

# Okuiri

*A Publication of the American JuJitsu Association*

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## AJA Awards

### OUTSTANDING DOJO FOR 2006

Budoshin Ju-jitsu Dojo  
Santa Clarita, California  
Prof. George A. Kirby, Sensei

ROC Jujitsu Dojo  
La Puente, California  
Jorge Corona, Sensei

Reston Budoshin Jujitsu Dojo  
Reston, Virginia  
Bruce H. Jones, Sensei

Vancouver Institute of Self Defense  
Camas, Washington  
Jeff Wynn, Sensei

Harvard Westlake Jujitsu Dojo  
Burbank, California  
Mark Jordan, Sensei

White Marsh YMCA Dojo  
Middle River, Maryland  
Wade Susie, Sensei

Arlington YMCA Ju-Jitsu Dojo  
Arlington, Virginia  
Thomas Salander, Sensei

Spring 2007

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KYŌHAN

# Black Belt: It *Is* a *Big Deal*

by: GEORGE KIRBY

*Before I begin this article, I would like to thank Mark Jordan, Godan, for inspiring me to write it. Mark gets really “enthusiastic” when certain topics come up, and black belt promotions and black belt boards are one of them. So, thank you Mark, here it goes, and I hope I don’t step on any toes.*

**P**romotion to black belt or any higher grade is a big step in a jujitsu student’s life. It can mean many things: recognition of accomplishments and skills, recognition that now he or she is really ready to start learning the art, relief that a goal has been accomplished, or all of these put together. Yudansha promotions are the results of years of work, practice, frustration, practice and patience. Yudansha promotions *are* a big deal!

*Yudansha promotions are the results of years of work, practice, frustration, practice and patience.*

So, why don’t we treat them as such? In some cases a dojo has only one sensei (Yudansha). The student does his test in class, receives his black belt and the world continues to turn. Done!

In other dojo, there may be several black belts that can make up an examining board or the sensei can bring together a few sensei from other dojo or from the AJA. They show up at a special time — Saturday morning or a class set aside — for testing. They are all wearing black hakama with white gi top and all are wearing the AJA patch in the same place on their gi. They conduct themselves in a formal manner. They ask the candidate(s) questions that require insight and thinking.

There is a mat exam. It is probably being videotaped by at least one person (often relatives), while others take pictures of the process. The candidate passes. All sensei sign the certificate of promotion and participate in the presentation of the belt and certificate. More pictures. Lots of congratulations to the black belt by family, friends, other students and the board members. It is a *big deal* and everyone will remember it as such.

No, not even I conduct every yudansha exam and promotion this way. Between 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> dan, my yudansha will probably get one of their dan grade promotions the old fashioned way: by my own judgment that they are ready for it.

However, promotion by a black belt board is impressive and that is why it should be used whenever possible. It increases the status of the exam, the candidate, the candidate’s sensei, the dojo, and the sensei who sat on the board. It is a win-win situation because it *is* a big deal.

**I** know that some sensei might be saying, “I do not want to have a black belt board testing my students because I do not want them to be embarrassed if they do not make it or cannot do what the board asks. That would make me look bad too.” I agree with you on this, but only if you are not careful in whom you test for black belt.

I will not allow one of my students to test for a black belt grade unless I am absolutely sure they will make it and do a good job of making it. For me and them, the test is a formality — a show that they can do well. It should be a slam-dunk for the candidate. If the candidate cannot make it a slam-dunk then he or she should not be testing for that yudansha grade. After all, the candidate does represent you,

*Promotion by a Black Belt Board should be used whenever possible.*

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# The Meaningless Belt

by: THOMAS SALANDER

## Do you want a Black Belt?

Wait, before you answer, can you say what that actually means? Most of us have worn a black belt since we were children and the question was probably first posed to our mother rather than us. That belt was an article of clothing, partly practical — to hold up our pants — and partly fashion — the right color, texture and length all had a fashion component, even for a child.

But that was not what you meant, was it? That

*A black belt is nothing more than a belt that goes around your waist. Being a black belt is a state of mind and attitude.*

—Rick English

was silly; we all know what a black belt means, right? Popular media attributes mythical and mystical powers to the black belt. Some martial artists have been held accountable for the injuries they wrought defending themselves because, as a black belt, they should have been able to control the attacker without hurting

him. Black belts are the masters of their art. They are the best.

