

TANG SOO TIMES

ISSUE NO. 200!!!

APRIL 2008



PAL CHE TANG SOO DO

229 South Chester Pike

Glenolden, PA 19036

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www.PalCheTSD.com

WTSDA Studio {Dojang} No. 330



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Wednesday, April 2nd - Kick-A-Thon & Break-A-Thon Money Due.
Monday, April 7th - Open House for Master Melchiorre's Studio {Dojang},
Dragon's Den Martial Arts at Voorhees.
Saturday, April 12th - Black Belt {Dan} Test at Coatesville. No
Classes.
Saturday, April 19th - Paint Day. No Classes.
Monday, April 21st - Color Belt {Gup} Test. No Classes.
Monday, April 28th - Black Belt {Dan} Class. Schedule Adjustment.
Friday, Saturday, Sunday, June 6th, 7th, & 8th - Youth Black Belt {Dan}
Clinic at Saginaw.
Friday, Saturday, Sunday, June 13th, 14th, & 15th - Adult Black Belt
{Dan} Clinic at Elizabethtown.
Friday & Saturday, July 11th & 12th - WTSDA World Championship in
Orlando, Florida.

CLASS SCHEDULE

In the coming weeks the class schedule will be changing for the Summer. Keep an eye out for the new schedule. There will be copies available in the lobby. Black Belts {Dan} who are able and would like to assist with the teaching are encouraged to volunteer. It would be greatly appreciated.

NEWSLETTER

This is the 200th edition of our Newsletter. I have asked Master Centrone if I could organize a special edition to make it similar to what the 100th Issue was like that was published in December 1999. We are re-running some old articles of Master Raver and Master Centrone as a tribute to all the time, thoughts, and effort that have gone into these 200 newsletter issues. Included in this 200th issue are the Selected Master's Corner Articles, Selected Instructor's Angle Articles, Selected Feature Articles, a Timeline, as well as Family Tree Listing of all the Black Belts {Dan} who have ever come through our doors. Enjoy!

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

April 9th - John Alesi
April 10th - Ellie Francis
April 15th - Joe Centrone
April 26th - Nick D'Amato
April 30th - Chris Imbrogno

MASTER'S CORNER - April 2008

Master Raver, our former Instructor and Master Centrone's mentor, has submitted this article in contribution to the 200th Issue of the Pal Che Tang Soo Do "Tang So Times". It is appropriately entitled: "Thoughts about Pal Che Tang Soo Do".

Master Centrone sent me an E-mail mentioning that the next Newsletter would be No. 200 and asked me to write something for it. Not knowing exactly what he wanted, I thought that since many current students at the Studio {Dojang} were not familiar with the school's history, a short article on that subject might be appropriate.

He indicated otherwise after I submitted the article to him. He wanted something more in regards to my thoughts over the past 18 years and how they related to Pal Che and the students there.

First, when we opened the school it was primarily motivated by selfish reasons. We needed to be Studio {Dojang} Owners for promotion to master rank. We did, however, agree that the school should be "family oriented" and not driven by financial reasons. Basic martial art values of integrity, loyalty, perseverance, honor, and respect were to be instilled in the students. As the school grew we realized that we had developed something special. Other schools around us grew faster, were more expensive, and seemed to move away from the ideals we wanted. Other Studio {Dojang} Owners laughed at us for not raising prices, not allowing sleeves rolled up, not turning on air-conditioning, not turning on the heat, and not advertising regarding the fund raisers we did for charity. We believed we were doing that because it was the right thing to do, not for advertising purposes. I still remember my original Korean instructor telling me that you can tell how good the Tang Soo being taught is by how bad the school smells.

Second, passing the school to Master Centrone was not done out of any loyalty to him, but rather, in the belief that he would not stray from the "Do" of Tang Soo nor from the beliefs and traditions that were started so many years ago. I know that I did the right thing for he is instilling in you, the students, the true martial spirit.

Over the years we had many positive results with students. We also had our share of failures. We had people who trained for years and just simply stopped coming with no explanation, no good by. One lady, who when she signed up was so shy she could not even look me in the eye, but by the time she made First Degree Black Belt {Cho Dan} Bo was helping with classes and writing articles for the Newsletter. She just disappeared and never tested for Black Belt {Dan}. No word, nothing. One boy, the only person from our school who failed the Black Belt {Dan} test, said he "wasn't learning anything new." When I mentioned to him that apparently he didn't learn anything old since he failed his test, he just dropped out. Another student who failed to get all his Black Belt {Dan} test material in on the last day it was due and when I told him he would have to wait 6 months for his test. He just stopped coming. A male instructor readying to test for Second Degree Black Belt {E Dan} was so nervous about writing a thesis he dropped out and went to another style where a thesis wasn't required for promotion. He never said good bye. I have never seen him again.

On the bright side, there were many positive results. One student who started training with me had been training for years in another style. I made him start as a White Belt {Sip Gup} and all he wanted to do was learn weapons. He was in special education so I made a deal that I would teach him weapons after he made Green Belt {Yuk Gup}. He graduated from high school, went on to college, and is now a Third Degree Black Belt {Sam Dan}. Another student who was a Black Belt {Dan} and attending college came to me with only several weeks of school remaining and said he was going to drop out of school and join the military. We talked; he graduated, and now has a very high paying job in industry. Another student who had been training in Tang Soo Do wanted to transfer to our school but wasn't permitted by his old school, so he had to stop training for a year to be allowed. He did and came to me to enter Pal

Che. He was a Blue Belt {Cho Dan Bo}, but I made him come in as a White Belt {Sip Gup}. (I wanted to see how much he really wanted to train.) He did and now he is a Third Degree Black Belt {Sam Dan}. Many Studios {Dojang} were starting classes for little children but I steadfastly refused. Grandmaster Shin talked to me and asked me to try a program. I did, signed up 6 four year olds and began teaching them myself. I refused to treat them as "little kids" but expected them to perform as older children did. You know what? They did, and all made Black Belt {Dan}.

My proudest moment though is of someone who walked through the "valley of the shadow of death." I had told him at one time during a particularly hot class that he was making a deposit in the bank, and that someday he may have to make a withdrawal when he needed it. He tested for Second Degree Black Belt {E Dan} and was in a tremendous automobile accident later that week. I don't like hospitals but I learned a lot about myself from him. Every day I walked to the hospital where he was, and sat and talked to him during lunch time. I wouldn't look at him at first, but would stare out the window as we talked. As he grew stronger and was released from the hospital, he would come to class and sit in a chair and watch class from the anteroom. He would even give encouragement to other students. He mentioned the bank deposit story in one of his later promotion theses. Because of him, I am now a Master's Master.

Do I miss Pal Che and all the training? Of course I do! How could I not? It is a thrilling moment to watch someone grow, not only physically but mentally as well. Watching students being promoted and giving their all in the testing process makes you proud. We had one young lady who sprained her ankle in line drills doing jumping kicks. She hobbled off the floor in tears, wrapped her ankle and came back on the floor to finish her test. She successfully tested for Brown Belt {Sah Gup} that night and even broke a board with that same ailing foot. Tang Soo Do is being taught differently now by most all schools in the association save one. The old traditions are alive and well, being taught at a small Studio {Dojang} in Glenolden: Pal Che Tang Soo Do.

TIMELINE

- April 2nd, 1990 - The Studio {Dojang} opened its doors. Intro Classes began.
- April 16th, 1990 - First formal classes were taught. 12 students were enrolled.
- May 6th, 1990 - Grand opening of the Tang Soo Do Institute. The East Coast Demo Team as well as our 19 original students put on a small demo.
- August 3rd, 1990 - First Color Belt {Gup} Test at Studio {Dojang}. 16 students tested.
- October 1990 - First Studio {Dojang} Newsletter published.
- August 1992 - Dennis DiMarco received Master Rank {Ko Dan Ja} at the World Championships in San Diego, California.
- May 1993 - First Students to receive Black Belts {Dan} from our Studio {Dojang}. Of the 5 who succeeded, Master Centrone is the only to remain.
- June 1994 - Three children from our Studio {Dojang} participated in the Region 8 Youth Video Project.
- August 1994 - Ronald Raver was promoted to Master Rank {Ko Dan Ja} at the World Championships in Orlando, Florida.
- November 1994 - First Student to become Tournament Grand Champion, Crystal Prentice.
- October 1995 - Raised \$450 for Lisa Bosch Bone Marrow transplant fund.
- May 1995 - April 1996 - No Newsletters published.
- February 1996 - Studio {Dojang} splits up. Master DiMarco relocates. 15 Students remain. Children classes end.
- April 1996 - The Studio {Dojang} on Chester Pike in Glenolden adopted the name: Pal Che Tang Soo Do. The Tang Soo Do Institute relocated to MacDade Boulevard in Glenolden.
- May 1996 - Children Classes began again.
- October 1996 - First Black Belt {Dan} from the newly named Pal Che: Scott Mueller.

- March 1997 - Raised \$750 for St. Jude Children's Hospital.
- February 1999 - Raised over \$2000 for St. Jude Children's Hospital.
- May 1999 - Began Tiny Tiger Program ages 4 to 6.
- October 1999 - First Student from White Belt {Sip Gup} to Black Belt {Dan} from Pal Che: Dave Voorhees.
- July 2001 - Raised over \$1800 for Hayley Quinn, a young girl suffering kidney birth defects.
- August 2001 - Karen Anderson travel as WTSDA delegate to China and Korea.
- September 2001 - Raised \$350 for firemen killed in the 9-11 terrorist attacks.
- Summer 2002 - Demo team is reconstructed by George Celona.
- October 2002 - Master Raver passed on the Studio Dojang} to Joe Centrone.
- January 2003 - Mr. Centrone adopted Master Kevin Robinson as his regional Master Instructor.
- March 2003 - Studio {Dojang} underwent expansion allowing for a third room which serves as a waiting room / lobby.
- May 2003 - Raised over \$1500 for Christopher Reeves Foundation.
- June 2003 - Voted Best Martial Arts School in Delaware County by Daily Times Newspaper.
- July 2003 - Pal Che Social Night
- October 2003 - Pal Che Tang Soo Do White Tigers Demo Team received 3rd Place at Annual Region 8 Championship in the Poconos for an outstanding performance of the history of Korea.
- February 2004 - Scholarship Winner: Angel Evangelista.
- May 2004 - Held first annual picnic.
- July 2004 - Mr. Centrone received Instructor of the Year award at World Championship in Orlando, Florida.
- January 2005 - Studio {Dojang} annual membership checkup is 30 more than usual. Pal Che experienced major growth in 2004.
- May 2005 - Angel Evangelista wins a Tournament Grand Champion.
- August 2005 - Raised over \$2000 for Alex's lemonade Stand.
- September 2005 - Vince Melchiorre, student at Shin karate Institute in South Philadelphia joins the Pal Che Family.
- October 2005 - Joe Centrone and Vince Melchiorre received the rank of Fourth Degree Black Belt {Sah Dan} in the Poconos.
- October 2006 - Scholarship Winner: Angel Evangelista
- November 2006 - Master Centrone and Master Melchiorre received the rank of Master {Ko Dan Ja} in the Poconos.
- April 2008 - Raised over \$2500 for Carley Cleaver, a young girl who had trained at Pal Che and was suffering from Leukemia.
- April 2008 - Master Melchiorre opened a partnership school called Dragon's Den Martial Arts in Voorhees, New Jersey. In the family are Pal Che Tang Soo Do, South Jersey Martial Arts, and Center City Karate.
- April 2008 - Scholarship Winner: Nick D'Amato
- April 2008 - Raised over \$1500 for Four Diamonds Fund, an organization whose goal is to conquer childhood cancer.

SELECTED MASTER'S CORNERS

April 1995

Why do we as Tang Soo Do practitioners, wear various colored belts? If things are as our Masters and teachers say, that Tang Soo Do strives for individual growth, not victories over others, but victory over ourselves, why wear something external that may inflate our egos? The answer to these questions is clear. The various colored belts represent short-term goals that need to be achieved in quest of a longer term goal. That is life! You are promoted from first grade to second to third and so on until you finally graduate from high school; you save so much money each week until you have enough down payment for a new car or for that dream vacation; and at work there are the little achievements that take place each day for your boss to say at the end of the year, "You are doing a great job and deserve a raise."

Originally in the martial arts, the practitioner would wear the same white sash each day to practice. Over the years he would practice, the dirtier this sash became until it was filthy. People could tell that person had been practicing a long time because his belt was black. Hence, the origination of the Black Belt. I've heard students make fun about the condition of a Black Belt's belt. It was frayed and worn. That merely means he has been a Black Belt for a long time and his belt is beginning to return to the white stage - innocence.

As a member of the World Tang Soo Do Association, you should be well versed in our color belt scheme. You should be aware of the analogy between the colors and the cycle of the seasons. However, stop and consider exactly what is being said, and for the beginners this might be difficult to understand because you haven't "been there" yet.

White is innocence. You know nothing, your techniques and knowledge are dormant, just as plants are in winter.

Orange represents that first spring flower that breaks through the snow. You show some understanding of techniques. Green puts you on the steep portion of the classic learning curve and you are learning rapidly. Every class reveals something new. Brown has muscle groups now working in unison. Proper hip movement and alignment into techniques has developed your power. Red helps you realize the power you have and you now spend time on controlling this power. Communication between specific muscle groups and the brain has been established and you notice increasing speed. Blue represents the flattening of the learning curve so far as techniques are concerned. Now comes the mental part. You are close to the Black Belt and now must begin to assume responsibilities in the Studio {Dojang}. Things may be asked of you that can only be accomplished if you are mentally prepared. Black represents the end of the color belt cycle. Your techniques are established. Now you can spend the rest of your life trying to perfect them, training is now mostly mental. You have an obligation to two millennia of forebears. You are a modern day warrior. And, a "Warrior Stands Alone."

August 1996

How do you get a Black Belt {Dan}? You find a competent teacher and a good school, begin your training and work hard. Someday - who knows when - it will come. It is not easy, but it's worth it. It may take one year; it may take ten years. You may never achieve it. When you come to realize that the Black Belt {Dan} is not as important as the practice itself, you are probably approaching the Black Belt {Dan} level.

At whatever level you achieve, if you think you deserve a Black Belt {Dan}, or think you are good enough to be a Black Belt {Dan}, you are indeed way off the mark and a very long way from reaching your Black Belt {Dan}.

Train hard, be humble, don't show off in front of your teacher or other students, don't complain about any task, and do your best in everything in your life. This is what it means to be a Black Belt {Dan}.

The real Black Belt {Dan}, worn by a real Black Belt Holder {Yu Dan Ja}, is the White Belt {Sip Gup} of a beginner, turned black by the color of his blood and sweat."

