



Steve Cattle 6th Dan (1947-95)



Steve started martial arts with Judo in February 1960, at the age of 12 in York gaining 2nd Dan after 10 years. Later in 1962 he also began training in karate under the tutelage of Gordon Thompson, at the first karate club in York. He was awarded his Shodan (1st Dan) by Sensei Enoeda 5 years later, he went to become a member of the British team in 1966 until he stopped competing in 1989. Sensei Kase awarded Steve his 6th Dan in 1994.

Steve Cattle died suddenly in 1995 but his legacy continues with the association he founded, The English Shotokan Academy. The senior ESA instructors all trained with Steve and his advanced teaching methods are still being used and passed on today, together with those of his teacher Sensei Kase.

Steve was a very well known and highly respected Karate-ka and as a former British Champion and member of the British Team for almost 25 years, winning many major titles, he was renowned for his phenomenal speed and superb fighting spirit. However, it was his in-depth study of Shotokan karate's kata that made him a bunkai (kata application) expert. As Steve put it the moves in kata are the "heart and soul" of karate, something which the ESA puts great emphasis on.

Included here are articles from Shotokan Karate Magazine, gratefully lent to us by John Cheetham,

STEVE CATTLE 5TH DAN 'BACK TO THE ROOTS' Interview by John Cheetham

Q. Firstly Steve, I have to ask you the 'Big' question. Why after 25 years membership as a Senior Instructor and Grading Examiner and National Squad Member have you left the K.U.G.B?

A. First of all John, I haven't 'gone' from the K.U.G.B. as such, in the sense that I have had a dispute with the K.U.G.B. I have no political arguments with anyone in the K.U.G.B. and it's been personally an agonising decision. What I have continued to do and what I have always done, is train the way and follow Sensei Kase and ultimately Sensei Yoshitaka Funakoshi and Azato Sensei's method of doing karate. A lineage we consider we can trace back to the 16th and 17th Century. I don't think that with the conditions in the present J.K.A. that we can continue practising this way. I have deliberately kept myself separate from the rest of the seniors in the in order to practice this way and to prevent any friction and any kind of technical arguments. I've gone along and acquiesced to quite a lot of decisions that I have not personally agreed with. But now, particularly with Kata changes and technique and idea, I can no longer do that. But now people say to me "Why don't you come to K.U.G.B and speak about this? But it's not quite as simple as that, because my teachers, my seniors, Sensei Kase, Sensei Shirai, Sensei Nishiyama in America, etc. have spent a long time fighting since the death of Sensei Nakayama and eventually have had to go from the J.K.A. So, me taking to the K.U.G.B over this would be pointless. My teachers can't do anything, so I, a junior compared to them, can make no impact whatsoever. They have gone one way and we have gone another. This is purely a 'Technical' argument; it has nothing to do with politics. Ultimately, political things will come into it, but as far as I am concerned and Sensei Kase is concerned, this is to do with the most deep and technical, fundamental details and principals, which our style is created on. There are great problems in this area and it would take a book to explain it all. The whole point is that SHOTOKAN Karate was created by, we believe, a group of people who were taught by Master AZATO, probably no more than three or four people. Ultimately and finally it got to its present form, or shall we say finalised by Master Yoshitaka Funakoshi, Master Gichin's son. This was in the period approximately between 1935 and 1945. This method of karate goes back a lot further, the Kata, the principles, understanding the meanings and movements, etc. Master Nakayama understood this and took what he could from the students of Yoshitaka; he hardly ever trained with Master Yoshitaka and he only trained with Master Gichin for about four years, probably only twice a week or so. However, he was a great leader and a wily and clever politician. On his death this cannot be maintained. The J.K.A. can't appoint a Chief Instructor because the seniors are our people, who have gone! Sensei Kase is my teacher and I have followed him. Two Shotokan groups have emerged with a different emphasis.

Steve Cattle follows the teachings of Master Taiji Kase.

