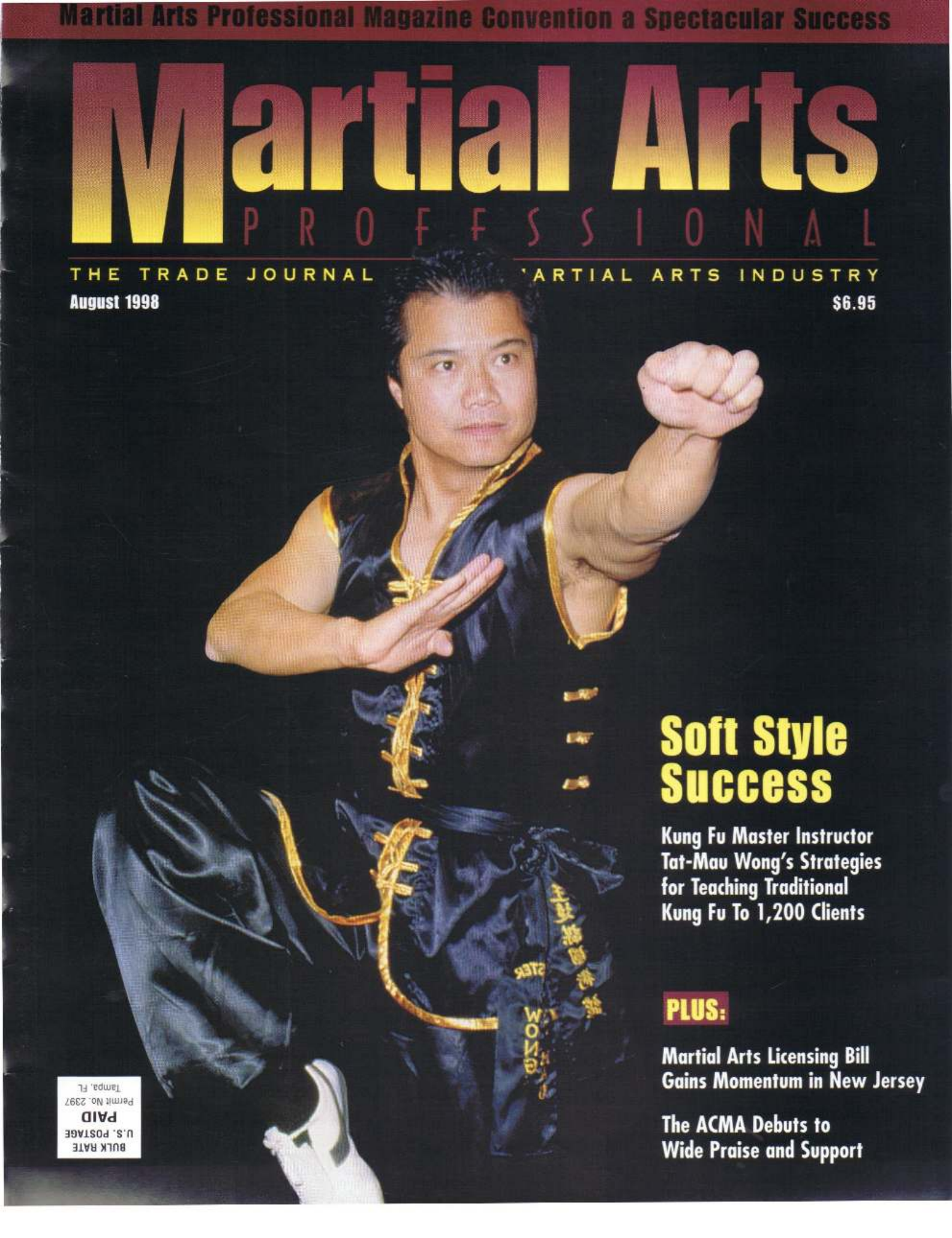
Martial Arts Professional Magazine Convention a Spectacular Success

Martial Arts PROFESSIONAL

THE TRADE JOURNAL 'ARTIAL ARTS INDUSTRY

August 1998 $6.95



Soft Style Success

Kung Fu Master Instructor Tat-Mau Wong's Strategies for Teaching Traditional Kung Fu To 1,200 Clients

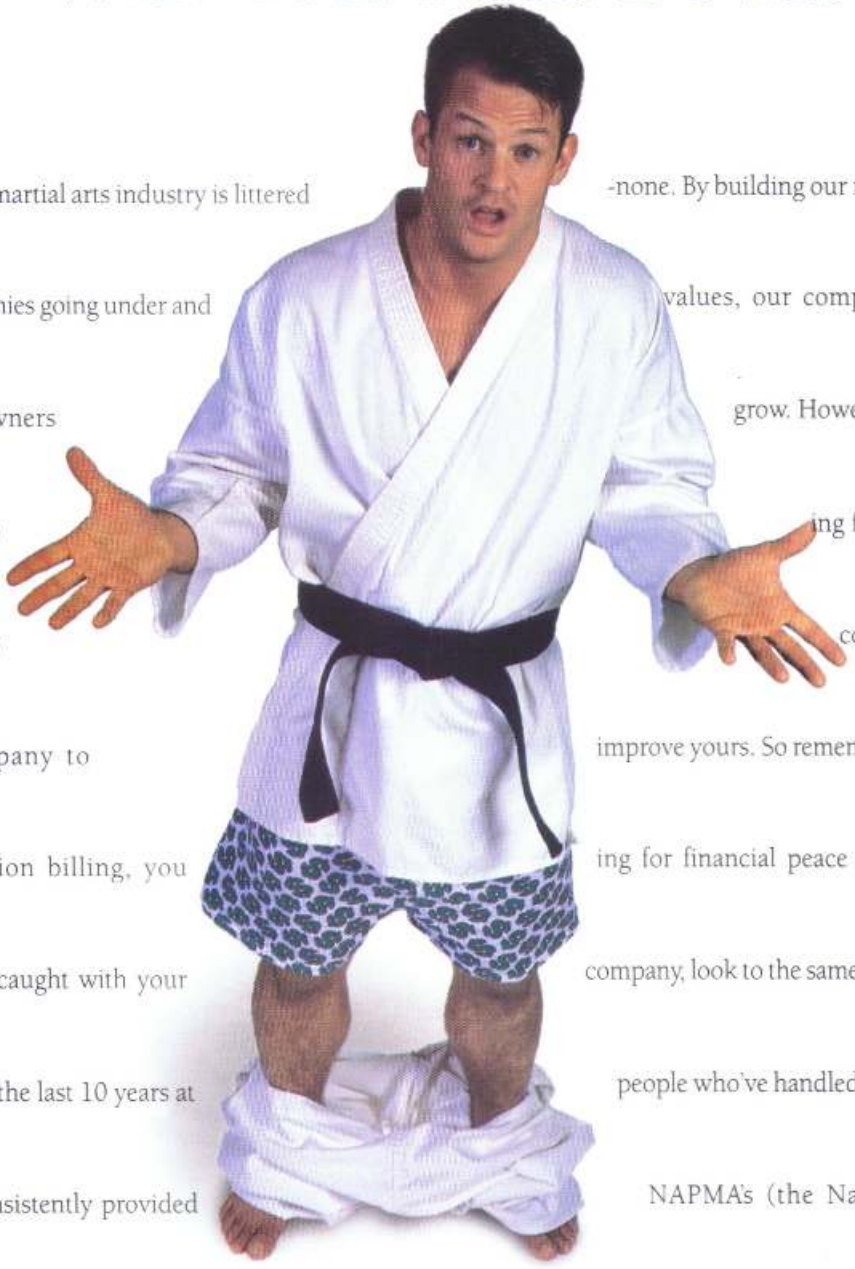
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Martial Arts Licensing Bill Gains Momentum in New Jersey

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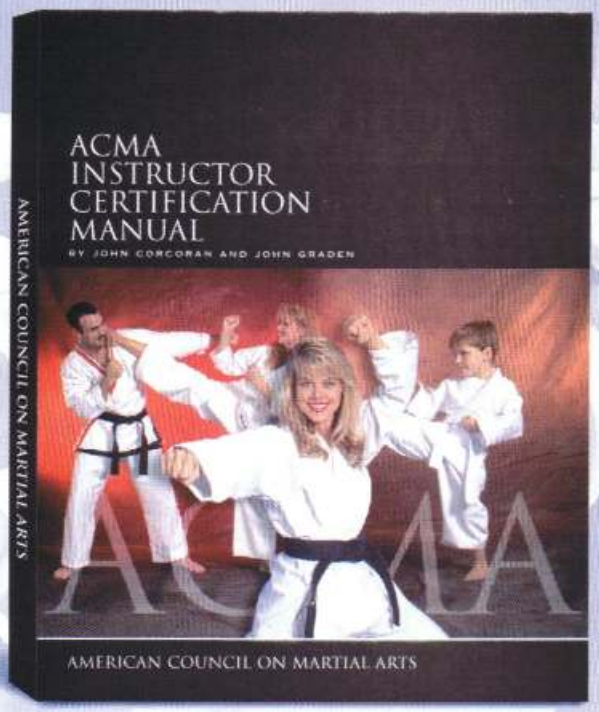
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American Council
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on Martial Arts

As I See It



What's Really Important For My Students?

By John Graden

For the past five years, as I've been writing and speaking on the martial arts industry, I've been asking the same question, "If martial arts is as good for you as we say it is, why aren't more people doing it?" More specifically, why aren't more adults in our classes?

Here's a quick survey for you regarding your adult program. Numbering 1-10, with 1 being the most important, rank the following according to this question:

What is the most important element clients should experience in my school?

___ Learning good, realistic self-defense.

___ Participating in rank hierarchy (low-rank to high-rank progression).

___ Getting into great shape (low body fat, good flexibility, good muscle tone).

___ Mandatory displays of respect to flags, people, shrines, etc.

___ Developing confidence that comes from knowing you can handle yourself.

___ Learning a traditional style.

___ Enjoying a social atmosphere.

___ Learning exactly what the student originally enrolled to learn.

___ Mandatory "good behavior" promises, oaths and creeds.

___ Wearing a traditional uniform.

Of the ten that you've numbered, the numbers 1-5 represent the five most important elements of your program and 6-10 represent the five least important elements of your program.

Now, here's the paydirt question: Would you be willing to give up, or at least adjust, the five least important elements in order to achieve the five most important? In our research, the five biggest objections adults have about joining a martial arts school are:

1. Wearing a traditional uniform and training in bare feet.
2. Participating in rank hierarchy.
3. Forced displays of respect.
4. Not being taught what they were promised until reaching a certain rank or learning other less practical material first.
5. Having to subscribe to a menu of values set forth by the instructor.

