

ShoDan Testing & The 2017 Seminar

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Over the years I have written articles about the changes I have seen in myself through testing or overcoming certain obstacles as I saw them in preparing for a test. On my path towards my black belt I would say early on I was driven by rank, but the further in the process I ventured, the more the process has become about self discovery and overcoming the challenges I was presented with. The test itself was not surprising to me, as I had a pretty good understanding of how things would unfold so there were very little unknowns. I would have to say the most enlightening things of this seminar occurred to me during the seminar itself.

The coaching that was given to me by other black belts changed. It changed from a physical step 1, step 2, and step 3 to more of a “this is why” you take step 1 & ect. It dealt more with the understanding of why this movement, inside the technique, is important as opposed to the movement itself, if that makes sense. I had two such epiphanies during training. The first occurred during the No Gi training Thursday night. We were transitioning from having Osoto Gake performed on us to applying Juji Gatame upside down. We did a similar exercise the year prior, but I was never able to apply the lock until I took my Uke to the ground versus while the opponent was still standing. Dojo-cho Chuck Sempai gave me a bit of instruction, though simple, that idea allowed me to keep the technique tight and use very little effort to apply.

The second was later in the week as we were doing a Tessen technique. We were asked to slap the opponent’s sword away and enter for a shoulder throw. Jaye Sempai explained to me that if you don’t enter directly to their center line the opponent’s counter cut would not setup the throw. Once I tried what he had explained me, the technique started to flow, the throw just appeared in the technique where it was supposed to be and was effortless.

In both techniques the theory of space became paramount to making the technique work. It was encouraging that both Sempais thought I could handle stepping past the 1, 2, 3 and could start to understand theory behind the techniques. I feel like those two moments alone were worth the price of admission, but there were countless other moments as I trained. I really tried to understand the meanings of the technique names as well and that started to unlock my mind to what the technique was supposed to feel like. I am always humbled by our Budo, the fact that there is always more to learn about techniques even if you have been doing them for the first time or the 1000th time. There is something there still to discover. I was so honored to be a part of The Gi Yu Kyo Kai’s 10th Annual Budo Seminar, once in a lifetime!