Hali‘a Aloha...

On August 29, 2011, three days shy of his 93rd birthday, we lost beloved friend and supporter Uncle Kent Ghirard. For 10 years, we worked with Uncle to document his personal story and that of his Hula Nani troupe. The knowledge and guidance he shared will continue to inspire generations. Thank you Uncle for leaving a legacy that will continue to impact our hula community.

HPS Makes News!

“Memories of the Dance”
Hana Hou Magazine, Hawaiian Airlines
Dec 2011/Jan 2012 issue
www.hanahou.com
search “Hula Preservation Society”

“Voices of the Kāpuna”
Hana Hou Magazine, September 2011
www.hanahou.com

“Hula For Two”
Hana Hou Magazine, Hawaiian Airlines
Aug/Sept 2011, about Babywearing Hula
www.hanahou.com

Social Media:
Hula Preservation Society
Hale Pulelehua

Meet Our Dedicated Team!

Hula Preservation Society
Hale Pulelehua

What’s up in 2012??

- Kent Ghirard Tribute to the International Waikiki Hula Conference (Friday, May 9, 2012)
- 6-month Celebration for the 75th Anniversary of the opening of New York’s Lexington Hotel Hawaiian Room (Events from June - November 2012) including City Hall photo exhibit & special presentation at Distinctive Women in Hawaiian History Conference.

Keep up with all our exciting activities by joining our mailing list. (Automatic enrollment with your donation.)

As always, we appreciate your generosity in the form of an annual donation to HPS.

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Kindly send your gift along with this detached section to: HPS, P.O. Box 6274 Kahoe ohe HI, 96744
OR you can use Paypal at www.hulapreservation.org: Click “Donations” at top -> scroll down & click on the “Credit Card” icon

HPS Makes News!

HPS’s Outreach & Education efforts continued with the Salvation Army’s “Women’s Way” drug treatment program (cultural classes), the Windward Ho‘olaule‘a (created PSA for television broadcast), and the release of our first-ever DVD! “Voices of Our Kāpuna” features sharing by three esteemed Kumu Hula - Auntie Nona Beamer, Uncle George Naope, and Auntie Kahili Long Cummings. It can be purchased at Native Books, Iolani Palace Gift Shop, Hula Supply Center, or directly from HPS.

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Hui Pulelehua presents at Kamehameha Schools Maui with their Kumu: Uncle Calvin Hoe & Iwalani Kalima (far L), Maile Loo & Kapomo‘ai Molitau (far R). They also presented a program of rare hula implement forms in Pua‘a at the ‘iimuki ceremonies of Hula Na Hanona Kāhike Pi‘ilani, October 2011

Hui Pulelehua continues its educational work with the 4 rare forms of implement hula: Hula ‘Ohe (Nose Flute Hula), Hula ‘Uti (Dance w/ Triple Spinning Gourd), Hula Papa Hehi (Treadleboard Dance), & Hula K’i (Hawaiian Puppetry & Dance form as an image). Presentations were made on Moloka‘i, Maui, & O‘ahu this year. Students range in age from 10-17 and most attend Hakipu‘u Learning Center. They continually work to master these difficult forms through learning routines from the hula lines of Uncle George Naope, Auntie Nona Beamer, & Papa John Keola Lake.

Hale Pulelehua continues its educational work with the 4 rare forms of implement hula: Hula ‘Ohe (Nose Flute Hula), Hula ‘Uti (Dance w/ Triple Spinning Gourd), Hula Papa Hehi (Treadleboard Dance), & Hula K’i (Hawaiian Puppetry & Dance form as an image). Presentations were made on Moloka‘i, Maui, & O‘ahu this year. Students range in age from 10-17 and most attend Hakipu‘u Learning Center. They continually work to master these difficult forms through learning routines from the hula lines of Uncle George Naope, Auntie Nona Beamer, & Papa John Keola Lake.

From August - December, HPS offered its first monthly workshop “Honoring The Ancients” to help our hula community build a foundation in three rare forms of hula: Hula ‘Ohe, Hula ‘Uti, & Hula Papa Hehi. Workshops were led by Calvin Hoe & Maile Loo. HPS hosted dancers from O‘ahu, Moloka‘i, Lāna‘i, Hawai‘i, Mexico, Japan, Michigan, Illinois, Las Vegas, & California.

