

Nana I Na Loea Hula
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AT WHAT AGE DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN HULA? That is an interesting question for me because I was born and raised in Kalihi (Kam 4th Road) and my tutu, my grandparents, had a great deal to do with how I am today. My tutu is pure Hawaiian. She's from Maui and came here with my grandfather and they settled here. She was very involved in doing things in the old ways. Hawaiian was spoken in my home. It was always spoken in the kitchen. It is something you heard all the time. Things like cleaning lauhala and quilting and feather work, we were around all the time. I was fortunate because I always felt Hawaiian. It was taken for granted. A lot of young people are looking for roots. But I was fortunate because it was something always around me. Hawaiian music was always on. The ukulele, everything. I would say that my grandparents were very strict about how things were done. There weren't always reasons for things. We just trusted them. We didn't say why. She took me to a friend when I was really young and it was just myself. I learned hula that way. When I wanted to learn about the uli'uli or things like that, she would take me to get one and learn how to use it. A lot of that beginning hula, it was done through the family. I think I always had a dream that one day I would learn traditional hula because it was something that we saw. I remember trying to beat out the beats on the back of the ukulele. I got in so much trouble. But I used to listen. I used to think there was something they're doing with their fingers. It was always around. It was always around. It wasn't something that you had to go anywhere. YOUR GRANDMOTHER KNEW HOW TO DANCE? Her father knew how to dance. Her tutu, Mamali, knew how to chant and had hula kapu. She didn't talk very much until later years and I got interested in traditional hula. So for her, hula was kapu. But as I became more interested in it, I think it made her very happy. She would share stories about how her father made his ti leaf skirt. When I was making my ti leaf skirt, it had to be a certain length and everything had to be stripped to the finest and everything was even. She said, "oh, it's so neat. My father just took the ti leaves off and made the skirt, dipped in the water and hung it on the lanai until it was time to use it." She shared those stories with me later. My tutu always emphasize that you have to learn to be humble. You don't go and talk about things. You learn them. You watch, you look, you

listen and you learn and that's how you do it. She had the greatest affect on me as far as my interest in pursuing anything in the arts. She did say to me that hula was one thing that was still living that had come and not stop. It was continuum. It was still alive. That it was important that we take care of it. WHEN DID YOU START YOUR FORMAL LESSONS? In traditional hula, I started with Kaha'i Topolinski in 1981. Ka Pa Hula Hawai'i. I was already in my thirties and I went to just learn. I really had no dreams of becoming a kumu hula. I was a teacher. I always taught hula in schools. I did the May Day program for the DOE. I taught hula but I never taught traditional hula. I taught the things that I had learned growing up. But that was one area that I didn't delve into because I knew there were certain things that you had to know before you did it. ABOUT KAHAI'S CLASSES. It was once a week for an hour. He taught the basics steps. We started in September and we did steps until April. Then we learned a hula noho. Basically the first year in hula was only steps. There was no movement in the top part of the body. It was very strenuous. We started with 75 students and within a month it was down to 30 and by Christmas it was down to 15. I for myself enjoyed that because once the steps were done you didn't have to think about it anymore. DID HE TEACH YOU TRADITIONAL CLASSICAL DANCES? We didn't do Pele dances. He did a lot of his family chants. I think the men did more of the staple numbers. The women did a lot of his family chants. I learned Ko'olau Au from somebody else after I graduated. He just went with how he wanted to teach. If you asking if the students know these numbers by the first or second year, no. Those traditional numbers, we are fortunate because you have workshops. It has filled a very big gap. HOW DID YOU FIND THIS HALAU? I met a person and after talking I said that I always wanted to take hula. He said, come to my halau, it's terrific, any age. And that's why I went. I didn't know anything about him. It was through a friend who said it we have all ages, all culture, it didn't matter what race, age you are, if you're young or old. WHAT ABOUT HIS STYLE? I really enjoyed his style. It was very flowing. Seems to be parameters of which he did not cross. There was a definite, you could see what was tradition for him. He was very good about saying where he got things from. This step is from Henry Pa. He was try to identify where he got the steps. I appreciated that. That was something that I enjoyed. I don't think that his style is easy to learn. You have to practice more than just going to hula, you have to practice at home to get it. There was something about it that took a lot of practice. The waves. So many waves. The hand waves. Not one wave. Different kinds of waves. The feet work and the hands. The teaching of the alaka'i was important to

