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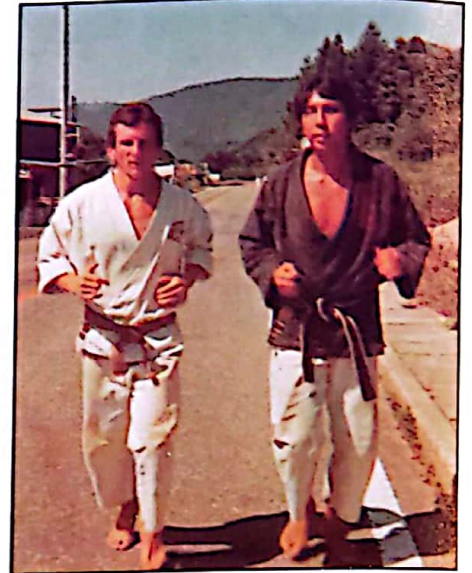
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TRAINING IN THE GARDEN



THE CHRIS CLIFFORD STORY PART 1

Article S.Grayston & Photographs by S. Grayston/C.Clifford



Clifford Sensei running with Endo Sensei on his first visit

Chris Clifford 5th Dan Sensei is not only a close friend of mine, but a true Karate disciple. A disciple who understands Kumite. He is a formidable fighter with skill and understanding of intercepting an opponent during any stage of an attack. He has made numerous visits to Japan to train under his Grandmaster - Ichikawa Sosui 10th Dan and his friend and master Kiyoshi Yonemoto 8th Dan Sensei. The Ichikawa Goju-Ryu system is vastly different from that of the Goju-Ryu in this country and Japan. As Clifford Sensei says, "Many people think there is only one type of Goju."

He understands the old way, the true path of Karate. He is totally dedicated to the art that he not only trains in, but lives in. He has trained in Karate for twenty eight years and is still looking for the deep knowledge that many traditionalists seek in the strange world of Karate-Do. I should add that I do not drink, although when we are together, he always cons me into a small drop! I spoke to him about his first experiences in Ichikawa Goju-Ryu.

SG. How did you first become interested in the martial arts?

CC. When I first began Boxing when I was 9 years old. I stayed with it for two to three years, but had a problem with it. I was being hit too much, and could never really see the sense of being hit in

through an old family friend **Barry Evans**. He was then a 3rd Dan at *Kyokushinkai* at a strong Dojo at the Uplands Tavern (Dulwich). That was known as a hard school of *Kyokushinkai*. The first time I went, I stayed for about 8 months to a year. I found this similar to boxing - take it -

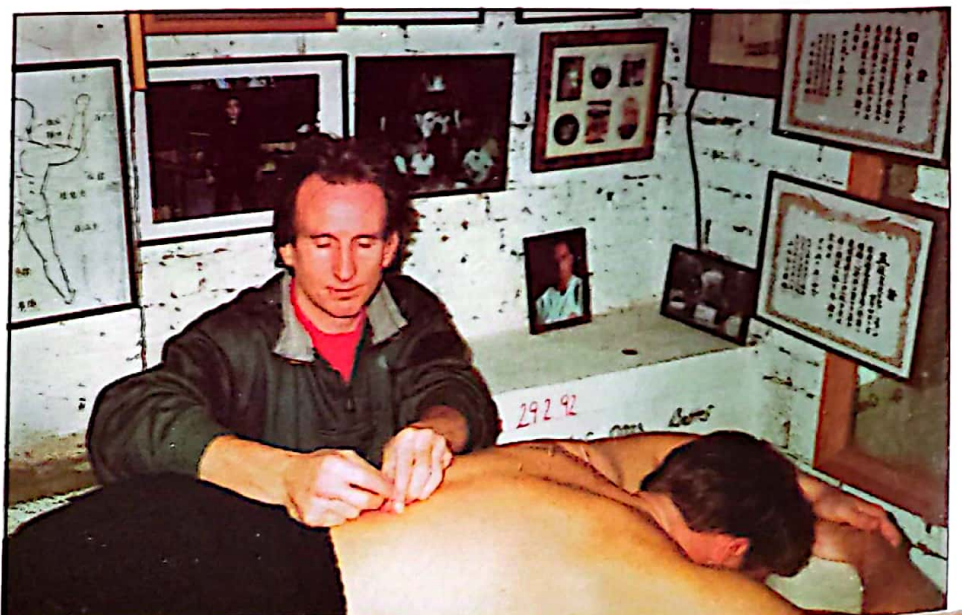
"Many people think there is only one type of Goju-Ryu"

