



The Isshinryu Way

Everything Karate & Kobudo

Isshinryu
Worldwide

Volume 20 Issue 1

Spring 2024

20 Years

This issue marks the start of the 20th year of this newsletter. It started as a simple way to spread knowledge for my dojo and acknowledge my students, but very quickly expanded as a way to support first all Isshinryu in Canada and then around the world.

Consistency goes a long way in both training and sharing a newsletter. By continuing to create it, I hope it has helped many Karateka learn and grow. As the years passed, there have been hundreds of contributors and to the best of my knowledge, it is the longest running Isshinryu newsletter in history.

Like all things, over time the newsletter has changed many times. My own understanding of Isshinryu changed it, the wonderful contributions of others has changed it, and feedback has changed it. I'm sure it will continue to change in the future as well, but most importantly, as a group, we are going to continue it's spirit of sharing our knowledge, celebrating our achievements and distributing the newsletter.

If you happen to be new to reading our newsletter, here's the key things to know.

We value training, train hard and you will always have a place

We train Isshinryu

We may train other styles, but we don't forget our Isshinryu

We support each other

Everyone is welcome

Keep the Spirit of the One Heart Way alive

Keep sharing the newsletter, encourage others to read it, encourage others to share it, encourage others to contribute.

See you at the Expo!

Upcoming Events

Events

May 2024—Isshinryu Expo—Thunder Bay, ON, Canada

July 2024—Isshinryu Hall of Fame—Gatlinburg, TN, USA

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Essential Isshinryu is available!

For more information on the first Canadian Isshinryu book, visit www.essentialisshinryu.com!

Who did you help today?



Importance of Kata

By Marlies Iorianni

I was 12 years old when I first started training. And of course, like most 12 year olds starting out in karate, really, all I wanted to do was fight, and become the next “Karate Kid”. I didn’t understand the significance of learning kata, in my eyes it was just a choreographed dance. That was really all I saw it as; I really didn’t see the actual importance of it. Although, I have personally always quite liked doing kata, even at a young age and would always enter kata in tournaments and quite enjoyed it.

As a black belt, I hear so many people who started taking classes and quit, or lower level belts say, “Ugh, I hate doing kata, kata is so boring, I just want to fight....” Everyone wants to be the next MMA fighter.

Or, “I quit because I didn’t like doing the katas, there was too much kata that’s not what I’m here for...”

Well, guess what? You probably aren’t going to progress much in your fighting if you aren’t learning your kata. Katas have many important functions in martial arts training.

I have learned so much in the last few years about different moves in my katas, things I have never even given much thought to before, for example, what looks like a “simple” step, can be a foot sweep, or a “simple” block and be a strike and block. Or, even looking at the body mechanics, I feel like this is very important because, the slightest shift of the hip can change the strength of a punch, where you extend your arm for a block, how far you hold it from your body will change how effective and strong it is, how tight your arm is to your side when you extend a punch. Or when you make a turn, pay attention to where you are ending up, would your opponent still be in your line of attack as to what move is coming next? It’s once you start really breaking the kata down, and really comprehending what the actual function of every little move is, that is when it might start to make more sense, as to why each move is the way it is. I didn’t start to really “appreciate” katas and their functions, probably until I was

about a blue belt, before that I kind of just went through the motions, not fully understanding what I was actually doing and why I was doing it.

Katas will help you train for real fighting, you can imagine your imaginary opponent, and you can use full force without hurting a real opponent. Some techniques are much too dangerous to be practicing on a real partner. You can practice correct form in front of other people, and they can correct you, or, show you multiple bunkai for a series of moves. Sometime that helps you think outside the box, especially if real life were to challenge you. We all have our “go-to” moves, but, sometimes those “go-to” moves won’t get you out of a threatening situation, where you might need to move to plan B, it’s always wise to have a backup!

Kata will teach you correct timing for certain attacks and how to respond and react, it will teach you how to fight at various speeds, your timing needs to match your opponents attacks. Kata will also teach you how to fight at various heights as well, we need to be flexible in our fighting style, and need to adjust to any type of fight presented to us.

