

January 2018 Newsletter  
Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyokai

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**New Year**

By Motoo Yamakura

I wish everyone and their families a Happy New Year. Thank you to all the members who work hard for the GKK

**Some News from Aum-Dojo – Israel**

By Zorri Eliraz

**ITKF world championship 2017**

During the first week of December 2017, the annual ITKF world championship was held in Montecatini-Italy with 44 countries participating. Israel's Traditional Karate national team also participated, and 2 of our juniors were part of the team: Ilay Astel and Stefan Elyahu. It was their first time participating in such an international tournament, and they did great. They kept a positive and calm spirit, despite many physical and emotional challenges. Stefan is ranked 9th in the cadet category, where he was the youngest and competed against several shodans. Ilay is ranked 5th in the junior category, and he too competed against older and more experienced karateka. Those are outstanding results! Bear in mind that the judges were official ITKF judges, which are meticulous and expect the highest quality of the participants. Ilay and Stefan are real Karateka and we are very proud of them.



We stayed another day in Italy and did some tourism.



**"Dento Karate Israel" end of the year event**

On December 18th the "Dento Karate Israel" (Israeli Traditional Karate Association) held a special training event. There were participants of 4 different traditional karate styles from all over Israel, including a group of the GKK Israel - Aum-Dojo.

The kids were divided into several age groups and asked to perform katas in front of teachers (which were from different karate styles). The teachers gave them feedback about how to improve their body dynamics, kime, continuation and transition. Afterwards a tournament was held for the older kids. Three of our kids received medals in their respective age groups: Amikam Weis (1st place), Ilay Astel (2nd place), Itamar Shetrit (3th place).



It was amazing not only to see several traditional karate styles together but also to connect people of different culture, background, religion and beliefs - see picture of our host Mr. Morad Amash, mayor of the hosting Arab town of Jesar A-Zarka, taking part in the Jewish ceremony of lighting the Hanukah candles.

Lots of lights and miracles happened over there...



## Fauda – second season

Fauda, the award winning Israeli television show, will soon air their second season. This time too, Sensei Nimrod Astel trained and coached the actors. He also did the action choreography. Several Aum-Dojo students also participated as action extras...



Sensei Astel also participated as an Arab extra.

See you soon on TV...

Wishing all GKK members a great year 2018 from all of us here – the Karateka at Aum-Dojo!

# How A Technique From Tensho Kata Saved My Life On The Street

By Detective Glenn Cunningham



As an undercover detective, this is just one of several stories I could tell based on this assignment. Let me introduce myself. My name is Glenn Cunningham. I was an undercover Police Officer/ Detective for the NYPD. I worked the streets of Brooklyn South for five years looking to buy any kind of drugs and guns. During this assignment, I used my knowledge of the Martial Arts to save my life in every situation you can possibly imagine. Let's take, for instance the tight situation I found myself in while performing a 7 AM to 3 PM tour. Just try to picture this as a martial artist.

You're in a small hallway, in a small housing project, five stories high, trying to buy some crack (cocaine) from some people you know are definitely dealing. How do you know? You ask! You ask the guy who just walked away from them with a big smile on his face. He tells you everything you want to know, from the brand name to the amount. So you're all set. Just go into the hallway, hand them the money and leave. But not today! Today these guys are feeling a little nervous. They don't know who you are and want to ask you some questions and feel you out to see if you're the man (police officer).

Now the last thing you want to do is get into a shouting match with these guys. This raises the suspicions of the dealers. Drug users usually do whatever the dealer says, because they want their drugs fast. So now all this is going through my mind and I now find myself in the hallway with some money in my hand. I approach a guy in the hallway and asked him if he was "doin." This means if he or anyone else was selling drugs there. He then signals yes and calls his boy over, who's standing under the stairs, to see if he knows who I am. At the same time the guy who was standing in front of me snatches the money out of my hand and a struggle ensues.

Now picture this: I'm 6'4" about 215 lbs. with hair down to my shoulders and have been studying the martial arts, (Goju-ryu Karate) at that time for about 15 years. I was 29 years old and what I considered at the time to be in pretty good shape. It was the afternoon, but the hallway was dimly lit. The guy in front of me grabs the money and we started struggling. I reach for my weapon since this has now escalated to a robbery and I was in a life-threatening situation. My undercover weapon was drawn.

