

Nana I Na Loea Hula  
Kumu Hula: Iwalani Evelynn Rae Walsh Tseu  
Interviewer: Lovina LePendur  
Date: 8/27/90

(CAN YOU GIVE ME YOUR FULL GIVEN NAME?) My full given name is Iwalani Evelynn Rae Walsh Tseu. (DO YOU TEACH PRESENTLY?) Yes I do. (WHERE?) I teach at the Mililani Recreational Centers and the Kanoelani Elementary School in Waipio Gentry, in the cafeteria. (CAN YOU TELL ME THE AGE OF YOUR STUDENTS?) Yes. If they're aggressive, four years old. Preferably 5 through adults. (ABOUT HOW OLD IS YOUR OLDEST ADULT?) My oldest adult is 68. (CAN YOU GIVE ME YOUR HALAU'S NAME?) It's a school of dance, and it's "Iwalani's School of Dance". (DO YOU TEACH BOTH KAHIKO AND AUANA?) My specialty is auwana. However, I do show basics in kahiko. (DO YOU TEACH OLI TO YOUR CHILDREN ALSO?) Yes. The only oli is my oli, my personal oli, that was written for me by Manu Boyd of my birth place and just a little bit of my background so that my students would learn my personal oli. (HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN TEACHING?) We've just celebrated, last week, my 16 year anniversary. I started in August, 1974.

(AT WHAT AGE DID YOU FIRST LEARN HULA?) I started at the age of six. (WHO WAS YOUR FIRST TEACHER?) Ku'ulei Clark. (DO YOU REMEMBER

WHERE SHE TAUGHT?) Yes. It was at the Hans L'Orange park in Waipahu.

(WAS SHE A TEACHER AT THE RECREATION CENTER?) Well at that time she wasn't appointed, I don't think, by the recreational center; it was just her own personal. . . (AND HOW MANY STUDENTS?) Oh, she must have had

hundreds of students. You know it's not like how it is today. It seemed like that whole place was full and you would just sit until it's your turn.

(IT WAS LIKE A PLACE TO GATHER.) Yes. And it was very open. And it was your class, you knew it was your class, you would stand up and dance and others would wait outside or just sit around and just watch each other.

(DO YOU REMEMBER HOW OLD SHE WAS AT THAT TIME?) Yes. She must have been at least in her forties, thirties or forties. You know when you're younger, everybody at that time, they look older. And I might be embarrassing her now to think that she was that old, but it just seem that

your teacher was so much older. (HOW LONG DID YOU STUDY UNDER HER?)

Several years. I cannot really even give you the exact. . . (DID YOU LEARN

KAHIKO, AUANA?) It was basically auwana. We did do some kahiko but at that time a lot of hapa haole hula and traditional hula was coming out, but it was not as dominant at that time, kahiko, as it is today. (DO YOU

REMEMBER THE METHODS SHE USED TO USE, THE STYLE?) She didn't bring it to our attention as a specific style. It was very simple, it was very clean,

she just said, "Not on your toes, flat foot." And when you would kaholo and turn to the side your chin would be up and to keep your face towards the audience area. Because at that time they weren't that specific as they are today. (AT THAT TIME HULA WAS MORE LIKE ENTERTAINMENT.) Yes! It was a pleasure, and you're not being competitive, you're not being judged. It was just for love and to learn your culture. (DO YOU KNOW IF SHE [KU'ULEI CLARK] HAD A KUMU?) I'm sure she did, but even at that time it wasn't important. We didn't go into her background or anything. It just wasn't that important at that time. Or maybe she did talk to other students, but I don't want to say that she didn't make that importance. Maybe she did, but it wasn't to me. (CAN YOU TELL ME OF ANY EXPERIENCES WHILE WITH THIS KUMU? DO YOU REMEMBER SONGS?) Oh, yes. And the whole atmosphere in itself that I can remember - and I try to stress that even in my teachings today - it was the love and the sharing that is important. It was the helping of each other, or your older hula sisters would come and work with you if you're having a difficult time on your kaholo or your lele uehe or whatever it may be. It was very giving. And that was important, the whole environment of the complete aloha spirit. (HOW LONG WERE THE CLASSES?) Well, you're supposed to be there for an hour. But like old timers, if they're not satisfied or they felt. . . , you just kept dancing until



