

**The Shorinjiryu Shinzen Kyokai**

- A Gathering of the Shorinjiryu Family
- Largest Group of Shorinjiryu Practitioners Worldwide
- Exchanging, Knowledge, Spirit & Friendship

**Shorinjiryu Shinzen Kyokai  
Shorinjiryu Shimbun**

**Don't Quit!!!**

by Jim Blanchard, Shodan

Karate has never been a natural thing for me. I am not one of those people who is naturally a good fighter or stylist. In my limited experience, I have found that most people who lack the natural abilities for this life style eventually succumb to the frustration of trying to overcome their lack of talent and quit. I didn't quit and, consequently, tested for and received my shodan on November 4<sup>th</sup> 1999 a month after my 45<sup>th</sup> birthday. This is one of my greatest achievements in my life.

Over the years since I started karate, like all of the people who have quit, I have had many reasons to stop. One of the greatest impediments to my development as a karate-ka is the arthritis in both of my hips. I can't ride a horse or a motorcycle as the motion in my hips is restricted, the pain I experience during stretching exercises is quite extreme yet I endure it and I don't quit.

If someone asks me, "Why do you continue", I don't have a rational answer

that the general masses would understand. What I think when people ask this question is, when I put on my gi a transformation takes place, I step out of my life as a civilian and become something a lot more spiritual and a lot more focused-almost another level of consciousness. I cannot simulate or recreate this shift in consciousness any other way and I know this is the reason I don't quit. But try to explain that to someone who hasn't experienced it and you get a rather blank look.

My path to individual enlightenment through the martial arts started about 8 years ago. I worked out and participated in a dojo with an outstanding group of people. Over a period of about 2 years this particular dojo produced some very good fighters in our style. Our sensei was extremely good at making us all feel like part of a superior team when we went to tournaments, even though I was not outstanding personally. During this time we concentrated primarily on

fighting skills and the technical aspects of the style were not enforced as strictly as some dojos. The camaraderie we experienced was intoxicating and I believe this is when the feeling of being enlightened started.

Anyway, at the end of the two years I had to make a decision for my career. The company I worked for wanted me to move from Cornwall to the City of Toronto. I agreed to the move and during the transition I started looking for a karate group that could satisfy my craving for the elevated level of consciousness that Shorinjiryu provided. I didn't want to live in Toronto and I knew that at the time there was a dojo outside of the city that was teaching our style. The sensei had a good reputation as a technical perfectionist who didn't appeal to me at the time as I was more interested in fighting then learning kata and kumite. Also by this time all three of my children were participating in the style and the classes at his dojo were from

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**Calendar of Events**

- March 16th**  
Spring Regional Tournament  
Imperial Dragon Hombu Dojo, New York
- March 17th**  
First March Break Seminar  
London, Ontario, Canada
- April 21st**  
Black Belt/Brown Belt Referees Clinic  
Imperial Dragon Hombu Dojo, New York
- May 17th-19th**  
Baltimore Invitational Tournament  
Baltimore, Maryland
- May 24th-27th**  
6th International Shorinjiryu Koshiki Tournament  
St. Jerome, Quebec, Canada
- July 13th**  
Summer Regional Tournament  
Imperial Dragon Hombu Dojo, New York

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## From the Desk of the President by Myron M. Lubitsch, Kyoshi

Another year? How time does fly. This may be trite but it is true. There is the old Chinese curse, in which one is wished to live in interesting times. And, by all accounts this past year has been interesting to say the least. In fact, it was tragic. All one has to do is look at the devastation of ground zero, the thousands of memorial services, the military actions overseas and the radical realization of life-style changes here in the United States and elsewhere to understand that we do, in fact, live in interesting times.

Allow me this opportunity to thank all those members from

around the country, from Canada, from Australia and India who contacted me with concerns for the safety and well being of our New York members. We grieve the loss of Sensei Ed Day. He did not make it out, as he was one of the hundreds of brave firemen who ran to help the victims. We are thankful that Renshi Troy and Sensei William both made it out.

To all those whose thought provoking and informative Shimbun articles enlightened us—thank you.

A special thank you goes out to all the instructors, black belts and especially the students who took the stand and attended the

Fifteenth Annual Shorinjiryu Shinzen Shiai, making it one of the most memorable Shinzens ever held.

No organization can function without the help, cooperation and dedication of its volunteers. I am proud to say that we have a great group and thank them very much.

I would like to thank Kaicho Watanabe for inviting us to two of his events after a hiatus of nine years.

Rather than ramble any further, I wish each and every one of you a healthy, happy, prosperous New Year filled with much joy.

## A Report from Florida by John A. Mirrione, Kyoshi

It has been a year since my relocation to the State of Florida. Both my wife and I are doing great and have finally settled down in our condominium by the sea.

The exercise room in our development is hardly big enough for one person to do kata, so I spent several months looking for a larger place to practice my karatedo a possible teach it. The potential places I visited were either too expensive or already had martial arts programs in place.

