



BEWARE OF THE BELT-MONGERS

By Karen Eden 3rd Dan

Ever notice those students who show up and train harder around test time? Sure enough, as soon as they promote, you know they won't be coming as regularly until another test date is due. I call them "belt'-mongers" because their ultimate goal is to get the belt, not the training that goes with the belt. But, let's see who really loses out here.

I have asked this many times before; What is a belt but a coloured piece of material? You can order as many as you want from many shops etc. Black belts, even master belts, are all readily available as are trophies at your local trophy retail store. You can even purchase a Nobel Prize!

Still, there is something to be said about knowing, deep down in your heart, that you are legitimate. Putting in the time and the sweat to earn your rank is one of the greatest accomplishments that you will ever know and experience.

I once ran into a woman who said that she too was a black belt, but that it was "no big deal" and really did not want anyone to know about it. I dropped it at that but often wondered why she had absolutely no confidence in herself or pride in her rank. I guarantee that something was not right with her training.

We should feel an overwhelming sense of pride for each promotion, We should feel pride for each belt promotion. We should feel pride in the fact that we did not quit when so many others whom we trained had quit. We should feel pride that we even had the courage to sign up for martial arts lessons in the first place.... we've already beat the masses in that one step alone. There is pride in knowing that when we started we could not do a back kick very well but with every passing day, we improved. There is pride in knowing that we are part of tradition that many have benefited from throughout history. Then, there is pride in knowing that we are fully capable of handling ourselves in a life-threatening situation or easily walking away from any taunting and verbal abuse. Belt-mongers do not feel this pride because they have not put forth the time and the energy needed to get these wonderful feelings.

I was proud to be a yellow belt, an green belt, a blue belt and a red belt. Today, I am proud to be a third degree black belt. I worked hard to earn my rank. More importantly, I am proud of who I am because I stuck with my training, even when I had so many reasons to quit.