

# ITOSU RYU NEWS

April  
2018



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# Karate In Toronto: The Early Days

By Tom Sudak, 5th Dan

*"Karate cannot be adequately learned in a short space of time. Like a torpid bull, regardless of how slowly it moves, it will eventually cover a thousand miles. So, too, for one who resolves to study diligently two or three hours every a day. After three or four years of unremitting effort one's body will undergo a great transformation, revealing the very essence of karate."*

Anko Itosu

Growing up in Rexdale in one of its poorer neighbourhoods, and being only five-foot-eight inch and a 160 pounds I decided it would be prudent to learn a little extra self-defence.

Searching the Toronto yellow pages I came across two small articles advertising something called 'karate'. One was for a club advertising Shito-Ryu Karate run by Masami Tsuruka. His ad was all words with very little content. The other ad was for a club called Shito-Ryu Itosu-Kai karate. It featured a black and white picture of a guy doing a high kick. I was intrigued. The club was on Six-Points Road near Bloor and Islington so was only a short bus ride away.

Thinking that I could be as good as the TV character Kato from the Green Hornet episodes I saw as a kid (aka Bruce Lee) I decided to investigate.

Not having any idea about when classes might begin I walked into the club as (green belt and yellow belts respectively) were sparring. Watching two adult males pummeling each other with bare fists and feet, stumbling off walls, taking unrestrained kicks and punches to the body but still standing impressed me. I was hooked. The year was 1972.

As karate and kung-fu movies became more popular there was an explosion of martial clubs throughout the GTA. Franchising and making money seemed to be their goal. There were clubs offering 'guaranteed black belt in six months'. Others offered to let you have your own club after one year of training for a mere \$35,000.



There were clubs touting Special Forces training, Israeli military self-defence, all kinds of kung-fu styles, and many with made up but impressively savage sounding names.

Upon further investigation, I found one club that taught members via a videotape of the instructor with students following along. In another their 'Shihan' was a former member of our club who had left as a first Dan years before. Still, another had a guy I knew to be a blue belt posing as a black belt, former Israeli Mossad instructor.

One after another people from all sorts of styles would come into our club posing as a white belt to test themselves at the expense of our students. In all cases, they would leave with a lesson in humility. Witnessing the proficiency of our members time and time again over these fly by night pseudo warriors is what kept in this style for over 46 years.

There is no easy path to perfection in this craft. It takes respect, humility, dedication to training, a desire to learn and most importantly, time. Take time to ask your sensei's how long they have been training and you'll come to appreciate that all of them understand the essence of Master Itosu's philosophy.

## DOJO KUN

**ONE, TO VALUE RESPECT AND COURTESY,  
ONE, TO BE REVERED THROUGH POSSESSION OF A MORAL HEART,  
ONE, TO REFRAIN FROM INTEMPERATE SPEECH OR ACTION,  
ONE, TO MUTUALLY TRUST AND COMPLEMENT,  
ONE, TO NEVER RELINQUISH THE SPIRIT OF THE ULTIMATE PATH**

# My Itosu-Kai Journey

By Ron Chase

My personal connection to Itosu-Kai began in the early 1970's when Sensei Tony Agnello (1936-2005) brought Shito -Ryu Itosu- Kai to Parry Sound. With his two sons, he would travel between Toronto and Parry Sound each week, often after training with Shihan, to instruct anyone in Parry Sound who was interested. Like many individuals, the physical and personal challenges were important factors in attracting me to join Sensei Agnello's Club. I developed enormous respect for his commitment to the study of Karatedo but more importantly came to respect his commitment to making whatever small differences he could in the lives of people who studied with him. The physical challenges and opportunity for personal development draw many of us to the Dojo, the values demonstrated by "those who came before" can keep us connected for a lifetime.

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## Bunkai

The Key To Understanding Karate

By: Alpha Barry

We all know the meaning of kata "bunkai", and how important it is to understand the application of each move we do in a kata. Bunkai is the key to understanding karate and making it efficient in a real combat.

We usually learn and see multiple interpretations of each kata move. But is there a better way of approaching kata bunkai is than a move per move study?

