



Newsletter

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Coming to Center

Shihan Lynn Philyaw

At this time in our association's history, it is particularly important that we attempt to achieve a productive and "centered" perspective. Those of you, primarily upper ranks, who have been in touch with the conflicts that have arisen since the Master's death in January will relate to what I am about to say on another level than those who haven't.

In aikido, there are four ways to maintain one's center: 1) Keep weight "underside" of arm and hand; 2) Keep your "one point" (attention to point just below naval); 3) Extend ki; and 4) Relax completely. The easy thing about this system is that you needn't remember all three because, if you accomplish one of them, you accomplish all four principles. What a deal!

In this busy world, many factors make maintaining one's center difficult -- increased population and traffic congestion, shopping malls, making ends meet, junk mail, TV and the thousand tugs of a consumer society. The dojo, for some of us, is one of our prized refuges from the chatter of our minds and the noise of the world. This is why we, having found karate, must carefully keep and nurture the peace we have found herein. It has its origin in principles of zen and even certain interpretations of the western religious tradition. (We in the Yin Yang Do are grateful that our beloved founder passed many of these principles on to us.) One of these principles is variously expressed in the west and the east -- as "charity" in the former (see Paul's 13th letter to the Corinthians in the New Testament) and as "acceptance" or "openness" in the latter. One old pre-zen poem holds that, once that one divides the world into good and evil, right and wrong, the universe is split in two.

All this must not be mistaken for "pie-in-the-sky" idealism. In a self-defense situation, in the dojo, on the job, in our homes and in our courts, decisions must be made and actions must be taken to correct a situation, but coolly (which is not to say more leniently, just without enmity). Decisions must be made without rancor or judgement -- for who can see into another person's heart? And, yes, decisions must be made. The crucial question is whether or not this action/decision comes from our calm and cool "center" or from our heated emotions. We know that the superior warrior is he or she who is without emotion in combat, is calm and coldly determined to triumph. The superior warrior sets about getting the job done, his/her mind devoid of "winning" and "losing," "good" and "bad," "right" and "wrong." If you are heated or angry or concerned with "winning," you will over commit or lose perspective on the fight; if you remain calm, you will see what's there and not what you imagine the case to be.

To maintain center in the arts as in life as in combat, we must maintain balance -- we must deal with issues and not personalities, acts and not motives, principles and not individual choices. (We are not equipped to see into another's psyche and past history.) One of the great sicknesses that plague our political system and our world is the readiness to judge, to condemn others as being Wrong, Evil or Stupid and champion ourselves or our group as being Right, Virtuous and Practical. This is a very comforting and self-congratulatory process; that's why it is so universally popular: "We are right and they are wrong!" We must continually, in our work lives, our kumite and our personal relationships, learn to breathe, to come to center.



From the President

Dick Bruno

Many people commented that our summer seminars were very interesting and enjoyable to attend at Kemper Center in Kenosha. I would like to take this opportunity to again thank all the instructors who shared their knowledge with all of us. As Shihan Foster once said, "Knowledge is useless unless one shares it with others." We will be looking for more talented people in our association this summer of 1995. So if you are asked to teach, please honor us as your students and share your knowledge.

Mike Radigan and Ron Zeith are coordinating our Holiday Party this year. I know that they will have something special for us this time with some interesting surprises. Let us give them our support and full cooperation in planning this important event. Our Holiday Party will be at the Taste of Wisconsin in Kenosha at the intersection of Highway 50 and I-94. (Please see our announcement in the newsletter.) Hopefully this will be more convenient for our out-of-town guests and provide better access for transportation to and from Kenosha. At the Holiday Party we are also going to offer a video taken with Lynn Philyaw and Shihan Foster. This will be a valuable video to your library because Shihan Foster discusses how the martial arts is applied in everyday life. We hope to sell these at the door for \$10.

In closing I would like to wish everyone and their families the Merriest Christmas and the Happiest New Year for 1994/1995 and please save some of your holiday cheer for our festive event.

