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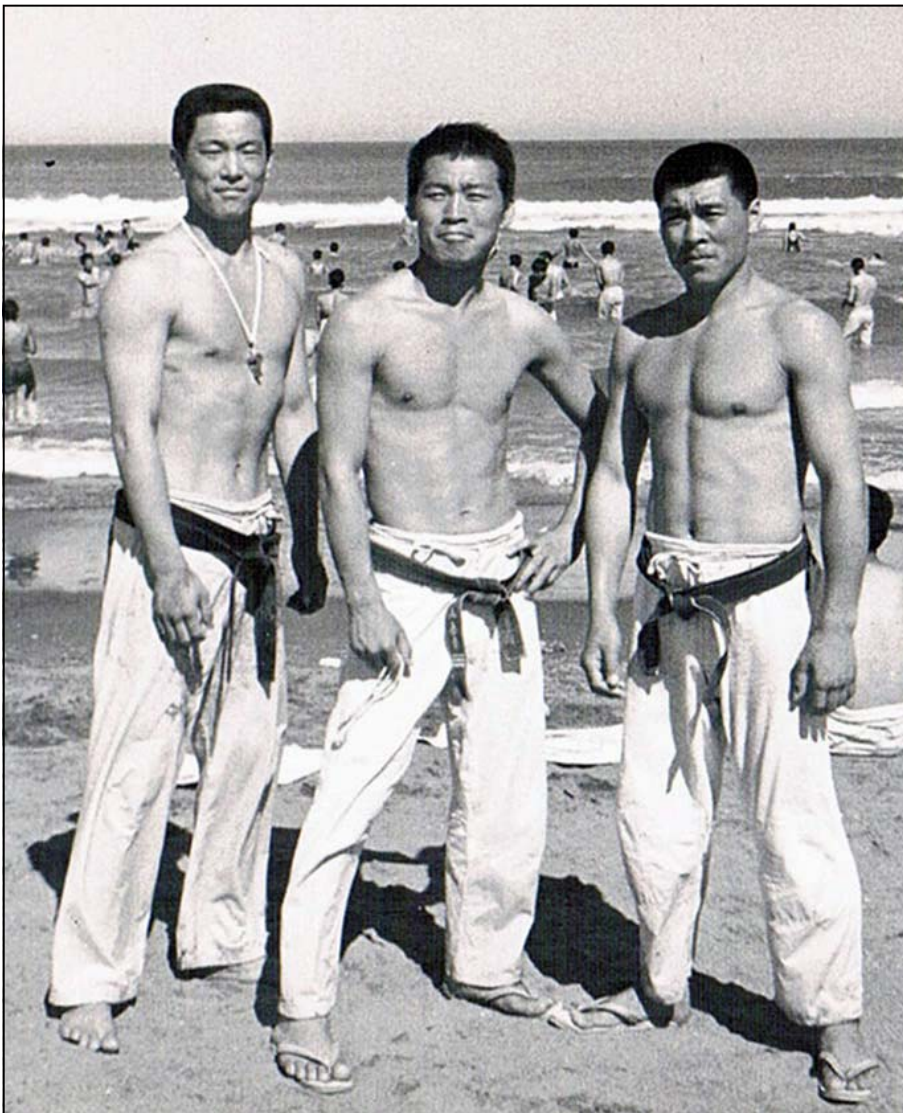
World Oyama Karate

Honbu Newsletter

Issue 38 - September, 2014

BATTLE OF ICHI NOMIYA BEACH

By Founder Saiko Shihan Y. Oyama



Saiko Shihan with Shihan Miura (L) and Shihan Kishi (R)

Although it's already September, Birmingham is still hot and humid. However, when I walk my dogs along the trail in the morning, I see more and more leaves beginning to cover the ground. The sound of the chirping birds has changed a little and the sky is turning a deeper, darker blue. I can feel autumn coming around the corner.

In Newsletter # 36, I continued my biography and talked about Winter Camp after I returned to Kyokushin Headquarters. I explained how I worked during that time to find and build up quality instructors, and it was at the Winter Camp that I first met Shihan Miura, who was then a student at Josai University and a member of the college's Kyokushin Branch. After the winter camp, I continued to meet with him from time to time, training together or going to eat and drink after class.

