



国際大山空手道連盟総本部

World Oyama Karate

Honbu Newsletter

Issue 33 - January, 2013

Seize The Day!

By Founder Saiko Shihan Y. Oyama

Rome Wasn't Built in A Day



Today is Your Day!

OSU! Happy New Year! The weather here has changed drastically over the past week. A couple days ago, it was up in the 70's just like spring, but today it's back to cold and rainy winter. On mornings like this, hot coffee matches perfectly. Although 2012 was the hottest in the United States' recorded history and the ancient Mayans had predicted that the world would end on December 21st, we're still alive.

New Year's is always a great re-charging time. I think I've mentioned before how I feel that as humans we need to break time into segments (weeks, month, years, etc.) in order to give us various starting points and times to reassess our progress in life. Like many people, I make resolutions at the beginning of each year. Some resolutions I have to continue on into subsequent years. About six or seven years ago, I resolved to make my novel *Uchi Deshi in America* into a movie. Every year, however, I would have to postpone it because of extenuating circumstances, but I never forgot about it. In 2013, this movie is scheduled to finally be released.

Whenever you resolve to achieve something, it's important that you make your goals realistic and break



SEIZE THE DAY !

larger goals down into manageable segments. I always told my Uchi Deshi that whenever you run long distance, 8 miles, 10 miles, 15 miles, etc., don't start off thinking about running the whole distance. Find a point on the horizon (a tree, house, traffic light) and focus on reaching that. Once you reach your target, focus on the next one and so on until you finish running. If you don't take this approach to achieving your big goals, it's nearly impossible to see what path to take and easy to become discouraged and lose hope. It's also important that once you have achieved your initial target (i.e. being able to comfortably run 8 miles) that you challenge yourself with the next goal (perhaps running 15 miles).

At this time of year, many people resolve to get into shape, lose weight or make other healthy lifestyle choices. Throughout the holiday season, they've spent so much time eating... and eating... and drinking and watching football... and eating... and watching football. (By the way, I was so proud of the way the University of Alabama annihilated Notre Dame in the BCS Championship. I love Alabama, Roll Tide!) After weeks of overeating and sitting around, people resolve to change their lives by eating better, going to the gym, or training Karate, especially Oyama Karate where they are guaranteed to be made to sweat.

But just like the weather, their resolve changes after only a few days. They hear whispers, maybe, "Hey you trained really hard last night. You deserve to skip today." Or maybe their friend calls them up, and as it gets time to go to class, the conversation is still going on. They may not be talking about anything more than trivial gossip, but they hear the

voice, "Friendship is important. You can train tomorrow, there's plenty of time." Gradually excuses creep up and they begin thinking, "I should really try and get in better shape before going back to the dojo. Maybe I should wait and start training in Spring." But when Spring comes, so do more excuses to postpone further and further into the future, and eventually their resolution disappears until next year.

The majority of people--old, young, men, women--experience this pattern of postponing. So, in order to ensure that you keep on track, start with what you can manage today or this week. Instead of sabotaging yourself by resolving to train every day, start with a goal of training twice a week. To get into shape, don't start by trying to do 200 pushups a day. Start with what you can manage (i.e. 30 pushups) and gradually increase the number until you reach 200. If you work in this way you are less likely to lose your resolve after the first week.

In traditional Japanese culture, when a person reaches the age of 60, they have a big *Kan Reki* celebration. At 60, they have lived through the entire sixty-year cycle of the traditional *Eto* calendar and returned to the same "year" and horoscope sign in which they were born (I believe the *Eto* calendar originated in China). When I reached this point in life, I still felt that endless possibilities were ahead of me and that I could keep pushing forward forever. Last year I made it to *Koki* (70 years). Mentally and physically, I have a deeper feeling about life, that each moment is precious--even the rain and cold. I make the most of each day, and am now writing part 2 of *Uchi Deshi in America*. I'm also

SEIZE THE DAY !

working on my biography, so I'll share more with you now that picks up where Newsletter Issue #29 left off.

Coat and Tie? Prison Suit?

After Haruyama had left and I had finished my period of Muay Thai training, the dojo felt empty and quiet to me--like the aftermath of a large party or the end of a firework display. It was hard to find the next spark of inspiration and to feel the motivation I had earlier. Karate training for me at that time wasn't a way of life or deep study; it was just about fighting and knocking out an opponent. I had conquered my rivals in the dojo, including Haruyama, which left an empty void I didn't know how to fill.

