

Cecelia Kaai

I was interested in the hula when I was a small girl. There would be family parties every Saturday in town so we would help serve the food. Afterwards everybody would want entertainment. I didn't know anything about the hula but my friend and I would make up motions to the songs the musicians played. I came from a big family who spoke fluent Hawaiian and my aunty was Rose Kuamoo the hula instructor. She told my father to bring my sister and I to her in Keokaha and she would teach us. My father said he couldn't pay her but he could make ti leaves for her girls. Aunty Rose entertained at the boat arrivals for ships like the "Lurline" and so my father would give her ti leaves in exchange for our hula lessons.

I studied informally with George Naope, & Martha Kaiawe in high school but upon graduation I came to Oahu to attend Church College. I took a few lessons with Piilani Watkins in Kapahulu but I had lost interest in the hula. I was more interested in the different cultures of the Pacific, especially New Zealand. I met my husband in Honolulu during the war. He had taken the name of his mother's father because people were threatening to send anybody Japanese or Chinese back to Japan or China.

We moved back to Kauai shortly after my daughter was born because we didn't want her to get to accustomed to city life. My husband didn't want me to dance so we became involved with a Kauai civic club. That's how I came to meet Joseph Kahaulilio. Some of my teachers didn't seem to care whether you learned the number correctly or not but Uncle Joe was different. He would tell you the meaning of the song, why you were dancing it, why you were doing each motion, and he would watch everything you did. I was with Uncle Joe until he left for California and he was the great influence in my career.

I began to teach under Hoakalei Kamauu in the State Foundation Program of the 1970's. She would train us and then send us out into the different districts to teach. I wanted people to see the way Hawaiians told their stories and that it was all in the hula.

I think the lowest point in my life was when I had the stroke. I was lying in bed and I couldn't make a motion, I couldn't talk, I couldn't sing. I had just been on the verge of going to New Zealand with Hoakalei and the opportunity passed me by.

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I began to work at the Volcano House and I met George Naope. I took a few lessons from him. I didn't get too much teaching from him. He had to entertain for some parties in Honolulu so he taught a few hulas and brought us with him. After him I had lessons from Maka Kaiawe. I was a junior in high school. I had one year with her. From there I came to Honolulu and took a few lessons with Piilani Watkins in Kapahulu. From there I went to Church College but I stopped taking any hula lessons.

I became interested in all the different cultures they had there. I didn't want to take any more hula, I had enough. I was interested in New Zealand. Then I would come home and teach anybody who wanted to learn. My husband I met my husband in Honolulu. He had taken his name from his grandfather because it was during the war and people were threatening to send anybody Japanese or Chinese back to ~~the~~ Japan or China and he didn't want that. We came to Kauai shortly after my daughter was born. We didn't want her to get so accustomed to city life that she would never want to return to Kauai. At first my husband did not want me to dance and so we got involved with a civic club. They needed somebody to help teach ~~minei~~ Minei for a fundraiser show and so my husband gave his approval for me to help. From then on I went and worked. I worked closely with Uncle Joe Kahaulelio who had a show at the Pacifica below Smith's boat(?). I was with Uncle Joe until the time he left for California and he has been my greatest influence.

Some of my teachers didn't seem to care whether you learned the number correctly or not but some instructors like Uncle Joe would tell you the meaning of the song. He would tell you why you were dancing it, and why you were doing each motion. Some people you can stand up anyway and make any kind of motion but Uncle Joe would watch your feet and every motion.

Hoakalei came here under <sup>the</sup> state and trained the teachers here and then sent them out to teach in different districts. I stayed under that program and taught until I had my stroke. I wanted people to see the way Hawaiians tell their stories. That they do it through the hula,

I think the lowest point was when I had the stroke. I was lying in bed I couldn't make a motion, I couldn't talk, I couldn't sing. I had just been on the verge of going to New Zealand with Hoakalei and I felt so downhearted. A dancer has to flow with the dance. You have to do the song with meaning. Make the motions clear. Some people say they have gone through an uniki or a recital but I've never gone through that. ~~the~~ All I did was practice and memorize. Uncle Joe rushed me because he wanted me to help teach the kids so he taught me everything that he thought I could use.

As I understand it hula kahiko is the dance done way before time. Only the men danced so the motions are done with power. I think the precise hula kahiko style of dancing is coming back. I think Lupenui and ~~the~~ even Lum Ho's motions are precise and flowing.

Cecelia Kaai  
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Puna Hawaii

I was interested in the hula when I was a small girl. There would be family parties every Saturday in town so we used to help serve the food. Afterwards everybody wanted entertainment. My friend and I would make up motions to the songs the musicians would play. I came from a big family that spoke fluent Hawaiian. I didn't know anything about the steps. My auntie was Rose Kumoo and she was teaching hula but my father did not take us to her. We were being asked to other parties to serve and dance and one party we went to was in Kona. Someone there saw us dance and told Auntie Rose. Auntie Rose told my father to bring my sister and I to her and my father said what for? You see she lived in Keokaha in the Hawaiian Homes and we were in the country. He told my auntie he couldn't pay her but he could make her tea leaves for her hula girls. Auntie used to entertain at boat arrivals like the "Lurline" and so my father would give her the Ti leaves whenever she would entertain in exchange for our Hula lessons. She would teach us three hours every Saturday.