



## My First ISKF US Nationals

*By Nina Tang*

There I was, standing in the staging area alongside my teammates. I remember seeing other collegiate competitors for the first time. My adrenaline was rushing and my heart was racing. I was a varsity tennis athlete in high school and attended many competitions and matches, but this dynamic was different in comparison. Everything felt alive. I felt like I was in an ocean of strangers, but at the same time it was a big Karate family.

Leading up to Nationals, my team and I made it a goal to practice almost every day of the week. Being a college student with vigorous workloads, this was not an easy task for any of us. It would be 10:00PM at night and we would all show up at the gym to practice team kata or review what we practiced during club trainings. We were there because we have a passion for Karate and a desire to grow stronger every day. I remember thinking how lucky I was to have a team who showed so much dedication to this sport, and that gave me willpower to keep training and putting in my best efforts.

My first event was Collegiate Team Kata. As the team with the lowest ranking belts, I admit that I was intimidated by the other teams. Everything we practiced for would be displayed in this moment. I remember walking into the center of the stage, letting my body take control, and bowing. Our score totaled larger than the team before us. In that moment, we left the stage smiling excitedly at each other. Although we were the lowest belts, we made a goal to try our best, and it paid off. This was followed by individual kata and *kumite* which put each competitor's training to the test.

As someone who's never been to a karate tournament, I expected everyone to be very intense. However, the sportsmanship was wonderful in that

everyone was willing to help each other out in correcting mistakes and giving tips on how to improve their techniques. Seeing the near perfect execution of katas from each movement to the breathing that accompanied them was very exciting. Seeing basic techniques during training come alive during *kumite* has inspired me to train harder every day.

Overall, I can say that Nationals was an unforgettable experience and an event that I hope to attend every year, with the intention to keep climbing in my karate journey.



*Mid-America competitors at the 2016 US National Tournament.*

*Photo courtesy of Mid-America ISKF*

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## My Journey to a Master's Last Class

*By Sensei Kim Weber*



*Students attend Master Yaguchi's last class. Photo courtesy of Sensei Kim Weber*

I heard of Master Yaguchi's retirement at Master Camp. There was talk that he would conduct his last class on December 17th, and the interest in attending was growing quickly.

When Jeff and I returned from camp, we both felt that we wanted to train with him one more time before his retirement. We discussed the possibility of going to Sensei's dojo in Denver to help us prepare for our upcoming dan exam or attending his last class in December. We decided that making a trip to Denver sometime before our dan exam might be the smartest choice. So we went to Denver in September. We owe a special thanks to our friend Tatsuun (Li) Ryu, for allowing us to stay with him. Many of you might remember Li. He lived in Lexington and was a part of Mid-America for a few years. Being in Denver was almost like being at MasterCamp, with a simple schedule...train, eat, train, eat, train, eat and a drink or two. We also got to spend some time with Yaguchi Sensei off the *dojo* floor. During our time there Sensei gave us some valuable advice for our exam and beyond. We came home from Denver happy and content. When you have a certain experience and you realize that it could be the last time, you value every moment.

After hearing everyone discussing Master Yaguchi's last class at Nationals, we came home wishing we could afford to go. Jeff and I knew we had had a very expensive karate year and doubted we could afford to attend. My heart kept

telling me to go, and Jeff admitted that he felt the same way. So I looked for options to make it affordable. I found tickets for \$66 roundtrip! We had to drive over four hours to an airport in Pittsburgh, but we were willing to do it.

There was a snow storm the weekend of December 17th; luckily it didn't affect our flight Friday. We had dinner with some friends once we arrived, and then it was off to bed. We wanted to arrive at the training location early so that we could watch the dan exam. We saw many familiar faces Saturday morning at the hotel during breakfast. Due to the large number of students expected, the day's events were being hosted by Sensei Gary Swain at the Lone Tree Recreation Center. Once we arrived there we changed into our *gi*'s and went to register. There were tables set up for registration, and various products for purchase, including a table for Catherine Pinch, who was there selling her book of Master Yaguchi's memoirs, "Mind and Body – Like Bullet."