So, don't ask how long it takes to make Black Belt {Dan}. Don't ask if you will be eligible for the next test. Train! Forget about the external influences, which will primarily be your ego. Let it go! Just train! Leave your preconceived notions at home or in the changing room! Train hard - train often. Promotions are external. Train for yourself and your self alone. Promotions and rank advancement will happen.

January 1997

I once read an article written by Master Sang Kyu Shim wherein he stated that water was one of the best Tang Soo Do teachers. Looking back on that article, I felt that I understood what he was talking about - water is soft and yielding yet can wear away the strongest rock. I never thought any more about it. That quote I could use in teaching Tang Soo Do to my students. The parallel was perfect - or so I thought.

As I think more about that statement, there are a lot deeper meanings hidden in that simple sentence. Water is pure, it reflects the heavens. Water never fears being divided because it knows it will flow back together in time. It is eternal. Water is powerful. It can be soothing, comforting and cleansing; it can be enormous, mighty, and overpowering. Its nature is constant. It is dangerous, it is mysterious.

Water is unafraid. From any height it will plunge fearlessly down. Water is balanced, no matter what the situation; it will seek its own level when left alone. It conforms to any situation in a balanced way. Water is accepting: it washes away filth, and yet, when it is still, it is the filth that settles, while water returns to its pure nature.

How is all this accomplished? Through humility! Water accumulates because it seeks the lowest ground. It goes into deep ravines and dirty places. And, in so doing, it gathers together and the resulting force is unstoppable. In the same way, only those who are humble can become great for they have accumulated the moral force within them.

December 1997

Everything we do in life forms a road. Our lifespan, our aging, our career, our endeavors, our relationships, all of these form a sequence that becomes the road we walk. When we walk along a road, we should not regret another road not taken. Those who are mature accept this. We cannot travel on one path while walking another. If we go to one destination, then it is inevitable that we will miss others.

It is tempting to linger upon regrets and suppositions, especially when times are unhappy. Maybe we could have been more famous or richer. Maybe we could have done more as we grew older. But it is far better to remember that we make our own road one-day at a time. If we have been fully involved with our own lives and have been making our own decisions, there is no reason for regret. As we grow older, it becomes critical to fulfill what we find important. The more we understand our goals, the more we can properly gauge how close we are to them. That gives us a very powerful understanding.

The road each of us walks is our own personal *DO*. All the principles we use in following universal *DO* are also applicable to our personal one. Just as there is only one great *DO*, so too is there only one *DO* for us-our *DO*. To be true to that, to be sure in that, is never to be separated from the essence of wisdom.

October 1998

In order to obtain silk, silkworm cocoons must be boiled before the thread can be pulled out. It takes many more hours of dyeing and weaving to make finished cloth. Perhaps that is why the idea of practice is equated with the refining involved in the process of making silk. Beginning students are raw, like the thread that comes from the silkworm. Only after the refinement of practice can they become like precious finished silk.

When the students went to the masters of old to learn the *WAY*, the masters therefore emphasized the word, "practice." As long as the student practiced, then understanding of the *WAY* was possible. There was no restriction based on gender. There was no requirement that one come from a certain class. There was no stipulation that one have some mysterious talent. Young and old, rich and poor, any were welcome to follow the *WAY*. But they had to make the effort. They had to purify themselves of bad habits and misconceptions. They had to work to acquire skill, so that they could not only help others, but also live their lives in independence. That took a long time. It took practice.

The more you harmonize with the *WAY*, the more easily you can go back to it. The more you apply the lessons from the Studio {Dojang} to your daily situation, the more skillful you become in moving through the intricacies of life. All this is elevated by practice. Like a person reeling silk, those who follow the *WAY* constantly draw themselves into finer and finer levels of understanding.

December 1998

There is a saying common to the martial arts: "When the student is ready, the teacher will come." The student's search is just as critical as the actual meeting.

The search prepares you mentally and tests you. Are you sincere? Do you really want to study? Or, is it simply an infatuation? In any martial tradition, we can find stories of disciples who weren't ready, or weren't capable, or weren't sincere. Simply entering into a martial path is no guarantee of success. From that perspective, the arduousness of the search is part of how you come to understand your motivation and how the master will come to know your sincerity.

The search is also how you narrow down what you really want to study. You want to uncover the knowledge and techniques that will best resonate with your soul. The search for a teacher is difficult. You have to feel comfortable with each other, you have to *like* each other, and feel a kinship with one another. Then, the possibilities of success are much greater.

"When the student is ready, the teacher will come." This phrase is true. The search is how you become ready. Rest assured, that for the "ready" person, the way can be found. An awakening can be found with just one word, just one gesture - but only **IF** the student is truly ready.

June 1999

This is a commonly published feature article entitled, What Is A Black Belt?.

Being an instructor for many years, I've been asked many times, "How long does it take to get a black belt?" I guess that depends. At some schools, it is simply a matter of what type of payment plan you can arrange or what type of contract you sign.

As you know, a lot of people feel there is nothing more important than earning a black belt. I don't believe that. I don't feel your main goal in the martial arts should be to attain a Black Belt {Dan}, instead, it should be a product of your training. I've noticed something very interesting occurs when people make earning a black belt their primary goal. Usually, they slack off or quit once they earn the coveted belt.

And, what does this mean? It means they never reach their full potential. They never become really competent. Therefore, deep down inside their hearts, they are always dissatisfied. Conversely, students who concentrate on their training and don't view the black belt so importantly seem to train longer, they penetrate deeper into their practice. A good black belt is first a good white belt.

Some students come into the Studio {Dojang} as if they were checking into a popular health spa or a four star hotel. Some aspiring students think that large doses of enlightenment and wisdom will be dumped on their heads. These people are in for a big surprise, especially when they realize they're mainly going to be doing a lot of sweating and working out.

When are you ready for your black belt? A student who thinks he's good, that this "stuff" is too easy, not training on a regular and routine basis, and keeps asking to test, are examples of someone not ready. A good black belt should know, at the very least, that he should not have an overly exaggerated opinion of himself.

What characteristics does an instructor look for in a student who is striving for his black belt? Any number of things.

First, he has to consider his student's skill level, competence, maturity, and character. He also has to think of the future welfare of the art. If you have a good teacher, you have to trust that your instructor knows what is best for you. The trust between a teacher and a student is a precious commodity, and you should treasure it.

Testing for, and achieving the black belt, is not simply winning. It means winning over yourself. That is no easy task. At the same time you can't let this new status go to your head. Be proud correctly. Be self-confident correctly. Be satisfied correctly. Look at your rank objectively. The black belt is a double-edged sword. It can cut both ways - one for good and the other for your own spiritual destruction.

So, don't be a good black belt. Be the best black belt. Keep your standards high. Don't settle for second best. Don't settle for easy standards or try to slide in just under the wire. You will never be happy. Remember, your black belt is not the end of your journey; it is only the beginning.

April 2000

People train in the martial arts for many reasons. The worst reason to train is to achieve rank so that you can strut around as a "Black Belt" and attempt to intimidate people. The average person on the street may be impressed and so may you, but to legitimate Black Belts {Dan}, you are the proverbial crowing banty rooster. At the recent Masters' Clinic in Florence, Alabama, 29 Third Degree Black Belts {Sam Dan} from around the world were invited to test for Fourth Degree Black Belt {Sah Dan}. This is the largest candidate class ever for the WTSDA. These 29 candidates had over 700 years between them as Black Belts {Dan}. The most senior Black Belt {Dan} testing for Fourth Degree Black Belt {Sah Dan} had a Dan Number in the 14,000's. That might not seem impressive to you, but my Dan Number is 6000 more than his is and I have been a Black Belt {Dan} for 16 years. This person has spent 25 years as a Third Degree Black Belt {Sam Dan} and this is his third Masters' Clinic as a candidate for Fourth Degree Black Belt {Sah Dan}. That is perseverance and indomitable spirit. Why do I mention this? That amount of time at a specific rank sure makes one month extra between Color Belt {Gup} Tests or six months extra between Black Belt {Dan} Tests seem kind of insignificant. My point is this, don't train to achieve rank! Train for self-improvement. Train for knowledge. Train for yourself. The study of the Martial Arts is a lifelong pursuit of perfection - of spirit, of character, and of technique.

June 2000

At times we all question why we do things. Last month was the first time I ever contemplated the question as to why I dedicate so much of my time teaching Tang Soo Do and doing things to better the WTSDA. Through a series of events that only the most senior instructors and masters were aware, I was emotionally let down and depressed. I questioned decisions made by the ruling board of the WTSDA as well as those made by my senior masters locally. I finally decided that at Pal Che we will teach traditional Tang Soo Do and that if you do make it to Black Belt {Dan} from here, you will be proud of what you have achieved. I will not lower my standards for financial gain nor will I insult the memory of the many traditional masters who have gone before. Tang Soo Do students, in post World War II Korea, were feared because of their ferocity. Make no mistake, we can say that Tang Soo Do builds character, unifies the body, mind, and spirit, teaches confidence, etc., etc., etc., but, it is an art of war! It works on the battlefield, it works on the streets, and it works in the alleys. The reason a Tang Soo Do Black Belt {Dan} was feared was because he knew how to defend himself/herself when push came to shove. I guarantee that as a Pal Che Black Belt {Dan}, you will know what to do if push ever comes to shove.

September 2002

The karate school is ready for a new beginning. I will be turning over the Studio {Dojang} to Joe Centrone at the end of September, and he will be the school owner. You have all either trained with Mr. Centrone or been taught by him. He has been a student here since 1990, and he is my most senior student. I ask all of you to accept him as your new teacher. The upcoming few months will be an exciting time for Pal Che. Make an effort to support the Studio {Dojang} and Mr. Centrone. Attend classes, help teach (or at least offer to help), attend tournaments, and support all functions. I will be stopping in occasionally during October to train and hopefully next Summer I will be her for some Color Belt {Gup} Tests and will eventually see your names listed in the WTSDA newsletter when they announce Black Belt {Dan} promotions. God luck to you all and good training!

July 2006

In 1980 I saw a TV movie about rape and how it affected a family. Having several young daughters (7 & 10), I thought to myself that I was responsible for these young lives. However, I also knew that Daddy was not always going to be around to protect them. Eventually, they would have to be able to "take care of themselves". One evening I asked them if they wanted to learn karate. In some rudimentary terms I tried to explain that it was a method of self-defense. They said "yes, but only if I would take it with them". I did some research and decided on Korean based karate because it emphasized the legs. I knew that an average woman could not match the upper body strength of a man, but legs were different.

I looked through the phone book for karate schools and found one in Newton Square; the "Tang Soo Do" school. Looking back, had it been a Tae Kwon Do, Kyuck Sool, or a Hapkido; that would have been the style that would have eventually been taught at Pal Che.

Anyway, the point of this story is that in my mind's eye, I remember my first class as if it were yesterday. I was a nervous 37-year-old professional starting a new adventure with my kids. I readily explained to everyone that I was only taking TSD so that my girls could learn. Secretly, I loved it. Had karate been available to me growing up in the fifties, I would have studied it. At my second class, I could not remember how to tie my belt {dee}, so avoid the embarrassment I went to the Master's office to ask him to again show me how to tie my belt {dee}. This moment stands out in my mind. Another moment I remember and cherish is when I went for my first test for my Orange Belt. I was excited and celebrated by taking my girls out to dinner for they had tested too! When I was a Green Belt, I was sparring a Black Belt {Dan} and actually scored a clean point; he then broke three of my ribs. When I tested for Blue Belt {Cho Dan Bo}, I was invited to join the Black Belt Club! What utter joy!

At Shin Karate in Philadelphia, I tested for Black Belt {Dan}. It was a five hour test and then we sat for another five hours watching another group test. At the end when they told us to line up I could barely stand because my legs and back had knotted up.

At my promotion to Second Degree Black Belt {E Dan} they realized that someone had forgotten to bring tape for the belt stripe. Another Black Belt {Dan} turned around, took the stripe off of his belt {dee} and gave it to the Master {Ko Dan Ja} to put on my belt.

I remember when we opened the karate school in Glenolden. We had twelve students at the grand opening ceremonies when we hung the flags. The East Coast Karate Demo Team performed. I still have the grand opening tape.

Of all the moments in my Tang Soo Do career, the moment that I cherish and am most proud of is when one of my students has that Master's Belt tied around his waist, and with a wet eye, I will know that the legacy has been successfully passed on to another generation.

October 2006

This article written by Master Kevin Robinson is entitled: "An instructor's greatest joy and private pain!"

As I sit and reflect on my career in the martial arts I'm flooded with many wonderful memories. It's hard to believe a skinny kid from a tiny town few have ever heard of would be so blessed as I have been. I have met and trained with some of the greatest masters of the 20th century. The late Grandmaster Remy Presas of the Escrima system, Professor Wally Jay founder of the Small Circle JuJitsu system, Professor Shihon David James of Vee-Arnis JuJitsu system and of course my teacher of many years Grandmaster Jae Chul Shin. Each one of these real Grandmasters has their own unique approach to the martial arts and how they relate to our modern society and their impact on the lives of their practitioners and themselves.

Over the years I have heard people ask these great men to share secrets, often they laugh and redirect the question or give a simple two sentence answer. Ironically since 2001 I have had a number of my own advanced students and students at seminars I was teaching ask me to share secrets. I am a lifetime student of the martial arts I have no great knowledge or secret techniques and I'm not sure anyone really does. I will however share a secret that few people know or even understand.

Every time a new student walks through the door and signs up I am excited and thrilled that they have chosen to study the martial arts and receive all of its wonderful benefits. I am grateful that they chose to allow me to be their teacher and trust me to guide them thru their journey. Every time a student works through a personal problem, overcomes a fear or takes a test for more advanced rank I inwardly celebrate their growth and progress.

Over the years I have had students of all ages, races, and cultures come to my Studio {Dojang} who've have had a wide variety of problems. Some had health issues, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, overweight, alcohol problems, and cerebral palsy. Some were victims of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, while others were insecure and shy. We have also had a number of students who came to us do to being diagnosed with ADD, ADHD, and poor academic ability, while others needed to reduce stress and become more coordinated. The greatest joy and instructor can experience is seeing the amazing life transforming changes in their students because they are part of a group that cares about them and their personal development and well being. I can give many examples of students whose lives were changed. We have had dozens of young people who were diagnosed with ADD and academic difficulty graduate in the top of their class and receive numerous academic scholarships. In fact one of our former students received a huge scholarship to M.I.T.

Several times over the years we have had students diagnosed with very serious illnesses and their doctors told them and their families the only thing that saved their lives was the fact that they had been in such great shape from all their training. Watching people who were abused and very shy become self-assured and outgoing individuals is exciting. Joy is the only word to describe seeing a student reach their goal of Black Belt {Dan}. The years of hard work, sacrifice, and dedication did all these things when tempered with genuine love and caring for each and every student. They come to realize the universal truth that each of us is important, no one is any better than or worse than them. They discover that if they want to succeed they must keep their eyes on the goals and not let anyone or anything distract them achieving their goals.

