

ATFI TaeKwon-Do in Texas: Beyond the Here and Now

Promoting TaeKwon-Do for Future Generations

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THESIS

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By the undersigned signatures below, this committee recommends that this Thesis submitted by the above-named student, in partial fulfilment of the Promotion to the rank of VII Dan, as requested, be approved and accepted for such Promotion.

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APPROVAL

Test Board Chairman

Date

Test Board Co-Chairman

Date

ABSTRACT

Frank Galindo III: ATFI TaeKwon-Do In Texas - Beyond the Here and Now Promoting TaeKwon-Do for Future Generations (Under the Direction of Master Fabian Nunez)

Not until the last 5 - 8 years of my 36 years of TaeKwon-Do training and instructing, and as I have aged, had I pondered the “mortality” of the Art in general, and of the mortality of ATFI TaeKwon-Do specifically.

How do we instill a sense of loyalty to our Art into our students so that they may become future Instructors who will also continue to promote TaeKwon-Do as it was meant to be taught - as taught by our Founder - and as we, the current Instructors, strive to teach? What are we, as Instructors, doing individually and collectively, to ensure the “continuation of our species” if you will, after we have “stepped down”, for whatever reason, from our respective roles in our Organization? How will we promote the TaeKwon-Do “torch” as we know it, and keep it alive and well for future generations?

There are probably as many answers as there are members of our Organization, but this paper will put forth some concrete suggestions, ideas, and for some of us, even answers to some of these questions, so that we may be able to continue in our Martial Arts Journey, specifically in ITF/ATFI TaeKwon-Do, knowing that after we are “dead and gone”, our legacy, General Choi, Hong-Hi’s legacy, will continue.

Information gleaned from newspaper articles, magazines, social media outlets, personal phone interviews, as well as from my own personal beliefs, will point to the same end via similar, although regionally applicable, and simultaneously, different means, all of which help to promote the Art, and the continuation of instruction, and to promote a “legacy” of not only continuity, but of connectedness to current and previous Instructors even leading back to our Founder thereby shedding light on the main study of this paper: How do we promote TaeKwon-Do (ITF/ATFI TaeKwon-Do) for future generations?

To my dad, Francisco Galindo Jr., who always took pride in his work regardless of the size of the task at hand, and who instilled in me the same regard for my endeavors... thanks Dad, for leading by example.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincerest and deepest gratitude and appreciation go out to Master Fabian Nunez, Instructor in Florida, Master Charles Avila from Colorado, Master Frank Prim from Tennessee, Master Travis Young from Texas, and Ms. Bridgette Morris from California. These fine Master and Expert Instructors allowed me to interview them by phone, and shared their insights, wisdom and experience in TaeKwon-Do and despite the divergent backgrounds and personal journeys, they helped cement the cohesion in the matrix of this work...thank you all for your input and for your dedication to the Art of TaeKwon-Do!

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I. Even though the origins of Korean Martial Arts can be traced back almost 1400 years to Ancient Korean Arts such as Soo Bak-Gi, TaeK Kyon, Sirum and Yoo Sul, TaeKwon-Do is not the ancient Martial Art that many schools of this Art teach, but merely 60 - 65 years old. The path for the birth of TaeKwon-Do, as we now know it, begin in the mid-1940's shortly after the birth of the ROK military force which was established in mid-January, 1946 (the same date that General Choi, Hong-Hi, the Founder of TaeKwon-Do, was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant).

General Choi's love for his country and all things Korean, his strong military discipline, and his resolve to promote a uniquely Korean Martial Art in his own country and beyond, eventually came to fruition. His in-depth study of body physics, his research and experimentation of and with body mechanics, and of the generation of power from one's own correct and particular movement, allowed him to develop a "Super Karate" -- TaeKwon-Do. TaeKwon-Do was proclaimed to the world as a "completely valid and unique martial art having a basic Korean origin" on April 11, 1955.

