



**PAN-AMERICAN GOJU RYU
KARATEDO SEIWA KAI
NEWSLETTER
全米剛柔流空手道
誠和会社内報**

**Dedicated to Traditional Goju Ryu Karatedo
ISSUE 15: November/December 2015**

Current and previous issues of the USA Seiwa Kai Newsletter can be found online at <http://www.greatlakesseiwakai.com/usa-seiwa-kai-newsletters.html>

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Ikebana: 生け花 Living Flowers

The Art of Shuji Tasaki Hanshi

By Mark Cramer



Shuji Tasaki Hanshi, the founder of Seiwa Kai Goju Ryu Karatedo, was known as a fierce fighter and intense instructor. I have heard some of the most senior instructors in our organization say that they would tremble when Tasaki Sensei was present. Others describe their reactions to his presence in far more graphic details, but they are not suitable for this publication. That was the *Go* or the hard side of Tasaki Sensei. There was a *Ju* or gentle side as well. He was an artist of Ikebana – living flowers. It would behoove us all to learn more about the art of Tasaki Sensei, the founder of the Seiwa Kai Goju Ryu.

In Western floral arrangements, it is typical for a significant quantity of stunningly colorful flower blossoms to be arranged in a vase. In Ikebana the vase plays a more central role in the piece, and stems, leaves, flowers and other parts of plants are featured in the composition. The focus of a traditional Ikebana composition is based on three lines of arrangement which are in harmony with a modest number of flowers and plant parts. The arrangement of the lines in the piece create a scalene triangle (three unequal sides), and the points of the triangle's sides symbolize heaven, earth, and humanity.



A typical Ikebana arrangement frequently contains a variety of other symbolic elements: a peak, a valley, a hill, a waterfall, a town by the water, a sunlit side of a setting, and a shady side of a setting. Japanese flower arranging is also known for its minimalism. The symbolism and minimalism most likely stems from concepts which are rooted in Buddhism since the first practitioners of Ikebana were associated with the Buddhist temples of the mid-sixteenth century.

During the creation of the Ikebana piece, the spiritual aspects of this Japanese art are particularly important. The creative process is punctuated with silence. It is a time to appreciate those qualities in nature which are often overlooked. This is also a time to relax the body, mind, and spirit. This spiritual element of Ikebana further differentiates it from its western counterpart of flower arranging.



**North American Goju Ryu Karatedo Seiwa Kai Seminar
With Seiichi Fujiwara Hanshi
Santa Monica California
November 6, 7, and 8**



Group Photo

The 2015 North American Seiwa Kai Goju Ryu Karatedo Seminar with Seiichi Fujiwara Hanshi was attended by nearly one hundred people from the United States, Canada, Mexico, Australia, and Belgium giving this year's seminar a truly international flavor.

Friday evening's session stressed Kihon and the Goju Ryu katas Sanchin, Tensho, Gekisai Dai Ichi, and Gekisai Dai Ni. Saturday morning's session consisted of beach and water training in Sanchin and Tensho which was a great learning experience and fun for all. Saturday afternoon yakusoku kumite applications to kata bunkai were practiced after which Sanchin, Tensho, Gekisai, Seiyunchin, and Sanseiryu were practiced. Additionally we were all treated to a kata demonstration by some of our students with special needs. The special needs classes were initiated about six months ago and are taught by Millica Cooper, daughter of Vassie Naidoo Kyoshi.

Prior to Sunday's training session was the JKF Goju Kai Shinsa (grading). During Sunday's training, Sanchin and Tensho were stressed as usual and yakusoku kumite applications for some of the advanced kata were also stressed. The session ended with detailed instruction in the katas Shisochin, Seipai, and Seisan. Following Sunday's training was the Seiwa Kai Shinsa.

A special thanks goes out to Tak Hamabata Shihan, Katsuhide Kinjo, and Kay Sakue of the Eibukan Goju Ryu Karatedo for their continued support of this Seiwa Kai event. Kay Sakue again provided a superb translation of Mr. Fujiwara's explanations.

Please enjoy the photos which follow. They were provided by Jan Stefanovic Sensei, and Des Tuck Shihan.

Below: the JKF Goju Kai Shinsa (grading) panel (L to R) Kinjo Shihan, Hamabata Shihan (from Eibukan Goju Ryu Karatedo), Fujiwara Hanshi, Naidoo Shihan, and Tuck Shihan of Seiwa Kai Goju Ryu Karatedo



Above: Shisochin bunkai applications

Both photos below: In yakusoku kumite drills, Fujiwara Hanshi stressed moving inside of your opponent's attack to block and then counter-attack.



