



国際大山空手道連盟総本部

World Oyama Karate

Honbu Newsletter Issue 10 - Spring, 2006

五輪書

Book of Five Rings

By Miyamoto Musashi

Translated By Founder Saiko Shihan Y. Oyama

水の巻 *Mizu no Maki (Book of Water)*



Battle of Seki Ga Hara, September, 1600. Musashi fought in this famous decisive battle between the East and West of Japan. Although he was only 17, his tremendous ambition drove him to try to make a name for himself as a warrior and gain employment in the service of a lord. Most historians agree, although there is no concrete record, that Musashi fought on the side of the West, which was defeated.

五輪書 Book of Five Rings ... Continued

In the chapter “Mizu no Maki” (Book of Water) Musashi explains the way a fighter’s mind and body should work together. The chapter is composed in very concrete steps: first he discusses how to hold your spirit, then how to hold your body (kamae), then how to hold your gaze (mesen), then how to hold a sword, how to stand with a sword, how to swing a sword, and finally how to move while wielding a sword. All of the instruction in this chapter comes from Musashi’s personal experience. In the Water chapter he tries to explain his strategy as clearly and concretely as possible.

“Hi no Maki” (Book of Fire) is the next chapter in the book. The Fire chapter explains how to fight against an opponent, whereas the Water chapter is centered on how a fighter is to prepare and train himself. These are the two most dynamic chapters in the book, and are my favorite, which is why I want to translate them in this newsletter for you. We’ll start with “Mizu no Maki” (Book of Water).

The strategy of my Ni Ten Ichi Ryu style is best explained using the element of water as an illustration. Thus, I have entitled this chapter “Mizu no Maki” (Book of Water). The limitations of language are such that I cannot fully explain the Way of strategy with words. But if you study these words carefully you can grasp their deeper meaning.

You cannot truly understand strategy by looking only at the surface meaning of this text; carefully ponder each word and all the implications it carries. If you approach what is written from many angles and read beyond the words themselves, you will be able to truly understand the Way of strategy.

My winning strategy is explained in terms of single combat. But if you understand the deeper meaning you can apply these principles to 10,000-a-side battles.

The Way of strategy is different than other things. Therefore, you must make sure you fully understand the meaning of what I have written; other-

wise, if you mistake even one word, you will lose your way on the path to knowledge. You must take time to not only read and understand the deeper message here, but apply it to your own situation, constantly looking for the deeper meaning.

I cannot be completely certain what Musashi is truly getting at by choosing the element of water to illustrate his winning strategy. Philosophers have repeatedly used water as a metaphor: water flows from up to down, high to low, water is strong yet supple, water takes the shape of its surroundings, water is adaptable, and so on. I question, though, if Musashi is really concerned about all of the philosophical points that so many people have tried to read into the deeper meaning of “water”. The categorization of the world into “5 Rings” or “elements” is a Buddhist construct that Musashi saw as a convenient way to relate his teachings to the people of his day. Then again, maybe he wanted to use the philosophical aspects of water—maybe not. Who knows?

Whatever the case may be, Musashi decides that he will use the element of water to illustrate his winning strategy. He begins by making the point that words alone cannot accurately convey the entirety of his message; the reader has to work and read beyond what is simply on the page. I have a strong connection with Musashi on this point. As I was writing *Perfect Karate, Kyoten I, II, III, and IV*, as well as other instructional material, I would sometimes feel frustrated by how much of what I wanted to explain couldn’t be done with just words and pictures. It was impossible to convey all of the finer points and details with just words and photographs. That is why I am always telling my advanced students, especially Black Belts, that you have to read and see *beyond* what is on the page in front of you. You have to take the techniques and principles in the books and approach them from various angles, arrange them in different ways, train hard to fit them into your body. This is the only way you will be able to understand the deeper meaning and truly build up your karate.

Musashi then makes the point that although his strategy is explained in terms of two people fighting each other, the principles hold true even if you apply them to mas-

五輪書 Book of Five Rings ... Continued

sive armies battling each other. Some of the samurai in Musashi's day objected to this point. As a result, although he traveled throughout Japan offering his services as a warrior, no one would hire him. Musashi tried all his life to become a high-ranking warrior, but was never able to reach his goal. Musashi then re-states how important it is for the reader to carefully study his words and apply them in training.

As I said earlier, I feel the same way as Musashi did about how important it is for you to take the initiative to truly understand the karate principles and techniques found in *Perfect Karate*, and *Kyoten I, II, III, & IV*. You cannot just simply read it and hope to gain understanding. You must take what is written in these books and inject it into your blood, sweat, muscle, mind and spirit. You have to train diligently to fit these techniques into your body. If you stop training, even for a short period, you will start to lose the forward progress you have made.

Even if the most coordinated, best conditioned fighter takes a break in their training, they will begin to lose the timing, power and rhythm they had before. Karate training is a lifelong venture. People who find out my age often ask me, "When are you going to retire? Haven't you done this long enough?". But karate is in my blood, my heart, my spirit. I tell them that we don't have pension plans in karate. All I have is my hands, my feet, and my body. This is what I will continue to work with until I die.

The main point that Musashi makes in this introduction is that in order to truly understand what he has written, you have to take an *active* not *passive* approach. You have to work to uncover the deeper meaning, see beyond the words, and dedicate yourself to your training.

Way of Hei Ho (Path to Victory)

Hei Ho is a "winning strategy". In order to become victorious, you must learn the proper way to control your spirit. While fighting, your inner spirit should remain as calm as in your everyday life. You must center and focus your mind. You must remain calm, but not overly relaxed. Without being tense, you must be alert and ready to



Miyamoto Musashi in his later years

五輪書 Book of Five Rings ... Continued



Besides being a genius in the art of war, Musashi was also a very talented artist. His favorite subjects were birds and *Daruma* (monks). This panel is on display at the Eisei Library.

act. You must keep your spirit and your mind open to the combat situation as a whole; do not focus all your attention on just one point. Rather than simply being still, your spirit should continue moving smoothly in a calm direction; disrupting this flow, even for a split second, is disastrous.

For Musashi, the key point of any winning strategy is how a fighter controls his/her spirit. The mental and emotional being must be centered and tranquil, yet ready for action. If a fighter fails to do this, they will lose. In karate training, we see this happen all the time during kumite practice, promotions, and tournaments. For example, a fighter steps onto the mat for a tournament match. Suddenly, they are bombarded with such thoughts as, “Oh! Everyone is watching me!”, “There’s my girl/boyfriend—I better win this match!”, “That guy is huge! I don’t know if I can beat him”. As they become nervous, their body grows stiff and tense; their natural rhythm is unbalanced, and their breathing becomes heavy; their spirit is on a rollercoaster, and they can’t focus or remain calm. As a result, they are unable to fight the way they want to; none of the combinations and techniques they spent so much time practicing seem to work.

Before a fighter can ever hope to control his opponent, he must learn to control his own spirit. When a person allows themselves to become agitated, many physical and mental changes occur. For example, when someone becomes angry, their muscles tighten, their heart races, their breathing changes, and their mind narrows its focus to a single point; all of their mental energy is directed at the person or thing that is upsetting them. An angry person’s spirit is less controlled than normal. As a result, accidents can happen, and the person may say or do things that they later regret when they calm down. If a fighter allows this, or any other type of disruption to affect their spirit, they have little (if any) chance of beating their opponent. That is why Musashi says that a person’s spirit must remain as calm in fighting as it is in everyday life.

The type of “calm spirit” Musashi talks about is not an “apathetic” or “lazy” spirit. The many technological and other advancements society has made since Musashi wrote *The Book of Five Rings* have enabled the average person of today to live a much easier “everyday life” than the average person of Musashi’s time. The “calm” of a skilled fighter is not the same kind of “calm” found in a person sitting in front of the T.V., drinking beer and eating pizza. A fighter needs a strong spirit, but at the same time, he must be relaxed enough

五輪書 Book of Five Rings ... Continued

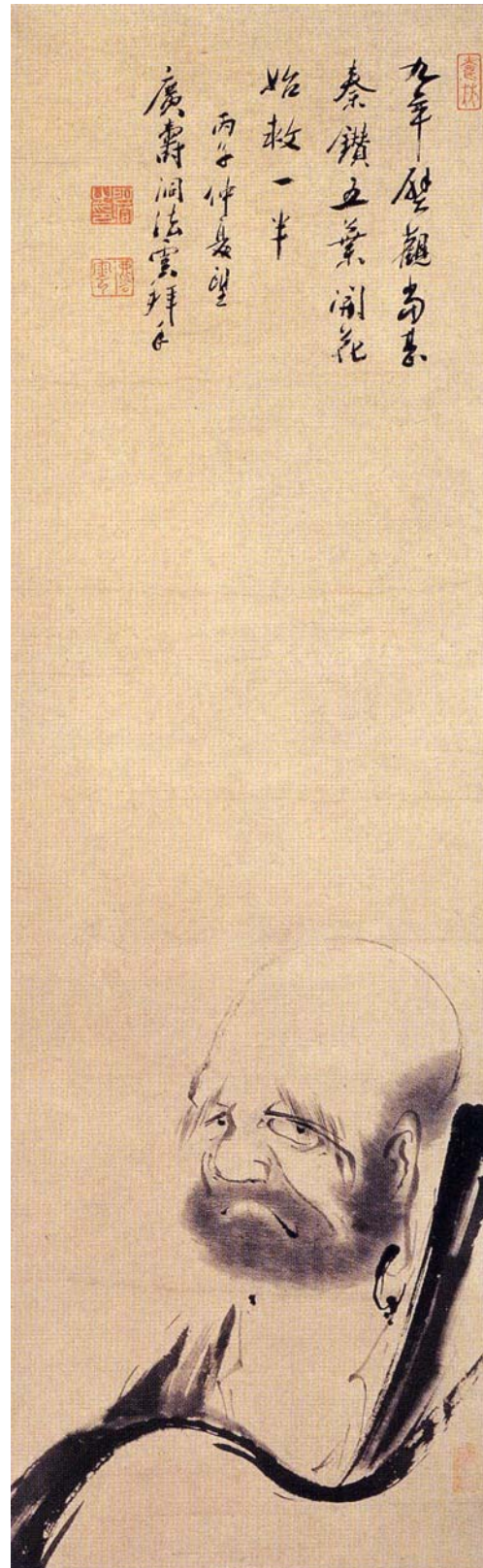
to see the “big picture” of the fight and not allow himself to become agitated. To achieve this, he must constantly fight himself.

As I have said many times before, fighting another person is really about fighting yourself. In kumite training, you have to continually fight all the emotions and thoughts that come up as you fight. You have to work extremely hard in order to realize how you are going to be in control of your fighting spirit; how you are going to remain calm as someone attacks you; how you are going to keep your focus on the fight and your opponent as a whole, not just concentrate all your energy on one aspect. In order to win this battle against yourself and your ego, you have to challenge yourself, push beyond your limitations and sweat, SWEAT, SWEAT! Once you have learned to control your spirit, your chances of beating your opponent are great.

When your body is relaxed, your spirit should remain alert; when your body is engaged in combat, your spirit should remain tempered. Independent of the body's state, the spirit should remain calm and tranquil. Likewise, do not let the body be dependent upon the state of the spirit. With your body relaxed, but primed, focus your attention on spiritual control. When you control your spirit, you can easily identify what is important and what is not in all matters; you will not be prone to rash or hasty action. Work to continually build your inner strength, but never let the enemy see your spirit.

Here, Musashi discusses the importance of always keeping your spirit focused and centered, regardless of what your body is doing. To be a good fighter, you must never show your spirit to your opponent. In other words, when you are physically tired, in pain, or tense with fear, you must not show it; your spirit should remain as a steady rudder, steering you through physical hardship. On the other hand, when your body is relaxed, reclining as you enjoy a cup of coffee or tea, for example, your spirit should still remain alert and prepared for whatever situation may suddenly pop up. Here, your spirit is “keeping watch” as your body relaxes.

While you are fighting, it is especially important to keep your spirit acting independently of what the body is doing. If you let your spirit rise and fall and bounce around to reflect what is happening physically, your mind will not be centered, and you will no longer be able to act and think clearly. This happens all the time in karate training classes, and especially during promotions and tournaments. When a student is hit hard with a clean shot and allows their spirit to be shaken, they tense up, and their thought turns to, “Man, that hurt! I’m gonna get that guy!” Soon after that, they run out of breath, lose all sense of rhythm and timing, and are easily defeated. Knowing this, sometimes, a good fighter will “bait” his opponent. He will attack fast and hard for



This painting of a *Daruma* (monk) is on display at the Okayama Museum

五輪書 Book of Five Rings ... Continued

a short time to get the other fighter riled-up. As the fighter retaliates and expends all his energy, the first fighter bides his time, and then chooses his moment to knock his opponent out. The importance of mind/body separation also applies to everyday situations.

When people lose their temper and allow their body follow suit, they usually face severe consequences. For example, when my wife picks at me for something, and I get agitated and start yelling back or in some other way lose my temper, by the end of it I'll find myself outside sleeping in the dog house. On the other hand, if she picks at me, and I keep my control and simply answer, "Yes ma'am, darling. You're right," and keep smiling, I get to stay in my own nice, warm bed. Here is another example. During the course of everyday life, sometimes people lose their balance and fall. Let's say a lady is walking down the street, clacking her 4" heels as she hurries along. Suddenly, her heel is caught in a

crack on the side walk, and she begins to fall. Two outcomes are now possible: the first is, she screams out, her spirit is thrown into a panic, and she thrusts her hand down to try and break the fall. Because she's going *against* the fall, she ends up snapping her wrist, spraining her elbow, and dislocating her shoulder. On the other hand, if she keeps her cool and doesn't panic, she can roll *with* the fall, wounding only her pride.

In addition to maintaining a strong, centered spirit, Musashi also stresses the importance of never showing your spirit to the enemy; not letting them know what you are thinking or which techniques or strategy you are going to use to defeat them. When your spirit is strong and centered, you are better able to see the overall picture; thinking in this way means that you don't invest your energy and attention into unimportant things. If your ultimate goal is to win the fight, focus your energy on that, and not on a certain kick or block



Saiko Shihan Oyama and Shihan Miura at the All-Japan Championship, 1980. Razor-sharp sword vs. wooden tonfa.

五輪書 Book of Five Rings ... Continued

or punch that happens during the course of the fight. When your spirit is centered and focused, even if your opponent hits you with a few solid shots, you are able to keep your composure and your rhythm, which is essential. By keeping your spirit unshaken and even, you won't take the "bait" of a fighter who is trying to rattle you, and thereby gain control over your rhythm.

When you show your spirit to the enemy, they can read you easily. From there, they can easily control you and your timing. By keeping your spirit hidden from view, you keep the enemy unsure and on their guard, always having to guess about how you are going to attack.

A small person must have a deep understanding of the workings of a large person's body, just as a large person must understand the body of a small person. Do not let your judgments be influenced by your pre-conceptions or personal bias. When evaluating the situation at hand, set aside narrow-mindedness; strive to view everything objectively. Only by doing so will you be able to see the truth of the matter and take decisive action.

In this paragraph, Musashi is telling us essentially that appearances can be deceiving. Outer physique does not necessarily reflect a person's true ability. Take for example a power lifting contest between two athletes. One's physique is awe-inspiring, his muscles ripple and glisten; he has no fat whatsoever, and he has more muscles than we would think humanly possible. On the other hand, while the second man also has a large physique, his muscles don't ripple due to his layer of fat; while he seems strong, his physique is not what we would consider beautiful. Seeing the two together, most people would assume that the first guy will win the weightlifting contest easily; "He has so many muscles! His muscles even have muscles!" However, when it comes time to perform, it is actually the second man who effortlessly hoists the weight above his head, while the first one struggles to lift the barbell even a foot off the ground. We see this happening all the time in the Olympics. The super-heavyweight athletes in this event usually look like sumo wrestlers; they have a big gut, and their muscles are bulky and undefined. However, they are able to exert tremendous power.

If a small person is to fight a noticeably larger opponent,

most people assume they know how the fight will turn out. Some would say, "Of course the big guy's going to win; look at the size of his chest and arms. That little guy doesn't stand a chance! He's going to be sent flying!" Other people might assume that they know how the two will fight; the big guy is going to move slowly, but all his techniques will be powerful, while the little guy is going to move around quickly, using mostly speed and not power in his techniques. However, they are only basing their opinions on the *appearance* of the fighters. This is what Musashi warns against.

Naturally, if a person lifts weights and builds up their body, they are eventually able to exert more power than a person who doesn't lift weights. But during a fight, what matters is how you use your body, not so much how large or small it is. Being a good fighter means that you don't *assume* anything about your opponent. Some people who are large are also very quick, some may not have much power, some have plenty of power but no speed, so their timing is slow; some people who are small move slowly, some have tremendous power. The point is that "setting aside narrow-mindedness" and "striving to view everything objectively" means that you have to see beyond your own bias and pre-conceptions in a fight. Each opponent is different, so you have to keep an open mind if you are going to fight them effectively. Look beyond their appearance and focus your attention on things such as how they move, how they use power and speed, how they counter your attack.

Going back to Musashi's time, large people tended to use larger weapons that were able to exert a lot of power. Small people usually wielded smaller weapons that allowed them to attack quickly. In order to not be at a disadvantage when one came to face the other, both large and small people needed to understand what strategy the other would likely use. The key point here is to see beyond your own personal experience. Allowing your bias and pre-conceptions to determine your decisions and actions in a fight leaves you open to being taken by surprise and defeated.

Your spirit must be clear, not muddy. Your spirit must be expansive, not bound. View all matters from a point of elevation and objectivity. Sharpen your wisdom so you can distinguish be-

五輪書 **Book of Five Rings ... Continued**

tween what is good and bad in all things. Cultivate a keen spirit by studying social justice, the nature of good and evil, the Arts, and every facet of human nature. When you cannot be tricked by the cunning of men, you will understand the Way of strategy.

The wisdom of strategy is different from other wisdom. Therefore, it requires specialized training. To obtain this wisdom, you must work to develop your spirit, to keep it calm and resolute in the face of battle. In this way, you will learn to make clear, objective decisions.

As Musashi stressed earlier, a clear and calm mind is essential for winning a fight. Apart from being centered and un-muddled, your spirit must be far-reaching and not hemmed in by anything. Most likely, a person develops their worldview piece by piece as they grow into adulthood. We as humans are shaped by our past experiences and the nature of our upbringing. All of these elements come together to determine how we view the world, how we relate to other people, the types of decisions we are likely to make, and how we conduct ourselves in any given situation. Musashi says that a good fighter must strive to see the world from a point of view that is beyond their narrow range of experience. You can see the landscape of the world much more clearly from an airplane than from the ground.

Outside of the realm of fighting strategy, expanding one's worldview is of great importance. All too often we see or read about tragic occurrences in the news that result from people acting in critical situations based on their personal bias or misconceptions of the truth. As a result, accidents occur, people are hurt or killed, and numerous other sad outcomes emerge. Even today, Musashi's points are still relevant.

I am amazed when I think about the fact that Musashi wrote his *Book of Five Rings* in the 17th century; yet here we are in the 21st century and his words still ring true. In spite of all the technological advancements society has made in the past 500 years, human nature has changed little. That is why it is important to train in World Oyama Karate! Even now, I must confess, I still make mistakes when it comes to following Musashi's advice. That is why, every night, I still put on my dogi

and sweat alongside my students. Obtaining the clear-mindedness and open worldview that Musashi talks about requires one to train hard and always try to broaden their horizons.

I'm reminded of the story of a famous Nobel Prize Laureate in Mathematics. While his name has escaped me, his story has not. One day he found himself stuck on an equation. No matter how he tried, he simply could not solve the problem. He decided to take a break. He put on some music and started to relax and take his mind off his problem. Later, he went for a walk outside, turning his mind to the beauty of nature and the mountains and forests that surrounded him. Suddenly, as he was walking, the solution came to him. Although the equation was unrelated to nature, it is evident that by changing his surroundings and opening up his spirit, the solution was able to come to him indirectly. Had he simply locked himself in his room, determined to stay until he had solved the problem, I think he would still be sitting there even now.

Experiencing the world with an open mind reveals the real beauty of karate; you can begin to see how the principles of karate hold true in a wide range of settings. For example, I've recently been watching the figure skating competitions on t.v., paying particular attention to the skaters as they jump. As a skater prepares to jump, they relax their upper body, store the power in their legs, then suddenly release their power and fly through the air. As they come back down, they turn their attention to making sure to come down in a good position, ready for the next movement. Just like in karate, they have a beginning kamae, the execution of technique, and an ending kamae. This is just one example, but if you expand your view you can find countless other examples in the world of how the principles of karate are at work—birds diving into the ocean to catch fish, or a bird trying to take off, bending its knees and building up speed with its wings until the climactic jump. The point is that you need to experience the world in as many ways as you can in order to build up your karate. When I sit down to watch t.v., I usually watch the news or sports; but sometimes, I need to watch dramas. So, if you want to be a good knockdown fighter, maybe you ought to go to the symphony or watch ballet once in a while!

The point is that broadening your horizons is not going



五輪書 **Book of Five Rings ... Continued**

to *directly* improve your level of karate ability. But, the more you understand the ways of society and are able to accurately discern between what is good or bad, right or wrong, tell when someone is being truthful or lying, all of these things will work to build up your spirit and your ability to see every situation clearly. As a fighter, your ability to effectively use a winning strategy will improve. During a fight, so many things are happening at once; you only have a split second to decide what to do. In order to see clearly and make good choices, your

spirit must be strong and steady. To build up this type of spirit, you have to train hard and study the world beyond yourself; broaden your horizons. Life is beautiful—World Oyama Karate is beautiful!

OSU!

Dictated to Karl Julian

April 22nd - Ultimate Challenge Knockdown Championship "Take the Challenge!"

July 13th - 16th - Summer Camp, Gulf Shores, AL "The Beach is Calling You!"

November 19th - Japan Cup "Don't Miss It!"

WORLD OYAMA KARATE
PRESENTS

DIRECTOR:
Saiko Shihan Y. Oyama

KNOCKDOWN KUMITE
Barehand
Barefoot
5:30 PM

Morning Kumite
10:00 AM

Winner invite to Japan Cup Nov. 19, 06

THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE
Saturday, April 22, 2006 Samford University Gym

Tickets Available
World Oyama Karate Schools

1804 29th Ave. South, Homewood (205) 879-4841
10530 Old Hwy. 200, Chelsea (205) 678-0433
6231 Veteran's Circle, Trussville (205) 661-6300

General Admission: Morning Kumite — \$15
Knockdown Kumite — \$20
All Day — \$30

Champion's Road “Karate Monogatari”

by 拳気 一
ken ki hajime

Chapter 14

A few days passed before the promotion results were posted. When I went inside, I saw something taped to the left-hand side of the wall in front of the training mat. I was so anxious to know whether I had made it or not, but I walked to the list slowly, trying to be cool about it. I looked at the list and saw my name, "Zac Appleton," under the heading "Blue Belt." I wanted to shout out loud "YES!" but I kept it inside. I felt a power surge through me. I felt like I was going to make it, because I saw several other guys in the promotion who were much worse than I was. But I had still been a little nervous. It felt great to see my name up there.

I walked toward the window and looked outside, so that nobody would see the smile on my face. Someone put their hand on my right shoulder, and I turned around to see Rachel's face. The light from the setting sun was shining through the window onto her face. Her face looked so soft and perfect in the light, and her hair was sparkling. She looked like an angel. So beautiful. She said "Congratulations, Zac," and reached out to shake my hand. I felt the warm blood flowing through her hand as I shook it. I felt like I was in heaven.

"Osu. Thank you," I said.

"Do you know about the champion's class on Wednesday night?" she asked me.

"Osu." I answered. "I've seen it on the schedule."

"Usually the requirement to come is a yellow belt. But sometimes, Sensei Ken will permit blue belts to come if

they are really committed. I think you would really like it. It's a really good class. Sensei Ken and the other black belts give you a lot of individual attention, so it's almost like a private lesson for each student. They work with you on your weak points. I think you could do it. I can ask Sensei Ken for you if you like?"

"Osu. Thank you! But do you think I could handle it?"

"I think you could. If *you* think you could. If you can't handle it, I won't talk to him for you. But you should ask Sensei Ken himself if he thinks so. He'll give you a straight answer. You should at least try and talk to him. If he says 'no,' you won't have lost anything."

I said "Osu," and hesitated before I said "Are you going to be there?"



Saiko Shihan Oyama and Sensei Takahashi. Not sure if Sensei is hurt or just ticklish!

Champion's Road "Karate Monogatari" 空手物語 ... Continued

She smiled at me and said "Osu. I really enjoy the class. I like it because sometimes afterward, we go out together for dinner or maybe just to hang out and have a couple of beers."

Inside, I felt like my whole body was smiling. I wanted to shout out in victory, like I had just won a championship. But I just smiled and said "Thank you," sort of nervously, I think. I decided then that I was definitely going to talk to Sensei Ken.

When the class finally started, the new blue belts were divided from the most recent beginners. Even though I wasn't wearing my new belt yet, I still was separated from the less experienced students. Sensei Ken started to teach us the block techniques.

I was still thinking about my talk with Rachel. My mind was in the clouds, and my concentration felt foggy. Sensei Ken's powerful voice woke me up, though, when he said "Listen up!"

"We have four basic blocks," he said. "Sometimes your opponent will use a straight technique, like the front snap. Or sometimes they use a roundhouse kick or a back spin kick, or some other curve technique like that. Or sometimes they will even kick below the belt. So you need to know how to block each one.

"Most likely, the straight blocks will be most useful. Forward motion is the natural way that people move. We walk in a straight line and move in a straight line. But curved punches, like *furi uchi*, or roundhouse kicks, require extra, less natural movements.

Even though forward movements are more natural, people use the curve techniques more often in free fighting. Nobody wants to hurt their toe, so they're afraid to front snap kick. Usually, students think they're kicking the roundhouse kick, when they're really not. It may seem like a roundhouse kick to you, but we instructors just look down and shake our heads." He laughed.

"So first, we need to learn to block the straight technique. And then we will learn the curved blocks. This is very important. In World Oyama Karate, 'block is attack.' Block is not just to block. Do you understand?" He said, with a very serious look on his face. Of course,

we all said "Osu!" Even if we didn't understand, nobody would say no. We thought we'd be dead if we said no.

