



MARTIAL ARTS, Taiji, YOGA AND MORE
THE PEACEFUL DRAGON
FOR THE CONTEMPORARY MIND, Body AND Spirit
Newsletter



www.thepeacefuldragon.com

September, 2007

704.504.8866



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Message from Master Eric Sbarge



A news item the other day informed us that the average American adult had read five books all year, and that a quarter of all Americans hadn't read a single book!

I'm as busy as the next guy, yet I find time to read a couple of books a week. I understand that there are "readers" and "non-readers" so I don't pass judgment on non-readers, but this news report got me thinking about the transmission of martial arts knowledge.

In the past, at least in China where our kung fu came from, many if not most practitioners were illiterate. As a result, oral "poems" were created to pass on the intricacies and key points of kung fu practice from teacher to student. And the seminal classics from Sun Tzu, Lao Tzu and others, so easily available today, were simply inaccessible to all but the most elite scholars.

Today, we typically don't memorize these poems and classics but read them alongside countless commentaries, explanations, and elaborations. I've assumed all along that most of my students are reading this material, and I offer monthly suggestions as well as an on-line reading list to steer students towards valuable reading material.

But if our students reflect American habits in general and aren't reading this information, where are they getting it? The news report didn't say whether "book" reading has been replaced by e-books or audio books, but hinted that it's been diminished by the internet, and a lot of TV and movies.

I remember reading once that when the printing press was invented and mass production made reading viable for the public, experts at the time feared the public would no longer be able to remember important stories or information. This worry came true: we did lose our ability to remember lengthy stories or passages. But we still got the stories, just via the new medium of books.

So today as a student if you aren't reading all the books and articles you can to maximize your skill, understanding, and benefits of your martial arts training, that may be fine. But it's only fine if you're getting the

information some other way. I wish I could pass all that I've learned on to you orally, but those days are long gone. I can only recommend some good books.



Upcoming Events

THE PEACEFUL DRAGON IS TEN YEARS OLD! COME TO THE ANNIVERSARY PARTY AND HELP US CELEBRATE!!

September 8, 11am – 3pm



The Peaceful Dragon is proud to announce our Tenth Anniversary Celebration Party on Saturday, September 8, from 11am – 3pm. It's hard to believe it's been a full ten years since we opened the doors at our first location in Pineville. It's exciting that over a dozen of our students have now trained at The Peaceful Dragon for longer than 10 years, dating back to the pre-Peaceful Dragon days when we trained in the park. And equally exciting is seeing the hundreds of new students who have joined The Peaceful Dragon during the last ten years.

To recognize our 10 year anniversary, lots of fun activities are in store for our students and for the general public. We'll have demonstrations of kung fu, tai chi and yoga, a kid's play area, the fire department on hand to teach about safety, and lots more. Bring your family out and enjoy the day!

DON'T MISS THE FREE TALK BY GESHE DAKPA TOPGYAL: "ESSENTIAL ETHICS"

Saturday, September 22, 7:30m



One of the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism is that suffering is a condition of life. All living beings want to avoid suffering and enjoy more happiness. From this profound truth, skillful means have been taught for many centuries: how can we reduce suffering and have happiness in this difficult world? Fundamental to all human beliefs are ways to behave which cause the greatest happiness for us and others. One of the biggest obstacles, in fact, is the very notion of "us and others."

Venerable Geshe Dakpa Topgyal returns to The Peaceful Dragon to give a free talk on the universal ethical guidelines for worldly interactions as well as individual spiritual development. He will also answer questions and sign copies of his new book, "Essential Ethics."

Geshe Topgyal was born in the western region of Tibet, but fled to India with his family at the age of six. He entered Drepung Loseling Monastery four years later and in 1994 completed his Geshe degree (the highest degree in the Buddhist system of spiritual education, equivalent to a Doctor of Philosophy). Geshe Topgyal, who is head of the [Charleston Tibetan Society](#), has extensive experience teaching and has traveled throughout the

United States and Europe. He speaks fluent English with a warmth and humor that brings his important message alive. Students are sure to have a wonderful experience!


WE'RE SORRY: THE CHINA TRIP IS SOLD OUT

Seventy students and family members from The Peaceful Dragon and A.C.C.S. schools have registered for our China Tour in October. Yes, unfortunately the tour is sold out, and tour-goers are anxiously counting the days until departure on what could well be the trip of a lifetime. If you had wanted to go but didn't reserve a spot on time we are sorry; maybe you can get on board for a future trip!

