

The Power
of
The Way

A Spiritual Journey

By Nodan

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Warning !

The breaking and self-defense demonstrations shown in this book can be dangerous and should not be attempted without the supervision of a qualified instructor!

Nodan's videos can be viewed at the *nodankarate* channel on YouTube, and the "Nodan Karate Video" is posted at:

nodan-karate.com

and

nodan-karate.mynetworksolutions.com

Chapter 1

Who is Nodan?

I am Nodan. In reality, I am the kindly old grandfather living next door, and if you passed me on the street you would hardly take notice. I was only able to reach a high level of performance in karate because of a brilliant teacher, intense makiwara training, and practice, practice, practice. I have no doubt that some of my YouTube viewers could equal or surpass my own martial arts ability, if they had my teacher, Master Quan Li.

I always knew that I would write this book someday, and that the identities of the people connected to my story would have to be protected. Understandably, some of them would not want their names associated with the incredible events described in this book. So, in order to remain anonymous myself, I created the fictional karate master, Nodan.

This satirical alter-ego is more than just a comic disguise. Nodan's buffoonish persona serves as a self-parody for my own misguided quest to become a great martial arts master, and his breaking demonstrations give tangible proof of the extraordinary power in Master Li's striking techniques.

In the 1980s, I began an earnest search for an enlightenment experience that could take me beyond the natural limits of my physical ability. Over time, this journey led me through a series of life-changing events that would cause me to stop practicing karate for a number of years.

Yohan, Yakov, and Jason

In 1991, I was brought back into karate by two young men who asked for self-defense lessons. Yohan and Yakov trained with me for

five years, and both were awarded the rank of black belt by an independent panel of martial arts experts.

In 1999, I received another request for self-defense instruction, this time from a former high school track athlete who had previously trained in the martial arts. Jason was a serious student, and since there was only the two of us, it was out of necessity that I served as his training partner for five years. It was this training, along with regular makiwara practice, that helped keep me strong in karate into my late fifties.



Yohan and Yakov (front center) pose with their test judges.

From “Nodan Tapes” to YouTube

During the last year of training with Jason, I bought a video camera and began the process of staging and filming a series of demonstrations that would show the power of my teacher’s “one strike” techniques. My intention was to use the tapes as a backdrop

for my warning to martial artists about the dangers of seeking paranormal powers beyond their own natural abilities.

I chose the name Nodan (no dan) because a make-believe karate master holds no real rank. For a disguise, I used a long beard and a mustache, a pair of Harry Potter eye glasses, and a soft, high pitched voice with a non-descript accent.

After the filming was completed, I purchased my first computer and signed up for a video editing class. As a beginner with no computer experience, I faced many difficulties along the way but, eventually I succeeded in producing my first dvd.

The critics rightly savaged my film, calling it “cheesy,” and pointing to the awful acting and poor production values. They recognized the power in the techniques but, nobody got the point I was trying to make.

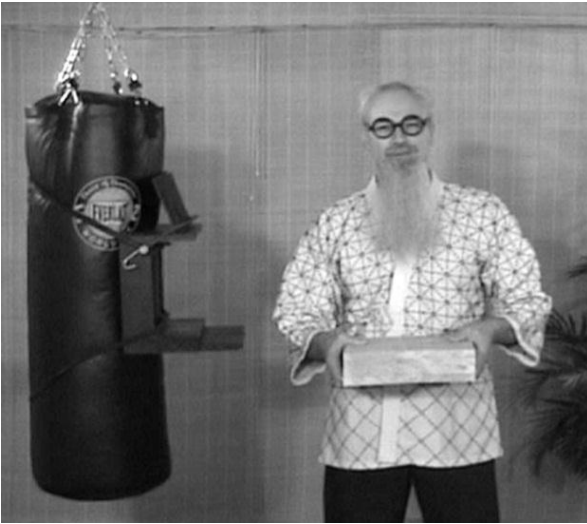
To add further insult, Nodan’s anonymity generated a good deal of false speculation about him on the internet, and most of it was negative. One website even went so far as to post bogus pictures, claiming they were the “real” Nodan.

I concluded that Nodan and his message were dead. Then, a few years later I discovered YouTube, which presented a new opportunity for me to use my Nodan tapes. This time, I wisely hired a professional videographer to help edit the videos, and serendipitously, Nodan and his message were given a second chance.

Before continuing, I want to make two clarifications. First, although the names of the persons in this book have been changed to protect their identities, I have not altered any of the facts. I have relied upon the written notes that I recorded at the time of the events described, and on the recollections of my wife and others connected with the story.

Second, this book is the fulfillment of a self-imposed obligation to tell my story and I do not want my readers to pay for it. So, the book is offered as a FREE internet download at:

nodan-karate.com,
and
nodan-karate.mynetworksolutions.com



I began filming my demonstrations while in my late 50s.



I used suspended board breaks like this bent wrist strike to illustrate the power in my teacher's striking methods.

Discovering the Martial Arts

I first became aware of karate's existence when I saw an advertisement in a weight lifting magazine in the early 1960s. The ad fascinated me with its promise of extraordinary power and fighting skill. I was familiar with boxing and wrestling, but karate seemed to be ideal for street self-defense.

After high school, I left home to attend college and soon enrolled in a traditional Okinawan karate school. I was so captivated by this mysterious art that I traveled for an hour and a half each way to attend class. The classes were rigidly structured with the emphasis on repetitions of the kata and the basic techniques. There was no self-defense training or free sparring.

From the beginning, I did not believe that the tournament competitions of the 1960s were realistic. For me, karate was an exercise in survival, not a sport, and my main interest was in learning how to apply the techniques in a real situation. I decided to concentrate on street self-defense.

While continuing to study karate, I began to work out with Tex Barnes, a college mate, who studied a style of combat jujitsu. Tex brought a metal training knife with a dull, rounded blade to our first practice session. He repeatedly attacked me and succeeded in "killing" me a number of times. Afterwards, I had big red welts all over my body.

This became a wake-up call for me, exposing the fact that real street self-defense was different from the traditional training I was receiving in the dojo. My formal blocks were ineffective, my body was out of position, and I lacked a strategy for defending against a skilled knife fighter's flowing combinations.

Tex showed me wrist locks and joint holds that were effective against close quarter knife and gun holdups, and he introduced me to a sophisticated combat maneuver that used a head feint and angle stepping to disarm and counter attack a gunman from more than six feet away. We also practiced defending against knife and club attacks, and the kinds of grabs and holds that street criminals were

likely to use. This early jujitsu training was the most important influence in my future approach to the martial arts. Not surprisingly, Tex Barnes went on to become a high ranking jujitsu master.

Throughout the 1970s, I trained hard and familiarized myself with a number of martial arts. I studied a variety of throwing and striking systems and was open-minded toward other schools, never hesitating to borrow from them.

Along the way, I taught self-defense and karate, and promoted seven men to black belt. By the end of the decade, and after fifteen years of training and study, I felt I had reached the limits of my speed and power. It was then that I began to seriously consider that there might be more to karate- perhaps something that went beyond the mere physical aspects of the art.

The stage was set for me to meet Quan Li, who would teach me a profound striking technique that would enable me to double my striking power.

Street Self-Defense: Gun holdup at Close Range



Nodan raises his hands in surrender and verbally distracts his attacker, while subtly moving his head out of the line of fire.



He secures the gunman's weapon hand with a jujitsu joint hold and then stuns him with a side head strike.



Board break with snapping side head strike

Chapter 2

Quan Li and Sensei

Quan Li was already an expert in Shaolin karate when I first met him in 1980. He had heard that I knew the complete Shotokan kata system, and he came to me hoping to pick up some of the more advanced forms.

As we trained together for the first time, it became apparent to both of us that his karate was far superior to mine. I was baffled by the uncanny “heaviness” and power in his techniques, until he explained that I was using muscle power, while he was leveraging his strength through bone alignment. The difference was astounding. Quan Li was the best karateka I had ever seen.

I concluded that I would have to relearn all the fundamentals of my art if I was to ever approach Li’s level of expertise. He agreed to teach me his basics, and I exchanged my well-worn black belt for the white belt of a beginner. The teacher had become the student.

After training with Quan Li for a year, I wanted to meet his former karate teacher, whom he always referred to as “Sensei.” Quan was in awe of this man’s exceptional abilities and had told me amazing stories about him. He made the necessary arrangements for us to meet with Sensei who, at that time, was teaching classes in traditional Japanese weapons (kobudo) and aikido. He did warn me, however, that Sensei had stopped teaching his karate a number of years earlier because he had concluded that the ferocious striking art no longer fit in a civilized society.

When I first met Sensei, I knew immediately that he was everything that Li had said about him. His presence was different from that of other men- a quiet, peaceful serenity that I had never seen before. When he performed his techniques, a powerful energy

flowed through him.

Quan Li had shown me the superiority of bone alignment over muscle strength, but Sensei demonstrated a spiritual power that seemed to transcend this physical realm. I had met a true master. Now, I knew what kind of martial artist I wanted to become. We asked him if he would consider giving us private instruction in his former karate-do but, he would only agree to meet with us occasionally to give us a few pointers. Then, he expressed skepticism as to where it would lead and concluded by telling us, “You’d have to be a saint to find The Way through karate today.”

But, Sensei’s skepticism did not stop us from going back to see him several months later. After his last class, he invited us onto the mat, and as we kneeled before him, he looked at me and said, “Jay, everything you know is wrong.” Somehow, I knew that he was referring to more than just my knowledge of the martial arts.

