



The Bulletin is a source for CATSDS students and instructors to share their thoughts and ideas in a "bulletin board" format. Enjoy!

Recent News

The Center for Aikido and Tang Soo Do Studies would like to welcome the following new and returning members to our school!

- Tedra Smith

We hope that you feel welcome and look forward to sharing with you! May you find that the Art you study in enriches your life.

Thank You...

By Sabom Vernon Medeiros and Sabom Mike Parenteau

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to Issue #1, 2007 edition of "The Bulletin." Without your participation, this endeavor would not be possible. Submitting papers is meant to be constructive for all of us and by doing so, allows us to see what is on each others minds and furthers the learning process, not only in the Arts we practice, but allows us to learn about each other.

Chinese New Year!

The Chinese New Year officially begins on February 18th! This year is the "Year of the Pig!" If you are interested, for more information refer to www.chinapage.com/newyear.html.

Upcoming Events

January 6th - Status Testing:

January 6th is the day for Aikido/Tang Soo Do status testing at the Colorado Springs HQ. Please show your support and participate!

Feb. TBD - Workshop:

Ms. Debra Takara with Life Fitness Networks will be conducting a seminar on the Hands of the 18 Luohan at the Colorado Springs HQ. More information to come!

April - Paper Submissions:

April is the month for paper submissions to be included in the May Bulletin. For more information, refer to page 6.

May 26 - C/S Expo:

Make preparations now to be a part of this year event! Support your school and your fellow students!

Students' Thoughts

Training Affects Others

By Ken Larsen – Aikido Practitioner

Sometimes coming to class is easy; sometimes coming to class is just plain hard, whether its work, school, other commitments or that “just don’t feel like it” feeling. If you look hard enough, and sometimes it is not that hard, you can find ways to not come to class. I realized this when one night my wonderful girlfriend demanded that I go to class. She kicked me out and told me not to come back until class was over. I asked her why she made this demand. She replied that as much as she wanted to spend time together, I was a different person when I missed class.

I never knew how my training could affect other people. I knew that if I missed class I would miss valuable instruction and leave someone without an Uke, but I never knew it affected other parts of my life. After this incident, I started to look at how my training was spilling over into other parts of my life. I saw that I was more irritable, less aware of things going on around me, and just plain didn’t feel good. This last point really struck home not because of the physical inactivity, but the spiritual. I felt less centered and couldn’t concentrate as well. It was amazing to recognize the things that I thought initially had nothing to do with Aikido.

I have finally realized that Aikido training is more than just on the mat; it is everything, everyday. Training for me

is not about rank or telling people that I train; it is now about just feeling better and letting Aikido affect the people around me. Even though things will still come up that prevent me from going to class I know that going is now the first step and perhaps the most important one. Now, if I could just figure out how to really use my center...

The Science Of Essence

By Walter Kretowicz – Tang Soo Do Practitioner

The true state of balance in martial arts lies in the practice of knowing what not to do and when not to do it: the science of essence. It is also good then to know what to do and when to do it: the science of life. *

Within the teachings and traditions of Tangsoology is reference to self-improvement through spiritual, intellectual and physical practice. The practices have headwaters in respect, humility and kindness to all, thus pledging responsibility: the science of essence.

Arguably, today’s world can be a volatile place, even during our normal daily routines we come into contact with those who seemingly use poor choice words and actions. It is not always necessary to meet these words and actions with punches, kicks or other force: the science of life. Having the wisdom not to make volatile situations worse, using restraint intelligently gives no form for those who wish to attack upon it and has been a

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highly regarded skill for hundreds of years.

Of all the hours spent polishing our skills in the Dojang, along with it goes a deeper understanding and responsibility: the science of essence. The science of essence is woven into our dobak and into our Tangsoology creed.

*The Art of War p.14

High School Stress

By Brian Brogren – Tang Soo Do Practitioner

Some people say that high school is easy. Apparently they are wrong, because it is hard. Not just worrying about grades and teachers, but dealing with other students, friends, and girlfriends. There is so much drama in my school, on top of fights and homework. The worst thing that I have to deal with is the homework. I get the feeling that every teacher thinks that I only have their class. In reality, I have seven. They give me assignment after assignment, and I get two or three projects at a time, all due on the same date. The worst part is I don't get much sleep when I'm overrun with all of these assignments and work. I mean, after work, the last thing that I want to do is homework or study.

