

Five years ago, for the first time in Seido history, [Kaicho T. Nakamura](#) and [Nidaime A. Nakamura](#) promoted five senior women karateka to the rank of Sei Shihan (6th Dan).



Sei Shihan Sandi



Sei Shihan Michelle



Sei Shihan Judy



Sei Shihan Maureen



Sei Shihan Nancy

In honor of Women's History Month, we are putting a spotlight on those incredible women who helped paved the way for future Seido female karatekas.

Each week in March you can read about one of these females, where they began, and their incredible karate journey thus far.

Meet Sei Shihan Nancy Lanoue, founder of Thousand Waves Martial Arts & Self-Defense Center, Chicago, IL.

When and why did you join Seido?

I joined Seido in 1979 when the small feminist dojo where I had been practicing Goju karate for two years became dysfunctional. A large group of women from this school did a major researching of dojos in NYC and a couple dozen of us joined Seido all within a month or so of each other. We chose Seido because we liked the aesthetics of the art, it seemed to be stable and friendly to women, and Sensei Ken Glickman (who ran the white belt program at that time) was very welcoming and accommodating to us.

Favorite Seido memory?

When students went down to do push-ups, the custom at that time was for the instructors to say "gentlemen make fists; ladies palm heels." This rankled with many women in our group, and somehow I ended up being the one selected to talk to Kaicho about it. He graciously invited me into his office to chat, where I pled my case that we be allowed to try whatever the men did. Kaicho's response, which cemented my decision to take him on as my teacher, was that he offered the palm heel option because he wanted more women to train in Seido and he thought being required to do knuckle push-ups would drive them away. My suggestion was to have two options for everybody because some women did want to try the harder option while some men would prefer not to. Through honest dialogue, many positive changes of this type have occurred that make training in Seido more accessible and empowering for people of all genders.

How has your training changed since you began and what are you up to now?

I have trained in martial arts for 41 years and run my own Seido dojo for 33 years. People I taught as kids are now professional teachers in my dojo and I am focusing on transitioning towards retirement. At age 65, I still love to train but I do more and more yoga to keep my spine and joints healthy so I can continue to enjoy karate.

Advice for any new female karatekas?

Choose your teacher(s) carefully. Speak up when you are confused or uncomfortable with your training experience. Allow women who are senior to you to mentor you, and be a welcoming friend to those newer than you. Develop leadership skills over time and use them to make a positive difference in your dojo.

