

Statement of Philosophy **(Bo Blalock, April 25th, 2009)**

In this statement of my philosophy, I want to discuss the purpose of the martial arts, I want to talk about what martial arts are for. There are those who would have us believe martial arts are a weapon, strictly for self defense with no other purpose, to these survivalist, maximum technique is their aim. There are those who would tell us martial arts are a sport, just an exercise where your competition record proves your skill and worth as an exponent of the system. Still others would argue that this is some kind of performance art, a form of recreation, a means of expression where efficiency doesn't matter if it looks good and you enjoy yourself. There are many different answers to that question of what are martial arts for. Each answer is satisfactory to the individual relaying that answer, but each answer only works for that individual. In searching for my own answer of the purpose of Hapkido and martial arts, I feel I have to go back to the beginning of my practice.

I first started martial arts in Kindergarten at 6 years old, because I watched this really cool movie about 4 very large turtles who were trained in the arts of fighting by one very wise rat. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles got me through the door of martial arts. I started doing Taekwondo at a local YMCA soon after seeing that movie, where about 18 years ago Master Pak signed my size 0 uniform with the Hangul for "Bo" on the left lapel. Ever since then, I have been unceasingly enraptured by the martial arts.

My first brush with Hapkido came when I was in the 2nd grade, and my friend threw me with one step outside throw on the playground. I have no clue where he learned it from, but I went head over heels on the concrete and had yet to learn side break fall (that would have come in handy that day).

My second brush with Hapkido came when I was in middle school, while attending a Taekwondo tournament in Saint Joseph Missouri, between forms and sparring competition, the black belts gave a Hapkido demonstration that I can still remember. People were flying through the air with a flick of a well timed wrist and screaming in pain from strange elbow grips. I didn't understand what was going on, but I liked it. Since that time, I made up my mind that same day I would learn this amazing style, which didn't rely on hitting other people, but instead relied on controlling them with a touch of the hand, and throwing them around the room at will.

I finally had the opportunity to learn Hapkido, when as a freshman at the University of Iowa I attended a Hapkido demonstration and saw the feats I remembered watching as a teenager being performed by our clubs students and teachers, I joined up right away the very next week. For the next 4 years I was choked, flung around the room, locked till my joints were screaming in pain, had my hair pulled out of my head, and all around had a really great time, made many friends, and learned many self defense techniques while avoiding permanent injury working out with a terrific group of people in Iowa City. The class I started in was around 50 people if not more, but by brown belt I was the only one of that class left, I guess I must have enjoyed the punishment more than they.

For the past 2 years I've been living in China, working out consistently and learning from many styles and people. Hapkido has stayed with me, and remained at the forefront of my practice in self defense.

So looking back now, with hindsight being 20/20, what did I learn and what was it for? What is the purpose of my martial arts?

Martial arts is being knocked down 10 times, and getting up 11, a lesson we learn everyday on the mats. Martial arts is living your life without anger and jealousy, you can't be angry at your partners for Hapkido-ing you too hard, or be jealous of them for being better than you, each practice ends with a bow and a thank you and a I'll see you next class. Martial arts is realizing you are here to learn, and asking others for their help, letting go of your pride and your ego, we learn to ask others for help or we can't improve our Hapkido, simple as that, and life is no different. Martial Arts is learning to live in community and cooperation with others, to take others needs into your consideration, to not be selfish, a class is run through teamwork and we learn our techniques through cooperation, you fall as many times as you throw, there is no room to be selfish in the training. Martial Arts is having surgery one day, then walking through the halls of a hospital doing your forms in your head and breaking imaginary wrist grabs on your way back to your room, at least it is for me, I hope no one here ever needs to have an operation of any kind. Martial Arts is about character, community, and kindness. Martial Arts is a way for us to learn and practice all those qualities and traits we wish to possess but don't know how to achieve by normal means. Martial Arts is an activity that shapes you into a better person. Martial Arts is a way of life.

The purpose of Martial Arts training is not for us to learn to fight others, but to learn to fight against mediocrity and complacency. To fight against laziness, and the voice in your head which says you can't. Hapkido, and all martial arts, are for fighting to be a better person, a good person. The Do in Hapkido is there for a reason. As I see it, the purpose of martial arts is to live a good life, be a good person, and kick some butt along the way.