

Preface

This collection of essays is the result of many pleasurable years of learning about the martial arts. When I first began over 40 years ago, I discovered only upon receiving my first rank certificate that I had been learning Korean Taekwondo. Everything was just called "karate" in those days and taekwondo was almost identical to the Japanese Shotokan style, from which it originated. We didn't even have colored belts; everyone was a white belt until the brown belt level was reached.

In the 1990's, with a much older body and joints not happy doing high-impact "hard-style" karate, my performance has been limited. But my involvement has remained intense nonetheless, working with my son as he has climbed the martial arts ladder from white belt to black belt in Okinawan Shuri-ryu karate, and over again from white belt to black belt in traditional Japanese Shindo-Jinen-ryu (a combination of Shorei-ryu and some Shotokan). Learning new katas along with him, working at tournaments he has competed in, and meeting a great many fine karate people along the way has been one of the great joys of my life. Furthermore, I discovered an enormous body of published literature, along with countless training videos from many styles, none of which were available when I first entered the martial arts. These are good times for the martial arts scholar.

In an effort to share some of this fascinating material with other karate students and their families, I began producing the *Roaring Tiger* newsletter in Tucson in 1994. Most of the items presented here first appeared there, between 1994 and 1998. Some of them have the flavor of a pep talk. I make no apology for this. Karate training can be tough, and many students *need* a good pep talk now and then.

These writings are not intended as a style manual; that task is left to the training manuals and tapes available from your dojo. Instead they are designed to provide a non-style-specific general background to the study of karate, to enrich training, improve tournament performance, clarify concepts, provide a rich historical backdrop, and give karate students and their parents a clue about where they are headed. Karate instructors are not inclined to spend hours lecturing; these essays will perhaps fill some of the gaps that often result.

Karate is people, and many people have given me help along the way. My thanks first of all to my original sensei, Robert Yarbrough, for introducing me to the joys of karate. Thanks especially to my good friend and teacher, Lend McCaster (6th dan), a world-champion competitor and a great sensei, whose good humor and long-suffering patience match his extensive knowledge of karate. Thanks also to Shuri-ryu shihan John Linebarger, who has always been supportive and helpful, to sensei Kandie Vactor, to Ryobu-kai Kyoshi (Master Instructor) Bill Damon (7th dan), and to many students and tournament officials, especially Hanshi George Anderson, who have graciously shared their knowledge and their friendship with me. And finally, thanks to my son, Eric, for sticking it out himself (with gusto) these years and becoming such a fine martial artist, while giving me the opportunity to learn alongside him. It's been a treat.

Wendell E. Wilson
Shodan, Okinawan Shuri-ryu

古松 空手



OKINAWAN SHURI-RYU KARATE-DO

CERTIFICATE OF DAN GRADE

This is to certify that karate-ka

—Wendell E. Wilson—

is hereby granted the rank of

Shodan

in recognition of great progress, knowledge, skill and accomplishment attained through the diligent study of Okinawan Shuri-ryu karate. It is our wish that you will endeavor to advance further in the development of your physical skills, philosophical maturity and spiritual strength through the study and practice of karate.



Lend McCaster, 5th dan
Director: KoSho East Karate School

廉任照四段

cert. no. 0047

KOSHO KARATE SCHOOL

Date: Dec. 7, 2001