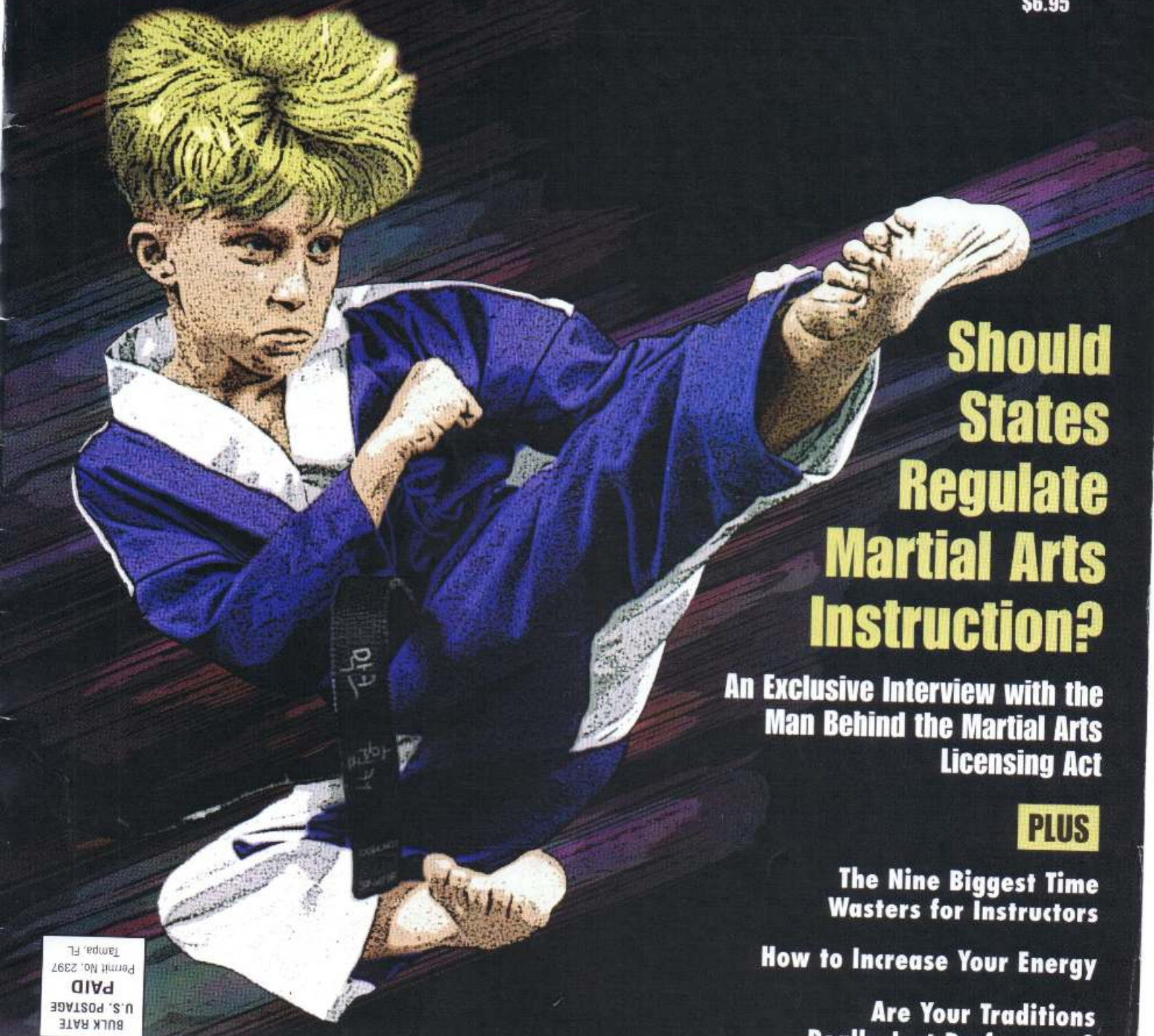
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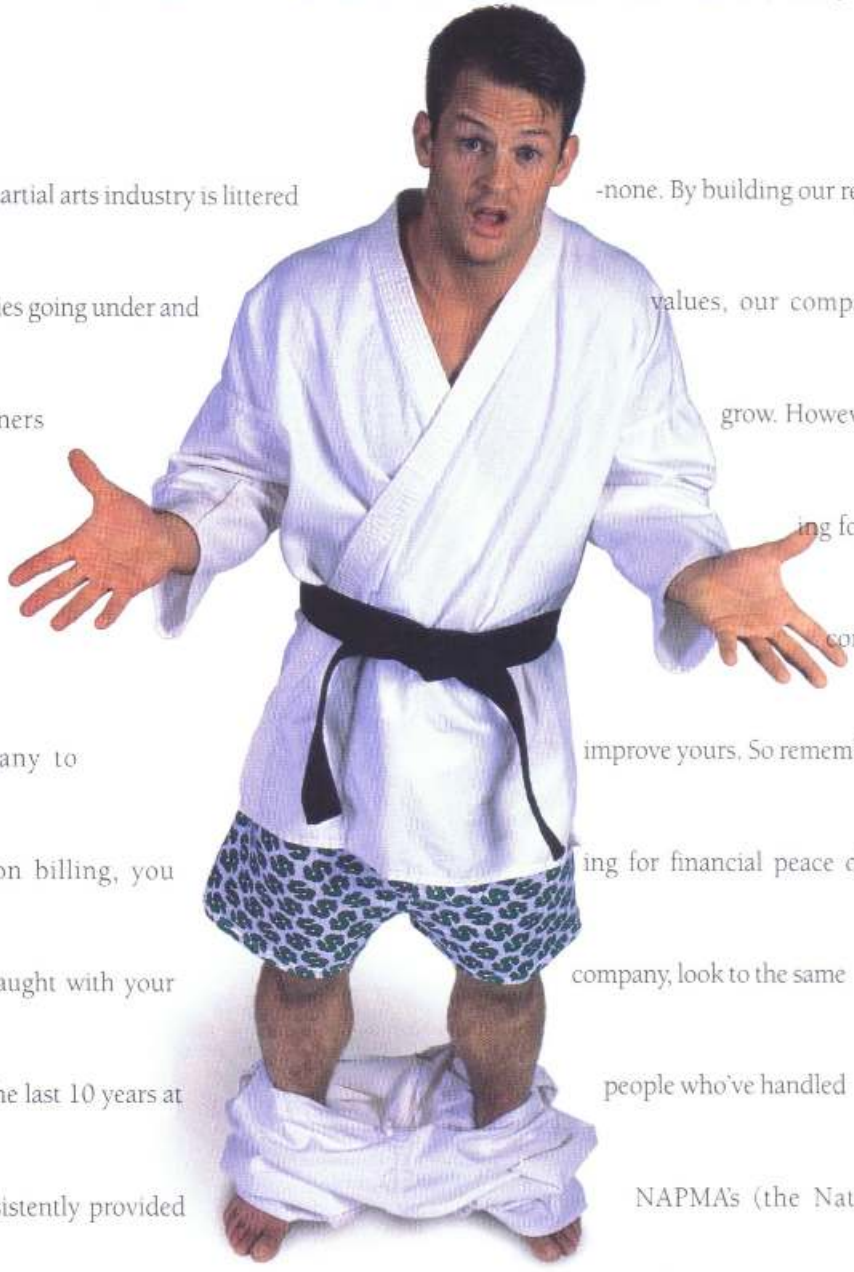
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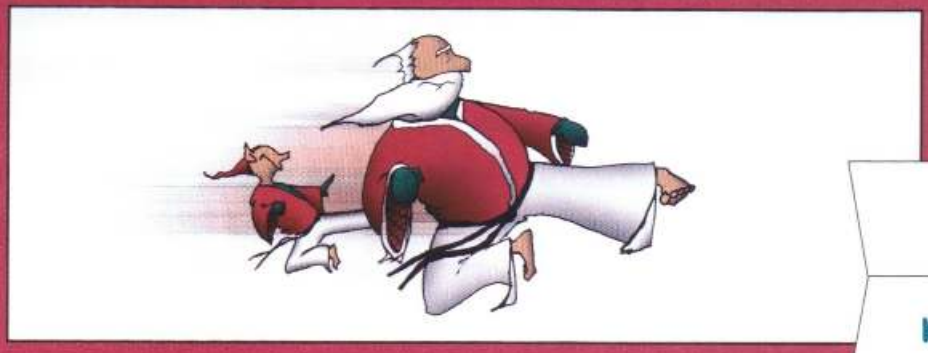
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Inside

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Inside

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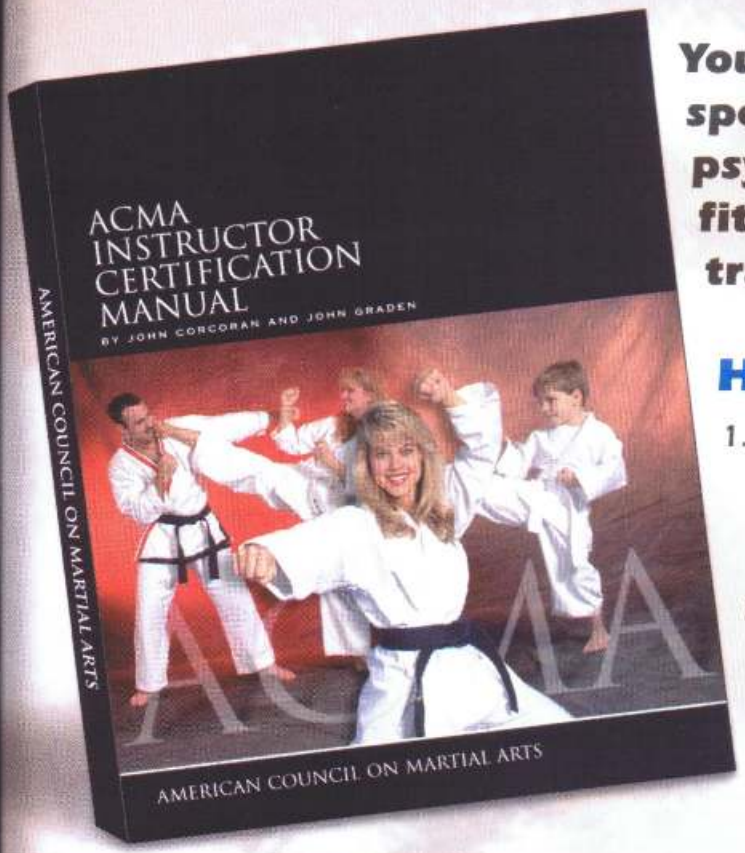
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–Denise Ost

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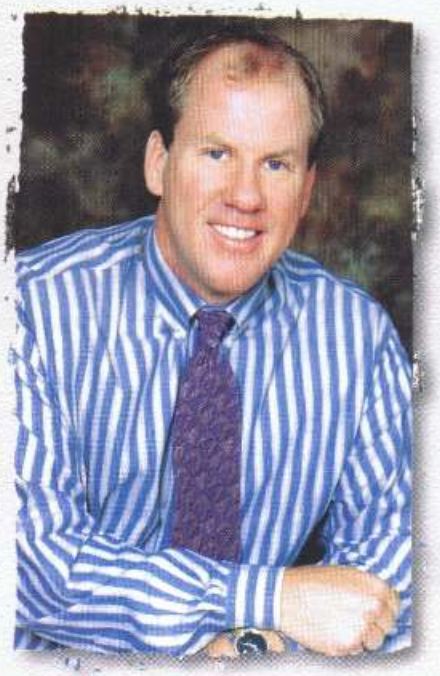
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As I See It



Have Your Preferences Become Your Traditions?

In my observation, much of what is referred to as tradition is really personal preference more than a stylistic tradition. Laughter, fun, t-shirts, stripes on belts, in-class exams, color uniforms, patches, and wearing protective equipment have been proven to have no negative effect on the quality of students. Yet it is due to "tradition" that many instructors resist these tried and true programs. What is your tradition? When did it start? Who started it? Why was he able to change and not you?

"It wasn't until I started visiting other schools that I realized many of these traditions didn't exist in those schools and vice versa."

It's a challenge to find a balance between the traditions to which we are endeared, and the realization that the school is not growing. The question is, "Is this tradition or my personal preference?"

When I was a student, it was tradition that when a student made green belt, they went through a hazing ritual.

When I walked into the school the Monday after the exam, I was proud of my freshly-dyed green belt. It was tradition to keep your belt and just dye it the new color. Since I wasn't 16 yet, tradition dictated that I could only dye my belt from the knot down. The rest of the belt remained white.

One of my instructors said that now that I was a green belt, it was tradition that we "belt-fight." He explained that belt-fighting consists of folding your belt in quarters and using it like a nunchaku. This was 1975 and student belts were very light. My instructor, on the other hand, had one of those thick, silk Tokaido black belts that ripped through the air. I took a vicious beating. He hit me in the same spot on my thigh and back every time for 20 minutes. Eventually, I began bleeding. It felt like chunks of flesh were being ripped from my body.

My other instructor came in an hour later and explained, now that I was a green belt, I got to "Rank-spar." Rank-sparring is a tradition of sparring with your instructor after you earn every belt from green on. He beat me so hard I honestly thought that, at one point, he had knocked my teeth out. After three rounds with him, I had about 30 minutes before my first green belt class. I was hurting but I lined up. After learning our new form, we geared up to multiple spar for the first time, which was tradition for a new green belt. Let's just say, it didn't go too well for me since I already felt like I had been mugged in a gangfight.

The next day, on the bus to school, every time we hit a bump, tears welled up in my eyes. I could hardly walk. I was a fusion of contusions. I never hurt so much in my life. Still, in a strange, twisted way, I liked it. I'm confident you have your own war stories, too. The strange thing is, this appealed to us. We liked it so much, it became our "tradition."

In our school, it was tradition that only black belts could wear colored uniforms. You also had to be a brown belt before you could even get the nice lace-up pants.

I liked all of those rules. I was raised that way in the arts and, when I started my school, I held on to them. It wasn't until I started visiting other schools that I realized many of these traditions didn't exist in other schools and vice versa. For instance, I visited a school that required everyone to stop what they were doing and bow to a black belt when he walked onto the floor. What a pain, but it was their "tradition."