Even with all these emotional highs anyone who's taught martial arts also knows the private pain. It is a secret that many of us keep to ourselves. All of our students are important to us and when someone stops training it hurts. I often wonder if I did something to insult or hurt that person in some way. I then wonder is my teaching not motivating or have I not made them aware of all their improvements and positive

changes. I then remind myself not everyone is going to love the martial arts like I do and make it a lifelong pursuit. There are of course different levels of pain and it really hurts when a Black Belt {Dan} stops training. All the years of training, the great physical conditioning, the time spent molding and developing these awesome human being and the tight friendship.

The most painful of all is when someone you have trained with for 10, 20, 30 years retires or stops for various reasons. In the past several years I have experienced several losses. In 2001, Professor Remy Presas passed away from brain cancer which was a loss to many around the world. Over the thirty years I've been in Tang Soo Do I have made many close friends, people I have sweat, bled, laughed, and sometimes cried with, all are exceptional people. I truly miss my friends, Master Ron Raver and Master Brian Piersall. This year however was extremely tough. My "karate friend" Master Joseph Leone decided to scale back in his martial arts training. Master Leone and I have been friends since our First Degree Black Belt {Cho Dan} test in the early 1980s. He and I have traveled to the Region #8 instructors class together since the very first class at headquarters. We took all of our Black Belt {Dan} Tests together and in 1994 he and I tested for Master Rank {Ko Dan Ja} together. I learned many lessons about life and martial arts from Master Leone and miss our long rides to class and the Masters' Clinic.

It is important that we as an organization enjoy each and every moment we can together because life can change quickly. Life is about others and then about you.

November 2006

This month marks my first opportunity to write in the Master's Corner. Articles from past Newsletters will now move to the Pal Che Archives where our resident editor will select an appropriate article from time to time. So here we go! I title this: "What would you do if you knew you could not fail?"

I too, remember my first night of Karate as if it was yesterday. Like Master Raver before me, and most of you since, I joined Tang Soo Do for my sons, to demonstrate to him that he would not get hurt. I began classes a month prior to signing him up. Although he never knew, it did hurt - but not from the punching and kicking of others, but instead from the daily stretching and training that was totally new to my body.

Sure, I was active as a weekend warrior and gym rat, but not since high school had I pushed myself mentally and physically, beyond the limits of what I thought was possible. And with like every other "hobby" I tried before this, everyone waited for the day when I would become bored quit.

Obviously, they are still waiting. The "it" that has brought me to where I am today was first noticed by two men: Master Ronald Raver and Master Dennis DiMarco. In me they saw the special gift that I see in many of you. When I look back over the years, there were many occasions when I wanted to quit, and even more when injuries had given me a perfectly good reason to put an end to my training. To this day, however, the most difficult thing I ever had to do in Karate was having the courage to start. Quoting from a recent article in the Delaware County Daily Times, Catherine Galasso-Vigorito writes: "The first step in any new venture can be downright frightening, overwhelming and intimidating, but what would like be if we didn't have the courage to attempt anything?" Walking in through that door on Chester Pike was no different.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote; "Whatever you do, you need courage. Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you that there is always someone that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising that temp you to believe critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to an end requires some of the same courage that a soldier needs. Peace has its victories, but it takes brave men and women to win them."

Once on the path to your goal, you will continue to run into many obstacles, you will run into people who will try to knock you down, make fun of the way you look, make light of your dreams and belittle your achievements, but remember, "Achievements do not come through ease, but by persisting valiantly and meeting hardships bravely." You see, Black Belt {Dan}, and even more so, Master {Ko Dan Ja}, are not the result of talent alone. It is the result of hard work, and perseverance. Along the way, you will see many people begin and then leave. If you hang in long enough, a love for the art, the training, and the people involved will develop. Drip by drip, as your sweat wears down the mountain of Black Belt {Dan}, you will see yourself improve, but more importantly, you will see the growth in others, and knowing you played a hand in their development both as martial artists and people, you understand why this is considered a way of life.

When I started, I never dreamed of becoming a Master; Black Belt yes, Master never. Many of you have been fortunate to have begun your Martial Arts journey at young age and your future in Tang Soo Do looks bright, but the opportunity is there for all of you to succeed in Tang Soo Do, but you must, must overcome the numerous roadblocks that await you. It will not happen overnight. But in time, you too, can accomplish your goals, in Tang Soo Do, or whatever field you envision yourself doing.

April 2007

This is an article written by Master Raver explaining how to answer questions about your training.

Whenever someone finds out I have a Master Instructor ranking in karate, I usually get hit with several inane questions such as, "How long does it take to make Black Belt?" "Do I break boards?" "What would happen if we got into a fight?" No one ever asks, "What is it like to follow the Martial Way?" "What kind of qualities does one have to possess to follow the Path?" If someone were to ask you this type of question, how would you respond? One such answer could be Moral Stamina.

The type of martial art created by Jigaro Kano (Judo), Morihei Uyeshiba (Aikido), and Hwang Kee (Tang Soo Do) – these founders of each system made it clear that development of character is a fundamental reason for the pursuit of the Way.

So, how do you obtain this Moral Stamina? Think about the ranking Black Belt {Dan} who gripes about the organization because he's been passed over for promotion, has seen others go past him in rank. He resigns and then claims the rank. Perhaps you want to slack off in your training or show-off a bit in class. That big eyed, cute brown belt who idolizes you, it would be very easy to take advantage of her. It is this erosion of our search for the Way when you give in to lust, greed, or laziness. It is these moments when your Moral Stamina is tested.

The Martial Way is a Path of self realization. It can be steep, dimly lit, treacherous, and sometimes it even cycles back on itself. Black Belts {Dan} must set the example for lower ranking students. We should be the shining example, not someone who has stopped along the journey and are now a hindrance or roadblock for others.

November 2007

Many, many years ago there was a man who lived his life in a temple training in the Martial Arts. At one point his teacher and all of the elders at the temple decided to send this man on a quest. They gathered in a room and invited him there to tell him the news. Upon being summoned, the student was both elated and fearful as he appeared before the elders. The instructors were clear on the instructions and told the

student that he must travel across the world to a temple in a far-off foreign land to complete the rest of his training. They told him this would be the quest for knowledge and when he arrived at the far-away temple the teachers there would share with him all their secrets.

As you can imagine, this student was very excited. He prepared and went on his way. His travels were filled with many trials and tribulations; he battled many vagabonds, warriors, gypsies and street thugs along his way. After almost one year on foot he finally arrived at the distant temple, tattered, weathered, but a different man. He was greeted as a champion and was led directly into the chamber of elders.

He was instructed to sit while the rest of the elders gathered and came to the room. Once everyone was in attendance he was handed a beautiful, leather-bound book with the title "The Book of Knowledge." The warrior took a deep breath, looked around, and smiled as he opened the book.

The book had only one page which was a mirror. The warrior looked at it, and saw only himself. He became frustrated and asked "Is this a joke?" The elders said "You are the only one besides us who has made the journey and survived. You are the living example; you can now take our place as the elder and run the temple so we can leave." The warrior was very frustrated and threw the book to the ground, breaking the mirror. Loudly he said, "I am happy to be able to have lived the lessons, but I will not waste my time in this jail when so many things are still to be learned." He then got up and left.

This story is a fine example of the quest for Martial Arts training. In the 21st century, students are not as patient as they once were and they do not realize that lessons are not always as evident as they would like. The lessons are in the time spent, the experiences, the failures, the losses, the successes, the bumps and bruises, the pain, the frustration, the confusion and the trust in their teachers. They also lie in perception – whether a struggle, a confrontation or a situation is taken as a lesson or dismissed as something other than that. Lessons are constantly presented to us, if we chose to learn. In our modern society we are accustomed to finding information at the click of a keyboard and getting the information in a nanosecond. It is amazing that any of the actual physical skills are still around. The road to success is paved in sweat, hard work and determination. A very wise man once told me, "The only thing worth anything is something you worked hard for." If something comes easy, then it is not all that valuable. Trust in your teacher, but work hard and live the lessons: train to live, live to train! Be the example, live the Black Belt, don't just tie it around your waste!

SELECTED INSTRUCTOR'S ANGLES

October 2002

This was the very first Instructor's Angle, Master Centrone's first written address to the school as its owner.

On Tuesday night new flags will be hung in the Studio {Dojang} thus marking a new beginning for our school. There will be some changes in the school, most good, other some people might find problems with, but all will be for the betterment of our school and the future of the students. Master Raver has been preparing me for this day for some time. Our relationship is much more than a teacher-student one. He is my mentor, friend, and philosophical father. He has taught me a lot about Life, Loyalty, and Honor. After my accident in 1996 he showed me strength through his calmness, being assured deep inside that his lessons would lead me to recovery. One benefit of being at a small Studio {Dojang} is the private lessons: not just in the Dojang but out of it as well. Some of our best classes were spent talking about karate and life in his office when no other student showed up to train. We watched the tremendous growth of the school in the early years only to be reduced to a handful of students in 1996 after a split. We have taught and trained with over 500 students in twelve years and watched over 20 receive their Black Belts {Dan.}

Although I am saddened by him moving to Florida, I am not losing my teacher. He will always be there, either by phone, a visit, or an E-mail. He will always be in my heart. I will teach and lead as though he is watching, for he will be. I encourage you to train the same way. Remember the little things, the corrections, the fine details in our Forms {Hyung} and techniques that he constantly reminded you on. Following in his footsteps will be a difficult challenge, but he has cleared a path for me to follow as I will not clear it for you.

April 2003

In the past few weeks I've become concerned with behavior problems of some of our students both in and out of the Studio {Dojang}. I'd like to take some time to discuss what I have been seeing from the little window.

First, let's say this: "**Karate begins and end with respect!**". Although you or your parents pay for lessons it is not a right for you to train. It is a privilege. The dues will only get you in the door. Respect, hard work, and the ability to give of yourself to others are what keep you there. The lessons learned in Tang Soo Do are not only to be practiced in the Studio {Dojang} but in every action, thought, and decision you make outside of Pal Che.

Although rank had its privileges, respect on the other hand is earned. Don't assume that by wearing a Black Belt {Dan} people will automatically bow to you. By showing respect and a genuine concern for others you will earn their admiration.

I was once told that the Studio {Dojang} is a microcosm of life. In the course of a night's training you are faced with the battles that can be compared to everyday events. Our five codes, written thousands of years ago, can be easily translated to fit problems of today in our everyday life. We bow to Instructors and higher-ranking students. This can be compared to listening and respecting our parents or bosses. (Respect and Obedience) We struggle to overcome a hard technique or form, much like being faced with a tough homework assignment or added pressure on the job. (Perseverance) We have to take tests, meet deadlines, and face our fears. (No Retreat in Battle) In class we ask you to be a good training partner, and outside, you need to care for your family and friends. (Honor and Friendship)

When I first joined karate, I thought I'd never be able to say "Yes, Sir!" or "Yes, Ma'am!". It wasn't long after that I found myself saying it to everyone: my boss, people in stores, everywhere I went. It wasn't always because they were important. It was because they were people, and they deserved that basic respect. If your behavior outside the Studio {Dojang} is not the same as it is inside, then you need to change. If your behavior in the Studio {Dojang} depends on who is there, either teaching or training, maybe you need to change. Whether you are young or older, White Belt or Black Belt, your actions in and out of the Studio {Dojang} reflect on our school, teachers, association, and more importantly yourself and your family. From what I have seen, if you can do it in the karate school, you should have no problems doing it elsewhere, so why not give your all in everything that you do.

May 2004

Remember when you first started Karate, how you would train three nights a week like clock-work. You were on a regular schedule,

training hard, on the fast track to Black Belt {Dan}. You couldn't wait to learn your next Form {Hyung}. What happened? Has Karate changed that much for you since then? Or have you changed? Have you learned everything there is to learn? Is there nothing new to learn? Has your desire waned with the passage of time?

I often wonder had Master Raver stayed and not retired, would I still be training. Some may think that I only stayed because I knew that eventually the Studio {Dojang} would be passed down. That assumption could not be further from the truth. I would have stayed, trained, and learned under Master Raver forever: train for myself, constantly seeking ways to improve; never training for rank, know instead that rank comes with time spent training in the Studio {Dojang}; not helping to run that school because someday it would be mine, but because it was the right thing to do, repaying Master Raver for all the years of his dedication to us, always trying to set the example for others to follow.

It's now been 18 months since Master Raver has left; some things have changed, and some have not. Students as always come and go, but knowing Karate is not for everyone, we continue. Now things need to change once more. For 18 months I have been waiting for someone to step up and take leadership of the school from a student's perspective: a leader, on the floor, in the locker room, and in the front office. Will it be you? Yes, some of you are contributing through teaching and the demo team, but are you out there on the front line, leading, setting the tone for class, pacing the others, being someone junior students can look to the front and say, "I want to be that good someday!". Have you reached your final destination in the martial arts, or are there more hurdles to jump? Although obtaining higher rank is not always the goal, but it is a measure of your dedication, to yourself, your teacher, your school, and your art. Some Black Belts {Dan} are now two or more years past their scheduled test date.

I've been where you are. I've struggled through injuries, gone through other times when I felt complacent with my training, when it felt as if I was training in quicksand. Deep down I knew they were only physical problems. When this occurred, I changed my mental view of Karate and my ATTITUDE towards Karate changed with it. I've mentioned before in various articles that there is no secret. The secret power lies within you. You need to challenge yourself. There is much more to learn, however, I can guarantee you this: you will not get better or learn anything new without training. You will not improve sitting on a couch or a stool. Begin to focus on getting better at what you have already learned instead of slipping backwards. Seek knowledge on your own, read books, watch videos, attend a seminar; don't just sit back and wait to be taught.

I know that it is hard to find time to travel a long distance just for class. I know that you're tired after a long day at work or school, or catering to your children, but you're a Black Belt {Dan}, at least that's what you tell your friends. Whenever I read, "What is a Black Belt?" at a Black Belt {Dan} Presentation, I often wonder what other Black Belts {Dan} are thinking. Do they see things like me? Are they listening? Are they even there? It's time to ask yourself: Am I a Black Belt?

October 2004

Every once in a while when class is finished, after all the student's have gone, I sit look out on the Studio {Dojang} floor and listen to the sounds of silence, I reflect on the good old days. The nights when I was just beginning and everything taught was new and fresh. Training was pressure-less, purely physical and yet fun. The learning curve was huge; all the waters of my Tang Soo Do journey were yet uncharted. The school was new, the teachers were eager to share their experience, the students were like sponges, absorbing everything they could from the sea of knowledge the instructors possessed. The road to Black Belt had not yet been paved, being cleared nightly by my Instructors.

