

## The Kodenkan Disciples and their Legacy

The early students of Master Okazaki were called Disciples. The first group were called the “Original Six” disciples. There would be subsequent disciples, but those in the first group would always be referred to as one of the Original Six. Disciples are those selected to receive all the teachings (in Zen, "from mouth to ear").

These early disciples, the Original Six and subsequent selected disciples were chartered to “preserve and promote Okazaki Judo throughout the United States”. Master Okazaki wished to share his Judo and Jujutsu with all who were willing to learn and who would be responsible for the learning.

The names of the Original Six were as follows: Harold McLean, Charles Wagner, Bob Glover, Richard Rickerts, Densel Muggy and Emil “Curley” Freedman. They began as a group in 1932 and several would find their studies interrupted due to their employment. Harold McLean would pass away prematurely and is not pictured below.



Eventually, the group would reunite in late 1936 and begin their studies in earnest. They would continue other schools or open new ones or continue as Senior Instructors at the Kodenkan.

Other disciples would graduate and return to the Mainland (as the United States was called). These included Professors Bud Estes and Ray Law, followed shortly by Professor Rick Rickerts, who left on December 6, 1941, one day before the attack on Pearl Harbor.



In the photo above, we see the Senior Instructors seated with Master Okazaki. To be seated is a position of honor and respect. The back row were subsequent disciples. Among those who became prominent we recognize are Tony Muran, John Cahill, Marion Anderson, Sonny Chang, Juan Gomez and Frank Souza. (The individual on the far right, Robert Pratt is unfamiliar.)

These were the pioneers. They built an organization others would take credit for and ownership of without giving credit to these early giants of Judo.

Of two prominent disciples who left Hawaii and started schools in California, some additional words are necessary.

## The Kodenkan Disciples and their Legacy

First, Professor Estes met Okazaki around September 1932 after the Original Six had been selected. He was a subsequent Disciple. (More on disciples below.) He stated he knew Master Okazaki for about 7 years and he met him right after the rainy season. Since we know he left in April 1939, 7 years earlier would be around May 1932. He said this was too early as the rainy season was later. It was deduced that he likely met Master Okazaki sometime in September 1932. Thus, his chance meeting with Master Okazaki was too late for him to be selected as an Original Six, but he, and others, could still be taught along with them.

Professor Estes' studies were also interrupted. He was sent to another Island by the Salvation Army at the same time his first marriage was breaking up. He would return for one weekend each month for an hour to two hours of counseling with a Salvation Army counselor. After the session, which he attempted to schedule as early as possible on Saturday's, he was free until the last boat left on Sunday. He spent all this time with Master Okazaki. They talked, they prayed (likely meditated), learned massage and otherwise just shared in their friendship and fellowship.

Professor Estes said these were the happiest weekends of his life and he was reluctant to leave. He said it was then that he knew his marriage was over and that he would dedicate himself to Judo. After the course of a few years, he began in earnest around January 1937, both at the Army-Navy YMCA with Rick Rickerts and Densel Muggy and at the Kodenkan, whose principle instructor was Charles Wagner.

In 1938, Prof. Law traveled to Hawaii as part of a public relations effort to make the Islands popular. He moved in two homes away from Master Okazaki and soon came to meet and know his neighbor. At that time, Professor Okazaki's massage business was paying the bills, but he was often left with free time. Anyone self-employed knows that free time means unpaid time. Ray Law, in the course of talking with his neighbor (Okazaki), suggested he might be able to help. He had put together successful Advertising campaigns and believed he could help in this manner. Master Okazaki said that with his family to feed and expenses he could not afford very much given the uncertainty of any success.

So, Ray Law devised a very inexpensive campaign. He made flyers and some of Okazaki's young students would put them on store walls and Kiosks around the town and near schools, or anywhere there were likely to be lots of people. Soon, the curious came and people with ailments that would not go away. Master Okazaki treated them and with success they started talking to others about this marvelous healing man. Before long, Master Okazaki was busy working day and night giving treatments and watching his Senior Instructors teach from his hidden window, always checking to see proper form and attitude were exhibited.

Because of this early and quick success, Master Okazaki was deeply appreciative of Ray Law and said there was literally no way he could repay Ray. Instead, Okazaki offered to teach Ray his system and accepted him as a Judo Disciple. Ray studied afternoons and nights and eventually began teaching Master Okazaki's junior class. This experience in teaching juniors would enable Professor Law to build the most successful Judo school in the country and teach literally over 14,000 students and graduate 116 students to black belt.

