

The Dragon Nhuis

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
THE CUONG NHU ORIENTAL MARTIAL ARTS ASSOCIATION
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DRAGON NHUS SPECIAL REPORT

Cuong Nhu Kids

Dragon Nhus

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The 2011 edition of Dragon Nhus was once again awarded an Apex Award for Publication Excellence.

“I know karate. So it's okay. I'll lead the way out.”



Few words have ever captured so well the courage, determination and self confidence we, as instructors, hope to instill – yet temper – in the children we teach.

These were the words of encouragement offered by a first grade boy to his classmates and teachers as the Sandy Hook tragedy unfolded.

They were so inspiring to President Barack Obama that he quoted them at the heartbreaking prayer vigil following the shootings.

This call to action reinforces the weighty responsibilities we have as kids’ martial arts instructors: we have the potential to shape our students self-perception and to influence, even mold, the way our students see and respond to the world around them – perhaps for their entire lives.

Any of us who teach children have experienced the joy, and yes the frustration, of teaching these little works in progress.

And I think we’d all agree teaching kids so often confirms the maxim that teachers who pay attention are enriched by the opportunity to learn from our students.

This issue of the Dragon Nhus is for and about kids. You’ll find a showcase of their art and essays, discussions on varied approaches to teaching, teaching tips, instructor resources – and a bit of humor.

Teach your children well.

Danny Pietrodangelo, Editor

IATC: New Cuong Nhu Masters



Above - Cuong Nhu Senior Instructors: (l.-right): Robert First, Joe Varady, Bud Place, Howard Hannon, Kirk Farber, Bao Ngo, Grand Master Quynh Ngo, John Burns, Didi Goodman, John Kay, Lap Hoang, Frank van Essen
Middle row: Elizabeth Roman, Roy Albang, Anh Ngo, Thu Ngo
Front row: Allen Hoss, Ricki Kay, Allyson Appen, Mike Ponzio.

Above Right - Masters promotions: Terri Giamartino, Didi Goodman, Howard Hannon, Elizabeth Roman, Anh Ngo

Right: Dragon Nhus Associate Editor, Master Didi Goodman, receives the Rokudan certificate from Master John Burns.



...and Renewed Marriage Vows



Burt Miller and Carolyn Frazier renew wedding vows before their Cuong Nhu family at IATC 2011



Grand Master Quynh and Jessica Bruno were married on July 4, 2012.



Some – but not all – Cuong Nhu married couples.

Confronting The Fear Factor

By Sara Falls
Redwood Dojo

I had begun Cuong Nhu in 2006, not to earn a black belt but to get in better shape, learn more about self defense, and have fun while doing it. I had accomplished this and knew I could continue to grow in these ways whether or not I had a black belt; my rank just didn't feel important.

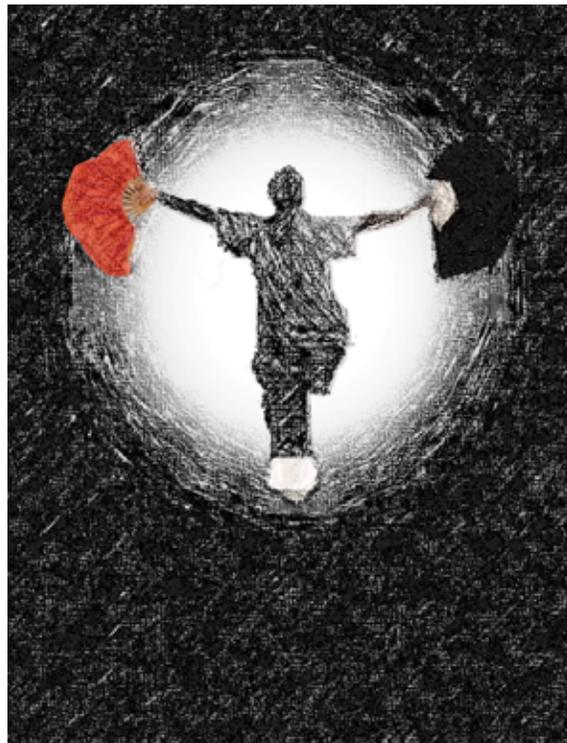
In retrospect, it's clear to me that much of this answer also came out of fear: the fear that I wouldn't be good enough to get a black belt no matter how hard I worked, the fear of the limits of my own body and mental stamina, the fear of the responsibility of being a black belt and therefore being a teacher and model to other students.

Ironically, it was my decision *not* to be afraid that, in part, led me into martial arts. When we first started our co-housing community in the Fruitvale neighborhood of Oakland, I heard a lot about how dangerous this area is, and my community-mates expressed the belief that one would be crazy to walk around alone at night.

This seems like a sad way to live, and I made the very conscious choice at that time that I didn't want to live in fear, that I wanted to be able to walk around in my community and interact with the people who live here.

Of course, I don't want to be naively unafraid, and, as a woman, I've had to confront these fears again and again throughout my life when I've decided to walk alone at night regardless of the neighborhood's

reputation. I knew that learning martial arts would not only increase my physical abilities and strength, but it would also make me more confident in general, and it seemed like a good approach to addressing that sense of fear.



So here I am, facing my black belt test, and I find myself confronting all those fears that made me think that I'd never get to this point. I would like to be able now to make the same conscious choice I made in the past—to just not be afraid; but somehow this seems more challenging, probably because I bump up against my fear every day in training.

I compare myself to others, and, a perennial perfectionist, I'm very hard on myself: "Why is everyone else getting this technique so much quicker than me?" "I'll never be able to jump as high in my flying

kicks as these teenage boys!" "What if I'm not in good enough shape? What if I get hurt?"

I'm sure everyone is nervous for their black belt test, but I find that facing this test raises all kinds of other issues for me: I have to confront my sometimes difficult relationship to my body and my body image—am I skinny enough, strong enough?

I have to acknowledge that I'm getting older and am not as springy and physically resilient as I was as a teenager.

I have to consider some of the sexism of our culture that still says women aren't supposed to fight or can't be as tough as men.

I have to forgive myself when I'm not perfect or when I struggle, which is often.

But I keep going; I keep training. Even though I still have these fears, I've decided to not let the fears control me. As a result I've gotten stronger and more in shape, and all those things I once upon a time thought I could never do don't seem so scary anymore.

For instance, as a white belt I could not fathom that I would one day break boards. I also used to hate sparring because I was afraid of getting hurt, and my incredibly competitive nature was perpetually annoyed about always losing. However, as I've gotten better at it, I've come to absolutely love it.

Continued on Page 23

Ryan Lewis

By the time I achieved my brown belt, I felt I was an entirely new person and presence in the dojo. I had incorporated myself into the community and went from being an introverted person, only concerned with myself, into a person who could relate with essentially anyone who walked in the door. I found myself being a more open person, both in mind, body, and spirit, in nearly all aspects of life. I had made a more diverse group of friends within Cuong Nhu than I would have without, and the community I gained at the dojo made me a better all-around person. I gained confidence and felt that I could handle nearly every situation. I understood that most situations that could end in violence could be avoided without fists or even raised voices. I found a balance between my soft, accepting and naturally avoiding nature, and the hard, confronting and abrasive person I sometimes needed to be to protect myself or others both mentally and physically. However, even with this incorporation of Cuong Nhu into my everyday life, I felt I had still only touched the tip of a massive iceberg. 🌊

**Brannon Sroka, Cypress**

College is supposed to be the time you figure it all out. Independence, responsibility and most importantly, discovering who you are as a person. As I near the - somewhat extended - end of my college experience, I find myself questioning this. If there is one thing I have figured out in the last few years, it's that I don't have it all figured out, not even close. This bothers me. I am someone who likes to understand things completely and to have all loose ends wrapped up in a neat package, contained and under control. Learning that life rarely offers up neat little packages was a hard lesson for me.

Cuong Nhu has always been an anchor for me. Training provided me with self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment, and a way to put life's challenges in perspective. This is especially true of training camp.

Coming home from a weekend of training, living, and breathing Cuong Nhu feels like beginning a new chapter in life. Each year carries a new lesson, and a new opportunity for growth. At first this seemed straightforward. Clear, concise, and easily carried out, I was able to apply these lessons and learn a bit more about myself in the process.

