

KUNIO MURAYAMA SENSEI

8th Dan Shito-Ryu Karate-Do Shito - Ka

Kunio Murayama was born on June 31, 1944 in Miyagi, Japan. His education in Shito-ryu karate began in 1962 when he was enrolled at Toyo University Karate Club under the direction of Master Manzo Iwata a direct student of Grand Master Kenwa Mabuni founder of the Shito-Ryu Karate System. He received his 1st degree black belt in Shito-ryu Karate-do in 1963 and continued to train at the University even after he graduated with an economics degree in 1966. From 1966 through 1968 Kunio Murayama served as captain and coach at the Toyo University Karate Club.

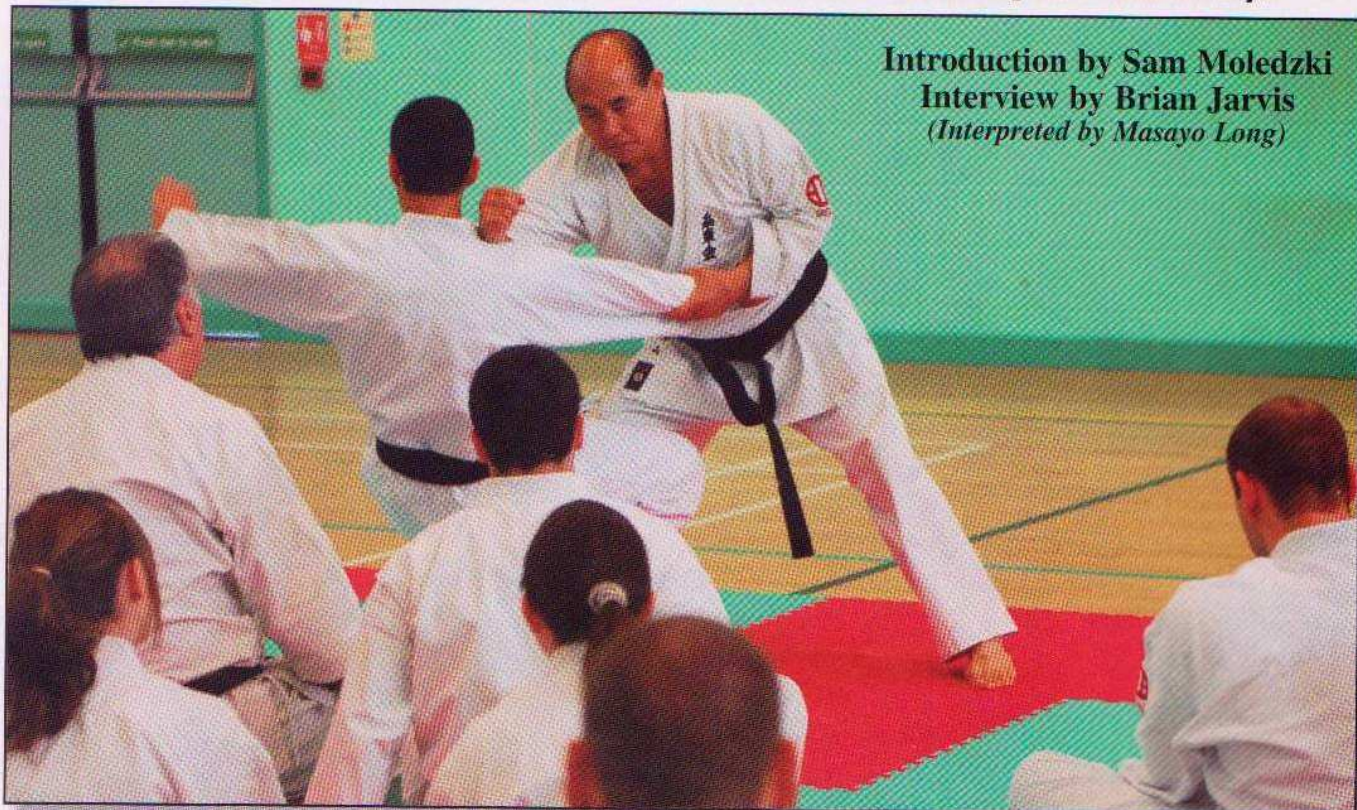
His enthusiasm, hard work and diligent training allowed him to become 'Uchi-Deshi' (live-in-disciple) under Master Manzo Iwata from 1968-1970, where he received his 'menkyo' (teaching certificate) directly from Master Iwata. During 1970, Master Iwata asked Murayama sensei to help further develop Shito-Ryu Karate-do by moving to Mexico and establishing a permanent facility in Mexico. Later that year Murayama sensei was appointed Technical Director of the Mexican National Karate Team that competed at the 1st. WUKO World Karate-do Championships, in Tokyo, Japan.

