

I'll Take a Bet On Fighting Spirit!

By Oyama Masutatsu, Sosai

Take from tape recording by T. Kume

Translated by M. Yamane & C. Wilby

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On May 10, 1978, in Nara, the ancient capital of Japan, Kancho Oyama gave a speech at a Public Seminar in which many prominent people from throughout Japan were also invited to speak. As in all Kancho Oyama's speeches, he spoke without the aid of any notes, and without having previously planned anything. The speech was some two hours in length.

I'm not the kind of person who usually gives speeches on such a big stage, and I think perhaps I had better do a Karate demonstration, rather than speak, so that you can all feel satisfaction. But I can only talk about Karate, because I only know about Karate. I'm not a politician, nor a good speaker, and I'm neither a businessman nor a leader. I'm just a Karate-Ka. So I'll just talk about Karate. Karate came from Okinawa 46 years ago. Mr. Funakoshi, who did much to make it popular, brought it to Japan. But Japan already had a similar art called Jujutsu, which developed from Koppo. Koppo became Yawara. Yawara became Jujutsu. Jujutsu became Judo, Karate and Aikido. Judo has throwing, strangles and ground holds, and originally was divided into 2 systems. 1) Kodokan Judo, specializing in throwing and based in Tokyo, and 2) Butokukai, based in Kyoto and specializing in ground holds.

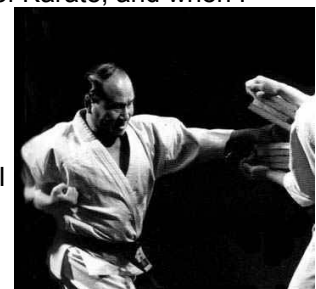


The Butokukai was, however, greatly influenced by the Japanese right party and was consequently disbanded by General McArthur after the Second World War. Before the war, the Butokukai and the Kodokan held a yearly inter-competition. This was perhaps the best time in Japanese Judo; it grew rapidly and became known overseas. I think most people know of the development of Judo from this point. So how did Karate grow? The Kyokushin-KaiKan now has dojos in 96 countries, but I didn't originally have the idea to open dojos overseas. It was only when I could no longer eat in Japan that I agreed to the suggestion of a teacher of the Butokukai, and went overseas to the USA. If I had been able to feed myself here in Japan maybe this would never have happened and my life now (would be) quite different. Anyway, I looked around a world that then did not know Karate, and in the 30 years that have passed since that time, Karate has grown quite remarkably. Why did Karate become popular so quickly? There are two reasons. One, though of course Karate training is hard and takes a long time, it is still easier to learn to use in a much shorter time than Judo or Aikido. And secondly, there is no need to hold or grasp at your opponent in Karate. When I was young, during the time of World War II, I was attending Takushoku University. I also went to a Karate dojo for daily training. The teacher there told me that recently I had become very strong, and I really had gained the confidence that I could beat anyone with my punch. I had gained power in all the techniques of Karate, and when I punched anyone, they would fly up 30cm in the air and then fall to the floor.

At this time my Sempai looked very small to me. Whenever you are in good condition, you feel that others are small. But one teacher told me that although I had become very strong in only one year of training, I had also developed a very big head. I felt inside me at the time, that I could easily



beat this old teacher with one punch, and I eyed my teacher with belligerence. The teacher told me that it takes 3 years to learn to form the seiken, 3 years to develop stance and 3 years to develop a punch, and that if you want to master Karate, it takes at least 9 years. But I still continued to think that my Karate was best, my head was indeed very big.



Soon after this, I was drafted into the army, and by the time I had returned from the war, my teacher had already passed away. 30 years have now passed and people call me a Master of Karate or "Karate God". But I'm just human, and now I'm finding that I am questioned by the things as seemingly as simple as how to form a fist; things I had not considered before. It is almost like the case of, the more I study, the more I realize just how much more there is

still left to study. A person who studies Karate for only 3 months can use it practically with the same 3 months of training. Karate is very useful, but to MASTER it is very hard. I'm now 55 years old, and I'm still wondering, what is Karate? Now the world population is more than four billion, but I would say a good half of the people have at least heard the word, Karate. Karate is an International phenomenon, and is no longer Japanese. Recently I have felt this realization very strongly. Japan has become very famous in the economic world, but I believe the only real thing the Japanese have got to show the world is Budo. But maybe I say this because I'm a "Karate-Baka"(Karate-fool). If you have a Karate Shodan you can consider your chances of one against five as being 50/50. In the USA and Europe, Karate has become very popular because Europeans, especially ladies, didn't like the holding in Judo. The charm of Karate is that both can keep a distance, and that when forced to come together, only one falls over. Karate training can develop a smart walk, as can Kendo, and both Kendo-Ka and Karate-Ka walk the same way. In old Japan, one of the Karate tests was to soak rice paper with water and walk on it without ripping it. We think we can judge the strongest people by watching the Olympics, that is; the Olympic Judo Champion is the strongest.



