



Dragon Nhus



The Official Publication of the Cuong Nhu Oriental Martial Arts Association

May, 2016

IATC 2016

Seize the Moment

INSIDE

Cuong Nhu Turns 50

ALSO

Dojo Development

Starting Your Own Dojo?

Cuong Nhu Schools Come

In All Shapes and Sizes

AND

"When I'm 64"

Older Martial Artists

Congratulations 2015 Candidates



Black Belt: 15

Brian Cebrian, Todd Morrone, Darrick Ball, Gaylan Lewallen, Katie Whitney, Shawn Whitney, Brianne Dimalanta, David Rees, Rosanne McDonald, Teresa Vargas, Caleb Boyd, Seth Plockelman, Estrella Silva, Stephanie Vollmer, Dirk Botterbusch



Shodan: 15

Stephan Rothwell, Dave Davis, Jennifer Argle, Bradley Austin, Kory Miron, Suren Kulkarni, Amir Carlock, James Schoen, Marianna Kaufman, Paul Bartels, Alexander Ngo, Christina Ngo, Rebecca Ngo, James Upright, Stacy Smith



Nidan: 3

Dawn White, Emma Atherton- Staples, Clint Neale



Sandan: 1

John Somerville



Yondan: 1

Mark Villanueva



Shichidan: 1

Nguyễn văn Nhân

Dragon Nhus

MAY, 2016

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THE MAGAZINE OF THE

CUONG NHU

ORIENTAL MARTIAL ARTS
ASSOCIATION
A NATIONAL NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION

CNOMAA

4654 Julington Creek Rd.
Jacksonville, FL32258



Dear Cuong Nhu Members,

Yesterday is history.

Tomorrow is a mystery.

So “Seize the Moment” today to control your destiny!

Many of us are planners, thinking far ahead gives us the comfort of knowing what is coming up in our future. However, anticipating unfavorable results can paralyze your willingness to take action. Fear and anxiety often occur when you expect an outcome that may not be to your liking. Over-planning with fear of failure will become procrastination. So, in this case, what is more important to you: the journey or the destination?

In the game of life, it is essential to enjoy every step and every day. It is the journey and the process that determines your happiness. I often state that preparation is 90 percent, and final execution is only 10 percent. Learn to accept reality and enjoy every moment of every day to fully enrich your memories.

Focus on the present moment, and do your best rather than expecting to be the best! The path of life is constantly changing and evolving. Enjoy the process each day, because time goes by too fast. Take one step at a time, and make lots of friends along the way.

When opportunity knocks, answer the door. You must be willing to attempt new endeavors to experience different feelings. Prepare to “Seize any Moment” as it comes, even unexpected. Otherwise, fear of failure is failure in itself. Success is your ability to progress in any aspect of life.

I'd like to sign off this letter by leaving you all a last paragraph of a poem that had an impact in my life since I turned 18. I was required to memorize the entire poem as a Freshman Greek pledge:

You may fool the whole world down the pathway of years and get the pats on the back as you pass – but your final reward will be heartache and tears – if you've cheated the person in the glass.

Quynh Ngo



Seize the Moment

“Progression is Perfection”

“Whatever It Takes”

Recollections of O'Sensei and the Early Days of Cuong Nhu



By Master Frank Van Essen

I was fortunate to have known O'Sensei since he first arrived in the United States. We were graduate students together at the University of Florida, each working on a PhD in Entomology. He told me he was going to start teaching karate classes at the University for free and asked if I was interested in joining the class. Since I had a little experience with a Japanese style previously, I decided to give it a try. That was in 1971 and a lot of things have happened since then.

The first class had about 40 students, as I recall. We started working out on the first floor of a graduate student housing building, where O'Sensei was living at the time. Every time we worked out, we had to move some ping pong tables out of the way in the room where we had class and put them back again at the end of class. Shortly thereafter we moved to a small gym on the University campus next to Florida Field, where the now Gators play. We sometimes worked out on the field and the artificial turf was often hot and rough on our feet. One tough exercise was running up and down the stadium stairs until O'Sensei said we could stop. He was old school then and essentially what happened was if O'Sensei said "jump." we said "how high?" The philosophy then was "no pain, no gain". But, we were all young college students, so that was ok. This later changed to "no brain, no gain." meaning that we should use some common sense in how we worked out.

I remember that since we were graduate students together, I would sometimes pass O'Sensei in the hallways or on campus and he would almost always stop and give me some pointers on my technique. Mary Davis (later to become Master Mary Davis) was a secretary in the Entomology Department at that time and knew O'Sensei from being in the department. She also became a member of the first Cuong Nhu class. Master Lap was also a member of the first class, which was known as the Dragon class.

O'Sensei was a very talented martial artist with exceptional abilities. The advanced classes were always enlightening. He often offered more than you could grasp, sometimes with complicated combinations that were easy for him to do – but certainly not for us. There was so much that he wanted to present that at times it felt like you were standing in front of a fire hydrant with all that he was throwing at you. At first he taught mostly by demonstration and then gradually added more and more explanation to his teachings. His eventual grasp of the English language was very good, especially for a non-native speaker. He expected much from us as students and was always pushing us to do better – be stronger, be faster, work harder. I remember sparring with O'Sensei – it was a humbling experience. He was very good with his hand techniques and very fast. O'Sensei was probably the most

impressive person I've ever met. I am very fortunate to have known him, to have studied with him, to have traveled with him and to have learned from him.

It was an honor to be his student.

By Master Ricki Kay

I went to my first Cuong Nhu picnic in December of 1973. It was somewhere in the Gainesville area. I watched Master Lap, John Benson and Phil Morgan take their black belt tests. The day started with group testing for lower ranks. I was watching my boyfriend at the time take his first test. Master Dong conducted the test, and promoted everyone right there. When lower rank testing was complete, three people performed a variety of martial arts moves and broke several stacks of boards. Master Dong then promoted those three people to black belt. I was in awe; I had never seen anything like this. I knew of the martial arts, but had never really seen it live or even on television. I noticed that each of the three people was of a different build and stature, yet here they all were, breaking boards and performing the same types of moves. And they all were able to reach black belt!

Then Master Dong came to the front of the crowd and asked for two volunteers. He chose probably the two largest people in attendance. They looked like linebackers for a football team. He instructed each one to stand on his side. Then he put his arm on each person's shoulder and instructed them to try and bend it. He sang a song (in Vietnamese) while doing this. Neither one of these huge men could even budge his arms!! I was mesmerized! I was astonished. After he finished his singing, he spoke about what the martial arts was really all about to him. He talked about the need to connect with people and family. He talked about working with others around you and sharing. He told us we should never have to use our martial arts if we live correctly.

Something in this touched me deeply. I saw people of different sizes and abilities who had each succeeded in obtaining their black belt. Maybe with sufficient time and dedication I could do as well. I had recently lost my father and was experiencing a deep depression. I saw the martial arts as something I could do every day and not get bored.

I joined Cuong Nhu in the very next class they offered, in January 1974.

... Many years later Master Dong came out to our house in Seattle in the early 1990's. We worked out almost all day and late into the night. The next day, we worked out while the kids were at school. We shared our thoughts and just talked about kids. I told him that Sarah had taken up track and was doing some jogging events with me. He told me that I had to keep encouraging her to stay active. I assured him I would.

He suddenly got up and went to his room and came back. He handed me a twenty dollar bill and said you must keep her active, I want to pay for her next track event! I didn't know what to say and I didn't want to deny him giving me this gift, so I graciously accepted it..

... Another time we had invited Master Dong out for one of our West Coast training events. It was time to fold up the chairs and wipe down the tables. Master Dong started wiping tables and folding chairs. Someone came up to me and said, "What do we do?" I said he is a normal person and just wants to feel part of the group. Let him do whatever he wants.

...Going back to those early years, Master Dong had just returned from Vietnam, and we were at one of the very early training camps outside Gainesville. He did not want women to spar men during a test. He said it would look bad. We had just spent almost 3 years battling to get "women's rights" in Cuong Nhu. We wanted to break boards, do the same amount of pushups etc. Now we were



being told that we would not be able to spar men. Mary Davis and almost all of the women went up to Master Dong and we asked whether, if we could show him that we would be OK, not get hurt and not look bad would he consider changing his mind. He agreed. So, we lined up the men on one side of the room and all the women on the other side of the room. We were allowed to choose who we would spar. I chose Frank Van Essen; I knew he had impeccable control. I had just taken a class from John Burns on foot sweeps. I decided to try the foot sweep. It worked perfectly. Each female sparred one male. We convinced Master Dong that we could do so and stay safe and not look bad. He changed his mind. 🙏

O'Sensei's Escape From Vietnam



NEWSLETTER

*****SPECIAL EDITION*****

August, 1977

809 West University Avenue, Gainesville, Florida 32601

NGO DONG IS COMING HOME!



NGO DONG

On July 7, the Cuong Nhu Karate Association received word that it's Founder had escaped Vietnam and is returning to Gainesville. Everyone is very excited over the news and hopes to see him very soon. O'Sensei Ngo Dong came to the U.S. in 1971 to study at the University of Florida as a graduate student. At this time he also founded the Cuong Nhu Karate School here in Gainesville which rapidly grew in membership. In June of 1974, Dr. Ngo Dong received the Ph.D. degree in Entomology from the University of Florida and departed for his homeland of Vietnam. He remained a professor at the University of Hue until September, 1974. He was then appointed as President of Quang-Da University in Da Nang. On April, 1975 sad news came to us by telegram from relatives that Dong had been executed after the fall of Vietnam. A memorial service was given in his honor by karate students at the University of

Florida.

However, in September, 1975 we received a letter from Dong. He was alive and in a re-education camp in Saigon. We received infrequent letters from him during this time, but he was alive and we were grateful when we did get a letter.

