

Soke's Corner

December 2013

Another year is coming to a close and as I organize my thoughts, do allow me to share them with you. Although there have been many unfortunate circumstances throughout the world, some of which we may never be able to understand the reasons for, many of us are still able to say "life has been good to us". That 'life has been good to many of us' is not merely being able to pay our bills and go on vacations from time-to-time. Rather, the opportunity to continue to learn and to teach our members our treasured art so that their journey toward self discovery will be realized. To witness renewed spirit and sharing happiness with others is indeed a true joy for those of us who teach.

The late Nelson Mandela once said,

"I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

Our TKFI philosophy embodies that same message where we teach the tenet of 'living in harmony and with equal opportunities'. We do not give leniency to gifted athletes for poor behavior just because they win gold medals. Nor do we tolerate those that might not be talented but make constant excuses for their short-comings. For students who have other challenges, we are sensitive to their capacity of learning, yet provide them with the same opportunities to learn and be successful in life.

Parents, grandparents and guardians also need to be more aware of their role as teachers to those whom they are responsible for. Too often I see children given too many choices and allowed to debate with their parents as if their parents were their equals. Parents need to teach and not be concerned with their children being angry with them. They too need to provide the opportunities for their children to learn with firm guidance, rules and boundaries. Only then can they find peace for themselves and for their children.

For 2014, learn to find time to bring serenity into your lives. Keep life simple and not allow the stress in life to dictate your freedom to live with peace and joy. The New Year resolutions should not be on goals but rather on strategy. For example, instead of setting a goal to lose weight, fill your refrigerator with healthy and nutritious foods. Get rid of soft drinks, chips, cookies and candies. Drink water and take walks as often as possible. And don't miss too many karate classes. Practice the act of kindness. We have organized a group called WAG (Wipe Away Graffiti). Cleaning up graffiti in the community not only provides a great service but also brings pride to our members. Volunteer to give the elderly music, time and companionship. Retirement communities appreciate and welcome visitors throughout the year to provide music and laughter to their residents. It is a worthwhile undertaking. Spend time with children. Share your

lessons of life and stories that give children hope and encouragement. Learn through karate practice to win in life.

As for me, I was not a good businessman since my predecessors told me that karate was not to be exploited, especially for the sake of making a profit. For years, I practically taught karate for free. Since then I have learned through the practice of karate that situations change and with it so must I. Making karate a full-time business and to provide students a better practice dojo that they can call home, I had to draw from my training on strategy and execution despite my earlier instructor's non-business philosophy. I need to give value to my teachings and to my facility. I have to re- think how to do business in order to focus on teaching without having to have another job to support myself. Patience, discipline and dedication were the key foundation that led me to my business success. I'm not seeking to chase the big monetary return, rather, more interested in being able to teach in order to provide the many lessons for human success. Karate has also helped me accept the reality of life and allow me to not be discouraged or bitter when actions of instructors and organizational leaders become the antithesis of positive leadership expected of them. Rather than losing faith in the martial arts community, I have become stronger with those that have remained loyal to our cause.

Some of you have asked me to touch on the subject of loyalty. Our dojos and TKFI organization is built on loyalty that binds us together. Loyalty of course is based on trust. If the leadership of our organization, or the sensei of one of our dojos expects loyalty yet demands favors for selfish reasons, they will only find division among their membership. With loyalty comes honesty. Teachers who don't train but fall short on their responsibilities will eventually find excuses to join with those having the same fruitless habits. Instead of communicating their shortcomings in order to re-ignite their passion and stay on course, they forego their loyalty. Some instructors leave our organization for valid reasons and that is perfectly fine. What I find disturbing though, is those who leave and wish to have no further connection with us. This indicates to me that for selfish reasons they were suppressing their shortcomings not wishing to be exposed by us thus retreating to a dark place. However, the truth is that those who left us are of no loss to our organization for their selfish agenda only hindered our progress. Their loyalty was already divided. So, for the New Year and hopefully many more to come, be one of the true compasses for our mission rather than expecting a few to hold steady the course.

Next, let me briefly talk about promises. When you say you're going to do something, commit to your promise and make sure you fulfill them. Don't allow excuses to erode your promises otherwise they become mere words that satisfy only your self-image momentarily. Keep all your promises at the highest priority or don't make them at all.

Have control over your children in public places. Under the appropriate circumstances, children should be allowed to run and play to expend their energy. Yet in certain settings, such as our Christmas parties, parents need to teach their children to behave such as, sitting at the table and not disturbing other guests, instruments and or decorations. They need to be taught respect for people's space. If they do not behave, I

suggest taking them aside for a serious talk about manners. It is always appreciated when parents make a special effort to teach their children to comply.

Cooperate with us rather than gossip that undermines our mission. I hope you would communicate your thoughts regarding the training we provide for you or your children. Rather than hoping we could read your mind, ask to speak to one of our instructors on any issues you feel we could help, whether it is behavioral, financial or educational.

Lastly, keep your faith from dwindling. If your ultimate goal is for fortune, power or fame, you will be at the mercy of this world. More often than not, you will find yourself very disappointed and empty handed. By faith, I'm speaking of your spiritual path that is paved by God's love and wisdom. Disappointments will draw light on new awakenings and possibilities and the voids will be filled with hope and strength.

I pray that all of you will have a very good year. Focus on meaningful purposes in life, and allow the struggles and challenges to make you a stronger and better person so that you can become better ambassadors for God.