Conversely, the most important elements to the clients and the clients-to-be are:

1. Getting in better shape.
2. Learning good self-defense and gaining the confidence that comes with it.
3. Not being singled out as a beginner.
4. Freedom to wear more comfortable, attractive apparel.
5. Getting what they enrolled for.
6. Not being treated like a child.
7. Mutual respect in the social structure of the school.

It's not as though the adults don't know what martial arts are about. The adults know full well what we offer. Most are choosing to pass. They are dropping their children off at the karate school and then going to the spa to get their workout in. In fact, most sources indicate that only one percent of a given populace is involved in martial arts at any time.

Why? Is it because people don't want to be able to handle themselves in a sticky situation? Or are people just not interested in getting into better shape?

Of course, not everyone is interested in these subjects, but certainly more than one percent. Where are the rest of the adults?

I think some of the answers may be revealed in the survey above. How many of the lowest-ranking items are potential obstacles for an adult joining your school? Is it more important to force someone to wear an outfit they don't like or to eliminate the obstacle so they can enjoy and grow from the martial arts, like we have?

The more I look at the elements of martial arts the more I see obstacles to learning. It's as though the word *Traditional* has become the universal scapegoat for actions and demands within a school that are embraced by a very small, and shrinking, minority of the population.

Please don't misunderstand me. This is not a pitch for Cardio Karate. It's a call for us all to step out of our boxes and look at our schools and what they represent from the outside. I don't see why martial arts can't be taught — forms, traditional techniques and all — without having to wear a gi, bow when a black belt walks in the room, or call someone master.

I want to see the number of adults in our schools grow, but it's not going to happen until we see our school as the average adult sees it. What's attractive? What's silly? What's a tradition and what's an obstacle? Right now, the common measure for a successful school is about 300 students. I would like that number to be on the very low end of the scale. That can only happen if we define what is really important to our clients and eliminate the obstacles that serve little purpose. ◆

JOHN GRADEN
Publisher

Martial Arts PROFESSIONAL

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Tat-Mau Wong has built a successful three school operation in the San Fransico Bay area by creating a teaching system that keeps over 1,200 clients in his schools.

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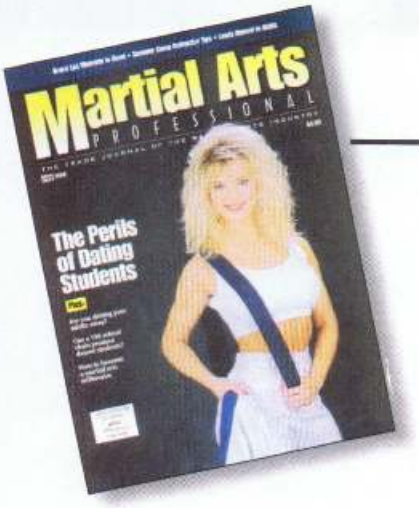
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About the Cover
Kung fu instructor, full-contact champion and television host Tat-Mau Wong

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

"How To" Info is Cause of Industry Problems

You do not know me, but I feel the time has come for introductions. I'm afraid I have the advantage in that your column arrives at my office on a regular basis. However, I've no doubt that by the end of this letter you'll be well aware of my position.

To start, I'd like to congratulate you for the first column ["As I See It," Jan '98] you've ever written with which I nearly agreed. Truth be told, it got a little exciting, for a while, to follow your commentary. That is, of course, until, as usual, you damned your position with your own words.

"The black belt has failed as a standard of teaching skill," you wrote. Really? For someone who positions himself as an expert industry leader, it's surprising you were unaware of a simple fact well-known throughout the Orient: It was never meant to be. You endorsed it as a standard.

Fortunately for people in your industry, the public was equally unaware. I don't ever remember organizations like yours getting worked up about the background of their applicants. It's interesting that your article appears on the opposite side of the page containing your offer, "Now only $69.95," that is guaranteed to enable the most incompetent green belt to pass himself off as a legitimate instructor. But I digress.

You also wrote: "The ACMA will be comprised of Sports Psychologists, Child Psychologists, Physiologists and fitness experts who are also involved in the martial arts." Thanks for the honorable mention. However, this statement does raise two downright impertinent, questions:

1. Don't you know any martial arts experts?
2. Do you intend to inform the public of who it was that set your certification standards for an industry outside their expertise?

Based on the past performance of your industry, I'd have to guess the answer to both is "no." Of course, I'm being facetious — a little. I've no doubt you know some eminently qualified teachers. I'm equally certain few would risk their reputation by endorsing this invitation to disaster.

The point is that it's precisely because of your success, at enabling unsuitable individuals to practice our profession, that we're in this mess to begin with.

Here's the bottom line: Unless you set legitimate standards; devised by competent martial arts instructors; enforced through active oversight; and backed by public revocation of your certification, you will do worse than fail. Unless you are willing to take responsibility for the "certified" instructors you turn loose on the public, instead of avoiding state regulation, you will insure it. Once, people had to take for granted the competency of the incompetent individuals you've drawn to our business. Now, you intend to swear for them — kind of — but the public won't be told that, will they? At least not by you.

What you are doing is right on target. It's an absolute necessity that our industry gets a hold of itself. Although I wish it were different, I simply can't trust your motivation.

Now what? Press releases at fifty paces? Or can we find a way to exist, if not in harmony, then at least in peace. Convince me you can devise a plan that will accomplish the right thing, in the right way, for the right reason, and you should have no trouble from anyone else.

SALVATORE T. MUSCO
East Morris Karate Academy
Co-director, American Budo Kai, Inc.

Editor's response:

To quote your letter, "What you are doing is right on. It's an absolute necessity that our industry gets a hold of itself."

Thank you. However, there are a number of incorrect assumptions you've made that we'd like to address.

While we certainly agree that the black belt was never intended to be a standard for teaching, the fact remains that it has become that. Though you say it is well known throughout the Orient that black belt is not a teaching standard, we don't live in the Orient.

In our observation, the three causes of incompetence in this industry are:

1. Poor martial arts skills. A guy gets his black belt from a guy who's only trained five years, who got his from someone who only trained six years, and so on.

This person may be honest, good-hearted and very proud of his black belt. But, he may have never been to a tournament or have any standard by which to measure his skill. As far as he knows, he's a black belt. That's not the fault of Martial Arts Professional magazine or any business "how-to book."

This guy has his black belt and he opens a school, which is his right, and the cycle starts over again.

2. Poor teaching skills. Most teaching is the hand-me-down version dating back 30 years. Many instructors still teach as though they were in a military camp training killers for war. With 50% of the student population under age 12, this is no longer effective.

3. Poor business skills. You can be a great martial artist and a good teacher, but if you don't have some basic control systems within your school, you're going to struggle and possibly fail.

Thousands of schools are healthier now as a result of NAPMA and the "how-to books," you attack. It's a very simple principle: Schools that go out of business are bad for the industry; schools that thrive are good. It's silly to say that I've drawn incompetent people into the industry by providing information. A green belt couldn't buy one of these books and run a school any more than a hacker could become a golf pro after buying a book on "How to Run a Golf School."

Poor teaching is being addressed by the ACMA. Poor business skills are being addressed by NAPMA and Martial Arts Professional magazine. In all three cases, the person could be honest and have great intentions. He just needs some help. That's what we do.

Sure, there are dishonest, unethical people in every field. Take the medical field. They have more regulation than anyone, yet we hear all the time about unethical doctors.

Our mission is to help this field by assisting instructors improve their skills. There will always be unethical people. We're focused on the vast majority of instructors who sincerely want to do a good job, but just need some help. We believe most people are doing the best job they can with the skills they have. Our goal is to provide them with information to help them develop their skills.

It's certainly easy to sit back and criticize other people and it seems this reader is particularly versed in that regard. We prefer to stay proactive and positive about the future of this field. ◆

Bill Regulating Instructors Gains Momentum

New Jersey — State Of New Jersey Assembly bill No. 2216 was introduced on June 15, 1998 by assemblyman Joseph Azzolina, District 13 (Middlesex and Monmouth). The "Martial Arts Instructors Licensing Act" creates a board of examiners who would regulate martial arts in that state. Within two years, anyone teaching martial arts, for compensation or for free, would be in violation of the law if they are not state licensed as a martial arts instructor.

This is the 13th attempt at licensing martial arts instructors in New Jersey. Some experts feel the timing of this bill, introduced just months after the last one failed earlier this year, indicates a growing momentum in the movement towards the passing of such a bill.

Portions of the bill are reprinted here. Next month, we hope to have a more complete report for you as this came to use two days before press. You can view the bill in its entirety at the New Jersey State Legislature web site at:

www.njleg.state.nj.us/9899/bills/a2500/2216_i1.htm.

If you want to protest this proposed bill or inform them of your support for the ACMA program as an alternate solution contact assemblyman Joseph Azzolina at Fax: 732-671-3016, Phone: 732-671-2220 or E-mail: asm.jaazzolina@worldnet.att.net.

What do you think?

In the meantime, we'd like to get your feedback on this bill. Do you support such regulations? Considering the martial arts is much smaller than the fitness industry, why are they seeking to regulate us and not fitness instructors? Would you prefer the ACMA approach of internal education? We look forward to your comments.

Please fax your thoughts on the subject to (727)570-2931 or e-mail to NAPMA@aol.com. Letters can be addressed to: Martial Arts Professional Magazine: 1362 86th Terrace North, St Petersburg, FL 33702. ◆

Martial Arts Instructors Licensing Act

This bill provides for the licensure of martial arts instructors and establishes a seven-member State Board of Examiners of Martial Arts Instructors in the Division of Consumer Affairs in the Department of Law and Public Safety to oversee their licensure. The board is to consist of four licensed martial arts instructors, two public members and a State executive department member.

To be eligible for licensure as a martial arts instructor, an applicant must:

a. Be at least 18 years old;

b. Be of good moral character;

c. Have a high school diploma;

d. Successfully complete any educational requirements established by the board;

e. Possess a third degree or higher black belt certificate from a source recognized by the board; and

f. Pass a written examination and a practical examination administered or approved by the board.

The bill provides that no person may be a martial arts instructor, with or without compensation, unless that person holds a valid license.

For a period of two years after the effective date of the bill, a person who is practicing or residing in the State on the effective date of the bill may qualify as a licensed martial arts instructor if that person is at least 18 years of age, of good moral character, has a high school diploma and possesses a third degree or higher black belt certificate and has been a martial arts instructor for three of the last 10 years.

The bill also provides for the licensure by the board by endorsement of martial arts instructors who have been licensed, registered or certified in another state with standards substantially equivalent to those of this State.

The bill also protects children from being victimized at the hands of unscrupulous martial arts instructors by requiring criminal history record background checks by the Division of State Police and the Federal Bureau of Investigation and child abuse record information checks by the Division of Youth and Family Services of all applicants and licensees and regulations with respect to continuing education requirements.

