

FACE TO FACE INTERVIEW WITH TOM MUZILA

MAWM - How did you get started in the martial arts?

Muzila - As a teenager, I became curious about the martial arts. In the mid 60's (I was 16) I walked into a downtown Long Beach dojo that Caylor Adkins was sharing with John Ogden, a premier judo player. This dojo was right next to a bar. As I walked into the dojo, it was like one big street fight. I had to step back to realize that I hadn't gone into the bar.. It was so impressive that it didn't register that I was in a martial arts establishment. So I started there. Warren Griffin, who was built like a pit bull, Caylor and Albert Koboda were some of the people that impressed me in those early days. Caylor was one of Mr. Ohshima's 6 original students (they consisted of Caylor, Jordan Roth and four Japanese students in 1955 era). Albert was one of Caylor's top senior students. My impression was that first night was that this was a real fight. The tidal wave of energy made the hair on the back of my neck stand up. They were on the ground fighting and grappling. I knew right there that this was the type of spirit I wanted.

I also started training at Long Beach State College under Bob Lopez who was the senior club lead. I started practicing there three nights a week, in addition to the Long Beach workouts. Another strong impression in those days was made on me by Don Depree. Don was doing lunge punches up and down the floor and at the end of the movement he would hit the door with his bare fist as hard as he could. He was like a wild animal kiai'ing and trying to break the wall down. Needless to say, I was impressed with this true Samurai spirit and I

made a commitment right there that this was to be a permanent part of my life.

The next rude awakening was my first special training in Long Beach led by Caylor Adkins. Mr. Ono came over from Japan to this event. After the first workout, I was facing Mr. Ono and I attacked him and he knocked me down. I wondered "who was attacking who". Then it was his time to attack me and again he knocked me down again. It was like he was playing with a little kid. I was using all my abilities and he was just toying with me. That night, we stood in a horse riding stance for 1 1/2 hours. Buddy Bailey, a pit bull sort of a guy, was in the center of the workout circle and after the first hour there was a pool of sweat all around him but he wouldn't stop. The next morning, we had our 9 mile first run up Belmont Shores and back. This was followed by a three hour workout where we did 100 katas at a time. There were 30-40 people there and they were going crazy. At the end, Buddy Bailey went out to the end of the pier and climbed a 30 foot pylon and would dive in the ocean and swim back. I couldn't believe that he would do this after the grueling workout. Caylor was the most impressive, though. He pushed us to 1000% on everything we did. And he participated in every thing we did as opposed to standing around.

MAWM - When did you meet Mr. Ohshima?

Muzila - At the Belmont Shores dojo, Caylor Adkins would ask Mr. Ohshima to come down once a week to lead workout. The first time I saw him, I was dismayed that he was so nice and polite before practice- tranquil and serene. The first time I shook his hand, it felt like a tidal wave of energy went into me. Then when he started teaching, it was like Dr. Jekell and Mr. Hyde. He was unrelenting. His techniques were unbelievable. He would move would be like a cheetah - like a ballet

dancer or a cat. He would face anyone. There were many people that I feared in the class, but when they went up against Mr. Ohshima, he would demolish them. He would also tap into the deep portion of your mind and motivate you to do more. Everything he did was positive. He gave you a bigger capacity. At this time, Shotokan karate became my life. After I began learning the principles Mr. Ohshima was teaching, it was like I began to learn about life, about the roots as opposed to the leaves. He did his with real style and class and showed how this could be tempered with courage and humility.

MAWM - How about your first test?