Then there are the people I have to deal with. Some of these guys don't respect property or other people. Every other week I step in to stop kids from picking on smaller people. I do realize I have an advantage being tall and I want to use it to help people, not hurt them. Even when

I intervene, sometimes the bullies will not step down, and it becomes a verbal assault. My dad just tells me that if things escalate to remember my training and I will do fine. I haven't been in a fight yet, and I don't really want to but I need to defend myself. The schools rule is not very good on this matter either. For example, let's say that some kids are beating up somebody, and I step in to help, they attack me, and I defend myself. The school would suspend me for trying to help. I don't see that as very fair.

Finally there is the drama. I always hear people crying over lost boyfriends or girlfriends. I hear about people smoking and drinking, and of course, peoples cars. For some reason, every thing that's sad gets multiplied by five [blown out of proportion]. I just get sick and tired of hearing about it.

What I Learned In Tang Soo Do

By Paul Giaquinto, Jr. – Tang Soo Do Practitioner, age 8

I moved here from Pennsylvania where I learned the Tang Soo Do style of Master C.S. Kim. When I started the Tang Soo Do in Colorado Springs, I had to learn the style of Master Lee. I had to start from the beginning. I have learned the forms I4 and I5. Also I have learned combinations 1-12. I learned L1-L5. I learned new ways to block, kick and chop. I learned new ways to stretch and warm-up. I learned techniques 1-5. I learned a new way to tie my red belt. I learned not to hit with all your knuckles, only with the

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two first knuckles. I learned that round kick is different from roundhouse kick. I learned green 1-4. I learned a new pledge. I learned that you don't need to be strong, but to be relaxed and confident. It is always hard to learn new things but it has been fun.

Stress

By Robyn Gray – Aikido Practitioner

Sometimes we don't know the underlying cause for stress, but most of the time we do. We know that we need to clean out and organize the garage, the closet or that room. We know we need to pay those bills and manage the finances better. We know we need to get 7-8 hours of restful sleep a night. We know we need to wash that pile of cloths. How about those 30 minutes of exercise three or more times a week, or eating healthy balanced meals, or managing our time, or spending quality time with our spouse or all the other things that add up on top of each other? We know what causes it, but instead we choose to put off for another day that garage and realize too late that all those boxes and junk piled up made us park the car outside, where someone decided to break in and steal the radio. Now we have to pay for a new windshield on a maxed out credit card or with money that we don't have, because we didn't sit down and manage our finances properly or pay our bills on time. This led us to toss and turn all night and maybe getting 3-4 hours of sleep. We now are running late, have nothing clean to wear and don't have the energy for any 30 minute exercise or to make that healthy balanced

breakfast. So we go for the fast food joints on the corner in our PJs and pay with that maxed out credit card. So, the only quality time we have with our spouse is fighting and bickering during the meal about the pile of junk, the finances, the weight gain, the dirty laundry, the quality time not being spent and blaming them for it all.

It sure is funny what you can learn and observe at the grocery store, and to think you only went in for a plunger and some refried beans.

Breathe

By Gihan Fellah – Tang Soo Do Practitioner

Papers were originally assigned to help the Instructor know what is going on in their students' lives and what the student has been thinking about of late. So, going off this model...

I am busy, busy, busy... That is exactly how my life is going right now. I can barely slow down long enough to write this assignment. I would love to sit and contemplate about the excellent Qigong seminar some of us attended a few weeks ago in Denver and share my thoughts. Perhaps I should write how the Exposition DVD came about and my thoughts on how all of us performed during the exposition. Maybe I could write about the fact that I am now the proud holder of the rank of Chodan in Tangsoology. In all fairness though, my personal life is at the forefront of my thoughts as I write this.

My boyfriend, Mark came up with the

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brilliant idea of posting a request on "Craig's List" (which is a web site for local musicians). He is looking for musicians to jam or record their music in our studio. Well, the response has been positive. We have musicians coming over to record; some are networking to start bands. Mark is out of his stupor and is very excited about what has now developed at our studio. I have been working long daylight hours at my job, and then I am coming home to take my children to their appointments. I am checking e-mails, making supper, jamming with new people, attending company Christmas parties, going to class when I am able and I still have not had a quiet moment to put up more than a poinsettia for our Christmas decorations. Status Testing is coming up in a few weeks, LASIK surgery is on the horizon (January 12th), and I would really like to just take a moment to catch my breath!

