

shinzen newsletters



**Shinzen
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**Shinzen
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John Mirrione, Sr



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[Brian Berenbach](#)



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Congratualtions Congratualtions Congratualtions. The promotion of John A. Mirrione, Vice President SSK

On April 8th, one week after his fifty-fifth birthday, Shihan John A. Mirrione was promoted to Hachidan-eighth degree black belt with the honorable title of Kyoshi. The simple ceremony was hosted by the Nippon Society of New York. This is a society dedicated to Japanese cultural affairs and quite interesting is where Tashi John P. Mirrione instructs. Shihan Mirrione, now Kyoshi Mirrione, was completely surprised by this event as the whole affair was kept highly secret as not to ruin the moment. Each of the guests were invited to give a brief speech and the adoration that flowed was heartwarming and gratifying.



The most interesting gifts presented was given by the director of the Nippon Society. She presented Kyoshi Mirrione with a hand painted fan. Of itself was very nice but what was written upon it was event more insightful. For upon the fan was written what we gave to you, you now give back to us. Translated as we (Japan) taught America karatedo and now America teaches us Karatedo. Something to think about.

Congratulations John A. Mirrione, Kyoshi.

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Retirement Congratulations

Kyoshi Michel Laurin and Shihan Tom Carmelengo from their real jobs. They have indicated that they wish to spend more time to their practice. Good luck to both of you.

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Ake no Myojo Budo...

practicing in beautiful Sykesville, Maryland, is delighted to announce it's 5 year anniversary. Thanks to all, and stop by our web page at <http://www.qis.net/~petermh> to email us birthday greetings!

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The Promotion of Brian Berenbach

We are pleased to announce the promotion of Brian Berenbach to fifth degree black belt with the title of renshi.

Brian has been an active student of Shorinjiryu since 1964 and has the incredible honor to have received his shodan in Japan from Shinan Kori Hisataka. Renshi Berenbach teaches Shorinjiryu Kenryukan at the Stelton Community Center in Edison, NJ and is the editor in chief of the Shimbun.

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What Makes a Healthy Dojo

By Kyoshi John A. Mirrione, Sr. VP

In this article I will share with the reader my views on how to have a happy, healthy dojo.



First let me say what I have said on many occasions, that when the day comes that karate is no longer fun to me, I will quit. Even after 34 years of study, I am still happy and in fact am continuing my learning journey into karatedo. I sometimes tell people that karatedo is like seeing a good movie, in so much that you want to see it over and over again, each time seeing and learning something new. In a Dojo, where discipline is a priority and where strict propriety of conduct is enforced at all times, you cannot hope but achieve prominence, growth, integrity and happiness.

Sempai Leads the Way. From the very beginning of a class, to the end of a class, the rules must be clearly set and followed by all. Mutual respect and courtesy must prevail at all times. Everyone in the school should keep in mind that inside and outside of the Dojo the rules still prevail. Seniors must be acknowledged and given respect no matter where they are. Practice must be with enthusiasm and with courtesy to all present. If you have a positive attitude, everyone will follow your lead. The student must always remember to leave the problem of the outside world outside the dojo. We should never allow street language or mannerisms to enter the dojo. The dojo must remain free of outside contaminants and only filled with enthusiasm and spirit. Sempai leads the way. If complaints are given a priority, then they become an accepted part of the curriculum and training. Students have learned to complain in the dojo. Sempai leads the way. If the sempai does not participate in tournaments or clinics, the students have learned not to participate. The sempai must keep in mind always that they are the ambassadors of the way. I will ask this question. If a student or sempai had beautiful technique, avoided competition and criticized the operation of the dojo or the actions of another, would you say that this student should be promoted? The criteria for promotion should be about good character, spirit, enthusiasm, honest, integrity, and hard work. In my experience, I have seen good karate schools go out of business for reason I mentioned above.

The sempai must lead properly or the school will fail. A non-participant, and/or complainer should never be a leader.

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"With Structure There Is FREEDOM"

by Renshi Dan Hayes

Any one who has conversed with me at length will have undoubtedly heard me say this in one manner or other. Although I came to this universal truth through my own tribulation. I have rather unsurprisingly discovered through time and research that I am not the first to expound on the concept. The entire process of Eastern education is based on this principal. Freedom without structure is chaos. Not speaking from a conservative view point, but experience.



A short story.

Years ago in a place far way, a boy at the very beginning of his future is making his debut in his first studio art class at the University of his choice. He is an extremely conscientious youth, eager to learn and impress. He has heard much of the trials to come at the hands of this renowned professor. The student is as fearful of failure as he is excited about success. Much like asking that beautiful girl out for the first time, that anticipatory itchy not so sweaty sweat.