The *dan* exam was delayed an hour due to the storm. About twenty-five students from Colorado, Alaska and Canada were there to test for *shodan* (1st degree black belt) thru *shichidan* (7th degree black belt) under the watchful eye of Yaguchi Sensei at the last *dan* exam he would conduct.

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## My Journey to a Master's Last Class

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In addition to Master Yaguchi, and the other Colorado instructors who were seated at the examiners table, there was Sensei Hiroyoshi Okazaki, I.S.K.F. Chairman, Sensei Cathy Cline from I.S.K.F. Northwest Region, Sensei David Jones from I.S.K.F. Calgary, and Sensei Oded Friedman from I.S.K.F. Israel. It was standing room only for those wishing to watch the exam. As I watched, I saw Yaguchi Sensei smiling often while observing the examinees.

After the exam, there was a break which allowed for everyone to warm up for the training, say hello to friends and get a photo op with the man of the hour. This break lasted for quite a while. It seemed that the hellos and photos of this family reunion were endless. Once we lined up for class, I wondered how we would all fit on the training floor. I heard there were about 150 people in attendance. The floor was more crowded than the back of the Okazaki Dome at Master Camp! If the person in front of me didn't punch quickly enough, I would punch his elbow. It was that crowded!

Yaguchi Sensei spoke to his translator, Tatsuun Ryu in Japanese, who then translated for us in English. Sensei began class saying that with this being his last class, he would like to remember when he was a white belt. The class seemed to be tailored to the memories of him training as a white belt. Many of the drills were done from a *kiba dachi* (straddle leg stance); the stance Sensei says is the foundation of all other stances. As the class went on, he would stop and remind us of a few points to remember when training: "always

protect your center;" "be aware of the correct elbow position when blocking;" and "don't save your technique." I have heard him mention these points before, but perhaps he was choosing what he wanted us to remember. That way he could continue to teach us, even into his retirement. If you are wondering how Sensei can walk away from something he has done since 1952 when he was attending university...he isn't. A couple of his students helped build a dojo in his basement where he will be able to continue his training.

That evening we attended a dinner hosted by Yaguchi Sensei at an authentic Japanese restaurant. After dinner, there were a few speeches of how thankful people were for all Sensei and his wife have given to us, the I.S.K.F., and to Shotokan. There was even a group chant. The evening ended with everyone receiving a special gift from Sensei for being his guest for dinner. Sensei seemed so happy. Maybe his smile was because he and his wife were going to Vegas the next morning.

The next day, Frontier Airlines canceled our flight, so we ended up staying in Denver longer than expected. Even though it put a kink in our plans, we were glad that we could stay longer and attend a brunch at our friend Maelo's house. It was a great gathering, with people from all over the U.S and Canada in attendance. The food and mimosas were amazing. Sensei Gordon McDaniel was in the holiday spirit leading us in some Christmas carols.

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*Yutaka Yaguchi, A True Karate Master*

## My Journey to a Master's Last Class

*Continued from Page 3*

And it was fun seeing the group from Arizona try to build a snowman. Unfortunately it was too cold and the snow wouldn't pack.

The canceled flight meant that we had to rebook our return, which got into Pittsburgh at about midnight. And then there was the 4 ½ hour drive. It was not an ideal ending to a great story, but it was definitely worth it.

As I think about Yaguchi Sensei, and my memories of him, I am honored that I received my *shodan* under him and that I have had the opportunity to know him. I will remember the training advice he has given me on the dojo floor. I will remember his kindness as I saw him smiling while watching the students taking their *dan* exam. I will remember his gratitude by saying "thank you for coming" to me and the many others whose heart told them to go to that training. I will cherish the time I

have been fortunate enough to have with him off the dojo floor.

I imagine that he is going to miss the *dojo* and all of his students throughout the I.S.K.F. I am pretty sure he is not going to miss the toll that all of the traveling had on him and his family. I am sad that he will not be a regular at I.S.K.F. events, but am truly happy that he is looking forward to his retirement and his plans of learning something new. "Some people make more than a career out of their work...they make a difference." Master Yaguchi is one of those people.

