The Peaceful Dragon

Newsletter

January, 2006

Children's Program

Special Message from Grandmaster Frank DeMaria

I often overlook sending our Little Dragons a note of encouragement, so please let me make this comment now. I wish to say how proud I am of all of you. I have met many of you now, especially from the Carolina Guan, whom I see once a year when I give a workshop. I must tell you how pleased I am with the Children's Division. In fact, here is a little secret: I enjoy seeing you most of all because you remind me of me when I was young! You are the future of our Art and have the same chance I had when I was your age.

Yes, I have made it to Master level over the years, only because I started so young and stayed with the training. I always loved it, although my Teachers were very hard on me, but they were also the most influential people in my life. They shaped me into what I am today and for this I am indeed grateful to them for what they have given me over the years. You too have the same chance; in fact you have a better chance than I had because we offer you so much more than even my Teachers offered me. There was little attention to children at that time, but now times have changed and there is great focus on training children to become our future Teachers and Masters.

The biggest advantage a person can have is youth, because with time all is possible; and you all have the gift of time now, so use it, develop your skills, and you will achieve great things in life. I personally feel our Schools are among the best schools around and can offer you intensive training in any arts that you are interested in learning: we do have it all under one roof. Even the Shaolin Temple in China is aware of us and the quality of our schools here in the United States. We in fact are the ONLY AMERICAN SCHOOL recognized by the Shaolin Temple as it Brother School. This is because of our heritage and traditions as well as the quality of our training.

Last year I saw a few of the Little Dragons students from our Brewster school during their award dinner. I was uplifted to see them as well and to think of the Great Chance they have to rise to the top levels of this Art, if they but keep it up and don't quit. In my school we have a few in the Little Dragon division and when I see them practice I am drawn to them because seeing them learn at that age brings joy to my heart, and I always think, Wow, if the little dragons keep it up they will be the great Masters of the Future. Remember, Jet Li and Bruce Lee started young and because of this they made it to very high levels, **and so can you.** You have the chance right now!!

I want to wish you all the Best in this Holiday season and if there is ever a question I can answer for you please send me an email and I will answer any questions you may have to the best of my ability**. You are all the Light of the Future; without you, the world of the Martial Arts would go dark and disappear. So Burn Brightly, to light up the Future of the art for all to see.**

Bless you all,

Ma Shrya

Workshops and Events

Whole Earth Returns Spring

冬去山明水秀

Winter Gone Mountain Clear Water Sparkles

大地回春

Spring Comes Bird Sings Flower Fragrant

春來鳥語花香

Because we are a traditional Chinese martial arts school, it is natural that we look to the Lunar New Year Celebration to mark the transition from one cycle of events to the next. Again this year we recognize this special time to share our success and our opportunities with students, friends, families and the public; to reflect on where we have been and to look where our paths individually and collectively may take us.

We have three interconnected celebrations at this time – a dinner for students and families; a workshop with Venerable Shi Guolin; a Chinese New Year Festival especially directed to our community – and we hope as many of our extended family as possible will come, participate, and share in these exciting and joyous events.

The Peaceful Dragon

Chinese Lunar New Year Celebration

Saturday, January 21, 6pm

This dinner and celebration are the highlight of our year, during which time we recognize the accomplishments of our students. Those who have completed one year of training receive the slap that symbolizes their willingness to accept the rigors of training, and the willingness of their Teacher, their *Sifu*, to accept them formally as students. Those who continue this far are also included on the ACCS (American Center for Chinese Studies) family tree, which is updated each year and posted in studio A. A printable version is also available at www.thepeacefuldragon.com. Students who complete five years of training are recognized as Disciples for their dedication to training; generally these students have begun to find the deeper meaning and satisfaction in their training and carry the knowledge into their lives and sometimes the lives of others. This year, Master Eric Sbarge will for the first time recognize several students who have completed ten years of training here at *The Peaceful Dragon*. Students at this level have embraced many aspects of martial life and can demonstrate competence in the full curriculum of their chosen arts. Those who express a desire to teach may become *Sifu*, eligible to teach on their own; others who desire only to continue their training become *Gao Shou*, meaning “high hand”, in recognition of their time, skill and dedication to our arts.

