



Dragon's Den

唐手道

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Ancient Martial Art Tradition

By Grandmaster Vaughn

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Tradition is an overused phrase emphasized by most styles in the world of martial arts. All claim to have a corner on tradition, but it is interesting to observe how very few follow tradition or understand just what the phrase means. If one is to delve into the mystery of martial arts tradition, it is this author's opinion that you must study the ancient beginnings and the history connected to martial arts in general.

When I first started on my martial arts journey in TSD fifty-four years ago, it was commonly accepted that traditional martial art began at the Shaolin Temple. Back then there were three countries that could trace their lineage back to Shaolin; they were Japan, Korea, and, of course, China. Nowadays, there are a multitude of states that make that same claim of lineage and advertise as teaching traditional martial arts.

The history of expert warriors who proved their prowess on the battlefield goes back to the beginning of time. They had to have discipline of training to reach the level of expertise that one would need to survive in those wars, but it was the Shaolin Temple that developed the codes and discipline over 800 years ago, that became the art of martial training. Our five codes are an example of following these precepts.

It is important to know that that temple began with the leader of Buddhism at that time, a monk named Bodhidharma (also known as Dalma who was the 28th pope or leader of Buddhism). By that time, Buddhism had spread to China where the emperor had become a Buddhist himself.

Great Dalma decided to make a pilgrimage to China to observe how his religion was developing there. When he arrived in China, he visited the emperor who was thrilled to meet Dalma, took him on a tour, and showed him the many pagodas and temples he had built to spread Buddhism. The legend goes that the emperor then requested that Dalma would guarantee him a place in heaven. Dalma explained that that honor was not his to give. This caused a falling out between Dalma and the emperor. It was then that the old monk retreated to a cave in the mountains in Hunan Province. He was disappointed and discouraged that the most educated man of the time could not comprehend the spirit of Buddhism.

According to the legend, he refused to teach anymore and sat in meditation in the cave for nine years and would not come out. The story explains that there were many of the students of Buddhism who stood outside the cave and made a vow that they would wait for him to change his mind to teach them. They waited for years and one by one they gave up and left him there. One monk, however, named Dazu Huike, refused to give up and stayed outside the cave for nine years. Legend goes that eventually this monk cut off his hand and presented it to Dalma to prove his sincerity. This unselfish act moved Dalma to come out of the cave and it was then that he began to teach.

The lessons included having to sit in meditation for extended periods. Dalma noticed that his students' health suffered

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Upcoming events:

Aug 24—Gup Graduation Ceremony

Sep 2—Studio Closed for Labor Day

Sep 14—Region 8 Black Belt Test

Oct 25-26—Region 8 Fall Championship

Ancient Martial Art Tradition

(Continued from page 1)

from inaction, so he began teaching them exercises that he had brought with him from India. These were developed by observing five different animals and copying their movements and methods of defending against attack.

It became common back then for the monks to travel back and forth between temples, and to sometimes bring treasures from one temple to another. At that time there were bandits who made a living attacking travelers who were on a journey through the mountains, abusing and robbing them of their possessions. The story goes that, after spending enough time performing their exercises, there were monks who were out on such a journey who were attacked by bandits. The monks fought back and easily defeated the robbers. They brought back the news to the Shaolin and their training took on a martial attitude.

As stated before, it was not new for great warriors to hone their skills in fighting, but no one had done it as the monks did at the Shaolin Temple. It was there where it became known as martial art. The main goal was not to become a fighter, but to develop the art as a path to enlightenment. It was recognized as an art to become a better person, as well as an expert warrior for good.

The tradition is to train, keeping this goal in focus while striving to be a formative warrior. This journey is meant to place the practitioner on a path to enlightenment, while at the same time, creating better character and also leading one to become a teacher to pay it forward.

Martial art has been around for a long time and has survived all these years even with the different practitioners through the years that have tried their best to make it suit themselves instead of realizing that it does not need fixing.

The secret is to keep a balance between striving for perfection and learning to live well in your own skin. That is where tradition pays off. By understanding the value of tradition and sticking to its principles, the martial artist gets much more out of the training.

