

KEALOHA KALAMA

Kealoha Kalama is a kumu hula, producer, entertainer, musician and recording artist. In 1971, she opened her hula halau on the premises of the Bishop Museum and named the halau, "Halau Hula O Pohai Kealoha", which means "hula studio of encircling love".

I was raised in the country. Growing up to lots of music, hula, and most of all, a good life, I was fortunate to have parents who gave us what they could...education and a beautiful home in Nanakuli. I was always involved in music, singing, playing the `ukulele, piano and even tried to play the guitar. All this is expressed in my music.

My mother was, and will always be, the biggest inspiration in my entertainment life. My mother, Mrs. Virginia Hamau Kalama, was the community association president, the Nanakuli Hawaiian Civic Club president, and was very much involved in politics. She was a true republican, working hard for her community. But she always played music and got us children involved.

My big love in those days was the hula. I learned hula in elementary and intermediate schools from teachers and sometimes from our kupuna.

Back in the 1950's, hula was a big thing in Hawai'i. Miss Puanani Alama was my first hula instructor. She was such a beautiful hula dancer and a wonderful instructor. We didn't do many chants because it wasn't as important as it is today. I also met John Pi'ilani Watkins and was very honored to perform for his group. Brother John was such a great composer, beautiful singer, musician, and fantastic entertainer. He was my kumu in hula and sometimes music. Back then in the late 50's, we put on shows at the military bases, the old Kapahulu Tavern, the Waikiki Sands Club and even on the neighbor islands. In the early 60's, we had the pleasure of going to the Mainland for about a month where we entertained from Los Angeles up to Washington State. I was very excited because it was my first trip to the Mainland.

I met Joseph Kamoha'i Kaha'ulelio through Brother John. Joseph and Aunty Pauline

Kekahuna were looking for hula dancers for their big show in the Princess Ka'iulani and the Moana hotels. I was very honored to dance for these great entertainers.

Before I started taking hula lessons with Joseph K. Kaha'ulelio, I got John Pi'ilani Watkins' blessings to go ahead in my Hawaiian and learn great and beautiful olapa. I was blessed and enjoyed taking lessons from two of Hawaii's outstanding and wonderful kumu.

I also danced for Auntie Vickie Ii, Genoa Keawe, Uncle Bill Aliihoa Lincoln, Louise Kaleiki, Leina'ala Haile (whom I love as a sister), and Leina'ala Simerson. I also had the privilege of traveling to Japan and the Mainland with Uncle Sol Bright and Hawaii's songbird, Auntie Lena Machado.

When I returned from the Orient, I started to work for the State Department of Transportation as a Visitors' Information hostess and in the Communication Department as a pager system announcer. Auntie Lei Collins and Uncle Joe Kaha'ulelio were my immediate supervisors. We also did a lot of entertainment for all the big VIP's who arrived in Hawaii, greeting people at Hickam Airforce Base, including the President of the United States. My biggest thrill was greeting Elvis Presley when he did a concert in the old stadium.

On certain evenings I also danced at the Halekulani Hotel and the Moana Hotel. I was asked to be the ground hostess for Aloha Airlines. Working there was the biggest blessing in my life. I travelled for the Hawaii Visitors Bureau and throughout the Mainland, the Orient, Australia, New Zealand and many other places.

In 1969, I started my own Hawaiian Revue at the beautiful Ulumau Village in Kane'ohe for about two years. I was asked to open a Polynesian Revue for the Waikiki Resort Hotel. I had the most beautiful dancers and wonderful musicians. They were Atta Isaacs, Harold Hakuole, Billy Hew-Len, Larry Asing, Peter Mendiola, Arthur Hew-Len and sometimes Pua Almeida, Gary Aiko, Frances Kamahele, and Samoa's fantastic fire dancer, Falaniko. I also produced shows

at the Reef Hotel, the Hyatt Regency Hotel, the Halekulani Hotel, the Bishop Museum and for the Hawaii Visitors Bureau. I had the pleasure of entertaining with friends, Brother George Holokai and Kimo Alama Keaulana, both who are great in 'auana and kahiko, and who worked on my Polynesian Revue in Waikiki.

I met Auntie Rosalie Stevenson who had such a beautiful strong voice and sometimes sang with the late Alfred Apaka. Being her lead dancer, I used to get the hula dancers for her. We had such a wonderful time traveling to Kwajalein, Johnson Island, Okinawa, Guam, Saipan and most of the Micronesian Islands. We also had a lot of neighbor island jobs.

For the past two years, I've been with the kupuna/kumu Hawaiian Studies Program under the Department of Education at the Admiral Nimitz Elementary School. It has really been a challenge to teach military children but I really enjoy helping them to learn our culture, sing Hawaiian songs, and especially learn how to pronounce our Hawaiian words.

After twenty-five years, I still have my hula halau, "Halau Hula O Pohai Kealoha". In whatever I do, I always thank the people who helped me and I make sure that I work hard in my entertainment life. After being in the entertainment field for over thirty-five years, I feel that I've paid my dues.

Having been a judge for many hula competitions in Honolulu, Hilo and on the Mainland, I found our culture to be popular all over the world and so many young instructors are coming out from all over the place. I find a change in our beautiful hula and our 'olapa and I guess it has to be because it's so competitive. I find it very interesting.

Throughout my life, my wonderful husband Wilfred T. Cabral, has always been there to help me with getting all my things together for my shows. He has always made me feel good about myself; never a negative word. He fills my life with so much love.

Revised: 1/25/95
9/22/95jy
Approved:10/11/95kk