

## My Karate Journey -- Part 1: My Journey Starts at the UH

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Aside from looking forward to eating my Mom's awesome custard pie and onolicious cooking as a child, life was pretty much calm and uneventful for me. However, if I fast-forward about fifteen years, there WAS something that I REALLY looked forward to — KARATE!!!

As a youngster, I took judo lessons from both the Nuuanu YMCA and at Shobukan, a dojo in Liliha. My Dad had taken judo when he was younger, and encouraged me to give it a try. I did quite well in tournaments at Shobukan, which was a very competitive club, and I enjoyed the training. However, a shoulder injury and doctor's recommendation quickly led to my "retirement" from the sport in middle school.

I had put martial arts pretty much on the back burner throughout high school, concentrating on baseball and basketball. Upon graduation, I attended the University of Hawaii as a freshman. My sister's boyfriend had joined a karate club that had just started on campus, called UH Karate Kai. He suggested that I should join too. HERE IS WHERE MY KARATE JOURNEY BEGAN!

I later found out that this dojo was a branch of a much bigger karate organization, the Karate Association of Hawaii, which also belonged to the Japan Karate Association. JKA was the number one karate organization in all of Japan ... and the WORLD, and continually proved it in international competitions!!!

The instructors at the UH dojo were college students who also attended the UH. This dojo contained ALL the elements for a perfect storm — members who were at the prime of their life, both physically and mentally, and instructors who were young, talented, and ... downright MEAN!!! Their plan for good karate relied strictly on SPEED and POWER! Nothing else mattered! Members were told to punch and kick as fast and as hard as they could for as long as they could! Pain was their main teaching TOOL, and they used it freely! So, yes, the training was gruesome and tough, but it quickly weeded out those who were unsure, unable, or there for the wrong reasons.

Although this plan of attack was sound, it lacked, in my opinion, the main ingredient for a sustainable and successful karate program ... TECHNIQUE! You see ... they never really took the time to teach the physics, and the HOWs and WHYs of each movement. Technique is the key ingredient that can level the playing field for EVERYONE — the athlete as well as the nerd! Technique ensures that EVERYONE can be successful, not just the big, strong, and gifted. Their mantra was, "Only the strong shall survive!" Mine was, and STILL is, "All who WANT to shall survive!" (I will elaborate further on this topic when I later cover the founding of Hawaii Shotokan Karate).

For me, it was a mental, spiritual, and physical challenge that constantly forced me to push through and exceed any false "limits" that I had set for myself. ONLY when you

give it your ALL do you start to experience the true meaning of the art, and the art itself starts to reveal the secrets of its mystery.