I believe most of us cannot live as a monk, but we can still strive for the ideals that the old monks set as examples to follow. For my part, I like to think that we are more like "half-monks," not being able

to live the discipline of a true monk, yet still setting those principles as something to strive for.

I often think of Grandmaster Shin, who was a born-again Christian. Through my years of observing him, I observed his character and self-discipline. He was truly amazing. He once told me that it was a chance meeting with a Buddhist monk that put him on his martial art journey. As a young man, he would accompany his mother on a walk up to a temple where his mother would go to pray. He would wait for her outside in the garden there. It was in this garden he first encountered an unknown monk. He told me he first saw the monk practicing kicks, jumping and kicking at the branches of a tree. He watched for some time until the monk called him over and coached him on how to do this technique. It was there that he decided to become a martial artist.

When Grandmaster Shin first came to the US in 1968, he was on a mission to visit the Black Belt instructors whom he had taught at the Osan Air Base in Korea. They had invited him to come to the USA to continue their training. His trip finally brought him to the dojang in Burlington, NJ, and he ended up staying. He was a 6th degree Black Belt instructor then.

In 1982 he organized the WTSDA and he was elected as its first Grandmaster. The rest is history which can be found recorded in the texts written on him. Read *The Legacy; A History of the World Tang Soo Do Association*. It can be ordered from the studio.

It was through a dream of his and his closest instructors that the WTSDA became what it is today. The dream was to create a pure martial art that followed the ancient principles of tradition, brotherhood, and professionalism. These are the principles we still strive to follow yet today.

It is fitting that we reflect on this dream. We keep it alive through the many events that are held each year such as the World Championships, the Masters' Clinics, Black Belt Clinics, Instructors classes, etc. One only need visit a World Championship to share in the martial spirit that grows and is present there. It is that spirit that keeps the old ideals alive and keeps us hooked on teaching and staying relevant even into old age.

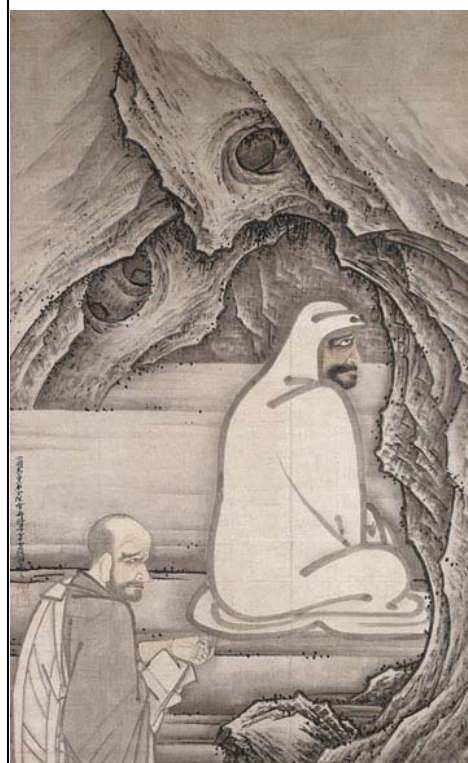
Respect for parents and elders is still one of the codes we are to follow and live by. This also applies when considering respect towards your instructor. Tradition teaches that it is our duty to stay in contact with our instructor; to keep him/her up to date on what we are up to and to report on how our training is progressing.

It is natural to separate, spread your wings and try it on your own, but it is imperative not to forget where you came from.

WTSDA was built on the shoulders of some great men and women who sacrificed a lot to get this big Association up and running. We started with not much more than a Convention and a dream. It's our job to keep that dream alive; a place where one does not achieve rank through politics or through sentimentality.

It is a great pleasure for me to see husband and wife teams whose dojangs flourish and continue to produce top notch Black Belts.

My advice: Stay true to "the dream," follow the rules, and live a happy life.



Dazu Huike presenting his severed hand to Dalma to show his sincerity to learn about the way

Youth Black Belt Camp

By Eva Kansal, Cho Dan Bo

Everyone is always talking about Black Belt Camp, and this year I finally got to see what it was all about. And they were right; it was a fun but tiring experience!

