

# NEWS PRESS RELEASE

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## The Kent Ghirard Tribute

**Kane`ohe, HI** - The Hula Preservation Society (HPS) invites you to a special Tribute to Uncle Kent Ghirard, on Saturday, November 13<sup>th</sup>, highlighted by the reunion of two dozen of his original 1950's dancers from his famous "Hula Nani Girls" troupe. Uncle Kent and his Hula Nani's were THE hula group in the decade leading up to Statehood. Formed in the late 40's and active through the early 60's, the Hula Nani Girls and their devoted leader Kent Ghirard performed throughout the Hawaiian islands and at all of Waikiki's major hotels of the time such as the Moana, Niumalu, Surfrider, and the Royal Hawaiian. Over the years, they performed with legends including Alfred Apaka, Lena Machado, Ray Kinney, Nona Beamer, Mahi Beamer, Alvin Isaacs, Pauline Kekahuna, Annie Kerr, and Gabby Pahinui. Uncle Kent and his girls also headlined the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago and were the first troupe to perform in Japan after World War II.

This special "Kent Ghirard Tribute" will take place as part of the final night of festivities at the World Invitational Hula Festival at the Waikiki Shell. (Specifically during the "tally time" on Saturday, November 13<sup>th</sup>, from 8:30pm – 9:00pm. Festival runs from Thursday Nov 11 – Saturday Nov 13<sup>th</sup>.)

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HPS has been documenting the hula life of Uncle Kent Ghirard since 2001. His active years in hula, centered around the late 40's to the early 60's, grew out of a love affair with Hawaiian music and hula that began when he first visited Hawai'i as a 12-year old boy in 1930. Originally from California, Uncle Kent moved to Hawai'i permanently after graduating from Stanford University. Although Uncle Kent was a "transplant" with not a drop of Hawaiian blood and modest formal training upon arrival, he became a well-known and ultimately well-respected hula troupe leader in Hawai'i. Uncle Kent's "Hula Nani Girls" were held in high regard for their professionalism, beauty, excellent grooming, and polished, synchronized dancing in both ancient and modern hula.

Over the years, Uncle Kent compiled a unique and irreplaceable Collection of photos, slides , and scrapbooks of him and his troupe in their varied performance venues. These include celebrity airport greetings, military ship arrivals, VIP presentations, HVB photo shoots, and regular hula shows, photos which showcase their distinguishable costuming and adornments, and undeniable cosmopolitan beauty. Since 2003, HPS has been working to digitize his Collection to fulfill Uncle Kent's wish of making the Collection available to the public.

For information on the World Invitational Hula Festival, please call Paulie Jennings at 486-3185. For Tribute information, please call Maile Loo at the HPS office at 247-9440.

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