

Nana I Na Loea Hula

Kumu Hula: Iola Balubar

Interviewer: Lovina Le Pendu

Date: 2/13/92

(NAME YOU WANT IN THE BOOK?) Iola Yolanda Caldito Balubar.

(WHERE DO YOU TEACH?) Right now I teach at the Central Maui Youth

Center in Kahalui Maui. (HOW MANY STUDENTS DO YOU HAVE?) I have

roughly maybe 180. It's flexible, it goes up and down. (WHAT'S THE AGE

RANGE?) I start them from 4 1/2 up to senior citizens. (DO YOU MIX THEM

OR DO YOU HAVE AGES?) No, I have ages and now they, if they're beginners

or intermediate, but usually when a new student comes to me I feel they

are a beginner student of how I teach, so I want them to learn my basics

first because every kumu is different and I want them to be comfortable,

so when I say ~~hela~~, this is my way of doing the ~~hela~~. Like other kumus are

not necessarily the right ^{ami}~~omni~~, is the right ^{ami}~~omni~~, the right side or left

side. I have beginner classes and I train them with the basics there and as

soon as they know the basics, I try to put them in their age groups. (YOU

TEACH KAHIKO, AUANA, BOTH?) Kahiko, auana, Polynesian dancing. (OLI?)

No, if I need to oli. Like whenever we enter competitions, I usually ask

kupuna to help me. (HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN TEACHING?) 18

years now in Maui.

(ABOUT WHAT AGE DID YOU LEARN?) I learned when I was in, I think it was the second grade. 8 years old. (WHO WAS YOUR FIRST TEACHER?) Elizabeth Lum Ho. (JOHNNY LUM HO'S MOTHER?) No, I don't think there was any relationship. She was in Wailuku. I am not sure because you know why after a few years after that, she moved to Oahu and she had relatives there in Oahu. She's been teaching hula for a long time, in fact, she was my mothers hula teacher too. (HOW OLD WAS SHE?) How old was Mrs. Lum Ho? Funny, she never had us call her Aunty Elizabeth, yah, we would call her Mrs. Lum Ho. She was Hawaiian, Chinese lady. She taught mostly auana. (DID SHE HAVE BASIC TRAINING TOO?) Yah, basic training. (WHERE DID SHE TEACH?) In her garage at home. (HOW LONG DID YOU TAKE UNDER HER?) Just about a year. (YOU WERE LEARNING WITH A GROUP OF DANCERS?) With a group of dancers it was a studio. She taught how I am too, different ages. (WHEN YOU WENT THERE IT WAS FOR LEARNING SHOWS?) No, I went there for learning. (DO YOU REMEMBER HOW THE CLASS WAS CONDUCTED?) Yah, the first thing when we got into class, she would concentrate on our basics and she would go through tone, kaholo^u kahele, uehi^{uuehi}, ^{ami} ~~omnis~~ and I remember her putting us against the wall if we had a hard time ^{ami ing} ~~omnis~~ for us to put our hands on hands against the wall, bend our knees and push, only concentrating on the hips, for that. And I

remember she having us kneel down and she would step on our thigh, so that I guess we would be more limbered and then I remember her using the bamboo stick in correcting us. Just to tap us to remind us, oh no not that way. (WHEN SHE TAUGHT YOU SHE MADE YOU KAHOLA RIGHT, LEFT, OR DID SHE MAKE YOU SIT DOWN AND WRITE?) Yah, she, what she did was basically, go over the basics and teach us the dance, the meaning, like ocean real simple and she used her phonograph. She didn't play. (DID SHE MAKE YOU WRITE OR JUST LISTEN?) Just listen, listen and copy, we didn't write. (DID YOU EVER ENTERTAIN WITH HER?) I went through a uniki with her, not to graduate, but just went through the uniki and after the uniki, I guess she took time off and then we never returned again. (HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE TAKING FROM HER?) At that time, I know she had several of classes because when I used to pass, I always used to look down that road, it was a narrow road, and I had maybe three houses one over there, two over there and her garage was directly inside this driveway and it was a single car garage. And every time I used to pass it she used to have classes going on, she had different classes. (AFTER HER DID YOU GO TO SOMEONE ELSE?) Yah, in fact when I was in second grade and I really liked hula and I guess she really saw that I was one of the, a really special student and I liked dancing, so even if I wasn't dancing with her, I

