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# BLACK LOTUS FOUNDATIONS

Donald Miskel

Since we are adding new members who share a common vision, I would like to elaborate on the foundations and philosophies of the Black Lotus Martial Art Systems and some of its underlying principles. We may not all share the exact same fighting system but we do have to be on the same page as far as direction is concerned. After all, “how can two walk together except they be agreed”? (Amos 3:3)

Black Lotus Martial Art System is an eclectic interpretation of a number of fighting principles and concepts. It takes its primary techniques from karate (Okinawan Kempo), American kenpo, Aikijitsu, and Chinese Chaun Fa and Chin Na. Though we follow an eclectic approach, each of these systems are separate entities and can be studied and ranked separately.

Goju Te Kempo is the foundation of the Black Lotus system. We feel that striking is the most effective way of dealing with combat and self defense situations. The grappling techniques that we use are generally used as restraint or throwing techniques at the end of a waza (fighting combination or sequence). They are not generally used as singular fighting techniques on their own, but supplement the primary striking techniques.

Goju Te Kempo gives us a flexible system that deals with aggression by redirecting the force of an attack and using it against an attacker. We try to avoid using force against force and will preferably use soft circular blocking that redirects the direction of the attack and positions the opponent a disadvantageous position. We use sabaki or positioning footwork, to place our self in the most efficient position to deal with an attack while offering the least access to the opponant’s weapons.

The Black Lotus System uses seventy percent hand (striking) techniques to twenty percent kicking and ten percent grappling techniques. Of course, since the system allows individual interpretation by the practitioner, these percentages may vary somewhat.

Our system uses about an equal percentage of open and closed hand attacks, again varying with the individual. We prefer strait line punching to circular, though both are used. Our open hand and arm strikes are generally circular, though again, a few strait line techniques can be and sometimes are used. Our kicks tend to be directed to an area from the solar plexus and rib cage to the feet, ankles and lower legs of the opponent. The system also incorporates leg and foot trips, sweeps and entanglements to destroy the opponant’s balance and attack his base. Kicks are not generally used as a primary technique. More often it is used to set an opponent up for a finishing technique, to divert his attention from a primary technique, as a supplement to a series of hand techniques, or as a finishing technique at the end of a waza.

Along with striking, kicking and grappling techniques, we use a series of bone and joint destruction, ripping and tearing techniques, and techniques designed to break the neck or the spine. These techniques are used for extreme situations and are not first choice techniques. They are designed for killing, maiming or seriously injuring an opponent. We also employ a number of choking, strangling techniques and sleeper holds, as well as a number of restraining holds and locks.

We will use nerve center and pressure point attacks, but our primary aim is to destroy the support system (feet ankles or legs), obscure or destroy the vision, or to compromise the

opponent's ability to breath. This gives us a number of easily accessible targets that don't require a lot of technical skill to access.

Aside from these offensive weapons, we employ a number of more exotic weapons, such as the shoulders, hips, butt, the chin, head, and teeth, as the situation may warrant.

Living in the modern world we also teach the use of weapons. Those who desire are taught kobuto, the use of traditional Okinawan and Japanese weapons. All students are taught the use of bladed weapons, striking weapons, firearms and weapons of opportunity. Students are also schooled in weapon defense, multiple opponent defense and scenario defense situational drills.

Our basic self defense system advocates gross motor movement and simplicity of technique. Though more complex techniques are taught to the advanced students we believe in erring on the side of simplicity.

Our defensive system tends to be deceptively simple. We avoid force to force blocks unless we are using a block as an attack on the opponants offensive limb. When using an attacking block we will try to direct it to the most vulnerable area of the opponant's attacking limb while cutting his line of attack to use his force against him. We prefer parrying or circular defenses to force on force blocks. Our blocks are used along with footwork and body positioning to place the opponent in a position that doesn't allow him an angle of attack, and makes it difficult or impossible for him to defend himself. They serve to unbalance, overextend or uproot him while placing him in a vulnerable position. They allow us to either strike simultaneously with our blocks or strike an indefensible area following the block or parry.

Though we train in a martial discipline, we are a Christian based martial art system, which means we exercise Christian restraint when confronted with a threat. We will fight but only when there is no other alternative. Our philosophy concerning conflict resolution is base on these premises. We will walk away from a fight if possible. We will try to reason our way out of a confrontation, deescalating or diffusing the situation if we possibly can. If forced to fight we will restrain rather than hurt, hurt rather than injure, injure rather than maim or cripple, and maim or cripple rather than kill. We will kill only if it is completely necessary and we are left with no alternative.

Our system incorporates several basic kata to teach flow, body movement and footwork, and to promote balance. More than kata, waza are taught to program basic movements, defensive techniques and incorporate responses into muscle memory. Static repetition of basic techniques are used in the beginning, to teach the student the techniques and to teach the proper body dynamics, but they are generally used only in the early stages. In the intermediate stages, basics are practiced through the wazas.

Within the Black Lotus Martial Arts Association, there are a number of individuals who teach complete systems. While they may not mimic the Black Lotus Fighting system they embrace the concepts and basic principles in the application, expression and use of their individual systems. Each student must invent himself and find his own way after having perfected the basics. They are given a large pool of knowledge to draw from and within this environment, governed by the core principles, concepts and philosophy builds his own approach that suits his needs and purposes. I don't want those who align themselves with me or train under me to be clones of me. I will give them the building blocks but what they build with it is up to them.

Each master and sensei is autonomous and teaches his own system, but we share common ideals, goals and philosophies. In the end, the Black Lotus Organization doesn't promote a single system, but embraces many styles that seek a common goal; The growth, proper education and implementation of our arts, and the proper approach in the use of our knowledge and ability.

This ends this brief explanation of our approach to the fighting arts. This has been an overview of our philosophy and approach to the martial arts. I hope it has given some insight into our ideas, philosophy and approach to the martial disciplines. These precepts are used as guidelines, not as set laws. As long as the individual member governs himself by responsible Christian rules of conduct and trains honestly and realistically, he has the flexibility that allows individual expression.

Lastly let me say that what we teach isn't a sport. It doesn't lend itself to competition. Until there is a sport that advocates competitive eye gouging, joint destruction, murder and mayhem, there can be no reasonable sports application of our fighting system. What this approach 'will' do is allow each individual to become the best martial artist he can be and if necessary, fight or defend himself and his loved ones.

In conclusion I would like to quote a couple of scriptures that illustrate our Christian philosophy and should serve as a guide in our endeavors.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness... (Matthew 6:33)

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him and he will direct your path." (Proverbs 3:6)

"Follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see God."  
(Hebrew 12:14)

God bless you my Brethren. Train hard and go with God.

# CENTERING

Donald Miskel

I have often been asked why do I, as a Christian minister, continue my studies of the martial arts. To date, I have put close to fifty years of study into training in something that I hope never to have to use. One of the answers I give most often is, "to stay balanced".

I'm not huge but at five nine and carrying 225 pounds of pretty hard muscle mass, I'm not a small person either. My size and the confident manner in which I carry myself tends to divert most would be assailants. Considering that I have lived a large part of my life in some really tough neighborhoods and have worked in some high risk professions, that's saying a lot. Not all to my own credit but some of this I attribute to my martial arts training.

So why do I persist in my training? I can give you several reasons. For one, studying the martial arts and doing the additional training that allows me to continue these pursuits, have kept me in pretty decent physical condition, even into my sixties. Another benefit is that it has helped to minimize the debilitating effects of aging. I'm not twenty years old and I can't do what I was one able to do, but considering my age, I manage to do more than most. To a large extent, we don't just get old. What we do is relinquish our youth and give in to old age. We don't have to do this. If we stay active, and train properly we're capable of doing much more than we might think. Another reason for continuing to train is it to stay centered.

I don't study the martial arts simply as a means of trying to find some form of enlightenment. This is what the 'do' in the martial arts, such as in judo or aikido, implies. I lean more towards a 'jitsu' approach. 'Jitsu' alludes to a more combative application. I don't continue my studies anticipating a fight or an attack that may never happen, but I do believe in being combat able. Actually, whether we study the martial arts as a 'do' or a 'jitsu', there are a number of benefits that the martial arts offer beyond trying to turn ourselves into the proverbial lethal weapon. Centering is one of these benefits.

Most martial arts address this concept to a greater or lesser degree. In some arts, especially the internal arts, such as Tai Chi, Pau Kua, Hsing I , Aikido and etc., centering is emphasized. In some of the other martial arts, it isn't taught as an individual concept, but in training, it is gradually instilled into a student.

Centering means more than the occidental interpretation of this word might imply. Centering takes several things into consideration. Centering implies balance. It means that a person must always be aware of his center of gravity and, for the most part keep it directly under him to remained balanced. It also requires a lowering of the center of gravity to accomplish rooting, making it difficult to unbalance, upset, or move the person. Balance also requires proper positioning in relationship to an opponent. It can mean being at the right angle to address an attack, or avoiding the direction of the attack. This implies, being at the right place at the right time. This allows a martial artist to redirect and contain a threat without exposing himself to undo physical danger. Balance also requires proper breathing. To remain balanced, a martial artist has to breathe from the diaphragm, expanding the entire area of the lungs. Aside form the fact that this oxidizes and energizes the body, it keeps the person from floating his body, or raising his center of gravity. This is often caused by breathing in just the upper portion of the lungs or by expanding the chest, raising the center of gravity. We have to keep in mind that since the center of balance is a few inches below the navel, it is more important to concentrate on and possibly extend the belly to lower the center of gravity. Floating interferes with stability and makes the balance weak. With weak balance it is impossible to be efficient in facing the opposition that life's threats bring with them.

Incidentally, balance figures in other areas of our lives. Man is a triune being, and to be balanced, in a holistic manner, means that each aspect of the person is in balance with the other. Training in the martial arts aids in attaining this.

Man is first a spirit. It is in this aspect of a man's being that he is able to have a relationship with God. We are told in the word that, "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Man's being should be centered first in his spirit. The word says, "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the spirit, the things of the spirit" (Romans 8:5). Being centered in the spirit implies denying the lust of the flesh. Of course, this is accomplished by seeking and growing closer to God through Christ, but it also requires sacrifice and discipline. Studying the martial arts will not necessarily make a person more spiritual, but it will offer some of the discipline necessary to be successful in this aspect of his life. As advised by Solomon, we acknowledge God in all that we do and we allow him to direct our path.

Secondly man is a soulish being. The soul is the intellect or the seat of consciousness. In a sense, the soul is who we are. It is how we see ourselves and how we perceive the world. In this area of our existence, we have our sense of self awareness. The soul determines the priorities in our lives and the choices we make. It is through the soul that we will decide to live with emphasis in either the carnal or the spiritual realm. It is in the soul that we exercise free will. We will either decide to seek the way of the spirit and draw close to God, to seek the way of the world which is the devil's path, or we will try to be completely self motivated, leaving God out of our lives, which is as self destructive as openly yielding our lives to the devil. Without God there can be no life and without Christ, there can be no salvation. To be centered in our soul is to make God the center of our lives. Again, by giving us better control of our physical selves, it gives us the discipline to deny the desires of the flesh and the influences of a sinful world that's rooted in the flesh. "Thou will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee." (Isaiah 26:3)

Lastly is the natural man or the physical aspect of our being. Man's greatest aspiration should be his salvation. We should understand that salvation is a process. The Spirit is saved immediately, as soon as we give our hearts to God through Christ. Jesus is the only source of salvation and the only path through which we can establish a relationship with God. The soul is saved gradually as we learn to yield our lives to God, walking according to his precepts. This is what it means to 'work out our salvation in fear and trembling' as mentioned in Philippians 2:12. The spirit and soul can be saved in this realm but the flesh can only be brought and kept under subjection. That is why we are told in the word that flesh and 'blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven'.

As we become centered through our martial art training, that sense of balance should begin to permeate other areas of our lives. The martial way is a way of sacrifice, self denial, hard work and discipline. Through this effect, we should seek to bring the rest of our life in balance by being completely centered.

Being centered doesn't mean sitting and contemplating your navel. It doesn't require transcendental meditation and chanting. Many of the practices of traditional Eastern martial arts will mislead us in our Christian lives. That is why, even in the practice of these physical disciplines, we must remain spiritually centered. This will focus us, enable us to attain our martial art goals and keep us in spiritual balance.

Being physically centered can save our lives in a confrontation. It can help us diffuse, deescalate, walk away from, or if necessary, physically deal with a confrontation. Being spiritually centered, on the other hand, can save our souls. We have to be centered enough to deal with every confrontation that life sends our way, whether it is in the natural or spiritual realm. As you pursue your studies, let me remind you; that you may or may not ever face a threat from a physical opponent in your life time, but spiritual warfare is a constant and universal reality. This applies whether you are a Christian or a sinner. In that area, the devil doesn't discriminate. He has a special dislike for Christians but it is his desire to destroy

every person he can, man, woman and child; saint and sinner. Being a Christian doesn't exempt you from this fight. The truth is, he has every saint in his crosshairs, but it gives us the tools to deal with his attacks. If there's one thing we learn in our training it's to use the right tool for the job. It isn't a good idea to 'bring a knife to a gun fight'. As martial artists and as Christians, we must know our enemy, be ready for any possible attack and be centered enough to deal with the challenges that life in this world (enemy territory) might send our way.

In closing, let me remind you that being centered means not anticipating anything, but being ready for everything. The enemy doesn't always telegraph his intentions. Be ready for whatever challenges you may have to meet, and as the Boy Scout motto says, "Be Prepared". Train hard, my brethren, stay centered and go with God.

## BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Donald Miskel

Way back in the day when I was a kid (some of my students will think that that was in the beginning of time), my father took me to downtown Chicago. He showed me a construction site where they had dug the deepest hole that I had ever seen. It looked to me like they had dug to the very center of the earth.

I asked my father why they were digging such a big hole. He told me that they were going to build, what was to be, the tallest building in Chicago. No, I'm not talking about the John Hancock Building or the Sears Tower. I may be dating myself, but I'm referring to the Prudential Building.

I wondered why they were digging a hole if they wanted to build a tall building. It didn't make sense to me. Being only a child, I didn't understand the need of a solid foundation in building. Unfortunately, a lot of Western martial artists suffer from the same short sightedness. They want to build tall, without digging deep.

Christ told the parable about the man who built his house on the sand. It stood quite secure until the rains came and the storms raged. Too many of us find ourselves in a similar situation. Our martial art skill is fine as long as we aren't faced with any real opposition. You may ask yourself why this is. It can stem from any of a number of reasons. It can be a lack of native ability, or physical skills in a person. He can lack the reflexes or the needed eye hand coordination needed. Some people are strong and have the musculature that is complimented by slow twitch muscles. They are physically powerful, but they lack speed. Some people, on the other hand, are long and lean and have the type of speed that results from fast twitch muscles. Some people are uncoordinated and clumsy. Some have poor balance. All of these, and other similar problems, can hinder martial arts skill. Many of these can be overcome with diligent training, but some are just the problems that we have to deal with as we seek success as martial artists.

There are some facts that have to be accepted. If you're short, you can't make yourself tall. If you're naturally thin, you can't make yourself large. Your bone structure, height and general body configuration are governed by genetics. If you're short and heavy boned, Taekwondo may not be your best choice in the martial arts. If you're thin and small boned, you might not want to dedicate your time to grappling and ground fighting. People have overcome these limitations, but I'm a firm believer that you should choose your martial art according to your limitations and body type.

Some of the challenges that we face in becoming competent martial artists are inherent but some are self imposed. If you're uncoordinated, training can remedy some of that problem if you're determined in your goal and stick with your training. We struggle with our limitations and natural lack of ability, and many overcome them with time and determination. We have to be realistic in our training. We have to work with, and sometimes work around, the things we can't change, and we have to change those that we can.

The western mindset has changed the way that the traditional martial arts are taught, or at least here, in the western world. Our feeling of personal freedom, personal expression, and entitlement, changes the traditional relationship between instructor and student. In the birthplace of these arts, students venerated their instructors. They didn't question their instructors and any doubts or disagreements they may have had they kept to themselves.

Getting back to the analogy I was trying to make at the beginning of this study, if you want to build high, you have to dig deep. The most important part of the building process is laying a good foundation. Without a good foundation, it doesn't matter what building material you use. You can build with the best steel and the finest brick. You can engage the finest artisans and have them take their time in their labors, but the results will still be poor if there is no foundation to your building.



Kobudo (Sai).

In a neighborhood on the southern outskirts of Chicago, I lived in a building complex that was built on reclaimed land. The land had once been swamp but had been reclaimed with landfill. Some of the buildings began to sink, over time, and their integrity was compromised. Consequently, they had to be torn down. Once the building has been built, it is virtually impossible to build a firm foundation under it. That's why it's important to establish a good foundation prior to building the structure.

In these days of reality training and real life martial arts, this is as important as ever. I put a lot of store in reality training. I teach a reality system myself. These systems are good, if they're built on something. Most of my martial arts training has been devoted to the traditional arts and was based on extensive training in the basics. When it is all said and done, it is the basic techniques that seem to work.

Unfortunately, many people judge a martial art by how visually and ascetically pleasing it is. There is some truth to this concept. Form effects function. When these martial arts are done well, the coordination, balance, economy of motion and strait forth purpose looks graceful to the eye. Grace as a natural by product of the arts is fine, but grace for the sake of grace is a mistake that robs the arts of their effectiveness. Looking pretty for the sake of looking pretty should never be our goal. We must keep in mind that we are practicing fighting arts and not ballet.

The problem that I have with many of the martial arts that are being taught today, is that they are long on technique and short on basics. The system that I teach came about in the eighties because many of the younger martial arts practitioners were proving ineffective

in the streets. It's nice being effective in the dojo but if it doesn't translate to the streets, where its martial ability is needed, it is nothing but a form of exercise, and probably not the best form of that. If it's only exercise that you want, you'd do better with aerobics or strength training. The martial arts were developed for fighting and that's what it should accomplish best.

Personally, I don't view martial arts as a sport. I did some tournament fighting when I was younger, but I quickly came to realize that many of the opponents that I couldn't defeat in kumite, I'd walk over in the streets. Combat, and the reality of the inner city streets, clarified a lot of the misconceptions of combat that I may have had. Personal combat is real. It isn't a game. If you face an attacker with a knife, you are either capable, or you are dead. That isn't the time or place to try to learn martial skills. If you aren't able to give a realistic and effective account of yourself, you very probably won't live to learn from the experience.

I grew up in tough surroundings and rough circumstances. Combat wasn't theoretical. It either worked or it didn't. I saw too many, would be, martial artists, left bleeding and broken in the streets. In those types of encounters, fancy and complex techniques don't work. In my experience, it wasn't the rear spinning heel kicks or the flying side kicks that got the job done. It was the shuto (knife hand) to the throat, the reverse punch to the solar plexus, the stomp kick to the knee that was effective. The basics are what work. The simpler a technique is the more chance that it will actually work.

I've had the misfortune of having to face attackers with knives, clubs and even guns. I was fortunate to survive these experiences, but you can rest assured that there wasn't a fancy technique to be seen during these encounters. I resorted to the ten thousand block and counters that I had done in the dojo to see me through these experiences. Too often today, fancy techniques are taught to green students. They haven't had the basics burned into their muscle memory, and though they may know the techniques, they can't use them when they are most needed. I don't care what martial art you practice, there is no effective fighting art without basics. Like a house without a foundation, it is destined to fail.

