

Ulalia Ka'ai Berman

Ulalia Ka'ai Berman, a resource teacher with Department of Education's Hawaiian Studies Kupuna program, is kumu hula of Ulalia Hawaiian School of Dance located in Kailua-Kona.

Hula was taught to me at the age of one and a half years by an aunt. Because one of my legs was shorter than the other, hula was an exercise to even out my legs. At three years old, my brothers and sister took me to Pu'unui Playground where Rose Lane was teaching hula. She taught basically hapa haole songs, a lot of 'auana and no kahiko. Aunti Alice Namakelua also taught at this park. I thought she was so strict. Little did I know that she would be a great influence on me and many of the halau. At the age of seven, Daddy wanted me to learn from his cousin, Ku'uilei Stibbard, but, by this time, I was enrolled at Hula Halau 'O Māiki and on my way to the life that gave me so much.

I learned how to do the business end of the halau while in high school. I took care of registration, collecting tuition, checking who had which costumes, and who was ready. I learned from the ground up. When Aunti Māiki was called away, I taught. And to teach your peers when you are still in high school is not easy. So, I learned all these teaching techniques before I became a kumu.

The teachings of Aunti Māiki enriched us all as she shared the love of her mentors. I grew up with many people who were a part of the halau unit. Aunti Māiki would do research with Aunty Bina Mossman, or sit with Aunti Vicky or Aunty Genoa. They all were part of my hula family. I danced with Uncle Bill Lincoln and Aunti Lena Guerrero for Boat Days. I worked with different musicians, and had to learn how to dance to the different covers of "Alekokoi" because each musician had his own timing.

*I have so many memories,*  
Those were magical days in hula and ~~nobody can take away my memories of them.~~ Holoku balls, concerts at the Ala Wai <sup>a</sup>Boothouse and McKinley High School; luau shows at the Queen's <sup>Hilton Hawaiian Village</sup> Surf and the Tapa Room; <sup>boat arrivals</sup> Boat Days with Lena Guerrero and <sup>A</sup>lice Keawekane. We were surrounded <sup>u</sup>

with people and love for all that life had to offer.

We were one of the first young children to dance in what is known today as the "Gibson Mu'u". Everyone called them pajamas. But Aunti Vicky I'i gave Aunti Māiki that high neck "Mother Hubbard" style, and it became an insignia for the halau.

*And of course,*  
When we get older we would perform with hula skirts made with <sup>one hundred fifty</sup> 150 ti leaves <sup>two pua melia lei,</sup> or red ~~the~~ cellophane skirts and ~~the~~ and white sarongs that people called the "Dorothy Lamour look."

Hula competitions brought out kumu hula that we had never heard of from the different islands. We saw Aunti Edith Kanaka'ole and her daughters Pua and Nalani from the island of Hawai'i, Elaine Ka'opuiki from the island of Lana'i and different kumu hula from O'ahu. We knew Aunti Kau'i Zuttermeister because she would come to our halau to work on several projects with Aunti Kawena Pūku'i. *smil?*

By the 1970s Aunti Māiki had started a kumu class. The only requirement was the student's desire to learn. Having a young family at that time, I didn't know what my goals were. I couldn't envision where I was going to be, years down the road. At times, it shocked me that I was studying to become a kumu hula. But on August 27, 1973, I'ūniki as 'olapa with Aunti Māiki, and the following year I finished as kumu hula along with the Papa Lehua class. With the blessing of Aunti Māiki, I opened the Ulalia School of Hawaiian Dance in 1976 at my home in Nu'uano.

Throughout the years, my husband Kona and our children, Kaleihoku-o-kona, Analu Ka'ai, Ho'olaikahiluonalani, and Lononuiakea have supported me behind the scenes. I'm grateful to them because it's harder to be a kumu hula today than in the past. We have to be on top of everything, whereas while studying with Aunti Māiki, we took one thing at a time. The pace of life was slower and simpler: this week, a program for Tripler Army Hospital, next week a program for Aunti Bina Mossman. That was it. Today, the kumu hula not only have to be

culturally conscious but we are faced with competitions and raising financial support more and more.

Life. Fulfillment. Enrichment. That's the meaning of being a kumu hula, and Aunti Māiki had all of these. She not only taught us about hula, but she taught us about life. She shared the ups and downs because it was a part of life.

I still come from the halau of Aunti Māiki and I continue her style, though I'm sure I have developed a few of my own motions over the years. But I am honored when people recognize Aunti Māiki's style when my haumana dance the hula. It reassures me that I'm still on the right track.

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