



## Growth

By Jerry Figgiani

**A**s any martial artist knows, as one continues their study in the arts, growth is an important factor in one's success. Growth comes in many different forms such as how one performs their basic techniques or it could be them understanding a kata. As an instructor the growth of my students, mentally, is most important to me. Grand Master Shoshin Nagamine always said, "Spirit first. Technique Second." Bottom line, if you are progressing mentally then the physical techniques will fall in place. Seeing this growth in your students is very rewarding.



What is also very rewarding is experiencing the growth amongst the senior members of a dojo or even instructors in an organization. One of my instructors from Okinawa is Masahiko Tokashiki. I first met Tokashiki Sensei in 2007 in Dayton, Ohio. It was at

a seminar given by the late Kensei Taba. Tokashiki Sensei was one of the instructors that were assisting Taba Sensei during his seminar. My first impression of Tokashiki Sensei was that he was a very enthusiastic and committed instructor. He was making a point to reach out to each of the students during that seminar. The ones that weren't grasping the concepts, he would pull to the side and give them individual attention.

A few years later, I was given the opportunity to train with Tokashiki Sensei in Okinawa. It was apparent that his enthusiasm was at a different level. At one of the sessions at his dojo, I remember how he pulled a student off the deck. He took him outside to the courtyard when our group broke out in to bo training. Seeing the student struggle, Tokashiki Sensei made it a point to give him all of his attention. This renewed the spirit of my student, who was new to training the bo. Since the passing of Taba Sensei in 2012, I made my third trip to Okinawa in 2017. Along with other members from my organization, Shorin Ryu Karate Do International, we experienced a renewed spirit in Tokashiki Sensei's teachings. I believe this is due to his commitment to keep the legacy of his instructor, Taba Sensei, alive.

Tokashiki Sensei is now under the direction of Takeshi Tamaki Sensei, who is the most senior practitioner out of the Nagamine Matsubayashi Dojo. Tokashiki Sensei's teachings have now taken on a more significant role. At seventy years of age, he still moves and teaches with the spirit of a man half his age. You can sense the wisdom he embodies from being surrounded by many of the greats of Okinawan Karate. It is this growth that helps inspire and benefit other practitioners, of the art, that are on their journey.

I am looking forward to Tokashiki Sensei's visit to New York, in May of 2018. Along with my students, I know we will greatly benefit from his teachings and lessons because of his continued growth. 🐢

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