

A Parent's Guide to the Martial Arts

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So your kids want to take up martial arts and become the next Chuck Norris, Jackie Chan, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle or Power Ranger. Or perhaps, you have heard that martial arts training can instill self-discipline, improve self-confidence, teach them respect and courtesy, or teach them self-defense. However, maybe you're just not sure about all that kicking and punching, and what about all those weapons? After all, after they watch their favorite martial arts filled movies, they run around the house punching and kicking, swinging their imaginary sword, acting out their favorite action hero. Therefore, you may ask, "What does all that punching and kicking really accomplish?" "Doesn't training how to fight make you more aggressive or more prone to fight?" I mean, we don't want our kids getting into fights in school or around the neighborhood, right? The bottom line is you just want to know whether or not learning martial arts is a good thing and you want to know exactly what your kids will be learning in a martial arts class.

If you're like most westerners, you probably have some ideas of what the martial arts is all about, but what you know is probably heavily influenced by movies and T.V. When you combine that with the confusion caused by our abuse of the current terminology used in the martial arts, it's no wonder we have a skewed view of what the martial arts is really about. As you read on, you will gain a better understanding of what the martial arts is and isn't, you will discover some of the benefits of martial arts training, you will learn what questions to ask to aid you in finding a good martial arts school, and you will feel more confident that you will make the right choice for your kids.

First, what is a martial art? This at first seems like a simple question. However, this deceptively simple question involves a lot more than meets the eye. We should first clarify the term 'martial art'. *Martial* is defined as "having to do with war" and comes from, *Mars*, "the Roman god of war" and *art* can be defined as "skill acquired by experience, study, or observation." Therefore, a martial art is a *skill or skills having to do with war, acquired by experience, study, or observation*. Based on your current understanding of the martial arts this answer may seem inadequate. After all, there are martial arts like Judo and Taekwondo in the Olympics, right? So, somehow the preceding definition doesn't seem right. In order to understand why this answer may seem inadequate we need to explore some of the history of the martial arts.

Over the centuries, the martial arts have evolved into a few distinctly different branches. These branches can be described as follows: Traditional martial arts, arts that were developed and practiced for their combat effectiveness; Martial sports, martial arts that have been modified for sport competition; and Martial theatre, martial arts that have been modified to enhance their theatrical value. Martial theatre is probably what most westerners are familiar with, as this is what is usually seen on T.V. and in the movies. The first two branches that I have listed can be further subdivided. With regard to traditional martial arts, some of these arts have evolved into training for self-perfection rather than self-preservation. And, as far as martial sports, you have the competitive combat aspect, which pits two combatants against one another. This competitive combat aspect can be further subdivided into *points competition*, where winners are determined by points awarded by judges and *limited-rules competition*, where winners are determined by submission or knockout. The other aspect is competitive demonstration, which involves participants demonstrating techniques via prearranged forms or via breaking various materials, such as boards and bricks, with a winner, again determined by judges. One of the modern trends in

this competitive demonstration aspect takes the demonstration to the extreme by incorporating acrobatics and gymnastics into the demonstration. Basically, this modern trend is a blending of martial sports with martial theatre. As you can see, this evolution of martial arts has created fundamental differences between the different branches that I have described.

The problem is that our terminology used to describe these differing branches has not evolved. We continue to label and group a wide variety of Asian combative systems and sports under the term 'martial art'. "Under close examination, however, we find that not all of these activities are truly martial in nature, nor are they all arts." (Morgan, 5) Donn Draeger, in his book *Classical Bujutsu*, echoes these sentiments by stating that one of the purposes of his book is to point out the carelessness of those who describe all Japanese martial skills under one classification, referring to the aggregate simply as "martial arts." (Draeger, 1, 18) Understanding the differences will be important when attempting to choose a martial art school.

In order to understand why I have divided the martial arts into these different branches, let us refer again to noted martial arts historian, the late Donn F. Draeger. "Draeger's position was that unless a system was developed by professional warriors for use in actual warfare, it is not a martial art." (Morgan, 7) "Unfortunately, Western misrepresentations of the martial arts have corrupted the proper conception of what genuine martial art is to be." (Shim, 59)

"The most dangerous of these distortions characterizes the martial arts as synonymous with sport." (Shim, 59) In fact, some dictionaries define martial art as "a sport." In those same dictionaries, however, a *sport* is defined as "a physical activity for diversion, recreation, or entertainment involving competition between opponents under specific, mutually accepted rules." When you consider that *martial* deals with war, and *war* is defined as "a state of conflict, struggle or combat between opposing forces," can we honestly say that *war* is a sport for diversion, recreation, or entertainment? I think not.

