

# ***The Power of The Way***



**A Spiritual Journey**

by Nodan

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of  
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# **Warning!**

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

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## Introduction

In 1981, after training in karate for 15 years, I began to study with an “enlightened” master who we called “Sensei.” Sensei showed me that karate could be practiced on two levels. The first is physical, in which only one’s natural ability is used. This is *karate jutsu* (empty hand technique), and the board breaking demonstrations shown at the YouTube channel, **nodankarate**, were all performed at this level.

The second level is spiritual, where enlightened adepts like Sensei display extraordinary psychic power and superhuman strength. This is the highest level of *karate-do* (karate as the Way), a path that leads to enlightenment. In my quest to acquire powers like Sensei, I engaged in occult practices and spent many hours in Zen meditation. The last time I trained with the master he told me, “You can get power from the dark side or the light.” Indeed, the terrifying energy infusion I received two weeks later came from the dark side.

In 2004, I began to film breaking demonstrations for a DVD intended to warn artists not to seek enlightenment through their arts. At that time, I created the make-believe master “no dan” (no rank) as a disguise, in order to protect the identities of persons who may not want to be associated with my occult past. To this end, I have changed the names of key characters in my story.

Nodan karate is not a style of martial art, but rather a method of forging “one strike” techniques for self-defense. The method utilizes five striking principles and flexible post makiwara training to develop “one strike” power. As such, Nodan karate is *karate jutsu* rather than *karate-do*, because it does not seek to lead practitioners into altered states of consciousness or enlightenment.



**Nodan Karate applies five striking principles to flexible post makiwara training to develop “one strike” power for self-defense. I practiced on this makiwara for 13 years before filming my breaking experiments.**

### **5-board break with reverse thrust punch**



**A 5-board stack can support a 650 lb. barbell placed across the centerline running parallel with the grain.**

Although Nodan's buffoonish persona serves as a fitting parody of my misguided quest to become a great master, the board breaking demonstrations in my YouTube videos are authentic and karateka can replicate them by observing the breaking protocols detailed on pages 41-43.

My journey to enlightenment began in earnest after I met Quan Li in 1980 and became his student and training partner for five years. Quan taught me Sensei's "one strike" Shotokan style, which was enshrined in the master's five-part *Shotokan Karate-do Workout*.

After a year training with Quan, I met Sensei, who had stopped teaching karate in favor of aikido and weapons. After meeting with the master several times, I joined his aikido school to better benefit from his spiritual wisdom. In due time, this led me into possession by an occult spirit of enormous ferocity and power.



Quan Li leads a class through the five Heian katas.



This book is divided into three sections. “The Way of The Spirit” gives an account of my occult journey to the dark side and superhuman strength, and how I found the true power of The Way.

“The Way of Technique” explains the physical method used to develop “one strike” techniques. While the five striking principles described in this book are not new to the martial arts, I was most fortunate to learn refined versions of these precepts from Quan Li.

Finally, “A Brief History” provides context for understanding how Nodan karate and this book came about.

### Three Declarations

First, although I have changed names to protect people’s identities, none of the facts have been altered. In addition, all quotations attributed to Sensei and others have been taken verbatim from my past notes.

Second, I do not profit financially from my YouTube videos or from this book, which is free with no sign in requirements at **nodankarate.org**. Furthermore, since I am anonymous, I cannot improve on my nonexistent reputation as a martial artist. Consequently, I have no reason not to tell readers the unvarnished truth, without hyperbole, prejudice, or guile.

Third, my understanding of the events described in this book are my own and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of others. For some readers, the world they are about to enter will challenge things they believe to be true. This is because our perceptions create our realities, which are not always the same as the truth. Accordingly, readers should proceed soberly and with caution.

# **The Way of The Spirit**

## The Dojo Spirits

In the late 1970s, I learned the first eight katas of Gogen “the cat” Yamaguchi’s Japanese style of Goju-ryu, which closely resembled the Uechi-ryu I studied during the 1960s.

Yamaguchi incorporated Zen Buddhism, Shinto, and yoga into his system and was considered one of the great karate masters of his generation. In the documentary film, “Way of The Sword,” Yamaguchi is observed in his dojo kneeling before a crystal ball and conjuring up the martial spirits. Described as an ordained Shinto priest and 10th degree black belt of “near mythical proportions,” the film’s commentator translates the master’s words:

“In my crystal ball, I conjure up spirits of past and future. I talk to the samurai warriors of old and to the fighters who are yet to come, and the secrets they tell me I pass on through my karate school.”<sup>1</sup>

### Gogan Yamaguchi (1901-1969)



In the documentary film, “Way of The Sword,”  
“the cat” conjures spirits using a crystal ball.

### **Traditional Japanese Dojo**

The traditional Japanese dojo (Way room) is where the departed spirits of the masters meet with the followers of the Way. Portraits of these masters occupy the kamiza (high seat of honor), and before and after each class students are led in a ceremonial kneeling bow before it. This ritual includes Zazen (sitting meditation), which is intended to open the mind to make it more receptive to the spirits.

For most Western practitioners, bowing down before the kamiza is a symbolic act of respect that has nothing to do with contacting the spirits of deceased masters. This was my perspective until I set up a traditional dojo in my home and began to experience strange phenomena.



**Quan Li's dojo kamiza displayed samurai swords, sai and tonfa, dojo certificates, and several portraits of departed masters.**

### **Zazen (sitting meditation)**



Japanese dojos follow the tradition of performing meditation and a ceremonial bow at the beginning and end of each class.

### **Traditional Ceremonial Bow**



Quan trained to perfect his techniques and wisely did not seek enlightenment and superhuman strength as I did.

## My Home Dojo

Following Quan 's example, in 1981 I set up a dojo in my home and Quan came once a week to train. He showed me the *Shotokan Karate-do Workout* that Sensei instituted when he taught the art. The workout was designed to burn away the ego, which was essential for reaching enlightenment. Special emphasis was placed on the katas, because they functioned as "moving Zen." Quan and I practiced many repetitions of the Shotokan forms using tempos that ranged from slow motion to full speed.

We used a kiai yell on every focused technique and without realizing it, I began using the sacred Hindu word "om" (pronounced ah-oom) as a kiai yell. At that time I was unaware of the subtle spiritual influences operating in the workout, which functioned as a kind of martial arts yoga.

During our workouts Quan and I routinely experienced unexplainable phenomena. For example, when practicing prearranged 3-step sparring a mysterious dynamic caused our arms to barely make contact, even though our blocks were easily deflecting the full power punches we were throwing. One time the dojo was filled with such energy that the wooden floor vibrated beneath our feet. On two occasions we became so energized that the rigid 2x4 striking post was split at its base during makiwara practice.

The power I was experiencing was exhilarating and steeled my determination to reach further and further beyond my natural strength. During the week I practiced the workout on my own and spent many hours in Zen meditation. Ironically, I could not see that rather than burning away my ego, the workout was subtly inflating it with the pride of becoming more and more powerful!

### **The Invisible Man**

One evening the energy in my dojo was exceptionally strong, so I asked my wife to come in to see if she could feel anything unusual. Kay entered and followed the energy source to the right side of the kamiza. With outstretched hands she traced the outline of an invisible “presence” standing in the corner. When she realized what she had done, Kay became spooked and rushed out of the room.

Shortly afterward Sylvester our cat entered the room to make his nightly inspection of the dojo. Quan and I watched to see if the cat would be aware of the invisible spirit in the corner. Sylvester began his customary walk along the back wall, then abruptly veered off course and went to the spot where Kay had encountered the presence. He sat down and stared up at the presence for about a minute, after which he nonchalantly sauntered out of the room.

Later that evening, Kay commented that the “invisible man” stood about five feet tall, which happened to coincide with the height of the diminutive Shotokan karate master, Gichen Funakoshi, whose portrait graced the kamiza. I do assume that Master Funakoshi’s spirit was in the dojo that night, but I believe the “presence” was associated with the spirit(s) that we contacted during an incredible Ouija Board séance shortly afterwards.

### **The Séance**

My former student, Gary, came to visit with Deedee his girlfriend. They brought a Ouija Board and after Quan and I finished our evening workout, we all decided to take the channeling device into the dojo to ask it some questions. So, I positioned the board on the floor in front of the kamiza.



**Spiritualists invented the spirit board in the late 1800s, in order to communicate with the dead.**

Kay lit several candles, I turned off the lights, and we sat down in a circle around the board. With pen and paper in hand, we began. Deedee and Kay placed their fingers lightly on the planchette and asked, “Is Master Funakoshi’s spirit in this dojo?” To my surprise, the planchette began to move and paused briefly over specific letters on the board’s alphabet. Gary and Quan acted as spotters and I wrote down the letters as they called them out. ONLYFORTWO. When we divided the letters into words the message read, “Only for two.”

We asked, “Which two is he here for?”

When the spirit answered, “For true believers,” Quan and I were certain it was referring to us.

Quan asked, “Is Master Ueshiba here?”

When the spirit answered, “All are here if you learn the truth. The truth is in this room,” my initial skepticism of the legitimacy of the channeling process came to an end.

I inquired, “Are we following the right path?” The spirit answered, “Many have trained. Few will develop the gift given by...” The planchette stopped moving.



We persisted, "Given by whom?"

"It must start from within."

At this point, Kay became unnerved by the weirdness of the channeling experience and stopped using the planchette. Deedee was able to continue on her own and asked, "Who is speaking to us?"

The spirit gave an evasive Zen-like reply: "Like the sky, all is open. The sword moves with wisdom."

Quan's teacher, Sensei, believed in reincarnation and had told Quan that they had trained together in previous lives. Quan asked, "Does Master Funakoshi live in the flesh?"