Saturday Morning Beach Training



Preparing to enter the water for more Sanchin training

Jamie Duggan (Brisbane, Australia), Seiichi Fujiwara Hanshi, and James Pounds



Group Photo after Sanchin and Tensho water training

**Goshukan Goju Ryu Seiwa Kai Canada Karatedo
Fall Gasshuku**

With Vassie Naidoo Shihan

Laurentian University, Sudbury, Ontario

October 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 2016

Submitted by Benoit's Martial Arts



Goju Ryu Karatedo Seiwa Kai Mexico Seminar November 20, 21, and 22



Vassie Naidoo Kyoshi was the instructor at the 10th Annual Seiwa Kai Goju Ryu Karatedo Mexico Seminar in Guadalajara on November 20th, 21st, 22nd. He was assisted by Johnpaul Williams. Over 100 participants from all over Mexico attended the seminar.



Friday, Kihon and Sanchin were taught in the morning while Kihon, Gekisai Ichi and Gekisai Ni were the subject of the afternoon session. On Saturday morning, Kihon, Tensho, and Saifa were taught, and in the afternoon session instruction centered on Seiyunchin, Sanseiryu along with their corresponding bunkai applications. Sunday morning's session focused on Sanchin, Tensho, Shisochin, and Seipai along with more bunkai applications.

Upcoming Event
Goshukan Goju Ryu Karatedo Seiwa Kai
Canada Seminar
With Fujiwara Hanshi



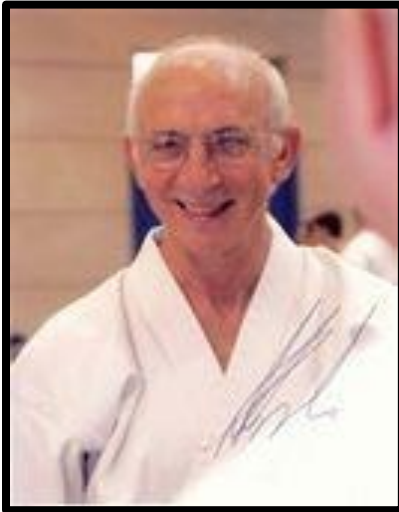
Toronto Skyline

Mark your calendars! This May 13, 14, and 15 Goshukan Canada will be hosting a seminar in Toronto, Ontario that will be taught by Seiichi Fujiwara Hanshi. Vassie Naidoo Kyoshi has cancelled the USA Seiwa Kai Instructor's Seminar which is typically held at that time of year and is asking that all instructors from the U.S. to instead make plans to attend the seminar in Toronto. If you have never been to Toronto, I can tell you that is one of the most pleasant cities in North America and is certainly a place that you don't want to miss.

More information will be sent out in a timely manner just as soon as all of the venue details have been worked out.

Goju Ryu Karatedo Seiwa Kai: One Organization

By Leo Lipinski



The other day, I was talking to one of the instructors in our international Seiwakai group about the meaning (in an organizational sense) of the various club names such as Goshukan, Shuseikan and Shodokan. As I am sure you have seen on Facebook it is known as Seiwakai (Group) International.

In fact he told me he was under the impression that if he left the Seiwakai in his country and became a member of one of the three (ie Goshukan, Shuseikan and Shodokan) that he was no longer a Seiwakai member and could be liable to losing his Gojukai membership. This is utter nonsense.

All three sub-groups are equally part of Seiwakai under the leadership of and responsible to Fujiwara Shihan. In fact the Goshu(kan) comes from the name *Goshu* which Tasaki Sensei was given by the late Gogen Yamaguchi. Gogen Sensei had three sons. Gosei, Gosen and Goshi and obviously felt so favorably towards Tasaki Sensei that he gave him the name Goshu.

Shusei(kan) was created as an amalgamation of the name Shuji, (Tasaki Sensei's real name) and Seiichi, (Fujiwara Shihan's name). As for Shodokan I do not know the origins of this but I will find out.

Returning to this commentary about the Seiwakai group, I repeat **all** are “Seiwakai.” There are various reasons why such groups are created in some countries and this is always done with consultation and the approval of Fujiwara Shihan as it was with Tasaki Shihan in the past. This is for Fujiwara Shihan to decide. It is **not** automatically granted and has, in certain cases, been denied in the past.