My dear friend, Mark pointed out that I need to slow down long enough to spend some time with my children. After all, they are only with me 4 out of the 7 days of the week. The reality is I can only visit with my boys for a few minutes every morning before I zip off to work (how sad that I use the word visits rather than parent). I make time in the evening when I get home at 5:15, unless I'm going to class that night, or to some other commitment like grocery shopping in which case I have less time with them until they go to bed at 8:30.

Where is all my time going? It seems to be getting sucked into some cosmic black hole. My belief is that God should be my first priority, then family, and then all

the other "stuff!" No wonder people take vacations to escape only to return to their same chaotic lives. I should know better than to speed through each day, longing for the weekend, only to have a weekend full of "catch up" with no relaxation; starting the next week as a repeat of the last. Ugh!

The reality is I am a single parent, living with my boyfriend, working every day to pay the bills and support the government with my tax dollars. I am always in motion every moment of every day, and for what? Why am I doing this to myself? It is interesting that at work (during the part of my day when I am most productive) I am getting praises left and right for a job well done, yet at home, I cannot seem to manage my time at all. As a Yudanja, I seem to be failing miserably. So, no more "woe is me," rather it is time to move on to the heart of the matter. Breathe, extend Ki, relax, and focus. Ah!

Back On The Mat

By Brad Pier – Aikido Sempai

I have recently returned to training after an injury forced a hiatus. Here are some thoughts and feelings concerning returning to the mat.

My body and mind both missed Aikido. My stress level stayed higher than usual, and I had to find some other methods of relief. Most of these methods were solo, and while effective, something was still missing from these alternative methods. I spent some time contemplating this, and it came to me the missing factor was connection. The physical and mental blending on the

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mat is unique. The giving and receiving of Ki is essential to good Aikido practice, and is difficult to recreate elsewhere.

I also experienced some fear about returning. Will it hurt and will I be able to practice at a pace that is ok for me, and still ok for my partners? I can answer most of these questions with a resounding yes. There will be some pain. I have to work my way back to a level of practice I expect from myself.

I would like to thank my instructors and fellow students for their support, encouragement, and spirit during this transition. I judge that it speaks highly of a dojo where students can work together on their journey, dealing with life events, work, injuries and whatever obstacles lie in our paths. Thank you all and I will see you on the mat.

Paper Submittal Procedure

As you all know, paper submissions are required for all students (that includes instructors...we're all students of the Arts we practice!), to be included in The Bulletin. The Bulletin is designed to be published every fourth month in the year, i.e. three publications per year. Therefore, we have the schedule as follows:

- December is the month for paper submissions to be included in the January edition.
- April is the month for paper submissions to be included in the May edition.
- August is the month for paper submissions to be included in the September edition.

Ideally, paper submissions should be turned in the first week of the month prior to the month of publication. For example, please submit papers in the first week of August for the September edition. Papers (preferably MS Word format) can be emailed to Sabom Parenteau at ctsds@comcast.net. If you do not have access to a computer, write your paper out and maybe you can get one of your fellow classmates to type it for you. Maybe they'll do it for a home cooked meal or possibly some other form of bribe. It also helps if you proof-read and spell check your publication before sending it. Let's all try our best to make each publication better than the last!

Instructors' Thoughts

The Value of Play

By Sensei Rob Roberts – Aikido Practitioner

This year we had the honor of meeting Mendiola Sensei and his students. Instead of using words like “training” or “working out,” Mendiola Sensei talks about “playing Aikido.” The first time I heard this, my mind recoiled in horror that anyone would use such a frivolous word to describe what we were doing on the mat. Then I thought about it some more.

Often we will trivialize the word “play” especially when we observe children at play. We will sometimes belittle what they are doing and dismiss it as “just play.” However, for a child, play is his job. Play is how children learn to deal with each other and it is how they emulate adults, preparing them to relate to other people in the real world. Play is a simulation. When I was in the Air Force we conducted a great number of simulations or exercises. In fact, we would determine ahead of time which units would be “playing,” in other words, which units would be participating. We rarely think of it this way, but skills such as flying helicopters, operating weapon systems, and conducting surveillance are martial arts. They are the skills of modern martial combat. The value of simulations is that skills can be perfected, conflict outcomes can be predicted, and no one has to die.

