

Leilani Rivera Bond

Leilani Rivera Bond established her keiki hula halau fifteen years ago on Kaua'i where she was born and raised. Leilani's Hula Hālau now includes adult women, with classes held in Wailua and Po'ipū, Kaua'i. In 1994, Leilani began teaching hula to a group of women in Reno, Nevada.

As a child, I really had a lot of good experiences and got to meet many famous people who came to Kaua'i because I helped my dad, Larry Rivera, with his shows at the Coco Palms Resort and in Honolulu. He began working at the Coco Palms in the early 1950's, and he composed and performed many songs that have become famous. "Waialeale" became really popular, and I remember that we were all invited to perform it at the Waikiki Shell.

In those days, the tourists came on the ocean liners, and my dad frequently sang "Love and Aloha," which talks about the Lurline sailing in. My sister and I were photographed holding a lei up so that one of the ships could be seen through the middle opening of the lei, and that photo became sort of famous. Kaua'i was such a good place to grow up in, and our family had a lot of fun.

I started taking hula lessons from Auntie Ku'ulei Pūnua when I was about three years old. I really enjoyed the Hawaiian music, the stories, and the many ho'olaulea we participated in. There were no stressful competitions then; the gatherings of musicians and dancers were a lot of fun. I tried my best to learn as much as I could. My classmates and I became very good friends. When I was young, I decided that I wanted to teach the hula too, but I knew I had to work really hard to learn the meanings of the words and the spirit of the dances.

Meanwhile, my father had started to entertain at Coco Palms, and he developed a Polynesian show, and my sisters, brothers, and I performed when we got older. Eventually, at about age thirteen, I became his lead dancer. That involved creating costumes, training other dancers and organizing the shows.

After I graduated from high school, I started Hawaiian studies classes at Kaua'i

Community College, but soon decided to postpone the rest of my education in order to assist my parents more with the shows. I also put on shows of my own for conventions and other hotels and entered some competitions. I began working in guest services at Coco Palms and got to know and learn from Mrs. Grace Guslander, Aunty Sarah Sheldon, Aunty Sarah Kealamapuana Malina Ka'ilikea, and other ~~people there~~ about Hawaiian culture and arts. In order to educate tourists about our culture and history, I did a lot of research on hula and Hawaiian music while I worked in the historical museum at the resort. I taught tourists how to play the 'ukulele, sew a lei, make a hula skirt, and other Hawaiian arts and crafts. These skills became part of my everyday life, and I learned leadership and developed my creativity while making many good friends.

An informal club of co-workers, friends and neighbors encouraged me to start teaching hula classes, and some of my students joined my father's Polynesian show. I met Steven Bond through this group of friends, and he joined my dad's show as a guitarist. Later, we married and when I had my first daughter, I became determined to pass on the Hawaiian culture to my children as a way to ~~preserve~~ ^{keep} a culture that my husband and I had grown up in. I decided that I could do this through hula. So, I started holding classes in my home for neighbors and relatives, and continued teaching as my family grew to five children, Kamalani, Lanuilani, Jonah, Stephanie Mahealani, and Ariel Leilani Keonaonalaulani.

Throughout the years, I've learned from several great kumu hula. Aunty Sarah Kealamapuana Malina Ka'ilikea worked with my father, and so she has given me friendship and knowledge over many ~~many~~ years. I also thank Uncle George Naope, Frank Hewett and Vicky Holt Takamine for their tutelage and continuing friendships, and I have received much from Aunty Sarah Sheldon, Pat Namaka Bacon, Edith McKinzie, and Pua and Nalani Kanakaole. I received a year of training in hula kahiko from Willie Pulawa, who was teaching on Kaua'i in the early 1980's. I enjoyed being a haumana again for a while, without the pressures of being a kumu

hula. His training encouraged me to be creative with kahiko. All these teachers helped me to recognize and realize the traditions of hula.

Besides learning hula, I had to learn and perform Tahitian and other Polynesian dances because they were all part of the Polynesian shows being presented at conventions and hotels ~~shows~~. Therefore, I sought training from Teipo Foster and Roiti Sylva, well known teachers from Tahiti. I also learned to drum from Jesse Jesse from the Cook Islands and Lloyd Chandler. They inspired me to create my own drumming rhythms. Perhaps in a year or two, I'll be able to take my ~~halau~~ to Tahiti, so that we can all learn from our cousins.

As a kumu, I try to teach my haumana to understand what they are dancing about and how to express the emotions in the chants and songs. Because I don't come from a family that speaks Hawaiian, I've worked hard to learn the language and am still learning. Before I create a hula, I study the words and try to list all the meanings I can find, then try to decide what the writer intended to say. That helps me to create and enjoy the emotions of the hula.

Like everyone else, I start my students with the basics because they need to have that foundation and discipline. Usually, kahiko is taught first, but because of today's modern English-speaking environment, I teach the keiki an English Hapa-haole song. That's how the children learn that the motions, words, and timing all move together. Then they learn kahiko and 'auana, and I always explain the meanings of the Hawaiian words. As the students get older, they learn aspects of Hawaiian arts and crafts. This year, we are holding monthly lauhala weaving classes for students and parents. I tell the keiki that it's important for them to learn the hula, otherwise it will die.

Preparing ~~and~~ and participating in competitions ~~now~~ take a lot of time and energy. I have wrestled with the idea of competing for profit or prizes, and it never really ~~settled~~ ^{satisfied} in my spirit. I try to convey to my haumana that, if we decide to and are invited to compete, then I challenge

them to compete against themselves, to convey, in a true spirit of aloha, their sincere affection for their hula sisters. I ask them to practice and exemplify what Hawaiians call ha'aha'a (humility) and to see competition as a chance to perpetuate our Hawaiian culture. When I see my haumana understand these concepts, then I feel I've succeeded as a kumu hula, and no prize can replace the inner peace that I gain.