In the future there will probably be more subgroups created. These will be independent in their particular country, but when it comes to training with Fujiwara Shihan, both in Japan or in the home country, **all** groups are considered to be Seiwakai.

Remember, all of you in any one of the groups are part of All Japan Gojuryu Karatedo Seiwakai and Seiwakai International with, Fujiwara Shihan as the President and Chief instructor.

All Japan Goju Ryu Karatedo Seiwakai By Leo Lipinski

I have decided to write an article about our organization. I am writing this especially for our many members in India and the many people who learn Gojuryu in India as well as other Asian countries.

Seiwakai is the “club” that was started in the early 70's by Tasaki Shuji Sensei. Tasaki was one of the very senior students of the late Yamaguchi Gogen Sensei. He was certainly the most famous fighter that was taught and developed by Gogen Yamaguchi.



Yamaguchi Gogen, apparently, was the founder of the Ritsumeikan University Karate Club. Gogen sensei himself had a reputation as a fighter as well as being an intelligent law student. His preference in Karate seemed to lean towards real kumite. From all my research into the early years of karate, Gogen sensei was possibly the originator, or one of them, of what we know now as kumite. We must not forget that in those very early days there were no rules. The person left standing was the “winner”.

I must point out that Tasaki sensei was one of many students who grew out of the 50's in Japan which was a very different breed from those who developed in the 30's and 40's. They were hard

and had a lot to prove as fighters. Many were antagonistic to Americans and the American occupation and some, like Tasaki Sensei were involved in regular street fighting. It took a long time for many of these “young” people of the 50’s to accept westerners. I won't go into the reasons for this. What I will say is the westerners who really trained with such people were taught a realistic and very hard way of karate. Most did not stay the distance.

Returning to the Ritsumeikan University, some very good kumite people grew out of this breeding ground. These were people such as Ujita Sensei, Kisaki Sensei, Seigo Tada Sensei and a number of others. It was people such as these that gave Gojuryu its well-earned reputation as a fighting system. University training was not about Kata, not about bunkai. It was simple and extremely hard – basic training, hard conditioning and fighting. In those early days there were no rules. This was typical in many universities but especially with Gojuryu. Competition in no way resembled the sport karate of today. Even now, kata is not of major importance in University training; it is all about winning and being the best. Kata and rules came later when you retired from University karate. In fact in real numbers not many continued after University, and those that did usually became coaches.

Another well-known name that came out of the 50's and 60's and was developed by Gogen Yamaguchi was Yamamoto sensei who was regarded as second only to Tasaki Sensei. If my memory is correct he was 5 or 6 years younger than Tasaki sensei.

Returning to Seiwakai, Tasaki developed his most well-known club in Oshiage in Tokyo. This club, which I know from personal experience, was the place where some amazing students were taught and developed by Tasaki sensei. Most were fighting specialists. Some still teach today.

Tasaki sensei continued to teach in Oshiage for many years. He was also Gogen sensei's primary assistant when travelling to many countries. As a result of this travel and experience, Tasaki sensei became very open to foreign students which resulted in Seiwakai developing over the years and growing into many countries all over the world.

Nowadays Seiwakai has clubs in probably 30 or more countries. Our Seiwakai organisation is growing constantly. Our senior teachers who are responsible for teaching around the world work to lift standards and quality.

Many of the countries are achieving exceptional results in modern sports karate while at the same time we are keeping the original standards and kumite methods that were developed in the past. We must never forget our roots. Tasaki Sensei’s values and quality of teaching never changed in all the time I knew him.

The aforementioned interview was also published in Issue 7 of the Pan-American Seiwa Kai Goju Ryu Newsletter and is reprinted on page 25 of this newsletter.

Goju Ryu Karatedo Seiwa Kai Humor

The Seiwa Kai Sensei



What my friends think I do.



What my idiot friends think I do.



What white belts think I do.



What brown belts think I do.



What I think I do.



What I really do.



Lighting the Fuse

By James Pounds

I can't tell you how many times I've considered giving up teaching. Every once in a great while I even think what life would be like without training in karate, but I really can't conceive of that. There's just something inherent in this disciplined art that keeps me seeking the nuances of improvement. There's always a deeper level of understanding that keeps us going. But teaching can be as frustrating sometimes as it is rewarding at others, and is a beautiful example of the yin/yang aspect of life in general – and the martial arts in particular.

