



# Newsletter

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## A Word From Shihan

### A Few Comments on Power

An interesting turn of events recently occurred on our national political scene involving Colin Powell and the pursuit of the presidency. He may have proven what some psychologist said once, that those who seek the presidency, who strive for high office, are the least deserving of it, a disquieting thought. From most reports, it was not the office itself that he would have shied from. It was the petty and vicious campaigning that would have been necessary that he had not the stomach nor the taste for. Some men are too good for the dirty fight and scramble for the top of the power heap. Many considered his resignation from the race to be a national disgrace, regardless of how they may have viewed his political position. Some say the public has lost a good candidate in General Powell because he saw political power as an opportunity for service rather than personal gain, but not one worth sacrificing his integrity and peace of mind for.

I'd like to say a few words about power -- about its nature, its acquisition and those who want to gain it. Power, aside from money (often its symbol and substitute), is one of the most sought after commodities in the world -- everything from power over nations to power over one's child or spouse. (It's interesting here to note that, according to the Chicago Tribune, during the period of the Vietnam War, while approximately 56,000 American men tragically lost their lives in battle, 53,000 women were killed by their spouses or boyfriends.)

We know, from our own experience, that even physically there is false power (the empty posturing of the playground bully) and there is practical power. Though most people perceive strength to be measured by the loudest talk, the largest muscles and the most aggressive stance, for the genuine and perceptive karateka, the danger signals are the lowering of the voice, the relaxation of the muscles and centering of the opponent (compacting of the body, the bend of the knees). Real power comes not from the upper shoulders and arms but from the lower belly, a point normally unassociated with physical power.

There can be said to be two ways to exert power : over oneself and over others. (Shihan Foster, in the interview we have on video tape, speaks about such distinctions as well.) This "power over others" may also be sought in the form of seeking the attention of or recognition by others -- fame, position, rank. The child in people will seek power over others because, needing some sort of self-esteem and lacking self-control, they must go after whatever source or sign of power that they can gain. People do what they can to get what they need, and we must not begrudge them that attempt. We may even pity them in such a misguided effort. However, neither do we have to honor it nor allow it to work toward another's



## Autumn Lightning — by Dave Lowry

Book Review by Al Reingold

*Sensei sighed. "For the bugeisha," he said, "it is not enough to be alert just when holding a weapon. He must be ready for the unexpected every moment, always ready. Sitting down, getting up, eating, sleeping — all the same. The bugeisha has to be aware all the time. We call this, say in Japanese, 'zanshin'." (p. 24)*

For many practitioners of the martial arts in the Western world, there seems to be the feeling that the combative ways learned today are somewhat different in scope and practice from the Oriental nexus. Clearly, this holds true in certain obvious aspects; namely, we do not customarily carry swords for spontaneous life-or-death combat situations in our daily lives (we carry guns, and have found far more callous ways of dispensing death, but this is a different issue). Additionally, the fact that Westerners are raised under substantially different cultural backgrounds than Easterners — even today — and taking into account the rapidity with which the world has changed in the last hundred years, it stands to reason that modern training would be significantly removed from the arts of our martial ancestors. In the experience of Dave Lowry, however, this blurring of cultures and centuries has afforded him a rare perspective into the values of the traditional bugei. In *Autumn Lightning*, he intricately explores the benefits that both cultures and traditions have yielded, and weaves a masterful tale blending his own martial experiences with those of the warriors of ancient Japan.

*Autumn Lightning* begins with the training of the author in the Yagyu Shinkage Ryu of fencing, under the tutelage of Sensei Kotaro, a Japanese-born swordmaster of samurai descent. From the opening chapter, where the young American boy is drawn to the mystique of the Japanese martial arts, through the easy rambling of analogous stories of the classical bugeisha of Japan, Lowry neatly juxtaposes two wonderful coming-of-age stories. In the ancient East, we see the birth of the now-renowned Shinkage Ryu, and follow its development to the Meiji era through the eyes and stories of its

founders and disciples. In the modern West, Lowry opens his heart to the reader, conveying the growing pains that all students of any worthwhile endeavor undergo, along with the wry insights of the Midwestern seventh-grader learning the culture, history, and fighting arts of Japan. This combination of American adolescence and samurai swordsmanship provides a dual experience, a balance which the author describes poignantly and gracefully.