After my return to Kyokushin Headquarters, I worked to build up the teaching system and class format. I was also able to convince many of the old Black Belts to return to the dojo. This helped to build up the excitement of training and the energy in the dojo. I told Mas Oyama that I'd like to design a special Black Belt class for these students. He agreed and we began holding a 2-hour class on Sunday afternoons. In addition to the Black Belts at the Headquarters Dojo, Black Belts from the other branches around Tokyo (including

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Gymnasium where all 300 of us slept on futons

Josai University) attended the class. In those days, Mas Oyama's training system had 5 kicks. We would do those 5 kicks without stopping, going up and back down the dojo floor. We would just kick and kick and kick for 45-60 minutes straight. After that, we would practice Pian Katas and Tai-kokyu Katas. Sometimes Mas Oyama would make us do basic techniques and turn 360° after each one. For example, we would punch, turn 360° and punch again, and so on. We'd do this for all techniques. After class we would be so dizzy that we walked in zigzags for a couple hours. Even so, we were excited to have a Black Belt class.

We began having Black Belt class soon after winter camp. In the late spring and summer, we would sweat a tremendous amount. We always looked forward to cold beer after class. We would all sit together in one of the tiny rooms in the dormitory behind the dojo. Everyone had a glass and we would have 4 or 5 "Sapporo Giants" set along the table. A "Sapporo Giant" was an extra large can of Sapporo Beer that was a little less than a gallon. After class, the first cold drink would slide down the throat, past the intestines and explode like an atomic bomb in the stomach, radiating new life across the body that made it scream, "Yes! I am alive!"

Once in awhile, I liked to tease the other Black Belts. Since I was the senior Black Belt, they could not drink or pick up their glass until I did. Sometimes I liked to make them wait. They would look like dogs salivating in front of a juicy steak,

awaiting the command to eat. I'd pick up my glass, but just before drinking, would stop and say, "Oh, wait! I have something I need to tell you." I'd put my glass down, so everyone else had to do the same. After a long pause, I would say something like, "It really is nice weather today, isn't it?" The first couple times I did this, they would remain patient. But after that, their expressions would change and they would look at me with eyes like those of assassin snipers. Shihan Miura and Kishi would grab my hands and force the beer in my mouth so that everyone could finally start to drink. They were all in their early 20's and I was about 30 years old, but we acted just like little kids.

Kishi and Shihan Miura had a special bond—like brothers. Kishi stayed at the dormitory behind the Kyokushin Headquarters. He had recently returned from 3 months of teaching at the Kyokushin Branch in Taiwan. He was supposed to have stayed longer, but had to come back after 3 months. I forget exactly why, but I think it had something to do with his visa or family situation. But he had done a great job teaching in Taiwan. His family owned and operated a large farm in Yamagata, in northern Japan. Since he was the oldest son, he was expected to take over the farm at some point. One day, he told us and Mas Oyama that he had to stop training and return home to oversee the family business.

Kishi was such a strong and pure guy. All of us really missed him. Mas Oyama felt that Kishi was an extremely talented Karateka and wanted him to continue training. So, a couple months after Kishi left, Mas Oyama told Shihan Goda and I that we should travel up to Kishi's place and try to talk his parents into letting him return. At that time, Kyokushin only paid us a very small wage. Mas Oyama would pay for our trip and expenses to travel from Tokyo up to Yamagata, so of course Shihan Goda and I were eager to go.

When we arrived at the farm in Yamagata, Kishi was so surprised and excited to see us. However, his father and younger brother knew instantly why we were there and so weren't very welcoming. Back in Tokyo, neither Shihan Goda nor I thought that we would be able to convince Kishi's parents to let him come back. But we were happy to go anyway because it meant having a free trip out of Tokyo. After we made our

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case for allowing Kishi to return, his father explained the family situation to us and why Kishi needed to stay. Kishi was upset that his father talked to Shihan Goda and I in such a stern tone, but it didn't bother us that much since we already knew that trying to get Kishi back was a lost cause.

We were surprised, though, that after our talk, Kishi surprised all of us by taking us to a really nice onsen (traditional Japanese hot springs). The onsen was at the top of Mt. Gassa (which translates to "The Moon's Mountain"). There was no way that Shihan Goda and I could have afforded to go to such a nice place. We had a great time going in the hot spring and eating and drinking. Kishi sang traditional Japanese songs for us. His voice was so powerful, sentimental and emotional. Our plea for Kishi to return to Karate didn't work, but Shihan Goda and I had a great time anyway.

