



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

## ***Editorial***

The Instructors for the CATSDS would like to thank all of you who took the time and effort to write a paper assignment for the Bulletin. Those who put forth this extra effort understand the meaning of our standard and what that means to our school.

You will notice that there are many references in this issue of the Bulletin to standards. Some might argue that standards are not needed and that standards do not allow for development of the individual and do not allow for creativity. On the contrary...standards provide the basis for these things. The CATSDS has always had high standards and these standards have not been unreasonable, given some of the standards put forth by commercial schools or for that matter, some traditional schools. Look up some martial arts schools on the internet and make your own conclusions.

To close, the year 2009 is about realizing that martial arts training is about character development. As a part of that development, the discarding of habits which do not allow for that development is an important point. To that end, paper assignments are not a request...they are a part of the standard of the school. It is every student's responsibility (we are all students of the Art we practice) to send in their assignments on time. There are 3 1/2 months, between issues, to come up with an idea and write about it. Judge for yourself whether this is too much to ask.

## ***Upcoming Events***

Thursday, Jan 1  
New Year's Day

Monday, Jan 19  
Martin Luther King Day

Monday, Feb 2  
Groundhog Day

Saturday, Feb 14  
Valentine's Day

Monday, Feb 16  
President's Day

Tuesday, Mar 17  
St. Patrick's Day

Sunday, Apr 12  
Easter

# Students' Thoughts

## **Respect and Etiquette**

*By Spencer Van Horn*

We must always show respect and etiquette to everyone. You must show it to your instructors, seniors, and juniors. We also show respect to people who come to watch by introducing ourselves and inviting them to learn. We must remember our place in line and how we bow in that line. Seniors line up first; they make sure that everyone is where they are supposed to be. The highest ranking senior sits first, then the second highest senior, and then the third. Now when we bow to Sensei (the instructor), he or she bows to the highest ranking student in the class, and then bows to the class, and then the rest of the class bows to Sensei. When getting up from that bow you wait for the person at the front of the line to get up, then the next person, and the next person...so you make a wave with it from black to white, or senior to junior. When you are training, the senior receives the attack first. Also, when a senior is having problems with the technique, the junior must not correct the senior, because that shows disrespect to the senior. If the junior is having problems, then the senior can correct the junior. Now this next thing has not been carved in the stone of etiquette, but I think it is very important that when you come and train in the dojo, you must leave your outside problems outside the dojo and then pick them up after if you want to. I say this because when I have had a bad day it shows, and people notice that I am not happy. It is not proper to bring this kind of negative energy into the dojo, because with bad energy there is bad ki, and bad ki

is distracting to everyone. This type of bad energy shows disrespect more than bad etiquette because unhappiness spreads like a sickness. Respect and etiquette is something we all must know, and practice while we are at the dojo.

## **Ki vs. Responsibility or Trauma?**

*By Fred Hunt*

Ki is pretty elusive for me, as I'm a Ki rookie. But it seems to me I could occasionally tell I "had" it when I started Aikido almost a year and a half ago. Now it seems it's much harder to get that feeling and I'm not sure why especially since we now focus on Ki even more than before.

Two major events have occurred since last year. The first was a new position at my job which gave me new responsibilities, but actually reduced my stress once the initial shock of the new job wore off.

The other was a motorcycle accident in which I broke my thumb and which prevented active participation during a visit by Sensei Medeiros. I know...I know, I'm supposed to come and watch anyway, but I don't do that very well. It makes me nuts to sit and do nothing especially while all that cool stuff is going on.

Could either of these events have caused a focus blockage during my Aikido practice which keeps me from getting "there"? Am I deluded and I actually have the Ki of one year old Aikidoka? Or was I deluded last year when I thought I was the cream of the novice Aikido crop?

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So which is it? Or does this happen to most rookies after a taste of Ki? Whatever, I'll just keep working at it and hope my Ki shows up and helps me through the next 18.5 years!

## ***The Winds of Change***

*By Stephanie Shuhayda*

The first thing I must say is that change is painful. It's so much easier to be content in life. Floating along, we decide we've heard and experienced most of the reasonably relevant things in life, and have in fact, already decided where we stand on them. Is there a God? What happens when we die? Which political party has all the answers? Who is right and who is wrong? We get comfortable in our thinking and rarely revisit our opinions; never realizing how small our world becomes as time passes.