It seems there are always one or two students who keep me teaching, those rare ones whose level of commitment and earnestness match my own. I train for myself, but I teach for those rare others. One thing I've discovered is that it's impossible for me not to teach. Every time I've relocated, I've had the perfect opportunity to not teach, and yet I always end up starting another club. Having a successful commercial dojo is for those who are fortunate enough to be rooted in a community long-term, because it takes years to really see those efforts take root and blossom. For the rest of us – the military folks, the corporate vagabonds, the restless souls who practice karate – we find students where we can and teach while we're 'there', knowing we may only be 'here' for a short time. In essence, our job is to light the fuse within our students, to set the intention within them to continue their education even if they lose a teacher.

Years ago, we relocated and had to leave a commercial dojo that had operated successfully for a number of years. I felt so guilty about leaving my students in the lurch, as if they might never find another Sensei to take my place.

What an egotistical notion that was!

I was coming from a viewpoint that gave me way too much credit and didn't give my students any. I was thinking like a parent who never steps away and allows their child to discover the world on their own, and therefore I might have been holding them back in certain ways.

I know for a fact that many of them eventually stopped training, even though we made every effort to keep the dojo alive through our senior students. I can't help that. Things had changed, and as much as we might not like to admit it, karate training can sometimes be a matter of convenience. If it becomes inconvenient through changed circumstance, many students will simply quit rather than go the extra mile. But there are those rare ones. Those are the ones I like to have walk through my doors.



They are the ones who will seek out an instructor, and convenience, cost, or distance have nothing to do with it. They are determined to train and committed to seek out the best instructors and fellow practitioners available. Those are the ones I love to run across, and if they happen to be beginners starting with me, then that's the spirit I want to embed in them. That's what I mean about lighting that fuse. Whether I'm there or not should actually be irrelevant. They should feel an undeniable urge to seek out the best and to continue their karate journey even if the

circumstances should change. It's a mobile world and very few of us remain in one location for the long term, whether students or instructors. If we are true catalysts, they will continue on just as we do.

Don't get me wrong. I really do wish I could see those acorns become trees, but I have to trust there are many good instructors out there to help them grow. The other side of the coin is that I benefit from students who find me and we learn from each other. We have to keep that 'beginner's mind' and realize we're always learning, all the time. As my friend Luis Morales Sensei says: "Always the Student."

This martial arts musical chairs has humbled me over the years, and has helped me keep my ego in check.

Goju Ryu Karatedo Seiwa Kai around the Globe

Team Seiwa Kai England Competes in Hungary

By Marie Tanabalan

Congratulations and well done to Seiwa Kai England Team!! Superb results from a squad of 6 who won 9 medals in total!!



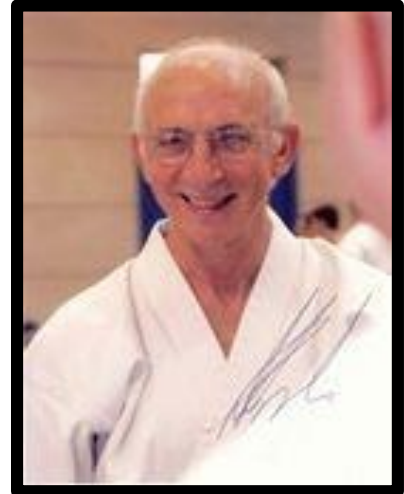
Hungary International competition results:

- Orion Chatterjee - Gold in kumite
- Jake Moore - Gold in kata
- Gedville Juodvalkyte - Silver in kumite, Bronze in kata
- Jasmine David - Bronze in kata and kumite
- Jacob Willmore - Bronze in kata and kumite
- Sabiha Amin - Bronze in kumite

Goju Ryu Karatedo Seiwa Kai England

By Leo Lipinski

Seiwakai England (Traditional Karate Federation – T.K.F.) is the branch of Seiwakai Japan, in England, authorized by the late Tasaki Sensei in 1987 and "inherited" by Fujiwara Shihan in 2011. I was appointed to run the office of Seiwakai England. The use of the name TKF does not change that TKF is Seiwakai and belongs to Japan totally.



The TKF Nationals are in fact the Seiwakai England Nationals and this event has attracted guest teams and participants from a number of countries.

From difficult beginnings, Indran and Marie Tanabalan have taken on the task that nobody since Leon Mare some fifteen plus years ago has done in the name of Seiwakai England. My thanks to them both and all those who came to their assistance for doing this very difficult job.

In addition to this they have organized individuals and teams from England to travel to other countries, including Japan, as well as bringing a many times European and World Champion to coach our students.