Mortal Kombat TV Series Planned

LOS ANGELES, CA — A syndicated television series based on the "Mortal Kombat" movie and video game series will be launched this fall from Warner Bros. Domestic Television.

"Mortal Kombat Krusades" will be produced by Larry Kasanoff, the producer of both "Mortal Kombat" films. ◆

Wood to Host MasterMind Weekend

LAS VEGAS, NV — Martial arts business consultant Andrew Wood is inviting school owners to his Four-Day M.B.A. MasterMind Weekend 98. The event will be held August 6-9th at the Alexis Park Resort in Las Vegas, NV, and costs $695.

For more information, call (352)746-4313. ◆

INDUSTRY UPDATE

PRODUCT ANNOUNCEMENT:

CARDIO KARATE BOXING GLOVES



St PETERSBURG, FL — Cardio Karate-logo boxing gloves are now available here. Cardio Karate, the nation's largest aerobic-kickboxing program with over 1,000 schools, now offers a high-quality, low-cost glove featuring the Cardio Karate logo.

The black, 12 oz. gloves have a velcro strap and the Cardio Karate logo across the wrist. Priced at just $9.95 per pair (minimum 10 pair per order), the gloves are designed as high-quality, introductory gloves for new Cardio Karate clients.

According to NAPMA Manager John King, "We spent a long time finding the right glove at the right price for our clients. These gloves are much higher quality than other gloves in this price range. At this price, we encourage owners to give them to new clients, much like giving a student a uniform in a conventional martial arts class."

For information on Cardio Karate gloves, call (800)973-6734. ◆

NAPMA FEATURED IN NATIONAL MAGAZINE

DUNEDIN, FL — The National Association of Professional Martial Artists (NAPMA) is featured in a two-page spread in the July/August issue of *Mac Today* magazine. *Mac Today*, one of the nation's largest Macintosh computer publications, featured NAPMA as a fast-growing innovative organization that is entirely Macintosh-based. All NAPMA's ads, videos, newsletters and marketing materials are produced on a network of 12 Macintoshes.

Mac Today is available on newsstands or by calling (800) 738-8513. ◆





Did you know there is a charity that actually pays your school to help children!

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KENPO WEEKEND INCLUDES CARDIO KARATE CERTIFICATION

FT. MYERS, FL — A full-day Cardio Karate Instructor Certification Program has been added to the itinerary of the popular Florida Kenpo Camp, hosted by Lee Wedlake, Jr. and Sean Kelley at the Radisson Hotel here. NAPMA Cardio Karate Director Jim Graden will conduct the program on Friday, October 2nd in Ft. Myers.

The camp runs from October 2nd-4th and features a variety of kenpo instructors including Wedlake and Kelley, as well as Richard Planas, a 9th-degree black belt from New Orleans, LA, and John Sepulveda, 8th-degree of Santa Clara, CA. The event will be held at the Radisson Hotel in Ft. Myers.

For more information, call 800-CAMP-FLA or Lee Wedlake at 941-481-9947. ◆



Hosts of the popular Florida Kenpo Camp, l to r.) Sean Kelly and Lee Wedlake pose with Jeff Speakman and Huk Planas.

CARIBBEAN COMBAT SELF DEFENSE CRUISE FEATURES JIM HARRISON

KANSAS CITY, KS — Jim Harrison, remembered for his notorious battles during the unforgettable "Blood-n-Guts Era" of American Karate, will be teaching his system of combat self-defense, Ronin Jutsu, aboard the "Norwegian Star" ship scheduled for a seven-day Caribbean cruise in October. The event, promoted by former Kansas City-based point-fighter Bob Boggs through EASP (Entertainment & Action Sports Productions), is entitled "Martial Arts At Sea Tour '98" and sails from the port of Houston, Texas, the exotic itinerary will include Calico/Cancun, Cozumel, and Roatan Island.

Harrison will be teaming up with former international fighting and forms champion Roger Greene, in teaching aboard the ship. Harrison combines humor with no-nonsense, proven self-defense techniques. His seminar was a highlight of the 1996 NAPMA National Convention.

Cabins for the cruise are subject to availability. For more info, call Bob Boggs at (913)782-5425, or you can e-mail him at EASPEVENTS@aol.com. ◆

HOW LARGE IS THE POTENTIAL FOR MARTIAL ARTS FITNESS?

UNITED STATES — With the movement towards fitness-oriented martial arts centers gaining momentum, we thought it would be interesting to see how large the potential fitness market is.

While these fitness centers cater almost exclusively to adults, the martial arts schools market to all ages. Still, the numbers for the fitness market are staggering compared to the highly-specialized martial arts school. Though this is the best comparison we could find, it's not really a fair one, in that the fitness centers are multimillion-dollar facilities. Regardless, we think this provides additional evidence that a school offering a variety of martial arts fitness classes, in addition to its conventional classes, will have a much larger market to appeal to than the "one-trick pony" school that offers a single-system program. ◆

TOP FIVE MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOLS*

SCHOOL	1996 REVENUES	NO. OF CLIENTS
GRACIE JIU-JITSU ACADEMY, TORRANCE, CA	$2,000,000	750
DEGERBERG ACADEMY OF MA, INC. CHICAGO, ILL	$750,000	950
KOVAR'S KARATE CENTER, CARMICHAEL, CA	$660,000	800
AMERICA'S BEST KARATE CENTER, EL PASO, TX	$592,000	791
JOE CORLEY AMERICAN KARATE, DELUTH, GEORGIA	$540,000	750

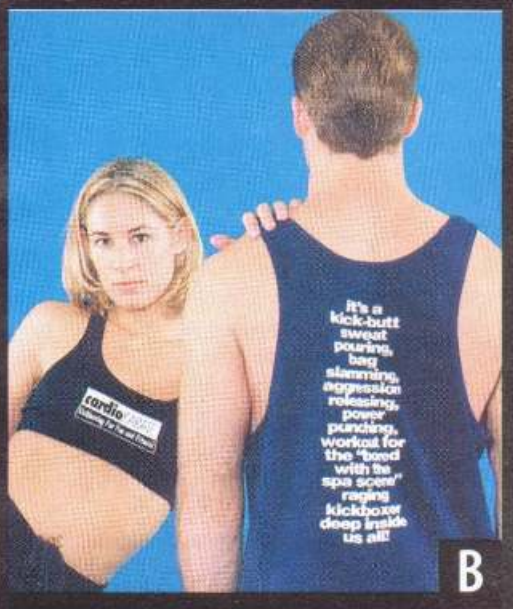
TOP FIVE SINGLE CLUB FITNESS CENTERS**

FITNESS CENTER	1996 REVENUE	NO. OF CLIENTS
EAST BANK CLUB, CHICAGO ILL	$33,000,000	9,000
FOUR SEASONS, IRVING, TX	$16,000,000	1,807
THE ATLANTIC CLUB, MANASQUAN, NJ	$10,800,000	4,000
FLAGSHIP ATHLETIC CLUB, EDEN PRAIRIE, MN	$8,300,000	3,800
GREENWOOD ATHLETIC CLUB, ENGLEWOOD, CO	$7,850,000	3,218

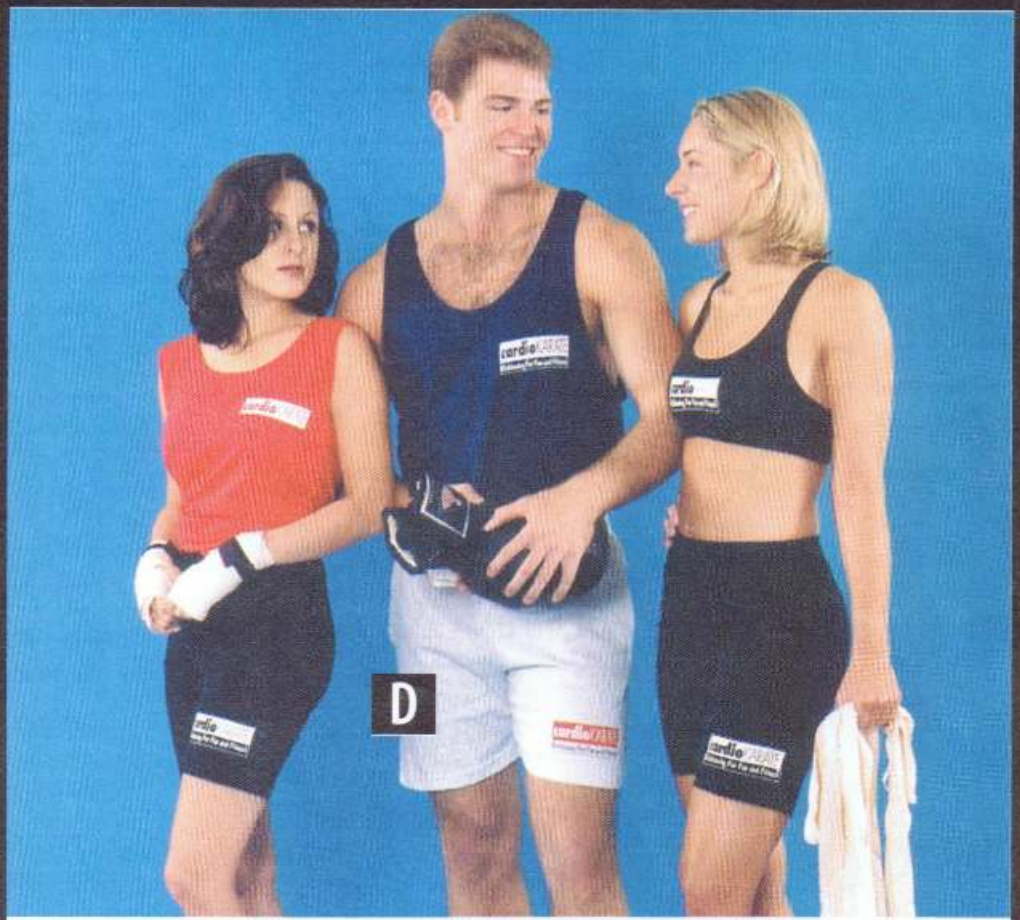
*SOURCE, "MARTIAL ARTS PROFESSIONAL" MAGAZINE, MARCH 1997
** SOURCE, "CLUB INDUSTRY" MAGAZINE, JULY 1997

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T-Shirts
Cardio Karate logo on the left front chest and Cardio slogan "It's a kick-butt, sweat pouring, bag slamming, aggression releasing, power punching workout for the 'bored with the spa scene' raging kickboxer deep inside us all!" *on back, as shown in B.*

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100% cotton. High-quality.

