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USA SEIWA KAI NEWSLETTER

Dedicated to Traditional Goju Ryu Karatedo ISSUE 7: July / August 2014

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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.

Below: 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

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.

Left: Shuji Tasaki, Hanshi

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.

Left: Interviewer Leo Lipinski Shihan

This article can also be found at the following website:
<http://www.surreykarateacademy.co.uk/articles/shihan-leo-lipinski-interviews-tasaki-sensei/>



HEARING VOICES?

By Jim Pounds

I'm sitting here this morning contemplating my somewhat sore and stiff body, and wondering just what it is about training that causes me to feel it a bit more on some days than others. Not that I don't enjoy the sore muscles. The days I walk up a flight of stairs and am well aware of my quads for instance are enjoyable because they make me aware of my body. In an era when so many people seem to be completely out of touch with their bodies, it's refreshing to know I have one.

The wonderful thing about our training is the direct cause and effect relationship inherent to it. On one obvious level, if I do not block my opponent's punch, I get smacked – and that, more often than not, hurts! Very basic cause and effect at work. On a more subtle level, our training helps us to realize that to improve and advance, we must practice, practice, practice - often times regardless of how we are “feeling” that day. The longer we train, the less important it is how we feel about it. We simply train for the sake of training and it becomes a very basic exercise in “chop wood, carry water”. We let go of the baggage of feelings and train anyway.

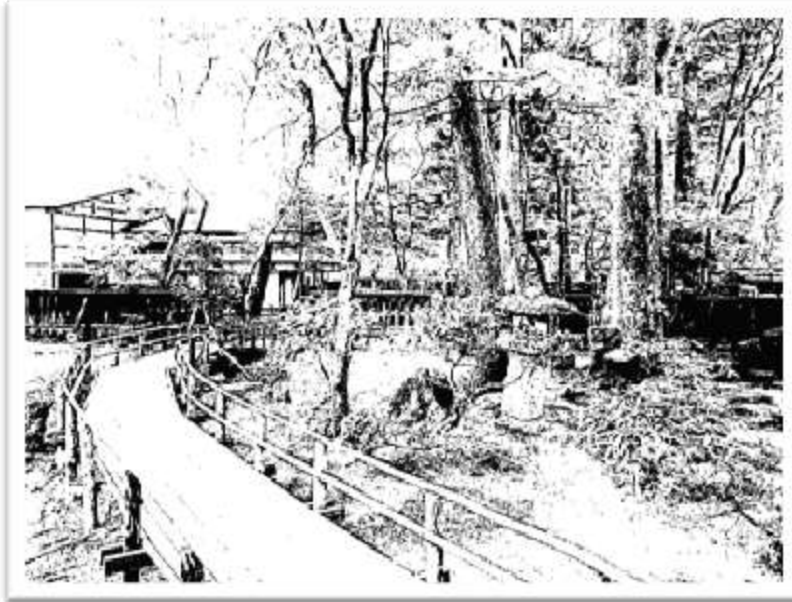
Short on cash this month? Train anyway. Bad day at the office? Train anyway. Spouse filing for divorce? Train anyway. Muscles sore and bruised? Train anyway. How we are feeling simply doesn't have much to do with it, and if pandered to, will often allow us to rationalize why we should not train. I doubt I will get to choose how I feel on the day I am attacked on the street. More likely than not, it will be a terrible, distraction-filled day that has me so low that my usual level of awareness, of zanshin, is not up to par, or I wouldn't be attacked in the first place. We must overcome our feelings about training – both excessive exuberance and extreme ambivalence if we are to arrive at the true essence of training. I am that I am. As George Leonard so succinctly wrote: “Zen and the martial arts are not things that you learn or do. They are what you are.”

Once again, we are talking about cause and effect. The cause is that we train consistently. We train in spite of our feelings because they become quite irrelevant. The result is that we become more self-actualized martial artists.

My students will recall hearing this story several times. When I was younger, I belonged to a particularly rough dojo, in which there was a very real risk of being injured, because our sensei worked with the police as well as barrio students and always stressed the most realistic training possible. It was fast, furious, and hard hitting! In retrospect, I think in some ways it was counter

-productive because of the tendency to revert back to brute strength and street techniques rather than the karate techniques I've come to find work just fine.

Needless to say, it was rough! I had cracked ribs and black eyes on more than one occasion. I was brave enough to be a student in this dojo, but still felt that dreaded fear in the pit of my stomach every evening when I was getting ready to head for the dojo.



Because of that fear, my mind would start into self-talk in an attempt to sabotage my training by allowing me an out by rationalization. It would begin with something like, "Boy it's been a long day and you worked really hard. You've already trained twice this week. You ought to stay home and rest your body." Meanwhile, I would be packing my equipment bag.

Next it would try guilt me with, "You haven't been spending enough time with your wife lately. You ought to take the

night off and spend time with her." Meanwhile I'd be driving to the dojo.

Finally, it would remember that it was Monday Night and The Raiders and 49ers were playing. Maybe I should reconsider. By that time I would be bowing into the dojo! The self-talk never abated. I learned to hear it yet remain determined to train. And you know what? The self-talk finally stopped forever. It never found a willing audience. All of these rationalizations were real and some even had merit, but I never let them deter me from training. Now, I train because I train – without thought of gain. It is not what I do. It is what I am.

So this morning I'm contemplating my somewhat stiff and sore body. A result of training. Maybe kumite. Maybe a series of focus exercises designed to improve leg strength. I don't remember. It's an effect of training. That makes it okay. And I'll be at the dojo tonight.

* The Zen Way to the Martial Arts. Taisen Deshimaru. From the Introduction by George Leonard. E.P. Dutton Co. 1982



Japan Seminars 2014: Seiwa Kai Goju Ryu Karatedo and JKF Goju Kai Blogs by Des Tuck



Day 1: Believe it or not, I'm off to Japan for the 9th time, this time to partake in 11 actual training days of 6-7 hours a day of karate. This year I'll be celebrating my 60th birthday here, and despite this activity not being age-appropriate, I've decided to do it anyway.

This year marks the 7th year since I passed my test for Rokudan (6th degree black belt) with the All Japan Karate-do Federation Goju Kai, and this means I'm eligible to test for 7th degree with the Federation. I was awarded a 7th degree in Seiwa Kai, our club, last year (on my 59th birthday) and had to wait a year before attempting the JKF Goju Kai test. My, how time flies.