*The second edition of Master Yaguchi's memoirs "Mind and Body – Like Bullet" by Catherine Pinch can be purchased at <http://www.karatayaguchi.com>*



*Master Yaguchi (6th from left) with other JKA legends at the first All-Japan Karate tournament, 1957.*

*Image courtesy of <http://yaguchikarate.blogspot.com>*

## Mid-America Certifications and Dan Promotions

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| Name                        | Club                        | Promotion/Certification | Location                    |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Jazmin Sorvala              | Swartz Creek                | Shodan                  | Mid-America Summer Camp     |
| Laura Graham                | Brown County                | Yondan                  | Mid-America Summer Camp     |
| Mark Bandy                  | Swartz Creek                | Yondan                  | Mid-America Summer Camp     |
| Michael Tomcsanyi           | Creekside Karate            | Sandan                  | Mid-America Fall Camp       |
| Kim Weber                   | Shotokan Karate of Anderson | Rokudan                 | 2016 ISKF US Nationals      |
| Jeff Weber                  | Shotokan Karate of Anderson | Rokudan                 | 2016 ISKF US Nationals      |
| Bambang Sartono Abdurrahman | Columbus Shotokan Karate    | Judge Class D           | 2016 ISKF US Nationals      |
| Andrew Wolff                | Shotokan Karate of Anderson | Judge Class C           | 2016 ISKF US Nationals      |
| Jeb Brack                   | Ohio Valley Karate          | Shodan                  | Mid-America December Clinic |
| Scott Mendenhall            | Cleveland Shotokan Karate   | Shodan                  | Mid-America December Clinic |
| Mike Hudepohl               | Ohio Valley Karate          | Shodan                  | Mid-America December Clinic |
| Aaron Wolf                  | Cleveland Shotokan Karate   | Shodan                  | Mid-America December Clinic |
| Myra Waterbury              | Athens Shotokan Karate      | Nidan                   | Mid-America December Clinic |

# Dayton Shotokan Karate Hosts Mid-America Regional Training and Dan Exam

*By Sensei Jerry Baker*

At our December Regional Training, Sensei Vaughan discussed and demonstrated several key principles of sparring. His emphasis was on how to position one's body and feet so as to maximize both the effectiveness of a block while also properly directing the power of a counter attack. His instruction focused on the following areas:

In sparring, the defender must take the correct position for an effective block and counter attack.

### **Power comes from the effective use of the hips driven by the supporting foot and leg.**

- Relax shoulders to facilitate the smooth movement of the hips and arms
- Sink into your stance so that your legs and hips work together to bring your power directly from your center toward the target of your block and counter.

### **Dynamic movement**

- Maintain a strong knee position in your support leg. This will require proper inside/outside tension. If the knee breaks in a direction away from the power flow of the block, energy is diffused in directions away from your target. The same is true in a counter attack since a solid, properly directed foundation will enable one to generate and deliver the maximum power for the technique.
- Use your draw hand effectively. This component of a block or offensive technique provides the counter balancing body connection required to deliver a block or counter attack at full strength. Without an effective draw hand, power and stability are diminished.

### **Triangle of power**

- Orient your body toward the target.
- Footwork is critical to alignment of the body.
- Body movement through stepping or shifting must provide protection and the correct distance and direction for an effective response.



*Sensei Vaughan and Sensei Talley demonstrate proper technique  
Image courtesy of Sensei Jerry Baker*

- Study the Karategrams of Basic and Advanced Directions found in Sensei Okazaki's The Textbook of Modern Karate. These diagrams will provide guidance as karate students seek to move in many directions for both offensive and defensive techniques. Good footwork is critical to one's efficiency of movement, the maintenance of correct form, and the maximization of power toward the desired target.
- Drills were conducted with partners to provide practice in delivering a jab and counter combination and in stepping back to block a kick and then delivering a properly aligned counter attack.

The day after our Regional Training, a Sunday-morning session was held under the instruction of Sensei Vaughan and Sensei Oberschlake. This "bonus" training provided yet another excellent opportunity for those in attendance to focus on key principles of karate performance.

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# Dayton Shotokan Karate Hosts Mid-America Regional Training and Dan Exam

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## Sensei Vaughan...

