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Open Mindedness


By Jerry Figgiani

Looking back at my years teaching martial arts, one thing hasn't changed...the importance of being able to convey to my students the value of being open to new ideas and concepts. As instructors, we all tend to speak the same language; we have to understand that sometimes there are multiple approaches to the same idea. Students are sometimes able to grasp these concepts by hearing the same idea presented in two different ways. I have personally experienced this with my students. One example, is a flow drill which I teach. In the drill, it is important to keep the hands up in position to deflect and counter as the drill is being performed back and forth. I was constantly reminding one of my students, Rick Kaufman, to keep his hands up in this particular drill. At a seminar we both later attended in Canada, the instructor giving the seminar was teaching the same flow drill. When he noticed my student and I working the drill together, he came over to make some corrections. The first thing he said to Rick was, "You must keep your hands up." That was a pivotal moment in my student's understanding of the technique...he left the seminar understanding the technique a little better. We still laugh to this day about it, but it was the small reinforcement which made a big difference.

Over the years, I have exposed my students to many different instructors in the martial arts. They have always been given the opportunity to attend seminars with me and some have even been able to travel throughout the world with me. I feel this is very important for their growth and understanding. Diversity in instruction sometimes makes a different impact on the student.

Recently, I was invited to teach a seminar in Ireland hosted by Kyoshi Patrick Beaumont, the direc-



tor of Matsubayashi International. What impressed me more than anything was Kyoshi's willingness to expose his students to as many instructors as he can. I am proud to say I have followed many great instructors who Kyoshi Beaumont has hosted, such as: Soke Takayoshi Nagamine, Hanshi Phillip Koepfel, Dan Smith Sensei, and Kimo Wall Sensei to name some of the many who have taught in front of Kyoshi Beaumont's students. The open mindedness and willing to learn new ideas was also shared by Kyoshi Dumitru Alexandru from Romania. These instructors and students made me feel at home as I expressed my concepts and ideas in kata and bunkai. This open mindedness is how traditional karate can grow strong again. It is very discouraging to hear about senseis who won't allow their students to attend seminars without them. Although I understand the importance of not exposing your students to someone who is unethical, it is important to afford students the opportunity to broaden their horizons and sharpen their skills. It's like the old saying, "Sometimes you have to let them go in order to let them grow." 

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