

NANA I NA LOEA HULA  
KUMU HULA: KEALOHA KALAMA  
INTERVIEWER: LOVINA LE PENDU  
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My full given name at birth - Julie Kealoha Kalama. (SO YOU MARRIED TO GABRAL?) Right. (TEACH PRESENTLY?) I have my halau for the past 25 years. (AND WHERE DO YOU HAVE YOUR HALAU NOW?) Right now we are located at Damien High School, but before that I opened up my school back in 1971 at the Bishop Museum - the grounds of the Bishop Museum. I taught there for about 13 to 15 years and then I moved over to Damien High School because of the time. See, they had classes there at the Bishop Museum, so we couldn't go in until six o'clock in the evening, and I stood in for my students. (CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT AGES?) I have ages from four to 68, maybe older. They're all my babies. (CAN YOU GIVE ME THE NAME OF YOUR HALAU?) Halau Hula O Pohai Kealoha which means "surrounded love", "studio of surrounded love", "encircled love". (DO YOU TEACH KAHIKO OR AUANA?) I teach both. We specialize mostly in different types of implements, hula and kahiko. (DO YOU TEACH OLI?) I teach the girls oli only when I'm gonna use them for special shows. If I want one of my haumana to do it, one of my students to do it, then I teach them a little on that.

(WHAT AGE DID YOU FIRST LEARN HULA?) I think I learned how to dance when I was seven years old. See, I am from a family of 13 children. I am number six in the family. I have six sisters besides me, and I have five brothers. (DO YOU REMEMBER WHO WAS YOUR FIRST TEACHER?) My first kumu hula was this guy named Kalua Mendiola<sup>who</sup> down Nanakuli. Then <sup>when</sup> he passed away and then I went to the Alama sisters. (DO YOU REMEMBER WHERE HE USED TO TEACH?) He used to have a place in Nanakuli - his friend's house - and we used to go there. I used to live there. I was born in Honolulu, in town, but I was raised down there in Nanakuli. (SO IT WAS KIND OF LIKE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD?) Yeah. It was like a neighborhood halau - just the girls. (HOW OLD WAS HE?) I think he was young. He was maybe about 25, 26, <sup>a</sup> years old something like that, and I was about ten, eleven years old. (HE NEVER TOLD YOU WHO TAUGHT HIM?) No. Many years ago he used to teach hula. (AND HOW LONG DID YOU STUDY WITH HIM?) Not too long <sup>I didn't study with him</sup> because it was strange. I didn't let my parents know that I was taking hula from this man and my father didn't like the idea that I was taking hula from a man. He wanted a lady to teach me, because I loved it because we grew up with music in our home because my mother was a musician. She had her own group and things. So that's why I always loved music and the hula. (AND WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM HIM?) Auana. Just hula and <sup>I learned</sup> <sup>auana</sup>

*numbers. insert*  
some implements. From him I went to the Alama sisters. *Puanani & Leilani Alama* They had a halau

in one of their friend's home in Nānākuli and they opened out there -

Puanani and Leilani. (AND WHAT DID YOU LEARN WITH THE ALAMAS?

KAHIKO AND AUANA?) No. They didn't teach us kahiko, We only learned

implements and auana. And in those days we never say auana or kahiko, we

just say hula or olapa or chant and that's it. *were used* Auana and kahiko came now

*for* when you have all these kinds of competition. But before it was strictly

hula olapa. (DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU TOOK FROM THIS MAN, MENDIOLA,

WERE THERE A LOT OF STUDENTS?) No. There was maybe seven or eight of

us, that's all, just to go in the community and perform. I couldn't go

because my parents wouldn't let me go. I went because of my \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ it was at her home. (DID HE GIVE YOU LIKE CERTIFICATE?) That's

what we had from John Pi'ilani Watkins. *Pi'ilani Watkins* When I started with Johnny, then

I got certificate. (SO AFTER THE ALAMAS YOU WENT TO PI'ILANI

WATKINS?) Yes. (HOW LONG DID YOU STAY WITH JOHN?) Oh, I stayed with

him many, many years. Over ten years. I even entertained with him at the

Kapahulu Tavern days and Waikiki Sands. (WHAT AGE WERE YOU THEN?) I

was about 15-16, but actually I started when I was seven years old - 7, 8.