About five years ago, some mothers of my students and other friends asked me to start a ladies class. Some were in my classes as little girls; others stopped taking hula when they became teenagers and had other interests. The ladies dance with a lot of feeling and try hard to understand the songs. A new challenge came to me a year ago, when Janet Rasmussen of Reno, Nevada, asked me to teach hula in her home. I go there every six weeks and these women have really blossomed into good hula dancers. They had their first ho'ike this September and danced with the Makaha Sons, along with some students from Kaua'i. The Reno students come to learn the Hawaiian culture with great respect. *of Regard*

Now that my youngest child has started school, I am determined to start my college education again. Most important to me, now, is learning more of the Hawaiian language because *it's so* *and* besides helping me with my hula, I want to be able to converse with friends from Niihau, ~~and~~ *Eventually*, I want to compose original songs in Hawaiian. Composing and performing music is my way of spreading aloha. I also want to study various styles of chanting. And, I hope that at least one of my children will decide to study the hula and teach it.

Rewritten: 10/31/95

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Leilani Rivera Bond

In 1981, Leilani Bond established the Leilani's Keiki Hula Halau in Lihu'e, Kaua'i. Besides teaching hula, Leilani also choreographs the dances and costumes for her father's shows in Kauai's hotels.

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I was influenced tremendously by my father in the hula and Hawaiian music. He is Larry Rivera and he has been performing at the Coco Palms Hotel for more than forty years. As a child, I would sit on the side of the stage and watch him perform. Each time I watched my father, I loved the music, the dancers, and the fun they had more and more.

We had a lot of entertainers in our family. My Aunt Leolani taught hula and my Uncle Ernie Menihune performed in Las Vegas and Tahoe. My uncles and aunties played music and my grandma played the ukulele.

At the age of three years old, I was already performing for my hula teacher, Ku'ulei Punua. She and my parents are really good friends so I used to sleep at her house. Her daughter, Penny Punua, and I were buddies and we grew up in hula together. I was a part of her family. I took hula from Aunt Ku'ulei for sixteen years until I graduated from high school. She was also a big influence on me to learn about the Hawaiian culture. While taking hula from Aunt Ku'ulei and performing for her, my father brought me and my sisters into his show. He wanted his daughters

to perform with him. And at the age of eleven or twelve, I started teaching the hula to the girls in my dad's show.

I took private lessons from Auntie Sara Kailikea while I was with Auntie Ku'ulei. She was ~~a~~ ^{my} good friend of my father and Grace Guslander at Coco Palms Hotel. She wanted to teach me kahiko ^{and} my parents thought it would be good for me to learn from her. Auntie Sara taught me "Wahine Huakea", a chant in honor of Grace Guslander. This chant was given to me and my sister and it was kapu to do it anywhere else but Coco Palms. It was a hula noho that we did for Grace Guslander's birthday.

^{and} I ^{also attended with} ~~also~~ took workshops from Uncle George Naope ^{and} Vicky Takamine. I also took hula kahiko with Willy Pulawa. I heard that he was good in kahiko and he inspired me a lot ~~with the hula kahiko~~. Willy was new to the Island of Kaua'i ^{and} ~~and~~ he had a halau here. I just started my halau and I needed to have more confidence in teaching kahiko. I stayed with Willy for a little over a year. It was so much fun being the haumana again ~~because~~ I realized how much more there is to hula. I saw a lot of things that I didn't see before as a young child. In 1983, he entered me in a hula kahiko solo division contest. I was a dancer and he chanted for me. I took second place.

Because of my religion, my parents wouldn't allow me to ^{uniki} ~~uniki~~ from

anyone. I've been teaching for eleven years now and I really wish that I did uniki. It's important because you need to know so many things about the hula, especially the basis. You need to know how to make the implements, the leis and all that you need to know about hula. You need to experience hula with different kinds of people. That's why I go back to Auntie Ku'uilei, to my source, and ask for help. Hula has changed a lot. In my days of training, hula was very simple. Today, 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 everyone is trying to impress how beautiful they are.

Hula kahiko is a spiritual expression from within and a good feeling of feeling Hawaiian. What I get from kahiko is an ancient feeling. It was simple back then, but it was also hush, hush. Nobody would tell you exactly what it was. They just say dance this motion and that's it. I couldn't ask for the words for the dance. Today, Now days, they give you the words and the translation. Back then, they didn't explain what it means, just show and follow. Now I express because of my experiences of learning. As a child, I wanted to know what the chant meant but I wasn't able to ask questions. Now I teach my children and I explain to them what the words mean. I don't speak Hawaiian language fluently, but I understand

and I do research on every song and chant that I teach.

My kumu told me that my style has changed and she wants to get back together with me on that. But I feel that hula is creating. I always create because of how I feel inside. When everybody smiles and they are enjoying the feeling that I create, it makes me feel good.

For me, I would be happy and content to see a student love the hula as much as I do. When I see ^{this} ~~that~~ in a student, it makes me feel complete and satisfied with this student because ~~she~~ ^{she} loves what she's doing, ^{and} ~~and~~ ^{she's} keeping up with her responsibilities and ^{remaining} ~~being~~ very humble ~~at the same~~ ^{time}. ~~Because~~ ^A lot of times, girls will get up to dance because they want to look beautiful. ~~But~~ ^{It} comes from within; ^{we} ~~we~~ should share and bring that feeling to ^{the audience} ~~that person~~ who is watching you and hope that they can ^{feel} ~~learn~~ what you are feeling.