Then we began. First, Sensei looped my karate belt around my waist and instructed me to move forward as he intermittently pulled and slackened on the belt. I wobbled and lurched my way across the dojo floor because my stances were not properly “centered” in the hara, a point located approximately two inches below the navel.

After this, he moved in behind me and, without looking back, I was told to estimate how far away his fist was from the back of my head. I could feel him close, almost touching me but, when I turned and looked he was standing ten feet away.

I tried again. This time, I was sure he was some distance away because I could not sense anything near me. But, as I turned to look, the side of my face lightly grazed his extended fist. Somehow, Sensei was able to extend and withdraw his ki (energy) at will.

Next, he stood before me in a relaxed front stance, his arms hanging loosely at his sides, and said, “Attack me.” I paused for a moment, wondering if he was serious. But, Sensei just stood there with a strange stare emanating from his eyes.

I shifted into a front fighting stance and cautiously looked for an opening. There was none. It was as if he was empty and had every possible attack covered. I would later learn that he had used the sword attitude known as Happo Biraki (Open on all eight sides)¹ to

thwart any attack I may have been considering.

Finally, Sensei asked us to perform the Taikyoku Shodan kata for him. After we had stepped through the form, he made the following comment to us: “It’s not that it’s wrong . . . it’s just not right.” It would take me another three years to understand what he really meant by this.

After this first lesson with a master of such superlative skill and power, I was more motivated than ever to continue with my training. I intensified my home workouts, and Li and I continued to meet with Sensei every few months to have him critique our progress in karate.

Quan Li proved to be as good a teacher as he was a martial artist. He taught proactively, performing every repetition, step for step, right along with me. For my part, I was a determined student, hanging on his every word and imitating his every move.

I did not have Li’s natural ability or genius at understanding the techniques. I had to be shown every step of the way, and then practice, practice, practice, until the movements became part of me.



Quan Li was the best karateka I had ever seen.

After training with Quan Li for nearly two years, I made a momentous decision. To better access Sensei's spiritual wisdom, I joined his school and began taking formal classes with him. Quan Li and I continued to train together in karate but, studying with Sensei added a new perspective to my understanding of the martial arts.

Sensei was a master of Miyamoto Musashi's two swords style, in which the long and short swords are wielded simultaneously, one in each hand. Musashi's classic guide to strategy, *A Book of Five Rings*, was the philosophical basis for Sensei's teaching.

In time, I began to comprehend Sensei's deeper spiritual understanding of the martial arts. For him, a true sensei was an enlightened teacher, and he scoffed at the casual use of the title by some Western practitioners of the arts.

The dojo (training hall) was the "way-room" where the departed spirits of the masters met with the followers of The Way. Pictures of these past masters were displayed on the kamiza wall at the front of the dojo.

The kamiza was the "alter of god," and at the beginning and end of each workout, Sensei would lead the class through a ceremonial bow before it. The kneeling bow included sitting meditation (zazen) which was intended to empty the mind, thus making it more receptive to the spirits.

In the 1976 documentary film, "Way of The Sword," the late Japanese karate master, Gogen "The Cat" Yamaguchi, can be seen kneeling before his crystal ball, summoning the martial spirits. Master Yamaguchi was a 10th degree black belt and a Shinto priest. The film's commentator translates the Goju-ryu master's words:

"In my crystal ball I conjure up spirits of past and future. I talk to the samurai warriors of old and to the fighters who are yet to come, and the secrets they tell me I pass on through my karate school."²

The old master can be seen beating his drum to call up the spirits from the past. The film's commentator notes that, for Yamaguchi, karate was for protection and self-perfection. Sensei did not use a

crystal ball or a drum to contact the spirits but, he followed this same philosophy. For both Master Yamaguchi and Sensei, the dojo was sacred space.

While the dojo served as the focal point for Sensei's spiritual connection with his martial art, astrology and the *I Ching* (Book of Changes) were also important to his occult practice. The *I Ching* is a Chinese divination system, and I once observed Sensei having a reading done by an expert in that esoteric art. Referring to his martial art, Sensei once commented to me, "This is my religion."



Sensei taught Kendo (The Way of the Sword).



This kamiza in Li's dojo was patterned after Sensei's.



Li and two students practice sitting meditation (zazen).

The Martial Spirit

During his classes, Sensei would often receive a revelation about a technique, which he believed to be a gift from the Martial Spirit. One time, I asked him how he had come by his great martial arts ability and his extraordinary physical prowess.

He told me about a special visitation that he received from the Martial Spirit a number of years earlier. It happened after he had developed a serious medical condition and believed that he was going to die soon. He had been seeking “the truth” through his karate-do and was determined to continue on with his training until he either found it, or died trying.

Sensei’s final breakthrough came as he was practicing the Heian Godan kata. As he turned and started down the middle with the double arm block, a tremendous power entered into his body, and he heard an audible voice ask, “Do you want it to stop?” He recalled that he had only a split second to decide, or the miraculous power would be gone. He chose to accept it, and became “Sensei,” the most powerful martial artist I have ever seen.

After this profound spiritual experience, Sensei believed that he could see beyond the kata and uncover any weakness in the karate techniques. Years later, he would acknowledge that it took him some time to learn what to do with the “entirely new energy” he received from the Martial Spirit on that “fateful day.”

Sensei’s Power

In his younger days, Sensei gave demonstrations where he bent steel bars and broke rocks with his bare hands. Li told me that Sensei had once confided to him, “I love my strength.” On other occasions, Quan recalls Sensei telling him, “Once you have the Martial Spirit no one will ever fight you,” and, “If I hit you, you should be dead before you hit the floor.”

Quan told me about an incident that happened years earlier when he was training at Sensei’s former karate dojo. During their class one night, a fight broke out in front of the tavern down the road, and the

loud commotion sent Sensei and his students running into the street to see what was happening. In front of the barroom, they could see a gang of men beating a man who was lying on the ground.

Immediately, Sensei went running toward them with his fist raised in the air, and roaring like a lion. Not only did the gang scatter and run for their lives but, according to Li, Sensei's ferocious kiai yell terrified him and the other students as well!

Sensei also had psychic abilities and could perceive things that others couldn't see. For example, one night during class, he abruptly stopped us during the workout and said that he could "feel" the presence of Joey Dunn, a former student, who had moved away from the area more than a year earlier. To our astonishment, in less than a minute, Joey Dunn walked through the dojo door.

A Self-Styled Zen Master

Although Sensei never referred to himself as such, I viewed him as a kind of self-styled Zen master, who blended Buddhist and Taoist philosophies into his traditional martial arts.

Sensei saw himself as a modern day samurai, and his belief in reincarnation was important to his philosophical world view. He once told me that he had been allowed to remember who he was, and that this had caused him much grief in his life. Another time, he showed Quan Li an old picture of a 19th century samurai that he claimed was a photograph of himself that had been taken during his previous life.

For Sensei, the goal of martial arts was to destroy the ego so that the illusions of this physical world would disappear. Once, while discussing this subject, he stopped and said to us, "Let me see if I can think with ego." He paused, as if trying to think of something to say, and then shook his head declaring, "No, I can't do it." To this day, I don't know if he was really serious, or just trying to move us away from our conventional way of thinking.

Sensei often made provocative comments about religion, and his harshest criticisms were directed toward Jesus, Christianity, and the church. When Pope John Paul II was nearly killed by an assassin in 1981, Sensei exclaimed, "He ought to be shot!"

Another time, referring to the New Testament's account of Jesus feeding a large multitude of people with only two fish and five loaves of bread,³ Sensei quipped, "That boy should have been a baker." Then he added sarcastically, "He screwed up and he's out there running around, and he can't wait to come back and do it all over again."

On other occasions he made pronouncements like, "The Bible is all lies," and "There's no such thing as the devil. You create your own demons."

But, Sensei could also be surprisingly sympathetic. One time, I heard him lament the fact that, throughout its history, Christianity has often distorted the true teachings of Jesus. Then, I heard him complain with genuine emotion, "Look what they've done to his message!" And, on another occasion he said, "If every person on the planet bowed their knee in prayer, all this would disappear."

But, the most shocking thing we ever heard Sensei say was concerning his comparison between the power of Jesus Christ and the power of the martial arts. This happened on several occasions during his discussions about the tremendous power of the martial arts at their highest level.

He said to us, "Boys, if you think the power of the martial arts is something, grab a hold of Jesus Christ. There's a power that'll knock you right on your ass!"

How startling it was to hear these words from Sensei, who spoke them with the authority of one who had some firsthand knowledge of their reality. In view of the negative things he often said about Jesus, this statement made no rational sense to us at all.

Several years later, I went back and asked Sensei why he would have told us such a shocking thing. He gave me a surprised and somewhat embarrassed look, and claimed to have no memory of ever having said it. Then, he admitted that several people had told him that he often said things that, later, he didn't remember saying.

Chapter 3

The Way

For the Chinese martial arts, the tao (dao) means “The Way,” a path that embraces a philosophy of life intended to lead its followers toward enlightenment. The Japanese word used to designate The Way is “do,” and Sensei’s karate-do, aikido, and kobudo were three expressions of his budo (martial way).

Meditation practices can be found in most religious traditions around the world. Indian yogis, Jewish kabbalists, Christian mystics, and Muslim Sufis have all used this tool to explore the deeper mysteries of life.

For the traditional martial arts, some form of Taoist or Buddhist meditation is fundamental to The Way, and I spent many hours in my dojo practicing to focus and expand my mind.

Home Dojo

Following Quan Li’s example, I built a dojo in my house. On the wall of honor (kamiza), I mounted a portrait of the karate master, Gichen Funakoshi. On either side of him, I placed the pictures of masters Ueshiba and Kano, the founders of aikido and judo.

