

# The Death of *Nakamura Sensei*

Leader of *Nakamura Ryu* and last surviving instructor from the *Toyama Academy*



*Nakamura, Taizaburo*  
Founder of the *Nakamura Ryu*

Posted on E-Budo.com

05-13-2003, 02:10 PM



[ghp](#)

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Registered User

Join Date: May 2000

Location: Moffett Field, CA

Posts: 895

## Nakamura Taizaburo Dead, Aged 92

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I was just informed by sources in Japan that Nakamura Taizaburo sensei died in his sleep today.


Sensei had been involved in swordsmanship since he was 15 and was well-known and controversial -- yet respected -- in iaido, jukendo, and kendo circles. Nakamura sensei was the last surviving army fencing instructor of the Toyama Military Academy, and the last of the three major post-war Toyama Ryu teachers.

His leadership will be sorely missed.

Sadness cannot express my feelings at this time.

Guy Power

Attached Images

 [nakamura92.jpg](#) (23.7 KB, 850 views)

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Guy H. Power

[Kenshinkan Dojo](#)



05-13-2003, 03:59 PM



[T. ALVAREZ](#)

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**Nakamura Sensei**

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It is with great sadness that I write this post after finding out from Guy that Nakamura sensei has passed away at the age of 92 ½.

I was extremely fortunate to be with Tom Smyth and our friend Siri from our Machida dojo when we made the run to Tsurumi.

When we got there my friend Roberto met us at the train station. Roberto is Nakamura sensei's student and right hand. He informed us that sensei was in the hospital having some routine pacemaker adjustments done and hadn't been feeling well. He said that sensei insisted that he bring us to the hospital as regardless of how he felt. He had an obligation to meet the Americans (Tom and I) that came all that way to see him.

We arrived at the hospital and upon exiting the elevator we saw an elderly man sitting in a wheelchair that looked as though he was in a very deep sleep. Roberto san spoke in sensei's ear and told him that we were there. The next thing that I heard was this loud and powerful shriek calling us to him. It was Nakamura sensei. He was awake and full of vigor. We walked over to him and sat our swords down and had Roberto san introduce us one by one. With each handshake and bow you could see the man come alive more and more every minute.

We talked about different styles that we had all studied and waza that was used. He mentioned to me that he studied a certain ryuha for 70yrs. And then quit doing it because he had finally realized that it didn't work. He told us stories of training and how much he enjoyed teaching foreigners. When I asked him why he enjoyed teaching foreigners so much, he replied in this low deep voice "Because they have much kokoro".

He then wanted to see our swords and I showed him my Howard Clark 1086M.

I have a picture holding it and his eyes got nice and big. I started laughing so much at this point as I handed him my sword all of the nurses and his daughter as well as Roberto san got this really scared look on their faces as if all hell might break loose. Anyway, he made a few gestures with it in the motion of cutting and smiled really big saying that he really liked the sword a lot. The only thing that he said against it was that the large O-Choji hamon that was on it wasn't good for fighting and that Suguha or Ko-Suguha was better for cutting. I was thinking oh great. He like my sword so much that I might have to give it to him which I would have done. Thank god he gave it back

Anyway, we were able to take a few pictures with him and thank him for his contribution to kenjutsu and tameshigiri as well as many other things that because of him we are all benefiting from today.

I was fortunate enough to have been given his permission to study a set of yari kata that he had attached to Nakamura ryu at some point. Though I'm not a student of Nakamura Ryu he was very happy and impressed that I would ask his permission to do this as none was really studying it anymore. He then told me that he looked forward to when I came back in 6mos. To see me perform them for him. He gave something that day that I will never forget . Thank you sensei.

Sorry for the long winded memories as there are people that are more closely related to him within Nakamura Ryu. I just felt like sharing something with all of and especially Guy that meant so much to me.

Our thoughts are with Guy and all of Nakamura sensei's family.

Big Tony  
Senpoken Dojo  
Bugei Trading Co.

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BIG TONY

Senpokan Dojo  
Tozai Imports

05-14-2003, 02:53 PM



[Nathan Scott](#)  
(Nathan Scott)  
Moderator

Join Date: May 2000  
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Those of us in the Shinkendo & Toyama ryu families are greatly saddened by the news of Nakamura Sensei's passing. Upon being informed, Obata Sensei spent some time before O-geiko last night to explain to us his early relationship with Nakamura Sensei, and the impact Nakamura Sensei had on the Japanese post-war sword society and on his own path in swordsmanship.

The passing of Nakamura Sensei and Guy's post reminds me that an important generation of instructors has come - or almost come - to an end. In the last decade, we have lost other famous instructors like Shioda Gozo Sensei in 1994 (one of the last pre-war students of Ueshiba Morihei), Sagawa Yuki Yoshi Sensei in 1998 (the last remaining student of Takeda Sokaku), Sugino Yoshio Sensei also in 1998 (acclaimed swordsman from TSKSR), Saito Morihiro Sensei in 2002 (senior uchi-deshi of Ueshiba Morihei; also passed on the same day - May 13th - exactly one year ago), and others. Many of their direct students, the next generation, are now in their late 40's or early 50's.

