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The Bulletin



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9/11 Remembrance

This past Saturday marked the 9th anniversary of the tragic 9/11 attacks.

Let us all take a moment to remember the more than 3,000 lives that were lost that day.

As practitioners of “Do” martial arts, we must continually reflect on what lessons have been learned, and how we can prevent such a catastrophe from reoccurring. We do this kind of self-reflection for both our personal self-defense, and to be more positive contributing members to our society. Although we leave our nations defense in the hands of our government and military, we mustn’t allow ourselves to become complacent as individuals, or as a nation. As Grand Master Lee wrote, “Become aware of social forces and how they can impact you negatively.”

Make no mistake, the social forces of hate, intolerance, etc. that led to the 9/11 attacks are alive and well. If you are not aware of this, then you’re not paying attention. When you train in your chosen art, keep these sobering thoughts in the back of your mind. Although we should always train in a joyful manner, there should also be an element of seriousness to our training. Not only should we take the refinement of techniques seriously, more importantly, we should take the refinement of our self seriously. By doing this, at the very least, we avoid becoming part of the problem; at the very most, we become a positive force for good in the world.

- Sabom Speaks

Editor’s Comments

The Bulletin is an open forum for the Students and Instructors of the Center for Aikido and Tang Soo Do Studies to post their personal thoughts and opinions. This is actually a requirement for membership in our school in order to further engage members in the intellectual aspect of their training. This also serves to enlighten the instructors as to what is going on in the student’s mind. For the most part, these postings will pertain to the individual’s personal journey, experiences, or observations in and around their chosen martial arts training.

Please feel free to read, enjoy, and most of all, learn a few things.

Some Upcoming Events for Fall 2010!

Friday, Oct. 22nd through Sunday Oct. 24th –
Mitsugi Saotome Shihan at Boulder Aikikai – see
website for details: <http://www.boulderaikikai.org>

November – John Sabo Sensei Seminar – details
to be announced!

Editors

Sabom Nim/Sensei Vernon Medeiros
Sensei Ryan Goettsche
Sabom Nim/Sensei Jude Miller
Sabom Nim Tim Speaks
Kyosah Nim Gihan Fellah

9/11; can we dig deep enough to learn the lessons?

September 11, 2001 is a date that often evokes memories of shock, dismay, concern, empathy, compassion, anger, regret, disappointment and sadness. As the 9th anniversary of this horrific event is remembered in the hearts and minds of people throughout the world, it behooves those of us who strive to practice the martial arts for peaceful purposes to understand that some people will never come to comprehend the complex intricacies' of human desires. The positive and negative attributes of desire guide all of us to live our lives out as we see fit. Our prisons are overloaded with those sorts of people who strive toward the negative side of desires. Most of us abide by the principles of positive desires and monitor our greed and curb our appetites accordingly.

Consider everything you desire and discern if your actions will bring harm to others. Negative desires bring harm to others. I believe this to be so. However positive desires, I like to think, motivate each of us to consider all aspects of living. This is what I believe the Moo Duk Kwan teaches us. This is what I believe the teachings of Morihei Ueshiba and his loyal students teach us as we train daily to curb our negative desires and put forth positive living. The Ki No Kenkyu Kai suggests all students study to become one with the Universal Ki of all things. This seems to be another way of suggesting to live a positive existence, not a negative one. I cannot stop terrorism in all its many shapes and forms, but to foster revenge keeps the cycle forever in motion. It is a difficult task to speak out against the masses that feed the flames of negative desires.

The arts of peace are for peace-not war. Try to understand this fact and good luck to those of us who wish greedy men would cease being greedy. Also, to those men, women, and children who like to kill other human beings, may we pray that they all would change their hearts and spread universal love instead of pain, hate, aggression and suffering.

Now you may be thinking that it is a very big, big world, and these sorts of things do not affect me or my family. Then you have already misunderstood the first lesson of 9/11! Everything we do as humans affects something. Let us affect the world in a positive way. Good luck on your travels down the road of life.

Vernon Medeiros

Colorado Springs Purple Mountain Dojo/Dojang Association

Student's Thoughts

What I've Learned

By Jimmy Hartford

My name is Jimmy Hartford. I started TangSooDo on April 24, 2010 and this is what I've learned so far. I have gained better balance by the stances. I have also attained strength by quick turning movements that generate more strength. Furthermore, I've learned how to defend myself if it ever became necessary. I strive for perfection within all my efforts in class. In conclusion, I achieved all of these by lots of practice.

Studying Tangsoodo

By Ethan Crosslin

Recently I started studying Tang Soo Do. Since then I have learned two forms, five blocks, and three punches. I also learned respect, patience, and how to fold my gi. I understand that it is important to practice what I learn in class, so that I can excel in Tang Soo Do.

