

Blast From the Past: Part 6



Where the red arrow is pointing was the location of the Karate Institute of America from March 1981 to April 1997 - 22622 Lambert St. #308, Lake Forest, CA. This was its second physical location. So many wonderful memories and black belts were created within the walls there. And if those walls could talk, oh what stories they would tell! The building has gone through many color schemes, veneers and management companies since then, but the shell remains the same. Thousands of students came and went through the KIA's door during those times. It was a bustling place of activity, friendships, memories, great performances and, as any Kiado-Ryu Black Belt will tell you, test after test where students oozed sweat, blood, tears, fears, smiles, laughter and the irrepressible joy of triumph! Although not as large in physical numbers today, the spirit of the KIA lives on through those souls still studying the art of Kiado-Ryu, still creating a legacy of great meaning and substance, for in the final analysis it is not material buildings which house the Spirit of the Kiado-Ryu but the hearts and minds of everyone who has breathed a breath to give it life.



Beautiful Centerpiece

The centerpiece of the Karate Institute of America is its beautifully designed and inlaid logo with both "KIA" and "Kiado-Ryu" sewn into the carpet. Designed and created by Dave "Rugman" Sampson (Kiado-Ryu Black Belt #42), the logo serves as a reminder of the path we follow. For more on the philosophy of the KIA logo, follow this link: <http://www.kiado-ryu.com/philosophy/>



Anna "Wildcat" Griffin - U.S. Armed Forces Specialist, E-4
& Kiado-Ryu Black Belt (#55)

How proud we are at the Karate Institute of America of Anna Griffin, now serving our country in the U.S. Army, has have many of her siblings. Wildcat's current rank is Specialist, E-4. She did her basic training at Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri. She is a Cryptologic Linguist in the Military Intelligence field. At the end of January she will be transferred to DLI (Defense Language Institute) at the Presidio of Monterey where she will learn Arabic. Congratulations on your new endeavor, Wildcat. You make us all so very proud!



Peaceful Psycho

James "Psycho" Griffin is not really psycho at all. In fact, he's one of the kindest and most gentle of souls [when he's not fighting]. He is also one of the toughest individuals you'll ever meet. James is the 60th Black Belt of the Kiado-Ryu. This pic was taken at the 30th KIA picnic



Steve "Coyote" Vertun and his lovely wife, Laura, are all smiles at the KIA 30th Birthday Party celebration at Dana Point Harbor. Steve is the 39th Black Belt of the Kiado-Ryu. During his competitive days, he was a Forms[kata] Champion on the NASKA competition circuit [North American Sport Karate Association]. Steve is also the Managing Director of Segue Corporation, as well as a singer, songwriter and musician.

Laura is a Pilates instructor and marathon runner. She's a wonderful addition to the "Coyote's" life. She keeps him running and staying in shape. Maybe her call sign should be "Road Runner!"



GROWLER POWER!

Chris "Growler" Grau, Kiado-Ryu Black Belt #36, a 2nd Dan and webmaster of Kiado-Ryu.com executes an elbow strike during a close-quarter practice session. Having excellent, functional and powerful hand and arm strikes, which Growler most definitely has, is a most important ingredient of being an excellent Karate Institute of America Black Belt. Oh . . . the beard looks good, too!



SHOOTER SHOT

Second degree Black Belt, Mike "Shooter" Benedict executes a fist to Bob's face during a practice session. Mike's understanding and experiences of life offer all of us a rich gift of appreciation. Although in his fifties, Shooter is an outstanding of a true martial artist - helpful, respectful, kind, studious and . . . tough!



New Purple Belts!

Congratulations to Tristan "Raptor" Ligtoet (left) and Josh "Viper" Shamassian (right) who achieved their Purple Belts, April 6th, 2009! Raptor and Viper are two very tough and talented young men. It is, indeed, a pleasure having them study at the Karate Institute of America. Great job, boys, and we look forward to continued great things from both of you in the future!



UNIVERSITY BOUND

Beautiful and lovely Sheel "Ceo" Chitalia poses with Mr. King after her last lesson before going off to college. Sheel will begin her Freshman year at the University of California, Berkeley. This young woman is a tribute to humanity. At the KIA we all know how tough and intense she is, a veritable lioness when it comes to fighting and self-defense. We all know, too, what an extraordinary young woman she is - bright, charming, intelligent, respectful, humble and oh, did we say intense? We wish Sheel the very best in her collegiate career and look for her to continue doing great things with her life.



Scary Eyes & Cultivator Blade

If Kim "Cultivator" Thomas didn't scare anybody with those eyes of his, that knife with its curved beak certainly would. And notice that huge right hand holding the knife! One of Cultivator's trademarks are his enormously strong mitts, developed over many decades during his career as a landscape architect. This shot was taken during his 2nd Dan Black Belt test in which he did an open blade knife kata [a KIA requirement], as well as two other weapon sets: short stick [his favorite] and nunchucks. Cultivator, a callsign originating from his profession, is obviously quite competent with his hands in more ways than one!



Devoted Black Belt Friends: Lou & Linda Gacs

Lou and Linda Gacs have been devoted and long-time friends of Mr. King and the Karate Institute of America. Each is an accomplished Black Belt, Lou holding multiple black belts in different styles. Mr. King first met Mr. Gacs, a now retired United States Marine, when he was hosting martial arts tournaments at El Toro Marine Base in the mid 1980s. Although not an official Kiado-Ryu Black Belt, Mr. Gacs is one of our own, a true friend, an unrelenting KIA supporter, and a black belt of uncompromising character. We are truly blessed to have his and Linda's loyal support throughout KIA history.



Bowing In

The date: 13 October 2009. The event: Tristan Ligtoet and Josh Shamassian's Blue Belt test. From left to right are: Kim Thomas [Cultivator], Tristan, Chris Grau [Growler], Josh, Mike Benedict [Shooter] and Mr. King [Whitefire], kneeling. The boys did an excellent job during their testing, as confirmed by the Black Belt panel. More to come. Stay tuned.



The Family Norman

This beautiful family is the Normans. Jeff, aka "Boa," is the 61st Black Belt of the Kiado-Ryu and holds a 2nd Dan Rating. Boa has been a generous and stellar supporter of the KIA for which we are all grateful. His wife, Michelle, is the ultimate hostess, and at the 30th Anniversary picnic she and Jeff prepared a feast for everyone. The handsome young big brother is Trent, and the twin lovely young ladies are Carissa and Nikki.



The Hyman Family

Clark "Flash" Hyman, the 16th Black Belt of the Kiado-Ryu, who received his 1st Dan in August of 1991, is pictured behind his lovely and ageless wife, Gwen, and their two sons, Sheldon [center] and Brandon [right]. Flash has been a wonderful friend and stalwart component to the legacy of the Karate Institute of America since he began his martial arts studies in the mid-1980s. Some people just never get old!



Proud Families

Supporting new Blue Belts, Tristan "Raptor" Ligtoet [left] and Josh "Viper" Shamassian [right] are from left: Mr. and Mrs. Ligtoet with their son, Tristan; Grandpa Shamassian [center] with Mr. and Mrs. Shamassian [right] and their son, Josh [middle]. Hannah, Josh's sister, is in the front row along with Raptor's little brother, Aidan [purple belt...(wink)].



Maddog & Sons

Pictured with Greg "Maddog" Bendel, the 14th Black Belt of the Kiado-Ryu, are his two beautiful sons: Hunter (age 7) on the left and Marcus (age 4) on the right. This photo was taken at the KIA's 30th Anniversary Celebration at Dana Point Harbor on 30 August 2009, nineteen years after Maddog achieved his 1st Dan. He is now one of thirteen 2nd Degree KIA Black Belts.



The Family Benedict

Celebrating the KIA's 30th Anniversary is the Benedict Family, Kiado-Ryu faithfuls for nearly 20 years. On the far left is Greg, aka "Earthquake," the 59th Black Belt of the Karate Institute of America. His father, Mike, aka "Shooter," is the KIA's 62 Black Belt and holds a 2nd Dan rating. Nancy, the mom, is in the red visor. Oldest son, Jeff, is centered in the back row. His girlfriend, Rhea, is in the yellow top.



Liz "Quasar" {Eckes} Avram and husband, Dean

Liz and Dean Avram are pictured here with their all-too-comfortable puppy in this spectacular winter wonderland scene from their new environs in Reno, Nevada. Liz, aka, Quasar [formerly Liz Eckes], is the 46th Black Belt of the Kiado-Ryu, receiving her 1st Dan rating on 10 August 1996. After marrying Dean, the couple lived in Southern California until the Fall of 2009 when they relocated to more quiet surroundings, and colder surroundings at that. We certainly wish them all the best in their life and activities.



Nicole “Goldilocks” Hackler and her Marine Corps husband, Watten Hackler.



Paul "Tron" Daniels is pictured here with his girlfriend, Kris, and her granddaughter, Kiera, at the KIA 30th Anniversary Celebration on August 30th, 2009. Tron, the 34th Black Belt of the Kiado-Ryu, is a champion martial arts forms competitor and one of the most gifted athletes in KIA history. He is a personal trainer in So. Orange County. His website is: www.thebodywarehouse.com

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