Challenges grew as I grew, and soon lessons were not clear and straightforward, but murky and complex. Instead of feeling more certain of myself, there were times when I was not sure I knew myself at all. The feeling of accomplishment from earning my black belt faded into uncertainty as I took on the responsibility of teaching. When I began teaching at Cypress, this self-doubt became even more pronounced.

We bow in, meditate, and everyone is either sensei or student. The reality is somewhat less clear. I can't pretend to have all the answers inside the dojo when my life outside clearly demonstrates that I don't. Instead, I need to be honest with myself and my students that we are all learning. Cuong Nhu is not a solitary journey, and I think that is one of the style's greatest strengths. The ability for students and instructors to grow together

makes the Cuong Nhu family possible. 🌊

Michael Chriss

After years of training in Cuong Nhu, my understanding of the three O's Principle has evolved. I believe it to be the founding principle of our style. It's my belief that a better understanding of the seven influential styles of Cuong Nhu martial arts in their purest form would help me to understand the prerogatives Ngo Dong took to create our unique style.

I once heard a story of a student confused because O' Sensei had taught him a technique in years past, and was currently showing him the same technique slightly different. When asked why, O' Sensei replied simply, "I've evolved."

What a great concept to apply to all aspects of your life. Being opened minded to all things, being inclusive and tolerant as we go, and being willing to embrace change. *z*

James Brown, Lighted Path

...These are some of the main aspects of my life. They are each rewarding and (when I'm honest) also challenging. My struggle is sometimes to admit that I struggle. I must think that admitting that I struggle is a sign of weakness. Yet when I do admit it, a burden is lifted – but this is easy for me to forget.

Some people know me in one area of my life but not another. On some days, these people could see me as two totally different people – on other days I might be more consistent. Slowly, I have been discovering that a way for me to be the same person in all my different roles is to admit that I struggle but am trying, I fall short but I want to grow. I want my worlds to collide and to be one. When I think that I have finally been able to be the best that I can be, in all aspects of my life at the same time, then I will have truly died. I will have died because I will not see a need to grow. True weakness is not admitting that I am weak, but rather when I am weak then I am strong. So I hope that I continue to struggle until my very last breath. *z*

Robert (Butch) White, Sakura Dojo

We all think we are indestructible or superman when we are in our twenties. I was no exception to this thinking. I could do anything, eat anything, go all day long with no rest, and take risks that I would be unsure of the consequences. I thought I was in good shape although I did smoke.

I discovered Cuong Nhu in my forties and it changed my life. During a green belt test I could not catch my breath. For me to continue in Cuong Nhu there was no choice. I had to quit smoking and concentrate on my health. As I became a little older I discovered some of

my limitations or what I perceive as limitations. My joints ache a little more, I need to stretch a little longer, I give more thought to why and how I do things, and I've learned to do things a little different to achieve my goals. At twenty it was all about me, now at the ripe old age of fifty plus, I know things happen for a reason and that we can learn from our mistakes, our mistakes enhance who we are today...

As I age I think about what I could have done at an earlier age to be in better health and shape today. Maybe that's why I enjoy teaching the children's class at our school. It's been five years since I have tested.

Sometimes I wonder why I still train, what draws me to Cuong Nhu. I believe the reason is the feeling I get from belonging to something larger than myself. I know the philosophy has helped shape my life and I believe this gets clearer with age. Cuong Nhu in its wisdom has opened my eyes to many ways of thinking. The physical part of Cuong Nhu makes me to want to stay in shape to compete with the younger students and to continue teaching. The children in my school are what bring me to class no matter how my day has gone. To instill the moral character and the determination the martial arts can teach is invaluable for children.

There will be many more crossroads in my way and as they appear I hope I have the insight or wisdom to see them, and if not, the ability to stand and move forward with them. *z*



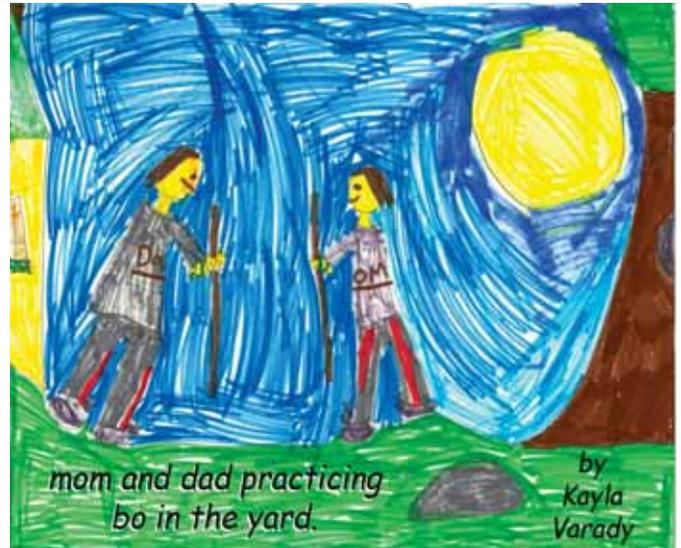
These are select excerpts from student test papers. They have been edited for length and style. If your paper was not excerpted, please understand that doesn't reflect on its quality. Submit your papers to Dragon Nhus as Word files (not pdfs). Remember to include your name and the name of your school. -Ed



Cuong Nhu



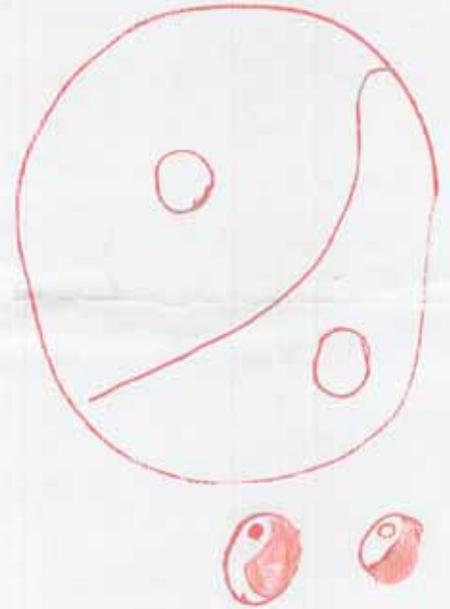
Kids



Young Cuong Nhu students were invited to submit their artwork for this issue. The subject matter could be Cuong Nhu, Martial Art or anything in which they are interested.



Jeffrey



Jack Thompson

I like to do flying kicks because they help me jump higher.



~~kick~~ i like to kick because it is good for your leg

Michael

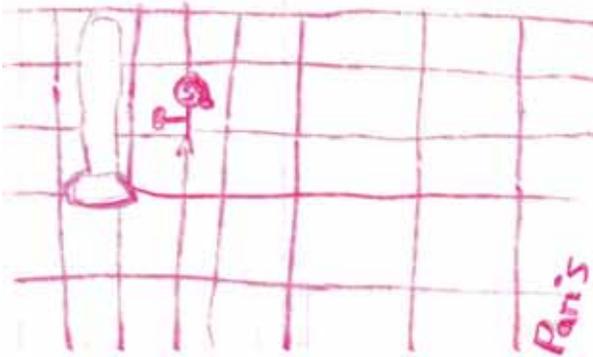




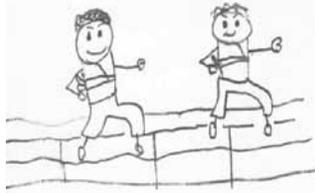
One of our favorite subjects
here at Dragon Nhus -
Dragons!