that halau. DID HE TEACH ALL THE CLASSES? He did or his alaka'i. WHO TAUGHT YOUR CLASS? Doreen. Haunani Judd, Joan Mankey. They were the alaka'i when I started. I was elevated three years later to alaka'i. And actually felt that I still needed dancing; I had no idea why to be alaka'i. I enjoyed working with students. WERE THERE REQUIREMENTS TO BECOMING AN ALAKA'I, HOW DID HE DETERMINE WHO WOULD BECOME AN ALAKA'I? It happened at hula practice. He asked everybody to leave the room. He called me in. I was a little reluctant because I was happy being a dancer. WHAT WERE THE DUTIES? I had to just observe and get used to being an alaka'i. I felt that that was pretty fast elevation for me. I just had been elevated to senior dancer right before. He has levels of dancers. Novice, Advanced novice, Junior, and Senior Dancer. Right after that he elevated me to alaka'i. The most important thing in mind was to dance as best as I could because the students were watching. You have to be at all the classes. You had to go to a meeting every week because he had meetings every week. You had to be present for all the hula classes that he taught. And if he taught night classes, you were there too. There were times that there were very few nights that I was home. HOW LONG TO KUMU. I was an alaka'i for eight years. I graduated eleven years after I started in 1992. WHEN DID YOU REALIZE THAT YOU WERE TRAINING TO BE A KUMU. None. Being part of, helping the halau. There is so much to do. That needs to be done in a halau that size. I used to take of the roll and tuition. DID HE ASK YOU TO TEACH. You have to go on if he wasn't there, you teach and after watching you know exactly, you have your warmup and you continue what was done the previous week. I know I did translations for him. Help instruct instruments classes in making instruments. There's a wide of range of things that you do: if he wants instrument making he'll assign to alaka'i. You instruct the students on how to make instrument. SPECIAL MEMORIES. I do about the students. I met a lot of special people who were drawn to traditional hula for many different reasons but who in my eyes came to have fun. That's not your halau, you are just part of the workings. I still see some of my friends, they still dance. That is a really nice thing that I remember about the halau and still say hello to many of my friends. And the alaka'i now were dancers when I was there. TELL ABOUT YOUR UNIKI OR GRADUATION CEREMONY. We had huelepo. He called it huelepo. For myself, he was having a special anniversary, Kalani and I had a very public presentation of our leis and our kihei. When he did release me, he told me to go on. So I've tried to. WAS IT PUBLIC, DID YOU DANCE. No. I chanted at that day because it was an anniversary. And I didn't know kumu was