When the spirit responded, "I, you, he," Kay gasped and exclaimed that Funakoshi's portrait on the kamiza had just morphed into a three-dimensional image and projected itself out towards her. Quan tried to explain how Sensei once told him that Funakoshi's picture did that sometimes, but Kay had seen enough. She sprang to her feet and rushed out of the room declaring, "I'm out of here!"

After Kay's departure Quan asked, "Will Jay and Quan become masters?" The spirit gave another evasive answer.

"All will be known when each level is attained."

Unsatisfied with this noncommittal response, Quan asked, "What kata level should Quan be training?"

The spirit responded with a curt, "Good-bye."

Undeterred by the rebuff, Quan asked about his future in karate: "Is Quan destined to teach in the future?"

The spirit answered, "Giving is receiving the ki."

Deedee was puzzled when she saw this written out on paper and asked why "key" was spelled "ki." She had never heard of this Japanese word denoting energy. I had watched Deedee on several occasions to see if she could be choosing

the letters, but she was not even looking down at the planchette as it glided effortlessly back and forth across the board.

Deedee asked a follow up question, “What is the ki?”

The spirit answered, “Look to yourself.”

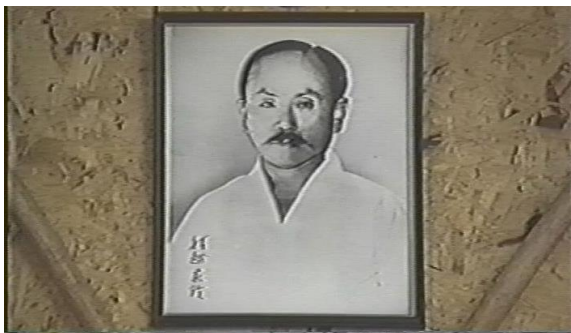
Quan then asked, “Will karate-do die with Sensei?”

“Like the seasons winter sleeps. Slowly spring comes. Have...” For a second time the planchette stopped moving.

We asked, “Can you finish this statement?”

The spirit appeared to have had enough and responded, “Greed is given to all. I give to two with much to learn.”

With that the séance was over... or so I thought. In fact, Deedee repeated her earlier question, “Who is speaking to us?” This time the spirit shocked Deedee and Gary when it answered, “the Devil.” Somehow, Quan and I had managed to repress this last communication to the point where neither one of us has any memory of it ever happening. To be sure, the séance had convinced me that a spirit realm did exist, but I was not prepared to accept the possibility that an evil supernatural being called “the Devil” could be real.



**Kay was terrified when Funakoshi's picture became three-dimensional and projected itself out at her.**

## **The Medium**

Shortly after the séance I went to see an old Spiritualist minister named Gert, who gave psychic readings. In practice, mediums summon up spirits who temporarily speak through them by taking over in a benign form of possession. I visited her on four occasions, hoping to gain additional insights into the workings of the spirit world.

On my first visit, Gert led me to her kitchen and informed me that a five-hundred-year-old Native American spirit guide was assigned to act as her psychic gatekeeper. We sat down at a table and she took hold of both my hands and began to speak in tongues. When Gert opened her eyes she said, “Now as I come into close contact with you...” Immediately, numbers of spirits began trying to come through. Gert frequently shook her head disapprovingly and spoke out, “No, not you,” to certain ones she did not want coming across. I got the impression there were numbers of departed souls not associated with me, who were trying to get messages through this portal from the other side.

Gert knew details about my family that she could not have known beforehand and I have no doubt she was in contact with the spirit realm. But when I told her about our Ouija Board séance, she became very angry and proceeded to denounce Parker Brothers for trivializing the board’s significance by marketing it as a parlor game, which she believed put an uninformed public at risk.

Ironically, the well-documented case of possession that inspired the 1973 block buster horror movie, “The Exorcist,” began shortly after the thirteen-year-old boy (not a girl as portrayed in the film) was introduced to a Ouija Board by his aunt, who was herself a practicing Spiritualist!<sup>2</sup>

### **In Hindsight**

In hindsight I realize there was no way for me to know for sure who or what Gert was channeling, or whether all the information was accurate. This applies to our Ouija Board séance as well. People lie and dissemble while alive in this realm, so what would prevent their spirits from doing the same in the next? Moreover, what if these are non-human demonic spirits giving misinformation or telling half-truths?

Although psychic mediums and objects such as Ouija Boards and dojo kamiza have no power in themselves, they can become portals for spirits to come through. It is due to the potential dangers posed from the demonic realms that occult practices are prohibited in the Tanach (Old Testament) and New Testament writings. Historically, this is all-the-more remarkable considering that the dominant world cultures during biblical times embraced the occult as a way of elevating humans to a godlike status.

Since the 1960s, Western culture has seen a proliferation of occult themes in gaming, books, art, and music that is causing many young people to think the spirit realms are mere fantasy. But this could not be further from the truth. In fact, there are any number of ways for the demonic to influence a person. Whenever we open ourselves by using psychedelic drugs, abusing alcohol, or engaging in occult practices, a door can be opened for spirit entities to pass through. Once the demonic has entered, it can be very difficult to expel. This can be especially true for those who use disciplines like yoga, Zen meditation, and martial arts as a spiritual path to higher consciousness and enlightenment.

## **The Enlightened**

After training for a year with Quan, I wanted to meet his former karate teacher, Sensei, who was teaching aikido and kobudo (weapons). Upon meeting the master, I knew at once that he was everything Quan had said about him. His presence was different from that of other men, and when he performed his art a powerful energy flowed through him that seemed to transcend this physical realm. Now I knew what kind of “enlightened” master I wanted to become.

I asked Sensei if he would give Quan and me private lessons in his karate-do, but he was skeptical and said, “You’d have to be a saint to find the Way through karate today.” His misgivings, however, did not discourage us from going back to see him several months later, and after his class he invited us onto the mat. As we knelt before him, Sensei looked straight at me and said, “Jay, everything you know is wrong.” Although Sensei, by his own admission, had barely finished high school and I was a psychologist working for a prestigious university hospital, I knew he was referring to more than my knowledge of karate.

Straight away the master set about proving his point. First, he moved behind me and instructed that I not look back until I could sense that his fist was close to the back of my head. I waited until I could feel him almost touching me. When I turned around, he was standing ten feet away!

I tried again. This time I was confident that he was some distance away, because I did not sense anything close to me. When I turned to look, the side of my face lightly grazed his extended fist. Somehow Sensei was able to extend and withdraw his ki (vital energy) at will.

Next, he faced me in a relaxed front stance with both his arms hanging loosely at his sides. He said, "Attack me." I shifted into a fighting stance and cautiously looked for an opening. There was none. It felt as if he could anticipate any attack I may have been considering.

Finally, he asked me to perform a kata for him. Sensei considered my performance for several moments before concluding, "It's not that it's wrong- it's just not right." He meant that "spirit" was not present in my movements.

After this amazing encounter, I was more motivated than ever to continue training in karate. I intensified my home workouts and Quan and I continued to meet with Sensei every few months to have him critique our progress.

After about six months I made a momentous decision. Quan and I would continue practicing karate together but, to better access Sensei's spiritual wisdom, I joined his aikido school. The three-hour-round-trip commute limited the number of classes I could attend, but studying aikido and sword with Sensei over a four-year period added a new perspective to my spiritual understanding of the arts.

### **Sensei's Strength**

A senior student told me that when Sensei taught karate he equipped his dojo with free weights, and that he could power snatch a 150 lb. dumbbell overhead with one hand. Perhaps even more impressive, he could lift and press the 150 lb. senior student overhead with relative ease.

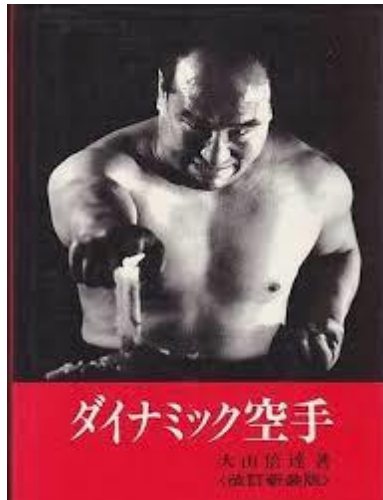
Nevertheless, Sensei's awe-inspiring physical strength was nothing when compared to the "spiritual" power he could project, and he once gave Quan a dramatic demonstration of his power. It occurred when Sensei instructed Quan to touch

his collar bone and Quan received a surprisingly strong “electric” shock. Sensei explained that the “little” jolt was only a fraction of the power he could project.

On another occasion Sensei told Quan, “If I hit you, you should be dead before you hit the floor,” and, “Once you have the Martial Spirit, no one will ever fight you.” Aware of these fantastic claims, I asked Sensei how he would compare his strength as a martial artist to that of the legendary Kyokushin karate master, “Mas” Oyama, who was considered the strongest karateka of his generation. Oyama was famous for fighting bulls with his bare hands, spectacular breaking demonstrations, and his prowess in kumite (sparring).

Sensei paused briefly to consider the question and then said matter-of-factly, “We’re about the same strength.”

### **Mas Oyama (1923-1994)**



**Sensei compared his strength to that of this iconic karate master.**

## **The Martial Spirit**

I once asked Sensei how he had come by his superhuman strength and martial arts prowess, and he told me about the life-changing visitation he received from the Martial Spirit in the late '60s. He explained how he had been suffering with serious health issues, but that he was determined to find the ultimate "Truth" (Sensei's term for "enlightenment") or to die trying. He was pushing himself to the limits of his physical endurance with many hours of kata practice.