Let's remember that Katas were created to keep all the karate knowledge and allow practice without any suspicion of breaking the law, during a time when karate practice was forbidden. It is very likely that each kata originally was designed with each move hiding a unique and specific bunkai.

It is also very likely that a Sensei creating a kata would do so, with the idea that, all its bunkai should be inter-dependent to allow the practice of the entire kata bunkai from beginning to end.

It would be interesting to take a kata and figure out the bunkai of each move that allows the kata to flow from beginning to end. We would then get closer to understanding what the sensei who created the kata had in mind.

This is obviously a very difficult task, as katas have been modified through the years, making it harder to find the originally intended bunkai by its creator. But I hope this will give you some food for thoughts next time you are trying to figure out what a kata move is for! Happy practice!

**Yudansha (Black Belt) Ranking  
Sunday, April 22th, 2018 10:00am**

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# Fall Tournament In Owen Sound

By: The Owen Sound Itosu Kai Karate Club

The Owen Sound Club is pleased to accept Shihan's invitation to host the 2018 Fall Itosu Kai Tournament. On Saturday, November 17th the Fall Tournament will be held at the Harry Lumley Bayshore Community Centre in Owen Sound, Ontario.

About 2.5 hours north of Toronto, Owen Sound is located on the southern shore of Georgian Bay in a valley below the limestone cliffs of the Niagara Escarpment at the foot of the Bruce Peninsula, which is famous for its exceptional geography. Key natural attractions include Inglis Falls, Harrison Park, Kelso Beach Park and several conservation areas. The Bruce Trail forms a ribbon around the city along the escarpment, connecting waterfalls and revealing a wide array of flora and fauna, including rare ferns. Owen Sound is also a great base from which to explore the Bruce Peninsula, diving for shipwrecks in Tobermory, and taking advantage of the extensive hiking and skiing trails across the region. Owen Sound is also home to the Salmon Spectacular Fishing Derby and the Summer Folk Music Festival.

The Harry Lumley Bayshore Community Centre is located on the shore of Georgian Bay. There is a walkway from the Community Centre southerly along the inner harbour allowing you to explore both sides of the harbour. There you will see the MS Chi-Cheemaun, the marine museum, and if you want, you can try your luck at fishing from the harbour wall, where anglers fish for and catch Chinook Salmon, Brown and Rainbow Trout. For younger karate ka, there is a playground nearby and plenty of open space for burning off a little extra energy!

Comfortable hotel accommodations are available beside the Community Centre at the Best Western Inn on the Bay. Enjoy a night on the bay and walk across the parking lot to the Tournament. Several other motel accommodations are available only minutes from the Community Centre.

The tournament weekend will be a busy one, with the tournament on Saturday and the Black Belt ranking on Sunday November 18th. We hope that you will take this opportunity to travel to the beautiful City of Owen Sound and join us for a great tournament!

Hope to see you here!

**Owen Sound Nihon Itosu-Kai**  
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 Assistant Sensei John Kirby 4th Dan

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## The Shito-Ryu Itosu Kai Family

By: Sensei John Michalenko - Georgian Triangle Karate Club

Karate started for me as it did for many children in the 1980's: The Karate Kid Movie was a box office hit, and everyone wanted to wear a white Gi and try out a Crane Kick. I was also in Beavers at the time, and one of our Beaver Leaders, who was also our community Radio Station announcer, was Sensei Frank Robinson. Sensei Robinson arranged for his Karate club to do a demonstration for the Beavers. That night I asked my parents to sign me up! One of the highlights during this period of time was ranking for my green belt under the watchful eye of Shihan Tsumura and Soke Sakagami (who visited Collingwood from Japan). Unfortunately, Karate took a back seat, when my undeveloped teenage brain thought other things were more important.