give it - but not too much thought on defence. I was only nine and a half stone in weight then and couldn't afford to keep taking blows. I left though did

return so time later to see if things had changed, but when I returned I saw the same thing - the big guy flattening the little guy! *Barry Evans* gave me encouragement to look at other things, not to give up because one system was not suitable for me.

SG. How did you first discover Grandmaster Ichikawa's Goju?

CC. I was on holiday in Spain with a girl friend and her family, and while at the beach bar one night, I noticed a Japanese man in a Gi with a black belt running up and down the 200 odd stairs to the beach. He must have done this continually for about an hour or more. I had always thought of Japanese people as being rather small, but this guy was over 6 feet in height and must have weighed over 14 stone! The thoughts of



Barry and the old days came back to me, but while I had Karate in my mind (and probably heart as well), I did not have it in my body. The next morning on the beach he came walking down and went to the back of the beach where he began to knock seven bells out of a tree! I recall he was practising on the beach for at least five hours before I could find the courage to go over and speak to him. I was lucky, he spoke some English and we were able to communicate. He said to me that he was a 1st Dan in *Goju-Ryu Karate* and *Aikido*. He had been with **Grandmaster Ichikawa's** school for five years before leaving the Dojo to travel the world and see as much as possible. He was making living money by working as an Acupuncturist and Shiatsu. During our conversation he had said that he had already tried to get into England but because he did not know anyone, immigration would not

grant him a visa. I asked him if he would spend some time with me as I was interested in the martial arts. He agreed and he was very happy to teach me. Over the next fortnight we became inseparable, not only me, but he became friends of my girl friend's family and treated her father for various ailments. His name is **Hiroshi Endo** and I studied the punch and kick, plus Nunchuku for the two weeks. When I left Spain the agreement was that he would follow me to England three months later.

SG. Did he arrive in England?

CC. Yes, he did, as agreed. We spent the next three months studying Karate together. When he left England, he told me to study *Goju Karate*, but be aware that the *Goju* that he had shown me was not available from anyone in England. I found this strange but continued to practise what I had been shown. The Karate he had shown me



