



Dragon Nhu



THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE THE CUONG NHU MARTIAL ARTS ASSOCIATION
2018 - 2019

CUONG NHU LEADERSHIP



INTERVIEW WITH GRAND MASTER QUYNH
INTERVIEW MASTER JOHN BURNS

PALMETTO DOJO HISTORY



From the Editor

This will be my last issue as editor of Dragon Nhus. It has been an honor and a privilege to edit your publication - little magazine, actually - for more than 10 years.

Together, with your exceptional writing and photography, the contributions of the Associate Editors, and most of all the trust and support of Grandmaster Quynh, we've turned Dragon Nhus into a nationally award-winning speciality magazine.

Our goal was to make the content diverse, with standing sections: IATC photos, excerpts from and full reprints of student test papers, dojo news, techniques, Asian and martial arts history and culture, and issue themes - like weapons, teaching and teaching kids. A few years ago we started a section called "Thoughts and Ideas." The purpose was to give students and instructors a chance to write about issues and events in their daily lives, times when they drew on Cuong Nhu principles and philosophy to help better understand and more effectively handle the challenge.

Finally, my favorite: "Cuong Nhu Kids." Our goal was for it to be enjoyable - a little educational, some entertainment, insightful papers written by young students - and some good-natured poking fun at familiar characters.

In the coming year, a new editorial staff will be considering where to take Dragon Nhus in the future - including the possibility of an interactive online "webzine."

Again, thank you for making Dragon Nhus a success.

Danny Pietrodangelo
Editor



Dragon Nhus

2018 - 2019

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"Then, I Was Diagnosed With Breast Cancer.

The support I received from Cuong Nhu members was so beautiful."

By Frances McCorkle - 2018 Mary Davis-Cates Scholarship



Left to right: Gretchen, Laurie, Frances McCorkle, Paula, Annalise

My interest in Cuong Nhu began when one of my granddaughters, who lives with my husband and me, started taking classes at Unity. I went and observed her classes every week, and was fascinated with what I saw at the Unity dojo.

It wasn't just a place to learn martial arts, but was so much more. It was a living growing community. I played with the idea of joining myself, but I didn't want to get in Tristyn's way and was afraid she would think it wasn't a cool idea for her grandma to join something she enjoyed doing; plus, at the time, I was 71 years old.

Seemed to me, and probably to her, I might be a bit long in the tooth to give something so physical a try.

Long story short, I decided to go ahead and give it go because I intuitively felt like it was important on multiple levels.

Time has passed, and by the time training camp happens this year, I will be 75. I am beyond grateful for the past four years and what I have gained from my decision to give Cuong Nhu a try.

The things I have gained have been far beyond just being in better shape. I feel like I have added something I have never really had in my life. I have found friendships that feel like two-way streets and don't exist just because I am a hard

worker, but because I am just me. It is a credit to Sensei Tanner and all the other sensei and sempai and the families that are attracted to the dojo that such a community exists. I have learned many things about myself – for example, even though it takes me longer than a teenager to learn some new move, with persistence, I can learn.

I've never received anything but encouragement from the Unity population. I am so impressed with the practice of people from other dojos coming for visits including Grand Master Quynh and Sensei Jessica, and the welcomes when we visit other dojos. It truly is a large,

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IATC 2017



Photographs by Mark Lake and Mark Brandenburg

IATC 2018



IATC 2018



More Than 20 Years of Leadership

An Interview With Grand Master Quynh



When you became the head of Cuong Nhu you were taking over from your dad, seen as a legend. How did you feel about that?

A little worried, but my dad told me when he started Cuong Nhu it was from the beginning. And so, a couple of years before he passed, I remember him telling me, don't worry, the foundation and the people that you have around you are very good, utilize all that strength and Cuong Nhu is good to go.

I felt really good, because we do have very strong leadership in a lot of black belts, and the core and the values of Cuong Nhu had been established for a long time. It's much easier to continue a tradition than establish a tradition.

What was the largest challenge you faced when you started?

For sure, it was the discrepancies and differences in movements, technical movements, in katas and weapons, between schools and regions. Everybody learned a certain way. And, even on the same kata, they all had little different interpretations, different movements. So the challenge was to help integrate everybody — across the

country, to make them do it so it looks the same.

It's easier to unite a spirit when you grade your students and everybody is doing the same thing.

**It's been a
volunteer path, all
the time I've put
in, but the reward
has been tenfold.**

So, you're talking about the need to standardize?

Right, the movements, the actual movement itself — not the difficulty or spirit. It's just a matter of getting everybody on the same page so that if you grade another other group of students you don't spend time on

teaching them the moves or have them question the superficial movement; you go right to the core principles and the execution of the techniques.

When you took over, there was a group of high ranking students, who had started with your dad when he founded the style. Some you had trained with. How did you go about building their support in the transition?

You know what? Respect. Several called me and told me for the love of my father and for the style, they would support me and help me keep the vision. So that part was easy, the other part is to give them the respect and to lean on them for guidance. For example, sometimes when people take over a family-owned business, they assume they know more than the guy that's been there and who trained them.

So, it was really pretty easy. They had taught me a lot as I've grown and we share a lot of ideas and I continue to want to learn from them, and lean on them — for their wisdom and their heart and soul.

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Looking to the future, what do you think is the biggest challenge facing Cuong Nhu?

Trying to keep Cuong Nhu quality but to make it more interesting. Because with the new generation and the generation of millennials, you have compete with Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube, Netflix. They have so much going on, kids today are smarter in the sense that they have access to instant information.

So today they're distracted and sometimes also on the route to getting good at martial arts, it's a long way and they don't have the patience. So, we need to keep it interesting and compact, to appeal to new generations.

How can we help Cuong Nhu grow?

You know, that's on individual dojos. Cuong Nhu gives us a lot of diversity, a lot of styles — hard, soft, weapons, ground work, the centerline concept, applications, philosophy and all that.

But, you know, it's really the instructors that make it appealing to potential students. If you're not making it fun, if

you're not selling yourself in a sense, if there is no chemistry with them on a personal level, they're not going to stay long.

I can tell you the simplest example. If you ask any student from grade school to high school, what's your favorite subject, they don't think of the subject, they think of the teacher.

How do you feel about students training in multiple martial arts?

There's a small percent of students that can do it. But a majority of the students can't. If they haven't mastered the tambo, why would you want them to split time to do bokken?

So, if 80 percent of the time they practice Cuong Nhu and 20 percent they do other styles, when they take a test, the best score they're going to get is 80 percent. Or, they slip up and may not pass the test.

The percentage of the students that could do it is small. Very few lawyers are also doctors. It's like if someone is learning the violin and they want to start learning guitar. They are taking time away from practicing the violin. They are both string instruments, similar shapes, but very different.

What are your hopes for the future of Cuong Nhu?


You know what, there's a fine line in martial arts. When kids sign up for karate, or their parents or grandparents sign them up, they have one objective in mind, right? They walk in your dojo, a 10 or 14 year old child, they want karate because they want self defense. They want to be effective if someone hits them, or wrestles them, or punches them — so they can protect themselves.

So the challenge is, once they get in, the teacher wants teach them the art aspect of martial arts — the wrist movement, the soft style, the katas and all that.

The most important part is, they have to make it physical. Because eventually if a kid takes karate up to green belt, parents look at them and say man you can make all these moves, but I'm not sure in two years, when you're older, you can fight somebody your size.

The challenge is you also need to go back to that core of when they saw you the first time. That means punching hard, kicking hard, practicing hard, being strong and physical, being disciplined — while they're learning the fun part. But as soon as you lose that main core, they say oh heck, I don't really need self-defense and I'm bored learning this stuff, so they quit.

Finally, is there anything else you want people to know about you being the head of style for more than 20 years?

I love people. It's been a volunteer path, all the time I've put in, but the reward has been tenfold. It's the reward of seeing how you change someone's outlook, helping them know that they can achieve their goals. So as long as I still have a love for people, and who they become, and I live by the idea that progression is perfection—which means that everybody can be perfect within their own world, as long as they are progressing—I'm going to keep doing it. 



Master John Burns

Assistant Head of Style Talks About Cuong Nhu - Past, Present, Future

DN: We learned from our "Meet the Masters" interview in 2010 that you grew up in Buffalo, NY, with four sisters. How did having all those sisters affect your worldview?

JB: Who knows! That's like asking a fish how water affected its worldview. Also, I knew lots of people with lots of siblings. It didn't seem unusual.

DN: You also played varsity football and tennis in high school and tennis in college in Buffalo, before moving to Florida after visiting a friend at UF and liking the warm weather. My question: Why did you take up karate instead of sticking with tennis when you got to Florida?