Finally, after the introductions and the preliminary announcements of attrition and the like the students are primed for their first introductory project SLAM!!! Three pages of inexplicable adjectives and verbs, so esoteric that the boy is numb with the thought that maybe he just forgot how to read! Looking around he sees that he is not the only seemingly illiterate student. This is barely comforting, but he can breathe again. After all of the, "how unfair, doesn't he know we have other classes?", "what an egomaniac!", the students band together to decipher and so their best to conquer this insurmountable task in their own way. Three days later, they learn what it is to be criticized by their mentors and peers and learn the art of being even more humble. Then comes the next project only two pages!!! He must be insane, two days!!! The students frantically bolt to their studios to pull their hair out again. History repeats itself but is a little less forgiving as they all knew what to expect. Then the dreaded assignment, a pause, then "Your assignment is to go home and make art, and bring it back in Three days." It was as if the sky opened up and Handel's *Messiah* choir was sung by 200 Whitney Houstons!!! All of the students left on clouds, excited beyond their ability to express! To the studios they went ready to create. Create what? What did the professor expect? Where should he begin. What materials should he use? What size? What medium? What space, integrity, dimension, reference, perspective, personal/impersonal, technical/exploitative, etc.,etc.? Oh how they longed for expectations! Someone please give them a direction,. Is there no God?!! Stuck in the CHOAS OF FREEDOM!

Finally a ray of light, a brain storm, divine thought, true genius! Let's just change some of the expectations from the first assignment to get us started!" exclaims the conscientious young student. He has learned his first lesson in learning and shared it with others.

Structure is a tool for creative thought. It frees us from ambiguity and distraction. We have a "traditionally" stylized Dojo, simple uniforms, simple rules, and clear expectations. We stand, sit bow, breath, enter and exit a room in a specific manner.

These seemingly tedious constraints are the reason we can define ourselves and defined a purpose. The peculiarities remind us of the uniqueness (which is why we are here and why some stay), that we are not expected to understand or perform immediately, as it is foreign. Once all of these idiosyncratic details are part of our unconscious process we

can begin to learn much more freely, as all of the mundane unconscious concerns have been detailed and solidified. The process of learning about and mastering these details also affords us many questions in a methodical manner to enrich our creative process, and also to answer these and other questions.

A punch with no target never hit the target. Again, common knowledge. Books, television, radio, seminars, newspapers, videos, cassettes, etc. all mediums of communication, expound in monumental unison "GOAL SETTING/SELF HELP"!!!

Depak Chopra, Stephen Covey, Think and Grow Rich, Thinoceros Success, Anthony Robbins, the Bible, Torah, Bahagivad Gita, Scientific Karate-do, need I go on? All of these sources give us the basic insight that our goals are to enjoy and know ourselves. To do that we have to learn of ourselves, make decisions, changes or enhancements. In order to do this we must define a goal, whether it be a belief system or a physical destination makes little difference. We then must set up a structure to achieve this goal within the parameters of our current life styles as to not dismay or disappoint us. WE can be easily disgruntled and discouraged so it is best to keep it simple and straight forward. Make each step in your process open to receive but not to quick to change, keep your eye on the goal. This goal will inevitably change as will you as will you. Goal achieved. Time for a new goal. This is the joy of living? (Just kidding?)the preceding article was an excerpt taken from a training letter written to Renshi Dan Hayes students.

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Letters to the Editors

Dear Shihan,

"My name is Matt Baron, I am a former student of Sensei Monjiyama. I trained with him for a four year period during the eighties before getting involved with Tai Chi. I am now a Tai Chi practitioner/instructor living in Portland, Me. .

"I just wanted to say that I have visited the Shimbun page a few times, and think it is excellent.

"I met you once, but I wouldn't be surprised if you do not remember. At one of the early Shinzen Shiais I was standing there with my dojo Sempai and we were wearing Judo Gis (Sensei Monjiyama liked to practice throws), you came over and said something to the effect of "Judo Gis? we're not that rough..."

"Thank you for a great page. And thank you for a great example as a way to rise above the politics that happen when a style splinters. Because that

is the true specialness of this page. As someone who has "trained around" I can honestly attest that splintering of styles is almost mandated by fate in the martial arts world. And this page in itself (let alone the Shinzen Shiai) is a great example of a right thing to do.... thanks, Matt Baron" *Thank you Matt, Kyoshi*

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Dear Shihan Lubitsch

I wanted to send you a note to say thank you for hosting us at your tournament. It was a great honor to be allowed to compete in your dojo. I was very impressed by the ornate dragons and the beautiful shoman. I was also very impressed by your students.