At this time I was a senior at Meiji University, getting ready to graduate with my law degree. But I wasn't sure what I was going to do in the future. Graduation was in March and some of my classmates had already lined up positions with big companies. I didn't have anything lined up and regretted that I hadn't studied harder like them, but it was too late. I tried to picture myself in a white collar office job. I had various notions about what life in an office would be like. Most were something like this...

I pictured myself getting up early every morning (which was always tough for me) and rushing to crowd into the subway on the morning com-

mute. I'd have to wear a conservative dark suit and tie everyday and sit at a desk doing paperwork all morning (for me wearing a suit and tie was just as restrictive as in inmate wearing a jumpsuit). Maybe my supervisor would yell at me for mistakes I had made on my documents. Then finally, I'd have a quick lunch break where I could breathe easily at last. But, then it would be right back into the office. I'd feel warm and full from the lunch, which would make the papers on my desk begin singing lullabies to me. I'd start to nod off, only to be yelled at by my supervisor again. In Japan, it is normal for company workers to work late at the office with the boss long into the night, sometime until 9:00 or



Eto Calendar with 12 Animals. 2013 - 'Year of the Snake'

SEIZE THE DAY !



Study Group with Professors and Alumni. Try to Find Me—(No prize if you do, though)

10:00 p.m. No matter how much I tried, I just couldn't picture myself in an office for the rest of my life.

By the time we graduated, two of my classmates had already passed the bar exam. In those days, passing the bar exam was extremely rigorous. There were a series of 4 tests held throughout the year. In any given year, about 25,000 - 30,000 people would take the bar exam, but only about 500 would pass (only 1 - 2%). However, I felt that the two classmates who had passed weren't that different than me, so if they could do it, then so could I. (In reality, they had studied law with almost religious fervor all through school. My academic

grades had always been average at best. Trying to pass the bar exam for me was like trying to climb Mt. Everest without shoes. But, I believed I could do it anyway). Many of the elite in Japanese society (politicians, CEO's, bureaucrats, chiefs of staff for prime ministers and other highly influential people) had passed the bar exam as their first step.

I decided I could be a lawyer or prosecutor. At that time, Meiji University had special post-graduate study rooms where graduates of the law department could apply and test for a desk in that room/group in lieu of paying for graduate school out of pocket. Before graduating in March, I applied and was accepted into this program. There were 5



SEIZE THE DAY !

other future law professionals in my "office". We each had our own desk. Some of the others had been there a couple years already, so I was the most junior in the group when I entered.

From elementary school to college, my favorite subject had always been PE. But if I applied myself, other subjects weren't a problem for me. Unfortunately, I didn't really pay attention in class unless I had a good teacher. But, if I made up my mind to focus on the material, then I could do well in any subject. I couldn't imagine life as a white collar office man, but I found law to be a very interesting subject. There were times I really got into the cases we studied. I would do hours of research and discussions with my professors. Sometimes they said I had great insights. I also liked the TV series *The Defenders* (American TV shows and movies were very popular in Japan. However all of the dialogue was dubbed into Japanese, which seems funny think about now). *The Defenders* was about a father-and-son attorneys Lawrence and Kenneth Preston. It appealed to me more so than *Perry Mason*. *Perry Mason* was OK, but the show had a very "Hollywood" style--very flashy and dramatic and not very thought-provoking. But the *Defenders* often challenged the audience to think and form opinions about what they were seeing. The show covered many controversial issues, such as blacklisting, euthanasia, abortion and civil rights. I felt a very strong connection and inspiration from this show. I wasn't made to be a businessman, but I could see myself as a defense attorney or prosecutor.

A couple of the high-ranking academic people in the study "office" were sponsored by law firms or other

companies, so didn't need to worry about money. The majority of us had no sponsor so we had to find work. I searched the newspaper and did any job I could. I worked the midnight shift operating a jackhammer on a subway construction project, I painted buildings, I washed dishes in restaurants and night clubs. I was so focused on becoming an attorney, that I didn't mind doing any of these jobs because I knew they were only a means to help me reach my final goal. I have a lot of funny memories from that time, some of which I want to share with you.

