

Nana I Na Loea Hula  
Kumu Hula: Leilani Bond  
Interviewer: Lovina Le Pendu  
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(YOUR NAME FOR THE BOOK?) Leilani Rivera Bond. (RIVERA IS WHAT?) It's my maiden name. (DO YOU TEACH RIGHT NOW?) Yah. (WHERE DO YOU TEACH?) I teach at Wailua. (IT IS AT HOME?) I used to teach at home, but I teach now at the Kaua'i Beach Boy Hotel in a big... (DO YOU RENT FROM THERE?) No, what we do is they lend me the place and all I do is a free hula show every other Wednesday for them, and I also teach out at Poipu, Keahona Shopping Village once a week and I do a show out there at Keahona Shopping Village. (AND THE KIDS FROM POIPU ARE DIFFERENT FROM HERE?) Yah. (NAME FOR YOU HALAU?) Leilani's Keiki Hula Halau. And the reason why I came up with Leilani's Keiki Hula Halau is because of the children. I taught 5 little girls that were my friends children and they loved the hula and I preformed with my dad Larry Rivera and I used to have them preform too, and just for fund, this is when I was young, younger. I think I was 18 years old and my hula comes from way back when I was 3 years old, can I start from there.

(CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT AGE YOU STARTED HULA?) 3 years old. (WHO WAS YOUR TEACHER?) Okay, my teacher was Ku'ulei Punua, I also preformed with her and my parents and her were really good friends, so I used to sleep her house. And her daughter, Penny Punua, her and I, here on Kauai we went to Ku'ulei's house, her home to learn the hula and her daughter and I were buddies. We grew up in hula together and I slept her house and I was part of her family and my family background. We have a lot of entertainers, my aunties and uncles, my Aunt Leolani, her English name is Agnus Rivera, she taught hula, mostly to the tourists though and some local friends. And my Uncle Ernie Menihune and the Waikiki Twins, he used to preform out at Vegas, Tahoe and all those other places. My uncles, they all play music and their sisters,

my grandma used to play the ukulele. My father is Larry Rivera, he now performs at Koko Palms Hotel, he's been there for 40 years, longest running show in the islands I guess. And through him he played musical instruments, he influenced us a lot in the Hawaiian culture, so we learned a lot from just seeing. I sat on the side of the stage and watched my father perform and so did my brothers and sisters. I come from 3 boys and 3 girls, boy, girl, boy, girl all the way down, so my mom was quit busy with us and my dad did the shows and he worked all day, he played music. At Koko Palms, they had an Ohana there, they all played music, sang, danced, the waitresses, bus boys, who ever. Every worker there did a show to, so I watched and as I watched I loved it each time I watched. The music, the dancers, and the fun that they had at that time and then I took hula with Auntie Ku'uilei and we were with their family and again I was influenced through their families. So with my father and Auntie Ku'uilei, I was influenced tremendously with the hula and the music, so I stayed with Ku'uilei for 16 years, till I graduated in High School. Now, I also met, you see Auntie Ku'uilei I guess Iolani Luahine was her kumu and she had another, Auntie Maiki and another, so I saw Auntie Iolani perform here on Kauai and in fact she did dance at Koko Palms. Her and her alaka'i, they danced at Koko Palms and she would chant for ours, just kahiko and her alaka'i and I saw her on stage at the convention hall. (DID YOU PERFORM WITH IOLANI?) No, I saw her dance on stage at the Kauai War Memorial Convention Hall and it was so beautiful the way she would uehe all the way across the stage at an old age. I don't remember how old she was, it could've been past her 60's. When did she die? (70'S) Must have been around 60's, she was really old and she danced and I really admired her as a young girl. I sent her a letter to her asking if I could learn from her, it was impossible, but when I was in grade school, St. Cathrine School, at second grade, I wanted to become a hula teacher and at that young age like that you don't think about those things, but I wanted to be one and when I was in the 6th grade, I did a hula show for my teacher that was going away of course.