you were just tired and they said, "Okay you can go home now." And of course you were supposed to be there for a duration of time, but it would run overtime if needed be. (DID SHE PLAY HER OWN INSTRUMENT?) Yes, she did play her own instrument, and also she would have her records available. But, yes, she would do a lot of her own singing. (DID YOU HAVE ANOTHER TEACHER AFTER HER?) Well, I had a variety of teachers that I can just give so much credit to. Today I'm still considered a haumana, as far as I'm concerned, and I'm forty years old. (CAN YOU NAME SOME OF THEM?) Oh yes. Uncle George Na'ope. My hula brother Kimo Alama; right now, today, if I ever need help he's always there. And even at that time when I was dancing professionally in Waikiki, you know, I have my hula sisters, and we would share a lot, and today they are kumu. Leimomi Ho is a kumu today, and at that time we were just all hula dancers. And you learn from each other. You never even dream that you'd become a hula instructor or a resource or a kumu that you are called today. (SO YOU NEVER GOT UNIKID FROM THE TEACHERS?) No. (DID YOU GET ANY CERTIFICATE FROM ANY OF THEM?) Yes, I got certificates when we would have ho'ike or our one year recitals, and unfortunately for me, today I don't have them. . . .

(WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO BE A TEACHER?) I really never thought of

wanting to be a teacher it just happened. A group of young girls that had looked up to me, in my area, and they just asked me if I would teach them hula. And because I was dancing in the evenings at Waikiki and I was available during the day I said, "Sure." And I started to teach them hapa haole hula and they enjoyed it and that's how it all started. I just never really gave it a thought that I would be a teacher today. I just loved it and I just became it. (IS THERE ONE KUMU OF YOURS THAT HAD THE GREATEST INFLUENCE ON YOU?) They all contributed a lot in many ways that probably [made me] what I am today. They all had their own individual values. They all had their own styles. One I would admire because of their inner soul or beauty, others because of their hula gestures. In hula there is just so many ways that you can admire someone. And you take the good here and there, and I am what everybody else was together.

(CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR DANCING STYLE?) I cannot say it came from "me" because it was given to me. The style I have today is a combination of others that I've admired and I've had the opportunity to work under. My hula kaholo is flat feet. My fingers are forward with your wrist relaxed on your *kikāla*, on your hip. And basically I tell the children to be proud of your culture, so you must keep your *awa* up, your chin up, and be able to project to the audience, tell the story, with your entire

face. And, I guess, that would be basically my basics in training is a complete projection. You can take a simple hula and make it a complete way of life and communication. In fact, isn't that what hula is all about?

(DID YOU ENCOUNTER ANY DIFFICULTIES IN YOUR HULA CAREER?) Oh yes, oh yes. But you know, you have to go through the rocky roads before you can become smooth. And that's all part of the experiences because it makes you a better person no matter how difficult it is. If you can continue to...at first you cry about it, but then now you look back and you can smile and say, "You know, that was all part of learning. That was all part of the experience." And now that I can share these memories and hardships with my students and say, "You know what? I had those difficult times too, so you're not alone." And you can share your experiences, and hopefully build this foundation for your students. They become your own personal children. And you groom them. (THEY'RE LIKE PART OF YOUR LIFE.) Oh definately! Yes! In fact, I have students today that are married, they have children, and if I'm in the store they come running up to me, and names I'm real terrible, I forget names but the faces, and they say, "Aunty, don't you remember me?" And I say, "Oh, yes I do!" because when you look deep in their eyes you can see them as a child. And then they're bringing their children to you. And then that's what



makes you feel old. Oh, but it feels so rewarding!

(WHAT GIVES YOU THE MOST JOY IN TEACHING TODAY?) The most enjoyment is that they retain the values, they take it home with them in their everyday living, and when they're on stage actually dancing, if we're talking as far as dance choreography, and when you can see that they are truly dancing from their heart then you know that you are part of that. And that's the greatest reward any instructor or kumu could have, when you see the actual product in front of you. In fact I have students that say, "Aunty, I'm a secretary today," or "I'm a sales clerk," or whatever it may be but, "Aunty, I remembered your values to always be humble and always be helpful and sharing." And they would tell me, "Aunty, because of this I was promoted very easily," in whatever job or career that they pursued because they were able to deal with the heart. And people recognize that.