From the ROK Army's TaeKwon-Do demonstrations in early 1959, to the approval from the South Korean Government to declare TaeKwon-Do as Korea's National Martial Art in 1965, and from TaeKwon-Do demonstrations in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia, as well as the demonstration of TaeKwon-Do in 1968 at the Council of International Military Sports held in France, this powerful Korean Martial Art piqued the interest of all who were introduced to it. This made TaeKwon-Do a world-recognized Art, and highly effective self-defense method, which became the basis of many world military self-defense regimens. Also an excellent form of exercise, TaeKwon-Do was a gift to the world shared by one man, whose legacy lives in the training halls of all who practice TaeKwon-Do.

II. Charyot, kyung-nae, junbi...familiar phrases to the practitioners of TaeKwon-Do. Students in the Do-jang, or training hall, or, even more succinctly, "place where we train in 'the way'", utter this terminology at the beginning of most drills throughout the training session, calling the students to attention, to bow to each other as a show of respect for each other and for the lesson at hand, and to begin the drill as instructed.

Most of us can probably remember the first day of our TaeKwon-Do class and the apprehension, expectation, or even awe experienced as various punching, kicking, blocking and evading techniques were introduced and practiced throughout the session. The ease with which some students were able to perform these techniques inspired us and instilled in us - those of us who continued training in the Art - a headstrong desire to

persevere, to overcome physical or mental obstacles in order to progress, and a dedication to practice daily to achieve the next level of training.

Training in TaeKwon-Do became an obsession. One hour a day was not enough; two hours a day were not enough...five days a week was not enough!

From bowing in to bowing out and everything in between, including but not limited to stretches and warm-up drills, bag work or kicking the shields or targets, or even each other, self-defense techniques and the ubiquitous patterns training, along with board-breaking and brick-breaking, and all the other nearly impossible physical expectations imposed on the class, TaeKwon-Do became a way of life. The “mystery” never diminished, and there were always more advanced drills, kicks, self-defense techniques and more expectations to surpass the last achievement - a never-ending hamster-wheel of “do it again” ...and the serious practitioner loved it!

How many of us, during our formative TaeKwon-Do years, were approached by a higher rank, namely our Instructor, to discuss the possibility of “taking over the studio” or being a principal Instructor? Probably few of us. How many of us were “asked” i.e. “instructed” to take a lead role in helping newer ranks learn their next technique? Probably all of us.

Unbeknown to us at the time, being “instructed” to help a younger student, younger in rank and not necessarily age, was the planted seed which allowed now seasoned Instructors to excel in their manner of instructing their students. Most, if not all of us can look back and remember emulating our Instructor(s) in their teaching methods, in their explanations of techniques, and even in their demeanor and style of interaction with students. Eventually, each Instructor developed their own “style” of teaching, preaching and practicing TaeKwon-Do, and “evolved” into the “Instructors” that we are today. Master Travis Young, VII Dan Instructor at the University of Texas TaeKwon-Do club states that he “became an Instructor in 1996 after Mr. Stinson (his Instructor) left me the school.” Master Frank Primm, VII Dan Instructor in Nashville, Tennessee recalls a similar situation explaining that his Instructor “promoted student involvement” and so Master Primm started “helping teach class at an early age as a Red Belt”. Another Instructor, Ms. Bridgette Morris, IV Dan Instructor in Cupertino, CA stated “even though she had been helping teach all along” that she feels she became an Instructor “when my husband told me (“instructed” her) to “lead the class”. Ms. Morris states that it was at this point the she felt she had become “Instructor grade.”

III. At what point does a student become “Instructor grade”? When does an Instructor know that he/she has now become a successful Instructor? How does an Instructor

“grow” his/her do-jang? How is a club, studio, Do-jang set up to continue the forum of TaeKwon-Do?

Anyone can open up a Martial Arts location and acquire a respectable amount of students, but what are the key factors that allow such a venture to blossom, thrive and grow and perpetuate?

Many ideas abound....from keeping student/instructor ratios low, to having standardized curriculum; from training Instructors on how to “be” Instructors instead of teaching them how to teach correct technique, to inviting other instructors from other bona fide Arts to share their techniques with one’s own students.

Terry Bryan, a multiple Black Belt holder in Karate, Jujitsu and Kempo has his “10 Commandments to Running a Successful Martial Arts Business”...