When the system that I teach was founded, it was to address the ineffectiveness of the black belts that the local martial arts were producing. Commercial schools catered to the desires of their students to remain financially solvent. Loss of students meant a loss of income, so many sensei compromised what they taught and how they taught it. Contracts with guarantees of black belts at the culmination of training, became common. When I first got involved in the martial arts, as a youth, I was told that very few students would ever become black belts. I was told that many didn't have the capabilities, regardless of the length or intensity of training. I'm not saying whether I think this is true or not, but I have seen a lot of shodans who wouldn't have been green belts in the systems I was brought up in. In those days, you expected to take at least six to eight years in earning that coveted first degree black belt, if you could do so at all. Now days, black belts are handed out in a year or two to anyone who stays the course. Again, I'm not criticizing any style, system or instructor, but I have a hard time seeing how a student can learn all that he needs to know, in such a short period of time, to reach black belt level. It's not up to me to determine how different organizations, schools, systems or instructors measure their students, but we should be careful about letting students believe that they are more capable than they are. Such a mistake can cost their lives. Reality doesn't allow for a lot of mistakes.

I realize that teaching methods have improved, but some things just take time. It takes time to lay a good foundation. In Okinawa, years ago, a student didn't learn a lot of kata. He might learn a handful, but he would specialize in only one. Each kata comprised an entire fighting strategy, and, according to the old masters, mastering any one, would give a practitioner an effective fighting system. They didn't base their ability on fancy techniques or flamboyant execution back then. They based their fighting arts on basics. They developed a level of competency that is seldom seen in martial artists today. Their secret wasn't in superior knowledge or esoteric techniques, but strong foundations and perfect executions of the basic technique.

Stories are told of, long lost, secret techniques. There are no long lost secrets in the martial arts. If it's hidden it's hidden in plain sight. If you want to be a good, strong, martial artist; if you want your techniques to really work in the streets where they are needed, you need to pay attention to your foundation. If it doesn't work, don't just learn new techniques. That's like building additional stories on an already rickety building. Start from the bottom up. Go back to your roots; to your beginning. A tree is strong because of its roots. A building is strong because of its foundation. If a martial artist is strong it is because of his basics. Train honestly, my friend. Go back to basics.

God bless you, my Brethren. Go with God.

# EMBRACING THE ATTACK OF THE TIGER

Donald Miskel

We are in a new era of martial arts. Many practitioners are abandoning the martial arts as a character builder and look at it simply as an offensive or defensive weapon. Actually, this isn't a new view. The martial arts have simply gone full circle and arrived again at the purpose for which they were first created.

Many of the advocates for this approach feel that they are innovators and to some extent they are. However, they aren't inventing anything new. They are simply reexploring the fighting aspects of the martial arts.

Throughout the history of the martial arts in the U.S. there have been mavericks that were solely interested in the combative aspects of the arts. They were criticized and sometimes ostracized because they advocated the more violent side of the martial arts. What these individuals had done was embrace the jitsu of the martial arts. Though they were looked upon with distaste by the martial arts community they were truer representatives of the original intent of these arts than their peers.

There are some good points in the practicality of the combative approach to the arts. Learning to fight takes less time than the obsessive preoccupation with form and grace. Fighting is simple and straightforward. In adapting this realistic approach, however, we need to be careful that we don't go so far in the other direction that we lose some of the benefits of the classical schools of martial arts. In many of these systems, the techniques aren't suspect. Only the intent and purpose of their implementation is sometime impractical.

The classical arts aren't so different from their combative cousins. After all, a kick is a kick and a punch is a punch. These and similar weapons are common through most martial disciplines. For the most part only strategy and philosophy divide them into different arts.

One problem with the fighting arts is that these arts are often practiced and taught by noncombatants and even pacifists. They have no intent of ever using what they learn in a combative situation so they aren't overly concerned with practical application.. There is nothing wrong with this mindset but we have to be realistic about what we are training in and what we're training for. Aikido, which incorporates some very effective and potentially dangerous techniques, has the tools to enable a fighter to hurt an opponent. However, the mindset that is adapted in its study will not create a good street fighter.

One thing that the classical martial arts offer is the ability to receive a technique. In our combative intent, we become so preoccupied with offense that we totally reject the idea of embracing the attack of an opponent. In aikido, a practitioner is taught to make the attacker's technique their own. They receive and blend with the attack. They even accept ownership of the technique. When you own something you can pretty much do what you want with it. You can put it where you want it. Often in our efforts to be aggressive and take a preemptive approach to combat, we sometimes throw out the baby with the bathwater. Fighting does require some level of aggression but aggression alone will not make a person into an effective fighter. That being the case, considering the level of practicality of these arts, we might as well buy assault weapons and be done with it. Very seldom will we be as aggressive as the thugs that we will have to face in a real fight. If aggression alone made a fighter, we would be lost before we started. In our training, we do try to increase our level of

aggression and even develop a killer instinct, but if we sink to the level of aggression of the street thug, we are no better than they are.

In the long standing philosophy of karate the edict is taught; "in karate there is no first strike". This might sound counter productive for an art as aggressive as karate but the problem is the lack of understanding of many practitioners and even instructors. Karate is basically a counter punching system. It reacts to an opponents attack and uses it to the karateka's advantage. Modern combative philosophy takes on an almost paranoid preoccupation with reaction time and preemptive strikes. What they fail to realize is that if you initiate the first strike, you are legally considered the aggressor. Of course, that is an over simplification but unless you are threatened by a weapon or accosted by multiple assailants you are legally at fault if you attack a potential opponent.

Action is always faster than reaction. That's a fact of life that we can't rewrite but there are ways of dealing with this fact. One reason some martial artists fall victim of their opponent's fist strike is because of lack of awareness. A person would become a nervous wreck if he walked around in a constant state of preparedness and potential aggression. That type of mindset would translate into a hair trigger disposition that could be dangerous in the hands of a trained martial artist. Instead, a martial artist should be trained to be aware of his surroundings and sensitive to what is happening around him. It is counter productive to go through life expecting and waiting for an attack that may never come. That type of attitude keeps the body and mind in a constant state of tension. As any martial artist knows, you can move faster when you are relaxed than when you are tense.

Another way of dealing with the preemptive strike is through spatial awareness. By keeping the proper distance between him and a possible threat a martial artist gives himself time to react. He also allows time to evaluate the level and intent of the threat. This should happen on a subconscious level if the martial artist is properly trained. If you have to think about an attack your defense isn't going to work.

Too many martial artists will attend a couple of seminars and think that they are ready to take on the world. It doesn't take long to learn a technique but it takes time to internalize it. This is accomplished by extensive training and repetition of a technique until it becomes second nature. Any technique, in order to be effective, has to be programmed into muscle memory. This can only be done through extensive practice. There is a world of difference between knowing a technique and being able to implement it.

Another element in effective combat and self defense is what the Japanese call sabaki. This refers to positioning. In order to be effective in a combative situation a fighter has to be able to position himself properly in relation to his opponent and the opponent's attack. Being in the right place at the right time can mean the difference between victory and defeat. Many people have become victims because they were in the wrong place. Avoiding certain areas will help a person avoid being confronted by certain situations. If you insist on strolling through a battle ground, you would do well to expect to have to fight. This same fact lends itself to combat. Positioning is half the battle.

Another element that enables a martial artist to be effective is total intent and commitment. Total commitment is necessary to make a technique strong enough to take down an attacker. This principle is called kime in karate. Kime means focus of effort, energy and intent. A tentative technique will only get you hurt or killed. If you don't intend to hurt or impair an attacker, your best bet (which often is the best tact anyway) is to take to your heels and beat a hasty retreat. As Miyagi said in the 'Karate Kid', "You do karate or you no do karate. No half do karate". If you aren't ready, willing and able to fight in a compromising situation fighting isn't your best option. You might do better to practice track. At least, if nothing else, you can 'get out of Dodge'.

The last principle I would like to explore is the one that this article is intended to address; receiving a technique.

In trying to address aggression we sometimes become obsessed with avoiding or stopping an attack. That's understandable considering the lethal intent of an opponent's attack, but sometime, in our fear of being hit we defeat our own purpose and in the process lose the opportunity to dominate and dispatch the opponent with the least risk of harm to ourselves.

In combat it is a bad idea to go toe to toe, blow for blow with an opponent. Especially since most attackers won't choose a victim that they feel is an even match. More often than not, you'll be facing a bigger or stronger opponent, one that is better armed or multiple opponents. This fact should govern our response to an attack. If we can put the opponent in a position where he is no longer a threat and can at the same time place ourselves in the position to do maximum harm with minimum risk to ourselves, we have the potential to end the conflict without being injured or hurt.

The occidental mind views things differently from the oriental mind. Our way of seeing things often gives us the wrong understanding of what is actually being taught with some techniques in the Asian combative arts. One such misconception is in the art of age uke, or what the westerner would call blocking techniques.

Let me clarify the concept of age uke. When I was studying karate I had the privilege (and what some would consider the bad luck) of being my sensei's uke. When practicing or demonstrating a technique, there is tori who implements the technique, and uke, who receives it. You'll notice that I said receive the technique. In order to learn a technique, there has to be cooperation between tori and uke. This cooperation doesn't involve opposition. Uke doesn't oppose tori's technique. He receives it. This sense of receiving the aggression of an attacker is what is implied by age uke.

In order to really take control of an attack the defender must embrace it. He has to receive the technique and make it his own. In so doing, he can position himself and his opponent where it affords the best advantage. Age uke should redirect the opponent's attack, overbalance him and put him in a position where the defender can implement a response from an indefensible position that offers maximum damage to the attacker with minimum risk to himself. In so doing he will be able to use the attacker's technique against him and use his own strength and aggression to defeat him.

There are instances when a martial artist will have to initiate the first attack. As martial artists, and especially Christian martial artists, we have to be able to discern when that is necessary. It is better to be able to redirect, diffuse or deescalate the violent intent of an aggressor without having to resort to violence. That is the ultimate skill in the martial arts. Unfortunately, sometimes meeting violence with violence is unavoidable. We have an obligation to preserve our own safety and the safety of our loved ones. Still, we want to act appropriately in a given situation. In facing opposition we should be discerning enough to know what course of action is necessary. Not only is this morally right, it can help a martial artist avoid serious repercussions and legal problems.

Learning the way of harmony, and not opposition, in all circumstances in our lives offers a certain amount of control in what could be a negative situation. Being centered and grounded and having confidence in our ability will circumvent many situations. You won't find yourself giving in to violence to prove yourself. Also, your level of confidence and your sense of awareness will often make a would be assailant seek easier prey.

In ending this one sided discussion, I would like to say that God and his protection is always our first line of defense. The word of God admonishes us that: "As far as you're able, follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see God" (Hebrews 12:14).

Train hard, my martial arts brethren. Go with God.

# BLACK LOTUS: FORM, FUNCTION AND FOCUS

Donald Miskel

The Black Lotus Association is made up of a membership of both masters and students of the arts. Because many of our members are the heads of their own organizations and teach their own martial arts system, I felt that a further explanation of the philosophy of the organization is in order.

First off, the Black Lotus Martial Arts Association (which for the sake of convenience and my lack of keying skills, I'll refer to as the BLMAA) was formed for instructional level students. That is to say, lower level black belts. Back in the dark ages, when I started studying the martial arts, it customarily took years to achieve a black belt. That is, if a student was capable of achieving that level of expertise. It generally took an average of six to eight years to reach the shodan level.

As time passed and more commercial schools came into existence, black belts were handed out in a much shorter time. This wasn't completely unwarranted, in that more efficient teaching methods were implemented. Unfortunately many schools shortened the time factor and changed the curriculum to retain students. Many schools issued contracts with a black belt promised within a prescribed amount of time. The shodan depended more on time factors than on the skill level of the students. This led to a lowering of the standards and a rush in the time that the curriculums were taught in. Because of this the skill level of the average shodan was less than acceptable.

Students who received their black belts during that time didn't realize that they didn't have the skill level implied by the rank they wore. They were under the impression that they had more skill than they actually had. This caused a number of students to be hurt and humiliated in self defense situations. The BLMAA was developed to address this problem.

It was my intention to bring together a number of instructors from different schools and systems to collaborate in addressing this situation. Thus, with the cooperation and help of several very qualified instructors, many older and of higher rank than myself, an alliance was formed and a curriculum developed, and the BLMAA came into existence. Several systems were taught in the classes, different instructors teaching on different days, but eventually a synthesis developed and an eclectic art began to emerge. This Black Lotus Martial Arts System (BLMAS) is actually several complete systems that can be practiced as individual, complete arts, or in concert with the other arts offered to form an individually adaptable eclectic fighting system. In this system the art was tailored to the student and he could choose his own path.

This approach to developing and teaching the arts proved successful and the skill level of the BLMAA students improved vastly. In our organization, the sports aspects of the arts weren't emphasized. We left the sport and competition areas to the individual schools and instructors. We concentrated, instead, on the combat and self defense aspects of the martial arts.

Because I was a pastor, at the time, and several of our key members were Christians, the organization gradually took on a Christ centered focus, replacing the Eastern spiritual influences with Christian philosophies and values. As the organization grew, more instructors who were pastors and ministers became ministers. Unfortunately, this didn't sit well with

some of the original members and some left our ranks while others became inactive while still retaining their memberships.



Because the organization taught (sometime brutally) efficient combative techniques, a stricter code of moral conduct was demanded of the students to discourage them from going out and putting their new found physical prowess to the test. Our students became very efficient in combat and self defense situations and accountability became a big part of our code of conduct. If a student was involved in a combat or self defense situation and it came to the attention of the organization, an explanation and a justifiable reason was required of the student. This cut down on the number of incidents by the members. Because conflict resolution and de-escalation in confrontational situations were taught and stressed these incidents became rare, even in the mean streets of Chicago.

In the BLMAA each school and instructor is autonomous, though they are expected to adhere to the philosophy and code of conduct of the organization. Initially, the membership consisted only of dan level membership. The instructors generally had their own schools or organizations and their students were considered auxiliary, or second level associates of the BLMAA. They weren't allowed individual membership. It is my intention to amend this rule and open the organization to lower ranked students. This will be discussed and put before our Master and Master's council in the near future.

The BLMAA doesn't hold tournaments and all interactions between the schools, organizations and systems are up to the individual masters and instructors. This may be subject to change in the near future but as of now, this is the rule of thumb. If the individual schools indulge in free sparing, inner school tournaments are allowed though they aren't sanctioned by the organization. The BLMAA and its fighting system is completely combat and self defense focused.

The BLMAS (combat system) has traditionally attracted more law enforcement, security people and students who work in areas where altercations and confrontations are more common. My personal experience has been in hospital security, personal protection

and in the mental health field, all of which are areas where confrontations are often common. The dynamics of these occupations have added to our realistic and practical approach to confrontational situations. I have also taught karate, kempo, aikijitsu and jiu jitsu, all of which I am more willing to teach to the general public. Since I don't teach commercially, I am at liberty to choose who I will teach, especially in the BLMA system. Many of our instructors share this same approach, but again, each school and individual organization within the BLMAA is autonomous and make their own rules in this area, however, where the BLMA combat system is taught, it is suggested that the students be considered carefully.

The BLMAA is designed to allow and interchange of ideas and fighting techniques between schools, systems and instructors. It also allows and encourages an ongoing forum that allows mutual growth through an interchange of ideas.

I am no longer young and will soon be sixty two years old. Age and several surgeries (primarily back surgeries) have caused me to curb my actual, hands, on teaching. I have a few private and semi private students that I teach my core system to, but my time now involves more research, writing and personal development than actual teaching. Most of my teaching is done through essays, articles and personal interchange with other instructors and students. I am still learning, and garner much from these interchanges with other instructors, masters and students.

It is my desire to bring together the various Christian martial arts schools and organizations so that we can coordinate our efforts. I am also interested in reaching the lost for Christ, using amongst other methods, the martial arts ministry. I feel that this should be our first and major focus in the BLMAA. Turning out good students is important but turning out students who will offer their talents and abilities to kingdom building should be our first priority. As the presiding master and chairman of the BLMAAI feel that this should be the first focus of our organization and of the martial arts ministry.

I have been a martial artist for over fifty years and I still research and train diligently, but first and foremost, I am a Christian and a pastor. My greatest focus will always be on the souls and spiritual needs of my congregation and students and winning the lost for Christ.

I invite all of the dedicated masters and instructors in the BLMAA to work closer together towards a common goal and to communicate with one another. We need to be in contact to coordinate and focus our efforts. We have a group on the Shinja network and I encourage all of our members to Join the Shinja network, the BLMAA group and the Kenseiryu and Thunderbolt Kenpo groups. I also encourage the membership to check out the Shinja Martial arts organization, the American Martial Arts Union and Master Quoc Tran's organization. These are Christian martial arts organizations and ministries, in their own right. Kenseiryu and Thunderbolt Kenpo are also sister organizations.

I ask the membership to refrain from martial arts politics and to seek unity with other schools, systems and organizations, whether they are classical or eclectic systems. We need a greater level of cooperation and brotherhood in the martial art community. Try not to shun other schools because they don't share our spiritual beliefs. Perhaps by contact with us and through our example, they will be led to the light of Christ.

God bless you, my students, friends and fellow instructors and masters. Let us work together and be with one accord. Train hard and honestly and teach the same way. That way we will achieve and reach our common goals, not only teaching the arts, but winning lost souls for Christ.

# THE REINVENTION OF SELF

Donald Miskel

In this journey there are many roads that we walk at different junctures of our lives. If nothing else, we learn that in this life, nothing stays the same.

Our study of the martial arts should be a journey of self discovery and personal improvement. Martial science and warfare is nothing new to us. We are involved in spiritual warfare everyday of our lives. We may never have to fight for our lives against a flesh and blood opponent, but we train to prepare ourselves for that possible eventuality. As Christian martial artists, our purpose should not be to learn to fight for the sake of fighting, but to enable us to face our real enemies, ourselves and the adversary. My spiritual brethren out there know who I refer to as the adversary. I refer to Satan, the enemy of God and man. We will discuss that area of spiritual warfare at another time. What I want to talk about now is facing the challenge of self.

Our walk with God and our Christian careers should be our primary purpose, but to us dedicated martial artists, our training is an additional way of life. It teaches us many lessons about ourselves and those that we interact with daily. We learn patience, persistence, determination, tenacity, balance, control and self-discipline amongst many other lessons, through studying the martial arts. Our confidence in our own abilities tends to center us and give us a sense of calm. Since we aren't as threatened by the world around us, we can go through life without constantly looking over our shoulders. Fear compromises our ability to go about our lives with equanimity. Our faith in God's protection and our knowledge of our martial arts abilities gives us a sense of protection and well being.

The lessons that we learn through our training should permeate every area of our natural life. We don't feel that we have anything to prove if confronted, and we can walk away from a threatening person without feeling reduced or minimized by refusing to be drawn into a fight. Knowing how frail the human body is and how easy it is to hurt, seriously injure or kill another human being gives us a deep respect for human life. We understand that it is easy to take a life, but it may not always be easy to spare a life if threatened. We can take a life, but we can't create a life. For this reason, we honor and cherish every living thing.

I grew up in harsh surroundings. The need to survive and my feeling of vulnerability made me violent and quick to fight. I would try to hurt anyone that I considered a threat before they could hurt me. I became an affective and accomplished street fighter at a young age. I was vicious as well as violent and in a fight, I went right for the eyes, groin or kneecaps. Because I feared reprisal, I fought to maim and seriously injure, if not to kill. I became accomplished with a knife or a strait edged razor before I was twelve. When I started studying the martial arts it wasn't to learn to fight. I already did that better than most of the other boys I came in contact with. When I began to train in the arts, I did figure that it would make me a better street fighter, but the more I trained, the less I wanted to fight. With that realization, I started on a road of self discovery that continues to this day.

Studying the martial arts makes you see things differently. If you truly immerse yourself in the arts, you will go through life as you do the colored belt ranks in the arts. Every lesson will enable you to grow and move up through the belts of life's learning experience. The world becomes the dojo and every experience adds to your training.

I have learned through the martial arts that, as I advance in rank, I am constantly recreating myself. I find that life is the same way. It is a constant learning experience that catalyzes constant growth and advancement. Life serves up many changes and challenges, some of them painful and even traumatic. I remember the trauma of being thrown to the mat for the first time or the pain of a broken digit from an improper technique. All served as street signs that directed me to the next level in my training.