Kata is also a way for us to train a little on our own, we aren’t always at the dojo to be working with a partner, and this also gives us a chance to have our own training time by ourselves. It is great for our body and mind. Kata will help improve strength and reflexes, as well as balance. Proper stances can help you stay balanced, centered and helps with your core, which keeps you locked in and sturdy, this will make for stronger striking and blocking.

By practicing, it will also help teach different breathing techniques, how much air should be expelled from the lungs at what time. Proper breathing can also help improve on execution of the kata. Most people take fast shallow breaths, sometimes, we just forget to breathe, but as a martial artist, this is not what you want. A deeper controlled breath will allow for your kata to be more relaxed, less stressed, and more fluid, this will allow for better focus as well within your kata. In Sanchin this is a prime example of how we direct our breathing and where we focus our energy, it’s a great way to practice Qi Gong. The proper exhale in

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Importance of Kata

By Marlies Iorianni

a fight can lead to a great explosive punch. Inhale on blocking, and exhale on strikes. It seems like a simple concept, but is it? This can take years to master, and it's quite fascinating how the body responds to the proper breathing techniques we use in our katas once we learn how to use them properly.

Katas also help teach us how to develop a clear mind. You should be able to do your kata without thinking of anything else. This is a mental state known as mushin or "no mind". It teaches you how to react freely to an opponent without any hesitation, and not be interrupted by any other thoughts, and to just focus on what is being presented to you at that very moment.

This is why kata can help you develop better fighting skills. It isn't just a "dance" for fun. It's something you will continually build on your whole martial arts career. I feel that as soon as I became a black belt, my whole perception on martial arts changed again. It was a total shift in learning. It really was like starting from the beginning again for me, I felt like I was a white belt again in a way, but with a different way of learning, and a much different outlook on martial arts all over again. I feel like these last two years have really opened up a whole other world of knowledge and understanding for me, and I look forward to many more years of trying to advance on my kata and knowledge of them and be able to pass on what I know to new students.

Perseverance and Self Confidence

By Anna Carangi

The inspiration to begin writing this essay came about after a Zoom class in which I was performing all of my kata for my instructor, Shihan Susan Baldassi. It was only her and I in the "break out" room and her reaction completely blew me away. She was so impressed with how I did that she even uttered some expletives. I told her I had been practicing quite a bit (which I have) because basically, I want to do my very best and make her proud. Even though it's been said, "Test day is your worst day." I am determined to make "test day" my "best day".

When I was first asked to test at the Expo/Virtual test, my default answer was "I don't know." That answer follows me everywhere but a very wise Shihan once told me, "You don't know but you're going to find out." I find myself saying that often these days. But for this question, I really didn't know. I immediately thought I am too old and I don't have the energy which are both purely excuses and untruths. Luckily, I have an amazing Shihan who supports me in any decision I make but very gently tells me I am ready for this challenge.

However, the decision is up to me. One day, Shihan came by to drop something off to me and I just blurted out, "I'm testing." I told her that I may as well as I had been prepping for it. Something in me just decided to. Next thing I knew, I intensified my training and my son Adam became my uke for bunkai. He has been extremely gung-ho during all of this. Initially, my answer to Shihan's question was coming from a place of fear. She sent me a quote regarding that very recently. "Fear, get in the back seat now. I don't want anything to do with you anymore."

So, here I am again in awe and somewhat disbelief that I am writing another essay for my next black belt promotion. Testing for Shodan was already the ultimate goal and going beyond that was not even a consideration in my realm of possibilities. I had already reached the high point of my karate journey and couldn't see moving much more beyond that. I tend to stay where it's comfortable and safe but my Shihan consistently helps to uncover the layers to unleash the warrior within. I wondered how I would learn two more katas? This time, with weapons in my hands. That not only seemed dangerous to me but completely

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unfathomable. I just couldn't picture it. I really thought I had reached the end of my journey as I knew it. Especially after a fellow karateka commented to me that this was just the beginning.