The K.U.G.B unfortunately are just a pawn in a much bigger game. This argument goes right back to Japan, and further even than the J.K.A. The J.K.A. is not what it was. The J.K.A. was formed by Master OBATA in 1947. Sensei Nakayama had virtually no part in it whatsoever and was a very minor figure. He ultimately, through manipulation and his group at Takushoku University, took over the J.K.A. Obata Sensei left in 1955 and because of that there is no definite line of seniority. The line of seniority and the people, who should have taken over, lie outside the J.K.A. To understand the J.K.A. you first have to understand the essence of Japanese life. Europeans tend to think of J.K.A. as a family, which passes down from senior to junior. It is nothing like that. It is an organisation for training and providing professional instructors. No more than that and no less. The most senior people in Shotokan never joined it. Master Hironishi, Master Okayama, Master Egamin, those people are senior to Nakayama and they never joined the J.K.A. because he was a junior to them. They wanted nothing to do with him. They weren't having him telling them what to do. Sensei Nakayama gathered round him his group from Takushoku and a group of other people who wanted to be professional instructors. My Instructor, Sensei Kase, was one of them but they had never been part of the J.K.A. He was originally part of the original shotokai group and was taught by Master Yoshitaka Funakoshi, Master Okayama and Master Hironishi. He was already a fourth Dan in their organisation before master Nishiyama persuaded him to come over the J.K.A. and to teach on their instructor's course. They did not know all the Kata and techniques, Kase Sensei showed them. Most people don't know that Sensei Kase invented Yoko Geri ke-komi and ushiro geri. There was a lower type of thrusting sidekick in the early katas. He classified the sidekick and round-kicks that Master Yoshitaka had done. He also invented the Jodan Kakato geri and Ura mawashi geri. That was passed on to the J.K.A. through him. People don't know that, they have no idea. Many of the katas we do, the Gojushiho katas were brought to the J.K.A. by Sensei Kase. The J.K.A. have no knowledge of the katas taught by seniors like Egami – sochin-dai, Sanchin – we do these with Kase Sensei.

Yoshitaka Funakoshi the son of Master Gichin

The J.K.A. as such has presented a very, very good style of karate, but it does not hold, by any means, the direct line from both Gichin and Yoshitaka Funakoshi. We feel that we are returning to our roots. We are attempting to take a step back to retract our steps and think again.

We are now part of the W.K.S.A. whose standards are, I will tell you, rigorously harder than the J.K.A. Believe it or not, this is not a place to hide in. W.K.S.A. If you read the initials you will see that it also reads the World KASE SHIRAI Academy, that's why it reads a bit ungrammatically. Our aims are the same; to follow the teachings of Master Yoshitaka passed on through Sensei Kase and his seniors who are still alive in Japan, Sensei Hironishi and Okayama who many have never heard of. Sensei Kase is amazing, yet he says that they are even better! The richness of our sources are fantastic. We have now regressed. We have gone back to thinking again. So, we have formed a group with similar aims. The aim of doing Shotokan Karate in another way. We would consider that we are not deviants. The J.K.A. have deviated from the original form and we are going back to doing it in its original form.

Q. Steve, you have always been a traditional karate-man yet always 'competed' in both Kuymite and Kata. How do the W.K.S.A. stand on competition? Will they be with W.U.K.O.?

A. We of course will enter our people into W.U.K.O. events and we support wholeheartedly W.U.K.O. Unlike the J.K.A. stand, I have always thought personally, that the W.U.K.O. direction is the direction we should go in. Which is to mix directly and mingle with other styles of karate. Master Funakoshi himself and Yoshitaka refused to name their style and they said that there would be no 'unity' to do so. It was their students who later penned the name Shotokan for the style. Styles are different methods of training. They are different answers to the same problems. The J.K.A. has always felt a need to be above and beyond the general 'all styles' of Japan. We in the W.K.S.A. do not feel that and we will definitely enter W.U.K.O. style competitions. Of course we will have our own competitions with some really unusual rules. Particularly in the Kata, for example: If you get a draw situation, the competitors will have to do the same Kata again but in URA. The opposite way around. This requires that you make a total understanding of the Kata. There is no forward or backward, no right or left; the Kata becomes a total unity with 'you'. In the W.K.S.A. competitors must enter both Kata and Kumite, not just one or the other. They cannot just enter one event. It's rather like looking at a coin. You have the Lion's head on one side of a ten pence piece and the Queen's head on the other. But it's still the same coin. Kata and Kumite are two sides to the same thing. When you understand that, you can make overall development. So, we demand that people enter both events. This is how you always see Steve Cattle, 'TRAINING' Steve is a seeker of the 'way'

This is how you always see Steve Cattle, 'TRAINING'. Steve is a seeker of the 'way'.

