

Nana I Na Loea Hula

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(Do you teach presently) I just teach off and on. Special occasions. (And where is that?) I teach with Hoakalai Kaumau'u. (At her halau?) Yes. (Where) Up in Nu'uaniu. (Kahiko and Auwana) No, just Kahiko. I've taught auwana before but my strength is kahiko. I would say I started teaching around 1975. When I started teaching with aunty I taught all ages. I taught children, I taught women, I taught men. This was through the State Council on Hawaiian Heritage Programs. (Now?) I usually teach men. Adult men. I was exposed to hula from when I was little because my sisters were dancing with Louise Kaleiki. And my family background is a background of hula people. But I was not involved in the hula until I returned to Hawaii from college. That was in 1972. I was enrolled in the University of Hawaii East West Center. This was before the renaissance. The renaissance was just starting to begin and there were a number of students that were interested in the hula, but my real formal introduction into the hula was when Aunty Edith McKinzie who was a student at that time with me at the university. She brought me to the state council classes for the state foundation. Aunty Hoakalei was the overseer, but Aunty Edith was teaching the beginners men class at that time. (How long with her?) The way the program was set up Aunty Hoakalei was the overall teacher and I've been with...well I was with Edith for that one semester and then I moved into Aunty Hoakalei's classes after that and I've been with Aunty Hoakalei ever since. I was introduced when I was brought there and then I stayed with her from that time on. It was about 1973, the beginning of 1973. She needed a man to teach her men's classes. I went in with Aunty Hoakalei and it was with the understanding that she was going to teach me to become a teacher. I taught all the beginners men classes at all those workshops because the hula master were they wanted to teach the advanced men. That's Uncle Henry Pa and Uncle George Holokai,

and some of the men that were coming. They wanted to teach the advanced men. Nobody wanted to teach the beginner men. Only kahiko. There were other men. All of them kind of just stopped and didn't stay around for too long. I stayed and I think I was kind of chosen by Auntie at that time. She wanted to work with me. It's kind of weird to think how it all happened, but it just all happened that I ended up being there. (Teaching methods.) Teaching methods at that time are the same that we do now. It's just you get up in front of the class and it's primarily through dance you get up and dance in front of them and you go around and you correct, but primarily you standing in front of the class and doing the dance with the students and you going around and correcting them. Physically correcting their bodies as they're dancing. And small classes. As a student I sat in the back of the advanced class and I hoopaa. That's how I learned to hoopaa. And then I got up and danced and Auntie was in the front showing us how to dance, and I followed and that's how I learned how to dance. And to oli we had a special class for the teachers where we just worked on chanting. Auntie Hoakalei (teacher). It was all though imitating that we learned but we had separate classes for each of those things. (Taught?) Mostly men. Older men and teenager men. (Hoakalei only teacher?) The real serious teacher over all this time. Well, I travelled with Auntie Hoakalei. I met Auntie Io and I was able to travel with Auntie Io for about 3 1/2 years with artist in the schools program and Auntie Iolani was Auntie Hoakalei's teacher. Iolani Luahine. So I was very very fortunate to through Auntie Hoakalei to have spent a lot of time with Auntie Io as well. Auntie Hoakalei said only two men have ever danced with Auntie Io professionally. I was one of the two. The other was Joseph Kahaulilio. He was the other one that used to dance with Auntie Io. There was a part on our program where I did male dances so she could clothes and there was a part where Auntie Io and I danced so I travelled with her and we did all the artists in the schools programs throughout the state for about three years with Auntie Io and Auntie Hoakalei, so in that way I just through living day day day with them