My favorite part of karate is having fun. Also (this is more my favorite) I like learning ~~techniques~~ ^{practicing} techniques and ~~punching~~ them on the targets

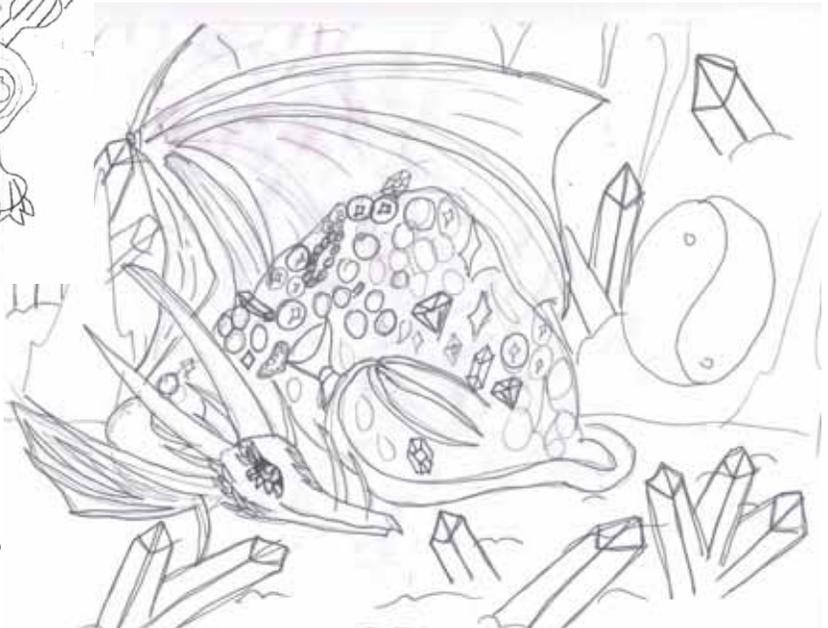
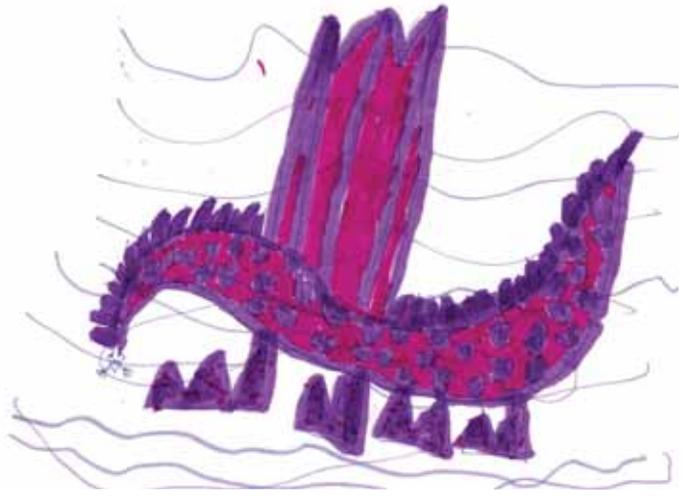
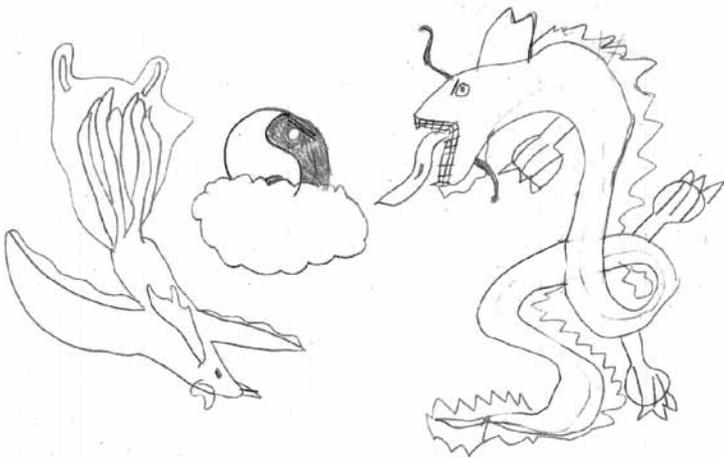


My favorite parts about Karate is being able to learn new moves and learn self defense. It is also fun to get active and move around.



Anthony Scanlon

BY KAYLAVARADY



Do you see the dragon?

Pacific Association of Women Martial Artists



MiKayla with Shihan Keiko Fukuda at the opening night of PAWMA Camp 2012. Photo: Malaika Kambon

By MiKayla Mahoney

I was the youngest person at PAWMA (Pacific Association of Women Martial Artists).

My name is Mikayla and I am 11 years old. I've been to PAWMA Camp twice – once when I was only one year old and the second time this summer. Being the youngest person at PAWMA Camp was fun, because everyone treated me with respect. I went to PAWMA because my Mom invited me. The camp was fun, challenging, inspiring, and enjoyable.

Master Terri Giamartino's class was super fun. We were doing Cuong Nhu. We were practicing a front snap kick and then a double punch followed by a BIG, loud "kiai." I thought, "Yippee! This is going to be fun, because I know how to do

it." My kick snapped in and out really fast. I let my foot drop to the floor. I stepped out into a right forward stance with a double punch and a loud "kiai." I said, "This is fun!!"

Master Sue's advanced kicking class was challenging. We did an impressive inner crescent jump kick. I was actually trying Tae Kwon Do on my own. I thought my Mom would've loved to come to this, because she's a 4th degree Black Belt in TaeKwon Do – but she was trying another class.

Sifu Michelle is a very inspiring person I met at PAWMA. She got a lifetime member award. Michelle accepted her award and raised it high above her head. Michelle smiled so brightly that it was like looking into the sun. If you ever

meet Michelle Dwyer, you are lucky!

Goeroe Louise Rafkin's Poekoelan class was exciting. The class opened my mind and made me see animal movement in a whole different way. We had to act like a caged tiger, a vast snake, and an eager monkey. We learned monkey, tiger, ape, snake, and crane techniques. I felt great trying that type of martial art.

Now that I have learned a little bit about PAWMA Camp, I finally know what it is like. There are so many teachers and other styles for you to think about. You can do any style you want to try. If you were to ask to me about going to PAWMA, I would say, "You should surely go." I can't wait to go again next year! PS.

I am now a purple belt! 🐉

My Turning Point in Cuong Nhu

By Becca Ngo

World Headquarters

Even though I hated karate, my family did it and there was no way out of it.

Unfortunately for me, my father, Quynh, Uncle Anh, Aunt Thu, Christina and Alexander were all by my side every day at 6:15 at Mandarin Martial Arts. Lots of pressure was put upon me because I couldn't let my own siblings outshine me. For instance, if Christina's technique was stronger than mine was, it made me feel inferior to her. Even for those few times that I cheated on my pushups or had a lazy stance, "Master Thu" would yell at me.

My dad and two of his siblings were all my instructors and I felt as if there were not one moment that I could breathe or even take a break. I loathed going to class and wanted to quit but my dad wouldn't let me. Every day on the way to class, I prayed for red lights, but it seemed as if the traffic lights were stuck on green.

As time progressed, I felt karate just wasted my time. I had tons of algebra homework to get done and the 2 hours spent at the dojo could've been dedicated towards Set Theory and Quadratic Expressions. We also did way too many pushups. A million pushups every minute was just too much. I obviously couldn't quit, so as my abilities got better, I was required to teach kids karate classes.

The biggest turning point in my life was starting to teach karate to kids. Hearing the news that I would be "forced" to teach was so overwhelming. But from the very

beginning, I knew I was going to love it. Matter of fact I did love it. I was given the opportunity to work with kids with various learning abilities and personalities.

As a student, everyone was told to perform the same. But as a teacher, there was no right or wrong way as long as Knife self defense and Pinan 5 got across. My father too, appreciated me teaching, it made him proud. Even though teaching would forever stay in my heart, it would definitely never escape because it was one of the things



that made my father happy.

My Grandpa, Dong, actually founded Cuong Nhu in 1965, but died in 2001. Karate was the one of the only things left between him and my father. I guess my grandfather and I have similar teaching styles because we both are more lenient towards the students, but take it seriously. A small thing – that seemed meaningless – like teaching karate for two hours a day – played a huge role in changing my life.

Shortly after my experience with teaching karate, I began to see in myself many of the traits I see in my instructors, Sensei Bert and Sensei

Mark – and I loved it.

They put forth so much of their time and I repaid them by slacking off and sassing them in class. Becoming a teacher taught me that it's actually pretty obnoxious for students to do that. That was the gas to my car; I was finally being driven to work hard.