This is not all. They have offered several courses with a WKF qualified Kata Judge/Kumite Referee which can only enhance judging skills in the group as well as enable us to have better qualified officials at our Nationals. Table staff have also attended these courses so they have a better understanding of what is required at competitions.

Please keep in mind that the Nationals are Fujiwara Shihan's Nationals-- (certainly not mine) not the Tanabalans'. They are doing a job of work with a lot of difficulties for SEIWAKAI. Your support and commitment will most definitely be noted by Fujiwara Shihan when he receives his customary report.

Goju Ryu Karatedo Seiwakai Seminar Manchester, England

By Leo Lipinski

During the weekend Saturday and Sunday 17th and 18th May one of our Seiwakai clubs in Manchester held their annual seminar. The organisers were Ian Bruckshaw and Gary Cronolley. They have been holding seminars every May for a number of years. Our other group in Manchester is under the direction of Steve Sijuwade who attended the weekend with a number of his students. Steve will be holding his annual seminar in November.

The training was attended by the instructors of many of our Seiwakai clubs from up North as well as their students. It seems that most of the black belts came for at least one of the 2 days. Unfortunately some work on weekends. As I constantly mention these teachers and their students travel all over the North and a good number will be coming to our next 2 seminars in Oxford (6th and 7th June) and Isle of Sheppey (8th and 9th August) to take part in the training. Although it's only May we have already had three two day intensive seminars this year, all very well supported. More than 50 turned up for training in Manchester.

During the 2 days we managed to get in a fair amount of Randori and this gave me the opportunity to introduce some of the techniques I personally like from the less sports directed form of training. To this end, in basic training we practised many techniques that are seldom used in most people's Kumite. For example Haito uchi, (sometimes used), Shita Tsuki, Shotei, Furi Uchi and others. Also trained was used of Gojuryu Kokutsu dachi, used for attacking and defensively and incorporated with multiple techniques. I favour a lot of forms of tai sabaki and moving around an opponent as opposed to stepping back to an attack. I especially like training "attack the attack". It is always difficult to change people from a one technique repertoire, to using combinations when attacking.

We worked on and corrected mistakes being made by some with the training syllabus. What I do find across the board at seminars is poor Kansetsu Keri—so time was given to this kicking technique.

I have noticed that many teachers do not actually teach—they stand and simply call out the time. Very little or no correction. I see little point in this approach as standards do not improve. We should not be going to seminars to simply exercise—that we do in our various Dojos /clubs. Seminars are for learning – for sharing and hopefully receiving new information or a deeper understanding of what we may already know.

I took time to teach some children how to perform Mawashi Uke and especially to show the teachers a very simple way to teach this. It is understandable if very low graded students find this difficult but practitioners of green belt and above should not need to be taught this. It is a failing of the instructor if they cannot- it is not a student problem.

We also managed to get in a fair bit of Nekoashi training, especially as to how we should use this as part of a defence for groin kicking (kin geri). A fair amount of work was on various forms of kin geri—and how to defend against this.

We certainly did not ignore Kata. As always we worked repeatedly on Sanchin and Tensho. For

the higher grades we worked on the mixing of relaxation and tension in tensho and the method of Ibuki (breathing) for both Kata was explained and practised repeatedly each session. I emphasised the difference in breathing as well as how tension is utilised differently in each Kata. The timing of Mawashi uke in both Kata was both demonstrated and trained.

Besides the two basic Kata, Sanchin and Tensho we practised a variety of Kata. Why they are considered basic I will never know—they take years and years to understand. Of course they can be learned superficially in a very short time. We worked with Gekisai 1 and 2, Saifa, Seiunchin, Sanseiryu, Shisochin and Seisan. As I do in many seminars I showed Kata application with a few variations of the same movement. I also showed how some Kata techniques can be applied in Kumite. I am not in favour of Ippon Kumite type practise or the way Bunkai (applications) are commonly practised. We are ultimately to use these techniques in real situations—therefore with this in mind timing and good footwork must be developed via randori and then more intensive kumite. However, some techniques cannot be applied in kumite – unless we want unnecessary injuries.

I was pleased that I could correct movements in various Kata. Simple changes easily adapted. What it does show is the importance of seminars for instructors and where possible for both days. If you attend one day on a regular basis you will eventually fall behind in Kata development. We need to constantly raise the bar.

My thanks to Ian and Gary for their great hospitality and a very well managed and organised seminar.

