



Just as it is the clear mirror that reflects without distortion, or the quiet valley that echoes a sound, so must one who would study Karate-Do purge himself of selfish and evil thoughts, for only with a clear mind and conscience can he understand that which he receives.

Master Gichin Funakoshi

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NL SHOTOKAN KARATE

JULY NKA SHOTOKAN SEMINAR AND DAN GRADING:

SENSEI OFFER KARATEKA FIVE TONES OF THE SAME COLOUR

Basics, open-hand defense and attack, explosive power, effective shifting, core stability and control, spirit in the Dojo...and more!

That is a sampling of what karate followers were presented with at the July NKA Shotokan seminar. It was a full-day event marked by training under each of the five Sensei (during the morning) and then a Dan grading in the afternoon. It was a particularly great day to be a karate student.

Those in attendance worked hard as one Sensei would facilitate the group with instruction and demonstration while the other four made their way around the floor, keeping the trainees in check and assisting them as they saw fit.

Attending as a brown belt to be graded for first Dan, I remember thinking that there couldn't be anywhere in North America where you could go to get such a concentrated offering of Karate knowledge and tutelage. Each with their own particular methods and teaching approaches, the five Sensei demonstrated, drilled and directed us as we went through the paces of repetition that are so important to becoming more adept in the martial arts.

Still impressively motivating and passionate about their art, they collectively embody decades of karate knowledge and training. They are eager to pass on the tradition and fundamental effectiveness of Shotokan as it relates to the mind, body and spirit.

If you study Shotokan, these seminars are invaluable.

J. Hutchings



CONGRATULATIONS TO THOSE WHO PASSED THEIR BLACK BELT (DAN) GRADINGS

— THE LEARNING BEGINS AGAIN

*Billy Moran—Sandan * Kara Bourgeois—Sandan * Dan Blackmore—Sandan*

Liam Wilson—Nidan

*Nicole Maddox - Shodan * Jeff Mayo—Shodan * Mary Williams—Shodan * Jeff Hutchings—Shodan*



松濤館



Recently I had the pleasure of having a discussion with Sensei Wayne Lee regarding his lifetime of studying and teaching the art of Shotokan Karate. As was expected, our talk was interesting and intriguing and offered a high level look into Sensei Lee's Shotokan life.

How it started:

Sensei Lee got his start in Karate in 1972, and has been dedicated to the art since that time. He was a university student and was turned on to karate by his cousin, Jerry Lee. Jerry Lee, Jerry Finn, Joe Gillies and Don Foo were all studying karate at the time and can be considered the initial group of karateka in this province.

Sensei Lee's admiration for Karate was immediate and he made tremendous effort to know more.

My cousin, Bruce and I would hitchhike from my house in the Gould's to the Dojo on Flavin Street in St. John's to get to class. I had watched my cousin Jerry Lee doing things like shuto blocks and the like and it looked interesting to me and I thought I'd try it. That was forty years ago, I guess.

The group that Sensei Lee started out with were always looking for Karate teachers and would oftentimes go down to the docks in St. John's to see if any of the visiting ships had anyone onboard who knew Karate. Dr. David Bell was a professor at MUN who could speak Japanese and he would talk to the men on the ships and ask if anyone was practicing Karate. Through this determination and attitude they were able to make contacts that would have lasting effects on their karate training.

We trained with Shane Higashi, Tsuruoka Sensei's number one student, and after that we trained under Tsuruoka Sensei himself for about fifteen years. He is considered the father of karate in Canada. With him we trained to the physical limit and even beyond, and this was the basis of our karate. We also were fortunate enough to have Nishiyama Sensei, a world-renowned master. Nishiyama Sensei visited us sometimes two or three times a year for fifteen years. Sometimes there were only ten to twenty people and we'd spend two or three days with him. Under them we trained hard and developed. We also trained with and Calvin and Melvin Wilder who came from New York with George Cofield.

There were always people in the dojo like Gary Brien, Ern Howell, Paul Bell and David Bell who helped you get sharper. We'd spar often and it made us both sharper and stronger. There were a lot of good influences in the Dojo. It brought your game up. There were also other Dojo peers like Bob Howse and Randy Williams who you trained with and they helped you develop.

Competition:

Sensei Lee started competing in 1977 as a purple belt, and in 1978 as a brown belt at the Nationals in Oshawa, Ontario. Over the years, in total, he attended fourteen National events and two world championships. At the height of his Shotokan competitive years he was ranked second in Canada.

I asked Sensei Lee about competition in Karate and if it is a hindrance or asset to our art.

Competition is a great experience. Competition is in no way a bad thing for karate. It's all about how you train and what you want to get out of it. Competition allowed you to apply your basics at the highest level. Competition allowed me to travel the world and meet all kinds of people; people like Ted Youngblood, Dave Green, the Jennings brothers, Brad Jones and David Tsuruoka. Many of these are still friends of mine to this day.

Even though it was non-contact, sometimes in competition you gave some knocks and you took some knocks but it all made you more determined to work and train harder. It was about spirit; if you got defeated, you were defeated with spirit, but if you won you won with humility. If you got defeated you'd dig deeper and get the adrenalin going, and find a way to get better. To be a good competitor you had to be sharp in the Dojo. If you were sharp in the Dojo and trained for the techniques to just come out of you, then you could bring that to competition and were sharp in competition.

During the competition days I trained five days a week; morning, sometimes lunchtime and then in the evening.

In Sensei Lee's opinion, the representation from Canada and from Newfoundland was as good as any in competition, and seeing this helped instill in him a deeper respect for the people he had trained with and the karate he had learned from Senseis Tsuruoka and Nishiyama.



One of Sensei's most cherished accomplishments was being chosen by his peers (out of 300-400 competitors) and presented with the Sportsmanship of Canada award. Sensei Lee feels that this award was the most meaningful of all his awards.

Training: - Then and Now:

Sensei Lee recalls training in his Dojo years ago and the differences he sees.

We no longer stand in Kiba Dachi or front stance with someone on our shoulders, or get whacked with the Shinai to keep us focused. I'm not saying that's the way it should be, but we don't train now as hard as we should. I remember that fifteen minutes into the training session at my Dojo, the floor would be soaked in sweat, making students tighten their gut and legs to stay stable on the Dojo floor.