Karate also took four hours out of my day. I taught for two hours, trained for the other two, and somehow I managed World History too. My instructors did the same for me. That realization brought an immediate and new respect from me for them. Not only did they gain a positive attitude from me, but I gained benefits due to all those pushups and squats. I noticed fat disappearing and muscle replacing it. I was ecstatic!

But physically, yes of course it brings benefits over time, but mental ones too. Confidence joined me through my journey to success because if I wasn't confident while

teaching, the students wouldn't listen. Anger control was a key factor that I now possessed because I was the example, not the learner.

A door was opened when I was given the opportunity to motivate others and get the perspective of a teacher. If I could go back in time, I'd erase my old character and change her into the person I am today. Only because of karate, will my motivation always stand high. It's where my abilities were put forth to not only help others, but to find myself again.

Life takes you down many different paths, but I choose to stick with the path Cuong Nhu has taken me down. 

Giving Back Is Part of Cuong Nhu

By Zachary Johnson

My name is Zachary Johnson and I am 12 years old. I started karate after I met Sensei Michael Hornback at a Vacation Bible School and decided I wanted to try karate.

The first class I took I fell in love with it. I have tried other sports before but I liked karate a whole lot more. I like that it is an individual sport and how well I do is up to me.

Before I started karate I felt scared around bullies and would never speak up for myself. Now I have more confidence both physically and mentally. I know that no matter what happens in the future, Cuong Nhu has given me the confidence I need to have a good life.

I went to a really small elementary school and I was worried about the bigger kids and larger class sizes in middle school. After building my confidence at Hero Academy and learning how to protect myself, I felt more secure about going into middle school.

One of the more challenging things I have done in Cuong Nhu is be a

part of leadership training. I had a hard time speaking up, telling people what they were doing wrong. I didn't give up and I



continue to try to improve my teaching. Even though it is not one of my favorite things to do, I know that giving back is part of the Cuong Nhu code of ethics and part of having a good life.

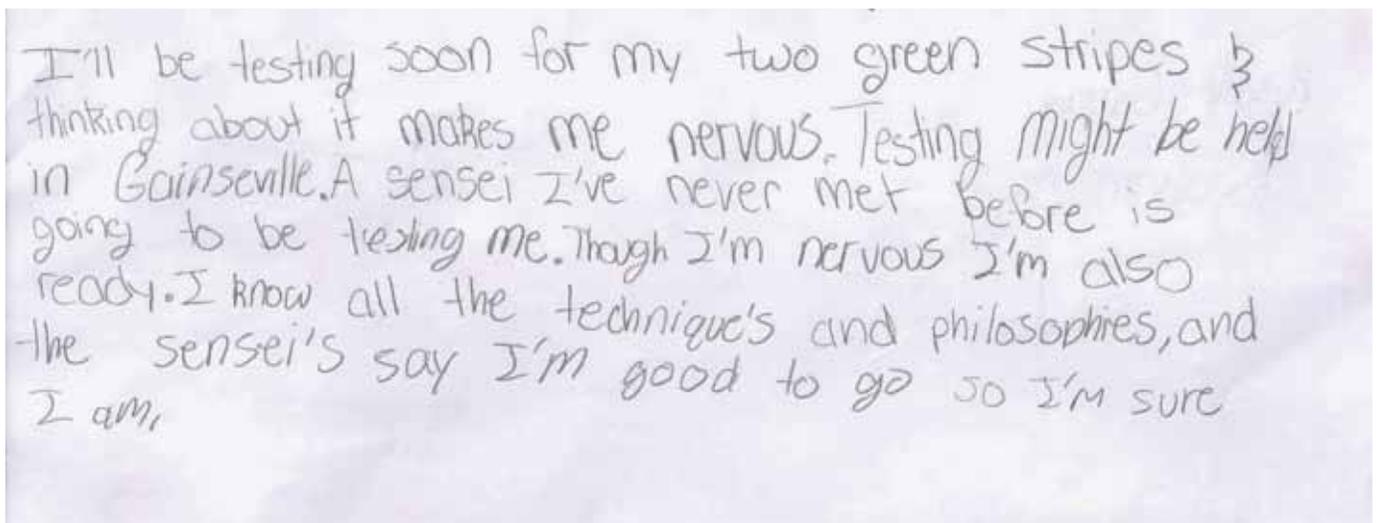
Cuong Nhu is not easy, especially

when you are trying to achieve a higher rank. It takes a lot of discipline and dedication to show up at the Dojo, three to five nights per week. Sometimes I really don't feel like going to the Dojo to train but I know it will soon pay off. I know if I want to achieve higher ranks, I have to be dedicated.

I have worked very hard for this Brown Belt testing and I'm excited to achieve this goal. It is important to me to make my Senseis and myself proud. All my Senseis have helped me so much, and I hope I can show what a great school Hero Academy is.

My next goal is to get a Black Belt at the summer training camp in 2014. I have a year and a half to train for the testing, but I have very good teachers to help me along the way.

I am thankful for Cuong Nhu and proud to be a part of Hero Academy Martial Arts and Leadership. 🙏



My Second Home

It Radiates a Feeling of Calm, and Also a Feeling of Fun

By Ryan Sokolow, Shojin Dojo, Clark, NJ

Everyone has a place that they like to go to when they need to feel happy or peaceful. I have one, and it helps pick me up whenever I am ever feeling down. It is the dojo that I go to for all of my karate classes. It makes me feel alive whenever I go to the dojo. It helps me be calm and have a lot of fun whenever I go.

One reason I feel that the dojo is my favorite place is that it radiates a feeling of calm, and also a feeling of fun.

For example one time almost every kid that came was running around, but as soon as the sensei yelled for everyone to line up all the kids stopped running, calmed down, and lined up. The calm that radiated from the room was very surprising since all the kids were there. I did not expect all of those young kids to be so calm.

It is always great when I go because along with the calm there is a great amount of fun. For example whenever we do sparring we always

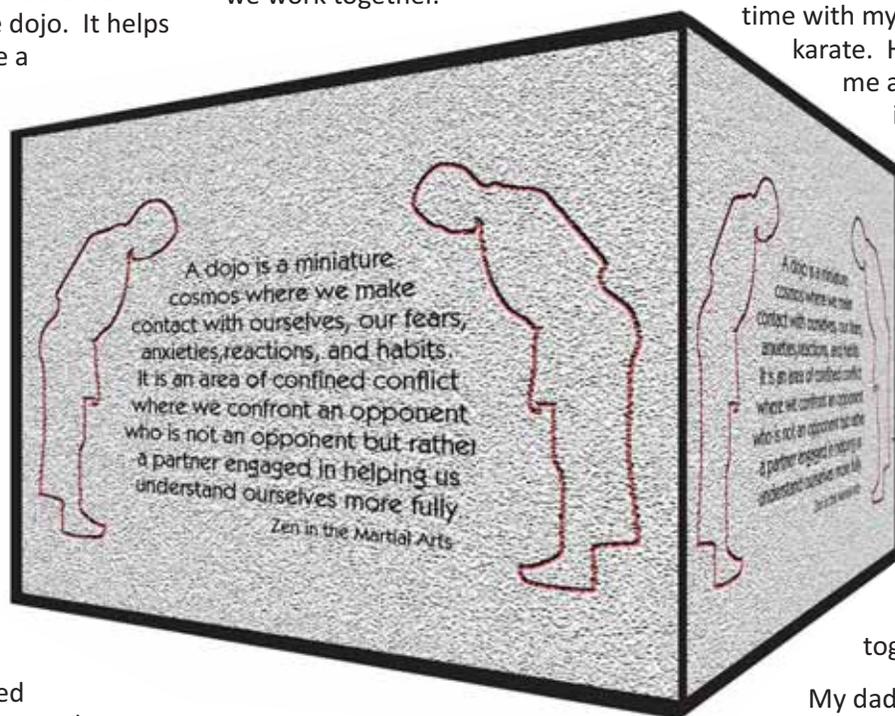
have a lot of fun. That is a very good reason why I do karate. A second reason why this is my favorite place is that I have a lot of friends there. With friends around it helps me have a lot of fun when we work together.

drills we always find something funny to laugh at. Friends are one of the main reasons why I go to karate.

