

Steve Austin

Thanks very much for agreeing to do this interview on your karate history Nick. Well, I'd like to start by asking you the most obvious question which I suppose is, when was the very first time that you ever heard about karate?

Nick Adamou

It was in 1964 when I was 17 years of age and a student at Tottenham Technical College. There was a student at the college called Terry Shram who, apart from looking remarkably like Charlie Watts, the drummer of the Rolling Stones, was beginning to get quite a reputation for himself as the person who could break wood simply by 'Chopping' it with the side of his hand. I was intrigued and fascinated by this and as soon as word got around that there was to be another 'Wood chopping moment' with 'Terry', I made sure to be there when it happened.

S.A.

So did you manage to be there? What happened?

N.A.

Well it was very impressive to see this quiet, unassuming and rather placid individual, who had very little to say for himself most of the time, just stand there, and then after raising his hand up, suddenly bring it down with incredible speed as he shouted (kiai), straight through a one inch thick, piece of wood performing a Shuto-Uchi (Knife hand strike).

S.A.

Was this the defining moment for you then? Was it because of this that you decided to learn karate?

N.A.

No, not at all. At that time it was believed that only people who had practiced Judo could take up karate and, as I had no intention of learning Judo, I never imagined that I would be allowed or be able to learn karate.

S.A.

So what was it that then?

N.A.

Well it was because of an A4 leaflet which was pinned on the notice board just outside the gymnasium of the college. It was April 1964 and I had about two and a half months remaining before I would go on a six week holiday to Athens, with my brother, Chris and our friend David. As I came out of the gym and turned to my left, I noticed the A4 leaflet with the word 'Karate' at the top. There were two Japanese men wearing white uniforms. One was crouched low in a long Kokutsu-Dachi (back stance) with the other man some four feet above him performing a Yoko-Tobi-Geri (Flying side thrust kick). I was instantly struck by the dynamic and geometrical art encompassed in the move and felt that, although this looked like a kind of beautiful ballet, the moves must surely be effective and deadly.

S.A.

So what happened? Did you cancel the holiday and start karate instead?

N.A.

No. I was too excited about the holiday to cancel it, especially as this would be the first time that I would be going on a holiday without my mother and father as a family. There were about two and a half months to go before the planned trip and I decided to visit the local library to find out about karate clubs in the area and also to take out a book on the subject.

S.A.

Did you join a karate club before you went on your trip? What book were you given?

N.A.

Well, the woman at the library was unable to come up with any information about karate clubs and asked me to come back in a few days when she had looked into it further by contacting other libraries. As far as the book, well, I really couldn't have been given a more apt one. The book was 'Karate, The Art of Empty Hand Fighting' by Nishyama and Brown. You know, it seems quite strange when I think that, the organisation that I would eventually join, would invite the very person who was chosen to perform Heian Yondan in the book that I had just been given from the library, and that this person, namely Hirokazu Kanazawa, would be my instructor just a year later when the BKF invited him to be its resident instructor for London.

S.A.

Yes, that is very strange!! So Nick, I assume you went back to the library to find out whether the librarian had come up with any clubs?

N.A.

Yes. She told me that there was only one organisation in the whole of the United Kingdom and this was the British Karate-do Federation (BKF) which was headed by its founder, Dr. V.C.F. Bell. I therefore kept all the relevant details regarding the BKF and immediately began to read the book.

S.A.

Were you able to learn any karate from the book?

N.A.

Well, as I imagined that all the information in the book was only for qualified practitioners of the art, I didn't even consider that I might be able to attempt this.

S.A.

I see. Anyway, you went to Greece in July. Did you enjoy the holiday? I imagine you must have had a great time there?

N.A.

Oh yes. It was wonderful. What was especially nice was the journey. Train from Liverpool Street Station to Immingham, then a seven hour boat trip to the Hook of Holland. From there we spent two days and nights by train travelling through Holland, Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia (as it was called at the time) and then all the way down the length of Greece to Athens. I remember a gigantic, orange, neon sign which read 'BELGRADE' as the train came into this city. We were all exhausted and

hardly able to keep our eyes open as the train finally wound its way into Athens at around 11.00pm at night. Then, suddenly, as we rounded another corner, the Parthenon came into view, all lit up in ever changing colours. Absolutely beautiful. Quite breathtaking.

S.A.

I assume that you returned to England in September time. Did you contact the BKF on your return?

N.A.

Well, David and I began the journey back on our own, stopping off in Salzburg for a day and then Vienna where we met up with my parents who were holidaying with my mother's relations there. Chris stayed on in Greece a little longer in order to visit Corinth and Mykonos. From Vienna, David and I returned to England at about the middle of September. I didn't contact the BKF on my return as I knew that if I started karate I'd obviously have to pay for the lessons and, to pay for them I'd have to have a job. I therefore spent about three weeks searching for a suitable job which, after having just spent two years at college, the word 'suitable' just didn't fit into the equation and this was nigh on impossible. I loved science and all subjects connected with science and would have loved to have studied astronomy or astrophysics in order to become an Astronomer. Whilst Physics and Chemistry were not too much of a problem for me, maths was my big, weak point. So I had to face up to reality and weigh up the options. Go back to college for another year in the hope that my maths would improve, and thereby forfeit any chance of doing karate or, get a job in order to pay for the lessons.

S.A.

How long after this visit to the Kentish Town dojo was it, before you actually joined the BKF?

N.A.

I believe I received my BKF Licence at around the beginning of December 1964.

S.A.

And was this when you started karate?

N.A.

No. my first Karate lesson was held at the Upminster Dojo some weeks afterwards. I think this was on 13th December 1964 at 10.00am on a depressingly dismal and cold Sunday morning. My brother and I got up at around 7.30am to catch the 144 bus to Turnpike Lane Station. From here we travelled on the Piccadilly, Northern and District line Undergrounds to Upminster. As we walked from Upminster Underground station to the dojo, which took about twelve or fifteen minutes, we passed a fair haired woman on the way walking in the same direction as us. I jokingly said to Chris that perhaps she was a karate expert. After we had changed into our Judo uniforms which we had bought a few weeks earlier from Dr. Bell, and were lined up with the other students in the dojo, that same, fair haired woman who we had just passed in the street came into the dojo and also lined up. This was Pauline Laville (now Pauline Bhindra of Blitz Martial Arts) and, like us, she was also wearing a white belt. It seems strange when I think that in approximately three years to the day from that

first meeting with Pauline, she, my brother and I would all take our Shodan Black belt gradings together, under Kanazawa sensei.

S.A.

How often did you train Nick?

N.A.

Well initially I only trained once a week at the Upminster dojo but after about a month, I also trained at the Kentish Town dojo. So I was therefore training twice a week.

S.A.

In those early days of British karate, who were your instructors and who else used to train along side yourself under these instructors?

N.A.

In the first five months of my karate training, my fellow karate-ka were Eddie Whitcher, Mick (Michael) Randall, Ray Fuller, Mick Peachey, Chris Adamou, Jack Johnson, David Johnson, Peter Labasci and Pauline Laville (now Pauline Bhindra). Later on, Andy Sherry, Bob Poynton, Steve Cattle and Terry O'Neil would sometimes visit and train at the London dojos. Instruction was given by Jimmy Neal, Terry Wynngrove, and Robert Williams as well as Dr. Bell.