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White, black, ash, red and yellow
S – XL $8.99

B. Men's tank tops
White, black, ash, red and navy
M – XL $8.99
XXL $9.99

Shorts
High-quality 100% cotton
Cardio Karate logo on the left front leg

D. Shorts with pockets
Black, ash and navy
S – XL $12.99

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Black only
S – XL $12.99

A. Sports Bras
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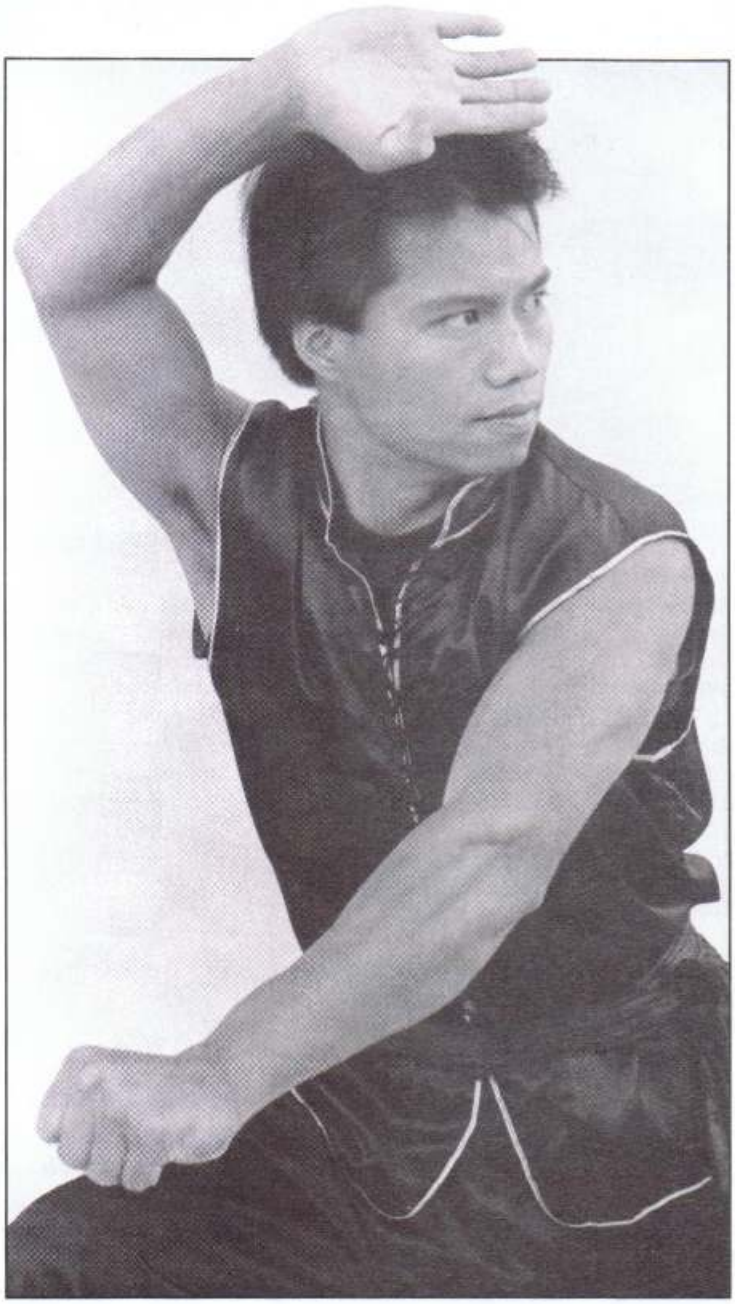
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TAT-MAU WONG

A SOFT-STYLE OF SUCCESS



INTERVIEW BY MICHELE J. HARRIS

Tat-Mau Wong is a kung fu master instructor, full-contact champion, promoter, television host and entrepreneur. He also may own the most commercially successful kung fu school in the United States.

In the world of traditional kung fu -- where many sifu still subscribe to teaching their techniques in a "closed door" manner under the trappings of secrecy and exclusivity -- it is Wong's label as "entrepreneur" that seems most unusual. It also clearly sets him apart from his peers. In San Francisco, California, often cited as the "Kung Fu Capital of North America," the success of Tat-Mau Wong's Kung Fu Academies seems unprecedented.

With three thriving, commercial San-Francisco-Bay-Area locations, Wong is a martial arts professional with major-league ideas about promoting his art to the mainstream masses. In fact, he openly embraces the terms "commercial" and "professional" that are often shunned by his kung fu counterparts.

Success didn't come easy for Wong. Today, he's far removed from his humble beginnings in Hong Kong, where he was a scrawny kid plagued with asthma, growing up in a decidedly downscale section of the city. By the age of seven, however, he had fallen in love with the martial arts, a pastime that would ultimately change his whole life.

Although he is Chinese, and lived in Hong Kong -- the Eastern mecca of the Chinese arts -- Wong first studied karate. In Hong Kong at that time, parents worried that kung fu was too violent for their children to be involved in it, and it was common knowledge that it was practiced by gangsters, members of the notorious Triads. Conversely, parents were impressed with the organization of judo and karate.

By age 11, Wong had found his first kung fu mentor, Lee Koon Hung, and began his study of Choy Lay Fut. Wong's desire for knowledge has since then led him to acquire black belts in both judo and taekwondo in addition to Choy Lay Fut kung fu, but to this day the latter remains his passion and the art which he teaches.

Before moving to the U.S., Wong became a full-contact and forms champion. But greater things were in store for the ambitious young man from Hong Kong. In 1983, he opened his first school in San Francisco. His ultimate goal was lofty indeed: To build a successful reputation and try to make kung fu as popular as karate. To achieve his goal, he decided he'd have to make kung fu highly attractive and accessible to the general public. In doing so, he developed a practical teaching system and set out to educate the public about the benefits of kung fu through innovative promotion, publicity and advertising programs. Thus began the building of a very visible and successful kung fu school with his name on it.

In 1993, Wong opened his second school, in 1996 his third, and more are in the planning stages. An entrepreneurial risk-taker, Wong claims to have created the first successful all-Chinese martial arts tournament. What



Wong instructs young students in class.

started in 1987 as a one-day affair with 23 Chinese-style divisions grew by 1997 to a three-day international event with over 110 divisions, 2,000 competitors from around the world, and 5,000+ spectators per day.

Wong has been recognized with numerous prestigious accolades: "Kung Fu Artist of the Year" by the Black Belt Hall of Fame; "Instructor of the Year" by the Inside Kung Fu Hall of Fame; and most recently, Hall of Fame "Man of the Year." His wit, charm and knowledge, as host of the weekly Bay Area late-night TV show, "Kung Fu Theater," have made him a local martial arts celebrity.

Meet Tat-Mau Wong, an unconventional kung fu figurehead and "Renaissance Man" of the Chinese martial arts.

MAPro: *You teach a traditional kung fu style, Choy Lay Fut. What were some of the difficulties you faced in making a traditional style commercially successful? What changes did you institute to make it easier for students to learn?*

Tat-Mau Wong: I teach a traditional style of kung fu called Choy Lay Fut. It originated in the Shaolin Temple and incorporates both southern and northern style techniques. It's very popular in Hong Kong. Although the style is traditional, I wouldn't say the difficulties lie in the style. It was originally designed for combat, not for teaching everyday people.

As soon as I moved to the U.S., I became aware that I needed a teaching system. The Chinese more easily follow their "sifu" or master; it is part of the culture. You can even see it in their [academic] school system. They are conditioned with discipline, follow rules, and don't question authority. If your sifu tells you to hold a cat stance, you just do it!

In the U.S., it's different. People want to know why ? They're also interested in the philosophy behind it all and tend to be result-oriented. I needed a teaching system to guide my students step-by-step and help them understand how to achieve their goals. Being goal-oriented also helps the students maintain their discipline. And since kung fu can be quite intricate, we, of course, start with simple techniques. The student needs first to understand the basics and start to get in good physical condition. Then we move on to more advanced techniques, forms and combinations.

MAPro: *What are the results of your efforts? Particularly in terms of business?*

Wong: Our current active enrollment for all three schools is twelve-hundred students. Our largest school has seven-hundred students. We employ eight full-time instructors, ten part-time instructors, and a handful of other personnel for the office, billing, accounting, and marketing and promotions.

Our San Francisco headquarters is our largest facility. It's seven-thousand square feet and includes additional training and weight rooms, as well as a hospitality lounge for students and parents. Our San Mateo school is thirty-five-hundred square feet, and our newest school in Concord is three-thousand square feet.

MAPro: *Do you own any of the buildings that house your schools?*

Wong: We don't own our building[s] yet. The San Francisco Bay Area is not the easiest market to own property in. [San Francisco has the highest median price per single-family home in the entire U.S.; commercial property prices are exorbitant as well.] However, it is definitely in our plans for the future.

(continued)

MAPro: *What, in your opinion, are the advantages of owning your own building for your school?*

Wong: Of course, there is the investment and appreciation of real estate. But just as importantly is security. Knowing you're going to be in the same location means security for your teaching staff and students. You can also create a nice training facility. When the property is not your own, you need to consider the money invested in fixing it up.

MAPro: *What kinds of programs/ courses are available to your students, and what is the cost of each? What is your most popular program, in terms of number of students enrolled?*



Wong having some fun with young students.

Wong: We offer a basic start-up program of one year for an average cost of nine-hundred to twelve-hundred dollars a year. Then we also have a three-and-one-half-year Black Belt Program. This requires a longer-term commitment and also includes additional techniques, forms, training, special seminars, and social activities. For our most advanced students, it continues with second-, third- and fourth-degree Black Belt Programs. Currently, we have about seventy percent of our students enrolled in the Black Belt Program. We are making some changes in the program, and are working on increasing that number.

MAPro: *Often, in the 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 seek?*

Wong: On occasion, we've had to spend quite a bit for upgrading our facilities. But on average, I believe that a fifteen percent profit margin for a large school is reasonable.

MAPro: *What areas can eat up a school's gross income?*

Wong: For us, staff salary is a big part of our expenses. It's important to pay the staff well. This includes bonuses, paid vacations and health insurance. They face our students everyday. When they are treated like professionals, they take pride in their career and feel the value of their profession. This maintains the quality of instruction and student service.

MAPro: *Kung fu is not usually considered an art for the mainstream public. What, from a business-operational standpoint, have you done in order to maintain high retention? What is your ratio of retention?*

Wong: It is true that there are more full-time professional karate and taekwondo schools, but I don't agree about kung fu not being for the mainstream public. I see martial arts as a whole. In fact, many karate and taekwondo schools advertise that they teach kung fu, just as a marketing gimmick. The general public doesn't really see or know the difference between karate, taekwondo, kung fu or any other art or style. What the public wants is a school. Quality classes and attention to student, or customer/service is absolutely crucial to maintaining high retention.