- 1). Set your price
- 2). Collect what’s due
- 3). Run your school on your terms
- 4). Promote yourself and your school shamelessly
- 5). Understand the 80/20 rule
- 6). Be thrifty with your money
- 7). Always be totally honest with yourself and others
- 8). While developing a reputation for being fair, be tough in business dealings
- 9). Develop an immunity to criticism when you know you are doing the right thing
- 10). Believe in the law of abundance

...and Bryan Zarnett, a Martial Artist and school owner in Whitby, Ontario, Canada, follows his “5 Laws of Success”...

- 1). Know the Why and the What
- 2). Be a business person
- 3). Marketing - finding “qualified” students
- 4). Teach a GREAT class - increase retention
- 5). Be a Master of Member Relations

(Even though the “10 Commandments..” and the “5 Laws” will not be explained in detail here, reference will be made to these guidelines throughout this writing)

Many Instructors do a great job in “being” Instructors but are at a loss when it comes to running the Do-jang as a business; “pay me later” or ‘pay me when you can’ (under #2 in the 10 Commandments above) should be eliminated from the Instructor’s vocabulary” says Mr. Terry Bryan.

Many of us have fallen into this trap in believing that if we don't give our students discounts, that we will not gain that student. In fact, the exact opposite is what actually happens, and the student's expectations for more allowances in the future will increase.

Does your Do-jang proclaim a lineage? A succession of Instructors leading up to well-known TaeKwon-Do, that is, TaeKwon-Do practitioners, or even to the Founder of the Art? Do you/your Instructor offer a diverse field of training or is it mainly fighting, or mainly patterns, or solely self-defense? Does training follow an observable curriculum or is it more of an off-the-top-of-the-head conglomeration of techniques that look cool, but have little or no foreseeable end? Are partner drills a common practice or do students mainly work alone or with targets such as punching bags, shields, or striking targets? Are allowances made for older students, less mobile students, or handicapped students to execute an alternate technique to still show progress? Does your style, namely TaeKwon-Do, accommodate your body style and your ability to perform well? And, what is the general feel or attitude at your Do-jang...is it merely a place to train and learn technique or does it feel like home?

The common threads woven and ascertained from this research point to the following:

- a) Run your Do-jang like a business; be fair but consistent in business dealings and know your worth - never sell yourself short by taking less payment than designated.
- b) Know your target market. Teach class to the needs of the students; children's classes will not taught the same as adult classes.
- c) Establish a rapport with parents and students alike and involve them in the workings of the Do-jang.
- d) Coach, train and educate yourself and your Instructors to maintain a continuity in training; pursue continuing education for yourself and your assistant Instructors.
- e) Invite other Instructors, whether from your Art or another Art, to teach a class at your Do-jang.
- f) Students will train with you not because of special pricing, discounts, or free lessons, but because they had a blast in the introductory lesson.
- g) Students will stay with you because of the continued learning atmosphere in their training.