Goju Ryu Karatedo Seiwa Kai India
Krishnagiri Club, Tamil Nadu, India
Submitted by Elangovan Srinivasan



Kyu Grading Panal and Students



Goju Ryu Karatedo Seiwa Kai Australia

2016 JKF Gojukai Championships in Tokyo

Submitted by Glenn Stephenson

I just got an email from JKF Gojukai Australia President John Hart regarding the 2016 JKF Gojukai Championships in Tokyo. The seminar, grading, and championships will be held in Japan at the end of August. I believe this is so that it will miss the Olympics (August 5 through 21).

The times and venues are as follows:

- The seminar will be held on Thursday 25th and Friday 26th August 2016 at Nihon Karate-da Kaikan.
- The grading will be at the same venue as the seminar on Friday 26th August. I hope this helps with travel planning arrangements.
- The championships will be held on Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th August 2016 at Yokohama Bunka Taikukan (Yokohama Cultural Gymnasium) The address is: Kanagawaken Yokohama-shi Nakaku Horou-cho



Interview with Shuji Tasaki, Hanshi

By Shihan Leo Lipinski

Editor's Note: Shuji Tasaki Hanshi, the founder of Goju Ryu Karatedo Seiwa Kai, was indisputably one of the greatest teachers of Karatedo of all time. He passed away in 2011, and this illuminating interview was conducted several years prior to his death.



Background Information: Shuji Tasaki was well known as Gogen Yamaguchi's most competent fighter having proven himself in the very first All Japan Karate-do Gojukai Championships in 1963 which was basically a day's competition of knock-out, knock down, break bones and finish them off matches. Having earned the cup for first place it set him as a target to be dealt with in the Dojo.

Today Shuji Tasaki Shihan is a much easier going person, with a heavy and strong voice and a father-like teacher's touch. He left Gogen Yamaguchi's organization in 1972 to form his own, Seiwakai. However today he remains close to Goshi Yamaguchi and attends functions of the organization. He attended the JKGA 50th anniversary as a senior and respected Sempai / Shihan. Today he is Hanshi of Gojuryu Karate-do Seiwakai and one of the most senior members of the JKF Gojukai.

Tasaki Hanshi won the All Japan Goju Kai championships with a broken arm, and he is also a renowned practitioner of Ikebana (Japanese flower arranging). These two penchants of Tasaki Shihan – fighting and flower arranging – reveal the true *go* and *ju* (hardness and softness) of his personality. Yamaguchi Sensei gave Tasaki Hanshi his nickname, Goshu. This is an abbreviation of his first name Shuji and Go being hard, meaning hard/tough Shuji.

The following is a time line of Tasaki Hanshi and his achievements:

- 1933 – January 20th – Born in Tokyo Japan.
- 1951 – Joins the Yamaguchi's Asakusa *All Japan Karatedo* Gojukai Gojuryu Dojo.
- 1952 – Grades to Shodan in Yamaguchi Gojukai Go-juryu Karatedo.
- 1954 – Grades to Nidan in Yamaguchi Gojukai Goju-ryu Karatedo.
- 1957 – Grades to Sandan in Yamaguchi Gojukai Go-juryu Karatedo.
- 1958 – Begins teaching under Gogen Yamaguchi.
- 1961 – Grades 4th Dan and Jokyo Renshi license issued by Yamaguchi Gojukai.
- 1964 – Shihan license issued by Yamaguchi Gojukai.
- 1965 – Grades to 5th Dan in Yamaguchi Gojukai Gojuryu Karatedo.
- 1966 – Shihan Kyoshi license issued by Yamaguchi Gojukai.
- 1970 – Grades to 6th Dan JKF Gojukai.
- 1972 – Founds Seiwakai (JKF Gojukai) Gojuryu Karatedo.
- 1974 – Continues teaching Gojuryu Karatedo at his Dojo in Oshiage Tokyo, Japan.
- 1974 – Appointed JKF National Instructor.

- 1975 – Grades to 7th Dan, JKF Gojukai.
- 1986 – Acquired the grade JKF Gojukai 8th Dan.
- 1986 – Acquires the Shihan license of Hanshi.
- 2009 – Awarded the grade JKF Gojukai 9th Dan
- 2011 – January 30th Shuji Tasaki Hanshi passed away of illness

INTERVIEW WITH SHUJI TASAKI, HANSHI:

When and where you born?