The ultimate goal of my training was enlightenment, and to reach the highest level, my ego had to be completely destroyed. According to Quan, practicing Sensei’s five part karate-do workout would gradually burn away the ego. So, one night each week, we would meet at my home dojo and train together for three to four hours.

After a while, we began to experience extraordinary power during our practice. I experienced a wonderful euphoria from the many repetitions of kata and from striking the makiwara mounted on the floor. Twice, we broke the striking post at its base, such was the

Makiwara Training



5 Board Break with Reverse Thrust Punch



power being generated during our training. Once, the wooden floor in the dojo mysteriously vibrated beneath us as we trained.

Kiai (spirit meeting) is the yell, the vocalization of the energy released during the execution of a technique. We used a kiai yell on every block, kick, and strike but, our voices never became hoarse from the hours of constant shouting.

Finally, we began to experience a most unusual thing. During formal three-step sparring, we used full power punches and blocks with no protective padding. But, somehow our punching and blocking arms seemed to barely make contact, yet each thrust was powerfully deflected. This sounds impossible but, it happened.

The strength we were experiencing was exhilarating and steeled my determination to reach beyond the physical limits of my power. During the week, I often practiced Sensei's karate-do workout for three to four hours a day on my own. What I could not see at that time, however, was that rather than diminishing it, the training was increasing my ego with the pride of becoming more and more powerful. What was supposed to be destroying my ego was, in fact, building it up.

Sylvester and the Invisible Man

One night as Quan and I were training, the energy in the dojo seemed to be exceptionally strong. After we finished our workout, I asked my wife, Kay, to come into the room and see if she could feel anything unusual. Kay entered the dojo and moved slowly toward the right side of the kamiza wall. She followed the energy with her hands and traced the invisible outline of a "person" standing in the corner! When Kay realized what she had just done, she became spooked and hurried out the door.

We had a black and white cat named Sylvester, who considered my home dojo to be part of his personal domain. Shortly after Kay's encounter with the spirit, Sylvester appeared in the doorway to make his evening rounds. Li and I watched, curious to see if the cat would be aware of the ghostly presence in the corner.

Sylvester began his slow, deliberate walk across the back of the

dojo. Suddenly, he veered off and went straight to the spot where Kay had just encountered the spirit. He sat down and stared at the invisible figure. After a short time, he stood up and casually walked out of the room.

Later that evening, Kay recalled that the spirit was about five feet tall, which just happened to coincide with the height of the diminutive karate master, Funakoshi, whose picture graced my kamiza wall. I do not know whether or not it was Funakoshi's ghost in the dojo that night but, I believe it was associated in some way with the spirits we would later encounter during a Ouija Board séance.

The Séance

My former student, Gary, came with his wife Deedee to visit us one evening, and they brought along a Ouija Board, a device used to channel messages from the spirit world. On the board is printed all the letters of the alphabet and the numerals 0 through 9. It includes a planchette (wooden indicator), which is used to point out the letters and numbers that are being channeled from the spirits.

Quan and I had just finished our workout, and we all decided to take the board into the dojo and ask it some questions. We lit several candles and turned off the lights. Then, with pen and paper in hand, we began.

Deedee and Kay placed their fingers lightly on the planchette and we asked our first question.

“Is Master Funakoshi's spirit in this dojo?”

The planchette began to slowly move, stopping briefly on ten specific letters on the board's alphabet. I wrote down the letters and to our amazement, the message spelled out the words “Only for two.”

We asked, “Which two is he here for?”

The answer was, “For true believers.” Quan and I knew that the spirit was referring to us.

Li asked, “Is Master Ueshiba here?”

“All are here if you learn the truth. The truth is in this room.”

“Are we following the right path?”

“Many have trained. Few will develop the gift given by . . .”

“Given by whom?”

“It must start from within.” At this point, Kay became unnerved by the channeling experience and stopped using the planchette but, Deedee was able to continue on her own.

One of us asked, “Who is speaking to us?” The reply was enigmatic and poetic.

“Like the sky, all is open. The sword moves with wisdom.”

Quan asked, “Does Master Funakoshi live in the flesh?”

“I, you, he.”

Kay suddenly gasped and exclaimed that Funakoshi’s picture on the kamiza wall had just become three-dimensional and had projected itself out towards her! Then, Quan Li remembered hearing Sensei once say that Funakoshi’s picture does that sometimes.

Kay had seen enough and left the room declaring, “I’m out of here!” The four of us continued.

“Will Jay and Quan become masters?”

“All will be known when each level is attained.”

Quan was eager to ask about his own training. “What kata level should Quan be training?”

“Good-bye.”

Quan tried another line of questioning. “Was Quan a samurai in a previous life?”

“The tree bears fruit. Only the beginning is looked upon . . . know not more than are given. Seek only what is in the heart. All masters believe.”

We knew something extraordinary was happening. Deedee had no knowledge of martial arts or the Zen-like answers she was channeling. At certain times, I watched her eyes to see if she could be choosing the letters but, she wasn’t even looking at the board!

As we progressed into the séance, the planchette’s movements became increasingly rapid until I could barely record the letters as fast as Quan and Gary called them out.

Li wanted to know if he would ever teach formal classes again.

“Is Quan destined to teach in the future?”

“Giving is receiving the ki.”

This answer was puzzling to Deedee, and when she saw it writ-

en out, she asked why “key” was spelled “ki?” Deedee had no knowledge of this Japanese word and its reference to energy.

One of us asked, “What is the ki?”

The spirit answered, “Look to yourself.”

“Can we improve this dojo for you?”

“Falling leave.”

I asked, “Will I ever teach again?”

“You will grow through giving to the teachings.”

Quan asked, “Will karate-do die with Sensei?”

The spirit gave us a vague answer: “Like the seasons winter sleeps. Slowly spring comes. Have...”

The planchette suddenly stopped moving.

We persisted, “Can you finish this statement?”

“Greed is given to all. I give to two with much to learn.”

With that the séance ended but, for me, contacting the martial spirits reinforced my conviction that I was following the right path.



Picture of Funakoshi became three-dimensional.

The Medium

After our Ouija Board séance, Quan told me about an old spiritualist minister named Bertha, who gave psychic readings. I went to her four times, hoping to gain further insight into the spirit realms.

Bertha lived in a dilapidated old house in a poor section of town. On my first visit, she led me through the house into a gloomy kitchen, where she informed me that a five hundred year old Native American spirit guide had been assigned to act as her psychic gatekeeper.

We sat down opposite each other and Bertha reached across the table and took hold of both my hands. She closed her eyes and paused briefly, and then she began to speak in tongues.

After this, she opened her eyes and said, “Now as I come into close contact with you...” Immediately, information was channeled through her Indian guide. Occasionally, Bertha would shake her head disapprovingly and speak out, “No, not you,” to spirits that she didn’t want coming through. I got the impression there were a number of departed souls, not all of them connected to me, who were trying to get messages through this gateway from the other side.

Bertha was able to give details about my family that she could not have known beforehand, and I have no doubt that she was in contact with the spirit realm. Surprisingly, she never revealed any specific information that was useful to me but, she did help to increase my awareness that a spirit world separate from this material one did, in fact, exist.

In the end, I realized that I had no way of knowing for certain who she was talking with, or whether all the information being given was accurate. After all, what would prevent the spirits from lying or deceiving me?

I told Bertha about our Ouija Board séance and asked for her opinion of the messages we received. But, she became irritated with me and explained that American spiritualists had used the “spirit board” in their religious practice since the late 1800s, and that marketing it as a parlor game had trivialized its importance and put an uninformed public at risk.

Chapter 4

The Last Workout

After five years of training with Li and Sensei, my martial arts had undergone a total transformation and I had immersed myself in Zen philosophy, practiced deep meditation, and used the occult in my pursuit of enlightenment.

Sensei often told us that his power came from “God,” and that all we had to do was ask for it and expect to receive it. But, if it was that simple, why didn’t any of his students possess his special kind of power? Why didn’t Quan Li, who by now, was a master himself?

Damien Wilson was a relative of one of our neighbors, and he heard that I practiced karate. He expressed an interest in the arts and asked if he could train with me sometime. Damien had never studied a martial art so, and I brought him with me to Quan’s dojo to try out our karate.

During our drive to Li’s, Damien told me that he was very psychic. He said that he experienced astral projection (soul travel) while sleeping, and that he could take thoughts out of people’s heads. Then, he made several astounding claims. He said that he knew where Sensei’s power came from, and that he could see himself as a future black belt. Finally, he boldly made this pronouncement, “Now that I’m going to be training with you, you’re going to see the ‘real’ power of the martial arts.”

By the end of the workout, however, Li and I agreed that Damien Wilson was one of the weakest and most un-coordinated men we had ever seen attempt to learn a martial art. Indeed, his claims seemed to be ridiculous to us.

After this, Damien wanted to meet Sensei and I arranged for him to accompany me to a class. Ordinarily, Sensei was friendly toward visitors, and it was his custom to sit next to them at the back of the

dojo and explain the workout as a senior student led the class.

But with Damien, Sensei had no interaction at all. The two men sat on opposite ends of a bench and ignored one another. I doubt there was even one word exchanged between the two of them during the entire evening.

After class, Sensei talked with Li and me as Damien looked on. I remember Sensei telling us about the kind of total commitment it would take to make the final breakthrough to enlightenment. He said we had to want it more than anything in the world and expect it to happen.

Then suddenly, Sensei pointed at me and declared, “Jay, you’re going to get this, and when you do you’re going to come back at me, ‘You ____ son of a bitch!’”