Sometimes students need to be pushed to the point of exhaustion and then a little more. This is the way to learn to dig deeper and find that last bit of spirit – dig down into your gut and find some more. When you're training like this, 'Yame!' should be the best words you've ever heard!

In training we need to get back to basics. Basics are like the alphabet – if you can't spell a word you go back to breaking it down. When we get lost in Karate or in a Kata, we need to let it go and go back to basics. Training and repetition in basics are the core of Shotokan.

The other thing we need is to use the Makivara more. We need Makivara and punching bags to learn how to drain your techniques and not simply bounce off. Hitting something and bouncing back is no good. In the early days I had a spruce tree cut off in my yard and that was my Makivara! On a Makivara you learn distance and timing and to keep the power flowing. I'd use this as a Makivara and use bicycle inner-tubes attached to trees behind me and attached to my arms and legs to provide training resistance.

The other thing we don't do enough of is Kata. Kata are the basics of Karate and Kata itself can be your total workout.



The Future of Shotokan:

The final thing we discussed was the future of Shotokan and whether or not Sensei Lee had any concerns.

Yes, I do. I think that Shotokan Dojos need to be tighter, and although everyone has their own flavour, etc, we need basic criteria to make sure we are all on the same page. There was a time when the Shotokan Dojos would attend summer camps and more seminars and we'd train together and party together – that way you got to know everyone. This also lets you get the knowledge and information out of the Sensei.

I also think we need more Dojos – not as a money making outfit, but to get more people involved. Teaching makes you better and I'd like to see my students teaching. I'd like to see my students getting better than me and passing on my love of the art, and what was instilled in me and what I've instilled in them. We don't have as many coloured belts now and we need them, just like we need the youth classes; children are the future of Shotokan, and karate teaches them respect, confidence and concentration.

I don't want to see the art die.

Conclusion:

Throughout the conversation one thing was very evident: Sensei Lee has dedicated his life to Shotokan and he'd have it no other way. He has performed on the world-class stage and has trained with and sweat alongside the forefathers of Shotokan in this province, and he's done so for the love of something he truly believes in. His concern isn't about when his next Dan ranking will be issued. In fact, he is clear on the point that it isn't about rank and never was.

Sensei Lee still believes that the Dojo is a place to *get rid of stress and clear your mind*, and he reminds us that it isn't all about getting to a certain point, *but to enjoy the journey along the way*. These days there aren't a lot of places that can offer that.

I have to also mention the fact that I have had the support of my family along the way. My wife Lucile stood by me and encouraged me and looked after my son Justin, and daughter Holly while I was training and traveling for competitions. Having that support is key.

Thank you to Sensei Wayne Lee for taking the time to do this interview, as well as for his years of dedication to his students of his Dojos. Oss! Sensei Lee.

“It was about spirit; if you got defeated, you were defeated with spirit, but if you won, you won with humility.”
Sensei Wayne Lee

Please note, the opinions and views expressed in this document are not necessarily those of any particular Dojo or organization, nor of any particular individual. Submissions and blogs appear as they were submitted or posted.

If you would like to contribute to the NLS Newsletter, or have ideas for articles, etc, please send your submission to jeff.hutchings@gmail.com

Obi—The Karate Belt

Jeff Hutchings

To say that prior to my recent promotion to Shodan that I didn't pay much mind to getting my black belt wouldn't be entirely true. In fact, the appeal of finally making black belt was two-fold. I was intrigued by the common thought that at black belt level you truly begin to learn and understand Karate, and you start to take on the challenge of making your karate more personal. Along with that was the years of encouragement from my father.

I got my start in Karate a very long time ago when dad introduced me to a coworker named Barry Martin, a Shotokan brown belt training under Sensei Bruce Lee. Dad saw karate as a way to help me become more self confident and I quickly became drawn in by Barry's palpable enthusiasm for his Karate. Now 77, dad still firmly believed that I getting my belt was an accomplishment that I should pursue, and when I called him to tell him I had passed my testing he was delighted.

"I'm glad to my heart! I'm proud of you...Stay with it now; Karate is a good thing for you."

When I finally got my belt in hand, embroidered with *Shotokan Karate*, I started thinking about its origin and how it had evolved; hence the substance of this little article.

"The belt story is symbolic of life"

"Speculative tradition proposes that belt colors (as indicators of rank) originated in a peculiar habit of washing all of one's training clothes except the cloth belt. Thus as training progressed the initially white belt would first turn a dingy yellow, then a greenish yellow-brown, then a really dirty brown, and finally a repulsively filthy black. Eventually, so they say, this progression was formalized as the white, yellow, green, brown and black belt ranks. Well, it's a nice story, but probably not true."

Wendell Wilson –

Essays on the Martial Arts

According to Wilson and others, the kyu/dan system of rankings was actually devised around the turn of the century by a Japanese martial artist, Jigoro Kano (1860-1938). Kano had taken the samurai battlefield art of jujitsu or aikijutsu and modified it heavily so as to eliminate the really dangerous aspects and make it safe for practice as a sport. Judo was introduced into Japanese grade schools and colleges. With so many new students he decided that a ranking system would help to encourage them, and would allow them to gauge their own progress. According to authors like Harry Cook, Kano awarded the first Black Belt (Dan) ranks in 1883.

Apparently, belts or sashes, especially white and red, had been used by school swimming organizations prior to their popularity in the Martial Arts.

In terms of Shotokan, of course, we know that Master Gichin Funakoshi adopted the belt ranking system after moving to Japan on his crusade to share karate with the world.

Myth and even urban legend has it that a black belt is a master. This, of course, is along way from the truth. Granted, a karateka has to exhibit a certain level of proficiency in technique as well as in spirit in order to advance the black belt level, but to use the terms *Shodan* and *Master* in the same sentence are an unrealistic and disrespectful stretch.

