

shinzen newsletters

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Topics

- [Letter From The President](#): by Myron Lubitsch
- [Two Days With a Master](#): by Brian A. Berenbach
- ["Why Do I Teach Karate?"](#): by Danny Hayes
- [Message From The editor](#): by Brian A. Berenbach
- [article Submissions](#)

Letter from the President

Dear Shinzen association Members,

You are to be congratulated upon your wise decision to be part of what will be the largest Shorinjiryu organization in the world. currently, the Shinzen association represents seven independent Shorinjiryu schools, all of which share a common lineage which can be directly traced to our founder, Kori Hisataka. Our Heritage, rich in traditions, beliefs, methodologies and forms, is one you can too be proud of.

The Shorinjiryu Shinzen Shimbun is going to be a publication dedicated to the dissemination of important information about your organization including, but not limited to the following: dates of tournaments, tournament results, interesting philosophical discussions of techniques and history by your instructors, Dojo events, and, of course, stories about you -- our students. Sensei brian berenbach, the Secretary of the Shinzen association, has been named the editor-in-chief of the Shimbun.

Sensei berenbach is a highly capable instructor who also happens to be an excellent writer who shares the high aspirations of the organization. all

items for publication will be directed to his office for consideration.

Myron Lubitsch, President

[Return To Topics](#)

A Seminar With a Master: Two Days With Hanshi Masayuki Hisataka

by Sensei brian a berenbach

The first time I met Master Hisataka was in 1963. I was a beginning white belt, studying Karate at a Judo Dojo on avenue J in brooklyn. The instructor was the venerable Hisanobu Yamazaki, a short wiry instructor of 5th degree, "fresh off the boat" and knowing not more than 10 words of english. anyway, during one of my lessons with Sensei Yamazaki, a fellow instructor by the name of Hisataka (a Go-Dan or 5th degree) briefly visited and observed the class during a promotion test. The only thing I remember of his visit was that after his departure I was promoted from white to yellow belt.

The second time I met Master Hisataka was in 1964. Sensei Yamazaki had been unceremoniously escorted to an airplane by two immigration officials, leaving his students somewhat lost and bewildered.

after having studied with a real life, authentic, Japanese instructor, looking for a replacement was proving difficult. The "tough guy" green beret instructors who wore combat boots on the mat, while impressing naive teenagers and innocents, were a let down for me. Sensei Yamazaki (who seemed to be made out of some kind of rubberized steel) would have politely and courteously rendered them limb from limb in less time than it takes to say "Gazeimus".

after Yamazaki-san's departure I remembered this other instructor, and after making inquiries, found that he was teaching at the brooklyn academy of Music. In my confused state I Senseid that any Karate being taught in an Opera House had to be truly classical.

a few days later, after taking the subway to downtown brooklyn, I climbed the stairs to the Dojo with some trepidation; payed my exorbitant membership dues to the "Dragon Lady", (the owner of the school was a caucasian lady with a chinese last name) and changed into my gi.

While bowing on the mat, I noticed Master Hisataka in the corner about to kick the body bag. He studied it the way a surgeon might study an x-ray. There was no visible movement by Master Hisataka; there was a loud "boom", and suddenly the bag was touching the ceiling. and Sensei's foot

was fully extended as in a thrust kick. I must not have been paying attention! I watched carefully as he kicked the bag again, and again it was physically impossible to see any body movement. One instant he was standing with both feet on the ground, and the very next the bag, bent into a "V" shape was pressed against the ceiling with his foot straight out. It dawned on me that here was someone special, someone I did not ever want to upset.

"I thought it was interesting, it was enlightening. I enjoyed seeing the originator's son... it was as original as it can get from his point of view.. I wish we had more time to get into deeper depth." -Robert Ferrante Shodan, age 42

after the bowing in ceremony and warmups we lined up to kick the same bag that Master Hisataka had done surgery on. I could not move the bag more than about 2 inches, and our one and only brown belt, Walter, could move it back about 3 feet.