Recently I read a book about relationships. The most stressful part of a new relationship is meeting someone. In the book, the author suggested enjoying the process of meeting new people, and

not becoming so attached to a particular outcome that it causes nervousness. He suggested a mental exercise, where you pretend that meeting new people is a game, and if you fail it's not important because it's just a simulation. Thinking of it this way allows you to relax. To relax is the first principle of Aikido.

Not too long ago I had the opportunity to try what are called “exertainment” systems. The two systems I tried were the Cateye GameBike, and the Powergrid Fitness Exer-station. These two devices are basically game controllers, one aerobic and the other anaerobic and isometric. You can connect these controllers to a game system such as a PlayStation, Xbox, or GameCube and then play a game. I tried Gran Turismo. With the Exer-station you push forward to move through the game, with the GameBike you pedal. I was trying to get this racing qualification in the game. It was quite challenging and I had to attempt it over and over again. The point is, I totally forgot that I was getting a workout. By the time I got my ‘B’ License in Gran Turismo, I was dripping with sweat and my heart was pounding. If we can turn chores like working out into play, then we'll do them because it's something that we want to do rather than something that we force ourselves to do because we think we should.

On many occasions Medeiros Sensei will show us a technique the execution of which is not intuitively obvious and say “play with that for a while,” and then walk away. O Sensei said to train in a vibrant and joyful manner. Enjoy yourself while you train; we're not fighting for our lives

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on the street, so you can relax. There is a Tao of play. See the value of play.

Justifiable Beliefs and the Concept of Ki

By Kyosa Tim Speaks – Tang Soo Do Practitioner

For every person the burden of proof required to justify his or her belief in a thing, or concept, is different. Each individual has had different life experiences, as well as genetic predispositions, that have molded their mind to varying extents. This goes back to the old nature or nurture argument, as to which shapes us more as human beings. In regard to the concept of Ki, or Chi, few people born in raised in western society have had experiences prior to indoctrination via the Asian martial arts. Thus, a westerner's burden of proof for belief in Ki may be considerably higher than that of a person raised in an Asian culture. As martial artists, particularly Tangsoologists, we must attempt to justify our beliefs along the path toward aligning ourselves with truth. Also, a periodic re-evaluation of our beliefs is a useful tool toward achieving true knowledge, and avoiding self-delusion.

Some would argue that human knowledge is limited to that which we can perceive with the 5 senses. Yet others would say that humans have the ability to reason independent of sensory experiences, and thereby obtain knowledge. This argument over the nature of human knowledge is another that has been going on for thousands of years. In reality, a combination of these two theories of knowl-

edge probably comes closer to the truth. Regardless, the ideal is that in order for a thing or concept such as Ki to be considered true knowledge, it should exist independent of whether we believe in it or not. This is excluding the extreme skeptical position that we are all living in a fantasy world constructed by our minds.

In our modern world of scientific discovery, many scientist and doctors are attempting to prove the existence of the illusive force of Ki. They poke, measure, and prod accomplished practitioners of the various Ki methodologies, and still find no measurable Ki. However, what they do find quite regularly are the physiological affects of Ki exhibited by these practitioners. For example, Tai Chi Chuan and Chi Gung practitioners have shown measurable increases in body temperature at the extremities during the performance of their various exercises. Some have even been able to produce this effect while sitting still. Perhaps even more interesting, are the measurable production of brain waves associated with concentration by advanced practitioners. All this scientific mumbo jumbo is very nice, but we may all be turned to dust by the time they figure out just what Ki is. In the meantime we can simply follow the teachings of those who know more about it than we do, and reap the benefits today.

In my personal experience, I can attest that Ki is a very real phenomenon, which produces noticeable physiological and mental affects on the human body. For example, performing chi-breathing exercises during moving meditation stimulates the mind and body resulting in a state of

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alert relaxation. This is due primarily to the increased availability of oxygen to the brain and other tissues. When we perform our warm ups and Hyung with this in mind we typically refer to it as performing the motion with Ki. Some of the benefits to training in this manner are refinement of fine motor skills, development of greater mental focus and gentle stimulation of the bodies glands and organs resulting in greater circulatory and immune system functioning.