Sensei Bruce Lee had a succinct and profound message about our progression through rank:

"The belt story is symbolic of life. We begin as white belts, unpredictable and innocent, and then spend a lifetime of training to become again a white belt in essence"

It is often said that a Sensei or Sempai is more likely to take a knock from a white belt than any other rank for a couple of reasons: they are completely unpredictable and they aren't over-analyzing their attack – they just let it go! Then, of course, a white belt who is serious about training will work hard and long, inside and outside the dojo, and through solid instruction and repetition of basic techniques will bring together such things as body kinesthetic, breathing and focused energy to produce fluid speed and power. The transition is from conscious incompetence - *being aware that you know very little about karate* – to subconscious competence - *effective technique coming out of you without having to process it beforehand*. This is a long and intense road.

Interestingly enough, to reach a certain level of adeptness, this determined student has to once again learn unpredictability as well as maintain a clear head. That is, to be effective you have to deliver techniques without thinking about them, and part of doing this is to maintain *Mizu No Kokoro: A mind like calm water* is one translation. Sensei Lee often stresses that processing attacks or defenses in your head when an altercation or fight is at hand is always a mistake. *"Think and you're too late!"* Thus, becoming a *white belt in essence* now makes sense. Techniques have to flow.

When recently asked about what happens after promotion to Shodan, Sensei Lee simply said "now we temper." In explaining this he offered that as a Shodan, you now have a piece of rough metal that resembles a sword, and now the arduous but rewarding task of honing, strengthening and polishing starts. In essence, you temper to make your karate—and you spirit—stronger.

A visual which struck me when researching the notion of the karate belt is the one pictured here. Avi Rokah, thought by many to be Nishiyama Sensei's most technically adept student, wears a belt that has very little black left in it. Not unlike the belts of some karateka in our own Dojos, it is essentially white after years of dedication and countless hours of training. The image seemed very symbolic of the karateka's path from white belt back to white belt.

Sensei Rokah often states that karate is a lifelong commitment and he likens karate to climbing a mountain - but with one essential difference: when you reach a peak, you look for another one.

Perhaps Shodan was a peak for me, but I don't have to look far to see the next ones. I often look around the Dojo and not only see karate at its finest, but I see the inspiration and passion required to make me want to get there. The efficiency and intensity of Sensei Wayne Lee's gyaku tsuki or Sensei Bruce Lee's yori ashi and Taisho-uchi are distant peaks (and perhaps even unattainable for many karateka) but they are peaks none the less—aspirations. Shotokan presents us with an unlimited number of goals of varying complexity.

Shotokan belts, I feel, are a necessary part of a milestone process where your progress can be gauged and tested. Shotokan Sensei don't give you a belt based on training time or status in the dojo - you earn it. I'm not sure of any other undertaking where, even as you age, you can still set standards for your progress and stay committed to bettering yourself, all the while seeing examples of individuals who have progressed beyond where you currently exist.

Shotokan is a lifestyle.

I am humbled to wear a time-honoured Shotokan black belt, but I will do so with bridled pride. A black belt I am, but any semblance of a master I am not... As Michael Clarke quickly pointed out to me, *'You're Shodan now, Jeff – that means your next class is your first day of school!'*

I can only hope that my health and strength hold so that I can wear my belt until it fades, because into the intriguing and fulfilling ocean that is Shotokan Karate, I've only waded to my ankles.





Following is a segment of an article by Iain Abernethy, published with his personal consent.

<http://iainabernethy.co.uk/>

BUNKAI - KARATE'S FORGOTTEN 95% Iain Abernethy

Try to get beyond the simple memorising of individual techniques and endeavour to fully understand the principles of combat

Karate's Hironori Otsuka (founder of Wado-Ryu) wrote in his book, 'Wado-Ryu Karate', "Martial arts progress from kata to kumite, kumite to combat and so on. Kata is a fundamental aspect of martial arts and hence is unyieldingly important." Here we are told that Kata should progress to kumite and then to combat. I feel that this is crucially important, as many karateka do not permit the use of kata techniques during sparring. Obviously the neck breaks, eye gouges, seizing of the testicles should be omitted, but what about the throws, chokes, strangles or locks? By omitting these techniques from live practice we do not get the opportunity to develop the skills and attitudes needed to execute the techniques in a live situation. Also, if we do not test our understanding of the kata's applications in a live environment how are we to be sure that they will work? The application of the katas has become more popular of late (but still not anywhere near as popular as it should be) and hence many people are revisiting their katas with renewed enthusiasm. This has led to a flood of 'applications' for various katas being proposed. Often these 'applications' are far too complicated to be of any use in a live fight. On a compliant opponent everything works! Learning the martial arts is a slow and methodical process. It would be foolish to throw lower grades into 'all-in-sparring.' First they must learn the kata to a sufficient standard, then utilise the kata applications in prearranged sparring, before finally using the katas methods in live sparring. That which is quickly created is quickly destroyed - the whole process takes time if worthwhile skills are to be achieved. Certainly all instructors should utilise their kata applications in live sparring - how else can they have any confidence in them?

The Katas contain a vast amount of martial knowledge; Striking techniques, Attacking vital points, Grappling, joint-Locks, Strangles, Ground fighting techniques, Chokes, Throws, Takedowns etc. The amount of martial knowledge contained within the katas is staggering.



Not only do the kata provide the techniques but, more importantly, they also include the principles upon which the techniques rest. The key thing is to understand "why" the techniques work. Try to get beyond the simple memorising of individual techniques and endeavour to fully understand the principles of combat upon which the Katas are based. Principles are far more important than techniques. Principles can be applied in an infinite number of ways, but techniques are very specific and hence limited. You should aim to be an adaptable and versatile fighter. Endeavour to fully understand the principles and learn how to fight in accordance with them. Whilst initially this understanding will be on an intellectual level, you should aim to integrate these principles into your subconscious (this being the main purpose of kata practice). At this high level the body will instinctively act in accordance with these concepts and hence make the karateka extremely formidable. By concentrating on the principles, and the various ways in which they can be applied, a single kata becomes an inexhaustible supply of martial knowledge. Hironori Otsuka (founder of Wado-ryu) encourages us to adapt and experiment with the katas techniques (whilst ensuring the principles remain constant) in his book 'Wado-Ryu Karate' (Pages 19 &20) Otsuka tells us, "It is obvious that these kata must be trained and practised sufficiently, but one must not be 'stuck' in them. One must withdraw from the kata to produce forms with no limits or else it becomes useless. It is important to alter the form of the trained kata without hesitation to produce countless other forms of training."



