

WSKF Newsletter



1st Quarter

January, 2025

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Upcoming WSKF Events

- 9/19 – Traveler's Meeting – Troy, OH & Zoom
- 9/19 – Black Belt Class – Troy, OH & Zoom
- 10/17 – Black Belt Class – Troy, OH & Zoom
- 10/20 – 10/26 – Internationals – Okinawa
- 11/21 – Embu Tai Kai – Troy, OH

WSKF Retreat Fundraiser attendees, Centerburg, OH, June 28th 2025



A message from Jack McPeck, WSKF Chairman:

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Past & Present Series – Self-Defense

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- On Mice, Curiosity and Self Defense – Jim Sage
- And thoughts on self-defense from Ron Cyphers, Kevin O'Reilly, Lori McPeck

Message from Jack McPeck, WSKF Chairman

How we “do it” today is not how we originally did it! Hanshi Grant went to Okinawa in 1966 in search for the truth; he felt karate students in the US were not being taught correctly, and that something was seriously missing in our training. After 6 months intensive training, Master Nagamine told Hanshi Grant to take what he has learned back to the USA and take it to “The Next Step.” Hanshi brought back to the USA the true art of Matsubayashi-Ryu Karate-Do, and he spent the next 53 years living up to the Master’s request to expand, refine and make the art better. Master Nagamine knew and understood that Okinawa Karate, although centuries-old, still had much refinement and development yet to be discovered and taught. The karate we do today within the WSKF is much different from that we did in 1966, and it’s the result of Hanshi Grant’s promise to the Master.



OKINAWA OR BUST!

A message from Jeff Leistner, WSKF Chairman

Things are coming together well for the itinerary. There are only a few unanswered requests at this time, and they will not be confirmed until late September due to Okinawa's scheduling timeline. It looks like our fundraising efforts will serve us well for the activities we have planned.

I am scheduling a "travelers" meeting for September the 19th (the same day as black belt class) at 5:30 PM at the Troy dojo. The meeting will go over the plans, distribute the journals, t-shirts, etc. We will be doing zoom for the meeting as well, but I would like for everyone going on the trip to do their best to attend. This includes family and friends going as well. Those unable to attend will receive the info in the mail.

Lastly, we have established a group chat on Facebook that we will be using for the traveling group to communicate and receive updates from now through the end of the trip. So, if you haven't joined the group yet, please do so.

Time is flying by, so be diligent in your traveling planning so you don't get caught off guard. I am looking forward to getting together to visit the homeland of karate with this amazing group of students, friends, and family.

- See Page 3 for the most current Itinerary -

Here is the itinerary as is currently stands:

10/20 Monday – Training seminars 9 AM – 5 PM Karate Budokan / third floor dojo

- Training sessions 9 AM – 12 PM
- Lunch 12 PM – 1 PM (lunch Binto box)
- Guest instructor 1 PM – 2 PM
- Training session 2 PM – 5 PM

10/21 Tuesday – Training seminars 9 AM – 5 PM Karate Kaikan / Room B

- Training sessions 9 AM – 12 PM
- Lunch 12 PM – 1 PM (lunch Binto box)
- Guest instructor 1 PM – 2 PM
- Black Belt testing 2 PM – 5 PM
- Banquet dinner (Mercure Naha) 7 PM – 9 PM

10/22 Wednesday – Bus tour 9 AM – 7 PM

- Visits to Churaumi aquarium, Maeda Misaki, Zakimi castle, Ryukyumura

10/23 Thursday – Training classes

- 10 AM – 12 PM class with Hokama sensei and Museum visit (Goju-Ryu)
- Dojo visits – time and location TBA

10/24 Friday – Tour visit & evening class

- Castle ruins and monuments visits
- Dojo visits – time and location TBA

10/25 Saturday – 100 Kata Challenge

- 8 AM 100 kata challenge on Tsuji Beach
- Free day

10/26 Sunday – Karate Day

- Karate Day on Kokusai St. 2 PM
- Free day

WSKF Karate Retreat Fundraiser

Hanshi Jack McPeck

On June 27 & 28, 2025 the Martial Arts & Family Fitness Dojo hosted the first WSKF Karate Retreat. The two-day retreat was attended by 45 students and an additional 20+ other family and friends. The retreat offered a heightened study of Matsubayashi-Ryu Karate-Do, through the legacy of Hanshi Frank Grant, and the WSKF leadership. All proceeds from the event will go to various WSKF projects to include the upcoming Okinawa Training Trip this October.

