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**World Oyama Karate**

**Honbu Newsletter**

Issue 46 - March, 2017

# FIGHTERS CUP & HOLLYWOOD DEBUT

By Founder Saiko Shihan Y. Oyama

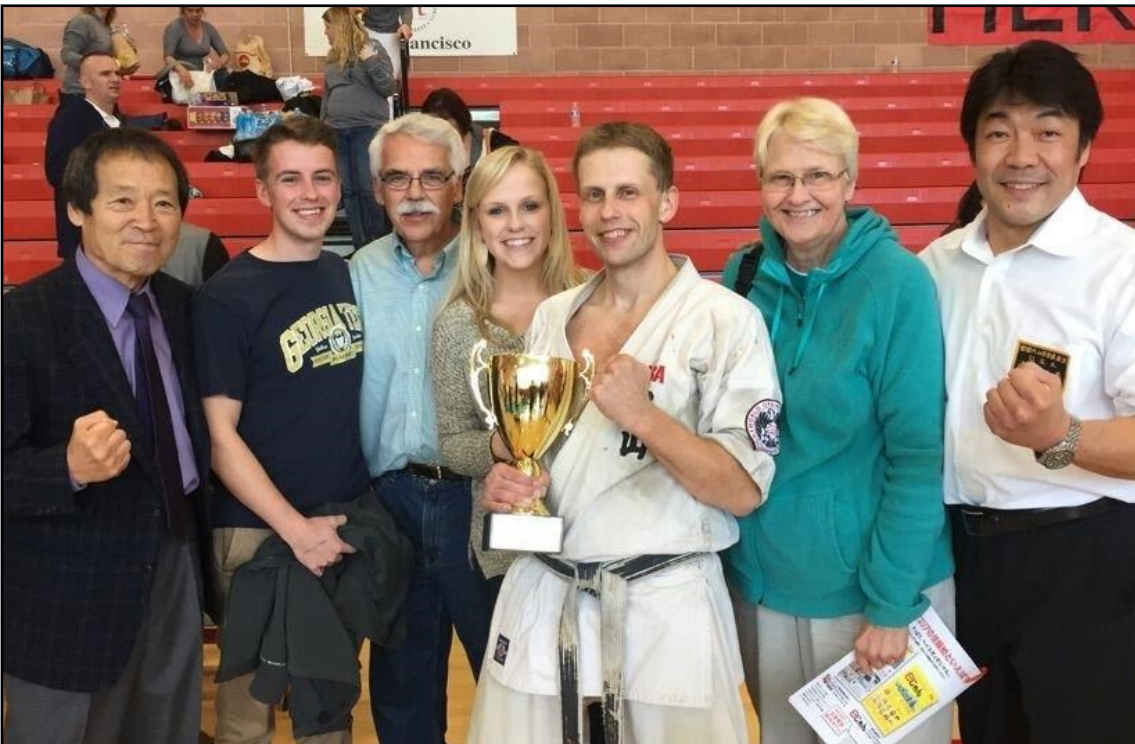
World Oyama Karate on the West Coast is very vibrant and strong. Last November, we had a theatre screening of the movie Take A Chance in San Francisco. A lot of people were able to see it and it was very exciting. On March 5th of this year, Shihan Saito and Sensei Yoko held the 13th Annual Fighters Cup Knockdown Tournament. Soon after they announced the date last year, Honbu Dojo chief instructor Sensei Karl knocked on my door one morning. Usually he's not very uptight at all. He acts as if every day is a holiday. But now, he was very serious.

"Osu! Saiko Shihan, I'd like to talk to you."

"What is it?"

"Osu, um, I'd like to fight in the San Francisco Fighters Cup tournament... What do you think?"

"Sensei, you have three kids and you're almost middle-aged. You've had surgery on both knees, shoulder injury, back



injury, head injury... just one mistake in a fight, and it could be really bad news for you. You have three kids to take care of, adult classes to teach and classes full of little monster kids to teach; are you sure you want to fight?"