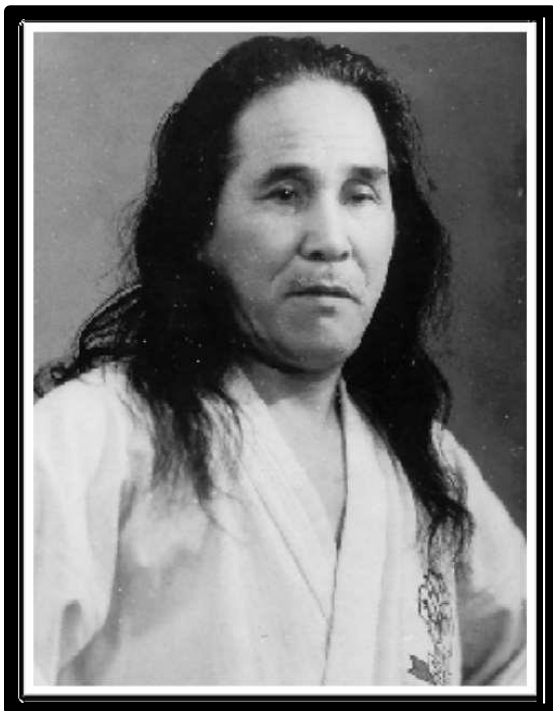
I was born January 20th, 1933 in Tokyo, and began training in Goju ryu on the August 15, 1951. I am now the Vice Chief Director of Federation Goju Kai and Official National Instructor for the JKF. (Japanese Karate Federation)

What was Available when you started training?

There was boxing, and other forms of karate, but schools where not rigidly organized. No particular names.

Why did you choose karate?

There were many foreigners in Tokyo. It was for self-defense and strong fighting. There were many street fights and I wanted the ability to fight back.



Left: Gogen Yamaguchi

Which Ryu did you begin with and why?

Yamaguchi sensei was my first teacher, and the only teacher for me. Yamaguchi recognizes me as one of his few remaining students. I chose this style because of the chance. Former Goju Kai in Asakusa [district of Tokyo]. He was living there. He only had 6 to 8 students that Yamaguchi personally taught. I remember Nakaishi sensei who was directly under Yamaguchi. I do not know where that sensei is now. There were two other senior instructors – Miyama Motomasa and Onishi Kenichiro sensei.

What was training like in those days?

Compared with now – it is heaven. In those days it was hell. Lessons are now more scientific. The first 8 to 10 months were of building the basics intensively and physical strength to be able to use the techniques as a good foundation. No karate techniques were taught in the first 10 months.

What kind of basic training?

Jumping, sit-ups etc. to the limit of endurance. Many fell. It was no fun and very few continued. Very few now take that kind of training.

What do you remember as a highlight?

Yamaguchi Sensei did everything with the students – even then. If I did this today, there would be no students. Learn how to breathe – a fundamental karate technique. That is why at my age, I can be more than equal to the younger instructors.

You won the first Goju Kai tournament. What are your views of tournaments then and now, and how do you feel about the change?

The first Goju Kai tournament held in 1963/64 and I won the finals representing Tokyo. The second tournament was in Wakayama, and I took 2nd place. Hirano of Wakayama won, he was three years younger.



In the same year at the second tournament, the Federation was born, asking not to have further tournaments until 13 years ago. The difference was in kumite. There was no point system then, only dojo-style kumite, and all of the presently forbidden techniques were permissible. The Federation was formed in 1965, and instead of dojo-style kumite, the point-kumite system was developed. Goju Kai, Wado Ryu, Shito Ryu, and Shotokan made the Federation. I have had a preference for teaching the dojo-style kumite versus the point-style. That is “teach as he was taught.”

As long as one has mastered the Goju Ryu kumite, the other can be adjusted. If trained in Goju Ryu dojo kumite you can continue after reaching middle age. Point fighting would not result in this. If you lose your speed you lose your karate.

By application, Goju dojo kumite gives you the edge, as it is not dependent on your youth. In karate if you step back you lose everything. Side stepping is good, younger have speed, older are slower. Therefore you must step in to receive. If you train only in modern karate, once you are passed 30 years your karate is over.

What place do you see Karate having in the modern world?

Firstly, spiritually/mental strength. The real value for him today, without this, in this world of trifling things and conflicting values, it is hard to survive. It takes endurance to deal with a definite purpose and target.