We all have large shoes to (try) to fill, as well as a large responsibility to preserve and, if possible, advance the teachings of "those who have lived before us". Perhaps hard, sincere training is the best way to respect the memories and contributions of such important instructors.

With condolences,

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Nathan Scott  
[Tsuki Kage dojo](#)

05-18-2003, 07:50 PM



[socho](#)  
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 **Warning - Long Post**

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I have hesitated to post anything here, as I knew Nakamura-sensei only briefly. I hope others will take a moment to share their impressions of this man. I will not recount his history or philosophy, as that is available to those of us who do not speak Japanese primarily through the efforts of Guy Power sensei. He has had several articles published in Dragon Times and has many of sensei's thoughts on his excellent website [here](#) .

As for personal impressions, to me he was very generous, with 'big hara'. He was passionate about the sword, yet had a great sense of humor. Two observations. First, I was observing a tai kai held at in Tsurumi, in Yokohama. Nakamura-sensei was one of those presiding over the event. Ron Zediker, a good friend and excellent swordsman, who spent over ten years training with Nakamura-sensei, was doing his form for competition. In the middle of his form, I hear laughter and a string of Japanese, with 'Amerika-jin' in it. Sensei was so pleased with Ron's performance and spirit that he couldn't resist pointing it out to the other judges and seniors.

Second, sensei's health was up and down during the time I knew him. Sometimes he would come in to class in almost a hobble, bent over and walking with a cane. He would sit in a chair in front of class and watch practice, occasionally giving guidance or making a correction. But when it came time for the class to cut, he always personally demonstrated the cuts he wanted us to work on. As soon as he had a sword in his hand, the years would fall away, he would stand straight and tall like a completely different man. So much of his spirit came from the sword and went into the sword.

The following was recently posted, with permission, on the [va\\_kendo@yahoo.com](mailto:va_kendo@yahoo.com) list. I hope the author will not mind that I repost in here, since he did give permission to post it on another public forum. It shows an important side of sensei that many of us never saw. I especially like the idea that sensei was 'enlightened'. Thanks, Tom.

Here Tom Bolling of Seattle relates another side to Nakamura sensei--  
[with his permission:]

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[re: Manchuria and China period:]

Yes, there is certainly a heavy history there. Absolutely.

Perhaps one mitigating thing you could say about Nakamura Sensei is that he was very open and candid -- and (I believe, from his own personal conversations with me) sincerely contrite -- in contrast to others from that period who have chosen to downplay what they did.

[re: personal recollections:]

Nakamura Sensei's visit to Seattle was in 1987...

Our Kendo Federation had no part in inviting him.... rather it was the Cherry Blossom Festival who had engaged him as one of several artists and crafts people coming from Japan for the Festival.

However, he specifically asked the Cherry Blossom Festival organizers to put him in touch with whatever Kenshi there were in Seattle, and this word was relayed to us in advance of his visit.

So we met him the first night when he arrived, and immediately took him from the airport directly to University of Washington Kendo Club's regularly scheduled practice. He watched our whole normal program of Iai, Kendo Kata, and Keiko, and then offered his suggestions and observations.... which astonished everyone with their specificity, and their personalized insights into each of the many individuals' own

Kendo!

Then we repaired to pizza and beer as usual, with him included of course. He ended up staying not in the deluxe hotel room the Cherry Blossom people had for him, but in Murosako Sensei's own home.

He simply hung out with Kendo people for every minute of his week or ten days in Seattle, attended every practice in as many area Dojo as met during his stay, and taught us and encouraged us freely, including a remarkable session with Team PNKF which was gearing up for the US Championships.

He insisted to the Festival organizers that our Kendo and Iaido demos be adjacent to his demonstrations of his Ryu's Kata, soaked his straw in Murosako Sensei's bathtub, and asked ME to serve as narrator/interpreter at the microphone for each performance. Since I was Murosako Sensei's deshi, I was also assigned to trail around after Nakamura Sensei and make sure he had things to eat (he always asked for either ice cream or yakisoba!) throughout the days there on the Festival grounds, and so on.

Nakamura Sensei made no bones about having been an officer in the Japanese Army's Kirikomeitai in Manchuria. This special "psywar" unit simply attacked the Chinese with drawn swords, and terrorized them utterly.

Well, Nakamura Sensei's direct words to us were that he had had an enlightenment experience, and renounced the use of swords to hurt others. He said that's why he had named his system "Happogiri Batto-Do" and not "Batto-Jutsu".... because he intended that it should only be used to cultivate the "Katsujin-Ken" and never again the "Satsujin-Ken" as in his previous, deeply mistaken, period.