All life experiences color and change us. Our inner essence is molded like clay by the things we learn and experience, and most importantly, by the people around us. I've come to understand that peace of mind depends almost entirely on with whom you spend your time.

When I first came to this school 10 months ago, I was injured, out of shape, and hadn't trained in 3 years. It quickly became obvious where my weaknesses lie and how they were connected. There were so many classes where I'd come home, feeling like I'd been beaten. I have spent many a night, with pain filtering through my dreams, and one very long night when I thought I was finished. But a funny thing happened; as I wondered how long I'd be able to train

before I was injured again and waited for it to happen; I realized one day...I was growing stronger, not weaker.

The level of our curriculum quickly weeds out those who just want to play or fight. Here, training requires thought, awareness, patience, control, humility, and at times, a deep trust in those who teach you. There comes a point where you must decide: Is it worth the pain?

Being a Tang student, my recent participation in Aikido class has been both rewarding and humbling. Aikido is such a beautiful, dignified art with its flowing, energetic force and elegant language. As I trained, I noticed my learning of one art was affecting the other. I began to wonder what would happen if a pure practitioner of each art were to spar with the other, who would be the victor? Whereas Tang is a hard, aggressive art that uses Ki through powerful punching & kicking for defense, Aikido is soft, using an attacker's own energy against them through the redirection of movement. In Tang, your energy moves up and out from your center as you strike and kick. In Aikido, your feet remain rooted to the ground, keeping your weight low as you move from your center.

Yet in being opposites, they complement each other. As Tang teaches us to defend, striking back hard & fast, Aikido teaches us that it's okay to take a fall. Aikido lends us grace, balance, and flexibility, while Tang endows us with strength, precision, and great force. I find the challenge is in blending them, so as to enhance my movements and not trip over my own two feet.

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I am grateful for my Sensei's and fellow student's constant patience and kindness with me. They make it look so easy, yet I stumble though the movements as a child, as if I've never had a moment's training. Watching the Sensei's demonstrations performed with amazing precision, I long for the ability to move as they do. To see Sensei Robyn move the men in class with such ease, amazes me and gives me hope. One day, I will find this elusive thing they call my center. As for the pain...I've decided it's worth it.

### ***Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!***

*By Gihan Fellah*

'Tis the season to be jolly, but with all the recent events in this country and around the world, it has been difficult to get into the Christmas spirit. The recent news of corrupt government officials (Mr. Blagojevich from Illinois comes to mind), billions in government bailouts that are lining pockets rather than helping the concerns of Americans, such as recession, the government's removal of religion from public places, mass company layoffs, etc. These issues are not helping to promote cheer and good will, nor patriotism for that matter. In fact, after watching several episodes of "Gangland," our government seems remarkably similar to how these gangs are structured and operated. Integrity, honesty, courage, justice, and "under God"...these are concepts that seem to be a fleeting memory in this former great nation of ours. How can one help our economy by purchasing Christmas gifts when basic necessities such as food,

utilities, rent, and other bills are becoming more difficult to pay?

In our small organization "The Center for Aikido and Tang Soo Do Studies", members took action to resolve conflict within our doors. It was not easy, but when the work was finished, the results were effective and beneficial to the development and continuation of the art we study. Change occurred as a result of strong leadership and loyal students, and is the reason the school is still functioning. We hold on to our tradition and teachings to continue what greater minds than our own have discovered and passed on. It is in my humble opinion, that this same structure needs to be applied to America. Currently, the American people are such a diverse group with different nationalities, different values, different customs and different traditions. There is no cohesiveness that holds us together, except greed. Our current nation's predicament was based on consumerism and greed and that is why it is falling apart. Our constitution and the values that this nation was built upon seem to be purposely forgotten by our current, so called "leaders and representatives".

In the 60's, most Americans were not afraid to stand up to what they believed was right. People protested, they stood together and they rallied. Change was demanded and change was made. Today, the majority of people hide in their homes after work or school and nothing is accomplished. Our children are not being taught to give back to society, only to take, take and take. It seems that we as a nation continue to ignore world history and the lessons from past mistakes. Our traditions are being nullified.

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Christmas, one of our nation's traditions, is slowly being censored. Christmas was one positive moment in the calendar year that tied all Americans together. Now, Christmas has become "winter break" for our children, a season of frenzied gift purchasing, a way for store owners to make up revenue, a Santa Clause and "Happy Holiday" Ho Humbug, time of the year. As for me and my family, we will celebrate Christ's birth and pray for our country.

