



Koshu Ryu Kenpo Newsletter

Winter 2012

We would like to wish everyone a prosperous New Year!!!! As Koshu Ryu has evolved, so has our newsletter. We will be making changes to better keep you informed and knowledgeable in the art of Koshu Ryu.

Possible Week Long Koshu Ryu Training

Would you be willing to travel to California and train for a week with the Mitose family? We are looking for feedback from instructors, students, and anyone interested in spending some time with us. It is a chance of a lifetime.

New Link Site

We have a new link to a great school under the guidance of Sensei Dan Stratton called Karate's Missing Peace. To find out more of Sensei Stratton or his school, drop over to our link page.

Mikka looking for Representatives

Here within MIKKA, we promote practioners we feel represent MIKKA and have grown as students. We are obligated to let our members and future Koshu Ryu practioners and students what is going on within Mitose's Koshu Ryu Kenpo Association.

Having said this, it is a sad regret that Miguel Rivas and Pedro Porem are no longer representatives of MIKKA, and their rank is no longer valid within MIKKA. The art was first offered by James Mitose to help others, his family has continued the tradition for decades. History has and always will be repeated.

We are looking forward to having new representatives around the world to help spread Koshu Ryu. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us on becoming a member, or any of the above mentioned.

Speaking of History

Since of the death of James Mitose many years ago, there has been many questions raised... did he promote while in prison... did he teach while at Folsom... read the following article to find out.

James Mitose's Prison Years

By Ken Relf

"True and pure Kenpo and Karate isn't a business where a student buys an instructor's time and knowledge. A student is fortunate to learn from the instructor and the fees keep the dojo opened, but don't buy the instructor's soul".

The man speaking is Arnold M. Golub, appointed Headmaster under James Mitose, and the one person who spent the most time with Mr. Mitose during his incarceration until his death in 1981. It is here he shares his story of this remarkable icon of Kenpo for the first time in over 25 years.

In Rural North Kona Hawaii, a Japanese couple would give birth to an individual who will forever known as the one who brought Kenpo to the West. There he would remain until as a youngster, travel overseas to Japan under the care of his grandfather. It would be here that James Mitose would receive his education in his family art, which he would eventually share with his students in his school when he returned back to Hawaii many years later. It was in 1947 when James Mitose would pen his first book that was ultimately released in 1953 called What Is Self Defense. Shortly after the release of the book, James Mitose would retire from active

teaching and virtually disappear from the martial arts community until the early 1970's.

A private student of James Mitose would be arrested for murder. During his interrogation with the police, the student would declare James Mitose as the mastermind behind the attack. James Mitose was sentenced to life in prison for conspiracy to commit murder, as well as extortion charges.

As the years would pass, it would seem as though the world forgot about James Mitose. Martial Art schools were rapidly making their way in neighborhoods along mainland USA and abroad. Many systems stemming from the teachings of James Mitose would venture off in different directions. It would take the curiosity of a prison guard to strike up a conversation with Mr. Mitose to determine whether he one who taught in Hawaii. As the story goes, the guard was an active student in Kenpo. Mr. Mitose would offer an unpublished manuscript to the guard in the hopes of having him publish it for Mr. Mitose. The guard would refer Mr. Mitose to his Kenpo teacher, who some time later would ask Arnold Golub to visit the prison and help Mr. Mitose publish his book. "During my college days I was an intercollegiate wrestler and a former wrestling champion. Later in life, I started studying Kenpo with Pat McClellan. I continued with Pat until he died of cancer. Then, I started studying Tracy Kenpo."

It was during the days Arnold was studying Kenpo was he asked by his instructor to visit James Mitose in prison and organize what would be James Mitose's final publications prior to his death. Since Arnold Golub was working in the prison system as an educator, it seemed fitting to arrange a meeting with James Mitose. It was during these meeting would Arnold Golub form a bonding relationship, and see a side of James Mitose very few ever did. "I was James Mitose's Headmaster during the last years of his life. I was the closest living person to him in the years before he died, and I visited him whenever the Warden would let me into Folsom Prison. I was visiting James Mitose during every single visiting opportunity open to me and this was a major part of my life. In fact, I actually taught college-level courses to inmates who were enrolled in a B.A. degree program at Folsom Prison, and I had to choose between continuing to teach in the program or visiting Mr. Mitose. I chose the latter. I had to stop working at Folsom Prison in order to meet with Mr. Mitose regularly. The Warden didn't want me to visit him if I was still an employee of the Prison.