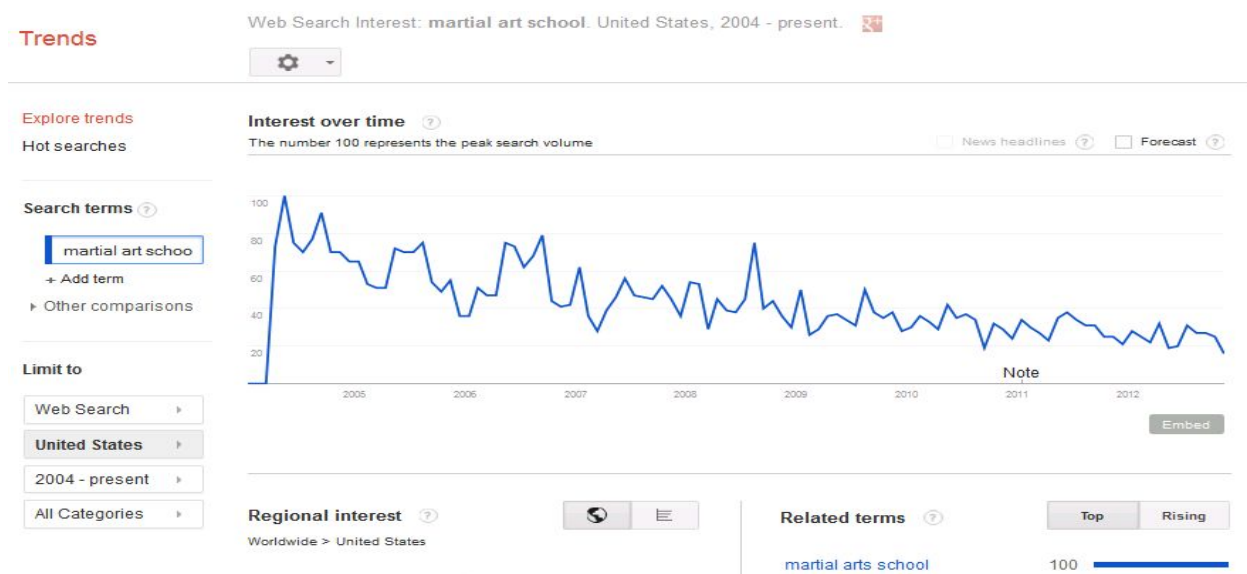
IV. American TaeKwon-Do Federation International (ATFI) formed in 2001, late November, has affiliate locations in 20 of the 50 States. Texas, the State of focus of this thesis, shows to have Affiliates in Austin, Houston (two locations), Midlothian (the D/FW area), Odessa, Tomball, Ballinger, Menard, San Angelo (two locations, although it is this Instructors knowledge that the Angelo Martial Arts location is no longer offering ATFI TaeKwon-Do), and The Woodlands. Over the last several years, it is apparent that student participation in tournaments, seminars, and in class attendance has dwindled.

Instructors have seen class sizes wane, and likewise, Instructor enthusiasm also falters when class size is minimal.

Why? Is it a lack of advertising or a failing to follow the ever-present mantra in advertising: location, location, location? Or has technology beat us to the punch with the “instant gratification” sentiment - students nowadays usually seem to ask “is there an app for that?” when approached about involvement in an activity. As my Instructor, Master Fabian Nunez indicated “students now have a very short attention span, no patience nor perseverance; they don’t want to wait weeks, much less months, to attain rank, or to learn new techniques. Many students expect to win in everything they compete in - but we (the students) have to learn to lose, and to handle adversity. Many students can’t even handle being on probation for testing!”