## Personalities

*By Mark Crary*

One never knows what is going to give me an idea as to what I will offer for a newsletter article, and many who know me may wonder what is really going on inside my twisted mind, (don't feel bad. I wonder myself!), but this time, it came from a conversation I had with a co-worker about life in general, and how events, relationships, work, and everything else, tend to form us all into the person we are. After some rather boring research, here's a little of what I came up with.

Doing a search on personalities was a little vague, and you would be amazed at the twisted stuff I found, and yes, it helped me feel a little better about being me... but we don't need to get into that here! Anyway, I added psychology to the search, and found Psychosynthesis, A Psychology of the Spirit, by John Firman and Ann Gila. Psychosynthesis is described as a field of psychology that "addresses both spiritual development and psychological healing and growth by recognizing and supporting the particular life journey of

the person – the individual's own unique path of self-realization." That statement struck a chord in me. Sounds a lot like "Do" to me, and mentions the differences in each of our journeys in the martial arts. Okay, maybe I've found something here. One of the chapters is "The Birth of a Sub-Personality." This is where it got interesting for me, because the subject of this chapter involved a technical writer who found himself drawn to motorcycling (they had me at hello).

"George" was invited by a friend to attend a bike rally one weekend, and decided to go along to see what it was like. Once there, he found himself drawn not only to the bikes, but also to the people, and the camaraderie they shared, not to mention the sense of adventure and freedom. The general culture of the rally presented "George" with what the book calls a "unifying center." A feeling that began to create in him a deep response that opened a new chapter in his life, very similar to a tree that grows a new branch, and he had begun relationships that would bring out of him what the book calls a "sub-personality." His spirit felt nurtured, and the people he interacted with at the rally served as the fertilizer, sun, and soil this new branch of himself, which needed to grow.

The motorcycle unifying center was like a mirror, showing him unconscious potentials within himself that he could work to materialize, if he chose to follow that path. The book I was reading states, "When the unifying center has been found, we are in a position to build around it, a new personality." What George didn't realize was that the seeds of his adventuresome

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spirit were always there, they had just been buried under all the mundane day to day requirements of work, family, and all the other "stuff" we all get involved with as we live our lives.

It occurs to me that we all, as martial artists, are going through the same things as George. We all have found something in the martial arts that calls to us. We all, in some way, find something that nurtures us, and keeps us coming back again and again, and we all are developing another sub-personality as martial artists. Every one of us has found something here that we desire. Something that maybe fills a void, something that takes our minds off our problems, and something that polishes our spirits. It doesn't matter what it is, and I'm sure it is different for each of us, but we are all here together on this path that leads us to who knows where.

We all, after some consideration, have made the choice to buy a dogi, and come to the dojo/dojang to train and find out what it is we all find out. At first, we all struggle. How long will it hurt to sit in seiza? When will I develop some degree of flexibility? Are my feet positioned properly? You all know how endless the list of questions is that we ask ourselves and our partners. As we begin, we have so many doubts. All this can seem very intimidating, but for some reason, all of us have chosen to continue, and eventually, things seem to get easier, and we are able, at least to some degree, to do what our instructors request of us. This is the same process we

all go through as we live our lives, whether it is as an infant learning to suck our thumb, to then learning to pick something up with that same thumb, or as a pianist learning scales, then progressing to performing a concert. As we develop as martial artists, we all find new qualities in ourselves that begin to emerge into our daily lives, and at some point, those around us will notice the changes. And so our new sub-personalities tend to come to the surface for all to see.

This new identity tends to unify the skills, gifts, drives, and qualities that we all discover as martial artists, as well as particular beliefs and values concerning being martial artists. We begin to identify ourselves as martial artists; we tend to begin to think and view the world from a martial artist's perspective; we are naturally attracted to the sight of a school, or someone wearing a uniform on their way to class; and we even tend to take positive and negative comments about martial arts in a very personal way.

In general, I have some serious doubts regarding psychology and a lot of its theories, most likely due to my lack of training and knowledge on the subject. But in this instance, I must admit that everything I read seems perfectly plausible. I have to say, though, that it might have something to do with the fact that the chapter I referenced had to do with a developing motorcyclist and that the scenario given so closely mirrors my own life. Not to mention, over the years I have watched the process take place many times in many people

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I have come in contact with. I just didn't know it.