although they were the same school really--one just a generation above. She was very influential though. My exposure with Auntie Io was very much an influence in my life. (When travelling with the two you were under Auntie Io or both?) Well, see auntie Hoakalei was taught by Auntie Io so Auntie Hoakalei's dances all came from Auntie Io wasn't really teaching but we were doing all the same dances and if there was something she would say--it was all coming from the same source. It was just two generations of people. It wasn't like there were two different teachers they were really the same. they were coming from the same source. Auntie Io was a generation above. She was Auntie Hoakalei's teacher. But it made a difference for me to physically be around her over those years. (Other teachers?) Not really. (Workshops?) Yeah, I don't consider a workshop. We were always taught that when you go to learn from a different teacher that you leave your style outside of the door and you open your mind up and you open your body up and you just copy the style of that teacher. And don't judge that teacher as being right or wrong because she's different. (Who taught that?) Auntie Hoakalei. I went to many many workshops and all the different people were still alive from Auntie Maiki to Auntie Henry. The whole gang was still alive. Lokalia was alive, Auntie Alice Namakalua, Eleanor Hiram, but I don't consider that taking. I met all of them. I was alive when all of them were there. I was in the teachers meeting with all of them because I was teaching the beginners men. I was kind of like the young kid and I just was there. I didn't say anything I just had nothing to say. I was in their presence and I felt very luckily to have been in the presence of all those people. (Perform with others?) No. Always with her. Always in her concerts. Whatever we did was with Auntie in one way or the other. (Teach mostly to:) to carry on a tradition. My orientation in the hula has always been to perpetuate culture and to keep the culture alive. And there's nothing wrong with putting on shows and being an entertainer. There's some part of that element in hula, but I've been very fortunate that my job have has kept me financially above ground so I never have to go



out and use my hula to make money. So I've been lucky that my hula has been something very special. It's my identity, it's my culture, it's my expressions, but it's not necessarily been an occupation that I have to do to make economically to survive. (Uniki?) Auntie Hoakalei doesn't uniki. Auntie Hoakalei didn't uniki from Auntie Io. Because uniki is something that for those people are so so deep that those god--you either have to keep those gods to uniki or you just go through different levels of training that's all. (Did she talk to you about why she doesn't uniki?) Because what I just told you. Because of the gods. In order to go through a formal graduation ceremony you have to keep the gods in an alter and in order to keep the gods in an alter you have to what the Hawaiians say, feed the gods. In order to feed the gods you have to not be a non-Christian. And since we're all raised in a Christian environment. Hawaiian gods aren't such that you feed them today and forget about them tomorrow. If you dedicated those gods to you life you have to keep them for your whole life. Not only when you want to dance hula. And if you don't keep them they turn back on you. Spiritually you become devoured. Uniki today is different than uniki today, but for people that are in traditional hula a traditional uniki is not possible today because of the kapu system that existed when uniki was really practiced. So today it's kind of taken a different meaning than the real strict traditional meaning. It's evolving into a different use. Uniki today I think they just mean a recital or a graduation from one level to another. I was coaxed into teaching. I was interested but I was afraid to teach. And I learned through Auntie Hoakalei that there is a whole way that you learn to become a teacher the same way you learn to become a dancer or a chanter so for that reason I was very fortunate that she was there and she made a very smooth transition between being a teacher and passing the ball to me in the class. And she would come in and critique my classes from the back and guide me through my classes and when she knew that I was not doing so well or when I was down emotionally she would come in and kind of move me through the

class so I had her guidance and very strong presence in the class. That really gave me the confidence to teach otherwise I wouldn't have taught. Aunty Io was a very very inspirational person. Aunty Io was brought to me by Aunty Hoakalei. And both of them have played an important part in my life, but my connections to the hula was before all of that through my grandparents. My great grandmother was Keelihiwa Napoka. She was my grandmother's grandmother. She was on my mother's side. She was a court dancer and it was interesting when I had mentioned her name to Kawena Pukui Kawena's mother had told her about Keelihiwa. She was a famous dancer. She went to Ka'u to perform for Maui. Were from Maui. From Ulupalakua. And in my family we had a lot of dancers. Some of the people that came out was Manuel Silva who was a famous hula master who was a cousin of my grandmother's. He was from Maui. He was a dancer and chanter in Honolulu. Everyone kind of knows about Uncle Manuel. He was the one that taught kahiko for Louise Kaleiki. He was a chanter. And from Keelihiwa then my grandmother's sister was a hula dancer and she studied with Kumanaiwa who was a famous hula master on Maui. And she is still alive today, but has given up dancing. She's a deaconess in a Hawaiian church. She's here on Oahu living near me, but she gave up dancing when she became a deaconess for the Hawaiian church. So the hula blood was in my family. (Name?) Elizabeth Chun Ling. Their names, their maiden names, for the two sisters was Kalehuawehe. My grandmother's maiden name was Kalehuawehe. And it's said my family's from that side of the island and through my family they did what was called the Haleakala dances which were dances done for Pele because Pele lived in Haleakala until very recent times. And everyone thinks of the Pele dances as coming from the Big Island, but there's a long tradition of Pele dances on that side of Maui where she was still erupting in the 1700s and up until the 1800s. They did the Haleakala dances that was what these people did. And when I trying to get into the hula my grandmother went to a couple of members of my family to be taught and things just didn't work out that it was passed to me so the way that I went was through the