Mind and Body

By Curtis Tygres

I was privileged to attend the Ki seminar with Shinichi Tohei a couple of months ago. What I really remember was the continued exhortation about having mind and body unified (or that mind controls the body). I really do believe this to be true. In my line of work I have witnessed this principle. I have seen people at the worst points in their lives and amazingly, some people have great attitudes (or mindsets). Some people who are near the end of their journey keep on going and sometimes even smile. Others who are amplified through illegal (or even legal) substances are able to take on 5-8 grown men without any previous training or supernatural strength of their own. The substances do not give the user actual physical strength; meaning it does not make the muscles bigger. Also I have seen people just wasting away due to depression or

anxiety. In all of these cases, I believe it is the mind that affects them. It is what they believe, or what their mind tells them, that affects their body. I also know this is true in my own life. When I am sad I feel tired and don't have the energy to do much of anything, but when I am happy or excited I feel like I am at the top of the world. Now I know those are "emotions". What my understanding is, currently, is that it's the mindset of it all. I believe all four of the following principles reiterate this concept of mind and body unification: Keep one point, Extend Ki, Relax completely, and Weight underside. I have a very limited understanding of these principles, but I know it is worth it. I'm thankful and appreciative of our Instructors at the Dojo, because they teach these principles.

Tangsoology

By Justin Buchanan

Let me think... I don't really have a specific topic that I want to discuss about my Tang Soo Do training. So I think I will just share some of the things that are on my mind about Tangsoology at the current time. I have been training Tang Soo Do for a little over a year now. After the first year went by, I figured out just how time flies. Sabom Speaks and Sabom Miller have both told me about how you should always pursue perfection even though it would be impossible achieve in the short life span we are given. Ergo, it makes no sense to me to think about how long one has been training. I believe that with patience and persistence, I will reach my goal for higher learning. Patience is definitely something I must learn. I have little patience in general, not just Tang Soo Do. But patience and time spent on the mat are just variables to an otherwise bigger equation. Don't get me wrong, these factors of my training have a strong effect and reason, but I believe the most important question to ask in one's training is why you train in the first place. Why do you train? Sabom Speaks and I seem to have sort of the same reason for training. His reason obviously differs from mine in some ways, due to the effects patience and time spent on the mat, but the reason I train is because I hate to fight. I think fighting makes no sense. Since I don't agree with fighting, it does make sense for me to study as many aspects of a defensive art as possible during my lifetime. As of right now, I seek to have the wisdom and physical attributes of the instructors I know. Obtaining

wisdom in the art they train, I'm guessing, comes with time as well as physical training. Training is slowly becoming a lot like a habit. I constantly think about it. You really could relate the way I think about training to the way I think about girls, money, and cigarettes. All the time! Even though I have been smokeless for a while, I still think about a good old cigarette. I smoked for a good seven years of my life and I believe training helped me defeat my nicotine craving. I am steady in college, I have a full-time job, and my training seems to be paying off in different ways. Tangsoology!

Surfs Up! Ride the Wave

By: Brent Bloem

Feeling the rush of wind against the body, vibrations coursing through the feet, and hearing the whir of the bearings as one cuts cleanly downhill on a longboard is incredible. This summer's latest hobby has taught lessons that can be extended to the study of martial arts. Like martial arts, longboarding teaches several similar principles. Namely, it helps shape one's balance, focus, and determination.

While carving down a hill, it's important to know where one's balance point is. Carving, the act of turning into and out of turns, requires the body to lean to keep balance. But, there is a limit to how much one can lean. Too far forward or backward and the rider gets tossed.

Yet, martial arts aren't any different. It also requires one to know where one's center is. A recent Tuesday practice confirms this when students were directed to lean forward and backward to find their center. To stand as most people do is too back weighted, and invariably, when force is pushed against the stance, the person is uprooted. The same holds true when an opposite force is put against a person who is too front-weighted. Therefore, not unlike in longboarding, a martial artist must know where to weight oneself.

However, balance is not only maintained in one's feet, but it is also maintained in one's mind. Dropping down a hill at thirty or more miles per hour exerts lots of unnerving stimulus—asphalt, that 20 grit blackened surface blurs underneath the feet; the board invariably vibrates and wobbles; and, cars rush up, down and across the same roads—all

pervade one's mind with a single thought: falling isn't a good option. To board, therefore, one must attain Zanshin, a state of "no-mind", or awareness without awareness, to obstruct the crippling thoughts from overtaking one's consciousness. To dwell on any factor overmuch invites disaster. It seems the same in training, and martial arts teach that. A person needs to be aware of everything around him or herself but mustn't specifically dwell on one obstacle (say a hand), because if one meditates solely on one, he/she will become overwhelmed with everything else.

Eventually, longboarding, or even martial arts for that matter, exact their tolls. A crash on a board sloughs off skin as a belt sander does to soft wood. It's physical damage, at times superficial, and at times crippling, that can leave psychological scars as equally inhibitive. The crash is always at the back of one's mind long after the event occurred, working like a whispered voice in one's unconscious that says a fall is possible, and that along with it, pain is certain (all the more reason for Zanshin). Train long enough in martial arts; a person will end up with some sort of injury. Whether it be a broken toe, a rolled ankle, a hyper-extended joint, or any other sundry of possible hurts, all leave the same unmistakable scar: the gnawing thought of it happening again. Yet, here is where the longboarding and martial arts are the same: one must wait the physical heal time and work through the mental heal time by continuing to practice, for exerting one's determination to continue and to be successful is the medicine that heals the mind.

