

# THE MAKIWARA

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE AOKA

**Happy Holidays**  
By Grandmaster Mitch Kobylanski, AOKA President

The holidays are upon us and the AOKA would like to wish the best to all Isshin-Ryu karate-ka worldwide. Regardless of how anyone celebrates the end of the year, enjoy spending the time with your family and friends.

2009 has taken its toll on just about everyone. Between business's closing their doors for good or down sizing, dojos have felt the affect in almost every sector. As the saying goes, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

This is the time for all of us to become creative when it comes to keeping your student base.

1. For your students that have been downsized and are out of work, consider offering one class per week at a special rate. This class might be taught by some of your brown belts or Sho-Dans.
2. You might be able to give a few students a limited time scholarship for a few months.
3. One of your black belts might volunteer one day a week to meet with a few of these students each week to keep their skill levels up.

These are just a few thoughts and I am sure that all of you can think of many more ways to help out our students. When times get tough financially for students, they still need an outlet with the friends and family that they have trained with. Consider working out a way to keep your Isshin-Ryu students during these unusual times.

# Happy Holidays!

**December  
2009**

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Please send questions, comments or contributions to the Newsletter Committee to have answered in the next edition:

newsletter@aoka.org

## Thoughts On The Third Code

By Charlie Snearly, Shodan, Charlotte, NC

The third code of karate, "The manner of drinking or spitting is either hard or soft," has always seemed unique and stood out to me. While the other codes seemed to have a very direct and practical link to my study of Isshinryu - balance, vision, hearing, striking, and so on - when was the last time you drank or spat while performing a kata? Hopefully the answer is "Never" for drinking and "Only when I kiai really loudly" for spitting.

But this lack of a straightforward application to my studies got me thinking more and more about the third code. Eventually, I started to break it down word by word. After doing so, what seemed to be an obscure, difficult-to-apply code became a source of insight into my training.

Drinking is an activity essential to life: people need to drink to survive. In applying this code to the martial arts, I thought about what is necessary for my training to survive. I came up with learning, because without learning, there cannot be growth, and without growth, there is only stagnation. So drinking, in my interpretation of the third code, means learning.

Spitting is a little trickier, and required a bit of mental gymnastics to define. As discussed earlier, drinking represents teaching, with the liquid being knowledge. So if drinking, the bringing in of liquid or knowledge, is learning, then spitting, where liquid or knowledge is pushed out, is teaching. Teaching is a constant activity in karate. Everyone in a dojo, including the newest student, is capable of teaching anyone else, even if they are not aware of it.

If drinking and spitting mean learning and teaching, then what does the second half of the code mean? What is hard learning? Soft teaching? Again, after some thought, an explanation can be constructed that has value and application for everyday training.

As I understand it, hard has an implication of directness and straightforwardness. Nearly every student has experienced hard teaching, when an instructor demonstrates a section of a new kata and then tells you to perform it ten times... and then ten more times... and on and on. Similarly, hard learning is when you learn something directly, such as when your Sensei gives you a new bunkai or self-defense move and you practice it enough times to feel comfortable with it.

On the other hand, soft has an implication of indirectness and subtleness. Soft teaching happens when a student is not immediately given an answer to a difficult question or situation and has to work through it on his or her own. Teaching a lesson about Isshinryu by application of the karate codes is an excellent example of soft teaching. Soft learning happens all the time at class, when a student happens to glance over and see a senior student performing a more advanced kata or discussing a difficult technique. These tiny glimpses of future learning help focus the mind on getting to that briefly glanced plateau of knowledge.

All of that can be extracted from the simple phrase, "The manner of drinking or spitting is either hard or soft." To me, this code contains a deep lesson about the many ways that learning and teaching occur in a dojo. Yet there are countless other ways you could look at and apply it.

The beauty of the codes of karate is that they are open to interpretation. What I've come up with could make perfect sense and help you gain insight into your training, or it might seem like a bit of a stretch. What is important, however, is thinking critically about and examining these codes in order to enhance and reinforce our martial arts training.