Thirty years later, on February 5, 1994 I was about to attend a seminar with Master Hisataka. Hanshi Masayuki Hisataka, son of the legendary Dr. Kori Hisataka, 9th degree black belt, head of Shorinjiryu Kenkokan Karate and the Koshiki Tournament System worldwide. Master Hisataka was to give two seminars, one today on the Koshiki System, and one on the following day on traditional Shorinjiryu Karate. The seminars were being graciously hosted by Shihan Myron M. Lubitsch at his brand spanking new Imperial Dragon Dojo on Jamaica avenue in brooklyn.

I was nervous entering the Dojo. Would Master Hisataka remember me? Would he, recognizing a familiar face and use me as his demonstration "makiwara"? The Dojo itself was impressive, with lots of room, a magnificent polished wood floor (more about that later) and images of dragons artfully painted on the walls.

"The overall lasting impression which permeated this historic event was the feeling of warmth which one Senseis when arriving back home after too long an absence. Hanshi Masayuki Hisataka once again proved himself to be not only a true master of karate-do but of cordiality and bushido. He definitively proved the necessity for lineage, roots and authenticity. I was honored to have had my Dojo chosen as the venue of Hanshi's first return trip to the United States in many years." -Shihan Myron M. Lubitsch, Seventh Dan Shorinjiryu Kenryukan, President Shinzen association

[Return To Topics](#)

The First Day

There were over 50 participants from the tri-state area crowding into the Dojo area. Karate-ka of all ranks had come to learn from the famous

Master, including high ranking instructors from other styles. In the true spirit of Karate-do, students introduced themselves to each other in anticipation of a rewarding experience. being out of shape and over-age, I made myself inconspicuous in the back row.

The seminar started and I immediately realized that my fears of physical abuse were unfounded. Master Hisataka was ever the gentleman, as I had remembered him, kind, courteous and considerate to a fault.

The seminar started with warmup exercises. These were intensely aerobic. The lack of air and intensity of the exercises was punctuated with periodic relaxation exercises that reminded me of a TV iced tea commercial. Just when I thought I was going to collapse, Master Hisataka would show us a combination breathing and relaxation exercise that would revitalize the mind and body. These exercises alone were worth the price of admission.

Since the first seminar was on the Koshiki fighting system, we then took turns donning and trying out Master Hisataka's "Super Safe" protective equipment. When I had studied in 1964, we had used modified Kendo equipment. although safe for the wearer, this early equipment had wreaked havoc on the fingers, hands, toes, arms and elbows of the attacker. an unpleasant byproduct was high student turnover. americans were not accustomed to having their hands and feet disfigured, and it took some period of adjustment to learn techniques well enough to use the equipment without fear of injury. I must say though, looking back to the "good old days", once I got used to the hard Kendo shield, I enjoyed the experience of striking full force without worrying about injury to my partner.

*"I liked it, it was fun. I learned a lot of good learning from a great teacher."
-Ruperto "Smiley Fuentes brown belt, age 14.*

The new equipment was wonderful. sufficiently strong to withstand the most powerful blow, rigid enough to spread out the shock, but padded on the outside to avoid injury to the hands or feet. Master Hisataka supervised a brief session with practice punching and kicking to get the feel of the equipment. He then reviewed prearranged two and three person forms for use with the protective equipment (bogu). although "old hat" for me, it was a real treat for those practitioners who had never experienced practice with protective equipment.

Master Hisataka then broke down concepts of sparring, discussing issues such as:

- synchronization of an attack with an opponents breathing
- different kinds of attack when the distance is long, medium and short
- the concept of tai-no-sen, go-no-sen, and sai-no-sen, that is, attacking before, during, or after the opponent has delivered his

technique

We were then transformed from combatants to judges. Hanshi Hisataka had us take turns as judges, teaching the fine points of refereeing a Koshiki tournament. While some students practiced fighting with the equipment, other students acted as referees and judges.

"I felt that it was an honor to work with the son of the founder of Shorinjiryu and, it was a great honor to receive a Koshiki black belt from him." -Joey Serrano Shodan, age 13.

