GKK Leaders

Below are profiles of the GKK 's leaders, Roku Dan and above, who continue to share their knowledge and experience with the members of the GKK, and other practitoners of Karate-do.

MOTOO YAMAKURA – Motoo Yamakura was born in Kyoto, Japan in 1943. At the age of 8 years, Yamakura studied Karate in the Temple of Kyoto where many Karate schools were to be found and later, at age 14, joined the Tojukuji Dojo a branch of Seigo Tada's organization, Yamakura entered the all Western Goju-Ryu Seigo Kan tournaments, and he was champion in both kata and kumite in 1965 and 1966. In 1967, Mr. Yamakura entered the prestigious Henry Cho's All American Karate Tournament held in Madison Square Garden, New York and won the light weight championship. After one final goodwill tournament in Muskegon, Michigan, he retired from competition.

When Mr. Yamakura came to the United States in 1967, there was no precedent in the immigration codes for his field of expertise. A new category was created and Mr. Yamakura was one of the first people to receive permanent residency status in the specially skilled labor category of Combat Fighting Specialist. In 1969, he enlisted in the armed services and was assigned to the Special Forces teaching hand-to-hand combat. He demonstrated his martial arts skills for trainees at war games, battalion gatherings, for the Green Berets, and at his own graduation which was attended by the Undersecretary of State. In 1974, Motoo Yamakura ended his military obligation as a Staff Sergeant.

Mr. Yamakura wants to be an international person. He was born in Japan but traveled to the United States and became an American Citizen. He studied English literature while in Japan. He graduated from the foreign studies department where he also learned Spanish and studied Chinese as it relates to Japanese characters. He studied Kobudo in his youth, Judo in his school days, and has studied Karate and martial arts for over thirty-five years. While in Japan, he studied the styles of, Shotokan, Shito-Ryu, and Wado-Ryu and practiced Shorinji-Kempo. He studied and taught Goju-Ryu, Uechi-Ryu, Tae-Kwon-Do and experienced Chinese martial arts while in the United States. Mr. Yamakura is the author of Goju-Ryu Karate-Do, Fundamentals for Traditional Practitioners, Volumes I and II. MotooYamakura is Shihan, Hachi Dan, Hanshi, and since 1983 has been the Chairman of the Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyokai International. The GKK is one of the largest, and oldest, Goju-Ryu organizations in the United States and also has programs in Canada, Mexico, South America, Europe, India, Sri Lanka and the Middle East.

RICHARD STAMPER – Mr. Stamper has over 40 years of experience in the martial arts. Beginning in the early 1960’s, he studied wrestling, boxing and karate. He holds Shichi Dan and Kyoshi certification in Goju-Ryu Karate, Go Dan in Jujitsu, Yon Dan in Judo, and Sho Dan in Shotokan and Shorin-Ryu Karate. Mr. Stamper studied with Mr. Jack Coleman who started a Karate program serving the Toledo area in 1959. In the late nineteen seventies and early nineteen eighties, Mr. Stamper was fortunate to spend practice time with Toguchi Sensei, Akira Kawakami Sensei, Uchiage Sensei, Mirakian Sensei, Yagi Sensei and other Goju-Ryu proponents. He was also fortunate to practice with Kuniba Sensei and Oyata Sensei.

In 1969, Mr. Coleman joined the Goju-Kai, under Gogen Yamaguchi, and established the Mid-West Goju-Kai with 20 programs in five states. Goju-Kai membership was maintained until 1975. In the early 1980’s the organization was re-grouped by Mr. Richard Stamper and re-named the Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyokai. Mr. Stamper was responsible for inviting Mr. Yamakura to join the GKK as Chairman in 1983. He has Lifetime Membership in the GKK with over 30 years of membership in the organization.

