

My Karate Journey – Part 5: Student to Teacher

Part 5: From Student to Teacher.

Frankly speaking, Funakoshi Sensei's efforts to get the Senpais to hitch to and pull a different wagon was quite unnecessary. You see, no one had a problem with him leading KAH when Asai Sensei left. We were ALL behind him 110%, and it bothered me to know that he couldn't see that!

Focusing on training and improving my skills, I soon found myself pulled in a different direction – teaching! KAH leadership wanted me to start sharing my talents with our members, so I found myself in FRONT of the class instructing MORE than IN the class training.

The addition of this responsibility opened my eyes to a whole new world, and forced me to carefully examine and evaluate each technique and how it should be taught. No doubt, MY karate improved by leaps and bounds because of teaching! It made me more aware of what I was doing, and led me to reflect on MYSELF. This self-evaluation led to many improvements in MY execution and delivery of techniques. My goal was, and still is, that ALL students should be able to excel and constantly improve in Shotokan Karate, NOT just the athletic and the talented! Although the teaching of technique improved under Funakoshi, KAH's teaching philosophy was akin to JKA's – of foremost importance was speed and power.

The club grew quickly under Funakoshi, who wanted to prove KAH's power in Hawaii's karate scene. Upon earning my black belt in two years, I was asked to start a branch in Hawaii Kai at the Koko Head Elementary School.

Before I discuss my first teaching experience, let me take an "aside" to explain my teaching style at the time. Later, I will cover its "evolution". Although I knew there were better ways to reach students and make them successful, I was ALSO brought up on the "speed and power" mentality. Trainings were tough, militaristic, and demanding. When I first taught a class, this was the very style that I used! I was very strict and demanding -- and unwavering!

However, I have ALWAYS been a very good reader of people, and this "talent" helped me immensely in my teaching. I could "read" just how far I could push a person before the mind would make the body quit! I used this technique constantly to push my students to challenge their "limits". Another quality I have that helped to smooth out the rough training sessions was a good sense of humor. After taking the students to their limits, I could joke and make them realize that they had just accomplished something awesome! This reinforcement of achievement made them want to challenge themselves even more!

Membership grew quickly, and the quality of karate improved significantly. Soon this branch was involved in competitions, and proved themselves worthy of ANY and ALL competitors! In their VERY first competition, they won more trophies than the members who trained at the headquarters!!! I was presented with both the “Instructor of the Year” and “KAH Branch of the Year” awards!

Because of the success at Hawaii Kai, they soon asked me to start a branch in Manoa valley. This was the branch that I had a particular fondness for. Since my wife-to-be, Paula, started training, along with other close friends, it was like training with family! Also, Manoa Valley Church, where we held classes, was the very church we got married in!!! LOTS OF GREAT MEMORIES AT THIS BRANCH!!!

Much like Hawaii Kai, Manoa was a smashing success! In the following annual tournament, Hawaii Kai and Manoa were 1st and 2nd in trophy winnings! Before I knew it, they asked me to open yet another branch on the windward side, Enchanted Lake. The first day of registration brought more than a hundred interested students! Classes were going GREAT, and I had them training with focus and intensity. However, I never got to see the fruits of my labor, as headquarters pulled me out of the branches and named me the head instructor of all KAH branches, which at this time numbered about 12. Basically, my job was to visit the branches, observe the instructors, then give them tips on how to improve their instruction and delivery.

Although this was a GREAT honor, I personally preferred being back in my dojo teaching my classes! I was a teacher with the Department of Education for over 40 years, and loved working with my students and seeing them succeed. Teaching karate was a natural for me, and has been my passion for over 50 YEARS now!

I BELIEVE THAT I WAS BORN TO BE A TEACHER!!!