A couple of my seniors in the study room advised me to try and find a job in a well-established company. If I worked for 6 months, then quit, I could collect unemployment benefits. So, I found work as a sales rep for a paint supplier. I worked with a friend of mine who was a little higher up than me, like an assistant manager. He was really skinny, and looked like he should be in a suit, but I was in good shape and didn't feel like the suit fit me or my personality. We would go on sales calls around Tokyo trying to woo clients by taking them to fancy dinners or giving them free baseball or movie tickets. One day we took out a potential client who was the manager of a very large international electronics corporation (H. Company). We went out to eat and drink. The manager took a liking to me, but not so much my supervisor. My supervisor didn't eat or drink much, but the manager and I dove right in and enjoyed ourselves. At one point I mentioned about my brother, Soshu's, and my involvement in Karate training and how I was currently studying to become a lawyer. The manager smiled at me and said,

SEIZE THE DAY !

"Mr. Oyama what are you doing? You're not cut out for this kind of company work. It doesn't fit your character. You need to get out of this little company," he said to me as he gestured to my supervisor. The manager and I started laughing. He was a really sharp guy. He could read people well. I felt a sense of relief to have an outside opinion validate what my gut had always told me--that I didn't fit into the corporate world. My supervisor was noticeably agitated--his client from the H. Company had just told his employee he was too good to be working there. He was irritated with me, but also trying to humor his client--it was funny to see him so uncomfortable.

I had a couple of good friends in the study room "office", M. and O. O. was a very sharp guy. M. wasn't as sharp, but his father owned a large construction contract company. Because of his connection, he was always able to find various construction jobs for me, so I didn't need to worry about that so much anymore.

Lullaby Vs. Torture

I studied very hard for two years after college graduation, at least 10 hours a day. I couldn't sit at my desk the whole time without taking a break, so I'd go to the library too to help me not feel like I was stuck in the same spot all day. One of the side effects of working and studying all the time without much sleep was that my reading material would often begin singing *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*, *Rock-a-bye Baby* or some other lullaby and cause me to nod off. Especially after lunch or in the heated library during the dead of winter. I'd slap my face or leg or pinch my cheek in an effort to stay awake,

but it was a constant struggle sometimes.

I asked one of my seniors for advice to keep awake. He said that pinching or slapping is more like a massage than a way to stay awake. The best method was to take a small, sharp straight pin and jam it into my arm or leg when I began feeling sleepy. "Really? Would I start bleeding?" I asked him. "Sometimes," he shrugged, "but once you get used to it you don't bleed so much." "Sounds like torture," I continued. He said simply, "Yeah, maybe so, but either you want to stay awake or you don't".

The next time I studied, I brought along a straight pin. I thought my arms would be too sensitive, so once I started getting sleepy, I jammed it into my thigh. My eyes popped open from the rush, and the rush of pain made me instantly alert. "Wow, this really works!" I thought to myself. But only an hour later, I started feeling sleepy again so had to give myself another prick. By the end of the day I had jammed myself with the pin many times, leaving marks all on my thighs. Bathing with all those puncture wounds was painful and I started worrying that I may develop some kind of infection if I continued this every day, so I decided that was enough with the pin pricking.

Our study group was mentored and supervised by various professors and alumni who were presently working as attorneys, lawyers or judges. The alumni had gone through the same program as us and so would return to help the next generation. Each week, they would give us a new case to study and every Saturday afternoon we would all meet to discuss and debate the case as a group. On Sunday morning, we would have an essay test on the case

SEIZE THE DAY !

that would last until lunchtime. So our only free time was Sunday afternoon and evening. On Sunday evenings we wanted to enjoy ourselves with a few beers, but money was tight. Our seniors gave us a tip that if we skipped lunch, we could increase the effect each beer would have on us, so wouldn't need to buy as many. It was important for us to release the tension of the week and talk in a more relaxed mood, so beer was key to get us to that point. We would gather in a small dingy pub that served the largest and cheapest quantities of food and drink.

Monday through Sunday, 365 days a year, we studied with only a small

break Sunday afternoon and evenings. There were no summer vacations. We had no time for dating. Sometimes on the subway, we'd see a beautiful woman and just tell ourselves longingly, "Someday...someday..." After a couple years of studying in my group, I began to feel that I was becoming very educated. My professors would often tell me how well I did in debates and discussions. I



Saiko Shihan and Inoue

felt that even in the study of law, I was a Black Belt. But all the while, Karate was still in my blood and body. There are a couple episodes I clearly remember from that time in my life.

