



May 2025 GMA Newsletter

CONGRATS TO COACH DAVID YOSHIDA on his BJJ BLACK BELT!!

Congrats to our newest black belts:

Miss Caitlin Gibson, Mr. Jonas Stewart, Mr. William Yoshida, Miss Jenna Berry (3rd), Mr. Nathin Plummer (3rd) and our newest junior master, Miss Aleah Spires.

CONGRATS to our graduating seniors:

Donovan Sieg, Taylor Ham, Maya Mras, Eli Elmore

Upcoming events:

May 3 rd	Demo team 9:00-10:15
May 3 rd	Break a thon and school picnic 11:00-3:00ish?
May 10 th	TKD tournament—Bedford
May 12 th -15 th	Happy Mother's Day--Mothers please join us for class this week.
May 17 th -18 th	GMA hosts Chinese Sword workshop
May 24 th	possible demo team practice 9:00-10:30.
May 25 th	Spring Clean 12:30-3:00 ish
May 26 th	No class, happy Memorial Day
May 29 th	TKD black belt/stripe testing retest and possible ceremony during BB and BBC class—no BBC
June 4 th -5 th	Rope dart/meteor hammer camp with Bensei.
June 7 th /8 th	Karate Kid Legends private viewing for GMA. Details later.
June 16-20	TKD Day camp 9:00-3:30
June 24-25	BJJ camp 9:00-3:30
June 28 th	Fuji BJJ tournament
June 30-July 1	Hapkido camp 9:00-3:30

Break-a-thon and annual school picnic

It is time for our annual school picnic and break-a-thon to benefit our scholarship program—which provides scholarships for students to become or stay involved in martial arts. Some of our own students benefit from this fund, so we need your continued support, plus it is a great chance for our students to get a lot of breaking practice! This year we will be having it at Jimmy Nash Park, Shelter no 5. Please arrive around 11 for registration for the break and set up. we hope start the picnic at 11:30, and the break practice will begin shortly thereafter. For the picnic, fried chick and pulled pork will be provided, and students need to sign up for the pitch in. We will still be doing fun and games such as egg toss and throwing pies at the instructors (1.00 per pie for scholarship fund) Please sign up inside so we can still anticipate numbers. Students DO NOT need to wear doboks to the break-a-thon (egg toss appropriate clothing strongly encouraged).

Mother's Day invitation

As usual, our students are welcome to invite their mom, grandmas, etc. to class the week following Mother's Day. We will plan classes to have you and your child interact and share the martial arts experience. While you are at it, feel free to try out any other class including our lunchtime hapkido and morning tai chi classes.

Sign up now for Day Camps/Summer camps!

We are now taking sign ups for our GMA day camps. These are weeklong intensive training sessions. from 9:00-3:30 each day. HKD/TKD camps are the equivalent of 30 classes and 3-5 points and cover a full belt rank material in one profoundly serious week. LD camp covers 8 stripes. Knowledge, drills, and games not normally covered in



class is also taught. And there is still time for dodge pad. Discounts are available for multiple camps or multiple family members. Additionally, get a discounted rate if you pre-register by May 15th.

Dragons camp July 15-17 TKD camps June 16-20 and July 21-25. BJJ camp June 24-25. HKD June 30-July 1

**** Special camp: Rope Dart/Meteor Hammer w instructor Ben Kennedy June 4th and 5th.**

GMA Wishes a Happy Birthday to:

Colin Steven 5/1	Ethan Jackson 5/2	Ryleighann Kennedy 5/2	Taylor Ham 5/5
Darien Troxell 5/15	Liam Phelps 5/18	Carter Craven 5/20	Mikey Helms 5/20
Greydon Parker 5/24	Ryan Spires 5/25	Eliana Gluff 5/28	

Training Anniversaries

Rob Snyder (TKD, BJJ 17 yrs.)	Lise Roberson (HKD 16 yrs.)	Thayne Boswell (TKD 3 yrs.)
Rylee Bryant (TKD 3 yrs.)	Cole Frye (LD, TKD 2 yrs.)	Dakota Stroup (HKD 2 yrs.)
Jamie Kirk (Tai Chi 1 yr.)		

Quotes of the Week

This May, as Heroes in Training, we will be looking at the stories and learning from some real-life heroes (medal of honor recipients) in honor of Memorial Day.

This Month in Martial Arts History (selected from “Dates with Destiny” in *Martial Arts Success*)

1984—Ninja Turtles debuts (in comic form)

May 1st, 1971—Billy Jack, featuring HKD master Bong Soo Han, premiers (it is released in ‘73 and helps fuel the Martial arts boom

May 20, 1975 –KTA in Korea consolidates the “kwans” as part of the unification effort of TKD. The CDK is assigned kwan #9.

May 25-27, 1973, first world TKD championships held at the Kukkiwon. The WTF is founded the next day.

May 27,1949. Shotokan founder Gichin Funakoshi founds the Japanese Karate Assoc, helps to spread Karate worldwide.

Congrats to our BJJ kids who competed at the FUJI tournament:

Brycen Byrum	1 st gi	1 st no gi	Ezekiel York	1 st gi	1 st no gi
Gideon York	3 rd gi	1 st no gi	Colin Stevens	2 nd gi	
Cameron Gregory	2 nd gi		Colt Goforth	3 rd gi	3 rd absolute gi



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The Teacher Appears When the Ego Disappears Part 2

Great men have almost always shown themselves as ready to obey, as they afterwards prove ready to command—Lord Mahon (In Ryan Holiday, Ego is the Enemy)

In discussing several examples of the bromide “when the student is ready the teacher appears,” I spent a lot of time discussing how the ego keeps the teacher hidden. There is one major, particular instance of the ego getting in the way that is very relevant to martial arts and deserves its own rant: the willingness-or lack thereof-to strap on a white belt and go through the ranks. You can’t see the teacher if you can’t handle being in the same room.