Today, things have changed. The teachers I have learned from have found greener pastures (Golf Greens), the students I once trained side by side with are all gone. The children I have taught in the early years of the Tang Soo Do Institute and later Pal Che, have grown up and moved on. The road to Black Belt is now paved with the sweat and hard work of others. New dedicated teachers have traveled the path, and are now instructing from the same blueprint that has worked for them.

You have all heard me say many times "Karate is not for everyone", however, it has taken me many years to accept and yet it still boggles my mind. How does something that you love one day become, over time, something that "you did?" Where is the commitment to yourself? The Art? Do people become bored that easily nowadays? It saddens me when students leave without saying thanks or at least goodbye. Parents who entrust their children with us can't even take a minute for a phone call. The dropout statistics are staggering, but the dropout rates of students who attain Black Belt are more bewildering. Out of every 100 people who start in the Martial Arts, only one becomes a Black Belt. At the recent Dan test out of 194 who tested, 46 tested for Second Degree Black Belt {E Dan} and only 12 for Third Degree Black Belt {Sam Dan}. Where do they go? Has Karate changed? On the other hand, have the people changed?

At Pal Che, we have defied the 1 in a 100 statistic. Our Black Belt rate is around 5%. Reaching Black Belt is within each student's reach. You just need to stay and train. Reaching the next level is a different story. Out of 30 Students who received Black Belts at our school, only 2 have reached Third Degree Black Belt {Sam Dan}, and 9 Second Degree Black Belt {E Dan}. The requirements Master Raver has set will not change or be modified; minimum time between ranks is set by the association. Training and teaching standards are set by the school. If you think the standards are too high, ask John, Scott, or George, who have been waiting much longer than their minimum time. However, when and if the day comes to test they will be more than ready and deserving.

Remember, Black Belt {Dan} is just the beginning. The first plateau, you will spend a lifetime climbing the next mountain. There are no 30-day programs, magic wands, or lucky breaks. The rigors, sweat, pain and discipline of training will give you a new respect for what we call practice. With the burden of reaching Black Belt lifted, you will find freedom in each movement, while drilling in forms; you will feel yourself stronger, better balanced and more fluent. As Black Belts {Dan}, you will reach new thresholds of pain and exhaustion. When others have quit you will still be fighting. Your responses will become as automatic as your heartbeat, you will become strong, confident, and in command. When you meet all the self-imposed challenges you set for yourself, you will become a Martial Artist. Drop in to the Studio {Dojang}, not out. Don't train for rank but rather train now for yourself.

September 2005

Everyone begins their Martial Arts journey seeking to get out of their training something personal. Regardless of what brings you to the Studio {Dojang} initially, our duty as instructors is to keep you there, and keep you interested in training. Although each student may have short-term goals for themselves, as head instructor, my goal for every student who walks through the door is long term. For me, Tang Soo Do, is a way of life. It is not a hobby or something I do in my spare time. And, although I work a full time job, I consider instructing the students of Pal Che my career. I understand that not everyone is like me, and I acknowledge, that for many of you, Karate is something "you do," as opposed to a "Way of Life."

No two teachers instruct alike. If they did, I would not need them all instructing. The wide variety of instruction allows each teacher to express themselves to the class, and to share some of the things they have learned in the course of their training. If every instructor were a clone of Master Raver or me, we would only need to hold class two to three nights per week. Instead, the flexible schedule not only allows the student to grow and explore the Martial Arts from various viewpoints, but it is also allows the teacher a chance to grow in their understanding of the student.

Add to this the fact that Tang Soo Do, under the direction of Grandmaster Shin, provides each of us a time and battle tested system from which to learn the Martial Arts. Contained within this system, are movements and techniques from many different styles of Martial Arts, including but not limited to, Judo, Hapkido, Kung Fu, Eastern Boxing, Western Boxing, Greco Roman Wrestling, American Wrestling, and even ECW Wrestling. We practice fighting skills learned on the streets, from Hong Kong to South Philly. We will imitate the movements and techniques of animals, both big and small, masters and movie stars. During our training, we will be required to use obsolete weapons from our past, which serve of no value in today's high tech world of destructive toys, while at the same time learning how to use anything handy as a weapon to defend you today; proving the fact that the Martial Arts did originate all other the world as needed.

Confusing? Consider this, Tang Soo Do not only teaches us how to prepare us for physical attacks, but also prepares us for life as well. In life, as with Karate, not everything can be learned from one teacher, no more than any one way to train is the better than another. I was once told there are no bad systems of Karate, only bad teachers. I believe this, and I feel it is my duty to you as your instructor, to never seize trying to finds ways to prepare you for battle both in and out of the Studio {Dojang}.

I see my Martial Arts journey as a never-ending journey for both perfection and knowledge. Therefore, no one class or one teacher can define or limit me in what I can accomplish. With the world as my class journey continues.

As students, I challenge you to not limit your Martial Arts journey by the preconceived notions and ideas of what you think Karate should be, but rather open your eyes and mind to the endless possibilities of what could be. In life, attacks, both physical and mental, will come at us from various angles, we must prepare in the same fashion.

May 2006

This is entitled: "Accountability, Pride, Courage"

I found myself sitting alone outside our Hotel with an ice cold beer in my hand, I felt great. It was around 4:00 am, in three hours we would be gathering again for the morning session. Just an hour and a half earlier, we had completed our first pre-test for the rank of Fourth Degree Black Belt {Sah Dan}. I was feeling quite proud of myself and the group of candidates who had tested alongside me. It had been a very hard test, but the feeling of accomplishment was interrupted by the fact that I knew, going into this test, there would be no promotion afterwards. Deep inside me, I still glowed with accomplishment.

Recently, at the Black Belt {Dan} Test, the question once again was raised as to how some candidates pass their Black Belt {Dan} Test without knowing or performing up to the standards of the Association. This problem is brought to my attention each year from both our students and other Instructors. Present this question to twenty teachers there and you will hear twenty different explanations, all politically correct, all lacking the courage to identify the truth. I've mentioned in past years the record of testing Black Belt Candidates from Pal Che, and from the Tang Soo Do Institute before that. The standards we set at our school are such that no one can ever question the worthiness of one of our students testing for Black Belt {Dan} and higher rank. This past week we had three students test, in three different groups, and each one shined in their perspective groups.

Our standards are such that not everyone is willing to sacrifice to continue. We expect a lot from each student, in all of time, energy, and effort. But it is nothing that those who have gone before have not done. At times, these expectations can stress long time friendships and relationships, but if the expectations are understood in advance, this creates even a stronger bond between teacher and student. This is the way I have learned it to be, and this is the way it will continue to be. It is said that with each generation of Black Belts {Dan}, the training and quality of the karate being taught at a school becomes watered down. In January, we had a well traveled and experienced Master, proclaim the quality of our Black Belts {Dan} to be in the top 5% of all the schools he has ever seen, and this man throws compliments around like manhole covers. This comment should make each Black Belt {Dan} prideful in their effort that day, and the effort and dedication they exhibit every day.

The solution to having candidates more prepared for Black Belt {Dan} is Courage. Instructors need to have the courage to tell students well before the test time they are not ready. Judges need to have the courage to fail these students without fear of higher ranking Masters. (I feel some Instructors have the hope that someone else will fail their student because they themselves lacked the courage to do it.) The candidate must have the courage to realistically look at themselves and know in their heart whether they deserve or not deserve to be there.

Now believe me, I know firsthand, there are many variables that go into whether or not a student should test or not test, physical and mental challenges, age, dedication to the association and school all go into the selection process. However, there can be no exceptions for candidates not knowing the required elements, and lack of desire and effort. Preparation falls on the teacher, heart and effort falls on the student, however, accountability falls on all three mentioned above.

Okay, so now you have passed your test, it was difficult, but you did awesome. You knew all your Forms {Hyung}, One Steps {Il Soo Sik} and Self-Defense {Ho Sin Sul}. Your Kicks {Chak Ki} were on, and you were flying all over the floor, however, the person next to you struggled, kept messing up, form {Hyung} after form {Hyung}, didn't know any One Steps {Il Soo Sik}, and flat out did not want to be there next to you. Fast forward three months, you are at the Black Belt {Dan} Clinic, and there is the person you tested next to, receiving a Black Belt {Dan} from their Instructor. How do you feel? Cheated? Does their promotion cheapen your own?

Around fourteen years ago, the WTSDA created a poster of a little girl (Michelle Prentice from our school) throwing her front kick while performing Staff Form Number One {Bong Hyung Il Bu}. The caption below her picture read, "We wear our Black Belts around our hearts, not around our waist". I thought of those words that night staring up at the sky outside the Hotel in Alabama. I did not need a Belt {Dee} or certificate to acknowledge what I did that night. I also think of those words every time someone asks me what rank I am. Yes I am proud, but does it really matter? And most recently, as I lay awake in my room after having just completed the third leg of the Master's test, I once again was reminded of that quote. Whether you have just earned your Orange Belt or Master's Belt, it does not matter, at that particular time, they are equally important to each individual. When I teach, I teach from my heart. When I train, I train with my heart. You should do the same. You cannot see your own belt {dee} when it is tied around your waist. Others can, and if that is their measure of your ability, they do not understand what we do. Through the years, I have learned from all ranks, teachers and students alike. The measuring stick I use is not the color or stripes on a belt, but rather the intangible qualities that make up that person.

Although we are a part of a large organization, Tang Soo Do must be an individual pursuit. I reminded you when you began; when you train, your only competitor is yourself. Each night, you must constantly strive to make yourself better. In the beginning you depend on the teacher and higher ranking students to measure your progress, but sooner or later you must become your own critic, measuring your successes and failures by where you left off on the previous night. When you test, although you want to be a cooperative partner, you must be selfish while striving to be your best. Despite what others think or say, you must know in your heart of hearts, how you did, and if you deserve to pass. Whether you are the testing Candidate, Judge, or Instructor, fail or pass, remember, "The only thing that doesn't abide by moral majority is a person's conscience."

July-August 2006

This is entitled: "In Discipline Lies Freedom".

For some reason these words do not sound as if they should share the same quote. But if you think on it for a moment it makes sense. What is Freedom? Although we live in a free society, we are constrained by many things, the list is endless. But worst of all we are confined most by our own shortcomings. Day in and day out we let ourselves down; we fail to meet the expectations that we create in our mind of how we should be, and what we should do. No one is perfect, and no one can be on top of things all the time, however, we can continue to improve on the things that will make us better, at least to ourselves.

How often have you gone through the entire day and at the end feel as if you accomplished nothing? When was the last time you made a New Year Resolution and actually kept it? What are your goals in Tang Soo Do, school, your career, life? In the past when you have failed or succeeded in meeting your objective, what was the main reason?

The answer is simple. Discipline. When you had to pass a test, you used discipline to help you study. When you wanted to drop some weight to fit into a dress, or look better in a suit, you used discipline to help you meet your ideal weight. The list goes on and on. Discipline, is the mental attitude that allows you the freedom to make the right choices at the right time. Although some people are stronger willed than others, I don't believe it is an attribute you are born with. It is cultivated through hard work and a dogged determination to improve. It is built night after night in class banging out line drills and forms, over and over. It, along with honor, are what set Martial Artists apart from the rest of society, and within the Martial Arts, separates the true practitioners from the "Snicker Bar" Black Belts.

Discipline allows you the Freedom, to plan out your day, to organize your thoughts and dreams, and then act on them. It frees you to take off from a workout on Friday and enjoy a night with your friends because you went to class earlier in the week as planned. Discipline, wakes you up early in the morning for a workout, so you can free up your day for any unforeseen problem that may interrupt your plans for later. Discipline, sits you down at your computer to do a report weeks before it is due. Discipline, is the thing that drives you to class on nights when you don't "feel" like going. Discipline, is the self-chosen path that keeps loyal to Tang Soo Do and frees you from being tempted to join the next latest and greatest martial art that buys space in Black Belt Magazine. Your goal now should be to not become a prisoner of your old self but try and become more disciplined with your daily life and enjoy the freedoms that will come from it.

SELECTED FEATURE ARTICLES

October 1990

This article is excerpted from the writings of a very dear friend and talented Martial Artist, G. Morgan Becker, 1989 WTSDA Instructor of the Year. It appeared in his September 1986 Studio {Dojang} Newsletter. This was the Feature Article in the very first Newsletter.

How many people in general, or how many students actually practicing a martial art really know the true meaning of "Black Belt?" The answer is not many. Why? Mainly because too many individuals only know and understand whatever they see and hear about "karate" and the martial arts from what they learn on TV and see in the movies. As all students at our {Dojang} know and appreciate, real "karate" is not all that glamorous. It requires a lot of hard work and serious effort.

Above all, the Black Belt is not a symbol of one's ability to beat up the ordinary man on the street. It is not a sign of some superman. It is the representation of a certain amount of knowledge of a martial art. A Black Belt need not be the best fighter in class, or the toughest person in the training hall. The most important value in receiving a Black Belt is in the very mastery of one's own conduct.

Earning a Black Belt means that the holder has set a good example to others as a human being. He or She will be able to set aside his or her own desires in order to help others. They will have firm control over their own emotions and temper, even in a difficult situation. Good Black Belts will conduct themselves wisely and conscientiously. They will be able to determine their own moral precepts and be ready, willing, and able to stand for the difference between right and wrong, and weigh the outcome of their actions on themselves and others.

All this really means is that a Black Belt should not be a symbol or mark of physical power. It should rather represent a sign of character.

The great Korean master Mas Oyama described karate as a "...way of life, the purpose of which is to enable men (and women) to realize their full potentialities, both physical and spiritual. If the spiritual side of karate is ignored, its physical aspect is meaningless." In his book, This Is Karate, he states very clearly that, "The ultimate purpose of karate is to develop the better features of human character rather than merely to strengthen human beings against physical enemies."

Each person has a different reason for studying karate and getting a Black Belt. Therefore, each person will have developed some of the aspects and requirements for a Black Belt more highly than others. For example, some practitioners may be very good technicians, yet may have little knowledge of the art which they practice. Others may be wise and understanding and not have developed as proficient technicians.

However, as one's training in the martial arts continues, one should become aware of a stronger calling, the molding of oneself into a better person, not only in fighting ability, but also in dignity and honor. This has traditionally been the goal of genuine martial art students.

February 1991

The 'Long Gray Line' is a term used to describe the corps of cadets at the United States Military Academy at West Point, NY. Cadets, officers, and alumni of this distinguished university are very much aware of this legacy and are proud of their heritage. Even Hollywood has glamorized these facts and the tradition surrounding this institution. This legacy and heritage dates back 190 years when the Academy was founded. Their motto: "Duty, Honor, Country" sounds strangely familiar to me. However, as a Tang Soo Do practitioner, I've heard it said in these all too familiar words: "1. Loyalty to Country; 2. Obedience to Parents; 3. Honor Friendship; 4. No Retreat in Battle; 5. In Fighting, Choose with Sense and Honor."