I first noticed these effects during my practice of Tai Chi Chuan. However this experience was slightly different from the Ki extension that I practice today in Tangsoodo, which is slightly different than what I've experienced while training with the Aikido group. This leads me to believe that the individual experience of Ki can vary with the application or intent of its use. Yet, I wonder if, as I progress in my ability to relax and extend Ki during a wider range of applications, things will become clearer.

In the end I think each person must experience Ki first hand, in order to satisfy his or her own criteria for a justified belief. Although scientists and doctors are hard at work gathering evidence on the positive effects of Ki training, they seem to be a long ways off from definitive scientific proof of its existence. I find this to be similar to how many people drive cars everyday without ever understanding what makes them operate. Likewise, the human body is far from being fully understood by medical science today. Nevertheless, we all operate our bodies on a regular basis to varying degrees of

efficiency. Does this constitute a justifiable belief for the average person? Perhaps not, but I am convinced that with due diligence and a relaxed mind, true knowledge of Ki can be experienced by anyone.

The Pursuit of Perfection

*By Kyosa Jude Miller – Tang Soo Do/
Aikido Practitioner*

Sometime ago, I was discussing the concept of the "Pursuit of Perfection" within a martial arts context with a friend. My friend, who has never had any martial arts experience, posed an interesting question for me that caused me to re-evaluate what my views on this concept are. He started by agreeing with me that "perfection" is something that cannot be obtained (in this material existence, at least). He followed up by asking "Why pursue something that can never be obtained? Isn't that a futile pursuit? Why bother?" My friend then stated that such a pursuit could only lead to feelings of frustration, discouragement, hopelessness, and eventually abandonment. I had not quite viewed the concept of "perfection" from this perspective before. I did not agree with what my friend said by any means, but at the time, I simply did not have the words to tell him as much and present a counterpoint. This took me a few days to think over, and the answer I was looking for finally came to me in class during warm-ups.

Yes, "perfection" is not something that is obtainable by beings in finite bodies. However, the "pursuit" is what leads to

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constant development. We as students of the martial arts should not be discouraged, but we should be thankful that there is no “cap” or limit on what point we can develop our training to. In a very loose sense, our ability to develop and advance our knowledge and understanding is without end, because there is always room to improve. Will any of us ever develop superhuman abilities and be able to perform supernatural feats? It is very doubtful. There is too much information to learn and too much to work on physically to approach such a level. But, the beauty of the Art lies in the opportunity to constantly improve ourselves. Our ability to develop and pursue perfection might as well be limitless, but only in the sense that we can always physically improve and develop further understanding. The work and development that we accomplish today helps the future generations of martial artist that come after us. The pursuit of perfection not only benefits the individual, it allows the individual to become a part of something greater than them self.

As martial artists, it is important for us to overcome feelings of despair and futility, especially on our path to perfection. It is important to remember that reaching perfection is the same reaching the end of the Path. With this in mind, we can rejoice knowing that our martial Path in this life only ends when life itself does.

I believe it is important to remember that there is always a way out of a training rut or plateau. There is always somewhere to go with your training. One never has to remain idle for lack of directions to go. One can always go back and polish

the basics, or one can press forward to discover new applications. Going back to basics and going forward to advanced techniques and applications becomes one and the same at this point, because both lead to further development. There are many paths and avenues to pursue perfection within the martial arts, and also in other aspects of life. Because of all of this, I believe that instead of despair and idleness, we should have a sense of great hope. Our pursuit of the Art and of perfection does not have to end. We can pursue and improve our Art well into advanced age – even up to the point where the body, mind and/or spirit finally yields in this existence.

So, I believe that it is important for all students of the martial arts and “Do”, to remember that the value of any goal is defined by the struggle. The struggle that we must endure in the pursuit for perfection in not only the martial arts, but in all endeavors will lead to great and valuable gifts for the rest of our lives. We must always take action, because the means and paths to take action are present. We only fail if we choose not to act. This is the explanation that I presented to my friend days later, in retort to his comments made to me. It is my great hope that he will consider all of this and go forward with a positive mindset of great hope in his personal journeys in life.

