

*If you understand "it", all things are One;
If you do not, they are different and separate,
If you do not understand "it", all things are One;
If you do, they are different and separate.*

*Zen Monk, Mumon (Wu-men)
(1184 - 1260)*

CHAPTER EIGHT

Rohai-Niseishi

When his busy schedule allowed, Chitose Sensei would travel by train to Beppu approximately three times a month. On rare occasions, he would show up more often. Everyone felt fortunate to have him in attendance to teach the Saturday class. Several times he would spend the night in Beppu and teach a second class on Sunday for those who were fortunate enough to attend. When he did stay over in Beppu he would hold classes in Judo and Kendo in addition to karate. A few times Chitose Sensei arrived on Thursday and stayed through Sunday. The additional two days gave the judo, kendo, and karate students in Beppu access not only to his technical knowledge, but also to his unique insight and wisdom in the various martial arts.

On numerous occasions, the band was required to travel to Kumamoto and Camp Wood to participate in training or in formal military ceremonies. There usually was some free time during these trips to Kumamoto that allowed me the time I needed to train with Chitose Sensei, Ishikawa Sensei,

and others from the western side of the island. Training in the Kumamoto area was held in an old, small, rather run-down building that was used as a dojo, not far from the army base. Training there was much more formal than the training in Beppu. My impression was that this formality existed because Chitose Sensei lived in the area.

Chitose Sensei, who I learned was a medical doctor, was a very demanding teacher. He was very tough on his students during class but, at the same time, he was very kind to everyone after the classes were over. I began to look upon Chitose Sensei less as a karate sensei, and more as a father. When I first met him, my impression was that he was a rather aloof person. As I got to know him better, I found that he was a very warm person, who was extremely sure of himself.

One Saturday, after a very rigorous class at the Beppu dojo, Chitose Sensei asked me if I would like to accompany him to downtown Beppu to go shopping. I was flattered by his offer and accepted at once – this was to be the first of many such shopping trips.

Sensei and I left the dojo and strolled downtown. After a few blocks we turned right onto Nagare Street and entered the main business district with its busy shops. Leaving Nagare Kawa Street a few blocks later, we turned left onto one of the primary side streets that was covered by a glass roof. (Covered streets are very common in Japan.) The streets were crowded with weekend shoppers. We walked among the crowd; Chitose Sensei stopped occasionally to enter a small store to make a purchase. As we navigated our way through the throng, I would occasionally be bumped by or bump into a passing pedestrian. This caused me to become aware of a very strange phenomenon while walking with Sensei. While I was being bumped, Chitose Sensei was never bumped, jostled or even touched. His movements through the crowd reminded me of a fish that I had seen swimming in a pond. Chitose Sensei unconsciously moved around people as he walked, looked into store windows, or tried to engage me in conversation that I had trouble

understanding. Since that day, I observed this phenomenon on several occasions and I eventually asked Sensei how he did this.

"Do what?" he asked in response. He had been unaware that anything was happening and was at a loss to explain it.



On Sunday, I walked to the dojo for a special class. I left Camp Chickamauga through the back gate. The streets, as usual, were crowded. A large group of little girls wearing sailor suit dresses were at the Beppu Buddha taking a tour. At 12:45 PM, I arrived at the dojo. Chitose Sensei was in a corner training several black belts. I removed my shoes, turned and bowed to them. They paid me no notice.

"It makes no difference whether your instructor returns your bow or not," Ito had explained to me many months before. "The bow is for your benefit, not his."

I bowed again, just for good measure, before I walked into the dressing room. I hurriedly changed into my karate-gi. I felt great – full of energy. I started to stretch and warm up in anticipation of a hard training session.

"Seiretsu." (Line up.)

The students and instructors lined up in rows. We knelt in seiza. Our eyes closed, we sat in silence for a couple of minutes, opened our eyes, then bowed to the wall holding the little Japanese flag. Chitose Sensei spun around to face us.

“Sensei ni, rei.” We bowed to him. “Osu,” we said in unison.

The class sprang to its feet immediately and we started doing stretching and warm up exercises. Predictably, we did the usual hundreds of kicks, punches, blocks, and strikes. We began perspiring and our karate-gi became soaked with perspiration. Twenty minutes later it was kihon (basics) time.