Mr. Stamper has taught 1000’s of students in adult education and church programs over the years. Mr. Stamper holds Shichi Dan in Goju-Ryu Karate and is the Assistant Chairman of the Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyokai International under Yamakura Shihan, Chairman of the GKK. Stamper Sensei, as Assistant Chairman and past CEO of the GKK International, is responsible for a majority of the administrative functions along with the various Directors and other officers of the organization. Mr. Stamper founded GKK Publications in 1987-88 and was the editor of Goju-Ryu Karate-Do, Fundamentals for Traditional Practitioners, Volumes I and II authored by Master Motoo Yamakura. Mr. Rich Stamper is also the author of The Character of Goju-Ryu, Kata Implications for Experienced Practitioners. Mr. Stamper has, and continues to, play an active roll in the growth and management of the GKK, which is one of the largest and oldest, Goju-Ryu organizations in the United States. He has also been active in growing the GKK internationally with members in Canada, Mexico, South America, Europe, India, Sri Lanka and the Middle East.

DUANE SAMMONS – Mr. Duane Sammons holds Shichi Dan and Kyoshi certification, in Goju-Ryu Karate. He began karate training in October 1964 under Gogen and Gosei Yamaguchi (International Goju-Kai). In 1983 he accepted membership in the Goju-Ryu Karate-do Kyokai and was designated Northwest America Regional Director of the GKK.

Mr. Sammons is Sensei and Chief Instructor of the Bellingham Academy of Self Defense located in Bellingham, Washington. Mr. Sammons holds Dan rank in a wide range of martial disciplines, including: Goju-Ryu Karate (Yamakura, Sensei); Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu Iaido (Oyanagi, Sensei); Kendo (Tanagami Sensei); Shinkendo (Obata, Sensei); Kobudo, GKK Kobudo Kai; Jujitsu, U.S. Judo Association.

Mr. Sammons was designated as a WKF (WUKO.) Level A Karate Tournament Official, and a Level 2 Examiner of the U.S. Judo Association. He has written BEYOND TECHNIQUE, Reflections for the Martial Artist, and written and produced the GKK Kobudo Kai Weapons Instruction Manual and video. He was the founder of the GKK’s Kobudo Kai weapons division. Mr. Sammons played a prominent roll in expanding GKK growth in Northwest America.

KEN MAUNZ – Mr. Kenneth Maunz holds Shichi Dan in Goju-Ryu Karate, a Sho Dan and Jujitsu, and Kyoshi Certification in the Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyokai (GKK). He is the GKK’s Midwest Representative. Mr. Maunz is a Lifetime Member of the GKK with over 30 years in the organization.

Mr. Maunz began his martial arts training in 1967 under Mr. Jack Colman, where he was exposed to Shotokan Karate, Goju-Ryu Karate, and Kobudo (Bo). From 1970 to 1972 Mr. Maunz served in the U.S. Army. While stationed in Korea he studied Tae Kwon Do for a short period of time. On his return from military service he again took up training with Mr. Coleman who had established the Mid-West Goju-Kai under Mr, Gogen Yamaguchi. Mr. Maunz received his Sho Dan from the Goju-Kai in November of 1973. He currently studies under Motoo Yamakura and Richard Stamper. He has established Karate dojo in six different Adult Education Programs; established a commercial Goju-ryu Karate dojo in Toledo, Ohio. He now teaches at his Ottawa Lake Goju dojo located in Ottawa Lake, Michigan.

JOHN ALGEE – Mr. John R. Algee holds Roku-Dan and Kyoshi certification in Goju-Ryu Karate. He also holds Sho-Dan in Jujitsu and Sho-Dan in Kobudo (Nunchaku, Bokken). He studied boxing and competed as an amateur in the mid 1960’s and early 1970’s.

Mr. Algee began his study of Goju-Ryu Karate in 1971 under Jack Coleman, and since the early 1980’s has studied under Motoo Yamakura and Richard Stamper. He is a Lifetime Member of the GKK with over 30 years of membership in the organization.

