

Nana I Na Loea Hula
Kumu Hula: Vicky Takamine
Interviewer: Lovina Le Pendu
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(ALoha VICKY.) Aloha. (CAN YOU GIVE ME YOUR FULL GIVEN NAME?)

My name is Victoria Myrtle Hanaka'ulani-o-kamamalu Holt Takamine. (CAN YOU TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR NAME?) My name comes from my great grandmother, Hanaka'ulani-o-kamamalu, who was married to, on the Holt side, to George Ho'onewanewa-o-nalani Holt. And the name was given to me by my grandmother. I was born shortly after the death of her oldest child, who was also Victoria Hanaka'ulani-o-kamamalu. (DO YOU TEACH PRESENTLY?) I am presently teaching. I have my own halau, "Pua Ali'i 'Ilima". I'm also teaching at the University of Hawai'i, teaching Hawaiian chant and dance and the Hawaiian music class there. And I also teach at Leeward Community College, a Hawaiiana course, and The Dances of Hawai'i in the HPE department. (YOU SAID YOU STARTED YOUR HALAU IN THE BACKYARD OF AUNTY VERNA WILSON?) Yeah! Aunty Verna had a group of women that were at Aiea High School and I was teaching, helping Leina'ala with her halau at that time and she said, "Oh, why don't you come and teach?." So she got a group of students together and my first lesson was in her patio in Ai'ea. And from there the halau grew and I moved to

my own home for a little while and it just got too big, so we ended up working out of a dance studio in Waimalu area, and then when that closed down, we are now presently rehearsing in the Kalakaua Rec. Center in Kalihi. (AND WHERE DO YOUR STUDENTS COME FROM?) My students now come from all over. (NOT JUST AI'EA?) Not even just O'ahu. I have some students that come in to the University initially, but they live on Maui. So during the school season they come to hula, from September through May, and then they go home for summer vacation and when they come back, they come back to hula.

(CAN YOU TELL ME AT WHAT AGE YOU FIRST LEARNED HULA?) I started dancing probably at a very young age by watching television and watching my mother dance, my mother used to dance with the Alama Sisters, and I took formal lessons with Auntie Maiki at about the age of 15 when she was at Ke'eaumoku Street. (HOW LONG DID YOU STUDY UNDER HER?) I studied with her off and on probably until 1975 when I graduated, I mean I'd studied with her consistently until I graduated from high school in 1965 and then she put me in a lu'au show at the "Queen Surf" with Ka'upena Wong who was the emcee at the time. And I used to work with her at the Moana Hotel when Auntie Maiki was the featured solo dancer there and was going back to hula off and on, and then I went to Japan and

did some dancing there and came back. But then she opened her hula classes for kumu hula in 1970. And I started, well I think that was around 1971 when I started with her again, but I didn't graduate with that first graduating class.

(CAN YOU TELL ME SOME OF YOUR EXPERIENCES WHILE YOU WERE WITH THIS KUMU HULA?) With Auntie Maiki? (YES. METHODS? DISCIPLINE?) The first thing we learned was basic hands and feet, so she had a special song that she had created just for us, and it taught us all the basic hand gestures and the feet movements, foot patterns, that went with these. And so we started learning how to speak the language, or understanding the language, from the first day we walked into class. We always had a test at the end of the month, so if we were in the Friday class, the last Friday of the month was set aside for words and translation for whatever mele or whatever song we had learned that month. And she would pull things out of the hat that we had had several months before, so you had to really keep on your toes. But we were expected to learn the words to the song, the translation, we wrote all of the movements down, the basic gestures, we all had to keep a little folder where we also did research on all of the songs that we learned and the places that we studied, so it was quite intensive. (DID YOU UNIKI FROM HER?) I graduated from her in 1974?

1975. (FOR OLAPA OR KUMU HULA?) We graduated as *olapa ha'apa'a* and kumu hula at the same time.

(WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO BE A TEACHER?) I don't know that when I started dancing with Aunty Maiki I wanted to. . . I didn't know that I was going to be a teacher at the time. I just had this love for the hula and the art form and the culture itself. And so, as the years went on, when she opened her class for kumu hula, I was invited to come back and study with her, and I knew, at that time, that that's what I wanted to do. In fact I was dancing with Zulu at the time and he wouldn't give me the Friday nights off so I quit. I told him, "You don't give me Friday nights off, I quit your show." He ended up giving me the night off so I could study with Aunty Maiki.

(WHAT GIVES YOU THE MOST JOY IN TEACHING?) I think it's sharing different experiences with the students. To see somebody get really involved through that. I really feel that probably the best thing for me is to watch them develop as a dancer and open new doors for them to develop self-confidence in themselves, to develop grace, to nurture somebody to the point where they'll really want more of the Hawaiian culture and the language than just the movements to the dance.

(IN YOUR STYLE OF DANCING OR YOUR WAY OF TEACHING, WERE YOU

INFLUENCED BY YOUR TEACHER OR OTHERS?) Well, because Auntie Maiki was my only teacher, I don't think that I could get away from her style of dance. I think that that's always gonna be with me. Of course, when you leave you develop, you go your own way, but the basic is always there, the basic foundation that she's laid for me will always be there. So I think I carry on her style of dancing, pretty much. (DID YOU TAKE FROM OTHER TEACHERS AFTER HER?) Not really. I had Auntie Nona Beamer in school, in high school, but that wasn't a regular class; that was just occasionally here and there throughout school. But nobody else. (YOU JUST TOOK WORKSHOPS?) Workshops, yea, and the State Council. Not formal training.

(CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT YOUR WAY OF TEACHING IN YOUR HALAU?)

When the students come to me, the first thing I tell them is that I might not be the right teacher for them. I don't feel that everybody...that I'm the right teacher for everybody, so that if they find that the way I'm teaching or that they're not getting anything out of it, I don't feel badly if they want to move on. I do feel that if they come in and they want to adapt to my style that the first thing we do is we train in kahiko first, and I start with their feet. But I teach them a text or a song in dance the first day they walk into class because the important things about dance is not just the movements; the important thing about the dance is the text.

And so, for me, just teaching feet and hands have no meaning. It is not Hawaiian. What you want to get out of this mele is the text to the dance, and so the text comes along with the feet. So I'll teach them a song right away. I want to get them moving. I want to get them involved. I want them to feel that they can accomplish a chant or a song in a short period of time. I want to start getting them feeling very confident in their own ability. (HOW MANY DIFFERENT CLASSES DO YOU HAVE?) Right now I have a children's class - they range in age from 5 to 11. And then I have a beginning women's class - they start from about 12 years old and run up to the early 20's. Then I have my intermediate/advanced class - they range in age from 16 to 40-something. And then I have an adult women's class that is just hula auwana, and that class is probably mid 20's to late 40's.

(DO YOU UNIKI YOUR STUDENTS?) No. I think probably eventually I will, but I'm not ready at this point to take on the responsibility of the uniki. I think that entails a lot of responsibility that I'm going to have to burden. I mean I'm going to have to shoulder for the students because you are responsible from then on for everything that that person does.

(WHAT KIND OF ADVICE DO YOU GIVE TO YOUR HAUMANA IF THAT PERSON WILL CONTINUE YOUR WORK?) I would hope that they would continue to learn; that they will always, I hope, be humble and have

humility; I hope that they've got the foundation and whatever they do, whatever they teach, they should teach with the idea of laying a foundation for that next generation, something upon which they can build upon, but that they are constantly and always researching and learning themselves so that they don't know all the answers. I mean I don't know all the answers and I don't think my students will know all the answers, and there's no way that Auntie Maiki has given me all of the answers where I can give to my students.

