

NEWSLETTER #70

1st QUARTER 2012

The Question of Junior Black Belt

The question is, "Why was the age of sixteen determined to be the age when a Black Belt could begin the three year procedure to attain higher rank."

The answer is multi-faceted. First of all, the rank of Black Belt is determined by many factors, the topmost being that the student has learned all of the material in order to hold that rank and secondly he, or she, has demonstrated it by passing all of the tests up to and including that of Black Belt.

But it doesn't stop there. Unfortunately, many younger students have the ability to learn all of the material and perform it adequately in order to hold the rank of Black Belt, but when put up against another Black Belt of equal abilities who happens to be fully developed physically and mentally the older student would and should win easily over the younger less developed student.

It stands to reason that if a twenty year old Black Belt were to fight a ten year old Black Belt it would be no contest. The ten year old might be able to hold his or her own for a period of time but the much more physically and far more worldly person would have much too great an advantage. Unless the twenty year old happened to be an extremely small person in stature, and the ten year old a greatly developed person for his or her years, then the contest might be a much closer match, but that in all likelihood not the case.

The founders of the Karate Connection had the advantage of having more than fifty-five years of combined experience in the Art before embarking upon how we wanted to set

up our organization so that it would be fair and equitable for everyone. We didn't want to slight anyone or any group or give unfair advantage to any individual or group. And having been around the Art for as long as we had, at that time, we not only had the experience of seeing what worked for the majority of other organizations, we had the opportunity of witnessing the mistakes they had made and how they handled them, or didn't handle them, because once a mistake is made sometimes it's just easier to go with it and try to justify it, than to try to correct it and make it right. Which is exactly what we wanted to avoid to begin with.

Some of the most talented Martial Arts Instructors and practitioners were among those who made the most egregious errors in setting up and running their organizations. Martial Arts they could do and do brilliantly but organizationally they were a disaster. Quite often they were among the worst businessmen as well. Again, as far as the Martial Arts are concerned, they were the best, but as far as far as everything else they needed to be successful, not so much, if at all.

We also had the advantage of watching them do many, many things right, so we simply examined everything carefully, then took the best and left the rest, and we felt that one of the mistakes that many had made was to allow children to attain a Black Belt with no consideration as to how and when they could go on to higher rank, which is another question altogether.

In most schools the Head Instructor sets the criteria for rank and the advancement in rank and there is nothing written or even spoken on that subject. He just does what he does when he wants to do it. He answers to no one and generally, no one questions his authority to do so. Which is not the sort of organization we intended to have. So we set about writing a set of Bylaws which, once agreed upon, could only be changed by a voting majority of the membership. But that's another discussion, so let's get back to the question of children and Black Belts.

Let's say that you have a kid who is ten years old in your school, who started the Art at age five, and within the five years he's been studying with you he has indeed learned all of the material to allow him to take and pass the test to attain his Black Belt. What do you do? Tell the kid and his parents that's he's just too young to wear the belt that he so

richly deserves? Make him wait for four of five more years to take the test when others who are older are doing it in half the time, just because they began when they were older? What's fair about that? The kid did the work and so he deserves the rank, doesn't he? We feel he does. But how do you do that and still allow your adult students to feel the significance and value of the belt that they've worked so hard for?

The first thing we needed to consider was; at what age does a person generally achieve their approximate adult stature. It varies, to be sure, but upon close observation we perceived that generally speaking at around sixteen years of age the majority of people are at least entering the physical and mental state of maturity to be able to handle the challenges and the responsibilities of wearing a Black Belt. We have also witnessed a few who at the age fourteen have the physical abilities but upon further observation we felt still needed to mature intellectually in order to handle those responsibilities. So, sixteen seemed to be the optimal age for 1st Degree Black Belt.