Both Sensei Kase and myself both believe that even senior students should continue both training and even competing. I myself may even compete in our European Championships this October. There are now fifty-four countries in the W.K.S.A. and 900,00 member's worldwide. We are no small organisation by any means. This of course includes many people in Japan from both the J.K.A. and Shotokai who were previously with those organisations and have now joined the W.K.S.A. We have our own first world Championships next year.

Q. What will now happen with all the many clubs you visit and grade at, no that you are with the W.K.S.A?

A. Well, naturally I would like them to go with us if it is at all possible. I would prefer that, because I think that if they have been practising our methods, which I have been teaching for a considerable time now, then they will carry on improving, in the direction I would like them to. Obviously, some people will stay with the K.U.G.B. – That is their own choice, I will, if they want me to, still continue to teach for them. Whether the K.U.G.B. would allow this I would not like to say. I would like it to be put on the record now that obviously I am going to personally lose a great deal financially by leaving and doing this. It is not a financial decision that I have made. It is a moral, technical decision, because I do not feel that I personally can continue to improve by staying with the instructors we have. I do not believe they have the answers or the deep advanced technical knowledge to allow you to improve through your 40's, 50's and 60's and the rest of your life. I would ask you to look at them and then at Sensei Kase and Shirai, and the difference in ability. I am the world's biggest sceptic and 'doubting Thomas' – I don't believe anything I am told 'ever'. I want to see it with my own eyes. I want to see it proved. Believe me, I have seen things proved time and time again with Sensei Kase. Sensei Shirai says there is nobody like Sensei Kase and the people who trained with Master Yoshitaka. There is nobody like this group at all, nobody at all. The others, do something else. Very good technical knowledge, but they slow down when they mature. Sensei Kase and these people get better with age. I want to be like that. I want to get better with age. I don't just want to stay in a little rut, just teaching Karate and being a referee or whatever. I do karate for my own personal improvement and I am prepared to accept that I have to suffer in one direction in order to improve in another, I think in the long term things will be better, but certainly not in the short term. I will definitely suffer financially in the short term.

Q. Steve, a lot of Shotokan students and instructors are quite confused over the recent Kata changes, especially in this country. Yet the J.K.A. have been doing them this way for some time. What has happened in this country?

A. Well, believe it or not, the K.U.G.B. and the other European Shotokan organisations are more original than the present J.K.A. Kata. We followed the performance of Kata as it was laid down in the 1960's and more towards the original ideas of Master Yoshitaka Funakoshi. As the J.K.A. advanced in the 1970's they became more pre-occupied with the 'Embusen Line' – returning to the same spot that you started from as well as maintaining the same hip height throughout the Kata. In the original versions of the katas first laid down in Okinawa, and then later on modified, for very, very different technical reasons, firstly by Master Azato and later by Master Yoshitaka Funakoshi and his group of students, this argument bore no basis. The criteria they used was that they changed things in order to make the techniques in the Kata more powerful and more effective. Now, Embusen, returning to the same spot, played no part in that. If you arrived around the starting place, this was enough. The same thing happens in Goju Ryu and Shorin Ryu and Wado Ryu. The J.K.A. and Nakayama Sensei were preoccupied with the 'Embusen Line' Sensei Kase had many arguments with Nakayama over this. He said to him "You know that master Yoshitaka and Master Gichin said that Kata is 'illogical', you can't make it logical."

