

What Karate Means to Me

How I Met Shihan and Joined the Club

To me, Karate is a great medium to find answers. The answers that I seek in my life. Few years ago, I was talking to Mark, who trains in Iaijutsu with me and was also my English teacher in the language school when I came to Australia in 2000. I asked Mark, do you know any classical martial art schools around Sydney because I have a strong interest in all classical martial arts. Mark told me that he knows one Karate master who he met about 20 years ago but Mark wasn't sure if his contact details were still the same.

In spite of this, Mark contacted me with 2 great news a week later. He got in contacted with Shihan successfully and told me there was a seminar that Shihan's master, Sudo Sensei would also be doing a special demonstration about the Karate on a Saturday afternoon. I said to myself that I can't miss this once in a lifetime opportunity. So Mark and I went to the Saturday seminar with permission obtained from Shihan. We were sitting on the side of the bench. Mark then told me where Shihan, Sudo Sensei, and Shihan's students were. As soon as I laid my eyes on them. I immediately sensed something different and deep with my instinct. After the seminar, I was convinced to join the club and couldn't wait to try out the class. I'm glad that I made the right decision. A critical and important one.

What I have Learnt

Ever since I joined the club in March 2010, I have opened my eyes to another horizon of classical martial art with Goju Ryu Karate. Technically, I have my kihon rebuilt and my foundation of empty hand fighting skills rebuilt by Karate. Moreover, I enjoy the kihon a lot. Every time, I practice kihon, it stimulates my thought of how I can make a combo out of few kihon wazas or experiment what could be the next level of kihon. It also bridges the gaps and things that I'm lack of.

Apart from the deep technical aspects, there are so much more of the personal development and discipline involved. The 3Cs, calm, clean, and clear. Firstly, calm. Our emotion varies from day-to-day. This associates to another word in Japanese, 「Heijoushin」. Keep yourself calm when sparring, keep yourself calm during grading, and keep yourself calm and consistent during everyday life. Not an easy task at all. Then clean and clear. When I come to the Karate class, my thought gets cleaned and clarified. The negative energies accumulated outside of the class can be cleaned when you finish the class and you feel fulfilled. Some aspects to the technique I wasn't sure of, they get clarified during the class.

In life, we tend to take short cut for everything, especially in this fast-food culture nowadays. But Karate has no short cuts. The effort and learning experience accumulate and will show from your inner body. Every detail and

effort you put in will matter and count. You have to think about what you are doing and why you are doing it. You may take artificial drugs to boost your strength and physical ability. But that is not the true strength of yourself because your mind has lost the control to external temptation. What I feel is to learn how to control, restructure, and develop your mind, body, and techniques simultaneously are important elements to find your truth that sometimes cannot be seen by naked eyes and answers to advance to the next level or unknown potentials of ourselves.

In addition, there is a connection that I found with one of my favorite daimyous (lords) in Sengoku period (1479 - 1603). How he lived is the exact impression I get from Shihan and the people from this club. His name is Uesugi Kenshin (1530 -1578). The man who devoted his whole life to the way of samurai and 「Bishamonten」 (armor-clad deity of warfare or warriors and a punisher of evil doers from Buddhism). His guts and determination to follow his heart and fate honestly are not something that people can do easily nowadays. In Sengoku period, one of the missions was to create a peaceful world for civilians, protect them, and no doubt it came with many obstacles. Similarly, the obstacles we face now are no different from the people from Sengoku period who had tried to achieve theirs. The actual samurai may not exist anymore but the samurai spirits are always within ourselves waiting to be awakened.

I feel and I'm sure this is one of the paths that I will be walking on. Shihan and everyone in this club are like the lighthouse in the dark, when I stray or drift I know this is one of the places I will come to seek answers and truth that I need for my journey of classical martial arts and life.

Lastly, I would like to thank Shihan, Mark, and everyone in the club who gave me the opportunity to find my answers and truth as well as the great advices I can share with everyone in here and hopefully with the next generation.

Thank you.
Alan Weng