



## *Regional Training at My Home Dojo*

*By Geno Cardosi*



*Image courtesy of Mid-America ISKF*

On September 14th my home dojo, Ohio Valley Karate, hosted its annual regional training at the Ascension and Holy Trinity Church in Wyoming, Ohio. The training was extremely informative and invigorating, but more importantly it was fun! The training program, led by Sensei Vaughan, was designed to teach us techniques and skills to improve our kata which we would be tested on later in the day. I learn a little something extra to add to my own practice each time I attend these clinics. The training is always very fast paced and a little different than a regular weekly class. Sensei Vaughan gives examples of perfected form and is inspirational in his years of practice to me and other karate students. After working on these skills, we were able to test. Overall the day of training and testing was a huge success and will always be very special to me as I was able to progress from a purple belt to a brown belt on my path to achieving a black belt.

The culmination of the day was testing in front of a panel of Black belts including Sensei Vaughan and Sensei Schrage. In my brown belt opinion, everyone did a great job at testing, showing patience, focus, and determination to achieve their goals.

As a reward for a successful day we had an amazing cookout another OVKC student's home. Mr. Dana Irvine hosted the cookout. We all had great food and camaraderie. We talked about the training, testing, and even politics. It was all under a beautiful full moon which cast the whole area in a tranquil pale golden light. We sat around a wonderful roaring fire enjoying delicious hamburgers and brownies for dessert. Even my walk home down the perilous busy main road couldn't spoil the tremendous day I had.

### **In This Issue...**

- Load and Explode - Page 2
- Golf Outing - Page 4
- Total Body Effort - Page 5
- Summer Camp - Page 6
- Coach's Note - Page 8
- Exam Results - Page 9
- Community Outreach - Page 10

## Load and Explode: Creating Explosive Movement

By James Oberschlake

Karate students may know the move, but often they are not doing the movement correctly. For instance, they may be able to perform an *oi-zuki*. The stance, hip position, posture, and alignment might be correct, but the movement (how they got there) might not be. Many students step and fall into their stance, then generate speed and power primarily with the upper body at the very end of the technique. Such movement fails to fully employ the dynamic principles used to generate the whole-body explosive movement known as *kime*. What follows are ideas for creating such explosive movement with a process I call, Load and Explode.

*Makiwara* is the traditional and still best method for developing *kime*. Hitting something trains the nervous system to completely contract the body muscles in an instant. But *kime* is more than the dramatic muscle contraction at the end of the technique. *Kime* should also employ an explosive starting motion. To do this, the body is “loaded” with latent energy, which when suddenly released, launches the technique toward the target at maximum speed.

Imagine two strong men holding a rope. When they are relaxed, there is no movement. If the men engage in a tug of war each pulling with a force of exactly 300 pounds, there is no movement, but there is latent energy. If one man begins to pull with a force of 301 pounds, there would be slow movement. However, if one man suddenly relaxes and releases his grip, there will be explosive movement in the direction opposite he was pulling. This analogy illustrates how loading and releasing latent energy can be used to create an explosive starting motion.

Loading the body is something that primarily occurs in the muscles. It is accomplished with the body’s natural reaction to gravity, commands from the nervous system, and as a response to activities of the mind such as awareness, intent, concentration, and imagination. The mind controls the body in accordance with nature.

Muscles are elastic; they can either contract or relax. In the body, muscles are arranged in

corresponding opposites that make movement possible. For instance, when biceps contract and triceps relax, the arm bends at the elbow joint. When biceps relax and triceps contract, the arm straightens. Contracting both pair at any point along its range of motion makes the arm strong, stable, and resistant to outside force. Relaxing both makes the arm compliant to outside force.

These explanations might be helpful, but “load and explode” is best learned by feeling the sensations of loading parts of the body with a ready tension that can be used to generate a quick, explosive starting motion. The sensation experienced in the muscles feels like a stretched rubber band or coiled spring. Just before executing a draw hand, feel the muscles stretch with a reaching tension that feels like a stretched rubber band. Before throwing a punch, squeeze the arm to the side of the body so that it feels like a compressed, coiled spring. Sudden relaxing of the appropriate muscles releases the latent energy and propels the technique toward the target at maximum speed.

Load and explode can be employed in the whole body as well. The body is symmetrical; it has a right side and left side. Adductor muscles contract and squeeze the sides of the body toward its centerline. Abductor muscles expand the body away from the centerline. For balance, stability, and quick, powerful movement, the muscles on both sides of the body must work evenly and harmoniously.

It is the quick squeezing motion that seems underdeveloped in most karateka. Emphasize this motion in your training. For instance, when practicing stepping in *kokutsu dachi shuto-uke*, see how quickly you can squeeze the knees and elbows together. Then do not hold them together because that would stop the momentum of the technique. The elbows and knees touch and brush. Eventually the technique from start to

*Continued on Page 3*

## Load and Explode: Creating Explosive Movement

*Continued from Page 2*

finish becomes continuous and accelerating and culminates with devastating impact.

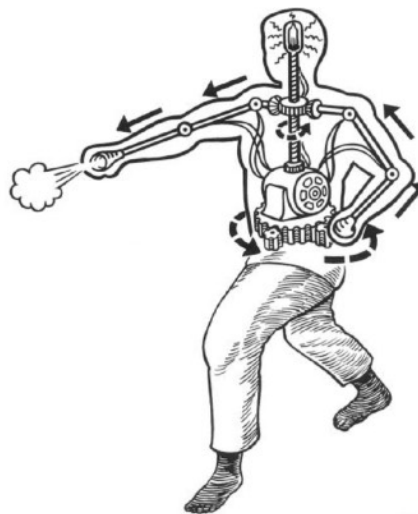
Another way to load the body is to use the legs. While maintaining good posture, sink by bending the joints of the legs: ankles, knees, and hips. The legs are now loaded, ready to push into the ground and propel the technique toward the target. The quicker and harder you push into the ground; the more explosive will be your starting motion.

Proper breathing can be used to load and explode. Proper breathing is an advanced topic, and I cannot adequately explain it in one paragraph. However, this much I will say: Your breathing should mimic your movement. When you are moving, you should be breathing; either inhaling or exhaling. As your movement accelerates, so should your breath. At impact the body muscles contract strongly, and the breath naturally stops. In this way proper breathing is used to generate speed and power.

Breathing can also be used to create a ready tension and load the body with latent energy. Here I recount instructions given from Sensei Greer Golden: Inhale fully. Exhale so that the lungs are about half inflated. Then press the remaining “air” into the lower abdomen. It may feel like you are pressing your belly into your belt. Inhale and exhale off the top, but always keep some residual air pressure in reserve. The lower abdomen always retains some firmness. Quick, explosive exhaling seems natural. Developing quick, explosive inhaling requires more practice. Quick inhaling and quick exhaling help create an explosive starting motion. One of the best ways to learn proper breathing is to *kiai* at the beginning rather than the end of your technique. Make the *kiai* throw the technique. The explosive *kiai* creates the explosive starting motion.

Finally, use your mind. Karate is more than an exercise. It is a martial art. Your body is a survival machine. The more you can mentally create a life and death combat experience, the more your body will naturally react to save itself. Do not create hate. Create the courage to face hatred, violence, and all manner of evil.

Train to increase muscle strength and flexibility. *Makiwara*, planks, plyometrics, practicing “5-pointed star” yoga posture, and using elastic bands – these are some ways to improve your body condition. Practice correct movement to reprogram the nervous system and muscle memory. Use your mind. Use your breathing. Sink and use your legs. Emphasize the quick squeezing motion when expanding and contracting. Create appropriate tension in the ready positions. Learn to load so your movement explodes from start to finish.



*Image courtesy of Best Karate Volume 2*

# 2019 Mid-America ISKF Golf Outing

*By Laura Graham*

For the past fifteen years Mid-America has held an annual Golf Outing Fundraiser. This year's fundraiser was like many in the past. The weather was perfect. We had 20 golf teams, over 40 hole sponsors, and many cash donations. As in the past, we had a regional training and testing on Friday night, followed by dinner at LaRosa's, one of our biggest sponsors. Saturday morning before the outing there was a team training. This is one of my favorites of all the team trainings. Throughout the day many karate volunteers worked hard to make our outing a great success.

I strongly encourage everyone in the region to try in some way to participate next year. We are fortunate that Mid-America is gifted with so many people who are willing to give their time and effort to support karate and the region in such a big way. This event has helped many Mid-America karateka participate in regional and national events. I am

especially thankful to Mid-America and all the businesses and people who sponsored our outings throughout the years. Last year at the clinic with *Shihan Okazaki, I*, along with three others, was awarded a \$250.00 Mid-America Karate Scholarship. This scholarship came from money raised at our golf outing. This Scholarship has helped me attend Spring Camp, Summer Camp, Fall Camp, and other trainings throughout 2019. Knowing that I have so much support from my karate family has inspired me to work harder towards my goals in karate. Like many of you, karate is a huge part of my life. It has made me a better person, and the golf outing is a way for us to pay it forward to many others. Master Funakoshi states in his biography, "One of the most striking features of karate is that it may be engaged in by anybody, young or old, strong or weak, male or female." What a great gift we have been given. The annual golf outing helps us give our gift of karate to many others.



*Images courtesy of Len Gordon and Jeff Weber*

## A Total Body Effort? Put the Ashi Yubi to Work!

By Larry Rothenberg

The Alaskan cruise ship's fitness center director was giving a lecture on "Dealing with hip and knee pain" (a very compelling subject for me these days). My wife said, "I'll bet you \$5 he's selling something." I shook her hand on the wager, and she left to attend another activity.

He started with an explanation about how hip and knee pain actually result from foot issues. Each attendee was asked to walk on a mat that was plugged into a computer screen. The screen projected the soles of the person's feet, like wet footprints at a swimming pool, with color coding showing the amount of pressure exerted by each area of the foot. Some projected more of the sole showing on the screen due to flat feet. Others projected almost no toes because their toes exerted almost no pressure when they walked. After their walk, each person clasped their fingers behind their rear end. He pushed down on their clasped hands, causing each of them to lose their balance and take a step back.

I was the last one called. I said to myself with determination, "I'm a karateka. I'm not going to lose my balance." However, when he pushed down, despite my attempt to tense my arms and shoulders against the pressure, I also had to take that step backwards. Then he put a pair of orthotic inserts on the floor and had each person stand on them. The orthotics had slightly elevated heels, and in addition to a nice arch, they had a ridge at the base of the toes. Magically, when he pushed down on our clasped hands, we all were able to stay in place. So, tensing the arms and shoulders against his pressure was not the solution. It was the subtle shift forward in our center of gravity, caused by the orthotics. How foolish to think I could maintain my balance with mere determination, and with no thought about center of gravity or technique. Later that day, I stood in place, and pressed down with my toes. I was intrigued by the subtle forward adjustment it caused in the center of gravity. Back home in the dojo, I studied and experimented with the use of the toes (*ashi yubi*) during techniques. I recalled Sensei Golden telling us when starting a step-in attack in *zenkutsu dachi*; we should imagine we are wearing cleats, and in *kokutsu dachi* to press down with the big toe of each foot. I studied this during the next few trainings. I found that using the toes is as important a part of a technique as using the other body parts. This

applies throughout the technique -- at the start, during the transition/acceleration, and focusing at impact. As always, I discovered that enhancing the use of one body part automatically and inevitably improves other body parts' involvement. For example, sharper hip action brings about a stronger, more complete draw hand, and vice versa. Better use of breathing brings about a better stance, and vice versa. More draw hand makes for a better stroke with the punching hand. Improved upper body features cause better lower body, and vice versa. Better posture makes for better *seika tanden* (low stomach) connection. And of course, better use of the *seika tandan* improves everything.

I found that more involvement of the toes directly creates more explosive starting speed, and enhanced acceleration, balance, stability at impact, etc. To my surprise, I also found that more involvement of the toes also improved seemingly unrelated body parts, like the draw hand. What a bonus!

We can even improve our bowing, by using of our toes. During our techniques, just as we concentrate on using and improving our use of stance, hips, *seika tanden*, draw hand, breathing, posture, etc., we should add the use of the toes to the equation. Sensei Golden explained "Every karate move is a total body effort." We should read it as "Every karate move is a TOTAL body effort." Even our little toe should strive to excel in executing its assigned task.

Hold the back of a chair and stand on your tiptoes almost like a ballet dancer on pointe shoes. I say almost because pointe shoes are structurally reinforced to distribute the weight load throughout the foot.



Continued on Page 6

## A Total Body Effort? Put the Ashi Yubi to Work!

*Continued from Page 5*

But get the balls of your foot off the floor so you are standing on your toes alone.



If you can hold this position for several seconds, you will notice how strong your karate training has made your toes without your realizing it has done so. Think how much stronger and more capable you can make your toes by exerting a little extra pressure at all times. Then your toes can become even an even more impressive force in creating explosive starts, increased acceleration, and stability at impact.

In his book, *Perfection of Character: Guiding Principles for the Martial Arts & Everyday Life*, Master Teriyuki Okazaki comments on Master Funakoshi's Dojo Kun and Niju Kun. In the eighth Niju Kun

principle, he says we should not think that what we learn in the dojo does not also apply outside the dojo. Being conscious of the use of the toes should not be limited to the dojo either. When simply standing, we can use our toes to make that subtle forward adjustment in our center of gravity.

If we involve our toes more when walking, we can feel increased stability and efficiency, resulting in a more confident walk. If a passing car sends a splash from a puddle our way, or if we are crossing the street and realize we are about to be hit by a car, we will want to react instantly to avoid it. Will our toes (and other body parts like the *seika tanden*) be engaged to be able to respond dynamically to make that change of direction instantly? This can save you money on your dry cleaning bill, or even save your life.

People who experience extreme frostbite lose the use of their toes, or even have them amputated. If we, similarly, were unable to benefit from our toes, how staggering would our loss of capabilities be? Let's be enthusiastic about the gift one of our great asset, our toes.

Incidentally, you can buy those orthotic inserts from the cruise ship's fitness center director for \$110. I paid my wife the \$5 bet.

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## ISKF Mid-America Summer Camp

*By Cameron A. Lasley*

Imagine feeling like a beginner again. Sub-par reverse punches and kicks. A draw-hand that seems a little looser than you remember. Hip movement that under-rotates with each technique, and the realization that you have lost so much of your muscle memory, to name a few quirks. After a relatively sporadic four year hiatus, my return to the dojo was both uplifting and inspiring. There is no better way to shake off the rust of time than to spend three days with other likeminded individuals. Individuals who seek perfection in their character. Those who embody faithfulness. Those who choose to endure and endeavor. Those who respect others and refrain from violent behavior, and who remain calm within and throughout.

The camaraderie between everyone is genuine and welcoming. A wonderfully diverse group of people from multiple states, backgrounds, cultures, and ethnicities. I speak of the ISKF Mid-America Summer Camp held in Fenton, Michigan at the YMCA Camp Copneconic.

Camp trainings were over a three day period from Friday evening to Sunday morning. Each training began with a robust warm-up and stretching routine. Wood floors undulated and stone fireplaces adorned with animal antlers helped to create the woodland lodge atmosphere.

*Continued on Page 7*

## ISKF Mid-America Summer Camp

*Continued from Page 6*



*Image courtesy of Mid-America ISKF*

All these things make you feel at home in a lodge including the fresh camp air.

The first training was held on a Friday evening lead by Sensei Martin Vaughan. I admire him and hold him in the highest esteem. It is always a pleasure to experience and learn from his vast knowledge. One of the major concepts of body movement we covered during camp was the emphasis on hip movement. The constant reiteration of the idea that the hip pivots, not rotates, was performed in conjunction with front stance (*zenkutsu dachi*). For example, the forward hip joint in *zenkutsu dachi* is the hinge on which the pelvis will shut, like closing a door. Combine that with the driving force of the back leg and now it is akin to slamming the door shut. When we started this hip movement exercise, our hands were placed on our hips with shoulders squared. The front leg knee of *zenkutsu dachi* must be stable as opposed to moving forward or backward, left or right when the hip pivots. As the hip pivots back, the rear leg moves naturally to accommodate the hip transition. The relaxed stable tension in the rear leg can then be used to generate our driving force from the ground into the hip. With the front leg rooted to the ground the pelvis pivots forward on the front hip joint. This allows for a greater transfer of energy from the ground into the technique. It also allows *zenkutsu dachi* to maintain its stability when performing other techniques. The importance of stability in the front leg, pivoting the hip versus rotating, and expansion and contraction were three key points of improvement I gained from this exercise.

My experience coming back was not without injury. Your joints lose range of motion when on hiatus for so long and your muscles become tighter from a lack of routine stretches. At the end of the training weekend it turned out that my adductor muscles were overworked. Both sides sustained a muscle pull. The loss of the ability to stretch the adductors without an intense pain hurt my morale. The attempt to complete side snap kicks was inhibited by my perception that I would further hinder the rehabilitation process and incur more pain. However, guidance and confidence from my karateka family kept me in high spirits.

Although, the healing process is not yet complete, I will endeavor to be faithful to myself to push forward from this learning experience. The moral of the story is not to go 200% as if you have been consistently training for a long period of time. It takes time to retrain, relearn, and reawaken the skills and techniques locked away in my memory.

Overall, the turn-out for the 2019 Summer Camp was overwhelmingly positive. Numerous people showed up to learn and train rigorously together through humid and stormy conditions. The food was great and filling after each training. The people and hosts of Camp Copneconic were phenomenal. I couldn't have asked for a better event to jumpstart the karate routines again than the 2019 Summer Camp.

Hope to see everybody there again next year!

## A Note from the Coach

*By Carol Glenn*

If you are interested in the competition component of Karate and want to be a part of the Team representing Mid-America at the National Tournament, you will be making a commitment to “step-up” your training. You should try to attend as many Regional Training events as you can and put in extra time conditioning your body in preparation for competition.

Plan to participate in Mid-America’s Regional Tournament in May; it’s a chance to test your skills in preparation for the National Tournament. Another important event to attend is Summer Camp in Michigan. This camp offers the opportunity for team members, especially Kata Teams, to spend extra time training together. The annual Mid-America Golf Outing is our Region’s major fundraiser and a portion of the proceeds benefit the competitors and judges attending the National Tournament. In order to receive a share of the profits, you must support or help out at the Golf Outing.

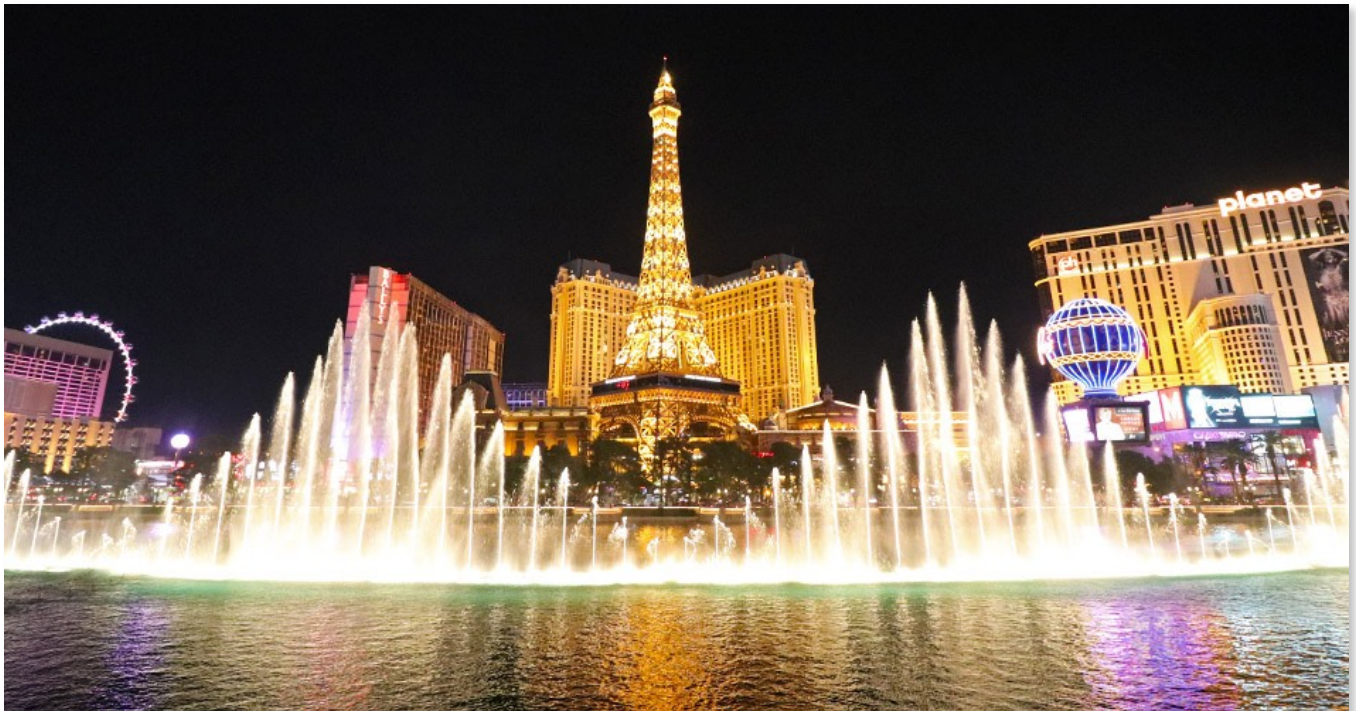
Most of our Regional Events will include an additional Team Training for anyone interested in

competing. In the second half of the year we will schedule “stand-alone” Team Trainings specifically for the Mid-America Team members attending the National Tournament. All of these Team Trainings will focus on preparation for competition.

While competition is not the focus of our Karate training, it is another way to challenge yourself, improve your Karate, meet some new people, and have fun doing it.

This year is the 41st Annual ISKF/US National Tournament, and it is being held in Las Vegas, Nevada, November 15-17. We have a Team of 18 competitors and 6 Judges representing Mid-America this year. In addition to all our individual competitors, we have three Kata Teams – Youth, Senior, and Adult. Watch for the results to be published on the Region’s Facebook page and in the next Mid-America newsletter.

If you are interested in competing in the future, please contact me.



*Image courtesy of [roadunraveled.com](http://roadunraveled.com)*



## Dan Exam Results



*Image courtesy of [breakingmuscle.com](http://breakingmuscle.com)*

**Congratulations to the Following Students Who Achieved Dan Promotions at the 2019 Mid-America ISKF Summer Camp**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Club Affiliation</b>	<b>Rank Achieved</b>
Alexander Geoppinger	Ohio Valley Karate	Shodan
Sonia Erfani	Shotokan Karate of Anderson	Nidan

# Mid-America Karate Community Outreach Program

We give back to the communities in which we operate by making community outreach a part of our Regional trainings. For our upcoming clinic on December 7, 2019 with Okazaki Shihan, we will be reaching out through our host at Milton-Union schools.

Please bring a hat, a coat, mittens, non-perishable food items, cash, or a toy with you to training in December. All donated items will be gifted through Milton-Union Schools to families in and around West Milton. We are targeting a real need in this community and your contributions will make a great difference in the lives of many local children and families during this Holiday season. We are also here to support your local club with outreach programs or ideas. Please help us target specific needs in your local community such as coats, school supplies, donated meals, etc.

Contact Michelle Randall at [marandal@svsu.edu](mailto:marandal@svsu.edu) Thank you for your support!





**Chief Instructor, ISKF Mid-America Region**

Sensei Martin Vaughan trained under Sensei Golden and Master Okazaki for over 40 years and is our Regional Director. He is also President of the ISKF.



**President and Assistant Instructor, ISKF Mid-America Region**

Sensei James Oberschlake trained under Sensei Golden and Master Okazaki starting in 1974. He is also the Chief Instructor of the Brown County Shotokan Karate Club.

**Calendar**

**October 12th-13th - Mid-America Fall Camp**

Hosted by Creekside Karate Club in Youngstown, OH

**November 15th-17th - ISKF US National Tournament**

The Orleans Hotel, Las Vegas, NV

**December 7th - Regional Training and Dan Exam**

Hosted by Dayton Shotokan Karate Club in West Milton, OH

**Contributors**

**GENO CARDOSI**

Geno, 3B, is a youth student at the Ohio Valley Karate Club located in Cincinnati, OH.

**LAURA GRAHAM**

Ms. Graham, 4th *dan*, is a senior student and instructor at the Brown County Shotokan Karate club located in Hamersville, OH.

**LARRY ROTHENBERG**

Mr. Rothenberg, 4th *dan*, is the chief instructor at the Cleveland Shotokan Karate Club in Beechwood, OH.

**CAMERON A. LASLEY**

Mr. Lasley, 1st *dan*, is a student at the Swartz Creek Karate Club in Swartz Creek, MI.

**CAROL GLENN**

Ms. Glenn, 6th *dan*, is chief instructor at the Swartz Creek Karate Club in Swartz Creek, MI.

**Editor**

**MARTY SCHRAGER**

Mr. Schrage, 5th *dan*, is the Chief Instructor of the Ohio Valley Karate Club in Cincinnati, OH.

**Associate Editor**

**MICHELLE RANDALL**

Ms. Randall, 2nd *dan*, is a senior student at the Indiana ISKF club in Indianapolis, IN.