



Dec 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009

## **Students Thoughts on October '09 Testing & Comments on October '09 Newsletter**

### **Spencer Van Horn**

I thought that testing, and the ceremony went well. I enjoyed testing with my friends from the center Aikido & Tang Soo Do. Testing for 3rd kyu was something I had been looking forward to for a while. I got lots of compliments from many people after the testing. I thought everyone who tested did very well and deserved their new belt rank. I enjoy the new belt system; it gives the school a new start in the Aikido and Tang Soo Do world.

dojo. Watching the Tang practitioners test in their art was impressive and helps demonstrate that there is always another way, and that may not necessarily be wrong. During and after the test I felt joyous, but focused. It was a truly rewarding experience and I look forward to many more. The knowledge and wisdom we aspire to is not an end but a means. The end is harmony, with ourselves and others; indeed with life and all the world. Our way is peace, our goal harmony, and we are tireless in our quest.

### **Jim Fleming**

Testing is important, easy to say, but why? Markers help you know where you are, where you're going, and what you need to do to get to the next one. Our school does not test every month like some random McDojo, our testing actually means something. Our testing was impressive, conducted by several masters, and at least 5 Yudansha not only from our school but sister schools in the area. So many instructors meant that not everything was by rote, not everything was prepared for; we had to truly demonstrate that we deserved the rank we were testing for. Testing was not only done in aikido, but also Tang Soo Do, demonstrating the unity of our

### **Greg Johnson**

Entering the dojo the morning of testing brought back memories of my last Tae Kwon Do testing 17 years ago. People were generally jovial but there was an underlying sense of nervousness. Being exposed to stress helps one learn how to deal with it in real life. What better way than to be surrounded by kind and caring individuals who are all as equally worked up about their own personal performance and progression in their chosen art? I enjoyed the setting, participating along side the Tang Soo Do students. This opportunity helped affirm, within myself, my path of study in Aikido and my son's similar journey in this life long art.

I learned in architecture school that testing for me was a time to assess where my own progress was at a particular time. It was a time to show myself what my strengths were and what areas I needed to work on. I am an adult and it was easy for me to distinguish in my mind, on testing day at the dojo, that I was testing myself while just participating and offering myself as a willing Uke. I learned where I was at and what I need to work on for my own progression over the next six months. For the children's class, I had explained to my son ahead of time that he would just be participating but not testing for rank due to our short duration of participation in the school. I knew in my mind that he may not understand this but that it would be good for him help out and to experience the testing atmosphere. It became very evident how much children measure themselves against their peers as apposed to assessing themselves. It was difficult to watch my son's disappointment at not receiving a fancy orange belt with the other students in his class. His experience with testing has not only taught him some valuable, if not slightly painful lessons of life, but it also taught me things about my son's character. I have been ever so amazed and pleased with his resilience, dedication, grace, and continued enjoyment, since testing, of an art that's depth and personal value is not as far from his reach as I had initially expected from a child his age.

One of the small things that I think I enjoyed most about the ceremony when the ranks were awarded was the personalization of the certificates. I enjoyed hearing the Sensei's comments on each of the students and could see the connection to each student's character

very well. I do not recall seeing that type of connection between Sensei and student in previous martial art's schools I have attended. I look forward to our next testing and even more so to the time between now and then.

## **Justin Buchanan**

All of the thoughts expressed in the contents of our current newsletter were very interesting to read, including mine. I have read about Mrs. Palmer and the rattlesnake, Jim and Kashiwaya Sensei, and how Ms. Fella stated that martial arts, any martial art if trained properly, can really improve one's life. Apart from the last paper I wrote, as far as knowing why I train is still questionable. In my opinion, the newsletters that students and teachers write are great pointers for a student in the process of practicing an art.

When I first encountered martial arts, I never thought it could get so complicated. Every aspect of your training matters; I have already heard this countless times from Mr. Miller and Mr. Speaks. Mrs. Palmer made a pretty cool point in saying that it is only natural for a martial artist to be concerned about safety, that you must take care of yourself, and negative thoughts don't help. I would only have to agree with Mrs. Palmer's words. Negative thoughts are never a good thing, as we have seen in other students that attended our school. The facts are as goes: some will survive the life-long training process, and some will not. Mr. Miller told me this, and this is very true. I can only hope that I will make my training a life-long process, and end up bettering myself through this process. Testing was an experience I will never forget. I

was being watched by all of my instructors, my fellow students (still senior to me) and people from the Aikido class all while doing forms, combinations, different techniques, one-steps, and even a little Aikido, or Aiki-Tang. I'll tell you what; my outlook on being nervous has changed dramatically. I am not as shy any more. I might not come off as a shy person, but belt testing should have proven to you I can be a nervous person whose mind can go blank at any time like any other human. But overall testing was a positive learning experience, just like everything else in life is a learning experience. Tang Soo Do is an awesome art, my teachers are great people, and all I can do is keep training.

