

Honoring Soke Takayoshi Nagamine and his legacy

The birthplace of modern day karate is Okinawa, which was once an independent country called “Ryukyu Kingdom”. There was an indigenous martial art called “Te”, meaning hand in the Okinawan dialect. The art of “Te” had many Asian influences, especially from China, but finally became Shuri-Te, Tomari-Te and Naha-Te in Naha City, Okinawa. These three Te’s were the origin of present day Karate.

Soke Takayoshi Nagamine was born in Naha City, Okinawa on August 12, 1945, the son of the late founder of the Matsubayashi-ryu style of Okinawan Shorin-ryu Karate-do, Osensei Shoshin Nagamine. Osensei Nagamine was in a generation that had been schooled by many of the great martial arts masters with his most influential teachers being Ankichi Arakaki, Chotoku Kyan and Choki Motobu. Before Osensei Nagamine’s passing away in 1997, he was named a ‘living intangible cultural asset’ by the Okinawa Prefectural Government.

Sensei Takayoshi Nagamine was the Soke (inheritor of style) of the Matsubayashi-ryu system, and the headmaster of the World Matsubayashi-ryu (Shorin-ryu) Karate-do Association (WMKA) in Okinawa, Japan. On April 25, 2012 Soke Nagamine unexpectedly passed away at the relatively young age of 66, leaving many who respected and knew him well with a void in their heart. He will be sorely missed, but his teachings and his budo spirit will live on, as does his legacy. Soke Nagamine established a strong world-wide organisation, which has a bright future ahead of it according to the new Association President, Kaicho Yoshitaka Taira, Hanshi 10th Dan and also a direct student of the style’s founder, Osensei Shoshin Nagamine.

In an interview with Mr Mike Clarke, author for over 300 articles for international martial arts magazines, and author of five books, Soke remarked about the following about his early years in Karate.

‘Mike Clarke (MC): When did you start training in Karate?’

Takayoshi Nagamine (TN): I began training with my father when I was seven years old, now I am fifty-nine years old [in 2004], so I have trained in karate for almost all my life.

MC: Was your training any different from the other students in the dojo?

TN: No, not really. In the dojo everyone was treated the same, me included. But afterwards, in our home life away from public classes, I received a lot of discipline from my father. For example, if students did one hundred punches, then I would have to do four or five hundred punches, the same with all the basic techniques.

MC: Because of who your father was, were you expected to train in karate?

TN: No. He never told me I had to do it. But watching him when I was a boy, really made me want to do it. In fact, he always demanded I did my homework and any jobs I had to do first before I was allowed to practice’.

At the direction of his father, and in order to help the development of Matsubayashi-ryu Karate-do on an international scale, Soke Takayoshi Nagamine went to the United States at the young age of 20 in the late 1960s and opened his first dojo in Cincinnati, Ohio. Outside of his personal dojo, Soke

Nagamine regularly travelled around the United States to teach clinics and seminars until he returned to Okinawa in 1979.

He returned to Okinawa in order to assist his father, Osensei Shoshin Nagamine, with the running of the World Honbu (Headquarters) Dojo and the World Matsubayashi-ryu (Shorin-ryu) Karate-do Association (WMKA). In 1991, Osensei Shoshin Nagamine retired from running the Matsubayashi-ryu organisation and in a speech passed the leadership on to his son.

In 1992, Soke Takayoshi Nagamine called together senior instructors in Okinawa and the United States and formed what is now known as the World Matsubayashi-ryu (Shorin-ryu) Karate-do Association (WMKA). In the United States, the late Sensei Nick Racanelli, Hanshi 8th Dan and Sensei Fred Christian, Kyoshi 8th Dan attended the meeting and were the first United States members of the WMKA. Soke Nagamine, alongside Sensei Racanelli and Sensei Christian called Osensei Shoshin Nagamine and expressed their support for the WMKA.

In 1997, after the passing of the style's founder, Osensei Nagamine, Soke Takayoshi Nagamine took the position as the Soke (head) of the Matsubayashi-ryu Karate-do system. In October 2008, he was promoted to the grade of Hanshisei 10th Dan in Matsubayashi-ryu. Soke Nagamine helped develop, establish and teach at dojos throughout the world, including in Australia, Canada, United States, and Europe.

