

OSS

The word “**OSS**,” of Japanese origin, has become an almost vernacular word in the world of Karate, understood and exchanged among numerous practitioners of many nationalities, not only on the occasion of everyday greetings but also in place of expressions such as “Thank you,” “Glad to meet you,” “Good bye,” and “I understand.” It must be uttered from the lower abdomen with a properly executed bow, showing respect, sympathy, and trust to the other party.

The “OSS,” a phonetic transcription is, in fact, written with two Chinese characters: The first character meaning literally “pushing,” symbolizing the fighting spirit, the importance of effort, and facing all obstacles – pushing them away – with a positive and unchanging attitude. The second character, meaning literally “suffering,” expresses the courage and spirit of perseverance; suffering pains and resisting depression with patience and without giving up, always keeping spirits high.

Youth possess these physical and moral qualities which enables it to face any ordeal and this defines youth. Nevertheless, these qualities are maintained and developed only with persistent daily effort. As it is often said, “Talent is nothing without effort.” The word “OSS” was said to young school children in order to encourage them to make a resolution, to convey it to each other and to encourage one another.

As Gichin Funakoshi stated and stressed again and again in his teaching and writings: “Karate begins with courtesy and ends with courtesy.” (Precept #1). This important principle is stated daily in the Shotokan Dojo Kun (school pledge) and must be practiced at all times.

The word “OSS” must not be used loosely. From now on, re-examine your attitude, posture, state of mind, pronunciation, and their harmony; the torso is inclined with the trunk straight and the chin is drawn in as you pronounce the word. The movement, the breathing, and the pronunciation thus executed all contribute to the filling of the lower abdomen (tanden) with ki and power.