Then in July, 1977 the "great" news came to the Cuong Nhu Center--Dong had escaped with him family and hoped to return to Gainesville. Parts of the two letters from him are as follows:

Djakarta, 7/1/77

Dear Cuong Nhu friends: At last my family and myself got out of the "Red Hell". This is the second time we tried to escape and we succeeded. It was like in a spy movie, I'll tell the whole story later on when we'll meet together. I was indebted to my friend Mr. Vo Dinh Chuc who owned a small boat (10m3c long

2m3c wide, 1 cylinder 11/16 hp) in a small harbor 300 km North of Saigon, consented to bring us along with his family. The two families had to leave Saigon by small groups (2 or 3 people each group) bringing nothing except clothes on the body (we'll be arrested if we bring luggages, money, or going in a group like a family) we changed bus then trucks, at last we arrived at the place at night, we jumped in the boat and fled to the ocean at 9:30 PM June 18th on June 22nd we ran out of fuel, food, water. We called SOS for 2 days. We met 14 big ships but they didn't answer to our SOS call. At last an Indonesian ship (6500 tons) named Garsa Tiga picked us up in the ocean, by then we covered already 600km without sleeping. They brought us to Singapore where we had no permission to land, then we arrived Djakarta 27 June, we had to stay aboard 2 days for investigation because we didn't have papers. A delegation of the United Nations and US Embassy came to ask us, we filled out many forms. Then we moved to a Vietnamese refugee camp where 108 other Vietnamese refugees lived there already 6 mths waiting for permission to go to USA, Australia and France. All procedures took a very long time. We hope that Cuong Nhu Karate Association could help us to shorten our stay in Djakarta in sending letter of sponsoring my family and my friend's family Vo Dinh Chuc the man who saved us in bringing us along with him in his boat. Hope to see you soon. Ngo Dong

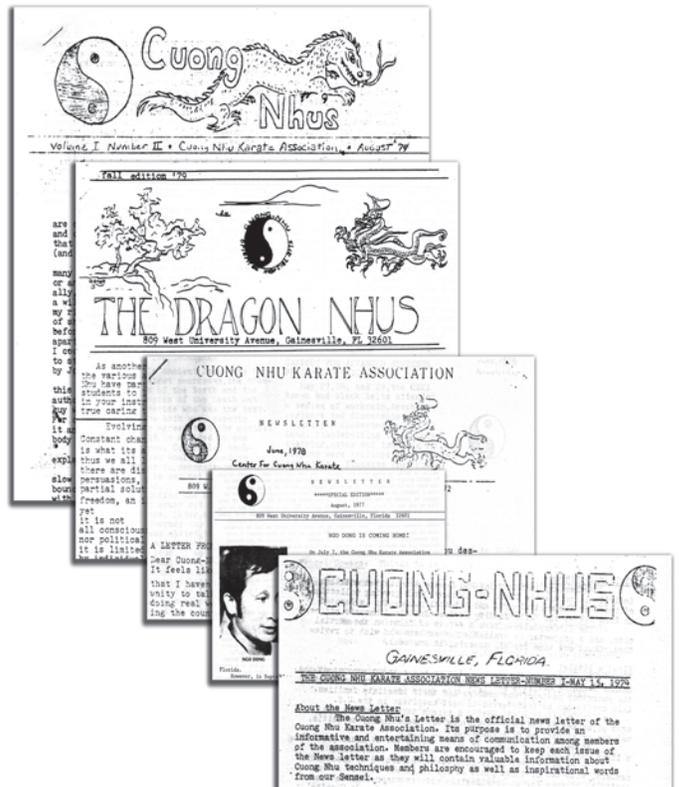
Djakarta, 7/13/77

Dear Cuong Nhu friends: I couldn't keep my tears in reading your telegram, it reminds all my sentiments to all of you accumulated for a long time. Since I left the US more than 2 yrs. ago, part of my mind and of my body is still with you. I'm very anxious to know the news of all of you. Two years, 2 mths and 20 days under the communist regime weaken my memory, I feel like I'm ten years older. I was so tired and on the nerves with the cat and mouse game, I didn't know when the communists would arrest me I'm so proud to escape although my house was guarded. They thought that I'm an ant on a cup surrounded by water, but suddenly I was transformed into a "butterfly". We are living now in a refugee camp an isolated village located 30kms from Djakarta. There are 109 refugees waiting there for 6 mths. At the beginning of August, there will be 50 persons departing for the US, I don't know if were among them, the United Nations will pay the trip tickets and later on we have to reimburse them whenever we get a job. Would you apply for me a job, entomologist or karate instructor, before hand so that I can start right away as soon as we arrive in Gainesville. There will be 600 persons over more than 3000 refugees having a change to go to US in mid-August. Other persons will depart in October. I hope with clever and quick arrangement we'll be among the group departing in August. I hope that the last two years would help me to write a book, Cuong Nhu philosophy becomes deeper and richer. Many thanks for all your help. Hope to receive your news soon. My best wishes to all of you. Love, Ngo Dong.

Previously Unpublished Poem By O'Sensei Dong

☆ **FLY SKY HIGH** ☆
 Break ~~surpass~~ your limits! Extend your reach
 Shake your brain, bake your soul.
 make your game.
 No name, no blame, no fame, no shame!
 Discover yourself and the world.
 Gear not what you see, express what you believe.
 Hate nobody but love everybody.
 Take to your wings and set yourself free.
 Fly high and wide as far as you can see.
 Think wise long before you die.
 Make your dreams come true, the best they can be
 You leave the crowd but still live in the clouds.
 Your spirit reflects the rainbow of diversity.
 We all become one and we are part of God.
 The concept that all human kind's accept
*W. O. Dong 3/30/94 Then humanity reaches
 Eternity*

Dragon Nhus Established 1974



Celebrating 42 years

Cuong Nhu Historic Reunion

By Bao Ngo



A historic reunion took place during 2015, the 50-year anniversary of Cuong Nhu's founding in Hue, Vietnam: For the first time since O'Sensei Ngo Dong fled Vietnam in the 1970's, Cuong Nhu members in the United States made contact with members of surviving Cuong Nhu schools in Vietnam, and welcomed Master Nguyen van Nhan, Head of Cuong Nhu in Vietnam, to IATC 2015. Master Nhan attended and taught at IATC, and was promoted to Shichidan by Grandmaster Quynh Ngo.



Master Nguyen van Nhan, Sensei, Cat Nguyen (O'Sensei's former student), Master Lap.

For many years it had been assumed no Cuong Nhu schools survived in Vietnam. However, Master Lap Hoang made contact through (believe it or not) Facebook, and learned there were in fact thriving schools training under the Cuong Nhu logo, and keeping the memory of O'Sensei Ngo Dong. Master Lap put their leaders in touch with the Ngo family and the Cuong Nhu Facebook community. The idea of a meeting or exchange soon developed. At that point, a call went out to the membership of Cuong Nhu, to raise funds to bring Master Nhan to IATC and sponsor him on a brief tour of the U.S.

After IATC, he visited Tallahassee with Master Lap, received a tour of Gainesville and its Cuong Nhu history, visited with Grandmaster Quynh in Jacksonville, then travelled to the West Coast to visit more dojos, as well as to see family members from whom he had been separated for many years. He visited and taught class at Rohai Dojo in Berkeley with Master John Burns, Redwood Dojo in Oakland with Master Didi Goodman, and Fairwood Martial Arts in Renton, Washington with Masters John and Ricki Kay.

With Cuong Nhu Vietnam and Cuong Nhu "Overseas" (as they call us) reunited in friendship, we can all look forward to future visits and exchanges. For now, if you'd like to "visit" Master Nhan's schools and see some of his hundreds of students in action, look for Van Nhan Huong Can on Facebook.







If You're Considering Opening A Dojo

The Dojo Development Committee Will Help

Information is important, and if you're thinking of starting a dojo, you will need to read and research. But the true strength of Cuong Nhu is that we have a community of instructors and professionals - real people with wide experience and deep wisdom – willing to share their knowledge, talk things over, and support your work.

Whether you dream of working out in your garage with a small group of friends, or making a living from a large commercial school—or any of several possibilities in between—there are members of the Cuong Nhu community who have been there, and they're ready to back you up with advice, resources, and moral support.

Dojo Development Resources

The Dojo Development Committee was founded to pull together, and make accessible, a variety of resources designed to help dojos—new and existing —grow and thrive. One of the most important parts of the Committee's work is developing a comprehensive guide with information an instructor will find helpful for stating and operating a dojo. For instance it will include materials, lesson plans, legal documents, great ideas and success stories, as well as contact lists of experienced heads-of-schools willing to serve as mentors or consultants—or simply to chat —about running a dojo.

Some material is already available online, in the 'Resources' section of My Site at www.cuongnhu.com. (The indefatigable Joe Varady has contributed extensive materials for this section of the site.

To help you target your specific resource needs, for planning and organizational purposes, the



Grand Master Quynh and Master Didi Goodman discuss dojo development

committee has tentatively – and roughly - identified five categories of schools:

- *Garage (or home) Dojo*
- *Community Dojo (including public or private and community programs)*
- *School/University Club*
- *Commercial Dojo*
- *Non-Profit*

The committee is currently seeking and assembling more content for the guide, both original material and links to online resources. One specific need is contributions from professionals with knowledge in specific areas such as legal/liability, insurance, non-profit incorporation, grant writing, and other relevant fields.

How You Can—and Should--Contribute

The Dojo Development Committee wants to hear from you. If there are questions you'd like to see answered, or specific resources you want included on the site under construction, please let us know.

If you have experience starting and running a dojo, and are willing to be contacted, please send your name and contact info to the Dojo Development Committee via dojo.development@cuongnhu.com, including a brief statement of your experience, and where (under which categories) you should be listed. Likewise, if you have relevant professional knowledge you are willing to share, contact us at the same address.

If you simply want to share some thoughts and advice, or contribute documents or resources you've found useful, by all means, send them. Also feel free to approach committee head Master Allen Hoss, and committee members Joe Varady, Tanner Critz, Karen Bradshaw and Didi Goodman if you see them passing by at IATC, let them know what you would like to see, and what you would like to contribute.

To pique your interest and spur you to action, the following pages include a sampling of advice and encouragement from just a few of Cuong Nhu's experienced leaders. 📖

The University Club Dojo



Joseph Cordell, Seihou no Mori Dojo, Western Washington University :

“If you're going to start a new University Club, here is something you need to remember: Perseverance. At club showcases there are dozens of people who express interest in your club, maybe 5 percent show up to classes and maybe one percent stay committed. You have to be patient and keep trying each and every quarter or semester. The club might not pick up and get any attendance the first school year, due to lack of publicity and/or lack of public interest. It takes a while to build a foundation that students would be comfortable in joining.”

Darius Jones, Tiger Dojo, Clemson, SC

“If you're going to start or run a University Club Dojo, one thing to remember is that college students are busy with all sorts of activities.

They are going to form friendships in those activities. The activities where they form the strongest friendships are going to be the ones they stick with. From the first day we get new members, we make sure to reach out to them and make them feel welcome. We try to get them to understand that Cuong Nhu is more than just a class or workout; it's family. I try to create an environment where students feel safe and wanted. That is usually enough to keep them coming back.”

