

CHANPURU



CHANPURU

Reflections and Lessons
from the Dojo



Garry Parker



www.TambuiMedia.com
Spring House, PA USA

DISCLAIMER

The author and publisher of this book are NOT RESPONSIBLE in any manner whatsoever for any injury that may result from practicing the techniques and/or following the instructions given within. Since the physical activities described herein may be too strenuous in nature for some readers to engage in safely, it is essential that a physician be consulted prior to training.

First Published April 01, 2015 by Tambuli Media

Copyright @ 2015 by Garry Parker

ISBN-13: 978-0692394243

ISBN-10: 0692394249

Library of Congress Control Number: 2015935607

All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without prior written permission from the Publisher or Author.

Edited by Jody Amato

Cover and Interior by Summer Bonne

Acknowledgments

With deepest gratitude to my teacher and mentors for guiding me on this path, and for encouraging me not to fill their very footsteps, but to follow them on the same path on which they traveled, leaving my own imprint.

Takamiyagi Hiroshi Sensei with his relentless thirst for knowledge, tireless research into the roots of karate, and the genuine compassionate heart of a warrior, certainly embodies the old maxim: *Do not seek to follow in the master's footsteps; seek what they sought.*

Thank you to my wife Izumi for tolerating my late nights, and for providing an endless supply of coffee with a smile on her face. Thank you to my mentors and friends who encouraged me, my family that supported me, and to those that I've encountered along my martial arts journey.

Finally, I would like to thank my publisher Tambuli Media, and Dr. Mark Wiley, for guiding me throughout this process every step of the way; his faith in this project, his patience in editing and meeting my needs, and his ability to gently nudge me in the right direction have contributed to the completed book that you have in front of you.

Each one of you, in different ways, are responsible for my continuous drive, ambition and zeal.

Praise for *Chanpuru*

“The honesty that pervades from this book comes from Parker’s total immersion in the Okinawan culture. His metamorphosis from American GI to Okinawan Karate Man gives readers a unique understanding of martial arts from the Ryukyu Kingdom.”

—Gary Gabelhouse

Novelist and Goju-ryu karate practitioner

“Fascinating and important lessons from a man who lived and trained in a place most people only every dream about. I highly recommend this book to all who study traditional Okinawan and Japanese martial arts.”

—Joe Swift

Tokyo Mushinkan Dojo - Japan

“There are lots of reasons to choose this read, but one in particular makes this book a rare find among the masses. Garry Parker’s sensei, Takamiyagi Hiroshi, is a true master of Okinawan Karate, one who has spent much of his life of Karate study, and also learning a Chinese system from the source... this book gives the reader access to this experience, a way to learn from Garry Parker’s personal journey. As a glimpse into the cultures, training, methods, and daily life from the perspective of “an American student in Okinawa,” it’s a great opportunity to see how all the parts actually connect.”

—Wade Chroninger

Meibukan Okinawa Dojo - Okinawa

Garry Parker gives the rest of us a glimpse into the process he went through, as a young American serviceman, learning not only the language and the customs of a foreign country, but also fully engaging in the process of actually *understanding* the culture that birthed one of the most popular forms of martial art on the planet. I believe that reading *Chanpuru* will help solidify all karateka’s basics, as (in my opinion) the foundation of karate is formed on the relationships one develops in the dojo.

—Russ Smith

Burinkan Dojo - Florida USA

Table of Contents

Foreword by Hiroshi Takamiyagi.....	xi
Foreword by Dr. Mark Wiley	xiii
Author's Preface.....	xv
BOOK ONE REFLECTIONS.....	1
Chapter 1: Okinawa	3
Haisai.....	3
Hamagawa Dojo	7
Makiwara Sensei.....	14
Survival	15
Civilian Life	17
Matsuri	19
Ichariba Chodee.....	22
Ganbatte!	23
The Sunabe Seawall	24
Not Your Black Belt	26
Kantoku	28
Every Day Is a Test.....	30
Chuura Umi.....	31
Okinawa Time	32
Chapter 2: Home Again.....	35
Culture Shock.....	35
A New Chapter	36
Breaking New Ground	39
Keys to the Kingdom	40
Chapter 3	43
Kazoku Dojo.....	43
BOOK TWO LESSONS.....	51
Chapter 4: Training	53
Train Anyway.....	53

