

# Shorinjiryu Shinzen Kyokai Shimbun

## Summer 2009

### *From the Desk of the President*

Clearly, the economic worldwide downturn has affected most of our member schools as well as mine. Registration has shown a decline and in some cases a substantial one. While schools are doing what they deem necessary to survive, they have not dumbed down their standards, standards that have proven to provide for superior students both within and without the dojo. Hopefully, this economic recession will end and the dojos will once again be flush with students.

The first six months of 2009 has been a whirlwind time period for me. I have had the opportunity to attend the Winter Regional Tournament, 15<sup>th</sup> Invitational Island Budokan Bogujutsu Tournament sponsored by Shorinjiryu Kenkukai, the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Kenyukai Watanabe-ha Invitational, the 13th International Shindo Budokan Koshiki Invitational, 1st Annual Central Jersey Tournament and the Spring Regional Father's Day Tournament. All these events proved to be highly enjoyable to attend and I truly hope that those who did had the same response as I had. Unfortunately, due to a medical condition, I was unable to attend the 2nd London Ontario Invitational which from my reports was also highly well received by its participants.

This Shimbun is an abbreviated one and formatted in a simple form as many of usual contributors have been very much involved in various concerns such as registration, work, graduations and preparations for the summer. I am certain that the next edition would have more of the great articles from our member instructors.

I wish everyone a most enjoyable summer.

Myron M. Lubitsch, Hanshi

### ***TRADITIONS***

In my travels to other martial art schools throughout the past several years, I have witnessed the misunderstanding of what makes traditional Karatedo so prolific. We all know that it is a martial art discipline but what does that mean? Where does the formal behavior come from and what role does it play in our training? Our teachers and those of us who carry on their teaching spend time insisting, I hope, on keeping the traditions. Unfortunately, over the years, there are some who have set aside the past traditions and have labeled them as being useless with no apparent benefit. They have lost their respect for the history of the martial arts and the masters who developed them.

*Traditional Schools*

Today the more traditional schools have to deal with new students who grew up in a society pretty much doing whatever they want. The markets are flooded with advertisements about martial arts that teach you secret methods to kill, all in just a few short weeks. The new students who join a traditional school find out fast that they no longer have free speech nor do they have freedom of movement or choice. The sensei is in charge, is not questioned and is never wrong. This concept is unnerving to those who first enter training and there are some long term students who never quite get used to it. The traditional schools have their formal behavioral patterns many of which were handed down to them. These customs/traditions are strictly adhered to and never questioned. Historic traditions are upheld and the utmost respect is given to those who came before them. Everyone strives for self perfection and the art form handed down to them is practiced diligently in this endless quest.

### *History/ Customs*

To better understand where most of our formal traditional routines come from, some aspects of Okinawan history must be told. At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century in Japan, Shogun Ieyasu Tokugawa felt that the only way he could keep control of those under his rule was to mandate the way they would live. Independent thought was to be discouraged and even characterized as being rude. Every aspect of people's lives had to be controlled. The clothes they wore, the houses they lived in, and where they could go were just a few of the restrictions. The people developed routines of organized movement (kata) in doing their daily activities. Everyone tried to perform them alike, thereby escaping punishment. Some examples of practiced disciplined routines were: bowing, preparation of tea, dressing alike, hair arrangement, lining up in a straight line, being sure not to cross in front of someone , not speaking unless being spoken to first, not raising your voice and moving quickly to accomplish a task demanded of you. Exactness of the ritual/form meant you could live a longer life. Without weapons the native Okinawan were vulnerable and so they began to practice their martial arts at night and even disguised their movements in dance routines. The Shogun maintained his power base for many years in his disciplined society.

### *Martial Arts/ Money*

While accepting money for instruction is as old as the inception of martial arts, there are a few who have made making money their primary goal. Money has become their god. There are many ways to make money teaching the martial arts. The eclectic schools of martial arts have decided to set aside the early traditions and create their own agenda feeling that it is the only way to be successful. In that type of school, there is worry about what parents say. Students have input as to what they want to learn. They have automatic credit card charges towards dues and hardly anyone fails a test for promotion. Some have come up with ideas about mandating private lessons prior to group classes. Another idea is to have peer teachers as opposed to having a qualified teacher actually doing the teaching. Peer teaching is not a new concept as it was instituted in the 1960s resulting in the watered down karate of today. Contracts, Black Belt Clubs, video instruction, internet promotions, additional levels of rank using stripes or stars are just a few of the ways that are used to keep students in attendance. The teacher feeds the students ego in order to keep the cash flow coming in. The free enterprise system of our great democracy fosters the growth of commercialized karate schools where teachers sell themselves and not their martial art. After

all it's the AMERICAN WAY.