One day as he was training alone in his dojo and practicing the Heian Godan kata, a tremendous energy suddenly entered his body and he heard an audible voice ask, "Do you want it to stop?" He knew he must decide quickly or the power would be gone. I can only surmise that the moment Thomas Fox accepted the Martial Spirit, he joined the ranks of the "enlightened" ones and became "Sensei," the most powerful martial artist I ever saw.

Sensei believed he had become invincible and could see any weakness in the techniques. Years later, however, he acknowledged that it took some time to learn what to do with the "entirely new energy" he received on "that fateful day." It is noteworthy that when asked if Mas Oyama had the Martial Spirit, Sensei answered with a resounding, "yes!"

## **Sensei's Aikido**

Sensei taught his own style of Morihei Ueshiba's aikido based on his background in judo, aiki jujutsu, karate, and kendo (Way of the sword). Sensei's encounter with the Martial Spirit appears comparable to Master Ueshiba's enlightenment following a contest with a skilled swordsman, in which Morihei defeated the man without fighting. Ueshiba

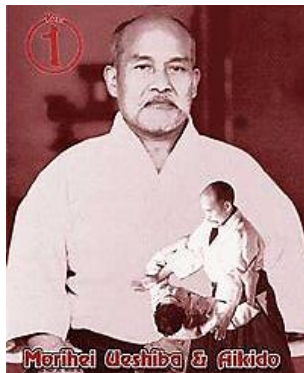


accomplished this by anticipating and avoiding the path of his opponent's attacks. Afterward, Morihei described being bathed in a "golden light" from heaven that was a "rebirth."<sup>3</sup> Like Sensei, he believed he had become invincible. Whereas Sensei had been infused with power by the Martial Spirit, Morihei believed he was indwelt by Izunome, the Angel of Purification,<sup>4</sup> who is a Shinto goddess associated with energy, fire, and enlightenment.

Ueshiba became known as "O Sensei" (The Sensei), because he was believed to be the most enlightened martial artist in all Japan. To memorialize his experience and elevation to godhood, aikido's founder commissioned a stylized portrait depicting himself as a powerful Shinto deity.<sup>5</sup>

The late aikido researcher and archivist, Stanley Pranin, penned the article, "Channeling the Power of the Gods," in which he noted that Ueshiba's early students talked about his superhuman strength, and that the master often spoke about "channeling the powers of the kami or dieties."<sup>6</sup>

### **Morihei Ueshiba (1883-1969)**



**Aikido's founder urged his aikidoka,  
"Move on toward enlightenment."<sup>7</sup>**

### **Sensei as Swordsman**

Sensei believed he was the reincarnation of the last true samurai, Saigo Takamori (1828-1877). While Takamori's role in restoring the Japanese emperor to the throne made him a national hero, his subsequent rebellion against the state turned him into a traitor. Sensei claimed that he had been allowed to remember his past life as Takamori, and that this had caused him much sorrow.



**Sensei bore an uncanny resemblance to Takamori, whose bronze statue stands in Tokyo's Ueno Park.**

Sensei was a master of the two swords style (Niten Ichi-ryu), in which both swords are wielded simultaneously. The art was invented by the 17<sup>th</sup> century samurai, Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645), who wrote the famous treatise on strategy in swordsmanship entitled, ***A Book of Five Rings***. According to legend, after Miyamoto had become invincible, he retired to a cave and practiced Zen meditation until he reached enlightenment and wrote his classic work.

The first time I trained with Sensei he used Miyamoto's "twofold gaze"<sup>8</sup> to thwart any attack I may have been considering (p. 17). The gaze sees distant things as close and close things as distant, which perceptually slows down an opponent's movements. With a mind devoid of anticipation, the opponent's strength and intentions are easier to discern, and I have found the gaze to be especially useful in defending against moving armed assaults.



18<sup>th</sup> century artist's rendering  
of Miyamoto's self-portrait.



**At Sensei's dojo, I studied aikido and kobudo (sword and jo). My brother, wielding a jo, has practiced aikido more than 25 years.**



**Aikido is a throwing art designed to inflict as little injury as possible.**

### **Yoga, Zen, and Budo**

Sensei believed that yoga, Zen, and budo (martial arts) shared the ultimate goal of reaching enlightenment. The Japanese word for “the Way” is “do,” and Sensei’s karate-do, aikido, and kendo were all expressions of his budo.

For Sensei, enlightenment is attained when the ego has been annihilated and the illusions of this physical world disappear. The emerging divine soul is no longer bound to endless cycles of birth and rebirth, but has been absorbed like a drop of water in a vast cosmic ocean. One becomes One with the universe. This Eastern philosophy, that we are divine souls inhabiting a divine universe, stands in stark contrast to the Judeo-Christian concept of a Creator God who transcends the physical and spiritual realms.

Budo, Zen, and yoga offer similar paths to the same goal of enlightenment. In the final analysis, all yoga styles are based on kundalini awakening. Kundalini is the Hindu snake goddess who manifests as an indwelling corporeal energy coiled at the base of the spine. A dominant characteristic of kundalini awakening is energy infusion or possession. When awakened, kundalini fire spirals upward toward the crown chakra to bring on enlightenment.

Even though this yoga paradigm is not commonly applied to the martial arts, Sensei had an intimate knowledge of it. Perhaps this was because the superhuman physical and psychic powers of “enlightened” martial artists, Zen masters, and yogis all originate from a common source.

Despite never having practiced yoga, the event that initiated my enlightenment experience happened when I looked into my dojo mirror and inexplicably found myself demanding to see the “kundalini fire.”

## Kundalini Fire



The kundalini is an indwelling corporeal energy coiled at the base of the spine. When awakened, kundalini fire spirals up the spine. It is the Indian manifestation of the goddess and can be likened to Ueshiba's Izunome, the Angel of Purification.

## Zen master and provocateur

I understood Sensei as a self-styled Zen master, who liked to make provocative statements on a range of subjects. Jesus Christ and Christianity were often the targets of his sarcastic wit. For instance, when Pope John Paul II was nearly killed by an assassin's bullet in 1981 Sensei exclaimed, "He ought to be shot!" Another time, pointing to the biblical account of Jesus feeding the five thousand with only two fish and five loaves of bread, he sarcastically quipped, "That boy should've been a baker." Then, referring to Christ's crucifixion, Sensei

looked heavenward and sneered, "That boy's out there running around looking for a way to come back and do it all over again."

In short, Sensei's disdain for Christianity was often on display and was expressed in statements such as, "The bible is all lies," and, "There's no such thing as the devil. You create your own demons."

### **Pulling wrists with the "Big Guy"**

Quan told me about a bizarre, yet revealing, incident that happened years earlier when Sensei was still teaching his Shotokan karate. One night during class he announced that he wanted to pull wrists (arm wrestle) with the "Big Guy," and that he had asked the Big Guy if he could be the head demon over the United States. If not, could he be the head demon over the East Coast. And, if that exalted position was not available to him, could he be the head demon of his home state. Barring that, could he at least be the head demon over his home town? Quan recalled how he and his fellow students were too dumbfounded by Sensei's confession to know what to think.

### **The most shocking thing**

Far and away, the most shocking thing we ever heard Sensei say concerned his comparison of the power of Jesus Christ to the highest power of the martial arts. On more than one occasion he told us, "Boys, if you think the power of the martial arts is something, grab ahold of Jesus Christ. There's a power that'll knock you right on your ass!"

How startling it was to hear these words from Sensei, who spoke them with the authority of someone who had firsthand

knowledge of the fact. Years later I went back to visit the master and asked him why he told us such a fantastic thing about Jesus. He gave me a slightly embarrassed grin as he claimed to have no memory of ever having said it.

### **A man without hope**

I once gave Sensei a small token of appreciation that provoked a stunning response. It was a small brass plaque in the shape of the kanji symbol for “hope.” He slowly reached out and took the gift in both hands and mournfully opined, “I have no hope.”

I could not begin to fathom this melancholy response. Besides possessing superior martial arts ability and super-human strength, Sensei had a successful commercial dojo, a live-in student who attended to his needs, and a loyal student following that revered him as a great master.

Sadly, at the end of his life Sensei became paranoid and alienated from family and many of his friends. By his own admission, Thomas Fox died without hope.

### **The Sensei Mystique**

For those of us who trained with him, Sensei was the proverbial riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma. Some believed his mystique came from using hallucinogenic drugs, while others thought him mentally ill or possessed. None of us doubted his brilliance as a martial artist.

Perhaps Quan best captured Sensei’s mystique years after we had stopped training with him. After several hours reminiscing about our experiences with the master, Quan half-jokingly exclaimed, “He’s not from this planet!”



## Enlightenment

The curious imposition of Damien Wilson into my journey to enlightenment sheds light on how the demonic can work. Damien was having an affair with one of our neighbors and heard that I practiced karate. He asked if he could train with me. Damien had never studied a martial art, so I took him with me to a workout session at Quan's dojo.

During our drive to Quan's house, Damien told me he had grown up with the occult and that he was very psychic. He claimed to experience astral projection (soul travel) while sleeping and that he could take thoughts out of people's heads. Then he made several stunning pronouncements. He said, "I know where Sensei's power comes from," and then boasted, "Now that I'm going to be training with you, you're going to see the real power of the martial arts."

By the end of our workout, Quan and I agreed that Damien Wilson was the weakest and most uncoordinated man we ever saw try to learn a martial art. We concluded that his grandiose claims were nothing short of delusional.

