



国際大山空手道連盟総本部

**World Oyama Karate**

**Honbu Newsletter**

Issue 32 - August, 2012

# Summer Journal

By Founder Saiko Shihan Y. Oyama

## HOT! HOT! HOT!



Ready to Face the Summer!

### It's a Wrap!

It's already August and 40 years since I came to the United States. I still need a strong chi in order to survive the battle with the Summer Heat in the Deep South. After we finished filming *Take a Chance* on May 21st, it took me a couple weeks before I could locate my hands and feet and head; my mind and body didn't fully recover until June. As I mentioned in the last newsletter, once we finished shooting the first day, I had my doubts about how I would make it through the entire process. If I were just making this movie for my own benefit, I would most likely have postponed it and put it off, but I am accountable to my

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students and members of World Oyama Karate; this film was for the good of the Martial Arts world as a whole, so I found the strength to carry on.

We finished filming in Atlanta on May 21st. In the script, these scenes were set in Japan--Masa's family's house and a small restaurant. However, there was no way filming in Japan could fit in our limited budget. Sensei Takahashi's friend, Hayakawa, owned a Japanese restaurant in Atlanta. He also rounded up a lot of Japanese people to be extras, making it appear authentic. For the scenes in Masa's father's house, we used the home of the parents of one of Sensei Takahashi's students. Derik Bauer, the director of photography, had the idea to have it raining during the scene. Scott and I agreed, but it was a sunny day, which made produc-

ing rain difficult.

I had left Birmingham at 5:30 a.m. We were scheduled to finish filming in Atlanta at 8:30 p.m. so I could drive back home. But, it took us until 1:30 a.m. to finish everything. By that time, it really was raining. During the last scenes, Scott was fast asleep on the couch, and I just wanted to shake him. But Derek and I soldiered on.

It was such a tremendously happy feeling when we finally finished. My heart was racing. Sensei Takahashi tried to convince me to spend the night in Atlanta, but I just wanted to get home to my own bed. The house we filmed in was located in a residential subdivision, so Sensei Takahashi said I could follow his car out to interstate 20. After following Sensei Takahashi around in circles for awhile, he stopped

and confessed that he was lost. So we had to go back to the student's parents' house and get the father to lead us out.

Once I got on I-20, it was pouring rain and thunder and lightning lit up the sky. I wondered if I would survive. But I felt great; I had completed the project. I had climbed this mountain of a movie and was coming down the other side. If the storm took my life, that was fine with me. I had finished the movie!

I started getting sleepy and tried to use the radio to keep me awake. It didn't help much, so I just started singing as loud as possible to keep myself awake. I made it home about 5:00 a.m. I tried to lay down to sleep, but



**Restaurant Hayakawa—Delicious Sushi!**

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was too excited. My dogs came and licked my face. Petting them helped me to calm down and eventually drift off to sleep.

After completing the movie, the next big event was the Japan annual Branch Chief Clinic and Meeting in June. Everyone was very excited and asking about when the movie would be coming out. Whenever I mentioned "Hollywood", their eyes would pop open.

## **Hot, Hot, Hot Summer Camp!**

In July, we had our Summer Camp in Orange Beach, AL. This year was unique because Sensei Karius, his son Vitold, and student Omar travelled from St. Petersburg, Russia to attend. This was my first time to meet with Sensei Karius since he joined our organization. He is a very genuine person and I appreciate his efforts. At least once a month, we get emails from people in foreign countries requesting to become members of the World Oyama Karate Organization. They brag about all of their degrees and Black Belts in Karate, Judo, Aikido, Ninja, Tap Dance, Speaking, Eating. They say they have so many Black Belts and that they are the chief instructors of police forces, army and navy personnel, special forces. They tell me they are willing to do me the favor of becoming a World Oyama Karate Branch Chief, that I should give them a 5th Degree Black Belt, but they are willing to accept 3rd Degree.

I usually don't pay these people much attention. Even when I was the chief instructor at the Kyokushin Headquarters in Japan, we would get the same types of letters and requests. But, Sensei Karius is



## **You have to go to Alabama and be Uchi Deshi**

different and I'm glad he made it to Summer Camp. He speaks very little English, but his son, Vitold speaks a little more. So he would translate for us. However, sometimes Vitold and I couldn't understand each other, so Sensei Karl would have to jump in and sort out the communication.

At one point, Sensei Karius and I were discussing family. I asked how his wife was doing. He said she was great and that she was 25 years old. Vitold is 22 years old, so I just stared at him in bewilderment



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## Yes, we got it! Nunchaku K

until he clarified that wasn't his mother. I told Sensei Karius that he's still young (he's 53). He told me that he has to be.

Sensei Naoi also attended Summer Camp, travelling in from Tokyo. He flew American Airlines, and when he arrived in Houston, his luggage somehow missed the connecting flight to Birmingham. He arrived late Wednesday night, and we were planning to drive to Orange Beach early the next morning. However, his dogi, belt, clothes, my suit, were all in his missing suitcase.