In 2006 Soke asked Sensei Ole-Bjørn Tuftedal, Renshi, 6th Dan, in Bergen Norway to set up a sub chapter of the WMKA to handle all affairs in Europe, as well as the Middle East and Africa, on behalf of Soke. The European Matsubayashi-Ryu Karate-Do Association (EMKA) was consequently set up by Sensei Tuftedal with the assistance of Sensei Fred Christian and Sensei Ed French in the USA.

Soke Nagamine was a great ambassador for Matsubayashi-ryu world-wide and spent much of his life around the world teaching seminars and clinics. He would regularly host international seminars, with the most recent being held in Naha City, Okinawa in November 2010 to celebrate the 75th Anniversary Festival of Matsubayashi-ryu and to commemorate the 13th Anniversary Tribute to Osensei Shoshin Nagamine's passing. The event was attended by over 330 members of the WMKA.

Soke Nagamine was dedicated to keeping the organization founded by his father, the WMKA, running smoothly and supporting all dojo and encouraging them to work together to perpetuate the true traditional art of Okinawan Matsubayashi-ryu Karate-do in eighteen kata and seven yakusoku kumite.

During a seminar in Florida in July 2011, Soke Nagamine said that 'many people in the world have a misinterpretation of karate. They think that karate is like tournament fighting or sports, but for us karate is part of our Okinawan culture. It is a culture not a sport. It is a martial art'.

Soke's ideology can be further seen in his discussion with Mr Mike Clarke when speaking about karate in olden times, and whether Soke thinks it has changed since then. Soke said 'well, inside [a person's mind] I think it's all the same, but, there might be some changes in the way some people interpret karate today, even from as recently as forty years ago. This has to do with people's cultural background, I think. Even on Okinawa now, there are many who just see karate as a kind of sport instead of a martial art'.

He continued to say that 'sometimes I am asked: what is the difference? It's true some sports are tough like boxing or professional kickboxing, they're very tough. But no matter what, all sports share the same definition. They have tournaments and the participants are trying to improve their record or previous result'. He further explains that 'karate is not like this, it is the study of death and being alive. Yes, death and being alive. If a person opens a karate dojo it is important to understand this philosophy. Martial arts cannot compete with sports because they have a different philosophy. In sport you compete against someone else, or perhaps your own record, but in martial arts you only compete against your 'self''.

An interesting point to note was Soke's response to Mr Clarke's question about whether he thought that Westerners (non-Okinawan karate practitioners) understood the meaning of Karate-do.

'Yes they do, some people anyway. Many western people have been training a long time, and they understand things better than some people here [Okinawa]. It all depends on the person and if they are open to such ways of thinking. Even physically, western people can be better at karate due to their bigger bodies and greater strength. It all depends on the philosophy in their soul'.

In a seminar in Australia in 2011, Soke was quick to stress the importance and benefits of discipline in traditional Okinawan Karate-do. Soke mentioned that 'sometimes countries [outside of Okinawa] have less discipline in their education programs and in their traditions. But in Japanese culture they have a 'discipline culture, they have a history in tradition' he said, indicating what benefits Karate-do could have to practitioners in the West, or other places that may lack that discipline culture from other means.

Soke continued to say that 'senseis will teach students good discipline in the class and this way the children know how to respect their parents and seniors more'. In addition, 'by teaching discipline programs, you get yourself healthier, you help other people more. Also in Okinawa and Japan, crime is very much less committed by the karate people and martial arts people. This is because they teach you how to respect other people'.

In an interview with Sensei Reece Cummings from Canberra, Australia in 2011, Soke Nagamine explained the five basic fundamentals of Matsubayashi-ryu Karate-do:

'We have this five fundamentals philosophy. This philosophy was from my father and his teacher, and it's very, very old – up to 700 years. Basically, the five philosophies are contributing to our understanding, to our essence of the mind'. These philosophies included:

1. You have to live in accordance with the principles of nature. You have to respect your parents and respect your philosophy.
2. We are studying movement. Once you study movement, you have to know how to function with your body to be able to use these moves. To become functional, you have to be conscious of every move you make.
3. You have to learn very well from your experiences and from other people's experiences – experiences that will teach you something valuable. Not only in education, but also in experience.
4. You have to strive for a sense of history and culture.

