



国際大山空手道連盟総本部

World Oyama Karate

Honbu Newsletter

Issue 36 - February, 2014

Ice Age

By Founder Saiko Shihan Y. Oyama



If you have passion, ice is hot !

This year, the weather has been crazy. The West coast hasn't had enough rain, and the East coast has had too much rain and snow. We've experienced very unusual weather and low temperatures here, but we have gotten through it. This issue of the newsletter is a little late, the reason is, we've been working on finishing the movie.

December 6, 7

We shot the final footage for the film, *Take The Chance*. On Thursday, the 5th, Masashi Odate (Rikio) landed in Birmingham and went straight to the recording studio to do voiceover work for the movie. It was only supposed to take about an hour, but we ended up finishing in a little over 2 hours.

On Friday and Saturday, we filmed scenes with the main character training as an Uchi Deshi and additional adult and Black Belt Class scenes. The filming went smoothly because I already had the shots I wanted mapped out in my head. Tom Stout came up from Mobile to handle all the camera work.

On Sunday, December 8th, we had the Ultimate Challenge Knockdown Tournament. There were no major accidents, and

ICE AGE



Camera ready!... Action!

everyone did a great job.

December 27

We cleaned the dojo corner to corner, top to bottom, to make a fresh start in 2014. After the clean up, I showed students the 3rd cut of *Take The Chance*. (Sensei Jean advised me to consider changing the "A" in *Take A Chance* to "The"--*Take The Chance*. People "take a chance" all the time, in numerous situations--betting, sports, business ventures, etc. But to "take **the** chance" implies that there is only one chance, one opportunity to take action, which more closely follows the message of the story. I agreed and told the producer, Scott Perkins, that we would be changing the title to *Take The Chance*. He was resistant at first, saying that we'd already advertised and promoted the film with "A". I told him that we weren't finished with the movie yet, and nothing was final, so there was nothing preventing us from changing the title. Eventually he agreed. So, from now on, the movie title is *Take The Chance*. Everyone needs to practice saying it 10 times!)

All the students who watched the 3rd cut said they really liked it. I felt good about their reactions. The next day, I travelled to Los Angeles with all of my family to visit Ken, Erica and my grandkids. As I've mentioned before, both Ken and Erica work in the movie business, and I was interested to hear a professional opinion about the film. I asked them if they'd be willing to watch this future Academy Award-winning film and let me know what they thought.

"Have you shown it to anyone else?" they asked.

"Yes," I said, "they all loved it. Said it was great. Just like a real Hollywood movie."

Ken and Erica looked at each other. "Who'd you show it to?" asked Erica.

"My students."

"Where?"

"In the dojo."

"Dad," Erica began, slowly shaking her head, "your students listen to you and do what you say, right?"

"Of course they do. If they don't I kick them out!"

"Exactly. So even if they thought your movie was stupid and awful, they'd would still tell you that it was great and they loved it. Right?"

"No, they would tell me straight."

"Wake up, Dad. It's not that easy." So Ken and Erica watched the movie with me. Afterward, they said, "Hmmm... mmm... you need to make some changes. The main character, Masa, should be doing the narration, not Rikio--it's Masa's story. You need to have two versions of the narration, one in English and the other in Japanese. The opening doesn't really work either. You need to go to Tokyo and do some filming to put at the beginning."

"What???" We don't have any money to go all the way to Tokyo!" They suggested that I could cheaply purchase stock footage of Tokyo from the internet to use. The more I thought about their suggestions, the more I agreed with them. I spent New Year's with the whole family at Ken and Erica's house in LA. On New Year's Day, the California air was warm and dry with temperatures in the low 80's. Azaleas and roses were already blooming. After lunch, we all went swimming in the outdoor pool...

January 3rd

I arrived back in Birmingham and felt like I had stepped into the Ice Age! The temperature at home was completely different from LA. It struck me then just how massive a country the United States is. Years and years ago, I used to spend New Year's Day by myself at the dojo. Everything was so quiet and peaceful. I'd come and sweat by myself, go up to my office and reflect on the past year and make my resolutions for the coming year. But once I had a family, then grandkids, my I

ICE AGE

have less and less freedom to do that. It was a couple days late, but I finally had a chance to think about my goals for 2014. The big one is to finish *Take The Chance*.