"Osu," his voice became very deep and even more serious, "maybe this will be the last time I'll be able to fight."

I could understand his feeling. For him, it was

**Saiko Shihan (L) and Shihan Saito (R) with Sensei Karl and His Family**

# Fighters Cup Story

important to have one last tournament in his Karate journey while he was still able to. “You really want to?” I asked.

“Osu, I think so.”

“Your wife know?”

“No, I’m not worried about her.”

“What!? Of course you have to worry about your wife! I’m Saiko Shihan, but wife is Saiko-Saiko-Saiko Shihan.”

“Osu, I think she’ll be fine with it.”

“OK then.”

So, Sensei Karl and I started training together to prepare for the tournament. I showed him a particular technique, but told him to save it and not show anyone. In ancient times, whenever a sword master was going to teach someone, they first evaluated their character. Before sharing the knowledge it had taken them a lifetime to acquire, they first had to see that the student asking to be taught could be trusted with it. If they felt that the student would use their training in a way that would have a negative impact on society or other people, they wouldn’t teach them. However, if the grandmaster felt that the student was deserving and that the training would be beneficial to his life, and in turn to the lives those around him, then he would agree to teach the student.

In my history as a Karate instructor, I have acted the same way. Whenever I’m approached by a student who has great coordination, but is also arrogant and cocky, I don’t show him any special techniques. If I did, he would not appreciate it, and furthermore would likely use them and teach them to other people in a way that would be dangerous. Of course in real life and practical application, there are no foolproof, special “super techniques” that work every time in every situation. Any number of variables can impact the outcome. But even so, some techniques can be more dangerous than others.

So I showed Sensei Karl this particular technique, but also how to incorporate step work. Many people rely too heavily on technique alone. Step work allows you to control mawai (distance), kakudo (angle) and hyoshi (tempo). Until you incorporate these things into your technique, the technique is not complete—that’s the philosophy of World Oyama Karate. Sensei Karl started getting ready, training every day. Whenever he was training, he was pumped up and got younger and younger, but after training, he would become older and older.

The tournament was on a Sunday. Sensei Karl left for San Francisco on Thursday. Shihan Saito was waiting for him. The first thing he did was take him to San Mateo dojo. He told all the students and parents, “This is Sensei Karl from Honbu dojo, he’s going to take care of classes today!” Everyone was very excited, but I had to wonder if Shihan Saito thought Sensei Karl was there to compete or to teach kids’ class. Karl’s younger brother is a graduate student at Stanford University studying aerospace engineering. His parents and sister (who is studying to be a physical therapist) had already planned to visit his brother on the same weekend, so they were able to come to the tournament.

That morning, about 185 people competed in the semi-knockdown division. There were 3 rings packed with fighters and judges and spectators. But everything went smoothly and the judging was well done. Shihan Sakataka from New Jersey, Shihan Takahashi from Atlanta, Sensei Shuji from San Diego and Sensei Fukunishi from San Jose all came to officiate in the tournament. All the Black Belts from San Francisco and San Jose area were also there, which of course included the very passionate Shihan John Lehner. In the late afternoon, we started the heavyweight and lightweight knockdown division. The heavyweight final match was between a student from Dashaa Mongolian Karate and one from Shinkyokushinkai Karate. The student from Dashaa dojo lost in the final last year, but this year he scored a Wazari and won decisively.

But I was most excited for the lightweight division. In the semi-final, Sensei Karl dominated. With about a mi-

# Fighters Cup Story



## World Famous Top Shihans and Senseis

nute left in the match, he did middle punch/back kick/soto mawashi combination that all landed and won by Ippon. But, he didn't do the special technique we had worked on; he saved it for the final match.

