

My Karate Journey -- Staying Fit!

TIME FLIES!!! I guess you've heard THAT before. Yet, it's only a matter of perspective. For those below 30, it means next to nothing. For them, the statement comes alive ONLY when they are at the end of a fun event, trip, or happy occasion. As you age, this statement hits closer to home, and may even preoccupy your thoughts, as you begin to realize that your life's "race" is quickly approaching the "finish line."

Unfortunately for me, this realization happened later than I would have liked! Missing countless opportunities to document many of the katas and techniques that I had either modified or created, I always felt that I had LOTS of time to get these things done on my to-do list. Boy, was I WRONG! In a blink of an eye, I aged from 40 to 65!!! By this time, my ability to execute these moves correctly, and to get them on video was on SHORT notice!

I WAS able to check off some of the items on the list thanks to Senpais Scott Oshiro and Clifford Lau. Scott secured a large room at the University of Hawaii for several Saturdays so we could video some of our advanced katas, and Cliff volunteered to tape me performing some katas and advanced techniques at the JCCH before classes began on Saturdays. These sessions definitely helped to cut down my to-do list, but a LOT still remains! Some are doable, and MANY will never get done!!

"THE GREATEST WEALTH IS HEALTH!!" This has been my mantra for much of my life. Being active in sports and martial arts reinforced and strengthened this belief, and good health continues to be MY number one priority! Family and friends are of definite importance,

but enjoying them is difficult without good health!! At HSK I took up rope-skipping and soon developed an exercise routine that was both challenging and intense. After polishing it to some degree, I introduced it to our students so they could enjoy the excitement and benefits of this amazing activity.

When I retired from the DOE in 2013 at the age of 65, my number one goal was to stay fit. I skipped rope daily and started a swimming regimen each day in our Endless Pool. Everything was going “swimmingly” — get it?

Unfortunately, because I’m the type to always try to push the envelope to challenge myself, I unknowingly exercised myself OUT of both of these activities!! One day while skipping rope and trying to increase my endurance, I heard something “snap” in my leg and felt pain in my calf. My swimming schedule also took a hit when my shoulders started to ache and I was unable to swim without pain! Regrettably, I have since stopped doing both of these activities.

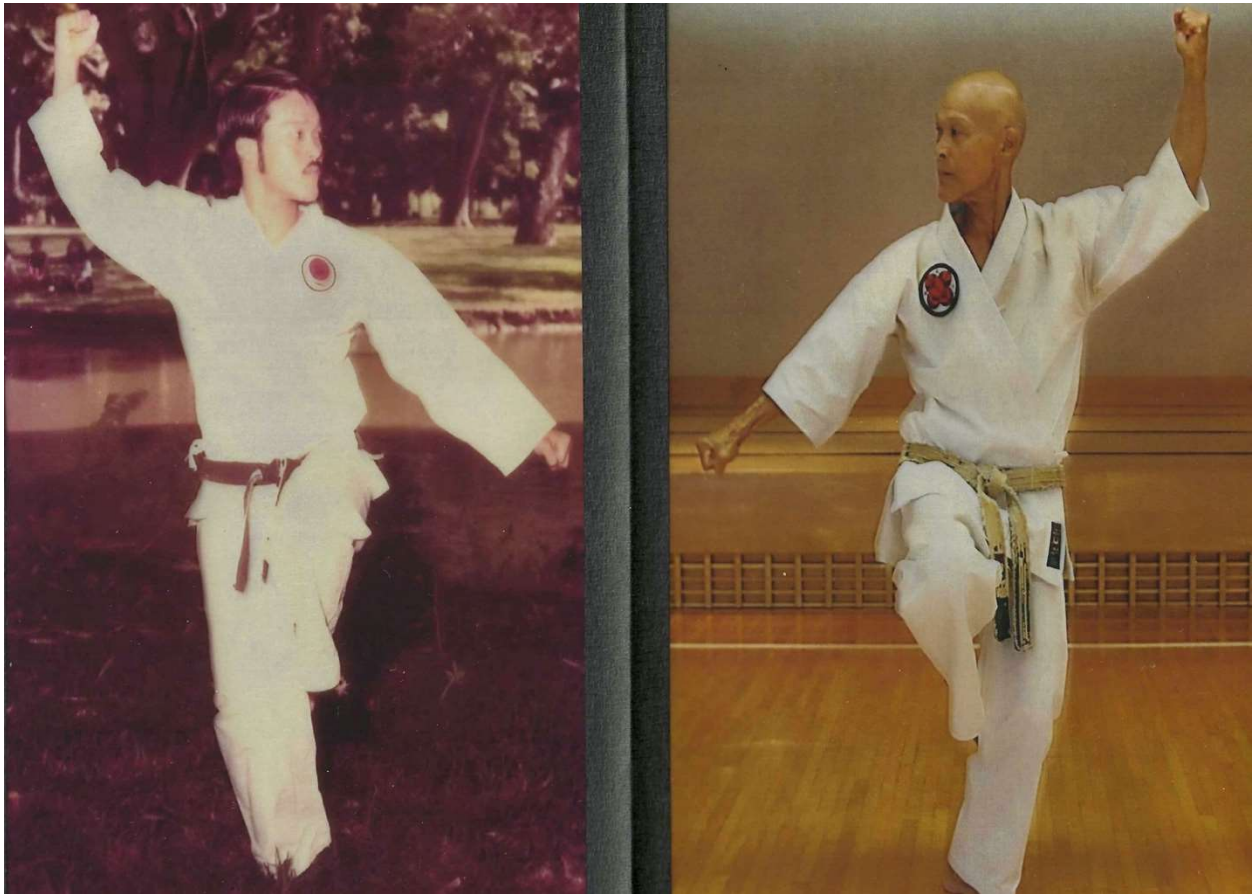
I have NOT, however, stopped exercising. I developed an exercise routine that I, at first, did daily but now do only on days that I don’t have karate. My routine has three parts. Part 1 consists of body stretches, push-ups, and leg and arm exercises with light weights. Part 2 consists of using a bench that I made to do knee pulls to the chest, abs, and bench presses. In Part 3, I use a little heavier weight for arm curls. My routine focuses on the two elements that I believe need the most work at my age — stretches and legs! I am aware that as you age you tend to “invent” excuses why NOT to exercise, but Paula and I know the importance and take this task VERY seriously — just like work!

The more than two years of isolation during the pandemic have had a devastating effect on HSK, our students, my instructors, and ME!!! Although I kept teaching and training on Zoom, I knew that this was NOT enough. While attending Roosevelt High School as a teenager I weighed 150 pounds. Since that time, my weight has slowly dropped down to below 120 during the pandemic. Interestingly, at first, I still felt GREAT!!! I felt strong, had lots of energy, and could STILL train with speed and intensity!

Then came my SEVEN MONTH battle with campylobacter in August of 2021!!! I had, apparently, eaten some contaminated chicken. After suffering from prolonged stomach issues and going through FIVE different medications, I am finally somewhat back to normal! BUT my weight dropped to 110!!! Paula and the rest of the family were quite concerned and started feeding me anything AND everything that could help me gain weight. I now take Boost Protein drinks and snack way more than I used to. I am now up to 115 pounds!

Because of this hugely bad experience with contaminated meat, and after watching several documented videos on the benefits of following a plant-based diet, in March of this year (2022) Paula and I decided to give it a try. We are NOT vegan, but try to avoid eating beef, chicken, pork, seafood, eggs, and dairy products. From time to time we will indulge in some sashimi or fresh fish, but our main diet is vegetables. Surprisingly, it has NOT been an astronomical change for Paula and me. In fact, we are ENJOYING this change in diet!!! We have done stir-fries, and hot pots at home, and are amazed that there are SO MANY plant-based restaurants close by serving yummy vegan dishes. We haven't regretted this move and, in fact, are quite happy with our decision!!!

Staying fit does NOT only mean what you DO to your body — it also means what you PUT INTO it!!! Hopefully, Paula and I will be able to live a long and healthy life, see our grandchildren grow, graduate, marry, and maybe — just maybe — GET TO MEET OUR GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN!!! As for me, I would like to be able to train, teach, and demonstrate effective and meaningful karate for as long as I am able!



Before ...

... and AFTER!