



Uyen Pham teaching a self-defense class at the Spring Branch Dojang.

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## Modern Day Martial Arts

by Grandmaster Kim Soo, 10th. Dan & Founder, Chayon-Ryu Martial Arts

Once, even up to the end of the 19th century, the martial arts had one purpose - to protect warlords and monarchies. But with each new weapons technology, and a modern view that peace is vital, the need for men to fight hand-to-hand combat has declined.

By the end of the 20th century, mankind had computerized weaponry, downsized armies, and the ability to fight war at a distance. In a way this is good, for it hopes that fewer wars will kill people. In a way, it's bad, for an enemy barely seen on a computer screen doesn't look human at all.

Indeed, sometimes it seems war of today - that real war, which requires hand-to-hand defense skills - is on the streets of urban cities throughout the world, and most of the soldiers are completely untrained. Only those who train regularly in traditional (not sport) martial arts, who practice truly effective self-defense technique and keep themselves ready at all times, can be considered successful warriors against the street crimes of today.

This is the first real purpose of traditional martial arts - to prepare one for effective self-defense. The second purpose is to prepare the mind and body for non-physical tests and trials of life - stress, aging, conflicts at work or school, frustrations, failures, and the aggravations of daily life in a fast-paced America.

The American Medical Association has in recent years placed a great emphasis on the importance of daily exercise in continuing health and fitness through the years. Many of my students, of all ages, sign up for classes initially just for physical exercise; in the beginning, they think that's all martial arts is about. They are surprised by intermediate level, when they find their confidence, self-esteem, and reflex capacity are all increased, while their stress, aggressiveness, and anger are in decline.

Beginning students are often delighted to see almost immediate results in the body's toning, and improved cardiovascular rates. They usually alter their diets to some degree, as they feel the benefits of regular training relax and strengthen their bodies.

But after a while longer, the same student finds mind and body working in unison, and will recognize a powerful tool developing - a well-being of spirit. When the student applies this new tool to daily activities, he or she is more aware that fears are beginning

put to rest, and that a relaxed mind, as well as body, are now available for use in life.

Indeed, many people take a walk in one direction or the other to reach a specific place. What they don't expect are the many positive surprises along the way - the "treasures along the path," as I call them. This is when full benefits of martial arts training can be seen, as people learn to live a healthier, more complete, fuller, more aware and enjoyable life, year after year.