Usually I just come here for the annual Seiwa Kai International seminar which is 6 days of training. This usually involves a total of about 11 days away from home. This time I'll be here for 19 days because of the extra training needed before the test. To my knowledge there is only one other person in the Western Hemisphere who has passed this test, so if I succeed, it will be quite an honor. The result isn't certain by any means, but I'm going to give it my best shot.

You may ask, why do I do this? I don't really know. But I do know that getting together with old friends, eating incredible food and drinking like a fish have something to do with it. Oh, and there's karaoke too.

Also the feeling of being physically primed, even if it only lasts for 2 or 3 weeks, makes it worth doing. It's also a way of escaping that crazy world we live in for long enough to gain perspective on the important things in life.



Day 2: The ride to Omagari was uneventful. It's about 3 1/4 hours and I must have had a good night's sleep because I usually snooze on the ride but didn't feel tired enough this time. The transition from built-up suburban areas to the wooded hills of the Akita area, where Omagari is located, is quite sudden. Northern Japan is more sparsely populated than the southern part and the greenery is a little magical. One could almost imagine Samurai riding out of the forests.

Below: The front entrance to and my room at Mr. Fujiwara's Ryokan (hotel)



Left: One of the hazards in Mr. Fujiwara's hotel is the stairs. They're made for Japanese-sized feet. This pic was taken with heels pressed back against the vertical riser. You have to really watch it going down.

Day 3: I had expected to start training today but was told that we were going to go sightseeing in Sendai and I was expected to come with. So off I went at about 9:30 am with Leo, Gosia, and Fujiwara Sensei. Sendai, as you may recall, is

the city that was badly damaged in the earthquake that caused the tsunami which created all the problems in Fukushima. It is about 120 miles west of the Fukushima nuclear power plant, which is a bit too close for comfort. The seminar and grading will be held there on July 24 and 25, and we will be staying there for a total of four days, so I expect to be able to give a glowing report afterwards.

Today's jaunt to Sendai turned out to be a bit of a bust. Fujiwara Sensei said he had to attend a short meeting and then we would go sightseeing but things didn't quite work out as planned. For a start, it was raining, and for another, it was about a 3 hour drive. When we got there, the meeting went on much longer than planned and the three of us sat around inside a recreational building for almost three hours before getting in the car to go back.

Day 4: We did some serious training today, although only 4 hours in total. I was happy that my kata (forms) got qualified approval from Leo, which gives me hope that I might even pass this test.

Mr. Fujiwara built a new dojo next door to his hotel a few years ago, and that's where we trained. There were only about 6 of us so we got some individualized attention. This is much better than training in a group of 60, where you have to be lucky to be noticed.

I always learn something new when I train with Mr. Fujiwara, and this time, he clued me in to a few things that are keyed to the higher grades. There are different ways to do the same technique, depending on your level. Obviously the degree of sophistication increases as you move up, and one of the challenges of teaching is that you're generally teaching to a lower level than your own, which means you often end up doing the technique at the less sophisticated level. When you go for your own test, you then have to re-learn the technique the correct way for your grade. It's complicated.

Four hours of training today was a nice way to get prepared for the six hour a day sessions that will be coming up beginning Wednesday. Normally we arrive on the Tuesday and on the Wednesday, jump over the waterfall.

People began arriving today for the main seminar, which starts on Wednesday. We had groups from Australia, Western Canada (Calgary), and from the US. More will come tomorrow from the UK, Portugal and more Australians and Canadians.

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Day 5: Today was a serious training day, although the total number of hours on the dojo floor was only 4 hours. Our group still consisted of about 8 people who came before the main crowd arrived for the seminar which begins officially on Wednesday.

Mr. Fujiwara really knuckled down on the people who are testing (including me) to check our standard for the particular kata (forms) we are required to do, and began the rigorous detail correction which is needed to hammer us into shape so that we can at least have a reasonable

chance of passing.

I always learn many new things here each time I come, and today was no exception. Unless you have a smattering of martial arts knowledge, the subtleties would probably be lost in the explanation, but it has to do with timing, footwork and form, for the most part.

Goju Ryu is a very graceful circular style of karate, and for that reason, women are particularly capable of performing the more advanced kata. Its moves flow beautifully yet when you understand the application of the techniques, you realize how brutal they can be. It's not about whether you can beat someone to the punch. It's about getting someone to submit to you without them realizing its happening.

The afternoon's training wasn't too hectic, but I was grateful to one of the Australians, Jamie Duggan, for pointing out how I could correct a difficulty I was experiencing with a particular kick at the beginning of my test kata. It is called a 'kansetsu-geri' which means "joint kick" and given the fact that I've had double hip resurfacing which removed the ligament connecting the acetabulum with the femoral head, I've always worried about stressing the joint too much when doing the downward motion of the kick.

Basically the kick requires you to lift your knee quite high and then drive your heel downwards through a person's knee joint, causing them to collapse. There's a sudden stop at the end of the kick, which is the point at which you bring your knee back up, but the impact at the end of it is quite severe. So the shock of stopping is what has caused me to think that I might damage my hip joints.

We all help each other, and Jamie showed me a way to angle the foot on the supporting leg which causes less stress to the joint on the way down. Last year I helped him correct a problem that had been dogging him for years, and he reminded me that one good turn deserves another.

Day 6: Our seminar began today with all seriousness. Hours of basic training followed by more hours of kata (forms.) Luckily the weather is about 10-15 degrees cooler than it usually is, which didn't stop us from sweating buckets, but it was a lot more comfortable than expected. It even drizzled a bit which cooled the air even more.

We have participants from US, UK, Italy, Australia, India, Iran, Canada (Calgary and Sudbury), and Iran. Some will be arriving from Portugal shortly. Total head-count is about 60.

Our style, Goju Ryu, has two kata which utilize isometrics, i.e. you squeeze your muscles while breathing rhythmically with your movement. This develops a hard core and great strength without adding much bulk. Although the movements are very slow, anyone who has tried isometric movement will tell you how tiring it is to hold your muscles tense for any length of time.

In addition to this, of course, there is technique which must be perfected. So although it looks relatively easy when someone shows it to you, actually doing it correctly is a far cry from first impressions. It can literally take several decades to learn to do these forms, known as Sanchin

and Tensho, with the appropriate form and understanding of the movements. And as Mr. Fujiwara often says - "head understand, body not understand."

