

Harriet Ne

I was brought up in an atmosphere where male hula was taught. This was in the valley of Pelekunu on the east coast of Molokai. I was born on Oahu but at four months I was taken back to Molokai. I became interested in the hula at five because I had the opportunity to walk in and out of the halau and watch the male dancers train. I had three uncles who had a halau so I was permitted entrance. I learned to take my first steps to the beat of the pahu drum.

My first kumu was Kaoo of Molokai. He taught me that you cannot do anything unless you have the right feeling within you. You can feel the vibration when your thoughts about the hula are correct. Kaoo would get inspired by going down to the ocean and then up into the mountains. Sometimes I would play by the seashore and watch him. One time I asked him what he was doing and he said he was waiting for the spirit to come into him and inspire him so he would know how to express the words. I was five-years-old when I started with Kaoo and he believed in training early in the morning. We would begin to train when the sun rose in the east. He would tell me that the sun is shining and another day is beginning where you are going to learn something new. Your heart and mind must be wide open to the acceptance of these teachings and that means you must discipline yourself to be open.

I stayed with Kaoo for nine years and then my family moved to Honolulu because Molokai did not have a high school. We lived up in Kaimuki on 9th Avenue and I went to a kumu named Kapele who was a big, husky, hapa-haole who lived out in Kahaluu. Kapele gave every student special attention. He would encourage our strong points in class and work on our weaknesses out of class. I was confused at the time because my father was a Christian minister and he said I couldn't be a Christian and dedicate myself to Laka at the same time. So after three years with Kapele he pulled me from the class.

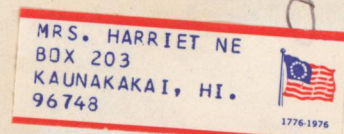
I went on to Enoka Paleka in Kapahulu but after two years my father again pulled me from classes. My last kumu was Nanawai who taught me down at the Nalani Hawaiian Village on Kaokalani Avenue in Waikiki. Nanawai was very good but he was a dreamer. He used to say to dance the hula you have to be a dreamer because you have to imagine yourself in another world, you have to visualize the moolelo and kauna of the chant. It took me seven years with Nanawai before I was able to uniki.

I began teaching comic hula at age thirty-six because that's all people were interested in at that time. In 1958 one of my uncles was dying a Lunailo Home. I went to visit him and he asked me if I was teaching. I told him I was teaching children on Molokai and he instructed me to teach the Molokai Kui and that it should be taught to the men of Molokai first. He told me to come to the side of his bed and with a traditional Hawaiian ceremony he passed his talent onto me, the next generation in the family. I told him I didn't know the Molokai Kui. He then got out of bed and performed the Molokai Kui step for me. He lay down on the bed and I think he was very happy because a few days later he passed away. I went home to Molokai and I opened my halau which was filled only with boys from Molokai.

When I was growing up my nickname was "Lovely Hula Hands". My aunty would tell me to be proud of my hands and I was always conscious of them. I was always taught that the palms of your hands should always face up because if they are turned down you will lose all your talent. Every part of your body from your fingers to your feet should be signifying a part of your chant and I think that discipline is being lost. I think kahiko is becoming more commercialized. It's alright for a student to take an unchoreographed kahiko chant and put motions to it as long as he or she understands and is faithful to each line in the chant. But there are kumu today that don't understand the language and must learn it if they are going to continue. The language and the culture are the same. When I lived in Pelekunu I was exposed to a community that only spoke Hawaiian. When I moved from the valley I lived in a world that only spoke English and I began to lose my knowledge of the language. If you don't know the language then you and your dancers are just making gestures. To me dancers are actors on a stage so in order to direct them a kumu must know the language, history, proper costuming, and the background of each dancer. I have big arguments with kumu because they tell me we cannot stay traditional all the time. They say we have to move along with the times but it's hard for me to see it their way. *

no corrections. OK. Aunty Harriet

Note new address



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When I was growing up my nickname was "Lovely Hula Hands". My aunty would tell me to be proud of my hands and I was always conscious of them. I was always taught that the palms of your hands should always face up because if they are turned down you will lose all your talent. Every part of your body from your fingers to your feet should be signifying a part of your chant and I think that discipline is being lost. I think kahiko is becoming more commercialized. It's alright for a student to take an unchoreographed kahiko chant and put motions to it as long as he or she understands and is faithful to each line in the chant. But there are kumu today that don't understand the language and must learn it if they are going to continue. The language and the culture are the same. When I lived in Pelekunu I was exposed to a community that only spoke Hawaiian. When I moved from the valley I lived in a world that only spoke English and I began to lose my knowledge of the language. If you don't know the language then you and your dancers are just making gestures. To me dancers are actors on a stage so in order to direct them a kumu must know the language, history, proper costuming, and the background of each dancer. I have big arguments with kumu because they tell me we cannot stay traditional all the time. They say we have to move along with the times but it's hard for me to see it their way. •

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Because of his wishes my first halau was composed of young men from molokai. I told them the story of the kui and the meleles that I was going to teach them. I was 46 at the time I began what I considered a halau. I had been teaching comic hula up to then because that's all people were interested in. I had begun teaching when I was 36.

