

Annual Seminar 2018

WS Bumgarner

Atlanta Gi Yu Dojo - Dojo-Cho

6/18

It's only been a week since the 2018 Annual Seminar has been over and I'm already looking forward to the 2019 Annual Seminar. The training, the testing, the bruises, and the Party Bus will all be permanent memories for me. Living in Atlanta I miss out on the regular training that occurs at the Dayton dojo. Maybe just as important, I also miss out on the weekly comradery and interactions with other Budo students and especially, Sensei. At this seminar Sensei spoke about many things, but I think the one concept that stuck in my head was the word "opportunity."

After one of the training sessions, Sensei and I were talking about a seminar that occurred almost 20 years ago. I couldn't remember the seminar and then it dawned on me that I hadn't attended that one for some reason. This was unusual because I had missed very few opportunities to train with my teacher back then, and I thought that whatever caused me not to attend must have been very important. The funny thing was, I couldn't remember what was so important that I couldn't scrap together \$300 and take a weekend to go and do something that I love with people that meant so much to me. Clearly, I had made a mistake by letting something insignificant and temporary blind me from what was important, and it had cost me a lot more than time and money; it had robbed me of an opportunity that I couldn't get back.

None of us knows what the future holds, and it would be foolish to believe that everything will stay the same while we try and figure our lives out. Sensei, the dojo, our health and ability to train – nothing is permanent. I'm old enough to know that you better be careful that your life doesn't pass you by while you're waiting for the perfect moment to jump into it. Some people tested for rank and passed. Good for you. Some people tested and didn't pass. Good for you. All of you should be proud that you made the effort, that you weren't happy with the status quo, and you fought to change it in your own life. The reward is not the certificate or the new rank you get to display. The reward is that you have successfully pushed back, at least for a little while, the inertia that invades all our lives. Inertia can keep people on the couch and not training. Inertia can convince people that they are too tired, too sore, or too injured not to train. Inertia can convince those who are at the dojo that they are getting the most out of their training when maybe they are just going through the motions. Inertia can make some hide behind other activities at the dojo when they should be spending time focusing on their own training.

This is not a "live like you were dying" speech. It's more like a "live a life worth living" speech. That's part of the reason why the annual seminars are so important. They only happen once a year and are rare. They are vehicles to your growth and depth as a human being that are impossible to replicate. We aren't just training; we are interacting with others and creating those bonds that give our lives meaning. We are creating the community around us. The annual seminars are unique moments in time that shouldn't be treated lightly. They are special to me and always help to reaffirm for me how important training is and how much more I want to learn and experience from Budo. For as long as I live (and for as long as you live) there will never be another 2018 Gi Yu Annual Seminar. It will never repeat, and for those who missed it, you will have missed that opportunity forever. The seminars are statements to

everyone – Sensei, other students, our family, our work peers – of what we stand for and who we are. The opportunity to shape our lives and the lives of those around are few and far between. If you attended the seminar I hope you don't take it for granted. If you didn't attend the seminar, I hope you're not like me and live to regret it. Make plans now to attend the 2019 Gi Yu Annual Seminar. You'll be glad you did.