Part of the exercise involves checking that the muscles are tensed correctly. This requires someone to smack down on you really hard on the shoulders, sides, butt and legs. They also check that your groin area is protected by kicking you between the thighs. So you really have to pay attention.

We didn't experience that today, but I expect it will happen one of these days, and definitely at the second seminar in Sendai.

By lunchtime, I was ready for some food and a nap, which I was able to have. Three of us - Leo, Vassie Naidoo and myself - are privileged to be the senior non-Japanese Seiwakai members in the world in terms of longevity with the organization. The immediate benefit is we get a ride with Mr. Fujiwara to and from the training, which is really handy.

As usual we went over to the supermarket for something to eat. You can buy some really good sushi for about \$4 - \$5, which goes to show that Japan isn't as expensive as some might think. Afterwards, I had a nice nap and then woke at 1:45 to go back to the Budokan (training hall.)

The afternoon training consisted mainly of us doing our kata appropriate for our grade level, which meant I could practice for my test. The kata which I have to do, Kururunfa, has a very difficult couple of moves at the beginning. Apparently 90% of the people who fail the 7th Dan test do so during the first two moves. It requires a sideways step into a cat-stance, a very intricate blocking movement with both arms while twisting your body, and a kansetsu-geri (joint kick) after which you have to bring your knee up and hold it for a few seconds before putting your foot down.

I had lots of trouble with my balance after the kick because of having to remain with your knee raised while balancing on the other leg.

Since I've had both my hips resurfaced with metal, I don't have a ligament between the femoral head and the acetabulum (hip socket), so I always worry that if I do a really powerful downward kick, it might have some effect on the integrity of the joint. However what I didn't realize until today is that my real problem was my supporting foot was turned sideways at too much of an angle, which over-stressed my supporting knee.

This was pointed out to me by Jamie Duggan, the Australian guy I mentioned in a previous blog. Last year I pointed out an error he was making with his foot position and when he corrected it, it made a huge difference to his technique. It was kind of like taking a thorn out of a lion's paw. He returned the favor today, and helped me rectify the balance problem I was having. A true example of how one good deed beget another.

It gave me a lot of confidence in doing the kata to have this corrected, so when the time came for us to demonstrate, of the five people who did it, I was told mine was the best. That doesn't mean

it's good enough for me to get through the test but it was certainly encouraging to hear that I'm in with a chance.

Later, I went to Vassie's room and a bunch of people joined us for some wine and chit-chat before we headed in to dinner. This is a picture of Vassie and Craig Vokey during that mellow time.



After dinner, Mr. Fujiwara and Leo entertained us with stories of the late Tasaki Sensei, who was the founder of the Seiwakai, our organization. As I think I mentioned in previous years, Mr. Tasaki was an extremely scary man. My teacher, Leo, whom I've never seen express fear of anyone, says he used to feel nauseous before going into Mr. Tasaki's class in the 1960's and 1970's. That pretty much says it all. *(Editor's note: I have heard several very high ranking Seiwa Kai instructors say similar things – "I would shake when Mr. Tasaki would come near me." and*

"People would crap their pants when Mr. Tasaki was around.")

Day 7: Today was our second full day of training. The weather was fairly cool, in fact it even rained, but we still managed to sweat our guts out. Mr. Fujiwara got us started with some basic exercises and then we began exploring the intricacies of Kata Tensho, which, in some ways, looks a little like Tai Chi.

There are flowing hand movements that are quite graceful and are paired with breathing which makes for a very effective way of blocking and striking at close range. The kata can be done in slightly different ways depending on your skill level, and when you get to the higher skill levels, it becomes quite complicated.

Mr. Fujiwara went into great detail and maybe I have a lousy memory, but it always seems like I'm learning something new about something I've been doing forever.

The afternoon's training consisted of more kata, with some of us, including me, having to demonstrate what we had learned so far. People take a keen interest in what I'm doing because I'm testing for the highest Dan level in the group. I'm still making quite a few mistakes but according to Leo, I'm making good progress, and his opinion is really all I care about. I'm still feeling quite positive that I can pull this off but it's an uphill climb.

Day 8: Training was fairly hard this morning. The thing that really gets us foreigners is the amount of repetition that is done here in Japan training. Normally at home we have a 1-2 hour class. Here, we have a 3 hour session in the morning and another 3 hour session in the afternoon. The way you fill up 3 hours is you do things over and over and over and over, while being

corrected along the way.

The result is you develop superior muscle conditioning (or chronic injuries depending on how you train) and there's a much better chance of improving your form. Mr. Fujiwara seems to know just how far he can push us and then he pushes a little harder. He's really an excellent teacher, and one of the things that makes us respect him so much is he can always do more than we can, and do it much better.

Since he's about 66 years old, that's nothing short of remarkable. He still moves the way he did with I first met him about 22 years ago, in fact he probably moves better than that. It just goes to



show that if you have a teacher you can look up to, even if he's about 8 inches shorter than you, there's no limit to what you can learn. The afternoon session was dedicated to improving our kata performance, and we broke up into "Dan" groups for our particular form. I was lucky enough to be helped with my kata by Leo, Vassie and another Japanese instructor whose name I don't know, but whom I'm familiar with from previous visits.

Unfortunately at about 4:15 pm I felt a little muscle pull in my upper thigh, and rather than push my luck hoping it would get better by

itself, I decided to stop training and give it a bit of a rest for the remaining 45 minutes or so.

We have several health care professionals among us, and one of them is Rod Martin from Australia, who is a professional acupuncturist and healer. He put his elbows into my thigh in few places which caused me to scream in pain, but afterwards it felt pretty good. He said my legs were really tight, which the muscle spasms seem to confirm. I'm not surprised considering what I've put them through for the last five days.

After dinner, Mr. Suzuki, the interpreter whom I've known since 2001 came by. He usually takes us to karaoke and tonight's the night. Well, as you can see from the pictures, it was a wild and crazy affair.



