



# Fighting Talk Summer 2011

June 2011

## May Day in the Melin

Issue 5

### Welcome:

As I am sure most of you have already learnt, our Chief Director Sensei Tatsuo Suzuki passed away in his sleep on the 12th July. Sensei Suzuki was a great man and will be deeply missed, his passing is loss to the whole of karate.

We have dedicated this newsletter to his memory, you can read more about this karate legend on the centre pages.

*Mark Thomas*

mark@wikf.com

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After a successful demonstration last year we received an invitation from the Melin Community Council requesting us perform a demonstration once again for the 2011 May Day Carnival.



I'm please to say everyone rose to the challenge and practice started with plenty of notice, unlike the previous year where we'd only had 2 weeks warning.

As such this gave an opportunity to working on a longer demonstration lasting over 30 minutes whilst also covering more aspects of Wado Ryu and our every day martial arts training.

It was decided to choreograph a demonstration that displayed each aspect of our training from warm up exercises, stretching to improve flexibility through to conditioning of muscles and joints .

Mixed in with this was various technical displays of karate including;

Kihon (basic techniques), Kata (Forms), Renwaku Waza (combination techniques) all coming together in a final display of self defence.

On the day sixteen members of the Neath and Aberdulias junior classes turned up in the karate gi's (suits) to put on a solid demonstration of karate.

There were noticeably more spectators this year and as such nerves were at a high amongst the demo team, although I'm please to reports they didn't let it show.



## Grading News

Since the last issue of fighting talk we have seen two grading examinations take place under Sensei Keith Thomas 7th Dan and I'm glad to announce that the 70+ people who graded all passed.

Due to the sheer number of people who turned up to attempt their next belts the grading on the 4th March we all had a particularly long night. I would like to say thank you to everyone for their patience and understanding, and a special thanks to all the children as their behaviour and etiquette during the night was excellent and a credit to their respective clubs.



### Dan Grading

This summer we see Lydia Stephens, Keith Morris and Daniel Harris getting ready to attempt various Dan Grade (black belt) examinations.

They will be travelling up to the WIKF Summer Course in Stratford Upon Avon in July where they will put through their paces over 3 days of training, 4 hours per day. Coming to a finale on the Sunday where they will then sit a written exam followed by a practical demonstration of their skills. Please join me in wishing them all the best



*Chaitanya Sharma performing a fine  
Sokuto Chudan*



### Guess Who??

Just for fun can you name the Shogun of Harley Street performing at Neath Carnival back in the 90's?

*Clue: Don't be fooled by the moustache.*

The answer can be found at the bottom of page 7.





Grading 4th March 2011 at Aberdulais Community Centre

## Juniors

### 9<sup>th</sup> Kyu

Celyn Lewis  
 Lisa Owen  
 Amiel Best  
 Owain Watts  
 Cerys Bowden  
 Iris Watkins  
 Aaron Booth  
 Molly Holmes  
 Darcy Sparkes  
 Joseph Bates  
 Shania Lloyd  
 Cerys Key  
 Ieuan Thomas  
 Steffan Thomas  
 Shane Thomas  
 Nathan Thomas  
 Zara Evans

### 8<sup>th</sup> Kyu

Luned Davies  
 Erin McGinn  
 Aiden McGinn  
 Owen Hillman  
 Holly Saltmarsh  
 Alicia Williams  
 James Thomas  
 Chay Bailey  
 Charlotte Evans  
 Caitlin Harris  
 Curtis Morris  
 Morgan Sparkes  
 Dylan Blackmore  
 Orla Blackmore  
 Iwan Blackmore  
 Evan Morris  
 Rhys Evans

### 8<sup>th</sup> Kyu

Emily Kerswell  
 Mia Griffiths  
 Callie Rattenbury  
 Amy Rattenbury  
 Tori John  
 Darcy Sparkes

### 7<sup>th</sup> Kyu

Hannah Griffiths  
 Tyler Williams  
 Callie Rattenbury  
 Erin McGinn  
 Charlotte Evans  
 Caitlin Harris  
 Rhys Evans  
 Amy Rattenbury  
 Holly Saltmarsh  
 Owen Hillman  
 Aidan McGinn

