

PhiVan Ha

Perfection of Character

#3 in *Lessons from Master Camp Series*



“When we test for higher ranking in karate, one of the most important things that we look at is character development. Has the individual become a better person? We look at a person's attitude towards bowing, whether he or she helps others, whether he or she is respectful and humble. Improvement in technique is important of course, however if that is all that has changed, I cannot pass a person to a higher level. His or her character must change as well.”

Teruyuki Okazaki (*Perfection of Character: Guiding Principles For The Martial Arts & Everyday Life*, p. 10)

I was in the back row of Sensei Miura's morning class, and he was teaching the self-defense applications for the kata Jion. I could only see glimpses of what he was demonstrating, so when it was time to split up into groups of two, my partner and I were struggling to practice the techniques. We looked around to the other groups, and it was obvious that we were not the only ones who were confused. So many groups had their own interpretation of what Sensei Miura had demonstrated that we couldn't decide which group was doing it right. But before we were ready to give up trying, someone walked over and helped us. I'd never met this person before, and I didn't know who he was. He walked us through the sequence step by step. His explanation of the techniques was really simple and precise, and it really impressed me.

Later that night, I saw that person again and asked Sensei Field who he was. He told me that he was Cameron King from Barbados. I told Sensei that he was one of the assistants in one of my earlier classes, but I've never seen him at camp before and I thought he was pretty good. Sensei nodded in agreement, and told me, "He was the World Champion in Kumite at the ISKF Shoto Cup in Toronto." Oh. That helps to explain it.

I ran into him again on the day of the Goodwill Tournament when we were taking our lunch break. He asked me how I did so far, and I told him that I only competed in kata but not kumite. He asked me why, and I said that I was never very good in kumite but I would compete if I had to, like in Team Kumite. He nodded to let me know that he understood, but went on to explain that kumite can be fun too if you learn to see it as just a game. It's about strategy, like a chess game. You move so that your opponent will move in the way that you want them to, and then you get them. You create your own opportunity. It's almost like when you look up at the clouds in the sky, and you use your own imagination to create the shape of an animal that you want to see. Kumite is similar to that.

I never saw him again for the rest of camp, but I reflected a lot on the things that I've learned from my few encounters with him. One of the things that stood out in my mind the most is how he humble he is. If Sensei Field had not told me anything about him, I never would have known that he was a Kumite World Champion. His manner and attitude radiate nothing but friendliness and humility. I thought to myself, "wow,

so this is what a World Champion SHOULD be like." Being the natural skeptic that I am, I live by the principle that I'll believe it when I see it. And I am now a believer. I believe that it is possible to be good without letting it get to your head. I believe that winning or losing shouldn't change who you are, or what you stand for. And I believe that practicing karate for yourself is great because it helps you to become a better person. But it is even greater if you can share your practice with everybody else around you also.

Now, I see competitions in a totally different light. I don't see it as a game of winning or losing anymore, but like Okazaki Sensei has always taught us, "it's just training." I want to be my best so that I can help the person I am matching up with to be better, and vice versa. Winning becomes less important because at the end of the day, winning or losing is not my ultimate goal in karate. I want to be my best that I can be for myself and for the people around me.

They say that when the student is ready the teacher will come. And I have to admit that I am a slow student because there is a great teacher right here in Santa Monica who radiates the same quality of humility and true karate spirit, and who I am very fortunate to have the opportunity to train with everyday: Sensei James Field. He is the coach of the ISKF Santa Monica Team and the chief director of the ISKF Southwest region. As a member on the team, I have often wondered why Sensei has not been teaching us "competition kumite" or "competition kata" so we can go out there and bring back big huge trophies. Now I understand, and I am grateful that he has chosen to coach the way he does. Even though he had been a fierce competitor and won many titles nationally and internationally, he understood that trophies are not the goal of training. He might not preach a lot in his classes, but he shows it by the way he teaches it. He wants his students to understand what karate is - the way he knows it. And it is not sports karate or competition karate, but the true art of karate from the techniques to the character development. His students might not win at every competition, but they will have the best attitude. They will show etiquette, control their techniques, and be the best that they can be. ■