Day 9: Our daily training started at 10 instead of 9 am today because the Budokan wasn't available for our use. We went to another fairly large location which was located in a residential area next to a playground and of all things, a rice paddy. This was just as well because since it was Sunday, we had about 30 extra Japanese karateka training with us, half of whom were kids and the other half, fairly experienced practitioners. Among them was a Mr. Saito, who was No. 2 in Japan in kata not long ago. He was the one who helped me a lot when I was grading for 6th degree black belt in 2007. He moves really beautifully and is still one of my role models.

We spent the morning practicing kata as one group and then in the afternoon, we broke up into our Dan groups and practiced our kata again and again and again and again and again. It's all about the repetition, you know.

It was quite hot today but luckily there was a cool breeze that made things bearable. People were quite hung over from the party last night, including Mr. Fujiwara, so I suspect that had some bearing on the training. Not that he was grumpy but he didn't balk at making us work quite hard on our basic movements for many cycles until we got it right.



I'm beginning to feel quite good, especially after realizing that the pain in the upper leg that I felt was my hip flexor that could be controlled by keeping my spine straight. Basically if you pull your chin back and keep your back straight, it relieves the pressure on the hip flexors, which are crucial if you want to lift your knees quickly for kicking. Strange that the positioning of the neck affects a

pain in the groin but there you have it - worked like a charm.

My plan to spend the rest day traveling with my Aussie friend, Chris McKenna, to Yokote Castle turned out to be a good one. After the usual delicious breakfast, I met Chris at Omagari Station where we took a local train to Yokote, a small town about a 20 min. train ride to the south west. Upon arrival, we found the way to the Castle well-signposted in English and were able to find it after about a 20 min. walk ending with a climb up a moderately steep hill.

The brochure we were given was in Japanese so I frankly don't know much about it but it was a smallish structure with the traditional stone base often found in Japanese castles. The grounds were picturesque and included a small lake with an orange bridge.

We went inside the castle and saw some relics of days gone by, including some leather armor worn by Samurai and a quaint wooden cannon. A steep climb to the top led us to a platform from where we could see the surrounding area for many miles.

We walked around the grounds a bit, and after spending about two hours there, decided we'd seen what we wanted to see and walked down the hill. Unfortunately we walked in the wrong direction, and after deciding we didn't want to walk any more, took a cab back to the railway station.



On the way up, Chris had spotted a hamburger and coffee place and since we were both keen to try it, went inside and rested our weary bodies. The hamburger was delicious as was the coffee - a real treat - but not inexpensive. The hamburger was about \$9 with no accompaniments, but I suppose if you want to eat American food in Japan, you have to pay the price.



Day 10: Training was, in a word, HOT. The temperature has risen here during the past few days and today looks like it will be another scorcher. Fortunately the humidity level has kept below 90 so there's some relief from that.

Mr. Fujiwara made us perform kata other than the ones we're doing for testing so it broadened the muscle conditioning a little, which wasn't a bad thing. It's just that it's getting quite close to testing time and I'd like to focus on what I have to do.

We did some partner work with some basic blocking, punching and kicking and I paired up with Allen Dabbagh, an Australian, who practices a slightly different version of Goju Ryu than I do. He was complaining that his arms were getting bruised from the way I was blocking, but I have to say I didn't feel a thing. Allen is one of the few people in the group who is slightly heavier than me but only by about 7 or 8 lbs. He's been quite successful in tournament in his age division, (he's 53 I think) and is a real estate broker in Sydney. If you're on Facebook, he's the one who got people to pull funny faces and take pictures with them.

I find that the more training I do, the better everything gets, including the way I feel, luckily. My muscles are getting used to the constant training and I'm not really looking forward to getting back to reality although in other respects I miss a lot about home, especially not being with Elena. Fortunately we're able to talk every day and it sounds like she's sewing up a storm with new fashions flying from her fingertips every few days.

Day 11: Today was the last day of training in Omagari and tomorrow, we head off to Sendai for the Japan Karate Federation Goju Kai seminar and grading. I will be attempting to pass the test for 7th degree black belt, for which I have prepared furiously for the last 10 days. I definitely feel very different than I felt when I got here. Much stronger and more confident of what I need to do.

Mr. Fujiwara trained us a little differently than he usually does, splitting the class up by grade level so that the advanced group was able to focus on more sophisticated applications rather than 'dumbing down' the entire process to the lower levels. This seemed to have worked well and while I didn't really learn much new, I did manage to hone my skills quite a bit and improve over the time I was here, which was my true goal. It was also great to meet up again with old friends who share my passion.

It's one thing to be able to improve at the age of 25, but at the age of 60, which I have just turned today, it's more of a challenge. I'm happy to report that everybody I trained with was unable to guess my age accurately within 10 years, so that gave me some comfort.

The morning's training consisted of doing partner work using various attack/defense

combinations and in the afternoon, we practiced our kata and then had to perform for the entire group. My performance went well and I received some compliments from people who matter.

After the training officially ended, there was a grading for our group, Seiwakai, for which I was on the grading panel. I don't know the results since I just turned in my score sheet, but most people seemed competent for the levels they attempted.

Afterwards we had quite a rowdy dinner where the wine, beer and sake flowed freely.



Day 12: Today we traveled from Omagari to Sendai, where the Japan Karatedo Federation Gojukai seminar will be held. It was a leisurely start to the day because our train only left at 12:46 pm so we had plenty of time to relax before heading to the station.

The train ride was just under two hours and when we arrived in Sendai I had to get my next Japan Rail Pass which took about half an hour. Craig Vokey, our Canadian group head kindly stayed with me and we took a cab together to the hotel. Thanks to a communication error with the taxi driver, we first went to the wrong hotel and then when he took us to the right one, we realized we could have literally walked across the road and up half a block to the right one. The driver felt so guilty he only charged us the minimum amount.

Sendai is a beautiful modern city, and the stores resemble those in any large US city except they're neater and cleaner. The Sendai folks seem quite prosperous and it's a bit like a mini-Tokyo but much better organized and well-laid out. The view from our hotel window was quite picturesque.

Sendai is only about 60 miles from Fukushima so I must admit I was thinking about the radiation, but apparently the radiation in Sendai is less than in Brisbane, Australia, although I'm not sure about the fish. Anyway it was delicious and I didn't give it much more thought. A good time was had by all, especially me.

As most of you know, today was my birthday and the dinner was certainly a celebration. Afterwards we met up with some Canadians, a Brit and an Australian, and chatted in our hotel lobby until I was ready for some shut-eye. We had some good laughs, which were generated in large part by the alcohol that flowed.

