

**Ciena Swafford (5/15/23)**

When forming HSK, Sensei had shifted the main ingredient for succeeding in karate from pure talent to effort, attitude, and commitment, making karate available for everyone who has stepped into the dojo. Having experienced this for ten years, I can say his words are backed up by his actions! Sensei's implementation of an equity pedagogy allows karate to be a sport for everyone to reach their potential and reflects his selflessness and unwavering passion to teach.

Although karate can feel like a group sport at times, it is heavily individual. Comparing one's own progress to their previous performance rather than others' opens the door to a journey of self-improvement. Training with HSK has strengthened my internal focus of control as I grew from a child to a teenager to an adult.

It was enlightening to read *My Karate Journey*, to learn the backstory and development of HSK, and where the core values, which are still apparent to this day, originated. It was like witnessing a behind-the-scenes exclusive of the making of my favorite movie.

Thank you Sensei for the writing and sharing of this book! I would love to purchase my own copy to annotate and highlight my favorite quotes.

Looking forward to the next training,

**Ann Oda (5/20/23)**

Sensei, Congratulations on your memoir! It was such a delight to read.

Did I tell you I love watching and learning from you? You are passionate, quick and stealth-like, powerful, true to self with a spirit of a warrior...yet you extend grace and patience to your students. (Maybe I need to thank your grandchildren).

I think there is something unbelievably rich and fulfilling knowing you made a positive impact on others, so I wanted to tell you - you definitely do. You say you are blessed but what's even more awesome is that you use your God-given talents to bless me, my family, and so many others. Thank you for giving your time and sharing your gifts with us.

May God bless you and your family with supernatural health and good success.

## **Susan Sawai**

First of all, I'd like to thank you, Sensei for sharing this wonderful book with us. It was interesting to see how HSK was born and how it evolved to what it is today. Lots of hard work and dedication.

Joining HSK 10 years ago, has been the best thing I've done for myself and my daughter, Ciena. My main goal was to have my daughter exposed to martial arts and what I envisioned came with it: discipline, respect and humbleness. I truly believe if you follow these traits, you can't help but blossom into a considerate respectful adult which I know was a key factor in Ciena's growth. I am so proud of her and I know HSK had a big part to do with it.

After reading the book, I realized we must've joined HSK at the right time whew! Then again there were times when I felt as if we came in just a little too soon! (Pre-Lyn) .

I am honored to learn from the best and will continue to take in all I can while I can. Thank you Sensei for sharing your knowledge with us and for being patient with me all these years. I may not catch on to things as others do but I can promise you I will always try my hardest!

One more thing I have HSK to blame for is I have made the greatest of friends at HSK and am so grateful to you and all the Senpais!

## **Cassie Teruya**

My first thought was... "thank you rylynn"

I am also thinking how blessed you are to have Aunty Paula at your side and two amazing kids.

## **Keith Ayano (6/8/23)**

Your book is an enjoyable read, uplifting and informative. When I joined in 1990 I didn't think you were mean. Serious but fair and to me personally very kind. Thank you for all these years and many more to come.

## **Christopher White**

I would like to tell you about how good this karate book is to me. I have always not read a real book but an online one and this book made me look for more books like it. I liked how honest you were in it and all the stories you wrote. Your life is full of amazing things and I like that you shared it with us.

## **James White**

I really appreciated you sharing your book with the dojo. It was a very fun and interesting read.

Again, I was truly touched by you mentioning Mikey and me for helping to keep the dojo going. After bombing the 4th kyu exam a week earlier before the shutdown of the pandemic, it showed how much more I needed to train and I didn't want lose any small gains I had made. So being at home with the family, during the shutdown, it made sense to figure out how to keep training. Fortunately Caran posted those pics of us to Facebook and that got the ball started, and look what it turned into, you made the best of a difficult situation to say the very least.

Hearing more stores of your earlier career was amazing and very forthright. It helps me to further understand where you were coming from when you began HSK 40 years ago!!

The honesty you shared throughout the book showed how much you care, you didn't pull any punches or kicks for that matter ha ha ha.

My family is grateful for this community that you have shared with us. I am also so grateful personally for you telling me so sincerely that I had a dojo pulling for me when I had that major surgery six years ago. I am so glad I came back, karate has helped me in so many ways. I'll keep coming back, it may not look pretty, but you know I'll just keep trying my best. Osu!

## **Emi Brown (6/19/23)**

Hi Sensei,

I sincerely enjoyed your Karate Journey book. I learned about your excellent reputation in performing and teaching Karate on the HSK website, which helped me relate to the content of the book to answer all my wonders and questions. I am grateful to learn about your history, including your family, and get to know all my senpais in HSK. It was

interesting to learn that you changed the training atmosphere after Rylynn's birth, which made me wonder if I could handle the strict training with your traditional method. Nevertheless, I feel honored to be a part of HSK and surrounded by the inspiring members you created. I have many areas you mentioned in your book that I could relate to or share similar values about life, particularly the importance of wellness. After reading the book, I am more confident that I am in the right place for my well-being, and I cannot thank you enough for your generosity in teaching us the meaning of great life through the HSK.