Keeping students excited and motivated is the key. Providing additional activities such as seminars, special events and parties also help the students to feel a connection to the school. When we talk about our "Kung Fu Family," it is a very real feeling and even extends out to our "Kung Fu Parents." We retain about ninety percent of our students. We even have students who have been with us since we first opened the school fifteen years ago. It's amazing to have been with these students since they were five years old, and now they're heading off to college.

MAPro: *How do you define student service?*

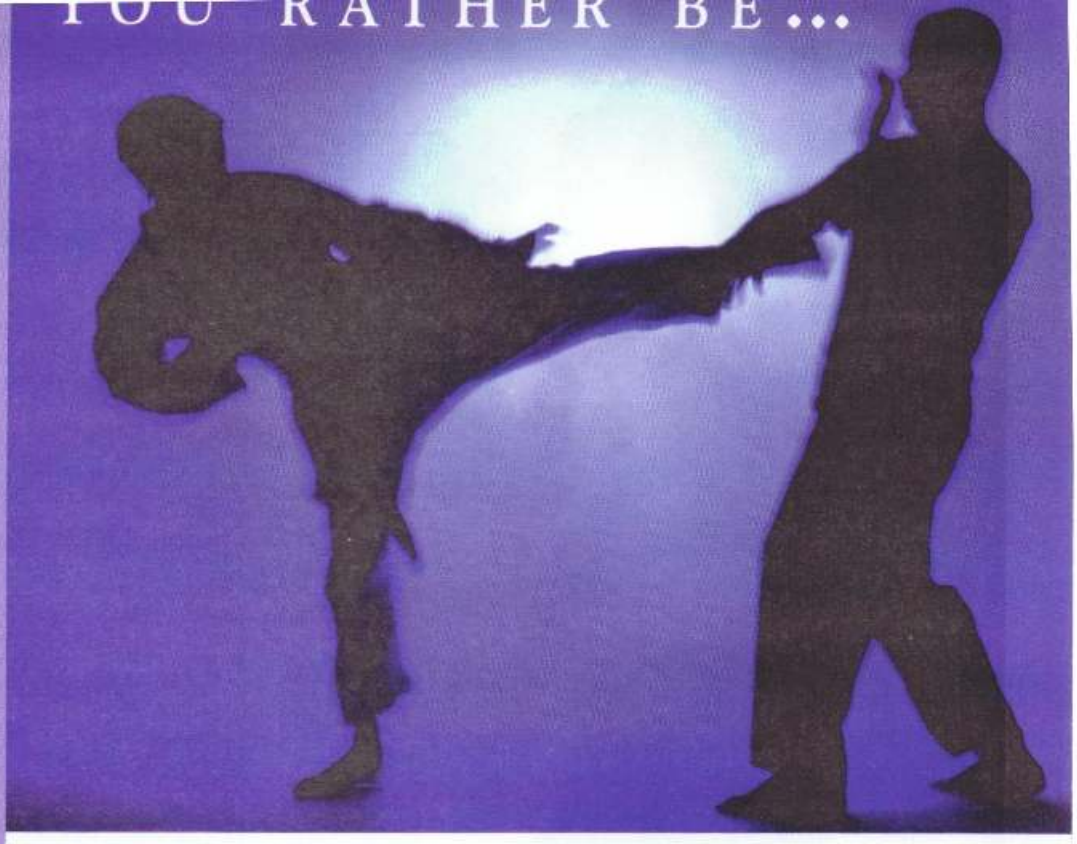
Wong: Student service means quality classes with well-trained instructors who sincerely and obviously care about the students. Providing a clean and comfortable environment is important. Martial arts has to do with health, and there's nothing worse than a dirty, smelly school. Communication is also necessary. There needs to be communication and understanding between the school and the students' needs and expectations. And of course, this extends to the parents as well. If the parents aren't happy, their kids won't be coming to the school. Parents are also a valuable part of the school. Some of our most enthusiastic volunteers are our kung fu parents. Even after so many years, it helps to keep your eyes, ears and mind open to the needs of the students and parents. There's always room to grow and improve.

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

Wong: Beginning and intermediate-level students test every two to four months. As the levels get more advanced, it takes longer to refine the techniques -- about four to six months. For black belt level and higher, it takes even longer. For the past few years, we haven't charged exam fees. In the past we did, but it felt like we were always asking for money, and it took away from the kung fu spirit. But like I said, there's always room for growth and-

(continued on page 18)

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(continued from page 14)

changes, and we're currently working on a new approach to charging test fees again.

MAPro: How many black sashes have you promoted through your schools, and over what period of time?

Wong: We have promoted over one-hundred black belts since we first opened in 1983. This also includes second-, third- and fourth-degree black belts.

MAPro: Do you belong to, or oversee, a traditional kung fu association?

Wong: Throughout the years, I have been involved in many organizations; on the board of directors or with a title position. However, for me, being part of any particular association is not the main concern. What really counts is actively working to promote Chinese martial arts, and supporting others in their efforts as well.

MAPro: How did the organizations respond to your operational methods?

Wong: Chinese martial arts associations are not usually concerned with the operations of individual schools. The goal tends to be more towards the advancement of Chinese martial arts in general.

MAPro: How important is belonging to a style-based martial arts association to becoming a successful school owner?

Wong: If that particular association can help you gain more knowledge of technical skills, teaching methods or business, then, of course, it's important. I am currently working with two schools in Brazil that are branches of my Tat Wong Kung Fu International Association. While other schools are having a hard time maintaining their students, our Brazilian schools have six-hundred students strong. I just returned from a trip there. Besides teaching the technical skills of my style, they are using my teaching method and incorporating new business ideas that they never thought possible.

MAPro: How do you respond to those individuals or associations that demand that a style be taught exactly as it was designed regardless of how that affects retention or the financial stability of the school?

Wong: It is important to respect the traditions of your style. But these are also modern times and represent a different set of circumstances and purpose. In all things, it is important to keep your mind open, to continue to learn and understand more. We continue to respect our old traditions while being open to new ones.

MAPro: Clearly, there is a proliferation of professional schools that maintain a high retention by serving the student and not a style or a distant association. Where does this leave the traditional kung fu schools whose focus is on adhering to a style.

Wong: First, I want to say that I don't believe keeping or losing students is based on adhering to a traditional style. I think it is based on having a good teaching system, and how you run your school. If the goal is to adhere to old military-style macho training, then there will only be a handful of students who will keep up with it. For some teachers, that's what's important, and that's okay for them. But, if your goal is to reach the mainstream and be successful as a professional business, then you need to adjust your teaching method. I still teach a traditional

(continued on page 32)

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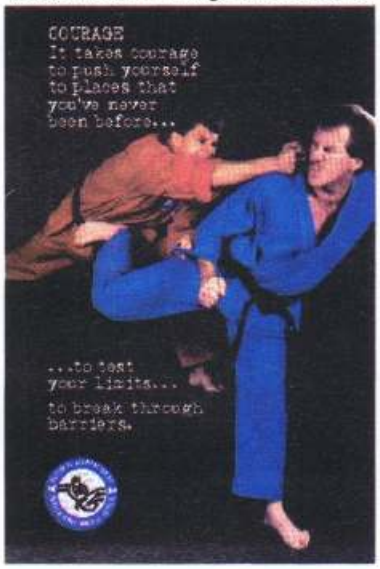
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The Birth of a Notion

The Debut of the American Council on Martial Arts

Over 600 attendees and 50 vendors packed the Hilton Resort on Clearwater Beach, Florida for three days of sunshine, networking and education at last month's Martial Arts Professional Magazine Convention.

Central to the event was the launch of the American Council on Martial Arts (ACMA). The ACMA is an instructor certification program providing martial artists with a universal teaching reference manual and exam. The manual was authored by nearly 20 ACMA Board members including sports and child psychologists, motivational experts, physicians plus legal and fitness experts.

Top: ACMA founder John Graden leads an ACMA forum discussion on Sunday morning during a packed general session.

Near right: Audience members took advantage of the opportunity to directly question ACMA board members during the forum.

Opposite right: Stephen Hayes' entertaining speech on tradition was one of the weekend's most popular presentations.

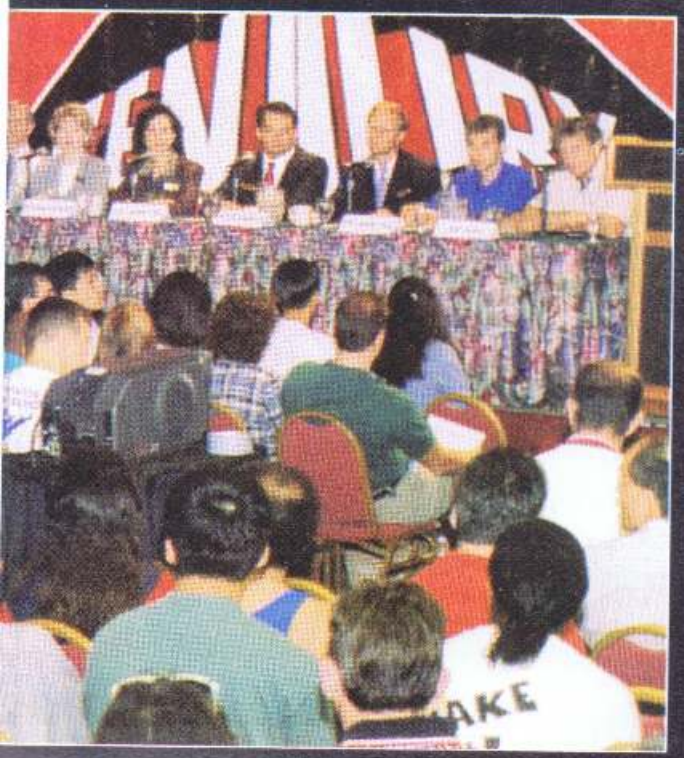
Opposite top left: ACMA Board member Joe Lewis responds to an audience member's question. Lewis's enthusiasm and passionate support of the ACMA concept was very well received by the crowd.