The Martial Arts & Family Fitness Dojo is located in rural Centerburg, Ohio on 5 beautiful acres of rolling, tree covered hills, among deer, wild turkeys and an abundant variety of birds and wildlife. Classes explored the intricate mechanics of our beautiful, yet lethal art, engaged in dynamic training methods and drills, and helped to unravel the often-misunderstood secrets of this ancient martial art.

Classes included karate fundamentals, basics, beginner and advanced katas, speed and strength drills, and yakusoku kumite. There were also special sessions on meditation, kobudo weapons, kata and yakusoku interpretations, and a Haiku workshop. Also at the retreat Brown and Black Belt Promotions were held and a WSKF Dojo Owners Meeting took place.

The Retreat was closed Saturday evening with an Awards Banquette that included Sloppy Joes, baked beans, pasta salad, fresh-cut vegetables and various deserts provided by attendees. After a quick and compulsory yearly WSKF Federation Meeting, promotion results were announced. Also announced were the Dojo & Federation Student of the Year recipients and those individuals chosen for the Frank Grant College Scholarships in 2025. Kyoshi Dale Pike again played the excellent role as Fund Raising Auctioneer encouraging us all to dig deep into our pockets and purchase some really nice items, all for a good cause. The evening and event was capped off with a 30-minute, professional-grade fireworks show, donated and produced by Sensei Evan McPeck and a few of his close friends.

In all measures, the Retreat was a huge success. . . . the attendance, the enthusiasm and the training was excellent. We raised a lot money that will continue to support the mission and important activities of the WSKF. Thank you all that attended and personal thanks to those individuals that pitched in, working early and late, helping to make sure event was the huge success that it was. Special thanks to Dave Reumann who donated the wonderful Entenmann's hamburger buns and cookies and to my sister-in-law Amy Christoff and her son Kane, who traveled in from North Carolina to help.



Dojo Updates

Martial Arts & Family Fitness Dojo

Centerburg, Ohio
Hanshi Jack McPeck

Corey Arnold had an emergency appendectomy in April. ... And then Jeff Brooks had one in July. Purely a coincidence we assure you.

But its not all bad news; Corey & Danny welcomed their son Malachai on July 12th! Malachai is keeping the new parents busy, but we couldn't be happier for Corey and Danny. Also, Mr. Brooks is already back on the deck; against his Doctor's wishes. We're keeping an extra eye on him this time...

Thanks again to everyone who attended the Karate Retreat Fundraiser!



Past & Present

In the Past & Present section we republish an article from an old WSKF newsletter. We also ask current students to give us their thoughts on the same topic today. The present ideas are not on the past article, but simply on the same topic. For this edition of Past & Present, we asked students for their thoughts on Self-defense. Their thoughts are published alongside Defense as Attitude from Jim Sage in 1988.

If you enjoy this section, please check out our next edition on
“the biggest mistakes in training.”

Defense as Attitude

(self-defense)

by James M Sage

Dayton, OH

Originally Published July, 1988

Everyone is familiar with the idea that karate is an activity that promotes postures and attitudes of self-defense. But do we ever stop and analyze what is really meant by defense? As practicing martial artists we like to cultivate a keen awareness about ourselves and our surroundings, but how often do we reflect on this attitude of defense? It is an attitude and, as such, has the greatest power to influence our behavior and our lives. Lately I have had the feeling this attitude has been overlooked and misunderstood.

In practicing our art, many of us are trying to grow in a number of ways, not just in the physical. We seek expanded consciousness, self-awareness, peace and calmness, self-control, confidence, courage, etc. Sometimes I find it hard to reconcile the aspirations with the idea of self-defense because the defensive attitude seems to form a wall – a shutting out of, an avoidance, a state of mind that somehow precludes receptivity reaching out, sharing, becoming one with.

Defense is so suggestive in our times, and the subtle implications attached to it are not always positive or conducive to self-expression, or expanded awareness. Defense conjures up thoughts of something eminent, of confrontations fear, failure, tenseness, causing injury to others, etc. Perhaps the word itself is a poor choice and confusing in its meaning. I find it much easier to deal with the idea of protection. As an attitude, with its power to form and transform, I feel this is a much healthier choice of terms.

