



Grandmaster's mother, Mrs. Duk-In Kim, (1908 - 1974).

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## MARTIAL ARTS IS NOT JUST ABOUT PHYSICAL TRAINING

By Grandmaster Kim Soo

Last September, I celebrated the 32nd anniversary of opening my first school in Houston, Texas. In the time since then, I have taught thousands of students, each with their own reason for coming to the Dojang.

Initially, many come in an effort to get fit and healthy. While this is a worthwhile reason to begin training, seeking fitness as an end to itself ignores a great insight into the benefits of training.

The Dojang is foremost a place of education. A place where you come to learn mental as well as physical lessons.

I am an educator, not a drill instructor. My purpose to help you learn, to give you the tools and experience to become self sufficient. I am here to help you find what you're looking for, even if it turns out to be something other than what you initially sought.

Training consists of many components. During any given class I may lecture for 10 to 15 minutes, have you practice basic movements, forms, and then teach you something completely new. During a one-hour class you should gain both physical and mental knowledge.

For a white belt student, class is usually a large increase in their level of physical activity, however, for students who have trained for at least a couple of years this type of workout should require very little physical effort.

I have stated before that martial art training may start as physical activity but after a period the emphasis should move to mental training. Therefore, your training in the Dojang should not be focused so much on the physical, you should be trying to develop your mental understanding as well.

The physical aspects of training are the most obvious and some people never grow beyond that. They seem to be focused on one aspect of training. They don't "empty their cup" before class and they miss the deeper experience that training has to offer.

This explains how people can train for 20 years or more and still not understand the mental and philosophical aspects I talk about. Unfortunately, these people have totally missed the point of coming to the Dojang.

Some people have also complained that they do not get enough work out from a one-hour class. I am saddened to hear this attitude for they too have missed the point.

Once again let me stress, the Dojang is about learning - not grunting. That is not to say you shouldn't work hard when you come. You will better understand what you learn through sweat and persistence. Just be aware that I am an educator not a fitness trainer. If you feel you need more of a workout than you get from class go for a run or use the weights when class is over.

I am reminded of my childhood in Korea. Every year my mother would travel to the mountain to meditate. As her son, I would carry a large bag of rice as a gift from her to the monks. It was an arduous journey of about one and a half hours on an overcrowded bus with a one-hour climb up the mountain with a sack of rice. When we got there, my mother would meditate for about an hour. Then we would come down the mountain and make our way back home.

I used to wonder about the point of it all. We spent way more time getting there than we spent there. It seemed that the destination and purpose was minor in relation to the effort of getting there.

I eventually came to understand that it's not about getting there, it's about what you take with you when you leave.

So it should be with your training. The time you spend in class may seem small compared with the journey of the rest of your life, but if you take away the right lessons you will find a worthwhile balance. The reward is there, you must be careful not to overlook it.

As a martial art student under Grandmaster Park, Chol Hee, I traveled all over the countryside to train. Grandmaster Park did not have a single, central location. One month we might have been in an office building downtown, the next month we may have been in a barn 20 miles west of the city. Six months later, we may have been in a shed 5 miles northeast of the city and two months after that 15 miles south in someone's backyard.

Training was not just about class time, it was about spending an hour on a bus, then walking for 30 minutes. Sometimes it meant going without lunch so I can afford to take the bus. Sometimes it meant walking to class. Making this effort to train and learn and teach built my Kong.

The time I spent "chasing the Dojang" gave me the opportunity to think about how my training and teaching could be better so more people could get the benefits. This is how I found my Nam. It comes from going to the Dojang and repeating basics

over and over again. It doesn't come from learning new things all the time.

Are you bored in class? Show me your basic movements! Without solid understanding of the fundamentals it is difficult to successfully promote you to a higher rank.

Martial arts training serves more than one purpose. It is not just cardiovascular exercise, self defense, sparring, or forms. Don't expect class to be tailored to your goals.

With the right attitude you'll find what are you looking for regardless of class structure. But you need to look within yourself to find it.