



The Shorinjiryu Shinzen Kyokai

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

Shorinjiryu Shinzen Kyokai Shorinjiryu Shimibun

Another Piece in the Puzzle

by Mark Vanniekerk, Sensei

Just after the defeat of Japan in world war II, Kaiso Kori Hisataka (Kudaka) returned home from China to find his country in ruins and the people demoralized. Kaiso saw the need to rebuild the peoples spirit. This was the beginning of Shorinjiryu Kenkokan in 1945, a school of karate based on the development of the individual in mind, body and spirit. It was obvious even to the young South African, Laurie Vanniekerk on his first meeting with Kori Hisataka in 1964 that there was a distinct difference between Kaiso's karate and other Japanese and Okinawan karate schools.

The Chinese Wushu influences were quite apparent. In particular; Baji (emphasising close range applications consisting of strong, explosive, techniques favouring the elbow, the power being generated by foot stamping), and Bagua (emphasising rapid stepping and turning movements to evade opponents, changing and spinning in circular fashion to swap positions and counter from the rear of your opponent, favouring open handed palm techniques generated from the waist).

Ten years later Shihan Laurie Vanniekerk introduced Shorinjiryu Kenkokan to Australia where it had spread from Brisbane to the other states. In 1981, the Koshiki sports system using Anzen Bogu was introduced. By 1986, Shorinjiryu Kenkokan and Koshiki had merged to become distinctly different to the karate Shihan Laurie had witnessed back in 1964.

After Kasio's passing in 1984, just like a many other Karateka, Laurie, myself and a number of Shorinjiryu yudan-

sha were excluded from the Japanese stream of Shorinjiryu Karate. So after being given Hanshi Masyuki Hisataka's imprimatur, the Shorinjiryu Karatedo Shindokan was formed. Our attention is directed to the interpretation of the Chinese influences superimposed on an Okinawan karate background, in an attempt to better understand the paradigm shift of Kaiso's thinking from his Okinawan and Japanese counterparts. My research sent me to China to study at the Beijing University of Sport and at the Shaolin Temple, where I found like the Chinese schools, Shorinjiryu was a complete system consisting of the four main components, ti- (leg and kicking routines), da (arm and striking routines), shuai (takedowns and throws) and na- (controlling techniques). In addition, Qi-gong (energy building exercises, used both for martial and Health applications), Weaponary, Randori (partnered fighting forms) and Yokusoku Kumite (paired sequences). Not all karate schools practice all these components.

I learned equivalent Chinese techniques and their applications and counter applications to those found in the Shorinjiryu Kata. The most interesting observation was made in Beijing. It is often said that the practice of karate improves health. But, like Sports Karate, tournament Wushu is not a complete martial system. In both cases, while highly talented, the competitors have a limited competing life, often with resulting long term injuries. Even the Taiji competitors had their ankles, knees and torso strapped during training. Things were the opposite at Shaolin Wushu

Quan at Mt Shan. Equal time was given to Qi gong and meditation practice, to calm the mind, improving the long term strength and health of the martial artist. Based on this, Shorinjiryu Shindokan incorporates Chinese training methodology, applications and Qigong exercises to existing Shorinjiryu Kata and Randori to enhance the long term health of it's practitioners.

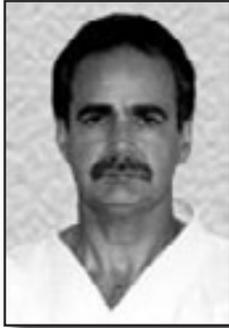
While there are some differences in the training methodology and techniques between the Shorinjiryu schools in general and the Shindokan, the Shorinjiryu origins of the Shindokan remains instantly recognisable to observers. We are pleased to be part of the Shinzen Kyokai and share in the diverse spirit of Shorinjiryu. Together, I hope we can all help fill in others pieces of the puzzle.

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From the Desk of the President

by Myron M. Lubitsch, Kyoshi



Another year now gone and a new one is upon us. This past year was, as the song "Sunrise-Sunset", accurately states "laden with happiness and tears.." On the negative side, a few of our instructors took ill. I wish them a

speedy recovery and good health. A very long time student, one who called me his "second father", chose to cut and reject over a decade and a half of association with my school and me. That action ultimately set into motion events that led to the apparent breaking up of a friendship of some thirty-five years. Two other students in two separate clubs did similar actions. I have no doubt that in their minds they had perfect justification. I can only hope that the bigger picture of their actions is eventually seen. As a final thought on these hurtful events, may I submit the following poem:

*Kokoro koso.
Kokoro mayowasu
Kokoro nari;
Kokoro Ni, ,
Kokoro, yurusu na."*

*It is mind
that deludes Mind
For there is no other mind.
O Mind
do not let yourself be misled by
mind.*