There were a lot of people when we got there, and when we all got in our groups, there was nobody I knew. It was a little intimidating in the beginning, but we got to know each other during the time before warmups. Some of us became friends, and we stayed together for most of the day. After warming up, we did some team building activities, so we started off with games. And after a little bit of that, we all split up by rank to do forms, one-steps, and weapons. The instructors were walking around helping everyone, and I learned how to improve my techniques more! When we got back in our groups, we did some more team building activities, like working together to

spell out words and make symbols using ourselves.

Later we had lunch, and we were all exhausted, but since it was so hot we got Kona Ice afterwards. We then went to our breakout sessions, and a friend and I did them together! There were a lot of cool options, so we ended up choosing "dynamic kicking" and "fun with fight scenes." In "dynamic kicking" we both learned how to properly do a sweep kick and how to make other kicks, including wheel and hook kicks, more effective and better. The whole time we were out in the sun, on the blacktop, and the sun was blazing down on us. We then moved on to "fun with fight scenes" and there were a lot of people. It seemed like almost everyone wanted to do this! I saw some of my friends from our dojang, and we got together to make a fight scene using open hands and weapons.

Once breakout sessions were done, we moved on to group forms. We started off with the first form and so on. Most of us were all from different studios, so you could see the small but noticeable differences in the forms. Everyone always said that we'd have to repeat Bassai over and over again, but I never knew it was that many times! After the first couple sets, I slowly stopped paying attention to what I was doing, but it was like muscle memory since I kept on moving in time. When they finally said that this was the last one, it was like we all got a burst of motivation to finish it off strong, and just like that, camp was over.

Black Belt Camp was definitely a worthwhile experience filled with new people and I'm so glad I got to go!

(More photos on next page)

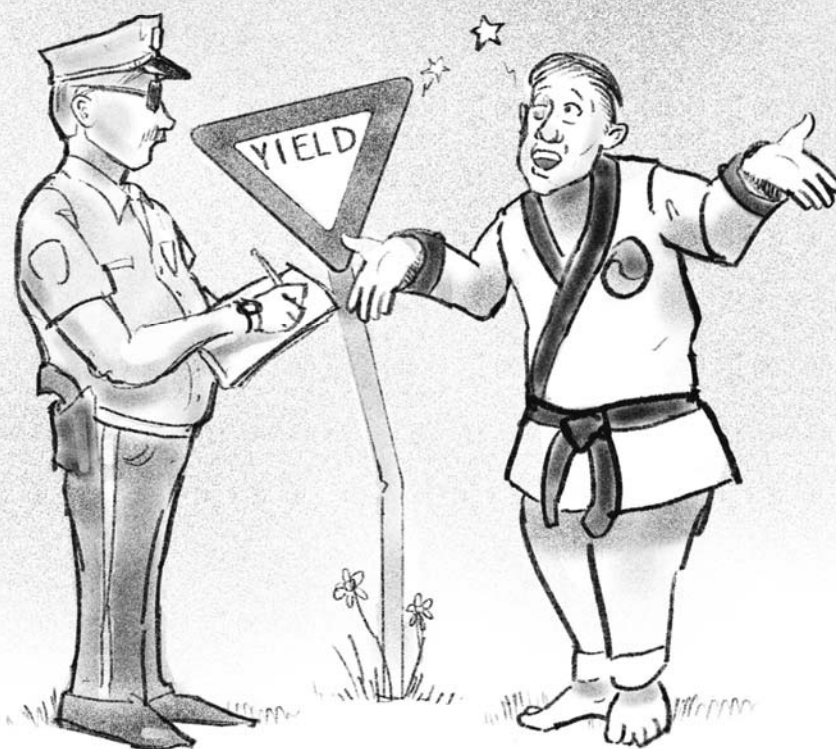


Youth Black Belt Camp (Continued)



JUST FOR KICKS

I'm sorry officer, I forgot
to look before I turned!



When doing forms, always look over
your shoulder *before* you turn!