Do vs. Jutsu.....	55
Challenge Your Comfort Zone.....	58
Your Own Path.....	59
Playing Karate.....	60
Training with Injuries.....	61
Forging the Blade.....	62
A Full Cup of Tea.....	63
Chapter 5: Rambling.....	65
Ronin.....	65
The Bridge.....	66
Thoughts on Tradition (Part 1).....	68
Thoughts on Tradition (Part 2).....	70
Old School.....	72
Chapter 6: Students.....	75
Coming Home.....	75
Giri — The True Student/Teacher Connection.....	77
Giri Explained.....	78
An Open Letter to Students.....	79
Talk is Cheap.....	81
Next Time.....	81
The Timeless Dojo.....	83
Chapter 7: Teachers.....	85
Sensei's Hat.....	85
Gratitude.....	86
Chapter 8: Character.....	89
Prejudice in the Dojo.....	89
Out of Order.....	91
Moments that Define You.....	92
Chapter 9: Shin (The Mind).....	95
Beginner's Mind.....	96
Remaining Mind.....	96
Empty Mind.....	97
Kaizen.....	97

Chapter 10: Growth	99
Baggage	99
Fifteen.....	100
Letting Go	103
Be the Best	104
After the Rain	105
Matsu	107
Chapter 11: Life	109
A Beautiful Thing	109
Fishing.....	110
Last Sunrise	111
Passing the Torch.....	113
BOOK THREE LEGACY.....	115
Chapter 12: Legacy.....	117
Making History Abroad	123
Junbi (Preparation).....	124
USA Arrival.....	126
First Class.....	129
Appointment.....	132
Gasshuku	139
One Chance.....	146
First Interview.....	147
Going Home.....	150
Epilogue.....	153
Glossary	155
About the Author	163



Foreword

Garry Parker lived in Okinawa from 1990 to 1996 and trained diligently at my Okinawa Goshukan Dojo. Even after returning to the United States, he has been devoted to training and sharing Shuri-te and Gosoken (Five Ancestor Kenpo) at every opportunity.

The Okinawa Goshukan Columbus Dojo is filled with the excitement of its many students. They are surrounded by people who train in other budo (martial arts), including Nihon Judo and Mugairyu Iaido, and who enjoy sharing their experiences and training with each other.

This is especially true for Judo. Mr. Parker began training with Schmitt sensei since 1984. He trained many years longer in Judo than in Karate, and although he primarily practices Karate-Do now, his years of Judo experience has assisted his development of tactical Karate in the areas of *tuidi*, and his foundation in the Judo style shines through.

The visions of the Columbus Dojo training camps (Gasshuku) shows many people who are very serious in training in Okinawan and Japanese martial arts. When I see their passionate, sincere, and faithful training, it reinforces my own passion. You can tell that the atmosphere of the American dojo is full of dreams of becoming proficient in Okinawan and Japanese budo by the practitioners respectful attention.

Mr. Parker has been gallantly searching for the path through his training and this has led to his success, and he has now published his book looking back at the experiences of his extensive Bushido training.

One might say that “ten years can bring a lot of changes.” It seems like time has flown by like an arrow, and I was happy to be present as Parker’s Columbus Dojo celebrated its 15th Anniversary. I believe Mr. Parker has had many valuable training experiences in the field of martial arts. As a person who taught him Shuri-te and Gosoken (Five Ancestor Kenpo), I feel deeply about him publishing this book and I would like to send my heartfelt praise for him. I am looking forward to seeing the published version.

