

Live in Peace

Live and let live. It seems so simple, but there are those who seek out confrontations in order to get what they *need* to live — a positive opinion of themselves — even if we may not wish to comply.

A married couple leaves a restaurant in LA and hands the valet their ticket. Three well-dressed single men exit behind them, one of which deliberately bumps the husband's shoulder. You and I recognize he is looking either to humiliate this man in front of his wife, knowing he won't fight back (3 against 1 and his wife's safety being a good reason not to), or he is looking to beat the husband silly thus simultaneously humiliating him and feeling macho. Of course, these well-dressed jackals are as cowardly as they want to make the husband appear. None of them would dare do this by himself, nor bother to do it if there were no woman around.

The husband says something aloud and they immediately turn like a school of barracuda, the leader showing his fangs and putting his nose in the man's face. Although they have initiated the insult waiting for the chance to pounce if the insulted party acts insulted, they now want the mark to make the next move as if they could deny culpability for the impending fight. "He started it, officer."

Why do they not want to simply enjoy the rest of the evening in peace? Because getting into a fight (even an unfair one) or making a dude back down makes them feel strong and functional in a world in which they think peace is for pansies and power is making someone else feel powerless.

Sure, they deserve to be publicly humiliated by Billy Jack, Lone Wolf McQuade, or Lee Jun Fan, but that seldom happens in reality. Instead, the poor mark has to exaggerate his apologies as if *he* had done something wrong and hope that the valet returns his vehicle quickly enough to make a propitious exit. All because he just wants to live in peace.

Political campaigns are getting to be more and more like this incident. Mr. Left or Mr. Right (take your pick, depending on the election and the issue) deliberately insults his across-the-aisle opponent, marshalling emotional arguments in an attempt to feel good about his own position. He can't just leave his political opposite in peace because he believes in a world in which peace is for pansies and power is making someone else feel powerless. Having power means he can have his way. And having his own way will, in his mind, always be at the expense of someone else's way.

It seems we have to learn the lessons of a liberal democracy and a functioning civilization all over again without a Thomas Jefferson to educate us. The best way to live in peace is to tolerate someone else's divergent opinions. They are the intolerant that start fights, often making their marks appear to be the ones looking for trouble.

You and I learn self-defense in case some wise-bottomed bucko in a buff suit starts a static outside a restaurant with two of his buddies to back him up. Would that we could learn our martial art as an art, as an athletic pastime, as a fun and educational hobby, and leave the Lone Wolf McQuade stuff to the police. But we live in a world in which peace, although not just for pansies, is easily disturbed by those who think that their

personal power depends on making someone else feel powerless. They may not be running for office, but they do want to rule.

It is the traditional martial artist's fate to figure ways around the nose in the face, or before that, the bump on the shoulder. It is the traditional martial artists job not to be Billy Jack or Lee Jun Fan, but to find a way to leave the dapper dingoes in peace in order to live in peace.

Next week, "Pacify to Live"