

Harriet Kuuleinani Sheldon Stibbard

When I was young, my parents did not want me to dance the hula, but I was determined to learn. Because of my family, I did not learn to dance until I was about twenty-one years old and married.

I was teaching school on Maui where I met Alice Garner, my first hula teacher. Alice was a soft-spoken and beautiful person from whom I learned kahiko and 'auana. 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." I continued with her for two months.

Once while dancing on stage, a Hawaiian woman said, "What is that haole lady doing up on stage?" To me, I have Hawaiian blood in me and I am proud of it, and her remark encouraged me to do better. After I went on my own, I asked Aunt Daisy Boyd to translate the Hawaiian songs for me. The hula came very easily to me.

In 1934, I started my classes teaching 'auana first, then kahiko much later. I had my own style and it was very different from other hālau. My costumes, my pā'ū, my holokū, my ideas came naturally after I visualized my songs and dances. My best memories are of the children. I always said to them, "Do not waste your parents' money if you don't want to learn." I taught boys and girls, some as young as three years old. Men and women also took lessons, but the men learned just for fun, not to perform. After taking hula for about six months, the children were given a certificate with a picture of myself for learning good manners, good feelings, attire, and discipline. My advice was to put your heart and soul into what you do, work diligently, strive and have a goal.

I also taught at Punahou School, but after three years they wanted me to give up my

studio to teach full time for them. I refused for I wanted to keep my studio in Honolulu. After one of my recitals in Hilo, Mrs. Helen Desha Beamer who was a guest, said that she would send her granddaughter to me for private lessons. That was a great honor to have Mama Beamer trust me so much.

The **hula** has changed a lot. When I look at the ^{cuwehe} **cuwehe** of today, we never opened our legs like that. Old Hawaiians were rascal and naughty, but in a clean way. My definition of **hula kahiko** is something in the old tradition. I love **kahiko**, but I never composed because I felt I was not an expert to do so. I prefer **'auana** songs, and my favorite is "**Mi Nei**".

Language to me is very important in **hula**. If Aunt Daisy Boyd did not translate for me, I would not have been able to do anything.

I am very honored to be recognized today. For me it is a compliment when somebody reminds me that I was his or her teacher and that I was teaching their granddaughter. What a beautiful reward it is for me. My greatest joy is what I gave to the children because it lives on today.

I also take pride in the fact that the students of Kuulei's Hula Studio were on the cover of "Paradise of the Pacific", "Times" and "Newsweek" and inside of "Collier's Magazine".

I also am proud of the fact that Oren E. Long, Superintendent of Schools, felt it was important enough for me to be excused from teaching school for a whole week on Maui to take my keikis (4 girls and a boy) to Honolulu to entertain with Ray Kinney's troupe at the King Theater in Honolulu. The newspaper articles about my **keikis** were tremendously rewarding.

All of these articles and dates are in a book that my granddaughter, Maunalei Love, is using in her **hālaw**, O Ku'ulei Aloha.

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