I Still Got It!

One incident I remember from this time involved

SEIZE THE DAY !

my friend from the study group, Inoue. He and I lived in rooms across from each other at a small boarding house. He was a very sharp guy and we would study and hang out together all the time. One day he and I went to a public bath after our Sunday test. At that time, you had to bring your own towel, soap and wash bucket with you to the public bath. We also wore *Geta* (traditional platformed wooden sandals). We stopped at a small *Yakitori* restaurant on the way home from the bath.

The restaurant was very small. An old man and his wife owned and operated it and lived in some adjacent rooms in back of the restaurant. The inside was simply a counter with 5 chairs and 2 small tables. Inoue and I sat at the corner of the counter. At one of the tables, a large guy with a mean mus-

tached face sat drinking alone. He stared us down when we came in, but we just looked the other way and took our seats.

Inoue and I talked about constitutional law and the exam we had just taken. The mustache guy kept looking at us out of the corner of his eye. Finally, he stood up and shouted at us, "Shut up you guys!"

Everyone in the place was surprised. Inoue and I looked at each other. Mr. Mustache continued, "You guys be quiet!" We told him we were sorry. He sat back down and Inoue and I continued our conversation quietly. A couple minutes later, the mustache man approached us at the counter. The old man behind the counter tried to calm him down, but Mr. Mustache told him to shut up. Inoue and I were getting mad now. This guy was nothing

more than a bully. The mustache man hit the wooden counter with a *Shuto* (Knife Hand) so hard that it shook the counter. We held onto our glasses to keep them from falling to the floor.

I looked up at Mr. Mustache indignantly, "What do you want?"

"You talking about the constitution!?" he barked, "I'll teach you a better lesson!"

"What are you going to



Geta

SEIZE THE DAY !

teach me?" I asked.

The mustache man was extremely agitated now. "Stand up and get outside!" he yelled at me.

"OK," I said calmly, getting up and following him out.

It was late in the evening. I followed Mr. Mustache into the alley behind the restaurant. A street lamp cast a warm glow over us. It was a quiet night, and the sound of my *Geta* echoed with each step I took on the concrete with an eerie "*kahts--kahts--kahts*" like something out of the movie *High Noon* or the *OK Corral*. (By the way, *Geta* are very antiquated now and hardly anyone ever wears them except in traditional ceremonies, especially young people). The old man and woman made a final plea with the mustache man to stop this, but he shouted them down with, "Shut up, this is none of your business!"

I was really angry with him at that point. Inoue had a look of terror in his eyes. He tugged at my sleeve and whispered, "Can you handle it? I've never fought in my life," in a panic. I told him not to worry about it. Inoue knew I had trained in Karate before, but we became friends during the time I had stopped training to focus on law school, so he had never actually seen me fight. I gave him my bucket, towel and soap and told him to hold on to them for me.

Mr. Mustache stood under the street light and glared at me. He ripped off his jacket in dramatic fashion exposing a wrinkled, dingy undershirt. His jacket was like a suit of boastful armor, but the wrinkled undershirt was pitiful in comparison. He assumed a very wide, traditional fighting stance

with his hands held low in front of him. "C'mon!" he growled. He was so dramatic, almost cartoon-like in his face and body.

I got into my fighting stance. "You ready?" I asked.

"C'mon!" he shot back. As soon as we started, I pushed him with my left hand, followed by a round-house kick to his head. His whole body immediately seized up. He stayed frozen for a moment, his eyes rolling back, then he fell to the ground like a tree trunk. I hadn't kicked him very hard, but my *Geta* made clean contact with his jaw, knocking him out cold.

Inoue was completely awestruck. He rushed over to me and said, "Wow, Oyama! You're so strong!" Then we both looked at Mr. Mustache lying frozen in the street. A new terror gripped Inoue. "Maybe he's dead," he wandered aloud in a hushed voice.

I knelt down at Mr. Mustache's head. His body was stiff but he was snoring--a sign that he had a concussion, but certainly was NOT dead. I tried to revive Mr. Mustache by shaking him gently and shouting at him to wake up. Inoue had never seen anything like this, so he was hysterical. "Oh, no, you killed him," he kept muttering. I had seen this many times in the dojo. I told Inoue, "He's snoring, which means he's breathing, which means he's not dead! Don't worry about it," I tried to calm Inoue down while simultaneously trying to revive Mr. Mustache. Finally the mustached man came to and I knew he would be OK, so I just said, "Sorry about that," and Inoue and I ran home.

