

George Naope

I was born in Honolulu, in Kalihi on Feb. 25, 1928. My father and grandfather originally come from Kona. My grandfather was Harry Naope, composer and founder of the Haile Choir. He was one of the first traveling schoolteachers for the Department of Education and he was one of the first graduates of Lahainaluna. My father worked on the inter-island ships he married my mother and I was born in Honolulu ~~and~~ but raised in Hilo so I consider Hilo my home since most of my life has been spent here on the Big Island.

*Old Good.*

My first kumu was a woman who lived next door to my family in Hilo. She was Auntie Edith Kanakaole's mother. Her name was Mama Fujii, she was married to a Japanese man. She was short lady, even shorter than me. But she was a master of the hula. I studied under Mama Fujii for five years. I will always remember her. I started with Mama Fujii when I was four years old. I'll always consider her my kumu because she did the hard work. She was the one that gave me the basics and my foundation. The teacher that ~~didn't~~ laid the foundation should be the teacher you give the greatest credit to. That's the hardest thing to teach. Mama Fujii was no. 1 very, very strict. She and my great-grandmother were dear friends and that's the reason I went to hula. My great-grandmother told me that our kupunas, my great-great-great grandfather was a kumu paa so she felt someone else in the family had better learn the hula besides her son which was my grandfather. So it really wasn't a matter of me having a choice about learning or not learning.)

So my great-grandmother took me to live with her. She spoke only Hawaiian. She was one of these Royalists. Everything had to be Hawaiian, and everything had to be for Hawaii. She was the one that lived right next door to Mama Fujii and since Mama Fujii had hula classes, I had to go.