### Damien meets Sensei

Damien wanted to meet Sensei and I arranged for him to accompany me to a class. Sensei had always been friendly toward visitors and would often sit with them and explain the workout as a senior student took over the class. But when I introduced Damien to Sensei, neither man appeared to acknowledge the other. In fact, I doubt they spoke a single word to each other during the entire evening. They sat on opposite ends of the visitor's bench and completely ignored one another.

After class Sensei invited Quan and me onto the mat as Damien looked on from the visitors' bench. Sensei began to expound on the serious level of commitment required to find the ultimate Truth. He said that, in order to access his kind of power, we had to want it more than anything in the world. He concluded by advising, "You have to ask for it and expect to receive it."

Following this, Sensei made two startling statements. First, he admonished us, "You can get power from the dark side or the light." Then he added, "My power comes from god" (at the time I did not know enough to ask, which god?).

Sensei's face and demeanor suddenly changed and he pointed at me and said, "Jay, you're going to get this, and when you do, you're going to come back at me, 'you goddamned son of a bitch!'" Say what? I was speechless. As I left the dojo that night, I was unaware that this was to be the last class I would ever take with the master.

On our drive home, I asked Damien how he felt about his meeting with Sensei, who had completely ignored him. To my surprise, Damien expressed genuine satisfaction with his visit and smugly boasted, "Me and Sensei have an understanding." Say what? By now I was completely bewildered by the incredible things I had heard that evening.

### **The transfer of power**

Damien accompanied me once more to Quan's dojo and we were joined by my black belt, John Bauer, who was operating his own Shotokan school. During our workout, I witnessed several extraordinary events. First, I watched as Damien casually sidled over to Quan and stood face-to-face with him, no more than a foot away. In a flash, Quan pointed

his finger in Damien's face and chided, "That's not going to work!" Damien showed no visible reaction to Quan's strong rebuke and slowly moved away.

At the first opportunity, I took Quan aside and asked him what the incident with Damien was about. Quan retorted, "Oh, he was trying to go right down into my one-point," which refers to the energy field located in the hara or "center," a point two inches below the navel. (Remarkably, when I asked Quan about this incident two weeks later, he had no memory of it ever happening.)

A second odd occurrence happened when I paired off with John Bauer to practice formal 3-step sparring. As we bowed to one another, John suddenly sprang back as if he had just seen a ghost. (Several weeks later he admitted that he had been startled by my "piercing black eyes.")

A third incident brought our workout to an abrupt end. It happened as Quan and I engaged in the same 3-step sparring exercise. After I had blocked his third lunging punch, Quan stopped and exclaimed, "Jay, you're killing my arms!" He rolled up his sleeves and exposed large welts on both his forearms. This was incomprehensible to us. We had been practicing this same exercise together with full power punches and blocks for five years and neither of us had suffered so much as a minor bruise. On the drive home with Damien, I tried in vain to think of possible explanations for these odd events.

Things became even stranger after I returned home. As I lay in bed that night, an eerie "presence" manifested itself in my lower back. It was a cool bundle of energy about the size of a softball that slowly undulated up and down my spine. I do not know how it happened, but unbeknownst to me, after

Quan had rejected it, I became infused with occult power by Damien, who himself remained as weak as ever.

Clearly I was the occult spirit's second choice, because Quan's dynamic personality, exceptional teaching skill, and superior technique would have made him the ideal host for a powerful demonic spirit, who could masquerade itself as an "enlightened" master possessing superhuman strength and extraordinary psychic powers.

### **Is this enlightenment?**

Two weeks after our last workout at Quan's dojo, Sensei's prediction about me "getting it" finally came to fruition. I had managed to ignore the eerie "presence" in my lower back, until I caught sight of my reflection in a mirror and the eyes staring back at me were not my eyes! They were black and piercing and projected an alien intelligence of their own. Without thinking, I beckoned to them and demanded, "Okay, show me the kundalini fire."

The alien presence manifested itself again in my lower spine and intensified as it radiated throughout my body. The strength I felt was both thrilling and terrifying. As I watched in the mirror, Sensei's face suddenly superimposed itself over my own and morphed into a monstrous demon of enormous ferocity and power. The holographic-like image leaped out at me with a thunderous roar. It was shocking to see the real source of Sensei's power. Was this the "enlightenment" I had been seeking? I stepped back and exclaimed, "If this is what it is, I don't want it!"

As the kundalini fire receded into my lower spine, I was seamlessly teleported into the outer darkness of the void, where I was disembodied but fully conscious, forever bound

to an eternal “now” beyond time and space. My veil of self-deceit was lifted, revealing that despite trying to do right by my family and friends, on a deeper level I had been living out of pride and self-interest. The ghastly vision soon faded, but not before I passed judgment on myself.

### **Do you love me more than these?**

For the rest of that day, I contemplated how I might rid myself of the alien presence that continued to occupy my lower spine. Later that evening the thought came to me that nothing purges like fire, so I began gathering things that were associated with my martial arts and burning them in our living room fireplace. These included rank certificates, books and magazines, portraits of the masters, and a prized personal letter from Sensei.

After a while, the most astonishing thing happened. Out of the blue, in my mind’s eye I saw Jesus sitting in the chair across from me asking, “Do you love me more than these?”

My heart dropped into my stomach. Like most American baby boomers, I had been raised in the church and knew the story of Jesus. As an adult, however, I had concluded that Jesus may have been one of history’s great moral and ethical sages, but nothing more. Besides, my ego identity was firmly wedded to my karate. I had been training for twenty years and had developed extraordinary strength in my techniques, and now Jesus was asking me to give it all up for him?

I knew saying “yes” to Jesus would mean certain ego death, so I stalled by continuing to search for more things to burn. Among the additional items I found was my original black belt, whose well-worn frayed edges had turned white, a visual testimony to my years of dedicated training. Even so,

I cut the belt into pieces and sacrificed them to the flames.

Yet, as the evening progressed, I came to the realization that the alien spirit could not be purged by fire or expelled by force of will. I kept remembering Sensei's hopeless despair and the terrifying encounter I had with the demonic earlier that morning, so the choice should have been easy. But the ego is a stubborn and rebellious master and I continued to delay the inevitable for several more hours. In the end, I reluctantly opted for hope. I chose Jesus.

The moment I said "yes" to him, the occult spirit, along with my ego identity as a martial artist, was driven out. I became empty and crushing despair engulfed my soul. This psychic death was far worse than any physical death I could have imagined. I felt abandoned and alone.

Then, within seconds a miraculous thing happened. A wonderful Spirit of Love poured in from above and filled the void with a sublime peace that cannot be described in words. Now I *knew* Jesus was a real, life-giving Spirit and Friend, who loved me enough to deliver me from spiritual darkness. He forgave me for the years I rejected him and accepted me with unconditional love.

Hence, my relationship with Jesus is personal and not grounded in religious doctrines or theological abstractions of belief, but in the mystical encounter I had with him during the evening of December 2, 1985.

### **The Aftermath**

The occult spirit had been driven out of me, but over the next ten days Kay and I would experience many demonic manifestations, such as our house lights flickering on and off and the toilets mysteriously flushing on their own.

On one occasion, Kay felt her foot pulled out from under her as she started down our front steps. She took a frightening tumble down the stairway, but landed softly and sustained no injuries.

There were vibrations emanating from the kamiza wall in the dojo, which we had quickly converted back into a bedroom, and Kay was aware of a negative energy in our bedroom that she described as feeling like being stabbed in the back. After several days I remembered that a wicker chair in the corner of the room had been in my dojo ten years earlier. We now realized that demonic energy could attach itself to inanimate objects, so I gathered up items that had been too big to burn and took them to the city dump.

With each passing day, more manifestations appeared. At times these were accompanied by the pungent odor of sulfur, which smells like rotten eggs. We saw the demonic effect our cat on several occasions and were privy to a shocking manifestation involving a relative's dogs that were living 1500 miles away, which showed us that the spiritual reach of the demonic may have no physical limitation.

But, to describe all the bizarre things that happened would only serve to give the dark side more notoriety that it deserves. Suffice to say, our home had become infested and we were not sleeping well.

A fellow martial artist promised to pray for us, and after a week he called to see how we had slept that night. Indeed, the malaise we had been feeling was gone and our home felt normal again. Then Josh told us that he and the deacons at his church had prayed the previous evening for our complete deliverance from the demonic presence in our home. For us this was a strong testimonial to the power of group prayer.

### **The True Way**

During my spiritual journey, I learned that a spirit realm exists that transcends our physical world, and that our consciousness survives death. Furthermore, I learned that “spirit possession” is a real phenomenon that cannot be rationalized away by vaguely identified neuropsychological processes in the brain.

While in the outer darkness, I discovered that everything we do will be judged, but that the “arrow of time” makes it impossible for us to ever go back and undo the negative consequences of our past mistakes, whether they were unintentional or not. This is why Jesus is portrayed in the Gospels as the sacrificial lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. I believe Jesus loves all people and calls every soul to himself when he proclaims:

***I am The Way, The Truth, and The Life.  
No one comes to the Father but by me.<sup>9</sup>***

### **The Primacy of Love**

Jesus affirmed the primacy of love when he declared that the two greatest commandments were, “love God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,” and, “love your neighbor as yourself.”

In fact, Jesus stressed the primacy of love in his farewell discourse to his disciples, in which he gave them a “new commandment” after they had finished the Last Supper:

**A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another even as I have loved you. By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for each other.<sup>10</sup>**



For Jesus, actions were more important than doctrines. He was not a theologian, a philosopher, or a dogmatist. Rather, he proclaimed that the Law and the Prophets could be summed up in the saying, "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."