After months of practicing in a small area, I did not give up hope. I knew that I would somehow find a place to practice and possibly teach. One day, as I was looking out my window, I realized that my new dojo was in sight. It is was a public park just down the road from where I lived. I surveyed the area and

bought annual membership. Now, I have 4 students who practice each week in my 100 acre dojo, with natural air conditioning, provided by the ocean which is just 100 yards away, trees that serve as makiwara (punching board) and grass that is our tatami mats. We train in the rain or sunshine. The training has been described to me as being similar to that which has been written about in old Okinawa.

I am proud to announce that two of my first students in Florida, my wife and Mr. James Zito, have been promoted to yellow belt. Additionally, I wish to inform you that several weeks ago, Mr. Derek John, a 2<sup>nd</sup> degree Shorinjiryu Canadian black belt, joined my class and our organization. Mr. John travels from Orlando, 3 hours each way, twice a month to train for three hours.

Our newest addition is Mr. Jason Dodd, a 1<sup>st</sup> degree black belt of Shorinjiryu Renshinkan, who travels 5 hours each way from Gainesville, Florida to train.

The outdoor training attracts a lot of attention, up to and including local law enforcement who have already checked us out on numerous occasions. The park rangers have now become accustomed to seeing us practicing kata and hitting the trees and bogu while dressed in our gi. The training is tough and dirty, given the outdoor elements, but we love it.

The Shinzen Kyokai and Kenkokai Karatedo organization can be proud of this new school and can expect to hear more about it. Our expansion in the State of Florida is just beginning.

## Joyeux Noel et Bonne Annee

Merry Christmas and happy New Year to all the Shorinjiryu family.

Have a wonderful vacation and good luck with all your projects.

Traditionally we usually have resolution(s) for the New Year. I always repeat to my students to

become a black belt means much more than better kicks and punches but it also means to become a better person. I think this could be a great resolution for the year 2002.

Remember: goals you set are goals you get.

Take care,

Kyoshi Michel Laurin,  
the Laurin family and  
the Shorinjiryu  
Shindo Budo Kwai Family.

## **The Fifteenth Annual International Shorinjiryu Shinzen Shiai - The Tournament of Solidarity**

The weather could not have been better and all the elements that combine to make a tournament a success were in place except one, September 11th. This Shinzen event was indeed a very special one. The official title of this event was the Fifteenth Annual International Shorinjiryu Shinzen Shiai a Gathering of the Shorinjiryu Family. This event was also the Crystal Anniversary and because of that all mudansha trophies were silver colored with crystal-like figurines, the yudansha awards were hand made wooden trophies also with crystal-like figurines and the medals were custom made crystal-like medallions.

There was an unofficial title for this event, the Tournament of Solidarity. For in spite of the horrific events of 9/11, the event went on as scheduled. While a few concerned individuals expressed their thoughts regarding the possibility of rescheduling the tournament, the decision to proceed with the event was made. The following letter was sent to the various schools of Shorinjiryu expressing the general consensus of the majority:

"On the bright sunny morning of September 11, 2001, the United States and New York in particular was attacked by a well-organized group of fanatic Islamic fundamentalists determined to wreak havoc and fear upon our Nation and City. The innocent workers, visitors, firefighters, policemen, court officers, and EMS workers at The World Trade Center felt the immediate impact of this tragic suicide attack-an attack that equates to an attack against all freedom loving Democratic nations around the world. The concomitant effects upon the families, economy, our City and Nation, and for that matter the world are yet to be revealed. We are New Yorkers and

proud citizens of the United States and, therefore, we will not capitulate to the dictates of these fanatic terrorists. The 15th Annual International Shorinjiryu Shinzen Shiai will proceed as scheduled. We do not hold any ill will or ill thought of anyone who for reasons of perceived safety will not attend. We wish that those who cannot attend do so in the spirit of Bushido and good will."

The arena was festooned with flags from the nations of the member organization and banners indicating the names of the various schools of Shorinjiryu both members and non-members. After the participants had lined up for the opening ceremonies, the National Anthems of the member states were played, a eulogy for our fallen Black Belt Firefighter Ed Day was given, a moment of silence for all the victims of 9/11, an affable and warm general greetings was delivered, and the tournament began.

There were close to thirty divisions of shiai, kata in addition to three divisions of weapons. Some 200 trophies were awarded in addition to over 200 medallions. The contestants exhibited remarkable skill in both the shiai and kata divisions. The competitors were absolutely superb not only in their technical skill expertise but in their bushido. In fact, the common feeling that permeated the entire event was of unequivocal friendship and camaraderie. The unanimous feedback was that this was the best tournament yet. The Peter Murray Spirit Awards were awarded to Doreen Rosario, adult recipient, and Samantha Soto, youth recipient. Both of whom received the award not only for the adversity they faced but for their spirit of cooperation, effort, support, and bushido.