5. Master your fighting techniques not from your imagination or reasoning, but through actual combat. Know what you can do, and what you can learn from the art of Karate. Don't obtain any techniques by your imagination. You have to prove what you can by doing – action, not imagination.

Soke Nagamine also explained the importance of humility in martial arts. Soke remarked that 'the more knowledge you have, the more humble you are going to be', he continued 'you're going to be a very dedicated person, not overconfident. That's what martial arts teaches you as a philosophy: 'to be humble is very important'.

Soke further elaborated by talking about what his father, Osensei Shoshin Nagamine, had said to him: 'well you know we human beings are not perfect, not at all. I believe my father was a very fair and honest man, and he would often say to his students, me included: 'rectify your mind, and always look to your feet'. What he meant was that we should always be ready to do karate. He was talking about our mind, our attitude. Always remember what it was like to wear a white belt. 'Sho-shin', have a beginners mind. We must never think we have become something big in karate. No matter what, every day when we practice we realize there is something more to learn.'

Of note is the way in which Soke carried his father's teachings to those instructing others in the art of Matsubayashi-Ryu, as pointed out by Martin O'Malley, EMKA, Ireland: "Soke Nagamine told us that his father used to say that we should try to 'Teach Difficult Things Easily, to Teach Easy Things Deeply, and to Teach Deep Things Enjoyably'."

Similarly a quote from Soke Nagamine provided by Sensei Lara Wendy Chamberlain, WMKA Santa Cruz, Ca expands on that: "You must learn to be able to teach in this way: for a teacher to be able to take something simple to explain and make it more complicated is one thing but to take a complex concept or technique and make it simple and easy to understand is preferable and more difficult to do."

Sensei Tuftedal, EMKA Norway, provided this related quote from Soke Nagamine: "To know a few things deeply and profoundly will teach you application also widely." Soke would also quote from his father, O'Sensei Shoshin Nagamine: "Better to master a few things deeply than many things shallowly". Soke was quick to point out the importance of virtue and often said: "Your knowledge may shine in one corner, but your virtue may cover the whole land."

Matsubayashi-ryu is a kata centric system, including 18 kata and seven yakusoku kumite, as handed down over the years, as preserved by Osensei Shoshin Nagamine and his students.

According to an old saying, one kata would usually be practiced for three years before the next would be learned. The last Matsubayashi-ryu Kata, Chatan Yara Kusanku is said to take at least ten years to master. Altogether, that's 61 years to master just 18 kata.

As for learning Karate, Soke told Mr Clarke about something his father had told him: 'my father, and even people older and senior to him, told me that around one hundred years ago when you did karate you didn't have a public class. Each sensei, would teach their students separately, not together. So it was possible that you could start training and meet somebody, say ten years later, who might have been training with your sensei for the same length of time, and you didn't know. In those days people kept it secret and never told anyone they trained in karate. It was something they did for themselves and not for others to know about. It is very different in our days. Back then each student was taught at their own level and the sensei would give the student different things to work on accordingly. Of course back then money was not really a question either. It was all about culture, discipline, intelligence and character'.

The eighteen Matsubayashi-ryu Kata include:

