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Guest EDITORIAL

by George Kirby

Pride or Necessity?

An interesting incident recently occurred after my 12th-grade Honors Government class watched a taped interview with Saddam Hussein. During the discussion that ensued, I tried to get my students to voice their reactions to the segment. An 18-year-old male who is planning to enlist in the military after he graduates proudly said he was looking forward to killing Iraqis.

His comment immediately elevated the class from a somewhat lethargic group to an enthusiastic forum for discussion. I was impressed by several students' remarks that implored others not to stereotype people or form prejudices against a whole nation based on the actions of a few. They made their point, and the student better understood what he had said. It ended up being an excellent impromptu lesson.

It was not until I got home that evening and had a chance to sort through the day, however, that I realized I had missed an important opportunity to teach another lesson—one that is inherent in the growth process of martial arts students. It could have had an even greater impact on the class than the one they experienced. The gist of it was this: The boy's tone indicated that he was looking forward to killing. It conveyed a sense of pride. While I could understand his desire to support the policies of the United States by serving in the military—and that may have been what he was referring to—it had not come across that way.

It concerned me because the attitude he expressed conflicts with the entire martial attitude of the military. And it conflicts with the entire concept of the *budo*. While it may become necessary to cause harm to another person to protect yourself or someone you have sworn to protect, hurting others is the last thing a martial artist wants to do. To use physical force out of necessity is tolerable; to look forward to using it is not.

Perhaps it was the student's youth that caused him to think that way. Perhaps he now knows that pride should never be a rationale for causing harm to others. The only acceptable rationale is absolute necessity when no other means is available.

I realize that a street conflict is different from a military conflict. However, soldiers on both sides of a war probably have more in common than they suspect: the same fears, challenges, dreams and joys. Enduring death and destruction is a painful and expensive way to learn that lesson.

I hope my student does not have to learn it on the battlefield as a member of the military or on the street as a civilian. Learning it anywhere is a sobering experience because you are directly and inescapably confronted with your limitations, the consequences of your actions and the fragility of all life.