MONTHLY DISCUSSION GROUP

Wednesday, September 5, 8:00pm

The topic for September is Conditioning and Fitness: Methods and Routines. As people change the ways in which they acquire knowledge – or fail to acquire it, see Sifu's message – is the importance of balancing body training with mind training getting lost? Can the deeper perspectives gained from reading *and* practice, if no longer pursued, affect understanding? – see Sifu's answer to student question. How fit do you need to be? Is conditioning necessary for good health or only if you want to fight? What is the relationship between methods and routines? How might these change with experience, age, injury, new goals? Come to the discussion, learn about these issues, and share your experiences.

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Window on the Dao

“If a man wants to be brave without first being merciful,
Generous without first being frugal,
A leader without first wishing to follow,
He is only courting the death of hope.”

Lao Tzu

Commentary by Master Sbarge

As martial artists, bravery and strength are virtues we seek to cultivate. But these virtues pale beside the virtues of mercy and compassion. Love is the strongest of conquering forces.

We cultivate generosity and benevolence, but what do we have to give if we haven't learned not to squander?

As a martial arts instructor, my best lessons on how to lead my students come from remembering how I followed – and continue to follow – my teacher. If you can't demonstrate the qualities of loyalty and inquiry, how will others demonstrate them towards you?

Martial Arts Tips

S...T...R...E...T...C...H!!!



One shortcoming that many martial artists have is a lack of flexibility. The excuses are many: I've always been too stiff to stretch; I don't have enough time to stretch; my body type doesn't allow me to stretch well so I'll never be flexible.

We all know there are two kinds of people: The kind who make progress, and the kind who make excuses. Or in this case the kind who become more flexible, and the kind who don't.

It doesn't matter how high you can kick or whether you can fold yourself up and fit in a bread box (what is a bread box, anyway?) What matters is that by stretching and becoming more flexible you have better chi circulation and blood flow, you can move more quickly and lightly, and you will be healthier and less prone to injuries. Isn't that what we're all training for?

Peaceful Dragon School News

USED CHILDREN'S BOOKS WANTED

Parents and kids, if you have any books lying around that you don't want anymore please donate them to The Peaceful Dragon. We are working to expand our library for the kids in our After School Program. Thanks!


REMINDER ABOUT CHINA TRIP

If you haven't gotten your shots yet for international travel, don't put it off any longer. There are many agencies and services with information about what you may need. Try <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/eastasia.htm> where you'll find an excellent overview, other recommendations, and updates about any health conditions that currently apply where you are traveling. Also, talk to your doctor who's already gotten questions from every patient who travels, and will know what is typical for most travelers.

WELCOME TO THE FOLLOWING NEW STUDENTS

The Peaceful Dragon welcomes several new students into our various programs. Please join us in helping them off to a good start. It's especially nice to see so many new younger students. Since the last newsletter, we have, **in the Children's Program:** Donovan Gannon, Cheney Boggs, Hallie Pellerin, Travis Quentin, Max Carabini, Rossi Craft, Monica Mancillas, Tyler McDonald, Colter Boudinot, Trent Chantemerle, Simeon Little, Colin Yap, Ryan Yap, Joshua Morningstar, Brandon

Gaviola, and Cesar Toro. New in **Tai Chi** are Gary Gilbody, Meg Wood, and Rafael Cohen; and new in **Kung-fu** are Darrell Breeden and Heath William. Congratulations on joining the premier martial arts school in the region. We hope you'll be with us for a long time to come!

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RESULTS OF NATIONAL KUO SHU TOURNAMENT

As in years past, our students who competed at the national level at the Kuo Shu Tournament held in Baltimore did an outstanding job. Most of our students who competed earned medals in multiple events, and even those who didn't medal gained valuable experience and insights into how to improve their skills.

One thing that stood out was the diversity of events our Peaceful Dragon and A.C.C.S. students participated in: Full contact Lei Tai fighting; Shuai Chiao grappling; Northern empty-hand kung-fu forms; Southern empty-hand kung-fu forms; kung-fu long weapons forms; kung-fu short weapons forms; tai chi solo form; tai chi weapons; tai chi push-hands; tai chi two-person forms; Pakua forms; and Kempo forms.