Of course those who have been around for awhile know that not all is serious. Martial artists know how to have fun too, and we are known for both the silliness and seriousness of our toasts and expressions of camaraderie during this dinner. Many other special awards are given in both children's and adult divisions; door prizes are raffled, some will dance, and all during this night will laugh and have a good time. **The dinner is catered this year at our school. Tickets are $35, now available at the front counter, first come first served. Don't delay as they are likely to sell out quickly.**

Workshop with Venerable Shi Guolin

Friday evening, January 20 – Sunday, January 22, see schedule below for times and details

The Peaceful Dragon gears workshops to be accessible to both adults and children, of all ages and abilities. Our mission is to spread the best of Asian culture particularly through martial arts and that means making authentic, traditional arts available to all who want to learn.

Shi Guolin is a 34th generation monk who came to this country from the famed Shaolin Temple in 1992 where he had been the principle trainer for the other monks there. He is recognized as one of the world's experts in Shaolin kungfu and is renowned for his unsurpassed qigong skills. Following is a breakdown of what the workshop offers.

- Adults and advanced Young Dragons may participate in the full workshop.
- Children 5-13 will have a specially designed one-hour class on Sunday from 3 – 4pm. Young Dragons ranked green sash and above may attend the three-day workshop with Master Sbarge's permission, or they can choose to attend the one-hour class.

Schedule
Friday, January 20, 5 – 9pm
Saturday, January 21, 9am – 12pm
Sunday, January 22, 9am – 5pm:
Special Children's Class, Sunday, January 22, 3 – 4pm
Workshop Price: Early-bird special $189 public, $149 Peaceful Dragon students. After January 15, price is $229 public, $189 students. Children's Class: $20.

Annual Chinese New Year Festival

Saturday, January 21, 1 – 4pm

Spring

Students are here because they have already found something to enjoy in the martial arts, and many are also attracted to the beauty and values of Asian cultures. But the purpose of a festival is more than entertainment for each other. Because we recognize how the arts we study may benefit the life of any person, the intrinsic nature of our commitment to the arts is not just to train but to share, to spread the knowledge. A festival is a terrific way to do this and, as we have done before, we'll have demonstrations of Taiji, yoga and gong-fu. There will be guest performances of authentic Chinese dance; feng shui show and tell; an acupuncture clinic, and much more! You can show your *Wu-de* not just by coming to the festival, but by bringing your family and friends as well. As a traditional school we rely on the commitment and support of our students to set up, manage and put away for events like this. A suggested donation of $3 per family will go entirely to The Peaceful Dragon Scholarship Fund.

Announcements

Peaceful Dragon Parade a Successful Fun-for-All

The Peaceful Dragon participated in the Lake Wylie Elementary School parade in December. Even though it was a chilly day, people came out of their homes to watch the lions and see martial arts students. Everyone had a lot of fun and of course there were even clowns!

Maintaining Our Peaceful Dragon

Recently, some of the senior students got together and volunteered to reestablish the student-driven cleaning and maintenance of our school. A list of cleaning chores is posted on the volunteer board. Helping with these chores is important not only because it is good Wu De, but also to alleviate the burden on Sifu of having to coordinate or do maintenance chores himself. And there is another reason for the tradition of students doing the daily chores in a martial arts school: it is part of the training. It helps us to realize the connection between what goes on in the classroom and the rest of our daily activities.

We hope you will choose to help maintain the Dragon as part of your training. Please join your fellow senior students and write your name on the list for any open task. You may even talk with someone already doing a chore and arrange to help them or cover for them when necessary. Most of the tasks have been broken down to take from just a few minutes to twenty minutes a week. If you need help with the details of a task or filling out the sheet, ask one of the senior students currently on the list or ask David Block via email at dblock@carolina.rr.com.

Discussion and Lecture Series

In one form or another, these talks have been a feature of life at *The Peaceful Dragon* for many years; drawing as few as a handful of students to a crowd from the public; ranging from how to eat according to the seasons, to the wit and wisdom of a visiting monk. Through all of these variations, it has been Master Eric Sbarge most times quietly sitting with a group and sharing his knowledge as well as drawing out insights from other participants, making connections (and also the occasional dry but very funny joke)! Following is the list of topics for 2006. This year note that guest lecturers will appear. **The first topic discussion, Treating Martial Arts Injuries: Kungfu Traditions and Medicines, will be on Wednesday, January 4, following Taiji class.** All students are encouraged to attend these discussions, which are an important adjunct to your training.

