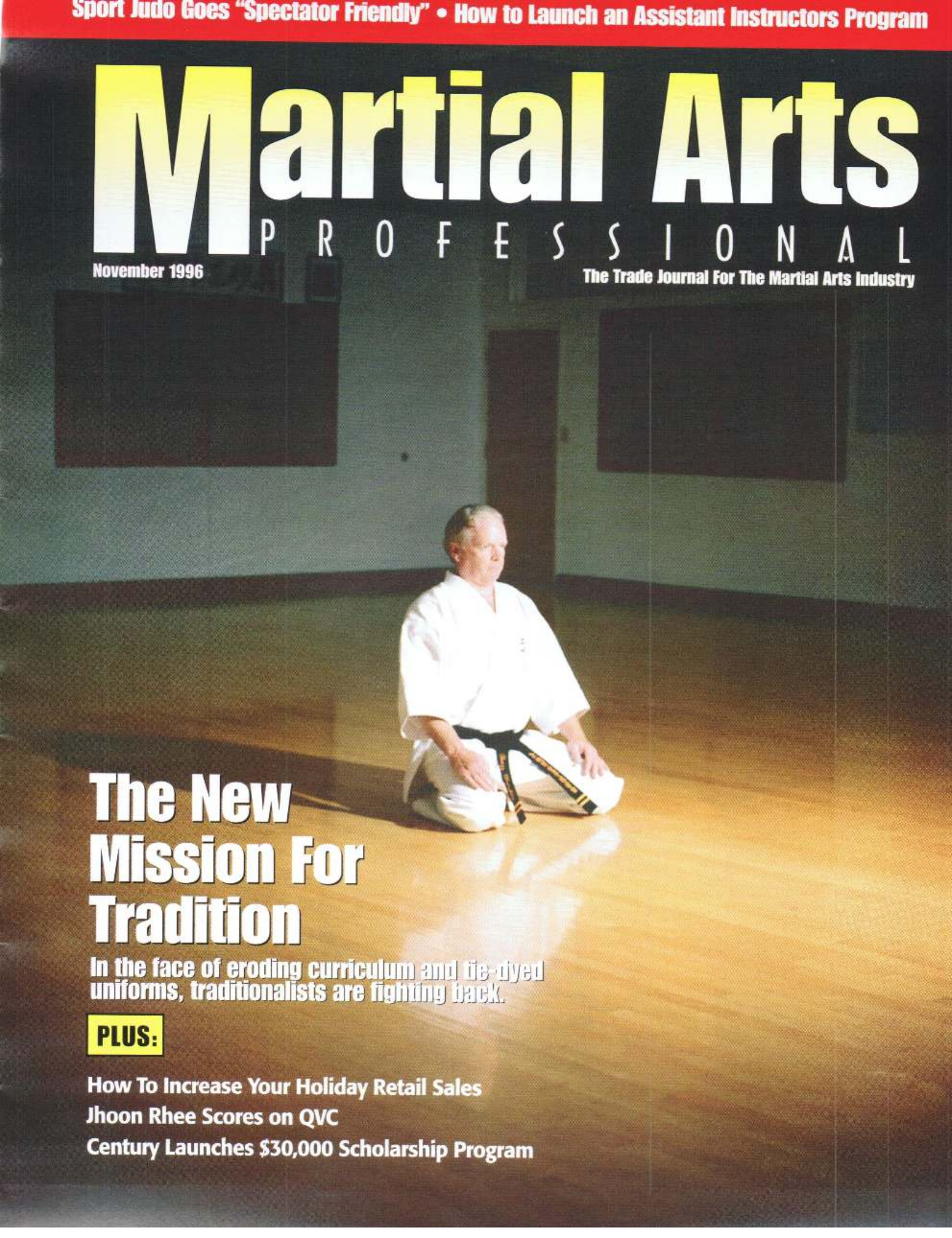
Sport Judo Goes "Spectator Friendly" • How to Launch an Assistant Instructors Program

Martial Arts PROFESSIONAL

November 1996

The Trade Journal For The Martial Arts Industry



The New Mission For Tradition

In the face of eroding curriculum and tie-dyed uniforms, traditionalists are fighting back.

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Jhoon Rhee Scores on QVC

Century Launches $30,000 Scholarship Program

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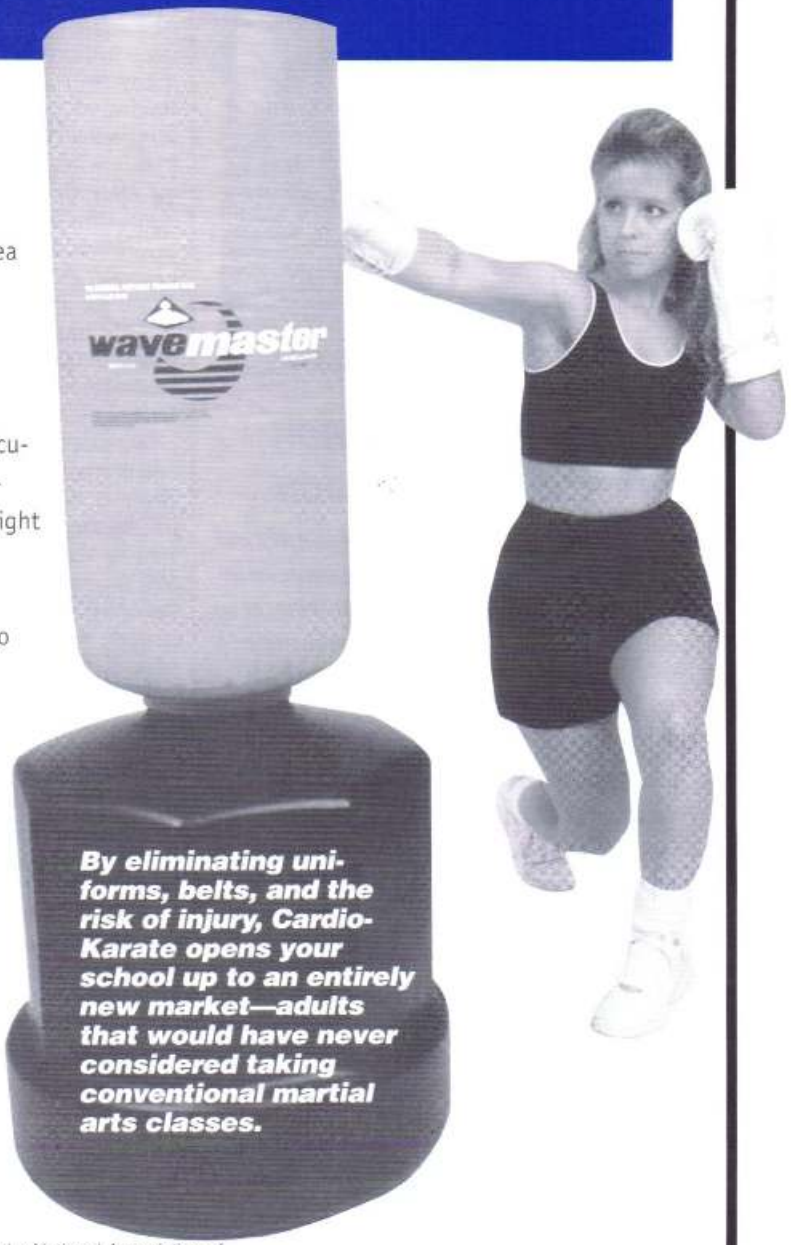
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AS I SEE IT

letter from the editor



Chasing our Passion Instead of a Pension

We are a unique breed. By deciding to make our living teaching the martial arts, we've made an interesting choice. I seriously doubt that many of us thought to ourselves, "I wanna be a millionaire. I know, I'll teach karate for a living!"

We chose this life because we love to teach and train. We chose to chase our passion instead of chasing a pension. Yet, as we race towards a new century, many of the industry references, role models, and examples on which we based our industry standards have changed.

As motivational speaker Brian Tracy points out, "Our society provides excellent rewards for excellent performance, average rewards for average performance and below average rewards for below average performance."

For too long now, the martial arts school industry has confused excellent martial arts skills or tournament titles with excellent performance. In the long run, they are not.

This is the key change that has come about in the last decade. More and more professional instructors are recognizing that we do not determine what is excellent performance. The market does. This is the critical realization that all successful school owners come to.

To make my point more clearly, realize this: The general market is not interested in your title, your rank, how many world champions you've trained, who you trained under, what association recognizes your rank or even how talented a martial artist you are. Only when you realize — and accept — this fact can you hope to grow as a professional and lead your school to greater growth and prosperity.

We are all very proud of our accomplishments and, justifiably, we should be. Your students can be proud too, provided they are still in class to learn about what you've done.

Now, don't misunderstand me; excellent martial arts skills are critical. However, they are just the ticket to get into the arena. They are important and without them you don't get to play. Still, there are thousands of great martial artists out there who continue to struggle with their school year after year, despite their seemingly impeccable background and skill.

Excellence, and its reward, is determined by the students and the parents that pass through your school. If a parent wants his/her child to learn to take care of himself and gain some confidence to deal with challenges, this parent will measure your excellence by how well you help his/her child accomplish this goal. You can be the All-Asia Champion, but if you can't help this child you don't get the reward.

An adult may be looking for something interesting to do while getting in shape. This person will measure your excellence by how interesting your classes are and how fit they feel as a result. You can be the trainer of champions, but if you can't keep this person interested you don't get the reward.

What this leads to is a quandary among our ranks. Clearly, the way we were raised in our original school usually is no longer appropriate (if it ever was). However, many of us feel very strongly that we should teach the same way we were taught.

This is a grave error. This single assumption has been the most damaging factor to our industry's growth since the first martial arts school opened in America in 1946. Just because you were taught a certain way doesn't make it right.

Like a child who is abused often grows up to be an abuser, too many of us cling to unprofessional and often brutal methods of teaching simply because, "That's the way we were raised." This multi-generational cycle has to be reevaluated.

You are perfectly aligned to get the results you are getting. If you want to change the results, you must change your methods. Otherwise, you'll begin and end each year with the same number of students — or less — and your school will struggle. Worst of all, you will fail to help hundreds of people who would have stayed with you had you realized the simple business law that the market is always right.

Your passion should lead to a great pension, but that requires hard work and focus. It takes a very tough person to recognize the errors of the past and then to commit to improving the future without excuses.

Hard work, focus and being tough. As martial artists, it sounds right up our alley, doesn't it?



JOHN GRADEN
Editor-in-Chief

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About the Cover
Successful traditional instructor Buzz Durkin is focused on serving his students.

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INDUSTRY UPDATE

martial arts business news, people, and places

CENTURY CREATES $30,000 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM



Century President Gary Hestilow

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK — Martial arts and education go hand in hand. That's Century Martial Art Supply's philosophy behind a generous scholarship program. Awarding $30,000 in scholarships to students attending college in the fall of 1997, Century is the first and only company of its kind to offer such a large academic scholarship program.

"Confidence and discipline developed through the martial arts are two essential traits for a successful academic career," says Gary Hestilow, Century 's President. "One of our objectives is to advance the character-building aspects, as well as the physical benefits, of participation in the martial arts."

High school seniors or full-time freshmen in good standing at a college or university may apply for the scholarships through their instructors. The student must be currently enrolled in martial arts and have completed at least one year of training. The application, available to instructors only, must include a written recommendation from the instructor. In addition to the application, an essay of 1,000 words or less entitled, "How the Martial Arts Has Made a Difference in my Life" must be submitted by the student.

The essays of all winners will be published and distributed by Century. Century will disburse the scholarships in the form of a check to the college or university of attendance. The scholarship can be used for tuition, room, fees, books or other necessities directly pertaining to school. There will be fifty (50) winners — ten (10) $1,000 scholarships and forty (40) $500 scholarships.

An independent panel of judges, chaired by Truman Irving of Toledo, Ohio, will make the winning selections. Irving holds a black belt and is a prominent businessman and civic leader. In the martial arts community, his reputation for fairness and honesty makes him a highly sought after referee for national martial art tournaments.