If you only understand specific techniques you will be unable to apply them should anything alter. Grasp the principles and you will be able to adapt any technique - in line with the principles upon which it rests - to be of use in an infinite number of situations. The great Choki Motobu (who was one of Okinawa's most feared fighters) put it very eloquently when he said, "One must learn how to apply the principles of the kata and how to bend with the winds of adversity" (Tales of Okinawa's Great Masters by Shoshin Nagamine Page 96).



Without a thorough understanding of the katas we are left with only a fraction of the karate syllabus. The commonly used techniques (kicks & punches) take up around 5% of the information available. If we wish to practice karate as its founders intended then we must study the katas in sufficient depth, utilise the kata's techniques in both pre-arranged & free sparring and endeavor to understand the principles upon which the katas rest. In this way karate becomes a complete and brutally efficient martial art. Within kata we have the chance to learn from the past masters and perhaps gain a little of their skills - It would be foolish in the extreme to ignore this marvelous opportunity



**SHOTOKAN KARATE
MAGAZINE
WWW.SHOTOKANMAG.COM**

If you haven't already done so, I'd encourage you to get your hands on the Shotokan Magazine. It is filled with excellent stories and different takes on Shotokan Karate and all of its amazing facets.

The latest issue is pictured here with Sensei Bruce Lee.



FEATURES

BRUCE LEE 7th Dan

Profile & Interview

Dr DAVE HOOPER

Thoughts From Japan

Editorial.

A TRIBUTE TO SENSEI BRUCE LEE 7th Dan.

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WEAR AND TEAR. By John Cheetham.

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TEACHING: LET'S HAVE LESS OF IT.

By Dr Dave Hooper.

THE ESSENTIAL WISDOM OF KARATE.

By Mike Clarke.

TOUGH LOVE. By Elaine Johnston.

REFINING KARATE-DO CONCEPTS. By Bob Remington.

READING—BOOK REVIEW

By Mary Williams

In the Dojo – The Rituals and Etiquette of the Japanese Martial Arts

By Dave Lowry, Weatherhill /ShambhalaPublictions, 2006

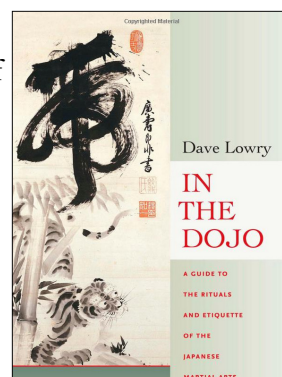
Have you ever wondered why we bow to the front of the dojo at the beginning and end of class? Or how the belt colours were chosen? These and other questions about karate rituals may occur to the serious karateka, for they are not answered in regular dojo sessions. For the curious, and for those who wish to deepen their understanding of “the way”, Dave Lowry’s book is useful. It addresses the common questions, and includes discussions on bowing, clothing, language, and the role of the sensei.

Lowry does not claim to provide the authoritative answer to every question. In some cases, there are multiple explanations available, passed down through different ryu, or schools, of martial arts. To those of us looking for tidy answers, Lowry offers a valuable insight early in the book. In Japanese martial arts, he says, “what one sees on the surface is almost invariably a (small) fraction of what is concealed below”. There are layers to peel back, contemplate, and study further.

The book is about budo, the collection of Japanese combative arts and ways. It gives examples from judo, kendo, aikido, karate, sumo and smaller schools. NKA readers might like more specific attention to karate, but I found that most of the information applied in some way. There are multiple karate references, for example to innovations by Master Gichin Funakoshi, to give assurance that karate is part of the story.

Why should we believe what Dave Lowry tells us? He is a serious budoka, a regular columnist for Black Belt magazine, and has written other books on Japanese culture and the martial arts. His strongest credential, however, is his evident penchant for digging in to learn the obscure details of his subject, and his demonstrated passion for this particular topic.

The answer to why we bow goes a long, long way back into Japanese history and culture. The belt colours are a recent development, arising in the business of managing a ryu in the modern world. For more insights, read the book. It is available from the usual online sources, and also from the Newfoundland and Labrador Public Library.



Benefits of Weapons Training for Karate Practitioners

Bob Davis

There are many benefits to Kobujutsu (weapons training). Regular training will improve both your health and your karate.

Kobujutsu and karate have many things in common. Both arts are broken down into kihon (basics), kata (forms), and kumite (fighting). They both share blocking and striking movements such as soto uke (outside block), uchi uke (inside block), uchi (strikes), and zuki (punches). As well, they share some of the same stances, zenkutsu dachi (front stance) and neko ashi dachi (cat stance). Principles such as ma-ai (distance and timing), kime (focus), tai sabaki (body shifting), atemi waza (vital striking points), and mushin (calm mind) are all principles that both weapons and karate training share.

Like karate training, weapons practice is demanding and will improve your endurance. Weapons like bo, sai, tonfa, and kama all weigh a pound or more. Regular practice with them will help develop muscle strength and coordination. Kobujutsu and karate use a lot of the same muscles; the warm-ups and callisthenics are the same. Both weapons and karate classes begin with push-ups, sit-ups, stretching, and core exercises.



Weapons training will improve your reaction skills and bring balance to your techniques. Mistakes in weapons can be dangerous and therefore safety is very important. Like karate, “getting out of the way” is always the first order of business. Kumite in Kobujutsu, always has a designated attacker and defender. There is always a natural tendency to have a “good side” in karate. To improve the weak side, you may have heard the phrase “twice on the left and once on the right”. Practice with the bo is done on both the right side and left side. As well, after mastering the bo, you will move to the study of sai and tonfa. These weapons are used in pairs, one in each hand.



Learning Kobujutsu kata will introduce karate students to new stances, as well as offer greater understanding of Shotokan Kata you have already been practicing. Stances like Neko ashi dachi (cat stance), Shiko dachi (square stance), and Kosa dachi (crossing stance) are used regularly in Kobu. Some of these are also found in Shotokan but in higher-level katas. Neko ashi dachi (cat stance) shows up in katas such as Gojushiho – Dai, Unsu, and Hangetsu. Katas such as Jitte, Enpi, and Meikyo have elements of bo in them. One of the first things that I was asked to do in Kobujutsu, was to take a kata from Shotokan that I knew and perform it with sai. I chose Hein Shodan. It was amazing how easily sai fit into the kata!

