



# PUNCHLINE



September 2012

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## Reaching for your Dreams

Maggie Hargus

Reaching the rank of black belt has long been a dream of mine. It's always been at the back of my mind throughout my karate training, a distant eventuality. Only in the past couple of years did I realize that it was time to actually focus on my long-held goal, and I started actively working to prepare for testing. For a while during my preparation, I wasn't sure I was going to make it all the way to black belt. I wasn't sure if I could handle training for black belt as well as keeping up with all the schoolwork of junior year in high school, along with continuing my other extra-curricular activities. However, at some point last June, I realized that I was never going to get to black belt if I kept hesitating. I decided that, by God, I was going to test for black belt if it was the last thing I did, and thus began the long year leading up to the test. Hours and hours of practice, even when I was dead tired on a Friday night, days and days of working to perfect each technique, all leading up to two final days in March when my fate was decided.



Without a doubt, the worst part of the whole ordeal was neither the preparation nor the test itself, but rather waiting for the test to start. Practice is only practice, and during the actual test I was only showing things I'd practiced literally hundreds of times. I was horribly nervous in the hours before the test, though, and it didn't help that there was a whole night in between the two days of the test. Once at the dojo and in the middle of the test, though, the nervousness disappeared and autopilot kicked in. I had practiced everything so many times before the test that I didn't have to work on remembering what techniques to do, and could instead focus on making everything look as perfect as possible for Sensei Kotaka. This was something that I had been preparing to do for years.

I started training in karate back when I was seven years old, at Lowell Elementary school. That was ten years ago. It's taken me ten long years to finally reach the rank of black belt, but it was completely worth it. I'm not going to lie and say it wasn't very, very difficult to do. I just also think the whole experience was rewarding enough to make up for all the less-than-fun parts of testing for black belt. It was a huge amount of work, and an enormous commitment to make, but now I have the satisfaction of having reached a goal I've had for over half my life.

# Spring Demo!

Adela Parra



The Spring Demo is a yearly event hosted by FKU to bring our community together and showcase our school's talent. Karateka from white belts to black belts of all ages participate in this event. The Demo begins with the traditional opening of class: a bow to Shomen, our Senseis and each other. Immediately after, the students demonstrated the basic punches, blocks and kicks in empty hand.

Afterwards the students performed katas, which are forms of patterns of kicks and punches. The Katas shown varied in difficulty, beginning with the youngest white belts performing Kihon Kata Ichi. This is the first kata taught in our style.



The more advanced students performed what is called a Bun-kai, which is a mock fight that explains the moves in a kata and shows their purpose.

Students also performed kata with the weapons they are taught, including bo (long staff), Sai (small pronged metal baton), and kai bo (long oar). The adult students performed the multiple variations of the Rohai family of katas.



Our newest Black belt, Amanda Rose demonstrated one step sparring, which shows the blocks, counter attacks and takedowns corresponding to different attacks. The students displayed their sparring skills, in a brief 2 minute match. Kumite (or sparring) is also a vital part of the school's training. The Demo ended with another set of respectful bows and a potluck lunch provided by the Dojo's community. Thanks everyone for making this event a success! See you next year!



# How I survived the Black Belt Test

Jennifer Sweigert

This past March, I travelled to Hawaii and tested for Sho-dan Ho, provisional black belt. It was the hardest thing I've ever done, and also one of the most rewarding. There's so much I could say about it, that I may have to write more than one article. This one focuses on the test itself.

Friday evening began with the written test. I figured that if I could pass the bar exam and become a lawyer, I could pass this test. But I also knew that you don't pass any test without studying. Over the course of the week, we had been quizzing ourselves and each other and practicing our embusen, the diagram of the footwork of various kata. After 45 minutes of hunching on the dojo floor, I turned in my written test. Then it was time for kihon kata, pinan kata, and naihanchin kata. I told myself these were all things I'd done a thousand times. Sensei George reminded us of this as well. He told the nine black belt candidates to relax, and rely on our training. I know I relied on my training. I'm not sure I achieved the relaxation part.