remember that there were occasions that she called me to dance with her at different gatherings at the, we used to have this haole camp down at Punaunea when I was little, Punaunea, haole club house they call it, and she used to call me at my mothers Bringly and dance down there with some of her, not the whole halau, just a few dancers and she wanted me to do Tutu E, My Waikiki Girl, and Mapuana and the first dances she taught us.

(FROM THERE WERE DID YOU GO?) From there, okay, this was during elementary, then I remember when I was in the 6th grade and my mother... (SO YOU STOPPED FOR A WHILE?) Yah, I stopped for a while, but I still liked dancing, but I just didn't have the time. I don't know why we didn't have the, maybe they just couldn't afford to send me maybe to hula classes. Then my mother bumped into Aunty Becky Kaopuiki and down at the shopping center and she looked over my mothers shoulders and she said, oh you have 2 daughters, oh they're hula dancers and she said oh yah, they dance a little bit, oh bring them over to my place, my yard, I teach my daughter and a few other girls to dance and maybe they want to dance for me. Because she was with the, she was the Mormon yah at that time and she, I guess the Mormon church knew that she had this dancing show, her family basically and so they had her dance at the Maui Palms Hotel just recently opened up down here in Kahalui Beach over here. And she also had

the Huki Lau Hotel and she says oh she needed dancers and she would be willing to teach us the hulas and just come. So we used to go down to her house down in Nasca and it was a housing area and hardly had room, so she taught us in her yard. Right in front of her apartment kind of like and we learned implement numbers, New Zealand numbers, hula numbers, Polynesian on top of kahiko. We did a mixture of numbers for shows that we did at small hotels. (SO YOU WENT WITH HER TO ENTERTAIN?) To entertain yah. (BECKY KAUPUIKI CAME FROM KAUAI?) Well, her husbands family came from Lanai. (SHE MARRIED A KAUPUIKI?) Yah, Alex Kauopuiki and what is that. (SHE WAS HAWAIIAN?) Yah, Hawaiian. I don't remember her maiden name. I wonder if she had relatives Ho'opai. I think she was related. She's down in Oahu now, you know and if you want to kind of contact her there. (WHERE IN OAHU?) I think down in Makaha with her daughter. (IS SHE IN A KUPUNA PROGRAM?) Not that I know, cause she was kind of a private home nurse.

(FROM HER DID YOU GO SOMEWHERE ELSE?) From her, she asked Uncle Johnny Hokuana to, he's a long time kumu hula from Maui well known here on Maui, but see he, I guess he really didn't really put in the time and want, he worked for the cannery for years and he, but he's pretty much into hula. He's asking Aunty to come over and teach us his hulas and I

learned from Uncle Johnny Hokuana also. And then after Uncle Johnny Hokuana. I learned also sharing with us too was Uncle Robert Kalani, some of his kahikos and implement numbers. (DID YOU STAY LONG WITH THEM?) Yah, I stayed with them a long time. Uncle Johnny and Uncle Robert came just to help Aunty Becky. Then I was with her basically through the 7 or 8 years. I never did uniki from anyone.

(FROM THERE?) From there I, Aunty Becky because we danced all the way up to high school, her daughter and I were dancing at this one particular night club here, local night club. And at the night club, the Pupukea cast that opened up at the Kaanapali Beach Hotel. Because most of the cast was going back because at the Queen Surf. So I thought it was an opportunity because I liked Tahitian and so I said yah I wouldn't mind doing it. So, I went and I joined Jose Over and they left he in charge with Nancy Moi, Samoan and his wife at that time and Felice, I wish I had remembered her last name. She was a Filipino girl, but she, she did..