Now, for the positive events, some incredible events clearly indicate that the Kyokai is getting even stronger. A recent trip to Australia cemented the strong bond between the schools. On a personal level, the reception and attention given to Shihan Vincent, Shodan Chris and myself was unbelievable. Revisiting and re-establishing old friendships was heartwarming. Truly, the spirit of hospitality is alive and well in Australia. While there, Shihan Phil Hooper, the Patron of Shorinjiryu, was awarded a long deserved grading. Sensei Mark Vanniekirk, son of Shihan Laurie Vanniekirk, the instructor who was first to introduce Shorinjiryu to Australia,

joined the Kyokai. You can learn about him by reading the fine article in this publication. Shodan Linton of Ohio is continuing the process of learning more Shorinjiryu forms, philosophy, history, etc. with the expectation of ultimately joining fully. We are in communication with a highly respected South African instructor who wishes to learn our system. Shodan Cyril and his school in Manhattan have applied for membership. The various events hosted by Kyokai members has grown greater in popularity. The popularity of the Shorinjiryu Symposium, 8th Shindo Budo Kwai Invitational, 9th Island Budokan Bogujutsu, and the 18th Shinzen Shiai clearly shows strength of not only the Kyokai but of Shorinjiryu itself. The quintessential instructor, Hanshi Shunji Watanabe, honored us by accepting the honorary position of Technical Advisor.

2005 looks bright for the Kyokai. I wish all Kyokai member and the friends of the Kyokai a very healthy, happy, prosperous New Year filled with excellent practice

Schedule of Events

February 20	Sunday	Referee/Scorekeepers Rules Clinic - Brooklyn, NY
March 12	Saturday	St. Patrick's Day Seminar - London, Canada
March 19	Saturday	10th Invitational Island Budokan Bogujutsu Tournament
April 16	Saturday	Spring Regional Tournament - Brooklyn, NY
May 20 - 22	Fri. - Sun.	Third Watanabe-ha Invitational Tournament - Baltimore, Md.
May 27 - 30	Fri. - Mon.	9th Shindo Budo Kwai Koshiki - Saint Jerome, Canada
June 5	Sunday	Referee/Scorekeeper Clinic - Brooklyn, NY
June 25	Saturday	Referee/Scorekeeper Clinic - Long Island, NY
July 16	Saturday	Summer Regional Tournament Brooklyn, NY
August 13	Saturday	Joint Picnic - Kenryukan, Kenkukai, Kenryukai - in L.I., NY
October 2	Sunday	Referee/Scorekeeper Clinic All - Brooklyn, NY
October 5	Wednesday	Final Scorekeeper Review
October 9	Sunday	19th Annual International Shorinjiryu Shinzen Shiai - New York
December 3	Saturday	Winter Regional Tournament - Brooklyn, NY

From the Desk of the Vice President

by Dan Hayes, Shihan



I have recently been reading of a certain young lady who will forever be an inspiration to me and many of my students. The question at hand is what is Bushido? My clinical explanation is that it is a “code of ethics” by which the feudal samurai aspired to and lived by. My answer based upon experience is that it is a state of mind or attitude. The full understanding of respect in all forms, the development of intrinsic power and fortitude and the responsibilities that come with it are what Bushido is all about.

The following story should evoke both inspiration and humility, for this

woman is a living example of budo and its ethics. Keep in mind that she is quoted as saying she loves what she does because she feels “Athletics have given me the opportunity to prove that I’m just like everyone else.” If everyone else were like her, we would truly be in a different reality!

When Sarah Reinertsen was a kid, she was told she’d never be able to run. This year, Reinertsen, 29, became the first female with a prosthetic leg to enter the Hawaii Ironman – which involves a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike, and a 26.2-mile run. Reinertsen’s left leg was amputated above the knee when she was 7 because of a tissue deficiency. She started running when she was 11, and in 1997 she completed her first marathon. After running six more – with a PR of 5:27:04 – she started competing in triathlons.

In 2003 she own the female leg-amputee division of the International Triathlon Union World Championships in New Zealand...Reinertsen doesn’t wear a prosthetic to swim, she has to hop out of the water and strap on her nine-pound running prosthetic to get to the transition area. There she switches to a prosthetic that has a bike cleat bolted to it. She has to change back to the running one for the marathon... “I want to help the disabled community break down barriers” she says. “I love my life. I wouldn’t want to be any other way.” (Article by Gail Kislevitz – Runner’s World Magazine, December 2004)

In closing, we all have our self perceived “challenges.” It is how we choose to let them shape our lives and affect others that determines who we are.

How Karate Saved the Pickle Jar by Zvi Strassberg, Sempai

The physical and mental benefits of pursuing karate-do are well-recognized. A number of sources, including research studies, conclude that regular practice improves cardiovascular functioning and strength and flexibility, as well as providing stress relief, increasing mood and patience, and reducing impulsivity and aggression in daily life.

There is another way in which I believe karate improves the quality of life, which is to reduce the number of annoying experiences that can have a cumulative effect on your mood and concentration abilities. My wife Claire and I agree that we have greatly improved our abilities in some of life’s subtleties, such as avoiding collisions in the mall or on the streets of Manhattan, moving our feet in time to prevent our toes being crunched by children at play, and in catching falling objects.

For example, I recently caught a jar of pickles that had been poorly placed and fell toward the kitchen floor when I opened the refrigerator.