The last reason why the dojo is my favorite place is that I spend a lot of time with my dad by doing karate. He does karate with me and is really good at it. In karate he is a green belt with two brown stripes. On his next test he will become a brown belt which I think will be sooner than he thinks. We sometimes do drills together. Also, we progress a lot whenever we are working together.

My dad is a very major part of why I go to karate and the dojo. Everyone's favorite place has a different meaning to them. For example, for some it could be that they want a little quiet. For others it could be because they have a lot of fun there. Well for me I go to the dojo for both of these and more reasons why the dojo is my favorite place.

The dojo truly is my second home.



All of my friends at karate always have something funny to say when I go to karate. For example, one time when my friend came they told me that their cat ran around their house all day not stopping for anything. Also, whenever we do

Meet the Parents

They're the Key to Your Kids' Class Success

The following discussions are excerpted from the Kids' Karate Workbook blog (<http://kidskaratebook.wordpress.com>), hosted by Didi Goodman.

Didi (Redwood Dojo, Oakland) Says:

The most important members of your children's program might just be the parents. After all, it's parents who sign kids up, pay the tuition, drive them to class, support their practice, and decide if & when they may quit!

Supportive parents give a tremendous boost to a school, both in practical terms (helping out at the dojo) and by creating a positive dojo culture. In rare cases, "nightmare" parents can have the opposite effect: Think "stage parent" interrupting class with their own instructions; argumentative parent questioning the instructor in front of the kids, or disputing a decision about tests and rank; or just, thoughtless parent talking loudly on a cell phone while letting your student's younger siblings run amok.

Tanner (Unity Martial Arts, Little Rock) Says:

Parents get etiquette guidelines when the kids first sign up, and reminders about key points before tests.

Handling a "stage parent" or someone who doesn't follow dojo etiquette clearly requires some tact. The most common impulse for parents to jump in comes when they want their child to behave better. But often times, the child's show is for the benefit of the parent anyway. So if they'll agree to leave (say, go

get a cup of coffee), things get better.

My favorite parents are those that give us feedback and get involved with their children's training.

Nightmare parents... Often they are depressed. We've had parents come in drunk to pick up their kids. ...In



cases where a parent continually puts a child at risk we've had to intervene, once going so far as to call child services.

Ricki (Komoku-ten Dojo, Seattle) Says:

Parents play the key role in whether their children continue in martial arts or quit. They have to understand (and we have to remind them) that children will sometimes whine and complain about just about anything. Children can be manipulative without even knowing they are doing it.

It became apparent to John and me long ago, that we had to point out the bigger picture to parents as well as to their kids. We would hear a parent say to their child, "Is this something you really want to do? Are you sure you want to do karate?" How does the child know what he or she wants to do? Kids see fancy kicks and things in the movies, on TV and in video games. Too often this is what they expect from martial arts training.

We remind the parents what they really wanted for their children was the discipline and all the elements of success that martial arts teaches.

We engage parents in a team approach. I remind them that these are just kids; they will complain and whine and not want to do things (like their homework and chores). It is our job as parents and teachers to just listen and ignore them! And keep them on track.

A good time for communicating with parents is during tests and

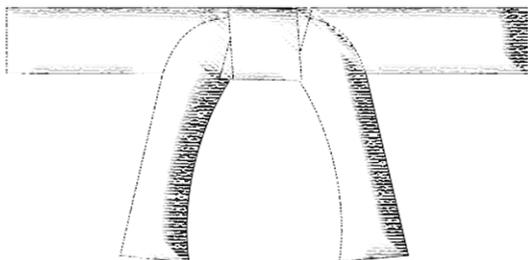
promotions. During promotions I use the opportunity to congratulate the students who have tested and to urge those who didn't to keep training. I talk to the parents and to the students. To the parents I say we are a team. There are three of us on this team. The parents have to bring the kids, and they have to listen to them whine, complain and not want to come so they can go play with their friends. It is their job to listen and still bring the kids - since they know what they are really learning in martial arts, and they know the value of it. **TK**

Belts, Cards, Badges and Stars:

Making the Connection Between Effort and Reward

Didi Says:

A young student approached me today to ask when his belt test was going to be scheduled. He'd been scheduled to test before the holiday



break, but became ill and missed a week of classes, then a couple weeks more over the holiday.

Normally, when a student misses a test date, I'll schedule a make-up asap, but sometimes this doesn't work out. This young man hadn't kept up his skills during his absence, and when I ran him through the basics at the first class of the year – expecting to check off his test requirements one by one – I discovered he just didn't know his stuff. He didn't recognize the names of basic techniques we practice every class...

So, here he came after class, asking why he hadn't gotten a new test date yet. I told him that, as much as I wanted him to get his stripe, when I looked at his basics, I didn't feel he was ready. I pointed out the difficulty he'd had with lunge punch and reverse punch, and with performing the lower block correctly. (This is a child who is old enough to do these things well.)

He looked disappointed, as is to be expected; but more than that – he

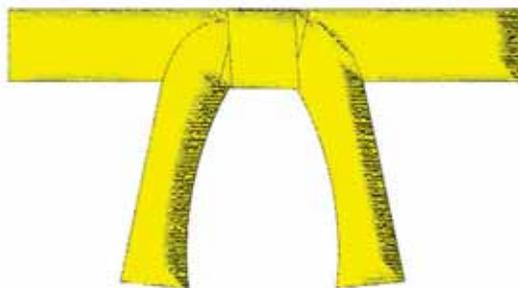
looked shocked, as though it hadn't occurred to him there was a connection between what we were doing in class, and what stripes he would get on his belt. We instructors talk about it all the time, but it still amazes me: Many kids seem to expect rewards they haven't earned. They want the stripe or belt, and figure they're entitled to it just for showing up, no matter how little effort they put in! But they're good kids. They just need someone to clarify the connection between

effort, accomplishment and rank (and then clarify it again, and again).

Terri (Hoa Sen Dojo, Emeryville) Says:

Many people, even teens and adults, sometimes think that time replaces or overrides lack of focused attention to details.

I always call out an individual's name to give him or her instant recognition for doing something done well. When I ask the group to work on something very specific



and after repeated repetition they start to get it right, I always praise the group.

I used to give out stripes that adhered to the student's belt with recognition statements such as "great punch", "excellent attendance", etc., but found that kids' were always expecting "something" and the younger kids (4-5) didn't always handle it well when one child got a stripe and they didn't.

The lesson I try to teach is that first you must set the goal: know what it is you are trying to do, and then know what you have to do to get it.

Smack (Sung Ming Shu Dojo, Atlanta) Says:

When it comes to evaluating whether



a student is ready for rank we tend to make that call in the last 2 weeks before a test.

If a student is not ready then we offer them an "animal test." We explain this test as a stepping stone to improving their martial arts; for example, the tiger test will help increase speed and power, the crane balance and precision, etc..

We explain that these tests are designed around the katas that black belts learn for their dan ranks. Once all 4 animals are earned they become dragon warriors (we called it that before the movie!) We currently have about 10 dragon warriors. The animal patches they earn are proudly displayed on their left sleeve.

On occasion a student will not test, and this is ok. We talk about testing in school, and would the children

Continued previous page

rather earn a C or study a bit longer and earn an A? Often children will volunteer to wait so they can really

shine at their test. This is usually the case as they advance in rank (and age).



We have to remember that these

are children. They are growing, learning, and trying to master their bodies. They make mistakes, and this needs to be recognized and forgiven. Their effort and drive needs to be awarded and fostered. We are doing more than just teaching karate, we are developing young adults.

Heidi Says:

I know this may sound strange, but I approach a lot of the kids training/rewards just like I approach the training and reward system I use with my dogs. A lot of it comes from a great book called "Don't Shoot the Dog." I highly recommend it for behavioral modification in all training areas.



I like to give instant praise/reward right when they do what I want

them to do. So the other day in class, I had this opportunity with one of my youngest kids. This kid has a really hard time

listening and focusing and sitting still in general.



