

SENSEI

What is a sensei? To most people the word translates to teacher. In Japan it means so much more. Let us break the word down to its bare bones to illustrate how this can be. Sen by itself means 'before.' Sei by itself means 'life.' So the 'sensei' existed in the life, or path you have chosen to follow, before you were born into it. When you call someone sensei, you are creating an obligation that means more than the usual teacher and student relationship. You are creating an obligation that is more family oriented. The sensei is like a father or mother figure, someone who commands respect. A person, who will push you beyond your normal limits, be it physical, mental, or spiritual. A sensei is not a coach of a team. A coach can be out of shape or out to lunch. A sensei can't. He has an obligation to be able to perform everything he asks of you and more. He is someone who has been there and is willing to come back and guide you in the way. This obligation is known as 'giri,' the burden hardest to bear.

To me it is the ultimate honor to be call someone sensei. It means more than master, grandmaster, or great grandmaster. I do not use the term loosely, and I give it the respect that it deserves.

Gordon Fisher