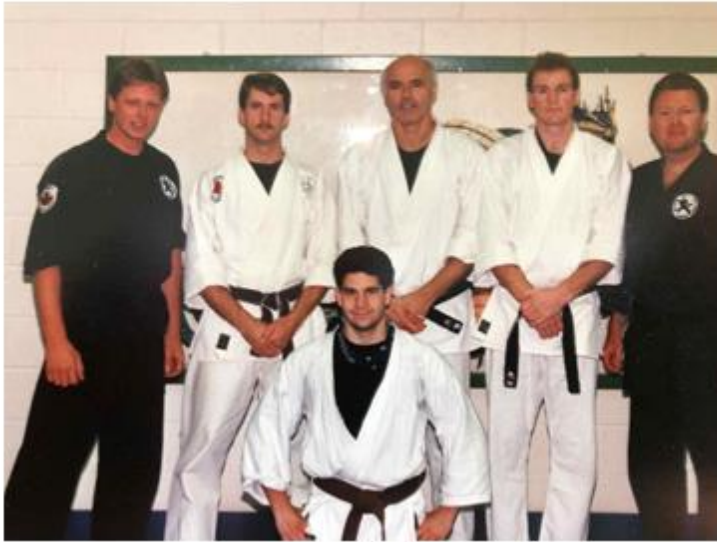


# SHO-DAN-HO



The photo on the left was taken on November 11, 1990 at the Sho-Dan-Ho exam of Sensei Ron Schofield, *first row, kneeling*. In the row standing, we see from left to right, Sensei Mike Brown, Sensei Robert Chamberlain, Sensei Robert Walther, Sensei Paul Cassidy and Sensei Doug

Johnstone. (Schofield, Brown and Johnstone are students of Robert Chamberlain).

In many martial arts groups, Sho-Dan-Ho is counted as a “provisional” Black Belt. The Snow Tiger group sees the Sho-Dan-Ho as a “half” Black Belt, a stage where the student has learned all the *kyu* belt requirements and is ready to present him or herself in front of a Grading Board. If she or he passes, they then go on to the final exams, either with the Kai Shin Karate Association or the Canadian Jiu Jitsu Council, or both. Snow Tiger follows this protocol in order to ensure that our students going for Black Belt become *lineage* Black Belts. There is absolutely nothing wrong with being a Dojo Black Belt, and indeed, you can honour your lineage by running a Dojo Black Belt exam. We’re just lucky to have our lineage masters on hand to test our students. We’re proud of our students. And, as always, testing our students is in the end also a test of us, the association instructors who teach those students.

The Sho-Dan-Ho exam evolved over time, and every Snow Tiger Black Belt has put her or his imprint on it. The test actually started in a Dojo/garage on the Black River Road between Madoc and Tweed, Ontario. The first candidate was Brent McCoy, who went through a five hour exam. The next exam, also at the same Dojo, featured two couples, Jim and Sheila Berry and Sharon and Max Van Dyk.

Snow Tiger then expanded to CFB Trenton, and the first successful candidates for Sho-Dan-Ho at the 8 Wing Trenton Martial Arts Club, were Rick Kearney and Phil Seguin.

At the time, many in the group were training seven days a week, nothing less than hard core. As they punched, kicked, threw and sparred their way closer to the Sho-Dan-Ho, they decided that they wanted a test experience that they would remember for a life time. In other words, some kind of ultimate challenge. And that's how the Sho-Dan-Ho test experience was born.

To begin with, there were only the invited candidate(s) and the Grading Board, consisting of Black Belts who had gone through the test as well. No spectators were allowed. By this time, the test lasted a minimum of six hours, often extending far beyond that.

Ask a candidate at that time if he'd like a more laid-back test and he would say: "No. The Black Belts did it. I should be able to do it that way as well."

Turn to the Grading Board and the Black Belts would shrug and say: "We did it. They should too."

In time, as the association expanded further, Black Belts who had undergone the Sho-Dan-Ho started presenting their own students to the Grading Board. It became a benchmark that everyone wanted to achieve.

There are many stories surrounding the Sho-Dan-Ho exam. In the future, we'd like to share some of those with you. Doing so, will provide you with a deeper understanding of what it is to be counted as a Black Belt within our association.

***Photo courtesy of Sensei Mike Brown.***