Donald Williams, Kim Hiep Si Dojo, Orlando FL

“If you're going to start a University-based Club, here are a few things to have in place. 1. A strong faculty advisor who will be your advocate when dealing with university officials. It makes it easy to get what you need, when the faculty member will go to bat for you. 2. You will have to be very flexible in your training times & locations. University Clubs are usually overseen by

Student Government Associations or Sports Clubs. These are students themselves, so the relations you have with them will change each year. You'll have to maintain and renew those relationships over time. 3. You need a strong Club President. As with most student organizations, the students legally run the show. A dojo on campus has to have a symbiotic relationship between the club officers and Head Instructor. Above all else, remember a University Club is still a Dojo. Respect the Etiquette.”

Robert First, Shiwa Dojo, Raleigh, NC

“Tip 1: If you get a space and at first nobody shows up... work out during the time you have, never just leave. My first student at Boston Cuong Nhu bumped into me in the last five minutes of my workout; I was there alone once again after weeks of nobody coming to my new classes. He saw me working out, we talked, he came back. Two weeks later he showed up with, now this is the truth, he showed up with 27 women from his dorm. That was my first dues-paying class at Boston University.

“Tip 2: Respect any space given to you, no matter its condition. If it is dirty, help to clean it. Get to know the staff, be willing to go an extra step, show your respect. And if there are rules, follow the rules! When Elizabeth and I started our dojo in Boca Raton we got a giant space in the gym, with mats. We loved it. One day word came down that outside groups would no longer be allowed.

We met in the office and they told Wado-kai and Judo—and us—that the free ride was over. After the meeting we were taken aside and given special permission to stay, because we had gone out of our way to stick by the rules.”



The Garage Dojo

Jon Fitzpatrick (retired, formerly of Empire Dojo, Santa Rosa, CA:

“If you are going to run a Garage Dojo, two things I would suggest: 1) Have a good flooring surface. This is essential, as bare concrete is very hard on the feet and joints. Consider investing in some mats. 2) To maximize space and appearance the training area should be mostly empty of the usual garage junk, such as shelves, tools, chemicals, etc.”

Mark Brandenburg, Kim Hiep Si Dojo, Orlando, FL :

“If you’re going to start/run a Garage-type Dojo, treat it as if it were a real dojo (because it is!). Set specific times for classes and don’t vary them except for emergencies. Keep the dojo clean and free of distractions. It is easy at home to leave a cell or house phone within reach, or answer if someone knocks on the door—but don’t do it....If you’re casual about dates/times, or take care of personal business while working out, the students will not feel you are giving them your full attention (because you’re not!). While I don’t run regular classes out of my garage anymore, I do have our students from Kim Hiep Si come to workout in the garage when we are on break from campus, so I still keep these rules in mind.”

The Community Dojo



Victoria Johnson and Russ Eggleston, San Diego Cuong Nhu Academy, CA:

“You can have a Community-based Dojo even if you are busy and have a job. If you can connect with a location such as a YMCA/YWCA, Boys and Girls Club, or Salvation Army Kroc Center (which is where we are), then you don't have to worry about things such as insurance, rent, or even collecting payments. We do not get paid, so all the

funds the Kroc Center collects from our students go to them. All we do is walk in, teach, and leave. Since we both have full time jobs, this works best for us.”

Danny Pietrodangelo, Pyramid Dojo, Tallahassee, FL:

“I have kind of an unusual Community dojo: it’s part of a non-profit program, Pyramid Studios, that provides services to adults with developmental disabilities. The students include adults with mental retardation, autism,



seizure disorders (controlled) and non-specific disabilities.

“It’s free to the students. Pyramid has bought us a little equipment. However, I’ve also been able to call on some of my friends for support. The response has been incredible (and tax deductible). So if you have a community school, don’t be shy asking for support. When we have demos at the program’s “Friends and Family Night” we get small donations as well.

“Our workout space is minuscule, but we make it work.

You have to remember, even though you’re helping the students, you are still a guest when you’re in someone else’s facility space. Make friends with the director and staff, respect the facility’s rules and help out where you can.”

Joe Varady, Satori Dojo, Phoenixville, PA:

“Take time to consider how much of a time and financial commitment you are able to make. As a full-time dad, running a community-based non-profit, teaching at a public facility, has offered me all the rewards of teaching Cuong Nhu, without feeling I have over-extended myself. Although my program started small, over the years it has grown to over 50 regular students. To begin a similar program, I would recommend contacting your local

Continued on next page

The Commercial Dojo

recreation department or school district to see what help and advice they can offer.”

Richard “Bud” Place, Northern Lights Martial Arts Center, Marquette, MI

If you are concerned about being able to afford a space for your dojo, consider sharing the expenses with another group. For example, Northern Lights is a small town, Community Non-Profit. We are all volunteer; instructors pay dues like everybody else. We share the dojo and the corporation with Marquette TaeKwonDo, in order to afford the facility. There are many friendly interactions between the two schools.

“Also, you can start small and start cheap—at a church, school, or community hall. When I started Cuong Nhu, class was in a city park. Buy essential equipment with your own funds.

“Most important, though, remember that the students make the dojo. Talk with them; pay attention to what attracts them and keeps them coming. Our students cite things like the pleasant, family-like atmosphere; friendly, enthusiastic instructors (no mean “drill sergeants”); high-quality instruction and style; and the instructors’ dedication. Remember those points and take them seriously.”

Ron Thomas, Tallest Tree Dojo, Gainesville, FL

“Tallest Tree is both a community dojo and a non-profit (one might say negative profit). I would say a couple of things. It is useful to have a critical mass of students for people to see when they come in the door. I would put this number at 10 to 20. This figure creates energy in the dojo and allows for several activities to be featured at once,

thus making things interesting for prospective students. The second point concerns marketing. We have tried a number of methods to attract students, including various means of advertising, community demos, websites and so forth. The only thing that has really worked for us (besides the occasional serendipitous walk-in) is word of mouth

from current and former students and instructors. So maintain your good reputation!”

Didi Goodman, Redwood Dojo, Oakland, CA:

“A Community Dojo doesn’t necessarily mean you can’t make a living. When I started out 25 years ago, I worked by day and offered evening classes two days a week, one hour for kids, one for adults. But those classes grew crowded and I had to expand, until I had full classes five to six days a week. At some point I was able to drop my other work to focus on Redwood Dojo. In fact, I practically had to drop my other work in order to do a good job. I have made a modest but satisfying living all these years. How the fees and expenses work will depend on your city’s rules, and specific arrangements with the center.

“If you’re going to start classes at a Community Center, first of all foster good relations with the staff and other programs. Be helpful; be flexible; take care of your own messes, and if necessary,

everyone else’s! Don’t be the person complaining and making demands.

“Second, be professional. Run the dojo as if your life and income depend on it, even if they don’t. Don’t be late for class unless your neighborhood is on fire (true story)! Don’t cancel class unless you’re in the hospital and can’t find a sub (almost true story).”



Gordon Eilen, Sung Ming Shu Dojo, Atlanta, GA:

“Sung Ming Shu Dojo is incorporated as a 501(c)3 non-profit entity. We have a Head of School and an Executive Committee that meets regularly to provide advice and direction. Ours is a long-standing, large school. Keep in mind that if you’re going to run a similar school, you’ll need help; it’s practically impossible for one person alone. A strong team of dedicated, volunteer leaders is essential. And relying on volunteers can at times be a challenge. But when things come together, and dozens of students are training and sweating and laughing together, then it’s all worth it!”

Shawn “Smack” McElroy, Atlanta Karate, Atlanta, GA

“Atlanta Karate is a non-profit organization, and teaches over 220 students in after-school programs at eight schools. Keep in mind that the program started out with just a few students at a single school, and grew over a period of years. We now have two full-time and four part-time paid instructors. If you want to start an after-school program, you’ll need to be persistent. Most schools have a person in charge of after school activities, but finding that person is sometimes a challenge. Once you make contact be sure to have all your important info ready—for example, you’ll need insurance. If you are a non-profit, that will help; and most schools require background checks and fingerprints from the local police department. While this list seems daunting, it is much easier than you think.

“Once you’re in, you are still ‘low man on the totem pole’ when schedule conflicts arise. Be flexible and work with the school. Bring flowers to the staff; volunteer at career day; donate to the PTA; buy an ad in the school flyer; sponsor the baseball team. The more you give to the school, the more they will see you as part of the family. Finally, give the kids great classes.”



Doug Storm, Atlanta Karate, Atlanta, GA:

“Are you wondering whether it’s worth all the effort, persistence and hard work to start and run a children’s program? I’ll just share a story. Gabriella started in our after-school program when she was in kindergarten. She is now in 5th grade. Not long ago she came to class with a piece of paper in her hand. She ran to me with a big smile on her face, and handed me the piece of paper saying she had drawn me a picture. I looked at her artwork; it was a cat, and it was very nicely done. She then explained ‘The kitty’s name is Golden Spotts! I drew

you a cat because I know how much you like them. Its eyes are blue because yours are, too. And it has golden spots because that is what you are made of on the inside.’

“It’s moments like this that make working with children rewarding and very special to me.”

John Kay, Komoku-ten Dojo (Fairwood Martial Arts), Renton, WA:

“I suggest anyone who thinks they might want to teach martial arts, first offer their services as sempai at an established dojo or university club. Find out if you really want to commit that much effort, that many hours, long-term. If you pass that test, then begin looking for a suitable space to open your own dojo. Start out in a public facility with minimum commitment. If it’s meant to be, you may grow into a commercial operation. But whatever type and size of dojo you establish, remember: You are making a commitment to your students. Don’t start if you are just going to walk away.”

Ricki Kay, Komoku-ten Dojo (Fairwood Martial Arts), Renton, WA

“If you are going to start a commercial dojo, make sure you are truly 100 percent committed. You will be your

Continued on next page

own boss, but you will wear many hats. You will be the janitor, the window washer and the accountant. You will have to learn to do your own advertising, your own retail sales set-up, and still teach all the classes. You will be mom to some and a psychologist to others. You might not get rich monetarily, but you will live a full life touching many people.

“On the business side: Do your homework before signing a lease. Get a demographic study done of the area. Check it out at different times of day. Check out the crime patterns, if any. Never accept a first time lease offer. Stay on top of your accounting and all business transactions. The business is yours 24/7. Make the most of it!”