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Be Thankful

By Sensei Hal Render – Aikido Practitioner

One thing that this time of year stresses, to me, is the need to be thankful. At times, however, this is difficult.

This year has been a hard one for me. Work has been quite difficult, with many changes of managers, changes of duties and loss of friends as the company has down-sized. My desire to remain employed at my current company has dwindled to the point that I am pursuing other options.

Home has had its share of challenges as well. Health problems, emotional problems resulting from my work situation and other issues have made home less of a sanctuary than it once was. I endeavor to make my home the secure, supportive place we all hope a "home" can be, but I do not always succeed.

Membership at the dojo, while steady, has remained low, and this has caused me concern as well. When such things occur, I try to remember the old sayings regarding dealing with difficulty in life, like "An inconvenience is an opportunity wrongly considered, while an opportunity is an inconvenience rightly considered," or "Pray to God, but keep rowing to shore."

One of the best sources for spiritual insight, for me, is the Tao Te Ching. On the topic of dealing with difficult, the Tao Te Ching says:

Accept disgrace willingly.

Accept misfortune as the human condition.

What do you mean by "Accept disgrace willingly"?

Accept being unimportant.

Do not be concerned with loss or gain.

This is called "accepting disgrace willingly."

What do you mean by "Accept misfortune as the human condition"?

Misfortune comes from having a body.

Without a body, how could there be misfortune?

Surrender yourself humbly; then you can be trusted to care for all things.

Love the world as your own self; then you can truly care for all things.

This passage resonates within me strongly, particular when I study Aikido. At various points in my study, I have found things I do not do well, situations I do not like and people with whom I have difficulty. By persevering and working through these periods, I have found that I gained something. In some cases, it is a greater ability or a greater knowledge. In others, it is simply the proof that I can get through such situations. All are invaluable to me, because they inspire in me greater confidence and a greater inner peace.

So, my simple message for this time is: Be thankful for everything. It is impossible for you to know the greater purpose that life has for you, so accept the good

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and the bad things that come your way, and use all of them as opportunities to grow. Seek the seed of good in all people and situations. Even when things appear to be the least desirable, the most dire and the most damaging, embrace them because each will help you to develop yourself.

A Heartfelt Thank You To All

By Sensei Samuel George – Aikido Practitioner/USJA Club Coach

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all students for supporting the dojo/dojang for this past year. Our rent, utilities, and telephone bills have been paid in full for yet another year. Our mat has been washed and kept with tender care. The dojo/dojang space still has an energy that supports us all and anyone who walks through the door.

The real dedication for the dojo/dojang comes from every dedicated student that continues to keep coming through the door every week. This dojo/dojang is a very special place where each of us continues to pursue our knowledge of our art one step at a time, one day at a time, and one year at a time.

We are the dojo/dojang. We are alive and well and after another amazing year I feel very blessed to be among your company.

Honoring Those That Came Before

By Sabom Mike Parenteau – Tang Soo Do Practitioner

One thing that I've always liked about our school, is that we have a code of conduct that is absent from many commercialized schools. This translates to respect and the courteous acknowledgement of those who came before.

This concept of "honoring those that came before" is not demonstrated by lip-service. It is demonstrated by the actions of a student, an instructor, a friend, a loved-one, etc. In our case, coming to class early, contributing to our publication, paying dues to allow for a place to train, running our school as Sabom/Sensei would run it, etc. shows an acknowledgement of our seniors and a commitment to the Art. That in itself is a great gift we can give our seniors and those that came before.

This concept is why traditional schools will outlast the commercial ones. These days, individuals belonging to commercial schools who receive a black belt rank from their instructor think the journey is done and they can move on; i.e. they've "mastered" something. In reality, they've mastered nothing and the journey has just started. The result is that you have constant turn over of students who have no impetus to carry on or "give back to the Art." In a traditional school there is more of a chance to have a group of individuals who understand this concept and share the Art. How do you think we are able to practice the Arts we study today? Carry on and train!

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A Seemingly Systemic Problem

By Sabom Mike Parenteau – Tang Soo Do Practitioner

Unfortunately for all of you, you get two things from me this time! As many of you know, I started a club in Longmont in 2000. At one time, I had as many as twelve students! Today through attrition, I have none...again. It seems as though this has been a recurring issue and I'd like to try to bring some light to this.