When I first arranged a visit to meet Mitose, he just amazed me and changed my life. No one else has ever done this! Mitose didn't complain, he was happy to be in a Prison in America where he was given food, educational opportunities, and where he could work to reform other inmates. Somehow, although I regard myself as a sophisticated and educated person, Mitose turned me into a true believer in a single meeting - into someone who wanted to help him get out of prison. He was no danger to anyone, he was old, and he was sick with diabetes.

I met James Mitose when I happened to walk past him in the prison yard at Folsom. Folsom Prison was a "close custody" prison at the time; more secure than San Quentin, which itself was a "maximum security" prison. I immediately got a "vibe" that I still can't explain - I just knew that this person was James Mitose. He stared at me, I stared at him; he walked past me all bent over and dragging his foot, and was about 5 feet tall. He reminded me of Yoda from Star Wars and I later discovered that he spoke like Yoda also. At a later time, after he was moved to a medium security prison (the Medical Facility at Vacaville), I visited him and he somehow was as tall as I am, and no longer had the limp. I asked him why he was so tall suddenly. He smiled and explained that Folsom was a very dangerous place and that by walking "bent over," he could see 360 degrees around himself. Mr. Mitose was a quiet talker. This seems to be a characteristic of the Japanese when they are being formal. We spent a lot of time, as you may imagine, dealing with his personal situation - his needs, and my and other people's attempts to get him out of prison, which was actually moving forward rapidly; and, naturally, we talked about publishing the books, which would have given him a job and a title in the event that he was paroled. I was the person who started a publishing company and founded an international organization, the International Kosho-Shorei Association intended for like-minded students of the martial arts who shared my philosophy of the martial arts.

At Folsom Prison, Mitose wanted to discuss his basic comfort (e.g., getting eye-glasses to see with) Mitose's vision was so bad that he was legally blind. Still, he had small areas of vision left and asked me for a large-print dictionary. I sometimes needed to buy him some orange juice when I visited to bring his blood sugar up. Mitose did refused to eat a lot of American foods (e.g., mashed potatoes), dropped out of the educational program (he was legally blind from his diabetes and couldn't see well enough to remain in the Program, and he didn't associate with a many of the prisoners). These behaviors placed him into a category that was described, by a Caucasian psychiatrists who was unfamiliar with Japanese culture as 'paranoid, uncooperative, and anti-social!'"

As the days turned into weeks and eventually months to years, James Mitose would allow Arnold into his personal life and share with him elements of his past. "While James Mitose insisted that he had committed no crime, he also insisted that he was guilty of the murder for which he was imprisoned. What Mitose actually

meant that as the instructor of the student who committed the murder, he was equally guilty for what his students did (this is an old and traditional Japanese viewpoint). The person described in the transcripts of the trial and the Mitose I knew were different people.

I once asked him to tell me about his family temple, but he didn't want to talk about any of this because he was "in a state of disgrace." He said he would tell me everything after he was released and didn't want me to contact his family. Mitose spent his entire life doing Kenpo from the time he was a young child. He was supposedly able to run up walls, and some old people who knew him when they were young, insist that he was able to run across ceilings. I didn't see him do this, but Mitose tried to demonstrate it to me once. I stopped him for safety reasons."

The world knew of a mysterious and quiet man that rarely spoke of his past, his actual training, or even his teaching methods. To most trying to make a name for themselves, James Mitose was branded as a one dimensional artist using outdated techniques. Mitose was much more. "Even though Mitose chose not to teach kata to his early students in Hawaii, he definitely knew them and he performed Naihanchi for me. I doubt that there are many people who could move like him or who could punch like him because his whole life was based on these things - it was not a hobby that he did for a few hours several times a week. Mitose (James) always said that kicking is only from the waist down. Anything above the waist uses a hand technique.

James shared some ideas with me about how to walk, climb hills, etc., but he was too frail when I knew him to teach people Karate. In any case, anyone who tells you that they studied Karate with him in Prison is lying because law enforcement authorities would never permit Karate to be taught in a close-custody prison! I worked at the Prison in the late 1970's - 1980's, and I know exactly what a prisoner at Folsom Prison during that time period could and could not legally do. There is literally only one place in the entire prison where a prisoner can't be seen by at least several officers. It is almost impossible even to pass anything to a prisoner without getting permission from a correctional officer first."

Although each visit would bring new and interesting conversations, James Mitose would hold back items he would deem too personal or unimportant. There were times of sorrow, and times of laughter. Arnold Golub would see a side of James Mitose that nobody outside of his family ever would. The years following Mitose's death, Dr. Golub would meet with and share many stories with those that trained under James Mitose. "James Mitose only taught a very small part of his art to students. All the major Asian instructors met at a now famous meeting a very long time ago and they agreed to teach only a small portion of their respective arts to students. This gave the instructors control over their students because the instructor always knew more than the student did. Mr. Mitose's students didn't even know the name of their art when they began studying with him. Thomas S.H. Young told me that when he was a student in the 1940s, he didn't even know what he was learning because Mitose never told his students what to call their art. The students just did what they were instructed to do. It was only after Mitose published his book (What Is Self-Defense: Kenpo Jiu Jitsu) in 1953 that the students discovered that they were studying "Kenpo Jiu Jitsu," Mitose told me that he left Japan because he was a pacifist and the government was planning to go to war and that the authorities were planning to arrest him. The true reason Mitose stopped teaching was because one of his students had a habit of testing the techniques of Kenpo by attacking drunken soldiers when they left a bar in Honolulu. Thomas Young made it very clear to me that James Mitose did not want to issue Black Belt certificates to students who were only fighters, but who had no understanding of the philosophy of Kenpo. Thomas Young told me that he intervened in one case and, with Mitose's permission, presented the Black Belt certificate signed by Mitose to one such student (who later became very famous). Kosho-Shorei Kenpo is not a physical art; it is a mental and psychological art in which one avoids and escapes with no body contact. In the late 1970's, Mitose made these teachings explicit when he published his book, "What is True Self-Defense?" In the book, he presented what he called an ethical martial art - the art of escape with no body contact. He termed this art "Kosho-Shorei Kenpo."

When James Mitose was asked what he thinks of how differently Kenpo looks comparing the differences in the curriculum that is taught in different Kenpo schools, he responded with "Kenpo and other styles always evolve as new training methods better than old ones come into existence and as instructors make small mistakes in their teachings that change the technique""Kenpo actually contains components of Jiu Jitsu even, though James Mitose was reluctant to teach much of his art to his original students. Indeed, Sigfried Kufferath, arguably the leading practitioner of Ju-Jitsu in the USA until his death in 1999, told me that he and James Mitose trained together (as equals) in Hawaii in the 1940s, and that James Mitose was skilled in Ju-Jitsu. Sig had absolutely no idea where or how James Mitose had learned this art, but Sig made it clear to me that James Mitose was already skilled in Ju-Jitsu when he arrived in Hawaii as a young adult. In 1981, Kig told me that James was already an expert in Ju-Jitsu during the time they trained together. James Mitose not only knew Ju-Jitsu, he also knew Karate and other arts. In Honolulu he described himself as a "Kenpo Instructor," not as a Great Grandmaster. That came later." "The Judge at Mitose's trial made one condition of any future parole that

Mitose must have a source of income before he was released.”

Not being able to remain in the education programs (He couldn't see and his understanding of English wasn't that of a native speaker), Mitose would delve into his past and begin to write his second book. His first book entitled "What Is Self Defense?" was well received. James Mitose could finally write the book he always wanted to showcase his art, and produce an income for the courts to enable his release. Kenpo was his life. "Unfortunately, we only published Book 1 of What Is True Self-Defense? And were working on the beginnings of the second book when Mitose died. We intended to publish five Kosho-Shorei Kenpo volumes, of which "What is True Self-Defense?" was Volume 1. Each subsequent volume was going to teach how to defend against more and more attackers; the final volume was to teach how to avoid touching an opponent in any manner during self-defense. Mitose's book presented the philosophy of Kenpo - the important aspect of Kenpo that Mitose wanted to present - and this is the information that most students don't want to learn (i.e., most students are interested in the physical techniques, not the philosophy). Unless teaching the philosophy underlying Kenpo remains the underlying foundation of what is taught in the dojo, instructors will merely be selling for a fee and be reduced to pleasing their students and will teach only techniques that students want to learn (flashy techniques), not the art they, themselves, have learned, and then the art they learned will die. I had convinced James Mitose, who had taught only a small portion of what he knew, to teach all of his art to students, not just thirty percent as was traditional in the old days to maintain power over students. My view was that those who should not have this knowledge would not take the time to read these books, or they will buy them, but not practice enough to be able to understand or to use the methods that are described - I suggested that students who don't deserve to know the art will not read the books anyhow, and will not learn from them."

Gaining Mr. Mitose's trust, Arnold Golub still remembers to this day the very moment he was appointed Kosho Shorei Honorable Head Master. For those that aren't sure what this appointment is, a headmaster works directly under the Great Grandmaster, and is the highest rank a non-family member can hold. "When James Mitose informed me that I was his Head Master, I initially refused and Mitose became very angry and informed me that it was 'his' Style and that he could appoint anyone he wanted." Arnold would accept this great honor, and would first ask his Kosho Publishing partner and former instructor since he was of a higher rank than Arnold. His partner accepted James Mitose's decision. With the publication on the way, it was decided to re-issue James Mitose's first book. When news of the books became public, would it attract much attention including James Mitose's children.