S.A.

So the first five months of your karate practice was under British instructors, when did you hear of the possibility that Japanese instructors (sensei) might be visiting the UK dojos to teach and also to demonstrate at various venues in London?

N.A.

I can't remember exactly, but I think this was around the end of January 1965. A rumour had started to circulate that four of the best karate instructors from the Japan Karate Association (JKA) would be visiting the UK to hold karate demonstrations throughout the country and also to teach karate at most of the BKF dojos. Over the weeks this rumour gathered more and more momentum until, one evening after one of the classes, Dr. Bell turned the rumour into a fact by announcing that, Taiji Kase (6th Dan), Hirokazu Kanazawa (5th Dan), Keinosuke Enoeda (5th Dan) and Hiroshi Shirai (4th Dan) would be arriving in the UK and coming to our dojo around the end of April. The qualifications and experience of these JKA instructors was staggering. Shirai sensei had been a JKA Grand Champion in 1962 and Enoeda sensei was the winner of the JKA kumite title in 1963. Kanazawa sensei (now in his 70s, and world famous as a 10th Dan) had gained a phenomenal reputation in Japan as he was the winner of the first, All Japan Karate Association championship held in 1957 which he won whilst he had a broken hand. He then went on to become the JKA Grand Champion the following year by winning both the Kumite (Free-Sparring) and Kata (Formal Exercise) titles in 1958. Dr. Bell also told us that Kanazawa sensei was renowned for his incredibly high kicks. Because of Kase sensei's seniority, he had been a JKA judge and referee. He then explained that he had invited Kanazawa Sensei to be the resident instructor of the two London clubs based in Kentish Town and Upminster.

S.A.

Were you given any suggestions or guidelines on protocol regarding these four sensei due to them being Japanese and also, because they were such famous karate instructors?

N.A.

Yes, Dr. Bell explained how we should conduct ourselves in their presence along with many other facts and details regarding them. I remember him telling us that all high grade karate-ka always have a good complexion due to their overall health, fitness and good physical condition which is a direct result of their rigorous training. He also said that Japanese instructors always remember each and every student who trains under them and I found all of this very interesting.

S.A.

Did Dr. Bell prepare any kind of a campaign to promote the planned demonstrations leading up to the arrival of these JKA instructors?

N.A.

Yes he did, he handed out white, A4 leaflets and yellow, A2 posters which announced their arrival and the time and venue of the demonstrations. We were all given several of these to put up in shop windows and wherever else possible.

S.A.

So Nick, the scene was set and you had about another three months before the arrival of these four, very famous Japanese sensei. You must have been incredibly excited. What were your thoughts and feelings over those months leading up to their arrival?

N.A.

Well, I had only been practicing karate since the middle of December 1964, about two months in all, and of course loved every minute of it. My instructors, who I held in the highest regard and with absolute respect, were brown belts. To be told that, in just a few month's time I would be training under black belts, who were Japanese and who were four of the Japan Karate Association's very best instructors was thrilling and a bit terrifying all at the same time although, I was very excited of course.

S.A.

Can you describe the moment you first laid eyes on these four, very special Japanese sensei?

N.A.

Well, I was an eighteen year old, ungraded white belt, with a Karate Gi that was made for me by my next door neighbour, having discarded my judo Gi a few weeks earlier. It was a Friday evening, around the 17th or 18th of April 1965. I had taken the usual, one and a quarter hour journey by underground from Chancery Lane to Kentish Town in order to train at my usual Friday night dojo, which was at the Lyndurst Hall in Weldon Road. I really had no idea what a momentous occasion this was to be in terms of karate history or that I was to be amongst the very first UK karate students to train in the first lesson ever to be given in the United Kingdom by

the best, Japanese sensei (instructors) from the Japan Karate Association (JKA). It goes without saying that I felt extremely privileged and excited to have the chance to train under these very special karate instructors.

S.A.

Were the four sensei at the dojo when you arrived?

N.A.

No, they hadn't arrived when I got there. The lesson began as usual and was taken by Jimmy Neal and Terry Wyngrove I think. Then, at about twenty minutes into the class, the doors to the right that we were all facing opened and one by one, the four Japanese sensei made their entrance, bowing and walking forward until they were all lined up in front of us. They glowed in their white karate Gi's and black belts. I have to admit that I'd never seen human beings look or 'feel' quite like this before as they simply stood there, hands down to their sides, heels together with toes pointing outward. There was a strength and power, a severity and kindness about them all in one go. Very impressive and quite strange.

S.A.

What happened after they lined up?

N.A.

Dr. Bell began by introducing each of them, starting with Kase sensei who was the most senior. Each sensei briskly took a small step forward and bowed as his name was called out. Then, Dr. Bell gave a short talk about that particular sensei. Once the introductions were over, Dr. Bell asked them what they wished to do. They decided that it would be a good idea to let Terry Wyngrove and Jimmy Neal continue with the class, whilst they walked in and around us in order to watch the way in which we performed karate techniques. This went on for about fifteen minutes after which time they asked us all to sit down, in order for them to demonstrate how the techniques should be performed correctly.

S.A.

Did all the sensei demonstrate something? What techniques did they show you?

N.A.

Well, first of all let me say that the atmosphere was electric as we just sat there, crossed legged on the dojo floor and watched the incredible speed, power and energy that was generated by these amazing karate-ka. What was also impressive to observe was the incredible control of their techniques when they performed Kumite (sparring) as every punch, strike and kick was pulled just a hairs width from the target. What they noticed immediately after having watched us perform karate, was that we were not using our hips and also that our stances were too high.

Therefore Kanazawa sensei demonstrated how we should twist our hips sideways for Age-Uke (rising block), Soto-Ude-Uke (outside forearm block), Uchi-Ude-Uke (inside forearm block), Gedan Barai (downward block), and how we should twist them forward for Gyaku-Zuki (reverse punch). These blocks were all performed in Zenkutsu-Dachi (front stance). Kanazawa sensei then went on to show how the hips

should be used for Mae-Geri (front snap kick), Yoko-Geri-Keage (side snap kick) and Yoko-Geri-Kekomi (side thrust kick).

All of Kanazawa sensei's kicks were brilliant of course but I have to say that, the speed and power of his side thrust kick was beyond belief. Mick (Michael) Randall was sitting crossed legged on the floor when Kanazawa sensei performed this kick as it shot out like a bullet over Mick's head. Kanazawa sensei then paired up with Enoeda sensei and performed a whole series of elbow strikes which, when he performed these at speed, were over in an instant.

S.A.

What happened after the class Nick? I imagine that you all had so much to think about and discuss?

N.A.

Well, we all went to the usual Friday night pub, 'The Admiral Napier' which was just a few yards down the road. Dr. Bell along with the four Japanese sensei as well as Terry Wynngrove and Jimmy Neal were also there.

S.A.

Did you get a chance to talk to any of the sensei?

N.A.

No, I was too timid and felt as if I was in the presence of Royalty. It was just not my place to approach them. I was completely overwhelmed.

S.A.

You mentioned that Dr. Bell had organised demonstrations for the four JKA sensei, when were these held and where?