Master Hisataka also spent some time going into issues of philosophy and proper etiquette and decorum. The true karate-ka is a gentleman or lady at all times, never losing his/her composure, and showing the proper respect for an opponent, judge, or fellow student. Several students asked questions about other styles and their methods. It was not lost on the participants that at no time did Master Hisataka speak ill of any other style or individual. When pressed, he would insist that there was no one "right" way.

The last topics reviewed during the Koshiki seminar were throwing techniques, and successive refinement or improvement of technique delivery.

"I thought it was a good class, it was run properly, I liked the techniques, especially in self-defense and exercise." -alberto Medina brown belt, age 25.

after the conclusion of the seminar there was a dinner in Master Hisataka's honor. I was astonished to find that he actually remembered me. Only a handful of the registrants attended. That was too bad as one might consider the dinner a seminar in its own right. I had studied with Master Hisataka's father in Japan (the legendary Dr. Kori Hisataka) and had mentioned how the drinking in Shinjuku (an entertainment district in Tokyo) after each lesson was much harder on me than the lesson itself. I was soundly castigated for making it sound like the Japanese Hombu was more of a drinking society than Karate Dojo.

"The last time I had the privilege of attending a clinic with Hanshi Masayuki Kukan Hisataka was in 1968 in brooklyn, N.Y. I was a green belt at the time and was so preoccupied with the dynamic person before me that I found it difficult to concentrate on the session. However, at this recent clinic, I made it a point to give my undivided attention to everything Hanshi said and did. He was as dynamic an individual as he was 26 years ago, only this time I was better prepared for the learning experience. I could not help but be impressed with Hanshi's willingness to share his vast knowledge of karate-do with all those in attendance. at the end of the two day clinic I mistakenly

uttered out loud a thought that I had which was that I along with others felt like children in his presence. Hanshi, hearing this replied, with a smile, 'Then the future of Karate-do is in the children.' I will remember for a long time to come this week-end with Hanshi." -Renshi John a. Mirrione, Sr, Sixth Dan Shorinjiryu Kenkokai, Vice President Shinzen association.

[Return To Topics](#)

Day Two

The second day, which was dedicated to traditional Karate, started out the same as the first day, with a series of warmup and breathing exercises.

a special promotion ceremony was then held. Several instructors who had made special contributions to either Koshiki or Shorinjiryu were given diplomas of international rank.

"The seminar was excellent, I can't wait for him to return again. We received a great honor by having Hanshi Hisataka to come all the way from Japan over to teach us. I had an exhilarating experience from this event." -elias Montalvo brown belt, age 16

The seminar then continued with a review of basics. Master Hisataka illustrated why it is important to hold ones breath during focus. Try this exercise: hold an arm out parallel to the ground, resisting gentle pressure applied by a partner to push the arm down. Try it first while breathing out and then while holding your breath.

a self defense session involved take downs and throws. Master Hisataka demonstrated where to strike after a take-down. Since we had no mats, I used my Karate-honed mental skills to seek out the shortest black belt in the Dojo. I paired with Janet, a good natured Ni-Dan in Renshi Mirrione's school. I spent the next 15 minutes making the acquaintance of the Imperial Dragon Dojo's new hardwood floor.

The last part of the seminar was a review of the relationship between kata and fighting. Volunteers took parts of kata, practiced them as kumite and then demonstrated for the class. Master Hisataka illustrated some interpretations of the various movements, pointing out how important it is to practice kata while visualizing opponents and having a clear understanding of the purpose of each move.

"How funny life is. In 1964, I witnessed a Karate demonstration by Sensei Hisataka at the World's Fair in Flushing Meadow Park. Little did I realize

then that I would dedicate so much of my life to the system demonstrated by Hanshi Hisataka. The clinic gave me a first hand opportunity to relive that prior experience" -Tashi carlos Figueroa, 4th Dan

The worth of a clinic is measured by what the participants take away. Judging from the attendees comments, Hanshi Hisataka's clinic was a landmark event.