When I called for lineup, he ran over and was the very first standing in his lineup spot, all ready, natural stance, facing forward, ready to do. I went right over to him and made a huge deal about it. Gave a big whistle so I got all the kids attention and I immediately recognized what he had done. I told him I had something for him after class to recognize this great accomplishment.

I gave him a respect badge. Not only does he line up every class like a star, all the other kids do too. I use the merit badges to help improve behavior (hardly anyone has earned the listening one yet). I have also developed a collectible card system (kids love to collect cards).

The cards are the size of business cards. There are philosophy cards (5 firsts of friendship – 5 cards for each), technique cards and theme cards (balance, focus etc.).

The philosophy ones will be in packs that go along with the 5's and 10's. When a kid demonstrates for example sharing in class,

right on the spot I will give him a card for sharing from the 5 First of Friendship set. When a kid does a fabulous roundhouse kick I will give him or her one of those cards – obviously they would have to wow me with a great one if they are already doing good roundhouse kicks. Or perhaps a kid that has struggled with side kick finally gets it right, they get the card.

Our new small organizer type karate

binders have inserts for holding the cards. The card system is similar to the merit badges, and they have worked well. Cards are cheaper though so I can hand out more, which means more instant reward of doing the right technique or behaving the right way.

Didi Says:

The badges, cards, binders etc, sound



really cool – I can see where kids would love them, and they're something I might consider using for my very youngest kids (4-5-year-olds). But I'm not likely to implement extras like that in my regular classes. Call me old-fashioned, but we're too busy working on the curriculum and ranks, and I don't have a bit of time left for handing out cards. (I might consider a student-directed trading-card system that's done outside of class time, on the

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Bullying and the Five Firsts of Friendship

By Tanner Critz, Gouitsu Dojo

Two traditional approaches to stop bullying – for both the victim and the bully – are big failures. The first approach tells victims they should stand up for themselves. Research suggests that this approach increases the isolation that victims feel. The second approach is the no-tolerance policy towards bullies. But this takes at-risk kids out of one of the few environments that could be a platform for recovery. If good interventions are not provided, research suggests that children who bully have a 60 percent chance of turning to crime later in life, and an even higher likelihood of passing on a legacy of bullying to the next generation.

Conflict is a normal part of healthy development. In conflict, both parties are upset and have lost perspective about ways they are connected. Sorting out conflict in a way that restores or adjusts a connection teaches compromise, boundaries, negotiation and forgiveness.

But in a bullying situation, the instigator is calm and feels certain about the connection to the victim while the victim is upset and lost.

As martial artists, our training works first towards not being a victim. Victims are characterized by social isolation, poor interpersonal skills and becoming agitated when prompted by a bully who is remaining calm. Studies have shown that the effective treatment for victims and bullies is the same – both have to be trained in healthy interpersonal skills modeled at home and at school.

One of my favorite philosophies in the Cuong Nhu curriculum is the Five Firsts of Friendship: Communicate, Smile, Care, Share and Forgive.

I'll admit, I used to think of it only as a list of practices that would help a person have friends. But over many years of teaching children, I've come to see it as the first drill in cultivating one of the most important attributes that a person can have



– courage. The practice of Five Firsts also aligns with research on what works to defuse bullying. It connects people to their peers and reinforces positive interpersonal communication.

People who are fearless and connected to other people will never be bullied, nor will they bully. Both are something we can improve with Cuong Nhu; Courage, camaraderie and communication being three of the Ten C's for Training.

The list is not “Five Ways to Make Friends,” nor is it the first five things you'll do with your friends. The reason the word “First” is there is because you can't wait for someone else to start. You have to act first in an uncertain situation.

Does this philosophy sound familiar? “Start the Revolution Within Yourself!” “Be the change you wish to see in the world!” Start by being the first to talk to people, to smile, to put yourself out there – in small ways that teach us about bravery. Then go deeper by offering your concern, compassion, property and labor. When we get to “care” and “share” we're risking more and therefore learning more about courage.

I use *sharing* as an example with kids because they hear about it all the time at home and at school. My example goes like this: We're at school eating lunch and after taking a bite of my sandwich I look at you with great wonder and say, “Wow. I think this is the best sandwich I've ever eaten! I can't keep something this good to myself! Would you like to share it with me?” Then I ask them two questions: “Would you take it?” and “What would you want to do next?” We discuss

that yes, you should take it, and then look for something to share back. I explain that the kid sitting next to you will see the meaningful connection and also want to share. The first domino is the only one that needs to be knocked down.

The point of the “Firsts” is to practice bravery in small ways that are sure to receive positive reinforcement, which encourages the student to grow bolder. By the time you get to “Forgiveness” you're practicing powerful selflessness. Forgiveness isn't just letting someone off on conditions; it means completely erasing their debt to you.

Now for the hard part. Bullies are kids, too. When they're after our

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Focus on Abilities

Cuong Nhu's Pyramid School .
The Three Os In Practice

By Danny Pietrodangelo, Editor

Sometimes during the first five minutes of class I think to myself: I'm in *Groundhog Day*. You know, the movie where Bill Murray re-lives the same day over and over again, redoing the same exact things he did the day before.

And then I smile to myself and appreciate my good fortune.

For the past two and one-half years I've taught a class for adults with developmental disabilities. Three students have moderate mental retardation, one has autism, two have seizure disorders, one who also has an impaired arm; and, one has multiple disabilities, including Cerebral Palsy and mental retardation, and does not speak.

(Before I go on, I want to make two important points to set things in context.) First, my students are adults and are treated as such.

Most live on their own, with supervision; some work; and all want – and are entitled to – lead everyday lives pursuing their interests and activities as part of – not isolated from – the world.

This article is in the kid's edition only because I use a modified version of the Children's Curriculum for the class, which allows me to take things slow.

Second, these students are not disabled adults – they are adults with disabilities. This is more than semantics, because words shape how we perceive things. Simply, they are people first; having a disability is second.

Think about it. Would we call someone with cancer a “cancered” person? No, it would be a person with cancer.



Our school is called the Pyramid Dojo (after the larger program for people with disabilities, in which we operate, Pyramid Studios.) Being available only to participants in the larger program, we're an official-unofficial Cuong Nhu school, bound by the same code of ethics and values of our style. Grand Master Quynh has been extraordinarily supportive, in keep with Cuong Nhu's inclusive philosophy.

With regard to my background, over the past three decades, one of my firm's specialties has been developing



education and training media and materials for and about people with disabilities. But this has been my first

hands-on experience.

The class is based on four simple precepts:

First, we focus on abilities, not disabilities. Second, an extension, do the best you can, your personal best. Third, there's no sorry in Cuong Nhu. If you mess up, don't apologize, just try it again and harder. And fourth, the three O's which are part of our logo. Simple, understandable, but no less profound.

From the outset of the class I made it clear that this wasn't the Special Olympics and you don't get a medal (here a belt) just for participating. Rather, you earn it, it takes time and some will move faster than others. There's no special treatment. Everyone is accountable to their sensei, their classmates, themselves and the dojo. No excuses.

Similar to any other class, we do stretching, conditioning, combinations, kata, self-defense, weapons, philosophy and breaking.

I like to keep the class light and fun.

Constant encouragement and affirmation is critical. Some people with disabilities have either gotten too little or too much. I avoid coddling because of a student's disability, rather I'll accommodate it by modifying a technique. I haven't had one unexcused absence since we started.

There are challenges: much slower rates of learning and comprehension.

Balance, stamina and coordination deficits that require special

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Cuong Nhu and Special Needs Students

By Deanna Bonnell

As a member of the education community I am frequently asked if martial arts, in particular Cuong Nhu, can benefit children with special education needs. My first reaction is always that Cuong Nhu can benefit anyone, no matter their physical or cognitive impairment. .

But there are questions instructors need ask and answer to help ensure that martial arts training is both beneficial and rewarding for students with special needs. Some of these include:

- Can I provide instruction in a physical setting and social atmosphere that is a safe and accepting environment?
- Do I have the instructor-to-student ratio – frequently 1:1 – to devote the time needed for students who may be slow learners?
- Does someone at my dojo have experience working with these students? Or, is there someone willing learn about the characteristics of different disabilities and about instructional methods that work best with such students?
- Do I have the desire, motivation and ability to meet the challenge? Teaching special needs students takes time and commitment.