The deadline for filing applications is February 28, 1997. Winners will be announced in the spring of 1997. ■

IRS CLAIMS CHAIN SCHOOL OWNER TRIED TO KICK TAXES

By Matt O'Connor

CHICAGO, IL — The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) claims John C. Kim, a controversial "master of eight different martial arts", was also a "master of deception" who skimmed millions of dollars from his nationwide chain of martial arts schools and evaded paying income taxes on the money. Kim's federal trial to face the IRS's charges commenced here in early September.

Kim operated under the name of Chung Moo Kwan, Oom Yung Do and other names.

According to a report in the "Chicago Tribune," Assistant U.S. Attorney Jay Tharp said Kim's personal prayer ended with this plea: "Please make me one of the 10 richest men in the world."

But Charles Meadows Jr., Kim's lawyer, said that since 1986, Kim has had nothing to do with operating the schools other than to let them use his name for a fee of $300 a month."

On trial with Kim are six others who were described by the prosecution as "close associates" who are accused of conspiring to defraud the IRS. They were identified as Thomas White, Kim's alleged right-hand man in the 1980s; Thomas Condon, Robert Sawinski and Michael McKay, each of whom operated martial arts schools in Illinois; and Joselito Jakosalem and Frank Kucia, who ran schools in Minnesota.

As students progressed, Kim and his schools emphasized paying fees in cash, Tharp told jurors. Much of that cash was skimmed and never reported to the IRS, he alleged. To try to keep the IRS in the dark, Tharp said the school owners kept coded records for short periods before burning them.

During the trial Kim wept at the defense table. According to his lawyer, Kim is a Korean native who came to the U.S. in 1972, was not a skilled businessman, spoke limited English and played a dwindling role in the schools' operations beginning in 1983.

Jurors have been warned the complicated case could take as long as three to four months to try. ■

INDUSTRY UPDATE

martial arts business news, people, and places

WORLD CHAMP LAUNCHES NEW SPORT JUDO

By Tom Callos



SAN JOSE, CA — United States Olympic Judo Coach Mike Swain is throwing judo into the twenty-first century. ESPN cable TV will film the historic launching of a new professional judo competition league, appropriately named "new sport judo."

Swain, a four time Olympian and America's only judo world champion, says, "A traditional judo match can be confusing and dull to the uninitiated."

Swain's ambitious project aims to make judo more spectator-and television-friendly. The traditional five-minute match will become three two-minute rounds. A wider variety of techniques will be allowed and the scoring will change to make the match more interesting and easier to follow.

All the terminology, customarily in Japanese, will be in English. For more information call (408)286-5836. ■

SEAGAL'S PROJECTS FLEX FINANCIAL MUSCLE

By John Dempsey



NEW YORK, NY — According to a *Variety* report, Warner Bros. has sold an 11-title package of theatrical films to ABC-TV, including three that still haven't been released to theaters yet. Among those three is *The Glimmer Man*, the action pic starring Steven Seagal and Keenen Ivory Wayans.

In another show of strength by the film studio, Warner Home Video's *Executive Decision* exploded in video stores in late August, drawing an impressive rental revenue of $3.58 million in its first week. The film, starring Kurt Russell, features Steven Seagal in a brief cameo role.

Industry experts report that theatrical movies are in vogue again at the networks, mainly because millions of dollars have already been spent promoting the movies at the box office, and everyone already knows about them by the time broadcast television airs them. ■

RHEE'S VIDEO SALES SURPASS $100,000—IN 20 MINUTES

By Tom Callos

WASHINGTON, DC — On August 15, America's senior martial arts' statesman, Grandmaster Jhoon Rhee, sold more than $100,000 worth of his Shim Shin Key ("Mind-Body-Energy") video exercise tapes—in just 20 minutes!

Time-Life Corporation represents Rhee's product, an exercise, meditation and breathing program aimed at senior citizens. Time-Life arranged for the nationwide television shopping channel, QVC, to market the tapes and Rhee was invited to appear on-camera to demonstrate and talk about his product.

"I did one-hundred pushups, a few kicks and stretches, and the phones went wild," says Rhee. He has been invited back to QVC and will appear again on October 8, 1996.

Grandmaster Rhee, at 62, is in better shape than most men half his age. He continues to be one of the most influential and inventive martial artists in history. Among his many accomplishments is the invention of martial arts safety-gear and musical forms.



He has been friend, trainer, and role-model to the likes of Bruce Lee, motivational speaker Anthony Robbins, Jeff Smith, Muhammad Ali, political columnist Jack Anderson, and politician William Bennet.

For more information on Shim Shin Key video tapes contact QVC at (800)345-1515. Grandmaster Rhee is available for seminars and lectures and can be contacted at (202) USA-1000. ■

INDUSTRY UPDATE

martial arts business news, people, and places

WMAC MASTERS REPORTS LOSS



NEW YORK, NY — In its recent quarterly earnings report, 4Kids Entertainment, Inc. (Nasdaq: KIDE), whose licensed products include action figures from BanDai based on the company's popular *WMAC Masters* weekly television show, reported second-quarter net revenues of $950,141, compared to $773,545, reported for the same period last year. For the quarter, the company reported a net loss of $513,314, or 17 cents per share, compared to last year's second quarter loss of $535,484, or 18 cents per share.

For the six month period, net revenues were $1,694,064, compared to $1,707,087 for the same period in 1995. The net loss for the six month period was $1,142,064, or 38 cents per share, compared to $1,021,355, or 34 cents per share for the year ago period.

The results for the quarter and six months were impacted by the seasonality of the Company's business and by a decline in licensing revenues from some of its more mature properties. In light of the Company's cost-cutting measures and subject to reasonable market acceptance of properties represented by the Company for licensing, the full year 1996 results are expected to be profitable.■

CLINTON PROCLAIMS RAPE AND ASSAULT PREVENTION WEEK

WASHINGTON, D.C.—President Clinton is proclaiming October 14 – 21 as Rape and Assault Prevention Week. During the week of October 14 – 21, martial arts instructors nationwide will be offering free self-defense/rape and assault prevention seminars to their community.

Each school will also host a fundraiser in conjunction during the week. The fund raiser is for the benefit of the Rape Awareness and Prevention Organization—International and various rape crisis centers and coalition groups in North America.

A portion of the proceeds will be donated in the school's name to the charity of their choice. For info call (805) 650-2720. ■



Robert Ferguson, national director of the Rape Awareness and Prevention Organization

USA KARATE CENTERS EXPANDING

ST. PAUL, MN — Veterans Gordon Franks and Pat Worley have plans to open two more of their USA Karate schools by next June and three more by the end of 1998. They currently have five schools in the Twin Cities area.

Some 50 karate schools already operate in the Twin Cities, but according to Franks and Worley, that's not too many. "We feel that there could be double the number of karate centers in the market and it still would not be saturated," Franks said.

Last year, the four USA Karate centers then open grossed $750,000. The company projects revenue of $1 million this year, with the addition of a new center that opened in February.

Franks and Worley say the growth will come from providing well-run, clean facilities. Their centers range between 1,500 and 2,500 square feet.

"It's demographics. We look at where families are moving," Franks said. About half of USA Karate's 2,000 students are enrolled with a brother, sister, mother and/or father.

The first two USA Karate schools generated only $120,000 in 1984. Two years later, however, profits enabled Franks and Worley to expand.

1995 advertising costs totaled $75,000. Advertising was USA Karate's third-largest expense, behind salaries for 10 full-time employees, and rent. Advertising inserts bring in about six students per month per center. ■

historical perspective

DATES WITH DESTINY

while looking ahead to the 21st century, we honor the past

By John Corcoran

Celebrity Birthdays

Nov. 3rd
Bob Yarnall, 54
American Karate Pioneer

Nov. 6th
Christine Bannon-Rodrigues, 30
Karate World Forms & Weapons Champion

Nov. 8th
Jeff Speakman, 39
Martial Arts Film Star

Hosung Pak, 29
Wu Shu Forms Champion

Nov. 9th
S. Henry Cho, 62
Korean-American Tae Kwon Do Pioneer

Dana Hee, 35
Olympic Tae Kwon Do Champion

Nov. 11th
Gerald Okamura, 56
Martial Arts Actor & Weapons Master

Nov. 12th
Anthony Mirakian, 63
Karate-do Pioneer

Karen Shepard, 43
Kung-Fu Forms Champion & Actress

Nov. 15th
Brendan Lai, 54
Chinese-American Kung-Fu Pioneer

Nov. 17th
Richard Kim, 79
Korean-American Karate-do Pioneer

Pat Worley, 48
Semi-Contact Karate Champion

Nov. 19th
Troy Dorsey, 34
World Kickboxing & Boxing Champion

Kim-Du Trinh, 30
Canadian Karate Forms Champion

Nov. 20th
Dan Ivan, 67
Karate-do Pioneer

Jeff Smith, 49
World Kickboxing Champion

Nov. 21st
Hidetaka Nishiyama, 68
Japanese-American Karate-do Pioneer



The Dream Team—1985 World Champion WAKO-USA Team
Jeff Smith, Tommy Williams, John Longstreet, John Graden, Troy Dorsey, Jim Graden, Eddie Butcher, Steve "Nasty" Anderson, Ray McCallum, Rudy Smedley, Leroy Taylor, John Chung, Diane Urbanas, Linda Denley, Helen Chung, Brian Dorsey.

Curtis Wong, 47
Chinese-American Martial Arts Publisher

Nov. 23rd
John Sells, 47
Karate Historian & Writer

Nov. 24th
Mike Dillard, 46
Century Martial Art Founder and CEO

Nov. 25th
Osamu Ozawa, 71
Japanese-American Karate-do Pioneer

Nov. 27th
John Corcoran, 48
Martial Arts Writer & Author

Nov. 28th
Jim Mather, 54
Karate-do Administrator

Keith D. Yates, 46
Martial Arts Author & Journalist

Paul Maslak, 45
Martial Arts Filmmaker

Nov. 29th
Kathy Quan, 36
Karate Forms Champion

Nov. 30th
George Goldsmith, 42
Screenwriter & Karate Black Belt

Historic Arrivals/Departures

November 1952
Japan's rugged karate master, Mas Oyama, wrapped up his eight-month U.S. tour that had taken him to 32 states. He was invited here by the U.S. Professional Wrestling Association. During this tour, Oyama initiated his famous challenge matches with professional wrestlers and boxers, all of whom he is said to have defeated. Oyama's exhibition bouts and demonstrations, including the breaking of boards, bricks and stones, received great public attention, with a major article in the *New York Times*, which covered his bout with a pro boxer at Madison Square Garden.

Nov. 1986
Korea's Yong Shul Choi, the founder of Hapkido, died in 1986. He was 96.

Nov. 2, 1985 — London, England.
5th WAKO World Championships
One of the greatest U.S. teams ever assembled for a world-class event captured first place overall team honors in semi-contact and 2nd in kickboxing. Dallas' Troy Dorsey made history by becoming the first champion to win gold medals in both kickboxing and semi-contact in a single event. Both forms and women's semi-contact competitions were officially introduced here; U.S. forms king John Chung won the former and U.S. semi-contact queen Linda Denley won the latter. Event marred by controversial loss for kickboxing gold medal by John Graden to Germany's Alois Hoffmann.

Nov. 5, 1978 — West Berlin, Germany
1st WAKO World Championships,
Competitors from 18 countries merged here for promoter Georg Bruckner's big-budget production of the World Association of Kickboxing Organizations' inaugural event. The U.S. team won first place. Today, WAKO is the world's foremost amateur kickboxing organization.

Nov. 7, 1979 — West Palm Beach, FL.
The first kickboxing world title fight to be televised on ESPN-TV. Co-promoter Steve Shepherd took away Earnest Hart, Jr.'s PKA world welterweight crown via a 6th-round knockout.

Nov. 14, 1977 — Tokyo, Japan
Los Angeles' Benny "The Jet" Urquidez scored a 4th-round KO over undefeated Kunimatsu Okao in a terrific battle televised live throughout Japan. Benny's thrilling victory was the landmark that established professional American kickboxers as world-class fighters.

Nov. 20, 1920
Korean-American Tae Kwon Do Pioneer Ki Whang Kim was born. He died in Maryland on Sept. 16, 1993, at 72.