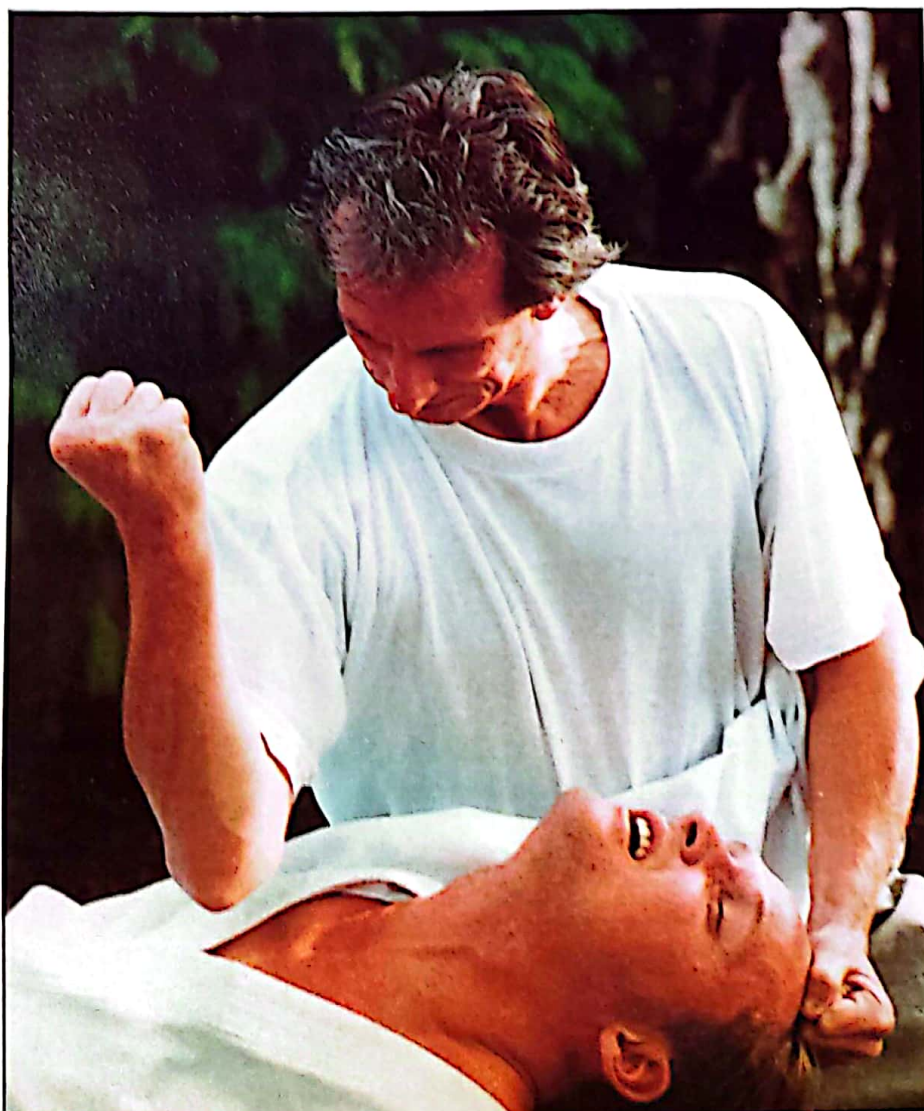
was very different from anything in England then. For example, we went to Crystal Palace to witness a demonstration of Karate by **Grandmaster Ohtsuka** (*Wado-Ryu* - he said that *Grandmaster Ohtsuka* was a friend of *Grandmaster Ichikawa's*). During the day's events I saw what I thought was a brilliant sidekick by one of his top students, and to my surprise *Hiroshi Endo* shouted, "This is NOT GOOD - the groin is exposed and you're NOT a coat hanger! It is not WHAT you see, but the EYES that you see with!" I was shocked to say the least. I thought I must have bad eyes, but now understand what he meant.

