Kailua Hawaiian Civic Club
Club Song from 1989 to present
“The Windward Side (of the Island)” – credited to Don Ho – was the club’s original song.

Nā Pua Lei ‘Ilima

Haku mele: E. Kau’i Zuttermeister.
Our text: As sung by Jerry Santos and Haunani Apoliona with the blessings of Aunty Kau’i; translated by Kihei de Silva.

Nani wale nā pua lei ka ‘ilima
‘O ka u‘i ho‘oheno o Kākuhihewa
Lovely are the flowers of the lei ‘ilima
The cherished beauties of Kākuhihewa

Ho‘ohihi ka mana‘o lā i laila
Nā pua lei ‘ilima e kaulana nei
My thoughts are entranced there
With the pua lei ‘ilima whose fame is spreading

Kūlana hiehie me ka hanohano
Ha‘aheo i ka maka ke ‘ike aku
Delightful and dignified in character
Stirring pride whenever seen

Kaulana nā pua lei ka ‘ilima
Ke kikowaena o nā ‘ailana
The ‘ilima lei blossoms are well known
Belonging to O‘ahu, the center of the islands

‘Ohu‘ohu wale ai nā malihini
Ka nani kaulana poina ‘ole
Thus are the malihini adorned
With this unforgettable, famous beauty

Ha‘ina ‘ia mai ana ka puana
Nā pua lei ‘ilima e kaulana nei
The story is told,
Famous are the flowers of the lei ‘ilima.

The meaning of “Nā Pua Lei ‘Ilima,” as with many of the best Hawaiian songs, can be as simple or as complicated as we care to make it. We can start with Aunty Kau‘i Zuttermeister’s central, kikowaena image of flowers in a lei and read into it the message of aloha ‘āina – of the unbroken, ‘ai kamaha‘o connection we share with our homeland as its children, family, and lāhui. Or we can examine the opening description of u‘i ho‘oheno – cherished youthful beauty – and marvel at how the song slowly adds to it the more enduring blossoms of charm, grace, and dignity: u‘i becomes hiehie, hanohano, ha‘aheo, and – finally – nani kaulana poina ‘ole. We children, Aunty Kau‘i says, aren’t about to fade away. Or we can view the song as a parable of strength in unity, as a koan of one and many, or as a nane of part-to-whole synesthesia. Lots of pretty little flowers, she says, can be made with love and patience into a lei of regal impact and beauty.

When all is said and done, simple is best. We take all of these meanings and collapse them back into the explanation that Jerry Santos gives whenever he sings the song for us:
it is Aunty Kau‘i’s song for the flowers of Kākuhihewa, for the children those flowers represent, and for the land that gives life to both.

The text, translation, and explanation given above have been excerpted from Hālau Mōhala ‘Ilīma’s Merrie Monarch Factsheet of 2007.