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studio.” Maunalei said, “I have pictures of myself as a baby in the hula studio, watching my mother and grandmother teach. Growing up, I was always there — even on Saturdays when I really wanted to be out playing. I started my apprenticeship to become a Kumu Hula at the age of 12, teaching the 3-year-olds. Looking back, my memories are filled with feelings of love and gratitude. Our style is an old style which comes from Kauai and is soft and flowing. I appreciate the old values and try to maintain them in my Halau today. This is not to say that I don’t also enjoy some of the newer styles, but I will always strive to maintain what has been taught to me by my kupuna. I don’t want it to die out.”

Maunalei’s halua, the Halau O Ku’ulei Aloha entered the King Kamehameha Hula Competition and also the Queen Lili’uokalani Keiki Hula Competition.

“When we enter into competition, I tell the students that our purpose there is to share our style of hula and to have fun. I stress that we remember to be humble, enjoy ourselves and grow together as a group.”

Maunalei also has a fondness for the elders of Hawaii and remembers them every May in a Ho’olaule’a dedicated to what the kupuna have taught. The event is called “E Ho’olohe Mai Kakou I Ka Leo Na Kupuna”, which means, Let us Hear the Voices of the Elders. Entertainers who have been major influences in Hawaii’s music are invited — Andy Cummings, Sol K. Bright, Sr., and Raymond Kane. They also invite younger and currently popular entertainers like Owana Salazar and Kapena. “I like the idea of blending the elders and youth together on one bill,” Maunalei said.

She added, “I wish more of the kupuna would come out to dance with us. They are so much fun to be with. Some have said to me that they have always wanted to learn to dance the hula and that now they seem to have more time. I learn a lot about life in general from my students — and especially from the kupuna.”

Maunalei’s grandmother Harriet Ku’ulei Nani added, “All my life I have loved my work as a hula teacher and I still feel I haven’t let my dear teachers down. Clear up to this day, I have carried on teaching the real old Hawaiian way, as they hoped I would. My heart and soul is and always has been teaching the hula correctly — sincerely and with love. E Ho’omau.....”

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