I was dumbfounded, and on our drive home, Damien expressed his great satisfaction with his visit with Sensei and announced, “Me and Sensei have an understanding.” Say what? Now, I was completely baffled by the events of that evening.

Damien went with me for a second time to train at Li’s dojo. During the workout, I witnessed a truly amazing thing. I watched as Damien walked over to Quan and stood face to face with him, without saying a word. Suddenly, Quan pointed his finger in Damien’s face and told him sternly, “That’s not going to work!” Damien said nothing and slowly moved away.

At the first opportunity, I asked Quan what that encounter with Damien had been about. He answered, “Oh, he was trying to go right down into my one point!” None of this made any sense to me, and when I asked him about it again several weeks later, remarkably, Quan had no memory of it ever happening.

Later in the workout, I paired off with another karateka, John Bauer, to practice a formal three-step sparring exercise. As we made our customary bows to one another before engaging, John suddenly sprang backwards, as if he’d just seen a ghost!

Several weeks later, John would admit that he had been startled by my “piercing black eyes,” and his wife Patty later confirmed that he had talked about that incident for days.

Toward the end of our workout, Li and I paired off to practice that same three-step sparring exercise. After I had blocked his three lunging punches, Li stopped and exclaimed, “Jay, you’re killing my arms!” He rolled up the sleeves of his gi and exposed large, swollen welts on his forearms.

This was shocking because Quan and I had been practicing this exercise together with full power punches and blocks for nearly five years, and neither of us had ever suffered so much as a minor bruise. I had felt nothing unusual during the exercise and could not imagine what could have caused these mysterious occurrences with both John and Quan Li.

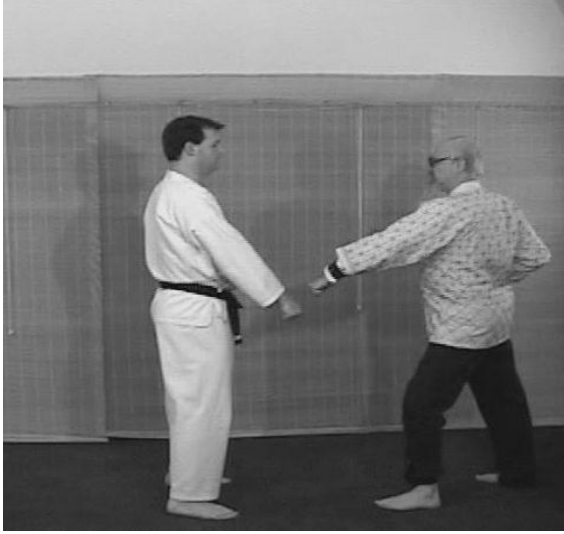
Unbeknown to me, that evening would become even stranger after I returned home. As I lay in bed that night, I became aware of an eerie sensation in my lower back. It was a cool energy, about the size of a softball, and it moved slowly up and down my spine.

I sat up in disbelief, hoping that this alien feeling was only a figment of my imagination. For a brief moment, I even wondered if I was going insane but, the sensation was too real to believe that I was imagining it.

I could not help thinking that Damien Wilson was somehow connected with this strange phenomenon and I called him the next day. But, when I spoke with him, he insisted that he didn’t know anything about it, and I believed him.

By the end of the day, however, I managed to repress the unexplainable events of the previous evening, and the weird sensation in my lower spine seemed to have disappeared. So, I continued in my pursuit of enlightenment, unaware of the coming storm that was about to engulf Kay and me.

As fate would have it, Quan Li and I would never train together again.



This three-step sparring exercise (sanbon kumite) led to the strange events with John Bauer and Quan Li.



Twenty years later, I wear arm guards for protection against Yakov's full power middle forearm blocks.

Chapter 5

Life and Death

Two weeks passed, and I had to interrupt my training routine to make a previously scheduled trip to visit my relatives. For me, the timing was especially inconvenient because I had the growing conviction that I was getting close to a major breakthrough.

Sensei's enigmatic words about my "getting it" had made a deep impression on me, and Quan Li had recently presented me with an honorary Godan certificate (5th degree black belt). In Li's karate organization, the 5th degree signified that the karateka had reached the highest level of physical performance in his art. This, too, reinforced my belief that I was getting close to my goal.

So, I was relieved to get back home and have Kay pick me up at the airport. But, on our drive home, she began to tell me about the frightening events that had happened to her during my absence.

It all began the day after I left while she was channel surfing on the television. She came across a program where the speaker was teaching about the Bible's prohibitions against idolatry. She heard him say that, whenever you bow down before an idol or insignificant picture, there will be a demonic spirit behind it.

He went on to describe the power that one can get from bowing down before images, and Kay couldn't help thinking about the extraordinary strength Li and I experienced during our training. She wondered if she should remove the pictures that were hanging in the dojo upstairs.

At the very thought of taking them down, Kay felt a negative energy begin to swirl around her head. Frightened, she telephoned Wayne, one of my former students, and asked him to come to the house and take the pictures down.

When Wayne entered the dojo, he could feel a strange energy in the room. As he began to step through a kata, Kay heard him exclaim, “Whoa! I can feel it.” He took the pictures down, placed them on the floor, and then left.

The next morning, Kay began to feel angry over being intimidated in her own home and she decided it was not enough to just take the pictures down. She wanted them out of her house. But, as she mustered her courage and started up the stairs to remove them, the malevolent energy that had swirled around her head the day before returned with a fury and buzzed around her like a swarm of angry bees.

Kay was not an outwardly religious person but, she had her own special relationship with God since she was a little girl. She prayed for protection and could feel a defensive shield surround her. Then, she hurried up the stairs and into the dojo, grabbed the pictures off the floor, and put them in the garage.

After telling me these things, Kay apologetically told me that she understood how important the dojo was to me, and that she hoped I wouldn’t be too upset that she had removed the pictures. But, I wasn’t upset at all. What was so obvious to Kay was still hidden from me. I was unaware of my deep spiritual attachment to my martial art.

By the time we arrived home, it was late and I was tired from traveling. I told Kay that the pictures were not so important and that I would deal with that situation the next day.

Kundalini Fire (the Power of the Serpent)

The next morning I woke up late. As I sat up in the bed and looked into the dresser mirror across the room, an amazing thing happened. The eyes in the face reflected back at me were not my eyes! They were black and piercing, and had an alien intelligence of their own. Perplexed, I got up and approached the mirror. I remember shaking my head and saying aloud, “No, that’s not me.”

I needed to get to the bottom of this curious phenomenon. I went into my dojo across the hall and assumed a fighting stance facing the

mirror on the closet door. Those same piercing black eyes stared back at me. Without knowing why, I said to them, “Okay, show me the kundalini fire.”

Then, that same mysterious bundle of cool energy that I had experienced several weeks earlier manifested itself again at the base of my spine. With a sudden rush, it rose up and began to radiate throughout my body, intensifying as it moved upwards toward my head. The supernatural strength I felt was both thrilling and terrifying, and an awful feeling of dread swept over me.

With horror, I watched in the mirror as Sensei’s face suddenly superimposed itself over my own, and then morphed into a demon of enormous ferocity and power. Because I was seeing its reflection in the mirror, the monstrous, holographic-like image appeared to leap out at me with a thunderous roar, as if from some otherworldly realm. It was like being in a three-dimensional horror movie, except this was no fantasy. This was really happening.

Panic stricken, I stepped back and declared to my reflection in the mirror, “If this is what it is, I don’t want it!” The vision faded and the energy receded back into my lower spine. I finally understood that the source of Sensei’s incredible physical prowess was demonic.

With this revelation, I found myself in a place of indescribable emptiness, a blackness where the only reality was my conscious mind. Stunned, I knew I was in the outer darkness of hell. I had believed in Musashi’s void, a place where consciousness does not exist. But now, to my horror, I existed in a disembodied state, alone, and without any hope of ever experiencing anything good again. I was caught in an eternal “now,” beyond space and time.

With me was the complete record of everything I had ever done in my thirty-eight years on this earth. This included every unloving and self-centered word, thought, and deed I had ever committed. I could see that I was trapped there, with no way out, because of the choices I had made. Thankfully, the vision soon faded away.

Immediately, I began thinking about what I should do. I had no intention of telling anyone, including my wife, what had just happened. Who could believe it? I was a trained psychologist and had just experienced phenomena that I believed to be symptoms of

the psychiatric disorder known as paranoid schizophrenia! Besides, for educated people like myself, the belief in demons and hell was part of the superstitious mythology of the past.

These bizarre events were too confusing for me to absorb, and I could only imagine that whatever had caused them was somehow associated with my bowing down before the kamiza pictures. So, I resolved to set that situation right.

After being away for five days, I needed to catch up with some errands. When I went into the garage, I saw the kamiza pictures on the floor next to the trash barrel where Kay had left them. At the thought of discarding them, I felt a deep sadness come over me. After all, except for my family, they represented the most important thing in my life. Reluctantly, I removed the pictures from their frames, tore them into strips, and put them in the trash barrel.

As I drove to the post office thinking about my situation, the thought occurred to me that I should replace the portraits of the masters with something different.

I decided on a mirror for the centerpiece of the kamiza, and on either side, I would place my original black belt certificate and the honorary Godan certificate I had recently received from Quan Li. Without realizing it, I would now be bowing down before myself. Oh, vanity of vanities! The sheer foolishness of this is beyond words.

