



Family

By Jerry Figgiani

In the winter of 2012, Jose Fraguas gave me the opportunity to write a column for Masters Magazine. I had hoped to be a voice for practitioners of Matsubayashi Shorin Ryu and to discuss the various splinter groups from Okinawa because they all still keep Grandmaster Shoshin Nagamine at the top of their genealogy. As I stated in that first column, it is my hope that through this column martial artists will tune into the common bond which is shared between us all. Keeping that goal in mind, I decided to call the column “Kozoku” which means “family.”

This past May in 2015, I held an event open to anyone who studies Matsubayashi Shorin Ryu, Shodan. The event lasted three days and was open to anyone Shodan and above. I created this event in hope that the various groups would be willing to support one another and participate in a non-political forum. The weekend was open to the first 60 Shodans and above who expressed an interest in attending. The response I received was overwhelming. That weekend, I had 71 students pass through the door of my dojo. Practitioners travelled to New York from Florida, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky, Connecticut, Maryland and Virginia. The groups which were represented were part of the WMKA, the WSKF, U.S. Shorin Ryu, Karate U.S.A., Kishaba Juku, and Shorin Ryu Karatedo International. Each group put aside its differences for the betterment and spirit of Karate. The event also captured the attention of Reggie Wax who is one of the sons of the first American black belt in Matsubayashi Shorin Ryu, James K. Wax. He felt this was an important event and didn't want to miss the opportunity to be a part of it. He made the ten and a half hour journey from Ohio to simply show his presence and demonstrate solidarity in this gathering.

During this weekend, each group demonstrated their methodologies, concepts, principles and ideas relating to the kata of Matsubayashi

Shorin Ryu. The three days flew by and for the weeks that followed, I still continue to receive positive feedback and the hopes that this type of gathering would take place again. The intent of this weekend were for the practitioners to get ideas on how to enhance their studies. The agenda was not to have people switching organizations, but to develop a fellowship and an open line of communications between organizations. It is this concept which had originally helped spread Okinawan Karate. It is in the spirit of Karatedo that the sharing, communication, and caring will keep us together. It is up to our generation to help keep the spirit of martial arts alive. In closing, I would like to thank the publisher of Masters Magazine, Jose Fraguas, for giving us this forum to help keep the connection amongst the practitioners of our art in place. What this weekend proved is that with the right mindset, the willingness to share and exchange ideas, and to have open communication is that the practitioners of martial arts can benefit. I am sure there are other associations, organizations, and federations that pretty much tend to stay by themselves and have a closed-door policy. I also understand all the political bickering and nonsense that goes on, but putting that “stuff” aside is something which is more important for the continuation of the martial arts. Belonging to our own associations and wearing our own patches are the things which can divide us and separate us *only* if we allow it. 🐉



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