

Lomilomi
How to *Massage*
Mirimiri
Romi

with your
Heart
and **Soul**

How to Massage/Lomi Lomi with your Heart and Soul

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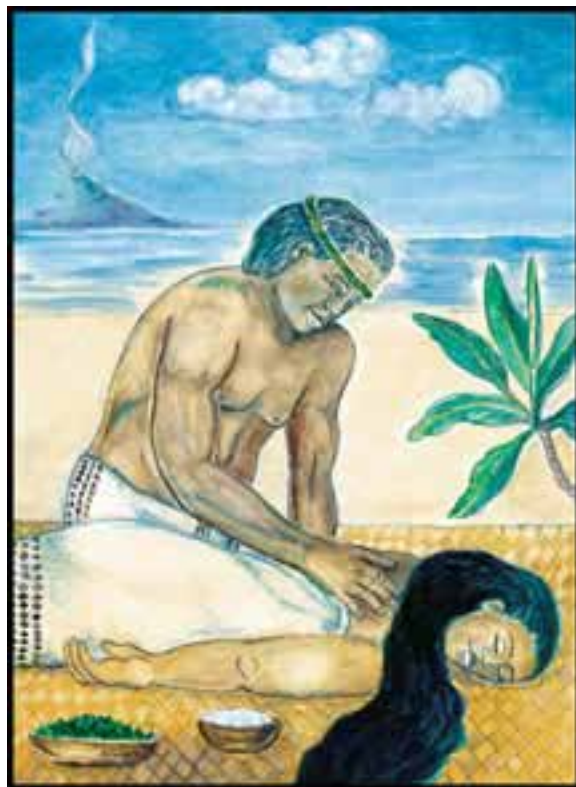
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Preface

*T*his book explores a very personal path of self-growth and self-reflection as a massage practitioner. Since the 1980s, massage has undergone a re-discovery and huge growth in popularity that few could have predicted. More recently, this has shifted to a fascination in Hawaiian and other traditional healing arts such as Thai massage. My career blossomed while living in Hawaii for almost four decades where I studied lomi lomi (spiritual Hawaiian massage) and the ancient art of ho‘opono pono (forgiveness).

Like with many things, it is not what you do but how you do it that makes the difference. When I was a teenager, I chose to learn massage, and I dedicated myself to a path of healing. I have never regretted this choice. Indeed, it has been a sacred journey that keeps getting better in ways that I could never have imagined way back when I received my first eye-opening foot massage in 1969. Little did I know back then how massage and the healing arts would shape my entire adult life.

In this book, I am offering you, the reader, some highlights of my journey to date as I learned, taught, and experienced massage in many forms and cultures. It has collectively become a fascinating adventure full of personal growth and spiritual discoveries infused with Polynesian magic. I've included some of my best memories and most sacred experiences over the decades, especially ones that made a deep impression on me or changed my life. Everything in my story



is true, and the spiritual experiences I've shared occurred without the use of any mind-altering substances (medical or recreational). They are, I believe, a direct result of my declared intention long ago to always know and follow the Truth, and to let God guide my hands and heart.

I can only share with you what has worked for me over the years. As I look back, I can say I've been truly blessed with many wonderful teachers and profound experiences, particularly while living in Hawai'i for almost forty years. As you read my story, perhaps you will find glimpses into the sacredness of your own path as well.



Part One

I distinctly remember one day back in 1974 while taking a long walk in the redwood forest of Polipoli on the slopes of Haleakala, Maui. The narrow path meandered through the young grove of tall, proud trees, and I felt like I was walking amidst many older brothers and sisters. Some towered above the others, their upper branches rattling in the wind, while the forest floor was quiet and soft far below. Ferns dotted the path, and at a clearing the convolvulus blue of morning glory tumbled down a small native tree. Misty low clouds danced past the treetops. At every turn, the shadows and diffused light produced a rainbow of forest green colors.

Although I was with no one, I did not feel alone. I was familiar with the trails and had been in the forest before. The trails were well maintained as Polipoli is a Hawaiian forest reserve; there were no wild animals to worry about and the weather was comfortably warm. On this day, I was at peace ... complete inner peace. I came upon a place with a bench and a magnificent vista to the North. From here I could see the entire northern ancient volcanoes of Maui, including the isthmus connecting it with Haleakala and the Pacific Ocean shimmering on both sides. I remember feeling completely content, desiring no thing.

In the back of my otherwise peaceful mind, the mental wheels were once again turning. “Why am I here? What is the meaning of Life?”

