



RANDOLPH  
MARTIAL ARTS  
ACADEMY

# ACHIEVE

*The Official Newsletter of the Randolph Martial Arts Academy*

*Issue 7*



## Kyan Chotoku- Founder of Shorinryu Karate

Kyan Chotoku, founder of Shorinryu Karate, was born in Shuri, Okinawa in December 1870. As the son of Kyan Chofu, who was a steward to the king of the Ryukyu kingdom, Kyan Chotoku enjoyed being well off early in life. His father also started him on the path of martial arts training at the age of 8, and focused on discipline which made an impression on him his whole life; a sense of discipline and order. Because of his family's wealth, he was sent to some of the best Okinawan karate teachers available.

At that time, each karate teacher only taught a few kata, so Kyan Chotoku sought out many different teachers so that he could become as well-rounded in karate as possible. Early on he learned Shuri-te from Sokon Matsumura who taught him Seisan kata. Later, after being in Japan for a few years, he returned home and at the age of 20, he studied Tomari-te with Kosaku Matsumora and Kokan Oyadomari from Tomari village, and learned Chinto kata. He also studied with Pechin Maeda, who had taught Kyan the kata, Passai. He studied the longest with Chatan Yara who taught Kyan many things including the kata, Kusanku. He spent much of his time focused on his karate, however he did study some kobudo, and his last teacher was Tokumine, who was rumored to be the best bo staff man on Okinawa, and taught Kyan the weapons kata, Tokumine no kun.

Later on at the age of 30, he moved to Kadena, where he'd spend the remainder of his life. Kyan Chotoku was a thin man, and with his slim stature he became extremely proficient at kicking technique, to the point where many Okinawans said he had no equal, especially with his double jump kick. However, despite his prowess in kicks, he was a complete martial artist, and did not consider himself a specialist. He believed one must be good at both hand and foot technique, and be well rounded to not be imbalanced.

Kyan Chotoku was very focused on the discipline of karate. He practiced Seisan itself for 2 years until he perfected the kata. The attention to detail and repetition required to master a kata had a profound impact on him, and he developed a great respect for the law.

Kyan Chotoku was known for some great physical feats including his unbendable arm. When Kyan had gotten older, he would demonstrate this feat at festivals. People of all ages would try to bend his arm which he held extended in front of him. No one was ever successful at bending his arm. When he was asked what the secret to his incredible strength was, his answer was always the same, "Develop your tanden (center). Drop your mind there and operate from there. Practice your kata until your kata moves from your tanden. When you *become* the kata, you've achieved the secret."

Master Kyan Chotoku would go on to develop the style of Shorin-ryu karate, which would later become one of the parent styles to Isshinryu Karate, the style we study. Kyan's karate emphasizes tenets that match his thin, fast, physical stature. The style emphasizes higher stances, speed and mobility, and a push-pull motion.

After Kyan Chotoku started teaching Shorinryu, he took on a few notable students. Most notable for practitioners of Isshinryu karate was Master Tatsuo Shimabuku. Master Shimabuku studied with Master Chotoku from 1931- 1935 in Kadena village and learned 5 empty hand kata. Shorinryu karate would be a major influence of Master Shimabuku's development of his own style.

During World War II, and esp. during the Battle of Okinawa (the final land battle of the war), people were scattered and food was scarce, so whatever food that Kyan could obtain, he would give to the children, in order to take care of those who could not care for themselves. Due to this, Kyan often did not eat, and passed away on September 20, 1945, due to hunger.

# Dojo News and Achievements

**New F.I.S.T.-** Congratulations to Jarred Veljkovic, Junior Black Belt, on becoming an Assistant Instructor!

**Congratulations-** to Layla Tallman, Yellow Belt, who this Spring as a member of 2 elite dance teams for the Dance Dream Academy in Ledgewood, NJ, competed in 2 dance groups over 4 competitions. In the 1<sup>st</sup> competition, True Talent, she placed 1<sup>st</sup> in both dances, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> competition, Inferno, placed 1<sup>st</sup> with a platinum overall high score in both dances, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> competition, Backstage, placed 1<sup>st</sup> in both dances, and in the 4<sup>th</sup> competition, Elite Dance Challenge, placed 1<sup>st</sup> in both dances. Her dance school earned 3 platinum scores and 5 scholarships. Her parents, family, & friends, are very proud of her dancing achievements in the 2022 season, as are we at the Dojo. Congratulations Layla!

**Charity Event-** On Saturday, June 4, 2022, the Dojo hosted it's annual Concert & Art Show benefiting St. Jude Children's Hospital. There was music, dance, art, and even a little magic! Some very talented artists and performers, both professionals and Dojo students, put on a great show to help raise money and awareness for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, and to date, this year, we have raised over \$2,300! Special thanks to Douglas DaSilva, Shodan, for putting much of it together and emceeing the event, and to Sophia Keoskey, Shodan, for her opening speech on what inspired us to start doing this in the first place. We started off with the Amazing Magnifico, had many performances and pieces of art from our students & some other great kids, and excellent performances by professionals: Stephen Porter, Conway Kuo, Eiko Kano, Karen Hakobyan, Patrick Reynolds, Angela Reynolds, Rodrigo Baggio, A. Lish Lindsey (piece composed by Faye-Ellen Silverman), Tzu-En Lee, Douglas DaSilva, Thomas Piercy, Yazhi Guo, William Chin, Gabriel Elias Costache, and Shichi Dan Mark Wade & the Mark Wade Trio (featuring Tim Harrison & Scott Neumann). It was such a great show and we're definitely look forward to next year!

**Congratulations-** to Ava Hopley, Nikyu, who was accepted at her school into a high-talented and skilled art club.

**Promotion-** Congratulations to Michael Corey, Nikyu, who was promoted at his job at Asco Power, Florham Park from Design Engineer to Senior Design Engineer.

**Congratulations-** to Eric Hopley Jr., Green Belt II, for him and his teammates on their baseball team being chosen to march in the local Memorial Day parade.

**Congratulations-** to Genevieve Bunge, Purple Belt, who placed first, second, and third in her classes in her horse show that was held on April 24, 2022. Great job Genevieve!



## Black Belt Promotions

Congratulations to the following students who were promoted in the past twelve months:

**Jarred Veljkovic- Junior Black Belt (Karate Camp 2021)**

**Anthony Helmstetter- Junior Black Belt (December Shiai 2021)**

**Sophia Keoskey- Shodan from Jr. Black Belt (December Shiai 2021)**

Great job by all. Excellent work & dedication. Kanpai!



Miss Sophia Keoskey began her karate journey when the Randolph Martial Arts Academy opened in September of 2014, when she was 7 years old, as the Dojo's first official home-grown student. She earned her Junior Black Belt in January 2021 at a special ceremony (due to the COVID pandemic), and she earned her Shodan in December 2021 at the Kai Shiai. She is both a dedicated martial artist as a student and also as a F.I.S.T. member (Assistant Instructor). In addition to being a martial artist, she is also a basketball player, a musician, and a very intelligent high school student. Even at a young age, she has a long list of accomplishments that anyone would be proud of, and is now adding being the youngest person to ever write the newsletter's Kanpai article, which for us at the Dojo, is a great privilege.

*Here's what she has to say:*

I remember when I initially passed by the Dojo and saw the Randolph Martial Arts Academy sign, and will always recall the first time I saw the maroon awning with the white, peeling letters that read "Steakhouse" even though it had become a Dojo. I immediately tugged on my mom's sleeve, asking to sign up, merely for fun. At the time, I didn't realize how much this would change the way I live my daily life and how it would become my second home.

When the Dojo first opened, I asked my parents to join & one thing had led to the next and within a week, I was more than ready to attend. You could imagine the excitement of a 7 year old, as she approached the neon green line, ready to bow on for the first time. I remember receiving my Kai ID number, ending in a 1, which didn't mean much to me at the time. Only now, do I reflect on how unique and important that number "1", and the beginning of my karate journey, is to me. It was in those days, where I was the only student in my class; two people, me and my teacher, in an empty room with a green carpet, that changed my life forever.

After training for a few months, more and more students started to join. Slowly, but surely, the Dojo started to grow, and I was able to witness it. As a kid, I watched the Dojo evolve and gain more and more people each day. As I started to see more people, I saw other Black Belts for the first time and I was inspired. As a child, I have always believed that to receive a Black Belt, one must be an adult. I didn't truly understand then that age is simply a number, and one can still achieve great things when they are young. Once I matured a little more, I understood that this was not true. I started to focus on an important goal. One that drove me on my journey, and pushed me to earn what I have and become who I am today. I wanted so badly to earn my Black Belt, and I wanted to show people that I can earn that Black Belt at a young age. I was dedicated, so I thought it would be easy.

I started working very hard and practicing every day at home. I remember attending early pre-class sessions with Mr. Hopley Sr., one on one, before the other students arrived for class, where I sparred with him to improve my kumite and then practiced kata to improve that as well. I remember with many things, such as kata, Mr. Hopley telling me, "you don't really know it if you can't teach it", so I started teaching & helping my younger brother, who would later join the Kai himself, the fundamentals.

As I started to get older and closer to my teenage years, I transitioned from the junior to the senior class, at the age of 11. I was intimidated, being a small child and a girl, but I had to quickly adapt and become a role model to others as I was higher in rank than most of them, and become a role model to them as they are aiming to achieve the same goal as I am.

Over those years, I competed in many tournament competitions, and brought home many kata and kumite trophies. I fell in love with the kata competition, and karate became my escape. As I'm sure many of you have heard Mr. Hopley say, the Dojo is a sanctuary and it's true. As I realized with hard work comes good things, I was so overjoyed, thinking I could continually attend all the classes during the week and practice countless more hours at home.

However, as I got older and progressed in my karate journey, I developed more conflicts. Between academic commitments and athletics, my priority for my karate dwindled. I was barely able to make class because of practices and games, and I was losing sight of the true meaning behind karate, and I disregarded it at times. It was almost a miracle for me when the pandemic hit, because it provided me with an opportunity to slow down, find my center, and respect the art of Isshinryu. Although many took COVID-19 as a burden, I appreciated the time to reflect on the art and my karate. As an Ikkyu at the time, I started to furiously practice at home, and I had more time on my hands to improve too, so I could be ready for anything that hit me.

After hundreds of online classes, that I never could have imagined would happen, Zoom meetings with my fellow ikkyus, and countless hours of practice, my moment finally arrived to earn my Black Belt. I remember seeing that belt in my hands and it was a dream come true for me. I was the youngest member of my group that tested for Black Belt, and I was able to prove to myself that I could earn it with hard work, even at 13 years old!

From the start of my journey, I looked up to Mr. Hopler, and was so fascinated how he turned an old, crumbling former steakhouse into a beautiful Dojo, and a safe place for people.

I was inspired to follow my dream and believe I am capable of doing so. I am forever grateful for the uniqueness of my experience, and to have memories of our Dojo that are special to me. By starting karate at a young age, I was able to gain discipline and develop values as a child that to shape my life to this day, and will continue to do so for the rest of it. I hope to inspire younger students with my personal journey, and show them that no matter what age you are, with a will to work hard, and the determination to achieve your dreams, anything is possible.

*Kanpai,*

*Sophia Keoskey, #6-25-1*

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## Words of Wisdom

*"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."*

-Martin Luther King Jr

*"If you had time to do it twice then you had time to do it right the first time."*

-John Wooden

*"I have failed over and over again in my life, and that is precisely why I succeed."*

-Michael Jordan

*"When it rains most birds head for shelter. The eagle is the only bird that when it starts to rain, starts flying above the clouds."*

- A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

*"Treat everyone with politeness, even those who are rude to you, Not because they are nice, but because you are."*

-Unknown

*Save the Date:*

### **Dojo Picnic for our 8th Anniversary**

We will be having our Dojo picnic in celebration of the Dojo's 8th anniversary!

When: Sunday, September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 1:00- 4:00pm

Signups will be open to all Randolph Martial Arts Academy students & their families

Detailed information is coming very soon...

Looking forward to seeing everyone there to celebrate!