### **Loving one's neighbor**

Jesus taught his disciples what it means to love one's neighbor. For instance, he instructed them to love their enemies and to be forgiving and merciful; to be peacemakers and not pass judgment on others. He advised them to keep a humble spirit and not amass wealth, but to be generous and caring toward the poor. Jesus gave these and many other injunctions to his followers, many of which are recorded in the oft-quoted Sermon on the Mount.<sup>11</sup>

Along my spiritual journey I have had my ups and downs because I am not perfect. Although I have often fallen short of Jesus' lofty ideals, I have found that living in union with his spirit of love has been more satisfying than all the wealth, and power, and fame this world could ever offer.

God is Love, and Jesus Christ is the true Power of The Way. So, pursue love because, in the end, everything else will be meaningless- a chasing after the wind.

Peace be with you,



### Inspired Poem

In 2004, I asked my Lord for help in writing a few concise words that would describe my encounters with the kundalini fire, the outer darkness, and Jesus (Jeshua). The following words suddenly came to me, as if out of thin air, which was all-the-more astonishing because I am not an accomplished writer, much less a poet!



After receiving the words to this poem, I could understand how the biblical writers could have been divinely inspired.

# **The Way of Technique**

## One Strike Power

I met Quan Li in 1980 and became his student and training partner for five years. Quan taught me Sensei's "one strike" style of Shotokan, which Sensei claimed was based on the *Shuri-te karate jutsu* that Master Funakoshi introduced to Japan in the early 1920s.

Quan was as good a teacher as he was a martial artist, and my descriptions of the five principles are based largely on insights I learned while training with him. He emphasized upright "centered" stances with proper bone alignments that were characterized by 45-degree angles. He also stressed powerful hip rotations and the extension of ki, and we trained in the spirit of Sun Tzu's famous martial art dictum:

***"To win without fighting is the highest skill."***



LI's blocking arms, front leg, and rear foot form 45° angles. He performs Heian IV and V in the video "Nodan Teacher."

Quan Li's Shotokan was based on the "one strike, one life" (ikken hissatsu) strategy of 19<sup>th</sup> century *Shuri-te karate jutsu*. According to Shotokan historian Bruce Clayton, Shuri-te was invented by Shuri castle bodyguards charged with protecting the Okinawan king. In the preface to his provocative book, ***Shotokan's Secret***, Dr. Clayton makes a revealing reference to the art's "one strike" approach:

"The new style made no attempt to subdue the opponent through painful nerve strikes or immobilizing joint locks. Instead, every element of the new art emphasized destroying the opponent completely in one or two seconds."<sup>12</sup>

Soken Matsumura was head of the castle bodyguards and was instrumental in inventing Shuri-te. His protégé, Anko Itosu, taught Gichen Funakoshi and systematized the art. Itosu also transformed the combat oriented *karate jutsu* to the more spiritually minded *karate-do*. These masters used prearranged forms to teach technique and the traditional Okinawan makiwara to strengthen and condition the hands, elbows, and feet to deliver "one strike" power.

**Matsumura**  
(1797-1893)



**Itosu**  
(1831-1915)



**Funakoshi**  
(1868-1957)



Matsumura was known for quickness and strong hip rotations, while Itosu became famous for his powerful punch. Funakoshi was considered by many to be "the father of modern karate."

### Board Breaking Protocols

An old martial art proverb says, ***“A man learns to fight so he will not have to fight,”*** and Nodan Karate seeks to instill self-confidence by developing “one strike” power techniques for practical self-defense.

I used suspended un-spaced board breaking to provide evidence of “one strike” power. Board breaking, however, is meaningless without an empirical method of determining board strength, so I devised a protocol that consistently measured the strength of my test boards at 130-135 lbs.

I used 1x12-inch-wide #2 common pine donor boards that were cut into 10-inch-wide pieces. Any knots that were along the centerline of the donor boards were spliced out, which limited the number of usable pieces (#1 clear pine is knot-free, but much more expensive).

Testing revealed that each 10-inch-wide board could support 130-135 lbs., which was determined by gently lowering a weighted barbell across the centerline of the wood running parallel with the grain. The full weight of the barbell was left on each test board for 1 full second before being lifted off.



**Each test board could support at least 130 lbs.  
(See YouTube video, “Nodan Board Testing”)**

Pine boards can vary widely in strength depending on their moisture content and to ensure consistency, a sample from each donor board should be tested just prior to breaking. When breaking suspended board stacks, it is critical to hit along the centerline, in order to evenly distribute the force of the blow across the board holder's "floating" supports.

Each board stack was assembled from the same donor board with the grain patterns facing the same direction. This causes the boards to break along a fairly-straight line, which matters more when they are suspended.

Resistance increases proportionally with each additional board. For instance, a 5-board stack could support at least  $5 \times 130 = 650$  lbs. (295 kgs.). Board strength can be adjusted by changing the width. Five 10-inch-wide boards at 130-135 lb. test strength are equal to five 8-inch-wide or five 12-inch-wide boards with the same 130-135 lb. test strength.



**Board strength can be adjusted by changing the width.**

I chose the lightest donor boards I could find since they were consistently drier from the start. And to maintain uniformity, only 10-inch-wide boards that fell within the 130-135 lb. protocol were used. This was because the 1x12x10 inch-wide dimension is commonly used in competitions.

As a practical matter, however, a 1x12 inch-wide pine donor board can be cut to any width that is equal in strength to the protocol standard. If a 1x10 inch-wide test board breaks with 150 lbs., a 9-inch-wide piece from the same donor board would break at the 135 lb. protocol standard. And, to maintain consistency, it is important that each individual board stack contains the same width boards that have not been baked, scored, or altered in any way.

The following breaking experiments show how the five principles and makiwara training develop “one strike” power. I conducted these experiments while in my late fifties to show the advantage of using proper technique over sheer physical power. To further illustrate the point, I used my “weak side” left hand to break the thickest board stacks.

#### **5-board palm break from neutral stance position**



**Forging “one strike” power from a neutral stance position is especially advantageous when defending against close quarter street assaults.**





### 5-board break with reverse elbow strike



The board stack must break *before* the bag begins to move.  
With a few exceptions, I used this 75 lb. suspended bag.



**WARNING:** Without gradual hand conditioning, striking hard objects with a bent wrist strike can result in serious nerve damage to the hands, the wrists, and forearms.

#### 4-board break with bent wrist strike



This was my most difficult breaking technique.

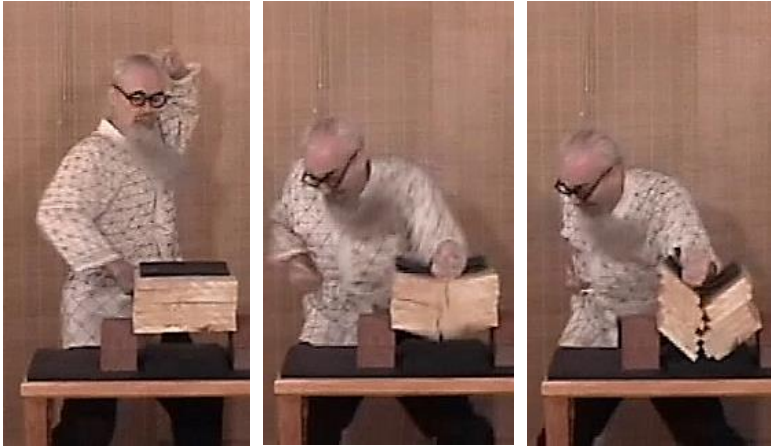
### **Training Both Sides**

Training both sides is important, because an injury can occur to either side before or during a street confrontation. Street assaults are fluid and unpredictable, and having the option of using either hand is a major strategic advantage.

#### **4-board palm breaks from neutral stance**



**7-board downward break with “weak side” left hand**

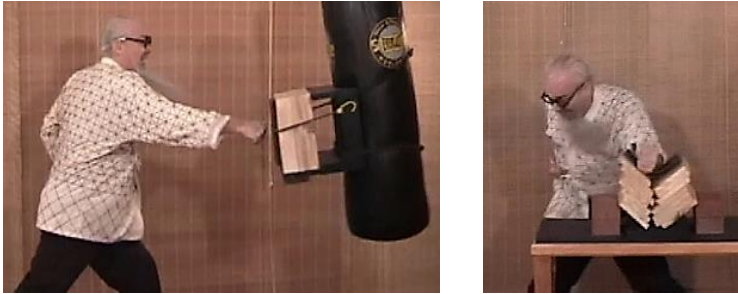


**7-board downward break with “strong side” right hand**



Despite practicing more with the “weak side” left hand, the “strong side” right broke a 7-board stack with considerably greater ease.

### Suspended horizontal versus downward breaking



**My “strong side” punch failed to break 7 boards (p. 65), whereas my “weak side” bottom fist broke 7 boards with relative ease.**

Downward breaks have the advantage of moving with gravity and generate maximum speed and body weight transfer. In addition, the rigid supports more efficiently transfer energy than does the “give” of a suspended bag.

Using spacers between the boards enables them to be broken one at a time in rapid succession, which requires far less force. The 5-board un-spaced stacks below could support a 650 lb. barbell, whereas each board in a 5-board spaced stack would break with only 135 lbs. of weight.



