



KAZOKU

Our Greatest Reward

By Jerry Figgiani

In 1976, Grand Master Shoshin Nagamine published his timeless classic “The Essence of Okinawan Karate-Do.” This book is a must for anyone who studies martial arts. The book also serves as the official text for students who study Matsubayashi Shorin Ryu. Within the book, Master Nagamine covers the eighteen kata and seven Yakusoku Kumites, which make up the syllabus for the style Master Nagamine founded. Besides the kata and Kumites, there is an abundance of information laid out in this book, such as the history of Shorin Ryu and valuable insights into the proper way one must approach the study of karate-do.

This informative book continues to inspire and provide valuable information that allows us to grasp not only the physical components of karate, but the very important intellectual understanding of the art Master Nagamine had put together. Today in karate, everything is centered on application based practice. While it is important to have a clear understanding of the study of kata application, it is also important to understand the impact that kata can have on one’s life. Kata can give the practitioner guidance in the importance of understanding karate-do. In my opinion, this is an area I feel most practitioners need a lot of improvement in. In “The Essence of Okinawan Karate-Do,” Master Nagamine outlines five key points on his suggestions for studying karate.

They are as follows-


1. Recommendations for study
2. Precepts in the mastery
3. Attitudes to be kept for karate training
4. Training hints
5. Ethics of the dojo

Within the precepts in the mastery, Master Nagamine points out in the sixth precept as he explains “Karate-do maybe referred to as the conflict within yourself.” This points to a clear direction as to where the practitioner should be looking. It is to look inside one’s self. Looking inside is an important part



of our development as practitioners and what could help us look inside is kata. A moving meditation, kata is the essence of karate-do.

Legendary Okinawan karate master Chotoku Kyan said “Merely an excellent physical constitution cannot guarantee a mastery of karate-do.” Using kata to look at our weaknesses can bring far more rewards in life than just application practices.

Many times I have witnessed strong karate men who have aged or have become physically weak, due to illness, use kata for the most important fight in their lives. That is to cultivate the fighting spirit within. With continued practice, hard work and introspection, understanding kata can lead us to self-realization. Following Master Nagamine’s methods can make kata our greatest reward. 

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