**T**his perception has not gone unnoticed outside the martial arts. While the belt ranking system was originated by Jigoro Kano for Judo about a century ago the terms and implication quickly migrated to many of the other Japanese-based arts. It has also been picked up by activities as diverse as flower arranging and composting.

Some corporations have adopted the term “black belt” to benefit from the halo-effect of public perception. Six Sigma offers Black Belt certification in Quality Management (you can also get a

green belt if you are less ambitious). Microsoft Corporation offers a Black Belt in Software Security.

All that is a distraction, really, because martial artists know that these are distortions of what a black belt truly means. That is, after we discount the self-promoted black belts and the instructors with a black belt in one art who use it as credentials to teach another art. We also must ignore the black belts who enhance their own status by putting down other instructors or dismissing the value of skills they themselves have not acquired. There are always scofflaws, egotists, illusionists, back-biters, and self-promoters in every endeavor and we should not judge everyone because of the behavior of a few.

Still, what does it mean to have a black belt in the martial arts? What assumptions can you make about a black belt's skills? Each art is different and often the styles within a given art are different. It is not prudent to assume that a black belt in karate can safely take a fall that a middle kyu in jujitsu would find comfortable. Some styles promote through competition; some through testing; some rely on the judgment of the instructor. The amount of training required may be six months or six years. The amount of classroom time (different from mat-time and calendar-time) can vary just as much.

Some styles push kumite; some emphasize kata; neither of which says anything about that person's ability to teach. Does it even make sense to raise the question of teaching when some schools will

*I've noticed something very interesting occurs when people make earning a black belt their primary goal. Usually, they slack off or quite once they earn the coveted belt.*  
—Kensho Furuya

# Letter From The Chairman

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## **The AJA needs your help!** That's it in five words.

When Dennis M<sup>c</sup>Curdy and I met in 2006, we set up a series of goals for the AJA and ourselves as leaders of the AJA. One of our first goals was to revamp the certification process to make it work better and more efficient. To that extent we have been pretty successful. No, not even we are perfect.

Now we are moving on to make the AJA a more responsive and well known organization. Although the number of AJA dojo and members has increased over the years, our level of service has not increased proportionately. Although some of the Board of Directors (BOD) members have assumed multiple responsibilities—and there's a very small but tremendously dedicated staff who have assumed single responsibilities—a lot is *not* being done because there are no AJA members willing to volunteer.

We are currently looking for volunteers for the following positions:

Materiel Director	National Media Coordinator
Communications/Public Relations Director	National Recruitment Coordinator
National Awards Coordinator	

Although we would prefer that the people selected for these positions be black belts, a black belt is not an absolute necessity for these positions. These positions are also open to Mudansha (below black belt) who have the skills necessary to perform the required tasks (see the next page for job descriptions and requirements). So, let your students know about these positions as well. They too can volunteer.

You should also be aware that all staff positions will be “budgeted.” This means that although we may not be able to pay for your time, the AJA certainly can pay for the materials necessary for you to do a good job. Also, you're more than welcome to develop a “staff” under you to help you with your responsibilities. Also, serving in a voluntary capacity provides you with greater access to the inner workings of the AJA—a valuable experience when the AJA looks for new potential BOD members. Last, and most important, you will be assuming a leadership role in the AJA, which increases your credibility and worth as an individual and as an AJA member.

The AJA needs your help! If you would like to help the AJA grow by volunteering for any of these positions please contact Dennis M<sup>c</sup>Curdy ([jujutsujohn@netscape.net](mailto:jujutsujohn@netscape.net)) or me ([senseigk@budoshin.com](mailto:senseigk@budoshin.com)) or submit your resume to the AJA Secretary ([kcurley2@earthlink.net](mailto:kcurley2@earthlink.net)). We will be glad to have you on the team.

