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AN INTERVIEW WITH SUZUKI RYUSHO SENSEI: A MOMENT IN TIME

Nearly twenty years since his last visit to the U.S., Suzuki Ryusho Sensei was greeted by Northern California instructors Soleimani, Mallari (seminar host), and Withrow upon his arrival at San Francisco International Airport. Following a brief check-in and rest period at the hotel, the welcome party ushered Suzuki to a delectable feast of sushi at one of Berkeley, California's finest Japanese restaurants.

Dinner time conversation is a wonderful way to get reacquainted and catch up on the news from afar. Suzuki was receptive to our questions and was eager to share about current events from the Honbu dojo in Tokyo. We were excited to hear of how preparations are under way for the upcoming SKIF World Championships in November 2006. The USF team selection process is still in its qualifying stage, but Kwok Hanshi, Technical Director and National Coach, is confident the USF team will represent the United States with quality competitors that are sure to exemplify the very best Shotokan in spirit.

Suzuki, himself a world champion, competed in the 8th World Championship in Durban, South Africa (2003), placing first in kata Bassai-sho. Prior to that year, he placed second in individual kata and second in kumite at the 4th World Championship in Mexico City (1988). He also has a noteworthy accomplishment of placing second in individual kata at the

22nd, 23rd, 24th and 25th All SKIF Japan Championships.

Currently the Director of the Instructor Division at Honbu dojo, Suzuki Sensei is responsible for nine instructors and oversees several phases of the training program prior to their teaching assignments with the SKIF organization.

A graduate of International Budo University, Suzuki began his marital arts training at age six and continued under his father's instruction for ten years until he met Kanazawa Kancho and applied for membership with SKIF. He received the rank of godan (5th degree) and comments that his favorite technique is gyaku zuki. After watching Suzuki demonstrate at our Northern California seminars - - his flowing combinations and graceful hip rotation - - it is obvious why he has been given the respectable position which he now holds.

Under the leadership of Kanazawa Kancho, is it any wonder why the cadre of instructors within the SKIF organization are unmatched by any other?

During his teaching sessions hosted by San Jose State University Karate Club, the attendees witnessed first hand Suzuki Sensei's teaching style. He has an elegant way of describing key elements of each technique so that even the most senior student can gain a more enlightened understanding of their applications.

Suzuki Sensei describes kime

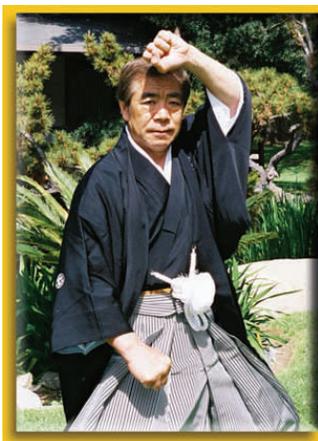


Suzuki Sensei demonstrates proper hip position.

Below: Seminar attendees in San Jose, California, USA

(focus) as a "spark" that occurs when all the elements come together at the precise moment of impact. This can be illustrated as necessary ingredients for combustion: a fuel supply, sufficient oxygen and a body in motion which creates the spark to start a chain reaction, launching your technique with timing and finesse. To the on-looker, the movement may appear effortless but on the receiving end, it is devastating.

Participating in Suzuki Sensei's training session was very memorable and we are truly thankful to all those who made it possible including, Kwok Hanshi, Soleimani Sensei and our seminar hosts Mallari and Castellano Senseis. It is with the friendship and support that SKI-USF continues to grow and the teaching of Kanazawa Kancho that builds harmony throughout the world.



Kanazawa Hirokazu
A Living Legend

KERI (KICKING) THEORY AND PRACTICE



Keri includes some of the most powerful techniques in karate. Keri is peculiar to karate and includes variations absent from the other martial arts and sports. If sufficiently mastered, kicking techniques can have a more powerful effect than attacks with the hand. However, mastering kicking techniques requires much time and effort.

When kicking, good balance is of primary importance because the body weight is supported by only one leg. This situation is aggravated at the instant the foot hits the target by the strong counter shock of the kick. To counteract this shock, place the supporting foot firmly on the ground and fully tighten the ankle of the supporting leg, keeping the upper body well balanced and perpendicular to the ground. To achieve maximum effect, kick with the **entire body** instead of with the leg alone. Pushing the hip forward during the kick helps achieve this goal.

Be sure to withdraw your kicking foot quickly after completing the kick. This prevents the opponent from catching it or from sweeping your supporting leg. As soon as the foot is withdrawn, it must be ready for the next attack. The photograph on the left shows Kanazawa Kancho performing *tameshi-wari* (testing of technique power).¹

¹Adapted from Dynamic Karate by M. Nakayama, 1966.

PRACTICAL KARATE 2: DEFENSE AGAINST AN UNARMED ASSAILANT (CONTINUED FROM LAST ISSUE)

Situation:

An assailant has grasped your right sleeve or wrist with his left hand from the front and is threatening to use force against you. You have plenty of room to move about.



