

The Never Ending Version(s) of Goju Ryu History

Steve Wilson – July 23, 2019

I feel compelled to share this information for consideration, because mis-information and or information lacking all of the facts (cheery picking) continue to emerge. And of course, those articles continue to be generated from members of the same organization...

Miyagi An'ichi Sensei and Higaonna Morio Sensei are exceptional karate-ka (masters) in their own right. Nobody has worked harder to spread Goju Ryu than Higaonna Morio Sensei. Higaonna Morio Sensei made Miyagi An'ichi Sensei well known throughout the World via articles and video tapes where Higaonna Morio Sensei credited him as his teacher. Both Higaonna Morio Sensei and Miyagi An'ichi Sensei are associated to Miyagi Chojun Sensei's Garden Dojo and to Miyazato Ei'ichi Sensei's Jundokan. Both Miyagi An'ichi Sensei and Higaonna Morio Sensei received rank from Miyazato Sensei. Miyazato Sensei issued Higaonna Morio Sensei his 7th Dan, following which, Higaonna Morio Sensei formed the IOGKF. There are Gasshuku flyers still in existence where Higaonna Morio Sensei credits Miyazato Sensei with being his teacher and the "head" of Goju Ryu Karate. Miyagi An'ichi Sensei is 7 years older than Higaonna Morio Sensei and is his Senpai in the dojo. I'm sure as his Senpai, while they were training in the Garden Dojo and in the Jundokan, Miyagi An'ichi Sensei taught Higaonna Morio Sensei a lot. I am also pretty certain that after they both left the Jundokan, Miyagi An'ichi did become his teacher and probably influenced him even further. I know having met him and having seen him perform, Miyagi An'ichi Sensei was a very kind, humble, and knowledgeable practitioner/teacher of Okinawan Goju Ryu. However, it doesn't seem very logical that his knowledge of his teacher or Goju Ryu, could equal that of Miyazato Sensei, who had at least 13 if not 14 more years of exposure training with Miyagi Chojun Sensei than did Miyagi An'ichi Sensei.

Miyagi An'ichi Sensei was born in 1931. Higaonna Morio Sensei was born in 1938. Miyazato Ei'ichi was born in 1922. Miyazato Sensei began training with Miyagi Chojun Sensei in 1935, when Miyagi An'ichi Sensei was 4 years old. Miyazato Sensei began training with Miyagi Chojun Sensei 3 years before Higaonna Morio Sensei was born. Miyazato Sensei spent 18 years as a student of Miyagi Chojun Sensei and was an active student that entire time, other than a few years during WW2. Miyazato Sensei also assisted Miyagi Chojun Sensei at the Naha Police Academy. Miyagi An'ichi Sensei trained with Miyagi Chojun Sensei 4 to 5 years, at the end of Miyagi Chojun Sensei's life. Have you ever seen someone who trained 4 or 5 years surpass all of their seniors? I haven't.

Miyazato Sensei is one of the only direct student's of Miyagi Chojun Sensei who studied with Miyagi Chojun Sensei before and after WW2. Miyazato Sensei is the only student that Miyagi Chojun Sensei recommended to be his assistant teacher at the police academy. Miyazato Sensei is the only student that took over the teaching role at the police academy following Miyagi Chojun Sensei's death in 1953. Miyazato Sensei is the one who was considered the "head" of the Garden Dojo following Miyagi Chojun Sensei's death. Miyazato Sensei is the only student that the family gave Miyagi Chojun Sensei's Hojo Undo equipment too. Miyazato Sensei is the student who the family supported in succeeding Miyagi Chojun Sensei as the head of Goju Ryu. A lot of people try to paint a picture that Miyazato Sensei was really a Judo-ka, not a Karate-ka. When Miyazato Sensei passed away he was a 10th Dan in Karate and a 7th in Judo. He was awarded his 8th Dan in Judo, after his death. Jundokan means the "Center for the study in the founder's footsteps" or "Following in the footsteps of the founder." It is named this to honor Miyagi Chojun Sensei. The Jundokan is a dojo in Okinawa that teaches Goju Ryu Karate. Miyazato Sensei was

not Jigoro Kano Sensei's successor. Can you imagine the knowledge he had having practiced both Judo and Karate for so many years? IMO, having studied both Judo and Karate for so many years and having reached such high rank levels in both, makes him a much more well-rounded and knowledgeable martial artist overall. If you ever met him, trained with him, or did an interview with him, you would also quickly realize he was the "boss."