(FELICE, SHE'S IN LANAI NOW. SHE WAS MARRIED TO HARRY BROOKS) Yah, that's right and what is she doing now?) (I JUST HAPPENED TO MEET HER IN THE AIRPORT ONE DAY) Yah, that's what her name was, Brooks. (SHE LIVED IN TAHITI, THAT'S WHERE SHE LEARNED HOW TO SING) She lived in Tahiti for a while. (SHE LIVED IN TAHITI FOR A LONG TIME AND PERFORMED

IN TAHITI AS A SINGER AND ENTERTAINER AND SHE KNEW ALL THE OLD TIMERS, SHE WAS AN EXCELLENT ENTERTAINER) Is that right, because she sang for them.

(FROM THESE PEOPLE, WHEN YOU TOOK, YOU WERE DANCING WITH THEM?) Yah, I danced with Josi Over with Fleci at Kaanapali Beach Hotel and really likes Polynesian dancing and basically it was a mixture. Hula and then we did real simple kahiko. (AT THAT TIME ENTERTAINMENT WAS MORE IN TUNE, NO COMPETITIONS?) Yah, the entertainment. In fact a competition just started when I started my hula business in 1975. I remember taking my first crop of girls that were excellent that I pulled out of my regular classes and trained them for shows and May Day Competition and I took them Merry Monarch that year, not to perform, and that year, just to observe and that year, that's the first year that Hilo Hawaiian had opened up because we were like almost the first people to stay there and we went to go to watch the Merry Monarch and we were close by and we just went to observe and that's when I remember competition starting. (WHEN DID YOU OPEN YOUR HALAU?) In 1975.

(WERE YOU ENTERTAINING AT THAT TIME?) Yah, I was entertaining. Well, no in fact I just had my first son, so at that time I wasn't entertaining and I rested for maybe about a year, a couple of years of

dancing as an entertainer, people knew me I guess as a dancer, they respected me as a person who can create dances because my dad was a politician and whenever I went to rallies, they always asked me to do a couple hulas at the rallies. So, I just felt with Aunty Becky Kaupuiki giving me that freedom of just going and sitting under the tree with her daughter and just creating a hula for her. After being with her for a while, she said, you and Luana go sit under the tree. Take this sheet of paper and go make up this hula for the show. So we were creating at about the 7th grade year. so, I just felt, so, so confident. I created that, I created this hula and so after that because people had seen me as an entertainer, outside and because I had my son in '74 and I couldn't go back dancing right away because I put on so much weight, yah, after being hapai and my husband said you want to stay home with the boy you know the baby, why don't you try to open up a dance studio you know because you can create and a lot of people know you as a dancer here, give it a try. So, I said okay. I put an ad in the paper, I didn't have a place to teach. I called my brother and asked him if I could use his double car garage, he says of course. Every Saturday I taught at his double car garage. And it was so overwhelming because I had so much students from that first week of ad in the paper. All of a sudden I knew this was my bag and I really liked it.

So ever since then, from teaching in my brothers car garage. (SO YOU STARTED WITH HULA AUANA?) Yah, I started with hula auana. Then I used what I learned in the different shows, the kahikos, like Lili'u E, Kawika, Hana Chant, Hoopuka and I just carried it on. And after that I went to see Uncle Robert Kalani to learn more of the kahiko numbers so I could teach my students. I didn't really get in to the language until maybe just 3-4 years ago when I got into the Hawaiian Studies Program and I taught at the different schools. Well, I taught at Elementary and then I went all the way up to the 6th grade. What is the different grades. It was not Elementary it was the 2nd grade. I taught the 3rd grade class, the 5th and 6th grade Hawaiian Studies and that I taught for 2 years and I went from Lahaina Intermediate, to Kam III school, to Waihee school and I ended up at Eau school and then I rested for a year and then they called me and asked me if I was interested again and I said, yah, I think I'll go give it a try. They needed a kumu up at Wailuku Elementary for the 3rd grade, so I went. I was teaching what the kupunas teach from the Hawaiian curriculum. Hawaiian studies curriculum. You know like the language, basic language, the weeks, days, numbers & body parts they wanted us to teach the haumana's.