Now then, the J.K.A. tried to make a logical study of Kata. They tried to make a physical study. A physical study of body control and movement. This has got little to do with transmission of power through your body or understanding the 'Bunkai', the application of the Kata. I have watched the videotapes of the J.K.A. and someone I respect very highly, Sensei Osaka. He performs the katas then the Bunkai. When he performs the Bunkai, that's the way we 'do' it! When he does the Kata following the Embusen Line, which he does beautifully, excellent, he performs it very differently. We and in many ways the K.U.G.B., have retained the original form of movement. We have not changed. Surprisingly, the S.K.I. Sensei Kanazawa's group has also retained the original movement. Sensei Kanazawa's has always experimented with the Kata, moving one foot or the other. But in essence, his Kata is more in spirit with the teachings of Masters Yoshitaka and Gichin Funakoshi. But the younger people in the J.K.A. say, "That is not important, who are they?". "They are people from the past and we have got to move on." So it's a decision you have to make. Whether you are going to perform Kata for looks, or for other, more deep, spiritual reasons. I would argue, the second. It may not be more beautiful but certainly more meaningful. Sensei Higoanna from Goju Ryu performs the Kata exactly as it is performed in Bunkai. Every movement can be used. We, Sensei Kase's group, argue the same. Every movement should be performed as it works. The present J.K.A. changes are not in line with this. John, I'd like you to print this, about the article that Dave Hooper did in S.K.M. Dave is a good karate, good knowledge but, it's naïve. It's the view of someone who did karate in the 1970's and didn't know anything about the previous history of Shotokan karate or the J.K.A. this idea that the J.K.A. is the guardian of karate and everybody else had deviated from it. This is in fact the opposite. It's the J.K.A. who have deviated. You and I have the films from the early 1960's before they sent instructors to other countries. We in the W.K.S.A. correspond directly to this. We perform Kata exactly like this. They have deviated and changed the Kata in recent years. I have been to Japan on many occasions and even in recent years I've had a great laugh when after I've performed Kata, as taught by Master Yoshitaka, and as on the old films, and then been corrected and told "the Kata was never performed like that." Such blatant 'hypocrisy'. The hypocrisy is beyond belief. I have films of the very people who told me that, performing the katas exactly the way I'd performed them!! This ability to bend the truth and to literally say things that are blatant lies, astounds me. Sensei Andy Sherry would argue the same thing, of course it's been politics not to say that, well, so far. The K.U.G.B. Kata performers have something the J.K.A. performers do not have: they have tremendous 'hip flexibility' / the J.K.A. Kata people have something the K.U.G.B. performers do not have: tremendous 'ankle flexibility'. When one shows the Japanese something they don't have, it is immediately criticised, it's wrong. When they show us something we don't have, then this is 'right'. Now, the truth lies somewhere between the two. The fact is that they are no more right than the K.U.G.B. The K.U.G.B. has evolved a style of fighting, which has, where competition is concerned, certainly exceeded the ability of the J.K.A. people. Whether this has anything to do with real karate or combat karate, that's a different story. You could match the K.U.G.B. team with the J.K.A. team and I'd say 65% or 70% of the time the K.U.G.B. would win. However, if you locked the same two teams in a room and see who comes out alive, I don't think it would be our lads. But in

competition this is the one area where we exceed them. But I don't think that the K.U.G.B. is the best association competition-wise. For instance at the recent World Shotokan Cup, the German team were not allowed to compete because they did not have J.K.A. certificates. But, let's be honest, even now people are receiving J.K.A. certificates with Sensei Nakayama's signature on. Now how can they be signed by somebody who's been dead for three years, or he's signing them from the grave.

There are now many European countries who are capable of beating Japan. This is a fact of life.

Q. Do you think we can match them in Kata competition?

A. Yes, in fact Europeans have tremendous hip flexibility and knee flexibility, as opposed to the Japanese ankle flexibility. The Japanese also have a more mobile and fluid movement which corresponds to the way your ankles move. The Europeans have a more powerful and dynamic movement. The choice is in the eye of the beholder. My argument with the way the Europeans move, is that once the Kata has no function, and this goes for Japanese too, once it is performed for purely 'visual' reasons and it does not work, then it is no longer 'Kata'. It's gymnastics. I've had great arguments with people in the K.U.G.B. over this, over the years. This is why I've kept separate, because I believe that once Kata is purely visual it has no point. To consider a Kata without 'Bunkai' is ridiculous, why the hell are we doing karate! Why not do gymnastics or ballet. There are plenty of things visually better than karate. Once something in karate does not 'work', it is nonsense. That is the law of evolution, if something doesn't work, it dies out.