Let's face it; these guys weren't there to talk about the weather. As I point my weapon at this undesirable, he grabs the revolver in such a way that the hammer of the gun won't go back to fire. He's holding the cylinder. He begins to twist the weapon to the left and my arm is being twisted because my fingers are still holding on. At this point it was still only a fight between him and me. I know that if he gets my weapon I'm a dead man.

As an undercover you have to choose if you want to wear a bulletproof vest, but the good U/C's never do. As we're struggling a huge woman comes into the hallway from behind me and I figure great, some help. No way. She just happens to know this person and decides to jump on my back and start to scratch and pull at my face. Now remember the guy under the stairs? He also begins to jump in, hoping to take me to the ground and take care of me. So now it's three against one.

Let me stop here for a minute to explain to you what kind of training I've gone through as far as conditioning my hands. I was taught to constantly train your hands to be ready for any type of situation. Hitting the makiwara (a striking board or post that is often padded) is a big part of the training. Proper hitting strengthens the hands, the wrists, the forearms, the hips and the shoulders. It teaches how to correctly throw a punching technique with kime (focus). Training these parts of the body takes complete dedication. Most students are over anxious and start out too quickly, resulting in injuries, and they never train on the makiwara again. But with proper supervision and correct technique, you will learn how to focus for proper hitting during jyu-kumite (free sparring). The makiwara isn't the only training I've done but it's the constant.

Other training included: several thousand push-ups, smacking stone with both sides of the hands, forearm conditioning and some iron palm training along with nirgi-game (clay gripping jars) and chi-shi (stone weight). When you put this together with years of training with kata and free sparring, also several ippons, I'm told you start to become a martial artist. One last thing I want to point out before we go back to my situation: Tensho kata. Miyagi Chojun Sensei (the founder of Goju-ryu karate) developed this kata to complement Sanchin kata. It is referred to by a couple of different names, such as the "breathing hands" and the "whipping hands". It is softer than Sanchin kata in breathing and in its fast smooth movements. The movements were taught to me by DeBaise Sensei when I was his uke (the attacker in two man practice drills) and on the end of vicious strikes of Tensho kata. At my dojo this kata is done after Sanchin kata. And Tensho was the first thing that came to my mind during the encounter in the hallway (since its moves perfectly fit the needs of confined space combat).

Now remember this is all happening in a matter of seconds! Something happens to you when you're fighting for your life. You change somehow. I don't know how but something happens to you. Your spirit seems to become very strong. (If you know what I'm talking about, at the end of this article I'll leave my address, drop me a line to confirm what I'm talking about).



This move from Tensho kata was used to strike the assailant in the side of the head with one hand after the assailant had grabbed Detective Cunningham's other wrist and revolver. Before striking the assailant in front Cunningham had first quickly withdrawn the same arm to his side, a move that provided an elbow strike into the person who had jumped onto his back.

(yes, I too was handcuffed).

I was a little curious about why the woman who was on my back suddenly went screaming down the hallway. One of the cops later told me that she was pregnant and that she was in pain from me hitting her with my elbow (a reverse elbow backwards is part of Tensho and many other kata when the practitioner is doing another technique to the front). She should not have jumped on my back. Now don't get me wrong, I'm not superman and don't pretend to be. I just did what I was trained to do - survive.

My final thought is that if I had not been trained properly in the martial arts and the bunkai of Tensho kata (and other kata too), this situation would have ended differently. The main attack was with the guy who grabbed my weapon and if I had not trained both sides of my hands to hit equally (using the palm heel strike) he could have pulled my revolver away from me and I would not have been able to write this article.

This was an actual undercover operation for the New York City Police Department. It took place in the confines of the 72nd Pct. by the Brooklyn South narcotics Bulldog team, March, 1993.

**Glenn Cunningham**, married 24 years with triplet girls, is a retired NYPD Second Grade Detective with 20 years experience working in Homicide Investigation, Computer Crimes, Kidnapping, Hostage Negotiations, City Wide Gangs, Street Robberies, Narcotics and International Terrorism and the NYPD Intelligence Div. and has also received the prestigious NYPD Medal of Valor

He has studied the martial arts for over 35 years and is the owner of the Kouketsu Dojo, a branch of the Masaji Taira Sensei's Okinawa Gojuryu Karate-Do Kenkyukai. Cunningham Sensei was graded by Miyazato Sensei in Sept. 1999 to Roku-Dan (6th Dan) and in 2008 he was promoted to Kyoshi Nana-Dan (7th Dan) by the Jundokan grading board members. In 2012 Taira Sensei replaced the Kouketsu Dojo Shibuchō with his own from the Kenkyukai along with Kyoshi Nana-Dan ranking. On 09/14/2014 Kyoshi Glenn Cunningham was promoted to Hachidan, 8th Dan by Taira Sensei