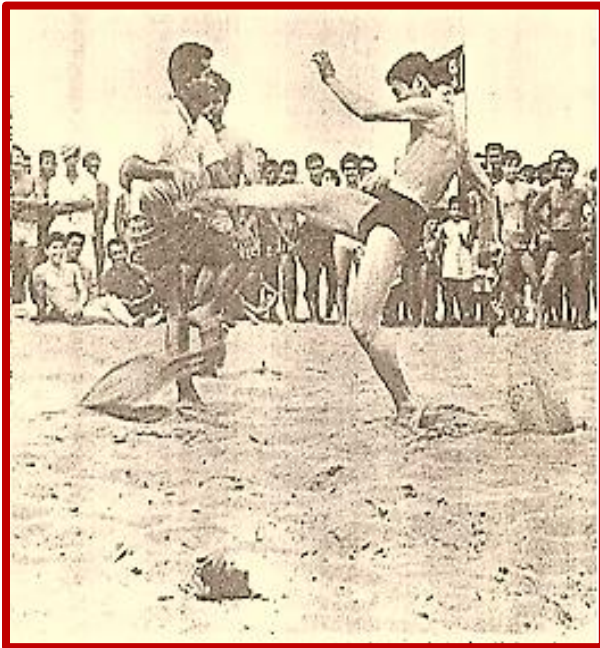
Have you ever since starting, had to defend yourself?

Countless times. These happenings were in my 30's and 40's – These years, people tend to stay away – sensing the need to do so, they stay away from him instinctively.

Who were your greatest rivals in kumite?

Even in kumite, the rivals were many of his seniors, because of the mental and spiritual pressure they give out, Mayama sensei specifically. This is possible out of respect for their senior/sempei status. There has been no one among his contemporaries and juniors that he considers a particular rival. Mr. Nishi and Mr. Wakayama could have this position. They had very strong reputations. They did not attend either tournament in the early days, so we never found out how good they were.

Even today the above two are still practicing in their own dojos. Not really rivals, he wanted to emulate those 20 years ago. In Kansai area, they still produce very good students. The gap has not been filled. The gap referred to is that Goju Ryu started near Kyoto first, and has produced more and better students than the Tokyo area.



Left: Gosen Yamaguchi (left), Shuji Tasaki (right), in the 60s.

What are your favorite techniques?

Kicking , haito and urauchi

Below: Shuji Tasaki, Hanshi



What do you consider important in your teaching?

My attachment to my students. A teacher notices the difference and tries to think of ways to improve each individual student. He also respects the individuality and characteristic of each person and tries to build them up mentally and physically.

Each generation seems to have their own great karate-ka. Of Tazaki it was him and Yamamoto before and after, who were the special ones? Ishihara and Chiba were his primary students. Shuji Sakamoto is another, and Takahashi is the third. Ishihara was exceptionally strong. There were 5- 6 others but they no longer train.

What is the meaning of OSS!!!!?

It is an important Japanese Value. OSS means “Endure and suppress yourself.” It should not be used frivolously. Often I ask people if they know what they are saying. It is an abbreviation of Oshi Shinobu.

With regards to Goju Kai as opposed to traditional Goju Ryu, Can you tell us about your Ryu and how it differs?

Fundamentally, very little difference. If there is, it is the mannerisms of individual students acquired from their sensei. There are unnecessary superficial differences. In older times Okinawa Goju had no kumite. Kumite was developed in Japan, and they only recently started kumite in Okinawa. They also now do tournament kumite. Goju dojo kumite has a strong reputation for its effectiveness, especially in the days of the old school. It was developed and contributed to, and preserved by all instructors. What has been preserved is the central idea of what it was, in the early days, central to all styles.

Miyagi sensei originated Goju Ryu, and the kumite is very close to the kata. Techniques should be applicable in kumite. We must remember the difference between mere kata forms and the actual use of techniques in combat and kumite.



What is the Japanese Federation Goju Kai and the JKF?

Goju Kai was formed in 1965 and joined the FAJKO (which later became the JKF) in the same year. The Goju Kai was originally formed by Gogen Yamaguchi sensei. After a few years Yamaguchi quit – and the Goju Kai continued as renmei Goju Kai. Ujita sensei was the president. JKF is the official karate body in Japan and Okinawa.

What special incidents do you remember?

Asakusa dojo – in the years after the war, were violent years. When a student was promoted to black belt, he was to go into the street, bow to the first person, then hit him. If he went backwards it was no good. If he collapsed this was good. This of course cannot be applied today.

To finalize the interview, what relationship if any is there between SEIWA KAI and the late Gogen Yamaguchi's IKGA group?

None at all. As I told you, Gogen sensei was always my only teacher. I was a senior (Sempei) to his son, Goshi. We still remain on friendly terms. Our organizations are totally different.



Above: Interviewer Leo Lipinski Shihan