

My mother taught hula so there were hula skirts on the walls, and the implements and music all around us. She never prodded my sister and I to go into the hula until we were interested. There was one day when she was spring cleaning and she took down all the hula skirts off to scrub the walls and my sister and I put on the skirts and began dancing. She looked at us and said, "You want to dance? I'll take you to class." And that's how I started. We must have been 3 or 4. My mother's name is Blossum Clark. I feel she's the very essence of the hula not only on stage but offstage as well. The essence of hula is to give out that's what she does. She always used the hula as a way of telling people about her love for Hawaii. Our home was a stopover place for strangers. Strangers were welcome and they would return again and again. I studied with my mother as long as I lived with her and I continue to study with her today. I only wish I had taken advantage of my grandmother's knowledge. I was with my mother from age 4 until I left at age 15. My mother taught me hula auwana. She did give my sister and I the fundamental steps in kahiko and was very strict that we did the steps correctly. I still teach those basics steps the way that she taught them to me. But she didn't say this is kahiko and this is auwana. It's only recently that there has been a clean separation of the two. The hula was just one dance back then. You approached it differently for one dance and then another. For kahiko, the emphasis was on the basic steps. When it came to the modern hulas, she allowed us to give more of our own personalities.

I didn't go through a uniki. It was interesting because my mother uniki'ed my grandmother who had taught her. By the time I was a teenager, my mother I guess was caught up in the times. During the time I was in school, there was no Hawaiian in class. We could take Spanish and French. So I did not uniki.

I did not take from anybody else although my mother encouraged my sister and to take from other kumu. Now I regret it but I do still consider myself a student and I will until the day I make. When you have the feeling that you've learned everything then you're depriving not only yourself but your students.

I began to teach 7½ years ago. My little girl was in kindergarten and I wanted her to dance so much but I wanted her to dance the way my mother had taught me, which was the way her mother had taught her. It was difficult because I knew I couldn't teach her alone. That would be too difficult for both of us.