

A photograph of two men in white martial arts uniforms (gi) with black belts. The man on the left is standing and holding the arm of the man on the right, who is in a high, horizontal kicking or blocking stance. They are on a blue mat with a red border. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

A Young Master of the Old Ways

Shihan

**GRANT
RATCLIFFE**

GRANT RATCLIFFE

You were very active in sport while growing up i.e. Soccer, surfing and AFL, what made you take up Karate?

I wanted to start martial arts training when I was 9 years old, but my parents wouldn't let me as they thought that with my fiery nature it would not be long before I used it on the people around me. I loved to watch Bruce Lee movies growing up and loved the idea of being super human and all that like Bruce and the other movie stars portrayed in their movies. (Boy was I wrong!).

Where did your training commence?

I saw Karate being taught in the surf club near home (Pambula Beach, NSW) when I was walking home from the surf. I didn't enrol straight away, but rather participated in the class from an external position, by blowing raspberries on the exterior of the Dojo window and flicking the lights off at the power box outside.

I told them it was a self-defence course, not Karate and they let me participate.

So how long did that behaviour go on for and how did you come to be a student in that Dojo?

One night the Sensei of the Dojo, Barry Linehan caught me blowing raspberries on the window, the glass sliding door was open and he grabbed me around the neck and the rest is history.

What did your parents say to this?

I told them it was a self-defence course, not Karate and they let me participate. After about 4 weeks into my training Sensei Barry drove me home and explained to my parents that it was Karate and how good it was going to be for me and they let me continue.

What did you like most about your initial training?

It was very new and very exciting. Sensei Barry was a 1st Dan Black Belt with the Yamaguchi Goju Kai organization, under Shihan Paul Starling. He was my very first teacher and one I became close to in my earlier years of training. I would travel with him to train at his other schools in Bega, Merimbula and Bombala. I would finish school or football training and go straight out to classes with Barry Sensei. It was like another world for me and I loved every minute of those early years.

Who had the greatest influence on your early training years?

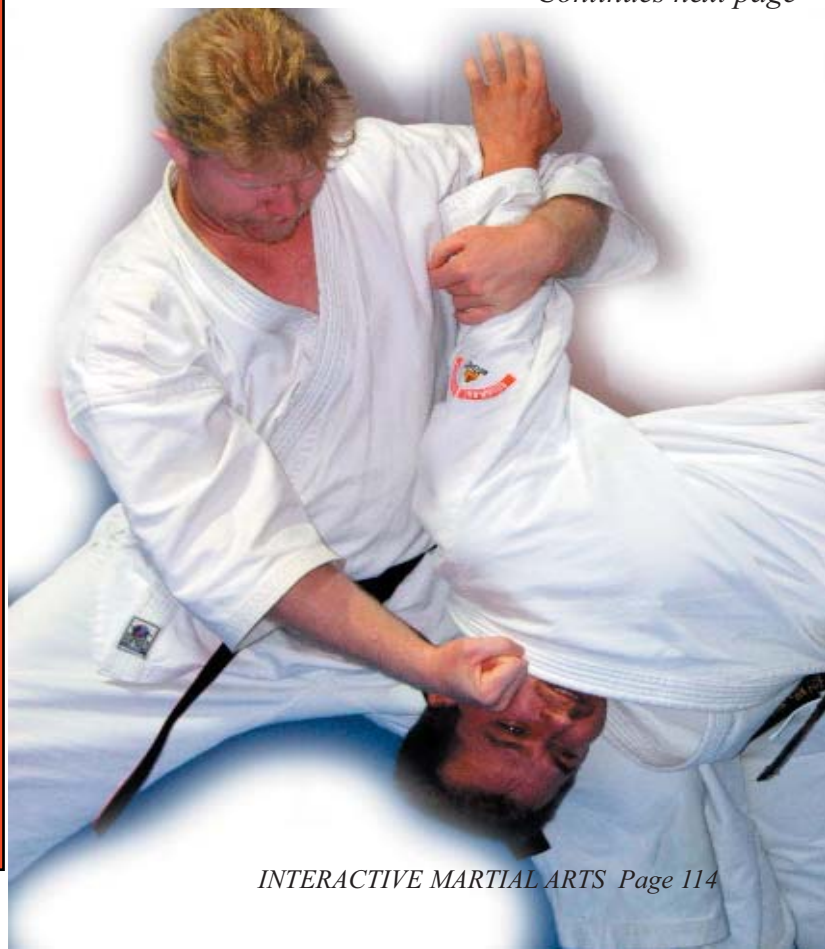
Obviously Sensei Barry Linehan had a huge impact on me in the beginning, but through the Pambula Dojo I was introduced to Sensei Kathryn Terry, who had come up through the ranks under the former head of Goju Kai and "Father of Australian Karate-Do" Shihan Tino Ceberano. She was looking for a Dojo to train in after the big split in Goju Kai, which led to Tino Shihan's dismissal. Goju Kai on the NSW south coast had over 300 active students prior to the split under Sensei Peter Ambrose and Sensei Kathryn was Peter's most senior Black Belt at that time.