Riding those shimmering waves of black in a midday summer heat has several similarities to martial arts. Boarding helps one to find one's center, so as to keep one's center of mass positioned where it needs to be. Boarding helps to develop balance of the mind, and to keep the swell of extraneous stimuli from overloading the mind. Perhaps equally important as the above, is that any setbacks, whether physical or mental, are inevitable, but their inevitability mustn't be a deterrent. What's important is that one continues to go along for the ride, whatever it may bring.

What Tangsoology Means to Me

By Jeremy Varney

When I think of the word Tangsoology, my heart goes back to when I was 9 years old. This is when I was first introduced into the martial art of Tang Soo Do. I remember watching the children's class 3 days in a row as a very shy, timid, and scared little boy. When I finally got out on the training floor at the end class on the third day I was hooked. I loved every minute of it! Now it was only 15 minutes that I spent with the head instructor because he was trying to go home to his family, but none-the-less, I was hooked. From that day I continued to go to class and train. Growing up in a wonderful martial art that taught me to be kind to everyone and everything, to have respect for others, to concentrate on the things placed before me, to be loyal to your martial art and learn from it. These are just a few things that I have learned.

Some very unfortunate events happened after being with that studio for 9 years and I was forced to leave. Although I had to leave behind a lot of good memories and a great training environment, I felt like I had lost a part of me. It was like someone ripped out my heart and I had to look at it as I bleed out. It was a severe blow to me. I crawled into a depressive hole and couldn't get out of it. I tried doing other things like painting, Warhammer 40k, working a lot, and video games, but those things couldn't fill this hole that I was missing. I wanted to train again. I wanted to feel that compassion, sweat and pain after having a good class. I was once again scared though. I felt like that 9-year-old kid again waiting 3 days to take a class. I was scared that once I joined another studio to train that I would get kicked out and lose that part of me again.

So back to my original question, what does Tangsoology mean to me? To me it means feeling comfortable in your own skin. It means being able to wake up in the morning and not be scared of what the world offers you. It means taking everything in from your surroundings and making the best of it. I have been with this school now for a month and I have felt more like me in this past month than over the 6 years that I was not training. This is what the entire world should do, a form of martial arts to keep some kind of purpose in their

lives. If everyone was training and learning from these arts then no one would have to worry about being mugged, getting into fist fights or things of that nature. Tang Soo Do is a way of life for me. It is what I keep in me at all times to help me become a better person. My hope is to become a better person with the things that I am learning. If things lay right before me then I can teach these same great beliefs to the next generation and so on.

Tangsoology will never abandon us unless we leave it, and that will never happen to me.

We must always look to the future and Tang Soo Do needs to be a part of that future. We need to follow the ancestors of this style and learn from all of them and their teachings. In closing, I want to say that this school is everything that it should be and it is a pity that few people from the community are taking this form of enlightenment. Tang Soo!

Practicing Ki in Everyday Life

By Cori Parmelee

I've been training in Aikido for about eight months now. In these past eight months, I have learned more about myself, and grown more as a person, than I had believed was possible in such a short amount of time. It has also been interesting for me to be able to chart my progress and improvement in my training. I have noticed more improvements ever since testing in June. I attribute part of this to a higher confidence level since receiving my orange belt. I believe the other part is because I have been striving to practice Ki extension more in my everyday life. In turn, practicing Ki has made me more aware of my surroundings and my body.

In the first few months of my training, I was only practicing techniques and Ki extension during the regular scheduled classes. However, as I have progressed in my training, I've started to practice more outside of the classroom and integrate the Aikido teachings into my normal day. I began by trying to be more aware of my surroundings as well as the movement of my body. I practiced Ki extension to try and feel the motions of things such as the motion of my tires on the pavement as I drove. As I continued to focus on Ki extension, I noticed that it took less concentration to extend my Ki as it had when I first started training in Aikido. I

have since become better at holding my one-point and feeling more balanced in my personal life as well.

Ki extension has helped me to be a calmer, more focused person. I am more aware of what is going on around me and what direction I need to be headed in my life. It has helped me significantly in my training as well, and I feel that I will continue to improve my techniques by practicing Ki extension in my personal life. As I become more aware of my own body and surroundings, I can better feel the way a technique is supposed to be performed and I will be able to make the necessary corrections to my own body to maximize the connection.

Through Ki extension, there is more positive energy in my life. I am a happier person who does not get as "stressed out" as I used to. My quality of life has increased significantly and I have more energy to carry out the many things which occupy my time. I am better able to balance my schedule and continue in a stress-free manner. I can only hope that my training continues on this path and that I will only get better.

Where's Your Center?

By Wisdom Stacker

Almost every time I see me instructor, he always has the same question for me; "Where's your center Sir?" Recently I've come to the conclusion that I don't know. In all honesty I'm still trying to find my center. I mean of course, I know where it is physically located on the human body, but I now understand that there is a long journey before me in order to truly "know where my center is".