Jan	Treating Martial Arts Injuries: Kungfu Traditions and Medicines
Feb	Wu-de: Cultivating Virtue in Your Martial Arts
Mar	Practical Chinese Medicine – *Guest Lecturer*
Apr	Applying the Tai Chi Classics
May	Chinese Language: Basics for the Martial Artist
Jun	Self-defense: The Mental Part
Jul	Zen (Ch'an) Meditation
Aug	Tea for Health and Happiness
Sep	Human Anatomy for the Martial Artist – *Guest Lecturer*
Oct	Maintaining Motivation in Your Practice
Nov	Cultivating Compassion and Wisdom – A Buddhist Notion?
Dec	Open Forum

Web Page Additions

There are 8 new photos available for students to see at http://kungfu.org/historicphotos.shtml. These photos, along with articles by Grandmaster Ma, provide students with indispensable knowledge about and context for the arts we study. Take time to check them out.

The recommended Peaceful Dragon book list has been revised somewhat. Master Sbarge has rearranged the categories and added about 20 books. Interesting highlights are books by Joseph Campbell and the Dalai Lama. Remember that by going to our web page and clicking on the Amazon.com link there, you still get great Amazon pricing and our school gets a percentage in exchange for hosting the link – a benefit for you and your school any time of year!

Wisdom of Ma Foren

This is the fourth installment of selections from Grandmaster's email. Any student who wishes to receive email directly from Grandmaster Ma Foren should visit http://kungfu.org/requestform.shtml *and include a brief thanks for Grandmaster's generosity. Make sure the punctuation and spelling on your email address are correct. And very important, don't forget to add Grandmaster to your approved senders list. If your computer is blocking email, get help from someone locally; Grandmaster Ma cannot help you with these matters.*

"Change is Happening All the Time"

Often, students become discouraged, thinking they are not progressing in their training. I hear this all the time. But the truth of the matter is we all change and we all progress; the problems arise because we don't see self-change. We see changes around us all the time and we recognize them, but self-change is rarely seen.

Think about it. Do you notice the changes in your aging? You don't see them everyday. You think, "Oh, I look the same," but in reality you are changing each day. Then one day you do start to see changes in yourself and it strikes you - a little more gray hair, or some pain that did not exist yesterday has now become part of your daily experience.

If you have children, one day they are kids and, before you realize it, they have changed and you begin to wonder, where did the kids go? They may look like teens now, but before long, the childish look becomes that of a young adult. Did you see the changes as they were occurring? Not really. You see only bits and pieces until the change is complete. Then you see it.

Changes are only noticed after long periods of time, not as they occurring. The same can be said about your training. Your Teacher, however, can see changes where you cannot, because your Teacher is working on changing you into a martial artist. In fact, I often tell students how I see the changes in them, but they look puzzled as if to say, "What changes? I don't see much."

Remember, change is change and everything and everyone is subject to it, whether it is change in your physical appearances, intellectual change, or spiritual change. Change is happening all the time. Often, change is apparent when you haven't seen someone for a long time. When you see them you think to yourself, "Oh, that person really changed." No matter what kind of change it is - mind, body, or spirit - you see it. But often the person does not think they have changed much. They think, "It's not me who has changed, it's you."

What I am trying to get across is that you are making progress all the time; you are moving towards awakening all the time, but you don't see it. Then one day it will come to you. You will notice the changes, and know you are making progress for the better. So do not become discouraged about your progress. You are making progress all the time. Even the worst student with two left feet will make changes in time. Maybe he/she will only change to two right feet, but change will happen in some way

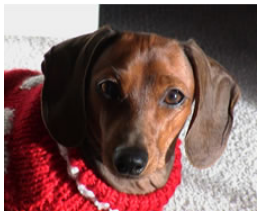
for sure. As long as you maintain your training, change will happen. So be content and patient with yourself and just allow it to happen in its own time. As they say, when the fruit is ripe it will fall from the tree of its own accord.

The longer you study the more you will notice change within yourself. In all my years I have never seen anyone who studied this art form who did not undergo change for the better. As I have said time and again, this art is for everyone. There is no one who can't benefit from training. When you start training you are like a cheap wine, but in time the cheap wine becomes the expensive wine because of the time spent in aging.

