

Autobiography of Steven E. Johnson

(Updated: 11 November 2022)

Born: May 1959

City: Elizabeth City (raised in Weeksville. Located about 10 miles on the outskirts of EC.

State: North Carolina

Schools Attended: Sheep-Harney Elementary, P.W. Moore Elementary, Central Elementary, J.C. Sawyer Elementary, Weeksville Elementary, Elizabeth City Junior High (Middle School now) and Northeastern High School

College Attended: Touro University International, now Trident University.

Major: B.S. Healthcare Management

Martial Arts: I began my studies of martial arts in November 1973 under the instruction of Tola Ethridge Lewis, Jr. (deceased), aka "Toby" Lewis, of the Elizabeth City School of Karate. The dojo was under the umbrella of Seishin-Kai Martial Arts based in Osaka, Japan, with Soke Shogo (Kosho) Kuniba (deceased) as Head, and Richard P. Baillargeon (deceased) was the USA Representative for Seishin-Kai (1964-1974).

As memory serves, it was late 1973 (November), and early 1974 (February) that Kuniba Soke fired Mr. Baillargeon as Seishin-Kai USA Representative. Reasons vary, but historical writings refer to money and organizational differences. What mattered in the end is that Kuniba Soke and Mr. Baillargeon remained friends and were respectful to one another until their passing.

Almost immediately after termination, Mr. B. founded the National Karate Jiu Jitsu Union (NKJU). As I was told, and read, NKJU became a very successful organization with roughly 5,000 members with top-notch instructors, nationally and internationally. NKJU was a Union that was comprised of many classical martial arts styles, as it was Sensei Baillargeon's vision for the UNION to be an association for the masses to cross-train in traditional Asian Arts, to include Tae Kwon Do. (Note: As a term of endearment, NKJU members referred to Sensei Baillargeon as Soke, Soke B., Master Baillargeon, or Mr. B. To me, he was always, Soke. (Soke is defined as the Family Head of a martial arts style/system). In truth, Soke Baillargeon's official title was Kaicho (President or Director)).

Sensei Lewis, later in years was awarded the title of "Hanshi." He remained my instructor in Motobu-Ha Shito-Ryu Karate-Do for the next 17 years (May 1991). I achieved the ranks, jukyu to yondan while under Sensei's instruction. It was also during this period that I joined the United States Navy as a medical professional who served as a basic Hospital Corpsman (1983-1990). Military rank permitted, I applied for and graduated from the Navy's top enlisted school of medicine, the Navy Undersea Medical Institute (NUMI). I served in this capacity as an Advanced Hospital Submarine Force Independent Duty Corpsman from 1990 to 2003.

May 1991: I was cross-ranked to yondan by Kuniba Soke. From 1991 through 1997 I trained and taught martial arts between Elizabeth City, NC and in the Virginia Hampton Roads Tidewater area.



January 1997: my military duties assigned me to Yokosuka, Japan for the next seven years. Shortly after arriving, I began teaching Motobu-Ha Shito-Ryu Karate-Do at Yokosuka Naval Base, but I wanted to teach in the Japanese community. Before doing so I had to seek permission and receive a teaching license/charter from the new Head or Soke of Seishin-Kai, Kunio Tatsuno (now deceased). Eventually, I received proper documentation from Tatsuno Soke to teach Motobu-Ha Shito-ryu at a Japanese community center. Looking back I taught Shito-ryu at Yokosuka Naval Base, Ikego military residential community, and in Zushi Arena located in Zushi, Japan.

April 1999: Tatsuno Soke required that I attend a training event in Osaka, Japan. It was at this event that I, unknowingly, was being observed for godan. During the day several yudansha were called forward to perform kata and to demonstrate knowledge of bunkai. Note: Before attending the event in Osaka, Masuaki Minamide, then Shihan, made monthly trips to Yokosuka to provide me personal instruction, and to refine my kata and bunkai. This led to my successful advancement to the rank of godan.

Since all of my sensei had passed away, in order for me to advance in my Budo career, I sought other sensei to train under, or represent.