1. Fukyugata (promotional kata): Fukyugata Ichi was created by Osensei Shoshin Nagamine, and Fukyugata Ni by Osensei Chojun Miyagi in 1941 at the request of the then Okinawan Governor, Mr Gen Hayakawa and a special committee of all the Okinawan Karate-do associations. These kata were created to form two introductory kata to allow beginners and school children to approach Karate practice in the most lenient way possible.
2. Pinan (Peace and tranquillity): Pinan Shodan through Godan were created by Anko Itosu around 1907 and were intended to be practiced by high school students as an integral part of the regular curriculum.
3. Naihanchi (horse riding kata): The composer of Naihanchi Shodan through Sandan are unknown, although many believe it was originally one kata. These ancient kata were the introductory ones to Karate for beginners prior to the Fukyugata and Pinan kata being composed.
4. Ananku: The composer for this kata is unknown. The characteristics of this kata are note by the lunging stances for defensive and offensive movements.
5. Wankan / Okan (king's crown): The composer for this kata is unknown, but it has a long history. This kata was practiced mostly in Tomari Village. The characteristics of this kata are its elegance combined with powerful movements of attack and defence sequences.
6. Rohai: The composer of this kata is also unknown, but also has a long history. It was primarily practiced in Tomari Village. The characteristics are the one-foot stances where the other foot is drawn to deliver a quick snap-kick. It is a short kata, but very elegant looking.
7. Wanshu: It is believed this kata was brought to Okinawa in 1683 by a Chinese envoy named Wanshu; but later, was reformed and developed by Karate men of Tomari Village. The characteristic of this kata is the execution of hidden fist punches.

8. Passai: The composer of this kata is also unknown. The characteristics of the kata are the execution of knife-hand techniques. This kata was the favourite of many Karate men of Tomari Village.
9. Gojushiho (literally "54 Steps"): The composer of this kata is also unknown. Goju-Shi-Ho literally means 54 steps. The characteristics of this kata are the spear-hand thrust and the resemblance of a drunken man's movements.
10. Chinto: The composer of this kata is unknown. The characteristics of this kata are the execution of a flying kick, and every movement is composed in a diagonally straight line.
11. Kusanku: This kata was adopted and developed by Okinawan Karate men after it was brought to Okinawa in 1761 by a Chinese Martial Artist named Kusanku. This kata is the most magnificent and advanced kata of all Matsubayashi Ryu Karate. It is also the longest and most difficult kata, requiring painstaking practice for more than a decade for mastery.

Soke stressed that there are three important factors to keep in mind when performing kata, these being: 'line of sight, posture and destructive power'. He also stressed three main criteria for evaluating kumite (including yakusoku kumite): intuition; endurance and speed and power

Passai was Soke's favorite kata and one he would perform for audiences around the world with great acclaim.

Anthony Wheelan, European Matsubayashi-ryu Karate-do Association (EMKA), Ireland, notes: 'In 1996 the pinnacle of my journey in Karate was having Soke Nagamine visit Ireland. He came to Ireland with Sensei Philip Koeppel of the USKK, and he amazed us all with his demonstration of the principles of Matsubayashi Ryu and he did an unparalleled performance of Tomari Passai, that left us in awe'.

Soke Nagamine would always talk about the basic movements in the seminars he gave around the world. In Matsubayashi-ryu the basic movements are the fundamental defensive and offensive movements. The intermediate movements serve to connect the basic movements. The movements of kata are divided into basic and intermediate. In a seminar in Cincinnati, Ohio in July 2011, Soke said: 'Be sure to move, pause, and then execute the technique. This develops zanshin!'

One of the things Soke would also stress in seminars is the three essentials of Matsubayashi-Ryu techniques. These being: 1. Acceleration (Kasokudo) 2. Centrifugal force (Tenshin ryoku) 3. Leverage (Teko).

Soke Nagamine repeatedly stressed the importance of the three types of rhythm in Matsubayashi-ryu Karate-do. As he explained to Mr Clarke in his 2009 interview:

'Basic rhythm is to develop timing so you can block when you are attacked, and then you can hit back from your block. With rhythm-two, you can block and attack at the same time. Rhythm-three is the ultimate technique and this is where we don't block, instead, we attack the attack! Even against a kick we can use rhythm-three'.

Soke Nagamine had dedicated his life to preserving the art of Matsubayashi-ryu and the World Matsubayashi-ryu Karate-do Association (WMKA), along side of the European Matsubayashi-ryu Karate-do Association (EMKA), as founded by his father, Osensei Shoshin Nagamine.

