

MARTIAL ARTS BIO: Tola (Toby) Ethridge Lewis, Jr.

National Karate Jiu Jitsu Union (NKJU / NKJU-I)
National Karate Jiu Jitsu Union International

Name: Tola (Toby) E. Lewis, Jr.

Born: July 7, 1945

Deceased: July 19, 2020

City/State: Columbia, SC



Rank: 9th dan (Kudan)

Title: Hanshi

Position: Nidai Kaicho/2nd Director (1992-2016)

Successor to NKJU after the passing of Shodai Kaicho/1st Director, Richard Peter Baillargeon, founder of NKJU, aka Soke Baillargeon.

Member of NKJU since 1974

Total Years in Martial Arts: 57



Born as one of the earliest of the "baby boomers" in Columbia, SC, while his father was in the U. S. Army during WWII. After a few brief moves to Chicago, IL, Wilmington, NC and New Bern, NC, finally settled in Raleigh, NC in 1948.

Raised in Raleigh, his education began at Mt. Vernon Elementary School, LeRoy Marti, Junior High School and graduated from Needham Broughton Senior High School in June 1963. He attended East Carolina University (ECU) in Greenville, NC in 1963 where serious martial arts training began with Sensei Bill McDonald under Goju-Shorin Karate-Do. He graduated ECU in 1972 with a Bachelor's degree, majoring in Geography and a minor in Geology. There was a break for a few years in training due to completion of active duty with the U. S. Naval Reserves in the U.S. Submarine Service.

Sensei Lewis assumed employment with the NC Division of Veterans Affairs in Elizabeth City, NC, where he remained until retirement in September 1996.

Lewis Sensei began training with Sensei, now Pastor Barry McCarty in Motobu-Ha Shito-Ryu in 1972 under the umbrella of Seishinkai Martial Arts Union (SKKU). In 1974, Sensei McCarty continued his education towards ministry and turned his dojo over to Sensei Lewis.

Once the changeover was completed, Lewis Sensei changed the name of the dojo from Seishin-Kai Karate School to the Elizabeth City School of Karate, located in Elizabeth City, NC.

From 1964-1974, Richard P. Baillargeon served as the Japan-USA Seishn-Kai representative for the late, Soke Shogo (Kosho) Kuniba.

In 1974 Sensei Baillargeon founded the National Karate Jujitsu Union. Lewis Sensei was among the first karate schools to join the NKJU. Sensei Lewis was a devoted student and instructor for NKJU. As such, prior to his passing, Soke Baillargeon appointed Tola as his successor and second director of the National Karate Jiu Jitsu Union.

As a member dojo of NKJU, Lewis Sensei trained under the now, Soke Joseph R. Ruiz of Valdosta, GA in Zen Shoto-Kai Karate-Do, Koga-ryu Kobudo, and Nippon Katsu-ryu Kempo until 1985 and periodically under Kuniba Soke until his passing in 1992.

Richard P. Baillargeon passed from this life to the next on February 14, 1989, at which time Tola E. Lewis, Jr. took the lead of NKJU.

In 1994, Sensei Lewis was ranked 9th dan and head of NKJU.

On March 12, 2016, Sensei Lewis decided to retire from teaching and running NKJU. In so doing he appointed his most senior student and first black belt, Steven E. Johnson to be his successor and Sandai Kaicho, 3rd Director of NKJU.