(AND WITH JOHN WATKINS YOU GOT CERTIFICATE?) Yeah, I got two; *received certificate for Johnny and* a

trophy. That's where I learned about trophies. We used to have



certificates, and then all of a sudden, when we had our little pa'ina recital or our little graduation, he gave us trophies. So until today I use that in my halau. Whenever I have my uniki I use trophies. Well, it shows... it has on top the name of the halau, <sup>and</sup> my name, <sup>on the top</sup> and then it has the support of the halau and how many years you've been there. John Pi'ilani Watkins was a person where you have to go in the corner and do your homework - I mean, do your studies in the corner. We used to have tests in the songs and the meaning and he used to put us in separate corners and he has to see that we can do it, plus he had to see if we knew how to make our ti leaf skirt, la'i skirt, because there are a lot of students that they don't know how to make their la'i skirts because they have the kumu hula do it or somebody else that they hire. Before he will give us our certificate - not now days, before when they graduate from my school, from my halau - they have to know how to make lei po'o, they have to know how to make their la'i skirt, and they have to design a costume either their old fashioned holo mu'u or pa'u. You learn from that. (SO WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO BECOME A TEACHER?) Oh, I've always thought about that since I was in high school, since I was young. I always thought that. (SO WHEN DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?) I used to teach after John Pi'ilani Watkins. I started with Joseph Kahaulilio. I used to dance for Auntie Pauline Kekahuna and I

started to teach with Joe Kahaulilio. We had a little studio on Ke'eaumoku Street, right below Auntie Maiki's halau. Auntie Maiki and Uncle Joe Kahaulilio are hula sister and brother, so we had about the same. That's where I learned more in the Hawaiian culture, more about kahikos. That's where I went strictly more into that. Before I did not know too much about that, so I started to teach Joe. And with Johnny Watkins I started to help him. When he couldn't make it I took over the class - that's how I started. Actually, I started early. After the hotel called me, the Edgewater called me and I taught hula there with Mary Silva. She had a school there. Actually, it was a school of dance. She teaches ballroom dance, and I used to go in and teach the hula. (SO YOU STARTED TO TEACH EARLY?) Uh huh. (WHO ARE ALL THE TEACHERS YOU HAD WHO REALLY INFLUENCED YOU?) Joseph Kahaulilio and Auntie Vicky, of course. Auntie Vicky used to be with us. She used to help us with the show and we learned a lot of hula and a lot of other things in the hula with Auntie Vicky. So I have to say both of them. But the things I was so impressed and excited about was performing for her, Auntie Vicky pa'ina, that we honored her and she wanted me there. She wanted me and my halau to perform for her. Oh, it was the biggest reward. And then after her pa'ina, her acknowledgement. Joseph Kahaulilio had one too, so I also performed for

him. (YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT THE TIME YOU WON THE MISS ALOHA. CAN YOU TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THAT?) Oh, I was so young. I was too young. Kalau, he asked. . .well, they had this little function Hawaiian Civic Club down at Nanakuli, and I think I was about maybe 14-15. I was real young. Oh, younger than that. And he said, "You should go into this competition. See, what I used to do even if I didn't have nobody at that time to teach me something good, I used to practice on my own. I used to go with my hands, and I used to just practice in the house and I used to go in the front of the mirror and my mother used to chase me out. "What are you doing? Do your work!" Then I went into that. Then I applied for it. I ran about five other girls, but my mother didn't know. I went with my girlfriend and her mother. None of my family knew. I came home and I told them. They said, "Who you taking hula from?" "Oh, this guy from down the street. He teaching hula." "What guy?" After I got married I went to John Pi'ilani Watkins. I got married young - 19 years old.

