



*The **FONGline** is a Cyber Newsletter
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CIRCUMSTANCE

Recently I had a conversation with a young man who complained about the mess his life is in. He cannot get a job because potential employers are prejudiced against people with long hair. His girl friend broke up with him because she does not appreciate all the things he has done for her. The complaints went on and on. After almost an hour of listening to him, not one moment did he talk about the part he played in the state of his mess. It is my opinion that as long as he played the blame game, he will meet one disappointment after another. On a larger scale, we see this in people who commit crime. Invariably they blame their upbringing, their deprived childhood, their parents and scores of other external events for their negative conditions and bad choices. In other words circumstances had a lot to do with the direction of their lives. Yet, as I think of a courageous man like Marty Manuel, a fellow martial artist and what he has done for others, he reminds us that circumstances has less to do with our lives as much as it defines it. Marty was a rated, skilled kick boxer in the PKA in the 80's. At the peak of his martial arts career he suffered a spine degeneration disease that slowly robbed him of the use of his legs. The disease gradually put him in a wheel chair. Even as the disease slowly took over, Marty refused to be bitter or debilitated. He continued to teach martial arts and gave himself to others unselfishly. He even took time to learn Modern Arnis from Remy Presas and became very skillful at this Filipino art. From his wheel chair, Marty trained several karate and kick boxing champions. Marty not only taught martial arts skills to young people, he taught them life skills and spiritual values. Marty did not blame circumstances for his physical condition but he chooses to define himself in the face of harsh realities. In the face of difficulties, Marty Manuel chooses to be better not bitter. His courage, inner strength and determination are an inspiration to all of us. Marty Manuel defined circumstances, circumstances did not define him.

In recent days Marty's health has declined, yet he refused to give up. I made a promise to his very good friend Master Philip Ameris that I will keep Marty in my daily prayers at 6:30 AM each day. I welcome all of you to join me at that hour and pray for Marty. Praying for Marty is the least we can do for a fellow martial artist who has given so much. I also take this opportunity to "Thank" Linda Riem, Marty's friend and constant caregiver for her compassion and many years of dedication to Marty. Circumstances do not define us, the decisions we make becomes the defining moments. Life is always a test. Success and failure is determined by the kind of choices we make and the degree of determination and sacrifice we are willing to invest to stay in the race.

Peace, Leo Fong

TRIBUTE

I want to take this opportunity to express my personal appreciation to Master Philip Ameris and his wife Jeannie for their dedication to the true spirit of the martial arts. The Ameris operates a very efficient and successful martial arts school (Ameris Choi's Tae Kwan Do School) in New Kensington, PA. Not only do they teach proficient fighting skills, they also place much emphasis on inner skills such as respect, discipline, character, compassion and many qualities that are needed to navigate through the arena of life. There is a close relationship between character and fighting skills. It was truly a privilege to share with Master Ameris and his students in a seminar back in April.



The focus of the seminar was on “playing the angles and win” with emphasis on footwork and relaxed focus.



Leo Fong working with Master Ameris on sharpening punches and strikes with the Wei Kuen Do strike/punch sticks.
James “Lutzo” Ameris is observing.



Master Ameris is demonstrating a jab with the WKD Strike/Punch training sticks.



Leo Fong with Master Ameris, explaining the value of sensitivity in counterattacks to Jim West one of Master Ameris' oldest students (80 years old) and most experienced student. Mr. West moves and hits like a young champion.



Jeannie Ameris and Leo Fong.



Over 60 students and instructors attend the seminar.

CONGRATULATIONS

There are two great moments in a person's life; the moment of birth and the moment when that person realizes the purpose by which he or she is here. My wife Minnie and I had the privilege of witnessing and sharing in that second great moment with Scott Perlo on Monday evening May 19th at the Sinai Temple in Los Angeles. Scott was ordained a Rabbi and teacher. Scott not only excelled in academia but also an accomplished martial artist in several styles of martial arts. I feel privileged to have shared in a small way Scott's journey as his Wei Kuen Do teacher. Our prayers and best wishes go with Scott as he continues his journey forward.



SPECIAL THANKS!

A special "Thank You" to Rev. Ken Fizer and Otterbein United Methodist Church for a great seminar on April 8th, 2008, it was truly a "fun time." The front-page photo, article and interviews in the local newspaper were awesome. It was all inspiring to see several schools representing Jeet Kune Do, Wing Chun, Tae Kwan Do and Karate at the seminar. Coming with an "empty cup" and sharing with each other is the key to growth and knowledge. Thanks again, Rev. Ken.

SOUL FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY

"I don't think God cares where we graduated or what we did for a living. God wants to know who we are." -**Bernie Siegel, M.D.**