

KARATE

The subtle art of self-defense which originated in Okinawa is now proving increasingly popular not only in Japan but also in some foreign countries.

Andrew Heiskell, chairman of the board of the American weekly, Time Incorporated, commented that he had never seen any art of self-defense with such speed, force and beauty as Karate. Foreigners who viewed the Fifth All-Japan Karate Tournament held at the Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium in June, 1961 did not spare their words of admiration for the powerful force as well as beauty of the art.

What is Karate?

Karate (literally empty hand) is not an art aimed at ultimate victory over an opponent; neither is it a dramatic act of splitting boards and cracking roof tiles with bare hands. The supreme goal of Karate is to train a person to conquer physical and spiritual obstacles and improve his cha-

racter. In training, emphasis is put on the spiritual side as much as on the physical side. A person cannot master the art until he has built up his character to a higher level. The following is a brief outline of this particular art of self-defense with the "empty hand."

Requiring the active movement of the whole body, the techniques consist of blocking or thwarting an attack and counterattacking by punching, striking or kicking. For example, there are a total of 20 parts in the hand and arm which are used when engaging in this art. There are some seven types of "tsuki" or straight blows. Some six parts of the leg are utilized. There are a total of eight types of ways to stand on one's feet alone.

Karate can be divided into three basic movements—"kihon" (fundamental), "kata" (form) and "kumite" (grappling). The fundamental movements include how to hit and fend a blow, how to kick

with one's legs, how to advance, retreat and move to right or left. All these movements require strenuous training before one can become adept at them.

In the case of form movements, the above-mentioned fundamental movements are combined rationally into new forms of continuous movements. A person engaged in this type of movement seem to be practicing calisthenics. But there is not a single wasted or meaningless movement.

A Karate man practices his art presupposing that he is surrounded by enemies. Therefore, he must be able to strike out in all directions as well as defend himself from all quarters.

There are several types of form movements depending on whether they are aimed at building up one's muscles and bones or quickening one's reflexes. However, every one of these movements must incorporate good balance, speed, beauty and striking power. Briefly, "focus" in Karate refers to concentration of all the energy of the body in an instant on a specific target. Anyone can practice these form movements—individually or in groups, the old or the young, men or women. Through continuous hard

training, one may be able to master this art of self-defense.

Amateurs go through these movements by first pre-arranging the parts of the body they are going to attack. This is called basic "kumite". In the case of experts, they engage in free "kumite" which simulates a real bout. Because these experts have gone through long and strenuous training, accidents rarely happen. However, since Karate blows possess destructive power, actual bouts are carried out under extremely strict rules in order to prevent injuries. Those who are allowed to participate in such bouts are only persons holding Karate grades and who can freely control movements.

Development of Karate

The history of Karate goes back hundreds of years, but it was in 1921 that the Gichin Funakoshi introduced this art to Japan and evolved the techniques of making the most effective use of various movements of the body. Funakoshi was the president of the Shobukai (Association of Chivalric Art) in Okinawa, the birthplace of Karate. This unique type of art was developed in the islands during the period when Okinawa was under the administration of Shimazu, the Lord of Satuma,

beginning in 1609, and Okinawans were prohibited from possessing any type of arms. Thus, the islanders were forced to invent an art of self-defense using only their bare hands and feet as weapons, and they practiced the art in great secrecy.

The introduction of Karate by Funakoshi caused quite a sensation in Japan, creating a growing number of followers, particularly among students. Subsequently, around 1924, Karate clubs were organized in major colleges and universities in Japan.

There was a temporary lull in the popularity of Karate immediately after the war, but with inauguration of the Japan Karate Association, it became much more popular than in prewar days. Its popularity can be seen by taking a glance at the association's "dojo" in the past six years. New followers include children from seven years old to men over 60 years of age. Women also are taking it up. But the largest number of practitioners are students. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that there are some 400 foreign Karate followers in Japan representing a total of 30 nations.

The Japan Karate Association with its headquarters in Tokyo has some 170 chapters

today throughout the country. Although it is extremely difficult to determine the exact number of persons practicing Karate in Japan, an approximate figure would be between 600,000 and 700,000.

The National Karate Championship Tournament was held on June 11, 1961 at the Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium attended by Crown Prince Akihito together with more than 13,000 spectators filling the spacious gym. Among the dignitaries present were the leaders of political and business circles as well as foreign envoys of 24 countries.

A total of 76 Karate experts selected from throughout Japan displayed their techniques at the tournament. Some 24 persons exhibited their prowess in the "kata" and "kumite" matches. Aside from these matches, side attractions were provided by a hundred persons holding ranking grades who displayed mass "kata" forms. Another attraction was the breaking of two one-inch boards placed together with the bare fist. Also shown were military dances of old Japan by young children as well as demonstration by a girl defending herself from an attack by a man. Foreign members of the

association also demonstrated their Karate paces.

Karate in Foreign Countries

According to the spokesman of the Japan Karate Association, aside from the American Air Force stationed in Japan which has adopted Karate as a regular subject in its physical education program in 1951, there are four Karate associations in the United States, namely Colorado Springs, Honolulu, Philadelphia and Los Angeles. In the United States, Karate has frequently been adopted by motion pictures and television, and the English version of the book on Karate, "Karate, the Art of Empty Hand Fighting," is reported selling well.

The Karate fever in the Republic of Korea is also high, particularly among students and soldiers. In the Republic of China, a different type of Karate from that in Japan is being practiced; it is a type of Chinese boxing which originated in the Chinese main-

land. In Malaya, the local Karate association opened a "dojo" in Seremban. In the Philippines, the vice president of the Philippine National Athletic Association has invited a Japanese expert to Manila to give instructions in Karate there. In Indonesia, there is a plan to form a local association.

In Europe, the country where Karate is most popular is France with a total of 12 Karate "dojo" and with an aggregated membership of about 600 persons. Satoru Murakami, a member of the Japan Karate Association, is giving instructions in France as well as in Algeria, Morocco, West Germany and Spain. In Switzerland, there are two "dojo".

In South America, there is a local Karate association in Brazil, and enthusiasts from such countries as Argentina, Venezuela, Peru and other South American countries are presently studying this art of unarmed self-defense in Tokyo.

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Edith—So that rich old bachelor didn't propose.

Madge—No, he ate six meals at that summer hotel where they advertise home cooking and decided to stay single.