In the meantime, Master Okazaki kept his promise to Ray Law and taught Ray his system prior to Ray and family returning to the Mainland. Ray opened a full-time school, not an evening or part time school. His mat would be filled with soldiers and sailors, both coming from and going to the Pacific. He would be assisted for many years by his Judo partner, Tony Muran. Professor Rickerts frequently taught special classes. Other Okazaki students often stopped by on their return to the Mainland. Professor Law thus taught and practiced for many hours each day, growing in skill and knowledge based on the teachings imparted to him by Master Okazaki. As one remarked, few Black Belters spent as many hours in attaining their black belt as Professor Law spent in one year of teaching.

In later years, another Okazaki student would arrive and say that Master Okazaki wanted him to teach Ray the Shinjin Arts. Professor Law said he had already been taught and that possibly Master Okazaki was becoming forgetful. The younger man thought he was to be Professor Law's instructor and would not listen to anything Professor Law said so Professor Law dismissed him out of hand.

Professors Estes and Law were disciples. Though they did not remain on the Island, they promoted what was to become the largest Judo and Jujitsu system in the United States.

Offshoots of the organization they founded, the American Judo and Jujitsu Federation (AJJF), would also become major organizations in their own right, exceeding in number of schools, black belts and participation anything

## The Kodenkan Disciples and their Legacy

possible in Hawaii. Indeed, the Hawaiian organization began to wither immediately upon the demise of Master Okazaki.

So why were the earliest prominent students called disciples? First, the number Six is important in oriental numerology and especially important to a Buddhist Sect – **NICHIREN BUDDHISM!** Nichiren had Six Disciples and these six went on to promote his version of Buddhism. Nichiren promoted the teaching of the **Lotus Sutra**.

“A noted verse reads....

*For the lotus flower to fall is to rise to the surface.”*

(see: [http://nichirenscoffeehouse.net/Ryuei/SixDisciples\\_01.html](http://nichirenscoffeehouse.net/Ryuei/SixDisciples_01.html) or Montgomery, Daniel. *Fire in the Lotus; The Dynamic Buddhism of Nichiren*, 1991, Mandala, London. ISBN: 1-85274-091-4.)

Okazaki knew that if only One were taught, then the system could die. However, if he taught several and authorized them to teach his system, then his Kodenkan Judo might survive. It is likely Master Okazaki knew the Oriental Maxim “A Teaching (Ryu) seldom survives the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation”. And we see this today with his Kodenkan in uncounted ways. Indeed, several of his Disciples were interested in the Martial aspects and not the Spiritual aspects or “oriental mysticism” as it was referred to. And others have looked up words in dictionaries and imputed this or that meaning based on their prejudices rather than what was taught. In the first case, things were no longer taught and in the second case, things were and are taught wrongly.

Professor Okazaki stated in his opening paragraph the purpose of the practice of Judo was for the perfecting of character (Shin). (My manuscript ( <http://dscheidt1.tripod.com/> ) details this developmental practice and goal.)

I should like to repeat an Oriental Maxim: "When one begins to undertake the development of Shin (Character / personal Spirit), one must first begin to develop Ki (life's force)." So anything that does not support this Maxim is a fabrication.

Thus, we cannot discard the “oriental mysticism” if we claim to practice and teach Kodenkan Judo. Nor can we pervert the meaning to something of our liking and make the claim. Nor can we say that only “so and so” could sanction “okugi” and no others. Such attitudes, obdurance and egotism are not products of Kodenkan Judo. Indeed, they are a debasement of what Master Okazaki taught.

Let us look no further than what Professor Okazaki called his business - the Nikko Sanitorium. Even though he bought the facility already named from Chester Dole, he continued to use the name for his business location. Here, Master Okazaki established the Okazaki Seifukujitsu Institute located in the Nikko Sanitorium.

The Nikko Shrine in Japan is one of their most sacred parks. (See: <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e3801.html> )

It is the resting place of the 1st Shogun and founder of the Shogunate of Japan. A place of beauty, harmony and reverence. It is not a place of lamentation.

*Toshugu Shrine is the final resting place of Togukawa Ieyasu (1543-1616),  
the founder of the Togukawa Shogunate which ruled Japan  
from the battle of Segigahara in 1600 through the Meiji Restoration in 1868.*

There are those who will say, “see, this proves Okazaki was a Shintoist and not a Buddhist!” This has been said and it proves nothing. A Japanese man once said that “Japanese are Shintoists on Happy Days and Buddhists on Sad Days.” Why? “Because on Happy Days the Shinto ceremonies are nice and on Sad Days the Buddhists ceremonies are nice.” Sometimes the simple answer explains the most.

Professor Okazaki called his school Kodenkan and taught Judo. He taught his Judo to his disciples. Those who teach and promote Kodenkan Judo today must look to the origins. The instruction **MUST** be **consistent** with oriental teachings. It cannot be in contention.

Professor Okazaki wrote, “These are the keys to the esoteric secrets of the Kodenkan into which I have had the honor to initiate you.” The key and the lock are now public while the practice is for each to find.