### 6<sup>th</sup> Mon/Kyu

William Thomas  
 Shane Powell  
 Caitlin Wathen  
 Lloyd Thomas  
 Lawson Bailey  
 Patrick grey  
 Abigail Orrin  
 Chaitanya Sharma  
 Dafydd Davies  
 Amber Davies  
 Alexandra Frost

### 5<sup>th</sup> Mon/Kyu

Abigail Orrin  
 Aimee Morgan

### 4<sup>th</sup> Mon/Kyu

Alexandra Frost  
 Amber Davies  
 Chaitanya Sharma  
 Dafydd Davies

## Seniors

### 5<sup>th</sup> Kyu

Angharad Jones

### 4<sup>th</sup> Kyu

Ian Rattenbury  
 Adam Maclean  
 Stephen Jones  
 Colin Jones

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Kyu

Donna Hillman

### 1<sup>st</sup> Kyu

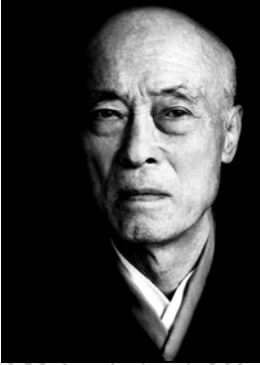
Keith Morris



和  
 道  
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 手  
 道  
 連  
 盟

Please note that some names appear twice as these people have tried two gradings since the last newsletter, their current grading is the highest listed.

## Sensei Tatsuo Suzuki 'My Life'



*It is with great sadness that I inform you that our Sensei and Director of the WIKF passed away in his sleep on the 12th July 2011. For any of you who have trained with or met Sensei he was truly a great man and an inspiration to all of us.*

*Even though Sensei has battled with illness over the last few years he kept his Samurai spirit and continued training right up to the end. All our thoughts and wishes are with his family, he will be deeply missed by all his students.*

*Below you will find an extract of an article Sensei gave about his life, I hope this gives you an insight into the man he was and inspires you with your training.*

I was born in Yokohama, Japan in 1928. My father was a fun loving man who enjoyed life to the full. He loved to cook, and owned a large restaurant. It was often hired by businessmen and local dignitaries for private parties where they could eat, drink and be entertained by Geisha.

This all came to an end when we were forced to move to the country to avoid American bombers during the war. School life was hard, and senior students would often beat the younger children for no reason. It was very militaristic, we looked upon our teachers as gods, I suppose it was just like the Samurai and his Lord.

I desperately wanted to become a soldier but was too young. I tried to join a naval academy but was rejected due to an eye problem. In hindsight I was actually quite lucky as they were all training to be Kamikaze pilots but at the time I was devastated. I was raised with the Bushido code, to die for my emperor and country would have been a great honour.

It was while at school that I had my first taste of martial arts. We practiced Kendo every day. When I was 14 years old I met one of my school friends older brother. He had studied Wado Ryu Karate while at university; from then on whenever he came home I would ask him to teach me. Eventually he agreed, it was all fighting - nothing technical.



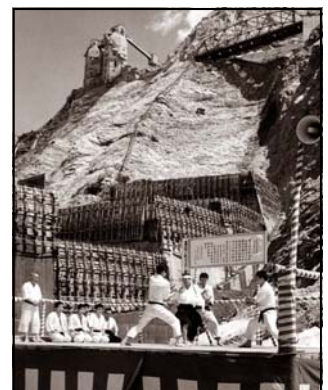
After the war my family moved back to Yokohama. The Americans were occupying Japan and despite my hatred of them I ended up working at one of their army bases as a cleaner. Government propaganda had turned Americans into demons. Through working at the base I came to realise that this was a lie. At that time food was scarce, we were living off insects and rice. The Americans gave us food, chocolate and of course Coca Cola. I loved it, it was all I ever wanted to drink, now I hate the stuff!