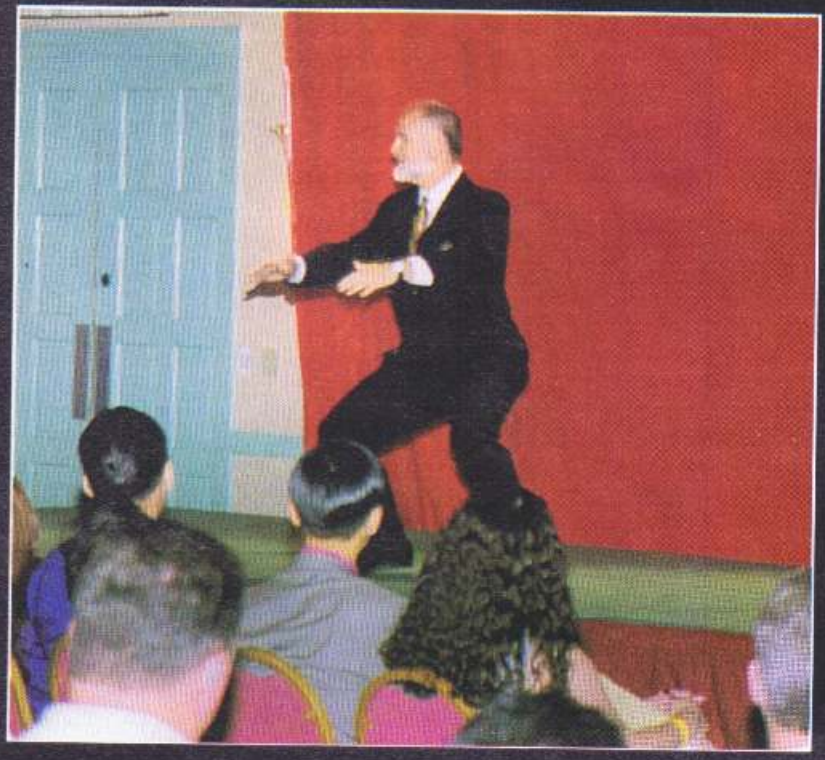
Opposite top right: John Graden's keynote address opened with an illustration of the baggage he and many of his fellow martial artists drag around after years of training a certain way.



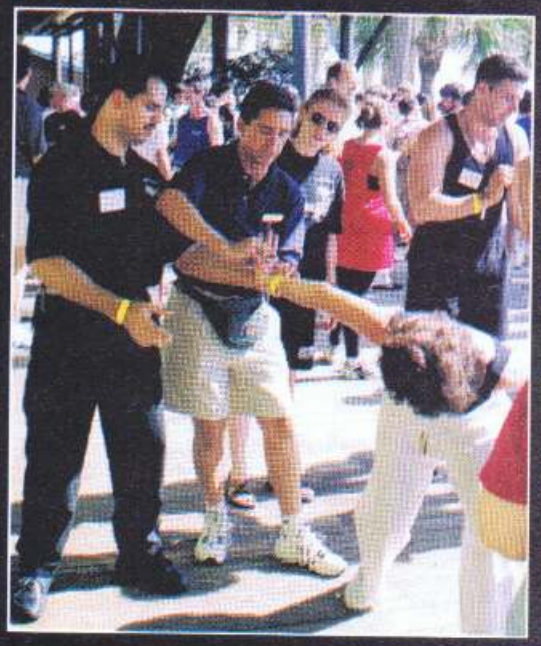

JOE LEWIS













Top: World Judo Champion Mike Swain of Swain Mats taught an outstanding class on introducing grappling to children and beginners.

Far left: Attendees lined up for a quick massage from Koppes Magnetic Enterprises after hours of classes, workouts and, of course, partying.

Near left: Peter Hill's beachside wrist lock seminar was well attended as always.

Bottom: Century Martial Art Supply sponsored Saturday's Cardio Karate class. NAPMA sponsored Friday's.







The vendor area was always busy and included some of the field's largest suppliers.

Far left: Asian World of Martial Arts.

Top left: Macho Products

Below: Century Martial Art Supply.

Center left and bottom: The Project Action Casino Night was packed with nearly 800 attendees from the convention and local Cardio Karate programs.

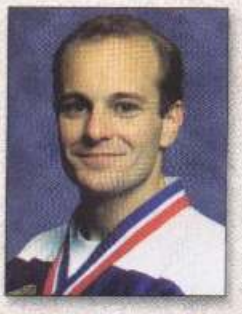








MASTER'S DEGREE



instructions for instructors

by Tom Callos

Mid-Year Evaluation

It's been said that the quality of your life is the quality of the questions you ask yourself. If that is so (is that so?), then the same might apply to our martial arts schools. Here are a few questions I think are worth asking:

How many students do you need — at your present rate of tuition — to pay your current expenses?

How many students will you need to pay your expenses five years from now (payroll, pension plans, vacations, etc.)?

These are quality questions because knowing those numbers can give you and your staff a target to shoot for. Or, it can show you that you're not charging enough for your lessons. Or, it can help you get a grip on financial realities (Am I losing my grip again?). If you're going to need 6,036 students to pay your projected income needs — let's see, three trips to Greece each year, a new BMW, build the biggest school in the universe, and hire Tom Callos to clean the locker rooms — then perhaps it's time for a little goal restructuring.

It seems to me that after studying your numbers you have a short list of options to choose from:

A) Pat yourself on the back. You're right on course.

B) Stay on the same course, but enroll more students.

C) Raise your tuition to meet your projected needs.

D) Adjust your projected needs.

E) Move to Hawaii.

Here's another question worth asking:

Over the next 12 weeks, what actions are you — and each of your staff members — taking to promote your program?

You remember what the five "P's" stand for, right? Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance. Planning your advertising campaign in advance keeps you from having to scramble after the fact. (Am I going to be able to pay my rent? My staff?)

And, while I'm on the topic of questions: Have you seen my latest contributions to the NAPMA video-training series? If you have, then answering the following questions should be a breeze:

1) What are the 3 Rules of Concentration?

2) Can you recite the Black Belt Success Cycle?

3) What the heck is Operation Clean-Sweep?

4) What's the Benefits Game?

As a martial arts school owner you have got to stay abreast of the latest technology and innovations. You've also got to quit pinching pennies when it comes to your education.

Speaking of education, how much have you spent on yours in the last five years? I hope you have a number worth bragging about, but if not, then it's time to get with the program. You're missing out on ideas that could revolutionize the way you run your school. Ideas that could put the zest back into your classes, the zing back into your bank account.

I recommend that you spend at least five percent of your gross income for the next 12 months on researching the latest ideas and methods being used in the martial arts world. Let's see, if you gross $5,000 a month, then you would spend $250 each month on you and your staff's education. That could buy you a plane ticket to visit one of America's top schools, or you could have me in living color in your living room (OK, OK, stop screaming — it was only a joke. If nightmares persist, see a medical health professional).

Finally, use the contact information for the magazine to give me some feedback on this column. Let me know what you like and don't like and maybe what you'd like to see in the coming months. It's, like, important to me. ◆

Tom Callos is a school owner in Hilo, Hawii, A NAPMA video instructor, and a former board member of EFC.

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GOOD QUESTION

answers to our readers questions



by Don Korzekwa, Ph.D
ACMA Board Member

Should You Give A Black Belt To A Student Who Plans To Quit?

Dear Dr. Korzekwa,
Last night a student asked if he could test for black belt at our next testing. Our requirement is a minimum six-months continuous training between black stripe and black belt, and to inform the instructor three months before the next test.

The problem is, this student took a three-month break from October to December. I told him when he took the break that when he returned he would have to train longer to get his black belt, because his skill and knowledge would decrease slightly and it would take a few months to get back to where he was when he left. He understood and accepted those consequences.

When he asked about the test last night, I told him I would have to check his time absent and how long he was back and let him know. Then his mother came in and asked him what I said. When he told her he had to make up the time he was gone, she got upset. "That's just great!" she blurted out in a rude tone and quickly left the room.

I'm sure it's just that she wants to get him his black belt and quit. I hate giving black belts to people who are going to quit. Any thoughts?

Mark Weber
Lakeshore TKD

Dear Mark:
Your concern regarding when students should test for their next belt level is shared by most instructors in the martial arts community. Students must meet the requirements which are established at your school in order to test and be promoted. They should also keep the agreements which you make. Adherence to these requirements and agreements is essential in maintaining the high quality of instruction which you want for your school, and teaching children appropriate respect for established rules and agreements.

The situation which you describe regarding this student's request to test for his black belt necessitates tactful communication with the student and the parent. It appears that the student and his mother expected a different response from the one that they received from you. Because their expectations were not met, the result was some frustration for both of them. The mother's rude manner and statement (i.e., "That's just great!") were probably a result of the frustration she felt with regard to the situation.

In order to resolve this issue, meet with the student and his mother together. Clarify their expectations, as well as your own. Communicate to them that your intention is to act in accord with the agreement that was set before the student took the three-month break (an agreement of which the mother may, or may not, have been aware). In doing so, they can better understand that your decision is not an arbitrary one, but based upon an agreement designed to help the student attain the knowledge and skills required for a black belt.

Make certain that all of you have the same understanding of what is required for the student to test for black belt. Acknowledge that this may be a frustrating situation, and tell them that you sincerely want for them to feel that they are dealt with in a fair manner. Your efforts to be consistent and principled, as well as showing concern for their feelings, will be helpful in dealing with their frustration and in reaching resolution.

Your very clear statement that you, "hate giving black belts to people who are just going to quit," suggests that this has become a frustrating set of circumstances for you. It is understandable that you, like many instructors, expect a certain level of dedication and commitment to the martial arts from an individual who has achieved the rank of black belt.

Unfortunately, many students may make attaining a certain belt rank their primary goal for participating in the martial arts. If that's the case, it will be difficult to convince these students to remain in training once they reach that goal. You cannot control the decisions that students and parents make once the requirements have been met and the black belt has been awarded. You can, however, have some influence in that decision-making process.

Consistently remind students and parents of the many benefits which they receive from training. Assist them in establishing training goals that are not limited to attaining a certain belt rank. Find out those things you can do to make coming to your school an important part of their lives. By doing these things, you will put belts, and belt discussions, in their proper perspective and achieve the commitment which you want from your students. ◆

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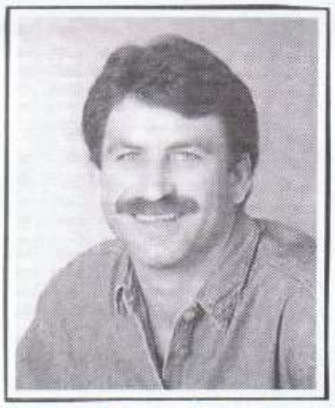
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The martial arts organizations that will survive and be prosperous in today's market are positioned in a manner that is lean and ready to handle the constant change of today's economy. Are you tired of throwing away money on advertising? Do you want **more students**? Do you want to increase your income two or three fold? Would you like us to show you how to do this without any out-of-pocket expense? 'Sound too good to be true? Well, it **is** true, just ask our existing **martial arts clients** They are so excited, **they did not even want us to disclose** this amazing marketing breakthrough to their competitors. We felt it would be unfair for us to allow that to happen, so we developed a **way to protect each karate school in an area.**

Don't miss out on this. At least give yourself the opportunity to see for yourself how incredible this turn-key program will work in your business. We would be happy to prove what we claim! You owe it to yourself, your family, and your employees to see how this amazing advertising system will give you an almost unfair advantage over your competitors!