When we got back to Tokyo, we solemnly told Mas Oyama that we had failed in our efforts to get Kishi back. I got the feeling that he had already figured it wouldn't work, but worth a try anyway. Of course, we left out the part about how we had a great time at the onsen. We just put on sad face and apologized for failing in our mission. But inside we were happy to have had such a great trip!

In those days, I sometimes stayed overnight at the dormitory behind the Kyokushin Headquarters Dojo. It was a very flimsy 2-story wooden building. If a strong wind came through, it would be nearly blown across Japan to Hawaii. Every morning, the Uchi Deshi lined up for Cho Rei at 8:30 a.m. Cho Rei was where we lined up and Mas Oyama came and talked to us about anything he needed to say before we started cleaning and training for the day. Usually, we would sleep as long as possible, until about 8:25 a.m., then quickly get up and line up. One morning around 6:00 a.m., there was a loud pounding on the front door. I slept on the first floor, so I had to get up and answer it. "Who the Hell is knocking this early!?!?" I muttered to myself as I walked to the door. I opened it and there stood Kishi—bright-eyed with his dogi under his arm.

"Osu! Shihan, I'm back!" he shouted. Tears filled my eyes, I was so happy to see him. He said that after we left, he had been able to convince his father to allow him to train for a couple more years.

There were so many quality Black Belts in the dojo at that time. Every inch of the building reverberated with the energy of all the students training there. The Kyokushin Headquarters building with comprised of 4 stories and a basement. The basement had the men's and women's locker rooms and showers. The 1st floor was the lobby and had an office and

small dojo. The dojo was more of a studio space that Mas Oyama had designed for taking pictures and film. The walls were all curved where they joined the floor and the entire room was white.

The main dojo was on the 2nd floor. Mas Oyama lived on the 4th floor, and the 3rd floor had the Kancho's office ("Kancho" was Mas Oyama's title), a small conference room and storage room. Sometimes Mas Oyama would come down to the 2nd floor during the Sunday afternoon Black Belt class. He would have a toothpick in his mouth and we would wonder what he had just eaten. He'd sit at the front of the dojo and say, "Go ahead!" and watch us training. We would do the 5 kicks over and over, the basic techniques with spinning after each repetition and various Katas. Sometimes we would fight during Black Belt class.

When I first started training as a teenager, fighting in the dojo was just like a street fight. We could punch the face, poke the eyes, kick the groin, grab and throw down an opponent. We didn't just merely throw each other on the ground either. We would purposely try to throw one another into the weight rack or desk or anything else that would inflict damage upon impact. We didn't bite each other, but pretty much everything else was allowed. When I returned to the dojo, however, the fighting was a little more mild. It was still intense, but the "street fighting" techniques weren't used anymore. I only weighed about 130 lbs. during that time. One Sunday, Mas Oyama wasn't there. We were getting tired of all the spinning around and 5 kicks nonstop. So I said, "OK, let's just fight."

We fought for about an hour, changing partners after each round. There were a lot of powerful, young fighters in those days, many of whom now hold high positions in the Martial Arts world. One of my partners that day was a really strong guy who weighed about 190 lbs. He also had a Black Belt in Judo. At one point, we were fighting in close. He grabbed me to try and throw me, but I moved first and picked him up. However, my stance was narrow, like Kake Ashi Dachi, so we both crashed to the ground. By picking him up in such a way, I severely injured my back. My entire left side went numb.

My salary in those days was very small, about \$200/month. So I couldn't afford to go to the doctor or chiropractor. All I could do was have Kishi and Shihan Miura massage and ice my back every night. At one point, I told Mas Oyama I thought I needed to see a doctor about my back. But he quickly replied that they would try to do surgery on my back if I did. He then told me a long story, the point of which was you should never have either a back or knee operation because it will turn out worse in the long run... plus the dojo couldn't afford to pay me more

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to see a doctor. (That injury still bothers me periodically to this day. There was one time in the Chicago airport that my back seized up and I couldn't move at all and had to be taken to the ER.)