The Parker family is a very happy and successful family. More than anything, they are very fortunate to have a whole family that is dedicated to karate; this is a rare occurrence. Mrs. Izumi Parker supports her husband in every aspect, and their children, Lisa, Kaori and Kenji are all following in their father footsteps with their devotion to karate. I would like them to continue these exceptional ways of life.

Mr. Parker and my son (Naoki) are about the same age and they trained hard side-by-side together as young men in Okinawa. He now is in his mid-forties and in his prime, and I feel he is like my son. As his sensei, I would like to encourage him by sending these words “*Ai wa ai yori irete ai yori aoshi,*” which means, “Some pupils surpass their masters.”

In Okinawa dialect, we say “*Uya masain guwa.*” What a parent wishes should be the same no matter where it is.

Additionally, one should not be satisfied with their commitment to karate practicing in their forties and fifties. It is very important to firmly maintain karate-do well into one’s sixties and seventies, hopefully even into one’s eighties and nineties. This is Ryukyu’s traditional way of life and way of being as a *bujin*, or a true warrior. It is common knowledge that leaders of Shuri-te live long lives. In the time when the average man lived fifty years, many bujin lived to be eighty to ninety years old.

Its technique is a low-impact way where “small can beat big.” This is why Shuri-te has been perfected to its best over its long history. Understandably, the skillful bushi embraces this ideal way. Traditionally, expert skill accounts for much more than being strong and firm.

Because we are master and pupil, I did not want my words to simply sound like an official greeting or statement; I wanted to convey my true feelings. Congratulations on publishing your book. I hope this is a great turning point for you and I wish you to continue to be a source of great inspiration in the near future.



—Takamiyagi Hiroshi
Okinawa Goshukan-Ryu Karate-Do< Senior Advisor
Chatan-Cho, Okinawa-Japan
September 24, 2014

Foreword

Since childhood, I've been fascinated with traditional martial arts and the many journeys one can take along their paths.

Among my favorite books are those where the author shares his experience in finding a teacher, in becoming accepted as a student, and in training the traditional way. Others are those containing insights into the cultural and spiritual aspect of the arts. Garry Parker's *Chanpuru* offers all of this.

I feel a kinship with Garry Parker. He met his sensei, Takamiyagi Hiroshi, and I met my sifu, Alexander Co, around the same time. What's more, Takamiyagi traveled from Okinawa to the Philippines to meet Co, since they share practice in Fukien Five Ancestor Fist. Garry has become Takamiyagi's disciple, responsible for upholding his art in the United States; and I have become the same for Co. And so, what a pleasure it is to publish Garry's book.

In *Chanpuru*, Parker takes us along on his Okinawan karate journey. "When I arrived at the Naha Airport for the very first time," he begins... and then the reader is hooked, wants to know what happens next. Being accepted into a foreign physical cultural like traditional karate is rare for Westerners. As Parker's account attests, the traditional dojo is very unlike the modern "karate school" with mats and air-conditioning and birthday parties. It is about self-development, self-knowledge, and respect. Like Itosu Anko Sensei wrote, "*Karate begins and ends with respect.*" Not trophies, no colored belts.

Parker shows us there are "no excuses on the path of karate." Training hard and being respectful are the ways forward. Traditional Okinawan karate is a bridge to the past. Unfortunately, the bridge is crumbling and the past is fading. Garry Parker took the time to earn his way into a traditional karate culture, and now holds the torch for others to see the way. *Chanpuru's* lessons and insights are timeless as the Okinawan culture.



—Mark V. Wiley
Publisher, Tambuli Media
March 25, 2015



Author's Preface

From the beginning of time, mankind has had to invent and progressively adapt methods of protection to survive. To ensure the survival of our species against wild animals, and to ensure survival of family bloodlines against ruthless thieves and marauders, we as humans have had to fight to survive. Centuries ago, we discovered that the most efficient way to protect ourselves was to create distance from the enemy; when the distance was closed and contact was unavoidable, the great equalizer was often weapons. From the rudimentary club to the masterfully crafted razor sharp sword, we improvised, created, and evolved through trial and error with bloodshed and sacrifice, into the warriors of today.

