

How to Choose the Right Martial Arts Seminar

By Master Guy Edward Larke

For those of us in the arts the concept of attending or looking into extra training to expand our horizons is nothing new. In fact if you don't many might say you're falling behind in the times. Whether you are trying to level up in your system, learn new teaching methods or cross train in another system, seminars are likely one of the best training tools available bar none.

For expatriates such as me, being followers of the *musha shugyeo* (wandering martial artist) mentality, seminars in foreign lands are a Godsend. Not only do you learn new arts and ideas, but you can network yourself in the new and foreign land in which you reside. Most of my connections and incidentally, my success, have resulted in the participation of such ventures in Korea, Malaysia and the Philippines.

However as the old expression goes, ***caveat emptor***, which is Latin for "Let the buyer beware". There are a lot of bad events to the say the least. Whether it's purposeful or accidental, a failed seminar is a waste of your money and time. Not to mention destroy your faith in the arts and the martial arts community in general.

Sadly many seminars the world over are about the hosts beating their chests like caveman in tirades about why their "tribe" is better than everyone else's and why their cave paintings trump everyone else's. If you disagree openly you are likely to be demonstrated on. It's a sad yet pathetic truth that even in the 21st century humankind still is obsessed with swollen egos. It would be nice to believe that as martial artists we would be above such barbaric practices, but tragically not.

In other cases the training is either too brutal or lack luster in comparison to the participants involved. Lack of research and/ or shared information can result in dissatisfaction or in some cases, legal action.

You also need to feel comfortable and safe where you're training. As followers of the warrior way we feed on *chi*. Even if you don't believe in such things, still you need clean and safe surroundings with appropriate facilities.

Lastly another issue is a lack of concern in dealing with other cultures attending the event. Everyone seems open to guests from all over the globe, but few put any effort into adapting to cultural concerns (i.e. the fact that Muslims refrain from eating beef). This can make for a very difficult for what should be an outstanding chance to break social barriers.

When hunting for your next seminar, common sense is your best bet. As my Marketing professor would say the 3 keys to success are research, research, research... Do your homework. We are in the information age after all. Check into the host as far as track record, qualifications, experience and past seminar participant comments. Compare what you get in terms of actual training, room and board in comparison to competitors. Too cheap may be a sign of an amateur operation while an overpriced one may indicate an over glamorized event. All style with too little substance.

These are especially important when you leave your nation's borders. In this case you'd be better to communicate with the host directly and share any concerns you may have in regards to language, disabilities, religion or dietary requirements.

As someone who has been accused of overanalyzing everything to death, I have turned down more seminar opportunities than accepted. I've even had a part in running a few in Canada and Korea. My

latest, and I hope my greatest, achievement will be in August of this year in Washington State of the United States.

For those of you who read my article in the November issue of this magazine, you are familiar with the amazing story of Chief Master Robert J. Ott. His tragedy not only drove his passion for the arts but for his obligations to the martial community worldwide. With over 200 seminars under his belt his Super Summer International Korean Martial Arts Seminar he is planning may prove to be the most elaborate he has ever attended or hosted.

It will be held at Camp Thunderbird next to Summit Lake in the Canadian Rockies. The 4 day seminar will include meals, lodging, and a multitude of extra activities, contests, prizes and giveaways.

The instruction will be wide and varied as it will cover every feasible aspect of the martial arts of Korea. The carefully selected instructors include Chief Master Ott, Sin Moo Hapkido Grandmaster Kenneth P. Mac Kenzie, Kong Shin Bup Grandmaster Rudy Timmerman, Chief Master John L. Godwin (Tang Soo Do and Hapkido), Chief Master Kevin Janisse (Kong Shin Bup), Taekgyeon master and champion Master Yang Jae-Sik, Tae Sool Won founder Grandmaster Troy Trudeau, and myself. The instructors were carefully chosen with spirit and open mindedness as a prerequisite. The feeling is to be akin to an enormous family reunion.

The price is extremely competitive, especially considering certification opportunities being involved. Googling his name brings up a myriad of results to research for the curious. Most importantly he is by far the most approachable and open martial artist I have met in many years. If you would like to expand your boundaries and see a bit of the beautiful Northwest part of the USA you can get more details at <http://www.certainvictory.com> or e-mail him at pilsung@comcast.net. Alternatively I can help you as well. I hope I can meet a few of the readers of Seni Beladiri there. Salam...

Guy Edward Larke sabumnim has dedicated his life from a young age to the pursuit of the martial arts, Asian culture and hopology. It led him to Korea in 2000 and has lived there since then. He now lives in Daejeon city with his wife Gi-Ryung and their son Alexander. He holds black belts in Taekwondo, Hapkido, Taekkyon, Bon Kuk Kumdo, Korean kickboxing, Karate-do, Wushu, Cheon Ji Muye Do, and Hoshin-Sul. Currently he teaches Taeglish (English Taekwondo) full time in addition to writing for various magazines and running Kisa-Do Muye (Martial Arts) & Marketing. In the future he plans to relocate to Malaysia to teach martial arts and continue studying. He can be contacted on Facebook or at kisa_do_muye@yahoo.ca.