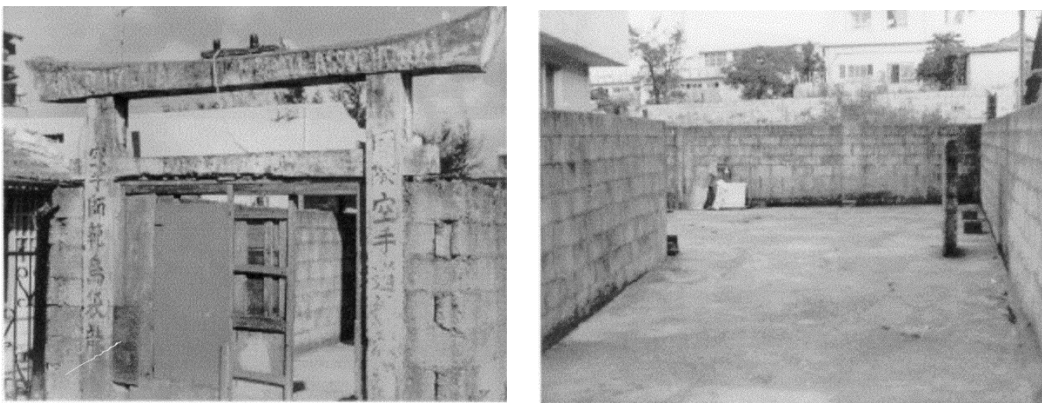


Tokumura Kensho – Ambassador for Karate & Kobudo

By A.J. Advincula & Jeff Perkins

In 1956, Tokumura Kensho started training in Shorinryu Karate while attending Agricultural Junior High School located in Agena Village, Okinawa. Tokumura joined the school karate club because his cousin, Tokuichi Oishi, was training in the club and Tokumura wanted to learn karate. A year later, the instructor, Seikichi Chinen, stopped teaching which prompted the young Tokumura to look for another instructor.

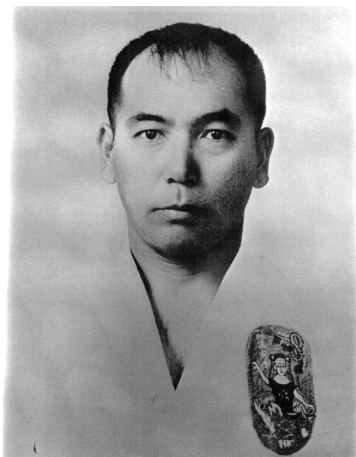
On April 7, 1957, Tokumura, who was 15 years old, went to see the founder of Isshinryu Karate, Tatsuo Shimabuku at his Agena, village dojo located near the Agricultural school. Shimabuku explained to Tokumura that a person using a vertical, non twisting punch could throw more punches than a person using traditional twist punches. Tokumura lost the friendly challenge and started Isshinryu, becoming a student of Shimabuku Tatsuo until the Masters death on May 30, 1975.



Early photos of Isshinryu's Agena Village Honbu Dojo

On August 18, 1961, Tatsuo Shimabuku presented Tokumura a silk document of the Kenpo Gokui (secret principles of fist way). Tokumura explained that soon after that date, Tatsuo stopped giving the Kenpo Gokui silk document out to his students.

Tokumura said that Tatsuo would have him teach Americans when he was still a white belt. He was only a teenage “school boy” and was scared to teach the older Marines. Shinsho “Ciso” Shimabuku (Tatsuo's 2nd son) would teach during the day and Tokumura would teach at night. Many of the American first generation Isshinryu students from the Agena Dojo remember Tokumura teaching them their basics.



He was promoted to ShoDan (1st Degree Black Belt) when Tatsuo Sensei gave him a used black belt that had been left in the dojo. The belt was too long so Tokumura had to cut it's length. Tatsuo Sensei

thought it looked bad that Tokumura was wearing a white belt while teaching the older marines.

Tokumura tells an “episode” of Tatsuo where he remembers Isshinryu’s founder telling him that he had earlier climbed up a telephone pole outside the Agena dojo for some Marines to photograph. Tatsuo got creosote on his white karate gi and wanted to know how to remove it. Tokumura told Tatsuo to use gasoline to remove the black creosote.