It was not long before Kathryn Sensei was teaching most of the classes for Sensei Barry, who worked as a roof tiler by day and security officer by night. Her teaching method was very different to Barry Sensei's and I preferred her more detailed way of teaching. She has been my main instructor ever since, present day including.

he was a Real Sensei, one that talked the talk and walked the walk..

Another big influence in my younger years was a Sensei by the name of Greg Gunns (5th Dan, Sydney Goju Kai) who had been sent down from Sydney to conduct our gradings and to manage the growing number of members joining on the south coast division of Goju Kai.

Continues next page

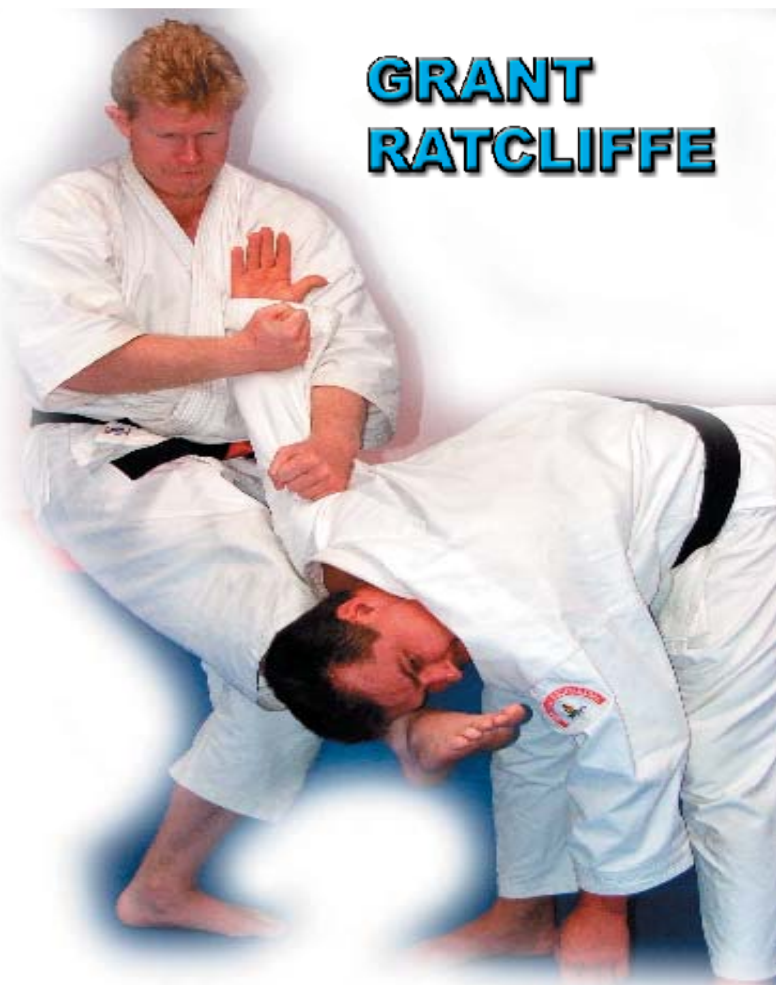


He brought with him a lot more than just his Karate ability, he was a Real Sensei, one that talked the talk and walked the walk and displayed what was not often seen in those days an openness to all around him including a young white belt such as myself. I remember his first words to me nearly 17 years ago, "How ya going young fella?" and that made me feel super special as I had never met a Martial Artist of his calibre before and is someone I believe to be one of the most underrated Karate Masters in Australia today.

Coming from Goju Kai did you ever have the opportunity to train with Hanshi Goshi Yamaguchi, current head of Yamaguchi Goju Kai and other leading Goju heavyweights?

Yes, I first met and trained with Hanshi Goshi at the Yamaguchi Cup in Sydney early 1992, this was an exciting time in my life because it was still early in my Martial Arts journey and he was the figure head for the organization that I belonged to. I also had the pleasure of training with him again in 1994 and 1996.

What was your Black Belt Grading like, looking back?
It was a joke!



I trained regularly with Paul Starling Shihan, who took over from Greg Gunns Sensei as the Chief Instructor for South Coast Goju Kai around 1993 (maybe as the student numbers increased he saw the financial benefit for himself making more regular visits to our area?). Previously the visits were twice a year from Sydney Hombu, but once Shihan Starling began making the journey down our way the number of visits increased to around four or five times a year. I was actually graded from Green Belt through to Black Belt (Shodan-Ho) by Paul Starling Shihan in the Goju Kai system.

I've heard that you trained under Shihan Tino Ceberano, was this prior to or after the split with Goju Kai? I spent nine months with Kyoshi Tino's IGK Organisation, which was after the big split in Goju. In that time I trained with Kyoshi on a regular basis even attending his Black Belt Instructors course while still holding the rank of 5th Kyu Green Belt.