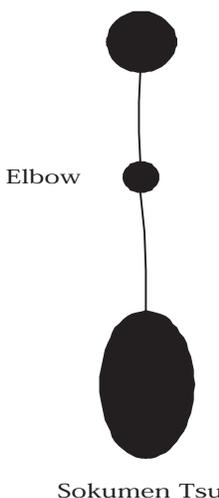
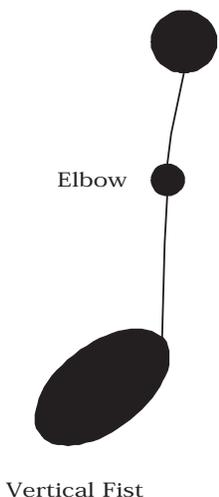
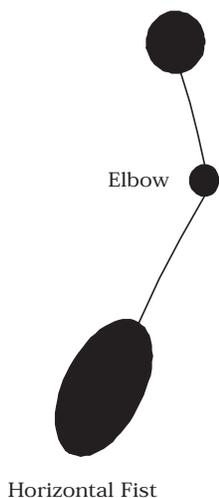
I reflexively caught the jar and said something to myself like “Wow- I can’t believe I did that. Thank goodness for karate” (paraphrase; author not to be held responsible for misquoting himself). Claire has saved earrings from disappearing down the drain when changing them at the mirror in front of the bathroom sink. Her quickened reflexes were particularly important when the sink was broken and had no stopper to close the opening. We have both noticed greater awareness and improved reactions in everyday life over the course of our karate study.

Things like having to clean up a pickle jar or take apart a sink drain are a hassle, but they aren’t catastrophic- at least on their own. But the fact is that hassles occur in the ebb-and-flow of everyday life. So cleaning up a pickle jar may well turn into much, much more if you now have to bust your butt to take care of it before you can pick up your kid from day care which closes in

fifteen minutes, and you’re going to have to drive like a maniac to avoid the extra fee for late pick-up, but you’d better get it done right away because if you leave it for later your other kid will come home and slip or step on the glass, and the phone call you needed to make before you left to pick up your kid now has to wait until later and the person might not be there in a half-hour... and so on. Or you have to block off or disable the sink until you can get to it, or if you take it apart now you’ll recover the earrings but be late for work... and so on. As we all know all too well, “little” things accumulate into stressful effects.

So what’s the point? The point is that we all know about the big, obvious benefits of karate. But there are other, subtle benefits that should not be overlooked. We should also appreciate that regular practice can literally and metaphorically help save the pickle jar—and at least a little bit of the sanity that we have left.

Reflections on Sokumen Tsuki by Brian Berenbach, Shihan



Well, it is December 30th, and I am sick as a dog, having come down with a very bad cold. I would work out to try to burn it off, but the last time I did that I wound up with pneumonia; so this time I will confine my activities to mental ones.

Kyoshi has asked me to write something for the newsletter, but it is difficult to think straight with a head full of cotton. However, in keeping with the spirit of the martial arts, I will give it a shot.

I will endeavor to discuss something very simple but very important to the karateka, the front punch.

We all know that there are some very serious differences between a Shorinjiryu punch and those in other styles of karate. First, we punch with a vertical fist, or Tate ken. The reality is that, for a shorinjiryu practitioner, the horizontal fist doesn't work.

Kaiso came to this realization as he was in the process of formalizing Shorinjiryu (This was told to me by his son, Hanshi Masayuki Hisataka while I studied with him). In order to deliver a very strong punch, the elbow has to be inline with the arm and the body or the arm will collapse like an accordion on delivery. Try this experiment: roll up your shirtsleeve, hold your hand out with your elbow slightly bent, and then turn your fist from horizontal to vertical. Note that as the fist goes vertical, the elbow is forced inline with the body. That partially explains why the Shorinjiryu punch is so strong. However, to deliver a really strong front punch (oi tsuki) it must be delivered from a side stance (sokumen tsuki).

If you compare the vertical fist and sokumen tsuki illustrations you can see why. In a front punch from zenkutsu dachi, the shoulder is not inline with the punching arm. When a punch is delivered, recoil will result in the puncher's body twisting to absorb some of the force, resulting in a weaker technique. In sokumen tsuki with the body turned fully sideways at point of impact, if the body is braced with the rear foot

and/or moving forward, all the force of the technique will be delivered to the target.

So body position is important. Now comes "the rest of the story" as the famous newscaster Paul Harvey is fond of saying. Unlike other styles, we have the philosophy of "**spiritual development of individuality in mind and body**". This is not an empty saying, but put into practice from day one by the Shorinjiryu karate-ka. There are two ways of delivering a front punch. You can land on your front foot while moving forward with the body partially facing forward, then twist the body to finish the delivery, ending with the body facing sideways to the target, with the punching arm fully extended, OR, you can throw your whole body into the technique, start the punch while airborne, and hit the target while the front foot is still off the ground with the body facing sideways and the arm fully extended in a vertical fist. If you only saw beginning and end pictures, the two techniques might look identical, but they are, in fact, radically different. Smaller people need to throw their whole body into the technique, larger and less agile karateka put a twist into sokumen tsuki, and students in the middle can try both and see what makes more sense. Being 5'6", I tended to mimic Sensei Yamazaki (my original instructor) and deliver with the foot closest to the target off the ground at impact so as not to impede forward momentum.