**Why I like Karate**

Tossing the old Pig skin around with my son for 15 minutes, my right arm hurts.

Two games of bowling at a bowling party, my right arm and right shoulder hurts.

A 3 hour seminar in practical defensive techniques with Hanshi Mady's, my whole body hurts.

That's why I like Karate. It's a balanced sport.

By Camilla Tikka

**Ouch!**

## The Discipline of Long Distance Training

By Rick Franco, Shodan,

Webster's Dictionary defines discipline as:

- **<sup>1</sup>dis-ci-pline**
- Pronunciation: \ˈdi-sə-plən\
- Function: *noun*
- Etymology: Middle English, from Anglo-French & Latin; Anglo-French, from Latin *disciplina* teaching, learning, from *discipulus* pupil

Date: 13th century

**1** : [punishment](#)

**2** *obsolete* : [instruction](#)

**3** : a field of study

**4** : training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character

**5 a** : control gained by enforcing obedience or order **b** : orderly or prescribed conduct or pattern of behavior **c** :

[self-control](#)

**6** : a rule or system of rules governing conduct or activity

This word embodies not only our study of Isshin Ryu or any other martial art, but is also the guiding principle when one must train alone or at great distances from their sensei. I hope to impart some wisdom and techniques gained over many years of separation while being a student of Isshin Ryu.

I started the discipline of Isshin Ryu in 2000 with Master Boykin. I was fortunate enough to be working and stationed at the same base. It is easy to train and learn when you can workout together three days a week for almost two years. Then as life tends to work, student and teacher had to part ways, I left the military to pursue a civilian life and Sensei had to change duty stations. This was my first real test of discipline. Until then it was easy to study because of convenience. Convenience can be the greatest ally or enemy if you let it. It took weekly phone calls and a basic understanding of the katas to continue with any motivation. Being a former Marine Officer, I thought I knew discipline, but until one has to juggle a new job, new town, and a new wife, training can prove daunting. This time in my life was my first true test of discipline and my dedication to the art. Luckily, in less than a year I was able to move back to my former duty station where I continued to

train until Sensei returned.

I have heard it said events can come in threes, both good and bad. I had my encounter with my second life event which once again tested my ability to maintain discipline. During this time of my life I began working overseas in combat theaters. It was during one of my intense work ups to go back overseas the "event" struck. I shattered my entire lower left leg and ankle to the point where titanium rods and screws were required to put it back together. Training was out of the question for at least six months. This however, did not mean I could not read, watch instructional videos and have inquisitive conversations with Sensei while I healed. When it came time to start training, it wasn't the discipline to train or the motivation I lacked, but it was the discipline not to train too hard, to be smarter and let my body heal and relearn how to balance and kick without fear. It was during this time I learned the discipline of self control and moderation in training.

Three years later and once again Sensei and I have had to part ways, due to life changes. Once again I have found myself in a combat theater, albeit a new one. It is here, I would like to believe I have learned the art of long distance training. The lessons of the past have prepared me for the difficulty in training on one's own. The techniques I have learned are working well for me and it is these techniques I believe can benefit anyone who has found themselves separated from their sensei or dojo.

Like any sport, hobby, art or career, preparation is the first thing one must do. By this I mean, ensure you have the right tools in your mental toolbox for the upcoming job. For me this means having links on my computer to the Isshin Ryu website and having a DVD of all the hand and foot katas to include the kubuto katas that I am currently up to. By having these reference materials readily at hand I can continue to learn the physical motions of the katas. I may not be able to correctly explain the finer points of bunkai, but when I do see my sensei I will have the rote memorization of the movements down, thereby allowing for a more valuable use of limited time, as opposed to remediation on simple moves.

