

Masutatsu Oyama

(1923 — 1994)

Sosai Oyama was born in south west Korea and first went to Japan in 1938 at the age of fifteen. A year later, he began *Karate* training with *Gichin Funakoshi*, and within three to four-years, was awarded *Shodan* (first-level black-belt).

At the end of the war, *Oyama* left civilisation behind and retreated to *Mount Kiyozumi* in *Chiba Prefecture*, where he remained in isolation for 18 months. During that time, he hunted animals for food, practiced meditation and trained incredibly hard every day.

A powerful and charismatic figure, *Oyama* founded *The Kyokushinkai* in 1956. Broken down, the word *Kyokushinkai* means: *Kyoku* — The final meaning of life, *Shin* — heart, and *Kai* — Association. From those humble beginnings, *The Kyokushinkai* today has over 10 million members world-wide.

I first read *Sosai's* books '*What is Karate*' and later '*This is Karate*', whilst I was a *kyu* grade in South Australia in 1964 — 1965. He became a hero figure to me and I wrote to him in *Japan* to ask if he would accept me as a student. I didn't expect a reply and I was quite astounded when an airmail letter arrived in Adelaide, with an invitation to go to *Tokyo* and 'train at his *dōjō*'!

Five years later, I walked into his *dōjō* at *Ikebukuro*, clutching my blue airmail letter. He made me so welcome, introduced me to many of his instructors, most of whom, were at that time, working on the latest James Bond film, '*You Only Live Twice*', with Sean Connery. That night, I was his guest at his new Korean restaurant he had recently opened, close to the *dōjō* and his hospitality was overwhelming.

Although I returned to see him many times, I never did train at his *dōjō*, as I had met *Kanazawa Sensei* and was training at the J.K.A.