Nov. 21, 1991
World Muay Thai Champion Nanfah "Lot" Seheradecho, after moving to Los Angeles and opening a school, died prematurely from an illness. He was 30.

Nov. 23, 1974 — Oakland, CA
Western Pro-Am
The first "co-op" promotion of a national karate tournament occurred here when eight promoters from different styles worked together to produce a single event. Top-ten-ranked Roy Kurban of Dallas, Texas, won the grand championship.

Nov. 24, 1968 — New York, NY.
World Professional Karate Championships
Joe Lewis, Chuck Norris, Mike Stone and Skipper Mullins all won their first divisional world titles (light-contact competition) in promoter Aaron Banks' groundbreaking event.

Nov. 25, 1987
Japanese Hakko-ryu Jujutsu founder Ryuho (Yoshinobu) Okuyama died in Japan. He was 86.

Nov. 27, 1940
Chinese-American Martial Arts Pioneer Bruce Lee was born. He died prematurely on July 20, 1973, at 33 in Hong Kong. ■



The Traditional Buzz

Buzz Durkin is redefining the mission of tradition

BY ANDREW BREEN

When a school owner maintains a steady enrollment of nearly 500 students, he must be doing something right. When he does it in a town of only 4,500 residents, it's an even more impressive accomplishment. And when he does it while teaching a no-frills traditional style, it's a good bet that there are some valuable lessons to draw from his success.

The noteworthy business to which we refer is Buzz Durkin's School of Uechi-ryu Karate, a 7,200-square-foot, state-of-the-art dojo in the small town of Atkinson, New Hampshire. Designed by Durkin and his wife Judy in 1988, the school is set out on wooded grounds and boasts a beautiful Bonsai garden as part of the landscape. In addition to the main training area, the dojo includes adjunct rooms for weapons and private lessons, a black belt library, spacious reception and locker room facilities, and even a pro shop where students may purchase uniforms, equipment and accessories.

Obviously far beyond your typical storefront dojo, Durkin's school was voted "Best Martial Arts Facility" from 1991-1994 and "School of the Year" in 1995 at the United States Martial Arts Association's National Convention.

Durkin has generated these impressive results teaching a traditional Okinawan karate system, without incorporating any fanciful bells, whistles or gimmicks to his curriculum. His respect for the roots of Uechi-ryu run deeply, all the way back to Okinawa, in fact, where he maintains a solid relationship with Uechi-ryu's central hierarchy. Indeed, Sensei Durkin's black belts are certified through the Okinawan Uechi-ryu Association and at least several times a year, he arranges for senior Okinawan instructors to visit his dojo to provide advanced instruction to his students.

Yet, while Buzz Durkin happily embraces the mantle of traditionalist, this 30-year veteran of the martial arts does not fit the stereotype of the dogmatic traditionalist. He has definite opinions on what makes for a successful school, and foremost among these is that style affiliations must take a back seat to student service. Durkin has long since abandoned the "survival of the fittest" mentality, believing, in fact, that, contrary to developing excellence, such an attitude drives students away.

Student service is more than just a convenient catch phrase for Durkin; it's the linchpin of his success. That commitment is evident in every facet of his operation, from the immaculate dojo to a flexible class schedule offering over 60 classes a



Traditional instructor, Buzz Durkin,has achieved success by serving the student, instead of the style.

week, to a carefully graduated training curriculum which makes learning a martial art a positive experience rather than an intimidating one.

In this first installment of his two-part interview, Durkin shares proven, nuts-and-bolts strategies for professionalizing instruction without compromising the foundations of traditional martial arts. Here's a man who not only has his cake and eats it too, he owns the bakery.

MA PRO: *What were some of the difficulties you faced in teaching such a traditional style and making it commercially successful?*

DURKIN: I think one of the things that I had to learn was not to make the training too hard too soon. I think back on the times that we almost drove students away proving what a strong style we had and how tough we were. Were there difficulties? Yes. But I think the difficulties arose from trying to be too hard on students too soon, by not tuning into what the student was really after, and by putting black belt expectations on white belts.

MA PRO: *What curriculum changes did you make, if any?*

DURKIN: Well, oddly enough, I'd say we made very few curriculum changes. What we did change was our presentation. By changing the presentation to where it's less physically demanding in the initial stages, but more upbeat, more energetic and more exciting, we were able to develop much better, much stronger retention.

In the old days, we were a lot more demanding of the lower ranks and rewarded only the performance. Now we reward the effort of new students and reward the performance a little further down the road. Though some people are surprised to hear it, we still perform the traditional curriculum. In our style, there are only eight kata so there's not a lot of material to change. If anything, the changes have been in the disguising of repetition and the verve with which we do things.

MA PRO: *How many students do you have and what is the breakdown in terms of males to females and children to adults?*

DURKIN: We currently have over 485 active students. Thirty-five percent of the student body is female, and we're probably at about sixty-five percent children and thirty-five percent adults. Our students range in age from five to the oldest student, who is 68.

MA PRO: *How many instructors do you employ, and how many classes do you run a week?*

DURKIN: Other than myself, we have one full-time instructor who's responsible for the childrens' program and the adult white-belt program. Other than that, we have a number of part-time instructors as well as people who assist such as our STORM (Special Team Of Role Models) members, junior black belts who assist teaching the juniors. Also, a select group of our senior students, who have the talent, time and inclination to do so, assist with the adults. We're a six-day-a-week operation and offer over 60 classes a week.

MA PRO: *How many students are in a typical class?*

continued on page 28

interview by john graden

FIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION! Part II

Producer/Director Paul Maslak on the Business of Martial Arts Film-making



"Sworn to Justice" producers Neva Friedenn (left) and Paul Maslak. The two met when Maslak was editor of "Inside Kung Fu" and Friedenn was a freelance writer. Their first film collaboration resulted in "Red Sun Rising," starring Don "The Dragon" Wilson.

In this final installment of his fascinating perception of martial arts movies, Paul Maslak speaks out about the responsibilities of a film director, the usefulness of simplistic plots, why film critics like some martial arts films and scorn others, and what he foresees for the future of the genre.

Of particular interest is his poignant analysis of the film fight scene. Citing, in part, elements he learned personally from Jackie Chan, Maslak defines what makes the "ideal" fight scene and what hinders that ideal from being consistently achieved. Unquestionably, his insight into the subject surpasses just about anything else you might have read before about screen fights.

About Directing

MA PRO: *You recently directed your first film, "Sworn to Justice," starring Cynthia Rothrock in the highest-budget film of her career. How did that opportunity come about?*

MASLAK: It was purely a business decision we had to make, and an offer we couldn't refuse. See, we ran out of money.

Originally my partner, Neva Friedenn, and I were to produce and our friend, Lyndon Chubbuck, a film and TV veteran, was to direct. But right at the start of preproduction, Lyndon had to bow out because of some eleventh-hour changes required on a previous film he had directed.

As an alternative, Lyndon strongly suggested that I direct. I knew the project better than anyone we could hire on short notice. And Lyndon felt that I had a better theoretical grasp of the job than many directors he knew. Plus, he offered to give me

a few pointers privately about things you can't learn in a book.

Also, Lyndon is married to Ivana Chubbuck, a high-powered Hollywood acting coach who counts Elizabeth Shue, Geena Davis, Jim Carrey, Brad Pitt, Sharon Stone and Gary Shandling among her present or former students. She offered to teach me a few things about handling actors.

Then Cynthia Rothrock came up with the idea of bringing over a Hong Kong pro to help out with the fight choreography. Neva and I thought that was a good idea. But we couldn't afford both a Hong Kong choreographer and a veteran director. So I got the job.

Then I hired John Corcoran to coordinate the martial arts unit so I'd be freed up to concentrate on the directing chores.

MA PRO: *What was it like?*

MASLAK: It felt a lot like being an astronaut in one of NASA's early manned space flights. You spend years, months and weeks planning and preparing. You have a whole staff of experts and technicians behind you at all times. But once they strap you down atop that rocket and hit the launch button, there isn't really a wide range of things you can do to steer the rocket. Most of that's been preprogrammed, if you prepared properly.

So a film production has a momentum all its own. And you know that if you make even a simple mistake at the wrong time, the whole thing could blow up on you.

It becomes almost a Zen thing. You're constantly mindful of the responsibility and of the things you can control, while trying to anticipate solutions to the things you can't.

MA PRO: *How did your responsibilities as director differ from your previous positions?*

MASLAK: Unless you're a producer or a director, you're only concerned with a small piece of the whole puzzle; such as story, or choreography, or camera, or props, or art, etc. Only the producer and the director are responsible for it all.

But here's the difference. The producer's artistic concerns are kept more general in nature so that he or she can devote most of his or her time to making deals, fighting production problems, and stretching the dollar. The director, on the other hand, watchdogs the financial concerns in a much more general way so that he or she can devote most of his or her time to the moment-by-moment artistic decisions.



MAPro Editor-in-Chief John Graden moonlights as a Brink's guard during a heist in "Sworn to Justice."

MA PRO: *What's the biggest expense?*

MASLAK: The stars.

MA PRO: *What kind of return would you expect on a film like this?*

MASLAK: That answer has to stay proprietary for the reasons I cited earlier. But I will say this. If you know what you're doing. . .know your markets. . .know how to sidestep the creative accounting, then you should consistently be able to make a return on investment that justifies both the expense and the risks.

The Genre

MA PRO: *Most martial arts films seem to have fairly simplistic plots and characters, a rare exception being the early "Karate Kid" films. Why is that?*

MASLAK: I suppose for the same reason you find fairly simplistic plots in *Twister* and *Jurassic Park*, in *Speed* and *Under Siege*, and in the sequels to *Die Hard* and *Lethal Weapon*. I mean, when you're working in a genre which promises a certain type of action, you're supposed to deliver that action in abundance. And we're only allowed ninety to one-hundred minutes, including five-and-a-half minutes for credits, in which to tell the story. So there isn't that much time to set up a lot of complication. . . either that or the story will be so confusing you can't follow it.

That's the first reason.

A second reason is that the film industry, like most industries, has become even more globalized over the last ten years. In 1986, more than half of a film's revenue came from the U.S. alone.

Now, typically sixty-five or seventy percent will come from overseas. And guess what? People who don't speak English don't really want to follow a complicated plot through subtitles.

A third reason is resistance from film buyers. They want films from which they can make big explosive coming-attraction promos. So they're somewhat unwilling to work with or pay full price for a more sophisticated story.

A fourth reason is that the better stories tend to require better actors, more stars and, thus, more expense.

And, finally, it's a symptom that the same old formulaic pap has been explored to death and that filmmakers have run out of ideas. And if my producer colleagues don't wake up soon, the genre will be completely tapped out.