In addition to this cultural yin and yang, Lowry explores another sort of interaction — that of the external and the internal. This is the concept of deep training, of the exterior reflecting the interior, of the folding and pounding of the sword and the swordsman until the very core is strength itself. It is a concept that, though hardly unique to *Autumn Lightning*, is succinctly and accessibly depicted herein.

*Instead of the purely physical conflict with an opponent, the masters of the Yagyu ryu understood that the real conflicts of existence come within oneself, in the soul and the psyche of a man as he grapples with his own mortality — and morality — in the dark corners of his self that no opponent could ever reach. These were the inner fields of battle, swordsmen of the Yagyu style of fencing were taught, where the life of the bugeisha was won or lost, for it was in that secret place that he forged for himself either just another life, or a life that was worthy of living.  
p. 143-144)*

While engaging in battle with a bladed weapon is to a large degree anachronistic, the Shinkage Ryu training applies to any society in any era. Whether in feudal Japan or in Missouri during the Vietnam War, the lessons and nobility of the traditional art remain the same, and Dave Lowry has created a delicate tapestry of our past and present, our Eastern cousins and ourselves.



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*Continued from page 1*

detriment. In fact, sometimes we are obligated to block that attempt, even as we must "neutralize" an attacker without anger but because they've called it upon themselves.

The adult in us will work toward a higher sort of power, power over our selves, that most challenging of opponents. Be wary of those who seek power over any but themselves unless it's truly in the service of others, a power exercised humbly and wisely.

— Shihan Lynn Philyaw





## Change Fosters Growth

George Zimmer

Sensei Foster eloquently modeled spiritual oneness during periods of changer as he presided over our karate organization. His presence still remains with us as our individual lives change and as our collective Karate experience presents tests of will and commitment. While many questions have been raised since our Shihan's passing, it is important that we not dwell on the past but rather, look to the future as we seek balance in the present.

This article is being presented in an effort to offer perspective in our quest for stability.

William H. Foster faced many challenges as our sensei, shihan, reverend, and spirit guide. We may ask, what characterized stability in leadership during the turbulent sixties, the freedom of the seventies, the unsureness in the eighties, and the maturation of his organization in the nineties? Certainly, decades of change manifested itself with numerous "In-House" problems for the Shihan and the yudanshakai. A further look would suggest that prominent and high ranking black belts left the organization or the club during that time - the author of this article being one of them. Yet, why then, did so many students and other advocates "Keep the faith?" why are we still together and why are so many of the "Elder Statesmen" comfortable with the change? Please consider the following"

1. Sensei Foster taught us that no one is ever given a greater burden than s/he can carry. The task ahead of us is not beyond our capability, even though it may appear to be more challenging than having to fight Elio Covelli or Joe Ferraro for the first time. In fact, some of us might rather accept that challenge since the pain of that experience would be easier to live with.
2. The one most commonly sought after quality in large organizations and the one most obvious attribute present among our yudanshakai, is loyalty. Loyalty can not be purchased and it cannot be negotiated in a contract. It is earned the same way that trust is earned. Perhaps the reason there is so much support among the board of directors and in support of Shihan Philyaw is because Sensei Foster allowed us time to study Karate and to grow as individuals while he assumed the burden of leadership. During that time we sparred very hard (made too much contact perhaps), learned kata, sought spiritual enlightenment, developed lasting relationships, and for a lack of a better description, grew up. It is important then, that we allow our younger students the same opportunity while honoring and dignifying all of those who choose our path.

3. Tradition. Certainly, tradition has inspired many of us to take considerable pride in our studies. We have not chosen to join the latest fad of rollerblading down life's highway. We have devoted our physical and spiritual beings to a study that develops internal strength and spiritual relationships. It is tradition from which we find security, from which we find examples of challenge and success, and from which we rely on when in time of questioning. It is the yudanshakai who offer collective support that translates to a carrying on of tradition. It is tradition, among other qualities, that Sensei Foster brought to Kenosha. It is this quality that has underscored our commitment to excellence. It is a major component in every successful organization. Tradition can too easily become nothing more than a memory if we choose to look elsewhere.