If you can answer yes to these questions, and are ready to take on this responsibility for and endeavor that promises to be rewarding for both the instructor and student,

here are some recommendations. Involve the student's parents, since



most are very invested in the idea of giving their child the opportunity to participate in and succeed in an activity. Be honest with parents. Don't promise timelines or levels of rank, point out the more important aspects of martial arts training: improved coordination and balance, enhanced social skills and the potential for increased cognition.

Be flexible to encourage. Know what is the best effort of your student and recognize achievement even in small increments. Six stripes may happen between belts, but each should be tied to specific achievement of goals. Sometimes knowledge and understanding can't overcome physical issues right away, but form often will catch up over time.

Because of my involvement in the school system with special

education students, we frequently have students with varying disabilities involved in our dojo

classes. Rewards for our effort as instructors are often slow in coming, but the gratitude of parents and the pride in accomplishment the students feel make it very much worth the effort.

Some teaching approaches I've found to be effective include:

- Begin with a 1:1 session to determine such things as learning style, sensitivities to touch or sound, emotional status, physical limitations and more. This also gives you a chance to explain basic etiquette (i.e. bowing), mutual respect and the relationship between a sensei and student.
- Always plan more than you may have time for. Short attention spans or a tough day at school may derail the best lesson. Better to move on to something that may be more successful and come back to a frustrating lesson. But remember, some frustration is a part of learning and we need to support our students with strategies for learning what we teach.
- Focus on abilities – not disabilities. You'll be surprised and enriched as an instructor from the unanticipated successes and benefits realized

Continued next page

Deck of Cards Class

What tricks do you use to make the workout fun? I don't mean "playing games" so much as *making a regular workout seem like a game*, or giving it an aspect that keeps kids engaged through many necessary repetitions.

The "Deck of Cards Class" is something I picked up years ago from a member of an adult class I was teaching. He got it from a Hapkido instructor he'd trained under in college. The basic idea is to use the suits and numbers to determine the repetitions to be done in a class

It goes like this: I shuffle a deck of playing cards, and designate meanings for the four suits. Clubs mean 'hand techniques,' spades mean 'kicks,' hearts mean 'exercises/calisthenics,' and diamonds may mean different things, depending on the class and my whim—maybe partner work, rolls and drops, or performing in front of the group. Aces and twos of any suit usually mean kata.'

Class proceeds by letting a student draw a card, and having the whole class perform the repetitions suggested by the card.

For example, if the first card drawn is nine of spades, I'll

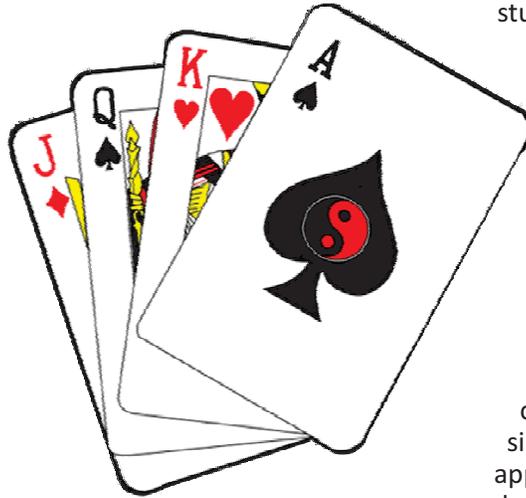
choose a kick, and we'll do a count of nine (or perhaps, nine on each leg) with a kiai on number nine. Then the next student draws.

In a class with older or more advanced students, I'll let the kids choose the techniques, jumping in only if someone is taking too long to decide. (It's important to keep things moving!) Even with the younger kids, I'll let them choose for hearts – push-ups, frog jumps, jumping jacks, etc.

When clubs are drawn, the technique might be a hand combination (as opposed to a single technique), as appropriate. If the card drawn is a low number, I might make the most of it by tripling the technique done on each count. The possibilities are endless, really.

In a good Deck of Cards Class, each student will get to draw twice or more. Even when they don't get to choose the techniques, there is a sense of excitement and control when they're drawing from the deck.

It's fun! 



– Didi Goodman

Special needs – continued from previous page

by your students.

- Help your other students know how to be patient and respectful of differences in their classmates. These are also great opportunities to bring in bully prevention information.
- Individuals with disabilities are in all areas of our communities. The buzz word is called "inclusion." Including students with special needs in Cuong Nhu training, goes straight to the core of our style: philosophy: Open Heart, Open Arts and Open Mind. 

Fear – continued from page 6

As the date of my black belt test approaches, I can't help but be nervous. I know this nervousness is natural; after all, getting a black belt is supposed to be hard. But I have been trying to channel that nervousness and fear into doing the work required to be successful.

I also know that I have already come an incredibly long way, and so I want to hold on to the spirit of my earlier self in remembering what is most important: not the rank but the skills, confidence and health that come with the rank. *zns*

Bullys – continued from page 19

kids it's easy to vilify them, but these kids are acting out a script in a desperate attempt for acceptance and identity. Recent research indicates that peer intervention advocating for the victim nearly always stops the bullying. If a bully seeks acceptance and peers denounce the act, then it will end. That is, if the bully's peers make it clear what he or she is doing is not cool, it can make a big difference.

We've all seen instances of bullying where bystanders either watch silently or pretend they don't see. Sadly this goes for teachers almost as much as for students. This is where practice with the "Firsts" begins. It's not enough to fight the bully. What really makes a difference is real courage – embracing victims and bully and building connections. Remember that people who feel good about themselves and their connections to others don't bully or get bullied. *zns*

Pyramid Dojo – continued from page 20

attention (I suspect, to some degree, these result from limited physical activity in the past.) Left versus right was a problem – my problem – until I came to realize that when teaching combinations, left or right doesn't matter much for now. Good technique is what matters. (Though it does make for a bit of chaos at 270 turns in Form 1. We can laugh about it).

The benefits of Cuong Nhu for the students has been extraordinary: Improved coordination, range of motion, muscle tone, balance, discipline -- and self-confidence. There are so many examples, here's just one.

When the student who has the impaired arm first came to class, she cradled her right hand in her left in front of her body. She used her right arm sparingly, due to the impairment – and convenience. She can't easily open and close her fingers, and physically positions them with her other hand to grab something.

She's worked very hard and the results are amazing. Now she uses both arms – insists on it. Her punches with her weak arm are now head-high, stiffed armed vertical strikes. But when she started she barely used her right arm.

We do demos at the program's Friends and Family Night. At the last two, by using a weightlifting glove to position her fingers, she performed basic tambo strikes, basic bo strikes. She also did an elbow break.

Board breaking in a demo is a training highlight for all the students. The challenge, focus, power and self-confidence inherent to breaking – and the crowd's response – offer a sense of self-satisfaction and physical accomplishment rarely accessible to people with disabilities.

This class has become an important part of my life, bringing balance and perspective. It's my own personal *Groundhog Day*. And that's what makes me smile -- I'm lucky enough to live it over and over again. *zns*

Effort and Reward – continued from page 18

other hand. Something like that could be fun.)

The only extras I do at my dojo are stars for participation in seminars, demos and tournaments – in other words, outside events that required the student to put in time and effort over and above what's expected in class.

For this, they get to sew a small star on their gi. The kids love it, of course, and much as I would prefer not to have to bribe them, when I implemented the star system, participation in these events did increase, which meant more benefit for more students.

However, badges, ribbons and cards for doing things like lining up, trying hard, and so on – to me that seems like giving special awards for doing what you're supposed to be doing in the first place. And I actually think that kind of thing – widespread as it is – contributes to their assuming they'll get all their rewards, including belt ranks, practically for free – like getting a trophy just for showing up.

On the dog-training analogy: When we work with dogs, we're trying to get them to do things to suit us humans – things they wouldn't do in a dogs-only society. That's why they need training. In that respect, the very youngest kids have something in common with the dogs – they don't yet know all the how-to's, rules and expectations of the human (adult) world, so they need training in things like how to line up, listen, try, etc. "Extra" rewards make sense, then, to help them learn and keep them engaged.

