

The Life Of A Budo Master Part 2

According to his birth record, Kenshiro Abe was born the fourth son of Mrs Koto Abe on the 15th December 1915 in Tokushima province, which was 1.9 kilometres from Yoshino River and located in the paddy field region close to the foot of the mountains. His father Toshizo was born in 1867 and was a school master, his wife Koto was born in 1877 as the second daughter of Toshizo's neighbour, Mr Gonzo Katakana.

In early summer when Kenshiro was four years old, in the head families house, the relatives and friends came around to help thrash the wheat. Kenshiro, always upto much mischief would run back and forth, to the annoyance of all the others. One of them asked Kenshiro to stay away from them and pushed his buttocks away with a farm implement. You hit me with a tool exclaimed Kenshiro, he blamed a 30 year old fellow who happened to be holding a tool. After chasing him around the house three times, the fellow gave up the chase to invite kenshiro to hit him back. It did not take long for Kenshiro Abe to become famous in the village after that.

On the 4th of September 1919 Kenshiro's father died which probably made the family stronger. Kenshiro and his older sister, Toyoko developed a most wonderful relationship which was to affect both of their lives. Mr Manpei Hino, who was about 20 years old when Abe was just four was a good friend and became almost a father figure to the young Kenshiro. Manpei was a good worker and was also the person in charge of special education for a gifted Judo master.

Kenshiro was always mad about Sumo, he and Manpei would spend many hours wrestling so he followed Manpei day and night and never stopped taking him when ever the chance arose. This was despite taking so many tumbles from Manpei. For instance, Manpei was very often tackled from behind and his neck strangled by Kenshiro, when he was sitting on the door step to have his lunch. In the end Manpei had to ask kenshiro to stop his playful games.

It was Mr Fujiwara, his primary school teacher,

who ran that special education in parallel with Manpei's. Fujiwara very much loved to let his students play sumo in physical education classes on rainy days. Kenshiro liked Sumo the best among all the subjects. Although his physique was normal, he was the strongest in his class.



In a harvest festival in October, shrines nearby held a children's tournament for the dedication. Kenshiro went out to take part in it and returned with many prizes such as stationery and sometimes cash. When he entered a lower secondary school, the direction of his life was determined. In April Showa 2, he attended a lower school nearby in Kawashima town, which had recently been built, at the age of 14 years. In the beginning there was no Judo-Bu (club or circle), so he took part in a basketball club against his will. In the second year, as soon as Mr Kazohira Nakamoto 3rd Dan, a former police officer came and founded a Judo-Bu, Kenshiro joined the club joyfully and without delay. His young lithe body was honed to the training of Mr Nakamoto, the teacher was not only very earnest, but also an excellent teacher of Judo. Kenshiro's enthusiasm exceeded his teachers expectations.

Their energy effected each other and created more powerful energy. His instinct to fight has been prompted by playing Sumo with Manpei and the primary school teacher Fujiwara's special education.

He was asked to refine his Judo, which he did, and was awarded his Shodan during his third year of lower school, Nidan the following year, and Sandan a year later. In the examination for Sandan he defeated ten other candidates without any problem. One of the judges was from the Butoku-kai, Mr Shotaro Tabata 8th Dan, praised him very much and recommended Mr Nakamoto to allow him to study for entry to the "Busen," in those days, 'Kodokan' and 'Busen' were both issuing Dan grades up to 5th Dan, they examined candidates ability very carefully, Kenshiro laid the foundations for his theory of Kyushindo whilst advancing through the Dan grades, and at a very early age.

Although Tokushima province was not over

enthusiastic about Judo, there was no student capable of defeating Abe, during his fourth year at secondary school.

Kenshiro was also a very good athlete and thoroughly enjoyed pole vaulting. One of his teachers who taught physical education wrote me that, he was always proud of teaching him as his student. Not only was he a very serious person who neither smoked or drank in secret, he was also very spirited, even bullies respected his prowess and chose to leave him alone.

One day, one of the Judo club members insulted another member who ran off crying, this kind of discrimination still went on in certain parts of the country. The insulted student on arriving home told people in the village, many becoming very angry, and flooded into the school. At the time, the teacher had left for his own home for private reasons, and only some Judo students were left with their training. The villagers demanded to see someone in authority and the student who was responsible for the insult.

So Kenshiro stopped the training, came forward and said, I am the captain of this club, a members fault is my fault so I will listen to you, but now we are all training, would you please wait until we have finished. He allowed the students to complete their training and leave for home, Kenshiro then accompanied the villagers back to the leaders house and listened to the details of the insult and remarked that he personally had not heard any of the offending remark as he had been engrossed in training at the time. Kenshiro added that he would apologise and punish the offending student severely for the insult. The villagers admired his respectable behaviour to apologise, and set about preparing him a dinner. Far from hesitating, Kenshiro asked for further helpings several times and ate all that was placed before him. Everyone was delighted with his manliness and began to call him "Taisho" (A great man) treating him like an adult from then onward.

In Showa 6, at the fifth year of school, there was an inter city tournament in Tokushima province, 30 towns sent 5 members each, made up of school students, policemen and students from a local Judo Dojo. Kenshiro represented Kawashima town as the captain.

Kenshiro was very fast and light in foot and body, once he blasted in with a technique, every opponent was dispatched in double quick time, his movements were so fast, that it was not possible to follow the technique. He won all his contests and Kawashima town consolidated their victory. He got the reputation that he seemed to have "wings." The whole of Tokushima resounds with his nickname "Pegasus."

When he was close to finishing lower school, his entrance exam for 'Busen' was prepared by his teacher Mr Nakano and others. Mr Tahata's suggestion, and

the fact that another student one year older from his own school had already been accepted for 'Busen,' greatly helped the entry for Abe. For in those days, for people to become expert in Judo and Kendo, a Judo teacher in a school, and a Judo Instructor in a city police force was the best way to enter 'Busen.' Although there are other schools around, such as "Tokyo Kushi Taikuka," "Tokyo Taiku Senmon Gakko" and "Kokushihan Senmon Gakko."

In 'Busen' that year, 300 candidates took the entrance examination for Judo and Kendo, which accept only 20 students each. Abe took the examination of "Kokushikan" first, which gave the exam earlier than 'Busen.' The exam was taken in two parts, writing and active, the active part was organised as a practice session between candidates. Abe defeated three students without difficulty. After the exam, Mr Kazuni Kudo from the Kodokan stopped Abe and earnestly asked a question, whether he would enter 'Busen' if he were to pass. It seemed likely that a 19 year old would answer, "Yes" I would like to yes, but I would rather talk to my parents first! But actually, he answered without hesitation, I am going to take the exam for 'Busen' afterwards, if I pass I will choose 'Busen.'

For the 'Busen' exam, he won two contests and drew the third, and he gained a second position among all candidates, the first position went to Mr Isao Tose, who left 'Kokushikan' in the middle of a course.

As Abe had passed for the 'Busen,' now it was a matter of finding accommodation in Kyoto. Abe was not the sort of person who cared to much for every day life such as washing, cooking, cleaning up and household chores, so Mr Kakamoto suggested Abe's mother follow him to Kyoto to look after him. Abe's mother agreed, saying that Kenshiro was the last of her sons, which would be her last task. Mrs Abe was 56 years of age, she sold half her fields and asked someone to look after the other half, rented a house in Kyoto and set out of a new life. Shortly after they had settled in, Abe's elder sister Toyoko moved in the house.