

## CY M. BRIDGES

Cy Bridges is the great great grandson of Kuluwaimaka, court chanter during the reign of Kamehameha IV to Kalakaua. Cy is a dedicated husband, father, Bishop of the Hau'ula IV Ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and has been employed at the Polynesian Cultural Center in La'ie for many years.

Hula is a bit different today. We've all seen movies of hula dancers of the past. All you have to do is pop in a video and you can readily see how much it has changed. Mele Hula and Mele 'Oli were once the textbooks of Hawai'i. The history and words that were carefully woven into the chants were very important. Today, the words at times become secondary while the motions take on the primary role. Crowds go wild when they see certain movements. They may not know what the words are saying but the moves are so electrifying especially in the kahiko that the audience get kind of carried away. There are some things that I have enjoyed watching, and yet would not dare incorporate into my own teaching.

Our Halau Hula began with four Kumu Hula: myself, Bill Kauaiwiulaokalani Wallace, Enoka Kaina and Keith Kalanikau Awai. William Cravens, who at the time was the President of the Polynesian Cultural Center called Bill and I in and asked us, "why don't we have a halau?". We told him it would be too taxing and would take so much time and effort to have fund raisers etc. Cravens said "Don't worry about any of that, we'll sponsor it and fund whatever you need" this would give us an opportunity to share the culture with the wider local community. We felt we would give it a try, and that's how we got started. Enoka suggested the name "Hui Ho'oulu Aloha" for our halau. We thought the name was nice, appropriate and had a good meaning. I think the most important thing is love, not only for each other but for the culture and for what we do.

After a while, everyone moved on. My cousin, Bill, went to the Mainland to attend law school. Enoka moved into Honolulu, I dropped off for a season and Keith took over. At one time I heard he was leaving the halau so I came back to keep it going. But everybody was so busy doing their own thing. Aside from everything else I was involved with, my family had to also share time with halau, it was a big part of their life.

Ever since I was quite young, I was fascinated, not so much with the dance, but more so with the chanting and how the voice was used as well as the haunting sounds of the ipu and pahu. I wanted to learn how they did that. The very first training I got was really from my mom and my grandmother. Now this was interesting because they were not chanters or hula people at all, however they would tell me how it should or shouldn't sound based on their experience or what they had observed through family members growing up. And as for myself I would listen and mimic recordings of chanters that I heard, especially our tutu.

My formal hula training began when I was in high school with Auntie Sally Wood (Naluai) at the Polynesian Cultural Center in La'ie. I consider her my hula mother because she was my first formal teacher and I was with her for a number of years and graduated under her tutelage. I danced in the Hawaiian section at the PCC night show and in the village during the day. When Auntie Sally would put on performances for special events like Kamehameha Day, May Day, or Aloha Week and special VIP visits which were many, we were the dancers.

Auntie graduated me fourteen years after I first started dancing with her. She called me early one morning. She was crying on the phone, and told me she was sorry. I didn't quite know what she was talking about. She said to me "I see a lot of kumu hula who are teaching and entering competitions, I thought of my own students that I've trained and they didn't uniki. I want you to graduate." So our group got together and seriously started training once again. Her nieces Sunday and Ellen Gay were the first to graduate. Keith and I followed soon after.

Auntie Sally has a beautiful style. It's simple like hula should be. She made it enjoyable, it was fun.

While still with Auntie Sally, I also began training with Auntie Hoakalei Kamau'u. It first started when Auntie Hoakalei came down to Church College of Hawai'i (now BYUH) to help us with a Hawaiian Club assembly. Then Auntie needed male teachers to help her with performances, hula workshops especially with the male hula classes. In conjunction with the workshops we had a big ho'ike the night before which included not only her own students but also many visiting



kumu hula and their haumana. In preparation for that, Peter Lono'ae'a and I would go into town to practice with Aunty Hoakalei. In 1976, a performing group went to the South Pacific Festival of Arts in Rotorua, New Zealand and aunty Hoakalei was our coordinator. It was a small group and I was very fortunate to be a part of it.

During the time we were with Aunty Hoakalei, I also learned from other hula masters because of our involvement with the workshops, ho'ike and the Arts Festivals etc. We were able to learn the stylings of Aunty Edith Kanaka'ole and her daughters, Pua and Nalani who was also in the New Zealand group. I was fascinated when Aunty Edith would explain about the different winds and rains or other elements and how they were associated with the various chants we learned.

I also had the opportunity to learn from Aunty Pat Namaka Bacon most of which were in conjunction also with other Festivals. I still call on her today when I need help, like the many others, she is a special person and a great inspiration to me.

Aunty Sally is a graduate of Lokalia Montgomery and I had the opportunity of also learning from Aunty Lokalia. I first met her when we did a performance for the crowning of the Lei day queen at Kapi'olani Park Bandstand. About a month later, she invited to come and learn from her. That really thrilled me. I learned featherwork as well as chanting. The featherwork classes were held in Waianae under the direction of Aunty Agnes Cope. What was even more special was the fact that one of Aunty Lokalia's teachers was my tutuman while he was at Mossman's Lalani Hawaiian Village in Waikiki.

I did not train intensively in chanting with Aunty Sally. Basically I was given the words, she would chant it for me and I would follow her until I got the gist of it. But as I went to other teachers, I found that Aunty Pele and Lokalia would incorporate techniques that were slightly different. I gathered a little bit from all my teachers. Noelani Kamekona took me to Ka'upena Wong. At that time he had just finished working with another student and was not able to dedicate the same time and effort, however, he gave me some chants and shared some techniques and said I

could call on him at any time. That in itself was a great boost for me.

My style is part and parcel of all my kumu. It is so very important to me what my Mom, Grandmother, Aunty Sally, Aunty Hoakalei and Aunty Pat and others think about what I do and how I do it. I only wish I can bring honor to them and what they've shared with me, I hope I never disappoint them.

The interesting thing with our halau is that our haumana are from Oahu, the Cook Islands, New Zealand, Fiji, Rotuma, Honolulu, Kaua'i, Big Island, Japan and Spain. They're from all over the world and they come to learn and love the hula. One of the greatest joys I get is seeing someone who has never danced, be able to do it well, and can understand, appreciate, and love Hawai'i, it's people and it's culture, through it's unique music and dance. Oh the pain! aahhh I guess it's worth it!