Saturday morning, it was time for "enhanced" basics. When the senseis only counted off twenty of each standing punch, block, and kick, I thought maybe we were in luck. But no. The much more difficult zenkutsu stance basics came in sets of 30. And the pace was easily twice as fast as my usual, and significantly faster than I'd ever done them. I stopped trying to pivot or worry about my form and just tried to make sure my foot was in the air at roughly the same time as everyone else's. I focused on a spot on the IKF banner on the wall and just kept breathing and kicking despite the screaming trembling muscles in my legs. And then, it the most difficult part was over. I relaxed, but only a little. I knew there was still a full day of karate testing ahead of us. It was only about 10 am.

Moving basics were tough, but easier than the zenkutsu stance basics because we got to move forward, switching legs, instead of doing 30 on one side to the point of exhaustion. Then three step sparring: moving back and forth using basic techniques with a partner. Having a partner to focus on and give encouraging looks made this part a welcome change.

Next came one-step sparring, with the goal of remembering my kick-counters and take downs and incorporating recent corrections. While still hard work, one-step sparring was more of a mental challenge than a physical one. I don't remember the order of what came next. I know we performed bunkai (kata explanations) and individual kata. The best part was that we got to sit down while others performed. Although after working my muscles so hard for several hours, sitting immobile on the floor with my legs crossed for 20- 30 minutes at a time came with its own set of painful challenges. And then it was all over but the sparring. Yes, free sparring was saved for the end, presumably in case of injury. Luckily, my only injury was when a much smaller contestant stumbled out of bounds during his match and kicked me in the shin as I sat cross-legged on the sidelines.

As the clock neared 4:00 p.m., the last of the sparring matches ended. I tried not to visibly sigh in relief. Which was a good thing, since we weren't quite done yet. The senseis wanted to go over the written test with us. When that was done, we still weren't quite done. There were pictures to be taken. The unofficial last act of every martial arts gathering. I stood in my very sweaty and smelly gi and smiled.



# Can We Do That?

Tracey Drum

“Can we do that?” was the question I heard multiple times during the PAWMA training camp this summer in Berkeley, CA. It had been a long time since I’d been able to attend a PAWMA camp. This would be my first time going as a black belt.

The long absence wasn’t intentional. The timing just never worked for me. I love going to PAWMA and being exposed to the multitude of martial arts styles. Sparring with someone who doesn’t deliver straight punches, but round, unpredictable techniques to your knee is alarming. It gives you a good jolt -- even when gently applied. It teaches you not to get trapped in the mind set that there is only one of way doing things. That was what I had learned many years ago when I’d been to PAWMA camps before; and this time I found I’d assimilated it.



Somewhere in my color belt experience, I had accumulated moves, internalizing them from previous PAWMA camps, NWMAF Special Training camps, and various other workshops and get-togethers. I found myself thinking, Now where did that move come from? as I redirected strikes I never used to see and turn them into arm locks.

Can we do that?

“We used to do stuff like that,” I’d say defensively. It’s true that FKU has deepened its focus on traditional karate, strengthened its relationship with our senseis in Hawaii, fine-tuned our skills and technique by developing our precision, power, and focus, highlighting the beauty of the Shito Ryu style. We’ve nurtured black belts in recent years, and as a school, have come a long way since my last PAWMA camp.

My personal discovery at this PAWMA camp speaks highly to encouraging color belts to go to martial arts camps such as these. Experiencing different styles of martial arts helps to build flexibility of the mind, as it forces you to adapt and respond to different situations. It also suggests the value of refocusing our attention again.

Yes, I think we can do that.



# It's About the Training

By Sensei Joanne Factor



One of my favorite summer activities is the annual National Women's Martial Arts Federation (NWMMAF) Women's Martial Arts Conference. Combining a self-defense instructors' conference with a women's Special Training martial arts camp very much like PAWMA's, it was a jam-packed five-day festival of many forms of martial arts and self-defense skills. This year we were in Oberlin, Ohio, where the temperature soared high into the 90s, and campers' spirits went even higher.