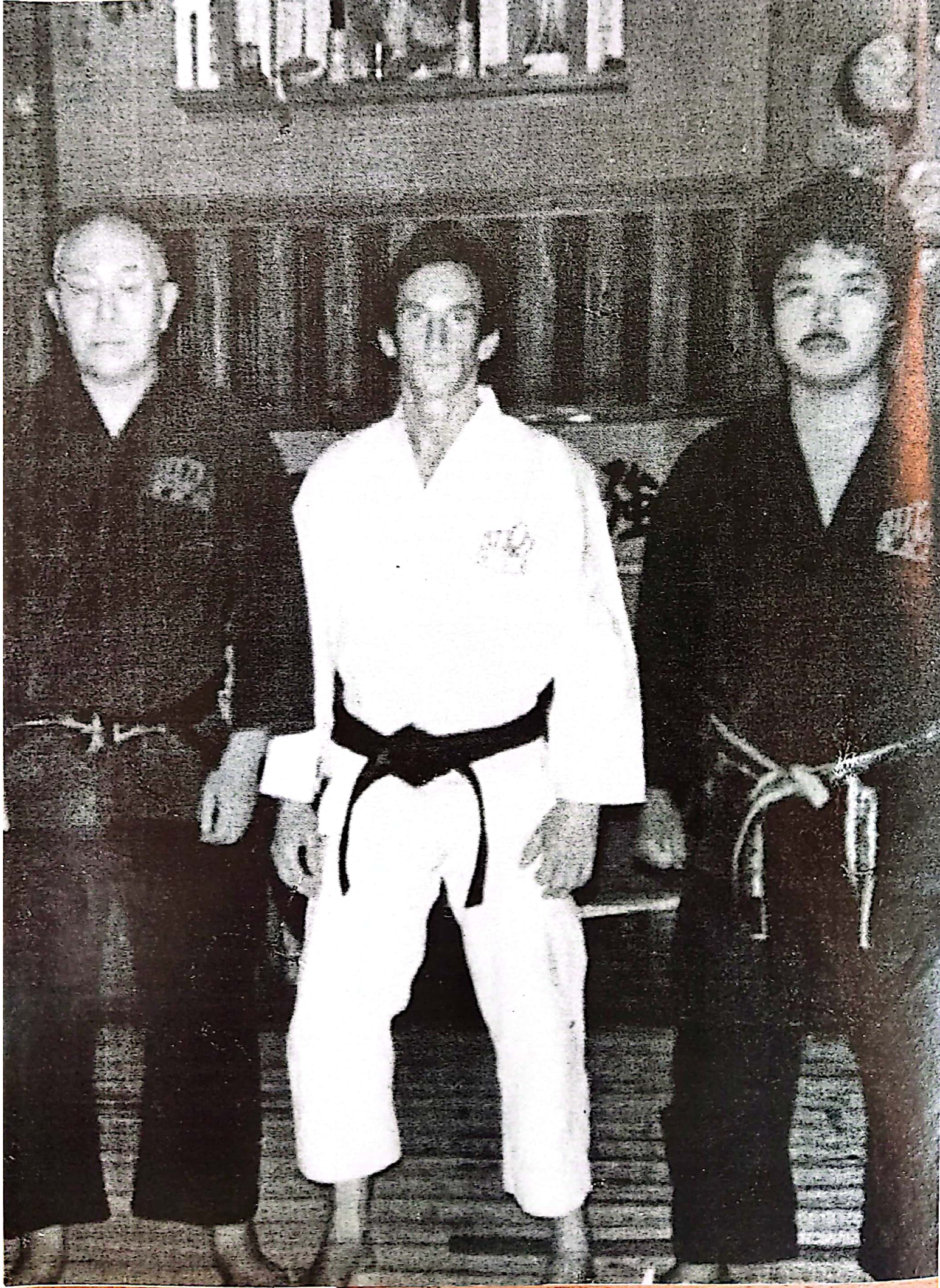
SG. Are you still in contact with Hiroshi Endo?

CC. Yes, he is still a disciple of *Grandmaster Ichikawa's* Dojo today. Unfortunately he works in Hokkaido (Northern Japan) as an Acupuncture Doctor and does not get to the Hombu Dojo to often, but does train every day and is a very strong Karateka. When he visits the Dojo everyone is worried because of his skill and ability. He has been taught by *Grandmaster Ichikawa* and **Kiyoshi Yonemoto** 8th Dan Sensei. He is a very close friend of *Yonemoto Sensei*. As I have had three of the world's finest Kumite teachers, my credentials for Kumite are good.

SG. How did you first get to visit Japan?

CC. When *Endo Sensei* left England I searched for a *Goju* school and came across **Brian Waites** *Gojukai* school at the 'Star of India' pub at Peckham





The continuation of the Chris Clifford Story

he gave me permission to come along and join the school. I explained that I had been taught *Goju* Karate for three months by *Endo Sensei* and my desire was to go to Japan and study under *Endo Sensei's* teacher *Grandmaster Ichikawa*. In the lesson that evening, it was physically demanding and I remember being swept by one student and came down head first! I thought I had broken my leg. Although when I think back now, they probably put it on me and were surprised when I returned to train again. I became not only a student of *Waites Sensei* - but also a friend. To this day I have not seen *Gojukai* like *Waites Sensei* - even in Japan. During the next six months I spent with him, he took me from nine and a half stone to eleven stone almost overnight. Bench pressing 325lb and squatting 375lb - *Waites Sensei* was very much into body building with his Karate. He was still able to remain supple, while I was suffering with my joints. Because of my friendship with *Waites Sensei*, this helped me to bring *Endo Sensei* back to England.

