

Sword and Spirit

The Journal of Itten Dojo

September 2022



— Why Budo? —

Regardless of the times in which you live, or the circumstances of your life, success largely depends on things you can control:

- **Building a foundation of strong relationships in a community of mutual support and achievement.**
- **Forging a disciplined and positive mindset.**
- **Enhancing your physical health and capabilities.**

These are exactly the benefits membership in an authentic dojo provides.

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Reflections Our 30th Anniversary

In the old Isshinryu Karate Club headed by Ralph Lindquist—where I earned my first black-belt and, more importantly, met my wife Rosanne (as well as Alan and Deb Starner)—we had a saying: “If we ever saw anyone that knew more about this stuff than we do, we’d be training with them.” That saying actually came to fruition, at least for some of us, and led the Wolfes and Starners to resign from the Isshinryu club and create Itten Dojo. This month, September 29th, marks the 30th anniversary of the founding of the dojo. The Wolfes and Starners are still together (both couples, plus a daughter each, and collectively!), Itten Dojo has become something more and very different than we ever imagined, and the future is unfolding with opportunities that almost beggar belief.

Before I go any farther, I want to acknowledge the many members of the dojo that are directly responsible for the existence of the dojo—through not just the good times, but through multiple, black-swan events that would have been the end of any endeavor less enthusiastically supported.

Foremost is the late Bill Campbell. Mr. Campbell was the CEO of Campbell, Rodoff and Stewart Food Brokerage and the primary owner of the building on Trindle Road in Camp Hill that originally housed Itten Dojo on the second floor of the offices. Alan Starner was a vice president in that company and had asked Mr. Campbell whether we might use part of the vacant upstairs while we looked for a permanent facility. Mr. Campbell had been a Lindquist karate student in the 1960s and was decidedly unhappy with us for having left the Isshinryu dojo, but he agreed we could use the space for two weeks. Ultimately, we were there for seven years, long after the food brokerage was purchased by other companies and gone from the building.

While we were all there, Mr. Campbell came to take great pride in the dojo. A tour of the dojo conducted by Mr. Campbell became a mandatory part of the first visit of any potential client to the offices of the food brokerage, and in one case landed the account when it turned out the client was an active karate practitioner (“Any company with its own dojo is exactly who I want to





The first practice of Itten Dojo. The lineup here, with (left-to-right) Wolfe, Starner, Wolfe, Starner reflects a lesson Alan and I learned early on: Training goes much more smoothly if you don't try to instruct your own wife...

be doing business with..."). Mr. Campbell's active support made it possible for us to build the enrollment and resources necessary to move into our own facilities, and his commitment was recognized through award of an honorary black-belt in karate. To this day, some of us regard Mr. Campbell as the patron saint of our dojo.

I'm listing the following individuals in more-or-less chronological order of their initial black-belt promotions (many achieved black-belts in multiple arts), rather than by magnitude of individual contributions to the dojo (although all individual contributions have been significant, and in some cases have continued even though the individual now lives far away). These are the members that achieved black-belt rank: Alan Starner, Randy Manning, Ed Dix, Michael Rozycki, John Butz, Eric Fennel, Matthew Yohe, Dr. Michael Nickels, Carmen Altomonte, Peter Hobart, Don Dodson, Budd Yuhasz, Jevin Orcutt, Jennifer Ziegler, Gary Burkett, Charles Hudson, and Dr. Sarah St. Angelo.

Unless you've done the same, in this dojo or elsewhere in an equally demanding environment, you have no idea the sacrifice and dedication these individuals invested to attain the ranks they achieved.

But there are others that, while not having achieved black-belt rank—or not specifically within our dojo—



The dojo is starting to take form, with the addition of some racks for weapons (still in use at our current facility) and other accouterments, but the "mat" is still just an outline made with masking tape.

nonetheless made contributions without which the dojo would not now exist. Josh Freeman heads the list. On several occasions, Josh provided critically-needed loans or direct financial support that carried us through. Just weeks prior to his untimely death in a helicopter crash, Josh told me he had something in the works that would tie our two dojo closely together and permanently ensure the existence of both. I never learned what Josh was planning to do. The *Tomon*, the magnificent dojo he built, is long gone, but Itten Dojo embodies part of Josh's legacy.



Josh Freeman, training with a yari (spear), during a visit to our original dojo in Camp Hill.



Former members like Scott Farrell, Jen Pomerantz, and Vic Wadhawan have stayed in close touch and over many years have made donations of funds or unneeded gear, or provided expert professional services to the dojo, free of charge. Their continued support of the dojo is very deeply appreciated.

With just a few notable exceptions in the course of three decades—and no, I’m not going to cite them by name—everyone else that has held membership in Itten Dojo has had a positive impact and helped make the dojo what it is today. My electronic records extend back to 1996. Even missing the first four years during which I did not keep detailed records, it’s clear that more than 1,600 people have inquired about training over the years, and more than 500 people have enrolled and actually trained—most of them for an extended period of time. The really important thing is that every member of the dojo has been known, deeply and by name, by the instructors and their fellow students.

And there have been many senior instructors with whom the dojo has trained since 1992. Originally, we had no expectation of ever doing anything other than karate and kenjutsu. But Fate had other plans. Sometimes by intention, and other times in order to recover from a black-swan event, we’ve accumulated substantial experience and oftentimes rank in a range of arts, both *koryu* (old-style) and *gendai* (modern) budo. Most of the instructors with whom we’ve worked have been exceptional, as martial artists and as individuals but, as has been the case with members of the dojo, there have been a few notable exceptions. I learned a great deal from all of them—the positive examples have had characteristics I try to emulate; the others I take as examples of what to avoid being or doing under any circumstances.

I started to create a list of everyone with whom we’ve trained, and then changed my mind, deciding instead to just make a short list of the most positive, past influences on our dojo:

Ted Vollrath. My final karate instructor; the first person in the world to achieve black-belt rank from a wheelchair. And then did the same in multiple arts. Vollrath Sensei was a huge supporter of our dojo in its earliest years and a very significant mentor to me.



William Knight. My first kenjutsu and aikijutsu instructor, and a great friend. It was always the best fun when Knight Sensei started a mini-lecture with, “It’s a paradox...”



Diane Skoss. We spent many years commuting to New Jersey to train in koryu jodo, and enjoyed every moment working with Skoss Sensei. She now holds *menkyo kaiden* in that art, and it is richly deserved.



Ellis Amdur. Collaborating with Amdur Sensei on an eclectic approach to aikido yielded an entirely different way to train and a wealth of insights. His writings continue to be very influential.



Rod and Mitsuko Uhler. The Uhlers were responsible for enabling us to train in koryu kenjutsu and provided our introduction to and opportunities to train with the incomparable Okabayashi Shogen Sensei.



As it's sometimes said, "The past is prelude," and that certainly applies to our dojo. Moving forward, we now have direct access to a number of the most highly qualified instructors in the world, and our dojo and arts are

recognized and supported by international budo organizations based domestically and in Japan. Ranks or certifications have been provided by the Shudokan Martial Arts Association, the Reigakudo Foundation, the Yamabushi Jujutsu Aikijutsu Association, and the Nihonden Aikibujutsu Senyokai.

Our in-house instructor staff has expanded to include:

Mark Hague provides leadership, technical oversight, and direction to the Ono-ha Itto-ryu Study Group. Hague Sensei's martial arts career has spanned over 42 years, 19 of those years training in Japan. He started Ono-ha Itto-ryu in the Reigakudo under Sasamori Takemi in 2002 and was awarded the *Kanajisho* license in 2009. As the only licensed and certified instructor (*shidosha*) of the Reigakudo in the Americas, he teaches Ono-ha Itto-ryu on behalf of the Reigakudo in classes, seminars, and demonstrations in the United States.



Rie Hashimoto Bailey, instructor for *shodo* (calligraphy) as well as Japanese language and culture, was raised in Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture, Japan, but has also lived in Spain, Italy, Washington State, and now Pennsylvania. She speaks Japanese, English, Spanish, and Italian, and is a professional international travel coordinator. Bailey Sensei is ranked 7th-dan in the Tonan school of shodo, is a Reiki master and teacher, and an alternative medicine practitioner with her own clinic.



Bailey Sensei has taught shodo everywhere she's lived and has received numerous awards for her art.



Our visiting instructors are:

Nicklaus Suino (iaido and jujutsu). Suino Sensei has been called “one of North America’s foremost martial arts teachers,” and is highly-ranked in iaido, judo, and jujutsu (among other arts). His personal mission is to master the most profound aspects of Japanese heritage martial arts and offer the true Japanese budo experience to his students. Suino Sensei believes that proper practice of Japanese martial arts can have a profoundly positive effect on people’s lives—and we can attest to this! Since 2009, he has been consulting for businesses and individuals who want to improve their effectiveness using the physical, mental, and intangible principles of mastery.



Salahuddin Muhammad (aikibujutsu).

Muhammad Sensei is the current headmaster of Hontai Hakkei Ryu and founded the Takeshin Dojo in 1984. He is an International Director of the Japanese Budo Association, under Asano Yasuhito Shihan. Muhammad Sensei is a technical director for jujutsu and aikibujutsu for the JBA, and is the director of the Nihonden Aikibujutsu Senyokai. He represents an independent, comprehensive, and powerful expression of aikibujutsu, and is technical advisor to the Aikijutsu Tendokai for advanced concepts.



Through the three decades of the existence of Itten Dojo and all that we’ve experienced and learned in that time, one lesson stands out most clearly. It’s best summarized in another saying of the old Isshinryu club: “It is the doing and the sharing of the doing that is the essence and true value.”

We could not agree more. 🌀

