

My Karate Journey, Part 18 -- The Future of HSK!

As I continue to quickly age, I often dwell upon the future of HSK. Now almost 75, I have been blessed with good health, an amazing and self-less wife (Paula), an incredibly loving and supportive family, two adorable grandchildren whom I would die for, and an AWESOME group of generous and helpful friends who would give me the shirt off their backs! As is often the case, when things are going super-well, we tend to ignore the “little things” that get in the way.

A months-long bout with a stubborn stomach bacteria has forced me to seriously examine not only MY health, but also the health of HSK! HSK is in desperate need of younger, dedicated Senpais to carry on our legacy. Most of our current Senpais are in their 50s, 60s, or 70s, which is NOT a good prospect for our survival!!

THERE — I SAID IT!!!

The survival and continuation of our current intensity and status in the Hawaii karate scene depend on youthful karateka. Interestingly, our membership lacks this very essential component. Much of our membership consists of young children and their parents, which is NOT a promising pool to choose from!

Our Senpai group has been great — supportive and helpful. However, many of them continue to train NOT only for the club or its members, but for THEMSELVES! They realize that karate is not just exercise — IT IS LIFE!!! Without karate, many of them would not be as active or physically fit as they NOW are.

Another HUGE life-saver of training is the camaraderie. I had previously taken my social connections for granted. Through HSK I have met thousands of people and have made life-long friends with many. Before this pandemic, I looked forward to seeing them at training and enjoyed chatting with and teaching them. I was ALWAYS around great people! This God-forsaken pandemic has taught ALL of us the value and necessity of continuing our social ties with each other. IT HAS KEPT US SANE!!! I now realize more than EVER how extremely blessed I am, and have been, to have such loving, caring, and supportive people in my life!

HSK lays claim to not only exceptional and superior teaching and training methods, we have also demonstrated our commitment to help our State and communities through fundraisers and blood drives. Although our karate is stellar, that is NOT how I want to define us. There has ALWAYS been a desire in me to help others. Teaching karate is ONE way! My years at McKinley High School as a digital media and STEM teacher, as well as an advisor for our IGNITION program to help incoming freshmen transition successfully to the high school environment, transformed this desire into a calling! My students designed projects using technology that helped to improve our community or school in some way. They planned and organized food drives, blood drives, school and traffic safety awareness programs, lunchtime entertainment, and other worthy improvements to the community. It was natural for me to want to extend this caring and nurturing desire to my karate family.

As far as I know, there are no other martial arts organizations that encourage their members to give back regularly to their communities through fundraisers or blood drives. This did NOT happen overnight! I patiently waited for many years until I felt the time was right, and our karate family was ready, willing, and able to make a positive impact on

our community. And, I WAS RIGHT!!! I am now SUPER proud and grateful for my HSK Ohana for “picking up the ball and running it downfield for a TOUCHDOWN!!”

So ... what IS the future of HSK? My plan has ALWAYS been to teach as long as I am able, and to train until the day that I die. IT STILL IS!!! However difficult it is to acknowledge that my time at HSK is quickly shortening, I know that it is necessary to state my wishes for the future. I have thought long and hard about the succession of leadership when I can no longer fulfill my responsibilities.

Clearly, HSK has thrived because of the atmosphere that I have created, and with the help of my Senpais, who have committed themselves to my quest. Although each Senpai has different strengths, talents, and teaching abilities, put together they form the total package with the qualities of a great instructor. However, not a single one of them has ALL the qualities necessary, in my opinion, to steer this ship through all kinds of weather!

There definitely are those who have donated much time and effort to making HSK what it is today. However, the leader of an organization such as this one must, first of all, be willing to sacrifice time AND give up certain pleasures for the sake of the club. At HSK, THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A PART-TIME SENSEI!! When you accept the position, you accept ALL the responsibility — and BLAME!!!

Although I would love for my legacy to continue when I am gone, I know that this is highly unlikely AND, realistically, UNOBTAINABLE! I am aware that my passion for Shotokan Karate and, more specifically, HSK and the desire to help others experience its “magic” is shared by only a few of the Senpais, if any at all. It would be unfair to expect ANYONE to

step into my shoes with the same commitment, enthusiasm, and dedication.

THE SEARCH CONTINUES!!!