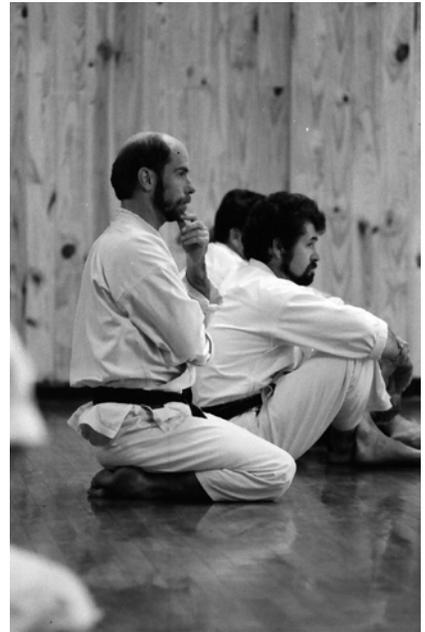


Greer Golden – A Cornerstone of Shotokan Karate in America

Many current Shotokan instructors, not only in the Mid-America Region, but also many who migrated throughout the country, began their training during their college years, under Sensei Greer Golden. Others from around the country were able to experience Sensei Golden's teaching at ISKF summer camps or other events in the past. Virtually all would agree that he had a way of motivating and connecting to college-age students that made him genuinely special. His students, and their progeny, perhaps numbering in the thousands, owe much of their current understructure for karate spirit, technique, and personal growth, to Sensei Golden. His history of courage and enthusiasm, and his legacy as an instructor are truly inspiring.

In 1956, Mr. Golden was stationed in post-World War II Japan. While stationed in Okinawa Golden saw Sensei Kobayashi conducting karate classes at the Air Force base. Mr. Golden began training with Sensei Kobayashi and Shotokan karate quickly became his passion. The Japanese were defeated but unbroken, and many were harsh on an American determined to master the skill and lifestyle of Shotokan. Golden persevered despite the difficulties, and extended his enlistment, allowing him to earn his shodan in Japan, as one of the first Americans to do so.



Sensei Golden at the ISKF headquarters in the early '80s.

Sensei Golden returned to the United States in 1961. He was invited by Master Hidetaka Nishiyama to train in his dojo in Los Angeles. In 1965 they were joined by a young assistant instructor from Japan, Master Yutaka Yaguchi, who had a major influence on Golden. In 1968 Master Nishiyama established the Japan Karate Association instructor training program in Los Angeles. Golden, Ray Dalke and Lester Ingber became the first trainees in the new program. They trained for six hours a day with Master Nishiyama and assistant instructor, Sensei Yaguchi. The three Americans became the first non-Japanese to complete the program and were licensed as instructors by the Japanese Ministry of Education.

Karate was becoming popular in the United States. Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, acting on students' wishes, was looking for an instructor to establish a karate club. Master Nishiyama recommended Golden, who was native to the area, and he accepted the position at Ohio University in 1970. He also started the club at Ohio State University in Columbus shortly thereafter, and created the Mid-America Region, which has since expanded to include Michigan, Kentucky, and Indiana.

The move to Ohio brought Mr. Golden closer to Philadelphia, where he began training and developed a relationship with Master Okazaki. In 1977, when the ISKF was created under Master Okazaki's leadership, Sensei Golden's students and the Mid-America Region were among the original members and have been loyal members ever since. Sensei Golden served for several years on the original ISKF Technical Committee and was instrumental in the organization and addition of the Alaska region to the ISKF.

However, Sensei Golden's lasting legacy may be the many students that went on to become national champions, Pan American champions, or members of the ISKF national team. Many of these students are now themselves certified ISKF instructors, such as Steve Pohle and John Pohle (East Coast Region), Bruce Green (Mountain States Region), and James Oberschlake and Martin Vaughan (Mid-America Region).

In most every successful person's life, there are notable leaders who have directly and positively affected their life's path. Greer Golden's contribution to the lives of his students, and the resulting impact on his students' students, as well as to Shotokan karate in general, is immeasurable.

To me, Mr. Golden is, and always will be, my sempai. He is a real sempai. A sempai is a person who helps his kohai and teaches him the right way to do things, both in manner and technique. He never holds back in helping the kohai, even if it is something that he himself needs improvement in. (For example, some sempai hold back showing techniques that they are not good at performing.) He never held back anything from me that he thought would help me.

I first met Sempai Greer Golden around 1965 or '66 in Los Angeles at Central Dojo. He had been in Arizona as the instructor there for a few years. He was one of the ranking black belts in the dojo.

In the beginning, I thought of him as being like the others, but found out he was quite different, even friendly. Of the group, Mr. Golden and Mr. Smith were the only ones who helped me by letting me know what I could do to improve myself. My sempai, Mr. Golden, was a special person to me. We would sit and talk, sometimes for an hour or 2, about what I could do to make my karate better. He also educated me on the history of Shotokan and the JKA lineage. (The ISKF hadn't been formed yet.) Mr. Golden was the only one that had trained in Japan at that time. He told me stories of most of the instructors that I had only heard about through the grapevine. He passed on to me a great deal of information about the JKA, its history and the people who made it. He also told me of a man I later came to know and admire very much, my instructor, Mr. Yutaka Yaguchi. Even now when I get to see him, Mr. Golden still tells me things that are new to me.

My Sempai, Mr. Golden, helped make me who and what I am today. He gave me the enthusiasm to want to learn more about the origins of karate and the path to follow to improve myself, a journey I continue.

Sensei James Field

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