The results from our school are as follows:

George Lu

- Kung-Fu Other Weapon- Men- 3rd
- Kempo Adv. Form- Men- 3rd
- Tai chi Straight sword Adv.- Men- 3rd
- Tai Chi 2-man set- 2nd

David Block

- Mixed Kung Fu form- Men- 1st
- Kempo Adv. Form- Men- 3rd
- Tai Chi Other Form- Men- 1st
- Tai Chi Other Weapon- Men- 3rd
- Tai Chi- 2-Man Set- 2nd

Melissa Ilardo

- Kung-Fu Broadsword

Melanie Misenheimer

- Kung-Fu Long Weapons- Women- 4th
- Tai- Chi Other Form- Women- 4th

Hameed Sanders

- Shuai Chiao- Heavy Weight- Men- 3rd
- Tai Chi Other Form- Men- 4th


Carrie Chun

- Kempo Adv. Form-Women- 4th
- Shuai-Chiao- Middle Weight- Women- 2nd
- Lei Tai Female- Middle A (55.1-60 kg)- 2nd

Adult Block "A" TESTING

Saturday, September 15, 10:00am

In order to test, please fill out your application at the front counter by Saturday, September 8. If for some unavoidable circumstance you are unable to attend the testing on the fifteenth, the make-up test date is Wednesday, September 26 at 6:30pm.

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PEACEFUL DRAGON STUDENTS SHOW STYLE AT CHARLOTTE LITERARY FESTIVAL

Between the outdoor kiosks and booths in Marshall Park, and the photo-ops and book-signings across the way in the Drake Hotel, the larger crowd was enjoying the air-conditioning. August 11 was a scorcher, but a few people braved the heat in the park, and got to see a (somewhat sweatier than usual) Peaceful Dragon demo. Thanks to all those who helped out.

TASTE OF S.W. CHARLOTTE DEMO WELL ATTENDED

Still very hot out a week later on August 18, but parents and children came out for a day of events. The Peaceful Dragon had a table there, and did a nice demo. Highlights were the chance for several people to try board breaking, and winning raffle tickets.

A lot of planning and chores behind the scenes go into the demos our guan presents. Thanks to everyone who helped. If only one person is motivated to become a student as a result of seeing a demo or talking to a student at a display table, the effort is worth it.

CLEAN-UP AND MAINTENANCE DAY THANK-YOU

People who run their own business know there is never an end to what needs to be done to keep things going. Anybody who has a family, goes to school, or does any work for a living knows that – as the saying goes – the chores get pretty daily. Our school is no exception. While we always wish for more students to take an interest in the upkeep of their school, those that help always manage to get a lot of stuff done. The Peaceful Dragon thanks all who helped this time.




Children's Programs

Step by Step Success

As a white sash, we don't expect to jump up and become a black sash overnight. It takes practice, more practice and some more practice to get there. That's why there are different sash colors so we can progress step by step from white sash to black sash. Any success won't work just over night. A gardener plants the tomato seeds and must tend them from sprouts all the way to maturity before harvesting the fruits. How about success at spelling . . . remembering the capitals of all the states . . . or even using complex mathematical formulas?

If we set a goal down the road, like earning the black sash or keeping our room clean, we'll need to set small incremental goals along the way. How about for one week, I'll put all dirty clothes in the bin before bed every night. The next week add to the list by putting all shoes away. And the following week put all toys away before bedtime. Finally we can add to the list, have my kung fu uniform ready the night before, pack my lunch, and make a to-do list for tomorrow. At first maybe we should not try to do everything on our list to keep our

room clean. If it's really messy to start with, and after a couple of tries we don't see the well organized room as we expect it, what do most of us do? We just give up. Instead, everyone should use the step by step success from kung fu in their every day lives. As Grandmaster always says, "master one art and you will master them all."

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CHILDREN'S PROMOTION DATE CHANGE

Saturday, October 27

Due to a conflict with the China trip being moved back a week earlier this year, the next children's promotion day originally scheduled for October 13, has been changed to October 27. This date is posted on our web site, but please make note of the change now so you can be sure to attend.

PARENT'S NIGHT OUT AT THE "SOAK-K" CORRAL

September 14, 6:30 – 10:00pm

Yep, we're having us a water gun fight! It's been hot. Here's your chance to cut loose, cool off, and have fun. It'll be Teachers against Students (probably more like a free-for-all, but hey, it's only water)!