Japan had a lot of chiropractors, shiatsu massage therapists, and acupuncturists at that time. One practitioner named Mr. Koyanagi had an office near the dojo. Among other things, he did Okyu treatments. Okyu is a type of treatment that involves heating up small slices of garlic and various herbs in a small glass cup, then turning it upside down and applying directly to the skin. I couldn't afford to see Mr. Koyanagi, though, so I had to stick with Kishi and Shihan Miura massaging and icing my back.

One day Mas Oyama sent Shihan Goda and I up to Chiba Prefecture on some type of official business. I forget exactly why we went. As always, we were excited to have any type of "vacation" away from the dojo. We took a train from Tokyo to the town of Ichikawa, inside Chiba Prefecture, then a taxi from the train station to the office where our meeting was. All the taxis throughout Chiba back then were owned and operated by a single company. After our meeting, we took a taxi back to the train station.

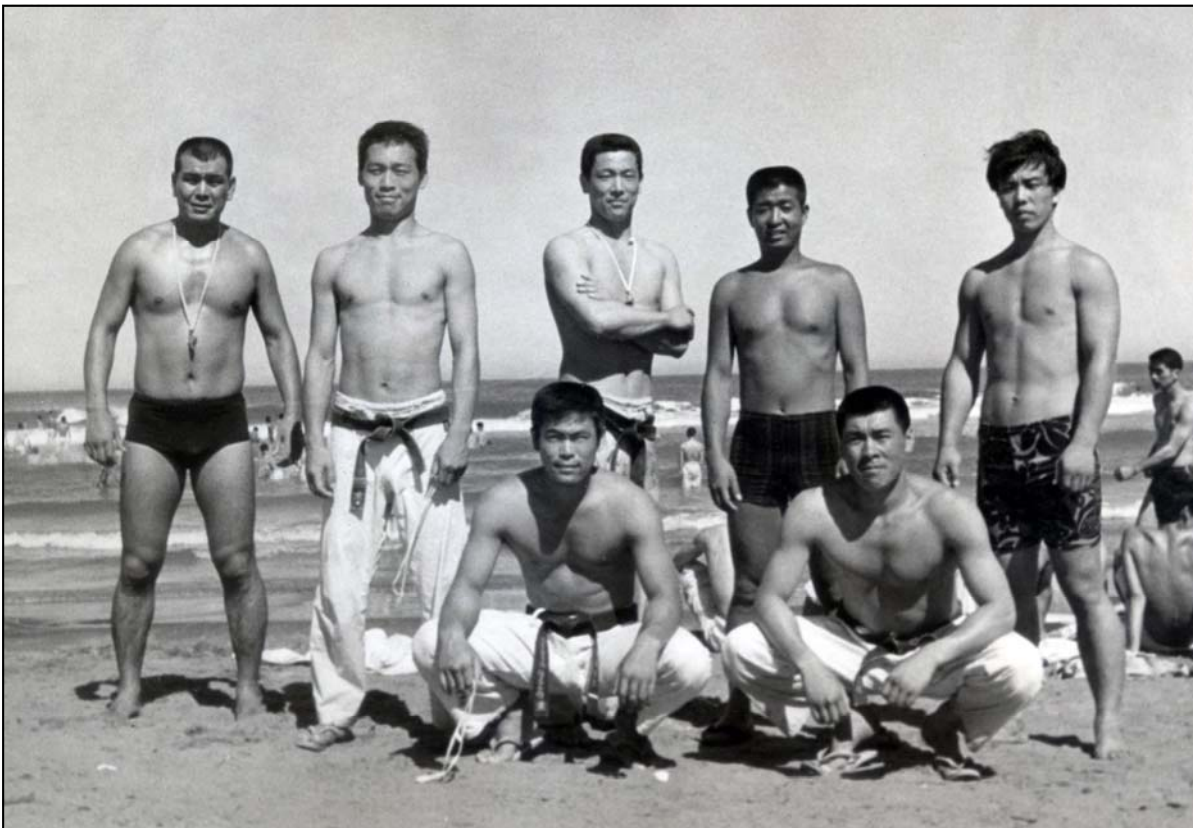
For whatever reason, the driver used back roads to get us to the station. Suddenly, he hit another taxi from the same company head-on. This was not a fender-bender or side-swipe, but a full head-on collision. There were no seatbelts in the back seat, so Shihan Goda and I were sent flying to the front of the car upon impact. We instinctively covered our faces with our hands. We were both unhurt from the crash, but Shihan Goda turned to me and said with a smile, "This is your lucky day. Now you get to go to the doctor!" Attorneys for the taxi company came on the scene and tried to get Shihan Goda and I to sign an indemnity release form. But I told them, "That crash really injured my back. I need to see a therapist. I know one, Mr. Koyanagi, that has an office close to my work. You guys need to pay for me to get treated by him."