Mr. John R. Algee is the founder and Chief instructor of the Shindo-Kan Academy, which is located in Toledo, Ohio. He has taught programs and workshops in elementary schools, junior high schools, high schools, the University of Toledo, churches, community centers, and in the NCAA Sponsored National Youth Sports Program.

The Reverend Mr. John R. Algee is a graduate of the University of Toledo and the Toledo Diocesan Lay Ministry Program, Lourdes College. He is an Ordained Minister in the Roman Catholic Church, and is the Pastoral Leader of St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church in Toledo, Ohio.

TOM BALDRIDGE - Mr. Tom Baldridge began studying the martial arts in January of 1980. He currently holds Roku Dan in Goju-Ryu Karate, a Shodan in Judo, brown belt in Jujitsu, and rank in Kobudo Kai. His favorite weapon is the Sai, and he authored the curriculum for Sai for the GKK’s Kobudo Kai (weapons division). He has been a member of the GKK since 1983.

Mr. Baldridge is honored to be a student of Duane Sammons Sensei for over 30 years. Along with fellow doshi at the Bellingham Academy of Self Defense he has trained under Yamakura Shihan and Richard Stamper. Prior to moving to Bellingham he studied Kempo Karate from James Keating Sensei. As time permits he is currently studying American Kenpo Karate from Mick Jolly Sensei and Gracie Barra Jui-Jitsu from J.T. Taylor Sensei.

In 1989 Mr. Baldridge had the privilege of joining Sammons Sensei in a trip to Japan. There they had the great honor of participating in a special class taught by Seigo Tada at the Seigokan Honbu. In 2010 he made a trip to the San Francisco to compete in the Golden Gate Internationals Tournament and visit the Goju-Kai Honbu of Gosei Yamaguchi Hanshi.

Mr. Baldridge met his wife as a fellow white belt and they have three children. He works at Western Washington University as an IT Specialist in the Financial Aid Department.

JIM BRIDENBAUGH – Mr. Jim Bridenbaugh holds Roku-dan and Kyoshi certification in Goju-Ryu Karate, and Ni-Dan in Jujitsu. He began his study of the martial arts in 1958 under Jack Coleman. Mr. Bridenbaugh has studied Tae Kwon Do under Mr. Park; he has also studied Judo and Boxing.

Mr. Jim Bridenbaugh was founder and chief instructor of the Texas Goju-Ryu from 1975 through 1978, and the Seido Kan from 1978 through 2002. He has taught GKK seminars in Springfield, Illinois and in Ohio, and has directed GKK Karate Tournaments in Ohio. Mr. Bridenbaugh has traveled to and practiced Karate in Japan. He is a Lifetime Member of the GKK, with over thirty years of membership.

Mr. Jim Bridenbaugh holds a Masters of Education in School Administration and Supervision, and a Bachelor of Education, from the University of Toledo. He has completed additional coursework in the Computer Certification Program, Japanese language studies, and graduate coursework in Educational Administration and Supervision at Bowling Green State University (BGSU). He attended Owens Community College, Ohio Law Enforcement and Peace

Officer training, and was a Police Officer. Mr. Bridenbaugh served as a US Army Specialist 4 in military intelligence, and was stationed in Viet Nam in 1972. He has spent a lifetime as an educator, mentor, coach, athletic director and administrator in the Texas and Ohio school systems.

BILL CARTER - Mr. Bill Carter holds Roku-dan in Goju-Ryu and was awarded Renshi Certification from the GKK in 2003. He is a Yon-dan in Kenjitsu having trained under Kono Sensei and Toshishiro Obata. Mr. Carter also holds Dan rank in Judo from the USJA and in Kobudo and Jujitsu divisions of the GKK.

Mr. Carter started at the Bellingham Academy of Self Defense under Sammons Sensei with his son in June 1981. He received his Sho-dan in 1986 and has been an associate instructor ever since. His dedication and consistency over the last 30 years have made him an integral part of BASD first as Treasurer and then as Sempai.