Hale Pulelehua studio continues to be a blessing, providing a multi-purpose space not only for us but for our community as well. Check out the studio website at: www.halepulelehua.org.

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Our work honors the treasured hula elders of Hawai‘i nei.
Mahalo to the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority, Friends of Hawai‘i Charities, Hawai‘i State Foundation on Culture & the Arts, Office of Hawaiian Affairs, & the Seventh Generation Fund for supporting this important work.

Sharing the Wisdom; Impacting Community

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The Hula Preservation Society is recording the invaluable mana’o of the Islands’ hula kūpuna.
Kaleikini lived hula as a child. She talks fondly of the old days, when money was not an issue. “We just went to dance when we were called,” she remembers. “If the job paid $6, each dancer got two and took it home to the family. We had no bank accounts, just some quarters on the dresser.” Making a pua (flower) gesture, she says she still dances in Honolulu when some of the Hula Nani dancers get together.

What we did was dance,” remembers Kaleikini. Her hands sweep up and out as she talks, telling stories of her days dancing hula in Europe, South America and New York. “Some of us thought of other careers. I was going to be a nurse. But then I would never have seen the world.”

Kaleikini, who is in her 70s now, was one of the famous Hula Nani Girls, gracious and elegant Hawaiian women who took hula to the world in the 1950s and ’60s. The Hula Nani Girls created precision lines of dancers that moved in unison, and their impeccable performances continue to inspire modern hula today. Across the globe, they introduced people to true Hawaiian culture and dance.

“If someone calls, we just go where they need us. We keep dancing to stay young.” She steps away from her memories for a moment and leans toward the woman who is recording her words. “I’m so glad you folks are doing this,” Kaleikini tells her. “Lots of us are gone, you know.”

The woman Kaleikini has thanked is Maile Beamer Loo, director of the Hula Preservation Society. She produced and directed this and numerous other video recordings, as well as interviewed the dancers. Loo has logged hundreds of hours talking story with Hawai‘i’s elderly kumu hula (hula teachers) and dancers, all in service of preserving their memories, knowledge and wisdom. “The purpose of the HPS archive,” Loo says, “is to document the great voices of hula before they go silent.” She knows the work is a race against time. The words of her hänai (adoptive) mother, the late Winona Desha “Nona” Beamer, are never very far away from her mind: “When one of our treasured elders dies, a library is locked forever.”

Beamer herself spent a lifetime working to preserve and protect Hawaiian culture. As a young Hawaiian woman studying at
Colorado Women’s College in the 1940s, she had witnessed firsthand the distortions of her culture: One evening her classmates took her to see what they thought was real hula. The performance was in the sideshow tent of a traveling circus, and Beamer was shocked that this vaudevillian act was being passed off as hula. Later in life she would take her own dancers on the road, all packed in a converted hearse named Begonia, and over fourteen months they would drive thousands of miles across the United States presenting what she called “real hula, not dancing bears.”

Beamer was a performer, storyteller, songwriter, activist and educator. In her 30s, when she was the manager of the Waimea Ranch Hotel on the Big Island, she began recording all that she had learned, seen, heard or read about ancient hula. Over the years she filled the walls of her study at the hotel with more and more butcher paper, using it to record her research and reflections. Then one awful night the hotel burned down, and all of Beamer’s work went up in smoke. Distraught over the loss, she stopped her record-keeping.

Then one day forty years after the fire, Beamer received a letter from a young woman named Maile Loo asking to study with her. Beamer said yes. The two hit it off so well that eventually Loo officially became Maile Beamer Loo, hänai daughter of her teacher. And from that relationship, HPS was born.

“HPS really began quite unassumingly one day after hours of intense training at Mom’s house in Puna,” remembers Loo. “Mom said, ‘I only know Beamer hula, what my grandmother taught me,’” remembers Loo. Nona paused. “We should ask Uncle George,” she said. That comment grew to a plan for videotaping the legends of hula—teachers, dancers and chanters—and creating an easily accessible archive of everything hula for future generations. The Beamer women realized that the fading memories of Hawai’i’s elders, most in their 80s and 90s, were the last direct link to great-grandparents who were, very possibly, witnesses to the traditions of hula during the time of the Hawaiian kingdom. “No one was out there asking our treasured elders what they remembered,” says Loo, “stories that could be shared for generations to come.”