I had spent almost two years on Maui, hiking and swimming and exploring her beauty. I had been living in an environment that was truly a paradise, further enhanced by the fact that I had not been working thanks to a small inheritance from my paternal grandfather. On a scale of 1-10, my stress level was about a minus five. Things were truly glorious.

Yet I repeatedly pondered this question of my life's purpose. I began to genuinely seek a reason for being here. I had yet to discover my calling in life. And from deep in my heart and soul, I now asked God for some insight. Thus began a two-way divine conversation. Although I had attended church regularly since childhood, this may have been my first true dialog with God on a conscious level. We were chatting in the form of my thoughts, and I was very receptive and sincere in my questioning. How I would love to rewind and replay this afternoon, so I could re-experience every detail. But I do remember getting the message that my hands were my sacred tools, and that I would be sharing a lot of information with many people about health and healing. And I clearly recall the question God asked me, "Do you want children?" And I remember deciding that yes, I did. And I remember being told, "You will never be alone." I had been sensing this, and believed it in my head, but now I knew it was true.

By the end of the afternoon, I knew it was time to leave Maui and head for a town with a university. The choices were Honolulu or Hilo, and I chose Hilo on the Big Island of Hawai'i. A week later, I landed in my new home and began a new chapter in my life.

MY EARLY DAYS AS A MESSAGE THERAPIST

I arrived in Hilo right before the Hawaiian 'renaissance' when the double-hulled Hokule'a^a voyaging canoe returned from Tahiti. There was a buzz in the air, and Hawaiians had begun to celebrate their cultural identity and pride. I became involved in a holistic educational non-profit organization and clinic called Ke Ola Hou, where I formally learned about foot reflexology, chiropractic, and other forms of massage. I joined a canoe club and spent hours paddling and swimming in the warm protected waters of Keaukaha just east of Hilo. I decided to learn anatomy and soon after passed my state massage license exam in 1977. I met and married a handsome Hawaiian man with lovely gardens, and gave birth to my two sons while living on an old Hawaiian homestead situated on a



secluded hill bordered with several waterfalls and a bamboo grove north of the city. For years we explored and camped all over the island, from the black sands of Kalapana and rocky coastline of Ka‘u, to the smooth sands of Hapuna and secret coves in Kohala. The Big Island is a treasure trove of diversity and pristine, raw beauty, with (it is said) twenty-one of the world’s twenty-two climates.

In 1982, when my boys were still toddlers, I moved to Kona and began working as a massage therapist at the former Kona Surf and King Kamehameha Hotels. At dusk, my sons and I would often go down Ali‘i Drive along the coast and watch the sunset, then on over to the Keauhou pier to watch the manta rays. There was a big light on a tall metal pole right between the parking lot and the pier, and we would sit there and wait for them to come. The first sighting was always the most exciting, as we would see the first big, black image heading directly towards us. Few creatures can manoeuvre in the water like they can! They would look right at us—or so it seemed—and literally do somersaults as if they were performing for us. We would applaud and squeal with amazement, and they would repeat the performance again and again. I have no doubt that they knew we were there and heard our cheers, but I imagine they came to the light for night feeding.

Living along the magnificent Kona coastline was conducive to communing with nature. I woke up to birds singing and the sound of the



ocean waves, and fell asleep at the end of sunny days ending in vivid sunsets. We lived right on the coast. Everyday I found myself listening to the moana (ocean), savouring the aromatic plumeria flowers, and talking to the stars from our patio on Ali'i Drive.

One day my younger son, Jonah Kaniela, and I ventured up to Kohala to hear a Native American healer named Sun Bear^b speak. My son was about seven years old at the time, and loved swimming and bodysurfing in the ocean. By the time we arrived at the venue, the sky was covered in clouds but it was not raining. About three-dozen people had gathered to hear Sun Bear lead a sacred peace pipe ceremony. We all sat in a large circular meeting room with plush carpet and huge windows on all sides that was located in a beautiful meadow at a private home. My son was extremely fascinated by the presence of this Medicine Man from California, who had long gray hair and a captivating smile.

Sun Bear began by honoring the four directions—East, South, West, and North—as well as the Mother Earth below us, and Father Sky above. His speech was deliberate and purposeful, and extremely sincere. Then he gave thanks to all creatures on Earth, beginning with the fish and all creatures in the sea. Next he honored his “two-winged brothers and sisters.” At that moment, two birds flew by and made loud chirping sounds. Then he thanked his “four-legged” brothers and sisters, and at that instant several geckos in the ceiling rafters made their little sounds. My son and I looked at each other in amazement. He went on, acknowledging all life forms on the planet with sincerity and reverence, and it was very powerful. He thanked the sun for its warmth, and at that moment, for the first time, the clouds parted directly above us and the sun’s rays beamed right down on everyone in the room! Then he gave a special thanks to the thunder, which was his personal element, he explained. He gave thanks for the gift of life that the rains bring. As he spoke, the clouds had thickened and a light rain began to fall for the first time. It was as if the whole thing had been choreographed, yet all knew we were experiencing a profound connection between a true human being and the world we live in. Everyone left that day, softly bedazzled by the magic we had witnessed.

My years in Kona were before the latest ongoing series of eruptions at Kilauea Volcano began. Back in those days, there was no vog (volcanic haze) in the air, and we would watch the sun set into a crisp and clean horizon. The clouds would be stacked from the mountain slopes all the way out to sea as if resting on



an invisible pane of glass parallel to the ocean extending as far as the eye could see. The sunsets were like color symphonies, and I would imagine being in an angel's body so I could continue traveling westward at exactly the same speed that the Earth was rotating in order to just 'hang out' at that place of twilight and continue savoring its magnificence. The old people in Hawai'i speak of 'jumping off points' located on certain sacred spots and western coasts of the islands, and how at the moment of death this is where souls leave the Earth. Sounds like a nice way to travel.

WORKING AT THE HOTELS

The 1980s were years of tremendous transformation for me, and my massage career took off. I founded my first massage school, the Hawaiian Islands School of Body Therapies, and I began my formal studies of Sports massage and a deeper understanding of Hawaiian culture beyond the exposure I received from the Kahalewai 'ohana (family) and my friends and neighbors. I met the great lomilomi teacher Aunty Margaret Machado at her little Kona beach house for the first time. It was also during this time that I became fascinated with the human body, so it was a joy to deepen my massage skills and really learn my anatomy.



By 1983, I had my own massage room at the Keauhou Beach Hotel. I had proposed renting their least desirable guest room behind the elevator, and they gave it to me for a good price as it was usually vacant anyway. In those days, it was common for me to do six appointments in one day, and the tourists tipped well. Many massage therapists go through this stage of ‘cranking out’ the massages while they earn good money. Most of my clients were happy travelers, delighted to be on a Hawaiian holiday, and already in a good mood. They came in smiling, and left smiling—the massage was like frosting on the cake. I became very strong, and could go deeper than most therapists. For me, the first two were the warm-ups; then the third and fourth appointments were the best. By the fifth one I was ready to do something else, and by the sixth I had to push myself. Today, however, I prefer doing one or two sessions, and taking a good hour and a half or more to complete each person.

I began teaching professional massage workshops. Back then, the state law required training for only 100 hours (70 in massage and 30 in anatomy) before beginning the 6-12 month apprenticeship. I also became involved in guest activities at the hotel, and held flower lei making classes and led on-site historical walks.

As it turned out, the Keauhou Beach Hotel was situated on a special piece of land that served as a residential retreat for the rulers, leaders and advisors of the Hawaiian Kingdom (prior to its illegal occupation and overthrow in 1893), including Alapa'i Nui, Kamehameha the Great, Queen Kaahumanu, Keeaumoku, King David Kalakaua, and Governor Kuakini. There they sought peace, relaxation, good climate and revitalization next to the recreational waters of Kahalu'u Bay. Today the rock heiau (temples) and ‘menehune breakwater’ still stand in testimony to its rich history. There is a wonderful marine reserve for swimming in the bay where one can almost touch reef fish of every imaginable color and shape, as well as honu (sea turtles). A secret, we learned, was to take a small bag of frozen peas and release them slowly. Fish of every imaginable color, shape, and design would encircle us. But the turtles interact with you on their own terms, and in the water they are very fast and agile swimmers.

For many years, I was co-directing the annual Kona Ironman Triathlon Championship finish line massage team. By 1986, my good friends Judi and the late Robert Calvert moved to Kona and launched *Massage Magazine*. Aunty



Margaret Machado, who passed away in 2009, graced the first cover, and the second edition featured cover photos of the Ironman with an inset of a few of us working on the winner. Those were days when massage schools were few and far between, and the Ironman medical director did not see the value of having sports massage at the race finish line. I clearly remember the expression on people's faces when they learned of my occupation. Massage was not a respected vocation like it is today. And no one could find practitioners doing lomilomi unless you knew a local family closely. So much has evolved since then, and I was well underway with a career path that I have never regretted.

