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# THE OKU TECHNIQUE

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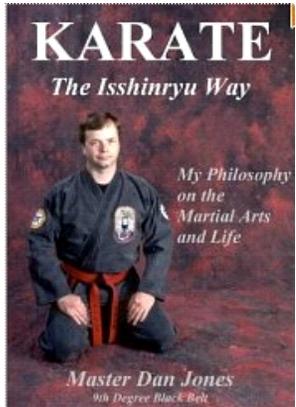
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THE MAGAZINE OF THE OKINAWAN KARATE-DO UNION



**OKU Summer Seminar  
Spring City, Tenn.  
July 12 and 13, 2013**

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## Analysis of the Isshinryu Vertical Punch

### From the Book

*Karate - The Isshinryu Way  
My Philosophy of the Martial Arts and  
Life*

By: *Dan W. Jones*

In this portion of his book Mr. Jones is discussing the Isshinryu punch with biology professor, Sensei John Moore. Mr. Moore provides a detailed analysis of the punch.

“The purpose of a punch is to deliver as much kinetic energy as possible to the desired target, i.e., your opponent. Compared to other martial arts, Isshinryu uses a fist that is somewhat different in terms of both the position of the digits, and the manner in which the punch is oriented and thrown, i.e., the “vertical” punch with the thumb “up” in the 11 - 12 o’clock position. The Isshinryu fist is formed by flexing/curling the fingers such that the finger tips are pressed against the palm of the hand. The end of the thumb is then pressed down on the proximal phalanx of the index finger.

As most trained martial artists are already aware, the actual mechanics of a good punch start with a

solid or rooted stance, upon which pelvis/body rotation (the amount varying with the martial art style) and arm extension are added. To be an effective punch, the energy of the body and extending arm must be efficiently transferred through the forearm, wrist, hand, and on into the target. To understand the path that this energy must take, it is useful to delve into the basic anatomy of the upper limb.

The single upper arm bone, or *humerus*, actually makes contact (articulates) with two bones of the forearm - the *radius* and the *ulna*. By far, the articulation with the ulna is the strongest and most stable. It is because of this relationship that the majority of the body and arm extension energy of a punch is transferred from the humerus, and on to the ulna. A problem occurs, however, as the energy is transferred down the ulna and on towards the wrist. At the wrist, it is the radius- not the ulna- that actually makes the strongest articulation with the *carpal* or wrist bones.

***“The actual mechanics of  
a good punch start  
with a solid or rooted stance.”***

To effectively transmit energy on to the target, a mechanism is needed to transfer a significant portion of the ulnar energy to the radius, which is in a better anatomical position to transfer the energy on to the hand. A band of very tough connective tissue called the *interosseous membrane* accomplishes this by connecting the ulna and radius, much like the canvas sling portion of a stretcher connects the two carrying handles. A significant amount of force, which might actually break the ulna, is “shared” with the radius via this membrane. The energy transferred to the radius is then directed through the carpal (wrist) bones, then to the *metacarpals* (between wrist and knuckles), and finally on to the target.

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A key point is that the degree of energy transfer via the interosseous membrane depends on how tight it is, which depends on the amount of twist in the forearm. The tighter this membrane, as occurs in a vertically oriented punch, the better the forearm bones share the energy - and transmit it from the humerus to the wrist and hand. The more the hand/fist is turned towards *pronation* (palm down, as in a horizontal punch) - the more relaxed the interosseous membrane becomes. Therefore, a full corkscrew punch is done with the membrane in a conformation in which it is least able to transmit force from the ulna to the radius! A more vertical punch, as in Isshinryu or some of the Kung Fu styles, will allow better sharing and transmission of force, or, to put it another way, a stronger punch.

