

Aloha Dalire

When you're brought up in a family that consists of your mother and your older sister being dancers. I was put in the hula at the age of three when I didn't have a mind of my own yet. My mother and my older sister and I were students of George Naope. I started at the age of three and I continued with Uncle George until I was ten. At that point he moved back to the Big Island and I stayed out of the hula for a year. Then my sister opened up in Uncle George's studio and I continued on with her, and my mother. Eventually my sister stopped teaching and my mother continued. My mother's name was Mary Kay Keolaulani Wong. My mother loved the hula and she could speak Hawaiian fluently which I cannot do. I suppose you could say she was the backbone of my hula. She was always there at practices and if you didn't remember the stick was always there waiting.

Nowadays a lot of kids resent that when you push them a little bit too hard. But I have to be thankful to my mother because without her I probably wouldn't be enjoying the hula the way I am today.

Uncle George was my first kumu and he taught me grace. Something that I think all hula dancers need. He taught me to enjoy my hula and feel it and I feel that's the kind of teaching you need when you dance. You had to project the hula. I think his influence was being a perfectionist. Uncle George taught mainly auwana. When I was taking hula, kahiko was not popular and did not have the respect that it has today. People were afraid to the kahiko in those days because of the kickback from the kapu. If you didn't perform the kahiko properly things could happen to you. These are things I remember hearing when I was little. This was in the fifties.

Uncle George was trying to train dancers that flowed with the music and with the tempo. He wanted us to feel that certain feeling that is needed to project the dance into the audience. I stayed with Uncle George for eight years.

I went on to my sister, Lokelani Anderson after Uncle George. Uncle George uniki'd my mom in 1955 and my sister uniki'd from him but my uniki came under my mother. At that time Tahitian and Maori were starting to come into the field of hula. People started to change the scope of their dancing. It wasn't so much hula anymore but Polynesian dancing. This was in the sixties. My priorities changed and I left hula. I think I left because I had been it since 3. I needed a change to broaden my outlook on dance. I needed time to see if this is what I wanted.

In 1965 I started to get involved with Aloha Week. I would go to the pageants and I became very close with <sup>Elke</sup> ~~Mary Kay~~ Ross-Lane who was the executive secretary of Aloha Week at that time. She was the one who coordinated all these pageants for Aloha Week. She was the one that influenced me in terms of research goes. Making sure that if you're planning to do a certain song you understand it thoroughly before going into it. Looking up your work and making sure it all pieces together. She was the one that started me into kahiko. In Aloha Week whenever they have the investitures of the alii kahiko plays a very important role. She had come to the first uniki that my mother had in 1963. She heard me chant and she thought I was someone she wanted to train. She took me and started to bring me out of my shell.

My mother needed a chanter for her unikis so I began to listen to the chanting records and imitating what I heard. I listened to records and tapes of Iolani Luaine which Uncle George was a student of. And I tried to imitate her. Now you can only imitate a person for so long. You've got to start finding your own territory. So when they hear your style is distinctive. So I guess when I first got into kahiko I was self-taught by a record.

I was fifteen years old and Auntie Elke wanted me to go deeper into the training but I felt I was too young yet and I wasn't ready yet. Auntie Elsie passed away in 1968 because I kept telling her I would go and I never did go when she was alive.

I started teaching for my Mom at the age of fifteen. At the same time I started to chant for the Aloha Week Youth Court. I uniki'd from my mom at the age of 18. I had to pass certain tests to become a kumu but it wasn't anything like the requirements we read about in the Unwritten Literature or of Ahalaus like Auntie Maiki's. It was basically a lot of paper work and research into different phases of hula. and making sure you understood what you were doing and what you were getting into.



I still don't feel like I am a profesional teacher because I'm still learning. I consider myself higher than the students taht come to me but still a student. This revival of hula is great because when I was grwoing up there was always a fearof going into the kahiko because of the fear of breaking a kapu. and sufferring the consequences. I was not able to learn what I consider the real ancinet hula becasue when I was trainnng people were not as open and they wouldn't share. They would just show you and teach you so much and tha't was it. Some of them felt we weren't ready to learn more, some just didn't want to share. because they felt the knowledge was therirs alone and no one else's. But I believe there is a great body of knowledge in the hula that is yet to be uncovered. I beleive all hula before the arrival of Cook is Kahiko.

I started to teach on my own in 1975 when I ventured out from my mother's studio. at the Chinese Cultural Plaza for three years. In 1978 my mother had gotten sick so I returned to teach with her. My mom passed away in November of 79 and I started on my own again.

Hula is a way of expressing inner feelings that cannot be expressed any other way. I was taught that you have to imitate your kumu and dance exactly like her but tha'ts not how I teach. I tell my kids I don't want them imitating me becasue when I dance the hula I am expressing what I felel in me and what I felel inside cannot be imitated becasue everybody is different. If you stick to the what your kumu has taught you but express it with ouyour own inner feelings the student has a better understanding o f the song. I want the feelijngs of my studentws to come out. I would love for someone to say I dance like my kumu but at thesame time I want to be recognized for myself.

It's important that the haumana are being given more today because if a kumu witholds you are leaving the students with a half-baked understanding and perspective of the hula.

The students are not being given soemthing completely we are giving them half. It's like Hawaiian words, the kauna. They are giving the students one meaning without giving the hidden meaning. Not being able to learn completely because the student has not been given all. I guess it's fu u just the way of the old scholl school. I suppose the kupuna were afraid if the knowledge went into the wrong hands it would get lost so it was only given to a few chosen students.

I i like the Kalakaua period becasue it was part of the transition in the dance. Tbe chants began to be based more on the present than on legends. I can identify more with Kalakaua than I can with Pele and the legends.

I think the hula <sup>kahiko</sup> will never die because of all the creativity going on in the hula kahiko. Kumu are creating their own cahnts now and I don't think it will ever stop grwoing.