© M.K. BUCKWALTER

Family Self-Defense Program

By Master Lipstein

Earlier this year, Grandmaster Vaughn received an inquiry from a woman asking whether we provided self-defense training for families. The woman, her husband, and two children were about to do some traveling, and wished to learn some basic self-defense techniques in the event they encountered an uncomfortable situation. Grandmaster Vaughn asked me to handle the request. I contacted the woman, and suggested the training session would be more beneficial if she could enlist others to join with her family.

On May 18th, we hosted the family, along with about 11 other people. The ages ranged from adult to young teens. Assisting me were Mr. Clark, Mr. Bhoir, Ms. Bhoir and Ms. Voight. The program we used was modeled after the program we have run for many years at Methacton

High School. We discussed situational awareness, using voice commands and walking with a confident posture. This discussion was followed by demonstrating basic strikes that could be used, including palm strikes, hammer fists and knee strikes.

What was most gratifying to those presenting the information was the wholehearted participation of the group. Every one of the participants was enthusiastically engaged, and went full force on all techniques. When the 90-minute session was over, the group thanked the presenters, and they all agreed they had had a very worthwhile session. We even had our original family indicate they might be coming back to enroll in our regular program this September.

We charged the participants a \$10 fee per person, and all the proceeds went to the regional scholarship fund. The group was so pleased with the program, and the fact that the funds went to scholarships, that they collectively paid more than the stated fee. The program was so successful that it's worth repeating if we can find other families with a similar interest in basic self-defense. If anyone is aware of a family or group who would like to attend such a program, please let me know.



Testing Your Knowledge

By Scott Thompson, Sah Dan



1. White belt represents...
 - a. Respect
 - b. Blood, life and energy
 - c. New growth in spring
 - d. Dormant seed in the snow
2. Which is one of the Seven Tenants of Tang Soo Do?
 - a. Perseverance
 - b. Loyalty to country
 - c. Endurance
 - d. Practice basic techniques
3. Students should arrive at least _____ minutes before class is scheduled to start
 - a. 10
 - b. 5
 - c. 15
 - d. 20
4. The 3rd code of Tang Soo Do is...
 - a. Obedience to Parents
 - b. Honor friendship
 - c. Loyalty to country
 - d. No Retreat in Battle
5. The term Kong Kyuck means...
 - a. Punch
 - b. Block
 - c. Kick
 - d. Attack
6. In Korean, Yodol refers to the number...
 - a. 8
 - b. 7
 - c. 9
 - d. 6
7. The first complete martial arts book is called...
 - a. Muyong-Chong
 - b. Hagakuri
 - c. Mooyae Dobo Tongji
 - d. Bong Soo Han
8. The monk who originated the Five Codes of Tang Soo Do was.
 - a. Wang Kun
 - b. Won Kwang
 - c. Hong Jung
 - d. Lao Tze
9. Internal power exercise is...
 - a. Nae Kong
 - b. Wei Kong
 - c. Shim Kong
 - d. Jung Kong
10. The formal name of Tang Soo Do is...
 - a. Soo Bahk Do
 - b. Moo Duk Kwan
 - c. Tae Kyun
 - d. Soo Bahk Ki

Answers: 1. d 2. a 3. c 4. b 5. d 6. a 7. c 8. b 9. a 10. d

Adult Black Belt Camp

By Isabelle Voight, Cho Dan

After the countless legends, tales, and memories I've been told, this year it was my turn to experience Adult Black Belt Camp/Clinic for the first time. When turning eighteen, Black Belt Camp becomes a rite of passage. The event took place at Elizabethtown College Campus. In the dorm room, I stayed with Melissa (a fellow CDB I knew from the Fall Championship) and her instructor Master Sekula.