After the passing of Soke, The WMKA Board of Directors has elected three new members to path the way of the future for the international organisation. In addition to being well-known and respected karateka in their own right, they are also all direct students of Osensei Shoshin Nagamine, these three include: Kaicho Yoshitaka Taira, Hanshi 10th Dan (President); Fuku-Kaicho Toshimitsu Arakaki, Hanshi 10th Dan (Vice-President); and Rijicho Iwao Tome, Hanshi 9th Dan (Chairman).

In a statement to the WMKA and EMKA, the new President, Kaicho Taira stated: 'We all remember as if it was just yesterday that Soke Takayoshi Nagamine's Unbelievable Passing Away on April 25, 2012. He was about to leave for Norway and Germany on May 7th, Canada and USA in July and Ireland in August. Soke Nagamine enthusiastically talked and was actively working for World Karate-do Seminar in Okinawa starting from November 3, 2013. We are still shocked and hardly believe of Soke's sudden passing away'.

'I think it is our obligation to Grandmaster, Osensei Shoshin Nagamine and Soke Takayoshi Nagamine to discipline 18 kata and seven yakusoku kumite correctly together with the spiritual essence of Matsubayashi-ryu Karate-do and pass down to younger generations. I ask you all World Matsubayashi-ryu Karate-do members to stand up together and cooperate and proceed to a bright future of WMKA and EMKA'.

Soke Takayoshi Nagamine's impact on his students around the world and his legacy are epitomized by these tribute quotes from WMKA/EMKA black belts from high ranking all the way to 1st Dan:

Fred Christian, Kyoshi 8th Dan WMKA Bellville, Illinois: 'I knew Soke Nagamine for 44 years. We visited each other's homes and family. Each time I was with him he touched my life and the lives of my students. The ripple effect of his teaching will last for generations.'

Shigehide Akamine, 7th Dan WMKA, Argentina: 'Soke Nagamine Sensei and I were classmates. When I was 15 years old, he encouraged me to participate in karate classes. Since then, he's been my Sempai. In 1968 when he travelled to the United States, I stayed in Okinawa, practicing with his father, Great Master Nagamine. By then I was already a black belt. I've always been in touch with Soke Nagamine Sensei. During the time that Soke Sensei was abroad, I've been invited on several occasions to join him, and that's how I met with him in Missouri and later in Los Angeles I have also invited him to Argentina three times, he was delighted to visit. He has been my partner and friend since childhood. This is how I remember him and his legacy and teachings will remain in karate and among all his students'.

Steve Trombley, Kyoshi 7th Dan WMKA Ontario, Canada: 'I found all my encounters with my teacher both interesting and spectacular. He was a gentle and kind-hearted man and teacher. He was always proud of his children. I will cherish the memories and the time I spent with him and I am proud to be his deshi. I will miss him greatly and will do my best to pass on what he has passed on to me to my students, to support his son, Bunshiro Nagamine, on his adventure in trying to fill his father's shoes and to support the board of directors of the WMKA'.

Angelo Mazza, Kyoshi, 7th Dan, WMKA Davenport, Florida: 'The passage of Soke has affected martial artists all over the world- In particular the dojos here in Florida and my family who are feeling the loss- especially since Soke was not just only my Sensei, he was a big part of my family. He had spent many of his visits spending quality time with my children, wife and myself. We all enjoyed his humor

and the knowledge he shared with us. He will be missed but will never be forgotten... Rest in peace my friend and Sensei'.

Ole-Bjørn Tuftedal, Renshi, 6th Dan, WMKA/Chairman EMKA Bergen, Norway: " After many years in karate I discovered Matsubayashi-ryu in 1996, and in October 1999 I succeeded in hosting Soke Nagamine in Bergen, Norway. He then graciously accepted me as his student. After that I had the great fortune of training with him almost yearly, and established a close relationship. The high points were my longer stays with him in Okinawa. As a teacher he didn't just teach karate, but wanted to include me in his culture, and with his friends and family. I have learned immensely from Soke, both as a karateka and as a human being, and this will stay with me for the rest of my life. I hope I manage to bring some of this to my students as I strive to evolve as a teacher".

