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Why Kissaki-kai?

- * Kissaki-Kai teaches effective defensive karate
- * Kissaki-Kai promotes reality in training
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White Hat or Black Hat?

In my young days, the American Western movie reigned supreme on the cinema circuit.

Actors such as John Wayne and Alan Ladd rode into town and out again later into the sunset, leaving behind simplistic images of the heroic ideal Man (with a capital 'M').

The bad guys invariably wore the black Stetson hats, the good guys wore white.

In this Hollywood world of the imagination, wearing the correct color hat was of great consequence, establishing, as it did, that although Right equaled Might, it didn't hurt that the wearer could swing a good right hook and draw his six-gun unbelievably quickly.

A bullet in the shoulder, a blow on the head - mere trifles to the indomitable wearer of the white hat!

The real world was not quite so straightforward, however, and the real wounded heroes from the second World War were also there to remind us in their memoirs and the films recounting their bravery that life was a little more vivid and painful

than its celluloid counterpart. It came as a worrisome dawning that just being in the right was no guarantee of winning through in life's

the 300 Spartans, these and so many more examples spring to mind of wonderful images of the zenith of achievement. Magnificent



vicissitudes. It became all too obvious that in the real world, being bigger, stronger, richer, luckier... all were frequently the factors which seemed to hold sway!

History seldom records the heroic and valiant efforts of those who fail anyway. True, some characters have made indelible images in the fabric of history, the larger-than-life impact upon the imaginations of millions has made even their final failure worthy of note and respect.

The intensity of the love between Romeo and Juliet, the overwhelming ambition of Richard III, the crumbling of the age of chivalry and Camelot, the sacrifices of

even in their defeat, downfall and decay, they still serve to establish heights to be scaled by those who simply look on.

Just occasionally, real-life does serve up a genuine hero, just in time to give hope that - even if only infrequently - wearing a white hat (and in the case of Douglas Bader continuing to wear it in spite of unbearable pain, the loss of both legs, and the total end of any future hope for an ordinary life) can triumph over apparently insurmountable suffering.

We, small, ordinary people need our heroes and heroines to give us the courage and hope that it is possible



to for us too to find within us the strength to emulate them, if only in the smallest fashion.

Somehow, the realization that the bullet wound in the arm, whilst actually a shockingly dreadful, painful and debilitating injury, not at all like the movies,



Wing Commander Douglas Bader

can still be - if not conquered, at least accepted and accommodated as demonstrated by the lives of real heroes - allows the meanest of us the possibility of finding a similar courage and determination in our own everyday lives.

In fact, of course, it is probable that even the greatest hero has always had feet of clay. After all, it must be hard being on the best of one's game all the time. Perhaps that too gives us some small comfort, and gives us heart to forgive ourselves our failings whilst we continue to aim at higher goals. Seeing things as they really are is mostly not a comfortable process, and recognition of our own inevitable failure as time, age, experiences and simply the everyday process of living grinds away at our heroic façade cannot inspire joy. However, acceptance does not mean ceasing to strive! After all, we may not be actual heroes, but that doesn't necessarily make us cowards!

I mentioned Douglas Bader above, and for those of you who don't know about him, he really was my childhood hero.

As a young man he joined the Royal

Air Force, and one day, practicing acrobatics he crashed his aircraft and suffered terrible injuries which led to both of his legs being amputated and he lay near death for a long time.

In spite of this, his indomitable willpower was such that he eventually talked his way back into the Air Force and became a leading squadron leader flying Hurricanes against the Luftwaffe in Battle of Britain. Eventually, he was shot down over France and ended the war in the infamous Colditz Castle prisoner-of-war camp because he kept trying to escape.

The Germans held him in such esteem that they even allowed British Fighter Command to parachute him a new pair of tin legs as his others were lost in the crash when he was captured.

In an age when many boys had John Wayne as a hero, or Superman, and later, Bruce Lee, I had the real-life example of Douglas Bader to inspire me, and he still does today..

Douglas Bader certainly wore a white hat!