Upon arrival Friday evening there were many feelings of excitement and uncertainty. I felt like a lost puppy who needed guidance. As everyone checked in, there were many familiar and unfamiliar faces. I was greeted by Vaughn's Dojang members, who reassured me about the events to look forward to the next couple of days. Later in the evening was the Masters' panel. During introductions as the panels began, a surprise game started—"Guess who?" Pictures from the Masters in their youth or early karate days were displayed and caused many laughs and smiles from the audience. As the panels were asked questions, memories from their days with Grandmaster Shin were shared. As a member of WTSDA, it was rewarding to hear the stories of a great man whom I, unfortunately, had never met. Dinner was pizza and afterward, many people stayed in dorm lobbies to socialize and catch up with one another.

Saturday was a full day. Rising from bed at 6:30 AM to be on the Bowers Center floor by 7:00. Walking meditation began first. In our blue tees, hundreds of people walked like a flowing river in silence along the scenic trail around the pond on campus grounds. Breakfast was just like the stories. Endless fruit, eggs, yogurt, drinks, doughnuts and more!

All dressed in our uniform best, we met on the field outside for warm-up. The heat was high and unbearable. During the warm-up, I was a few steps short of having breakfast a second time. Rank-ordered breakout areas inside the Bowers gym began. As a Cho Dan-to-be, I entered the group training towards E



Dan. It was here we refined our weapons skills. We were introduced to a jump-spinning hook kick. This had caused me to fall flat on my back once.

Group hyung followed. Fortunately, Grandmaster Strong was with us for the Black Belt Clinic. He led group hyung. During group hyung, we did the basic three or four forms a few times. The group could hear the call of Master Robinson from the front saying, "There's no ki hap on the last move." This went on for six forms until there was a sound of silence at the end causing the sound of rejoicing of victory among the army of hundreds of Black Belts as if they had won a battle.

E. Watson over the last two breakout sessions. After dinner were the long-awaited lightning lectures. Topics of armor design, creating a studio, donating blood, and Johnny and Pete (mentorship) were shared. Many of the members from Region 8 have a role in headquarters. Questions about the growth of the Association, our Region, and our presence in other countries were asked and we were able to receive answers from Master Fattori and Grandmaster Strong. The time in the evening was then spent on socializing with peers. I spent time with the members of our studio and ate pizza.



Breakout sessions were in the afternoon. I participated in the Women's Self-Defense led by Ms. Dunn, Hakuda (flinch reactions) led by Mr. Schwartz with Masters Aciri & S. Zamora-Soon, and conductor training led by Masters Scott &

Sunday morning began with Ki Gong led by Grandmaster Strong. There were two more breakout sessions left. This time they were divided by last name. One session was on judging hyung and

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Adult BB Camp

(Continued from page 6)

weapons and the other was breaking boards. It was important to learn how to hold boards, especially for those taking the Black Belt test. After finishing with hyung and being required by Grandmaster Strong to do the jump in Pyung Ahn Oh Dan

eight times back and forth, we ended with a single Bassai. The Masters' demo was interesting to watch. Sah Dans did the advanced form Wang Shu and Oh Dans and above performed Jion.



Black Belt Camp came to a close and as an eighteen-year-old, it was my first experience with this clinic. Many memories were made and I met countless peers I will meet again and again. From my test in the spring, there was one other adult who, like Mr. Singh and me, was not yet officially promoted to Cho Dan. Throughout the weekend we were "his people." I look forward to meeting again as official Cho Dans. The comradery shared among the Masters and Instructors and all Black Belts was rewarding. As the years pass, I wish to have long-term relationships with all the Black Belts in our region.



KIDS

IDS

KIDS

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Kids' Corner

Word Finder

By Anoushka Yadav, E Dan

There are so many different aspects of Tang Soo Do, including the knowledge we must learn from the martial art. One of the Five Codes of Tang Soo Do is "Loyalty to Country." This means to love and appreciate one's country. This refers to both people born into a country, and people who become a part of a country. Let's take these words, "Loyalty to Country," and see how many other words (that are at least 4 letters long) we can make. Try to find at least 40 words by using only the letters shown in the phrase (there are over 80 words)! Do NOT use a letter more than the number of times it appears in the phrase.