**The 5 suspended boards on left are much harder to break than the 5 supported boards on right.**

# The Five Principles

## 1) Proper Bone Alignment

Stances are ***centered*** in the hara, a point two inches below the navel

## 2) The 1-2 Timing

The hips are fully rotated ***before*** the striking arm or leg is extended

## 3) Follow Through

Mentally ***follow through*** (extend ki) with every technique, “all the way to infinity”

## 4) Correct Breathing

***Inhaling*** through the nose and ***exhaling*** through the mouth using the diaphragm

## 5) Soft and Hard

The correct sequence of ***relaxation*** and ***contraction*** of all major muscle groups

## 1st Principle: Proper Bone Alignment

Proper bone alignment is foundational to all martial arts. Whether training stances are high or low, their center of gravity must be located or “centered” in the hara, a point approximately two inches below the navel. The ability to “move in center” is vital for the transfer of maximum power through the hips. To learn the 1st Principle, maintain the hips in a pelvic tilt position and mentally locate the mind in the hara. This is “thinking from the center.”

In the demonstration below, Nodan is assisted by Yakov “the hammer” and three former students, who will attempt to push Yakov out of his one-leg crane stance.



From left to right: Yakov “the hammer,” Nodan, JV, JD, and SS.



**Yakov maintains a “centered” crane stance as the three men try to push him backward. By using the proper bone alignments, Yakov redirects their energy into the floor.**



**By “moving in center,” Yakov drives the men backwards.**



**“Moving in center” with a lunging step**



**This technique is used to preemptively counter attack a knife threat. Nodan will use a quick head feint before advancing.**



**He blocks attacker's weapon hand as he begins to move in.**



**Nodan holds an upright “centered” position as he strides in prepared to execute a palm heel thrust to opponent’s jaw.**



**Nodan’s back foot and palm heel strike form a straight line running through his “center.”**

**“Moving in center” using a cross-step**



**Nodan assumes a fighting stance to confront a knife threat.**



**He preemptively leans in and blocks away attacker’s weapon hand. Note that a straight line extends from his back heel up through his “center” to his shoulder. Proper bone alignments enable Nodan to transfer “one strike” power into the block.**



**Nodan remains upright and “centered” as he cross-steps toward assailant. Note how his left arm is positioned to counter attack.**



**To project “one strike” power, Nodan assumes “centered” straddle stance a split second before making contact with attacker’s head or throat.**

## 2nd Principle: 1-2 Timing

The 1-2 Timing **leverages** the 1st Principle by generating power through the hips, which in turn accelerates the striking arm. The hips rotate **before** the upper body turns toward the target (step 1). Next, the upper body is rotated **before** the striking arm is extended (step 2).



**Step 1- Nodan's hips are sharply turned, while his upper body moves naturally and remains relaxed.**



**Step 2- His upper body is sharply rotated 45 degrees toward the target. Next, his punch is extended through the boards.**

In the 1-2 Timing, the hip rotation (step 1) and the upper body rotation (step 2) are separate actions. In addition, the upper body rotation and the extension of the punching arm move in a 1-2 timing sequence. This must be studied well, because many techniques utilize a 1-2 timing within the 1-2 Timing principle. These 1-2 timing actions spiral the energy generated by the legs, hips, and body core muscles up the spine and out the striking arm. In Japan, this leveraging technique is known as the “double whip” or “returning wave.”

Note the bone alignments in Nodan’s finishing position above. His rear leg forms a straight line extending through his “center” up to his right shoulder, which has been rotated 45 degrees. Karateka should consciously separate the two steps within the two 1-2 timing sequences, until they become a natural part of every technique.

The 1-2 Timing is grounded in the 1st Principle, Proper Bone Alignment, because without a “centered” stance the hips will not generate enough speed and body weight transfer to produce “one strike” power. This is true for all striking, kicking, and blocking techniques.

To learn the 1-2 Timing, the mind must locate in the hara or “center,” two inches below the navel. If the mind is allowed to locate in the striking hand, the arm will “lead” rather than “follow” the hip and upper body rotations. This will result in a “push” rather than a leveraged “thrust.”

It is worthy to note that sports that hit a ball, such as baseball, tennis, and golf teach 1-2 timing, in which the hips are turned *before* the arms are extended. Ironically, this principle has been all but lost in many karate schools today.

### **Throwing a baseball uses 1-2 timing**



**Throwing a baseball is much like throwing a punch. The hips are rotated (center) before the throwing arm is extended.**

Yakov “the hammer” demonstrates a simultaneous downward block with a reverse thrust punch. The suspended bag caroms off his fist like a pinball, because he applied the 1-2 Timing. This action is what distinguishes a properly leveraged “thrust” punch from a much weaker “push.”



**Yakov maintains his upright position as he holds “center” throughout the technique.**



### 1-2 Timing in the lunging elbow strike



Nodan holds his hips back as he steps into a diagonal straddle stance (left). Step 1- He rotates his hips towards target (right).



Step 2- He rotates upper body and extends elbow strike.

### 1-2 Timing in the back elbow strike



Nodan is grabbed from behind in a one-arm choke hold. He drops into a “centered” straddle stance ready to execute elbow strike.



The 1-2 Timing is applied in the reverse direction. His hips rotate backwards and the elbow follows.

### **3rd Principle: Follow Through (Extension of Ki)**

Quan Li taught the “extension of ki” on every technique, “all the way to infinity.” I changed the name of this principle to “Follow Through,” because Westerners can more easily relate to the follow through concept taught in sports that throw, strike, or kick a ball. In Eastern thought, ki is the vital life force that makes up the universe, and it can be gathered and projected by masters like Sensei. The common factor in the Eastern and Western understanding of the 3rd Principle is that the force of each technique is maximized when it is “mentally” extended, “all the way to infinity.”

The Follow Through principle is essential for breaking multiple un-spaced boards, because the kinetic energy of a strike dissipates as it meets the resistance of each successive board. The function of Follow Through is to help maintain hand speed all the way through the target.



**The graduated resistance of the flexible post makiwara helps in the development of the 3rd Principle, “Follow Through.”**

### Follow Through with the “push” break

This is a safe, but difficult test of the 1-2 Timing hip rotation and Follow Through principles. The challenge is to thrust against a single board with enough speed and body weight transfer to break it before the suspended bag begins to move. This is a “zero-inch” break, because the thrusting hand remains in contact with the board from the beginning to the end of the technique.



First, Nodan rotates his hips sharply toward the target. Next, he rotates his upper body and arm through the board, while following through (extending ki), as if projecting his hand “all the way to infinity.” Before executing the break (left), his stance is relaxed, the spine is straight, his head is erect as if suspended on a string, and his elbow is turned under to reduce power loss through the elbow joint. Note how his right arm remains relaxed throughout the technique, which illustrates the 5th Principle, Soft and Hard.



**This bent wrist break from a cat stance was executed from a “weak” cross-chest position and required a powerful hip rotation with Follow Through, “all the way to infinity.”**



**He mentally follows through beyond the 3-board stack.**

### **Visual effects of Follow Through on a suspended bag**



**I tested my limits of punching power attempting to break 7 boards with my “strong side” right hand, but my reverse thrust punch failed to generate sufficient speed to overtake the movement of the bag.**



**Follow Through causes the energy of the punch to pass through the 7-board stack and board holder and into the bag, which is seen absorbing the full force of the blow.**

## 4th Principle: Correct Breathing

Breathing is controlled using the diaphragm- inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth. Shuri-te styles like Shorinryu and Shotokan use natural breathing, while Goju and Uechi-ryu use a forced breathing style. I have trained in each of these arts and can attest that they all teach, **inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth.**

When executed vocally, the *kiai* yell is carried on the breath and manifests as a primal roar that emanates from the depths of the hara or “center.” When Nodan executes *kiai* without a vocal yell, a loud and forceful rush of air can be heard on every focused technique. Correct Breathing is vital for executing rapid focused movements and facilitates the application of the 5th Principle, Soft and Hard (see the YouTube video, “Nodan Dagger Form”).



**Correct Breathing uses the diaphragm (left) and not the intercostal muscles in the upper chest (right). Boxers, wind instrument players, and opera singers are trained to breathe using their diaphragms.**

## 5th Principle: Soft and Hard

Soft and Hard refers to the sequential contraction and relaxation of the major skeletal muscles in the body. For example, in the reverse thrust punch, the legs, abdominals, and hips are contracted first, while the muscles in the upper body remain relaxed. Next, the upper body and arms are sequentially contracted and the entire body focuses hard upon impact. After the strike, the body again becomes soft. Mastering the 5th Principle requires many thousands of repetitions, until the *transitions* within and between the techniques flow without tension.

In the example below, Nodan is accosted by two men. In defending against multiple opponents, surprise, speed, and “one strike” power are important factors in mounting an effective defense. The correct application of Soft and Hard is critical for maintaining proper form, in order to maximize speed and body weight transfer.







**Nodan rotates his hips and attacks one of the assailants.**



**His relaxed (Soft) transition following this first break will maximize speed and body weight transfer into the next.**



**Nodan rotates his hips and strikes the second attacker.**



**The ability to become Soft during transitions enables him to break both board stacks in about 1 second.**

### **Soft and Hard Cobra block/strike defense**



**The block and spear hand strike take only a split second when Soft and Hard transitions have been mastered.**



**Nodan deflects the knife thrust using a bent wrist block.**  
**Safety goggles are worn when practicing eye strikes.**



**Using one continuous motion, Nodan's bent wrist block transitions to a spear hand strike to the attacker's eye.**



**Nodan's striking hand transitions back to a block as he prepares to punch from ready thrust position.**

## Kicks and Blocks

Kicking and blocking techniques utilize the five principles. For self-defense, the middle and lower-level applications of the front, side, and back kicks are the most practical. Lower-level kicks are easier and safer to perform and are more effective against un-trained street criminals.

### Front Thrust Kick

In the front thrust kick, the hips are rotated 45 degrees as the knee is raised. This opening of the hips releases the hamstring muscles and allows for greater flexibility of movement, which maximizes speed. The knee should be raised higher than the intended target, because a “down and in” trajectory gives the front thrust kick its greatest power.