The problem is, it seems that as human beings we all share a need for role models to help to set goals and ideals for us to work towards in our lives. In former days the family would provide some of these, and - in a less informed and less critical age - religion (of whatever form) provided other examples.

Society, living together co-operatively on a planet with finite resources, demands that the goals established for

the ethos are more or less the same, leading to a harmonious and healthy existence. Unfortunately, religion has always been used as a tool by ruthless and unscrupulous people for political and personal ends, and the extended family has become less of the norm than the nuclear. Thus two major props in society have been subverted, weakened or removed entirely.

The spread of education and science has also allowed for a more discerning view of how we, the planet, the universe - everything, works, and the very existence of some supernatural being has become a matter of uncritical belief (faith) as those who still require a prop to lean on become more entrenched in their unsupported beliefs.

I don't wish to be facetious, nor to upset any reader, but if - for instance - a child still irrationally clung to a belief



Wing Commander Douglas Bader in flying suit center

in Santa Claus as he or she became an adult, then a psychiatrist would step in to help deal with this inability to accept reality.

So, in a time of great change in the world, and of a disruption of the pillars upon which earlier ages rested their morality and belief system, what is left to give a guide, to set examples, to act as templates for the young in society?

Well, this whole, huge responsibility devolves upon us! Each individual, now even more than ever, has the duty



to make full use of advances in science to use the rational brain in educating the young, and making full use of the resources of the planet and society to provide the necessary environment for the health (in mind and body) of the young, and finally to stand up for what is properly seen as right.

Therefore, following these meanderings, it brings us as martial artists to realise that our position as sifu, or sensei, also carries the weight of responsibility to act as the role demands, not simply as a passer-on of physical techniques, but as respected advisors who also teach in an honest fashion aware that power carries responsibilities and should never be misused.

Unfortunately, of course, it *is* frequently misused. Whenever a sensei promulgates a rule that students must only train with his organization, that is denying the student the opportunity to seek knowledge elsewhere, completely contrary to established martial arts tradition and of other areas of knowledge.

Whenever a person or a body advertises that they are teaching such patently outlandish skills as causing unconsciousness without physical contact, by power of Kiai (shouting) or Ki (projecting invisible energy) they are doing inestimable damage to the reputation of all authentic teachers who deprecate such unscrupulous behavior.

Playing upon the credulity of the less-discriminating in society, for egotistical or pecuniary advantage, is absolutely the work of the wearers of black hats!

The finest martial weapon we possess is that situated between the ears - the brain. Standing up and deliberately opposing the purveyors of nonsense is not easy. It takes backbone and the courage of one's principles to continually promote the truth in the face of the

enmity, not just from those directly opposed, but also by very many who have 'bought into' the propaganda of these charlatans, who also feel deeply aggrieved that their belief system is being challenged.

To nudge a person towards analytical introspection and critical assessment of any long-held belief can be a profoundly disturbing process and it would be far easier to opt out by side-stepping difficult issues by allowing that "*everyone is entitled to their opinion.*"

However, this is an indefensible statement, and an untenable point of view. Everyone should be entitled to an '*educated and reasoned*' point of view, backed up by logic and facts. Any other stance is illogical and simply wrong.

Part of the Zen background to the martial arts is the effort expended in achieving a proper, correct view of the world and one's place within it. Much is made of the need for 'right' thinking and 'right' action. Seeing things clearly, as they are, not as they appear to be, is both an aim and a consequence of such training. This is not an easy way, but remember that one of the original meanings of "sensei" is "one who has gone before;" someone who has travelled the path and is able to point the way.

Contrast this highly responsible role with that of the self-aggrandizing showman who is hoodwinking hundreds of students and fleecing them of their money by offering 'guaranteed black belt rank' if they sign up to this or that school program, or 'Ki manipulation' seminars where 'No-touch knockouts' are passed off as genuine.

I am not advocating that we all set out to become Zen masters and teach absolutely in the manner prevalent hundreds of years ago. I am, however,

certainly saying that anyone who stands up and asks to be considered as a person of repute who will teach and guide students to achieve their full potential does uphold the traditional values within the discipline and sets an example to be followed, not a spectacle to be derided! Put on a white hat!