JB: Yes, I was into tennis back then; I was All-Catholic doubles champion in high school, and played at Canisius College – but I never seriously considered tennis at Florida. For one thing, I was a transfer student with only one year of eligibility left. Plus, Florida is a huge school, in a region where people play tennis seriously all year round – unlike Buffalo, where I didn't practice in winter. Besides, I already had in mind that I wanted to take up martial arts, so when I enrolled at Florida, that was my intention.

DN: Why were you interested in karate?

JB: It was in the air back then. It was the "Bruce Lee era" with his movies being so popular and "Kung Fu" was on TV. A guy I worked with at a bar in Buffalo did Taekwondo, and he was always talking about it. I jokingly tried to stab him with a long hot dog fork, and he blocked it with a lower block. I thought that was cool. A friend was taking karate at Buff State, and if I hadn't moved to Florida I might have done it in Buffalo. When I got to UF, I called the intramural sports department and asked what martial arts they had. They said

Isshinryu on these days, Shotokan on those days, and Cuong Nhu on these other days. Cuong Nhu fit my schedule, so that was that.

DN: Describe the first day you walked into a Cuong Nhu class. Who was there



Master John Burns (left), Assistant Head of Style. Master Allen Hoss, President Cuong New Martial Arts Association.

– and are any of them still training?

JB: I went down to the basement of the Florida gym, where class was supposed to be – but they were working out on Florida Field. There was this guy, maybe a green belt, coming out (it was Edwin Sroka, for those who might remember him), and I asked him where the class was. He said they were out on the field, then showed me a few things I'd need to know so I could join in: a punch, a chop, a low block, maybe forward stance. Then

I went out and joined the lines. There were something like 200 people on the field. O'Sensei Dong was teaching – he taught on one day, John Benson did the other two days. Who was there who's still training? Ricki Kay was in that group of white belts. John Kay, Frank Van Essen, Mike Ponzio, Lap Hoang (although he's officially retired) – all of them were there, either working out or on the sidelines getting ready for the next class. There may be others. There are definitely people who joined soon after who are either still training or still in close touch with the Cuong Nhu community.

DN: You knew O'Sensei. What stands out in your memory of him?

JB: He was very charismatic. Besides all his energy and physical skills, he would sit us all down and talk about love and peace and being good people. We were all very taken with him. When he returned to Vietnam, and we later got the false report that he had died, we were devastated. And of course, when we learned he was alive, and when he returned, it was great. It was exciting to train with him again and be part of a style that was evolving. He always went at everything with a lot of thought and energy.

DN: How many years before you earned your black belt?

JB: About 3 years – I joined in January '74, got black belt in March '77.

DN: That seems fast by today's standards. Was that typical back then?

JB: Yes. The black belt requirements back then were much more concentrated than they became in later years. It was probably more similar to a Shotokan Karate black belt. There were

Continued on next page

no weapons till after black belt (Bo 1 was introduced soon after, no self-defense demo – just a good, solid curriculum of techniques and combinations, katas, self-defense sets, sparring and board-breaking.

DN: Who gave you your black belt test?

JB: John Benson, Frank Van Essen, John Kay, Melinda Chancy. I believe Frank was in charge of it. There might have been one more person on the panel. Sensei Lap promoted me at the picnic the following Sunday.

DN: So, O'Sensei was back in Vietnam at that time?

JB: That's right. I was a black belt when he returned in October '77, and he promoted Carolyn Frazier and me to shodan in December '77.

DN: You've studied other martial arts. Can you tell us a little about what, when, and why?

JB: I've trained extensively in Aikido and modern Wushu – and I still do today. The first time I took up Aikido was at UF – I was a green belt in Cuong Nhu. I learned about an Aikido class starting up, and I was interested in it. I trained for about six months, then realized I couldn't pursue two different martial arts at the same time at that level, and really give them my best effort. It's the old saying, "A dog that chases two rabbits catches neither." I turned my full attention back to Cuong Nhu. Later, after I'd been a black belt for a while (a more appropriate time to consider cross-training. I rejoined that class, but didn't really go full-on into Aikido until 1985 in California, when I started training again and continued ever since. My reason in 1985 was because I wanted to better my techniques in Cuong Nhu – get a better

understanding of our Aikido-based techniques, to be able to perform them better and teach them better.



DN: What rank do you have in Aikido?

JB: I was promoted to Godan (5th degree) in January 2017.

DN: Speaking of California, how did you wind up there?

JB: In 1980 I followed a girlfriend out. She

eventually came back to Florida, but I stayed. I liked it there (still do), and was able to join up with my Cuong Nhu friends Donald Grassmuck and Miguel Estrada at their dojo in Berkeley. (Donald and Miguel left the Bay Area long ago. I started Rohai Dojo in January 1985.)

DN: What about Wushu? You're rather known for your Wushu-based weapons – 3-sectional staff, whip chains, rope dart and so on. How did you get into that, and how does it relate to Cuong Nhu?

JB: I first saw Wushu weapons on the tournament circuit in Florida; there was a guy who was really good, really flashy, always took first place. In California one day, I saw a flyer for classes with a fellow named Anthony Chan, and something rang a bell – I went back and looked up that competitor, and it turned out he'd studied with Anthony Chan. So, I checked out the class, and also saw a performance by the Beijing Wushu Team... it was just really cool, looked really fun, so I decided to do it. What does it have to do with Cuong Nhu? Well nothing, or maybe everything. Wushu training is very physically grueling. It demands that you be in top physical shape. It also demands that you push the limits of skill, practice hard, take risks. You can really hurt yourself with those weapons, and even with just the physical techniques. Isn't that

the essence of martial arts training? It's not about the flashy performance, it's about how you got there. Hard work, pushing limits, taking risks. That's why I prefer traditional ways of training, no shortcuts. If you can train like that, you can bring it back to anything you do, and give it an extra edge.

Continued on next page

Feature

DN: What is your training regimen?

JB: I take a noon Aikido class Tuesdays and Thursdays, do Wushu for 2-3 hours on Saturdays, and do my own workout (kicks, jump kicks, sweeps, bagwork, katas, conditioning) Mondays and Wednesdays. I lift weights every other day. Then of course I teach Cuong Nhu class every day but Sunday – four classes most days.

DN: Do you recommend other Cuong Nhu students cross-train the way you do?

JB: That depends. First off, I can only train like this, really, because I've made martial arts my profession and my life. Most people can't do that, or they have a 9 to 5 job and a family – it would be impossible. If someone – a Cuong Nhu black belt, that is – wants to expand their training, and can pull it off, that's great. But even then, they might need to ask themselves what's the point. When people go take class in one of Cuong Nhu's component arts, and then come back saying "Cuong Nhu is doing this wrong," or "Cuong Nhu should be doing this other thing instead," they're missing the point! They should probably just stick to Cuong Nhu and train harder. But if they come back saying, "What those guys are doing can help me get better at what we're doing," that's what it's about. Aikido is different from Cuong Nhu, but training in it can make you better at Cuong Nhu. On the other hand, you can get better at Cuong Nhu by training harder and deeper at Cuong Nhu. We have a lot of resources and excellent teachers within our style. You don't have to cross-train to get what you need.

DN: That brings me back to the Cuong Nhu curriculum, and how it's changed since the days you could get black belt in three years. Can you say something about how the curriculum has evolved, and how the latest changes to the kyu rank requirements fit the picture?

JB: Well, I can tell you how I experienced it, looking back. In those early years, O'Sensei Dong was concerned with giving us a solid foundation in a short time, because he'd be going back to Vietnam in a short time. The solid foundation was hard style; the "seeds" of soft style were in our self-defense sets. We would need to grow those seeds after black belt, and also broaden our training into weapons after black belt. (Of course, some of us did some weapons training on the sly before

integration of soft and hard, so he moved more soft style emphasis into the kyu ranks. He used applications to illustrate Wing Chun principles of sticking, trapping, and the "5 Saves" – and he moved that into the kyu ranks through "formatted applications." By the time we put together a new manual in the early nineties, we had a very comprehensive curriculum. But it was no longer possible to get black belt in just three years. There is a lot of very sophisticated martial arts in there. It is all important to learn, but it takes many years.

DN: So how does that connect up with today?

JB: I'm getting there! [laughs] Okay, when Grandmaster Quynh took charge, he inherited a "work in progress." We had a wide curriculum, and people had gone different directions with it, so he needed to bring us back together with standardization. And he did that. But recently when he asked me to be his "assistant head of style," he had another project in mind, that had to do with how hard it had become to get black belt – or how hard it was to get there and really have good skills in all the required areas. He believed, and I agree, that the long time frame and the difficulty were discouraging people, and it was affecting the growth of the style.

