

*Mrs* Louise Beamer

I was born on January 22, 1907 in Honolulu and in 1923 at the age of sixteen I married into the Beamer family. My husband's mother was Helen Desha Beamer and she lived in Hilo on the Big Island. Mother Beamer was a musician, a composer, a dancer, and she was my first kumu. She taught me everything. Mother Beamer always taught at her mother's home on Eighth Avenue in Kaimuki. When she visited Honolulu, all the young ladies would come to learn and there would be thirty young women dancing in the living room. Now Mahi's (Mahi Beamer) mother and I, the two daughters-in-law, would stand in the backline and that's how I really got started.

Mother Beamer had her own way of teaching. She didn't do too much dancing for you or with you. <sup>The same way</sup> She got up and showed you the dance one time, ~~and that was it. When she~~ taught auwana, she would sit at the piano and play it one time, ~~and that was it.~~ You were allowed to watch the motions, and listen to the words once and then you were expected to get up and do it all. The hula that we were taught was simple and subtle. The subtler the better. Our knees were always drawn up rather than outward when we would uwehe and the dance always projected the words of the chant. I went through the process of learning the hula kapu but because of the kapus associated with the dance I've chosen never to teach it.

Mama had a very beautiful way of teaching. She always told me, you know <sup>Loe</sup> ~~in~~ you always have to be aware of how you are teaching. You always have to teach your students the way you would have wanted to be taught. What she meant was a teacher had to go down to the level of each student. I first began to teach at home in Alewa Heights. We had a very long porch with a ~~million-dollar~~ <sup>spectacular</sup> view of Pearl Harbor and that's where I held my classes for five years.

Sometimes I would teach a student something and she would get it right away. But in the next class another student might not get it at all. I always remembered what she told me and I would ~~have to~~ go home and figure out another way to teach the lesson. Mother Beamer told me that there's always a reason why the child understands and doesn't understand and it's an excuse to brand the child as stupid.

To tell the truth I wasn't too keen about the idea of teaching at the very beginning. I was nineteen-years-old and I didn't ~~believe in myself~~ and have the confidence in myself to be a teacher but she believed in me and that's how I started to teach. I took over her classes at Punahou School and in 1934 I opened my halau in Waikiki next to the old Kodak building. In those days I used to work in hula from seven in the morning till seven at night. I would close my studio door and drive home and there was so much joy for me to open the door and come home to my children. I think the greatest sacrifice I had to make was the time I couldn't spend with my family because of my work. There were mornings that I would feel a little low but when I got to that studio I would turn on the Victorola and I would forget everything outside. Whatever problems I might have had dissappeared. Suddenly my whole life would be inside that studio. I just enjoyed it so.

Mother Beamer always told me that when you perform the hula you always want to portray your best side, the good side. The other side never. You just keep that to yourself. We weren't even permitted to dance naughty hulas. I'm from the old school of training and it's hard for me to understand the changes in the hula of today. Kumu hula has been my life's work, as well as the work of my daughters and their daughters. It disturbs me when unqualified hula instructors identify themselves as kumu hula. The right to this identity must be earned.

in mind that we are taking the Hawaiian lifestyle and sharing it with ~~these~~ keikis who are coming from all different backgrounds, hopefully they will blend it with their own. For example, when a student five-years-old trains with us until she's eighteen, no matter her cultural background, she will know as much about the hula as any dancer. We are training children of all racial backgrounds to be proud of themselves and their heritage.

So where does the hula go from here? In grandmother's and mother's time everything was changing with the influx of foreigners and Waikiki was the only public showplace. For the hula to survive, it was taken from the home and the family and made available to everyone. Grandmother felt if we taught the keiki well then they would always have a love for Hawaii and the Hawaiian culture. Today you'll see an image of the Hawaiian culture in Waikiki that is dominated solely by economics, this is what upsets me.

The hula is not just an expression of the culture, it is the heart of the culture. Today people are changing the hula and infact are changing the culture. Unfortunately, in time we may get use to changing the culture and find it easier to do so, rather than to perpetuate it.



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TITA BEAMER SOLOMON

In our family, hula is a way of life. We have always been in the arts. My daughters, Malama and Hulali, represent the fifth generation. It has never been a question of choice but a commitment to our culture. My sister ~~(Nona Beamer)~~ and I spent every summer on the Big Island with our grandmother, Helen Desha Beamer, and we were brought up with music and hula. We thought every family played the ukulele, sang and danced ~~the hula~~. This was grandma's philosophy for all of us and how we took it from there was our own kuleana.

Everybody had to be trained in the fundamentals of dance and music, <sup>so while</sup> children were outside playing ~~while~~ <sup>(Louise Beamer)</sup> we were practicing. For mother, and grandmother, the Hawaiian was their first language but for my generation it was more important to learn English. Grandmother realized that unless she got all of us involved with the Hawaiian arts we would lose the Hawaiianess in our lives. The hula, ~~you have to understand~~ encompasses everything in the Hawaiian culture.

I began to dance at the age of two under mother and grandmother, I was taught both kahiko and auwana. When grandmother would come to Honolulu, Nona and I would dance in the backline of her hula classes. Mother shared with us the quiet and beauty of the art. <sup>while</sup> Grandmother Helen Desha Beamer, stressed discipline and perfection. Mother was really more lenient. The hula was something very special and we had to take care when we studied or danced it.

I graduated from Kamehameha School and enrolled at the College of the Pacific in California. A local Y.M.C.A. (Young Women's Christian Association) was putting together a Hawaiian cultural program and I was asked to teach. This was how I began, I taught easy haole hula, because I wanted them to enjoy <sup>at</sup> the ~~hula~~ and not be intimidated with the culture. You always have to keep