Mr. Carter has truly made attending and instructing at BASD not only his way of life but a way of his family life. In the early 1990’s he met, Roberta (Bobbie) Carter, who started training with her three daughters. Like his son after a few years her girls drifted away but she stayed and holds Go-dan in the GKK. The have long since married and are now training with the next generation, their grandson.

GREG DODGE – Mr. Dodge holds Roku Dan and Renshi certification in Goju-Ryu Karate, Nidan in Jujitsu and Judo, and Shodan in Kobudo. He has been studying and teaching martial arts for over 40 years. Mr. Dodge has also studied boxing, wrestling, Wing Tsun, and Tae Kwon Do. He is a Lifetime Member of the United States Judo Association (USJA), and a member of the Kobudo-Kai weapons division of the Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyokai.

Mr. Dodge is Chief Instructor of the Tora Shin Kan Center for Martial Arts, and teaches, or has taught, Goju-Ryu Karate, Jujitsu and Kobudo in the Washington Schools District, and Central Catholic High School, Adult Education Programs. He has conducted Goju karate seminars at other GKK schools, the USAKF’s Kwanmukan Symposium, and for Northwest Ohio Boy Scout and Girl Scout Troops.

He assisted in the editing and publishing of Goju-Ryu Karate-Do, Volumes I and II, Fundamentals For Traditional Practitioners by Motoo Yamakura; The Character of Goju-Ryu, Kata Implications for Experienced Practitioners by Rich Stamper; The History of Karate and The Masters Who Made It by Mark Cramer. Mr. Dodge has also participated in the production of various GKK training videos, established the GKK Corporate Identity, and designed and developed the GKK Web site. He has also written and published the Tora Shin Kan Center for Martial Arts Student Guide. Mr. Dodge has participated in the Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyokai (GKK) as a Technical Representative, as a Review Board Member, and is the GKK Marketing Director.

BILL GILLER – Mr. Giller holds Roku Dan and Renshi certification in GoJu Ryu. He is a Shodan in Jujitsu and a brown belt in Tae Kwan Do. Additionally, he has wrestled and studied judo. He is also a certified referee. He began his study of GoJu with Mr. Duane Sammons in 1965 when he attended college at Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington. He joined the GKK in 1983 after 15 years with Mr. Gosei Yamaguchi. During the last 40 years he has participated and trained with Mr. Gogen Yamaguchi, Mr. Gosei Yamaguchi, Mr. Goshen Yamaguchi, Mr. Motto Yamakura, Mr. Rich Stamper, Mr. Tero Chinen, Mr. Duane Sammons and Mr. Bill Reuter.

Mr. Giller received his Superintendent's Credentials in 1998, holds a Masters Degree in Educational Administration, and a Bachelor of Arts in Physical Education. He received the GKK Chairman's Award in 1998. He has put on various self-defense workshops in Skagit Valley and demonstrations in schools. He also competes in Sprint Triathlons for additional conditioning and training. Most of all he is blessed with three fantastic children: Jennifer, Julie and William.

BOYD GITTiNS – Mr. Boyd Gittins holds Roku-dan and Renshi certification in Goju-Ryu Karate. He began his martial arts studies in 1967 at Washington State University in a dojo run by a student of Mr. Teruo Chinen. Mr. Gittins has studied Karate, Aikido, and Judo. Past instructors have included Teruo Chinen and Bill Reuter (Goju Kai), and Mary Heinie (Aikido,). Mr. Gittins and his students have regularly attended gasshuku with Mr. Motoo Yamakura. He is a longtime member of the GKK and JKF.

In 1994 Mr. Gittins founded karate programs at both Seattle Central Community College (SCCC) and North Seattle Community College (NSCC). He and Carol Gittins taught the self-defense portion of the Taking Charge Program at the Seattle' VA Hospital. The program was designed to help female veterans suffering from PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) as the result of violent sexual attacks to regain normalcy in their lives. The program had a higher than anticipated success rate.

