Karate Biography for Mark D. Rudd

Birthday: September 5, 1961

My first contact with Isshinryu was around 1972, when as a 5th grader, I had the opportunity to go with a friend to a karate tournament in Ruston, LA at Louisiana Tech University. My friend’s cousin was a student at Tech, and was taking karate there at the Louisiana Tech Karate Club. I know now that it was under the instruction of William Pogue. I knew nothing about karate or different styles or anything other than they wore white uniforms and hit and kicked each other. They also did these routines that looked cool, but I didn’t have a clue what that was about (kata). There was no karate school anywhere near where I lived, so it was a mysterious and awesome thing to us to get to see karate in person.

We saw karate students fight and do kata. We saw people get bruised ribs, saw a black belt get his mouth bloodied pretty good and then end up winning his match, and watched a guy do what I know now was Wansu kata. I remember little else about the tournament, but the main reason this is relevant is because they had a table selling patches, and I got a Mizugami (Isshinryu) patch and brought home.

Fast forward about 15 years, and a friend of mine had just been promoted to black belt in Isshinryu karate. I had no idea he practiced karate, but was interested in it and was invited to check out their class. I was also looking at another karate school and trying to decide which I wanted to enroll in. And then – I saw that patch – they were wearing that patch like the one I got at that tournament. I knew then that the other school was not going to be for me – those guys that had that patch were tough and could fight, so I was determined to study Isshinryu.

* Began Isshinryu Training in March of 1987 in Jonesboro, Louisiana under the instruction of Randy Buller, 2nd dan. Mr. Buller was a black belt of Sensei Albert Christman, who was associated with Sensei William Pogue, in Ruston, LA.
* Was promoted to shodan on Nov. 30, 1990. Mr. Buller’s school closed shortly after.
* Spring of 1991 – started teaching my brother, Donald Rudd, who had just finished service in the US Navy and wanted to learn karate. After a few weeks of training(with the approval of my previous instructor) I started my first karate school.
* June 1991 – started first dojo in Dodson, Louisiana – called it Winn Isshinryu(Winn Parish, La.). That dojo is still operated by my brother and first student, Donald Rudd, 7th dan. The building location has changed a few times, and it is now called North Louisiana Isshinryu, but it is the same dojo.
* 1992 – began training with Gary Lloyd, 5th dan, in El Dorado, Arkansas, taking private lessons in preparation for Nidan.
* Aug 1994 – promoted to Nidan by Sensei Lloyd.
* Job relocated to Andalusia, Alabama in September of 1994. At that time, the nearest Isshinryu dojo was three hours away.
* Started Andalusia Isshinryu Karate in March of 1995. It has been in operation without interruption since that time. On three occasions, AIK has been selected as a finalist for the IHOF dojo of the year, winning the award once – in 2016.
* Began training under John Lloyd, 6th dan, and Ronnie Brasher(now 8th dan) in Atlanta, GA. They were affiliated with the Isshinryu Karate-do Association (IKA) in Shreveport, La. The IKA was headed by Harvey Kennedy, 9th dan and William Pogue, 9th dan in Shreveport. Sensei Pogue was the first Isshinryu instructor in Louisiana and was from Detroit, Michigan. His instructor was Ken Pittaway of the Don Nagle lineage, and Mr. Pogue was in the same dojo as Willie Adams, Norbert Donnelly, Doug Noxon, and other notable instructors from the Detroit area.
* Sandan - Was board certified for Sandan by IKA in November 1997.
* Yondan, November 2000 by IKA
* Godan, June 2005 by IKA
* Rokudan - August of 2010 was promoted by Sensei Ed Johnson, 10th dan and Ronnie Brasher(now 8th dan).
* Andalusia Isshinryu was invited to join the IIKA by Dave Gabbard in spring of 2017. We became a member dojo and have attended tournaments and functions when possible. In 2018, AIK was selected as the IIKA Dojo of the Year.
* Nanadan – March of 2018, by Sensei Ronnie Brasher and Sensei Ed Johnson
* July 2018 – was inducted into the Isshinryu Hall of Fame

I have pursued good instruction throughout my career in karate, and have tried my best to make sure whatever rank I have been honored with was earned to the best of my ability. I will always consider myself a student of karate, and have tried to learn from whoever I come in contact with.