(WHEN YOU TAUGHT KAHIKO IN YOUR HALAU, YOU TAUGHT WHAT YOU

LEARNED FROM YOUR KUMU?) Well, during that time when I first opened up my dance studio, I only taught what I knew from other teachers. Before, as years went on you can see in my information sheet, as years went on in '75 I started my dance studio. So, around the '80 I started entering hula competitions here on Maui. The Ka'ahumanu Festival and I did, I entered the first year with senior girls as well as keiki's and we entered for the auana division and at that time competition wasn't that steep, but it was pretty good for Maui and we placed first for both divisions and Uncle George Naope saw what I had from Maui, so he asked me several times to come to the Merry Monarch. I just wasn't ready for that kind of competitions yet at that time. I didn't have the time, because of just being a young mother too. So, I decided to just carry on my halau and finally we all got interested in Tahitian. I got more interested in Polynesian and I went in to the Tahiti Fete in Kauai. Then after the Tahiti Fete, I went to the, I have it on my fact sheet, then I went to Kauloponi hula Competition on California. Took my keiki up there. We did both the Tahitian and the auana. We entered auana there, but as far as the kahiko part, I really got into it when I got into the Keiki Hula, Lili'uokalani. That's when I started creating my own kahikos and trying to put my own tunes to the chants that they gave us. Every year when I watch the tape I

can see how I grew. I really grew and I'm still learning, there's so much.

(DO YOU GIVE CERTIFICATES TO THE CHILDREN WHEN YOU TEACH?)

Yes, every three years. So beginner, intermediate and like okay. This is how I felt I would probably uniki then, but I have not yet got a student that has stayed with me for 12 consecutive years. (HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE WORK UNIKI?) Uniki to me is to graduate from a halau, that you have learned from, the kumus basics, how she interprets her dance for you to learn, and for you to come out, your feeling, what makes you describe the move and how you describe it and actually your feeling from within that you could bring out. Your creativity to create your own hula and kahiko. I would think at that time I would uniki, gee to me 12 years that they have learned what I have taught them from me. Just me as a kumu. Every kumu have their own ability, their own knowledge and their own you know what they have learned. Like people more into the culture have really got into kahiko and really learned the language. What they would uniki on what they know. Like for me what I know and what I have shared with my students to me that's what I would uniki them.

(DO YOU THINK HULA HAS CHANGED?) Yah, the hula has changed.

When I first started hula, it was real simple motions, real basic motions, it wasn't like today. Today is a little bit more, to me because I know the

different Polynesian dancing and you know we all intermix and I can see the different steps that somehow get caught into our hulas. And sometimes I see some Samoan step into the hula dances, some times is see visa-versa. Hawaiian into Tahitian, Tahitian into hula. We are all intermixing and I see the difference. Now it's a little bit more modern, but yet now I can see because when now it's got carried away from the simple hula style. I think now we want to try and get back to it. (DO YOU THINK PEOPLE ARE AWARE OF IT?) They are aware of it and they want to get back to the natural simple way. (DO YOU THINK IT WILL CHANGE?) I think that it'll come back. It looks like coming back. I think right now it's coming back in tradition, that's how I feel because now I see more and more people getting involved in the culture, the language. I really feel Hawaii ... (IS IT BECAUSE YOU'VE BEEN TEACHING SO LONG AND YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE?) Yah, like we lost it, we're so involved with what's happening today that we've lost it. I talk story with different kumus, different entertainers, we got to go with the wave because we are entertainers, not, if they want modern, we got to go with modern, we got to be real versatile. (DO YOU THINK THERE'S 2 DIFFERENT HULA FOR ENTERTAINERS AND HULA FOR .. ?) Yah, the competition bring us back to the tradition, to me. Because watching others, just by what the whole

