



Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyokai NEWSLETTER November 2003

DVD's Available

Two new DVD's from the advanced class are now available. The August and September DVD's are ready for purchase. To place an order, please contact Mr. Stamper at gkkg@goju.com. The cost is \$15.00 per disk.

The subject matter of each disk is as follows:

August – Class lead by Mr. Shawn Kidwell, covering SaiFa, the competition version and some of the subtle details of said kata. Also, during the class we explored some bun-kai applications.

September – Class lead by Mr. Kevin Forsythe, where we explored the application end of SanChin.

Please contact Mr. Stamper for your DVD's.

USAKF STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

Cleveland, Ohio-Oct.11, 2003 The USA GKK Competition Team did well on Saturday, October 11, 2003. The USAKF State Championship was held in a little town outside of Cleveland, Ohio. Here are the results our team members had;

Kevin Forsythe

1st-Kata
2nd-Shitei Kata
2nd-Kumite

Ann Manning

1st-Kata
2nd-Kumite

Mary Meade

1st-Kata
1st-Shitei Kata
2nd-Weapons Kata
1st-Kumite

Ben Meade

1st-Kata
1st-Kumite
Dawn Dopp
2nd-Kata
2nd-Kumite

These results are very impressive. Many of the team members were dealt some challenges that they did not expect. Ms. Dopp, with four months of Karate experience and a partial physical handicap, was put into a division with red and brown belts. Mr. Forsythe wound up competing in the 18-34 advanced division, while Mrs. Manning fought a Tang Soo Do stylist who wasn't truly aware of the rules, like no foot to face contact. Even so, the team did very well.

Mr. Kidwell said, "I am proud to be a part of this organization and the things that we are doing. If you are interested in joining the team, DO IT!"

CHARITY CD

One of our Dan rank members, Mr. Ken Klaft, is part of a group known as the CUBE CITY BLUES. This group has produced a CD that features such perennial favorites as "I Got Those I.T. Blues", "The Outlook Blues", and "X-10 Sally". All proceeds go to the benefit of the Mason Bailey Fund.

Mr. Stamper said, "I just listened to the CD. It only takes about fifteen minutes. It's pretty good – cute concept – professionally done."

So now the GKK has it's own famous recording artist! What a great organization the GKK is. Copies are \$5.00 plus postage.

Contact Mr. Klaft at KENKLAFT@accesstoledo.com for your very own piece of history.

THINGS YOU DON'T WANT TO HEAR YOUR SENSEI SAY

- 1) I'm going to try to do this lightly.
- 2) That pressure point is located right here.....
- 3) Now, throw a punch at me.
- 4) Everyone do the next movement in the form, now hold still while I check everyone's stances.
- 5) (only applies if you are a big guy) I like big guys.
- 6) Today we will work on internal strikes. Here, hold this phone book against your chest.
- 7) Just one more ...OK now just one more...
- 8) OK, block the first punch ...
- 9) I like to call myself a groin technologist.
- 10) So, YOU WANT TO DATE MY DAUGHTER!!!!

Editors Note: Number 10 is my favorite. I have a brown belt that is engaged to my daughter.

E-DISCUSSION

Sempai-Kohai Relations. This subject was brought up on the GKK e-mail discussion group. There were some insightful responses and information regarding this subject. These e-mails, with the permission of their originators, are being printed here for our members who do not belong to the e-mail group or do not have e-mail.

9/23/03 **Shawn Kidwell**

"I would like to hear input from everyone on the sempai-kohai relationship. The Japanese think that this is very important in martial arts. In case you are not familiar with the Japanese terms this is known in English as the senior-junior relationship or "mentoring". Lets get a discussion started on this idea.

9/24/03 **Jeffrey Sullens**

Hello from Afghanistan

Sempai/kohai relationship extends way beyond the martial arts. In Japan this relationship exist in schools, business and most other parts of Japanese culture. We here in the west only see it in our martial arts practice. The relationship is a form of mentoring but not always the one on one relationship that we see in the Big Brother program or something like that here in the U.S. In Japan the Sempai/kohai relationship is as much about social structure and hierarchy as it is about mentoring the junior person. In the west this is a hard relationship to establish in the dojo, given that students range a great deal in age. You may have an instructor who is only 25, a white belt who is 40 and a green belt who is 12. So, the age difference makes it hard. Not a lot of 40 year olds are ever going to look at a 12 year old as their Sempai in the true sense of the word. In most dojos in Japan students most often start training when they are young so, the ranks in the dojo are the age's of students are more in line with each other, allowing the relationship to truly be one of senior and junior that exist both in the dojo and out. Take care, Jeff