Throughout my study I have found that being in control of your center consists of many things. Having a true awareness is one major thing. To have a true awareness is being conscious of even the little things. You always want to be aware of your surroundings. What's coming your way and what path to take to avoid any and all obstacles. No matter what environment you may find yourself in, it's always best to have knowledge of what's happening around you; because what is confidence without competence? You're sure to encounter an unwanted collision or worse, meet your defeat by being caught completely off guard. It is paramount to be aware of your thoughts and be able to choose

the correct path with precise timing as well. Being thoughtful isn't a bad thing, but over-thinking will only slow you down. How can you take advantage of the opportunities that come your way if you're always too late?

To have your center is being able to overcome your fears as well as your doubts. I don't think I'll ever forget the first time I was asked to break a board. I thought to myself "are these instructors crazy?" I had doubts that I couldn't break the board, and I was afraid of hurting myself. I had convinced myself that I couldn't do it. My doubt exposed my fear; it was written on my face. I allowed my mind to be led by a thin square block of wood. Just an example of how easily you can be led if you're not in control of your center. Imagine how easily you could be manipulated by the wrong people if you are without your center. Furthermore, I believe that overcoming fear requires honesty, because if you're not honest then you'll always be in doubt. There are no answers when there are second guesses.

I feel it is important to stress that Aiki-tang is something that we should apply to our lives, not only when defending ourselves but in everything that we do. That being said, one should always be in control of their center. I feel as though I have definitely found two key points to finding and controlling my center. I know that there is most definitely more to finding one's center and I hope to deepen my understanding as I further my training. Only then will I be able to unite and cooperate with others to ensure a more peaceful society, to recognize falseness and align myself with truth, to lend assistance to other to others less fortunate than myself, and to further the teachings and traditions of Aiki-tang.

Soft Focus

By Greg Johnson

As I drove my automobile North on I-25 from Albuquerque to Colorado Springs, I had plenty of time to analyze the process of getting from one place to another. I realized that I was using a technique that we spent considerable time practicing one evening in class. As I viewed the world around me through the windshield, it occurred to me that I did not focus on any one thing at a time. I scanned the horizon and was able to gather information and react quickly to a large number and variety of

events that took place within my view and immediate vicinity. I almost felt these events taking place rather than seeing them. The dashed line streaking by, a raven swooping overhead, the bugs hitting the windshield, the truck in front of me swerving slightly to avoid a piece of rubber tread sprawled across his lane. I knew all of these things were going on but did not focus my gaze directly at each element within my periphery.

The evening that we spent practicing a "Soft Focus" on our Uke taught us that we could move more harmoniously with our partner and our surroundings if we did not zero in on one aspect of their body or their movement. By viewing our partner holistically, we could move with them a lot easier and blend with their movements as if we began our technique at the same instant that they began their attack. I believe Uke's movements became more intuitive, and more predictable to Nage.

I have realized that a lot of the principles we practice in Aikido happen to be things we do in our everyday lives, even something as simple as driving down the road. Viewing a great piece of artwork or even watching a sporting event, if you soften your focus, many aspects become more clear and easier to respond to. You may sense movement, composition, alliances, and overall intent that you would not notice by focusing on individual brushstrokes or players on the field. By not focusing on the minutia, I feel a greater awareness and connection to the world around me as well as with my training partners in Aikido.

Summary of Hagerstown's Martial Arts Seminar - 1 Aug 10

By Tom Bouie

The Hagerstown's Martial Arts seminar at the YMCA went well. The audience, and especially the speakers, thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Most internal Chinese martial arts, Aikido, and Karate were covered and expertly demonstrated. Rarely will you see such a broad coverage of martial arts in one place and at one time. The speakers were Paul Cote, Paul Phillips, and Vernon Medeiros. I was a proud demo dummy.

Mr. Paul Cote give a great lecture & demonstrations of the internal Chinese martial arts: Wu, Hao, & Yang Tai Chi, Ba Gua, Hsing I, as well Okinawan Isshin-ryu karate. His Academic Training Traditions Institute in Frederick MD provides martial arts, mind-body workshops, and life science studies. He also teaches Tai Chi at the Hagerstown's Community College & Hagerstown Women's Club.

Mr. Paul Phillips covered the very popular Cheng Man-ch'ing style of Tai Chi. This style of Tai Chi focuses on rooting, chi, balance, and fluidity. He has studied this style in great detail for many years. He lives & teaches Tai Chi in Middletown MD.

Mr. Vernon Medeiros demonstrated Tang Soo Do, Aikido, and the Japanese wooden sword. He lives in Hagerstown and teaches Aikido & Tang Soo Do at the Hagerstown YMCA.

Although no two martial arts are the same, they can be categorized by their techniques. Aikido & Ba Gua seem to be out of the way of the opponent's attack, keep their opponents constantly off balance, restraining & joint locks, etc. Hsing I and Wing Chu have powerful and fast punches. Both excel at closing on their opponents, slipping around the opponent's center-line, simultaneously punch & parry, and driving lightning fast punches completely through their opponents. Note, it's very difficult to attack or defend without good balance & a solid rooting. Tai Chi, Aikido, Ba Gua, etc., seem to manipulate the opponent's balance & root so their attacks are impossible or insignificant. Karate, Tang Soo Do, Hsing I, etc., seem to overpower or destroy the opponent's balance & root. Same result, but different means to it.