MA PRO: *Twenty years ago, we all thought that if only people could see the martial arts in action, they would appreciate our passion and flock to the schools. While the martial arts are more prevalent in film than*

continued on page 24

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Martial Art Events

November 1996

1-3	MI	National Black Belt Testing, Inkster, Contact: Carl Tate Jr., PO Box 591, Inkster, MI 48141 313-730-9889 Fax: 313-730-5909
2	NY	American International Karate Championships 6th, Rochester Convention Center, Contact: Michael Monaco, 196 Red Rock Road, Rochester, NY 14625 716-227-7791
2	AL	Southern Region Open Karate Tournament, Dothan, Contact: Mike Culbreth, 1791 Ross Clark Circle Southest, Dothan, AL 36301 334-794-8238
2	CAN	The Canadian Chinese Martial Arts Championships, Contact: Jon Funk, 8875 Horne Street, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada V3N 4J8 604-421-3637 Email: jfunk@smartt.com
2	TX	World Champion Lloyd Freight Train Lister Tournament of Champions, Texas Salina Convention Center, Contact: Lloyd Lister, 2749 Dixie Street, Corpus Christi, TX 78405
2	IN	8th Annual Martial Arts Symposium, Contact: Mike Kincaid, 111 North Meridian, Lebanon, IN 46052 317-482-6992
2	TX	Sixth Annual Shin's Karate Tournament, Waco Christian Gym, Contact: Martin Heese, 3000 Dell Mead, Waco, TX 76705 817-867-1414
2	MT	Quam's Tae Kwon Do Championship, Bozeman High School, Contact: Doug Quam, PO Box 4333, Bozeman, MT 59772 406-586-3995
2	OH	4th Annual Erie Shore Classic, Cleveland, Contact: Sport Karate Productions, 5950 Louis Drive, North Olmsted, OH 44070 216-979-1019
2	VA	Ted Wong/Jerry Beasley Jeet Kune Do Seminar, Contact: Ian Marshall, 540-961-9151
2	MI	North American Tae Kwon Do Awards Tournament, Constantine High School, Contact: Ken/Cindy Anglemyer, 1235 South Washington Street, Constantine, MI 49042 616-435-8101
2	NJ	MacKenzie's Wood Breaking Seminar, Contact: Ken MacKenzie, 2000 White Horse Road, The Echo Shoppes, Voorhees, NJ 08043 609-346-1111
3	OH	Tracy's Karate Tournament, Contact: Bill Di Carlo, 10318 Lorain Ave., Cleveland, OH 44111 216-974-1050
3	IL	Spirit of Martial Arts Classic, Myna Thompson School, Contact: Michael Schlosser, 517 Broadmeadow, Rantoul, IL 61866 217-893-4153
3	PA	PA Super Championship/Naska Triple B, Boyertown Senior High School, Contact: Donnie Ellixson Jr. 10 South Reading Avenue, Boyertown, PA 19512 610-367-1670
3	MO	Just for Kicks, Owensville, Contact: John Adams, 107 West Lincoln, Owensville, MO 65066 573-437-4108
3	MO	China's Kungfu Champions 1996 TS Tour and Workshop, Folly Theater, Kansas City, Contact: Chun Ma Sit 913-266-6357
9	NC	Battle of the Carolinas, New Bern, Contact: Scott Warren, 2102 Horseshoe Bend, New Bern, NC 28562 919-638-6680
9	OH	Lee Bachman Kenpo Seminar, Contact: Dean Norris, 5682 State Road, Parma, OH 44134 216-886-0001
9-10	MA	Dog Brothers Stickfighting Seminar/Marc "Crafty Dog" Denny, South Hardly, Contact: Ernest Laberge, 4A Pine Street, Easthampton, MA 01027 413-527-7027
9-11	CAN	Pan American Tae Kwon Do Championships, Contact: Clint Norman, 1247 A Lorne Street, Regina, Canada S4R 2J9 306-525-0005 Email: patkd@unibase.unibase.com
10	WI	All Midwest Tae Kwon Do Championship, Xavier High School, Contact: David or Diane Bunnell, 1131 East Wisconsin, Appleton, WI 54911 414-733-4600
10	PA	Eastern Alliance National Championship, Foglesville, Contact: Master Kates, 717-386-2657
10	NY	Tournament of Tourmanments, Long Island, Contact: Frank Galante, 302 Hollock Avenue, Port Jeff, NY 11770 516-474-0714
10	PA	24th Annual Pennsylvania Karate Championships, Valley High School, New Kensington, Contact: Frank Caliguri, 1724 Fifth Avenue, Arnold, PA 15068 412-335-9300
16	FL	SW Florida Martial Arts Championships, Cape Coral High School, Contact: Jeff Santella, 1412 Viscaya Parkway, Cape Coral, FL 33990 941-772-KICK
16	CA	Rumble in Redding VI, Win River Casino, Contact: Dan Verdugo, 1040 Locust Street, Redding, CA 96001 916-241-8175 Email: gverdugo@shastalink.k12.ca.us
16	TX	Budo Taijutsu, Kenjutsu and Firewalk, Contact: Dave Bolin, Woodlands Dojo, Houston, TX 713-367-4818
16	TX	North Texas Intensive Combat Hapkido Seminar, Center Park Recreation Center, West Irving, Contact: Danny Passmore, PO Box 11603 Waco, TX 76716 817-662-3229
16	TX	3rd Annual Corpus Christi Tae Kwon Do Championships, Contact: Raymond Lumampao, 4938 South Staples # A8, Corpus Christi, TX 78412 512-992-0388
16-17	NC	Ted Wong Original Jeet Kwon Do Seminar, Contact: Warren Graham, 8407 Quarry Road, Charlotte, NC 28212 704-536-3373
17	FL	Tractional Kokusai Karate Championships, Orlando, Contact: Abby Griffin, 5600 West Colonial, Orlando, FL 32808 407-294-0626
17	MO	Terry Gibson Seminar, Springfield, Contact: Steve Black, 417-883-6338
23	OH	PKC State Finals, Canton Civic Center, Contact: Rick Addessi, 3745 Woodland Avenue Northwest, Canton, OH 44709 492-4113
23	OK	Yun's/Reeder's 1996 Tae Kwon Do Championships, Contact: Jeffrey Reeder, 8104 North May Avenue, Oklahoma City, OK 73120 405-848-4851
23-24	CA	1996 USAWKF National and International Tournament, Contact: Lily Eagle Claw Kung Fu, 4475 G Treat Boulevard, Concord, CA 94521 510-689-6868 Email: tsh08@aol.com
24	MD	12th Battle of USA, Northern Virginia Community College, Contact: Yong Sung Lee, 7137 Old Alexandria Ferry Road, Clinton, MD 20735 301-868-8880

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selling your school



Prior to selling his school, the author built a large student body and competent staff.

HOW TO SELL YOUR SCHOOL

part one

by Tom Callos

In the first day at his new job, the lion-tamer apprentice anxiously asked his new boss the big question, "How do you tame a lion?" With his good arm, the chief lion-tamer reached up and absentmindedly traced his three fingers over the long scar next to his eye-patch and said, "Carefully, son. Very carefully."

Sure, it's an old joke, but when Martial Arts Professional's editor-in-chief, John Graden, asked me to write an article on how to sell a martial arts school, my thoughts on the subject were the same. Selling a school should be done very carefully. After all, it's more than a transaction. It's about your future, the buyer's, your student's, and the well-being of a business you've spent nine lives to build.

Two years ago, after more than 15 years in business, I sold my school located in Reno, Nevada. A couple of well-known school-owner friends of mine have recently sold theirs too. In this article, we'll share some of the lessons we've learned, and offer some useful advice should a sale be in your future.

Why Sell?

Joe Lewis and Bob Wall sold their karate school in Sherman Oaks, California, to Chuck Norris in 1968. Chuck Norris sold it to Pat Johnson. Pat Johnson sold it to Harold Gross and Dennis Ichikawa. Ichikawa sold his half to Gross. Harold Gross sold it to Bernie Krasnoo.

That's just one school that was sold five times, probably for five completely different reasons. Of course, not everyone goes off to become a movie star or a karate legend. Some owners sell to chase new dreams, simplify their lives, or pursue a peaceful retirement. Owning a school takes a ton of time and energy (as if we didn't know). When a martial arts teacher gets the bug to do something else, something different, selling could be the best move.

Bob Montgomery sold three successful schools he owned in Cincinnati, Ohio.

"I sold for two reasons," explains Montgomery. "First, I was so busy managing 600 students that I was becoming a stranger to my two young children. Second, as luck would have it, just when I was thinking about slowing down, one of my staff members asked me if I was interested in selling. It was perfect timing."

Steve Lavalee has spent several years carefully orchestrating the sale of his three prosperous schools in upstate New York. Lavalee's dream was to escape New York's harsh winters and move to sunny Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

As for me, I became motivated to sell because I had an eager and qualified buyer, and I wanted to become a professional writer. Whether the opportunity to sell falls into your lap like it did for Montgomery, or it's part of a carefully executed plan like Lavalee's, there are many good reasons to move on when the time is right. One of the most challenging tasks you'll face after deciding to sell will be determining your school's value.

What's a School Worth?

What a school is worth depends on who you talk to. The seller thinks it's worth more than the buyer, probably a lot more. Friends of the seller will agree with his assessment, while the buyer has his or her own posse of consultants. Accountants use a net operating profit formula to determine a school's value. That's a method where several years of net profit (as shown on your tax returns) are averaged and then multiplied by 1 or 1.5%. It's probably a good method, unless you've spent the last few years trying to convince the I.R.S. that you aren't making a profit.

To sell a school, you have to have something of value to sell. Some schools aren't worth more than their "m & m's" (mats and mirrors). There's plenty of good-looking dojos out there that aren't making a profit. Their owners do it out of their passion and love for the arts (or so they say), which is

kind of unique to our industry, if you think about it. You'd be hard-pressed to find the owner of a dry cleaning company or a septic-tank business who operate out of their passion for dirty laundry and excrement. Don't get me wrong, I'm not putting down school owners who don't make a profit, but to have something worth selling, a school's got to have some assets. As an example, let's use my school.

In 1994, I sold my branch of West Coast Tae Kwon Do. The number one most valuable thing I had to sell at my school was...

...No, wait, let's make it a quiz. I'll list my Reno school's assets and you tell me, as a buyer, which one you would be most interested in. Here's an impromptu inventory list:

1) *Twelve 8' x 10' mirrors, glued to the wall.*
2) *About 3,500-square-feet of mats.*
3) *Three rooms of office furniture, two computers, a fancy phone system, and six custom-built benches.*
4) *Twenty-five kicking shields, 20 hand paddles, and 16 sets of focus mitts.*
5) *About $1,500 worth of unsold retail equipment and $500 worth of books.*
6) *One small TV and one big-screen TV.*
7) *An outstanding reputation in the community and a 16-year history of operation.*
8) *A dedicated group of 500 students (about 80 active black belts), and 6 fully trained staff members.*
9) *A custom-built, 4,300-square-foot school with a reasonable lease, in a busy location.*
10) *A 6-year average monthly cash-income of well over $30,000.*
11) *An accounts receivable (student contracts) worth almost $500,000 (due over a four year period), with a 7-year history of 90% collection.*

Well, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure it out. My accounts receivable was my most valuable asset. Note that I also had a great cash business. The prior year, my gross income had averaged $35,700 per month. But for the buyer, that was only history; the accounts receivable was the future. It was almost like money in the bank, but it hadn't always been like that.

In the early 1980s, I had cashed-out almost every student in my school on a black belt course. I sure did have a lot of cash in the bank. The key word is *did*. I don't know about you, but my cash usually finds a way to get spent — fast. There's no feeling quite like the one of having a school jam-packed full of students, and still not having enough money to pay the bills.

Fortunately for my cash flow, my school, and eventually for my school's buyer, I changed my business practices. Instead of cashing out, I started taking a substantial down payment and budgeting out the remaining tuition over the length of membership. I also documented each transaction in a fair and legal written agreement between the student and the school (you know, a contract).

With that experience under my belt, I'm puzzled when I hear people touting the benefits of a no-contract or cash-'em-out enrollment policy. It doesn't make sense to eliminate contracts from a school or to accept only cash. In the long-run, cash-out schools don't make any more money than schools that offer payment plans. As for the argument that consumers are wary of contracts, it's my experience that 99% of the public doesn't give a hoot about them. It's all in the presentation. What consumers really dislike is paying for something they don't want or like, or aren't using anymore.

The main difference between a no-contract/cash-out system and a contract school is a significant and financially impressive accounts receivable. Yet some of these cash-out gurus act like their idea is the best thing since ankle-length gi pants. In my opinion, it's a real bad idea. It's short-range thinking and the easy way out for school owners who don't anticipate their students sticking around. When you build a big accounts receivable and have 500 collectable contracts in your files and 500 happy students in your classes, then you'll have something of value to talk about with a potential buyer (not to mention your banker or landlord).

The Ideal Buyer

"The best person to buy a school is someone grown from within," advises Steve Lavalee. "The students will be more accepting and you'll have had ample time to check them out."

Bob Montgomery, Lavalee and I all had students buy our schools. I sold mine to a staff member, Paul Reyes. Ten years earlier, Paul, already a black belt, had moved to Reno to join my staff. It was the beginning of a long friendship built on a mutual respect and the hard work it took to build a school from 80 to over 500 active students. Paul was the perfect buyer.

He knew the school and the students almost as well as I did. He had served as an Assistant Instructor and then a Head Instructor. He had been a New Student Program Director, and had also been in charge of Black Belt Club renewals and retention. A year before we ever discussed the sale, he was General Manager at the school. With the exception of payroll, accounts payable and advertising, his job duties had involved every aspect of the operation.

What's the point? If you start planning now, you can nurture a potential buyer from the ranks of your students. You can maximize your school's sale with a careful plan of growing and training a buyer, building tangible assets, and preparing staff and students for the change in leadership.

When it comes to selling your school, there are five letters to remember: PPPPP. They stand for Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance. ■

Systems-Driven Vs. Personality-Driven

The value of your school can be greatly enhanced by making it a "systems-driven" operation.

In Michael Gerber's famous book about business management, "The E Myth" — Gasp! Don't tell me you haven't read it! — he explains the difference between a business run by a system, and one run by the sheer force of the owner's knowledge and personality. A systems-driven business is run by a simple documented system. Each procedure in the business, from operating the cash register, cleaning the locker rooms, to how to pay the bills, is outlined in a step-by-step fashion in an operations manual. Even the most inexperienced employee need only read the manual to perform required tasks, because it's all done by the numbers.

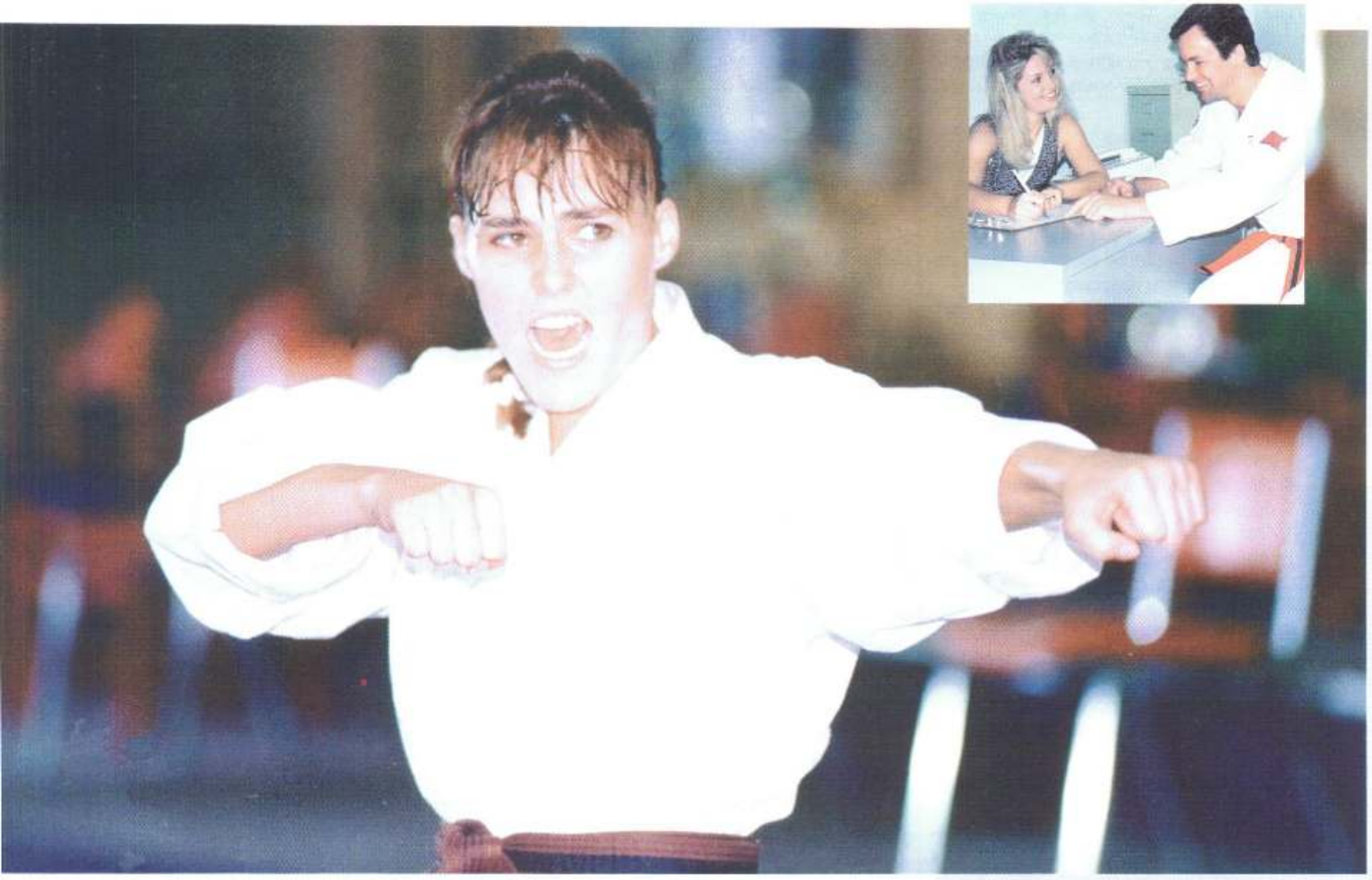
A systems-driven operation is an impressive asset to add value to your business. A new owner will have a much better chance of succeeding quickly and efficiently with a system like that already in place.

Unfortunately (for a seller), in the martial arts industry, most schools are "personality-driven" businesses. A personality-driven business runs not by a system, but by the sheer talent, charisma and knowledge of the proprietor. Without the owner present, the business can come to a standstill, or literally fall apart. It's caused by an owner working in the business, instead of working on the business.

Trying to sell a business that's personality-driven is no easy task. It makes it very difficult for someone to buy the school who hasn't spent a significant amount of time training with the school's owner.

If you want to maximize the sale of your school it's vital that you document how it runs. As a first step, read "The E Myth." ■

Join The Nation's Fastest Growing Professional Martial Arts Association



As martial artists, most of us didn't decide to get into the martial arts business because we thought it was a quick way to get rich.

We chose this life because we love to teach and we love to train. However, the reality is that a Martial Arts School is a business, and you can't make it in this highly competitive business without growing revenues, without new students, and without constantly marketing and prospecting to make your school grow.



We understand that school owners want to focus their time and attention on the students, not on marketing. That's why the National Association of Professional Martial Artists (NAPMA) was formed.

NAPMA has put together a powerful team of marketing professionals to give school owners affordable access to proven, quality marketing and advertising materials that would normally be out of reach for most small to medium sized businesses.

The response has been absolutely phenomenal! Why? Because each month NAPMA provides you and your school with the professional marketing, advertising, and operational materials to make your school grow faster than you ever dreamed possible. This allows you to focus on the area that motivated you to open a school in the first place; teaching Martial Arts. NAPMA was designed from the ground up to be so affordable that any school could afford to participate. Besides, the program is set up to pay for itself by adding just TWO new students! And the whole program is backed by NAPMA's unconditional money-back guarantee! But these are just part of the reasons why NAPMA is experiencing this incredible growth; if the program didn't work, it wouldn't continue to grow.

Why NAPMA Works

Since NAPMA launched, back in January 1995, over 500 schools have signed on and are already enjoying the benefits and advantages of the latest in innovative martial arts marketing, teaching and business education. NAPMA membership gives your school a major advantage over your competition by helping you retain more students, sign up more new students, and become more successful WITHOUT selling out!

Monthly Marketing Muscle

As a NAPMA Professional member, We'll supply you with everything you need to help make your school a success, including:



• Camera Ready Ads That Get Results!



NAPMA has contracted a team of professional design experts to provide you with the most powerful ad campaigns our industry has ever seen, all camera-ready, and designed to get results fast! For instance, Terry Bryan's school in Colorado Springs, Colorado enrolled over 70 students from our special NAPMA promotional tie-in with the Power Ranger film in theatres. Our marketing strategies get results, and we do all the design, copy, and research work for you, leaving you free to concentrate on providing quality training.

National Black Belt Club Renewal Program

It's no secret that in the past some Black Belt Clubs were used as a way for students to "pay" for black belt status without earning one. This is absolutely not the case with NAPMA and our program is set up entirely different. Our National Black Belt Club is designed to help you, the school owner, attract and retain quality students though their commitment to reaching Black Belt Status the right way; through hard work and discipline.

The National Black Belt Club is the perfect system for generating a steady monthly source of highly profitable renewals and should account for 60% of your tuition income while having a huge effect on the atmosphere and energy in your school. NAPMA provides you with all the flyers, brochures, patches, certificates, posters and most of all, national affiliation for your Black Belt Club students.

Video Training Seminars for Your Staff

NAPMA members nationwide say that this is the most valuable tool they have ever used to educate and motivate their staff. Imagine the benefits of exposing your staff to the most successful martial artists in the industry; sharing their drills, their business strategies for success, and their experiences. Our monthly video training provides you with three 20-minute seminars targeted to a specific area of the school: Instructor training, office training, and owner training.

Professional Designation



Only NAPMA member schools receive the authorization to use the designation, "Member: National Association of Professional Martial Artists" on their marketing materials, ads, business cards/letterhead, and even on the school itself. This designation shows your affiliation with a nationally recognized professional organization and speaks volumes to the public about your commitment, integrity, and concern for your school and your students. NAPMA schools uphold the highest ethical and safety standards in the business and it's our intention to inform the public of the benefits of patronizing NAPMA member schools.

Networking

We've found that NAPMA member schools want to help each other succeed. Many school owners find this an invaluable resource; the ability to instantly have a common bond with another member school and to interact on a variety of issues, techniques, and challenges all school face in today's marketplace.

Toll-Free Consulting Hotline

The NAPMA hotline is there as your link to getting the most from the NAPMA program material, videos, Black Belt Club program, and all aspects of NAPMA membership. School owners have told us time and time again, how important this toll-free access is.

Cutting Edge Developments

cardioKARATE® THE WORKOUT THAT PACKS A PUNCH™

Aerobic Kickingboxing is the new fitness sensation and NAPMA is proud to announce an exclusive new program for its member schools. With this new program NAPMA schools will be the first in their area to take advantage of this exploding new market.

Our exclusive Cardio programs, provided to NAPMA member schools at no additional charge, come complete with ads, marketing ideas and video curriculum examples so you can launch the NAPMA Cardio-Karate™ or Cardio-Kicking™ program in your school right away.

As a NAPMA Professional member you will have the opportunity to implement many of the latest, cutting-edge marketing strategies months before your competition even knows what hit them. NAPMA members always get the competitive marketing edge.

In-House Promotional Events

These can be very lucrative (potentially generating thousands of dollars in additional monthly profits) and easy to produce. We'll provide you with step-by-step instructions, plus ready-made ads and flyers for super successful in-house promotions for student retention and additional profits.

continued on next page

"I have run successful martial arts schools for over thirty years now. After viewing the NAPMA material, it looks like an old dog can learn a few new tricks. I'm joining today."
—JIM HARRISON
American Karate Legend

"In my first month with NAPMA, I enrolled 10 students into the National Black Belt Club. Thank you!"
—SCOTT ASHLEY KARATE
Kickboxing Athletic League

"John Graden has a great ability to communicate how to take total charge of your success. His landmark program will set the standard for high caliber schools."
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World Heavyweight Champion