9/24/03 **Shawn Kidwell**

Thanks for your input Mr. Sullens, very good points. Any ideas how we can learn to have a western version of this concept? Please keep sharing with the group; you are a valuable contributor to this group. Shawn

9/24/03 **Michael Wert**

The kohai-sempai relationship is learned from a Japanese child's earliest years in school (speaking from two years of teaching at public schools in Japan), and it would be impossible to duplicate completely here in America. In the Japanese dojo, you have to understand that the kohai-sempai relationship is not a friendship in our sense. There is this idea of "maintaining distance", certain topics are taboo, personal problems are largely left unspoken, especially in the workplace (speaking from another two years working in a Japanese office). There is nothing more disheartening for a kohai or student, than to hear his sempai of sensei sit down over a couple of beers and hear "Man let me tell you, my wife has been cheating on me and..."

I think what we could learn from the kohai-sempai relationship is to know who can speak in class, and who should shut up, no matter how wrong they think the sempai (and especially sensei) is (unfortunately, even in Japan there are would-be teachers after less than a year of practice). Trust is an important factor, trust in what the sempai is teaching/ advising /instructing at that moment. This doesn't mean blindly following, but be respectful, focus on what they're doing, and then think about it yourself after class.

The age factor is an excellent point, and in Japan, most karate/ judo/ kendo students' start from an early age and thus the kohai-sempai follows age. But in less popular modern budo, like kyudo or iaido, you have many people starting well after there 30's. In this case, the young, yet sempai person, will be in charge, but there will still be an

air of respect to the older person. The sempai's instruction will usually be a bit gentler to the older kohai than to the younger one. Two cents for free. Michael Wert

9/24/03 **Shawn Kidwell**

Mr. Wert, Wow! I wasn't aware that there were so many highly knowledgeable people in our organization. These are excellent points being made on the Sempai-Kohai relationship. Anyone else have ideas?

I hope to hear more from Mr. Sullens and Mr. Wert in the future. Please do not hesitate to start a discussion here guys. I am sure people are learning from your comments. Thanks

9/24/03 **Earl Dennis**

Mr. Sullens, You have some interesting ideas that have made me do some thinking here.

However, I respectfully disagree with your statement that we do not have any Japanese like sempai/kohai relationship in the US or western culture outside the dojo. We most certainly do in the military—particularly in the Marines. Having served in the Marines for six years, I was not only the beneficiary of what we often referred to as a Sea Daddy, but also became one to several other marines as I rose in time, grade and maturity. This often went beyond just mentoring military work, chain of command, leadership, etc. to teaching some of our more headstrong people the value of moderation in drinking, proper public behavior, morals/ethics, and in one very shy case, how to ask a young lady out on a date both properly and successfully.

I do agree that it is hard to establish the proper relationship based on rank or age alone, as most in the US are apt to do. I myself did not go in the Marines till I was 26 and found it difficult to follow

the lead of a 22 year old Corporal or Sergeant with four years of service—initially, but only initially. I was quickly schooled differently by those men and the entire organization. This schooling taught me much. Upper most, it taught me that it is the job of the would-be sempai to establish his position, not on his age but rather on his maturity. The Marines (and other branches of the military as well) have always done an outstanding job in this area.

Age or rank alone prove nothing. It is the sweat we have poured into the floor and the expertise and maturity we have developed from it which marks the sempai as such. But the uneducated student does not know this, and most people coming into the dojo for the first time are lacking in this knowledge. So, it is up to the sensei to first teach this point and prove its validity before anyone assumes such a position. A 12 year old of course has not developed enough maturity to be a sempai regardless of his rank, but the 40 year old should have enough, even though he has not the martial arts rank. Proper senior/junior relationships are often propelled by maturity, rank or skill are only secondary. Where as you seem to be saying that the rank alone is the basis of a proper relationship. As I have said maturity and maturation has more to do with a proper sempai/kohai relationship than does just rank or age.