(DO YOU REMEMBER THE DIFFERENT STYLES OF DANCING?) All of them had different stylings. (DID YOU KEEP SOMEBODY'S STYLES IN YOUR HALAU?) Oh, yes. I'll always keep the style between John, Joe Kahaulilio. I'll always keep that styling. I won't change. When it's time to kaholo down bent, I'll do it. When it is time to hela, when it's time to uehe. . . I



must say there's not a right way. Nobody can say they are right in their uehe or their hela. You know, like I say, every halau is different nowadays because of this competition because if you have everybody doing the same thing it's not a competition, so it is up to you as a kumu hula how you feel and you love, how you see. When I go to any competition I am not only going there to support the thing, I'm going there to learn. I learn, I really do. I love the beauty about it. I love to see the excitement.

(DID YOU ENCOUNTER ANY DIFFICULTIES WHEN YOU WERE TEACHING?)

Well, I am going to tell you this: I thank God that I never advertised, I didn't have to advertise. When we started at the Bishop Museum - and those days we never had competition so I was filled in every class - so I was teaching like practically every day except Saturdays. Well, Saturday morning I was teaching and then I cut it down to four days a week. But when the competition started to flow in, it gives some girls initiative. They want to get up there and show the public that they can do this, do that; but I did not come from a competitive world even if I did go in that little competition, which I did not think nothing about it. My mom always entertained for us. We were the type of people that we will sit down in the house and we will sing with one ukulele or guitar. It was for us, for the community, the people. Back to the halau - I still have a lot of

students, but I find a breakage. Students want to compete. Students don't want to compete. It's a flow. I think most of the halaus go through that. When you're full you're full. When you're slow you're slow. You have periods that we slow but I thank God every class. I still have my steady students. (HOW ABOUT YOUR STUDENTS TODAY? YOU GIVE THEM CERTIFICATES?) I give them trophies. I still give them trophies and I don't feel they should graduate until they make four years, sometimes six years, and they have to learn everything. They have to know everything. I keep that culture going and I want to share that with my haumana.

(WHAT KIND OF ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUR STUDENTS?) I tell them, "You know how I am. I am very particular, your dressing especially. I don't want to see you girls coming to any of our functions where we have to perform any old way. I see a lot of that until today and I don't think, I don't care. If you go to the store you don't look that way." That's how we were brought up with my mom. I want my students to look good, No matter where they are, they representing me and the halau and respect. I say no matter what, first thing you respect you parents first. (HOW ABOUT YOUR HALAU? DO YOU SEE STUDENTS THAT MIGHT WANT TO BECOME A TEACHER?) Well, I wanted my daughter-in-law but she move to Hilo, and I wanted my daughter and she lived in San Diego. My daughter has a little



halau now in San Diego. It is "Ka Lei Nani Polynesian Islanders". She is a beautiful Tahitian dancer. She's a beautiful dancer. It is too bad years ago I did not put her up as Miss Aloha Hula in Hilo. She danced for Danny Kaleikini's show. She danced for the lu'au show there. She danced for my show at the Waikiki Resort for the past four years, then we moved down to Reef Hotel - we have a show there - and many, many places. She promoted Hawai'i with Aloha Airlines, Hawaiian Airlines. She has her own show. It consists of herself and two other girls. Three boys, and the musicians come from San Diego, and I go up and help her every now and then.

(YOU KNOW HULA HAS CHANGED. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF HULA KAHIKO TODAY?) As I said, that's why we have competition. Because of the competition it is changing. I know. I judge so many competitions, and they have when you choreograph your halau you are gonna do it like it is your own way. Like you see the Cazimeros changed a lot of things but that's their doing. You see Chinky Mahoe's group dancing different steps like Darrel Lupenui where he came from.

