

TANG SOO TIMES

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PAL CHE TANG SOO DO

229 SOUTH CHESTER PIKE

GLENOLDEN, PA 19036

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Mar 12 - Black Belt pretest. No adult class.
- Mar 17 - Central PA Championships.
- Mar 26 - Gup test at dojang. No adult class.
- Mar 31 - Red Rose Championships. No classes.

MONDAY NIGHT ADULT CLASS SCHEDULE

- Mar 5 - Regular adult class.
- Mar 12 - Black Belt pretest. No adult class.
- Mar 19 - Black Belt class. Red belts and higher.
- Mar 26 - Gup test at dojang. No adult class.

MASTER'S CORNER

Karate is a paradox! To the fledgling student, karate is exciting. At each and every class the student learns something new: a new kick, a new block, a new stance, a new form. It's everything they thought it was except for all the hard work - stretching, pushups, crunches, and aerobic conditioning. The movies very seldom capture the behind the scenes hard work and countless hours spent perfecting the kicks, blocks, stances, and forms. Nonetheless, to the fledgling student the mere fact that they are walking in the footsteps of Bruce Lee and Chuck Norris is all that matters. They brag to their friends they are 'taking karate.' They think they are cool!

Karate is a paradox! To the senior student, karate is boring. At each and every class the senior student practices the same things over and over that they learned as a green belt, orange belt, and even as a white belt. A cho dan (first degree black belt) has to wait a minimum of two years training to just be eligible to test for second degree. In that time period they have to learn only two forms - a bong form and the 2nd Naihanchi form. It only took them three months to learn the 1st Naihanchi hyung and the first form has 33 moves, the second only 30.

As Grandmaster Shin wrote in the Dan Manual "In order to master Tang Soo Do, mere technical knowledge is not enough. A person must delve deeply into the innermost spirit of it. He must attain the state of mind known as "Moo Shim" - "Empty Mind". What exactly is the empty mind? It doesn't mean that we walk around with an empty mind. It means that if we ever need to use the physical skills we learn in class, we cannot think. Whatever the action we take to defend ourselves must be an automatic response to the threat. If we have to think, it is too late.

NEW STUDENTS

We would like to welcome the following new students to our Dojang and to the worldwide family of Tang Soo Do:

NEIL CASEY

MICHAELA BEGG

JOEY CHIMIENTI

ALISON MOLL

We also welcome back MATT DURSO who trained with us before. MATT is an 8th gup orange belt.

Train often and train hard. You are on the steep portion of the classic learning curve and every class should reveal something new and exciting to you. If you ever have any questions, do not hesitate to ask a senior student.

SUBMITTED ARTICLE

A while back Mr. Centrone asked the children's class to write something about "Attitude." Here is Justin Ritter's paragraph.

I think that "attitude" is the main source of the Martial Arts. If you don't have a good "attitude" you will never master the two goals of Tang Soo Do - 1. Becoming a Black Belt, and 2. Becoming one with nature. Even though "The goal of Black Belt" is very, very difficult, it is much more difficult to "become one with nature." I haven't reached either but wish to have them. Becoming a Black Belt will take a long time but becoming one with nature will take even longer. I need to practice every day even if I am injured. From now on I will try always to put forth 100% effort in all my blocks, kicks, punches, forms, and techniques. I will also try to have the best "attitude" at every single class, at home, and everywhere else.

FEATURE ARTICLE

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 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.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

**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)