How many improvements in your program have you resisted because of your reluctance to let go of these traditions/preferences? What could you drop or alter to improve the student experience? Some traditions are more limiting than beneficial. Still, some are very important to the arts. To me, mutual respect, a commitment to excellence, and responsibility with the use of martial arts are the traditions that count.

I think it is the hardest to define "the best" when it comes to a ritual or a uniform. They are less tangible. Others vary so much from school-to-school that they are more indicative of the personality and preferences of the school owner, good and bad, than the benefits of the martial arts. I encourage you to evaluate your traditions and determine what you want your school to accomplish. You may find that what appealed to you and me, as students so many years ago, may not appeal to the rest of the population today. ◆

JOHN GRADEN
Publisher

Martial Arts PROFESSIONAL

December 1998 • Vol. 3 - No. 12

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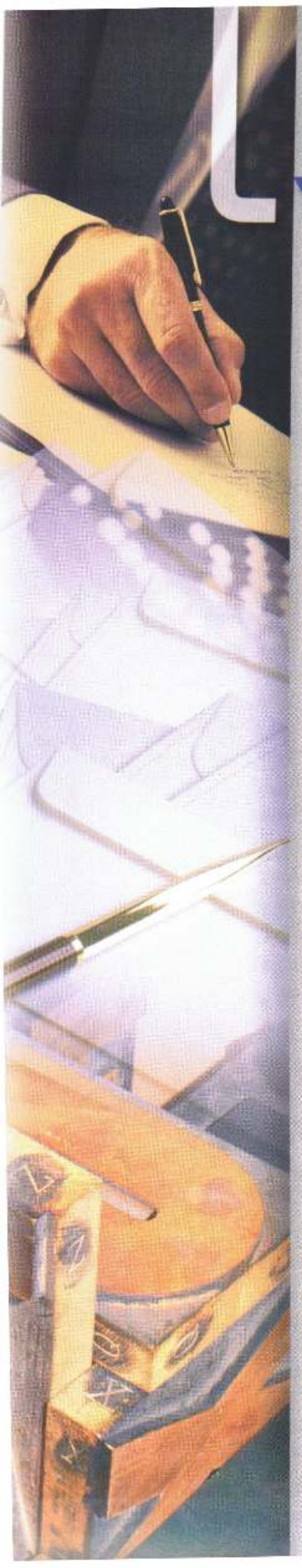
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Black Belt Mark Folker is NOT jump kicking for Regulation

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Illegal Instructors?

The proposed bill to regulate martial art schools sickens me. It will create more problems than it is intended to fix. I've learned that rank is no indication whatsoever of an instructor's qualifications. There are 4th-dan instructors who lose students in my area because they are poor instructors, they have poor attitudes towards their students and their curriculums are weak.

Let martial art schools live by the law of the land: If you have a good school with the intent of developing strong martial artists with high morals and strong spirit — and this applies to all ages, shapes and sizes — you will survive. If you have a poor curriculum, focus only on competition, certain age groups, and/or money, you will eventually fail. This natural law is better than any political bill.

It takes eight years to reach 3rd dan in my school system. Requiring that rank for instructors is ludicrous. You can become a doctor in eight years! I have truly hard-working 1st-dan students who willingly give up their summer to train beside white belts. Would they be illegal instructors? I have 1st-dan black belt adults who have agreed to help me with a program for autistic children. Would they be illegal instructors? Choosing a caring, talented, dedicated individual for the instructor's program is not enough? Someone outside my school who knows nothing of these people gets to decide? The child molesters won't be able to pass this test?

This is all totally ridiculous. Answers on a sheet of paper mean nothing to me; I judge a person by the three years they have spent in and around my school.

Did I hear something about requiring instructors to have tournament credentials? All good sports coaches were not all award-winning athletes. No, absolutely not. Some were mediocre athletes with an excellent grasp of the sport and human relations, that's why they are coaches. I've won gold medals and trophies at tournaments. Big deal, I beat the people who showed up on that day. Someone else, somewhere else, is always better.

If you want a good competition school, only promote the strong, let the weak become disillusioned. This is all garbage: Teaching the strong is easy, making the strong stronger is easy; teaching the weak, and making the weak strong, this is a true challenge! Don't judge an instructor by his strongest; judge him by the improvement in his weakest student.

All these magazines and publications just scream about increasing your bottom line, building a 300-student school, enrolling more students faster! Its all a joke to me. I teach for the love of teaching. I've had my own school since I was a 1st dan and I'm not motivated by money. This is why I retain students. We have a school, not a business, and that's what it feels like within our school.

By everything I have learned from the Masters and Grandmasters, I am doing things correctly, respectfully and for the benefit of our students and our community. I am 37 years old and one year past my 2nd dan, I have a 2,000 s.f. school with 70 students and regular growth. My retention is incredible. The family unity inside my school is incredible. We have helped teens avoid trouble; we've improved school grades; we've improved respect around the households and within our community. I demand respect for authority, for our elders, and for our environment.

I earn a living through another career. The martial arts are simply a passion and a way of life for me. I teach with integrity, tradition, and all of my heart. Yet under this proposed bill, I would be an illegal instructor. Tell that to the parents of these autistic children who are simply looking for a little physical activity for their children. Sorry folks, this bill won't make the bad instructors go away: they will always be around. It is just going to make things more difficult for the good instructors. This proposed bill may force others to promote students to 3rd dan faster simply for the need of good qualified instructors.

Regulating the martial arts is like trying to regulate self-expression. You cannot regulate the music someone creates or the other forms of creativity. Those truly talented rise to the top; those motivated by proper principals rise to the top. These rules should be enough to regulate the martial arts.

My advice to others, "Open a school, not a business, and they will come." And, "Choose your instructors wisely."

FRANK S. EHNLE
Brandon, Florida

Many Objections to the New Jersey Bill

Dear Assembly Member Azzolina,

I have been a student of the martial arts for almost 40 years and have certifications as a black belt in five different martial art systems. In 1978, I was the Tang Soo Doo heavyweight world champion and in 1996, an inductee into the World Christian Martial Arts Hall of Fame.

At present, I am a six-degree black belt and chief martial arts instructor of a small school in South Jersey. We have six active black belts and about 60 active students. I'm also a retired Army Sergeant Major with a degree in business. I served my country honorably for 23 years. This includes two combat tours in Vietnam.

Assembly Member Azzolina, I say this not to bore you but to qualify my statement regarding your efforts to bring into act a licensing law to regulate martial arts instructors. I personally have many objections to your bill. However, please be advised of the following:

1. Why is there a need to license martial arts instructors when there is no requirement to do the same with professional boxing instructors/trainers? They charge a fee, too! This also applies to other health and fitness professionals.

2. Why are you making it a requirement that one must pass a written exam and complete educational requirements to be licensed? My first martial arts instructor was not from this country and he was outstanding in the martial arts. Mr. Azzolina, he spoke very little English and, undoubtedly, would not be able to pass your suggested requirements!

This would certainly discriminate and limit our exposure to outstanding martial arts instructors. No one would be motivated to come to the great state of New Jersey to teach martial arts, especially those who are new to this country. Is this what you are trying to do, exclude others? There is a big difference in regulating and excluding.

3. What are good moral standards? Whose standards are you using?

4. Finally, you are requiring that one must possess a third-degree black belt from a recognized source. Mr. Azzolina, when a new student comes to my school from another system in the martial arts, unlike others, I never take their present rank from them. We observe their abilities and skills for 90 days and then make a judgement as to where they are placed in our class. I have come to the understanding that there are many systems and certifications in the martial arts. How can you or anyone exclude anyone from that which was given to them by their hard efforts and work? Not I.

In closing, I see many problems with your efforts and have many questions as to your purpose. What would motivate you to single out martial arts instructors and let others go free of scrutiny? What have we done to merit your attention?

I've competed in many martial arts tournaments in New Jersey and have had the opportunity to observe many martial arts instructors. For the most part, I have found most to be honorable and worthy of their calling.

Mr. Azzolina, please understand that your efforts may be honorable but they will do more harm than good to the martial arts community. You are about to exclude those who are not as fortunate as others. Throwing out the baby with the water, so to speak!

I have been teaching martial arts for over 25 years and I'm in the process of being promoted to 7th dan. Whom are you going to place on your board to certify me? Whom are you going to place on your board to certify those who possess my rank or higher? You are about to insult about one-third of those martial arts instructors in the great state of New Jersey!

DAVID L. WYNN
Chinese Goju Martial Arts Association

Tradition Has Its Place

As I see it, Mr. Graden, you should open your eyes.

The latest issue of "Martial Arts Professional Insult Magazine" has finally ticked me off enough to say, "Stop it!" Since you and the other contributors write, publish and distribute this magazine to all styles and types of martial artists, how can you degrade the industry so much and still do anything useful?

It was my opinion that the American public had become wiser and more educated, by experience, in dealing with "unqualified" instructors or schools. Martial arts instruction has been in the U.S. for more than a half century. Tradition has its place, discipline has its place, freedom of thought has its place, freedom of choice has its place, modern improvements have their place, even belts have their place.

Bad instructors will weed themselves out. Your purpose is to improve the industry. Help to build it. Give goals to those willing to work for them. There are as many martial arts styles as there are different kinds of cookies. What some may use and enjoy, others may not. There probably would be something in the martial arts that could benefit any individual. Please stop insinuating that styles or methods are either wrong or right. You should be setting a standard for building true confidence in the martial arts industry since we are still only beginners at being "professional".

Your column, "As I See It," in the July '98 issue gives the impression that a black belt instructor will treat all of his new students this way. What was your point? Did you mean every black belt instructor? Were you implying that all schools were run this way?

The NAPMA Cardio-Karate advertising reads: "In just one day you can learn to teach, market and operate a Cardio-Karate program." Is this real karate? Is one day enough to qualify someone to teach you "how to defend yourself without any foreign yells?" Why does the advertising you send us, to publish for our potential students, state, "You learn the fun way without any of the serious stuff like uniforms, belts and breaking concrete blocks with your head." Your advertising and manners are like that of the jealous, old, insecure, "let's cut them down so we can win their students over" concept.

What about all of the martial arts schools which now offer several styles of martial arts, belt programs, self-defense classes, and Cardio-Karate classes? You play them against each other.

Get off the negative. Lead, don't point. Show us what we pay you for.

JAN MITCHELL
Central Texas Martial Arts
The Karate Shop

John Graden's Response:

I'm sorry if everything I write isn't to your liking. I think that's the nature of commentary. I'm certainly not capable of pleasing everyone, but really do appreciate your feedback.

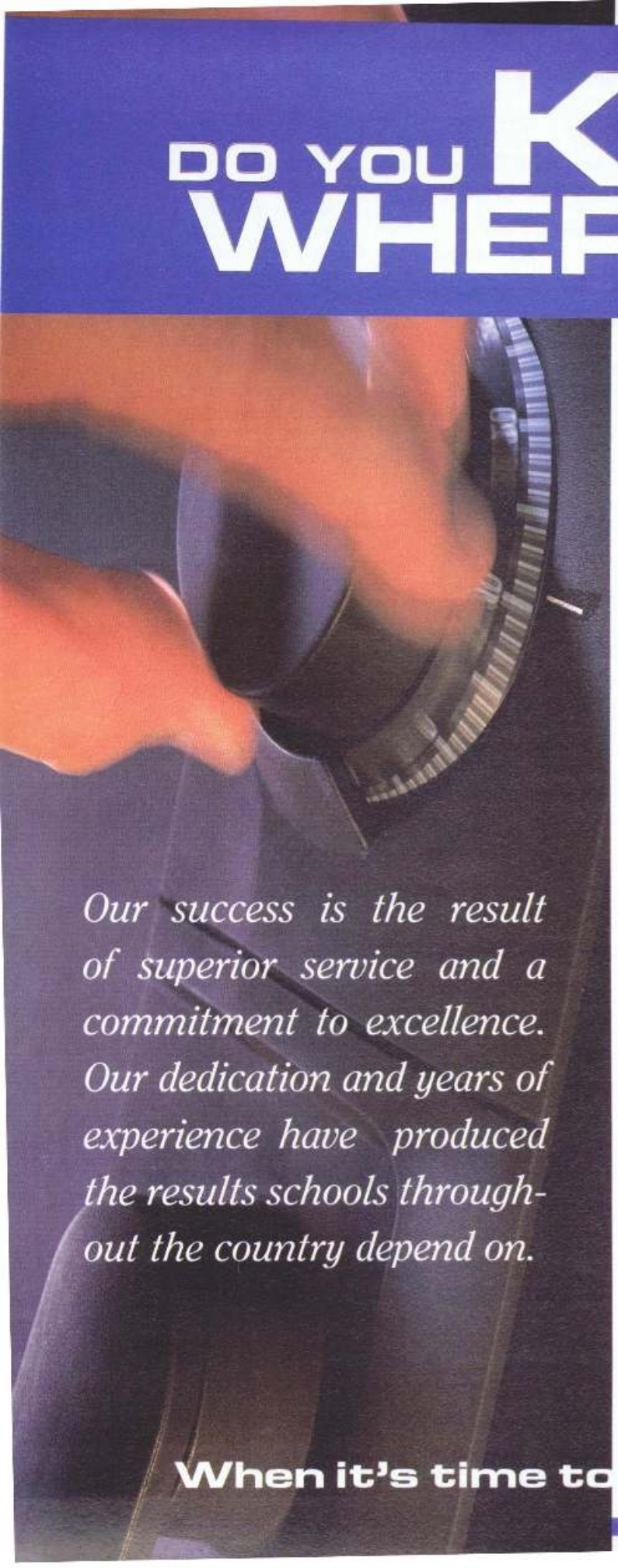
If, as you say, my job is to raise professional standards, then I must point out areas that I feel are hurting the field. I don't think I can do the job very well by just running around saying everything is great. It isn't great. Only 1% of the population is involved in martial arts and we have virtually lost the adult market. There are reasons for that, many of which were illustrated in the column that prompted your letter.

It is not my nature, nor my position to idly sit back and let things be. I care a lot about the martial arts and I want to see it grow so badly that I'm willing to risk the ire of people like yourself in order to make a difference.

If you really think about it, that really is what you pay me for. Actually, no one pays me for the column and it costs nothing to the end reader but the time to read it. I think the 26,000+ readers of "Martial Arts Professional" should have the opportunity to make their own decisions about what is written, just as you have. Not everyone feels like you do — or like I do. You'll notice that the NAPMA program doesn't include much from me regarding any of these issues. I reserve that solely for the magazine.