In training, I have seen an often recurring situation that plagues a lot of the Kyu (colored belt) ranked students. In trying to reach that coveted Shodan (1ST Dan) they overlook the lessons of their own rank. To them the black belt is the be all, end all. They are so infatuated with the idea of attaining black belt level that they don't concentrate on the rank that they have. They glitz over the techniques of that rank, skimming along the surface of each rank instead of becoming immersed in it. They don't realize that they are building a flimsy foundation for their black belt and do just enough to make it to the next rank. When and if ever they do reach black belt, they will not be good ones. They'll find out that rank in the dan ranks don't come as easily as in the Kyu ranks. They will never make it beyond Shodan, and the Nidan ( 2nd Dan) will always be just out of their reach. If they are in a strict martial art school, they will learn that the difference between Shodan and Nidan is as great as the difference between the white belt and the black belt. They were never a good yellow belt, or green belt or brown belt. The kyu ranks weren't important to them. Consequently, they will never be effective black belts unless they go back and relearn their kyohan (basics) over again.

Life is much like that. It is a journey of many avenues. Life leads us to many unexpected places, but regardless how inconsequential each experience seems, we will be required to learn from it before we can really move on and advance. Many lessons in life, we will do over and over again until we get them right. There are some lessons in life that you can't get around.

I have recently had an experience that redefined many areas of my life. It definitely redefined my outlook and my approach to the martial arts. I received a severe back injury, not in training but on my job. I worked in mental health and my occupation put me in contact with many psych patients. I have worked the gamut, from the mentally challenged to the criminally insane. I often found myself having to contend with combative patients many of whom were psychotic. The reputed strength of a combative, psychotic person isn't just a cliché. You only have to deal with one of them, hands on, to see how difficult it can be. They will try to hurt or injure you, but you aren't allowed to hurt them. It is necessary that they be handled humanely because they of their illness. You can't take their aggression personally and you can't answer violence with violence.

I wasn't hurt by contending with a combative patient, however. I was hurt by catching a large male patient (approximately 300#) that had passed out. He risked serious injury because of the way he fell. I wasn't working with the patient' but I saw him begin to fall out of the corner of my eye. I had to clear the distance that separated us to catch him. When I caught him, I caught him off center and off balance. He wasn't hurt, but my back was badly injured. The accident resulted in several subsequent surgeries. Two of the surgeries were to fuse the vertebrae in my lower and middle back. I have very little flexibility in my spine because of this. Another result of the two back surgery resulted in some impairment of my right hand. Part of that hand is weak and completely numb.

I was left in a depressed state because of the limitations that these injuries imposed on me. It affected almost every part of my life. I'm still walking with a cane, and I had to relearn how to do some vary simple tasks. Because of the injuries, I can no longer work in my profession. My mental health career was my second profession in sixty years, and I am left unable to work at either of them. On top of that, my martial art career came to a screeching halt. I felt that that was enough to be depressed about.

I have suffered from clinical depression for much of my life. Along with depression I've suffered from PTSD from my career in the military during the Viet Nam conflict. In faith, I had stopped taking the medication that the doctors prescribed to me, some time ago. Because of past experiences with addiction, I'm shy about taking medication. God delivered me from addiction, but I realize that there are things that I have to do to walk in that deliverance. When I was recuperating from the different surgeries, I was prescribed several extremely addictive pain killers. I took them for a few days after getting home but stopped taking them against medical advice. I felt that it was better to deal with the pain than to flirt with a new addiction. Working psych, I have dealt with any number of patients who became addicted under a doctor's care. So, now here I was again, threatened with severe depression. I have learned in my Christian walk that there is no coincidence or happenstance in God's universe, especially in the lives of his people. The Christians inopportunities are God's opportunities. These situations teach us to "stand still and see that he is God". Romans 8:28 tells us that "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose". In doing the work that God has put before me and furthering my education, I have been able to deal with the onslaught of depression without the debilitating affects of psychotropic medication. What many would consider a bad situation, God managed to use to redefine my life. I went back to school and managed to earn two graduate degrees. I have begun to build a new ministry and I have begun to work as an evangelist until God gives me new direction in my ministry.

I was told that I would have to give up the martial arts. Also, I was told that I could no longer indulge in strength training. I have been an avid weight lifter since my early teens and losing these two activities would prove a major loss. I went along with the doctors for over a year, and watched my physical conditioning dwindle by the day. I finally came to the conclusion that enough was enough. I have begun to train again, both in the martial arts and with weights. I obviously can't do what I used to do, but I've set out on a road of rediscovery. I have in effect begun to reinvent myself. I have had to learn how to do things differently. A few years ago, I could do flying kicks. High kicks were no problems. I thrived on them. Now I can just barely kick waist high. As a blind man learns to compensate with his loss of sight with his other senses, I learned to use weapons and techniques that I had never chose to perfect before. I walk with a cane, not the kind with a hook but a stright cane with a knob on the end. What a martial artist might call a hanbo. Needless to say, I have become quite proficient with it as a martial arts weapon. I have begun to put more emphasis on the Aikijitsu and Jiu jitsu techniques that I have learned over the years. I have begun to use more kenpo and kung fu techniques instead of the hard karate punches that challenged my new physical limitations. As in the other areas of my life I have had to innovate. In all it has been a new journey of self discovery.

In my martial arts, I might not be able to compete in the master's tournament and jiyu kumite (free style sparring) might be a thing of the past, but that okay. I had begun to teach and train more for self defense than for sport, anyway. Not that I was ever that big on competing. I've always considered myself the eternal student but through this experience I have regained the thrill of learning a new art, except now, life is my teacher. While once, I was thrilled with the objective of reaching my destination, now I am thrilled with the journey. In many areas of my life, I am being blessed to redefine myself. There are few thrills greater than the thrill of renewing and reinventing yourself. We don't have to wait until a trauma or some tragedy requires us to make changes in our lives. We can choose to change and go in a new direction. After all, that's what we did when we accepted Christ into our lives.

I'm just assuming that anyone who reads this is already a Christian, since this is directed to Christian martial artists. If you haven't made that commitment in your life, I invite you to make a change. Give your life to the savior. I guarantee you'll never find a better opportunity to reinvent yourself.

God bless you, my martial arts brethren. Train hard, and go with God.

# TEACHING TODDLERS MARTIAL ARTS

J R Lee-Barron

## Introduction

To teach all kinds of people takes a special skill. A skill that is completely separate to possessing good technical ability or being a successful athlete. And that skill is called "Teaching ability" because it's a fact that being good at your subject doesn't mean you can teach your subject, any more than being able to drive a car makes you a good mechanic!

This article will help martial arts instructors to come overcome some of the difficulties that are encountered when called upon to teach one of the most demanding groups of students. No! Not elite Commandos: Young pre-school children!

## Background

Not all martial arts instructors choose to teach very young children (4-6 years), as they know it will prove an extremely demanding task. They are, of course, quite correct in this assumption! It requires a special set of skills, and the author would certainly advise against such an endeavour unless the instructor concerned has undergone some form of specialist training to be able to deal with the complexities involved.

However, it is important that instructors continue to refine their teaching ability as this will help improve performance and maintain good practice in quality assurance throughout. So they are to be encouraged to seek out and undergo such training. In the meantime, here are some of the "basics" to be going on with:

To be able to teach a toddlers class, the instructor will need to understand something about child development, and structure the classes in such a way as to compliment and reinforce this.

- Child development has four main aspects, and these are as follows:
- Physical;
- Intellectual;
- Emotional;
- Social;
- Collectively, these are known as "PIES" (nice easy way of remembering them!);
- Physical Development.

A pre-school child will have already begun to act independently, they will be able to change into their own budogi, and use certain equipment efficiently. In addition, they will have good levels of balance and agility, so you can reasonably expect them to be able to perform kicks, break falls and throws.

However, it must always be remembered that they are STILL DEVELOPING, so extensive care must be taken to avoid any and all activities which might have an adverse effect upon their delicate frames (Joint locking, strangles/chokes, rolling over objects, striking hard objects, certain types of exercise, etc).

### **Intellectual Development**

The young child's mind is like sponge when it comes to soaking up information. They love learning new things, and the instructor will need be careful in not taking them "too far, too quickly" because the mind, just like the body, can be overworked and strained. So make sure that here are regular periods of work (learning) and rest (play) Generally, Toddlers tend to learn best by "doing" (kinaesthetic) rather than too much listening (auditory) or watching (visual). That is to say that although it IS still important that the instructor does continue to both demonstrate and explain what they want the class to be doing, much more emphasis should be placed upon the doing, simply because this is an "active" learning style which requires energy and participation, rather than the more passive ones of sitting still while looking and listening to the instructor while trying not to fidget, pick-noses or fall asleep!

These young learners will already have developed good problem solving ability, so the instructor shouldn't immediately rush in to correct any minor mistake s/he has noticed (unless some aspect of safety is in danger of being compromised) Rather, they should allow them some time to try and work it out for themselves, as that way they will get a far greater sense of achievement.

### **Emotional Development**

Even though human beings are the most intelligent species upon the planet, it is still our emotions that define who we are. The ability to "feel" rather than simply "reason" or "think" is what makes our existence so rich and varied: what makes us "human" if you will.

During this period, the children will still be developing their understanding of feelings (both their own and those around them) this is a vitally important skill which will aid them in eventually becoming well-balanced adults.

Instructors should show constant support and offer plenty of reassurance to the Toddlers, helping them to develop their confidence and sense of self. They should be encouraged to form new bonds and friendships on the mat, express their feelings in a socially acceptable manner and also to think about how other people feel. When implemented correctly, the above techniques will combine to result in an emotionally strong and secure child who "feels" valued as an individual.

### **Social Development**

Social skills are what get us by in society at large. Any form of group learning is a "social experience", wherein the young child will not only be learning the subject being taught, but also certain aspects of interpersonal skills and teamwork. This is where they learn about such things as responsibility, discipline and good manners. To "wait their turn" and use "please" and "thank you" (and "Ooze") etc.

Children in this age group can be expected to share equipment, work well in a team, choose their own friends and wait patiently for the instructor's attention. The acquisitions of these "socialisation" skills help them understand the basic rules and principles of society, and their place within it. They will have respect for others, discipline in themselves and (later on) more of an appreciation for law and order.

### **Teaching Methods for pre-school children**

As we all already know, Children of this age have:

- A great deal of energy;
- A very short attention span;
- An ability to learn quickly;
- A love of games and play;

- Varying levels of coordination.

This means that your lessons will need to be the following:

- Safe! (instructors act "In loco Parentis" This means they have a duty of care to keep the children placed under their care safe, secure and healthy);

- Short (30/45mins max);
- Kinaesthetic (emphasis placed upon "doing");
- Interesting, challenging and informative;
- Have plenty of variety;
- Contain lots of the "fun" element (children learn a lot when playing games)

In addition, motivational aids may be employed such as badges, medals, trophies, certificates or coloured "tabs" for their belts, etc.

This is a type of what is called a "token economy", and it can play an important part in the encouragement of learning and attainment among young children, being a valuable resource in influencing and building positive attitudes and behaviours.

- Instructors must have:
  - Suitable Qualifications (Black belt or equivalent plus a coaching/training/teaching award, etc);
  - Have undergone a Criminal Record checked;
  - Have a child protection policy that is revised and updated regularly, and that they display this;
  - Have special training in Child Protection;
  - Make sure all Health and Safety measures have been taken and are up-to-date (Including Insurances).

Teaching Toddlers can be an extremely rewarding undertaking as you can often see the results of your efforts almost immediately. It is well worth the extra efforts involved.

Prof. J R Lee-Barron PhD FIMAS

About the author:

Prof. Lee-Barron is an experienced researcher, educator and academic. He is the president of the Institute of Martial Arts and Sciences, an officially recognised academic and professional organisation offering accredited qualifications for martial artists from the basic, introductory level right up to post-graduate university degrees. Prof. Lee-Barron has various black belts in several martial arts, the highest rank being 9th dan. In addition, he is a former military advisor and police consultant, having worked extensively with the security forces of more than one country. He may be contacted through the Institutes website at: [www.institute-of-martialarts-and-sciences.com](http://www.institute-of-martialarts-and-sciences.com).

# INSTITUTE OF MARTIAL ARTS AND SCIENCES ANNUAL CONFERENCE

J R Lee-Barron

The first conference of the Institute of Martial Arts and Sciences was took place on July 18<sup>th</sup> at the IMAS Head Quarters in Wigan. Associates, Members, Students and Fellows of the Institute were in attendance to see martial scholars from all over the UK present their research papers. The day started off with an official welcome from the IMAS president, Prof Jaimie Lee-Barron PhD FIMAS, who reminded everyone present as to why the Institute had been formed and the general theme of the conference itself which was : “The history and development of the martial arts and their continued relevance to contemporary society”.

Several learned research papers were then presented upon various aspects of the martial arts and sciences. These included:

“The social and physiological benefits of martial arts training in the police service” By Prof. Matthew Clempner MPhil FIMAS

“The martial arts and sciences as a tool for modifying attitudes and behaviours in the classroom” By Prof. Paul McVey BSc FIMAS, and

“The importance of protecting children and vulnerable adults in the martial arts” By Mr Jacob Sibley BA PGCE MIMAS

To name but a few. Other people who presented papers included: Prof. George Scarrott MPhil FIMAS (Founder Fellow and Grand Secretary), Prof. Kevin Pell FIMAS, and the Reverend Toby Humphry MA FIMAS. All of these papers were well received by those present and modified copies will shortly be made available for publication. During the afternoon session, the Institute was honoured by a visit by Lord Smith of Leigh, who asked the various members of faculty present some very astute questions regarding the papers being presented and how they envisaged the Institute developing in the coming years. Lord Smith is a very busy, pro-active Peer of the Realm and was exceptionally busy on that particular day, so his visit was very appreciated by all.

The day was brought to a close by Prof. Lee-Barron, who thanked everyone for attending and pronounced the whole affair a resounding success, with a promise of an even bigger conference to take place next year. IMAS is now an officially recognised UK Institute listed in the publication “British Qualifications” and accredited both by the NCFE (a large, national awarding body in the UK) and various overseas universities. This year alone has seen the IMAS grow with members and branches in many countries, and several courses being held such as:

- Child Protection
- Health and Safety
- Introduction to teaching skills
- Etc.

**PROGRAMME**

**I. M. A. S.**



CALAMUS EST VIRES QUAM MUCRO

***The First Conference of  
The Institute Of Martial Arts And Sciences***

**The 18th day of July 2009  
IMAS National Headquarters, Wigan, United Kingdom**

Morning

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION: *10.00am*

*Prof. Jaimie Lee-Barron, President of the IMAS*

"Accredited Prior Experience and Learning (APEL) in the Martial Arts and Sciences"

This paper will explore the APEL system in use in many of today's educational establishments and explore how it can be applied to the martial arts. It will demonstrate how applying this process can help us in identifying the nature and depth of a student's transferable skills and abilities, and how these might be efficiently integrated into our own particular martial art systems. Thus enabling us to fairly assess and evaluate students from other styles and systems into our clubs by accepting their past learning and achievements, so not forcing or expecting them to learn the same material all over again.

It will show how APEL should be adopted as good practice and how it can prove beneficial from the perspectives of both the instructors and students.

Reverend Toby Humphry MA FIMAS

"The social and physiological benefits of martial arts training in the police service"

This paper will explore the origins of modern Police training from ancient systems used by the guardians of older civilisations and show how the needs and requirements of modern day officers differ today from those of centuries ago. It will also demonstrate the positive effects martial arts training can have upon young Officers in modern society. It will show how

regular training can increase not only the physical health and fitness of student officers, but also help in enhancing their levels of confidence, self esteem, discipline, and vital abilities in interpersonal skills, team-working and conflict resolution.

By Prof. Matt Clempner MPhil FIMAS

"The martial science of boxing and its contribution to military close combat"

This paper will examine the more obscure aspects of Boxing as a martial science. It will illustrate that the martial history, tradition and virtue of boxing is an undeniable fact, even if one that is rarely recognised or acknowledged. It will concentrate upon the military applications rather than the modern sporting aspects, demonstrating how it has been an integral part of the training of a warrior since ancient times.

It will explore how it was used to develop "fighting spirit" and how it has continued in contributing to the origins and development of modern military close-combat techniques in much the same way as some of the oriental martial arts.

By Prof. J R Lee-Barron PhD FIMAS

*12.00-13.00 LUNCH*

Afternoon

"The origins and development of the Daito Ryu Bu Jutsu"

This paper will trace the beginnings of what have come to be known as the "Aiki Bu" art, examining its origins as a closely guarded "military secret" of the Minamoto, through the bloody testing-ground of the "Sengoku Jidai" (warring-states period) and the terrible costs of the Gempei war, which saw the ascension of the powerful and warlike Takeda family. It will show how this art continued to develop throughout the Shugunate period and into the Meiji restoration. It will show how one of the last great warriors, Minamoto Sokaku Takeda, witnessed the futile Satsuma rebellion and, with it, the twilight of the Samurai, and managed to bring this deceptively beautiful martial arts into the "modern" world.

By Prof. George Scarrott MPhil FIMAS

"The protection of children and vulnerable adults in the martial arts"

Every single day, martial arts instructors across the country are unknowingly putting themselves at risk of prosecution through pure ignorance. This paper has been written in order to help raise awareness regarding the urgent need for instructors to undergo relevant training in the protection of children and vulnerable adults. It will also stress the importance of having correct policy in place for martial arts clubs and associations.

It will outline the basic legal requirements for safe-guarding these groups, providing the information needed to implement these in the correct manner and, by so doing, protecting all parties involved, martial arts instructors included.

By Jacob Sibley BA PGCE MIMAS

Child Protection Advisor, IMAS

"The origins of Ju-Jitsu, and its journey to our shores"

This paper will seek to trace the colourful journey of what has become universally known as the art of Ju-Jitsu, commencing with a brief overview of its origins to its eventual

arrival on English shores in the closing years of the nineteenth century, in particular to the historical foundation stone laid down by Yukio Tani of the Tenjin Shinyo Ryu and his co founding along with Taro Miyake in 1904 of the London Budokwai located in Oxford Street, London.

The paper will then explore the deeper combative elements of Ju-Jutsu, and investigate what sets it apart from many of the modern day sporting martial arts and will finish with an insight in to how a number of modern day practitioners feel with regards to many of our long established martial arts being led down a path of abuse and destructive commercialism.

By Prof. Kevin Pell FIMAS MGRY

"The martial arts and sciences as a tool for modifying attitudes and behaviours in the classroom"

"Teaching can be an extremely stressful profession. The attitudes and behaviours encountered by modern day teachers are often insulting and threatening, with some even resulting in instances of personal violence.

This paper seeks to explore the positive effect that martial arts training can have upon children and young people in the education system. It will show how regular training can increase not only the health and fitness of pupils, but also enhance levels of confidence and self esteem, inner discipline, and important social abilities such as interpersonal skills and teamwork, etc. This will aid overall academic performance by instilling a strong sense of self-worth and respect in the individual, helping to reduce instances of disruptive behaviour such as bullying and so aiding teachers in maintaining control in the classroom."

By Prof. J R Lee-Barron PhD FIMAS

### PRESENTATIONS

A special certificate will be issued to all attendees in order to commemorate this historical event. Certificates will be signed by all those who presented papers.

### CONCLUSION

ENDS: 16.00

PLEASE NOTE: There will be a short faculty meeting taking place post conference.

IMAS would like to express the sincerest gratitude to Shaun Roberts BSc MIMAS and Nomad Training, who helped make this event possible.

