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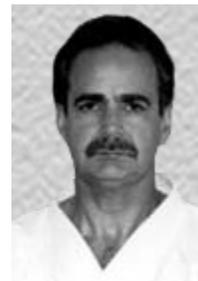
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### Letter from the President

Dear Shinzen Association Members,

The Eighth Shinzen Shiai scheduled for October 1, 1994 has all the markings of being the largest gathering of the Shorinjiryu family yet held by our association. More Shorinjiryu schools are going to be represented than ever before, and that is a direct result of your faith in the Shorinjiryu Shinzen Kyokai.



We welcome the support of all the Canadian instructors and students who will make that rather arduous trek from the north. We welcome, as well, all the Maryland instructors and students who will also make that long trek but from the opposite direction. Hopefully, our Australian visitors will be able to make their final connections in time for this event. And, there is still the possibility that India may be represented.

Whether you come from New Jersey, Staten Island, Long Island, Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, Connecticut, Canada or Maryland, no matter from where you hail, your support and participation is welcomed.

The Shorinjiryu Shinzen Kyokai welcomes you to participate and enjoy the festivities of this the Eighth Shorinjiryu Shinzen Shiai. We wish you the best of luck and we hope that you continue your practice of Shorinjiryu Karate-do.

Myron Lubitsch, President

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## **A Message From The Editor**

by Sensei Brian A Berenbach

This issue of the Shinzen Shimbun has articles by 3 well known instructors, each from a different school of Shorinjiryu. Sensei Debora J. Simms, from Shihan Watanabe's style gives us a woman's perspective on Karate. Renshi Tom Carmelengo writes a poetic allegory on personalities in Karate. Renshi John Mirrione, Sr. describes what training under a master was like before Karate became a "fast food" enterprise. I am sure you will enjoy each of these articles. These author-teachers are each in their own way making a significant contribution to the preservation of the art and science of Shorinjiryu.



As an added treat, I have put down the 3rd of the three Gohon Kumite forms. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the Gohons, they are loads of fun; short, fast, and full of spirit. I especially like the third one because the two karate-ka become one in spirit as they execute the last turning form and punch in unison, achieving a rare intimacy. This is the essence of Shorinjiryu. A form worth savoring in a Martial Art worthy of prospering - the editor

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## **A Woman's Perspective**

by Debora J. Simms

Female martial artists have always been in the minority. Women are even more noticeably absent in those schools, such as ours, which emphasize

heavy contact. This observation often leads to speculation about why women participate in karate in lower numbers than men. Invariably, physical and psychological differences between the genders are cited as causative factors.

ANY discussion about gender differences is bound to be both sensitive and controversial in contemporary American culture. Most feminists will argue that the only difference between men and women is their reproductive anatomy. All other differences between the genders, they claim, are the result of a lifetime of differential treatment. A feminist will argue that women are usually less athletic than men only because women, unlike men, are not encouraged to become athletic. Others will argue that women are born with less athletic potential than men. Both sides have evidence to support their conclusions. It is a well-established fact that, on the average, women have less bone and muscle density than men. It would follow then that on the average, women are less able than men to withstand a blow without injury. Men have only a slight aerobic advantage over women in that they are usually possessed of a slightly higher red blood cell count, a slightly lower blood pressure and a somewhat larger heart. It appears that there are no other significant physiological advantage given to males as opposed to females.

These physical differences between men and women, whether they be caused by genetic or social influences, have necessitated the creation of a woman's division for shiai. However, it is crucial that women learn to spar with men in the dojo to prepare for the possibility of having to defend themselves against a male assailant should a situation arise.

There may be, however, some advantages given to women which have not received much attention. It has been my observation that women are, on the average, more flexible than men and that this can afford them some tactical advantage in sparring. Correspondingly, women should be heavily trained to use kicking techniques as their leg muscles are almost as strong as a man's, but more flexible.

I also suspect that lighter and more flexible students tend to be quicker than their heavier counterparts. If this is true, then women, who are usually lighter and more flexible than men will have the added advantage of speed. An instructor should be watchful for these qualities in their female students. Every good instructor will seek out his or her students particular strengths so as to maximize their benefits. The maximization of strengths serves to counterbalance to a student's weaknesses.

There are psychological as well as physiological differences between men and women. A feminist will argue again that these differences are the result of social influences and not the result of genetics. Whatever the cause, everyone agrees that there are psychological differences between men and women.

Just as the average woman is not trained to be athletic, she is similarly not

trained to be physically aggressive. Furthermore, women rarely have had prior experience with a contact sport such as football. The low rate of participation of women in karate is most likely a reflection of the fact that many women cannot imagine themselves capable of participating in a physically aggressive sport. As a result, the first few blows a woman takes when wearing body armor are usually psychological shocks. This is one area in which proper instruction can make or break the student.