going to do this, presented a certificate. It was a total surprise. He publicly announced that we had been released from the halau that we had graduated as kumu. That was a big surprise for me. I was not aware that he was going to do that, but he likes that. When I was in the halau as a alaka'i, you learned everything, you learned about costumes, you learned instruments, chanting. He was the one who pushed me into chanting. I was taking chant from Kalani (Akana). He told me to go to the museum to learn and I did. I was in the chant competition. Chanting was one thing I felt really comfortable with. More so than even dancing. I found a place I could feel like at home. The kind of mele that we did, the traditional Hawaiian. It's different. Because when I was young, I asked tutu to teach me how to write Hawaiian and she told me to get that book. I brought it to her. Of course I knew it was the Bible. This is where you learn to write. If you read the Bible, you see, it's old and that's how she taught. It different from the formal Hawaiian that is being taught. Language has a great to do with what's happening to traditional hula. WAS IT EASIER TO LEARN HOW TO CHANT BECAUSE YOU KNEW THE LANGUAGE. Yes, the sounding of it. I had to practice for a long time, but I found that it was very comfortable. GREATEST INFLUENCE. My grandmother, my tutu. She was the one who affected everything that I did. If I didn't feel that I was doing well enough, I could always go to her. She would have something good to say to make me feel better. She influenced my life the greatest; how I think, what my values are, what I think is important. WAS SHE STILL ALIVE WHEN YOU WERE TAKING LESSONS. Yes. I went back to her for help. I can't do this, I don't know how to do this. She would tell me to shift my weight here. Because she saw it. Her father danced hula. She said shift my weight. That's all I had to do. She would tell me I would be fine. She helped me make my skirts. She helped me make my leis. When I make kahili, she would help me tie all the feathers together. When I make uli'uli or ipu heke, she would always watch. There was this one time I was making this one ipu heke. I had found the bottom gourd and I waited three years to find the top. I found the top and I put it together and I couldn't believe it because the bottom gourd had such a beautiful kani but it just went "thunk". And I was so sad. I told her tutu that I waited so long to make this. She said open up the mouth. I said but the instructions are.... only four inches. She said, if I don't open my mouth you can't hear me. So I open the mouth and I still use that ipu today. You'll be surprised what your tutu knows but may not say until the time comes. It's common sense. I was lucky to have her. WHAT MADE YOU PERSEVERE. There was something about hula that me feel good. I felt good when I was with my fellow

hula students. There was a great deal of pleasure in learning the traditions that were being taught to us. I enjoyed that; the hula part. There was a lot of other business part. I perservered in hula because I felt very much enjoyed it. I totally enjoyed. It wasn't easy. HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE YOUR HULA STYLE?

Whatever song that was taught to us, we will try to pass it on exactly how we were taught. I just did 'olapa with Kaha'i. Although he did teach 'auana, I just did 'olapa. I was alaka'i only for his 'olapa class. He set a foundation for me. I'm very aware of my parameters of how far I can go to stay within traditional hula. When I learn a dance from another kumu, workshop or whatever, I try to do it exactly like they show it. My hula style, like I said, what kumu has taught us, I try to teach it like that. What other teachers had taught us, we try to teach it like that. If it is something we are creating we try to stay within the parameters that he created for us. There are boundaries. For myself, I think I always keep this in mind. The mele is the most important part; the poetry, the chant, the words are the most important part. And the dance is a part of it but the most important part are the words. There aren't that many native speakers and I think because of that, hula has changed. I think that has made a direct affect on traditional hula. The lost of the language. Because people didn't know the language, I feel traditional hula changed because of it., You listen to Mrs. Bacon describing her hula, very simple, simple, almost dull. It's the words that were most important. For Doreen and I, we try to keep that in our mind. How can you overshadow the most important part. The word. It has to be clear. The person has to be able to hear them. Keeping that in mind, we try to stay within the parameter but our base comes from our teacher. OTHER

TEACHERS OR WORKSHOPS? Mainly through workshops that we attended. Certainly all in the last twelve years, we've gone to every one that was offered by Kalihi-Palama. We've taught all of those hulas just as we were taught. We were lucky. We started taking those workshops when we were just instructors and we wanted to teach them until we graduated. TELL ABOUT YOUR HULA CLASSES, NAME OF HALAU, LOCATION. I was released from Ka Pa Hula Hawai'i in August 1992 and in September, I walked around the neighborhood and left flyers in the mailboxes and I had seven young ladies come to take hula. That's how I started and I teach at home in Kahala. I was so thrilled that anybody came. I was really thrilled that I had a class. That was the begining of the halau. It begins it's fifth year this year. It's grown slowly. We don't advertise. We're not a commercial halau. We don't do fundraising. Whatever the kids pay tuition which is \$20, we use for their costumes or any instruments. It provides us with enough money to pay for the