There is more. Imagine having a bo (or a broomstick if you are not a karateka) and running full tilt at a sandbag and hitting it with the tip while lunging. If we can deliver our techniques such that at the moment of delivery the arm goes rigid (like a bo), forward momentum will drive our makeshift bo right thru the target. That is focus, or ki. By letting out some breath and holding it, and by then tightening all the muscles of the body at impact, there is no body elasticity or give to the collision

of our fist with the target, and the target will give. Of course, we also need to tighten the muscles of the arm when delivering a punch (just the last little bit) so that the elbow joint is cushioned and we don't wind up with tennis elbow.

So then, are the other styles of karate "wrong" to punch the way they do? Not at all. To answer that question, you must first ask what is the purpose of the punch. In many styles the ability to deliver several rapid fire punches in succession is the goal rather than the power of the first punch. In those styles sokumen tsuki won't do, primarily because of the time to get the body around so that a follow up punch can be delivered with the other hand. However, you need to be careful. It is important not to become dependent on simultaneous pull/punch (pulling the non-punching hand back to battery while punching with the other hand) as this can get you in big trouble. Imagine punching someone and missing. They grab your punching hand, and you want to deliver a second punch. It is really important not to get in the habit of simultaneous pull/punch as, if you do, when your punching hand is grabbed, you will be unable to effectively deliver a punch with the other hand. In Shorinjiryu we don't use a simultaneous pulling of the hand that is out to add force so it should not be a problem. In fact, if you look closely at Niseisan Kata, one of the hidden bunkai of the kata is to train the student not to rely on pulling the non-punching hand to add power to the punching hand, but rather to rely on body twist (hineri tsuki) and forward body movement (oi tsuki).

Shorinjiryu has also evolved over the years. With the introduction of better bogu (body armor), and a desire to have students compete successfully in open competition, the ippon techniques that I used many years ago have been de-emphasized. It is my belief that we now see lunge

The Kata of Shorinjiryu - Nijushiho by Des Paroz, Yondan

From the outset of this short article, I must declare a bias – Nijushiho is my favourite kata. Although each of Shorinjiryu's various kata is wonderful in its own way, Nijushiho has something about it that makes it special. I don't think I am alone in this thought – in correspondence, Kyoshi Myron Lubitsch has expressed his belief that Nijushiho "is the quintessential Shorinjiryu kata" and that it "is indicative of the theories of movement, timing, distancing – everything of Shorinjiryu"! Kyoshi Myron made a further point that when senior Shorinjiryu teachers give a demonstration, their demonstration often consists of this kata.

What is about Nijushiho that makes it so popular – after all it is just another kata, isn't it? Let's look at the history and some possible theories about this kata that may help us to understand it a little more.

The word Nijushiho is made up of 4 Japanese kanji – ni (2), ju (10), shi (4) and ho (techniques). Quite simply, the name means "24 Techniques". These characters may also be pronounced as "Niseishi", and some styles utilize this pronunciation. Hanshi Hisataka (1976) provides an alternative explanation of the name when he tells that it implies that combinations of 2 techniques are twice as powerful (4).

Nijushiho is a kata that is contained in the syllabus of many styles, particular Shitoryu, Shotokan and Wadoryu, as well as a number of Okinawan Shorinjiryu groups. However, the vast majority of these renditions look absolutely nothing like our Nijushiho. These Nijushiho's are linear, where our's is angular, and none of the others contain the signature technique – nekozeken (cat back wrist). Nekozeken is an unusual technique that can be used as a blocking technique, a striking technique or both.

Nijushiho exists as a form used in at least one school of Fujian Crane-Fist (McCarthy, 1995). It is unclear as to exactly how this kata came to Okinawa, and this is an interesting

area of further research. In fact, this school of Crane-Fist also teaches a form of Sanchin, and it would be interesting to explore this school further to identify possible links to Shorinjiryu.

In Okinawa, most versions of Nijushiho can be traced back to a single figure in the annals of Okinawan karate – Master Seisho Aragaki (1840-1920). A relatively little-known figure, Aragaki is also known to have been a major source of several other kata – notably Sanchin, Seisan and Sochin. Aragaki was a teacher of several key figures, including masters Kenwa Mabuni (founder of Shitoryu), Tsuyoshi Chitose (founder of Chitoryu) and also master Kanryo Higaonna, teacher of Chojun Miyagi (founder of Gojuryu). The Shorinjiryu version of Nijushiho is not traced back to any of these masters.

Instead, Hanshi Hisataka (1994) relates that our version of Nijushiho was passed to Shinan Kori Hisataka by Master Anko Azato (c. 1828-c. 1915), a contemporary of Aragaki. Supposedly, this version of Nijushiho was enhanced by Azato to reflect techniques he had honed to defend himself in a duel with the swordsman Yorin Kanna (Sells, 2000) – also referred to as Toshiaki Kirino (Hisataka, c. 1963; Hisataka, 1994).

Azato is a lesser known but pivotal figure in Okinawan karate history, having himself been an upper level aristocrat (of the Peichin class), senior government statesman, learned scholar, master of both karate and the Jigenryu school of swordsmanship, and a noted horseman. Apart from being an early influence on Shinan Kori Hisataka, he was the main assistant to Sokon "Bushii" Matsumura at his dojo in the gardens of Shuri Castle. Among other students there was Master Chotoku Kyan (1870-1945), principle teacher of Shinan Kori Hisataka. Interestingly, none of the other styles influenced by Kyan include Nijushiho.