What this does for our younger people is to not embarrass them later on in life. Let's say for example an instructor has a kid who starts with him at the age of six and by the age of ten has learned all of the material, so he takes the test and is promoted to Black Belt. Then he sees his adult peers being promoted to higher rank every few years or so. So what do you do with him? Promote him too? If so, that means that when the kid is around thirteen he's already a Second Degree Black Belt and at sixteen a Third Degree Black Belt and then at nineteen years of age he's a forth and just after reaching the Age Of Consent, twenty one, he's already half way to Grand Master? What does that do to the integrity of the belt system as a whole? I'd say it pretty much destroys it. And what about the kid, how does he compete in tournaments as a high ranking Black Belt against people his own age and size? If he beats them they say, "Oh well, he's a fifth Degree Black Belt, I didn't have a chance." And if he loses, they say, "Oh wow, look I just kicked a Fifth Degree Black Belt's ass." What does that do for his self confidence? It makes him not want to compete in tournaments or possibly even at the Dojo for fear of being shown up and embarrassed. And if that happens he'll never be the Martial Artist he dreams of being.

The solution lay in the belt itself. We felt there needed to be a distinction between his belt and that of a grown person, which in our case was made easy by Mr. Parker. It had to do with something I never understood in the first place, but never thought to ask the "Old Man" while I had the chance. The question was – How come a person goes to First Degree Black Belt right off the bat? How come not just plain Black Belt and require him earn his degrees?

In the military, (in which Mr. Parker served) when you are inducted or enlisted, you begin your military career at the rank of Private, then, if and when you distinguish yourself in the eyes of your superiors you are promoted to the rank of Private First Class, which earns you more money and more responsibilities. The Navy and Coast Guard have different titles but the level of rank is the same. In the Martial Arts, in almost all styles and systems you begin with a White Belt and when your promotion comes you change colors which might vary with the style or system. So, using that criteria, when we in the Martial Arts begin our journey into the higher ranking system, Black Belt, it would only seem logical that we begin with a plain Black Belt, no stripes, no degrees, doesn't it? Does to me. So how come we begin that by skipping that stage? Like I said, I never got to ask Mr. Parker, but I wish I had. I would love to have heard his answer, of which I'm sure he had one.

The thing is, when we promoted to Black Belt at the Original Karate Connection School in Hawthorne California before Ed Parker passed away, we did it exactly the way Mr. Parker did because he sanctioned all of our promotions. He felt comfortable doing this because he was told who was getting promoted and to what ranks, before they were promoted and he was given the opportunity to veto the promotion of any individual at any rank beforehand, which he never did. We felt that as long he was sanctioning our Blackbelts he should have the right to do so beforehand and not after the fact. So when each individual was promoted to Black Belt they were automatically promoted to First Degree, which was in essence skipping the rank of Private in the US Army or the United States Marine Corp. but that's the way he promoted us and that's the way we continued to do it. Tradition.

With nobody wearing just a plain Black Belt, it turned out to be was perfect for our purposes. We simply used the plain Black Belt for the rank of Junior Black Belt. A person under the age of sixteen years wears a Black Belt void of red stripes and is allowed to test for First Degree upon reaching the age of sixteen which assures that no one under the age of forty can reach the rank of Grand Master, which would mean that they've taken the test for rank on every third birthday since turning sixteen, plus earning the bonus degree for becoming a Certified Instructor along the way. Which they must have done in order to reach Tenth Degree. Without being a Certified Instructor the highest rank they may achieve is Ninth Degree.

Every Now and Then Comes a Treasure

Introducing Bill Parsons, 5th Dan Kenpo

Bill Parsons comes to us via a Tracy offshoot originally. He has also studied Sil Lum Gung Fu, Won Hop Kuen Do (a Kajukenbo variation), a bit of Wing Chun and over the years has also been involved in brief studies of Tae Kwon Do and Tang Soo Do in various parts of the world while on active duty with the U.S. Military.

Mr. Parsons achieved First Dan in the art of Hapkido while serving in South Korea, and received formal permission in 1977 to teach that art in the U.S. from Master Bong Soo Han, which he did for 23 years. He then desired to return to his Kenpo roots and discovered the Karate Connection in early 2000, and has been studying and teaching the Karate Connection syllabus, once he achieved his Black Belt in our system, since then also becoming a Certified Instructor.

That's the historical part of Mr. Parsons' Martial Arts career, but what I personally find much more intriguing about Bill is his passion for the Martial Arts. He doesn't just engage in them as most of us do. Bill is one of those people that dissects each and every aspect, of each and every element, of each and every particle, and then goes back to dissect the components that he just took apart. And in the meantime he'll examine all of the principles and concepts involving whatever it is that he's just meticulously dismembered.