Karate-Do: My Way of Life - Gichin Funakoshi

Book Review by Al Reingold

"The great virtues of Karate are prudence and humility"
(p. 93)

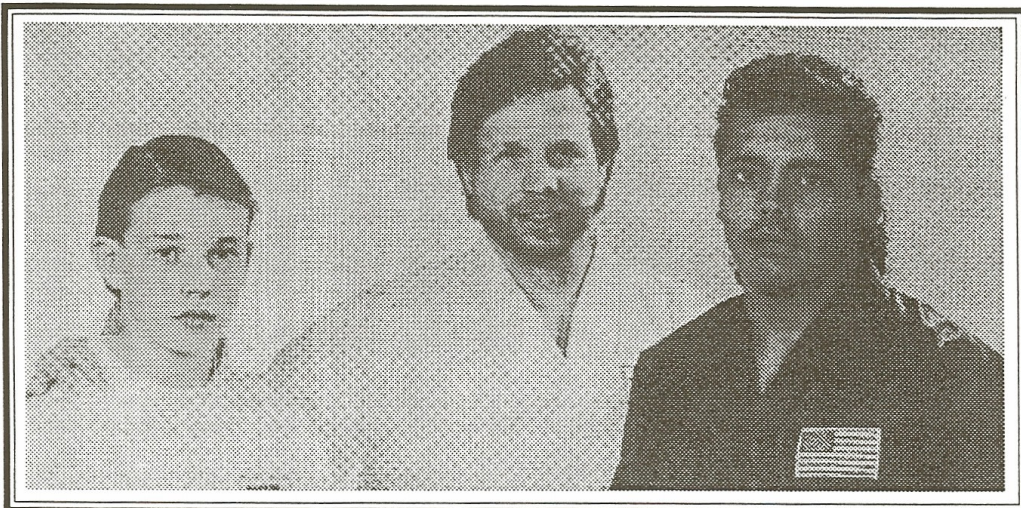
From the outset, *My Way Of Life* differs from the majority of martial art literature in that it is neither physically nor historically instructional. Master Funakoshi, the founder of Shotokan Karate and the man who introduced Okinawan Karate to the Japanese mainland in 1922, prefaces this wonderful collection of anecdotes as being "little more than the ravings of a very old man." *Karate-Do: My Way Of Life* aptly describes the tone and content of Master Funakoshi's slim autobiography. Funakoshi conveys the great extent to which Karate pervades into every aspect of his daily life and routine, in and out of the Dojo. Outside the first few pages, we hear little about time spent in training, but more on the guiding principles of his two Senseis, Masters Yasutsune Azato and Anko Itosu. In describing his later years, we learn even less about his students in Japan. In fact, he leaves actual time spent in the Dojo more or less in the background, and details his quest to teach Karate to the Japanese people and from there to the rest of the world. The autobiography follows Master Funakoshi's ninety years of life, dwelling on memorable snapshots of his past as a Karate student and schoolteacher and his prophetic vision of the future. Funakoshi affords a rare glimpse into the simple life of pre-war Okinawa during the the peak of Karate development there. The tone is one of a grandfather's den, where by a soft fire and dim lights one's revered mentor opens doors to himself for the benefit of the younger generation.

Master Funakoshi teaches away from the mystical perspective of the martial arts, especially when discussing feats of extraordinary skill and power

espoused by sensationalists. He downplays the violent attributes of the martial arts in general and Karate in particular, and stresses that the study of Karate should be for the building of character and for learning about oneself. Even though, as mentioned above, he does not accentuate in detail Karate kata or technique (these are covered in another of his books: *Karate-Do Kyohan: The Master Text*), he does provide guidelines for self development outside the walls of the Dojo. These he lists at the end of the book, after touching stories of his childhood and young adulthood -- he begins to teach only after he has shared with the reader a great part of himself. Among the guidelines he states: "Try to see yourself as you truly are and try to adopt what is meritorious in others." Also, "Abide by the rules of ethics in your daily life, whether in public or private." (p. 109) Master Funakoshi counsels humility, and predicts, in the 1950's, a deterioration of respect and the beginning of the loss of the old traditional ways.

The Master underplays his own prowess as disciple, practitioner, teacher, and missionary. His sacrifices included separation from his wife for years at a time, having to assume custodial tasks to afford room and board, and leaving the homeland of his ancestors for the strange city of Tokyo. However, his vast legacy has been the introduction of Karate-Do to millions of people throughout the world, and the founding of the most widely practiced style of Karate to this day. He has followed his own guideline and that of his Senseis -- "To train with both heart and soul," and that Karate-Do is, "above all else, a faith, a way of life." (p. 106, 109)





Eric Brown, Bobby Brown and Rene Santiago

Goodwill Games - St. Petersburg '94

Lynn Philyaw

What follows will be a relatively brief (really, Ron!) summary of what turned out to be a very tightly packed, eventful and enlightening trip to Russia and the '94 Goodwill Games. To fill in all the huge gaps, you'll have to ask others involved -- Bobby and Eric Brown and Rene Santiago -- and read the 20-page paper I submitted for graduate credit.

For a variety of reasons, the above karatekas were honored to be invited to join Team USA on their journey to Russia to compete against a Russian team as a demonstration event in the Goodwill Games. We also performed at the half-time of the final Russian-American soccer match and were featured in the closing ceremonies -- all seen by millions around the world (though few Americans seemed very aware of the events).