N.A.

The first of the three demonstrations ever to be given by the JKA in the United Kingdom was held at Kensington Town Hall on 21st April 1965. Before the four Japanese sensei came onto the stage to perform their demonstration, Terry Wynngrove took a mini karate class and, as far as I can remember, Eddie Witcher, Mick Randall, Mike Peachey, my brother, myself and few others from the usual group, were the students training in this 'mini' class. This was organised in order to show that British people were also practicing karate.

S.A.

What did you have to perform in that 'mini' class Nick?

N.A.

We had to do some simple basic techniques such as; Gedan-Barai (downward block), Oi-Zuki (stepping punch), Age-Uke (rising block), Heian Shodan (first kata) and Gohon -Kumite (five step sparring).

S.A.

Did the lesson under Terry go on for long?

N.A.

Again, I find it hard to remember but I think it was something like ten or twelve minutes perhaps.

S.A.

Could you describe for us what the four Japanese sensei did in their demonstration?

N.A.

Certainly, but before I do I have to say that their demonstration of free style sparring was totally amazing and quite unbelievable. So fast, so agile, so powerful and so precise. There was no bouncing up and down or forward and backward moves as they paired up ready to attack or defend. Instead, they both just stood there, silently facing one another in, what seemed to be an almost, deep, meditative state of deep concentration with a kind of 'taut, pent up' energy that you could literally feel. Like two cats that are about to fight each other, both totally bound up in the other's slightest move or gesture. Very slowly and at about an inch at a time, one of the sensei would edge just a bit forward or just a bit backward until, as if some invisible line had been crossed and then 'Wham!!!' the attack would suddenly take place, as if out of nowhere. What dynamic moves these were. Imagine an elastic band that has been stretched back as far as it could possibly be pulled with absolutely no movement at this point. When the band is released, it snaps forward at an incredible rate. Their attacks and defences were just like that. One second they were standing motionless and, the next, they would just shoot forward backward or to the side, covering about a meter in an instant. Awe inspiring.

S.A.

Yes, awe inspiring. So who paired up with who? Did they demonstrate any basic techniques or do any kata? What about breaking wood, was that performed?

N.A.

I remember Kanazawa sensei and Shirai Sensei doing freestyle and it was staggeringly fast. The athletic agility of the two of them was just incredible with punches, kicks and strikes going off all over the place. Like two, wild cats. During these exchanges, Shirai Sensei performed a front kick which Kanazawa sensei avoided by jumping in a kind of semi circular manner. At the exact moment his feet touched the floor from that jump, he performed a left Yoko-Geri-Kekomi (side thrust kick) to Shirai sensei's mid section. Kanazawa sensei's kick was so fast; it looked like a piston shooting out of a secret compartment. Truly amazing.

S.A.

Who else performed free style?

N.A.

I remember seeing Kanazawa sensei and Enoeda sensei pairing up and giving an equally, fast, dynamic and deadly display of free style. Truly breathtaking with Enoeda sensei's Oi-Zukis (stepping punch), Mae-Geris (front kick) and Mawashi-Geris (roundhouse kick) hurtling forward at Kanazawa sensei, with all the power of a massive steam train going at full speed. In all the displays of free style, Kase sensei acted as the referee.

S.A.

What else was demonstrated by these four JKA sensei?

N.A.

Kase sensei demonstrated the applications of Heian Yondan (Fourth basic formal exercise) with Enoeda sensei. As he got to the last Morote -Uke (augmented forearm block) and moved from Kokutsu-Dachi (back stance) to Zenkutsu-Dachi (front stance) grabbing Enoeda sensei's head in the process, Kase sensei jumped up into the air and performed Hitsui-Tobi-Geri (flying knee attack) instead of the usual Hitsui-Geri (knee kick). I also remember seeing Kase sensei perform a kata which, I think was Chinte. When he performed the kiai, a very strange thing happened to me because it seemed as if, one minute I was there, watching his display and then, after his kiai, I felt like I was waking up from a deep sleep. I looked around me and tried to figure out where I was, and what was going on. It took about ten seconds to get my orientation back but I have to say that it was a very strange experience.

S.A.

You mentioned tamishiwara (wood breaking) Nick, who performed this?

N.A.

Kanazawa sensei broke four pieces of wood with Gyaku-Zuki (reverse punch) to the front followed by Ushiro-geri (back kick) behind, then at ninety degrees he performed Mawashi-Geri (roundhouse kick) and then after he turned to the opposite side he performed Shuto-Uchi (knife hand strike). The whole procedure was over in about four seconds. I can't remember whether he performed this at the Kensington or the Hornsey Town Hall demonstration which took place on 24th April 1965 but, what I do remember especially about the Hornsey Town Hall demonstration was Shirai sensei performing tamishiwara. In his combination, he broke the first two pieces with ease but when he performed jodan Mae-Geri (front snap kick head height) to the last piece, it didn't break but instead, his kick lifted those who were holding the wood, very slightly off the floor. So he tried again with an extra person supporting the first two who held the wood. It still wouldn't break. He tried once more and it finally broke. The audience was ecstatic and applauded and whistled loudly. However, when Shirai sensei bowed and went back behind the curtains, he sank into a kind of half sitting position and put his head in his hands and angrily muttered some words in Japanese. The other sensei rallied round and seemed to be consoling him. When he threw the piece of wood down that had been so hard to break I noticed that it had a massive knot running through it. As disappointing as this had been, it certainly proved to everyone watching that there was no 'trick' involved in the wood breaking demonstration.

S.A.

You said there were three demonstrations, what about the third one, how did this go?

N.A.

The third demonstration was at Poplar Town Hall, but I'm pretty sure I didn't go to this one. If I did, I really can't remember anything about it.

S.A.

So what happened to the four JKA sensei once the demonstrations were over?

N.A.

They all went with Dr. Bell to Liverpool for about a week I think and then they came back to London from where sensei Kase, Enoeda and Shirai went to South Africa for six months to teach. Enoeda sensei returned to England and instructed in Liverpool and the North of England. I can't remember exactly when this was but it may have been immediately after the six months stay in South Africa.

S.A.

And what about Kanazawa sensei?

N.A.

Well, Kanazawa sensei stayed on in London for one year as an instructor of the BKF after Dr. Bell secured a work permit for him which would last up to March 1966 and, during this year he made regular visits to other BKF dojos around the UK.

S.A.

So, am I right in thinking Nick that, from the time when you started karate in December 1964, up to the time when Kanazawa sensei started to instruct within the BKF, in May 1965, some five months in total, you didn't take any gradings?

N.A.

Yes, that's absolutely right. My first grading was held on either the 28th or 29th July 1965 at the Lyndurst Hall in Kentish Town under Kanazawa sensei and my brother and I went from white to yellow belt 7th Kyu. Pauline Laville (now Pauline Bhindra), who had started karate one or two months earlier than myself and Chris, went from white to green belt 6th Kyu and Mick Randall and Mick Peachey who were nine months my senior, received purple belt 5th Kyu. Ray Fuller did exceptionally well by going straight to temporary 4th Kyu.

S.A.

Did Dr. Bell organise any courses for the BKF students now that Kanazawa sensei was in the UK for the coming year?