Since 2000, the cross-section of student's ages has been from 12 to 50+. The majority of students, within the last few years have had an age of twenty to thirty years. This brings up a question for me. Why is it that this age group in relation to martial arts training, have all fallen away? I think I have some possible answers:

- 1) Impatience
- 2) Unwilling to persevere
- 3) Laziness
- 4) No Attention span

Impatience seems to be a systemic problem in our society. With the advent of the internet which can be a useful tool, it seems we are in need to have things now. Email, cell phones, fax, etc. all exacerbate this wanting desire to have information or some other need immediately. Most of us use them. When not misused they can be useful, however we seem to be entering into a state of indulgence.

Perseverance is a key factor in "Do" train-

ing. It makes us better people, stronger in our integrity and our conviction. Do those in this age bracket want things handed to them? Aren't we as a people partially defined by our struggles? Isn't this supposed to add to our character? Even though you can mention it in class, work on forms every class and struggle just to get the basic movements, some of my former students did not see the value in persevering while training. Do they not see that this can help them in their daily lives as well?

Laziness could be one factor. We all get lazy from time to time. However, hard work is a good thing in that it allows us to reflect on the path which brought us to where we are. Perhaps it is not to those people walking through my door. Perhaps I should have given a 2nd degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do all that she wanted. She said she didn't want to test and have that pressure. However, she wanted to know our curriculum, wanted to know the "in's and out's" of Tang Soo Do. She wanted me to sit down with her after every class so that she could write down the forms (hyung) as I recounted them for her. I would simply say that she shouldn't worry about those things now if you just want to train. We can train for now and learn as we go. She could not accept this concept. I guess certain people want to be "spoon fed" information and not work for it. It shall not be in our school!

It seems that with all of the media and various ways of receiving information these days, our attentions are being diverted. This also translates to things we would like to do. This week it is martial

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arts, next week it's hockey, then soccer, then baseball and the list goes on and on. Why is it that we feel the need to spread ourselves so thin? Think about it.

In conclusion, this is a partial explanation and obviously scratches the surface. People are complicated creatures. I will say one last thing to those that have walked out the door for honest reasons and dishonest ones, "thank you." I would personally like to thank each and every one of you, because every one of you reminds me why I train.

Retrospective - 2006

*By Sabom/Sensei Vernon Medeiros
– CATSDS Founder*

The year 2006 has come to a close and our school The Center for Aikido and Tangsoodo Studies has survived another year in the market place. As I reflect on 2006 as it relates to our school I am deeply moved by the dedication and loyalty of our members. It is no easy task to commit week in and week out to a training schedule that asks the serious student to give enormous amounts of their leisure time to the art that we teach. In Maryland I have seen a number of people drop in to investigate the Aikido program at the Hagerstown YMCA only to drop away before they ever really learn how to do a few simple routines. The training times that are offered may not be the best however my belief is if a person desires to do something special then they will make the necessary adjustments to fulfill the goal.

In Hagerstown on April 1 I held our one-year anniversary at the YMCA. I am

grateful to those members of our Colorado Branch for accepting my expensive invitation to support my anniversary Keiko. I personally invited two local schools from Fredrick Maryland to participate, Sensei Jack Simpson's Aikido group and the South Mountain Ki-Aikido group. I felt that the anniversary Keiko was a success. Because of this event I met a very special person from France, Magali. Magali is a dedicated student of Aikido and holds the rank of 3kyu under the Aikido Federation of France. Magali is my assistant Instructor to our YMCA program. Magali takes care of Aikido business when I am out of town. I am grateful for her presence in my life at this time. I look forward to her accompanying me to Colorado when we hold our 2007 Exposition in May.

August 12 Exposition held in Colorado Springs, CO. was an awesome event! This was my first opportunity to meet Mendiola Sensei and his students. I was very pleased with the response from Mr. Scott Arnold's school. We have held this Exposition since 2005 and I know 2007 will be even better. I thank everybody who makes the effort to contribute to the success of our school.