We did have a few difficulties. Because of a late notice, we didn't draw a big crowd. Also, the camera blurred most the pictures (it was a little too slow to capture the action). Nevertheless, all the speakers had a good time and would love to do it again. These problems won't occur next time.

Instructors Thoughts

Cause and Effect

By Kyosa Nim Gihan Fellah

Change is a constant in our world. Our minds are constantly refined as we learn new information that causes us to reevaluate. Changes in the weather often cause our moods to shift; changes in relationships can transform our lives; change in our age as we get older causes our perspective to differ, etc...

Change is pretty constant in the martial arts also. Hyung in Tang Soo Do is constantly altered in seemingly minor ways as taught by different instructors, but these minor changes have significant meanings that can completely transform how the hyung is understood and practiced. Just as in Aikido, each instructor teaches techniques slightly different based on how much understanding the student has. This also differs depending on how the instructor themselves interpret what they were taught.

Ok, so where am I going with this? I recently came across a poem/song I wrote in November of 2007. The first verse goes like this:

“You spoke so slow
I caught my mind wandering
Away to someplace far and I
Held my mind in my hand
And watched as it melted
Through my fingers to form
A puddle on the floor”

When I first started training in Tang Soo Do, I wanted to work on refining my sense of focus. My mind was constantly jumping around (now society labels this as ADD). This poem reminds me of how I used to have trouble following someone’s conversation. With training in the martial arts, I’ve refined my focus/attention on not just conversations but in all areas that require attention to detail. While I still work on my focus in class, I realize that

my reasons for continuing training have changed numerous times throughout the years. This seems perfectly logical, as life is constantly changing the circumstances that surround us.

The Secret to Martial Arts

By Sabom Nim Tim Speaks

The secret to the martial arts is that there are no secrets. Just like the secret noodle recipe in Kung Fu Panda. That being said, I’ll tell you what the secret to martial arts is anyway. You must train, train often, and train sincerely. That’s what my instructor told me and is likely what his instructor told him. It’s all just hard work and more hard work. This simple approach to training the mind, body and spirit in various martial arts has been done for a very long time. It’s what I call a time-tested and proven methodology.

However, I feel it necessary to add that you must practice/train according to a sincere methodology. It would be a sad waste of time, from a martial arts point of view, to kick and punch the air without a purpose. So what is a sincere methodology anyway? Well, a methodology is a “body of practices, procedures, and rules used by those who work in a discipline or engage in an inquiry (The Free Dictionary).” Also, another way to phrase sincerity is to be honest, genuine or to not pretend. Therefore, a sincere methodology is a genuine body of practices, procedures, and rules that are used by those working in a particular discipline or study.

For example, each martial art, culinary art, dance art, etc., have slightly different methodologies for how they approach their particular discipline or study. All however, come back to the same thing; in order to gain the highest levels of proficiency, you must train, train often, and train sincerely. It doesn’t matter if you are doing Aikido, Tangsoodo, Taekwondo, Chuan Fa (Kung Fu), or Mud Wrestling. If you want to be good at something, you must practice it often.

Unfortunately, there’s a lot of noise and garbage to sift through before you can determine what methodologies are sincere and worthwhile to study. If you are a complete beginner, then discerning real martial arts from fantasy may be a daunting challenge. Without any former knowledge

or training as to what a reputable martial art should look like, it's a crapshoot. All I can say to a beginner who may be reading this is "do your research!" Each person must find an art with a training methodology that's right for them.

In the case of a serious martial arts student, the concern should not only be with the validity of techniques in a self-defense situation, but "how does the greater art help you refine yourself as a human being?" For example, self-defense may be your primary reason for studying martial arts, but if the instructor is teaching more efficient ways to murder people, then you must question, "How does learning these techniques make you a better person?" Higher ethical reasoning should always be an integral part to any sincere training methodology.

Also, for sincere students who have already found a martial art with a training methodology to your liking, you must continually reflect upon your training, and how it helps you achieve your goals. Although it is important that you develop a trusting relationship with your instructor, trust need not be blind. You can see, hear, and feel for yourself if the stuff you're being shown really works, or if you need to apply fairy dust to do it. You can also monitor your own character development for signs of improvement in your daily life. The methodology of the art you practice should include the study of higher etiquette, which in turn should help you become better at dealing with other human beings. The general argument is that polite people will get into far less fistfights than rude people.

Again, the secret to the martial arts is that there are no secrets. There are only old men and women who have toiled for a lifetime on a labor of love via a specific sincere methodology. Their special insight and martial skill only seem magical to beginners. So if there is a real secret to martial arts, it's to find a good instructor and listen to him or her. They will likely guide you on a path to train, train often, and train sincerely. Until we can all plug a high-speed data jack into the back of our head like Neo in the Matrix movie to "Know Kung Fu", we're stuck with this approach. Even then, your body must be trained to work with your mind in a coordinated fashion or you will likely injure yourself. It's doubtful there will ever be a substitute for hard work, but I'll keep an eye out and let you know when I find it. Until then, get off the couch and get to the dojo/dojang!