year. The neighborhood I live in is very supportive. We have classes and they seem to enjoy the drums at night. Very nice people in the neighborhood. They know we try to service the neighborhood. Also, this will be our 12th year teaching at Punahou. Last year, actually for two years, we invited our older students to come and help. So they have a lot of fun. We teach seventh, eighth and ninth through twelfth. And we have a group we take to competition. Every year they're new because they just come for May Day. We take our older girls and they help to teach the seventh and eighth graders. And they're right with us in the same area so we're on one side with the high school and the few of them who volunteer, they're right there. We have one eye over there and teach them the dance. Actually they're learning more about hula because they have others to teach than if they were just coming to hula class. They really enjoy it. They want to know what they're going to teach. It's all by volunteer. It's not a requirement thing. It's wonderful. And right now we're working on chanting with that older class. They're very close. Everyone of them danced in Kamehameha Competition. The whole class. We said "you will all dance so you must all be ready." AGES. The youngest is twelve and the oldest is 27. Only women. HOW YOU GOT INVOLVED WITH PUNAHOU. That was an assignment. Every one or two years, Mr. Eldredge would invite new people to come and teach. Palani Kahala was there before us. And Manu was there for one year. He asked Kaha'i to help with the May Day program. Kaha'i said yes and this was assigned to us. We went there, besides doing all the stuff at halau, we would go there on Sundays and we would teach. Do everything, the costumes, everything. Doreen and I. There were other alaka'i. When we started in the beginning, there were two other alaka'i. They left the halau. So it became just Doreen and I who went. It was a wonderful experience that we could have every wished for. Although it was a lot of work because we always had to go back to the halau and be ready to do whatever that needed to be done at the halau. We had this opportunity to do all the things that we were taught to do. Decide on the costumes, everything had to be approved in those days. The only thing that we were given free rein was the ka'i and ho'i. Kumu told us what dance to teach and had to approve the costumes. But we would come up with the design of the costumes. Then after a couple of years, he let us chose or give us suggestions of might be good. Although we would always teach what had been taught to us. The men were separate from us. I really enjoy that because I enjoy working with people that age. They're terrific. Mr. Eldredge was very kind to us. As far as I knew, we were supposed to be there for one, at the maximum for two years. We started when it was at St. Louis High

School. What an experience that was. Getting dressed in the field house. It was like a steam house. For me, it's when hula really became a tremendous joy. You can't describe when you have these kids. And also brought to mind, the responsibility that you have in teaching traditional hula. You better do your homework and be able answer these questions. Teaching now in the halau, there comes a time to reach all the students. This is the way we learned it. It was not explained to us. So we will teach that way. And there's no why. Fortunately for us our students, well most students are very trusting. That's why the responsibility is great. They expect you to teach something that's traditional. In my heart, I believe we are. AFTER YOUR RELEASE, WHAT HAPPENED NEXT? The first year I was on my own, I was allowed to come back and teach with Doreen. She was still teaching at Punahou. We taught together. At the end of that session, she was released. He gave us charge of that if we were continued to be invited. It was going to go under our halau, Ka Pa Lehua. And Doreen came with me. We've been together since then. We do it a little differently because we teach in the living room. The size of our living room controls the size of our class. ABOUT KA PA LEHUA. I started it but we're together now. As soon as she graduated, she came in. We were always talking. I always told her, I'm here when you are ready. When I started it, Doreen was still with Kaha'i. Towards the middle of the first year, she told kumu that we collaborated. We've become friends over the years and there are things that we do naturally together. I don't have to say anything. She doesn't have to say anything. It just works like that. We just have something precious and that's why we keep it at home. We dance out on very rare occasions. We try to keep it at the school. We have school dictionaries, we have place name books. We have the kids do the research. Not at home. We watch them do it. We don't send homework home for one to do. We want to see them all doing it. We have instrument making and they have to do it themselves. We do lei making together. We bring in people to teach them to do special leis. They have opportunities to do that. We do not take them out into the forest. Doreen and I go. I'm sure if anyone were to graduate, we would show them where to go. There is so little of what use to be so much, we're more concern about the damage to take kids into the mountains. But we do go and we pick and we bring it back to have them learn how. They continue to do that lei and bring us a sample until it's mastered. Then we know that they know how to do it. We try to give them a repertoire of traditional numbers that we feel it's important for them to know--traditional numbers. Any student who comes to a traditional halau needs to learn these numbers before they leave. There's only two classes: one is beginning.

