

Nana I Na Loea Hula
Kumu Hula: Nani Lim Yap
Interviewer: Lovina LePendu
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(HOW DO YOU WANT YOUR NAME IN THE BOOK?) Nani Lim Yap. (WHERE DO YOU TEACH?) Right now we teach in Kona. (AT YOUR HOME?) No. We really don't have a halau, persay, or a place or hall to perform. What we do is we usually just rent certain places or we would use outdoor settings. (HOW OFTEN DO YOU HAVE CLASSES?) What we do is...I have an entertainment company that I do a lot of the Hawaiian productions, and so I'm training constantly for that. So a lot of the girls that come from the halau are constantly training for that. There are some from the halau that they don't do the production side of the company. They only would like to dance just to train and we do that. We do that about nine months out of the year. (DO YOU HAVE A NAME FOR YOUR HALAU?) "Na Lei O Kaholoku". (WHO GAVE THE NAME?) The name was given to us by Auntie Pilahi Pahi, and this was at the time when my eldest sister, Leialoha - who is another kumu of the halau - she was taking special classes from Auntie Pilahi in Hawaiian language and Hawaiian translations, and Auntie Pilahi gave her that name. (DO YOU KNOW WHY THAT NAME?) "Na Lei O Kaholoku", to her she envisioned a lot of dancers. "Kaholo" means "to move" or "to go". "Ku" means "to stand". So, in a sense, it's more like in hula you have that kind of motion, moving and standing. So she envisioned this, that it would be a continuous lei, you would continuously have the students come and they will join. They will continue to make this a fulfilled one, a circle, a lei of dancers is what she felt it would be. (HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN TEACHING?) I would say for about 15 years. (YOU STARTED WITH THAT NAME?) No. We got the name approximately 10 years ago. (DO YOU TEACH KAHIKO AND AUANA?) Both. (DO YOU TEACH JUST OLI OR OLI WITH THE DANCE?) We do oli with the dance. (AGE OF YOUR STUDENTS?) I think the youngest we have in the halau right now is about 15 years old, and it ranges all the way up to about 30-35. (DO MOST OF THEM ENTERTAIN WITH YOU OR JUST A

FEW OF THEM?) A few of them. (DO YOU CHOOSE THEM OR DO THEY CHOOSE TO GO?) They choose to go in. In fact some of them have come to me from dancing other shows, and then when we began the halau again to start training as a halau for specific projects like Merrie Monarch and other functions that we might have, they decided to come back over because they feel a loss of their ties to Hawaiiana. They feel a loss of it. Very Hawaiian girls and men, but they want to come back to learn the real basics of hula, 'cause they feel that sometimes they jump into this professional type of dancing where they feel like, "Yeah! I can get up there and do it!", but they feel like there's no tie, they have no foundation, and they need it badly. That's how they feel. So I don't force them to come back. They come because they want to dance.

(WHAT AGE DID YOU FIRST LEARN THE HULA?) The hula I learned when I was... it had to have been about 6 years old. (THIS WAS IN KONA?) My mother was my first kumu. (AT HOME?) It was at home. (DID YOU LEARN AS AN INDIVIDUAL WITH YOUR SISTERS OR WITH A HALAU?) Individual. As sisters. (IS IT BECAUSE YOUR FAMILY WAS ENTERTAINERS?) It was because... my mother was uniki(ed) at a very young age. I'm trying to think how old she was. She says at that time in Kohala there were several kumus, but she took from a specific kumu that was her aunt. (CAN YOU TELL ME HER NAME?) Her name was Rose Mason. (SHE UNIKI[ED] FROM HER?) She uniki(ed) from Rose Mason, yes. (AND SHE WAS FROM KOHALA?) Kohala. But my mother was very impatient with us, and so she stopped teaching us. And, I would say for about 5 years after that, my father felt that we should learn culture and things. So he took us to our aunty, which was his cousin on his side, that was also a kumu hula that came from Niuli'i, Kohala. (SO THEN YOU WENT TO AN AUNT?) Yeah. And her name was Margaret Kaleolani Moku. (AND SHE'S ALSO FROM KOHALA?) She's also from Kohala. (WHAT AGE WERE YOU?) So at that time I was in the 7th grade. That would have made me about 12 years old. (YOU STAYED WITH HER FOR A WHILE?) Until I graduated from high school. So that was 5