What this means is that "sport applications of combative systems, such as competitive taekwondo, karate-do, and judo, are not martial arts. Putting a combative system in the competitive arena requires an array of rules to be placed on it, constraining its maneuvers and detrimentally modifying its technical application. In time, as 'players' are trained in how to work within the rules to best win the game, the system evolves to fit the framework of those rules. What is effective in the constrained, competitive environment is often worthless in the no-holds barred world of actual combat, and what is effective in combat, being illegal in sport, gradually fades from the training program and is lost." (Morgan, 7-8)

It should be noted however, that some styles continue to be taught in a traditional manner with the emphasis on combat effectiveness or character development, or both. While on the other hand, as we have just seen, some styles have shed their martial applications in favor of pursuing excellence in sport competition while at the same time still claiming positive character development. It must be pointed out however, that one may excel in sports or competition without necessarily possessing an admirable character. Just look at the current headlines and you will invariably find some sports figure who is in the spotlight for drugs, marital infidelity, or some other immoral behavior.

Case in point is the recently announced retirement of the U.S. Taekwondo Union's president and the resignation of that organization's treasurer amidst a U.S. Olympic Committee's investigation of financial mismanagement and misappropriation of money. In addition, recent headlines detail the suspension of the International Olympic Committee's Vice President, Kim Un-yong, who is under investigation for suspicion of corruption and embezzling funds from the World Taekwondo Federation, which he has been heading for three decades, and from the World

Taekwondo Headquarters, a Seoul-based institute that issues taekwondo credentials, as well as accusations he took bribes and kickbacks from former South Korean Olympic officials. (Associated Press, New York Times, L.A. Times) As you can see, although positive character development is possible in sport related activities, it is not a prerequisite for advancement.

"The fundamental differences between the martial arts and competitive sports go right to the marrow of what it means to be a martial artist." (Shim, 59) It is for these reasons previously mentioned that I have differentiated between martial art and competitive sport. Don't misunderstand me, I have nothing against martial sports or those who choose to train for and compete in them. There are positive aspects in those activities, and in some cases, participants in those sportive applications are tremendous athletes, but those who choose to train for and compete in martial sports should not deceive themselves into thinking they are practicing martial arts or The Martial Way.

So what is this Martial Way or *budo*? How does *budo*, "martial way," differ from *bujutsu*, "martial arts?" Moreover, how does pursuing this Martial Way differ from pursuing athletic excellence in combative sports? First, we should understand that *budo* developed from the technical basis of *bujutsu*, however the classical *budo* were not designed to serve the warrior in combat. Whereas the *bujutsu* emphasized form to be used in bringing about an effective combat result, the *budo* stressed form to be used as a means for gaining an understanding of the self and for gaining self-perfection. Training in *budo* thus, it was believed, aimed at "higher values" than those of *bujutsu*. (Draeger, 2, 33)

"It should be understood, however, that the *budo* were not created as forms of social amusement or sport, or as methods for the display of pure aesthetic artistry. They were intended to be austere disciplines that engage and train the mind directly, in serving one's daily life through a process of dedicated and protracted training. The classical *budo* are meant to be experienced, serving as a pattern of behavior for life and self." (Draeger, 2, 34)

Furthermore, Hirokazu Kanazawa, in his book *Kumite Kyohan*, states; "From the viewpoint of karate as a competitive sport, the teaching method reaches its goal when only five students among the fifty become good competitors. This number succeeding in individual or team competition is sufficient to establish the reputation of their Dojo. However, from the point of view that karate is a martial art, the method of teaching does not reach its goal unless it achieves the physical and mental development of the entire class." (Kanazawa, 10)

What does all this mean to you and how does it influence your decision as to which style to choose? What you as a parent should realize is that mastery of the system that your child practices is not the desired end in itself but only a vehicle towards that end. The student must learn to "subdue the external gratifications of rank, prestige, competitive victory, and ego in general for the truer rewards of personal development." (Morgan, 10) This is the essence of *budo*, *martial way*. "The Martial Way is a discipline devoted to the perfection of character. Outward displays of finery expose an individual who needs external reinforcement to reassure him of his self-worth. Even public displays of skill and prowess, when motivated by the desire to impress others, demonstrate and intensify fundamental weaknesses within. And therein lies the pitfall of tournament competition." (Morgan, 28)

In his book, *Dewey and Eros: Wisdom and Desire in the Art of Teaching*, Jim Garrison states "Everyone passionately desires to possess what is good, or at least what they perceive as good, and to live a life of ever-expanding meaning and value. It is for the sake of the perceived good that practitioners strive to perfect their practice. What they seek, however, soon comes to possess them and eventually becomes the content of their character." (Garrison, 1) When one practices martial arts

with the goal of acquiring trophies, amassing tournament victories, or to boost one's ego, then their practice takes them down the path of self-gratification, and weakens, not strengthens, their character.

