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This column is devoted to those instructors who feel strongly about issues in the martial arts, and who wish to express their ideas and opinions in a way that would be constructive and of interest to all martial artists of all styles. Although we cannot pay for such contributions, each contributor will receive a copy of the issue in which his opinions appear in advance of the sale date. The editors reserve the right to edit all material submitted into a workable length. The opinions expressed in this column are not necessarily those of the staff.

to pasture. We can walk within 75-100 feet of families of wild deer, and jack rabbits that hardly notice us as we walk quietly by, taking in nature's beauty.

As I sit in a chair looking out at the pond, I can't help but feel the serenity, the stillness, and the beauty we have for ourselves. It is very relaxing to watch the breeze-induced ripples make their way across the pond.

What does all of this have to do with my meeting with the new **BLACK BELT** editor? Nothing really, or perhaps everything. For it is the ripples in the pond that bring back the memory of our discussion. The pond is saying, "Do not overlook the obvious," and the wind is saying, "Listen to me as I make the water ripple."

As I sat and watched the pond I thought of our discussion about traditionalists versus modernists. The pond brought the issue to light and resolved it at the same time. Nature is very simple. The message from the pond was as simple as it was thought-provoking and revealing. It said:

I, the pond, am your martial art. I contain all the knowledge there is to know. I am the possessor of all the history, philosophy, and other elements of your art. I am all there is. My source is the same as all martial arts, for we all essentially have the same roots. I have sprung from beneath the earth and from the heavens to be here on the surface for you to use. The wind is that which is created by the practitioners of the art. The ripples are the physical manifestations of what they are using of me. As the ripples move across my surface, they cause undercurrents that move the water throughout me. Though some ripples may be stronger than others, they all come

Continued on page 78

**A Message from the Pond
by George Kirby**

I recently had the opportunity to meet Jim Coleman, **BLACK BELT's** new editor. After introducing ourselves and talking about an article for a future issue, because I teach jujitsu and judo instructor Wally Jay as a martial artist, and if I thought Jay was a traditionalist or a modernist. As we continued to talk, Jim thought an article on traditionalists versus modernists in the martial arts might raise some eyebrows and responses.

Now, several days later, my wife and I are staying at a resort ranch about 30 miles southeast of Mendocino, California (north of San Francisco). It's a nice resort, 250 acres of woodlands, ponds and pasture surrounded by thousands of acres of oaks, redwoods and firs. There is a pond about 75 feet from the front of our cabin. The sky is blue and you can hear the soft breeze whistling gently through the trees. From our cabin porch I can watch an occasional osprey dive for fish. In the evening we can walk several hundred yards up to another pond, past horses turned out

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Even if we, as mortal humans, can't resolve the problem, history will. History does not make a value statement, saying that a system founded 500 years ago is more traditional than one founded 450 or even 300 years ago. It is merely older. A 300-year-old system has a 300-year tradition. A 30-year-old style has a 30-year tradition. Both systems may be equally valid. Only time and history will bear this out. This is because history is like the pond. Man's presence upon the earth is like the ripples on the pond. Man's life starts and ends on earth, just as a ripple starts at one end of the pond, moves across, and then laps against the opposite shore, ceasing its existence.

However, the pond remains. The pond will always be there. Even though a ripple reaches the opposite shore, its impact remains. It has made an impression on the undercurrents of the art and changed the pond in some small way.

Now that I've become aware of the message from the pond I'm not too comfortable with it. Maybe it's because I've felt that certain martial artists have a greater impact on their

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art than others. Perhaps they do; perhaps their ripples are stronger. Maybe I was hoping that there was something more to the message, something more complex. Maybe it is the individual's impact on history, or an individual's impact on man's total existence, that bothers me.

The pond says that I am part of the whole. Which ripple am I or will I be? What undercurrents will I create and will I cause any changes in the pond? I wish I knew. Perhaps that's what bothers me most.

Perhaps I shall be fortunate enough to see some of the impact. That would be sufficient reward. The pond's message is simple: We are all of the same making, casting our ripples on the surface, making an impact on the pond of life. The problem is whether I can accept the simplicity of the message. That will take time. ✂

About the Author: George Kirby is the president of the American Ju-Jitsu Association and is a fifth-degree black belt in the art of jujitsu. A frequent contributor to BLACK BELT magazine, Kirby is the United States representative for the International Ju-Jitsu Tai-Jitsu Federation.

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