I became very strong physically and mentally with *Waites Sensei*, it frightened my family because of the vast change in me. When *Endo Sensei* came to England he met *Waites Sensei* and strangely enough, *Endo Sensei* had the same physical presence as *Waites Sensei*, yet he had never lifted a weight in his life - it was natural strength. During this period *Waites Sensei* and I were taking all the vitamin tablets we could get to give us strength and bulk - I was training 10 hours a day then. But, to my surprise - while training with *Endo Sensei*, he would make do with only a glass of water every five hours! The *Goju* with *Waites Sensei* was very powerful, very strong, but all hard. The difference between the two was very hard for me to understand then. *Endo Sensei* stayed for six months before returning to Japan, and the idea was that I would follow as soon as I could raise the money. I trained with *Waites Sensei*, **Sam Grayham Sensei**, and on my own until I had enough money to go to

DAYS to get there! Eleven times it stopped! It was arranged that **Steve Bellamy Sensei** and *Endo Sensei* would meet me in Japan as I arrived. *Endo Sensei* met me at the Airport and we took a bus to Tokyo. To my surprise **Harry Cook Sensei** was at the bus terminal! They gave me some maps and bits, and I arranged to meet *Bellamy Sensei* and stay at his home during my visit. This was August and probably the wrong time of year to go (weather wise), it was a scorcher (1977). I went to *Endo Sensei's* mother home that was a one room house about eighteen inches from the main railway line. *Endo Sensei* and his family were not rich, his father died during the war, and his mother had to make do. She made us some food and gave up her home to us (there was not room for too many people there). During that night, I got up to take a leak, held on to a pipe and slipped - the cistern, and the side of the wall came off in my hand and I ended up sitting in the road with gallons of water around me! I had only been in her home for three hours! We had to move out and *Endo Sensei* made up a tent for us in the park! His mother was not pleased - I had trashed her humble home (typical -Ed). The next morning I was due to be presented to **Grandmaster Sosui Ichikawa 10th Dan**, I dreaded touching anything in his home! *Endo Sensei* normally rises at 4.00am - this came as a bit of a shock to me. I remember running around Tokyo, punching and kicking till 6.00am. After a wash in the park toilet, we then took a train to **Grandmaster Ichikawa's Dojo (Ueno)**. I had never seen so many people squeezed into one coach. We couldn't all fit in so they pushed us in with sticks! On arrival at the Dojo, I thought I must have the wrong address, it looked like the front of a green house - on entering I felt like I was going back in time, Grandmaster was sitting in a hole in the wall with the kitchen behind him having his breakfast. The Dojo is his living room and his son's bedroom. He has since built his son a bedroom up stairs. He did not speak to me - he simply grunted a few words at *Endo Sensei* - probably "who's he." He gave *Endo Sensei* permission for me to get changed into my Dogi. There were loads of Gi's and weapons on the walls



they were left by students who had gone so quickly they had forgotten their Gi's - this made me feel wonderful! After seeing Karate in England, what I saw over the next three weeks was totally different - like black and white or chalk and cheese. The feeling in the Dojo was electric, inspiring, it made me want to be part of it.

It was later on when the students started to arrive. This was the first time I met **Kiyoshi Yonemoto Sensei** (then 6th Dan). This was the man that *Endo Sensei* says, "*Never think my Karate is good - watch Kiyoshi Yonemoto Sensei.*" Yonemoto Sensei came over to me, welcomed me here, and gave me a welcome from Grandmaster Ichikawa. He told me to relax and enjoy the Karate. He said that we would all be leaving for Gasshaku in the Neko mountains in two week's time.

SG. Was Grandmaster Ichikawa the man the you had envisaged?

CC. It was very difficult for me to envisage anything, as the contrast between the Karate in England I had seen, and the Karate of *Endo Sensei* was different. I had built a misconception of what strength is in my mind. I thought bulk, muscles, and weight training would make my Karate stronger. I could not have been further from the truth! There were 10 students in the Dojo and not a muscle on any of them.

SG. Did you practise Kumite with these students?