"The simple answer is there is much more to be gained from following The Martial Way than technical proficiency and the external rewards of athletic success. The Martial Way does not start and end at the door of the training hall. This is what separates The Martial Way from other pursuits and makes it so valuable. Where one may play a sport or have a hobby, one lives The Martial Way." (Morgan, 10-11) Now you should have a better understanding of what a martial art is and is not. You should also understand that budo, with its goal of personal development and self-perfection, requires time and effort, but is a rewarding and valuable endeavor.

You should now be able to determine what it is that you're looking for now that you understand the differences between martial art, combative sport, and martial theatre. In addition, now that you have seen some of the benefits of training in the martial arts and the martial way you are ready to tackle the problem of finding a martial arts school, but how do you go about choosing the right class or school? What questions do you ask?

There are many things to consider such as: location, class schedule or time, and cost. Moreover, who is the instructor and what is his experience level? What are the instructor's teaching qualifications? What is the focal point or purpose of the school? What is taught and how is it taught? Moreover, it is important to understand what the answers to each of these questions mean and how they will help you make the right decision. Let's take a closer look at some of these considerations, explore how important each of them is in the context of choosing a martial arts school, and determine what answers we should be looking for.

First, let's talk about the questions whose answers should have the least impact on your decision. One of the first questions most people will ask is "Where is the school located?" or "Is this the closest school?" Most people believe location to be one of the more important considerations. However, location has no bearing on the quality of the school or the quality of instruction. Thus, you should not base your decision very heavily on where the school is located. Another consideration that usually ranks high on a person's list is class times. Obviously, it would be preferable if the school that you choose has class times that fit your schedule but that may not always be possible. A third consideration that should also have very little impact on your decision is cost. This is because cost is not a good indicator of the quality of a school either. As you will see through the rest of this article not all schools are the same. There are differences in the type of instruction and in the quality of instruction. Therefore, it will always be better to travel farther, pay more, or rearrange your schedule in order to attend a high quality school. A martial arts school can have a tremendous impact, good or bad, on a child's physical, mental, and emotional well-being. If you have your child's best interest at heart, minor inconveniences will not deter you from a higher quality school.

So, how do we determine whether the school you're looking at is a high quality school? There are many different types of training facilities and the type of facility will most likely be closely associated with the type and style of martial art or arts that are taught there. However, before we go further, it must be noted that since this article is a guide to martial arts we will continue to focus on that aspect and determine what kind of facility is most appropriate for training in the martial arts and the martial way. Therefore, we must first determine what kind of facility is most appropriate for training in the martial arts or the martial way.

Many different types of facilities or schools may come to mind. There are the ultra-modern facilities with a weight room, sauna, etc. There are also storefront schools that can be found in

places like a strip mall. Sometimes you may even find a small class in a local recreation center. However, what we are looking for is a true dojo. What is a dojo you ask and how does it differ from other schools? Fredrick Lovret in his book, *The Student Handbook*, states "The Japanese word *dojo* may be literally translated as 'Way-Place'. It indicates a place where the Martial Way is followed. Note the use of the term *followed*. In a school you study the martial arts; in a dojo you live the martial arts." (Lovret, 4, 7) As, you have already seen, there is a major difference between these two philosophies.

Lovret goes on to say, "A dojo is much, much more than just a school. A school is merely a place where the staff attempt to impart knowledge and physical skills. A dojo, however, is more a state of mind than a place." (Lovret, 4, 7) A traditional dojo doesn't just teach; it makes a concerted effort to create an entirely new and better person. "There is something about training in a proper dojo that brings out the best in a person. It doesn't just make you do more than you thought you could do; it makes you do more than you ever dreamed you could do. The dojo, just by its existence, sets a standard, a standard that forces everyone in it to strive for perfection." (Lovret, 3, 27)