Even though there were a limited number of black belts, those who did attend worked the entire day with great professionalism and expertise. A few adult brown belts who were highly trained in at least three official refereeing clinics and who assisted at a number of In-House Tournaments were enlisted to lend a hand and did very well. No tournament can run successfully without trained, knowledgeable and enthusiastic volunteers. The Kyokai has the best group of score-keepers and table officials that anyone could possibly ask for. They were magnificent. The other volunteers lead by Virginia Reeves-Green did a superb job. The tournament ran smoothly and on time thanks to the work and effort of the attending black belts, adult brown belts, and volunteers.

That evening the love fest and feelings of goodwill continued as over one hundred people attended the annual dinner/dance awards banquet at the Radisson Hotel at JFK. Special trophies for performance during the prior year were awarded to both yudansha and mudansha. Awards of recognition were presented to the volunteers who contributed their time, effort and work to the organization during this current year. The Shorinjiryu Shinzen Kyokai Bushido Award was presented to Renshi Vincent Capers, Jr. for his outstanding contribution to the growth and betterment of Shorinjiryu Karate-do. The food and dancing were non-stop. And, not to sound trite, but a good time was had by all.

In all, this was an incredible statement of solidarity, cooperation and goodwill.

## **A Report From Down Under** by Jim Griffin, Renshi

The quarterly combined training camp of the SeiRyuKan and ToraKai Dojos of Australian Shorinjiryu Katatedo was held on Sunday 25th November. This camp included the Shodan Ho grading of Laurie Buxton who was graded by a panel including Shihan Phill Hooper, Jim Griffin Kenshi, Sensei Lesley Griffin, Sensei Anne Aylward, Sensei Tom Griffin, Sensei Robbie Griffin, Sensei Wayne Watson, Sensei Barry Bishop and Sensei Mark Slingo.

Laurie performed well and was awarded his Shodan Ho by Shihan

Phill Hooper. The group in the photograph from back left are: Sensei Lesley Griffin, Sensei Barry Bishop, Sensei Wayne Watson, Shihan Phill Hooper, Jim Griffin Kenshi, Sensei Anne Aylward, Sensei Robbie Griffin, Sensei Mark Slingo (front left) and Laurie Buxton. Missing from the photo is Sensei Tom Griffin.

Sensei Tom Griffin won the Australian Koshiki Association National Cruiser weight title at the recent National Championships, Laurie Buxton placed second in the Veterans Division and Amy Arrowsmith

and Zoey placed second and third respectively in the under 11 division. All performed well-displayed spirit, particularly Sensei Tom who overcame energy sapping sickness to come through on the day.

Shihan Phill Hooper and Jim Griffin Kenshi were awarded Life Memberships of Australian Koshiki Association at the Championships for their contributions over many years, as competitors, referees and office bearers.

## **Don't Quit!!!** by Jim Blanchard, Shodan

*CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1*

9:00 pm to 11:00 pm, which was to late for the kids. But, we didn't quit and continued to search for an alternative

After about a month of looking at a bunch of what I could only describe as Karate mills we came across a style that wasn't the same as Shorinjiryu nevertheless it looked like it had some of the same makings in attitude and karate-ka interest. We joined a Shorinryu dojo and, although, the Sensei and style were ok, I never achieved the same feeling of enlightenment that I had with my previous Sensei.

We had been participating at this dojo for a little less than a year when our friends from our previous dojo, who we still kept in contact with, let us know that a tournament was coming up that they were participating in and we were welcome to come and watch. Well, we did go to watch and a most interesting thing occurred. As soon as I walked into the tournament I started to feel different, spiritual, in tune with the world again. Something I had only felt fleetingly in the Shorinryu style we were participating in at the time. After watching the whole tournament my children and I all decided that this is what we wanted to do again.

As soon as we got back home I contacted the Sensei outside of Toronto and regardless of class

times signed us all up. We hadn't quit after all, only taken a little additional training in another style.

Once we started my children and I weren't really surprised to find that our technical abilities were a lot less defined than our new Sensei would accept for our present kyu levels. All of his karate-ka were technically our superior, even some of the newest students. Within a short period of time all of my children quit, they were discouraged and wanted to move on to other things (I didn't want to force them as I thought it might turn them away forever) I though continued. During the time it took me to reach the level of technical expertise that our Sensei expected I was continuously frustrated with myself. I got discouraged many times and my hip condition began to affect the confidence I had in my ability to meet my Sensei's expectations.

I ended up talking to my family doctor about my hips and after some initial discussions recommended I visit a specialist. I ended up doing this and she recommended I try a new treatment that they were using on knees at the time. The procedure required a deep injection directly into the hip joint (ouch) of an artificial fluid similar to sinovial lubrication found naturally in our joints. Well it worked for about a week and then the pain increased

substantially beyond what it had been before the treatment. After more testing the conclusion was that the medial profession didn't know what the problem was and that the treatment obviously wasn't working.

My confidence and motivation were now as low as it had ever been and I started to miss classes. Just before the treatment I had received my 2<sup>nd</sup> kyu brown belt and now I didn't think I would be able to continue with the intensity of training needed to reach the level at which I could test for shodan. Well, my Sensei started to call me up and he encouraged me to come back to class. My fellow karate-ka also did their best to help, so again, I didn't quit. That was 4 years ago and as stated earlier I did achieve my first-degree black belt.