It was a mumble jumble kind right and then as I went through school, I never sang before never thought I'd play the instruments, but my dad would lay out all the instruments. You know the guitar, ukulele and hula implements. In fact, they bought me a guitar at 16, never touched it until 18, but I hung around a lot of people who sang and played the music and I admired, and I went into a choir at Kapa'a High School with Renee Thronus. Sang in her choir and I didn't know why I wanted to enter the choir, but I said, gee I want to sing and all my friends sung and played the guitar. From then we had rock-n-roll music that's what we played rock-n-roll and my parents said you know you have to learn Hawaiian music. So they kept pounding that into me at a young age you don't think about the future, but yet I wanted to have, I wanted to become a hula teacher at a young age in second grade, today, I never thought I'd become one, because of the 5 little girls.

(HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN YOU TAUGHT THOSE 5 LITTLE GIRLS?) Actually, I started very young, not just with them. I taught in my dad's show. I was taking hula with Aunty Ku'ulei and my father had his own show and as I grew into the hula, my father said, why are my daughters with her only and I have my show. I need my family with me, that's how he brought us into his show. As we grew up and as we preformed with Aunty Ku'ulei too, but family is first, so we did with my father. So, I taught as I grew up. I taught the girls at a young age of I think was 11,12, you know teaching, teaching dances and of course you make all of your mistakes dancing, the do's and don'ts.

(AFTER AUNTY KU'ULEI, YOU WENT ON YOUR OWN OR YOU LEARNED WITH SOMEONE ELSE?) I went on. Oh, Aunty Sara Kailikea, I took private lesson with her while I was with Aunty Ku'ulei, because she was good friends with my father and Grace Guslander at Koko Palms and she wanted to teach me kahiko. So my parents said it would be good to learn from her too, and so I took some from Aunty Sara. She taught me a chant that was in honor of Grace

Guslander, "Wahine Huakea" was the name of the chant and that chant was given to me and my sister and it was kapu to do it anywhere else but Koko Palms, to honor Grace Guslander. She was the general manager, the owner of Koko Palms. She's the lady that made Koko Palms what it is today and also worked for... (WHO WROTE THE SONG FOR HER?) Sara Kailikea and it was a hula noho, so we did that for Grace Gunslinger's birthday. We honor her every year at Koko Palms.

(DID YOU TAKE FROM OTHER KUMU TOO?) Yes. I took from, I just took workshops. I took workshops with Uncle George Naope, Vicky Takamine and also took hula kahiko with Willy Pulawa and I heard he was good in kahiko and he inspired me a lot with kahiko. (WHEN YOU TOOK WITH WILLY PULAWA, IN KAUAI?) Yah, he was here in Kauai. He was new to the island, he had a halau, he was new. I just started my halau and I needed to have more confidence in teaching kahiko although you learn as a child, the difference with the ancient kinds, you have to learn every single thing, but now days environment is so different. You are involved with your school activities and all that so it's hard, you can't learn everything so I wanted to encourage myself and give myself self confidence to teach my students and I just had a little group of girls after those 5 girls. And the little, Aunty, please teach again. Because I stopped for a while, got busy, got married, and I said 1980 my daughter was born and this little girl comes to me and asks me when are you going to teach again. So I said, let me see what I can do. So, I said, okay, let's start it up, I cannot, this is what I love to do. Teaching hula and I don't know as much as the other kumu did and I said but the child doesn't know more than I do. So that's why I taught hula because of this one little girl and my children's sake and my sake. This is the only thing that I really love to do and all the jobs I did, I worked at Koko Palms, for many years. I first started off as a bus girl at my fathers shop the earl of.. and I worked my way up to guest activities/social hostess and I've been working for, let's see, I've been working for, started July 13 and I ended my job there August 1987. '74 to '87 I worked at Koko Palms, but it all tied in

with hula because the job as guest activities means you get to teach people hula, lei making and any kind of Hawaiian Culture and arts. Having my daughter, she learned the same way I did, that's from the side of the stage watching us at 1 year old. And all my children, I have 5 children now. Four girls and one boy, all danced, my youngest is one and she loves hula. I named her Leilani, Arial Leilani Keonapualani and hoping that she'll be the last to take care of the halau with her name Leilani and...