4. Acceptance. Sensei Foster accepted all of us without question or reservation. All of our lives took different paths and in each and every case, he provided undaunting loyalty. Each and every one of us needs to accept and value our fellow students for their individual strengths and weaknesses if we are to continue to grow. There are no super heroes, just well intended people trying to help. Nor should anyone philosophy dominate our thinking. For example, Sensei spoke that the only competition worth seeking was that competition within one's self to become a better person. He supported interest in tournaments because he believed tournaments promoted collegial relationships between organizations and styles, not because he supported the notion of competing in arenas. At the point in which he feared that outward competition created "false pride", Sensei directed us away from tournaments. We need to remember that when placing emphasis on decisions about our studies.

In closing, here is a quick story. It was the early 1970's during a warm and humid workout in the little gym at the KYF. The air did not move in the sweltering heat and the intensity and pace of the workout was horrendous. At a moment in which the burning sweat blinded our vision and many simply appreciated the pause, Sensei announced, "The manner in which you treat others is the manner in which others will judge you." For many years I wondered why he chose a time in which we were nearly exhausted to preach the gospel of enlightenment. Maybe it was because he felt that the real qualities inherent in an individual reveal themselves most strongly during



## "In The Breach"

Chuck St. Pierre

The phrase comes from old naval military lore. It's the phrase that the loader of the deck cannon yelled to the gun crew at the precise instant the round was in place, but just before the wick was lit. This phrase was crucial because it foretold the noise, violence and destruction it was about to create. It also signaled the point of no return to the gun crew.

This analogy is valuable to us in our development as Martial Artists. Many karateka have studied for years, some for decades, but have never been "in the breach". Others have it's that point in time when, like the gun crew on board ship, you realize that you are moments away from violence, and there is no turning back.

*Feel* the following examples:

You are standing alone on a quiet street corner and a large individual walks up beside you, gently grabs your elbow, and asks you quietly to give him your wallet and other valuables. You are "In the breach".

You walk into the restroom in a restaurant after dinner, and as you turn to leave two men walk in quickly, close the door blocking your exit, and tell you you're not going anywhere until they say you can. You're "in the breach".

You have just filled your gas tank at a filling station, and are about to pay for it at the counter, when a man enters the station, and pulls out a pistol. You are "in the breach".

Other than accident or illness, we are never closer to injury or possible death during our lives, than when we are "in the breach". That point in time when we sense that we are in harms way, and we have to decide what to do, or what recourse to take.

So, what is the lesson here?

The greatest Karate Masters can boast that they can defeat any mortal, but not one can tell you what to expect when you are "in the breach". All of the katas sparring, and wazas will not totally prepare you either. Nothing can

totally prepare you for what will happen to your mind and body, as the realization takes over that you are "in the breach".

So, what is the answer?

There is no answer. That is the lesson.

No one can tell you what to expect "in the breach" or predict for you what you will do. You will only know that for sure when it happens...a flood of thought, and sensation, from head to toe. Can you prepare for this? Maybe...maybe not. Some can and some have more difficulty because of their life experiences and emotional makeup. Diligent meditation might help some. Spending time with your thoughts could prove helpful. Honestly searching your personal feelings about being "in the breach" can also prove valuable.

I had one student tell me that he used to go out looking for a fight (and he found quite a few) just to experience the feeling. Not wise.

While no one really has a total answer for you, Sensei Foster talked about a concept that might make some sense for us.

He taught us that life can be viewed from many aspects, to be sure. One aspect was that life was simply what he called "a preparation for death". Those of us who are prepared properly would die with dignity and grace *regardless of the circumstances of their death*...and those who did not may die in a less graceful, or dignified manner.

He also said that fear was a cognitive, or mental thing, and did not exist below the neck. To die with dignity and grace is to give life everything you have; to give every moment your best shot; to face anything with your chin up, with confidence, and without fear.

I couldn't think of a better way to find myself "in the breach" than that, could you?

Good luck in your quest for knowledge!