They agreed and I looked up to the sky, and said, "Thank you, God! Thank you, thank you!" So I finally got to have my back treated. Of all the treatments I tried, Okyu was by far the most helpful, although the intense heat was tough to bear.

OH! SUMMER CAMP

The Kyokushin Karate Summer Camp was held at a famous beach in Chiba Prefecture called, Ichi Nomiya on the Pacific Ocean.

During camp, Mas Oyama stayed at a hotel, but all the other 300 of us slept on rented futon mats in a junior high school gymnasium. Under Mas Oyama, I was commander of the summer camp. Shihan Goda was vice commander, and under us were the other Black Belts—including Ōishi, Miura, Nishida, Kanamura, Sato and Kishi. We would wake up in the morning at 4:30 while it was still dark and run along the beach. After running, we'd clean up the area we



Glorious Young Age! (See if you can find Shihan Goda!)



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BREAKING NEWS !!!

Don't miss Saiko Shihan's son-in-law, Ken Marino, new show on NBC.

MARRY ME
SERIES PREMIERE OCT 14 | TUESDAYS 9/8c

Together every crazy step of the way.

PREVIEW THE NEW SERIES COMING TO NBC OCTOBER 14!

Don't miss the new romantic comedy starring Casey Wilson ("Happy Endings") and Ken Marino ("Eastbound & Down") coming to NBC this fall.

<http://www.nbc.com/marry-me>

Marry Me

would train in and practiced basic techniques, Kata and Yakusoku Kumite.

Whenever Mas Oyama held a training camp, he always brought a professional cameraman to take pictures and film. After training one day, he told the Black Belts that he wanted to take pictures of us doing jump side kicks. But not just regular jump side kicks! One part of the beach had a long row of pine trees that were planted as a wind barrier. He took us to the trees and told us to climb up the trees and jump down while doing a jump side kick. We were shocked—of course none of us wanted to jump out of a tree!

He looked at me after he told us, and I looked at the other guys and we just kept looking back at each other, saying things like, "You go ahead", "No, Shihan, you have a great side kick. Why don't you do it?", "No, I think you would look better in the picture. You go ahead." We went back and forth like this for a couple minutes while the cameraman set up. Finally, Mas Oyama yelled, "What are you guys talking about?"

"Uh, osu, Kancho. Maybe we need to put a mat down under the tree," one of the Black Belts said.

"Fine! Hurry up, get a mat!" shouted Mas Oyama. So we brought our rented futon mats from the gymnasium and laid them out under the tree. Still, none of us wanted to be the

one to jump out of the tree. "Everybody do it!" Mas Oyama finally commanded.

"Osu, Kancho..." I said, "My back..." I still was feeling the effects of my back injury.

"Don't worry about it, just do it!" said Mas Oyama. So I climbed up to the first branch and looked down. "Whoa... We're going to need an ambulance on standby," I thought to myself. Mas Oyama gave me a hard look when I stopped at the first branch, so I climbed up to the second branch. I started to go up to the 3rd branch, but when I looked down, I decided that the 2nd branch was as high as I should go if I wanted to survive the jump. I jumped out of the tree and did a side kick on the way down. After I did it, everyone else jumped off their branches. We instinctively gave a loud Kiai on the way down. But our Kiai wasn't one of power and intense energy; it sounded more like someone shrieking in terror after seeing a ghost. I have a picture of my jump side kick, but I don't want to put it in this newsletter. When everyone had finished, Mas Oyama looked like he wasn't too happy with our photo session.

That night, Mas Oyama brought us out to a different part of the beach. There was a beautiful, clear sky full of stars. Star and moonlight was shimmering on the waves rolling gently on

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the shore. Somehow, Mas Oyama had found a large hoop that he had suspended in the air. Leading up to the hoop, were boards of plywood so that we could easily run and jump through the hoop, which would have been much more difficult on the sand. There was something very familiar about the hoop that we couldn't quite figure out. Finally, it hit us—this was a hoop from the circus! This was a hoop that lions and tigers would jump through! But where were the lions and tigers??

