

Texas Kobukan Newsletter
August 02, 2007



If you did not receive this newsletter via email, please send an email to info@texaskobukan.com with the student's name, and I will add you to the email distribution list.

Black Belt Promotions:

I am pleased to report that two of our long time students have achieved the rank of Shodan (1st degree Black Belt). Their promotions were based upon completion of the required number of training hours, long term and consistent efforts to improve their skills, exhibition of good character (both inside and outside the dojo), patience and proper technique in teaching and working with other students, and passing a grueling test of both physical and mental skills.

Keith Pelusi was promoted on 5/27/07.

Sarah Jones was promoted on 7/7/07.

These should be considered major events for our dojo. Because of our requirements and the student commitment required, it is very rare for a student to achieve a black belt here – and even more rare to have two awarded this close together. These are the first Black Belts awarded in our dojo since 2002.

Sarah Jones to Japan

Sarah left at the end of July to journey to Japan for a one year assignment teaching English as a second language at a Japanese High School. While we hate to see her leave for so long a time, we can't help but be excited for her opportunity to learn first hand about Japanese culture and language – and hopefully study some martial arts along the way.

David Brown to Iraq

Also, David Brown, one of our advanced Brown Belt students working toward his Black Belt, will be deployed to Iraq for a year. We wish David a safe tour of duty and hope he is able to continue his martial arts training and return ready to continue his progress at our dojo.

Brown Belt Promotions:

Another of our long term students, Ethan Sikes was promoted to Brown Belt (3rd Kyu) on 7/28. Although not as intense as the Black Belt requirements, Brown Belt promotions are also based upon completion of the required number of training hours, long term and consistent efforts to improve skills, exhibition of good character (both inside and outside the dojo) – and a test of physical and mental skills.

No classes 9/13 and 9/15/07

There will be no karate classes held at the dojo on Thursday, 9/13 and Saturday, 9/15. All the instructors, along with three of our brown belt students will be attending KUDA SHINSHI'S 2007 SEMINAR in BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA. See the following article for more information.

KUDA SHINSHI'S 2007 SEMINAR, BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA

**14&15 September, Friday & Saturday,
16 September, Sunday (OPTIONAL)**

SESSION TIMES:

- **Friday/Saturday - 9:00 – Noon;
2:00 – 5:00; 7:00 – 9:00.**
- **Sunday – 10:00 – noon; 2:00 – 4:00
(optional)**

FEES (Received Prior to 1 Sep):

Single - \$100 (all sessions), \$40 per full day, \$15 per session

Couples (Same Family) - \$155 (all sessions), \$60 per full day, \$25 per session

Family (3 or more) - \$200, (all sessions), \$70 per full day, \$35 per session

FEES (Received After 1 Sep):

Single - \$125 (all sessions), \$45 per full day, \$20 per session

Couples (Same Family) - \$195 (all sessions), \$75 per full day, \$35 per session

Family (3 or more) - \$250, (all sessions), \$90 per full day, \$45 per session

Location: ***Oak Hills Christian College,
1600 Oak Hills Rd SE, Bemidji, MN***

All Association members in good standing are encouraged and welcome to attend the seminar. If you would like to attend and have not yet discussed it with the Instructors, do so as soon as possible.

Status of the Dojo:

We are approaching the three year anniversary at this location - our first class held here was on 8/24/04. (See the dojo history on the website for a history of the dojo before coming to this building.)

Monthly Tuition Reminder:

Note that monthly tuition is due prior to the end of the previous month. If you have not already paid for August please do so as soon as possible.

Annual Registration:

Note that when you initially joined our dojo, you paid an annual registration fee. The annual registration fee (\$40 for the first family member, \$25 for additional members) is collected annually on the anniversary of your first payment. If it is

been over a year since your last annual registration payments please provide your payment as soon as possible. I am behind in sending out notices, but will be providing reminders on an individual case basis. Since we are approaching the three year anniversary at this location, a number of students are at their renewal time.

Patches:

If you recently joined our dojo and paid your annual registration fee, you should have received an Association patch for your gi. If you did not, please let me know.