### *Eclectic Tournaments*

Unfortunately, I continue to see the eclectic tournaments where judges joke around, wear sneakers, multi-colored gi and belts with cell phones and iPods hanging from their belts. They have patches all over their gi to the extent that they resemble walking billboards. Some even make a pathetic attempt to utter some oriental words and yes, even make a feeble attempt at bowing. They feel that if they do not relax the standards and turn the tournament into a social event the attendance will dwindle. I decided to attend a tournament locally to compete. I was assured by the promoter that I would be competing against other traditional forms. After arriving and getting ready to compete, I was surprised to find that the only traditional aspect of my division was that they bowed incorrectly. Everyone had competed with a modified or made up kata. The judges embraced the modification of forms by awarding high points to those who did cart wheels across the floor and twirled around aluminum sai and tooth pick bo. These promoters and competitors alike have lost the purpose behind why they were there. They have lost respect for the history of the martial arts and all the benefits of its discipline.

### *Shorinjiryu*

Much of the past martial arts traditions are practiced in Shorinjiryu. We all bow the same , kneel in the same way, tie our belts the same , wear the same uniforms, place patches over the heart with association patches worn to the right side of our uniform. We practice kata , never talk during class, line up in a specific order, bow to our teacher. We practice humility, politeness, respectfulness, are hard working, and show respect for our teachers. We never give up nor do we show our pain. This is a sharp contrast to what we see today in the more commercial schools.

We promote our art while eclectic practitioners sell themselves.

In conclusion, it must be said that there is no learning without respect for our teachers or our martial art. The simplest concessions lead to the deterioration of a discipline. There are those who would argue that they have made changes to improve karatedo. They even point out that masters such as Kaiso Hisataka changed what they were taught and integrated other martial arts in the development of their style. What is of paramount importance here is the motivation for change. The masters were motivated to make their system of self defense the very best for survival purposes while in modern times there are those who make changes to appeal to the customer and make a profit. I am proud to be a part of a comprehensive and sophisticated style of karate that took nothing short of genius to create.

John A. Mirrione, Kyoshi  
Shorinjiryu Kenkokai Karatedo  
Shorinjiryu Shinzen Kyokai

## Book Review

Peter Hiltz, Shorinjiryu Ake no Myojo Budo

*Living the Martial Way*  
by Forrest Morgan

*Living the Martial Way* is unique in the modern pantheon of today's martial arts literature, most of which, including this reviewer's own book, provide more of a how-to manual than guidance on how to apply the improved ethics we associate with our martial arts training.

Morgan divides his book into three parts covering training, honor, and living. The first part, *The Way of Training*, describes his vision of the warrior mindset and differentiates "warriorship" from our modern martial arts. He compares and contrasts the concepts of doctrine, strategy, and tactics, and provides guidance on choosing the correct martial art and training style. *The Way of Training* discusses practical applications of strategy applicable to fighting and the more esoteric concepts of kiai, aiki, kokoro, among others. While critical of much of the modern martial arts, analyzing their focus and practice habits in comparison to his vision of warriorship and true martial arts, he embraces the concepts of kiai, aiki, etc., without applying the same critical reasoning he applies to his analysis of today's martial arts. While willing to measure current practice against the sole metric of combat effectiveness, he accepts the pseudo-magical concepts without critical review, negating his bold critique of current practice with an apparent passive acceptance of these mystical concepts.

The second section, *The Way of Honor*, was the most intriguing and profitable of the book's sections. Morgan rightly points out that for most of us, "honor" and "face" are confused and provides a clear definition of honor and face, and outlines a set of guidelines for determining when we are dealing with one or the other. He gives three "Tenets of Honor": obligation, justice, and courage, and discusses each, providing examples and a checklist of questions to ask ourselves when confronted with challenges to either honor or face. He concludes the section with a discussion of revenge and suicide, applying the three tenets of honor to separate actions of honor from those of cowardice. In this reviewer's opinion, this discussion was the most powerful in the book and is well worth additional study.

Section three, *The Way of Living*, was the least profitable. Covering the standard advice regarding exercise and nutrition, it also includes a discussion of religion and the martial arts, correctly identifying that martial arts are tied to Eastern philosophies, not Eastern religions.