years, 17. (WITH YOUR MOTHER & THIS AUNT, DID YOU LEARN BOTH KAHIKO AND AUANA?) We learned auana. (FROM BOTH OF THEM?) Yeah. My mother felt that kahiko for the young children at that time was not quite proper yet! (SO MOSTLY AUANA?) Mostly auana. (DO YOU REMEMBER THE STYLE?) Oh, yeah! When we went to Aunt Margaret, we did hand movements that go with the dance. With my mother, she learned all the... I call it "old style" because it's the rolling of the hands, and it's all in. They bring in to the style, where the other ones we just did this [point] and then this. And much later I learned the significance of why that was so. (CAN YOU EXPLAIN THE SIGNIFICANCE?) I learned it much later from Kaha'i when we took a resource class from him, Kaha'i Topolinski. (YOU TOOK SOME CLASSES FROM HIM?) Yeah. I have a lot of other resources that I've taken. Kaha'i's explanation of that was that you would hold the knowledge, bringing it in and always keeping it close. And I guess at the time my mother taught us it was not... she didn't really... she had thought it was just a basic thing that she would teach you that. But there was a significance to the hands movement like that. And that was all I learned about the significance of it, of the dances coming in. Kaha'i is real careful about stuff like that, he really is. (WITH YOUR MOTHER AND YOUR AUNT, WAS THERE A DIFFERENCE IN STYLE?) Very different. Different style. (WHAT WAS THE DIFFERENCE?) The smoothness, the softness. (SO YOUR MOTHER WAS SOFTER?) I would say my mother was softer, softer on her feet and on her hands. And I would say that my mother danced the old Hawaiian style. (AND YOUR AUNT WAS MORE LIKE YOU WERE GOING...) Yeah, going with the hulas. (KIND OF STRESSING THE KAHIKO SIDE?) Yeah, that goes with it.

(AFTER YOUR AUNT, DID YOU GO BACK TO YOUR MOTHER AGAIN?) No. We started to go to other teachers from there. (CAN YOU TELL ME THEIR NAMES & THE EXPERIENCE?) One was Uncle George Na'ope. (BEFORE KAHAI?) Yeah, Uncle George... these are all through the Culture and Arts Foundation. Uncle George Na'ope, Kaha'i Topolinski, Edith Kanaka'ole, Iolani

Luahine, Darell Lupenui and John Ka'imikaua. (DID YOU LEARN A LONG TIME OR JUST WORKSHOPS?) We just took workshops.

(DID YOU HAVE SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS TO BECOME A TEACHER?) You see, my aunty, we were with her for a long time. And she had gotten sick, she was sick for a long time, and where we would have to go to her house to learn any new numbers. So we made an attempt to go several times. And then, I would say several years before she passed on, her legs, she couldn't move her legs or use her legs or her hands. She could use her expressions, but she couldn't use her legs anymore. And from that time, that was when she gave us the...we were uniki(ed), but uniki(ed) in a sense where it was more of a ho'ike to me, more of a ho'ike. And we have done that. I would say we went through that twice when we were with her, and to me it was more of a ho'ike. (SO YOU JUST STAYED WITH HER, AND WHEN SHE PASSED ON...) That was before she passed on she gave that to us two to carry it on, because we were the most... (AND THAT'S YOU AND YOUR SISTERS?) That's me and my older sister. And she had taught us just about everything that she knew already. She said, "That was it. You folks know everything that I know. Just please take it and train others." I think more or less what she felt was that she did a lot for Kohala, for the children; and that's what she wants us to do, you know, for the children. I guess students, but her love was for Kohala. So in essence I guess she wanted us to carry on "Kohala", that style. (YOU BECAME A TEACHER BECAUSE YOU WANTED TO CONTINUE OR WERE YOU ALREADY IN ENTERTAINMENT?) I was already in entertainment. (SO IT JUST...)

Continued. (HOW DID YOUR KAHIKO COME?) Kahiko was also from her. (SHE DID TEACH YOU KAHIKO?) Yeah. She gave us all the basics and she taught us a lot of the basic hulas that you find today, the traditional things.

(WHY DID YOU WANT TO TEACH? WAS IT TO FOLLOW UP WHAT SHE SAID?) It was to follow up what she said, but also through music. We were raised...although we lived at home,

our babysitters were my grandparents, and they spoke fluent Hawaiian, both of them. So you come around to kind of understanding what they are talking about. They'd use a broken Hawaiian and English, but you would understand. And I found out that, while we were training, that you could catch the essence of the song like that because you knew; they could speak Hawaiian to you and you knew what it was. So when I began to sing it even made more sense. I could actually understand the song. Therefore, I felt that through that understanding I felt, "Gosh, I should teach. This is the time. This is where maybe where she says, 'Go and teach' should come in." And that's where we took it from there, knowing the song, teaching it, and translating it, and teaching it from there. (SO YOUR HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE CAME FROM HOME. . .) Oh, yeah. (NOT FROM STUDYING?) No. From home. Although I'm not fluent with Hawaiian, the thing was that we could understand. Even my mother, she says that too, because that's how my mother understood 'cause they spoke fluent in her family. My grandfather was pure Hawaiian. My grandmother was Hawaiian-Haole, Caucasian. But fluent they spoke. It was strange, too, because when they got married, my grandfather came from Ka'u, my mother from Kohala, and they both could not understand their Hawaiian. This was different, very different. They had a hard time, so they would call on my grandfather's sister to come from Ka'u and she would come and translate for a little while. And she told my grandmother, "Please be understanding with him because his Hawaiian is different."

(OF ALL YOUR TEACHERS, DID YOU HAVE ONE THAT REALLY INFLUENCED YOUR DANCING TODAY?) I would say one is Iolani Luahine. (WHY?) For one was, as elderly as she was when she was training us, she's like a young dancer. You wanted to be like that, as though you were floating; real, I guess, mystical! What you saw was what you wanted to become. (IT GAVE YOU. . .) Real incentive.

(HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR DANCING STYLE?) I would say with all the teachers

that we have learned in our background, we've not taken from each. We found ourselves that over a period of time, when things were changing in the 70s, that hula should be this way, from this one, this is where, but it's not. We came back to the reality of knowing that what we had learned from the very beginning, that is where our roots lie. And if we chose to take anything from all these other kumus that we have learned from, they will be resources for us. If there's something that we need from here, from the base, then we shall go and gather.

*(ENCOUNTER ANY DIFFICULTIES DURING YOUR HULA CAREER?) No. (WHAT KIND OF JOY/REWARD DO YOU GET BY TEACHING?) I feel sometimes that I...like I said, I know I can sing the music, I can feel it and understand it, I can translate that music - that song, I can give it to a dancer or dancers, and it comes out exactly as you envisioned. And when that happens, to me, that's the right mix. The flow is good. And it has to work well with specific dancers, too.

(IS YOUR WHOLE FAMILY IN ENTERTAINMENT?) Yes. (DOES IT GO FURTHER THAN YOUR PARENTS?) No. It's my parents. (HOW DID YOU GET INTO IT?) My mother and my father both sang and played instruments. My father played the ukulele, so did my mother. When we were little children, my father would train all of us to play the ukulele. So he would pick and we would train, and each evening we did this. It was a constant thing. Sometimes we'd get sick and tired to know that, "Oh, it's time. We got to go in and play the ukulele." But you saw no significance in it at that time or how it would effect you now, but my gosh! Now it's like "Wow". It's been a part of our life and it was also part of my father and my mother's life. My mother sang. She always had a beautiful voice. Always. And my father would always play for her and they'd sing and stuff, and we would always play Hawaiian music - Hawaiian radio, Hawaiian music. So it was constantly around us. And then we learned how to play. My father taught every one of us, every single one of us children, we learned how to play from him. And then I guess, more or less, the singing part we wanted to mimic my mother. And I felt that I would do, I would