They still haven't gotten their steps yet. Once they get their steps and they go into the other, we review the old numbers that we have taught, Kawika or those other traditional hula, Koolau. So that everyone knows them. If they leave we feel like they know these numbers. And we taught it to them our style of these numbers. We sit and talk about what we want for our halau; what we would like the students to know and we teach three dances a year. The younger students, definitely try to teach them two numbers a year. They have summer break and a Christmas break. So it doesn't run the whole year. DO YOU TEACH 'AUANA? Yes we do. Every now and then we teach 'auana. In fact, all the 'auana that I love are all old numbers. I have to think where these students are. Yes we have taught 'auana and it's fun. They learn it real quickly because there's a tune, a lightness of it. So they enjoy it. TEACH CHANTING? We are really trying to teach the children because we have the students who helped the seventh and eighth graders at Punahou, we make great efforts to do their chanting drills to strengthen their voice and so they can have an 'i'i. You can't chant if there's no 'i'i. There's certain exercises that they can do. I'm very grateful to Kalani Akana because he taught those things to me. DO YOU EMPHASIZE TEACHING LANGUAGE. Yes, absolutely. You can't do it without it. If you don't know what you're dancing. Even if you don't have the layered kauna or literal translation, it's important that the student learn the words because the motions go to the words. Even if there's no motions, it still goes to what's happening in the story. That's the key to everything. If you don't have the language, you don't have hula. That is the important part. And we have them chanting and dancing until they're all chanting and dancing. So that they can learn it. Each part. And we teach them how to pa'i. If they learn the dance, they know how to chant it and they know how to pa'i. it And we always tell them, if their granddaughter wants to learn it, what are you going to do? Hum. You need to know the whole song. We didn't teach them any drumming but they make their ipu heke, and they pa'i and they are still learning their chanting. It takes a while. It takes a lot of breath control and strength in the diaphragm and feeling comfortable with what you're doing. We teach them, it's not really a melody but two or three notes and when to go up and when to down and to conserve their air. PLANS TO UNIKI STUDENTS IN THE FUTURE. I hope so. I have great hopes that we'll be able to graduate someone who will go on. All the things that we've learned from many different people. We honestly believe not all knowledge is in one halau, in one person. It's everywhere. And we try to live that. You can say something but if you really believe it then you have to live like that. We try to be examples for our

students and let them know that we don't know everything. We're still learning and we go to our resources to check. We check everything. That's one thing Kaha'i taught us to do with our homework is to check and double check. WHAT MAKES TEACHING HULA WORTHWHILE? You are teaching a traditional art and yet you can see, especially with the students who are with you for a number of years, how does it affect them. Not only in a physical way, you can see that they stand taller, you can have more confidence and composure but you can see how it affects their thinking. I think it is a great responsibility to be a teacher of anything because your thoughts and your values are transferred over anything that you do. I don't see how it cannot be. So I think it's important to look at what you think as a teacher it's important to you and what you will focus on because you're the one who chooses the focus for the students and how they will focus on those things. And that becomes very important to them, I think that they pull from it in their daily lives. One basic thing in the halau, if you're not having fun; you're not enjoying this, why are you here? We try to get enjoyment and we try to teach them that hard work is important. You can't just walk through and become a good dancer. You have to work at becoming a good dancer, a good chanter. If they see that in regular life if they work hard, it will be all worth it. It's not what you say, it's what you do. WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT? I never really thought about that cause we're such a young halau. I just look at each dance as a whole and when Doreen and I get to the end; when we have taught it and have pulled everything that we can from ourselves to teach this dance, that is probably the greatest accomplishment that I feel and that we're having fun doing it. And that the students are having fun doing it even though it is hard work. Each dance can be an individual accomplishment. I look at that as a great accomplishment. This past year the entire class was on the floor (Kamehameha Hula Competition). That was a great accomplishment because we decided that everyone will dance. We had two students who came back from college and we had to teach them on the side. They came back in May and they made it on the floor. That is a great accomplishment for all of them. We talked about it. Do you think we all can to it, do you think that you can reach out and help someone who's having a hard time cause we can't do it just the two of us. We have to help each other. And that what we try to do in the halau. There's a lot of values in teaching in any area of especially in things Hawaiian because the things that I learned that the words are important. The deeds are important; they should match your words. Don't say something and do something entirely different. So once we made the commitment that all of us