Most sincerely,

*George Kirby*

## Materiel Director

The duties and responsibilities of the AJA Materiel Director include, but may not be limited to:

- Maintain adequate supplies of AJA patches, Dojo Handbooks, and other items on hand by placing orders with suppliers as necessary. You will need storage space to accommodate the supplies you need to keep on-hand. This can usually be maintained in two medium sized boxes.
- Sell AJA supplies by taking orders from AJA members, collecting fees, recording each transaction, mailing the ordered supplies and receipt to the customer, and forwarding the fees to the AJA Treasurer.

- Maintain detailed records of purchases, sales, postage and packaging. Send all records and a quarterly report of inventory and sales to the Treasurer.

[Complete list of duties and procedures may be provided upon request.]

### Qualifications:

It is preferred that any candidate for this office hold the rank of Shodan or higher. It would be helpful, but not absolutely necessary, to have accounting and/or retail business experience.

### How to Apply:

Interested candidates should submit a resume to the AJA Secretary at [kcurley2@earthlink.net](mailto:kcurley2@earthlink.net) referencing "Materiel Director" in the subject line.

## Communications Director

The AJA Communications Director's duty is to see that the AJA is favorably represented to the general public, as well as the rest of the martial arts community.

- Make sure that all AJA media (including print, internet, video and audio) is current, relevant and correct.
- Work with the AJA National Media Coordinator to develop and maintain an "Information Packet" which will serve as the AJA sales brochure, and an instant source of relevant information about the AJA (also known as a 'press kit').
- Responsible for all articles and press releases distributed to all martial arts publications including magazines, web sites, and other martial arts organizations.
- Assist the Recruitment Coordinator to provide information to potential member dojo and work with them to encourage AJA membership.

### Qualifications:

Any candidate for this office should hold the rank of Nidan or higher (preferably Sandan). It is highly recommended that the candidate should have business, public relations or marketing experience.

### How to Apply:

Interested candidates should submit a resume to the AJA Secretary at [kcurley2@earthlink.net](mailto:kcurley2@earthlink.net) referencing "Communications Director" in the subject line.

## National Awards Coordinator

The duties and responsibilities of the AJA National Awards Coordinator include, but may not be limited to:

- Administer award programs for Outstanding Student, Outstanding Black Belt, Outstanding Sensei, and AJA Hall of Fame awards.
- Send out forms to select worthy award recipients.
- Compile returned recommendations from Regional Directors.
- Notify Membership Director, Newsletter and Webmaster of winners.
- Have plaques, certificates, or other types of awards made for winners.

### Qualifications:

It is recommended, but not absolutely necessary, that any candidate for this office should hold the rank of Shodan or higher. The candidate should have good computer skills.

### How to Apply:

Interested candidates should submit a resume to the AJA Secretary at [kcurley2@earthlink.net](mailto:kcurley2@earthlink.net) referencing "National Awards Coordinator" in the subject line.

## National Media Coordinator

The duty of the AJA National Media Coordinator is to make the AJA look good (professional) in all released publications and different forms of media, and to help the AJA get noticed by getting materials published. The Media Coordinator will need to work with the AJA Communications Director to develop and maintain several important documents such as a "Press Kit" (detailed information for anyone inquiring about the AJA and its benefits), and an "AJA flyer" (a brief synopsis of the information in the Press Kit).

The most important job of the Media Coordinator is to get this information distributed to the people and outlets that will use it. Additional duties may include:

- Write and distribute press releases regarding AJA events and Sensei biographies to the media (magazines, internet, etc.).
- Search for media outlets and keep an updated list of those interested in receiving martial arts and jujitsu related information.
- Write query letters to determine what media sources want and in what format they prefer.
- Write articles, or distribute articles written by AJA personnel, to media outlets.

### Qualifications:

It is preferred that any candidate for this office should hold the rank of Shodan or higher. It is recommended, but not absolutely necessary, that the candidate should have media and/or marketing experience.

### How to Apply:

Interested candidates should submit a resume to the AJA Secretary at [kcurley2@earthlink.net](mailto:kcurley2@earthlink.net) referencing "National Media Coordinator" in the subject line.

## National Recruitment Coordinator

The duty of the AJA National Recruitment Coordinator is to help increase the number of affiliated dojo in the AJA, and more specifically to:

- Search out other Ju-jitsu dojo and organizations (Japanese styles).
- Provide them with information to encourage AJA membership.
- Work with those who show interest in AJA membership by helping them with the application process.

The Recruitment Coordinator will need to make excellent use of the internet and martial arts magazines to locate potential new dojo. He/she will need to develop contacts of local dojo that don't advertise in magazines or on the internet.

### Qualifications:

It is preferred, but not mandatory, that any candidate for this office should hold the rank of Shodan or higher. It is recommended, but not absolutely necessary, that the candidate should have sales and/or marketing experience.

### How to Apply:

Interested candidates should submit a resume to the AJA Secretary at [kcurley2@earthlink.net](mailto:kcurley2@earthlink.net) referencing "National Recruitment Coordinator" in the subject line.

# Studying Ju-Jutsu With a Daughter

by: SCOTT FINLEY

In the spring of 2006 my then 12-year-old daughter spontaneously said that she wanted to study a martial art. Since Samantha had never been interested in other sports or physical activity, I was more than a little surprised. Nevertheless, I simply asked her which art. She had no idea what the options were, or what they entailed, so I sent her on a research mission: she had to find out enough about the martial arts to select one. She came back quite quickly with her answer: she wanted to study Ju-Jutsu (or maybe JiuJitsu or a half-dozen other spelling variations).

Our next stop was to review the options together. We found a couple of articles on the web that described and compared the various martial arts (for example <http://www.selfgrowth.com/articles/Moore41.html>) and verified that she did not want a pure sport (such as Judo) or significant emphasis on the spiritual aspects (such as in Aikido). She thought that self-defense skills could be useful. Finally, our investigations turned practical, in part to validate what we'd learned theoretically. One small complication came from the many spellings of Ju-Jutsu, so web searches were tricky; we'd already dealt with that while researching the various arts. Another complication was that less commercial classes, such as those in a YMCA, often do not have their own web pages or listings in the Yellow Pages (or even someone knowledgeable to answer the phone). Nevertheless, we sampled a children's Aikido class (almost, but not quite), a children's karate class (she knew within two minutes that she was not interested), and a children's Ju-Jutsu class (that would have been okay, too). Then we visited a mixed class, adults and younger folks, beginners and more advanced students, all working together. Samantha's eyes were as big as dinner plates. As we left the class she said, "That was sugoi!" We had, in complete ignorance, stumbled onto the

She had no idea what the options were, or what they entailed, so I sent her on a research mission: she had to find out enough about the martial arts to select one.

remarkable class at the Towson YMCA taught by McCurdy Hanshi and Feelemyer Hanshi. And as a bonus, it was about a five-minute drive from our house.

"What does 'sugoi' mean?" I asked.

"It means 'cool' in Japanese," she informed me. *Anime* has certainly changed early exposure to Japanese language and culture. But then she dropped the bombshell. "That's the class I want to take, Dad. But I'll only be comfortable in it if you do it with me. If you do it you'll be sugoi, too."

I was not looking for another activity. I already went to the gym a few times each week, but I still felt fragile after a back injury on the ice a couple of years earlier, years of serious gastrointestinal illness, and some major intestinal surgery, successful but with permanent changes that required some accommodations. I had studied Judo for less than a year as a kid, but that was about 35 years ago. Never much of an athlete, at 47 years old I thought I just could not do it. Those guys were hitting the mat pretty hard.

But I thought about it. McCurdy Hanshi was very encouraging, and I thought about it some more. Finally I decided that I just could not pass up a chance to be "sugoi." Samantha and I started attending classes together in April. It has been everything I could have hoped for. Three times each week we get to share this experience, getting exercise, getting strong, and developing confidence. My major fears turned out to be groundless—the environment is safe and the minor injuries we have had are mostly troublesome if they interrupt our training. Our relationship has blossomed, I think in large part because we do this together. We have a context in which we can discuss the role of fighting in a civilized society, and she's still trying to figure out what I meant when I told her that we were "learning how not to fight."

When we have travel plans that conflict with class I have to apologize to her, and often we just modify those plans to work around the class schedule. She focuses intently on getting her homework done before our evening classes, and I find that the evening classes

*"That's the class I want to take, Dad. But I'll only be comfortable in it if you do it with me."*

# Events

## Shrewsbury Seminar

From gun disarms to sambo to stick fighting, the Rising Sun dojo's Second Annual Ju-Jitsu/Martial Arts Seminar covered a variety of topics in six presentations.

The seminar, hosted by The Rising Sun School of Jujitsu and held on March 31 at the York County YMCA in Shrewsbury, Pa., began with instruction from Dave Patton, an instructor with the Fairfax County, Va., police department. He demonstrated defenses against handgun attacks, including an arm bar, a wrist strike to remove the gun, and a disarm that involved twisting the gun away.

Wade Susie and Karen Curley then showed techniques with the *yawara*, a short stick also called a *Kubotan*® or *koshi-no-bo*. They demonstrated how to perform several variations of *tekubi shimi waza* (*nikkyo*), as well as a *kote gaeshi* from a front choke. They also showed several strikes and a leg take-down with the stick.

After lunch, Scott Anderson showed techniques from sambo, a Russian adaptation of jujitsu. He showed a spread block, with arms

outstretched to counter either a roundhouse or a straight punch, and two ankle blocks to throw an attacker. He also did a multi-part submit flow, which included a choke using one's shin and a roll-over arm bar.

Tom Smith, who teaches American Kenpo, showed timing patterns to enhance flow and power in striking techniques. He demonstrated strikes of noticeable power, causing significant impact to his assistant with what Smith said was only 10 percent of his full force.

Next, Carlos Rodriguez demonstrated capoeira, an Afro-Brazilian martial art that combines self-defense, music, and acrobatics. Participants learned several capoeira kicks and then practiced with each other in a circle to the beat of music and clapping.

Finally, Raelene Meneses of the Maru Martial Arts Dojo at Loyola College taught Doce Pares eskrima, a Filipino stick fighting art. She demonstrated 12 basic strikes and counters and then showed throws from "eskrido," a combination of eskrima and aikido. Meneses is current world champion in several areas of eskrima and will defend her titles in 2008 in Cebu, Philippines. 📷

## AJA Western Region Freestyle Kata Competition

April 21, 2007

Studio City, California

e-mail: [Yosho@Otaku-Kai.com](mailto:Yosho@Otaku-Kai.com)

## Jujitsu Seminar

Saturday June 2, 2007

Crestview, Florida

e-mail: [tgordon@gordonmartialarts.com](mailto:tgordon@gordonmartialarts.com)

## Jujitsu America Annual Convention

July 20-22, 2007

Foster City, California

website: [www.jujitsuamerica.org/sportjujitsu.php](http://www.jujitsuamerica.org/sportjujitsu.php)

## BJJY Summer Camp

August 24-26, 2007

North Oaks Park

Santa Clarita, California

e-mail: [SenseiGK@Budoshin.Com](mailto:SenseiGK@Budoshin.Com)

website: [www.Budoshin.Com](http://www.Budoshin.Com)

## Camp Budoshin

September 22 or 29, 2007

Burbank, California

e-mail: [SenseiGK@Budoshin.Com](mailto:SenseiGK@Budoshin.Com)

website: [www.Budoshin.Com](http://www.Budoshin.Com)

## Seminar & AJA Tournament

Saturday November 3, 2007

Arlington, Virginia

e-mail: [Thomas@Budoshin.Com](mailto:Thomas@Budoshin.Com)

## AJA Western Region Freestyle Kata Competition

November 17, 2007

Southern California (location TBD)

e-mail: [Yosho@Otaku-Kai.com](mailto:Yosho@Otaku-Kai.com)

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Okuri welcomes submissions of articles and proposals. We prefer plain text (.txt) in electronic format. You may also send articles for consideration through the US Postal Service or via fax.

Back issues are available.

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AJA Newsletter  
c/o Thomas Salander  
P.O. Box 5213  
Arlington, Virginia 22205

Submission deadline for the next issue is June 17, 2007.

# Yudansha Testing

...continued from page 2

the sensei, and you *do* want to make sure the candidate looks good since it *is* a big deal.

But where do you get this “board” from? If it is only 1-2 other ju-jitsu black belts or you are testing for higher yudansha grades it becomes even more difficult to find qualified black belts to serve on your examining board.

*I will not allow one of my students to test for a yudansha grade unless I am absolutely sure they will pass — and pass well.*

So, what do you do since this is a *big deal*? One of the proposals that Mark Jordan has made as part of the revised constitution (still being worked on by the AJA Board of Directors - BOD), is that whenever possible, and especially for higher yudansha grades, that there be a black belt board made up of yudansha who are certified by the AJA to test black belts. Wow! Things are being raised up a notch. As Emilio would say, add some more chili pepper. Did you say there will be at least one nationally certified examiner on the Black Belt Board? Wow! This *is* a *big deal*!

Yes it is. But doesn't the yudansha candidate deserve that honor? Isn't your school that important that it ranks having a nationally certified examiner on your local board? Wow! That will enhance your (sensei's) image in the eyes of your students and parents. This *is* a *big deal*.

**N**ow comes the reality check. If you can't “dig up” an AJA certified examiner locally how do you get one to travel to your dojo? The only real answer is that you will possibly have to pay for it. So how do you do that?

If there are a number of AJA dojo in your area all of you can get together and agree on a common exam date and location for your candidates. You can have the examiner conduct an instructional seminar for part of the day and hopefully both of you will walk off with some money after expenses. You can ask the AJA for financial assistance if necessary. The important point is that there is a way to do this because, as Mark said, “It is a *big deal*.”

Although this process will be more formalized in the revised constitution (if it gets through the BOD), it should not keep you from using black belt boards for examining yudansha right now. You, as a sensei, have the obligation to make a yudansha exam and promotion a *big deal* without denigrating the actual testing or promotional process.

Make the process of yudansha testing and promotion as noteworthy and as positive as you can. It will impress everyone if it is done with propriety and everyone, especially the candidate, will remember it. It will enhance the image of your students, the dojo, you, the AJA, the art, and everyone else involved. It will look impressive in the local newspaper too because it *is* a *big deal*. 🍱

*George Kirby, Judan  
Chairman, Board of Directors  
American Ju-Jitsu Association*

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*Ultimately, how we deal with our own errors, mistakes and failings in our own lives is the spiritual practice of martial arts in the midst of reality.*

—Kensho Furuya

*You have the obligation to make a yudansha exam and promotion a big deal.*

## REGIONAL AWARDS

### Steve Pendergrass

Western Region Outstanding Student  
Kern Valley Defensive Arts  
Wofford Heights, California  
Tony Damigo, Sensei

Steve has been amazingly supportive of Tony Damigo's dojo and the instructional program. If he could do backflips for Tony he'd do it. Every dojo needs at least one committed person like him.

### Jeff Wynn

Western Region Outstanding Black Belt  
Vancouver Institute of Self Defense  
Camas, Washington

Jeff has done a tremendous job of managing the AJA website and keeping it up-to-date.

### Paul Wally

Southern Region Outstanding Student  
American School of Self Defense, Inc.  
Kernersville, North Carolina

### Tommy Wallace

Southern Region Outstanding Black Belt  
American School of Self Defense, Inc.  
Kernersville, North Carolina

### Debbie Burk

Northern Region Outstanding Black Belt  
Rising Sun Dojo  
Shrewsbury, Pennsylvania

Debbie has increased the training opportunities in the region by hosting an annual seminar with top-notch instructors. She actively supports the other regional activities by bringing a large delegation of her dojo to each event.

... and belated recognition for 2005 ...

### Tim Moss

Southern Region Outstanding Black Belt  
American School of Self Defense, Inc.  
Kernersville, North Carolina

## DOJO AWARDS

### Marc Kolodziejczyk

Budoshin Ju-Jitsu Dojo Outstanding Black Belt  
Santa Clarita, California

### Byron Davis

Budoshin Ju-Jitsu Dojo Outstanding Student  
Santa Clarita, California

### Glenda Perl

Budoshin Ju-Jitsu Dojo Outstanding Student  
Santa Clarita, California

### Robert Connolly

Arlington YMCA Jujitsu Dojo, Outstanding Black Belt  
Arlington, Virginia

Bob continues to be both a support to his instructor and a role-model for other students in the dojo.