"One of James Mitose's sons, a Vietnam War hero noticed that someone was publishing his Dad's books and wanted to know what was going on. He contacted me and I went to L.A. to meet with him and to either get him involved actively (I was unsuccessful) or to get his cooperation (which I did). Tom Barro (Mitose) also found us at about this time because he read the martial arts magazines and learned that I was writing about Kenpo and about James Mitose. He contacted us and we told him that James was in prison. Then, all of us made contact and he started visiting Mitose at Folsom Prison and working with us. Tom lived too far away to visit every day, but did come regularly and on weekends."

Many more people took notice and wanted to visit James Mitose. His book was soon to be released, and the world again would remember the man for his talents, not for his situation. Some who visited had hidden agendas and wanted nothing more than acknowledgement of their rank would never see Mr. Mitose ever again once they had what they came for. "We did issue Black Belt certificates and we did recognize the rank of Black Belts who had studied other styles; however, students were taught only the philosophy of Kenpo in the Prison, not techniques. I asked everyone to send Mitose \$2 to \$3 dollars a month in return for his acknowledgment of their rank with his own certificate. Almost everyone took the rank certificate, but never sent him the \$2 to \$3 a month that I suggested they send. This would have given Mitose a little money to buy stamps, writing paper (that others used when he dictated letters because he couldn't really see, and cigarettes (used as money in the prison)."

With the books printed and articles running, the likelihood increased that James Mitose would be granted parole. After 7 years being locked up in maximum security facilities, James Mitose could finally become a free man since he now had an income. Just shy of one month before his probable release, the unthinkable happened. Diabetes had taken its toll. James Mitose suffered a massive stroke, and left him paralyzed on the left side of his body.

"When Mitose was dying, he was transferred from Folsom Prison to San Quentin Prison and receiving very little medical care, a nurse asked me, "Who is this man?" Apparently, prisoners were lined up to pay their respects to this man, an unprecedented even at San Quentin. These were presumably people who had been reformed (?) by Mitose during their earlier incarceration at Folsom Prison. In whatever manner, Mitose had made a lasting impact on these inmates."

His condition worsened over the next few days until James Mitose succumbed to his disease, and passed away. There was no funeral, no services, only the cremation of his body. Many of those whose life he touched in their worst moments of their lives was now gone, and those who came for rank and recognition seemed to be too busy to care.

"When Mitose died, I wanted to have a demotion for those who received rank but who were not actively helping us to promote true and pure Kenpo, but my partners didn't want to offend their friends this way, even these same "friends" had turned their backs on Mitose, while using his reputation to benefit themselves in their martial arts businesses."

It was decided to carry on with the company that was established for James Mitose, and continue to show the world the true meaning of Kosho Shorei. This caused others to take notice, and find ways to prosper from Mitose's name, even after his death.

"People I didn't know suddenly asserted that they had "studied" Mitose and earned high rank from him, even though, in reality, they never met Mitose. One instructor actually had the gall to forge our own rank certificates, including both my own and James Mitose's signatures. He sold these certificates for \$100 each, a lot of money in 1981."

The organization helping James Mitose would now investigate these claims, and search for clues on Mitose's mysterious past. "Something was going on in the Asian community, but it wasn't to prevent us from teaching Kenpo. It was to keep the unknown part of the Mitose story secret - we were probing too much. There is definitely more to the story, but we will never find out what we are missing in our own understanding. In about the late 1980s, I simply became really tired of martial arts politics, betrayals, lies, and fraudulent use of my name, including counterfeit rank certificates with my forged name on them, and related issues and retired." Even a quarter of a century after his death, Arnold Golub still believes the message James Mitose was trying to convey to the masses and wishes things went differently. "I'm just disappointed that James Mitose was let down by those closest to him, and that greed was the major factor in almost everyone's motivation after James Mitose died."

Arnold Golub has retired from the martial arts world, and lives a life with his family as a father, as well as a grandfather. His name is still held high with respect in the martial community, his peers at the University, as well as this writer.

The impact James Mitose made on Dr. Golub still resonates to this day. His words and emotions will forever live in the memory of Dr. Golub, and those lives he touched. During the worst and darkest time of his life, James Mitose showed those that would care enough to listen to make the best with the gifts of life they are offered in life and live in harmony with their surroundings.



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