

'SONCHOU'.

A Response by Sensei Renee

After reading Sensei Grant's write up on Sonchou I could not help myself but respond... below I hope to capture in my response what this has meant for one student (me), throughout my training, and the implications this has had for my 'modern world'.

'Sonchou has three most important elements for a person to strive for to create success - respect, esteem and regard...'

I had never heard 'Bushido – Way of the Warrior' put that way before (into these three exact words). But reading this article put into words what I always knew in my head, felt in my heart, searched for within my soul, and strived for in my actions. I had no other choice – I was driven for these to be true to my way of life.

'Respect is listed first, although not necessary the most important of the three'. I agree that it is hard to place these three almighty practices in a hierarchical order – yet for me Respect was, and is, so all very important.

So, it does make sense to mention this one first!

RESPECT...Respect was the first practise I was taught in Bukido. I was taught - Respect for our dojo, our dojo was sacred; this is how we treat it. Our dojo is a part of us, and us a part of the dojo; if our dojo is unwell and un-kept, then we too are not at our best. Respect for our instructors; an instructor has trained long and hard for many years and deserves one's respect. (After all, an instructor's belt has turned black from one's spilt blood – how can we but not respect them!)

Respect for higher grades; these are our leaders. They show the steps we are faced with, the path ahead should we choose it, a way to over come the challenges that lie await and define us, an ally should we ask for one – how can we but not respect our higher grades!

Respect for lower grades; they are our future. They watch what leaders do, they mimic what leaders do, they strive for what leaders have, they model themselves on who and what they see, they stand before and listen, they stand in front and fight for, they can surprise and deserve to always be wary of. They are our future – how can we but not respect our lower grades!

This practice shaped me and became a natural part of training and life that I never questioned... I believed in it – it was a part of me, and I a part of it.

I believe that to be a true 'warrior', one MUST practice and truly believe - 'in order to get respect, one must first give respect'. 'These actions and the principle of self-respect and respect for others, is the hallmark of the modern warrior...'

'Esteem is feeling good about yourself and what you are. The basis of this concept is that we become what we think about'... This practice so easily follows on from the first - our esteem feeds and develops richly from the full practise of respect (... 'we become what we think about...').

ESTEEM... I believe we start to see a cyclic effect involving Respect and Esteem.

Sensei Rod commanded respect. He commanded respect with his passion for Bukido and his love for martial arts.

Sensei Rod lead by example – his words were always displayed in his own practise. He always strived to be the very best he could be and drove others to follow his lead. One could not help but to strive for excellence - to accept nothing in oneself except the very best – through respect develops esteem!

To respect my higher grades meant they were willing to share their knowledge, dedicate time to my questions, give away their secrets, help develop my talents, assist to eradicate my weaknesses, encourage me when I needed support, believe in me when at times I may not – through respect develops esteem!

To respect my lower grades meant I was worthy of being respected, worthy to learn from, worthy to trust, worthy to ask help and assistance from, worthy to be someone for whom to model practice on,

worthy of someone maybe to be admired – through respect develops esteem!

To respect my dojo meant I was a worthy club member; to respect my dojo meant I treasured my opportunities; to respect my dojo showed I believed in common understandings; to respect my dojo meant I was someone to be trusted; to respect my dojo meant I was someone for whom to spend time on; to respect my dojo meant I wanted to return – through respect develops esteem!

I entered Bukido with esteem in place, yet a more mature esteem developed throughout my training. This grew through the years as I learnt from others and questioned myself – one must question one's esteem to grow!

Questions I asked myself and strove to find answers within included:

How can I show others that I appreciate the time spent on me? (What else can I do to show my respect?)

How can I show others that I am worthy of more time? (What else can I do to show my respect?)

How else can I help others like I have been helped? (What else can I do to show my respect?)

What must I do to find the strength to continue? (What new tasks must I undertake to help develop my esteem?)

What must I do to take responsibility for my own journey? (What must I undertake to help develop my esteem?)

To be a 'warrior' one must develop sound esteem – 'By always living up to our word and our commitments, we will feel better about ourselves and have a high level of self-esteem. Other people begin to see us as individuals with honour and treat us differently and therefore ads to this level of self-esteem'.

'Knowing the consequences of each of our actions is imperative to the mindset of a warrior. Thinking several steps ahead, we know what each move is going to produce long-term and using a deep sense of responsibility and regard for others we make sure that our actions never hurt another person. Taking into consideration, the effects of our actions on others and making sure that we don't unintentionally harm others is one of the key actions of the modern warrior. '... One can see quite easily why 'Regard' is so imperative to 'Way of the Warrior' by relating the below dictionary meanings to what I have discussed above:

REGARD . We put it all into practice!

- (1) To look closely or attentively at someone or something; observe steadily.
- (2) To hold a person or thing in respect, admiration, or affection.
- (3) To look upon or consider in a specified way.
- (4) To relate to; concern; have a bearing on.
- (5) To take notice of or pay attention to, heed.

So finally, I get back to my reason for this response...

I was awarded the Bushido Award - 'Way of the Warrior', from Sensei Rod when I was just 21, I had not long been a black belt. I learnt that night that Sensei Rod had only ever given one of these out before in the past, and I was one of two receiving the award that night.

Receiving this Bushido recognition has been the greatest honour EVER given to me.... it still takes my breath away that I am thought to be worthy of this by my instructor.

I eat it, breathe it and live it – it is what I believe in and what I believe should be practised by all – Respect, Esteem, Regard..... in the dojo, at work, mixing with friends, interacting with strangers, during good times, during hard times, in times when you are hurting and think you don't have one more punch or kick left, in times when physical training is sparse especially as Sensei Rod mentioned in his Bukido letter - now things are getting slower, kicks lower etc.. this requires a new Respect, Esteem and Regard that is essential to find....

Things may change but one thing does not. 'These three concepts are imperative in the foundation of understanding of anyone that is interested in truly understanding bushido, the way of the warrior and how that applies in the modern world' - To find these one must find COURAGE and HONOUR (These are worthy of further exploration at a later date!)

So...

If you wonder, is it truly real...it is!

If you wonder, is it truly worth it.... it is!

If you wonder, can you truly discover it...you can!

...RESPECT. ESTEEM. REGARD.

Yours in Bushido,

Sensei Renée