"Remember that!" he said. "Whenever you attack an opponent in the same spot over and over again, most likely they will block your technique. But if you use the block as attack, they will get thrown off guard. If you use the block to move your opponent into an open position, and then attack, you will be more successful. Don't count on your block technique too much, though. You need to understand the importance of footwork, so you can move into better position and better angle, so that you can attack more naturally. This is a very important mental point, so you can control your technique. So you need to *kiai!*"

We all said "Osu," but I didn't quite understand. He said to do the block technique, but not to count so much on it. It seemed unclear to me. I tried to understand though, and to connect it to my free fight. I thought, if I don't move, my opponent will hit me back, but if I move, I can more effectively attack my opponent. Even though I didn't fully understand, I said "Osu!" just to be safe.

When Sensei Ken talked, he caught my mind. It wasn't like he was just talking. He truly struck me and grabbed my attention.

He said "After you learn today about *gedan barai* and *chudan soto uke* block techniques, make sure you read page 27 through 35 in your Karate Kyoten Volume II book. You need to pay attention to the book so you can practice correct technique at home."

We said "Osu."

Sensei Ken said "What!"

And we all shouted "OSU!!"

"Remember. *Your* block is not *my* block. You need to make sure you understand the block. You need to make sure you do it correctly. Do you understand?!" His voice was getting heavy and powerful.

I answered with a loud "OSU!"

Champion's Road "Karate Monogatari" 空手物語 ... Continue

After class had ended, I went home. I was pretty excited about the block techniques. But I was most excited that Rachel had invited me to the Wednesday class. I was excited because I knew I could talk to Rachel more if I went. It felt like it was one of the most exciting days of my life. As I sped down the road, I couldn't contain myself: "Yes! Yes! Whoo-hoo!" I shouted, now that I was in the privacy of my car. I didn't know then whether to tell Toby about it or not, but I was too happy to worry about it. I pushed in the gas and headed back to my apartment.

Chapter 15

Two weeks passed, and I finally was given my blue belt.

I was already getting the hang of the *Gedan Barai* and *Soto Uke* block techniques, even though they were still far from perfect. *Soto Uke* was especially hard for me. As I moved my arm into blocking position, my elbow always came up too high. Sensei Ken explained to us: "You need to read Karate Kyoten Volume II, pages 32 and 33."

I practiced at home in my room. I opened my hands to get into a comfortable position, and then practiced the block over and over. The book helped me so much. *Gedan Barai* was sometimes even more difficult for me. I knew I was supposed to move both hands into the block at the same time. The *Hike Te*, or "pulling the hand," is very important for power and balance. I would already have my right hand pulled to my side before I blocked

with my left hand, instead of pulling both hands into posture at once.

Sensei Ken said, "Don't rush it. Whenever you learn a new technique, you need to think always: before the technique can be correct, the total body posture must be correct. Each technique requires a different way to use the total body. After the total body posture is correct, the technique becomes more natural."

"When a block technique uses your hands, you also must correctly move your knees, your hips, your shoulders. But most students just swing their arms into the position. This is not correct form. These students get into bad habits."

"That's why we tell you 'read the book.' Each detail of the posture is important."

Also, he added, "Be patient about it. 'Osu' can mean 'patience.' As important as coming to train in the dojo is training in your daily life. You probably have a couple of moments in each day in which you can think about how to move and practice your body posture. You don't always have to *ki ai* or work up a big sweat."

So, I took his advice, and practiced a little by myself. I became much more comfortable with the block techniques.

To be continued.....



Issue 10 - Spring, 2006

Editor-in-Chief: Saiko Shihan Y. Oyama
Editors: Sensei Dale Onstine
Senpai Jean Johnson
Karl Julian
Graphic Artist: Sensei Masa Takahashi
Technical Assistant: Tony Ching

World Oyama Karate Honbu Dojo
1804 29th Avenue South, Homewood, AL 35209
Phone: (205) 879-4841 Fax: (205) 879-4849
www.worldoyama.com

Copyright © 2006 World Oyama Karate. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited.