

'Iwalani Tseu

'Iwalani's School of Dance originated in Wahiawa on North Cane Street on August 1974 and is now located in Mililani and Waipi'o Gentry, O'ahu. 'Iwalani teaches dances of all the different cultures that make Hawai'i the rainbow connection of the world.

Ho'ae'ae Ranch, O'ahu's first macadamia nut orchard has a significant place in my life. I was born there in 1950, and raised in Honouliuli, a town noted for the 'ilima flower farms. At the tender age of six, I enrolled in Auntie Ku'ulei Clark's hula class at Hans L'orange Park in Waipahu. To me she was the matriarch of the hula; she was Hawai'i.

Auntie Ku'ulei taught us first to be ha'aha'a (humble), aloha kekahi i kekahi (love and respect others), and most of all, to respect yourself. She taught us that it would be wise for each haumana to keep in mind the wise saying of our kupuna, "A'ohe pau ka ike i kou halau" (think not that all wisdom resides in your halau).

Under Auntie Ku'ulei, I learned the basis of the hula, kahiko and hula 'auana, the hands and body gestures. In my days of learning, the hula 'auana was the "in" thing. Although we did some kahiko, I especially prefer 'auana.

The art of hula fascinated me as I continued to watch the older girls dance. The unity and aloha spirit they expressed gave me the incentive to work harder, for I desired to be as good as they. I did not realize then the impact hula would have in my life.

As a teenager, my mother was instrumental in enhancing my interest in dancing. Remembering my early training years, my mother helped me to be aware of how vital it was to protect the inner beauty of a mele. She encouraged me to flow with each mana'o so that the story would be felt as well as viewed.

Hawaiian composers have always taken time to write songs and chants about whatever caught their eyes and hearts, the beauty of a pretty girl, a handsome male, certain places, flowers, lover or 'ohana. Many of my hula follow the same traditions. I think of my childhood,

of people and places, glimpses of moments that express the Hawai'i I've known. To me the hula is the ability to create one's most inner feelings and not a copy of someone else. This I learned from one of Hawai'i's great kumu hula, Auntie Ku'ulei Clark.

I later became a professional dancer and traveled to the mainland and abroad and danced in luau shows in Waikiki for Leina'ala Simmerson. Nohelani Cypriano was our drummer and Leimomi Ho our line captain. In shows at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, Kimo Kahoano was our fire knife dancer and my hula partner; Marlene Sai was the featured female singer. Our dedication and discipline under the direction of Kimo Mansfield was a challenge. We had to adhere to strict rules in appearance, manners, and overall conduct. Being a hula dancer was very special.

I was offered to do a two-week promotion for American President Lines on the passenger liner steamship, President Cleveland. This promotion developed into a commitment which lasted nearly three years. Traveling to exotic countries such as Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore, Philippines, Borneo, India, Africa, Peru, Chili, Argentina, Acapulco, Brazil, Canada, Tahiti, and New Zealand brought rewarding memories and an opportunity to share our Hawaiian culture.

One day I was asked to teach a few young girls the hapa haole hula. These little girls brought their friends and before I realized it, the class increased tremendously. Their eagerness to learn was so refreshing. This also brought back memories of my childhood. I was thrilled to watch the progress of my haumana.

The art of hula is recognized throughout the world for it is a dance form as well as the history of our kupuna. Their mana'o was transformed within our body and soul through songs and dances as a way of communication, a way of expressing our cultural heritage, the wealth of our Hawaiian Islands which make us so unique. Only in Hawai'i, a multitude of ethnic culture is able to accept the differences in peace and harmony. This is truly the meaning of aloha. I am

honored to have the opportunity to share this art of Hawai'i and be a part of the Hawaiian Renaissance.

Hula is a continual learning. In the Islands, unconditional love is shared through the hula haumana where mental and physical discipline are obtained. Kimo Alama Keaulana unselfishly continues to share his expertise, mana'o, and encouragement with me. I will always be a haumana under the direction of Uncle George Naope, his inspiration in spirit, love, and knowledge. Respect and loyalty are traditions and values vital to our culture.

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