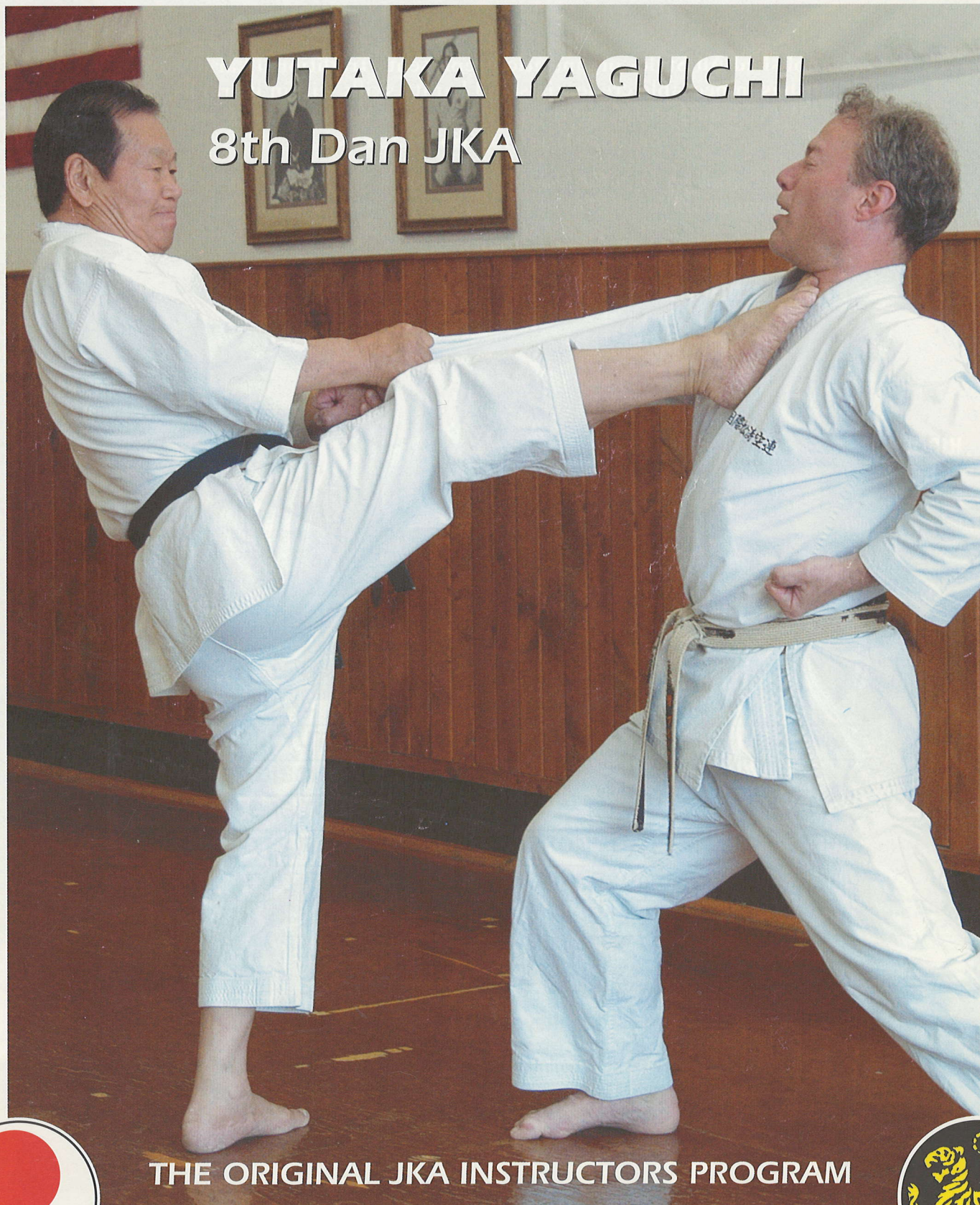


# SHOTOKAN

KARATE MAGAZINE

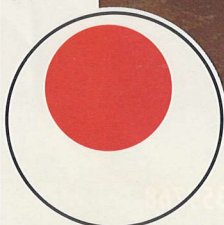
Issue 84  
£2.50  
JULY 05

**YUTAKA YAGUCHI**  
8th Dan JKA



THE ORIGINAL JKA INSTRUCTORS PROGRAM

THE MAGAZINE FOR ALL SHOTOKAN KARATEKA



# SENSEI YUTAKA YAGUCHI 8th Dan.

Chief Instructor Mountain States Region ISKF, Colorado, U.S.A.

Interview By Bruce Green.