Correct Muscle Response

By Sabom Nim/Sensei Jude Miller

In traditional Do martial arts, understanding and developing correct muscle response is paramount for the practitioner on the path to perfection in their chosen Art. Without correct muscle response, the body is unbalanced and moves awkwardly. An unbalanced body can lead to an unbalanced mind and spirit and vice versa. When developing the body along with correct muscle response, the practitioner of the martial art should also strive to develop all aspects of the self. It should also be noted that correct training, study and practice lead to the development of the entire self quite naturally.

Relaxation is of utmost importance in the development of correct muscle response. Relaxation allows the body's energy to flow outward naturally in a balanced, yet motion-filled state. This motion can be in the physical form of the body, the thoughtful form of the mind, or the energy form of the spirit. The body can be completely still while energy motions forth and outwards. For example, let's say that I relax my arms and allow them to hang naturally at my sides. In this relaxed state, the blood flow is uninterrupted and travels throughout the entire arm. To the contrary, if I flex my arm at the bicep from this same position, the muscle contracts and redirects energy inwards and back toward the body. The blood flow concentrates where the contraction is taking place rather than flowing freely throughout the arm. In this contracted state, an imbalance has been created; the arm is strong, yet unable to move at full capacity. It can only fully move again once the bicep relaxes and the blood flow is again evenly distributed through the arm. The entire body functions in this manner.

There are 2 forms of relaxation: mindful relaxation, and a "dead" relaxation. "Dead" relaxation leaves the body unresponsive and takes no conscious thought. If I were to unmindfully relax my body completely at this moment, my body would crash to the floor. A practitioner cannot pursue their Art in this state. Mindful relaxation involves being conscious of how the muscles and energy of the body are feeling and interacting with each other. The muscles, skeletal structure, and

energy of the body are all able to interact in harmony through mindful relaxation. A good exercise to cultivate mindful relaxation is to try and feel the blood flow in your fingertips. If the hand is clenched tightly into a fist, this feat is extremely difficult to accomplish. If the hand is supple with the fingers extended, the sensation of the blood flow moving through the fingers tips can be registered and felt. In time, the practitioner attempts to feel their own blood flow throughout their entire body in this mindfully relaxed manner. This practice allows for the cultivation of Ki throughout the body, and is useful for Aikido and Tangsoodo practice alike.

Another good exercise for practice is to imagine that your hands are wet and that you're drying them off by gently shaking them. The gentle shaking of the hands should be in a mindfully relaxed state and the hands should not move apart or separate from the rest of the body. It is important to imagine the sensation of water running down the hand to the fingertips before being flung into the air. This exercise is good for developing correct muscle response when extending the body and mind's energy outwards. It centers the body and develops correct balance while in motion. The strikes and blocks of Tangsoodo should all be performed with this sensation of "drying hands/feet".

By developing the body's ability to mindfully relax, the practitioner of the martial art also develops their nervous system. The practitioner becomes more aware of what their body is doing. With this awareness comes the ability to greater control the motions of the body, the thoughts of the mind, and the state of the spirit. This kind of daily development can lead to fulfilling longevity and becoming a better human being overall.

Respect: what happened to it?

By Sensei Ryan Goettsche

Respect for elders has been something that families (parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, etcetera) have had the obligation to instill in their youth. Passing on the importance of understanding, and admiring what everyone older than they has to share, holds more importance in certain societies than others. Some societies only focus on how to better their children so that they are financially successful vs. socially successful.

Respect for elders, and their knowledge gained through their life experiences, is fundamental for development, as children and young adults grow older.

One thing that I've been noticing through the years as I have been studying Aikido is that within our society, there is a total lack of respect that many people have for each other, both within the martial arts community and without. When I was finally able to afford to train in the martial arts at the age of twenty-two, I had a daunting decision to make. What art to train in? Why that art, and what school to join?

I finally decided that Aikido was the one for me after a long internal process. That was an important decision because of the fact that all "Do" arts, "Do" meaning "The Way", require far more than other martial arts require. When I was first accepted as a student of Medeiros Sensei of Aikido-Kai San Shin Kan, all I could think about was "What do I need to do to learn? How can I prove myself to be a diligent student? What do I need to do to prove that I belong here? I walked into a martial arts school and "asked" to be taught. That request meant that I would be willing to do whatever was asked of me, to never second-guess the Sensei, to never treat Sensei or the school with anything but the utmost respect.

At the time I began training, I did respect people for their knowledge and experiences...at least I thought I did, but I still didn't truly understand. Respect is truly about putting yourself in somebody else's shoes and imagining what it was like for them to gain their knowledge that they are able to pass on to you. For example, when one asks the question to an elder, "Please teach me what you know about this?" Or in a martial setting, "Please teach me all that you know?"