Muzila - I had trained about 6 months, 6 days a week and had one special training before testing (which was unusual). The kyu test was incredibly long - about 50 people. What stood out was the level of the brown belts. These guys were like gods as to what they could do - their ability. At that time you really had to be tough to be a brown belt. The test was so long and grueling that everyone was totally exhausted afterwards. The test was conducted first on the brown belts and then downward. We had to wait at the side until our turn. I remember that Caylor said that while waiting for your test, you had to keep focused. I was impressed with this strictness. It was like an ancient atmosphere. Everyone was so serious. During kumite, the most important part was hitting the other guy and also how you took getting hit. Everyone got hit. Barry Slutsky was a talented brown belt, and was the best at that time. His spirit and techniques were tremendous. His side kick was phenomenal. All these impressions presented a challenge and standard that drove me to work out harder. I have never failed a Shotokan test, but I appreciated passing this first test more than any other. The whole atmosphere was like out of an ancient period of time in Japan.

MAWM - Who were some of the other impressive Shotokan players at that time.

Muzila - Jeff Klein was one of the most impressive. He would always win in tournaments. Back in the 60's, at the Long Beach International, he fought a top Korean fighter who was known for his flying kicks. Jeff faced him and caught him in mid air and slammed him down for a full point score and the win. Don Depree was probably the toughest karate man in his prime. Louis Del Gato fought Don Depree and Don almost killed him. It was like he had been through the Running of the Bulls.

MAWM - Tell me more about Mr. Ohshima, the chief instructor of Shotokan Karate of America (SKA).

Muzila - He used to teach about the color and shape of our eyes.. If you could see whites all around the eyes, it meant in Japan that one was a murderer. But when he would dilate his eyes and they would all become black, he would be able to control them. They would become under his power. So Mr. Ohshima has developed the ability to dilate his eyes so his whole eye area was black.

MAWM - Can Mr. Ohshima still do this?

Muzila - The amazing thing is that as he got older, Mr. Ohshima's special abilities increased. He had a saying - "Kokoro", that said that you don't accept death. But not to accept death, you have to not care about it and jump in to that black hole and not accept dying. He could turn this on like a light bulb.

MAWM - Tell me about Mr. Ohshima's legendary ability to fight someone on a line drawn out and to be able to get behind his opponent without leaving the line.

Muzila - It's "Uremi" - entering technique or entering mentality. Mr. Ohshima would face a student and when they attacked, he would avoid them and go through them without leaving the line. Mr. Ohshima said he discovered this capability by accident. He was sparring with Mr. Honda (one of Mr. Ohshima's top students in Japan) and saw a kick coming in and ducked under the leg and went behind him. He then worked on and perfected this capability.. In SKA, one of the requirements for a brown belt is to display this mentality . This is tough since it's not the American mentality to go under and avoid. a kick that is coming straight at you.

MAWM - Would you do the Running of the Bulls.

Muzila - I would love to. In fact SKA has a school in Spain and I could have a double purpose trip.

MAWM - What other "Mr. Ohshima feats" can you talk about?

Muzila - He was 145 pounds, but could not be lifted by two larger guys. He would get two guys to lift him up by his armpits, which they easily did. He would then imagine he was a large steel liberty bell, very heavy.- and they couldn't lift him. He also had an unbendable arm. Three people would try unsuccessfully to bend it. Also, he would touch his thumb and first finger and two people couldn't pull these fingers apart. He would image that his fingers were fused together..

MAWM - How about your first Kate School special workout?

Muzila - The large special trainings were held at Kate School in Carpentaria by the beach. The school was on a hill above the beach. The students stayed in the school at night, and had to go down the hill to workout. We called that hill - Hamburger Hill. It was about one mile

down and was made up of eroded pavement. Also, the road was lined with acorns and there were lots of acorns on the road. We would have to run that hill both ways.. So facing 4 days of workout, you could end up with torn up feet at the beginning of the first day. And you had to run this hill every day. So we had to practice going barefooted weeks before the workout. The first night of practice involved 1000 basic moves, followed by a 9 mile run on the beach in the sand. The workouts each had several basic parts:

- Basics, with 1000 executions of each move
- Kiba dachi stances for 1.5 hour (in the morning, usually on the second day of practice)
- Katas - Three different practices of katas each done 100 times.
- Kicks - 1000 each
- Kumite - If there were 300 people, you ended up fighting all 300. Juniors first faced seniors, then peers to peers. The adrenaline was massive. There was one time when a guy broke his arm so that it was at 90 degrees but he kept on fighting.