In addition, several students have already signed up for the various degree level programmes available (including the coveted "Grad.IMAS" Qualification) those interested in joining the IMAS or enrolling any of its courses should refer to the website for further details: [www.institute-of-martialarts-and-sciences.com](http://www.institute-of-martialarts-and-sciences.com)

# TRAINING IN THE NOJO

Donald Miskel

No, my friends, that wasn't a typo. It isn't a misspelling, though as many of you know I'm notorious for those, despite years of advanced education. If they gave belt levels in spelling I would never get past yellow belt. Thank God for spell check. Along with my questionable spelling ability, I can't type. Not properly. I'm probably the fastest two finger typist in the Continental United States. I used to blame it on my wide hands and thick fingers. That and the narrow computer keyboards. I did fine on manual typewriters. But, as I am often want to do, I digress (old folk are pronged to ramble). Training in the nojo.

Have you ever had one of those experiences that make you aware of your age? Several years ago, I happened to be in one of those mega department stores. I was living in Waukegan, Illinois at the time. The store was in the town of Zion, Illinois, one town over. I ran into a young man in his mid to early twenties. He asked me if I remembered him. Obviously, he was young. Any experienced person knows that you don't ask that kind of question of anyone over fifty, and I was well over fifty at the time. I didn't even pretend that I knew him. He smiled and refreshed my memory.

It turned out that he knew me from one of the neighborhoods where I had spent a good portion of my adult life. It turned out that I had taught his father when he was a teen. I had a school at the time and I taught at the YMCA a couple of days a week. As a way of mentoring some of the kids in the neighborhood I taught a karate class in the park on Saturday mornings. His father had been one of my students in those open air classes. When he had grown to adulthood and had children he brought them to one of my schools for me to train. This young man had been my student for a year or two. I've taught more children than I can count over the years. Most I taught without charge. I remembered some of them but I had forgotten him. He asked me if I had a school in the area. At the time I was working and teaching classes at Chicago State University fifty miles from Waukegan. I had him bring his daughters to my house and I taught them basic self defense in my back yard. I actually managed to teach three generations of that family, all of them at under eighteen. That's when I realized I was getting old.

In my many years of teaching the martial arts, I have taught some of everywhere. I taught for the YMCA, in community centers, church gyms, Chicago Park District field houses, a couple of colleges and universities and in formal dojo. Of the places I have taught and trained in, my favorite place was in the nojo. No, that isn't a proper word. It's a play on words that implies training outside of the dojo. I've taught as many or more students in parks, back yards, garages and in whatever space was large enough to throw a kick or perform a throw in than in gyms and dojo. On any number of occasions my wife has threatened my life for teaching impromptu classes in the dining room or having her living room smell like a men's locker room.

I have owned a number of schools and at one time I owned several. I've also taught at schools owned by other sensei. All that was nice but the best classes I ever taught and my own best training were conducted in the nojo.

I grew up in the inner city; Chicago's tough South Side. That's a politically correct way of saying I grew up in the ghetto. Even after my father was able to move us out of those rough neighborhoods, I frequented the back alleys and side streets of the city. I was a street tough kid. I didn't need martial arts for self defense. I was one of the problems that made

martial arts necessary. I was one of the toughest kids in a rough neighborhood. Actually, my father, an ex marine, put me in a martial arts school to curb my aggression. I was prone to fight for very little reason. I was gang related real early. Most of the guys in the hood were.

When I started taking karate, none of the other students wanted to train with me. I was accustomed to fighting. As far as I was concerned karate was fighting and that's how I approached it. Because of the reluctance of the other students to train with me I became my sensei's uke. An excellent position for hands on tutoring but a painful way to learn a martial art. Despite being a good fighter, I wasn't necessarily a good karateka. I drove my sensei to distraction with my back alley approach to the arts. In order to move up in rank with the other students, I had to come to the school early and I was often there when my sensei locked the doors. I also had to spend a lot of time practicing at home. That meant in the park, the alley behind the apartment building or in the basement if the janitor left it unlocked. I got an old army duffel bag and filled it with old cloths. That was my heavy bag. I wrapped a two by four with hemp rope and surgical tape and made a makiwara. I bought, borrowed or stole every martial art book I could get my hands on. Most were old army manuals, since the martial arts weren't popular at that time and there weren't many books available. Later, when eight millimeter films were available, I got hold of an old projector and acquired whatever martial arts training film I could find. I continue that trend till this day. I own an extensive martial arts library and my collection of martial arts DVDs numbers way into the hundreds.

I found out that I worked out better alone or with whatever poor unsuspecting kid I could finagle into working out with me. I taught the little I knew to other kids in the neighborhood to have people to work out with out side the dojo. Like me, these students were ghetto snipes and shared the same do or die attitude to anything combative. I practiced kata in the dojo but because hard contact wasn't allowed , I practiced my sparring in whatever available space me and my raged band of students were using for an impromptu gym. I wasn't anywhere near instructor level but the students I taught were good at our violent style of sparring that we indulged in. We literally beat the crap out of each other. Without the restraint taught in the dojo these guys became the terror of the neighborhood.

I fought in a few tournaments but I didn't care for them. They weren't realistic enough for my liking and more often than not, I would get disqualified. Everyone could box in my neighborhood, even the girls. I boxed CYO and for the Chicago Park District for a couple of years. I was a good boxer, but boxing matches, like tournaments, had too many rules. I continued my own training methods and me and the guys I worked out with formed a renegade type of street kumite system that we called 'Back Alley Ryu'. By this time, I was training with the infamous Count Dante (John Keehan). He was considered by the conservative martial arts community to be the bane of the martial arts world. I had found my niche. The training in the schools of his organization was grueling and brutal. I loved it but it still wasn't the same as training in the streets. I learned what I know of focus, form and function in the dojo but I learned to fight in the streets; in the nojo.

When I was in the service I had an opportunity to see some of the full contact fights in Thailand, Taiwan and in the Philippines. I tried my hand at a few of them and got my can trashed. I earned my black belt in Kuntao and kempo when I was in the service. Neither was popular in the States when I got out of the service, and while the organization I belonged to grudgingly recognized my rank they never really accepted it. Besides I was growing in a different direction. I trained in other arts and went back to earn black belts in the jiu jitsu that I had studied in the early days of my martial arts career. During that time I fought in a few of the illegal pit fights that were cropping up in various places. Money was made from small purses and from side bets. The fights were brutal but the fighters weren't well trained and while more realistic they weren't very challenging. I pursued more my training in the backyard and garage dojo some of the returning GI's were opening.

All of that was a long time ago. I've trained in quite a few martial art systems in my years in the arts. Some I've received advanced rank in. I've moved away from Chicago and have been in Tucson for the past five years. In that time I have returned to my first love.

Training in the nojo. The weather here is conducive to outdoor training if you can deal with the heat. I have a large backyard with a concrete patio. I've been conducting my classes outside in the years since I've been here. It gets hot but it's a wonderful way to train. I'm purchasing a new house and I'm converting a huge garage into a martial arts dojo. It's large enough to hold all of my training and weight lifting equipment with room enough to train ten or fifteen students. This will be my new dojo.

In my years of teaching I have turned out some good students. Some were trained in the dojo and gyms that I taught in, but in my opinion, the best of them came up in my backyard schools. Many classical martial artists have criticized me for my love of informal training but some of the greatest masters in history trained that way. The beautifully equipped gyms and dojo that we take for granted are a modern creation. Originally karate and jujitsu was taught in whatever space was available. The dojo was wherever the sensei happened to be teaching. Master Mas Oyama trained in the woods and in the mountains of Japan. It was there that Kyokushinkai Karate was born. In the Philippines Kali, Arnis and Escrima were generally taught in backyards or open fields. Pentjak Silat and Kuntao were basically taught out in the open. In this modern age, we have built beautiful and sometimes luxurious dojo, dojangs and kwoons but maybe we've lost something in the process. Teaching combative arts in luxurious surroundings may just take something out of the arts that we teach. I wonder if in those beautiful schools with their showers and sauna and nice locker rooms we haven't lost the true essence of the combative arts. When I was in boot camp the surroundings were anything but luxurious. Luxury wasn't conducive to our training.

I'm not suggesting that we close the doors of our schools and start teaching classes in the woods but maybe we should take a different approach to the arts. When I began in the arts the work outs were almost sadistic. Our sensei(s) and teachers did things to us that would get them sued today. Bloody noses, black eyes and split lips were expected and broken fingers and toes weren't unusual. We beat on makiwara pads until our hands bled and our sensei were anything but gentle. I'm accused of being a tough teacher and many students wouldn't put up with my type of training. I wouldn't go back to the training methods from back in the day but I do believe that martial training should be just that; martial and combative in flavor.

Looking back, I still believe that I've become the martial artist that I am because of the way I trained. I wouldn't want my students to grow up in the type of neighborhoods that I did and I certainly wouldn't want them to test their martial arts skill in hand to hand combat in some jungle or another. Many of us did though, and while I must admit that that's a dangerous way to come by realistic fighting skill it'll certainly slap you into reality. To many martial artists, their fighting skill is theoretical. They believe that what they've learned will work in a pinch. To those who have been there there is no theory involved. Those who have had to face a knife wielding assailant or wrestle a fire arm from a determined attacker probably know what works and what doesn't. The very fact that they are still in the land of the living says something about their martial abilities.

I am neither the consummate instructor or martial artist but I do know how to fight. I've been both shot and stabbed so my efforts weren't always successful but I managed to live through those experiences and learn from them. I'm not trying to present myself as super sensei. I have the rank but there are better practitioners and probably better instructors. What I am saying is this; you fight the way you train. If you don't train hard you won't fight hard. Fighting has to be based on skill and conditioning but it also has to be based on experience and know how. If not your own, then from the person you train with. You can't learn jungle warfare in a country club. By the same token you won't learn alley fighting in a nice disciplined karate class. Learning to fight requires blood sweat and tears. Well, blood and sweat, anyway. Hopefully they will help you avoid the tears. At least in a real conflict. Cry in the class so that someone won't end up crying over you in a funeral chapel.

Okay, I'm through pontificating. I'm climbing down from my soap box. Let me say this before I finish this rambling attempt at an essay. If you want to become capable as a martial

artist, you have to challenge yourself beyond the comfort of the dojo. You have to train in different terrain. You have to take yourself out of your comfort zone. You'll find that some of your most beneficial training will happen when you're alone, away from your usual surroundings. Keep in mind that an attack won't happen when expected or in a convenient place. If you expect the absolute worse case scenario you won't be disappointed. You may have to defend yourself in a rocky alley, in a confined space or on ice or snow. Don't confine yourself to the comfort of the gym. You can pretty much rest assured that you won't be attacked there. Wherever you are when attacked is the nojo. Not a good experience but if you survive it you'll learn from it. In all truth, the only way to really learn to fight is to fight. Should you find your training thrust into one of those nojo situations leave the rules in the gym and please, no bowing before the conflict. There are no rules in the nojo. That type of thing may not be what you want to supplement your training but should you find yourself in such a situation just consider it a (life and death) part of your training. This is where the hours of grueling training is put to the test. This is real life kumite in the nojo.

God bless you, my brethren. Train hard and train honestly. You never know when your training will go from the dojo to the nojo.

# REAL WORLD MARTIAL ARTS

Donald Miskel

In my fifty plus years in the martial arts, I have seen many fads and trends come and go. I've watched karate competition transition from point fighting, to full contact karate to kick boxing. I have seen similar changes in the grappling arts as well. The transition from those changes to mixed martial arts and to reality based training was foreseeable considering the developing mindset in the martial arts world.

Originally all martial arts were developed for combat and self defense. Of those arts, karate was considered one of the most direct and effective fighting arts. In those days, the traditional arts were the cutting edge in martial combat. Over the years following those times, the martial arts developed into what we call a 'Do', as in Judo or aikido. They filled a different role in the societies that they developed in and became more of a means to an end than an end in themselves. Training became more of a ritual or even a hobby and was approached as such. Perfection of form and grace became more important than effectiveness in combat. Any self defense value was incidental. That isn't to say that the combative aspects weren't there but a practitioner had to train specifically towards those ends to be truly effective as a combatant.

With the dissolution of the Samurai class in Japan and the inclusion of fire arms in their culture, the martial arts were no longer widely practiced as fighting systems. Violence was frowned on in the new culture and warriors were frowned upon. Thusly, the martial arts became just that; art forms. Any resemblance to real combat began to lessen as the need for such arts diminished. Training in the art became a 'Do' or a way; that is to say a way of enlightenment, self discovery or discipline. The 'Book of The Five Rings', the definitive work on combat strategy, became a tool for businessmen and corporate board rooms rather than a means of strategic advantage on the battle field..

Many of the classical martial arts, that had their roots in Eastern Religion and philosophy, again embraced those roles and many became thinly veiled religious practices. The masters and sensei who embraced these philosophies consciously or inadvertently became warrior priests (the emphasis on priests rather than warriors). Martial arts became more and more esoteric in their practice as self defense became less of an issue.

Recently MMA has become popular. Personally, I have mixed feelings about these competitions and the people who compete in them. I did something of the same thing when it was illegal and any profits were made by small purses and side bets. These competitions took place in empty warehouses, old barns, basements, lofts and back alleys. Any where space was available and the cops weren't liable to interfere. These competitions were nothing like the ones popularized by movies like 'Blood Sport' and the competitors were less skilled than those of today but they were really 'no-holds- barred. In a sense, they were glorified street fights, not so different from what we see in some of the competitors in MMA today.

Most of the competitors in these modern MMA matches are fairly decent punchers and kickers and some have pretty good punching skills but what they do doesn't translate to real world fighting systems. Against a single opponent who adheres to a set of rules they would be devastating fighting systems but the real world doesn't work that way. I admire Gracie Jujitsu but I question its practicality in the streets. On the mean streets of any city, going to the ground is suicide. Please trust me on this. I've been in enough street fights and

have witnessed enough violent encounters in Chicago's bloody streets to understand the problem with such a scenario. Go to the ground and his buddies (these thugs always seem to have buddies, even if you don't see them) will kick your head in. No future in that.

Too many of the, so called, modern martial arts systems are taught by people who have never had to fight for their lives in the streets or in combat. I don't question their skill or the arts that they teach but some of the assumptions that they are based on are faulty. I don't offer myself as the consummate master but I grew up in an environment where fighting for survival was a daily possibility and happened more often than I care to remember. Also, I've had the misfortune of being involved in military combat. Nothing slaps you into reality like reality.

Let me say at this point that defending yourself in a serious situation, fighting for your life and even fighting to the death, isn't as easy as a person might think. I've had to do all three in my life. Taking a life with a weapon or with your hands, up close and personal, is one of the worse things that any person will have to do. A sane person can't do something like that and come away unscathed. At this late date in my life, I am still treated for PTSD. Not so much because of what I've seen or had to endure but because of what I've had to do.

This essay isn't about me or my experience or exploits. I don't have a lot to be proud of in those areas and they aren't experiences that I would care to share. What I'm trying to say is that only conflict and combat prepares one for real world self defense. If a person should have to deal with such an unfortunate scenario, he had better either have personal experience in combat or be trained by someone who has. Anything other than that is theoretical and theory doesn't cut it in the streets. A life and death struggle isn't the circumstance in which you want to find out what doesn't work. Learning that way can get you injured or even killed. A few instructors have managed to survive in such situations and have a real world view on survival and combat. Better to learn from their experiences than from the school of hard knocks. Everyone doesn't survive that kind of training. Learn from those who have if given the opportunity.

Personally, I love the traditional martial arts. I am ranked in several of them and have taught them to many students over the years. I just made sure that they realized that what they were learning was an art and not combat. Taught in that environment the techniques they learned didn't make them into deadly fighters. Properly tweaked, however, these same techniques can be made combat effective. The problem isn't the techniques, it's how they're taught.

Complex techniques become difficult if not impossible for the average student in a high stress situation. Fine motor skills tend to go out the window in those situations where they are most needed to make such techniques work. It is possible with long and disciplined training to enter a near meditative state during combat that enables a combatant to operate at peak proficiency in the face of danger and act without fear. That type of ability isn't attainable with the amount of time and effort that the average student is willing to devote to training. Because of that we have to lean towards simple techniques that build on natural reflexive human reactions and build our techniques from those.

There are three principles that the effective combatant must remember. The first is, 'simple works best'. The more complex a technique is the more it is subject to fail. All the flashy techniques must be discarded. The second principle is, 'natural is better'. Teaching the body to do something that is unnatural to accomplish the same thing that a natural movement would accomplish as well or better doesn't make sense. We have to teach our bodies to use those natural, reflexive moves effectively. Lastly, 'basics work'. Save those fancy acrobatic techniques for demonstrations. When in doubt, use the kiss method of combat. No, that doesn't mean to become overly affectionate toward your opponent, though that would probably convince him that you're crazy and put him off his game. What I mean is, 'keep it simple stu, I mean, keep it simple son.'

As we examine our martial art roots, we don't want to throw out the baby with the bath water. Many of the techniques that comprise these arts are tried and true methods, forged in the heat of combat. As instructors and students we have to fit them into the framework of these modern times and our individual needs. We shouldn't lose the connections with our roots or the ones who laid the foundations that we are now building on. We have to hold on to the 'art' within the martial arts without losing the combat reality of the 'martial' aspects of the martial arts. After all we ARE martial artists. We aren't a bunch of hooligans running around trying to find more efficient ways to bash someone's head in. If we are then we're nothing more than trained sociopaths and should be locked up somewhere.

As martial artists we should study as much to improve ourselves as to be efficient fighters. Fighting is antisocial and we shouldn't spend our lives trying to be as violent and vicious as the thugs on the streets. Our greatest opponents are ourselves. As we strive to perfect our techniques, we also improve our bodies, minds and spirits. That's the true essence of any martial art. That's why no martial art should be practiced without a modicum of spirituality. I'm a Christian minister and this essay is directed primarily to Christian martial artists, so I'm not suggesting that you indulge in Zen meditation or paganistic spiritual practices. What I am saying is that our Christian beliefs should be prevalent even in our martial practices and should season our efforts with spiritual salt. This will keep us rooted and grounded. Practicing combative disciplines without spiritual and moral values invites in all kinds of negative spiritual influences and encourages antisocial thinking. As martial artists, we have to seek the higher path.

I can teach a person to be an effective combatant in a relatively short period of time. It doesn't take a lot of training to learn to knock someone's lights out. The predator in the street isn't well trained but he is as dangerous as any wild animal in the jungle. His single mindedness, focus and violent mind set make him as dangerous as any trained combatant. Our efforts shouldn't be to become or to create a more dangerous predator. Instead we should strive to forge ourselves and our students into better human beings while creating the tool, the skill and the mind set that will enable us to survive long enough to achieve those goals.

When I accept a student I am looking for a disciple who will dedicate himself to this martial and spiritual journey. I'm not trying to create better fighters. I'm trying to create better human beings with the knowledge and ability to protect themselves and their loved ones should the need arise. I am also trying to create students who are equipped to recognize and avoid, or in a worse case scenario, diffuse and deescalate a dangerous situation. If they should have to fight, I want them to have the tools to defend themselves and protect their loved ones, but in reality, if they find themselves in an actual physical altercation, I have failed in teaching them the greatest ability that the martial arts have to offer. The ability to live peacefully in a violent world and to avoid or circumvent trouble before it starts. We practice to defend ourselves if we must, but more than that, we train so that we don't have to fight. Fighting in a threatening situation is natural. If we have to do so, we should be able to do it well. However, there is a higher path; the way of the true spiritual warrior. The word of God says; "Follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see The Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). Ideally, that should always be our goal. That is the highest demonstration of our applied skill; the most advanced execution of our spiritual and martial ability. Anyone can take a life. It requires more refinement to spare a life. A life spared is possibly a soul saved. Therein lies the greatest combative ability against our greatest adversary. That's real world martial arts.

Train hard, my martial arts brethren, and go with God.

# THE APPLICATION OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN THE MARTIAL ARTS AND SCIENCES

J R Lee-Barron

## INTRODUCTION

This article will seek to highlight the numerous academic aspects of the martial arts and sciences and how they might be of serious interest and value as objects of research by various specialists. It will demonstrate their worth to researchers from other disciplines, providing them with a wealth of potential material to examine, experiment with and catalogue. Indeed, they are an extremely rich resource that has, for the most part, been completely neglected, with only a few brave and/or curious even bothering to explore the possibility.