Lara Wendy Chamberlain, Renshi 6th Dan WMKA Santa Cruz, California: 'Soke had a deeply introspective filter on people and social organization. When it came to make a call as a leader he saw through the upper layers and pierced through to the truth of the matter. He understood true loyalty to the art, and he taught me dedication to the practice of Matsubayashi Ryu'.

Ward Jardine, Renshi 6th Dan Pickering, Canada: 'We will all miss Soke very much. His dojo and home were always open to anyone who would take the time to visit and he was always willing to travel to see each and every dojo. He was passionate about his karate and his father's legacy.'

Scott Mastin, Renshi 6th Dan WMKA Cincinnati, Ohio: 'I will always cherish my special and unique time that Soke devoted to me. He was a rare gem on earth. I will continue to pass down all of the teachings that he so selflessly gave me. I realize that I am very fortunate to have spent as much time as I did with him. I will always love and cherish his friendship, teachings and who he was as a person'.

John Carlyle, 5th Dan WMKA Harrington, Australia: 'I, for one will miss him greatly as I travelled to Okinawa many times to train under him and he has been to Australia numerous times as well. His skill, knowledge and depth of understanding will be missed by the karate world. To receive instruction in true Okinawan karate-do is a privilege very few karate practitioners will ever experience let alone from the master of the style you follow'.

Ed French, 5th Dan, WMKA Belleville, Illinois: 'Soke was always kind and showed his appreciation of support. Having handled some administrative tasks for him and the WMKA, he always gave public recognition and showed his appreciation.'

Fred Schlesinger. 5th Dan, WMKA New Mexico: 'Soke always welcomed WMKA members who wanted to come to Okinawa and train at the Hombu dojo. I specifically remember an email in which he said: "Mr. Schlesinger, you know you are always welcome at the hombu dojo". He had a warm heart and would go out of his way for you if he trusted you and knew you were dedicated to Matsubayashi-Ryu. Soke Nagamine made a lasting impression on me when he went to extremes for our group and made sure we had a great time when we visited Okinawa for O'Sensei's 85th birthday celebration in 1991. As the son of Grandmaster Shoshin Nagamine, Soke really strived to do his best to fulfil his role as Soke of the system and carry forth his father's legacy. In retrospect he accomplished his role to the fullest and will be missed by so many of his students across the globe'.

Curtis Anderson, 5th Dan, WMKA Columbus, Ohio: 'It's hard to put in words how much all of us will miss Soke's knowledge of karate and the tradition training'.

Steve Will, 5th Dan, WMKA Lebanon, NJ: 'I first met Soke in 2007 when I attended the seminar in Belleville, Illinois along with my sensei, David Williams, Kyoshi (one of Soke's first students in Cincinnati). The more time I spent with Soke over the following years, the more I could see his influence on my sensei. I am thankful of their combined impact to me and my training in Matsubayashi-ryu. Not only did I look forward to every opportunity to train and spend time with Soke, I encouraged my students to attend. Soke had great knowledge of Karate, and enjoyed teaching. For those of us who have trained with Soke, his passion of Karate will live on within us...and hopefully to those whom we teach'.

Des Chaskelson, 5th Dan, WMKA Cocoa Beach, Florida: "I met Soke Nagamine in person in Okinawa in November 2012 at the 75th Anniversary Festival of Matsubayashi-Ryu and was awed by his presence, stature, karate knowledge, ability to communicate, humor, and personality. We were so honoured to have Soke add Cocoa Beach to his tour of North America in July 2011 and to share with us his karate-do and his humanity. We are all deeply saddened by his untimely passing and will honor his memory and legacy by continuing to practice the pure and traditional art of Matsubasyash-Ryu Karate-Do and to support the WMKA, Soke's legacy.'