Mas Oyama wound gasoline-soaked cloth around the hoop and told us, "We're going to light this up and you guys are going to run and jump side kick through the fire." Again, we all looked at each other and said, "you go, no you. No, you go ahead. No, you go..."

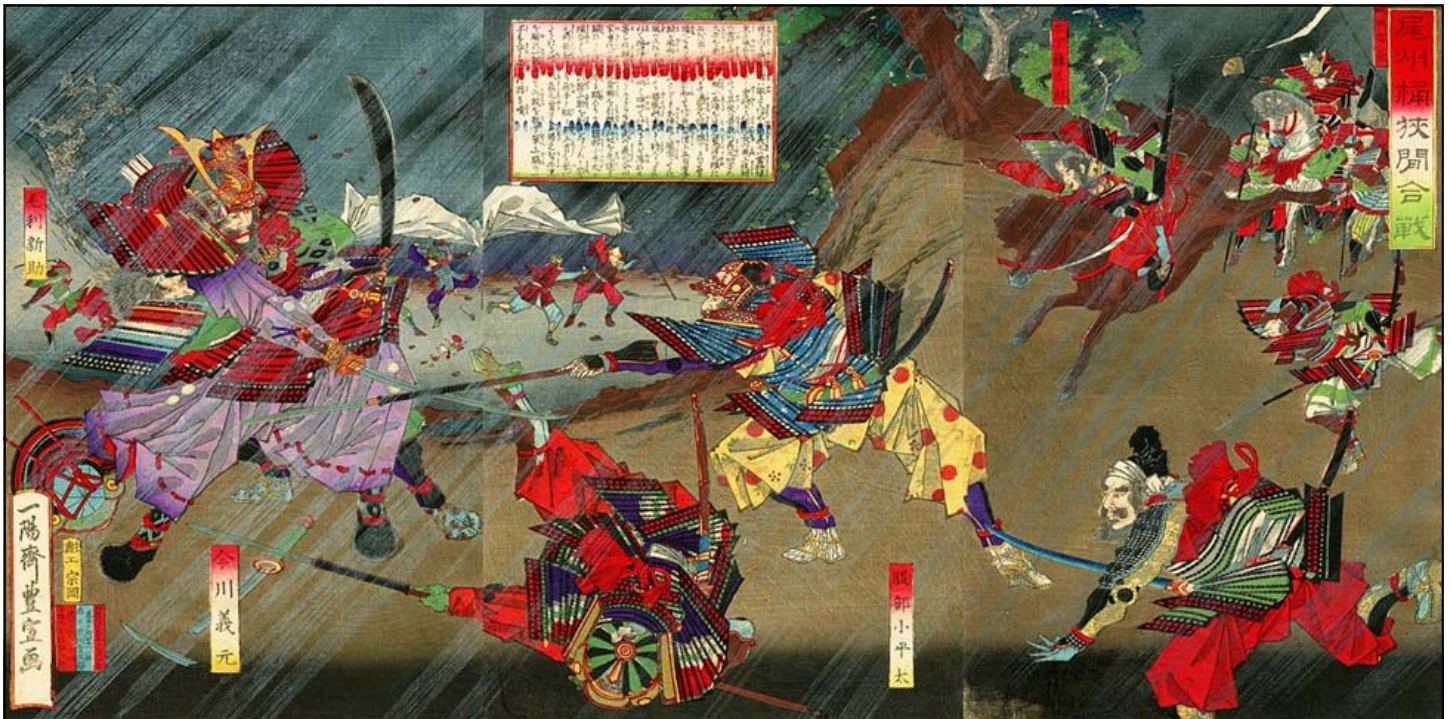
"Hurry up!" Mas Oyama shouted as he lit the hoop on fire. One of the students at the camp had a lot of gymnastics training. We told him, "You do it! Make sure do a good job so we don't have to jump through the fire!" The student did it without any problem. He actually went through a couple times. Mas Oyama had one more shot in mind for the following morning.

