



JULY 2021

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INTRODUCTION

In this issue, we say goodbye to Sensei **Freeman Thurston**, 7th Dan with a tribute recognizing his years of service to the TWKK organisation. Sensei Freeman died on June 13, 2021. Over time, we have reported the sad loss of a member, or a member's close family relative; but in the history of the organisation, this is only the second time we have published the loss of a senior member, our Director of Caribbean affairs. (The first was on the occasion of the death of Sensei **Masaru Shintani**, 9th Dan).

Following an email exchange with Sensei **Dave Manara** and Sensei Freeman back in May, I suggested that our most senior sensei share his thoughts in an interview on the topic of interest. At the time, Sensei Freeman also shared an article in a similar vein. Both are included in this issue.

The virtual Yudansha classes have been a hit! [Karate pun]. The **next Yudansha** class is planned for **Tuesday, July 27th**, at a later hour to accommodate our karate-ka in the west.

We do have some Club news to report; and recent rankings, which shows that some clubs have managed to keep the karate training going in this restricted time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Club heads will be thinking about what rules will have to be in place in order to meet public health requirements for arranged public 'gatherings'.

This may mean karate-ka may need to wear masks while working out; it may require continued social distancing; it may require that students must be vaccinated in order to train in the dojos. This is all food for thought while we look forward to opening our dojos for gathering to train together.

Remember, getting your COVID-19 vaccination is not just for your protection, but for the protection of everyone around you. Variants of COVID-19 will continue. Being vaccinated will reduce the risk of getting ill. Like the Flu shots most of us are used to each fall, COVID shots are likely to become an annual safety event/requirement. It is not going away.

Stay Safe, Everyone!

Enjoy your read! > EDITOR **ROBB DODS**

TORONTO WADO-KAI KARATE CLUB LTD.

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Don't Dabble

An Interview with Sensei Dave Manara 9th Dan by Robb Dods, 6th Dan

Have you ever wondered how your instructors choose what they teach for each class in the dojo? What about why sometimes it seems like some classes may be repetitive, or your instructor hasn't taught new or different techniques? In these times of gladiator-like entertainment in ultimate fighting competitions and demonstrations, why isn't your instructor teaching grappling, boxing, jumping, flipping, judo techniques, and other esoteric forms?

These questions raise a few issues that you need to think about and decide for yourself regarding what you want from your Wado-Kai training. If you read our philosophy section on our website, at Toronto Wado-Kai, we teach traditional Karate. I asked Sensei Manara about this.

**We Teach Traditional
Karate**

"This is what I expect our instructors to be teaching. Our instructors have been taught by me, and/or taught by my students. I expect them to uphold the principles of traditional karate-do.



"An instructor knows her/his dojo, knows what each student is capable of, and where they are in their training. The instructor must blend the needs of all the students into choosing what will be taught at each class. Sometimes an instructor will decide what the focus should be from the results of a previous class(es), some improvement that is needed by everyone. They may prepare some techniques, series of combinations, or kumite that has not been taught in a while. They may even come to a class prepared with something in mind and yet,

in the warm up, choose a different direction because of what they observe.

"While some classes seem exciting because you learned something new, like a new kata or a new technique, some classes may seem repetitive. If they ever seem 'boring' then I challenge you to think about your own attitude to training. Why do you come to class?"

**Our training is for the
serious karate-ka**

"As one trains towards the black belt level, it is often said, 'The more I learn, the less I know'. Ask any black belt of a more senior level what they feel they need work on and they most often say 'The Basics'; those same techniques you first learn as a white belt.

"One thing is for sure; your instructors will not teach a class that is not designed to improve the training for you and your classmates. I believe as an instructor, the challenge is in the question, 'Does the student want to be good at something, or to have a little knowledge of bits and pieces?' I like to compare it to someone who wants to be good at hockey, tennis, golf, karate, baseball, etc. ... he/she will be good at nothing with pieces of training only. If I practice my choice sport, I will be closer to "mastering it" with effort, rather than as a hobbyist. Our training is for the serious karate-ka.

"As an instructor, the challenge is on designing classes that are interesting and challenging both physically and mentally. They are different in the form of drills, yet encompass the key ingredients that are required to progress.

"This reminds me of one of my most serious students (at the time) who some of you may remember, Gerry MacPherson. I asked him, after about five years of not missing a class, 'What keeps you so interested every day of training?' The response surprised me. His answer was, 'I never know what to expect, and how you change class dynamics on a dime.' I learned a lot by that comment.

"I want to teach people who commit to training properly, and not just dabble."