But once the kids have the basics of being in a class, the

need for those extra rewards should disappear.

The focus now should be on the work and the accomplishments, and besides the satisfaction of mastery and the confidence it brings, the visible reward system is already intrinsic – it's the belt ranks.

Which brings me back to my original question – How do we foster an understanding of the connection between effort, accomplishment and rank, so kids don't focus on getting the belt as though it's a free merit badge!

Heidi Says:

Most of my students are of the younger age group. I suppose when they get to be older I may develop a different approach. Good food for thought on the cards, I haven't implemented them yet but will probably verbally note the event and provide the actual card after class during binder time.

I think that just like parenting, you can't give in and you have to stick to your principles and no matter how much they plead or pull on your heart strings with disappointed puppy eyes, they can only get their rank (or gain special recognition like trophies etc) if they really and truly earn it!

I've seen a lot of adults act worse than kids when it comes to rank and how much emphasis they put on it. Maybe we should come up with some good tools to help adults too! 



All available at www.cuongnhu.com.
You must login.

By Sensei Joe Vardy and
Sensei Jessica Bruno.
www.cuongnhu.com

School Spirit Cuong Nhu Kids Style



STOP HUGGING ME!!!

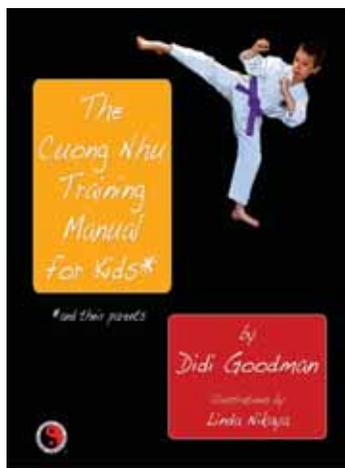
By Gordon Eilen, Sung Ming Shu dojo

I'm writing this because I'm really angry, frustrated and annoyed. It's hard even to write, because the steam coming out of my ears is obstructing my view of the computer. But I know if I don't get this out, something bad is going to happen. When I teach kids classes at the dojo, kids keep hugging me. Jeez! It's driving me crazy!

Look, I've trained in Cuong Nhu for 18 years. I can do a pretty darn good job of visualizing my opponent when I'm punching, kicking, blocking and throwing. What I can't visualize, and don't want to visualize, is some little kid running across the room with a big goofy smile on their face, latching on to me with a big hug right when I walk into the dojo. Sometimes before I even make it in the front door!

I checked the manual... "Sweet" isn't one of the 5 S's. "Cute" isn't one of the 10 C's. Neither is "Cheerful". So, you see, this isn't just a physical issue. It's killing me philosophically, too!

Please understand - I've worked really hard to look really serious. It's all about attitude, man. There's only so many times I can hide my smiles before someone sees me!



By Master Didi Goodman

S O Y V I C Z X O V C P X C E
M H P H S I L P M O C C A G N
I J G E K H E T M Y W R N Y M
L I A F N N A M B R E E Z F U
E A P I M H U R N Y L X O O O
T W E I V N E V E L C R D T P
X N N V I P Y A A O Z E R P E
L D F C I K I H R E V L H Y N
J Y A U S G C H B T U L P N A
C T B Z E X R O S F D R G H R
E T T U I L Q O Y D I G N B M
E N Q B T V B A F V N H Z F S
J E S V I R L S U C C E E D S
A I C L L P X C A L O I I G L
U T E B I C W D X O Q R G R D
M A O K B E N C O U R A G E F
F P O O A B O A D O O U Q U E
L M D S G X U T C E P S E R F
P Q H Q T E F V O U G H U L K
N I M P I Z Q J R E L X O J T

Warning! This is a super-hard puzzle. Words may appear forward or backward, up and down or diagonally. See if you can find all the words listed:

COMMUNICATE
SMILE
CARE
SHARE
FORGIVE
FRIENDSHIP

OPEN MIND
OPEN HEART
OPEN ARMS

RESPECT
ABILITIES
ENCOURAGE
PLAYFUL
PATIENT
CHALLENGE
FAIL



Clarence Wimple discovers that a home-study course in the martial arts is more difficult than he originally anticipated.



"Hey - we just gotta learn that."



I wouldn't get nasty if I were you. My "Edward has a yellow belt in Taekwondo."



No grandpa, I said will you be my uke. Not do you want a cookie!



It's a Lovely card from your sparring partner. He say's he's working on his control.



Tico has just opened a canine Cuong Nhu School. Guess what it's called. (One idea below.)

Hai Po Na Bi Te

BLACK BELT AND DAN PROMOTIONS

BLACK BELT	SHODAN	NIDAN	GODAN
<p>2011</p> <p>Edmond Cain Sofia Escudero Catherine Gallagher Johanna Greenspan- Johnston Jonathan Herr Calvin Kern Suren Kulkarni Mary Lackner Troy Landers Gene Monroe, Jr. Madeleine Ngo Thao Uyen Pham- Vu Trung Duong Pham- Vu Jose Rosario Dawn White</p> <p>2012</p> <p>James Alaimo Chris Brown Richards Bruns Justin Burrell Pamela Consear Sara Falls Daniel Forquer James Forquer Brendan Gill Pryce Hadley John Kelley Johnson Kung Woody Little Clara Maguire Marissa McDonald Tiana Miller- Leonard William Neumeier Emilee Orton Corie Ralston Erin Riddle Amandine Roche Rosa Rossi- Goldthorpe David Strouhal Andrew Valentine Benny Varon Scott Vignon James Van Eck III Nicole Wieck Asher Wolf Cristian Woroch Andrea Yunis</p>	<p>2011</p> <p>Axel Adalsteinsson Angel Albanese Blake Allen Emma Atherton Erik Bland Rosanne Boudreau Gilberto Cardona Molly Clark Joshua Cunningham Ken Drogue Ayman Fawaz Rosario Fico Rick Goldstein Tim Gray Steve Jenkins Nicholas Lolli Don Massarelli Austin Miller Clint Neale John Norman Parnee Paras Chris Perry David Register Duston Richards Brian Shaw David Tamayo Alex Vergara Kyle Visitacion Michael Wieck Daniel Zambrano</p> <p>2012</p> <p>Ed Cain Paul Corriveau Pavlo Dmytrenko Sofia Escudero Rachel Gowan Johanna Greenspan- Johnston Jonathan Herr Mary Lackner Gene Monroe Jr. Madeleine Ngo Hanson Nguyen Felix Noreiga Jose Rosario Rob Weien Dawn White</p>	<p>2011</p> <p>Tyler Ciccone Buffy Ewertz Janice Gates Demetrius Harris Oliver Johnson Jr. Shawn McElroy Carlos Phelan Laura Spycia Mark Staples</p> <p>2012</p> <p>Trevor Bonnell Michael Chriss Joseph Cordell Madeline Crouse Julia Granacher Andy McLaughlin Thanh Nguyen Theresa Smith Brannon Sroka</p> <p>SANDAN</p> <p>2011</p> <p>Deanna Bonnell James Brown Bill Ceccherini Patti Ceccherini Craig Cleckner Tanner Critz Bill Diaz Joshua Hemielowski Seth Hemielowski Keith Morin Steve Smith Jim Thieman</p> <p>2012</p> <p>Robert White Jr.</p> <p>YONDAN</p> <p>2011</p> <p>Karen Bradshaw Bert Miller</p> <p>2012</p> <p>John Hooley Tony Kay Ben McGimsey Kathy Varady</p>	<p>2011</p> <p>Joe Varady Donald Williams</p> <p>ROKUDAN</p> <p>2011</p> <p>Terri Giamartino Didi Goodman Howard Hannon Anh Ngo Elizabeth Roman</p> <p>Shichidan</p> <p>2011</p> <p>Kirk Farber</p> <p>2012</p> <p>Ricki Kay Thu Ngo</p> <p>KUDAN</p> <p>2011</p> <p>Kudan (9th degree*): John Burns</p> <p>Kudan is the highest rank in our Cuong Nhu Master Burns is the only one who holds that rank in Cuong Nhu. Congratulations Master Burns!</p>



Taking a timeout at IATC