It is said that in ancient China a class of priests developed the martial art known today as kung fu. They developed the art for protection, and why not – they were the keepers and conveyors of sacred teachings. To preserve the secret knowledge was their duty – hence the need for protection.

In recent times the peace loving people of Okinawa were subjugated by cruel outsiders and the art of karate was developed out of necessity. The necessity wasn't self-defense, itself, but rather the need to protect and preserve the family – the most basic and sacred of all human endeavors. Surely the evil presence on the island threatened physical destruction, but more so it threatened destruction in the mental and spiritual realms as well.

Here is the significance of te – empty hands – relying on one's self. Finding strength, control and guidance from within. This calls for attitudes that are positive and receptive in nature. These attitudes are directed towards ourselves and the things we love, respect and aspire to. The ability to protect results from developing along these lines. It is like the person who plants a garden and provides the healthiest medium possible for vegetables to grow in – the right amount of water, sun, natural additives, care, etc. The plants, being healthy, will take care of themselves. Compare this to one who plants vegetables and lets them go, standing by only with harsh chemicals to blast any threat of pests. One is protecting and preserving. The other is defending. Which is better?

As Westerners in this material age we are just beginning to appreciate the spiritual nature of an art, Eastern in origin, that is ageless and universal. There is a significance to empty hands, to no weapons, to nothing outside of self. It makes us go within to the higher Self, to the Source. Within is the key word, the pivot on which so much depends as regards our understanding.

All great teachers from all cultures and religions have taught us to look within. Within, where we will find the Silence. Where we will hear the still, small voice. Where we will feel the peace. Where we will discover the energies. From where we will emerge, realized, confident, capable and loving. This through an attitude of preserving, through an attitude of protecting.

ON MICE, CURIOSITY AND SELF DEFENSE

Jim Sage, 3rd Dan

It happened at an airport facility. I was casually walking the property line, taking a break, when I came upon a board lying on the ground. I lifted it just to see what I might see, a snake perhaps, or a mouse darting away. Instead I beheld a mouse suckling a brood of tiny baby mice. I gently laid the board back down and walked away. Some may scoff when I say this, but the look on the face of that little mouse was sheer terror. It was upsetting, but at the same time enlightening. Terror. I felt ashamed, yet how could I know. But I am glad the incident happened, for it gave me insight into the reality of emotions in animals.

Later reflections on the incident brought to mind a number of thoughts relative in some way to our understanding of self defense. Psychology 101 tells us of man's striving for self preservation, his basic instinct of "fight or flight." Some academics like to refer to "cave men" and imply man learned self defense because of being attacked by ferocious animals. Yet, curiously, we find references in scriptures and in creation myths from indigenous peoples of animals being teachers to mankind; of creator having done this by design. I have always found references to cave men to be bogus. There just aren't that many caves around.

Do the long running repetitions of such concepts induce a self limiting understanding? While there is no denying a place for self defense on the physical plane, there is something more going on, on an unseen level. Budo brings insight.

In the further reaches of our efforts, in the higher realms, we are given to understand, and reach for esoteric things, such as there is no first attack in karate; know what your opponent is going to do before he does; win by not fighting; don't think, do; see what is unseeable, and so forth.

These things speak of knowing beyond the mundane preoccupation with self defense, real and necessary though the need for defense may be. The self limiting ideas we have lived with become understandable when you see the "world view" given us for countless ages – a view of struggle, adversaries, conflict, self preservation, aggression, confrontation – all creating a logical outcome of a need for self defense. Yet self defense is only a partial picture, a limited view of mankind and his part in the scheme of things.

Few know of another history telling of a time when things did not begin with the word self. The world view of the Cherokee, among others, comes to mind. Their thinking says we are here to be helpers, and that we are all relatives to each other and to all things.

Wisdom keepers of our epoch have compared the earth to a school and /or a hospital, saying we come here to learn and to heal. In another far distant time, wisdom keepers presented a different world view using different metaphors that taught us "we are in this together." (Indeed all things are in this together.)

The implications of and the results of both lines of thinking are knowable and palpable, and need more room for discussion than a newsletter may provide.