(WHAT DO YOU THINK OF HULA KAHIKO OF TODAY?) Well, I think hula kahiko has evolved. It's not the same that was 50 years ago or 20 years ago for that matter. We, as a people, have evolved and have changed and, therefore, our likes and our dislikes have changed, and we tend to do the things that we like and tend to shut aside the things that we didn't like. So if we learned something from Auntie Maiki that we didn't really care for, we don't carry that on to the next generation. So those things have a tendency to be lost. I kind of hope that there are some people that have learned things that will carry on because we don't have the same feeling. I may choose to carry on something different. I think we have to be careful to stay within the guidelines of what is "hula kahiko". I think that's a very gray area where we, as kumu hula, tend to kind of cross over

sometimes. Sometimes we get too creative in our efforts. (CAN YOU GIVE ME YOUR DEFINITION OF HULA KAHIKO?) Of hula kahiko? Well, for me hula kahiko is traditional Hawaiian dance accompanied by chanting and traditional Hawaiian percussion instruments as opposed to hula auwana which is Hawaiian dance accompanied by singing and Western instruments and, at times, the traditional percussion instruments also, but primarily the fact that it's sung with Western accompaniment.

(DO YOU THINK HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE IS IMPORTANT IN HULA?) I don't think how you can teach hula or perform without knowing the language. I'm not talking about conversation. I'm talking about understanding of the language, of the text, and the different *kaona* involved, the inner meaning, the hidden meaning, and the places that they are written for, who they are written for. I think that all comes through the language.

(WHO DO YOU CONSIDER HULA MASTERS?) Well, Lokalia Montgomery and 'Iolani Luahine and her grandmother Keahi Luahine. I think they were proponents(?). Pua Ha'aheo was also a teacher of Aunty Maiki, in addition with Aunty Maiki. I think today we look to Pat Bacon, we look to Aunty Edith McKinzie, Ka'upena Wong.

(IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HULA KAHIKO TODAY?) There are dances that we say that have a genealogy that have come down from Keahi

Luahine to Lokalia to Auntie Maiki and to my generation and to the next generation, and those dances we want to try and keep as they were taught: songs like "Kaulilua I Ke Anu 'O Wai'ale'ale", "Au'a'ia", "A Ko'olau", to a certain extent. "Aia La 'O Pele". Most of those chants have a genealogy. Then you have text where the chant, the text, is of older 16th century, so we don't have a dance for it. So we end up creating a dance to illustrate this text to enhance the text. If you keep it within the style, yeah, but it's not really traditional. I think it's evolved. It's something that's re-created. It's a traditional form that has evolved from what we know of as being hula kahiko. (SOME KUMU HULA HAVE WRITTEN CHANTS. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THAT?) That's the same thing. It's not ancient because you just wrote it so you can't call it ancient hula, hula kahiko. It is written in the style of hula kahiko, so you need to add that word "style" next to it - "ancient style hula". Then I think you're safe. Which you say that this is ancient or hula kahiko.

(BESIDE HULA, WHAT OTHER THINGS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?) Well, I'm always still taking classes in language. I try and sit in on Hawaiian language classes here. I have a foundation that is interested in perpetuating Hawaiian culture, things of the Hawaiian culture. I've done a film on the hula: "Kumu Hula: Keepers of a Culture", a documentary film on

hula instructors today and what they think of the hula and what's happening to the hula. I'd like to do more of that. We have a hula festival that we sponsor annually at "Lani Ku Honua" out at Campbell estate. And this year we want to include more Hawaiian culture so we'd like to bring in a group of students from Moloka'i that is involved with the makahiki program up there, doing a makahiki presentation along with the hula, because, you know, hula and sports and dancing were all part of the makahiki festivities.

(WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE NEW KUMU HULA OF TODAY?) We've got lots of young kumu hula that are sprouting up. I think that's healthy, really. I think we want to nurture that interest in the hula. We don't want to discourage that. But I also feel that they need to look to their elders more often and not assume that they know everything that they need to know to teach. In that sense, they really have to go back to the source, go back to a kumu, *kumu* meaning "source", and if you are going to be the source then you have to be the source in everything, not only just teaching movement and teaching dance, but in teaching the language and the history and handling personal relationships, how you handle yourself in public, how you present yourself in public is as important as... (SO IT COMES DOWN TO "YOUR SOURCE IS IMPORTANT".) Right. You need to have that

source; you need to have that root. And so if they don't have one it's time that they really should think about looking for somebody that's going to be willing to take on that responsibility, and it's hard if you've already started. But if you've already started, you're already set in your own ways. It's time for you to listen to somebody else say, "Well, you can't really do that." I think if they have that desire they'll find somebody who would be willing to. (DO YOU THINK THAT'S BECAUSE OF THE DIFFERENCES IN GENERATIONS? WHEN YOU TELL THEM THAT THERE IS A LOT OF PEOPLE OUT THERE THAT THEY CAN GO TO, THEY DON'T FEEL LIKE THEY NEED IT.)

They don't feel like they need it because their concern is, "Oh. I'm just going to teach hula and we're just going to enter competition." I think part of that stems from the fact that the competition encourages new groups to enter just for the sake of competing, just for the sake of showing and demonstrating the hula. They are not nurturing the entire hula. They're not nurturing everything that is involved in the hula. (SOMETIMES THEY'RE MISSING THE POINT.) Yea. Your link to your ancestors. The link to the past. I was really annoyed one day several years ago. I saw an add in the paper: "Hula Dancers for Merry Monarch Hula Competition." They were looking for dancers to enter Merry Monarch. It was an ad in the paper, and I wanted to call to find out who that was. But that's not the point. That

wasn't the point of Merry Monarch to begin with. I'm not saying it's Merry Monarch's fault. I think it's the kumu's fault, whoever is looking for dancers. That's their kuleana, it's their responsibility. But I think that's not a good result of what is happening.

(DO YOU THINK WORKSHOPS ON HULA ARE IMPORTANT?) I think it's important because it opens avenues that are normally closed for a lot of the students. Sometimes when you go to a halau you are expected to stay with that halau, that kumu hula, and not be able to take lessons from somebody else. And you will find that other teachers have lots of valuable things that they share with your students. So if you have a chance to have a workshop and a chance, like at the University you can study with Noe Zuttermeister and myself and we try to bring in somebody to come in to teach, but you can go there and take hula from Zuttermeister and me at the same time and not have any commitment to each one of us just outside of that class period. So I have students from Kaha'i and I have students from other different halau that can come to the University and feel safe not hurting their kumu hula by taking classes with me. . . . I think if you're going to develop a style and a lineage then that's important that you have that. I like the opportunity of studying with other people occasionally, but I think that, you know, you just cannot go here and there and everywhere

and expect to come out. (SO THE WORKSHOP IS TO WIDEN. . .) Yea, to broaden your perspective of the hula and to be aware of what's going on around you is important.

(DO YOU THINK WORKSHOPS SHOULD BE CONDUCTED FOR KUMU HULA OR STUDENTS?) I think both. I think the workshops for kumu hula have to be more in-depth. But workshops for students have to be more basic. And by "in-depth" I mean when you're going to teach a kumu hula a mele they need to know how to chant it, how to drum it, how to dance it, and how to teach it and all the little things about it. When you teach for students, all they're going to need to learn is how to dance it. But as a kumu hula, if you're going to do this for a kumu workshop, then they have to know all the different aspects of that dance in order to be able to make use of that.