Fast forward to the Ryukyu Kingdom of the 1600s. The indigenous martial arts of Okinawa (known originally as *ti*) were blended with the fighting arts of Fujian China to formulate the birth of what would become the globally popular martial art known as Okinawan Karate.

Before uniforms, belts, titles, and the tradition of a dojo with wooden floors, were quiet warriors in everyday clothes, secretly training in backyards or behind walls, diligently practicing under the cloak of night. There were no tournaments, no politics, and no nonsense; there were only hard men that sacrificed time, sleep, and comfort to toughen their bodies and strengthen their spirit in pursuit of improving their odds at protecting themselves and their loved ones in the absence of weapons. A nation of disarmed citizens, no matter how peaceful, will always find a way to improvise and protect themselves. The Okinawan karate legends of centuries past set the bar high, and we still follow in their footsteps.

The key turning point for Okinawan Karate's popularity in America came courtesy of the American military men following World War II. During the American occupation of Okinawa after the war, Soldiers, Marines, and Airmen began to practice karate. For the economically struggling karate teachers, this was an answer to prayer; teaching American servicemen meant food and clothing for the Okinawan teachers' families. After training a few years, many of the servicemen went back to the United States, continued, training, and opened dojo of their own. These men were the pioneers of

karate in America. Those were the glory days of Karate in the West! The 1950's through the 1970s saw an enormous explosion in popularity of karate in the United States. Brutally hard contact, gallons of sweat pooled on the floor from hours of practice, blood and tears shed, bumps, bruises, and the occasional broken nose, black eye, bloody lip, or fractured toe was just an ordinary part of training. You would get bruised and banged up; this type of training was expected, and it was unapologetically accepted as the only way to train. Without the constant testing of skills within the four wall of the dojo, a karateka could not be confident that he was learning an effective art.

What happened?

Slowly, things began to change. Now, we see a softer, gentler, approach to Okinawan karate. We see lighter contact, shorter training sessions, and lightning fast promotions. In fact, if not for the sign on the door, or the photos on the wall, many Okinawan karate dojo in America could easily be mistaken for their Korean counterparts. There is no denying that the new generation of Karate is here to stay; we live in a society of instant gratification. With the advent of technology in the late 20th Century, popular culture has helped groom an entire generation of impatient people that want it now, and are willing to pay extra to get it. There are 'karate schools' that advance or promote students with very little skill improvement. Rewards for mediocrity and promotions for simply showing up have become all too common.

Fortunately, that isn't the case with all dojos; the old style of Okinawan karate training actually seems to be enjoying a revival since the beginning of the 21st Century. There are still those that hold on to the old traditions and practice them diligently. There are those who train quietly, dedicated to preserving the old karate of Okinawa, and they can't be swayed or bought with the promise of money, titles, or fame.

I consider myself fortunate to have met and trained with such men and women, and have dedicated my life to the practice and pursuit of the karate of times past. To the traditional karate that can only be found in small dojos in unassuming places, sometimes off the beaten path, and often only with an invitation or personal introduction from a current student or respected teacher. In the chapters that follow, I invite you to come along on my journey and see how this American gained entrance to a rapidly disappearing society

of authentic Okinawan martial arts seldom seen in today's world; a journey that has brought me a lifetime of rewards that money can't buy.

I'll guide you on my journey, both in and out of the dojo, and introduce you to the experience through my eyes; the journey can be a little personal, and isn't always about karate, but that is what makes a memorable life. All experiences on my path haven't been glorious, but they all have helped to forge my will.

This book is divided into 3 sections: Book One is autobiographical, in that this section details highlights and reflections of my personal journey in karate from the dojo floor to the crashing waves of the East China Sea, and all points between.

Book Two is filled with topics relevant to the study and practice of this art. This includes lessons that I've learned, essays, advice, personal thoughts and stories, and little nuggets of wisdom that I've been taught along the way, and am now passing on to you.