Do you recognize the man on the right? Nakayama Sensei demonstrates how to escape with a move that is very similar to kata Heian Shodan. "At his grasp, center your weight with legs somewhat wider apart than usual. Be sure to advance the leg on the side which the assailant is grasping. Watch the assailant carefully. Prepare a tight fist with the left hand, knuckles down, holding it close to the left hip. Keep the rear foot firmly planted on the ground as you shift weight to that leg. Slide the front foot back a short distance, being careful not to bring the feet together. At the same time, using the drawing power of your weight, shift to the rear leg, pull the arm across the front of your body in a downward direction, rotating the wrist toward your thumb as you do this, while keeping your chin tight to the chest as you pull. As the right arm comes free from the assailant's grasp, make a tight fist. Continue withdrawing the right arm and, with a circular motion, bring it up across his chest, knuckles up."

TAKUSHOKU UNIVERSITY



Kancho training in the snow with students from Takushoku University

“Training at Takushoku was always very hard and I was beaten many times by my sempais (seniors) . . . I complemented the training sessions at Takushoku with some hard training of my own. For example, at night when everyone was asleep I would go to the basement and train from midnight to 2:00 a.m. I couldn’t put on the lights for fear of discovery, so I used lighted candles near a mirror. It is very difficult to train against your own image in a mirror. No matter how fast you are,

your image always appears just as fast. I would also strike the makiwara between five hundred and one thousand times every day until my skin was torn.

At times, small pieces of straw would remain under the skin of my knuckles. While walking in the street one day, a passer-by (who turned out to be a doctor) took me to the hospital to treat my fist. But when I returned to the dojo, the seniors told me not to worry about my hands and ordered me to take off the bandages.

When in training camp I was sometimes ordered to run while executing oi-zuki (lung punch) non-stop and without

avoiding any obstacles on the way. I would occasionally stop to rest and catch my breath, but when I returned to camp I would be ordered to start all over again. I later learned the reason for this: The seniors had been watching me through binoculars. At times we had to run in water or up a mountain and I used to add some practices of my own, such as placing small stones between my toes, performing mawashi-geri (roundhouse kick) or mae-geri (front kick) and watching how far I could throw the stones with my toes. I also removed hats from people’s heads with ushiro-geri (back kick). It was around this time that I finally realized the futility of hunting the Sumo wrestler who had hit me years earlier, and I gave up on the idea.”¹

¹Adapted from *Shotokan: A Precise History* by Harry Cook



Suzuki Sensei leads the class in Kihon-waza.

NIJU KUN

- One who practices Karate must follow the way of justice
- First you must know yourself Then you can know others
- Spiritual development is paramount; technical skills are merely a means to the end
- You must release your mind

Gichin Funakoshi
Founder of Shotokan Karate

KARATE: A PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH



Mizu no kokoro (a mind like water) this principle is rooted in the teaching of the old karate masters. It refers to the need to make the mind calm, like the surface of undisturbed water. Smooth water reflects accurately the image of all objects within it’s reflection. If one’s mind is kept at this state, apprehension of the opponent’s movements, both physical and psychological, will be immediate and accurate, and one’s response, both defensive and offensive, will be appropriate and adequate. If the surface of the water is disturbed, the image it reflects will be distorted. If the mind is preoccupied with other thoughts, you will not be aware of the opponents intentions, whether defensive or offensive, creating an opportunity for the opponent to attack you.



Tuski no kokoro (a mind like the moon) Just as moonlight shines equally on everything within its range, you need to be constantly aware of the totality of the opponent and his movement. Developing this awareness will aid you to be consistently aware of any opening in your opponent’s defenses. Similarly, clouds blocking the light of the moon are similar to nervousness or distractions which “cloud” the opponent’s movements and physical intentions, making it difficult to apply the appropriate technique and leave you vulnerable to attack.



Correct posture is not only essential for breathing, it is proper etiquette.

A LOOK AT CULTURAL BASED HEALING

EDITOR'S COLUMN

In our Fall issue, I discussed a wellness topic that is foreign to many people: the blood type and its relationship to healthy living. I would like to continue this theme by introducing a holistic approach to health and how it can apply to your martial arts training.

As we all know, being healthy and fit requires a planned, consistent effort to exercise. Practicing a martial art such as Karate is one of the most systemized, tested, and long-lasting programs available today. Engaging in the martial arts can be a beneficial component of your fitness routine by being one of the primary building blocks of good health. As with anything in life, you must make time.