It also seems evident to me that in some cases, a sub-personality can, through time, become so encompassing that it winds up being the dominant personality. This is just me juxtaposing, and I don't know if the book goes on to mention this point, because I got tired of reading what felt like some sort of manual written for a student or professional shrink (I'm neither). The proverbial, 1% biker comes to mind, as well as O'Sensei, and anyone else who has taken their chosen path to that kind of extreme. Who knows how long the process took, or if it was a conscious decision, but eventually, all the other sub-personalities were relegated to back burner status, and what was left on top was a biker or great teacher.

Where does this leave me? I hadn't really thought about it until I started my research and began writing this piece, but it has left me evaluating my life in a way I never have before. First and foremost, I am a father and husband. Those two things have had more to do with who I am than anything else I can think of. It's amazing to me how having someone in your life that depends on your stability and character affects your decision making processes. Ok, maybe stability is a stretch in my case... I wish there was some sort of scale or ruler for this, because what really comes next is hard for me to decide for sure. Motorcycles and martial arts have both been a part of me for almost as long as I can remember, and both have

given me more joy, peace, learning, and yes, pain, than I could possibly convey to anyone who would be foolish enough to listen to my ramblings. I guess I won't be able to answer that question until my days are done, but I can't wait to see how it turns out!

### **Tang Soo Do Brotherhood**

*By Bob Reynolds*

*Member of the Hwa Rang World TSD  
MDKF*

For three months now, I have been a full time visitor at the Center for Aikido and Tang Soo Do Studies. Having a 2nd Dan in traditional, old style Tang Soo Do and my base dojang being in Ventura, California under the founder, Grand Master Ho Sik Pak of the Hwa Rang World Tang Soo Do Moo Duk Kwan Federation, I needed a place to work out here in Colorado Springs. Kyosa Speaks, Kyosa Miller and Sabom Medeiros have given me their permission and have been kind enough to allow me to train and direct me as I focus on my next level...3rd Dan. They have accepted me with my limitations (total left knee replacement and age of 57) with respect. I started training in Martial Arts at age 15 and have left and returned many times. At age 57, I feel it is not only in my blood but in my DNA if that were possible (I wish it were). Tangsoology, having evolved from Moo Duk Kwan and sharing beliefs such as philosophy of the art, attitudes, conduct, and training in physical and mental aspects,

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lends us to a good match. As examples in comparisons between Tangsoology's "Code For Your Conduct" to GM Pak's "10 Articles of Faith" are:

1. Be loyal to one's country
2. Be obedient to ones parents
3. Be loving to your spouse
4. Be cooperative to your brothers
5. Be respectful to elders
6. Be faithful to your teacher
7. Be faithful to friends
8. Kill only in justice and with honor
9. Never retreat in battle
10. Always finish what you start

Next would be the Tangsoology's "Mental Training Requirements" compared to GM Pak's "10 Key Concepts" which are:

1. Courage
2. Endurance
3. Concentration
4. Honesty
5. Humility
6. Control of Power
7. Tension and Relaxation
8. Speed Control
9. Justice
10. Best Friendship

The Tangsoology Creed compared to GM Pak's tenets:

1. To build true confidence through knowledge in the mind, honesty in the heart and strength in the body.
2. To keep friendship with one another and build a strong and happy community.
3. Never fight to achieve selfish ends, but to develop might for right.

These are what lend us to a brotherhood. A brotherhood accepts each other within the same style but other true Martial Arts styles as well. Also, there is a willingness to look for the best in every style to better improve and to share that knowledge with others that need our training: the weak, the defenseless, the meek and small of statue. Grand Master Jhoon Rhee's motto (The father of US Taekwondo) is "Might For Right".

In summary I thank Colorado Springs Tangsoology for their brotherhood toward me and look forward to always working with and alongside them. I hope everyone has a great 2009. Tang Soo.

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## ***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:

- 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.
- December is the month for paper submissions to be included in the January 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 December for the January edition.

Papers (preferably MS Word format) can be emailed to Mr. Parenteau at [ctsds@comcast.net](mailto: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

## **Aikido in the Dreaming Body**

By Sensei Robyn Gray – Senior Instructor

Do dreams have meaning or are we just replaying the day's events while we sleep with different endings? Are they full of symbolism and are they mirrors that reflect back upon us on how we truly think or believe? Do we dream to sleep or do we sleep to dream? Are they prophetic? Research has shown that our brain waves are more active when we are dreaming, and if that's the case, why would it be unreasonable to get the best information while in that state. Whichever way you believe is your choice, everyone dreams whether we remember them or not. Through the years Aikido has not just entered my daily world, but my dream world as well. I've had plenty of dreams regarding Aikido. Some I can hardly remember unless I have a déjà-vu moment. Some dreams come back in flashes, glimpses or a certain technique sparks a memory. Sometimes, I've awakened knowing and feeling that I've had a dream about class, but can't remember a thing. While others I can remember every detail and tell you absolutely everything and those are the ones that get me saying to myself...what did it all mean? This is one of those dreams, so please enjoy...and just maybe...one of you can figure it out.

