COLORED BELTS AND KENPO

By Chuck Sullivan

In last month’s newsletter we discussed the colored belt ranking system in the lead story, titled “Testing” and I mentioned the relationships of colored belts to Kenpo. In answer to the written inquiries to my comment about a “point being missed”, here’s the rest of the story.

Until as late as the mid-sixties, there were no colored belts in the Kenpo system, except for Brown and Black. The origin of these colors came from the fact that in the very early days in the Art when the wearing of the gi was introduced there was only a white belt, which came with the gi. The tradition was to wash the gi but not the belt. In time of course the belt became brownish with dirt, from handling and using it as a strap for carrying the folded gi. Finally the belt would become virtually black and that’s the way you could determine how long a person had been practicing his Art.

As hygiene became more commonly practiced, the tradition of the dirty belt was replaced with dyed belts. Somewhere in time the use of other colors was adopted. This practice is thought to have originated in Japan.
Unfortunately, my memory fails me as to exactly when the following took place, but in looking at the Official Program from the 1965 International Karate Championships held in Long beach I found an article on Bob Cook (one of Ed Parker’s students from his West L.A. school who had won the Heavyweight White Belt title the year earlier and if I’m not mistaken Ed Parker’s Kenpo Karate system was still using only the white belt with brown stripes to indicate rank within that level. So it was sometime after 1964 or 1965 that I went to Mr. Parker with my observations and thoughts on the use of colored belts within the white belt rankings. Here’s what led up to it:

The early sixties was a tournament crazy time. Everybody from toddlers to doctors entered and fought for the reputation of their school and personal glory. It was a frivolous time. Except for cups and an occasional pair of shin guards there was virtually no protective equipment. We fought on bare concrete floors and knockouts ran rampant. There was little sophistication of technique. Here were grown men who already had the ability to kill one another and now, the training to do it quickly but hadn’t studied long enough to have learned, let alone mastered, the techniques of truly defending themselves against the aggressive techniques everybody seemed to be concentrating on. It was mayhem in its entire splendor. If ever there was a day of the Modern Gladiator that was it.

About that time I began to notice an odd phenomenon. One school’s students were seemingly winning all the titles, at all the tournaments, up to, but not including Black Belt. At the Black Belt level they did about the same as anyone else but in the lower divisions they ran away with everything. These guys were no better than anyone else but their record was! How come? Things like that perplex and frustrate me and if there is a logical answer, I want it.

The whole thing became clear, when I discovered there was a differential in the time frame between their promotions to Brown Belt and ours. The usual length of time from beginner to Black Belt was about four years. That was traditional for just about all schools and systems, at that time. Training and the volume of material was dissimilar then. It was primitive in comparison.

The school that was doing all the winning was holding their students off for Brown Belt for an additional year. It took their students three years to make Brown Belt. Think about that! What does an additional year mean? It means that their students fighting in the white belt division who were in their third year were actually Brown Belts fighting in a lower division. It also meant that all of the Brown Belts had at least a year on all others just coming into that division. What an advantage!

It was at that point I went to Mr. Parker with my revelation. I knew he would want to give our people the same advantage so I devised a plan that I thought would surely meet with his approval. I first suggested that we go to the colored belt ranking system. He rejected that immediately. He said, “It’s not Kenpo, it’s not in the Chinese tradition.” My counter was, “Neither is brown or black belt, in fact neither is the whole belt ranking system.” He had to concede that one. So, following that logic, if we were already violating tradition, with brown and black belts and brown tips on the white belts, why not go all the way and replace the tips with colored belts. My argument was that the adding of a stripe to your white belt isn’t nearly as
dramatic as changing belts. If belt ranking is a reward system, why not make it as gratifying as possible? I approached it as a merchandising strategy.

He liked that. He could see the logic in it. He could see the marketing potential. That’s when I launched into my real objective. I felt he would probably disagree with making the students wait an additional year for Brown Belt, even though it was in their best interests. Wow, was I right.