What are some of your fondest memories of training with Tino Shihan? In 1993 the IGK World Championships were held at the West Point Casino in Tasmania, this was my first and only tournament that I competed in. It was at this event that I played my first ever game of Black Jack and who better to gamble with than the one and only Tino Kyoshi. I believe he did quite well on the night, but not all of us were so lucky, with me losing the staggering amount of \$25!

You could say I lived and breathed Aikido day and night for those twelve months.

Instructor Training with Kyoshi Tino at Mt Evelyn was also a real treat as the classes were small and more one on one training was conducted. At the conclusion of the Instructors training Kyoshi told me that I was an asset to the IGK and to keep training hard as I would someday become a great teacher in my own right.

Also the Arnis training with Kyoshi sticks in my mind for a myriad of different reasons, one being the amount of smacks on the wrist and fingers one receives in the learning process in the art of Arnis. He is a unique Martial Artist and a phenomenal instructor and I am thankful for the time that I had with him in my early years of training.

Continues next page

You say that you only ever did one tournament, was this from personal choice, as we all know Goju Kai was one of the leading schools in competition throughout Australia? I was never exposed to tournaments in my early years and training directly under Sensei Kathryn Terry, whose main focus was to produce quality Martial Artists of the highest order, not for the sake of collecting a trophy, but rather to improve the lives of her students.

What was your Black Belt Grading like, looking back?
It was a joke! After all the stories of previous gradings I had heard of in years gone by with their endless bouts of Kumite, Kihon and Kata and after reading the now famous "Budo Karate of Mas Oyama" by Sensei Cameron Quinn, with it's stories of the 50 man Kumite and how Oyama Sensei describes the Black Belt test, I mealy along with fellow student, now a Sensei in his own right Mike Thiele, performed 60 minutes of basic techniques, demonstrated the Kata we had learned from White to Brown Belt (once) and participated in sparring that consisted of five bouts of light Kumite. It was not what I was expecting, but with the likes of Paul Starling Shihan on the grading panel, who was I to argue with what was required of me for such a rank.



