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Auntie Nona and the true gift of music and dance

April 10th, 2008 by Vicki Viotti

Winona Beamer was a proud Hawaiian, many years before it became fashionable to be one.

Back in the day, Kamehameha Schools set about to nurture "good and industrious men and women," but practicing Hawaiian culture was not a big part of the program. That didn't stop Nona Beamer, who once got the boot from the school for standing up and dancing hula at a tea for the trustees when the powers that were at Kamehameha frowned on such displays of rebellion.

She used to tell that story with a little twinkle. For Auntie Nona, standing up for the culture wasn't meant to be ornery. It was simply the right thing to do, the only thing she *could* do.

And she was a true adherent to the Hawaiian value of sharing what was yours. Hula was to be shared, now and always.

As a woman with both feet planted in a changing world, she embraced new technology and joined with her hanai daughter, kumu hula Maile Beamer Loo, in the Hula Preservation Society. Its mission: to document the hula traditions of different masters of the art. Loo, who is a techno whiz-kid as well as a dancer and teacher, has compiled quite the video archive. It's Maile's baby, but Auntie Nona hanai-ed that one, too.

See for yourself:

<http://www.hulapreservation.org/>

At least there is a place to go to hear that sweet voice. While covering hula and Hawaiian affairs for the paper, I got more opportunities to chat with Auntie Nona by phone, so it's the voice that springs to mind for me.

Aloha pumehana, Auntie Nona. See that those angels mind you as you teach them the "Beamer Method," too.

— Vicki Viotti

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