### **Training Philosophy of Taira Sensei**

Most of Taira Sensei's Karate career has revolved around his focus on the Bunkai of the Goju Kata. He has painstakingly dissected the kata and trained his body to the point where he has mastered the inner workings of Gojuryu. Taira Sensei's Bunkai is unusual in his insistence on working the Kata in sequence, rather than picking techniques from the kata in isolation. He is also adamant that the Kata do not be changed to perform Bunkai.

We thank Detective Cunningham for allowing us to share his article with our readers. Email; [kouketsujuku@aol.com](mailto:kouketsujuku@aol.com)  
[Kouketsu Dojo 278 Lincoln Ave Staten Island, NY](http://Kouketsu Dojo 278 Lincoln Ave Staten Island, NY)

OK, so it's three against one, how not to get killed? Undercover time is now over, you're a police officer and your cover is blown. What I remember, I'll try to explain as best as I can. The woman on my back was suddenly off my back and screaming, running out of the building. As for the guy who grabbed my revolver, I remember striking him twice with my left hand (a move from Tensho kata where the practitioner hits forward and down with his palm heel from a high chamber position) into the ear location, which forced him to release the grip he had on the revolver and drop to his knees (this was the move that saved my life).

The guy behind him threw a punch at me but only grazed me. I countered with an upper cut that did not catch him solid because he was moving backwards. He then took off up the stairs. Remember this is all happening within seconds with no room to move! Now the guy who first went down from the strikes of Tensho is now grabbing my legs and trying to bite me. These street people don't give up easily. At this point the back up team is starting to move onto the block. There are some things that I cannot talk about. For instance, how did they know when to move in just then? Sorry CONFIDENTIAL.

At this point, I don't know how or from which kata it came or what I exactly did, but the guy trying to bite me ends up with his head through the glass part of the door and his ear is hanging on by a thread of skin. The back-up team arrives and they arrest the woman. They come into the building and seal it off. Eventually they catch the guy who ran upstairs and collar him too. The guy who went to the hospital was screaming something about seeing the devil and that he (the devil) took his ear. I, as an undercover, was screened so as not to be seen too much in the area

## Tensho As a Required Kata for Nidan

As told by Yamakura Shihan, 5/23/14

At shodan testing for nidan, Tensho is the required kata but the word required is not as we normally interpret it. Tensho must be demonstrated to the judges to show the beginnings of understanding. With time it will mature.

If there is a product – for this example a phone – and the cost is \$30.00, we see this is as if we have \$30.00 we can buy / have the phone. \$30.00 = phone. This is U.S. thinking.

At shodan, we learn Tensho. It is the required kata. This does not mean learn Tensho – receive nidan. It does not.

In the Tada dojo there was white belt and black belt. There was no green or brown. As a white belt you learned Kihon kata. At black belt you learned Uke No kata.

Now think of Sanchin and Tensho. At white belt you learn Sanchin. At black belt you start to learn Tensho.....You are starting the journey.

Performing Tensho does not necessarily equal receiving nidan. You can expect to be asked to perform them all.

## Why We Continue to Do Basics

By Carol Gittins

While the concept of always learning something new seems desirable, repetition, especially mindful repetition, is key to mastering a skill.

As an example, the high block is a basic movement. We should continue to practice it just as ballet dancers continue to practice their stances and leg lifts. We should continue to practice it just as Michael Phelps practices his swimming strokes because that is how we and he avoid the degradation of form and function. He doesn't just jump in the pool and set world records. He practices and sharpens his technique—it's called "training."

When people's performance begins to decline because of aging or injury, they should continue to practice the high block to develop adaptations that will maintain the block's effectiveness. (And yes, it is an effective block. One of my students used it to prevent a 12-foot long 6x6 post from falling onto his head. I used it to deflect a poorly thrown softball when I was umpiring at home plate.)