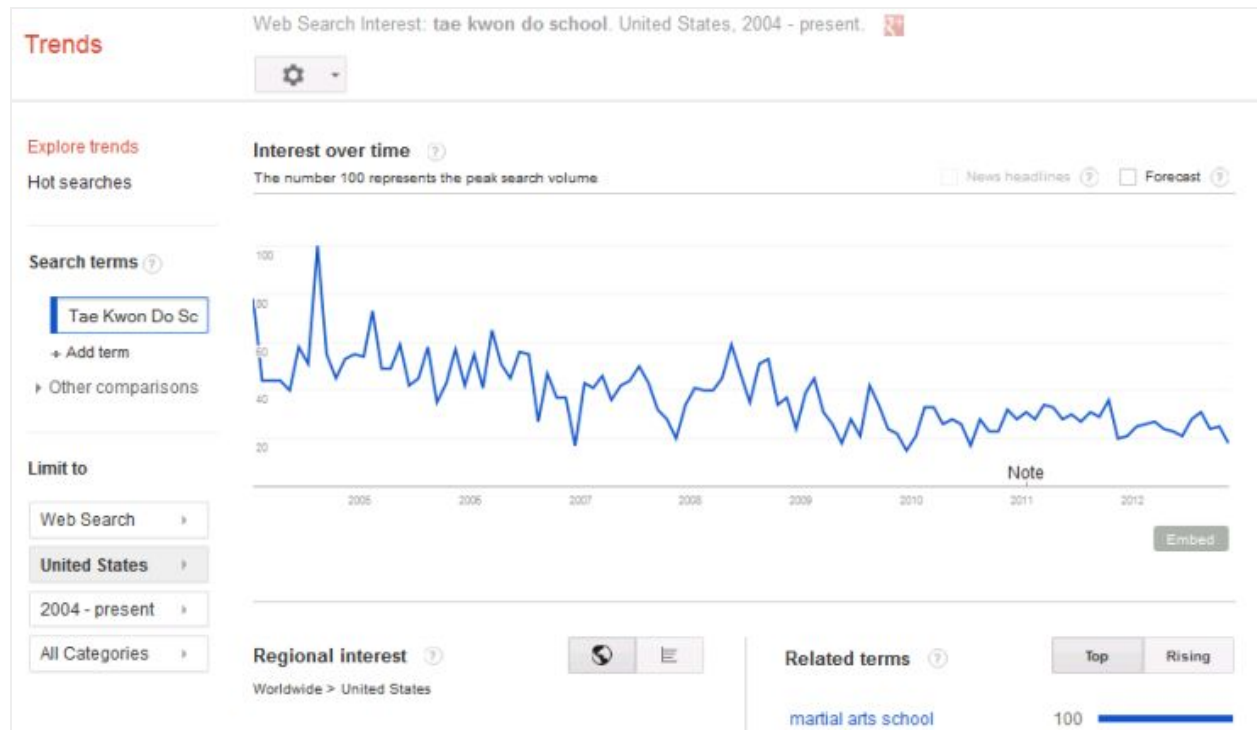
The website www.chinesmartialstudies.com cites a study conducted by Garey Gablehouse of Fairfield Research that reviewed the trending statistics of searches (from Google Trends) for Martial Arts from 2004 to the present. Gablehouse cites: “...A carefully selected random sample of 1,000 Americans showed that just over 21% of them had studied some martial art at one point in time. This means that roughly one in five American adults (about 20 million people) has some personal experience in the martial art. 2.8% of American adults reported being current members of a school and roughly 3% of American children are currently enrolled in martial arts classes. Most individuals who no longer practice walked away from these experiences with a positive impression of the martial arts, and left their last school due to circumstances beyond their control (a move, new job, new schedule or a changing financial situation).” From Gablehouse’ assessment, we can correctly assume that many among us are, at the very least, familiar with one form of Martial Arts or another.

However, there is still a decline in the trend for searches for Martial Arts...ALL Martial Arts as the following graph illustrates below:



Gablehouse took his study further. In searches for TaeKwon-Do specifically, the representing graph is as follows:

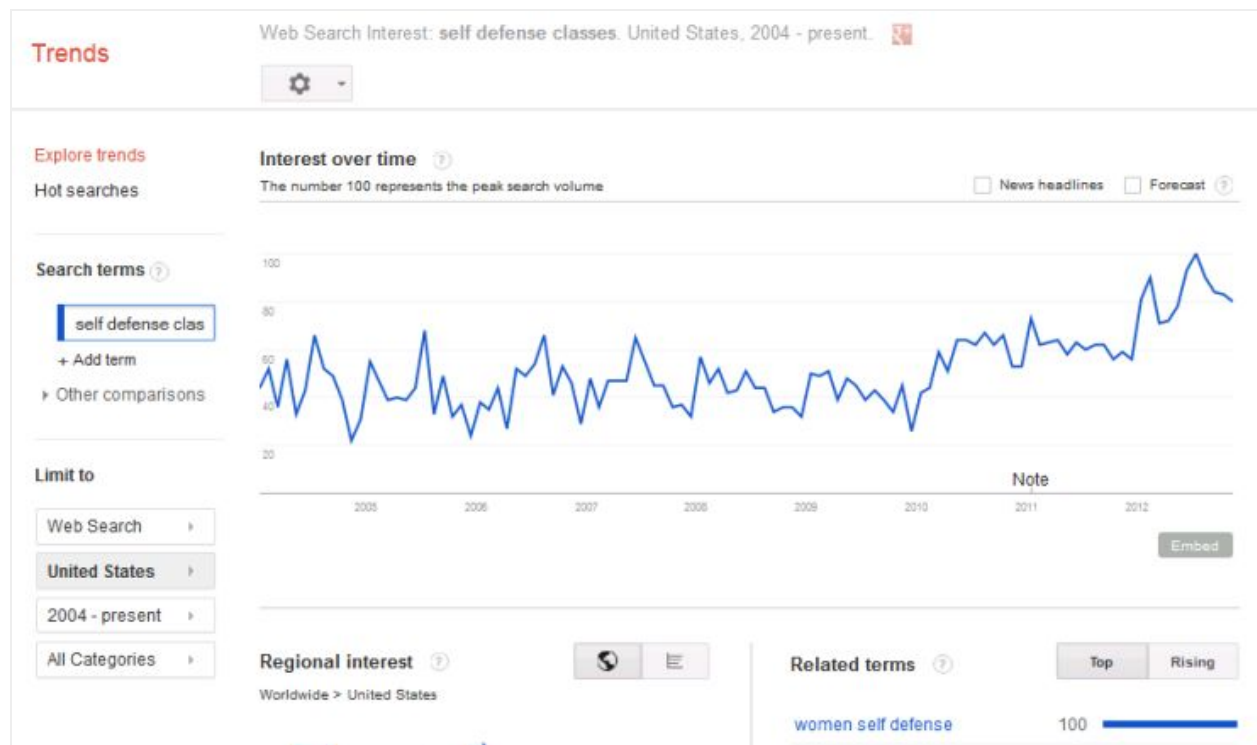
The Korean Martial Arts in America: Tae Kwon Do



