

Shoshin Ryu Yudanshakai Newsletter

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Belt Burnout: Beating the Yonkyu Blues

by

Bryan Stanley

“Those are some tough belts, yonkyu, sankyu, nikyu, and ikkyu,” said Professor Clyde Zimmerman. “I remember what it was like, and that was a tough time.” He gave those dubious words of encouragement to my student Jeff Doyle, during a trip we made many years ago to Professor Zimmerman’s dojo in Carson City.

Professor Zimmerman couldn’t have been more correct, the climb to black belt is a long one. It takes time, energy, and persistence from the student. It takes faith, understanding, and guidance from a sensei. It takes an unwavering commitment to see the journey to its end from everyone.

During the climb there will be a period of time that tries even the most ardent student. For some it happens early, for others it happens later, but for nearly every practitioner of the arts there is a time where the payoff isn’t as great as the effort, where the ends don’t add up to the means, and where the techniques get stale and the practice gets boring. The affliction goes by any number of names: Belt Burnout, the Brown Belt Doldrums, or The Yonkyu Blues. It’s not fatal by any means, but it can be.

So what is belt burnout? The definition, for purposes of this article, is the point where a student no longer feels as though he or she is progressing. Think of it in terms of the climb up a mountain.

When a climber is fresh, the climb is easy and everything is new. Even though it is a long way off, the top of the mountain is constantly in sight. The longer the climb goes on, the more the terrain starts to look the same. Then the climber hits a plateau, it goes for miles to the next up hill section. That plateau tests the climber’s resolve, it’s long and boring. The hill at the end is short, and on top is another long plateau. The rest of the climb is a series of short climbs followed by long plateaus.

On the climb, dealing with the plateau is the hard part. Everyone who has ever done the art has experienced long nights, weeks, months, and years where it didn’t seem as though they were learning anything, where it seemed as though these elusive techniques would never be found.

Mike Whitaker, Sensei of Golden West Jujitsu, Riverside, thought he would be a brown belt forever. Professor Jack Mauck from the Santa Monica YMCA could remember those days and decided to work out six nights a week rather than three. Peter Zukowski from Boulder City Shoshin Ryu says that he never thought he was going to be a black belt. The list goes on and on. Ask a black belt if they ever got discouraged doing the art and without a doubt they’ll say yes. But the determining factor is that they didn’t let the discouragement stop their practice.

(See “**Belt Burnout**,” continued on page **four**)

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Yudansha Notes

Get Well Soon

Troy Bertrand, one of the members of the illusive Surf City Shoshin Ryu dojo, underwent his second open heart surgery in the past four years in early December.

The doctors were calling the procedure a success and, if it works out the way they predict, he may never have to have another operation on his heart.

Of course there's no telling what's going to happen to the rest of his body, but...Get well soon.

News from Peachtree, Georgia

Peachtree City, Georgia, had their 4th annual x-mas, demo and promotion night. Seventeen teams performed for family and friends and a number of promotions were recognized. After the demos and promotions, the entire group had a killer buffet. (For the complete list of promotions, check the Promotions column on page six)

In other Dojo news, the Ippon Judo and Jujitsu class has two judoka turned wrestlers. Josh Jewitt and Derek Wojcik recently competed in the largest middle school wrestling tournament in the state of Georgia. Josh won his thirty-two man "B" team bracket with a perfect 5-0 record.

Derek took third in his "A" team division, losing only to the top seeded wrestler by a 9-8 score. Among his victories were pins of the #3 and #4 seeded wrestlers in the division.

The 7th Semi-annual Ippon Open will be held April 29, 2006, and will feature judoka from up to ten different states.