When most people describe someone as being a perfectionist they are really playing a little fast-and-loose with that term. What they are really saying is; the person displays great attention to detail. Perfection is generally beyond the average man's capabilities in almost all but the most rudimentary of activities. Not so with Bill.

We are going to present a series that Mr. Parsons has been working on. He recently submitted the first section to us and we decided that we must share it with the membership. In reading what he's wrote I think you'll agree that while it's not guaranteed to make you a better Kenpoist; it will none the less give the reader a more comprehensive overview of our Art, the techniques we practice and the general concepts and principles involved. These are things that you may already know but never thought of in the same terms that he thinks of them. There will no doubt be elements where you will say to yourself, "Damn, I never thought of it that way before."; and there may be other elements where you might say, "Hot damn, I never thought of that at all!"

So give Mr. Parsons' work a read and see what you do think and then we'd like to hear your thoughts, on his thoughts.

IKCA KENPO

A Comprehensive Evaluation

Prepared by:
Bill Parsons
5th Dan, IKCA Kenpo

INTRODUCTION

Objective

The objective of this work is to bring to the reader a detailed understanding and increased appreciation of the art of Kenpo as taught by the founders and executed by the members of the International Karate Connection Association.

Goals

The ultimate goal of this work is to demonstrate, by detailed description of the IKCA curriculum, how this system of Kenpo compares in its specific execution to the various systems that make up the martial art known as Kenpo; and by extension the larger world of the martial arts in general.

The secondary goal of this work is to evaluate the IKCA techniques individually and comprehensively breakdown the significant details necessary to insure optimum effectiveness and efficiency while executing the techniques.

The third goal is to discuss the Master Form, sets and drills taught by the IKCA and the skill sets they are meant to develop and augment.

Appendices

It is very easy in this type of work to want to include in the main body of the document various subjects and sub-categories that the writer feels necessary to share, but which quickly bog down the process. The decision has been to include such information in a series of appendices to the main work.

SELF DEFENSE TECHNIQUES

Why Does Kenpo Use Techniques to Teach Self Defense?

Simply put, <u>position recognition</u>. It is the quickest and most efficient way to teach effective self-defense. In individual "packages" or "mini-scenarios" the three things that go into surviving an actual self-defense encounter are addressed: recognizing the attack, positioning your own body in response, and taking immediate control of the attacker's actions through affecting and maintaining control of their body position and actions. When we are able to recognize the positions that our attacker uses and the positions we can place the attacker in, we remain one step ahead of the attacker. To quickly build our recognition capabilities of the "snapshots" of body position, the packages or scenarios we use are called "techniques".

How is teaching a technique efficient?

The key to any good self-defense response is the individual's ability to remember what to do in a given situation. But running through a catalog of responses to an attack when the attack is coming at you is not practical in the dynamic environment of the street; in fact it's quite dangerous. So what do we do?

There are two basic types of memory at work in the human brain, explicit and implicit. Explicit memory is the memory you have to consciously think about, such as "Where did I put my keys?" or "What did I buy at the grocery store yesterday?" Implicit memory on the other hand is the "automatic" memory we use every day, such as tying your shoes or driving or typing. When someone first learns to drive, their mind is filled with numerous details. "How far do I turn the steering wheel to make a ninety degree turn?" or "How hard do I have to push on the brake to stop before I hit the wall?" However, the longer they drive and the more experience they gain, these responses no longer require conscious thought and become relatively automatic. Remember the last time you had to think about how to tie your shoes? This is your implicit memory at work.

Training repetitiously in a scenario-based environment using techniques is the most efficient way to put your "automatic" responses into your implicit memory. What does

this do for you? It saves you time, and in a street based self-defense situation, time is crucial. Consider this: You are in an altercation that lasts one minute in duration. How much time is present? Most folks would say <u>one</u> minute. But in actuality there are <u>two</u> minutes, your minute and your attacker's minute. The question lies in how those minutes are being used. Your goal should be to spend as little of <u>your</u> minute as you can reacting to what the attacker is doing. Conversely, you want your attacker to spend the vast majority of <u>their</u> minute reacting to what you are doing. When an attacker is reacting to your actions they are not initiating action against you. When this happens you are the one in control, and the ultimate goal in self-defense is to gain and maintain control.

So How are Techniques Used in Self Defense?