Tang Soo Do also has a very rich and heralded legacy stretching back through the centuries to the Hwa Rang Dan (Flowers of Youth) of the Silla Dynasty. We have every right to be proud of our heritage, the Hwa Rang Dan were probably the greatest warriors the world has ever seen. As a Black Belt, I challenge each and every student to join Tang Soo Do's 'Long Gray Line' stretching 10 times as far back as West Point's and become a Black Belt. It's not an easy task to accomplish, for if it were, attaining Black Belt would have no meaning.

It's easy to wear a Black Belt. For \$5 you can go to any Martial Arts supply store and buy one. That, however, would be a hollow victory. There is more to being a Black Belt than just wearing one. A Black Belt is, and must be, a Black Belt in the heart and mind - and lives by the principles and tenets 24 hours a day - not just in the Studio {Dojang}. The trappings worn by a Black Belt are just "window dressing" and are used to show the world the level of expertise the wearer has achieved.

Attaining the rank of First Degree Black Belt {Cho Dan}, should not signify the end of your journey. If your goal is to reach Black Belt and then drop out because you have reached your goal, then it's time to re-evaluate your ideas of just what being a Black Belt entails. Our founders believe that attaining Black Belt is merely the end of one journey and the beginning of another. The newly promoted Black Belt has now cleared the mind and is ready to truly begin to learn what the martial arts, and more specifically Tang Soo Do, are all about and what they have to offer to people living in our times. This journey is not a two, five, or even ten year journey, but instead a journey lasting the rest of your life. Make that commitment. Walk with us on that never-ending journey to the beat of a different drummer:DUTY.....HONOR.....COUNTRY.....

June 1991

The 'Path' to obtaining a Black Belt may best be compared to climbing a mountain. To a new white belt, he looks at the mountain from afar and says to himself, "It doesn't look that steep or difficult. I'll get to the top in no time." However, as he begins his training and gets closer to the foot of the mountain, he begins to see that it is indeed much more of a difficult task than he first thought.

The orange belts are in the undergrowth of forests that lie at the foot of the mountain. They know the mountain is there, but because of the dense forests they cannot see it. It is all they can do to stay on the trail. They can, however, hear their Sahbumnim somewhere ahead of them saying, "This is the way, come this way. The path is over here."

Green belts have broken through the undergrowth. The mountain is not steep and they make rapid progress towards the summit. "How could anything be this easy? Sahbumnim has said this mountain is difficult - boy was he mistaken. I'm gonna break all speed records in getting to the top of this mountain. My Sahbumnim will be so proud of me."

The brown belt has passed the easy part of the climb. Now the path is very steep. He must be strong and powerful to continue the climb. Your Sahbumnim is pushing and pulling you without really touching you. "How does he do it?"

The red belt must be quick and agile. He walks a narrow, dangerous path that does not seem to be making any progress towards the summit. Luckily, all the climbing done to this point has caused all muscle groups to work in unison. This path has pitfalls such as ego and lack of humility that can cause one to falter in the quest. Your teacher is nimbly moving in front of you - indicating the path.

The blue belt has now almost reached the summit. The air is rarefied, and he must clear his mind and prepare for that final assault. How bad do you want to reach the summit? You can turn back now; those last few steps are extremely dangerous. Who would know? The pinnacle is only a short distance away. Your Sahbumnim can only nod his head and point to the goal. You must do it yourself.

You've reached the summit. You stand there; proud and erect. You take your Sah Bum Nim's hand. He smiles at you and you notice a glistening in his eye. He welcomes you to the brotherhood as he bows to you. The legacy has been passed. You look down and see the path you've followed. You see the other students at various levels along the mountain. They look up at you and decide to try harder. You're yelling encouragement to them, giving directions and help, but you can't touch to help them, they must do it themselves as people have done for two millennia.

You look around to enjoy the view. Then you see it!!! Another mountain!!! Only this one is more rugged, more difficult!!! This is the mountain of Second Degree Black Belt {E Dan}, which only one First Degree Black Belt {Cho Dan} in five will be able to climb. Then it strikes you like a ridge hand to the temple, there will **ALWAYS** be a higher mountain!!!

July 1991

This article was written by our Instructor Trainee, Ms. Jean Sowa, and is entitled, "Salutations."

On the street, people greet each other with a smile, a handshake, a nod or even a hug. It is a way of acknowledging another. Usually the type of greeting chosen depends upon the relationship between the two people. Some might be considered formal (handshake or salute) and others informal (smile or wave of hand). Regardless of the salutation we speak, they all convey a degree of respect, warmth, consideration, esteem, and appreciation.

In the Studio {Dojang}, how you bow, how you salute, and how you conduct yourself are all part of your salutation to the art and its instructors. While a variety of greetings exist on the street, only one is acceptable and used in Tang Soo Do. This is the bow! If it is Kwan Chang Nim, Sahbumnim, or a new tenth gup that you are greeting, the bow is the same. Remember, a serious approach (one of the 14 attitude requirements) is necessary for proper salutation. First, stand at attention, feet together, hands at your sides. Eyes should focus on the one you are greeting. Bend forward at the waist with eyes on the ground. Looking ahead when you bow is disrespectful. Not losing sight of the person can be translated that you do not trust them.

When bowing, one must bow at the waist approximately at a 90-degree angle. To bend less or to only flex your neck is incorrect. After completing the bow, rise slowly. Pulling up too quickly conveys a sense of disrespect and disinterest. Again, bowing is a greeting. Rising in haste is similar to pulling your hand back when someone is ready to shake it.

Bowing to an instructor should be done upon entry into the Studio {Dojang} and both at the beginning and end of class. Students bow to the instructor to display respect and to thank them for teaching. Instructors, on the other hand, are thanking the students for giving them the opportunity to teach. Students make it possible for instructors to share what they have learned. Without students, teachers would not exist. Bowing to fellow students is also a display of respect and appreciation for the opportunity to practice Tang Soo Do techniques.

Respect for the flags is done by saluting. One first stands at attention and raises the right arm to the left side of the chest. The fist is clenched with the palm facing down. Pause. Lower arm and then enter the Studio {Dojang}. The same steps are followed when leaving the Studio {Dojang}. These actions exemplify respect to the native country (USA), to the country where Tang Soo Do originated (Korea), and to the World Tang Soo Do Association. The bow, the salute, and the removal of one's shoes prior to entering the Studio {Dojang} reinforce the sacredness of this room. The sole purpose of the Studio {Dojang} is to train the mind and the body.

A salutation also goes beyond the initial greeting. It involves one's conduct throughout the entire class. Standing straight, paying

attention, overcoming idleness, listening and following instructions are other examples. Another is never to turn your back on an instructor. If you are asked to sit down, you should walk backwards to the rear of the room. This behavior shows respect and honor.

There is also protocol for sitting. Knees are bent with feet tucked under thighs. Shoulders and spine should be straight. Hands are placed on the knees, and during meditation, the head is flexed forward. Eyes are closed, mouths are silent, one does not move until the command to do so is given.

Tang Soo Do is not just kicks and punches. It is a way of life accompanied by rules, codes and tenets. The salutations and examples of conduct behavior mentioned above are found in these rules, codes, and tenets. Furthermore, the discipline needed to become a successful practitioner begins right here and now.

May 1992

The animal associated with Tang Soo Do throughout the years has been the Tiger. The tiger moves with grace and economy of motion, yet at the same time keeps hidden the savage fierceness and power which is associated with this beautiful animal. When we talk about a student having the "Eye of the Tiger" we are not just quoting some Rocky movie to try and motivate you.

Red belts should be eager at class to practice and 'perfect' techniques in anxious anticipation of the Black Belt test that lies ahead in their future. They should not be sitting around in quiet or semi-quiet cliques before class talking about anything but Tang Soo Do. A Black Belt instructor can look at a student and see this burning desire in their eyes. As instructors, we are passing on the legacy of several millennia to you. Wearing, or rather achieving, Black Belt status is no light matter with us. You are our future - you will teach others, who in turn will teach others, and so on and so on. In you we are alive; for something we say, or do, or how we act will affect you. This will be passed on, and generations from now, some student will trace his heritage and discover that what he is being taught was taught by Mr. DiMarco or Mr. Raver. We must be extremely particular when we recommend someone for Black Belt.

Currently, we are dismayed at the lack of intensity displayed by our senior belts. Of people eligible to test for First Degree Black Belt {Cho Dan} Bo at the June 5 test, only two people display the "Eye of the Tiger", that burning desire to want to be the best of the best, the desire to walk with us to the beat of a different drum, the desire to be one in a thousand - A Black Belt.

August 1992

I sat at my computer looking at the screen for quite a while pondering just exactly what I should write about for this edition of the Newsletter and was drawing a blank. I read some old newsletters from other Studio {Dojang} to try and get ideas but nothing would come to me.

Recently, I received a letter from my friend Morgan Becker in Florida and he said that he was inspired by my 'back to basics' classes for the advanced ranks and that he tried it in a class consisting of his senior students. He said they loved it!

Almost at the same time, my wife wondered out loud to me about what was the purpose of keeping the doors closed in this heat and punishing the students. What purpose did it serve?

You've read Kwan Chang Nim's article in the WTSDA Newsletter wherein he outlines training in Korea in both hot and cold weather and how they were treated by their instructors. Tang Soo Do strives to develop the mind, body, AND spirit. If you attend a class that pushes you to the extremes of your endurance, where physically you are spent, and on top of that, the temperature is 110 degrees, there are two choices that you have. You can quit! Who would blame you - the instructors must be crazy to do that to you in this heat. OR, you can attempt to block out the discomfort, forget about the sweat in your eyes, ignore the burning in your lungs, and push yourself on to the threshold of your limits. That very decision is the beginning of forging of self-discipline, perseverance, and indomitable spirit. Traits that Tang Soo Do strives to develop.

What good does this do!??? In life, not the Studio {Dojang}, but on the street, in the work place, in the schoolroom, on the playground, and on the sporting field - the ability to put pain, discomfort, or any external influence out of your mind so that you can focus on your assigned task is what good it does. I enjoy golfing. Have you ever noticed that spectators are asked to be quiet while someone is getting ready to hit a golf ball? Can you imagine fans being asked to be quiet while someone is attempting a game winning field goal in football or a free throw in basketball? Focusing your attention is something that golf doesn't teach.

Sports in general do not teach what Tang Soo Do strives to develop. In sports, there are teams competing or in some cases individuals competing for their team (wrestling, for example). That is the difference. Sports are competitions between individuals or teams where there is always a winner and a loser. Tang Soo Do is different. Not tournament Tang Soo Do - but rather the Tang Soo Do that exists daily in the Studio {Dojang}. Those hours spent with your Teacher {Sah Bum Nim} practicing Forms {Hyung}, One Steps {Il Soo Sik}, and Sparring {Jae Yu Dae Ryun}. Those countless hours spent stretching stiff and aching muscles. In that Tang Soo Do, there is no loser because there is no competition between people or teams. Your only competitor is yourself. Your spirit must be brought to co-exist in harmony with your mind and body. That very ability of your spirit to come to the forefront and be on an equal footing is what good it does.

Sometime when they don't realize what you are doing, watch a ranked Black Belt {Dan} or Master {Ko Dan Ja} and see the peace that exists within their eyes and in their everyday actions. That internal peace is the good that having the mind/body/spirit coexist in harmony. Pushing your body and mind to their very limits so that the spirit has a chance to develop is the good that it does. To the beginning student this may seem difficult to understand and believe, but it happens. I can see the difference in students who are now Red Belts and Blue Belts {Cho Dan Bo} from when they were White Belts and Orange Belts. If these people would honestly look at themselves they too could see the difference in themselves.

To train in Tang Soo Do for you and you alone, to push yourself beyond limits that at one time you thought were impossible for you to achieve is what good it does. "Back to basics" is not something new or something that I thought up, but rather, a way of understanding what several millennia of practitioners have endured. Treat yourself walk with GrandMaster {Kwan Chang Nim}, other Masters {Ko Dan Ja}, Black Belts {Dan}, and thousands of others. Walk to the beat of a different drummer. Only we can understand, "WHAT GOOD IT DOES."

July 1993

We have been running the advanced class for about a year and a half. My main problem to date has been students not knowing the requirements of the belt they are now wearing or one they once wore. We refer to it as a game, but it's a sad commentary when blue belts get caught in glaring mistakes in the World Forms {Sae Kye Hyung} and cause their classmates to do pushups.

However, when we practice kick techniques in class and I say to do 5 with each leg, that is all that is done. Students then stand around waiting to be shown the next "new" technique. When I ask for a demonstration of the last technique, I'm told, "I've got it down perfect." It takes a lifetime to perfect just the basic low block and center punch - yet in just 3 minutes students have the jump 360 degree wheel kick down "perfect."

Tang Soo Do, at least the way it is taught in this Studio {Dojang}, is a lifetime pursuit of perfection. There is no easy way to become

perfect, and there is no three minute drill that I know. The "Pepsi Generation" does not live at our Studio {Dojang}. The instant gratification that people living in our times are used to having is not available at this Studio {Dojang}. Students have left here because we didn't appreciate their "talents" and have become "black belts" at other schools in less than one year.

At the last Black Belt {Dan} Test, Grandmaster Shin told the testing candidates that from now on they would not be introduced to people as just, "John Doe," but rather, "John Doe, he's a Black Belt!". The burden of being a Black Belt {Dan} is tremendous. You are always on center stage. You must be in control of your emotions and actions at all times. A Black Belt {Dan} is one in ten thousand. People must always say, "What is so different about that person?"

The "Eye of the Tiger," which we talked about in previous newsletters, is sadly missing. The desire to enter the Brotherhood of the Black Belt {Dan} is not there. Sure, you want to be a Black Belt {Dan}, but your reasons are strictly egotistical. Are you ready to try your hardest, to push yourself past your limits of endurance, to be the best that you can be - or do you want to settle for mediocrity? As soon as you get a little tired do you wrinkle up your lip and complain of stomach cramps, headaches, sore muscles, or some other "major" injury and want to sit down, or do you forget about the discomfort and continue with class?

At the advanced class we ask students to do pushups and once a month we count the number they can do. When we first started this, I was appalled at the small number that our advanced students could do. After two to three years of training several nights a week, and being asked to do at least 30 push-ups at each class, many could not even do 20. Why? That burning desire for self-improvement is not there. YOU want to be a black belt. YOU may eventually wear a black belt. YOU will consider yourself a black belt. But, will other Black Belts consider YOU a black belt?