Promotion Night in Santa Monica

The Westside Dojo hosted a special promotion night on November 29th with special guest, Professor Imi Okazaki-Mullins (Daughter of Prof. Okazaki). The event was well attended by 38 Black belts & 48 Kyu Ranks of the Southern Cal. Danzan Ryu Jujitsuka. (For the complete list of promotions, please see the promotions list on page six)

Sensei of the Month

Name: Jack Mauck

Rank: Godan

Dojo: Westside YMCA

Number of years practicing the martial arts: thirty-three

Styles studied: Jujitsu and Judo

Favorite Book: *Shogun* by James Clavell or *The Course in Miracles*

Favorite food: Venison

Favorite movie: *Gandhi*

Favorite Actor: Sean Connery

Favorite Actress: None, most are too kooky

Favorite musical artist: Puccini

Most memorable moment in the martial

arts: A personal achievement, getting out of all the torture sticks

Favorite thing about practicing Danzan

Ryu: It's just plain fun.

Four famous people you'd like to invite to dinner: Abraham, Jesus, Eden, and Moses.

Biggest inspiration: My father. He was always there; never said, "No;" and only offered guidance.

Danzan Ryu Hall of Fame

Juan Gomez:

In the later part of the 1930s Juan Gomez began studying Danzan Ryu Jujitsu under the instruction of Sensei Charlie Wagner and later came under the tutelage of Professor Okazaki.

In 1939 he was one of the charter members of the Amercian Jujitsu Guild – later to be called the Amercian Jujitsu Institute – serving in the office of Vice President.

Professor Gomez opened his own school and among the black belts he trained were future professors and Hall of Fame members Wally Jay and Antone "Tony" Gonzales.

Professor Gomez passed away on October 17, 1995.

***Editors Note:** So that we don't forget their contributions to Danzan Ryu, the newsletter will publish a short biography of each member of the Hall of Fame.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST NEWS and KAMP KAISHINKAI

By
Sue Jennings

The Pacific Northwest has had many events over the past few months to keep everyone busy. Between regular classes, summer camp, the JA Convention, and Ohana, it's been non-stop martial arts. In June the school year ended at the Evergreen State College, which meant that students could continue their studies at KaishinKai's main dojo near Centralia.

Representing KaishinKai at the **2nd Annual Rocky Mountain Regional Convention** in American Fork, Utah, in July was Sensei Sue Jennings of Centralia, Washington, and Sensei David Woodland of Magna, Utah. Both taught several classes at the event sponsored by AJJF Regional Director Bob Hodgkin. The event brought about sixty people together. It was an enjoyable experience, even if the heat was a little oppressive.

A few weeks after the Utah event, **Kamp KaishinKai**, the Pacific Northwest annual summer camp, was held on August 12-14, 2005. With great weather and enthusiastic martial artists, the group had a great martial weekend.

Instructors for Kamp KaishinKai for 2005 were: Prof. Ron Jennings and Senseis Paul Bedard, David Woodland, Rob Gebhart, Allen Schaffer, John Doyle, Dana Totten, Tim Ames, and Sue Jennings.

During the weekend the instructors most of the Danzan Ryu boards from yawara through shinyo, kiai no maki, massage, and history. Special instructor training was held covering advanced lists including the torture sticks. With stargazing during the Perseid Meteor Showers, a fire pit with s'mores, ninja games at night, and a terrific Saturday evening banquet and promotion ceremony, it was an enjoyable and busy camp experience. (For a complete list of the promotions, please see the promotions list on page six)

The Literary Ninja

Budo Secrets: Teachings of the Martial Arts Masters

Edited by John Stevens

Pages: 115

Cost: \$12.95

The main focus of this book is to promote the mental aspects of martial arts. It contains an interesting collection of maxims, philosophies, and anecdotes surrounding various martial arts. The book consists of three sections: "The principles of budo," "the philosophy of budo," and "tales of the masters of budo."

The first section is comprised of lists of rules, principles, and adages from arts including Aikido, Swordsmanship, Karate, Judo, and Ninjitsu. Further reflections on the harmony and philosophy of martial arts in life are also included in the second and third sections, but readers are largely left to themselves to discover this harmony on their own.

If you enjoy plunging your mind into the depths of philosophy and the search for harmony of life and movement, then it may be time to brew your favorite blend of coffee or tea and settle into your beloved reading chair. However, if you want a book of physical technique or enjoy being told what to think and do by not having to divine your own answers, this book will prove little more than irritation. But wait! There is more to this little book than meets the eye. Included with the lists upon lists of principles are numerous pictures of Eastern scrolls, calligraphy, and art, along with brief explanations of their histories and translations.