Sparring Equipment

This is just another reminder that once students are promoted from 10 kyu (white belt) to 9th kyu (yellow belt) they will start sparring. While we have some loaner feet and hand protection for students to use until they purchase their own, students are expected to purchase and bring a mouthpiece to each class. Male students are also expected to wear an athletic cup protector to each class. Several 9th kyu and above students are not bringing all required equipment, and that forces us to limit their sparring.

On Time & Ready to Practice:

We continue to have some students regularly arrive late for class. While we are glad to see them at all, the beginning part of class has a special significance. It is there we line up, prepare for our practice by bowing both to the front of the dojo and to the sensei. We then go through warm-ups designed to prepare both the body and mind for the remainder of the class. Students arriving late who miss some or all of this important part of class sometimes never seem to get in sync with the other students, and certainly don't get all the benefit they could from the training.

Some Frequently Asked Questions:

If you had to pick a single most important factor in determining the success of a student, what would it be?

I have given this question a lot of thought. By observation over a number of years and a number of students, I believe the more important factor is simply for the student to **show up for class**. It sounds simple, but students that show up regularly seem to progress better than more naturally gifted or more motivated students that attend classes on an infrequent basis. We currently have three classes a week available for students to attend – and I keep records on number of classes and training time since each students' last promotion. By observation, students that attend class infrequently require more hours to reach the same level of improvement and readiness for promotion than a student with a smaller number of training hours obtained over a shorter period of time. Bottom line, we can't work with students that are not here – so please make every effort to make as many classes as possible. One old rule of thumb is that it takes two classes for every class missed just to get back to where you were before the missed class.

If you had to pick a second most important factor in determining the success of a student, what would it be?

If you accept that the most important factor is to show up for class, then I believe the 2nd most important is to **pay attention** to the instructors. Said another way, **focus** on the class. We can't teach if a student is not in attendance, but if the student is physically here but is not paying attention or focused on the instructors (i.e. looking out the window, worrying about some sound at the back of the room, worrying about what the

person next to them is doing, etc.) then they don't have a chance to learn. Part of what we expect the students to learn is how to focus and pay attention for the duration of the class.

If you had to pick a third most important factor in determining the success of a student, what would it be?

If a student attends class and pays attention, then the third factor would be to just **try (motivation)**. I believe a motivated student that attends regularly, pays attention, and tries can achieve anything – including a Black Belt at our dojo. If any of these three factors are missing, then history says the student will not be able to effectively learn and progress. Another observation is that parents can take care of #1, to some extent the instructors can demand #2, but #3 is up to the student. I have seen a number of students that show up every class, pay attention, but really don't seem to care about anything but getting to the end of class (or maybe to the sparring session). That is ok, because it is likely the classes are doing the student some good – but also that student should not expect to be promoted to higher ranks.

Why don't you accept younger students (i.e. younger than seven)?

There is a finite amount of teaching time available in each class, determined by number of instructors and assistants attending. The younger the student, generally the more direct supervision they

require during a class, and the more time they take the less there is available for the other students. Our choices then become either to spend a larger portion of instructor time working with the younger students or to spend an equal amount of time with all students – which often means the younger student does not get very much out of the class. That is why we draw the line at seven while allowing six year old potential students to work out with the class to see how they do – and then we decide if we will accept them as a student.

How long does it take to achieve a Black Belt?

I can't provide an answer that covers all students. I can say that it would be difficult to achieve a Black Belt (starting with no martial arts experience), in less than three years. A general observation would be that a student whose only goal is obtaining a Black Belt will probably never get there. Students who care about the training, about perfecting their techniques, and learning new skills (the journey) will progress and will pass Brown Belt, 1st degree Black Belt, etc. on their journey. Those who only care about the belts as a badge to show their achievement – will tire long before they reach Black Belt. When I told one prospective student it would take 2 1/2 to 3 years to get a Black Belt – he got this wide eyed look of wonder and said “3 years, just to get a Black Belt??” I wished him well as he left in hopes he could find a less challenging way to spend his time.

Please send any comments or suggestions regarding this newsletter to: rafinley@texaskobukan.com. Also please send any topics you would like to see addressed in the FAQ section.

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