Still, you know that oppressing opinion and information is never a good idea. Asking me to stop writing about anything that might offend is a form of censorship, no one, I'm sure not even you, would think right.

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INDUSTRY UPDATE



CHAN'S "RUSH HOUR" CRASHES THE $100-MILLION MARK

By John Corcoran

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA — Jackie Chan cemented his U.S. superstardom in October when his latest action-comedy, "Rush Hour," became the first martial arts movie in years to gain domestic blockbuster status while still in release. Not since 1990's "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" has a martial arts-oriented film performed as well.

"Rush Hour," Chan's first Hollywood production in more than a decade, which pairs him with shrill comic Chris Tucker, opened the weekend of Sept. 18-21 in 1st place with a $31-million jump-start. It broke into blockbuster territory three weeks later and, at press time, Oct. 26th, was holding in 6th place with a cumulative $115.6 million.

"Rush Hour" outperformed the most recent martial arts-laden films, including Wesley Snipes' "Blade," which fell out of the top 20 after nine weeks with a highly impressive $67.7 million and Jean-Claude Van Damme's dismal "Knockoff," which barely passed $10 million before disappearing.

In recent years, martial arts movies, as well as, action films starring martial artists have been decidedly sagging at the box-office and have virtually dried up in the straight-to-video and cable-TV markets. This situation makes Chan's success all that more remarkable and unquestionably crowns him as the new martial arts box-office king. ◆

KICK DRUGS OUT OF AMERICA WINS PENNSYLVANIA GRANT

CHESTER, PENNSYLVANIA — Actor Chuck Norris' Kick Drugs Out of America program was recently awarded part of a $300,000 grant here, according to an announcement by Pennsylvania governor Ridge's office. The grants are intended to generate four new opportunities for youth in four Chester middle schools, Showalter, Smeadley, Main Street and Pulaski.

The grant was awarded through Pennsylvania's Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program and the Governor's Partnership for Safe Children.

Norris' Kick Drugs Out of America is a national martial arts program that builds self-esteem and drug-resistance strengths for youth.

STUDENT EXPELLED DUE TO AIDS

VIRGINIA – A 14-year-old argues that his karate school illegally kicked him out of class because he has the aids virus. Michael Montalvo requested a Virginia Federal Appeals Court to re-instate his case. A lower court had ruled that the karate school could exclude the teen. Montalvo's attorney, from the Rotherford Institute, contends the case is about descrimination - not safety.

Terry Raney, plaintiff's attorney says, "The law is to prevent hysterical decisions being made about disabled people simply because they have some disability and that includes AIDS."

The school's attorney claims federal law does not require that they accommodate the teen.

Nathaniel Collier, defense attorney says, "They would be protected but for an exclusion in the ADA [American Disabilities Act] that says that, if participation presents a significant health risk to other participants, then the provider doesn't have to make the accommodation. They don't have to allow that person to participate."

The school claims students and teachers frequently draw blood, posing infection risks. ◆

NAPMA TO OCCUPY NEW HEADQUARTERS

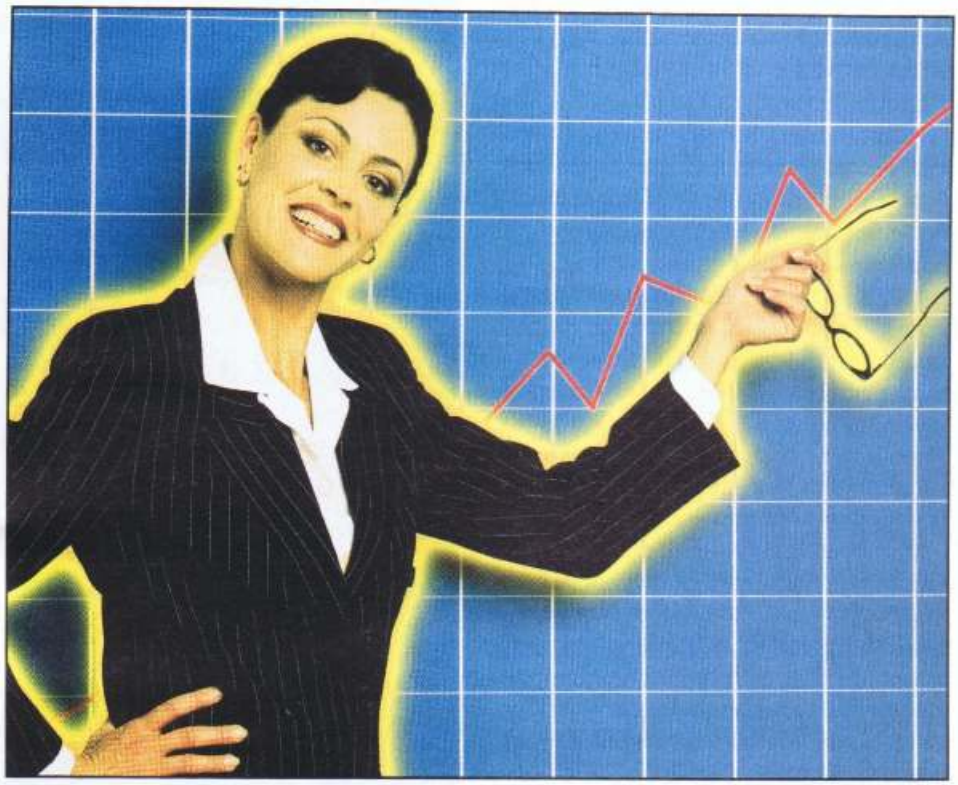
ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA — In order to expand its production capabilities and staff additional consultants, the National Association of Professional Martial Artists (NAPMA) is moving into a larger facility November 1st.

According to NAPMA Systems Manager John King, "The additional space allows us the room to expand our art department by adding additional graphic artists. We've also enlarged our digital television studio so we can increase the quality and the quantity of our member videos.

"We have big, exciting plans for our members in 1999 and this extra space will help expedite the launching of these new programs," King added. "Also, the ACMA [American Council on Martial Arts] offices will be housed here, too, so we can work in a more synergistic manner with them as well."

The new address for NAPMA is 5601 116th Avenue North, Clearwater, FL 33760. ◆

Industry Update



Speakers Wanted For '99 "MaPro" Convention

ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA — The 1999 "Martial Arts Professional" World Conference is seeking speakers for its June 11 - 14, 1999 three-day symposium in Clearwater Beach, Florida. Speakers wishing to present should submit a video audition tape to MAPro Convention, 1362 86th Terrace North, St. Petersburg, FL 33702. ◆

"MAPro" Announces Regional Conferences

ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA — "Martial Arts Professional" magazine, in association with the National Association of Professional Martial Artists (NAPMA), is sponsoring a series of regional conferences in 1999.

Speakers included in the program, include: "MAPro" publisher John Graden, NAPMA Vice President Rob Colasanti, NAPMA Video Instructors Tom Callos and Kathy Long, and ACMA Board Members Joe Lewis and Jhoon Rhee.

Dates and cities will be announced. ◆

Macho Products Establishes First International License Agreement

SEBASTIAN, FLORIDA — Macho Products, a manufacturer of premier training and protective gear for martial arts and law enforcement, is now establishing license agreements for the Macho Brand. The first company to reach such an agreement with Macho is Jason International, Inc., of Seoul, Korea.

Jason International, a footwear manufacturer in Korea, has factories in Korea and China. Macho has awarded a worldwide athletic footwear license entitling Jason International to manufacture and market Macho Brand athletic footwear.

Jason International is expected to produce a complete line of footwear to include footwear for jogging, hiking, golf, soccer and general fitness needs for men, women and children. As part of the agreement, Jason will also produce Macho martial arts footwear, well-known in the industry as a premium martial arts shoe.

Vice President of Sales Charles Ferrer said Macho and Jason International expect to debut the product line at the SuperShow in February of 1999.

"We are very excited about this first agreement," said Ferrer. "Jason International plans to begin shipping some of the Macho Brand footwear as early as October, but the complete line will be ready by the spring."

Ferrer, who joined Macho a year ago, said Macho has been working for the past year to get ready for this jump in licensing its brand. "Macho has already established a strong distributor network around the world for its martial arts and law enforcement products."

Macho is currently soliciting companies interested in marketing the Macho Brand name and willing to enter into long-term agreements. "We're poised to make Macho a household name in sporting goods, athletic footwear and other industries, too," said Ferrer. ◆

Skydiver's Benefit Project Action

ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA — Bill Klase, owner of the American Executive Karate Center, a Project Action Sponsor Studio here, recently formed a very unique partnership with Skydive City, in Zephyrhills, Florida, to sponsor a very different type of fund-raiser for Project Action.

The fund-raiser, called "Skydive Bingo," involved selling numbered raffle tickets. After the ticket sale, 100 numbered paper plates were tacked face down in the landing area at



Bill Klase of St. Petersburg, FL, on his way to completing a very unique and successful fund-raiser for Project Action.

Skydive City. Klase, the team leader of the "Bronze Dragons" skydiving team, team member Chris Moore and Skydive City manager T.K. Hayes, all master parachutists/skydivers, jumped from 5,000 feet and targeted the paper plates. The three numbers which were on the plates they touched upon landing were the winning numbers.

"I got the idea from a skydiving instructor and we have used the event to raise money for a couple of veterans organizations over the past several years," Klase said.

Prizes for the winning ticket-holders in St. Petersburg included dinner for two at local restaurants and AMC movie-theater passes. Prizes for the winners at Skydive City included ten free skydives ($160 value) donated by Skydive City, ten free parachute-packing jobs ($50 value) donated by The Packing Place, and a $20 gift certificate from the Sunshine Factory, a parachute equipment supply store.

100 tickets were sold both at Skydive City and almost another hundred to martial arts students and friends in St. Petersburg. The event raised almost $1,000 for Project Action.

Anyone wishing to contact Klase about sponsoring a similar fundraiser may do so by calling (727) 521-1989. ◆

"Bullyproof" Curriculum:
Programs Aimed At Stopping Bullying At School



BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS — Schools in Massachusetts are trying to stop bullying and their efforts may do more than end the torment that has led youngsters elsewhere to commit suicide. Studies show that 15 to 20 percent of children in this country are involved in bullying, either as bully or victim, more than once or twice a year. Student suicides, because of bullying, have been reported in New Hampshire and elsewhere.

Further, researchers say school bullies often become wife batterers and child abusers.

In Massachusetts, many schools are now going after bullying with "Bullyproof," a middle-school curriculum created by Nan Stein, senior researcher at the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women.

"More and more schools are taking bullying very seriously," Stein told *The Boston Globe*. "There is more of a threat of litigation now. Some bullying is sexual harassment or even criminal assault."

Last June, the Wellesley College center produced "Quit It," an antibullying program geared to children in kindergarten through third grade. Tom Brown, a Cincinnati filmmaker, has produced "The Broken Toy," a video showing middle-school students the difference between teasing and bullying. He has shown it in more than 4,000 schools around the country.

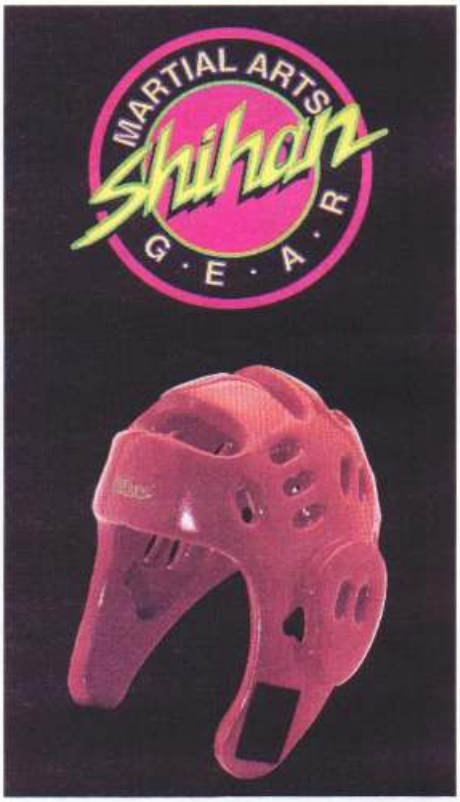
"Some people still have the attitude that 'kids will be kids.' But today's bully is not the same bully we had," said Patty Rich of Hanson, who helped bring the Broken Toy Project to middle schools there last year. "What I hear from parents is that we need zero-tolerance on bullying and we are all constantly looking for new programs to combat it," she told the *Globe*.

In Springfield, a group of parents, including Theresa Couture, a pediatric intensive care nurse and mother of a bullied son, talked to School Committeeman Nicholas Fyntrilakis after the school started dealing with bullying. After being ignored or called names, Couture's seventh-grade son was pushed into a urinal, elbowed and kicked. On a field trip last March, he was pushed into a puddle by a boy, who also broke his glasses. Couture's son has been transferred to another school where he is thriving, she said.

"What we need to do is put some consequences for students who feel they have the right to persecute and intimidate others," said Fyntrilakis. But some specialists believe punishment is not the answer because bullies usually are outcasts who don't trust adults.

"Good teachers are developing classrooms and schools into caring and just communities," said W. George Scarlett, a psychologist at Tuft University's Eliot Pearson Department of Child Development. He said that instead of punishing bullies, "a lot of clever teachers find a bully's productive interests and skills. If the bully needs to be a big shot, he can be one in a big way," in class without hurting anyone. ◆

NAPMA Members Receive Discounts & Free Co-Branding



TAFTVILLE, CT - John Bogdanski, President of Shihan Martial Arts Gear expressed his support for the outstanding effort of NAPMA by offering the group a special professional discount of 10% off all Shihan products regardless of volumes purchased (see ad on page 34 of this issue).

In order to help position NAPMA members in a more distinguished light, Shihan is offering the organization free co-branding. For a limited time, Shihan Martial Arts Gear is offering a full set of traditional red gear, that normally wholesales for $42.00, at a introductory price of only $34.95 including applying the individual school logo. If a school does not have a logo, Shihan can help create one.

"The martial arts industry is rapidly expanding, it is so important to make you and your school recognizable in this highly populated market." Mr. Bogdanski went on to further explain, "Putting your logo on gear helps differentiate you in a very positive way in this already crowded market place."

Aside from traditional solid colors, Shihan has recently introduced very vibrant Metallic colors that are also available for co-branding. ◆

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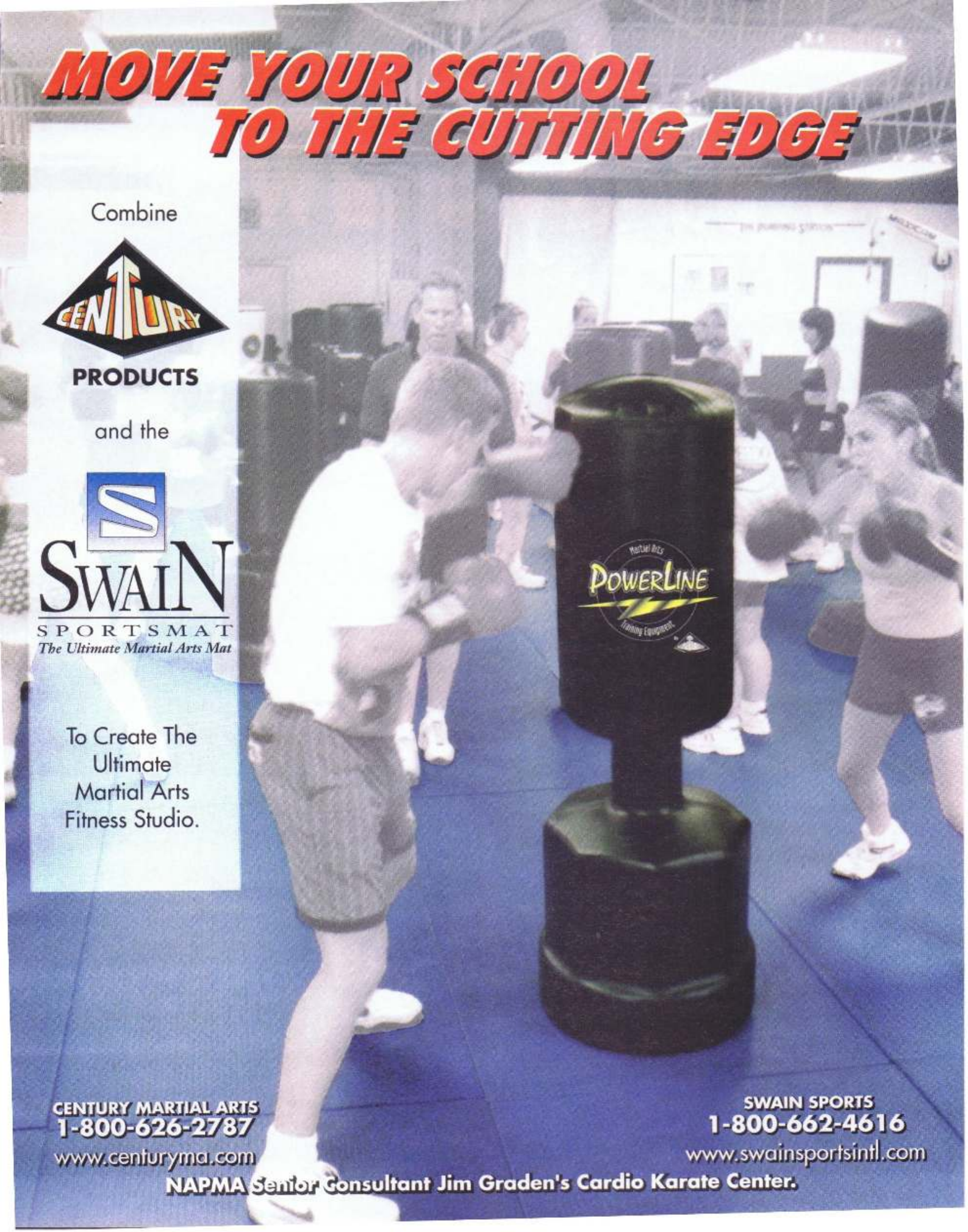
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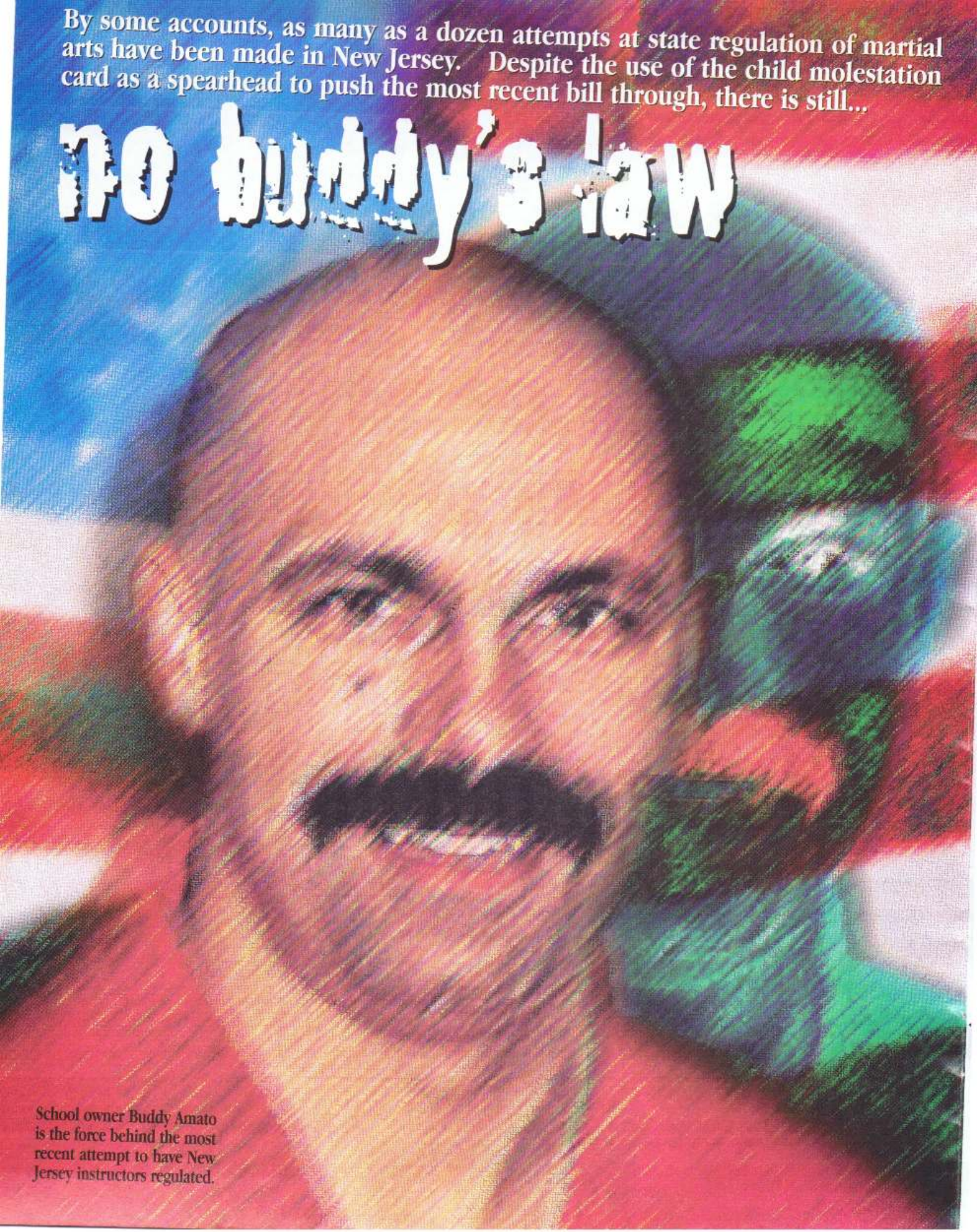
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NAPMA Senior Consultant Jim Graden's Cardio Karate Center.

By some accounts, as many as a dozen attempts at state regulation of martial arts have been made in New Jersey. Despite the use of the child molestation card as a spearhead to push the most recent bill through, there is still...

no buddy's law



School owner Buddy Amato is the force behind the most recent attempt to have New Jersey instructors regulated.

Cover Story

Meet The Man Behind the Martial Arts Instructor Licensing Act

No single article in our magazine has stirred up as much controversy as the news-piece from our June '98 issue that revealed the Martial Arts Licensing Act of New Jersey. This proposed government regulation of martial arts instructors set off a fire storm of protest from martial artists and the bill was dropped. Still, this was, by some accounts, the 13th attempt at regulating martial arts in New Jersey alone. While we don't have any numbers from other states, we do know of similar bills that have been introduced in Texas and California. So far, all of the bills have been defeated.

The sponsor of the bill was New Jersey state assemblyman Joseph Azzolina. His office stated, "The martial arts is not an industry screaming for regulation." Nevertheless, the very thought of government control over who can teach martial arts is a very disturbing thought to most professional martial arts instructors.

It was with this in mind that we sought out the black belt and school owner behind this most recent attempt at government regulation of the martial arts. His name is Buddy Amato, and he claims to have the largest school in New Jersey with over 600 students. A former police officer, Amato says he's been teaching martial arts since he was 17 years old. Interestingly, Amato, now in his mid-40s, included a provision that instructors must be at least 18 years old to teach. Why would he propose regulations that he himself (and even me, the interviewer) did not meet?

That's just one of the hard questions we'll let him answer, as well as, the many

Interview by John Graden

Martial Arts Professional: *Give us some background on your current position in the martial arts in New Jersey.*

Buddy Amato: I run the largest school in New Jersey. I've got over six-hundred students and it is a non-franchised school, which says a lot because most of the schools around here are franchised schools.

I have been in the martial arts now for over thirty-seven years. I opened my first school when I was only seventeen years old. I was still in high school. I first started out running a program with eighty people. And I said, "Jeez! Eighty people!"

But I credit a lot of my success to trial by error. Like, I was reading your book [the "ACMA Instructor Certification Manual"]. That was outstanding. I wish I had had a book like that when I started out. The book was that impressive.

But one of the things I am very proud of, after reading your book especially, is that I've been in the business now for twenty-six to twenty-seven years and I've never been sued. Not one time which is a very rare thing. I'm an ex-police officer, also, so I honed in on your legal aspects [in the ACMA manual].

MAPro: *The Risk Management section.*

Amato: That's right. And that is a lot to say because most schools — at least, I'd say ninety percent of all martial arts schools that have been in business for over ten years — have experienced a law suit. I've never been sued. I am very, very safety-orientated because the bulk of my business is children.

MAPro: *Tell us about the bill you introduced and worked on with Assemblyman Azzolina.*

Amato: I wanted to get a bill put into existence where, before you got your mercantile license, you would submit to a fingerprint check, where you would have a background check done on you. People were getting fingerprint cards done on them when they were working as a janitor in a school. And being that we called ourselves teachers, this was the least we can do if we are going to be working with children.

What happened was, every time I turned around, I was hearing these negative things these instructors were doing. First, there was that guy down south that a father had to blow away because he was molesting his kid. And there was a dojo over here in New Jersey that was having pit-bull fights in his school. Then, there was a another martial artist in North Jersey that was known to be raping his kids. Terrifying activities were going on that were known about for a long, long time.

MAPro: *Who knew about them?*

Amato: Well, a lot of people knew. They knew that he [one of the guys cited above] was gay. They knew he was a homosexual,



Amato believes times have changed and instructors under 18 should not be allowed to teach. "I don't believe in children teaching children".

but finally he was getting caught with students and the students weren't saying anything.

MAPro: *And he got caught but nobody said anything?*

Amato: He got caught. People walked in on them and it was finally getting to the point that, where it was so blatant, that everybody turned their back on the guy. And the case is still pending to this day.

And then, the most recent thing is, this Yobgaybe. He was called by the name of Yobgaybe. If you take the words and jockey them around, it spells, "boy be gay." But it's spelled, Yobgaybe. What he was doing was, he was molesting kids in, like, five different states. While he was doing seminars out of state, he was getting these kids and he was molesting them.

MAPro: *Let's focus on the central subject. Was this government licensing for martial arts instructors or school owners?*

Amato: Let's put it this way. It would be nipping the bud if the school owner himself had to apply and was found out that he had a very, very scrupulous background.

MAPro: *Meaning what?*

Amato: Felony conviction. In other words, say Mr. Jones goes out when he is seventeen years old and he joy-rides in the car and he gets caught. Now, he is 30 years old and he wants to open up a karate academy.

Well, when he gets his background check done, that comes up a hit. That shouldn't prevent him from opening up a school. As long as he has been clean and doing the right thing all those years in between. He made a mistake as a kid and he corrected himself.

Take the same guy, when he was eighteen years old, who had a molestation charge — a child molestation — and then he had a robbery at a Burger King. These red flags go up. This guy should not be allowed to teach a child. He shouldn't be able to be put in that position where a child is looking up to him as a role model.

MAPro: *Let's review some of the other areas you introduced in your bill. First off, you say the "minimum age to be able to teach should be eighteen."*

Amato: Yeah, I think that eighteen is an age that would be good because most people are out of high school at eighteen years old. For instance, I will be the first to admit I was seventeen years old and I was teaching.

MAPro: *What about a seventeen-year-old who's helping some kids at the church?*

Amato: That's different. Now, if he wants to open up a full-time business, I would assume, I would hope that he's got at least a high-school diploma to back it up.

MAPro: *Wouldn't he have the same access to children that a full-time school owner would have? Possibly, even more in that situation?*

Amato: Definitely.

MAPro: *But that's okay?*

Amato: No, but, hopefully, he is going to be in the guidelines of that facility. It would be supervised. If he is on his own, with his own little business, or maybe he is teaching private lessons in his house, now that is different because, now, he is seeing these kids on a

regular basis. Now, he is actually taking real funds.

MAPro: *So, this bill was for school owners, not instructors?*

Amato: Yeah. I would like to see it for owners and instructors but to be realistic, it would have to be for the owner of the school first and, I think, the owner of the school, at that point, should take it upon himself to do background checks on his employees if they're actually going to be teaching. I know that's what I do.

MAPro: *You do background checks on your instructors?*

Amato: I know my people when they come in here. I'm very, very careful only because they represent me.