***“A limb can move fastest when it is told to do as few things as possible.”***

The vertical aspect of the Isshinryu fist is also very conducive to efficient energy transmission from the hand to the target. The two striking knuckles are aligned with the largest and strongest of the metacarpal bones - those bones that will transfer energy from the radius and carpal bones, on to the knuckles. Boxers (and other untrained fighters) often hit with the last two knuckles! This causes the force to be transmitted through metacarpals four and five (associated with the ring and baby finger, respectively), which simply aren't as thick and strong as two and three are. The result can be what is clinically called a “boxer's fracture” - breakage of metacarpals four and/or five. (Mike Tyson did this many years ago when he got into a “street fight” with Mitch Green in a clothing store. Mike hit Mitch one time - with an untaped & ungloved hand! The result was that Mike received a boxer's fracture of one of his metacarpals.)

The vertical fist also tends to keep the elbow in close to the body, which has the benefits of both protecting the ribs and of maximizing energy transmission from the body to the arm. A palm-down fist loses these attributes to a certain degree, especially when punching along a vector that is parallel to the floor. High-speed films of Tae Kwon Do practitioners doing board breaks show that, at the time that the fist contacts the board, the fist is actually in a vertical orientation - thus allowing for maximum energy transmission! It is only after the fist passes through the plane of the board that the palm-down position is achieved.

***“A more vertical punch will allow better sharing and transmission of force.”***

The advantage of the vertical fist is also illustrated, indirectly, by the fact that many defensive tactics instructors teach the more powerful “tilted” palm-heel strike, in which the fingers (of a right-hand strike) are oriented to the 2 o'clock position, as opposed to the “traditional” 12 o'clock orientation.

In this position, the person is basically throwing an open-hand version of the Isshinryu punch! (If this is unclear, try the following: place your hand in a traditional palm-heel position, with the fingers pointing upward to the 12 o'clock position. Now straighten the hand to align it with the forearm, as you curl the fingers into a fist. It will be a palm-down fist. Do the same with the palm-heel in the “tilted” orientation. When you straighten the hand and curl the fingers, you will be in the standard Isshinryu vertical fist!)

As a final consideration of the vertical or Isshinryu fist, consider the intrinsic forearm muscles and their effect on punching. To have the hand in *pronation*

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(palm down) or full *supination* (palm up) requires the use of some intrinsic muscles of the forearm known respectively as *pronators* and *supinators*. A punch is best thrown when these two muscle groups are in a balanced condition, i.e., when neither is “dominating” the other. An unbalanced condition occurs whenever there is full *supination* (e.g., a classic uppercut), or full pronation (e.g., a classic corkscrew punch, ending with the palm facing down.) The most “neutral” position of the hand is best as far as balancing these two sets of muscles, and when punching with maximum force. As an example, the forearm/hand group is in a fairly neutral position when someone *initially* extends their hand to “shake hands” with someone else. (To use a clock face, the thumb of the right hand would be at approximately 11 o’clock.) This neutral position is optimum for energy transmission through the arm/forearm. Energy in a punch is a function of both the mass of the moving limb, and the *speed* at which the limb moves.

***“A punch is best thrown when these two muscle groups are in a balanced condition.”***

A limb can move fastest, thus maximizing energy, when it is told to do as few things as possible. So - making a fist, and then extending the arm in a vertical punch (i.e., neutral position) will generally be faster than making a fist and extending the arm in a punch *while you are also asking the forearm to twist to a palm-down position.*

All political and style-based rivalry aside, the above anatomical relationships provide powerful support for the conclusion that the Isshinryu vertical fist is better, both structurally and functionally, at delivering the most energy to a target, in the shortest amount of time, and with the least stress to the arm and hand.”



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## Attitude

**The Longer live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on my life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what otherpeople thinks or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company, a church, a home. The remarkable thing is we have choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you. We are in charge of our attitudes.**

*Charles Swindell*

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# NEWS

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## OKU News

### Don and Jan Roberts, Fairburn, Ga.

**J**an and I have been piling up the miles since the last newsletter. We attended the Dragon Society International seminar in April, and found it to be a lot of fun, as well as interesting and informative. Every one was very friendly, and it was good being able to hang out with board members Roger Overholt and Michael Patrick. It also didn't hurt being able to relax in a suite atop a beach front hotel. In addition to the classes, we learned that DSI is planning a memorial seminar to honor Sensei Wheeler, Remy Presas, and Ridgely Abele. It will again be held in Myrtle Beach, S.C. on October 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup>. We will be sending out more information to our members, via e-mail. It should be good.



