

Hanshi Don Studebaker

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The road to obtaining my 9th Dan has been an exciting, arduous, and very worthwhile journey. I have trained with many masters over the years and have learned so much from each and every one of them. I feel privileged to have trained with men that were so dedicated to the Martial Arts and I thank them for the knowledge that they handed down to me.

I began my journey by training in Tae Kwon Do from 1967-1970. Over this period of time I received my Green Belt, along with no confidence what so ever as far as my abilities went in the martial arts. After obtaining my Green Belt I started training with Robert Broe in Mo Duk Dwan Tang Soo Do. Two years later I received my Red Belt. I then began training with Hank Murphy, was considered then for a high belt, and received my first Dan in 1972. During this period of time I was competing in tournaments throughout Michigan. I stopped training with Hank when he decided to relocate to Hawaii.

Vic Harrell then began training me in the art of Ike Shin do Bushido Kwan and under his instruction I was awarded with my second and then third Black Belt. During this time I was competing in tournaments every weekend and was fighting full contact. I was then introduced to Sensei Yamashita by some of my competitors and he trained me every other week-end in Shorin Ryu. While training under Sensei Yamashita I retested for my third belt in Shorin Ryu. I was unable to obtain this level until two years later because I had to prove my loyalty to Sensei Yamashita and all that he had taught me in Shorin Ryu.

I had also started training with Sensei Steve Reynolds in Jiu Jitsu Kai. I would travel to Toronto, Canada every other month and he, in turn would travel to Midland, Michigan, where I lived. During this time I obtained rank in Jiu Jitsu Kai, where most of our grab arts come from.

Sensei Broe then wanted to start training in the International Brotherhood of Tae Kwon Do. He was averse to doing Shorin Ryu because he wanted to stay in a Korian style karate, so we started traveling to Ann Arbor, where we continued training more extensively in Tae Kwon Do. We trained together for another year and shortly thereafter I was once again tested for my third Dan, which I received.

At this point I decided to focus 100% on one style and one Master so I chose Shorin Ryu, which is an Okinawan Style, and the master I chose was Sensei Tadashi Yamashita, who I continued training with from 1984 to the present time. Under his teachings I obtained my 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th Dan. In 2012 I was awarded with my 8th Dan. August 13, 2016 I was awarded 9th Dan and Hanshi title. Over the past 45 years I have passed on my knowledge and my passion in Martial Arts to countless students.