Shirahama Sensei and every one of the black belts were frantic about basics because Chitose Sensei was; their obsession was understandable. Chitose Sensei had instilled this fanaticism in everyone who had been fortunate enough to become his student.

The class stepped forward into Seisan dachi. Chitose Sensei walked among the students, making small corrections and explaining the finer points of the stance: leg muscle tension, the balance points of the bottom of the foot and the proper method of punching and directing the energy forward. Ito-san checked me and was there to advise me as Chitose Sensei would explain some of the finer points about a technique.

We started punching and kicking as we moved forward and then backward. The entire class was now sweating profusely. The training floor was wet and getting slippery.

“This is not a retirement home!” Shirahama Sensei yelled in Japanese. I had heard that statement so often that I knew it by heart, it needed no translation. Several more passes were made back and forth across the training area. We did several repetitions of seisan dachi, combined with blocks, punches, strikes and kicks.

“Mawashi geri!” Chitose Sensei said, just loud enough to be heard. The mawashi geri is a kick that strikes the target horizontally. The ball of the kicking foot is snapped into the opponent’s kidneys, chest, throat, or temple/face area, with great power. The leg swings at a ninety-degree angle

as the foot strikes the opponent while the supporting leg is bent. Many of the most experienced instructors can perform the kick without pivoting on their supporting leg, however, only the most gifted karate students could do it right after the first few times.

“Knee up!” Shirahama Sensei would shout.

I was usually a little slower responding to commands than other members of the class because of the language problem. Most of the commands I had become aware of but there was always one or two I was unsure of. I would watch the Japanese students, see what they did, and follow along. Occasionally this would earn me a knock for responding slowly to the command.

Chitose Sensei and Shirahama Sensei stayed behind in the dojo as the class went outside for makiwara practice. The number of makiwara was limited and the students would line up three or four deep behind them. I was third in line and I patiently waited for my turn. The second student completed his set of punches and kicks. I moved forward to face the straw post and placed my left hand against the straw to measure my distance. I slammed my right fist into the straw-covered post again and again. Next, I moved a little farther from the post and practiced several side kicks against it. I felt a sharp pain in my buttocks.

“Knee up,” Ito said from behind me.

Automatically my foot raised a full four inches. I glanced around looking for Ito. He was already two makiwara away with a shinai in his hand checking another student. I backed away from the makiwara and the student behind me stepped forward and began to punch. Each student took three turns at the makiwara. The class jogged back into the dojo after makiwara training.

It was kata time. A quick snap of the hands to the left and a right shuto (knife hand strike), followed immediately by a left nukite (spear hand thrust) to the opponent's throat.

“Go!” (Five!) Shirahama Sensei said as Chitose Sensei and he continued to make corrections. We were nearing the end of the Potsai kata.

“Nijusan!” (Twenty-three.) The students rotated their left feet ninety degrees to the left.

“Nijushi!” (Twenty-four.) We stepped to the right and performed a Sagurite-no-kamai (open sweep hand position).



Niseishi kata training.

Another yell from Shirahama and we moved our right feet ninety degrees to the right.

“Yame.” (Finish).

We stepped back into musubi dachi, the natural stance, and bowed. We stood there, our uniforms wet; Chitose Sensei spoke to us and told us to make our uniforms neater. We were able to rest for approximately one minute before beginning another kata. Students who had been seated were ordered to stand and join the class.

“Niseishi Dai!” Chitose Sensei said. “Niseishi Dai!” the students yelled.



The kata Niseishi Sho flows as the class performs it.

The students assumed the uchi hachi dachi stance in unison as their right hand, made into a fist, was covered by the left hand. Upon the command of “Hajime!” the students double-chest blocked as they breathed in through their

nose, and out through partially closed lips, rhythmically. Niseishi was practiced several times as Chitose Sensei made corrections. After the completion of Niseishi kata training, the class formed in groups of two and began practicing Niseishi Kaisetsu. Kaisetsu are the self-defense movements within a kata.