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WORDS FROM MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOL OWNERS

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Scott Woods Karate International 510-339-7736

"I was also skeptical at first, until I saw it work, and then I couldn't believe it. We get 50-70 leads every time we use it! ***They even showed me how to earn money on it outside the martial arts industry and it worked every time!***
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Students weight training and conditioning in Wong's upstairs weight room.

(continued from page 18)

style, but the way I run the school and the way we teach makes it accessible to a wider range of students. It meets the needs of modern-day students.

MAPro: You have achieved an impressive level of success in a large city filled with many martial arts schools. To what do you attribute this?

Wong: I truly believe in the benefits of the martial arts. I am passionate in the belief that martial arts is a tool to teach people physical and mental skills that contribute to the value of their life. Passion can be very contagious. I have taken great efforts to balance tradition with professionalism. I continue to work hard, and to continue in my desire to grow and improve. I'm involved in the community and have never been afraid to take risks. I've taken chances with some of the events we created -- like the International Chinese Martial Arts Championship and our National Kickboxing event -- and I have benefitted from the results. I also try to set an example. It is important to be willing to work with others in their efforts to promote martial arts. The more popular the martial arts are, the better it is for everyone. The real competition is not the environment or other martial arts schools. The real competition is within yourself -- to be and do the best you can.

MAPro: We understand that you are planning to open a fourth school. What important steps do you take to make a new school successful?

Wong: Planning, research, and knowing your goals are important to the success of a new school. Since we already have several schools and are satisfied with the results, we try to find demographics that are similar to our other schools. And again, we are open to learning what we can do even better.

MAPro: One of the recent trends in our industry is the Cardio Karate movement. While we all agree that this is not traditional martial arts, it's extremely popular with the adult market. As school owners, is there a lesson here for us?

Wong: Many people are still intimidated by the macho martial arts image. Things like Cardio Karate and Box Aerobics don't have that threatening image. They're more user-friendly. Those same concepts can be used in advertising and promoting your school. And of course, that first impression on the phone, or during that first visit, is very important. It is up to your staff to make them feel comfortable and welcomed. Once they're in your school, they'll love the excitement of real martial arts.

MAPro: In an early editorial, the founder of "Martial Arts Professional," John Graden, asked the question, "Are forms killing our retention?" This seems like a good question for a kung fu school owner, since Chinese forms are far more difficult for students to learn than karate forms. What do you think?

Wong: Yes, it's true that Chinese forms are more intricate and can be more difficult to learn. This is all the more reason why it's important to have a good teaching method. So long as you keep it interesting, and break it down step-by-step, there are no problems in teaching forms.

Forms can be very exciting and practical. In kung fu, there are a lot of animal techniques and students always find these fascinating. Many also enjoy the artistic aspects of the forms, and when they understand the practical application of the techniques it's even more rewarding.

Forms also help to develop cardiovascular fitness, and work wonders for conditioning and toning. When students feel the benefits, they really enjoy it.

MAPro: In your opinion, what will the martial arts market for kung fu schools be like in the year 2010?

Wong: I see the future as very bright. In the last few years, there has been a rise in Chinese martial arts tournaments. This helps us to come together, share ideas, and create greater public awareness. In the past, Bruce Lee helped bring Chinese martial arts to the forefront. Today we have Jackie Chan helping once again to make Chinese martial arts popular. I see no limit to the future growth of kung fu. There will always be a need for health, fitness and self-defense!

MAPro: Where will you be then?

Wong: I see myself still growing and in the forefront promoting Chinese martial arts and my own organization, including my international branches. I've made a commitment to pass on to the next generation the knowledge and responsibility of our martial art. This secures their future as professional martial artists, and insures the continued growth of our school for generations to come. ◆

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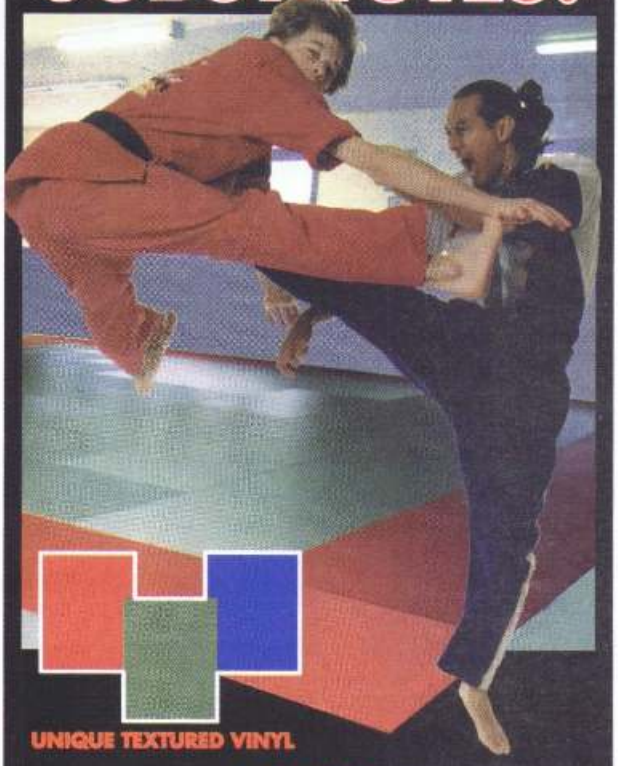
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How To Develop Switching Barriers To Drop Out

Part 2:

Build Relationships If You Want To Build Retention

If you want to keep your students, you must not only provide quality instruction, you must also be their friend. That was the surprise (to many) revelation from last month's column, and this month we'll continue on the topic of finding ways to keep your students from quitting.

Service businesses of all types, including martial arts schools, should put up "switching barriers" in order to keep customers. As we've already discussed, a switching barrier is an added value item businesses use to make it more difficult for a customer to take his or her business away.

A good example of a switching barrier in a service business would be a travel agency building a customer database. By building a database of customer preferences, a good travel agent would know whether a particular customer liked to sit by a window or by the isle during a flight. The agency would also know which rent-a-car company the customer prefers and which hotel he/she frequents.

The investment a customer makes in building a relationship with a business becomes a switching barrier to his or her leaving. The fact is, people don't like change and they will usually choose to stay with you if you give them a good enough reason to. The best reason I've ever found to stay loyal to a business I used, was friendship, and friendship is nothing more than building a relationship.

Using a customer database as a switching barrier is a good idea for any service business, especially a martial arts school. Here is an idea I share with EasyPay clients to build relationships/retention with their students. If you currently use the two-box student attendance system, you will understand this procedure. If you are not familiar with the two-box student attendance system here's how it works.

The school has two 3 x 5 index-card boxes. The first box (Box #1) has every attendance card, in alphabetical order, placed in it each Monday. As the students come to class that week they take their card from Box #1 and give it to the instructor to place back in Box #2 after class. This way the instructor knows who has not attended class that week by reviewing the cards left in Box #1 on Saturday.

A version of the same two-box system will work as a database for instructors to keep up with student contacts.

The instructor has two-boxes in his/her office. Each student has a contact/comment card placed in the box that only the instructor writes on. At the beginning of each month, all the cards are in Box #1. Each night before class the instructor selects five cards from Box #1 to contact that night in class. The instructor will make a point to spend a few minutes privately in class with each of the students he/she has selected. After class, a few notes from the conversation with the student, along with the date and time of the contact, is recorded on the back of the student card and then the card is filed away in Box #2.

If the student you selected is not in class that night, hold the card out for a few days and see if you can make contact next class. If the student is out all week, when you make the absent call, record on the card that you spoke personally with the student and file the card away in Box #2.

All of us fall into the trap of becoming "used to" our students and taking them for granted. The highest drop-out-risk group we have are the middle-ranked students. Instructors usually divide most of their time between their white belts and their high-ranking, long-time students, leaving the largest portion of their enrollment, the middle ranks, with the least attention paid to them.

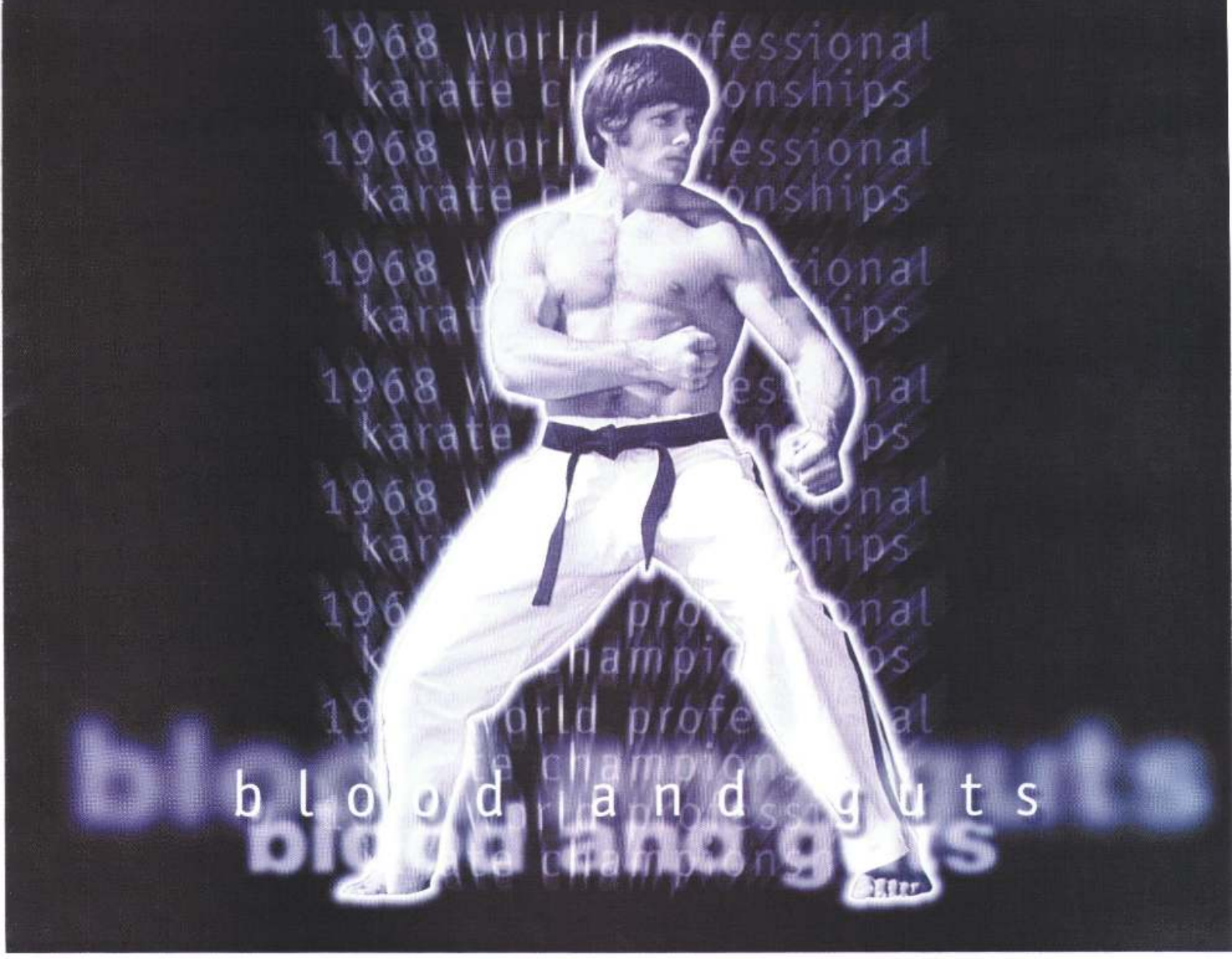
You can easily see where forcing yourself to spend a few minutes with each student on a regular basis will go a long way toward building relationships with your students. Remember this formula:

Relationship = Retention.