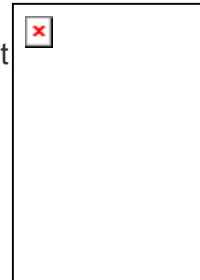
Everyone was very friendly and participated in the spirit of great sportsmanship. I am looking forward to the chance to spend time with the members of your dojo again soon.

Sincerely,
Richard Miner, Harmony By Karate *Thank you Richard, Kyoshi*

Food For Thought

from Renshi Emmanuel Hawthorn

Today I overheard one friend speaking with another, offering some very sound advice and I would like to pass it on. No doubt, everyone has heard the same advice a thousand times before but, if you don't mind, my view is, that it can't be said enough.



Friend to friend, "We only have one life...one kick at the can (so to speak) and that life, however long or short it may be, is too short. Friend to friend, we should expend every effort to enjoy life...every effort to do the right thing...every effort to be honest... every effort to be morally correct...every effort to express the truth... etc.

This all sounds like "Applepie & icecream"... and difficult. However, it is truly the easiest, most rewarding extension of effort and energy (ki / chi) one could express.

As an afterthought to the above friend to friend conversation, the underlying theme holds true for one the valued premise in Shorinjiryu Karate - do, i.e., "Maximum efficiency with a minimum amount of effort"!

"Always seek to develop the character further aiming towards perfection and complete harmony with creation"in Mind, Body & Spirit!

Health & Peace
Manny Hawthorne, Renshi

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Don't Take Yourself Too Seriously

Peter M. Hiltz (Ake No Myojo Budo, Inc.)

In my martial arts career, I've run into many individuals with many different perspectives on the martial arts. Some have been gratifying meetings, and others have been boorish and unproductive. Typically, the boorish ones seem to have the most to say; though they don't say very much, while the productive meetings ended with a mutual understanding, respect, and improved knowledge. I've also observed the politics of martial arts organizations and their leaders and have been disappointed that people who should have been role models engage in petty politics and other ego enhancing exercises. Fortunately for all who belong to the Kyokai, its fundamental tenants prevent a great majority of the higher level politics, and defeat the efforts of anyone looking for ego gratification through belts and titles.



Why are jostling, politics, and ego enhancing so prevalent in the martial arts? Why do so many people take themselves and their karate so very, very seriously? To begin, let's understand what I mean by "seriously." If your self esteem is tied directly into your martial arts, such that if your martial art or proficiency is criticized you feel really bad (or maybe even a little bad), you could be taking yourself too seriously. An example is in order. There is a gentleman in my area with a number of interesting characteristics. Firstly, I am certainly not passing negative judgments, just citing observations that all add up in an interesting fashion. This balding gentleman wears what hair he has in a Steven Seagal ponytail. He wears (every time I've seen him, winter and summer) a well-worn leather jacket covered with martial arts patches. When we've talked, the conversation always evolves to comparisons of lineage and he is quick to drop oriental and famous names. In short, his life, both external and internal, appears to revolve around the martial arts and his status in it. Other characteristics that could indicate one takes oneself too seriously are using high powered titles for very small things, and being unable to admit one does not have the answer or can improve.

In reality, for most of us, while our karate is serious, and we are dedicated to it, it is not tremendously important in the grand scheme of things. Nor should it be. Ignoring the situation where one does things to advance one's commercial school (some of which seem to be contradictory to the

virtues I was taught, but I understand the need for them, and pass no judgments), karate is a hobby, or a vocation. A serious, high quality one, but one none the less. It is far less important than our families, health, country, etc. To make one's karate the center of life, and our status in it our reason to live, is a tragedy in the making.

Why does it become so important? My theory is that two conditions in American martial arts lead to so many taking themselves so seriously. The first is that our fundamental culture is one of self-importance and competition. Japanese culture is group oriented and one's acceptance in the group is more emotionally satisfying than destroying the competition. Humility and harmony, or philosophy, is not integral to American martial arts. The Dojo Kun, or school principles, posted and memorized, do not constitute teaching. If it is like other things I know in life, it is considered a 'ticket to punch' that must be completed prior to promotion. The fact of it being listed in the promotion requirements defeats any hope for making philosophical improvements part of an individual. The second reason is that we wear our status on our belts, or should I say, as our belts. Where else is person's status ("Oh, are you a BlackBelt?) so visibly displayed? In what else is there such mystique as the BlackBelt? In a school full of students, those who wear a black belt are considered special! Everybody aspires to it. And, a school's teachers are typically not to be argued with. What they say is gospel! A student comes to class, takes orders to DO something, and does it! How can this not feel good? All of this leads to inflated egos and loads of self importance.