**GRANT
RATCLIFFE**



Did you begin teaching after receiving your Black Belt?
No, I never had aspirations of teaching, but mealy loved the training process and the feeling one gained performing a good kata and the Kumite clashes we all like so much.

I believe you studied Aikido, was this to compliment your Goju training?
No. In 1996 Sensei Kathryn decided to move on with her life leaving her husband of 20 years who was himself, along with her daughter and son in law, students in the Goju system. Paul Starling Shihan felt that what Kathryn as an instructor in Goju did was wrong (leaving her husband and all that) and decided to suspend Sensei Kathryn and I from the Yamaguchi Organisation. This parting from Goju Kai lead us to the North Coast of NSW, where I saw an advertisement promoting Aikido on the Gold Coast. Being a big fan of what I had seen of Aikido through Steven Seagal movies, decided to check it out. I loved Aikido from the get go and found it quite different, yet similar to my Goju training. I studied under Graham Morris Sensei 5th Dan for twelve months, attending classes almost every day. You could say I lived and breathed Aikido day and night for those twelve months gaining a wealth of knowledge of the dynamic art of Aikido.

Did you ever have the want to return to your Goju roots?
Yes and No. I loved Goju and the dynamics of the system, but was no longer willing to subject myself to the narrow minded, self serving, so called Masters, who demanded respect and loyalty but gave none in return! (Which was commonly seen in the Organisation in which I came from)

This is when I ran into a man by the name of Shihan Greg Merigan, a direct student of the famous Shihan Sal Ebenez. Sensei Kath and I began attending Greg Shihan's classes, purely out of a need for fitness as we were both sitting around doing nothing at that stage. (Arm chair warriors (laugh!!!))
Greg Shihan is a

rarity in this industry and is to this day one of my closest friends.

Continues on next page

GRANT RATCLIFFE

I believe you enrolled in an Instructors course at the Australian College of Natural Medicine. Who taught you and what was the training like at the college?

This was a two-year fulltime tertiary level instructors course incorporating massage, sports injury management, point location and other intense subjects that complimented the Martial art technique and my teacher was Kyoshi Patrick McCarthy. It was full on! I mainly attended the Martial Arts based subjects i.e. Martial Arts Theory and Technique. I spent around 30-40 hours a week training in the Dojo with Patrick Sensei and the other college students.

Prior to enrolling in the college you were a very successful businessman with a company employing over 100 strong staff, how did you handle the change?

The largest obstacle I had to get around (for lack of a better word) was my reading and writing ability, or lack of I should say, would be more accurate. For instance I had to drop out of Anatomy and Physiology in the first week because of my illiteracy. In saying that the physical training was great. Training under Patrick Sensei was a blast. He made Karate make sense (to me anyway) and has a unique ability to pass on knowledge, be it bio-mechanics, Kata applications or the history side.

When you say you were illiterate, how bad were you?

During my business days all I was required to do in my administrative role as a Managing Director, was sign my name on the cheques, but when I entered the college I was required to write essays, I came into a bit of bother because my reading level would have been that of a grade 4 student. Most of my fellow students at the college would remember me copying their notes from the theory class, yet understood very little of the words on the page. I could speak the words yet struggled to read and write them. That's why all of my written tests I refused to do and asked if I could speak the answers.

Obviously running a Martial Arts magazine you can now read and write, what helped you overcome your reading and writing disability?

I was told me to obtain a decent dictionary and to stop on every word that I couldn't understand or spell. Of course by the end of a three-hour theory class I would be ecstatic to have found a word that I was stuck on during the first 10 minutes of the class. I also found great martial arts to read so hence began my lessons in literacy.

How did you cope with the rigorous training at the college, which consisted of all day training, five days a week?

Hard! I walked into College's Dojo at around 127kg and within the first 6 months I lost in excess of 32kg.