As noted last month, in some ways a white belt is the most open to instruction, as they are eager and open to learning, and the Dunning Kreuger effect has not occurred. But it also requires a humbleness to accept a low position in a very structured, hierarchal culture—where they have little “rights” and no input. This flies in the face of our individualistic, egalitarian society. And many people, especially those raised in the false self-esteem era, can’t handle being in a subservient, non-equitable position. In fact, it is becoming a societal problem.

As Ryan Holiday points out, many hate every minute of their internship or entry level position. Interns sue their employers for pay. Kids are willing to live with their parents instead of taking a job they are “overqualified” for. People are unwilling to take one step back in order to take several steps forward for fear of “being taken advantage of,” which is often just the time-tested process of paying your dues.

What they fail to realize and participate in is the age-old, time-tested model of apprentice learning. It is the methodology that produced Renaissance greats like Michaelangelo and DaVinci. Some would argue that it was merely circumstance that they were born in an era that used such an outdated and unrefined methodology, but if it was such a suffocating, oppressive model, then how did it produce a cluster of geniuses and masters that we arguably haven’t seen since?

Japanese martial arts (and other art forms like calligraphy) have a similar concept of learning and refer to this process as Shu-Ha-Ri. Peter Ralston offers a translation of the swordsmen Chozan Shissai that describes each stage of the process. Shissai doesn’t use the terms per se, but his comments are still very illustrative. Shu means to imitate. The white belt adheres to specific techniques and methods, without question or deviation. Shissai via Ralston, “The beginner has no ability to discriminate, he understands incorrectly, and naturally, considers what he understands to be true.” [so just keep imitating]. I can’t remember who said it in regard to BJJ practice, but in practice one should ask questions, test and verify everything—unless you are white belt—then shut up and just practice.

Eventually, the student starts to internalize the principles and concepts that come from repetition. In the Ha stage, they are allowed to deviate or depart from the strict rules of the Shu stage because they are learning the “why” behind the “how” and still apply the principles in more varying circumstances. Shissai explains this transition thusly: “The function of swordsmanship lies in activity and form. If its form is discarded, what reference shall the Principle of its essence have? By practicing function, one becomes aware of its essence, and it is in this awareness that the liberation of function lies.”

Finally, the Ri (to leave, depart, or separate) stage is when the practitioner can innovate, develop their own style of doing things, and contribute to the art. But they can only do this because that have embodied the core principles and concepts so well; they can use them creatively without deviating from them. Shissai summarizes the whole journey in settling a debate among students, who are arguing about which type of spear is better... “Regardless of what a person uses in the beginning, replying upon the experience of those who have preceded him, he takes care to study and utilize all of the advantages handed down to him, and thus attains



freedom in usage. Yet, when he progresses, and ultimately finds the way himself, then even a cudgel becomes a spear in his hands.”

Shissai describes an amazing end result in the Ri stage. The problem is that people aren't willing to put in the work at the earlier stages. Simple imitation can be (without the proper attitude) boring and tedious. Students complain they are bored doing the same thing over and over again, yet clearly haven't learned it yet, and want to know when they get to do the cool stuff. BJJ practitioners, instead of drilling basics, try the fancy moves from Instagram that are good for likes but not for rolling. We appreciate the enthusiasm that might need to be curbed, but it sometimes becomes a heart or spirit issue...the student thinks we are just holding them back for some reason. Why should they have to do their time? A long time ago, we explained to the grandmother of a new TKD student that they had to earn their white belt after 10 classes. She went out and bought her granddaughter another white belt and was astonished to find we wouldn't let her just walk into class with it.

This problem has been further compounded in the commercialization of the martial arts...where the student insists on having the rights of a customer rather than the obligations of an apprentice. I have never had a problem with students balking when I ask them to clean the mats, but I wonder if some of them think that is 'what I pay you for.' (As an aside, I suspect these are the same people who don't think it necessary to wipe their sweat off fitness equipment when they are done, but I digress.) I suspect it would blow their mind to know that traditionally, not only cleaning the entire school was a duty that fell upon the students, but they were also expected to launder the black belts' uniforms as well. In fact, it is largely speculated that the tradition of having your name on your black belt comes from this tradition, so that the lower ranks wouldn't mix them up during cleaning. You might think that is outrageous but compared to the students who had to give the founder a bath, it doesn't seem so bad.

Those stories, and countless others I could list, harken back to an era where apprenticeship was the expectation. I can say that my time as a 1st keup, just before my black belt testing, was in some ways a lighter form of my fraternity pledgship. Again, some people's egos can't get past being subservient to get to the rewards on the other side. But as Ryan Holiday asks, "If you are going to be as big deal that you think are going to be, isn't this a trivial imposition?"

He goes on, "Greatness comes from humble beginnings. It comes from grunt work. It means you are the least important person in the room until you change that with results. This requires us to fight the ego that says we are being demeaned." Being a lower rank can be humble but isn't demeaning. Every higher rank has been in your position and probably paid a higher price than you to get through it. If you want the knowledge that comes with their level of rank, you must first imitate not only the techniques, but also their ability to suppress the ego.