N.A.

Yes, Kanazawa sensei instructed on two courses. The first of these, which I didn't attend, was held in Chigwell around the end of August 1965. However, I did attend the week long course that was held the following week at Lilleshall, in Shropshire.

S.A.

Could you describe in detail everything relating to the course?

N.A.

The first of the two hour classes started at 5.30am or 6.00am in the morning and, before the class commenced, Kanazawa sensei led all of us in a run around the grounds of the complex in our Gi's. Before we could get onto the grass to start the run, there was an area of gravel that had to be traversed which, when I gingerly walked across it, felt like pins and needles in the soles of my feet. I hated running

because it used to trigger off my Asthma but, as I didn't want to be seen as a coward, I never mentioned this. Luckily, I never had any Asthma attacks on these morning runs, which was quite strange. During the run, and at certain selected moments, Kanazawa sensei would shout out one, two, three, four all the way up to ten in Japanese, i.e. "ichi, ni, san, shi" and so on and he, along with the rest of us would perform Choku-zuki (straight punch) to his count whilst we were running. On the tenth punch we all kiai'd. I was always at the end of the line or amongst the last to finish.

After the run, we would file into the dojo, line up and then, after doing some warming and limbering up exercises, the normal karate class would start.

These early morning classes were a shock to my entire system as I hated getting up early in the morning nearly as much as I hated running. However, I have to say that I really felt physically and mentally brilliant afterwards. It was wonderful to meet up with other karate-ka including, Andy Sherry, Steve Cattle and Alan Smith who also attended the course. Apart from the karate techniques which Kanazawa sensei explained and demonstrated so brilliantly, he also showed the importance of using the stomach or 'Hara' when practicing karate. To highlight this in one of the classes, he stood in Shiko-Dachi, stance and then asked one of the larger built students to run at him in the same way that Sumo wrestlers start their bouts. Starting his run from around five foot away and accelerating to maximum speed, the student simply bounced off of him as if he had hit a wall whilst Kanazawa sensei never moved and seemed absolutely solid.

On another occasion, Kanazawa sensei sat on the floor with his legs together, pointing upward at a forty five degree angle. His body was also at a 45 degree angle to the floor and, at a ninety degree angle to his legs, creating a 'V' shape, he asked any student to try to push his legs or body down towards the floor. When a student came up to him and tried, it looked as if he was pushing downward against a solid object like a table or a wall. Another student was invited up to help the first, and still no movement. Kanazawa sensei said that he was able to channel the force of the push, down his body and into the floor through his stomach, thus making the position that he was sitting in even more stable.

On the last day, after the final class of the course, I went along with around twenty five of the other students to a pub nearby with Kanazawa sensei. Somehow and quite by chance, I ended up sitting immediately to the left of Kanazawa sensei which, as an eighteen year old, quite shy person, felt very awkward. During the course of the evening, and after quite a few drinks, I started to feel a bit more relaxed and, as everyone else had been asking Kanazawa sensei so many questions about all kinds of things, I gathered myself together, took another sip of beer and went to ask him a question about karate. It's very strange as, at that very moment, before I had the chance to say "Sensei", he turned to face me, waiting for the question. How on Earth did he know that I was going to say anything because it was very noisy, a typical party atmosphere with lots of talking and laughter. When he turned to face me, I was lost for words and took a gulp of beer. This kind of thing happened about four times with the 'Master' facing the opposite direction after having just listened or spoken to another student and then, at the very moment I was about to say "Sensei" he would turn to face me. Finally, I managed to ask him my question which was about Yoko-Tobi-Geri (flying side thrust kick).

S.A.

I believe you said earlier that Kanazawa sensei's work permit lasted only for one year and would expire around March 1966. During that year, how many gradings did you take under him?

N.A.

I took three. The first from white belt to 7th Kyu as I've already mentioned was in July 1965, then I graded to green belt 6th Kyu on 8th November 1965 and on 23rd February 1966 I graded to 5th Kyu purple belt.

S.A.

What happened when Kanazawa sensei's work permit expired?

N.A.

For his own reasons, Dr. Bell wasn't going to renew Kanazawa sensei's contract with the BKF. This meant that Kanazawa sensei would not be in a position to instruct us anymore. We were quite simply, devastated. Whilst this was going on, I think Kanazawa sensei visited France for some weeks and at the same time, some of the higher graded students such as Eddie Whitcher, Mick Randall, Mick Peachey and so on, tried to organise a work permit for Kanazawa sensei. It seemed that, if this couldn't be achieved through the BKF, then it would have to be arranged through a new organisation. A meeting was set up at the Lyndhurst Hall dojo in which Dr. Bell, several BKF members from Liverpool and most of the members from the Lyndhurst Hall dojo in London attended. I never liked meetings and am not sure whether I was at this one. If I was, I have to admit that I recall very little of it. However, I distinctly remember, being at another meeting which was held just a few days later with most of the members of the Lyndhurst Hall dojo. Dr. Bell was not at this meeting. This took place after we had trained and all gathered at the Admiral Napier pub. Those present were Eddie Whitcher, Ray Fuller, Robert Williams, Mick Randall, Mike Peachey, Pauline Laville (now Pauline Bhindra), Chris Adamou, myself and many other students who's names I've forgotten. After much deliberating to find a suitable name which would encompass what the new organisation would represent, Eddie Whitcher came up with; 'Karate Union of Great Britain' (KUGB).

When Kanazawa sensei returned, he became the chief instructor of the KUGB in the south of England with Enoeda sensei in Liverpool and the north. It was around this time that my brother, Chris Adamou founded the Blackfriars dojo and I put up the first month's rent for the new venue which was to become the honbu dojo (Headquarters) of the KUGB in the south of England.

S.A.

Was the honbu dojo at Blackfriars the only KUGB dojo in the south of England?

N.A.

Yes, but in a very short space of time, other clubs soon opened up with Kanazawa sensei as the chief instructor of these. As a purple belt, I was given the task of promoting the KUGB clubs that started up in and around London.

S.A.

Did you increase the amount of times that trained Nick, now that more KUGB clubs were opening up in London?

N.A.

Definitely!! With Blackfriars, Upminster, East Ham, Childs Hill, and Chiswick dojos now up and running as KUGB clubs under Kanazawa sensei as their regular instructor, I had the chance to train as much as five times per week under one of Japan's very best instructors. On quite a few occasions, Enoeda sensei would visit some of these dojos and instruct along with Kanazawa sensei and those lessons were phenomenal. Once, when Enoeda sensei was due to visit the Childs Hill dojo in Golders Green, Kanazawa sensei told us that this particular class was going to be run on the same lines as a JKA black belt class.