Sunrise on the Ichi Nomiya beach was really beautiful with a red sky and stars and moon still visible. Mas Oyama wanted to film us running behind him on the beach at sunrise and later

edit in some dramatic music. The sun rose at about 5:30 a.m. So at 5:00 a.m. the next morning, we all gathered on the beach and waited for Mas Oyama to come over from the hotel. At 5:30, he hadn't come yet. Then it was 6:00 and we started wondering where he was. At 6:30, he still hadn't shown up and the sun had already risen. Breakfast was served to us between 7:30 – 8:30 every morning and only at that time. If we weren't there during that hour, we didn't get to eat. It was already 6:30, so I made everyone start running and training. After breakfast, Mas Oyama finally came to the beach. There was no dramatic sunrise, but we took film of us running behind him anyway. Mas Oyama had bad knees, though, so the cameraman tried to shoot up from the ground to show Mas Oyama's chest.

We ended summer camp with Kiba-sen, which is a war on "horseback". We pretended we were warring historical samurai clans from the 12th – 16th centuries (such as the Genpei, Genji, Hei Kai clans. Early Japan was comprised of warring territories until it was unified under the rule of Shoguns, most famously, Nobu Naga, Toyotami and Tokugawa). We were divided into the West and East teams. Four people made up each "horse"—3 people were the "legs", 2 people in back and 1 person in front, and the 4th person was the rider.

The object was to knock the reigning Lord of the opposing team off his horse. I was the Lord of the East and Kanamura



Nobunaga's 15th century surprise attack

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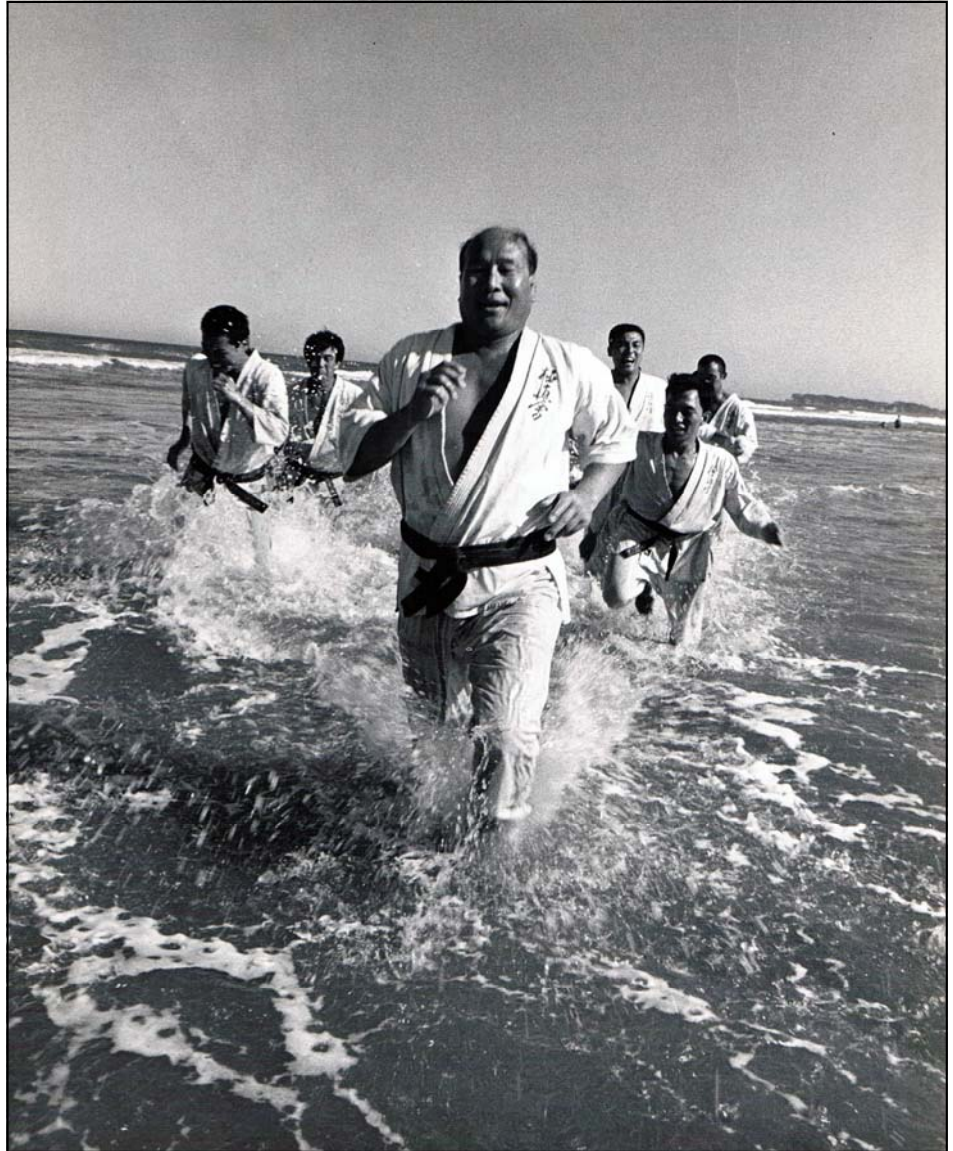
was Lord of the West. Everybody else were soldiers battling each other. Historically, both in Eastern and Western, when a king/ lord was killed in battle, that was it—that group/country was defeated. No matter how the war was going, once the ruler was killed, the entire army was defeated. There are some exceptions, though, such as the great 11th century Spanish ruler, El Cid. After he died, his corpse was dressed in armor and propped up on his horse in order to boost the morale of his troops at the siege of Valencia. Anyway, Mas Oyama was the chief of the East vs. West battle. There were so many strong Black Belts on the opposing side—Shihan Kishi, Isobe, Big Sato, Shihan Miura, Ōishi—all World Champion and All-Japan Champion fighters. I would have to devise a strategy in order for us to win.

I borrowed a strategy from history. The Genpei War took place in Japan during the 12th century. One of the sides, the Heike stationed themselves up against a steep cliff facing the beach. They figured that no attackers could come down the steep cliffs, and they would have a clear view of any frontal attacks. However, the leaders of the other side, the Genji asked the local people if horses could possibly go down the steep cliff. They were told it was impossible. So they asked if there were any animals that went down the cliff and were told that deer went down the cliff. The Genji considered this and figured that deer had 4 legs, same as horses, so if deer could go down the cliff, then horses could too. And that's what they did. The Genji mounted a surprise attack down the cliff and defeated the Heike. The Lord Nobunaga also used this same strategy when his army of 3,000 defeated Inomiya's army of 25,000 in the 15th century.

Before our battle, I called my troops over to me. "You scared of those guys?" I asked.

"Osu, yes," they answered, "If we knock them off their horses, maybe they will beat us up the next time we train at the dojo."

"Well," I said with stern eyes, "They aren't ghosts. They aren't monsters. They are human, same as you. You have 2 hands, they have 2 hands. Theirs are just a little bigger and rougher.



Running behind Mas Oyama down the beach

You have 2 legs, they have 2 legs. Theirs are just a little bulkier and stronger. If you're scared, don't look them in the eyes, just look at their chests. If you still are scared, just close your eyes and push them over." So, I pumped them up and we looked across at the other side and began chanting and screaming. Mas Oyama gave the signal for the battle to begin.

Both sides charged at each other. But, I and my horse slowly backed away from the action. Nobody noticed us moving around the back. The other team was so confident. Kanamura just sat on his horse, completely smug. I eventually made my way all the way in back of the other team and came up behind Kanamura. He still had no idea I was there. "Hey, Kanamura!" I shouted, almost laughing. He turned around,



A surprise attack never works a 2nd time, but I still felt victorious"

shocked to see me. I grabbed him by the head and belt and through him off his horse into the water. "We won! WE WON!" I screamed. Mas Oyama laughed so hard that tears rolled down his cheeks.

The other team couldn't believe what had happened. They immediately said that they wanted a rematch. But I told them, "No way. There are no rematches in a real battle. Once you're defeated, that's it." They kept demanding a rematch.

"Plus," I added, "our strategy is only good once. If we try again, there's no way it would work or that we would win." But they wouldn't stop, and finally Mas Oyama said, "Go ahead, do it just one more time."

So we battled again, but this time we had to fight head-on. The other team just charged me and ripped me off my horse. I didn't stand a chance. Even though I was sent crashing to the water, I still felt like I had won and kept smiling to myself.



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 Editor-in-Chief: Saiko Shiyan 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

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