

## Now What Do You Have? 2

To answer this question, give yourself a review. You don't have to ask these exact questions, but based on our fictitious example of you as a 90-year martial artist at age 107, you may want to compare your answers to other martial artists you had met along the way.

You noted that you have lived as a generally healthy person. Have other martial artist you have known done the same? Or, have some kept themselves in shape until a certain dan-rank or title was achieved, then smoked, drank, overate, and generally blamed age rather than personal habits as the reason why their health was not exemplary?

You recognized that you had become a warmer, friendlier, more tolerant person. Have other martial artists of similar experience done the same? Or have they become more distant from first the lower kyu-ranks and then the lower black belts until almost everyone was beneath their contempt? Did they put middlemen/-women between them and the real world, not to make their work more efficient, but to insulate them from reality?

You had become a good source of information that benefits others and have shared your knowledge so someday others can surpass your knowledge and pass on the wisdom. Have other similarly ranked martial artists repeated the same training again and again while they resist recognizing other's contributions to their art? Do they stop learning, thinking everyone else lucky if they could only learn from them?

Finally, you noted that you had become a grateful, appreciative person. Have other longtime martial artists expressed gratitude and appreciation both for the teachers, the opportunities that befell them and for the students they were lucky enough to teach? Or, do they expect other to express gratitude that they were lucky enough to walk in the shadow of greatness?

Let's assume that you are the odd duck, and that other martial artists have become colder, less friendly, less tolerant people unwilling to share knowledge, unwilling to benefit others, and unappreciative of whatever they have been able to achieve. Further let's stipulate that they are world-famous, have made money on the martial arts, and are about as highly ranked and highly titled as large statues of demigods in climate controlled museums. Now what do they have at the end of their careers?

If you point to the titles, ranks, money, and fame, perhaps you have been training in the martial arts for very mundane reasons and perhaps I, as a 50-year martial artist and the author of this article, simply are too idealistic to understand you. As Judy Tenuta used to say, "It could happen!"

I look at the top shelf of the dining room bookcases and see the trophies I won in college wrestling, judo, and later in karate, while others broke and were disposed of. I look at the dojo walls and see a few certificates of rank and title, while others are filed away never to see the florescent lights overhead. In my closet I see various belts, each signifying various levels of achievement. Others are

stored in an old gi-bag, while others, threadbare and torn, have been thrown away. All of these are mementos of what I accomplished, and serve, along with photo albums, as stimulations to the history that students want to know. But they are not I.

I don't know what I'll have after 90 years of budo besides digital photos on the computer and a couple of additional threadbare belts, but what I will have *become*—I hope—is someone who managed a instrument well and in such a way that only those who managed their instruments well can understand.