We lived close by. Once we were back to the boarding house, we just stared at each other, un-

SEIZE THE DAY !

able to relax. Soon afterward, we heard ambulance sirens in the distance. We assumed the worst. We were law students, so were very familiar with Japanese law in these types of situations. The kind of street fight I had just been in couldn't be classified as "self-defense". If Mr. Mustache suffered serious injury and had to be taken to the hospital, both Inoue and I would be held responsible. Having a criminal charge against us would prevent us from ever taking the bar exam. Our whole future would be destroyed.

Neither of us could sleep with the uncertainty of Mr. Mustache's fate. After a couple hours, we went back to the *Yakitori* pub. It was the middle of the night. The mustache man had left. We banged on the door for about 10 minutes until the old man finally answered. We explained how anxious we were to know what happened to Mr. Mustache. Had he gone to the hospital? The old man reassured us and said everything was fine. Shortly after we had left, Mr. Mustache had gotten up and asked the old couple for some bags of ice and walked home. We were so relieved!

A couple weeks after that, I was at the public bath by myself. There was a guy washing up next to me. He looked familiar... I asked him at last, "Don't I know you from somewhere?" The guy's eyes popped out when he recognized me and I realized he was Mr. Mustache, but he just shook his head nervously and answered, "No, no we don't know each other," and rushed off.

I Still Got It??

Another incident from this time took place in the

dojo. After taking the spring test portion of the bar exam, I called up Shihan Goda. He worked for a car company, so had a tiny car (smaller than a "smart car" but with none of the safety features). He drove me down to a large government building where the results were posted. We found my name and number posted among the final 2,000 out of the 30,000 that had taken the test. I was elated. Even though I still had two more tests to take, I felt like I had already passed the whole thing. Shihan Goda and I talked about Karate a little and I said that maybe I'd stop by the dojo sometime.

One Sunday after the weekly essay test, I felt that I wanted to stop by the dojo and sweat a little bit. I hadn't trained in 3 years, but I still felt like I was in good shape. Maybe it was the early summer air that told me I could just pick up where I had left off 3 years ago. When I entered the dojo, everyone welcomed my return with an enthusiastic, "Osu! Osu! Osu!" Fujihira was the chief instructor. He had been my junior when I was still training. I didn't recall him being anything special, just one of many of my junior students. (But during the time I was gone, he had since started fighting in Muay Thai competitions and become a national champion.) He had improved exponentially in my absence. I told him to let me borrow a dogi and join the class.

As soon as we started, my head was as cocky as ever, but my body had a hard time keeping pace. The class did 100 kicks, but I started breathing heavily after just 10. Even so, I still felt confident that I could handle the free fight portion at the end of class. I had beaten Fujihira before, so when it came time to free fight I said, "Hey, let's you and me

SEIZE THE DAY !

fight." The whole class stopped and buzzed with whispered excitement. I know now that I shouldn't have said that, but at the time I still believed I was in as good of shape as ever.

During the 3 years I had been away, Fujihira had continued training. He was a little shorter than me, but his body was rock solid, bursting with muscle. Mine showed the effects of 3 years' absence. But Fujihira was very humble in his response to my request and answered, "Osu...Shihan...maybe we shouldn't do that..." But I insisted, so he said OK. As soon as we faced each other in our *Kamae*, his chi was such that his body seemed to double, then triple in size, while mine began sinking away. It was as if a switch had suddenly been flipped and he was transformed into a fighting monster. I tried to do 1-2 punch and kick, but my movements were rusty and he easily blocked. He returned with a flurry of punches and kicks like bullets that assailed me from every direction. He controlled himself and didn't hit with full power, but I still found myself backed into the wall pleading, "OK, OK you win!"

Fujihira stopped and was once again humble and gracious in victory. I realized at that moment that if you don't maintain yourself physically and keep up your condition, your speed, timing, fighting sense and techniques will become rusty and diminish regardless of how much glory you achieved in the past.