Of course there is no way for me to evaluate the sincerity of a person's reported enlightenment experience (although perhaps Zen masters might have a way of checking on it). However, Nakamura Sensei may very well be an enlightened man. Once when we pulled up near the door of the Seattle Center House to unload all our makiwara, etc, Nakamura Sensei climbed down from Murosako Sensei's van right into the face of a tiny, snarling and terrified high strung little dog who had been locked by himself in another vehicle right next to us. The window was open enough that the little dog could get his nose --AND TEETH-- right out there, and boy was he barking, yipping, growling, and carrying on, defending his territory!

With a big chuckle of delight, Nakamura Sensei walked right up and stuck his hand right in the top of the window and started scratching and petting that dog's head! The dog instantly began sobbing and squeaking and LICKING Nakamura Sensei's hand! I'm not making this up... I was climbing out of the van right behind him, and saw the whole thing!

Another time, we had a couple hours between performances, and Murosako Sensei (who was actually quite ill as it turned out) was feeling exhausted and wanted to take a nap in his van, so he ordered me to walk around and do whatever Nakamura Sensei wanted for the couple hours. Nakamura Sensei decided to stroll over to a kind of small plaza where there were some newly-forced bulbs like daffodils and tulips in planters (this was April in Seattle... still half-way in winter mode).

He wanted to smell the flowers and look at a lot of scruffy little urchin-type kids with snotty noses who were horsing around with skateboards and other "toys of mayhem." As soon as we entered the small plaza area, several of these little kids actually came over and started hugging Sensei's legs, rubbing their dirty faces on his beautiful hakama, and yelling greetings at him, reaching up to pat his big "hara." I was a nervous wreck, but Sensei merely laughed and chuckled and proceeded to a bench where he sat down and basically held court for two hours! Some of the kids climbed up on his lap, and lots of ladies with toddlers brought them nearby for a kind of blessing or something. It was the most remarkable thing I've ever seen... this jolly man in outlandish brown robe-like attire was speaking NOT ONE WORD OF ENGLISH! It was amazing!

Another similar incident occurred on the Sunday morning of the Team practice. The Team was waiting for Nakamura Sensei to arrive in one of the gyms at Kent Commons. Across the hall, all kinds ladies with corsages were getting ready for a huge cat show. There was a big sign... "Admission \$5.00" and here came Nakamura Sensei down the hall. As soon as he saw the cats, to heck with Kendo! With a big chuckle this grand old man in the lovely BIG three piece wool suit headed straight for the entrance of the show. Again, not a word of English... and certainly no five dollar bill!! ... only a huge smile and marvelous chuckles. Two or three of these beautifully turned-out ladies immediately took his arms and escorted him all over the whole cat show, talking to him, pointing out this or that rare breed, opening cages and putting cats in his arms! Why did they do that? Who could they have imagined he was? And why did he spend 30 minutes petting all kinds of cats when he could've been "enjoying" a hammer-and-tongs Team practice?!? This guy not only had his priorities straight, but had ladies, kids, AND CATS utterly charmed... again, all without one single word of English.

Finally, why was he late in the first place? Mrs. Murosako had made him WAFFLES for Sunday breakfast. He informed the Murosakos that he had never had waffles before, and he would like some MORE! Murosako Sensei told him "Sensei we'll be late." Nakamura Sensei looked at Susie (Mrs. M.)... and again politely but firmly insisted that she make some more waffles! Which of course she was absolutely delighted to do.

Later that day, when my friend Ken Ogami heard about the waffles, he said to me: "You know, Tom, Nakamura Sensei may very well be an enlightened man!" I told Ken that I wouldn't be the least bit

surprised.

For myself, I don't know that much about Nakamura Taizaburo's followers, or exactly why he was more or less an outsider with the Zen Nippon Kendo Renmei (although all the same, he was nevertheless Kyoshi 7th Dan in the ZenKenRen).

But I know that he sent me several nice letters and gifts of books after returning home to Yokohama, and gave Murosako Sensei masters of his instructional tapes, with permission to freely make copies for the Kenshi he had met...

He was a very NICE Kendo sensei, whom we always remember as undoubtedly one of our good friends.

We don't know about the "commercial" aspects of his own Dojo which some people mumble about, but at least he certainly recognized us as people who never charge money for sharing the art of Kendo, and shared his own awesome level of development with us very freely and unselfishly... exactly like any other real Kendo sensei.

I can also report that he liked Seattle beer, clams, spaghetti, pizza, yakisoba, ice cream, and waffles.... same as any "normal" Kenshi!

I'm more than willing to be objective about everyone's good points and bad points, because that is the "Kendo way" too... seeing things as they are. But I must tell you that there are a hundred some kenshi in Seattle who recall Nakamura Sensei with their heartfelt "whoever holds a shinai is a friend of mine" affection. We know from our own direct experience that he was certainly the genuine article as far as great Kendo/Iaido sensei are concerned...

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Dave Drawdy

"the artist formerly known as Sergeant Major"