Training in weapons can also be fun and exciting! It can give a karate student who has gotten bored, a renewed interest in training. Kobujutsu has it's own grading and belt rank system. Starting as a white belt can let an advanced karate practitioner become a beginner again.

Bob Davis is a student of Shotokan Karate and Ryukyu Kobujutsu.

For information on Dojos, upcoming events and a PDF version of this document, see the following link by Bob Davis: www.stjohnsdojos.net

"KARATE BEGINS AND ENDS WITH RESPECT."

~ANKO ITOSU

Editor's Note: One NL Shotokan Newsletter reader feels that karateka sometimes need to be reminded of etiquette, specifically Dojo etiquette. The Dojo (*Place of the Way*), after all, is a place where we come together to learn from Sensei (*One who has gone before*).

DOJO KUN

Master Funakoshi believed that, for the true *karate-ka*, the *dojo kun* should not only be considered a set of rules of conduct in the dojo, but a guide to everyday life. Everything we learn in the dojo, we should apply to everyday life.

Jinkaku kansei ni tsutomuru koto - Seek perfection of character

This is the ultimate goal of karate. The other four principles of the *dojo kun*, as well as the entire *nijyu kun*, all tell us what it means to seek perfection of character—how we can go about pursuing this highest objectives. But this is the most important thing. .

Makoto no michi o mamoru koto - Be faithful

To be faithful means to be sincere in everything you do. Here we are talking about making a total effort, all the time, in whatever you do.

Doryoku no seishin o yashinau koto - Endeavor

Try hard at everything you do. No matter what you are doing, whether it's training, working, having a relationship—give it one hundred percent. To do anything else is to cheat yourself and others. If you don't endeavor to do your best, you are not being faithful to yourself and others, and you are not trying to seek perfection of character.

Reigi o omonzuru koto - Respect others

A true martial artist always shows respect to other people. And it is something you ought to feel in your heart. Showing respect is a sign of humility, and humility is necessary for an open mind, which it turn is necessary to learn, to grow.

Keki no yu o imashimuru koto - Refrain from violent behavior

This is a reminder to keep calm inside. Control yourself at all times, from within. Conflict within is a form of violence. It leads to violent actions, which is something you should try to avoid at all costs. A martial artist should always be in control, and that begins with an inner calmness, with peace of mind.

Abridged from: <http://www.iskf.com>

Jeff Brooks said that the Dojo is a place where we go to *"honour our rank with hard work and good conduct."*

MOVIES:

Kuro-Obi Black Belt

The events take place in 1932 in Japanese-occupied Manchuria, in which the corrupt leaders of the Japanese army are trying to take over all the Karate dojos for their own personal benefit. Amidst these circumstances the master of one of these dojos dies before passing on the Kuroobi to his successor, leaving three of his pupils the task of deciding amongst themselves who deserves it most. After they bury their master, they are forced to leave the dojo and join the Japanese army. At this point, their journey leads them on rather different paths both in life and in the understanding of their master's teachings of martial arts, only to reunite them at the end



"The way of karate we pursue is a bare-handed martial art which we practice with an unwavering heart in a state of emptiness; it is a way of developing the personality."

M. Nakayama

CONSIDER THE KARATE PATH

In a society where our thought processes are pushed and pulled in more directions than a stray kite in a hurricane, Karate can be more relevant now than ever.

Of course, it all has to do with your approach and what you're looking to get out of it. On the surface it can help you get in shape, get you out of the house to meet a few people, give you a feeling of satisfaction of being part of something, and it may even teach you self defense or to be a good competition fighter. Not bad.

I'd suggest you take it further. I often say that current society is on fast-forward, frantically trying to get somewhere, and this 'destination' is a moving target! Traditional karate is a study, not simply a sport or activity. It is not restricted by age of physical makeup, your progress doesn't rely on team members or coaches, you can practice it practically anywhere, it comes with a true sense of satisfaction and accomplishment, and the goals you set are your own. As for the *teachers*, Sensei become Sensei only via their own lifelong commitment..

I'd define Karate more in terms of extended and continuous satisfaction as opposed to instant gratification. A karateka trains regularly, inside and outside a Dojo, oftentimes doing repetitious technique, and in doing so learns patience, poise and physical and mental fortitude. Karate offers a devotee a vast and rich history to delve into, as well as numerous layers of potential study and research. There is a limitless amount of written and visual material on the subject, a lot of which is authored by genuine Masters and subject-experts.

If you're considering walking into a Shotokan Dojo for the first time, or even making a comeback, you're making the right move. Training time is your time. In the Dojo the vast and intense bombardment of social and work-related pressures fall off and the focus is on something we often seem to neglect—ourselves.

If you're looking for an acorn of self-care for your life, take a look at Shotokan Karate...you may find a mighty Oak.

See you in the Dojo!

J. Hutchings

ON KATA

"The kata is only an outside symbol that represents the inside. So you must understand the inside, if not then you are only a puppet doing movements with no meaning." - **Hidetaka Nishiyama**

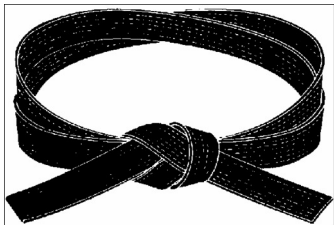
"A kata must contribute directly to efficiency. If it does not, it is worthless." - **Tokitsu Kenji**

"To practice kata is not to memorize an order. You must find the kata that work for you, understand them, digest them and stick with them for life." **G. Funakoshi**