BRING UP TO FIVE OF YOUR FRIENDS FREE

GET A \$10 DISCOUNT YOURSELF FOR THE FIRST FRIEND YOU BRING

BRING YOUR OWN WATER GUN / BLASTER / CANNON, WHATEVER YA GOT

Other Things to Bring:

- A dry change of clothes
- Towels and a plastic bag for wet clothes

Things You Don't Have to Bring:


- Pizza
- The movie we will enjoy

Come on out and be prepared to have an amazingly good time!

Student of the Month

Our Children's Program student of the month for September is Monica Pfeifer. Monica, now a purple sash, has worked hard since she began at The Peaceful Dragon. She continues to show outstanding self-discipline and is always looking for a new challenge. We would like to recognize Monica this month for her huge leaps and bounds towards her goal of gaining more self confidence. Recently in a demonstration at Southwest Middle School, she showed great confidence and leadership as she lead a group through Lo-Han form. Congratulations Monica! Great job and keep working hard toward your goals!

The adult student of the month is Dale Guadagna. A disciple level student, Dale has been a strong advocate for The Peaceful Dragon with consistently above average involvement and demonstration of wu-de since the early days. He has done a lot of computer set-up and program work for the guan, planned several of our demos, and practices hard but intelligently. His progress has been steady, and he shares his growing skill and knowledge easily and openly, making him an ideal teacher candidate. In fact, Dale assists instructors in a number of classes every week. Dale is particularly worthy of being student of the month for the range of his contributions to The Peaceful Dragon.

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Disciple Forum

What's the Difference?

By Instructor Tim Myers

A couple of weeks ago in disciple's class, I finally got a chance to do some man-da (slow sparring) with a Laoshu (teacher level) who has always given me great feedback and insightful comments about kung-fu. This time was no exception. While he had some difficulty explaining specifically what made him come to his conclusion, he felt that my man-da was heavily flavored by my experience with real self defense situations. We kicked this idea around for a while but couldn't really get a handle on it.

Soon thereafter, another senior student made a similar comment while we were doing man-da. She couldn't put her finger on why, but seemed to think my style resembled street fighting more than a kung-fu style. After class I mentioned her comment to my training partner. She said she was thinking the same thing while watching me in a two-on-one drill earlier that night. One of the instructors who overheard our conversation told me not to worry about it. Given my body type, I was almost certain to develop that kind of style.

While I didn't worry about it, (well not much), I did give it some thought. After all, I've spent six years studying Shaolin because I think it's a beautiful style. Why doesn't my man da look like kung-fu? What does good kung-fu look like? For that matter, what does street fighting look like? Are they really that different? I discussed these questions with several disciples, but we couldn't come up with satisfying answers.


Finally, I explained all of this to Sifu and asked him what differentiated a street fighter from a kung-fu stylist. In typical Sifu fashion, his answer was indirect. It depends, he said, on the situation. In a real fight, there is not a lot of difference. He noted that in mixed martial arts competitions where almost anything goes it's impossible to distinguish between styles. Everyone looks more like a street fighter, relying on simple, direct attacks and defenses. They emphasize aggressiveness, speed and power without a lot of complex techniques. In a real fight, you want to rely on things you have drilled until you know they work for you.

Man-da, on the other hand, is a place for experimentation. It's a time to develop or reinforce the things that make kung fu a unique system of self-defense. Sifu recommended that I concentrate on the circular movements, stances and footwork that define Shaolin Kung-fu. He also suggested I emphasize open hand positions rather than fists. Practice bridging techniques to better close the gap with your opponent. Try to stay connected to learn to feel your opponent's movements. With time and effort, these more complex skills will become natural to me.

But Sifu, I asked, shouldn't everyone try to put a little bit of street fighting in their style since it is so effective in self defense? Not really, he said. Not everyone wants or needs to develop their fighting skills. Most of our

students would be better off spending their time emphasizing the mental and physical health benefits that kung-fu practice brings. It all comes down to what they really need.

As usual, Sifu gave me a lot to think about. Should I be practicing street fighting techniques during man-da or should I save that for da-ja? After all, I haven't had a real fight in over thirty years and don't expect to have one any time soon. Wouldn't I be better off working on things that are more useful to a middle aged man? Man-da is not a contest to be won; it is a drill to be shared and an opportunity to learn. I guess this is going to require some more thought.

