

## Nani Lim Yap

In addition to running her own entertainment company, Nani Lim Yap has been teaching hula with her sister, Leialoha Lim Amina, for over fifteen years. They are kumu hula of the Hula Halau Na Lei 'O Kaholoku domiciled on the Big Island of Hawai'i.

Our very first kumu hula was our mother Mary Ann Neula Lim. She had completed her hula studies and gone through the ceremonies of "uniki" under her kumu hula Rose Mason of Kohala. I was six years old when my mother began to instruct my sisters and I. She soon became impatient with our progress and decided to stop teaching. About five years later my father felt that we should not be deprived of learning our culture and so he took us to his cousin, our aunt who was a well known kumu hula from Niuli'i, Kohala. Her name was Margaret Kaleolani Moku and I took from her for six years until I graduated from high school.

Aunty Margaret taught and shared with us her unique style of hula which came from Kohala, Hawai'i. We met once a week at the old Hawi Gymnasium for hula classes and danced once a week for her at the Mauna Kea Beach Hotel's Tuesday Lu'au. Sometimes on weekends and special occasions we would go and dance for her at local family parties as well. Aunty Margaret had fallen ill after while and we began going to her home to learn new numbers once a week. I sometimes enjoyed the stories as well as the hula lessons on the porch of her hale. Several years passed and she became ill. She had difficulty with her legs and became confined to a wheelchair but she would still continue to dance and teach using her expressions and her hands. The essence portrayed without the movement of her feet was very captivating to me. She taught my older sister and I just about everything that she knew. She said, "That was it. You folks know everything that I know. Just take it and train others." She wanted us to carry on the style for the children and her love of Kohala. She made sure to share this kuleana with my parents as well and to know that it was given with her love and aloha.

We were encouraged to go to other kumu hula while under her tutelage and also after she had passed on. Through the program funded by the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, we had also experienced the styles of 'Iolani Luahine, Uncle George Naope, Edith Kanaka'ole, Kaha'i Topolinski, Darrel Lupenui and John Kaimikaua. These were all workshops deeply appreciated and well enjoyed.

Because our babysitters were our grandparents who spoke fluent Hawaiian, we had come to understand Ka Olelo Hawai'i. My grandfather came from Ka'u and spoke a very poetic dialect of Hawaiian. This enabled us to understand the essence of the mele being taught while we were training for hula. When I began to sing, it made translation even easier. I could actually understand the song and its' literal translations as well as its' kaona. Therefore, I felt that through that understanding, I should share the knowledge. It was a follow up on what Aunty Margaret had said. This was the time. And so we took it from there, knowing the mele, translating them and teaching it till today. We have a kuleana to pass on these traditions as they were taught to us and to perpetuate a style that is truly part of Kohala.

Rewritten: 09/29/95nly