MAPro: *So, do you conduct background checks on your people?*

Amato: As much as I can that's legal. You see, right now it is not legal. You can't legally do it. It's called "invasion of privacy." You really can't do it without consent. What my background check basically consists of [is], I find out everything I can find out about a person before I let them teach.

MAPro: *Your instructors will not consent to a background check?*

Amato: No. I don't even ask them to do it at this point. I do it myself. I look into them myself. I know these people. They're people in the community and, unless they have some hidden past and they came from another part of the world, I know it.

MAPro: *Do you have assistant instructors?*

Amato: No, not even one assistant instructor. They're students. You don't teach here. You don't get up in front of a class or do anything like that unless you were trained by me. And the reason I can afford to do this, I have eighty-five to ninety black belts. This isn't a small school.

MAPro: *So, these instructors are not getting the background checks. Are they all eighteen?*

Amato: The ones that teach. Yeah, they're all eighteen and older. I don't believe in children teaching children. But I do, to be honest with you — I have younger students like my daughters. They're thirteen, fourteen years old. They assist in the class.

MAPro: I started teaching professional classes at age sixteen in 1976. Your proposal [for regulation] would have made me a criminal. I would have been breaking the law proposed by your bill.

Amato: No, it means you wouldn't get a mercantile license. Nor would I. I wouldn't have gotten one at seventeen-years-old either.

MAPro: *So, clearly, it is obvious that there are people who can teach at that age.*

Amato: They can do it, but times have changed. You follow me?

MAPro: *No, I don't.*

Amato: It's not the same world that it was when we were kids, when we were brought up. You're in the days now where every time you turn around a kid is getting molested or getting hurt.

MAPro: *Let's move on to the next requirement. You say in your proposed bill that "an instructor should be at least a third degree."*

Amato: When I sat down with the senators, they said, "What rank do you consider someone to be as an instructor?" Well, here in my school, to promote someone to a black belt, you have to be a third-degree black belt. You cannot promote someone to first-degree black belt unless you were at least a third-degree black belt because you can only promote one under yourself.

So, if I am a third dan, I can promote you to first dan. If I'm a second dan, I can't promote you to first because I've got to be at least a third dan.

MAPro: *Is third degree a requirement you would like to see happen in order to open a school? To get this license?*

Amato: I really would like to see that. Now, the thing is, this is when a problem comes into play and I'll be the first to admit it, because some of my best friends are kung-fu martial artists. You know all systems have their own way of ranking. So, that is why it is almost impossible to get something like that put into a bill. So, I agree on the fact that it is impossible because no one has one way of thinking and one way of ranking.

MAPro: *Well, again, that would certainly have eliminated me. I started teaching as a brown belt.*

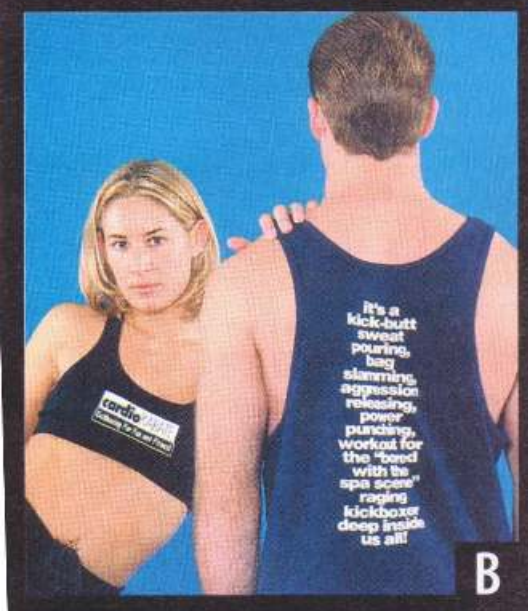
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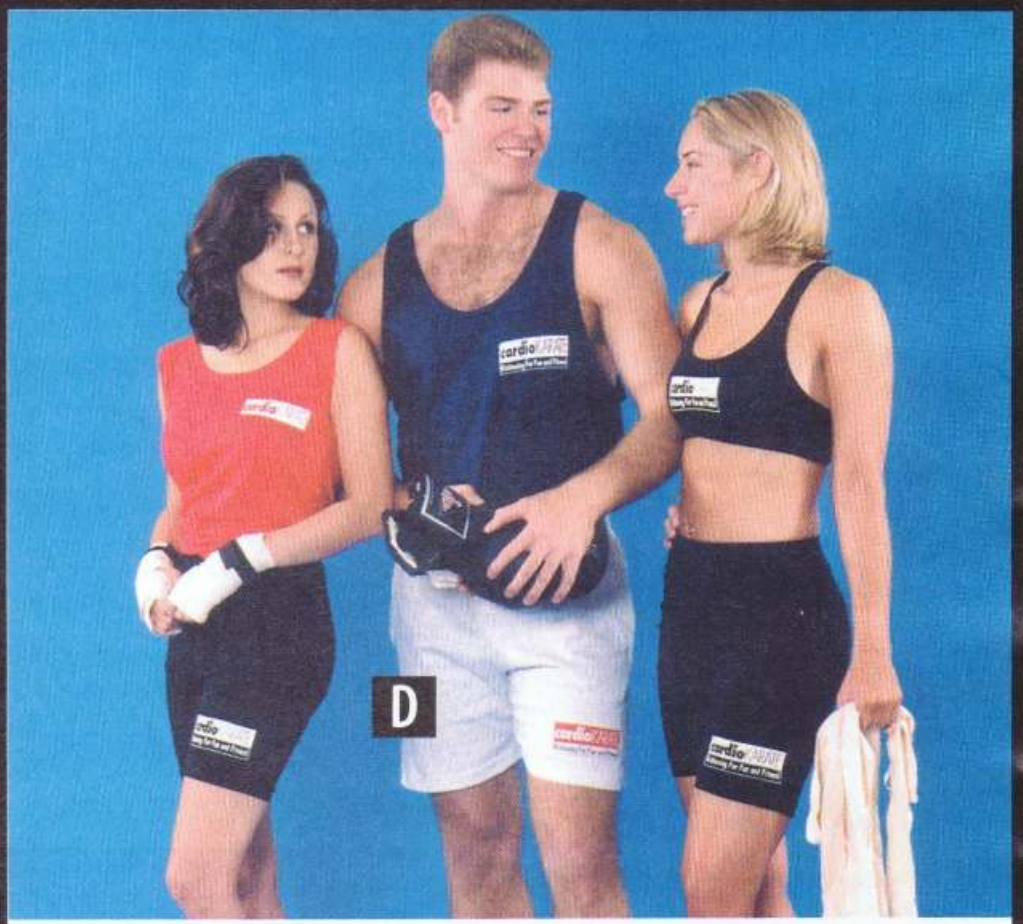
"It's not the same world that it was when we were kids. You're in the days now where every time you turn around a kid is getting molested or getting hurt" – Buddy Amato

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PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESS



motivation and success

by Brian Tracy

The Seven Ingredients of Success

Are You Fit To Lead?

In the past few months, I've described how you can reach your full potential. Which is really what martial arts is all about. We've described how, like learning the intricate steps of a complex kata or form, success is simply a matter of taking the right techniques and applying them everyday. All esteem is built upon a foundation of excellence and every day you execute your "techniques of success" correctly, your esteem will grow as a result.

Last issue, we discussed the first of the seven ingredients of success — Peace of Mind. Peace of Mind is achieved by creating a vision of your perfect future. You begin unlocking your potential by envisioning your life as if it were exactly how you would want it to be in every respect. Then you work backwards from that vision to make it a reality. We also discovered that, not only is peace of mind the most important of all the ingredients of success, but it is your birthright. Everyone is born deserving and having a right to peace of mind.

The second ingredient of success is health and energy. Just as peace of mind is your normal and natural mental state, health and energy is your normal and natural physical state. Your body has a natural bias toward health. It produces energy easily and in abundance in the absence of mental or physical interference. And radiant health exists in the absence of any pain, illness or disease. If you achieve all kinds of things in the material world, but you lose your health or your peace of mind, you get little or no pleasure from your other accomplishments.

As a martial arts professional, you must maintain a healthy, energetic state to present a congruent message to your students. If you are out of shape and low in energy, the message you are conveying to your students is that, by studying martial arts, you become out of shape and a person of low energy.

Many of you are in great shape but, sadly, many of our peers let themselves go after years of rigorous training. With each advancement in dan ranking, many of us seem to add a belt size as well.

Not only does this damage your image as a martial arts leader, but your own success is also compromised.

Imagine yourself enjoying perfect health. Think of how you would be if you were your ideal image of physical fitness. How would you look? How would you feel? How much would you weigh? What sort of foods would you eat and what kind of exercises would you do?

A businessman in one of my seminars came up to me after he had thought about this "ideal image" and told me that, if he was in perfect health, he would be able to run a marathon. His problem was that he was 40 years old, 20 pounds overweight and not particularly fit. He doubted that it was possible for him, but the thought process had begun.

The more he thought about himself as he could be, rather than as he was, the more excited he became about the very idea of training for a marathon. He began to see himself as lean and fit. He became more and more convinced that he could do it. He bought a couple of books on running and started running a little each day. He got the right clothes and the right running shoes. He increased his distance each week and soon began doing "fun runs" and mini-marathons.

Within one year, he ran his first marathon, 26.4 miles. He fulfilled his vision and became the person he had imagined he could be. Most important, he felt fitter, thinner, stronger and more energetic than he had felt for many years.

His work improved because he had more energy and generally felt better each day. His confidence soared as he became more fit and felt younger and stronger. His relationship with his wife improved since his mood and energy was higher and, frankly, he became more attractive physically.

Now, this was a 40-year-old businessman. You are a professional black belt martial arts instructor. Many of your students come to you seeking the same benefits as the man I just described. However, your ability to help these students will be in direct proportion to how well you are keeping in shape yourself.

Health and energy are critical to all success. Nothing is more important than your health. While professionals in all fields benefit from good health and high energy, in the final analysis, for professional martial arts instructors, it is an absolute requirement for success. ◆

ACMA Board member Brian Tracy is one of the world's leading experts in the field of human development and motivation. A martial artist since 1964, Brian is the author of many of the best selling audio albums in the world on these subjects.

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–Herman Luette,
Way of Japan School of Karate

Definitely very impressive...well organized.
–B.C.Yu, Martial Arts Center

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–Robert Decker,
Decker's Blue Wave Tae Kwon Do

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–David Borowitz,
Borowitz Black Belt Academy

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"The programs contained within your monthly package have not only been extremely helpful but also rewarding."
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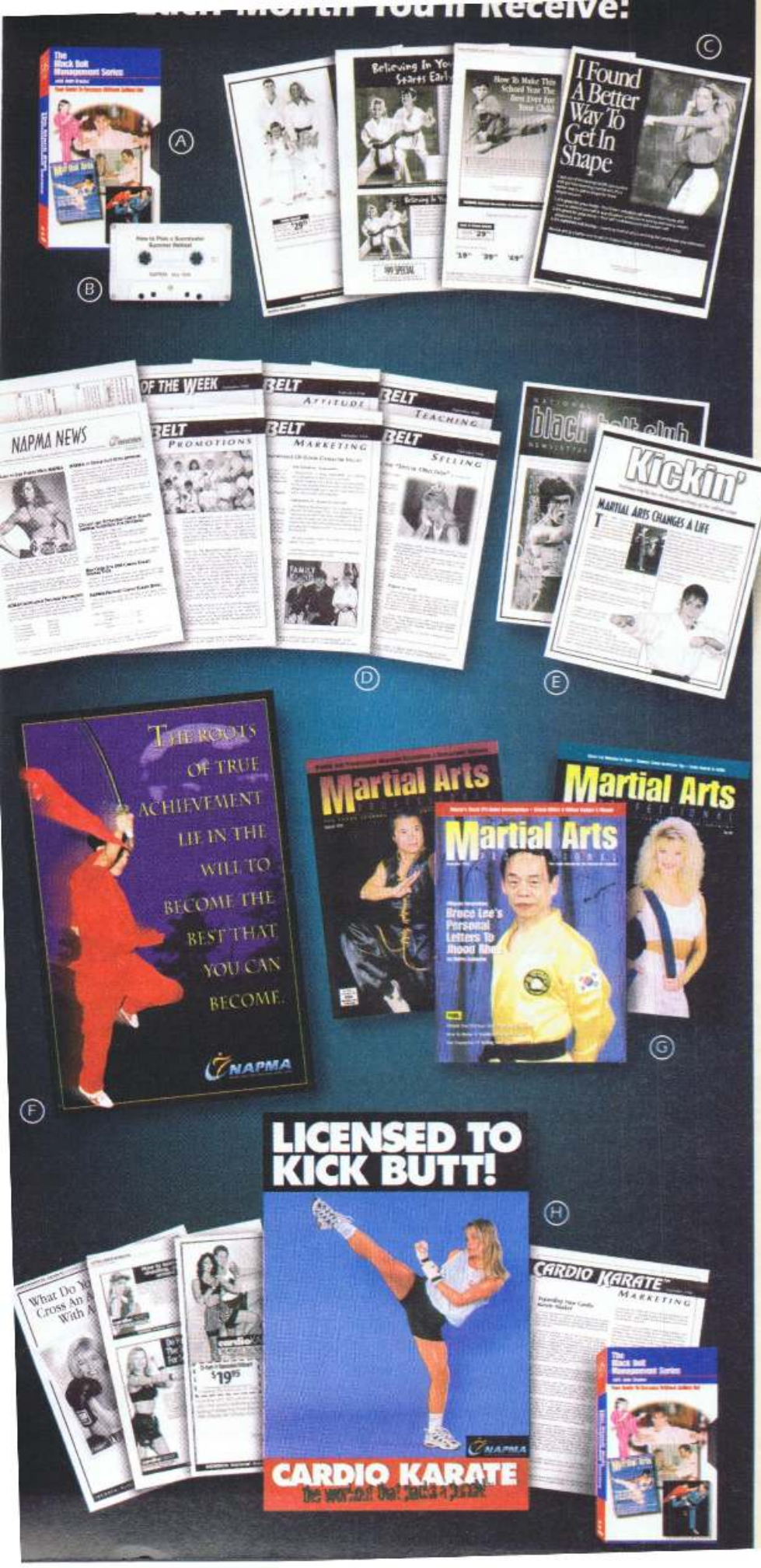
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"Thanks for producing a superb package each month."
–Lewis Jones,
American Karate Center

Your company offers an excellent value with a good breadth of products and services.
–Scott Fiorillo,
Bryans Road T K D Academy

I have had experience with several other martial arts management programs (eg:Andrew Wood, EFC, and United Professionals) and yours is far and above the best in quality and usefulness of information and presentation quality.
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(continued from page 19)

Amato: You started teaching as a brown belt but, again, you've got to remember when we started doing that. You started teaching as a brown belt. I take it you've been in the arts as long as I have. I've been at it since I was a little kid.

MAPro: *Are you implying there are more molesters in martial arts now than there were then? Do you have any numbers to back this up?*

Amato: Well, it's just common sense. Child molesters are coming out more in the public because people are being educated. People are realizing that certain things are inappropriate because they are being taught about it in school. They're being taught what's good and what's bad.

MAPro: *You also included a requirement that an instructor have "a high-school diploma?"*

Amato: I think this is common sense. If you are going to call yourself a teacher of the martial arts, you yourself should have some type of education. Now, one of the things that I stress very, very strongly here is education in school with the kids. It's like you've got to excel in school to excel in the martial arts. Because you can't dig a ditch any more without a high-school education. So, it's like. . .I think it is just a no-brainer.

MAPro: *Of the three requirements you propose, this is the third one that would have eliminated me, because I didn't graduate high school.*

Amato: Oh, well, I'm sorry to hear that. I'm surprised.

MAPro: *I started teaching at sixteen.*

Amato: There is no way in the world someone who is not educated could have written that book [the "ACMA Instructor's Certification Manual"].

MAPro: *Educated and high school are two different things, I think.*

Amato: Well, I read your book and there is no way in the world that someone who put this book together wasn't educated.

MAPro: *Let's go on to the next requirement from your bill, and that is, "be of good moral character." Tell me how you define that.*

Amato: Good moral character is someone who doesn't have a felony conviction, someone who hasn't been out robbing Burger Kings and raping kids and, you know, hijacking cars and beating their wives. I mean, it's just common sense.



"The biggest problem with the martial arts is that we're not unified because there are so many different systems and there are so many chiefs and there's not enough Indians." – Amato

MAPro: *Where is the line drawn, though? Who makes these decisions?*

Amato: If you are twenty-seven-years-old and you committed armed robbery, you are still on probation. If you are out of jail, you are still on probation. Obviously, if you are on probation and seeing a probation officer, you shouldn't be teaching children. At least, until you clean your act up on that end. These are laws that are already in existence.

MAPro: *Well, I guess the question becomes, again, where do you draw the line? Who makes that decision?*

Amato: This time, you're twenty-seven-years-old [when you committed the crime, but] now you're thirty-seven-years-old. In those ten years, suppose you've done nothing but lived a clean life. I mean, you've turned around one-hundred percent. You are really showing you are an asset to the community. Then, that one crime shouldn't prevent you from opening up a school.

But, now, suppose you are twenty-seven-years-old and you did that one crime. Then, two years later, you did another crime. Forget child molestation. And a year later, you did another crime. I mean, all these red flags keep coming up.

MAPro: *I understand that scenario, but I'm not getting any clear-cut definitions of what would be okay and what would not be. From a time-frame standpoint or the severity of the crime, including child molestation?*

Amato: There would be no time. If you were eighteen-years-old when you did that [convicted of molestation], you could be one-hundred-years-old, as far as I'm concerned. In that case, the only thing you should be doing is collecting quarters at the pay toilet on the Boardwalk.

MAPro: *How about the next one — "technical and written examination."*

Amato: Well, see, that's not my idea. It was something they came up with and it's not. . . I don't think it is a bad idea, but I think that should be left up to the instructor of the school of the student that's going to be a black belt being promoted by the instructor.

MAPro: *So, you think it should be between the student and the instructor to determine their technical qualities.*

Amato: That's right. They [the senators] put it in there and worded it like, "Who's going to set up these tests?" I mean, I don't blame people for running for the hills. "Jesus Christ!" They're thinking, "Buddy Amato is going to set himself up as the head dean and you're going to have to pass his test!" You know, I couldn't pass your test and you couldn't pass my test.

The biggest problem with the martial arts is that we're not unified because there are so many different systems and there are so

(continued on page 32)

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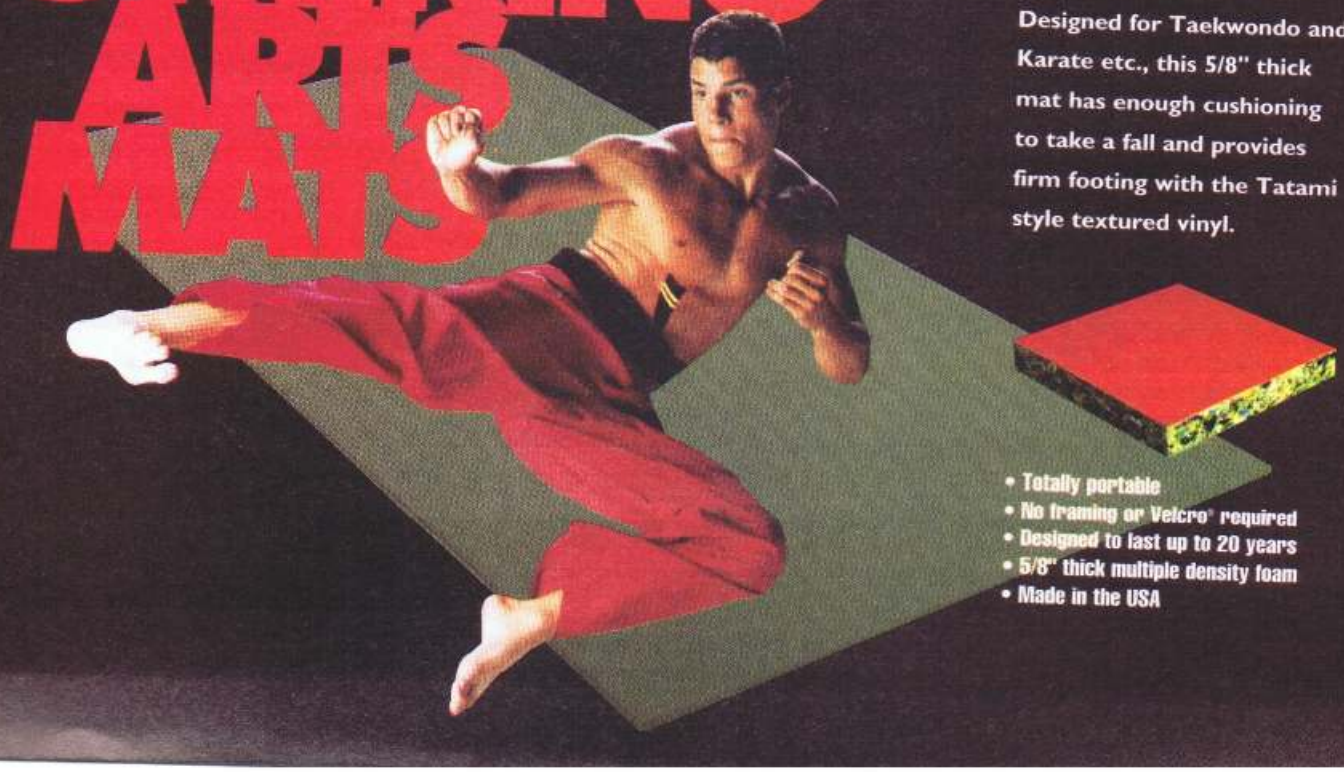
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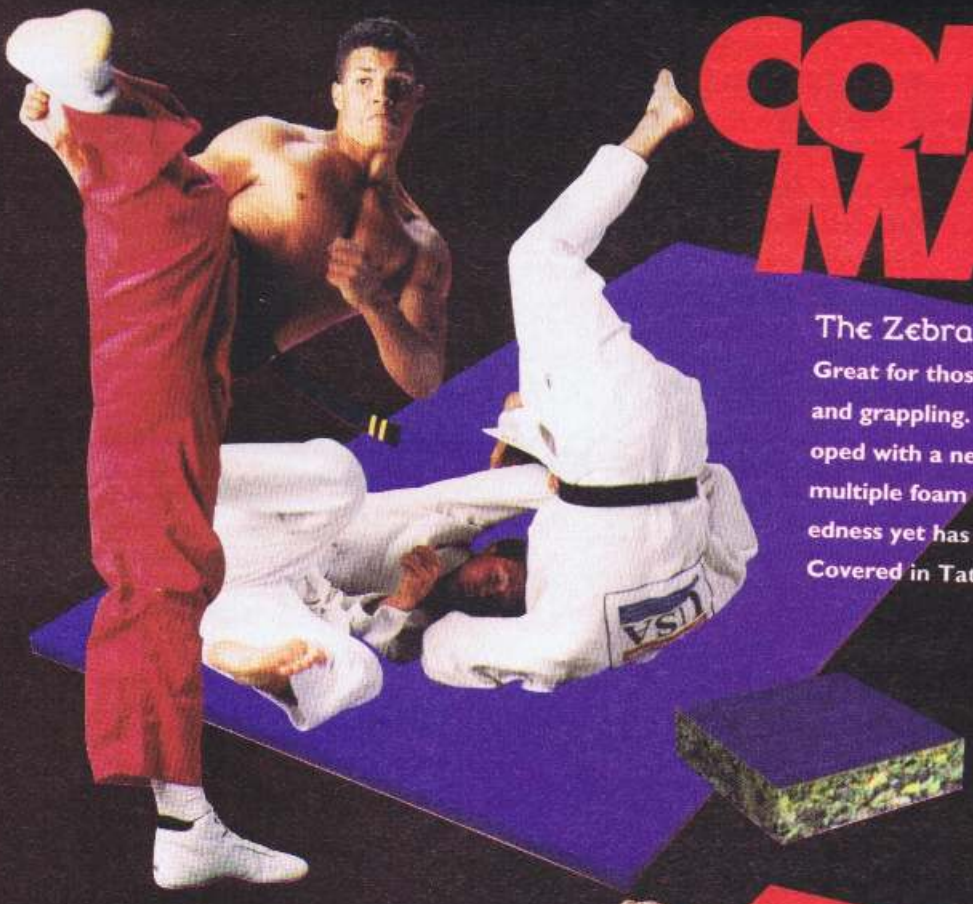


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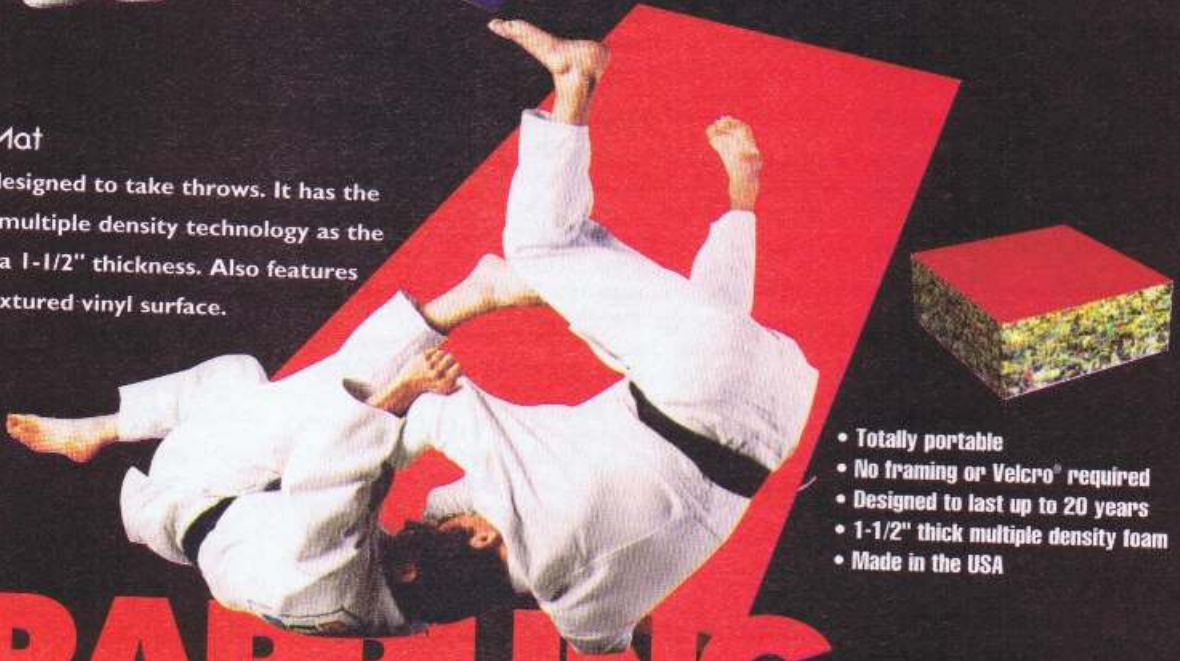
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instructions for instructors

by Tom Callos

Time: Once You Spend It, Man, It's Gone

I recommend you take care of the minutes: for the hours will take care of themselves.
— Lord Chesterfield (1694 - 1773)
English statesman and man of letters.

Have you ever wished for a little more time? Yeah, me too. It's one of my favorite wishes — right up there with having Joe Lewis' hair and Bill Wallace's left leg. I suspect it could be the second most-repeated phrase in a martial art instructor's vocabulary, close behind "Next time, I suggest you wear a cup."

I don't have to tell you (but you know I'm going to anyway) that a topnotch instructor has a giant gym bag full of time-consuming responsibilities, duties and to-dos. I say "topnotch" because the better you are as a teacher, the bigger your load. The novice instructor can focus on imparting information to his or her students, often blissfully ignorant of the thousand-and-one other things that cry out for his/her attention. On the other hand, the expert instructors' awareness extends not just to the students, but to the entire ecosystem of the school. Besides teaching, they're keeping an eye out for latecomers, parents who need to connect, visitors and potential new students. And, if they're like me, they're wondering if there's toilet paper in the restrooms, if Mrs. Corbett is going to make her down-payment and if that bench over by the mirrors is an accident waiting to happen.

Modern school-management techniques have done little to lighten the load. These days, it seems like there's at least an hour of paperwork and phone calls for every day of teaching classes. Not to mention filling out enrollment agreements, making lists, studying video tapes and organizing or attending those all-important staff meetings. The plain truth is that there's no such thing as "more" time and that the best thing we can do is avoid wasting the time we have.

Over the last 15 years, I have conducted rigorous personal experiments literally using myself as a human guinea pig to study the effects of time-wasting on martial art school management. Over and over again, I have come up with various theories which I would double check, then triple check for accuracy. The following list is the result of this exhaustive (and ongoing) time-wasting study.

The 9 Biggest Time-Wasters for Martial Art Teachers

1) Telephone call interruptions.
It's no accident that this is number one on the list. It's one of my worst time-wasting habits. If someone isn't calling me, then I'm calling someone—anyone! Especially when I'm trying to avoid the work at hand. "How's the weather in Sacramento, Dave? Hey John, what's the good news in Florida? Hey Steven, do you READ those scripts first?" Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah!

2) Unexpected visitors.
"I just thought I'd drop by and talk story." Unexpected visitors, whether they are friends, salespeople or students, can burn time faster than a fleet of Corvettes can burn gas.

3) Uneventful meetings.
"Well, I forgot my meeting notes at home but, since you're all here, hey, does anyone want to come over my house Saturday and watch "Gym-Kata" again?"

4) Putting effort into small things while high-priority tasks go unattended.
"I'll get to that delinquent student list — right after I dust off these trophies."

5) Personal disorganization.
"Gee, has anyone seen my day planner?"

6) Trying to do too many things at once and underestimating the time it will take.

7) An inability to say "no" to others.
"A karate birthday party this Sunday for your beagle? Sure, I'd be glad to."

8) Doing routine tasks that others could do just as well.

9) Work "falling through the cracks" or being duplicated unnecessarily due to confusion about lines of authority and responsibility.

There you have it. By not wasting as much time, perhaps you can control more of the time you have. And you know the old saying: "Time is money." In the October issue of "Esquire" magazine, 73-year-old veteran-actor Rod Steiger hits the time-nail on the head in an interview entitled "What I've Learned." He says, "Success means controlling your own time. If you can control over 60 percent of the time in your life, you are really successful. Time is the most important currency but, once you spend it, man, it is gone."

Man, is that the truth! ◆

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

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(continued from page 26)

many chiefs and there's not enough Indians.

MAPro: *That's why we feel the ACMA has a good shot.*

Amato: To be honest with you — one thing I don't do, I don't stroke people. You can talk to Joe Lewis; you can talk to Gary Alexander. Those people know me. If I don't like you, I'm going to tell you I don't like you. I look at this book and I'm very impressed. I think that this book is on the right track. But, you see, one thing about the book is, it's a great aid for people like you and me who are really sincere about bettering the martial arts. But it's not for the unscrupulous martial artist — for the persons who really don't care. They are not going to read the book.

MAPro: *That same person could certainly get a license and be as unscrupulous as others.*

Amato: You're right. But if the licensing procedure background check is done, at least you know the guy is not some type of criminal preying on these kids.

MAPro: *You're really pushing a major change in how the martial arts business is run. What kind of numbers do you have, other than just your gut feeling, about the number of molestations that are actually occurring in the state of New Jersey in martial arts schools?*

Amato: If there is one occurring a year, it is too much.

MAPro: *That's not the question. Do you have a number?*

Amato: I couldn't give you that answer.

MAPro: *What about other larger sports? Baseball coaches, football coaches, basketball coaches, dance instructors all have influence over kids.*

Amato: And do you know who the worst ones are? And it scares me and no one has ever said anything about it. These Cub Scout Masters. . .in the woods.

MAPro: *Those activities are much larger than the martial arts. They are not regulated. As somebody from assemblyman Azzolino's office said to us, "Martial arts is a field that is not screaming for regulation." The implication was that it wasn't necessary. What kind of evidence do you have that it is necessary more for us than it is for these other activities?*

Amato: The main reason is because we have more influence and we have more control, and we have more molding power than any of those industries combined.

MAPro: *How do you know that?*

Amato: If we combine every single one of those industries, they do not have the influence that a martial arts instructor has over a child.

MAPro: *I'm trying to get some kind of evidential justification for this. By our estimations, the incidence of molestation is miniscule. Certainly, if you want to save one child, that's great, but government regulation is a lot to ask. The majority of the few cases we've been able to find in our experience has been primarily involving first-time offenders whose crimes, then, would have never come up on a background check.*

Amato: In my lifetime — in my whole lifetime — if a background investigation that was sponsored by me, if it protected just one kid, it would be worth it.

MAPro: *Let's talk about the resources that are already out there for instructors and parents. If somebody has been convicted of molestation, Megan's Law dictates that that information is made available to the public.*

Amato: They don't do it. Ask all the people that you teach, every single one of them; I'm sure there's hundreds and hundreds like that at my school. How many went to see if you were a Megan's Law violator? How many did it? Nobody did it to me, either. Not a single one of them.

MAPro: *So, you want thousands of martial artists to pay hundreds of dollars in fees and submit to these standards in hopes of preventing what is already a miniscule number of incidents, even though the information is already available to the parents and the public?*

Amato: You are one-hundred percent right. That is exactly what I want. And the reason why is because no parent who brings their child into a martial arts school does any type of background check at all, as far as any type of molestation on that instructor. They do not look into it. They don't. And the reason why is, when they walk in, they trust you because you are a karate school owner. They walk in and they see you standing there in that clean white uniform wearing that black belt and they are in awe.

MAPro: *Don't you think that is a big assumption about how people perceive you?*

Amato: You can argue with me forever, but the Megan's Law doesn't work. I'm an ex-cop and, many times, they make these molesters move into towns and Megan's Law only works if that person goes and reports to police headquarters.

MAPro: *What you are saying is, "Let's take everybody in the martial arts industry and regulate them and license them. And a lot of guys who are not molesters are not going to qualify, even though they have done a good job as school owners."*

Amato: It will not hurt them. I told you it would only hurt them if every other year they came up with a felony conviction.

You're talking about a felony conviction, not talking about a misdemeanor. We're not talking about jaywalking. We're not talking about when you were a kid, you shoplifted or you joy-rode. We're talking about felony convictions. We're talking about serious crimes. You are talking about endangering the welfare of somebody else or a minor or seriously endangering someone, or hurting someone physically with a weapon. I mean, you're talking armed robbery.

You're not talking about a domestic violence thing where you argued with your wife. Follow me? Where nobody was hurt. You're talking something serious that continuously pops up. Even if it's just one conviction.

MAPro: *Is battery a felony?*

Amato: Yes. It depends on what type of battery you're talking about, too. Battery, you could say, "I get into a fight and I hit some guy and I got convicted on a Class II battery or a simple assault. Now, I did that when I was nineteen or twenty years old. Now I'm twenty-six-years-old and I want to open up a school."

Now, that doesn't carry a stiff sentence, especially if you are a first-time offender. That should not make you unable to open up a school. That's what I said earlier.

MAPro: *Who determines these "shoulds"?*

Amato: I'm not asking to set the rules. I'm only one person. I'm just this one person who is saying, "Hey! Listen!" I'm looking for background checks to be done on people just to ensure the safety of the kids that we "so call" love.

MAPro: *What about costs?*

Amato: I don't care how much it costs for licensing. They can sit back and complain and they can cry, "I don't want to pay fifty

(continued on page 38)

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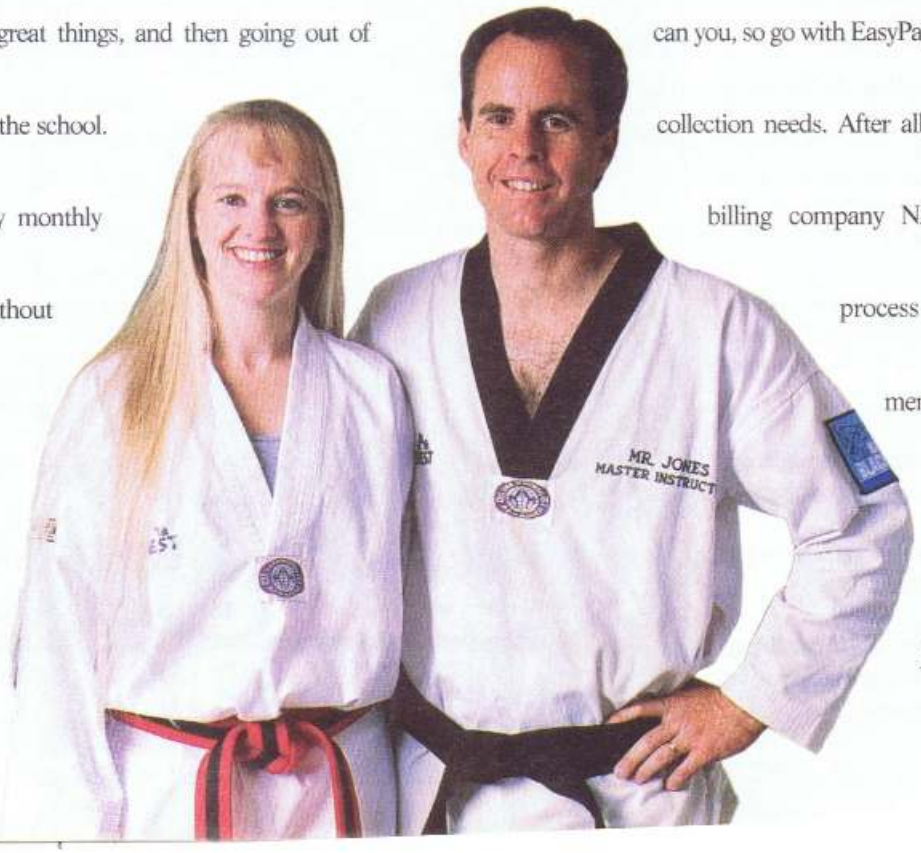
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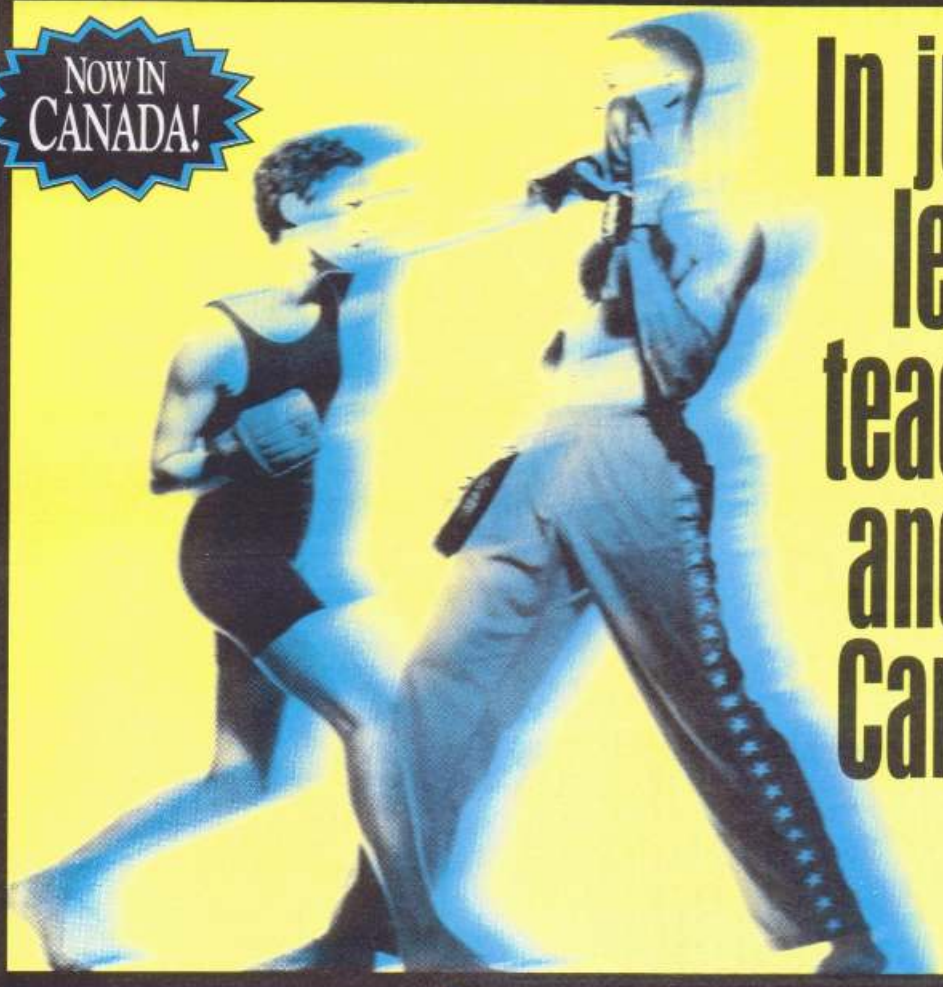
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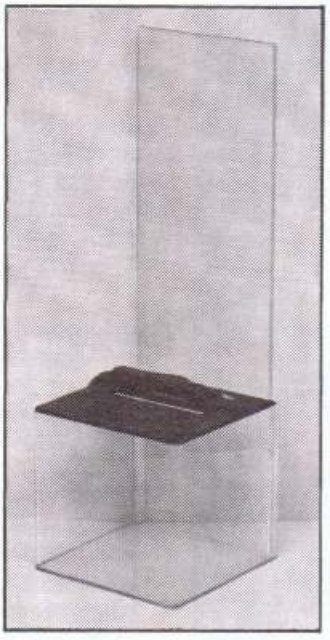
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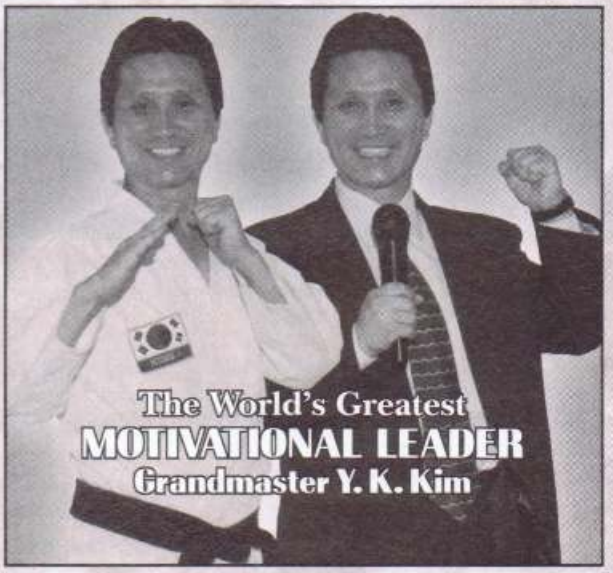
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"Right now, there are no guidelines for regulating martial arts. I mean, we're out there, literally, with no guidelines. If you really think about it, it is really something to think about." – Amato

(cont. from page 32)

dollars a year" or whatever, but, you know, then get out of the damn industry. If you can't afford fifty or one-hundred bucks a year to do what you love doing and make a living, then you shouldn't be teaching karate.

