

The personal battle of

Feature by Mike Saad
Photos by Peter Thomson

KARATE



When you hear the word Karate, what flashes through your mind? A mysterious Oriental man with a sleek, hardened body, capable of fending off legions of opponents in a weaponless confrontation; someone capable of destroying countless blocks of wood with his hands, feet or head; or perhaps you picture someone who is gentle, unselfish and who epitomizes the utmost in humility and courtesy. Many wrongly believe Karate is merely a means of learning how to fight. This is unfortunate. Karate is a way of training the spirit and the body for the purpose of maintaining justice and perfecting one's character.

Modern Karate, as a martial art, was developed by Gichin Funakoshi who died in 1957 at the age of 90. To him Karate was a way of life.

Gichin Funakoshi began his Karate training in secret. He was introduced to one of the greatest Karate adepts in Okinawa, Master Yasutune Azoto, by the master's own son. At the time, Karate was banned in Okinawa by the government. Funakoshi was thus forced to travel by night and practise by moonlight in Azoto's backyard. Funakoshi, a frail child from birth, upon realizing his health had improved

due to training, "began seriously to consider making Karate-do a way of life."

In 1922, Karate was introduced to the Japanese public by Master Funakoshi who was requested to instruct at various universities. As a young man, Funakoshi enjoyed meditating and writing poetry among the pine trees on Mt. Torao. He signed all of his poetry with the pen name "Shoto", meaning "Pine waves." Students who greatly appreciated Master Funakoshi's life time efforts in Karate responded by naming the first true Karate dojo (place of training) the Shotokan; the "house of Shoto."

Today, Karate is by no means restricted to the Japanese. It first spread to America after the Second World War when Master Funakoshi was asked to tour the United States. He brought with him three assistants, one of whom was Masatoshi Nakayama, perhaps his most favoured pupil. Nakayama, presently a ninth degree black belt, is now chief instructor of the Japan Karate Association. Master Nakayama is a director of physical training at Takushoku University in Japan and has been instrumental in developing Karate as a sport. He writes, in his text "Dynamic Karate," of