Sensei Karl's final opponent was very limber and moved around a lot. I could tell Sensei Karl was getting a little anxious because he didn't as much chance to crash and fight in close. I tried to send my thoughts to him, "patient... be patient—life is beautiful". In the last minute, the opponent started coming in more aggressively—that's what Sensei Karl was waiting for. Sensei Karl waited for his moment as they fought in close. Suddenly, he jumped and did a kaiten uchi mawashi geri that

landed square to the opponent's nose and he went down. The entire gymnasium exploded. It was exactly what we had worked on all that time leading up to the tournament. I was glad to see Sensei Karl end his last fight in such a dynamic way. After that, we took pictures with his parents and brother and sister—the doctors, the engineer, the physical therapist... and the Karate instructor. I'm thankful for all the hard work Shihan Saito, Sensei Yoko, and all other Black Belts and students in the dojo and surrounding areas put into producing the tournament every year. I'm already looking forward to next year!

Osu!

# Hollywood Debut

## Hollywood Debut

A couple weeks ago, after class, Senpai Paul told me that the movie *Get Out* had a 100% rating on the Rotten Tomatoes website. I just looked at him, perplexed. I had no idea what he meant and why he was telling me about 100% rotten tomatoes.

“Osu, you know the movie. That you’re in... Called *Get Out*,” he said.

“Oh, oh, yes, now I remember!” I exclaimed. “Yeah, I’m in there!”



**Hollywood Debut ???**

So, let me tell you about my Hollywood debut. Before my appearance in *Get Out*, I wrote, directed and acted a little in my movie, *Take A Chance*. My co-producer, Scott, said that when he screened the movie for a bunch of his friends, they all wanted to know who the actor was that played the role of Shihan Oyama. He told them that I played myself and they couldn’t believe it. Don’t misunderstand me, though, I have no desire to be a movie star, but it tickled me to hear that. I was able to be convincing because I was playing myself in my own story. But *Get Out* was completely different.

The movie is written and directed by Jordan Peele. After my son, Zac, graduated from the University of Alabama, he told my wife and I that he wanted to go to LA and write scripts. He had no desire to do anything else; that was it for him. So we were both happy to let him go, although he left us with an empty nest. After awhile, he landed a job with Comedy Central. Just like me, he’s a soft and easy-going person (Don’t laugh!) so he got along well with everyone. He became a good friend of Jordan Peele while he was working on the Key & Peele show. Three or four years after that, Zac left Comedy Central to write for the online sketch group College Humor, but he kept in contact with Jordan Peele.

One day, Zac called my wife to tell him that Jordan Peele was going to be directing a horror movie. He’d been writing the script little by little for the past 7 years. It was going to be shot in Fairhope, AL and there was a small role for a Japanese businessman. Jordan had asked Zac about approaching me to play the role. So, Zac told my wife. When I got home from the dojo one day, she was waiting for me. “Sit down,” she said.

“Yes, ma’am,” I said.

“Zac called.”

“Really, wow!” Zac hardly ever called. If we called him 100 times, he only called us back maybe once.

“He said you’re going to be in a movie,” she continued.

“No, I’m directing a movie,” I corrected her.

# Hollywood Debut

“Not your movie! A Hollywood movie.”

“Oh, OK... What is it?”

“A horror movie.”

“Horror movie!? Like monsters and demons and zombies?”

“No, you’re going to be a Japanese businessman.”

“Huh... Why am I in it?” I asked.

“Because Zac wants you to. And I want you to, that’s why!”

“Yes, ma’am. But I have to teach class and take care of the dojo. I don’t have time to be in a movie,” I tried to reason with her.

“It’s just for three days. And they’ll pay all the expenses.”

es.”

“Oh, OK, that’s good.”

“I’m just worried about one thing, though,” she said.

“What?”

“You have a couple lines of dialogue.”

“Oh, no, I can’t do that! I can do dialogue about Karate, but that’s it.”

“Don’t worry, I’m going to train you,” she said.

“Are you coming with me?” I asked.

“Of course!”