It was here at Keauhou that I met Morrnah Simeona, a native Hawaiian kahuna lapa'au and ho'oponopono^c teacher. In 1987 she and Dr. Stan Hew Len, a psychologist with extensive experience and great gifts, gave a presentation on "The Life Force and Healing" at the Conference at Po'o Hawaii. The conference was held in 'The Year of the Hawaiian' and aligned with both the new moon and the rising of the Pleiades constellation in November. Also presenting at the conference were Rubellite Kawena Johnson, Professor of Hawaiian Language and Literature (UH Manoa), Papa Kala Naliielua (OHA), David Mauna Roy and his daughter Mikahala Roy, cultural resource consultants from Kona, and three men from the crew of the Hokule'a: Captain Shorty Bertelmann, Watch Captain



Tava Taupu, and Navigator Nainoa Thompson. It truly was an uplifting voyage of re-discovery of the way of the Hawaiian. It was rare back then to have so many outstanding speakers in one public place, as it was merely a decade since the Hawaiian renaissance blossomed and fruited. Everyone who attended was visibly uplifted, and I was deeply inspired.

By 1988, I was very concerned about the thick vog in Kona as well as exhausted with my growing responsibilities as a vocational school principal, teacher, and administrator. Even though I loved my work, I was experiencing increased back pain and other stressful health conditions. When in pain, I began seeking out, and thus learning about, various holistic remedies including chiropractic care, Back flower remedies, and acupuncture. These all helped, but my stress level kept resurfacing to throw me out of balance again.

One day I received a treatment from a master acupuncturist and herbalist, Dr. Angela Longo, LAc. “Damp heat in the liver” was my diagnosis. Within an hour of needles and herbal remedies, my symptoms had completely dissipated. This restored my faith in my body’s own healing abilities, and I began a personal love affair with my liver as well. It also confirmed that I needed to reduce the stress in my life.

I decided it was time to sell my massage school and move out of the volcanic air pollution. I put just one little ad in *Massage Magazine*, and the perfect buyers emerged. A lovely and hard-working couple, Lynn and the late Peter Wind, relocated from Canada and became the new Hawaiian Islands School owners. With the help of Daddy David Brae, we blessed the school. Shortly thereafter, I relocated to O’ahu, the ‘gathering place’.

NEW ENVIRONMENTS AND CHALLENGES

There are over a million people living on the beautiful but heavily militarized island of O’ahu. It was an exciting change from all those years on the Big Island. From 1989 to 1991, I “hung up” my massage hat. I loved frequenting the white sand beaches at Lanikai, and I was salsa dancing with a group of hot performers. I played and relaxed and fell in love all over again. I visited California, got remarried, and returned to college where I received a second degree in arts and humanities. I landed a wonderful clinic supervisor job with a company car. My eldest son David Kaniuhaohao Jr. had been accepted to Kamehameha School



and the Honolulu Boys Choir. Life was great, and so was my health.

Don't we wish it would stay like that ... when we're in love, our children are angels, and life is wonderful? But of course, things changed. Suddenly, I got laid off my job, and lost the car. My sons were growing and their hormones kicked in. Instead of sweet choruses of music and waves, the boys began to fight more and listen less. And then my love "changed his mind" and decided to live alone in his California olive orchard.

Saddened and confused, I returned to Hilo with my budding teenaged boys in what seemed to be default move. I had no plan and was financially and emotionally depleted. The prosperity of my Kona school and fun activities with my sweet sons and second husband were fading memories. Now I was dealing with a divorce and unemployment. What had gone wrong? What was I to do next? What could I do well, and what did I enjoy doing???. Again, I prayed for guidance. And again I was led back to massage and my purpose.

I remember clearly declaring when I was 21 years old, "God, whatever happens to me in my life, I always want to know the Truth." I knew from early on that if I had the Truth, with God's help, I could sort things out, sooner or later. As uncomfortable or even painful as the Truth can be, I knew I would prefer it to being in the dark about anything. *The Truth shall set you free* is not just a promise, but a statement reflecting a fundamental universal law governing all things. Truth gives us a window through which to see things clearly and honestly. Our *understanding* may not come when and how we expect it to, but I have no doubt that in the end, justice will be served. Likewise, I've always made a point to do what I say, and say what I do, and expect others to do the same when dealing with me. Being human, naturally I've made my share of mistakes, but have never changed my mind about this choice.

So I recreated myself all over again, and rediscovered my purpose. From the ashes, I arose and decided to start another massage school, this time in Hilo. With the support of my angels, including my dear songbird friend and fellow massage therapist Leslie, who rented us the basement in her Laupahoehoe home, I got back on my feet. With my meagre unemployment checks, I took the bus into Hilo everyday. Jennifer, another angel friend and massage therapist, helped me open a small classroom next to her massage clinic in a beautiful old downtown building that used to be a hotel. Then, in the fall of 1992, I founded





my second massage school with thirteen wonderful students.