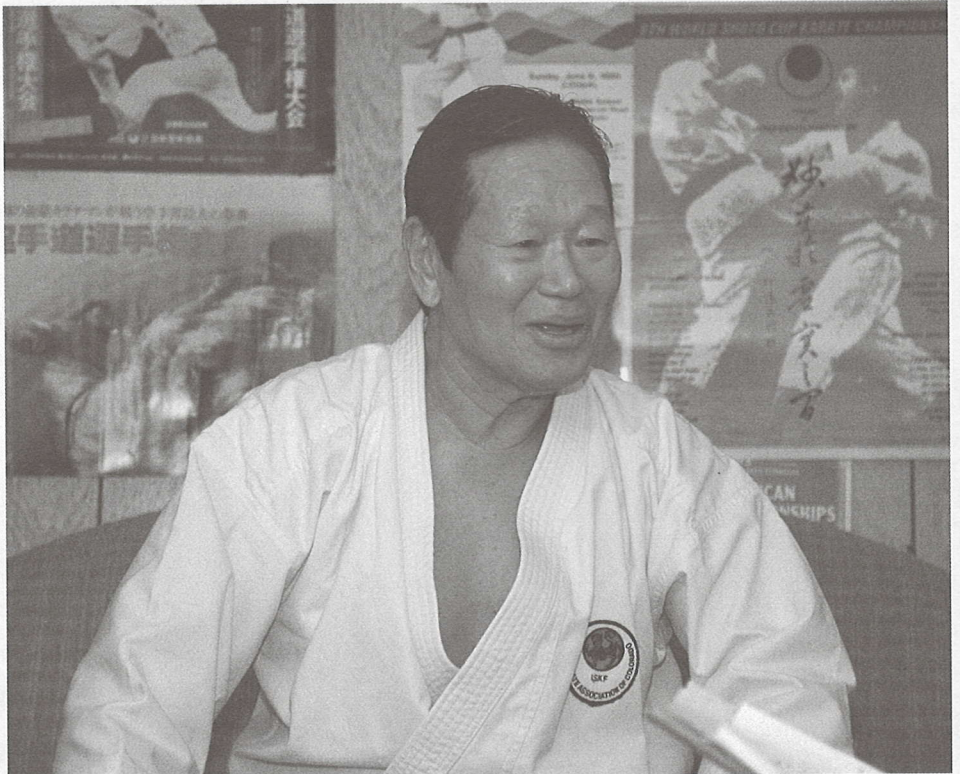
*Born in 1932 in Hiroshima, Japan, sensei Yutaka Yaguchi began karate training in 1952. He tested under Master Funakoshi for his first and second-degree black belts. As one of the first graduates of the JKA Instructor Training Program, he has played an important role in the growth of American JKA karate. Sensei Yaguchi has been the Chief Instructor of the Mountain States Region of the ISKF, and has been in Colorado since 1973. He is interviewed in this article by one of his senior students, Bruce Green.*

**BG: When did you enroll in the JKA Instructor Training Program? Who were your classmates?**

**YY:** I started in the JKA Instructor Training Program in 1957. Three people started at that same time; myself, Mr. Tsushima, and another student who dropped out.

**BG: Who led training sessions? Which instructors influenced you most during instructor training, and how did they influence you?**

**YY:** Sensei Nakayama, and he was assisted by Mr. Nishiyama and Mr. Okazaki. Sensei Nakayama had the biggest influence on me – I had a short temper and no patience, and sensei Nakayama told me to be more patient. He told me, *“You won’t make it in society without patience. By the same token, you won’t make it as an instructor without patience.”*



*Sensei Yutaka Yaguchi has resided in the US for 40 years. Here in his dojo office in Colorado.*

**BG: What qualifications were required to enter the program; and which principles were you expected to obey in order to stay in the program? What philosophy was communicated to this early Instructor Training group?**

