

## Instructor Profiles

### **SENSEI BAKKIES LAUBSCHER – IOGKF SOUTH AFRICA CHIEF INSTRUCTOR**

**IOGKF – 8<sup>th</sup> Dan**

#### **SHORT BACKGROUND**

He was born on 30 November 1948 in Bethlehem in the Free State, but has been living in the wine lands of the Cape, Stellenbosch, for the past 50 years.

After High School, he obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Physical Education as well as a Higher Teachers Diploma. He spent six years as a schoolteacher before joining the South African National Defence Force as a Sport and Physical Training officer, where he was applied as head of the Defence Force Sports Club Western Cape Command with rank Lieutenant colonel. As a Senior Staff Officer, he was trained in management skills and was exposed to various levels of corporate management and decision-making. He is currently retired from the military and spends most of his time teaching Goju Ryu karate.

#### **KARATE BACKGROUND**

He started karate as a boy in 1964, in the Kyokushinkai style. Technical input at the time was just about non – existent and received mostly from Japanese sailors rounding Cape Town port. *(An interesting point to note was that An'ichi Miyagi Sensei, whilst working on Japanese fishing boats in his youth, taught karate in Cape Town in the 1950's when his boat was docked in Cape Town).*

In 1965, his teacher changed to JKA (Shotokan), in which he was graded to Senior Sho dan at the age of 16 by the well-known JKA icons, Senseis Taiji Kase and Hiroshi Shirai. The latter stayed in Cape Town for almost six months, during which time Sensei Bakkies trained with him at least four times weekly, shuttling between Stellenbosch and Cape Town by various means, such as hitch hiking, goods train jumping, etc.

At the age of 16, he also won the Cape Province Grand Champion (Kata and Kumite) title for the first time – to put this achievement in perspective, there were no age or weight categories in those days!

He changed to Goju Ryu in 1966, after completing his year compulsory national military service, when the style was introduced in South Africa

His association with Higaonna Morio Sensei, began in 1972, when Higaonna Sensei came to South Africa for the first time and spend three months teaching in Cape Town. During this time, he trained almost on a daily basis with him (being a university student, he managed to study *'flexi'* time!).

At this time, Higaonna Sensei invited him to Japan to further his study and in 1973 he left for Japan aboard a cargo ship and after 25 days at sea and one typhoon, he arrived in



Tokyo Bay, to spend almost six months in Japan training in the famous Yoyogi Dojo with Higaonna Sensei, Higaonna Sensei being in his early 30's and full of energy at this stage!

He is currently maybe one of only a handful of foreigners left in the IOGKF who actually spent considerable time training in Japan in the 'old' days - many popped in for two or three weeks of training, which is not quite the same as living there for a long period with all the thrills of homesick, language (shopping meant pointing with the fingers!), food/water poisoning (the famous '*Japan Guts*'), etc.

He contemplates that the tempo of training and discipline of those days in Yoyogi Dojo was very intense – the emphasis was literally thousands of repetitions of Kihon – one time, they would only do continuous *mae geri* training for a whole class - two hours non-stop, or do *makiwara* training until the skin was stripped from the knuckles after a while! (If Sensei told you to hit the *makiwara*, you only stopped when he told you to stop – no going to the toilet or having to take your wife shopping in those days!)

He philosophises that, although the training methods were thought to be 'It' at the time (young, fired up, full of 'macho' - one just 'did it!'), some of it was actually not so good – hence the many injuries by karate ka in those days, mainly knee, back and shoulders. Nowadays, modern scientific understanding and methods of physical and psychological training aspects has provided better alternatives – **but the Martial Art (*Budo*) principles must remain the same** – it is not a sport!

## SPORT KARATE CAREER



In 1972, he was selected for South Africa's National team to participate overseas at the 2<sup>nd</sup> WUKO World Championships in Paris. He placed joint fifth in the Individual *Kumite* division (there were no weight divisions then, only open division). In 1975 he was again a member of the Springbok team to the Los Angeles World Championships, with the South African team losing against the eventual winners, England, in the quarterfinals (Terry O'Neill being a member of the England team).

After contemplating his experiences as a tournament fighter, and later, as an administrator, where he served as a Provincial Coach, Chairperson and National selector, he decided that tournament Karate, technically and politically, was a total deviation from real Karate and Budo. Since 1975 he decided to quit sport Karate to concentrate

on traditional Karate only.

## GENERAL

He was awarded Hachi Dan (8<sup>th</sup> degree black belt) by Higaonna Sensei in 2004 in Okinawa during the World Budosai.

He gets invited to teach all over the world on a regular basis and has taught Goju Ryu in 23 countries to date.

He is married with his wife, Denise, and has two sons and a daughter.

His approach to karate is :

- Traditional (honest, hard training, many repetitions, top physical conditioning!) and he likes to stress:
- The educational value of karate - especially for children and young people.
- The learning process never stops, and all instructors should always remain students of karate.
- He sets exceptionally high personal standards.
- He expects high standards from Instructors and believes that they should '*walk the talk*' and be a positive role model to their students
- No Instructor or Senior should take their position or seniority for granted - they must gain and maintain respect through continuous training and correct attitude - always strive hard for the highest standards, both in ***technique*** and the ***understanding*** of Goju Ryu.



He believes that good health is one of the most blessed possessions and that moderation in everything is essential to maintain a balanced personality. He also truly believes that the ability to live in harmony with all people is one of the most important in life. He has a wide range of interests from history, music (opera to rock) to the outdoors - fishing, hunting and overland trekking or safari in total remote areas. His motto is always to live and enjoy every second of life - '***Carpe Diem!***'