LOYALTY TO COUNTRY

- | | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 15. _____ | 28. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 16. _____ | 29. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 17. _____ | 30. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 18. _____ | 31. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 19. _____ | 32. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 20. _____ | 33. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 21. _____ | 34. _____ |
| 8. _____ | 22. _____ | 35. _____ |
| 9. _____ | 23. _____ | 36. _____ |
| 10. _____ | 24. _____ | 37. _____ |
| 11. _____ | 25. _____ | 38. _____ |
| 12. _____ | 26. _____ | 39. _____ |
| 13. _____ | 27. _____ | 40. _____ |
| 14. _____ | | |

WTSDA 2024 World Championship Experiences and Thoughts

By Ridham Khambhati, E Dan

The World Championship is an experience like no other. It's where you meet people from different regions and places all over the world and make many friends. This was the third World Championship I attended, and each section of this article has been named to indicate which day and time everything took place.

Thursday Night

After a long drive to Greensboro, my family and I walked into our hotel expecting to see a lot of fellow Tang Soo Do students. Surprisingly, there wasn't a single one. Once we settled into our hotel room, we started looking for somewhere to eat. When we got back, it was already late, and we were ready to go to bed because we were tired from the long travel and needed to get ready for the big day.

Friday Morning

Friday morning was filled with many things to do as we had to get ready, eat breakfast, and head to the Greensboro Coliseum, where the competition was going to take place. Since we got there quite early, I got to meet Grandmaster Strong while he was free as well as many other Masters, including some from Vaughn's who I was glad to see there and they gave me some last-minute tips to make the most out of competition. Then, as I was walking around the building, I met friends that I had made at other tournaments and even Black Belt camp.

As we walked around, we patiently waited for the clock to hit noon and for our division and ring assignments to be called out. Only a few minutes later, with the announcements of the first divisions, the Black Belt competition officially began.

Friday Afternoon - Competition

I was in one of the first divisions that were called and I headed straight to my ring, wishing everyone around me the best of luck. The judges and competitors came from many different places around the world, even as far as Sweden. As we handed in our competition cards, there was some confusion because some people were not competing in sparring. While everything was getting sorted out, I looked at the other 18 competitors in my ring and started to become nervous. Once everything was good to go, we started our weapons competition, and after each competitor, the judges gave out their scores. Then, it was my turn. I did Dan Gum Hyung, and after my form, I was both encouraged and humbled at the same time. Since the judges were from different regions and countries, they all looked at different aspects of my form and I received very mixed scores. As we finished up the weapons competition, I started to mentally prepare for Jin Do. As I saw everyone else's Jin Do, I was impressed and shocked at the different ways that each person demonstrated their form. I'll admit, when I was up next, I started to overthink and when it was time for me to perform, I sped through the form and even accidentally lost balance at the

end. As I stood there in choon bee, I knew that my scores would be much lower than I wanted, and when I received them, they ranged from 7.2 to 7.6. I was upset, knowing I wouldn't place in open-hand forms as there was a lot of tough competition. Next was sparring and I was the fourth match. As the match progressed, each judge had very different opinions. Some judges thought a technique was a point, while others thought it was a warning. We were around a minute in and the score was still 0-0 and I knew that I had to get a point in as soon as possible. Within the next 10 seconds, I scored and he scored right after me. It was 1-1 and there were around 15 seconds left on the clock. He threw a head-level kick, and although there was controversy about the scoring, he got the point and I lost 2-1 when time ran out. Then it came time to watch the other competitors spar and that's when I knew I had to spend more time and effort to find new combinations and become better. Even though I was upset and disappointed that I didn't place, I knew what I had to work on and I am excited to work harder and become an even better martial artist.

Final Thoughts

Overall, Worlds was an exciting and unique experience as always. I look forward to all the competitions to come and to see some of my peers in my ring again at Regionals in October or even at the World Championship in 2026.

Vaughn's Dojang Creativity Demo Team

By Bhushan Bhoir, Sam Dan, Hapkido

Vaughn's Creativity Demo Team is an all-youth team that represents our Dojang at the WTSDA Region 8 Championship in the fall of each year. This team also competed at the 2022 WTSDA World Championship in the recent past.