In the martial setting, I've watched time and time again students walking by high ranking Sensei's and giving a quick nod of the head and saying "Hi Sensei", "What's up Sensei", "How are ya!". This is the most basic lack of respect. This proves that they have not ever stopped to think about the many years that a Sensei has spent constantly training, picking herself/himself off the mat, always striving to better themselves, and to eventually know that they will pass on what they have learned.

Some students these days do not want to be burdened with humility and respect because they are only training for one of two reasons: physical fitness, or what they see as mastering the techniques for self-defense. Mastery of the techniques is not what Aikido is about! The techniques are but a tool to understand the deeper meaning of respect. The training teaches the student to not only respect the Sensei, but also to respect themselves as well as others. This respect allows for the openness to learn more than what they originally started training for.

Most students do not want to watch and learn what Sensei is showing during warm-ups; they continue only doing what is easy for them or what they've been shown before, if they've trained with other teachers. For example, when a Sensei shows stretching to the right side...the student does them to the right, not the left because of the mirror effect. The student must humble themselves to watch and learn with an open mind. Before class, a student should be training with other students, stretching on their own, and always stop what they are doing to properly bow to the Sensei when he/she walks in. During this training before class, the students should know that Sensei will walk in at any time and be prepared to show respect to that Sensei who is there to share their experiences with the students. The ever-evolving gym mentality is gripping the martial arts community, which results in a lack of thinking on the student's part. Students of any art must realize that "They" are the ones that walked through the doors of the school and asked to be taught. This request does not come with the ability to pick and choose whatever a student desires to glean from the art; for example, only wanting self-defense or power over others. There is no power over others who choose to attack you verbally or physically. There is only the need to right what is wrong in their actions, showing them respect while teaching them respect. Students of Aikido must come to see this, and that if they enter a dojo asking to learn...then they must honor all that has come before them.

Tangsoology Mental Training Requirements

By Sabom Nim Mike Parenteau

The Tangsoology handout has a couple of important items inside regarding the "Mental

Training Requirements" for those who choose to undertake the study of Tangsoology:

1. Courtesy, integrity and humility (#4 in the handout)
2. Be patient and strong inside, mild and kind outside (#7 in the handout)

In regards to item #1, we intuitively know the meaning of these terms. Isn't it interesting that in times we live in, these three character traits are somewhat looked down upon? Look at those in the media! Look at the movie stars we watch on the big screen! Look at pro athletes! Not to paint with a broad brush, but I would say there are few who truly are courteous, have integrity, and are humble to their fellow man. In our traditional mode of training and learning our chosen art, these are important things to demonstrate. When we visit other Dojos/Dojangs, i.e. "Dojo/Dojang-hop", we represent our instructor, and the instructor/school we visit will be impressed if we show proper courtesy to our fellow martial-artists. Case in point: a few students from The Center for Aikido and Tang Soo Do Studies attended a Ki workshop on the University of Colorado campus. I was training with a Sensei from Hawaii (sorry Sensei...I do not recall your name!), and when I bowed to him, he said, "You have a very nice bow." Demonstrating courtesy and humility via the bow I made to him impressed him enough to make that remark. I would like to think that I represented my school and my instructor well in the brief instant. This is what we should be thinking about when we train with our fellow students or when we train with those from other schools, etc. We can instantly make a connection with another by being courteous and humble! It is a great way to reach out to our fellow martial artists and people in general.

Item #2 is equally important, if not more so. Patience is important for instructors sharing the art with new students. It is important for new students to not become discouraged while learning difficult motions in new forms, for example. Being "strong inside" refers to perseverance; where we endeavor to keep moving forward even though obstacles may be set in front of us. Being "mild and kind inside" reminds me of a saying that Sabom Medeiros has mentioned to many of us. Sabom would remark that Sabo Sensei would often say something to the effect of, "...we must be courteous at all times." This

statement ties in with the first concept discussed earlier. Can you imagine if someone bumped into you and instead of saying, "...that's ok, it's no problem", you shouted at the person some disparaging remark and maybe even called them a name that was uncalled for? A verbal shouting match could ensue (assuming the other person is not "mild and kind"), and maybe the police get called because two people are causing a civil disturbance!

Martial arts are not about creating conflict; they are about stopping conflict! Sabom Medeiros has shared a story of Master Lee with me, where some disgruntled individual started calling Master Lee names that were not intended to be courteous...they were intended to be bigoted and racist. Master Lee, I'm sure, could have laid the guy out...no problem. But he didn't. Master Lee knew the guy was trying to start something and didn't let him goad him into a physical confrontation. Master Lee demonstrated a "patience and strong inside; mild and kind outside" attitude. That was his "self-defense" in that moment, or in other words, "Do".

We meet people every day, whether they knock on our door at home, see them at the Dojang, say hi to them at work, etc. The two concepts that Master Lee shared help to shape our selves through the training that we do on the mat. That in turn makes us better human beings and maybe, just maybe, we can spread good will and foster peace in a world that seems to crave controversy.