I returned home and mounted the mirror and certificates on the wall. I found another picture of Master Funakoshi in the dojo closet which I tore into strips and discarded into the bathroom trash basket. This particular portrait had hung in my previous dojos, and Kay later told me that its eyes used to follow her when she moved about the room. Kay had always assumed that, if there were spirits in the dojo, they were friendly.

I took one last look at my re-habilitated kamiza and went down to dinner, hoping that my world would now return to normal.

After dinner, Kay went upstairs to take her evening bath. Afterwards, as she was washing out the bathtub, a hateful male voice threatened her saying, "I could get you!" ... then it described how it would violate her with the most heinous abuses imaginable.

Kay was shocked by the filth and vulgarity of the threats and,

without thinking, she reached into the bathroom trash basket and pulled out a narrow strip of paper. On it, two piercing black eyes glared back at her. Terrified, she dropped the strip of paper back into the basket and hurried down the stairs to tell me.

I was too stunned for words. Kay knew nothing about my earlier encounter with the demon, or of my tearing up Funakoshi's picture and putting it in the bathroom trash. I now had confirmation that we were experiencing a very different kind of reality- something that was beyond our comprehension.

I went up the stairs and stood in the bathroom doorway, not knowing what to do. There was dead silence... and then I finally understood. The evil spirit that had just threatened Kay was from the same demonic realm as the monstrous Martial Spirit that had morphed out of me earlier that same day.

My heart sank and my resolve melted away. Sensei had once told us, "The highest level of the martial arts is controlled insanity."

I felt like I was there.

The Purging Fire

As I stood in the bathroom doorway, the thought suddenly occurred to me that nothing purges like fire. I picked out the torn strips of Funakoshi's picture from the bathroom trash basket and went downstairs. I lit a fire in the living room fireplace and burned them.

After this, I went through the dojo closet to see what else should be burned. Besides the two certificates I had mounted on my kamiza wall, I found several books written by Master Funakoshi and a prized personal letter from Sensei.

One of the books was Funakoshi's classic work, ***Karate-do Kyohan: The Master Text***. On the jacket cover was a photograph of the 14th century statue of Kongorikishi, a fierce Hindu warrior god who is often seen guarding the entrances to Japanese Buddhist temples. His ferocious, "spirit released" visage reminded me of the demonic face that had appeared to me earlier in the day.

This book was too thick to burn all at once so, I ripped the cover off, separating it from its binding. Then, I began tearing off sections

from the interior of the book and feeding them to the fire.

As I placed the last group of pages onto the fire, an incredible thing happened. The pages began to slowly turn, as if by some invisible hand.

There was a pause, and the one page in the book that showed old photographs of Master Funakoshi in various kata poses was displayed before my eyes.⁴ It seemed to be asking, “Do you really want to give up this beautiful art that has become such an important part of your life?” Had I invested too much time and effort in this exquisite art to give it up?

As the last few pages of the book were consumed in the fire, an image appeared on the brick inside the fireplace. It looked like the ferocious face of Kongorikishi, just as it appeared on the jacket cover of Master Funakoshi’s book. Somehow, the demon had seared its raging image onto the fireplace brick. The uncanny picture could have passed for the work of a skilled charcoal artist.

By now, I understood that getting free from these demonic spirits was going to cost me more than a few karate books, rank certificates, and portraits of the masters.

We all live within the context of our environmental experiences. Although I was raised in the church, somehow the message of God’s love, as revealed in Jesus, had never become a reality for me. As an adult, I had concluded that Jesus was a great ethical teacher but, nothing more. I became an agnostic, one who claims we cannot know if God exists. But now, with the realization that demons and hell are real, I had to ask myself, could Jesus be more than just another enlightened teacher?

Do you love me more than these?

At once, I imagined that Jesus was sitting in the chair across from me and asking, “Do you love me more than these?”

My heart dropped into my stomach, because my self-identity was as a martial artist. I had trained for many years and had developed extraordinary power in my karate. I felt a spiritual communion when practicing Sensei’s karate-do workout, with its formal bowing cere-

monies, meditation, and rich symbolism. Sensei's workout had become my sacred rite- my path to enlightenment and ultimate truth. This had become my religion, and now Jesus was asking me to give it all up for him?

To live without the martial arts was unthinkable but, could I keep my beloved karate and live with Sensei's controlled insanity?

The stakes could not have been higher but, I wasn't ready to give up my art so, I continued to search out and destroy more and more items that had been associated with my many years of training. I placed Master Funakoshi's paperback autobiography in the fire and it made a loud and angry hissing sound as it burst into flames. I continued to hold out, however, with stubborn pride preventing me from making that final decision. As a samurai, I was not ready to switch my allegiance to another Lord.

But, in my mind, I kept going back to the time when Quan and I gave Sensei a small token of our appreciation, a brass plaque with the kanji symbol for "hope." I remembered how Sensei had taken the plaque with both hands and, with downcast eyes, had said mournfully, "I have no hope." Now, I could not help but wonder . . . had Sensei exchanged his soul for the power of the Martial Spirit?

For me, training in the martial arts had become synonymous with practicing Sensei's karate-do workout, and I knew that choosing Jesus would mean never practicing that sacred rite again.

The Way of the Warrior is the resolute acceptance of death,⁵ and I finally chose to sacrifice my life as a martial artist. I knew that switching my allegiance from the Martial Way to Jesus would mean committing psychic suicide. After all, Jesus had told his followers, "Whoever does not take up his execution-stake and follow me is not worthy of me."⁶ So, I chose Jesus. I chose death.

The soul of a samurai is in his hara, and I could feel my life force literally drain out onto the floor. I became an empty shell, abandoned and alone. In an instant, everything I had hoped to become was lost. I had become a nobody.

And then an extraordinary thing happened. An indescribable warm and wonderful Spirit of Love poured in from above and filled the void with a profound sense of peace- a peace that is beyond my

ability to describe in words- a peace that surpasses all understanding. Now, I knew that God *is* Love, and that from that moment everything would work out according to His will.

I had become a follower of Jesus with a new identity. The detached sense of peace that I had experienced as a martial artist was replaced by a living peace. Now, I understood what Jesus meant when he declared, “Whoever loses his life for my sake shall find it.”⁷

I do not know how long I remained in that sublime state but, at some point, I went into the kitchen to make a cup of hot tea, as Kay watched the last embers of the fire burn themselves out.

Suddenly, she came running into the kitchen exclaiming, “Jay, you got to come see this!”

I followed her back into the living room and she pointed to the fireplace. To our amazement, the ferocious image that had been seared onto our fireplace brick had been transformed into a tortured, pathetic looking face.

I knew this was a sign that the powers of darkness had been defeated when I chose Jesus.

The Aftermath

The entity that had entered into me had been expelled but, over the next ten days Kay and I would gain a new level of awareness and understanding of these demonic spirits. Incidents like the house lights flickering on and off and the toilets mysteriously flushing, caused us to realize that the demonic infestation in our home would need further purging.

There were vibrations coming from our bed and from the kamiza wall in the dojo. We had a tenant renting out a room on the third floor of our house and, after several days, we asked him if he had been experiencing anything unusual in his room, which was located directly above the dojo. Jerome’s face turned pale as he began telling us about the strong, “unnatural” vibrations that had been coming from the floor and wall in his room. Soon after hearing our explanation for these phenomena, Jerome recommitted his life to serving the Lord.

We now understood that demonic energy can infect physical ob-

jects, and the next day I gathered up a number of items that had been associated with my past martial arts training and took them to the town dump. This included a substantial amount of furniture and equipment dating back some twenty years. Each day, more things came to our attention because of the negative energy emanating from them. Sometimes, these were accompanied by the strong smell of sulfur.

Kay kept feeling a negative energy when she was in our bedroom. We searched the room several times, but could not find the source. Then, I remembered that the wicker chair in the corner had once been used in my karate school nearly ten years earlier.

One time, Kay felt something “pull” her foot out from under her as she started down the stairway. She took a frightening tumble but, miraculously, she landed softly and suffered no injuries. We believe a guardian angel cushioned her fall.

On another occasion, I distinctly heard Kay call my name as I was praying upstairs. I suspected that the voice was not coming from her and I did not respond. Afterwards, I asked her if she had called me. She had not. Then, I remembered how Sensei had heard the Martial Spirit audibly speak to him, and how Kay was threatened by a vulgar voice from inside her head.

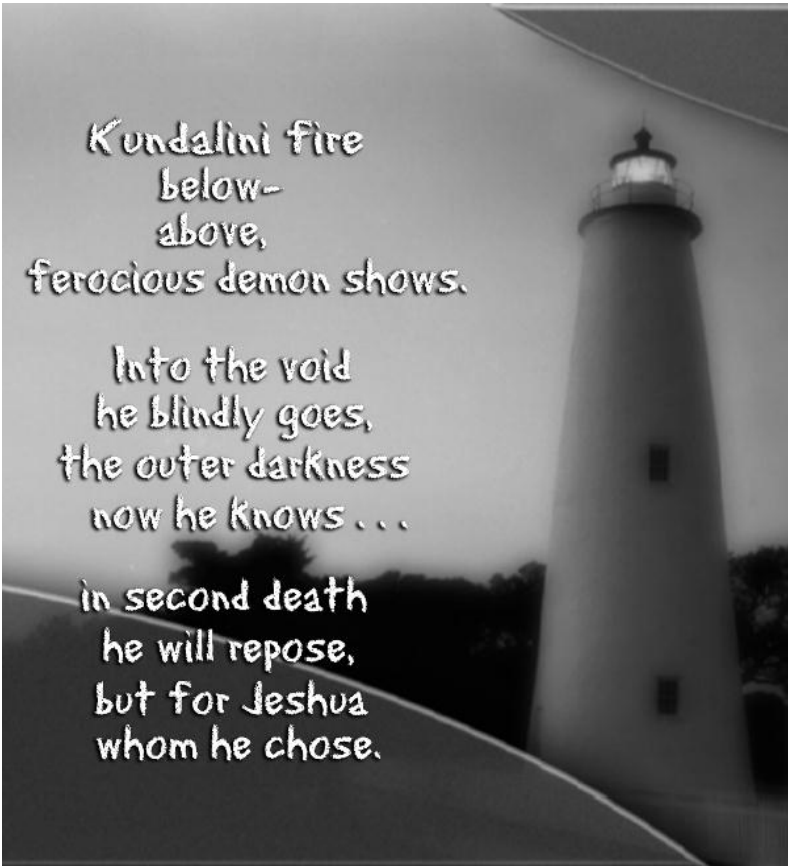
Hearing voices (auditory hallucinations) are symptoms of paranoid schizophrenia, and I had worked with patients with this diagnosis at several psychiatric hospitals. Now, I realized that the spirits can communicate through our brain functions, and that the psychotropic drugs used to treat this disorder could help relieve the symptoms by inhibiting certain nerve receptors in the brain.

