



KAZOKU

Trailblazers

By Jerry Figgiani

Over the next year I would like to introduce or reintroduce some of the major influences in Matsubayashi Shorin Ryu. Since I started this column back in 2012, my aim was to educate people about the history of Matsubayashi Shorin- Ryu and the people who pioneered it. In 1962, the founder and Grand Master Shoshin Nagamine, set forth his first representative from Okinawa, Ansei Ueshiro. His arrival here in the United States, still has left an impression on many who are training in Shorin- Ryu today.


Due to political issues that go back to the early 60's, some Matsubayashi schools don't recognize the importance and impact that Ansei Ueshrio made on the Shorin- Ryu community. It's easy for some people to erase history, but people will lack the truth and knowledge of how some people have paved the way for others. Ansei Ueshrio was the first of many trailblazers to arrive in the United States from Okinawa. Barely speaking English, adjusting to western culture and having no family here, Ansei Ueshrio overcame many obstacles with fortitude and perseverance. A direct blood descendant of the Okinawan class Bushi Warriors, Ansei Ueshrio has left a permanent mark on the karate world. After settling in the United States, he established many karate dojos throughout the east coast and the mid-west. Developing many black belts here in the States, Shorin- Ryu began to spread into a major force. Notable black belts under Ansei Ueshrio were James Wax, Ernie Ferrara, Ar-

thur Drago, Terry Maccarrone, Joe Carbonara, Frank Grant, Joyce Santamaria, Sal Franco, Bob Yarnall and Bob Scaglione. While he established himself as a successful business man, he also brought his family to live here in the United States.

Because of a break in communication between the Okinawan Honbu Dojo (main headquarters) and Ansei Ueshrio, in 1969 Master Nagamine sent over another instructor, Chotoku Omine. It was at this period in time that students had to make a decision as to who they would show their loyalty to, Ueshiro or Omine.

Ansei Ueshrio created and added a Kata Fukyugata Sandan to the Matsubayashi syllabus, which did not go over well with the Honbu Dojo. He also introduced Oyo-Ten-Ren, which is an across the floor exercise similar to a kata. Both are still practiced today in many dojos.

Senior practitioner of Ueshiro Ha, Sensei Terry Maccarrone, opened his first dojo in 1966. He remembers Ueshiro's classes being very physical. The classes were geared with the intent to eliminate people who would not work hard.

Without the commitment by Ansei Ueshrio to come to the United States, who knows how many people would be studying Matsubayashi Shorin Ryu today? Instead of erasing history, we should embrace it and be thankful Ansei Ueshrio paved the way. His legacy will continue to move forward. 



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