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In Memoriam

Senior Dan Council Member – Sensei Freeman W. Thurston, Shichidan Caribbean Director and Head of Bahamas & Caribbean AIKIWA Wado-Kai Karate

Senior ranks often find it interesting to cast our memory back to when we knew certain people as a white belt, or an early rank. For those of us still around and old enough to remember the early days of karate training at Ryerson University (then, Ryerson Polytechnic Institute) in the mid-1970's, we may remember first meeting Sensei Freeman when he began his karate training in 1974. Sensei Freeman enrolled in karate classes while attending Ryerson to achieve his degree in Engineering, which he did by 1978.

When Freeman first came to Toronto, he already was married with two children. It was only natural to engage the family in karate training, and it wasn't long before his better half, Sensei Annamae, 4th Dan, began training at Ryerson as well. After graduating, he then went on to initiate teaching karate classes at home, in Freeport, Grand Bahama, Bahamas. Since that time, over the past 48 years, Freeman successfully promoted the martial arts in the Caribbean and has been the TWKK Director for the Caribbean for many years.

Over the years, many of our members have visited Sensei Freeman and Sensei Annamae in Freeport for karate adventures in the Bahamas. Sensei Dave Manara, 9th Dan, made numerous trips to visit Freeman and update him on katas and kumite training that we were experiencing in Toronto. Sensei Steve Borda, 8th Dan, has accompanied Sensei Manara, and also visited on his own a number of times. As Freeman once put it: *“Technical and managerial support and encouragement were provided personally by Sensei Dave Manara, and via a ‘rash’ of visiting TWKK senior ranks, including sensei Robb Dods, Rob Stark, Blaine Beemer, Eric Goddard, and Steve Borda.”* Freeman visited Canada many times, attending the annual Training Camps, and staying with various members while visiting numerous dojos in and around Toronto. We even had him try a quick work-out exercise, barefoot in the snow, in Port Perry once.



There always seemed to be interesting things happening during those visits to the Bahamas. “I remember the first time I went down to train with Freeman in 1989, when I was a 3rd Dan,” said Sensei Robb Dods. “Freeman had arranged a surprise radio interview for the two of us, to promote karate classes in Freeport. I think the same day, a local newspaper article came out with a picture of the two of us, but in the caption below I was given the rank of 6th Dan! I was afraid to tell Sensei Manara when I came home, claiming ‘It wasn't my fault!’ I treasured that article for years because I was sure I would never reach the rank of Rokudan.”

A group of some 24 or 26 of us descended upon Freeman and Annamae in 1992. What a trip! We often were waiting in the lobby of the hotel, joking about Freeman being on Bahamas time, because no matter what time he told us to be ready to be picked up to go to some event, he was always late. We had a great time between those events, scuba diving, horseback riding on the beach, a booze cruise, and more. We can't forget the colourful, noisy [Junkanoo](#); and Freeman arranged some evening events at his home with Annamae, and at a local night club (to see Spiderman – not the one we know, for sure). Some of us have a video that was made of that trip that is quite humorous to pull out once in a while.

Another organised trip to the Bahamas didn't happen until 2010, with an even larger contingent of karate-ka; and everyone who attended certainly enjoyed the visit as well. There are plenty of pictures, sorted by the eight days of the trip, at the Flickr website [TWKK Photo Albums](#).

Excerpt from the FOCUS issue, January 2016: When Sensei Freeman began teaching, it was a summer training program for children, offered at the Freeport, Grand Bahama, YMCA. The primary objective of this program was to fill

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in the usually boring, mischief-prone, long hot days after the euphoria of the school closings wears off, and dull, nothing-to-do reality takes root in most of the youth.

The program was originally seen to be a very limited, essentially a one-off “special”, as there were no plans for the karate sessions expanding beyond the initial summer offerings. Due to public demand and support, the program was modified and offered in the Fall/Winter as a regular YMCA program, taking on a life of its own when the Community Centre programs were organized in the Spring for urban youths.

Over the ensuing years, Freeman expanded the programs to include primary and secondary schools. He organised young adult classes, and a vibrant adult training program for the whole family flourished. The programs, offered ‘free-of-charge’ to all initially (i.e., subsidized by Sensei Freeman Thurston ☺), became supported with special funding by the Bahamas Government via Freeport, Grand Bahama, local Government Council, and occasional grants from Corporate Friends-of-Bahamas Wado-Kai.

Notable milestones and benchmarks for Sensei Freeman Thurston – the Man, and Bahamas & Caribbean AIKIWA Wado-Kai Karate – the organization, are inseparable entities at this stage of our development!



Pictured here is **Sensei Freeman** (3rd from right) about to enjoy the celebratory cake at the **40th Annual TWKK Training Camp** in 2013 at Wasaga Beach, Ontario, Canada.

Surrounding him (from left to right) are friends of old, Sensei **Ray Kennedy**, 7th Dan, **Marilyn Manara**, Sensei **Dave Manara**, 9th Dan, (Freeman Thurston), Sensei **Steve Borda**, 8th Dan, and retired Sensei **Rob Stark**.

As the head of the Bahamas / Caribbean Aikiwa Karate Do / Kubudoh Association, Sensei Freeman represented the TWKK organisation in the Bahamas. It was from his efforts that the TWKK first became an international organisation.

More recently, Sensei Freeman’s health was failing. Being a private person, he shared his health concerns only with a few of the TWKK family. He was on dialysis for many years and suffered a couple of heart attacks in the past. In the wake of hurricane Dorian in 2019, Freeman’s and Annamae’s house was badly damaged, adding a great deal of stress for the family. The morning of June 13, 2021, Sensei Freeman suffered a heart attack, which he did not survive. The Home-going celebration service of Sensei Freeman Thurston was held on Saturday, July 3, 2021 at the Grand Bahama Family Worship Center.

Sensei Freeman has left a noticeable void in our community and our leadership, and he will be sorely missed by all the members of our karate family.

For more details of Sensei Freeman’s karate journal, this link is to an online PDF document of his obituary and additional background: [Sensei Freeman Thurston](#).

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CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NEW BLACK BELT RANKS

Congratulations to the following Yudansha members recently promoted.

André's Budo Centre, Edmonton

To Shodan: **Alexandra Lepage** and **Delphine Roux-Buhl**

To Shodan-ho: **Maddison Lang** and **Zean Reynolds**

Randy James' dojos, Edmonton

To Shodan: **Olivia Burden** and **Jason Burden**

NEWS FROM CLUBS

TWKK Virtual Yudansha Classes

The virtual Yudansha classes for black belts have become popular and are continuing. The numbers below include the instructors leading. 'Sign-ons' are show because we do not always know if there is more than one person per login for the classes.

April 20, Senior Dan Yudansha: 11 sign-ons for the first ever Yudansha for 4th Dans and up.

Some Comments: 'The Senior Yudansha class was excellent. Well taught with lots of time for questions / discussion. It ran at the proper pace and step by step instruction through a "not well known" kata was appreciated. Good comradery also.'

'I enjoyed the class. It's great to have the chance to work on higher level kata and techniques. We all know how hard it is to find time to do that during a regular class. Thanks to everyone involved for all the hard work. Looking forward to the next one.'

May 25, Yudansha: 28 sign-ons representing approximately nine clubs

June 26, Senior Dan Yudansha: 13 sign-ons

EDMONTON Karate Club, Edmonton AB

Sensei Randy James,
Shichidan
(7th Degree Black Belt)

ST. PATRICK SCHOOL and
NORTH POINTE COMMUNITY
CHURCH

We had two Shodan-hos ranked to Shodan; **Olivia Burden** and her dad, **Jason Burden**. Unfortunately, we're losing their family to the States as they are moving to South Carolina in July.

Congratulations to **Pericles [Perry and Santa] Iadridis** from our Edmonton club on the achievement of his 3rd Kyu.



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Edmonton Karate Club,
Edmonton AB

Congratulations to **Greg Snaith** on the achievement of his 3rd Kyu. (Greg is the orange belt at the left, below)



ANDRE'S BUDO CENTRE, Edmonton AB

Sensei André Beauregard
Rokudan
(6th Degree Black Belt)

ANDRE'S BUDO CENTRE INC.
TUESDAYS & THURSDAYS:
7:00 – 9:00PM

Alexandra Lepage recently received her Shodan. Pictured below left, Alexandra is next to her mother, **Nathalie Bilodeau-Lepage** who received her Shodan almost two years ago, and of course, me.

Alexandra was 13 years old when she started her karate training. So, congratulations to Alexandra!

Congratulations to **Delphine Roux-Buhl** on her ranking to Shodan! (Pictured right)



Also, congratulations to **Maddison Lang** and **Zean Reynolds** who both were awarded their Shodan-ho.

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**OSHAWA-WHITBY
Karate Club,
Oshawa ON**

**Sensei José-Carlos Garcia
Hachidan**
(8th Degree Black Belt)

C.O. Theresa Virgin,
1st Kyu (Brown Belt)

YWCA CENTRE
CHILDREN & ADULTS

WALTER E HARRIS PUBLIC
SCHOOL
CHILDREN - BEGINNERS &
ADVANCED

Summer seemed to come in like a lion—well, hot and sticky anyway. Hopefully we can have some nice temperate days for outdoor karate!

Congratulations to **Emily M.** who achieved her Junior Black Belt on April 6, 2021.



Way to Go Emily!



On April 20, 2021 **Adora M.** received her Yellow Belt. Excellent Adora!

That is pretty much it for this season. We are seeing the end of this debilitating 'flu', so I know we can't wait until we are all back together in all of our facilities.

Have a fun and safe summer.

**Persistence in Training - The Bahamas and Caribbean AIKIWA Wado-Kai
Karate/Kobudo way**

Submitted by Sensei Freeman Thurston in May, 2021

Have you ever heard or seen that quote "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results"? It's often misattributed to having been said by Albert Einstein, but there is no actual evidence that he ever said that. Yet the quote persists. It's hard to know the implied context of whomever actually said that statement, but I certainly don't think it applies to your Wado Karate [training], or any martial arts training program.

Whenever I hear a student lament that they are bored or feel like they are just "doing the same thing over and over", or that "they already learned that", my mind goes to that quote.

To get better at learning/mastering karate/Kobudo, you genuinely need to work on the same thing –over and over and over again– in the hopes of eventually seeing improvements and results. And then, when you do see improvement, you still have to keep doing it over and over for maintenance. It's through pushing through the periods

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of seeing no improvement that we eventually get to see improvement in our work. But then once you get there, the only way to keep it is to continue to keep doing it. It never stops...

Role of Your Sensei

You have to show up. You have to do the work. There is no shortcut or secret to it. You just have to keep at it. You make mistakes. You grow. You try new things. You keep doing the same basic things day in and day out. It's part of developing your own creativity and being tenacious about it to help fight off boredom if you are experiencing it. Your sensei will see to it via constantly monitoring your progression during training periods...and over extended time for novices/beginners.

For Intermediate/Senior Students

It's up to you to keep going when you feel like you are plateauing, and to examine what you have been doing, and see if there are areas that can be tweaked for growth. If you have been devoted to your sensei and dojo training programs, but still feel that something is missing, it's great to get an "outside eye" or opinion in those moments. Go ahead... your sensei should not feel threatened... he/she might even recommend such an action. Take a private class with your own teacher, or try another teacher you have never learned with before. Sometimes a fresh perspective helps us to refocus our self when we feel stagnant.

Yudansha Students

If you are intermediate level or higher you can practice with the group, led by your sensei and other senior members of the dojo. During these sessions, it is not unusual for the group to explore specific realms of the art (drills, techniques) ...including forms/applications from other schools and aspects of the Martial Arts world.

But, as always, the thrust of the Yudansha training is wrapped around the Principles and Basic Philosophies that identifies your art; in our case Wado-Kai Karate/Kobudo; and your sensei's perspectives and views of the same. Period.

TORONTO WADO-KAI KARATE CLUBS AND CLUB HEADS

AJAX-PICKERING – Daina Als	EDMONTON – Randy James
André's Budo Centre (Edmonton) – André Beauregard	OSHAWA-WHITBY – José-Carlos Garcia
BAHAMAS/CARIBBEAN AIKIWA – Freeman Thurston	RYERSON (Toronto) – Leaton Bernard
BEAUBASSIN (Halifax) – Dan Duggan	SEIKIKAI MARTIAL ARTS (Etobicoke) – Steve Borda
BROOKLIN-WHITBY – Mark Illy	THORNHILL – Biller Ching & Dave Manara
CALGARY – Steve Henrich	
CLARINGTON – Robin Singh	YUDANSHA HOMBU (Thornhill) – Dave Manara

TORONTO WADO-KAI SENIOR DAN COUNCIL

Kudan (9 th Degree Black Belt)	Dave Manara
Hachidan (8 th Degree Black Belt)	Steve Borda, José-Carlos Garcia
Shichidan (7 th Degree Black Belt)	Randy James, Ray Kennedy, Larry O'Grady, Ron Sheyan, Freeman Thurston
Rokudan (6 th Degree Black Belt)	André Beauregard, Leaton Bernard, Biller Ching, Robb Dods, Steve Henrich, Tony Marziliano, Michael McCarthy, Ed Young
Godan (5 th Degree Black Belt)	Eric Bergman, Ken Buck, Heather Cant-Woodward, Joel Cohen, James Darker, Margaret Michael, Frank Murphy, Ron Ruskay, Jim Sullivan, Anthony Woodward
Yodan (4 th Degree Black Belt)	Andy Basacchi, Dan Duce, Kim Duggan, Alex Nguyen, Annamae Thurston

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