

Kamalei Sataraka

In 1976, Kamalei Sataraka opened her hālau, Hui 'O Kamalei, so she could share her love of hula with the people of Hawai'i.

Hula teaches you everything about life. It teaches you about nature, respect and about God. It teaches you how to be humble and disciplined.

My mother thought that I was born to hula. She took me to Sally Kamalani when I was two years old, and even at that young age, I remember enjoying hula.

A year later, we moved into town and I remember going to Emma Bishop who taught on McCully Street. Emma Bishop used to take us to perform at the Kapi'olani Bandstand where we wore paper leis and mu'umu'u. In those days, the people threw money when we danced. Everybody used to laugh because I would sit down and collect all the money and take it to my mother. Those were the good old days with Emma Bishop. I stayed with her until I was about six or seven years old.

I ended up taking hula from John Pi'ilani Watkins. I started when I was nine and I graduated with him twice. His graduations weren't the traditional graduations. At that time, people didn't put an emphasis on traditional ceremonies, like the ailolo ceremony. It was more like a recital. We graduated to another level, up to another class. And he gave awards.

To graduate, he wanted us to pass our test. He used to give us a written exam and a dance exam. As long as we passed, we could go to the next level. The written exam was about the songs: the background of the songs and how well we knew the words and the translation. That was his criteria for passing. Because I was teaching for him, I was embarrassed if I got a low grade, so I tried my best to get A's.

Whenever he was busy or he couldn't be there, he asked me to open the hālau and teach for him. That's where I learned to teach. I taught for him many times and I ran his hālau for

him, ~~while~~ *While I was in High School.*

I attribute most of my hula training to John Pi'ilani Watkins. He was really before his time. What I got from him was basically show business and not much traditions. He took us to New York where we worked under June Taylor, the choreographer for the Jackie Gleason Show and the Dean Martin Show. I really enjoyed dancing with him because I'm pretty much an entertainer myself.

When I was eighteen years old, I left Johnny Watkins and a couple of us formed our own group. We started traveling on our own all over the world. We went to Japan many times and to *KOREA* *Africa*. We tried to travel as much as we could *while* when we were young.

I started yearning for the traditional part of hula that I did not get from Johnny Watkins. When I came back from traveling, I studied and did research on my own. I taught myself most of it. I took anything that I could learn from anybody. I was very curious and very inquisitive. I think that a lot of where I am today is attributed to trying to make myself a better kumu hula.

What I wanted to do is to open a hula studio to teach people that hula can open gates for them. They can travel around the world and they can do anything they want to do as long as they put their mind to it. Nothing is unattainable. My goal was to take my students around the world as entertainers. *Somewhat of the goal is fulfilled.*

The greatest accomplishment for me is entering competitions. When I opened the halau, I had no inkling. Competitions were out of my league. But the *students* *we tried* kids asked to enter. So I try. And, whether you win or lose, it makes you feel *"THAT IS"* that's an accomplishment in itself.

I 'uniki my students but not traditionally. They have to go to language classes. They have to be able to make their pahu drum and their ipu heke. They have to be able to oli, to dance kahiko and 'auana, and dance with the implements. *Alto to take the language class taught by video experts who come into halau.*

The advice I would give the young hula teachers of today is to instill in ~~children-~~

their haumāna, love &

confidence. You have to tell your children to be inquisitive and to do their research if they want to carry on the traditions of hula. I don't consider myself a traditional hula teacher, but I do consider myself a good hula teacher.

I think hula has gotten more lively and more progressive. There ^{are the} ~~is~~ purists who want it to stay the same, but I really don't think hula will stay the same. Like everything else, Hawai'i is progressing; things will keep moving and we do move with the flow. It would be nice if we can keep our traditions the way it was in the past, but I really don't want to go back to the past. Hula is progressing but it will get to a point where it will come full circle. Like our clothes that we wore in the '40^s, they'll come around again.

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Thank you for waiting for my narration. I have had such a bad year with an ailing medical condition, that this was just the last thing on my mind. Please forgive me, for I know there was a deadline, and you know, I don't even remember when it was. If you feel it is too late to publish, I'll understand. But, PLEASE DO ACCEPT MY APOLOGY!! Mahalo!

May I tag on this little paragraph at the very end?

Lastly, I feel all patrons of the hula need to focus on the man above. The creator of all who allows us to do what we do. We also should teach our haumāna and 'ohana to understand and respect the gods of yesterday, for our ancestors felt that their ancestors were embodied in spirit, in everything they owned. Hence many gods. Today, we still carry that respect and majority of us are Christians in various denominations, therefore we follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. Focus on him, our Lord through Jesus, and he will not give us anything we cannot handle!

NĀ POMAIIKA'I ME 'OUKOU