So I have only one thing to say, no matter what happens or how discouraged you get: **DON'T QUIT!!!!**

My youngest son has since decided to start taking karate again and is continuing in the footsteps he started out in some 5 years ago. So, he didn't quit either.

I am forever in the debt of the three Sensei who helped my get to where I am now. I would like to thank Shihan Wolfgang Boggs from Guelph, Ontario, Shihan Thomas Bellazzi from Cornwall Ontario and Sensei Matt Reilly who now resides in Australia.

## North American Society by Brian Aarons, Hanshi

Greetings fellow karateka. Best wishes for the season and great things for the new year. Kyoshi Myron has asked me to send a brief note for the newsletter and I've been racking my brain to come up with something wise and profound to impress people but there's nothing there. (How's that for reverse impressing?).

Finally, what came to me is to use the impact of Sept. 11 for some general musings. Needless to say, it is shocking and unnerving to think that an enemy that has declared itself to be an enemy of freedom and democracy can penetrate our collective societal space – if they don't like our ways or our money don't sell oil; we'll come up with alternatives like solar power; don't watch our movies or TV entertainment. If they do like what we've developed here on this continent then model the format. It's ironic that cultures that have thousands of years of culture and wisdom can't do what we've done over the past 200 years and all they can do is look upon us with envy and hatred. It doesn't mean everything is perfect here in our society but we have declared the right to pursue our goals in an unthreatening democratic way.

My thought is that predominately we North Americans have a society where racial tolerance, respect, integration and love will grow and flourish and it is fast coming. One of the things that it has brought to mind is that we have to be vigilant from threats from within and without. It's easy to see the threats from without. Consider that over 200 years ago 13 colonies came together and established a philosophy of freedom to pursue life and liberty through a democratic process. It was and is the profoundest philosophy to be found in a society that this world has ever experienced. Is it perfect? No. But, we must endeavor to harken back to it. Sensei Hisataka always told me that you must always return to basics. An example of the threat within is in the mistrust engendered by our politicians in your country and mine. For any politician to come before his people and make statements under oath, be found out and shrug it off with a play on words and meaning is reprehensible.

For the industry leaders in our society to uncaringly pollute our atmosphere knowing full well the impact upon our bodies and our children's vis-à-vis cancer, etc. and

then fund research projects to find cures is equally reprehensible.

The only thing these supposed leaders have is their integrity and their word for us to follow – if they don't we can't, and then there's nothing. So it comes down to us, the little people to be vigilant over our rights and this is where our practice of Shorinjiryu comes in to play. Our playing karate, among other things, allows us to be militarily ready to protect our kith and kin should we ever be attacked on our continent. Another benefit is that we experience the honesty and purposefulness of our fellows in their practice. This allows us to experience first hand the fact that old time values like integrity, honesty, speaking our words, are still in existence. There's no way one can be duplicitous or phony in their practice – it shows up in attendance, performing kata, kumite and shiai. I have to stop now because even I am getting confused by my own verbiage (ha ha); so, peace, love and light to all peoples of all faiths.

Walk the walk and shine your own spirit. Arigato.

## Sunshine News & Congratulations

- Congratulations to **Renshi Troy Lester** and his wife upon the birth of twin girls, Troi andasmine.
- **Renshi Patrick Panneton's** wife is expecting very shortly.
- Grand Opening of **Renshi Patrick Panneton's** new dojo.
- Congratulations to **Sandan José Tigani** and his wife upon the birth of their son, Luke Ryan.
- Happy Birthday **Shihan Tom Carmelengo**, 52 years old and congratulations upon his new home.
- Congratulations to **Laurie Buxton** upon his promotion to Junior Black Belt.
- **Shodan Jim Blanchard** newest recognized black belt in the Shinzen.
- Good Luck to **Patrice Carriere, Juliean Pilon, Maxime Millette, Guylain Robert** and **Anthony Robert** upon their Black Belt test on December 21st.
- **Christian Morin** upon his promotion to second degree black belt.
- **Ikkyu Jason Berenbach's** 2nd year on the Dean's List at Rowan University
- Grand Opening of **Sensei Michel Pilon's** new dojo with over 70 enrolled with more at the door.
- **Shihan Phill Hooper** and **Jim Griffin Kenshi** were awarded Life Memberships of Australian Koshiki Association.
- Enjoy your vacation in Canada, **Kyoshi Michel Laurin**.
- Pre-congratulations to **Nidan Oscar "Ozzie" Salvatierra** on his promotion to Sensei (Sandan) in June 2002.
- Gee whiz, only four more years and **Renshi Paul** will receive his fifth degree black belt.

## The Case for Teaching Manners by Peter Hiltz, Tashi

Rarely in my martial arts do I have a bad week. No matter what the frustrations of my individual practice or the issues that arise from running the school, I get through it with a cheery, tranquil spirit. Unfortunately, in late October I had a very bad week.

