
Quotes

Professor William L. Montero, Sr.

1916 – 1992

As recorded by his student Bob McKean between 1974 – 1992

Note: The following quotes came from various talks and discussions Sensei Montero had with me during my years of training under his guidance. Many of these discussions took place during or after class at the Pacific Judo Academy in San Jose, California. I wrote these quotes in my dojo notebook as they occurred. – Bob McKean

"If it hurts it works."

This was in reference to the effectiveness of how an art should work and if you can't make an art work for real then it should not be used for self-defense.

May 1975

"Yawara is the first list you learn and the last list you master."

Sensei Montero required us to learn and develop an endless number of Yawara variations. He felt Yawara was an important foundation list of Kodokan Jujitsu.

August 1974

"If you are going to be a little bush on the side of the road then be a strong little bush."

Sensei Montero taught us it was important for a student of Kodokan Jujitsu to keep a low profile and not to brag about ones training or to show off. A little bush does not attract attention as people go by, but through hard training and dedication you develop strong roots and that makes the little bush strong.

February 1975

"Ask no quarter, give no quarter."

This was in reference to being attacked by a person with a knife. Sensei Montero took knife training very serious. He believed if a person attacks you with a knife it was a life and death situation and you needed to be mentally and physically prepared to turn the fight around and to be more aggressive than the attacker. He was a strong advocate of always taking the knife away from the attacker and cutting him at least once to either injure or kill.

July 1979

*"Kodenkan Jujitsu is the art of
10,000 throws."*

The point Sensei Montero made here was that Kodenkan Jujitsu was not a system of 10,000 different throws, but a student must perform EACH throw 10,000 times to understand and master that one throw.

October 1976

*"The price you pay for
knowledge."*

I had injured my shoulder during class and was sitting off to the side watching the rest of the class. Sensei Montero came over to me and made the above comment. He said that my injury would be only one of many more to come if I truly wanted to learn the system from him. Minor injuries were common during our hard training classes but safety always came first. During my years at the Pacific Judo Academy I never saw a serious injury occur on the mat.

May 1977

*"A teacher cannot be a teacher
without a student and a
student cannot be a student
without a teacher."*

This was an example of the teacher student relationship Sensei Montero promoted. He believed it took a mutual commitment for a teacher and a student to make learning possible.

November 1977

Qualities of a Sensei

Sensei Montero said the qualities one needs to exhibit in order to become a Kodenkan sensei (teacher) included:

1. Abandon one's ego.
2. Champion the truth.
3. Defend honesty.

November 1977

*"I promote instructors not just
black belts."*

This was from a talk about the requirements for black belts. Sensei Montero said being able to do (perform) the arts was not enough to become one of his black belts. A person needed to be able to perform the arts, understand them and teach them to others. He said this was also Professor Okazaki's view of what a black belt should be.

May 1978

*"Your obi does two things. It
keeps your jacket closed and it
reminds you where you line up
at the start and end of class."*

Sensei Montero was very traditional in his belief of different ranks and colored belts. He believed what a person knew was more important than what color belt they wore.

August 1974

"I judge an instructor not by the color of his belt but by how well his students behave and how proficiently they perform their arts"

"Never ask someone what rank they hold. Ask how many years they have been training and who their sensei is."

"History will only last as long as the people who were there can remember it unless it is written down or photographed."

"Professor Okazaki was a great man but he was a man. He put on his gi pants one leg at a time and he used both hands to tie his obi."

Sensei Montero believed there were too many people "over-ranked" in the martial arts. He did not approve of young people (8-18) holding black belt ranks, particularly ranks such as nidan, sandan, etc. "It takes years to mature into an adult and years to mature in Kodokan Jujitsu." "Kids may be able to perform some of the arts but they don't understand what they are doing and they don't know how to teach." A black belt should be a good instructor. You can tell how good a teacher is by watching how his students act and perform.

October 1979

Too many people are over ranked and the color of the belt, or their rank title, does not always tell you the truth about a person's true training and ability. There is no substitute for many years of training.

May 1977

This was about how well we recorded information in our dojo notes. Sensei Montero demanded we maintained detailed notebooks. Sensei Montero was not in favor of filming or video taping him performing the arts.

February 1980

Sensei Montero had nothing but total respect for Professor Okazaki but stressed to us that he was a man. Sensei Montero made this comment when he heard about some of the "stories" about Professor Okazaki doing some rather strange or questionable feats.

April 1978

*"Teach others what you know
and not what you think you
know."*

Sensei Montero told us he had witnessed martial art instructors who were "phony," had big egos, could not properly teach the arts but attempted to do so anyway. He felt you do an injustice to Kodengan Jujitsu, your sensei and yourself if you present yourself as a black belt this way.
August 1984

*"If Professor Okazaki was alive
today we would not recognize
the arts."*

Sensei Montero often told us Professor Okazaki was always trying to improve the arts of his system. What he taught in the late 1930s was not totally the same as what he taught in the mid 1940s. If Professor Okazaki was alive today the arts would be improved on and changed, making them even better.
June 1979

*"The three things one must do
to become proficient in
Kodengan Jujitsu are practice,
practice and practice."*

Sensei Montero stressed to us, the only way one could become proficient in Kodengan Jujitsu was to train hard and as often as possible. He did not like people who only talked about the arts and did not put in time on the mat. He would call them, "All talk and no do."
December 1978

*"No matter how much rice you
eat you are not going to
become Japanese."*

A comment Sensei Montero made about certain people who try to impress others by showing off their knowledge of Japanese customs, history and language without actually living in Japan for a better part of their life. He considered these kinds of people to be "phony" martial artists. "Some small minded people think they need to be Japanese impersonators to do good martial arts."
April 1980

*"When they start paying me to
advertise for them I will start
leaving their tags on my gi."*

Sensei Montero purchased judo uniforms for his students at the Pacific Judo Academy from a local vendor. The uniforms and belts had a cloth label listing the company's name. These labels were on the outside of the uniform jacket and belt and easily visible. Sensei Montero felt that a judo uniform (gi) should not have any labels or tags on them. He required us to wear only the dojo patch on the left breast of the jacket and to remove all labels. He said, "You need to look like a martial artist and not a NASCAR driver."
October 1974

*"What your sensei first taught
you is the original way."*

This was a discussion we had concerning comments made by other Professors as to what was the "original" way the arts were taught by Professor Okazaki. Sensei Montero said different students were taught at different times by Professor Okazaki and what was taught to one person may not be the same way it was taught to another person at a different time.

May 1977

*"The knowledge I give you is
yours to keep but the rank
(belt) is mine and I can recall it
if I believe your actions or
behavior ever becomes
questionable or unethical."*

Sensei Montero believed his black belts needed to follow a code of conduct and a code of ethics. If you violated these codes he would take away your rank and disown you as one of his students. On one occasion I witnessed Sensei Montero expel one of his black belts and cut up his belt for misconduct outside of the dojo.

March 1975

*"I teach because of my love for
the system and not for money."*

Sensei Montero did not believe a sensei should make his living totally off the fees he charged for teaching. He referred to those who did as "prostitutes" of the martial arts. He said it was fair for a sensei to charge a reasonable fee in order to help pay for the dojo rent, utilities, mat repairs and related expenses.

August 18, 1976