So, early Thursday morning, he, my wife and Senpai Jean all tried to find someone from American Airlines that could tell us where the suitcase was. No one could locate it. Fortunately, Sensei Naoi's lap-

top wasn't in the suitcase. Actually, he carries his laptop with him *everywhere*. He even brings it with him to the bathroom. That's why I call him Mr. Laptop.

During Summer Camp, everyone trained hard day and night. We did Hatsu-To and Nunchaku Kata Kihon Sono Ichi. Sensei Tetsu had already moved to Texas, but he was able to come down for summer camp. He stayed at my condo with me along with Sensei Takahashi, Sensei Karl, Sensei Naoi. I'm glad Sensei Tetsu was there because I can't trust Sensei Karl and Sensei Naoi's cooking.

Whenever they train in a different location, students experience a refreshed feeling. The training hasn't really changed but the atmosphere is differ-

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## ata Kihon Sono Ichi Kamae!

ent, which causes them to see things in a new light. During summer camp, I focused on the importance of *kamae* (posture) and stance. I'm always yelling "Bend your knee!" to my students. Even more so at my Black Belts since many of them have become hard of hearing. At first I say, "Bend your knee" softly. The second time around, my voice becomes more powerful. After that, I start shouting and using the shinai.

From the very first lesson, I convey to students the importance of *kamae* and stance. I have them stand in Heiko Dachi with feet shoulder width apart. I tell them to place their weight in the middle of their feet, then on the toes with knees bent, then back on the heels. I ask them how they feel. When

the weight is on the toes with knees bent, people feel more primed and ready for action. With weight back on the heels, most feel more cautious. This shows that changing a person's posture can alter a person's feelings and mindset.

I always say that if your stance is weak, your technique is weak. For example, if you have a wide, powerful stance, you can use your upper body effectively. If a baseball pitcher only took a tiny step before throwing the ball over the plate, every batter would knock it out of the park. Instead, pitchers lift their leg into a wide stance in order to shift their weight with maximum force when throwing. Weightlifters to just bend over and try to lift a barbell from the ground. They get close and squat

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down in order to use their body's full potential when lifting.

In order to take down an opponent or assailant, you must have a lower center of gravity and strong base. Otherwise your attempts will be ineffective. On the other hand, if you want to kick with your lead foot, you need a short stance in order to shift your weight and kick with speed. That's why Kihon Sono Go uses transitioning between Zenkutsu Dachi and Kokutsu Dachi for punch and lead foot kick techniques. The more smoothly you can transition between different stances and weight distributions (i.e. 50/50, 80/20, 70/30) the more in control you will be of your timing, power and speed when fighting.

Unfortunately, stance training is inherently unexciting. Everyone wants to skip straight to practicing techniques. Even if they swing their arms wildly out of control in Furi Uchi, they'd rather do that then concentrate on first making a strong Kiba Dachi. Or maybe they pull their fist way behind their hip and thrust it as far forward as possible in executing Shita Zuki because they don't have a strong Zenkutsu Dachi that enables them to generate power from their hips, not their arms. (Even Senpai Bushido still does this after all the years he's trained with me. Sometimes I wonder if he loves me or hates me. If he is going to bring peace or nightmares. But I haven't given up on him yet, and I hope he won't either.)

Many students train with intensity when they first learn something new. However, as the days and weeks go by, they lose focus and become sloppy and rusty, especially in their stances. Then when they are under pressure at promotion testing or in Kumite, their technique doesn't work because they haven't built up sufficient muscle memory for the *kamae* they need. So at summer camp, I tried to

stress the importance of *kamae* and stance by practicing Hattsu-To Kata. Also with Nunchaku Kata Kihon Sono Ichi Kamae, which emphasizes the importance of setting up the body before an attack.

I hope everyone has had a chance to see the Olympics. There are many examples athletes altering their *kamae* to suit the action they are about to take. Runners lining up for the 100M dash do so much differently than those lining for the 800M. Table Tennis competitors are on their toes constantly in order to keep pace with the match. Even animals use *kamae*. Birds in flight bend their heads forward, different than when they hop around on the ground.

So, while stance and *kamae* training are not flashy or exciting, they are essential to everything you do. As athletes get older, their joints start to weaken, which is why they retire. (I'm not referring to myself, though! I'm not retiring!) In order to build up your ability and conditioning, you need to learn to love stance training. During class, whenever I say, "Hold your belt..." most Black Belts groan. I make everyone practice over and over going from Zenkutsu Dachi--Kiba Dachi--Kokutsu Dachi--Nekko Ashi Dachi. They start to wonder, "What have I done to deserve this? Why am I here being tortured when I could be home on the couch with a cold beverage, watching TV?" The reason I torture them with stance practice is because I love them. Whenever I look at students on the left side of the dojo, I can feel the students beginning to raise their hips and start to slack off. I always catch them! I shout at them to bend their knee! Don't spoil yourself! Train with your total body!