Tomorrow is the first day of the seminar. The second day will begin with my grading, which will last all day, although my part will only last a total of about 10 minutes. It should be pretty grueling just to sit there all day.

Day 13: Today was the first day of the JKF (Japan Karate Federation) Gojukai seminar, the prelude to my test tomorrow. The proceedings are conducted in the Sendai City Gymnasium. Once inside we were greeted by a row of officials sitting at tables where they collected money for various things - seminar fee, dojo registration fee, etc. I met up with some of the instructors I've known and trained with since 1992 in various countries around the world, and it was nice to see most of them are still walking.

I also met up with various other karateka from other clubs than Seiwakai, whom I don't see much anywhere else. There were a few folks from New Zealand and a couple more Iranians and Australians but other than that, not too many additional ones showed up. Seiwakai is the largest club in the JKF Gojukai and it showed today since we constituted about 70% of the group.

The seminar itself was a bit of a let-down compared with what we'd been used to doing every day with Mr. Fujiwara. The pace was quite slow and the depth of teaching rather superficial. The demonstrations were also a bit disappointing. We really appreciated what we had done in Omagari with Mr. Fujiwara, who is one of the very best teachers in the JKF Gojukai, for sure.



The only real highlight was being taught by Mr. Akira Shiomi for an hour. Mr. Shiomi has been the coach for numerous World Kata champions and for kata (forms) is in a class of his own. I first met him in England and traveled with him to Austria and Slovakia as well a few times. He's really a class act. He's 80 years old and still very capable. Here's a picture of him taken by one of my colleagues.

He spent most of the time talking about really fascinating stuff and is hugely credible. Some teachers demonstrate things that make you wonder how long they'd last if you had to do kumite (sparring) with them. Not so Mr. Shiomi. He isn't scary like the late

Mr. Tasaki was (founder of Seiwakai) but he definitely knows his stuff. And he's in incredible shape. I've seen him do pushups like a 20 year old.

At the end of the afternoon session, we took the obligatory group picture. That's me on the left side of the picture running to get into the shot.



Day 14: To get to the testing location this morning, I took the subway from Sendai station to the gymnasium. When I arrived at the hall, I paid my 20,000 testing fee and Bingo! I was in!

There are 7 judges on the grading panel, one of whom is Mr. Fujiwara. Mr. Muramatsu, whom I have known for many years, is the head of the grading panel. Out of the 7, I count only two 'friendlies' so I'm going to have to do a good job. There are a couple of 'hostiles' for political reasons, sad to say.

This testing group is for 6th, 7th and 8th Dans and looking around the room, there were only three other foreigners there. The rest were Japanese - about 45 of them. After a brief introduction

and short speeches by a couple of the big-wigs, none of which I understood, we were instructed to leave the room while the 6th Dan testing was being conducted.

While sitting there waiting, one official and a couple of other test-takers looked at me in disbelief and asked if I was testing for 7th Dan. Perhaps they thought I had made a mistake because they didn't think foreigners ever made it this far. Actually they don't, so their surprise was sort of understandable.

The Iranian contingent arrived at about 10:30, including Nabi Ibrahimi, who was with us in Omagari. He discovered to his horror that he was supposed to be in the testing room already and I suggested that he try to get in the room since he'd come this far. I didn't fancy his chances though. The Japanese are sticklers for time, which is obvious when you take a train here. As it turned out, they wouldn't let him in, and he came all the way to Japan for his test for nothing. He got the training but that was all directed towards him getting his 6th Dan from JKF Gojukai and it must now wait for another time.

The 6th Dan group finished at 12:00 and the examiners took a lunch break, so there's more sitting around until they come back at 12:45. After lunch we were called into the room for our big event. All instructions were given in Japanese but next to me spoke some English and he whispered the essentials to me, probably because he saw the look of dismay on my face.

We went in groups of two for the first two kata, Sanchin and Tensho. Then we had to our individual kata. I felt ok about mine. The grading panel is inscrutable. You just don't know what they're thinking. There were 15 in the group and the entire thing took just under two hours for everyone.

Afterwards I took the subway back to the hotel together with my 'translator' who happened to be a long-time student of Mr. Shiomi, who I've previously mentioned was the coach of several world kata champions. He said my kata looked ok so we'll see.

A group of us went out to a really nice restaurant on the 7th floor of a building. We had someone with us who spoke Japanese, one of the instructors from Tokyo, and were able to negotiate a really good deal for a sort of family-style meal which was really incredible. There was much drinking and joke-telling and I got to bed at about midnight.

Day 15: Well, I found out that I did not pass my 7th Dan JKF Gojukai. It is obviously a disappointment but the only reason was that my 'kansetsugeri' which is a difficult kick, wasn't powerful enough. Since I've had both my hips resurfaced, I am not willing to kick any harder in case it causes damage, so that's the end of the road. Apparently my two other kata were very good but that wasn't enough. The Japanese don't give you any leeway for disabilities and there's

no way I would try any harder in the future. But I got this far and that's something to be proud of, I know.

I have mixed feelings about this but on the positive side, this has been an amazing trip and I've been glad to share parts of it with you. Considering that only one person in the Western Hemisphere has ever passed the JKF Gojukai 7th Dan test, I didn't feel so bad. Leo, my teacher told me that I had trained really hard and that he couldn't have done what I did during the past two weeks, and that meant a lot to me. Leo doesn't give out compliments unless he means them.

After we attended the opening ceremony of the international tournament, I left together with some Australians and Canadians on a trip to Yamadera, an 8th Century monastery up on a hill. We took a 1 hour train ride and emerged into blistering heat, probably in the high 90's, and immediately found an air conditioned restaurant for lunch.



After that we hiked up 1,170 steps to the top both the journey and the destination were amazing. Except for during training, don't think I've ever sweated that much in my life.