As the days passed, more contaminated items, demonic manifestations, and unusual events continued to occur. Our home had been infested and, as a family, we were feeling unsettled and not sleeping well. I had a friend, a kung fu teacher, who had become the assistant pastor at a church several towns away. He understood our predicament and offered to remember us in his prayers.

After a week, he telephoned us in the morning and asked us how we had slept the previous night. Had anything in our home situation changed? At once, Kay and I realized that the atmosphere in our

house had indeed changed. The malaise that we had been feeling for the past ten days was gone, and our home felt peaceful and normal again.

Then he told us that, at their weekly meeting the night before, he and the deacons at his church had prayed for our deliverance from all the demonic presence in our home. For us, this became a powerful lesson in how prayer really can change things.



In 2004, I wrote this poem to describe my encounter with the Martial Spirit, the outer darkness, and Jesus (Jeshua).

You have now read our account of the life-changing events that happened to Kay and me more than twenty-five years ago. My own spiritual journey has had its ups and downs because I am not perfect, and “enlightenment” for me has been an on-going process of discovery and growth that leads to truth.

From my experience, I learned that we are spiritual beings having a physical experience, and that the spirit realms are more real than this world of time and space. I discovered that hell and demons are real, and I am equally certain that heaven and angels are real.

I am also sure that Jesus is the Messiah who was prophesied to come, and that his Spirit of Love- that peace that is still beyond my understanding, is real. In spite of my rejection of Him, God loved me enough to deliver me from spiritual darkness. He loves all people at all times and calls every soul to His divine Light.

Time is like a flowing river. It moves in one direction and never stands still. In physics, this is referred to as the “arrow of time.”

Jesus told his followers, “Be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect,”⁸ because he understood that every mistake that we make, whether intentional or not- carries with it the irreversible consequences of cause and effect. Even our innermost thoughts have the energy and power to affect both the physical and spiritual worlds.

But, human beings are not perfect and the arrow of time makes it impossible for us to go back and undo our past wrongs. We are all destined to die with the negative consequences of our mistakes.

Ultimately, only God Himself can heal the damage that we do and bring good out of evil. This is why Jesus, as the Messiah, is portrayed in the scriptures as the sacrificial lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Whether you believe in him or not, Jesus is history’s best and most compelling example of unconditional love.

We have a choice between two clear alternatives. We can live a self-centered life, or a God-centered life. We can live with the burden and anxiety that comes from following our own way, or we can live with the peace that comes from living life in the Spirit.

Jesus taught his followers to be peacemakers, to be forgiving and merciful, and not to pass judgment on others. He advised them to keep a humble spirit and not to amass great wealth, but rather to take

care of the poor and needy. Above all, he told them to put their trust in God.

The choice is ours as to what kind of persons we want to be, and there is this wonderful option available to each of us. Indeed, Jesus calls every soul to himself when he declares:

“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but through me.”⁹

Jesus is the very manifestation of God’s unconditional love- a love that transcends all religious, philosophical, and moral debate... a love that is immeasurably more satisfying than all the wealth, and fame, and power this world can offer.

Jesus is love. Pursue love because, in the end, everything else is meaningless- a chasing after the wind.

Appendix

The Five Principles

This Appendix is for martial artists who have an interest in Master Li's principles of striking technique.

During our last workout together, I watched as Quan Li rejected the Martial Spirit. I was clearly the Martial Spirit's second choice because Li's dynamic personality and superior technique would have made him the ideal person to carry on Sensei's karate-do. So, why did I receive the Martial Spirit and not Quan Li?

I believe the answer lies, at least in part, in our different motivations for training. I wanted to become a great martial arts master with paranormal powers like Sensei, while Quan trained to perfect his karate techniques. Master Li never aspired to become like Sensei.

When people ask me if I am opposed to bowing down before the kamiza, I tell them that this is a matter of personal conscience. I do not advise it, and I no longer do it, but I do not have the wisdom to judge the motivation and intentions of others. I have never assumed that any of the people or things described in this book were inherently evil. Rather, I believe that our good and bad intentions shape our reality. So, let each one be persuaded in his own mind.

karate is an exquisite art that is good for physical exercise and self-defense, and I used Quan Li's striking techniques to perform my board breaking demonstrations. But, I am always aware of the fact that these demonstrations are weak and unimpressive when compared to the strength that can be channeled from the spirit realms.

Some martial artists may be tempted to seek these paranormal powers as I did, unaware that they come from the dark side. With the Martial Spirit, Sensei possessed supernatural strength and was the most powerful martial artist Li or I have ever seen. But, he lived an unhappy life that ended in alienation from his family and friends, and by his own admission, he died without hope. So, what will a man exchange for his own soul?

Master Li leads two students in kata



Quan Li trained in a number of striking arts, along with judo, aikido, and kobudo (traditional Japanese weapons). He earned a black belt in Sensei's karate-do in the early 1970s, and continued on to perfect his own interpretation of the art.

Li's brilliance was in his striking technique, which Nodan later named *The Five Principles*. None of these precepts are new to the martial arts but, Li's radical interpretation of The 1-2 Timing and his emphasis on the Extension of Ki, set him apart. Ki (chi) is the dynamic energy that is inherent in all living things. The Extension of Ki is the *Mind Principle* that projects energy into the blocking, kicking, and striking movements of karate. "To extend ki," is to mentally "follow through" with every technique.

In Li's 1-2 Timing, the hips must be *fully* rotated *before* the arm moves. This timing increases terminal velocity and generates more power, which is reflected in the formula, $\text{Force} = \text{Mass} \times \text{velocity}^2$.

In the YouTube video, “Nodan’s Teacher,” Master Li can be seen leading two students through the Heian Yodan and Heian Godan katas. His speed, power, and precision are a benchmark of excellence for the traditional striking arts, and his five precepts are summarized in the video, “The Five Principles,” at the *nodankarate* channel.

The Five Principles

- 1st Proper Bone Alignment (the stances are centered)
- 2nd 1-2 Timing (the hips rotate before the arm moves)
- 3rd Extension of Ki (the Mind Principle, follow through)
- 4th Correct Breathing (breathing from the diaphragm)
- 5th Soft and Hard (balance between relaxation and focus)



Li demonstrates the Proper Bone Alignment for the Rising Block. He taught aikido’s *unbendable arm technique*, in which the arm becomes impenetrable, like ‘a steel rod wrapped in cotton cloth.’

Makiwara



Master Li advocated makiwara training for developing strong striking techniques.

The traditional Okinawan makiwara was a rigid post wrapped in rice straw and buried three feet in the ground. With intense training, its users formed bone calcifications and calluses on their hands.

Sensei once trained with Mas Oyama, the founder of Kyokushin karate, and Oyama told Sensei that, by the age of forty, his hands were damaged from years of hard makiwara training, and that he always knew when it was about to rain because of the pain and swelling in his knuckles.

To protect his students from injury, Nodan designed a flexible, rubber padded striking post that was based on the principle of *graduated resistance*. In the end, this proved to be a safer and more efficient way to develop powerful strikes. Besides this, callus formation is not essential for effective street self-defense.

See the video, “Building a Makiwara and Board Holder,” for instructions on how to build a flexible, indoor makiwara.

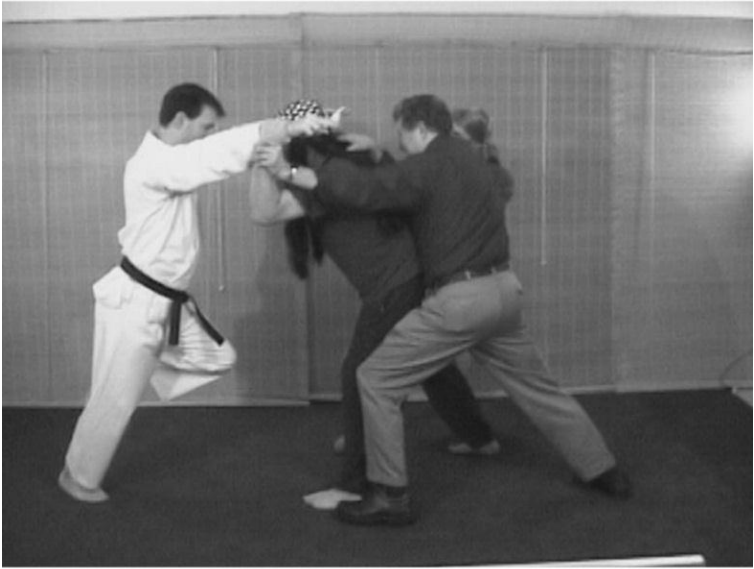
Stance Testing

In Quan Li's first principle, Proper Bone Alignment, the center of gravity of the stance is in the hara, a point two inches below the navel. Nodan and his student, Yakov "The Hammer," are assisted by three former students in this demonstration.