The end of class neared and Chitose Sensei was going to demonstrate Potsai kata. The students cleared the center of the training area as Chitose Sensei moved into it.

“Potsai,” Chitose said and he sank into uchi hachi dachi. As he demonstrated the kata, his uniform snapped loudly each time his hands and arms moved to perform Shuto (knife hand) and nukite (spear hand) techniques. The kata became a thing of beauty and raw power.

When demonstrated by the other black belts Potsai was always extremely well done, however, it was just a kata. Seeing Chitose Sensei demonstrate a kata, on the other hand, was almost like a religious experience.

Finally, the class was over. We were ordered to line up and Chitose Sensei made some comments about our practice. He mentioned specific areas where he felt that we as a class needed improvement. After the final seiza and meditation we bowed and the class was dismissed. A few students retreated to the dressing room where they removed their wet karate uniforms. Many of the students, enthused by Chitose Sensei’s performance of Potsai, continued to practice.

As I was preparing to leave the floor, Ito informed me that Chitose Sensei would like to see me do a kata. I had, during the many months I had been training, learned the movements to all of the kata, including Potsai. The majority of my time however, was spent practicing the kata Seisan. Chitose Sensei, Shirahama Sensei, Ito-san, and a group of students, stood around

waiting for me to do my kata. “My Seisan is getting better,” I thought, “I should have no trouble demonstrating it.”

“Rohai Sho,” Chitose Sensei said.

Caught by surprise, I hesitated for a moment, bowed, stepped into uchi hachi dachi, and started the kata. I dropped down on one knee into an iaigoshi dachi, blocking downward, then sprang up and did a double side punch (morote yoko tsuki). I worked my way through the kata, gaining confidence as I went along. I front kicked, stepped forward into a kosa dachi, did a juji uke to the side, and an X block to my right side. Instead of stepping back with my left leg and punching to my right, I stepped back and performed a haito uchi strike with my left hand. I snapped my hips and faced to my left as I did a shuto strike, and completed the kata. Suddenly I realized that I had made a major mistake. I had started one kata and finished with another. Chitose Sensei, Shirahama Sensei, Ito, and the rest stood there with big grins on their faces.

“Atarashii kata (new kata), Rohai-Niseishi.” Chitose Sensei said to everyone present, while smiling at me. “Moichido!” (One more time!)

On my second attempt to do the kata, I made no mistakes.

“Gould bouy,” Chitose Sensei said, as he patted me on the shoulder and smiled.

“Chitose Sensei is scheduled to return to Kumamoto City later this evening,” Ito told me. “We stay and train, would you rike stay, train?” Ito asked.

I remained at the dojo with a few others. We trained an additional hour and forty-five minutes. With Ito-san translating Chitose Sensei’s comments, I learned a great deal that day and I came to realize why Chitose Sensei’s last name meant, “the man of infinite wisdom.”

Ito, a few others, and I visited a local bathhouse after we left the dojo. For over an hour we soaked in the steaming waters. Some small plastic cups appeared as a cold bottle of Asahi beer was passed around. I took a cup and attempted to sip the beer from it but had great difficulty. I drank a little; however, after my night out with Don Matthews, my taste for beer had not fully returned. I bowed to Ito upon leaving the bathhouse after an hour of soaking and we went our separate ways.



I took Rocky's words of wisdom seriously when he told me that I should relax and enjoy life and not do karate all the time. On Sunday of the following weekend, Howard, Kazuko, Junko, and I planned a trip to Takazaki Yama, the famous Monkey Mountain just to the north of Beppu. We had been anticipating the trip for some weeks.

Howard and I saw the girls standing in front of the Hanago Bar and Grill when we were still half a block away. Kazuko was wearing a green flowered American style dress; Junko was wearing a purple blouse and black slacks. Both looked radiant.

"Have you been waiting long?" Howard inquired.

"Not long," Kazuko answered as she flashed Howard a big grin.

I winked at Junko and asked her if she had missed me since I had been spending so much time on training.

"No miss," she replied with a shrug. "No miss pain in butt."

“Gee, thanks,” I replied. “It’s nice to know that you were concerned.”

This made her laugh and the one eye peaking out from behind her hair twinkled with delight.