“Good, because if I have to sign a bunch of contract papers, I need you to read and explain them. They might



**Keegan-Michael Key (L) and Director Jordan Peele (R) with son Zac**

# Hollywood Debut

try to get me to sign myself over to them and they'll ship me off to some strange place like human traffickers do."

"Don't worry about that! You're over 70, nobody wants to ship you anywhere. Trust me!"

So, every day, we practiced my dialogue. I felt like Rocky, getting stronger day by day. As it got closer to the time to leave, one of the production people contacted me to ask my height, weight, shoe size and other measurements. They told us to arrive a day early for wardrobe. When we got there, a lady met us to go over the shooting schedule and sign paperwork. My wife read over the contract. She seemed surprised. "GG..." she said.

"What?" I asked.

"They're going to pay you."

"I know, you told me. They pay for the hotel and food

and everything."

"No, I mean they're going to pay you for your acting."

"Wow, really!?"

"Who's your agent," the lady asked. My wife and I looked at each other. Agent? Agent?

"I don't have an agent," I said.

"Yes you, do!" my wife interrupted, "I'm your agent."

"Oh yeah, she's my agent."

"So, you take 10%?" the lady asked.

"No, I take 100%." My wife turned to me, "Your money is my money and my money is my money. That's the American way."

"OK," I said. I couldn't argue. Next, we went to the costume room. Three ladies were waiting for me. They



Director Jordan Peele wearing Oyama Karate t-shirt... You can see the "Swe" part of "Just Sweat" logo

# Hollywood Debut

kept putting various articles of clothing on me. My shoe size is 8 ½ E, but at that time, I had a painful corn on my big toe. The 8 ½ hurt my feet, so they brought size 9. Those still hurt, so they brought 9 ½, then 10... Finally, they brought size 12 and those were OK. They started laughing at how I looked with those big shoes. “Don’t worry about it,” I said, they’ll be watching my beautiful face, not my shoes.” They couldn’t stop laughing.

Next, they took us to my trailer. My trailer was right next to those of the main cast. It had a kitchen, shower, toilet and sofa. Later, they took us back to the 5-star hotel and we had a nice dinner and went to bed. The next morning, people from the crew picked me up and drove me to my trailer. A little while later, Jordan Peele and two of his assistants knocked on the door to get me. Zac had told me that Jordan’s birthday was that day, so I gave him a red “Just Sweat” shirt and a copy of Perfect Karate. They took me to the makeup room. There were 12 stations, like an assembly line. Each time I moved down a seat, a different person applied some part of my makeup.

The set was a large southern mansion. There were about 200 people moving around working on the set or waiting for their scene to be shot. There was so much waiting around. A lot of the people there were either extras or people like me with small bit parts. They were professionals and had come from all over the country. It was funny, though, because once in awhile, Jordan would come check on me and ask if I needed anything. He didn’t check on any of the other extras or bit part people—just me. I also learned that none of them had a trailer like I did. They all shared a big barn, I was the only one with his own trailer.

Between takes, I was taken to the same green room as the main cast, not as the extras. We had lots of fruit, snacks, cakes and coffee. All the others were herded around in big busses. I was glad Zac knew Jordan. After more and more waiting, it was finally time for me to be in a take. It was a scene in a garden, and I was supposed to walk with a group from point A to point B while holding a glass of red wine. I was excited to get to drink

wine, but quickly found out it was just red-colored water. Apparently, they don’t let the actors drink during filming. Between takes, a really huge guy was assigned to take care of my glass. It was a little cold outside, so another guy, this one really skinny, was assigned to take care of my coat. Wherever I went, they followed. If I went left, they went left. If I went right, they went right. I wondered if I should go ahead and teach them Shi-Ho Kata. But they were a little too out of shape. We did a lot of takes of just walking slowly across the screen looking at each other.