At the time, there were no black belts, and the class was made up from brown belts, which were the highest grades and purple belts, one of whom was me. After the warm ups, the class started with Yoko-Geri-Kekomi (side thrust kick) off the front leg, then step forward and down and then, Mae-Geri (front kick), then step forward and down with Oi-Zuki (stepping punch). We had to perform this ten times slow to count, then ten times fast to count and then thirty times fast no count. We did this both sides. Because everyone was perspiring profusely, the floor became very slippery and, as we progressed onto the next combination of, Mae-Geri step down, Mawashi-Geri step down and then Yoko-Geri-Kekomi plus Gyaku-Zuki, my left leg began to slip on the wet floor as I was about to perform the Kekomi. I could tell that if I extended my leg I would slip over so, at that point I withdrew my leg and didn't perform the Kekomi and simply finished with Gyaku-Zuki. Suddenly, out the corner of my eye I saw Kanazawa sensei running towards me and in a split second he swept my legs from under me. As I began to fall he caught me, and told me off for not performing the whole of the combination. At around this time, at the Childs Hill dojo, Kanazawa sensei taught us Enpi and Kanku-Dai. In some of the classes, Enoeda sensei as well as Kanazawa sensei, also taught us Jitte. Whilst I was still in the process of learning Kanku-Dai, Kanazawa sensei was asked to do a demonstration of karate at Brentford Football Pitch in the half time period. It was decided that Kanku-Dai would be performed and, Eddie Witcher, Ray Fuller Mick Randall, Mick Peachey, my brother and I performed the kata along with Kanazawa sensei.

S.A.

I assume you got to know Kanazawa sensei 'The Karate Master' by virtue of the fact that you trained with him so regularly, but did you ever get to know Kanazawa sensei 'The person'?

N.A.

It's certainly true that along with the usual group, we would follow the 'Master' to all the different dojos week in and week out, and this did sometimes give us the chance to see how he dealt with people and situations. What became very evident however was that although he was a phenomenal fighter, his philosophy regarding karate and Self-Defence was that the art was not just about the application of fighting techniques in a fighting situation, it was also very importantly about how to present oneself in society, being kind and having good manners in everyday life. It was also about how to avoid or change 'awkward' situations through humility and positive psychology and thus avoid confrontation. He showed us that all of this was a very

important part of what 'The whole' of karate should be about. Sometime, when someone would compliment Kanazawa sensei for being the first person to win the All Japan Karate Championships, he would usually answer with. "Thank you but please remember that I was only a karate champion for that one day, what about all the other days of the year?" Then he would say. "Karate is not just about being a champion on one day of the whole year but karate is about how hard you train in order to perfect your karate and yourself all the time, for every day, not just one"

S.A.

This may sound a strange question Nick but, were any of you given anything in recognition for your loyalty to Kanazawa sensei like a badge or a special belt perhaps?

N.A.

This may sound like a strange answer but, our reward was simply to get as many chances to see his brilliant karate and to try to emulate it as best we could by travelling to any location in order to train under him. However, because Eddie Whitcher, Mick Randall, Mick Peachey, Jack Johnson my brother and I were always there at practically all of his classes, we became part of what Kanazawa Sensei called his 'elite' group of London students, which in 1966 he named as 'The Seven Samurai' and Kanazawa sensei along with the six of us made up 'The Seven Samurai'. Later on, Mick Peachey my brother and I, were picked to assist Kanazawa sensei in the application of kata techniques in a book called, 'Kanku-Dai ' published by Paul Crompton.

S.A.

You mentioned earlier that Enoeda sensei would sometimes instruct alongside Kanazawa sensei, did any other JKA instructors come to visit the London dojos also?

N.A.

Oh yes, during this period, and because of Kanazawa sensei's fame and reputation in Japan, Hawaii and Europe, other Japanese JKA instructors would come to visit the honbu dojo (headquarters) in order to train and assist in classes taught by him. These would include the following sensei: Kase, Shirai, Myazaki, Nagai, Takahashi and Sumi. On rare occasions we would have the privilege to see short but spectacular impromptu displays of free fighting when they would pair up and demonstrate their favourite fighting techniques, including Kanazawa sensei performing his famous Yoko-Tobi-Geri or flying side thrust kick. This certainly was the golden era for British karate in my opinion, and how lucky I was to have been taught by these great masters.

S.A.

With films such as James Bond 007, 'Pink Panther' with Kato films and television programs like The Avengers that made people more aware of Martial Arts at that time, did Kanazawa sensei ever get invited to show karate and meet any of the stars who appeared in these?

N.A.

Yes, John Chisholm, who was one of the grades senior to myself, worked at Elstree

Studios and invited Peter Sellers to come to watch a Karate demonstration given by Sensei's Kanazawa and Enoeda. The usual loyal group of students including myself had to perform in a 'mini' Karate class taken by them. Afterwards, Peter Sellers was asked if he would be the Hon/Sec of the KUGB but he was unable to do this.

S.A.

Did any other celebrities come to see karate demonstrations which were given by Kanazawa sensei or Enoeda sensei?

N.A.

Yes, Lee Marvin and John Cassavetes were working on the film 'The Dirty Dozen'. So John invited the two film stars to watch a Karate demonstration of free style sparring and kata which was put on by sensei's Kanazawa and Enoeda at the Chiswick dojo which John had recently opened up. Along with some of the Chiswick dojo members, I as a purple belt and the usual group of loyal students participated in this demonstration by performing basic techniques. The two film stars, watched in amazement as the demonstration ended with Kanazawa sensei breaking a four inch block of Obeche wood with a reverse punch. After the demonstration, I made my way down the corridor to get changed and suddenly, Lee Marvin came around the corner and towards me in the opposite direction. As we passed each other, I asked him what he thought of sensei's Kanazawa and Enoeda's demonstration. In that deep, gruff voice he answered. "It's Zen. It's just pure Zen".

S.A.

You mentioned that you attended the BKF Lilleshall one week course in Shropshire as a white belt. Were there any other courses held during Kanazawa sensei's stay in the UK?

N.A.

Yes. There was a one week course held in Colourcoats, on the north-east coast of England which was given by Kanazawa Sensei and Enoeda sensei. Mick Randall and I met up with Jack Johnson in London and were driven all the way there in his car. Michael and Jack were brown belts and I was a purple belt. My brother Chris was supposed to come along also but that morning was quite sick with a migraine and therefore couldn't join us.

S.A.

When was the first KUGB Summer Course held at Crystal Palace?

N.A.

I can't really remember, but I know that I attended the first of these and was perhaps a 3rd kyu brown belt. I attended most if not all of these Crystal Palace courses until around the grade of 3rd Dan

S.A.

Who instructed on these Crystal Palace courses and how long were the classes?

N.A.

Usually, the following sensei instructed: Kase, Kanazawa, Enoeda, Shirai, Kong, Asano, Kato, Nagai, Takahashi, and Sumi. On one of the Crystal Palace courses,

the Chief Instructor and head of the JKA, Masatoshi Nakayama Sensei instructed and of course this was very special. As far as the classes were concerned, there was a morning and evening class and each one lasted for three hours. When the first of these week long courses was to be held, I remember Kanazawa sensei explaining to us, his London students that, the first day will seem impossible. The next day your muscles will start to hurt and you will be very stiff and feel incredibly tired. On the third day, you will feel that you can't move your body at all and want to give up. On the fourth day you will feel a bit stronger, looser and healthier with more stamina. On the fifth day your body will feel as it did when you started the course but, you will be so much stronger, looser, faster and healthier. When you finally have to go home, you will find it very strange and miss all the hard training. I can only say from my own personal experience of these that the above was exactly true for me.

S.A.

When did you attempt the grade of Shodan, 1st Dan Black Belt Nick?

N.A.

My brother, Pauline Bhindra (nee Laville) and I were told by Kanazawa Sensei that we should attempt our Shodan at the Blackfriars dojo in December 1967. We were all successful in achieving this and what was especially nice was that Pauline was the first woman to achieve the grade of black belt in the UK. That evening, after the grading, Kanazawa sensei took the three of us out to London for an expensive meal to celebrate our success.

S.A.

When did Kanazawa sensei finally leave the UK? How did this affect you and what happened after he left?

N.A.

After his three year stay in the UK, Kanazawa sensei left England for Dusseldorf (Germany) where Nagai sensei was based. Although I was lucky to be taught by three other brilliant Japanese instructors at the Blackfriars dojo, namely Sensei's Enoeda, Takahashi and Sumi, there could be no one to replace my 'Master' who I had trained under for nearly five days a week for practically every week of his stay in the UK. He had made such a deep impression on my life and the lives of my fellow karate-ka, Mick (Michael) Randall and my brother Chris. Whilst we continued to train under sensei's Enoeda, Takahashi and Sumi, we also trained very hard on our own, in lessons that were 'carbon copies' of those that we had trained in under Kanazawa sensei. Eventually we opened up our own dojo at the Ross Wylde Hall in Walthamstow and a short time after this, the Winchmore Hill dojo was opened in 1968. It was in that same year that I reached the finals of the KUGB kata competition but had to withdraw due to an injury which I had sustained in the kumite. The three of us were incredibly close, brought together by the joyous and sometimes, heartbreaking journey of this beautiful art form called Karate-do. How right our 'Master' had been when he used to say that Karate is fight with yourself. As time went on, Mick Randall and my brother started up there own company producing and selling Makiwara and in 1969 all three of us travelled to Dusseldorf so that Kanazawa sensei could test the Makiwara. It was so good that he immediately endorsed the product. Whilst in Dusseldorf we were invited to train at Nagai sensei's

dojo with Kanazawa sensei instructing and had to do free style with Nagai sensei's students.

S.A.

It must have been great to meet your master again. Were you keen to invite him to the UK to teach now that you, Chris and Mick had your own dojo?

N.A.

Yes. Definitely! Kanazawa sensei was invited to the UK from Germany whilst he was resident there and then later on, from Japan to instruct on two or three day courses that we organised. This was no easy task, and we couldn't do this on our own as he was in such high demand world wide and throughout the whole of the year

S.A.

How does Shiro Asano fit into the story Nick?

N.A.

The very first time that I heard about Asano sensei, as far as I can remember, was when I was a 3rd Kyu. Kanazawa sensei was explaining Asano sensei's favourite free-style technique which was Mae/Mawashi-Geri, a technique which consisted of changing a chudan (stomach height), Mae-geri (front kick) into a jodan (head height), Mawashi-Geri (roundhouse kick) at the very last moment. He could do this with incredible speed and the final kick was very hard to block.

The first time that I ever trained under Asano sensei was when he visited the Blackfriars honbu dojo and again, as far as I can remember I was a 2nd Kyu. On this occasion, he invited any student to pair up with him for Gohon-Kumite. At the time, Asano sensei was a 4th Dan and each of his Oi-Zuki's (stepping punch) was so fast that it just couldn't be blocked and he therefore pulled each punch just a few centimetres short of the target. Those that paired up with him were so shocked after the first attack, that Asano sensei needed only to blow at them in a friendly and joking manner to cause the student to over react and convulse backward, almost falling over in the process. Although he was a truly brilliant karate-ka, instructor and exponent of freestyle, he was a very friendly and approachable person. Eventually, he settled in Nottingham with a large following of very loyal students.

S.A.

Did you ever invite Asano sensei to your dojo Nick?

N.A.

Mick Randall along with my brother and myself were actually the first U.K. instructors to invite Asano sensei to London. Initially, we organised regular, fortnightly classes for Asano sensei which were held on Friday evenings at the Winchmore-Hill dojo. Later on, regular three or four monthly weekend courses were held there, and in between the Saturday morning and evening classes of these weekend courses, we would have our own, 'Private, two hour free-style & kata' class with Asano sensei. There were also weekend courses which we organised with Kanazawa Sensei and Asano sensei and on some occasions, Kato sensei would also come to teach. This type of training regime, with Kanazawa sensei and Asano sensei continued from 1970 up until 1978. 1970 was incidentally when Mick, Chris and I were graded to

Nidan (2nd Dan black belt) under Kanazawa Sensei and Asano sensei. Whilst all of this was going on, Mick, Chris and I were teaching four times per week at our own clubs and did our own, private, two hour training sessions with each other which were held one or two hours before the actual class that we were about to instruct. We did this whilst working at various jobs from 9am to 5pm on and off.

S.A.

It was during the 1970s that the JKA won the world karate championships in Paris. I believe that sensei Tanaka, Osaka and Yahara were members of the Japanese team that won. Did you get the chance be there at these championships Nick?

N.A.

No, unfortunately due to other personal family commitments, it was impossible for me to be there. However, Kanazawa sensei, who was 7th Dan at the time and coach for the Japanese team, along with Asano and Kato sensei brought Masahiko Tanaka, Yoshiharu Osaka and Mikio Yahara to the Winchmore-Hill dojo. The class began by Kanazawa sensei introducing the three team members to all of us after which he went through warming and limbering up exercises and then took all of us through basic techniques. Once this was over, we were asked to sit down. I knew we would be called up to pair up with these phenomenal fighters and found a little reassurance in the fact that they must have very good control.

S.A.

Did you in fact you have to pair up with them?

N.A.

Yes. They each called us up to perform Gohon-Kumite (five step-sparring) with them. They were just phenomenal. Speed, power, kime, spirit. Impossible to block any of their attacks. Truly amazing.

S.A.

Did you have to do any other form of sparring Nick, or did you only have to do Gohon-Kumite?

N.A.

No, Jiyu-Kumite (free-style sparring) was next and each of us paired up with one of the team members as Kanazawa sensei watched over the whole proceedings.

S.A.

Who paired up with who?

N.A.

Well, although many students did pair up with the three Japanese team members, I can only remember three bouts. The first one was my brother Chris being paired up with Yahara sensei. I seem to remember Chris doing his usual combination of step over Kizami-zuki, Mawashi-geri and Gyaku-Zuki after which I think Kanazawa sensei called "Yamae"! At the very instant that Kanazawa sensei started the bout again as he called "Hajime", Yahara sensei's leg was snapping back from a jodan Mawashi-geri to Chris's head and Chris was lying on his back practically knocked out. He was that fast. The next person who paired up with Yahara sensei was Gregory Durant.

This bout lasted even less time than the previous one as Yahara sensei's brilliant Mawashi-geri was out and back in a split second and Gregg was on the floor, like my brother. Well, I had been watching all of this and, as you can imagine, a lot of thoughts were going through my mind. Fear was top of the list but I didn't want to miss such a brilliant chance of facing this amazing karate-ka and formidable fighter. As soon as Gregg was taken away I jumped up, bowed and said OSS and was invited up. I could hear my heart beating in my head and ears I was so frightened and excited all in one go. Standing in front of Yahara sensei felt a bit like standing in front of a massive, stone object that was in the process of toppling over and onto me. Suddenly he attacked and all I could do was step backward. I thought, "I'm still here" Then he attacked again and again with punches and kicks and all I could do was to constantly step back and out of the way until I fell down as my legs gave way. Kanazawa sensei called "Yamae" and although I got off quite lightly, I was nevertheless, disgusted with myself.