This all-youth Demo Team is a self-reliant team with minimal help from parent helpers. Co-captains and senior team members brainstorm ideas and create routines balanced with technical skills and creativity. The team designs ideas for scenery, props, costumes, and make-up as well. All team members are encouraged to showcase any special talents besides their Tang Soo Do skills—those that the team can use in a creativity demo.

Typically, in late spring, co-captains visit all classes including classes at YMCAs to recruit new members. Any student 9 years and older and 5th Gup (Brown-Green belt) and higher can join the team. Occasionally, younger students and lower Gups are recruited as well, if their skill sets match the team needs. Being an all-youth demo team, students over age 18 can't join the team. This year, we recruited seven new team members. Team practices are held from mid-June through the end of August each Saturday from 1 PM until 3 PM. Mandatory practices are held every Saturday and Sunday (1 PM through 4 PM) from September through the Championship event in late October. All practices are held at the Audubon Dojang.

The Team also raises necessary funds to meet their financial needs for props, scenery, and costumes. A Bake Sale and Car Wash is the key event to raise funds. This year, we will be holding the Car Wash/Bake Sale event on August 17 at the Audubon Dojang between 9 AM and 12 PM. Please help us by spreading the word about the event. More than just raising the money, this event teaches the team to own responsibility, teamwork, and self-reliance.

If any students are interested in joining the Demo Team, please contact Bhushan Bhoir (bhushanjb@gmail.com) or your child's class instructor.

Honoring the Journey: A Celebration of Achievement

By Farya Bakar, Cho Dan

On a memorable morning in June, our dojang gathered to celebrate a significant milestone in the martial arts journey of our dedicated students—their attainment of the Black Belt. The Black Belt ceremony is not just a time to don a new belt but a profound recognition of the perseverance, discipline, and growth each individual has shown.

Awarding the Belts

As the atmosphere filled with anticipation, each student was called up to the front. They received their Black Belts, accompanied by personalized words of encouragement and acknowledgment of their hard work and growth. Family and friends in attendance applauded, capturing this monumental moment.

Reflection and Gratitude

The ceremony concluded with a reflection on the importance of community in the martial arts journey. Students expressed their gratitude to their families, instructors, and fellow martial artists who supported them. It was a heartwarming reminder that while martial arts is an individual path, it is enriched by the collective effort of the dojang community.



A New Beginning

The evening ended with a small reception, where attendees mingled and ate and drank together. The Black Belt recipients, our new leaders in the dojang, are ready to embrace the responsibilities and opportunities that come with their new rank. As they step into this new phase,

they carry with them the values of respect, perseverance, and humility.

Congratulations to all our new Black Belts! We look forward to seeing you continue to grow and inspire others on this journey.

The Importance of Volunteering

By Master Altieri

Many years ago, Grandmaster Vaughn taught us about the importance of giving back to our community. Over the years, we found many ways to give back to the community including: women's self-defense programs, sending items to our troops, collecting essentials for St. Mary's Shelter, holding blood drives, serving breakfast at a homeless shelter on Thanksgiving morning, doing an annual Christmas collection for those in need in Philadelphia, etc.

In the past, we have done a lot of volunteer work at Freedoms Foundation (now called Founding Forward). Some of these projects included cleaning the PA Medal of Honor Grove, painting their patio,

redoing their volleyball court, painting their white fence, etc. On Saturday, July 20th, our team (Masters Lipstein, Altieri and Summers; the Singh family; Mrs. Mentley; Mr. Otto; and Mr. Spears) were assigned

to cleaning up branches. It was hard work, and we filled almost two small dump trucks of wood chips. It was an honor doing work at the VF Founding Forward location, especially when you think about all of the Medal of Honor Recipients that are honored in the Groves. Our work was also a way to say "thank you" to FF for allowing us to train on their property.

Volunteering can be hard work, but it is a great way to reach out to help others. After all, one of the purposes of Tang Soo Do is to be a better person, and volunteering is a great way to accomplish this goal. We will continue to do volunteer work because it is part of our foundation.



Congratulations!