I would suggest that we take a page from Japanese history to delve into for a good perspective on this seemingly incorrect alignment of age and rank. During the olden times, the lord of a given place might very well be a young man in his twenties or even early teens (perhaps even 12 years old) while his sempai (as well as

much of his army) were decidedly older and may have been even less skilled in the arts of war. In the modern dojo case the relationship is skewed along similar lines. Namely a higher ranking and , perhaps, more skilled, younger man teaching the art (leading the army over) an older man, while simultaneously learning maturity from him. Granted the ideal is older and higher rank leading the younger and lower rank, especially since this is the easiest to do. But it is the maturity that must hold sway in the sempai/kohai relationship. To that end the elder must be schooled enough to be humble in the art, while at the same time giving the maturity to the younger person. In such an event it is the sensei's job to teach the 40 year olds and 12 year olds what their roles are. If done properly, both will benefit. In that way the older student, like the general, becomes the sempai for maturation of the green belt while he becomes humble and uses it to learn the skills from the greenbelt. Granted few 40 year olds will do well in this situation, but more would succeed if their teachers did a better job of teaching the reasoning behind the relationship.

Ideals based on age and rank are nice and can provide much comfort and stability, but in the end they are just that, ideals or dreams, thus figments of our own imaginations, which reality and our own self-control must rule over. Earl

9/24/03 **Michael Wert**

Aha! Mr. Dennis you've nailed it! Where in the West do we see the modern Japanese sempai/kohai relationship? In the military! And that truly does tell us a lot about the nature of the sempai/kohai institution in Japan – one of disciplining the body in the Foucauldian sense of keeping people in line, doing the “correct” thing, control etc.

What we have to remember about any historical institution, be it the idea of sempai/kohai, “harmony” (wa), the operation of the modern dojo, etc. is that they are always changing. My bet is that the sempai/kohai relationship changed in the early twentieth century as Japan was gearing up for war (this is an educated guess from my own pursuing a Ph.D. in Japanese history out here in Southern California) and that Edo period was completely different.

The same has been said about the modern karate dojo, with a lot of “osu”ing , grim looks, etc. and the more relaxed atmosphere of dojo in Okinawa. I've never trained in Okinawa, but I have trained in Kobudo (not the Okinawa weaponry but Japanese swordsmanship) in Japan and can tell you that the atmosphere was drastically different from the more modern kendo dojo in Japan, Kendo being the epitome and origin of militarism within the dojo, that has influenced karate since before the war. (the first volume of the Koryu book series in an excellent resource for learning more about the difference between old and new – see www.koryu.com But that is off the topic Michael 9/25/03 **Ed Boyd**

What does the Sempai Kohai relationship add that is of beneficial nature to the learning environment? I never minded being Kohai. Kohai is a role I always enjoyed. It comes from having good Sempai I guess. I am not so at ease with the Sempai role that I have seemed to fall into by default these last few years. I guess that happens as you start getting older. ☺ For instance sometimes I get held up at the office especially if there is a client/server problem. (I can only work on this stuff when the users are out of the system.) If I get to the dojo late, everyone

stops their training then they turn and bow to me. I don't like that, I'm late, it's my fault keep training. But I don't say anything I simply return courtesy and do nothing which upsets the dojo culture because that is the way. I have recently gotten involved in submission fighting. No belts, no rank and everybody respects everybody and plays hard. This is a martial art culture that is quickly growing on me. Ed Boyd

9/25/03 **Jeffrey Sullens**

Mr. Dennis How are you sir? Well the military is something I do understand as I am currently deployed in Afghanistan and run combat missions every day. I have been in the Army since I was 17. I am now 30. First the Army or Marine Corp in your case are extreme and not exactly on par with how a modern dojo in America operates. The military is an absolute dictatorship there are no grey areas regardless of age. I have the rank and if I say so, that's that. Now of course a mature soldier or leader of soldiers will welcome the advice of those below him when it is valid. The example of the military is perhaps a good one when compared to pre war Japan as stated by Mr. Wert and keep in mind that the modern or Genbudo karate that is taught in the U.S. and Japan with it's drilling up and down the floor to a senior counting out ichi, ni, san, is a result of Japan gearing up for WWII consider that when Karate was introduced to the main land, Japan was at war not with the U.S. but in China and Korea. Our very own Yamaguchi Sensei was even a prisoner of war in China (Manchuko) at that time. I have never trained in Okinawa but I have trained in a number of Okinawan karate dojo in the U.S. both in Shorin Ryu and Goju Ryu and there is a much more relaxed environment where a more

traditional Sempai/Kohai relationship exist. The Sempai float around the dojo making corrections as needed and much of training is individual and not group focused with the exception of warm ups and the occasional group kata. Aikido and judo which are both pure Japanese also usually have a relaxed environment where the sempai sort of float from pair to pair of students offering advice and correcting movements.

