

My Karate Journey, Part 17 -- From Devil to "Angel" ... My

Amazing Transformation!

When I first started karate training, my instructors were MEAN!!! They made us do things that were both demeaning and demoralizing, such as pushing wet rags with our hands while racing across the dojo to mop the floor, and carrying one another on our shoulders while holding a stance. They seemed to make us do EVERYTHING the hard way — AND they enjoyed it!!! Hence, there were MANY “casualties” in our classes. Only a few chose to stick it out and accept their fate. But, THAT was their aim — to weed out the uncommitted and weak-of-heart.

Thanks to my judo experience, I understood their intent. They did NOT want to spend time teaching someone who would last only a few weeks or months. And their plan worked! We ended up with a small group of students who were COMPLETELY committed to learning Shotokan karate, no matter HOW tough it got!! This group of college students was at the perfect age, both physically and mentally — and, they were VERY “hungry” and competitive!!!

You might NOW understand why I was such a “hard-a\$\$” when I started to TEACH karate. While at KAH, I actually kicked students out of my class or sent them home if I thought they were not training with enough energy or effort. Push-ups and muscle-aching drills were a large part of our routine. My job, I felt, was to teach them GREAT karate as quickly and efficiently as possible — AND to weed out those who did NOT belong! In short, I WAS MEAN!!! BUT, in my defense, I was also FAIR!!!

When I started HSK, my teaching methods remained unchanged and unwavering. My students either learned karate MY WAY, or they took the highway! WHY, then, did HSK end up so successful?

I believe there were 2 major reasons. The first is that, as Paula puts it, I WAS BORN TO TEACH!!! I REALLY took time to analyze and modify our techniques to make them more understandable, and therefore easier to learn. MY SAMURAI THINKING ALSO BEGAN TO CHANGE! Why “weed out” students who were NOT gifted, but still interested in learning? Maybe it’s NOT them, but the method used to “teach” them! Although it may take them longer to learn a technique, if they understand the “hows” and “whys” they will eventually get it. The “fast track” way I was a proponent of soon became the “do-it-at-YOUR-pace” way!

Secondly, I found that I had a knack for “reading” a person or a group of students. I somehow knew how much mental and physical stress a person could take before their mind and body would shut down, and used this to my advantage. I would push a group to its limit, then stop JUST short of them giving up. This was MY method of having them test THEIR limits — and it worked WELL!!! I also used humor in my teaching. MY instructors rarely, if ever, used humor. They were constantly hard, strict, and to the point. I used humor to lighten the mood, as karate classes can get uncomfortably tense. My Senpais used to tell me that every time I scolded the class or made them aware of mistakes they were making, they felt that my dissatisfaction was aimed directly at THEM! I told them, “IT WAS!!!”

So, although my overall thinking began to change, my teaching method remained relatively unchanged from 1983 until 2007. Then, a GREAT TRANSFORMATION TOOK PLACE IN ME!!! Well ... that’s

how my Senpais described my “metamorphosis,” changing me from an ugly (angry) caterpillar into a beautiful (“sweet”) butterfly! The cause of this miraculous change? It was the BIRTH OF MY GRANDDAUGHTER RYLYNN!!!

Here is my story: When Remy first revealed to Paula and me that we were going to be grandparents, my first reaction was, “I am NOT ready to be a grandpa!” BOY WAS I WRONG!!!

Fast forward to the birth day. When Remy was ready to give birth, she invited us to join her in the delivery room with Mike. I was hesitant, but Paula insisted. So we agreed. It was rough watching Remy go through all the pain of the birth, but soon baby Rylynn appeared!

“SHE IS SO BEAUTIFUL!!!” I exclaimed. Witnessing a true miracle, my heart was pounding with joy, my mind was full of amazing and awesome fireworks, and my body felt like it was floating on air!!! I could NOT take my eyes off of her, and I was bursting with pride and happiness!! When I held her for the first time in my arms, I felt beside myself and couldn’t believe that I was carrying such a precious “gift!!”



Floating on Air!

On THIS day, according to ALL around me, my “downfall” began! My “mean” guy persona started to peel and fall away, I started to laugh and smile more, and I became more HUMAN!!! Bottom line — I SUDDENLY became a MUCH happier person, to the GREAT relief of my students!!

Here’s what those close to me have stated:

Senior Senpai Cliff Lau: “YOU WERE MEAN!!! BEFORE Rylynn’s arrival, you were Strict, Serious, Tough on students, Scary — not very approachable, Little interaction other than karate instructions, Not afraid to reprimand, Used fear to motivate, Lots of pain and few breaks during practice. AFTER Rylynn’s birth: Friendly, Smiley, Forgiving, Nurturing, Flexible, Ample breaks!”

Senpai Scott Oshiro: ”As a child training with the old club, Sensei was like a Yakuza ‘Oyabun.’ As an adult coming back to join HSK, he was still like an Oyabun. Suddenly after Lynn’s birth, you could actually have an interactive conversation with him. And interactions have drastically improved as Lynn has grown.”

Daughter and brand-new mom Remy: “Ever since the first time pops saw Lyn’s face and held her in his arms, his entire demeanor changed. His stern, hard shell fell away, and revealed his adoring soft side. What an amazing change to behold!!

Wife Paula: “Alan said ‘She is so beautiful!’ and suddenly his entire demeanor changed to reveal a man newly wrapped in the pure ecstasy of grandfatherhood!”

It’s “funny” how a grandchild can bring you so much happiness!



Our Sweet ANGEL!!!

But, when you seriously think about it, you begin to understand. When you have your own children, there is also GREAT joy. However, you have to SPLIT YOUR PRECIOUS TIME with them, work, bills, mortgage payments, car payments, etc, Etc, ETC!!! The list goes on and ON. As grandparents AND retirees, we are able to spend SO MUCH MORE precious time with them with SO MUCH LESS worries. THAT IS THE MAGIC OF GRANDPARENTHOOD – AND how I became an “ANGEL”!!!



Transformed FOREVER!!!