Tanner Critz, Gouitsu Dojo, Little Rock, AR:

“If you'd like to start a commercial school from scratch (rent a space, market and start a school in a new area), write a full business plan to get a start-up loan, even if you don't need one. This is a great exercise that will force you to think over your budget, plan for the future, create tools to measure your progress, and confront any weaknesses in your plan. Have a business person or experienced investor look it over and tell you what they see. While the strength of your school will eventually arise from your teaching and leadership, its hard to do those things well when you're struggling with the business side.”

Terri Giamartino, Hoa Sen Dojo, Emeryville, CA:

“The main reason I prefer running a commercial school is the control it gives me over managing my business and turning my love and passion for my art into a profitable venture. I can grow and expand as needed. I get to create the kind of environment I want for my students without restriction.

“My number one piece of advice for others is this: Try to spend at least 15 minutes every day doing something that directly focuses on getting students. You can easily get buried in busy work, but constant marketing for new students is imperative if you want to not only survive, but grow!”

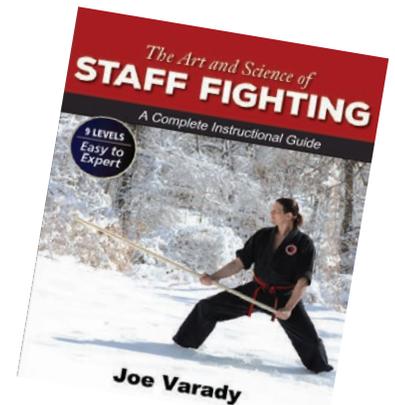
John Burns, Rohai Dojo, Berkeley, CA:

“Always remember that old saying, ‘The person who says it can't be done should not interrupt the person doing it.’ You might encounter critics and skeptics, but if your passion is for martial arts and you want to make your living sharing it with others, pursue it and give it everything you have. Those of us who have lived it are happy to share what we know. I'm available to talk any time, and so are many of my successful and accomplished colleagues.”

NEWS

Sensei Joe Varady's New Book

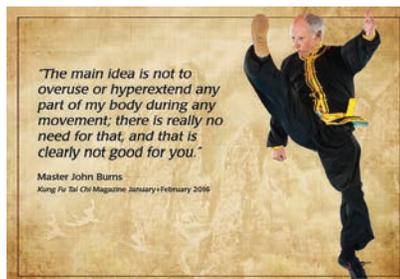
Sensei Joe Varady's new book, *The Art and Science of Staff Fighting*, is being released by YMAA Publishing in November 2016. In his book, Joe teaches a system comprising nine progressive stages of training, or ease of learning and for developing a proper understanding of staff combat. Each level includes detailed instruction as well as a workout specifically designed to help the reader master the material.



Master John Burns Featured In National Magazine



Master John Burns is featured in *Kung Fu Tai Chi Magazine*, Jan-Feb 2016 issue, with a six-page spread titled “Longevity in Modern Wushu.”



Portable Dojo: A Dojo Is More Than A Space

By Grandmaster Quynh and Sensei Jessica Ngo

For eight years, World Headquarters was fortunate enough to train in our own building. When we started the dojo, we accepted five year olds and older. Many of our black belts, who had moved with us from UNF (Osprey dojo), were committed to this new venture. However, for every business, the enjoyment must balance the cost of doing the work. Even though we rented out the space to two other martial arts groups, the overhead, as well as teaching extra classes and cleaning the facility on our own, did not balance out the efforts. Therefore, we decided to sell the building and move all of us to another location to get more visibility. For the next 12 months our new work out space was at the most popular fitness/gym facility in the Jacksonville area. Unfortunately, sacrifices had to be made. Giving up mats, training on a much smaller floor space, and being unable to swing weapons freely were just a few newly experienced limitations.

This transition was challenging, but turned out to be one of the better experiences for us all. We learned how to throw and fall on hard surfaces, executing in a slower motion and with greater mindfulness. Our awareness increased by rolling softer with greater body control on much thinner, fold-out mats. On the weekends, our black belt and Dan candidates would train at our house and set up mats in the driveway. Wow, with the Florida sun beating on the black asphalt, and no shade in sight, pre- planning and quick execution of techniques were necessary before the tanning lotion (spf 40) wore off, or in our case dripped off.

Hmmm, now we understand why Olympians train in an adverse condition before the big race. In fact, it was so favorable that the candidates couldn't wait to take the real test in an AC climate with real mats, and a cool, wooden

floor. For us practicing weapons outside was also a plus. Most of the time, we had to wear shoes since the hot asphalt was burning our feet. Even though this made it a little more difficult to slide into stances, the great thing about it was that we encountered a more realistic way of movement with real life attire. Also, having no walls to specify 'front' and 'back,' made us internalize the katas in greater depth. We often used our dining room window as a mirror to see our reflection and make the necessary

corrections to the techniques. One could say, we figured out how not to only train in the "Martial," but also the "Arts" part, which was tapped into through our creative ways of coming up with alternative training options.

Eventually we found our new dojo space, a community center at a local church, centrally located with a great floor space (basketball court). Thankfully, it too, is not air conditioned. So, for eight months of the year we breathe in that

heavy, wet, Florida air while training 90 minutes. It was then that our motto was created: "Don't be the first to drop out." We still live by this every class. All the moving and training outdoors has given our students and senseis a sense of what it is like to perform under duress. We love the winter months even better, because we have great reason to keep the students warm by doubling up the repetitions. All in all, these conditions made us realize how, with an open mind, one can adapt to many circumstances. 



Building a Training Center



By Karen Bradshaw

Strip mall martial art sites always feel a bit creepy to me. There are so many schools out there trying to draw you in with gimmicks, flashy logos and black belt contracts. I was glad to teach part time in San Diego, where my days were spent helping executives build leaders and herding teams of scientists to play fair. Two nights a week I was able to let go and train with O'Sensei and try and carry on the dojo after he moved away.

Times changed and life brought me to a small town in the Rocky Mountains where the industry I thrived in didn't exist. I remodeled my basement and turned it into a 600 sq foot dojo. Three students asked to train with me and soon the number grew to 30. After a local business asked me to host weekly leadership sessions, I started to remember how much I love

teaching. I began to draft a plan for a multi-faceted training center.

With help from many within Cuong Nhu, I drafted a business plan to estimate if a center could work in small town Carbondale with a population of 6,000. I was against teaching just martial arts for both my fiscal stability and sanity. Fortunately, my Masters Degree is in Exercise Physiology, so I decided to merge the different parts of my past into my new future. I found the minimum square foot space to fit the dream, and built the best dojo in the Roaring Fork Valley – Rising Crane Training Center. We had mats, boxing equipment and serenity unequaled for 100 miles.

The focus is martial arts (50 percent), private training (30 percent) and professional development (20 percent). Professional development classes and private training occur while my daughter is in school. She comes home to the dojo with me and we teach until 6 or 7 p.m. each night. Before we launched in September 2014, I asked a good friend and well known Aikido instructor to join me. Roderick teaches two nights a week.

Since then we have added Brazilian Jiu-jitsu and cross training classes to complement the Cuong Nhu and Aikido programs.

It is a great deal of work – and constant. If you decide you want to create your own dream training center, search deep, do your homework and establish a support crew. I will say it is very rewarding and I am a true active member of our community, helping forge

leaders every day. We have over 120 members at the center and teach more than 30 hours of group classes, in addition to private work. I hope we have our first brown belt this year and my brain keeps ticking with more adventures to come. Now if I can just get some sleep.

Following are my top 10 tips to building and operating a training center:

- Know in your heart what you can charge people and keep it simple.
- Assess the competition, stay 10 miles away from those you respect or talk to them first.
- Decide what kind of schedule you can maintain- class size and max capacity result.
- 2000 sq. ft is a minimum size.(And that's pretty tight.)
- People come first- how you teach, 1:1 connection, team building and community spirit.
- Keep it clean and safe. Families don't want a stinky, musty gym.
- Systems & staff- get a great software system and website. Trade for staff support.
- Celebrate BIG every year.
- Create youth leadership and demo teams.
- Micro manage your operating expenses. 🙏



Sensei David Smith (founder), Master Allyson Appen, Sensei Joel Markwell, Master Allen Hoss and Sensei Jack Keily

35 Years for Sung Ming Shu Dojo

By Allen Hoss

Sung Ming Shu Dojo - SMS - celebrated our 35th Anniversary on Saturday March 19, 2016. SMS was founded by Sensei David Smith in 1981 with its first classes open to the public that March. 2016.

The early classes were with David's friends, who had achieved the rank of 1-green stripe and were the senior students in our dojo – and about

20 of us that joined the first official public class. That class included my dear friend Sensei Teresa Philyaw and her future husband Sensei Richard Philyaw. Richard and I went on to become the first black belts that began our training at Sung Ming Shu.

Master Allyson Appen and Sensei Jack Kiely moved to Atlanta in 1982; Allyson achieved the rank of black belt

Continued on page 23

Aging, Teaching, Training and in the Martial Arts



By Allyson Appen

I turned 56 last year. Every morning, before I leave the warmth of my bed, I stretch my body and wiggle my toes, flex my feet back and forth, and rotate my ankles. If this feels OK, I know that I can go for a morning run with my dog. For the last 10 years, I have been plagued with various foot issues that have interfered with that morning run: Achilles tendinitis, sore bunions, and plantar fasciitis in my heels.

Pain-free movement is a gift, and something I rarely considered until I hit 40 or so. Since then, it hasn't been completely downhill, but I find that I need to carefully consider how the activities I choose to engage in might affect my body.

This year is my 34th year in Cuong Nhu and I plan to be training and teaching for many more years. Most of my students are in their 40's, 50's, and 60's, and it is important to recognize the effects of aging on my students' abilities to process information and execute physical techniques.

Some of the well-documented effects of aging include:¹

Cognition

- Working memory (also known as short-term memory) - the ability to hold and manipulate information declines with age.
- Information processing – time to process increases with task complexity.
- Multi-tasking – older adults perform less well than younger adults when processing or coordinating multiple tasks.

Movement Control

- Older adults respond more slowly than younger adults. In general, an older adult will take between 1.5 and 2 times longer to respond than a younger adult
- Movements made by older adults tend to be less precise and more variable than those made by younger adults.

What accommodations should be made for our aging students? Already, our requirements stipulate that students over age

1 Designing for Older Adults – Principles and Creative Human Factors Approaches – Fisk, Rogers, Charness, Czaja, Sharit, 2009.

Continued on next page

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40 can choose to refrain from breaking boards and sparring on their tests. I don't expect good flying techniques from my older students — those are to challenge the teens and help all develop balance and coordination.

