

Nana I Na Loea Hula
Kumu Hula: Ray Kahikilaulani Fonseca
Interviewer: Lovina LePendu
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Kahikilaulani is my hula name given by Uncle George Naope. He used to call me Kahiki because I was always playing Tahitian drums and told me when I uniki he will complete the name. Then Kahikilaulani was given to me at my uniki. I also named my halau "Kahikilaulani," meaning "the staff of Heaven." I teach at Waiakea Villa. My students are from five years old basically all the way up to 60 years old. I also work part-time with the elderly activities program. With that group the oldest one is 86 years old. I teach kahiko and auana. I do teach oli but on very rare occasions, like for Merry Monarch, Miss Hula. I specialize in the dance, but I don't think I am ^{versed} ~~versat~~ile enough to teach oli. It has been 10 years (that I lived) in Hilo, but prior to that I worked in Honolulu with Uncle George. I was assisting him going to various workshops. That's how I really started. I started to dance hula t age 17. I ^{Kioloalalani} was with Keolalani Studio as a Tahitian drummer then I moved on with Auntie Pauline Padeken and Lokelani Andersen and that's how I really met Uncle George ^{in 1970}. He had asked me to come to his halau to teach Tahitian, so that summer I came up with Uncle George and I never went back home until three years later. I lived with him. I was only the Tahitian drummer then I started to ask questions about hula and taking an interest in hula. Uncle George's style to me is different from others. He has a lot of feet

movements. It was through his inspiration that I could go out and learn from other kumus like Lokalia Montgomery who was teaching ^{at Waianae for} ~~there~~ with Aunty Agnes Cope. I also took workshops from Henry Pa. I was in his class for a while and also worked with him at the Waikiki show ^{with} at Tavana at ^{Aina} ~~the~~ Hau Princess Kaiulani. Uncle George made me go to workshops. I took from Aunty Edith and Eleanor Hiram Hoke. He wanted me to broaden my horizon. I ~~uniki~~ from Uncle George in 1977. Since then, until today, even if we live apart I am still with him in spirit. If I get stuck with something like a chant, I still will go to him and ask for advice. In 1980 I opened in Hilo. Uncle George always told me in the hula sharing of one's knowledge was to enhance one's knowledge. So for me I learned that my job was to share what I learned so I can learn even more. Uncle George is my greatest inspiration. How I became a teacher. At that time Hilo did not have too many teachers--especially in the kahiko. What Uncle George taught me in traditional dances I try to keep it in the same ^{sense} sets and that goes for the other teachers, too, because I feel that tradition should always be carried on. ^{keep exactly} With my ^{most of everything is} ~~uncle~~ creation I get a little of everybody. For me my difficulties in my years of teaching are mostly growing pains than anything, but I have some good supporters that are with me to keep me going. Parents. To me, my joy is to see them do it to the best of their abilities and do it with full love and understanding of the art. I compose a few chants with Uncle George's help. To the young teachers of today I just want to tell them to remember their roots. That is very

important so hula can be an everlasting art. Hula today is high tech compared with the hula 40-50 years ago. And with the young teachers coming it is changing again with the new environment today. We live in a totally new world. There is a chant that Uncle George had helped me put together with the prisoners in the Kalani Prison--"Ku Lanakila." Kalani Meineke helped him with the wording, that is my favorite chant. I do not have a preference to kahiko or auana. I love all auana songs. Every song has a different spot in my heart. Hawaiian language is important because for me without the language there is no dance. I try to use Hawaiian in my classes. Lots of my students take the language at the University. I depend on them a lot so they can help me. They can project better. The one without the language is just mimicking. Already with Uncle George I used to ask tons of questions about translation. Master of hula, Uncle George, Aunty Kau'i, I think Kimo Alama is fantastic, Johnny Lum Ho--he has created a whole new essence of hula. To me, he is a genius in that. Beside hula, in my halau we try to do everything ourselves. Implements, feather leis, costumes. We don't hire seamstresses. To me, when they dance with the costumes they had made, they have a feeling of accomplishment. I don't like to be a judge. To me everybody is beautiful so judging is very difficult. We need more workshops for dance (and) language so the students can broaden their horizon. When I am here teaching it is the force within me that drives me. Everything in my life is related to hula. My parents help me in the background, fund raising, dressing, etc. but not in the

halau. When I come out a winner I first feel fortunate, blessed. I always tell the kids to thank the almighty to allow us to be here because to me what really matters is they all come on (off?) that stage with no regrets. They gave their 300% and feel good about themselves. Once they are on that stage they are winners. Competition is learning process for me. I am always concerned about what we do. I really don't watch other halaus. I simply watch each individual dancer of my halau and go from there, and learn to work with that. So they are not only learning from me, but me from them. I have quite a few students. I have from day one, and they are now starting to teach in schools. This year I will have my first uniki. I will recognize certain individuals in the halau, and (it) will be publicly known that they can teach, and I feel great about that.