Book Three is dedicated to the legacy of my teacher, Takamiyagi Hiroshi, the founder of Goshukan-Ryu (the martial arts style comprised of Goso Kenpo, or Five Ancestor Fist, and Shuri-Te), and pioneer of Wu Zu Quan (aka Ngo Cho Kun or Chinese Five Ancestor Boxing) on Okinawa, Japan. An exclusive interview is included in this chapter, along with rare photos from his personal collection.

This book is written for everyone, and no one in particular, in that the target audience for this work is very broad; it is my sincere desire that karateka of all ages and skill levels will be able to identify with some of the content, or perhaps even learn something new. Unlike the early years veiled in secrecy, now Okinawan Karate is for everyone, and should be freely shared with all.

So what is the meaning of *chanpuru*, the title of this book? It is one of the most popular dishes in Okinawa; there is no set style, or list of ingredients for this amazingly simple, yet wildly popular dish. It usually consists of some type of meat, lots of fresh vegetables, tofu, and egg. This is all thrown together and sautéed (stir-fried) and served with rice.

Chanpuru simply means something thrown together, or mixed up, and while there is usually a common elemental flavor, there is also a vast variety of combinations that can be enjoyed.

Indeed, chanpuru is the embodiment of the Ryukyu and Okinawan experience; with the cultures of China, Siam, Taiwan, and Japan blended into one; the flavor is uniquely Okinawan, while highlighting the very best flavors of each contributing culture.

This book is similar to Okinawa chanpuru. The common theme is Karate, but there are many different elements pertaining to the subject. These elements are compiled in this small book as a series of tips, philosophy, articles, advice, and experiences that I have gained over a lifetime of practicing martial arts. From a high school student practicing judo at the Columbus, Georgia YMCA, to a young American living in Okinawa, my experiences have taught me to be a better student, and hopefully, a better teacher.

It is my sincere wish that every person reading this book will gain something positive; In a time where stylistic elitism is still rampant within the traditional martial arts community, this book is directed toward everyone, and no-one in particular. The content of this book is written for all karateka — for those that don't train, or those inactive practitioners on a lengthy break, perhaps a chapter or two will even help inspire you to go to the dojo and take steps on the path to mastering your own destiny.



—Garry Parker
Columbus, Georgia
July 2014

BOOK ONE
REFLECTIONS





CHAPTER 1

Okinawa

Haisai

When I arrived at the Naha Airport the very first time, I had no idea what to expect; it was winter, and having just left Korea, I was prepared for the worst possible weather; obviously I hadn't properly researched Okinawa when I received my PCS (permanent change of station) orders to "Kadena Air Base, Japan."

As I stepped into the airport, I was met with a huge sign that read "Haisai Okinawa" in bright colors with two animated, smiling Shisa (lion-dogs) on either side. As I gathered my baggage, I noticed flowers everywhere; huge red and yellow hibiscus, along with the native *deigo* (akabana) flower adorned the



Higa-San, Parker, Takamiyagi Sensei in Shuri Village 2003

When a foreigner dedicates a little time and effort to learn about their native culture, the beautiful spirit of the Okinawan people is revealed.

Naha Airport in vivid color. What a pleasant surprise! I was just another young airman reporting to my new duty station; little did I know that this would be the first step of the journey that would change my life forever.

Haisai is the Uchinaguchi (Okinawan language) word for 'hello'. This greeting is used everywhere, and in addition to being a fairly simple word to learn, I found it to be a great ice-breaker when meeting new people, or even when visiting a shop, business, or restaurant. I discovered that Haisai, to the Uchinanchu, is not just a greeting, but an integral part of their culture. Haisai is a connection to their family, their grandparents, their past, and their roots. Haisai helps the Uchinanchu to preserve their unique identity as distinctly different from the Japanese that occupied their tiny island Ryukyu Kingdom and attempted to strip them of their unique culture as they imposed imperial rule.