Google searches for “Tae Kwon Do” from 2004-Present.

These trends, that although do not PREDICT the future for TaeKwon-Do (as famed baseballer Yogi Berra once said: “prediction is difficult, especially about the future”), seem to tell where the interest in TaeKwon-Do has gone...down. Similar graphs were illustrated in Gablehouse’s study for the Japanese Arts, namely Karate, Judo and Aikido. “TaeKwon-Do”, Gablehouse asserts, is “still the most popular martial art in America (by a large margin) but it is clear that things are not going in a great direction for the art.”

Conversely, the following trends for searches for “self-defense”, as opposed to any particular Martial Art, are illustrated by the following graph, and were derived by the same study:



Google searches for “Self Defense Classes,” 2004-present. Note that while searches for the traditional martial arts as a whole are declining, there is actually increased interest in short, focused, self-defense training.

V. What does this tell us? We must, as TaeKwon-Doin, pay attention to these statistics! We must be flexible, modify and adapt to current modes, while maintaining integrity and not compromising the Art to fulfill the gratification of the “credit card mentality”, the “we want it NOW” mentality that seems to pervade our society.

The good news is, as Gablehouse points out, that : “One in five American adults has studied the traditional martial arts and might do so again if given an opportunity. Almost all of these individuals are actually interested in self-defense (the original purpose of these fighting systems)...”.

While the pervasive onslaught of MMA on the screen bombards the public with gladiatorial-type combat that was all the craze several years back, and still carries much weight in the self-defense seeker’s interest in Martial Arts, Gablehouse points out that “there is a growing awareness that MMA is a form of training for an intense combat sport, and not primarily a method of street fighting. Figuring out how to break through to these individuals in the face of all that advertising might be a challenge, but it is not impossible. If the traditional martial arts fail it won’t be because of MMA. It will be a result of their own inability to adapt and survive.”

And survive we will!

How do we as TaKwon-Do practioners, defend against a single or double-leg takedown? How do we defend against a stabbing or slicing knife attack? How do we defend against a joint lock or joint manipulation? Does TaeKwon-Do have the answers? Yes it does! Does YOUR TaeKwon-Do Instructor have the answers? He (or she) should, but truthfully, he/she may not. So why are these particular questions important in this discussion? Just as the same menu day in and day out leaves a person hungry for a more palatable cuisine, so too in the TaeKwon-Do class a student is easily distracted when the same material, whether a kick, pattern, self-defense technique or even the same game, is presented on a repetitive basis. To an Instructor of a traditional Martial Art such as TaeKwon-Do, the student, historically, would repeat routines, techniques, kicks, patterns, etc, for a seemingly endless amount of time; to today's students, 5 to 7 minutes is too long to repeat any technique - remember the "credit card mentality"? Seasoned Instructors know that one does not even begin to learn a technique until we've practiced it 300 times, as General Choi indicated. Few are the students who would do any technique 300 times...in one session. But "over" time, anyone can accomplish the 300 times per technique, and learn correctly.