The duo looked for any earlier documentation that did exist. It was spotty at best, says Loo, and none of it was recorded on video. Listening to audio oral histories housed in the University of Hawai’i libraries, it was clear to Beamer and Loo that words were not enough. “People talk with their hands and their eyes, especially hula people,” Loo says. “What we wanted to know, to document, was when they first saw hula, when and how they were selected as students, who were their teachers.”

Of the nearly sixty kūpuna HPS has interviewed to date, the late Uncle George Na’ope might be the most colorful. The patriarch of Hilo’s world-famous Merrie Monarch Festival, he was Nona Beamer’s mentor and hänai (adoptive) mother. Here Nona interviews The Joshua Sisters, a well-known dancing trio from the World War II era. Below, Nona delivering a lecture on O’ahu in 1958; at right, the much beloved Uncle George Na’ope, founder of Hilo’s Merrie Monarch Festival.
Merrie Monarch Festival is remembered for his gold lamé suits, rings on every finger and side-splittingly funny performances of comic hula. In the interview, Na'ope remembers himself as a 3-year-old boy who had to go to hula every day. “I thanked God for Sunday,” he says. “Hawaiians don’t dance on Sunday. I was glad to go to church!” He remembers learning the drum and chant of ancient hula and then, at around age 11, being told to dance. “I didn’t know how. Then I realized after chanting and watching, I did know how, so I danced!” His talent caught the eye of the leading Hawaiian entertainer of the time, Ray Kinney. The two spent years spreading hula and Hawaiian music around the globe.

Another legend whose story has been documented by HPS is Kent Ghirard. Ghirard was a 12-year-old boy in 1931 when he sailed from San Francisco to the Islands on a luxury liner. Watching the graceful hands and bodies of hula dancers as they greeted the ship in Honolulu, he fell in love. Back in California he found a teacher and started his own hula training, and in 1947 he sailed away from a presumed career as head of his father’s business, the Ghirardelli Chocolate Company, to follow his love for hula. It was Ghirard, the “tall Caucasian person teaching hula” as Leialoha Kaleikini remembers him, who started the famed Hula Nani Girls. In HPS interviews, dancers remember one of Ghirard’s inventions, the green hula panty. Ghirard costumed his dancers in bright tops, often strapless, and green ti leaf skirts—sans the then-conventional below-the-knee bloomers. Rather than be too risqué, his solution was a bright green hula panty that would match the skirt, allow for its great swish and sway and show beautiful, bare legs. The dancers still laugh about dyeing their own panties. “The panty makes dancers giggle,” Nona Beamer used to say, “but it does the job!”

Eleven years after that simple conversation over dinner between teacher-and-student mother-and-daughter, the Hula Preservation Society has collected more than a thousand hours of video footage and tens of thousands of images. At the outset Beamer told Loo that there would be “no boring documentaries!” She asked Loo to find the real story of hula life, recording the enthusiasm, creativity and personal stories of each dancer or kumu. “What we do,” Loo explains, “is very simple: We call and ask to come talk story about hula and to record the conversation.” Once arrived,
Loo and cameraman Gene Kois ask, “Where would you like to sit? Where are you comfortable?” The dancer or kumu is filmed in natural light with ambient sound that can run from a barking dog to a neighbor’s television. Loo thinks that a hundred years from now those sounds on the recording will tell a story of their own.

Hula costumes from the 1920s, scrapbooks, photos, vintage 78 records, audioscassettes and hula implements have all been donated to the HPS by hula elders. What began for two women as a labor of love for hula has grown into a federally recognized nonprofit. Nona Beamer died in 2008, and Loo now carries on the work herself. The first documentation was done on a shoestring, Loo says, and the organization still runs “very lean,” though it has been slowly augmented with grants from foundations, private donors, the State of Hawai‘i and the federal government.