(DO YOU GIVE CERTIFICATES OR UNIKI THEM?) Uniki, no. We have a ho'ike and I do give them certificates, yes. (HOW LONG DO YOU EXPECT THEM TO BE WITH YOU BEFORE YOU GIVE THEM A CERTIFICATE?) Well, we have our first year certificate or our five year and our ten year certificate. (WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR THE YOUNG HULA TEACHERS TODAY OR THE HAUMANA THAT WANT TO BE KUMU HULA?) The values that

we must instill in any young person is the values, the respect, the humbleness, and the love. And when you have all of this, you have the happiness, and when you're a happy person, everybody can recognize it immediately. If you're *ho'oi'a*, if you think you're better than someone else, that too, they'll recognize it and that's the biggest downfall in your life. When anytime you think you're better than somebody, then you can be easily replaced. And those are not the values you want to give because those were not the values of our ancestors because we must remember when people came to Hawai'i, Hawai'i was known as the most hospitable and loving islands, and that's the reason why we attracted a multitude of different ethnics cultures here because they were welcomed. And where else in this whole world, where a little island like that can have so much love. And because we are so international today, and so westernized, a lot have forgotten.

(WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE HULA KAHIKO OF TODAY?) Personally, I have no opinion because I feel that at least they're trying their best and they're perpetuating. And I'm just supportive of anyone that is trying to *perpetuate our culture. And I don't want to be judgemental of anybody* because then I would be a hypocrite of what I mentioned earlier as far as to be just loving and sharing. I just feel that as long as they're doing our



we must instill in any young person is the values, the respect, the humbleness, and the love. And when you have all of this, you have the happiness, and when you're a happy person, everybody can recognize it immediately. If you're *ho'oi'a*, if you think you're better than someone else, that too, they'll recognize it and that's the biggest downfall in your life. When anytime you think you're better than somebody, then you can be easily replaced. And those are not the values you want to give because those were not the values of our ancestors because we must remember when people came to Hawai'i, Hawai'i was known as the most hospitable and loving islands, and that's the reason why we attracted a multitude of different ethnics cultures here because they were welcomed. And where else in this whole world, where a little island like that can have so much love. And because we are so international today, and so westernized, a lot have forgotten.

(WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE HULA KAHIKO OF TODAY?) Personally, I have no opinion because I feel that at least they're trying their best and they're perpetuating. And I'm just supportive of anyone that is trying to perpetuate our culture. And I don't want to be judgemental of anybody because then I would be a hypocrite of what I mentioned earlier as far as to be just loving and sharing. I just feel that as long as they're doing our

culture, good, bad or indifferent, they are trying their best. And who am I to judge? Because some is going to like it and some not.

(WHAT'S YOUR DEFINITION OF HULA KAHIKO?) A hula kahiko is time of old. And you must do it with a lot of pride and knowledge. Kahiko is just the stories of our ancestors - their hardships, their love, their everyday living. (DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE CHANT?) No, I have no favorite. (DO YOU COMPOSE CHANTS?) No. I've thought of it, but I've never actually put in down on paper. (SO YOU PREFER HULA AWANA?) Definately yes. I respect our old. . . And I feel now we have such good halau that want to go into kahiko and my place now as an instructor is to instill the values to the haumana of today. Because when they think of Aunty in the future then I'll be kahiko! And then they'll say, "Aunty gave us values." And that's important.

(WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE HULA AUANA? DO YOU HAVE A SPECIAL SONG?) No, I don't. But just this year, and I've been in the business for 16 years, I really found a song that has become my theme song of our school, and I got the blessing, the permission, from Haunani Apoliona, which is Alu Like. And "Alu Like" means "let us all work together", in peace and harmony. Let us work with our hands. If you have nothing nice to say about anybody don't say anything at all. Let us hang on to our traditions

and our values of our ancestors. And from this day on that is the theme song of my school, because those are what I believe in. And it took me sixteen years to find a song. So "Alu Like" is definitely my school song and the theme song.