So how do we determine if the school is a true dojo? Donn Draeger, in his book *Classical Budo*, describes a dojo this way: "The dojo is austere, a humble place of natural and quiet dignity. It may be a specially constructed, spacious hall or simply a small but suitable indoor area. Always cleanliness and order predominate." (Draeger, 2, 43) He goes on to say, "It follows that the dojo must contain nothing ostentatious to distract the mind, for not only would this run contrary to the element of spirituality in the dojo, but it is patent that no really serious training can be pursued in a training area that contains all sorts of ornamentation." (Draeger, 2, 46)

The next consideration in finding a high quality school is by far the most important and is usually the least researched when choosing a martial arts school. What is the most important consideration you ask? The most important consideration is 'finding a good and qualified instructor.' So how do you determine if the instructor you're looking at is a good instructor? I can give you some guidelines to follow but in addition to the instructor's qualifications, the instructor's personality and how he conducts the class should also factor into your decision.

First, let's talk about qualifications to look for. The first questions that you need to ask are: "What is the rank of the instructor?", "How long has he or she been training?", and "How long has he or she been teaching?" Teaching and rank requirements may vary from organization to organization, so in order to understand what answers we need to look for let's look at the traditional standards set forth in Japan. In the traditional Japanese martial arts, usually the minimum rank necessary to teach is *yondan* (4th degree black belt). What is so special about *yondan*? Well, in most schools, *sandan* (3rd degree black belt) is the rank that separates junior *yudansha* (black belt) from senior *yudansha*. This means that 1st and 2nd degree black belts are considered junior black belt grades. And a junior black belt is a student, not a teacher. Moreover, if you don't have enough discipline to stick with a legitimate school long enough to earn a *sandan* or *yondan*, then you don't have enough discipline to run a dojo. (Lovret, 3, 2) (Lovret, 12, 16-17)

Most people, and many martial artists, however, believe that once you earn your black belt you are capable of teaching. The confusion lies in the misconception in the West that a black belt is an expert. Earning a first-degree black belt, however, only means that a student has just begun to learn. In Japan, a first-degree black belt is called a *shodan*, which means first level. In a traditional school this indicates about three years of training and it is at this time that a person is considered to be a serious student. In addition, it is at the black belt level that the student will have demonstrated proficiency in the *shoden*, or "beginning teachings."

The *shoden* are one-third of a three-layer teaching structure found in a typical ryu. This three

layer system is composed of *shoden*, *chuden*, and *hiden*. The *shoden* or “beginning teachings” is what a student is taught when he first begins training. After he is capable of executing all of these techniques properly, he is allowed to advance to the *chuden* or “middle teachings.” A student can spend years or even decades mastering these techniques before he is introduced to the *hiden* or “secret teachings.” This is the source of a lot of confusion in the West. Many students and instructors never really master the *chuden* let alone reach the *hiden* level, if they are even aware of such a thing, and therefore never learn all of teachings of their particular ryu. (Lovret, 5, 20) And a teacher must have a thorough knowledge of the subject he teaches.

In fact Sang H. Kim, in his book, *Teaching Martial Arts*, says, “A teacher must be an expert in the subject he teaches. In the field of martial arts, this expertise should be based on solid professional knowledge and experience in the arts being taught.” (Kim, 37) This sentiment is echoed in all teaching vocations. For example, Herbert Kohl in his book, *On Teaching*, states “Teachers have to have some mastery of the subjects they teach,” (Kohl, 9) and Gilbert Highet, in his book, *The Art of Teaching*, states, “The first essential of good teaching, then, is that the teacher must know the subject.” (Highet, 12) This brings us to a disturbing, yet common practice found in most modern martial arts schools. This practice involves the adding of classes to the curriculum based on current trends in order to make more profit.

In the early to mid-eighties, *ninjutsu*, which was popularized by the fictional movies from Hollywood, was the hottest trend in the martial arts. In the late eighties and early nineties, it was *Aikido*, which was popularized through the movies that featured Steven Seagal. The early nineties also saw the advent of the *cardio kickboxing* craze, which was popularized by Billy Blanks with his introduction of *Tae Bo*®. The tremendous popularity of *Tae Bo*® caused many schools to add some form of cardio kickboxing to their curriculum in order to increase profits. In the early to mid-nineties, Brazilian jujutsu, which was popularized by the no-holds barred competitions, became the hottest trend in the martial arts, and as a result, many schools rushed to add grappling skills to their curriculum. Today, there seems to be a rash of schools now offering classes in swordsmanship due to the popularity of recent movies such as *The Last Samurai*. In most cases, the instructors in these schools take a short training course or seminar in order to add a class to their curriculum and in other cases, information is borrowed from books or videos. Unbelievably however, sometimes the classes and content is just purely fabricated. This goes completely against the expertise required in order to teach a subject, as mentioned earlier by Highet and others.

Moreover, Highet gives an explanation of the qualities of a good teacher in the following example: “If a girl chooses the career of teaching French in school, she should not hope to commit the prescribed texts and grammars to memory and then turn her mind to other things. She should dedicate part of her life to the French language..... You may ask why this is necessary. There are two answers to this. The first is that one cannot understand even the rudiments of an important subject without knowing its higher levels -- at least, not well enough to teach it. Every day the grossest and most painful blunders are made not only by teachers but by journalists and radio commentators and others who have the public ear, because they confidently state a half-truth which they have read in an encyclopedia article, or because they lay down as gospel a conjecture once uttered by an authority they admired. And many teachers, trying to explain certain problems in their own subject, fall into explanations suggested to them by a colleague or thrown up by their own imagination, which are nevertheless totally wrong, and which an extending knowledge of the field would have corrected long ago.no one knows, no one can even guess how much knowledge a child will want and, if it is presented to him in the right way, will digest. Therefore it is simply useless to teach a child even the elements of a subject, without being prepared to answer

his questions about the upper ranges and the inner depths of the subject." (Highet, 13)

The preceding example also brings to light an important point that can be applied to your potential instructor in the form of a question. Has your potential instructor dedicated part of their life to the martial arts? "This is a critical point too many junior yudansha fail to think about. They rarely stop to consider the fact that a master instructor has probably spent just as much time learning to teach his art as he did learning to do it. "In the case of martial arts, teaching an art is much more difficult than learning for one important reason. In most cases, the student seldom realizes that learning can only take place when the correct conditions are present. Students need to be prepared to learn before the actual process of learning can take place." (Furuya, 44) Basically, you should have an absolute minimum of ten years of intensive training before you should even attempt to start teaching without supervision." (Lovret, 3, 1) This is a far cry from the shodan level. In addition, "being a good fighter or martial arts practitioner does not automatically mean you can be a good teacher. Without a certain degree of experience in all areas of the martial arts, it is difficult to teach." (Kim, 37)

Moreover, as far as rank and credentials are concerned, do some research. You should verify all claims of rank, training and teaching time as there is a current trend to inflate one's rank and credentials, as well as outright fabrication. Also, even though the instructor or school may belong to a professional sounding organization, this doesn't mean very much. Most of these organizations simply require a monthly fee to be a member and never check the legitimacy of their members. Keep in mind, there is plenty of fraudulent activity going on in the martial arts world and no one is being held accountable for it, so if you don't do the research, you could be scammed fairly easily.

If your potential school's instructor meets the time, rank, and experience requirements then you need to look at a few other things. First, how old is he? You may say that's unimportant, however, the age of the instructor makes a difference in the quality of instruction and, maturity only comes with age if it comes at all. An instructor needs to be mature in mind and body before teaching and with maturity comes dignity. "And dignity is something you need a lot of if you want to be a *sensei* (teacher)." (Lovret, 3, 5)

Moreover, since it will take about 12 to 15 years to legitimately earn a yondan, the instructor should be around thirty years of age before attempting to teach. However, some people mistakenly believe just because they have been training since they could walk, that all the years of training from age 4 to 14 or so, really count. What these people fail to realize is that maturity of mind and body takes experience and time. "Sorry there are no teenaged grandmasters, just as there are no dignified teenagers." (Lovret, 3, 6) For example, if a person has graduated high school with 12 years of education and they wished to become a teacher, they still would not be qualified to teach. They would be required to take additional courses and they would have to earn a minimum of a bachelor's degree, but more likely they would need a master's degree. This means another 4 to 6 years of education on top of the previous 12.

To summarize, here is what Michael DePasquale Sr., a high-ranking instructor of the martial arts has to say, "I personally believe that an instructor should be of at least yondan rank (4th degree black belt). His age should be a minimum of 32 years. He should have at least 5 years of experience teaching classes in a dojo under the tutelage of a ranking master instructor." (DePasquale, 54)

Does this sound like your potential teacher? Before you make your decision, however, here are some other questions that you will want to answer as well: How does the instructor handle the class? Is he in control? Do the students listen and appear respectful? Can you talk to current students or parents of students and get references from them? Has the instructor taught at other

facilities and can you get references from those facilities? Who is the instructor's teacher and what are his or her qualifications? How long has the instructor's teacher been training and how long has he or she been teaching? Are his or her credentials legitimate? Can you get a positive reference from the instructor's teacher?