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The second and perhaps hardest, yet most important concept of the discipline is setting a routine and a schedule. I have found it very useful to set myself on a schedule for practice. I am in a profession where my physical ability can conceivably make a difference between life and death. Therefore a training regime is paramount, however, as with anything or anyone making the effort is the key. Tell yourself, that you are going to do kata three days a week for however long your schedule will allow. Then write this down and put it where you can see it daily. Perhaps on your desk at the office, on the wall in your room, the refrigerator, it doesn't really matter as long as it is highly visible. Prepare a written reminder of your training schedule or carry a notebook with you. I currently use a technique I have borrowed from my physical training where I record weight sets, time and repetition and I have incorporated the same for



Rick Franco demonstrating the firing of an M16 Viper-XRP somewhere downrange.

kata training. I have found it valuable to write what kata I am going to do, how many times and the amount of time spent training. This log book allows me to have a set goal for what I am going to work on and what I have worked on in the previous days and weeks.

In conclusion, long distance training takes time, effort and a system of rules governing our actions. It takes discipline. If you ever find yourself away from your dojo, your sensei and in a foreign land, don't despair, it can be done with a little effort and preparedness. Just like anything in life, if it is worth having and continuing it will take effort. It is this effort and a continuing promise to myself to achieve the level of Ni-Dan within the next few years. This will take effort and of course discipline. I hope that my experience will give you the tools and techniques needed to continue your training, wherever you may find yourself.



### Self Evaluation Time

By Heath Stewart, Ikkyu, Marshville, NC

This article is aimed primarily at those in their teens, though everyone could learn something from it. The majority of you will probably brush this off and not read it, but I strongly encourage you to do otherwise. I'm going to give a little background on myself first so you can understand from where I'm coming. I am a 21 year old senior at East Carolina University on the brink of a new stage in life called the "real world." My inspiration for this article comes from observing the teenage students in my dojo who are entering high school, or fresh young minds entering the awkward teen years.

I mentioned my age and status as a student as a way to say, "Hey, we're from the same generation so I know how you feel." I'm not a psychologist, and I'm not writing this because I think I'm an adult who knows every-

thing. I don't know everything, and I realize it more and more everyday!

I'll tell you now, and I won't be the last one to do it, but it's not easy being a teenager. I know you're thinking, "Yeah, yeah tell me something I haven't heard idiot." Well I can't really do that, because after all you already know everything right? That's what you think. What you do know is that you want to be everybody's friend and you got to impress everyone and worry what everyone thinks of you, right? Wrong again. You may say you're independent and could care less what others think, but deep down you know you do whether you admit it or not. I did, your Mom and Dad did and your Sensei did. It is human nature and it gets easier as you

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age.

Now I'm going to tell you why you shouldn't worry about these things. As part of one of my assignments in my public speaking class, I've had to do a lot of research. While the topic is irrelevant, the statistics and facts I uncovered during research are astonishing and not what I expected to find. I decided to study the amount of teen violence in the United States. In my research I found that juveniles (persons under 18 years of age) make up about 10% of all murders in the U.S., 25% percent of violent crime which includes 14% of sexual assaults, 30% of robberies, and 27% of aggravated assaults. This information and more can be found at [www.ojdp.ncjrs.gov](http://www.ojdp.ncjrs.gov) which is the website of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Center. This website also states that 37% of these crimes committed involved an adult offender. Keep that in mind for a moment.

The sheer number of murder committed by teenagers has increased by over 30% in the last decade. This is horrible! Peer pressure sucks but my God how far do we have to go to make friends?? If you're reading this article, you're already taking a step in the right direction by being involved in an organization that advocates discipline and self-respect. Job well done! However, there are many steps in life and you can still be led down the wrong path.

What you should do is have a periodic evaluation of yourself. Ask yourself questions like the following: How am I performing in school? Could I do better? Who are my friends? Do I really know that they are genuine? Would these people do anything to help me or boost my self-esteem? Do they do drugs or drink alcohol? If you can't answer these questions without disappointing your Mom, you're Grandma, and you're Preacher, then you may want to make a few changes in your life.