Like I've always said, Karate is Culture, and Culture is ever-changing under the influence of arts, the economy, politics, and especially technology. Most young people today aren't at all interested in Martial Arts training. They'd rather bury themselves in video games, iPads, and Smartphones. Wherever I go now, coffee shops, restaurants, even driving on the road, I see people buried in their phones. Some are so engrossed in the text messages they are reading and writing that they walk into people, or into water fountains, or off subway platforms, or even die in car accidents caused by lack of attention to the road. The vast majority of information that is consumed with such intensity and urgency is vastly inconsequential. It's gossip or mundane chatter about what to eat for lunch or where to go after work or school. People give so much attention to these trivial things that they miss out on the more important things in life.

One of the messages I want to give the audience with *Take The Chance* is that life is precious. I saw a program on the Discovery Channel about the history of the universe. One of the scientists said how to have water and trees and life on Earth is a rare occurrence in the universe. We must take care of our planet, otherwise a miserable future awaits us. I completely agree. Life is precious. We are lucky to be alive and healthy. We should think more carefully about how we spend our time and to what we give our attention to in our daily lives.

OH! Winter Camp!

Honbu Dojo reopened for the New Year on January 3rd, but Monday January 6th was when most students returned for training. Area schools also re-started on January 6th, but for the first couple days, some were cancelled or had delayed opening times because the temperatures were so low and everything was frozen. Cold weather can severely limit people's desire for action, to move around. I know because I have the same feeling when I have to walk my dogs in the cold mornings. When I sit at the table and drink my coffee before going out, I can see and sense the freezing temperature outside. I need real guts to go out with the dogs, especially at my age. I bundle up with my coat, gloves and knitted cap. The dogs get so excited when I

finally shout, "Let's go!" But I'm not excited--I'm just cold.

Usually when I walk the dogs on the trail, even on pretty cold mornings, I see a total of about 10 people out jogging or walking. But on these mornings when the temperature was in the single digits, I didn't see a single person. My kiai came up naturally as I walked, and I kept telling myself, "I can do it, I can walk. I'm a healthy young man." Walking in the freezing cold brought up some memories of my early training at Kyokushin Headquarters in Tokyo.

The last time I discussed my biography (Newsletter #33), I talked about how I went to law school and worked hard to become a lawyer until one day I ran into Mas Oyama behind Meiji University and he asked me to come back to the dojo. By that time, my older brother, Soshu, had already moved to New York and opened a Kyokushin branch. Once in awhile he'd write me a letter. He'd always say things like, "You're still sitting in a dark library 12 hours a day, studying law books... What kind of life is that? Don't you want to see the world? You only have the chance when you are young."

When I was growing up, I always dreamed of travelling outside of Japan, especially to the United States. As a kid, I watched Westerns like *Hi Noon*, *Shane*, *OK Corral*, and imagined myself as a cowboy like Gary Cooper or John Wayne. *Gone With The Wind* introduced me to the American South. I imagined what it would be like to live there. Sometimes I saw British or French movies, and my interest turned to Europe, but overall I dreamed of traveling to the US.



Tom Stout was a great help

ICE AGE

I was 29 years old when I ran into Mas Oyama at Meiji University. Seeing him made me realize that I was at a crossroads--if I wanted to get out of Japan and start a new chapter in my life, I only had a limited opportunity left. Mas Oyama convinced me to return to the dojo.

While I was at college and law school, I pretty much stopped training. There were a couple times that I went back to the dojo. The first time was the incident I mentioned in Newsletter #33. Fujihira was the chief instructor. He was a little shorter than me, but very muscular and had a warm heart. He had been training hard the whole time I was away, so when I insisted that he fight with me, I quickly realized that I was out-matched. A couple years after that, there was one other time that I went back to visit the dojo.

The 2nd time around, I was more humble. I had spent years just studying for 12 hours a day with little exercise. In the basement locker room of the Headquarters building, I changed into a dogi that they let me borrow and put on a white belt. The previous time I visited, I was still cocky, but this time around I had a different perspective. I didn't want to show off, I just wanted to get a good sweat.

I went up to the main training area on the 2nd floor. By that time, Fujihira had since moved on to somewhere else. A different young, muscular Black Belt named H. was the chief instructor. He had been All-Japan Champion at one point. H. recognized my face when I came in. He came up and greeted me with a hearty, "Osui!". I asked if it was OK for me to join the class and he said sure.

