

Nana I Na Loea Hula
Harriet Kuuleinani Sheldon Stibbard

Harriet Kuuleinani Stibbard is my name. I don't teach anymore. When I was young my parents did not want me to dance. They said I have to watch, not dance, but I had that burning urge to learn hula, and I was determined to learn it. But, because of the family, I did not learn until I got married. I was about 21 years old, then I had my first baby, taught school where I met Alice Garner, Alice Mahi Garner. She became my teacher in Maui. After five weeks of lessons, she told me, "Harriet, I don't know why you are coming to me. Your talent is god given. I just can't teach you anymore." But I still continued with her a little longer. In all, I had 20 months. Alice was a soft spoken person, a beautiful person. I learned kahiko and auwana with her.

A Hawaiian woman saw me dancing on stage one time and said, "what is that haole lady doing up on that stage." To me, I had Hawaiian blood in me and I was proud of it. And remarks like this encouraged me to do better--it made me stronger. So I went on my own. I asked Daisy Boyd to translate for me for my songs, then I will go home and everything would just come together very easily. I first started my classes at about 1934--Mrs. Featherson at Sand Hill. I had my own style. I was very different

from other halau, my costumes, my pa'u, my holoku. My ideas came naturally after I visualize my songs and dance. I started to teach auwana first then kahiko much later. I would have private lessons on a song then go back to my students to teach them. My best memory was just to teach the children. It did not matter the cost as I always said to the children, "do not waste you parents' money if you don't want to learn." My greatest joy was what I gave to them because it lives on. My students were as young as three years old. I taught boys and girls. I also had men and women, but men just learn for fun, not to perform. I gave certificates to my children with a picture of myself. To receive a certificate they had to have good manners, good feelings, attire, discipline, then they can earn a diploma. They usually take hula for about six months before they can get a hula diploma, and my advice was "put you heart and soul into what you do, work diligently, strive, have a goal Hula has changed a lot. When I look at the uwehe of today we never open our legs like that. Old Hawaiians were rascal, naughty, but in a clean way. I was sent out of the room every time the old folks danced and I would peek around the corner.

My definition of hula kahiko is something in the old. I loved Kawika. I never composed. I felt I was not an expert to do it. I prefer auwana songs. My favorite is Mi Nei. I like Papalina Lahilahi. The language to me

is very important in hula. I know if Daisy did not translate for me I would not have been able to do anything. She was very important to me. I loved what I did and I thought it was beneficial.

When I think of masters of today, I think Alicia Smith, Mapuana De Silva. My granddaughter should continue my work. I really would not like to be a judge, it is hard to judge something that is changing. When I see the song "Maunaloa," to me it is a disgusting song. When I see they hold up the handkerchief full of holes from cockroaches, Hawaiians were not that dirty in their dances. For me it is a homage, a compliment when somebody comes to me now and reminds me that I was his or her teacher. Thirty years later a Japanese man came to me and reminded me that I was his teacher and at that time I was teaching his granddaughter. What a beautiful award it was for me.

My costumes were different. Today it is changing again, but sometime I think it is not too proper to just go to the shop to pick up a costume to dance. At my time we made our own design and costume.

I am very honored to be recognized today. I am very honored. I always felt when I teach hula I should do it with my best. I also taught at Punahou School, but after three years they wanted me to give up my studio to teach full time for them. My studio was in Honolulu at that time. I had

Mrs. Beamer at one of my recitals as a guest and after the recital she came to me and said that she will send her granddaughter to me for private lessons. It was a great honor to have Mama Beamer trust me.