I decided to learn English and went to the local YMCA where they held classes. Once there I discovered that they also taught Karate. I knew that it was Karate that I wanted to do and soon forgot about learning English. The instructor there was a man called Mr. Kimura. He was one of Professor Ohtsuka's best students. Professor Ohtsuka was the founder of Wado Ryu Karate.

The Americans had banned all martial arts so we had to call Karate, Japanese boxing. I trained at the YMCA for about 6 months before we had to move on. We would train wherever we could, in gardens or fields, in the rain and snow, anywhere the American's could not find us. Kimura was a very intelligent man with a very sharp technique. He was a 5th Dan at the time the highest grade in Japan.

I was fascinated by the way of the warrior and the samurai code. I read books on Budo, Bushido and Hagkure. As a boy I dreamt of being a samurai hero. After the war we were not allowed swords, so I looked for a martial art without weapons. In Judo it was always the big guy who won, but Karate was different. With speed, timing and good spirit I could defeat any opponent large or small.

Post-war Japan saw the Japanese people embrace everything American, baseball, coke, Elvis. I wanted to give the world something Japanese. I decided to become a great martial artist so I could teach the world about the Japanese spirit.



When I first started I was only training four hours a day that eventually increased to 10. Everyone thought I was crazy but I believed that to be the best I had to work longer and harder than anyone else. I would train in a shrine garden near my home until well into the early hours of the morning. By wearing my gi (the white Karate outfit) I inadvertently started a rumour of a ghost who stalked the shrine at night.

At the end of every year I would go up to a temple in the mountains for two weeks. There I would train every day from morning until night, only stopping for one small meal. To eat any more would make me sick. My day would start with a run, followed by Zen meditation. After that I would practice my punching by extinguishing a candle flame with just the force of my punch. Next I would work on my kicks by wearing iron boots. This built strength and speed. My favourite technique was the sokuto (side kick), Ohtsuka sensei would tell students, if you wish to practice sokuto go see Mr. Suzuki.

That would be followed by three hours of fighting with my fellow students. By the end we would be physically exhausted. To end the day I would practice kata (set moves against imaginary attackers). I would perform each kata three times. When finished my body would feel great all the days aches and pains gone.

I would travel to Tokyo several times a week to train with Ohtsuka sensei. He was a truly great man. Away from Karate he was a gentleman but inside the dojo he was like a true samurai. He would train with us as well as teach us. Many of his senior black belts had returned from the war, they were tough both physically and mentally. The fighting in those lessons was extremely hard.

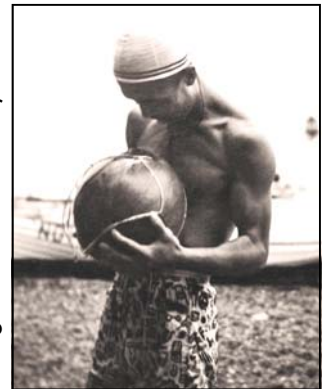


In the old days fighting was different than it is today. There were no rules, any technique was allowed; kicks to the groin, strikes to the eyes or throat. Contests would be organised between the various universities. We would visit with a team of 10 fighters - to us they were the enemy, especially if they practiced a different style. Nowadays most styles fight pretty much the same way, but back then I could tell a person's style of Karate from the way he fought. Shotokan fighters were very stiff and liked lots of room, whereas Goju Ryu liked to get in close - Wado Ryu would be somewhere in between.

The home crowd would be crying for blood and would often try to hit us with sticks or whatever they could lay their hands on. The senior students would referee but would rarely stop a fight unless it looked as if one of us was about to be killed. We would end up fighting on blood-soaked floors. No pads or guards were worn, it was all bare fists. Many people lost teeth or broke noses or other bones. Eventually the heads of all the styles got together to devise competition rules. They were concerned that potential students were being put off.

In 1963 I and two other students traveled the world demonstrating Wado Ryu Karate. This resulted in offers from several countries to come and teach. I narrowed it down to either Britain or America, as English was the only other language that I could speak. I was offered a sponsorship deal by some American businessmen, but a leading Shotokan instructor, Ohshima, was already teaching there so I declined.