*Excerpts from the forth coming book*  
**"The Dummy"**

by Al Ferguson

Greg left the courthouse and walked the three blocks over to the PPYF, the Pleasant Prairie Youth Foundation. He felt strange carrying a duffel bag stuffed with a towel and a new sweat suit. He really didn't know what to expect. He had heard all the stories before. Stories that they beat up their students and expected them to go out and get into fights to prove their ability. All stories told by no minds who never took a class. Who would never last through one of those classes.

Greg arrived a half hour early. He would at least get a look at the room where he would begin training his body and his mind. He would stretch out a bit. The little that he knew about stretching. Five minutes into his attempt at stretching a short man with jet black hair that should have been thinning by now walked in and smiled at Greg.

"We've been expecting you." He said after he bowed in facing the East. "I'm Elio Fortunato."

"I'm Greg." He said accepting Elio's handshake. "I guess I'm here to start training." He said a little nervously.

"Good. And don't be nervous. All the stories you've heard are told by people that don't know any better. All we expect from you in here is that you try to do your best."

"I've been trying that all my life." Greg.

"Good then you'll do just fine." Elio

Greg couldn't help but notice Elio's strange garb. He had never seen a karate Gi up close. Only in the movies. They looked like black pajamas. Thick ones. And he was wearing a thick stitched two and one-half inch wide black belt.

"The sweat suits fine. No need to rush out and buy a Gi just yet." Elio said noticing Greg's curiosity. "Let me show you how we line up to start a class." And he went on to show Greg the etiquette that all learn upon entering a dojo. Others started arriving, while Greg was getting the hang of all the new terms he would quickly get used to.

"Rich!" Greg hollered out as he saw his friend walking in wearing a white belt.

"Greg. Happy to see you. Are you sure your up for this already?" Rich asked concerned that Greg might not yet be able to withstand the rigors of Pastor Foster's workout.

"Well, I think so. I'll do my best." Greg.

"Good. Everyone in here does. And we still look terrible." Rich added in his usual self depreciating way.

"Good. Then I'll fit right in." Greg replied as he started to relax around all the new faces.

"Kiske!" Elio shouted at exactly Five PM. Everyone stood shoulder to shoulder at attention for about a

minute, when the door opened and Pastor Foster walked in.

"Sensei. Oreit!" At that point they all bowed in unison. "Count off!" Sensei Foster said sternly without shouting. And followed the count with "Odd numbers. Two paces forward. Move."

The class began with all students doing stretching exercise together. Some Greg had seen before in Gym class and others were completely foreign to him. In five minutes he was beginning to feel loose. And sore. And then.

"Down in Kiba. Move." Sensei

And Greg along with the rest of them assumed a stance like they were riding a horse. Except that there was no horse between their legs. Only space. Greg's legs began shaking like a leaf. He thought he was going to lose his balance. His knees felt like they would begin knocking together any second. He couldn't believe that such a simple looking exercise could be so difficult.

"Breathe. Everyone forgets to breathe. In through the nose. Out through the mouth." Sensei.

That's it. Greg thought. He was forgetting to breathe. He was holding his breath while maintaining his stance. Jeez. How dumb. And they all were doing it. At least all the beginners. And they held for five minutes. Until their legs were rubber.

"Down for pushups. Starting with Elio, count off 10 each." Sensei.

Greg sensed that was at least 120 pushups.

"Do your best to keep up. Even if you can only do 4 or 5 out of the ten." Sensei.

"Whew. A break." Greg thought. "Let's do as many as I can."

"Roll over for stomach exercises." Sensei.

After 20 minutes of what seemed like torturous hell for all but the fittest class members Sensei Foster divided the class.

"Elio. I want you to take Greg off by himself tonight and for the next few classes and work with him on the basics so we can get him up to speed and blend him in with the rest of the class." Sensei.

"Yes Sensei." Elio said as they bowed to each other.

And for the rest of the class Elio worked with Greg on the basic stances, movements, blocks, kicks and punches. Greg was not a slow learn. Not anymore. He still needed to build up his stamina but that would come in time with consistent practice.

"So how was your first class?" Teke asked as she and Greg went out looking for a new home for Greg.

"I'm sore in places I didn't know I could hurt." Greg.

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