Parker and Takamiyagi Sensei. Shuri-Okinawa 2003

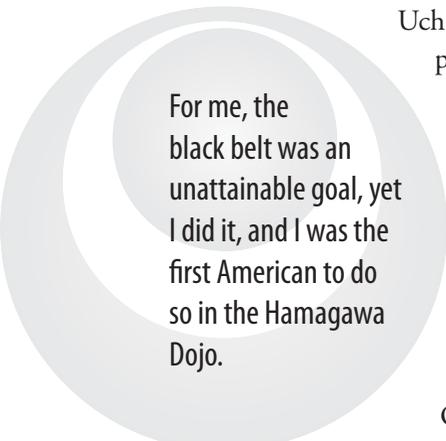


Parker and Takamiyagi Hiroshi, Shuri Gusuku 2003

As an American living in Okinawa - the simple act of bowing, smiling, and saying 'Haisai' opened dialogue for me that otherwise may never have happened. The *Uchinanchu* are friendly, but they are also extremely proud of their heritage. When a foreigner dedicates a little time and effort to learn about their native culture, the beautiful spirit of the Okinawan people is revealed. I can't begin to count the number of times that a dismissive or suspicious look was transformed instantly to a smile because I spoke one little word. I was invited into the homes and lives of some wonderful people that I certainly would never have met, all because of Haisai.

Now, before you get the idea that Haisai is a magical word that transforms Uchinanchu into friendly, sharing people that naively invite foreign strangers into their homes, it isn't. Let me explain: It is the principle of the word, not the actual word that opens doors. Anyone who is sincere and makes the effort to learn the language and culture of Okinawa, is usually readily accepted by the





For me, the black belt was an unattainable goal, yet I did it, and I was the first American to do so in the Hamagawa Dojo.

Uchinanchu. After a few years, I realized that, in some places, I was even more accepted than the *naichaa* (mainland Japanese)!

One particular Sunday morning, I loaded up my Toyota Hi-Ace van with snorkeling gear to start another new adventure; I discovered so much of the island by driving around and attempting to get lost. Away from Highway 58 and the main roads, driving up north through the small villages, stopping here and there, I discovered the real Okinawa. This particular morning, I was planning to go snorkeling in Onna-son (just past Yomitan) and decided to go to Ie-Jima; I drove all the way there and just got to the bridge when the rain started; After a half hour or so, the rain turned to a heavy storm, and my snorkeling adventure was cancelled. I started back toward Kadena.

Along the way I stopped at a roadside stand near *Manzamo* (a popular tourist attraction) for lunch; I noticed that not only was I the only *gaijin* (foreigner), but all the other customers seemed to be *naichaa*! The staff greeted me with a canned ‘*irashaimase*’ (Welcome) and I nodded a bow. I returned the greeting with “*Hasai, Chabidasai*” (hello, forgive the intrusion). The *Obasan*’s (old woman’s) eyes lit up, a huge ear-to-ear grin appeared, and she replied with a loud “*Haisai! Mensore!*” (Hello! Welcome!) I replied with ‘*Nifedebiru!*’ (Thank you!) She then called me over to the side, out of line, and sat me at the counter and served the biggest bowl of *soki-soba* (a distinctly Okinawan pork spare-rib-flavored noodle soup) I had ever seen. The day was stormy and gloomy, but I found a little piece of sunshine that day with the older woman at the roadside stand for lunch; we talked sporadically for a couple of hours, whenever she had a few minutes between her other customers. I had exhausted nearly all of the Uchinaguchi in my linguistic arsenal within the first couple of minutes, but had a working knowledge of *Nihongo* (the Japanese language). She was extremely interested in why I, a young American serviceman, was taking such an interest in her culture. The first couple years of learning and studying the language and culture were sometimes a struggle, but that day on the side of the road, I no longer felt like an outsider, I felt at home.

