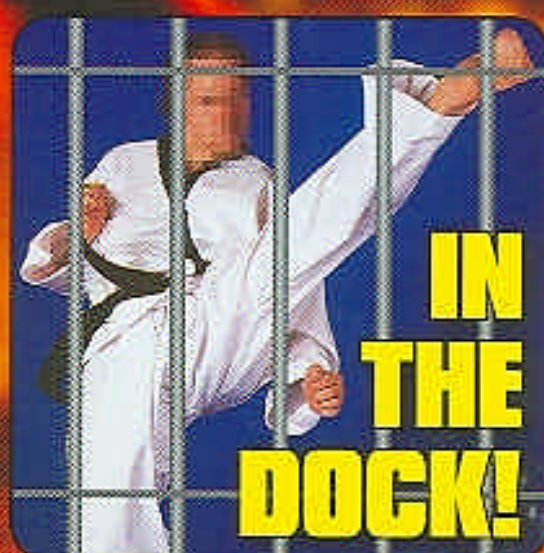


THE BEST IN MARTIAL ARTS COVERAGE

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COMBAT



**IN
THE
DOCK!**

*The national press puts
martial arts
on trial!*

CORE- VITALITY

Why is nutrition so important?

MARTIAL ARTS AND THE LAW

The plain facts in black and white!

BRUCE LEE'S FITNESS REGIME

Discover the secret of his washboard abs

A NOD OF RESPECT

Martial humility or a bow too far!

GORDON LIU

*Meet the star of 'Kill Bill vol's 1 & 2' and the legendary
'36th Chamber' at SENI'06 - only at the Combat Stand (829)*



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SAM MOLEDZKI

Part 1

An interview with the President of Karatedo Shitokai Canada

Sam Moledzki has a long and rich martial history, starting in 1967. At that time he was already studying boxing and competing as a member of the Midland Avenue Collegiate gymnastics team. He began practising Karate-Do under Master Kei Tsumura and his impressive fighting career started a short time later in 1968, when he competed at the 7th Canadian International Karate Championships, where he took 2nd place in the kumite. His career has been full of trophies and awards since, including becoming the only non-Oriental to win 1st place in kumite at the Japan Kanto District Karate championships and this interview is an in-depth introduction to a true warrior.

COMBAT: Moledzki Sensei, you have been practising martial arts for many years now. Can you tell us when and where you began your martial arts journey?

SAM MOLEDZKI: Well, let me see now, if my memory serves me right, I was introduced to this fabulous world of martial arts back in 1967, in Toronto. It was approximately 9 years after the initial introduction, in 1958, of organised karate in Canada by the man who is referred to as, the Father of Canadian Karate, Masami Tsuruoka sensei. A very close and good friend of mine named Bill Pinkerton, (Pinky) had asked me one day if I was interested in checking out a place where they were teaching some kind of mysterious Japanese fighting system. Something he had pronounced as "eye-key-due".

I admitted that I'd never heard of it but, said "sure, why not, it might be something different and new to do." So, we were off to somewhere in the downtown Toronto area, to check out the place. Unfortunately, after arriving downtown, we couldn't actually find the location so Pinky sug-

gested we go to another place he knew for sure. It was the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre located in the North East of Toronto called Don Mills. He suggested the JCCC because he had recently played at a wedding reception there as a member of a band. Bill was an accomplished drummer. We arrived at this very impressive, early 1960's marvel of modern architectural design by a local Japanese Canadian architect named Raymond Moriyama and, proceeded to walk right in the front doors unannounced.

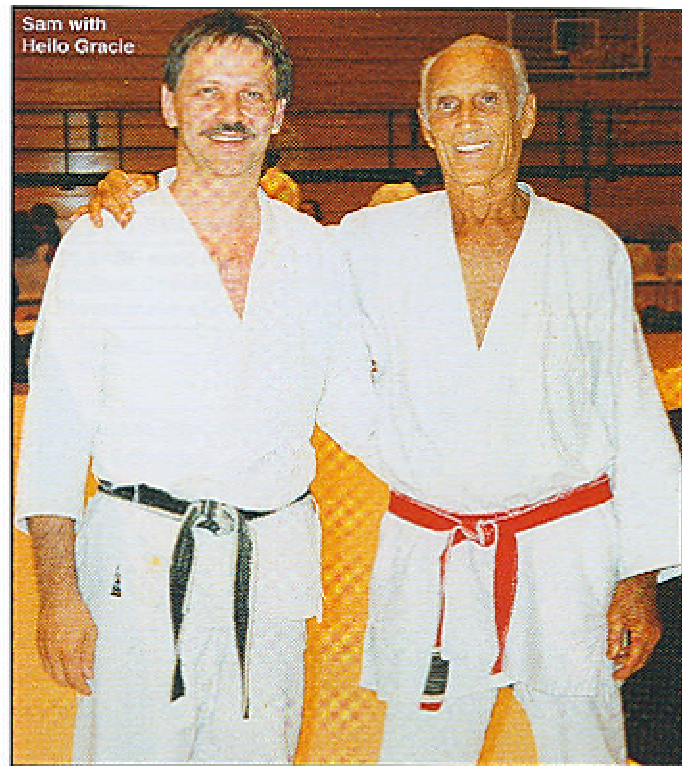
At the reception area we boldly asked "Do you have eye-key-due here" and an older Japanese gentleman behind the counter replied something like "No, eye-key-due." Is called "Ai-ki-do"! And, we don't have. He did indicate that "Judo, Kendo and Karate-do" was being taught there and we were instructed to return on Monday for Kendo and Tuesday for Judo and Karate do classes. The following Tuesday evening I signed up for my first Karate class and, as you say, the journey began and I'm still enjoying it very much.

COMBAT: What style of karate did you initially learn and what was the training like back then?

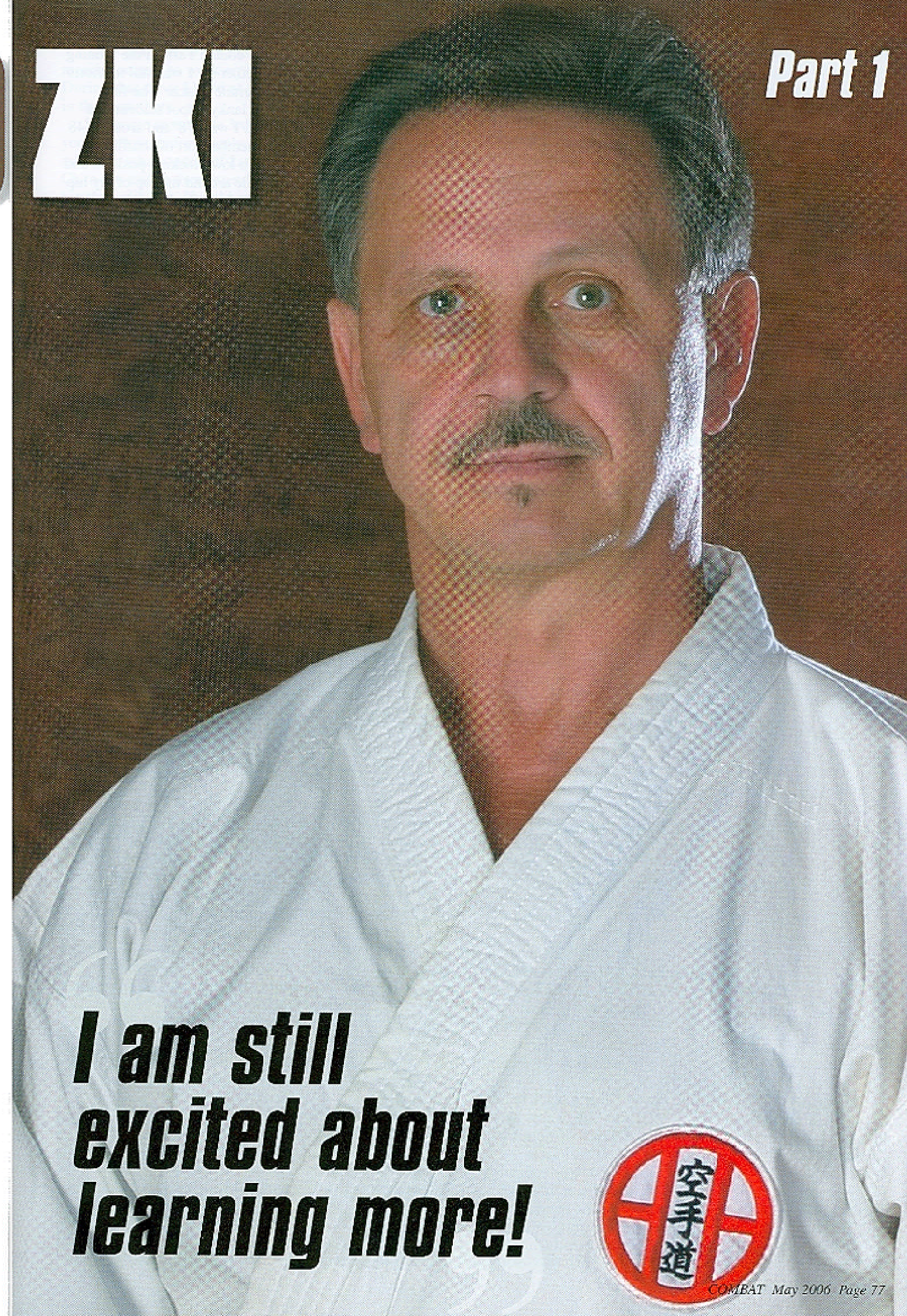
SAM MOLEDZKI: The karate being taught all across Canada at that time was a system called Chito-Ryu. Please, picture this if you will. My very first karate class that Tuesday evening was, to say the least, very impressive. Upon opening the double doors and entering the training area, there, before me were approximately 100 students in their pyjama looking outfits, punching and kicking and yelling at the top of their lungs. I thought, WOW, this is something I can really get into. I believe I'm going to enjoy giving this a go and trying it out! The rest, as the saying goes, is history!

I recall the training sessions were a full two hours. They included a light 10 minute easy stretching warm up, followed by a two mile run outside in bare feet, Spring, Summer and Fall, and shoes in the Winter. Then, more basic calisthenics of jumping jacks, toe touching, splits, leg lifts etc, including the usual 50-100 push ups on the palms, knuckles, backs of the hands, finger tips etc, and sit ups with basic blocking techniques, and so on, for the first hour.

FYI, water bottles were never permitted at all during the workouts. After a 2-3 minute break, we would line up usually 10 across and 10 deep and begin the second hour.



Sam with Heilo Gracie



***I am still
excited about
learning more!***



COMBAT: Was there particular focus on kihon, kata or kumite and were you encouraged to compete outside your dojo?

SAM MOLEDZKI: Yes, the norm back then was the three K's (kihon, kata, kumite), as it was in most dojo across the country. Kihon was first. This consisted of simply lining up 10 people deep. We would then take turns counting to 10 while, punching and kicking in usually a zenkutsu dachi stance. I distinctly recall that when someone messed up the count, we'd have to start right back at the beginning of the row you were in, and repeat the techniques. Everything was usually done with a very loud and strong Kiai. I remember on more than one occasion, during a normal class, we'd only complete the techniques on the right side of the body because someone would continually mess up the count and we'd never get to exercise the opposite side, for lack of time before we'd move on to the next part of the scheduled class.

Kata was practised by separating into belt colour groupings. I remember very little applications were shown, let alone actually taught for kata then. But, some of us were curious why we had to perform something a certain way and would ask sensei Kei Tsumura privately, and he would usually show us some form of application that would satisfy us enough to continue practising the kata. Generally though, we mostly repeated the kata patterns over and over again to commit to memory in preparation for a belt testing down the road.

Jiyu kumite was what we most wanted to practice and it was practised usually during the last 20-30 minutes of each class. We would change partners (usually 1 1/2-2 minutes per match) with any belt level, including black belt, as many times as possible to gain more experience against different calibre, size and types of fighters. All sparring was bare knuckle without mouth guards or even groin protectors and, NO weight distinction either.

Recently, I was asked by a couple of young black belts from one of my affiliate dojo, what it was like to spar back then in the old days. They had heard all kinds of stories of how tough and brutal it was then, and were curious to know. By nature, I am not a person who indulges in fanciful, made up stories of the present or past. I simply relate them to the best of my personally experienced memories and, I honestly do distinctly remember my very first sparring match in the dojo, after about only 3 weeks of lessons. (6 classes)

I recall during that time, I still couldn't afford the training fees and the training uniform together so, I was still in shorts and a T-shirt for my first actual kumite match. The first match was against a very tall and lanky 6 foot student in a nice clean white gi and white belt. I was 5'8" and around 148 lbs. When the match began, I remember sort of shuffling around with my left arm down in a low blocking position and my right hand against my right side around the top of my hip level feeling very awkward for a little while. When he finally came too close to me, I reacted by continuously punching him as many times as I could until he fell back into a stack of chairs and scattered them everywhere. He ended up on the ground in agony, with a really surprised look on his face.

Because of all the commotion and noise of the falling chairs, a few moments later, we were instructed to change partners. I was then instructed by the chief instructor, sensei Tsumura, to spar with this mean looking yellow belt, with a few scars on his face and wearing a not so clean and well worn yellow belt. I recall clearly thinking I have to stay away from this guy because he's about my size and, I hated fighting people of my own size. I figured he's a yellow belt and already has more ability than me in karate so, I needed to be cautious. A few moments later he committed a major error when he executed a beautiful side kick at my body and left it out there a little too long admiring it. I quickly grabbed it and countered immediately with a front kick to his groin.

Well, needless to say, he instantly dropped and I thought, boy am I in real trouble now. First the white belt, then, this yellow belt that ended up both on the hardwood floor rolling around in shock and a little bit in pain. Tsumura sensei was right there again and, this time he matched me up with a green belt, who was a couple of inches taller than me and about 25 lbs heavier. One look at this guy and I knew I was definitely in serious trouble. I recall thinking that I have to hit this guy first before I get clobbered so, I did just that. Within a couple of seconds, I positioned myself close enough to punch him in the head and, when I connected, to my great surprise, he didn't fall to the ground but, simply staggered back a bit. He then immediately recovered and proceeded to kick me in the head with a terrific flying side kick.

Wow, what a surprise that was I can tell you. I never experienced anything like that kick before. It prepared me for the future to expect the unexpected and be ready for anything. In almost 15 years at the JCCC, we were never encouraged to visit other style's dojo to train at, nor were we ever encouraged to enter competitions outside of our own organisation. Truth be known, I personally did both. I entered a couple of eclectic (Open circuit) non-sanctioned tournaments, on a few occasions at different times and really gained valuable experience. Usually, I would end up in the doghouse for a little while, when Tsumura sensei found out about it. Over the years, we were always encouraged to enter only sanctioned tournaments.

COMBAT: When was your introduction to the Shito-ryu system, who was your Sensei and how did it differ from your previous system?

SAM MOLEDZKI: Actually, my first introduction to the Shito ryu system was in the summer of 1969, in Detroit, Michigan, USA. Let me explain here a little if you will. My work profession was, and still is as a draughtsman. (Only difference today is, everything is drawn using computer software) I was then employed by a consulting engineering firm that had a contract with Allied Steel and Conveyors in Detroit.

They sent me on my first foreign assignment. It was a 3 month contract to work on the 1970, Ford model changes. During that time, I lived at the YMCA and used to work out in the gym there.

Sometime around the 3rd week there I believe, I met a young fellow (unfortunately, I don't recall his name) who asked me what system of karate I was practising. I explained Chito ryu and he then extended an invitation to work out at his club with him. He told me he had just received his yellow belt, and saw that I was a brown belt. The following evening I think, we went to his club and I was introduced to his sensei. He (sorry, but I've forgotten his name also) asked many questions about the system of Chito-ryu and then explained that his system was Shito Ryu Itosu Kai and he was supposedly, a 4th dan student of Fumio Demura sensei. Demura sensei had introduced Shito ryu Itosu kai into the USA in 1965.

I trained there for only one more session and never did return again. Back in Toronto, it was during the later part of 1968, that sensei Kei Tsumura, was increasingly becoming dissatisfied with the whole Chito ryu experience in Canada and had decided to investigate other karate systems. After briefly training privately with a visiting Japanese Shito ryu Itosu Kai stylist throughout the early part of 1968, Tsumura sensei had made arrangements to travel to Japan and begin intensive training in the Shito ryu system. Of course, we as students were not aware of any problems occurring at the time and, were only aware that Tsumura sensei was going to Japan for approximately a year.

He was met at the Haneda (Tokyo) airport by a Seiko Suzuki sensei, a senior instructor of Itosu kai and, immediately taken directly to the Shito ryu Itosu kai headquarters of its founder, Ryusho Sakagami sensei, 9th dan, in the small town of Tsurumi. The town was located along a commuter train line between Kawasaki and Yokohama stations. Tsumura sensei returned to Canada at the end of 1969. He received his 5th dan in Karate & 5th dan in Kobudo directly from Sakagami sensei and, officially introduced the Shito ryu Itosu Kai system to Canada, as an affiliate branch organisation of Sakagami sensei.

Over the next few months, we were told to forget everything we had learned to date about Chito ryu, and were directed to concentrate on learning this new Shito Ryu system. During this phase, the dojo actually lost a few members who refused to make the change over but those of us who stayed, eventually learned the new Shito ryu Itosu Kai system. The transition wasn't too difficult as I remember, just very intense. Besides making adjustments to how we executed certain basics, we had to learn 20 new basic kata + 20 new basic ippon kumite, 5 Pinan kata and 3 Niafanchin, before we could test for our black belts.

I recall training Tuesdays and Thursdays at the JCCC and special classes on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays at Tsumura sensei's other dojo location, regularly, over the next 3 months, to prepare for my first black belt test in this new system. I successfully received my 1st dan on January 10, 1970.