(DO YOU THINK HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE IS IMPORTANT?) Oh, definately! If you don't have the language, how would you be able to express yourself? You must know the language. (WHY DO YOU THINK THE LANGUAGE IS SO IMPORTANT?) Number one, it is our culture of Hawai'i, it is our language, and we've all lost it. Myself, I cannot even consider myself a speaker of the language, that's how far gone it is for me. But 'til the day I die I'm going to try to learn more and master it. When you understand the language everything fits in and becomes much easier. And for myself, even in this Hawaiian culture that I have, in perpetuating it, unfortunately for me I still have difficulty and I stumble over a song. If you don't know the mana'o, if you cannot really read or talk and feel deep inside, you're really lost. So you must know the language. (DO YOU TELL THAT TO YOUR CHILDREN?) Yes. (DO YOU TEACH THEM WITH THE WORDS AND THE LANGUAGE?) Yes. And we have the Hawaiian and we have the English. Then I just give them the common greetings and I give them the simple in Hawaiian words. Give them all the basics or the numbers or the colors or



the parts of the body, the everyday greetings. (SO YOU INCLUDE A LITTLE BIT OF THE HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE?) Oh yes, definitely. (WHO DO YOU CONSIDER A HULA MASTER TODAY?) Aunty Edith McKinzie, Uncle George Na'ope, Aunty Kau'i Zuttermeister. (CAN YOU TELL MY WHY?) Because they're so knowledgeable. And when you see them, they just walk with authority, they speak with authority, their whole being. You know that they've paid their dues and they've worked hard to what they have today. And they can give you so much knowledge, experiences. (BESIDE HULA, WHAT ARE YOU INVOLVED WITH?) As far as in Hawaiian I teach Hawaiian Studies in the Department of Education. And we teach the dance, we teach the language, we teach the values, and that's important. Arts and crafts, simple lauhala, you know, bracelets, simple mats or fans. (HOW ABOUT IN OTHER DANCING? OTHER CULTURES?) Oh, yes I am. Because I am of a mixed breed, as you can see, I'm hapa of everything else. But I've found it important to understand the Hawaiian culture I must understand myself and my ancestors. And when I did that, I studied the Filipino, I've studied the different Polynesian dancing, our cousins of Tahiti, of Samoa and of Tonga. And I have had people live with me, and when you live with them, you learn each others' values and appreciate. And I've found out that we all basically have the same roots and values, but then we just went off

into our own ways. And that was important. And that had even a stronger impact for me to know that I was on the right track. And you don't know that unless you go through those experiences. (DID YOU EVER SERVE AS A JUDGE?) Yes I have. (WHERE?) I was a judge at the "Keiki Hula Competition", "Ia 'Oe E Ka La" in San Francisco, and in November of this year I'll be a judge for the "Kupuna and Keiki Hula" in Kona. Besides also being a judge for our Polynesian cousins of Tahiti, I was a judge for four years for the Tahiti dance competition. (WHERE IS THAT?) Here at Kamehameha Schools. (AND WHO IS TAKING CARE OF THAT?) Aloha & Siosi Dalire. (DID SHE HAVE IT THIS YEAR?) It is coming up - September 7th, 8th, 9th, that weekend. . . .

(WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT WORKSHOPS?) Oh, the workshop. Yes, we all can use workshops, no matter what it is - a language, on values, on arts and crafts. (DO YOU THINK WORKSHOPS ARE MORE IMPORTANT FOR STUDENTS OR KUMU?) Kumu. Then we can learn from each other. (AND SOMETIMES HAVE THE KUMU AND THE STUDENTS TOGETHER?) Yes. But there should be a time only for kumu, and then you can open it for mixed. (IF YOU WERE TO HAVE A WORKSHOP, WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD WANT TO BE DONE?) If I were to attend? (WHAT DO YOU EXPECT TO HAVE? WHAT DO YOU WANT TO LEARN?) There is just so much that's going

through my mind as far as learning. For myself, I always want to learn more and more. So I really cannot say. Language, yes. Dancing, just the sharing, the values, the methods, or how would one be in their class. Sometimes their personality changes dramatically. And we need to just have a nice session that we can come together and just share and realize that we're not all alone and we all come from one family even as instructors. (AND HOW TO BE TOGETHER INSTEAD OF STEPPING OVER EACH OTHER.) Yes. You know that when I was in the Orient that if you are a dance instructor they have a variety of songs that everybody does it the same way. I had a girl that was taking from me that she was a Thai dancer and she said would she go back today 20 years later, if was a certain song would be playing, all the Tai dancers dance the same thing. It's just the basic. Whatever song, there's several songs. And you just do it. So no matter if you're at a gathering and even if you take \_\_\_\_\_ it doesn't matter because it's all the same. (THE HAWAIIAN WAY WAS THE SAME WAY...) Yes. And I think that would be nice that if someone could even start that, or a group of kumu get together and choreograph and pick a theme song or a song of Hawai'i that represented our ancestries, and we all dance the same...