I have had many opportunities to learn at seminars, in competition, at testing events, and at dojos I have visited, both with Isshinryu and karate ka of other styles.

I have had opportunities to train in seminars with notable Isshinryu instructors including Ed Johnson, A.J Advincula, Harvey Kennedy, Bill Pogue, Al Mady, Sherman Harrill, Norbert Donnelly, Dave Gabbard, and many others.

During the mid-nineties, I began competing in tournaments in Alabama and surrounding area, primarily open tournaments. There were no Isshinryu competitors at any of these tournaments, and while some of the people there knew of Isshinryu, the only Isshinryu any of them have had direct contact with is me and my students. We had to work and train hard to earn their respect.

A lot of the practitioners were Yoshukai Karate and I competed as a member of their black belt team for several years. My school also competed on their point circuit(USYKA). I would give a lot of credit to Yoshukai Shihan Steve Pierce for a lot of my improvement in tournament fighting and kicking. We trained together as friends and team members for a lot of years, and he is one of the top Yoshukai black belts in the world.

As an instructor, my goal is to train students that are able to practice Isshinryu at a high level of proficiency in all aspects of their training. I believe it is important to be good in all areas – kata, weapons, fighting, self-defense, and to be physically fit.

More importantly, I hope students that train in my dojo learn life skills that will help them become better persons, better citizens, and better at whatever they pursue in addition to karate. I emphasize the value of hard work, respect, loyalty, diligence, and responsibility, and encourage them to strive to make the world a better place and to have an impact on those around them.

Highlights of personal karate accomplishments include:

* 2000 USYKA Black Belt National Karate Champion
* Competed as a member of the USYKA Black Belt Competition Team for several years.
* 2005 USYKA Instructor of the Year(only non-Yoshukai person to ever receive this award)
* Three-time finalist for Isshinryu Hall of Fame Instructor of the Year
* Have won multiple Black Belt Grand Championships in open tournament competition in both kata and kumite
* 2002 Isshinryu Hall of Fame Men’s Overall Black Belt Grand Champion.
* 2006 Isshinryu Hall of Fame Men’s Kata and Weapons Grand Champion.
* 2007 Isshinryu Hall of Fame Men’s Kata and Weapons Grand Champion.
* 2015 Isshinryu Hall of Fame Master’s Division(6th degree & up) triple crown winner in Weapons, Kata, and Fighting
* Have won multiple first place finishes at IHOF in all categories - weapons, kata, and kumite.
* Over 70 first-place finishes in black belt tournament competition in several states – Alabama, Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee, Georgia, and Florida.
* Have taught self-defense clinics for police departments, women’s groups, and other karate schools.
* Have trained Regional, National and World Karate Champions and Isshinryu Hall of Fame award winners.
* Have trained 50 students to black belt level
* 2018 Inductee into the Isshinryu Hall of Fame(113th inductee)

Non-karate information:

* Born, September 5th, 1961 in Ruston, LA
* Graduated salutatorian from Dodson High School, Dodson, LA. In 1979.
* Married LouAnn McGrew December 1, 1979 - present. She was the valedictorian of our class. ☺
* Two children – Thomas Rudd, 30 and Kimberly Rudd, 26. Three Grandchildren – Johnathan(7), Lacey(4), Eli(2).
* Graduated cum laude from Louisiana Tech University in 1994, BS Operations Management
* Served in the Louisiana Army National Guard from 1979 – 1985, honorable discharge.
* Worked 24 years in chemical industry (worked full time while completing college degree).
* Worked 2 years as Vice President of Academe Solutions, a software consulting firm specializing in higher education Peoplesoft/Oracle systems.
* 2008 – present – employed by PowerSouth Energy Cooperative in Andalusia, Alabama as Plant Results and Compliance Specialist.
* Member of Southside Baptist Church in Andalusia, Alabama – have served as a teacher, deacon, bass player in worship band, choir member, and on different occasions, SS Director, Finance chairman, and Deacon chairman.