Phil Collins, 4th Dan, Rockledge, Florida: 'Once in a lifetime some of us are fortunate to meet special people, a person who is bigger than life and makes a positive and substantial impact on all he meets. Takayoshi Nagamine who is called "soke" by those who are members of the Karate group WMKA (World Matusbayashi Karate Association) is that special person. Born into a legionary Karate family, he had big shoes to fill. Following his father Osensei Shoshin Nagamine, he rose to be a legend in his own right. In spite of, and maybe because of that status, his humble attitude made him very approachable to everyone. Although, a Soke (carrier of the style) and 10th degree black belt, every new white belt student was always given the utmost attention and care. It is a shame that when such people leave this world, they leave a vacuum that is difficult to fill. But the lessons he taught us, his students, will have him with us in spirit for generations'.

Reece Cummings, 3rd Dan WMKA Canberra, Australia: 'It is a unique bond that is shared between a sensei and student in the Okinawan martial arts. On every occasion that I stayed at my sensei's house in Okinawa, he showed nothing but the greatest hospitality. Soke's passing has created a deep sadness, and a great void of such a special person and instructor who had so much knowledge, skill and willingness to help anyone who showed their dedication to their karate journey'.

Andreas Quast, 3rd Dan, WMKA Düsseldorf, Germany: "Although training with Soke at any time could easily turn into an existential experience, he had a great sense of humor. 'At a seminar he said with a big grin, 'There are two kinds of teachers: those who don't know the bunkai and those who know. You have to train 10 years, maybe twenty or thirty years to understand, to become an expert. Usually I give only hints and let the people find out the rest on their own. That's the traditional Okinawan way. But now I will explain it to you, so that you don't think that I belong to those who don't know.'" One thing I also remember very well is from speech he gave in 2010: "There are two kinds of people in Karate: givers and takers. We want givers" '.

Karl-Heinz Tessner, 3rd Dan WMKA Timmel, Germany: 'Soke was so kind, generous and helpful. He answered every (even stupid) question. showed so much, it was amazing. To have the chance to train under the guidance of Soke was a wonderful feeling. I felt, my search had come to an end while finding Soke and Matsubayashi Ryu (my search took nearly 16 years since starting Karate). Soke gave me a feeling of being a member of a big and great and helpful family'.

Anthony Wheelan 3rd Dan, WMKA Athlone, Ireland: 'Soke Nagamine lived in the steps of his father, he left this world far too early, there was still much he had to pass on. His passing is another huge loss for Traditional Okinawan Karate. While his death closes a bridge to the past it is my hope that everyone he inspired will remember and preserve that bridge. He was a great man and I feel lucky and privileged to be part of his legacy'.

Ian McKenzie 3rd Dan, WMKA Orlando, Florida: "What I learned from Soke Nagamine is that the beauty of karate is not in the physical prowess one attains, but the integrity it demands of its practitioners, the integrity that they carry into all areas of their lives, and which Soke Nagamine embodied so well'.

Tony Gibson, 2nd Dan, WMKA Pickering, Canada: 'Soke made Matsubayashi-ryu inclusive to all his students. He gave us not only his karate, but through his efforts, he also gave us an international brotherhood of friends and global family. He will be deeply missed. Arigato Gozaimasu'

Martin O'Malley, 2nd Dan, WMKA Castlebar, Ireland: 'I can only say that I feel truly privileged that I had the opportunity to spend time with Soke Nagamine both in Okinawa and in Ireland. He was an inspirational teacher, a truly great man. The memories of times spent with him will remain with me for the rest of my life'.

Jeanne Chipman, 1st Dan, WMKA Cocoa Beach, Florida: 'My first and only encounter with Soke was brief, yet one of the most memorable experiences in my karate training. In only 4 days, I was fortunate enough to meet my first Okinawan karate master, receive instructions, demonstrations, words of advice from him, and be awarded my black belt by him. The feeling of being so inspired, yet embraced by a human touch, by someone of such a high rank says more about Soke Nagamine than mere words can express'.

Stu Warren, 1st Dan, WMKA Cocoa Beach Florida: "I was honored to test for Sho Dan with Soke, during his visit to Cocoa Beach in July, 2011. I was humbled by his presence, and thought provoking instruction. His technique, and application of Kata, was inspiring and realization that Sho Dan truly is the beginning of the journey, and my quest for knowledge had just begun. He will be missed, and never forgotten'

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