Upon entering the Brotherhood of the Black Belt {Dan}, all senior Black Belts {Dan} will welcome you. They are (or will become) acutely aware of your abilities: mental, physical, and spiritual. Whether you are accepted as one of them will depend upon YOU. They can tell if you've paid the price of developing your mind, body, and spirit through the relentless pursuit of perfection. They can tell if your spirit has been forged through rigorous training in the Studio {Dojang}. They can tell if your character has been tempered through the challenge of adversity in the Studio {Dojang}. They can tell. They can tell.

August 1993

At the recent Dan Clinic in Millersville, the souvenir "T" shirt was inscribed with the Korean symbol for "Do" with the inscription, "The Path I Chose." Wow! That really grasped the essence of what Tang Soo Do is all about. You have been exposed to many articles about Tang Soo Do being a path (Tang Soo Times - May 1993, WTSDA Newsletter - Fall 1992). The Do or Way of the Warrior is the Path a Tang Soo Do Black Belt walks.

It is not a path of physical fighting as the word warrior indicates to many people, but rather, a path where battles are mental. In this day and age where everything is handed to us, perseverance is not needed. We can get a fast food meal, we can buy anything we want with a piece of plastic rather than plan and save, we get instant gratification.

As your training progresses, watch the many distractions that can be presented to you; your friends are going to the movies, but you have class. What's one class more or less? Your friends are making fun of you; what good is being able to fight with your hands and feet when almost everyone carries a gun? It's 100 degrees outside, let's go to the pool. Who wants to spend the evening in a smelly, hot karate class? The distractions go on and on. Our records of prior students are full of people who were dropping out for a month to play baseball, soccer, or any other myriad of sports. People who were stopping for a short time because their family gave them grief about the time spent in the Studio {Dojang}. Students were dropping out because they were tired from working during the day. People were dropping out for the summer to vacation, etc, etc, etc. The list goes on and on. These are the battles a Tang Soo Do warrior faces everyday. A Tang Soo Do Black Belt has the same number of distractions that you have, maybe even more. The warrior confronts these distractions, balances Um and Yang, works out a solution, and stays on the chosen path.

No one ever said it was going to be easy. To the contrary, we always will tell you that making Black Belt is something special; not because a Black Belt is a superman but because it takes a commitment of time, energy, and effort. This is a chance for you to see what you are made of inside. You can drop out for any number of reasons, reasons limited only by the imagination of your mind. Or, you can grit your teeth and stay with Tang Soo Do. You can become one in ten thousand, and you will be able to call yourself a Black Belt. Then, after becoming a Black Belt, you can make a further commitment of yourself and begin the journey to become a Martial Artist.

This "Do" is not an easy road to walk, however it is the one we have chosen. Come, walk with us.

November 1993

At the conclusion of a recent class taught by one of our Instructor Trainees {Jo Kyo Sah Nim}, he talked to the class about teamwork. In this talk he drew a parallel between the Phillies and our Studio {Dojang} students. Mentioning that last year the Phillies were in last place and that no one gave them a chance this year to do anything. However, as you all recall they were three outs away from going to the seventh and deciding game of the 1993 World Series.

The parallel of this is that they got where they were because they believed in themselves and they had teamwork. Our Studio {Dojang}, as well as any other *traditional* Tang Soo Do Studio {Dojang}, relies on the teamwork between students when practicing techniques on one another. This includes trust and confidence that you will not be injured when practicing one steps, self-defense, takedowns, and sparring. Also, if you make a mistake your classmates will help you to correct this mistake, not poke fun at you. We work with one another to ready each other for a promotion test. This is the way it SHOULD be.

However, when it boils down to real life situations - in the street, at work, at school or at any place OUTSIDE the Studio {Dojang} - the warrior stands alone! If your schoolmates are ready to go out drinking - the warrior stands alone! If your friends are doing drugs - the warrior stands alone! If everyone is picking on someone because they are different - the warrior stands alone! You know what is right and do it. The warrior stands alone! In business, profit is king, but not at the expense of doing what is right - the warrior stands alone! How many times have your friends teased you about going to karate? Do you go anyway or do you back down so that they do not think you are different? When you are young it is very difficult to be different than the crowd. Peer pressure can be a burden, but be different. Exert peer pressure for what is good and right. Stand alone!

We are a brotherhood of Black Belts. We all have paid our dues to be called Black Belts. We stand as one - stretching back thru the millennia of time - however, in times of life and death situations on the battlefield, the warrior stood alone! Granted, we are not normally in life-and-death situations, but we do have to make decisions every single day - decisions that affect ourselves, our family, our friends. As a warrior you may never have to face a life and death situation on the battlefield but you may have to stand alone against the tide of conformity and do whatever is right, not what is easy or wrong. **THE WARRIOR STANDS ALONE.**

August 1994

The title of this month's article is entitled, "Yaki-ire", and was written by Chief Instructor Ron Raver.

Although we study a Korean martial art, the title of this article is a totally Japanese word and has nothing to do with the martial arts. Yaki-ire is the process of heating a sword until it is red hot, and then plunging it into a trough of water. This is probably the most dramatic moment in the swordsmith's day. In the popular imagination, the glowing blade, the darkened smithy, the hissing bellow of steam - all these make the yaki-ire an almost mystical experience, whereby the metal structure of the blade itself is transformed, and a sword is born. This is performed at night with the lights out because the master swordsmith must be able to see the true color of the heated blade in order to judge its temperature.

A successful yaki-ire demands considerable skill and complete intimacy with one's materials. The smith does not work from mass-produced factory steel. Every batch of metal he handles has unique properties, some of which the smith has intended, and others he must simply contend with. He judges the temperature of the blade entirely by eye, and then must not hesitate to seize the exact moment for quenching.

As I said in the opening statement, this term (yaki-ire) has nothing to do with the martial arts. Why then, am I writing about it? It is simple: as instructors in the ancient Korean martial art of Tang Soo Do, we are in effect master swordsmiths. Every student we accept has unique properties, some of which are intended and some we must contend with and slowly change through the years of forging. We must judge the student's physical, spiritual, and mental growth strictly by eye. When the student is ready we must, without hesitation, seize the moment for testing.

At some point in everybody's training comes the time when the forging is complete and the quenching must take place. This is the test. For even with the master swordsmith, yaki-ire, as often as not, ends in a ruined blade that must either be re-worked or discarded. The parallelism still holds. We can look in a student's face and see the burning desire to learn our beloved martial art. In others we do not see this. In that student, we have to work harder, we need to light that spark in the student. If we cannot, that student may need to be discarded.

The entire process of taking a beginning student and turning out a black belt is yaki-ire. Then, upon receiving the black belt, we begin the next stage of the sword manufacture - the polishing. Let us not forget, we are all students of Tang Soo Do, and as such, we all fit somewhere in the sword manufacturing process. As I am your master swordsmith, GrandMaster {Kwan Chang Nim} is mine.

March 1996

So much has gone before this day. As you are well aware, the Studio {Dojang} has split into two separate schools with many of the students going with Master DiMarco. We wish them well in the start up of the new Studio {Dojang}.

We cannot rewrite history. We can remember it any way we want to, but the truth remains: what has happened has happened. We have made many friends that are not training with us, and that does not make them any less of a friend. We all belong to the same Tang Soo Do family and therefore are still brothers and sisters. We are still interested in their progress and growth. When you train beside someone for a long period of time, a bond develops because of the like experiences you have had together. We cannot toss that aside because of a difference of opinion as to which instructor to train under.

As one goes through life, the journey always has many forks in the road. Each one has a decision to be made with it, "Do I take this path or the other?" Some decisions are easy and others are difficult. Not all decisions are as emotional as the one made by the students at the Tang Soo Do Institute last month, nonetheless, each and every one of you made a decision. This reminds me of an old story about Alice who one day came to a fork in the road and saw a Cheshire cat in a tree. "Which road do I take?" She asked. His response was a question: "Where do you want to go?" "I don't know," Alice answered. "Then," said the cat, "It doesn't matter which road you take." You all have set goals or objectives in Tang Soo Do, and therefore those goals influenced your decision.

You all put a lot of thought into the decision as to which school you should train. I've heard a lot of talk about the breakup of the Demo Team. No one should take Tang Soo Do just for the express purpose of showing off their talents. If anyone made the decision as to where to train on that basis only, they need to re-evaluate their purpose in training. Tang Soo Do, as taught here under the guidance of Grandmaster Shin, is the whole process of endless mental, physical, and spiritual development. As you expect your decision to be respected by everyone, we cannot treat others who made a decision opposite of ours with anything other than friendship, courtesy, and respect.

September 1996

This month's feature article was written by Joe Centrone. Joe did not give it a title so let's just call it, "Take it To The Bank."

"I asked God for strength, that I might achieve.

I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey.

I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life.

I was given life, that I might enjoy all things."

This is a quote from a famous baseball player named Roy Campanella who early in his life struggled with being one of the first Negro players in the major leagues, and later died a crippled man in a wheel chair. He had experienced both the highs and lows that life has to offer.

This quote means a lot to me and basically sums up a week in my life earlier this summer. One day asking for the strength to make it through my Second Degree Black Belt {E Dan} test, and just a few days later asking for my life.

In life you discover that it is not the good times that get you through bad times but rather the struggles and difficult times that shape your character and spirit. Our training teaches us to be obedient to our parents and to honor our friends. Without my family and friends I could not have recovered as I did. We learn things like no retreat in battle, indomitable spirit, and perseverance. These are the tools I used to get myself through my accident and subsequent recovery.

Why are you taking Tang Soo Do? Why do you push yourself to train while you are injured? Why do you train when at times you do not feel like attending class? These are some of the questions I used to ask myself. Do you ever ask yourself some of these same questions?

Recently I had been injured in an accident and found the answers to these very questions. I hope none of you ever have to go through what I did to find those same answers. What I found out about myself was that when faced with what others believed to be an impossible task to recover, I was able to summon what was needed to get back on my feet. The love and hope of family and friends is the first thing needed to rebound from the most catastrophic circumstances.

But, what about the times when you are alone with just your thoughts for company? What can you use to find encouragement when there is no one else around, not just in recovery but in any tough situation you may come across? My Tang Soo Do training is what helped me get through some tough private moments. Not the physical aspects of my training, but the mental toughness that the physical training brought

on.

During the first day of physical rehab at the hospital I was doing leg exercises with the therapist standing over me yelling encouragement. Hearing her count reminded me of a lesson from one of my early classes in karate and I began to cry. The therapist thought I was in pain and told me to stop. But, these were tears of joy. I was reminded of an extremely hot night when we were working on what seemed like instinct. We were so exhausted that I remember thinking that it was crazy for us to train like that.

Master Raver would often tell us that "Karate was like a bank, the more we put in, the more we could get out." He told us to remember this particular night and put it in our bank, because some day we could withdraw it from our account. Lying on that therapy table, I finally realized the lesson from that night's class so many years before.

October 1997

Everyone gets discouraged in their training at one point or another. The longer we train, the more dark periods of failure, discouragement, and frustration we can remember surviving. Through the years, however, we learn to resign ourselves to it and manage to continue somehow - going one step at a time. Beginning students, as you might suspect, quit easily when they meet their first obstacle. They soon lose interest when the training becomes too hard or they cannot catch on to Tang Soo practice as easily as they had hoped.

In our martial arts training, we understand that quitting means defeat, but why does this feeling rise up in ourselves and why is it so uncontrollable? Why do we become frustrated in our training? Why do we reach plateaus? Why do we stop progressing? Why does everything suddenly become meaningless? We all ask ourselves these questions at one time or another.

We create ideal situations for ourselves in our minds, and when events go contrary to our expectations, we become discouraged. We imagine that we have the right to be happy and we deserve to be happy, so any condition contrary to or outside of this condition is not really a part of our lives. We think that when we are happy we are living our lives, and when we are not happy something from the outside is interfering with ourselves.

In martial arts we realize that both happiness and unhappiness are a part of our lives. We train to accept both equally. Of course, if given the choice between the two, we would take happiness like everyone else. But, unfortunately, we cannot choose between the two.

When we are making good progress in our training, we are quite proud of ourselves. When we begin to slow down, when the techniques don't work quite right, when our style doesn't seem to make sense anymore, we become discouraged and think about quitting or looking for another martial art. Success is a part of our lives, but failures and disappointments are a part of our lives as well. We should accept both equally as fundamental to our martial arts training.

We take notice of good and bad only because they are things that we discriminate between. In martial arts, however, we cannot discriminate, just as we cannot choose our opponents or the circumstance of the encounter. And, in dealing with the opponent we are often working at some disadvantage, which we overcome by virtue of our training and technique. This is what makes Tang Soo Do so interesting. The same can be said for life as well. Martial artists survive day-to-day, welcoming adversity and using our skills and personal power to slowly but surely reach our goals and aspirations. The energy we use can be called the power of life. In whatever job we have, however dull and meaningless or however fine and distinguished, we accept both with the same mind. This is the essence of our training - and - this is also what makes Tang Soo Do training so difficult at times.

When we become discouraged with our training, there is nothing wrong with being discouraged; it is only another part of our training. The important point is to not misunderstand it and quit, but to keep training just as before. After a while, we find that there was no reason to be discouraged with ourselves at all.

February 1998

This month's feature article was submitted by Second Degree Black Belt {E Dan} Joe Centrone. He did not give me a title for the article, so I'll call it the Martialist's Way of Living.

In the past year and a half I have been forced to look at the reasons I continue to train in the martial arts. Physically, my body does not recover well from the rigorous training we endure. Mentally, I find myself frustrated because of my physical limitations. So, why continue?

Once I see myself beyond these minor setbacks, I remember why I continue. When I first started Tang Soo Do, my goals weren't clear. I enjoyed the training and learning self-defense, but I was not thinking about the long term.

As the months turned into years, I began to see the intrinsic side of the martial arts; where at first karate had been a sport and hobby, it was now becoming part of my life. Not in the sense of becoming obsessed with the training aspect, but more in the way my life had changed in the process. Before, I had been someone who "took" karate, now I was someone who was "living the martial way."

What does this mean, "living the martial way?" The martial way is a way of living. It is a holistic discipline aimed at the pursuit of excellence, not just in the Studio {Dojang} but in life. I know that all of you are familiar with the meaning of 'DO' in Tang Soo Do. It translates to the 'WAY,' or how to live. At our school or 'DO' jang (the place where the way is taught), we believe in living our lives according to the codes and tenets described in our Gup and Dan Manuals.

Like the Commandments of the Bible and the Golden Rule of the Buddhists, our codes and tenets describe guidelines for us to live an honorable life. In the book, Living the Martial Way, Forrest Morgan breaks honor into three basic tenets - Obligation, Justice, and Courage. In upcoming Newsletters, I will talk about Justice and Courage, but for now I want to talk about Obligation. Obligation is the root of all warrior honor, and meeting one's obligation is the principle part of what makes a warrior honorable.