When I suggested it and gave him my reasons, he refused to even consider it. I tried to impress him with how much of a disadvantage our students were competing under, but to no avail. He just couldn’t see making people wait another year for Brown Belt, even though the other school was making it work to such an advantage. He kept repeating the same thing over and over, “It wouldn’t be fair, Chuck. It just wouldn’t be fair.” I tried using that same logic in reverse, restating how unfair the other school was being to us but that didn’t work either. No matter what I said, I just couldn’t get my point across. So, the colored belts came into being in the Kenpo system and the other school continued to take advantage of the extra year of training in competition.

This was my first lesson in…

“YOU CAN’T WIN THEN ALL”
(Nor the last)

TOM FORD WINS THE
“OUTSTANDING VIDEO PERFORMANCE FOR 1995”

It may not be an Academy award, but we thought it fitting to at least acknowledge the most outstanding video performance we see each year. Last year Thomas E. Ford of Everett, Washington, USA turned in a video test for Brown Belt that was truly extraordinary. He borrowed from techniques to create his own endings that were incredible and done beautifully. Tom’s a big man who moves with the speed of a lightweight and the power of a locomotive.

There is no gold statue but there is written recognition.

Congratulations Tom!
MEET JOE R. LANDSDALE

Joe R. Landsdale is one of your IKCA brothers. He lives and works in Nacogdoches, Texas, USA. Joe is a novelist who has had over a dozen full length novels published. He was recently in the Los Angeles area on a book signing tour that included several cities. We caught up with him in Westwood for a short visit. I hope next time he’s in town he’ll have more time.

I had the extreme fortune of reading three of Joe’s novels which I did in record time. You’ve heard people describe a book with, “I couldn’t put it down.” Well, that’s how I set a record. I really couldn’t put them down. If you like mystery, action and adventure and you’ve ever wondered what it’s like in East Texas, pick up a copy of Cold in July, Savage Season or Mucho Mojo, the three I read. Anyone will fulfill those requirements and a lot more.
Since the production of the Karate Connection's Video Series we have come to the realization that there are many principles discussed on those tapes needed to be presented in a more comprehensive manner.

All of the principles of Kenpo are covered in depth on the video series; however each was introduced at the time it was needed, to illustrate a point about the topic being presented at that time. They are scattered throughout the tapes and it would be difficult for a student to treat each as an individual subject and study it as such, therefore we’ve decided to do it for you. The Karate Connection is very much a living, breathing entity. It’s growing and evolving all the time. As we find better ways to present the Art we’re not limited to what we established in the beginning. We are able to pass any improvements on to our video students as soon as we have proven their worth through experimentation with our regular group. The absolute beauty of the Karate Connection Video Program is the method of communication we are utilizing, which allows us to do something as unique as this.

The BONUS VIDEO is thirty-six minutes in length. The subjects covered are: THE ELEMENTS OF POWER – THE ELEMENTS OF SPEED – BREATHING AND THE KIAI – COVERING OUT and finally THE MASTER FORM.

**THE ELEMENTS OF POWER**
- ROTATIONAL FORCE
- TORQUE
- CENTRIFUGAL FORCE
- BACK-UP MASS
  
  (Through body alignment and mass-in-motion)

- SPEED
- GRAVITATIONAL FORCE

**THE ELEMENTS OF SPEED**
- COMBINING MULTIPLE MOVEMENTS
- ELIMINATING SUPERFLUOUS ACTIVITY
- USING CONTINUOUS MOTION
BREATHING AND THE KIAI
THE CONCEPT OF COMBINING THE TWO INTO AN EASY AND WORKABLE METHOD, TO REALIZE THE ADVANTAGES THE KIAI IS DESIGNED TO GIVE YOU.

COVERING OUT
THE HOW'S WHY'S AND WHEREFORE'S OF STAYING COVERED AT THE END OF EACH TECHNIQUE.

THE MASTER FORM
HOW TO VIEW THE MASTER FORM FROM BOTH A PRACTICAL AND ESTHETIC PERSPECTIVE.

When you pass your Purple Belt test we will dub the contents of this video onto your test tape at no additional charge. THIS VIDEO IS NOT FOR SALE. We created this segment for our students in order to strengthen and expand their understanding of the material contained in the regular video series.

