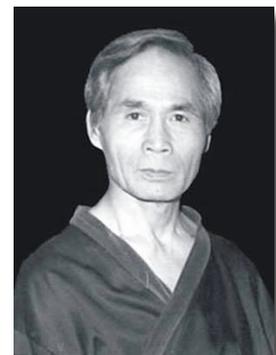




**Meeting the Masters:
Mas Tsuruoka (1929-2014)
and Professor Vee (1910-1999)**



Over 50 years of training in budo, I have been lucky enough to meet or train under many notable martial artists. This year, I want to share my impressions, some deep set, some fleeting, about the men and women I met on the way.

Tsuruoka Sensei was the father of Canadian Karate.

Many karate-ka from the U.S. think he was a Japanese national who settled in Canada, but in fact he was born in Cumberland, British Columbia. In these essays, I have refrained from giving the master's history and accomplishments since anyone can look them up on the web, but I wanted to make mention of Tsuruoka's roots because some of his students have studied with him for 50+ years and are proud of both his Japanese and his Canadian lineage.

Professor Florendo Visitacion, on the other hand, was born in Ilocos Norte, Philippines and came to New York via Hawaii and California. His Vee-jitsu was a combination of his eclectic martial arts studies constructed around the basic ju-jitsu he learned from Kiyose NAKAE.

Tsuruoka Sensei had a reputation of a tough-as-nails no-nonsense traditionalist, but I met him late in his life when he was mellowing (except when he taught class). One of his senior students, Sensei Frank Foulkes, had purchased a number of my video programs (back when we sold VHS cassettes) and in 2009 asked Tsuruoka Sensei if he could sponsor me for a seminar. The seminars went on for 5 years until Tsuruoka Sensei's passing in 2014. He attended all but one, when he was ill, and I made sure to send complementary seminar DVDs to him so he had a record of what I taught. To my surprise and delight, he not only liked what I did, but also quietly and indirectly presented me with one of finest complements I have ever received. Having viewed my Seiken Budo seminars and then my *Tensho: The Aiki of Karate* DVDs, he told Frank that he always had thought that karate was fast, powerful, and destructive, but that Annesi Sensei had made him see another side of the art. What a courageous and kind admission from a founding father of karate in the West and my senior by twenty years.

I met Professor Visitacion when he accompanied Roberto Torres, his chosen successor, to be recognized by a rank-recognition society of which I was a part. Later Bob Torres and I did seminars together and shared students. Then however, Bob was slightly under the age requirement for recognition. I don't think Professor Vee was terribly happy with having made the trip for nothing, but I suggested to Bob that with a little patience it was obvious he would be recognized as soon as he hit the minimum age since his grandmaster had shown up in person to sponsor him. The lack of "official" recognition did not detract from Professor Vee passing his art to Bob. To be honest however, I was less interested in Bob's qualifications (since I trusted Vee would not promote someone unqualified) and more interested in seeing the old master move. To be frank, he looked small and frail, but as soon as a knife thrust came he move quickly and accurately, not only disarming the attacker but also

finishing him off quite thoroughly and with a relaxed ease that made you think he would simply straighten his cravat (if had been wearing one) and step aside to order a Vodka Martini. He was probably 30 years older than I at the time. Now I am his age and I can thank him for setting an example that does not count age by years, but by one's ability easily straighten a cravat with one hand while dispensing punishment (albeit controlled) with the other.