As with life, take from this book what you will.

On the Ninja's scale of white to black belt, I give *Budo Secrets: Teachings of the Martial Arts Masters* a BROWN belt.

-- The Literary Ninja

(“Belt Burnout” from page one)

“I think you have plateaus, where there are long stretches of time where it doesn’t seem right,” said Professor Jack Mauck. He has been involved with Danzan Ryu for more than thirty years and can still remember what it was like in dealing with the Yonkyu Blues, “Then one night, it all falls together. It’s like, ‘Hey, I got through it.’ Suddenly those techniques that had been bad for the last six months are now great and become your favorites.”

How one copes with the flat spots in his or her learning curve is one of the great lessons of the martial arts. With more than forty years of experience in Danzan Ryu, Professor Ken Eddy, Sensei of Mizu Shin Tao, thinks the plateaus are an important part of learning the art, “From my perspective it gives the student an opportunity to grow. In our culture they think it’s about learning technique. The system is set up for your character to grow along with your physical and psychological development...I think that sometimes it’s a good awakening for people to sit there for a while and see what it is about...I think it’s important for people in our culture to understand that its not about rank, it’s about seeing more in a technique than you saw before, seeing more in yourself than you saw before.”

Not surprisingly Sensei Jason Spencer, sensei of Ko Ryu Kan in Rocklin, California, and one of Professor Ken Eddy’s top students, holds the same basic view. “One of the reasons people come to the martial arts is to learn patience and maturity. They shouldn’t need someone holding that carrot out in front of them every six months to keep motivated.” Jason is a thoughtful man who has been studying the art for sixteen years; he continued his idea about the benefits of a plateau, “the other thing is that it’s good for the instructor too. You get to see what the person is going to be like when they get impatient, and they don’t think they are getting what they should be getting. Are they going to get up and leave, or are they going to be the kind of person that is going to stay for as long as it takes?”

There are other benefits that occur from being locked in one belt for a long time. According to Professor Roy Center he sees it as an opportunity to refine technique, “I think mostly we have an opportunity to learn all these techniques...We know how to do the mechanics, but as you progress and do them over and over again, you learn what the technique is. You get that from going over the list over and over.”

Professor Center has been doing Danzan for more than forty years, and he’s seen and experienced thousands of things. It has never occurred to him to stop practicing, but he said this about belt burnout, “I saw it in myself after the fact, but I didn’t get it when I was going through it. It was actually ten years, I had been teaching for ten years, and the light came on to me about what the techniques were. I had been going through the motions without knowing what I was doing.” He laughed about the experience and made a comment about being a little slow, but he has never looked at a class without it being a challenge and an opportunity to learn. That’s why he never felt that he developed belt burnout.

Perhaps the most altruistic method of dealing with the Yonkyu Blues comes from Sensei Mike Whitaker. “I took my sights off of moving forward, then I started doing better and finding out where I could fit in better,” he said. “I took the focus off of myself and put it on to other things, and that took away the burn out.” His lesson could possibly be the most valuable for anyone trying to cope with a long stint at a particular belt, “I think the greatest thing I got out of it was a change of focus. I realized that it was about the art and the system. It was about keeping Professor Okazaki’s traditions and beliefs going. It is a huge struggle to take the focus off yourself.” How often are our problems the result of focusing upon ourselves?

By placing the focus of his study on to other people’s advancement and understanding of the system, Sensei Whitaker found new areas for growth, “The belt has responsibility. Maybe because of your rank you get the chance to take more of a leadership role in the dojo. Or maybe students come to you when they have a problem because Sensei is busy with another group.” By helping others, he managed to create a new appreciation for his study and in turn forgot about his struggle with the Yonkyu Blues. (See **“Belt Burnout,”** continued on page six)

Ask the Doctor

Dear Dr. Rich,

I get gassed really easily in class. I'm thirty years old, I don't smoke, I'm probably twenty pounds overweight, and spend most of my day in an office sitting at my desk. What is the easiest and safest way for me to get back in shape or better shape?