I was asked to teach several classes: two for the self-defense conference in online marketing, two for Special Training in our exacting style of traditional karate, and to participate in the panel on teaching self-defense in institutions of higher education.

Teaching karate at Special Training presents a unique set of challenges. Many of the campers are themselves black belt teachers; it is both daunting and energizing to see high-ranked teachers from schools I'd admired for years come to my classes to learn more about the precision and power of our karate. Both classes (Stance Dance Revolution and Bunkai) invited campers to learn what makes our stances so strong and fast, and our kata explanations so exciting.

The Self-Defense Instructors' Conference covered a variety of subjects. I learned that Title IX now covers much more than sports on college campuses, and may in fact mandate that self-defense training be offered. I learned about a form of racist speech and action called "microaggressions," where you think the other person said or did something racist but you're not sure if they meant it like that (and some things you can say in response). I learned some additional physical and de-escalation techniques for domestic violence situations (frankly, the NWMMAF is one of the only self-defense certifying bodies to pay more than lip service to the importance of domestic violence in women's self-defense). And I learned more about knife use and disarms (one of my favorites).



Because it is almost always held somewhere on the East Coast, few FKU students attend. This year Kinny Kimlinger made the trek with me. I was especially appreciative because Kinny helps so much with my self-defense classes, as well as with the after-school enrichment program at APP Lincoln.

There were two other special highlights in Special Training. One was when Kinny and I got to break boards during the demo. The other was when Anne Kuzminsky, on the NWMMAF's Board of Directors, showed me a simple acupressure technique to cure a headache and nausea brought on by the heat (and it worked!).

Because I've been attending Special Training since 2005, it was also fun to see people I've worked with over the years, whom I only get to meet up with and work with this time of year.

Next year's NWMMAF date and location will be announced in September, and I highly recommend that any woman or girl who wants to expand her depth of knowledge of martial arts consider attending.

# Plank Progression

Deb Schaack

As I get older (and apparently more prone to injury,) the concept of exercise progression has really started to make sense to me. In the hopes that some of you will not be a slow learner like me, I thought I'd start with a few progression tips for a common exercise that we regularly incorporate into our training: the plank.

The plank is a great exercise for building core strength, primarily in the abdominals, but also in the back. Since we all know that most of our power is generated from our core, this exercise is important! However it's important to practice good form so that you're actually working the targeted muscles. Figure 1 illustrates the proper full plank position, with elbows under shoulders and body in alignment from ankles to top of the head. When first starting this exercise, it's common to see either sagging at the hips (valley) or hips higher than shoulders (mountain.) You'll commonly hear a sensei making a correction during this exercise letting someone know they are out of alignment. If you are unable to hold proper alignment, you're not working the core efficiently and you may be putting excess stress on your shoulder joints or your low back.



Figure 1



Figure 2

If you feel yourself unable to hold correct alignment with full plank, Figure 2 shows a less rigorous option that allows you to work up to full plank while still strengthening your core. The knee plank follows the same principle, with your body aligned from your knees to the top of your head.

A good trick (when you don't have a sensei around) to help you know if you're aligned is to balance a bo or a broom on your back as illustrated in Figure 3.

Once you're able to hold full plank for a full minute (with good form for the duration,) you might be ready to "kick it up a notch." Figure 4 (next page) shows a good next step in

progression. Note that the leg is lifted only slightly so your body stays aligned and your back does not arch.

When you start single leg plank, start by lifting each leg alternately with control, but no sustained hold time, for a quarter of the time you can hold full plank, finishing the rest of the time with full plank. Example: Assuming you can hold full plank for 1 minute, start single leg plank with controlled alternating leg lifts for 15 seconds, followed by 45 seconds of static full plank. Progress by gradual adding time to the alternating leg lift phase until you can do 1 full minute of continuous controlled alternating leg lifts. NOTE: If you find yourself dropping (vs. controlled lowering) your foot to the floor, you've lost form. Also, if you start tipping to one side and your hips are no longer parallel to the floor, you've lost form. Once you can do one full minute of controlled alternating

