

## My Karate Journey, Part 8: A New Dawn: Year 1!

After speaking to Funakoshi, I felt all obligations that I had to him or KAH were finally laid to rest. I now knew that it was the proper time to start my own club – AND do it MY WAY!!!

Paula was teaching kindergarten at Noelani Elementary School in Manoa at that time. I spoke to the principal, Hiromu Izumo, and asked if it would be all right to use his cafeteria to hold karate classes there. He was short and stocky with a loud and gruff voice. But he also had a very big heart! He was an aikido man, and as the principal of hundreds of young children, he understood the power martial arts had to teach and improve the confidence, humility, and behavior of kids and adults alike. He gave me his blessing and supported my efforts to advertise and recruit the very first class of Hawaii Shotokan Karate in June of 1983.



Our FIRST class: Remy (first row, 2nd from left); Thomas (back center)!

My first class consisted of 15 members, including my daughter Remy, my nephew Paul, AND my father Thomas!!! Interesting story: My dad would bring Paul to class for training and sit in the back to watch and wait for him to finish. At age 67, he felt that he was too old to train himself. I told him that instead of just sitting for an hour, he should join the group, stretch out, AND get some exercise. He agreed, and after just ONE class he was HOOKED!!! He had taken judo when he was younger, and had been active and exercised his whole life, so this was a natural for him.

Pop loved it SO much that even after Paul quit, he would be there working out! I felt proud and honored that I could finally give something back to him, and be able to teach HIM something after all the years of receiving his wisdom. His performance in class sparked me to establish two perpetual trophy awards given yearly, the “Tom Sekiguchi Most Inspirational Member” and the “Member of the Year” awards. Tom, of course, was the very first recipient of the “Inspiration” trophy!!! These awards are extra special because the winners of the following year are chosen and presented their award by the previous year’s winners! I WAS ECSTATIC TO SEE HIM ENJOY HIS TRAINING, KNOWING I WAS MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN HIS LIFE!!!



Pop awarded the “Tom Sekiguchi Most Inspirational Member” award

Although I knew that my Dad did judo, lifted weights, and stayed in good shape in his youth, I never SAW him participate in these activities. After watching him train and seeing him move and deliver his techniques, I realized where I got MY athletic ability! HE WAS AWESOME!!! I had older members train in the old club, but my Dad blew them ALL away!! His speed, coordination, and determination were incredible, and even the



bigger, younger, and stronger members had problems keeping up with him!!! I WAS SUPER PROUD!!!



Remy's performance ALSO blew me away!!! I knew how hard karate was on the body AND the mind, and at 5 years old my plan was to just expose her to the wonderful world of possibilities. Karate had worked miracles in MY life, and I wanted the same for her. Although she was NOT athletically gifted, she had a very strong mind and an even stronger

desire to please me! She worked incredibly hard and long to move up in the ranks and, at her young age, NEVER once complained or refused to train. I WAS EXTREMELY PROUD OF HER DEDICATION, PERFORMANCE, AND GRIT!!!



Remy was awarded “Outstanding Female” karateka in 1984!

Because I understood the difficulty of the art, I wanted to make the HSK experience fun too. So, two months later we held a club picnic, where

members played games, ran races, tossed water balloons, etc. Just fun ... no karate! We also gave out lucky number prizes to each family, including 25# bags of rice, cases of ramen, etc., AND presented one family with a grand prize, a brand new color TV!



Remy (right, with pink top) competes in the potato sack race!

In addition, we started an annual beach training at Ala Moana beach park, starting at 6 am in the morning! Our members loved training ON the sand, IN the water, and even UNDER water!!! This event was to become a favorite of our HSK Ohana! We trained for 1 1/2 hours, washed up, and then made and served our members a delicious breakfast of scrambled eggs, sausage, rice, fruit, and pastries, and enjoyed the day at the beach. We also passed out goodie bags on Halloween and had a Christmas party, including a visit from Santa Claus to cap the end of the year activities.





Pop (left) trains on the sand at our annual beach training





Son Rylan (center) mesmerized by the appearance of Santa!

As you can see, HSK made VERY little money from karate! In fact, for many years we LOST money from these events. Luckily, my intent was NEVER to make money ... or LOSE any!!! I looked at it as a way to give back to others what I was so fortunate to gain. Just to see the joy and happiness that we brought to our members was MORE than worth the cost!



Six months later, I started my second beginners class at Noelani, enrolling 17 new members for a combined total of 30! My time at the dojo now doubled. Remy's class became the general class, and I now had 2 classes to teach. HSK was now rolling smoothly along.



With yet another beginner's class three months later, my time in the dojo now tripled! I now had THREE classes to teach at each training — the beginners, general, and the newly formed advanced, filled by Remy's class. We now had 41 total members!

By the end of our first year, HSK was picking up speed as it moved down the runway! My dream of starting my own club had become a reality, and the future looked VERY PROMISING!!

Alan Sekiguchi, July 08, 2022