Some of the best Karate fighters I've ever seen have come from Goju Kai.

How did you find the training at the college coming from the Goju system?

If you look at the Goju Kai bunkai/oyo jutsu you will see that all their defensive applications are based around kicks and punches, which looking back have no real street value other than the obvious distance and timing aspect of those two person drills. So Goju was a great base to come from entering into the Koryu Uchinadi system taught at the college. Tegumi exercises linking corresponding defensive principles to acts of aggression make the basic movements you are taught from day one in the dojo carry value and open your eyes to more than just the solo movement so I was taught.

So would say that the Goju Kai system from which you came lacked realism?

Some of the best Karate fighters I've ever seen have come from Goju Kai. My statement earlier was more directed to the application principles that Goju worked around in relation to their Kata. My eyes have been opened by the HAPV theory taught on this course. It directly links each solo composite in the Kata to a real physical act of violence, making the movements within the kata hold a more realistic application that would be more commonly seen in a real world street encounter i.e: headlocks, bear hugs, arm bars, grabbing of the hair and

GRANT RATCLIFFE

Did McCarthy Sensei's teaching differ from what you have previously undertaken and do you believe this was because of his knowledge and understanding of the Martial Arts as a whole?

Well obviously coming from his depth of knowledge and his many years spend living, researching and training in Japan and other places. I simply came from the Goju Kai system and i thought it was a great stepping-stone for me especially having such a demanding instructor in Sensei Kath Terry, who would make us repeat a technique over and over until we had mastered it. So you could say when I entered Patrick Sensei's dojo I had a high level of the basics in karate already.

What was one of your fondest memories of training at the College?

Well during our end of third semester examinations we were near the completion of a five-hour long physical test, Patrick Sensei had asked me to grab the ladder and return it with him to the store room, during a break, along with some other items. As it was getting late I turned to the students in the dojo and told them to shower and get ready for our celebration dinner, at this stage Patrick Sensei was already on his way to the store room and had no idea of what I had just informed the students of. On returning from the store room some ten minutes later, Patrick Sensei saw naked bodies running to and from the showers, he turned to me and said, "What the hell are they doing? We haven't finished testing yet!" I turned to him with a stunned look on my face and said, "I have no idea?" In a fit of rage he launched himself into the showers and informed them all that the testing hadn't finished and they were to get their asses back on the dojo floor immediately! By the time I made it back into the dojo most of the students were there dripping wet and standing in their smelly gi's. Either Patrick Sensei was informed by another student or just realised what I had done, sat at his desk in the dojo and smiled at me, as he then informed us all that we were going to finish off with Kumite (sparring). Looking at the unhappy faces glaring at me across the floor I realised I was in for a hard sparring session. That was one of the funniest times at the College.

How did you fare that afternoon, after the sparring?
Conrad, a fellow student in my class also saw the humour in what I had done, even though he was one of the naked bodies being yelled at by Patrick Sensei. Everyone saw the humour in it as we talked and laughed about it at the dinner that night. I was known in the dojo as the joker and as the training was generally hard yakka to put it lightly, it was always good to get everybody smiling and laughing. For the majority of my stay at the college I have the fondest memories I have to date of my Martial Arts journey thus far.

Initially I thought that I could put the magazine together in a Word Document, that's how little I knew about computing.

*How did you come to start and build what is now regarded as Australia's most respected and educational Martial Arts publication, **Bujutsu International Magazine**?*
I had the idea of becoming more of a free-lance journalist who would travel around the country conducting interviews on Martial Art Masters, lesser known Instructors and International dignitaries. So I began my investigation into starting my own magazine.

Was your illiteracy a burden when starting a Magazine?
No. Because most of the content was interview based, all that was required of me was to put together interview questions. My primary concern/problem was the lack of knowledge surrounding the use of computers, as I had never owned one up until that point. Initially I thought that I could put the magazine together in a Word Document, that's how little I knew about computing. It wasn't until I met a young man at a local printing firm by the name of Thomas Hosier who helped me with the initial requirements needed, ie: programmes, computer, computer lessons etc...then the magazine begun to take form.