There are styles where anyone can get a black belt in a couple of years, even an eight-year-old kid. We will never be one of those styles; we don't want that. It's not Cuong Nhu. We're proud of offering something more comprehensive. But we want people to feel their forward progress, and not feel like they're never going to get there. Not everyone can train four or five or six days a week, like some of us old-timers. Grandmaster Quynh wanted us to regain some of the spirit from back in those early days, without actually going backwards. The excitement of getting really good at a concentrated set of skills.

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black belt! But I digress.) When O'Sensei returned from Vietnam, he began teaching us the weapons katas, and going deeper into soft style, and he also considered, what is the best way to present this material so people will integrate it and get good at it? He tried different approaches. He moved weapons basics into the kyu ranks, which was very positive for students; everyone likes weapons. Also, as you may know, for a while there was a totally separate Soft Style curriculum and ranking system. He ultimately dropped that, but while he had it, he kind of forced some of us black belts to get a much better understanding of soft style, which would help us pass it on to the next generation. He wanted better

The Story of the old Palmetto Dojo: Seed to Forest



By Mike Ponzio

This story is about one of the second generation of Cuong Nhu schools founded in the U.S.; that is, the second wave of black belts that left Gainesville and established schools in the 1970s.

Anne and I had both graduated from UF and I got a job in Charleston, South Carolina in August 1978. We rented a house and worked out in the backyard, doing katas and hitting a heavy bag hanging from a magnolia tree. Two kids walking by one day watched us over the chain link fence, and asked us if we would teach them. We checked with



their parents, and began their classes in the backyard. Coincidentally, at work, some of my co-workers, also new

employees in their twenties, showed interest in learning Cuong Nhu.

Our backyard was getting crowded, so we moved classes to the neighborhood park. Black belts from Gainesville were generous and administered the first green stripe tests; our one-bathroom house was happily crowded with Cuong Nhu friends for that weekend. Then we carried on the tradition that was established in Gainesville, enjoying a picnic after the testing.

Shortly after Anne started working at the Medical University of South Carolina, she met another employee, Richard Stacey, who eventually became our first black belt. He was interested in the martial arts, and being a Resident Advisor at the nearby College of Charleston, he arranged for us to hold Cuong Nhu classes in the dorm. We moved the park classes to the college, and added students from the College of Charleston. When all 20 - 30 students attended class, the room became too small, so we moved outside to the common area—a concrete courtyard.

Working out in the courtyard, we did have to endure some college students yelling down at us; once throwing beer bottles. Maybe they were not really that vicious—or just not accurate. The bottles broke on the concrete nearby without injuring anyone.

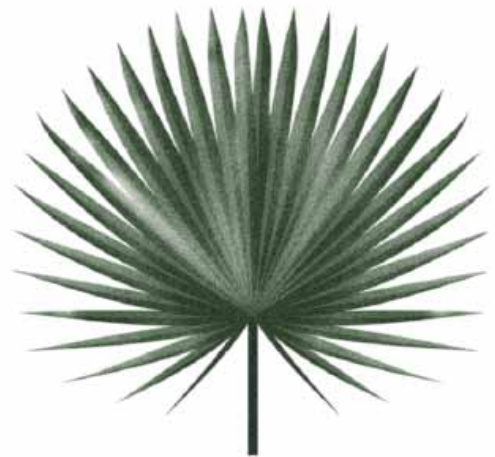
Classes were going well, but we needed a more public location to hold classes and attract people other than college students. We found a city gymnasium we could use for free, and other than CNOMA membership fees, classes were free.

Classes grew, but training at the city gym could be challenging. People

playing basketball before our class, sometimes refused to stop. The gym manager interceded, threatening to ban them if they didn't stop.

Once when I was getting a drink of water, one kid asked me, "Are you *bad*? Are you *really bad*?" I smiled and said, "No, I am good!" He seemed flustered and said, "Come on, man. You know what I mean!"

Still, classes were starting late, due to



the basketball players' interference. One day, when the manager was not around to stop the basketball games, I deviated from the 4 A's (there were only four back then). I ignored "aware" and "avoid," but did *anticipate* and *act*: I ran into the basketball game and intercepted a pass, hoping there wouldn't be a confrontation. Luckily, the young men just left.

Over time, we decided to find a new place to practice and rented about 2,000 sq. ft. on the second floor of a grocery store that sold food scavenged from train wrecks. At least, that's what the landlord of the building told me. We rented it for \$150 per month; students paid \$5 per month.

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Feature

Palmetto - continued from previous page

Unfortunately, the owners stored boxes of food, including cereal, upstairs near our workout floor. I remember punching in rectangular stance while reading *Snap, Crackle, Pop!* and *Frosted Flakes are Great!*

I also remember seeing rats running along the rafters in the ceiling. The two men who owned the grocery store would typically be hanging around in the store (which, in retrospect, I think was a front for other activities) when I showed up to start classes. As I walked through the store, they would approach me and feign punches, saying things like, *I bet you five dollars, I can hit you before you can hit me! How about ten dollars!*

Meanwhile our Cuong Nhu friends from Gainesville visited, tested our lead students to green belt and beyond, and filled our house with love.

About a year after we began classes at the fake grocery store, the shady partners skipped town with our \$150 initial deposit and we had to vacate our dojo.

A few blocks away, near the Naval Station, we found a 3,000 sq. ft. second floor, above Shorty's Snack Bar - for our new location. The rent was a *whopping* \$300 per month and students paid \$10 a month to work out.

By then we had about 45 students, so the students' fees paid the rent, the utilities, and there was a little extra for buying heavy bags and mats.

We named the new dojo the *Palmetto Center for Cuong Nhu Karate*. Not only was the palmetto tree the state tree of South Carolina, but the palmetto encompasses the yin yang, Cuong Nhu

hard soft concept. During the U.S. War of Independence, the British bombarded an American fort near Charleston. It was made of palmetto logs. The cannon balls bounced off the spongy palmetto wood and the fort did not fall.

The students were very involved, fixing the tile floors, erecting mirrors, and maintaining the dojo. Master John Burns organized several tournaments in Charleston. We used his guidance, in the following years; proceeds - over \$1,000 annually - were donated to a local orphanage.

Every dojo has its stories, one of ours is



Master Mike and Sensei Anne, founders of the Palmetto Dojo have been married 40 years.

the invention of the *Ronco can crusher makiwara device*. In the spirit of recycling, students donated empty aluminum cans to the dojo - *fodder for the device*. You would insert a can in the device, and a punch to the padded end of the plunger would flatten it.

Another one I'll never forget. One night, I arrived late to the advanced class and Anne was teaching. As I walked up the stairs to the dojo, I could hear the class *kiai-ing* loudly. When I got to the top of the stairs, I observed the class from the

side, expecting to see Anne in the front, but I couldn't see her. Instead, I saw my eight-month-old son, Tony, in a stand-up rolling baby walker, wearing his gi. I heard *hut! hut!* It certainly looked like a baby, dressed in a gi and a white belt, was the sensei!

At the height of the dojo, three beginner's classes were taught in the metro area, as well as at Palmetto. Afterward, the instructors and the advanced students met at Palmetto to work out. There were about 90 students in all locations.

We were fortunate to have many visits over the years by O'Sensei Dong and his sons. We loved having our Gainesville Cuong Nhu friends visit, test students and hang out together.

Anne and I moved to Louisiana in 1987, but the Palmetto Dojo continued on under the skilled guidance of Sally Catlin and Tim Rakar.

We have many good memories with our friends at the dojo, and there's one that especially stays with me. One night, after we had worked out, we were meditating in attention stance; I was hot and sweaty, as were the students. Then I noticed some of them wavering slightly, either from their exhaustion, or maybe mine, and I envisioned we were a forest of trees, swaying in the breeze. A forest descended from the tallest tree, O'Sensei Dong. **70**

Sound Judgment

Knowing When or When Not to Act

By Ron Reitz

I will never forget the “popping” sound and the coldness I felt on my face. I still have vivid images of two armed, masked men suddenly appearing directly in front of me and my wife.

The one nearest me pointed a Glock 9mm, semi-automatic hand gun directly at my chest. I could hear my wife saying something to the men, but I was entirely focused on the gloved hand pointing its weapon at me. I cannot tell you what she said. My mind was calm as I instinctively put my hands in the air, avoided eye contact and focused intently on the finger that rested on the trigger. I was wedged between my car and the wall in our garage and I knew I had no room in which to defend myself.