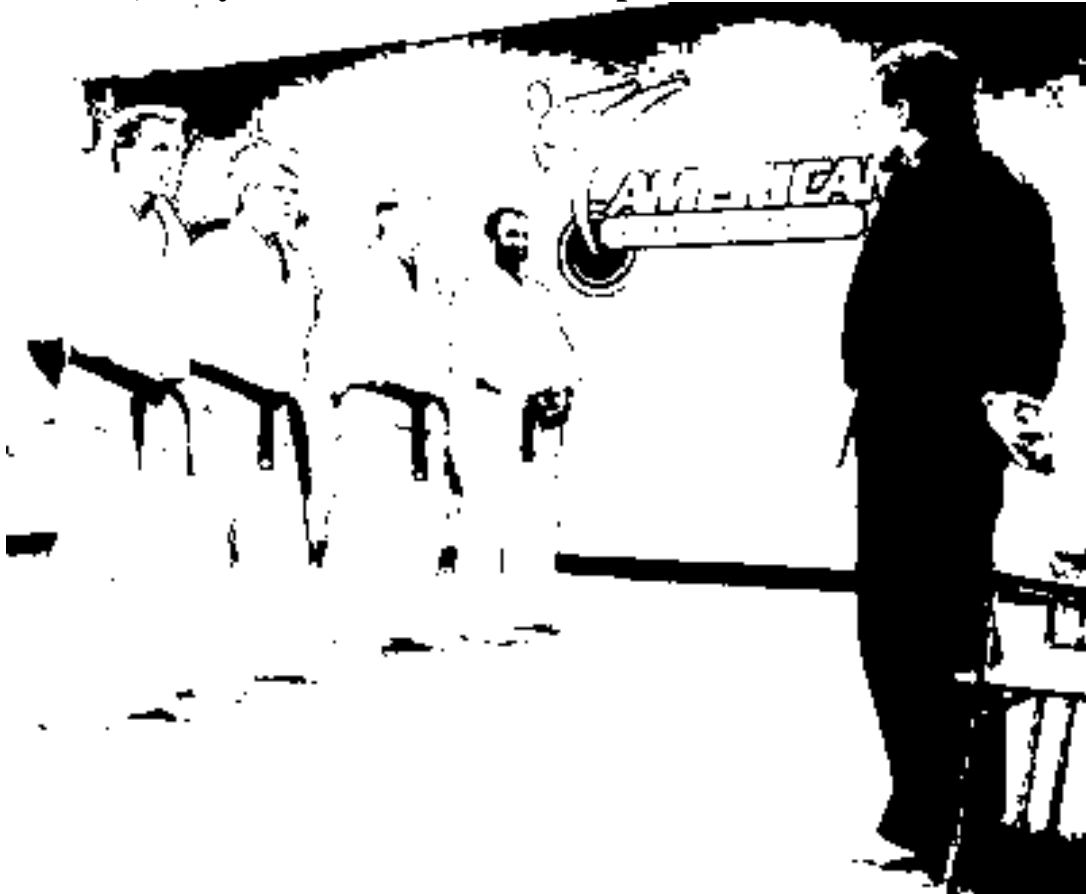
After spending about half an hour on the top, we descended back to the base of the hill,

where we headed for the nearest vending machine to re-hydrate. We then headed to the station to get the train back to Sendai. Fortunately the platform had an air conditioned waiting room because it was still blisteringly hot outside.

I will be leaving this afternoon for Tokyo where I will spend a day sightseeing and then will leave for home on Tuesday, arriving about 2 hours before I depart. That's how the International Date Line works.

Seiwa Kai Humor

Master, can you tell us the three-fold path to success in Karate-do.



Grasshoppers, the three-fold path to success is cash, check, or major credit card. That is the way of Karate-dough.



**Great Lakes Seiwa Kai Seminar
And Friendship Tournament
With Vassie Naidoo, Shihan
May 30, 31, and June 1
Bedford, Michigan**



The Friday May 30 seminar was reserved for brown and black belts.



**The Saturday May 31 seminars were open to all, and 53 Seiwa Kai Students attended.
(Most Attendees are in the photo above.)**

The Sunday, June 1 Friendship tournament had 53 competitors and all but a few were Seiwa Kai Students.



Above: Gold, Silver, and Bronze medalists in the 13 to 14 year old girls kata division

Thoughts from Yudansha on the Great Lakes Seiwa Kai Seminar:

Emily Mata (Junior Shodan – age 14) I was impressed with the extent of Shihan's Naidoo's knowledge, and he explained everything he taught us. He was so extremely in-depth with his information that I wouldn't be surprised if I absorbed just ten percent of what he taught us.

Daniel Pakulski (Shodan – age 18): I was surprised at how in-depth Shihan Vassie was with even simple things. I learned that I was bending my back leg in Zenkutsu Dachi. I will now focus more on keeping my back leg straight. I thought that Shihan Vassie was very insightful. I learned a lot in the two days he was with us. I enjoyed helping him demonstrate bunkai in front of the class. I am the type of person who learns the most when helping demonstrate. I also think the young kids got a lot out of the seminars too. I can't wait for Shihan Vassie to come back next year.

Gary Ewing (Shodan – age 55) Just a couple of thoughts about the seminar. I thoroughly enjoyed Vassie Shihan's demonstrations of kata and bunkai. I was not able to attend the morning session, but was told it was equally informative. I also missed out on junbi undo and the core training, so when I arrived I was told by Sensei Keith and Sensei Chris that I was not allowed to miss any of the sessions next year. Since then, I have taken some good-spirited teasing about what I missed.

The dinner was equally enjoyable. We able to discuss a wide variety of issues with, not only Vassie Shihan, but Shihan Cramer and other black belts in attendance. This was absolutely

priceless. I am, without a doubt, looking forward to Vassie Shihan's visit next year. I will be ready!

Chris Perry (Sandan – age 46) I appreciated Vassie Shihan's attention to detail. He broke the kata down to manageable chunks that everybody could comprehend and spent the time to explain why things are performed a certain way – including the demonstration of bunkai. I believe this level of detail helped everyone in attendance gain a deeper understanding of the katas without making the amount of information overwhelming. I am always impressed with the better understanding of the katas I have after the seminars. His love of teaching karate was evident by the passion he showed while leading us through the various classes over the weekend. As simple of a pattern that Sanchin kata is I continue to be amazed at the difficulty I have to perform it somewhat satisfactorily. The tips and suggestions that Shihan made to help me are some of the bigger items that I will continue to work on improving.

The spirited junbi uno was fun and invigorating! I have made a couple of adjustments to my ab exercise routine as a result! Vassie Shihan explained to us that we must constantly train our bodies thorough an invigorating junbi undo, and that this isn't something that any of us can omit from our training. I will try my best to ensure that all of our students continually experience this.

