

The Five Tenets: The Soul of Taekwon-Do

The philosophy of martial arts is steeped in thousands of years of history and tradition. The five tenets: courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self control and indomitable spirit, form the bases of Taekwon-Do.

The tenets are universal but General Choi has integrated them into the essence of Taekwon-Do and has created a unique and everlasting form of modern day martial arts.

Taekwon-Do has attracted a vast amount of younger practitioners and it is essential for their development that they encompass the true essence of the tenets.

Wu Tong's Journey is five short stories geared for children between the ages of five to ten that tell of how Wu Tong learns the importance of the tenets in his life.

WU TONG'S JOURNEY

A CHILDREN'S STORY

COURTESY- The unwritten law handed down by ancient philosophers that help maintain a harmonious society. It entails the basic law of “Do on to others as you would have others do unto you”.

The sound of the chimes floated through the air as Wu Tong ran to the temple. Wu Tong was always late, but today was a special celebration and he wanted to be on time. He neared the shrine and could see the ceremony had already begun. He hoped no one would see him if he quietly snuck into the temple. The celebration finished and Wu Tong's master called him to his side. “Wu Tong you have been discourteous to the elders and to everyone at the temple by your lateness. A true leader is always courteous”. Wu Tong knew that the master was correct but he just couldn't get to places on time. One day the master asked Wu Tong to arrange an outing for the do jang.

Wu Tong was very excited as he was one of the youngest in the dojang and he saw it as a great honor.

The outing was to a Buddhist shrine high on the hillside overlooking Wu Tong's village. Wu Tong arranged the food, drinks and ensured everyone knew where and when to meet.

The day arrived and Wu Tong rose early to meet his friends. He arrived at the meeting place but no one was there. He waited and waited getting madder and madder. A half-hour late three of his friends arrived and Wu Tong reprimanded them for being late. They just smiled and said they were sorry. Wu Tong waited for the other members of the group but for him the day was a disaster. Wu Tong was furious, how could everyone be late?

“ How could they be so inconsiderate and discourteous ?“. As he was waiting Wu Tong looked up and saw the master and the other boys slowly walking towards him. The master asked Wu Tong “ Why are you still here “.

Wu Tong told the master how everyone was late and discourteous to him.

The master asked Wu Tong “How do you feel “ Wu Tong replied “I feel they do not respect me and don't care about my feelings”.

How do you think others feel when you are late and you do not pay attention to what they are saying? The master asked. Wu Tong saw that all the other members of the dojang were looking at him and he realized that the outing

was a lesson for him. Wu Tong just lowered his eyes and bowed and said he was sorry. “Wu Tong saying sorry is very easy I will know how sorry you really are when you arrive on time”. The master smiled and said “ Now! lets go on our outing. Everyone smiled as Wu Tong lead them towards the shrine on the hillside.

INTEGRITY- Is the ability to define right from wrong and have a conscience if wrong to feel guilt.

One day Wu Tong spent a wonderful afternoon with his friends training for the national tournament. Wu Tong wanted to be part of the team as they would present a pattern to the Emperor at the tournament. Team patterns require a lot of practice in the do jang, but more important it requires individual practice at home to perfect each movement. Wu Tong was always happy to practice in the do-jang but rarely practiced at home. Today, the team was practicing a special pattern and the master was looking directly at Wu Tong, and a frown crossed his brow. The master asked Wu Tong about his practice outside the do-jang and Wu Tong worried what the master would say, lied to him. The master said nothing but emphasized the importance of practice at home and Wu Tong assured him of his diligence. The tournament was two months away and everyone was in full training. Wu Tong continued to practice at the do-jang but did little work at home. The master asked him one more time about his practice at home and Wu Tong continued to lie. The master knew of his deceit but permitted him to learn from his mistake. The big day arrived for the selection of the team and the master asked Wu Tong to sit next to him as he watched each candidate.

He asked Wu Tong, his opinion of each candidate and how long he thought that they practiced at home. Candidate after candidate performed and Wu Tong realized that his patterns were not as good as the other students.

Finally it was Wu Tong chance ; he did his best but he knew that his patterns needed much improvement. The master asked Wu Tong what he thought of his patterns and how long he practiced at home. Wu Tong looked into the master's deep stern eyes and told the master about his lie. The master eyes softened and said to Wu Tong “ Wu Tong you did not lie to me but to yourself, go home and practice for now you understand that I do not pick the team members but through their work, dedication and performance they pick themselves”.

PERSERVANCE- is the ability to have the focus and patience to achieve a goal over a long period of time.

Wu Tong's ultimate goal was to do an individual performance before the Emperor. He had dreamed and visualized the scene over and over in his mind. He could see himself gliding across the do jang as he performed his patterns with grace and power. Wu Tongs only problem was to perform in front of the emperor you had reach a senior level and for Wu Tong it would be years before he would reach that level. Wu Tong was slowly losing his desire to continue. The master would call Wu Tong out to perform in front of the class and although his patterns were good they were a long way from excellent. The master saw Wu Tong getting more and more depressed. One day a notice came about a tournament that would take place for the entire region and each do-jang was to send only one students. The master thought long and hard who would benefit the most and chose Wu Tong one of the youngest in the dojang. There was great excitement as the tournament came closer.

