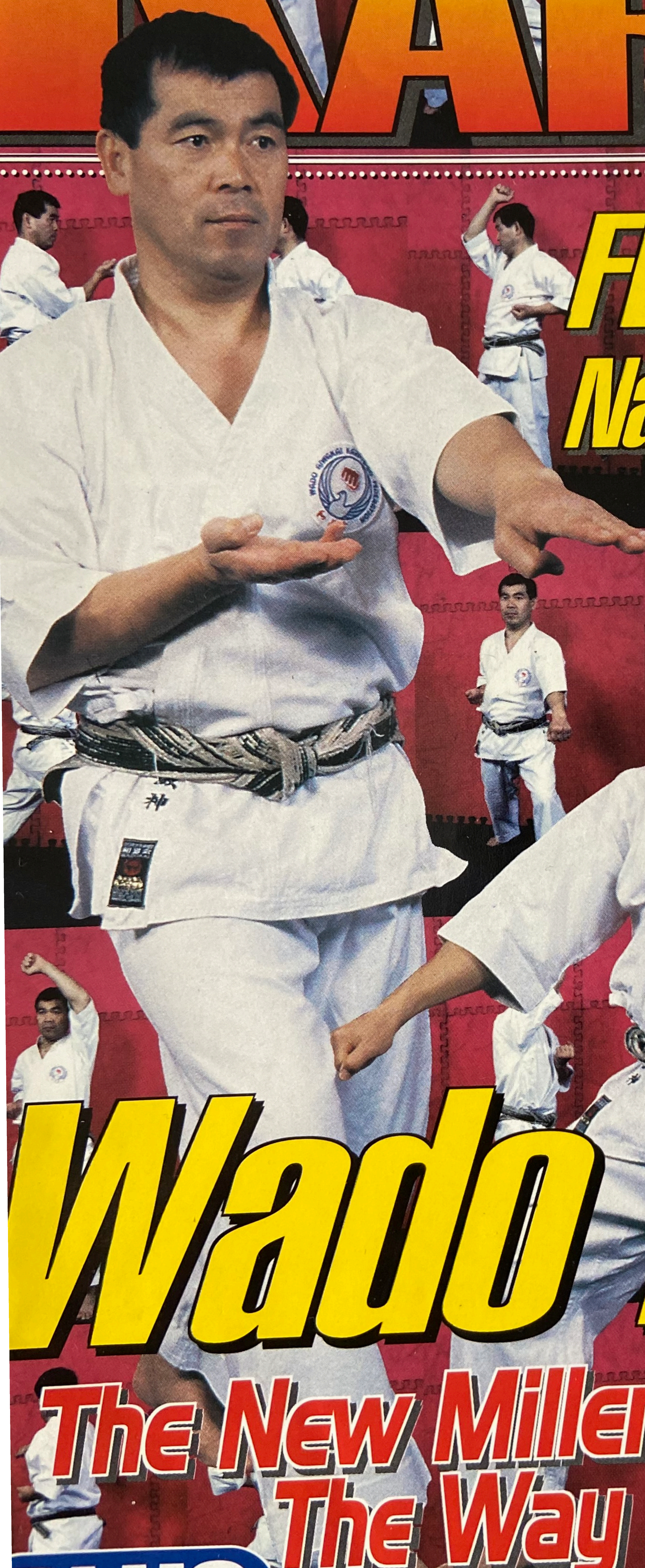


TRADITIONAL KARATE

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**FEKO's 14th Open
National Championships**
Report & Photo Special



Wado Ryu

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SAKAGAMI S



Mister Sakagami has the strong, stocky build of one of the professional boxers he admires, and likes to watch when he has some free time. Like me, he is a big fight fan, and when he talks it is with a rapid enthusiasm for all the fighting arts but especially the art for which he is known and respected- Wado Ryu. An art he hopes to see unified in the United Kingdom.

TRAD: When did you start Karate Sensei?