The cause was the behavior and attitudes of two of my students. In spite of discussions, some as recent as the class before the bad behavior, I saw demonstrated behavior and attitudes that are the opposite of what I'm trying to teach. I was very upset.

To make a long story short, I saw three behaviors that have no place in the dojo. Let me go through them from least significant to most significant. The first was tattling on another student. A student was horsing around on the mat while my attention was elsewhere and pulled down a banner. While this was not a great issue (though inappropriate in the dojo), the subsequent tattling by another student was. I had no sooner asked the general dojo for the person to admit to their action when the pointing finger came up. The guilty party barely had time to understand the question before someone was taking joy at getting them in trouble. If the tattler was as quick with their techniques as they were pointing fingers they'd be a force at the next Shinzen Shiai. I ignored the tattler except to tell him to put the finger down.

The second and third issues are both serious, and very close in importance. I'll talk about lying first. A student lied to me. They were caught being rude outside of class (tapping on the window then hiding when I looked up) and when I mentioned it to them outside of class they instantly denied it. In fact, they

denied it twice. Lying is unacceptable, and more so for a karateka in my dojo, and even more so when it is lying to the teacher. They lied reflexively. There was no thought. To me, this speaks of a pattern of lying in the student's daily life.

The third issue sums up the others and so I'm considering it the most important: personal responsibility for one's actions. All of these, including the tattling which is a strategy to deflect or insulate against blame, deny personal accountability for one's actions. We live in a society of self-made victims and it is one of the reasons many Americans, in spite of being in the wealthiest nation on earth, are unhappy. Personal accountability is the key to individual and societal strength.

I teach a number of ethical principles in my teaching of Shorinjiryu. These concepts were strongly incorporated into my training, and purported to be imbedded in the martial arts. They are honesty, integrity, good manners, humility, tolerance, and self-discipline. I've not seen them in most of the martial arts I've come across, but have seen the results of not including them. The Japanese had a strong philosophical component to their martial arts (Bushido), and while I'm not going to teach their philosophy verbatim, I will take their model and make the Way of the Martial Arts one that is built upon these spiritual foundations. These philosophies, taught as part of our training, prevent the skills of physical karate-do from creating bullies.

These virtues create and reflect on your honor. All of us represent our families, our beliefs, our schools, and the style. Your actions create your own honor, and reflect on your

parents' and family's honor and the honor of the dojo. You are being judged by the world all the time. If you act dishonorably, you dishonor all.

I encourage all of us to consider these teachings to be as much a part of Shorinjiryu, or at least your school, as Renshu Kumite Ichi. Make them more than just a list of dojos on the back wall.

To complete the story, in response to this I'm not going to lecture the classes ad nauseam on ethics. That would not help. Those that understand would, with endless repetition, pull away from the message, and those that refuse to listen, would still never hear. Instead, I'm letting everyone know the club's position: this material is an equal part of your training, and we will not promote people who do not accept this ideal. The liar will not be promoted. Those that fail to grow into personal responsibility will not be promoted. I've offered any student who wishes to withdraw from training their club dues back.

There are accepted ways to move beyond these issues: admit your mistake, apologize for lying, and demonstrate growth towards a better attitude, don't do it again. Begin taking responsibility for your actions.

I suspect some of my students will be surprised to discover that the club is not concerned about numbers of students. They may be shocked that we'd actually offer their money back to make it easy to leave. Few in this day can believe that there are organizations that are more concerned with quality than quantity. We'd rather be small and honorable.

## Perfection of Self by Tom Carmelengo, Shihan

While most of the world has become commercialized, and this season has become a season of “what do you have for me”, I take it as a time for reflection. I wish peace and happiness to all, especially after the trying year we all just went through. I’d like everyone to look at people around them in their everyday life, they are all your brothers and sisters, just like in the Shinzen, we are all connected. Martial Arts is a great example of “Harmony” between people. Here we have people of all ethnic and religious back-

grounds, striving for the same goal — “Perfection of Self”. We share stories, ethnic foods, languages, and music. We share in competition.

Let us continue to share in Love and Peace throughout our lives, not just in the holiday season, as we strive for the “Perfection of Self.”



In Memoriam of Sensei Ed Day 9/11/01

## Classical Versus Eclectic by John P. Mirrione Jr., Tashi

There is much controversy over eclectic training versus classical training. We can define traditional training as martial artists who try to preserve techniques, philosophies, etc. of their art form from the past. Eclectic martial artists are those who try to incorporate techniques and philosophies from different art forms, therefore creating their own personalized style.

Bruce Lee was an individual who had learned a traditional form of Wing Chun Kung Fu from a master named Yip Man in China. After several years of study he decided that his art form was limiting his skill developmentally. He crusaded to learn from various masters of martial arts in the 1960's such as Fumio Demura and Jhoon Rhee. He borrowed and exchanged until he decided to name his own personalized system, Jeet Kun Do. He proceeded to inform the world through interviews with Black Belt magazine that the classical martial arts limits the students capability and that martial artists should explore different avenues.