I'll give you an example based on my past. I got involved in the Cub Scouts when I was a kid and eventually the Boy Scouts once I was old enough. One of my classmates in middle school, who eventually became my best friend, wanted to get into the Boy Scouts. I got him involved and he actively participated. I'll call him "Charlie," though that's not his real name. Charlie was a good student, made good grades and was a good

friend. He would come over to my house frequently to ride four-wheelers and hang out. Like any middle school kid, Charlie was rambunctious outside of school. We all were. During high school we didn't hang out as much because we had different classes and extracurricular activities. This turned out to be a good thing for me because Charlie started using drugs with his new "friends" and just two years ago was sentenced to prison for second-degree murder. This sparked a chain of events which eventually led to the death of another person.

Fortunately I never got involved with that lifestyle. In fact, I haven't seen him since we started high school so I really never kept up with him. For me, doing drugs was never attractive so I didn't worry about being pressured into it. But that's not to say it couldn't have happened because we were both at a very vulnerable age. It goes without saying then, that you are who you hang out with and what you repeatedly do.

Keep in mind that your decisions not only affect you and your life, but they also affect those around you. The future for everyone is always in the hands of the next generation, so every decision you and your friends make could potentially determine the fate of the world! That's a scary thought isn't it? Of course, you may think to yourself "How am I going to be responsible for all that?" Well, think of it like this - one weak link in the chain could cause the whole thing to come apart.

The final thing I'm going to say is that if you have a friend who you know has issues don't stop being their friend! You don't have to do what they do, but rather you could be the positive influence on them. I often wonder if Charlie and I stuck together in high school if I could have changed his life. These are tough years and you're going to be pulled in many directions, but remember "The blood circulating through the body is similar to the Sun and Moon." Stay in constant motion so that when you are confronted by all these obstacles and pulled in different directions you will bend, but never break.



# UPCOMING EVENTS

Date	Location	Event
24-Apr-2010	King George, VA	Seventh Annual King George Karate Isshinryu Open Championships



## Promotions

Martina Benedikovicova to Nidan  
 Terry Heise to Nidan  
 Ben Smyth to Nidan  
 Justin Groody to Shodan  
 Jonathan Meinzer to Shodan  
 Marisa McLaughlin to Shodan  
 Mike Payne to Shodan  
 Heath Stewart to Shodan  
 Michelle Bukkhegyi to Shodan-ho  
 Nicholas Lewsey to Shodan-ho  
 Kayla McLaughlin to Shodan-ho



Congrats to Apex Martial Arts



Congrats to Heath Stewart



Congrats to Mike Payne



**2009 AOKA Fall Seminar – Lessons Learned**

By Vittorio P. Antonacci, MD., Ni-Kyu, Carolina Isshinryu Academy

On Saturday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, the Cape Fear Isshinryu Dojo in Wilmington, NC, hosted the annual AOKA Fall Seminar. The seminar started in the morning with Brown and Black belts training. The remaining kyu ranks participated in the afternoon session of the seminar. Training topics covered the entire spectrum of karate, from kata and bunkai, to sparring strategies and kobudo, as well as ukemi/throws. The format this year was very interesting and consisted of required and elective seminar sessions. In comparing to previous seminar formats, this allowed the seminar to take on a much more personal focus.

Initial sessions had participants cover important central Isshinryu principals in kata, kumite and kobudo. The most difficult (and as a result most interesting) of these session for me was the bo-sai randori session lead by Master HC Butch McLaughlin (Apex Martial Arts - Charlotte, NC). In our dojo, weapon katas are only introduced at Ni-kyu level. Having to participate in this session without the benefit of formal sai training up to that point resulted in my first lesson learned “it all comes back to basics.” Basic midblocks with sai are not really any different than our midblocks without sai. Upper blocks are still executed like upper blocks. Lower blocks are still lower blocks. Having to defend against the bo with these “newly learned” techniques gave me a real sense of accomplishment once we were done with the session. I could not think of a better introduction to Kusanku Sai Kata than that randori session.

