

# Way of the Warrior

By Dave Martin

I wrote most of this article on April 12, 1996, after teaching a police class in Woodland and a subsequent meeting with several professors at the AJJF Convention in Sparks, NV.

At the end of the Woodland class, I wanted to teach the police carotid chokehold. The resistance I encountered to teaching this technique from the club's sensei, and the failure of the professor observing the class to come to the defense of the art, left me disgusted and disappointed. I sat down and penned the first draft of this article simply for own my peace of mind. I did not attempt to publish it. After some soul searching, I dropped my AJJF membership instead.

Now, in 2008, after returning to the mat at the two Chico clubs, I have seen a reawakening of the idea that martial arts can be used and taught for self-defense. Jujutsuka are beginning to realize that kata, by itself, is not all there is to the art.

With that thought in mind, I believe more than ever that this article now needs to be published.

There are three distinct approaches to practicing any martial art, including Danzan Ryu Jujutsu:

Kata: A way to practice cooperatively with your partner so that together you can learn even the most dangerous of techniques without injury. Kata is an essential part of learning the arts. But in many ways, it has been over emphasized. Rolls and falls with more concern for perfect position than guarding against attack. Hip throws that have torrie stepping in to meet uki. Great as long as uki stands still but not much if he's moving. Dojos were teaching 80% formal kata and 20% ineffective self-defense.

Competition: A way to practice your art against an opponent who not only refuses to cooperate but is just as anxious as you to prove his techniques and win the contest. The judo shiai is a controlled environment with safety rules and controls.

Self-Defense: A way to practice the arts against an opponent who poses a physical, violent threat to you or others. Be honest: in these troubled times, we all wish to be able to protect our loved ones and ourselves. After all, Danzan Ryu Jujitsu began as a combat-orientated martial art system, and should still be practiced that way.

I watched as a few people in the Federation turned the entire organization into one that promoted their own gentle arts for gentle people who did not have the ability to defend themselves. How could they have done this?

It didn't happen overnight. The change began subtly by leaning away from Judo contests and instituting kata competitions to fulfill the rank requirements. Eventually, even this requirement was de-emphasized.

The martial focus during class and testing began to weaken, and a greater emphasis was placed on peripheral knowledge, such as on katsu and kapo, massage, anatomy, and whether you could pronounce the Japanese name for the art correctly. All of these changes became more important than the ability to defend against and defeat an opponent.

New rank requirements were pushed forward, in an attempt to make the arts more compatible with today's societal restrictions, I suppose. Perhaps it was because someone was injured once while doing it improperly and fear of insurance liability prompted change. Maybe it was changed just because the powers-that-be could change it.

A few of us old dinosaurs fought to keep the old ways. But as the new wave gained popularity, we found ourselves laughed at and our arts called too rough. They named my technique "Godzilla no Kata," a name I wear proudly to this day, not because of the image but because it implies the ability to physically overwhelm an opponent.

The "new wave" began to harvest the bitter seed it had sown over the years. There are cases where black belts, mugged, found their arts useless. The Kata Manuel has been updated so often that many of the original concepts have been lost. A case in point: the concept of Tsukkomi Jime, (the bear claw choke) has been totally lost over the years. Called the Bear Claw because the fingers grasped the gi and attacked uki's throat, tucking under his chin. Now the grip is changed to allow an attack into the carotids. Concept lost.

The proud statement that we are the school of ancient tradition is becoming less and less true.

I saw black belts in my police classes who had never been choked out or experienced the energy it takes to choke an opponent unconscious. When I explained that even young judo players were using chokes in contest, I was told that the powers-that-be felt that the technique was too dangerous to practice and that they had decided not to study that portion of the art. I found this amazing, considering that our boards include an entire list of choking arts. This may be a result of having too many high-ranking black belts who have never been warriors themselves and have no real-world life experience with physical conflict outside of the dojo.

Once, during a police tactics class at a convention, I demonstrated a take down used by police officers in conjunction with the carotid hold. One of the students asked "What do you do about the broken neck?" (He thought I was too rough.)

He was not satisfied with my reply that, as far as I knew, this had never occurred but that should it happen, I would call for medical assistance, render first aid, and carefully explain the circumstance in my report. DZR is a “martial art” and some arts may do damage to an opponent. That’s just the way it is.

The new-wave martial artists could, perhaps, revive their training partners from the unconsciousness of a choke. They could name every bone their arts might damage. But they had lost the ability—and perhaps the intestinal fortitude—needed to perform the technique that is designed to break that bone. DZR is a “full service” martial art system. No matter how you are attacked, you need the ability to respond with the appropriate level of force. You are taught options to choose from. These options include escapes, strikes, throws, chokes, control holds, bone-breaking techniques, and other techniques that can seriously injure or even kill your opponent. To take away any of these options from a student will set him up for failure in real-world self-defense.

Back then, my comment to these new-wave martial artists was that if that was their stand—if they didn’t intend to learn the full purpose of the arts—they might want to take up line dancing or exercising to music. "What had happened to the martial art system Master Okazaki had entrusted to us?", I asked myself. It seemed that the system was no longer “martial”; that the organization was more concerned with the quantity of students and schools than it was with quality of the techniques and the Ryu. Who are we to change the system Master Okazaki gave us and reduce its effectiveness for self-defense? There are reasons why he designed it the way he did and to water down his system is wrong.

Lately however, I have seen people waking to the realization that there is more to jujutsu than kata. Students are beginning to insist that the arts provide them the real ability to protect themselves. They are starting to question changes in their school and organization that weaken the martial component of the art, and with it, the influence of those who run the schools and organization. This healthy concern may eventually wrestle dictatorial control from the old guard. In fact, it may be the reemergence of the warrior spirit.

If we are not willing to teach effective arts the way they were taught by Master Okazaki, students will go elsewhere.

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October 20, 2008