After returning from the WUKO World Championships, sensei Murayama continued to establish a good following and began teaching in Monterrey, Mexico. In 1975 Murayama sensei was appointed Technical Director of the Nuevo Leon Karate Team of the Mexican National Championships and later, Technical Director of the Mexican National Team competing at the 3rd WUKO World Karate-do Championships in Long Beach, California. A student of Murayama sensei's, Mr. Tony Rivera, won a controversial last match against the famous European Karate Champion, Dominique Valera of France.

Between 1975 and 1985, Murayama sensei served as Technical Director of the Mexican National Karate Team at over a dozen National, International, Pan-America, and World Championships finishing with many first place team and individual event titles for

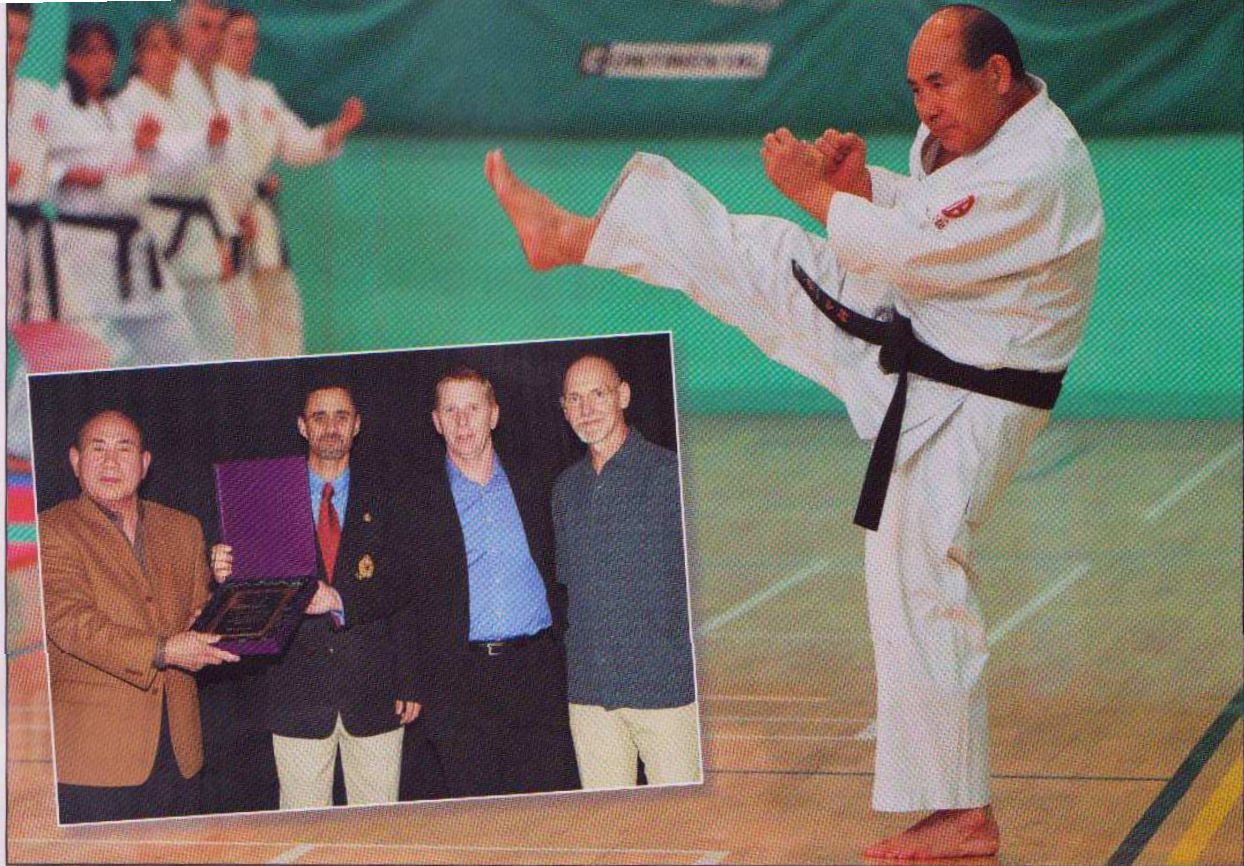
Mexico. In 1988, Murayama sensei received his Pan-American Union of Karate-do Organizations (PUKO) Referee licence in New Orleans, USA and the World Union of Karate-do Organizations (WUKO) Judge licence in Cairo, Egypt. During 1990, at the 10th WUKO World Championships in Mexico City, sensei Murayama received his WUKO Referee licence.

In 1991, Murayama sensei expanded his organization by officially accepting sensei Sam Moledzki and his Shito-Ryu group from Toronto, Canada into the Shito-Kai Murayama Karate Organization. Since then Murayama sensei has also welcomed the USA and most recently the United Kingdom into his Shito-Kai family along side Costa Rica, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic, which he regularly visits in a bid to share his vast knowledge and experience as one of the worlds leading Masters of Shitoryu.



Introduction by Sam Moledzki
Interview by Brian Jarvis
(Interpreted by Masayo Long)





COMBAT: When did you start training in Shitoryu Karate, and had you practised any other martial arts before beginning your karate training?