Great question. If one were to take the description above in isolation they could come to the conclusion that techniques are to be done beginning to end every time they are used on the street. Nothing could be further from the truth. What?!? Does that mean what I learn is not going to be able to be used on the street to defend myself? Absolutely not, but what it does mean is that you will most likely use what you've learned in segments or pieces.

On the street self-defense is a dynamic environment and as much as you will strive to have everything under perfect control, it just isn't going to happen. However, the goal is still to have as much as is possible under your control. Your responses and actions are based on position recognition, but remember that these positions change. It may be because you change them (you being in control), or they change because of other reasons (you not being in control). Your success will lie in how you deal with the unplanned changes.

In IKCA Newsletter #64, SGM Chuck Sullivan addresses how the techniques learned allow us adapt to the constantly changing reality of the street:

"What the techniques do is give us a functional way of learning all of the weapons of the body and how to apply them against all of the targets of the body and at the same time give us a flow of motion we couldn't possibly gain any other way.

Imagine trying to learn all of the targets by studying a list of them or looking at a chart or drawings or even photographs. Then imagine trying to learn them and remember them when you need them. No, the best way to learn the targets is to strike to them, repeatedly, and in as realistic a manner as possible; the same with the weapons. You don't want to be thinking about what weapon you want to use when the time comes that you need to use it. They need to be ingrained into the fibers of your very soul by that time, or it isn't just gonna happen. That's why we practice the Kenpo Techniques the way we do.

That's why we have a training partner come at us with a punch or kick who then allows us to block that attack and counter it with a series of strikes that in theory will disable or otherwise incapacitate him, which will allow us to leave unharmed. That's the theory and that's the way we practice until we are so comfortable striking with any manner of weapon to any possible target that it becomes second nature to us. You no longer need to think about it, it just comes naturally.

Of course we have added to that equation many other elements, such as using our life-size dummies, so that our strikes encounter real opposition rather than just thin air. A person can strike like the wind when the wind is the only resistance, but as soon as a physical entity is introduced everything changes. The blow is stopped. The flow of motion is stopped, the timing is altered, and oftentimes your balance is even challenged. Everything is thrown off just a little, or even a lot at first, until you become accustomed to having that happen, then everything comes back into focus. You slowly begin to regain your speed and timing and eventually are just as fast and fluid as in the air, but with a skill you didn't possess then: the ability to hit solid objects, hit them hard and keep hitting hard with good stance, balance and stability.

Don't misunderstand, some people with the dedication, a great training regimen and the talent, plus tons of practice might just be able to make many of our techniques work in their entirety on the street, but the average practitioner will, in most cases, find the need to alter the technique to fit the situation. Meaning, that once your first counter strike has landed, you're likely to find that the reaction of the opponent won't be what the technique anticipated, which is always just one of many possibilities, which means that

the next series of strikes will of necessity be changed in the middle of the action, and that is why we practice borrowing, blending and combining. The technique you started out doing, in an instant, becomes just the beginning of bits and pieces of other techniques until you've created, what in essence is, a new technique based upon the situation at hand.

Even a kick to the groin, which in all probability will produce a doubling over effect, might not. If it does, fine, we've got a number of targets such as the kidneys, spine, base of the skull and back of the knees to work with if those are the targets presented to us, but what if he doesn't double over? Okay, we've still got any number of other weapons and targets at our disposal. In fact there is practically no position or juxtaposition you can be, in relation to your opponent, when you don't have a weapon and a target. You might need to alter your distance and even change some angles while you're doing it, but they're there."

Kenpo as a martial art has been called "a scientific method". What is scientific about an art? The "science" of working techniques is body positioning. It involves doing your best to position the attacker's body where you want. The "art" of techniques come when you have to change your game plan midstream, changing, adapting, blending and borrowing as necessary.

So how does teaching techniques fit into that picture? Go back to the two words used at the beginning of this discussion, <u>position recognition</u>. In a nutshell, it's recognizing and creating "<u>snapshots</u>" of body position and dealing with what your memory recognizes (implicitly) as it happens.

TIMING

It has been said, "Good Kenpo is not about speed, it's about timing." What the heck does that mean? Basically it means that proper execution of Kenpo allows things to happen on their own natural timing.