Hamagawa Dojo

The Hamagawa Dojo was a small, unassuming building covered with vegetation and tucked away on a tiny corner lot in a residential neighborhood only a few hundred meters from the Sunabe sseawall. Compared to the houses and apartment buildings, the dojo seemed out of place. Little did I know when I stepped in for the very first time, that this little hot metal building would forever change my life! My friend Wade had been married several months before, and it was at his wedding that I was introduced to Takamiyagi Sensei. Wade and I talked, and trained a little, he was a student at the Hamagawa



Original Hamagawa Dojo Kanban: 1990



Hamagawa Dojo Entrance: 1990



Side of the Hamagawa Dojo: 1990

Dojo, and lived in the apartments across the street, but had previously trained in kenpo (Okinawan karate) back home in New Mexico. After meeting Takamiyagi Sensei and watching the karate demonstration at Wade's wedding I expressed interest, and he introduced me to the sensei.

At one point, there were four of us from the same squadron training at the Hamagawa Dojo; Wade, Mark, Dave, and me. Within a month or two, Mark and Dave lost interest, and Wade eventually left to practice at another dojo; then I was the only American left in the Dojo.

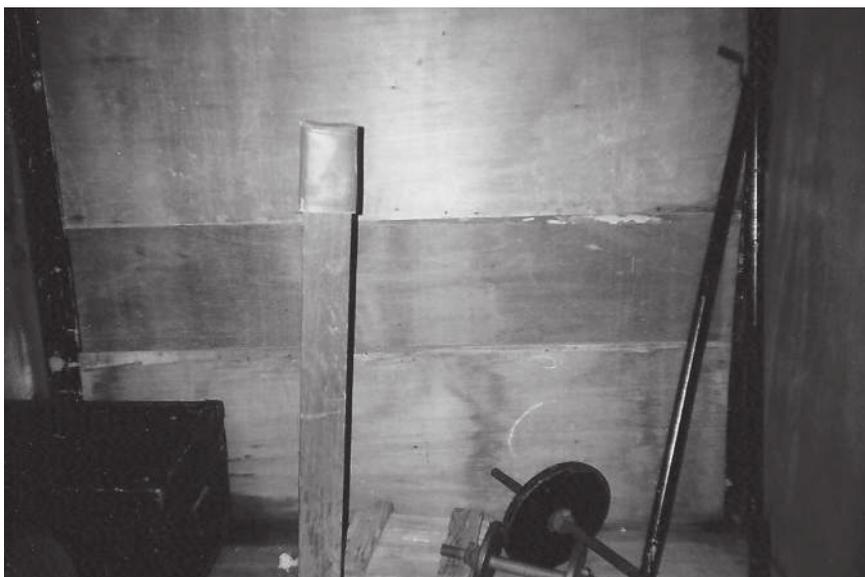
For a few months after that, the reception from my *senpai* (senior classmate) was a little colder, and I felt that Takamiyagi Sensei wasn't sure if I was really committed; over the years, American servicemen had gained a reputation in Okinawa for dojo-hopping, or moving from one dojo to another every few months without fully committing to one.

I made a commitment to arrive early and stay late at the dojo; I trained every day, after work and on weekends; I practiced *kihon* (basics) for hours, I stretched, and practiced the one kata that I was learning. After a couple of



Takamiyagi Sensei leading Kata practice at the Hamagawa Dojo. The author is back row, closest to the camera.

months, the reception began to grow warmer from my senpai and Takamiyagi Sensei gave me more personalized attention and correction. I learned in a few months what some Americans never learn; until you prove your dedication and loyalty, you won't receive any detailed instruction or interaction. I learned



that I had to work hard to be accepted as a true student at the Hamagawa Dojo. I had to earn it.

Throughout the years, I absorbed some of the essence of that dojo, and did my part to add to the spirit of the dojo, too. Countless gallons of sweat poured down my body and soaked into the hardwood floor as I practiced and learned all that I could absorb.