So our Nijushiho, with its nekozeken and fast, angular movement stressing evasive action over

blocking, is derived from Azato. It is unlikely we will ever know where Azato got this kata. Perhaps he and Aragaki exchanged techniques, a feasible scenario for 2 aristocratic government officials. Perhaps, they both learned it from another source. Perhaps, it was a common kata among Okinawan masters of their time.

This also explains why our Nijushiho is different from most other styles – ours is based on one that has evolved from Azato, whilst that used in Shitoryu, Shorinjiryu and other schools traces back to Aragaki.

What has puzzled me, however, is why the version in Shotokan is unlike our Nijushiho. The founder of Shotokan, Gichin Funakoshi (1868-1957) was a student of Azato, and never studied with Aragaki. Given this, you would think that the Shotokan version would at least resemble ours.

Cook (2001) relates a story that apparently Funakoshi may have forgotten a number of kata, specifically including Nijushiho. In an effort not to lose the original teachings, Funakoshi sent his son, Gigo Funakoshi, Masatoshi Nakayama and several other senior students to Osaka around 1927-28 to learn several kata from Kenwa Mabuni. As we've seen already, Mabuni was a student of Aragaki, thus explaining why the Shotokan version resembles that of Shitoryu.

This is further backed up by Chambers (date unknown), who tells us that the kata (re-)learnt from Mabuni included Rohai, Wankan, Nijushiho and Sochin, among others. Chambers goes on to describe that the form of Shotokan Nijushiho was further modified by Gigo Funakoshi and his contemporaries to include several side kicks and other techniques not present in the original form. Interestingly, Hanshi Hisataka has of recent years been demonstrating a version of Nijushiho with a similar form as the Shotokan one. This he refers to as Kudaka no Nijushiho, suggesting the

The Kata of Shorinjiryu - Nijushiho by Des Paroz, Yondan

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possibility that perhaps that form of the kata is traced back to the Kudaka (Hisataka) family. Outside of the Kenkokan group, this version of Nijushiho does not appear to be practiced in Shorinjiryu.

Sells (2000) tells of the existence of at least 2 other forms of Nijushiho – a longer “Okinawan Nijushiho”, and the short “Niseishi-sho” of Chitoryu. I personally have yet to see former, so cannot comment as to whether it is related to our form. The Chitoryu version is however a distinctly different version – either from ours or the more common Shotokan-esque version.

So we can see that Nijushiho has an interesting and colourful history. Next time you compare our version with another stylist, hopefully the above will serve to help you explain why ours is different.

The Shorinjiryu Nijushiho was one of the original five kata emphasised by Shinan Kori Hisataka (1907-1988), along with Sanchin, Naihanchin, Chinto and Kusanku. Of these, it is the only one not depicted in his c. 1963 book. According to Hisataka (1994), Shinan chose Sanchin, Naihanchin and Nijushiho as the basic kata, as they emphasise three directions – linear (Sanchin),

lateral (Naihanchin) and angular (Nijushiho).

Clearly Nijushiho is well suited to the task of relating angular fighting strategies. Various open leg step (hiraki ashi) and cross-legged (kosa ashi) movements are utilised to move around the imaginary opponent, and many of the techniques emphasise getting inside the opponents attack to negate the technique. Presumably, this strategy is derived from Azato's applications against a swordsman, where it would be necessary to kill the effectiveness of the long range weapon by getting inside its effective range.

As a matter of interest, the sai kata practiced by many Shorinjiryu schools (and depicted in Scientific Karatedo) is commonly just referred to as Sai no Kata. However, it appears that Shinan referred to this kata as Nijushiho no Sai. Close investigation of the 2 forms will bring many similarities to light, and it becomes obvious that the 2 are originally the same. By depicting Nijushiho no Sai in his c. 1963 book, Shinan filled the gap left by not including Nijushiho with the other forms.

Nijushiho is unique among all Shorinjiryu kata, and the Shorinjiryu version is unique among all kata

in general. It is at the same time graceful and fast, and gives insight into evasion, angles, and killing the techniques attempted by an opponent. Nijushiho is a kata that should be studied in great depth by all practitioners of Shorinjiryu, as it contains so many of the essential elements of our style.

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Important Notice of a Change in Rules

Points will be awarded for controlled techniques to the head in all divisions 5th Kyu and above child or adult. Whereas contestants

10th Kyu – 6th Kyu may throw techniques to the head, they will not be considered as points. As before,

absolutely no contact is permitted to the head or neck area. Students under 5 Kyu (green) shall not compete in weapons forms.

The Resume of Frank Davila

“Karatedo & I (past, present and future), to express “Karatedo”, Frank Davila offers a poem written by Marianne Williamson (as quoted by Nelson Mandela in his inaugural speech, 1994).

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.

Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that frightens us.

We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?

Actually, who are we not to be? You are a child of God.

Your playing small doesn't serve the world.

There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you.

We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.

It is not in some of us, it's in everyone.

And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.

As we are liberated from our own fears, our presence automatically liberates others.