We entered the Hanago Bar and Grill and sat at a booth in one corner. Howard and the girls had the standard Japanese fare. I never learned to eat many vegetables and was leery of food I couldn’t easily identify. As a result, my meal consisted of fried chicken and french fries. The fried chicken was delicious although the french fries, which were quartered like boiled potatoes, tasted as if they had been deep fried in fish grease.



The Beppu Buddha.

After our meal, we walked to the bicycle rental shop, which was adjacent to the Beppu Buddha. Howard and I paid the four hundred yen for four old

bicycles. We inspected all the bikes and located the best four. To our good fortune, we located one that was a little smaller than the rest – the ideal bike for Junko. The owner of the small shop, an old man, adjusted the seat of the smallest bicycle to its lowest position so Junko’s feet could reach the pedals.

“Now that we have the bicycles, who knows the best way to Monkey Mountain?” I asked.

“Follow me,” Junko replied.

We rode single file through the narrow side streets of Beppu as we wound our way northward.

The sun was coming out from behind the clouds, which were slowly dissipating. Motorized traffic was very light. As we rode north on the bay road, an occasional three-wheeled truck passed us. The pedestrians, however, were another matter. Large numbers were walking in both directions. We rang our little bicycle bells to warn them that we were behind them as we rode through the throng on our way to the mountain.

After a short ride we were in the countryside. The houses were thinning out and giving way to lush tropical vegetation. To our right was an unobstructed view of the bay. After pedaling for fifteen more minutes, we started up the mountain. The mountain had a gradual slope that was easy to ascend, even with the old one-speed bicycles. As we slowly advanced up the side of the mountain we became aware of chatter coming from the trees. Monkeys were becoming more and more numerous the higher we went up the mountain. The road gradually became steeper. We had to stop and push the bicycles up the mountain road on a few of the steepest grades. At last, the road leveled off. We climbed back onto our bicycles and began pedaling again. The girls were holding up very well and did not seem winded from the ride. Howard and I were starting to feel fatigued and a little saddle sore from the bicycle

seats. Of course, being U.S. Paratroopers and heroes in our own minds, we would never let the girls know that they were harder than we were.

Ahead of us lay a sharp curve. Upon rounding the curve we caught view of a small store on the left side of the road. Outside the store were several benches and, surprisingly, a brand new Coca Cola sign hanging in front. We agreed that this would make a good rest area. Howard and I painfully got off of the bicycles.



The Monkey's of Takazaki Yama.

As we entered the store, we were warmly greeted by a little old lady in her seventies who had come out of a back room to wait on us. Kazuko and Junko did the ordering; Howard and I did the paying. We each had a cold Coca Cola and a candy bar. We went outside and sat on the benches to consume our snacks. As soon as we opened our drinks and candy, we were surrounded

by monkeys. Some of them were very brave and came right up to us begging to be fed. Occasionally, a monkey would run up to us and try to swipe our candy bars from our hands.

Our return to Beppu was much easier since it was mostly down hill. After returning the bicycles, the four of us headed back to the Hanago Bar and Grill. Upstairs above the grill was the bar, which had a very large dance floor. The floor was crowded, as usual. Howard, Kazuko, Junko, and I had been dancing for about a half-hour when suddenly a commotion erupted in the center of the dance floor.

A pretty, young Japanese girl, using both hands, pushed her GI boyfriend, with whom she had been dancing, away from her. She had a look of anger on her face. I recognized the GI who was her boyfriend immediately. It was Antonio Cavello, an Italian national who had joined the U.S. Army. After serving in the Army for five years he would be eligible for American citizenship.

“What’s the matter me?! What’s the matter you?! That’s what’s the matter me!” the little Japanese girl exclaimed. Despite her barely understandable English, she had a great Italian accent. Everyone in the bar roared with laughter. Tony, who was barely capable of speaking passable English himself, had taught his girlfriend English – and what a job he had done!

We left the Hanago and strolled up Nagare Kawa Street in the direction of Kazuko’s and Junko’s home. After a hug and a good night kiss, Howard and I headed back to the main gate of Camp Chickamauga thinking life couldn’t possibly get any better than this.