And because we have done high block for years, it can serve as a diagnostic for our physical condition every time we use it. Doing the high block, run through this check list:

- Is the rotator cuff moving without impingement?
- Is the fist fully closed?
- Does the opposite elbow fully come back to chamber?
- Is there tightness in the back?
- Does the deflecting arm complete an ude uke as the blocking arm takes control?
- Does the wrist of the blocking arm stop in front of the forehead at the most effective distance?
- Are both shoulders down?
- Are the hips level and the shimo tanden engaged?
- Is the stance correct?
- Does the weight shift slightly with the block?
- Is the breathing linked to the movement?
- Are the contraction and relaxation of the muscles in sync?
- Does the forearm rotate so the hand finishes with the little finger up just as the block finishes?
- Is the attack visualized?

If all that was involved with the high block was flinging the arm into the air somewhere in front of your face, there is no reason to keep practicing it. But the high block is not the alphabet because the alphabet is a static thing that is not affected by age, injury or growth (physical, mental, spiritual). The high block is an action, and as an active thing, it is affected by all of the conditions that affect the body. This means we need to keep practicing the high block, and the front kick, and the front punch because our bodies, minds and understanding of the martial arts keep changing and developing.

Additionally, we do learn the alphabet at every level of education as well as throughout life. After using the alphabet for reading, writing and speaking in our native language, we learn to use it for foreign languages and mathematics. It is used in music and knitting, in construction and legal documents, and in assembling IKEA bookcases. Familiarity with the alphabet makes it easier to use in applications other than its primary uses.

Additional thoughts from members of the KinNamiKan:

BG—In the simplest form, basics are isolated movement coordination drills and “muscle memory” subconscious response exercises. Basics usually focus on the simplest fundamental interpretations of a given philosophy. Thus, basics should facilitate both the introduction to and refinement of the most important specific aspects of practical application. For this reason, basics are usually taught and practiced using the maximum allowable range of motion. During practical application most techniques, through necessity, must be abbreviated in order to respond in a timely manner to need (defense) or opportunity (offense). As much as possible, the abbreviated (practical) techniques must still contain as many of the biomechanical advantages provided by the full basic application. In order to assure the effective practical application of technique, the practitioner must have already spent significant time practicing the full maximum force, position and timing of basics. Therefore, basics are usually taught and practiced from what might be called a full windup or compression position and travel through the maximum safe range of motion. When adequately practiced, the exaggerated movements of basics should be easily translated into effective abbreviated practical applications. Advanced practitioners can and should practice and refine many of these abbreviated movements during basics practice as well.

AM—I think of practicing basics more like doing musical scales, or parsing a sentence, rather than individual letters of the alphabet. The movements form the fundamental building blocks of all our advanced techniques. The foundation has to be solid, or the building isn't.

CJ--Michael Jordan made his early fame in basketball with lay ups and inside shots. At mid-career he started staying late after team practice to work on his outside shot – a veteran and future hall of fame player working on simple basics. And of course, he became famous in the last half of his career for his outside 3-pointers.

YB—Here is my favorite Japanese proverb: 「千里の道も一歩から (senri no michimo ippo kara). It means everybody begins with the first step (or Rome was not built in a day). This proverb tells us that no matter how big the endeavor is, we will be successful if we employ steady effort from the first step. Therefore, practicing basics is important for learners.

To succeed, we sometimes should retrace past experiences. I think that practicing basics is a measurement of how enhanced the person is physically and mentally. I regard the basic training as that which makes the learner return the starting point.

CS—I had lunch with my co-worker who trains in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu this week. We grapple from time to time, mostly him teaching me a technique or two. We talked about the idea of practicing the same basic techniques over and over. He said that "In BJJ, you see a lot of movements, grappling set ups, sprawls, full-guards/half guards, etc. It's nice to know high level technical stuff like these to challenge yourself, pushing your envelope to all possibilities. But the truth is, in most grappling matches, basic techniques are often times used by high ranking practitioners to win. It is not the flying arm bar or the North-South techniques but the basic 'rear naked choke' or the simplest arm bar that they employ to win."

In Arnis, it's the same thing. Flashy multi-angled attacks were often times being taught to students after years of dedication because the Guro (teacher) wants the basics to be drilled and implanted in the hearts and minds of every Eskrimadors. Even in advanced movements, execution of basics must be studied and if needed, scrutinized so that the practitioner is humbled and checked (of course in a constructive, empowering way).

LS—The response reminds me of the movie “Shirō Dreams of Sushi.” It’s a true story about a sushi owner/chef of a very small sushi bar, located in the lower basement of a Tokyo subway entrance, who received the Michelin 3-star award for culinary excellence. It was because he mastered the art of offering the same excellent sushi, day by day, by following the exact same standards day by day. Even in his daily commute to work, he would sit in the same seat on the train every day!

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