Here are some other considerations for teaching, training, and testing older students:

Keep things simple

- Limit combinations to three or four per set — any more is too hard to remember.
- Train a movement set several different ways to learn the set from different perspectives: moving down the floor; in six movements/four directions; in application with a partner.
- Be concerned more about basics: exact stances and focused techniques that are precise and crisp.

Take more time

- It will take older students longer to learn katas and remember movements, so set your expectations accordingly.
- Focus on quality, not quantity. Don't demand the same level of endurance as you do from your younger students.

Recognize limitations, and still demand excellence

- So they can't kick head high — so what? Their kicks can still be clean and focused, with a strong return.
- Bad knees, bad hips, bad shoulders? Modify katas and techniques to protect injuries or limited range of motion.
- After establishing a minimum acceptance baseline as presented on our style DVDs, older students should be challenged to the extent of their abilities, and measured to that potential, not to an athletic ideal.

My self-image as a martial artist and athlete is evolving as I age. No longer feeling as fast or in as much control, I'm modifying my sparring for my



Allyson Appen

partners' safety. Sure, I'm wiser and more experienced, but it's an adjustment of my ego to not feel as strong or as fast as I was in the past. As the Buddha says, "Everything that has a beginning has an ending. Make peace with that and all will be well." Learning to respect my limitations will support my endeavors to continue engagement in the martial arts, even if I have to let go of certain techniques or perceptions. 🙏

Photos by Wendy Pressman-Savage

“...when I’m 64”

By Allen Hoss

“Will you still need me, will you still feed me, when I’m 64?” In the late 60’s I enjoyed those words of Paul McCartney’s novelty song on Sargent Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band. But, as the song said, at the time, that would be “many years from now”.

Well, oops, guess what – it is many years from now and I’m 64. What a long strange trip it’s been...

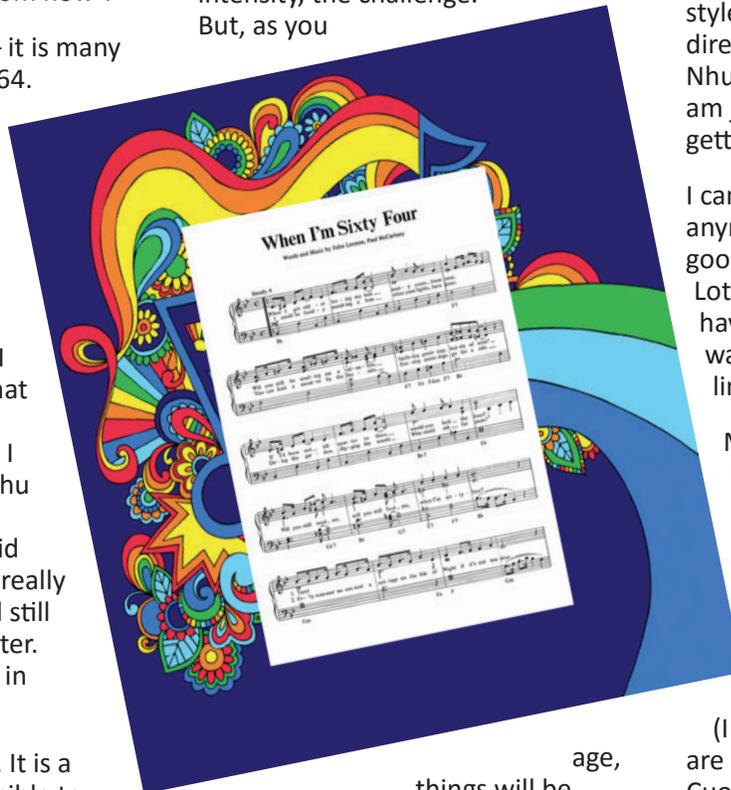
Aging in the martial arts is a fascinating experience. I did not start Cuong Nhu until I was 31. I had quit racing dirt bikes at 27 because I was, really, too old for that sport, just like I was too old for gymnastics when I was 20. I found Cuong Nhu when it was introduced in Atlanta by Sensei David Smith. When I started, I really had no idea that I would still be doing this 33 years later. What has made training in Cuong Nhu a keeper?

OK – here’s what I think. It is a keeper because it is possible to keep on training as we get older. More importantly, because we’re part of a larger family – and an endeavor that continues to evolve and grow – it helps us individually continue to evolve and grow.

Friends of mine that have been aware of my involvement in Cuong Nhu, over the years have asked me, “How long do you think you will keep doing this?” My standard answer has always been sort of a joke, but also the truth: “As long as I can stand up!”

Why quit? Well, it does hurt sometimes and for cryin’ out loud, my dad was not sparring with

20-somethings when he was my age. I still love it, almost every day – but not every day. Some days are not good days, and I have learned that I need to accept that. Any of us who have made it to advanced ranks are fairly obsessive about training. We like the feeling of working out, the sweat, the intensity, the challenge. But, as you



age, things will be different. You have to become more self-aware, and perhaps the hardest part, is learning to accept your limitations. I still love a really hard workout. But there are times that I know it’s not a good day for a hard workout.

I actually began my martial arts career studying Tai Chi. I trained for a year with Master Chung Teh in the Yang style in my 20’s. I thought it was cool – but wondered, where is the action? Now I have a whole different appreciation for soft style. This past October, Master Anh came to Sung Ming Shu and conducted a soft style seminar to bring us into the new

understanding of Cuong Nhu soft style. I really dug it; it also gave me a way to think of progressing in Cuong Nhu, even as I get older.

You’ve probably all seen images of old Chinese folks doing Tai Chi in the park. That’s what I want to do. I have decided to re-learn all three soft style forms in the new Cuong Nhu direction. I have been working on Nhu 1 for the past three months, and am just now starting to feel like I’m getting it. It’s cool.

I can’t do Fighting Form flying anymore, but dang it I can do a pretty good Nhu 1, then Nhu 2, and then Lotus Form. You get my drift? You have to keep exploring and finding a way to grow, based on your abilities, limitations – and your spirit.

Master Mary Davis was my longtime instructor and mentor used to say, “What you lose in physical ability as you age, you should strive to gain in spirit and wisdom.” I hope I am gaining in spirit and wisdom. It’s an ongoing challenge that I know that all of us “senior”

(I hate that word) martial artists are striving for. Our legacy is a part of Cuong Nhu history, and our job is to pass on to the younger generation.

Oh, also. I don’t care what Master Allyson says about losing cognitive ability. I personally haven’t lost anything yet...except my keys, and, oh yeah, my glasses, and there was something else I just can’t remember right now...

So you young folks reading this, just be aware, one of these days, you too will be 64 – “many years from now.”



Mark Brandenburg, Kim Hiep Si Dojo

Are you planning a vacation or business trip soon? Check the Cuong Nhu website to see if a dojo is located near your destination; traveling to one is always worth the trip.

You get an electrifying and rejuvenating feeling when you visit and train with others that you don't normally train with on a daily basis.

...Sometimes the opportunity arises to participate in non-martial arts activities with members of another dojo. This is an excellent opportunity to develop a lasting friendship that extends beyond the dojo. While in Seattle in addition to training at Komokuten dojo, I had the opportunity to climb Mount Rainier with Master John Kay, and Senseis Tony Kay and Chris Zarlengo. I will remember the graciousness of my friends—opening their home to me the night before and their advice in helping me in my first climb on a glacier

Cuong Nhu is a very special style of martial arts, enabling us to be trained by and train with Cuong Nhu members from throughout all the country -- and the world. We really are a big extended family.

...Stop by a Cuong Nhu dojo in the town you're visiting. The surroundings may be different, but the familiar yin yang patch on the gi and the welcoming smiles you'll see from the students and instructors makes it much more.

Todd Morrone, Cypress Dojo

After high school and a few semesters in college, I entered the U.S. Army to earn money for college, develop

myself, and jump out of a perfectly good airplane! During my time in the Army, I was truly guided to some of the purest and best leaders I have ever experienced in my life. Their passion, commitment, and mentoring truly pushed and inspired me to achieve goals that I never realized I had the capacity to achieve. I became a warrior, but more importantly I learned initiative, integrity, how to teach myself, and how to lead and be led.



I had always wanted to learn a martial art, but I wanted to find a style that paralleled the values I learned in the Army. The Army's NCO motto, "Be, Know, & Do," simply means to be a person of values, know yourself and your job, and take action (act in accordance with your values and knowledge). One of my first exposures to Cuong Nhu philosophy was the 3 O's principle, and I was drawn to how similarly it paralleled the philosophy from my military experience. In many ways I found literal mental and philosophical comparisons, but it is the commitment to personal development that I saw the greatest commonality.

It is this key characteristic that I was seeking in a martial arts school.

Clint Neale

I started taking Cuong Nhu about 10 years ago. It's the only martial arts style that I have taken. My son started first and I began shortly after. And we both have been going strong ever since.

At times I ask myself why I still take Cuong Nhu. I like to think of it like looking at an iceberg. There is the top part that is above the water. The 10 percent that is easy to see. Clear as day. Then there is the bottom 90 percent that you don't really see unless you pause to take a look. The top 10 percent is obvious to most because many of us probably have similar reasons for taking martial arts. Some examples from the top 10 show why I enjoy taking Cuong Nhu. It's fun, it's a challenge, and with all the different things to learn it evolves. It doesn't get stale. I am proud to watch my son as he practices hard in class as well as when he does well on the tests. I take pride in my own accomplishments and the effort I put in to making myself better. I am proud of

the students I've worked with when they do well. I also like it when I can help them in their growth as a martial artist. These are all obvious reasons; the top part of the iceberg. However, it's the bottom 90 keeps that keeps me coming back for more.

Here are some examples that aren't so obvious. The bottom 90 percent: A new student, child or adult, comes into the Dojo and stares at the floor while speaking to you because of his or her shyness or insecurities. Then, after a few weeks or months of training, that person is now looking at you eye to eye. You can see the positive changes in their confidence

and attitude and it's great to witness. One Saturday testing in Gainesville a student had to break boards. She had struggled for quite some time in class prior to the test. During the test she was on her last attempt. It was so quiet in the Dojo you could hear a pin drop. She was very tense, then got herself under control and did a front thrust kick like her foot was shot out of a cannon and crushed the boards. The onlookers erupted in cheers and clapping. Many had tears in their eyes because of the joy they felt for her.

the importance of instructors to share their experience, and not just the techniques.

