

**August 2010**  
**Monthly Communication**  
**Sensei Cline, NW Region Director**

The 20<sup>th</sup> Niju Kun may be, in some ways, the most difficult precept to live and practice. As an instructor, you want to bring life, energy and knowledge into your classes, but sometimes it is difficult to bring your karate instruction "to the next level." This precept asks us to stretch ourselves and push the envelope regularly in order to grow and excel as a human being. In speaking with Ken Kraisler recently, he said that he really needs to practice something three times before it begins to take hold, make sense, and start to feel natural. I knew his statement to be true; not only for myself, but I had actually read this in a textbook I used to write one of my papers for the Instructor Trainee Program. When introducing a new combination or application in my dojo, I observe the student's reactions to new material, and I make sure I reintroduce that same information over again until it settles in the muscle memory and the students feel comfortable. Challenges are evident in life and in the dojo. These challenges are opportunities to test our resolve and conquer any conflict in our minds, in our lives, or in our bodies. Attending Mt. States Camp in a few days will allow me, as an instructor, to train while other instructors teach; bring back new and different ideas; and refresh my mind and soul in my effort to reach for the next level. Always Create and Devise – a challenge at all times.

**Niju Kun**

The 20<sup>th</sup> Niju Kun is our focus for this month: "Always create and devise."

**Kata of the Month**

Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced: Kanku Dai, with 65 movements and kiai points at movements 15 and 61.

Black Belt: Tekki Sandan, with 36 movements and kiai points at movements 16 and 36.

**Technical Focus**

Body expansion and contraction, stamina, hip vibration, generating power in multiple techniques without body shifting.

**Instructor Spotlight: Ken Kraisler, Godan**



**Where and when did you start training with ISKF?**

I was 19 years old in the summer of 1987 on break from college at UC Berkeley. Someone came into the restaurant where I was working with an ISKF Santa Monica

Karate t-shirt. The next day, I went to Sensei Field's dojo, took a quick look around, plopped down my money and stepped on to the floor. I had enough observational sense to bow. Some other new guy didn't bow. A blackbelt took notice and yelled at him "bow when you step into Japan".

I can remember my very first class. Someone was leading the warm-ups, and they had us stretching the back of our legs. I was not very limber. My eyes were closed as I was wincing in pain and when I opened them, Sensei Field was about 6 inches from my face with a big smile. He said, does it hurt that much? I was hooked.

## **What were the reasons you started training?**

At first it was 100% about self-defense. I wanted to be able to defend myself against a physical assault. Of course, at this time, I did not care about Kata. I didn't understand how Kata transmitted the techniques across the generations nor how it conditioned the mind and body. I did, however, love one step sparring and all its variations. I was convinced that if someone stood in front of me and announced their technique, that I could see it coming and therefore defend myself regardless of how good they might be. A year or so later, when I was a green belt, Ken Von-Helmont (a wonderful man, terrific blackbelt and a real stickler for bowing when you step on to the dojo floor) stood in front of me and announced mae-geri chudan. I was fully ready and set, but he came in so fast and so deep that I did not see it coming and did not react. His foot impaled itself right above my solar plexus. Down I went, immobilized. I could not breathe, but I immediately realized the hilariousness of the situation. After all, he was in front of me, several feet away. I knew what was coming, about when it was coming and I knew how to execute the block. I never counted on the fact that I might not be able to see it coming. He might as well have kicked me from behind. My whole premise for self-defense was shot. How unfortunate for my solar plexus. This irony left me with a huge smile which Ken must have mistaken for pain. He kept whispering, "Ken get up before Sensei sees you." Sure enough Sensei Field came over and, whack, "Ken Von-Helmont, don't hit the green belts!" Ken looked at me again. I was still smiling.

Years before I started training, I was a huge fan of "Kung Fu" with David Carradine. For me, as a kid, that show captured what it meant to be a martial artist. The main character was humble but not weak and, on occasion, he displayed near-super-human capabilities. He would often think back to his early training as a kid. He'd remember the various lessons and try to apply them to

his current situation. He took something that was traditional and ancient, and deployed it in his modern life. He was a big albeit fictional hero for me, and so I tried to find a Karate school at that time. I visited an Ed Parker school in Van Nuys, CA, but I was a kid and I just couldn't make it happen.

In my first year of college, I hurt my back playing racquet ball. I decided I needed to change my exercise regimen to something with a more structured curriculum, something that combined conditioning with stretching (for my back). I started looking for a martial arts school. That's when I saw the t-shirt.

## **Who are the 2-3 people who have most influenced your martial arts training, and why?**

My answer to this question is pretty boring in that they it is so standard. My primary instructors influenced me the most. These would be Sensei Cline, Sensei Field, Sensei Yaguchi. I have witnessed each of these people demonstrating those same near-super-human capabilities that I saw as a kid in my beloved television program. I have to tell you, I have really seen it. The speed, the power, the fluidity of motion. Amazing stuff to be around. And, what's more amazing, they, as teachers, have been able to get me to do the same thing (at least on occasion). Karate is a traditional and ancient martial art. It's movements are beautiful, and, if done right, it makes us more than we'd otherwise be. These people have stayed true to the martial art as they hand it down to us. It's a huge influence.

Often times, when I'm training or teaching I'll have a brief flash-backs to something one of these instructors said or demonstrated or tried to get me to do. It makes me want to get the techniques right, not make any mistakes. I have pictures of them around my dojo. They help me remember not be lazy, not to give up on things, to practice correctly.

**What keeps you training and teaching – what inspires you, what do you most enjoy, what are you learning now?**

I'm still learning lots of things, extending my capabilities. Karate learning is cumulative. Being able to do something new that I was not doing 5, 10 or 15 years ago is inspiring in and of itself. Now that I have figured out these new things, I can listen at seminars and hear things more completely. I think this is especially true when the masters talk about using momentum, using the opponent's power, circular actions, taking a path of least resistance.

I love my students. I love it when they progress. Sometimes I spar with them and take advantage of things I know they are weak at. Soon, they get good and I can't do it anymore. I love that. I love training with them. We train hard and go out for a drink and a meal afterwards. This is the best.

**Upcoming Events**

**ISKF/US Nationals Championships**, Sioux Fall South Dakota, November 6 & 7.

See the annual calendar on our regional website which lists regional, national and international events. <http://iskfnw.org/default.htm>

I love the camps and seminars. I often think I better stay in shape or I won't do well at these events.

Doing the techniques, doing kata, doing basics can be a real joy. It's exercise, but it's also relaxing. It changes my outlook on everything else. The movements are beautiful and to be able to do them or at least some of them is a terrific feeling. Currently, I'm working on the 10 or so Kata after the core 15. These are tough and they keep me plenty busy.

Lot's of people create adventures in their life. Mountain climbing, sailing, skiing, etc. Karate is my adventure.

**Anything else you'd like to add?**

I think all young people should have at least a year of Karate training, especially girls. People need to have some concept of self-defense, skill-based confidence and etiquette.