The three men will attempt to push Yakov out of his one-legged Crane Stance. Yakov must maintain a properly centered stance, and then, by "moving in center," push the three men backwards.

Master Li used this stance testing method to evaluate a student's progress in developing correct posture (Proper Bone Alignment).



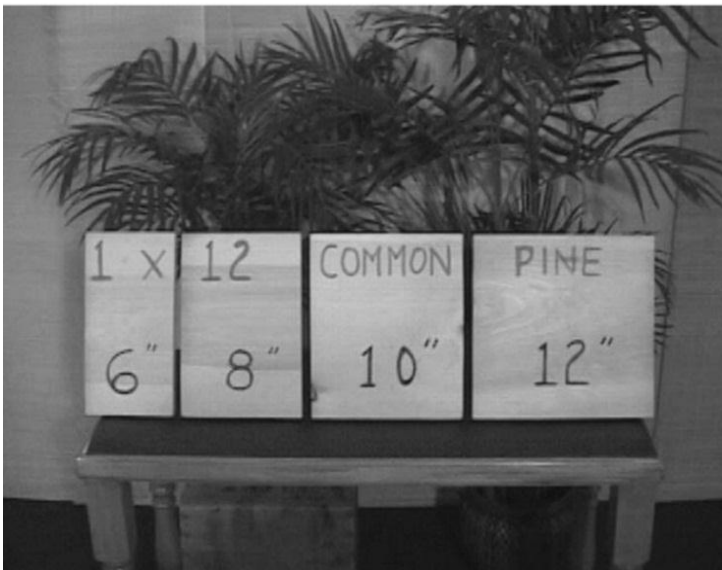


The Breaking Demonstrations

Board breaking was never part of Nodan's teaching or karate training, and he only used these suspended breaking demonstrations to give evidence for the extraordinary power in Master Li's striking techniques. Un-spaced, suspended board breaking is more difficult because it requires both a substantial transfer of body weight into the board stack, and enough speed to overtake the movement of the bag.

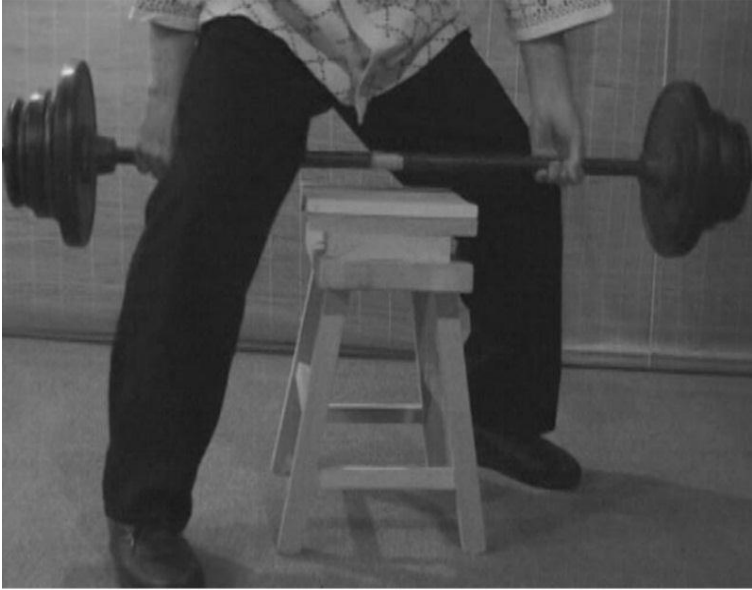
Nodan's boards were cut from Common White Pine, which is indigenous to Canada and the United States. Wood strength varies depending on moisture content, and a sample from each donor board should be tested before cutting and breaking (the lumber industry standard for 1x12 inch wide pine boards is actually $\frac{3}{4}$ x 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches).

For an excellent guide to board breaking, see *Karate Breaking Techniques*, by Jack Hibbard.¹⁰



Board strength depends on width and moisture content.

Board Strength and Breaking Difficulty

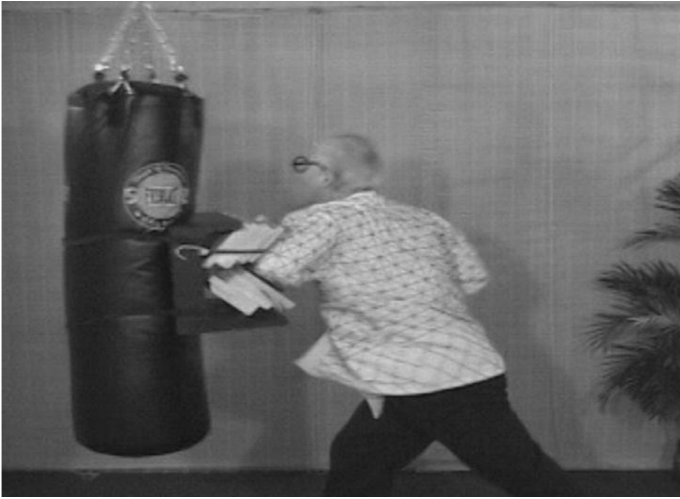


Nodan's board testing showed that each 1x12x10 inch wide board used in his demonstrations could support, on average, a 130 lb. (59 kg) barbell, when placed across its centerline running parallel with the grain. When the boards are un-spaced, the resistance increases proportionally, and the 5 board stacks used in his suspended power breaks could support a 650 lb. (295.5 kg) weight.

Placing spacers between the boards changes the physics of breaking and makes it considerably easier. Using spacers is more like breaking 5 boards in rapid succession, one at a time.

Board breaking can be faked by first scoring or baking the boards, or by inserting thin spacers. In the video, "Board Strength and Breaking Difficulty," at the *nodankarate* channel, the editors have left 53 seconds of un-edited film (2:14-3:07), in order to show that Nodan's breaking demonstrations are authentic.

5 Board Break with Reverse Elbow Strike



4 Board Break with Bent Wrist Strike



5 Board Break with Downward Block



Master Li taught that the basic Downward, Middle, and Rising blocks are striking movements that conform to the five principles of striking technique. He especially emphasized the necessity of applying the second principle, The 1-2 Timing, and the unbendable arm to these formal movements.

The traditional blocks use the full range of motion to develop form, speed, and power. Over time, they teach the karateka how to project strength into the “abbreviated,” shorter and quicker street versions of these formal kata blocks.

7 Board Break with the Right Hand



Downward breaking techniques are stronger than suspended horizontal ones, because it is easier to drop the body weight down than it is to transfer it laterally. Also, the rigid supports used in downward breaking eliminate the power losses that occur when energy is absorbed into the suspended bag.

Developing both the right and left sides of every technique is an important part of karate training because an injury to one side or the other can happen before or during a street confrontation. Also, street attacks are fluid and unpredictable, and having the option of using either hand becomes a significant strategic advantage.

Nodan performed his four and five board suspended power breaks with his “weak side” left hand, in order to emphasize the importance of this point. And, the fact that he was in his late 50s when filming his breaking demonstrations shows the advantages of Master Li’s *technique* over sheer physical prowess.

7 Board Break with Left Hand



See the video, “The Five Principles” (6:29-7:07).

Anatomy of the Push Break

The challenge in this technique is to exert 135 lbs. (61 kg) of thrust on the board before the suspended bag moves. Nodan used a 1x12x10 inch wide pine board, which could support a 130 lb. (59 kg) weight.

First, his stance is properly aligned with its center of gravity in the hara (one-point), a point two inches below the navel. His body is soft, with only enough tension to hold the stance together. The rear leg and spine are straight and the shoulders are held down and back, in order to reduce power loss through the shoulder joint. The feet grip the floor and the head is held erect, as if suspended on a string. His elbow is held “under,” and the heel of the palm rests on the board. This front stance position conforms to Li’s first principle.

Breathing in through the nose using his diaphragm, Nodan inhales deeply while simultaneously drawing energy (ki) up from his heels into the one-point.



Next, he rotates his hips sharply while keeping his upper torso, shoulders, and arms properly aligned and relaxed.

Then, he focuses hard as he rotates his upper body into the board and exhales with a kiai yell. Throughout the movement, he mentally “follows through” the board with a concentrated Extension of Ki, as if projecting a stream of energy out to infinity (note how his right arm remains relaxed throughout the movement, demonstrating command over the Soft and Hard principle).

The Push Break is a simple, but challenging test of all five principles. The Extension of Ki and The 1-2 Timing are especially critical to the technique because, with the striking arm already fully extended, the acceleration required to overtake the movement of the bag can only be generated by a quick and explosive hip rotation.



The Push Break can be seen in “The Five Principles” video at the *nodankarate* channel (4:43-5:01).