As with everything else, the martial arts have changed over the passing of time. What should not have changed is the status in which teaching these arts is held. However, with the 'dumbing down' of so much in society and the rise of the shopping mall Dojo with students frequently taught by 'sensei' barely older than themselves with little or no conception of the difference between a martial looking sport and a real martial art, it has been inevitable that such a loss of respect and status has accrued.

Elsewhere, in an article about 'Giri' (respect) I have written at length about the disservices brought about in different ways by charlatan sensei. There are many ways in which we can fall short of such exacting standards, but when faced with difficult choices I remind myself of Douglas Bader, and I ask myself: "What would he have done?" Well, technically, of course, he could not advise me, but in facing up to pain, hardship, danger - and overwhelming odds, well somehow my little problem gets set into proportion.

We still need our wearers of white hats! ~ Vince Morris sensei

What is Kissaki Kai
by Doug Wachs - 2nd Dan

In my karate career, which spans nearly 27 years, I have trained in multiple karate styles earning a black belt in two. Along



the way I have studied (academically if not physically) quite a few other martial arts.

For a while I trained at a school called Kanzen Gojuryu. If the school's name left any doubt, it was obvious that the style in which we trained was Gojuryu from the Goju Kata we practiced as well as the picture of Gogen Yamaguchi that hung on the Dojo wall.

While in college, I trained in the Rider College Karate Club. The name was not such a dead give-away, but the Tang-Soo-Do manuals that were handed out left little question as to what martial art we were practicing.

For about 10 years now I have been a member at a dojo in Marlton, New Jersey. If ever anyone asked me where I trained, I would explain that I was at a Shotokan school called Kissaki Kai. This initially seemed a reasonable answer. After all, a number of years ago, the school used to be called "Club Shotokan"; we practice all of the same Kata as other Shotokan schools, and there is even a picture of Gichin Funakoshi on the wall. But as I've recently been considering that answer, I believe that it is far too simple a response to give the full truth.

Shortly before I began training at this dojo, they joined forces with a new head instructor named Vince Morris. Originally a Shotokan stylist himself, Sensei Morris was (and still is) a world renowned authority in karate. He holds several national and international tournament trophies in both Kata (forms) and Kumite (fighting) and his defensive tactics teachings are used as components of the self defense and Officer Protection training in numerous law enforcement and military organizations around the globe. Having become frustrated with the lack of connection between the popular tournament style of karate and true self-defense, he spent many years studying different styles and their Kata, examining them for their hidden and original meanings.

When the New Jersey school began working with Sensei Morris, they took on the name of Kissaki Kai as that was the name

of his international organization. Following the 9/11 terror attacks, Sensei Morris decided that his services were needed in the United States and moved his headquarters to the Marlton dojo. This move was facilitated when after thorough investigation, the US Govt. designated sensei Morris as possessing: "Exceptional skill and talent."

Immediately, the focus of our training changed. Of great importance was not just what was added to the training, but also what was removed. Many common karate training techniques were removed from our typical workouts as they were deemed not only useless for self defense training, but in many cases counter-productive. While it is not uncommon for a school's instructor to remove bits and pieces of classical training techniques from their regular regimen, it is usually the Kata that is ignored. Under the guise of removing useless methods, these changes usually stem from a lack of understanding of them. In contrast, it is Sensei Morris' in-depth understanding of martial arts development that led him to focus on Kata while eliminating other parts of typical training.

⇒ Gone was the focus on hours of mindless repetition of random combinations of techniques, up and down the Dojo striking into empty air; replaced by a focus on techniques grouped together to compliment each other and their impact on the human body.

⇒ Gone was the blind performance of Kata as some sort of dance where techniques are performed simply because "that's what they are supposed to be" learning only the most obvious of applications of the moves; replaced by a study of Kata whereby each and every move of each and every Kata from beginner to advanced is examined for its meanings both obvious and hidden.