### Alana Wiljanen

Arlington YMCA Jujitsu Dojo, Outstanding Student  
Arlington, Virginia

Alana has demonstrated enthusiasm, perseverance, poise and heart. No instructor could ask for anything more.

### Kenneth Wyatt

Red Dragon Dojo, Outstand Student  
Gwynn Oak, Maryland

He has perfect attendance; practices Karate, Japanese Sword as well as Ju-Jitsu; and attends several seminars and competitions each year.

# DVD Review: *Live Fire*

by: ROBERT L. ROGERS

# 詞

“It’s wrong what we are doing” Larry Wick says at the start of his new DVD *Live Fire*. “Don’t ever, ever, ever do any of this!” he warns.

What requires such dramatic warnings? Wick is showing self-defense techniques against guns. Only he’s not using fake replicas made from rubber or metal like most of us do. Instead, he’s using real pistols, real shotguns, and real rifles, with real bullets, that really go off.

*This DVD’s greatest strength is its graphic demonstration of the actual consequences of a gun discharge.* Wick’s experiments with gun explosions may indeed be high-risk, and his cautions well warranted. But the lessons learned from these demonstrations are sobering. This DVD, available from [www.splitsecondsurvival.com](http://www.splitsecondsurvival.com), is valuable for anyone who teaches gun disarms from theory without considering the effects of an actual discharge.

Wick begins the DVD by attempting a gun disarm that grabs the attacker’s hand close to the base of an automatic pistol. When the gun shoots, the slide (a part of the gun) slams back and cuts Wick’s hand. Wick then shows the blood on his hand and suggests that the impact could have stopped his ability to complete the technique. Then he goes to bandage his wound. The lesson is to make sure that that your grip on the attacker’s hand is clear of the slide.

When some types of guns discharge, a spent cartridge is ejected. Wick shows one of those shells ejecting from a rifle, with sufficient force to pop a balloon. He warns against trying to wrestle with the gun and standing where an ejected cartridge could strike you in the face. Even the gas discharge from a rifle can be dangerous, he suggests, so keep moving and don’t stare at the weapon.

Also, beware of grabbing a revolver (the type of gun that holds its bullets in a rotating cylinder instead of a separate magazine). Wick dons heavy leather gloves and grabs a revolver while it shoots. Despite the protection, the glove is damaged, and Wick says the effect was “very, very painful”—“I have no feeling in my fingertips right now.” Without such hand protection, the damage would be even worse, Wick suggests, and you aren’t going to be able to complete joint locks. (Partly for this reason, Wick is fond of revolvers as self-defense tools.)

Wick shows the consequences of secondary impact of a gun discharge by holding a gun near the side of a mannequin’s head. Some self-defense instructors advise keeping the gun close to your head, Wick says. Wrong. When the gun goes off, the mannequin’s head is blasted from the concussion alone (not the bullet). You cannot withstand this type of power, says Wick, so don’t let the gun discharge near your ear or face.

This DVD’s greatest strength is its graphic demonstration of the actual consequences of a gun discharge. For obvious safety reasons, few people practice gun disarms with live ammunition, and it is thus possible for techniques to seem effective in the abstract yet fail in reality. Wick’s DVD

is a useful way for instructors to compare their techniques against the harsh facts of a gun discharge.

A few caveats: This DVD is probably best suited for instructors rather than for less-experienced students. The video assumes a familiarity with both guns and disarming techniques. Some of the video’s terminology (like “stovepiping”) will be unfamiliar to those without firearms training. And this DVD focuses on showing what fails instead of on teaching more generally how to deal with a gun. (One of Wick’s other DVDs, *First Shot*, addresses this broader topic.) Moreover, in places I found the video’s narrative disjointed: An early scene, for example, spoke of a disarm of a 45-caliber gun that the viewer was supposed to have seen already (but hadn’t).

But these are quibbles about a DVD that presents a realistic and sobering evaluation of martial-arts techniques against a gun-wielding attacker. If you teach gun-disarming techniques, Wick’s *Live Fire* is a worthwhile addition to your library. 

