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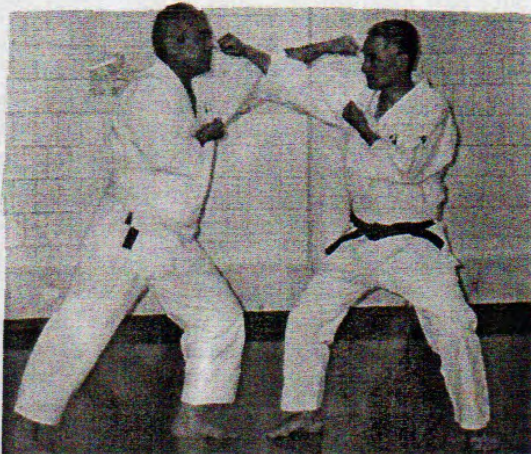
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INTERVIEW WITH GRANDMASTER HIRONORI OHTSUKA II

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Q: Sensei, what are the major changes you have seen in karate since you started training?

A: The main change I have seen is the introduction of competition karate. I feel competition is good but techniques like nukite, haito and taisho are not practiced as much and that is sad to see. These techniques are not used in competition but we must try to keep training them. People say karate is a martial art but some limit themselves to only sport training, not complete martial art training. Sport is always lacking for those who



come second or third. Wado-Ryu uses proper fighting techniques and we try to attack all major weak or vital points. We practice with controlled techniques and try to support each other in our practice. In sports they too try and help

each other to practice and improve their techniques, but their technique becomes very simple. For example, when you get hit in practice from loss of control we try to control our techniques when we practice but sometimes

there is no control or a loss of temper but afterwards, with continued practice, students begin to control their mind. Sports karate can make one champion but martial arts try to make more gentlemen [people] with controlled minds. That is the main difference.

Q: What techniques do you feel are most important for daily training?

A: You should start with basics and then go back to basics. If your basics are not good enough you cannot use strong basics for kata, kihon kumite, ohyo kumite, ippon

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kumite or jiyu kumite. For example, doctors have to have basic studies so that they could use applications to decide which illness, which medicine to use, which operation, which knife to use. This is all coming from basics. In Japan, in my dojo, we start our practice with basics, then kata, then kihon kumite or ohyo kumite, then jiyu kumite free fighting and then before we finish we always do more basics.

Q: What do you think are the major benefits of kata to a student's understanding of karate?

A: When you practice kata if you just repeat the same move again and again you will waste your time. Instead when

you practice you should question the meaning and application of each move. In this way kata will not become a dead repetition of movement. You must make the kata alive. Try to avoid unnecessary tension, unnecessary movement and unnecessary technique. There are many techniques so you should try to put kata moves into your own techniques. Some people practice a kata just by doing it three times but if you practice just once, concentrating on why we do this, and how we do this, thinking about each individual move you will see that practicing once in this way is worth more than just practicing the kata three times without

thinking. This is very important for students practicing kata.

Q: How important is mokuso in karate?

A: The beginning of a karate lesson often starts with mokuso. During this time try to forget about what you did today, your worries and your stress. In kendo, when they practice mokuso, they say Ken zen ichi. Ken means sword or sword work, zen means zazen-zen Buddhism, ichi means that both should be in one body. Some people can put both together but some, even if they practice mokuso, cannot put them together. It is said that martial arts and zen should be one body but



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it depends on the person and how they practice. My father used to talk about *ôochaku zazenô* lazy zazen meditation. Zazen is usually done kneeling, sitting down or in lotus position, which can be painful. My father would practice lying on the floor like a large letter of the alphabet. When he lied down he would think of numbers, count his breath and try to forget everything. When you get used to it, even when counting numbers, other thoughts may come into your mind. To keep a totally empty mind for a long time is almost impossible maybe it will last for thirty seconds or one minute so my father said this is impossible. It depends on the person

if they are satisfied or not. It depends on the person if they want to practice *mokuso*. Don't force yourself too much to practice *mokuso*. I explain to my students when we practice *mokuso* at the beginning of our lesson to forget about the outside world. When you come into the dojo I want you to practice, enjoy your training and what you learn from the instructor, that is the objective. When you bow entering and leaving the dojo or *shomen*, *Sensei* and *otagani* it is a show of appreciation and you should say to yourself you will enjoy this lesson and hope for no accidents and you will support each other, all these things should be in your mind. When you bow to the *Sensei* you

ask to please teach us and *otagani* you are asking for support from other students and hope for no accidents and when you finish the lesson the last bow is thanking everyone for a good lesson. That is the feeling you should have when you bow.

Q: What would you like to see in the future for Wado-Ryu?

A: Wado-Ryu karate, as I said, has both real fighting and sports fighting in it and both are like a wheel both should work together so karate can move forward. Also teaching children is very important so that the future of karate can build. As long as children continue practicing Wado-Ryu will always grow.



Thank-you *Sensei*.

Domenic Capilongo