MAWM - As an instructor, you must miss out on some training. Does this bother you?

Muzila - Now that I am 50, I find myself missing the training part more and more.

MAWM - The term "facing yourself" keeps coming up in the SKA organization. Where did that come from?

Muzila - From Mr. Ohshima. Early in training with Mr. Ohshima, we

were taught to defeat our strongest opponent - ourselves - our fears, and weaknesses. Karate aligned the very being of physical existence to face, harmonize and extinguish those weaknesses. This allowed me to look at myself with "severe eyes" - the only thing that can cut a diamond is another diamond and the only things that can cut our consciousness is our own consciousness.

I made Shodan right before I went to the service where I signed up with Special Forces. This was my first test of Mr. Ohshima's philosophy. It allowed me to keep alive. I went on several covert operations in early 70s in South America. You had to have high academics in the Green Berets while you were learning survival skills. The biggest thing I noticed is that if I faced these situations head on, I could throw out my fears and therefore had a better chance of surviving. When I faced life and death against the revolutionaries, I would always have Mr. Ohshima's words echoing in the back of my mind and I would not get attached to the fear involved with the life threatening situations. Negative mindtalk would put you on a downhill spiral toward defeat. A real turnaround happened when we went into a 6 week secret session. We thought we were ready to go but when we got there, we started worrying about trip wires, mines, etc and we were totally exhausted after the first few days. I then said we have to stop. We had to be positive, thinking positively how we were going to get through. If we get taken out, we will go our in style.

I noticed when we got that mentality, we became liberated and it started to protect us. This type of thinking got us through several situations of firearm encounters at 20-30 feet. In one situation, we had to burrow in to the jungle and had to become one with the plants while the enemy was searching for us and coming as close as a few feet. We had to

disappear mentally and think that they wouldn't detect us. At one time, I saw this one inch ant and I just became that ant, since it was right after a ferocious firefight. All this related to the martial arts training when I got back. I never forgot it.

We had different teams.. mountaineering teams, scuba teams, airborne HALO teams (high altitude low opening -- skydiving). One time through the training drill we had to jump with all scuba tanks on, slip out of our harnesses, roll up the shutes and hide them and coordinate to come up somewhere in a coordinated azimuth.. all you had was a compass.. We would then tie ourselves together and go to the bottom for deployment .. and when you reached out in the dark you didn't know if you were touching your buddy's shoulder or a shark.

MAWM - Did you do any karate during the service?

Muzila - During the last 10 months, I was transferred to the 101st airborne.. I started boxing for the post and had 8 fights. I was on 24 hour duty and boxed 3 times a day. This was opportunistic to be able to work out that much.. we didn't have anything to do until there was an emergency. (sort of like a fireman). Then I got 10 guys together and we trained twice a day and went to open tournaments and won lots of trophies. We had all different styles.. so we did a lot of eclectic stuff. I met Bill Wallace and beat him in kata during that time.

I went back to Cal State Long Beach and got my degree in Asian Religions to study the Asian mind behind this whole martial art thing. I then got connected to the Kundalini yoga organization. They wanted to learn karate via Mr. Ohshima. He started teaching them and it was then handed down to Caylor and then it came to me. I went to special yoga training.. 12 hours per day.. no talking for 9 days (only talked the first

day).. you could really get to "feel" people behind you without seeing them. I had the world's largest yoga class - over 1000 people at one time in Taos, NM at 7500 ft.

Then after I got back from that special training, Ron Moyers was going to be 30 years old and he asked me to run 30 miles on his birthday. I said OK if he would do 10,000 stepping front punches. He said OK, so we ran 30 miles in 5 hours and then two days later we did 6 hours worth of front punches. After 6000 front punches, we kept looking at each other but were unwilling to bring up thirst. Ron finally said " do you think that we should drink something".. it was like a shot of adrenelin. But we stopped at 6000.