On the opposite side of the car the second man held his weapon pointing at my wife. The man in front of me was about six feet tall, weighed over 200 pounds, was athletically built and appeared to be in his mid-20's. His demands to give him everything I had were loud and intense. I handed him my wallet and car keys but they were not enough. The man put his hand in my front pocket to search for something else and retrieved my house keys.

At that split moment I thought I might be able to make a move to grab the gun but the risk was too great and the intensity in his voice told me he was likely high on drugs. I was then pushed farther into my garage toward the door that leads into our house. I knew I had martial arts weapons within reach but was not in any position to reach for them. I was now standing next to my

wife at the front of our car with one man pointing his weapon at my wife and demanding everything she had. He began pulling her rings off of her fingers and reaching for her watch. My wife, much like me, was calm and cooperative.

My mind continued searching for a way to get



out of the situation. The second man asked where the keys to our other car were and my wife and I both knew those keys were in the house. So were our youngest daughter and her friend. When the men had taken everything on us, one of them started searching through our car for anything else of value. At that moment my wife slowly reached behind her, opened the door to our house and jumped in. She yelled for me to get in there. As I was closing the door behind me I heard the “pop” and felt the cold sensation in

my mouth. I knew the shot was fired from the second guy who was standing about 15 feet from me. That one shot hit me in my mouth and I assumed it was going to be pretty bad.

My wife later told me she pulled me into the house, closed and locked the door behind me. “He shot me!” I said. I could not believe he actually shot me. I quickly looked in the bathroom mirror and saw my face was still intact but I could feel I had a tooth missing and I saw a lot of red. I raced upstairs to get my gun from my safe as I heard my wife yelling at me to “sit down!” My wife was already on the phone with 911 yelling at them to hurry as her husband was shot and we had just been held up in our garage.

I knew they had the keys to our house and the only way to protect my family was with my gun, which was locked in my safe, upstairs. Just as I was heading downstairs my daughter opened her bedroom door to see me bleeding and carrying my gun.

My daughter's room is directly above our garage and yet she was not awakened by the gunshot; rather, she was awakened by my wife's voice on the phone with the 911 operator. The assailants never got into our house and the police arrived moments later.

There were two helicopters and at least 10 police cars that responded. We did not know it at the time but there were at least three men as the driver remained in the car. I have replayed this incident over and over in my mind hundreds of times,

Judgment - Continued on the next page.

Judgment - from previous page

searching for a solution of how I could have responded differently, better even. I have come to accept that we did the right thing, there was nothing else we could have done that would have resulted in a better outcome. My Cuong Nhu training was certainly flowing through my mind, and I deduced the best action in our situation was the retreat we made.

I have shared my experience with our dojo. Now, when I teach self-defense I do it with a different perspective. We learn, train and teach numerous self-defense applications. We envision and create various scenarios that involve attacks from multiple people and various weapons. They are practiced and performed in a controlled and synchronized environment with trained ukes, and have been rehearsed countless times.

These are valuable tools that help us prepare for an unknown attack.

My recent experience makes clear I was unprepared for the psychological impact such an attack has on you. During a violent attack, your brain responds in various ways. In my case it was doing it's best to defuse the situation, while simultaneously searching for an opportunity to counterattack. When the situation is such that the risk of a wrong or ill-timed move could end your life or that of your wife, you opt to wait until that risk diminishes.

In our situation we had a slight moment to act quickly. In our case, my wife is the one that was able to position herself in such a way we could escape if the moment was right. Fortunately, that moment occurred, and my wife moved at the perfect time to escape into the house.

Again, there was significant risk present, but the risk was slightly lower at that moment.

Knowing what technique to use and when to use it is only part of defending yourself. I would offer having the ability to think clearly about all consequences to any action you take is of great importance, and one that may be difficult to prepare for. My teaching of self-defense now has another element, which is understanding your body and mind may not react in unison when confronted with life-threatening circumstances, and this is an important factor to know.

This experience has given me a perspective on the importance of knowing when or when not to act. 🙏

Master Burns - Continued from page 9

DN: So how do you achieve that without dropping a lot of good curriculum?

JB: Well, a few things might get dropped, or made optional. But surprisingly few. Some things get moved back to the dan ranks. A few things get moved around to make sure there aren't any rank levels that are roadblocks because of too much new material. Weapons basics got moved earlier, because people are capable and it raises enthusiasm. That allows spreading out the weapons requirement over more levels, which helps things move faster. You see how it works? Grandmaster Quynh had a lot of specific ideas we implemented, and we solicited and got suggestions from instructors. One thing that struck me is we had gotten too "test-heavy;" we had put every good drill and training method onto the curriculum as an actual test requirement, instead of treating them

as what they were: drills and training methods. We shouldn't be testing students on how well they've memorized their instructor's favorite drills. We should test them on the skills those drills are supposed to develop. For example, don't test how well they can do "checkbox pattern." Test them on whether their sparring shows good offline evasive footwork and counterattacks. If it doesn't, prescribe some drills – but don't test them on the drills; test them on the skills! That's why a whole lot of items got moved to the "drills" section. People said, "Oh no, you got rid of my favorite drill!" No, we didn't. All we did was remind you it's a *drill*, not something to put on a test.

Really, very little got dropped; quite a few things got moved around; and I believe we have a kyu rank curriculum now that meets Grandmaster Quynh's desire to let students advance much more quickly, while developing a high level of skill.

DN: Any thoughts about the challenges CN faces in the future?

JB: Right now I just think we need to see how well the new requirements meet the goal of faster advancement, and see what we need to do to help instructors make it work. As Cuong Nhu's first and second generation leaders are getting older and sooner or later won't be with us, we need to make sure the next generation of leaders are ready to carry Cuong Nhu into the future.

DN: If you had to identify one thing you would want to remembered for, not just martial arts, but also your life in general, what would that be?

That I was able to help my students, old and young, and made a difference in their lives. And maybe also that I made a few people laugh. 🙏

Reality-Based Self Defense Training

By Scott Vignon

While studying Cuong Nhu, I have developed close friendships with several members of our school. In addition to Cuong Nhu, we also practice a self-defense system aimed at



protecting against violent attacks. I began assisting one of my friend who teaches self-defense classes at a local gym. We teach three classes once a week and have a mix of men and women.

Watching someone who, not long ago, had timidly walked through the door unsure of what they were getting themselves into suddenly turn and gouge the eyes of their attacker with confidence proved to be quite rewarding. These students had never been faced with a violent encounter before, but you could almost see the light bulb come on as they realized that they have the innate ability to defend themselves.



Teaching self-defense classes also has provided insights and lessons that I believe apply to my martial arts training. The difference in scope (fewer techniques) and perspective (fighting for your life) lead to differences in training that more strongly emphasize certain aspects than traditional martial arts training. Some examples that I have found important include:



- **Awareness.** The ideal self-defense scenario is one that never happens at all. Being aware and showing awareness allows one to avoid many threats before they turn into a violent attack.



- **Adrenaline.** Self-defense scenarios have high emotional intensity and typically an element of surprise. We simulate this in training to achieve realistic reactions, including adrenaline surges, which lead to a decrease in fine motor control. This physiological change greatly impacts the contents of your self-defense toolbox.

- **The Switch.** Emotionally intense scenarios also can effect a change in attitude. For example, a mother realizing she is the only thing standing between an abductor and her child. The result appears like a switch was thrown in the brain and the person now has decided they *will* defeat this threat.

- **Energy.** Just as Aikido relies on the opponent committing to an attack, effective self-defense training relies on the bad guy projecting realistic energy. A menacing gaze, the swagger in their step, a verbal assault, perhaps a grunt as they attack, these elements combine to create a more realistic scenario that triggers the other mental and physiological symptoms of violent aggression.

I have always found martial arts training to be rewarding, both physically and mentally; however, using those skills to serve the people made it even more so. I also believe the experience from teaching self-defense has made me a better martial artist, and certainly a better instructor. 🙏

Philosophy Words - Answers

d	g	a	j	e	y	w	s	m	r	a	d	o	a	p
j	l	w	r	h	n	s	t	a	e	y	f	c	m	q
n	s	o	k	i	p	d	k	s	r	g	q	s	b	d
e	s	t	t	f	k	u	y	f	d	c	a	s	r	f
v	c	x	r	i	d	g	q	t	s	k	t	e	w	z
e	o	y	a	p	i	m	k	i	m	n	h	y	t	g
z	s	r	e	f	v	g	y	m	u	h	n	j	i	o
q	s	c	h	d	r	t	g	b	i	h	u	j	m	p
f	t	c	s	a	w	f	u	e	x	n	q	w	s	c
d	c	d	e	v	f	r	b	g	t	n	d	h	t	m

Keep Moving Forward

By Alexander Ngo

One of the greatest blessings of life is being given the opportunity to take advantage of something. You start to grow up, and your outlook on life begins to change: You no longer worry about tangible and disposable items that you want; rather, you begin to invest your time and attention into what you need. It may take a little more time for some people, and that's okay. But those who realize this more quickly have a head start in this figurative race we all call life.