So even though I wasn't training for the 2 years I was in the study group after college, Karate was still in my blood. After a couple of years of watching some of our fellows pass the bar exam and move onto better things, Inoue and I were still in the

study group. I started losing the enthusiasm I once had for studying law. One day I went to the public bath near the university at 3:00 the afternoon. Most people usually bathed at night. However, the bathhouse opened at 3:00 and whenever I went as soon as it opened, I would pretty much have the entire place to myself. As I was walking back home after an afternoon bath, someone touched my shoulder. I turned around to find Mas Oyama standing behind me. He looked at me holding all my bathing supplies and asked, "What are you doing?"

I answered simply, "I'm just taking a bath."

"But it's in the middle of the afternoon," he went on, "Only old retired people take baths in the afternoon."

"Well, I like afternoon baths." Mas Oyama broke into laughter. He had a very dynamic laugh--his body was tight and he sounded like he was doing *Ibuki*, rather than laughing. I started laughing too. He told me that I should come back to the dojo and share my experience and help bring up the next generation of students. My brother, Soshu, had since left the dojo to start teaching in New York. I told Mas Oyama that I would think about it, to which he responded, "You're still young. Remember how you always said you wanted to get out and see the world?" He put a 1,000 yen note in my vest pocket. He was good--I was so tempted. To be or not to be--that is the question...

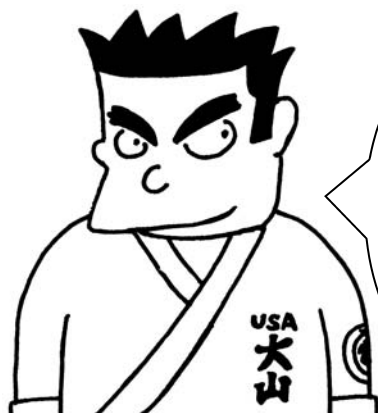
Inoue moved back home after I left. I heard that he finally ended up passing the bar exam and began work as a local judge, then later an attorney.



World Oyama Karate 2013 Honbu Schedule

- Jan. 2.....Wed.Honbu Dojo Training Starts
- Feb. 2.....Sat.Regular Promotion 10:30 a.m.
- Mar. 2.....Sat.**Brown/Black Belt Promotion**.....10:30 a.m.
- Mar. 23.....Sat.Japan Clinic / Black Belt Promotion (Himeji, Japan)
- Mar. 24.....Sun.Japan Clinic / Black Belt Promotion (Tokyo, Japan)
- Apr. 6.....Sat.Regular Promotion.....10:30 a.m.
- Apr. 19.....Fri.OPEN HOUSE (Honbu Dojo)
- Apr. 20.....Sat.OPEN HOUSE (Chelsea Dojo)
- May 4.....Sat.**American Cup Tournament**
(Birmingham, AL)
- May 25.....Sat.Regular Promotion10:30 a.m.
- June 2.....Sun.**Fighter's Cup Tournament**
(San Francisco, CA)
- June 15-16.....Sat.-Sun. Japan Branch Chief / Instructor Clinic (Kanagawa, Japan)
- June 29.....Sat. **Japan Challenge Cup**
- July 18-21...Thur.-Sun.**Summer Camp** (Gulf Shores, AL)
- Aug. 3.....Sat.Regular Promotion.....10:30 a.m.
- Sept.TBA.....**Brown/Black Belt Promotion**
- Oct. 5.....Sat.Regular Promotion.....10:30 a.m.
- Nov. 9.....Sat. **Japan Cup Tournament**
- Nov. 23.....Sat.**Brown/Black Belt Promotion**.....10:30 a.m.
- Dec. 8.....Sun.**Ultimate Challenge Tournament**
(Birmingham, AL)
- Dec. 14.....Sat.Regular Promotion.....10:30 a.m.
- Dec. 27.....Fri.Year End Dojo Clean-Up.....6:00 p.m.

***Some dates are preliminary, and are subject to change. We will give advance notice for date changes.



2013 is YOUR year! Time to make a fresh start and SWEAT, SWEAT, SWEAT!

Issue 33 - January, 2013

Editor-in-Chief: Saiko Shihan Y. Oyama

Editors: Sensei Karl Julian

Graphic Artist: Sensei Masa Takahashi

Technical Assistant: Senpai Tony Ching

World Oyama Karate Honbu Dojo

1804 29th Avenue South, Homewood, AL 35209

Phone: (205) 879-4841 Fax: (205) 879-4849

www.worldoyama.com

Copyright © 2012 World Oyama Karate. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited.