

November 2011 Newsletter
Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyokai

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December Training Event, Franklin, Kentucky

by Ken Maunz

We have picked a date and training times for our visit to Mr. Herman's club in Franklin Ky. It will be Fri. Dec. 2, 6pm to 9pm and Sat. Dec. 3, 9am to 4pm. Anyone interested may contact Mr. Herman, his info is on the GKK website under dojo directory.

Current and Proposed GKK Projects

by Ed Myers

Hello All,

As you should be aware, we have a wonderful website at GKK.com. It was constructed and is maintained by Greg Dodge (Marketing Director) and Eric Naujock (Webmaster). Over the next few newsletters I would like to share with you some of the current and future activities.

The GKK database and E-mail registration are current activities targeted for this year. With this we will need the school leaders and your help. Mr. Dwight Scales (National) and myself (international) will be contacting the school leaders in the very near future. The East Coast Schools (i.e., Maine, NY, PA) with the assistance of Mr. Allen Zaklad have already provided us with their completed GKK Email List Registration Forms. We are now focusing on the mid-west, west coast and the international clubs.

The following is a description by Mr. Dodge of the two projects. Please read on.

GKK Database Project

This project will create GKK Database which will allow GKK Administrators and School Leaders to input, manage, and access school, student, and GKK membership information (i.e., school and student contact directory, enrollment dates, student promotions, school fees, GKK dues, payment of GKK dues, etc.).

This project will make it easier for the GKK and its School Leaders to manage the massive amount of physical documents and information generated on our schools and their members; make it easier to search information on members, submit annual dues, provide school leaders and GKK administrators with a tool that allows them to manage our organizational and individual schools records and information.

For security reasons we will support various access levels (i.e., GKK Administrators - Full Access; School Leaders - Individual School Access, etc.)

The project will be done using MySQL (free) and PHP (free) so that we can put the database on a server (Web-based).

GKK E-Mail List Registration Project

This project will allow the GKK to build and manage an e-mail database (list) of all of our members worldwide. It will allow the GKK organization to more easily communicate with all of its members worldwide. This project will also allow the GKK to significantly lower the cost of communicating with its members. The information gathered on these forms will also help us in building the GKK Database. The forms should be re-submitted for students whose information has changed, and for new students as they join our programs.

Here is something I heard on a rerun of a (what I thought) was a pretty good show: Vanishing Son:

Two monks, one old and one young were out walking and the younger monk noticed the older one occasionally pulling out a mirror and gazing into it. Realizing vanity was frowned upon by the monks in general, when this continued throughout the day he finally had to ask. "Master, I've seen you during the day gazing into that mirror, please explain this to me." "My young friend", the master replied. "Whenever I begin to feel overwhelmed by my troubles I look into this mirror to remind me not only of the source of my problems, but of the solution as well!"John Henderson

"Through humor, you can soften some of the worst blows that life delivers. And once you find laughter, no matter how painful your situation might be, you can survive it.".....Bill Cosby

Fort Sill. The rocky foothills of Oklahoma. Geronimo was a prisoner of war here. Home to rattlesnakes, scorpions, and the site for USAF Combat Survival School. It was the last two days of the course: SERE. Survival, Escape, Resistance and Evasion. Not a fun time. The goal of SERE was to avoid capture, but the cards were stacked against the teams. We were given pre-determined checkpoints which we had to reach without being captured and we had to make the checkpoints by a certain time. But, no one ever made it to all the checkpoints. Our team did pretty well, being the last team captured. Now, it was off to the concentration camp to be interrogated.

The goal of interrogation was to make the prisoner sign a confession to war crimes. I asked someone who had gone through the training as to how many sign the confession. He said everyone eventually does. When I asked what happens after that, he said nothing happens - the interrogators just release you and you get some hot food, coffee, cigarettes and sit around a campfire to warm up.

There was no sense of time in these last two days, only exhaustion. All I knew was it was very early in the morning, maybe two a.m. when we were tossed out of the truck like unwanted luggage. I noticed the campfire was rather crowded. About a third of those captured had signed the confessions while another third was being tortured. We made up part of the final third and were to stand at attention with a few others as we waited for the Camp Commandant to "greet" us.

Then it happened, the smell of coffee coming from the campfire. Really, really good smelling coffee. That's when the Maxwell House Coffee jingle started playing in my head. Many will remember the famous jingle which was part of a national ad campaign in the sixties. The music notes matched the drops of coffee as they percolated.

We stood at attention for maybe an hour before the Commandant opened his tent, making a grand entrance. He was wearing a uniform with so much decoration, he looked as if he'd spent a thousand dollars buying medals at the military surplus store.

The Commandant launched into a tirade; *"You @#\$\$% Airmen. You come to our country pretending to be our friends. You aren't our @#\$\$% friends. You are our enemies."* He worked in profanity like an artist works in watercolors. *"Friends? Ha! Just a bunch of @#\$\$% thugs and devils who say they want to be our friends."*

Standing next to me was a little guy who was shaking. I couldn't figure out why at the time, it wasn't really that cold. It didn't dawn on me he was terrified.

The Maxwell House jingle kept playing, the Commandant kept screaming, the little guy kept shaking.

Suddenly, after twenty minutes of profane ridicule, the Commandant grew quiet. *"I'm not a bad man. I really am lonely. I long for peace...for friendship. Does anyone want to be my friend? Anyone? Anyone?"* He moved up and down the lines of we prisoners asking for a friend.

To my horror, the little shaking guy was leaning forward trying to get the Commandant's attention. "No!!," I thought to myself. The Commandant was hunting for his first victim; someone to make an example of. I started to reach for the little guy when all of a sudden, his eyes as big as silver dollars shining in the moonlight, and at the top of his lungs, my co-prisoner shouted: "I'll be your friend!!!!"

I lost it. I busted out laughing. Not a little laugh. A full blown knee-slapper. A laugh that echoed off the giant boulders in this God forsaken place. Uh, oh. Big mistake.

Four Air Combat Controllers were on me in an instant, screaming at the top of their lungs. *"You think this is @#\$\$% funny?"* The Maxwell House jingle kept playing in my head. *"Do you know how many Airmen are prisoners of war, you stupid @#\$\$%?"* Another whiff of coffee. I really tried hard to keep a straight face, but it happened again - I started laughing. The Commandant was livid. I thought his head would explode any minute as he screamed in my face. Nope, I just couldn't stop - every few seconds, a suppressed laugh sneaked out. Funny thing, was two of the instructors had to turn their heads because they had started to laugh as well.

Ok, so what does this have to do with karate? Nothing really. It has to do with seeing humor in dire times. It's knowing hard times are temporary and if one tries hard enough, humor can be found in the circumstance. And that laughter becomes contagious in a way.

Last month, four Air Combat Controllers lost their lives along with several members of SEAL Team Six when their helicopter was shot down over Afghanistan. I was reminded of how different my life could have turned out. Of how fortunate I was.

What doesn't kill you only makes you stronger.

Karate has been my anchor through many a storm. A constant where I can lose myself. A moment where I sort those things which will pass from those things which are truly important. I would never trade the hard times. They give me the ability to put things in perspective. The loss of a job, a home or a fortune can all be replaced. As long as you have your loved ones, hard times are only a temporary inconvenience.

An Excerpt From:

The Character of Goju-Ryu **Kata Implications for Experienced Practitioners** by Rich Stamper

Chapter 14: Age Uke

I suspect that the first karate movement you learned was age uke - rising block. And if it was not the first technique, then one of the first group you learned. You have most likely practiced it every class for many years. You can most likely do an excellent rising block. Good for you.

How often do you use rising block when sparring? Seldom? Never? How come boxers don't use rising block? If it's a good block, seems like boxers would use it.

We somehow feel compelled to justify rising block. We spent a lot of time learning and perfecting it. It must be a great move - it might not work for a boxer, and we may not use it in sparring, but it appears in Gekki Sai and we teach it in one-steps. I mean, why would we spend all those years and repetitions if it didn't have value?

Ever wonder about that? Maybe not. Or if you did, perhaps you figured the answer was there, just beyond your current level of understanding. Could it have been that age uke was never intended to be a block? Does it really make sense to leave our head in the path of danger and rely on our arm to protect us? An untrained person wouldn't do that - they'd move their head as they raised their open hands to try to deflect. Instead, we're taught to meet force with force - using the small bone in our forearm to hit - while leaving that noggin right there in harm's way. Ah, the mysteries of the martial arts.

I contend that there are no blocks in karate. Wow! That ought to raise some hackles! Okay, I state it that strongly because that comment goes directly against the grain of our early training and continuing beliefs. If we define blocks as meeting force with force while not moving our body out of harm's way, and relying on our arm (or leg) to protect ourselves, then there are no blocks except as a last ditch, desperate effort. It defies logic to train to sacrifice any of our body parts on a regular basis.

Well, then, you might say, the blocks don't really block - they deflect. I would agree, except that's not how they're normally taught. We teach to hit bone to bone and the strongest bone wins. If I hit straight down on your head with a baseball bat would you use age uke? No? Why not? Aren't we trained to block anything that comes within range of hitting us? Oh, I remember now, it's just hands we are to block - but we will respond as we have trained.

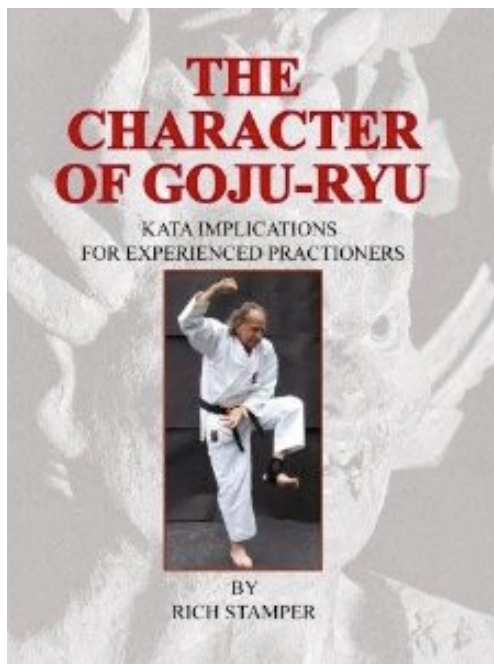
So, then, what the heck is age uke? I know, the name translates to something like up block, so that's exactly what it is. Just like Ford's Mustang is a horse owned by Mr. Ford. Well, we have to call it something, and 'old man grasps monkey's tail' is already taken.

Just for kicks, let's look at the age uke movement as if we didn't know what the movement was intended to accomplish. What it would look like to someone who had not been fortunate enough to have been trained in the use of age uke. To that unknowing person, it might look like lifting something off the table and holding it toward the light to study it. We do leave the arm hanging up there after all. That unknowing person, upon further observation, might discover that the hand is closed and turned palm out, and does eventually return from that extended position. Maybe the movement is to capture a fly on the wing. Because the head is not moved during this operation, it would not be considered to be in harm's way and that possibility wouldn't enter into the assessment. Maybe the movement is in preparation to knock on a door with our knuckles. Is all this silly? Perhaps, but it is to make a point. If it looks like a duck, quacks like a duck, walks like a duck, it's a block??

So what is age uke?

First, please understand that when we learned the movement we were in some established stance and nothing moved but the arms. The idea being that this method would allow us to concentrate on learning just the arm movement without having to think about the rest of the body. However, since we learned age uke while in some stance and not moving our head, it became entrenched that that was how it should be. This is really important: Just because we were originally taught age uke without moving any of the rest of the body out of harm's way doesn't mean that we shouldn't move our head out of the way when doing age uke. Age uke is an arm movement. Period.

The hand faces palm out. That is a natural position when raising the hand in front of the face, especially when seeking protection. If someone threw a small object at your eyes, three things would likely happen. Your eyes might close, you



might move your head, and you might raise your open hand palm out in front of your eyes. Or you might get hit in the eye. Point is, the age uke movement follows how our body moves instinctively, except the hand is closed. Why is the hand closed? It is either a grabber or a hitter. Note that the emphasis is on the hand - not the forearm. Hammer fist is natural and works. Grabbing stuff with the hand is natural and works. Hitting things with the small bone in the forearm is not natural and not a good practice. Don't hit stuff that way. So, if it's a hitter the hammer fist it would be appropriate for impact on any hard surface like the lower jaw, or a soft surface like the throat. If it's a grabber, it will work against almost any empty hand attack by grabbing and pulling to hike-te - just as we were taught to perform the movement. And, the head and body should be free to move as appropriate during the execution of age uke. Try some of this a few times and see what you discover.

Did you try it a few times or is that just too foreign to even consider? I hope you can at least try.

This really isn't about age uke. It's really to help us learn to let go of preconceived notions and observe what the kata is trying to teach. It's to help us understand that what we learned as karate babies may not be the real intent of a movement but a dramatic oversimplification to help us to learn the mechanics.

Age uke is an easy target to use as an example, but the concept should not be limited to age uke. Uses should be discovered not dictated.

Quack, quack.

Did You Know?

by Rich Stamper

Did you know that your organization is what you make it? It's someone else's organization only if you choose not to be actively involved.

Member's Marketplace

I have several karate gis that I am selling. They are Meijin 14 ounce, size 8. I think they are now called PRO on their website You can determine if these fit by going to their website, just type in meijin karate uniforms.

Five have the words Goju Ryu embroidered in kanji on the lapel near the waist. Four of those have a GKK patch already sewn (professionally) on the jacket. The sixth uniform has neither embroidery nor a GKK patch.

These are very heavyweight karate gis. Two have never been worn, two have been worn twice and the plain one has been worn about ten times. I may have laundered the two which haven't been worn to remove the sizing / chemicals used in manufacturing; I cannot remember since they have been sitting in a tote in the original plastic bags (all are in bags) for a few years. All were cold water washed and hung to dry, never put in dryers.

I am asking \$50.00 for each of the ones with kanji and \$40.00 for the plain. They listed for \$120.00 each, unless one purchased five which is what I did. I believe I paid \$80.00 each plus shipping with the bulk discount.

Obviously, I don't wear these much, so I see no point in keeping them. Ten dollars each for shipping.

Thanks,

Bill

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