Sincerely,
Doughboy

Dear Doughboy,

The obvious response about aerobic conditioning was tendered in a previous newsletter. The wording in your question, however, led my mind along more fragrant definitions for the term "gassed." I have had the opportunity over the twenty-seven years I have practiced and taught jujitsu to work with a number of people blessed with the ability to use pungent or downright toxic odors and gasses as part of their martial arts arsenal. These squeaks, toots, and "breakages of wind" have usually been emitted to the embarrassment of their owner as the result of a fall or strenuous move. These activities literally force the air out involuntarily by applying direct force to the abdominal contents or tensing the abdominal musculature, and bringing the entire class to a screeching halt in mid throw. I have been asked on many occasions (and I dare say that without being asked, I have volunteered the information with tears in my eyes on other occasions) how best to cure this problem.

All of us harbor bacteria in our intestines capable of converting a part of certain sugars, proteins, or fats in our diets into gas. Much of this gas is, thankfully, odorless, and therefore lends itself better to humorous sonorous distractions in class than to seeking the nearest open window. Those of us who lean more towards a carnivorous diet will likely have gas notable for at least some offensive odor. Some of it can clear the mat.

My advice to anyone prone to "letting loose" in class is to avoid eating foods well known to cause gas for twenty-four hours before class. Foods such as beans, cabbage, legumes in general, tend to promote gas formation. People usually know which foods set them off as this tendency has likely received undesirable attention from friends and family in the past. I currently have a student who seems to eat these foods before class intentionally. There are food additives such as "Bean-o" which helps reduce gas formation. Lastly, the act of eating causes an increase in intestinal motility that lasts a couple of hours. I encourage my more aromatic students to wait until they get home to eat or to eat at least three hours before the start of class.

Dr. Rich Charlebois

Words of Wisdom

“Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance.” – Unknown

“It’s hard to beat a person who never gives up.” – Babe Ruth.

“I am not young enough to know everything.” – James M. Barrie

“You can observe a lot just by watching.” – Yogi Berra

(“**Belt Burnout**” continued from page **four**)

Most black belts can offer some advice about how to deal with the Brown Belt Doldrums. The longer one stays in the art, the more experience one gains in any number of areas. One of them is perspective and Jason Spencer had this to say about that topic, “Roger Medlin said to me one time, ‘This whole rank thing is nothing more than an exalted pat on the back.’” He continued by elaborating on that quote, “We get so hung up on it. It doesn’t make your O Goshi better, half the time it makes it worse. It doesn’t make you more able to protect yourself. It doesn’t make you more physically fit. It doesn’t improve your social life. So try and forget the rank and focus on the technique.”

Having been around the art for most of his life, Professor Roy Center has a perspective about dealing with belt burnout that resonates from his experience on the mat, “Most people need to understand that everything that they are going through, there have been people for three or four hundred years going through the same thing. We are always thinking it’s only us. It’s not.”

A dojo has a built in safety net. Sensei, the other black belts, and the students who have been around for years, all have experience. Most have dealt with or are dealing with the frustrations that come from extensive study of martial arts in general and Danzan Ryu specifically. Like a mountain guide for a wayward climber, each can help find a path through the Yonkyu Blues.

Promotions

Kukyu:

Cody Hayes – Ippon Judo and Jujitsu

Hachikyu:

Breanna Wojcik – Ippon Judo and Jujitsu

Mike Wood – Ippon Judo and Jujitsu

Hartley Smith – Ippon Judo and Jujitsu

Zach Montgomery – Ippon Judo and Jujitsu

Skyler Webb – Ippon Judo and Jujitsu

Josh Jewitt – Ippon Judo and Jujitsu

Shichikyu:

Bradley Dowis – Ippon Judo and Jujitsu

Gokyu:

Matt Shaw – Ippon Judo and Jujitsu

Lance Carter – Ippon Judo and Jujitsu

Ryan McDaniel – Kaishin Kai

Vinson Huynh – Kaishin Kai

Lisa Harrison – Kaishin Kai

Michael Luttmmer – Kaishin Kai

Pete Barnhill – Kaishin Kai

Yonkyu:

Aaron Ringel – Ippon Judo and Jujitsu

Cody Wojcik – Ippon Judo and Jujitsu

Irfan Khan – Santa Monica YMCA

William N. Fordes – Santa Monica YMCA

Tristan Hahn – Santa Monica YMCA

Patrick Hollland – Santa Monica YMCA

Christopher Randle – Santa Monica YMCA

Takahide Aso – Kaishin Kai

David Cullom – Kaishin Kai

Dru Swaim – Kaishin Kai

Chris Eller – Kaishin Kai

Roy Marsh – Kaishin Kai

Mike Hutchings – Kaishin Kai

Joe Granville – Kaishin Kai

Greg Blake – Kaishin Kai

Sankyu:

Mark Diez

Shane Dooley – Santa Monica YMCA

Nikyu:

Alan Ringel

David Hahn – Santa Monica YMCA

Shodan:

Elizabeth Reed – Santa Monica YMCA

Peter Goss – Golden West, Riverside

Tim Ames – Kaishin Kai

Nidan:

John Doyle – Kaishin Kai

Sandan:

Rob Gebhart – Kaishin Kai

Betty H. S. Wolf 1934-2005

Betty H.S. Wolf, daughter of Henry S. and Nami Okazaki, passed to her reward on Wednesday, December 28, 2005. Betty was born on January 3, 1934, in Honolulu, Hawaii, and moved to the mainland in 1951.

Betty was an avid practitioner of Yoga as well as Jujitsu and Judo. She was deeply interested in Hawaiian culture and the metaphysical world. She loved animals and was always active in the community.

Betty is survived by her sisters and many loving family members, including her cockatiel and close confidant Kiko.

There are no formal arrangements planned. She will be cremated and her ashes taken to Kihei, Maui, a favorite place she shared with her family many times.

First Contest of the Year

The Orange YMCA is hosting the first contest of 2006 on Saturday, February 11. This kata, sumo, and alligator wrestling contest is open to all junior yudansha between five and seventeen years of age.

Each competitor is required to compete in all three disciplines. The techniques and rules are on page eleven of this newsletter.

Please send all entries and memberships to:

**Shoshin Ryu Yudanshakai
C/O Prof. Kevin Dalrymple
5547 E. San Juan Dr.
Orange, CA 92869**

Go out and get involved. Be part of the success of Shoshin Ryu in 2006.

Amador Grand Opening

On November 12-13, 2005, Amador Judo and Jujitsu celebrated the grand opening of their new facility in Livermore. Their new 5,000 square foot space has two dance rooms, two jujitsu rooms, and ample space for the myriads of students who come through the doors of the dojo.

Saturday's festivities included a 3' bo clinic by Professor Kevin Dalrymple and a gun defense clinic by Professor John Congistre. After a quick lunch break, the dojo filled to the rafters with junior judoka who pushed, shoved, and threw each other in a sumo contest that created more excitement than a Giants' game.

Among the special guests for the clinics was Sensei Jeff Doyle from Tsuba Jujitsu in Merced, who shared a few of his federal law enforcement gun defense techniques with Professor Congistre.

Sunday's celebration took place at a nearby junior high school for the annual Amador Kata Contest where roughly eighty teams participated from the Dublin and Livermore studios. This competition is different in that it is possible to have more than one first place team in a division.

The concept for the contest was designed by the Rebmann's in order to herald great technique rather than muffle disappointment. The format of the contest is a lot like a test. If a hundred people take a test, it's possible for all one-hundred to receive an *A* as long as each test taker demonstrates sufficient knowledge of the subject.

This contest works the same way. Contestants try to reach a level of the possible points, and their total determines if they get first, second, third, or nothing. The most important thing is that participants walk away with a sense of fulfillment.

Congratulations to Amador Judo and Jujitsu on the opening of the new dojo.