Remember, the eighth International Shinzen Shiai will be held on October 1st, 1994.

[Return To Topics](#)

"Why Do I Teach Karate?":

by Tashi Danny Hayes

Why do I "teach" Karate, what's in it for me? I'm certainly not going to make a million or get into the movies. So, what is my chief motivator (what gives)? To answer this question you will have to limit the goals of Karate to the difference between the Do (doe) vs. the Jutsu philosophies of the arts.

In short, the Do forms are described as a way of life with a "higher" purpose. Jutsu refers to the physical forms (i.e., self-defense, warfare, etc.). each can incorporate each other (although the Japanese are somewhat dualistic as a culture), but there does come a point at which one can determine whether a teacher (or instructor) is Do or Jutsu philosophically based.

Our Shorinjiryu Karate history is steeped deeply in the Jutsu arts as it was primarily developed during warfare and practiced as such. It has developed in time a Do form in my teaching. It is not necessary for all who study Karate to practice as a "way of life", but this is what I try to do. This commitment has shaped my personal and teaching philosophy, my Sensei of purpose, and my social/moral obligation to teach.

I'm certainly not going to make a million or get into the movies. So what is my chief motivator?

Which brings us to the next point, HOW aND WHaT aM I Teaching YOUR cHILDRen aND/OR YOU?

as per an excerpt from Student affairs Functions in Higher education, by G. H. Knock, there are several philosophies in educational processes that exist. Two of these are PRaGMaTISM and eXISTeNTIaLISM.

explanations:

To the pragmatist, knowing involves a relationship between the knower and the object to be known. The pragmatist asks, "Does it work?" Students are encouraged to learn by doing and apply to knowledge to find solutions. Pragmatism emphasizes full creative development of the whole student.

In short, I work with students to develop their ability to learn and teach themselves. There will be times when I will not explain a technique fully, but will leave the student to work through techniques to find answers for themselves. We may then review the learning process that they have experienced, such as: physical process, critical thought, and their relation to other areas of life. One other example to illustrate would be seen in allowing students to assist in teaching others. This helps them to review their own processes, progress and understanding. The goal of this philosophy is to bring a student to the existentialist philosophy of learning.

In existentialism, teaching becomes a collaborative effort as well as a self motivated practice. This philosophy stems from the framework that one is responsible for oneself.

by utilizing existentialism as the philosophical goal of my pragmatic (both terms are defined in this article) approach to teaching, I can aspire to instill a DeSIRe to learn in my students. I am striving to relate this to other areas of growth, maturation and learning.

This will insure three things. First, that Karate will continue to grow after others and I are long gone. Second, that my students will continue to grow with Karate ability and knowledge after others and I are long gone. Finally, that my students will use these processes in other areas of their lives to develop and foster a philosophy of commitment to learning for the sake of personal growth, strengthening and using their abilities to critically question and deduce in a logical, sensitive, moral and ethical manner.

I will and do need all the help and support I can get. Wish us luck.

[Return To Topics](#)

Editor's Message

by brian a. berenbach

I must apologize for the belated arrival of this publication. but now that the Shinzen Shimbun has arrived, it is here to stay. I look forward to your correspondence, articles, and notices of events. It is you, the reader, who

will make this newsletter.

I am always saddened to hear of politics and personal rivalries affecting the well-being of the Karate system created so brilliantly by Dr. Hisataka.

Only with one voice can we ever hope to influence national and international athletic associations or obtain university affiliations and recognition. Hopefully, the Shinzen association can act as a unifying force to present the appearance of a dynamic, unified system to outside organizations.

If I may be permitted to change the subject I invite all participating Dojos to send their addresses and a calendar of events. I will do my best to see that your submissions make it into the next issue. Looking forward to hearing from all of you - the editor.

[Return To Topics](#)

Article Submissions

The submission of articles, news-worthy events and letters is encouraged. address all correspondence to:

The Shimbun editor
Shorinjiryu Shinzen association.
P.O. box 210160, Woodhaven, NY 11421

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[Return To Topics](#)