Make it hard for your students to quit; build switching barriers. ◆

Rick Bell is a well-known speaker and consultant to the martial arts industry and is President of EasyPay Automated Billing. He can be reached at 1-800-852-4005 or IFCEasy@aol.com.

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by Rob Colasanti
Vice President, NAPMA

Charisma The Keystone Trait

I have found that a martial arts instructor's level of success usually parallels his level of charisma. That's because when an instructor has charisma, all school-related programs and procedures just seem to fall into place easier. But when an instructor is missing it, running a school can seem like an uphill battle. Indeed, I'm convinced that charisma is a quality that often separates the best from the rest in business.

By definition, charisma is a unique personal power belonging to those exceptional individuals capable of securing the allegiance of large numbers of people. Other sources define it as the ability to command, inspire and motivate others. Knowing this, wouldn't you agree that charisma is a trait that could be beneficial to all martial arts instructors?

Clearly, instructors that possess charisma are well-positioned to grow their schools. They just have a certain charm about them that causes people to join more frequently and with less hesitation. Also, charismatic instructors retain students for longer periods of time. That's because their students aren't bored by the instruction. They're motivated, inspired and excited by it. In short, charisma helps instructors to create and keep students.

On the other hand, instructors that lack charisma can cause their school to suffer. These types typically complain that nothing works for them. They say they can't get a Leadership Team started, no one shows up for demo team practice, staff members keep leaving, people won't enroll, nobody supports special events, etc., etc., etc. When they're done whining, they usually blame it all on their area. But in reality, they are the cause.

Their personality is usually too silly, too serious, too boring, too pushy or too lackadaisical. Often, they are uninteresting, unmotivating or long-winded. Instructors like this unintentionally run people off and end up with one of those infamous "stuck-in-a-rut schools" for years.

From a purely business perspective, an instructor's background in the arts may offer little reward without charisma. I say that because I often chat with successful school owners that are not champions, high-ranking black belts, martial arts veterans or even the greatest practitioners in the world. But the one thing they do have going for them is their ability to "sell" a vision of the martial arts. They have the knack for getting people to "buy" into what they are offering. In other words, they have charisma, which garners trust and gives them believability. This one essential quality allows many instructors to build and maintain a strong following of students regardless of their location, economy, business plan or style.

Furthermore, many charismatic instructors are able to operate successfully even though they often deviate from conventional martial arts business ideals. For example, some instructors purposely teach grueling classes yet have hundreds of students that keep coming back for more. Others maintain large schools even though they have no Black Belt Club or Leadership Team. Some peak-performing studios are run like temples. Others are like martial arts fitness centers. Many use contracts, while others use EFT's, both or none. Style, too, is irrelevant when it comes to success.

I could go on and on. The point is that, regardless of how they run their schools, charismatic instructors usually have a better shot at making it work.

If you're looking to become a more charismatic instructor, here are three helpful suggestions that will start you off on the right foot:

1. Read. You'll find plenty of books on charisma at any library or bookstore. They'll typically be located in the psychology, self-improvement or business section; not the martial arts section, where most of us usually visit first.

2. Observe. Another excellent way to become more charismatic is to visit successful schools and watch how the instructors teach. Pay close attention to their teaching style, personality and the overall way they present the material. Remember, "If you want to be successful, learn to emulate the behavior of successful people."

3. Take Action. Start making a conscious effort to become more charismatic. Every time you teach a class or work with a student, pay attention to what you say and how you say it. Remember to be exciting, motivating, charming, energetic and enthusiastic. Presentation is everything.

In summary, martial arts is a personality-driven business. People usually get involved and stay involved with the training to the level they are motivated by the instructor. Also, the lessons are not a commodity product or a guaranteed sale, like fast-food. So a school's success depends largely upon the instructor's ability to inspire students and keep them interested in the lessons. Charisma is the keystone trait that allows that to happen naturally. ◆

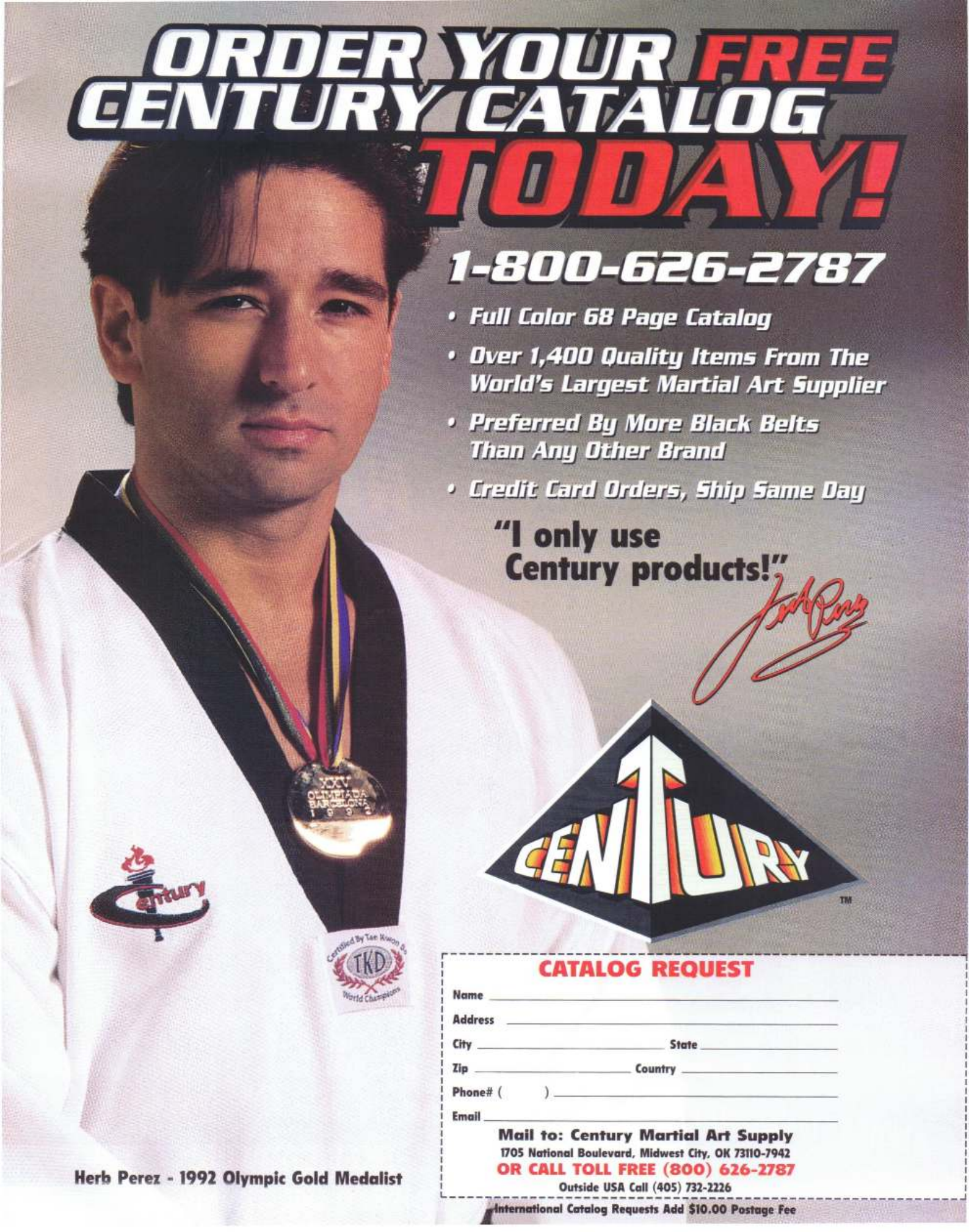
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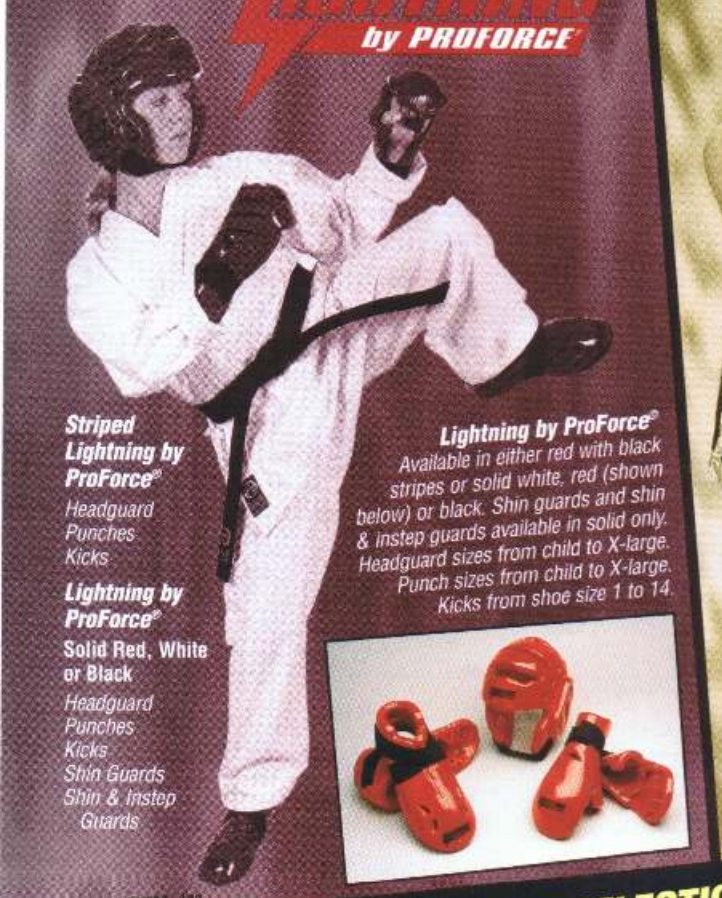
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