

Honor. Courage. Discipline. Respect. Trust. Balance. These are just a few of the words that define a true martial artist, a warrior. But it is not enough to have these words in your vocabulary, it is their intent that makes them powerful. To live an impeccable life one must live consciously. Aware of every action he takes and fully accepting the consequence of that action. A warrior accepts whatever circumstance life may throw at him, good or bad, and uses that experience to improve his journey.

In contrast, there is a world of people who live unconsciously. Floating through life allowing decisions to “happen” to them. This is the role of the victim’ always finding something to complain about and blaming their circumstances on someone else.

My personal journey began when I was a sophomore in high school. I grew up in the same neighborhood with the same friends and went to the same schools. Imagine my emotional state when I was told we would be moving away. Not just to a new city or another state, but another country on the other side of the world, South Korea. How I chose to accept this situation would define me for the rest of my life. Initially, I found myself angry, depressed, and even afraid.

However, after being there for just a few short weeks, while wandering aimlessly around the military base where I now lived, I found my first martial arts teacher. He stood only 5’ 7” tall and could perform the most amazing feats. Before class he would pick up any rock and slice it, as if he were slicing bread, with his bare hands. He could leap high into the air and do a flying sidekick into the bottom of a basketball net. For the next two years, I studied as much as I could in Hap Ki Do, Tae Kwon Do, and even Kung Fu.

My experience there taught me to embrace change because change is inevitable. I learned to find the adventure that change brings. I also learned to seek out teachers who could show me something new. These teachers have taken many forms. I have learned from my children to enjoy every moment of being alive and from my wife, patience and understanding. I have had the privilege of studying my healing art under two of the greatest minds in Chiropractic today, which I continue to learn from. To find inspiration and knowledge one need only listen and observe the events that happen around you. Then you must act upon this knowledge to mould your unfolding destiny that will ultimately define who you are to your self and in the minds of others.

When it comes to learning lessons in martial arts and in life, my teacher and friend Chief Master Robert J. Ott stands alone. Just when I feel I can’t take one more curve ball from life, I hear Master Ott’s voice booming in my head “Jong Shin Tong Il—one mind single purpose!”

I have come to understand the importance of earning this black belt. It’s a symbol of accomplishment and of a journey that’s just beginning. It recognizes the focused intent of a man who never gave up—who “never surrendered.” A true warrior.

So to define a martial artist, and an exceptional way for anyone to live, nothing states it better than what we call the “Meaning of Moo Sa”:

1. To build your knowledge so that you may know when to fight for what is right.
2. Keep a warm heart. Be loving, compassionate, and understanding of others.
3. Be courageous in your fight for what is right.
4. (And most importantly) Be a person all people can trust for your word is your bond.

Thank you for giving me the privilege of sharing this day with all of you. It has been an honor.

Pil Sung!