Our next adventure was to travel to San Francisco, thanks to our ace student and friend, Kirk Harding (see The OKU Heads West). This was a great trip, and we had the opportunity to meet and train with some great martial artists. Thanks to Kirk, his wife Anne, daughter Lisa, and Bubble the wonder dog, for the fantastic hospitality. Also thanks to Jennifer Tu for taking a day to show us around San Francisco. Jennifer should be paying us a visit in October. It just goes to show that the OKU is becoming a tight family.

When we got back from the coast, we found that our good friend, Sensei Doug Koschel had become a grandpa. The new arrival is Jase Douglas Mathis. Congratulations, young man, along with

## Tigikai



### Theories and Analyses of Isshin-ryu Karate Do Kata *by Don Roberts*

Seisan, Seiuchin, Naihanchi, Wansu,  
Chinto, Kusanku, Sunsu, Sanchin,  
and Tokomeni No Kun Kata

**We are able to send copies of the above books  
at a greatly reduced price in Adobe format.**

**Please contact Jan Roberts,  
Gambatteisshin@aol.com,  
if you are interested in either  
printed or digital copies.**

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# NEWS

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parents - Suzy and Lee, sister - Jen, and all the family.



On Saturday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, we drove out to Oxford, Georgia to participate in a summer camp put on by the International Karate and Kobudo Union. This was the last training of the week long camp, and I have to say it was outstanding. It is hard for me to put into words my admiration and affection for this group of dedicated martial artists. Starting from the top, Soke Joe Ruiz, his high dan board, including my buddies, Larry Griffin and Ron Downton, down to the young kyu ranks, they bent over backwards to make us feel welcome and at home. I am proud to call them our friends.



At their banquet Saturday night, Jan and I were amazed at the camaraderie, the heart, and sense of family we experienced. They all are reflections of their leader, my special friend, Joe Ruiz, and I know he is proud of them all.



June 22<sup>th</sup> we will be in Tennessee for a testing, and then it will be time for the “big dance”, the OKU summer seminar. This one is going to be special, so I hope everyone will be able to come.



**Dennis Thomas, Athens, TN**

**S**ome of our members have celebrated many achievements already in this first part of 2013.

# NEWS

Here is the listing:

- April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013, Stacy Dockery and Steven Croft were both promoted to Shodan
- On June 8<sup>th</sup>, four dojo members attended three separate tournaments and all placed. Josh Hall placed 1<sup>st</sup> in men's Black Belt kata and 2<sup>nd</sup> in Kumite. Dakota Bassham placed 1<sup>st</sup> in men's beginner (Orange Belt) kata, 3<sup>rd</sup> in Men's Kyu rank weapons and 1st in Men's Beginner (Orange belt) kumite. Zach Thomas placed 1<sup>st</sup> in under 18 black belt weapons and kata and with a twisted ankle placed 2<sup>nd</sup> in kumite. Steven Croft placed 3<sup>rd</sup> in Men's shodan/nidan kata and 4th in kumite.



- On June 12, 2013 - Dakota Bassham was promoted to green belt.



Congratulations to all the accomplishments these young men have attained.

We will be having our 3<sup>rd</sup> annual tournament this November on the 2<sup>nd</sup> (3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Athens' Elks' Martial Arts Open). It will be at the Elk's Lodge, 109 S Hill ST, Athens, TN. This will again be a benefit for the Needy Children of Athens' Christmas fund. It is an open tournament so all styles are welcome. For more information call: Call 423-368-1049 or 423-506-1518 or join the Facebook group here:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/514017525313354/>

We are also looking forward to seeing everyone at the OKU Summer Seminar this year!



## SPECIAL INTEREST

Individual membership	\$12.00/yr
Foreign membership	\$30.00/yr
Lifetime membership	\$150.00
Dojo membership	\$20.00/yr
Dojo Listing (for member dojos only)	\$10.00/yr
Kyu Promotion Certificates	\$5.00

**Please mail news or articles to Jan Roberts, 610 Waterboy Rd., Fairburn, GA 30213. Please send to: Gambatteisshin@aol.com. Deadline August 1, 2013.**



## The OKU Heads West

*Don Roberts*

**O**n May 24<sup>th</sup> Jan and I boarded a plane and headed for the scenic city by the Bay, San Francisco. The trip, our second in two years, was financed by our great friend and student, Sensei Kirk Harding. We had met some really interesting and enthusiastic folks last year, and were looking forward to seeing them again.

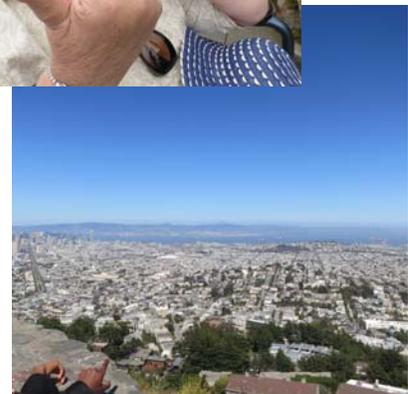


After landing and spending the night at the beautiful home of Kirk and his wife Anne, we headed off to the Berkeley dojo, home of many good memories. We were there to sit on a testing board for Jennifer Tu, who was being examined for the rank of Shodan. Jennifer did an excellent job on a comprehensive test and passed with flying colors. We were not the only ones who had traveled far for Jennifer=s test. One of her instructors, Ren Sensei, had come from Ohio, while her Mother and

brother were there from Louisiana. It was a packed house. Later, at the ‘victory party’, we spent quality time with everyone, especially Jennifer’s mom, and had a great time. This was especially satisfying because Jennifer is our newest lifetime member, and plans to visit us here in Georgia in October.



We got in two super days of sightseeing. The Hardings (plus Bubble the Great Dane puppy, (Seventy-five pounds and growing) took us to the Mission district for the Carnival Festival, and then lunch and the Ferry Building. Later, we had dinner at an authentic Chinese restaurant. It was



great, but thank goodness Anne was there to order for us.



Jennifer also spent a day showing us around the city. We communed with plants and butterflies at the Conservatory of Flowers, and checked out an albino alligator at the California Academy of Science. Toss in a side trip to view the city from Twin Peaks, lunch at a Burmese restaurant, and coffee and chocolate at specialty shops, we had a full day. Thanks again, Tu Sensei, for sharing the day with us.



Kirk-san arranged for me to speak at the breakfast meeting of his Rotary Club. The food was great, but I wasn't sure how I would be received by

these successful members of the business world. Fortunately for me, everyone was friendly, and my war stories seemed to go over pretty well. At least, no one fell asleep.



I taught two 2 hour classes, one for the Berkeley dojo, and one for the students of Sensei Pedro Bernady, a Shorin Ryu stylist. Jan and I were extremely impressed with both Sensei Bernady and his students. We felt very much at home in their beautiful dojo, which is located in a fabulous fitness center. I had missed meeting Pedro-san last year, and was lucky to spend some time with him and his people this time. He is a great instructor, and a fine person.

On our last day, we returned to Sensei Bernady's dojo, and I taught a 5 1/2 hour seminar. It was very well attended with interesting people from different martial arts, and everyone seemed to adapt well to the subject matter. Finally, everyone (including me) was looking glassy eyed, so we wrapped it up, tired but happy. Many of the participants showed up for the post seminar celebration laid on by Kirk and Anne. These folks really know how to party (and I didn't even mention the delicious Memorial Day pig roast we attended.)

Thanks again to Kirk and Anne for a great trip that we will always remember. I hope we have made some new friends for our organization, the OKU. 🤝



## President's Corner

Well, it's almost time for our premier event of the year, the OKU summer seminar. This year we will have some exciting new classes and instructors to add to our "usual suspects." For example, Sensei William Mason will be teaching an arnis class, which should be exciting, so if you have a set of a-sticks, be sure to bring them.

I am also looking forward to the Shinkendo class which will be taught by Sensei Jorge Reyna. I had the pleasure of meeting Sensei Reyna and an event hosted by Master Jim La Rocco and was very impressed by his knowledge and his friendly nature. If you are not familiar with Shinkendo, it is about the use of the Japanese sword. If you don't have a boken (wooden sword) they will be available at the seminar for \$8.00 each. In addition to basic instruction in the use of the sword, there will be some two man demos, as well as a demonstration of cutting. If you have never seen a katana slicing through tatami, you are in for a real treat.

Remember there will be classes on Friday afternoon, from 3:00 to 7:30, as well as Saturday, from 8:00 to 4:00. Following the last Saturday class, we will present our annual OKU awards. I

think this will allow more people to witness the presentation. Later, we are planning an informal get together where we can hang out and hopefully make some new friends.

Remember, if you are planning to spend the night, please contact the Howard Johnson Hotel in Spring City, by June 28<sup>th</sup>. To get the special rate, be sure to mention the OKU seminar. Their number is 423-365-9191. Maps of the area (as well as an address for those of you with GPS) will be included with the flyers Jan is sending out. If you need more information, you can contact Jan via phone or E-mail.

Until then, take care, and we'll see you at the seminar.



## ATTENTION EVERYONE

**In order for the OKU to create and maintain an accurate database for our members, we will be sending the next issue of The OKU Technique to those whose memberships are verifiably current.**

**If you do not receive the September issue, please contact us via email, so we can resolve the problem.**

**Thanks in advance for your patience.**



## Well Armed

*By Roger Ovrholt*

**M**ost instructors believe that if we teach our students proper technique, an automatic response will take over during a physical threat which will allow them to effectively defend themselves. Every instructor has experienced a student who could perform kata or a technique with little effort and great precision, until they are placed in front of an audience. When performing in front of peers or their instructor, some students lose their confidence, seem confused, and cannot properly execute the technique or kata they have practiced many times. This reaction is often a response to stress they are experiencing and not a lack of physical training to perform the technique. The usual response to a student not being able to perform properly is for the instructor to tell the student to practice the technique or kata more in order for it to become an automatic response. After a period of time this solution often works and the student is given a new task to master. The challenge of dealing with stress experienced during new or unfamiliar events may not be addressed.

***“Defense techniques need to be automatic responses.”***

Students must be advanced in their mental and emotional preparedness as well as their physical

skills. During training, stress can be experienced in a controlled environment, and can often be dealt with.

***“I have seen officers with years of training and experience perform differently than expected.”***

During combat, a martial artist must understand the dynamic of stress response and be prepared to mentally and physically respond to threats. As instructors we can help by teaching our students what to expect during stressful situations, assist them in confidence building, discussing use of force legal and moral issues, and working with them to improve their ability to deal with stressful events. The student will still need to practice the kata or technique many times; defense techniques need to be automatic responses but it can be done with more confidence and precision when stress alarm reaction is understood. Master Michael Patrick’s book on body stress alarm is a good reference guide for students and instructors.

***“This reaction is often a response to stress.”***

During police operations, I have seen officers with years of training and experience perform differently than expected. These officers were well trained physically, but did not understand the dynamics of life threatening combat. While it should be our goal to teach the art of avoidance, students should have all the knowledge available to them if they are faced with a physical attack. Most students will not explore the need to understand the effects of stress on their mental and physical performance without the guidance of their instructors and the senior students with who they train. As the science of martial arts advance, we as instructors should advance our teaching methods to ensure our students are well armed.



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# DOJO LISTING

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Ed Daniels Karate  
5040 Lois Lane  
Kell, IL 62853  
(618) 822-6245  
eddanielskarate@hotmail.com  
www.eddanielskarate.com

Fugate's Martial Arts Center  
108 Ogee St  
Tullahoma, TN 3788  
Sensei Brent Fugate  
(931)454-9060  
fugatesmac@earthlink.net  
www.fugatesmacenter.com

Gambatte Isshin-ryu Dojo  
Jonesboro, GA  
Sensei Keith Lowry  
1klkarate@gmail.com  
Sensei Don & Jan Roberts  
(770) 456-5887  
Gambatteisshin@aol.com

Samurai Karate School  
307 Morning Dew Court  
Canton, GA 30114  
(770) 720-1755  
Sensei Dave Domer

Bryant's Karate School  
Oxford MI  
Sensei Jeff Bryant

OneHeart Dojo  
105 N Jackson  
Athens, TN 37303  
Sensei Dennis Thomas  
(423)368-1049  
oneheart@bellsouth.net

Leonard's Isshin-Ryu Karate  
P.O. Box 1113  
Ervin, TN 37650  
(423) 3351089  
jnl2bunkai@yahoo.com  
www.geocities.com/jnl2bunkai

Holloway's Isshin-ryu Karate School  
6479 Forest Side Dr.  
Waterford, MI 48327  
Sensei Dan Holloway  
Phone: 248-666-4723  
E-mail: dhkeiko@aol.com

Transformation Martial Arts  
1232 Hillsboro Blvd.  
Manchester, TN 37355  
Sensei Timothy Garrett  
(931)723-8575  
www.twmatn.com  
brofg@hotmail.com

Walters State Karate Dojo  
Sensei Michael Johns  
3774 Apostle Road  
Morristown, TN 37814  
(865) 627-0389  
mejohms@charter.net

Overholt's Karate Studio  
Sensei Roger Overholt  
5284 Brights Pike Road  
Morrison, Tenn. 37814  
Chiefofpolicemt@charter.net

Free Spirit Grand Junction  
19110 55th St  
Grand Junction, MI 49056  
Sensei Jerry Vorva  
(269)214-8858

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# DOJO LISTING

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Tullahoma School of Karate  
P.O. Box 2805  
Tullahoma, TN 37388  
Sensei Al Brown  
(931) 607-2079  
tullahomakarate@bellsouth.net  
www.tskonline.com

Asheville Shuri-ryu Karate-do Kai  
335 Avery Creek Rd  
Arden, NC 28704  
Sensei Karl Wagner  
ardenkarate@gmail.com  
(828)275-4257

Free Spirit Grand Junction  
19110 55th St  
Grand Junction, MI 49056  
Sensei Jerry Vorva  
(269)214-8858

Double Dragon Dojo  
PO Box 384  
Milligan College TN 37682  
Sensei Dixie Neth  
423-335-3903

Caywood's School Karate  
2980 West Side Drive  
Cleveland, TN 37312  
(423) 4725634  
Sensei Tony Caywood

## **Jim LaRocco's Dojo's**

2 Tri County Plaza  
Cumming, GA  
Sensei Jim LaRocco  
(770)844-7500

Sekai Toshi Gijutsu Dojo  
120 Sweetwater Dr,  
Fayetteville, GA  
Sensei Bill and Lisa Strong  
770)356-1026

Powers Karate Academy  
34425 Lorain Rd  
N. Ridgeville, OH  
Sensei Ed and Melissa Powers  
(440)327-3688

Westlake Martial Arts  
27321 Detroit Rd.  
Westlake, Ohio  
Sensei Gary Yano  
(440)250-2787

Smoky Mountain Isshin-Ryu  
1203 Car Donna Dr.  
Sevierville, Tenn.  
Sensei Sonny Newman  
(865)604-8881

Isshin-Ryu Bushi Karate Dojo  
27707 Marilyn Dr  
Warren, MI  
Sensei Tom Perry  
(586)751-8080

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**OKU PRESIDENT DON ROBERTS  
OKU SECRETARY-TREASURER JAN ROBERTS  
610 WATERBOY RD.  
FAIRBURN, GA 30213**

**MEMBER DOJO'S PLEASE SEND YOUR  
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SENSEI JAN ROBERTS  
610 WATERBOY RD  
FAIRBURN, GA 30213  
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Okinawan Karate-do Union  
610 Waterboy Rd.  
Fairburn, GA 30213