I moved to England in January 1965. It was hard to settle at first. My English was very basic, I had to take a Japanese/English phrase book to lessons to try to explain my teaching. As I was the only Japanese instructor in England everyone wanted me to teach them. Demands on my time were so great that I had no time to do any other work.



At first I thought that it would be difficult to teach westerners an oriental martial art. Back in Japan I had been told that Westerners could not move as we did because they sat on chairs as opposed to the floor, as a result they had no hip power -obviously this was wrong.



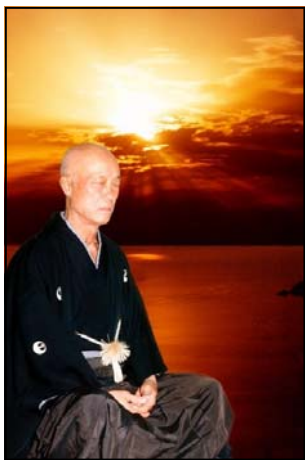
I missed Japan, I was living in a bed-sit that would get so cold that it would be impossible to sleep. I would have to train to warm-up before going to bed. There were no Japanese shops and I longed to eat some Japanese food.

The whole profile of martial arts in the west took a great leap forward during the so-called 'Bruce Lee boom'. I found myself on TV and in the papers all of the time. This kind of attention always attracts people out to prove themselves. None of them were any good. There was once a Hungarian man who claimed to be one of Bruce Lee's top students, after one month's training with him, a student would be able to beat any opponent. I was outraged by this claim so I contacted the paper that ran the article and challenged him to a fight under any rules that he cared to set. I waited but heard nothing, so eventually I rang them back. He had told them that he had already beaten me and

## Sensei Tatsuo Suzuki 'My Life' cont'd...

saw no reason to fight me again. I laughed, he was obviously scared to face me man-to-man. Over the years I have proved myself and gained people's respect. I still like a good fight though. Most days I spar with Kevin, an instructor at my London dojo, it helps to keep me sharp.

I had several jobs while I lived in Japan, which sometimes required me to use Karate, including nightclub bouncer and bodyguard. There was often friction with the yakuza (Japanese gangsters). I once found myself up against a local yakuza gang. I was alone but there were about 20 of them. I backed up to a wall and picked up a large rock. If I stepped forward they would move back, if I moved back then they would move forward. Luckily one of my friends was passing by on his way to buy some sake and saw what was happening. He ran back to our house and returned with help. Even though there were only 5 of us against 20 of them, the yakuza were terrified. One of their gang had recently lost an eye in a fight with a Karate man. I dropped the leader with a blow to the groin and knocked out another one who came at me with a knife. The rest of them eventually managed to run off. I realised that I had lost my university cap - I would be in serious trouble if it were to be found by the police. I searched everywhere for it and eventually found it under the body of a yakuza. The next day I scoured the papers for reports of a dead body but found nothing - I guess no one was seriously hurt.



Fear with regards to fighting can be overcome by mental training. It's a vital aspect of Karate training. It is important when fighting to have a strong spirit and a brave heart. When attacked you must never be scared or startled. You must believe in yourself this is difficult to achieve. A famous samurai was once asked what he would do if he were attacked in the street. He replied that he would move towards his attacker so that he could not strike down with his sword. To back off or freeze would mean death. I would often go to monasteries to learn Zen meditation from the monks. A samurai would not fear death before battle, this was the state of mind that I aimed to reach. I am always careful though, and will never change in believing that I am invincible. You must be wise and careful.

These days too many people stop training once they pass 2nd or 3rd Dan, they don't realise that belts are not important. Grades mean nothing, all that matters is to train hard. Many people call themselves 10th or even 12th Dan, but most of them are rubbish.

When I was awarded my 5th Dan no university student had ever been graded so high. I did not want this and asked Ohtsuka sensei not to give it to me but he insisted. It was the same for my 8th Dan. Over the years I have been offered 10th Dan but refused it. It would mean nothing to me, the only man worthy of giving me a grade was Ohtsuka Sensei and he is dead.