MAPro: *I don't think anybody argues that molestation should never happen. I think that the fear, and I think it is a legitimate fear, is the problems that come with government intervention.*

Amato: I agree.

MAPro: *How can we, internally, handle this and educate our people and work toward a solution?*

Amato: John, you tell me. The ACMA is on the right track, but it's only going to work on people who are truly seriously interested in doing the right thing.

MAPro: *Well, then, that begs the question: Who is to keep the people from just ignoring the license and just teaching anyway? Do they get arrested?*

Amato: I'm not saying England is the way to go. But in England, if you are caught teaching the martial arts without being licensed through the State, you're locked up. Now, I'm not saying that should be done here. But I think that if you say, "I'm not going to have a background check. Screw that. I'm just going to teach." In that case, then you can't get the mercantile license because you didn't get the background check.

MAPro: *What if I teach out of my garage?*

Amato: That's illegal.

MAPro: *Or go to the Community Center, or go to—*

Amato: —They should be fined. I'm not saying put in jail, but a cease and desist order would be put on them. "Hi, Mr. Jones, this is a cease and desist order. For every day that you teach you are going to be fined fifty bucks."

MAPro: *Do you plan to reintroduce this attempt at regulation? What's next?*

Amato: I'm not going to. But if I get the support of you and get the support people who have a voice, then, yes. But I'm not going to try to reintroduce it. You know why? Because I got beat up on this.

MAPro: *Let me ask you about Gary Alexander and some of the other guys assisting you with this effort. How would you classify their involvement?*

Amato: They're one-hundred percent behind what I want to do. They see it happening.

MAPro: *But is it for the same reason?*

Amato: They see it happening and there is no guideline. Right now, there are no guidelines for regulating martial arts. I mean, we're out there, literally, with no guidelines. If you really think about it, it is really something to think about.

MAPro: *The ACMA is a step towards providing those guidelines without regulation.*

Amato: I'm one-hundred percent behind that. I like what you're doing. I'm very impressed. I read your book and I'm very, very observant.

I love my work and I'm very successful at what I do. My life is the martial arts. All my daughters are black belts. It's a dojo. All my daughters are running it with me. This means a lot to me. You know, it's like. . .it really means a lot to me when I see a kid hurt or when I see a kid molested.

MAPro: *When the government starts getting involved, you lose control and before you know it, ten years from now, what you started, as an altruistic opportunity to help children, is totally removed from that.*

Amato: You might be right.

MAPro: *Oh, there is no question!*

Amato: I might be the Amazing Kreskin [a famous psychic] if I could disagree with what you said.

MAPro: *That's the thing that scares people.*

Amato: I really don't know. I know that the boxing industry is regulated.

MAPro: *It's a sport.*

Amato: I know that. A lot of other sports — baseball, football, you know — I'm not classifying ourselves with that.

MAPro: *Dance is not regulated and that industry works with tons of children.*

Amato: My kids are both dancers, too.

MAPro: *It's very similar to martial arts.*

Amato: To be honest with you, I fall into that "duh" category. My kids go over to Miss Pern around the corner to learn dance. I know nothing about her. ◆

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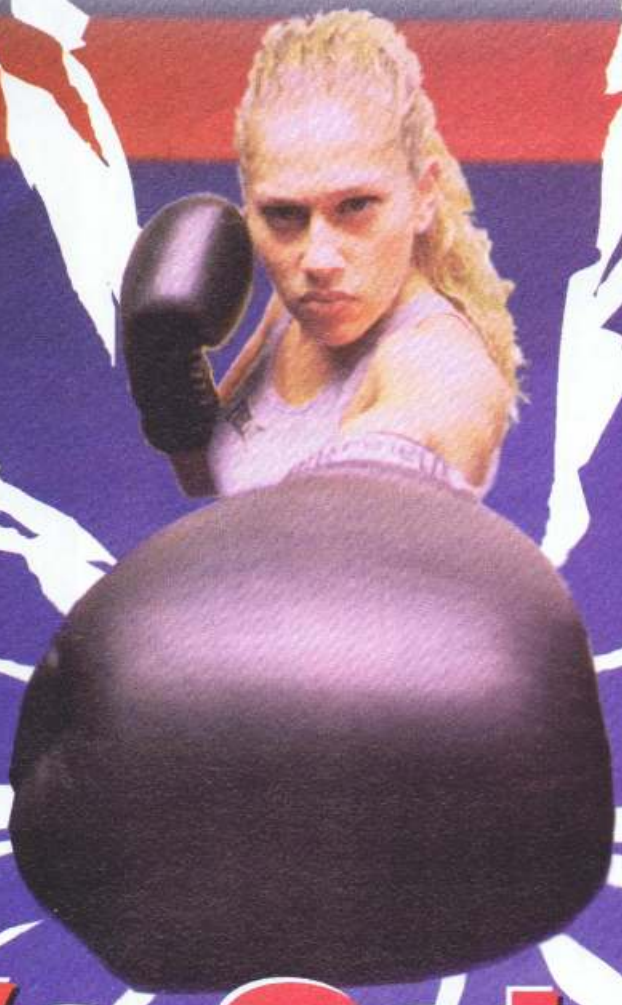
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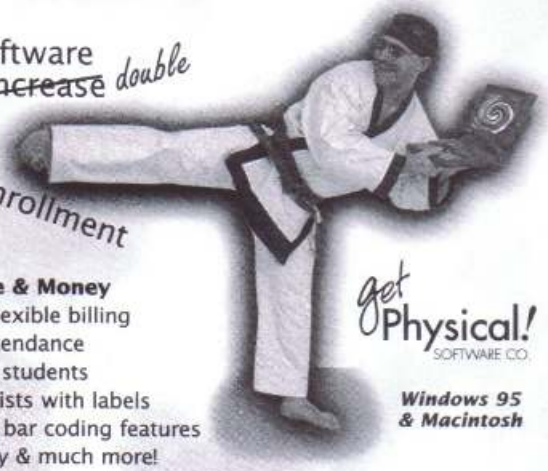
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EXECUTIVE DECISIONS



managing for success

by Rob Colasanti

Flexing The Fitness Muscle III

Using The Fitness Field As Our Business Role Model

Both the martial arts and fitness fields began developing their faces simultaneously in the early eighties. It was during this time that many of the educational and professional organizations in both fields were formed. However, since then, fitness has grown at an incredibly fast rate relative to martial arts. In fact, experts report that the martial arts industry is currently in a stage similar to where fitness was about 15 years ago.

Clearly, martial arts professionals stand to gain simply by modeling some of the tested and proven traits employed by our ever-so-successful fitness friends. Remember, if you want to be successful it helps to model the behavior of other successful people. With that in mind, here's a few key areas that school owners could improve upon:

1. Offer More Variety

As a NAPMA consultant, I speak to martial arts school owners all day long. In my conversations, I find that too many schools still offer just one service. Most claim they operate their schools in this manner because their superiors make them or because they feel obligated to uphold a particular tradition. By and large, these schools tend to stay small and constantly struggle to survive. Without question, I've come to realize that running a single-program school in today's marketplace is indeed "risky business."

Fitness centers, however, offer lots of variety and, as a result, they attract an enormous amount of people to their facilities. For example, Gold's Gym alone has over two-million members. If you recall, the average health club maintains approximately 1,200 members. What's interesting is that they manage to achieve these kinds of numbers with very little advertising. According to IHRSA, the average health club spends about two percent of its budget on marketing. Hmmm, there must be truth to the old saying, "Give people what they want. . .and they shall come."

Fortunately, martial arts schools are beginning to see the effectiveness of this strategy. In addition to their traditional arts, many schools now offer kickboxing, yoga, day care service, tai-chi, Cardio Karate workouts, classes for preschoolers and more. All of this extra variety has allowed schools to accommodate a vast spectrum of clients. Not only is this great for business, but it allows us to help so many more people with our teachings.

2. Sharpen Professional Skills

As we talked about last month, fitness club owners are typically entrepreneurs that understand the ins and outs of business concepts such as management, sales and marketing. I can assure you they don't obtain that knowledge by accident. Success is a matter of choice and they work hard at developing their professional skills.

Martial arts professionals, on the other hand, are less eager when it comes to this. In fact, it's been my experience that many school owners are reluctant to invest time, money or effort into sharpening their business skills. They simply refuse to break out of their comfort zones and bring their professional skills up to date with the times. This is a huge mistake that can result in years of stunted growth.

According to famed motivational speaker Brian Tracy, "Some of the most successful companies in the world invest 15-20% of their gross income back into employee education each year." This includes seminars, conventions, management support programs, consultation, audio and video programs, motivational aids, college courses, etc. As Mr. Tracy says, "If the only tool you have in your toolbox is a hammer, then the whole world begins to look like a nail." The best way to prevent this is to start acquiring more "tools" to work with.

3. Improve Work Habits

Following the example set by health club owners, many martial arts school owners need to work harder if they plan on enjoying a similar level of success. This means getting up earlier, working later and following the principals governed by the 80/20 rule. It means doing more demonstrations, handing out more fliers and scheduling more school promotions. It means constant planning, continuous staff training with programs like the American Council on Martial Arts (ACMA), strict money management and on-going personal development. These are the kinds of things that make a business successful regardless of what type of business it is.

Even though comparing fitness centers to martial arts schools is in some ways like comparing apples to oranges, the principles of business and professionalism described above remain constant for both. Furthermore, I truly believe that everyone can benefit from having a mentor. For us, the fitness field would serve as a terrific role model. They're way ahead of us but, if we emulate their style we might be able to bridge the gap a little. Let's see just how fast we can make up that 15-year difference. ◆

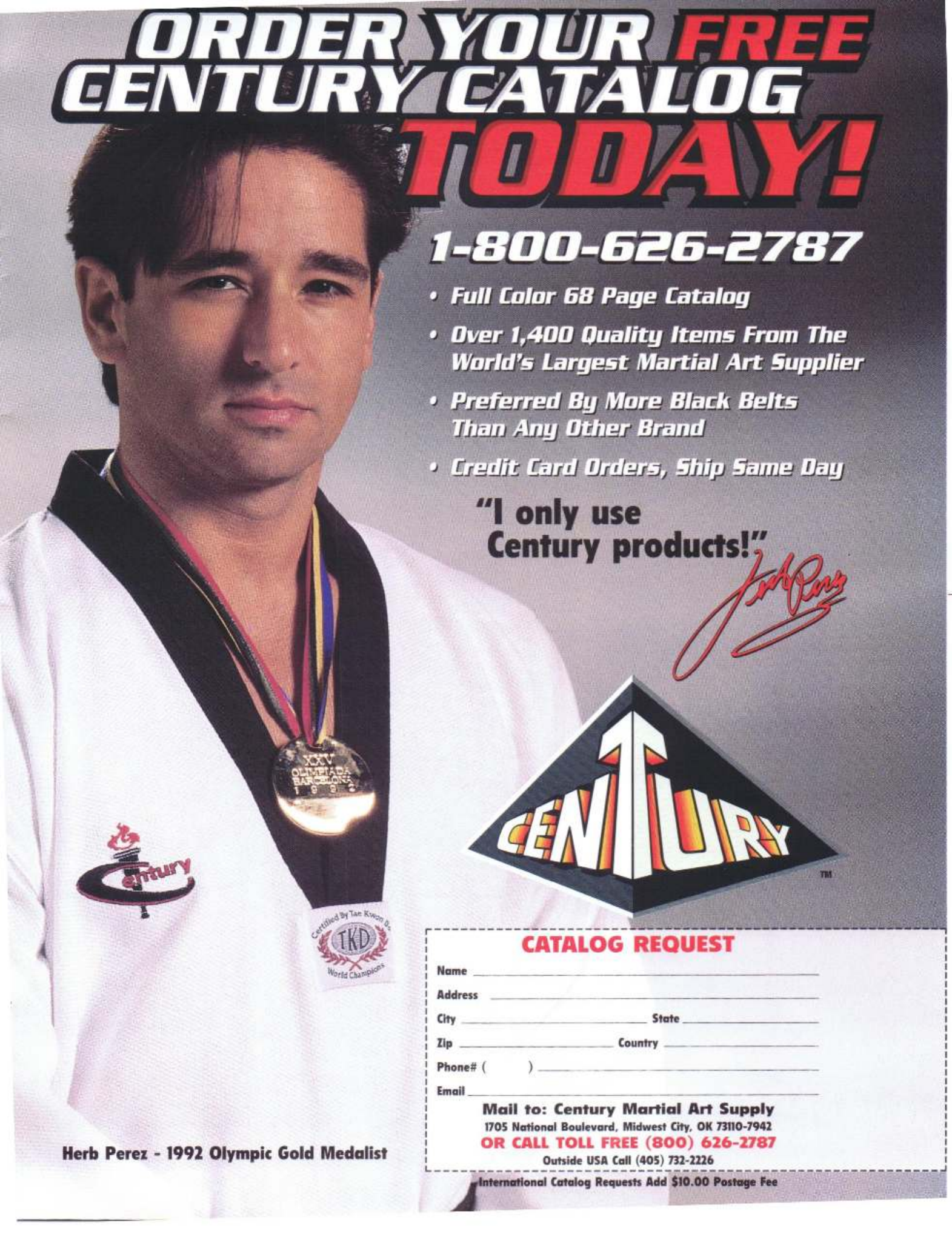
Rob Colasanti is a 3rd-degree black belt and, as Vice President for the National Association of Professional Martial Artists, speaks with hundreds of school owners across the country each week. Rob has a BA degree from the University of South Florida and is the author of "How To Be A Black Belt."

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