

EDWARD WILLIAM COLLIER, JR.

Currently a dance teacher at the 'Iolani School, Ed Collier has been teaching hula for over 30 years and is the kumu hula of the "Hālau O Na Pua Kukui" located on the Sand Island Access Road in Kalihi.

When I first started to teach hula, my hālau was known as the "Ed Collier's Dancers." At that time everybody was using the word "hālau" in their name and we wanted to be a hālau too. One day the name "Hālau O Na Pua Kukui" came to me. During that time in the late '60s and early '70s, I was dancing with Kawai Cockett and the Lei Kukui Serenaders. And because I wanted to keep the association with the Lei Kukui Dancers, I asked Kawai Cockett if it was alright to use this name. I used the word pua instead of lei kukui because the nut is the final stage. But as the pua, we're still growing. It's not the ^{final} finished product. I don't think anybody can ever be the ^{final} finished product, because there are so many things that you need to learn ^{about} through hula. Also the kukui is so symbolic. The Hawaiians used it for their food, medicinal uses, their dyes, and mainly for their light. I felt this was a nice name and it gave me a good feeling to be a kukui and to be a Lei Kukui Dancer.

I first learned hula when I was about twenty years old. Instead of being a dancer first then studying to become a teacher, it was the complete opposite with me. I was a teacher first. While involved with the St. John's Church in Kalihi, I got the kids who didn't have anything to do and who had studied under different hula teachers to share with all of us. And because these kids loved to perform, we did shows at hospitals, old folks homes and service clubs. So my first students were my teachers. They showed me the basic steps.

Although I didn't know how to dance, I just had a love for the hula. By watching my kids, I was able to choreograph. But I wanted to learn ancient hula and because I wasn't trained formally, I did not really understand it. I used to watch somebody dance and copy it, thinking it was alright. I later found out what I was doing was wrong. Uncle Henry Pa set me straight. He

told me that hula is your own creativity. You have to create your own dance. You cannot use somebody else's hula.

My first and only teacher was Henry Pa. He was teaching at the Magic Hula Studio located on KaTākaua Avenue. He and Auntie Rose Joshua shared the studio. I stayed with him for about 4 years.

Uncle Henry taught me kahiko, auwana and how to choreograph. Uncle Henry had a fantastic mind. The man was way ahead of his time. He was amazing. He once presented a hula ballet that was danced all to Hawaiian music with Hawaiian movements. The only thing different was that the dancers were dressed like ballet dancers.

Uncle Henry would sit with me and teach me the pa'i first. He would show me the drum beats and then we would go over the words. I remember getting scoldings from him when I didn't remember the words the following week because I had not done my homework. After that I made it a point that whenever he taught me the dance or pa'i, I made sure that when I came back the following week, I knew my homework. I wanted to let this man know that I appreciated what he was doing for me. He told me to teach my students what I was learning from him. And as I taught my students, *it enabled me to remember the dances.* ~~everything started to fit in and I kept getting better and better.~~

I wish I had more time with Uncle Henry Pa. He spoke the Hawaiian language fluently. He was able to translate and tell me what the song was actually about. He made me write and gave me handouts, the Western way of teaching hula. At times he would test me by saying things and have me recite it. Just to see if I was able to pick up from listening to him.

Today, I teach hula the way I was taught but I also choreograph my own. It depends on what I'm going to use the hula for. If it is for a showy show, then I would re-choreograph the dance. If it's for a recital, then we do it the way it should be. I'll tell my students that this is how this dance was taught to me. so now, I'm teaching it to you. ~~And then~~ And then there are times I'll

tell them, "This is my creation." I teach them "Kawika" in its very basic form because "Kawika" is a chant that starts everybody off who wants to study kahiko. This is traditional. And after a while I'll come back and I'll say, "You know how to do the traditional form, now I'll teach "Kawika" to you in ~~another~~ ^{my} form. This is not traditional, this is my creation."

After teaching for thirty years, my biggest joy is that I'm now teaching the children of the first children I taught. And it's just the joy of giving people the pleasure of knowing a little of their Hawaii through hula. ~~Because~~ ^{am still learning and} I myself have learned a lot and I want my students to learn through hula ~~itself~~ ^{too}.

The advice I give to most young kumu hula is that the road is tough. When you fall down, you cannot stay down. You got to pick yourself right back up and keep going. If you stay down, that's where you're going to remain.

I define hula kahiko as the past. Twenty years from now, we're going to be the past, and chants written about things happening today will be kahiko. The true form of kahiko is the traditional works and the way the dances were passed on to you from your kumu. There are some changes from what I remembered the kahiko to be when I first danced, ~~but I like everything~~ ^{I believe} else. Everything has to have a change for it to survive. ~~I~~ ^{and hula is no different.} I enjoy the work of the young kumu hula. I see a lot of innovations in the hula and I tell myself, "that's different." Change is alright if it inspires the young people to continue to hula.

I used to feel bad because I didn't ^(uniki) ~~uniki~~. But other kumu and even some of our masters did not go through that old style of ^(uniki) ~~uniki~~. I think that the desire to teach and share is the only thing that is important. People ask me how come I don't ^(uniki) ~~uniki~~ anybody. I'm just waiting. Each kumu who is getting on in age will know eventually who they will select to carry on their work or select to carry on their ^(hālau) ~~hālau~~. When the time is right I will know who that person is. I'm hoping it's my daughter but it ^{could} ~~may~~ be somebody else. ^{too}.