*I am sitting crossed legged on a bed in a room that feels like a combination between a dorm room and a tropical vacation hut. It is a square room with windows directly in front of me and an open doorway that enters out into a hallway just to the right of me. There are two beds and two bookcases,*

*one is an old antique bookcase with glass doors up against the wall and the other one is an open crate style bookcase that helps divide the space, but leaves a pathway. The shutters on the windows are open and the soft white sheer curtains are gently blowing. I can feel the breeze coming through and see the sun setting on the trees and the flowers just outside the window. I'm studying something, because books, notepapers and a brown leather bound journal are in front of me. There is another person with me (of Asian descent) who is working on a laptop computer standing on the opposite side of the room. We share the room together, but we are here for different reasons. We are talking back and forth, smiling and asking each other questions and it makes me feel like I'm a college student, but yet I know I'm not because my boys are at home waiting for me. Just out in the hall we hear commotion. We both immediately turn our heads to the doorway because we hear from the others that O' Sensei is coming down the hall. He is saying his goodnights to everyone and is making sure he goes from room to room. When he finally appears just outside our doorway, I stand up and we both bow towards him and say goodnight. He looks at both of us, then glances back towards me and drops his eyes down to my hands. I'm holding the leather journal. He then looks up at me again and just stands there smiling at me. He never once enters into the room, but his presence filled the room and he never said a word, but yet it feels like he's telling me something. Still smiling, he gently bows his head and slowly turns to leave. I then awake.*

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## ***The Holidays & Our Extended Martial Family***

*By Sabom Tim Speaks – Senior Instructor*

It's always around this time of year when we're celebrating the holidays that we start thinking about family and friends. Certainly we think about our loved ones many times throughout the year, but the Christmas and New Year's Holidays are a special time traditionally spent reconnecting with them. The New Year's Holiday is also a time when we reflect on the good and the bad of the previous year and look forward to good things to come.

We certainly have had some trying times over the past year. Yet we persevere, forge ahead and make great things happen. New and exciting things are in store for the Center for Aikido and Tang Soo Do Studies. We are a special group of extended family and friends come together to support one another in our individual martial endeavors. Like a family we must support and encourage one another to continue the long journey toward perfection. Each and every member of the Dojo/Dojang has this responsibility. In the context of training it is important to give this support in person. Or in other words, you must show up to train with your friends and extended family on the mat. It is difficult for your friends at the Dojo/Dojang to progress in their training without you there to help them.

Often we hear lame excuses why this or that person can't make it to the Dojo/Dojang to train. These excuses usually reveal a person who believes that his or her absence affects no one else. This is a person who doesn't think of themselves as part of the Dojo/Dojang family. It is important to realize that each and every Dojo/Dojang member has a great impact on the everyday training dynamics of the Center for Aikido and Tang Soo Do Studies. The ongoing success of our school depends on a student body composed of people who care enough to show up and train. I believe the secret to this type of dedication is not merely a love for the art which you practice, but a self-obligation to the extended family and friends who rely on you for help with their training. For me at least, remembering that I need to be at the Dojo/Dojang to train, as well as to help others train, keeps me from making lame excuses so that I can stay home to watch re-runs of *Leave it to Beaver*.

Ultimately, it's time to celebrate the Holiday season with family and friends. I hope each and every member of The Center for Aikido and Tang Soo Do studies has a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Remember that each and every one of you is a valuable member of the Dojo/Dojang family. Your continuing perseverance at showing up each and every time to train is what will make our Dojo/Dojang even more successful in the coming year. Great things are to come. Now is the time to remind ourselves of what is most important in life...eggnog.