The rate at which things happen in a self-defense encounter is the result of two things; reaction and action. If you recall we've talked about how, as a defender, you want to move from reaction to the attack to action in a self-defense situation as quickly as

possible. When you achieve this, you are now causing the attacker to react to your actions.

The reactions of an attacker to what you do will be either voluntary or involuntary. If they are able to see one of your strikes and block it, that's a voluntary reaction; if your strike succeeds in hitting its target and the attackers moves because of it, that's an involuntary reaction.

The basis of proper timing allow for the body reaction of the attacker. Too many times Kenpo practitioners are enamored with the speed of a technique (especially of the hands) missing out on the fact that in reality the speed should come in short bursts followed by pauses to allow the attacker to react (involuntarily). If you watch old videos of Mr. Parker, you will see movement analogous to the firing of a machine gun. When a machine gun is properly fired you don't pull the trigger and allow the gun to go through the entire clip or bandolier. If you do, the barrel will heat up and swell and the gun will jam. Rather, you fire a machine gun in short, controlled bursts. Moving in short, controlled bursts of movement, Mr. Parker would allow the attacker to react to what he was doing, thereby allowing him to evaluate what to do next.

To put it succinctly, in Kenpo, don't get ahead of yourself. Move fast when it's called for and pause when it's called for. For example; if you kick someone in the groin and expect their head to drop so you can punch it on a lower level, wait it until drops to that level to throw the punch. If you don't wait, don't be surprised when your punch misses its intended target. If it never drops, do something else!

Proper timing makes Kenpo greater than the sum of its parts.

Technique Breakdown

The evaluation and breakdown of the specific IKCA self defense techniques in this document will follow a common format. Each technique evaluation will list the following categories:

Nature of the Attack
Technique Description
Principles and Concepts
Common Mistakes
Technique Alternatives

Nature of the Attack. This section will primarily be focused on the assailant's perspective of the encounter and will deal with the attack present in the ideal phase of the technique. This will include attacker intent, weapons used, intended targets, direction of the attack, and maneuvers used by the attacker; along with what position the defender will be placed in during the initial attack. In a nutshell; the why, what and the how of the attack. In the case of escape techniques the degree of capture will be discussed as well.

<u>Technique Description</u>. This will include all things present from the defender's perspective to include stances, foot maneuvers, weapons and targets. Additional aspects of the technique will be discussed as well to include timing, expected body reactions and subsequent body positions. The technique description will structure all of the above into "stages". These stages combine those things in the technique that are to be executed simultaneously. Seldom does a single move occur in isolation from other moves. Other subsequent categories in the individual technique breakdowns will make use of these stages in their descriptions.

Principles and Concepts. This section will include those Kenpo principles and/or concepts that are present in that particular technique. The "mental" aspect of the art if you will. Proper inclusion of the principles and concepts in Kenpo maximize efficient and effective execution present of any phase of a given technique. Conversely, proper execution will by default include the principles and concepts necessary. So which is more important, the execution or the principles and concepts? Neither and both. It is difficult to separate the two, just consider that each mutually supports the other. The ultimate goal is to blur the lines between the mental and the physical. When that happens the practitioner knows they finally "get it". The section will list both defensive and offensive principles and concepts.

It is not the purpose of this work to define each Kenpo principle or concept. The most definitive work on this subject is <u>The Encyclopedia of Kenpo</u>, by Ed Parker. As an aid, page numbers in the <u>Encyclopedia of Kenpo</u> for principles and concepts mentioned in this work have been included here for further research.

A note concerning principles: There are numerous principles that are related to various angles that are created by correct movements and actions in Kenpo. For example, a properly executed block will create an *angle of deflection*, which creates an *angle of entry*, which creates an *angle of execution*. There are also certain "over-arching" principles that lie at the heart of efficient and effective movement. This means that they should be implemented anytime a practitioner executes their Kenpo. How of all these principles work together will be discussed in an appendix to this work.

Common Mistakes. Over the years qualified instructors will notice the same set of mistakes are made at given points by practitioners of nearly all belt levels. In this section the most common mistakes will be outlined. It is commonly thought that mistakes associated with the execution of basics are more likely to be made by beginners and more "conceptual" mistakes made by intermediate and experienced practitioners. Guard against this type of thinking. Many times mistakes can be carried over numerous techniques when the same or similar move is done in each. Practitioners of all belt levels are susceptible to even the most elementary of mistakes.

