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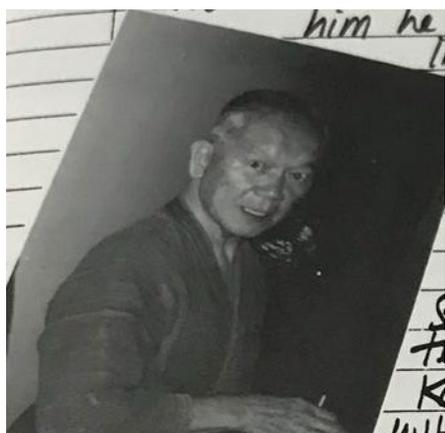
REMEMBERING LIM SENSEI

LIM KWA CHWEE

This article is an excerpt based on the accounts of David Kwok, 'one of the old birds in Singapore Kendo Club', who knew and trained with Lim Kwa Chwee Sensei. It tells the story of Lim Sensei and early days of how Singapore Kendo Club came to be. Mr Kwok has since passed on, but we're deeply grateful to him for having kept a part of SKC history for us to remember.

Kendo, the ancient art of swordsmanship, came to Singapore during the years she was known as ‘Syonan-to’. At that time **Cik Hamid Ahmad**, who was later to become one of the pioneers of Singapore Kendo Club, **had picked up Kendo from some Japanese officers** at that time.

Another pioneer, in fact the man who was instrumental in the founding of Singapore Kendo Club was Mr. Lim Kwa Chwee. He had long been inspired by the samurais in the old movies he used to enjoy and was most impressed by their attitude towards living their **devotion to duty, self-discipline** and **sense of honour**.



Lim Kwa Chwee Sensei

Determined to learn the way the sword, he began his quest for a Kendo teacher and eventually he was introduced to Cik Hamid Ahmad. However much to his disappointment, Cik Hamid who had not trained Kendo for several years refused his request.

Undaunted, Mr Lim persisted to request Cik Hamid to teach him Kendo. Perhaps his quest seemed like a scenario from the old movies he enjoyed, and finally Cik Hamid relented and consented to impart his knowledge of Kendo to him and a small group of enthusiasts in 1968. Thus began Lim Sensei’s **life-long devotion to the way of the Sword at the age of 46**.

Initially, training was conducted at the Police Training School (PTS) as Mr Lim was a senior police officer at that time with Polis Republic Singapura. There was no luxury of a proper dojo. Instead, training was done on concrete floor in a training shed. **What was more important was that the students were keen and willing to train hard.**

Together with **Mr. Lim Kwa Chwee**, amongst the other pioneers were **Mr. Andrew Lim**, Mr Lim's only son. And there was **Mr Chong Weng Khun**, whom many of the older members fondly refer to as 'Old Man Chong', and also **Mr. Francis Lee**, an old friend of Mr Lim.

SKC was officially registered at the Registry of Societies in 1972, and was given the status of a National Sports Association (NSA).



Pioneers of Singapore Kendo Club

In 1974, it became an affiliate of the FIK, International Kendo Federation, and was registered with the Martial Arts Control Unit (MACU) as required by law.



Original kendokas from all walks of lives

Thus, with the club formally registered, the following aims and objectives were subsequently drafted in the club's constitution:

Aims and Objectives of Singapore Kendo Club:

1. To promote the sport, Kendo, in Singapore through the conduct of regular and organised classes at venues, designated and/or approved by MACU.
2. Through the rigorous training of Kendo, promote and pursue the ideals of a rugged society.
3. Through the culture and traditions inherent to Kendo, inculcate the qualities of humility, patience, tolerance and self-discipline through the Spiritual and physical perfection of Kendo.
4. To enhance and strengthen the bonds of brotherhood amongst the many races of Singapore.

Singapore Kendo Club made its **first public debut in 1972** and since then, contributed to the promotion of Kendo through demonstrations staged for various Ministries and campaigns.

By then, the club had attracted a sizable number of Japanese expats and children. **It is indeed very fortunate that in Singapore, there are many Japanese who chose to train Kendo and SKC remains grateful for their participation.**

In the late 70s, Singapore Judo Federations was allocated a new dojo at Portsdown Road, and their former dojo on the rooftop of the People's Association was allocated to Singapore Kendo Club.



Rooftop dojo at
People's Association



Huge dojo with spring boards!

Many of the members then would remember mopping the vast 20m x 45m dojo on Sunday mornings that gave them more than enough 'oomph' for training. The

building itself was older than most of the members, the toilets were miles away and the climb up the spiral staircase was to say the least, breath taking! But it was cool big, airy, and most of all, it was SKC's own dojo.

In 1974, soon after SKC was formed, **Mr Lim Kwa Chwee stepped into the international arena during the 3rd World Kendo Championships in U.K.** Singapore did not win, but the Singapore flag was unfurled for the first time at this prestigious triannual tournament, and would probably be one of Lim Sensei's proudest moments for Singapore Kendo.

There were several occasions where SKC had to form a team to participate in friendly exchanges in Malaysia, or when a sizable number of kendo guests came to Singapore.

However in April 1988, **SKC formed a team to represent the Club at the 1st opening of the ASEAN Kendo Tournament.**



Singapore's first appearance at the 3rd World Kendo Championships

On **11 May 1988**, barely a month after the 1st ASEAN Kendo Tournament in Kuala Lumpur, **Lim Kwa Chwee Sensei collapsed and passed away during training at the Singapore Japanese School dojo.**

Former senseis in Japan proposed a Memorial challenge trophy in his honour and the 400k yen trophy was eventually brought to Singapore by S.Sasahara sensei and K.Nakajima sensei – the prime movers of the trophy fund.

Known as the ‘Lim Kwa Chwee Memorial Goodwill Kendo Tournament’, the event was inaugurated by the ambassador of Japan, Mr. Yamaguchi. The same year, the dojo was shifted from the rooftop of People’s Association to the Japanese School.

SKC has been extremely fortunate in having many Japanese teachers training with our members, and also extremely grateful to the Singapore Japanese School for allowing us to use the school facilities over the years.

In retrospect, the ‘growth’ of Singapore Kendo Club for the past decades have been consistent in terms of membership numbers. However, in terms of our interaction with the rest of the Kendo world, we have come a long way.

What is most important is that our members have not departed from the original aims and objectives of the Club and from the basic ideals of Kendo.

This, more than anything, should be our greatest tribute we can give to our late founder, Lim Kwa Chwee Sensei.