October 6 was the last opportunity I had to attend the Colorado branch school and was granted the privilege to teach those students who made the effort to be in attendance. Consistent attendance is always a challenge for sincere students. Insincere students do not have this problem; they simply fail to commit to their original purpose. In our hurried world to go to work, take care of family, friends, follow political interests, war and homeland

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security interests, we are bombarded by a multitude of endless visual and auditory stimuli which assaults our senses. Our school is seen as a dinosaur in both what we offer and what we ask of serious students. Mr. Parenteau and I agree that we must preserve our methods even though many students quit and fail to recognize the value of what we offer.

We are not a commercial school. Commercial schools in my estimation offer only a shortsighted activity for non-serious students. The belt system, tournaments and seminars have become a marketing tool to generate monies for the school, organizations and federation etc. Our school is a place of learning and a means to set goals. It is a place that challenges each student to practice self-reflection, self-improvement, spiritual, physical and mental development; it is not a vehicle to generate monies for the instructors.

I am presently thinking that the path of peace is a very narrow one. This may explain why so few are walking its crooked steep path. The world can be much more than what it is presently and it starts with being honest and consistent in honoring commitments and asking all students to do the same.

November 4 through the 12 found my girlfriend, Kimberly and I en route to San Diego California for a week long visit to see my Instructor John Sabo Sensei, his family and attend Isoyama Shihan's seminar in San Fernando California which was sponsored by Paulson Sensei of Santa Clarita, CA.

We visited Shimabukuro Shihan's dojo, Sunset Cliff's Aikikai and spoke with Bernice Thom Sensei. We visited San Diego Aikikai and Mission Valley Aikido. Sabo Sensei and I went to practice with Martian Katz Sensei at his dojo located at the Stanley Recreation Center while Kimberly watched a Hawaiian Hula class at the center. We visited Master Jong H. Lee's Tangsoodo School, which is located in Santee, CA. We went to the US Mexican border and decided against crossing into Mexico because the lines were long to come back into the US.

On November 10, Kimberly and I headed to Los Angeles to attend Isoyama Shihan's seminar. Isoyama Shihan was awesome. He looks so young. I am always impressed with his humility. He is always so patient with students. I thought the most remarkable thing Shihan did was allowing students to do the techniques on him. Of course no one could do it correctly therefore Shihan always did Kaishiwaza. The theme of Shihan's seminar was to always do Aikido correctly! I was amazed at all the different ways that I have seen Aikido performed by myself and others through the years and Shihan knew them all and then he would point out why it was incorrect. The correct way is the one that makes complete sense. I have much work to do to correct my incorrect Aikido.

The holidays came and went without incidence. My daughter Bianca and her husband Ron gave us a surprise visit by driving up from Atlanta, Ga. when they were unable to get a flight into Denver, CO.

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This was a great Christmas present for Kimberly and myself. While Kimberly was at work one day the three of us went to the District (DC.) to explore the Memorials and pay our respects at Arlington Cemetery. The day was long and a little cold but we had a great time. We put a few miles on our shoes that day. Ron and I went to Aikido class on Sunday and all I can say is he still has the technique he had when he left years ago. I was amazed at how much he remembers and how well his ukemi skills are. To my eyes it is as though he never stopped training. I hope to take him to visit Isoyama Shihan next year.

Well here we are standing at the threshold of a New Year and my hope is that all students and Instructors will train with a new sense of purpose and commitment. It is really very simple to do. You just keep showing up weekly and leave your habits and conceits at the door and apply yourself completely for the two hours of class then you forget about it and let the body remember until the next class.

Post Script to the Retro '06

I was deeply saddened to hear that the world has still not learned from its mistakes of the past. As I often do when I am leaving work at 3:00am I was listening to the NPR radio broadcast of "The World" which is a British broadcast of news events around the globe. The announcer had stated that Saddam Hussein was executed on a Muslim holy day at dawn. As I listened I thought of the martial arts

I practice and a famous phrase from my favorite television drama from the early 1970's; "the taking of a life does no one honor." It is interesting to me that the majority of people who are in favor of democracy condone killing. It seems that the very issue of killing horrified the world when the attacks on 9/11 took place in the United States, yet five years on the people of the world still hunger for death and kill in the name of justice. The killing of Saddam Hussein did not bring anyone back that has died. The killing of Saddam Hussein only confirms what we fear or dislike and we become guilty of the same crime. Think long and hard about the ways of peace, Aikido and Tangsoodo are arts for peace not hatred, killing, revenge or destruction.