Shoshin Ryu Yudanshakai

Membership form



Please check one: _____ New member _____ Renewal _____ Date _____

Name (Last) _____ (First) _____ (MI) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Birthdate _____ Sex: M / F Phone(s) _____

e-mail address _____ Dojo affiliation _____

Instructor _____ Your current rank _____

Dues/ fees: \$25.00 per year. Membership dues include mandatory liability and supplemental medical insurance. Membership is for the current calendar year from January through December 31.

Signature _____ Date _____

Parental consent if under 18 years _____

Mail to: **Shoshin Ryu Yudanshakai**
C/O Prof. Kevin Dalrymple
5547 E. San Juan Dr.
Orange, CA 92869

Phone: 714 - 538 - 4622

Please enclose your check payable to Shoshin Ryu

For more information, visit us at www.Shoshinryu.com



The Orange YMCA Jujitsu Club
is proud to present

Kata, Sumo & Alligator Wrestling Competition

(Ages 5 to 17 years old)

The New Police Athletic League Center
1275 E. Lincoln Ave, Anaheim
Saturday, February 11, 2006
9:00 AM Check-In

Contest Fee: ***Free*** to all SRY members

Shoshin Ryu membership required (Application attached)
Membership \$25

Email Steve Davis for more information
sdavis@anaheim.net



Registration Form

Orange YMCA Jujitsu Club
Kata, Sumo & Alligator Competition
Anaheim, CA
Saturday, February 11, 2006

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

—

Day Phone _____ Night Phone _____

E-Mail _____ Organization _____

Dojo _____ Style _____ Rank _____

T-shirt Size ___ XL ___ L ___ M ___ S

WAIVER – ALL PARTICIPANTS MUST SIGN BEFORE ATTENDING

In consideration for the privilege of participating in the Orange YMCA Kata, Sumo and Alligator competition, I the undersigned release, acquit, and forever discharge the Orange YMCA, the Orange YMCA Jujitsu Club, each of its employees, agents and employees but not limited to them, of and from any and all claims, demands and causes of action which the undersigned may now or shall hereafter have or claim for on account of, or deriving in any manner from any injury to person or damage to property of any nature arising out of participation in the martial arts classes and/or other activities herein described, or any activity or travel related thereto or attendance thereat. The obligations and undertakings herein expressed shall be binding on the heirs, executors, administrators, representatives and assignees of the undersigned. I realize that the practice of martial arts contains an inherent risk of personal injury and I hereby assume that risk.

Participant Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian _____ Date _____

Division Requirements/Techniques For Jujitsu Kata Competition

5-10 years: (8 Total Techniques)

- * 2 Strength/Coordination Techniques
- * 2 Rolling/Falling Techniques
- * 2 Striking Techniques (Kick or Punch)

- * 2 Open Techniques

11-17 years: (8 Total Techniques)

- * 2 Rolling/Falling Techniques
- * 2 Striking Techniques (Kick or Punch)
- * 2 Hand Techniques
- * 2 Open Techniques

There will be no break down for Novice/Intermediate/Advanced. Techniques will be judged based on competitors rank and ability to perform the Technique.

Sumo Competition Guidelines

- This will be a win/lose competition (no points)
- No time limit
- Round Robin format for competition
- 15' circumference ring
- Bow in/Judge/Competitor
- Sumo position (Both hands/knuckles on ground, feet flat on mat-Squat position)
- Once competition starts, both feet must remain on the ground
- Must remain within circle
- Competition over when opponents feet have left mat/circle
- Object is to get your opponents feet off mat or outside of ring
- **NO striking, kicking, head butts**

Alligator Competition Guidelines

- This will be a win/lose competition (no points)
- No time limit
- Round Robin format for competition
- 15' circumference ring
- Bow in/Judge/Competitor
- Alligator position (Push up position, hands and feet on mat)
- Once competition starts, feet must stay below hip line, back straight
- Any portion other than hands/feet touch the mat, competition is over
- Object is to grab/push opponent, causing loss of balance
- **NO head butts, head slaps**