The anxious non-aggressive student needs to be introduced to shiai in stages. I first have these students spend several evenings hitting air shields or bags. Then I don protective gear and have the student attack me. Initially, I do not avoid the attack, but encourage the student to strike hard. Once the student has confidence in their ability to strike hard, I begin to escape the attack. Later I add blocking. Further on, I will add a touch counter strike. This involves swatting or lightly knocking on the protector to show them how they left themselves open for a counter strike. Over time, I increase the strength of my technique until the student is ready for full protected contact.

This can be a long process for some students. I remember spending six months with one woman whom I thought would never reach the point of full shiai. One night it all came together for her and now she is one of the fiercest opponents any man could ever meet in the ring.

The Shorinjiryu founders have been very fair in their treatment of women. They have allowed full participation in the martial arts without compromise, but there is one area in which they have failed their female students. The chest protectors were not developed with the female figure in mind. This has posed a significant problem for the more curvaceous female student.

The current flat design causes most of the impact of a blow to be transmitted to the bust. Not only is this uncomfortable, but it can be harmful to women over time.

While many women do not feel the need for added chest protection, they would do well to avail themselves of some. There are a variety of products on the market, but the best one I have found is the female rib guard put out by "Century." For some women, a piece of foam egg crating worn underneath the chest shield provides enough protection. Encourage your women to protect themselves as best as they can until someone designs a "Supersafe" shield with women in mind.

In this article, I have described only the most general differences between the average male and female karate-ka. It is vital to know that women, like men, are each unique individuals. Our system of training emphasizes individual development as opposed to mass conformity. It would be wrong to think of women as being in competition with men. Indeed, I have learned that the best competition is within oneself, in learning how to transcend ones self perceived limitations. Many of those self limiting perceptions are the ones which tell women that they are weak, unassertive, and ineffectual persons. Karate has helped me to break those erroneous self perceptions.

Through the training of the body, the mind is reached and taught also. Our founder Shinan Kori Hisataka said it best when he described karate-do as, ?Spiritual development of mind and body.?

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## Castles Made of Sand

by Renshi Tom Carmelengo

They're real eye catchers, clean-cut forms by the sea, sometimes they're decorated with shells, small pieces of driftwood or maybe the builder was ingenious enough to add little windows: All to dazzle and spark your imagination... not to mention the praise he or she receives.



There are a certain breed of so-called martial artists who seem to have gotten their principles from the sand castle. They, too, are really eye-catchers; well decorated with sparkling satin gi or no gi at all, maybe combat pants and a colored T-shirt. They've studied a lot of styles, not long at each, but enough for their immediate purposes. They pick the fanciest of kata and most flamboyant of ways to fight, all carefully chosen to dazzle and spark the imagination, not to mention the most important of all-- the praise from others. But, what these type of artists didn't learn from the sand castle is that it is short-lived. Eventually, these practitioners will fade away and quit, or their following will get bored with the bragging and obnoxious attitude.

If the sand castle was built on higher ground or maybe if it had a sturdier foundation, then maybe it could have lasted much longer. But, it didn't and never will. Sand castles are meant to be washed away with the next tide. The martial artist is different, and, yet, not.

We can choose how long and hard we practice by the foundation we build. We must build our foundation of concrete and stone. How can we ever think of advanced weaponry or attempt those intricate combinations of hand and leg techniques without a strong working knowledge of basics? Chamber, focus, speed, distance and timing must be blended together to form the concrete of our foundation the stones mixed in represent attitude. These are most important. All these elements must be carefully blended together before we can give thought to erecting our castle. What good is the fancy building if the foundation is weak?

The first thing I, as an instructor and referee, look at is the attitude of the student. If the attitude is cocky, then I know that person's foundation is made of sand. We, therefore, have to tear down the castle, weed out the sand, and built it over using the correct ingredients. If the attitude is humble

with deep self-pride of the work which the student has put into their studies, then I know I'm dealing with a person whose foundation is strong. There will be no sand granules falling on the dojo floor.

Shorinjiryu is not an easy style to learn. It's intricate, beautiful karate and powerful fighting techniques takes years to truly understand, let alone perfect. The only true way to build your castle is through the constant practice of basics, for without strong basics, the castle you build will be no stronger than those we see at the beach.

... and so castles made of and slip into the sea, eventually...  
Jimi Hendrix, 1967

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## **My Way of Life**

by John Mirrione, Sr.

My Introduction: Although I had second thoughts about the subject of this article, my loving wife convinced me to go forward with it. The following is the first installment of my recollection into Shorinjiryu history as it took place on the East Coast.



The Bruce Lee (Kato) phenomenon had taken hold in the early 1960's and sparked my interest in the martial arts. My dearly departed uncle, Tony Vispetto, who as a highly ranked black belt in both Judo and Karate, drew me into the martial arts. My training with him was infrequent, yet very informative. He was a war hero who was decorated for bravery many times while serving in both the Korean and Vietnam conflicts. When he told me of his military and martial arts experiences, I had no idea about whom or what he was referring. He mentioned names such as Funakoshi of Shotokan Karate, and of having seen a form of wrestling called Kempo -- at which he would later become proficient. In the early 1960's he became Vice President of the Rocky Mountain Karate Federation and organized the first American Judo Club recognized by the German Judo Association. His dedication to the martial arts earned him a fourth degree black belt in karate and a third degree black belt in judo. Additionally, he was skilled in the art of Kung-fu. At that period of time, it was very unusual for someone to be graded that high in two martial arts: his martial arts training spanned two decades.