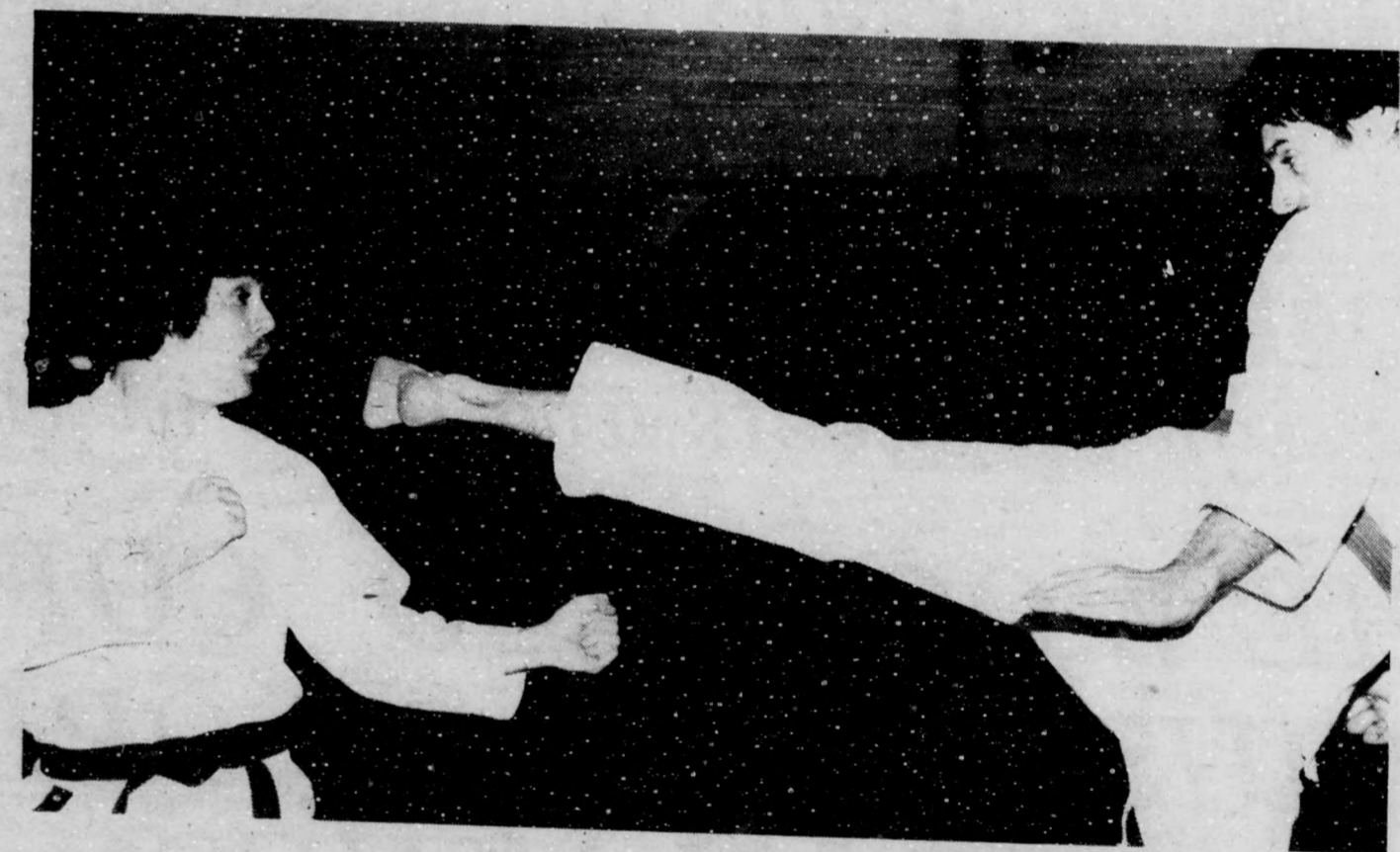
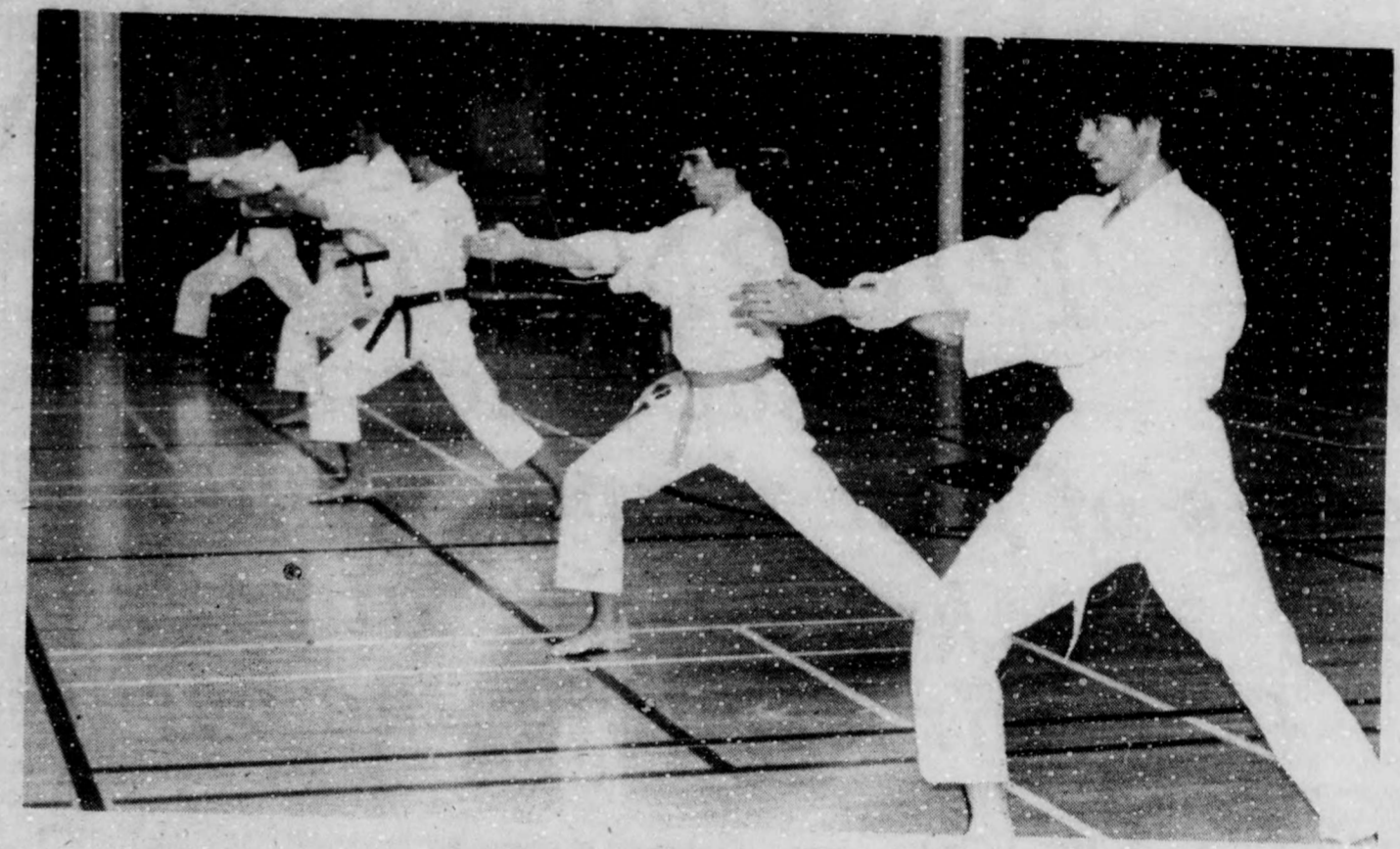
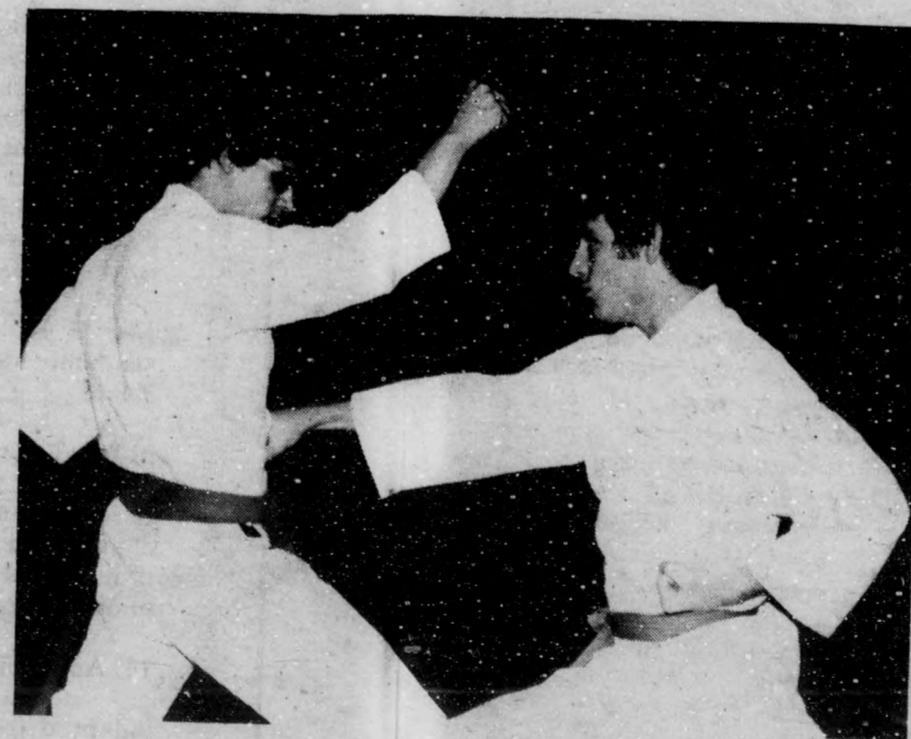
Master Funakoshi's philosophy:

"To the master, Karate was a martial art, but it was also a means of building character. He wrote: 'As a mirror's polished surface reflects whatever stands before it and a quiet valley carries even small sounds, so must the student of Karate render his mind empty of selfishness and wickedness in an effort to react approximately toward nothing he might encounter. This is the meaning of kara, or 'empty', of Karate.'"

Karate originally was written with the Japanese characters meaning "Chinese Hand." Funakoshi attired the characters to translate into "Empty Hand."

Here at UNB, our club, known as the Kenko Karate Club, is an affiliate member of the J.K.A. At present there are about 40 members. Our chief instructor, Ray Butler, currently holds the rank of first degree black belt, while there are a number of brown belts.

Each September, at the beginning of another school year, there is a large turnout of beginners, sometimes as many as 40 new members. People join for a variety of reasons: to stay in shape; make friends; learn self-defence, or to learn to fight. Unfor-



unately, most people don't realize what training in Karate truly involves. When you enter the dojo you will not be shown ancient secrets of long dead masters or what nerve to touch in order to make someone fall helplessly to the floor. Shotokan Karate consists of speed and power, agility and body control, and courage gained only through endless practise, stretching, sweating and aching. It is no wonder that out of the 40 new members who began in September only 7 or 8 will still be training at the end of the year, and only 1 or 2, if any, become a black belt. It requires a special kind of

person. One who will attempt to learn humility and respect. At the end of each class, following a short period of meditation, students repeat the "Dojo Kun" (rules of the dojo):

- 1) Seek perfection of character.
- 2) Train hard.
- 3) Be faithful.
- 4) Respect others.
- 5) Refrain from violent behavior.

Karate creates no heroes, there is no glory to be had. The battle is a personal one.

"The ultimate goal of Karate is not victory but to know oneself."

Gichin Funakoshi