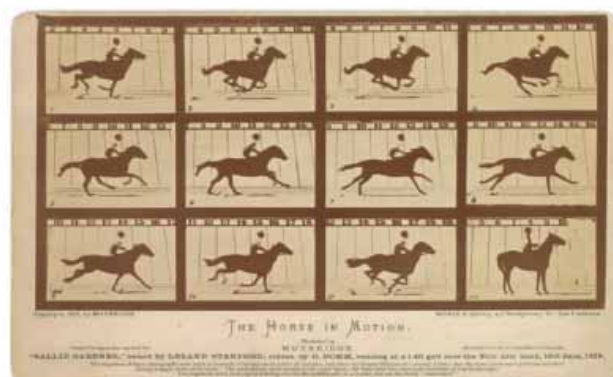
When we think of a race, we commonly think of a winner, or where the finish line is, or quite possibly how long this race is. But in the metaphor for life, there is no finish line; there is no winner; there is no measurable length. Rather, there is a target zone, there are leaders, and there is a measure to what degree each leader resides in the target zone.

Additionally, there is the middle of the road, wherein lie those who do not quite meet the criteria to be top dog. Conversely, there is the back of the pack, home to those who currently have no aspirations in their lives or do nothing to reach whatever aspirations they may have.

What is perhaps one of the most important concepts to understand in this race is recognition of your own position. From my experiences as a sensei in the past four years, there were moments where I did not recognize my own position in the race. It started as a race to reach Nidan. Each subsequent stripe symbolizes knowledge, growth, and further experience in Cuong Nhu, right? Not necessarily. I waited an extra year to test for the rank, ultimately deciding the year I was eligible that I was not quite ready, and that the extra seasoning would allow me to season

myself more and hone in on perfecting my craft. This taught me patience and perseverance, which helped me grow as a person, thus advancing my position farther along in the race. It further exemplified the aspect that you need to take a step back to look at your own position in life and utilize that knowledge to move forward.

It then comes down to a measure of your own character. Are you the person who will lie to yourself, believing you are further along in the race? Only you can



answer that question. Self-acceptance is an asset that one should aspire to achieve. Earning the title of sensei does not mean you are always correct, or that you know absolutely everything. In fact, we, as senseis, are still students ourselves, since the learning process never ends.


It is especially beneficial to utilize your position as an opportunity to help others. As a sensei, I am presented with the opportunity to help others progress in the style, regardless of their rank. I learn through teaching my students, but I also get to help other senseis become better teachers (as they help me too), effectively moving all of us in a forward direction. Through years of dedication, in essence we are moving forward,

achieving the level of perfection through degrees of progression.

To keep in tone with progression, we commonly need to ask questions, whether it may be to others, or to ourselves. We need to move forward, but to move forward with no purpose is like moving sideways: you are moving, but without direction, therefore there is no progression. As a perfectionist, one of the questions I ask myself the most is "why do I make

these mistakes?" I hate to watch myself make mistakes, knowing retrospectively I could have done something to prevent what happened. It's encoded in my DNA. But then again, those are moments where I need to look at the bigger picture. Making a difference is what separates a leader from a teacher. I embrace my weaknesses in hindsight because I know I learn from them.

One of the things that I find the craziest is that I am only 18 years old. I am still at the beginning of my life. There is so much left for me to explore and I still have so much to learn, but that's perfectly okay. I acknowledge where I stand in my life, and I will continue to take the wheel and drive my course.

The advantages I currently have are willpower and time, and it is in my best interest to utilize them to the best of my ability to better myself so that I may be able to help others. With such opportunities in life, it would be an honor to continue to serve the style in the future and those who have helped shape me, and for those reasons I continue to keep moving forward. 

Daring Greatly

By Madeline Rawley Crouse

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is not effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly...."
Theodore Roosevelt

The above quote hangs in Master Joe and Sensei Kathy's kitchen. Combined with a quote from Nelson Mandela, "As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same," I find purpose, peace and joy as I get ready for my upcoming Sandan test.

My preparation for Sandan is unfolding quite differently and unexpectedly than imagined or as occurred for previous ranks. I have a knee injury that significantly restricts my movement. I am closer in age to 60 than 50....Put together, these realities present unique challenges that have caused me to question everything, especially testing for Sandan. I will not be able to achieve the level of excellence expected.... However, that is precisely why I want to test. It is my moment to "dare greatly" and to put myself "in the arena," though imperfect, and just do.... It is an opportunity to accept that excellence takes many forms, perfection is a false and empty goal, and that I am still vital, with much to offer others, perhaps even more than before.... Testing is about self-acceptance and self-tolerance - something with which I have struggled all my life.

When I look at myself in the mirror or see a photo of me, it's hard to believe that it is me. I see wrinkles, yellowing skin,

greying hair, a middle-aged body, and I ask myself, "Who is that person?! Where is Madeline?" Then, I then ask myself, "Who is Madeline? Who do I want her to be in the years to come?"

At the same time, my test is about the opportunity to motivate others to challenge themselves to get moving, regardless of their limitations....My Sandan test may inspire others to get up and move, to do new things, and to challenge themselves to grow regardless of their circumstances - perhaps even to learn karate.



I ask myself, "Who is that person?! Where is Madeline?" Then, I then ask myself, "Who is Madeline? Who do I want her to be in the years to come?"

Ironically, of late, I've been thinking about quitting karate. Movement, something that has always brought me happiness, has been difficult and has felt as though it is slowly being taken away from me. I have wondered whether it is time to throw in the towel or if I'm being called to do other things. Yet, each time I say, "This is it," something happens to stop me from stopping, and, instead, I recommit. It is always a different trigger: a super fun class, I learned something new, I understood something more deeply, I had a good work session with a fellow karateka, or most importantly, when I realize that the things in life that stymie others I handle well because of my martial arts training.

My mid-fifties have been challenging. I need more sleep, tire easily, forget things, often misplace things, and often (believe it or not) listen more.

Now that I'm listening better and observe a lot, I also question much, as there is a growing sense that we make a big deal about things in life that don't really matter. I know with certainty, however, that each day is a gift, and for each one I am super

grateful. Just like I tell my 5th graders, I live each day fully alive.

I know, too, that I am committed to serving others, striving to be a ray of light for them by listening well, sharing just right, and guiding them gently on their own journeys. I have to grow where planted, using my abilities and experience to help those around me, while living modestly, sincerely, with nobility and elegance, bum knee and all. So that's what I am going to do. Oh, and also test for Sandan. 🍀

Budapest, Krishna, Cuong Nhu

Progression Is Perfection



By Anna Golson - Tallest Tree Dojo

I was born in Budapest, Hungary, and grew up in Hungary, Germany and Austria. I had a mostly happy and adventurous childhood traveling quite a bit with my dad, who ran his own architectural firm. My mother, a mechanical engineer, passed away in a car accident. I have five younger brothers and three younger sisters. They currently live at various places around Europe, the UK and the US.

We lived behind the Iron Curtain under the heavy-handed rule of communism. This meant that every aspect of life was monitored. At the same time, we were relentlessly fed communist propaganda. I was well taken care of, but also expected to fully embrace the party line.

People who broke the rules - especially those who spoke up against the ideology of communism or questioned the leadership - were heavily punished. It was not uncommon for entire families to disappear. The fear of ending up on the watch list of the communist party was always present, both in adults and children.

Right after graduating high school, I had a chance to visit the US. I left with no hesitation - and no intention of ever going back.... To this day, I'm fearful of landlocked countries, border crossings, men in uniforms and big red flags - but I

also happily sing old communist songs in the shower and on long car rides.

They did have catchy songs.

After arriving in the US.... I embarked on a spiritual journey, studying the Bible, the Koran, the Bhagavad-Gita - books forbidden under communism.

My spiritual quest eventually led me to a group of Hare Krishna monks, and I was immediately attracted to their beautiful, peaceful ways, and their ability to answer my big life questions. I joined their ashram for several years.

... In time, I decided I wanted to look for a new path. I'm very grateful for everything I learned from the monks and that they allowed me to experience their lives....

This is when I found the Tallest Tree Cuong Nhu school. From the very beginning, I was impressed with the attention of the students, the dedication of the teachers and the overall atmosphere of the dojo. I was amazed - and delighted - the philosophy was so much in line with what I learned from the monks.