In 1946, Shihan Kori Hisataka developed Shorinjiryu Kenkokan Karatedo. He learned from traditional masters of Okinawa and China. He believed in developing a system that would be both classical and eclectic. His motto of “Spiritual Development Of Individuality In Mind And Body” exemplifies his eclectic philosophy. He was truly brilliant and ahead of time. He believed in learning the basics of striking and grappling techniques. He also believed in the balance of safety and reality through his usage of Bogu Jutzu training. What Shihan Kori Hisataka truly understood was that the students’ character development needed a structural format. The importance of dojo etiquette and respect have become a jewel to find in today’s society in which disrespect is common behavior

I believe if Bruce Lee were still alive he would have gone back to his classical training because it was his Wing Chun that made him a success. Also, he was too young to not have his Sifu to teach him. It is not just the technique, but also his philo-

sophical foundation that should have been nurtured through his master.

There is nothing wrong with exploring different avenues. I personally have trained with numerous different styles. This training has made me appreciate my own even more. Students who learn an eclectic martial art without maintaining a classical base may often find themselves in disarray emotionally.

It is important to have one style and one teacher to call your own. To be able to claim someone as your teacher gives the student continuity, stability, focus, honor, etc. If you feel you have surpassed your teacher’s skill, that’s fine. Remember, if they got you to that level that can make you better. It is not quantity of information that you learn from your instructor but your instructor’s ability to help you perfect the basics.

In essence, we need a classical martial art to continue to nurture our development throughout a lifetime of study. This classical way will give us a solid foundation to explore our system and others, so we can’t develop our own individualized and eclectic way.

## To Be a Black Belt by Brian Berenbach, Renshi

In my classes, I am incessantly haunted by the refrain “when are we having a promotion test?” or “when am I getting promoted”. I find it interesting that the higher the rank of the sempai, the less likely he or she is to ask that question. Why do people want to be black belts? Accomplishment? Power? Ego? What happens to karate-ka when they become a black belt? Is it the same in Japan? Have things changed over the years? In this Shimbun article I hope to answer some of the above questions while educating and entertaining.

First, what does it mean to go from 1st kyu to Shodan? Well, that depends on where you are and when you are. When I studied in Japan, my class was 90% black belts. A shodan was just a novice who had gotten the basics down. That was because there was one dojo, one sensei, and that was where you trained before and after making shodan. That meant that after a while the majority of students were shodan and higher.

I never cared for promotions. I am basically lazy, and every time I got a promotion more was expected out of me. Ouch! On the other hand, classes were very pleasant. As a black belt in Japan, I got in line and worked out till I dropped. Few things cleanse the mind and body or feel better than a heavy workout. Boy, have times changed.

People confuse the belt with the skill. In taekwondo some (not all) schools have promotions every six weeks, charging hefty sums of money at each promotion. The parent is happy (my son, the black belt) the teacher is happy (\$\$\$), everyone is happy. So what is wrong with this picture? Well, if you went to Harvard for 6 months, hardly studied and were awarded a degree, what would it be worth? More important, what would you be worth?

Several years ago I had a neighbor whose son was studying taekwondo. In fact, he had just made shodan at the tender age of 13. I put a bogu (shield) on my oldest son Marc and asked him to kick it. The results were telling. He simply could not make physical contact with the shield. One day, after achieving the rank of yondan he was “jumped” in the school parking lot in a case of mistaken identity by several “yutes” and beaten up. He was unable to defend himself.

Who makes black belt in Shorinjiryu? Pick one: a) best fighter, b) best kata skills, c) best fighter and kata, d) neither a nor b. The answer to the question is usually d. Making shodan really requires only one skill, and that is not a karate skill. Figured it out yet? The answer is tenacity. The student who does not quit makes black belt. Period. The best fighter may think “Well, I’m the best fighter and a black belt. Nothing

more to learn in Karate, time to move on.” Which leads to another question. Is the best fighter the best karate-ka?

It is important to understand the difference between the martial art and the sport. Karate was, is and always will be a martial art. The day that it is eclipsed by the sport aspect, it is dead. The reason is very simple. Understanding comes with time, usually long after the reflexes have slowed down. I stopped competing at about 43, but I am still learning the martial art. So someone who makes shodan, wins some tournaments and thinks “That’s all there is” is going to miss out on a lifetime of pleasure. Students who takes classes for six months and feel that they are not getting promoted fast enough are also very likely to quit (good riddance). What they don’t understand is that, since the martial art is meant to be learned over a period of twenty or thirty years or more, taking an extra few months or years to achieve rank is really irrelevant.

Funakoshi, in his writings, talked about the mysteries of the martial arts: A life long journey of exploration.

## Seasons Greetings and Some Food For Thought

Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, Peace, Health & Happiness, from The London Ontario family of Shorinjiryu.

For the families in New York City, God be with you, your grief and sorrows are in our prayers.

