

Way of the Empty Hand

BY RICHARD LEVANGIE

Could a Bruce Lee movie change a life?

Enter the Dragon did. In 1973, an introverted teenager growing up in Truro was dragged to see a plotless movie boasting the finest fight scenes ever filmed.

Jazzed, Tony Tam saw *Dragon* 34 times.

Today, that story seems so, well...humorous. Tam — a tall Halifax lawyer — hardly looks like he'd be attracted to martial arts' ostensibly violent world.

Appearances are deceiving. This fourth-degree black belt is Chief Instructor of the

"Karate has strong spiritual and intellectual aspects," says dentist Danny Tam, a fourth-degree black belt. "The concentration used in karate can be applied to everyday life. We talk about focusing on a block or a kick — meaning that mind and body come together to make a strong technique. That applies to life. Karate teaches us how to focus, bringing body and mind together to accomplish our goals."

Paul Gareau — a Dalhousie grad — is Tam's most accomplished student.

"The practice of karate flows into real life," says Gareau, a computer analyst. "Karate is some-

Buddhism. By adopting Dharma's rigorous training methods — eventually refined into the art known as *Shaolin* — the monks developed legendary physical, mental, and spiritual prowess. The history is confused, but most believe *Shaolin* spread throughout Asia, merging with indigenous martial arts. In Okinawa, a Japanese island where feudal lords banned weaponry, secretive martial art styles evolved, called *Te* (meaning "hand").

In the late 1800s, Gichin Funakoshi, an honoured Okinawa school teacher and poet, fused *Te* styles learned from two masters. Funakoshi travelled to Japan to demonstrate what he later called *karate-do* — way of the empty hand — before a Ministry of Education exhibition in 1922. His audience was so impressed that Master Funakoshi stayed, teaching at universities. His style was called Shotokan, after his pen name.

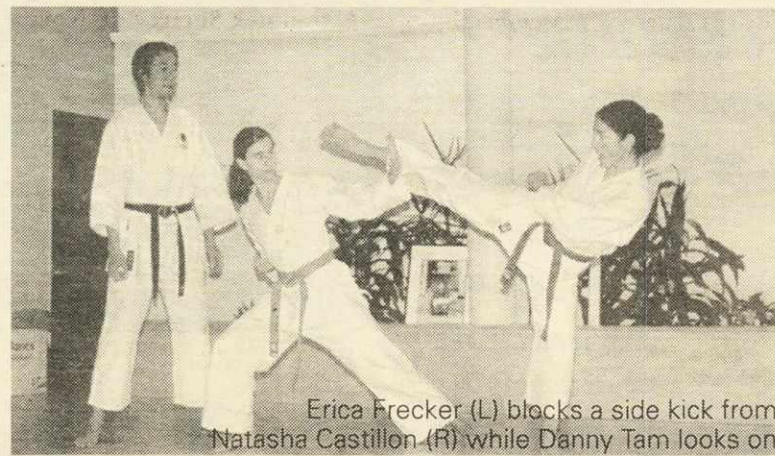
The designation *karate* has hidden subtleties. In writing *kara*, Funakoshi chose characters that mean "to render oneself empty." That's when students are open to knowledge.

The best teachers haven't forgotten that. Master Teruyuki Okazaki — the celebrated Chairman of the International Shotokan Karate Federation who brought karate to North America — teaches in Halifax each March. Even as a beginner, Kathleen Bryden recognized this eighth-degree black belt's deeply spiritual nature.

Now, the anesthesiology resident and black belt applies lessons taught by old masters to her hectic life.

thing that you try to perfect knowing that you never will. But it gives you a goal, something to strive for. Some people think karate is violent, but I don't think that way. The biggest fight is the one you have with yourself — to see if you can get your body to do what your mind wants it to do."

A class taught by the Tams is varied and interesting. Students or *karateka* practise basic stances, blocks, punches, strikes and kicks



Erica Frecker (L) avoids a side kick from Natasha Castillon (R) while Danny Tam looks on

Erica Frecker (L) blocks a side kick from Natasha Castillon (R) while Danny Tam looks on

— singularly and in combination. *Kata* are sequences of techniques against imaginary opponents that blend power and elegance. *Kata* names like *Crane on a Rock*, *Flying Swallow*, and *Looking at the Sky* emphasize the wisdom old masters gleaned from nature. *Kumite* (sparring) is non-contact, so students learn control and discipline.

"The beauty of karate is that everyone contributes," says Danny Tam. "You can train on your own, but you'll never develop the spirit that comes from training together. During a tough class, you can feel the spirit building, a collective spirit. Everyone comes together. It's just tremendous. At the end of the class, people have more energy than when they started. They move more fluidly. That's why karate has been called Zen in motion, meditation in motion."

Martial arts emerged 1200 years ago, when India's Boddhidharma travelled to China's Shaolin monastery to teach

Halifax-Japan Karate Association — a university-based club. Students of all shapes, sizes, and abilities fill classes at the King's Fitness Centre — students fascinated by karate's intense and introspective milieu.

This story is 23 years in the making. After his B-movie epiphany, Tam enrolled in Shotokan karate — a traditional Japanese martial art — at the local Y, but his instructor absconded with the money. He was a beginner, but class members felt he was the most technically proficient student, and asked him to teach. He discovered that karate offered more than kicks and punches.