- emphasized the vertical alignment of the head, shoulders, hips, and feet.
- He demonstrated how the movement of one's body should be like "riding rails" – smooth movement

## Sensei Oberschlake...

- continued this emphasis by discussing how you must "see your opponent."
- Motion must be continuously accelerated without stopping. Students should initially practice continuous motion slowly, then a bit faster, and finally with faster breathing guiding the speed of the movement.
- Trainings should follow various phases of training as prescribed by Sensei Okazaki. We begin with the warm-up phase in which we prepare our bodies and minds for what is to come, followed by the post-warm-up phase in which simple karate moves and techniques are studied, followed by the period of

progressive intensity during which the principles of complex movements are studied, followed by the warm-down phase in which the complex principles under discussion are applied to all parts of one's training, and ending with the recovery phase.

Sensei Oberschlake also gave a brief overview of the concept of *Shu-Ha-Ri*, which deals with how one progresses from the basic levels of learning to the ownership of the skills and knowledge.

- *Shu* can be termed as the phase in which one obeys the rules and follows the directions of the teacher. One will be expected to watch and listen and copy what is demonstrated.
- *Ha* is the phase in which one can begin to incorporate the principles and detach oneself from the rules taught before. The student begins to take charge of his/her own learning.
- *Ri* means to transcend your understandings to begin to create your own way in accordance with what you have learned and what you see as possible. This is the stage where the student finds true ownership of the principles that have been studied and practiced for so long.



*Students attend the December clinic hosted by the Dayton Shotokan Karate Club*

*Image courtesy of Sensei Jerry Baker*

## Mid-America Karate in History



*Mid-America Karate students at The Ohio State University with Master T. Okazaki and Sensei Greer Golden, 1977*

*Several notable karate-ka:*

- 1. Master T. Okazaki*
- 2. Sensei Greer Golden*
- 3. Sensei Tim (Swede) Obrstrom*
- 4. Sensei Howard Beebe*
- 5. Sensei Larry Rothenberg*
- 6. Chris Elsaesser*
- 7. Steve McGee*
- 8. Sensei John Pohle*
- 9. Sensei Steve Pohle*
- 10. Sensei Martin Vaughan*
- 11. Sensei Bill Evans (Deceased)*

## Approval Process for Dan and Certification Exams

*At the Regional or National Level*

The Mid-America Technical Committee and Chief Instructor announce the approval procedures for Regional members intending to take *dan* or certification exams at the Regional or National level. Beginning January 1, 2017, all members are required to obtain the written permission of the Regional Chief Instructor before applying for dan or any certification examination (including judge, instructor or examiner). In addition, any papers required for *dan* or certification examinations must be reviewed by the Chief Instructor before they may be submitted to ISKF Headquarters.



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When making purchases thru [www.Smile.Amazon.com](http://www.Smile.Amazon.com) Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to your favorite charitable organization. Choose Mid-America Karate-Inc at [www.Smile.Amazon.com](http://www.Smile.Amazon.com) to start donating to your favorite karate organization!

Thank you for your support!





**Chief Instructor, ISKF Mid-America Region**

Sensei Martin Vaughan trained under Sensei Golden and Master Okazaki for over 40 years and is our Regional Director. He is also the Chief Instructor of Indiana ISKF.



**President and Assistant Instructor, ISKF Mid-America Region**

Sensei James Oberschlake trained under Sensei Golden and Master Okazaki starting in 1974. He is also the Chief Instructor of Brown County Shotokan Karate Club.



**Instructor Emeritus, ISKF Mid-America Region**

Sensei Greer Golden graduated from the Instructor Trainee Program in 1969 and was sent to Ohio University in Athens to begin sharing his knowledge with Mid-America karate students.

**Calendar**

**January 14-15 - Kangeiko / Winter Camp**

Hosted by Indiana ISKF in Indianapolis, IN

**February 11 - Youth Tournament**

Hosted by Shotokan Karate of Anderson in Cincinnati, OH

**March 11 - Regional Training and Kyu Exam**

Hosted by the Dayton Shotokan Karate Club at Milton-Union Elementary School, Dayton, OH

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