



Kangeiko 2016 A Karate Tradition

By Kim Weber and Martin Schrager



Mid-America Kangeiko Attendees and Instructors on Day Two

Photo courtesy of Kim Weber

Mid-America ISKF started the year out right with our annual *Kangeiko*, or Winter Training, hosted by Sensei Martin Vaughan, 7th *Dan*, and the Indiana ISKF karate club at Ben Davis High School and Hoosier Gymnastics in Indianapolis, IN.

Kangeiko is an annual tradition practiced by *karate-ka* the world over where foundational principles of the art are reviewed and studied. This regression to basic technique is part of an annual training cycle and is symbolic of the overall learning process. We start out as beginning karate students learning these basic principles and gradually, as skill and form are improved, move to more complex movements and ultimately to more free (*ju*) techniques. This annual cycle of training is very similar. Starting with *Kangeiko*, we practice basic technique and as the year progresses, focus on more sophisticated trainings.

This year, to kick off our annual event, a wonderful Kung Fu demonstration was performed by Eddy Vaughan and other members of the IUPUI Chinese

Martial Arts Club. The parallels between Kung-Fu and Karate were apparent to the trained eye and the goals of each art are the same - the perfection of body control and movement.

Next, the *dan* and *kyu* ranks were split for the two Saturday classes. Sensei James Oberschlake, 7th *Dan*, and Sensei Vaughan both helped conduct the *dan* classes, while Sensei Kim Weber, 5th *Dan*, worked with the *kyu* ranks.

The day ended with an entertaining dinner at the Ginza Japanese Hibachi Restaurant.

Continued on Page 2

In This Issue...

Anderson *Shiai* - Pg. 3

A Journey of Many First Steps - Pg. 4

March Training - Pg. 6

Student Spotlight - Pg. 9

Kangeiko 2016

Continued from page 1

Camp concluded Sunday with a training at the gymnastics studio which allowed us the opportunity to practice *kata* and to apply the techniques learned for practical self-defense, most of which centered around utilizing take-downs.

Thank you to Sensei Oberschlake, Sensei Vaughan, and Sensei Weber for their instruction.

Sensei Vaughan reminded us that the topics covered this weekend are the foundation for our improvement.



*Sensei Oberschlake demonstrating kata application and laying the smack down on Sensei Marty Schragger
Photo courtesy of Kim Weber*



*Sensei Oberschlake demonstrating that if done properly, size is not an important factor in applying karate techniques
Photo courtesy of Kim Weber*

Anderson Youth Shiai

By Kim Weber



Two Youth students compete in basic sparring competition at the Anderson Youth Shiai

Photo courtesy of Kim Weber

Anderson Karate in Cincinnati has been conducting a youth *shiai* or “contest,” since 2012. The Anderson *shiai* started as a practice tournament for the local youth students as a way to begin preparing for the ISKF National Tournament being held in Cincinnati in the fall of 2013. The *shiai* also gave table workers, and judges practice for their roles in Nationals as well. After the

National Tournament, the students expressed an interested in continuing with the event.

The *shiai* has grown, with the recommendation of Sensei Vaughan, to include the entire Mid-America Region. We hope to continue holding this event to serve as an enjoyable learning experience for everyone involved and invite participation from all regional dojos.



Scenes from the Anderson Youth shiai in February 2016

Photos courtesy of Kim Weber

A Journey of Many First Steps

By J. R. Geoffrion

I have been studying *Shotokan* karate-do since I moved from Toronto to Chicago in the late nineties, only a few blocks away from Sugiyama *Dojo*. My study of karate-do, however, started in 1984 in Montreal.

Having moved a multitude of times for my studies and career, I learned early on in my karate-do journey, that the sensei's knowledge, and his or her ability to communicate and transfer this knowledge, was paramount to the actual karate style practiced. As a result, I have trained in various styles including *Shito-Ryu*, *Chito-Ryu*, and *Isshin-Ryu* for years at a time.

I soon realized that each style, organization, dojo, and sensei typically emphasizes and transmits different aspects, techniques, and nuances – either deliberately such as the style itself, or unintentionally such as due to a particular body type or physical capability (or limitation) leading to personal preference and predisposition. As a result, karate across style, organization, dojo, and sometimes even sensei, may look foreign to one another.

For many years, I thought this constant change was a curse. I seemingly had to re-learn everything from the ground up: stances, *kihon* sequences, *katas*, *bunkai* interpretations, and even terminology.

For example, there may be very few common *katas* between styles – especially if their lineage are distant. Even when *kata* bear the same name and origin across two styles, they may still vary wildly – sometimes almost enough that they are not recognizable from one another.

Although I had earned my *shodan* in *shorin-ryu* in 1990, I can't recount the many times I wore a white belt — signaling an openness to learn — as I relocated and joined a new dojo.

The Journey Comes Full Circle

Although most of us dream of a black belt when we begin our journey, the rest of the goals we set for ourselves are often tactical – because they are seemingly achievable – we train to learn a new technique, a new *kata* or we train for the next test, the

next competition. And, along the way, we learn a thing or two. Our horizon is not that far ahead of us.

Your opponent will not adhere to any of your starting points. Your opponent does not care if you are at the right distance to defend or counter properly. Your opponent does not care which foot is forward. Your opponent does not care if you are 'ready' – as a matter of fact, that's when they should launch their attack. Against an opponent, you would need to alter your timing, readjust your distance, modify your breathing, and revise your stance.

We are taught techniques from the first day we wear our white belt. Techniques are specific. Techniques are rigid. Techniques can be limiting.

I realized that techniques are just two points in time with a path between them – as such, there are no techniques – that may have been what Funakoshi meant when he wrote:

"A student well versed in even one technique will naturally see corresponding points in other techniques... [techniques] are all essentially the same... variations on just a handful."

So, Why Are We Learning Techniques?

Techniques are teaching tools from which we should learn the basic principles at the core of karate – all karate. Techniques are a means to an end.

Interestingly, these basic principles also apply to a wide range of sports and physical activities outside of martial arts. For example, the *zanshin* principle is analogous to the very important principle of following through with one's swing in golf, and the *kiai* is similar in function to the 'grunting' emitted when a professional tennis player returns the ball with force and speed.

Looking across the various styles, the 'shape' differences that we see are mostly a reflection of which basic principles dominates a particular technique. Intention, eye line, breathing, synchronization, pelvic tilt, hip rotation and vibration, and numerous other principles are common to all.

Continued on Page 5

A Journey of Many First Steps

Continued from Page 4

From Techniques To A Basic Principle by Contrasting Two Styles

If an advanced *karate-ka* joins a different style – different organization, dojo, or sensei – the *karate-ka* may discover these basic principles as he or she attempts to adapt and accelerate his or her transition to the new system.

For example, from an external perspective, an observer comparing *isshin-ryu* and *Shotokan* will most likely note that *isshin-ryu* adopts a higher and smaller stance: *seisan-dachi* rather than make extensive use of *zenkutsu-dachi*. As a byproduct, hip rotation is not as widely used in *isshin-ryu* – common to most of the *Naha-te* lineage styles such as *goju-ryu*, relatively distant from our *Shotokan* lineage.

With less hip rotation, higher stances, and typically a close quarter distance between practitioners, *isshin-ryu karate-ka* must generate power in a way that is mostly foreign to us *Shotokan* practitioners: *chinkuchi*.

Because *Shotokan* practitioners primarily use rotation, vibration, and linear momentum to derive power, another reason we seldom hear of this principle is most probably because *chinkuchi* is not a Japanese term, but originates from the *Uchinaagushi* language of Okinawa, the island of Funakoshi sensei's birth.

So, What Is *Chinkuchi*?

Simply, distilled to its simplest form, *chinkuchi* is the total coordinated contraction and tension of the entire body, not just the striking extremity, including breath, and intent.

Chinkuchi can be manifested and observed in two very different forms:

1. Continuous Dynamic Tension
2. End of a Ballistic Action (impulse)

How Does One Develop *Chinkuchi*?

1. *Continuous Dynamic Tension* – Practicing a kata with dynamic tension is a way to train one's

chinkuchi. Although it is possible to train almost any kata with dynamic tension, it is easier to practice those that are to be performed in such a manner.

Practicing *Hangetsu* – primarily the beginning 11 movements – is the favored *Shotokan* kata. An even better kata would be *sanchin*, which is practiced in several other styles, as it is entirely devoted to dynamic tension.

