



V o l u m e 13 - 4  
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## The Climb Within Your Journey

In the last newsletter, I talked about stress and how you can relieve it through the practice of Tang Soo Do. As in everything, we need information to know how to accomplish this. Knowledge is the key to so many paths in life. Knowledge is power. Knowledge gives us wisdom. Knowledge is knowing something with familiarity gained through experience. Without it we will not be able to gain in any area of life.

Recently, a student asked me to write upon this subject because of a phrase I used in the morning class. That phrase was “It’s not about what you *don’t* know, it’s about what you *do* know.” Testing was upon us in the Academy. So many people try to rush to get ready for a test, or panic about what they are to know for each level of their rank. Really, cramming for any exam will only produce failure later on. You will not retain the core material. It will be lost in the future. To prepare for any test or quiz, consistent practice and awareness is all that is needed. A little each day will enable one to gain the familiarity with any subject and give them the experience to keep hold of that. As stated before, that is knowledge.

In Tang Soo Do, the quest for knowledge is a journey. The belt system is in place to allow each practitioner to know for themselves the level of knowledge they have achieved. I have created “spotlights,” which are quizzes, to have the practitioner know that they must stay abreast with the knowledge they are learning and to not push it to the side or brush it off until “test time.” The idea is to enjoy the training in your life and not worry about time restraints.

Instructors are there to help you advance in your journey in training. Our jobs are to help you gain this knowledge and to help “push you” through your classes.

Too many practitioners and parents worry about these tests. Look within and see if you have been preparing yourself accordingly. Look within to see if you know the material that has been laid before you in class. Understand that you are responsible for what you have been taught only, not what you have not been taught. It’s not about what you don’t know, it’s about what you do know.

The best thing about life is its journey and the experiences that we have along the way, but what defines us as people is how we handle the conflicts in our lives. The knowledge we gain through these times helps shape us and make us grow inside more than anything else in life. If life were always rosy and full of rainbows and sunshine, we would never appreciate the greatness of ourselves. The challenges in life are what define you. If you let it, this journey will teach you about many qualities of life: patience, dedication, responsibility, pride, loyalty, honor, commitment and motivation.

The climb in life is hard. How you face it, deal with it and overcome obstacles will define you. As in *Rocky*: “The world ain’t all sunshine and rainbows. It is a very mean and nasty place. It will beat you to your knees and keep you there permanently if you let it. You, me or nobody is going to hit as hard as life. But it ain’t about how hard you hit, it’s about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward, how much you can take and keep moving forward.”

That is a powerful lesson that all of us can learn, young and old. Keep you chin up, focus each day. Stay focused on the journey itself and not on the end all the time. If you



start a journey and come to the end, then begin another one. The climb is the best part of your journey. Enjoy Tang Soo Do, the benefits it brings you and how it enriches your life. Again, it's not about what you *don't* know, it's about what you *do* know.

-- Master Rexer

## The Importance of Tang Soo Do Etiquette

Rexer's Tang Soo Do is a traditional martial arts school. Our goal here is to produce quality martial artists who will not only understand how to punch, kick and defend themselves, but who will also begin to understand the art and learn to embrace all the wonderful knowledge to be gained and carry that with them wherever life takes them.

When students first sign up for classes, they receive a Basic Tang Soo Do Etiquette packet. Whether it be a child or an adult, I stress to them that this is an important packet of papers that will help them greatly throughout their training. I encourage them to put it in a safe place and refer to it later. During those beginning weeks of training, there is so much to take in, but as you get settled, the packet will help to make sense of everything you are learning.

I realize, however, that very often that packet is lost or discarded. How do I know this? Many of the questions and much of the confusion students or parents sometimes have are items that are contained in that wonderful packet of knowledge! Questions such as taking care of their uniform, bowing, arriving late (don't!), testing and so on, are often questions we receive. Although we are more than happy to answer any questions you may have, you may also refer to this packet to make your life easier as your training goes on.

If, for some reason, you did not receive a packet, or if yours was lost, please see us at the desk or check out the wall where the belts hang by the front desk and we will be sure you get a new one. As always, when in doubt, ask and we will be happy to assist you! Tang Soo!

-- Mrs. Fairbanks

## Therapy Session

Time got away from me, and I hate it when that happens. It's 11:37 when we get into the car to go to class. It's Saturday. Class is at noon. It takes 20 minutes to get from our house in Owego to Rexer's. I remember that the clock in the car is fast - about 5 minutes fast against the clock at Rexer's. I don't want to be late. I don't want to be the one to screw up Master Kage's line configuration by having to wait to bow in to class after everyone has lined up.

We are contemplating moving from Owego to Endicott. We are scheduled to look at a house later today. We've seen it once already. It's a little smaller than our house now, and 30 years older. If we decide to make an offer on it, that's only the beginning. We have to sell our house. We have to de-clutter, paint, patch, clean and organize. It's such a pain to move. We don't *have* to move. My mind is spinning. We're trying to get our house ready to sell, just in case. I have about six things started, and none of them finished. I have something for work I'm responsible for that has to be done today. I remind myself not to forget.

We're heading up Day Hollow Road. As always when we're in a rush, there's a vehicle in front of us that has all day to get wherever it's going. There are deer all over the place up here. A fox ran out in front of us the other night on the way to weapons.

It's 11:54 on the clock at Rexer's when we arrive. We hurry, change, get our cards and still have two minutes to stretch. What was I supposed to do for work? It's hot in here. And humid. We line up for class. Master Kage says to the ten or twelve colored belts in the lineup "Welcome to black belt class!" There must be twenty four or twenty five black belts. Two black belts come in after we've lined up. I'm glad I wasn't one of them.

Master Kage starts the warm-up: "Arm circles backward!" All at once, my mind is clear. I feel good. Everything is in its place. I don't have to make any decisions, just follow orders. I try to unload everything into a *pal coop kong kyuk* at the imaginary person in front of me, bracing my fist in my chest.

"Dan members, line up along the wall. Grab the wall with your left hand. Roundhouse kick position." It hurts, but it feels good at the same time. I try to squeeze my leg up higher. It feels high and then I see myself in the mirror. It's not so high. Master Rexer isn't here, he's upstairs with the Il gups, but in my head I hear him saying "Mr. Rupert,



pick you head up!" I lift my head and try to lock into that shoulder, hip and knee alignment. Gimme the juice, he says. I can feel the orange. We're squished tightly together in line, completely filling the wall so that Mrs. Williams has to wrap around onto the bleacher wall. I'm knocking Mr. Weston's knee with the bottom of my foot each time I bring my foot back. "Every other person take a big step out from the wall. Drop down to a split. Count to ten, and back down to one!" Master Kage tells us to stay in our lanes and counts out numbers for stepping side kicks. We're packed it, but it's OK. It's working. I try to pivot my standing foot on the kick. Back on the wall, sweat is dripping from my face onto the mats.

We swap sides with the gup members who had been lined up along the mirror, working on *Ho Sin Sool*. We work through cross elbow sleeve grips one through four. I try to remember to step deep on number 1, to elbow the floating rib on number 2, to target the collar bone and not the shoulder on number 3, to drag the arm down and skip back on number four like Master Kage does. I didn't look at the clock, but I can tell there are only a few minutes left of class. Backfist, reverse punch, hook then uppercut. "Switch your feet!", and then: "Ten squat thrusts!" I know that everything will fall into place with the house. If we move, or don't move, it will be right. It will work out. "Turn and face the American flag. *Kuk Gi Ba Ray. Bah Ro. Muk yum. Cha Ryut* and *Kyung Ret*. Right foot back. Three claps and you're dismissed. Tang Soo Do! Awesome! Endeecott!"

These are uncertain times. Like everyone else, I have problems and challenges in my life. I'd like to think that I'm running my own life, but there are times when I feel like my life is running me; it feels like I'm scrambling to react to whatever comes my way at work and at home, rather than defining the plan. Things change whether you want them to or not. Through everything, though, my Tang Soo Do training is a constant. It is a way to forget whatever problems I have for an hour, and recharge my mind and body. It reminds me how much I have to be thankful for. Sometimes by shifting my mental focus away from a problem for an hour, a solution presents itself while I'm putting my belt back in my bag and folding my sweat soaked uniform. Then it's time to go home, wherever that might be, and wash my uniform so I'll be ready for the next therapy session.

-- Mr. Ray Rupert

## What Tang Soo Do Means To Me 2.0

### Part I

One of the requirements to test for black belt is to write a paper, the subject of which is "what Tang Soo Do means to me." When I completed mine in early 2004, it took me somewhere near the guideline of three thousand words to answer the titular question. Today, almost six years later, I can sum up what Tang Soo Do means to me in two six word phrases: It means the world to me; Tang Soo Do is my life.

Over the past nine years, Tang Soo Do has defined who I am, helped me conquer fears, and bypass difficult and stressful events. Even though my training has been ongoing for nearly a decade, I had not recognized the true impact Tang Soo Do has had on me, and what it really means to me, until a year and a half ago, when I came close to leaving martial arts for good.

If I had been any weaker in my mental and spiritual side of training, I would not be a part of martial arts today. It is important to me that I share my story with our school, from what caused my initial detachment from karate to my breaking point, because I want to let everyone know that when you encounter a hurdle in Tang Soo Do (as well as other areas), you can always find a way around it. There is always a way to snap yourself back into the positive state of mind in order to advance with your goals and become the best that you can be. There is always a way to pick yourself back up again and become better than you were before.

The events that led to my detachment from karate began in 2007. That year, I had competed in the tournaments I'd always attended: Grandmaster Byrne's in Boston, our tournament here in Endicott, and Master Oien's in Latrobe, PA. I failed to place in any tournament for the entire year. I remember lying on the shiny, hardwood gym floor at St. Vincent's College in Latrobe after Master Oien's tournament wrapped up, thinking, "what's the matter with you? You're the biggest loser in the world. You can't compete with anyone your age; they've been training longer than you. They're all in shape, you're just a fat slob. You'll never get any better."

The excuses began flowing. I am not an ingrate, and am not a negative person, but I was very frustrated by my performance. Instead of training as hard as I could and working out to get in better shape, I stewed in my



negativity and excuses. I ended up taking a couple weeks off from class for no real reason. In reality, I was simply too lazy to try to fix anything that was wrong. It's embarrassing to admit because it is exactly the opposite of a black belt attitude. But, had that never happened, I would not have learned from it.

In my opinion, Tang Soo Do consists of 60% mental attitude, and 40% physical prowess. The spiritual aspect is a byproduct of the two working together. The physical ideas are the easiest to digest for new students – which is why until red belt the physical is focused on almost exclusively. At red belt, the mental side of training is introduced. At black belt, the spiritual aspect becomes prevalent. This breakdown played a major part in my disconnection from – and, more importantly, my reconnection, with Tang Soo Do.

Seasons changed, and soon it was March. Grandmaster Byrne's 2008 All Tang Soo Do Championships arrived. Being four months after the laziness and negativity that set in on the gym floor of St. Vincent's, it would seem that I would have sorted all of my excuses out, fixed them, and moved on to continue training. I wish I could say that I had.

Despite having attended classes irregularly, I am a competitor. It was here that I began to develop an early version of what I call the “Tang Soo Do mindset.” I placed first in breaking in the event, and figured, “hey, alright – what I'm doing now is working. I better not mess with it.” Please remember my percentages. I had gone to class considerably less than usual, and had a premature idea of the mental and spiritual side of training. I would say that, physically, I was 20%. Mentally, I was near 40%. that adds up to 60%. If that were a grade on any test, it would be a failure. Though I give a positive mentality a slight edge over physical prowess, you cannot develop one without the other – they go hand in hand, and when one strengthens, so does the other. Simply, it equates to the saying “If you think you can or you think you can't, you're right!”

Once I returned from Boston, I noticed how lopsided my training had become. I soon regarded it as beyond repair. My entire mental perspective began to give way as I incorrectly assessed what repairing my training as a whole would entail. I attended classes more sporadically than before – and this went on for a period of months. Around this time, probably late May, my family decided to attend Grandmaster Giacobbe's National Karate Championships, held in July in Atlantic City, New Jersey. In the back of my head, I knew that I would go, I knew that I would compete – but how, with spotty training habits and a poor

mental attitude? As the tournament neared, I nagged my father on a regular basis, hoping he would let me stay home while everyone else made the trip. Miraculously, he managed to raise my spirits so that I would not only go, but compete as well. I became blissfully unaware of how unprepared I truly was. I probably spent five minutes total practicing for this massive event – and I probably ended my session with an “okay, good. I remember”. This particular year, the tournament featured forms, breaking, and weapons on the first day, a demo that night, and sparring on day two. We arrived the afternoon before day one, and I was still unaware of how grossly unprepared I was.

The next morning, we took the elevator down to the lavishly decorated sixth floor at Bally's Casino, and made our way to the tournament, held in the Ocean Ballroom. As I walked through the doors, a switch was flipped in my brain. I now knew how unprepared I was. Negativity returned with a vengeance. “What are you doing here!? Look at all of these people! There's no way I can compete...I can't...I can't...I can't...Get me out of here! I've had enough! I quit!” The singular thread tethering me to competing was that I had already registered. I did not want to upset my Dad by quitting karate *and* wasting eighty dollars.

Therefore, I “competed” in forms, with a rendition of Lo Hai which was more akin to a 1920s silent film than it was to a crane, the animal representation of the form – jittery, quick, and, well, silent. That was one of the most shameful things I have ever done, and it pains me looking back on it – especially now, when I think about how much Tang Soo Do means to me. It was like saying, “THERE – are you happy now? I didn't waste your money.” Ashamed and depressed, I exited the ballroom and made for the immense, marble-and-mirror-lined bathroom, where I unceremoniously rolled up my belt and zipped it up in the end pocket of my gear bag. I went up to our hotel room, and slumped onto the bed. What would I dedicate myself to now? Where could I go from here?

Everyone has had a time when they have returned home from a fun vacation and thought, “boy, that sure was fun. I wish I could go back; but that won't happen for a long time.” I had truly quit karate in my own mind. As soon as I had left it, I longed for the return. My mind sorted through everything that happened in that span of time, from way back when I fell in my very first class when running back from a jump side kick, to the event that had just occurred. Thinking only of the negative, I felt progressively worse as each memory presented itself. I wanted to go back again, but I was too lazy, and this time,



genuinely scared. I couldn't go back down now – I'd look like a fool if I showed my face around my “ex” fellow practitioners.

What bothered me the most as I laid there was my Dad – we'd had so much fun training together all this time, and now I had taken all of that away. It also upset me that I had deserted Master Rexer – he was the one who taught me everything I know, all of the historical forms, kicks, and punches, and I had wasted seven and a half years of his time in the instant I walked out of the tournament, throwing away everything he taught me. My mind attempted to compute what would happen next in my life, minus karate. The computations turned up a 404 error – file not found. I could not comprehend my life without Tang Soo Do. The way I am today began to show itself, and I snatched the room key and made for the sixth floor, only to encounter my family in the lobby. The tournament was over. I was so angry with myself for everything that had happened. Still channeling the future me, I swore I would move on and learn from this, but under no circumstances could I regret any of the entire ordeal. Regret gets you nowhere.

I had no idea what was happening, or how things would turn out, but Someone knew. I decided I would just follow that Someone's plan, and let Him sort it out. The demo was next – that evening. I couldn't wait. So begins the pivotal turn in my martial arts career.

*To Be Continued...*

-- Mr. Tim Rupert

## Upcoming Events at a Glance

Here are just a few of the events coming up in the next months. See the calendar for a complete listing.

Event	Date	Notes
Roller Skating Party	Dec 20	\$5 Admission Fee, which includes skate rentals.
One Day Only Sale on Rexer's Merchandise	Dec 20	The more you spend the more you save - see the flyer in the newsletter for more information.
Sleep over Party	Jan 2	8PM until 8AM on 1/3.
Holiday Party & BB Promotion	Jan 9	Tickets to be sold at the front desk.
Building Closed	Jan 18	For Martin Luther King, Gr.'s birthday.
Joe Lewis Seminar	Feb. 6	See information page in this newsletter.
Board Breaking Clinic for BBC Members	Feb. 9 - 12	See Announcements and Recent Events section of Newsletter for scheduled days.
Building Closed	Feb. 15	Presidents' Day
Black Belt Evaluation	Feb. 19	5 PM - All Black Belt Ranks



## Announcements and Recent Events

### Rexer's Collecting Toys for Tots, Food for CHOW

Beginning Thanksgiving week, we will be collecting toys and food for those in need. Please bring nonperishable food items to the table by the student card box along the office wall. Unwrapped toys can be placed under the Christmas tree inside the front door. Please bring your donations in by December 20th, so that Master Rexer can deliver them prior to Christmas. Times are tough economically, which is even more reason to do what we can to help our neighbors and each other. Thank you!

### Roller Skating Party

On December 20th, Rexer's Karate Academy will be taking over Skate Estate on Old Vestal Road in Vestal. From 5PM until 8PM, Skate Estate will be open to Rexer's students, families and friends only! There is a 5 dollar admission fee, which covers admission to the event and skate rentals. All ages are invited. Come have fun and get to know your fellow students and parents.

### Sleep Over Party

It's that time of year again! The Rexer's sleep over party is scheduled for Saturday, January 2nd. Parents, drop your children off at 8PM on Saturday, and pick them up at 8AM on Sunday. Kids, bring your toothbrush, pajamas and sleeping bag. There will be lots of games, activities, snacks and a movie.

### Holiday Party and Black Belt Promotion

The annual Holiday Party and Black Belt Promotion will be held on Saturday, January 9th at 5PM. Tickets must be purchased in advance. Due to building occupancy and code laws, a limited number of tickets is available, and no one will be admitted without a ticket. Listen to announcements after class for ticket sale dates. Plan ahead to come see the biggest Team Rexer demo of the year, enjoy the catered dinner and see the black belt promotions.

### BBC Board Breaking Clinic

The week of February 2nd, Master Rexer and his staff will be conducting board breaking clinics throughout the week for Black Belt Club members. Bring your own wood.

Clinics will be held during normal class times according to the following schedule:

Rank	Seminar Date
Orange and Green Belt Children	Tuesday, February 9th
Black Belt, All Ages	Wednesday, February 10th
Red Belt Children	Thursday, February 11th
Adult Colored Belts - All Ranks	Friday, February 12th