In addition to the aforementioned items, here are some other things to consider. Are all instructors certified in CPR, mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and basic first aid? Do the instructors have a basic knowledge of how to treat sports-related injuries? Although injuries in a good dojo are rare, they can occur and if not treated properly can be made worse in some cases. In addition, if a school is teaching kids, then the instructors should have some knowledge of child physiology and know what exercises are appropriate for children and what exercises to avoid. Moreover, many schools today emphasize fitness and state that they will help you improve your fitness level. The martial arts is definitely a physical endeavor but if a school emphasizes fitness, you should ask what qualifies them in the fitness field. Training in the martial arts doesn't count. If they are emphasizing fitness then the instructor should have some physical fitness qualifications, either a degree in the physical fitness field or be certified in the fitness industry from a respected organization.

Also, some schools offer a form of cardio kickboxing, or some other like term. Does the instructor of this class hold qualifications in not only the martial arts field but also in the cardio/aerobic field as well? There are many things that a person who runs a cardio type class needs to know, not only so the participants gain a benefit but for their safety as well. The same holds true for the modern martial sports trend emphasizing gymnastic skills. If this is the type of school you're interested in then you should ask what are the instructor's qualifications to teach such skills. Remember, just because someone can perform a skill themselves doesn't automatically qualify them to teach that skill.

In conclusion, "the true way of Budo is to practice martial arts in such a way that they will be useful at any time. To teach them in such a way that they will be useful in all things." (Parulski, 1, 74) The mark of an excellent teacher is not their ability to perform; rather it is their ability to get you to perform! It does not matter how many trophies have been won or how perfectly an instructor may be able to execute his techniques. If he cannot convey or transmit his knowledge to you, if he cannot inspire you to learn by his mere presence, then you are not in the company of a good teacher! The bottom line is you can train in the martial arts for 10, 15, or even 20 years but that doesn't mean you know how to teach martial arts to others.

In most martial art schools, the instructor is usually referred to as *sensei*. *Sensei* is a Japanese word that is usually translated as 'teacher.' However, a *sensei* is much, much more than just a teacher. In fact, there is nothing in the term *sensei* that suggests teaching. Translated literally, *sensei* means, 'born earlier,' and as such denotes wisdom. It is more correctly "a title of respect for someone who is older and wiser. (Lovret, 1, 98) As such, a *sensei* won't just be teaching people, he will be molding them, and his students won't merely be trying to learn what he knows, they will be trying to become exactly like him. That is a heavy responsibility. (Lovret, 3, 24) And you must ask yourself, "Am I willing to entrust my child's growth and development to my chosen instructor or school? This decision should be carefully thought out and chosen with care.

Take the time to do some research and get the facts. Without good information, you will inevitably make a bad decision. Draeger puts it this way, "Most important to all who contemplate the study of a classical bujutsu is to obtain instruction only from qualified and licensed instructors. Unfortunately, there are also a number of people, both Japanese and non-Japanese, who claim to be instructors in classical disciplines; armed with bogus credentials they exploit the inability of the

general public to identify competent and licensed teaching authorities." (Draeger, 1, 190)

As far as your concerns about the dangers in learning martial arts, most of these concerns stem from misconceptions and martial arts practitioners of poor character. Just give serious thought to what Gichin Funakoshi, who is considered the father of modern karate, has to say on the dangers of martial arts, "The indiscriminate use of the art of karate would cause great public concern and one cannot deny its potential dangers. However, it would be regrettable that pursuit of this mysterious art, of which one can properly be so proud, should be shunned simply because it is too dangerous. The source of concern is largely based on the misconception arising from instructors of poor character, who thoughtlessly place the emphasis of training on the techniques rather than on the spiritual aspects of the *do*, and from the misbehavior and poor attitudes of karate students who are learning this art solely as a technique of fighting." (Funakoshi, 5)

You should by now have enough information to understand better what the martial arts is and is not. The Martial Arts and The Martial Way have a rich heritage and they have a great deal to offer serious students in today's dangerous world. Unfortunately, the true Martial Arts and The Martial Way have been obscured or lost entirely in most martial arts schools in the desire for economic, personal, or political benefit. Sadly, as a result, students in most martial art schools today are only getting the surface features of a deeply rooted tradition. It is my sincere hope that you now understand what to look for in a training facility and what is required to be an effective teacher of the martial arts in order that you may come to realize the tremendous benefits that training in the martial arts can offer, not only for your children but for you as well.

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