Hilo has always welcomed me, first in 1975 after I left Maui, and again when I left O‘ahu. This is where my ‘ohana has Hawaiian homestead lands. It was here, on the Big Island, that I was blessed to meet such legendary teachers as kumu hula and chanters Edith Kanakaole and Nona Beamer, and master herbalist Papa Henry Auwae. I re-connected with Aunty Margaret Machado, and met Aunty Mary Fragas (see photo). It is also where I befriended other great teachers, like dancer Ernest Morgan, acupuncturist Dr. Jeffrey Dann, kumu lomi Dr. Dane Silva, kumu lomi Leina‘ala Brown Dombrigues, and many of my lomilomi and ho‘oponopono teachers. Over the years, my new Hilo school kept growing as I moved into larger locations. I opened a student massage clinic, and developed a wonderful and personal relationship with the community.

While business blossomed, the challenges at home were intensifying. Both of my sons were in high school and, although they were eating well and in various sports and activities, the 1990s hit us hard like a ruthless hurricane. One of my teenagers was like a wild stallion that needed breaking in. Drugs, manipulation, disrespect, and violent temper tantrums fuelled by raging young male hormones found their way into my otherwise peaceful mountain home. I found the old stress levels returning, only now this was accompanied by fear.

As with all crisis scenarios, this opened up more opportunities for new profound insights. At work I was empowered and respected, while at home I was helpless and overwhelmed. I was treading water in a turbulent sea, so I prayed



for assistance and insight. And again, new teachers emerged.

Enter kumu 'elele Mahealani Kuamo'o-Henry (see photo). "No worry, eh! You jus in da pilikia big time! You in da hell hotel, but all you gotta do is decide to turn da addah way. You see, you either choose pilikia or pono ... simple." And with a snap of her fingers, she explained that it's got to be one way or the other. "Jus like wen you hapai (pregnant) ... you either hapai or not. Well, you either in pilikia (trouble) or pono (balance) ... no gray area."

Well it took me years to truly embrace this, but gradually I learned how to control my own responses to things and what I attracted to me rather than to try to control outer circumstances or others. Walking the pono path became the single most sacred thing I could do to save my sanity at the time. In fact, applying the principles Aunty Mahealani taught me seemed like a magic carpet ride, for it always carried me through and beyond all the pilikia, drama, and trauma that was happening in my family. I could always turn within and shift my perspective enough to see with more clarity and thus change what I said, did, or even felt ... no matter what was happening. Another gem of wisdom had been given to me at the perfect moment by yet another angel. From that time onward, I learned to listen to and follow my calm inner voice. I found that it was always speaking to me, giving me the perfect advice, if I was just quiet enough to listen. I also



realized—actually experienced the truth in—the fact that I am never alone. For almost ten years I studied Aunty’s unique method of ho‘opono pono ke ala, and began to work with my own guides and ancestors. I brought her into my school to share with the students, and as a guest speaker for ‘traditional days’ in my lomi workshops. To this day, these insights continue to guide my life.

After years of studying and eventually writing my first book on Hawaiian healing, it was time to sell my Hilo massage school in 2003. The boys had grown and left home, and I began traveling and doing teaching tours to the US West Coast, Canada, Mexico’s el caribe, Tahiti, Australia, and New Zealand. As I write this, my second book, I am living and teaching massage in New Zealand, called Aotearoa in the native Maori language. I have been gifted a lovely place, surrounded by native forest reserve adjacent to seawater hot springs. As I begin to embrace the native mirimiri and romi romi healing arts here, I can see many similarities with the lomi lomi of old Hawai‘i. And the healing journey continues ...

ENDNOTES

- a. **Hokule‘a**—The double-hulled voyaging canoe built to replicate the ancient canoes of the Pacific Islanders that were used to navigate throughout Polynesia using nothing but the stars, currents, and other observations of nature. In 1976, Satawelese navigator Mau Piailug, with a Hawaiian crew, guided Hokule‘a without instruments to Tahiti, a distance of 2400 miles. The canoe then returned to Hawai‘i showing that the two-way voyages celebrated in Hawaiian oral traditions were indeed navigated without instruments.
- b. **SunBear**—Native American healer and medicine man (1929-1992) who popularized the Medicine Wheel. Born in Minnesota, he later settled in California in 1970.
- c. **lapa‘au and ho‘oponopono**—The Hawaiian words for plant medicines and the practice of making things pono (balanced and righteous).