(WILLY PULAWA, HOW LONG DID YOU STAY WITH HIM?) Just for a year, a little over a year, it was so much fun being the haumana again at an older age because I realize how much more there is to hula, and I saw, a lot of things, I didn't see before as a young child because a lot of times you stray off. You just love to dance and get up there, but then you forget sometime what you are there for because it was a lot of fun back then, but he, I enjoyed. That was in 1982. Then in 1983, he entered me in a hula kahiko solo division contest. It was called Kawahine.. of I target. I was a dancer and he chanted for me and I took second place and as a child we never had Keiki Hula Competitions we preformed at community functions. You know Aloha Week, Kamehameha, that was a highlight for us and those days to me were really good because you don't go out there just to dance for money, but you go out there and dance because you love the hula, and the life that comes out of it, that's why I make it my life, to teach the hula. I can to college and work my way up to become a doctor or something, but I thought that hula was my place.

(YOU DIDN'T UNIKI FROM ANY OF THESE PEOPLE?) No, see at that time they didn't do that. Because of our religion, you cannot do that, my parents wouldn't allow that, so I just have to go with whatever my life lead me to and I studied up on all that. (THE PURPOSE THEN WASN'T TO GET A CERTIFICATE, IT WAS JUST TO ENJOY AND ENTERTAIN?) Yah, entertainment, enjoyment and the tourism came and we did a lot of entertainment. (DO YOU THINK THAT UNIKI

IS IMPORTANT IN HULA?) Yes. Now I've been teaching for 11 years and I really wish that I did uniki. It's important because you need to know so many things, at least the basics. You need to know how you make the implements, the leis and all that you need to know. You need to have the experience. Hula with different kinds of people it's important I think, that's why I'm going to go back to Auntie Ku'uilei, to my source and say help me. In fact I did see her several months ago and she said when I'm ready, come back and we'll talk about it and we'll see what she can do for me, because I feel that part is missing and I feel so terrible, I feel terrible.

(HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT HULA TODAY?) Hula changed a lot. In my days of training hula was very simple. Now days everything is how fancy you can get and it's changing. Simple to where they're not trying to impress, they're trying to express and now days everyone is trying to impress how beautiful they are or something, but not everyone is that way, you can see that in some halau. (HULA KAHIKO, CHANGED?) In some halau, in some halau, no. The old timers they still stay with they're.. it's hard for me to remember all my dances with Auntie Ku'uilei because it's been many years now I just create my own dances and kahiko and now is different. (TRANSLATE WHAT YOU THINK IS HULA KAHIKO?) Again, hula kahiko, they're ancient hulas. It's a spiritual expression from within and to me a good feeling of feeling Hawaiian, feeling from way back then, an ancient feeling is what I get from kahiko. And it was simple back then an ancient feeling is what I get from kahiko and it was simple back then, but it was also hush, hush too. Nobody would tell you exactly what it was, they just say dance this motion and that's it. I couldn't ask give me the words for it. Now days they give you the words and the translation, back then they didn't explain what this means, what that means and all I did was show and follow. Now I express because of my experiences learning. I wanted to know as a child, I wanted to know what this chant means. I'm saying the right words, and I wasn't taught that sorry to say. I wasn't taught.. you have to follow and you can't ask any questions. Just do it

and that's it. Now I teach my children. I tell them okay the words are important. I explain to them this word means. I don't speak Hawaiian language fluently, but I understand and I do research on every song and chant that I teach. (DO YOU DO THE RESEARCH YOURSELF OR DO YOU GIVE TO THE CHILDREN?) Well, I do it myself and I teach the children and I tell a story about the song and the meaning for each motion that they do. They'll ask why this motion is that and I'll tell them exactly. This word means the word and that's why you have to do it on the word. You cannot point your finger oi, and point it later and the word comes out oi.

(DO YOU PREFER KAHIKO OR AUANA?) It's hard to.. I love both kahiko and auana. I love to be serious in my dances and I like ai ha'a. I like the strength of kahiko, so a lot of times when we compete, my students do fast dances and Pele. (WHEN YOU TEACH TODAY, WHAT STYLE DO YOU USE, WHICH TEACHER?) My kumu told me my style has changed and she wants to get back together with me too on that, but I feel that hula is creating. That you create. I always create because of how I feel inside and I create my motion and when everybody smiles. I say yah and it makes me feel good that they are enjoying the feeling that I have. (KAHIKO AND AUANA, YOU CREATE YOUR OWN?) Yah, all my kahiko and auana unless there is some hula that I remember with Auntie Ku'uilei, then I'll show them. And it was very simple at that time so I'm trying to be creative. Something like "Beautiful Kaua'i" that you learn from your kumu, you want to teach you halau and songs that are of now days I create my own. (THE KAHIKO YOU LEARN YOU TRY TO KEEP THE SAME?) Yah, I try to, but it's hard to remember at a young age. I got distracted a lot to because again the environment now days that we have for the children, the t.v., rock-n-roll, it's hard. A child today will have a hard time trying to love the hula and as a kumu you have to bring that out too. You have to let them know I'm depending on you and I tell my children I depend on you, all of you girls to learn what we have now and carry this on because if you don't then who will and hula will die. And I said do you want hula to die and they said no, and I said,