S.A.

Mick, Chris and yourself were all 2nd Dans at this time I believe when were you all invited to attempt the grade of 3rd Dan?

N.A.

This was in 1973, when Kanazawa sensei formed Shotokan Karate International (SKI), we graded to Sandan, once again under Kanazawa sensei and Asano sensei within SKI.

S.A

One of my older students told me that she remembers seeing the tail end of a television program called 'Nationwide' in which Kanazawa sensei was performing some karate defence and counter attacks to several other karate-ka. Do you have any idea what this might have been about and could you possibly throw any light on this Nick?

N.A.

Oh yes, this was in 1974 when Kanazawa Sensei, Asano sensei and Kato sensei along with myself, my brother, Mick Randall, Eddie Whitcher and Steve Cattle appeared on the popular, 6pm television news program hosted by Sue Lawley called 'Nationwide'. As far as I could understand at the time, Kanazawa sensei wanted to show that the slow, graceful & health promoting moves of T'ai Chi have a self-defence application similar to karate techniques and that these self-defence applications would become evident when performed at speed. Anyway, Kanazawa sensei, who was facing us, lined us up in a semi circle as we stood in Shiko-Dachi stance. We all began to perform a very slow and gentle energising exercise called Chi-Gung.

After going through these moves very slowly we suddenly started to attack him at maximum speed from left to right. I was the last to attack using a head height roundhouse kick. Instantly, the 'Master' dropped to the floor counter attacking with a roundhouse kick to my lower abdomen after which he threw me to the floor. If you blinked you would have missed it, he was so fast. Incidentally, this was the first time that I had heard about T'ai Chi or Chi-Gung and it wasn't until around 1976, that Kanazawa sensei first demonstrated a T'ai Chi kata and began to teach us small sections of it at the Winchmore - Hill dojo.

S.A.

Am I right in thinking that this was the same year in which you established 'The Harrow School of Shotokan Karate' at the Harrow Leisure Centre and also, wrote 'Karate Basics for Beginners'. I mention your book as I distinctly remember seeing the words: 'Copyright © N.B.ADAMOU 1974' written in white print at the bottom of the first page which was completely red Nick?

N.A.

Yes that's quite right. It was at this time, in 1974 when I wrote 'Karate Basics For Beginners'. Mick Randall took photos of me performing the moves which lead up to the completion of a particular technique. These were taken in the clubhouse, which was where we did much of our own private training. The photos of Kanazawa sensei performing the final, completed technique were also taken by Mick Randall in his flat, the night before Kanazawa sensei and those who I've mentioned above appeared on 'Nationwide'. I then went on to print, publish and promote the book myself. In answer to the first part of your question, yes, it was also in 1974 that I established the Harrow School of Shotokan Karate at the Harrow Leisure Centre. This was the first karate club to be established there, as the centre had just been built and opened up to the public. Classes were held on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings and the manager was Keith Remfrey, the Olympic Judo silver medallist!

S.A.

And in 1978 you were graded to Yondan (4th Dan) within SKI?

N.A.

Yes, in 1978 Mick Randall and I were asked to attempt our Yondan (4th Dan) under Kanazawa Sensei and Asano sensei, and were both successful.

S.A.

When Mick Randall and the many other high grade instructors left SKI to form, English Shotokan Karate Association (ESKA), you remained in SKI. Why was this?

N.A.

It's quite simple really. I never felt mature enough or that I had learnt enough in order to leave Kanazawa sensei and therefore SKI. But I completely understood why Mick left and I respect him totally for all that he did within the KUGB and SKI and for all the help and support he gave to the many Japanese that came to stay with him in his flat and later on, at his house. When he left SKI, I felt as if I had lost a member of my own family. I was quite devastated.

S.A.

And what about those other students that started before you and who were senior to you?

N.A.

All I can say is that most of them had either stopped doing karate or had left SKI by 1978 which was a great pity for karate.

S.A.

So, with Mick Randall having left SKI in 1978, am I right in thinking that you were the highest graded UK instructor within Kanazawa sensei's organisation?

N.A.

Yes, that's correct.

S.A.

Where there any other changes because of this?

N.A.

As far as I can remember just before Mick Randall and the other high grade instructors left the SKI, Mick Randall and I and perhaps one or two others were going to be allowed to conduct the kyu gradings when Kanazawa sensei was not in the country. Therefore, when I remained in SKI I was allowed to carry out Kyu (junior) grade examinations on his behalf and this was the first time that he had authorised a non-Japanese instructor within the UK to oversee such gradings. I also organised many of his visits, having to correspond with all the instructors in my Kenshin group of SKI clubs in the south of England and also with Jim Hardy in Scotland, Tim Heart in Ireland, Mr. Blanchard in France, Mr. Arsenvic in Denmark and various other heads of karate groups in Europe and Africa. I continued to do this until 1988. Whenever he came to this country, my phone never stopped ringing, such was the man's popularity.

S.A.

You mentioned the word 'Kenshin' when you spoke about your group of clubs within SKI. Does this name have any significance Nick and who was in your Kenshin group?

N.A.

Well, as students joined my karate club at the Harrow Leisure Centre and trained under myself and on the courses that I arranged for Kanazawa sensei, they would inevitably reach the level of Shodan (1st Dan black belt) over a period of three to four years. Some of these students went on to start their own clubs whilst still coming to train under myself within SKI at my dojo at the Harrow Leisure Centre. Kanazawa sensei suggested that, in between his visits to the U.K. I would visit these clubs for courses and gradings and those clubs became part of my group of clubs which he named 'Kenshin'.

There were four clubs that became part of my Kenshin group that were run by students that had started as complete beginners under myself when I was Yondan (1978 SKI 4th Dan). These were the Greenford club run by John and Brenda Wise; the Northwick Park Hospital club, which I believe was run by Rosalind Rust and Stephen Hpa; the Chorley Wood Club run by Dr. Robert Anderson; and the Temple Fortune Karate club run by Ivor Anderson. There were also other instructors who had not started karate as beginners under me, but who had decided to join their club to my Kenshin group after having attended one of the many Kenshin SKI courses that I had organised for Kanazawa sensei. Those clubs and instructors were, Tony Sasso in Aylesbury, Manuel Tresperdene in Camberly, Fransico Espinoza of the Europa Karate Club in Watford, the Worthing SKI club run by Sue Langford, Andy Hibberd's

club in Richmond and David Jones in Newbury all became part of my Kenshin group within SKI.

S.A.

You also co-authored 'Kanazawa's Karate' with Kanazawa sensei didn't you Nick?

N.A.

Yes I did, in late 1977 I wrote the manuscript for this book which I presented to Kanazawa sensei when he arrived in the UK. After having consulted with Kanazawa sensei on various technical and factual details, the book was published in 1981 as "Kanazawa's Karate" and was re-titled "The Dynamic Power of Karate" later on.

S.A.