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## **Consistency**

*By Sabom Jude Miller – Senior Instructor*

For the past 6 months, a martial principle that I have found to be of great interest is that of consistency. It can be said that I am seeing this principle through “new eyes”, as I have already gained some understanding of it through my years of training. I recall during Sensei Sabo’s visit this summer, that he stated that the key to mastery is consistency; when a master moves or performs a technique, the motions are always the same. A month after his visit, I saw this concept in motion when we trained at Kashiwaya Shihan’s seminar near Ft. Collins. Every time Shihan moved, it was the same even if the technique was different. You could tell that he always moved from his center while relaxing and extending ki. The way Kashiwaya Shihan held a sword was the same way he grabbed the wrist when he performed shihonage. During class a couple of weeks later, Sensei Ryan added that ikkyo and yonkyo, when performed correctly, used the same “grip” as when holding a bokken. This was a big light bulb going off for me in Aikido, because I learned that I am very inconsistent in the way I moved. I was not aware that I was grabbing a partner’s wrist completely different from how I was holding a bokken on certain techniques. I was just moving without the necessary thought needed to induce development. The only thing consistent about my training was my holding on to old habits, which just happened to be the crux of Sensei Medeiros’ message during his last visit in October.

This is how I am trying to apply and develop myself in Aikido. Hopefully, my attempt to do the same is Tangsoodo is consistent, considering the principles of Do are consistent regardless of the Art. I have found that marching in Tangsoodo is a training method that easily lends itself to the practice and development of consistency. When marching, I make a concerted effort to make sure my techniques setup and end the same way every time. I pick a target, and try to hit it every single time. I try to make every front stance the same, regardless of which foot is forward or what the technique is. When practicing a form, I always try to end the form where I started it. During kicking drills, again, I pick a target and try to hit the same spot every time. This is all a large number of actions to keep track of, and repetition helps to ingrain the correct motions into motor memory, which helps. Expanding further, repetition is a very old and consistent method of training.

From what I am learning, consistency is what helps to build a tradition. Too many times I have seen commercial schools that are inconsistent in their practices and teachings. I happened to train in a commercial school for 5 years (earning a shodan in the process), so I will share my views from personal experience with such schools. My first martial arts school, the National Karate School, is no longer around. Inconsistent practices and teachings are the reason for this. In the dying days of the school, attendance from the instructors was far from consistent. I was consistent in my attendance and training, but I would not see my instructors for weeks at a time. If there is no consistency in attendance and

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training with the instructors and students, a school cannot exist.

Because the instructors were inconsistent, the students were inconsistent. Eventually, everyone started to develop their own ideas on training, and these ideas were inconsistent from each other. Some students wanted to train for tournaments, some wanted to make lots of money teaching, and some wanted to learn other Arts to add techniques to our system of karate. All of the inconsistencies eventually led to general chaos. As Sabom Parenteau will recall, one day we all showed up for class only to find out that the head instructor had been inconsistent in his communications and paying the school's bills. We were left without a place to train.

Fads and inconsistencies, including eclectic philosophies and wild displays (as can be found in tournaments and circus style demonstrations), run rampant in today's martial arts. Even in traditional schools, there are students who are inconsistent in their attendance, training and support of the school. It is important to train in a mindfully aware and consistent manner in order to develop the self. Then to further the cause of consistency, one must develop all areas of their lives in this manner. When consistency is a standard, practitioners develop their Art and the school maintains its traditions. Honest consistency takes time and effort, and cannot be bought or traded for. It is important to let go of negative old habits (which tend to be directly correlated to inconsistencies), and progress in a mindful and ever-present manner.

## **Commitment**

*By Sensei Ryan Goettsche – Senior Instructor*

When I first started training under Medeiros Sensei in 1994, I would never have guessed I would learn so much about a martial art or about myself and even more, to still be working on perfecting both counts. I have always loved and been fascinated with martial arts ever since I was a child and wanted to be a great martial artist someday. But, this notion was in my head and that someday was never really pondered or scheduled. I never pushed myself to get a black belt in four years and I didn't eat, sleep and breathe Aikido.

I was very excited when I first joined Aikido Kai San Shin Kan and I trained as often as I could which usually ended up being about 5 or 6 classes per week. When I first started training I was working night crew at King Soopers and Sensei offered morning classes from 9:00-11:00AM on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday and evening classes from 6:00-8:00PM on Tuesday and Thursday. There were a core group of students which regularly trained during the evening or morning times and once in a while show up to the other classes. So my regular schedule was to go home after work at 7:00AM and stay awake by playing some music and a Game Boy. I had to stay awake because I'm not the type of person that can nap for one hour; it's all or nothing for me. So I would stay at home for an hour and a half then go off to class. One of the regular students of the morning classes also worked at night but he would just drive over to the dojo after work and

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sleep in the back of his van. I would always get to class about 20 minutes early and sit in my car waiting for Sensei to come and open the dojo. When Sensei would arrive, I would knock on the van to wake up the other student and we would all file into the dojo, change and train. I'd then go home, shower and head off to band practice then go back home and sleep before work.