However, as I continued to train, I realized I had a mental block about becoming a black belt. Seeing the skill and performance of



black belts - I was so impressed and inspired - but, at the same time, thought: I will never have the skill to do those things. And, being a black belt means standing out and being a leader; during my childhood, standing out was a very bad idea.

I read, in Cuong Nhu philosophy, the Five Fears of Achievement: Hard Work, Failure,



Intimidation or Pressure, Associating with People, and Death. And I realized, that's where I have been.

Thinking of the five fears: I know I won't die if I test for black belt; I can handle hard work, but's there's still the possibility of failure, and pressure based on expectations.

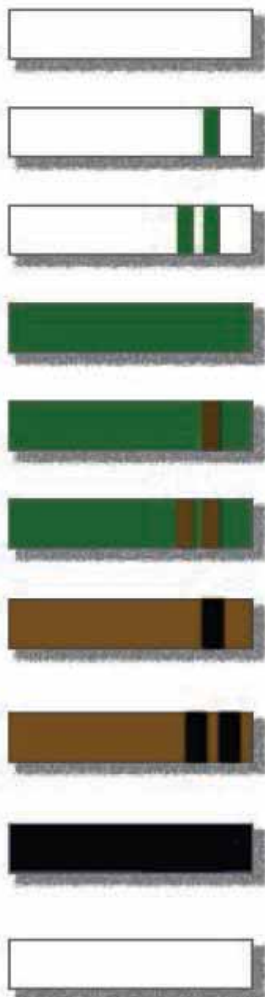
I re-read the Code of Ethics, and I saw there was no mention of perfect techniques or ranks. Rather, it binds us to living a simple, sincere and noble life, with self-confidence, self-control, modesty, dedicated practice and a non-defeatist attitude. It binds us to an ideal of being good, honest, hardworking and dependable people - and to serve others.

Regarding my own skills, I read in the philosophy how "Progression is Perfection." My goal should be to progress - to work hard to be the best I can be.

I also came to realize that getting a black belt isn't about me. It's about serving others. Ultimately, we learn these skills to teach, to inspire our students to try their best and reach for goals they thought were impossible to achieve. And in turn, they inspire us too, pushing us to be better examples, come up with more effective ways to teach. In the process, we become their students.

This philosophy of evolution - student, teacher, then student again - and doing my personal best in each, makes me look to this next step. 🌱

Still a White Belt at Heart



By Mark Lake

How often in your training do you try to cover up your weaknesses? Of course, we want to appear strong and competent among our peers and instructors, but does hiding your weak areas really help your training? Or is it really a matter of protecting our ego?

I tend to be an introvert, so I find it difficult to learn something new in a public setting. I prefer to practice by myself at first until I get the hang of it, avoiding the embarrassment of making all the rookie mistakes.

Returning to my Cuong Nhu training after 11 years off was humbling and uncomfortable. I had to relearn a lot, adapting to an older, less flexible body.

This was a life lesson, reminding me that I am always a student. Regardless of what I'm wearing around my waist, I am always a white belt at heart. This is true in every area of life: physical training, relationships, work, and spiritually. True ignorance is to believe that one has nothing left to learn or improve. Our life is a constant evolution if we continue to refine our own knowledge and skill.

This means that we pass through various stages, as in the "Ten Stages of Growth," beginning as a nobody and eventually becoming a nobody again. This cycle repeats through our lives over and over, making progress but returning to the beginner stage again and again.

Breaking this cycle - to stop making new progress - is the beginning of death. Studies have shown that learning new things increases brain activity as people age and helps combat dementia. People who are stagnant have much lower brain activity, as many typical daily tasks become so routine that there is little brain stimulation. Learning something new activates the brain and increases health. *tn*

New Dojo - Cuong Nhu Welcome

By Elyse Rantanen

I feel honored to have been able to experience training at multiple dojos. Together, I have had about ten senseis who trained me regularly, and although it is tough sometimes when they have their own way of doing things, I feel as though having these multiple viewpoints will broaden my own perception of the art.

At first, the transition between dojos was a struggle. I was leaving my friends behind, I was also being exposed to a new style of teaching.

The classes lasted thirty minutes longer than I was used to, and the workouts were different. I was intimidated by the black belts at the new school, and I felt as if I had to prove myself.

But after a few weeks, I realized there was no need to feel uncomfortable.

The instructors encouraged me to be the best that I can be. *tn*

A Long Way To Go

By Butch White

I remember standing in the line at my first training camp as a novice white belt and seeing how many students were to the left of me. I did not see myself ever getting to the other side, it seemed so far away. Six years later I became a black belt and realized I was now standing with only seven to eight rows of senseis standing to my left. I realized at that moment that my training was just beginning, I still had a long way to go. *tn*

O'Sensei's Way of the Sword

By John Hooley

O'Sensei Ngo Dong returned to the United States in November 1977. He was the instructor of my senseis, John Kay and John Benson, at Dragon Gate Dojo. When he returned to Gainesville, I had already completed my education and was working in Naples, Florida, where I founded Ronin Dojo in October of 1977. I had two black stripes.

To prepare for my black belt test, I needed to return to Gainesville to train. O'Sensei worked with me at the Center to correct my technique and make sure that I would be ready for the test. He was personally dedicated to promoting the style. He emphasized the importance of new black belt instructors, but refused to sacrifice proficiency and precision in our martial arts techniques to ensure promotion. I was very fortunate to be able to work with him directly. O'Sensei provided me with this unique opportunity for personal growth.

Basic Techniques

In one of our sessions, O'Sensei took me aside and brought out two bokken. He explained that he wanted to teach me his personal Japanese sword kata. I was completely surprised that O'Sensei would take the time to teach a two black stripe student this kata. I was not sure that I could learn this in the limited time available to us. Naturally, I could not tell the master of the style that he might be overestimating my ability. I was determined to do the best I could, but not convinced that would be quite good enough.

He patiently showed me how to draw the bokken, the seven basic cuts, the thrusts and the five guard positions (kamae). We did not do any repetitive drills except to make sure the cuts were proper and the window blocks were strong. Then he taught me the kata.


The Weapon

We used bokken. Their weight and balance is very close to that of a live blade. Miyamoto Musashi fought his most famous duel with a wooden sword. Whether a bokken or a katana, this is a weapon that is philosophically distinct from any other weapon in the Cuong Nhu Martial Arts system. You may strike your opponent with a bo or a tambo, a sai or a kama, and incapacitate him or her. The sword is for cutting your opponent. Each cut should be fatal to your opponent.

The Kata

So how can you fully understand the weapon? The kata uses a series of short stances. The guard positions in the kata allow blocks and quick cuts. The kata applications are demonstrated and learned in prearranged sets. Nevertheless, you can sense the power and finality of the cut as you bring the bokken over your head. When you work with a student and raise the bokken to strike, he or she will sense the power you are focusing. In these applications and the short stances the mortal danger inherent in the sword techniques cannot be ignored.

The Future

I received my Shodan in 1978 and hope to pass this kata on to the new generations of Cuong Nhu instructors. It has great philosophical and spiritual value to any student. 



Pegasus Is On The Move

By Bill Hudson

On April 30, 2018, Pegasus Dojo - Florida A&M University (FAMU) - celebrated thirty-two years of training and service as a Cuong Nhu karate school. During this period of time, countless college students attending a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) have participated in martial arts training. These students have come from every state within the United States and from 10 countries in Africa, as well as a few from Southeast Asia. These students had in common a desire to learn, and a commitment to making a difference.

During the first 15 years of the school, most students would only reach brown belt before graduating and returning to their home cities, states or countries. As Cuong Nhu grew and new schools were opened, graduating students began to relocate to other Cuong Nhu schools in their cities of employment, or in

their home city or country. This allowed students the opportunity to continue their training and progression. During the past thirty two years, Pegasus has produced a remarkable array of students. Two of these outstanding individuals are Master Donald Williams and Sensei Demetrius Harris. They exemplify the true spirit, dedication and commitment exuded by O'Sensei. We are so very proud of them.

Pegasus continues to provide training to college students. This training is offered through the College of Education. There are two courses, a beginning course (PEM - 1441) and an advanced course (PEM - 2442). Each course carries two credit hours and can be utilized as an elective course in various majors within the Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation. 🏆

Sensei Tony Kay Heads Komoku-ten Dojo

As of January 2018, Sensei Tony Kay has taken over as official head of Komoku-ten Dojo, which resides at Fairwood Martial Arts in Renton, Washington.

He began his martial arts training at the age of 5, in 1989. He achieved his black belt at the age of 13. He did assistant teaching for 3 years prior. He began his official teaching career at the age of 14, teaching his own groups of students. He has continued teaching his entire life.