Two years ago was truly a dream come true for me. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I could achieve this level of karate. I was the student that was so nervous to perform kata that I had to go to another part of the dojo just to get through. I was so intimidated, insecure and unconfident in my abilities. All I could envision was performing kata upon kata in front of various judges in a huge ballroom with sheer fear. That day, I smothered myself in essential oils that were designed to calm my nerves and I approached the testing like it was my job. I was there to fulfill a responsibility and do what was required of me. I was going to do it to the best of my ability. I was able to get through due to the many people that surrounded me and wanted me to succeed. May 18th, 2018 was by far one of the most honourable and memorable days of my life. I will cherish this day for years to come. Sometimes, I still cannot believe I realized my dream. It was with perseverance and commitment that I did. With the support of my Shihan and karate family, I proved to myself that anything is possible.

I feel like it is important to know a bit about my background to help provide some insight about the person I was to the person I have become today. I come from a family that was fairly active in body building, martial arts, boxing and overall exercise. Fitness was not foreign to me but self-confidence was. I was the youngest of five and the only girl. I suppose this very fact made me tough in my own way. I had no choice but to defend myself at a very young age from the latest WWF wrestling maneuvers. Thank you Hulk Hogan, Randy Savage and Ric Flair. Having said that, I was also "the girl" and so, girls didn't fight or exercise because they were too "fragile" and might get hurt. I am quite certain that this is a demon I have been "fighting" against for at least forty years. It has taken me to the closer side of fifty to finally realize that I too, can achieve my goals. I don't have to feel like that "fragile" little girl any longer that needs someone to protect her. I can do that myself or at least have a chance to

defend myself if I found myself in a situation to do so.

Today, I find myself in somewhat of a different place in my life. One that has been mainly unfamiliar territory up until this point. I am navigating uncharted waters with a confidence and determination I have never experienced. I most definitely have my moments when I get down, fumble and forget. Will I be perfect? No, absolutely not and I don't expect to. Will I do my very best? Yes, I will give it everything I have. Believe me, I absolutely know without a doubt, that I have so much to learn but it makes me feel better when people more advanced than I are still being corrected. It just shows me that we are all human and we are learning no matter what level we are at. Shihan always tells me not to compare myself to others because we are all on different paths and we do what we can when we can. I am the strength that I have wanted to be for so long and I do have the warrior inside of me. My Shihan has seen it.

To close, I want to focus on key individuals who have been instrumental in leading me to this path I find myself on at this time. Firstly, I dedicate my essay to Shihan Susan who has believed in me from the beginning even when I didn't believe in myself. She is the shining star that brings light to my life with her loving, caring, encouraging and nurturing nature. She really does care about me and truly wants the best for me. There is no one that has been there for me the way she has. I have grown in so many ways because she challenges me to go further even when I just want to give up and not try anymore. She keeps me going in directions I never thought possible. She is an amazing and remarkable Shihan, soul sister and friend. Without her in my corner, none of what I have achieved would have been possible. Thank you from the bottom of my heart Shihan Susan.

Thank you to Shihan Dinah Jung for her constant encouragement and belief in me when I was just starting out. She was my very first instructor and I know I must have been really uncoordinated and slow to learn but she passed no judgement whatso-

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Perseverance and Self Confidence

By Anna Carangi

ever. She would just keep saying that I could do it without hesitation and kept working with me. She has continued to be caring and supportive as both a friend and a Shihan. This was extremely evident at the Expo in 2018. She could see how nervous I was and took one of her students and myself to practice kata. We just kept reviewing it over and over until we felt more at ease. She did not have to do that but she did because she wanted me to succeed. I often say to her, I never forgot where I started. Thank you Shihan Dinah.