2. *Impulse* – The impulse *chinkuchi* is a little different in the sense that the contraction is in contrast to the relaxation. Without relaxation, the contraction has diminished impact. As such, training for an impulse *chinkuchi* will also train the practitioner in relaxation to create a ballistic action.

In a pair, each practitioner is given a 26" x 1 ¼" rattan *escrima* stick. The "attacker" will lie on her back in a relaxed *shizentai* position between the feet of the standing "target" partner. The attacker will extend her arms almost fully while holding the stick with the hands shoulder width apart. The standing participant holds his stick loosely with one hand and let the stick dangle about 15° downward from horizontal so that the tip is slightly below the ending position of the attacker's stick.

The attacker will bring her stick down just above her chest and keep the hands semi-opened (to ensure the least contraction possible) to support the stick rather than hold it.

In a ballistic motion, she will exhale sharply and "throw" the stick to the target. At the moment of impact, she will snap her fists close around the stick, press the floor with her back, and contract her entire body – the target stick will gauge your results based on how fast and high it bounced.

Continued on Page 6

A Journey of Many First Steps

Continued from Page 5

You Already Knew Chinkuchi, Didn't You?

If you are still reading, you most likely had heard of *chinkuchi* all along – without hearing the word. You all have seen or heard of Bruce Lee's "1-inch punch" famous demonstration – that is a demonstration of *chinkuchi* (among other basic principles). Understanding *chinkuchi* will help you develop power from very small distances, with little or no hip rotation as you are accustomed to.

Set Your Goals

One of the key goal we set for ourselves throughout our karate-do journey should be to understand the basic principles – not just to learn techniques and katas — only then will we truly be able to understand part of the essence of karate-do.

There are many other principles at the root of Shotokan and other styles that are worth exploring. It is worth learning from one another.

Acknowledgement: I wouldn't be where I am in my journey if it wasn't for the training techniques of Sugiyama sensei and Frank Chrzanowski sensei.

March 2016 Regional Training

By Jerry Baker

In his instruction at our March Regional Training, Sensei Vaughan expounded upon and demonstrated a variety of *Foundational Concepts of Movement*. While his instruction dealt directly with techniques related to sparring and kata performance, the concepts covered are applicable in all areas of karate.

1. Power from the Driving Leg: "You have to hit your opponent from the floor."

An excellent technique for teaching this concept is found in the delivery of an effective counter punch. Sensei Vaughan was very clear in saying, "The rotation for a counter punch must come from the rear foot on the floor – not the shoulders." It is that rear leg that propels the power up the leg, through the hip, and then drives both the counter punch and its accompanying draw hand. If we do not follow that natural progression from the floor to the punch, we will diffuse or possibly misdirect the power flow of the technique.

Likewise, in a step-in technique, the initial movement is powered movement of the rear leg and transfer of power to the stationary front foot. In turn, that front foot becomes the supporting rear foot that drives the body and the technique toward the opponent at the end of the technique. Any block, strike, kick, or punch will then be powered by the new driving rear foot.

2. Footwork

There is clearly a right way and a wrong way to train oneself to deliver a technique. The direction we received from Sensei Vaughan was explicit in reminding us that we use our footwork to align ourselves with our opponent so that we are able to maximize the "Triangle of Power" toward our target. We need to "square up" to the target, stabilize the front foot, and use an effective draw hand to facilitate the flow of our power and the solidity of our stance. It is our footwork that sets our distance, supports our movements, and enables us to both defend ourselves and deliver a decisive attack to our opponent.

Continued on Page 7

March 2016 Regional Training

Continued from Page 6

3. Powerful Techniques

Sensei Vaughan quoted Sensei Field when he noted that his definition of karate is "...using a technique with maximum power on target. *Kime*." To make technique without *kime* is not karate. To do otherwise is to waste an opportunity to score a point, end a fight, or demonstrate a move correctly in a kata. Sensei Vaughan elaborated by saying, "You must have control. The technique must end correctly. When working with a partner, you must control your technique by stopping with *kime* without striking too far." Partner training will help one to learn to control the power. Without control, the technique is ineffective, opportunities are missed, and injuries can occur.

4. Block and Counter: *Create Opportunities*

Sparring without blocking is like an Oreo without the cream in the middle - something is missing. Two opponents simply attacking each other often leads to sloppiness and no clear winner. In karate, we are to show skill, patience, and a visible depth of understanding about our opponent and ourselves. We must use our opponent's energy to deliver effective blocks to stop them and then deliver our counters from the right distance, toward the right target, and in the right time frame to be effective. By blocking well, we enable our own response.

Sensei Vaughan spoke of Master Yaguchi's call for us to "Make a chance!" Sometimes, we see opponents who are brawling. As Sensei Vaughan noted, "Every time you block, you make a chance. Do more than look for a chance." It is up to us to practice our blocking, positioning, and responses so that we can take full advantage of our blocks. An effective block can end an attack and give us the opportunity to be our most effective.

Blocking and countering have their own unique techniques. Some critical partner-training components to bear in mind are:

- The attacker is to respond to the auditory stimulus of the instructor's count.

- The defender is to respond to the visual stimulus of the attacker's movement. The defender is moving on his/her own count as dictated by how both basics (*kihon*) of the block/counter and kata are to be performed.
- Distancing is critical to an effective response to an attack. As Sensei Oberschlake noted, "Do not bail out too far. Maintain the correct distance so that you can respond before the attacker's technique lands." Efficient timing can provide a chance to land your blow even before the attacker completes his/her attack.
- Respond immediately after the first touch. As Sensei Vaughan said, "When the block touches, punch now! You can never be brain dead. You must respond purely as your training teaches you. Your response will disrupt their pattern. You will create a chance." This quick-response mentality cuts short the attacker's plan and allows the defender to take control of the action.

5. Self-defense

Sensei Vaughan relayed two simple maxims when one considers the proper defense when someone grabs you. First, "If grabbed, punch." While there is much written about multi-part responses to such a situation, the simple truth is that until you "disrupt the attacker's pattern," you will not "create a chance." At the first touch, or even earlier if you can gauge the attacker's intent, you must take full advantage of the proximity you have to the attacker and go on the offensive. You can begin to block and grab the attacker once you have neutralized the initial show of intent.

Secondly, "Stay on your feet." Going to the ground is to be avoided at all costs. Stun your attacker with a sharp attack and then block and shift to a strong stance to create the distance you need to deliver a decisive blow. Your counter attack should be the end of the confrontation, so be quick and decisive and strong.

His advice to us was simple. Be aware, be prepared, and practice moves you have been using for years – ones you have learned from practicing katas. But first, make a quick and sharp attack as your initial response. By paying attention to the foundational concepts noted above, you will make your move rapidly, with spirit, and with *kime*.

Continued on Page 8

March 2016 Regional Training

Continued from Page 7

7. Kata Performance

Two simple tips will improve your kata.

- “Finish each move before beginning the next.” To do otherwise will stanch the flow of your kata performance and not show a clear understanding of the intent of the moves.

- “Break out of your box.” To show more power and an effective flow of energy and technique, extend your moves. Do not simply force moves. Your task is to make full moves in the direction of the energy. Deliver your moves with power that will demonstrate your understanding of what the kata represents. Use extended and smooth expansion and contraction movements to stretch your kata and increase your power.



Students training at our annual March regional clinic in West Milton, OH

Photo courtesy of Jerry Baker

Student Spotlight

Alexis Ortiz-Rosario

By Adam Clouser

Alexis is a member of the Ohio State University Shotokan Karate Club. He started his training in his hometown in Puerto Rico at the age of 16. In Puerto Rico, he trained both *Kenpo* and Hawaiian *Kenpo* before moving to Ohio to pursue a Ph.D. in Biomedical Engineering at OSU. Alexis received his *Shodan* this last December. He lives in Columbus with his wife, Katia, and enjoys playing music and walking his dog.

Alexis was asked to expand on his research and how it relates to karate motion.

The specific topic of my research at OSU is the decoding of the motor cortex and ponto-medullary reticular formation participation in reaching. I realize that's a bit of a mouthful. In layman terms, I am looking at how two different brain systems collaborate and compete to control muscle movements, particularly in reaching. One of our findings has to do with the way ponto-medullary reticular formation works. This area of the brain stem is tasked with locomotion and posture control, both of which don't require our conscious knowledge to work. An interesting finding is that when you stimulate some cells in this region you get what is called a bilateral reciprocal pattern. In other words, when one limb flexes, the other extends naturally. It was only after talking to our instructor Adam Clouser that I came to realize I was studying how the brain performs karate techniques, which require extension of a technique and compression of the draw hand. So the next time you're training, remember to thank your brainstem for being generally awesome.

Muscle Agonist and Antagonist: Would you drive your car with the brake on?

I have been asked to talk a little about agonist and antagonist muscles and their role in muscle movement, specifically karate technique. Muscles are the pulleys of the body, and being aware of them during training will bring tremendous insight. A quick description of the two types of muscles described herein: agonist muscles are those which drive the force and antagonist muscles oppose it. In some instances, these muscles can be found opposite to each other, like biceps and triceps. In

dynamic motion, like karate, the constant recruitment of agonist/antagonist muscles needs to be properly calibrated in order to attain maximum efficiency in technique.

In the case of a simple punch, one muscle is not always the agonist or antagonist. For example, when contracting, as in a draw hand, the biceps are the agonist and the triceps are the antagonist. When extending, as in punching, these are reversed. This constant transition between muscle contraction and relaxation can get confusing and you may find yourself weakening technique by flexing the wrong muscle and holding back the technique. It is important that during training you think about these muscles and ensure that when punching, only the triceps should be engaged, or with your *hikite* hand your biceps should be fully engaged. This engagement of agonist/antagonist muscles are all over the body, with quads/hamstrings for kicks, and other muscles groups for stances and techniques. So, next time you are in training think about the muscles that are the basis of your power and how you can effectively engage them to further improve.

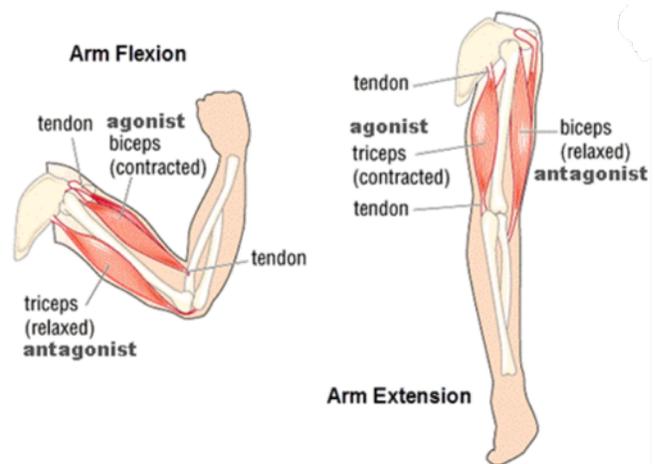


Figure 1: <http://www.ptdirect.com/training-design/anatomy-and-physiology/skeletal-muscle-roles-and-contraction-types>



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Thank you for your support!



Sensei Golden



Instructor Emeritus, ISKF Mid-America Region

Sensei Greer Golden graduated from the Instructor Trainee Program in 1969 and was sent to Ohio University in Athens to begin sharing his knowledge with Mid-America karate students.

Sensei Vaughan



Chief Instructor, ISKF Mid-America Region

Sensei Martin Vaughan has been training under Sensei Golden and Master Okazaki for over 40 years and is our region's Chief Instructor as of 2015. He is also the Chief Instructor of Indiana ISKF.

President and Assistant Instructor, ISKF Mid-America Region

Sensei James Oberschlake has been training under Sensei Golden and Master Okazaki since 1974. He is also the Chief Instructor of Brown County Shotokan Karate Club.

Executive Director, Mid-America Region

Sensei James Nelson is the Chief Instructor of the Swartz Creek Karate Club and has served as the Executive Director of the Mid-America Region since 2003.

Calendar

April 16-17 - Spring Camp and Collegiate Regional Tournament

Hosted by the Ohio State University Karate Club, Columbus, OH. Honored guest instructor will be Sensei James Field.

May 14 - Adult and Youth Regional Tournament

Hosted by the Ohio State University Karate Club, Columbus, OH

June 10-17 - ISKF Master Camp

Camp Greenlane, Lansdale, PA

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