It will highlight the efforts of the IMAS in striving hard to encourage and promote education, training, research and qualifications in the martial arts and sciences and, by so doing, gradually causing them to become more accepted as an academic subject of very real merit and worth.

## ACADEMIC FACETS READILY FOUND WITHIN THE MARTIAL ARTS AND SCIENCES

Researchers in the following disciplines would find much of worth in the martial arts and sciences:

### **Anthropology**

Anthropology is the scientific study of the Human Being, at all times and in all types of societies, cultures, civilisations and situations. The origin of anthropology is to be found in both the Natural Sciences and the Humanities. It asks questions such as: What defines a human being? Why do we tend to behave the way we do? And why do we develop particular belief systems?

Therefore, it is quite easy to see from the above that the martial arts and sciences have a great deal to offer this subject specialism, particularly in what is called "cultural anthropology" which is a sub-division that tends to concentrate upon "ethnology" or the study of certain systematic comparisons between different cultures. For example: A well known author wrote and published a definitive work upon the European knight. This book was very well received and, a couple of years later, the same person decided to write another work, this time upon the Japanese Samurai, so drawing comparisons between the two while also highlighting certain differences in the attitudes and behaviour of each. (We can see from this example one of the many "crossovers" that frequently occur between academic disciplines. This author was writing these works as an historian, although they could just have well have been presented (with a slight modification in context) as an anthropological text)

The comparison between the different warrior castes and their indigenous martial arts would be a perfectly acceptable study for any cultural anthropologist to embark upon and would no doubt, yield a wealth of interesting data for the researcher(s).

### **Philosophy**

Philosophy deals with the life's really BIG questions such as who are we? And why are we here? The meaning of truth and even life itself, Etc. There are many different schools of philosophy, as well as diverse areas of study (Epistemology, Logic, etc.) But, the areas that would be of special relevance in the martial arts would be both Aesthetics (which concerns itself with art) and Ethics (which concerns itself with morals, duty, scruples and generally "doing the right thing for the right reasons")

The martial arts would be most relevant to the oriental schools of philosophy that have their origin in religions such as Buddhism and Daoism, but certain European schools would also find much of interest, in particular Stoicism which concerns itself with the control of the emotions, and the Existentialism of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Sartre among others, that subscribes to the theory that the human being must take full responsibility for the human condition rather than simply blaming it upon "Fate" or "God".

### **Psychology**

Psychology is the study of the functions of the human mind. It concerns itself with perception, cognition, personality and behaviour, etc. Again, it has many schools (Behaviourism, Cognitivism and Humanism, etc) and specialist areas (such as educational, industrial, etc) However, the martial arts would be of most use to psychologists researching the following aspects:

- **Anger Management**
- **Conflict Resolution**
- **Stress Control**
- **Sports enhancement**
- **Education**
- **Performance coaching**
- **Etc.**

There is a lot of interest in the way that martial artists utilise certain mental disciplines or "mindset" if you will. The ability to control their mental and physical abilities to the extent where ordinary flesh and bone can be used to break hard objects for example.

The psychology of warfare and the mindset of traditional warrior castes might even be able to shed some light upon the causes and treatment of certain mental health issues suffered by modern soldiers, chiefly, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) which causes such a lot of misery to so many. So, once again, martial arts have a lot to offer from a psychological standpoint.

### **Sociology**

Sociology is the study of human society and behaviour. It encompasses such things as the way society and culture influence the individual and also how individuals manage to find their place in the greater scheme of things and concentrates upon building up a body of knowledge regarding the effect that such things as religious and political beliefs exert upon the attitudes and behaviour of communities and society at large.

Up until quite recently, members of local communities maintained quite strong, close relationships with each other. They went to the same school, relaxed in the same bars or

cafes, and worshipped in the same church or temple. These days, most of that has changed. Parents will actually up-stakes and move to another area in order to try and get their child in to the school of their choosing, because of the improved transport system, people tend to travel further afield if they want to go for a night out and not that many people are as devout with their religious observances as they were in times gone by. And, even if they are, it is now possible to worship in many different temples and churches, with it being possible to change your denomination, or even your entire religion, almost every week!

Because of this changing social structure, people are now far more independent rather than co-dependent. In the UK in particular, our churches and public houses are shutting down at an alarming rate, so this process is continuing and might even be speeding up somewhat.

In this climate, local martial arts clubs tend to endure as bastions of strength in the community. The vast majority are run by local people for local people, and make a very real and concrete contribution to their communities: Martial arts instructors continue to play an important part in keeping their local communities healthier and safer, and can also exert a tremendous influence upon the children and young people that come to them for lessons. They take part in important events in their local area such as putting on displays at garden parties and fetes, and engaging in fund-raising activities for charity, etc. In this manner, martial arts clubs actually help act as the “cement” of their local communities, attracting literally all kinds of people to come together in a spirit of trust and respect. Therefore, as instructors, we must be mindful of this fact: Our field of influence extends way beyond the mat, into the family unit and throughout the community at large.

Sociologists with an interest in the historical aspects of their science would find much of interest in the martial arts, as wars have always played a pivotal role in shaping the society we live in. The selection, training and fighting arts of the warrior, together with their strict code of ethical conduct, have had a heavy influence not only in the way that wars were fought, but also in how nations eventually evolved and came into being.

Therefore, martial arts can prove to be a rich source of both historic and contemporary information to sociologists.

### **Theology/Religious Studies**

The martial arts of every country have always been very heavily influenced by certain religious beliefs and philosophies. Even today, it is possible to see the residue of these influences very clearly in not only the various histories of our arts, but also the rituals and traditions that are still so much a part of them. If we look into the historical origins and of many combative systems, we will find monks, priests and philosophers nurturing them and helping them to develop, if not actually inventing them altogether.

Indeed, if it were not for the warrior monks of many cultures and societies, then the martial arts we all know, love and learn today might not have survived at all. This is especially true when we look at such arts as Gatka from India, Shaolin Kung Fu from china, certain styles of Bersilat from Malaysia and Kyudo from Japan. Each of these martial arts is inseparably and indelibly linked to a religious belief and philosophy, with each still retaining certain undeniable aspects of these within their training regime and philosophies. Still other martial arts, such as Thai-Boxing and Sumo wrestling, clearly still bear the marks of theology upon some of their practices, requiring special blessings, prayers, rites and rituals as an integral part of their competitions.

### **Historic**

As already stated above: War and religion are two of the sharpest tool's employed in the shaping of human culture and society. In this manner, it could be argued that the martial

arts and sciences have helped to both build and destroy entire empires and nations. Fighting and the use of weapons are so ancient that they actually even predate our own species: The great apes have been shown to demonstrate crude strategy and tactics, as well as modifying sticks into forms of primitive spear. The most primitive of weapons would include the stick, stone and bone, and any combination thereof the martial arts we practice now as a healthy pass time were then, quite literally the tools of the trade. It was upon the battlefield that a great deal of martial arts and sciences have their roots and continued development, from ancient times up until the present, with people like Fairbairn and Styers researching, experimenting and modifying the traditional techniques found in the Japanese and Chinese systems so that they could be of more efficient use in 20<sup>th</sup> century conflicts, the Israeli armed forces developing Krav Maga, and the United States Marine Corps with their military martial arts programmes of today which aid young marines to prepare for and fight battles, physically and mentally. These constant modifications are a necessary part of evolution where only the strongest survive.

Historians already find much of interest in the martial arts. Hence, you have serious researchers who delve into the weapons and armour of bygone eras. In addition, you have very respected institutions such as the Imperial War Museum that actually employ martial artists and Masters at Arms to demonstrate their abilities, so allowing the general public a rare opportunity to witness historical combat “up close and personal”. Martial arts, then, are actually pieces of “Living History” that allow both historians and the general public a unique insight into the past.

In addition to the above, there are several other disciplines that would find much of interest and worth in the study of martial arts. The very practice of martial arts techniques themselves contains a wealth of scientific application. Anatomy, Physiology, Bio-Mechanics, Kinetics, etc, are all a very real part of any training session. Health and fitness, Sports Science, Teaching methods and coaching all also have their place. It is about time that the martial arts and sciences were acknowledged and accepted as being the rich repository of knowledge they truly are.

## **CONCLUSION**

All of the above is already happening (albeit in an extremely sporadic way.) Research papers have been submitted by academics of several disciplines throughout the past few decades. Even so, there is not enough of this valuable research for martial arts per se to be taken seriously as a subject worthy of stringent academic examination in its own right, with only certain specialised aspects being investigated by researchers from several other specialisms. And, it has to be said, the majority of faculty within the Institute (myself included) have, of course, all undergone their academic training and gained qualifications in various academic disciplines other than that of the martial arts and sciences, simply because the opportunity did not exist for us to research the arts we all loved to practice and teach. In a way, this has helped to make our faculty both strong and varied. But, the time has now come for the martial arts to “come of age” as an academic subject in its own right. Indeed, this is one of the main reasons as to why this institute has come into being, and remains one of its primary goals.

Earlier this year, the Institute of Martial Arts and Sciences held its first ever conference. It was a small affair but, never the less several very interesting research papers were submitted and presented. It is hoped that this research will soon be published so others might gain access to them and perhaps even be inspired to conduct research of their own. In addition, members of faculty constantly work hard at establishing strong links with several other learned institutes and universities the world over, and continually publishing books, articles and letters in both specialist journals and the martial arts press. So it has already started. The face of martial arts have changed irrevocably for the better, thanks to a scant handful of determined academics, researchers and educators who also happened to be very

highly ranked martial arts practitioners. It is those few who have made it possible at last for the martial arts to be studied not only on the mat in a martial arts club, in the sporting arena or even on the battlefield, but also in classrooms and lecture halls. Martial artists can now also sit academic exams as well as undergo grading examination tests. And they can gain useful academic, professionally accredited qualifications as well as belts or sashes, and these qualifications mean just as much outside of the martial arts club as they do within it. Martial arts and those who practice them are now beginning to gain the status and recognition they so richly deserve.

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[www.institute-of-martialarts-and-sciences.com](http://www.institute-of-martialarts-and-sciences.com)

# THE MOMENT OF CONTACT

Donald Miskel

Perhaps because I suffered with a learning disability in the formative years of my education, I have an insatiable hunger for knowledge. I had a very difficult time learning to read. I suffered from what is now diagnosed as dyslexia. Learning experts knew what it was in those days but it wasn't diagnosed or treated in inner city schools.

There were no learning programs for what was considered the slow student in those days. They were tucked away in classrooms with the hyperactive kids, those with behavioral problems and the ones with no impulse control, until they were old enough to be quietly ushered out of the educational system. Somehow I was able to stay out of those classes but I was essentially left pretty much on my own in the class room. The turning point in my life was the one teacher who took enough of an interest to encourage me to keep trying. Long story made short; I learned to unscramble the letters and numbers in my head and learned to read and do math. Because of that I became a voracious reader and researcher.

My past experience has taught me several things. One is that no student is hopeless. Another is that some may learn differently but all can learn. Lastly, people learn at different paces and in different ways. Physical and psychological differences makes it impossible for us to do everything the same way. Another lesson learned is that one key person can change the direction of a student's life. If a teacher has the patience and determination to work with the difficult challenge no student will be a failure.

While working at Chicago State University I met a student who had been in a terrible accident on the night of his prom. His prom date was killed and he was left in a coma and wasn't expected to live. He did recover but he was left with severe physical limitations. He was able to walk but essentially had the complete use of only one leg and one arm. He was a wonderful example of the indomitable human spirit but people thought I was crazy when I accepted him as a student. Most of his was private training and though he sometime became discouraged he never gave up. He was never able to do what some other students could do but in my heart and mind he was one of my best students. With only the use of one arm and limited mobility he still became a credible martial artist. He would never be able to compete in tournaments and he wasn't the original 'Five Fingers of Death' but he was a true martial artist.

The martial arts are many things to many people, and serves various purposes in the lives of its practitioners. There are as many reasons for studying as there are those who study. Whatever the reason for studying, whatever the level of ability of the student and however long he pursues his goals all of his ability comes down to that one micro second of contact. We call this point kime or total focus. It is what the true martial artist strives so hard to perfect.

To those of us who study the martial arts as a means of self defense, we train for that one instance; that one moment when our ability is called into service. We are taught to avoid that confrontation but when it becomes unavoidable success or failure and sometimes life and death boil down to that one critical moment; that one point of contact. Unlike in martial arts movies, fights don't last for ten or fifteen minutes. What happens occurs in a blitz of quick violence. The average street fighter isn't in the kind of condition to go ten rounds and neither is the average martial artists. That life and death struggle that we all hope to avoid is encapsulated in a brief moment in time.

When violence happens it happens quickly. The average assailant isn't going to give you fair warning and in the heat of the confrontation you won't have time to prepare. When faced with an escalating threat of violence we will try to diffuse or deescalate the situation. Failing that we should try our best to remove ourselves from the threat. When all this fails we can either become proactive or preemptive in our approach or we can prepare to defend and counterattack against the expected attack. Either way in these instances we have opportunity to prepare and time to react. Unfortunately the most dangerous attacks don't happen like that. More often than not the attacker will stack the deck to his advantage and violence will be sudden and unexpected.

The professional fighter understands that fights aren't won in the ring. They are won in the gym. It may culminate on the night of the fight but the win, if the win comes, was many weeks in the making. The real fact is that it was put in motion from the first time the fighter stepped into the gym. It is the same in a real combative or self defense scenario. You will fight the way you train.

As I have fore stated, I am a big reader and researcher. Knowing 'how' has never been enough for me. I want to know 'why'. In teaching we show a student how. Over time he will grasp the 'how' to a greater or lesser degree. I have found that if I teach the student why as well as how he will better be able to internalize the technique in question.

In my reading and research of the martial arts I have come across several publications that have greatly illuminated the 'why' in my inquiring mind. One was 'Dynamic Karate', by Master Masatoshi Nakayama, who was the head of the JKA (Shotokan Karate) organization. It confirmed in a nutshell what I had gradually discovered over several years of study. It gave me a deeper understanding of the inner working of the power in karate. The second book I have just read. It is, "The Physics of Karate Do", by So Shihan Felton Messina. Shihan Messina is an engineer and has a good grasp of Physics. He applies this knowledge to the science of power in the martial arts. He also addresses several of the small mistakes that even some seasoned martial artists make which cause their techniques to be less than effective. As often as not the thing that renders a karate technique ineffectual is as small as the improper positioning of the heel. A small thing but far from inconsequential. It is these small issues that make a technique effective or ineffective. I recommend both of these books highly. The one by Master Nakayama is a large format book and may be out of print but if you can get your hands on a copy it is well worth having. The one by Master Messina is available on Amazon.com for under twenty dollars.

Coming up in the martial arts I was never that big on tournaments. I had to fight in some to attain rank but I realized that some of the same people I lost to in tournaments I would destroy in the streets.

Some years ago while only a sandan (3<sup>RD</sup> black) in karate I taught at and managed a martial arts dojo. We had instructors who taught Judo and Aikido and we had an instructor who primarily taught kata and sparring techniques. He was ranked in the top ten in the nation at the time. My function in the school was to manage its everyday operation and to teach the self defense courses that several students had sole interest in.

The young man who was our kumite instructor and local champ would often try to convince me to become more active on the tournament circuit. He explained that because I didn't do much fighting that I would lose in a real confrontation. He was convinced that he could easily beat me in a real fight. I took his teasing good naturedly and went about the business of running the school. Growing up in the neighborhoods that I grew up in and having served in combat in the military, I took a different view of what tournaments had become. I was more interested in what was effective in combat than what proved successful in tournaments.

The school was in the shopping district of an upper middle class neighborhood. Violence wasn't much of a problem there. For the most part, it was a pretty quiet neighborhood. The kumite instructor and most of our students were drawn from this

neighborhood. Most of the students in the school were more interested in exercise and competition than self defense. Especially the younger ones.

A mile or two from the neighborhood where the school was located was a large federal housing complex, one of the toughest of the 'projects' in the city. The people from there came to that neighborhood to shop and to attend the movie theatre down the street from the school. One night after the other students had left this particular instructor, his girl friend (also a student) and I were still in the school. I had to stay late because we had been collecting the student's dues for the last couple of days and I was doing the books. Usually, I would have been the last person left in the school but the young instructor had been showing his girl friend some new techniques after class.

I had the blinds drawn over the plate glass window in the office when I hear a commotion in the street out front. Looking through the bamboo slats I saw the instructor in a verbal altercation with several young men. I recognized that they were from the projects down the way and I correctly guessed that things were going to get ugly. I made my way out of the office and through the dojo in time to take in what was happening. The confrontation had quickly gone from verbal to physical. I got there in time to see, what I was to learn was the third mawashi ushiro geri (rear spinning heel kick) thrown by the young instructor. I watched as the intended victim leaned away from the attack, grabbed his attacker by the back and top of his karate gi and rabbit punch him to the back of the head. By the time I was able to pull the attacker off he was sitting astride the young instructor rocking his head with looping round house punches. I'm not going to glorify my handling of the situation or the three young men that had confronted the instructor. This illustration isn't about me or my physical prowess. Just know that the situation was dealt with and the young men sent on their way without any serious injury. The young instructor was hurt but his pride had suffered more than anything else.

Talking to him and his lady friend and from the little bit that I had witnessed I was able to piece together what happened. The young instructor had escorted the young lady outside and was waiting with her for her ride to arrive. While they were waiting three young men passed by and one of them said something untoward to the young lady and made derisive remarks to the instructor in his 'karate pajamas'. One thing led to another and the fight ensued. Fortunately only one of the young men fought him while the others egged their friend on. The karateka responded to an attack with a rear spinning heel kick knocking the attacker from his feet. Uninjured he got back up and tried another attack with the same result. The rear spinning heel kick was the young karate instructor's bread and butter technique and had won him numerous tournaments. He could pretty much land it at will. I personally saw the last kick and quickly saw why it wasn't effective. In tournaments, since any extra distance was an advantage and heavy contact wasn't allowed many of the fighters made adjustments of the striking surfaces of their kicks. With the rear spinning heel kick the flat of the foot was often extended to give a few extra inches of reach and to lessen the impact. The result was a slap with the sole of the foot instead of a focused blow with the heel of the foot. The result spoke for itself.

The assailant and his friends were routed with little more than their feelings hurt and the girl's ride came. The young instructor, chastened and embarrassed refused to discuss the incident. I tried to tell him that things like that happened and since he wasn't badly injured he could use it as a learning experience. He shook his head and without remarking on my encouragement changed clothes, put his equipment in his locker and left. I never saw him again. He didn't come back to school and as far as I know he left the tournament circuit.

That was a rather long story to illustrate a small point. A fight is won or lost according to preexisting experience and training. First of all you specialize in what you train for. If you train for point fighting with little or no contact allowed you'd be foolish to think that it will prepare you to fight in a full contact tournament. Secondly, while forms teach and improve technique they don't teach distance, timing and the broken rhythm that is necessary in a real fight. They also don't prepare you to take punishment. In a real fight punishment and sometimes injury

are likely, even with the best technique. If you are fighting a skilled knife fighter and you get cut, you can't afford the luxury of curling up and allowing what will happen to happen. I guarantee that it would get you seriously injured and probably killed.

In the streets violence isn't theoretical or hypothetical. It is real. If you ever find yourself having to fight for your life you have only your present skill to see you through. That isn't the place to learn to fight. It's a lesson that you very well might not survive to. The streets aren't the place to learn new techniques or put together new strategies.

Some of us have learned from instructors who have actual fighting experience and street savvy. Believe me, they probably had previous street knowledge. They didn't enter the dojo as virgins to the streets. Hopefully, their careers in the martial arts have mellowed any residual hostility, leaving them with their martial arts skill and a realistic view of what works in the streets. Learning from them and those who have studied the martial arts as a jitsu, or actual fighting system, rather than (or as well as) a 'do' may be better able to teach a student to survive in the streets. It's a lot less traumatic (and less dangerous) to learn these skills from someone else who has been there and is able to pass on this knowledge than to learn it first hand.