When I went to the Merry Monarch I saw a lot of changes in the traditional dance. I saw one olapa group that still danced gracefully and I saw other olapa groups that danced very animatedly. To me the dancers are performing or a chant like actors on a stage rather than dancing. Whenever you teach a dance, a kumu has to learn all the history, all the background ~~of the dance, and what it means to the dancers~~. Important things such as proper costuming are being ignored. ~~This is important because you are transferring a certain feeling to your students. I have big arguments with kumus because they tell me we cannot stay traditional all the time, we have to move along with the times so they introduce modern costumes and motions into the olapa. I tell them the Merry Monarch is a gathering of halaus to perform the traditional hula. I would like it to be continued the way I learned it, the way I was exposed to it.~~

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My favorite olapa is Hoopuka? it is written for Molokai and it tells about the sun rising up in the East. All the pastures turn their leaves to the sun. the sun moves onto the trees and the taro patches and they all lift up their arms to the sun.

My favorite hula auwana is Kukunaokala. because it also tells of the sun going around the world.

Many of the young kumu are having a hard time teaching the kahiko because they are having a hard time communicating and getting their haumana to learn.

The first thing you have to do is build up a close relationship between the kumu and the haumana. A kumu has to learn the physical and emotional history of a student. You have to learn their strengths and weaknesses. Maybe a student has fallen off a horse when she was 12 years old.

I also don't like students coming into the halau and spending their time gossiping. Their concentration has to be on hula when they come into the halau.

It's alright for a student to take an unchoreographed kahiko chant and put motions to it as long as they know what each line in the chant says and they are faithful to it. I think kahiko is becoming more commercialized. Every part of your body from your fingers to your palm should be signifying a part of the chant and I think that discipline is being lost. I was always taught that the palms of your hand should always face up because if they are turned down you will lose all your talent. There are kumu today that don't understand the language and they must learn the language. The language and the culture are the same. When I lived in Pelekunu I was exposed to a community that only spoke Hawaiian. When I moved out of the valley I was exposed to a world that only spoke English. I found I began to lose my knowledge of the language.

If you don't know the language then you and your haumana are just making gestures when you dance. If you can translate every word to the students then it is easier for them to picture the feeling of the dance in their minds when they get up there.

Henry Pa, Iolani Luahine, Tom Hiona

I would describe my style as traditional with a little of my own ~~own~~ personal inspiration. My own kumu Kaho would get inspired by going down to the ocean. He would look out into the ocean and then up into the mountains and that's how he would get inspired. Sometimes I would play by the seashore and watch him. I asked him what he was doing and he told me he was waiting for the spirit to come into him and inspire him so he would know how to express the words. The difference is he did not create totally different motions from what was trained in him to express those words.

Harriet Ne
Oct. 21, 1915

I was brought up in an atmosphere where male hula was taught. This was in the valley of PeleKumu on the east coast of Molokai. I was born on Oahu but at four months I was taken back to Molokai. I became interested at 5 years old. I had the opportunity to walk in and out of the halaus and watch the male dancers train. I had three uncles who had a hula so I was permitted entrance. I learned to take my first steps to the beat of the pahu drum.

My nickname is "lovely Hula Hands." When I was growing up my Auntie would tell me to be proud of my hands. I was always conscious of my hands.

Ka'o'o was the outstanding kumu hula of Moloka'i. He was my first kumu. He taught me that you cannot do anything unless you have the right feeling within you. You can feel the vibration when your thoughts about the hula are correct. I was five years old when I started with Ka'o'o. He believed in training early in the morning. He believed that hula training should start when the sun is rising in the east. He taught me that you have to have good thoughts inside you when you dance. The sun is shining and another day is beginning where you are going to learn something new. Your heart and mind must be wide open to the acceptance of these teachings and that means you must discipline yourself to be open.

My second kumu was when I came to Honolulu to attend High School because there was no high school on Moloka'i at that time. My kumu lived out in Kahaluu. His name was Kapele, a big husky hapa-haole. He gave every student special attention. He would stress our good points and work on his students weaknesses after ~~xxxx/xxxxxkamekamekax~~ ~~xxx~~ class. I stayed with Kapele for three years. I was mixed up at this time because my father was a minister and he said I cannot be a Christian and dedicate myself to Laka at the same time. So he yanked me out of the class.

We lived up in Kaimuki on 9th Ave. So my mother formed a kumu in Kapahulu named Enoka Paleka. I was with him for two years until my father pulled me from the class again. My father did not want me to dedicate myself to the old gods. My next kumu hula was Nanawai. He was a dreamer but he was very good. He used to say to dance the hula you have to be dreamer because you have to imagine yourself in another world, you have to fantasize about the chant. You have to be a dreamer to dance. It took me seven years with Nanawai before I was able to uniki. The uniki was a equal measure of modern and ancient ceremony. He taught me a Nalani Hawaiian Village in Waikiki on Kaokalani Ave.

I began teaching at 46 years old. I thought there was a need for our young children to learn about their culture. I began to teach the hula through the 4-H club I was involved with.

I had an opportunity to go to college at Pacific University in Oregon but my haumana begged me to stay. I was 42 at that time.

I was teaching but I didn't really have what I considered a halau until 1958. In 1958 one of my uncles was dying at Lunalilo Home. I went to visit him and he asked me if I was teaching. I said I was teaching boys and girls on Moloka'i. He told me to teach the Molokai kui to the men of Molokai first. When I told him I didn't know the steps he told me to come to the side of the bed and he spit into my mouth. This was the old Hawaiian way of passing one's talent onto another generation in the family. He then got out of bed and performed the Molokai Kui steps for me. He then lay down on the bed and I think he was very happy because he had passed on the Kui style that had originated on Molokai. A few days later he passed away so I opened a halau filled with only boys from Molokai.