

Celebrating 40 years of teaching hula

By Melissa Tanji

The Maui News

WAILUKU, Hawai'i (AP) — In a single-car garage on Vineyard Street in Wailuku, a young Iola Caldito learned the hula. Taught by the late Elizabeth Lum Ho, the six-year-old found a passion and never let go.

"I loved hula from the very start," said Iola Caldito Balubar, now 68, a *kumu hula* and professional Polynesian dancer. It became her life and her career, reported the *Maui News*.

This year marks the 40-year anniversary of Balubar's *halau*, which got its start in May 1975. Initially called Iola Balubar Polynesian Dance Studio, the group was renamed Halau Hula O Keola Ali'i O Ke Kai, which means "the lively king of the sea," in 1982. The name was inspired by her sons' names, Keola and Kealii, and by the family of her husband, Richard Balubar, divers and fishermen who love the ocean.

From that Vineyard Street garage, Balubar followed her passion and learned more hula and Polynesian dance, including Tahitian, Maori, and Samoan styles. She performed professionally at Maui venues familiar to old-timers, such as the Intercontinental Hotel in Wailea (now the Wailea Beach Marriott Resort & Spa) and the old Maui Lu Resort in Kihei (which currently is being turned into a 388-unit timeshare project).

Balubar has taken hula and Polynesian dance to the mainland, Japan, the Philippines, and Canada. She even performed at Disneyland's Tahitian Terrace Restaurant, with five half-hour shows daily.

"I would look forward for Tinker Bell flying on an overhead wire across Disney's park," she recalled.

In addition to performing, teaching became a calling. Balubar has taught hundreds of adults and children over four decades. Her career is so long that she currently is teaching grandchildren of some of her early students.

"I feel very successful. I feel very happy to have reached out to so many people that have trusted me and who came to me as a student to learn how to portray the hula,



DECADES OF DANCE. Iola Caldito Balubar (left photo) established her halau four decades ago and is currently teaching grandchildren of some of her early students in Wailuku, Hawai'i (right photo). Balubar is *kumu hula* of Halau Hula O Keola Ali'i O Ke Kai, which means "the lively king of the sea." This year marks the 40th anniversary of her halau, which got its start in May 1975. Initially called Iola Balubar Polynesian Dance Studio, the group was renamed in 1982. (Matthew Thayer/The Maui News via AP)

Hawaiian culture ... as well as Polynesian dance that I have taught all these years," Balubar said.

Among her many students is 24-year-old Cheyenne Jarnesky of Waiehu, who has been dancing with Balubar for 20 years.

"Hula and Tahitian (dance) stuck out for me. It always did," said Jarnesky, who dances professionally at the Westin Maui luau in Kaanapali. "She kind of molded me into becoming the professional hula dancer that I am today."

Jarnesky, who is an *alakai* or leader in the halau, said she has continued to dance for Balubar all these years because of her approach to performance and practice.

"She will always help you along. She will never put you down," Jarnesky said.

"(Balubar) is always happy. She is always sharing aloha with everyone. New people coming into the halau, she will take them on. She will never tell anybody no," Jarnesky said.

Val Fernandez, who has been dancing with Balubar for more than 20 years, calls her teacher "a loving, caring person."

Back in the day, Fernandez said she performed Tahitian and Maori dances, but hula currently is her favorite. Some of the best times with Balubar and her hula sisters are at family gatherings or parties, where they all get up to dance a familiar



song.

"We all love to dance and perform," she said.

Wendy Perry of Kahului, who has been dancing with Balubar for 31 years, calls Balubar a "kumu, friend, and aunty."

"We have learned life disciplines from her loving and caring ways — how well she treats people, how she gives unselfishly to others, how it's never a problem to do something for you," said Perry. "Her infectious laughter, twinkling eyes, and big heart enrich our lives. What would we have done without our beloved Aunty Iola?"

Over the years, Balubar's halau has performed at nonprofit events, healthcare facilities, and Maui shopping centers. The halau has taken part in competitions, including the Merrie Monarch Festival on the Big Island and the Queen Lili'uokalani Keiki Hula Competition on Oahu. The halau also has participated in competitions in San Francisco and in Las Vegas.