Words, being shared as a gift, I would like to offer some food

for thought and not surprisingly, “commonality!” From the Book of Five Rings, I-Ching, and the Teachings of Shorinjiryu: “One, is the target; two, the weapon; three, the distance; four, the entrance; five, the execution and completion. To win, one must meditate and think only of the five.”

Incidentally, this methodology is excellent for any endeavor, be it militarily or for a final exam!

Health & Peace,

Kenren Emanuel Hawthorne

## **Something Else to Think About** by Manny Hawthorne, Renshi

There is an old story of a young man who served as an apprentice, passed the tests and skill demonstrations as a journeyman, and was ready to be named an independent tradesman. He went to his master craftsman and told him that he was ready to go out and establish his own practice. The master said he had one more to pass. The young man replied: "I am ready".

The master asked him to describe the true meaning of his professional credential. The young man immediately replied: "It means the end of my journey, a

well-deserved reward for all my hard work."

The master said that he did not have the right perspective.

After a month the young man returned saying that he was ready to answer the question.

Again the master asked him the true meaning of his professional credential. This time the young man replied: "It is a symbol of distinction and a sign of high achievement."

Again the master was dissatisfied, and said, "Return to me next month when you understand the full meaning!"

In humility, the young man returned after a third month. The master again asked him the question and the young man replied: "This credential only represents the beginning, it is the start of a never-ending journey of work, discipline, and a ceaseless commitment to continuous learning."

The master said: "Now you are ready to work on your own!"

### **Reference:**

The Certified Quality Engineer Handbook, American Society For Quality (ASQ).

## **Peacemaker or Warrior** by Mark McKennon, Shodan

For most of us, karate training is motivated by its practical aspects and values. Fitness. Discipline. Respect. Camaraderie. Self-improvement. Self-defense. These concepts are simple enough, and even in our current world, in which simplicity (meant here as a lack of ambiguity) is less evident but more important than ever, they are all that most of us will ever want from karate.

But karate (and other martial arts) poses an issue more puzzling than any technique. It is the paradox of Peacemaker/Warrior. Of Harmony/Violence. No other issues in society or nature are more opposed than these. And yet, for centuries karate practitioners have attained this balance. As we learn to channel energy that has the poten-

tial to harm other human beings, we discover a Zen-like focus or serenity that comes from—or is—ki. It may seem contrary that powerful movement could be formed by or within tranquility. But the philosophies of "the quiet mind" are a component of karate, and help one to defeat a shiai opponent or a real-world aggressor. We have examples of this in everyday life: clarity of purpose and commitment to action are vital to success. Therefore, the lack of them in a crucial situation may lead to disaster.

Some practitioners may be brawling gladiators who might improve by more closely examining the philosophy of budo. Sensitive students can gain more fighting confidence through practice—and can see the

possibilities in videos of martial arts stars routing evildoers. But for many, karate is primarily neither competition nor life lesson, but simply a special, gratifying path to health and other forms of personal power. Whatever our motivations, steady training enhances our general awareness and imparts a greater sense of well-being. Eventually, karateka may encounter one of the puzzles of karate: a peaceful mind can avoid fighting, but can also empower the body to fight decisively. Perhaps someday, in the ultimate victory, ki will finally vanquish violence. But it is likely that the peacemaker and the warrior will need each other for some time to come. And so, we train to be both.

## Kumite Commentary - Offense by Brian Berenbach, Renshi

To illustrate how the perspective of a karate-ka changes over time, Renshi Brian will present one black belts' perspective of the offensive side of Renshu Kumite Ichi. See if it is any different from yours.