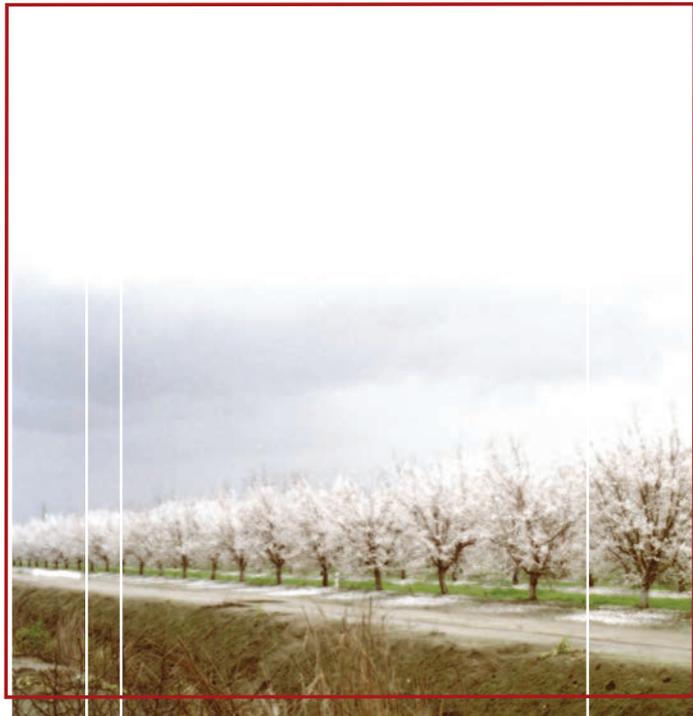
Cameron Parsons

Yesterday I read a test paper.... What made this paper so singular was that it was the first black belt paper I had ever read written by a student that I had trained from white belt. This student was in the first class of beginners I had as a black belt, was on the first test I ever gave by myself as a sensei....and is the first student I trained through all of the ranks right up to black belt.

While I have watched his technique develop and evolve from not even knowing where his own solar plexus was to executing flying kick combinations that I myself am not able to do, I have also watched this student grow from being a 19 year-old kid, into a 25 year-old adult ... well most of the time. I have also had the opportunity to watch the philosophy start to take root in him, to witness him go from struggling to memorize words to recite on a test, to reciting them faithfully, to seeing him incorporating them into how he lives his life.

Amir K. Carlock, Sung Ming Shu Dojo

...It's a little like the chicken and the egg. You've got to have a healthy body to have a healthy brain but sometimes the mind in the brain doesn't always take care of the body the way it should, so then you've not got the healthiest brain. The rewards and pleasures to the brain are not always rewards to the body. It's a risk and reward scenario, for which I've got to continually try to find a balance.



Cuong Nhu has been a good influence, just by the regularity of classes. Sometimes I just don't want to go and exert myself -- but I always feel better physically and emotionally after doing it. It shows that the commitment to a regular beneficial habit makes life better.

Eric Weaver, Rohai Dojo

A few years ago Master Jhoon Rhee, considered a pioneer Tae Kwon Do in the United States, was profiled in Parade Magazine. He was asked what advice he would give someone who wanted to train in martial arts. His answer was interesting. He said that if

he had been asked that question in the past, he would have replied that the person should definitely train in Tae Kwon Do. But, he continued, his years of experience had shown him that the key to successful martial arts training is not necessarily the style you choose. He counseled that the aspiring student should to visit number of dojos and choose an instructor that she feels comfortable with regardless of the style.

... but, while Master Rhee's advice is well-taken as a first step, over time I have come to believe that the style itself also matters. From my point of view, the values of Cuong Nhu are also an important factor in the development of my community of friends in Berkeley. I like its traditional focus on hard work.

James Upright

A sensei once addressing my class said, "All the skills we acquire in our practice are like different items we are packing for a trip." This is a metaphor that I find myself sometimes contemplating (even more so lately), and I often find new parallels when I

revisit the idea. I do not claim to be an expert in the outdoors, however, I would imagine that if one was to leave for an extended trip up a mountain or through the woods one would want their gear to be of the highest quality. It would not do to have shoes, clothes, a knife, or tent that fell apart before you were able to reach your destination.

Similarly, rushing through techniques just for the sake of being passed onto new ones seems akin to not gathering your finest gear for your future journey.

Ken Droque

In the past couple years I have held a few self-defense classes for women. The first class started at my job. One of my responsibilities is running a safety program at a large commercial building, along with building and fire safety. The classes have not been huge, but the response from the women who participate has been very positive. I have been asked to continue them and I get lots of comments from people in the building that have heard about it....Most of the women are office workers in their 30s and up, and they have never really thought about what they would do if a situation arose. And that's my goal – to get them thinking about it.

Nathan Levin

The word fundamental is key.As Michael Jordan famously put it, "The minute you get away from fundamentals – whether it's proper technique, work ethic or mental preparation – the bottom can fall out of your game, your schoolwork, your job, whatever you're doing."

...Perhaps the most important fundamental skill I've learned from Cuong Nhu is how to help others improve.

Cuong Nhu incorporates helping others as a core component of the style. It is all about learning to read and understand your students so that you can communicate in a way that will have the greatest impact on their training.

Paul Bartels

During this time I have learned some

Don't give up! This is the most important point. Training in martial arts is often difficult. Life is often difficult; everyone goes through rough times, even if it is not always apparent on the outside. We all have two choices—we can keep on doing our best, or we can give up when

things get difficult. I've lost two close relatives in my lifetime to suicide, the most extreme example of giving up, so I know where that path can end. Most problems in life eventually work themselves out, especially if we are not afraid to reach out to others for help and support....

Give back. I believe in karma—the idea that whatever you do in life, good or bad, will come back to you sooner or later. As a student, I am taught martial arts by instructors who teach because they enjoy doing so and are donating their time and knowledge....I read once that "knowledge is like love—if you want it, you have to be able to give it to others."

Paula Martin Morell

My bare feet tap a gentle rhythm on the soft dirt trail, the pat, pat, pat lightly beating like a distant drum. It's Thursday morning, a couple of hours after sunrise, and I am on my daily 6-mile barefoot trail run through the woods near the Arkansas River.

Today, like most days, it's just me and the birds, squirrels, and deer. I have no way of knowing what I'll find on the path ahead, but it will be unexpected and beautiful, of that I'm sure. And as I connect to the earth and the world falls away, it doesn't take long to empty my mind and open my heart, the reason why I'm here.

It's for this same reason that I'm here with Cuong Nhu.

I started Cuong Nhu when I was forty-three. It wasn't to get in better shape, or learn self-defense, or earn a certain belt. Those are all fine reasons to start, but they were not mine. Instead, it was beauty and balance that originally led me to Cuong Nhu..... 🌿

Sung Ming Shu - Continued from page 18

in 1984 – first blackbelt at awarded SMS.

In 1983 we also had another life-changing occurrence. Master Mary Davis moved to Atlanta from Gainesville, FL and began teaching and training at SMS. She took over as head instructor in 1984 I was blessed to have Master Mary guide me through the process of training for black belt and taking the test in Gainesville with O'Sensei in early 1985.

Master Mary passed from this world on May 17, 2006.

I became head instructor in 2002.

In February of 2014, I turned over the leadership of SMS to Sensei Gordon Eilen. I remain "Head of School Emeritus and Chief of Insider Trading" – still training and teaching and enjoying watching the next generation of Sung Ming Shu take the reins. 🌿

When Students Leave: Do You Feel Like It's Your Fault?

By Rachel Gowan

There is a special joy that comes from teaching your first beginners class. You get to watch a group of strangers meet for the first time, bond over similarities, train, push, and encourage each other, and then be rewarded as they earn that first green stripe.

Their enthusiasm and excitement for learning new techniques is so contagious that it inspires the other students. I have been fortunate enough to get to share in these experiences when I taught my first group of new adult beginners. So naturally, there was a heartbreaking sadness when slowly the class got smaller and smaller until there was only one student left, and then years later she too finally stopped coming.

I'm a worrier and a people pleaser. These qualities can come in handy and be helpful at times.... As an instructor I try to use these qualities to help plan my classes well. If I balance enough different aspects to my class, I don't have to worry about my students getting bored and I'm sure to keep them pleased with the variety of the class.

But as an instructor, a worrier and a people pleaser, I can't help but ask myself, what am I doing wrong? when my students quit. Did they lose interest because I did not keep the class diverse enough? Was it my teaching style? Did I explain things well, or confuse them? Was I receptive to their needs? What could I have done to keep them from leaving? When we evaluate students for testing, we tell them that it is

technique-oriented, not personal, but as an instructor, when we lose students don't we sometimes take it personally?



When students decide they no longer want to train in Cuong Nhu, we can't force them to continue. We have to honor and respect their decisions, while hopefully learning something from that experience that we can carry on in to the future. I think sometimes this decision to quit feels so foreign and hard to connect to for me because, well, I've been doing this for 20 years and can't actually imagine my life without Cuong Nhu in it.

Communication is a recurring theme in our Cuong Nhu philosophy. We use it in the five firsts of friendship, the "tions" for both teaching and leadership, and even to be

successful in our training/running. So as an instructor, I want to be sure I am communicating well to my students our acceptance of all abilities and ages, the principles behind techniques, class expectations, and so forth, while making sure they too feel comfortable communicating with me their questions, concerns, injuries and limitations. I want to be able to reach out when it appears they are having problems and I want them to be able to reach out to me too.

At what point does it fall on the instructor to reach out to students who appear to be having a difficult time, consistently miss class or drop out? Should I reach out?

Certainly someone should acknowledge that their absence is noticed. We're different than a gym — if you stop coming contributes to a unique and powerful spirit that I feel every time I enter the dojo. I'm sad whenever we lose a member, regardless of whether it is because of choice, injury, or even death.

It's not really all that bad, though. There is a natural curve of students who will not stick with Cuong Nhu after starting.

know it can be hard to make that commitment to try something new, but once you get hooked into Cuong Nhu and realize the different bond and engagement it provides, it's hard to leave. This is a family. We care about each other. We hang out

Continued on page 27

Circles

By Heidi Goldstein-Sidley

It was late Monday night after returning from Training Camp and I lay in bed surrounded by my family back in Westchester, New York. The kids nestled close to me in our king sized bed. Benjamin was almost seven and Isobel, three and a half. Their breathing was like the relaxing ebb and flow of the ocean. I was rubbing Benjamin's back and Isobel had her hand gently cupped around my cheek. I was thinking of the circle of life we had created. We were all connected as we lay there. It was peaceful. I started to reflect on the weekend that had just passed, IATC 2011. "Rise Above" was the weekend's theme. My mind began on a journey as I lay there in the dusk, snuggling with my kids and reflecting on the recent training weekend. I started making connections in my mind that led me to some interesting conclusions about myself, my family, my childhood, Cuong Nhu, circles and the most important thing in the world.

...my mind swiftly came back to the present as I lay in bed, unified in spirit with my own kids that first night back at home in New York. Lying in bed, my mind clear and relaxed, my ideas begin to grow more macro, making connections with my childhood and my current role as a parent. Small circles lead to bigger circles as a bigger idea begins to surface.

I had a caring and dedicated mother by my side my entire life. My

biological father on the other hand was nothing to brag about and was part of my life until I was about 10. He himself came from a dysfunctional family with minimal family values and he led a less than noble life. A self-centered alcoholic with women at the



forefront of his priority list, a wife and child came further down the page of priorities. He was not a family man. Not the kind of man that worked hard to provide love and a solid foundation of trust for his young family. Not a man that stood by his commitments and promises.

I recall many a broken promise as a child. I swore I would never go down that road once I had children. I think this broken circle of trust at a young age made me independent and self-reliant. Those traits served me well in many areas of my professional life. However, in my personal life, I preferred to lean on myself more

than get support or help from others. This probably explains why I delayed settling down and starting a family with someone until my early thirties.

My step father came into my life when I was about 10 and helped me to rebuild the shattered vision I had of what a father should be and helped to build back that circle of trust that had been lost. My step father was a family man and stood by his commitments and promises. He practiced what he preached for the next 30 years and continues to do so. I was able to close that broken circle of trust from my

childhood.

I knew I needed to "rise above" my childhood experiences and break the cycle of a broken home. I needed to move outside my comfort zone and trust and commit to a relationship in order to create a successful and loving family environment full of stability and trust. I initially met my husband, Craig in graduate school, but it wasn't until 11 years later when we reconnected that I was able to settle down and start a family with him. The broken circle I had started to repair in adolescence was finding closure and completeness as we began to start our own family in 2003. My husband was

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

a family man, just like my step dad. He put family first. Family was the most important thing.

When I met O'Sensei in the early 90's I remember him telling me that a job/career was at the top of the priority list. He explained to me that without a job/career one couldn't support a family. He was highlighting for me that family was the most important thing. O'Sensei seemed to always say all the right things and push all the right buttons to motivate people to improve themselves and surpass their own goals.

He was a family man and I instantly was drawn to Cuong Nhu. Circles of trust, family values and priorities,

unification of spirit and a sense of comfort from that unification gave me an idea about why O'Sensei may have created Cuong Nhu, "The Art of Love". .

A family has each other, but how nice to have such a deep and extended family for added love and support. This wasn't a one way highway. Like Ying/Yang it flows both ways. Love was the protective coating of that precious jewel called family – immediate, extended and beyond.

As I lay there in bed with my own family after such a meaningful training camp, I began to think about nature and the animal kingdom. How a mother surrounds a newborn and curls up around it to protect it from the world outside. To protect it from predators, from the elements and to

build that confidence that only comes from being loved unconditionally.

Wouldn't that support and love be even stronger if that protection came from both a mother and father? Even stronger: mother, father and siblings. Even stronger yet: mother, father, siblings, grandparents, uncles, aunts. What about all that – plus hundreds of people, unified in spirit sharing a common ground and a mutual love of Cuong Nhu. Make that protection so deep and strong that it lasts a lifetime, long after you are gone. What a vision and accomplishment to be able to share and pass along to the younger generations. 🙏

Students Leave - Continued from page 25

I know it can be hard to make that commitment to try something new, but once you get hooked into Cuong Nhu and realize the different bond and engagement it provides, it's hard to leave. This is a family. We care about each other. We hang out outside of class, we spend time at each other's houses, we are there to support each other through thick and thin.

recently asked my kid's class what keeps them coming back to class week after week. There were some students with the answers I expected to hear,

but then there were others that surprised me.

Some said they train because it's fun, they learn new things like self-defense, or it makes them stronger; all fantastic reasons and also part of what keeps me coming to class.

Another student who has been around for a few years said he loved the community aspect of the dojo. "Me too" I thought, this really is an extended family and even the kids in the kids classes can see that! Finally, our newest white belt raised his hand. He's not the most coordinated or naturally athletic student and he's one of those kids where you are never

sure what is going to come out of his mouth, but it is guaranteed to be entertaining. He stated proudly that he likes coming to class every week because the teachers are nice and encouraging and that they always help him when he has a hard time. I was filled with so much pride, not just for myself as a teacher, but for all of the instructors who pour themselves out to their students every day because they love it. We are doing something right here I thought. I am doing something right, and it's noticed and appreciated and, yep, I am going to take this personal. 🙏

Being a Role Model for Young Girls

By Katie Whitney, Gouitsu Dojo

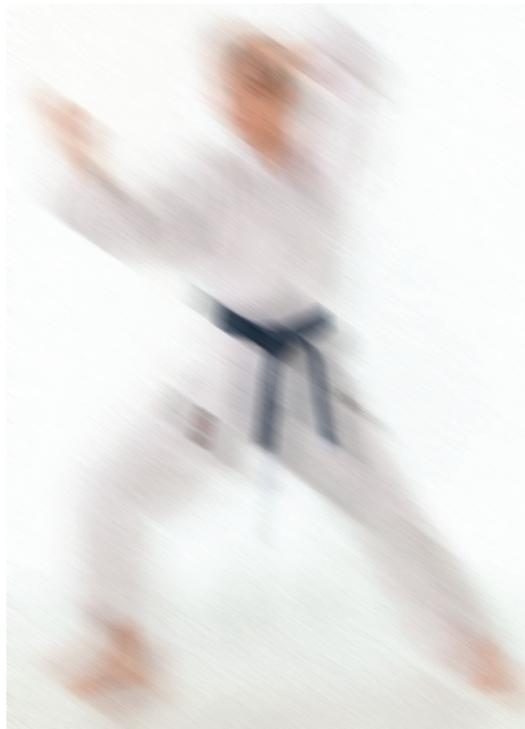
I have a distinct memory of a time in middle school when I went to the beach with some friends, among whom was a boy that I liked. Embarrassed to be seen in a bathing suit, I quickly ducked under the water to hide my legs, and kept my lower half under water until it was time to go. When I got out, I immediately put shorts on over my swimsuit, before anyone could see me. And while that particular incident stands out in my mind, there were many others like it.

And then, six years ago, I began training in Cuong Nhu. I can't pinpoint the exact moment when my thinking began to change; like most internal changes, it happened gradually. From hearing Sensei Tanner talk to the kids' classes about how important it is to have strong legs, to hearing Senseis Chris and Ming laugh about how hard it is for martial artists to find jeans that fit well. Because we all know that martial artists have big thighs. Well, I didn't know. What I did know was that, for the first time, I heard people talk about how having big thighs was not only tolerated as a necessary evil that went with training, but a good thing. A desirable thing.

After all, big thighs are often a result of strong legs. And strong legs allow you to kick hard and move fast, to hold your ground in your stance, to throw and pin your opponents, to punch with power and speed.

With this shift in perspective has come a change not only in how I feel about my thighs, but about my whole body. Over the past couple of years, my diet and exercise regimen has been less than optimal, and as a result I have gained a good bit of weight. As we steadily approach the black belt

test, I have increased my efforts to lose this extra weight. But it's not out of vanity this time. (Okay, I'm sure that plays a role in it – I'm human, after all.) It's largely because I realize how much better my push-ups will be if I am lighter. And how much faster I can move. And how much better I will feel in general – the feeling of being



disciplined, rather than out of control.

I have also become hyperaware of just how much women in our society focus on diet, exercise, and weight. Perhaps because the martial arts are still largely populated by men, the longer I have been in Cuong Nhu, the more I have gotten out of the habit of being around groups of just women. I have become much more sensitive to the fact that when I am, there is almost constant talk about what someone ate that they "shouldn't have." or how long they will have to work out to burn off those calories. And of course a healthy diet, exercise, and weight are important. But when I hear women who are already at a

healthy weight, who eat an incredibly healthy diet, rejoice over losing three pounds after a bout of stomach flu, I can't help but think that our society has lost perspective. We emphasize appearance rather than function.

In our dojo, we have a large contingent of children, many of whom are girls. These girls are amazing – one is a fearless bad***, another is a muscular gymnast, a third is a talented artist – just to name a few. Each of them strong, and confident in who they are. I want these girls to grow up wanting to be healthy rather than thin. Wanting strong bodies, instead of "perfect" ones. So when I find myself making jokes about being fat, I bite my tongue. Because even though it might be a joke, they hear it. How we speak betrays how we think; how girls hear women speak about our bodies is how they will think they ought to feel about theirs.

I've never really viewed myself as a role model, but I think the responsibility will be thrust upon me as a female sensei, whether I wish it or not. I hope to maintain a sense of intentionality in how I speak not only of myself, but of other women as well. I hope to be a model to young girls what it is to be both a strong and feminine woman. To enjoy the company and individuality of other women, without competing or cat-fighting. To truly live up to the idea around which our dojo was founded – Unity. 🙏

Gichin Funakoshi, Founder of Karate-do



It is important that karate can be practiced by the young and old, men and women alike. That is, since there is no need for a special training place, equipment, or an opponent, a flexibility in training is provided such that the physically and spiritually weak individual can develop his body and mind so gradually and naturally that he himself may not even realize his own great progress.

Karate-Do strives internally to train the mind to develop a clear conscience, enabling one to face the world honestly, while externally developing strength Mind and technique become one in true karate.

To search for the old is to understand the new. The old, the new, this is a matter of time. In all things man must have a clear mind. The Way: Who will pass it on straight and well?

He who would study Karate-Do must always strive to be inwardly humble and outwardly gentle. However, once he has decided to stand up for the cause of justice, then he must have the courage Thus, he is like the green bamboo stalk: hollow (kara) inside, straight, and with knots, that is, unselfish, gentle, and moderate.

There are many kinds of martial arts, ...at a fundamental level these arts rest on the same basis. It is no exaggeration to say that the original sense of Karate-

Gichin Funakoshi (1868 – 1957) is considered the “father of karate.” Both a poet and philosopher, he once said, “The ultimate aim of karate lies not in victory nor defeat, but in the perfection of the character of its participants.” Funakoshi was a man of Tao. He placed no emphasis on competitions, record breaking or championships. He placed emphasis on individual self perfection, the common decency and respect that one human being owed to another.

In 1922, Master Funakoshi introduced Karate-do to mainland Japan. He brought to the Japan 16 kata: 5 pinan, 3 naihanchi, kushanku dai, kushanku sho, seisan, patsai, wanshu, chinto, jutte and jion. Funakoshi founded Shotokan karate, a style that influenced the development of Cuong Nhu’s hard style. His book, *Karate-Do: My Way of Life*, is a must-read for every martial artists. Following are quotes from Master Funakoshi and his *20 Principles of Karate*:

Do is at one with the basis of all martial arts. Form is emptiness, emptiness is form itself. The kara of Karate-Do means this.

The correct understanding of Karate and its proper use is Karate-do. One who truly trains in this do [way] and actually understands Karate-do is never easily drawn into a fight.

Students of any art, including Karate-do must never forget the cultivation of the mind and the body.

To win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the highest skill. To subdue the enemy with out fighting is the highest skill.

The ultimate aim of the art of karate lies not in victory or defeat, but in the perfection of the characters of its participants.

Twenty Principles for Spiritual and Mental Development

- Do not forget that karate-do begins and ends with rei.
- There is no first strike in karate.
- Karate stands on the side of justice.
- First know yourself, then others.
- Mentality over technique.
- The mind must be set free.
- Calamity springs from carelessness.
- Karate goes beyond the dojo.
- Karate is a lifelong pursuit.
- Apply the way of karate to all things. Therein lies its beauty.
- Karate is like boiling water: without heat, it returns to its tepid state.
- Do not think of winning. Think rather of not losing.
- Make adjustments according to your opponent.
- The outcome of a battle depends on how one handles emptiness and fullness (weakness and strength).
- Think of the opponents hands and feet as swords.
- When you step beyond your own gate, you face a million enemies.
- Kamae (ready stance) is for beginners; later one stands in shizentai (natural stance).
- Perform kata exactly; actual combat is another matter.
- Do not forget the employment or withdrawal of power, the extension or contraction of the body, the swift or leisurely application of technique. .
- Be constantly mindful, diligent, and resourceful in your pursuit of the Way. 🏆



2015 Instructor's Training (formally called Yudansha Training)

Cuong Nhu: Making A Difference

Heartfelt Thanks From A Parent To Sensei Michael Hornback

(The author prefers to remain anonymous.)



Many of his dreams will remain simply dreams, but on the day that my son said, "I want to be a white ninja." I began a search for a

hero. That search led me to a Hero, Sensei Michael Hornback, at Hero Martial Arts Academy in Longwood, FL. My 26 year-old son is a captive of autism and various neurological differences. Skylar is inhibited in his ability to learn and has limited physical abilities which include a lack

of motor coordination and an inability to fully rotate his joints.

Despite learning of these limitations upon our initial visit, Sensei Hornback agreed to use his talents and provide private lessons to our son to help us meet our mutual goals.

During the initial visit, I was impressed with Sensei Michael's ability to continually redirect Skye and keep him on task. There is no down time, no wasted moments during class; once Skye is on the mat, the Sensei has our son's full attention and keeps him in constant motion. He has learned about Skye's immense interest in science fiction, and often taps into

that obsession as he teaches him new skills. This also gives Skye a "hook" to help remember the stances, blocks and kicks. He was recently able to learn all 21 steps of taikyoku kata (enthusiastically called "Lightning Kata"), a phenomenal accomplishment for a man who cannot spell his last name.

As his abilities on the mat have progressed, his confidence off the mat has increased. He will often ask me, "Mom, am I strong now?" He requests that I take videos of him during his lessons and place them on Facebook. When I read the responses to him, he glows with pride, something that is quite rare in his life. We currently attend two classes per week, but would go each day if possible. It is the most physical activity that he willingly participates in each week.

His coordination skills have improved dramatically. His sessions have produced much better results than the physical and occupational therapy that he had for years. One of the best things about karate with our Sensei is that our goals of physical activity and increased mobility for Skye are being simultaneously met while working towards Skye's dream. When he asks if he will ever drive a car or be able to go to a mall alone, I now redirect that sadness by saying, "No, but you are going to be a white ninja someday." 🥋



Cuong Nhu Masters, IATC 2015

The Cuong Nhu Kids of West Coast Training Camp

Photographs by Linda Nikaya

Linda Nikaya



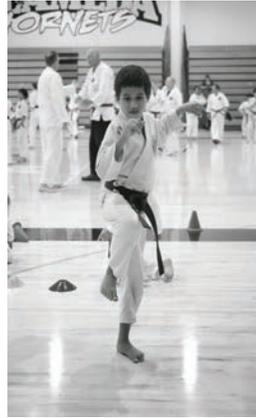
Cuong Nhu lost a wonderful soul and valued community member in July 2015, when Linda Nikaya succumbed

to cancer after a long battle. Linda was the calm, competent office manager at Rohai Dojo in Berkeley, keeping things running smoothly for seven years, until she retired at the end of 2013.

She was a talented photographer who left us some beautiful photo galleries of Rohai Dojo events, and used her talents as illustrator for Master Didi Goodman's books, *The Cuong Nhu Training Manual for Kids (and their Parents)*, and its multi-style edition, *The Kids Karate Workbook*. If you attended West Coast Training Camp, she might have been the person who helped you get registered, showed you where to go, or wrote down your dinner order, when she wasn't moving quietly through the gym with her camera.

Linda had a long-term love for martial arts. She trained in Cuong Nhu in the 1990's at Hoa Sen Dojo, reaching brown stripe level, and trained for several years in Wing Chun. Rohai Dojo is lucky to have had her—and to have her grandchildren Joshua and Lily as members of the dojo family.

Ed Note: Like the ones on this page, Dragon Nhus has published multiple collections of Linda's work, especially her photographs from the West Coast Training Camp. She was an exceptional photographer. We'll miss her.



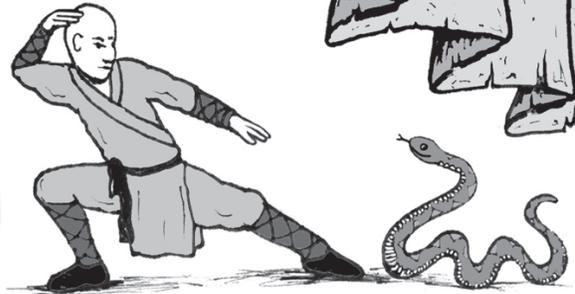
History of the
Martial Arts
Part II:

Shaolin Monks and Kung Fu!!

Written by
Brian Harr
Illustrated by
Joe Varady



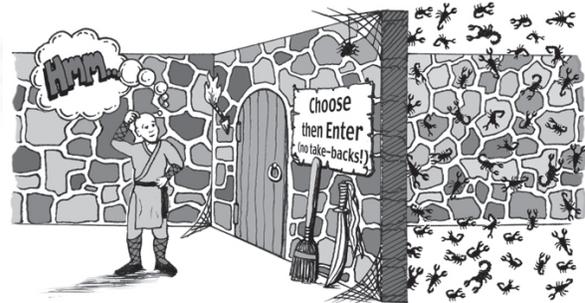
The Shaolin monks developed exercises based on philosophy by Lao Tzu. He believed in harmony with nature and the balance of opposites. This was called Taoism.



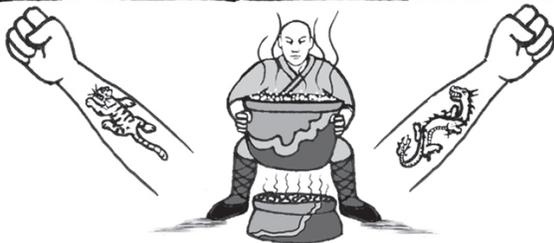
The monks used nature to help them develop their exercises. Many were taken from the movements of animals such as the snake, tiger, monkey, deer, and praying mantis.



Shaolin graduation ceremonies consisted of walking through a hallway with spears that shot from the walls and (hopefully) surviving a surprise avalanche of falling rocks...



They were asked to choose between a broom and a sword, then entered a room filled with scorpions, and their test wasn't over yet...



At the end they had to move a large cauldron filled with boiling water that permanently burned the images of a tiger and a dragon onto the forearms of the graduate.



With their training the monks could easily defeat armed bandits. The bandits were sometimes unsure if they had been attacked by humans or animals.

Next Time: **KARATE ON OKINAWA**

Can You Spot the Differences?



1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____



7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

11. _____

Answer on page 35

Mental Toughness

By Nickolas Senske (Age 12)

I have been training at Cuong Nhu World Headquarters since 2008, and started when I was 5. When I joined karate, it was because I wanted to learn how to (at the time) simply kick butt like the Karate Kid.

Through the years I have noticed changes that can relate to code of ethics #4: *Only by absolute discipline of mind, body, and spirit do students maintain honor in Cuong Nhu.*

I had to overcome how I used to not like Cuong Nhu and that a lot is about mental toughness. I also have to break two boards in one direction for my brown belt test. The first time, I wasn't able to do it, as I didn't have the correct technique, physique and mental toughness.

I have had to do many home workouts to strengthen my muscles. The average home workout would be legs or arms, and core. Now I have the strength and mental toughness to break the boards. Mental toughness means getting past the mental block that makes you think 'I cannot do it, I am not strong enough, I do not have the correct technique'. I do now know that the boards are weak and I am strong, meaning I have the strength and mental toughness to not give up when I see the boards.

I have gone from the person who didn't really care about karate except ranking up to the person who is dedicated to training and will not give up easily. As in the code of ethics.

'I couldn't have asked for a better style....'

By Clayton Mendes (Age 10)

Hello my name is Clayton Mendes and I am 10 years old. I have been training at Cuong Nhu for about 5 years.

One of the Code of Ethics I can relate to is Number 7 "The Goal of a Cuong Nhu student is to maintain a pure, simple, sincere, and noble life." I can relate to this because when I was younger I would get in a lot of trouble at school. In fact, I got in so much trouble that if I didn't write an apology letter to the principal, all the trouble that I had gotten into would go on my permanent record. But because of Cuong Nhu, I have become a new person, and that means staying out of trouble and listening to my authority figures.

So to me, brown belt is not the end it is the beginning. I have grown a lot from Cuong Nhu. It has made me a better person in attitude, toughness, and standing up for myself and other people. Cuong Nhu has been a great experience for me because the people and environment is so positive and hardworking. I couldn't have asked for a better style of karate like you guys.