Blood from my shins was wiped from the tire *makiwara* (striking post) as I practiced perfecting my *mawashi-geri* (round kick). Blood from my knuckles soaked into the leather *sunabukuro* (striking sandbags) and makiwara cover, as I trained impatiently, trying to do too much, too fast, and injuring myself in the process. Tears of frustration were shed when I struggled to perfect *waza* (strikes) or *kata* (forms), but just couldn't get it, in spite of my efforts. Years later, tears of joy were hidden by my sweat-drenched face as I received my shodan (black belt). I never thought I would get that far.

Everything I've accomplished in martial arts is due to hard work and diligent practice. I was never very athletic, and always had to work harder than most to achieve the same result. For me, the black belt was an unattainable goal; yet I did it, and I was the first American to do so in the Hamagawa Dojo. Before then, I was already a dedicated student; but after my *shodan* promotion, my loyalty to my teacher and my dojo was solidified. I made a

Throughout the years, I absorbed some of the essence of the dojo, and did my part to add to the spirit of the dojo, too.



Hamagawa Dojo 1995: L-R Isa, Takamiyagi Naoki, Author, Takamiyagi Hiroshi.



Hamagawa Dojo 1995: Nafudakake (name-boards of current students)

commitment then to remain a loyal and dedicated student as long as I was living and breathing.

For the next 18 months following my black belt promotion, I continued to train, learn, and absorb all that I could process in such a short period of time. I took every opportunity to practice, learn and receive all knowledge that Takamiyagi Sensei would share with me. Sure, I was just one of thousands of foreigners training in karate that had come to Okinawa courtesy of the United States government, but seeing my name within the *Yudansha* (black belt) ranks on the *Nafudakake*, the only name in katakana, made me realize how far I had come.

makiwara...
this simple tool
forges the spirit
of determination,
ensures proper
patience, and breaks
bad habits without
prejudice.

Attending testing days now took on a different meaning for me. After my shodan promotion, I was no longer nervous on testing days, for it was the first time in years that I was able to observe and fulfill my duty as senpai by helping my *kohai* (juniors).

[Like the Preview? Buy the book...](http://www.TambuliMedia.com)

TAMBULI MEDIA



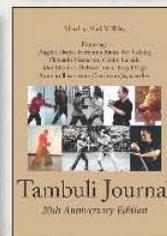
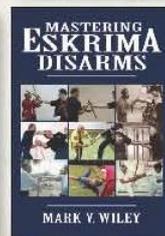
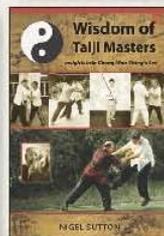
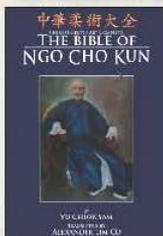
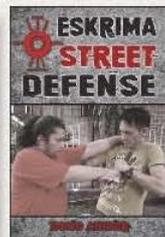
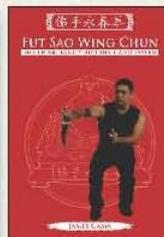
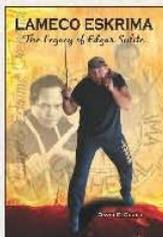
Excellence in Mind-Body Health & Martial Arts Publishing

Welcome to Tambuli Media, publisher of quality books on mind-body martial arts and wellness presented in their cultural context.

Our Vision is to see quality books once again playing an integral role in the lives of people who pursue a journey of personal development, through the documentation and transmission of traditional knowledge of mind-body cultures.

Our Mission is to partner with the highest caliber subject-matter experts to bring you the highest quality books on important topics of health and martial arts that are in-depth, well-written, clearly illustrated and comprehensive.

Tambuli is the name of a native instrument in the Philippines fashioned from the horn of a carabao. The tambuli was blown and its sound signaled to villagers that a meeting with village elders was to be in session, or to announce the news of the day. It is hoped that Tambuli Media publications will “bring people together and disseminate the knowledge” to many.



www.TambuliMedia.com