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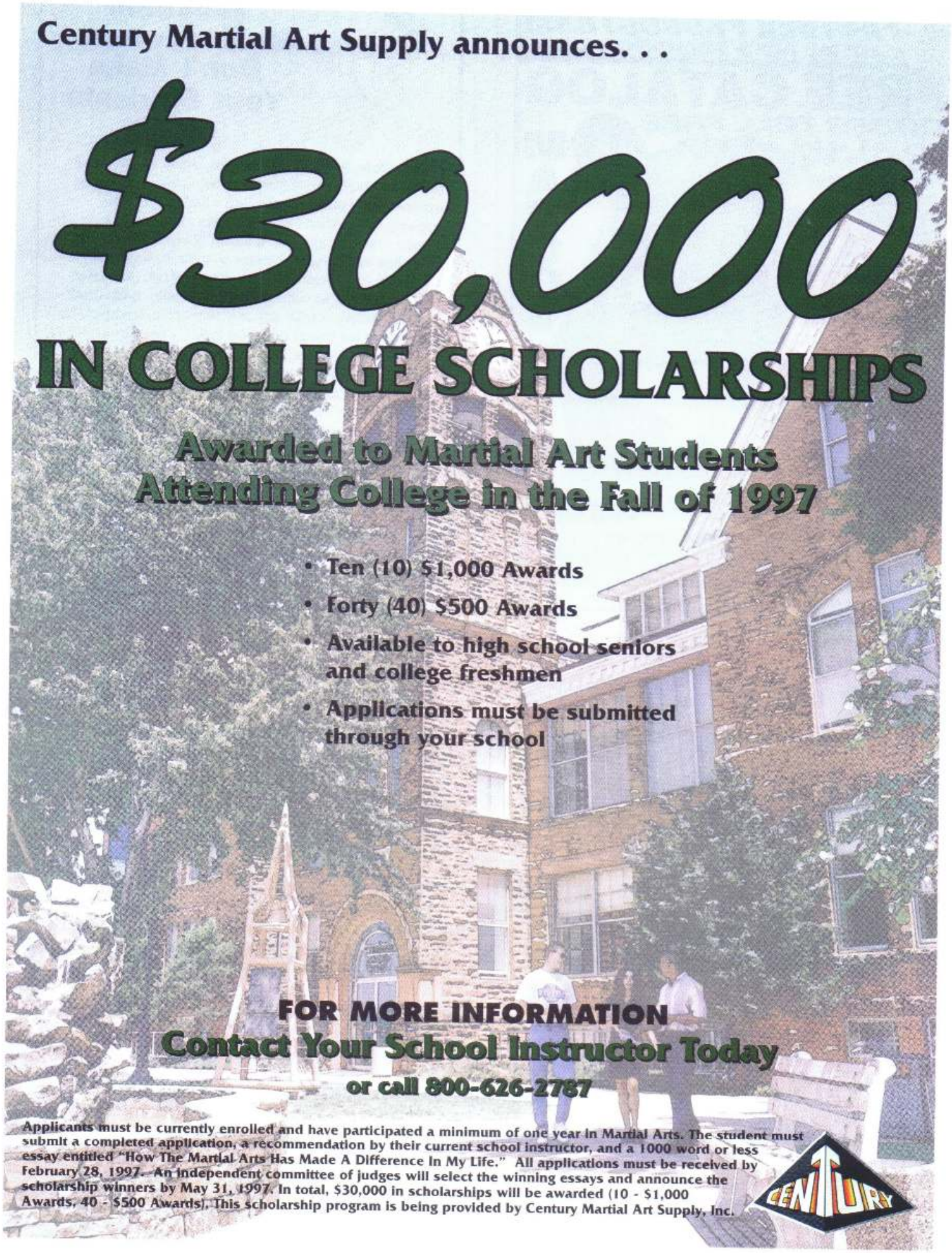
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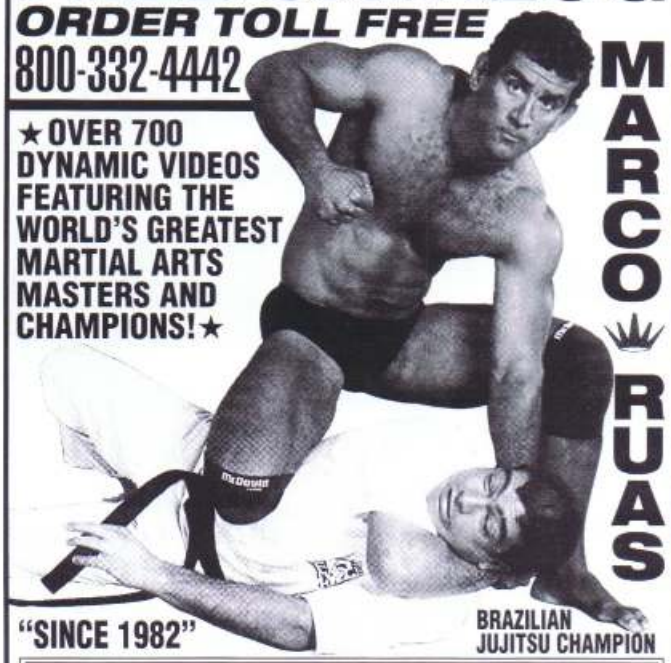
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In Your Corner

By Gary Hestilow

Make this your best Holiday Season!

While every other business is gearing up for their busiest time of the year — your school has a slow down. As Thanksgiving passes and Christmas gets closer, new enrollments slow and then stop. Your students are distracted by the holidays and attendance falls. Tuition collection is down.

In the past, you have tried to pump up your product sales but never had the money to risk on extra inventory. This year is no different — so you sit and wait out the holidays until January when business gets back to normal.

From the retailing side, your school can be like all other retailers. You can have a huge increase in product sales during this time. Remember that your students and all their family members are buying gifts at this time of year. The "I wonder what to give" question will be asked and money will be spent. You can answer the "what gift to give" question. Do not lose the sale to another retailer. Put the money in your bank account. Here is how!

Have a "Wish List" program:

A wish list program sells from catalogs, posters and product selection lists. This programs biggest advantage is that you do not tie up money in inventory! Your customer gives you a wish list with the item(s) they want under the tree. You place the order in time for holiday delivery. When the order arrives, notify your customer and make the sale. Follow these simple steps to put it in place.

Order the posters, catalogs and any additional point of purchase materials you need from your suppliers.

Print up a wish list form for the students to list their "wishes." This is a simple one page sheet that gives the "how to" instructions and a place to list what they want. It should ask for colors and sizes in addition to the name of the product. Be sure to ask for names and phone numbers.

Put up a decorative box with a slot in the top. Use it as a place for kids to drop off their list. As the lists are collected, contact the parents about ordering the items on the list. Make a poster promoting the wish list and display it by the "Wish List" collection box. Talk about the program in class.

The best way to spread this limited resource is to buy more types of items as samples rather than many units of the same thing. Remember you are using these items for display not as selling inventory. Buy your samples in the sizes and colors most likely to sell. As the season nears completion you will want to sell the products used on the display.

Decide which items you want to display and order these items as early as possible. Make sure you include things you do not normally sell. Remember you are showing items for holiday gifts. Basic boots, gloves and uniforms will not make a very good display. You sell these basic things every day.

Set up the display where everyone will notice. A grid wall display decorated for the holidays and showing the sample item can be very effective. Let the customers see and feel the products.

Place a small inventory order for the products that are most popular. Many of the sales will be made because the customer saw the product and wants it right now. Have some inventory on hand for immediate sales. Reorder as necessary to keep your basic stock. On these reorders you can get the items your customers want but you do not have on hand.



Set up a holiday display:

If you can afford to bring in additional inventory, do it wisely. It's best have one to "show" and one to "go" on the larger items like training equipment. A PowerLine Wavemaster does not fit on a grid wall display. It is important to let your students and parents know they are available from you. Place your "show" unit out with a ribbon around it. Sell the "go" unit you have in inventory.

Make suggestions to your students and parents:

You know what the students need for practice in class and at home. Meet with parents and spouses and suggest these items as holiday gifts. Don't assume they already know what is needed or wanted. You can help them create a big surprise under the tree.

Use one or all of these suggestions to boost your holiday sales. The more things you do, the more you will make. Use your vendors as much as possible to minimize your inventory. Sell from samples and catalogs and order early and often. ■

Gary Hestilow is the President of Century Martial Art Supply and a national speaker with the Three R's seminar tour.

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Fights, Camera, Action!—from page 12

ever before, it still has not garnered the mainstream respect we thought it would. Why do you think that is?

MASLAK: It's like you said. Too many simplistic stories. But more than that, it's the whole premise behind the genre.

If you look at the martial arts films which are liked by mainstream critics, they're usually Japanese samurai films directed by Akira Kurosawa and starring Toshiro Mifune. That's because those stories are based on an actual historic era in which real samurai martial artists served an important function in Japanese society. So the stories were about people who really did, or who really could have lived.

Film critics scorn contrivance. They want plausible stories about true-to-life people confronting important personal dilemmas and resolving them like real people, yet in a surprising way.

There never was a time when martial artists as a group played an important role in American society in the same manner as the samurai in ancient Japan, the knight in medieval Europe, or even the sheriff in the Old West. So when you start out to make a martial arts film, automatically you have to contrive a hero and a villain, both of whom are or will become martial artists.

Do you remember *Iron & Silk*, about a college kid who goes to China to teach English and study wushu? The critics loved it. Now you know why.

The Art of the Fight Scene

MA PRO: *Overall, martial arts instructors have mixed — and very strong — opinions about the fight scenes in martial arts movies. Many do enjoy them for their entertainment value. Others, however, criticize either the unrealistic nature of film fights or a cookie-cutter similarity throughout the genre that lacks originality. Perhaps the critics need to understand the internal filmmaking problems to soften their opinion. Let's start at the beginning. What makes an ideal fight scene?*

MASLAK: Wow! That's a really, really tough question. Because I started out as a martial arts journalist, I had the good fortune of personally being able to ask Jackie Chan that same question on two separate occasions. Once in 1980 after he first became an international celebrity, and again, recently, just prior to the U.S. release of *Rumble in the Bronx*.

MA PRO: *Smart move! Without question, Jackie's the greatest living genius of the genre. You have our rapt attention!*

MASLAK: I thought that might get a big reaction from you [laughter]. Okay, ready? The secret of a great fight scene is. . .there is no secret! Just hard work. The same answer, incidentally, that martial arts masters cite to their students who seek secret knowledge about mastering techniques.

To be specific, back in 1980 Jackie's English wasn't very good yet, so he mostly mimed his answer. But, essentially, he indicated that a fight scene had to be based on some kind of dramatic structure, either serious or comedic. Then you build the action around that structure.

More recently, and now with a very good command of English, he also told me that you had to find something unique or different for any good action scene. That unique or different element could be the location, the clothing of the characters, the oddity of the situation—a certain thing—as long as it captures the audience's imagination.

In the case of *Rumble in the Bronx*, Jackie cited his bullfight with the hovercraft. That was unique; that was different. And that certainly captured the audience's imagination.

Now, putting these two ingredients together into one action scene takes a lot of planning as well as a lot of plain and simple hard work.

I don't think I could improve on the master's explanation.

MA PRO: *Why don't we see the ideal fight scene more often?*

MASLAK: Well, continuing with Jackie Chan's definition, I suppose there's a lack of sufficient hard work in the proper areas. I mean, a fight scene should be organically integrated into the story. It should not be tacked onto a scene just because you think it's time for some action.



Director Maslak with veteran actor Tony Lo Bianco.

For example, if your hero is a cop and he raids the villain's hideout, the fight that follows is organic because it comes out of the natural motivations of the story's principals. But if your cop-hero leaves the local cop bar on his way to that raid and gets attacked out of the blue by thieves who have nothing else to do with the story, that's contrivance.

In other words, a fight scene should not stop the story while the action occurs, but, rather, it should carry the story and its drama within the action. If you can do this, the audience will have feelings about the characters and the outcomes of their fights. You build suspense. That's why the *Rocky* movies and the early *Karate Kid* pictures were so popular. They integrated the fight action with the story.

Finally, as Jackie also suggested, I suppose there isn't enough energy spent on invention. . .on finding that hovercraft and using it in some fresh, unique, or different way that excites an audience.

MA PRO: *Is that why the fight scenes in so many films, especially in the lower-budget "B" films — are mediocre or often look similar? Why don't we see more creative artistry along the lines of what Jackie Chan does?*

MASLAK: Well, for one, there is a huge advantage between the A-list films with sizable budgets and the more prolific modestly-

budgeted B films. Jackie Chan hasn't made a film that cost less than nine-million dollars in over a decade. Steven Seagal's, Jean-Claude Van Damme's, and even Chuck Norris' films cost at least that much.

But the overwhelming majority of martial arts films, as you know, are quite low budget. That's the real reason so many fight scenes in the genre have a similar look and feel.

One Hollywood rule of thumb says that the more unique a picture looks, the more money it costs to produce. *Independence Day* and *Twister* were anything but cheap. So most of us who work in the martial arts genre can't afford the expense of a hovercraft, even if we thought of it. In fact, that's usually the reason we didn't think of it.

MA PRO: *Can you tell our readers how that lack of money specifically impacts the fight scenes in B-realm martial arts films?*

MASLAK: There are technical demands of time, energy and talent that are all affected. First, you've got to find good martial artists who are also good actors. And I'm not just talking about the fighting stars. I mean the fall guys. They've got to be able to react realistically to fight blows and to take falls. Furthermore, they need to behave like the characters they're portraying throughout the scene. They have to look like they're trying to hurt their film foes, but without really doing so. And that's hard to do.

In Hong Kong, the film industry can draw from several Chinese opera troupes which are filled with kids who've been trained for years in martial arts, drama, comedy and acrobatics. In Hollywood, we don't have anything like that. One reason my friend Art Camacho became so sought after as a fight choreographer, before he turned director, was because he screened and trained his own troupe of fighters who knew how to perform at least the basics.

Secondly, you need to know that fight scenes, when they are properly photographed, consume a lot of crew time. And on a low budget, time is the most precious commodity. So, often the martial arts unit will have something very special or creative planned, but the director had to spend a lot of time earlier that day on some other dramatic scene. And since it's much easier to simplify a fight scene than it is to cut pages of dialogue, guess what gets sacrificed?

MA PRO: *That's an excellent explanation, Paul. So, the imaginative fight scene, planned as a Mercedes, gets reduced to the level of a Hundai?*

MASLAK: Yes. . .that's an excellent analogy. I can't count the number of times I've seen a fight choreographer suffer great disappointment because of this problem. He's ordered to kill his better idea and sacrifice the quality of his craftsmanship for something simple, quick and easy to shoot. He is not in a position to rebel so he must obey, but under his breath he utters the common complaint, "Same old story. . .the martial arts unit gets shafted again!"

Now don't get me wrong, I don't think a smaller budget excuses a routine fight sequence. That just explains why it happens so much. Personally, I think the smaller the budget, the harder we must work. We have to be even more inventive and more imaginative than our big-budget counterparts.

MA PRO: *How do you see the martial arts film evolving over the next twenty years?*

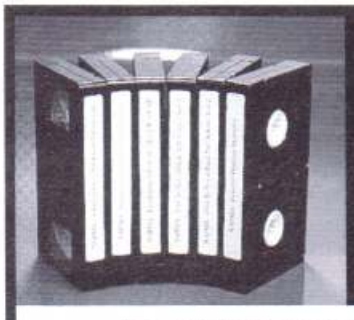
MASLAK: I think Jackie Chan may usher in an era of comedy martial arts for awhile. But, in general, I think it's either we make better films, or the genre will fade away.

One extremely promising portent I see for the coming years is the fact that, at last, Hollywood has a bit of bench with regards to martial arts actors. On the Cynthia Rothrock picture we just finished, *Sworn to Justice*, every martial arts role was played by a good martial artist who also was a good actor.

As far as I know, that's never happened before!

A lot of credit goes to Miss Rothrock, who really worked hard for months and months to get ready for what I suspect was the most challenging role of her career. I'm quite proud of her and of the film.

And, yes, *Sworn to Justice* is trying to set a better standard for the modest-budget action/martial arts film. We at Maslak/Friedenn Films don't want the genre to fade away so we're doing our part to help the cause for everyone. ■



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SAVED BY THE BELL

how to properly praise your program

By Rick Bell

Over the last two issues we've learned that most callers inquiring about lessons are not effectively handled by the people answering our telephones. A great number of "would be" new students are slipping through the cracks because most schools have no clear, standardized telephone sales procedure.

"Be careful about praising your program for too long in a phone call. The more information you give over the telephone, the less reason the caller has to come in."

This month we will discuss the third part of a system I call "The 4Ps." The Pivot–Profile–Praise–Prompt method is a proven, easy-to-learn approach to answering the phone, responding to questions, and securing an appointment with an interested caller.

Previously we talked about the first two Ps; the Pivot and the Profile. A quick review reminds us that when a prospective student calls, he is initially asking the questions; for example, "How much are lessons?" We use a pivot (the first P) to reverse the conversation so that we are asking the questions. The classic Pivot phrase is, "Are you interested in classes for yourself or for your child?"

A Profile (the second P) is then developed of the caller's needs by asking specific, probing questions, such as, "Tell me a little about Johnny, is he shy or outgoing?"

The third P, the praise, is your opportunity to praise your program by telling the caller how your classes meet his specific needs that he outlined in the profile. The trick here is to listen to what the caller is saying in the profile, understand it, and respond appropriately with a specific praise that gets him excited about your classes.

Here are two examples of two different types of praises:

1. If you ask the profile question: "Tell me a little about Johnny, is he shy or outgoing?" and the caller responds, "He is very shy, and we were hoping your classes could help him," now you would know that Johnny probably suffers from low self-esteem.

If the caller says Johnny is shy, you should structure your praise like this: "Our program is great for kids who are a little shy. In fact, I can't think of a better activity than martial arts classes to build confidence. What I need to do is set a time for you to come down and meet Mr. Franklin. He heads our 'I'm A Winner' program, and he's great with the kids."

2. If, however, the answer to the profile question is: "Johnny is very active, and gets in trouble at school, and we were told by a friend that martial arts classes would help calm him down," you would respond in a different way. When a parent tells you his child needs to calm down a bit, it usually means the child is at least mildly hyperactive. The praise of your program would sound something like this: "Mrs. Jones, martial arts classes are one of the best activities for children who have trouble slowing down and focusing. What I need to do is set a time for you to come in and meet Ms. Richards. She heads our 'Listen and Learn' program and she's really great with the kids."

In the previous two examples, I slipped in a very valuable appointment technique. Did you catch what it was? Remember, when someone calls you about lessons, it's not enough just to say good things about your program, you must motivate them to come in. One of the best ways to do this is to mention to someone that they must come in to meet a staff member. The valuable technique I used for motivating the appointment was third-party involvement.



When I tell a caller he needs to meet Mr. Franklin or Ms. Richards, what I am really doing is giving him a reason to come in. If you don't currently have a 'Listen and Learn' or an 'I'm a Winner' program, or a variation thereof, start developing one.

One word of caution: Be careful about praising your program for too long in a phone call. The more information you give over the telephone, the less reason the caller has to come in. You must train your staff to be disciplined enough to not go off on tangents, and to stick to a well-developed script.

Next month we will conclude our discussion of the 4Ps with the last P — the Prompt. ■

Rick Bell is the National Director for EasyPay Tuition Services and developer of the popular No Intro Enrollment Tour.

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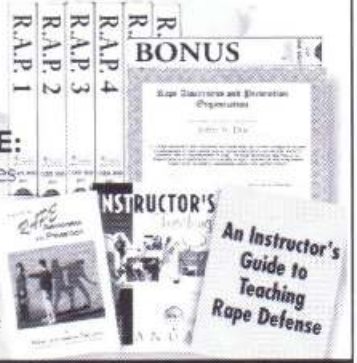
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continued from page 11

DURKIN: It varies widely, of course, but I can tell you that with children, we never have more than 10 children per instructor. The classes may range in size from ten to maybe twenty-five people. I rarely like to see it go over twenty-five or thirty, maximum. We aim for a student-teacher ratio of ten to one, but usually it's a lot lower.

MA PRO: *You own the building that houses your school. What obstacles does an instructor face when moving from renter to owner?*

DURKIN: I think that buying, or, as in my case, building your own school, certainly for individual school owners, is the best thing that they can do. Rather than years of rent going out the window, every mortgage payment brings you one step closer to being free of debt in owning the building.

There are challenges, but none that are unreasonable. It's critical for an instructor or school owner to have excellent credit and a good relationship with one or several banks, but that is no different than any other business. It would behoove those interested in buying their own building to have a good credit rating, be well-known in the community, know other business people in the area, and certainly, to know the bankers. A martial artist may also have to seek out help from financial people to come up with a good business plan.

MA PRO: *Too often, in pursuit of a big, beautiful school, owners end up spending nearly every dime they make on expenses. What kind of profit margin should a school owner be looking for?*

DURKIN: Without sounding facetious, I'd have to say it's different strokes for different folks. It's up to each individual to determine what he's happy with and what his goal is. For every person, it's different. A person may make a lot more money and be unhappy where he is, or he may be willing to sacrifice and make less money to be in a place where he loves being.

Statistically, I think a profit margin of fifteen to twenty-five percent, after expenses, is a very realistic figure.

MA PRO: *What areas can eat up a school's gross?*

DURKIN: Overall, the main problem is carelessness about watching expenses. I believe in the value of keeping statistical



Buzz honors his past, while securing his future.

checks, in terms of things like: What should salaries be? Thirty-three percent of gross. How much should I spend on advertising? Ten percent of gross. Small school owners can get in trouble in areas such as rent by not negotiating a lease to their advantage — like having a rent of twenty, twenty-five or thirty percent versus trying to knock it down to that ten percent of gross. It's disheartening to see school owners work and work just to have their profits eaten up. Statistics have to be watched and tracked.

MA PRO: *Uechi-ryu is not usually considered an art for the mainstream public. What, from a business operational standpoint, have you done to maintain high retention?*

DURKIN: Again, I think the key is in the presentation. Regardless of style, we teach people first and martial arts second. That means having the student's best interest at heart. We try to nurture that student. It's critical to give the student what he came in for. If a student comes in and says, "I want to learn self-control and self-discipline," well, that's what you try to develop in him in an encouraging and nurturing way. I think that can be done regardless of style. It just comes down to treating people correctly.

MA PRO: *How do you define student service?*

DURKIN: I define student service as simply doing the right thing for the student. It's putting the student's best interest first, and this can be demonstrated at any level. Is it in the student's best interest to have a flexible class schedule that will give him more of an opportunity to practice? Of course, it is. Is it in the student's best interest to have sparkling clean showers? Of course, it is.

So we try to do the right thing for the student and, frankly, there's never a contradiction between what's right for the student and what's right for the school — certainly, not in the long run.

MA PRO: *How often do your students take exams? Is there an exam fee?*

DURKIN: New students take exams, essentially, for kyu-striping every month. The further a student advances, the more we spread out the time between tests. We try to test one-third of our student body every month.

We have no exam fees. I'm opposed to that and believe it has a detrimental effect. You're saying, "Gee, I want to advance you, you're doing a great job, come on down and take the test and, by the way, give me twenty-five dollars." I think it works against the whole idea. We want students to be promoted; we want them to do well, and to tie that in with a monetary thing casts a negative pall on the whole thing.

MA PRO: *How many black belts have you promoted through your school and over what length of time?*

DURKIN: We just celebrated our twenty-second anniversary and, though I don't have an exact number, we've promoted well over five-hundred people to black belt.

One thing that I'm very happy about is our senior student retention. For instance, we have four sixth-degree black belts practicing at the school, all of whom have been studying twenty years or more. In fact, we've promoted seventeen people to fifth-degree black belt, all of whom are still active.

MA PRO: *Have any of these black belts started schools in the area and become your competitors?*

DURKIN: No, there hasn't been a problem in that regard. Ten of my senior students have gone out and are running schools that are doing very well. However, we're part of an organization I formed called the Butokukai, whose member schools support each other in a non-competitive way.

Everyone realizes that opening schools too close together would be self-defeating for everyone concerned. The way it

works is, a school owner sets up far enough away as to not draw off students, but close enough to draw upon the strength of our established dojo, in terms of utilizing black belts for a demonstration or utilizing manpower to help run a kyu test. It's never been a competition factor because school owners see it as a win-win situation.

MA PRO: *Do you belong to a traditional Uechi-ryu association?*

DURKIN: Yes, I do. I belong to the Uechi Karate Association, headquartered in Okinawa, Japan. The headmaster is the third generation of the Uechi family.

When a student passes the black belt test, he is registered in Okinawa and receives a certificate of proficiency from the family headquarters. Typically, at least once a year and often more, we invite Okinawan instructors to come visit us, give seminars and lectures, and assist with the teaching. We're very much affiliated with a historical group with strong roots.

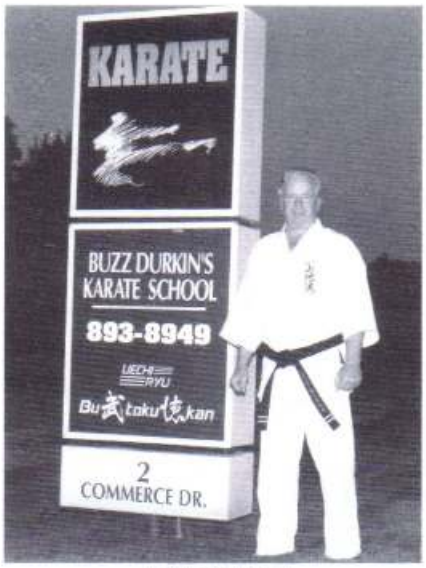
MA PRO: *How does that organization respond to your operational methods?*

DURKIN: We have a very good relationship. Though we've had the president and headmaster of the All-Okinawa Karate Association visit many times, one time that sticks out in my mind is when they came over for the dedication ceremony for our new building. They loved it. I mean, would a headmaster prefer to see thirty people doing his style or three hundred? I think, obviously, the three hundred.

Our seniors in Okinawa have always been thrilled with the support we get [here] in the community, whether from local business people, bankers or from the people in the Boys & Girls Club. They were astonished at the community ties that the school has been able to engender through the years.

MA PRO: *How important is belonging to a style-based martial arts association in terms of becoming a successful school owner?*

DURKIN: Well, I think it lends a certain amount of credibility to what you're doing, certainly at a higher level. I don't know if it's very important to beginning students. I think, over time, it's nice to have roots you can tie into, but what really makes a school successful is the personality and sincerity of the person who's teaching. Is the instructor proficient? Does he have something of value to teach me and can he do it in a way with which I'm comfortable? I believe these things are much more important than styles and associations.



A sign of success!

MA PRO: *How do you respond to those individuals or associations who demand that a style be taught exactly as it was designed by the master, regardless of how that affects retention or the financial stability of the school?*

DURKIN: There is a sixteenth-century Japanese poem that is so germane to our situation in the martial arts industry. It reads, "Seek not to follow in the footsteps of the men of old. Seek what they sought." I think the key is to seek what they sought rather than do exactly as they did.

I've come across so many of my peers and associates who say, "Hey, that's the way my teacher in Okinawa did it. In 1969, we had three-hour classes every night and that's the way I'm going to do it." Well, we don't live in eighteenth-century Japan, we live in 1996 America, so things have to be tuned in to the people we're teaching — to the culture, the society and, certainly, to people's expectations. The essence of what we do has not changed, but the way we do it has. We've become better communicators and better teachers. I'm a much better teacher than I was twenty years ago, and I believe that the changes are a good thing.

MA PRO: *As a traditional school, your students wear only white uniforms. Yet, in many schools, black belts wear red or colored uniforms, or belong to some type of Black Belt Club to indicate their status. How do you maintain the visibility of your Black Belt Club students?*

DURKIN: Everyone [here] does wear a white gi and, without getting too philosophical, I believe that instructors and assistant instructors are distinguished by their attitude and enthusiasm. They stand out through their approach and their excellence and that is, I feel, much more meaningful than having someone stand out because they are wearing a black gi top.

Some schools choose to do that and it works fine for them. We don't do it and I find that we don't have to. It's never been an issue. We are a black belt school; this is a key element in our approach. Everybody, with the exception of trial enrollment students, is on a black belt track. There's no mistake or equivocation about that. So we're in the business, if you will, to build black belts because black belts are contributing, respected members of society. They're respected because of their patience, their confidence, their willingness to contribute. Therefore, it's our job to promote qualified black belts. So, again, with the exception of brand new people who might be testing the waters, I consider everyone in our school to be members in our Black Belt Club.

MA PRO: *Many instructors tend to make excuses for rejecting new ideas or proven concepts. If you were a new school owner just starting out today, what three steps would you take to be successful?*

DURKIN: I think the first quality you have to display is an open mind. You also have to have a positive expectancy. It's easy to say, "Yeah, but I can't do it." Give it a chance; maybe you can. I think, from a business point of view, certainly one of the—if not the—best thing we did was to employ the services of a third-party billing company, which for us is the Educational Funding Company. I happen to be on its Board of Directors. ■

Andrew Breen is a black belt and a prolific martial arts writer based in Boston, Massachusetts.

THE SEVEN LAWS OF SUCCESS WITHOUT SELLING OUT

PART VI

the law of multiplied efforts, part II

BY JOHN GRADEN

PART SIX OF THIS series features excerpts from the top-selling martial arts business manual "Black Belt Management, a Guide to Success Without Selling Out."



Leadership team members are essential for smooth running special events.

Launching A Leadership Program

A leadership team is a handpicked group of Black Belt Club students who receive training from you on how to teach your curriculum. To launch a leadership team, you can start by announcing to all students the formation of a very special team. This team will represent the best of the best from all students ranked blue belt (nine months experience) and up who meet the requirements. You would like to include them all, but you have only 10 spaces available, and over the course of the next month you will be watching classes very closely to see who qualifies. On the next belt exam, you will announce your nominations for this new program.

The students are informed that the program is specifically for teaching leadership skills and the students will get to attend special leadership classes with the master instructor. Also, special social events and seminars will also be implemented for this very special group.

As the month goes by, you pull your prime candidates into the office for a little "chat." Without alluding to acceptance or consideration in the new team, you simply discuss their progress. How do they enjoy the classes? How has martial arts helped them? What do they do for a living? How tight is their schedule? If they had a choice, what three jobs would be their dream jobs?

From this conversation, you will get a feel for the person's potential as a team member. In a few cases, you will be surprised to hear martial arts instructor come up as a dream job. At the conclusion of the conversation, you make no promises of any jobs or leadership team membership.

At the conclusion of the next belt exam or promotion, with everyone present, you make a very important announcement and have each new leadership team member run up to accept the nomination and be appreciated by the crowd. This is a very powerful launch to the program and showcases these new recruits in front of their peers and under-ranks.

Later, in a meeting with this new and very excited group, you explain that they are the first students to be named to the new leadership team. You may even have a special name for the group such as the Power Team, SWAT (Super Winning Attitude Team) or the HIT Team (High Intensity Team). Promoted them as the best of the best. As exciting as it is, they must understand that there is a big commitment to accepting this nomination. Make this commitment very clear to avoid having to drop someone later.

They must attend the extra leadership team class taught by yourself and they must commit to help teach at least two classes a week. This is a leadership program for instructor training and, while not all of them will go on to professional status when they make their black belt, only leadership team graduates will be considered for professional staff positions. You give them a very exciting picture of special status, recognition and responsibility and then finish by having them make an appointment to speak with you one-on-one the following Monday or Tuesday.

In the meantime, they should go home and discuss this with their family, in terms of the time commitment and opportunity. The following week you meet with them individually. Some will not be able to make the commitment, though they will be very appreciative of the recognition. You inform those that do commit that their first leadership team class is Saturday at 11 a.m. and remind them that attendance is mandatory.

Now, it's just a matter of eduction and motivation. Though they may be blue or brown belts in martial arts, they're white belts at teaching and must be nurtured along.

First, in leadership team class, they learn how to conduct a warm-up and the do's and don'ts of wandering corrections. Then, when they show up to assist a class, you position them in front of the class to act as a role model. Let the students know that this is a leadership team member and this person is in the instructor-training program. Encourage them to encourage the leadership team member in his or her quest to be a good teacher. Also, remind them that if they work hard they, too, can become members of the leadership team.

This system is extremely effective and one of the best examples of a win-win situation. The leadership team is the backbone of the school. They are enthused, motivated and take great pride in their position without being conceited. If anything, they strive to be as accessible and approachable to the students as possible. Each month, honor a "Leadership Team Member of the Month" and showcase all of them in demonstrations and promotions.

For students younger than 14, you may form a team of role models, or STORM (Super Team Of Role Models). These kids do not have to meet much since all they do is perform with the class they assist. They are, however, showcased as much as possible in recognition of their achievement in being named to the team. ■



heavy hitters

Mike McCoy

Born: July 3, 1957 in Tallahassee, Florida
Residence: Orlando, Florida
Occupation(s): Owner, Florida Karate Center
CEO of ISKA and President of the ISKA World Tour
President of NASKA Ratings
Publisher of *Sport Karate News*

How many events does the North American Sport Karate Association (NASKA) sanction annually?

In 1996, NASKA sanctioned 28 nationally-rated events. These events are strictly governed by NASKA and are rated either A, AA or AAA. The AAA events carry the most points and widely regarded as the best open tournaments in the world.

How many competitors participate in NASKA events annually?

The AAA events vary between 1,000 and 2,800 competitors. The AA- and A-rated events average around 500 each. Overall, considering some competitors go to many events each year, we calculate that almost 20,000 competitors compete in NASKA-sanctioned events each year.

What is the average entry fee?

Typically, $35-45 for A and AA events and from $45-65 for AAAs.

Have the number of competitors trended up or down?

Since 1990, attendance has increased overall for NASKA events. Some individual events might have drops in attendance or sudden increases, but overall, attendance at NASKA events has been steadily increasing. However, the growth in the early 90s was larger than it has been the last two years.

When tournament participation is up, are school numbers up? Is there a correlation?

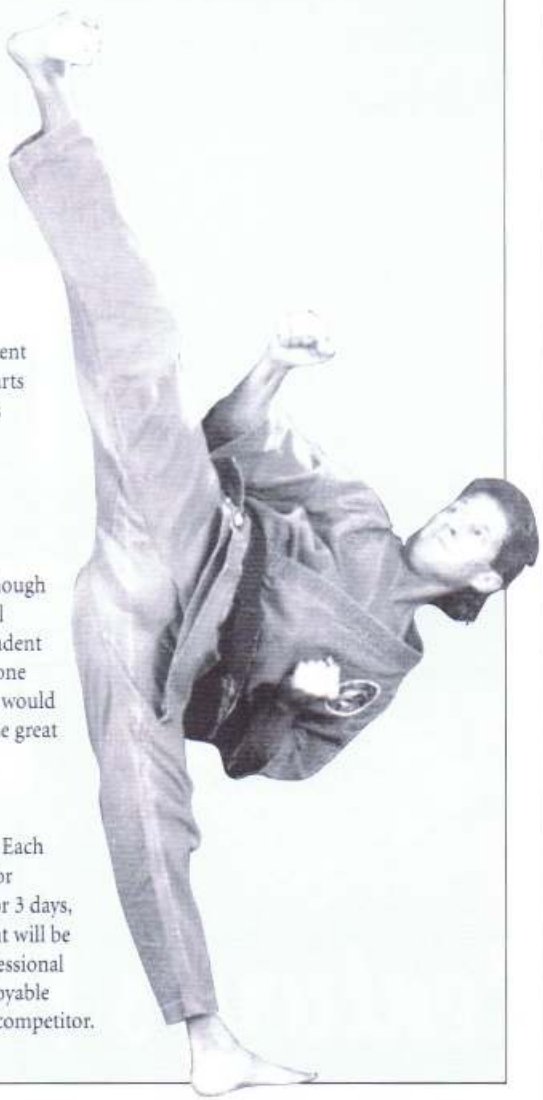
Absolutely. It's almost a direct correlation. Half of all of the competitors at any given event are white through green belts. These participants probably weren't even in the martial arts one year ago so this would be their first event. If enrollment is off one year, we have less beginner and intermediates in the marketplace to attend the events.

Do you think encouraging students to compete in tournaments is good for a school's business?

Yes. Competition helps motivate some students. It seems to me that those that like to compete also strive to be the best at everything, including their martial art. However, though it might be a good way to motivate a handful of students to become exceptional martial artists, it can scare away three times as many that just don't like it. I encourage every student to compete in at least one event before he or she becomes a brown belt. Every so often one student will be very good and like competition, but the majority don't and that's fine. I would never require students to compete more than they want. Losing five students to find one great one is not a good trade off.

Describe a NASKA tournament ten years from now.

The top events will be for black belts only and 100% sponsor and spectator-supported. Each event will be televised live to millions of fans throughout the United States and taped for international audiences. Events like we see today will be enormous, probably lasting 2 or 3 days, where the top black belts will be trying to earn a spot on the televised events. Each event will be professionally run with a standardized set of rules being meticulously enforced by professional officials. Essentially, most of the events will still have the same goal of providing an enjoyable weekend of camaraderie, competition and excitement for the "weekend warrior"-type competitor. Essentially, a family-oriented hobby that has excellent benefits for young and old.



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