In the twenty-first century, the love for hula seems to grow exponentially every day. Hundreds of thousands of dancers in Japan, Mexico, Europe and all over the world eagerly search for hula fact and wisdom. Letters, emails and text messages come in to the HPS web site regularly, asking for answers, information and “real hula teachings.” Loo is happy to see so many visitors. At the moment, she says, HPS is putting its limited resources into capturing as many stories as possible. In the future, though, she plans to grow the HPS website, www.hulapreservation.org, and to share all of the organization’s precious interviews on the web. “We know that our online library can be used by hundreds of thousands if not millions of dancers,” she says, “who have an honest desire to learn about hula and Hawaiian culture.”

On May 11, 2012, as part of the International Waikiki Hula Conference, HPS will stage a tribute to Kent Ghirard, who died August 29, 2011. It will be held at the Hawai‘i Convention Center, and the Hula Nani Girls, including Leialoha Kaleikini, will be dancing. For information, call (808) 247-9440 or visit the HPS web site.
Experience Hula Preservation Society’s first DVD, a true gift for the eyes, ears, and heart. Created from a live program held in July 2005 on the island of Maui, *Voices Of Our Kūpuna* features three of Hawai‘i’s beloved Kumu Hula – Auntie Nona Beamer, Uncle George Naope, and Auntie Kahili Long Cummings. This unique footage captures their individuality, loving spirits, and playful natures, as they share important wisdom and valuable insights into hula, music, and Hawaiian culture, all of which they have used to educate countless people around the world. This is a must have for any hula person’s library!

"He makana makamae maoli no! Thanks to the vision of HPS, we – nā makamaka ā pau – are all privileged to sit in the alo of these kūpuna, see their maka, hear their leo and know that their mana‘o will always be with us, thanks to media and technology. Purchases of this DVD will support HPS’s important work of honoring the hula heritage of our kūpuna, and sharing glimpses of it with us all."

Dr. Amy Ku‘uleialoha Stillman

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For more than a decade, the Hula Preservation Society has been interviewing, and videotaping, hula's most respected elders, capturing their knowledge, their memories and their stories. The result is a treasure trove of history and culture; here, we present just a few excerpts from the hundreds of hours of footage. By MICHAEL KEANY

Photos: Courtesy of the Hula Preservation Society
T ALL STARTED WITH A SIMPLE QUESTION. Pioneering kumu hula Winona Beamer was in her Puna home, talking story about hula traditions and techniques with her hanai daughter, Maile Loo-Ching. “We were sitting around her table,” Loo-Ching recalls, “as we did so many times, and all of a sudden Auntie Nona asked, I wonder what my peers know about all this? I was like, Well, let’s go ask them!” Beamer and Loo-Ching did just that, visiting the homes of expert kumu hula and practitioners who had been born before 1930, equipped with a video camera. The interview settings were casual—living rooms and back yards—but the stories they began to record were priceless.

“These people are cut from a different fabric,” says Loo-Ching. “They grew up in a Hawai‘i that is not around anymore. A lot of them were raised by grandparents who lived in the 1800s. The way they did things, the Hawaiian they spoke, it’s different.”

What started as an informal project quickly turned into a real nonprofit organization, the Hula Preservation Society. Since 2001, Loo-Ching has interviewed more than 50 people, capturing more than 1,200 hours of footage in all, and is still going strong.

Because the kupuna being interviewed are now in their 80s and 90s, Loo-Ching says her oral history project feels like a constant race against time. “Since we’ve been doing this, we lost Uncle George Holokai, Auntie Myrtle. Uncle George Na’ope passed, Auntie Emma Kauhi. It’s been a wake up call. We need to step it up.” Of course, with finite resources, HPS has focused more on recording new oral histories than on editing and publishing the ones they’ve already got. But Loo-Ching is applying for national grants that would allow them to put everything online.

Here, we’ve selected a few stories from the Hula Preservation Society archives we feel capture the vitality, wisdom and humor of hula’s oldest living generation—from early hula memories to anecdotes of an earlier time in Hawai‘i. Each kupuna’s account has been edited for length and clarity.
EDNA PUALANI FARDEN BEKEART
BORN 1917

Bekeart hails from the renowned Farden clan of Maui. Her sister was Irmgard Farden Aluli, and her sister Emma Sharpe was a renowned kumu hula. Bekeart is best known for her work writing Hawaiian children songs. In this 2002 interview, she shares her earliest hula memories from the early 1920s.

