

RECOGNIZING THE OLYMPIC KARATE EFFORT OF THE 1980s AND 1990s

By Patrick Hickey

There have been a number of formations of the National Governing Body (NGB) for Karate through the United States Olympic Committee. Probably none are as formidable as the original “USA Karate.” This is The USA Karate Federation which will be holding a major Hall of Fame induction in Akron, Ohio, Saturday April 18, 2015. “AAU Karate” morphed from being simple karate committee of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) to an incorporated sports committee of the AAU (NAAUKC) until leaving the AAU to become USA Karate and the NGB member for Karate in the United States Olympic Committee (USOC), a position it held until 1995. Jerry Thompson was the initial chairman, and later George Anderson with Patrick Hickey and Thomas LaPuppet complete the “triumvirate” credited with building a major Olympic karate effort. During this time frame many important martial artists in the United States dedicated their time and effort to the “USA Karate” effort. Among these include many Japanese instructors such as Takiyuki Mikami, Hidy Ochiai, Kiyoshi Yamazaki, Minobu Miki, Koji Sugimoto, Masaharu Sakimukai, Katsutaka Tanaka and others. On the American side, in addition to



Anderson, Hickey, and Lapuppet were Don Madden, Phil Koeppel, Jim Cottrell, John Nanay, John Townsley, Jim Mather, Robert Saal, Al Santucci, Bernie Scarda, Babe Sorrento, Alex Sternberg, Chuck Merriman, Ridgely Abele, Bill Viola, , Roger Jarrett and many others too numerous to name. Many prominent athletes participated in the “USA Karate” effort including Tokey Hill, Ken Ferguson, Billy Blanks, Alberto Pena, Domingo Llanos, Kathy Baxter, Gina Halderman, John Linebarger, John DiPasquale, Bob Allen, Joe Minney, Eddie Bethea, Julio Martinez, Michael Graves, Jerry Kattawar, David Ames and Gary Tetsui. A number of the younger competitors from the old “USA Karate” now have important positions in the current NGB such as Cedric Barksdale, Cleve Baxter, Bob Allen, Tommy Hood, Dustin Baldis, Matthew Ralph, John Fonseca, Christina Muccinni and the list goes on and on.

The Hall of Fame in Akron in 2015 is intended to create awareness of the efforts of the original pioneers of the Olympic karate effort in the United States. This includes athletes, coaches, officials, administrators, statewide organizers, and a myriad of martial artists that were needed to make “USA Karate” grown into huge program that included local and state qualifiers, league qualifiers, Junior Olympics, State Games and national championships.





During its heyday, “USA Karate” had athletes, junior and adult, every month in different countries representing the United States.

During its tenure as the NGB, “USA Karate” is credited with creating the first Pan American karate organization – the Pan American Union of Karate-do Organizations with George Anderson as the first president. The general secretary at the time was William Millerson who now is president of the current Pan American karate body. The United States team was the first official Pan American Karate Champions. This Pan American organization under George Anderson’s leadership and guidance is credited with placing karate as a sport in the Pan American Sports Organization games and is the reason today why US Karate athletes participate in the Pan American Games and within the Olympic Committee.

On the world level, attention was turned to the United States when George Anderson was elected chairman of the powerful referee committee of the World Union of Karate-do Organizations (now World Karate Federation) and later became its first vice president and participated in the merger discussions with the International Traditional Karate Federation (which after 20 years is still raising its head in international karate politics.) While Vice President he helped organize both the medical committee and tournament administration committee of the WUKO along with Thomas LaPuppet and Michael Bukala.

In the United States, in addition to creating the largest qualifying network of karate tournaments, the “USA Karate” led the way in the professionalizing of competitions by requiring official certification, bye charts, documented registrations, and many other regulations in use by other major

sports groups in the USA. Many of these improvements are still being used today with little or no modification. During this time frame George Anderson became the first karateka to be a member of the United States Olympic Committee and “USA Karate” held the first All American Youth Championships and first Karate Junior Olympics.

None this could have happened without the contribution and dedication of numerous martial artists in many different capacities. Many of these martial artists have not received recognition for their accomplishments. The Hall of Fame activities will recognize many of these individuals for their part of the legacy that is “USA Karate” in the United States.

This Induction Ceremony and activities will take place at the The SYB Hall 4157 Hudson Drive Stow, Ohio 44224. The Hall of Fame is expected to be a sell out so you may wish to get your tickets early. Tickets for the Hall of Fame induction ceremony can be purchased at https://events.membersolutions.com/event_detail.asp?content_id=48501. Hotel information is found on the registration website.

At this time The USA Karate Federation is attempting to find and contact individuals that were involved from 1981 to 1995. If you were, or are aware of someone, please email their contact details to usakarate@usakarate.us.

The USA Karate Federation is a 501.c.3 tax exempt charitable foundation. “USA Karate” is a registered trademark of The USA Karate Federation.

In addition to the USA Karate Hall of Fame, the Police Self Defense Institute (PSDI) will also participate with their Hall of Fame activities. 