If you have already achieved your Purple Belt, not to worry, we will dub the BONUS VIDEO onto your next test tape regardless of which test it is. For our Black Belt Students: We will dub it on the test tape for your next degree, if that's in the near future, at no additional cost. If it will be too long before your next test and you want it now, you may send one of your previous test tapes to us to dub it onto. Or, if you prefer, we will purchase a blank tape for you. If you send your own tape please include the usual shipping and handling fee to return it to you. If you want us to purchase a blank, please call us. Please allow a few weeks for delivery. We are not using the Duplication Company that does our regular videos. It's the only way we can afford to give this to you, at no actual charge, and we want you to have it.

The future is where we will spend the rest of our lives. I would hate to think that the Karate connection is locked in to what was put on our video series at the time we did them. Things change, attitudes change and while tradition is certainly valued, so is progress. We've kept our minds open from the beginning and hope to, till the end. But we'll never change, just for the sake of change and we'll never add just for the sake of having more. We will work it out meticulously before we pass it on to you. Even then, we expect you to use your own powers of observation and intellect to determine if you want to incorporate a suggestion or leave it.

Some things in the future will not be optional, such as; we are going to require some two-minute freestyle matches before you reach the black Belt level. We've found that if we don't see you freestyle before Black Belt it isn't fair to you for us to hold up your promotion based on your freestyle performance. If we see it beforehand and it isn't up to par we can be instrumental in guiding you toward a passing performance. We are constantly striving to give you a program of which you can be proud. For your rank to have true value the program must have true value. It’s no different from when we got our belts from the “Old Man”. He didn't make it easy either, he just made it possible.
YOUR IKCA FAMILY TREE

Lineage is defined as:
The descendants of a common ancestor
Considered to be the founder of the line.

That’s why we decided to commence our Family Tree with the name of Professor William K.S. Chow. Before Prof. Chow the style of Kenpo was decidedly more Chinese in nature. It was Prof. Chow who westernized the system to better serve his students in Hawaii. Prof. Chow’s Family Tree would have the names of all of his Black Belt students. Among Prof. Chow’s students, who went on to teach and promote was Edmund K. Parker, who brought Kenpo to the Mainland where he had to further westernize the system to better serve his students here.

Under Ed Parker and the International Kenpo Karate Association are all the Black Belts promoted by that organization. In turn, each Black Belt who ultimately went on to teach and promote, has his or her own listing. Under the name Chuck Sullivan on the Ed Parker Family Tree are fifteen names. There is an asterisk behind each name to indicate that these Black belts were also taught by Ed Parker personally, because the school Chuck Sullivan ran was a partnership between he and Ed Parker.

Of the fifteen black Belts under Chuck Sullivan, three went on to teach and promote under their own auspices. They in turn are listed with the names of their Black Belts, with the exception of those under Steve Sanders because of the length of the list.

One of the Black Belts under Chuck Sullivan is Vic LeRoux. The International Karate Connection Association was founded by Chuck Sullivan and Vic LeRoux and under that joint venture are the names of the Black Belts promoted within the International Karate Connection Association. That’s where your Family Tree will begin, but those listed before you should also be included, so that your students know your and their lineage.
Dear Editor,

This is in response to the letter by Teddi W. Nowicki which appeared in Newsletter #4.

First, I believe I speak for all of the IKCA Kenpo practitioners who live too far from the IKCA Headquarters (home base) to attend classes in person on a daily basis when I say:
You are extremely lucky to have Chuck and Vic in your home town!!

I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to get to know Chuck, Vic and some of the other brothers and sisters of the IKCA at the seminar in Amite, Louisiana. Our instructors brought together a family of enthusiasts with very diverse backgrounds. Personally, I became involved in Kenpo more than ten years ago in New York. Once I received my brown belt, life got in the way until 1994 when I found my way home with the IKCA. Today, I practice with my girlfriend, Wendy Joly, in Tampa, Florida.

Teddi, picture (if you will) a warm summer night, with a cool breeze, stuck in a two-mile long traffic jam on the center of an eight-mile long bridge that stretches clear across Tampa bay, is a frustrated Alan Nisberg. Imagine multiple lanes of bumper-to-bumper traffic standing still, waiting (for what seemed like forever) for the police, fire engines and ambulances to clear the way. Well, I couldn't wait forever. It's time to practice the Master form! I guess I was the entertainment for everyone else. For me, I just felt like throwing some kicks and punches!

Here's to a lifetime of broadening horizons!

With best personal regards,

Alan J. Nisberg
Future Black Belt, Kenpo

P.S. You don't want to know what my kiai sounds like!
The following is from Addison Randall;
One of our old-time Black Belts and a good friend.

Dear Chuck,

I just finished reading Newsletter #3 you were kind enough to send me and saw the ad for THE KILLING ZONE and the nice article that went along with it. It prompted this letter to tell you that we are putting together a package to raise money to do one to three more films; two of which will be the scripts you and I wrote together, CH’I starring CHUCK SULLIVAN as detective Dan Callahan. (Move over Norris, there’s another Chuck in town) and A REASON TO DIE in which I hope to reunite a lot of THE KILLING ZONE cast. The third is STEEL PIRANHA.

As we have often discussed, it’s called show business. Without the show there ain’t no business and without the business there ain’t no show. Raising money for films is not easy. There are a lot of rip-off artists in “Hollywood” ands investing in a film is about the same as going to Vegas and standing at the Crap Table, (Your odds at the table are probably better, but it sure isn’t as much fun!), but there is a lot of money to be made, if we keep the budget small and get good distribution.

Our advantage is that we presently have a very good relationship with a world-wide distributor and friend. He knows my work and is willing to take on the films for foreign distribution once we get them made. This puts us ahead of ninety percent of the independents around.

As always, we are looking for help in getting our funding. If there is anyone in your fine organization that feels they may be able to assist us in getting one, two or even all three made, please have them get in touch with you and you can pass it on. I am already in touch with your student John Quinn at Alchemy Films.

When you and Vic first started the Karate Connection Tape Series you were kind enough to ask me for help in their production and to serve on the board. Due to the constant demands of “the business” I have not been able to be as involved as I would have liked; But if I can at least get CH’I made then I feel that I will have made a small contribution.

I wish you all continued success.

My best to Vic.

Your Friend,

Addison Randall, 2nd Degree Black, Kenpo
President, Soulstone Entertainment
To Our Students:
We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your promotion. We know what kind of dedication and perseverance it requires to earn rank in the Martial Arts and we wish to pay our sincerest respects to you, for having shown what it takes to appear on this list.

CONGRATULATIONS!

October 1995

Harry Wilford, Jr. Pasa Grande, AZ, USA Blue
Thomas Clauch Webster, TX, USA Blue
Rebecca Hattersley Acton, IL, USA Orange
Samuel Garza Falfurrias, TX, USA Orange
Wes Albritton Pisgah, AL, USA Orange
Luis A. Cardenas Fontana, CA, USA Blue
Trace Albritton Pisgah, AL, USA Brown
Austin Saladin St. Helena, CA, USA Yellow
Amanda Mullins Napa, CA, USA Blue
Kelly Knight Napa, CA, USA Yellow
Jessica Jones Napa, CA, USA Yellow
Matthew T. Wilson Ft. Davis, TX, USA 1st Degree Black
Manuel Grijalva Tucson, AZ, USA Orange
Joe Moore, Jr. Palatine Bridge, NY, USA Orange
Charlie Morgan Fredericktown, MO, USA Purple
Ray Gong Alhambra, CA, USA Purple
Michael Hyatt Perry, UT, USA Orange
Holly Hyatt Perry, UT, USA Orange
Scott Pearce Kaysville, UT, USA Blue
Shaun Aghili Walnut Creek, CA, USA 1st Degree Black Belt
Angel Romero San Jose, CA, USA Junior Black Belt
Erica Bravo San Jose, CA, USA 1st Degree Black Belt
John Kortman Bellerland, HOL Orange
David Loudermilk Adelanto, CA, USA Orange
Richard R. Smith Military APO Orange
Charles Shad Torrance, CA, USA Purple
Dan Heerdt Charleston, IL, USA Green
Bruce Pahl Wilmington, DE, USA Orange
James Frank Smith Cleveland, TN, USA Orange
Tim DiPadoya Willowick, OH, USA Orange
Greg Booker Houston, TX, USA Purple
Julio Cardenas Phillips Ranch, CA, USA Purple
Richard Kolk Belvedere, IL, USA Purple
### November 1995

- **Michael Fournell**  
  High Bridge, NJ, USA  
  Blue

- **Susan Fournell**  
  High Bridge, NJ, USA  
  Blue

- **Tanya Quintana**  
  San Jose, CA, USA  
  Junior Black Belt

- **Aldo Quintana**  
  San Jose, CA, USA  
  Junior Black Belt

- **Ed Murray**  
  Rossmoor, CA, USA  
  Purple

- **Doug Dipzinski**  
  Grass Lake, MI, USA  
  Orange

- **Brad Hamilton**  
  Archdale, NC, USA  
  Orange

- **Adam LaClair**  
  Lyndonville, VT, USA  
  Orange

- **James Folse**  
  Montrose, AL, USA  
  Orange

- **Eli Bachara**  
  California City, CA, USA  
  Purple

- **Gerard Perez**  
  Howell, MI, USA  
  Purple

- **Reggie Hamilton**  
  Thomasville, SC, USA  
  Blue

- **Harold McGill**  
  Lithonia, GA, USA  
  Green

- **Jason Subiate**  
  Torrance, CA, USA  
  Purple

- **Arend Pryor**  
  Vallejo, CA, USA  
  Orange

- **Doug Wheeler**  
  Huntington Beach, CA, USA  
  2nd Degree Black Belt

- **Deborah Knable Richtman**  
  Trabuco Canyon, CA, USA  
  1st Degree Black Belt

- **Heith Lang**  
  Pisgah, AL, USA  
  Orange

- **Jeremy Moore**  
  Pisgah, AL, USA  
  Orange

- **Brandon Pike**  
  Pisgah, AL, USA  
  Orange

- **Dave Brown**  
  Howell, MI, USA  
  Orange

- **Ken Jesse**  
  Huntsville, AL, USA  
  Orange

- **Roderick O. Pruitt**  
  Jacksonville, FL, USA  
  Purple

- **Adam C. Werner**  
  Roselle, NJ, USA  
  Blue

- **David H. Bean**  
  Farmington, VT, USA  
  Green

- **Joseph P. Poliseo**  
  Roselle, NJ, USA  
  Brown

- **Lisa Fredricksen**  
  Cave Creek, AZ, USA  
  Blue

- **Daniel J. Crill**  
  Phoenix, AZ, USA  
  Green

- **Daniel Albizo**  
  San Jose, CA, USA  
  Junior Black Belt

- **Scott Beers**  
  Torrance, CA, USA  
  Purple

- **Ray Gregory**  
  Anaheim, CA, USA  
  Purple

- **Cory Fetterly**  
  Hawthorne, CA, USA  
  Blue

- **Hugo Garcia**  
  Long Beach, CA, USA  
  Purple

- **Dan Skidmore**  
  San Pedro, CA, USA  
  Brown

- **Phillip Chavez Cisneros**  
  Orange Grove, CA, USA  
  Orange

- **Jennifer Tniele**  
  Cedar City, UT, USA  
  Orange

- **Nathan D. Murphree**  
  Springfield, MO, USA  
  Purple

- **Steven A. Crawford**  
  Kansas City, KS, USA  
  Blue

- **Anthony Johnson**  
  Excelsior Springs, MO, USA  
  Blue

- **Clayton A. Pait**  
  Hartville, SC, USA  
  Blue

- **Harry Wilford, Jr.**  
  Casa Grande, AZ, USA  
  Green

- **Sherri Wilson**  
  Edmonton, AB, CAN  
  Green

- **Daniel Firpo**  
  Hawthorne, CA, USA  
  Yellow

- **Verena Firpo**  
  Hawthorne, CA, USA  
  Yellow

### December 1995

- **J.P. Keith Brazeale**  
  Leland, NC, USA  
  Orange

- **Bruce Camise**  
  Princeton, FL, USA  
  Blue
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