go to the radio and listen for the same songs and I would start to sing what I hear. (THIS IS AN EARLY AGE?) Yeah. Well, this is when we were still living up in our old house, so I would have to be about 8 or 9 years old at that time. (ON YOUR OWN?) We just wanted to on our own. (DID YOU ENTERTAIN AT SPECIFIC PLACES OR JUST FOR PARTIES, FRIENDS?) After that we moved down into town, and then all of us started to get involved. My brother was taught at an early age, so when he went to school he was actually kind of helping to teach. (IN TOWN WHERE? IN KOHALA?) Yeah, 'cause we lived way up on a ranch in Puhui. And then we moved down into town, in Hala Ula, which is. . .we lived out in the boonies as compared to where the other kids lived! And then we finally moved into town, and that's when everything started to go along. My mother, her brother, my father and a friend played together. And then they started their group. And then they changed - another lady came in, another fellow played guitar. So they changed. . .I would say about 2 or 3 times the whole group changed. And they only entertained for parties in Kohala; and then they were asked to entertain at the hotels. And that's how they started. We started playing at lu'aus right after them. It's like they started, they moved up to hotels, we started, and we moved up to hotels. (IN DIFFERENT GROUPS?) In different groups. (NOT WITH THEM?) No. See at that time, then we would go. We'd have my mother them and then would be. . .no, there would be all of us, 'cause after that they would still go out and play, but my mother them would come home and we would play together; all of us, we would play together.

(WHAT DO YOU THINK OF HULA TODAY?) I think styles have evolved. Like I said, if you take from different teachers, maybe you will take resources from some and then create again. But my thought is that you should always go back to the foundation. That has been our thought within the last few years, I guess. And it's to say to stay traditional, and traditional in our sense is the basics, the basics that you were taught, that's traditional. And to stick to that.

(WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF HULA KAHIKO?) Hula kahiko, to me, depends on the type of dance that you are doing - your level of energy as far as dancers, and your level of energy as a chanter. It takes on a different plain. It's different from hula auana. How would I explain that? The level is like...the thoughts. (THE THOUGHTS ARE DIFFERENT.) Yeah. Hula kahiko is...it's like when you're dancing, your thoughts and everything are just...it takes you to a different level of translation, and depending on what type of hula kahiko it is - the more modern it is, the more... (SO FOR YOU HULA KAHIKO HAS TIME PERIODS?) Oh, definitely! It's almost as though we have to create and have everybody visualize what it was back then. (HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN A TRADITIONAL CHANT?) I say traditional chants would be the chants that everyone else knows. Everyone would find it in their basic foundation. If you were to look in every kumu hula's book what was their first chants that they learned, I think everyone has a basic that they're gonna teach from. And I feel that if you look in some of these kumu hula books, everyone will have those traditional chants. Almost every kumu hula we learned from in there, "A Ko'olau Au" was one. Another traditional is "Aia La O Pele". Uncle George, Auntie Io, everyone. (YOU MEAN EVERY SINGLE PERSON WILL HAVE THEIR OWN TRADITIONAL...) I say that they would have their own traditional way of doing it, but I think you'll find it in the annuals of everyone that they would say, "Oh! 'Aia La O Pele'? That's a traditional chant!"