In closing I go once again to nature. Similar to us, animals are curious. Mammals, birds, even insects, watch us, and not just for defensive purposes. They probably aren't aware of their being curious, as we are aware of being curious. But they are curious. And this makes my feelings of kinship with the natural world run deeper and stronger. This is a path that only grows with insight, peace, conviction, and a realization that speaks of an ability to react, and ...succeed.

"I believe that the mastering of karate lies not in physical superiority, but rather social pliability – learning to live in harmony with nature and one's fellow man rather than frivolously trying to dominate and destroy." -Shoshin Nagamine

Ron Cyphers, 5th Dan

Self-defense can be described as the use of physical force to protect oneself or others from physical harm. It can also be the state of mind about destroying an attacker's willingness to fight.

As Sensei Leistner reminds us as we train to "always be aware of your surroundings and never put yourself in bad situations". This has been an axiom for centuries, but it seems to be even more important today. You should be aware of the people around you, and if you are in a building insure you first look for exit doors that you can get to safety if necessary. Also, keep your back covered, that is; keep your back toward a wall, a product rack or a support post.

Self-defense is generally taught that there are three types; unarmed, armed, and verbal. I believe that there are more types such as: eye contact and body posturing. Also the best self-defense tactic is to attempt to defuse the situation by remaining calm and softly taking the attacker out of his/her anger, if possible.

We train in karate and we understand how to protect ourselves especially with the empty hand. However many people do not have such training. Today, in the USA there are many types of self-defense, one can train at: boxing, wrestling, judo. Jujitsu, MMA, and the different types of karate. Again remember, "always be aware of your surroundings and avoid bad situations."

Sheepdogs

Kevin O'Reilly, 5th Dan

Most of us started Karate either for self-defense or to get some exercise. If we listen to our Sensei we will be better then what we would have been without Karate in self-defense. Our style gives you some advantages that you would never have had without karate. The main advantage is it gives you confidence in being able to handle the attack. With this confidence confrontations don't always end in a physical confrontation, but it could mean just looking at the attacker with confidence and this is enough to get them to back away. The look can be a great deterrent. If you look confident attackers see this and may look for a weaker target.

We must remember that even with the knowledge we gain, we are not experts and must work hard to get better by practicing what we are given to use by our Sensei. It is not the Sensei's job to make you the best you can be in a conflict, but they do give us the tools to protect ourselves. If you do not work on the tools, they will not be there when they are needed. We must always look inside ourselves and ask are we preparing for the attack and are we ready.

Look around when out in public and beware of your surroundings. Keep your eyes up when walking in public areas. Become a people watcher and see what people are doing and looking at. One of the major problems in our society is that we are distracted by too many gadgets. To all of you, put your phones away and look around. The videos, the video games or the phone calls can always be done later unless you are in a hospital bed because you allowed yourself to fall prey to the wolves. Don't become a victim because you allow yourself to be the victim.

I could have written an article on how to do better self-defense moves. Like I see many times, people being afraid or just too timid to do an effective move because they are not close enough to be effective in the move. No, I wrote about not being aware of your surroundings. Hanshi Grant would speak with me on his fear that people did not understand the dangers in the world. Hanshi was a great warrior, but an even greater person that cared for the safety of the people in our organization. Be safe for Hanshi, if not for yourself.

When I was working full-time in Law Enforcement, we always had a saying that we were the sheepdogs protecting the sheep from the wolves. The wolves like to sneak in and get an unaware sheep. Unfortunately there are not enough sheepdogs in the world, so we must become our own sheepdogs to protect ourselves and our families.

Lori Mcpeek, 6th Dan

Growing up as a woman and now as a senior citizen woman, I have kept self-defense in the forefront of my mind as I am out and about. I also believe since I am involved in karate, self-defense is something I am very aware of as a necessity, especially in this day and age. I believe self-defense can be something as simple as being aware of your surroundings and those around you as well as projecting self-confidence. No one wants to attack a person who will give them a hard time and fight back.

To me self-defense can be something as simple as looking around as you are walking, looking at those people who are walking with you, around you, and towards you. Keeping your purse and belongings close to your body, not looking at your cell phone, and not having in ear pods while listening to music from your cell phone or talking to someone. You want to see the big picture. You want to be fully aware.

