

## *Lessons With The Master* A “Must Read” for Serious SKIF Members

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Whenever serious karate students have asked me to recommend books they should read on karate I have always listed Kancho Kanazawa’s books, as well as a few others, including C.W. Nicol’s famous book, *Moving Zen*. For me, *Moving Zen* has always been a favorite because it describes the author’s experiences studying karate at the old JKA Honbu Dojo in Tokyo under Sensei Kanazawa and other famous JKA Shotokan sensei in the early 1960s. However, as good as it is, *Moving Zen* is now considered dated by many younger karateka who find it hard to relate to events that took place in the 1960s, before DVDs and the internet. Moreover, it was about training at the old JKA Honbu Dojo, not about training in Japan at the modern SKIF Honbu Dojo.

Thanks to Sensei Paul Walker of California, however, we now have a new book that has some of the best elements of *Moving Zen* but also contains a wealth of detailed and up-to-date practical information for SKIF members and instructors. This new book is entitled *Lessons With The Master* and it was written by Sensei Paul Walker, who currently lives and teaches karate in California. The book centers on Sensei Walker’s experiences training at the SKIF Honbu dojo under Kancho Kanazawa and other high-level SKIF instructors for three years during the 1990s--about 30 years after the period of time described in *Moving Zen*.

In my opinion, *Lessons With The Master* is a terrific book and is a “must read” for serious SKIF members. It is particularly valuable for yudansha (black belts) and instructors. This is because, although it does present a great amount of general information about karate training Japan—as is the case with *Moving Zen*—*Lessons With The Master* presents much more detailed information on karate training, teaching, grading, culture, and etiquette. As such, it includes information that is simply not available from any other book. What’s more, the information in this book is specific to Shotokan karate as taught by Kancho Kanazawa and the SKIF. However, the book has something more for everyone with a passion for karate, regardless of rank or organizational affiliation.

The book has ten chapters and a four-section appendix with excellent reference materials. In total it has 572 pages, including a detailed index. The first chapter is nine pages long and is entitled “Karate at the Honbu Dojo.” It describes the SKIF headquarters dojo in Tokyo, the etiquette and conduct followed there, the social life, how Sensei Walker was able to fit in while training there, and other observations by Sensei Walker. This chapter, in itself, is fascinating and would be worth the price of the book, particularly for anyone planning a trip to Japan for karate training. In the second chapter, Sensei Walker discusses and breaks down “lesson components.” Here, there is a detailed discussion of the formal etiquette, warm up, kihon, kata, and kumite as conducted in regular training at the dojo. In addition, this chapter discusses conditioning,

target training, partner work, group work, explanation and demonstration of techniques, the dojo-kun, and use of makiwara and weapons.

Chapter three explains why Sensei Walker kept a detailed training diary in Japan and how he kept his diary. It is useful background and provides a good template for anyone planning to keep such a diary. Chapter four is a short chapter that presents ten excellent training tips with discussion. These tips apply to life in general as well as to karate training and they are a nice addition to the book. Chapter five is entitled “Teaching Tips.” This chapter should be a real value to karate instructors. Chapter six presents a series of ten lessons for specific objectives and it should also be of real value to instructors.

In chapter seven, Sensei Walker describes the backgrounds and teaching styles of each of the official SKIF instructors who assisted Kancho Kanazawa or taught when Kancho was away during the time when Sensei Walker was training at the Honbu Dojo. It thus discusses: Ichihara Sensei, Murakami Sensei, Suzuki Sensei, Tanaka Sensei, and Nobuaki Kanazawa Sensei. Chapter eight discusses the top ten favorite lessons Sensei Walker had at the Honbu Dojo during his three years of training there, including a description of the subject matter covered and the knowledge and inspiration he gained from each lesson.

Chapter nine is the longest chapter and is, in effect, the heart of the book. It outlines the material covered in each of the 279 lessons Sensei Walker participated in at the SKIF Honbu Dojo while in Japan. Each lesson was different, and the author describes the subjects covered and the instructors who taught the lessons. In addition, for many lessons there are notes which contain valuable information about special points made during the lessons. For instructors, this chapter is a reference that could be used for planning hundreds of different lessons. The final chapter is entitled “Grading Notes.” This chapter describes Sensei Walker’s dan gradings under Kancho Kanazawa for the Nidan, Sandan, and Yondan levels. It provides some interesting information about Sensei Walker’s personal dan grading experiences under Kancho Kanazawa.

The book also has a four section appendix, as follows. Appendix A includes the SKIF grading syllabi and system from beginner level through Godan; Appendix B contains a Japanese-English glossary of common terminology; Appendix C contains an example of a “Rotating Curriculum” for training; and Appendix D contains a listing of additional resources, including a list of suggested books, videos/DVDs, and websites.

*Lessons With The Master* is available online from iUniverse publishing and retails for \$33.95, plus shipping. It is well worth the price and I highly recommend it to all SKIF members! To order call 1-800-AUTHORS or order online from [www.iUniverse.com](http://www.iUniverse.com) (See enclosed advertisement.)