Keith Williams (Sandan – age 64): I thought Vassie Shihan's instruction was very detailed and clear. He presented and demonstrated Kata in a way that allowed me to easily visualize the applications.

Vassie Shihan did a great job with the young ones during the seminars on Saturday. This is my second year attending, and both years he presented something different that was fun for the young ones and older ones alike. He kept everyone's interest engaged and energy elevated because we all wanted to see what would happen next.

I wish to take a moment for a shout-out for my dear friend Mr. Gary Ewing to whom I have attempted to describe in words the fantastic learning experience of Friday night and Saturday morning, but words cannot convey the essence of the learning experience and the spiritedness of the junbi undo. I will try to do my best to have the same type of instruction and spirited junbi undo in my classes so that all who missed any of these seminar sessions do not feel deprived of these great experiences.

The Great Lakes and the Seiwa Kai

Here in Ohio and Michigan, our clubs are collectively referred to as Great Lakes Seiwa Kai, and there are two good reasons why. First of all we are Seiwa Kai, and secondly these lakes are the dominant feature of this region of the country. I suppose that many of us who live in this area tend to take the Great Lakes for granted, or assume that everyone has seen them and admired their beauty and majesty. When I was a child and teenager, my family had a summer home on the Lake Erie, and since we spent the entire summer and many autumn weekends there, the lake was an everyday sight for me. It doesn't always occur to me that people from other regions of the country will find these lakes to be a major point of interest.

On Sunday after the seminar and tournament, I was taking Vassie Shihan back to the Detroit Airport when he mentioned that he had never seen the Great Lakes. I was a bit surprised since both of us had been in Toronto the previous month, and Vassie Shihan had done some

sightseeing after the seminar. So I assumed that he had seen Lake Ontario since Toronto is located right on the lake. I can only suppose that the people in Toronto assumed (like I had) that a Great Lake wouldn't be a major point of interest.

At the moment when Vassie Shihan mentioned that he had never seen the Great Lakes, we were about half of a mile from Lake Erie (pictured below). So I exited Interstate 75 and we drove to the beach. It is an imposing and beautiful lake. The states of Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, and the Canadian province of Ontario all have shorelines on this majestic lake. This is particularly impressive when you realize that Lake Erie is the second smallest of the Great Lakes..



Great Lakes Facts:

Lake Superior is actually not a lake; it is actually a fresh-water inland sea – the largest of its kind. All of the four other Great Lakes plus three more lakes the size of Lake Erie could fit inside of Lake Superior. The water in Lake Superior could submerge all of North and South America in one foot of water.

Lake Huron is the second largest among the Great Lakes, and the fifth largest lake in the world. Moreover, Lake Huron and Lake Michigan are considered by some to form a single lake since they are connected at the Mackinac Straights and have the same mean water level.

Lake Michigan ranks third among the Great Lakes, and sixth among all freshwater lakes in the world. It is the only Great Lake that is entirely within the borders of the United States.

Lake Erie is the fourth-largest Great Lake in surface area, and the smallest in depth. It's the eleventh largest lake on the planet. There is alleged to be a 30 to 40 foot-long *monster* in Lake Erie. The earliest recorded sighting dates back to 1793.

Lake Ontario is the smallest of the Great Lakes in surface area, and second smallest in depth. It's the fourteenth largest lake on the planet.

WU XIANGUI

(Go Ken Ki)

1886 to 1940

IN THE 20TH CENTURY HE CAME from CHINA and EMIGRATED to OKINAWA
INFULENCING the WORLD of KARATEDO



Go Ken Ki

吳賢貴

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Wu Xiangui (known in Okinawa as Go Ken Ki) came to Okinawa from Fuzhou, China in 1912. He was a tea merchant who operated a successful business between China and Okinawa. He also had a profound impact on the development of karate in Okinawa. He taught the Southern Chinese gongfu (功夫 kung-fu) style of White Crane and “had a major influence upon Miyagi Chojun, Mabuni Kenwa, Kyoda Juhatsu, and Matayoshi Shinho.”ⁱ

Research provides an interesting narrative regarding Go Ken Ki and his training: “Through the day, Go Ken Ki [Wu Xiangui] worked in his shop, but at night he taught White Crane Boxing... Tuition was free but the students were expected to provide four or five raw eggs which were eaten during training.”ⁱⁱ This training took place in the second floor of his tea shop and involved both White Crane Boxing and supplemental training equipment which was used in hojo-undo to strengthen the body. Furthermore, some of the kata that he brought from China have become part of Okinawan and Japanese karate-do through Mabuni Kenwa and Kyoda Juhatsu. The kata Nipai or Nipaipo is a well-known example of this.ⁱⁱⁱ



Left: Wu Xiangui (Go Ken Ki) with Mabuni Kenwa

Mr. Wu’s influence on the development of karate was quite extensive: “In the 1920s Go Ken Ki [Wu Xiangui] was a member of a number of karate study groups which included Chojun Miyagi, Kenwa Mabuni, and Shinpo Matayoshi, so it is reasonable to assume that he passed on his version of Fukien White Crane to interested members of these groups.”^{iv} Consequently we know that beyond a doubt, Wu Xiangui’s teachings influenced the development of this lineage of karate.

WU XIANGUI and GOJU RYU

Wu Xiangui helped to shape the development of Goju Ryu. He was instrumental in Mr. Miyagi’s second trip to China in 1936. He accompanied Mr. Miyagi and acted as his interpreter. For ten days, the two men stayed as guests at the home of one of Mr. Wu’s White Crane Boxing students and tea trading partners. While in China, Mr. Miyagi demonstrated karate-do and was also introduced by Wu Xiangui to Miao Xing, a Monk Fist Boxing expert. There are some researchers who assert that it was through his exchange of ideas with Miao Xing that Mr. Miyagi was inspired to develop the Geki Sai kata.^v

However, it must be noted that this assertion about the development of the Geki Sai kata is not without dispute. Whereas no one disputes that the development the Geki Sai kata occurred after Chojun Miyagi return from his second trip to China, not all researchers agree that his experiences on this trip inspired the development of these kata. Mr. Morio Higaonna tells us that there was no connection between Mr. Miyagi’s trip to China and the development of the Geki Sai Katas: “Miyagi however, was unable to conduct any meaningful research on this trip.”^{vi} Furthermore,