He augments his martial arts training with weight lifting, running, bicycling and hiking. He has summited Mt. Rainier,

and completed the 208 mile Seattle to Portland bike ride twice, accomplishing it within one day. In May, 2018, he did an outstanding job performing for his Godan, 5th degree Black belt. He favors weapons, katas and especially grappling.

He holds a Masters Degree in Education. He has been teaching 1st grade in a public school for the past 5 years.

He has been very happily married since August 2015. Tony has excellent leadership skills and will take Komoku-ten dojo far into the future. 🏆

Sensei Lara Tribe-Jones Heads Redwood Dojo

Sensei Lara Tribe-Jones is the new Head Instructor at Redwood Dojo in Oakland, California. She was promoted to that position by Redwood Dojo founder, Master Didi Goodman, in January 2018. Sensei Lara began training more than 20 years ago, alongside her dad, when she was eight years old. She now holds a BA in mathematics and an MA in education, as well as a California Teaching Credential. A

former Oakland middle school teacher, she has taught kids and teens in classroom, camp, dojo, and after-school settings. She shares her life-long passion for martial arts and education with students of all ages. Master Didi, after 27 years at the helm, now focuses on preparing the advanced students for testing, and is spending more time helping at Rohai Dojo. 🏆

New Cuong Nhu Schools

Sacred Flow Arts - Little Rock, AR - Paula Martin, Head of School
Gin Kyo Dojo - Athens, GA - Shawn (Smack) McElroy, Head of School
7 Dragons Dojo - Paris, France - Marilyn Tasso, Head of School

The Dojo Library: How and Why

By Bobby Suiter

People learn in different ways, and not all of them are easily offered within a dojo environment. Those who are fortunate enough to be primarily physical learners will have the easiest time, being able to pick up techniques and concepts through practice under instructor supervision. While all of us can eventually learn through mass repetition (and you should do mass repetitions to hone muscle memory of techniques!), the fact is some of us pick up information easier in other ways.

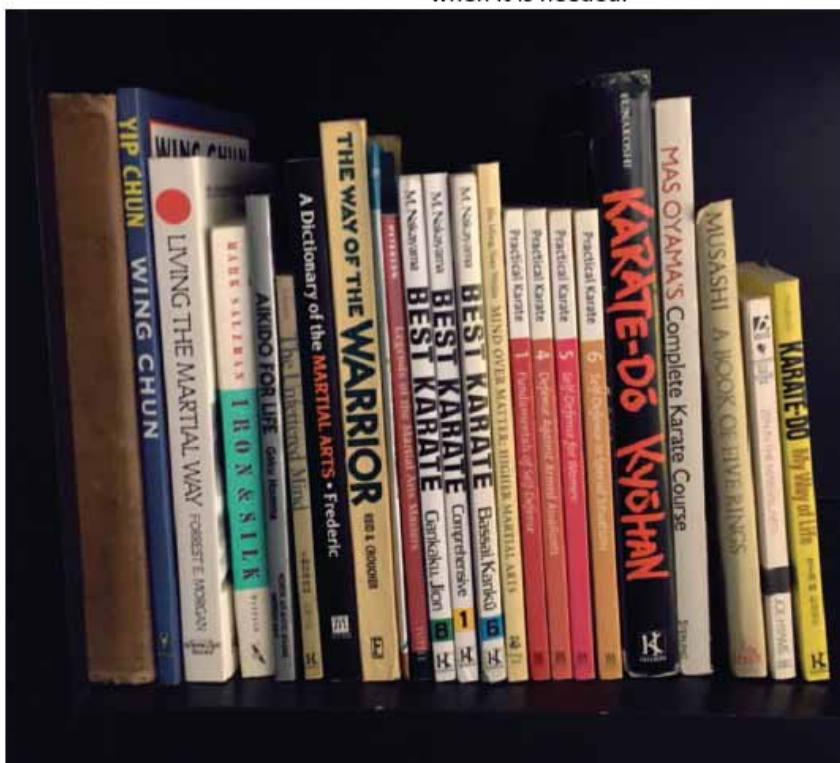
Personally I find it much easier and faster for me to pick up a concept by reading about it, then trying it out after absorbing the idea in text form. So when Master Joe Varady told me he wanted to reboot the dojo library, I was excited to take on the task – that meant more reading material to store in my home.

I'd like to share my experiences and lessons:

You don't need a huge library to start out, and you don't need brand new books. Most of our books came used from Amazon or eBay, and others were donated by students or instructors.

Keep a log (I use a spreadsheet format) of all your books. Note which are checked out and when. This goes a very long way to not losing books when you can quietly approach a classmate after a lesson and ask them how they are coming along in a book they've had for 3 months.

Realize that some people flat out do not find any joy or interest in reading. You will not get 100 percent participation in this program, at times it's very low and can be frustrating. What matters is that the resource is available when it is needed.




In my opinion, you need to find someone who actually enjoys reading to run the program; someone who would willingly read the entire library in their spare time so they help others find the book they need.

Let me end this by giving a quick collection I'd call the library starter pack. I've tried to keep this simple and cheap enough to be feasible for a smaller dojo to afford.

Technique: *Karate-Do Kyohan* by Gichen Funakoshi, *Best Judo* by Jigoro Kano, *Championship Fighting* by Jack Dempsey.

Philosophy: *Book of Five Rings* By Miyomoto Musashi, *Zen in the Martial Arts* by Joe Hyams, *Living the Martial Way* by Forrest E. Morgan.

Oh and just for fun: *Musashi vol. 1-5* by Eiji Yoshikawa.

If anyone would like to talk about starting a dojo library, you can reach me via the Cuong Nhu Group on Facebook, or e-mail me at RW.Suiter@Gmail.com. 

Promotions

IATC 2017 Candidates

Black Belt

Ryko Lastimosa, Jacen Reese, Megan Allen, Nicholas Lippis, Noah Young, Georgia Klingensmith, Robert Simon, Clarence Canada, Meagan Richards-Boeff, Nathaniel Villarina, Chandler Vu, Allegra Sasser, Paula Martin Steven Faby, Alanna Faby, Nick Senske

Shodan

Andy Souder, Justin Hutchinson, Hannah Morgan, Ronald Reitz, Martha Richardson, Chris Robinson, Reggie Stanley, Stephanie Vollmer, Marilyn Tasso

Nidan

Brian Shaw, JamesVanEck111, Joanne Wolford, 2James Schoen, Parnee Frederick, David Strouhal

Sandan

Shawn McElroy Joshua Cunningham, Rosanne Boudreau, Tom Panton

Rokudan

Donald Williams

IATC 2018 Candidates

Blackbelt

Mark Lake, Margaret Sagarin, Elysse Rantanen, Sage Carleton-Ferris, Gwendolyn Hill, Jeannie Wang, Aaron McLeod, Magnus Sepp

Shodan

Matthew Bahr, Ryko Lastimosa, Steve Faby, Meg Richards-Boeff, Nick Lippis, Noah Young, Megan Allen, Georgia Klingensmith, Stephanie Eastham

Nidan

Benny Varon, Alex Vergara, Darrick Ball, Shawn Whitney, Alexander Ngo, Felix Noreiga, Christina Ngo, Kory Miron, Amir Carlock, Seth Plockelman, Stephan Rothwell

Sandan

Thanh Nguyen, Rachel Gowan, Madeline Crouse, Joe Shacter, Michael Scheinkman, Demetrius Harris, Oliver Johnson

Yondan

Deanna Bonnell, Butch White, Tim DeMarte, Michael Hornback, Victoria Johnson, Russ Eggleston

Godan

Gordon Eilen, Tony Kay

Masters Promotions:

Rokudan

Jessica Ngo, Darius Jones

Shichidan

Elizabeth Roman, Robert First, Howard Hannon, Terri Giamartino, Didi Goodman

Support - Continued from page 2

welcoming community that exists from coast to coast, and I am so proud to be a part of that.

Toward the end my first year at Unity, I was able to attend training camp, and had a wonderful time; and then, I was diagnosed with breast cancer.

It was a totally terrifying thing to find out, but the support I received from Cuong Nhu members was so beautiful. I was never pitied, never discouraged from my drive to keep trying whenever I was able, and it was music to my ears to hear my teachers and fellow students saying, "That will work better if you try it like this."

It translated to me that I was perfectly capable of becoming a better student, even though I was struggling. It would have been so easy to allow myself to quit, but I continued to go to class when I was able, and I made it through the loss of my hair, several surgeries, chemo, and a drastic weight loss.