In those days, when Hawai‘i became a possession of the United States, everything went fast forward. You had to stop speaking Hawaiian, you had to learn English. Don’t dance the hula, it’s lascivious; it was the missionary attitude at that time. So nobody was doing anything Hawaiian. But the hula went underground. People were still doing it in country places, like Lahaina. And at Puamana, we used to have hula dancing there. But not the sacred dances.

As a child, four or five years old, I remember seeing my mother and other women doing the *hula ku‘i* (in Bekeart’s usage, an informal hula used to flirt). That’s what they danced. Not the hula with motions of a story. They came later. But in the country places like this, they would have Hawaiian music and dance this hula ku‘i, with that flair. And then the men would get in and do the same thing, like a teasing, flirtatious kind of dance. And everybody would shout and clap and sing and enjoy the couple doing the hula together. Like I say, it was a flirtatious thing.

As a four- and five-year-old watching my mother, I did not like it. I was stunned. [chuckles] It was something that was done at home, you know. But there it was my mother and my dad doing it. Here, some other man would get up and dance. My dad was not a dancer anyway. So I was really shocked to see this. But I know, to witness this was really something.

LEILEHUA DESHA BECKER FURTADO
BORN 1927

Furtado spent the majority of her career as a singer, dancer and television personality. After receiving hula training from Louise and Helen Beamer, Lei performed as the star of the New York Lexington Hotel’s legendary Hawaiian Room in the 1940s, and appeared regularly on KGBM’s Kini Popo Show in the ‘50s. In this 2002 interview, she talks about how hula has changed over the years.

Years and years ago, different islands had different styles. That’s what makes hula so interesting. It’s the difference between the different dancers. When we danced, each family had a style all their own, and you knew it. You knew who came from where. They’d always say, That’s a Beamer dancer, That’s a Bray dancer. It was wonderful to differentiate between the families. Now it’s all blended. You don’t know who they took from.

I’m not lambasting them. I’m glad all of this stuff came back. The soloists they have at Merrie Monarch are quite good. The ‘ōlapa (ancient-style hula) as well. I don’t know about the ‘auana (modern) stuff. I love the ‘ōlapa, because the girls come in and chant. There’ve been a couple that were wonderful. But it’s just the regimentation. You wonder what they’re training with. A metronome? Or rock and roll? [chuckles]

They’re not sloppy. These girls are, you know, doing exactly what they’re supposed to do, which is a regimentation. You know, like the Rockettes. It’s all in the right place, but you’re not having hula, because you’re not having the inside coming out.

For the most part, most of the time I see people dance, they don’t convey the joy of what they’re doing. And that’s really missing. A zest in it.

Of course, I should talk; I don’t watch the whole Merrie Monarch. I try to watch when they have the soloists on and you know, ’cause it’s just not what we knew hula to be. And I really don’t think it was ever competitive. It was sharing. Hula is sharing, not, you know, I’m gonna win and you’re not.
EMMA KAPUNO‘ULAOKALANI KAUHI
1916 – 2006
Kauhi grew up in Kapa‘ahu on the Big Island, speaking Hawaiian as her first language. In this 2001 interview, she shares the beliefs instilled in her as a child and her experiences with the goddess Pele:

Being born and raised in Puna from a very young age, it was drilled in my mind that Puna is Pele’s land. I heard it growing up. My mom put emphasis on that. Mom was a practicing Catholic all her life. And she respected Pele. Mom used to say, Pele can appear any time. As a beautiful woman, as an old lady, a haggard lady. When you’re driving and you see somebody on the side of the road, stop and pick them up, especially if it’s a lady. You can never tell that it might be Tutu Pele. That’s how I was brought up.

We lived in Kapa‘ahu. There’s no radio, no TV, no telephone. So you’re really isolated. There was no outside communication, so we didn’t know when the Pele was going to erupt. And the only way we know is, usually we have earthquakes. When the earth shakes, that’s a sign that Pele is going to erupt.

I remember one time, my aunt said to my uncle, Well, now that Pele has come back to Halema‘uma‘u, we should take the kids to go see the Pele. Four or five of us piled into the car, and they took us to the volcano. And this was the first time I ever saw the lava activity in Halema‘uma‘u.

