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Perspectives Face to Face

By Janine Moore, Moore Martial Arts

Q&A with

Gary Curtis

GARY CURTIS SHIHAN is looked upon as a new pioneer of the arts. Sensei Curtis was the first person to bring James Mitose's art to the continent of Australia. He has faced many obstacles and challenges to spread and improve the Martial Arts in Australia. He is considered to be one of the new innovators of the arts. Sensei Curtis is a humble man who has made a significant difference in the arts.

*Lake Macquaire School of Self Defense
18 Waterside Ave., Sunshine, NSW, Australia*

Q-How did you get your start in Kosho?

A-I basically started coming to the states to participate in a tournament and to hook up with people that I thought would be good to connect with. This was more than 10 years ago.

Juchnik Hanshi was at one of the seminars or tournaments I was attending. I had this list of people I was going to see while I was in the US, and Hanshi was doing a tournament. He was doing a seminar the night of the second day of the tournament. I went to the seminar with a couple of other students of mine and my brother who was in martial arts at the time. Not a lot of people turned out at the seminar, so Hanshi called it off after about three quarters of the night. Instead, we went to a bar and had a drink. Hanshi Juchnik and I talked for about an hour or so... he asked, "what are you going to do in the next couple of years?"

I said, "I need to learn to get smarter and wiser."

"Hm. I can understand that, but how?" asked Hanshi. He then gave me an article out of a magazine. He said, "I may see you again, I may not." And with that I went home. Which was in NTSE. I sat there and watched a hitting video. I had a school of 80-100 students. We would train for tournaments. But I started watching this stuff, Kosho and I thought geez, this is amazing stuff. I started to study Kosho. One night I walked into the school and said, what I thought I knew doesn't make a lot of sense anymore. I'm switching, I'm going to start

learning this other system. All those who want to stay with me that's fine... Those who don't, thanks for the journey. It's been fun.

And with that, I ended up with eight students who wanted to stay. The rest of my students thought I suddenly got soft, because now I wanted to move out of the way of a hit instead of taking it all on.

Q-How did you go about with your training Kosho?

A-Obviously, with one take, you don't get a lot of information, so I rang up Hanshi, I wanted to come back to the states to meet. We met in Anaheim. He turned up... we did an interview and he sold me more tapes and books. And that seemed to be the way we worked in the next 10 years. I'd go back every year. Some years I'd go back to the dojo and I'd park myself in a hotel near Hanshi's dojo, get picked up in the morning, go to classes, all day, I'd be the last one to leave at 11 at night.

Nothing was open, I used to go to the 7-Eleven, buy a six-pack of beer and a bag of chips. And go to bed. The next day, we'd get picked up again and we'd go through it again. The deal was if you train at Hanshi's place for free, you had to throw in a Hanshi lunch.

And he was good to me.. He's always been good to me. We'd train all day, we get people coming in and out, people wanting to train because you were there and on the weekends, if Hanshi was gone with someone else, he'd assign people to look after you. He would do the Saturday class, the healing classes, and on Sunday, someone was assigned to take you to a family barbecue or take you to Fulton Lake or... it was just like an extended family. Any time you'd come in, it was like, amazing... Sometimes I'd come in on my own, sometimes I'd bring someone with me. Sometimes I'd have an extended holiday with the family and divert staying at Disneyland, and I'd go out to train. It's been



an expensive ride, and every trip runs about \$5,000.

Q-What was your goal to learn Kosho?

A-It was never going to be a money-making concern. I don't run a full-time school. I have a full-time job, it's a good job, I earn good money. I have a dojo that's where I work, so I don't have to pay rent. I did have for a long time, I built a dojo attached to my house. And I used to just train there. Students used to turn up and we'd train there. But that's now turned into a flat for my daughter... I'm back out to the hospital where I work. Yeah, I don't advertise. Word of mouth. I'm that scary dude that does all that funny stuff over there, that real secret stuff. They either stay or they go. I've taken seminars when Hanshi's been out to other schools. They all go wow, that's the greatest thing they'd ever seen. Those students in the end became the core group. This group I've got now, decided a long time ago, that Hanshi's been coming down here for 10 years, and we

Q&A with Gary Curtis continued, page 2

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Q&A with Gary Curtis, continued

used to do the open seminar thing. We'd market it, get enough money to cover what we needed, but we were training at a lower level. As a group we decided that this wasn't where we wanted to go. I ask Hanshi to give me a fee. The idea, we'd divvy it between the tenants. In the 12 months time he's coming, this is the money you'll have to have to make it happen and that's what we'd do. We'd get 12 months worth of work in the 4-5 days while he's down here. Do a four-day program, hire out a place at the sport and rec, fitness camp, or government run which is three hours away. And Hanshi stays with us, and as you know what Hanshi's like, he's not an easy person to housesit with. He doesn't sleep. He has these really weird and strange eating habits too. And then he always, at the last minute, there's a disaster as you're trying to take him somewhere he needs to go. He needs a haircut or a watch. Or I need a this or I need a that.

