

# VIOLET OGAWA

Violet Ogawa is known statewide as the leader of *paranku* (small hand-held drum) dance group and for her generosity in sharing the art with people of all ages and ethnicities.

Born in Kahalu'u, O'ahu, Violet Otome Nakasato Ogawa, is the seventh of eight children of Koshiro and Maka Manna Nakasato, who were both born in Gushiken of Motobu.

Ogawa's mother passed away while she was in intermediate school and her father decided that she should help with the family-run chicken farm business. Ogawa completed intermediate school but did not attend high school.

Her first job, at age 16, was with the Moiliili Flower Shop in 1939. By 1942, she was working at Love's Bakery, where she met Herbert Ogawa, her future husband. Violet and Herbert married in 1947 after Herbert returned from military service.

A year later, Ogawa gave birth to their first child, Florence, who stayed with Herbert's mother in Hawai'i, while Violet and Herbert moved to Chicago so that Herbert could attend the Illinois Institute of Technology. Herbert's mother and Florence moved to Chicago the following year. Ogawa worked at a toy manufacturing company, but became a full-time mother when she gave birth to a second daughter, Gail. The Ogawas later had two more children, Wendy and Jay.

In 1974, the Ogawa family returned to Hawai'i. Violet worked as a translator at Robert's of Hawaii and then for the Department of Education as a school health aide, from which she retired.

In 1975, the Ogawas became very involved in Club Motobu's activities and in promoting the Okinawan culture through the Hawaii United Okinawa Association. Violet is also active with Hui O Laulima.

Violet's interest in Okinawan dance began in 1928 at the age of 4. She, her sister Mitsue and their father had returned from a visit to Okinawa where Mitsue learned the dance, "Hatoma Bushi." Mitsue taught the dance to Violet and they performed regularly for family gatherings while their father played the samisen.

In 1976, Violet took a class from Matsumoto Josho-Sensei who had come to the UH from Okinawa to teach an Eisa Paranku class. Violet eventually started the "Paranku Clubs of Hawaii."

At 83 years young, Violet Ogawa continues to direct the organization. They have performed throughout Hawai'i, the mainland and Okinawa. Today, the club is 80-plus members strong. Many of them are senior citizens who remain in good health because of their paranku workout. The club also has branches on Maui and Kaua'i. Ogawa-Sensei has always happily introduced paranku to school children, the HUOA Children's Day Camp participants and community groups.

In addition, Ogawa teaches kimono sewing classes at the HUOA and made the uniforms worn by HUOA visitor guides.

The Paranku Clubs of Hawaii enthusiastically opens the Okinawan Festival with their energetic and lively performances. The members also help make paranku costumes for the children's picture-taking in the Cultural Tent.