SAKAGAMI: I started Karate training in 1959 as a teenager but originally I wanted to train in boxing. I loved boxing and still love watching it. My city had a population of just over 200,000 at that time and I couldn't find a boxing gym and the nearest was thirty miles away, and in those days that was an impossible distance to travel. So then a friend told me you can find a Karate dojo and I said okay I'll do that instead, and that's how I started.

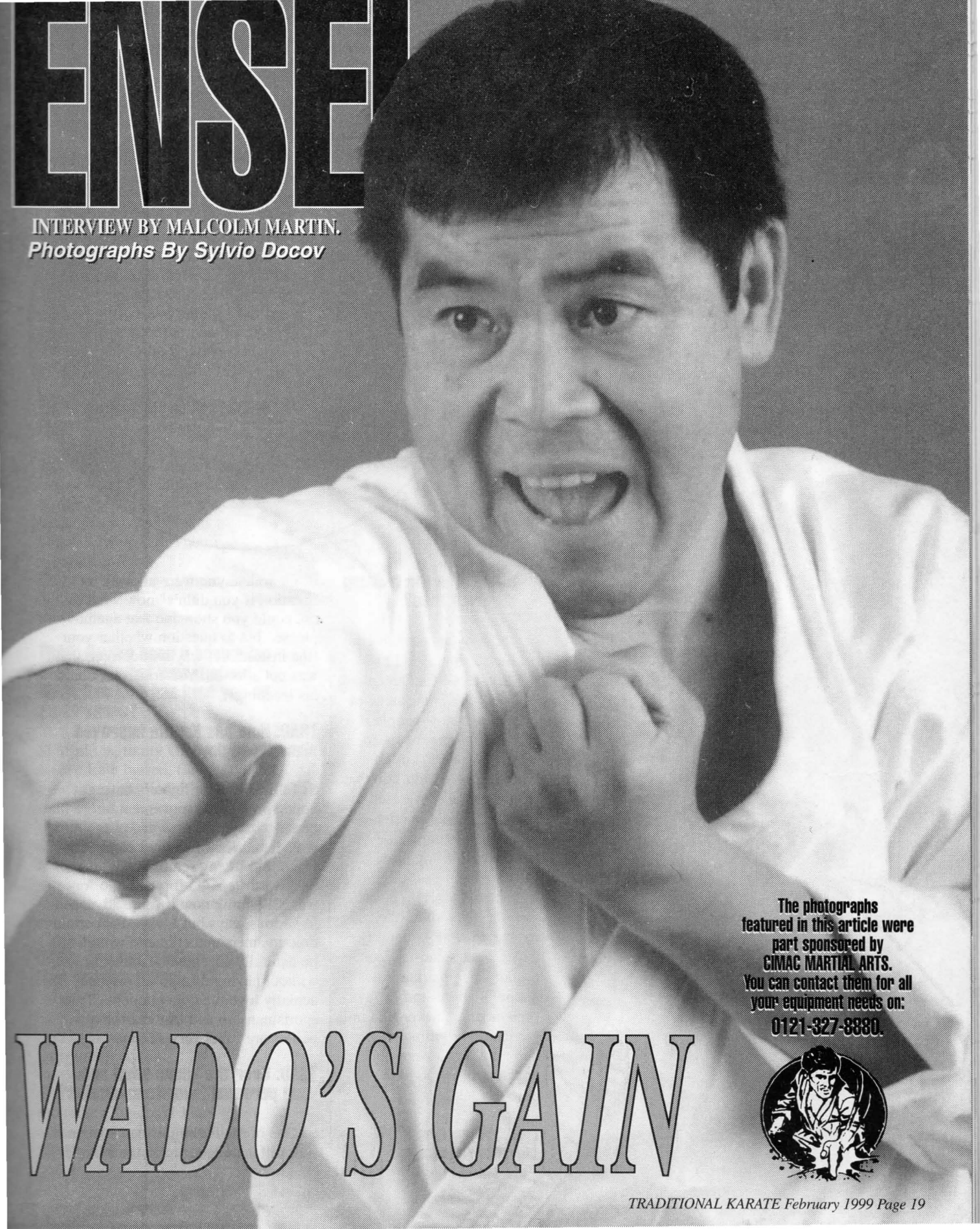
TRAD: Who was that with?

