



Ku'uiipo Kalahiki Morales

HAWAIIAN CULTURAL ARTIST

Josephine Ku'uiipo Philomena Kalahiki-Morales first learned traditional Hawaiian weaving as a child, and has been an instructor of Hawaiian arts for over 18 years. She spent her childhood in Ko'olaupoko, Kahalu'u on the island of Oahu. Every morning Ku'uiipo awoke to the soothing sound of Hawaiian Music coming from the radio of her mother, Martha Maleka Kalahiki, a falsetto singer and entertainer. Through her mother, Ku'uiipo learned how to play the ukulele, and sing all the wonderful songs of Hawai'i.

She frequently spent summers with her Uncle Sonny and Auntie Tita Kahala at their home in Kahana Bay. Here, in a pristine valley still untouched by the modern world, Ku'uiipo learned how to work the land in the traditional way, and listened to stories from Papa Didi, the resident Kupuna, of the old days and ways. From Mai'a (banana), to Pea (avocado), and Samoan Crab from the river, they lived solely on the pure food that nature provided. Ku'uiipo's education did not stop there.

In the early 1960's Ku'uiipo spent some time at her mothers sisters home in Papakolea. Auntie Beatrice Lake taught her Hula Auwana along with her sisters and cousins. She continued to learn the art of Hula from Uncle George Na'ope, Auntie Martha Kaiawe, Liko Johnson and other various Hula Masters.

Ku'uiipo also lived in downtown Honolulu on Smith street in Chinatown. There she experienced the Chinese culture and customs from Chinatown's elders and shop merchants, Chinese New Year was an exciting time she will always remember and cherish.

Ku'uiipo's family lived in Waikiki in a small white house across the famous Waikiki sea wall. There Ku'uiipo learned how to slide on the wall and ride waves with a pipe-o board her stepfather made of wood.

While attending the University of Hawaii at Hilo, Ku'uiipo learned Hawaiian Ethnobotany. Her instructor was our Auntie Edith Kanaka'ole, a master of the culture, who took the class on many extraordinary field trips teaching students the art of living in harmony



with nature using the Hawaiian value system.

Ku'uiipo's education continued as she learned to weave in the footsteps of her grand aunt, who was lovingly referred to as "Tutu Lady" a weaver of Lauhala. Tutu Lady, like the weavers of old, had a lauhala tree growing outside her home where Ku'uiipo lived as a teen. She learned basic weaving with lauhala from her older sister. This sparked a deep love of weaving that burns strong to this day.

Ku'uiipo continued her education on weaving from many polished masters throughout the years. She learned how to weave Lau Niu (coconut) from Jim Rutledge, who's mentor was Uncle Frank Kamaka of Kona. Ku'uiipo's first lesson with Lau Niu was from a Filipino man at a family lu'au. She is one of the few women weaving Lau Niu today in Hawaii.

These wonderful learning experiences were just a precursor to a life devoted to culture, with a strong focus on traditional hawaiian weaving. Ku'uiipo's hope is to perpetuate the legacy of weaving natural fibers of Hawai'i, so it will live on through each generation. She has instilled this love in her daughter, Malia Kanoe O'kalani Becklund, who weaves with her today. Ku'uiipo continues to teach beginner classes through various groups and schools in Hawaii.