But why is this bad? Who is hurt? In fact, many people are hurt by martial artists taking themselves too seriously. The most obvious person hurt is the one who takes themselves too seriously. How do they feel when they find someone with a bigger title? How do they console themselves when someone with better skills comes along? It must be difficult for some to realize that in spite of wearing a blackbelt, they cannot fight as they used to, cannot do kata as they used to, and cannot kick as high as they used to? How horrible it must be to get older and feel the skills of youth slip away. Does their self esteem slip away also? What if no titles are forthcoming, or worse yet, they lose their titles either by having them revoked or because their organization falters? If these people are teachers, then their students suffer too. Techniques that they cannot do well don't get taught. Learning stops because the teachers cannot admit they can learn more, or that other material has value. It is worse than this because as the door is shut on expansion of material, other material is forgotten, and so the total wealth of material being taught slowly slips away.

My challenge to all of us is to look at ourselves and check for too much seriousness. Titles are fine; we all like titles. Feeling good about karate and our place in it is fine also. However, if it becomes our reason for existence, we might be taking ourselves too seriously. If we cannot admit to being human, and think we always know best about our karate and

school, we might be falling into this trap. We should be able to rejoice in the skills of those better than us, celebrate new knowledge and understanding, and admit that we will always remain students. After all, who else sews patches on underwear (our Gi's), runs around in public with them on, and wears belts that don't hold our pants up!

Tashi Peter Hiltz

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So You Study Karate?

Sensei Alberdeston "Big AL" Gonzalez

I have a friend who has been practicing karate at another school for about two years. Just about everyday he talks to me about his class the night before and its funny to me because he often starts with, "I don't know if you ever did this?" Then he goes on how they throw punches, kicks, situps, jumping jacks, stances, forms, the different kata, etc. And, I told him I've been doing that for at least 12 years. One day, I asked him to work out with me a light workout and he agrees. Anyway, after about _ hour he was just about to pass-out. I thought to myself if only he would have spent those two years with Shorinjiryu he would have a better understanding of what a real martial arts workout is.



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to Kiai or Not to Kiai

Shorinjiryu is unique in many ways. One of which is the absence of the use of the kiai. In the first place, what is kiai? One defines kiai as a, a union of spirit and verbalization of energy, a lot of ki, a shout, a union of strength and spirit, etc. For the sake of discussion, we are referring to the artificial yell and not the natural expulsion of air. We function under the concept of *mugonkata* or silent kata yet there are schools that use *hasoshikata* or talking kata-they kiai on virtually every technique. Some schools use three kiai, one to get ready, two for a killing blow and three for completion. One high ranking Shorinjiryu instructor called the kiai a "secret weapon." Yet, in over thirty plus years of knowing him, I have never heard him use the kiai.

So, what to do? Understand that the body is kept loose until the actual point of contact. An artificial verbalization at that point will reduce strength not increase it. Therefore, there are physiological and anatomical reasons for not using the kiai as there are for use of the vertical fist.

However, there is another problem, Shorinjiryu has kata that did not

originate with the Shinan directly. A suggestion, non-Shorinjiryu kata which employs a kiai may have one or two kiai used only. Shorinjiryu kata such as naihanchin, nijushiho, sanchin, wanquan, sankakutabi, ananku, chinto, kusanku, bassai, sochin, seisan, happiken, rohai, etc. the kiai may not be used.

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Black-Brown Belt Clinic

The recent clinic was highly successful. Those in attendance were afforded a series of lectures given by Kyoshi Lubitsch and Kyoshi Mirrione. The first lecture that was given was by Kyoshi Lubitsch. He traced the history of Shorinjiryu from its onset to the present offering a few insightful theories regarding the origin. Kyoshi Mirrione gave a very informative lecture on dojo etiquette and the reasons for maintaining proper etiquette. The participants were then given a unique exposure to the instructional practices of the original Japanese instructors in anecdotal reflections by the senior instructors. This proved very enlightening. Afterwards, a review of the kata Anuku was had and a short mini-tournament followed.

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The Fourth International Competition

We wish Kyoshi Laurin the best of luck in the upcoming competition to be held on May 28th in Saint-Jerome, Quebec. In the past, only good memories and good times were had by this event. We have been informed that Kyoshi Lubitsch will be traveling with a group of 70 plus contestants and escorts to this fine event. Good luck to all. Remember, the sheer act of participation makes each participant a winner, not the trophy.

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Visit Our Web Site at WWW.Shorinjiryu.org

Web master [Jose Tigani](#)

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

The Shimbun Editor
Shorinjiryu Shinzen Kyokai
P.O. Box 210160, Woodhaven, NY 11421
Or E-mail to MMLShihan@AOL

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