There are people performing Kata in Great Britain in many associations not just the K.U.G.B. which have no corresponding basis in 'Fact'. And in J.K.A. this is the same. One exception is Frank Brennan. Frank is a physical genius. No doubt about it. He has pushed the limits of karate further on. People have had to follow where he has led. They guy is totally amazing and I will not criticise what he has done. But the J.K.A. will say, "No, our way, Frank's way is best". There is no best way, Kata is illogical. It allows for personality. Once we lose that, we lose everything.

Steve is one of the most respected Shotokan Instructors and Competitors in Europe.

Q. Finally Steve, what are Steve Cattle's views on the way Shotokan will go in the 1990's?

A. We are now in a very severe time of change. The J.K.A. is in turmoil. There is no leader. Sensei Asai and Shoji have now gone. The committee just has not worked. We in the W.K.S.A. have a leader in Sensei Kase. I was training with them in Sweden recently and afterwards watched a Dan-grading. The syllabus is unbelievable. There were people, including Scandinavian internationals of a very high standard taking 2nd and 3rd Dan, as well as taking Dan-grade, and they all failed under Kase and Shirai. And, I think that the overall standard in Scandinavia is slightly higher than in Britain. This is an incredibly difficult syllabus. The standards are so high. It demands that we make power, not just from hip twisting but from 'shock'. Most J.K.A. and S.K.I. people make power from hip twisting. We also do that, but we do other things too. We use 'shock', the transfer of energy. Sensei Kase says that a lot of karate people here and in Japan can only make power on certain techniques. He says many have 4th and 5th Dan punches yet 7th Kyu Shuto's or Haito's. This is the way to progress. We are progressing in a way that has been lost. Developing all techniques.

The other thing too, is to allow people to train as we get older. The way people train at the moment is fine for young people. But when you get to a certain age, this type of training begins to wear out the joints. There is no doubt about it. It is detrimental, particularly to the knees and hips. By training in Master Yoshitaka's way through Sensei Kase we are able to do things that enable you to carry on training and improving into your 40's, 50's, 60's, 70's, and 80's. Master Genchin Hironishi is still training in his 80's. Master Okayama is still training in his 70's. I think he is 75. Sensei Kase said to me that he is so fast that you can't block his oie zuki. These people have just carried on. They have never been involved with the J.K.A. they had no mission to spread karate. They just train for themselves. We have a lot to learn from these people. We intend to learn from them.

Sensei Kase and Sensei Shirai are planning a system of Shotokan karate which will carry us, not into the 1990's but into the next century. I intend to follow them. I have no doubts in my mind that just remaining one of many people within an organisation that has, in my view, had its day, is not the answer. We have got to look at what karate is all about. How do we get back? Through the people who 'know'. Instead of us 'thinking' we know everything. Let's get the knowledge from them, the ability. Let's 'do' something instead of just talk about it. I've had enough of talk. I want to follow the people who are doing something.

I, and many of my friends have given up something that is valuable to us. We have given up our membership of J.K.A. and membership of the K.U.G.B. purely because we believe that the only possibility for us to get better, not just in Great Britain but throughout the World, is to start doing karate 'properly'. No longer a kind of watered down version of that. We have documented, photographic, physical evidence of what original karate is. We also have, we believe, the people who can still do that. We are now intending to follow them and make our own people, as near as possible, like that. I simply want to get better!

Well, Steve, I have to honestly say that I have thoroughly enjoyed listening to you. I have known you for many years. I know you have a burning passion for karate and I know all S.K.M. readers will see that through your words. Thank you very much for a great day spent with you.

EDITOR

(Oh! And thank you for the marvellous demonstrations of techniques and Kata Bunkai. My ribs definitely know what you mean about transfer of energy!)

Steve Cattle just says "I simply want to get better with age".