I often tell my adult students, especially Black Belts, that spiritual/mental *kamae* is just as important in training as physical *kamae*. You should approach

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training with an open mind, like a field of freshly-fallen snow or a blank canvas. Ego and preconceptions will cloud the canvas of your training and prevent new discoveries from taking root. Black Belts have a tendency to believe that they already know everything. They assume that because they have reached Black Belt, they have nothing new to learn. This way of thinking prevents them from going deeper in their training experience and knowledge. In order to continue reaching your goals and making progress, you must remain humble.

This is not only true in Karate, but in any other sport of profession. Our own ego can often get in the way and cloud our judgment, thinking and perception. If you look at any successful world-class athlete such as Michael Phelps, Tiger Woods, LaBron James, all of them share one basic common denominator-- they still take direction and guidance from a coach/trainer. Even athletes of this caliber rely on a coach's objective view; the coach can see things in a player that the player can't see for themselves.

Its especially, especially, especially important for naturally talented and coordinated athletes to listen to their coach. This type of person can quickly catch on to new techniques, skills and movements. But they need to continue training with repetition in order to learn in their entire body, and not just in their head. Just think of how many miles Michael Phelps still swims everyday in training or how many hours Tiger Woods still devotes to perfecting his stroke or LaBron James his free throws. These athletes are some of the best in the world, yet they still need diligent training under a coach's direction. Their natural talent and skill alone are not enough to sustain continued success.

That's why I always jump on my Black Belts and

make them listen to me and continue working on their mistakes and bad habits. It is my job to push them beyond the limits of their own egos. Whenever I teach or demonstrate for students, I become aware of their character, coordination, levels of conditioning, power, speed, limitations. Once I understand them and what they are capable of, I can tailor my approach to teaching them in order to bring out their best. No matter how well you think you understand basic techniques, you still have more to learn. Including me. How you execute the same technique from one day or moment to the next is different. Your body is constantly changing, so your thinking and perception needs to keep up.

I learn by teaching. I see how a student is able or unable to do what is required and I gain a deeper understanding of how basic techniques fit the human body. The student may not realize it, but I catch glimpses of what is possible for them and it is my job to challenge them to reach their full potential. (A long time ago, I saw Senpai Bushido's potential. But in the past 10 years, he's reached a road block. I'm still waiting for a new spark of energy in his training journey).

So, to make a long story short, try to keep an open spirit/mind whenever you train. Don't let your little ego block you off from making new discoveries. Whenever you say, "Osu!" upon entering the dojo, you are leaving daily life and your ego outside and entering with fresh eyes and an open mind. Each time you enter, you are reborn and re-challenged to face yourself. You must not only challenge your mind and spirit, but your body as well. You must take action and push yourself physically to get results.

**JUST SWEAT!**

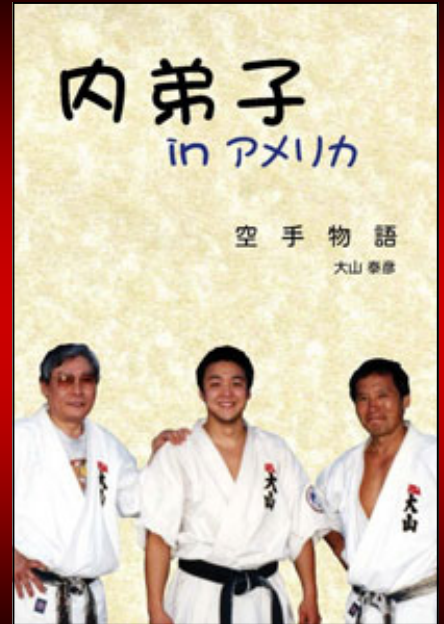


**DON'T MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY**

Motion Picture '*Take A Chance*' is coming soon.

It is based on the novel '*Uchi Deshi in America*' written by **Saiko Shihan Y. Oyama**. It is available in English and Japanese.

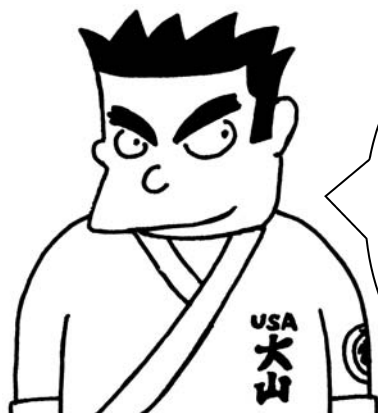
**GET A COPY NOW !!!**



# COMING SOON !

## Ultimate Challenge Knockdown Tournament

### December 2nd, 2012 Samford University



You can tell we are in Summer.

I am sweating through class and I LOVE IT !!!

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