Submitted by Emanuel (Manny) Hawthorne, Renshi

The Kagami Birake

The Kenryukan and the Kenkukai follows and expands upon a ceremony that a number of the more traditional martial arts school share. *Kagami Birake* is translated in a number of different ways: the rice cake cutting ceremony, the opening of the mirror, the breaking of the rice cake. Since the Japanese language, as with others, uses words in idiomatic nuances the word *kagami* means mirror and the word *birake* is a form of the word *hirake* or opening so the ceremony for our purposes would be breaking or opening the mirror.

The ceremony is an ancient one that was originally religious in nature. Nowadays, the religious meanings are lost and to the martial arts world, including the Kenryukan, ascribe absolutely no relation or relevance to any religion.

What appears to have been a celebration in preparation for a New Year, the people would clean and prepare their homes for another year. In modern times, the entire country celebrates New Year with a two-week celebration where schools are closed, businesses shut down and families gather together. As time went on, the common people would take this time to join with family members and basically have a good time. Parents would

play games with their children and a highly festive celebration of the New Year would begin. The ancient samurai would take their armor and weapons and polish them to shine as a mirror. The sword being the soul of Japan and the mirror the spirit, this would be an opportune time for the warriors to honor their weapons. Small round rice cakes would be offered to the spirits and the weapons prepared. Rice was considered the staple of life and, therefore, understandably held in high esteem and reverence.

The special rice cakes mentioned above were made for this celebration. These cakes were called *mochi* and fashioned in the form of old style metal mirrors. Two to three would be placed upon each other with an orange on the top to represent the orchids. Other ornaments would be placed about the *mochi* symbolizing various devotions. These rice cakes tended to become very hard and after a few days had to be broken with a hammer, hence the concept of breaking the mirror. The broken pieces would be eaten with other foods and the refreshing of the spirit begins.

Sometime about the mid-1880's, Jigano Kano originator of judo, instituted the celebration of *Kagami Birake*. From that time on many tra-

ditional martial arts schools followed suit. As was mentioned before, this celebration has no religious meaning but rather a spiritual one having personal significance. Usually, the formal celebration takes place on the second Sunday of January and in many cases January 7th or 11th and always in the home dojo. The Kenryukan splits the celebration into two parts. The first part, takes place on the last day of classes for the year. Students review all kata taught during the year, special speeches, the "secret book of all knowledge" and other events are partaken of including a New Year's *kampai* and small gifts. The second part, takes place on the first Saturday (first official class) where all students engage in the most demanding and strenuous class of the year which consists of 1,000 kicks, punches, jumping jacks and crunches each and about 100 to 200 push-ups. The chief instructor along with the other instructors address the students, a *kampai* and sweet cakes are distributed. At this point the students have rededicated themselves to another year of learning.

"We are what we repeatedly do; Excellence, then is not an act, but a habit." Aristotle

An Open Letter by Jim Dee, Nidan

Another year is completed and I hope, like me, you have reached the goals that you set for yourself this past year. Please allow me to share mine with you.

My goals for this year were to run in the Boston and New York Marathons as well as to hopefully become a Nidan in Shorinjiryu.

The Boston marathon was the first goal that I reached and it took the mind and the heart of a true martial artist to both train and complete in the 26-mile course. I would run in the cold nights last winter, some nights the temperature going to -20 degrees F. with the wind chill. I would do this 5 nights a week, for

up to two hours a night. When the day finally come in Boston, the race start temperature was 85 degree. Great weather for the beach, yet deadly for the long distance runner. By the time I reached the finish line on the mid April afternoon, 1,000 of the 20,000 elite runners from all over the world had collapsed from heat exhaustion and dehydration.

Weeks later as I recovered from Boston, I was rendered speechless by an act of Kyoshi Myron. At the end of my weekly class at the Hombu Dojo, I was presented with my Nidan certification as well as my Second Degree Black Belt. I was attending classes regularly for the

year and I absorbed as much as I could each week. Previous to my training at the Hombu Dojo, I was what one might call a "RONIN" with my own dojo and students for 7 years. It was a pleasant surprise that I was not expecting on that night. There was a lot more than I had to learn about this art to be more comfortable with my new title and rank as well as to be an asset to my dojo and to the Hombu Dojo.

I realized that I get older, sometimes a technique of a form can be lost somewhere in the mind. To refresh my memory, I can count on the youth students of the Hombu

An Aussie Holiday by Jim Griffin, Renshi

Australian Shorinjiryu Karatedo recently had the pleasure of a visit by Kyoshi Myron Lubitsch, Shihan Vincent Capers and Shodan Christian Hernandez so I thought it a good idea to put their efforts into print.

They arrived in Brisbane at around 8.00 am on Sunday 28th November following 22 hours travel and they were cleaned up, refreshed and ready to commence training by 10.00 am at a combined Shorinjiryu training camp.

We had students and Instructors attend from Innisfail (1000 miles), Sydney (600 miles), Coonabarabran (500 miles) and Rockhampton (400 miles) in addition to the local Brisbane Dojos. Shihan Phill Hooper attended, as did Sensei Chris Kliese, Sensei Tom Griffin, Sensei Julie Hooper, Sensei Beth Wall and Sensei Kerry Kneen along with many current Dan and Kyu grades. These people remembered Kyoshi Myron from his visit in 1985 and were keen to catch up with him again, most are not actively training at present but you never really stop training in Shorinjiryu.