### 5-board break with front thrust kick



**Nodan assumes a relaxed front fighting stance position.**



**His hips rotate as he raises his knee above the intended target.**



**A "down and in" trajectory gives the front thrust kick its power.**

### **Preemptive low back kick defense**



**Nodan feigns surrender before launching preemptive counter attack against the knife wielding assailant.**



**As he abruptly turns, he strikes toward attacker's face and then transitions the strike into a guarding block.**



**Nodan's hips are cocked and ready to execute a low back kick to adversary's knee joint. Note how his blocking arm holds its position as a distraction from his real intention.**



**Head to heel, Nodan's body forms a straight line through his "center," as he powers through the 4-board stack.**



### **Formal downward block**

The five principles are applied to all blocking techniques, and the formal version of the downward block is an example of a “one strike” block that hits with the entire body, not only with the arm and shoulder.

According to Quan, all blocks apply the “unbendable arm” technique, in which the blocking arm is extended in a soft/hard state of tension using the triceps and latissimus dorsi muscles that run along the upper sides of the back. The “unbendable arm” causes the blocking arm to become like a slightly bent steel rod wrapped in cotton cloth.

Formal blocks use the full range of motion to develop proper form. With training, however, karateka can project strength into the shorter and quicker street adaptations.

### **5-board break with formal downward block**



**This break was made possible by applying the “unbendable arm.”**

### **Abbreviated downward block defense**



**To defend a surprise front kick assault, Nodan must be able to block with power from a “hands up” surrender position.**



**Nodan drops into a “centered” stance and projects his blocking arm downward to intercept the kick.**

### Formal middle level block



As the hips begin to rotate (left), the blocking arm moves naturally. The hips are rotated (center) before the block makes contact (right). (Note 45° angle of the block as he applies the “unbendable arm.”)

### Abbreviated middle level block defense



Nodan defends a knife thrust using an angle step and abbreviated middle block, while countering with a hook punch to the head.

### Formal Rising Block



He lifts his blocking arm using the shoulder and latisimus dorsi muscles on the upper sides of his back. The block will assume a 45° angle on completion as he applies the “unbendable arm.”

### Rising block defense



Nodan steps in and jams overhead knife attack by adjusting his rising block outward, in order to intercept the angle of the attacker’s arm.

## Street Defense

Today, the mixed martial arts (MMA) have taken center stage as an entertainment blood sport. At the professional level, highly trained athletes compete for fame and fortune in heavily promoted cage matches. This latest expression of the martial arts is very different from reality street defense.

***There are no rules in the street.*** Striking the eyes, throat, and groin, are among dozens of tactics prohibited in sport. This includes biting, which is an effective deterrent against grabs and holds. Sport fighters also have warm up time before a match, hand protectors, mouth guards, groin protectors, and a referee to control the action. Even more importantly, sport fighters do not face armed or multiple assailants where grappling skills are much less of a factor.

For examples of “one strike” street applications, see the videos, “Nodan Self-Defense,” and “Nodan Karate.”



**It takes only a split second to block attacker's weapon hand and execute simultaneous spear hand strikes to the eye and throat.**

### **Spinning defense against a pitchfork attack**

Every year people are assaulted by an array of improvised “non-weapons,” such as hammers, baseball bats, tire irons, machetes, and pitchforks to name a few.

Defending against a pitchfork assault is similar to facing a thrusting sword or staff. A good strategy is to use an initial head feint before executing a spinning maneuver behind the assailant. This strategy positions the defender to execute a decisive strike before the adversary can turn and counter attack. (See the YouTube video, “Nodan Dagger Form.”)

A “spin and run” maneuver can also be used as an escape tactic when surrounded by multiple assailants, Rugby players and football running backs often use this strategy to spin out of the grasp of would-be tacklers.



**Nodan takes a position just outside opponent's effective thrusting range. Sport competitors never have to fight armed opponents.**



**He uses a sudden head feint to momentarily freeze opponent before beginning to spin outside the assailant's line of attack.**



**The assailant reacts to his sudden head feint and thrusts, but Nodan has already moved out of the line of attack. He holds "center" as he continues to spin behind assailant.**



**He spins into a “centered” ready thrust position, from which he can counter attack with a reverse punch.**



**Nodan can counter attack to the spine or the back of the head, targets that are off limits in competitive fighting.**



### **Defending against a machete attack**

The machete is an essential tool that is employed in many areas throughout the world. However, when used against a human being, the machete becomes a lethal weapon. In the Rwandan genocide of 1994, countless thousands of Tutsi civilians were hacked to death with machetes by Hutu militia groups. Practicing to defend against this kind of unconventional weapon attack is an essential part of realistic street defense training.

Defending a machete assault is similar to confronting an overhead or side arm club or hatchet attack, in which the weapon is large enough to require a slight “hitch” in the assailant’s swing. One strategy is to move in quickly as the aggressor begins to hitch. The object is to jam the weapon hand before it can generate enough speed and leverage to cause serious bodily injury. This requires much practice.



**Nodan maintains a strategic distance so he can maneuver in or out, depending on the actions taken by his attacker.**



**As the assailant hitches his arm to attack, Nodan steps in with his back foot, in order to close the distance.**



**After closing the distance, he jams the adversary's arm by executing simultaneous rising block and front kick to the solar plexus (he can opt to kick or step in to punch).**

## Defense against a gun hold up from behind



Nodan gives gunman false confidence by raising hands in “surrender” and saying, “Okay, take anything you w...”  
(Words of compliance have a “disarming” effect.)



Before finishing his sentence, Nodan abruptly swings his arm up, which turns him out of the line of fire (left). He continues to pivot 180 degrees and “wraps and traps” the gunman’s weapon arm.



**He strikes to the temple. With practice, the element of surprise makes this street defense easy to apply.**



**Nodan applies “one strike” power to neutralize threat.**

### Back and side head strike defenses

The number of boards that can be broken with a given technique does not always indicate its effectiveness. My back head strike lacked enough speed to break more than two boards, but the mass of the head makes it a devastating strike to the face. Likewise, the momentum of a snapping side head strike can stun an assailant into submission (bottom photos).



**Nodan pins his attacker's arms (left) and executes back head strike. Speed and power are generated using a "double whip" hip thrust.**



**Nodan feigns surrender while subtly moving his head out of the line of fire (left). He applies a twisting joint hold (center) and follows up with a snapping side head strike to face. Head strikes are banned in sport.**

## **The Best Martial Art?**

Debates over which is the best martial art should begin with the question, “best for what?” There are traditional throwing and striking arts, competitive fighting styles like sport karate and mixed martial arts (MMA), and reality-based self-defense systems like combat jujitsu and Krav Maga. Each of these arts develops its own strategies and techniques.

Ultimately, the best martial art is the one that best addresses ***your*** goals. Those who would seek instruction should research and visit their local schools, because there are good and bad teachers in every style, and each art has its strengths and weaknesses.

In reality, not all practitioners can develop the “one strike” power necessary to stun and stop a determined attacker with a single blow. Furthermore, for many people legitimate “one strike” training may be unavailable, too expensive, or too time consuming to pursue.

## **A practical alternative**

A practical alternative is to take a hands-on self-defense course and carry pepper spray (mace), which is available in handy pocket size containers. Pepper spray is relatively safe, inexpensive, and legal in most countries, which can be a major advantage wherever firearms are restricted.

As with any defensive weapon, users should become familiar with its proper use and legal applications, and should practice arming and discharging live canisters in both indoor and outdoor settings. Fortunately, there are a number of excellent YouTube videos showing the proper use of pepper spray.

# **A Brief History**

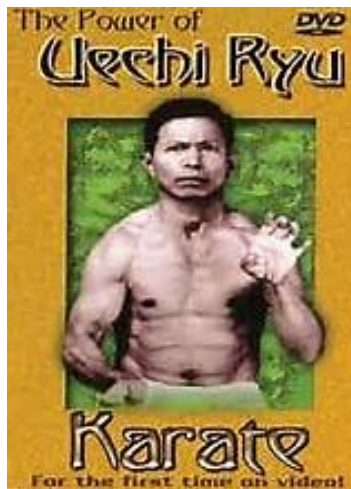
## The 1960s

Beginning in 9th grade, weightlifting was my passion until I began studying Uechi-ryu karate in the mid-1960s. This Okinawan style was named after Kanbun Uechi (1878-1948), who imported the art from China. His son, Kanei Uechi, helped systematize and popularize the art.

Uechi-ryu is a devastating in-fighting style that emphasizes Sanchin, a kata that uses hard focused breathing designed to condition the body to be impervious to an opponent's blows. The art is characterized by the extensive use of circular blocks and snapping kicks and punches, and employs a strategy of attacking the opponent's pressure points using finger tips, thumbs, and single knuckle strikes.

In the YouTube video, "Nodan Katas," the five principles are applied to Uechi-ryu's Seisan kata, which gives the form a uniquely different expression.

### Kanei Uechi (1911-1991)







**Sanchin (left) is an hour glass stance designed for maximum stability. Uechi-ryu features numerous open hand and snapping techniques.**

For seven years during the 1960s, I did heavy dead lifts, squats, and C&Js, which gave me an advantage in karate. Although I never used steroids and was lean and wiry, I was considerably stronger than I looked. Years later this lifting background was a significant factor in my ability to break thick suspended board stacks using my “weak side” left hand.