But we can make better records and results by a type of effort that has nothing to do with the Olympics, even though medical doctors may disown such acts as nonsense. For example, a monk, who was dying by fire, said that he could feel no pain nor any heat, so long as he kept nothing in his head. I believe in this ability, I have seen and felt it. One kempo teacher brought a hand being burnt. If you haven't seen this kind of act, perhaps. You can't believe it, but the secret is to forget that the hot water is hot. Scientist can't say how these things happen, but nevertheless they happen. At this point scientific knowledge doesn't cover everything. People ask me what is Kyokushin, Well, an old Budo-Ka once said that 1000 days of Karate training makes a beginner, 10,000 days makes a master. Master = Kiwameru = Kyoku. Shin = truth, therefore Kyokushin = to master the truth; to seek for the ultimate. Karate is a very simple art, but in comics and movies it is always portrayed with fancy movements. This is just business; the movies aren't always truthful. It is just a case of "You have put flowers to the leaves in order to make money". Actually Karate is a very simple thing, but simple things are boring, so moviemakers and many dojo-owners have to add spice to make it sell. Today many young people are chasing after the flower. But I knew one young man, a university teacher, who took one year's holiday and came to Tokyo to study Kyokushin-Karate. He felt the training was very hard and simple, with the same techniques being repeated 1000s of times everyday. To him it was not a fight against others but a fight against himself. This is Karate. Sometimes people say that Kyokushin-Karate is "Kenka- Karate"(street-fighting Karate).At first people called Kyokushin-Karate "misconceived Karate", then "street-fighting Ka- rate", and now they call it "real-fight Karate". But I want to make my Karate "soul spirit Karate". Today's Karate has undergone great changes. Before when foreigners met Japanese in their countries, they imagined Judo. However, if you practice Judo you develop a bad figure, you injure you face and scars and your walking becomes very slow. Judo-Ka cannot handle street-fights. I think you have seen Popeye cartoons before, haven't you? In these stories, Brutus, who has a big body always loses against the little Popeye. In the USA I saw many people like Brutus. They were very powerful and strong, they could even break cola bottles between their arms. If you are caught by this kind of person, you will surely lose, but their movements are slow and in their fighting they always try to catch and hold. Maybe they can work in Pro-wrestling, but they are useless in street fighting. You can see many guys around with big muscles on the beaches of Miami, but the true strong ones have less showy form, slimmer figures. In the street fight, the muscled type can't catch the thinner type because too many muscles, which in fact they really don't need to have in order to fight effectively, hamper them.



I first heard this saying when I was in the USA. Ballet Dancers are good fighters. Oh I'm sorry, I'm only talking about fighting, but anyway, I hope it's interesting for you. You know, Ballet dancers have a very nice walk and slim, strong bodies. In fighting they can fight very rhythmically. I had one ballet dancer friend who liked to fight. Once when I was out with this dancer, he started to fight against others, eventually I had to help him out, but at first when I was just watching, I was very impressed with his rhythmical movements, despite his funnily formed fist. Our lives have rhythms. It means we