We did bag training, movement practice and Kata (which of course I mixed up). Later we did Yakusoku Kumite. At the end of the 2 1/2 hour class we did free fighting. Before we started, I was already exhausted. My stamina was terrible. Unlike my last visit, I just wanted to watch the fighting, not participate. H. was the only Black Belt. He and the Brown and Green Belts fought hard. At one point, H. asked me, "Shihan, do you want to fight?" I said that I would just fight some of the beginner students. I felt that I could handle them OK.

I fought a couple fights with beginners, and already I was out of breath. That's when the real drama started. I was standing back against the wall when H. came up and asked, "Shihan, may I fight you?"

"No, I think I've had enough," I declined.

"Please," he insisted. It was then that I remembered a rumor I had heard about H. Whenever former senior students returned to train at the dojo, he made it a point to challenge them and beat them up in front of his students. Again, he

asked if he could fight me. By that time, all eyes in the dojo were on us. I knew I could turn down his request anymore.

"OK," I said at last. From watching him fight other students, I knew that his fighting style was to use a 1-2 punch with a heavy right foot low kick and set up for a left foot face kick. Even though I hadn't trained in a long time, I could still read him.

Whereas Fujihira had a warm heart and used restraint when fighting students, H. was more of a bully. He tried to show off how superior he was by beating up students during free fighting. I knew that once in awhile, Mas Oyama would share stories with students about former Black Belts. He had mentioned me before, so the students that day knew about me and my reputation from what Mas Oyama had told them, so they were eager to see me fight with H.

When Fujihira and I faced each other before we fought, his body seemed to grow suddenly big when he got into his Kamae. But with H., his body seemed the same size, which made me feel more comfortable. My techniques weren't sharp since I hadn't trained in so long, so I planned to use more of a counter strategy. As soon as we started, H. came in with a 1-2 punch, low kick, high kick. I already expected this, so was able to block him. He continued trying this same attack over and over, but grew increasingly frustrated that he couldn't land any clean shots. He became impatient--he was the chief instructor and he was losing face because none of his techniques were working.

This is a clear example of how *Tokui Waza* (favorite/best techniques) can have 2 sides. While it is essential that a good fighter have favorite techniques that they can use to beat their opponent, they should be used sparingly at the exact right moment, only a couple times during a fight. Overuse of favorite techniques, especially when they are not being effective, can cause a fighter to lose their rhythm and timing and give their opponent more confidence. We continued fighting for about 3 minutes. My stamina was poor, but H. was getting frustrated and tired as I kept blocking his attacks.

At one point, he pushed me hard with both hands into a corner and tried to do a hard low kick. I blocked with my shin and the bone-on-bone impact caused him to change his face and start limping a little. He moved back to the middle of the dojo and asked me, "Shihan, is that enough?"

"Sure, that's enough," I said. We shook hands. I was relieved that I had been able to handle him. That experience made me realize just how important a chief instructor's attitude is for building up the quality of the students. When Mas Oyama

ICE AGE

approached me to return to the dojo, H. had since gone and opened a branch in Southern Japan. A Brown Belt, S., was the current chief instructor. S. wasn't especially strong or powerful, but he loved Karate. His problem, though, was that he lacked the charisma necessary to energize and his students and make them excited to train. That's why Mas Oyama wanted to bring in someone with past experience who could fill that gap.

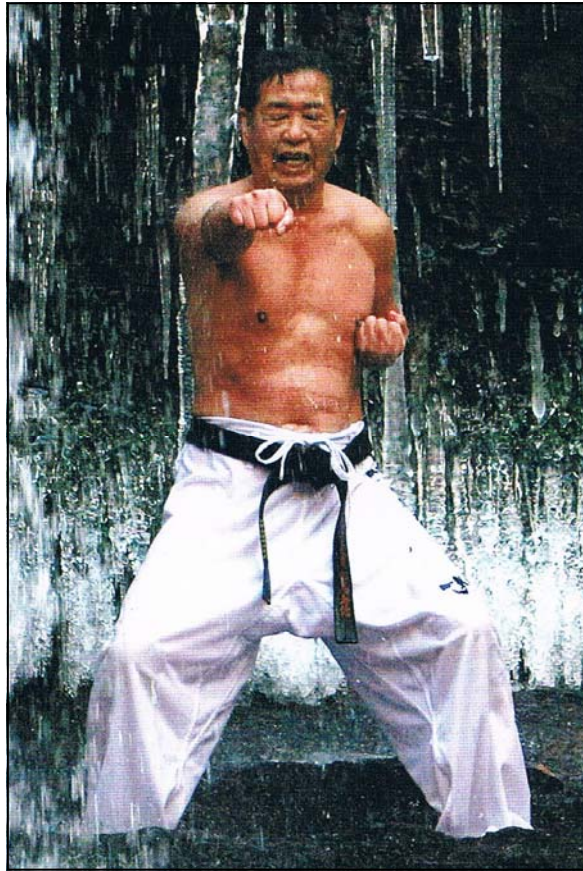
As Mas Oyama and I talked, I told him that I wanted to try and build up the teaching system at the Headquarters Dojo. I wanted to send someone overseas. I said that before I was sent anywhere, I wanted to send someone else to open a branch so that other students could see the teaching system worked. That was the beginning of me being chief instructor at Kyokushin Headquarters.