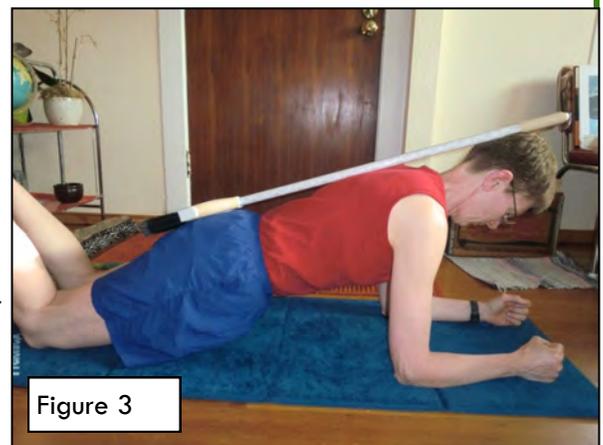


Figure 3

leg lifts with good form, progress to sustained alternating leg lifts, holding each leg 10 seconds prior to lifting the alternate leg, gradually increasing to a 30 second hold per leg.

For those of you who really need a challenge, the next progression is single arm/single leg plank as shown in Figure 5. Start this progression, once you have mastered the single leg plank and can hold it for 1 full minute, 30 continuous seconds for each leg.

With this exercise, lift your left arm and right leg together, then your right arm and left leg together.



Figure 5

Alignment for the

single arm/single leg plank position continues to be important, so your spine stays in line and your pelvis is level. Similar to the prior progression, start with controlled alternating lifts for 15 seconds, followed by 45 seconds of full plank. Gradually add longer time for the lifts and shorter time for the full plank. Once you can do one full minute of alternating single arm/single leg plank, progress to 15 second holds for each arm/leg lift pair. Hope I see you practicing your plank progressions in the dojo!



Figure 4

## Slut Walk

Joanne Factor

SlutWalk Seattle is holding their second annual march and rally this September. SlutWalk Seattle 2012 will be held on September 9th, 2012, from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. Participants will meet at Occidental Park, march north on 4th Ave, and rally at Westlake Park.

Background: On January 24th, 2011, a member of the Toronto Police told students at York University that "women should avoid dressing like sluts in order not to be victimized." This statement agitated the students, who, tired of language like this being used to shift the burden of violence prevention from perpetrators to victims, organized a protest called SlutWalk. The goal of the protest, as well as the provocative name, is to bring attention to eliminating victim-blaming (stigmatizing individuals, especially women, for their actual or imagined sexual proclivities) in law, culture, and the media.

In the ensuing year, SlutWalk blossomed into an international social movement. Local activists Jessi Murray, Robin Sacks, and Samuel Schimmel organized a march and rally in Seattle in solidarity with the Toronto SlutWalk, held on June 19th, 2011. The event drew a large crowd, featured several speakers, and was widely covered by the media. SlutWalk Seattle is a nonprofit organization in the process of obtaining 501(c)(4) status,

More information is available at [slutwalkseattle.com/sws12](http://slutwalkseattle.com/sws12). Inquiries may be directed to [info@slutwalkseattle.com](mailto:info@slutwalkseattle.com).

## Yes! I want to help FKU support women and children in the martial arts.

The Feminist Karate Union is a non-profit organization and your donations help us fulfill our mission of providing affordable, quality martial arts training to women and children.

Enclosed is my gift of:

\$25

\$50

\$100

other \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

# Events

## September:

Sept 17: Karate at Thurgood Marshall Elementary begins.

Sept 18: Karate at APP Lincoln Elementary begins.

Sept 18-19: Adult class evaluations.

Sept. 20: Karate 101 Beginner's Cycle

## October:

Oct 27-28: West Coast Open Karate Tournament, Tacoma,

## November:

Nov (date TBA): Pacific NW Karate-do Classic, Edmonds.

Nov 13: Kobudo testing.

Nov 17: All-Hawaii Karate Championship.

## Karate 101:

Invite your friends to join our Adult Women's class! The Karate 101 beginners cycle teaches basic Karate and self defense skills in an 8 week session for only \$99.

Starts  
September  
20th!



Check the calendar on the dojo bulletin board for changes, additions, and updates!

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