"I have been accused of changing the Kata but there have always been differences in the performance of Kata. Not only the obvious style differences in the various ryu(schools), like when the same Kata is performed by the Shotokan, the Shitoryu and the Wadoryu, but also minor differences from how you interpret the move and also from your age and physical capabilities. In the Kata, Nijushiho, two side thrust kicks are performed ... a twenty year old may have no difficulty performing them but forty years later . . . how will it be then? The same technique ... cannot be expected of a sixty year old -rather he should just lift the leg, as the kick was originally done. Likewise, I have sometimes taught a roundhouse kick in the Kata 'Enpi'. I did this because no other Kata contains a standing roundhouse kick. I felt that the addition of this kick was beneficial - yet it did not change the basic concept of the kata." **H. Kanazawa**

"Kata must be correct unlimited and most of all alive. Martial arts progress from kata to kumite, kumite to combat and so on. Kata is a fundamental aspect of martial arts and hence is unyieldingly important." **H. Otsuka**





The Karate Belt

Greg Boyde – Yondan

The karate belt is probably one of the most well-known aspects of karate – people with no knowledge of karate or marital arts know that a black belt means ‘something’. What it means to a karateka however is very different from the perceptions of the general public. In Shotokan karate a black belt or dan ranking is certainly an achievement to be proud of, one that recognizes a student’s years of training and ability to perform kata, kihon and kumite. It is also, unfortunately the end of the journey for many students who have the disillusioned belief that upon earning a black belt they are proficient in karate and have reached the pinnacle. It is, of course, just the beginning! I obtained my 1st degree black belt or Shodan at the age of 18, after just graduating from high school and preparing to enter University. I was not immune to those beliefs of having ‘made it’ and it took several months (or years...) of training as a new black belt to realize I was now just ready to start. The first journey of karate from a white belt to a black belt had only prepared me to understand the principles of karate and prepare myself for the endless pursuit of perfecting them.

Perhaps, it is then that the color story ends at black, rising up through the levels of karate every student performs the required syllabus to pass a grading and advance to the next rank, which in turn results in that proud moment of turning in your belt for a new color (or in my case dyeing the same belt 4 times....) The change in color distinguishes you in the line of students and shows your advancement up the chain while continuing to train for the goal of the black belt. Upon achieving a black belt though and coming to the same realization as I did – you come to understand that this visual cue of rank means less and less as you now begin an endless journey to perfect your karate mentally and physically.(or maybe they just ran out of colors in Okinawa...) Generally in Shotokan karate we see a progression of belts (or kyu) as follows:

White – Yellow – Orange – Green – Blue – Brown –

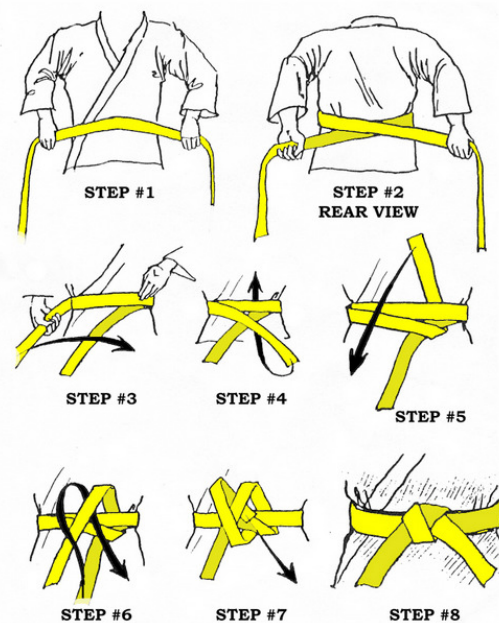


Upon obtaining the 1st dan black belt, while the color story ends, some karateka embroider their belts with their dan ranking or through years of training (or washing...shh...) show their rank by the withering and whitening of their belts, however belts do give out and as such you should never judge a karateka by the color of their black belt. A 6th or 8th dan may have had to finally turn in their belt for a new one – that new black belt is no indication of their karate prowess!

“Today a man strives initially in the martial arts to become a "Black Belt" in karate to learn to fight. But as his training progresses he should become aware of a stronger calling, the molding of himself into a better person, not only in fighting ability but also in dignity and honor. This has traditionally been the goal of the martial arts student. The black belt is an award or honor given to the modern knight or samurai who has sacrificed many hours in disciplining and honing his body and mind to achieve the epitome of physical and mental attainment. The black belt is the symbol of an expert.

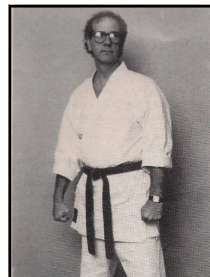
Likewise each karateka must realize that the black belt is not a gift, but a goal, a symbol of one’s great effort. In setting up a high quality ranking system, not only the student but karate in general will benefit. Thus instilling a greater sense of pride and achievement in the receiving of a black belt.

An excerpt from **THE TRUE MEANING OF "BLACK BELT" AS IT SHOULD BE.... AND AS IT IS** — Hidetaka Nishiyama



SENSEI JOE GILLIES: A NL KARATE FOREFATHER REMEMBERED

By Cathy Gillies-Barron



In Mom and Dad's early years together they tried different martial arts like Aikido and Judo. It seemed like Dad was always searching. He was trained privately by David Bell, in Karate, and, eventually, decided he wanted to bring Karate to the Newfoundland public. My understanding is Sempai Bell was comfortable in the supporting role, of that endeavour. Everything Dad undertook had to be top-notch! Once you progress so far, you need further instruction. He certainly searched far and wide in that regard, mostly in the United States. Some core karatekas will remember some cool cats that were brought in, like Mr. Cofield, and the Wilder brothers, from places like New York and Ohio. Not only was he searching for quality instruction in the discipline of Karate, itself, but it was important that the organization be recognized as legitimate, which meant there must be affiliation. Dad was always very forward-thinking. Although, in some respects, he may have been comfortable in a bygone era; with regard to his ideas, he had vision, and could see the big picture. He decided to connect with Sensei Masami Tsuruoka, out of Toronto. And, the rest is history! The annual, provincial, summer camps at the Torbay Rec. Centre; other camps, and training, here and away; gradings; and competitions.

