

Miyagi Chojun



Miyagi Chojun was the founder of Goju-Ryu karate. He was born in Naha, Okinawa, and started training in the martial arts at the young age of 9. The name Miyagi is actually a Japanese derivation; the Okinawan name is Miyagusuku. He was dedicated to his art and became the disciple of Higashionna at the age of 20. For a number of years he went to China to study Zen and various martial arts before eventually returning to Okinawa to formulate the Goju-Ryu principles and open his own dojo. When Miyagi developed Sanchin kata, he incorporated shorei movements and Zen breathing that he had learned in China. He dedicated his life to spreading his art as far as he could, travelling throughout the Pacific, including Hawaii, at great expense to him.

After the Pacific War, Miyagi moved back to Okinawa from Japan, and settled in Ishikawa. Because of the need for food, the entire village would go into the fields to harvest. Miyagi became a very quiet man, not speaking of himself or his karate. He was a huge man with great strength, but due to his humility, other men would ask him to make tea or do dishes while they labored in the fields. At the end of each day's harvest, several men would load the trucks so that the harvest could be delivered back to town. One day, the bales were larger than usual and these men had difficulty lifting them onto the truck. Miyagi told the men to move aside and he lifted the loads himself in one motion without strain. After that, word of his feats of strength spread all over Okinawa with many people, including karate experts, coming to see this strong man. Once they realized he had moved back to Okinawa and was no longer in Japan, they flocked to him for lessons.

Miyagi Chojun was known for the strict discipline of his training. He believed in developing the mind as well as the body, and he had a strict regimen on getting up every day at 5AM practicing some kata, and then doing a 10km run. He believed in things such as strong, stable stances and that a student should not move onto their next kata without first mastering the previous kata. He had a strong belief in foundation, and practiced basics and more basics with kata in between. He was a humble man but did perform feats of strength from time to time, not for himself, but as he said "for the sake of Okinawan karate." On one occasion he performed for hours as to display the endurance of a true karate ka. He would do such things as thrust his hand into slabs of meat and tear off chunks, put white chalk on his feet and kick the ceiling so his footprints remained, tear the bark off of a tree, and many more.

Also of note, the character Mr. Miyagi, in the Karate Kid film franchise was named after Miyagi Chojun as stated by screenwriter, Robert Mark Kamen.

Miyagi Chojun was a very pleasant man and was kind to everyone, so there aren't too many episodes of fighting in his life. He lived the art for the sake of the art, and never harmed anyone. He was known to have the body of a bull and the spirit of a saint. He passed away in Ishikawa, Okinawa on October 8, 1953.