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Wisdom of our Grandmaster Ma For Ren



Dear Grand-master: I am afraid of being hit and also hitting someone what should I do?

—Anonymous

This is a question not often asked, and it should be because I think everybody feels much the same as you. Unless there is something mentally wrong, most people don't enjoy getting hit or hitting people. Of course there are always exceptions to any rule, but on the average we all are much the same. The true idea behind Martial Arts is to bring peace among mankind, not fighting. We only train to protect ourselves in the event we are attacked. A real martial artist is the last person you have to fear; we are peace-loving and respectful people. The last thing we want to do is fight. There is always a HOWEVER..... And here's mine.

In real life there will always be people who are not so kind and peace loving as you. And those people will hurt you without conscience, without *any* reason whatsoever. Certain people would even take your life for a dollar. Yes, you must be peaceful but as Roosevelt said, "Speak softly but carry a big stick." I think that was Roosevelt? Hmm . . . anyway, you get my point. Just listen to the news and you will hear it is loaded with violence everyday and everywhere. Because violence is a fact of life, not to face it and prepare to fight against it is not a good idea; hence we train for that reason and other noble reasons. As I said, fighting is a reality, and not to be prepared for any eventuality is not wise. So we must learn to defend ourselves and that's means learning how to take a hit as well as learning how to give it back.

Within the training, students learn to overcome their natural fear of hitting or being hit. They learn to focus on the techniques and prepare for any eventuality. They learn to train in iron body and learn what it means to be hit as well as to hit back. They learn to have confidence in their abilities and use them effectively. Once you've been hit the mystery is gone: you know what to expect and you also learn to return strong retaliations. Don't think about it so much, training will take care of the rest. You will become less fearful because you will feel more confident in your skills to defend. All hinges on the intensity of your training and devotion to practice time. Remember also, any good school will teach you to stand off in practice fighting; what we call "Man Da" slow fighting. There will be enough body contact there to get you used to taking it and giving it. All this is done over the years, so don't worry; just train hard, be sure to know your techniques well, and don't be afraid to use them effectively. You will soon overcome your present fears. Your fears will diminish more day by day; until then, just focus on training and enjoy the learning without worry. Our system works; if you let it transform you, it will. Knowledge overcomes all fears. The more you know, the less you will fear; the less you fear, the less you fight. Think on that . . .

If you want to get email directly from Grandmaster Ma, go to <http://kungfu.org/requestform.shtml>. Provide your full name and email address. Include a brief thanks for Grandmaster's generosity. Make sure the punctuation and spelling on your email address are correct. 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.

Students Ask Master Sbarge

Question: My ankle started swelling up for no apparent reason, so my doctor told me I have to stay off it for four – six weeks. Can you suggest something I can practice at home since I'll be missing class?

Answer: My answer has to start with a question: Why will you be missing class; just because your foot is injured? If I missed class for every injury I ever had, I would probably have 15 years of martial arts experience instead of 30. If you can hobble out to your car, get to class. We'll find something for you to do on your other leg until the good one heals.

On another note: When joints swell for no apparent reason, it is usually an indication that it's time to go on a serious detox diet, and evaluate your overall eating and lifestyle habits.



“Creativity starts with a blank space. The blank space can be humbling.”
—Twyla Tharp

“Be quick to admit mistakes and slow to criticize. Above all, be constructive.”
—Dale Carnegie

Coupon of the Month


SAVE

SAVE

Buy any meditation Zafu (the cushion you sit on) and get a Zabuton (the cushion that you place the Zafu on top of) for 30% OFF the regular price!

Print and clip this coupon and present it with your purchase.

Offer expires August 31, 2007

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Neighboring Businesses

**Printing.
Packaging.
Perfecting.
And the list goes on.**



Document Services

We can print, collate and bind presentation materials, including complex and high-volume jobs.

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(Across from the Super Target intersection of 49 and 160)

Classifieds



Hold your next
BIRTHDAY PARTY
at
The Peaceful
Dragon!


What could be more fun than a party right here! That special someone and guests will enjoy lots of fun and games (including the obstacle course), plus an exciting martial arts class. All guests receive a gift certificate for a FREE private introductory class and the birthday boy or girl gets a special present from The Peaceful Dragon! Read all about it at:
www.ThePeacefulDragon.com/BirthdayParties.shtml

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.

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