are living rhythm. Those that lose the rhythm of life become ill. A good musician can be a good Karate-Ka. Even one who just loves and listens a lot to music can be very good at Budo. Many famous people have also been musicians, and I think most Budo-Ka love music and can play some instrument. A person with bad rhythm can't be good at Karate. Walking is a rhythm, waking up and washing your face is a rhythm, and one shouldn't break these rhythms. Sometimes people break these rhythms. Sometimes people break their rhythm because of work, and some don't appear to have any rhythm at all. For example, many years ago, I went to a town in New Jersey, USA, to become the private teacher of a Bodybuilding teacher. In the first week, I found that my student always moved backward when he was supposed to move forward. I asked him if he liked music, and when he answered that he hated music, I apologized and left, saying that you simply can't learn Budo without rhythm. I have already talked about my going overseas. Many Japanese are traveling abroad these days, but it is not without some problems. For example, the President of the Brazilian Japanese People's Organization, Mr. Fuji, said to me that many people are beginning to feel antagonism towards Japanese because Japan has become an economical animal. He told me of how some Japanese came to Brazil, opened a Bank and collected money from the Brazilians, only to escape half a year later, and how many Japanese sponsored companies are paying small pitiful wages. He asked me how we could clear up the bad feeling, and then answered himself by asking me to please send him many Japanese Karate-Ka. At present many dojos in Brazil are unused, but if I were to send instructors they would all begin again teaching Kyokushin. Mr. Fuji, whose son is training Karate, is convinced that Karate is truly the greatest discipline. Judo has a lot of throwing, which is a nice feeling, but it isn't so nice to be thrown, and it can cause spine injuries to youngsters. Today's Judo is just a lot of grabbing and pushing, and in Kendo you need to have too much heavy and expensive equipment. At any rate Mr. Fuji said that Karate is wonderful because you can train alone, and that it's very popular in Brazil. Actually, Karate is popular everywhere. Because Karate comes from Zen years before, Karate had a very bad image. Judo was the powerful might and Karate was always the "bad". Karate was associated with gangsters and always lost to Judo in the people's minds, in books and in movies. Fortunately Karate doesn't have this image today, because it eventually became known that Karate and only Karate comes from Zen. Karate starts from spirit training, from Zen. Other Budo may develop Zen and spirit training, but Karate starts from spirit training. I studied Judo in the Kodokan, and I know very well that only Karate starts with and from spirit training. Karate's profound relationship to Zen has made Karate popular the world over. Karate is Zen. European people are people who don't believe anything without looking for evidence. If you say you can break a whisky bottle, they say "Show me". I went to USA just after the war and I received many insults of "Kill the Jap." However, after I demonstrated my art to them, they could forget their prejudice and follow my way. When I was in USA I broke the tops off 12 bottles in one go. Long thin neck bottles are easy to break and short, thick ones are hard, says physics. I demonstrated this to my audience. First I adjusted my breathing (the most important thing in Karate), and then I broke all the bottles continuously, sometimes two or three at a time. Everyone saluted me and respected me; I had shown evidence of my words. . Western people are big and Japanese are small, but you can stop a person getting out of a chair with one finger; it has nothing to do with size. In USA you have to prove yourself to be believed, grid if you aren't believed you can't live. Fortunately, 1 was believed. After this the fee 1 could ask for lessons tripled. Americans are very interesting; when you charge a higher price the people feel the lesson has better quality, and you gain more respect!



During my trip to France, things didn't go nicely with the promoter and we split. I had nowhere to go, so I slept on a park bench. I couldn't speak French and my English wasn't so good either. Actually, when I was in the USA the promoter told me not to speak so much because they believe great oriental men don't say much, so I unfortunately took this advice and never really learned much English. Anyway, I started teaching in France to a company driver but when it failed, I took a job in a cabaret breaking bottles as my act. After one week, however, I was told that breaking wasn't so popular and could I do something else. An Embassy's friend of mine suggested that I do walking on my hands, so I did an act hand walking up and down a spiral staircase. It was very hard, especially coming down! I was very afraid, but at the time, my greatest fear was starving. The fear of starving really makes one strong. When I returned to Japan, I told my wife that it was through that hand-walking act that I had lost all my hair and gone bald! But behind sport everyone is forgetting Budo. Now, here in Japan, baseball is very popular, and all students seem to love the sport and dream to be professional players. People who have big bodies or can run fast are pulled into the baseball club. I'm not saying that

baseball is bad, but too many people are crazy about it. Baseball, however, is only popular In Japan and the USA, and this is why there is no world tournament. It may even be why Japan can't win so many medals in the Olympics. I am always asking the sports committees in Japan to put a bit more power into some other sport beside baseball. Why do we forget Budo, which incorporates old Japanese spirit? Budo is as good as sport. Now I am no longer sure of the future of Japanese Karate. I am not sure if we can be the strongest for much longer. 30 years ago it was new to everyone, but this is not so now, and even the communist countries know Karate. Now in Karate knowledge and Karate history, there isn't such a great difference between Japan and other countries. Karate is changing from white people's power Karate to Black people's jump Karate. If Black people train more, one day Japan will lose to them. Today's Japanese don't pay enough attention to Budo. Foreigners come to Japan especially to learn Karate and they spend much of their life savings, but the Japanese who can easily learn it, don't bother to do so. However, I am happy to note that there are some younger people who want hard training. Sport means to enjoy, but Budo means to be hard to yourself, and to make yourself strong. Today most of our youngsters don't have any moderation, they can't work within the proper limits, or change according to circumstances. So many of them are doing things that go against Human-Do (way). . But over the past 2 or 3 years, I believe the situation has improved a little. Many new students are coming to Kyokushin daily, because they really want a harder time, a stricter, more disciplined life. Japan has many Karate styles, but Kyokushin is the strictest. Hard to yourself, kind to others; this is Budo, and this is why I insist that Kyokushin remains strict. Recently 88 out of every 100 of my students wrote that they want strict training. 3 years ago most said that they wanted to do Karate at their own pace, as a hobby.



