

# Kiyoshi Yonemoto, 8th Dan

**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW & PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE GRAYSTON**

**The name 'Kiyoshi Yonemoto' may not be familiar to martial artists in the UK, but throughout the world, it is a name associated with dignity, honour, and true Karate-Do. For he is a student of Grandmaster Ichikawa, a legend in Japan, and the only living person to hold a genuine presented copy of the 'Bubishi' (the legendary Chinese book containing the original movements of the Chinese monks).**

**He recently visited England to give tuition to Clifford Sensei (one of Grandmaster Ichikawa's students), and whilst he was here, I struck up quite a friendship with Yonemoto Sensei and Clifford Sensei.**

At 13 years of age Kiyoshi Yonemoto started training in Judo, but after five years of training, he decided that he wanted more from his martial art training. He had started to walk the true path of the 'Way', he sought the knowledge of how to defeat an opponent to the death, and after consulting with a senior Judo Master,

he was led to the home of Grandmaster Ichikawa (Ueno). He had been told that Grandmaster Ichikawa had spent a lifetime mastering the legendary 'Bubishi' (see statement further on), and sought the same answers as him. In conversation at Grandmaster Ichikawa's home, he learnt that Ichikawa studied with the belief of 'Kill or be Killed'.

Now at the 8th Dan stage of his learning, he totally understands the way of 'Kill or be Killed', he says, "Many people practise Karate, but few understand 'Kill or be Killed', for me this is the true way of Karate and a happy life." He has three sons, one 25, one 23, and one 20 years of age. Although he says that one is Shodan,

the youngest one is naturally talented, but does not practise enough.

Although the world has seen a 'watering down' of the original Karate of great Grandmasters such as Higashionna, Miyagi, and Higa, Yonemoto Sensei says, "In order for Karate to be accepted into schools, colleges, and Police Academies, Miyagi Sensei had to formalise it, losing many of the principals taught to him by Higashionna Sensei. He knew that the TRUE disciple of Karate would find the TRUE way of Karate."

"The teacher who follows the way of 'Sport' or 'Business' Karate should encourage the use of protective equipment. The one who follows the true way will find he has no need, once

he understands what true Karate is," said Yonemoto Sensei when questioned about protective padding for sparring.

He explained that his type of Goju-Ryu is different from that which has been seen in England up to now, he says, "My Goju-Ryu is that of Ichikawa Sensei, and he learnt Higashionna Goju-Ryu. The other type which is Aragaki type, is easier to learn, but the Higashionna way is the original way." All the training is a reflection of the Bubishi, and all students are encouraged to study this method. The Bubishi is handed down through generation of Master to student. Yonemoto Sensei said, "There are only eighteen Okinawan/Japanese and one



Yonemoto Sensei 8th Dan with Clifford Sensei 5th Dan

Englishman who have authorised copies of the Bubishi, Ichikawa Sensei has the original today and has mastered its contents. He teaches directly from the original Bubishi. We practise Tsuru Kata (Crane) which teaches many of the principles of Goju-Ryu."

Yonemoto Sensei does not believe in relying on Makiwara, Chishi, or Kougoken, he says, "The use of these training aids is for the weak one to help him become physically and mentally stronger, but one must NOT rely on these as his strength, he must find the TRUE technique and natural power, this will enable the weak and the old to defeat the strong and the young." He has much admiration for weapons training and believes that in studying the weapons, there is less chance of being defeated by an opponent with a weapon. He says, "This is the way I think of weapons, they are just an extension of man. Master the thinking and movement of man and one will come to realise man IS the weapon."

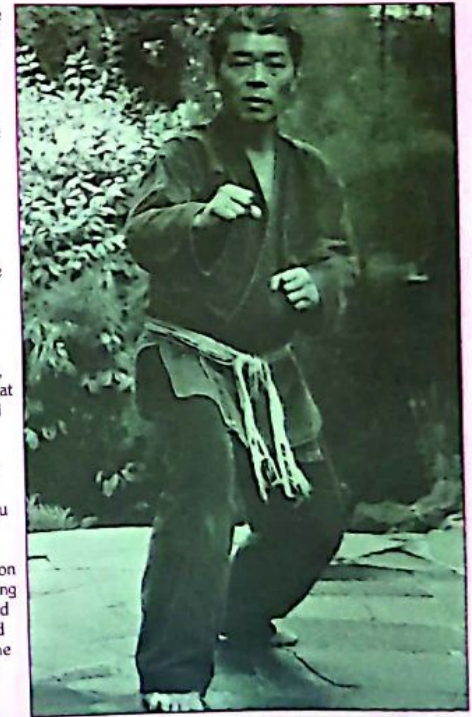
I observed Yonemoto Sensei teaching the principle of evasion and timing using to magnets to show the methods of repelling and attracting, and explained that my system uses similar principles (Nagashi) as adopted from the Wado system. He explained that he had inherited the learning from his Master (Ichikawa) and developed his own thinking on the principle. Free thinking and development are encouraged in Ichikawa Goju-Ryu, and each person that masters the Bubishi is expected to contribute to the system. This is true learning and something their Ryu can be proud of.

I questioned Yonemoto Sensei on Westerners practising the martial arts, and whether they could truly understand the oriental values, or need they adapt Western values to

the Eastern way in order to learn? He said, "Yes, some can FULLY understand. Many seem to judge the book by the cover. I have noticed their Kata to Kumite often has no connection, they do not seem to understand Henta'. In my Dojo, the way of thinking is to use only techniques necessary to kill the enemy. When using techniques against the enemy, we must always think of our own safety - Kill or be Killed - is life's rule."

I have to add to this, many will not understand 'Henta' unless they think and believe the way of Kill or be Killed. When a Karateka who follows the 'way' is challenged, the mind and body come together, in a form of 'combat mode', the degree of unison can be seen in some. Some people say that this master, or that master, has good 'Ki' (Spirit), but this is also the observer sensing the unison of mind and body in tight harmony in the subject matter.

Grandmaster Ichikawa is a legend that many Karateka could benefit from seeing him perform, so I asked Yonemoto Sensei if he perceives him



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