Chad Sheets, 7th Dan

Self Defense must be understood via meaningful thought and experienced via events. Since we are in print: one thing to discuss is mindsets: First Awareness: Are you aware of your surroundings and activities in them, where you are, what threat assessments have you made, are you getting too relaxed such that something you should expect was unexpected, etc.. The second is practicality: How does the action one is taking in self defense have a maximized probability of success and minimized danger to oneself, height, weight, speed, distance, situational forces, etc. Self defense may involve blocking and striking, or using your mind to de-escalate a problem or both. And third, execution: are you physically, mentally and emotionally capable of doing what the situation calls for, and understand the aftermath. One could (and many have chosen to) write books on each of these subjects, and all their different meanings. Discussing each of these topics at length is something we should welcome when working with other practitioners. Self Defense Experience can be found in and out of the dojo – in everyday life, sometimes welcomed, or sometimes it happens. The more training you can do mentally and physically for all sorts of encounters can only increase the odds of your success.



My First Class With Hanshi

Kyoshi Jeff Bentle, 8th Dan

My first class with Hanshi Grant was in the summer of 1991. He was holding a brown and black belt clinic at his dojo on Rt 201 across from Bethel High School. It was a hot Saturday afternoon. I was a new Go Kyu, with two white stripes of tape on my belt and one faded green strip where the third one used to be. My Sensei, Dale Pike, asked then Kyoshi Grant, if I could watch class. Kyoshi looked at me and I heard him say, "He can train. Put him in the back."

Sensei Pike drove me there that day, but it wasn't my first time at Kyoshi Grant's dojo. Earlier that spring, Sensei started bringing me to Saturday morning classes with Sensei Harris. There were usually just a few of us in class and I'd never seen anything like it. Sometimes when there were some brown or blackbelts, Kyoshi Grant might come out in his shorts clutching his coffee cup and he'd take over teaching, eventually, sitting on the bench on the side of the deck. One time, Kyoshi had a brown belt (I don't remember who) put his foot in Greg Johnston's belly (also a brown belt), drop to his back, and throw Johnston through the air. He landed in a perfect shoulder roll and sprang to his feet. Laughing.

I was terrified I'd have to go next.

But today was a Class. They used to call them "clinics," back then, these special classes. There must have been 50 students in that little dojo, maybe more. And Kyoshi Grant was up front. When Sensei picked me up for class that morning, he was a little late, but he was mad at me because I didn't have my gi with me. I said, "You said I could only watch." He said, "Get your gi!"

Now here I was.

For those of us who've been training for a while, look back with me. Back to a time when Matsubayashi-ryu was a strange new thing, full of unusual words and customs, unfamiliar movements and their wonderful names. Every kata a mystery, a story hidden in the language of movement. Do you remember the smell of incense when the grass was all dewy and then, suddenly, Harris wanted to run? Backwards?

And there he was. Kyoshi Grant. In that surreal moment, it occurred to me that I had never actually seen him in his gi. I admit, I don't remember a lot of that class, but I remember learning Chinto for the first time. Or rather, I remember doing the first movement of Chinto over and over again. You know, when we drop into a cat-stance and bring that arm around and clash with other shuto like two swords on a rolling ship? Trapping, stopping, crushing? Who knew something like that could be so many things? Then all of a sudden, I heard this roar and every eye turned to the front and Kyoshi showed the ferocity, the power, that terrifying something, usually hidden, now unexpectedly revealed in Chino's very first count. It wasn't so much a kiai, this roar. Nor was it a challenge, because there was no challenging it. It was a command, a turning point where the tide of conflict comes to the edge of either ruin or victory.

All on the very first count.

Anyway, that's how I remember it.

The Extra Move

Dewite Daryl Avery, 4th Dan

In Grand Master Nagamine's book Pinan Godan has a representation of an extra movement that is not normally taught. Before I tell you what I learned, I will provide a little background. When Hanshi Grant moved from Kentucky to Piqua Ohio, Black Belt classes eventually moved to his house/dojo. I was at that time working at Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Fairborn Ohio while living in Eaton Ohio. The commute from my house to work or my house to Piqua was about an hour each way. I decided on Black Belt Class nights I would just drive from work straight to Hanshi Grant's arriving over two hours early for class. The first couple of classes I just parked at his house and took a long nap waiting for class. Eventually Hanshi noticed me out there and said I could just wait in his dojo. Having access to the dojo I spent two hours training. After that training it left about 30 minutes to rest and relax before the official class began. At some point, instead of staying out of Hanshi's way during that time He started inviting me in for conversations. For several years, this became the routine, and this is where I got answers to many of my questions.