Tokumura remembers Tatsuo telling him that he bartered with Choki Motobu and paid rice and beans in exchange for learning Motobu's fighting techniques. Shimabuku also talked of exchanging goods for training with Kyan Chotoku Sensei.

He remembers Taira Shinken coming to the Agena dojo around 2 PM to instruct Tatsuo in Kobudo. The dojo was near the Agricultural Junior High School and Tokumura would look through the gate to see who was there. He was caught by Tatsuo Sensei once and asked to step in to observe.

As with most students who trained under Shimabuku Tatsuo Sensei, he still has a certain reverence for the man. Tokumura stated that as a “school boy”, Tatsuo told him to never smoke cigarettes (Shimabuku Sensei was a heavy smoker). Tokumura took this advice to heart and has never smoked.

After Tatsuo Shimabuku's death on May 30, 1975, Tokumura trained in the Kinaka dojo and taught for Kichiro Shimabuku, the founder’s first son. Tokumura would teach on Monday, Wednesday and Friday while Kichiro taught Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

On March 17, 1977, Tokumura received his Shihan License from Kichiro Shimabuku. He was promoted to Rokudan (6th Degree Black Belt) on July 10, 1984 by the Isshinryu World Karate Association (IWKA). Tokumura also tested for RokuDan under the Japan Karate Federation (JKF), where he was one of only three to ever test and receive a perfect “10” score on all his kata. Tokumura, being an Isshinryu stylist, had always trained using Isshinryu’s “tate ken” (vertical fist punch). Prior to testing in Japan he visited Gojuryu’s Miyazato Eichi Sensei for training and was told, "For once Tokumura, use a twist punch when you test". Tokumura practiced hard for two weeks using the traditional twist punch and said he was very sore from training this way when he tested. He received his Rokudan certificate dated March 16, 1985, signed by President Ryoichi Hasegawa of the JKF.

Throughout the years Tokumura would visit and train in other styles of Karate and Kobudo. He has said he liked most styles of Karate and thought they were all good. He studied Kobudo under Master Eisuke Akamine who was the successor to Shinken Taira. In October 1987 Tokumura left Isshinryu to study Gojuryu Karate at the Jundokan in Naha under Miyagi Chojun student, Miyazato Eiichi Sensei.

With 50 years of martial arts experience, Tokumura Sensei has developed his own style of Okinawa Kobudo called “Tokushin” in Japanese or “Tukumi” in Okinawa Hogen. His style emphasizes powerful technique utilizing “chinkuchi”.



Tokumura Sensei performing Tokushin No Tekko



Tokushin Karate & Kobudo emblem

The name “Tokushin” uses the first kanji of Tokumura’s name “Toku” 徳 and the kanji for “shin” 身 which means “body” or “oneself” and refers to his (Tokumura’s) personal Kobudo or “Gokui” (secret or essential principles). In Tokushin Kobudo there is one kata for each of the weapons of Bo (staff), Eku (boat paddle), Nunti Bo (spear), Sai (truncheon sword), Nunti Sai (truncheon sword with opposing tangs), Tuifa (L-shaped baton), Tekko (horse shoe style metal knuckles), Techu (pointed metal fist or hair pin), Kama (double sickles) and Nunti Bo (fishing spear). Tokumura Sensei has created kata for some of the more obscure weapons on Okinawa such as the nunti bo, horse shoe style tekko, techu and the nunti sai. Tokumura stated that he waited many years for someone on Okinawa to make a kata for these weapons and no one did. So, after 50 years of training, he made kata for these weapons. Tokumura Sensei has also created his own kata for the eku or boat paddle. He has lived all his life in a fishing village and disagrees with the many eku exercises he sees on Okinawa where the hands are changed on the eku as in bo. In Tokumura’s kata, the grip on the eku never changes from that used when paddling.

On April 28, 2001, Tokumura was promoted to Hanshi, Kudan (9th Degree Black Belt), by the Ryukyu Traditional Kobujutsu Preservation Budo Association endorsed by President Nakamoto (Yoshikazu).

Tokumura Kensho retired as a Captain from the U.S. Marine Corps Okinawa Security Forces. He often tours the U.S. and Canada teaching his Tokushin Kobudo. Tokumura has developed into a great ambassador for the Island of Okinawa, passing on the ways of Okinawa Karate, Kobudo and Okinawa culture to all that want to learn. He often says. “I don’t teach karate and kobudo to make money. I teach to make friends.”