I contacted Shihan Goda. He hadn't trained in a long time either. Over the years, lots of good quality Black Belts had quit training for one reason or another because they had a conflict with Mas Oyama. Shihan Goda and I contact former Black Belts to get them to return and form a Black Belt Association. Shihan Goda lived in his parents' house then, and we had our first Black Belt Association meeting on the 2nd floor of his house.

After that first meeting, old Black Belts slowly started returning to the dojo. Training started feeling exciting like it used to. The Brown Belt, S. was a good person, but in the dojo, the chief instructor needs to be a strong leader. If the instructor's chi is not strong, then the students aren't excited. An instructor needs to be passionate about what he/she is teaching. They need to show this passion, not just with what they say, but how they act.

This principle holds true for any sport, not just Karate. An excited teacher/coach = excited students/players. **All World Oyama Karate Branch Chiefs make sure not to forget this!! (I need to remind myself too.)**

It had been about 6 or 7 years since I had trained regularly when I took over as chief instructor. I had to develop my own



Can you believe it!? Shihan Goda, 71 years old, at Winter Camp!

level of training as well as teach students. On top of that, I had to manage all business matters at the Headquarters Dojo. It was an immense amount of pressure for the first few months. Especially with my own training. My conditioning was terrible. My techniques and movements were not sharp like they once were. It had been a long time since I had chased techniques. During training, whenever you chase a technique/movement, it will begin to fit you. If you don't chase it, even if you understand and can do it basically, the power, speed and timing is not there. The technique is hollow and only surface-deep. I could still move and do basic techniques, but my fighting was rusty, my timing was off because of my absence. When I chased Haruyama, my movements were sharp as a razor. But when I came back, I felt like I had to rely on past experience to handle fighting, like pulling money from a savings account. I struggled like this for about 6 months.

Whenever I teach Uchi Deshi or future Karate instructors, I always tell them, don't chase women--let women chase you (that probably will never happen though!) You need to chase technique and movement. If you don't chase techniques, they will never fall in love with you. When I came back to the dojo, I was chasing again. I had a lot of ground to cover, and I was only chasing at the speed of a trot, but it was a starting point.

I taught by example, sweating more than the students. The atmosphere in the dojo became more and more exciting. If there aren't any Black Belts in class, or the just talks and doesn't sweat, then students feel like they are at a lecture, not training in the dojo. All of the classes at the Headquarters Dojo became more exciting. In addition to adult classes, we also had seniors' and kids' classes.

At that time, lots of foreign visitors came to train at the dojo. One day a student from Wales, Howard Collins, showed up unannounced in the lobby of the Headquarters building. He went on to become European Champion multiple times, and came very close to being All-Japan Champion. When he showed up at the dojo, he was a 4th Kyu Green Belt. He held

ICE AGE



Mitsumine Shrine

a suitcase in each hand, and my honest first impression of him was that he was some homeless guy. I looked at him and thought to myself, "What is this guy doing here? This is the Kyokushin World Headquarters Dojo, not a homeless shelter."

It turns out that Howard Collins had contacted the dojo by mail before coming, but somehow, no one received his letters. After talking with him, I found him to be a very nice guy. He was well-versed in dojo etiquette and said he wanted to dedicate himself to training as an Uchi Deshi. I said OK, and put him up in the dormitory and told Mas Oyama about the situation.