In the kata, at the Hijiate (Elbow) strike, different bunkai possibilities have been presented. I consider all of the bunkai variations I have been taught as good, valid and possible. It was first explained to me that after the elbow strike, your target would drop and another person was running to attack and the side-step was to get out of that person's way. This allowed them to run past you before following their path and striking the back of their leg/knee to drive them to the ground. This was a great visual that was easy to accept while learning this kata. There were other bunkai offered over the years for that move including placing the attacker in front of you and driving them off to the side with the elbow strike leaving more room for the other attacker. There was always the possibility that there was no one running in and the strike to the back of the leg was to the person receiving the elbow strike as they were falling forward. Again, all possibilities are valid and possible. The concept of bunkai is about how you envision the fight so that it makes sense to you as you perform the kata.

This brings us back to the book. After the elbow strike and side-step there is an extra step and hand movement that we do not teach as part of the kata. The book shows a step with the left foot and the right hand coming around like an outside block. Then the next move is the small step, then the spin around following the opponent to the ground. On one of those discussions before Black Belt Class, I asked Hanshi about this move. My belief was that the elbow strike and the eventual take-down was to the same person. To me, this extra step was how I moved the person in the direction I wanted them to go. I came to believe the first step left followed by the hand movement was providing this person

I had just elbowed a foot to trip over and a driving hand either to the back of the head, or maybe the shoulder, driving them where I wanted them to go (they should have already been bent over and off balance from the elbow strike). Hanshi Grant agreed it was a reasonable viewpoint on the bunkai, if that move was being taught. As always, I asked the why question. If this image is in the book, why don't we teach it. Hanshi Grant told me that even though the image was in the book, Grand Master Nagamine did not teach him that step as part of the kata. He said he was passing on what he was taught. And that is why we don't currently train that movement.

The WSKF 2025 Summer Retreat Experience

Daryl Avery, 4th Dan

Every rank and every age group will have different experiences and feelings about the retreat. To me, the retreat was much more than just some great training in multiple areas of our style. It was also like a family reunion. I got to see black belts that I haven't seen for many years as well as meeting and training with some I had never met. Everyone was wonderful. I learned some different ways that specific kata could be seen in fighting scenarios. I believe the most unusual, effective and entertaining was demonstrated by Jeff Bentle and crew. But we all had ideas to offer followed by a discussion of the strategy and tactics involved. When everyone attended class, I will say the room was crowded; but there was still enough room for everyone to perform kata. The dojo was beautiful, inside and out. Everyone had the opportunity to break cement blocks to be used in the walkway outside the dojo. I watched students of all ranks, and ages giving it a try. Some broke and some did not, but the real treat was watching students have the courage to try. And if you are curious, at age 72 and not having broken concrete since 2008, I broke mine with a left-handed punch. I applaud all that had the confidence and courage to try, I believe that is just as important as the actual break. Lastly, at night-time I can truly say I have never heard so many frogs making noise as there was there. It was like a symphony of different types of frog noises coming together to sing in harmony. Definitely a great experience. If you missed the retreat, I hope you can make it next time to live the experience for yourself.

Alison Klingler, Ik Kyu, Matsunoki Martial Arts

The WSKF retreat was an enlightening experience. It offered the chance to not only get away from our busy lifestyle, but the opportunity to digress from our typical karate lifestyle. We were able to dive deeper into our techniques, but also explore the spiritual aspect of karate that we don't always get the chance to practice in our home dojos. From meditation and haiku writing, to the carefree fun of trivia, fireworks and laughter, it was a beautiful experience.

Fireworks

Lisa Shank, 5th Dan, Matsunoki Martial Arts

As night fell over the retreat grounds, the sky above lit up with a dazzling fireworks display, each burst echoing with energy and meaning. Through over a hundred hours of unwavering commitment to prepare for the event, Evan McPeck along with a friend, set the sky ablaze with vibrant colors and rhythmic explosions that captivated students and families alike, symbolizing celebration, unity, and reflection. Fireworks, while often seen as a modern form of entertainment, have deep roots in cultural tradition—originating in ancient China and spreading across the globe as a way to mark important occasions with awe and reverence. In the context of our karate retreat, the display served as a powerful reminder of the enduring traditions that shape our practice. Each flare of light reminded us that while our movements may be physical, our discipline is rooted in centuries of cultural heritage. Much like the sparks that briefly illuminated the sky, the wisdom passed from teacher to student lights the path of Karate-Do, linking us to those who walked it before us and those who will follow.