KUNIO MURAYAMA: I started practising Shito-Ryu in 1963.

COMBAT: Why did you decide to practice karate as opposed to other martial arts?

KUNIO MURAYAMA: Since I was a child, I was attracted to karate as a way of practicing Budo (Martial Way).

COMBAT: Can you tell us about your early days in karate and what the classes were like under Iwata Manzo Sensei?

KUNIO MURAYAMA: When I was a young student, kumite (sparring) classes were particularly hard. Emphasis was put mainly on spirit rather than accurate technique. In kata however, Iwata sensei made me repeat the same kata again and again in order to make it more powerful. (Sensei explained)..that this practice would never end... Mr. Iwata showed (me) the true depth of karate. accurate technique.

COMBAT: You captained and coached your university club team for several years. Was it during this time that you decided on a teaching career in karate?

KUNIO MURAYAMA: Yes, I was an instructor for two years there, (during which) our team came second in the Japanese University National Championships as well as receiving several top awards in other competitions.

COMBAT: In your opinion what makes a good karate teacher?

KUNIO MURAYAMA: A good teacher should have a wide knowledge base, loyalty and honour. Personality is very

important rather than Karate technique.

COMBAT: In 1970 you moved to Monterrey, Mexico. Can you explain why you chose Monterrey and describe some of the challenges you faced at that time?

KUNIO MURAYAMA: By the time I decided to go to Mexico it had already been ten years since karate had been introduced to countries outside of Japan. I was worried whether or not I would be able to pioneer karate abroad, especially as I didn't speak Spanish. However, I had a strong spirit and confidence which I was given by Mr. Iwata and, in time I gradually developed my Spanish and communication skills with my students. It wasn't as bad as I initially thought.

COMBAT: Did you have to change your teaching methods to suit the western culture and did you find the western students very different from the Japanese?

KUNIO MURAYAMA: Yes, my methods were adapted to suite 'Western ways'. However, basic practice methods are the same everywhere but they (Westerners) don't practice unless they're given a reason. It can be difficult to explain the importance of repetition in developing efficient and natural karate technique.

COMBAT: Over the past 36 years you have attracted many students from all over Pan America and now Europe, what do you attribute your success to?

KUNIO MURAYAMA: I did my best not to lose myself. I also tried to adapt myself in many ways according to the people and the culture of those I was teaching.

COMBAT: You are renowned for your knowledge of Nanban Satto-ryu Kempo Jutsu. Can you tell us a little of the history of this art and how you came to study it?

KUNIO MURAYAMA: This system was founded by Mr. Hashimoto in Kyushu. In the 3rd generation, Mr. Saiko Fujita took over, who was also a famous Orthodox Shiga Ryu 14th generation as well. Mr. Iwata Manzo was the 4th generation of the Satto-ryu system. Mr. Iwata developed further the Gyaku-Waza (reverse techniques) and other characteristic techniques.

COMBAT: Do you feel kobudo training is important to Shitoryu karate-ka and do you teach kobudo in your classes?

KUNIO MURAYAMA: Yes, it's important, but we don't have a (specific) lesson with weapons. If students practice individually, it's a good idea to use this (method) to improve their technique.

COMBAT: Do you place much emphasis on Japanese martial art philosophy in your teaching and if so how is it received by western students?

KUNIO MURAYAMA: Some students will never realise (understand) about it, because I don't teach it (specifically) as a lesson. I show them all about it in the lesson and students will usually follow me, and they will learn about it naturally.

COMBAT: Has karate changed a great deal over the years and are you happy with its development into the new millennium?

KUNIO MURAYAMA: Yes, it has been changed dramatically. There are more competitions and karate has been (made) more popular as a sport rather than Budo (Martial Way). It's a good thing that we have more students (practicing karate) than ever. On the other hand, it's a shame that the Budo philosophy is fading away.

COMBAT: For many years the world governing body has worked hard to get karate recognised as an Olympic sport, is this something you support and why?

KUNIO MURAYAMA: It is very positive, but we must be very careful to focus on Budo philosophy, when we involve more business and power.

COMBAT: How would you like to see Murayama Shito-Kai develop and what are your plans for the near future?

KUNIO MURAYAMA: Learning from other students is always important rather than winning competitions. I would like students to help each other to polish their technique.

COMBAT: Do you have a message for your British students and karate-ka in general?

KUNIO MURAYAMA: Karate is for your mental and physical development. It is not a fight for somebody else, not for your teacher or your group. Be kind to others and be hard on yourself, so you will learn more about a good life.

COMBAT: Sensei, thank you for your time and we look forward to your return to the UK.

KUNIO MURAYAMA: You are welcome.

**Brian Jarvis is the President of Shito-Kai Murayama UK and can be contacted on 07971 584901 / samuraimartialarts@msn.com
Masayo Long can be contacted for Japanese / English interpretation www.masayoinfojapan.co.uk**