The next 20 years flew by, and before I knew it I had children of my own, as well as a job as a teacher. It was also time for the film industry to remake a classic; The Karate Kid Movie was a box office hit once again. My own children started to ask if they could take Karate. I knew that one of my students in my Science class was a black belt at a local club. I asked him to bring in a pamphlet and immediately recognized the Shito-Ryu Itosu Kai symbol. My eldest son Ethan, who was six at the time, was excited to join the class, and my other son Evan quickly wanted to as well. Before attending I researched Shito-Ryu Itosu Kai online. I was impressed by Shihan Tsumara's accomplishments and preservation of Shito-Ryu Itosu Kai as a traditional martial art.

The first night I was met by Sensei Norm Hammond, who told me we weren't joining a club, we were joining a family. Head Sensei, Omer Levert instilled in the students a sense of community service, by insisting that club members help with The Crohn's and Colitis Fund-raisers in our town. Sensei Omer's extremely giving nature, patience, discipline, respect, and selfless dedication to promoting Karate exemplify all of the qualities of a true Sensei. Admittedly, I sat as an observer for 3 months and started to think about joining in to get exercise. Being on the receiving end of a ridiculous road rage incident helped to seal the deal for me to start training with the club. Once again, I witnessed the family feel with multiple Sensei's from different clubs helping me attain Shodan - thank you to everyone who helped. We have always been welcomed at the Hombu, where again, you are treated like family. Ethan always enjoyed the warm hellos from Therese. (And I always smiled when Therese roused Sensei Daniel about having children.)

Being part of the Shito Ryu Itosu Kai family has become a lifelong journey that I don't regret. If you are a parent who is watching, join in, you won't be disappointed. You will feel younger, more fit, and more confident. It is a great family sport! As Sensei Sudak says, "Come do exercise with a purpose." And Sensei Daniel will only crack half a smile when you get overzealous, or if you try a technique that is a little too advanced.

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# “Birth, School, Work. My Life The Branches Bend With The Wind, Karate. My Life”

By: Joe Barrau

As we head into what will be my BEATLE year..... what is that you say? Well if you have heard of the iconic band called the BEATLES, you may have heard the song whimsically penned by Paul McCartney called “When I’m Sixty-Four”. It’s a year where I can look back on my life and if the mood fits, I can sing and play a song that really moves me.

This is the year that I lay to rest my parents, Frank and Ilda Barrau and welcome a grandchild later this year. Shihan; my Karate “Father” if you will, walked and talked me through the double loss last summer. It was he that suggested we take them back to where they started life out. His calming advice put my mind and heart at ease. The way of the “Empty Hand” is not always just about kicks, punches, and Kata, it is also being shown the way with help and guidance. It’s the year I can reflect on my life, all the good and sometimes the bad because what life would it have been if it was all good, right? There is a Ying to every Yang.

It’s a life where a huge portion has been spent practicing and teaching others the magic and grace one finds in traditional Shito Ryu Karate. It’s a life that involved friends and family and friends that became family all because of Karate. It is a life worth living and it’s a life that is still evolving.

I can even pinpoint the month and year when I finally committed to something much bigger than me February 1978. Would I be the same person I am without Karate? I doubt it. I spent the better part of 1978 getting to know Shihan Tsumura and his lovely wife, Therese (pre-Daniel and Martin). I remember going to dinner with them to a Portuguese restaurant on Augusta Avenue in Toronto. I recall his Camaro and putting trim on the sides so that he wouldn’t get any more door dings. I became a friend.

In 1979 I moved back to Alberta and started the first club of Alberta Shito Ryu in September of that year. In 1981 we sent our first ever team to the spring tournament at the old JCCC. I took a young team of Karate-Ka with me and we held our own at the tournament. Over the past 37 years, we have fielded too numerous a number to remember teams. The one thing I can remember is the attention and friendships that developed with people from all over the world. One trip that stands out to me was our first one to Ireland. Too many antidotes to put down here but suffice it to say I learned the meaning of an “Irish Handshake”. Claire Hart sparred with me and gave me a wakeup call by doing a roundhouse that bruised me from my shoulder all the way down to the opposite thigh. Thank God for the Irish version of Advil, and...Guinness!