Haiku

Lisa Shank 5th dan & Sylvain Shank 4th Dan

This summer, Hanshi McPeck hosted a two-day retreat at the Martial Arts & Family Fitness Center in Centerburg, Ohio. The retreat featured a variety of sessions that were both physically demanding and intellectually stimulating, designed to deepen students' understanding of Karate-Do beyond the deck. One particularly meaningful session was led by Sensei Lori McPeck, who introduced participants to the art of Haiku—a short-form, non-rhyming poetry that originated in Japan. Traditionally written in a single 17-syllable line in Japanese, the English version of a Haiku follows a three-line structure: five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, and five in the third. Before writing, students were encouraged to explore the wooded areas surrounding the retreat center, observing nature closely to inspire their poetry. Through this mindful practice, they connected with the environment and gained insight into the cultural roots of their martial arts training. Haiku writing, like Karate-Do, requires mindfulness, simplicity, and precision. Sensei McPeck's session highlighted the importance of Culture—one of the five essential steps to understanding Karate-Do, alongside Tradition, Science, Experience, and Actual Proof—encouraging students to reflect, express, and connect with the deeper meaning behind their practice.

Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694) was a 17th-century Japanese poet known for his haiku. He is often regarded as one of the most famous poets of the Edo period and recognized as the Master of the haiku form, elevating it to an art. Bashō was interested in haiku from an early age. However, he put his literary interests aside and entered the service of a local feudal lord. After his lord's death in 1666, Bashō abandoned his samurai (warrior) status and devoted himself to his poetry.

On a withered branch,
A crow has alighted:
Nightfall in autumn.
~ Matsuo Basho (1679)

For your pleasure, below are just a few of the Haiku written by students at the retreat. Domo Arigato Sensei Lori McPeck!!

The flower I see,
Is colorful as can be,
As it grows to be.
~ Annabelle H.

On peaceful pathways,
I see the freaky frogs,
I resume my walk.
~ Hanshi Olin

Crossing the blue bridge,
We're eating wild raspberries,
While training with friends.
~ Chris & Aiden B.

A crack utters depth,
The humid mass spills the dark,
Still with spoiled growth.
~ Chris S.

I'm the bell ringer,
When the bell rings come running,
If you fail you're done.
~ Kevin O.

Hanshi barks get down,
Nekoashi burns my leg,
Not my problem!
~ Jeff S.



Frogs loud serenade
Slumber causes noise to fade
Soon wake loud again
~ Daryl Avery

Sleeping with the frogs,
As the flickering fire died,
The soundscape of frogs.
~ Larry H.

A bee tried to sting,
The wind carried it away,
Happy to be free.
~ Tate R.

Cattails in the pond,
Students wandering around,
The shade feels so good.
~ Chris & Aiden B.

Nature calls frequently,
Affordable Portables,
Relaxing relief.
~ Dave R.



The tree has fall leaves,
Yet it's just the start of summer,
What a world it is.
~ Henry R.

Mother be nervous,
Water be too obnoxious,
Wants it to be calm.
~ Annabelle H.

The sun will shine bright,
Let the rays from Heaven bring joy,
The people from Heaven shine.
~ Kevin O.

In Japanese
Matsunoki ni,
Nitchu no raitogurin,
Yoru wa kurai.

In English
In the pine tree,
Light green in the day,
Dark at night.
~ Sylvain S.

A small waterfly,
Dipping only the surface,
Perfect nekoashi.
~ Patty B.





The birds flying high,
Soaring through the air up there,
Oh they fly so high.
~ Nolan

Little bugs disturb,
I hope it will not be crushed,
For being too small.
~ Patty B.

Raindrops falling fast,
Thunder cracking the night sky,
Sweet serene slumber.
~ Lisa S.



Moss Grows on tree bark,
Tree bark doesn't look good,
I don't like tree bark.
~ Liam S.

Flowers are blooming,
They are circling the pond,
The sun is shining.
~ Chris & Aiden B.