There is nothing wrong with studying the martial arts as a form of competition or as a means of physical improvement and exercise. It's fine to study for self discovery and discipline. The martial arts serve all of these functions admirably. While pursuing these treasures that the martial arts offer we still need to train to develop the fighting skills that these same arts were designed to teach. There is no such thing as a non martial martial art. An art though it may be, the martial in the phrase implies an art with combative implications. Without that you aren't studying a martial art. You might as well do tai chi (as opposed to tai chi chaun) which is strictly an exercise.

In the end, any martial art's effectiveness boils down to the moment of contact. Karate originally was a two hit system. You hit the opponent, the opponent hit the ground. It amounts to that moment in time when that instance of contact occurs, but in reality it is more than that. It is the technique and the determined attitude that you have trained to instill into such an instant. It is the skill perfected in hours of training in the dojo. It is the body dynamics that uses the tried and true physics of properly performed technique that's applied in an attack or counter attack. It is the kime or total focus that puts all of our effort into that brief contact. And lastly, it is the coming together of the body and the spirit that culminates into the totally focused commitment in that moment of contact.

A person witnessing the confrontation from the side lines will see only that one devastating technique that levels your opponent. They won't see the hours of training or the years of experience that preceded it. They won't see the tenacity, the determination and the fighting spirit that you have developed through your dedicated training. They won't see the physics, the body dynamics, the focus and the killer instinct (harsh words but necessary in a real fight) that culminated in that one finishing technique. All they'll see is that moment frozen in time and that brief but devastating point of contact. This is martial arts. This is karatedo.

My friend, this reality is what we train to avoid but it is what we prepare for. For that one point of contact.

Train hard my brethren and go with God.

# STRENGTH VERSES POWER

Donald Miskel

Before I get into this discussion, let me define several words (and principles) that I will be trying to expound on.

Strength: Physical power. (Muscle derived power)

Power: Might or force. The Capability of doing or accomplishing something.

Energy: The capacity for vigorous activity or to create power.

These definitions were taken from the Webster's Universal College Dictionary and were chosen selectively to illustrate this subject.

In this essay, I am focusing on strength and power as it applies to the martial arts. I will use personal observations and experiences to illustrate the subject.

In my earliest teaching career I taught mostly young men. My first school was utilitarian and rustic. At that time, the martial arts weren't especially popular. Very few women were attracted to the study of the arts and few older individuals.

Teaching young men seemed easy at the time. Most of the students were vigorous and athletic. All of them had the strength common to young men and were adrenalin and testosterone driven. They rode the wave of youth and much of what I taught came relatively easy to them. I have come to learn through years of experience that their ease of practice had more to do with my inexperience and incomplete understanding of the under workings of the arts that I taught than their own natural abilities.

My personal epiphany in the martial arts came when I was asked to teach a woman's self defense class. I found that many of the techniques that the young men did as a matter of course were difficult or impossible for my new female students to accomplish. I had to step back and take a closer look at what I was teaching and how I was teaching it. I had to gain an understanding of the underlying principles of the karate and jujitsu that I was teaching. I came to understand that my male students were able to do what I demanded of them through sheer muscular strength. The female students didn't have the physical power or upper body strength to power through the techniques when they weren't done properly. This discovery became a turning point in my teaching career.

I began studying judo and jiu jitsu, and later karate, from Japanese instructors. Their teaching techniques didn't sit well with my Western sensitivities and after several years of study without any major advancement in rank, I affiliated myself with a fledgling American martial arts association and the system that they taught. The training was hard and brutal and the classes were long and hard. I equated that with better training. Also, rank came faster.

The karate system that I studied was an eclectic blend of shorei and goju karate. Theoretically it blended the hard shuri te (shorei) system with the softer goju system. I say theoretically because the training focused primarily on the harder aspects of karate. We learned to use the sanchin dachi (hour glass stance) and neko ashi dachi (cat stance) stances but most of our fighting was done from the zen kutsu dachi (front leaning stance) or the kiba dachi (horse stance). We learned the mawashi uke (circle block) and the tensho (cranes wing) blocks, which were soft techniques, but emphasis was on the harder power blocks. Linear techniques were preferred to circular. Parrying, side stepping, evading or

retreating was unheard of. All of this added up to a power oriented, strength based system. It was brutal and aggressive but it often fell apart when used against a bigger or stronger opponent with equal and sometimes even lesser skill.

The goju system of karate is based on hard and soft techniques. It embraces the law of the yin and yang. In theory, a hard weapon is generally used against a soft target and a soft weapon against a hard target. For instance, a seiken zuki (fore knuckle punch) wouldn't be used to strike the point of the chin. A palm heel strike would possibly do more damage with less trauma to the hand. Unfortunately the ju (soft techniques) of goju, which require more skill and training, weren't emphasized or weren't taught at all. Rather the go (hard techniques), which are easier to teach and more easily grasped, were generally taught in the United States.

I'm not trying to criticize the art itself or even the people who taught it. I'm just saying that they were teaching only half of the art. There is a reason for this. Most of the teachers in those days were soldiers who had learned their arts during limited stays at duty stations where these skills were available to them. They learned their arts in a relatively limited time and in the short time allowed to their training were taught the external skills of the arts that they studied. On the other side of the coin, many of the old instructors of these arts, seeing the less than acceptable Western attitudes of these students, limited what was taught them. These young instructors came back to the States with a partial understanding of their arts and with a hard core military approach to teaching them.

As time passed and these instructors sought more advanced training and studied the kata, waza, and the application of these techniques the deeper meanings of their arts began to reveal themselves. Unfortunately, many occidentals, being larger in size, still substitute strength for the true power of the martial arts.

I am an advocate of strength training. I have indulged in weight training, power lifting and body building since my mid teens. Today, even in my sixties, I still indulge in weight training, though due to injuries and the resulting surgeries, I am leaning more and more to strength training with less radical resistance systems. Many of my fellow martial artists criticized me for my infatuation with size and strength but I learned not to depend on either to power my martial arts techniques. I still practiced the proper kinesiology and physics in my techniques in spite of strength.

At 5'9" and around 230 pounds, I'm not a small person but there are people out there a lot bigger and a lot stronger than me. If we depend on physical strength we'll eventually come across someone bigger. If we depend on physical strength alone, we will be helpless before a larger or stronger opponent. By the way, there 'is' a reason why fighters are divided by weight class. Size does matter, especially when faced with an equally skilled opponent. Still, size is not the only determining factor in a physical confrontation. There are more effective ways of generating power than with raw strength.

Strength is determined by physical endowments. Size, musculature, slow twitch muscle tissue, skeletal structure and connective tissue all contribute to physical strength. There are also the less physical side of the coin; the berserker type strength that we find in the psychotic individual. I worked in the field of mental health for a large part of my working life. I've witnessed first hand how strong a 120 pound woman can be when fueled by psychosis. Adrenalin also plays a large part in the strength equation.

Power, on the other hand is affected by things that can be controlled to a greater or lesser degree. In karate we use the kiai or spirit yell to focus our effort. Aside from giving our efforts an infusion of adrenalin, it tightens the diaphragm and forces oxygen into the blood for maximum effort. We also use kime, which simply means focus. Focus has both physical and mental aspects. The mental part is simply total commitment to a technique. A half serious technique will be ineffective. The physical part of focus in the power equation requires proper body physics, bone and muscle alignment, muscle contraction and relaxation and breath control. Power flows from the heel, through the leg, into the hips, through the torso and is

transmitted to the limb and striking surface. Impact is focused several inches into the target and all the joints are locked and the muscles tensed for the moment of impact. The body is relaxed after impact and the weapon instantly withdrawn creating a whip like focus of strength and energy. This results in focused power as opposed to brute strength.

The classic reverse punch in karate is a study in physics. Let's examine it and get an idea how power is generated in karate. In the front leaning stance, seventy percent of the weight is on the front foot. Thirty percent is on the rear foot. If a karate fighter is standing in a natural position when attacked he will step back on one leg to allow him time and room to absorb the power of the attack while blocking or parrying the blow. For illustration purposes, we're going to say that the karateka stepped back with the right foot with the weight evenly distributed on both legs or slightly more weight on the rear (right) foot. He blocks the attack with his right hand or arm putting his body in a half facing position to the attacker. To counter attack he shifts his weight forward while turning counter clock wise at the waist. And pushing off of his left leg which is locked and planted behind him. As he is full facing the attacker his chambered right hand punches with the turning of the waist turning 180 degrees in a torquing motion while the left hand moves in a counter motion coming to a chambered position. Contact is made with the knuckles of the index and middle fingers focused about three inches into the target. If he has managed to catch the attacker's attacking limb or his clothing, the karateka can augment the damage by pulling him sharply into the counter attack. Upon contact every muscle is tensed as the punch penetrates the target. The striking arms immediately relaxes after the strike is delivered and is drawn back as fast as it was delivered creating a whipping type force. and keeping the energy of the strike from rebounding into his own limb. Now let's look at the physics of this technique.

First of all there is the forward linear momentum of the push off the ground with the planted right foot. Secondly, there is the centrifugal force generated by the snapping turn of the waist and hips. The opposite action reaction principle is used by quickly retracting the left arm to add additional power to the punch. Upon contact the punch focuses into the strike to penetrate the opponant's targeted area. The strike is delivered with the knuckles of the index and middle finger directing more force in a smaller area. The torquing motion of the striking limb adds centrifugal force to the strike. If the opponent can be pulled to the karateka or if the forward momentum of the attack is redirected by the defender's block, the opponant's strength and forward momentum can be used against him. The result is a tremendous amount of power generated with a minimum amount of effort. Lastly everything is brought together with a loud kiai focusing every ounce of effort into the nerve center or pressure point that received the punch. It isn't difficult to see and understand the physics of this attack. The result can be devastating. The reverse punch is an excellent example of using physics to produce power and power as opposed to strength. Power is generated by using science as opposed to raw strength.

Some years ago I was practicing in the gym prior to the start of my class at one of the YMCAs in Chicago. There were other martial arts classes offered in the YMCA's curriculum. A student from another karate class came in and watched me as I punched and kicked the bag. He eventually approached me and offered to show me the power in his technique. He punched the bag and sent it swinging toward the ceiling. He equated the distance of the swing with the power of the technique. I corrected him and showed him a power punch (gyaku zuki, reverse punch) into the bag. Rather than powering away from the punch the bag bent around the striking surface of the punch and actually jumped or lifted several inches. The young man was puzzled by the bag's reaction to the punch. I explained to him that rather than penetrating the target with his punch he was pushing it away from his power. Karate is a striking art, not a pushing art. An untrained person will hit a man and knock him down. A trained martial artist can hit him and he'll collapse or fall towards the striking hand. That's because the power of the punch was fully absorbed by the target. Little or none of the force was converted into a pushing motion.

It takes time to learn to generate power in your techniques. The process doesn't happen over night. Some of it can be taught but much of it is acquired through constant practice and through personal trial and error. An instructor can show you how to perform a technique but implementing that technique still requires practice. Seeing it is one thing. Doing it consistently is another. That's why it takes so much time to learn a martial art. Learning karate isn't that difficult. Perfecting it is. It's a long and arduous but rewarding process. It isn't accomplished over night. On the surface karate looks rather simple but as you begin to become an in depth student you'll realize how complex it really is. The difference between an effective technique and one that doesn't work is sometimes small and subtle, but it's these subtle differences that separate the practitioner from the master.

In spite of most of a life time dedicated to the perfection of the arts, I am a long way from being a master teacher or practitioner. I find that no matter how much I know there is still much to learn. With age and injury, I am no longer able to do what I once could. I'm limited in my performance but I am not limited in my studies. My body is somewhat hampered but my mind still functions (though my wife might contest that). More time is available for contemplating the spiritual and the deeper physical aspects of the martial arts. I'm more involved in the administrative ends of the martial arts but my own quest for perfection continues.

Before letting you get back to your practice, let me speak a brief moment on ki or chi. These words, the Japanese and Chinese versions, are used to express the concept of intrinsic energy. In many of the internal martial arts such as Tai Chi Chaun, Pua Kua, Hsing I and aikido, much time and effort is spent in trying to develop this elusive energy and the ability to use it. It has taken on an almost magical and esoteric mystique. I have had an opportunity to study several internal arts. I don't claim to be an expert at any of them but from my own observations I perceive ki or chi as being a result of proper breathing and focus coupled with the proper physics. There is nothing magical about it. That isn't to say that it is easy to acquire or perfect. Demonstrations of ki can be impressive but internal or soft martial arts don't have a monopoly on this type of energy. We use the same energy when we kiai and use kime. I don't advise becoming preoccupied with studying chi kung or the other methods for perfecting ki. Instead I advise students to continue to perfect the techniques of their own chosen martial art and the intrinsic energy will eventually become apparent in their techniques.

Though the development of power is more important than the development of raw strength I still recommend strength and endurance training to any martial arts student. I've seen too many instances of boxers taking out trained black belts in martial arts contests. If karate is the powerful fighting system that we say it is this shouldn't be. The problem isn't so much with the martial art system as it is in the lack of conditioning of the fighter. Most week end warriors, which is what most karateka qualify as, aren't in the kind of physical condition to contest with a trained and conditioned boxer. Both strength and endurance are required along with those devastating techniques that you've trained so hard to learn. Other wise, you won't have the ability to use them. Having knowledge but an inability to implement it is futile. Considering that we study a combative discipline it doesn't make sense for a martial artist to be unable to defend himself.

Kumite is a way of developing fighting skills. Kumite should be a part of any training curriculum. Some skills can only be honed by contesting against other fighters. Since we don't advocate street fighting, sparring is a good way of practicing your acquired skill. I'm not a big proponent of karate tournaments. I'm more focused on the combative and self defense application of the martial arts. I had occasion recently to watch a recorded karate tournament. I didn't believe what I was seeing. What I was watching resembled anything but karate. The fighters (can I call them that) bounced around in a poor imitation of a boxer. Because they had no base to fire their techniques from, they had no power. The result looked more like a game of tag than a fighting art. With power, as with everything else, we perform like we practice. You can't and won't develop power while acting like a jumping

bean. That isn't what I mean by kumite. If I wanted to liken my fighting approach to something, I would rather resemble a pit bull than a bunny rabbit. If you want to be affective in your art, don't try to reinvent the wheel. Karate is a power system. The stances and techniques were developed to develop the maximum power, effectiveness and efficiency. The power is inherent in the system. You don't have to reinvent it to make it work. If it doesn't work for you it's because of you, not the system. Kumite and waza will help you come to the skill level that is required to implement your skill.

Lastly, I would like to encourage every student and practitioner to continue to practice and strive to perfect his technique. If there is any secret to developing what the Chinese martial arts call Qing or complete power and focus of energy in your technique it is in the basics. Master Funakoshi said that taikiyoka is the kata for the beginner. Then again he turned around said that taikiyoka is the kata for the master. After all the years of working to perfect the complex and intricate techniques of his particular martial art the master eventually comes around full circle and arrives again at the beginning. The gyaku zuki(reverse punch) is one of the first strikes that a young karateka learns. It's part of his kiohan or basics. The reverse punch is basic but it is the signature technique of most karate systems. A karate black belt will knock you out with a kick but he'll kill you with a reverse punch. It's the technique of the beginner. It's also the technique of the master. The secret of karate power is in the basics.

In this study, I didn't reveal the secret that some of you may have been looking for. If there 'is' a secret it is that there is no secret. Power comes with time and practice. That's the secret of all skill, effectiveness and power in any martial art. That's the only secret.

That about winds up this study.. Continue to train hard. It's up to each of us to perfect his own ability. This is a journey of self discovery and you are the greatest opponent you will ever face. Go with God, my brethren.

# 8<sup>th</sup> - MASTER ZUBAIRIS TAEKWONDO CUP 2009

Rizwan Mustafa Zubairi

**Over 600 colour belts participants took part in two day mega event.**

The 8<sup>th</sup> Master Zubairi Taekwondo Cup 2009 was held on 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> May 2009 at P.E.C.H.S Karachi Cadet School hall under the auspices of Pakistan Taekwondo Council.

The event is officially sponsored and approved from Zubairi Martial Arts And Sports Federation-International. The international council for martial arts cum sports learning, teaching and friendship.



The championship is sanctioned from World Organizer of Martial Arts-USA and Korean Martial Arts Instructors Association-South Korea.

More than 600 boys and girls have participated in this two day event under the rules and regulation of the World Taekwondo Federation-Korea of Kyrogi, Poomsae and Kyuk-Pa.

M. Shoaib has been declared the best male Taekwondoist of the event while Ayesha is best among the girls.

The Referee and Jury panel is as under.

- 1- Shabbir Hussain 3 rd Dan–Organizing Secretary.
- 2- Faraz Jaffery-3 rd Dan. Chief Jury
- 3- Rehman Shah-3 rd Dan. Chief Referee
- 4- Abid Alam-2 nd Dan.Referee
- 5- Yumna Siddiqui-1 st Dan Referee
- 6- Shaikh Zahid Hussain-Time Keeper

## 7- Shehla-Member Organizing Committee

The winners receive certificate, shields and medals from the chief guest Mr.Ashfaq Ahmed Director Karachi Cadet School. Mr. Abdul Majid Khan was the guest of honor at the occasion. Both have praised the event and liked very much the techniques displayed by participants during the event. Master Zubairi has specially demonstrated the Ho-Shin Sul techniques for boys and girls for prevention and safe guard them from different attacks.

On second day at prize distribution ceremony Master Zubairi has specially award International certificate to Shabbir Hussain for his out standing contribution and promotion of Taekwondo in Youth. The International Sports Award has also been awarded to Abdul Majid Bhatti. Others official will receive shield of honor Faraz Jeffery, Rehman Shah and Shaikh Zahid Hussain.

Grand Master Oh Kum Yul from South Korea, Taekwondo GM Richard from USA and Grand Master M.I.Tianero from Saudi Arabia send special messages to Pakistani Taekwondo players and officials for their contribution and development of Korean martial Arts among youth.



### **LIST OF KYROGI WINNERS.**

#### **GOLD MEDALS:**

Ayesha Punjani, Ayesha Lakhani, Ramis, M.Ali, Abdul Basit, Mubashir, Murtaza, Zia Uddin Butt, Hasnain Raza, Daniyal Talha, Danish Ahmed, M.Zubair, M.Hanza al Azair, A. Basit, Munir Ahmed, M.Maaz Anis, Uzair Nasir.

#### **SILVER MEDAL:**

Mustafa, Abdul Sami, Hussain Kaleem, Azhar, Hamad Ghous, Mohibullah, Hammad Hussain, Jawad Ahmed, Zawed Kyat, Kamran, Awais, Muhammad Ahmed, M.Waqqas, Tariq Shyan, Asghar Ali.

### **LIST OF POOMSAE WINNERS.**

#### **GOLD MEDALS:**

Ayesha Mehmood, Azra Ayaz, Khizar, Sameer, Hammad, Ali Hamza, Shahzaib, Shoaib, Usama Khan, Mufadir, Shaheryar, Junaid, Rameez Talha, Ummaid, Abdul Rehman, Shahmeer.

#### **SILVER MEDAL:**

Hamza Javeed, Muneeb, Iqbal, Mujtaba, Sheraz Khan, Muzammil, Ahmed, M.Zaid Moten, Nafees, Kashan, Mohtasib, Nawab, Farman, Anees, Salman.

**LIST OF KYUK-PA WINNERS.**

**GOLD MEDALS:**

Palwasha Punjani, Haris, Hussain, Sufyan, Affam, Riyasat, Rizwan, Munawer, Asad Jabber, Adnan, Mudasir, Ali Shan.

