



# Newsletter

June 1992

## Table of Contents

Title	Page
Fire!	2
From the President	4
Using the Term "Sensei"	5
The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan	6
Editors Note	6
Dojo News	7



## A Word From Shehan

It is hard to overstress the importance of early training. Our training, before yellow belt, marks us for life. One can overcome the flaws of early teaching; sometimes, maybe! Don't give up because the student without flaws, does not exist. My years of boxing marks my posture. I am constantly trying to overcome this.

The moral character of the sensei is more important than his physical form. It marks the students spirit. A bully will produce bullies. A teacher who is honest, courageous and caring will pass on those virtues on to his students. We cannot hide what we are, from our students, (for very long). "What I am speaks so loudly that you cannot always hear what I say." I could not accept the responsibility of being a sensei (part teacher, part parent) unless I declare myself a fellow student. What I am may be partly excused because of who I am becoming.

"As a twig is bent, so shall the tree stand." God grant us the courage to accept this great responsibility and this enormous opportunity.

*Shehan Foster*

## BirthdayParty for Shehan

Please join the celebration of shenhan's birthday on Saturday, July 11th, 1992. Once again we will meet at the Fireside Restaurant & Lounge, 2801 - 30 av, Kenosha, Wisconsin. 414-551-0600. Cocktails at 5:30, and dinner at 6:30 PM.

The menu will be as delicious as last year with Italian baked chicken and meatballs, choice of mashed potatoes & gravy or potato salad, choice of Mostaciolli or pasta salad, hot vegetable, tossed salad and dressing, kidney bean salad, green bean salad, cottage cheese, relish, fruit & cheese tray, bread, rolls & butter, and coffee. The cost is only \$12 which includes tax and tip.



## FIRE!

Werner Hoeflich

Karate is not a game. It is not a sport. It is not even a system of self-defense. Karate is half physical exercise and half spiritual. The karateka who has given the necessary years of exercise and meditation is a tranquil person. He is unafraid. He can be calm in a burning building.

*Masoyama*

This is a quote I once read in one of the many books I have on the martial arts. Little did I know I would be in a position one day to verify its literal meaning.

On the morning of December 20, 1991 at 4:00 AM I woke up from a sound sleep to find that my apartment building was on fire. The building is a turn-of-the-century, five-story New York City tenement. Although I didn't know it then, a fire had started at an electrical junction in the ceiling of a apartment in my line on the second floor. I live on the fifth floor. The wiring in the building was the antiquated cloth-wrapped kind and the fire had no trouble moving quickly through it, spiralling upward from floor to floor.

What actually woke me was the sound of people screaming, and the heavy, acrid smell of smoke. I consider myself very lucky, since my smoke alarm didn't go off.

My first thought, once I got the bedroom light on, was that it couldn't be my building: there was no smoke in my bedroom. I scrambled out of bed and tried to get dressed but couldn't because my mind was racing so fast. The simple act of putting on pants was impossible! Giving up on getting dressed, I ran to the front door and opened it, only to find a wall of smoke so thick I couldn't see the stairs a few feet away. It became painfully clear that it was my building that was on fire, and I wasn't going out the front door.

When I shut the door, I realized that my apartment was quickly filling

with smoke, and that my situation was getting desperate. I went back into my bedroom, which had the least amount of smoke in it, and tried getting dressed again. But I quickly aborted the effort when I realized that I was starting to breathe in the smoke which was now coming into the bedroom.

I got down on the floor, as close to the ground as possible, trying to get oxygen. I had always been told it would be there in a fire. What I found instead was more smoke. It was literally coming out of the floorboards. This was truly one of the most amazing moments of consciousness I had ever had (there would be more to come!) and I don't know how much time had elapsed by this point. It seemed like an eternity, but it was probably less than a minute. The smoke was rising and curling in on itself in front of my face. I didn't have my glasses on, but I could see that the smoke was composed of tiny particles: thousands and thousands of them rising, hovering, moving in slow motion. It's hard to imagine how physical, viscous and liquidlike the gases produced in a fire are, until you've experienced it. It's more of a floating grimy liquid than it is a gas. I didn't have to breathe much of it to realize that I would drown in it if I didn't get fresh air soon.

