

Sensei Says

#24 - February 2003

Originally printed in the BMAI Newsletter "Best Times"

So, how are those New Year's Resolutions going? Great! I hope.

After writing last month about some of my past resolutions I got many different comments from parents and students. Interestingly, it was the cold showers that drew the most attention.

"Why would you do such a thing?" seemed to be the most common response. "To know I can," is the best answer I seem to be able to come up with. Can you do it? I know I can without hesitation. What else can others do that you cannot, or will not? It's not like it's bad for you; in fact, many believe that cold baths are very good for your health.

Of course, I didn't do it to be better than others (and I'm sure there are things you have done voluntarily that would freak me out). I did it to become better than myself. It was, as are many aspects of martial arts training, a test of self-discipline, and a confidence building experience. Everyone has had many difficult undertakings in life. But when such a task is taken on voluntarily it offers more opportunity for personal growth – since that is the sole purpose of the exercise.

I ran across a wonderful story that sums up the type of discipline that I aspire to. It is from the book *The Storyteller: The Wisdom of Legend and Lore* written by my good friend and sempai Dennis Dallas. He wrote the book at the request of some of his students. After several years of work he compiled 78 great stories that inspire the reader to think – and question what they think. He even included a few stories that I had shared with him.

Decide for yourself if you think the star of this story would have hesitated for a moment before jumping into ice-cold water!

- Alan Best

-

Mahatma Gandhi was renowned for his wisdom and goodness.

A mother brought her young son to Gandhi. She begged, "Please, Mahatma, tell my son to stop eating sugar."

Gandhi paused, then said, "Bring your son back in two weeks." Puzzled, the woman thanked him and said that she would do as he asked.

Two weeks later, she returned with her son. Gandhi looked the youngster in the eyes and said, "Stop eating sugar."

Grateful, but bewildered, the woman asked, "Why did you tell me to bring him back in two weeks. You could have told him the same thing then."

Gandhi replied, "Two weeks ago, I was eating sugar."