Look for subtle changes and you will see them: changes in your thinking, in the spiritual or in the physical. They are there; you just have to look and compare what you were before you started training and what you are now. Just continue to train and nothing can stop the changes that are about to happen in the future, as well as the changes that are occurring right now.

Now, let's move straight ahead! More change awaits us!

On The Dragon Path



2006 is the Year of the Fire Dog, wherein the “dramatic, ferocious, alluring, motivated by strength of mind, and self-confident” traits will be emphasized. This is also a year for reflection and to assess ones values. In spite of disturbances and upheavals, alertness and honesty can keep us going. Amazingly kind and noble deeds may be done this year, and unusual changes may occur. 2006 will be a year when the open-minded and fair can prevail. Even with cynicism ever on the rise, equanimity and peacefulness can come to the fore. Perhaps it is the path of the dog we need to seek this year as we wonder how to cope with the anger and fear and bad behavior around the world. In Western culture, we are fond of seeing ourselves in animals. How equally valuable it is to see them in us. Part of our training at *The Peaceful Dragon* involves animal forms in which traits identified with specific animals are projected and expressed in the spirit, movement and application of martial forms and techniques. Part of our training also involves learning how to incorporate *Wu-de*, the martial code of ethics and behavior, the martial role of duty, into our lives. Perhaps there is no better time to consider the example of the dog, unconditional and direct, a perfect microcosm of the Dao.

Making the Connection

By David Block, Disciple level student

For the first few years studying Martial arts, my goals were to get into better physical shape, relieve stress and gain minimal knowledge of how to defend myself. For some strange reason I felt this need in spite of the fact that I had not been attacked in the 45 years that I have existed on this earth.

I came to class fairly diligently and trained hard most of the time and as time went on, my ability to endure some of the painful postures in yoga, conditioning exercises in Kungfu and learning new forms seemed to progress in a sometimes slow but steady rate. I guess I was doing alright as a martial arts

student. I came to class, saw some improvement, and when I left class I went on with my battle with the outside world, perhaps in better shape but somehow with the same results.

After several years, a light bulb went off for me. In Tai Chi class, Sifu had us doing push hands and after a few minutes asked us to cite some of the causes for problems we had in effectively being able to push or avoid being pushed by our partners. The list included reasons such as I tense up when he pushes me, I am thinking of something else that distracts me, I am afraid she will push me down, I freeze up, I stop breathing, I can't clear my mind. As this went on it became clear to me there is a relationship between how we act and react in our training in the school and outside of the school.

Now let me explain that as obvious and simple as that may seem to most of us, it took me a while to become aware and understand it on a deeper level. There was at that time, an understanding and trust in the martial arts concepts that allowed me to start applying what I was learning to my daily life. I began to apply the same focus and martial arts principles in some of my daily challenges as if I were training in the Dragon. It started with small things like getting up in the morning with a good attitude, or being consistent with good organization at work (push hands without a partner), and graduated to solving the difficult challenges of upset customers or difficult fellow workers (moving push hands with at least one partner).

I think that how we focus in class, with a deeper understanding can affect how we can manage what we understand as stress in all that we do. I also believe that how and what we focus on in our daily lives can affect how we train in the school. Most importantly, it takes understanding and making the connection, which for me, was not that simple. Connect the two and who knows; maybe it won't take several years for you to see the light.

Dragon Classifieds

NOW brand Supplements a Bargain!

Save 20% off retail for these top quality vitamins, minerals and food supplements. Carefully researched and chosen by Debra and Sifu, NOW products are an exceptional benefit for students and invaluable to combat stress and enhance overall health. Orders are placed the first of each month and ready for pickup in a week or so.

Your ad could be here; text and graphics, a scan of your business card, or artwork you submit. The cost is $5 for students, $10 for the public. Give your copy to George, or email maibu@carolina.rr.com. Pay at the front counter.

Save on Quality Martial Arts Supplies and Weapons

Get 10% off retail for high quality martial arts supplies direct from Martial Arts Mart and waive the shipping and handling fees. Many items are on display for you to try sizes and styles, and any item can be ordered from their extensive catalog.

Fill out one of the Order Forms at the display area near the restroom and give it to our staff along with a 50% deposit at our front service counter. Orders will be placed the first of each month and merchandise will usually arrive within one week and be ready for you to pick up.