The last chapters of the book, *The Warrior Stands Alone* and *Mastery and the Martial Way*, drifts towards modern self-help therapies and gives the impression that Morgan's "warriorship" will make one superior to others. Begun immediately after criticizing current martial arts practice, the recurring subtle self-aggrandizement detracted from the motivational aspects of the book. By the end of the book it is clear that Morgan's motivation is not service but superiority.

While not without its flaws, and not Pulitzer Prize material, *Living the Martial Way* is a valuable addition to any martial arts library. The middle section, *The Way of Honor*, provides valuable lessons and guidance for interpreting and deciding courses of action against perceived insults and slights, and this section alone makes it well worth the cost. *Living the Martial Way*, by Maj Forrest Morgan, USAF, is published by Barricade Books, 185 Bridge Plaza North, Fort Lee NJ, 07024, 1992.

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*The following article is an explanation of the certain kata rules for the international Koshiki events with regard to the International Olympic Committee*

### ***Kata: competition procedure***

Since the announcement of the possibility to introduce Koshiki at the 2016 Olympics, there is a world coordination to organize and fulfill the requirements of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). According to the IOC regulations, an Olympic sport must be established on 4 continents: Africa, Europe, Oceania and Americas. For the Americas, a Pan-American Koshiki federation is currently being formed to adapt Koshiki in the Americas.

The collaboration of all Koshiki practitioners is necessary to develop and expand the sport at the regional, provincial (or state), national, and international levels.

This is the reason a standardization of our approaches and regulations of the rule are necessary for all Koshiki practitioners. To this end, we should refer to the highest contributing order, the World Koshiki Karatedo Federation (WKKF). I propose to write in future editions of *Shorinjiryu Shimbu*, starting with this letter to review official rules and procedures. This review is necessary because I saw in some competition several important divergences between the application and consequences of these procedures and rules. My goal in this paper is to demystify and to uniform Koshiki Kata procedures.

### ***Kata presentation***

How do you introduce your kata? There have been many differences such as: clapping your hands twice to announce yourself and acknowledge the participating officials "shinzen ni gassho ...", by entered the side of the shiai-jo and bowing the outgoing karateka, placing an open hand in direction of the ground to clear a path, or announcing your name, style, and dojo, etc.. These are some variations I saw in various international competitions. For me, and even more importantly for my students, these variations become a real stress because we are unsure as to the expected way to properly adjust ourselves at each competition.

To answer the previous question and to meet the requirements of WKKF, I present to you an excerpt from the WKKF COMPETITION RULES, KATA AND KATA BUNKAI CONTEST (last reviewed June 2006) on page 34, rules 5.5.1 and 5.5.2

5.5.1 The contest shall proceed in the following manner. When a contestant's name is called by the announcer, the contestant shall enter the contest area from the area directly opposite the referees. Prior to entering the contest area, the contestant shall bow (*nyujo*) and proceed to the designated starting position. The contestant shall then bow to the referees (*shomen ni rei*) and announce the name of the *kata* to be performed, in a loud voice, with *kiai*. At the referee's call of "*hajime*" (start), the contestant shall commence the performance.

5.5.2 Upon completion of the performance, the contestant shall return to the designated position and wait for the referee's announcement of the result. The contestant shall then bow to the referee (*shomen ni rei*), withdraw and bow again to the contest area

### *Conclusion*

With an act of compliance to the Rules of WKKF at future international competitions, it is easy to present your kata and greatly simplifies this task which should not give undue stress to the karateka participants.

In the next article, I will discuss the objective criteria for kata judging. It is fundamental to impartially evaluate a karateka independently of his karate style (*ryu*). According to the rules of the WKKF, these criteria will help to objectively rate the kata contestants.

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### Upcoming Event

The 23<sup>rd</sup> International Shorinjiryu Shinzen Shiai  
The Gathering of the Shorinjiryu Karate Family  
October 11, 2009  
Queens, NY  
718-647-4157  
[MMLShihan@aol.com](mailto:MMLShihan@aol.com)

Pre-registration has its advantages. Use them!  
The applications have been sent to the instructors and are located on the International  
Shorinjiryu Shinzen Kyokai Web Site:  
[Shorinjiryu.org](http://Shorinjiryu.org)

***Congratulations to:***

All the graduates from all our member schools. Job well done.

Shihan Jim is now a proud grandfather.

Kyoshi Michel for having his international tournament named as the first leg leading to the  
Pan American Games.