**SILVER MEDAL:**

Bilal, Abubakar, Khawer, Zouhair, Unaib, Noor, Shoaib, Moiz, Faiq, S.Feroz, Shahnan.

# BISON SYSTEM

Ritesh Reddy

Military Martial Arts have a singular goal – to terminate the enemy or opponent in the shortest possible time. During World War II UAC methods were hastily compiled by the Allies for training the armies world over. These methods were derived from traditional martial arts like Wrestling, Judo and Karate prevalent at that time. Even today, the modern day combatives are derived from BJJ< Brazilian Jiu Jitsu (a ground fighting art). Martial art instructors are not familiar with the military applications & requirements and military instructors do not have a professional background in martial arts, other than the sport versions of Wrestling, Judo, BJJ, Taekwondo & Karate. The most recent addition to military martial arts is Krav Maga, an art centering on street fights, escapes from collar grabs, wrist grabs, neck locks and bear hugs, a scenario not applicable to the military, where silent and sudden termination tactics are the rule.

The Rao couple, Prof. Dr. Deepak Rao and Dr. Seema Rao, spent 17 years of their life, researching & training over 15,000 soldiers from the Indian forces in Close Quarter Battle and Unarmed Combat. They have over three decades of professional expertise in various martial arts. They draw inspiration from their Teacher, Richard Bustillo, Original student of Bruce Lee and World authority on the art founded by Bruce Lee, Jeet Kune Do (JKD).

The Jeet Kune Do concepts are a guideline to problem solving inside and outside the arena. The JKD concepts as understood by us can be summarized in brief as follows

A) Research the truth or subject at hand: under guidance of an expert without any bias or preformed notions with an open minded approach

B) Absorb what is useful & C) Reject what is useless: depending upon whether they meet the criteria of Simplicity & Economy of Resources, Directness and Efficiency.

D) Tailor make whatever has been absorbed to your self, your situation and requirement

Now applying JKD to the military martial art requirement, there is a need for an art which meets the following

A) The Art must cater to no height, weight or age category

B) All techniques must be aimed at termination or crippling vital targets

C) All techniques must be simple, few in number, easy to learn

D) All knock downs must take Less effort and the shortest possible time

E) The Art must be principle based, allowing every individual to modify it to his advantage and constitution.

The Rao's research led to a modern day art "The Bison System". This military art has been developed by the Rao couple after 17 years of training the cross section of the Indian forces. Their efforts in modernization of Close Quarter Battle training has received two Army Chief appreciations. The Indian Bison or the Bos Gaurus is a very aggressive animal, standing 2 m tall, with 32 inch horns and weighing 2 tons. Its principle enemy is the Tiger, which it rushes head on and often gores to death. The Gaur Bison is not to be mixed with the American Bison, which is a timid animal often hunted and now almost extinct. The Gaur is

also known for its principles, the entire herd standing in a circle around the calf confronting the tigers.

The Rao's Bison system has the following JKD features

A) Each opponent is fought with a different STRATEGY depending on his size, height & aggression level.

B) ATTACK first, Attack fast, Attack hard and suddenly to force the opponent to adopt a defensive approach

C) The appropriate RANGE or distance is to be selected depending on your advantage and to the opponent's disadvantage.

D) The hardest parts of the body are used against the softest parts and VITAL organs of the opponent.

E) The best available ANGLE is selected to attack the opponent and disrupt his defense.

F) Attack is launched at the appropriate LEVEL (Head, Body, Groin, Leg levels) depending upon the height of the opponent.

G) Attack is always launched in rapid COMBINATIONS rather than singular, giving the opponent no time to think.

H) A correct STATE (Ice-Static, Water-Bobbing, Gas-Prancing) of engagement is adopted depending upon stature of the opponent.

Almost all the elite Special Op forces of India have been trained by the Rao couple. The Rao's have helped in modernizing the Counter Terror CQB training curriculum of various Indian forces. Many of the special operation units of the Indian forces have gone on record stating that they have benefited immensely from Rao's expertise in Close Quarter Battle training.

Today, world over, the Bison system is regarded as the most modern military martial art.

# HOW THE PRINCIPLE OF AIKI RELATES TO HAPPO NO KUZUSHI

Martin Ramirez

There are two main principles that must be thoroughly understood by every Jujitsu practitioner. The principle of Kuzushi and the principle of Aiki. Both of these complement each other and are relate as well, one may not exist without the other. First, lets start by exploring what Kuzuishi or Happono Kuzushi is. In its simplest form Kuzushi is the art of "breaking the balance". This concept is essential in arts like Judo, Jujitsu, Aikido and even Karate. There are two main ways of breaking a person's balance you either push or pull. The objective of the "push or pull" is to disrupt the opponent's center of gravity. There are 8 points or directions in which a person can be unbalance. If you master Kusushi you will realize how easier will be to apply a joint lock or execute a throw in a uncooperative individual.

The nickname of "gentle art" has to do with the effective application of Happono Kuzushi and Aiki. If you execute Kuzushi effectively your techniques will be effortless and very gentle in nature. The action principles of Kuzushi and aiki are involve in every Jujitsu throw. If it is done the right way these actions will be unnoticed not only to the viewers but to your opponent as well. Every time you execute Kusushi think about how the laws of physic work. Is you alter your attacker center of gravity by pushing or pulling should be no resistance on his part. The ultimate goal is to be able to feel when Kuzushi happen so you will take advantage of this to overcome your opponent. A good exercise to practice the kuzushi is Randori . Randori is a practice method in which you try to throw your training partner and avoid being thrown. This type of training develops your sense and skill to feel Kuzushi in your movements and your training partner movements as well.

The other principle that require our attention is the principle of Aiki. Aiki is directly relate to Kuzushi. Now, lets explore what is Aiki and how it is relate to Happono Kuzushi. The basic definition of Aiki is to fit, join or combine energy. The equivalent of Aiki in Korean Martial Arts is known as Hapki as in Hapkido. The mastering of Aiki requires the effective use your energy and your attacker's energy. In applying Kuzushi the right application of energy is a must. If you learn how to use the energy of your opponent and yours effectively during combat, all techniques will be executed smoothly. That's why you can see how easy a small person may be able to overcome bigger and stronger opponents. The small person who learn Kuzushi and Aiki is capable of prevail in combat due to the mastering of these principles. All techniques accomplished with Aiki are subtle anad require very little use of force. The concept of Aiki is compromise of three aspects: A-Blending not clashing: as in Kuzushi we don't want to get into a force against force match, remember the precept of no resistance. You have to learn how to blend your energy with your opponent's energy for maximum efficiency. Like in Happono Kuzushi when you execute Aiki you do subtle weight shifting and pushing or pulling; The objective is the same in both principles, to unbalance the attacker through the correct focus and use of energy, "Aiki". Kuzushi and Aiki require total body and mind coordination. So, next time you get into a "randori" match try to combine both principles for maximum efficiency and minimum effort. In conclusion, Kuzushi is the art of unbalancing an opponent that need of Aiki for maximum effectiveness. In other words the "push and pull" need the right use of energy as a complement.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF ATEMI-WAZA

Martin Ramirez

Atemi-waza is the area of the combat arts in which you develop and practice all types of striking techniques. No matter what type of Martial Art or combat system you practice they all include Atemi -wazas of some source. Even in "soft" Arts as Aikido we often find atemi techniques hidden in the movements. In Aikido they are often use as a way of distraction to settle the opponent for another technique. In real combat and self defense you can not rely solely in the exclusive use of one type of techniques. Royce Gracie, for example, showed us the practicability of striking techniques in close quarter combat. In all the U.F.C events in which Royce Gracie won, he used some type of Atemi-Waza to overcome stronger opponents. Some of the atemi waza techniques he frequently used were the palm heel, heel kicks while in the mount position, fake front kicks to close the gap, elbows, ground knees strikes and the list go on. Atemi waza techniques are very important specially if you are facing a 7' feet height 380 pounds "Hulk".

Atemi- waza has many purposes and applications in combat. The most common are: to fake, to distract, to close the gap, to block or deflect an oncoming attack, to stun an attacker, pressure points strikes, to diminish the opponent's resistance in order to apply a technique and to debilitate a stronger opponent. In Judo for example all Atemi Waza techniques were banned in competition. Jigoro Kano wanted to develop Judo as a more competition friendly art and decided not to include this techniques in Judo matches. Even though Kano did not excluded Atemi-waza for self defense applications, he though it would be safer not to include such techniques in Judo matches. In its origins Judo was Jujitsu which of course included Atemi waza techniques. In Jujitsu we practice "Shiai" which is a match that combines throwing and striking techniques. "Shiai" most be practice in a safe way to prevent injuries and accidents. The striking techniques in "Shiai" are just mimic and stop short before making total contact with the "uke" or training partner's body. In some jujitsu Schools this practice require the use of safety equipment such as gloves and protective gear such as shin guards. In addition to the latter, body contact is limited and the force use kept to a minimum to prevent injuries as much as possible. While in Judo matches the objective is to win in competition, "sport mentality". In "shiai" the objective is to practice to survive in combat using all the tools available, "self defense mentality". The combination of atemi -waza with the application of kuzushi and the right use of aiki will make you a better Martial Artist.

# UNARMED AGAINST A BLADE

Donald Miskel

People study the martial arts for any number of reasons. The type of art you study probably reflects that reason. If you are sports oriented, you probably aren't studying aikido or krav maga. While all martial arts serve a purpose all aren't created equal. Some lend themselves better to self defense than others. Some are better for self discovery while others are better for competition. My emphasis in my study is combat, self defense and personal security. I had my martial arts foundations developed in a very combative system, more by coincidence than personal intent. That influence and the fact that I grew up in a violence ridden part of a very rough city shaped my philosophy concerning the martial arts. Having become a Christian and a pastor further shaped my thoughts involving self defense and personal protection

I grew up fighting and I was good at it. In the neighborhood I grew up in violence was a fact of life. No one questioned it. Every person dealt with it as best they could. I was gang related for a good portion of my life. Back in the day guns weren't the weapon of choice on the streets. They weren't as easy to come by for kids back then. We were more prone to make zip guns than to have a manufactured fire arm. Knives and other concealable weapons were preferred to guns. They were more readily available and they were more easily concealed.

Being black in the inner city of Chicago meant you could be stopped and searched at any time. More often than not knives were confiscated. You might get your butt whipped for carrying one but it usually wouldn't land you in jail. Consequently everyone on the streets carried some type of bladed weapon. There were exceptions. Some guys carried brass knuckles, a sap (blackjack) or some other such weapon but knives were more common.

In my neighborhood you had to be able to do two things. You had to be able to throw hands (box) and you had to be able to use a knife. Lacking in either skill got you hurt or killed in the streets.

I began studying the martial arts formally at age twelve. I also boxed for the Chicago Park District. When I started jiu jitsu and later karate classes I went in knocking more advanced students on their rear ends. I was street tough and I knew how to fight. The only reason I was there was because my father enrolled me to curb my aggression level. The one thing I wanted to garner from those classes was to be able to disarm a person with a knife.

I like to keep current with the trends in the martial arts. I like some of the reality fighting arts. I'm somewhat more dubious about Brazilian Jujitsu and especially MMA. By the way, MMA is nothing new. I did that when it was illegal and we fought for small purses and side bets. Of course the competition wasn't as good but those really were no holds barred. The only rule was you couldn't use a weapon. Other than that there were no rules. You fought until someone was incapacitated or rendered unconscious. There was no tapping out. You fought until one of the fighters couldn't continue. As I think back on it I see how foolish that type of thing was. At the time I was young and thought I was invincible and I needed the money. The fights were brutal, bloody free for all. Unfortunately, much of the MMA I've seen is too similar. Too often it seems to be brutality simply for the sake of brutality. By the way, that kind of thing would get you killed on the streets.

More often than not the average assailant will either be armed or he'll have friends for backup. If you think that you're going to stand toe to toe and trade blows with a street thug

you'll very probably be sorely disappointed. Thugs don't fight fair. If they didn't think they had a distinct advantage chances are they wouldn't be confronting you.

In a lot of the disclaimers accompanying reality training a student is warned that his chances aren't good against a person with a knife. If the person is trained or skilled with his weapon that's probably true. I have yet to find the trained martial artist that can take a weapon from me. So what does that mean? We obviously can't curl up and die in the face of a knife attack. The best defense against a knife is foot techniques. Use those size twelves to get out of Dodge. Fighting should always be our last resort anyway. You fight only if you're left with no choice. That's especially true if your opponent is armed. Don't fool yourself. An armed person is always more dangerous than an unarmed person even if that unarmed person is trained. Still, if you have no choice and there's no way to make a quick exit your only alternative is to defend yourself. It isn't the best case scenario but when it's all you're left with you have to deal with the issue.

This isn't a set of techniques against a knife wielding attacker. Hopefully, if you're reading this you have some training to cover such a situation. Technique alone won't help you win in such a situation. Whatever skill you have has to be coupled with courage and a willingness to do whatever it is you have to do. Unless you are a police officer or work in some such similar vocation forget knife disarms. Disarms are designed to deal with a lethal situation with as little harm to the assailant as possible. Life and death combat doesn't include compassion for your opponent. When faced with an armed assailant your purpose has to be to destroy or totally disable your opponent. Anything less than that is going to get you seriously hurt or killed.

I have taught self defense and anti rape classes over the years. In many of those classes I have had women walk out because the techniques were too brutal. Combat isn't ballet. Combat is brutal by nature. If you aren't ready to try to kill or seriously injure an armed assailant you've lose before the fight starts. Believe me, if he is trying to attack you with a knife, your safety and well being is not one of his primary concerns. His intent is to hurt, seriously injure or kill you. Anything less than total commitment on your part will help him in his efforts.

Is it possible to face an armed assailant and come away unscathed? Unlikely if he knows what he's doing but it is possible to defend yourself and discourage or even defeat such an attacker. Forget the odds against you. You aren't playing the odds. You're trying to survive. If you've trained realistically for something like this, you already have the tools. You have to be willing to use them brutally and viciously. You can't win a fight by being defensive. You have to defend yourself but at some point you're going to have to go on the attack. You'll have to find a way to initiate an attack or counterattack your opponant's attack. You can't keep evading and blocking his attacks forever. If you don't do something to discourage him or hurt him he'll keep trying until he finally connects. You have to fight back.

You're more dangerous with a weapon. Use whatever is available. Don't fight him empty handed if you don't have to. Use the element of surprise. Throw something at him. Spit in his face. Startle him with a loud unexpected noise.

If you're forced to fight empty handed fight smart. Forget about pressure points. Most of them are too small to access on an armed and moving assailant. In that type of fight there are three areas of attack. If he can't see he can't fight. Attack his eyes. Compromise his vision. If he can't breath he can't fight. Compromise his ability to breath. If given the opportunity, attack the throat or the solar plexus. If he can't stand he can't fight. Attack his foundation. That includes his insteps, toes, ankles, knees and shins. Often these areas can be accessed with minimum risk to you. If you can get access to a joint or a limb go for bone breaks or joint destructions rather than attempting a disarm. His personal safety ceases to be your concern when he threatened you with a weapon. Until he is incapacitated or subdued err on the side of maximum damage.

Lastly, expect to be injured. If by some miracle you aren't, well and good but don't go in expecting to walk away unscathed. If you are cut or stabbed your life depends on your willingness to keep fighting. He isn't going to stop because you're hurt. You have to fight back if you hope to survive such an encounter.

In an encounter of this kind your survival depends on your willingness to not only defend yourself but to hurt, injure or kill your assailant. I'm both a Christian and a minister. I don't advocate unnecessary violence but you have a right to defend and preserve your life. It's your duty to protect you family and loved ones. There's no guarantee that you'll win such a conflict even if you fight with all of your skill and courage but I guarantee you that you won't live if you aren't willing to fight back. If you're willing to take a punch in the nose and turn the other cheek that's your choice. You may take a beating but you have a good chance of surviving that type of attack but when that same opponent is armed, turning the other cheek isn't a viable option. If you choose such a course your death won't be just murder. It'll be suicide.

I've had the fortune or misfortune of being involved in several knife fights. I've also had occasion to face several such opponents unarmed. I've been both cut and stabbed and still managed to take down or get away from the assailant. On the other hand I have actually managed to defeat an armed opponent without being injured. Whether those instances were because of my high level of skill or my opponant's ineptitude is open to argument but I'm still here to tell the story. I have no illusions about my martial abilities. Surviving such an encounter has as much to do with God's grace and mercy as with my skill or my opponant's lack thereof. I would never willingly find myself in such a situation if given any choice. My solution for this is to go armed. Because of several surgeries I carry a cane (and I'm not afraid to use it) but I'd probably carry one even if I didn't need it.

I would advise you to train realistically to develop usable skills. I'd further advise you to develop your killer instinct and develop a level of fighting aggression. Forget about fancy or complex techniques. They probably won't work when you need them most. Keep your techniques strait forth and simple. If you have to defend yourself be willing to take it as far as you have to. Against an armed assailant you have to be willing to take it all the way if you have to. You aren't fighting for a medal or a trophy. You're fighting for your life. You have to fight like your very life depends on it. Forget about fighting fair. There's no such thing as a fair fight. If you're going to fight then fight. Don't half fight or kinda fight. Give it everything you've got with conviction and lethal intent. There are no runner ups in a knife encounter. If you win, the prize is your life. If you lose... Well let me put it this way; I hope you're right with God.

In conclusion let me say this. The best fight is the one you can avoid. Next to that the second best is the one you win. Not managing either of those the third best fight is the one you survive. In the end that's what it's all about. If you don't survive the encounter you can't take it back to the drawing board. All I can say is if you must die in such a situation sell your life dearly. Death is always a possibility. The ancient samurai went into every battle expecting to die. If death proved to be inevitable he sought to die well.

Train hard and train realistically, my brethren. Go with God.

# RENSHIS, SHIHANS AND HANSHIS (OH MY)

Donn Miskel

Sounds a little sarcastic doesn't it? As well it should. I've become sickened with all the politics and infighting that seems to plague the martial arts community. Things aren't quite as bad as they were in years past but we still have a long way to go to achieve any real unity in the martial arts world.

I've dedicated the major part of my life to the research, study and teaching of the martial arts. I started my formal training in 1959 but I actually began instruction two years earlier under a brown belt judoka who gave informal instruction at one of the Chicago Park District field house gymnasiums. I was a part of the turbulent era of the martial arts in the early sixties that culminated with the unfortunate death of Jim Konservic at the Green Dragon Black Cobra Hall on the North Side of Chicago. I was a member of the old 'World Karate Federation' and later a member of 'Count Dante's' Black Dragon Fighting Society. It was a wild and turbulent time in Chicago and karate was a rough and bloody affair in those days. Training was brutal and grueling but some of the toughest fighters of that era could be found in those small and dank dojos in Chicago.

I have recently become incensed again by the backstabbing and back biting that I've become aware of on various blogs, martial arts discussion boards and websites. You'd think that grown folk would get a life and find something better to do. It seems that the only way some people can build themselves up is by tearing other people down. There's an old saying; "An empty wagon makes the most noise". I'm convinced that many of these critics of everyone and everything fall into that category.

I have my highest rank in eclectic and Americanized Asian martial arts. In reality many of those who think that they are studying a completely traditional art are doing exactly the same thing. Very few Western instructors teach these arts in a completely traditional format. The art, no matter how traditional, is filtered through the mind and personality of the one teaching it. That gives his interpretation of that art a unique flavor independent of the traditions he may have been thought. As a disclaimer let me say that I have instructor rank in several traditional arts. I have trained under a number of Japanese, Okinawan, Chinese and Filipino masters in my martial arts journey. While I enjoyed the sense of oriental culture that they offered I found their instruction no more enlightening than that of their Western counterparts. The best two instructors that I studied under were of Irish and African American extraction.