⇒ Gone was ippon kumite performed with an uke attacking from an unrealistic posture and far away distance. All partner training is at touching

distance, as in real life.

⇒ Pads, focus mitts, and punching bags were no longer simply a form of protection used in sparring to shield a student from an over-zealous attack. Now they are used as tools for teaching the delivery of counter attacks to specific points on the body to increase their effectiveness.

Kissaki Kai also added a study of the vital "Kyusho" points on the human body. While certainly not discovered by Sensei Morris, the use and understanding of these points (an integral part of the martial arts at their inception) had been lost over the years as martial arts have deteriorated into sports. Sensei Morris has returned to the use of Kyusho points which he first became acquainted with in Ju-Jutsu some 55 years ago, and has re-introduced them as an integral part of Kissaki Kai.

There are other martial arts schools that cover vital points briefly in their teachings, but it is frequently common belief in them that these points work through some sort of invisible channels or meridians through which flows some invisible, undetectable 'Ki' energy. Again, this erroneous concept is derived from a lack of understanding of the Kyusho points. Sensei Morris devotes an entire chapter in his book The Secret Art of Pressure Point Fighting (Ulysses Press – 2008) to de-bunking these myths) which clearly shows how the effects related to using the vital points and vulnerable areas derive from natural physiological workings of the human body. No mysterious forces required!

Central to the teachings of Kissaki Kai are 'The Rules of Combat.' Authored by Sensei Morris, these rules are the culmination of years of studying works such as the Bubishi and the writings of Sun Tzu and Musashi combined with his own years of experience working with law enforcement and teaching bodyguards. 'The Rules of Combat' formalize Sensei Morris' martial arts philosophies. They act as the mechanism through which a martial artist can unlock the true meanings of any Kata while



Doug Wachs 2nd Dan

serving to ensure the defensive waza are effective.

It occurs to me that a long time ago, Master Funakoshi took years of martial arts training, applied his own beliefs and experiences and formed Shotokan karate. Chojun Miyagi did the same thing by applying his own interpretation of the martial arts to develop Goju Ryu. With these things in mind, I have to ask the question... "What is Kissaki Kai?"

I put this very question to Sensei Morris. In responding, he indicated that he believes Kissaki Kai to be a "martial arts philosophy". It is applicable to any martial art and is specifically tied to none. Personal humility prevented him from proclaiming Kissaki Kai as anything more than that.

I train directly under Sensei Morris. Our dojo practices Shotokan Heian Kata, but this is where the similarity ends between our school and a Shotokan dojo. All other things that we do are distinctly the teachings of Sensei Vince Morris. I would actually contend that Kissaki Kai, if not its own martial art, is definitely its own style of karate. ~ Doug Wachs 2nd Dan.

It makes you think!

"Depend on the rabbit's foot if you will, but remember it didn't work for the rabbit"

~ Anon

I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times.

~ Bruce Lee

"It's never too late to be what you might have been."

~ George Elliot

"Many of life's failures are people who didn't know how close they were to success when they gave up!"

~ Thomas Edison

Forthcoming Seminars UK

Sensei Vince Morris will be holding a seminar and Dan test in the UK March 20 in Haywards Heath - check the website for details www.kissakikarate.com

call: Sensei Came:
07952 670 349

info@karateacademy.org.uk

USA

Sensei Vince will be teaching at a seminar in Washington DC

April 17th

3265 S St, NW, Washington DC.

contact David Ernst for details

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Important Notice to all former Kissaki members of The London and South Essex Dojo

False information has been circulated about the termination of this Dojo's membership.

All members of the former Kissaki-Kai London & South Essex Dojo who wish to confirm their grade status should email: info@kissaki-kai.com

Students should be aware that Fees for membership and insurance paid to the Dojo by many students did not, in fact, reach Kissaki-kai, and after almost 3 years of trying to regularize the situation, regrettably the Dojo membership has been terminated and no grades conferred in this period are currently recognized. These students were not members and were training and taking grade tests whilst uninsured!

All memberships and insurance can be obtained through the UK Chief Instructor, sensei Don Came - 07592 670 349



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