

Senior Sensei William C. Morris
March 16, 1947 to March 9, 2007

Sensei William “BILL” Morris was introduced to the Martial Arts in 1957 as a Jujitsu student in California. His teacher was a close friend of his parents so he always referred to him as “UNCLE DON”. In reality, Don was a Hawaiian who taught the Danzen Ryu of Jujitsu. He returned to NYC in 1961 where he started training in Judo with Sensei Jackie Stern at the PAJA Dojo. He also trained at the Judo Twins Dojo under Bernard and Robert Lepkopfer and Professor Sadeki Nakabayashi.

According to Sensei Stern, Bill was a terror on the Tatami. At 16 he stood just under the 6’0” mark and weighed a solid 250 pounds! What made Bill Morris an exceptional Martial Artist was his deceptive speed – he moved more like a middleweight than the super-heavyweight he was. Bill dominated the Junior Division in the NYC area. He again traveled with his parents but furthered his Jujitsu expertise under Professor Wally Jay. When he returned to NYC, he earned his SHODAN grades in both Judo and Jujitsu. While competing at a New Jersey Judo tournament, he was spotted by Sgt. Bohan, a top student of the legendary Isshin Ryu Master, Donald Nagle.

He felt an affinity with this unique style and earned his SHODAN in Isshin Ryu Karate in 15 months and his NIDAN and SANDAN grades 7 and 13 months later. In addition to the Karate practice, he continued his Judo and Jujitsu training under Professor Michael DePascule, Sr., he also found time to study and excel in Kendo, Chinese WuShu, and Bujutsu (weapons). Another three (3) Shodan ranks (or the equivalent) were earned by the young giant.

Returning to NY, Bill again went to expand his knowledge and seek out the finest Sensei he could. He worked diligently on his Judo with Professor Robert Selay – learned GoJu Ryu Karate from Grandmaster Chris Dibiase and Shotokan from Master Tom Purdy. Purdy, himself a big man with credentials in both Shotokan and Judo, was impressed with Sensei Morris’ speed, agility, and explosive application of WAZA.

Master Purdy was already well known throughout the Northeast for his Martial Arts shows. As far back as 1967, he exposed people to Judo, Karate, & Weapons thru his “FIGHTING ARTS OF THE ORIENT” touring show. Morris soon made Master Purdy’s Dojo, The American Judo – Karate Academy, his home dojo and joined the demonstration team. It was here he met a younger Karateka named John Reddick and a young Judoka named Jay Hager. Reddick and Hager were already an inseparable pair and they

sort of adopted Bill into their little fraternity. You very seldom saw 1 of the 3 without at least 1 of his partners. Just like the Judo Twins Dojo (where both Purdy and Hager got their starts), the AJKA became a hotbed of exceptional Sensei and a “*must stop in*” for visiting Sensei’s. They entertained Martial Artists like Anton Geesink, Jon Blumming, Wilhelm Ruska and Chris Dolman from Holland; Klaus Ghan from Germany; Brian Jaicks, David Starbrook and Neil Adams from Great Britain. In addition, the presence of the head Judo instructor, Professor Sadeki Nakabayashi, made sure a steady stream of Japanese Judokas, Karatekas, and Kendoists. As you might imagine, the classes were brutal but Sensei Bill held his own in combat.

Master Purdy had to chance to expand his FIGHTING ARTS OF THE ORIENT to new lands. In a period of 3 years, the group compiled not only a fine record of large crowds, but performed in a way other shows are still copying today (before the showmanship of the AJKA team, Dojos demonstrated their Art by running a mini-class). Bill was a major part of the troupe as he amazed crowds with his ability. “How can a man THAT big move THAT fast and how can he be SO agile?” was a common comment from the crowd! Among the top shows the group did are:

1. Royal Albert Hall in London (a Command Performance for members of the Royal Family)
2. Being a featured act in many of the “ORIENTAL WORLD OF SELF-DEFENSE” from Madison Square Garden in NY before 20,000+ screaming Martial Arts fans AND practitioners
3. Performing before crowds filling Soccer Stadiums in Bogota Columbia.
4. Working out in Brazil with a family of Martial Artists and encouraging them to show their Art more in public – The Gracie Family agreed!

Though Master Purdy had an entire cast of outstanding Martial Artists and Performers, it was usually Bill Morris who stole the show!

Returning to NY after the tours, Bill taught Karate at Aaron Banks New York Karate Academy. He taught Judo to adults and children at a number of YMHA locations and YMCA’s in the city. He of course continued his training to hone his considerable ability. The AJKA became the home dojo for two outstanding Sensei – Robert Hasman (Shotokan Karate) and Emilio “RENO” Claudio (Sosuishi Ryu Jujitsu, Kodokan Judo, and Korean Yudo). The team of Hasman and Claudio were excellent Sensei who complimented

each others skills as they developed the style we know today as “**HOTEIKAN**”. While the two Sokes worked on their system, Morris, Reddick, Hager and Purdy contributed many concepts and techniques.

For all his accomplishments as a competitor and demonstrator, Sensei Bill was NEVER happier than when he was teaching children in a dojo. Watching him work with kids as young as 3 and 4 years old was a real sight! Here was this huge and powerful Martial Arts expert who could display softness with children that belied his size and strength. If anyone ever earned the designation as a **GENTLE GIANT**, Bill Morris was it!

Master Bill Morris held an 8th Dan in Jujitsu, 7th Dan in Judo and Korean Yudo, 5th Dan in Isshin Ryu Karate, 4th Dan in GoJu Ryu Karate, 2nd Dan in Kendo and Shotokan Karate. He held a Black Sash in WuShu, as well as 1st Dan grades in Bujutsu and Aikido. With his long time friend, Sensei Jay Hager, Master Morris rejoined the Hoteikan System in November, 2001. He became a vital part of the teaching process and was an inspiration to all.

But it was, again, the children’s classes he enjoyed the most. Nothing gave him a greater joy than a 4 year old making a technique work for the 1st time or the excitement of that child earning a tip or a promotion. This is not to say that he can not teach adults. On the contrary, he was an excellent teacher but kids were his passion.

In the Hoteikan System of Martial Arts, Master Bill Morris stands near the top! His place is 4th in the hierarchy behind Soke Hasman, Soke Claudio, and Shihan Armstrong. He was proud, rightfully so, of his standing in the organization and was seen by ALL Hoteikan members as a positive influence for the RYU.

Master Bill Morris had his final battle starting in February of 2007 when he slipped into a coma. He held on until his great heart gave out on March 9, 2007 (just one week before he would have turned 60!). he was (and IS) a vital part of the HOTEIKAN development, growth, and legacy. He inspired all who met him on the Tatami as he shocked people with his explosive quickness and his raw animal power.

He will be missed by ALL Martial Artists and especially by the HOTEIKAN Brothers and Sisters he loved so much.

Rest in Peace Brother – your memory will live on!