

United States Martial Arts Association

8011 Mariposa Avenue, Citrus Heights, CA 95610-1514
Tel: (916) 727-1486, Fax (916) 727-7236, Email: psp83@earthling.net
USMA Home Page: <http://www.MARARTS.org>

MARTIAL ARTISTS AREN'T LIARS!

I've been administering Martial Arts rank promotions for 52 years. When I came back from England while serving in the Air Force in 1958, I was elected as Secretary of the old SAC-ARDC Judo Society, and that's how it all began.

At that time we had several hundred black belts registered, and we handled only Judo. We required that for every black belt, we had to have in our files a photo copy of his or her Kodokan (Japanese Judo Institute) rank certificate. As our new Secretary, I carefully searched our files and found that for about 50 of our black belts, we had no Kodokan rank certificate.

With relentless zeal, I wrote to both the Kodokan and to the US Kodokan affiliates (called "yudanshakai" or black belt groups) about the rank status of every single one of these members. In every case, without exception, I found that they indeed had the rank they claimed! We verified them all, every one. That's when I became convinced that Martial Artists don't lie about rank matters, they would be ashamed to do so.

Not that we haven't found exceptions to this rule, we have. Over the past 52 years I can remember at least four cases where someone lied about his fights won, his years in the arts, or some other aspect of his background. The truth is that less than one out of a thousand Budoka will falsify their records. However, just as soon as these people's ranks are published, leaders who knew the facts immediately contacted me (and maybe a host of other leaders!) to expose the falsehoods. The ranks, if any, were rescinded. **This means we have a sort of self-correcting feedback system. In the long run liars can't get away with it, and they realize it.**

Everyone knows that there are big variations in ability. We all know of teachers who claim to know everything, but you can't get them to get out on the mat to each in front of people who are really competent. We have an expression that covers these people: **"EVERYBODY KNOWS WHO CAN DANCE!"** All of us who have been kicked around for 20, 30 or even 50 years can spot a phony in about two minutes watching him or her attempt to demonstrate, teach or coach. But that's just physical ability. These same people might be highly qualified in other aspects of the Martial Arts.

Rank is awarded for many reasons. In Japan, the birthplace of Judo, JuJitsu, Aikido and Shotokan Karate, leaders are sometimes awarded 8th Dan for large monetary contributions made for the benefit of Judo development. In fact 8th Dan is often defined as "Important person of the Martial Arts." Certainly, a donation of a million dollars or more makes one an important person indeed. All this is not to say that our USMA rank system is perfect. It's not. It's just the best system that has ever been developed. Please read my other essays on ranks in the Martial Arts for further information.

You are always in my heart,

O-Sensei, Philip S. Porter, Founder, US Martial Arts Association
Judan: Judo JuJitsu, Taiho Jitsu, Budo Taijutsu, Shorindokai Karate, Jun Kin Shin, Mixed Martial Arts