People who study Karate also study etiquette and develop good and pleasing manners. For many years the Japanese themselves were very prejudiced against Karate, but Karate is the only Budo that studies spirit. Even in foreign countries they make little shrines, and bow to them in Japanese style. They place the Japanese flag in their dojos along with their own country flag, and after training they clean up in Japanese fashion. Maybe you (the audience) can't suppose this, but what the foreigners want from Japan is not money or economic things, they want Budo spirit. Budo spirit means Karate spirit, and Karate spirit means Kyokushin. Kyokushin means 1000 days a beginner, 10,000 days a master. By this we mean that you must be hard to yourself and kind to other people. The way to study being hard to yourself and kind to others is through Budo. Now I can see a number of students challenging all hardships in training, and it is very pleasing to me. Of course Kyokushin's training is hard, but it doesn't mean it's violent. We don't kill anyone in training, as it often happens in some university cheer clubs here. I always tell my instructors to be hard to themselves that they should never order the students to do 1000 kicks until they themselves have done it. I tell them they may only order 300 press-ups if they too do it, and I stress that they shouldn't be lazy, shouldn't be soft on themselves and hard to the others. Too many people these days are soft to themselves and hard on others, they should study the way of Budo, the way of Karate, Kyokushin-Karate.

Sometimes at midnight I have a period of self-criticism and analysis. Who is Oyama Masutatsu? What am I? I'm not a person with great leadership ability and I'm not a businessman or a politician. So what and who am I? I'm a bugeisha, a person who fights everywhere, always. I am a person who only trains Budo. But even a strong gunman becomes weak when he gets old, and a good horse can't be a good horse forever. What does a Bugeisha do when he becomes old and finds someone stronger than himself? At this time, he can escape. A long time ago I was talking about Karate in front of a politician, and when he asked me what I want to do next in my life, I answered that I think the destiny of my life can only be one way; I will become a monk. When I was young I tried to enter a Buddhist Temple, but unfortunately I couldn't join at the time. I told them that when I became old I would come again, and they were all much surprised. You see, I am a bugeisha, I'm not a leader. Spirit is the most important thing. I wanted to be today's Miyamoto Musashi. Then the war came. It just happened to be that I did not die in the war, but after the war, and even now, I felt very sorry for my friends who did die. So I started living for Karate, and I suppose I will even die for Karate. I traveled around the world and became the Head of an International Organization. I chose and set out on the left road, and ended up

became an organization Head. When I suddenly woke up and realized this and its implications, it was already too late. Sometimes I am asked why I always so deeply respect Miyamoto Musashi. It is because of his strength, He could defeat anyone in a fight, even his parents, child, teacher and friends. I could learn from him, that you have to win. When you fight you shouldn't think of any other thing, you should fight and win. I also have a Sempai whom I greatly respected. I so respected Mr. Kimura, the Judo-Champion, that during the early stages of the war, I even went to Takushoku University because Kimura was at this university. He was like my God then, and I believed that he was the Miyamoto Musashi of the present day. I tried to be like him in every way, as I wanted to be every bit as strong. Unfortunately, I was soon drafted into the army. After the war I kept contact with Kimura and visited his house, and he was always very kind to me. He taught me many things - judo, pro-wrestling, and when I was in the USA, he was particularly kind and helpful to me. After a few years however, Kimura changed to pro-wrestling, but he lost many fights because of the pro-wrestling business tricks. Once he had lost, people became cold to him. In the fighting world, you simply have to be a winner. When you win everyone listens to you, but no one listens to a loser. After you lose, no one hears your excuse, even if it is a good and valid one. Winning is "man's" way, and fighting is man's "romance?".



I respect a person who shows his fangs in a fight. I feel a great attraction and charm to any fighter. I despise those who try to cover themselves even if they are rich and "great". I respect a person who is always fighting in life. I respect all fighters, even if they are my enemies. If I have such a student, I want to help him very much in anyway I can. Today's young people are only thinking about graduating a good university so that they can get a job in a big company and have a beautiful wife and a prestigious car. They don't have any fighting spirit, they don't try to fight in life. One University Medical Doctor, Vice-President of his department, came to Tokyo just to train Karate some years back now. He took a long holiday from his university, and trained very hard. He was a fighter. If you don't have any fighting spirit you are a useless man and your life has no value. You have to fight, to challenge.