The anchor in this whole thing is Shihan Tsumura and his family. We now have his son, Daniel helping to run the association and teach. A passing of the torch, if you will. Shihan and I speak of it regularly and he always says, it’s time for the younger generation to take over. Couldn’t agree more and it couldn’t be a better bunch. After all, we had a hand in helping to develop these young men and women. Couldn’t be prouder and sometimes feel like a venerated Uncle, Ogi-san.

I want to wish all the competitors and their respective Sensei’s goodwill and fellowship. Hopefully, you get to experience all that I have in the past 40 years. My somewhat sorry attempt at Haiku at the top sums it up, at least for me.



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# The Birth Of The Dream

By: Mike Piperopoulos

At the age of 10, my family and I returned to Toronto from our native country Greece. With my broken English pronunciation at school, I was a target of being bullied. Thus my introduction to martial arts.

The best help my parents could offer was a way for me to learn how to defend myself and strengthen my shy and timid character by enrolling me in Karate. At the age of 11, my karate journey began at the JCCC, Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre under the instruction of Shihan Kei Tsumura and other accredited black-belt senseis.

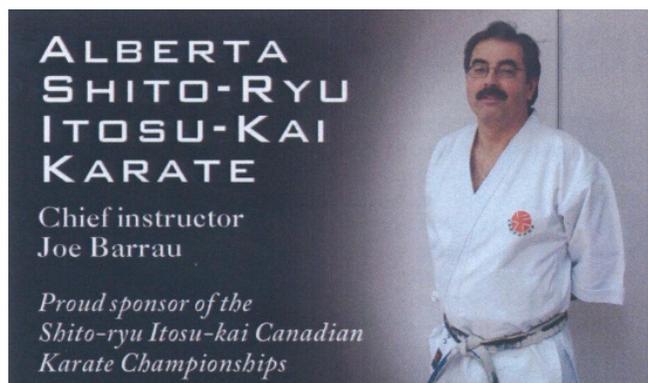
The first few years were challenging and quite rigorous and I wanted to quit. I actually walked out of class not ever to go back one day during break time. QUITTING was not an option. As months and months were passing I began to understand this concept of patience, perseverance, discipline meant to strive for your best possible you. I was starting to fall in love with this art of karate and started to dream of one day having my own dojo and teach karate as I had learned and to help others reach their best potential of themselves for whatever their reason for wanting to learn karate.

At the age of 17, after a major car accident which left me disabled until the day of my ranking I ranked and received my Black belt in the wonderful art of ITOSU-KAI karate. By this point, karate had become one with myself. I slept, ate and envisioned karate and having my own dojo became my existence. However, at some point life catches up with you and priorities are compromised and change. As I entered my 20's I shifted to now find myself in the real adult world which took me away from karate.

Over these years my parents never stopped encouraging me to return to karate for my life balance and to return to my "happy place", karate. Finally in 2016 at the age of 39 and with absolutely NO preparation or training I decided to participate in the fall International Karate tournament. At the end of the tournament that afternoon, I was instructed by my Master Shihan Kei Tsumura to rank for my 2nd-degree Black belt the following day and was given permission and encouragement to open my very own dojo in Montreal where I now live. It is the first and only ITOSU-KAI club in Montreal, Quebec.

I am ecstatic to report that the official opening of MONTREAL ITOSU-KAI was on Saturday, August 26th 2017 with the honour of having Senseis Daniel Tsumura, 6th Dan Karate, 2nd Dan Kobudo, from Toronto Honbu, Sensei Andy Sai 3rd Dan from Vancouver, British Columbia and Sensei Mike Duval 4th Dan from Wasaga Beach, Ontario.

Don't just dream...work hard to achieve YOUR DREAM!!  
**DREAMS DO COME TRUE IF YOU DON'T QUIT!!**



## To All Itosu-Kai Beginners Out There.

By: Alpha Barry

Did you notice that there is kata named after two Senseis whose names are almost spelled the same on our kata list?

One is O Sensei "Sokon MatsumUra", and the other one is O Sensei "Kosaku MatsumOra".

From internet articles to published books, these two Senseis have been mixed like no others, some people going as far as believing they are the same person. To add to the name similarity, they lived pretty much within the same era [Roughly early to late 1800].