As time went on I changed jobs and had to rework my entire schedule around work and training. It was my first day job and I was still in a band at the time. So I couldn't change the times I went to work and train in Aikido but band rehearsals could be changed. I couldn't train in the morning anymore either so now I started going to the evening classes and Saturday morning classes. Three days per week was all I could make it to now. It wasn't a hard adjustment to make but it was strange because it was a different group of people and I felt like a brand new student again. Plus the evening classes were much larger than the weekday morning classes and that was intimidating as well. But I had to keep training and polishing my techniques and my spirit. My desire to learn the art and commit myself to the school was the most important thing. I didn't care how long it would take to master the art...whatever it even means to "master" something. It's kind of like halving a number and then halving that number and so on, you never get to zero...the number just gets smaller and smaller. If you keep training, you never master it, your movements just become more refined and your Ki starts to replace the physicality of the movements.

As time marched forward I moved 25 miles from the dojo, started working 50 miles from where I live, have a wife and three children. Schedules outside of the dojo always need to be worked on, just like in the beginning; work and dojo times stay consistent so it's up to me to work on everything outside of those times. I only have so much free time outside of work and my time at the dojo will not be sacrificed for another activity I may want to start doing. I would love to play in a band again but there is no time to commit to it so I don't for now. We also have a lot of activities that Brandon is involved with such as Cub Scouts which takes time (thankfully the meetings are on Tuesdays and Thursdays). So personal schedules can always be changed to support the things I truly want or need to do. I will work until 2:00AM so that I can go to class that night, come home and do the things I needed to get done for the day vs. not going to class so I can get the things completed and go to bed at my usual time.

I am still trying to figure out what has changed over the years but I don't see the excitement and enthusiasm in the martial arts community which used to be there when I first started training. I do think that it is partly the "now" society we have created over the past fifteen or twenty years. Most people are all about instant gratification because of the technology we are told we love and have to have, the crash course certifications we can get online, etc. When people become more disconnected from society and everything that is happening every day, at any given time, the desensitization is, I think, astounding. True martial training is not about those things

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but rather the slow, relentless commitment to the polishing of the human soul. It is that constant desire to be better tomorrow; not just better at work, a better father, a better husband, a better guitar player...an overall better person. If you're a better person, everything else is just a given.

## **Standards in the Martial Arts**

*By Sabom Mike Parenteau – Senior Instructor*

In our last Bulletin edition (Sept. 08), Sabom wrote about standards, in relation to our history and school. This month, I'd like to continue on his idea and talk about why I think there should be standards and further, why HIGH standards are important. An example is in order. Suppose you would like to hire a contractor to build a fence for you. Customarily, in the construction trades, you would solicit a minimum of three "bids", or proposals from your contractor choices. You would go over the scope of the work, e.g. the type of fence, stain or paint, the length of fence, gates, etc. After receiving your bids, you'd compare them all and decide who understood the project the best and who is giving you the best value. Some commercial clients go through a long procedure, weighing the technical expertise, craftsmanship, cost and a variety of other things in determining who will be awarded a project. But for most of us, it is a matter of talking to the contractor(s) and seeing their final proposals before deciding. Now...say we are in the midst of our project. Your contractor is doing ok, but it appears that he's not showing up at the jobsite per the agreement, or he's using a

stain on the new fence that wasn't originally proposed and he didn't tell you. What would you do? Would you allow him to continue his behavior and use the substandard material(s), or would you address him and say, "Look...I am paying you for a service we agreed upon. The work you are doing is not measuring up to that agreement." Think about that for a moment...