He'll go and we'll shop.. He loves a market in Sydney, or a day in Chinatown. He'll walk it for hours and come out with one or two items. Like what are we doing. It's just Hanshi. He's brilliant, in some aspects and lousy in others and that makes him who he is. You get used to it, you get used to the man. You love the man for who he is and what he does. How he does it.

Q-Did you have any other experience in the martial arts before you met Hanshi?

A-I had a black belt for 10 years before I ran into Hanshi. But ... I was getting hit from my own students. Why? I thought I was the best. With Hanshi's teaching you actually learn how to move, when to move, why to move. A lot of it didn't make a lot of sense to me. I couldn't make things fit. My old instructor never did forms because he couldn't make them work. I never knew anything about the healing arts, whatsoever. Just paint the house...

Once you start to learn why and how it all fits, it just makes the art so much more interesting... you can be more mental than brawn and muscle and still be in the arts. If I was still in my own system, I would have been out of the arts at 35 or 36. I can't do some things because my knees need to be replaced. But Hanshi's never pushed. He's said, you'll learn 'em when you're ready. When it's important to you, you'll learn it.

Q-What obstacles have you run into while trying to teach a new system in Australia?

A-So we were trying to start up a system in a country where no one has ever seen it, you can't go in and say you're going to do calligraphy... you have to learn how to move, how to get out of the way. I didn't spend a lot of time doing the katas or the calligraphy until after I knew how to move. Then I could market it, and go and talk to other people. The funny thing is my students like the fact that they can break me out, tell them how banged up I am, and then say, try to hit me. Then I can move around them, make them look silly. Then they

go you shouldn't be able to do that cause you've got all those injuries. So I tell them this is what you guys need to learn. Some do some don't and some leave. I've had students since they were 14. They come in and out. Change jobs, but they're never disconnected... they'll come back. People need their own time and own space, they'll come and go. The dojo is a place you can go back to. I've seen people that haven't been here for years. They just drop back in -- no why, or what's the issue. ... it is disappointing when you don't see them for a while, but at the end of the day they all have their lives, they need to be able to live those lives apart from the arts, because that's what the arts is.

Q-I think when we began with Hanshi, we were not as disconnected like you are. Our teacher was not teaching anymore and turned the style over to Jon Moore Sensei and myself. We knew there was more to what we were studying at the time. But we also knew that there was this void, and we were searching for answers. That is when we were introduced to Hanshi by one of his students. We explained to him our story and he told us this is what you have to do to study Koshu. So we did it. That's how our journey started, he'd come out to Colorado and would teach us ten forms in a weekend, and we'd work on them till the next time we had him out. Does this sound familiar?

A- The story tends to repeat itself over and over and over again... You either take the opportunity or you don't. There were four or five other martial artists with him when I first met Hanshi. They did ... or never tried to progress it. When you know what's right or what's wrong, you can't go back to where you were, you know... sorry, but what I knew I thought was the bees knees, the best thing I'd ever seen, but now I've seen something that's far more advanced. We need to come across and do this, ... or we just all step back and quit, and that's what a lot of people do they just step back and quit." Because the challenge is now you have to go back to being a student. And that's the hardest part for a lot of people, they don't want to go back and be a student.

I was doing a hopping pattern. I was hopping everywhere, he said, what are you doing that for?... I said it's in the book. ... He said no... you feel like a real dumb ass ... because you're so far ... Sometimes Hanshi will come out and say I didn't see it that way, you guys have picked up something totally different... we have to make it work because we were just getting lost. We had to sort it out between us as a group. And the funniest thing. I had one of my real early students, when he first ran into this stuff, he said to me, we don't have to tell anyone else. We'll just work it, work it for ourselves, and I was absolutely floored. What's the point of that? It's an art form. That needs to be expanded, everyone needs to know. Not keep it to yourself.

On one trip I flew into Sacramento to train with Hanshi or so I thought I was supposed to meet with him. But after I got there, he looks at me, he said what are you doing here now... He said I'm flying out tonight. I said, I've flown here all this way, and you're telling me you're leaving. He was like, no worries. I'll have the boys get you... I'm thinking no, no no. Anyway, he sets me up with Dwayne, he's teaching sword kata. I never had use of a sword. So anyway, I'm out there doing sword forms. I was really angry, really pissed off. Hanshi taps me on the shoulder before he leaves and says everything has an in-out, up-down movement, good to see you man. I'm on the flight going home, reading one of his books, still dirty about this whole trip. I look down the aisle and there's the hostess and she's coming out, serving drinks. And she's putting things up to the top things... I looked at in said ah... he gave me 12 months worth of stuff to work on in one sentence. One sentence, everything goes up-down, in-out. I worked that for the whole 12 months. It's been a great journey, it's all been good. My kids have sort have lived it. I dunno what I'd be doing if I wasn't doing Koshu.



Charles Garrett Kyoshi
Gathering 2010



Etiquette, the forgotten?

Each martial arts school has its own form of etiquette or *reshiki*. The general etiquette that is usually practiced is to bow as you enter and leave the school. Bow to you partner before you begin and end training together. Bow as you face your sparring opponent. You may have a creed that is spoken before class begins and ends. Lining up according to ranks. Using the correct titles for your teachers, students and assistant teachers. There are many to list here.