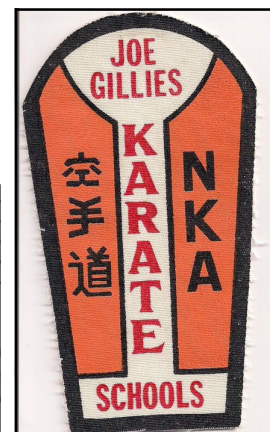
I remember I was eleven when I used to follow Dad to some of his early Karate classes. We lived in Kilbride, and he conducted them at the Parish Hall. Most of his students were teenagers, and young men and women from the general area. I used to go to put off doing my homework, but it wasn't long before he had convinced me to participate. We had to get someone to sew me a gi. I drifted away from it for some of my teenage years.

Many different karatekas over the years have memories of the different places that served as our dojo – the Fisheries College, Flavin St., Henry St., and Prescott. Of course, there was the building we owned on Terra Nova Rd., which Dad built for the dojo, before it was expropriated by the City. It didn't matter where it was – it was the people, and their commitment, that counted. Of course, all that was where it started in St. John's. As people moved up through the ranks, and there were others across the province, different black belts took on Gillies Karate Schools in central, and out to Rocky Harbour. That was Dad's plan - to focus on getting a really strong cadre of black belts, the base from which to expand, to make Karate accessible to as many Newfoundlanders as possible.

The Newfoundland Karate Association was formed, and Newfoundlanders were competing in the Nationals. My mom, Ruby, was one of the early group of women to compete on that scene, and was integral to the Gillies Karate Schools organization. Dad was proud of where we come from, and was all about shedding the "small town complex" some had when going against the bigger centres; and instilling we were all as good as any of them, and in fact we had strengths because of our small-town situation. Again, in team training, he was progressive. The basics of proper breathing, and hydration, were important, but the mental state was as important as the physical. Visualization was a tool, and he brought in a sports psychologist. Based on showings of Newfoundland karatekas, he was successful! Of course, Dad became a member of the executive of the National Karate Association, and a co-coach of the Canadian team at world championships. I believe he also became involved in lobbying for karate to become an Olympic sport.

For Dad, as long as people were making personal improvements, that was a successful situation. I believe he would just want people to strive to keep improving, using the mind with the body. And, he would want the total organization able to function as a unit to optimize effectiveness in dealing with any issues, and advancing. Dad, Sensei Gillies, was somewhat of a compact man, and I can still see his fist – that perfectly square fist.

"It didn't matter where it was – it was the people, and their commitment, that counted."



A TRIBUTE TO RUBY GILLIES— “MOTHER OF THE NKA”

By Sensei Bruce Lee

“Understand to achieve anything requires faith and belief in yourself, vision, hard work, determination, and dedication.” G. Devers

It was 35 years ago, back in 1978 that I was graded to Black Belt. There were other people graded with me that day, but the person I remember the most was my very good friend, Ruby Gillies. Ruby just recently passed away on July 7 after battling four decades of medical adversities.



Ruby had a warrior’s heart. That’s the best complement fellow karate-ka can give to one another, but that’s only the beginning, she was more. She was a wonderful friend.

Her beautiful smile, warm embrace and the sparkle in her eye would make anyone feel special. If you were lucky enough to have known Ruby you would also understand she was more than a strong Karate Shodan - she was the quintessential loving mom and wife.

When I first met Ruby she was married to my karate Sensei Joe Gillies. They had two boys, Joey and Ian and two lovely girls, Debbie and Kathy. They were the children of one big extended family of Shotokan prodigies. The Gillies children were steeped in the martial art tradition, and always protected by their mom first.

On so many occasions I remember leaving Karate class and going straight to Ruby’s home in Kilbride and there we would engage in a few libations and always great conversation. Most of the time it would involve the subject of karate but no subject was taboo. Our conversations went in every direction and it was an absolute pleasure to be in the company of such open-minded and refreshing people. With all the activity of boisterous men expounding the virtues of training, Ruby was the consummate host. She was the first to jump up and never ask if you wanted something to eat but would put it in front of you anyway. That’s the way she was, she knew how to make a person feel welcome.



Ruby would train as hard as anyone in the dojo, kicking, punching, blocking and striking with the best of them. She was tough, God only

knows how tough she was, but she was more than that — Ruby was an inspiration to all that came in contact with her. When she was a young lady she was diagnosed with Cancer and it broke my heart to visit her in hospital for what I thought could be a last goodbye. Well, that was well over thirty years ago when she beat cancer the first time, and she would continue to do battle with this awful disease for forty more years before her last farewell. It seemed like nothing could keep her down; every time she was re-diagnosed with cancer she would do battle, and to no one’s surprise, she would win again. These battles did take their toll on her little body, each time carving away another part of her. How she was able to rebound time and time again after such trauma was a testament of pure strength and endurance.

Ruby was also a psychiatric nurse and she would be quick to point out that it was her nursing training that helped her to be better able to take care of herself. No doubt that was a big factor, however it was more than that. It was her fearless nature and pure love of life that kept her going when most would simply curl up and die.

Cont’d

Ruby was the Mother of the Newfoundland Karate Association in that she did so much behind the scenes to support and influence the direction, and with her support, karate development progressed in Newfoundland. She prepared documents, passed out bills, and collected and cataloged statistics and helped organize competitions, seminars, and summer camps. All the senior black belts say that Ruby was the backbone of the Newfoundland Karate Association. Every Association would be greatly served to have a person like Ruby Gillies to make it run smoothly and efficiently.

It was over twenty years ago that the magazine "Readers Digest" did a profile on the amazing life of Ruby Gillies. Since that time she lived another life as equally deserving to be recognized as outstanding.

Let me end this little summery of Ruby Gillies by saying she was more then the sum of her parts - she was all these things and more. Ruby had a warrior's spirit and an angel's heart. She will always be remembered and loved by her family and friends and she will forever be a part of the respect given with the first bow in every Karate class that I will partake in. I know I'm not the only karate-ka that shares that sentiment.

Oss Mama San...You will be missed...

Bruce Lee — brucelee@nl.rogers.com

BUDO?