**YY:** A new trainee had to be a graduate of college or the equivalent in education, and over nidan rank. It was

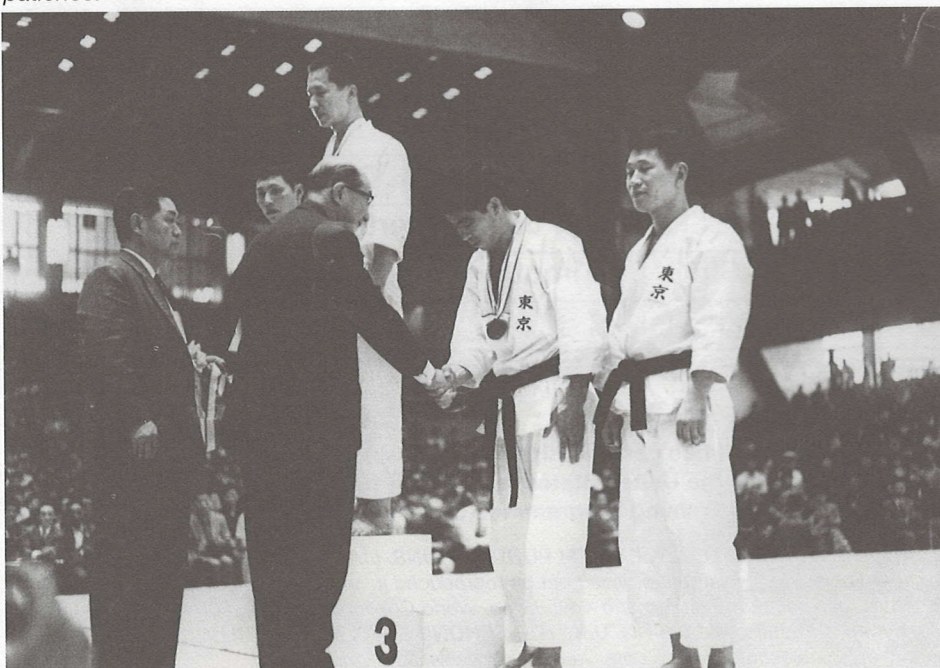
expected that practice hours must be followed, and we had to write and present a verbal report every week. Also, you had to assist in instructing. The primary philosophy taught was that through karate, you must contribute to society, through karate training, you must become a better person. This is karate-do. You train hard, improve yourself through demanding, challenging training, and you become a better person. This benefits society. Another guiding philosophy was to develop super basic techniques, very correct kata, and effective kumite.

**BG: How long was this program in years, and what was the daily and weekly training schedule?**

**YY:** Two years, full time. 6 am to 9 pm Monday through Saturday. Instructor training was from 6 to 8 am, 12 to 2 pm, and 4 to 5 pm. In between these sessions, you were expected to assist teaching elsewhere. Sunday training was morning and noon, then the afternoon was free. This was the training regimen with my entire group (Kanazawa, Mikami, Tsushima, Asai).

**BG: Have the number of subjects changed since the start of the program?**

**YY:** No, not practically speaking.



*Mr. Takagi (left) and Mr. Kosaka during the 1963 JKA All-Japan Championships. Kumite winners (left to right) Shirai (2nd place), Enoeda (1st place), Kanazawa and Yaguchi (3rd place).*

Basically, they never change because you must uphold a consistent standard. The foundation remains the same, but slight changes are natural as society changes. For example, the increasing influence of sports brought some adjustment to subjects, and affected the answers to certain questions.

**BG: How much studying and how many reading assignments were given to the students aside from the regular physical training?**

**YY:** Every Friday, we had an exam. Sensei Nakayama would give a subject to each student, then the student would read their report, and sensei Nakayama would discuss and critique the discussion. Often, students would be required to demonstrate their idea. This was just another training and interactive learning method. So, not much reading was required because there were few books available on karate at this time, but plenty of studying and discussion about concepts.

**BG: What section of the training did you find most challenging at the beginning?**

**YY:** The mental pressure! I wasn't worried about the technical aspect at all, but the biggest challenge was the pressure to keep up with other students, such as Mr. Kanazawa. I was the junior student, and I felt pressure being around Master Nakayama, and my seniors, Mr. Nishiyama, Mr. Okazaki, Mr. Kanazawa, and Mr. Mikami. I think everybody felt this pressure, even the seniors. After two years of this, I could take the mental challenge, and I was a stronger person because of this.

**BG: Which kata were most favored during your trainee years; and which was your preferred kata?**

**YY:** Bassai dai and Jion were popular at that time, but besides the 15 kata that Mr. Funakoshi left us, the newer kata such as Sochin, Kanku-sho, and Bassai sho were popular because tournaments had just started in 1957. Sensei Nakayama specialized in Unsu, Mr. Okazaki; Nijushiho. My kata was Bassai sho. We were initially overwhelmed by these new kata.

**BG: Did you have any rivals that you competed against?**

**YY:** Everyone! I was the lowest rank in the entire group, so in effect everyone was my rival. So to become part of the group, I had to compete hard against all the seniors. But they all contributed and influenced greatly to who I am today.

**BG: At the end of your Instructor Training program and after you**



*At the 1963 JKA All-Japan Championships Tokyo, some of the kumite competitors, (Left to Right)... Yamaguchi, Kisaka, Asai, Enoeda, Yaguchi, and Kanazawa.*

**graduated, what did you think about being assigned overseas? When did you know that the graduates would be asked to go to overseas?**

**YY:** I had practically no idea it was coming. I didn't have a good foundation because I slept through my English classes for one and a half years. But I was aware that others were just being sent. In 1964, Nakayama sensei first told me he wanted me to go overseas. First, Mr. Kase, Mr. Kanazawa, Mr. Enoeda,

Mr. Shirai, then me – four new instructors sent to Europe, and only one to the U.S., although Mr. Nishiyama and Mr. Okazaki were already in the U.S.