PhiVan Ha is a *nidan* training at ISKF Santa Monica

CALENDAR of EVENTS

July 30-Aug. 2:

Mountain States Camp, Greeley, CO

Sept 12:

Kyu Exam, Santa Monica Dojo, 1PM

Sept. 13:

Instructor Training, 1PM ISKF SM

Sept 26:

LECTURE: Karate Etiquette 6:30PM,
Santa Monica Dojo



Photos courtesy of Steven Wein and Herman Evaristo, HEPhotoWeb.com



ABOVE: Master Hideo Ochi, Europe, Sensei David Jones, Canada, PhiVan Ha, Steven Wein, Master James Field, Lynn Nakada from Santa Monica, at Master Camp 2009

LEFT: Sensei Field receives 8th Dan certificate from Master Okazaki

BELOW The hardy students who made it thru every class at Spring Training '09



Spring Training, SM Dojo from HEPhotoWeb.com



TRANSITIONS

SHODAN

-At SM 3/14/09

Isabelle Cabana, JKA San Diego

-At Santa Monica Dojo, 6/6/09:

Walt Morton, ISKF Santa Monica

NIDAN

-At SM Dojo, 6/6/09

Christine Cornel, JKA San Diego

PhiVan Ha, ISKF Santa Monica

Sam Kent, ISKF Santa Monica

-At 1000 Oaks Dojo, 6/6/09

Brenda Yoshinaga, SK Newbury Park

MARRIED

-July 3, 2009 in Santa Monica

Ernesto Halim, Yondan, ISKF SM and

Joanne Rosario, 3rd kyu, ISKF SM

BORN

-March 8, 2009

To **Irene (Wong) Uota**, Shodan, ISKF SM

and Spence Uota: Brooke Haruye Uota.

SUCCESS:

“ The dictionary is the only place where success comes before work. **-Mark Twain**

Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do. **-John Wooden**

Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out. **-Robert Collier**

By Lynn Nakada..... Master Camp 101

Being a newcomer to the Master Camp experience, I didn't know what to expect. Most of what was coming was word-of-mouth advice and the description from the Master Camp registration application. It was a wonderful experience to train with masters and other students from around the world.

Sensei Miura worked on body movement and joint manipulation application from kata. He was very adamant about efficiency in using the entire body for blocking attacks from multiple opponents, with the arms become merely an extension of the body's movements. He demonstrated several throwing techniques using joint manipulation to ward off much stronger attackers. In his own words, Sensei Myura is 70 years old with a mind of a 40-year-old, and he was tossing people quite literally twice his size, all the while with a welcoming smile on his face.

Sensei Ochi's teaching style had a heavy emphasis on using multiple attaching and defending techniques in a sequence. He would begin with a basic attack or defense technique and keep adding onto the sequence. Each count could include anywhere from one to three techniques, and in a six or seven count sequence, that's a lot of moves to remember (especially at 7 A.M.). His classes were great for conditioning and training the body to not be stuck in a repetitive rut when it comes to attacking or defending. Sensei Kanazawa focused on defensive techniques against multiple opponents, each using a different attaching technique. Each defensive move combined a counter-attack while shifting at an angle to anticipate the next opponent's actions. It was a great set to practice, and also a great way to meet people before trying to punch or kick them.

Sensei Field's reputation is just as vast as where campers came from - Bolivia, Israel, Mexico, Canada, Venezuela, Italy, Lebanon, India, Trinidad & Tobago to name a few. The most comments about Sensei Field were first about his teaching style, and second his attitude. Many trainees who visited our dojo before joked about the "long" Santa Monica warm-ups and the amount of exercise repetition Sensei enforces in an average class. But everyone noted that when Sensei teaches, he does so because he wants that individual student to learn, not to show off how much he knows or to make students feel inferior. Many called it "tough love" training. He makes a connection to everyone who trains with an open mind and healthy attitude. So when it was Sensei's turn to accept his certificate for 8th Dan on the last day of camp, the entire mess hall applauded as though he were one of their own. It was a very heart-warming sight.

My personal lesson for next year - "Duck."

-Lynn Nakada is a Nidan from ISKF Santa Monica dojo.