4 Board Break with low Back Kick



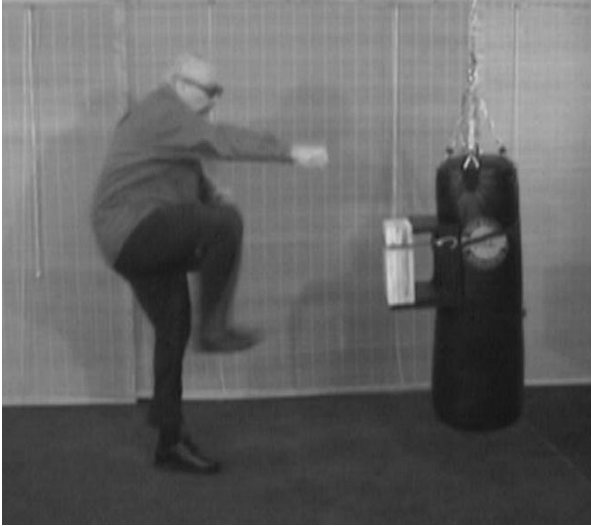
The low Back Kick to the knee extends through the target with “follow through.”

Quan Li’s kicking techniques also followed *The Five Principles*. In the Front Thrust Kick (next page), he taught that the hips are rotated 45 degrees as the knee is raised. This “opening” of the hips releases the hamstring muscle and allows for greater speed and flexibility in the movement. Li once trained with a high ranking Taekwondo master and could perform the difficult Korean roundhouse kick to the head with perfect hip extension.

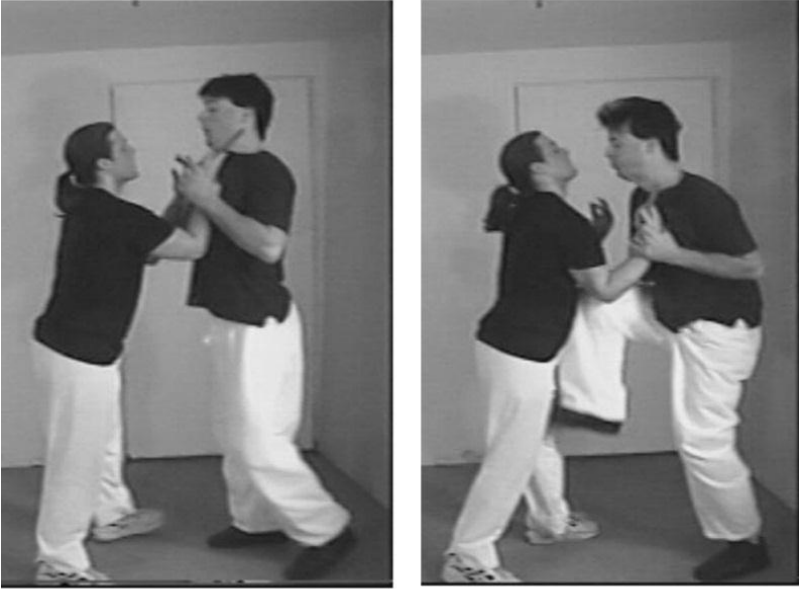
While executing the front kick, it is important to keep the base foot firmly rooted to the ground. The “down and in” motion of the thrust gives this kick its exceptional power.

For practical street self-defense, Nodan advocated lower level kicks to the abdomen, the groin, and the knees.

5 Board Break with Front Thrust Kick



Close Range Knife Holdup



Nodan's students, Yohan and Yakov, demonstrate a joint hold defense with front kick counter attack.

Every traditional martial art must be adapted for practical street defense because, *what you practice is what you will do* when confronted with a real attack. Nodan's karate was self-defense and not a competitive sport. Psychology, deception, and understanding the predatory nature of street criminals were foundational to his strategy.

There are no rules in the street. Spear hand strikes to the eyes and throat, grabs and strikes to the groin, and biting are among the effective defensive measures that are not permitted in sport. Also, sport fighters do not face armed or multiple opponents, and "one strike" power can be the equalizer when defending against these kinds of attacks (See "Nodan Self-Defense" at *[nodankarate](#)*).

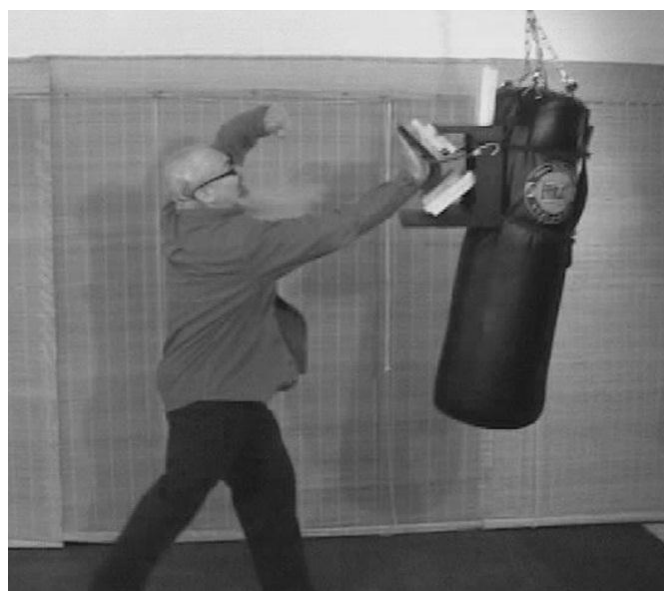
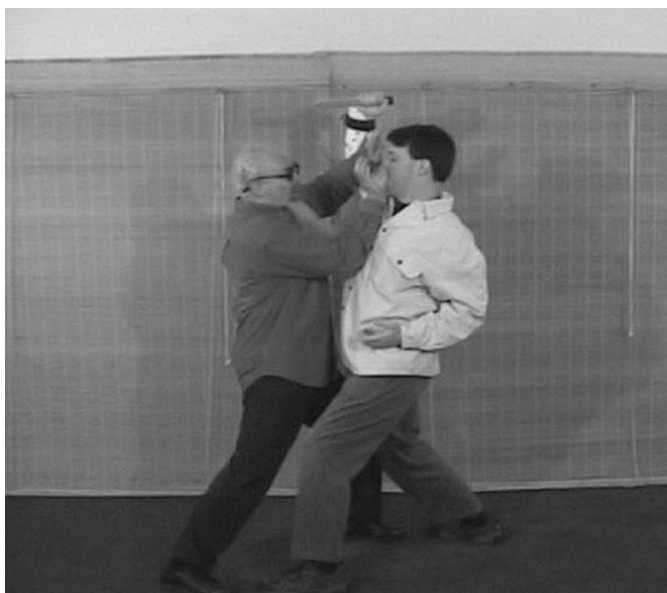
Lunging Knife Attack



Yakov waits for Yohan to commit to a lunging attack. Then, he simultaneously blocks and angle steps away.

Simultaneous Rising Block with Palm Strike

Nodan uses the *two-fold gaze* of perception and sight to determine when to move in and counter.



Defending Against a Front Choke



5 Board Break with Palm Strike



Pre-emptive Street Self-Defense



Nodan preferred to use a non-threatening neutral position when facing a street attack. Sometimes, however, circumstances change and call for a fighting stance.

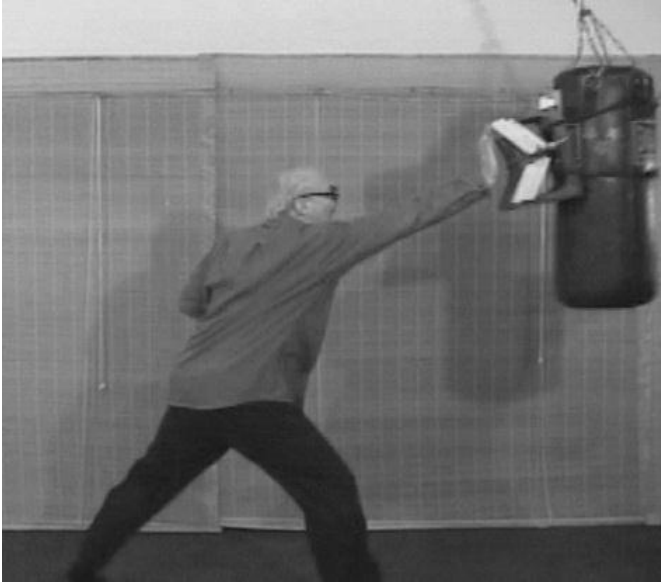
In the example above, an armed assailant is threatening, but not yet committing to an attack. If Nodan believes that a deadly assault is about to be launched towards him, he may determine that a pre-emptive counter attack is the best strategy. He assumes a relaxed fighting position with his arms “floating” in a lowered, non-aggressive attitude (note that he keeps a safe distance away- just beyond the attacker’s effective lunging range).

He momentarily “freezes” his assailant with a sudden head feint, and then moves in quickly with a sweeping knife hand block. He continues stepping through and strikes to his attacker’s face before the adversary can react and make a counter move.

The speed at which this technique is performed can only be appreciated by viewing the film clip from the video, “Nodan Self-Defense,” at the *nodankarate* channel on YouTube (2:51-2:58).



Lunging Palm Strike with “follow through”



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Discussions about which is the best martial art should begin with the question, “best for what?” The best martial art is the one that best fulfills *your* personal goals. There are good and bad practitioners in every art, and each style has its strengths and weaknesses.

Martial artists will do well to heed this proverb:

“To win without fighting is the highest skill.”

END NOTES

1. Miyamoto Musashi, A Book of Five Rings, The Overlook Press, c. 1974, p. 8-9
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3. Matthew 14:15-21
4. Gichen Funakoshi, Karate-do Kyohan: The Master Text, Kodansha America, Inc., c. 1973, p. 34
5. Miyamoto Musashi, A Book of Five Rings, The Overlook Press, c. 1974, p. 38
6. Matthew 10:38
7. Matthew 10:39
8. Matthew 5:48
9. John 14:6
10. Jack Hibbard, Karate Breaking Techniques, Tuttle Publishing, c. 1981