

50 Years and counting

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This year, 2013 just happens to be the 50th "Golden Anniversary" of our Karate organization and I want to take this opportunity to thank all those students from all around the world who made this possible.

After 50 years, it is easy to enter into a world of nostalgia and let my mind journey back to those days, through the Golden Age of Karate, when we were kings, rock stars and life was fine as wine.

The ships that passed us nightly through the years included the full spectrum of people: dedicated, talented, kind, generous, and loving. As well, there were unbelievable ego maniacs, racist, thieves, bullies, who often shocked us with a menage a trois of emotion: arrogance, insolence, ignorance, and more. But we prevailed. It was fun.

They came, from all walks of life. We had soldiers, singers and scientists. We had doctors, dancers and druggists, (remember the 60's and 70's!) There were judges, janitors and journalists. We had our share of lawyers, labourers and low lifes. Not to forget priests, politicians and policemen. They came from everywhere. They were our bright lights in the firmament of eternity.

Not much disturbed the even tenor of our lives. Especially, when you always had karate to point out a new trail ahead and new places.

Many times we had the stretch of a wonderful Canada to enjoy. Living in Japan with my teachers, had everything. Perhaps I should have stayed as I wished to, but that is another story and I'm too old now. I only have "Senior" thoughts, and make "Senior" noises.

I don't have enough space here, or the urge, to indulge in anecdotal reminiscences, except perhaps to shout out some country's name and hear the resounding echoes that brings me happiness: Japan, Holland, France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Italy, America, Chili.

I'll always remember Ireland. It took only 13 visits. And I'll never forget Argentina, another place I contemplated living.

Sometimes, you catch yourself remembering things: one time landing a plane, loaded with some Argentinean politicians, rows of crowded fans shouting and waving flags lined the airport. The suits deplaned first. Quiet response. We went next and the noise was deafening from our fans. Almost to a man, the politicians turned their heads to us in amazement. It was brilliant.

How about eating in a street restaurant and watching yourself performing on television news. Hey, everybody deserves their fifteen minutes on life's stage.

You sometimes remember funny things: an Irish drunk, with loose dentures, making his way home at night singing "I'm just a street car named Desire!", before falling into a ditch. That was brilliant.

How about the kvetching night in our guest house, we watched a short, 400 - hundred pound ball- of- a student, who should have been in sumo, tip toeing to the fridge for a midnight snack. He lost his shorts, but held on to his turkey leg before crashing to the floor. That was priceless.

How can you forget that older student, who spent vampire hours training, saying he wanted to fight like the boxer Joe Louis and write books like Truman Capote. Unfortunately he wrote like Joe Louis and fought like Truman Capote. You had to be there.

Alright. I'm sorry I lied about becoming anecdotal. Okay. But 50 Years has been a long karate road. There is no last chapter to karate, perhaps only the rowing of Mabuni's boat splashing to the island of Budo.

Days have gone by so fast, so slowly. As we do today, we all struggle against chaos and unpredictability, and try to put a delusional order to everything and hope for the best. Nothing changes. But that's alright.

Memory often is an unreliable territory and the mists of time blur it further. Sometimes just when you thought you had all the answers, and carefully placed yourself in the right direction, life starts asking all the wrong questions. So much for Feng Shui. But that's all right, too.

I suppose there is never an ending to Karate. The memory of everyone who has lived it differs from that of the other. That's the way it should be.

And before I run out of puff, to all of you, thank you again for making the last 50 years possible. I am truly privileged to have had the opportunity to have spent some time on that ship with you.

Merci. Thank you. Arigato.