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*This is a useful way for instructors to compare their techniques against the harsh facts of a gun discharge.*

# Meaningless

*...continued from page 3*

*Welcome to the era of 10 year old “black belts”, 15 years old “junior instructors”, 20 years old “masters”, 30 years old “grand-masters”, and 40 years old “supreme grandmasters”.*

*—Ben Haryo*

award a black belt to a student nine years of age? Perhaps a black belt says more about the instructor that awarded it than the person who wears it. Sometimes belts are awarded to keep a person in the art; sometimes to get them out. Sometimes the promotion is to pad a resume or soothe an ego. Sometimes it really is to perpetuate the art and any instructor could promote for all of those reasons at one time or another.

Finally, is a black belt an end or a beginning? No one can know for sure, not the instructor, not the student, and certainly not an outside observer. Only the instructor can say what they intend it to mean. Only the student can demonstrate, with time, what it actually does mean.

If, as many of us believe, a black belt is just the beginning of our training, then a black belt really means both nothing and everything. Like distance markers along a trail, it only has meaning to those who know, understand, and agree upon the unit of measure. A “black belt” cannot tell us what technical skill a person has or the customs they are familiar with or what language they speak. It does not tell us how long they have studied, how they have trained, or what piece of themselves they have left on the mat.

But, if they see their own rank as the beginning of their training, then there are some things we may guess. They probably have focus and understand there is more they do not know than what they do know. They probably have more than average patience—with others and with themselves. None of that is certain, but the odds are in their favor. They are not perfect. They are not invincible. They are not the best. A black belt certainly is not what most people think a black belt means, but it is also much more. 🐉

*Technical knowledge and acquiring credible rank are two entirely different things.*  
—George Kirby

# Daughter

*...continued from page 6*

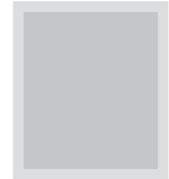
are much more important to me than that excessive dinner I might otherwise have indulged in. We are very conscious of the gift we receive from the teachers we work with, and we try to reciprocate in the ways that we can, by cleaning mats, showing up promptly, and throwing ourselves into the activities that together make a class work smoothly. I was much prouder of doing well in the Kata competition at the July Northern Regional Shiai than I expected to be, since it so explicitly highlighted how far I had come from being ill much of the time. My wife, a librarian and gentle soul, is not interested in joining us (though she likes to watch), but my older daughter has started training with us when she’s home from college.

As of this writing (January, 2007) Samantha and I are yellow belts, 6<sup>th</sup> Kyu, and she appears to be determined to take this study as far as she can. She now goes to the gym at her school a couple of times each week, to lift weights and practice her falls. This would have been inconceivable before Ju-Jutsu, but now she has found a way

to be an athlete. Although I sincerely hope she never has the need to employ the art to defend against a real attack, I am glad that she will have options other than “victim.” I have lost over twenty unnecessary pounds since starting, and I feel younger than I have in a very long time, though I now tend to bruise more and my joints are not always pain-free.

I do not know if others can benefit from my experience. Much of the power in this case came from the fact that Samantha initiated the activity as well as my participation. Perhaps if I had tried to draw her into the same thing she might have dismissed it or done it grudgingly. On the other hand, I know of other families that have shared martial arts training with marvelous results. Instead of “time away” from family the activity is transformed into “time with.” If you can make it work in your family, I cannot recommend it highly enough. 🐉

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## American Jujitsu Association

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The American Jujitsu Association (AJA) was founded in 1976 and is an internationally recognized governing body for the martial art of Jujitsu in the United States. The AJA is registered with the U.S. government as a 501(c)(3) amateur athletic association and is governed by a national board of directors (BOD) according to its Constitution and Bylaws. The AJA is comprised of many different styles of the "Gentle Art" (at least four represented on the BOD), each with its own uniqueness, and each providing a positive influence on the martial arts community as a whole.

For more information about membership in the AJA, contact the membership chairman, Mark Jordan at P.O. Box 4261, Burbank, California 91503-4261 (e-mail [majik8@usa.net](mailto:majik8@usa.net)) or go to our website.

Find us on the web:  
[www.AmericanJujitsuAssociation.org](http://www.AmericanJujitsuAssociation.org)