well, we have to carry on and to the best we can weather it's simple that's how to do the hula or a very hard song. You have to do the best you can because it makes a difference in your attitude you have to have a good attitude in hula. You have to be humble, you cannot, I don't want to see anyone with a black heart, it means so much to me that people can be loyal and humble in your halau and especially you don't forget where you come from. But the family too, sometimes when they come from a bad family and they come into your halau, you have bad experiences. It's hard to cope with and people can be very mean, but that's because the family. The child is innocent. That's the only bad experience was this one year, I think it was 1987, were people wanted to glorify their daughters and they were kind of brand new to my halau and the old timers were all wow what's going on. The parents have to influence, like my parents have to influence me. Auntie Ku'uilei did.

(DO YOU THINK THAT LANGUAGE IS IMPORTANT?) Yah, very important and again, I don't speak fluent, I understand the language when I do go into my songs, I learn through my songs. I went to Kauai Community College to take up Hawaiian Language and that was when I think I was 18, right out of High School and of course sometimes you can get lost at a single age, don't know what you want to do and then I got married at a young age. And had children after children so the only way I could do it, I couldn't go to school and I wanted to go to New Zealand. I wanted to go to Tahiti. I wanted to go to Honolulu. I wanted to learn, but again I felt that my father needed help and if I left him, nobody would help him with the teaching, carrying on so I stayed with my father and everybody else left. My brothers and sisters because they were all entertainers. My brother played the base, my sisters danced and I always did the lead in the show and choreographed the dances and the costumes.

(IN YOUR FAMILY, YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE THAT TEACHES HULA?) Well, my brothers still play music, he's in Boston now. And my middle sister is teaching little girls at the school,

that's about it. My dad is still at the hotel. (DO YOU STILL PERFORM WITH HIM?) Oh, yah.

Well, see I've been doing my shows at Keahona Shopping Village. I started doing hula shows, that was, it's been over 5 years at the shopping center once a week. And I teach my classes and then I did shows at the Kauai Resort Hotel for about 4 1/2 years and that recently stopped. The hotel went bankrupt, they weren't doing very good at the hotel, so they cut off all entertainment, so now I just perform with my father and Lee Dancer's sing. Teach the girls and do private shows. I do my hula.

(HOW MANY CHILDREN IN YOUR HALAU?) Almost 100. (KEEPS YOU BUSY?) Yah.

(HOW OFTEN DO YOU HAVE CLASSES?) Every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Then I leave Friday, Saturday and Sunday off, because the people want to be with their families.

Friday nights they're too busy so I teach on those days. (ALL CHILDREN OR ADULTS TOO?) I have ages 3 to over 55. All ages. (THEY ALL LEARN KAHIKO AND AUANA?) Well, mostly the young girls do everything. The adults would do just hula auana and kahiko, mostly auana, just for fun. (FOR AUANA YOU PLAY INSTRUMENTS YOURSELF?) Yah, I play the guitar and I dance for them first. I show them the moves and explain to them about the song and then I get them to dance by themselves.