### **Japan Judo and Karate**

I believe there was a holiday celebration at my grandmother's house in Brooklyn sometime in 1966, when my Uncle Tony told me to seek out training at a reputable, traditional Japanese karate school. He told me to go

to Bay Parkway and 66th Street in Brooklyn for at that location I could find a well-established, traditional school of martial arts. My first visit to this school was a pleasant surprise. The judo class had just ended under the instructor Kiyoshi Shina. She gave me some literature to read and asked if I wanted to stay and watch the upcoming karate class. I accepted the offer and proceeded to take a seat in the center of the waiting room.

The students quickly lined up, knelt down and bowed to a young Japanese instructor named Minoru Morita. After the warm-up exercises were completed the actual training began. I had difficulty keeping my attention focused on the students because of the lightning fast punches of their instructor. Having grown up on the streets of Brooklyn, I was no stranger to street fights and I thought I had seen it all. Sensei Morita added a new dimension to punching, he would execute a punch and somehow strike at his target three times before the punch was fully extended. You could not see his fist, but you could certainly hear his gi sleeve "pop" three times. His kicks would follow his punches also in multiples of twos and threes. I imagined anyone finding himself an opponent of this martial arts expert would be met with instant defeat. I was sold on his physical prowess. After engaging in conversation with him and experiencing his considerate demeanor, I decided to become a student of Mr. Morita and my study of Shorinjiryu Kenkokan Karatedo was to begin.

The karate classes were small in comparison to the more popular judo classes, and, therefore, seemed very much like private instruction. At this point in time, the fashionable thing was to learn a martial art from a Japanese instructor. If you didn't, rumors that you didn't learn a martial art at all would be let out. Pioneers of American karate such as Aaron Banks, Peter Urban, Moses Powell and Tom LaPuppet all had large followings, yet their students were frowned upon as not having legitimate training. This kind of bias attitude is no longer prevalent today, yet in some quarters that belief still does exist, at least, marginally.

My first karate lessons, which took place above Wallach's Clothing Store, were not easy. Sensei Morita taught by example. The one who gave me a clearer understanding of what was being taught was a black belt by the name of Walter Gekelman. He was the first American to be awarded a black belt in Kenkokan karate. He was very bright and very close to Sensei Morita. On occasion Walter would have everyone sit in a circle to give explanation of techniques and teach us some history of Kenkokan. We once viewed a film of the Grandmaster and his son punching and kicking a primitive heavy bag at the Hombu dojo in Japan; Walter gave us an incredible insight to what we were viewing.

Even though Walter, who was fast and expert at his techniques, would never seem to be a formidable opponent against a brown belt named Sam Reese. Sam was in a category of his own. He was a well-spoken, gentle, six foot plus man, whose legs rivaled the now well-known Bill (Superfoot) Wallace. No matter where you were while fighting him he seemed to be always able to strike you with what appeared to be a front kick turned crescent.

At that time there were three other brown belts, one whose name was Noel and two brothers named Joe and George Young. Noel was short and round, but moved gracefully through kata. The other two brown belts showed up only to practice shiai for upcoming tournaments. They trained to hit hard and fast.

There was one other student who stands out in my mind. His name was Gil Burzen. He was promoted to yellow belt just a few weeks after I started training. Gil and I trained together during most classes. However, I must admit that his progress was more rapid than mine and his hunger for more information and training took him on short jaunts across the United States. At one point he trained with Mike Stone, who at the time was also training Priscilla Presley. After each trip Gil would demonstrate new forms to Sensei Morita. Sensei Morita looked upon Gil with great pride and fascination.

As for instructors go, Sensei Morita nurtured our need for growth and knowledge and never held us back.

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## A Small Jewel - Kumite: Gohon Sandan

by Sensei Brian A Berenbach

### OFFENSE: (O) / DEFENSE: (D)

NOTE: 8 of offense and 8 of defense are done simultaneously.

1. **O** - Right cat stance  
**D** - Left cat stance
2. **O** - Left step, right front kick  
**D** - Left cat step back and to right, inside downward kick
3. **O** - Right cat step diagonally back and to right with right outside sweep  
**D** - Right reverse kick
4. **O** - Switch feet, pivot clockwise on left foot, left outside block  
**D** - Continue moving forward after the kick with a right punch (right punch-kick combination)
5. **O** - Right twist chop  
**D** - Right cat step back, right extended arm block
6. **O** - Left step, left chop  
**D** - Left triangle step
7. **O** - Left cat step back  
**D** - Continue the turning form and left punch
8. **O** - Right triangle step, right punch  
**D** - Right triangle step, right punch



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## **Article Submissions**

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

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