S: It happened to be one of Mister Tatsuo Suzuki's dojos, a very famous instructor with a good reputation, but of course I didn't know anything about styles, it just happened to be a Wado Ryu dojo.

BOXING'S LOSS IS

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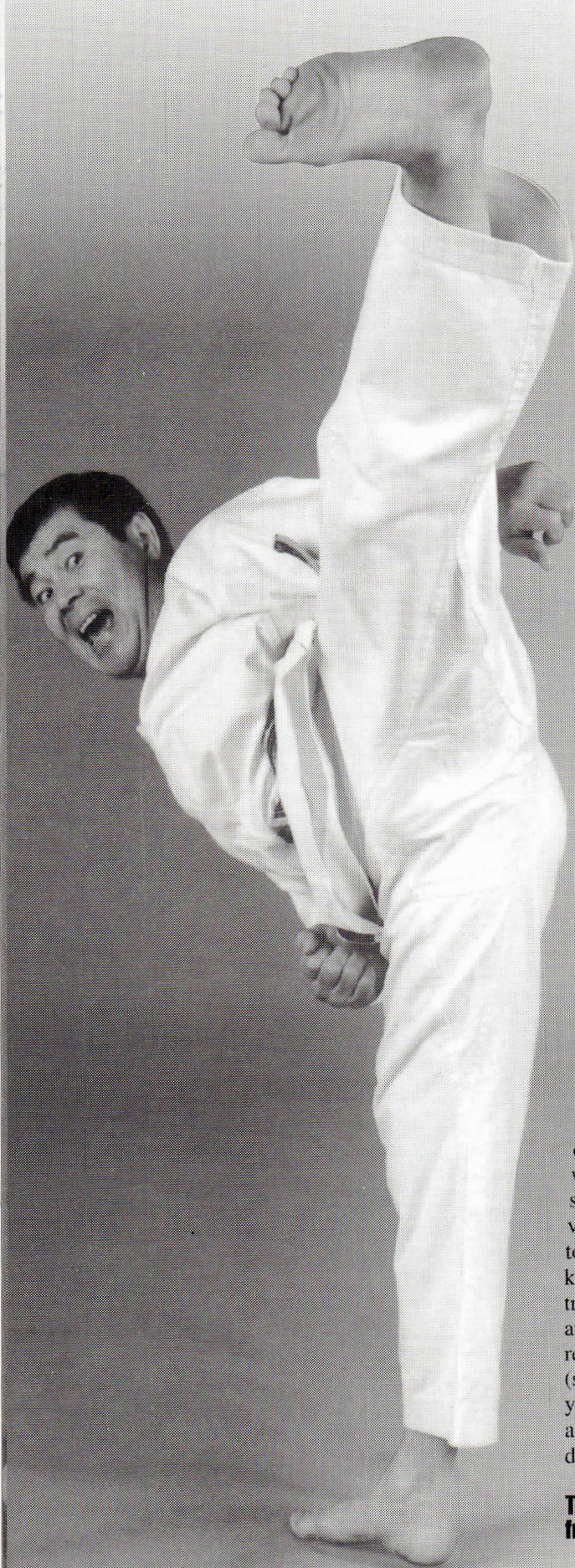
INTERVIEW BY MALCOLM MARTIN.
Photographs By Sylvio Docov



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WADO'S GAIN





TRAD: Was the training different then?