(DEFINE HULA KAHIKO.) I like it. I like the soft, the regular way, the old traditional way that we used to do it. (DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE CHANT?) Oh, yes. Aunty Edith Kanaka'ole's kahiko "Owaka Kalani Naue e ka Honua." I love that. I learned that from Aunty Edith Kanaka'ole and her

daughter Nalani up in a workshop in Kamehameha School. (DO YOU PREFER KAHIKO OR AUANA?) I love auana. That's me. I do kahiko in my shows - always the opening of the show. (KAHIKO WAS JUST REVIVED. WHEN YOU WERE LEARNING. . .) We didn't go too much in kahiko. You know, there's some parents that come to me, some children come to me, they cannot learn kahiko, you know? The parents don't want them to learn kahiko. And you'd be surprised - our own Hawaiians. They tell me, "I don't want my child to learn kahiko or chant," and I say, "Why?". They say, "Because of our religion." And I say, "But it's not a religion thing. It's not religious. We are not honoring our fire goddess or anybody else like how we honor our God. It's a different thing. This is our Hawaiian heritage. This child is Hawaiian and she should learn our Hawaiian heritage." I know it's not that easy to learn, but at least one like the simple one like Kawika for King David Kalakaua, Lili'u E. . . What's wrong? They don't want because of their religion. There's a lot of 'em.

(DO YOU THINK HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE IS IMPORTANT?) It is. It is very! Because I go to classes. I haven't been to classes for a while anyway. I love him dearly, Puakea Nogelmeier up Kamehameha Schools. When you learn the hula you have to learn a little Hawaiian, the simple words in Hawaiian. I have my children sit down for about 10 to 15

minutes and I tell them the different words in the song. What is "i lalo", "i luna". What is "ka'i". What is "mai". What is "ho'i". Because sometimes when you are at a show and the kids are stunned. You just say, "Keikis i lalo" or "i luna" or "Keikis ho'i" and boom, they're out. You don't want them to know what you are telling them. When we perform at the Hawaiiana show - so many times a month I perform there - and I did that one night and this lady came to me and says, "You know, your girls just stood up and they turned right around and they walked right out. What did you tell them?" I said, "I told my keikis to turn and go. I said just huli, ho'i and they went right out." Even I tell my ladies and my big girls. I give them the words and the meaning. I say, "If you folks are going to take it home and just put it in a drawer it's no sense I give you, because in my days my teachers never gave me any papers like this. We never did. We had to go out and do research. If we wanted to learn while we were dancing we had to listen to them good in here in our ears and go home and practice it and remember what they were doing. But today I am giving you folks the words. I stay up until late typing it. I take it down to the museum or to the bank and have it mimeographed and share it with you people and I cannot see you folks telling me it's home. If you don't know what you are dancing about, then how can you project." (DO YOU GIVE THEM TESTS?) Oh,



yeah. I give them verbal test. Everybody is together. I say, "Okay, you. Can you give me some mana'o on the first verse?" They look. Oh, they can say in Hawaiian what is the meaning? I say, "Put in your own words. It doesn't have to be the regular translation that I gave you," and they come out. Then one girl, "Who is the composer?" See, the most important things are the title and the composer, and I want them to know that a composer worked hard to make a mele so that I can teach and you folks can dance it. I said, "I want you folks to remember the composer." If there's a mele, there's a song that I don't really know the composer and I'll try to go out and do research. I just put it traditional then I research all my books. I go out to Bishop Museum. It's tradition. "But that's very important," I tell my girls, and every time when I am teaching I give them like half an hour and then I give them 5-10 break to study their meaning and then, at the end of the class, "All right. Put all the papers away. Stand right where you are. We gonna have a test. We gonna have a verbal test and the pu'iwa."

(TODAY WHEN YOU THINK OF HULA MASTERS, CAN YOU POINT OUT SOME PEOPLE YOU KNOW?) There are so many of them. I really cannot say that certain person is a master. You know, there's so many of them. (WHAT'S YOUR DEFINITION OF A MASTER?) To me a master of hula is a person not only good in Hawaiian. They're good in what they are doing in hula, in

music, how you act in the community, your personality. Because there are so many masters, you cannot say who is the best. There's so many out there.