CC. Yes, on the first day I was told by *Endo Sensei* that *Ichikawa Sensei* would like to see my Kumite. This is practised very different in *Ichikawa Sensei's* Dojo



'friendly ones' [a term the Ichikawa Goju students use to describe real practitioners -Ed] and *Ichikawa Sensei* watched every bout closely and stopped a bout if he had a comment to make. Only two students would fight at any given time, with a senior grade refereeing. I had to fight all ten students.

SG. Did you get a chance to practise any of the Ichikawa Goju Kata during this lesson?

CC. Yes, we did practise Kata, it was very different again. It was taught under relaxed conditions and everyone was more than helpful. *Yonemoto Sensei* took the class and *Ichikawa Sensei* watched him teach.

SG. What is the relationship between *Yonemoto Sensei* and *Ichikawa Sensei*?

CC. Then *Yonemoto Sensei* was the senior instructor in the morning class. There were three classes a day. Now *Yonemoto Sensei* is a proficient teacher with his own school, and travels to see *Ichikawa Sensei* only sometimes.

SG. Did you realise at this stage that this was the style and school for you?

CC. I realised the first day I met *Endo Sensei* in Japan. There was something very different about his Karate - very knowledgeably different.

SG. Why do you think *Ichikawa Sensei* does not have an 'Open Dojo' as so many of the masters of his era have done?

CC. He teaches with sincerity and therefore only teaches those who have a good heart. He guards his learning - he shares it only with sincere disciples. He has been practising for 66 years. He is a master of *Ken-Jutsu*, *Aiki-Jutsu*, or obviously *Goju-Ryu*. He is no longer limited by style or system. He has entered what he calls the eleventh level



which he says is spiritual learning. He is gathering knowledge for the next world.

SG. I know that you have your own Dojo at your home, but most of your training is done the 'old way' in the garden. What do you feel is the benefit of outdoor training?

CC. To understand martial arts in great depth, we firstly have to understand nature. This cannot be learnt within the confines of an indoor Dojo. I like to see time and change in my garden. The various seasons of the year, etc. To understand *Sanchin's* breathing we need fresh air in the lungs, and as the seasons change - our breathing changes. In the summer we breathe quicker and deeper - but in the winter we have to breathe slower as the air goes down - to warm the air. If we don't it will cause sickness to the body.

SG. You have not only learnt Karate and Kobudo from the Ichikawa school, but also Acupuncture and Shiatsu. Does this knowledge play a large role in your understanding of Ichikawa Goju?

CC. From the first day of my study of *Ichikawa Goju* (when I first met *Endo Sensei*), I was told that the greater the depth of study of the human body, the higher the level of understanding *Karate* I would get. And this is true, I have a deeper understanding of *Karate* than many of the people at my grade. I have made my living a *Yonemoto Sensei's* clinic in Japan and at my own home with my knowledge of *Karate*, *Acupuncture* and *Shiatsu*. I have recently begun to study herbalism, and would like to thank **Master Paul**

Whitrod for sharing some of his knowledge in this direction. *Ichikawa Sensei* has always said, "To kill or to cure." He means that we need knowledge in both so that we can develop our higher stages of learning.

SG. How many times have you been to Japan now?

CC. Over 50 times now I think, I am not sure, I been so many times, three times a year mostly.

SG. I bet that has cost a small fortune?

CC. Over the years it has cost a fortune, when I have been short, I have sold everything - this includes my house, my car and my wife's jewellery. To be a true Karateka we need a special wife - which I have. I have seen Japan and slept outside shop doorways, I have also stayed in class hotels when my companies were doing well and I was a millionaire, you note - was. I was a millionaire inside when I first met *Ichikawa Sensei*.

SG. I understand you may be building a bigger Dojo so that you can accommodate more students?

CC. No, I will expand my existing Dojo. I am not a good teacher - I find it difficult to part knowledge to others and don't feel it is the way that I have been taught. The *Ichikawa* school has never been commercial and *Ichikawa Sensei* has never worked, only taught and trained. He has sold land and goods to stay alive and he has only ever taught a handful of disciples. I feel that this is the true way and my way forward to higher levels.