Finally the big day arrived. Wu Tong arrived at the tournament and the

do jang was filled with students from all over the region. Wu Tong watched the others practice and was impressed with their grace and power. He was starting to worry about his performance and realised that he knew his patterns but lacked the fine intricate skills of some of the other students.

Wu Tong performed his patterns with as much grace and power he could muster. When his patterns were finished he was called to the judicators table and were told his patterns were good but not excellent. The master could see the disappointment in the boy's eyes and he said, "Wu Tong, the seed is strong and developing a firm base but you must water it daily and give it time to grow. It cannot be a mighty tree before it has had time to grow"

Wu Tong left the tournament with the master's words ringing in his ears.

When he returned to the dojang he was filled with enthusiasm and the desire to practice and nurture the champion inside him.

One thing still bothered Wu Tong and one day he asked the Master "Why did you send me to the tournament, there were other students who were much better than me". The Master smiled slightly and said "There are many winners at a tournament not just those that win metals. You have changed since the tournament, the desire to learn burns bright in your soul. Wu Tong the tournament has given you the path and maybe, someday, if you follow that path you will be a champion and not just a winner of metals.

SELF CONTROL – is the ability to control oneself both mentally and physically in the do jang and in ones personal life.

Wu Tong started his training at a young age and as time progressed he grew in rank and stature in the dojang. The master would ask Wu Tong to teach other students. Mu Sung, one of the older boys, who was big and burley, didn't like this and instigated the other boys against Wu Tong. Mu Sung would often mumble under his breath and blame others especially Wu Tong for his failings. Mu Sung was much larger than Wu Tong had very little control of his techniques, especially in sparring. Wu Tong on the other hand kept total control and used the situation to learn how to handle fighters like Mu Sung. He perfected his checking kicks, jabbing sidekicks and a variety of blocks.

Mu Song would get madder and madder, losing his temper, kicking and punching wildly. Wu Tong on the other hand simply controlled his temper and controlled the sparring.

One day the members of the dojang were returning from a tournament and members of a local gang confronted them. A gang member made fun of the do jang and challenged them to prove their worth. Mu Song immediately lost

his temper and rose to meet the gang member. Wu Tong remained in control and very quietly told the other members of the do jang , “they challenge us only to prove their own worth, we know our worth”.

Mu Song would not listen. He jumped forward to face the largest member of the gang yelling kicking and swinging wildly. Wu Tong looked on in despair as the gang member knocked down Mu Sung and was about to dispose of him with a final kick . Wu Tong with absolute pose, grace and power jumped forward and administered a perfect checking kick stopping the gang member . Everyone was startled for no one expected the smallest of the group to come forward to save the big burley boy. Wu Tong was calm and slowly helped Mu Sung to his feet, never taking his eyes off the gang member. The gang member attacked just when he thought Wu Tong was at his most vulnerable. The rest all happened in a blur. Wu Tong administered a perfect simple front snap kick to the stomach of his attacker and then swept his feet out from underneath him. In the same instance Wu Tong was above him administering a downward punch which stopped at the tip of the gang members nose. There was no doubt Wu Tong had won. Wu Tong backed off slowly, bowed and walked away with Mu Song and all the members of the do jang following him.

**INDOMINABLE SPIRIT – is when a
courageous person is pitted against overwhelming
odds and yet stand up for their principles.**

Wu Tong had many adventures at the do jang , but no adventure tested his true resolve more than the day he had to stand up to his friends.

Wu Tong and his friends were returning from a tournament in which the do jang had performed poorly. His friends were complaining about training and the master.

Wu Tong listened but did not say a word for he knew what they were really looking for was an excuse for their own failures. During the next couple of weeks some of Wu Tong's friends left the do jang to practice with other masters.

One day Wu Tong was walking in the marketplace and he met his friends. They told him of their success in the most recent tournament and once again asked him to join them. Wu Tong just smiled and said no. Wu Tong knew it was not the month at the new do jang that brought them their success but the years of training with the master.

The master knew what was happening, and quietly continued teaching his students, growing them slowly into champions. At the next tournament Wu Tongs did not win any metals and once again Wu Tong friends asked him to join them but he refused.

This time he did not refuse out of loyalty to the master but because he knew deep inside that he had changed. His patterns were developing grace and power; his sparring was quick but thoughtful. The master taught him to see an opponents movements before they ever happened. Wu Tong was also getting stronger and the master taught him to relax and use his speed first then his strength to develop power. No Wu Tong would not leave the master in fact he was looking forward to the year-end and the national tournament. Time moved quickly and Wu Tong practiced with great dedication. The day finally arrived and the national stadium was filled to capacity, as all the regional flags flew over the stadium. Wu Tong had entered for four events patterns, sparring, team patterns and destructions. The tournament was a great success for Wu Tong as he won three gold metals, but his biggest thrill was when the master's do jang won the gold metal for the best do jang in the tournament. The announcements were made and Wu Tong looked for the master ; as their eyes meet , the master ever so slightly bowed to Wu Tong and a very small smile creased his lips.