



Profile on Augusta Helen L. Rankin Bento

Augusta Helen “Gussie” Lihu’enuikahanakalani Rankin Bento is a gifted quilter, feather lei maker and servant leader whose life’s work and mission is to share her knowledge and encourage others in the practice and perpetuation of Hawaiian values and traditions.

A graduate of Kamehameha School for Girls in 1950, she attended San Mateo Junior College and the University of Hawai‘i. Gussie served in various capacities at Kamehameha Schools, including executive secretary to the President and first coordinator of the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Heritage Center, which she retired from in 1996.

Gussie is self taught in the art of Hawaiian featherwork. She taught featherwork as well as lauhala classes free of charge to members of the Hawaiian Civic Clubs, Department of Parks and Recreation, Kamehameha Schools Extension Education, Lāna‘i Community School and Windward Community College.

Gussie is also a renowned master quilter. Her interest in quilting began more than 80 years ago when she was given a quilt made in 1932 by her grandmother Malia Kealoha Rankin. Gussie has been featured in video segments on quilting and also participated in the Great American Quilt Festival in New York City in 1986. She also spearheaded a quilt demonstration project with the Kalihi-Palama Culture and Arts Society whose purpose was to record the history of thousands of hand-made quilts made before 1960, including their history and means of preservation. Her quilts have also been displayed throughout North America, Japan and Australia.

Gussie has shared her expertise in quilting and feather lei making with the Daughters of Hawai‘i, Friends of Mission Houses Museum, Hawaiian Historical Society, Kamehameha Alumni Association, Ke Anuenue Sorority at the University of Hawai‘i, Queen Emma Hawaiian Civic Club and St. Ann’s Catholic Church.

Gussie was recognized for her knowledge, expertise and teachings by the following organizations:

Kamehameha Schools- 2005 Distinguished Order of Ke Ali‘i Pauahi

Hawai‘I Tourism Association- 2007 Kahili Award

Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum- 2009 Mamo Award

Currently, Gussie teaches a quilting class at the Queen Emma Museum and serves as Kupuna Cultural Specialist at the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Heritage Center. But more importantly, Gussie serves as a role model to all who have come to know her. Her students, friends and family are testaments to her teachings, her stewardship and her many contributions to our culture and to her love for all that is Hawaiian.