Getting into marathon karate training was one of the greatest experiences of my life. At special training, we were doing 1000 front punches and one day started wondering how long it would take to do 10,000. It was like I had to have a NO LIMIT mentality. It's like if I did 10,000 then I could do 100,000.. Like climbing mountains.. if you climb the Colorado peaks, maybe Everest would be OK. Also I would hear from Mr. Ohshima that old warriors in Japan (monks and samurai) would train for phenomenal durations .. In 1600s they would train 6 hours per day. These guys could do phenomenal things. This thought pushed me onward.

MAWM - So you started to do it more and more?

Muzila - Yes and then I moved to work with Ken Osborne near Lake Shasta. He invited me up to start a dojo. Caylor brought him to Long Beach and I was really impressed. At Lake Shasta, the mountains were there and I started climbing a lot. Mt. Shasta, Hood, Mt. St Helens, Mt. Adams, etc.. Whitney 15 times. I taught karate class at Shasta college at

night. It was during this time that I did a 21 day special training program. I would work out 9 hours per day. Run 6 miles up a mountain, (3 up, 3 down) then do 3000 basics of a different technique, then do one kata 100 times, followed by 2 hours of kumite with Kenny. He was a Youndan and I were a Sandan. This was in 19 77. Mr. Ohshima came up some times. During this training, Kenny separated his shoulder.. I really went on a campaign on this 10,000 repetition thing - 10,000 kicks, 10,000 front kicks, 10,000 thrust kicks, etc.. On New Year's Eve, we did 10,000 basic katas - it took up to 10 hours and our wives were really upset. Then I climbed 6 mountains in 7 days (didn't make 7 - just lost it on Mt Ranier.. The problem was the time it took to drive between the mountains. But I realized I had paid my dues. Training with Kenny was phenomenal.. He had a great foot sweep (he trained with Chuck Norris in the 70s - he was Norris's first black belt.) We started experimenting with the Kato attacks trying to ambush each other. . We would do that for weeks on end.

I was working at a country club and read that stimulating peripheral vision would stimulate clairvoyant vision. So I wore glasses that only allowed me to see out the side. I went through a whole day at the country day only looking through the side of the glasses. This greatly improved my kumite skills.

In the early 70s I get into the subject of intuition and did a lot of research. At Long Beach I talked to Professor Richard Spurney and he was teaching psychometry classes which taught you how to read an object -- pick up on frequencies or vibrations. He wanted to popularize phychometry.. so people could use this ability in their everyday lives. He didn't believe that you had to be gifted. He would develop 5 person teams and we would do readings with psychologists and try to find

murderers or use ESP to find evidence for court. The courts worked with us, but we had to keep this secret. They would not consult us unless they got to a dead end and we would then do map readings to give them a lead.. and had a lot of success but they couldn't publish it. Also we would tune in to a psychology analysis where 5 people would analyze one person as a group. As a group, if are some off, it's OK - the others made up for it.

MAWM - Did you apply this to karate?

Muzila - I would try to tie this to combat so that you could pick up what they were going to attack you with or when .. to make it intuitive.

I then contacted Peter Gotela who wanted to use these groups to find Bigfoot and UFOs. I got interested (if nothing else for the woods).. I would go on 3-4 expeditions looking for evidence. We found hair samples.. The laboratory work provide that it wasn't any known animals. We recorded some eerie screams from the whatever these things were. We would then stick this scream in real sounds and use it to test people that said that they had heard bigfoot.

Another reason I got into that is that it would be one thing to face any man.. but another thing to face the unknown - something you don't know. I was able to apply the acronym. FEAR - " false evidence appearing real", and I applied my journeys to the woods to training my fear.

MAWM - Did this help in your karate training?

Muzila - Yes, the ultimate was the unknown.. something that we thought could rip us to threads.. I had some close situations. I never saw anything face to face but I heard some mighty foot pounding in

those woods.