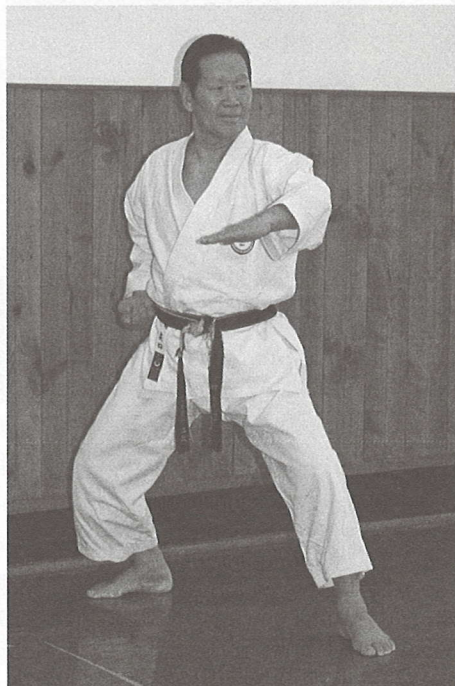
**BG: Did you pick the United States or did sensei Nakayama pick it for you? What Dan rank and age were you when you came to the States?**

**YY:** No, I had no choice – I was requested by the American side, and directed by sensei Nakayama. My rank at that time was 5th dan, and I was 32 years old. In fact, I'm about to reach 40 years in the U.S this year.

**BG: Can you think of a favorite time you had in the instructors training program? Can you think of a bad time you had in the instructors training program?**

**YY:** Favorite time; I was very happy to remain healthy and injury-free during my two years in the program; I never missed a class or activity because of health or injuries. I trained in a healthy manner; others would get sick or injured, and I never missed classes or other activities. I just felt so fortunate to make it through the program without illness or serious injury.

Bad time; I had a slump because I had ignored basics, and put too much emphasis on sparring. I became very frustrated, and couldn't win. Mr. Okazaki and Mr. Kanazawa would treat me like a kid. Mr. Okazaki was so technically



*Nijushiho, a favorite kata of Yaguchi sensei.*

strong – just an incredible technician, and Mr. Kanazawa was so physically strong. I could never beat Mr. Kanazawa! I realized I hadn't mastered basics adequately. So I went into a "dark mood" period. I didn't realize what karate really was; I thought it was only attacking, only fighting and breaking boards. I didn't appreciate how important it was to fully integrate all facets of karate-do. Initially, I had no concept of the mental challenge. It took me 2 years to overcome my feelings of inferiority.

**BG:** What other memories and lessons did you bring to the present time from your days in the JKA Instructor Program?

**YY:** Sensei Nakayama taught me to be patient, so I try to really convey this idea today in my teaching. I wouldn't be here without the lesson of patience I learned from Nakayama sensei; I would have gone back to Japan. Until sensei Nakayama died, he always encouraged me to be more patient. Until he died, he would always say to me, "Don't excite, don't excite, don't excite." This influenced and supported me greatly because it was a basic life lesson that I really needed to learn.

At the same time, my students have helped me learn to be responsible and patient too. Because I have students, I have to be responsible. In order to be responsible, I had to continue learning patience. I appreciate my students from



*Yaguchi sensei says that it was Nakayama sensei who taught him patience.*

the bottom of my heart for all they have taught me!

You can't call me old aged or an old man because I'm still learning so much.

When people ask me about retiring, I tell them I'm still learning so much and still growing.

**BG:** Where is karate-do going in the future?

**YY:** Karate will grow as a sport – maybe 80% of the public view karate as a sport; it's human nature to be interested in competition and winning. But in sports, the emphasis is not respect or self-development, just win or lose. Respect for other people is very important, and normal training should bring this to be of value to society.

I would be very sad if all I taught about was winning or losing. Winning or losing is not important, but learning the mental aspects are the real challenge and benefit of training. I place more emphasis on the mental aspects of training because this will take my students beyond just sport karate. I try to combine sports and the mental challenge in training. The general public won't support sport karate without the broader benefit of better people, respect. I want people to love karate because it's good for people and society.

*(You can learn more about sensei Yutaka Yaguchi by visiting the website: [www.uniques.com/shotokan/index.html](http://www.uniques.com/shotokan/index.html)*

*Special thanks are offered to William E. Berg and C. J. Herman for the photography and Ted Toyokura for translation assistance).*



*"You can't call me old aged or an old man because I'm still learning so much."*