

Mary Jo Freshley

1934 -

Kamehameha Schools, Kapālama
Physical Education Teacher, 1961-1993

Korean Dance Expert
Halla Pai Huhm Studio
Instructor, 1975 - 2001 Director and Primary Teacher, 1994-2001



Finding Aid

Kamehameha Schools Museum Archive

Stacy Naipo, KSK 1982

Candace W. Lee

Assistant Archivist

Finding Aid

By Candace W. Lee
Kamehameha Schools Assistant Archivist

Abstract: Photographs in this collection were taken by Mary Jo Freshley during her career as a physical education teacher at Kamehameha Preparatory, now Elementary School at the Kapalama campus in Honolulu.

Title: Mary Jo Freshley Photographs, 1961-1993

Size: .5 linear feet

Provenance: Mary Jo Freshley donated the photographs to Kamehameha Schools when she retired in 1993

Access: with permission of the archivist or director

Collection number: Freshley 2004-8

Citation: Kamehameha Schools. Each researcher assumes full responsibility to comply with current U.S. copyright laws

Bibliographic record: Kamehameha Schools Library Catalog

Biographical Note

Mary Jo Freshley was born on September 25, 1934 in Homeworth, Ohio. She graduated from Bowling Green State University (BGSU) in 1956 and went to Michigan to teach physical education. She returned to BGSU for her Master's in Education degree. While recruiting for teachers, Pauline Fredericks, Principal of Kamehameha School for Girls, stopped at BGSU and hired Freshley. Freshley says that two days after she arrived in Honolulu, she knew that this would be home for the rest of her life. In 1993, Freshley retired from 32 years of teaching physical education at Kamehameha School, Kāpalama. She became the Halla Huhm Dance Studio Director after the death of its founder in 1994. Seven years later in April 2001, Freshley passed the directorship on to an accomplished dance assistant, Jia Kim. Freshley continues to teach dance classes, and work on the vast Halla Huhm Dance collection housed at the Center for Korean Studies at the University of Hawaii, Mānoa, and the Halla Huhm Foundation.



Honolulu Star-Bulletin photograph, 1999

DETAILED INTERNET BIOGRAPHY FROM *Perspectives on Korean Dance* (Wesleyan University Press, 1999) by Judy Van Zile, Professor of Dance, University of Hawai'i.

"Mary Jo Freshley, who now runs the Halla Huhm Dance Studio, was born of European ancestry in Ohio in 1934. Although she studied many kinds of dance in college, her interest in Korean dance did not begin until after she moved to Hawaii in 1961 to teach physical education to elementary-level students. Piqued by her exposure to Korean dance in a University of Hawaii class taught by Halla Huhm, she continued her studies at the Halla Huhm Dance Studio.

Over time, Freshley's studies became more intense, and in the 1970s she began to assist at the studio. In 1974, when a Korean assistant left, Freshley and a local resident of Japanese ancestry began to teach entire classes at the studio rather than just assisting Huhm.

Freshley's knowledge of Korean dance and culture did not come solely from her work at the studio, however. In 1972 she spent 3-1/2 weeks in Korea with other students on a study tour arranged by Halla Huhm. Since then, she has returned to Korea more than six times for periods ranging from several weeks to three months, during which she, like Huhm, studied with some of Korea's finest dance masters. Some of her teachers were the same as those who had instructed Huhm (particularly Kim Ch'on-hung), as well others, most notably Kim Pyong-sop, a recognized performer and teacher of Korean farmers band dance and music (nongak), and members of the well-known contemporary SamulNori group.

Freshley's dance knowledge and abilities were formally acknowledged by Halla Huhm. In 1975 she was given the designation of instructor, together with the name Pai Myung-sa. She is one of only about a dozen individuals who earned this certificate, and is the only one still actively engaged in studying and teaching Korean dance.

Since Huhm's death, Freshley has been the primary teacher at the Halla Huhm Studio. In addition to handling business matters, which include responding to countless requests to do performances for Korean and non-Korean functions, raising funds for the studio, and obtaining costumes, music, and dance and music equipment from Korea, she teaches Korean dance to individuals who are, for the most part, of Korean ancestry, while she, herself, is entirely of European ancestry.

Freshley's knowledge and dedication are recognized today by virtually everyone affiliated with the studio, as well as by those who observe studio activities from the outside. Koreans as well as non-Koreans stand in awe of her knowledge of Korean dance. They admire her efforts to learn the Korean language and her on-going study trips to Korea. She has received recognition from the Hawaii Korean Jaycees, the City and County of Honolulu, and a Community Enrichment Award from the Korean American Society of Hawaii.

Coinciding with the death of Halla Huhm was Freshley's retirement from her grade-school teaching position. Since 1994 she has devoted herself full-time to the studio. She draws no salary from studio income, however. Funds are used to pay studio rent, purchase costumes and musical instruments, and, on the rare occasion there is a surplus, to help subsidize dance study trips to Korea for students or the visit of a guest instructor. She continues the same goals and

practices established by Halla Huhm, despite the fact that she is not Korean. She describes her goals as helping people gain a sense of what Korean culture is like through dance and music; perpetuating the repertoire of Halla Huhm, showing the diversity of Korean culture through the diversity of Korean's dances, and educating both children and their parents. She also now teaches the Korean dance class at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

In 1992 Freshley obtained a grant from the Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts to work with Halla Huhm, on a mentor-apprentice basis, to document the costumes used by Huhm. Freshley's report, now part of the Halla Huhm Dance Collection, contains a large number of photographs and detailed explanations of costume components, including Korean terminology for them.

Freshley has worked tirelessly on organizing and maintaining the Halla Huhm Dance Collection--photographs, newspaper clippings, and other memorabilia that provide an invaluable record of activities of Halla Huhm and the studio. The collection was recently selected as one of three in the United States to receive support, through the Dance Heritage Coalition, for evaluating, preserving, and organizing materials in the collection.

In 1994, Freshley was instrumental in founding the Halla Huhm Foundation, a non-profit organization established to support activities relating to Korean culture, particularly dance, in the islands. The organization assists in bringing professional companies from Korea to perform in Hawaii, in bringing guest teachers from Korea to teach, and related activities. Freshley is currently President of the organization."

by Candace W. Lee with Mary Jo Freshley, April 2004

CONTAINER LIST

Her collection is currently unprocessed.