(YOU ENTER MANY COMPETITIONS?) Yes. In many competitions. (DO YOU ENTER FOR YOURSELF OR DO THE CHILDREN DEMAND IT?) Well, the children want to. Let me see we started off, my first competition was in 1983 when I entered as a soloist with Willie Pulawa and then I went up to San Francisco and we won 1st place in auana as a dance. I was a dancer with this group of girls they put together and we went and we had so much fun. Then in '83 we did a lot of community competitions and shows. (HERE IN KAUA'I?) Yah, like Kamehameha Floats, we used to get involved in floats. The shows, then in '85 we took the Queen Lili'uokalani Keiki Hula Competition 1st place in the Mary Kawena Pukui language award and I was stunned

because I didn't even try to win that award and won. I was really surprised to win and it really encouraged me. I was really surprised, very honored. (WHEN YOU TEACH THE CHILDREN, DO YOU TEACH THEM IN HAWAIIAN?) Mix. I teach them English but I also talk to them in Hawaiian, I sit them down. As beginners, I sit them down and they do hula noho just hand gestures. Like show me pua and they would show me pua anuini. You know all the hand motions for hula. (DID YOU ENTER SOME COMPETITIONS IN KAUA'I TOO?) 1985 we didn't take first place that was the first time we entered the Queen Lili'uokalani Keiki Hula in 1986. We took first place in the Hawaiian Language Perpetual Award and one of my solo dancers, Floyd Esponosa, he took second runner up. And '86, we entered the Waihe'e Hula Competition, that was held at the Kapa'a Ball Park, so we took first place in the group auana on our island. And '86 again, September 27, we had the Aloha Week Keiki Hula Competition and we took first, second, and third place which was surprising. We took all three places. This competition we had a team. One team consists of one kahiko dancer and one auana dancer and they have to put both point together in order to win. So they combined the points so we took top honors that year. In fact Wendell Silva was a judge, George Holokai, Winona Beamer were judging that year and I was so happy to win. '87 we took first place again and of course we entered the yearly Christmas Parade. Took some honors there. 1988, my daughter Kamalani, she took Little Miss Coconut Coast and Aloha Week she took second place. This October 16, 1988 and 1989, we took first runner up Aloha Week again. I give credit to my husband too, for putting up with what I have to do and it's so hard and also my daughter, my step daughter, his daughter helped me out plenty when I was teaching. She also learned how to dance the hula and today she is a very good dancer.

(BESIDES HULA, DO YOU DO OTHER THINGS HERE?) Teach hula, so shows, raise my family. (DO THEY DO THEIR OWN INSTRUMENTS AND COSTUMES?) Yah, we work together to make leis, make your hula skirt, Tahitian outfit. I do Polynesian dances too. Maori, Tahitian,

but I stick more to hula, auana and kahiko. (DO YOU INVOLVE THAT IN HULA TEACHING OR DO YOU HAVE SEPARATE CLASSES?) That's outside of my classes. We do it on our free time, what free time. (THE STUDENTS LEARN ALL DIFFERENT SHOWS, OR YOU HAVE DIFFERENT STUDENTS?) Well, if they knew their songs, they could dance it, they have their costumes made, they know their songs, they dance, but if they're not going to be responsible, then that means that they really don't care. So, they just have to work. If they want to be there, they're going to be there. They don't they're not going to be there. They have to get their costumes and dances together. I do help them a lot. If they don't have something, I will help them out if I can.

(WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT HULA TODAY?) It's really hard question, but I think it'll grow if we as a kumu will teach correctly and do the best we can to encourage the children and make them see clear what's going on. Because as a child, I know I wanted to teach and I know I loved the hula but I didn't really see clear enough until I grew up and then I saw how much I missed and yet I was really in tune. And I wanted this and I wanted that to do that and I guess you cannot learn everything. (WHO DO YOU CONSIDER A HULA MASTER?) Well, Uncle George, Auntie lolani Luahine was my number one. I always admired her ways of dancing and chanting. And Auntie Sara Kaiwikea, I loved them because they were of the old time, they were real to me, they weren't just entertainers, they were real, real people, kamaka maoli.

(SOMETHING SPECIAL IN THE BOOK THAT PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT?) (ABOUT HULA, HOW YOU FEEL, HOW IT SHOULD BE, HOW YOU FEEL AS A TEACHER FOR THE CHILDREN?) For me, I would be happy and content to see a student love the hula as much as I do. When I see that in a student, it makes me feel complete and satisfied with this student because she loves what she's doing and keeping up with her responsibilities and being very humble at the same time. Because a lot of times girls will get up there and dance because they look beautiful, and it doesn't come from the outside, it comes from within the hula. That is what I feel about the hula,

that it comes from within and that we should share and see if we can bring that feeling to that person that is watching you and hope that they can learn what you are feeling.