I had many various positions and jobs at the dojo in those days. I taught classes and tried to build up new instructors, I took care of the Uchi Deshi, I managed the office and did reporting, writing and editing for the monthly Kyokushin magazine. Whenever we had visitors to the dojo that Mas Oyama didn't want to spend time with, it fell to me to take them out to dinner, meet with them, etc.

The first week of January, we had a Winter Camp up on Mt. Mitsune. I still wasn't in good shape at that time. Students from the outskirts of Tokyo attended the camp along with the

Headquarter Dojo. There were a couple hundred people going to camp, so we chartered a couple large buses and drove everyone up the mountain. We wound our way up through the ice and snow to a Shinto shrine atop the mountain. The shrine was comprised of various wooden buildings and housed Shinto devotees who lived in the shrine year-round. The Shinto devotees' lives were very austere and simple. They lived with nothing more than bare essentials and devoted their daily lives to purifying themselves mentally and physically.

One of the shrine's buildings was a large open hall, which is where two hundred of us slept on futons on the floor in straight rows. As you can imagine, sleeping was difficult with all those people snoring, farting, grinding their teeth, tossing and turning. Each morning we woke up sharply at 4:00 a.m. We would immediately roll up our futons and push them against the walls of the large room. Next, we put on our dogi (at that time, we never wore anything under the dogi for any reason) and opened up all the large windows that lined the hall. Blasts of cold air came rushing in and we could still see the moon and stars in the black night sky. We then started training by doing 100's of seiken and 100's of kicks.

In the dojo, instructors usually need to tell the students to Kiai during class. But at Winter Camp, that wasn't necessary--students would automatically Kiai in the harsh cold air. Their Kiais had a sense of urgency, as if they were trying desperately not to freeze to death. Instead of the normal sound, these Kiais sounded more like, "Help me! Help me!"

The first training lasted about 45 minutes. By the end, we were warm and sweating. We then walked (barefoot, of course; we never used wore shin pads then) to the *Hon Den* ("Main Hall") of the shrine.

The *Hon Den* was also wooden, with doors and windows fully open to let the freezing air circulate. We were met there by the *Kan Nushi* of the shrine. In the Shinto religion, a *Kan Nushi* is the head person of a shrine. He functions as a mediator between God and humans. He talks to God on people's behalf and also conveys messages from God to humans. (Many aspects of Japanese culture are associated with Shinto. The association is a way of preserving ancient customs and traditions. It doesn't necessary reflect the actual religious beliefs of people who participate).

Once everyone was inside the *Hon Den*, we sat down in *seiza* (on our knees) and closed our eyes. At that point, the *Kan Nushi* began speaking to God and telling the story of Kyokushin Karate and asking for our safe training. After just 10 seconds of sitting in *seiza* in the frigid air, our feet went completely numb. Every once in awhile, a strong cold wind would

ICE AGE

blow through and it felt like being cut with a sword. I couldn't focus on anything the *Kan Nushi* was saying. All I could think about was the stinging pain and numbness in my legs.

I was sitting next to Mas Oyama, so I couldn't move around or anything. After 5 minutes, I started hoping that the *Kan Nushi* would finally finish. But he was really getting into what he was saying. He was very excited about Kyokushin Karate and had a lot of respect for Mas Oyama, so he kept talking and talking. 10 minutes passed. Then 20... then 30 and he still was talking!

At last I heard him finishing up, saying to God, "That is what we ask of you and thank you for listening to our request." I started to wonder how I would be able to stand up. Mas Oyama uttered a deep, "Osu." That was my signal to yell the command, "Eyes open!"

We opened our eyes, and Mas Oyama stood up. I pulled myself to my feet as fast as I could and commanded everyone else to stand up. They all stood up, but since their legs were numb, many people collapsed back to the floor with a loud thud. *Dunn! dunn... dunn-dunn... dunn dunn... dunn!* They fell over, one after the other. Howard Collins fell to the floor,



**Nagagutsu—Hard to do roundhouse kick
when wearing these!**

grasping his leg and screaming. This was a pure example of "Osu" spirit--patience and guts. Eventually we made our way back to the large hall and started training again.

Among the students attending Winter Camp was the Karate Club from Josai University. The leader of the club was a senior named Araki. Araki was a Black Belt and I had seen him training from time to time at the Headquarters Dojo. He had a great attitude and really sharp techniques. I approached him about coming to the dojo after graduation to become an instructor, but he said he had to take care of his family's business back home after college. Araki introduced me to a junior who would be the next leader of the Josai University Karate Club... and that's when I first met Shihan Miura.

