

by dominick giacobbe

The Pursuit of Perfection The Traditional Training of Tang Soo Do

What is tradition? Tradition is wearing uniforms. Bowing. Believing in your art. Practicing the art as it was passed down. This is where you get the true benefits. The martial arts are all about philosophy and art. And it takes a lifetime to perfect your art. You should never be satisfied.

The art I practice, *tang soo do*, is more than 2,000 years old. It originated in China and eventually ended up in Korea. It has been passed down from generation to generation.

One of the concepts that has been passed down is forms training. We do the old style of forms, and they are very traditional. There is no music. There are no flashy uniforms. We have never changed them; they are always done the same way. This preserves the sanctity of the art.

Traditional training emphasizes the philosophy, values and honor of the art. Similarly, teaching kicks and punches without any internal training has no heart. The values and morals from internal training make the practitioner a better person, and that is the aim of the art.

Philosophy, Meditation

Traditional training has other benefits, too.

You can always get an intense, vigorous workout from traditional training. When I started



training, classes lasted for three hours. Today, they have been shortened to about 1 1/2 hours. Nevertheless, you still do lots of stretching, blocking and kicking drills, forms, self-defense moves, free sparring and calisthenics.

There is also a definite focus throughout the class. There is no talking, laughing or fidgeting. We meditate before and after each class, and I give a philosophy lecture at the end. Many times my students and I will discuss my lecture.

The benefits of training traditionally are simple. The martial arts help you develop as a person from the inside out. Among other things, you learn how to be more focused and less aggressive.

Of course, this formula does not work for everyone. For some, traditional training is too disciplined. People like to be

less formal nowadays, and the bowing and the respect could be too much for some of them.

Keep Digging

If you are going to be successful in your traditional training, you must do two things.

First, in order to achieve greatness, you need to believe in your instructor's knowledge and beliefs. If your teacher holds up an apple and says, "This is a pencil," you must believe him with all of your heart.

Second, stick with your art. Most people, especially modern practitioners, jump from art to art like someone looking for water. For example, they unsuccessfully search for water, so they move on to dig somewhere else. They end up jumping from hole to hole, digging a lot of shallow ones without ever hitting water. These are the modern practitioners.

If you dig a hole and continue to dig deeper, you will eventually hit water. Put all your focus and energy in that one hole. Traditional martial artists are those that stick with one hole, and they are rewarded for their diligence. MA

About the author: Dominick Giacobbe, who owns 11 schools throughout the United States, has practiced tang soo do for 20 years. He competed from the late 1960s to the late 1970s.