competition is about, they want culture, they want you to stick with in the culture, they want you to carry on. (DO YOU THINK COMPETITIONS ARE ALL DOING IT FOR THE SAME PURPOSE?) Yah, to me I think hula competition is to try to stay with the traditions. Well, maybe the different competitions say this is hapa haole. You can use the English songs and what not, but you still have to stick with in the tradition of the dance and maybe if there is a hapa haole song then you can put in whatever at that time, steps that you can incorporate. (SO YOU THINK THAT HULA HAD A TIME PERIOD TOO?) To me kahiko is more ancient, more the old, the old style. The old style is more plain, simple, plain, simple, to the point kind of like, with meaning, dance. (CAN YOU GIVE ME A CHANT THAT'S KAHIKO FOR YOU?) Hole Waimea, because to me have the real, it describes, when I think of Hole Waimea, I think of the spear to describe the actions of the warriors, the spear makers, I feel more in the chanting, serious kind of... (WHERE DO YOU SEE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HOLE WAIMEA AND WHEN YOU ENTER KEIKI HULA?) To me, I've always had and I still do, putting a chant together by tune. So when they send me the copy of kahiko, I think that's my hold up and down fall because just to, for the dance part it's no problem because for me I like to create. I would stick with the basics, traditional but not what I call tradition is not necessarily to

another kumu. So, were all different. (BUT YOUR BASIC, WHAT YOU LEARN?) yah, my basics what I learn, and what I teach. (SO THE DIFFERENCE?) I think Wendell did a lot of research in that so, I think, I don't, I will call that kahiko. (HOW WOULD YOU TRANSLATE A TRADITIONAL CHANT, HOLE WAIMEA TRADITION CHANT OR HULA KAHIKO?) --

(WHEN YOU WERE TAUGHT WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG, WHEN YOU WERE YOU TAUGHT KAHIKO?) It was just dance, it was no explanation, but real simple works like maka, kino explaining what we danced. The wording, just words, we didn't go deep into. (DID YOU LEARN CHANTS TOO?) No. (DID YOU TAKE CLASSES FOR CHANT?) I did just recently from Kealii Richelle and Hokulani Padilla, because I wanted to have my students oli in this particular competition and they were, it was just like they were busy too and they didn't have a regular class, so they just had us come in between their classes. It wasn't really much of a class and then you know you have to move on and you have to do your own thing. (DO YOU THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO LEARN THE LANGUAGE, THE CHANT?) To me if you can create and you feel comfortable with it, that's ... (FOR YOU, WHEN YOU HAVE A CHANT AND YOU HAVE A PROBLEM YOU GO TO ANOTHER KUMU AND ASK FOR HELP?) Yes. When I first started I used to ask Robert Kalani with the beating and then after I came to a point that I said, I'm a kumu, I have

to bring out my own creativity, this is what they want to see in different halau. They don't want to see someone who copies other halau. So, I used to try to create my own beats and my own kaholo's and that's what I do now. Of course we hear it from other halau's but then we don't remember what halau we picked it up from and then I know some other halau's look at the past Merry Monarch tapes. I try not to. I just try to if I seen a Merry Monarch and what kind of stayed in my mind years by maybe I'll bring it back, maybe it'll just come out, and it's just me. (DO YOU THINK YOU NEED LANGUAGE WHEN IT COMES TO CREATIVITY?) Yes, you do need the language. What I've been doing is I've been going to other kupunas asking them the language if in case I need a Hawaiian song that I need to be translated or I just go to my Hawaiian language dictionary and just pick out the main meaning of that song and I'll just interpret it like that. (WHEN YOU TEACH YOUR CHILDREN, DO YOU TEACH THEM THE SAME WAY YOU WERE TAUGHT?) I do all the work and I convey it to them. I'd like to do that, like have them do the research, but it's just the time again. (IN YOUR HALAU DO YOU TEACH THEM COSTUMING?) Yes, I have them go out and get their own flowers and we sit down and make leis which we did when I first started. Like I'll get ti leaves and I'll show them how to make the ti leave skirts. More the modern type, like with the string. We don't do the more kahiko