The sempai/kohai relationship should be one of nurturing and bringing the student or kohai along the path. Not one of hazing or breaking down and forcing into a pre-determined mold as is often done in the military. In my karate education of 16 years I have always had sempai who were senior to me in age, rank and maturity. I may be wrong in my thinking but it just works better that way for me. Even F.A.J.K.O. list age as part of it's requirements for rank. I believe the G.K.K. also uses the F.A.J.K.O. guidelines for rank or at least they use to when I joined in 1998. I hope we can keep this going and get input from as many members as we can. Good choice of topic Mr. Kidwell.

9/25/03 **Earl Dennis**

Mr. Sullens How correct you are. The military is an extreme case compared to the modern dojo, but then the modern dojo is an extreme case compared to society in general. The military itself is a dictatorship, as it should be. My point was that there is a sempai/kohai relationship inherently in our beloved organization of frustration and joy. Our culture is not devoid of such an institution, save for the dojos alone. Granted in the military it may not take a loving fatherly appearance, but when the Major looks to the elder Sergeant Major and asks, "What do you think Sergeant Major?" it is there. As well as when you have a young

screwball Private who just needs and begs the same Sergeant Major for that extra midnight duty over the weekend. As you state the "mature soldier or leader of soldiers" will welcome the advice of those below him when it is valid". The sempai/kohai relationship is more of maturation than correcting what specific item that may be wrong.

Now I, personally, would not use pre-war as the division line. I know I am splitting hairs here, but I shall do so anyway. The reason being that much of the training in the dojos did not change till after it became more focused on a sport orientation and popular in the US say somewhere in the late 1950's to early 1960's. This is readily apparent from those who originally trained in Okinawa after the war and brought us this inheritance. In any case, the sempai/kohai relationship still remains with its' prime objective – maturation of both sempai and kohai.

I agree with you about Mr. Kidwell. Mr. Kidwell thank you. Mr. Sullens, keep up the good work soldier. Hoo-rah. Earl

9/26/03 **Jeffrey Sullens**

I do agree with you on your points, Mr. Dennis and thank you for the good conversation. I hope there are more in the future. I need the stimulation while here in the mid-east. Please take care. Jeff

9/26/03 **Earl Dennis**

Thank you Jeff. I have enjoyed the talk as well. I am looking forward to more of your thoughts. Keep your head down. Earl

9/26/03 **Shawn Kidwell**

I guess I have found some idea that many have a point of view on. This is great! The reason I didn't make any statements about the sempai/kohai relationship is I wanted to hear from our group of experienced

people. I have learned about each of your and I am glad.

My feelings are a little different however. I feel that sport has not changed Karate at all. (I know somebody won't like this statement). I feel it is the American paradigm that has changed the atmosphere, the focus on kihon and kata away from combat and bunki as well as other elements of training.

Also, many do not realize that Asian people are respectful to a point of discipline that seems militaristic everywhere. They tend to exhibit this idea of sempai/kohai at home, at work, at the practice hall, and even at play. The idea is that they are very strict on themselves all of the time. There is always someone in their lives that they can look to about answers, other than their boss/ sifu/ sensei. I am not sure if war is the center of this culture difference. It very well could be. We Americans tend to take our freedom for granted.

I do not however feel that we need to copy anyone. But feel that we can learn from anyone. I think that the sempai/kohai relationship in the dojo is a very beneficial thing for the students. If I am a student with only one teacher, I will only learn one point of view. Also, I will tend to develop a sort of belief that my sensei is the only person qualified to teach me.

Lastly, from my experience it is very healthy for the kohai to always strive to be better than their sempai. This keeps the sempai on their toes and in turn, they learn lessons from their junior. Domo Shawn
9/26/03 **Michael Wert**
Where to start ...

Well, we really have to leave essentialism out of this (and orientalism – Edward said died the other day). What is essentialism? “Asians are ..(fill

in stereotype)”. The Chinese, Koreans and Japanese (which I assume is what is meant by ‘asian’ but who knows) have very different views on the whole sempai/kohai institution. Also, the sempai/kohai relationship differs even within different domains in Japan. For example, the s-k relationship in a college karate club is much stricter than in the workplace among adults, which is in turn different from the Japanese self-defense forces.