1999: I was asked by the now, Hanshi Bill Woodard of the National Karate Kobudo Federation (NKKF) to represent his organization as Vice-President and International Director. It was later that year that Hanshi Woodard awarded me the title of Renshi. In 2001, Hanshi promoted me to rokudan in Motobu-Ha Shito-Ryu Karate-Do and awarded me the title of Shihan.

It was also during this time that I represented, Hanshi Hugh Kelley of United Martial Arts Association International (UMAII) as his Assistant Director, Assistant Chief Instructor, High Dan Board Vice-President and Motobu-Ha Shito-Ryu Shihan. Eventually, I resigned on friendly terms with NKKF to fully commit to UMAII. I learned that one could not effectively serve two masters at the same time.

June 2000: Hanshi Kelley recognized my 6th Dan from Hanshi Bill Woodard and cross-ranked me as the same in Motobu-ha Shito-ryu Karate-Do. In April 2002, Hanshi Kelley advanced me to 7th Dan and issued me the title of Shihan in 2004. Due to a disagreement with Sensei Kelley, I severed ties, and joined forces with the International Society of Okinawan/Japanese Karate-Do (ISOK) organization. ISOK recognized and accepted my rank of 7th Dan from Kelley, but that was after I submitted video proof of my budo skills/knowledge and underwent a cross-reference background check. I remained with ISOK until it dissolved in 2018. I served as ISOK's Shito-ryu Karate-Do representative on their Senior Technical Committee. Hindsight being what it is, I should have remained with Hanshi Woodard, but all of these experiences helped prepare me for future leadership responsibilities.

March 2016: It was time for me to return to my NKJU roots. The timing was perfect, as my sensei was ready to retire from his position as the 2nd Director of NKJU. He asked, and I accepted the role as the 3rd Director (Sandai Kaicho) of the National Karate Jiu Jitsu Union (NKJU) and the second Director of the National Karate Jiu Jitsu-International (NKJU-I).

June 2018: Promoted to Hachidan, 8th degree black belt by my sensei, Hanshi Tola E. Lewis, Jr., Nidai Kaicho of NKJU.

June 2018: Awarded Shogo title of Hanshi by my sensei, Hanshi Tola E. Lewis, Jr.

March 2021: Founded the National Karate Jujitsu Federation, USA-International® The reason for changing the name from NKJU to NKJF was due to the less than honorable actions of a yudansha trademarking the name and patch, yet he was not appointed by my Sensei, or the late Soke Baillargeon.

March 2021: In order to avoid trademark or copyright concerns, I changed my karate style name from Motobu-Ha Shito-ryu Karate-Do to Seito Motobu-Ha Shito-ryu Karate-Do.

OTHER:

- International Society of Okinawan/Japanese Karate-Do: Senior Technical Committee Shito-Ryu Representative
- Provided Jujitsu/Goshin-Do waza to law enforcement officers throughout Portsmouth, Norfolk, Chesapeake and Newport News, Virginia
- Provided hand-to-hand combat techniques/strategies to Seal Team 2, 4 & 6
- Provided self-defense instruction to women for six months while deployed on active duty to Great Lakes, IL
- Participated in numerous martial arts seminars, conferences, workshops, clinics, and tournaments over four decades throughout the USA and Japan
- Provided Motobu-Ha Shito-Ryu Karate-Do, Kobudo, Goshin-Do and Hakko-Ryu Jujitsu instruction to thousands of students throughout the USA and Yokosuka, Japan
- National Karate Kobudo Federation Vice-President and International Director
- United Martial Arts Association International Assistant Director, Assistant Chief Instructor, High Dan Board Vice-President and Motobu-Ha Shito-Ryu Karate-Do
- Affiliated NKJF with the Ryukyu Kobudo Hozon Shinkokai association under Hanshi Deborah Yoshiko Dometrich, 9th Dan
- Affiliated NKJF with the International Martial Arts Federation, the oldest Budo association in Japan.
- Received menjo from Hanshi Vincente Valverde, 8th Dan, authorizing me to teach in his style, Seizen Motobu-Ha Shito-ryu Karate-Do, Seizen Budokai Renmei. (Same Kuniba lineage)

1974 - Current
Evolution of NKJU to NKJF