But there are also ones that are not spoken of or taught directly to students. These forms of etiquette are just as important or more important to follow and to practice in front of other students, so they too can carry on and hand down proper etiquette. No one is too old or is too high of rank not to follow or perform etiquette.

When your instructor gives you a ring on the phone, give them a call back. Your instructor doesn't want a text back or an e-mail back, they called you for a specific reason and you should out of respect return their phone call. When your instructor asks you to take care of a certain matter, you should in return handle it within a short period of time. No excuses should be given as to why you have not done the task. Figure out how to accomplish that task. Most of the time your instructor relies on you for tasks that they know you can handle and should be handled with honor and respect.

These days, society believes that the young should eat first or they do not have to wait for what they want. We are in a 'now' society. As a teacher in the martial arts, how do you teach restraint, waiting, patience? A good

practice to do within a school (dojo, dojang) function is to have the highest ranking student go first, or the eldest go first, your guests go next and the youngest or the lowest rank, yes, they have to wait and go last. Not only will this teach respect but how to be patient. Train your students to ask the instructor if they would like a glass of water or something to drink. Have them work on these things at home with a family gathering. Give kids an assignment for them to take home during the holidays or during a family event and have them help their grandparents and parents. Have the kids make sure that their elderly loved ones goes first or eats first. This also is a good practice of self control and being aware of one's surroundings.

How many lessons can be learned for practicing etiquette?

Loyalty

This is something to really consider and take to heart. This was written by Grand Master Robert Trias, and it is how the students of Okinawan Shuri-ryu viewed student loyalty and dojo etiquette:

Aside from the small monetary consideration involved in joining a good school, a responsibility of "good dojo citizenship" is incurred by the enrollee.

In terms of loyalty, this means avoiding anything which might constitute a slanderous statement about other members, or otherwise do anything to lower a member in the eyes of others.

Each individual student is a show window of Karate, and defamation of the student is defamation of the art.

All members are more than generous in their desire to help each other progress. To treat each other with less than deep consideration would be ungrateful.

The above statements also apply to the dojo master, but in a very special way, since he/she is a direct link in the centuries-long chain of masters who have transmitted their Karate knowledge and ethics to their followers, now passed down to the students of the dojo.

The dojo master embodies his own integrity, ethics and accomplishments, as well as those of the masters through which he/she traces his/her own Karate lineage, and these in turn become Karate tradition for the present-day students.

The student who runs his/her master down in the face of this heritage is an ingrate, indeed.



From "Pinnacle of Karate," by Robert Trias, *Methods of Okinawan Shuri-ryu*, grandmaster Robert Trias, 10th Dan karate, Headmaster of Okinawan-style Shuri-ryu karate.

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Juchnik Hanshi training methods from the masters:

Training tips from Juchnik Hanshi that will not cost you money:

One of my practicing methods to teach people to roll: I would have students get in a line and I'd take a Shinai and spin it. They'd have to time the spin and dive over the Shinai. To develop recouping from this, they'd spin the weapon, one-two strike, one-two strike, so they would have to time the roll, and get up and then retreat. These are old practicing methods to develop practitioners' abilities, speed and timing. Or, gripping to fill a large jar with so much sand, learn to grip the top of the jar, while doing your kata you'll develop your fingers and forearms.

To develop open-hand strikes, you may use instead of a bag, purchase a bag of rice at a store, wrap it in duct tape, put it on an object that is waist level, let your hand drop front back, do this over and over and over again. To find out if you're being successful, listen to the strike. Also hit with a closed fist to work on punches.

Another object to use might be a simple phone book. Make sure it's from a large city. Once you strike with hands, strike and draw the hand back. Soon, you'll start taking pages out of the phone book. That's also how you develop strikes. You'll pull muscle groups of opponent or tear flesh.

Another method: Get a cup or bowl, pour rice into the cup or bowl, form a peck and just tap on the rice, over and over. You'll know you're doing well when the rice turns to powder.

Another method to develop forearms: I'd get weights, or a weighted bar, and role the hands back and forth.

Another way to develop gripping: Take a stick, grip it with both hands and twist it back and forth. Or hang a weight with a rope off the stick and roll the weight up and down.



Professor Leibert O'Sullivan training at the Gathering 2010

Restorative Arts **Martial Arts Tidbit Corner**

I was thinking about what to write about for the section of the newsletter, restorative arts. Some sort of tidbit that can help with martial training. Then it hit me, the best tidbit that I can share -- Attend this year's Gathering.

There will be a variety of very talented and trained instructors with a huge background in this subject, restorative arts.

You can train with the best in the country. You can get your questions answered. I couldn't even come close to their knowledge. Some of these teachers are; Al Ikemoto, Brian Garrett, Bernard Langan, Bruce Juchnik, Leslee Kufferath, Gary Curtis and many, many more.

Sign up for the Gathering 2011 now. The Gathering is Sept. 24-25, 2011 in Sacramento, Calif. For more information, call Juchnik Hanshi at 916-308-2606.



Al Ikemoto Gathering 2008