### **Dan Stephens**

Sensei,

I was very happy to have the opportunity to read your book. First, I would like to ask how can I get my own copy? This book had a lot of messages that I would definitely like to be able to read again and again. I did have the sense that there is a lot more to the story that I would be fascinated to understand. Of course anything about Tetsuhiko Asai is much valued and appreciated. He was one of the pioneers to leave Japan to help the proliferation of Japanese karate outside of Japan. But he was an amazing man, one that I would like to know more about. As you say in the book little is known of the actual man, but I am fascinated with him. I thought it interesting that you started in Judo and also the same with Sensei Asai as his father was a police officer taught him Judo.

Another part of the story I am interested in was the pioneering spirit for your grandparents to leave Japan and come to Hawaii. I do think that the current generation really does not understand the significance of this migration and its impact on Hawaii. It is somewhat overshadowed by the upcoming attack of Pearl Harbor in 1941. I believe it is a story that should be told and we would benefit so much by understanding this part of Hawaii's history.

One part of the story that I appreciated very much was you sharing your personal changes overtime with the births of grandchildren. We may not train in the same manner as it was 20 years ago, but when you instill the importance of striving for perfection of our kihon, kata and kumite, like being underwater and trying to get to the surface to breathe. We push harder and reach deeper mentally and when we change our mindset the bodies will follow. Mindset is everything and progress is the result of first fostering the mindset.

A part of fostering that mind is knowing your story, as it has motivated me to train smarter and to accept things I cannot change. Often younger folks live a lifestyle which

is conducive to the rigors of karate. Your book is a reminder karate is just not something for the dojo. It is how we carry ourselves through our lives.

Again thank you for sharing your story, it is truly a blessing.

Very Respectfully,  
Dan

### **Austin Toma**

Aloha Sensei!

I want to start off by saying thank you for allowing and sharing your Karate and life experiences ! Reading the book felt really surreal (not because it's the first book I've read in years haha) because I'm reading and learning about where and how my sensei became who he is today. It's really an honor to be training under a living legend!! Reading how hard and how much you've trained per day is inspiring! How hard Asai Sensei pushed you and wasn't easy on you guys but still stuck through it. It was also interesting to read about how your teaching style has changed over the years as well! From before Rylynn was born to after! Karate is a part of my life that I absolutely cannot live without, has taught me discipline in a way nothing else could, and have made lifelong friends. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for teaching and giving your all every lesson! Like I mentioned before it truly is an honor!!

Mahalo Sensei for allowing me to be one of your students! OSU!!

### **Elsa Enomoto**

"I've always been curious about sensei's story so I was excited to read his book. As expected, his journey to being who he is today was challenging and he embraced it. I certainly understand where and how his strength and beliefs were built over the years. It's a book that I will continue to reflect on for many years to come. Thank you sensei for being who you are and inspiring your students to better themselves."

See you tomorrow!

**Linda Martini (9/1/23)**

I thoroughly enjoyed reading Sensei's memoirs, "My Karate Journey". There was so much history and so many achievements not just in karate but with teaching and community service as well. A life to be very proud of! Reading about his very quick ascent to a karate black belt and becoming a tournament champion was very interesting and seeing photos from that era was extra cool too. The fact that he would train three times a DAY makes our training three times a WEEK seem very lackluster! The photos with him and wife Paula are the cutest pics I've ever seen, young love is so beautiful and you can see it in their faces that they were meant for each other. I was also thankful to hear about the change in Sensei after his granddaughter was born. The only Sensei I have known is Sensei 2.0 and he is great! I'm not sure I would have been tough enough to train under the OG Sensei! People who have journeyed through life by his side have my respect and must be tough as nails!

Thank you for sharing your story Sensei you have an amazing life to be exceptionally proud of!

**Tara Miyamoto**

Hi Sensei Alan,

I thoroughly enjoyed reading your book. It was incredibly inspiring, you truly live a very blessed and beautiful life. I really enjoyed learning that your love for karate has not only shaped your life for success but you continue to give back selflessly to the community and share your love for karate with future generations.

We see it first hand at every training, you are a remarkable teacher and were truly born to do this. You and Mrs. Sekiguchi are a match made in heaven. You both have a passion and dedication for teaching that your students will never forget. Mrs. Sekiguchi has always been my favorite teacher of all time, it's such an honor to be taught by both of you. Especially now that my son can reap the benefits of your teaching. We are so grateful to be a part of the Hawaii Shotokan family.

We pray for the continued success of the future of HSK. You don't have to worry about your legacy, it lives on in each and every one of your past, present and future students. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all that you do and have done for your HSK family! Thank you to Mrs. Sekiguchi for all she has done. Behind every great man is a great woman!

Kind Regards,  
Tara Miyamoto

**Allison Yonamine** (10/10/23)

Hello Sensei,

WOW! What a journey of your karate experience! Thank you for sharing your life experiences in karate. I am so happy that Rylynn was born as your 'mean guy persona' was "peeled" away. I agree that your previous teaching experience is a great benefit to the students when you demonstrate a karate move. Your calf injury and your shoulder injury reminded me of my injuries. I had to stop swimming due to calcification tendonitis in my shoulder.

Thank you,  
Allison Yonamine