

## My Karate Journey, Part 31 -- What Others Say!

This year marks HSK's 40th anniversary! Although from MY perspective we have come a long way and are doing exceptionally well, considering the recent circumstances, here are some comments from the Senpais and members that have made my incredible journey well worth the time AND effort!

Excerpts from training members:

**Malissa Iida-Takashima** (12/22) — *"... Prior to joining HSK, our son had anxiety participating in organized sports including soccer and basketball. Once they (Brent and father David) joined HSK, it not only created a unique bond but provided an environment in which he (Brent) could learn and gain confidence. ... Sensei and all the Senpais followed the same principles which provided consistency. ... They had expectations from the beginning, which were made very clear, and would not falter. I appreciated that very much.*

*Over the years, Brent has ventured out and tried various things including scouts, water polo, and swimming. He continues to try and improve in his activities. I see him growing into a very good person and I don't think it would have been the same without the HSK community.*

*Now, I have the opportunity to participate in karate with our younger son, Marcus. I see excitement and pride in Marcus when he attends practice. I feel fortunate to be able to share in this experience because not only do I get to learn with my family, but because I get to do so in the company of so many good people. I feel a sense of camaraderie and loyalty. I also feel all the muscles in my body hurting (in a good way) during and after practice."*

*Thank you HSK for keeping my family healthy and teaching them such*

*valuable life lessons. I look forward to the beach training, camp, blood drives, holiday parties, and practices.”*

**Elsa Enomoto** (12/22) — *“... I debated for days on whether or not I should continue. Deep down I knew it would be best to continue, however, I had doubts because of my age. I didn’t think my body could physically handle karate. I was exhausted after every class. I couldn’t lift my knee high enough. I was not flexible enough. I thought maybe if I started at an earlier age, things would be easier. All these thoughts were running through my head. Then it dawned on me that sensei and the senpais are living proof that karate is highly beneficial in so many ways. I realized that I can’t put limitations on myself because of my age or allow myself to listen to negative thoughts. It may take me longer to learn the art of karate and it’s okay! Keep practicing, bounce back, slow down and a can-do attitude became my mantra. The lessons I learned is to be perseverant, be resilient, be patient and be positive and everything will work itself out.”*

**Tara Miyamoto** (12/22) — *“My son and I started taking classes at HSK six months ago. ... It was the beginning of an amazing experience that I could share with my son.*

*Karate has improved my self-discipline and focus. Before karate, I would always tell myself I would start exercising. Tomorrow would come and I would go the entire day making excuses for NOT exercising. I was tired and out of shape, stressed from work and raising a family. Karate was a blessing in disguise, forcing me NOT to be lazy. I’ll always remember when Sensei said, “People need a coach to tell you what to do. You don’t do 20 push-ups at home by yourself!”*

*Karate is exactly what I needed at this moment in my life. I have learned so many new things in such a short period of time, and I owe that all to the amazing Sensei and Senpais who have been there to mentor us every step of the way.*

*My son, Dylan, has always been an energetic and playful child. So much so, that he would get into trouble at school. We would try everything to work on his behavior – timeout, talking to him, rewards, and punishments. These things would work temporarily, but then he would get into mischief again.*

*Karate has made a significant difference in his behavior. He is now more calm, controlled, and self-disciplined. The school reports that are required by HSK is a wonderful initiative for students. My husband and I both credit HSK for the positive changes we have seen in him.*

*I am so grateful to Sensei Alan and each and every Senpai (Remy, Tracy, Alan, Scott, Ray, Todd, and Cliff); they motivate and inspire every student in class. Their dedication to karate is truly remarkable and something I will continue to strive for.”*

**Linda Martini** (12/22): *”... There are many amazing things about HSK, but the main gem is Sensei. Being taught by him feels like something Super special. Here is a guy who has practiced the art of karate for longer than I have been alive! He moves with such speed and a deadly grace that is so cool to watch. His teaching style is firm and fair, and his explanations of techniques are so thorough. He is truly an inspiration. To have that strength and agility at his age, it shows that karate can be a life-long endeavor.*

*Then there’s the Senpais. They are an amazing group of people who are also masters of the craft. They are so helpful, generous with their time, and patient to correct my constant little (and big) mistakes. They also make me chuckle at the ridiculous things I do sometimes. The support they give the club is immense.*

*Overall, I am much fitter and stronger than when I started. There’s one other surprising element that makes me come back class after class. It is simply stepping through the dojo doors and becoming a student. I leave behind the worries of adult life, the constant chatter and questions at home*

*from my three kids, and all the mental noises of never-ending to-do lists. It's so liberating to give yourself over to these incredibly talented individuals to watch, listen and learn, and forget about everything else happening outside the dojo for an hour.*

*It's truly an incredible package, gaining the skills, having the support, the strength training and meditation. I'm so thankful for HSK, Sensei, and the Senpais for making it what it is!*

**THANK YOU!"**

**Dan and Christine Stephens (12/22):** *"Grace, Christine, and myself came to Oahu a year and half ago from the mainland for our work with the Navy. Everything was so chaotic and up in the air. I had a goal to get Grace training in Japanese karate BEFORE she was 9. She needed some stability while we were settling down to our new lives. Christine agreed we ALL needed to train together to encourage her. The funny thing was the stability that Grace needed was actually the stability we ALL needed.*

*HSK helped our transition. We all had a common goal. We all shared and continue to share. The five principles of Shotokan we carry into our schools and jobs. An added benefit is Grace's encouragement to excel in school. Sometimes I think that encouragement is like a soft whisper in her ear from Sensei, to try hard and do well.*

*Being a part of HSK has given us a family of friends, great memories, and awesome goals to accomplish. HAPPY HOLIDAYS to you, Sensei, and all the Senpais!"*

**Emi Brown (12/22):** *"I have always had a slight interest in learning martial arts since childhood, and my interest grew over the years. I finally decided to pursue one of my wish lists at age 44.*

*The training was done on zoom when I joined the Hawaii Shotokan Karate in March 2021. The common assumption about the virtual setting was that it might not be suitable for learning Karate as in-person training,*

*but I had substantial training experience. I was fortunate to have high-quality one-on-one training on zoom from every Senpai who has a different teaching skill to guide me with insightful training and instruction. Sensei, who has remarkable Karate mastering experiences, would always visit during the session and provide thorough assessment and guidance on my improvement. I sweat harder as the training progresses on zoom and the in-person at the dojo at a greater level.*

*I love the positive energy throughout the dojo and being surrounded and inspired by every Karate enthusiast. I am always filled with gratitude for Sensei and Senpais for their genuine dedication to teaching us Karate. I may not be able to become an Olympian or professional martial artist as I wish, but I always imagine myself training like one. My mental has gotten more robust after being with the HSK for learning to push when I feel the limits mentally and physically. I feel empowered to do anything I set my mind to by the valuable training that Sensei and Senpais provide, and I will continue to thrive and evolve with the HSK.”*

**Cassie Romero** (brown belt, 12/22): *“... . I can’t believe that it has been almost ten years with the club! Sensei always says find something you love; if you are going to be here for an hour, then make that hour count; set goals for yourself so you can improve ...*

*Little did I know that the message was for me. I always felt that it was directed toward my kids and I had hoped sensei’s words would resonate with their developing minds because I shared the same thinking. My kids heard the message loud and clear and had given karate enough time for them to know that it was not for them. It was me who was forcing them to continue which in hindsight explains why they were mediocre at best. A health crisis made me realize that life is too short to invest precious time doing something you do not love and that is when I told my kids that it was time for them to move on. There is no regret because my children have memories both good and bad that will positively impact them in one way*

or another.

*The reality of the club is that it has a revolving door. Students cycle in and out of the club because life happens. It is rare to see a student move through the ranks and earn the prestigious black belt because all the stars need to align for that to come to fruition. What I have seen in the past ten years are sensei and senpais pouring their hearts out at each and every training with the mindset that they ARE grooming future black belts. They practice what they preach and for that hour that you are in their dojo, they strive to build responsible, persevering, and hard-working individuals through karate.*

*Adults who walk through the door also take something away; for every person it is something different but the common denominator is sensei and the values that he and the senpais teach. For me personally, they embraced me and my family from the moment we stepped into the dojo. They lifted and held me and continue to support me through karate. Sensei is well aware of my limitations but simply expects me to be the best I can be. Sometimes I am embarrassed to be a brown belt knowing that my skills are less than stellar. I need to remind myself that I worked hard for my brown belt and it represents the time, commitment, and the effort that I put into my karate.*

*I think my longevity with this club is because I believe that HSK is special. It not only strengthens the mind, body, and spirit; it nurtures family and relationships as I've made lifelong friendships along the way. It seems like only yesterday that we peeked into the dojo and took that first step. Ten years later my love for the club is still strong and I pray for good health and for many more years with HSK. Osu!"*

I also offered my senior students and instructors who had submitted anecdotes back in 2014 to add, update, or change them if they chose to. You can read those on our website. Just click on "I love HSK".



Thoughts from some of your Senpais:

**Senpai Tracy (1/23):** *"... I love to train, so the biggest plus for me is being able to train while contributing to the community through HSK. Whether it's through helping with teaching HSK's students, making donations to the Food Bank or the Blood Bank, it gives me purpose knowing I can contribute where and when I can. Also, I don't know what I'd be doing for exercise if it wasn't for karate.*

*I am still learning, especially how to teach, and training is still challenging. I think Sensei is a gifted teacher/instructor. His teaching method(s) makes it interesting and easier to understand. The way he breaks down each technique is incredible, allowing the student to visualize how a technique should look, work, how specific movements of your body can be used, etc. It adds another dimension to my training.*

*I'm proud to be able to say that we at HSK still have an active, teaching, training Sensei at his age. His teaching abilities, in my opinion, have not waivered from when I was a lower colored belt. We are honored whenever Sensei teaches a class."*

**Senpai Todd China (1/23):** *" ... I do feel like I am still learning, and that training is challenging. It's always an eye-opener when Sensei explains things such as an application from a basic color belt kata, and it's something that I hadn't ever even considered. It just shows that Sensei has such a vast well of martial arts knowledge to draw from and I'm only aware of a small portion of it.*

*... I think Sensei's teaching and training are as sharp as ever. It's regrettable that he may no longer be able to participate in active kumite training, since he is still more than capable of whooping me in any kumite session. He can pretty much sniff out and counteract anything I try against him, even at less than full speed. "*

**Senpai Scott Oshiro (1/23):** " ... *The biggest plus is the continuous learning of the art and being able to pass along that knowledge to the students in the club. ... Always appreciate learning new techniques/applications from Sensei. For me, training is still very challenging as I'm not yet physically back to where I'd like to be.*"

**Senpai Cliff Lau (1/23):** "... *The physical and mental challenges were a very refreshing change from my daily routine. Learning new techniques and incremental accomplishments made training interesting, satisfying and rewarding. And the one hour of "me" time did wonders for me psychologically. ... Training is still important to me and keeps me healthy. However, teaching others to benefit from karate as I have is a major reason, I'm in the dojo from opening to closing. ... Building lifelong friendships and health (biggest plus at HSK). ... Sensei still possesses more knowledge (and technique) than all of us. IRREPLACEABLE.*"

Cool? Heart-warming? ... Definitely!!! For me, it is affirmation that HSK has done its job and has followed through on its vision: "To develop a respectful, responsible, and contributing member of our community." For me, tear-jerking as well, as I have taught EVERYONE who now trains and hundreds more that have since left!

I used to wonder how and why people who trained at HSK rarely made it to the brown belt level, much less attained the prestigious black belt! I now understand. LIFE HAPPENS!! Although it felt like just a flash in time, I now realize that I have spent 55 years of my life doing what I truly love.

I used to tell the Senpais that I love to train more than I love to teach. Now, I love to teach MORE than I love to train. I NOW train so that I am ABLE to teach!!!

LIFE IS GOOD!!!