State Foundation with Auntie Hoakalei and that was the other way was open. So it's like I just went to the ways that were open. But the hula was in our blood, our family's blood. My grandmother and them were the ones to see them all done, the Haleakala dances. I don't think they were every recorded. But it was a very strong tradition on that side of Maui. The whole hula tradition was very different. The kuahu they put limu kala on the kuahu. They used limu they didn't have maile and I have pictures of my grand aunt's graduation. He skirts are made out of the rootlets from the Hala tree. They use the hala, the roots and they smash it up and they make it real soft and I have pictures of their hala skirts and they have limu kala leis they used to put on the hula alter. And so it's a completely different tradition on that side. It was the dry side of Maui and a different environment but hula was very strong.

In terms of style I think styles are personal taste, so I'm comfortable with our style because that's how I was trained, but I realize that other people might have a different idea of what is pretty in their mind. And it's all right whatever they have in their mind to be pretty. The styles are different for everyone.

When I took a workshop it was like you went in there...you erased everything from your mind. The hard part was when you learned the same dance that you had learned one way before. Or that you were so paapono on learning it that way when you first learned that dance to learn it another way. That for me was the hardest because the tunes and motions are already part of your mind and they're a part of your body, and when you don't think you go back to what you used it for. So if I know a dance one way and they were going to teach it another way usually I don't go into that class because it really really would confuse me.

(Difficulties?) Not really. Well hula took over a major part of my life. Hula was a very very important part of my life. A

major part of my life. At least 15 years I would say when I was learning. And it was I worked and I did dance and that was what I was. So I had a very limited personal life and hula was a major part of my life, and it still is a part of my life, and it will be a part of my life until I get very old. I made choice, a commitment. And a commitment is not something for today or tomorrow. It's like in perptetuity the dances that you have and what you do.

With the state foundation we had whoever signed up for classes. People were given to you because they were coming to learn about the culture and learning about the traditions so there were hundreds and hundreds of people that came to learn beginning hula and intermediate hula in those days. And this was like the beginning of the renaissance so there were a lot and a lot of people and I had no choice since Auntie Hoakalei made the selections. But I look to each one of them as being a different challenge. They might have something physically that you have to overcome to teach or they might have a mental block and so for me it was my time for learning how to teach and it was a very exciting time for me. When I teach today it's who I want to teach. It's not open. I don't have open classes or anything like that. For special events or something that Auntie wants me to teach a group I'll teach. They're just mainly Auntie's people that I teach. Yeah, even Sissy. Neither of us have really stepped away from Auntie. It's part of Auntie hold on. She needs us with her and it's a good relationship, so it's just kept itself going all these years.

I think hula has changed. I think it's healthy for change. I think it has changed, but I don't think change is necessarily bad. The only thing that I see is bad is if we confuse our traditional hula with modern hula, and we don't keep the traditions traditions and the creative hulas and the modern hulas understand that we have a tradition and we keep them separate the classical ones. As long as we can keep what is traditional

traditional and then create and do all the wonderful things and the things that are fun to do within the culture. Stay today with it but have an understanding of where we come from and what's happening now is that the traditions in our hula is being lost and people are doing what they think are kahiko hulas that they're making up today. Well, I don't think that there are enough of the traditional people that are teaching and I think that we have to keep what is traditional traditional. And traditional to me is what has been passed on from one human being to another human being to another human being. The chant and the dance. And if you go to most kumu hulas today and ask them what they have in their repertoire that is traditional most of them don't have anything. They find the words in the archives and make up the motions and the tune which is good, it's not bad to do that, but also somewhere along the line they should have some training of where they have come from. Where we have come as Hawaiian over all these millenniums of time. We have to look back and look back at our classical traditions and understand those. To me what is hula kahiko is the classics. Are the ones that have been passed on from one generation to another. The motions and the voice through one human being touching another human being over a period of time.

Hula is just a tip of the ice berg in terms of culture. Hula is a reflection of the culture. It's the expression of the culture. The lyrical expression of culture. But it involves everything. Language is important because to appreciate the hula you have to be able to appreciate the language because only in Hawaii from what I can see in the Pacific are the words not separated from the dancing. You can elsewhere and you can listen to drums and people will dance, but in Hawaii the words have to be there in order to have dance. If you don't have the words you don't have dance. That's why it's important for dancing because dancing does not exist without words. The words first and then the dance.