Some Things That I Have Learned from Goju-Ryu

by Bill Giller

There is life after forty. So if you aren't there yet don't worry, life will happen. And yes, there is life after fifty. Again, it will happen - plan for it. And so it is not a surprise to me that life happens after sixty. I have managed to make it to sixty-one and really never thought too much about it-until now.

I have been blessed with good health, excellent fitness, and limited injuries. I also have been fortunate to study and practice GoJu-Ryu for the past forty-four years with such notable sensei as Mr. Yamakura, Mr. Stamper, Mr. Yamaguchi, Mr. Chinen, Mr. Reuter and Mr. Sammons. I decided to veer from my karate training and tackle a triathlon at the World Huntsman Games this October in St. George, Utah. Although I veered from karate training it would not abandon me. Throughout my life GoJu-Ryu has taught me to be persistent. It has taught me to set goals, to develop plans to achieve them, to provide the means to execute them and then use feedback to master them. Enduring warm-ups, kata practice, bunkai understanding and application, or kumite were life builders in never giving up and always striving to do my best.

It has taught me to persevere. When I began as a white belt, I marveled at the upper belts smooth techniques. I set a goal of becoming a black belt and resolved to accomplish it with a dogged work ethic. In the dojo, perseverance meant doing it again and again and again and again until I met the standard. And, when I reached Shodan perseverance meant setting goals towards Nidan and beyond.

All of the persistence and perseverance took place in an atmosphere of patience. Patience from my sensei's who provided the guidance and knowledge to share and help me correct my techniques. Patience from GoJu itself, as it is an ongoing and lasting art form that can be properly learned through time. Learning patience myself as I struggled through difficult blocks, strikes, kicks, turns and combinations. I developed patience with myself and confidence in myself as I learned and improved my techniques.

As I relied on Goju through the years to assist me with persistence, perseverance, and patience I developed a very deep and humble passion for it. I always attempted to model my passion for the art through accurate instruction, through exacting techniques in the dojo, through my conversations with students and other instructors and by my actions in my community.

Combined with the above there was always a sense of joy working and performing in the dojo. Although we all worked extremely hard and diligent, there was also a sense of play. Going to the dojo, learning and practicing GoJu-Ryu produced great fun! (It was a tremendous amount of hard work too!)!

And so, as I began my training for the Huntsman Games triathlon, I used my learning from Goju to help prepare me. Teamed with persistence, perseverance, patience, passion and play this last year I prepared for the triathlon. As I accepted the silver medal, I was so thankful for my GoJu training. And as I creep towards my seventies and eighties I will continue to rely on these five P's that I have learned from Goju-Ryu to meet life challenges that lie ahead.