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# COMBAT

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# SAM MOLEDZKI

# ZKI

Part 2

## An interview with the President of Karatedo Shitokai Canada

Last month we began our interview with lifelong Karate and Kobudo practitioner Sam Moledzki, looking at how he started in the martial arts and this month we conclude the interview with a look at his study of Kobudo, Kempo, his extensive travels and memorable highlights across four decades of training.

**COMBAT:** You also have an extensive knowledge of both Japanese and Okinawan weaponry, can you tell us about your introduction to kobudo and the weapons you practice?

**SAM MOLEDZKI:** My first taste of Kobudo actually was when I was a blue belt in 1969 and had an opportunity to play around, informally, with a pair of Sai that Tsumura sensei had. He had shown me some fundamentals. The students who wished to learn the Kobudo system of Itosu kai were instructed in special classes only after they received their 1st dan level in Karate. My official instruction in the 5 basic weapons of Sakagami sensei's Kobudo (Bo, Sai, Tonfa, Nunchaku and Kama) began in early 1970 and, was taught directly by Tsumura sensei.

Later, whenever I did travelled to the Honbu dojo in Tsurumi, Japan, (1971, 1976, and 1980) I had the special privilege of also receiving direct instruction from Sakagami Ryusho sensei in Kendo, Jodo and Iaido as well as Karatedo which, was arranged for me by Tsumura sensei. By 1980, I had received my 5th dan in Shito ryu karate, 3rd dan in Ryukyu Kobudo and 1st dan in Muso Jiki den Eishin ryu Iaido.

It should be noted that in February 12, 1981, I personally chose to leave the Shito ryu Itosu kai Karate and Kobudo Association of Canada to further my own personal knowledge of the martial arts, independently.



**COMBAT:** You have studied under Kunio Murayama Sensei for over 15 years now. How did you meet and what made you decide that Murayama Sensei and the Shito-Kai was for you?

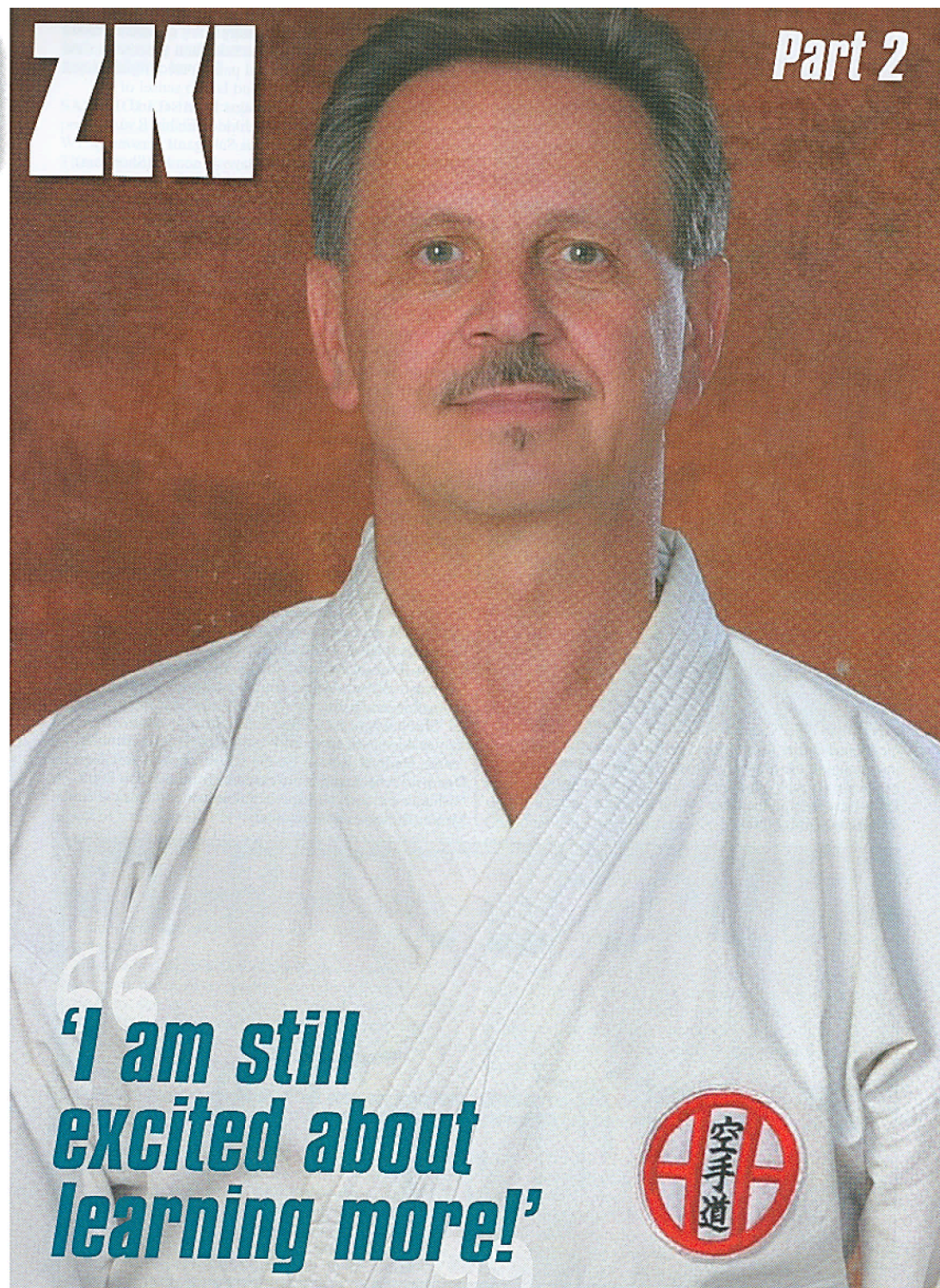
**SAM MOLEDZKI:** Please allow me to explain it this way if I may. I remained independent of any international federation over the next 10 years (1981-1991) by choice, and then, had the great fortune of meeting Kunio Murayama sensei 7th dan, Japan Karatedo Shito Kai from Mexico, during our 1991 Canadian National Black Belt Karate Championships in Vancouver, British Columbia. At the time, I was a senior Canadian referee and also had one of my junior students competing at the nationals. Murayama sensei was a special guest instructor conducting a Shito ryu seminar on shitei kata. I must clarify at this point that I had previously heard of Murayama sensei and thought this was a great opportunity to train with him as another senior member from the Japan Shito kai Federation.

In 1989, I had previously been introduced to the Shito Kai system when I attended a Masters Kata Seminar in Akron, Ohio at Sensei George Anderson's dojo. The masters conducting the 2 day seminar included Sensei Soma (Goju-kai); Sensei Arakawa (Wado-kai); Sensei Hisatomi (Shito-kai); Sensei Kawakami (Shoto-kan). In attendance also was Luciano Valero (Mexico Shito-kai Federation), a direct student of Murayama sensei & President of the Mexican Karate Federation. The seminar with Murayama sensei was excellent because it also included the kata applications for Bassai Dai and Seienchin which were really well received.

During our nationals my student, Roland Chan, became the first ever junior to win both his Kata and Kumite divisions at the Canadian Nationals. Murayama sensei, a head table guest, had come directly over to congratulate us on the win. He then extended a personal invitation to us to come to Mexico. I took this opportunity to put Murayama to a little test and asked him directly if I came to Mexico would he teach me the Kata Nipaipo. I explained to him that I had never learned the kata in Shito Ryu Itosu kai.

Now, from my personal experiences, the most typical reply from a Japanese master would be something like: Mmmm, No! This kata very high, high level and not for Gaijin; or, Not possible! - Must be member long, long, long time etc. Murayama sensei's instant reply was YES! Come to Mexico and I'll teach you personally.

Later that year at the North American Cup in Monterrey, Mexico, I attended as a Canadian referee and Roland Chan competed and finished 2nd in his Kata division, 2nd in his Kumite division as well as 3rd in Open Weight Kumite divi-



*'I am still excited about learning more!'*

sion. During that week and after a couple of extensive personal interviews and training sessions with Murayama sensei, I had the great fortune of being accepted as his direct student.

**COMBAT: Murayama Sensei is known for his knowledge of 'Nanban Sattoryu Kenpo'. Can you explain a little about this system, its origins and how Murayama Sensei came to study it?**

**SAM MOLEDZKI:** Well, Nanban Sattoryu Kenpo Jutsu is different types of techniques taught by Seiko Fujita sensei, 14th generation master of Koga Ryu Ninjutsu to the founder of Shito Ryu Karate, Kenwa Mabuni. Mabuni sensei introduced some of the techniques to one of his top students Manzo Iwata and realised that Iwata sensei became very proficient quickly so, Mabuni sensei asked Fujita sensei to teach him directly. Manzo Iwata sensei received a Menkyo Kaiden from Fujita sensei and became the 4th Soke of Nanban Sattoryu Kenpo Jutsu upon his death. Iwata sensei taught a few people including his son Genzo.

Murayama sensei was a student at TOYO University and a member of the karate club there instructed by Iwata sensei. After graduating, Murayama sensei became an Uchi Deshi student of Manzo Iwata sensei. He lived and trained directly at Iwata sensei's home and learned the Nanban Sattoryu Kenpo Jutsu there, over an approximate 3 year period. Upon the death of Manzo Iwata sensei in 1993, Genzo sensei became the 5th Soke of Nanban Sattoryu Kenpo Jutsu.

**COMBAT: Your quest for knowledge has taken you to many places over the past 4 decades, can you tell us about some of the masters you have trained with?**

**SAM MOLEDZKI:** Sure, o.k. where do I begin? Let me see now. 4 decades is a lot to try and remember but I will try and recall to the best of my memory. I believe my first exposure to other karate systems and instructors was already mentioned earlier starting back in 1969 in Detroit, with instruction in the Shito Ryu Itosu Kai system. I do remember being instructed for a brief time by a visiting Japan Goju Kai sensei in the early 70's at the JCCC, named Watanabe sensei I think.

Later of course, in Japan, during the 70's and early 80's, I received karate instruction from Sakagami Ryusho sensei and Sadaaki Sakagami sensei and participated in seminars in Iaido with Yamatsuda sensei and Ishido sensei of the Muso Shinden Ryu system. Yamaguchi sensei and Sakagami Ryusho sensei, of the Jikiden Eishin Ryu Iaido system. While in Japan, O' Sensei Sakagami personally introduced me to Nakayama Marayoshi sensei (Shotokan), Yamaguchi Gogen sensei (Japanese Goju Ryu) and Hironori Ohtsuka (founder of Wado Ryu karate) between 1971 and 1976, I believe.

I first met Hayashi Teruo sensei in 1972 at the 2nd WUKO World Karate Championships in Paris, France where I was captain of the Canadian team and received instruction briefly from him many years later. During 1975, at the 3rd WUKO World Karate Championships in Long Beach California, I was co-captain of the Canadian team and was very privileged to attend a private meeting as a guest of Sakagami sensei, aboard the docked cruise ship/hotel Queen Mary. There, on the Queen Mary, I was given the great honour of meeting, for the first time Hiroshi Kinjo sensei, Mabuni Kenji & Manzo Iwata sensei (Japan Shito-kai), Kenzo Uchiage (Japan Goju Kai), and Hayashi Teruo sensei again. I recall that it was quite an eye opener to say the least, to be in the same room with all these famous masters and absorbing the energy and feeling in the room. With my limited knowledge of the Japanese language I was instructed by Sakagami sensei to be very quiet and listen closely.

In Canada, USA, Mexico and the Caribbean, over the last 4 decades, I've also had the distinct privilege to meet and train under some very famous masters. They've included Mabuni Kenji sensei, Iwata Manzo sensei, Sakio Ken sensei, Hisatomi Tokio sensei, Iwata Genzo sensei, Masami Tsuruoka sensei, Tatsuo Suzuki sensei, Kai Kuniyoshi sensei, Nishiyama Hidetaka sensei, Higaonna Morio sensei, Nishimura Seiji sensei, Ohtsuka Jjiro sensei, Shiomitsu sensei. Plus, Seiko Suzuki sensei, Yamazaki sensei, Demura Fumio sensei, Miki Minobu sensei, Heilo & Roiron Gracie sensei, as well as Ticky Donovan sensei, and more recently from 2000 to 2005, Nishikawa sensei, Hasegawa Yukimitsu and Patrick McCarthy sensei among others.

**COMBAT: During your youth you competed many times both nationally and internationally. Can you pin point any highlights for us?**

**SAM MOLEDZKI:** I believe earlier in this interview I previously mentioned representing my country at two WUKO World Karate Championships (1972 & 1975). These for sure I considered way up there! Also, in 1970, I won the North American Karate Championships kumite title and, in 1971 in Tokyo, Japan, I won the East Japan Kanto District kumite title and was presented the title trophy and certificate by grand master Ryusho Sakagami sensei. I would have to say also, finishing second in Kata, to the great American Goju Ryu stylist, sensei Chuck Merriman, and, second in kumite to another great American martial artist, Sensei Joe Hayes in the early 1970's. In 1973, I won first place in Kumite at the 8th International Karate Championships in Canada, with Nishiyama sensei awarding me the Championship trophy, after refereeing the finals. And finally, I'd say winning a third place finish at the 1976 Canadian Nationals, when KATA was first included. First place was taken by Tak Samashima and second by Kim Wong, if I'm not mistaken. These would definitely have to be some of my more memorable karate competitions.

**COMBAT: Many karate-ka quit training once their competition days are over, what has kept you motivated all these years?**

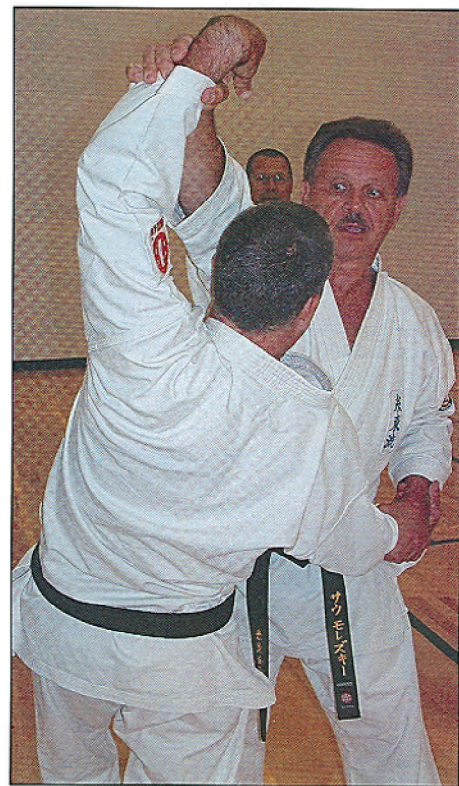
**SAM MOLEDZKI:** I'm certain it's the continuing thirst for the never ending knowledge found within the martial arts I guess, and simply trying to better understand this marvellous art. I began my journey back in 1967, and I'm still excited about learning more and more from various leaders in the martial arts. It truly is a never-ending journey. My quest to understand our budo/sport system led me into three other fields after my competitive days came to an end in 1981.

As a way to give back something to an art/sport that pretty much took me off the wrong path and virtually save my life, I decided I'd give back to it as much of myself as humanly possible. I became interested in the officiating aspect of our sport after being the victim of poor officiating on many occasions. I pursued that side to the extent that I spent the better part of 15 years as a Provincial, National, and Pan-American and WSKF world licensed referee. Approximately 12 of those years were directly paid for out of my own pocket. Only after becoming a member of the Canadian Referee Council did I actually have things partially funded.

I also served as President of the Karate Ontario Association, the province's sports governing body for karate in the province, as well as 1st Vice-President of the National Karate Association of Canada for 2 year terms each. Since 1991, I've also been a member of our provincial coaching staff.

**COMBAT: Can you tell us a little about your organisation in Canada and its affiliation to Murayama Sensei and the WSKF?**

**SAM MOLEDZKI:** Well, as mentioned earlier, I officially became a direct student of Murayama sensei in 1991. Since then, I have more or less travelled to Monterrey, Mexico or brought Murayama sensei to Canada to continue my training on an annual basis. As an official member of Murayama sensei's organisation, all my previous



Canadian students and affiliate dojo were also accepted. My association in Canada became eligible to compete at the 1st World Shito Ryu Karate do Federation Championships in Tokyo, Japan in 1993. At the competition, the Canadian team members competed well and one of my own top female students, Christine Kay, won a world bronze medal in her kumite division.

The WSKF officially recognises only one organisation per country. My Shito kai Canada Association received recognition and official documentation at the 2nd World Shito Ryu Karate do Federation Championships in 1996 in Puebla, Mexico.

In October 2005, Shito Kai Canada will be competing at the 35th Copa Murayama Karatedo Championships. We are also preparing perspective members for the Canadian team selection that will be competing at the 5th World Shito Ryu Karate do Federation Championships in September 2006, in Japan.

**COMBAT: You have achieved so much during your career, do you have any further goals or ambitions?**

**SAM MOLEDZKI:** Yes, to stay healthy enough to see my new 8 month old grandson Joshua, receive his black belt in Shito Kai karate do.

For more general information see the following web-sites: [www.shitoryu.org](http://www.shitoryu.org) [www.shitokaimurayama.com](http://www.shitokaimurayama.com) [www.karatedo.co.jp/shitokai/wskf/index.html](http://www.karatedo.co.jp/shitokai/wskf/index.html) <http://fujitaseiko.tripod.com>

