

And The Story Begins. . .

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The Territorial Legislature just released a small sum of money to conduct a modest research project to collect the old *mele* from those who were still alive and who knew how to perform them. That was back in 1923-1924 when Miss Helen Roberts would arrive in Hawai'i from Vassar College to undertake such a monumental task. She did not know Hawaiian customs, language nor the islands so she needed someone who could do the job. At that time, the Hawai'i *nei* that existed was a very different one from what we know of now. It was still extremely rural in the vast majority of the terrain. The Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum would be the home base for the project and the Hawaiian language interpreter and customs expert was Thomas Maunupau. Mr. Maunupau would pave the way for Miss Roberts and enable her to collect the hundreds of *mele* that would comprise her collection. Mr. Maunupau would explain to potential informants that their knowledge would be entrusted into good hands to be preserved for many generations past their own lives. Some Hawaiians still refused to part with their knowledge. Some families were shocked when they heard their senior family members chant for they never knew that they held the skills and knowledge to do them. Others understood the well-meaning intentions of this strange, *haole* scientist and the embracing Mr. Maunupau. Thomas Maunupau carefully recorded every syllable from these old chanters and in a few cases was able to copy by hand the words from those old *mele* books that a few had written in. In all, these would number to nearly 700 *mele* with about 200 tunes recorded.

After Mr. Maunupau's work was completed, his desire to preserve and perpetuate what was left of our Hawaiian music and dance did not

extinguish. His children would be exposed to a lot of the old things of the Hawaiian ways. The Hawaiian language was spoken all the time at home by family friends and relatives but it was not taught to his children. They understood Hawaiian but did not speak it readily and fluently. The daughters of Thomas and Eunice Maunupau would be sent to hula lessons. One of their daughters, also named Eunice, was a beautiful dancer. One of her teachers was Charles Cash who learned hula and who used to *pa'i* for Joseph Ilalaole. Another one of the Maunupau girls was Adeline. She also danced but among her brothers and sisters, she was gifted with a beautiful voice. Her father would send her to certain families and people to learn their songs from them in addition to hula. Aunty Adeline told me that among her earliest teachers was a relative, Mrs. Annie Baker, from Kualoa. She also was a student from another distant relative, Mr. Joseph Ilalaole. A student of Mr. Ilalaole's was Lokelani Richards. She taught hula out of her home on Cartwright Street in Waikīkī and also taught the Maunupau girls and many others. Later on she would further her lessons and studies in Hawaiian music and dance with Mrs. Mary Kawena Pukui as a part of a class that included other Parks and Recreation hula teachers. They would meet for lessons on Wednesday afternoons at Mrs. Pukui's Birch Street home. Other teachers included Tom Hiona, Winona Beamer, Alice Keawekane Garner, Ella Fernandez, Lena Machado, John Kameaaloha Almeida and Alice Namakelua. This legacy of music initiated by Mr. Maunupau also included the formation of the Kapahulu Music Club. Thomas Maunupau was very civic-minded, loved people and had a great sense of humor. Neighborhood friends, family and musicians would meet to sing, share songs, learn them and in

a few instances, record them onto discs. Where these discs are today, no one knows. The Kapahulu Music Club would go and entertain at various civic functions, O'ahu Prison and for other occasions. Every year in the Kamehameha Day Parade there was an island float sponsored by the Kapahulu Music Club complete with musicians and dancers. The last of these island floats would be in 1974, the year that we won (portraying the island of Kaua'i), and that would be the end of the Kapahulu Music Club. But not the end of the Maunupau *mele* legacy. Adeline Nani Maunupau Lee would teach hula and Hawaiian music for the City and County of Honolulu Department of Parks and Recreation until 1979, when she would retire after 29 years of service. During those 29 years, Adeline Lee worked with and under the direction of Mrs. Alice Kalāhui. Anyone who knew Mrs. Kalāhui knew what a stickler she was for being conscientious about being correct. The "other Alice" in the Parks Department was Mrs. Alice Namakelua. She pioneered the teaching of hula and Hawaiian music within the Parks and Recreation Department system. Together, the two Alices would formulate a systematic way of teaching hula and Hawaiian music to literally thousands of students in all age groups at dozens of playground sites throughout the island of O'ahu. Under the influence of these two ladies, Adeline Maunupau Lee would take great care in getting things correct, writing things down and keeping them in order. The Parks and Recreation staff relied a lot upon Mrs. Pukui, John Almeida and others who contributed greatly to their efforts. In their files would be literally hundreds of songs, translations and explanations largely through the efforts of these people. As with the passing of time, these things were literally "thrown away" with