The trip itself was grueling -- little sleep, sub-standard food and a schedule that was taxing and restrictive . . . a lot of waiting, endless rehearsals, too much time on buses. Nevertheless, there were wonders to be witnessed and felt -- simply being in Russia (a land most of us grew up fearing and preparing to defend ourselves against) an oddly fairly-tale country (because it had been officially depicted as just as mythical and unreal as 'heir government had portrayed ours . . . well maybe not quite so much). And now this "great power" is on its knees, struggling with problems we can hardly imagine. It has the worst of our system

with none of the benefits of theirs. The cure of instant democracy and capitalism may prove worse than the disease.

Our traveling company consisted of a group interestingly high in testosterone and, therefore, quick to judge and easily irritated -- karate people, internationally ranked arm wrestlers and power weight lifters. Where we went, people noticed! Just to be understood, I had to be a bit more aggressive, pretend to be irritated when I wasn't, drop my voice by half an octave and increase my dosage of vulgarities. There was one time that this "attitude" bothered me and I withdrew from and counseled against it. Oddly enough, the rules of the competition had not been determined prior to the meeting of the two teams, though many of the coaches had seen a full-contact demonstration by one of the Japanese coaches of the Russian team, one which depicted an exceptionally high degree of full-force contact to both body and head. Some of our coaches, seasoned competitors bent on winning at any cost, vowed that we would do anything it took to beat the Russians -- and they worked themselves into a lather of hostility so that they were determined to "take no prisoners" rather than lose at the Goodwill Games (which seemed an outrageous irony to me). As it turned out, I did not have to push my issue because the Russians

proved far more willing to compromise and cooperate than we were. In fact, they seemed noble both in the strength of their fighting and in their head-held-high acceptance in defeat.

As for the fighting, many had been trained as "full contact" kick boxers, which meant an over-reliance on widely swung kicks. Once we learned to get inside those devastating kicks, we had an advantage with our hands. The greatest example of our success was embodied in young Eric Brown, Bobby's son. One day was spent in a "testing out" session during which we held sparring matches to determine what the rules of competition would be. Eric drew a lad whom we later discovered to be one of the toughest young men in his class. Eric had entered the competition with a prior arm injury due to a biking accident, which his opponent, probably unwittingly, capitalized on -- delivering one devastating kick after another -- until Eric's arm was bloodied and he was somewhat discouraged.

After a bit of tending to and coaching, he came back for the real match with the same opponent and won decisively. He not only managed to evade those kicks but learned to enter consistently and with perseverance. He outscored his opponent, this time, significantly.

As for the other "victories"? Rene Santiago proved to be an aggressive and effective international competitor. He won his round hands down. Now we get to the oldest competitor admitted to the ranks of competition, one who hadn't really intended to "compete," though we all knew it was in his blood all along, an impulse he couldn't deny, especially since he -- and how many of us could turn this down? -- had an international arena to compete in. (How many years does the old guy have left ?!) Intended at first as an "alternate," Bobby decided, as the oldest competitor, to commit himself to the ranks of the young bloods out to win. He fought an exceptionally strong opponent, one who took his toll physically. Bobby, though weary and bloody at the end, managed to work his way inside heavy kicks to

outscore his opponent.

Once on the bus and on the move, I noticed Bobby not feeling up to par. When he told me he was hurting, I knew (as anyone who knows Bob) that he meant it and that it might be serious. I immediately redirected the bus to the nearby American medical facility (first choice of the Russian mafia and inaccessible to most citizens), and they dropped us off for temporary treatment. I assisted in sewing up an eight stitch cut over his eye, and ex-rays confirmed an injured kidney. But the old warrior had done more than his share to help the team toward the gold!

Was it worth it after all? Well -- considering all that the Russian people have gone through and how many of them have to see Americans as being at least partially to blame for their conditions -- it was an incredibly moving experience to march around Kirov Stadium, waving American flags, with Boris Yeltsin on the dias, and have 80,000 Russians give you a standing ovation all the way around the track. It was one of the most moving experiences of my life, and it said so much more about them than it did about us. Yes, they impressed me. And my heart goes out to them in an almost impossible time.

Bottom Line:

- 1) "We" officially won the gold.
- 2) We may have won a battle against tae kwon do for a spot in future Olympic events.
- 3) Of the eleven karate competitors at the '94 Goodwill Games held in St. Petersburg, three of the victors were members of the Yin Yang Do Karate Association and one was an affiliate (from Far Eastern Arts). I think this is impressive and something you all should be proud of.
- 4) We have, I hope, learned more than we went there to prove.