My second required session was Sanchin Kata. Those that have ever seen Grandmaster Mitch Kobylanski perform this kata know the focus and intensity demanded by Sensei in this kata. Even though I have had the privilege to learn this kata firsthand from Grandmaster Kobylanski, the learning process continues as long as we continue to allow ourselves to continue learning. Like finding that last piece in the puzzle you have been working on for much time, there was one teaching point in particular that stayed with me long after the seminar. That particular point is not what is important. What is important is that even though you may be familiar with a particular instructor at a dojo or at a seminar; do not let the familiarity prevent you from continuing to learn! We must all let our ears continue to listen in all directions and your eyes continue to see all sides at all times.

After the compulsory morning sessions, participants had three choices to choose from in each of the remaining morning and afternoon seminars blocks. It was interesting to note most of the advanced belts and higher gravitate to kumite and kobudo. As Sensei always stresses, “it’s all in the kata” – this was my main focus.

Sensei Brent Holland (Cape Fear Isshinryu – Wilmington, NC) covered the 3 arrows of karate in a way that was deceptively laid back, but very effective and on point. Interestingly, there was only one brown belt and only one black belt in the session I participated in. The points that Sensei Holland made in how mind, body and spirit infiltrate not just Sanchin, and not just every kata – but everything we do – has been incorporated permanently in my karate.

The next seminar small group session was with Master Tim Grismer (Carolina Isshinryu Academy – Matthews, NC) covering movement and balance in kata. Watching the participants go through their kata - freezing at various points - in order to demonstrate their balance and control was a most effective way of demonstrating the lesson in the Isshinryu code of “being able to change directions at all times.”

Another standout lesson from the seminar was the session lead by Sensei Rita Parke and Sensei Rick Edinger (Cunningham Isshinryu – Talboro, NC) on Nahanchi Kata bunkai where we applied bunkai from the entire kata, as if fought with our backs on the ground...think about that one for a while! As we are almost a month out from the seminar as of this writing, I can honestly say that I do not remember all of the individual steps in the bunkai presented. The experience of going through this however profoundly changed the way I approached bunkai in every kata from that day onward!

As we rotated through the different sessions, one could not help but evaluate some of the other participants in the seminar sessions. When I started to think about this more, I realized that this process of observing, evaluating and comparing was in itself a very important lesson to take home from the seminar. While you may not think about it every time you are at the dojo, we all know and understand where we stand in rank in our own particular dojos...who the instructors are, who stands next to who when lining up at the beginning and end of class, etc. When you are at a regional or national seminar however, these distinctions are blurred. As you assess the other participants and they assess you, you are able to both validate your strong skills and at the same time discover your deficiencies. Similar to moving out of the house for the first time, you can begin to learn where you stand in the greater karate community.

I guess the most important lesson learned in the seminar echoes the popular advertisement slogan, “just do it”. We are all busy in different ways in each of our own lives and have a list of conflicting activities and events that may prevent us from making it events such as the AOKA Fall Seminar I was able

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to attend this October. Once you get over that first obstacle, the rest is easy. In describing the word “seminar”, Wikipedia describes that the idea behind the seminar system is to “familiarize students more extensively with the [methodology](#) of their chosen subject and also to allow them to interact with examples of practical problems.” Wikipedia goes on to describe that “participants must not be beginners in the field under discussion” and that “everyone present is requested to actively participate.” Seminars have long been the foundation of advanced training in the educational process in many different fields and should be a part of the education process

for all students serious in progressing in their study of the martial arts.

Another seminar is scheduled for mid February or March in the Charlotte, NC area. A summer seminar is scheduled for Wilmington, NC area in late June. I highly recommend attending the bi-annual seminars. Not only is this a teaching session to learn new skills, its is a gathering of like minded people—brother’s and sister’s, if you will, helping one another. The friends you make here are the friends you will have for a lifetime.

See you there!



Instructors and Participants of the AOKA Fall Seminar in Wilmington, NC

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