Oyama Masutatsu, have you ever lost a fight before? Yes, I have lost many times. Just after the war, I was bashed up by a group of blacks and was even hospitalized, but man-to-man I have never lost clearly. I have only lost trying to fight against five or six people, because I am no God or Superman. One instance of "losing" even proved highly valuable for me. This was during my meeting with Mr. Ching in Hong Kong. I loved the personality of Mr. Ching, and I respected him very deeply. When I met him I was 33 years old and he was nearly 70. I am now bald, but even at that time, although he was very old, he had more hair than I do now, and he was only around 50kg in weight. Of course I had more power and speed than he had, as I was young, but he was a magnificent man, just like an old God. My head was bowed the whole time that I was in his presence, as I couldn't look at him directly. I had lost to him without doing anything. He asked me to show him my techniques, and I showed him all that I knew. He said that it was wonderful and dynamic, but still with an edge on it. He said I was like a rough diamond and I needed polishing. I asked him to teach me but he answered that he didn't really have anything to teach me, just that I had forgotten the definition of Karate and my movements had become too straight. He said, draw a circle and have a spot on it. A straight line is plus alpha. He said that straight Karate was just gymnastics, but you only beat people when you have power, true power that comes from the point and circle. Since that time I have been teaching all my students the same thing, and this is why Kyokushin Karate is different from other Karate styles. The life of Kyokushin Karate is Kumite (fighting). The life of Kumite, fighting, is in basics. You have to practice circle training. One should never show ones back to the enemy, you must try to get him from behind. If you are to the side of your opponent you can win 60% of the time, if in front perhaps 50%, but if you can get to the back of your opponent you can win 70-80% of the time. Students must train how to come in from behind.

You can be strong by studying Karate. I think most people find a great charm in the idea of becoming strong. Every individual must be strong, if you want to join Kyokushin, then I take it as my responsibility and duty to teach you. But if you cannot get the secrets, the knowledge about Karate and yourself, by yourself, then I can't help you. If you train the same technique 100,000 times then

will suddenly see the light, "Oh, this kick is this way". This is the way to get the secrets, the knowledge about Karate and yourself. Every country seems to have a saying similar to "you can lead a cow to water, but you cannot make it drink", whether the cow drinks or not, is over to the cow. Teaching may be the duty of myself or the sempai, but whether you become strong or not is your own problem. Since old times we have had the idea that secret techniques are given by the teacher, but this is nonsense. The secrets, the knowledge can't be given by any teacher, you have to grasp it yourself with your own hands. Can you be strong if your parents give you money? It is over to you, as to whether you can be happy and strong or not, it has nothing to do with your parent's wealth.



Everyone must have water and air to live. If we didn't have enough of these, then people would fight for them. Even if you are rich, have money, power and food, you will die without air. Breathing is most important in Karate. We have Ibuki breathing in Karate. It has an outside and inside character: it is positive and negative. When others are unaware that you are breathing, then this is negative breathing, and the breathing that surprises others is positive breathing. Positive and negative breathing is called Ibuki. Breathing in slowly is negative, bringing up the air to the chest and breathing it out with a loud sound is the positive aspect. It is very important breathing, for it calms the body during any kind of stress. We also have another kind of breathing called Nogare, and we have two kinds of it, a front and a back. When you put power into your little fingers, extend your hands and pull, them back to the chest while breathing in, and then open the mouth and breathe out slowly again with the tongue between the teeth, then we call this the front style of Nogare breathing. The ura style, back style, is to bring the hands up from the side to the arm pits while breathing in and push them out in front of you while breathing out slowly. The importance of breathing can be illustrated by an old Chinese story. One day a very fit man and a very fat man were walking along together, when suddenly a bear appeared on the same track. The very fit man ran away and climbed a tree, but as the fat one couldn't run or climb trees, he decided to play dead. The bear came to inspect the fat man by walking around him and sniffing for any signs of life. The bear sometimes grunted in the ear of the man lying on the ground and it almost seemed to the man in the tree, as if he was having a conversation with the fat man. Eventually the bear went away, and the fit man came down from the tree. He asked the fat man what the grunting bear was saying all the time to which the fat man answered ? Don't have friends who can't help you". It is just a joke, but even in this very dangerous time, the fat man could breathe in negatively, and thus he managed to save his own life. Well, I seem to have talked for quite a long length of time. I hope that you have enjoyed listening, and that you have come to understand Karate and Karate-Ka a little from my speech. I thank you all for your patience and attendance. Osu.