It is still important for me to train regularly. It can be difficult though, demands on my time have increased tremendously over the past few years. As well as my own training I teach twice a week at my London dojo. I am also the head of a very large Karate federation, the Wado International Karate-Do Federation ([www.wikf.com](http://www.wikf.com)), I travel extensively both here and abroad holding courses for my members.



Over the years Sensei Suzuki had written a number of books and been featured in magazines world wide, above are a selection of magazines he appeared in.

# Events 2011



Issue 5

You will find below a list of the key events, there are many other events and competitions, details of these will be provided as and when they are become available.

**Grading Schedule** - Provisional grading dates with Sensei Keith Thomas 7th Dan.

- 6th August 2011
- 15th October 2011
- 10th December 2011

Please remember that you must have trained for a minimum of 3 months between gradings and have attended 25 lessons before being eligible to grade.

## WIKF (Wales) Summer Course Weekend (20th - 21st August)

This year we will be holding a two day event;

Day 1. Outdoor training course venue to be confirmed

Day 2. An interclub karate tournament.

To decide on this years summer course venue we are making full use of technology and have been using an online poll to see your preferences; follow the link from our website to our Facebook page to have your say. At the moment the consensus is Merthyr Mawr Dunes and Nature Reserve.

Cost for the 2 day event is £30 per person, family of two £55, family of three £75.

Cost for the 1 day event is £20 per person, family of two £35, family of three £50.

Included in the cost are;

- A pair of kickboxing bottoms
- A WIKF Wales T-Shirt personalised with logo and name.
- Transportation to and from Day 1
- Entry fee for Day 2
- Trophies for first three places
- A medal for all children who compete

*To ensure that this event goes ahead please express your interest to your club instructor as soon as possible. A £10 deposit is required by 30th July along with sizes for your kickboxing bottoms and T-Shirts.*

*We understand that in the current climate that this may seem an expensive two days, but I can assure you that for the association to break even a minimum of thirty five people need to attend. Any extra money taken will be placed into the children's Christmas party fund.*



Summer Course 2009—Merthyr Mawr



和道園  
國際空手道連  
定



Japanese Kanji  
"Sadameru" - "to fix"

Wado International  
Karate -Do Federation  
(Wales)

For more information please  
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or visit:

www.wadokarate.co.uk

or www.wikf.com

### Dojo List:

#### St Catherine's Church Hall:

Pee Wee (4 - 5 years)

Tue / Thurs: 5.15pm till 6.00pm

Children (6 years +)

Tue / Thurs: 6.00pm till 7.30pm

Adults

Tue / Thurs: 7.30pm till 9.00pm

#### Aberdulais Community Centre:

Children

Mon / Fri: 6.00pm till 7.30pm

Adults

Mon 7.30pm till 9.00pm

#### Crynant Community Centre:

Wed 6.30pm till 7.30pm

## Fix It!

A little while back I heard a story about a time when a friend in America (Tom Kosslow) was training with Sensei Suzuki and was being corrected repeatedly on a particular kata. Now Tom is high ranking and respected instructor within the WIKF and after hearing Sensei's favourite English word "AGAIN !" several times he apologised and said "Sorry" .

Sensei looked at him with that look he sometimes gave and said "Don't be sorry. Fix it!" and continued to make him repeat the technique many more times.

This is an important lesson for all Karate-Ka that if we are unsuccessful in things, we shouldn't make excuses, we should "Fix It". Many things we encounter in life are difficult to master or concur and will require continued and diligent practice, it is this spirit and attitude that will help you succeed in karate and in life.

So next time you can't get something quite right, don't give up and make excuses like "it's too hard", "it's impossible" just "Fix It!". As one thing is for certain; the further you get in martial arts the more difficult it is to achieve the next level, if you understand this and have the "fix it" attitude it can keep you from becoming disheartened at what may seem like slow or no progress.

**"Be not afraid of growing slowly;**

**Be afraid only of standing still"**

Chinese proverb