## **Brent Bloem**

On reading the C.A.T.S.'s newsletter, I am discontented by the short submissions. C.A.T.S.'s instructors ask for one page of writing. A handful of submissions do not comply, and several paragraphs are supplied. The dojo's/dojang's members are adults. Why aren't the instructor's directions executed? The answers to this question can be numerous; but one factor is the wellspring: laziness. Everyone has four months to write an article. But even then, if one overlooks this opportunity, our instructors give two weeks notice to complete the work. Two weeks is more than enough time. As is demonstrable by this newsletter's submissions, 15 year olds are abler to write better, longer works with lesser time. Being a high school English teacher, I know; 9<sup>th</sup> graders receive one week to complete a 2-3 page paper. That

their performance eclipses adult's performance is sad. Testing for Tang Soo Do was frustrating. I had unachievable performance expectations. In all, I wasn't prepared as I should have been. One drawback was that testing came too soon. Being away from training for three years created three challenges. Motor skills, concentration skills, and memorization skills redeveloped slowly. In turn, I didn't perform as I know I could. Another setback came from inefficient training at home. I focused too much on the nuances of several forms and combinations while I focused too little on the others. Learning the fundamental movements first and learning the refined nuances afterwards would have been wiser.

## **Gihan Fella**

I was asked to write my thoughts on testing, so here it goes. I liked the idea of testing the Tang Soo Do and Aikido group together in the first half, and then splitting the two arts into their own groups. I believe it effectively gave all participants of "The Center" a chance to observe each Art and to make their own conclusions of the similarities and differences. What I would like to see differently in upcoming testings is to have each Yudansha stand up when they are asking the "examinees" to perform techniques. Also, I believe the Yudansha need to be clearer in what they are asking, and in turn, the examinees need to pay closer attention. After each group of examinees was called forward, directions had to be repeated several times after being shown, rather than just being done by the

students being tested. It was clear what each student needed to work on and what the instructors need to focus on in the future.

## **Gihan Fellah**

It is always interesting to read through The Center for Aikido and Tang Soo Do Bulletin because it gives a glimpse of each person's thoughts and life experiences. The layout of the newsletter was also helpful because it offered info on Saotome Sensei's Halloween Seminar and a link to more info on the event. The following is my summary of the main points of each person's newsletter submission:

1. Cathy Palmer: "Rattle Snake" -- Be safe.
2. Stephanie Shuhayda: "Absence Makes the Heart grow fonder" -- "Need to be strong...need to train to do this."
3. Jim Fleming: "Symbolism & Association" -- Kashiwaya Sensei said atemi differs depending on what leg you lead with, ie. Attack with the same hand/leg forward and you have balance; if you attack with the opposite leg/hand, then you have power.
4. Lilli O'Connell: "Being a New Student" -- The positive and negative of Tang Soo Do training.
5. Sean O'Connell: "Reasons for Training at 'The Center'" -- How Tang Soo Do seems opposite of what he learned in hi Kempo training (Kicks, Punches).
6. Spencer Van Horn: "Why I train" -- As a way of life to better himself.
7. Justin Buchanan, "TSD: The Beginner" -- Show respect and be open-minded.
8. Sam George: "Thoughts on Friends leaving Aikido" -- With friends gone, Aikido seems like an empty place.
9. Gihan Fellah (Myself): "Being New" -- Is your life on the right track?
10. Brent Bloem: "From one to The Next" -- He viewed other styles and saw the value of perfection in his own training.
11. Sabom Nim Medeiros: "Interview with Sabo Sensei" -- Meaningful training.
12. Sabom Parenteau: "A guide to training" -- Perseverance is the nucleus of Do.
13. Geottsche Sensei: "Dojo Etiquette" -- You are judged by your etiquette more than your technique.
14. Sabom Miller: "Examine closely every aspect..." -- The importance of self-reflection.
15. Sabom Miller: "Tangsoology San Diego '09" -- Master Walker's feedback.
16. Gray Sensei: "The Art of Advancement" -- Put aside the fear, Be-Do-Have.
17. Sabom Speaks: "San Diego Quest 2009" -- Master Craig Burke and highlights of swimming in the ocean with Sabo Sensei.

These were just very brief highlights from each submission. The work that went into compiling each submission into the final newsletter and posting it to

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the website is apparent, and very much appreciated.