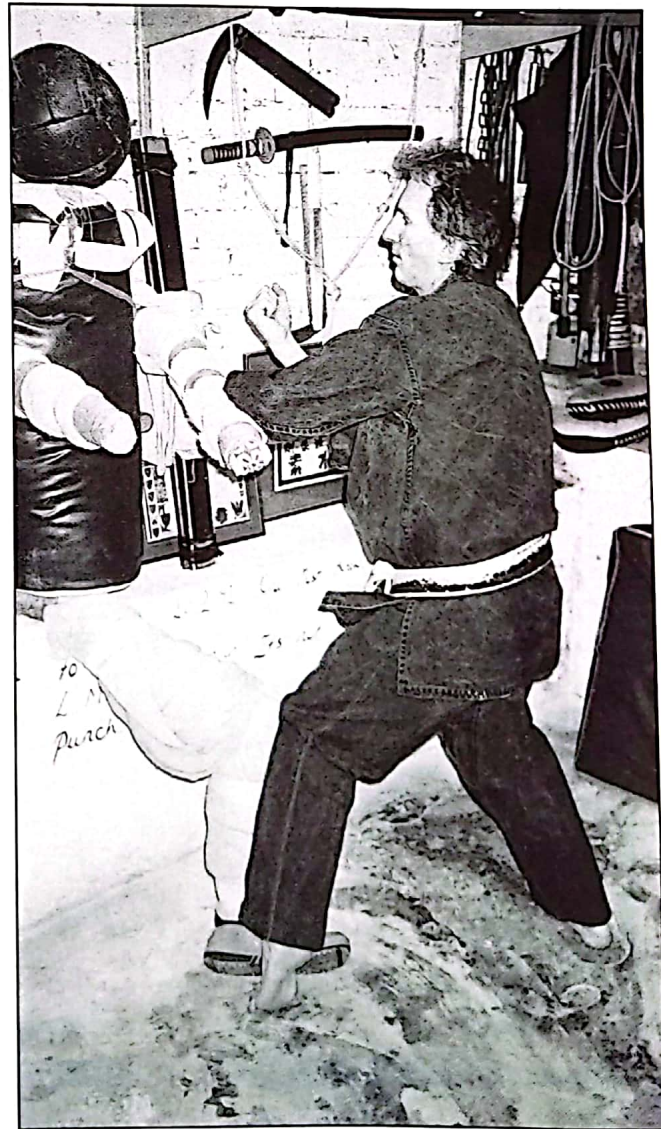
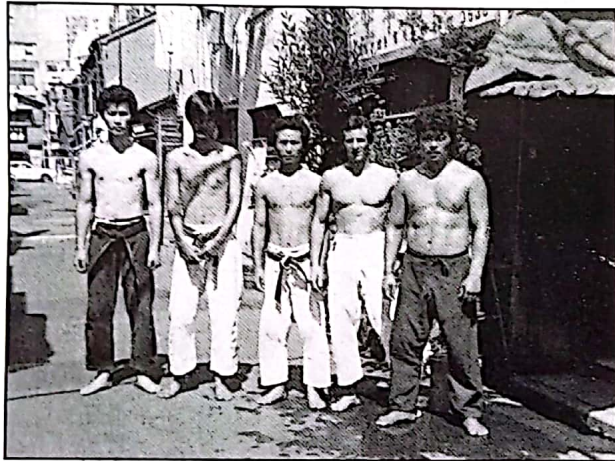
SG. Many senior grade teachers are on a pedestal, but Yonemoto Sensei has given me, and yourself many presents and gifts, and we both look on him as a close friend. Why do you think that the Ichikawa disciples are such warm, friendly people?

CC. As I have said, *Ichikawa Sensei* ONLY takes sincere disciples, real people, and I think *Yonemoto Sensei* is his greatest disciple. Since the first day I met him, he has been nothing but kind and friendly. In fact, over the years not only has he shared his martial arts - but his heart. He sees these as the same. He continues to teach me about Karate and life.

THE SECOND PART OF THE CHRIS CLIFFORD STORY WILL BE IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE.



Clifford Sensei, Grayham Sensei, and Yonemoto Sensei at a Sauna baths (Adachi-Ku)



Clifford Sensei training on the dummy

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