style the knotted way. Yah, I do, I do get them involved in making their won outfits the parents. (HOW ABOUT YOURSELF, DO YOU FEEL CONFIDENT OR DO YOU THINK YOU NEED MORE AS A KUMU?) Definitely yes as far as what we were talking about the language and I think it's basically what you've around now to keep you interested in the culture. You never stop. (DO YOU NEED TO LEARN MORE ABOUT, HOW DO YOU FEEL?) I think what I need to grow is to go back to learn more the language. The history so when I share. (DO YOU THINK HULA IS ALL THAT, THE LANGUAGE?) No, yah I grew to now because I'm getting so involved in different competitions. I think hula is history, it's not only dance, before was dance because I'm a performer, I love to dance. I love to dance weather it be Polynesian, hula kahiko, it's just dance itself that I love. (DO YOU THINK HULA IS COMING BACK TO THE BASICS?) Yah, it is coming back, I can see the more people want to come back, and more learn the tradition part, like the language, even the real ancient type of kahiko. (NOW YOU SEE YOUNGER PEOPLE THAN YOU TODAY THAT CALL THEMSELVES KUMU AND HAVE HALAU'S, DO YOU SEE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEIR VERSION AND YOURS?) I think, like I said it depends on you kumu hula. I feel every kumu hula has their own style, they have picked up what is comfortable for them and how they want to live their life in hula and I don't see a time period, I see individual. I think

individual for their own style, they carry on from what they've learned from their kumu.

(HAVE YOU LEARNED SOME TRADITIONAL CHANTS, DANCING, DO YOU KNOW THERE ARE SOME EXISTING?) Yah, to me No Luna Kaalakai. I learned that from Uncle Robert Waialeale. (DO YOU TEACH THAT TO YOUR CHILDREN?) No, I kind of got away from that. (WHY DO YOU GET AWAY FROM IT?) Because it's harder, because we don't have the time to share. It's just that there's so much happening today you move on and you tend to forget, you tend to forget. (DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT OTHER ONES YOU LEARNED?) Kaulilua, A Ko'olau. (CAN YOU RECALL WHEN YOU LEARNED THOSE CHANTS IF THEY TOLD YOU WERE THOSE CHANTS CAME FROM?) the history yah. No they didn't tell, they just taught it. That was from Uncle Robert Kalani. I was in high school in the '60's maybe. (ARE YOU GOING TO BE TEACHING THESE CHANTS TO YOUR CHILDREN?) No, I would like to go back, but I need to refresh it. In fact I just talked to Uncle Robert and I know it doesn't look like he's getting older, but I know he's getting up there so I just talked to him and he said lola I am willing to share with you, call me and let's get together Wednesday and Thursday and every Wednesday and Thursday I have other things to do, so I really got to make time to get together with him.

(WHEN YOU THINK OF CHANTS RIGHT AWAY YOU THINK OF HIM, DO YOU THINK HE'S THE ONLY ONE ON THE ISLAND THAT CAN TEACH YOU THIS OR THAT THAT'S THE ONLY PERSON YOU FEEL DIRECTED TO?) Yah, I feel directed to him, that's who is willing to share with me. Other kumus are too busy, they are so wrapped up. I feel they want to grow to so they're doing what they want to do on that end, but yah, there are certain kumus you don't feel comfortable with because you feel the competition. (WHEN YOU WANT TO GO BACK AND ASK DO YOU WANT TO LEARN THEIR STYLE OR JUST THE CHANTS?) Yah, because I like their style and because I want to learn what they know that I haven't learned yet. Like Kealii Richelle. He has learned from what I understand, his grandparents in Hana and he is young. Like he is 30 and I wouldn't mind. I like his style but I don't have the time and right now we are competitors so it's harder. It comes to the point that after a while they are afraid to share.

(HOW ABOUT WORKSHOPS DO YOU THINK THE OLD PEOPLE WITH KNOWLEDGE IS TOO FAR TO GO BACK TO?) No, I don't think that would be to old to go back to. In fact I talked to Uncle George Holokai, but I need the time to get him here and his timing too so no I'd like to learn more. Aunty Yamashi, I didn't take hula from her, but I sent my niece to take hula from her and she says I know there's so much competition between kumus but

you just do your own thing, your doing fine and she used to give me so much encouragement even up to last year. When before she passed away. I called her up and I wanted some information from her and she said she was too tired and she had all her infos stored away and she didn't have time to pull it out because she's not well, but she said you just carry on with what you do, if your feel it is right and comfortable for you, you do what is right.