Kyoshi Myron took the class, with assistance from Shihan Vincent and Shodan Christian and we progressed through Naihanchin Yon and some Sankakutobi Kumites for about 4 hours followed by Kyu gradings then Dan grading demonstrations by Sensei Max Estens (Godan), Sensei Graeme Bowden (Yondan) and Sensei Des Paroz (Yondan). Shihan Phill Hooper was presented with his Nanadan belt and diploma followed by the other Dan grades. A traditional sake ceremony was completed with enthusiasm.

It was home for a cleanup at around 4.00 pm and a relatively early night.

We went sightseeing early on Monday, Bribie Island, the Ettamogah Pub, Montville in the mountains for

lunch then visited the Queensland Zoo where they all got to cuddle a koala, Shihan Vincent got to go eye to eye with an old man kangaroo (the kangaroo won) and Shodan Christian nursed a blue tongue lizard. We were now late for our 4.00 pm training session at my Seiryukan Dojo but not too late and we complete a spirited 90 min. session before cleaning up and heading into Brisbane for a Japanese meal of Sukiake and Shabu Shabu and a few sake's with the local Instructors. A late night!

Tuesday commenced with picking up Shihan Phill for a day on the Gold Coast but first we visited the Mack factory for a short tour so Shihan Vincent and Shodan Christian could have their photos taken in a big Mack truck. From there we were off to point Danger then lunch at Burleigh Heads, a tour through Surfers Paradise and back to the Seiryukan Dojo for the normal 2 hour Tuesday training session. The training was followed by a quick meal and another late night.

Wednesday saw us visit Noosa where Sensei Tom Griffin was ready to show us the sights. We visited the Noosa National Park where we got to watch dolphins surfing close up, an eagle soaring and posing for pictures at the same time then on to Alexandria Bay where Sensei Tom and Shodan Christian went in for a surf. It was then back to Noosa for lunch. We walked a total of about 6 miles in the heat. We dropped Sensei Tom off and then headed back to Brisbane for training at the Seiryukan Dojo again. After about 2 hours training we cleaned up and had a great bar-b-cue meal of steak, shrimp and calamari cooked by yours truly. Another late night.

Thursday was sightseeing in Brisbane City, we walked, shopped, lunched in the Botanical Gardens, walked some more, toured Parlia-

ment House, walked some more, an early dinner at a Japanese takeaway then off to Springwood for training at Sensei Anne Aylward's Torakai Dojo. A special training guest was Sensei Mark Vannekerk from Shorinjiryu Shindokan and also Shihan Laurie Vannekerk, his wife Dale and Sensei Richard Bryant (they didn't train). (Shihan Laurie trained with Kaiso in the early days).

We trained for about 2 hours then visited Shihan Laurie's house for a meal and many stories of yesteryear before heading home, in trouble, at around 1.00 am. Sensei Lesley Griffin, my wife, has no sense of humor!

Friday morning was the time to say good bye to our honored guests so we drove them to the airport for their lunch time flight. I understand everything went smoothly from then on, late flights, lost luggage, late arrival in New York, no problem.

The New Yorkers had finished their relaxing Oz holiday and were well rested, we drove around 900 miles, trained for around 14 hours, Kyoshi Myron wore a hat and shorts, Shihan Vincent took 1500 photos and Shodan Christian smiled, all in around 90 deg F heat. A great holiday!

Seriously, the effort and commitment of these three fine Karateka and gentlemen during their Oz visit will be remembered and talked about for years to come. We thank them and appreciate their friendship and guidance.

Karateka from different Schools from opposite sides of the globe training as one with no issues, politics or baggage, I love Shorinjiryu!

(On behalf of Shihan Vincent and Shodan Chris and myself, we thank you. In fact, we had a blast, you, Sensei Leslie and the entire group were fantastic. Thank you, again. ~ Kyoshi Myron)

Its Better to Burn Out by Peter Hiltz, Sensei

"Its better to burn out, than fade away"

The title quote is attributed to a number of folks, with a Google search yielding a majority of references to Neil Young and Kurt Cobain. However, the utterance that sticks in my mind the most is from the movie Highlander with Sean Connery and Christopher Lambert. In it, Clancy Brown, in the role of the Kurgon, relishing the struggle, makes the statement, "I've something to say, it's better to burn out, than fade away."

We face these situations every day at school and job, in relationships, through illness, etc. How we deal with them affects our life and the lives of those around us. Do we face the real world, regardless of the curve balls it throws, and struggle on, or do we quit, either decisively or by default. Many choices come from no win situations. Regardless of whether we can win or not, we still face three choices: fight, flee, or ignore. I'll argue that ignoring is the worse choice, but still a choice.

Let me argue the point with two examples. The first relates to a karate student I've had who started strong but now rarely makes class. Sometimes he'll only attend one class a month, sometimes he peaks up to 7 or 8 a month. He's neither with the program nor out of the program, and he's making little progress. He is not in class enough to learn or build reflexes, and his skills have slipped. He gets

disappointed when he doesn't get promoted. What else in his life is suffering from the ad hoc attendance in class? Does he attend when he feels guilty? How much pain does not meeting his goals cause him? Would it not be better if he either chose to attend on the best regular schedule he could, or dropped out until he could devote more time? If schedule issues cause his sporadic attendance, maybe dropping out and spending time at the gym in preparation for returning would be the most profitable path. You've got to know when to change paths, and be able to consciously make the choice.