By *Elaine Johnston - UK*

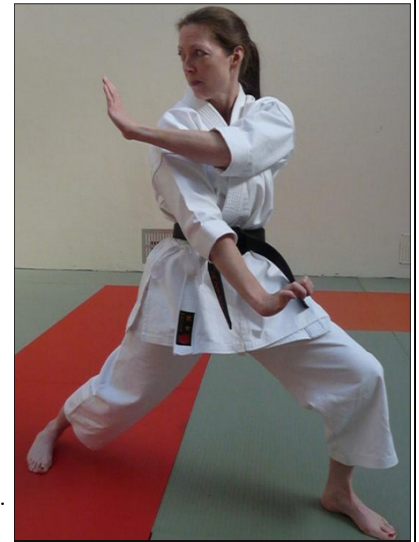
The Budo philosophy has intrigued me greatly as my Sensei does not believe that I am Budo training, whereas I do. Let me try to explain: Budo training is a way of life and it is the development of one's character. This to me means spiritual development; I am training my psyche (Soul). My Sensei told me that Budo training is intense and it is in preparation for war and one must train for war every day if one is to commit to Budo training. I told him that I battle with my fears every day, am I not at war already? I am in preparation to perfect my character and reach my full potential so that I can realize my true nature and win this war. Is that not Budo training?

He says that hard physical training for the body is Budo training. I am in the Dojo every day helping with classes. Some days I have to suit up twice even three times a day. My Sensei trains his students to be robust and realistic and I have to face these well-trained students in class which often fills me with trepidation and sometimes I get hurt. Is that not hard physical training? It is a good point here to mention that my Sensei is my husband. I should also say that he is my Sensei first and that this puts me in an extraordinary position. Every day we work in a home office together, Sensei John Johnston is a full time professional Shotokan Instructor and I assist him. Every night we work with classes, weekends are for classes and seminars. You get the picture. I don't have a normal husband; I have a 24-7 Senior Instructor and spiritual teacher. He is a very well respected Authority in his circles. I have to say here and I am not biased but he has integrity at a level that I still find myself analysing to try and clarify.

As well as having my character and behaviour permanently under observation, I live in a transparent arena, under the scrutiny of a high ranking Instructor. Him and I train very hard and I would not be able to allow myself to be trained at that level by someone who lacked total trustworthiness. I do not have a choice about how much training I can take; I do however have the ability to develop strategies to be able to train as much as necessary. In my opinion I walk the path and I have learned through my training that it is only my own opinion of myself that matters. I also believe that to strengthen my psyche will in effect strengthen my body so I am continually getting stronger and better.

John showed some footage on youtube showing a Japanese Instructor (Sensei Morio Higaonna) Makiwara training. He said that is Budo training, my mind instantly went into psychoanalyses mode. I had to consider the term Martial Art. I can understand John's perspective and how that makes sense but mine also needs to be understood. Visual Arts involve the creation of objects where the practical considerations of use are essential. What use is that type of training to me? Whenever am I going to need to punch a hole in someone? If it is not useful then it is not beautiful. Art can be referred to as any skill or mastery. To master something so completely means to have full use of it in the most effective way. I translate this into my Kata. Kata to me is an art form. It is aesthetic and it is very exacting. The thought processes behind Kata I can see as an exact science. It is my goal to be able to master the art and the science as I see befitting to me and my spiritual quest. Kata must have beauty and it must have emotional content of the right mix and the correct quantity. My art is very personal to me and my Sensei has always taught and encouraged me to make my art my own. I have certainly learned how to do that.

(Elaine is a 2nd Dan from Coventry, UK, and is feature writer for the Shotokan Magazine)



Special to NL Shotokan Newsletter



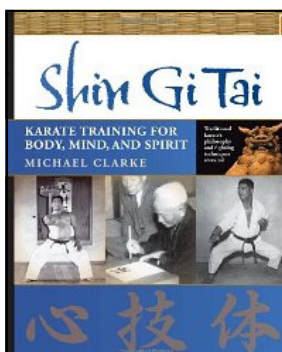
Mike Clarke.....a few thoughts on the importance of belts in karate:

“I understand many people feel the belt means something, it has significance, but it's just not true. When I visit Okinawa each year I train at two different dojo, one for karate and another for kobudo; in the karate dojo I wear a black belt, in the kobudo a dojo a white one.....but I'm still me, training just as hard in one dojo as I do in the other.”

There was a time, not so very long ago, when the idea of wearing a belt during karate training, was considered a mistake; anybody could grab you by the belt and grapple you to the ground. With the push to popularize karate in Japan, the idea of belts was borrowed from Judo; back in Okinawa, the senior teachers of karate at that time thought the idea of ranks and belts was at best unnecessary, and at worse, divisive: I think they have been proven correct on both counts.

Today it is completely impossible to tell the capability of a karateka simply by looking at the belt they wear. Proficiency standards vary so much between schools of karate, and even from one teacher to another, that the “ranking” system which makes use of belts to indicate levels of skill, is meaningless. To give the belt you wear any consideration at all, is to miss the point of practising karate.

My advice, as you asked me for it, is to forget the colour of the belt, and focus on enjoying your karate. For Example, Shodan = "First Position". It's your first day at work, nothing more. When karateka achieve Shodan they have merely arrived at a place where they can begin training seriously.



Michael Clarke, Kyoshi 8th dan, Okinawan Goju-ryu has trained in karate since 1974. He has written over two hundred articles for international martial arts magazines, and authored three books. Starting as a young ‘street-fighter’ in England, to a disciplined student of budo in Okinawa, Clarke enthusiastically teaches traditional Goju-ryu Karate in his dojo (pictured here) near Launceston Tasmania, Australia.

Gichin Funakoshi performs the initial move in Kanku Dai

Is it simply a ceremonial move that embodies the name of the Kata—*To View or Contemplate the Sky*? Is it a defense against a Jodan attack or attacks, practiced at above eye-level to accommodate for Master Funakoshi’s small stature? Is it a last-resort, two-handed thrust into an opponent’s face?

“Once a kata has been learned, it must be practiced repeatedly until it can be applied in an emergency, for knowledge of just the sequence of a kata in karate is useless.” – Gichin Funakoshi



Please note, the opinions and views expressed in this document are not necessarily those of any particular Dojo or organization, nor of any particular individual. Submissions and blogs appear as they were submitted or posted.

If you would like to contribute to the NLS Newsletter, or have ideas for articles, etc, please send your submission to jeff.hutchings@gmail.com