You said earlier on that, Kanazawa sensei performed a T'ai Chi kata in the Winchmore - Hill dojo, in 1976 I think it was. When did he start to introduce T'ai Chi into the many courses that you organised for him Nick?

N.A.

I believe this must have been around 1979 at a course which Kanazawa sensei suggested I organise at the Michael Sobell Sports Centre in Hornsey, London. Whilst in the process of organising the planned course, I had a phone call from the person who was acting as the agent for the T'ai Chi master, Mr. Chu who asked whether it might be possible for Master Chu to demonstrate T'ai Chi on Kanazawa sensei's course. This was a very strange coincidence as this was the first time that Kanazawa sensei had planned to teach T'ai Chi on one of his courses and no one else would have known about it. Anyway, I immediately phoned Kanazawa sensei in Japan and explained my conversation with Master Chu's agent. A meeting was organised at my flat in Muswell-Hill for Master Chu, his agent, Kanazawa sensei and myself which was set for when Kanazawa sensei would arrive in the UK, three weeks before the planned course.

S.A.

What happened at the meeting Nick. How did it go?

N.A.

Well it was a very friendly and enjoyable evening as we started off with a delicious French four course meal which was prepared for us by my wife Martine. After this, Kanazawa sensei and Master Chu spoke about their own particular experiences and understanding of T'ai Chi which culminated in Master Chu demonstrating and explaining a T'ai Chi technique on his agent.

This was very impressive as Master Chu simply pushed his palm forward about one inch against the sternum of his agent who was standing in a front stance. This seemingly gentle move sent him reeling backward and into my piano which was about six feet away. It seemed as if a massive accelerating wave had hit Master Chu's agent. It was amazing to watch.

S.A.

Did Master Chu come to Kanazawa sensei's course?

N.A.

Yes and he was a great success.

S.A.

In a recent publication, you said that achieving the grade of Godan (5th Dan) was an important point in your karate journey, why is this?

N.A.

As I explained earlier, Kanazawa sensei arrived in the UK as a twice 'All Japan Karate Champion' having earned a phenomenal reputation in Japan, Hawaii and Europe. He also came to this country as a 5th Dan and it was therefore especially meaningful and symbolic to me when I was awarded this grade by him in 1983 thus becoming the first student/ instructor to have been awarded this grade by Kanazawa sensei in the UK within SKI.

S.A.

Did you ever visit Japan Nick?

N.A.

Yes, in 1984. Over the years, quite a few Japanese Karate-ka and friends of Kanazawa sensei would visit and stay with myself and Martine at our flat in Muswell-Hill for one or two weeks. Amongst these were Hiruta sensei 4th Dan karate and T'ai Chi instructor, Miss Kamakura 3rd SKI Kata Champion, two teachers who taught Kanazawa sensei's children along with their husbands and many other Japanese friends that I can't remember. We would look after them and also take them out to show them around places of interest in London. They always told us that, should we ever come to Japan, they would do the same for us. When Martine began working for a travel agency and was able to get cheap flights around the world, we took them up on their offer and went to Japan for two weeks. We had a wonderful time there and Kanazawa sensei's wife and the many Japanese friends that we had made over the years looked after us, organizing many interesting excursions and visits around Tokyo and Kyoto.

S.A.

You remained in SKI for another six years until 1989 which means you had followed Kanazawa sensei from those early days in the BKF, the KUGB and then finally, SKI, a total of twenty four and a half years. Why did you finally leave SKI Nick?

N.A.

By November 1989 I decided to form my own karate organisation, The National Shotokan Karate Association (NSKA) and my reasons were quite simple. I had served my apprenticeship as a loyal disciple to Kanazawa sensei for nearly twenty five years, longer than any other student that had started under him in 1965. In fact, many students by this time had already established their own karate organisations, some of them after only having reached the level of Shodan (1st Dan Black Belt). When I started the NSKA I decided to hold a two day 'Open' karate course at the Harrow Leisure Centre for my newly formed association, and asked Kanazawa sensei if he would honour me by being the 'Special Guest Instructor' on it. This he agreed to do and around 400 karate students from many different associations and styles came to train under one of the world's most famous Japanese masters. This

was the first time that Kanazawa sensei had instructed on a course that was not part of his own SKI organisation and I felt that this gesture was an endorsement of my newly formed association. The Harrow Leisure Centre remains the main training base or honbu dojo for my association today.

S.A.

You called your association, the National Association of Shotokan Karate (NSKA) when it was formed in 1989. Why did the name change to the International Association of Shotokan Karate (IASK)?

N.A.

The NSKA evolved into the IASK (International Association of Shotokan Karate) in 1993 when Somnath Palchowdhury, of the Indian Federation of Shotokan Karate (IFSK) invited me to India for a six day course incorporating Kyu (junior level) and Dan (Black Belt) gradings. It was during this six day course when the IFSK asked if I would let them affiliate to my association. I said they could and changed the name of my association to reflect this.

S.A.

How did the IFSK know about you in order for them to invite you to India for the six day course?

N.A.

Six months after forming the NSKA I was asked to write a monthly article in the well known martial arts magazine called 'Traditional Karate' and these articles were named 'The Nick Adamou Column'. Although I decided to stop the column for my own reasons after about a year, some of these magazines made their way to Calcutta. Somnath had trained under Kanazawa sensei a few years earlier in Calcutta and, of course had been immensely impressed by him. When Somnath read my column, and realised that I had been a disciple of Kanazawa sensei for so many years, and also discovered that I had co-authored "Kanazawa's Karate", he decided to invite me to instruct on the course.

S.A.

Could you explain a little about your club at the Harrow Leisure Centre?

N.A.

The Harrow School of Shotokan Karate has been operating at the Harrow Leisure Centre for the past 30 years, since 1974 and I have taught literally thousands of students of all ages, levels of fitness and differing backgrounds, with their own unique personalities and physical potential. I have seen how Karate and the positive character changes that it can promote in most students have enhanced the lives of so many people simply through the training. In a world that is perhaps becoming ever more materialistic, with a move away from many fundamental morals and principles, I genuinely feel that the practice of karate, where the 'fight' is actually with yourself and how you deal with the 'Inner You' can perhaps fill a void that seems to be growing ever larger day by day in present day society.

S.A.

Finally Nick, how would you describe the type of Karate that you teach to your students and black belt instructors since you formed your own association in 1989?

N.A.

It would be impossible to forget Kanazawa's sensei's phenomenal karate and the way in which he taught and performed it throughout those wonderful years when I trained under him, and was so closely connected to him as his student in Karate-do from 1965 to 1989. Because of that wonderful journey and experience, I have always taught, and could only teach karate to my own students in the way that my master taught it to me and my fellow karate-ka such as Eddie Witcher, Ray Fuller, Robert Williams, Mick Randall, Mike Peachey, Pauline Bhindra, Jack Johnson and Chris Adamou, all of whom were there, at the very beginning.

S.A.

Nick Adamou was awarded 8th Dan by the IASK Technical Committee and this grade was ratified by the English Karate Governing Body in February 2003. He was awarded his 9th Dan (Kyudan) in February 2012 and his 10th Dan (Judan) in February 2022 and has trained unceasingly in the art of Karate-do for the past 60 years.