I made it because when I was too exhausted to want to continue, I felt it was very important that I not let this wonderful support group down. I give much of the credit for making it out on the other side of my experience to my fellow Cuong Nhu people because of their support and ever-caring natures. Currently I still have issues (I won't bore you with those) that are physical things left over from my treatment, plus some that stem from my age; but, everyone, young and old, respects these limitations, and they encourage me to continue to become a better student, and a better person, which is exactly what I want to be – a better student and a better person. I want to be a contributing member of Cuong Nhu for as long as I am able.

I will be grateful for the things I have been given in Cuong Nhu for as long as I live. I have gained physical strength, respect and friendship. I received encouragement, and support when things were tough – and it continues now that things are so much better. I feel like I am a stronger, more balanced, more confident person because of my decision to take up Cuong Nhu at such a late age.

I am grateful Sensei Tanner welcomed me to the community of Unity with open arms and continues to encourage me to grow as a student, and so glad for all the others who also encourage me, and include me in their circle of friends at the dojo. 🙏

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Philosophy - Words

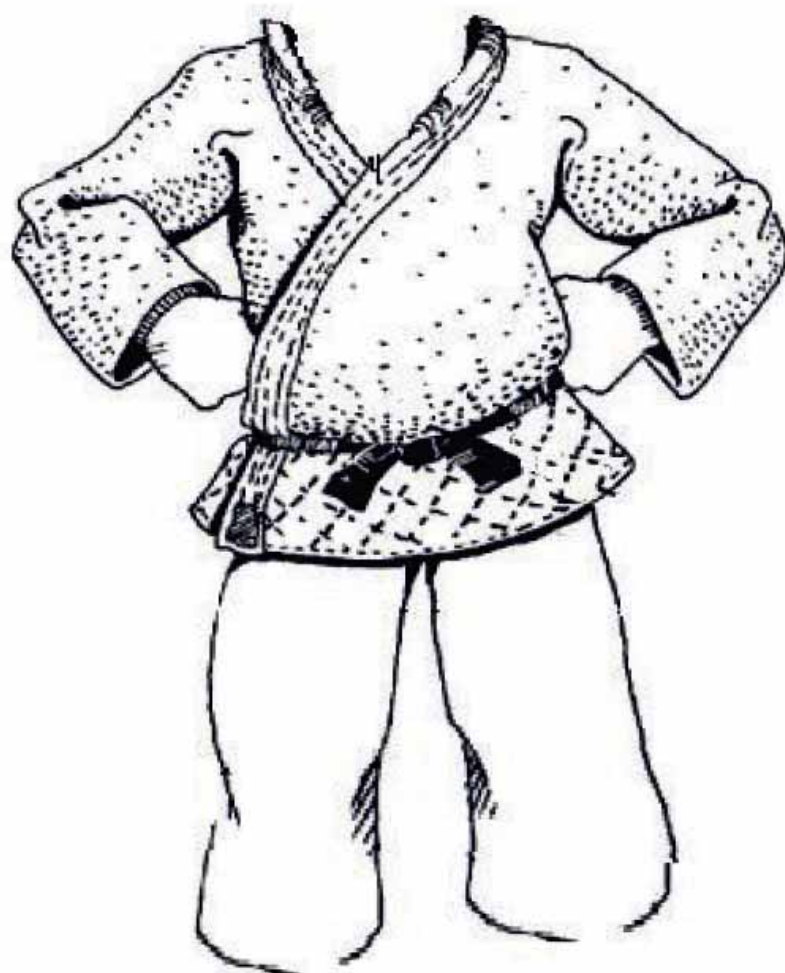
Circle the letters that spell each of the three Os:

Mind, Heart and Arms

The words are spelled backwards, left-to right, right-to-left and diagonally. Answers on page 14.

d	g	a	j	e	y	w	s	m	r	a	d	o	a	p
j	l	w	r	h	n	s	t	a	e	y	f	c	m	q
n	s	o	k	l	p	d	k	s	r	g	q	s	b	d
e	s	t	t	f	k	u	y	f	d	c	a	s	r	f
v	c	x	r	l	d	g	q	t	s	k	t	e	w	z
e	o	y	a	p	l	m	k	l	m	n	h	y	t	g
z	s	r	e	f	v	g	y	m	u	h	n	j	l	o
q	s	c	h	d	r	t	g	b	l	h	u	j	m	p
f	t	c	s	a	w	f	u	e	x	n	q	w	s	c
d	c	d	e	v	f	r	b	g	t	n	d	h	t	m

Since the olden days, painting or drawing a leader was a great honor. Now, you can do just that. Don't forget to include those things that make your Sensei really special: big ears, wild and crazy hair, a big bushy mustache. Be respectful, of course.



Loulogy: Remembering Lou Schilling

A Gentle, Kind and Wise Man Who Gave So Much To Cuong Nhu

"A page for you, Lou: Friend, mentor and all around good guy! Always looking for the good in any situation. I can't leave a shopping cart in the parking lot without guilt because of you. You will be missed!"

Denise Guerin, Tallest Tree Dojo

"Always a smile on his face and Cuong Nhu spirit in his heart! Going to miss him."

Michael M. Scheinkman, Good Nhus Dojo

"Sensei Lou was such an enthusiastic proponent of Cuong Nhu. He saw our style's potential, and made his visions into reality through efforts like "Lou Mart." He also did a lot of behind-the-scenes work for the style. The Schillings definitely helped our style grow into what it has become today. I'll miss you, Lou!"

Jae and Kathy Varady, Satari Dojo

"Back in the mid-80s I was giving a one or two green stripe regional test to some kids, one of whom was Lou's daughter, although I don't think I knew it at the time. She was around 8 or 9 years old I'd guess, and she was doing her self-defense in a very perfunctory manner with no passion or power. I told her that I wanted her to show me the moves again, but that she needed to do it like her life depended on doing it strongly - because some day it might. So I grabbed her wrist and she exploded into her moves, ending with a snap kick to my groin that almost made me fall over. I tried to maintain my composure and told her, "That was great. For your next test we're going to have to work on control." Unbeknownst to me, Lou had videotaped the whole incident."

Andrew Gannon, Vulcan Dojo

I first met Lou when I attended my very first "Campout." He was sitting behind a table in the corner of the gym, with a wonderful array of

martial arts gear and weapons for sale - "Lou's Mart." I bought a pair of nunchaku for seven dollars. Being from California, where 'chucks are highly regulated and hard to get, I couldn't believe he could just sit there selling them - and so cheaply! I thought of him every time I used them; and as a matter of fact, I had that pair of nunchaku out - re-stringing them after all these decades -



Lou was among the first few people who was dedicated to teaching Cuong Nhu to kids. At a Campout in the early 90s, many of us with kids' programs met for an idea-sharing session, and Lou had a lot to contribute. For example, he used feedback slips, where kids would get a stamp - either a smiley, a frowny, or a neutral face, on various aspects of their performance in the day's class. Another very practical idea was Lou used special remittance envelopes, placed near the door with a receptacle nearby, that allowed parents to pay for classes or gear, or leave a note, while he was teaching class. When I finally implemented the same at Redwood, it was such a help - I thought, "Why did it take me so long? Thanks, Lou!"

Didi Goodman, Redwood Dojo

Back when the "Center" was displaced and we were renting space from the city of Gainesville, Lou and I were tasked with seeking new digs. We investigated an old three story building downtown that was once a furniture store. Lou was in hyper-architect mode and I never saw a tape measure so deftly handled. It was like the performance of a kata. Lou was a multi-faceted man and a huge asset to Cuong Nhu. I will never forget him.

Lois Wood, Center Dojo (Tallest Tree)

Sensei Lou taught the children's class at Tallest Tree Dojo for many years, and my sister and I were his students. I first met Lou when I was five years old. When you're that young, you mainly remember odd, small details. The main thing I remember in those years was his stern forbiddance of the word "can't." When one of us would protest a drill by saying "I can't," he would always say "now remove the apostrophe and the t." Switching your mindset from a state of negative thinking, to one that lets in the possibility of success is something that would stick with me throughout Cuong Nhu and my life. I also remember at the end of class, before meditation and bow out, his long-winded reminder of putting up your shopping carts after grocery shopping and not letting the carts roll into traffic or parked cars. At least once a week. Thanks, Sensei Lou, for teaching me those life hacks at a very young age.

Kelly Thomas, Tallest Tree Dojo

Lou was a tireless worker for Cuong Nhu, teaching, selling quality gear to Cuong Nhu members, serving on the Board of Directors for many years, helping O'Sensei Dong in any way he could. My condolences to his wife Julie, who also got roped into working hard for Cuong Nhu. I'll always remember and appreciate the Schillings.

John Burns, Rahai Dojo

