

## **MASARU SHINTANI**

Sensei Masaru Shintani, 9th Dan (Kudan) was the Supreme Instructor of Wado Kai Karate in Canada and is founder of the Shintani Wado Kai Karate Federation (SWKKF). At the time of his death he was the highest ranking Sensei outside of Japan. A direct student of Master Otsuka, the founder of Wado Kai, Sensei Shintani devoted over 50 years to the study of Karate. He also held ranks in Judo (Sandan), Aikido (Shodan), and Kendo (Shodan).

Sensei Shintani was born February 3, 1927 in Vancouver, British Columbia, the child of Japanese immigrants. His mother was a member of the Matsumoto clan, a respected samurai clan whose history goes back hundreds of years. Like most West Coast Japanese-Canadians during the Second World War, his family was held in an internment camp used to house hundreds of Japanese Canadians. While growing up in the camp, he studied Japanese language and heritage, along with Kendo and Judo, the standard physical education for all Japanese students.

One day in 1940-41, he met Sensei Kitigawa who was a practitioner of Shorin-ryu, one of the older Okinawan Karate styles. However, Sensei Kitigawa simply referred to his teachings as Kumite (fighting) and soon the eager young man was beating the bark off of trees with punches, blocks & kicks. Sensei Shintani recalls training barefoot on the ice rink and sparring bouts that he describes thus, "Every time you got on the floor, it was life or death." Overall, Sensei Kitigawa's methods would be considered excessive or 'brutal' by today's standards.

After years of training under Sensei Kitigawa's direction, Sensei Shintani was graded to sixth dan when Kitigawa returned to Japan. Sensei Shintani himself began to travel to Japan to train in Karate and visit his mother's family. He met Master Otsuka in 1956 at a Karate seminar. Over the next few years, Sensei Shintani competed in and eventually won the championship in the large Japan Karate Federation tournaments. In 1958, Master Otsuka approached Sensei Shintani with an invitation to join his organization, Wado Kai. Impressed with the

character and integrity of Master Otsuka, Sensei Shintani respectfully accepted the invitation. During this time, Sensei Shintani's family moved to Beamsville, near Hamilton, Ontario. He began teaching Karate and Judo locally at the Japanese Cultural Center in Hamilton and a club in Stoney Creek and Grimsby. In 1979, Master Otsuka graded Sensei Shintani to hachidan (8th dan). At the same time Master Otsuka presented him with a kudan (9th dan) certificate, to be revealed by Shintani after a suitable period of time had passed (he declared his kudan rank in 1995). Also during this time, Sensei Shintani traveled to Japan several times to train with Master Otsuka. Master Otsuka honored his Canadian disciple by visiting Ontario on a few occasions to visit and teach, the last time being in 1980, only two years prior to his passing. During the 1970s, Master Otsuka appointed Sensei Shintani the Supreme Instructor of Wado Kai in North America.

In the last years before his death, Sensei Shintani spent much of his time developing Karate and Shindo concepts and traveled to various regions of North America and overseas to conduct seminars in Wado Kai and Shindo. As the leader of a large martial arts organization in North America, he could be a very wealthy man. Instead, Sensei Shintani lived a humble life of quiet modesty, continuing to live by three ideals: Humility, Integrity, and Honor. He passed away in 2000, while teaching a karate seminar in northern Ontario.

Sensei Ron was a brown belt in Judo when he began to train in Karate at the Stoney Creek club under Sensei Lou Roentgen. This was in 1968 and Sensei Shintani was a frequent visitor to the club, allowing the students to learn directly under him. In 1972, Sensei Ron received his 1<sup>st</sup> Degree Black Belt. Sensei Lou closed the club and went back to South Africa for years, returning to Canada in the mid 90's. Sensei Ron re-united with Sensei Lou to continue his training and teaching in Wado Kai Karate.