Mr. Gittins served in Vietnam from 1969 through 1971 as a military policeman in the US Army. He has bachelors and masters degree in physical education from Washington State University. He competed in the intermediate hurdles in the 1968 Olympics. During the era of "ping-pong" diplomacy, he was a part of the track and field team that visited mainland China, which was closed to most Westerners. Mr. Gittins is married to Carol and has one daughter, Renee, who is currently a Ni-dan in the GKK.

CAROL GITTiNS – Mrs. Carol Gittins holds Roku-dan and Kyoshi certification in Goju-Ryu Karate. She has studied martial arts for over 30 years. Mrs. Gittins has trained in Karate under Duane Sammons (GKK) and Bill Reuter (Goju Kai); Kung-fu under Mark Jones; and has training in Aikido and Chi Gung. She began training in Goju-Ryu in 1972 at the Bellingham Academy of Self-Defense.

Mrs. Carol Gittins has been teaching Karate since 1977. She started the North Kitsap Karate Club in 1979, and the KinNamiKan Dojo, formerly known as the Greenlake Karate Club, in 1995. She teaches the advanced karate classes for the GKK members in the Seattle area. Mrs. Gittins and husband Boyd taught the self-defense portion of the Taking Charge Program at the Seattle' VA Hospital. The program was designed to help female veterans suffering from PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) as the result of violent sexual attacks to regain normalcy in their lives. The program had a higher than anticipated success rate. She has also taught self-defense seminars for public school employees and for church groups.

Mrs. Gittins has taught English and/or physical education in public high schools for 28 years. She holds a masters degree in English from Western Washington University. Mrs. Carol Gittins enjoys writing and one her articles, "Adapting Karate Instruction for Learning Styles" is included in Carol A. Wiley's book Martial Arts Teachers on Teaching. She is currently working on a manuscript whose working title is "Generating and Applying Energy in Karate." Carol Gittins is married to Boyd and has one daughter, Renee, who is currently a Ni-dan in the GKK. She is a past Assistant Chairman of the GKK.

TOM MCKEON - Mr. Tom McKeon currently holds Roku Dan and Renshi Certification in Goju Ryu Karate, and holds Dan rank in Kobudo Kai (GKK Weapons Division).

Mr. McKeon began his martial arts journey in 1974 at the Yamate Gakuin boarding school in Yokohama, Japan. As a year long Exchange Student, he studied Wado Ryu Karate in a very successful high school tournament oriented program. Immersed in the Japanese culture, reading, writing and tradition has shaped his foundation in "The Way".

Mr. McKeon has been with the GKK and the Bellingham Academy of Self Defense since 1987 under the direct tutelage of Mr. Duane Sammons. He began teaching at the BASD in 1991. As an associate instructor at the BASD, he has worked to develop and guide many who have chosen this path in life. Mr. McKeon is involved in coordinating the daily activities at the BASD. He is active in Kobudo Kai (GKK Weapons Division), and in 1996 developed the curriculum for Tonfa. Mr. McKeon continues to teach Tonfa at the BASD today.

Outside of the Dojo, Mr. McKeon holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Biochemistry. He is a Petroleum Chemist, managing the product quality distribution of Air and Ground fuels for a major pipe line in the Pacific Northwest. Mr. McKeon also is a 27 year retiree Volunteer Firefighter and Emergency Medical Technician.

ED MYERS – Mr. Ed Myers holds Roku-dan and Renshi certification in Goju-Ryu Karate, and Shodan in JuJitsu. He also studies Judo. He began studying martial arts in 1974 at the University of Toledo, under Mr. Richard Stamper. Mr. Ed Myers also studied under Jack Coleman form 1975 to 1976 at the Shido Kan.