My coach has seen the strength inside of me as well. Shihan's son Brandon has been our trainer for the last couple of years and I have done exercises that I never thought I could do. But Brandon taught me that it does not matter what age you are. You can do anything at any time and it is never too late to start. The same things his mother told me years prior when I began karate. They both taught me that there are no limits. The only limits are the ones that we place on ourselves. I have been my biggest hindrance and worst enemy this whole time. That was changing though. Brandon could see our potential and even suggested that Shihan and I enter a dead-lift competition next year. He wasn't joking. Brandon's workouts helped me build the self-confidence that I was lacking and draw out the vitality, vigor and power that I had learned to suppress all these years. We did exercises such as heaving medicine balls, sled pulling, bench pressing and battle ropes. He always encouraged me to go the extra mile even when I didn't think I had an ounce of energy left in me. Nowhere in any other gym has someone had so much faith in my capabilities. Brandon taught me that there are no goals out of our reach. We can achieve anything we set our minds to and get the results we desire for both our physical and mental well-being. I can honestly say, without a doubt, I am in the best shape of my life because of Shihan's motivation to get me exercising in the first place and Brandon's faith, encouragement, dedication and commitment to us. Thank you Brandon for believing in me and more importantly, in my abilities.

Thank you Shihan Brent Horton. I was actually reflecting over the last two years (Expo 2018 in particular) and I recalled how extremely down to earth

Shihan Horton was with me at testing. I remember being very nervous, anxious and self-conscious and he could clearly see that. He tried to calm my nervousness with kindness and patience. It definitely worked. I also had my two on one match with him and he encouraged me to keep going the whole time and complimented me after the fight. I have much respect for Shihan for his humbleness and the time he took to make me feel more at ease when he really didn't have to. He believed in me too. Thank you Shihan Horton.

Shihan Richard Wharf is also someone who I would like to make mention to. He was truly a kind, caring and gentle human being that took the time to try to ease my nervousness when I tested in front of him at the Expo. He exhibited such passion and dedication to karate which came through to me in his patience and instruction. He was definitely taken from us far too soon and will always be greatly missed amongst the Isshin Ryu community.

I also want to thank my karate family, Toshikai Dojo. Sensei John, thank you for being like a father. He was so thrilled the day I finally learned Bo kata. He actually told me he was proud of me which almost made me cry. He often says, "You're my hero," and then I follow up with a hug. He is truly a sincere, good-hearted man who wants to see all of us succeed. Shihan Janet, for encouraging me to keep practicing and giving me pointers on how I can improve. Shihan Tim, for offering your time in doing the Zoom classes and your videos on Youtube. They serve as a great reference point as I have watched them more times than I can count. The twins Rachel and Megan have been amazing in their support and willingness to teach and work with me from day one without judgement. Coach Sean, who I was extremely intimidated by, for seeing my improvement and potential in fighting and sharing his expertise on self-defence. Much respect and gratitude as well to all the Senseis and Shihans that I have had the privilege to learn from over the years.

Master Mady, you continue to be a true inspiration to us all. Thank you for your passion, commitment and dedication to an art that you have wholeheartedly embraced, respected and shared for dec-

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Perseverance and Self Confidence

By Anna Carangi

ades. My utmost respect to you for all of your hard work and all that you represent to Isshin Ryu Karate.

Adam, my son, thank you for motivating me to practice bunkai and to learn it yourself. Your interest in what I do has been what has inspired me to try harder and give one hundred and ten percent. Thank you for always asking me to spar even when I grumble, making excuses that I'm too old or when you tell me I can do better to challenge me further. Thank you for wanting to be a part of all of this and giving me the ambi-

tion and drive to want to do the same.

Thank you to my dad, Luigi Carangi, who taught me resilience and strength. He would always say, "when the going gets tough, the tough get going." No truer words have been spoken. I know he is watching today from up above with such pride and joy at his little girl. I often remark and Shihan has also agreed, that I definitely inherited these qualities from him. It would have made him so proud to see his little "Annarella" test for her next black belt. This one's for you and Adam, dad.