No matter how old we are, we all have an obligation to someone or something. As children we have an obligation to our parents, elders, and siblings. As parents we have an obligation to our children and spouses; as employees to our employer, as students to teacher, and as teachers to students. One of our obligations as students is to pay dues. Now hold on, I know what you are thinking, all this talk about honor and he leads us down the road to a financial issue. This is about more than money - it is about a need to survive in today's world. In earlier times, students and teachers would conduct class in their homes, in open fields, and even in temples. Today's regulations make it difficult to teach out of the public eye. Because of legal and ethical standards, schools need to be available to the public.

Despite what many people think about martial art schools, we, at Pal Che, are not in this for the money. The instructors at this school receive no pay for their time. Knowing what I know about Sahbumnim he would be more than happy to see a zero as opposed to red ink at the end of each month. At Pal Che Tang Soo Do we are not selling you a service but rather giving you a part of our lives.

Returning to the book, Living the Martial Way, "...Qualified instructors devote many years to mastering their craft. They spend countless hours in the training halls, usually following days spent at full time jobs. They pay for their expertise with blood, sweat, and broken

bones. In fact, a classical warrior is probably the most highly trained professional in our society. So, how do you think your monthly pittance of dues can pay for your training, it only supports your instructor and the school, making it possible for him to offer you his art..."

Recently, I noticed some students, rather than pay their monthly dues, watch hours of training time disappear - a small setback in their master plan to obtain a Black Belt. Too often we have seen students vanish for months at a time and then re-appear and act as if nothing has happened. Maybe it is the fact that you can be a no-show, no-pay student and suffer no harm. One of the qualities of a traditional martial art school (and make no mistake about it, Pal Che is a traditional martial art school) is the benefit of not having to pay a funding company and receive a coupon book for your dues. Notice we call them "dues" as opposed to payment. You are joining a fraternity, a family, and as in a family we need to communicate. Instead of ignoring your obligations, call or come in and talk to Sahbunnim - something can always be worked out.

As you continue on your path I hope you will understand the martial way is not a month-to-month hobby, but rather a life long commitment to living as a warrior.

January 2000

This month's feature article was written by Third Degree Black Belt {Sam Dan} Joe Centrone and is entitled, "A View From The Sideline."

One night last month while attending a class I could not take part in due to being "dizzy", I had a chance to view class from a different perspective. Although my vision at times was distorted and shaky, I began to look past the sight of the ten students training and into the reflection of the class in the windows facing the street. I began to ask myself what people on the other side see when they look through the windows.

What others see, if they even take notice, are people ranging from old to young, big to small, black belt to white, kicking, punching, and blocking, over and over. They will see some kicking high while others are kicking low, some fast, others slow. Then the light changes and they are gone, driving away with their own pre-conceived notions of karate. If they had one time or another trained in another style or school, they might even compare what we do to their own experience.

What they can't see or feel is the *spirit* of the class. They may see the windows fogged up and say, "wow, they must really be working hard in there, or they may see students standing around, listening to a description of how and why we execute certain techniques in our Forms {Hyung}. Some students believe that the spirit of a class is measured by how much they sweat, or how the windows look. This couldn't be further from the truth. *Spirit* is not only measured by the physical, but also by the mental and spiritual. It's not what you get out of the class but by more of what you take out. There is a difference between get out and take out. As students we should enter each class with an empty cup always eager to learn and leave class with a full cup. A cup filled not only with drops of perspiration from the physical, but also the fluids from the mental and spiritual aspects of our training that comprise the *essence of Tang Soo Do*. As teachers, we aim to give each student the guidance needed to add something to their cup. Whether it is something we show them or something discovered through self-examination.

Having trained at our school for nearly ten years I have experienced every type of class imaginable. I've left the Studio {Dojang} both soaked with perspiration from a night high in pace and repetitiveness and dry as a bone from sitting the entire class in Master Raver's office discussing philosophy, not just about martial arts, but about life (as if there's a difference). I always departed, leaving class each night with something in my cup: sometimes a drop from having noticed just one thing differently; other nights with my cup overflowing from not grasping everything I was taught, but always with something.

As I said earlier, the one thing people cannot see is the *spirit* of the class. What I missed sitting on the side that night watching, was only the physical aspect of our training. But what I saw and felt was the mental and spiritual aspects of class that you can only experience by being there. If you are not training in a classroom atmosphere, that is, with a teacher guiding you, and the shared energy of other students, you are depriving yourself of two thirds of the ingredients needed to become a complete martial artist.

June 2000

Our newest Black Belt will be leaving us to get married and live in Southern Florida. Our direct training with him will cease at that time. If he ever gets back to this area he will resume his training with us, if even for only a short visit. He will no doubt seek out other karate schools in his community at which he may train. Nonetheless, his heritage is with us here at Pal Che. No matter where he goes or what style he studies, he will always be a Pal Che Tang Soo Do Black Belt. I have given him a copy of the Black Belt hierarchy that is posted on the glass-encased bulletin board (as I do to all newly promoted Black Belts). He can't know where he is going if he doesn't know from where he came. The following is an open but personal letter to him.

Being a Black Belt is sometimes a lonesome road. When you are around other Black Belts there is a camaraderie, a closeness, which exists because all have experienced many of the same events at one time or another during their training. Being alone as you will be requires you to walk this lonely road. It will become difficult for you to train month after month, year after year, by yourself. "...The '*DO*,' which signifies a "path" or "way" to polish oneself, has a life of its own, be it the *DO* of Tang Soo, or the *DO* of any of the various other arts. Precisely because it has its own life, *DO* is changing, but only in its outer form. The basic nature of *DO* remains immutable. If the way attracts you to walk it, it flourishes; if not, it wastes away. The *DO* of Tang Soo earnestly seeks people to walk its path..."

You must think of yourself first and foremost as a warrior. Warriors are special people. Since warriors understand the concept of honor, they set ethical standards above most of the rest of society. Since they pattern their lives around the pursuit of excellence, they tend to achieve in their chosen vocations. Warriorship is an extraordinary and powerful way to live, but it is not for everyone. In past cultures one was born into the warrior class, but not today. There is no inherited status. Today, the warrior must set himself apart from the rest of society by his own personal excellence. Start today by thinking of yourself as a warrior and not as someone who does Tang Soo Do as a hobby. Practice Tang Soo Do and your profession to hone your spirit. The warrior is a man of character, a man of wisdom and insight. Learn to recognize and pursue internal rather than external objectives.

A warrior doesn't train for others to see him. He trains because he is a warrior and perfecting his spirit is his lifetime objective. The warrior needs no one to reinforce his self-image with praise or reward; he is self-contained. As a result he is just as satisfied to train alone, and he is alone in a crowd! Turn your eyes inward!

July 2000

"With Rank Comes Obligation" is the subject of this month's feature article. The student manual clearly states that a requirement for red belt is: "...voluntary participation in all Studio {Dojang} activities, exemplary conduct, and exhibit high character..." For Blue Belts {Cho Dan Bo} this same manual says, "...display extraordinary leadership and dedication to the art, Studio {Dojang}, and Association..." For Black Belts {Dan} the manual states that the requirements for promotion, among other things, are: "...have distinguished leadership ability and be a credit to his Studio {Dojang} and Association..." It also states they must "...demonstrate positive contributions and attitude towards the Studio, Art, and Association..."

I see many of these requirements lacking in a number of our high-ranking students. For a typical organization such as the Lions Club, it is said that 80% of the work is done by 20% of the membership. That's fine there, but in a Studio {Dojang} there should be equal participation by all high-ranking students, especially by the Black Belt Club members. What I see happening is that most everything is being done by just a few people. At every Black Belt {Dan} Presentation, I read from the Black Belt {Dan} Manual, Grandmaster Shin's quote, "If you can move others ahead, keeping your ego in hiding, contributing your own excellence towards the enhancement of others, then you will be on the right path of reaching the ultimate goal of the Martial Arts." Blue belts, and especially Black Belts, should jump at the chance to either teach, or help teach, beginning students.

Warriorship is a unique calling. The obligation of a warrior is to the millennia of warriors who have gone before and the obligation to protect the lineage by readying future warriors. All Black Belts as well as blue belts at Pal Che are warriors. Obligation to a warrior in Japanese is *giri*. *Giri* translates literally as "right reason." It means duty, but it really means much more. *Giri* can best be defined as a moral obligation to fulfill one's duty. It works like this: whenever someone does something for you, you assume an obligation to repay him. You carry this obligation as a burden until you relieve yourself of it by repaying the individual in a manner commensurate with what he did for you. The Japanese would say you carry his *on*. Fulfilling that obligation is *giri*. *Giri* is the glue that binds warrior societies together. If you think you have no obligation to the Hwa Rang Dan, Pal Che, Grandmaster Shin, or to the white belts, then you really have no business being here.

November 2000

Third Degree Black Belt {Sam Dan} Joe Centrone submitted the following article. He calls it, "The One-Percenter."

On Monday night, October 23rd, four of our students were promoted: two to Second Degree Black Belt {E Dan}, and two to First Degree Black Belt {Cho Dan}. It was a very special night for the students, their families and all of us here at Pal Che.

It is sometimes understandable when others think of us as a cult or some type of weird group of martial clones. They see the formalities of our tradition: the bowing, the saluting to foreign flags, and saying they could never bow to anyone, or worse yet, salute a foreign flag. They listen to the unfamiliar way that we address one another and the Korean terminology we use. They look confused when they see us, one moment trying to inflict pain upon someone and next assisting them up and bowing or hugging them. Outsider's cringe when we talk of honor, integrity, and respect, words uncommon in today's society yet much in need. Yes, in looking at us from the outside, it is easy to see why others view us as extreme. I can also understand why some people would want to avoid training in the big windows of Chester Pike and Glenolden Avenue.

A few years ago I wrote an article about training in those very windows. Like another student, I had reservations about training in the windows of such a busy intersection. We are taught that those who know do not say, and here I was in plain sight of anyone driving past the Studio {Dojang}. Never being one to hide, I continued.

Ten years have since passed, now I could not be prouder than to be observed in those same windows. Once embarrassed by my lack of ability to kick or jump high, or look cool doing fancy techniques, I now take pride in knowing that over 400 students have passed through the doors and I am still here.

Am I brainwashed? Perhaps, but I like to think of it as an addiction. I am addicted to training, going out on the floor each night and giving it all I've got. I'm addicted to pushing others to reach their potential, and encouraged by others to always strive to reach mine. I am addicted to sweat; it is the nectar of hard work. I'm addicted to pain, for it has become my closest friend, letting me know I am alive. I am proud to step out on floor each night and lead the class in warm up drills. When you see me smile or laugh it is because I am happy to see others who understand and are willing to make these same sacrifices. I am honored that when I am at a World Tang Soo Do function others refer to me as "Raver's Boy," because I know they respect Master Raver's values and teaching philosophy.

At last year's Black Belt clinic Master Conrad referred to us Tang Soo Do students, as the "one-percenters," claiming that only one percent of society is willing to do what it takes to become a Black Belt. If you were fortunate enough to be at the Black Belt promotion on October 23rd, you had a chance to hear what the other ninety-nine percent won't hear unless they come inside our steam covered windows.

Each of the graduates spoke of others first before ever mentioning themselves. Thanking their families, instructors and fellow students. They talked of the changes Tang Soo Do has made in them and how their lives had improved since their start. By speaking of others first, they understand what Tang Soo Do at Pal Che is all about, putting others before themselves. This is not a cult at all but rather caring and generous. In today's society it is unusual. I believe this is the very thing that makes others uncomfortable to be around us.

Outsiders will never fully understand us and what we do. We try fruitlessly to explain it to them but we eventually get a look that we are boring them. Our families, patient as they are, act as though they are listening, but even they get tired of the same old stories and "had to be there jokes." They don't understand that our good-natured and sometimes harsh ribbing of one another is a sign of affection and respect. No different than other families, we can say it but you can't.

We have all run into that person who used to take karate and always wanted to come back but never had the time. If you were there on the 23rd you got to hear Adam describe the aching he felt as he watched classes from across the street: The desire burning in him to return. He knew what went on inside those windows and proved he had what it took to come back better than ever.

If you were there watching you would have seen the humbled yet proud look in John's eyes as he thanked others for helping him reach second degree. Having spent many nights after class with John, I know how much it means to him to train and teach at Pal Che.

Next was Karen, listening to her passionately describe her journey from beginner to black belt was like hearing a writer describe her inspiration for a great love story. It brought a tear to my eye.

Last was Phil, never one with words, he managed to say enough to make us all very proud of his accomplishments. He indeed has come a long way. I'd bet Phil, like myself, is also proud to be in the big windows on Chester Pike.

The bottom line is this. There are no secrets about what we do. We do not cast spells or perform magical tricks on our students. We do not meditate to hypnotic mantras. We train hard! That is it! We sweat, bleed, ache, and sometimes cry together night after night. We have

shared the births of our children and the deaths of our loved ones. We partied together at weddings and cried in our beers after breakups. Our group is not an exclusive one, but few are willing to pay the membership dues.

We are not a cult, nor are we clones of the way. We are a misfit band of one-percenters, all cutting individual paths to reach the same mountaintop.

February 2001

This is going to be a short feature article but it is the repeat of the story about Kwi San and Chu Hwang.

How did the Five Codes of Tang Soo Do originate? Two Hwa Rang warriors, Kwi San and Chu Hwang, wanted to seek Won Kwang's advice on how to purify their minds and regulate their conduct. Won Kwang was a renowned Buddhist priest in Silla. Both warriors felt that Won Kwang's advice was necessary to teach them the proper conduct and mental attitude so that they would not offend higher nobles and officials. They finally called on the venerable priest, Won Kwang, and begged him to offer them some precious words which would be their lifetime commandments. His response: first - loyalty to your emperor; second - filial piety; third - honor friendship; fourth - no retreat in battle; and fifth - in killing, choose with sense and honor. They were told to carry them out without neglect.

Thereafter, both Kwi San and Chu Hwang carefully followed the teachings of Won Kwang. When a large number of Paekche troops invaded Silla, Kwi San and Chu Hwang joined the battle under the leadership of General Muun, the father of Kwi San. In mid-battle General Muun ran into an ambush and fell from his horse. Kwi San rushed to his father's rescue killing a great number of the pursuing enemy, and crying out to his followers, "Now is the time to follow the commandment to not retreat in battle." Then Kwi San gave his horse to his father and fought courageously beside his friend, Chu Hwang. Finally, both Kwi San and Chu Hwang perished on the battlefield "...bleeding from a thousand wounds."

March 2001

After last month's story regarding how the five codes of Tang Soo Do originated, this month I asked the adult class to tell me the **TRUE** story of the 47 Faithful Ronin of Ako. I was surprised that quite a few senior members of the Studio {Dojang} had never heard this story. This story ran last in the August 1999 Newsletter and provides a classic example of how loyalty, revenge, and suicide factor into the Japanese cultural interpretation of warrior honor.