(WHAT KIND OF WORKSHOP WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE? ONLY HULA OR GENEALOGY, HISTORY?) Oh, I think all of those. What would be nice is if you could focus on, say, "Okay. We're going to do this particular chant for Ka'ahumanu and we want to talk about her birth place at Hana and Ka'uiki." So if we're going to do that then my idea of that workshop was: the workshop will be held in Hana; we'll go and look at the site, Ka'uiki; we're going to talk about the things that happened there; we're going to talk about her genealogy and why these things are mentioned in the chant and

where these places are. So you'll have an experience about that hula, the history of that place. (ONE CHANT CAN HAVE MANY DIFFERENT STYLES. DO YOU THINK IT'S GOOD TO LEARN DIFFERENT STYLES?) I think it depends on the focus of the workshop. If you're going to do a historical perspective on this chant then I would like to see presented the different styles of chanting. So I would like to see the Zuttermeisters. I think it would be important that you have somebody come in and do the Zuttermeister version of Kaulilua, do the Maiki Aiu version of Kaulilua, do Kaha'i Topolinski's version of Kaulilua, and have them explain where their version came from and why and who taught it to them and if there were any changes that were made to the dance as they were learning it or teaching it, why did they change it. Same thing with Aunty Maiki. And this, I think, should be for kumu hula because if their knowledge (?) will in(?) their dance then they can understand more or less. Now whether you want to teach that version of..., whether Aunty Kau'i would want this version of her Kaulilua to go out would have to be dependent on her, whether she just wants to do it for demonstration and just show that, and then that's it and nobody gets to learn it, and that's fine. But you have to respect them as a kumu. That would be, really, kind of difficult because those are serious hula pahu and, for some people, very personal. (WHILE

THESE PEOPLE ARE ALIVE WE SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE, OTHERWISE HULA WILL BE GONE.) And then you have to approach them in a manner that is more receptive to them, and then you have to respect their wishes on how they plan to do that. . . .

(IN YOUR HALAU, DO YOU HAVE PEOPLE THAT YOU LOOK UPON WHO WILL CONTINUE YOUR WORK?) Yea. I think so. I have a few students that will probably be willing to carry on and become kumu hula eventually. (AS A KUMU HULA, IS IT IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO HAVE SOMEBODY CARRY ON?) Yea. I think so. I would like to leave students behind that can carry on and come out of my halau and develop as a kumu hula in their own [way].

(DO YOU COMPOSE?) I've composed a couple of chants that I haven't correographed or anything yet, but it's just sitting there right now.

(DO YOU JUDGE?) I have judged but I hate judging. (YOU DON'T LIKE JUDGING?) No. I don't like to judge, because I'm too busy enjoying the dance that I forget to be critical. I like everybody that comes up and I look at their interpretation as being theirs so I don't think I'd make a good judge. I just enjoy watching everybody!

(HOW ABOUT ENTERING COMPETITION? YOU DON'T ENTER TOO MANY?) No. I traditionally enter the Kamehameha Day Competition. I've entered Merry Monarch. I think it's important for the dancers. I like to enter

something once in a while, at least once a year. It gives them something to work towards. Then I can spend that much time polishing technique work when, normally, we would just be learning routine and not really being really strict with some of that stuff. (IT HELPS THEM.) Yea. It helps to just kind of fit a tone in their technique. (HOW ABOUT YOUNGSTERS FOR KEIKI HULA? YOU DON'T HAVE YOUNG ONES?) I do, but they're not at the level where I think they are ready to compete yet, and I don't stress that at that age level. I just want them to come in and hula and chant with me. It's not serious. (DO YOU TEACH YOUR HULA IN THE HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE?) I'm beginning to do that a little bit more than I normally do. My young ones are pretty much akamai. I can carry on semi-conversations in English and Hawaiian with them, so I float in and out of that, and my advanced students are getting to the point where [*end of side I*] they are able to speak a little bit more Hawaiian.

(DO YOU CONDUCT WORKSHOPS IN YOUR HALAU TOO?) Yea. I like to do that. (DO YOU TEACH YOUR STUDENTS THE SAME WAY YOU WERE TAUGHT?) Yea. They made their own. . .[*end of side II*]