



Uechi-Ryu Journal

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Article Title: Beginner's Tale

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Bio: Carl Watts is a California native who returned to studying Martial Arts after nearly 20 years. He chose to pursue Uechi-ryu based on the positive impression he had of both the local club & the classes he initially watched.

Abstract: Humorous insight into Mr. Watts' Uechi-ryu introduction. Witty as it is, his article contains some sage advice and a positive outlook on the style of Uechi-ryu.

INTRODUCTION

I am a beginner; I ache, I'm confused and I have to say that I find Uechi-ryu to be a great physical release from my hectic schedule.

Starting a Martial art is so exciting I think. Of course for me it's more like starting again. Back in the late 70's I was fit, trim, full of pep, had hair, unmarried and good looking. A few of those traits changed over the years, but luckily for me I am still good looking!

I was not a fighter by nature, but I always enjoyed working out. When I decided to go for a career I joined the merchant marine to see the world; I did and I also had my fair share of boiler room boxing matches. Rough and tumble is how I liked it, so Uechi-ryu was a pleasant introduction for me.

As George Mattson mentioned in the 'Red book'; I began to train because I needed a change in my life. I am happy with my line of work, it's not physical but is hurried at times. My life is in good order, but as I grew older and the kids are mature (used loosely, they're college students) I decided to focus on something for me.

I checked into yoga...sorry not for me, meditation...fell asleep, Zen...see meditation. Flipping through the yellow pages I found the Martial Arts section and thought I would have a look.

Well Tae Kwon do looked nice, the ad was big & the school was very well decorated. But the high flying turned me off, I am sure it has value; but it wasn't for me and my 'portly' frame. Master Choi said I would lose the belly, but I like it fine where it is thank you.

Next came a Uechi-Ryu dojo; This I liked. Okay so it's not flashy, there is a cardio element and the training is hands on. Not too much for my weathered frame, but realistic enough to keep things in check.

I find the Uechi-ryu system to be rooted in a no-nonsense approach to defense. I immediately found the benefit of learning one wa-uke block for most kinds of attacks. My sensei keeps saying that all is in Sanchin. For the most part I believe him; I stink at it but I have a few good years left to perfect it.

I had a bit of trouble when I first started as I was taught the arm rubbing and pounding exercises. I was sore and beat to heck. The brown belts I was working with had a serious grasp on these techniques and felt I should learn it quickly from them. I hope to return the favor as my wife and boss both thought I had my arms caught in the elevator door...repeatedly.

There is an element of confidence to the body conditioning & should be adopted by more systems. I feel it is unrealistic to assume you will not be hit. While I can't say I really enjoy being hit, after the past year I am certainly less worried about getting a fistfight. I've seen fights, been in a few myself. They weren't pretty on any account. However if the training is realistic and in-depth you stand a much better chance of coming out on top.

I wish to impart this point to my younger workout partners...including the many higher ranking ones. Uechi-ryu is an art with its roots in self protection. If you follow the training practices with concentration you will see that the system works. If you go to class and just 'be' there; well you may never learn **how** it works. Enjoy the art, the fellowship, the exercise but please take the defense aspect seriously. It can help you when you find yourself in a jackpot of trouble. I speak from experience.

I am no where proficient in Uechi-ryu, but I do try. I enjoy the concentration of Sanchin, and truth be known I enjoy the kata applications of it as well. Kanshiwa is fun. Such a huge difference from Sanchin in the movements, yet I see and feel the Sanchin underlining the moves. The bunkai is great to work on no matter what level you are at. I notice the advanced students flying at each other to get a 'true to life' feel for it. I understand that Master Kanai Uechi and his students created it; I would like to travel to Okinawa someday to experience Uechi-ryu in its 'original form'. Our American version is somewhat different though; maybe it's our body types? I seen some guys from up north in Canada; British Columbia...that was different, even on our side of the world we all interpret Uechi-ryu differently I guess.

I enjoy Uechi-ryu for what it is, and what it is to me. One hand is the defensive, and the other is the personal development aspect. The latter side is something that is likely unique to everyone. I wonder how other 'old folks' like me enjoy the art, maybe I will have to start asking. My name is Carl, and I study Uechi-ryu.