This episode involves a chain of events that began in Edo (now Tokyo) during the Tokugawa Shogunate. The year was 1701 and Tokugawa Tsunayoshi who ensured the loyalty of the warlords by requiring them to maintain residences for their families in Edo and to spend every other year in the capital themselves ruled Japan. Basically, the warlords were held hostage.

Asano Takumi no Kami was one warlord of the rural province of Ako. He was a warrior in the truest sense. Unfortunately, he was young and impetuous, and his crude, martial manner didn't set well with the genteel sycophants who cluttered the Shogun's court. When one of them insulted him, Asano drew his sword and attacked.

Asano only managed to wound his enemy, Kira Kotzuke no Suke, but it was enough to cost him his life, for drawing a sword at court was a capital offense. For his lack of restraint, the shogun ordered Lord Asano to commit seppuku. Asano was an obedient vassal, and he ended his life later that day.

This suddenly left Asano's retainers, his samurai, with two problems. First, they were without their master and unemployed. This was a bad situation, for under Tokugawa rule there had been peace for one hundred years, and Ronin had little chance of finding work. But more seriously, since their master had been condemned for breaking the Shogun's law, all his retainers were honor-bound to follow him in seppuku. Most of them were ready to do this, for they were men of honor. But when they learned of how their lord had been duped by Lord Kira, they knew they couldn't end their lives before taking care of business.

All samurai were trained in the principle that a man should not live under the same heaven with the murderer of his leader-lord-father. Of course, seppuku would have removed them, but the Ronin of Ako saw their obligation in this situation as something more than merely to join their master in death. They concluded they had a solemn duty to avenge the death of their lord.

This would be no easy mission. All of Edo suspected the Ronin would attempt some sort of attack, and Kira was under the shogun's protection. In addition, Kira had a large security force as well. So, meeting in secret, the men of Ako decided to play out a ruse until they convinced the eyes and ears of Edo they weren't a threat.

For the next two years, the 47 Ronin of Ako went their separate ways. To the loathing amazement of Edo society, the men didn't attempt any revenge or even honor their fallen master in seppuku. They walked in disgrace, many taking up various non-warrior occupations. Some even left their families and became womanizers and drunks. In the eyes of the shogun and all others, these men had no honor and no face.

It was all an act!

By 1703 attention had shifted away from the degenerate Ronin from Ako. So late one December night, the 47 faithful Ronin gathered one last time, then departed in a snowstorm for Kira's mansion. They caught the compound completely unprepared. In a surprise assault followed by a short skirmish, they killed Lord Kira and everyone in the household. Then, they took Lord Kira's head, washed it in a well, and placed it as an offering on Lord Asano's grave.

That morning the 47 faithful Ronin of Ako surrendered to the authorities. Following fretful discussions with his councilors, the shogun sentenced them to death but ruled that they would be permitted to perform seppuku and die as warriors rather than face execution as common criminals. Within days all 47 joined their lord and entered the annals of history as Japanese national heroes.

The story of the 47 Ronin is a classic account of warrior revenge. It provides a sterling example of warrior honor in its truest form. These men saw through the fog of law and recognized justice. They courageously fulfilled their obligations, knowing full well their actions would lead to their own destruction. They bore no illusions about the difference between honor and face. They publicly humiliated themselves for two years hoping to get that one chance to fulfill their obligation. These were truly men of honor.

"We, the Ronin serving Asano Takumi No Kami, this night will break into the mansion of Kira Kotzuke No Suke to avenge our Master. Please be assured that we are neither robbers nor ruffians and no harm will befall the neighboring property." — Placard the 47 Ronin posted the night they avenged the death of their lord.

April 2001

In continuing with our series on martial arts history, this month we will feature a true story about a Hwa Rang warrior who lived after the Silla (668-918) and Koryo (918-1392) dynasties.

Unfortunately, the Hwa Rang life style and the martial arts fell out of favor during the Yi Dynasty (1392-1910), and adherence to the Hwa Rang code declined. Several noted Korean heroes, however, did choose to live by this code such as the great Admiral Yi Sun-Sin (1545-1598). He was reputed to have invented the first armored battleship (Kobukson) in 1592, which is said to be the precursor of the present day submarine.

Admiral Yi is held in such high esteem that when the Japanese fleet defeated the Russian navy in 1905, the Japanese admiral was quoted as saying, "You may wish to compare me with Lord Nelson (one of England's greatest naval officers), but do not compare me with Korea's Admiral Yi Sun-Sin...He is too remarkable for anyone."

In 1597, Admiral Yi became a victim of Japanese espionage within the Korean Royal Court. As a result, he was unjustly relieved of command and placed under arrest, taken to Seoul in chains, beaten, and tortured. Spared the death penalty because of his years of service to the king, he was demoted to the rank of common foot soldier. Yi Sun-Sin responded to this humiliation as a most obedient subject and demonstrated a remarkable ability to maintain his pride in the face of unwarranted demotion.

When the second Japanese invasion came, the Korean fleet was completely defeated. With the news of this disastrous defeat, a loyal advisor of the king called for Yi Sun-Sin's reinstatement. Yi was left with only 12 boats, but in spite of this, attacked and destroyed a Japanese fleet of 133 ships. Admiral Yi Sun-Sin was a shining example of the Code of the Hwa Rang. He has come to be known as one of the greatest naval warriors in world history.

The dedication and self-sacrifice of the Hwa Rang were clearly based on principles much stronger than ego and self-interest. The basis was the Sesok-Ogye (now the five codes of Tang Soo Do), the code of the Hwa Rang. As students of Tang Soo Do, we should always endeavor to live by the codes and improve our moral character. We should also be very proud of the examples set by the founders of our art and those who lived by the code of the Hwa Rang. The Hwa Rang not only set a standard for the ethics and conduct of the Japanese samurai which followed hundreds of years later, but offer a cultural guideline for today's Tang Soo Do students to examine and follow in their lives as martial artists.

May 2001

The Five Codes of Tang Soo Do, written some fifteen centuries ago, are still a succinct statement of Hwa Rang ideals. It is necessary to understand the original meanings of them in order to fully appreciate the role they played in the life of the Hwa Rang.

The first: To serve the king with loyalty – is the most important in that one's primary duty and the greatest honor in fulfillment is found in the service of one's legitimate sovereign or government. The character, which means loyalty, is composed of two elements, one meaning center and the other heart. Loyalty, and thus patriotism, is an emotion very close to the human heart and must be linked to moral life.

The second code: Filial Piety – is represented by the character **Hsiao** and is one of the Confucian cardinal virtues. This character is also made up of two elements, one signifying old and the other child. As such, it implies the relationship between young and old, the very basis of the entire social order. Filial piety is a recognition of responsibility and the most fundamental perception of the social relationship nature of man.

The third code: Trustworthiness toward friends – stems from the character which shows a man standing beside his word. This recognizes that the ultimate cement for deep and long lasting relationships must rest on personal honesty and trust. Trustworthiness toward friends is intimately tied to the understanding of honor, and honor is the beginning of character.

The fourth code: No retreat in battle – implies that one must make a total commitment and not hesitate to give one's all for a just cause. The character is for approaching but for which there is no English phrase to be able to capture its meaning. The connotation refers to the spirit of doing what is right and is associated with the concepts of valor, fortitude, bravery, fearlessness, and courage.

The fifth and final commandment: Selective killing of all living things – is intimately connected to the honor of a warrior and is also a major theme of philosophical speculation. If one must take a life it is important to use discrimination. This further implies a calmness of behavior and a composure of mind undisturbed by passion, what one might call restraint or self-control. This sense of the fitness of things is the ultimate honor of the warrior.

The statement of Won Kwang's code of ethics reveals concern with all three areas in which man can perceive the sacred: the individual, society, and the cosmos. Loyalty reflects the natural love which is the consciousness of many; in filial piety the natural human heart is displayed; in honesty is found the measure of a man, his sense of shame; in courage is found his strength of will and bearing; and in discrimination is displayed compassion and humility. These codes have immortalized the Hwa Rang in countless ways, their deeds and lives still shine as models which few men in history have achieved, combining courage with honor, bravery with rectitude, wisdom with compassion, and above all, a code by which to guide their lives.

June 2001

In Tang Soo Do, as well as in almost all traditional Martial Arts, the term "mu shim" or "wu hsin" (in Chinese) is employed to denote the ultimate goal of a practitioner. These terms literally translate to "empty mind," but don't be fooled because they do not mean that we go around as zombies not thinking of anything. In fact, I ask each and every one of you – try to spend 15 seconds thinking of absolutely nothing. It is impossible! What an empty mind means is that we are neither devoid of all emotion nor is it a quietness of mind. Although quietness and calmness are necessary, it is the "nongraspingness" of the mind that mainly constitutes the principle of "no-mindedness." A Tang Soo practitioner employs his mind as a mirror-it grasps nothing, yet it refuses nothing; it receives, but does not keep. It means to let the mind think what it likes without the interference by the separate thinker or ego within oneself. Mu shim is therefore a process of employing the mind to see the totality, and not the segments; it is looking at the whole tree, in all of its glory, as opposed to the individual leaf.

Mu shim can easily be related to the famous fable of the centipede. It goes like this:

The centipede was happy, quite,
Until a toad in fun
Said, "Pray, which leg goes after which?"
This worked his mind to such a pitch,
He lay distracted in a ditch,
Considering how to run.

Mu shim then simply means to do what is natural without having to think. If you stop to think how you breathe, you will probably lose your breath. You don't have to think about the electrical impulses running through your brain – they just happen. If, when sparring, or heaven

forbid, on the street in a fight (a moment of life and death) you have to think what your response is to a certain offense against you, you are already defeated. "It" must happen. "It" is that indefinable, intangible thing that happens to you by spending so many hours in the Studio {Dojang} with your instructor practicing the same techniques over and over again until they become so ingrained in your psyche that they just happen without any forethought. "It" just happens. That is mu shim!

December 2001

This Feature Article is meant to be an open letter to all the instructors and trainees at Pal Che Tang Soo Do. Contained in this open letter is something that can be shared with the students and parents as well.

The Martial Arts are uniquely set apart from any other sport because they are a "Way of Life." No other sport emphasizes the mental discipline essential to combining the mind, body, and spirit. Thus, it is the responsibility of all martial arts instructors, as educators, to teach the philosophical aspects of the Martial Arts. Indeed, it is easy to teach the outward skills of the Martial Arts, but this can never be mastered completely without the exercise of spiritual power. More specifically, as an instructor, you must impress upon your students the importance of persistence and perseverance or the value of sticking with a study until progress is established. This is what we call goal-oriented thinking.

Do you as an instructor teach your students to clear their minds before class so that they can rise to the point of complete receptivity? This can have an enormous effect on how the class progresses. In addition, you must teach your students the high standard values of obedience to the good, to the positive, and to growth. Moreover, you ought to demand respect for the flags, for the master instructor, Grandmaster and all upper belt levels. Teaching fellowship and camaraderie among the peer group will establish the proper spirit in the school.

Taking time to emphasize these qualities separates the martial arts school from the boxing gym, health club, and weight lifting club. Clearly, the study of the martial arts has that extra dimension above other activities. The Martial Arts instructor must instill in his students a code of behavior by demonstrating the art of bestowing and winning respect without abusive or offensive behavior.

Top martial art master instructors carefully plan their curriculum by breaking it down into weekly lesson plans. Like building blocks, they progress toward the minimum requirement of the next belt level. Each lesson should contain meditation, warm-up, and a philosophical theme in addition to form, techniques, and combination practice. In summary, we teach by "objective learning." This goal-oriented teaching is what develops the character and spirit of the martial arts: a dedicated martial arts instructor that can truly say that he has had a positive impact on his students, developing life lasting qualities.

February 2002

Joe Centrone wrote this month's Feature Article and although it is pretty self-evident what he is saying, let me entitle this "Train from Within".

I'm sure in recent weeks everyone had noticed the increased size of the Adult Class. Because of this I've heard some grumbling among the ranks. Comments like "I'm not learning anything new." It is common to hear these things from lower-ranking students new to Tang Soo Do, but when you hear it from higher-ranking students, you begin to wonder. Are the classes too big? Does the number of students affect the way class is run? Does the wide range of belt ranks cause the Instructor to spend more time teaching the newer students?

Let's address these questions. The first thing you need to understand is that *Tang Soo Do* is a WAY OF LIFE, and each class is an opportunity. In life there are good days and bad, just as you are going to have good classes and bad. No one is going to be at his or her best each night. The great things about Martial Arts training is you get to come back the next night and try again.

Are the classes too big? Complaining about the size of a class is like saying there are too many people at a party. It's the people you invite that make a great party atmosphere. Class, in my opinion, is no different. Everyone is invited. The intensity level in class is contagious. If you don't catch it, you need to look inside yourself for the answer.

Does the number of students affect the way the class is run? Yes, it has to. Less room influences the way an Instructor is going to setup the class format, but it should not affect the way the student trains. Student should train all out all the time no matter what drill or lesson is being taught. Coming to class with an empty mind and a positive attitude will dictate how much effort you're going to place into your training. Students should know that the intense powerful techniques and low stances of the Horseback Warrior Forms {Naihanchi Hyung} were a direct result of training in small crowded Studios {Dojang}.

Does the wide range of ranks cause the Instructor to spend more time teaching the newer students? The Instructor of a class is like the conductor of an orchestra. Like the conductor, who knows his seasoned musicians know the symphony, the Instructor has confidence in his higher-ranking students to have both the self-motivation and self-understanding of the class structure so that he does not have to keep a constant eye on their training. By class end he has seen or heard from everyone combining all students into one.

Earlier I mentioned to bring an empty cup to each class and leave with a full one. As White and Orange Belts, you depend on the Instructor and higher-ranking students to fill it. As Green through Brown, you begin to feel your way through class and combine both the Instructor's guidance and your own self-discovery to fill your cup. Once you reach the rank of Red Belt or higher the responsibility of filling the cup falls solely on the individual. Sure there is still much to learn, but the desire to improve and self-motivating aspects of training, at this level, should be embedded into the students psyche. If not, the student will linger, while the Teacher moves on to other students in which he sees the "eye of the tiger".

As students it is okay, on occasion, to look towards others for motivation, but remember they will also be looking to you. As Instructors, whether you are in charge of the class or just helping, you must re-discover yourself each night you teach. Create new ways to teach old things. When you teach incorporate your individual personality with Master Raver's unending quest for attention to detail. No matter if you are instructing or training, remember: "Karate is like a bank, the more you put in, the more you'll be able to withdraw!".

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

THE BLACK BELT IS NOT WORN AROUND YOUR WAIST BUT RATHER IN YOUR HEART AND MIND; AND AS SUCH, IT MUST BE WORN AND SEEN IN YOUR EVERYDAY ACTIONS, NOT JUST IN THE STUDIO {DOJANG}.