So, back to the basic question of this work: How do we promote TaeKwon-Do for future generations in Texas under the American TaeKwon-Do banner? How do we continue our own legacy, our Insructor's legacy, the legacy of ATFI, and ultimately, General Choi's International TaeKwon-Do Federation's legacy alive and "kicking" after we, as the current Novice, Expert, Master and Grand Master Instructors, have breathed our last?

VI. From the personal phone calls made, to the perusal of magazine, website and newspaper articles, and from my own personal experience, the following observations are prevalent in establishing and promoting an ongoing school of thought, tradition, experience and wisdom in the TaeKwon-Do arena generally, and in the ATFI in Texas specifically:

- 1). Establish a lineage - let students and parents alike, know your TaeKwon-Do geneology. This promotes a continuity in the Art, in the instruction and curriculum, and in the student's understanding of why some things are done "this way".
- 2). Follow a curriculum which teaches the basic precepts within the system but which allow for variations that meet criteria at each of the individual ranks - determine "what" is to be practiced but allow the "how" a technique is taught, to be selected by each Instructor (not all releases from a single, same-side hand grab are the same from location to location).
- 3). Teach from the heart as well as from the brain - anectdotal teaching as well as technical teaching both have a place in the Do-jang at the appropriate time.
- 4). Understand that each student is training for their own reason - from self-esteem issues to self-defense training, to lose weight or to gain weight; from learning how to control anger issues to becoming more assertive in social settings. Everyone's reason is unique.

- 5). Make it personal - let students know that we (Instructors) were not born as Black Belts; we too, had to learn the ropes from the bottom up and we understand “the struggle” to excel.
- 6). Make it fun - finish classes with a fun drill for the kid’s classes as well as for the adult’s classes, for example games for the kids and reflex/agility drills for the adults.
- 7). Losing doesn’t make you a “loser” - highlight the importance of holding your head high even if you “lose the match” as long as you learn from your mistake so you can do it better next time.
- 8). Promote Community Involvement (Public Service) - look for local activities that the Do-jang can be part of: City clean-up efforts, Soup kitchens, Fundraisers for the elderly, infirm, or mentally/physically handicapped, etc.
- 9). Cross-train - promote overall health and wellness via involvement in other physical activities, other Martial Arts, and even self-awareness seminars.
- 10). Conduct Instructor meetings for education and training - review techniques, protocol, pattern movements, etc., with Assistant Instructor’s to ensure that the training focus is as accurate and consistent.
- 11). Conduct Do-jang functions to encourage camaraderie between the students, Instructors and Parents.
- 12). Above all, MAINTAIN HUMILITY - acknowledge that other Instructors and even other students are far better than you in some areas of TaeKwon-Do; allow them to “shine” by spotlighting their particular skill set. Acknowledge that even Instructors forget pattern techniques (hence continuing education and training) and that even they get hit when sparring, and that Black Belts don’t always win. As Master Nunez has always explained during tournaments: “...be gracious in losing, and humble in winning.”

The findings of this study do not, in and of themselves, guarantee a major influx of students that will fill our Do-jangs with a never-ending supply of eager alumni or acolytes willing to “take the reins and steer the horse” into the next generation of TaeKwon-Do, should we apply these findings to our individual Do-jangs, but rather fill us with insight into how we, as Senior Instructors, should proceed in the marketing, in the presentation of our beloved Art, and ultimately, in the perpetuation of TaeKwon-Do, specifically, ATFI TaeKwon-Do. The current trend in the market indicates a high interest in the Self-Defense aspect of Martial Arts but not so much in the development of moral character, in perseverance, or indomitable spirit. It is, therefore, each Instructors’ overall approach in the method of instruction and the means to the end of the instruction that will not only fulfill the prospective Martial Arts seeker’s desire to continue training in a traditional approach to the Arts, but that will also direct, inspire, promote and instill the seeker’s desire to learn more, and to nurture a desire to want to carry the TaeKwon-Do torch forward by continuing the teaching, and continuing the Art in the next generation of TaeKwon-Do Do-jangs!

We must “be the eternal teacher who teaches with our body when young, with words when old, and by moral precept even after death.”

TaeKwon!

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