

PULUELO PARK

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dancer who

where training

I, as a youngster learned from my GrandAunties in Kohala, Hawaii, and learned here in Kalihi after coming from the big Island. I began my first hula Auwana with Caroline Tuck. I enjoyed her classes, and was mostly fascinated by the way she would teach the dancers to drop on their backs (meaning lying down on their backs and only their hands would be extended upward waving and doing the hula.) Then about the age of 11, I learned Kahiko from a teacher that was so strict, that I really lost interest. I never again liked the hula for as long as four to five years. However, in my later years of course I appreciated it very much. My mother was against the hula kahiko because of their kapu's and the rituals that a dancer must go through. My dad was a musician so the emphasis in my family was more on music. My children are half-Korean and I felt that their Hawaiian side would be neglected if I didn't bring our hula culture to them at a very tender age. So at the age of thirty, I began to train under Lokalia Montgomery who lived in Kapahulu on Charles Street. I studied with her for two years, and at the same time after one-year attended classes for one-year and a half with Auntie Katie Nakaula. (She taught me the kuahu style of Chanting and dancing more towards the temple style of dancing. In other words more like kapu dancers.) Both teachers I respect very much. I loved Lokalia's way of teaching because what she taught me, the kapu's were lifted. There was never fear of the hula when I studied with her. With Lokalia A private recital was held at her Halau forme. After our Paina (lunch she told me my dear you are to open your Halau now, starting in your Home. I started to open "PUAMANA HULA STUDIO" on July 25, 1952. I started with five Haumana. In Palolo, oahu.

This is 2nd Paragraph

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(2) I never did like the hula. My mother was against it because of the rituals and my dad was a musician so the emphasis in my family was more on music. My children are half-Korean and I felt that their Hawaiian side would be neglected if I wasn't able to teach them. So at the age of thirty, I began to train under Lokalia Montgomery in Kapahulu on Charles Street.

A usual class with Lokalia would begin with a talk session. She would tell me the story background and meaning of the particular mele we were going to learn that day. There was no sense of rush like today where we want the children to learn as much as possible in a certain amount of time. Not those days. She would chant the first three lines of the mele and I would repeat the lines back to her. After every three lines she would stop and give deeper explanations of each line and we would not go on to a new portion of the mele until I was comfortable with the first. My training with Lokalia was mostly kahiko and she said that her line was from Tutu Keaka Kanahele and Mary Pukui.

I stayed with Lokalia for two years and then went on to Kathy Nakaula with whom I studied under for a year and three months. Auntie Kathy was a kuahu teacher who taught the ritual dances, and I found her to be much different than Lokalia. She had been brought into the hula from childhood and she was always emphasizing the correct placement of the feet and hands. Lokalia was always worried about your posture, and how you presented yourself. Auntie Kathy was more interested in how you put your dance across so I learned the motions and gestures of the dances almost immediately. I went through an uniki with Auntie Kathy but my mother prevented her from taking me through the rituals.

Lokalia had a tremendous influence on me. She made me keep my head up and I danced proudly. She was always so calm and collected and she taught me to respect who I was. It was she who encouraged me to open my halau. I began with five students who were mostly family and they would have to travel from Waimanalo to my home in Palolo. Because of family obligations, I had to close the halau in 1953. I re-opened the halau in 1960 in Hauula and eventually moved it to Kailua.

Today's training emphasizes more physical expression of the ideas in the mele. Some of the hula kahiko today even resembles martial arts. The hula audience of old was made up of people who knew the hula and knew the language so the gestures of the dancers could be more subtle. Today's kahiko is what the modern audience wants it to be but it's not necessarily the hula of old. Each kumu in the past had their own style and you didn't see it mixed with other cultures like it is today. Lokalia taught me that the old way is not the only way and that as a teacher, you must be creative but I feel this creativity has gotten out of hand. The older kumu have to step forward and draw the line of what is traditional. There is so much doubt today because the majority of us aren't directly linked to the old days.

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Puluelo Park was born in Hoesa, Kohala and moved to Watertown, Oahu at the age of 9. She established the Pumehana Hula Studio in 1952 and currently resides in Kailua, Oahu.

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