Thanks for the Memories

by Greg Kvaska

"I received an email awhile back from a Dr. Kvaska, thanking me for the monthly GKK Newsletter. The name rang a bell. Sure enough, there was a photo in the GKK archives titled -- 1986, BGSU, Greg Kvaska. I asked Dr. Kvaska if I could run the photo in a future Thanks for the Memories segment and if he would explain the picture for our readers. So have fun reading the below article by Dr. Kvaska" - Mr. Bill Handren.
1986, Bowling Green State University, Greg Kvaska Jump Kick

We put on demonstrations around campus to try and market the club and increase membership. From what I can remember, we weren't all that interested in making more money teaching, but just loved the sport and culture and enjoyed sharing it. 'Karate' back then had a certain mystique America had recently discovered, and many red-blooded American men thought they could take a few lessons and become a One-Man Gang. Not surprisingly, once the macho guys realized how tough the practices were and how hard it was to become proficient, most with this narrow vision dropped out.

That said, Bill and I were not all 'pure'. We had the opportunity to provide a demo for a girls gym class, and for two young, broke, lonely guys, this sounded like a great opportunity to meet and impress chicks.

Bill narrated the demo and we went through the usual segments with basic striking and blocking, kata, kumite, and a staged presentation of self defense to show how the ladies could defend themselves with a few basic moves. The final act was a breaking demo with punches and kicks, culminating with my jumping (flying?) front snap kick to break a board held high by two students standing on chairs. I had made this kick many times before, but anyone who does breaking demos knows that not all boards are the same.

Anyway, with his usual flair, Bill set the stage, emphasizing how difficult this break was and had the young ladies on the edge of their seats. Pumped by the narrative - and the cute young blond in the front row - I took off running, leaped, kicked, 'crack'...and the board remained whole. So, if the crack was not the board, what was it? You got it - my right, big toe metatarsal joint. Bill, being the mastermind he was, explained to the ladies that these things rarely happen and he was sure I wanted another go at it. In reality, that was the farthest thing from my mind as I struggled not to shed tears in front of the ladies. I was willing to bow and leave...except for the young blond in the front row. So, despite better judgment, rapidly swelling toe joint, and increasing pain, I returned to the start position, bowed, took off running, leaped, kicked...and 'crack'...shattering what was left of my big right toe metatarsal. The board remained whole, the young blond shook her head, and I bowed to the board, to the ladies, to everything else in the room and limped off.

There's an obvious lesson in this, but more importantly, a great story of juvenile pride and stupidity. Epilogue: 40 years later the right metatarsal is 3 times the size of the left, I've run several marathons, been married for 36 years... and still wonder what might have happened with the young blond if I had only broken the board.