

Self-interest, a spirit of social service and the Esoteric Principles

By Wm. M. Fischer, Prof.

Every now and again, I take out the Esoteric Principles of Judo which, origins notwithstanding, provides a manifesto of what a serious student of Danzan Ryu jujitsu should know, understand and follow about his art. Each time I read it, I come away with a slightly different (and hopefully richer) understanding of the precepts.

Some time ago, I was struck by one of the excerpts in the Esoteric Principles: "One must guard against self-interest and foster a spirit of social service." Does the phrase describe two principles, or one? As a martial artist takes a technique apart, lays the parts before him or her and studies how and why it works, the same can be done with these guiding principles. So, we look at each part.

As someone who has spent just short of 50 years in the martial arts, I can state unequivocally that "ego" and "self-interest" are two of the most toxic of concepts in jujitsu. When a person (or organization) is seen as jockeying for position within the Danzan Ryu family by device or design, the result has been, and always will be, disastrous.

In the two years following Ohana '90, for example, an issue arose where an entity claimed to be the "soke," or inheritor, of the Danzan Ryu jujitsu system as a result of a document obtained from Prof. Okazaki's son, Hachiro. The divisiveness of this claim struck at the very concept of 'ohana' which had been growing for several years prior. At a meeting of the Danzan Ryu jujitsu organizational heads in 1992, the then-senior professor of the organization in question very wisely decided and guaranteed that this claim would be a non-issue and that the document would not see the light of day again. This action illustrated how the Esoteric Principles and *kokua* were rightly chosen over self-interest and ego.

The rejection of self-interest and ego provides a positive vacuum into which a spirit of social service can be advanced. My college judo instructor (I will not mention his name so as not to embarrass him, but his initials are "Clyde Zimmerman") used to say that we take the 1% of the time we spend in the dojo and apply it in the remaining 99% of our lives and our community. With the knowledge of the martial arts comes great responsibility and obligation. By "fostering a spirit of social service," we turn outward to our family, our jujitsu 'ohana' and our greater community in order to fulfill one of the obligations imposed upon us by our study of the martial arts: the obligation to serve.

So, in looking at each concept, one is an antithesis of the other: A negative and a positive--a yin and a yang. We all have an ego and so the real trick is to keep it in check, look outward and work for the greater social good. As stated later in the Esoteric Principles, "service to humanity is the fountain of mutual existence and common prosperity," and to the serious martial artist, it is an obligation to be met.

1/15/2013

About the author:

Prof. Bill Fischer began training in judo in 1965. He helped establish one of the first high school karate clubs in the nation a year later. He was a member of his college judo team for 4 years and the head instructor for 2 years. In 1971, he began studying Danzan Ryu jujitsu with Prof. Mike Chubb, judan, and is currently ranked at kudan. He served on the Board of Directors of the AJJF, AJI and Shoshin Ryu Yudanshakai over the years and worked with Prof. Chubb to create and develop the annual Ohana weekends. He was inducted into the American Jujitsu Hall of Fame and Danzan Ryu Jujitsu Hall of Fame in 2005.