At the end of the day, I was so exhausted. The reason was that I hadn’t done much of anything all day. I’m used to sweating and punching, kicking, screaming not just sitting around and waiting. At dinner, I said to my wife, “You know, this part I play, anyone could play it, not just me.”

“Yeah,” she said.

“So, maybe, I’ll just quit and let them find someone else.”

“No!” she yelled. “You promised Zac, you promised the director, so you have to do it!”

The next day was more of the same—waiting, waiting, waiting. I listened to the other bit part actors talking amongst themselves about their agents, their websites and their past movie roles.

“Who’s your agent?” one of them asked me.

“My wife,” I said.

“Wow, she must be a good agent the way Mr. Peele is always taking care of you.”

“No, she’s just a housewife, really.”

“Oh... So what percentage does she take?”

“100%”

“What!? You need to speak with a lawyer. That’s not right!”

# Hollywood Debut

“Well, she is my boss. If I argue, I’ll end up in the dog house and I’m too old to be sleeping in there with my dogs.”

After awhile they asked me, “So what types of roles have you done before?”

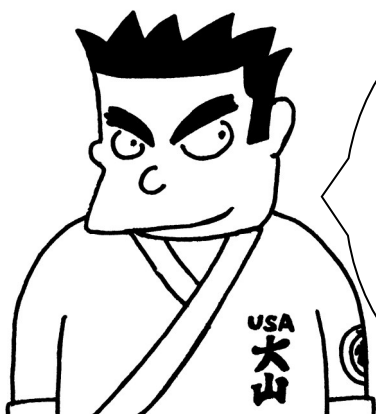
I really wanted to tell them about *Take A Chance*, but before I’d come to Fairhope, my wife and son told me to never, never, NEVER say anything about my movie. So, I just told them that this was my first acting job, and definitely my last.

On the last day, we did three takes of my scene in which I spoke. After that, I was done. I was so happy. I told Jordan it was great working with him, and that the movie was wonderful, but I wasn’t sticking around any longer. When we were about ready to check out of the hotel, though, one of the production staff knocked on our door and asked if I’d be willing to stay for just one more day. I told her, “NO WAY!” and we went home. But I’m really glad that this movie has reached #1 and happy for Jordan Peele and his staff.

The filming happened a couple years ago. Then, recently, we started seeing commercials and ads for *Get Out*. My wife was getting so excited. February 24th was opening day. She forced me to go see it. I told her I didn’t much want to see it and have bad dreams, but she made me go anyway. She joked that I should wear sunglasses and a hat since I was a big star and would want to avoid the paparazzi. We went to a 2:00 p.m. showing

and were surprised at how full the theatre was. It was a lot different than what I expected a horror movie to be. It wasn’t bloody or gory, just about ordinary people. There was a very strong theme in the movie about society and race, but Jordan worked it so that it wasn’t overt and obvious. At the end, both my wife and I had a positive feeling. She said it was going to be a hit. And she was right. A couple weeks later, it reached #1 at the box office. I remember an acceptance speech that Steven Spielberg once gave at the Oscars. He said that for a movie to be great, it needed a strong story and powerful theme. That’s the case with *Get Out*. It doesn’t have a well-known cast and the budget was relatively small for Hollywood – about \$4.5 million. But even so, it beat out all the other big budget movies and has earned over \$100 million. It made me feel good about my movie, *Take A Chance*. It isn’t a big budget movie and doesn’t have any big stars in it, but the story and theme are very strong, so I feel like it has a good chance of being successful.

The Monday after *Get Out*’s opening weekend, I went to my bank (Wells Fargo). When I got in, all the tellers and managers were quiet and looked at me strangely. One of them finally said, “I didn’t know you were a movie star! My husband and I saw you yesterday on screen.” I told her I wasn’t a star, just a Karate instructor. She then pulled out her movie ticket stub and asked for my autograph. I felt so big and happy... Overall, it was a great experience.



“Get Out” of here !!!  
I meant go see the movie.

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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](http://www.worldoyama.com)

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