Right now there is the phenomenon known as “parasite-single” with the more popular version “furiita” that has existed for a while. This is the growing trend of people in their 20's living at home, not going to college, and not working full time. Just living off their parents. And having lived in Japan, I can tell you there is a lot of this. Does this sound like people being hard on themselves?

As for sport not changing karate... Sincerely, Michael
9/26/03 **Shawn Kidwell**
You have obviously missed my point.

You are looking at the “labels” themselves and not the ideas. I don't want to get into a ten-page story on my life, but I have noticed that successful “asian” (Japanese, Chinese, Hong Kong, Korean, Thai, I can go on..) people that I have known all share a common element. They have respect for a mentor relationship, and utilize it often.

I told you this is why I did not make my points first. I am not a military person. So I do not have the lingo that you can identify with. If I had elaborated first, it seems no one would have joined this conversation.

Here we go. Karate is not Japanese, it is not Okinawan and it is not Chinese, nor

American. The Karate that has influenced your life and mine has been influenced and changed in some way by all of these cultures.

Being a place of discussion I would prefer that if a comment that I make does not make sense to you, you would question about it or ask me if I could rephrase it. I cannot help but feel that your reply has some amount of attitude behind it.

I am American and my wife is Chinese-Malaysian. I practice Okinawan and Japanese Karate-do Goju-Ryu as well as cross train in many other styles. Maybe I should have used the word “eastern”. I was making a suggestion of my views, not stating fact, or trying to influence anyone. I want to know how we can take the ideas that are viable from this usually strict relationship (sempai/kohai) and apply it effectively to our American Dojos and have the idea work. More or less, make it an American idea.

Any ideas? Shawn
9/27/03 **Allen Zakland**
Hi folks, I'd like to join in this stimulating discussion. I think I agree with something that Shawn said, that karate changes as it is practiced in different cultures. The more relaxed atmosphere in the US in general has a lot to do with Americans as more relaxed and less into formal up and down relationships (except for the military). To me this is a good thing, because I believe karate is such a spiritually fulfilling path, and few Americans would practice in the traditional Yamaguchi style.

What I think is central in the kohai/sempai relationship whether it be practiced in Asia or US or wherever, is respect. Respect may be shown in one culture by absolute obedience, and in another by kidding

around with the sempai. In our dojo there is informal conversation in the dojo and first names are commonly used. Nevertheless, there is a strong culture of respect from kohai to sempai, and just as much from sempai to kohai. Sempai teach more by setting an example than by correcting kohai. I learned from Mr. Yamakura (who speaks the "I am here to learn" himself) that all of us are teachers and all of us are learners. And whether we be dan level or kyu level, we must respect each other as fellows on the spiritual journey of Karate. Thanks for listening, Zak

9/27/03 **Shawn Kidwell**

Allen, I think we see things in a similar way. My school though traditional isn't strict. I have had experience on both sides of said relationship, and feel that it was needed. Many students do not take on this relationship on their own, I wonder if people in the organization think it is a good idea to suggest to our students that they adopt these ideas, or if we should let them be relaxed and develop it (or not) on their own. Shawn

Editor's Note: These messages were generated on our E-group and have put forth some interesting views. We would like to have any and all input from our non E-group members on this subject. Please forward them to me at my address at the end of this newsletter. They will be printed, in their entirety, in our next issue. The more information and points of view we generate the more we **All** learn. Thanks for the debate gentlemen. Keep it coming.

***Fear causes hesitation,
and hesitation
causes your worst
fears
to come true.***

WORLD CHAMPION'S KUMITE SEMINAR

NOVEMBER 22, 2003 1pm – 4pm

NOVEMBER 23, 2003 10am –12noon Lunch break 12noon – 1pm

1pm – 3:30pm 4pm ~ BELT TEST

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NOVEMBER 2003

DATE	FUNCTION	TIME	LOCATION
5	Nat'l GKK Team	6:30 pm	Sho Yo Kan Dojo OHIO
12	Nat'l GKK Team	6:30 pm	Sho Yo Kan Dojo OHIO
19	Nat'l GKK Team	6:30 pm	Sho Yo Kan Dojo OHIO
22-23	World Champ. Kumite Seminar	See ad above	Richmond BC Canada
26	Nat'l GKK Team	6:30 pm	Sho Yo Kan Dojo OHIO

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