O Sensei "Sokon Matsumura" is the best known in the Shuri region of Okinawa, while O Sensei "Kosaku Matsumora" is best known in the Tomari region of Okinawa.

Katas like: Matsumora Wanshu, Wankan, Matsumora Bassai[also know as Tomari Bassai], and Matsumora Rohai, originated from O Sensei "Kosaku Matsumora" in the Tomari region, while katas like Matsumura Bassai, Matsumura Seisan, originated from O Sensei "Sokon Matsumura" in the Shuri region of Okinawa.

Separating the two individuals and regions definitely helps to understand the differences of style within their katas.

## Itosu-Kai Origins: John Bellamy

I started when the Paisley club began wayyyy back in '96 I believe. I had been part of another club (a Chito Ryu club) for a year and I was eager to carry on and jumped at the chance when I saw the advertisement for the new club. I remember how stern Sensei Frank was about the rules and thinking how he was going to scare everyone away but the club did well especially given how small the town is. I also started going to the Port Elgin club (this is when they had some 70 members) and was doing karate four nights a week for a while.

I do remember one time at Honbu when Daniel was showing us the newer way of doing shuto (with the arm further stretched out) when almost immediately Shihan came by pushing my arm back in admonishing me "trying to start your own style" and I just remember thinking "okay I'm with this guy." I also remember how when teaching kata's how Shihan would talk about the history of it and such and it now blows my mind how he remembers so many kata's in such detail.

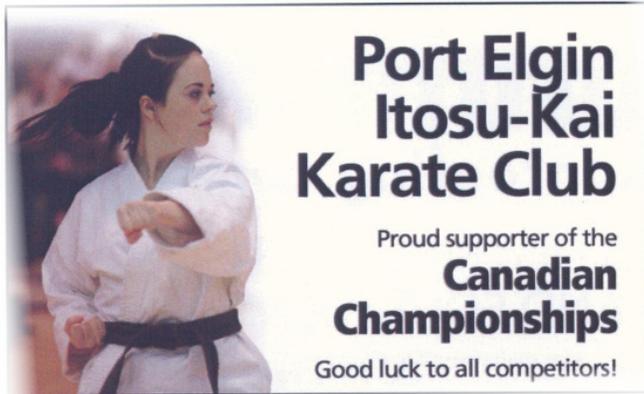
### Mike Duval

One of the many Godan's of the Wasaga Beach club.

The reason I joined karate is probably not much different from most people. I always loved watching martial arts movies and wanted to learn. Growing up, I was always busy playing hockey and skiing in the winter and playing soccer and baseball in the summer, so karate was something I wasn't able to commit to. When we moved to Wasaga Beach, I decided to give up hockey and start skiing more. This allowed me to finally join karate. There was only one club in town, Shito Ryu Itosu Kai, operated by Sensei Dave Poretta, one of Sensei Frank Robinson's students. I went out to their registration night in 1993 and was instantly hooked! I enjoyed the workout and learning what karate was all about.

I think the more important question is always why do we stay in karate? Is it a quest for knowledge, continuing to improve our skills and move up the ranks? For me, I stay because I enjoy learning the martial art, but more so because of the people I have met along my journey. I have met so many people across Canada as well as in Japan, Australia, the US, and many other countries who I keep in contact with regularly and call friends that I would never have had the chance to meet without the opportunities karate has provided. I have people that I look forward to seeing a couple times a week at class, teaching and learning from. I have close friends that I talk to almost daily as a result of my journey in karate. The greatest thing you can do is get to know your karate family, they will always be there when you need them!

I don't have a necessarily "interesting or funny" story to share about Shihan or Tsumura Sensei. However, one of the things I really enjoy about our association are the times you get to spend one on one with Shihan. He has lived an amazing life, has tons of stories and experiences from traveling around the world and all the different things he has achieved. I always enjoy listening to these stories, when he shares his thoughts and perspective on certain things or helps you focus on a specific area of karate to further your own development. I think sometimes we forget about just how special it is to be able to train and learn from someone as important as Shihan, we should take advantage of it as much as we can! He is an amazing fountain of knowledge and experience!



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