

Perfection by Michael DeDonato, OAA Martial Arts Committee

Why is it that we, as martial artists, repetitively practice techniques (usually embodied in our forms)? During your martial career you may practice a particular technique thousands of times. An instructor with over 25 or 30 years of practice may have performed the same technique tens of thousands of times.

We are all aware that practice does not make "perfect," but that proper repetitive practice comes close to perfection. I believe that the most beloved phrase of all instructors is "do it again" often followed by "but this time try" x where x might be something like "better centering", "more power" or "execution at a different angle", etc., ad infinitum.

So after practicing a particular technique quite possibly for the 30th, 40th or 50th time in a single session you might say to yourself: "this is getting boring when can I move on to doing what I want to do and besides my leg (or arm) is sore, bruised and tired?". You then look at your instructor and wonder to yourself "how come I am doing all the work?".

Let's address both of these issues. With regards to your instructor, please keep in mind that any legitimate instructor didn't get to their position by taking the easy road. You may be asked to practice a particular technique for 50 times but your instructor may have had to practice the same technique 75 or 100 times on more than one occasion during his own practice sessions with his/her instructor.

Additionally, remember that there are times when your instructor must observe rather than practice. There are lots of instructors who practice constantly with their students, but they may not be observing. If they are not observing, then they cannot assist in your learning process. It is also true that there are many instructors who observe without putting any effort into practice. My advice is to stay away from these folks. It is best to work with an instructor who practices, takes time to observe and appropriately guides your actions.

As to the insistence on proper repetitive practice within traditional Asian mar-

tial arts systems, you are not just exercising. You are polishing your form and technique. In the process you are also "polishing" your character. Discipline, dedication and mental will go "hand in hand" with this process.

With tens of thousands of proper repetitive motions you are seeking to eventually perform with "Effortless Perfection". In Japanese this state of performance is referred to as "Shibumi".

If you watch a true master (not a celebrity) of martial arts who has a lifetime of dedicated and disciplined martial arts training and experience you may catch a glimpse of this concept being executed as they perform their forms or techniques. In this vein, I find the enclosed video of Zenpo Shimabukuro performing Kushanku to be inspiring as well as an exemplar of "Shibumi" in action.

As you watch, remember that Shimabukuro Sensei has spent hour after hour perfecting his performance, technique and character. Were there times he wanted to quit? Probably. Were

there times when his legs or arms were just too exhausted to perform one more time for his instructor? I suspect that this was the case. Were there practice sessions when Shimabukuro Sensei felt sick, nauseated, angry, upset, frustrated at himself, his fellow students and the world? I don't know, but being human he may have felt any or all of these emotions during his martial career - just like you.

So now let me ask you one more question. How will you react the next time your instructor says "do it again". My recommendation is that you thank him/her for their dedication in helping you along your path to perfection.

<http://filesserver.uechi-ryu.com/videos/zenpo.wmv>

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OAA thrives because of your generosity and time!

Much of our activities, our business of promoting our Uchinanchu culture, and creating fellowship simply could not happen without the generous donations of money, goods and time! We occasionally receive calls asking what is the best way to help and so here are some ideas in case others were also curious.

OAA Wishlist

green tea bags • creamer • 6oz Styrofoam cups • plates • napkins • copy/printing paper • blank CD's and DVD's • multimedia projector

Insurance Referral

OAA is a registered non-profit with the Commerce West Insurance Company's Automobile Insurance Referral Program. If you purchase insurance through one of the 25 participating insurance agencies and designate OAA as your non-profit of choice, OAA will benefit. This program has discounted rates for members who qualify as good drivers. For more information on participating agencies, contact the OAA.

Ralph's Community Contribution Program

Are you a frequent shopper at Ralph's? If you enroll your Ralph's card and link it to the OAA, a percentage of your eligible purchases may go to OAA each quarter! You may enroll online at Ralphs.com or contact the OAA for a special letter to take to your local Ralph's store. Contact OAA for any questions.

Volunteering

Office Brigade *NEW*

OAA is looking for regular office volunteers who would like to assist with taking messages and helping with office duties. Approximately 6 – 12 hours a month. Interested volunteers would be given an orientation and short training. Contact Yuko, if interested!

Translation for flyers, website, etc.

Are you multilingual? We are looking for Japanese, Portuguese and Spanish volunteer translators to help with website & materials for the Wakamono Taikai (and more!)

Community Service Hours or Internships

OAA welcomes young members who wish to volunteer for their community service or if they interested in a structured internship.

Other Opportunities

Come out to the OAA monthly volunteer day or when we have mailings to put together. Let Yuko know you are interested.