**At 17, I practice heavy straddle lifts in my room. At 20 (right), I am 5-10½ and 155 lbs., but can deadlift 3x my body weight.**

### Combat Jujitsu

My main interest in studying karate was to learn how to apply the techniques in street situations, but my Uechi-ryu school did not teach practical self-defense. Fortunately, I met a college classmate, Tex Barnes, who was proficient in combat jujitsu. Tex brought a metal training knife to our first practice together and succeeded in “killing” me numerous times, which left large red welts all over my body. My formal blocks were too slow, I was always out of position, and I lacked a strategy for defending against a skilled knife fighter. This was my wakeup call, exposing the fact that reality street defense was very different from formal dojo training.

Tex taught me how to defend against the kinds of assaults street criminals were most likely to use. This training, in conjunction with karate, became foundational to my future approach to street defense.



**My students, Yohan and Yakov, practice a twisting joint hold defense against a knife holdup. This was the kind of practical street defense I learned from Tex Barnes during the 1960s.**

## The 1970s

After graduating from college, I moved away to pursue graduate studies in psychology. There were no Uechi dojos in the area, so I joined a school that taught a hybrid style of Gichen Funakoshi's Shotokan karate, with elements of judo, Shorinryu, and Chinese kempo thrown in. I liked the head instructor's practical philosophy, "If it works use it."

This eclectic style was very different from the Uechi-ryu I had studied. The breathing pattern was natural and the training stances were deeper. Emphasis was on freestyle sparring and the katas were very similar to the official forms endorsed by the JKA (Japan Karate Association).

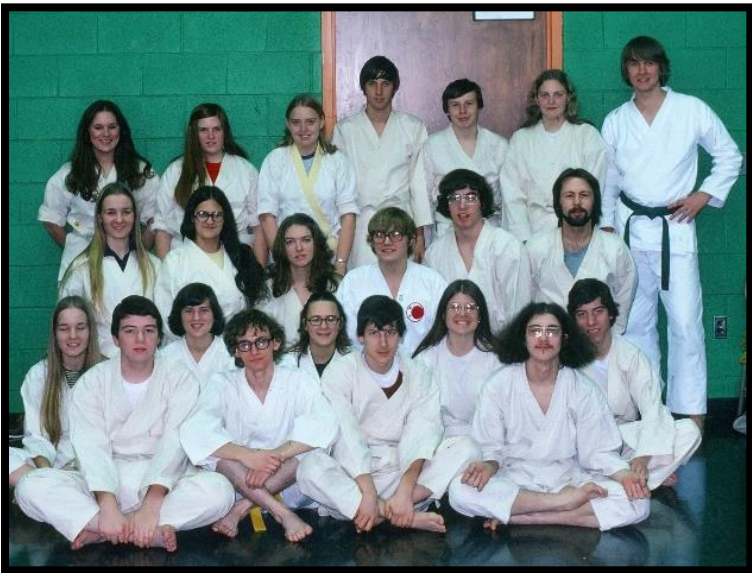
The school also offered private self-defense courses, many of which I taught due to my training in jujitsu. In addition, I learned Zen meditation, which eventually led to my quest for enlightenment and superhuman strength.

### Gichen Funakoshi (1868-1957)



After receiving an instructor certification and dojo charter, I relocated again and took a position as a psychologist at a large university hospital. I also began teaching Shotokan and self-defense courses at colleges and community centers.

After a while I opened a small dojo and taught Shotokan and self-defense. Along the way, I studied the advanced JKA katas and learned the first eight forms of Gogen Yamaguchi's Japanese style of Goju-ryu. I also learned a most challenging form from Choi Li Fut kung fu that used exceptionally deep stances and large circular arm movements to generate chi (ki). This form proved to be far more difficult than any karate kata I ever learned, and the experience left me with a special appreciation for the Chinese martial arts.



**My senior student, "Big Ed" (right), helped me teach this college course in 1975. By 1980, I had promoted 7 men to black belt.**



**My first black belt, JD, opened his own School.**



**My black belts, Yakov, Rik, and John Bauer taught karate as self-defense.**

## **1980-1985 (Training with Quan Li and Sensei)**

The account of my training with Quan Li and Sensei, and how I found the true Power of The Way has been detailed in the first segment of this book, "The Way of The Spirit."

## 1992-1996 (Teaching Yohan and Yakov)

In 1992, I began to teach karate street defense to two young men, Yohan and Yakov. After training five years without receiving rank, they had become so proficient that I had them tested by an independent panel of judges for black belt.

Their test consisted of Shotokan basics, bag techniques, pre-arranged kumite, the Shotokan katas, Jion and Kanku Dai, and self-defense, in which they were required to successfully defend against a variety of realistic street assaults.

The test concluded with an opponent making continuous attacks with a knife, because real confidence comes from the ability to defend oneself in difficult situations. After the test, both men received black belts in *Shotokan Karate Jutsu*. (See the YouTube video, “Nodan Students,” for an edited version of the black belt test.)

**Yohan “the bull”**



**Yakov “the hammer”**



**Yohan and Yakov trained five years before receiving black belts.**

When Yohan and Yakov began training, they were both avid guitarists. To protect their hands, I fabricated a flexible post makiwara that worked on the principle of “graduated resistance” (to this point I had only used a heavy bag and rigid post makiwara). Since callus formation is not necessary for effective street defense, I covered the striking area with several layers of soft rubber padding for added protection.

Over time, the flexible post makiwara proved to be as effective at forging “one strike” power techniques as the traditional style makiwara, but without the risk of debilitating hand injuries (For instructions on how to build a flexible post makiwara and board holder, see the YouTube video, “Nodan Makiwara.”)

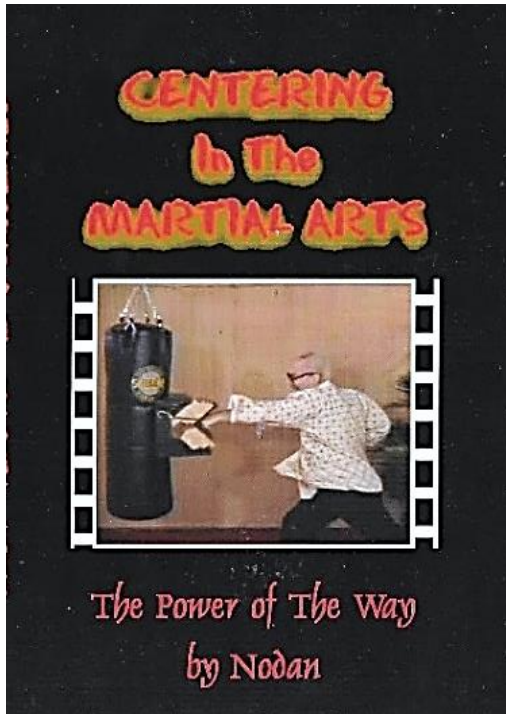
### **1999-2004 (Teaching Giles)**

I taught karate street defense to Giles, a former track athlete, who was an excellent practice partner. We trained together once a week for five years, which helped keep me strong in karate into my late fifties. Giles reached the brown belt level and could break 3 suspended boards with a reverse punch, a feat that few adult black belts could perform.

### **2004 (DVD)**

In 2004, I released a DVD intended to warn martial artists against pursuing enlightenment through their arts. The critics rightly savaged my effort, calling it cheesy and pointing to the awful acting and poor production values. Adding insult to injury, my anonymity sparked speculation on the internet as to my identity, with one website going so far as to post bogus pictures of the “real” Nodan!

## DVD front cover (c. 2004)



Before YouTube began in 2006, videos were disseminated through VHS tapes and DVDs.  
(I did not “discover” YouTube until 2009)

2011+ (*The Power of The Way*)

In 2011, I published the first edition of *The Power of The Way*, which proved as big a failure as my DVD. Even so, I continue revising the book in the hope of one day producing a satisfactory edition. In the meantime, I take comfort in the fact that humility finds a refuge in anonymity.



## **Nodan Karate YouTube Videos**

**Nodan Karate (20:01)** Comprehensive summary of Nodan Karate's "one strike" training method and SD applications

**Nodan Five Principles (8:41)** A concise summary

**Nodan Makiwara (4:52)** Instructions on how to build an indoor flexible post makiwara and board holder

**Nodan Self-Defense (4:07)** "One strike" street applications

**Nodan Board Testing (3:51)** board testing using a barbell

**Nodan Students (3:46)** Edited version of black belt test

**Nodan Katas (2:44)** Tekki Shodan, Seisan, and Onsum

**Nodan Dagger Form (2:19)** Advanced Chinese/Okinawan form that features many rapid-fire focused techniques

**Nodan Teacher (1:23)** Quan Li performs Heian IV and V

***A paperback copy of *The Power of The Way* is available at Amazon Books at publisher's cost, plus handling and shipping charges.***

## END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> “Way of The Sword,” c. 1976, distributed by Coe Film Associates, #65 E 96<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, N.Y. 10128
- <sup>2</sup> Thomas B. Allen, *Possessed*, iUniverse.com Inc. c. 1994, 2000, p. 2
- <sup>3</sup> Morihei Ueshiba, *Budo*, Kodansha International, Ltd., First edition, c. 1991, p. 13-14
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 29
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 20
- <sup>6</sup> Stanley Pranin, *Aikido Journal*, “Channeling the Power of the Gods,” June 20, 2015
- <sup>7</sup> *Budo*, p. 28, 29
- <sup>8</sup> Miyamoto Musashi, *A Book of Five Rings*, The Overlook Press, 1974, p. 54-55
- <sup>9</sup> The Gospel of John 14:6
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid., 13:34-35
- <sup>11</sup> The Gospel of Matthew 5-7
- <sup>12</sup> Bruce D. Clayton, Ph.D., *Shotokan’s Secret*, Black Belt Communications LLC, c. 2004, p.viii



Lighthouse Productions c. 2011