Mistakes in any martial art can be separated into two basic categories; positioning and execution. This manual will attempt to address the most common mistakes, the reasons they are usually made and the corrective action needed. To avoid repetition, as with principles and concepts, the reasons and corrective action will be outlined in the first technique in the curriculum where the mistake is commonly found, with a reference to that technique for subsequent occurrences.

<u>Technique Alternatives</u>. The beauty of Kenpo lies in its interchangeable responses depending on relative position. The choice of options available can be numerous for the exact same position and sometimes movement.

In the work <u>Infinite insights into Kenpo</u>, SGM Ed Parker outlined eight things that could be done to a self defense technique:

Prefix - Add a move or moves to the beginning of a technique.

Suffix - Add a move or moves to the end of a technique.

Insert - Add a move or moves into the midst of a technique.

Alter - Change a weapon or target in a technique.

Adjust - Change the angle or range of a technique.

Regulate - Change the speed or force of a technique

Rearrange - Change the order of a technique.

Delete - Remove a move or moves from a technique.

Different applications of these eight categories of change have resulted in popular and similar modifications to the IKCA techniques by experienced practitioners. For each technique the most common variations will be included. The variations may include changes that include small moves or a sequence of moves. This section will also include the most common Blending and Borrowing combinations seen across the association. It should be understood that these variations and options are exactly that, variations and options, and are not to be interpreted or taught as changes to the base technique as mandated by the IKCA.



We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your promotion. We know what kind of dedication and perseverance it requires to earn rank in the Martial Arts and we wish to pay our sincerest respects to you for having shown what it takes to appear on this list.

Reed O'Neal
Viran Ranasinghe
Mason Kennedy
John W, Garnett
Dana Gallagher
Courtney Griner
Norman Mathers
Bianca Cruz
Eric J. Rodriguez
Mike Johnson
Mike Johnson
S.D.Hunn
Anastacia Y. Fraijo
Adam McCartney
Ana Gruender
Ashley Broadfield
Ashley Broadfield
Britanny Foust
Ethan M. Wood
Ethan M. Wood
Joshua O'Donnell
Lucas Marlett
Marty Marlett
Matthew C. Wood
Monica Marlett
C. J. Schalyo
Joshua Zitnik
Herb Starlin
Ron Tepe
Clint Jullens
Mike Nakagawa
Holly Nakagawa

Paoli, IN, USA
Germantown, MD, USA
Germantown, MD, USA
Cibolo, TX, USA
Medford, OR, USA
San Angelo, TX, USA
Fuquay-Varina, NC, USA
Edinburg, TX, USA
Edinburg, TX. USA
Canada
Canada
Fresno, CA, USA
Fresno, CA, USA
St. Louis, MO, USA
St. Louis, MO, USA
St. Loius, MO, USA
St. Louis, MO, USA
Cypress, TX, USA
Buena Park, CA, USA
Las Vegas, NV, USA
Evansville, IL, USA
Long Beach, CA, USA
Redondo Bch, CA, USA

Redondo Bch, CA, USA

ORANGE BELT	
ORANGE BELT	
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YELLOW BELT	
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GREEN BELT	
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YELLOW BELT

Michael Armstrong
Justin Piopongco
Ross Godwin
Wes Garnett
Kent Holland
Jeremy May
Kevin Carrasca
Andrew Ward
Tony Glorioso
Bill Hayes
Jennifer Thomas
John Barnett
Manuel Reyes Barajas
James Dyer

Redondo Bch, CA, USA
Redondo Bch, CA, USA
Moses Lake, WA, USA
Cibolo, TX, USA
Cypress, TX, USA
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Torrance, CA, USA
Torrance, CA, USA
Torrance, CA, USA
Torrance, CA, USA
Lompoc, CA, USA
Lompoc, CA, USA

BROWN BELT
BROWN BELT
BLUE BELT
ORANGE BELT
BLUE BELT
PURPLE BELT
ORANGE BELT
JUNIOR BLACK
7TH DEGREE BLACK
4TH DEGREE BLACK

8TH DEGREE BLACK

2ND DEGREE BLACK

3RD DEGREE BLACK