From 1946 until his death, Miyagi Chojun Sensei physical condition was seriously affected by congenital heart failure, which led to heart failure and death in 1953. From 1950 through 1953 his illness seriously affected him. For the last 3 to 4 years of Miyagi Chojun Sensei's life he observed class from a chair. This is the time that Miyagi An'ichi Sensei trained with Miyagi Chojun Sensei. It doesn't really seem possible that Miyagi Chojun Sensei himself could have physically taught Miyagi An'ichi Sensei all of the kata. Try teaching Sepai, Kururunfa, or Suparinpei with words only. Remember, video tapes and Youtube didn't exist then... In short, a senior who could physically demonstrate the kata had to have been involved. This is common sense.

I believe the facts clearly demonstrate that Miyazato Sensei taught both Miyagi An'ichi Sensei and Higaonna Morio Sensei. It is also a fact that Higaonna Morio Sensei remained affiliated with Miyazato Sensei until Higaonna Sensei formed the IOGKF in 1979. So, from 1957 through 1978 (21 years), Higaonna Morio Sensei was affiliated with Miyazato Sensei. Teruo Chinen Sensei also stated that Miyazato Sensei was Higaonna Morio Sensei's teacher and Chinen Sensei's teacher. Chinen Sensei also stated that Higaonna Morio Sensei was his (Chinen's) Senpai, not his teacher.

Another point of interest is that Miyagi An'ichi Sensei actually promoted Tomoyuki Kato Sensei (another personal student of his from Japan) to 10th Dan "before" he promoted Higaonna Morio Sensei to 10th Dan. Miyagi An'ichi Sensei had taught Kato Tomoyuki Sensei privately in Japan and then introduced him to Higaonna Morio Sensei. Kato Sensei became the Chief Instructor for Japan for Higaonna Sensei's IOGKF. Kato Sensei later resigned from the IOGKF and resumed his training with Miyagi An'ichi Sensei.

None of the senior karate teachers in Okinawa have ever considered Miyagi An'ichi Sensei to be Miyagi Chojun Sensei's heir. It would be ridiculous for anyone who understands karate to think that a student who trained 4 to 5 years and was only 21 years of age at the time his teacher passed away, could possibly be considered his teacher's heir. Many of Miyagi Chojun's Sensei's first generation students trained with Miyagi Chojun Sensei longer than Miyagi An'ichi Sensei trained with him. Still, Miyagi An'ichi Sensei trained with Miyagi Chojun Sensei, heard his words, and received instruction from the founder, which none of us can say. Miyagi An'ichi Sensei was a talented karate-ka and teacher, but he was not Miyazato Sensei nor did he possess Miyazato Sensei's knowledge or experience. In the same vein, Higaonna Morio Sensei did not hear, see, or receive from Miyagi Chojun Sensei what Miyazato Sensei heard, saw, and received. Neither Miyagi An'ichi Sensei nor Higaonna Morio Sensei can possibly know Miyagi Chojun Sensei's ways and intent better than Miyazato Sensei. It really is that simple if you use common sense, logic, and facts.

Personally, I sincerely feel that Miyagi Chojun Sensei's true and rightful heir was his son Miyagi Kei and that now his Grandson, Miyagi Toru is the rightful heir to Miyagi Sensei's karate style. It is also my opinion that Miyazato Sensei was his most senior active student and most knowledgeable student, at the time of his death in 1953. Miyazato Sensei also witnessed the evolution of Goju Ryu first hand. However, Miyazato Sensei was not from Miyagi Chojun Sensei's blood, so the heir to the style is Miyagi Kei Sensei and his heirs.