

Excerpt Two (taken from Chapter One)

It should go without saying that the experience of training in such a positive and high quality karate dojo for as long as I did changed my life. There were many personal challenges and triumphs, both inside and outside of the dojo, and, ultimately, the whole experience was one of continuous personal growth. I am reluctant to share too many personal stories, because I know that every individual's visit to such a dojo is unique and invaluable. What happened to me is not a direct representation of what would happen to any other visitor to Kanazawa-kancho's Honbu Dojo, but I believe the experiences that I relate here and the lessons that I learned are indicative of the unquestionable quality, the family feeling, and the tremendous depth of spirit of anything and everything that Kanazawa-kancho is involved in.

However, despite the tremendous expectation we, as students, all have that Kanazawa-kancho, and indeed all the other great Shotokan masters, will teach us true and genuine Shotokan karate of the highest level, the ultimate responsibility for the quality of our karate experiences lies squarely on our own shoulders. In order to gain the fullest benefit from our training in the art of Shotokan karate and in order to learn the many invaluable life lessons that are embedded into our own individual karate lessons, we must personally choose to embrace the teachings that are given to us. We must do our best to not only internalize these lessons, but also to find a way to pass on the wisdom of these teachings to future generations of karate practitioners. If we are successful in doing this, we will be able to pass on the legacy of our instructors, and, in our own ways, we will contribute to the ongoing growth and development of our art.

This is one of the primary objectives of this book. Please believe me when I say that the hardest thing that I ever had to do at the SKIF Honbu Dojo had nothing to do with the intensity of the training sessions, the challenge of living in a foreign culture, or even the writing of this diary and, ultimately, this book. The hardest thing that I had to do was to say good-bye to my friends, my seniors, my sensei, and the overall experience of living and training in Japan.