all other things that were "old and useless." When Adeline Lee heard that these things were being tossed out, she literally went to the old job site and took whatever she could from the rubbish dumpsters and retrieved them. During her life time, she shared most of these *mele* with me. I have known her for practically all of my life. She taught me and she made me teach with her. At that time I didn't know the scope and depth of what I was doing but now I understand a lot more than I did at that time. I was fortunate to have been her apprentice as most hula teachers today cannot say that they have apprenticed with their teacher. When Adeline Nani Maunupau Lee was taken home by God in 1992, this was the first funeral I really cried at. As a musician, I have sang and attended many, many funerals and so I never cried at funerals but at this one I grieved and grieved for quite a while afterward too. All your life someone is there and then all of a sudden--- gone. I felt all alone and scared because I realized that now I really have to do it all by myself and get it right. The songs, translations and explanations that comprise the Kimo Alama Keaulana Mele Collection in the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum Archives is largely the legacy left by her that was started initially by her father. Her death made me reflect upon my life.

In my relatively short lifetime, hula and Hawaiian music has been a huge factor and has played an important part in much of what I have done. I first started teaching hula at the age of 16 years old under the guidance of Aunty Adeline. I did my first solo hula teaching at that age and also assisted her with those ancient hula workshops sponsored by the State Council on Hawaiian Heritage coordinated by Hoakalei Kamauu. The first workshop was held in

1969. Of the 17 workshops held throughout the years, Adeline Lee and myself taught at 16 of them. In those days, people were going crazy trying to "rediscover their Hawaiianess." During the Hawaiian Renaissance, hula was becoming fashionable and a whole new wave of hula people were coming upon the scene. Many flocked to Māiki Aiu Lake and she held several *'uniki* to sanction many of her students to become *kumu hula*. My own teacher and myself decided that I would not go through the *'uniki* and *'ailolo* ceremonies. Through Christian prayer we did everything. At the Foster Gardens in an evening light performance I danced. The torches were created out of *kukui* and as they burned, I danced. We all know what the *kukui* symbolizes. I was taught to be a dancer, an *'ōlapa*, in both the ancient and modern modes. At the same time I was taught to be a musician, a *ho'opa'a*, with both the ancient and modern instruments. Not many hula teachers can claim these skills today. After my apprenticeship I was given my own hula classes to teach by my own teacher and she sanctioned me as *kumu hula*. Because she took me to others to learn, a practice nearly unheard of today, she acknowledged the old time saying: *'A'ohe pau ka 'ike i ka hālau ho'okahi* ("Not all knowledge is held in one school."). She knew that other *kumu hula* knew things that she didn't and she wanted me to learn those things. Humility plays a huge role in hula and she lived this in the things that she did. At a hula demonstration and panel held at the Fritz-Luden Dance Studio that used to be upstairs from the old Golden Duck Chop Suey on the corner of Algaroba and McCully Streets she went to the microphone and said something that shocked me and I think everyone else that was there too. The panel members were badgering me in trying to find out certain things about hula and I

was not about to divulge what they wanted to hear. Well, Aunty Adeline heard enough. She went to the microphone and said, "Kimo had many good teachers other than myself and so therefore, he knows more than I do." She walked away from the microphone and left the room. The rest of the audience followed.

Throughout the years I have been a judge ant many of our major hula competitions. I have been an outspoken judge. Hula and Hawaiian music has been very good to me. I was trained in both. Why should I compromise and let people have their way? Hula is creative but it has its bounds. Hula has gone so far out of reach in many cases that it gets harder and harder to retrieve as the years go by. I hope that the hula community has not become so addicted to creativity that hula choreography, protocol, rhythms and tunes and all the lore that goes with hula becomes so obscure that it is no longer culturally Hawaiian. While I am alive and well, I want to teach the wonderful things that my teachers taught and gave me. However, it comes with a price. It cannot be compromised at all cost! Who would want to sell their culture, their own precious identity, short--- at any price?

In Nānā I Na Loea Hula: Look to the Hula Resources, Aunty Adeline's story opens:

The best thing about my life today is that I am able to pass on my knowledge to an alaka'i. The knowledge and tradition of the culture was given to me only to give out. How will people learn about and respect the culture if no one tells them about it? The responsibility of the kumu hula becomes then to choose someone who will be faithful to what is being passed down.

Adeline Nani Maunupau Lee started me off in hula. I know that I am not finished in hula because there is so much more to know and half a handful of those experts are still alive. Without those that know better than I, I cannot grow. It is from the past that meaning can be found in the present so that the future can be better defined. I hope to find others who have the patience, understanding and tolerance for the ways of old. For these will be the "hold outs" who will not fall prey to the confusion of modern times.

The old Hawaiians used to say, "*E hana mua ā pa'a ke kahua mamua o ke a'o 'ana iā ha'i*" ("Work to make a solid foundation before teaching others."). There's lots of work for us to do.



# The Hula Tradition of J. Kimo Alama Keaulana