Martial arts has been a part of Eastern culture for thousands of years. Its practice reflects the Eastern attitude towards the effect of exercise on the body. This view differs from the Western perception in that the primary function is to build bigger and stronger muscles ("bulking up"). The Eastern focus of exercise is to strengthen the internal organs, nerves, joints, ligaments, and blood vessels. Eastern medical thought believes that most illnesses are due to internal weakness and that there is no room for disease if such weakness is eliminated through exercise. Westerners, on the other hand, tend to view illness as a result of infectious bacteria or other outside agents which can be controlled with medication. In simple terms, it may be said that the East tries to fine-tune the body,

while the West attempts to control the external environment.

As you can see, there are some fundamental differences between Eastern and Western attitudes toward the body and the prevention of disease. How has Eastern culture displayed the ability to look more deeply into health problems than the rest of the world? It may be that Western medicine has tended to treat symptoms rather than weaknesses in the body systems that result in illness. For example, if a patient were to go to a Western doctor for treatment, he would probably be thumped, x-rayed, stethoscoped, drained of blood and given a prescription. If the doctor found nothing out of the ordinary, he would most likely tell the patient that he is fine, meaning that the patient is no better and no worse than anyone else the doctor has seen.

If an Eastern doctor were to examine the same patient, he might shake his head and pronounce that the patient is far from healthy. The Eastern doctor's medical understanding of health for the human body allows him to more delicately perceive the overall state of a patient's internal organs. A perception like this would enable the doctor to diagnose some major health problems that a Western counterpart might have missed.

The fundamental difference lies in the underlying philosophies of the two systems. Western medicine tends to view the human body as a complete and self-regulatory

system and maintains that the average person has few flaws of any consequence. Eastern medicine, however, is far more cautious in its estimation of the body's capabilities. Because Eastern culture believes that the body is a flawed organism requiring continual regulation to maintain an optimal state of health, it may be helpful to look to the East to develop Western preventative medical practices.

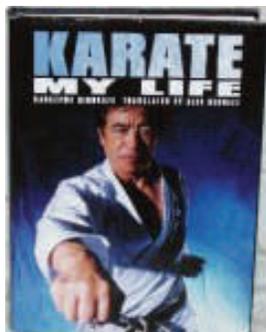
The potential health benefits arising from the practice of martial arts are increasingly becoming of interest to Western medicine. This practice can be part of an approach to attain an optimal state of health. Karate practice gives the student an opportunity to exercise both body and mind in synchrony. If you are just beginning, Karate may simply be a form of exercise or a method of self-defense. In time, other aspects of the art will alert you to skills such as proper breathing, the development of positive energy (ki), increased focus (kime), and so forth. I encourage you to continue your journey.



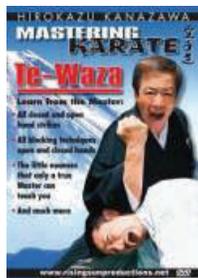
Without courtesy and respect you have no dojo.



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SUZUKI SENSEI VISITS NORTHERN CALIFORNIA, USA



TRAINING TIP

Remember the “Rule of Blocking” during practice with a partner (uke-waza). All blocks should involve the body. Think of the arms as merely an extension of the body. When blocking with the body, maintain a body connection with your partner through the arm, making a tight fist and twisting the wrist at the **very end** of the block. Synchronize all blocking actions by exhaling and tightening the lower abdomen. This will help you develop *kime* (focus).

Editorial Staff

Editor: Mark Withrow **Publisher:** Sue Kuipers

Contributing Writer (s) For This Issue :

Joanne Mied, N.D.

Dr. L. Wang, L.Ac.

Layout and Design:

Sue Kuipers

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For comments, contact SKI-USF Withrow Sensei at (925) 484-1954.

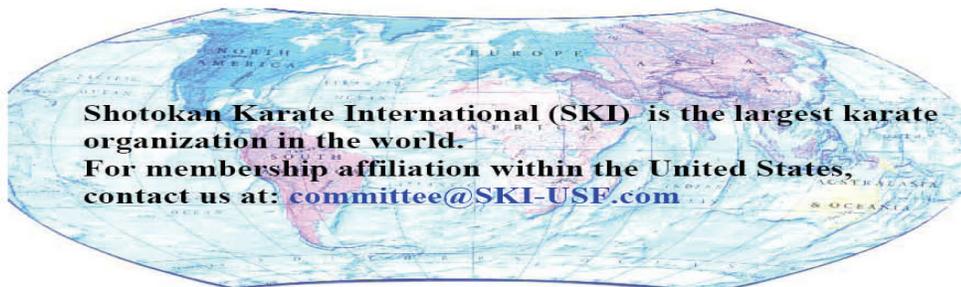
We are always interested in sharing the traditional art of Karate-Do; If you would like to submit an article please contact us at : Email: committee@ski-usf.com or Withrow Sensei at

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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- **January 28, 29 2006 Murakami Sensei visits Northern California, USA.**
- **National Championships – Dates TBA**
- **Selection of members for the 2006 World Championships**
- **9th SKIF World Championship - Tokyo, Japan. Week of October 30, 2006**



For updated information please check the website at:

WWW.SKI-USF.COM