The Yin & Yang of Gripes, Observations and Bewilderment

By Sabom Nim Vernon Medeiros

I really have nothing of great importance to offer the current newsletter other than to say I enjoyed visiting the headquarters both in May and August of 2010. I enjoyed visiting Mr. Arnold's Fountain Valley martial arts school. He has relocated to a larger facility and has done an amazing job attracting new students. Yes, I still struggle with the Yin and Yang as it pertains to all my current observations of 21st century societies hungry for sex, exploitation, death, violence, talking heads, and reality TV. My complaints are about how people are so self-absorbed with technology and texting, speed-car highway driving, and lastly,

my complete bewilderment with lackadaisical martial art clubs.

So many interesting things have occurred since my May 2010 visit to the Colorado Springs headquarters.

In Hagerstown Maryland, Tom Bouie, a jujutsu practitioner decided to host a Tai Chi workshop/demonstration for the community. This event was held at the YMCA. It was an interesting event that was free to the public, but due to late notification, Tom was unable to attract a large crowd. Maybe next year I can assist and help to announce the workshop to a larger audience.

I have been invited to teach Tangsoodo in a very large facility at Martinsburg, West Virginia. The place is huge! I was told that the goal is to have numerous martial arts styles teaching and training students and to eventually become a martial arts college of sorts. Wow! That is a very big goal. I wish them the best of luck because times are tough financially for most people who want to dip into a training regiment in the Asian Martial arts as well as the American styles.

In my estimation, my traditional notions about martial arts training are 180 degrees out from the popular trends that dance their way into the commercial market place. Mixed MA is the Taebo of the last 5 yrs and will continue to be for the next 5yrs. Chinese soft arts are again attracting new interest from young and old alike. It seems to me that instructors in these arts always claim to be descended from some great esoteric lineage.

The commercial Taekwondo and Kenpo/Kempo schools still cater to vast numbers of children and families with a fun & games mentality. 90% of all American martial arts schools still promote and propagate tournaments with the express rational that competition is vital to student's mental, spiritual and physical development. At the other end of the spectrum is the complete naivety that one can dabble and recite a mantra. They delude themselves that because they move around with certain motions that resemble martial arts, that somehow they are martial artists.

I guess I am a dinosaur when it comes to how I see Asian martial arts being taught. It was a pleasant surprise to see the movie The Karate Kid

remade with a Chinese ethic/theme. It is true that there are no bad students in the martial arts, only bad teachers teaching very bad things. I have been bemoaning this statement since the late 1980's. I do not see traditional BUDO/MOODO/MUDUK training as having to instill or foster old world ways or thinking.

The old ways of war and conquest are important to understand as a student of the Do arts progresses. However, true self-defense has nothing to do with war, aggression, violence or retribution. In my estimation, self-defense is about keeping yourself out of harm's way by training diligently and sincerely in the art of your choice.

People's notions about their own interpretation leave them to foster ideas that are out of step with the long tradition of the martial arts. Present circumstances: club verses dojo.

My experience over the last thirty years is that Americans do not like, nor will they accept humbling themselves to Asian ideas. As Americans, most of us accept the notion that if one decides to pursue a sport, job, career, leisure activity, hobby, academic excellence, religious studies...well you get the idea; we do so on our own terms. This idea that I (an American) will decide when, if, and how, I will pursue that which I choose, and that I will do so on my own terms is so typical of American society.

During my 2010 August visit to Colorado Springs I went to visit a martial arts club that practices community Aikido. Not knowing what community Aikido is, I set about the task of locating the club on the internet and researching where the meetings were being held and what time the group members gathered to hold their forum. From what I read, the classes started at 10am but we were later told that the official times for their practice varied due to member availability. What I saw was a true club. There was nothing vital about their practice. In many ways it reminded me of typical present day Tai Chi practice (although not the kind that I experienced with Liang Ting). It was a sort of "come when you feel like it", follow along as best you can, and we will get through this the best way we can. No ownership or responsibility to what or who has come before. Aikido practice has a strong connection to the values and esthetics of the Japanese. In a true dojo, these esthetics are always

practiced. I have had the privilege of being trained in martial arts with an Asian foundation, which was always in the lead. My uncle's Karate classes at Fort Carson were strictly taught. John Sabo Sensei and his instructors, Dick Kadalowbowski and John Damien Sensei always taught with Asian values at their core. Professor Jeff Noblete and his wife Debra held the values of Aikido Schools of Ueshiba in high regard. Liang Ting was a very humble teacher of Yang Tai Chi, and in order to be considered a true student of his, you had to demonstrate that you were hungry and thirsty. Master Jong H. Lee taught that you must strive to better yourself and you must support the group (your dojang), otherwise you were considered insincere and dishonest. Presently, even though I am independent, I still carry on the importance of these values, hence why I had to clean out my dojo so that my senior instructors could continue the hard work required to maintain a reputable dojo/dojang.

Today I no longer have a school. I belong to the headquarters group and they direct me where I am needed.

Having said all of this, the bottom line is that religion, and all that goes with it, will still be offered up for sale. Commercial schools will still contrive ways to take students money. Talking heads will continue to provoke and mislead most of us. Greedy people will continue to steal more. The list is endless. Good luck! And be careful!