

BEVERLY HEALANI SUN LAN APANA MURAOKA

Kumu hula and founder of Healani's Hula Halau & Music Academy on Kauai, Beverly Muraoka has been teaching hula for over twenty years.

My father bought a fifteen dollar guitar from Sears and that is how we started to learn how to play and sing. My mother also played ukulele. I played music with people like Aunty Genoa Keawe and Uncle Benny Rogers, one of the steel guitar greats, Victor and Kuulei Punua for the Aloha Week Festivals and Uncle Joseph Kahaulelio. I also played with Peter Ahia and Uncle Val Kepilino and numerous others. Everyone expected the Apana Sisters to dance and play music.

Kutchie Kuhns was a Polynesian entertainer who came to live on Kauai. She asked my mother if my sister, Lovey and I could learn hula from her. We probably never would have started otherwise. I was nine years old at the time.

Aunty was known for her comedy. She taught us comical numbers. A feisty hula teacher, she loved fast numbers. The first hulas we learned were "Hula Lolo", "Tutu E", and "Princess Pupule." We learned from 1957 to 1961. Aunty left Kauai because she wasn't feeling well.

Thereafter, we joined the Kapaa Mormon Choir. We learned hula and singing under the tutorship of Jane Kina Goo and her daughter, Inoa Aniu, Puanani Smith and Germina Quereto. We entertained from 1964 to 1982 at the Coco Palms Hotel. Through them, I learned to dance slowere dances that I'm known for. Not bragging, I have been known to be the smoothest, slowest dancer.

Moving to Honolulu, I learned from Aunty Sally Wood Naluai. I met Aunty Sally many years prior when my sister Lovey was attending Church College of Hawaii. Aunty was the Hawaiian instructor and we entertained at the Polynesian Cultural Center

in the 1960's.

In the meantime, I also became involved with singing and dancing with Aunty Genoa Keawe. She gave me more instructions and insights too. She is my mentor.

Returning home, people asked me to teach but I was working for the government and couldn't do both. Also, Lovey owned a halau and I didn't think it was right for two sisters on the same island to compete. Later, Lovey became ill and asked for my assistance. When she totally left the hula, people were still bugging me to teach, so I consented. I left the government and embraced the hula.

Up to this point, having my hula girls compete and be declared winners at the Merrie Monarch was my greatest accomplishment. We took Aunty Lovey's name but I was the teacher. Another good deed is that I have allowed handicapped children in my halau. To see them coordinate their motions gives me tremendous joy.

To me, the hula that I see today is kind of mixed up. You are not too sure if the dancers are dancing anciently but dressed modern or dancing a modernized kahiko. It can be confusing. When we were growing up, we were told to use only greens and to keep our costumes simple. Today, you see Baby's Breath and other modern flowers intertwined in the kupees.

I consider my halau small compared to others. I teach at the community center in Lihue and at my home in Kapaa, but I love each of my students very much. My husband helps me create designs and is our manager.

Hula has made me blossom and humble. It has taught me to endure hardships but also has given me many blessings.

My recent greatest accomplishment has been to serve as head judge for Uncle George Naope's Kona Invitational Hula Competition.