



Kata In the Parking Lot

By Wendy McVicker

For many years, Athens Karate Club members have been meeting once a week, outside of regular classes, to run kata: week after week, starting with Heian Shodan and going as far as we could, to the very edges of our kata knowledge, and sometimes beyond. This regular practice had become, over the years, if not the backbone of our training, at the very least a sturdy foundation for us.

Then the pandemic and ensuing lockdown hit. No more classes. We had no access to the building where we usually trained. We quickly discovered (thanks to the more media-savvy among us) on-line training options, but we missed being together, supporting and encouraging each other, keeping our communication lines going. Training in our cramped home spaces, with phones ringing and pets strolling through, wasn't enough. Although we are all truly grateful to those who offered online classes, it was still kind of lonely.

Then we realized that we could meet on a Sunday in a far corner of the library parking lot and do our kata, with plenty of social distancing and no walls to force us into double-stepping, or pets to trip over. Sure, the surface of the lot was rough — we had to be aware of cracks and gravel, fallen leaves and the occasional wandering worm — and sloped ever so gently, so that sometimes we listed a bit in certain stances, or found ourselves on the verge of tumbling downhill — but we were so glad to be together, training, that even the rare bicyclist zooming past to stare, or gust of wind, or squirrels chattering in the branches overhead, only added to the sense that we were carrying on, as we have been trained to do. Be faithful, Endeavor: we could do this! We dressed for the weather; only pouring rain or ice and snow would keep us from that parking lot. We shared our jumbled feelings and thoughts about the extraordinary times we were living through — and we trained.



*The Athens Karate Club Parking Lot Kata Gang
Image courtesy of Wendy McVicker*

We knew we would be grateful to get back into a climate-controlled space where we could train on a level wooden floor in bare feet, where gusts of wind wouldn't strike at the most inopportune moments (up on one leg in Gankaku, anyone?) — and we are. But deep inside, part of me still misses the intrepid feeling of riding my bike to the library and meeting my fellow survivors of the wreck for the very grounding practice of kata, starting with Heian Shodan and going as far as we could.

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The Dojo Kun's First Principle: Seek Perfection of Character

By *Larry Rothenberg*

In his Best Karate book series, Master Nakyama quoted his sensei, Master Funakoshi, as saying, "The ultimate aim of karate is not in winning, but in perfection of the character of its participants."

Master Funakoshi listed Seek Perfection of Character as the first precept of the *dojo kun* (principles of the dojo), perhaps because the *dojo kun*'s other precepts can be viewed as subcategories or means to the end of Perfection of Character.

Seek Perfection of Character is an indisputable path to success in karate and life. Volumes can be written to analyze those four simple words. Let's scratch the surface.

Seek means to try to find or discover by searching or questioning. Hence, seek implies expending effort to pursue an objective.

Character means eliminating negative moral and ethical traits like envy, anger, greed, and craving personal honor; and to strive to acquire positive traits like humility, gratitude, honesty, kindness, self-discipline, and respect. Our character is measured primarily by our behavior in relation to other people. How should we seek perfection of character? We seek by doing.

Do we put energy into giving all our training partners and new students our friendship and support, celebrating their successes in karate and their lives, and offering encouragement during difficulties?

Do we have the intention to help their learning by sincerely attacking them during sparring drills?

Do we try to enhance our attitude and intensify our positive energy, to help boost their spirit during training?

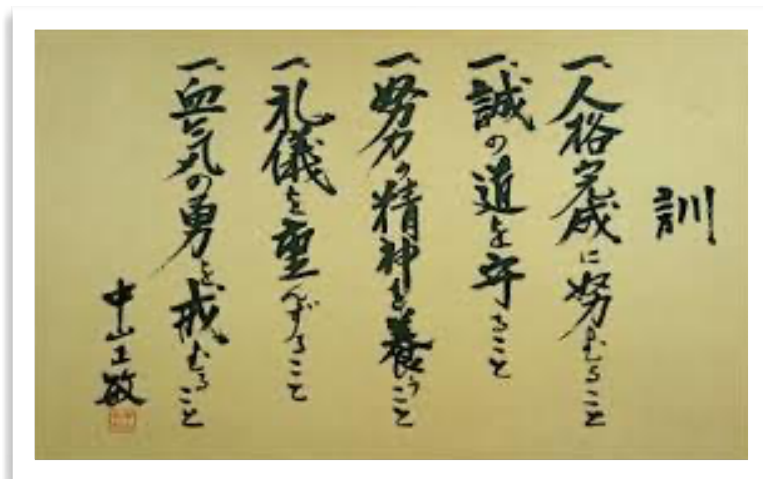
Are we serving others honorably in all respects, without fail?

Even if we strive earnestly over a lifetime, we will never lack opportunity to improve our character. Perfection of Character is a non-attainable goal for all but the holiest people, yet we must constantly strive for perfection.

To seek unceasingly and with resolute purpose, is the objective. The reward is not in attaining perfection, but rather according to the effort.

How thankful we should be to Master Funakoshi for enriching his students, our Senseis' Senseis, with his profound *dojo kun*!

Together, may we seek to attain the *dojo kun*'s principles and transmit them to our successors.



Dojo Kun calligraphy by Nakayama Shiban

Image courtesy of <https://www.kuroobiya.com>

Thank you for the 2021 Mid-America Scholarship

A Note from Bev Pugh

Every year, Mid-America ISKF gives out scholarships to students for writing an essay and who exhibit strong character and strong principles. In 2021, Bev Pugh was proudly named one of several winners. Below is a note of appreciation.

“The principle of the dojo kun that means the most to me is Endeavor. I think of this principle as Persevere – to try hard and to keep trying.” -- From my Scholarship essay, December 2020

This has been a year of perseverance. Between Covid-19 and my knee, there have been many times this year when it would have been too easy to walk away from my training. Remembering the *dojo kun* helped me to continue with my training – sometimes having to be creative in how. Zoom trainings forced me to push myself as I learned from those on my computer screen. Knee problems forced me to adapt to allow me to continue training as I work to restore more movement. Through it all, perseverance has been my word for the year. I would like to thank the Mid-America Region for the generous scholarship I received in December 2020. This money allowed me to participate in eight different regional events throughout 2021. Many of these were Zoom trainings which each offered an opportunity to train with others from outside my dojo. I was also able to participate in the in-person training led by Shihan Okazaki in December. Each of these regional events allowed me to learn from experienced karate-ka and to train with others from outside my dojo. I always bring home some new “nugget” when I attend a regional training. It might be a new drill, a new way of explaining something or a renewed excitement for training.

Thank you again to Mid-America for this scholarship.

-Bev Pugh



Bev (center) training at Spring Camp in 2017 with Sensei David Jones and members of Mid-America ISKF

Image courtesy of Mid-America ISKF

Own Your Karate

By Jerry Baker

My last submission to this newsletter was in December, 2019. We had just had an amazing regional training given by Okazaki Shihan. We were all fired up to carry our karate into the new year, and the holidays were just around the corner. Life was good. Life was normal. Life was about to change. COVID arrived and disrupted everything including our karate training. And because of health concerns in my family, I was forced to close my dojo.

Little did I know, but that was the beginning of the best time in my personal karate life. I could not attend any trainings in person, and I could only train alone. Luckily, I could hear a familiar voice in my head reminding me of a karate truism. “If you want to train for intensity, train in a group. If you want to train for depth of understanding, self-train.” Sensei Golden had made it clear long ago that if we were to ever “own our karate” we would have to study it in detail on our own using all we had ever been taught and practiced.

I still had a club to look out for, so until we established our twice-weekly ZOOM sessions I began to send them self-training notes. I am sure their hopes for a cure to

COVID increased tremendously if for no other reason than to stop the avalanche of emails coming their way. Once our ZOOM classes started, I used those training notes to give them a guide for their own trainings at home. But meeting two times a week meant that there were five other days available to study the personal ownership of our karate. It was time to put Sensei Golden’s admonition into practice.

After having a club for almost thirty years and a karate life of my own for decades, I have always loved to train by myself in my home dojo. But now that training took on a new life of its own. There is much to learn in the smallest details of movement, footwork, body position, transitions, fluidity, correctness, and efficacy. The “mystery of karate” of which many self-styled practitioners falsely speak is actually to be found in the wonder of how the smallest parts of big things produce amazing results. And we are lucky in our clubs and region and international organization to have instructors who can lead us through those steps so that we, on our own in our own self-training, can truly begin to “own our karate”. The tools for self-improvement are in our hands. It is our job to learn how to use them.

Karate for a Lifetime

By Valerie McKay

I joined the Dayton club in my forties, out-of-shape and with no experience in sports of any kind. The club joke is that I spent the first year in the bathroom, looking in the mirrors, trying to figure out how to coordinate my arms and legs.

My approach to the study of karate has been more cerebral than physical. When I study kata, I picture each move in my mind, breathing and flowing from one move to the next like meditation. In my mind I can perform each move perfectly without wasted motion while properly applying power. I use the Best Karate books to read the descriptions of the moves and stances, and look at the dynamic notations to reveal the application of speed, power and focus.

Fortunately, Shotokan karate is based on the philosophy that any person, of any age, in any shape can be

successful. Mid-America has been blessed with both legendary visiting instructors and amazing instructors who call Mid-America home.

These last two years have certainly an excellent time to practice and apply the *dojo kun*:

Seek perfection of character
Be faithful
Endeavor
Respect others
Refrain from violent behavior

As I approach my 3rd decade of karate and begin my 7th decade on this Earth, I tell people karate keeps me young. Karate and my fellow karate-ka have kept me going through these challenging times.

Congratulations to the following Mid-America Karate-Ka for their Recent Promotions and Qualifications!

Dan Promotions

Name	Club Affiliation	Rank Achieved	Date
Tyler Maly	Brown County	Shodan	6/26/2021
Caleb Horner	Anderson	Shodan	10/16/2021
Scott Bishop	Brown County	Shodan	10/16/2021
Jessica Robbins	Creekside	Shodan	10/16/2021
Joshua Baumann	Creekside	Shodan	10/16/2021
Dana Irvine	Ohio Valley	Shodan	10/16/2021
Joseph Moskowitz	Cleveland	Shodan	10/16/2021
Steven Robbins	Creekside	Nidan	12/5/2021

Qualifications

Name	Club Affiliation	Qualification	Date
Jeffrey Weber	Anderson	Instructor, Class B	6/9/2019
Jeffrey Weber	Anderson	Examiner, Class C	6/9/2019
Carol Glenn	Swartz Creek	Examiner, Class D	6/9/2019
Kimberly Weber	Anderson	Examiner, Class B	6/9/2019
Tim Gay, Sr.	Creekside	Judge, Class C	11/15/2019
Andrew Wolff	Anderson	Judge, Class B	11/15/2019

Sensei Vaughan



Chief Instructor, ISKF Mid-America Region

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

Sensei Oberschlake



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

March 12 - Regional Training

Location TBD

April 23-24 - Spring Camp

Hosted by The Ohio State University Karate Club

May 21 - Mid-America Regional Tournament

Hosted by The Ohio State University Karate Club

Contributors

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