S: Whatever the martial art, Karate, Aikido, Judo, the fundamentals are always the same of course. Now people tend to do more speed and pad work, circuit training. We didn't do that in those days. We used to do the jogging in barefeet, even in Japan they don't do this any more. I was a fifteen year old schoolboy, discipline was very military style. We had to line up straight quickly, kneel, bow, stand-up. We trained under certain rules and regulations and I remember we never said no! (smiles) Everything was yes, "hai", you were not allowed to say no in the dojo! (laughs)

TRAD: Were questions frowned upon?

S: Of course you were allowed to question if you didn't know what to do, could you show me that again, please, but to question whether your (the instructors) way was correct, that was not allowed. You could not doubt his teachings.

TRAD: How has Karate improved since those days?

S: I think modern fighters have got good speed, good movement, more like boxers movement now and even wrestlers. When I entered competitions I was told by my senior never take a backward step. Go forward. Go forward! Fighting now is more advanced in various ways but I wish that certain dojo manners and etiquette would still be naturally accepted by students, without having it imposed on them. To actually love the dojo etiquette. True sportsmanship and true martial arts beliefs are I feel very similar.

TRAD: Over the years what are your personal favorite memories?

S: One of the highlights came when I was still a student, I won the Middle

TRAD: Were you confident in the English teams ability to show Wado to the Japanese?

S: I feel we can learn both ways. They could still learn certain things from Japanese students but also they could learn from European Karate students. It is not always everything from Japan. One of my senior partners in Japan told me he felt the English students were of a high standard.

TRAD: When did you first come to England?

S: I first came to England in November 1967 and I stayed with Mr. Suzuki for about six weeks to learn how to teach. I was a young 23 year old. Then I was sent to West Germany and stayed there until May 1970 when I moved back to England.

TRAD: Having been a boxing fan originally, what was it about Wado Ryu that has kept you all these years?

S: Wado is, to my knowledge, and of course I am biased, (laughs) is the most scientific Karate of all. Wado movements are very similar to other fighting arts such as boxing and even athletic sports such as fencing, dynamic but at the same time natural movements. Good Wado performers make it look so natural and natural means smooth. It flows.

TRAD: Are there other arts that you like to look at?

S: Yes, apart from boxing, some wrestling techniques, Aikido movements, their body to Wado. Obviously Judo, I believe it is a good foundation for the martial arts, especially

TRAD: Judo seems to have been replaced by the ultimate fighting styles, what are your thoughts on this?

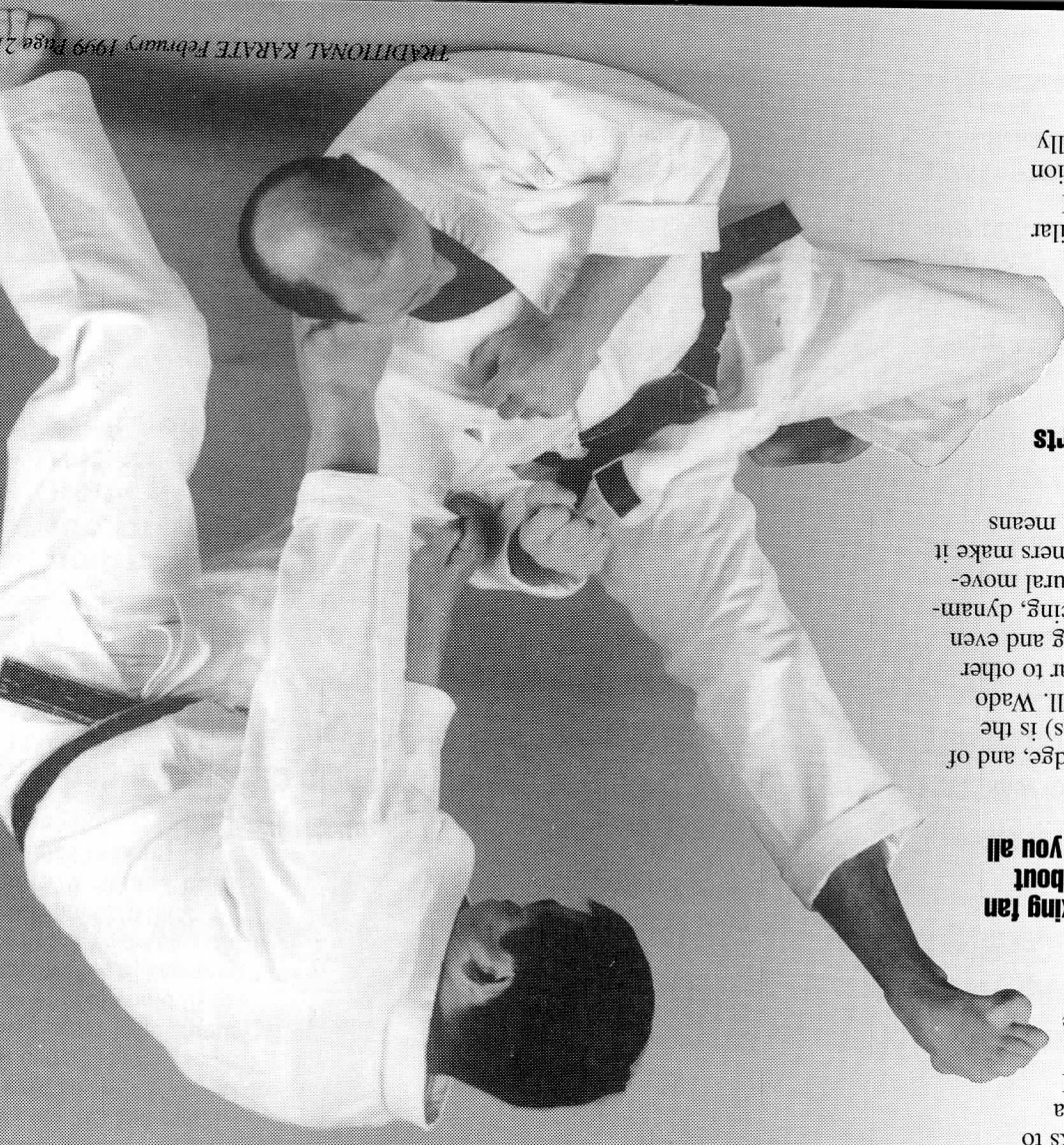
Karate, a lot of the top Karate fighters in Japan in the 50's and 60's started in Judo. They would train in Judo up to the age of 17, 18, then would come Karate.

TRAD: Is Karate a strong self defense system?

S: Yes, I could watch it for some techniques, but I would prefer to watch true wrestling or Judo, or boxing or kickboxing, rather than this everything goes. To me, ultimate fighting is no judges, no referee, two men fighting to the death! That's the truth and that is impossible. So no matter how much they say it is, it's not ultimate fighting. I'm not that interested that much but some of the technique is good.

TRAD: With so many options available to our youth now, has traditional Karate still got a role to play?

S: I believe so because let's face it, a human being is a human being, whether 2,000 years ago or today. The fundamentals are the same. Science has improved tremendously, technology-



gy but human self is still the same. It's what we call spirit, heart, mind.

TRAD: And what aims have you still got for Wado Ryu in this country?

S: In this country, having so many fragmented Wado groups, when we started in this country, it was only Wado and Shotokan, I suppose even today it is the two main styles. I want to bring the Wado groups together under the banner of England Wado Kai, with access to Wado Kai headquarters in Japan, Wado cup, European cup, dan gradings, any member country in the world. That is important to me. I have been meeting people to try and make this dream come true.

TRAD: On a personal level?

S: When you stop questioning, your growth in techniques and knowledge has stopped. So I always want to ask why do we do this and that, is there any other way to do it better? In that sense I will never stop learning.

If you would like to talk to Mr. Sakagami or join the Wado movement call him on 01902 821579. I know he'd be glad to hear from you!

