

合気手琉空手会

Aiki Te Ryu Karate Kai Honbu Dojo – Desk Reference of Shihan Franz

Topic: Surviving amongst the Mixed Martial Arts / UFC faze

Two men enter...one man wins! Blood, face pounding action and a lot of disrespect are what has caught the world by storm in the latest martial arts fad to make millions since the inception of Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Everywhere you look there are good martial arts schools across the nation offering some sort of MMA class with hopes to profit on this new fad...but at what cost.

The MMA movement is nothing new. It was around in the 1960's but thanks to mass marketing appeal it has to blood thirsty and violence craving people in our country it has become next big training fad...as much as Tae Bo was a few years back! In reality it has damaged the real martial arts and standing firm as a true practitioner of Budo is very tough these days especially when you operate a dojo. At the Honbu Dojo we get around four calls a week from people wanting to learn MMA, or to train with us to do MMA, even though we NEVER advertise that as part of our dojo. When we try and explain to them that MMA is not a martial art but rather a sport they get defensive and ridicule us. I am not belittling MMA. I am a big fan and love to watch it, judge the matches and have a very good background in this type of training...but I know that it is not a true martial art.

A traditional martial artist understands that “seeking perfection of character” is the ultimate aim of training. We train so we do not have to fight but are prepared if we ever must fight. We seek to perfect the knowledge our Sensei has handed down to us and to honor our Ryu, Dojo and Sensei through our actions. I personally know many authentic black belts that would kill the fighters in the ring, but you would never see them involved in MMA because they have no reason to prove how “tough” they are...not to mention they would never act like these new found heroes of our youth do. We seek a higher goal, one void of pride, lacking in ego and full of self fulfillment. MMA is not a martial art because they train to win a competition and we do not, we train seeking to defeat our toughest opponent...ourselves.

Avoiding selling out to MMA can cost your school but you will get better students and be able to keep intact the same honor that has made Karate what it is today. It is easy to get caught up in the world of MMA but keep in mind that these people switch trainers almost as quickly as they change their clothes. They have no loyalty unless it serves their own personal interests and goals. MMA fighters want to be feared instead of respected. They want the world to treat them as if they are someone great and demand you do so or they will “throw down” with you. If this is what you can accept as your teachings then you do not belong in our Ryu since none of this has any place in a true dojo.

So how do you not sell out and remain in business? The answer is easy...you educate people on what true martial arts about. This is a very tough part of your life because most people today do not truly want to learn but rather have what they “believe” to be correct re-enforced. Educating the public comes through demonstrations, personal self belief and your own “daily actions”. You must understand that you have nothing to prove by fighting another. You must teach your students that fighting, especially in a cage, is not what our forefathers wanted the martial arts to become. You must train hard every day to demonstrate and teach your convictions. It will be tough but in the end, long after this latest fad has died out, you will be just like me...still here, still teaching, still living the martial way.

When you market your dojo you must focus on why it is real training. We develop the person into a better person, not a fighter. We teach inner discipline and peace to avoid conflict and stay safe yet give you the skills to become a warrior of life. You will need to talk to as many groups as you can to educate them on what true martial arts about. Call your local service clubs and ask to be a guest speaker. Hold public demonstrations and educate people what a real martial art is. Do all this but remember that MMA people are most often rude and outspoken. If you make a derogatory statement about MMA be prepared to back it up with a lucid, well thought through statement...and educated. It is up to the true martial arts students to educate others since media only portrays the violent side of what we do and that will never change since people feed on that. Good luck and if you ever need any help please email me at kyoshi@franzkarate.com