

## My Karate Journey, Part 32 -- "Complete Tyrant"?

Another "What Others Say!" story, but from a different perspective. Unlike EVERYONE else in HSK who got to go home after their training to lick their "wounds" and prepare their body and mind for another "onslaught" from Sensei, daughter Remy did NOT have that luxury! She DID go home ... but with ME!!!

Current members have been lucky, most enrolling in karate AFTER the "softening of Sensei" occurred. This, you will recall, happened with the birth of granddaughter Rylynn. HSK members have her to thank for the pleasant, friendly, approachable, easy to talk to, kind, funny, warm, easygoing, sympathetic, agreeable, good-natured, and personality-rich Sensei that they NOW encounter in the dojo.

Here is Remy's take on HER HSK experiences:

"When sensei gave the assignment for the anecdotes, I hesitated about writing one. My history with karate has been long and varied, and I felt that I would end up writing a novel instead!! Finally, I decided to give it a try, so here goes.

As many of you know, sensei, my dad, started HSK when I was 5 years old so that I could learn karate with other students of my level. At age 5, I was a VERY mediocre student, to put it generously. I lacked focus and concentration and was often taken out of the main group for remedial help with one of the senpais. During these sessions, I recall being very distracted, watching what the main group was doing instead of concentrating on catching up myself!! There were numerous occasions when I would not feel up to training and would complain to my mom, telling her I didn't want to go to karate. She would always ask me, "Do

you want to tell Poppy you aren't going to karate?" and my answer was NEVER "yes," so I ended up begrudgingly dragging myself to the dojo on those occasions. One reason for my reluctance was that HSK was a very different club back then. My beloved father — kind, playful, loving, but strict at home, was a complete tyrant in the dojo!! (Senpai Cliff will back me up on this!!) If we so much as moved a muscle before he said "naotte," we would immediately be punished with push-ups, with increasing numbers of push-ups required after each subsequent infraction!!

These memories are humorous to look back upon, but I realize now that these experiences taught me important lessons — one being that there are some things in life that you MUST do whether you want to or not!!

Although my relationship with karate got off to a bit of a rocky start in my childhood, as I grew older I began to enjoy karate more and appreciate the lessons and skills that I had begun to learn, willingly or not. Physically, I grew stronger and more coordinated. Mentally, I became tougher, more resilient. I began to appreciate the value of determination, how to persevere, and tell myself I CAN even when I really wasn't sure if I could. From time to time, I found myself pleasantly surprised when I actually COULD do it.

My younger brother, Ry, joined me in the dojo four years after I started, and I quickly realized that he easily exceeded me in focus, memory, skill, and natural ability. It was a struggle for me just to keep ahead of him in rank even though I had a FOUR YEAR head start on him!! Although his skill so clearly exceeded mine, to his credit, he NEVER made it a competition between himself and me. Pops was tough on both of us, and I think in a way, that helped us become BFFs who would support each other through the tough trainings pops would put us through. Also, thanks to this experience, I learned that even though my bro's skills were

far superior to mine, that didn't mean that my skills were "junk." In other words, just because Ry was better at something, it didn't necessarily mean that I was bad at it. This, I think, is a valuable lesson for ALL of our members. People are all different, and we each have our own strengths and weaknesses. As individuals, we should try to avoid comparing ourselves to others, and instead compare our present selves with our past selves. Have we improved upon our past selves?

That is the only question that matters. If the answer is "yes," then we are moving in the right direction.

My bro and I continued training until the year 2000 when he graduated from high school and went away to college, and my plate became a bit full trying to juggle university coursework with karate.

I finally made a commitment to return to HSK in 2013 (I think), when my daughter, Rylynn, turned 5 and was old enough to take karate. I always knew I wanted my kids to train with HSK so that they could learn the valuable lessons I learned growing up. I trained with Rylynn in the white belt class, since over the intervening 13 years, my karate skills had been buried under a truckload of cobwebs!! For myself, I wanted to re-sharpen my karate skills. For my daughter, I wanted the same hard-won benefits I had acquired from karate so many years ago. I wanted her to be disciplined and kind — confident and humble — respectful and caring — tough, both mentally and physically, so that she could take care of herself and her fellow human beings in an unpredictable world.

Unsurprisingly, she, like her mom, began as a mediocre student, but over the years, I have watched her grow and develop while learning many of the same lessons I myself learned so many years ago. She has grown from a rather distractible, uncoordinated little girl into a strong, intelligent, and kind young woman. She, herself, is beginning to recognize

and appreciate some of the benefits that karate has afforded her, and I'm glad to say that I have seen her outlook towards karate improve in recent years as she has formed close bonds with many of her karate friends. I am optimistic and hopeful that in the years to come, she will continue to grow her mental and physical toughness with the help and encouragement of sensei and the senpais.

My son, Rynn, started karate for the first time in 2019 when he was 5, and like his mom and sis before him, he proved to be yet ANOTHER mediocre student. (Poor Pops!!) He muddled through training until the pandemic, and attempted to train on zoom, but lacked focus, so Pops booted him from zoom class. When we resumed in-person classes in April of last year, Rynn restarted as a white belt, and this time around has been doing MUCH better than the first go-round. He is an entirely different student who has grown IMMENSELY, more disciplined and focused than at age 5, and it makes my heart happy to watch him training hard each time he comes to practice. He accepts constructive criticism with a good attitude, and I can see him striving to improve each time he trains.

As a senpai, I love building relationships with the students. I enjoy encouraging them to try their best and to exceed their own expectations. It is gratifying to watch the students continually learning and improving their skills, and I am so proud of them for their hard work and dedication to their training. Each student is on their own unique HSK journey, and I am thankful and honored to be a part of that journey. Our goal as HSK instructors is simply to help everyone achieve their highest potential, not just as a karateka, but as a human being; and I thank sensei and all the senpais for their dedication to this goal. Here at HSK, we are one big family. We all have our problems and areas we need to improve, but we all are working toward a common goal. We all try to help and encourage

one another to become better, even if it's just by starting a friendly competition with the person you are standing next to, to see who can do a lower stance, a faster kick, or a louder kiai.

Karate is a difficult sport. You get out of it what you put into it. Each training session is a contest against yourself — it's a constant mental arm-wrestling match. Can I improve my stance, snap, kime, focus, stamina? Am I going to give up, or am I going to give it all I got? It's my choice.

**I CHOOSE TO GIVE IT ALL I'VE GOT!!!"**

**Senpai Remy**

Alan Sekiguchi, January 14, 2023