would go, I think stepping on the floor, we had met our commitment and the rest was just fun. It's a difficult challenge at Punahou because we have new girls every time. At the most, we can stretch fourteen lessons. We do have a handful of students who come back until they graduate. And it's hard because if we switch from a Kalakaua number to an older number, sometimes they can't do the older number because there's much more aihā'a. I remember we did Poliahu one year. It was such a different step for them; they had never done it before. Some had said there is no such step as this, the ulili step. I was kind of hurt. We had learned this in a workshop from Keahi Allen and Mrs. Bacon had taught this to us. There is a step like this. The exposure is very limited. Many of them have only May Day. Every year is a challenge and we try to keep the cost down. We do not go over thirty dollars per costume. So that is our limit and we try to loan things to them so the perspective of hula does not become expense. WHAT ARE YOUR REASONS FOR ENTERING COMPETITION? To have a platform to show our style and to show the commitment of our halau in perfecting that style. Our students don't dance out and we think it's good for them to show. We have ho'ike at the end of the year where all the family and friends are invited and we have pot luck. But this is one part where the public is able to see how hard the students work on their hula. Sometimes we perform numbers that we've learned from other kumu and it gives an opportunity, if we can show it to the best of our ability as we were taught somehow we'll have something to do with perpetuating traditional hula. Even the hula that our kumu had given us, the style that our kumu gave to us. DEFINITION OF HULA KAHIKO. Language is what has affected traditional hula. Students are not familiar with traditional Hawaiian language. Now here we go again. What do you mean by traditional language? Is there a new Hawaiian language? Yes there is a form of Hawaiian language that is being taught. Traditional Hawaiian language is very different. There's a simplicity to it. There's a beauty to it. If you closed your eyes, you would never know it from the way my tutu was talking; her voice. You could only see it in her eyes. You can't really get mad in Hawaiian. There's a way that it's being spoken. Those times, it's different. It sounds different because there's a different style to it. Because the students talk to you and you don't have a background in language and because the audience does not have a background in language, it can affect how the dance is performed. There's nothing left to the imagination. It's like today's films, there's nothing left to the imagination. A lot of it has to do with the language. Although great efforts are being made to teach Hawaiian, I feel fortunate that I heard the Hawaiian from yesterday. It helps me in

my hula today. I had very special people in my life to direct me in what's important, what my worth is, who I am today, and what I want to do with my halau. It's very special and that's why we keep it at home. There is no space and that means the class is full until someone leaves. That's how we can keep ourselves with our feet on the ground. We don't get carried away. And that's also fortunate because we don't have to make a living out of it. Language has a lot to do with it. It's very difficult to compete at Merrie Monarch which is very difficult with the media for one week or two weeks, one month. It's a lot of hype and I think this has an affect on hula. I don't mind what it does to 'auana because 'auana is free to do whatever you wish. But it does have an affect on traditional hula. But I always enjoy a wonderful traditional hula performance. When I go to watch, I clap very hard because it is not easy to stay within your realm. You have to make a consorted effort to remember what is important. And for us, it's the words. ANYTHING ELSE TO ADD. It takes a lot of hard work to be true to tradition and that you need to hold fast to being humble. And if you do hold fast to that, it can only bring you happiness. Remember those things that our kupuna taught us. There's more to the hula than just dancing. There's the person and you're helping to give them some of the traditional values that came from our culture. As you grow up, you find that these are universal values which you don't know about until you read and study the cultures. There's a lot of young people reaching out to learn about cultural heritage whether it's their nationality or not, it doesn't matter what color they are or what culture they're from. They're eager to learn about those special things that the Hawaiian culture has. Things were simple . You have to work hard and be humble about what you do. Be honest and be trustworthy. And to the best of your ability, the best of your knowledge, hold fast to those traditions. That's something that's important for young people.