Move	Comment
Kenko Ritsu-Rei	Fighting Bow - The Japanese are intelligent enough to formalize a kumite bow while keeping the eyes glued to the opponent, unlike the kei-re or polite bow.
Slide right foot forward into on guard position in a cat stance.	The cat stance (nekoashi dachi) takes about 1 year to learn. The back stance (kokutso dachi) takes about 3 years to learn. Since this is a beginners kumite it starts with the cat stance. Yamazaki used to unconsciously drop into kokutso dachi while he was teaching students nekoashi dachi. I sometime do the same without thinking. Also, never move towards an opponent unless you intend to do them bodily harm.
Right lunge punch (oi tsuki)	This is considered a real battle of wills. Defense needs to wait until the last instant before springing to the right into kosa dachi. I can still get to most of my students with this move. I put the shield on them and then hit them to show them that their block was ineffective or that they moved too quickly and I was able to change direction before punching. In Japan the senseis used to harass the sempais by constantly breaking through their guard during kumite practice. After a while the student learns the "killing zone", that is, the range from near to far, where that first technique can be delivered effectively.
Pivot counterclockwise on the ball of the right foot, right outside block (soto uke)	This block has to be done just right or you get hit. Ideally the right arm and torso will be in a straight line. By getting out of the way as well as blocking, the technique is effective against a knife fighter. This block is right out of a Roman sword fighting training manual, and, in fact I remember seeing an old sword and sandals epic where Jeff Chandler is teaching soldiers the basics of soto uke (with a roman short sword, of course).
Left step, right front kick	It takes a while to learn how to move the body in the previous technique in order to be lined up for a good front kick (mae geri). The defender will try to jam the attacker's body. The attacker may have to rapidly slip back to get enough room to kick. If I put a bogu on defender, after the punch (previous move) it is almost impossible to block the kick if you are fast enough. Also, the perfectionist will not step directly, but rather cross the left foot over the right to protect the groin before kicking.
Right back fist	This technique is all hips. The best way to learn is on a heavy bag. Using the shoulder or arm does not generate enough power.
Left jump into kosa dachi, right open hand gedan barai	I had a nidan friend in Japan who was very tall. If you watched his upper torso when he did this it was like he was on a pogo stick. The step or jump into kosa (cross legged) dachi coupled with a right downward sweep is right out of the iaido manual (Japanese sword fighting). The technique is an effective block and dodge, especially when holding a sword, bo, jo nunchuks or sai in the right hand.
Left turning form and left chop	Again, the power is in the hips, and the technique works best if practiced on a heavy bag. Focus is very important. This technique, coupled with the last one, works as a combination block and counter when using two swords or bo.
Pivot on right foot, right cat step back with right pressing block	Defense is trying to strike with a left empi (elbow). It is very easy to then immediately do a reverse empi with the left elbow into the solar plexus as the opponent moves back. By placing the right hand on the opponents left shoulder and pressing, defense cannot deliver a reverse empi and must move away from offense. Note that the second empi technique that is being defended against is in sankoktobi kata.
Return to start, ritsu-rei.	Concentration and discipline until the engagement is broken off with the final bow. Never take your eyes off your opponent. This is good training for other physical and mental activities. A tiny lapse in concentration while driving a car can be fatal.

## Kumite Commentary - Defense by Vincent Capers, Jr., Renshi

To illustrate how the perspective of a karate-ka changes over time, Renshi Vincent will present one black belts' perspective of the defensive side of Renshu Kumite Ichi. See if it is any different from yours.

Move	Comment
Kenko Ritsu-Rei	This signals the beginning of a life and death struggle, whether faux or real. All playfulness is put aside a state of mushin no shin must be achieved if I want to survive this match. <b>Remember:</b> <i>There is no difference between kata, kumite and shiai. With each you are still trying to defend an opponent.</i>
Left Stance	Assuming a defensive position, I wait for an attack, patiently but attentively. Traditionally a left stance is considered a defensive position but that is only true if you are right-handed. My power lies in my left.
Step out with the right foot and block with the left hand	The timing is crucial for this technique. The key here is not to move to early or too late. If I move to early aite will alter his attack and follow me. If I move to late, aite may score an ippon and the match may be over before it has begun.
Triangle step into a right step punch	The beauty of Shorinjiryu is that the defensive techniques lead to extremely devastating offensive ones. This technique is also the epitome of Shorinjiryu. When executed with proper breathing, timing, distance, speed and power aite would have no option but to yield.
Pivot on the ball of the left foot while moving the right leg clockwise, sweeping left down block	This technique is deceiving. On one hand, it is a simple escape and block. But with time, practice and experience this technique turns into a much more. If the hand is raised just before aite returns his foot to ground it becomes a throw. Or if I strike the back of the knee or the calf before the foot is raised my opponent will not be able to move and I will have a decided advantage over him.
Double block	The best laid plan of mice and men do fail from time to time. This is another example. My step punch was blocked, I missed with the sweep and now I am left in a vulnerable position. I must block and protect my head and face. My palms must face outward to absorb the full power of a hammer fist, and I must keep the elbows together. But if I grab my opponent's arm at the point of impact I may have a chance.
Right front twist kick.	The keys are to twist the left foot slightly before throwing the right kick and to use the hips. This maximizes the distance and force of the technique. If landed this is an automatic ippon.
Duck with the arms out-stretched	How did that kick miss? I cannot dwell on that. I must again protect head and especially my neck. If my balance falters, all will be lost. But the beauty of Shorinjiryu may give me yet another opportunity.
Step back with the right foot and right back elbow	Now is the time where attentiveness pays off. This technique is so unexpected and strong there is no counter. The most important part about this technique is that it is blind. I am not looking at my opponent so my eyes cannot be read. Additionally, this is a powerful technique that is delivered right to the solar plexus. A definite show stopper.
Step left elbow	Where the first elbow failed the second must succeed. My opponent is in the air, escaping away from me. This technique would cut him into two. And the match, our struggle will be over with me as the victory.
Left stance	Yogi Bera's saying still rings true, "It ain't over till its over." I must remain vigilant. I do not know when aitemay attack again or if this battle has been concluded.
Kenko Ritsu-Rei	The match has ended and my mind, body and spirit have truly be tested. The match has ended with neither a victor or conquered. But I am wiser having fought with a worthy opponent, whether faux or real and drawn a tie.

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