Shihan Miura was just 19 years old at that time. I don't have a clear memory of a lot of the details about our first meeting each other at Winter Camp, so I consulted with Shihan Miura when writing this newsletter. There were some training sessions outside, and I remembered that we were barefoot when training outside. When I asked Shihan Miura if that was correct, he started giggling.

"Why are you laughing?" I asked.

"Most everyone wore tennis shoes when training outside," he said, "but you wore big rubber boots. I was impressed with how you managed to do roundhouse kicks and side kicks wearing those heavy boots."

Winter Camp was 2 nights and 3 days. At the end of the 3rd day, we trained under the icy cold waterfall. But before that, we ran down the mountain and back up. I started out running with everyone else. The trail on the mountain was long and winding. I remember that on the way back, I took a shortcut by climbing straight up the face of the mountain. There were a few senior Black Belts who took the shortcut with me. Shihan Goda was with me, but I'm not sure who else. What I do remember clearly, though, is that we were *so hungry!* On the way up the mountain, we packed snow tightly in our hands and ate it. It didn't really satisfy our hunger at all, but we kept doing it anyway. I clearly remember every part about struggling up that mountain.

I walked the trail with my dogs and thought about these things. The icy creek and frozen grass brought back various images of Winter Camp. I wonder if I could take my students from the Deep South up to train on an icy mountain, wearing only a dogi... They'd probably sue me! Also, at my age, I'm not quite cut out for it.

Anyway, 2014 is going to be a great year! Remember--Don't think about it, don't talk about it, **JUST SWEAT! OSU!**

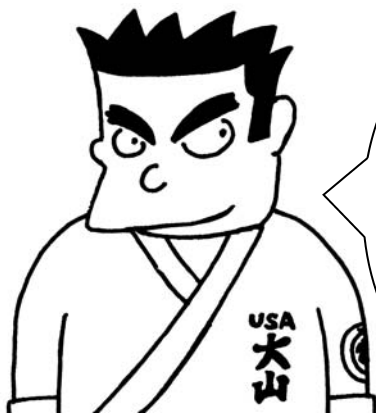


World Oyama Karate 2014 Honbu Schedule



- Jan. 3.....Fri.Honbu Dojo Training Starts
- Feb. 22.....Sat.Regular Promotion10:30 a.m.
- Mar. 21--23Japan Clinic / Black Belt Promotion (JAPAN)
- Mar. 29.....Sat.Advanced (**Brown/Black Belt**) Promotion...10:30 a.m.
- Apr. 5.....Sat.Regular Promotion.....10:30 a.m.
- Apr. 26.....Sat.**American Cup Tournament**
(Birmingham, AL)
- May 3.....Sat.Regular Promotion10:30 a.m.
- June 1.....Sun.**Fighter's Cup Tournament**
(San Francisco, CA)
- June 21-22.....Japan Branch Chief Camp
- July.....17-20.....**Summer Camp** (Gulf Shores, AL)
- Aug. 23.....Sat.Regular Promotion.....10:30 a.m.
- Sept. 6.....Sat.Advanced (**Brown/Black Belt**) Promotion...10:30 a.m.
- Oct. 11.....Sat.Regular Promotion.....10:30 a.m.
- Oct. 19....Sun. **Japan Cup Tournament**
- Nov. 16..Sun.**Ultimate Challenge Tournament**
(Birmingham, AL)
- Dec. 13.....Sat.Regular Promotion.....10:30 a.m.
- Dec. 26.....Fri.Year End Dojo Clean-Up.....6:00 p.m.

****Some dates are preliminary, and are subject to change. We will give advance notice for date changes.*



2014 is
going to
be a Great
Year!

Issue 36 - February, 2014

Editor-in-Chief: Saiko Shihan Y. Oyama
Editors: Sensei Karl Julian
Graphic Artist: Sensei Masa Takahashi
Technical Assistant: Senpai Tony Ching

World Oyama Karate Honbu Dojo
1804 29th Avenue South, Homewood, AL 35209
Phone: (205) 879-4841 Fax: (205) 879-4849
www.worldoyama.com

Copyright © 2012 World Oyama Karate. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited.