

Birth of *Yoshisu* (child of the Hawk)

One night almost two years ago, my journey began. I didn't know what to expect, nor did I expect to find the path I've chosen; a path I hope to keep on for the rest of my life. It was definitely a good idea to show up for my second class of Traditional Karate (then, a new instructional class being offered). The notion of not coming back had not crossed my mind, but I was the only student that night, as it remained for the entire quarter. How fortunate am I, to have been at the right place at the right time and to have met the right person to lead me on that path? My instruction in *karate-do*, the way of the empty hand, began then with my *Sensei*, *Shihan* Mina Ludwig, *Go Dan*, a 5th degree black belt.

My training continued as I was joined by others finding their way on this path. Hard work, discipline, and strength of spirit reached far beyond the lessons we learned in basic techniques of punches, kicks, proper stances, and movement. Perhaps this is what that other aspect to the martial arts was that I knew existed, but didn't really quite understand.

In June of 2008, my teacher received permission and a blessing from her *Sensei*, *Kyoshi* Lawrence Hawkins Jr. to charter her own dojo and in July, *Yoseikan Yoshisu* was born. Today, this *Yoseikan* (place of enlightenment) is a second home to students from all over the world. On most training days, you can hear us counting in Japanese, but every so often you may come across Farsi, Filipino, Tamil, Chinese, French, Spanish, Greek, Russian, Polish, as well as English. The thud of kicks hitting focus pads grows louder with the few becoming as many as seventeen. My *kiai* (spirited yell) still echoes, but it is now joined by those of my brothers and sisters, my family in and out of the dojo.

Whether it's training hard in the dojo, outside running through the woods carrying bricks, or sharing stories over a tasty meal, we always have a good time together. This past October, we were fortunate to experience a special moment while attending the annual banquet of the United States Chito-Kai, our national organization. The 2009 Teacher of the Year was awarded to our very own Ludwig Sensei. We could not be more proud to see her recognized for what we already know her to be, an extraordinary teacher dedicated to her students, who gives us much of her time and energy. Sensei has a gift for recognizing how students learn in different ways, for translating ideas about movements and body positions into words, and communicating through intention. She senses when our spirits need rousing and knows when some lessons need to be taught, while other ones are better learned on our own. Her training in Chito-Ryu began in 1983 and has continued unbroken through high school, college, law school, marriage and having two children. She exemplifies the ideals of courtesy, respect, integrity, perseverance, all with the spirit of a Samurai. This is why it is with great pride and honor that I now wear the brown belt she wore 22 years ago. As I continue on this path, I look back and admire how far we've come, and look forward to what new adventures lie ahead.