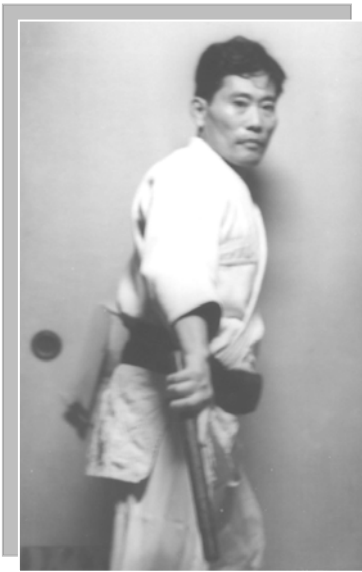




How I came to know Nakasato

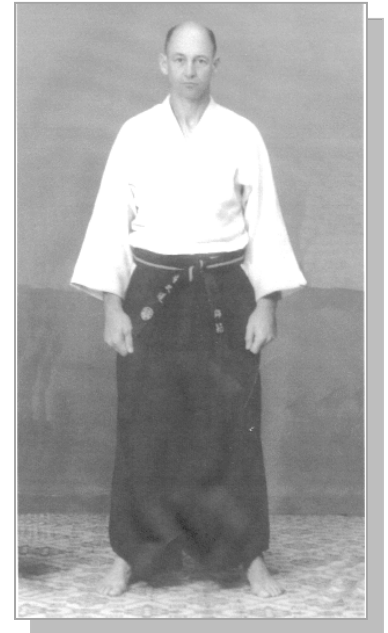
By Vincent J. McGale 1968

Having studied Judo in the States and an introduction to Aikido, it wasn't until my second trip to Okinawa back in 1958 that I met Nakasato. As I recall ... I was working out in Judo at Mr. Yamagawa's dojo in the township of Futema at or near the intersection of Futema next to the Futema Shrine. As I understood it, Mr. Yamagawa was the Chief of Police in Futema. As I never question it, I did see him in uniform a couple of times.



After a hard workout one evening in August we were just talking and I mentioned something that I was looking for Aikido or something like it and had he ever seen or heard of any here! He was straight forward on the thing and said, "well ... I haven't seen Aikido but there's a man that gave a demonstration down at the main dojo next to the police station in Naha". Those who have ever seen the main dojo realize how large it is. I don't know how many tatami mats it takes to cover the floor, perhaps over two hundred! Anyway, that's where the demonstration was and he was giving it to the police.

Yamagawa sensei told me that I should go to the Kominkan (a town community center) at a place called Kaneku which is just off to the east of Naha. To get around the island in those days I had bought



myself a 125cc motor scooter so one evening after work I headed for the village of Kaneku. There, I met with a gentleman who was more or less the caretaker of the Kominkan. Explaining as best I could in broken Japanese that I was looking for a gentleman who was teaching Aikido or some form similar to it ... and if he was the one that gave a demonstration to the Police. He told me he knew where he was and that his name was Nakasato ... so with him on the back of the scooter, we headed for the town of Yonabaru. Getting dusk, we met Nakasato on the side of the road. We spoke ... asking if he would teach me, he stated he would and to come the following Monday at the Kominkan at the village of Kaneku.



Arriving that first Monday evening as instructed, the center of the Kominkan was well lit and sure enough there was Nakasato with approx eight tatami's flaked out on the floor and teaching approx six students. I was told that class would be six days a week and sometimes on Sunday. As time went on, I rarely missed a class and was the only American. On occasions, a couple of people would come to class, one being a black belt whom was thin and very tall especially by Okinawan standards and we became friends for many years. I found out that the gentleman who introduced me to Nakasato was also a black belt in Shobudo as well as Judo, but did something wrong that displeased Nakasato and stripped him from his belt. Anyway, once in a while there would be a new dude walk in ... but they never lasted very long due to the pain. As months progressed of course the class got smaller. The local village people took an interest (as observers only) in Nakasato teaching me so we became the center of attraction. After a while it was basically one on one, but the tall Okinawan black belt would still come down on

occasions. As the pain never ceased, this black belt (Sandán) would beg me not to put things on hard or would say take it easy it's not necessary etc... I'm listening to all of this, but at the same time Nakasato's doing handstands on my goddamn arm! I got to the point where I just wish it would break, because then I wouldn't have to be bothered going back to class anymore. As it never did, the pain was intense and never let up.

I eventually had to shave my forearms due to getting ingrown hairs through grabbing and all the different techniques. I noticed quite a bit of increase in the size of my wrist ... usually you can tell someone who has been active in Ju-Jitsu by the wrists if learned properly! It's hard to tell where the wrist ends and the forearm begins in that the forearms look rather straight and your wrist becomes much larger. Getting off the subject for a moment ... this is a place incidentally where a lot of people who are body builders and who pump weights and do other things ... they don't seem to put as much emphases on wrist development as they due to other parts of their body. I've often wondered about that because there's one thing for sure in that a person who's actually doing Ju-Jitsu, their wrist power becomes very strong and also their finger power ... grip in general if they train and exercise correctly.

OK, back to the main topic ... as the winter wore on of course taking a shower, as I had to take one in the summer didn't change. As the Kominkan didn't have an actual shower facility, I used three large cold buckets of water in a secluded area whether it was hot or cold ... and it does get cold during the winter months. If you can picture the first cold bucket, soaping down then rinsing off with the other two buckets in December and January, drying off ... getting on my scooter and traveling back for a two hour trip in the cold ... well I must have been crazy and didn't even know it! I might add that I could never miss class, even going six days a week ... mainly because I didn't know where Nakasato lived for a long long time. For this reason, I couldn't afford to miss. On several occasions I would go to the dojo running a fever and not feeling well, just to let him know that I didn't want to miss class etc... We would listen to me, shake his head saying oh yes oh yes. There would be a break in the conversation ... next thing I knew he would tell me to put on my gi. I thought this to be a great misunderstanding and a real communication problem! I did this the first couple ya times it happened and what happened was that I found out something. I found out that if you feel bad, running a fever and so forth and ya worked out hard forgetting about your problems ... it just went away. I finished on several occasions over the time ... finishing running a fever and after the class I didn't have a fever and I felt good. It all just went away ... just went away, sure enough!

Stationed at Camp Courtney some 20 miles north of the dojo and the speed at that time being 25 mph and congested traffic at several points, the trip was two hours each way. Working all day, traveling four hours, working out two hours one on one six days a week didn't give me much time for anything else. My schedule was tight, working with Nakasato the pain was intense and taking cold showers as described was the story of my life at that time. My body was conditioned to this type of treatment ... otherwise I would have not been able to withstood it!

In time, due to some political pressures applied, the use of the Kaneku Kominkan was needed for some other purpose, so we had to get out. We eventually moved to a place up at the Kawasaki gym which was on base and had a large built up tatami area of some 60 tatami's compared to eight. Kawasaki was another small base a few miles down the road from Camp Courtney. I lived down by the Tengan River ... it was much closer, about a twelve minute ride and I'd be right there. This was a lot better than the two hours down and two hours back from the Kaneku area in Naha.

Being on base, the exposure to service personnel was much greater, but as usual ... I saw them come and go! Many would pay their monthly dues and after one or two nights ... wouldn't see them any more. One person did stick it out by the name of Graham until he rotated back to the States. Well, I could go on and on as the rest is known history, but this at that time is what happened. This is how it was ... somewhat uneventful, but something I felt I had to do.



尚
武
道

Respectfully,

Vincent J. McGale
Rokudan

Shobudo Bujitsu Jujitsu