Before we went up, my aunt, Mom’s sister, told me that when we go, we have to take ho‘okupu (ceremonial offering). It was the first time I heard about ho‘okupu. Just about a half a mile from Halema‘uma‘u, there’s an area, almost like a garden of ‘ōhelo berries. The saying is that that was Pele’s favorite, ‘ōhelo berries. And I was forbidden by my mother to eat the ‘ōhelo berries. That’s for Pele. So I never tasted the ‘ōhelo berries.

We stopped at this place. And Auntie Luika, Mom’s sister, said, “OK, each child take a little bouquet of these ‘ōhelo berries, this is going to be your ho‘okupu.” Then we go over there, and we’re all praying down to the edge of the crater. Auntie is mumbling something and then she tell us to throw our ho‘okupu, and we throw our ho‘okupu in Halema‘uma‘u.

Later, I had my own children. So my mom and I, we saw the glow at night. Mom said, “Okay, Pele is back, so let’s take the
children up to see the volcano." And so we went. Mom told my brother, driving, "Stop at the liquor store." Mom got out of the car, and I followed her. I'm very inquisitive, you know. And I heard Mama tell the sales lady, "Give me the most expensive gin you have." So the lady got it, and she said, "Wrap it up in a nice wrapper for a gift."

So we went onto Halema'uma'u. Got out of the car, open the trunk, and I watch every move she made. Get this liquor bottle, and get the ti leaf, and wrap it around this liquor bottle. Make it real nice, you know. So we walk up to the edge of the crater and she was chanting in a soft, soft tone. And then she threw it; this was her ho'okupu.

And then all of a sudden, Ga'il said, "Ma, Ma, look at that; look the paper, look the paper!" And when I looked, you know, the paper that was wrapped around the liquor bottle was fluttering up, like it had been torn in bits.

When that was all over, we went to the car, and Mom told me, "That was a sign. Pele has accepted the gift." And that's the way Mom was.

GEORGE LANAKILAKEKIAHIALI'I NA'OPE
1928 - 2009

A legendary kumu hula and Hawaiian chanter, George Na'ope is perhaps best known for founding the Merrie Monarch Festival in 1964. In this 2008 interview, he explains the origins of the festival.

I was appointed as promoter of activities by Mrs. Hale who was then elected chairman for the County of Hawai'i Island. And she said, "We gotta do something, George." So she sent me to Maui, where they had the Whaling Spree, in Lahaina.

All I saw was a drinking brawl. All drinking, nothing Hawaiian.

So when I came back Monday to Hilo, Mrs. Hale called a staff meeting, and she said, "Oh, George went to Maui to the Whaling Spree and we're gonna start one here, too." I said, "We're not gonna start one, we're gonna make our own." I didn't want to tell them what happened there.

And so I just came out with: Let's honor King David Laamea Kamanakapu'u Kalāka'a, who loved the hula and was the first Hawaiian ali'i that toured the world. He was the Merry Monarch. And that's how it started. I didn't know what I was gonna do.

We had some hula shows during the first event. But not a competition. Just had Hilo people, you know, halaus. The only contest at Merrie Monarch was the Kalāka'a beard contest. We had the Grog Shoppe, seeing as Kalāka'a was a merry old soul. Later we had the first Hilo competition, and then opened up to the public, and the next thing you know, look at Merrie Monarch today. But we try to keep it authentic.

Everything changes. The music has changed, the dances have changed, but the hula is still the ability to create one's most inner feelings. So no teacher is wrong. That's their mana'o. That's how they feel. Hawaiian words have many meanings. And you can take it, can be naughty but still get nice. But that's the hula. Hawaiians do things how you feel, not how somebody else feel.

The hula is the ability to create one's most inner feelings and not somebody else's. So don't say that that teacher is wrong and this teacher is right. They're all right. That's their interpretation. And that's why the hula is beautiful. That's why the hula is done all over the world. Every country you go to, they dancing the hula. Maybe the "Hukilau" or "I Wanna Go Back To My Little Grass Shack." But it's the hula. And they know where Hawai'i is. So, no ke akua e aloha maku'o—he gave us love for us to share. Not to talk about somebody.

Old Hawaiians say, Pua ka wahā, kana ka lima. Shut your mouth. Let the hands tell the story. That's Hawai'i.