(WOULD YOU SAY THAT HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE IS IMPORTANT IN HULA?) Yes it is. (COULD YOU EXPLAIN?) I would say Hawaiian Language is important in hula, but also I would say that today we're living modern, yeah? So when you're learning hula in today's sense, if you're learning hula from a very young age and you feel that this is destined... But, you know, we grow up today with so many other...we have so many choices to make - what we want to be - that hula becomes just a part of...hula is not like before. It's just set aside, it's a hobby. It's put on the side as hobbies. When before, if hula was destined to be, it was a part of life. You

lived it every day. Today it's not so. It's because money has taken over what we choose to do! But if it was so today. . .like a student would choose that, "Hula is what I really want to do," and from today forth they make that. . .language would be very important. Language would be the most important thing to them. (THEY HAVE IT AS A CHOICE.) Right! But if you're much older and you choose to take hula from now, what I would say is we're going backwards now. You're coming backwards. You're going to want to learn the hula. Now you find that hula is important to you now. I feel they're gonna go backwards. So all that we have right now is to translate backwards. And if we can do that, then that gives us a closer tie if we do not know the 'olelo Hawai'i, the Hawaiian Language. *(DO YOU THINK HULA IS A GOOD TOOL TO BRING PEOPLE BACK TO THEIR ROOTS?) Not only bring them back, you have discipline. There's a lot that you can learn: discipline, awareness, respect for things of old, awareness of going back and learning traditions, traditions that some people don't really know today. It's made us go back into, like I said, at least have places that we can. . .[error on tape]

(DO YOU TEACH IN WORKSHOPS?) I haven't done workshops. I've brought a lot of people over to do workshops. (FOR YOUR OWN HALAU?) Yeah, for our own halau.

(WHO DO YOU CONSIDER HULA MASTERS?) One is Auntie Iolani Luahine. And another, I would say, is John Kaimikaua. (WHY? WHAT DO YOU SEE IN HIM?) The reason why is because when I need answers, I am pointed in that direction. And when I've asked him for answers he has always given things where he says, "Well, you might not find this recorded," but this is what he has been taught. And for such a young person, he holds so much knowledge. And I know people would question my. . ."Well, you don't know. Where would you find this?" Yes! Where would I find it? I may not find it in the Bishop Museum, I may not! I said, "But I could sit down with John all day long, and he could tell us stories that are like. . ." (ABOUT HULA?) About hula and everything else.

(DID YOU EVER SERVE AS A JUDGE?) No.

(ANY PERSONAL STATEMENT FOR THE BOOK?) Yeah. That, through music, we can convey the mele with the true expression. I would say like true expression would mean once you know what it is, you've translated it in your mind. If it's a love song you can make it even sweeter, and that with hula it just enhances and just takes it on another dimension. And that we can still be able to, all people. (SO FOR YOU, YOUR HULA HAS TO BE THAT MUSIC THAT YOU FEEL AT THE SAME TIME?) Yeah. Chant does the same thing to us too. (SOME PEOPLE JUST TAKE HULA TO DANCE. FOR YOU IT HAS TO BE COMPLETELY. . .) All. Everything. (IT'S A PART OF THE WHOLE.) Yeah. Like you were talking about costuming, yeah? Everything. You know, we have to envision with this everything comes together.

(DO YOU UNIKI YOUR STUDENTS?) No. I don't uniki. (THINKING OF DOING IT?) Yes! I need to be trained in uniki because I haven't had a formal uniki. Our teacher had only told us what it was and how it was, and that we would be uniki(ed) one day. But no one could foresee that she wouldn't be well. And it was something that we had hoped for. So when we look at it today it's like, "Oh, well! Who can uniki us in this form, in this talent, the foundation that we have?" It's like, well, not really no one, but what we need to do is. . . what we're doing right now is going back into our genealogy, our ko'i. There might be someone's still in the line that hold that kind of. . . (CLOUT?) Yeah, that would still be able to do it for us. And that is our hope. So that's what we're doing right now.

(HOW DO YOU SEE THE FUTURE OF HULA?) I think hula will remain, and hula will remain stronger now because of our awareness of Hawaiian things. For our children, now even younger kids are getting into hula nowadays. So our awareness is growing. It's being instilled in the children, and that's where it'll live longer. If you have a class of 50, who knows, maybe 5 of that 50 will come out and carry on the traditions, but we will have. We will. I'm sure of it.