Mr. Myers was chief instructor and founder of the Delta Dojo from 1989 to 1992. In the 1980’s he taught at the Bedford dojo, under Mr. Richard Stamper. He also served as the GKK Midwest Representative during the 1980’s.

Mr. Ed Myers has a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Toledo. He is the Engineering Manager for Toledo Molding and Die Company. Mr. Myers was married in 1986, and has three children. He is the Leader of the LifeTeen Band for St. Richards’s church (he plays piano and guitar). He currently serves as CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of the GKK.

CHUCK PHILLIPS – Mr. Phillips began his training in the martial arts in 1966. He holds Roku-Dan in Goju-Ryu and Renshi certification. Mr. Phillips has also studied Judo, Aikido, Shorin-Ryu, and Tae Kwon-Do. He has studied under Motoo Yamakura, Sun Mo Yun, Shugoro Nakazato, Jack Coleman and Mike Young.

Mr. Phillips is renowned for his foot sweeping abilities, and his craftiness in sparring. He has trained many black belts to higher skill levels in his martial career.

Mr. Phillips joined the Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyokai in 1973, and is a Lifetime Member of the GKK with over 30 years if membership in the organization. He was Chief Instructor of the Grace Community Center (1979), and founded the Nippon Academy of Karate-Do in Lima, Ohio in 1982. He is certified as a Level B Tournament Official. Mr. Phillips served in the U.S. military in Viet Nam from 1968 to 1969.

DAVE SHANEMAN – Mr. Dave Shaneman holds Roku-Dan and Renshi certification in Goju-Ryu Karate. He began studying Karate in 1969 under Gary Boyd and Jim Weinhoeft at the Springfield, Illinois WMCA. Mr. Shaneman earned his Sho-Dan in 1973 as a member of the Goju-Kai.

Mr. Dave Shaneman has studied Karate, Judo, Jodo, Iaijutsu, Iaido, and Kendo. He is a longtime member of the GKK,

and has memberships in the Nippon Kobudo Jikishan-Kai, Midwest Kendo Federation, AUSAKF Kendo Federation, and is a past member of the International Shotokan Federation. Mr. Shaneman has studied under Motoo Yamakura (GKK), Teruo Chinen (Jundokan), Morio Higaonna (IOGKF), Akira Kawakami (Tokai Juku), Terry Rees (Tokai Juku), Teruyuki Okazaki (ISKF), and Masayuki Shimabukuro (Nippon Kobudo Jikishin-Kai).

Mr. Dave Shaneman ran the Karate program at the Springfield, Illinois YMCA from 1975 to 2000. He currently assists Kim Barrington and Ed Boyd with operation of the Riverton Goju-Ryu dojo. Prior to his retirement as a Deputy Sheriff, Mr. Shaneman was a Defensive Tactics and Firearms Instructor for the Illinois Mobile Training Unit and the Sangamon County Sheriffs’ Department. He is a past USAKF referee. Mr. Dave Shaneman has a Bachelor of Science, and undergraduate studies in counseling, from the University of Illinois, Springfield.

BRAD SMITH – Mr. Brad Smith holds Roku-Dan and Kyoshi certification in Goju-Ryu Karate. He began his training in Goju-Ryu Karate in 1969.

Mr. Brad Smith has studied under Motoo Yamakura (GKK), Gosei Yamaguchi (Goju-Kai), and Jack Coleman (GKK, Goju-Kai).

In 1971 Mr. Smith took over as Chief Instructor of the Fremont Goju program when Mr. Mike Wise entered military service. He has also taught Goju-Ryu Karate programs at Terra State Community College. Mr. Brad Smith has taught Goju-Ryu Karate seminars and workshops in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Boothbay Harbor, Maine; the Atlanta, Georgia area; in Northwest Ohio.

Mr. Brad Smith holds a Masters Degree in Clinical Counseling, is a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor, and an Associate Professor in Criminal Justice and Psychology at Terra Community College, He is Assistant Director of the Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyokai (GKK).