



Wado International Karate-Do Federation

DOJO CONNECTION

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The Present Moment

There is a song by Tim McGraw entitled, "Live Like You Were Dying," in which he goes to a doctor for whatever reason and gets bad news. The advice is that you should do the things you've always wanted to do and make the most of the time you do have while you still have the time. Live in the present is the message. Good advice.

My doctor recently told me he was concerned that I might have cancer...again. It turns out that thankfully I don't, but it certainly did remind me of my own mortality. Since that time I have learned to SCUBA dive and I've traveled to Europe hiking and camping in six different countries. Those were things I had been putting off.

There is a reason that this moment is called the "present." It's because every opportunity you get to pay attention to what is going on in your life is a gift. We take it for granted and we don't focus on the reality going on around us. You are not even promised so much as your next breath yet we act as if we are going to live forever. This is an illusion of our own making. It has been my experience that opportunity seldom knocks twice. Pay attention the first time. Learning to comprehend the totality of our life experiences is invaluable beyond words.

How Good Are You?

Sooner or later someone is going to ask you just how good are you at this karate stuff. If you are an instructor it's a good question and one a prospective new student is entitled to ask, but it is a troublesome question. If you claim to not be very good people certainly have to question whether you should be teaching anyone else. On the other hand if you say you are pretty good, then you have a different problem to deal with...proving it. I guess you could

always answer with a something mystical sounding like maybe, "The clouds are dark. Rain is wet." That would be avoiding the issue and probably cheating. If you were a painter and someone asked you, "Are you a good artist," what would your answer be?

When people ask me that question my answer is to say that I have trained and practiced karate for over 37 years. I am still learning but anyone who wants to train with me is welcome to the fruits of what I have learned for what it is worth. They will have to decide if I am worth listening to and learning from. Good is a relative term. They will have to decide for themselves where I fall on the scale of bad to great.

Junior Olympics

Two students from the Academy of Classical Karate-Do recently competed in the AAU Jr. Olympics held in New Orleans, LA.

Michael Perez is a 5th Kyu who competed in the 16 year old advanced division. Michael took the **BRONZE MEDAL** in kata and the **SILVER MEDAL** in kumite.

Tom Scott is a 1st Kyu who competed in the 15 year old advanced division. Tom took the **SILVER MEDAL** in kata and captured the **GOLD MEDAL** in kumite. That should secure Tom a spot on the AAU USA Junior Team.

Their instructors, fellow dojo member, and all of us in the WIKF USA are proud of their achievements. Great job guys!

Hagakure

Doug Jepperson

A lot of you have heard about the Samurai mindset and their philosophical goal: "You must attain the resolute acceptance of death." This sounds

dramatic, but you only have one life. You can spend it in halfhearted endeavors or you can spend it giving every fiber of your being to your chosen endeavors. I think this is what Yamamoto Tsunenori was trying to explain in Hagakure or “Hidden Leaves” a book written in the 17th century with contributions from a few other samurai of the province Nabeshima Han, present day Saga. Under the Tokugawas, the enforced logic of the Confucius influenced system ensured stability among the samurai, but to the samurai this concept or frame of mind made it possible for them to train, compete and fight with the mind of the warrior or Mushin.

Yamamoto Tsunenori had been counselor to Mitsushige, lord of Nabeshima Han, for many years, and upon his lord’s death he wanted to commit suicide with his family in the traditional manner. This kind of suicide was strictly prohibited by the new legislation, and full of remorse, Yamamoto retired in sadness to the boundary of Nabeshima Han. Here he met others who had faced the same predicament, and together they wrote a lament of what they saw as the decadence of Bushido. Their criticism is a revealing comment on the changing face of Japan during Musashi’s lifetime: “There is no way to describe what a warrior should do other than that he should adhere to the Way of the warrior (Bushido). I find that all men are negligent of this. There are few men who can quickly reply to the question ‘What is the Way of the Warrior?’ This is because they do not know in their hearts. From this we can see they do not follow the Way of the warrior. And The Way of the warrior is death.”

This means choosing death whenever there is a choice between life and death. This sounds dramatic, so we can make this more palpable by saying that when you choose the easier path you are actually killing your spirit, deadening what it is in you that makes you, you. So by choosing to stick by your principles, your training or your endeavor, and by choosing, you choose with uncompromising dedication so much so that you would rather die than give you up, you choose life. It means to see things through being resolved.

Sayings like, “To die with your intention unrealized is to die uselessly, and so on, are from the weak Kyoto, Osaka Bushido. They are unresolved as to whether to keep their original plan when faced with the choice of life and death. Every man wants to

live. They theorize with staying alive kept in mind. “The man who lives on when he has failed in his intentions is a coward.” That to die having failed is to die uselessly is a mad point of view. This is not a shameful thing. It is the most important thing to the Way of the warrior. If you keep your spirit correct from morning to night, accustomed to the idea of death and resolved on death, and consider yourself as a dead body, thus becoming one with the Way of the warrior, you can pass through life with no possibility of failure and perform your office properly.

What if each of us chooses to think earnestly of our employer? Even if we work in a gas station, a bakery, or a software development firm? Would that not make us unique? Would that not make us stand out in our conviction? “Even an unadaptable man who is completely useless is a most trusted retainer if he does nothing more than think earnestly of his lord’s welfare. To think only of the practical benefit of wisdom and technology is vulgar.”

Some men are prone to having sudden inspirations. Some men do not quickly have good ideas but arrive at the answer by slow consideration. Well, if we investigate the heart of the matter, even though people’s natural abilities differ, bearing in mind the Four Oaths, when your thinking rises above concern for your own welfare, wisdom which is independent of thought appears. Whoever thinks deeply on things, even though he may carefully consider the future, will usually think around the basis of his own welfare. “By the result of such evil thinking he will perform evil acts. It is very difficult for most silly fellows to rise above thinking of their own welfare.”

This is not a Japanese concept. Oscar Wilde made a similar observation. Even from the gutter we can see the stars. Do you want to spend your days looking at the garbage in the gutter or looking at the stars?

Back to the book: So when you embark upon something, before you start, fix your intention on the Four Oaths and put selfishness behind you. Then you cannot fail.

The Four Oaths:

Never be late with respect to the Way of the Warrior.
Be useful to the lord.

Be respectful to your parents.

Get beyond love and grief: exist only for the good of man.

