

Kenshiro Abbe 8th Dan
The Founder Of Kyu Shin Do

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Born on 15th. December 1915 in a village in the Tokushima province, Japan, Kenshiro was the fourth son of Toshizo and Koto Abbe. His father was a school master and a Kendo teacher, however he was never to learn Kendo from his father as Toshizo died tragically in a flood during a Kendo weekend course in the mountains in September 1919. Kenshiro was initially keen on Sumo wrestling and was the strongest in his class he won many prizes. He eventually became Tokushima schools champion of wrestling.

At 14 years old Kenshiro joined judo classes when they were founded in the village. His enthusiasm was boundless and he was awarded 1st. Dan within a very short time. A year later he graded to 2nd. Dan and at 16 years old he became champion of the High School Judo League at Tokushima and was awarded 3rd. Dan. He was the youngest ever to gain this award.

During his 5th year at school he entered an inter-city tournament involving 30 towns, representing the town of Kawashima as Captain. Being very fast and light he threw every opponent and was given the nickname of Pegasus, the winged horse. Kenshiro was successful in gaining entrance to 'Busen', exclusive training college of the Butokukai in Kyoto where he studied Kendo and Judo. He received instruction in Kendo from Ogawa Hanshi, 10th. Dan Sword master and in that year he was the youngest student to gain his 4th. Dan in Judo.

Every Saturday afternoon tournaments were held at the Busen which involved Kenshiro fighting five opponents in succession, each contest lasting five minutes. He invariably won these tournaments and in the Autumn of his second year he gained 5th. Dan.

In June 1937, at the age of 21, Kenshiro enlisted in the army, spending the next four years in Manchuria where he had no chance of training in Judo. As an officer he was, however, required to study Kendo and was awarded 3rd. Dan. He finished his service in 1941, returning to Kyoto and the Busen, but was recalled when the war began to Tokushima to run a training company. The Japanese army concentrated on Jukendo - bayonet fighting - and he considered it his duty to study the weapon in depth. He became one of the first and foremost exponents of the bayonet, overcoming a Kendo 6th. Dan in a Command match at the Japanese Imperial Tournament.

It was during his period of military service he first formulated his theory of Budo, Kyushindo, although he did not reveal it publicly until much later. Also at about this time he was selected by Morihei Ueshiba, the creator of Aikido, to receive special training with him. Aikido at that time was still secret and only very special students were selected to train with Ueshiba. Abbe studied for ten years under Ueshiba Sensei and became his senior student of Aikido.

Abbe was greatly concerned about the modern trend towards materialism and it was as a spiritual alternative to this that he saw his theory of Kyushindo:

Kyu: means desire, yearn, sphere or circle, search or study.

Shin: means the heart, spirit, true inner nature or nexus point, universal truth or law, to be true to oneself.

Do: means the way or path, sense of a total path. A way of life or self discipline.

Kyushindo philosophy is derived from three fundamental precepts, which are:-

1. Bambutsu Ruten: all things existent in the universe turn in a constant state of flux, undergoing a succession of changes.
2. Ritsudo: this motion is rhythmic and smooth, a flowing movement.
3. Chowa: all things act, flow, work in a perfect accord or harmony (go with the flow: Ed)

Thus to attain perfection in technique means to attain perfection as a human being, and through your studies to become a better person and a useful and positive factor in society.

(Compare this with the philosophy underlying Ueshiba's Aikido!! Ed)

During the early 1950's Abbe broke off all liaisons with the Kodokan as he was of the opinion that Japanese Judo was in the decline. This was around the time that their syllabus was reviewed and rewritten with Olympic contest in mind - the syllabus which is more or less in operation today in the sports styles of Judo.

Abbe headed for Britain and was accepted as President of the London Judo Society (LJS). Seeing Abbe in action was something new to the British, and he was noted to be amazingly powerful - he once demonstrated this by chopping a table-leg (still on the table) into two pieces using his toes!

With Bill Woods, Abbe helped form the British Judo Council and introduced his own theory of Kyushindo. He also introduced Kendo, Karate, Kyudo, Aikido, laido and other branches of martial arts to the UK.

Abbe later went to Europe where he taught in many countries, always returning to London. He suffered a car accident in 1960 which left him with permanent neck damage. Henceforth he was in constant pain and resultant nerve damage impaired his mental faculties.

He returned to Japan in 1964 at the time of the Tokyo Olympics, but was not received well by his family. He lodged alone in a cottage apart from the main house and remained there until his death in 1985.

Altogether Abbe resided in London for nine and a half years, at the end of which time the organisation he founded numbered some 50,000 members world-wide. One of the greatest influences in Abbe's life was Ueshiba, the founder of Aikido, under whom he studied for many years.

Abbe was very fast and light in foot and body and it was almost impossible to follow his technique when he applied it.

He would say :-

'Natural movements and natural stances are your combat movements and stances.

And your combat movements and stances are your natural movements and stances.'

On 1st. December 1985 Abbe passed away suffering from a stroke. According to his will his body was donated to be dissected at the Saitama Medical University and on 10th. June 1986 the funeral was held in Tokushima City and his remains were buried in the grave of the Abbe family. With his passing the world lost a genius.

His natural form of Judo, Kyushindo, lives on within the Zen Judo Family and maybe one day his dream will

be realised and this will be taught throughout the world.

By Brian N Bagot.

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