My bedroom window was the closest option I had, so I got off the floor and went over to it. In my bedroom window was a large square

fan, hanging in front of the top pane of glass and just above the bottom pane. Realizing I had to get the fan out of the way to open the window, I grabbed it by its sides and began to pull. It wouldn't budge. I started tugging at it violently and could feel myself on the verge of panic. The more I pulled, the more frantic I became. Right when I was at the point of completely losing control of myself, I realized I had to get a grip on myself and the situation. In retrospect, it was like slapping myself in the face. I stopped completely. I stopped fighting my situation. I stopped pulling at the fan and let my hands drop to my sides. I stopped reacting emotionally, and started dealing with what was happening -- right then and there. It was as if something "took over" that slowed everything down and allowed me to see clearly what was happening. I remember saying to myself, "Stop, Werner. Stop pulling on this thing. You've taken it off a dozen times. You know it can come off easily, if you take it off right."

It was then I remembered I had to lift the fan off the screws that held it, instead of pulling on it.

I compare what was happening to me up to this point to the mental training developed through kumite in karate. One of the first things you develop in kumite is the ability to use your adrenaline with a clear head, and not just react to the "fight or flight" instinct -- the natural response in threatening or confrontational situations. The adrenaline power of



"fight or flight" is there for a reason, but instead of letting yourself be controlled by it, you should use it to your advantage. When someone is trying to hit you, your body will react appropriately if your mind is clear and not clouded by your emotions (fear of getting hit, anger at the person, etc.). I feel that my karate training helped me in a very desperate situation to gain control of myself and increase my odds of surviving. It helped me see clearly what was happening at the moment and allowed me to assess what had to be done.

With the fan out of the way, I was able to get the bottom window up and breathe in some fresh air. With my head out the window I began to scream "Fire! Fire!" over and over as loud as I could. Looking down, I could see the flames and sparks from the fire coming around the back of the building. This was the first time I could actually see the fire. I could tell that the fire was burning on the third floor and I took account of how much smoke was coming out of the windows directly below me. Normally I am afraid of heights, but this fear never materialized. In contrast, I was mesmerized, almost fascinated by all the elements of the predicament I was in. It almost felt surreal I could hear people screaming and cursing (in such a way that I was sure lives were being lost), and looking out across the vacant lot behind my building, I could see spectators watching my building burn. They had congregated behind a chain link fence bordering the lot, and their faces were illuminated by the fire. I could also hear sirens, but no fire trucks had arrived yet.

I still had no clothes on, and there is no more vulnerable feeling than being naked and trapped on the top floor of a burning building on a cold winter night. I remembered I had a

bathrobe hanging from one of the supports of my loft bed, within arm's reach. I was able to grab it, without even looking, and finally got something around me. Still standing and breathing at the window, I quickly but clearly went through every option available to me to get out. Intuition had completely taken over, and I knew what I could and couldn't do. I thought about putting a wet cloth over my face and going out the front door again, but knew I wouldn't make it to the kitchen for water. There was too much smoke. The thought of using the fire escape was even more out of the question. It was in the living room, the farthest point from where I was standing, and I knew I would asphyxiate before I could get the fire gate open. My only other way out was through the window where I was standing. This meant trying to jump across the seven-foot-wide air shaft and into the building next door. To do this, I would have to jump with enough force to breakthrough the window directly across from mine. Of course, it was December and the window was closed. If I missed or failed to break through the window, I would fall five stories!

Just as I realized I would have to jump, I remembered my cat "Two". I had forgotten all about her until this point. She always came when I called, so I started yelling her name until finally, after what seemed like a long time, I could hear her cries outside the bedroom door. I kept yelling her name and finally, I could see her hazy outline through the smoke. Her meow sounded raw and desperate. I had to go back into the smoke to pick her up. She was covered with soot and in a panicked state. I could hardly hold on to her, and from the way she sounded, knew she had inhaled a lot of smoke.

Even though I knew I would try to jump, another dialog had started in my head. It was very clear and distinct -- separate from my thoughts about jumping. It was the realization that I was probably going to die. What is interesting about this is, I wasn't really upset about it. I clearly remember thinking, "Wow. I never thought it was going to happen like this." I even started laughing to myself because the predicament I was in seemed so ridiculous. There I was, caught in a fire I didn't even start, and it was going to kill me! I mean, it wasn't even my fault! It all seemed so silly. I realized then how easy it would be to just lie down and to sleep forever. It didn't seem terrible at all, just very easy. Lie down and go to sleep.

It was very clear that if I didn't leave soon, I was never going to leave. I walked back to the window. My cat was screaming and I knew she needed air. As I held her out the window to breathe, I had my last thoughts of being rescued miraculously. I thought that if Two and I could just stay at this window and breathe long enough, the fire department would be able to break in and get us out of there.

This thought was cut short when the wind that had been blowing changed direction. This caused the smoke that had been coming out of the windows below me and blowing away, to come directly up and into my window. Now there was an immense amount of smoke coming out of the fourth floor window below me and up into my room -- so much that I assumed the fire had reached the fourth floor. This meant it was only a matter of time. Soon, the fire would hit my floor. "I'm next," I thought. My cat, acting like a barometer of oxygen, became even more frenzied and began fighting to get loose from my grip.



I knew the time had come to leave. There would be no rescue by the fire department. Unfortunately, so much smoke was coming in the window, it was hard to see anything in front of me. Luckily, my next door neighbors had left a small lamp on in the window behind the drawn curtains. I could just make out the illumination and I used it as something to aim for.

I had arrived at the "do or die" point. There was no thought of success or failure. Neither entered my mind. My only thoughts were of what had to be done..

I knew I would have to get up onto the windowsill and jump across -- all in one motion. I couldn't climb out the window first, and then jump. I wouldn't have the courage. Everything had to be done in one move. I also knew I shouldn't jump until I could feel both feet solidly on the sill for traction, which made me thankful I had no shoes on.

I took one last look behind me. I could no longer see my bed which was only two feet from where I was. Smoke in back and smoke in front: It was time to jump. I clinched my cat as tightly as I could under my left arm and said to her "Looks like it's time to go," and then I knew enough to stop thinking. I don't know how I got on the sill. The last thing I remember was feeling my toes curling around the stone sill until I could feel them both gripping it equally and thinking, "Now!"

The next thing I knew, the tip of my head, my shoulders and torso smashed into and then through the window I had been trying to see just seconds before. I had hit the pane with enough force to carry my body through, up to my knees which landed hard on the sill. I landed partially in someone's empty bed. All the lights were on in the apartment. I was covered with glass and feeling somewhat embarrassed about

coming through their window. I yelled "Is anybody home?" It felt so bizarre to ask this question -- in this situation!

Unfortunately, my cat didn't make it. She broke free during the jump and fell the five stories. This would cause me a lot of anguish, during my recuperation in the hospital. I knew I had cut myself badly. My bathrobe was sticky with blood. But I was alive.

Realizing I was alone in the apartment, I got off the bed, went out the front door, and down to the street where I found a fireman (they had finally arrived) and told him that I'd hurt myself and needed help. An undercover police officer was also there, who took me by the arm and put me in the ambulance that had just arrived.

During my stay in the hospital there was time to reflect on what happened and what I had done. Images and thoughts were etched in my memory, and what kept coming back to me was how, when I was standing at my bedroom window getting ready to jump, I knew exactly what to do. It was as if my whole life had been in preparation for that moment. Nine years of gymnastics, ten years of karate and three years of zazen all came together in one concentrated effort to save my life. And it worked. I saw that karate works, really works, beyond my wildest dreams. This is why we practice, over and over through the years. As Jane Asher said in her article, Karate and Life,

"One does not have to do hand to hand combat to use karate. Once understood, it becomes part of everyday living and when necessary, is there to use to pull you through a mental or physical crises."

THE END



## From the President

Richard K. Bruno

The first week of July my family and I will be leaving Kenosha for Libertyville, Illinois. It is with mixed emotions that I leave the hometown I grew up, but we are also looking forward to new ventures and perhaps opportunities of expanding our association. I will miss the Tuesday workouts with Sensei Foster and will miss working out regularly with friends at the headquarters dojo. Our membership has increased in our dojo and our beginners class boasts over twenty students. Our instructors - Larry Davis, Dave Kurtz, Al Ferguson, and Tom Plunkett are doing an outstanding job.

We have also increased our association membership this year and have had many Kyu and Dan promotion. Our cable show on T.V. has had many members of our different schools demonstrate kata, kumite, wazas, self-defense, and tameshiwari techniques. There are still openings for this summer according to Candance Brill. Candance has done an excellent job directing this show along with Joe Ferraro. Both of them have put much effort and hard work into this production. Our members have received much encouragement from the viewers of Kenosha and the response was very positive.

In closing I would like to thank all our members for the support you have given us this year to make the association strong and meaningful. Please keep up the excellent teaching in your classes and continue to write for our newsletters.

We hope to see you at our mid-summer dinner to celebrate O'Sensei's birthday. Bring a smile and enjoy the fun. All families and friends are invited.





## Using the Term "Sensei"

Lynn Philyaw

In the martial arts, more than in most activities or organizations, members are asked to observe a formalized set of conventions both of behavior and address. We bow at certain times and to certain people; we behave differently within the dojo, especially during formal work-outs, than at a social gathering; we exercise a greater degree of prudent self-restraint and show, perhaps, more obvious respect toward others than under more casual circumstances. When one first begins as a student, there usually follows a period of adjustment to the new and strange procedures and rituals. Some accept it readily and enthusiastically, some merely accept because they are told to, and some adjust themselves outwardly but never quite catch the spirit of it; these latter ones, I think, may never get beyond learning technique alone. Seldom, however, do the majority of students fully understand the reasons behind such ritual, though most abide by protocol admirably.

One reason for formality in the dojo is the fact that we are engaged in an art that is potentially lethal, whose ostensible intent is martial, which implies elements of threat, competition and conflict. In order to neutralize or hold in check some of these more destructive elements, we must exaggerate their opposite -- e.g., harmony, deference, respect, humility. We must, in short, create

and maintain an ongoing context of mutual trust if we are to engage safely in an activity that rides so dangerously a borderline. (Perhaps this is why those who practice only tournament karate can allow their unbridled egos so much latitude; it's only another sport, after all.)

Observing formalities -- particularly those regarding forms of self-restraint or humility -- also benefit the student because they teach the discipline needed for effective martial arts training. Leaving the ego at the door helps get one out of their thinking mind, for, when one is busy "thinking about," verbalizing, questioning or considering the "self," one is not doing, not in the moment. But so much for general ritual.

Because of questions brought to me over the years, either stated or implied, and because of the encouragement of other instructors, I am attempting here to focus on one of these formalities . . . addressing one's karate instructor as "sensei."

One of the first desires one has upon joining a group is to become comfortably familiar with their fellows. But, despite the fact that close relationships are often formed, this attempt to achieve such casual familiarity goes only so far in the karate class, where a deferential respect is paid those of higher rank, especially the sensei. Why, as is often done even outside the dojo,

address another person by a title, especially in this supposedly egalitarian republic of ours? Why raise one person, all their frailties intact, above others? For both the student and the instructor, I think, there are profound benefits, without which the heart of what we know as the art would be lost or jeopardized.


First, by calling the instructor "sensei," the karateka establishes and reinforces his/her position as "student" -- one whose primary function is to learn. In the ordinary world outside the dojo, we are so busy trying to compete and prove ourselves "right" that it is difficult to open ourselves to the possibility of real learning; thus, we remain "closed" systems, too threatened to take a new look at ourselves, and, without this, the possibility of growth in karate and in our lives is slim if not impossible. After twenty-five years of teaching both karate and high school English, I have encountered many very "bright students" who were so busy proving their own point (or desperately trying to cover their insecurity) that they blinded themselves to something greater than their own fear. (This, by the way, is the real danger in basing one's life on competition with others; it is based on the fear of losing.) We all know beginning students and even more "advanced" ones who, in a social situation, when surrounded



by people of much higher rank and greater knowledge and wisdom, wasted their opportunity to learn by speaking too much and listening too little. To be a good student in karate -- as in many other areas -- is to be receptive, open rather than closed. Moreover, once we sincerely address another as "sensei," we open up areas of possibility far beyond the limits of our narrower "selves," thereby expanding our real potential. In short, having called forth the best "student" in ourselves, we are really ready to learn.

Having taught English for so many years has given me a profound respect for the effect of language. In large part, we create much of our own world (external as well as internal); it tends to answer to our conceptions, and we conceive by "language." How we treat someone or what we call them often affects what they are apt to become for us. In calling someone "sensei," we not only pay respect to them but, however unintentionally, call forth the best in them as an instructor and as a person. If they fully accept that role, they will strive to become the best role model, arbiter of disputes, leader, parent/counselor, karateka, channel for knowledge, etc., that they can be; they will tend to rise above their own self-interest, beyond their "selves" toward something greater, something that will benefit their students more than just another "friend" or acquaintance could. To call them by their first name, e.g., in


or out of the dojo, is to invite them to fill a lesser role for you and for themselves. Get into the habit of it and you will cease to have a "sensei."

We form many types of relationship during the course of our lives -- parents, lovers, friends, business associates, casual acquaintances, etc. -- but few are more important than those developed with those we choose to learn from. Decades ago, many "progressive" parents thought it better to be a "friend" to their children rather than an authority figure, an acknowledgement, also, that they were also mere human beings like themselves. There is something to be said on behalf of this decision; however, too often the valuable function of "parent" was lost in the process. Because most of us have only one sensei, we would do well to preserve and maintain that unique relationship. Also, consider that one becomes honorable to the degree that he honors others; this is the great paradox of humility. To ask whether or not the person so honored really deserves such authority and position is to miss the point. The use of the term "sensei," in its truest sense, recalls to both (the user and the one so designated) the path that we are all traveling, toward becoming our higher selves. 

## From: *Guide To Meditation* By Ram Dass

Submitted by Jane LaFlash

A young lad was sent to school. He began his lessons with the other children, and the first lesson the teacher set him was the straight line, the figure "one". But whereas the others went on progressing, this child continued writing the same figure. After two or three days the teacher came up to him and said, "have you finished your lesson?" He said "No, I'm still writing 'one.' " He went on doing the same thing, and when at the end of the week the teacher asked him again he said, "I have not yet finished it." The teacher thought he was an idiot and should be sent away, as he could not or did not want to learn. At home the child continued with the same exercise and the parents also became tired and disgusted. He simply said, "I have not yet learned it, I am learning it. When I have finished I shall take the other lessons." The parents said, "The other children are going on further, school has given you up, and you do not show any progress; we are tired of you." And the lad thought with sad heart that as he had displeased his parents too he had better leave home. So he went into the wilderness and lived on fruits and nuts. After a long time he returned to his old school. And when he saw the teacher he said to him, "I think I have learned it. See if I have. Shall I write on this wall?" And when he made his sign the wall split in two.

*The Sufi Message of*  
Hazrat Inayat Khan 

## Editors Note:

Once again I am asking for your help in writing articles to be included in the newsletter. We as an organization need your input for our continued growth. I would also like to thank all the people who help me copy and distribute each newsletter to their respective clubs. Any questions, comments, suggestions, etc please direct to - Al Gomez,