I am of the belief that if a martial art is to be effective as a combative or self defense tool it has to reflect the demands of the times and the needs of the practitioner. I love iaido. It's a beautiful art and the discipline that it requires does wonders in offering an occasion of self discovery. Still, it has very little relevance to modern self defense needs. I still teach defense against sword attack to my advanced students but I don't expect them to ever face a katana wielding attacker. Of course, in the crazy times we live in there's no guarantee.

I have recently been honored with the rank of 10<sup>TH</sup> Dan Hanshi through several national and international organizations but I have better sense than to step into a school in Japan and expect the 9<sup>TH</sup> Dan master there to fall down on his knees and kowtow to me.

That doesn't even happen here, though in my humble opinion... But then, again, that's neither here nor there.

Whatever rank I have been granted is recognized by my peers in the U.S., Europe and Australia. In spite of my fifty plus years in the arts I may or may not be recognized as a master by organizations in some Asian countries. That's probably as it should be because, though many of my techniques are based on what I've garnered from various Asian systems, what I teach is patently American. It addresses the needs and the physical and mental attributes of occidentals.

I teach enough kata to claim some connection to my classical martial arts heritage but what I expect my student to garner from them and how they are approached is uniquely American. I no longer teach the classical systems, not because I don't appreciate them but because they don't suit the needs of the type of student that I teach. Before leaving Chicago most of my students were involved in law enforcement, security, mental health or other such high risk occupations. They wanted to learn how to defend themselves or how to respond in a combative situation. Because of this my training regiment consists primarily of kyohan (basics) waza (short fighting forms), and ippon and nippon kumite (one and two step sparring). I leave jiyu kumite and randori (competition sparring) for the sporting crowd. Nothing wrong with competition. It just isn't my point of emphasis.

I respect every master of every classical martial art that exists. I admire their fidelity and their dedication to their master, their predecessors and their system. I feel the same way toward the original systems that I trained in, their founders, present masters and sensei. I just don't teach what or the way I was taught. The classical systems serve a purpose and fill an important niche. I don't expect them to adhere to my ideas or philosophies, nor do I criticize what they do or how they do it. If it works for them and fulfills their needs it has served its purpose.

I don't seek recognition from systems, organizations or masters outside of my circle of peers. The masters and instructors I associate with share a similar philosophy and follow a common path. I only ask for the same respect from these classical stylists that I show them. I don't require their approval of what I do.

There was a time when I would challenge others who questioned my integrity or my ability. More often than not I left them broken and bleeding but unconvinced. Fortunately I've grown up and I understand that beating the snot out of someone doesn't educate them and it certainly doesn't change their direction. They will continue to do what they do and think what they think even if they do it battered and bruised.

I have read in several blogs where people were slandering the knowledge, integrity, ability and honor of people that they have never met and don't even know. As a minister I am discouraged from using graphic language so it would be difficult for me to adequately articulate my opinions of such individuals. Also, since I have learned that it isn't expedient to give people of that ilk badly needed attitude adjustments I just shake my head and go about my business. You can lead a horse to water but you can't hold his head under until he drowns. And I quote.

I know and associate myself with some rather controversial martial artists. I have seen them being criticized and slandered by people who couldn't stand in their shadows. They have never seen them fight and they have never crossed swords with them ( which probably explains why they are still capable of running off at the mouth). I have seen some of these individuals fight. Most of them are exactly what they claim to be. They are exemplary fighters and teachers. What more is a martial artist required to be before he is recognized by the status quo?

During the sixties and seventies Chicago and much of the rest of the Midwest was ostracized and basically ignored by the martial arts media and the rest of the martial arts community. This, in spite of the fact that Chicago had some of the toughest fighters in nation.

Some things went on that were less than acceptable amongst some of the teachers and practitioners in Chicago but the entire city was black balled for the actions of a few. Unfortunately this type of trend still continues. Politics and martial arts snobbery still abounds. This shouldn't be so.

The martial arts should be a brotherhood. There is too much contention between systems, organizations and styles. People with different philosophies or who train in different ways for different reasons are criticized. No one has a monopoly on the martial arts. A person has the right to train in whatever style or system he wants. Who he trains under or who his style was initiated by does not determine how effective that person or his style is. Being old doesn't make something more effective and just because something has been done the same way for a lot of years doesn't make it practical.

Many systems were designed to address the needs of the time. The techniques that they used reflected this. The hands were abused and heavily conditioned because they were used against people wearing armor. Flying kicks came about to address enemy on horseback. Does that mean that we should practice these same techniques today? That depends on the individual. Conditioned hands come in real handy for tamashiwari (breaking) demonstrations but they don't necessarily make a person a better fighter. A karateka or taekwondo stylist may be able to leap up and kick the ceiling but that doesn't mean he'll be effective against a knife wielding aggressor. I've known individuals who could break stacks of bricks, fly through the air like a leaping cougar and lift massive amounts of weights but who couldn't fight their way through a handful of kindergarteners.

As I've gotten older I've had younger martial artists want to test their abilities against me. Many of them have never been in combat and they've never had to fight for their lives in brutal city streets. Everything they know about fighting they learned in the dojo. At sixty two years of age and with injuries that have resulted in several debilitating surgeries I'd still wager that I could knock their hats around backward. But that isn't what the martial arts is about and it certainly isn't what I train for. They want to spar with me to see if the art I teach is effective. Considering that much of what I teach is designed to disable, incapacitate and even cripple or kill, I don't think that there is a way to satisfy their requests without someone being seriously hurt. They have yet to come up with a sport that advocates competition eye gouging and such like. Some arts don't lend themselves well to competition. When soldiers are training for combat or police officers are preparing themselves to survive on the streets I don't think that competition is one of their primary concerns. Competition won't prepare them for survival for a life and death situation.

Lastly, I would like to talk about what constitutes a master. By the time a person has stayed with the martial arts long enough to really become a master he is up in age. There are no twenty year old martial arts masters. That isn't to say that a twenty year old can't be an excellent martial artist. Some are but they aren't masters. Mastery takes time. Contrary to what those old martial arts movies may lead you to believe there are no seventy year old martial arts masters going toe to toe with twenty five year old fighting champions. That only happens in the movies. I'm too old to fight in a tournament, even if I wanted to. That doesn't mean that I can't defend myself. I can't fight a twelve rounder but I can give you pure hell for three or four minutes. Considering what I would feel that I had to do to defend myself against a younger opponent, the fight wouldn't be pretty. If I had my way it wouldn't even be a fight. A fight requires give and take. At my age I'm willing to give but I don't plan on taking much in the way of abuse. That means that, with my limited choices, my response would have to be violent, vicious and deadly. Such a scenario wouldn't be good for anyone involved.

Considering that most masters are getting up in years and can't or won't try to compete with the younger fighter it stands to reason that he is a master because of what he knows not because of what he can do. If you have the fortune to train with and learn from such an individual you're trying to tap into the knowledge that he has. If you came to engage him in ritualistic combat or try him out to see what he knows you came to the wrong place for the wrong reason.

A case in point. When Mohammed Ali came to Angelo Dundee he didn't ask him to spar with him. Dundee was too old to be trying to fight a young contender who was still in his prime. That didn't mean that he didn't have anything to offer Ali. On the contrary, Mohammed Ali was, in affect, sitting at the feet of a master. He came to him to learn what he had to teach him not to test his fighting prowess. Mohammed Ali became the world heavy weight champion and Angelo Dundee was an aging trainer. So I ask you; who was the student and who was the master? (You should have known that there'd be a test) If you said Ali I'm sitting here risking carpal tunnel syndrome for nothing and you're educationally challenged.

There are teachers, sensei and masters out there in every shape size and variety. They teach some of anything and everything an aspiring martial artists might want to know. Because he doesn't have an oriental cast to his eyes or have a Japanese, Korean or Chinese name doesn't put his claim to the title of Renshi, Shihan, Hanshi, Sensei, Sifu, Guru or Maestro in question. If he teaches what you need well and effectively and he is able to back up his claims what do you care who he is sanctioned by? If a person offers you a million dollars are you going to check his pedigree to see if his fortune consists of 'old money'? If you do you're an idiot. If it spends it spends. By the same token, if his system works it works. He doesn't have to claim lineage to some sage sitting on a mountain top in Tibet to be a viable martial artist, an excellent teacher or a martial arts master. Being a master has less to do with who you claim lineage to than with your own personal knowledge and experience. A master is a master because of what he knows not who he knows. If you want to be able to name drop pursue your journey with someone who offers you that opportunity. On the other hand if you want to learn an effective martial art or fighting system, find the teacher who offers what you need and follow him. In the end a title is just that, a title. The bottom line is does he have what you need and is he willing to offer it to you. If you find that individual, you've found your master. Follow him. Who knows? You might actually learn something.

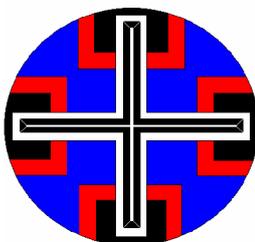
God bless you, my brethren. Train hard and go with God.

# BLIND FURY

Dan Edwards

So, you wanted to know how I got started teaching blind students and what it's like to teach 'em? Well, let me tell you a story...

I had achieved my 3rd degree in Combat Kenpo Karate when my instructor, and the systems founder, Jeff Wilson, was disabled in an accident (of all things, the poor guy slipped on the stairs from a spilled bowl of soup), which left me sitting around with no one to train with and not much to do in the martial arts world. I was practicing from time to time in my home studio just to keep active with the forms, but nothing really involved and no active students to teach - that is until I met my new friends Randy, Kevin and Lee....



In 1996, a request was received to initiate a class for a small group of men at my church. That inauspicious beginning and many years later, my focus has specialized in training blind and/or visually impaired students. This is the story of that beginning:

After one weekend service at my church, a Pastor was attacked by a deranged man who blamed the church for all his problems, when the dust had settled and nerves had calmed, I offered to train the Pastor in some basic self-defense moves. It wasn't long before three of his friends joined in and a small karate club formed meeting two or three times a week. We would work out, train, chat and generally have a good time.

This was great for me since I was managing the drunk tank downtown, and spending 8 to 10 hours a day, 5 days a week surrounded by violent and homeless drug addicts was getting a bit stressful - I needed a way to blow off some steam.

Pretty quickly Lee (the natural athlete of the group) and Kevin (the driven engineer of the trio) got to their 1st degree, but Randy was lagging behind (the pastor and instigator of this little club had moved on by this point and was no longer working with us). You see, Randy was blind. He has been diabetic most of his life, and (as often happens) for the past few years his vision was steadily degrading - to the point where he could no longer see any fine detail and was having great trouble differentiating large shapes and objects from more than two feet away.

As training advanced and techniques became more involved, it was a struggle to find effective ways to communicate what had always been visual teaching methods. We began changing and adapting ways to both teach and learn.

I wanted him to succeed and he desperately wanted to get his black belt (especially after Kevin and Lee beat him to it) so we began to vary our training around to maximize his vision and minimize his need for eyes. I would wear a white Gi while standing against a

black wall so he could more easily see my movements, we would spend hours working on short foot-work techniques and days would get spent going over multiple attacker forms. Something really interesting began to happen though, as I realized I was spending more and more of my time *explaining* a technique and less and less time *demonstrating* a technique; Randy was getting better and better at countering my every attack.

Through his tenacity, Randy progressed in the style and discipline of Combat Kenpo Karate, eventually earning his 2<sup>nd</sup> degree Black Belt and rating as one of the most respected Instructors and Examiners in our system.

In the beginning we would try to use his cane as a weapon of defense - only to find (after shattering more canes than I care to remember) they simple weren't built to stand-up to a high-impact environment. Easy fix. Drop the cane.

We would spend hours trying to get Randy to 'reach out into the void and find the attacker' only to have it dawn on us one morning that if he can hear a mouse pee on cotton - he can certainly hear an attacker approaching and know which angle to turn to avoid or confront him.

This process taught us, rather quickly, that the old "watch what I do and repeat it" style of teaching was not going to work for Randy. His learning style needed to be replaced with a word-picture of each minute detail of every technique as it was being performed. Teaching a sighted person to block a punch is simple, direct and easy, using the maxim of 'watch and learn' – "*throw a high block like this* (while performing a high block) and *then counter with an elbow punch like this*" (while throwing an elbow punch to the attacker).

Teaching a blind man that same technique takes a bit more detail and explanation, it involves long verbal descriptions of what each part of the body should be doing, such as: "*Okay, your legs are well spread to balance your body. Move your left leg forward approximately ½ step while twisting your torso to the right about a ¼ turn. Your body should be centered, not too much weight on the heels or balls of your feet. At the same time slightly bend your knees to lower your center of gravity. While stepping forward, lift your left arm up bringing the forearm in front, vertical and in about a 45 degree angle from the ground. This is done to intersect with the attackers blows....*"

As you can "see", just communicating a simple block takes a great deal of time, exacting language and a way of thinking different from most thought processes. It requires the Instructor to approach teaching from the student's perspective.

Our classes then became more and more about situational awareness - helping Randy learn to use the sense he does have left and forget about the one that he was missing. In time, Randy earned his 1st degree - and I do mean he earned it. I was really proud of the fact that the first blind student to be awarded a black belt (at least by me) wasn't given any slack and was made to pass all the speed drills and forms that every-other black belt candidate has had to do. I recall Randy doing far better on his demonstration than the sighted students had done, simple because Randy couldn't see the crowd around him!

As Randy accepted the loss of his vision, he sought out classes and training to help him adapt to being blind in a sighted world. Through his "vision", the first Blind Self-Defense Seminar was born.

Randy enrolled at the Orientation and Training Center in Seattle, a school operated by the Washington Services for the Blind that taught adults who have gone blind to function and survive in a world defined by sight. He thought a Blind Self-Defense Course would benefit many others.



**Dave Sharpe (1<sup>st</sup> Dan) leading a seminar at the OTC.**

Unaware of the response and through Randy's encouragement, we designed a short seminar at this Center. To my amazement and pleasant surprise, there was a great deal of interest in "Blind Karate". We were soon teaching 5 to 6 seminars a year and, as I witnessed, changing lives in the process.

Well, to say that the first one was a disaster would be an overstatement - but not by much. As it turns out, there is a big difference in teaching a single blind student over the course of a few years, and teaching a classroom full of blind students in a few hours. Yes, Seminar 1, Day 1 did not go smoothly.

As our experiences with blind students grew, our training styles evolved and improved, we eventually came to a point where teaching a two day seminar was a 'no brainer'. I teach about 75% of the seminar with sleep-shades over my eyes, which help me be more effective by reminding me that my students are blind. This forces me to slow down and verbally demonstrate each technique with thorough word pictures allowing the students to see in their mind's eye the moves as they unfolded and the rationale behind it. The end of the two day class would culminate in a full-speed, live, in-person attack on each student.

I'm here to tell you, it is nothing short of amazing to watch the transformation from Day One - the "I'm blind and I can't do it and I'm a victim!" to "I'm blind and you are going to get hurt if you mess with me!!!" The confidence, the swagger, the self-assured stance, the powerful freedom of knowing that they can walk down the street and believe - truly, deeply know that they can defend themselves. This metamorphous is the reason I teach these classes for free. There is no amount of money that can affect the feeling of pride I have as I see each student's progression.

Situational awareness was a big piece of the pie; getting each student to reach out with their ears and listen to my voice and foot-steps as I walked around the room, teaching them to immediately recognize the nature of a grab the moment they are attacked, helping them to understand the need to fully know their surroundings so they could make a timely escape. This was all critical stuff, but surprisingly the single greatest obstacle to overcome was helping them understand, to truly know, they could do it; and more so, that they were allowed to do it.

I have to admit, this surprised me a great deal; but upon reflection it started to fit together. They have all been told they were *disabled*, somehow flawed in their design, and therefore, by inference they were less worthy than those around who were *fully-abled*.

For those students who had grown-up with some degree of visual problems this psychology ran even deeper, for as children they had been informed that they couldn't go there, or couldn't do that (for logical safety reasons of course) because they were blind. Their whole lives had been defined by their inability to do something, and here I was telling them they were fully capable of learning a martial art and fully capable of applying that martial art to self defense. For some, this was a bit too much to grasp, for others, it became a mantra for their lives.

Another interesting aspect of teaching self-defense to blind students was learning to overcome what I call the 'blind robot gait'. Imagine if you could not see how your body moves through space, you have to reference for what your arms and legs are doing at any given moment, and added to this you are acutely aware of all the little inanimate obstacles laying around the world that are just waiting to jump out and attack you; slamming into shins and barking at your ankles, or slapping you firmly in the face. Not fun!

Usually, this isn't something we are able to fix over the course of a short weekend seminar, but for those students who strive to earn a black belt it's a simple issue of mind-over-matter; if you don't mind, it won't matter.

Randy and I have been running these seminars for nearly 8 years now, and in all that time I have never accepted a payment for a class, simply because there is no amount of money that can compete the sense of accomplishment I have when I see a student walk into class on Day 1; scared, intimidated and totally sure of his or her own lack of value; then to see them walk out on Day 2, filled with confidence and the knowledge that not only can they fight back, but that they should fight back.



**Dan Edwards (in the Redman suit) attacking a student on Day 2. David Sharpe is in the background. – Here the student is using a kubiton to inflict the maximum amount of damage possible.**

Each class begins with a simple question - what are you willing to fight for? The answers all vary, but in the end I hardly ever hear 'I am willing to fight for myself'. It's usually a mix of being willing to fight for a prized possession, willing to fight for a family member or friend, but painfully rare is the student who proclaims 'I will fight for myself', 'I will fight for my safety'. As the class progress and students learn that by using a keen sense of hearing and touch that they too can fight back, the confidence needed to use these new-found skills slowly develops.

Day 2 ends with a full speed, live attack from me (fully protected in my Redman suit of course!). Each student is brought into the room, one person at a time, and each student has

to face their nightmare - a hulking man intent on doing them harm, and in these past 8 years and several hundred students, each one has managed to defend themselves against me; some inflicting some serious damage that has made me eternally grateful for all that extra padding!

Just recently I had the honor of awarding a black belt 1st degree to another blind man, David Sharpe; who has now taken on the mantle of instructor and is going forward with his efforts to teach other blind people about martial arts.



**From Left – Dave Sharpe (blind), 1st Dan; Randy Tedrow (blind) 2nd Dan; Dan Edwards (author) 5th Dan**

Prior to being awarded his belt, David had to demonstrate, to me, his ability to teach CKK to other students, and so we had him lead a seminar at the blind school in Seattle where this had all begun so many years ago...The seminar went well, David had a good time, Randy and I got to watch our protégé spread his wings, and a few weeks later one of the students had a chance to put into practice the techniques we had given her.

The situation was not all that unique; a young woman walking home at night with her boyfriend finds herself confronted by a group of men with obvious ill-intent. Now is the part where you are expecting a great and dramatic fight scene, with vicious kicks, flashing knives and screams of wounded would-be attackers.

Sorry. Didn't go down like that. Actually, this young woman learned one key point to self-defense for blind students – Always keep your cool. She took out her cell phone, hit speed dial for the police, dropped the phone to the ground and stood ready to fight back if need be; all the while calling out to her boyfriend to tell her what street she was on, which direction she could run, how many attackers there were, what landmarks were close by – thus giving the police operator an exact location for her, and letting her know the best route for a quick escape.

These days I teach blind students almost exclusively; I can't even recall the last time I taught a sighted class; frankly, it's just not as much fun.

Watching David and Randy train, one would never know they are blind. Unless, of course, you noticed the white cane next to David or Randy's guide-dog, Clark, curled up in the corner of the studio. Over the years, Clark has even gotten used to all the yells and shouts. And we have destroyed more canes than I care to think about!

Combat Kenpo Karate for the visually impaired can provide confidence and skills usually thought out of their reach. It has shown to provide a level of self-assuredness that is

comforting to the student and their loved ones. If you are interested in learning more about these classes, please don't hesitate to contact me via my email, at [train4defense@yahoo.com](mailto:train4defense@yahoo.com) for further information about time and locations.

## NOTES FOR AUTHORS

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