Mr. Morio Higoanna tells us that Mr. Miyagi's inspiration for developing these kata was quite different: "He had two purposes in mind: the physical and spiritual development of the individual practitioner and increasing the popularity of karate."^{vii}

Mr. Morio Higoanna does acknowledge that Mr. Miyagi and Wu Xiangui (Go Ken Ki) were very close friends. They were frequently in each other's company and would often engage in recreational activities into the early hours of the morning: "When Miyagi and Go Ken Ki played Chuji (the game of Go), as they did frequently, Kina [a student of Mr. Miyagi] stayed up all night serving tea and attending to their needs."^{viii} Their friendship also involved their mutual love of the martial arts, and Mr. Miyagi often invited Wu Xiangui to his dojo "to come and demonstrate his art of white crane."^{ix}

Since Mr. Miyagi and Wu Xiangui (Go Ken Ki) were close friends, were members of the same karate study group, and often trained together in the martial arts, it is safe for one to infer that each of these men influenced the martial arts of the other. The depth and breadth of that influence will often be the subject of debate.

THE MYSTERY of the *BUBISHI*

Finally, there is speculation that Wu Xiangui is the person who introduced the *Wubeizhi* 武備志 (or *Bubishi* in Japanese) to the Okinawans. "Okinawa's *Bubishi* is an anthology of Chinese *gongfu* [kung-fu], its history, philosophy, and application."^x This book focuses on both White Crane kung-fu and Shaolin Monk Fist kung-fu. Additionally it is generally accepted that this text greatly influenced the development of Okinawan and Japanese karate-do.^{xi} It should also be noted that Goju Ryu (which means the hard and soft style) was named after a passage in this text: "The way of inhaling and exhaling is hardness and softness."^{xii}

It is surmised by some researchers that Wu Xiangui brought the *Bubishi* to Okinawa when he arrived in 1912. Mr. Wu's nephew, Go Seibi "stated that his uncle gave him a copy of a book which was almost identical to the *Bubishi* in terms of content."^{xiii}

Although no one knows who actually authored this martial arts text, and no one is absolutely certain who first brought it to Okinawa, all are in agreement that this text was influential in the development of karate-do. Nonetheless, we are certain that Wu Xiangui possessed an early copy of the text, and that he found it important enough to bequeath it to his nephew.

No one can deny that Wu Xiangui (Go Ken Ki) was instrumental in the development of Okinawan karate-do. He contributed to Mr. Mabuni's Shito Ryu, Mr. Kyoda's To'on Ryu, and Mr. Miyagi's Goju Ryu. Moreover, it is possible that he introduced the *Bubishi* to the Okinawans which further influenced the development of karate-do.

End Notes are on page 33

Editor's Note: The following article about Shihan Vassie Naidoo's work with inner-city kids recently appeared in the *Blue Pacific News*.

Local seventh-degree black belt sensei will take kids on whale watching trip

By Cristian Vasquez

When Sensei Vassie Naidoo, a seventh degree black belt graded by the Japanese Masters in Japan, came to America in 1980, he was already dedicated to working with inner city kids. On Saturday, May 17, Sensei Naidoo will expand on his efforts when he takes a group of kids on a whale-watching trip out of Doc 52 in Marina del Rey. The trip will take place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

"They seem so excited," Sensei Naidoo said. "I just want to see the light on their faces, their smiles and happiness. Hopefully we see

some whales."

Naidoo, whose dojo is located at 2202 Pico Blvd. in Santa Monica, has continuously served inner city children with classes, uniforms and belts even when these children could not afford it. Recently, Sensei Naidoo has been working at a charter school in South Los Angeles, Center for Advance Learning. His idea for the whale-watching trip was born from an experience that occurred not too long ago.

"Last year I got them (kids) to come to the dojo in Santa Monica and I had all my black belts show up and we all worked with the kids

and they had a fantastic time," Sensei Naidoo said. "Then we ordered pizza and juices and took them to the park opposite and and they had a really fantastic time. This year I decided that I should get some sponsors and take them on a boat cruise whale watching. Most of the kids have not been to the Westside, they have not been whale watching and they have not been on a boat. They were really, really excited about this."

Sensei Naidoo left South Africa due to political reasons, the Apartheid, came to America in 1980, where he shared his passion for karate with those willing to commit.

"It started out very small by working out in the park and people watched me," Sensei Naidoo said. "That is how I started my school. In the early 1990s I decided to do what I did in South Africa, which was to teach karate to inner city kids by helping the kids in the schools and to keep them off of drugs and away from street gangs."

Sensei Naidoo was even featured in 1998 on NBC's "Unsung Heroes" and was named one of the nation's top 50 unsung heroes. He welcomes all children willing to learn to his dojo, regardless of means.

"If they can't afford it, they come and train in my dojo for free because I try to help them in that way," Sensei Naidoo said.

To learn more, persons interested can contact Sensei Naidoo at his studio at (310) 399-6955, his cell phone (310) 968-4862 or they can visit his website at: www.karateofla.com.



Photo courtesy of Suzie Kim

PASSION—Sensei Vassie Naidoo, a seventh degree black belt graded by the Japanese Masters in Japan, came to America in 1980. He remains dedicated to keeping inner city kids away from drugs and gangs, via karate.

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- ⁱ McCarthy, Patrick: *Bubishi*: page 41
- ⁱⁱ Cook, Harry: *Cook, Harry: Shotokan Karate*, page 12
- ⁱⁱⁱ McKenna, Mario: *Dragon Times*: Vol. 20 page 15
- ^{iv} Cook, Harry: *Cook, Harry: Shotokan Karate*, page 12
- ^v McKenna, Mario: *Dragon Times*: Vol. 20 page 15
- ^{vi} Higaonna, Morio: *The History of Karate*: page 56
- ^{vii} Higaonna, Morio: *The History of Karate*: page 92
- ^{viii} Higaonna, Morio: *The History of Karate*: page 65
- ^{ix} Higaonna, Morio: *The History of Karate*: page 64
- ^x McCarthy, Patrick: *Bubishi*: page 27
- ^{xi} McCarthy, Patrick: *Bubishi*: page 27
- ^{xii} Higaonna, Morio: *The History of Karate*: pages 67-68
- ^{xiii} McKenna, Mario: *Dragon Times*: Vol. 20 page 15