My mother is living this situation now, and gives us the second example. She's in the best nursing facility money can buy, recovering from a stroke. Two months ago she could walk; now she cannot. Her weakness is not from illness or the stroke, but instead from her avoiding making a choice about her future. The high level view is that she's three choices, as we all do: work with the physical therapy people to get as much strength back as possible (fight), decide that her situation is not worth continuing and stop eating (flee), or ignore it. She's chosen not to choose, which equates to ignoring it. She refuses physical therapy, and sometimes medicines. Under eldercare laws she has that choice. The issue is quality of life. If she fights to gain strength, she will live longer and have a higher quality of life. If she chooses to stop

eating, she will have a dignified and relatively painless death. Her refusal to make the choice is a choice to suffer. She'll linger on, reaching the point where she gets taken to the hospital, and they'll force feed her and then return her to nursing care, repeating this cycle until she succumbs. During this time her discomfort will increase and her quality of life decrease. Would not either of the first two conscience choices be better? Is it not better to fight for strength and quality of life so that one is healthier, and when the end comes it comes quickly? Is it not better to decide that one's quality of life is below one's requirements, and therefore take the steps to not live below that standard? Fading away is clearly worse for everyone. She suffers, her family suffers, the caregivers who've come to know her suffer as they watch something unnecessary and tragic.

These choices are not easy, and are frequently painful. The best path is often still bad. However, in the drive to pick the best choice from the options we face, regardless of if all are bad, it is still better to burn out, than fade away. To make a deliberate choice to go 110% into whatever choice you make.

This brings us back to martial arts philosophy (not that we've left it). The Japanese have a saying that you've not tried until you've died trying. Is this not the same thing?

Give it some thought.

Email Request

In an effort to facilitate a faster and cost effective method of communication, please submit

your email address to us at shorinjiryu.org@aol.com

Reflections on Sokumen Tsuki by Brian Berenbach, Shihan

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

punches delivered in a front stance instead of a sideward facing stance so that the second punch can be delivered more quickly.

This concludes my rumination on sokumen tsuki. I hope that, whether you agree with me or not, you will

reflect on what I have said here, and let me know your views.

I am extremely grateful to all the earlier Shorinjiryu instructors who made personal sacrifices so that we might have the opportunity and pleasure of studying a fascinating and beautiful martial art. My heart-

felt thanks to our current Shinzen leadership, Kyoshi Lubitsch and Shihan Hayes for all their ongoing efforts and sacrifices. And to you, my fellow karate-ka, a very happy new year. May you have much success in your study of karate, and in all your future endeavors. Ous!

Congratulations: The Year 2004 In Review

Title	First	Last Name	Grade	School
Shihan	Daniel	Hayes	BB 7	Kenkukai
Shihan	Phillip	Hooper	BB 7	Australian
Shihan*	Brian	Berenbach	BB 6	Kenryukan
Shihan	Vincent	Capers, Jr.	BB 6	Kenryukan
Shihan	Carlos	Figueroa	BB 6	Kenryukai
Shihan	Atul	Joshi	BB 6	Kenryukan
Shihan	Troy	Lester	BB 6	Kenryukan
Renshi	Page	Christis	BB 6	Watanabe Ha
Renshi	Larry	Dammons	BB 5	Watanabe Ha
Renshi	Alberdeston	Gonzalez	BB 5	Kenryukan
Sensei	Max	Estens	BB 5	Australian
Tashi	Des	Paroz	BB 4	Australian
Sensei	Graham	Bowden	BB 4	Australian
Sensei	Peter	Guarascio	BB 3	Kenryukai
Sandan	Richard	Alicea	BB 3	Kenkukai
Nidan	Yesenia	Santiago	BB 2	Kenryukan
Nidan	Jim	Dee	BB 2	Kenryukan
Kohai Nidan	Anthony	Leiva	BB2 Jr	Kenryukan
Kohai Shodan	David	Nespoli	BB Jr	Kenkukai
Shodan	Rajesh	Bhat	BB 1	Kenryukan
Shodan	Stacey	Hines	BB 1	Kenryukan
Shodan	Doro	Konate	BB 1	Kenryukan
Shodan	Christian	Hernandez	BB 1	Kenryukan
Shodan	Ian	Rosenblatt	BB 1	Kenkukai
Shodan	Frank	Davila	BB 1	Kenshin
Shodan	Roxanna	Davila	BB 1	Kenshin

*title upgrading ~ previously promoted to 6th Dan

Recommended For Black Belt Promotion in 2005

Ikkyu	Nazir	Khan	Kenryukan
Ikkyu	Rafael	Lajara	Kenryukan
Ikkyu*	Christopher	Sciacchitano	Kenkukai
Ikkyu*	Patrick	Sciacchitano	Kenkukai
Ikkyu*	Samantha	Soto	Kenryukan

*to Junior Black belts

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