United Southern Isshinryu Karate (USIK) Seminar

By Sensei Tim Boykin

The USIK hosted a self-defense seminar at the Southeast Carolina Isshinryu Dojo in Shallotte NC, hosted by Sensei Ray Reisen on Saturday the 17th of February. Seminars in support of the USIK are held on a quarterly basis and rotate venues and locations through the year. The seminar ran over two hours and was broken into two main groups. The first group was comprised of youth participants which ran in 30-minute training blocks, under the close supervision of Godan and below instructors. Including Sensei Justin Andre, Carin Bloom, Sam Funderburke, Meredith Fangman, Dave Heim, David Schartman and Ray Reisen This training focused on

verbal commands, controlling distance, grab/wrist escapes and general awareness, but also left time to engage in a series of innovative games meant to develop confidence and stability. The second group were comprised of adults and mid-level Kyu ranks and focused on applications of Isshinryu upper body basics, lower body basics/kicks, close-in self-defense and controlling distance (maai). This training was conducted by senior leadership, including Grand Master Kobylanski, Grand Master Boykin, Master Jon Oshita and Master Don Gyr. The seminar was successfully conducted without injury, with a total of 44 students and instructors in attendance. Many thanks to Sensei Ray Reisen and Master Jon Oshita for hosting.





Mady's Martial Arts Updates

Hanshi Albert Mady is constantly travelling to train and support Isshinryu Karateka around the world. This past summer, his grandson Matteo Mady placed first at the Isshinryu Hall of Fame in Kumite as well as was recognized as the young male Karateka of the year. Congratulations Matteo!

Hanshi Mady also participated a large seminar joining forces with other prominent Isshinryu Masters for the 2023 Day with the Masters, sharing his expertise and helping generate enthusiasm to train among all in attendance.

Some thoughts from Hanshi Mady for anyone looking for focus their training

Old school karate-ka: Old school karate-ka can "fight" you standing up, sitting down, lying

down, attacked from the front, side and behind. I said FIGHT, not sport, no rules. I said OLD SCHOOL, real karate was developed to maim, cripple or kill. The old school will bite you, pull your hair, smash your groin, knee caps, throat, gouge your eyes, smash your face off a table or wall, slam you on to the concrete, head-butt, pick up anything and use it to defend themselves. It's not sparring; no rules, no referee, no bell, you can't tap out. YOU TRAIN TO SURVIVE, if that's not being taught, you are not learning KARATE. Sitting under a tree and chanting is not karate. I see these adds stating, "family oriented Karate, no contact," what a load of you know what. I want my families to be able to protect themselves when they leave the dojo. A lot of schools will teach a lot of pretty techniques, you must have the mindset, if you don't have that, all the pretty techniques in the world will not save you. Training like this will produce confidence and not bullies. This is NOT teaching violence, just the opposite, it teaches you to keep violence away from you.



Attend the Expo and Grow

By Richard Ruberto

I'm looking forward to supporting other presenters, helping with the testing for rank, sharing my knowledge, seeing old friends, making new friends and be further exposed to Canada and Canadian hospitality. I so look forward to attending this event.

Whether you are a presenter or participant you have to train. That's all that is required of you is to give it your best. No one but no one should hesitate to approach me and ask questions or ask for help with something. Please don't ever feel you are bothering me. That's what I'm there for. I want to teach and will teach the entire time if asked to.



About The Newsletter

Just as in our dojo training, the newsletter is about sharing and improving as a group. We regularly have contributions and updates from Quebec to British Columbia in Canada, as well as from Germany, New York and the Southern United States. Everyone is always welcome in my Dojo or to share via the newsletter.

Articles are welcome from anyone and everyone. They can be about anything related to the Martial Arts, a technique you think is just great; A better way to do a technique; History of a Karate Master; a tournament trick that works well; ANY-THING!

All articles are appreciated as e-mail. You can send it to your instructor to proof read and send in, or directly to me. (sensei@isshinryu.ca)

You can even include pictures if it helps your article!

Karate Terms

Karate Creed—Ed Parker

I come to you with only Karate, Empty Hands.
I have no weapons,
but should I be forced to defend myself,
my principles or my honor,
should it be a matter of life or death,
of right or wrong,
then here are my weapons,
Karate, my Empty Hands.

**Victims love entertainment,
Victors adore Education**
Robin Sharma