So, in our example, the "standards" being discussed would be the materials of construction and the workmanship-like manner in which they are installed. This is commonplace. So why shouldn't standards exist in a martial arts school? Our school hasn't had a lot of standards by which we practice our art(s) of choice, but we have always had a HIGH standard. This is unlike some of the mainstream schools out there today. However, to escape becoming robots, Sabom has allowed some lee-way. For example, in TSD, when performing some of our forms, in certain cases there are a few different ways to do a particular sequence of motions. We are not rigidly set upon one method. Also, Sabom has also allowed whoever is leading class to lead it according to their own style as long as they remember kihon or keecho. So, in order to stand out from other schools, our HIGH standard has to be maintained. The HIGH standard I'm referring to are the more important things which characterize good students, instructors and a good school. Think about the contractor example again. If the contractor used the materials they said they were going to use and did it well, do you think they would get a referral from the client? Of course! The same is true of our school. We have to continually strive

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to make ourselves better and maintain the HIGH standard we do have. That means, in reference to our HIGH standard:

- 1) Coming to class. Numbers count! This is important for juniors of course, such that they can gain proficiency. Also, this is very important for senior students, for how can a senior student lead class when they cannot get to class regularly? What does that say to the junior student, who strives to move or have the technique of the senior student? When we become lazy by not supporting each other with consistent regular attendance our reputation begins to erode.
- 2) Training with sincerity. Spectators can see when you don't want to be there!
- 3) Good technique. Sabom has said many times, "If it looks good, it is good!"
- 4) Know your stuff. This is especially true of Yudansha/Yudanja. If you are talking to a prospective student, it is good to have a basic knowledge of our school's Arts, the requirements, etc. Also, it is good to have some general martial art knowledge of other styles. This can come in handy when talking to people who have had prior experience walking through our door. Then we can say we know what we are talking about and it will show!
- 5) A clean studio. I believe we do this, but it's good to reiterate! Especially since it's been cleaned, painted and reworked. More to come too!

- 6) Respect and etiquette. While we recognize our school hierarchy (those who have come before), we all respect each other. As the Tang folks say, "Recognize and respect the achievements of others." Etiquette is another thing we must maintain at a high level.
- 7) Lucky #7...Unity. When people walk through the door and see how one school with two different Arts act with each other...they will be impressed!

I probably could go on, but I hope you can understand that in order for us to stand out and not be like the "belt factory" down the street, we need to understand that a HIGH standard is necessary and prudent. Because we not only represent our school in what we do but we also represent our instructor. This is the main point, and something that falls short in mainstream schools. So let's keep the standard HIGH!

## **Reflections and the Move Toward a Holistic Standard**

*By Sabom/Sensei Vernon A. Medeiros  
– Chief Instructor*

The year 2008 has come to an end and our school has managed to survive another year in the commercial martial arts market. Our school offers quality instruction in the Korean art of Tangsoodo and the Japanese art of Aikido. Quality instruction creates quality students.

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What is interesting to me is in our hurry up and give it to me "NOW!" and 10 minutes later "I am bored..." society, we as a unified school have managed to solicit a student membership that understands quality training cannot be accomplished in a few quick lessons. Our students appreciate that applied discipline and dedication to our training is a key factor to our accomplishments with the arts we study. Our school emphasizes continuity of regular practice as the only viable means of gaining proficiency which contributes to the overall aesthetic of our school. Historically, over the last 100 years all decent martial arts (from China, Japan and Korea) that emphasized physical, mental and spiritual growth required all students to accept responsibility for their part toward maintaining the reputation of their instructors and their school.

This requirement still holds true today. We as members in good standing with the Center for Aikido and Tangsoodo Studies are committed to training regularly so that we may play a role toward the quality of our school.

Presently, "YOUTUBE.com" (a video reference source grossly in violation of copyright laws in my opinion) gives me access to dojang from all over the world. I can view Aikido schools, Karate schools, Kenpo schools, Judo schools, Taekwondo

schools and Tangsoodo schools. This website allows me to view Instructors and their students practicing their martial arts. What I specifically learn from viewing all these videos is that students and instructors are proud of their accomplishments with their training and they are proud of their schools. Each person is contributing to their school's history as well as honoring their Instructors and the art that they practice.

For 2009 may we all feel proud of our contributions to our school's history because through our own dedicated actions we are setting the aesthetic tone that others from the community will judge us by.

A few key points to consider for 2009 while training at the Center for Aikido and Tangsoodo Studies. Leave old habits outside the dojang. If you desperately need to cling to your habits you will gain nothing from your training and you will impair other student's progress. Maintain a positive attitude toward your goals otherwise you will discolor the quality of your experiences. Excuses are cumbersome. They weigh you down. To avoid the weight of cumbersome excuses is to simply not create them. Honor your commitments. Lastly respect your seniors for their years in the art and seniors please allow junior students to progress at their own pace because they do not have enough time logged on their training resume.