Continues next page

A Young Master of the Old Ways

Did you believe it would become as successful as it has?

Yes and No. I thought that all I had to do was produce a magazine, get it distributed and watch the money roll in. Boy was I wrong. I believed by producing a mature Martial Arts Magazine profiling more seasoned Martial Artists, irrespective of their political affiliations and standing with the Martial Art community within Australia, people would just flock to it. But that wasn't the case. It has been a long hard road and only now three years on that I can truly see a magazine that I once dreamed of sitting in the Newsagencies throughout Australasia.

Other than your lack of computer skills, were there other obstacles you had to overcome?

I think it is normal for publications to start off slow and then gain the confidence of the industry. As you may recall other martial art publications have gone through the same process of starting and establishing and then gaining ground. No magazine can be successful without support of writers or advertisers. It is only now that Bujutsu has firmly established itself as the Premier Martial Arts Magazine sporting gloss paper and now in full colour. People have started to support Bujutsu, as it is now a permanent fixture on Newsagency shelves throughout Australasia.

Three years on do you still enjoy the process of putting a magazine together?

With each issue comes a lot of satisfaction especially once you see the finished work, but with each issue you find new challenges/problems to deal with. The hardest thing is advertising or so they say, but I have found that side of things not so bad, with many of our clients repeat advertisers. I love the magazine business as it has given me the opportunity to meet and train with some of the world's greatest masters, listening to their stories and gaining insight into the people they really are.

You were graded to 5th Dan by Kancho Deena Naidu, how did this feel to achieve such a rank at such an early age?

I am definitely thankful to Kancho Deena who himself was a direct student of the famous Gogen Yamaguchi Hanshi and the sixth graduate of the Japan Karate-Do College, for awarding me such a rank and coming from such a fine Martial Artists it was truly an honour.

Where do you see Bujutsu Magazine in 5 – 10 years time?

I believe Bujutsu has firmly established itself in the market place and is growing all the time, with subscription currently at an all time high. Bujutsu will continue to grow and strengthen its place in the Martial Arts Publication Industry in Australasia as it continues to offer the highest level of articles, information and interviews.

Upon leaving the college you began to build the foundations of your own Karate-Do organisation, why?

I started my own organisation, not out of self-gratification or glory, but purely to build an organisation that had none of the elements that plague so many. By starting my organisation I could teach what I wanted and in a manner in which I believed to be beneficial to my growing number of students.

So what style of Karate is Ryukyu Kai based from?

Firstly Ryukyu Kai is not a style it is purely the name I gave my organisation. The International Ryukyu Kai Karate-Do teaches the Okinawan Goju (Naha Te) lineage of Kata and their related defensive theories and themes (Ritual Acts of Physical Aggression), along with the two person training practices of old style Karate-Do (Tegumi). Ryukyu Kai is taught through a systematised teaching template to guide all of it's practitioners to a deeper understanding of Okinawan Karate-Do, its unique history and for it's ultimate aim of understanding self defence and the premise on which traditional karate is based.

Your seminar circuit within Australia is beginning to build momentum, what do you attribute to this success?

Simplicity. Firstly, my main objective is to give the seminar participants as much as I can in the time that I have with them. Because there is such a wide and diverse calibre of Martial Artists and systems attending my seminars, I mainly teach application drills and two person exercises. I base all my seminars around two words, "Educational and Fun!" This I believe has been the secret to my success with seminars.

You've told us about your past and present activities and training, what do feel the future holds for yourself and your International Ryukyu Kai Organisation?

As I said earlier, if the calibre of instructors and up and coming black belts is anything to go by Ryukyu Kai has a very exciting future. My goal is to continue to build the Ryukyu Kai Hombu in Tweed Heads, help my students to achieve their goals (ie: becoming black belts/instructors) and to continue to conduct my seminars that I enjoy immensely.

THE END