To Our Newest Cho Dan Bos:

Tanishi Choudhary Virinchi Hubli Varunavi Sharma

Perspectives on the Cho Dan Bo Test

By Master Wayne Rosenkrans

At the most recent Cho Dan Bo (CDB) test, I made the comment that I'd been managing the test for close to thirty-two years. That revelation came to me that evening when my wife asked me where I was going on a Friday night, and my reply of a CDB test elicited from her a comment that, "You've been doing that a long time."

After the test I went back to see how long it had actually been and to review what had happened in the intervening years. Shortly after receiving my Cho Dan in 1996, then Master Vaughn asked me to create a special group that was to become the All Stars. The CDBs at that time were training together on Friday nights at a gym in Royersford under another Cho Dan who left the studio around that time, and I was asked to handle the CDB class. We opened the Audubon studio in 1998; Master Lipstein and I had been teaching adults at the YMCA and were asked to move to instruct at the new studio, and the CDB class was transferred there. Dr. Painter remained at Phoenixville and Master Altieri handled the class at Pottstown (subsequently stopped). I made the suggestion to Master Vaughn to create a special test for advancing students from first Gup to CDB and he approved. So, my involvement with the CDB class and test actually began in 1996, 28 years ago (my mistake was starting to count the years from when I started TSD (1992) and not when we started the class). Master Altieri took over the CDB group training in about 2006 but I continued to manage the CDB tests.

The logic in initiating the test was to create a clear separation between the training years of being a Gup student and starting preparation for becoming a Black Belt—to generate a "rite of passage" to the year of being a Black Belt Apprentice.

Prior to this, CDBs were tested just like any Gup student with their Gup cohort. To emphasize the transition to a new status, the test was separated from the Gup group with a judging panel and conductors on a separate night. Both the written and physical test were much more difficult than what a student would have experienced before, and were patterned after the actual Black Belt test, just not quite as difficult. Tests were expected to be held every other month or so.

The studio demographics at that time were very different from today. The classes were mostly older teens and adults with much smaller numbers of younger students. Students at that time included such familiar names as the Mentleys, the Thompsons, Mr. Summers, the Luneaus, the Mudds and Mr. Peters, all of whom were some of the first to experience the new testing regimen. The initial pass-through rate was about 70% passing and 30% being asked to repeat the test, which I thought was about right. The studio demographic started to change in the early 2000s with fewer and fewer adults and major growth in the young (middle school) student numbers. This demographic changeover was reflected in student performance on the CDB test, which saw pass-through numbers almost switch to 30% passing and 70% being asked to repeat. Most disturbing was a dramatic fall off in students passing the written test with some students having to repeat three and four times. As a result, and the desire of GM Vaughn for the students to peak at the Black Belt test rather than the CDB test, the somewhat controversial step of easing the physical test was made. The number of students taking the test also fell, so frequency of testing dropped from every other month to when enough students were eligible. The

pandemic was a challenge just to keep students engaged and the studio afloat. The instructor staff performed miracles on Facebook and Zoom for their students and the parents reacted in a very supportive manner. We did manage to conduct a couple CDB tests during those times, but they were far from ideal.

Since the pandemic, the demographics have stabilized to the current dominant young attendees topping out with our high school seniors. The pass-through rate has improved somewhat to about 50:50 and performance on the written test has improved modestly. What is most gratifying to see is the number of students "burning up the floor" with their performance starting to climb. There were always a few students at each test session who were extraordinary in their approach to and performance on the tests, both written and physical. In addition to performance, they just seemed to be having fun and would work with each other. The term, "burning up the floor" was coined for these students and the number had fallen to none at some tests, but the number is starting to climb again.

Looking back on the last 28 years, I believe that the test has accomplished what we set out for it to do: provide that positive "rite of passage" from Gup to Black Belt for our students. To students preparing for the CDB test, you will continue to build this aspect of training at Vaughn's Dojang. When you come forward to receive your blue belt, take a moment to look around you at the Black Belts who went before you, and especially those who were there at the first tests—the Summers, Mentleys, Thompsons, and the others mentioned earlier.