Her dancers also have entered Tahitian dance competitions, such as the Heiva I Maui Tahiti Fete. Balubar gave a shoutout to her lead Tahitian drummer and singer, Guiller Evangelista, who has been with her for 25 years.

Some of Balubar's dancers have gone on to professional careers at the Old Lahaina

Luau and the Royal Lahaina and Westin Maui luaus, along with Tihati Productions, which produces large, professional shows for conventions, international tours, television appearances, and international bookings.

Balubar continues to teach hula to people of all ages and still holds afternoon practice in Waiehu for keiki and the "gracious ladies" of the mature set.

Balubar is the daughter of Richard "Pablo" and Dorothy Lovell Caldito. Her father was a member of the former Maui County Board of Supervisors and later the Maui County Council. As a youngster, Balubar said she was known as "the Caldito daughter, the hula dancer."

At one point in her youth, she had to stop taking hula lessons because the family could not afford them. "I didn't know how much it was, (but) we had to stop," she said.

Later, in the sixth or seventh grade, she was able to resume her lessons. The late Becky Kaopuiki gave Balubar an opportunity to choreograph hula.

"It was then, I gained the confidence to choreograph hula. (I) also created our own outfits," she said.

From that point on, she never looked back and was dancing at luau and entertaining at parties "at a young age."

"I have danced forever," she said.

Team U.S.A. beats Japan to win 2015 Women's World Cup

By Jody Lim

The Asian Reporter

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — The United States defeated Japan in the final of the 2015 Women's World Cup (WWC), the once-every-four-years world championship of soccer. The U.S. got off to a fast start, scoring four goals in the first 16 minutes of the match. Defending champion Japan finally got on the board in the 27th minute.

The Nadeshiko of Japan earned a spot in the final match by defeating all their opponents in Group C: Switzerland 1-0, Cameroon 2-1, and Ecuador 1-0. After the group stage, they defeated their Round of 16 opponent, The Netherlands, 2-1, to start off the knockout stage. The next squad to fall to Japan was Australia, 1-0, in the quarterfinal, then England in the semifinal, 2-1.

The U.S. booked their ticket to the final match with two wins and a tie in Group D: a 3-1 win over Australia, a scoreless draw against Sweden, and a 1-0 defeat of Nigeria. In the Round of 16, Team USA beat Colombia 2-0 to



WORLD CHAMPIONS. Team Japan's Rumi Utsugi (left photo, left) slides as Carli Lloyd (#10) of the United States dribbles the ball during the second half of the Women's World Cup soccer championship in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, on July 5, 2015. The United States beat Japan to win the title. In the right photo, Japan's goalkeeper, Ayumi Kaihori, gets a hand on but can't save a goal scored by USA midfielder Carli Lloyd during the first half of the game. (AP Photos/Elaine Thompson)

earn the right to play China PR in the quarterfinal, who they beat 1-0. In the semifinal, the U.S. knocked off number-one-ranked Germany with a 2-0 score.

USA's Carli Lloyd started the scoring in the third minute of the championship game on a corner kick taken by Megan Rapinoe. The goal was the fastest goal in Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) WWC Final history.

Within two minutes, the U.S.

had tallied another goal. On a free kick, Lauren Holiday sent a ball in that was flicked by Julie Johnston and finished by Lloyd.

Just nine minutes later, in the 14th minute, the United States was on the board again. After a series of passes by the U.S., Team Japan defender Azusa Iwashimizu attempted to head the ball away, but instead sent it up into the air and to the feet of Lauren Holiday, who volleyed it into the back of the net.



After two more minutes, the score was 4-0, when Lloyd took a shot from near half field. Japan goalkeeper Ayumi Kaihori got a hand on the ball, but it bounced off the post and into the goal.

Japan's Yuki Ogimi hit a curling shot on a pass by Nahomi Kawasumi in the 27th minute to finally put Japan on the scoresheet. Shortly after the goal, in the 33rd minute, Japan head coach Norio Sasaki subbed in a player with experience to spark

his team: 36-year-old Homare Sawa, who has scored 83 international goals for her country.

Japan's play improved, but the team only managed to score one more goal, by causing a USA own goal in the 52nd minute. The U.S. scored once more, a nice finish by Tobin Heath in the 54th minute, for a final score of 5-2.

The next FIFA Women's World Cup will be held in France. To learn more, visit <www.fifa.com/womensworldcup>.