

5 Questions: Sensei Bruce Green

What role did karate play in your move to Colorado? A close second place to landing a great job at the newly created by the U.S. Congress Solar Energy Research Institute (SERI—now the National Renewable Energy Laboratory). For a young guy just starting to develop my career, this was a huge step forward. But right on the heels of this development, I saw my prayers answered (see answer to second question below) to one day train with sensei Yaguchi. Thus, these two significant events were very much intertwined. And also enticing was the prospect of moving from Illinois to Colorado and John Denver's Rocky Mountain High. Dreams can come true!

Would you please describe a memorable experience that influenced or altered your thinking on karate? I have to answer with a threefold answer, all pertaining to my first exposures to sensei Yaguchi. I first met Yaguchi sensei in late 1972 when he headlined a training clinic at Ohio State University. My first real karate instructor, Greer Golden, hosted Yaguchi sensei's visit. I was a young, barely eighteen-year-old brown belt who didn't know much about anything. We were confronted by this Japanese guy with a crew cut and an attitude! Then, in late spring of 1973, I went to the All-American Karate Federation (AAKF) collegiate nationals in Brookings, South Dakota. Sensei Yaguchi (still crew-cut days) did a five-person sparring demo where he sparred one after the other with, in this case, some of the senior American instructors. Watching sensei Yaguchi spar is just special; so utterly natural, flowing, and devastating—this very memorable event made a huge impression on me, just seeing elite karate. Finally, I went to the 1976 AAKF Bi-Centennial Goodwill Tournament in Philadelphia where sensei Yaguchi (no more crew cut) did a mesmerizing demonstration of Kanku Dai to Japanese music. Thereafter, I really began to dream and pray toward one day training with sensei Yaguchi.

What character traits were held by your early karate role models that drew you deeper into the art? As a consummate high school jock (soccer, wrestling, and pole-vaulting), I thought I knew something about self-discipline and perseverance. However, these traits, as well as dedication, loyalty, and patience became manifest in my exposure to this newfangled physical activity called karate-do. Frankly and at that early stage of my life, I needed a good dose of character development that serious, traditional karate-do training can encourage. Thankfully, sensei Greer Golden, who was one of the first three graduates (i.e., Golden, Dalke, and Ingber) of the N. American JKA Instructor Training program (run by senseis Nishiyama and Yaguchi in L.A.), knew and followed the formula so well developed by the JKA (i.e., character development through rigorous, challenging, and sincere training). (cont'd on p.4)



1976 AAKF National Bicentennial Goodwill Tournament
(Photo by Bill Berg.)

5 Questions: Bruce Green (cont'd from p.3) It was an easy transition to training with sensei Yaguchi and experiencing the same emphasis on rigorous training and character development.

There is another trait one can learn, and the *dojo kun* describes this trait: integrity. Very early in my karate life (1975), we had Frank Smith come to Ohio with sensei Golden hosting, for some clinics. To say Frank could be commanding and downright frightening is an understatement (see *Mind and Body – Like Bullet*, pp. 61, 65). My girlfriend and I hosted a gathering that weekend for Frank, and it subsequently gave me great respect for Frank; he was the consummate, gracious gentleman toward my future wife during his visit and the entire weekend—what an overall example for someone young and very impressionable like me. I admired his style, and it showed integrity.

You have been teaching karate for many decades and to hundreds of students. What do you enjoy about teaching karate?

Seeing people of all ages overcome the challenges that they bring with them when it comes to learning something different like traditional Japanese karate-do. Seeing firsthand many examples of character development and personal improvement being achieved from karate training. Experiencing people's gratitude and appreciation for what they get from training. And finally, seeing people dedicate themselves to long-term karate training.

Having attained the highest ranks in our karate system, what would 8th Dan, A-ranked, international competitor Mr. Green tell your younger, wide-eyed karate self about the art you are going to spend a lifetime practicing? I would have to say, “My friend, you won’t believe what the future holds and what I’m going to tell you. And guess what? It’s incredible and great!” I would describe how this path would allow me to establish many cherished lifelong friends, interact with lots of interesting people, and delve into a culture of great beauty, relevance, and integrity. Finally, I would try to convey how this new form of exercise—which we know is so much more than that—is of great practical value for safety, personal development, fitness into waning years, and mental health.



Dan Mueller, Bruce Green, and sensei Yaguchi N.
American Goodwill Invitational, Winnipeg, Canada, 1981

Mr. Green began his training in 1970 and was a finalist in the JKA National Collegiate Karate Championships from 1973 to 1975. In 1980, Mr. Green was appointed Assistant Instructor to Sensei Yaguchi and in the same year became Chief Instructor of the JKA of Boulder (Now Boulder Shotokan Karate). In 1995, Mr. Green graduated from the JKAISKF Instructor Training Program as one of Sensei Yaguchi's first students to graduate from the Mountain States Region. Mr. Green became a Certified Examiner through the JKA-ISKF in 1996 and is now an A-ranked Instructor, Examiner, and Judge.