

To: Dave Cater

In a recent letter in the Dec 2003 issue by Jason w. McNeil "My Turn", the author wrote that a martial art instructor becomes the employee of the student in the same regard, as a plumber or a mechanic. This is a matter of the instructor's state of mind and how the instructor presents themselves to the student and the public.

I am a professional. After 19 years of study and training I have more training in my field than a doctor who comes out of residency. Most doctors of medicine are able to practice medicine after fewer than 12 years of training. Most college level professors have 6 to 8 years of higher education. With all their degrees they would not allow you to dictate how they would teach you. When you pay tens of thousands of dollars to go to college, the student's state of mind is not that the teacher is his employee. The student does not get his money back if he fails.

I would compare myself more with the college professor. I am teaching a skill. A student should pay as you would for any professional training. If he does not feel that what I have to teach is not worth the price then he can go to Joe Karate Do. That is a choice that is open to him. If he decides to attend my school, he places himself under my guidance and trusts my methods and abilities. For example, Wu Bin is a famous wushu coach who is well respected in the wushu community. Would you question him on how he teaches. To point out something about the famous coach of Jet Li, Wu Bin's root of learning was not wushu but weight training. It was later in life that he got involved with wushu. Knowing this and asking him to train you, what would you think?

One of the things I see happening today with martial art schools is that they are becoming after school daycare. Is this really a bad thing? I would say no. Where better to send your child to learn a code of morality that we call "wude", martial morality. I would say that this is one of the biggest reasons parents send their children to a martial arts school. They want little Johnny to learn respect, discipline, and confidence. With this in mind, we as martial art instructors, maybe not all but most, can guide the student in this path. In most martial societies, the success of the student is not determined by how stronger or how weak the student is. It is determined by the student's morality and character. In wushu, morality is of the wisdom mind. This is not led by their emotions. The wisdom mind has five key elements that are called "Wude" (Humility, Respect, Trust, Loyalty, and Patience.) These traits are what make Chinese Martial Arts so unique. The people who train hard will discover, through their countless hours of practice and determination, the warrior within. Over years of training a student who trains hard and with the right teacher will develop "Wude" along with a strong will, endurance, perseverance, and courage. With all of these traits he will discipline himself. These will come with setting goals, overcoming challenges and setting new goals.

Let's move on to the teacher student relationship. There is a saying in wushu, "It takes three years for a student to find a teacher and three years for that teacher to accept him as a student." What does this mean? Over our time we will have hundreds if not thousands of students. How many will stay to complete the full course, maybe a handful. As

teachs we can do what the public school systems have done for years, just pass the student regardless of the knowledge or grades. In this same respect, some schools have adopted this way. Earn your black belt in 2 year (some in one year). This has diminished the quality of that rank. After living in Okinawa, Japan for six year, I can tell you what I saw over there was a lot harder. It took a lot longer to get your Sho Don (1st degree black belt). Now to come back to the states and see some 25-year-old Go Don (5th degree) or Roku Don (6th degree) is a dim shadow of tradition. A teacher will only have a few students that stay to complete there training. Only some of these diehard students maybe taken as disciples. When that happens the relationship changes between teacher and student. Usually this disciple will not pay money to the teacher. He has been accepted in the same respect as a child of that teacher. So, when the grass needs to be cut it, it gets cut. When the house needs to be cleaned, it gets cleaned. This is why teachers in their lifetime do not take many disciples. With this comes a many of the elements of “wude”, and this act is not taking lightly by a teacher.

To conclude, we can say that the idea of how we look at ourselves as teachers has to be evaluated and put in perspective to what we have to offer to our student and community. In our lifetime of teaching only a few will stay the course and pass on the tradition of wude and our skills to the next generation. What we can offer to the parents and community is to help mold the students we touch to be better people and add value to their community. Then we can say we have done well.

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