"I was shy as a child," Tam recalls. "Suddenly here I was, 13, in front of 60 people teaching karate. I soon grew out of my shyness. I could feel my confidence increasing. I learned to communicate with people, to deal with people. As each year passed, I was growing as a person. My study habits improved, my discipline improved, I did better at school. As my respect for other people grew, I was no longer interested in fighting."

He was interested in helping others explore this intriguing martial art. In 1979, the young commerce student founded the Dalhousie Karate Club, which has evolved into the nonprofit Halifax-JKA with four dojos in metro.

Ironically, the 75-member class on campus is filled with nonviolent students trying to perfect a martial art. Many people assume karate allows Neanderthals to vent hostilities. That's sometimes true, but not here.

The Dal club attracts highly-motivated students, including men and women studying theatre, commerce, the humanities and sciences, engineering, physical education, medicine, pharmacy, law, and dentistry. Karate means fitness, mixing aerobic and anaerobic exercise, but others find layers of complexity.

intramural schedule

January 12 - January 16

No Games on January 9th or 10th due to Law Games.

Remember to Check Dial-a-Rec on the day of your game to confirm your Game time. 494-2588

SUNDAY JAN. 12

Co-ed A Basketball

7:30 p.m. Chemistry vs. Girl Guides
7:30 p.m. Med Pulses vs. Commerce
8:30 p.m. Physio vs. Killer Cod
8:30 p.m. Dentistry vs. DABS
9:30 p.m. Rec. 3 vs. Bronson/Smith
9:30 p.m. Wild Raiders vs. Pharmacy

Men's A Basketball

1:00 p.m. MBA vs. Minutemen
2:00 p.m. Swim Team vs. The Freaks
3:00 p.m. Dentistry vs. Med
4:00 p.m. The Kool Moe vs. Celtics

Men's Res. B Hockey

11:30 p.m. Bronson vs. Killer Cod

Co-ed C Volleyball

6:30 p.m. Phantastic Physicists vs. Tupper Rats
7:30 p.m. DCF vs. Tupper Smashers
8:30 p.m. The Rizzos vs. The Mt. Uniacke Marxists

MONDAY JAN. 13

Women's Basketball

8:30 p.m. Shirreff Hall 1 vs. Raiders.

Mens B Basketball

9:30 p.m. Law vs. The Navy
10:30 p.m. Pharmacy vs. Physio

Co-ed B Volleyball

Div. 1
7:30 p.m. Ultimate Rascals vs. Computer
8:30 p.m. Physio vs. Rec 3
9:30 p.m. SAA Shooters vs. DAPS

Co-ed B Volleyball

Div. 2
7:30 p.m. Wild Raiders vs. Law
8:30 p.m. Medicine vs. Pharmacy
9:30 p.m. Nursing vs. Commerce

TUESDAY JAN. 14

Men's B Hockey

10:30 p.m. The Purple people vs. the chiefs
11:30 p.m. The Duffs vs. DABS

Co-ed A Volleyball

7:00 p.m. Law vs. Killer Cod
7:00 p.m. The radical vs. Med Spikers
8:00 p.m. OT vs. Oceanography
8:00 p.m. Dentistry vs. Eliza Studley
9:00 p.m. Pharmacy vs.

Commerce

9:00 p.m. Chemistry vs. Girl Guides
10:00 p.m. Physio vs. Miscellaneous
10:00 p.m. DABS vs. Cool Pacers

WEDNESDAY JAN. 15

Men's Res. B Hockey

11:00 p.m. Raiders vs. Bronson

Men's C Hockey

8:00 p.m. Med Blasters vs. Physio
9:00 p.m. Law vs. Dentistry
10:00 p.m. Womens Hockey Club vs. Pharmacy

Co-ed Innertube

Water Polo
Will resume NEXT week.

Women's Volleyball

7:30 p.m. Pharmacy vs. Dentistry
8:30 p.m. Shirreff 1 vs. Smashers
9:30 p.m. Shirreff 2 vs. Raiders

Men's B Basketball

7:30 p.m. Geology vs. Med Pulses
8:30 p.m. Chemistry vs. Girl Guides
9:30 p.m. Geology vs. Runckles
10:30 p.m. Law vs. Pharmacy

Men's Res. A

Basketball

Men's Res. B Basketball
No game due to varsity Basketball game.

THURSDAY JAN. 16

Men's A Volleyball

7:30 p.m. Pharmacy vs. Law
8:30 p.m. Pig Dogs vs. Dentistry
9:30 p.m. DABS vs. MED Spikers

Men's B Volleyball

7:30 p.m. Pharmacy vs. Half Inflated dark Lords
8:30 p.m. Ultimate vs. Raiders
9:30 p.m. Chemistry vs. Spiked Punch

Men's Res. A Volleyball

7:30 p.m. Eliza Studley vs. Bronson Smith
8:30 p.m. Raiders vs. Killer Cod.

Co-ed B Basketball

7:30 p.m. OT Adaptors vs. Pharmacy
8:30 p.m. Geology vs. MBA
9:30 p.m. Law vs. Medicine
10:30 p.m. The Radical vs. the Phantastic Physicists