(BESIDE HULA, WHAT DO YOU DO?) I am an entertainer. (AT BISHOP MUSEUM?) We have private lessons and then I run the show. I have my own show that I run at the Bishop Museum. My regular for the month is the Hawaiiana Hotel, the Willows, the Royal Hawaiian Shopping Center and the Bishop Museum, plus my halau. Then I travel a lot, too, for Hawai'i Visitor's Bureau promoting Hawai'i, so I'm quite busy.

(HAVE YOU SERVED AS A JUDGE BEFORE?) Oh, yeah. I judged two years for Keiki Hula and I judged two years for Merrie Monarch, San Francisco's "Ia 'Oe E Ka La," the Makahiki up in Waimea. I judged that for seven years. Seattle, Washington festival, the Kona competition - I judged that. (HOW DO YOU LIKE TO BE A JUDGE?) I love it. I love to be judge for the competitions because you see all different. . .you learn yourself and you'd be surprised what they do.

(RE: KUMU HULA) Today I think it's too many. It's getting ridiculous. Now, I don't mind if the person has taken hula for over 20 years, 15 to 20 years. Not 3, 4, 5 years because their halau won in a competition and they turn right around - boom - open their halau. I mean, that's their business

now, but I don't feel that way as an old timer in the business because there's so many things you have to learn and even the old timers downing the old timers and that's bad because everybody is different. Sometimes we are at a show and we are not competing. Now, because I know Auntie Hoakalei - I went to her, too, for a little lesson in chanting - we did a lovely show at the hotel for Aloha Week, and she forgot her pahu or her ipu heke. "Baby, give me your ukulele." That's impromptu, and if you're kumu and you're an entertainer you have to be flexible. I don't care who's around or what because I go through that. Even at the museum, sometimes I forget my ipu heke, I get my ukulele, I pounding away chanting because we are there and I cannot run downstairs to get an ipu or whatever. You have to...the show must go on. So there's nobody in their right mind can say, "Oh, you know, I saw you doing this chant with an ipu." Was I in a competition that time? This girl was telling another person. I said, "You know what? Was he in a competition that time?" "No." I say, "Then you have no right to be saying that." "Oh, but Auntie Kealoha..." "I'm sorry." When you are competing then it's a different story. Like they have to have shoes on. Before, in our days, we don't wear shoes, but now you don't want to be all dressed up with these beautiful old fashioned...what the girls are making today. You wouldn't want to go to the Royal barefooted in this



beautiful outfit. Because of competition you have to wear shoes. If you have to you have to. We used to wear tabis. Do you realize that? We used to wear tabis on the shows. Uncle Joseph Kahaulilio and Aunty Maiki used to be in our show at the Moana Hotel. We weren't criticized about it. No way somebody can criticize us about that because it is a show we are putting on. When you put on a show and competition that is two different things. You put in your show the way you feel you have to do it. The show must go on, so you use whatever means you have. An entertainer is an entertainer. An entertainer is different from the person who has to sing and play instrument, emcee the dance, the hula. You have to do everything. A musician is a plain musician. A dancer is a dancer. Even if we've been in the business over 25 or 30 years we still learning. So the kumus who... well, we never called ourselves kumu before. We always say "hula instructor" or "hula teacher." As I say again, it is because of this competition. Everybody is a kumu hula nowadays. To me, a kumu hula is a person where you've been in the business over 20 years, over 25 years. You have worked for it. You have paid your dues. People go away. I know some people that went away to the mainland and I never thought them as entertainers here before nor dancers, but today they have their own halaus in the mainland. To each his own.

(WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT WORKSHOPS?) Oh, I love it. But then, too, I went to two or three workshops before and I find that everybody is learning the same thing where you have to teach that in your own halau or you are going to bring it back to your students, like "Owaka Kalani". That I learned from Aunty Edith. And thank goodness I haven't seen anybody else do it yet. But I remember Kaulana was in that class. Mapuana de Silva. So I guess they are keeping that on their own, or maybe they are just composing their own chants and things like that. I did it at our Bishop Museum Festival a couple of times. Darrel Lupenui, I remember he came on after me and he says, "Kealoha, can I have the words and the meanings," and it's too bad I didn't have enough time to give it to him or I didn't hear from him after that and things like that. But he asked me for it. He says, "I think it's so beautiful." (WORKSHOPS. WHAT KIND? FOR INSTRUCTOR OR STUDENTS?) The workshop should be for kumus - you know, for hula instructors - in the chants, in the kahikos. And I don't like to go into deep kind of kahikos. I like the regular nice ones. "Aia la o Pele", "Owaka ka lani", "Kaulilua" - I love that. It should be something where whoever's teaching should bring in a lot of Hawaiian words, Hawaiian meanings, instead of teaching all of us the same. . .well, I guess that's the workshop. You gonna learn the same thing. Everybody's gonna learn the same. (DO

YOU HAVE SOMEBODY THAT YOU LOOK UP TO FOR WORKSHOP?) When I went to the first workshop - and I love Auntie Sally Wood- I went to her and I loved her. I really liked her. And then the second time I went to Auntie Edith Kanaka'ole. To me it is good to go to different people. I wouldn't say a certain person is the person that I want to go to because they picked - they put so many of us in the group. But so many of us...like they say, "10 of you going to her, 10 of you going..." Okay, you couldn't pick what teachers we want and I don't think that's right. I'd rather choose. I'd rather see who's the instructor and go to that person. (DO YOU LIKE TO INCLUDE LANGUAGE INTO WORKSHOPS TOO?) Yeah.

(DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING SPECIAL TO SAY?) As I say, I've entertained for many years. I think over 30 years and... (WERE YOUR PARENTS ENTERTAINERS?) My mom, my mother, Mrs. Virginia Kalama. And of course my dad, too. My dad used to sing a lot at home all his Kohala songs because he is from Hawai'i, Kohala - Kohala, Hawai'i. My dad was raised there, born and raised there. The Kalamas. And my mom was born in Kane'ohe. They loved music. I guess in all us Hawaiians, we loved...we had piano down to bass. (ONLY YOU WENT INTO THE ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS?) No. I have a sister, Puanani, Rosella. Rosella Puanani Akiona. And she is with the Royal Hawaiian Band. And she is also with the hula



Hawaiian Hut show for the past ten years, and during the day she is a State Farm Insurance Agent, secretary agent. She's a singer with me on my last album that I made. And then my sister Pearl used to dance for. . . my sister Pearl was a dancer. She's a dancer, too. Pearl Stevens. My sister Pearl Leimomi Stevens, I want to put her name in to give her a little break. She danced at the Waikiki Sands with John Pi'ilani Watkins, too. And my kid sister Jackie Kehaulani Maynard, she danced for Kent Girard many years professionally at the Moana Hotel and many other hotels, and she lives in Provo, Utah now. Granger - I'm sorry. I'm sorry - Granger, Utah, and she's with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. And my oldest brother, he was an entertainer, too. He also sings. All of them. My oldest brother made a little small. . . (HOW MANY CHILDREN DO YOU HAVE?) I had three - two boys and a girl. And all of them entertain. They all entertain with me at my show. And my daughter is Jewel Kaleinani, and my son Raymond. Sydney, my oldest boy and then Raymond. (SO YOUR DAUGHTER BEEN IN SAN DIEGO HOW LONG?) Six years. And her little girl is Julianne. Her little girl is also Kaleinani. Julianne Kaleinani is also a dancer. She's fantastic. Of course, she comes here every summer and I train her. And she goes to Kamehameha School every summer, and I train her. She sings, she dances, she plays the piano now.

My daughter learned under Puanani Alama and myself, but I was the one that started her. But you know, with your own children, they don't wanna learn from you and they cry in the corner. My baby took hula from Puanani for about a year or two. And then she came back to me. Then she said, "All right, mom." She started professionally at about 14 years old. (HOW ABOUT IN YOUR MARRIAGE? HOW YOUR HUSBAND TOOK YOUR ENTER. .  
\*\*\*END OF TAPE\*\*\*) This is my second, very helpful. He is my right one.