

# Empty Victory

by Severiano Roqueni

*Compassion is the key element to combining a clear conscience, and a kind heart and soul.*

*—Severiano Roqueni*



Since I was five years old, I have trained in the martial arts (including Chun Kuk Do, JiuJitsu, Kenpo, Muy Thai Kickboxing and Tae Kwon Do). I have competed in tournaments, gaining many values, except one that was frowned on—compassion. Although it is critical, I was trained not to believe in it—until I learned about it in a way that haunts me even now, three years later.

Currently I am doing very well (I am pre-black belt in Chun Kuk Do and state champion in Arizona and Sonora, Mexico), but what should have been my proudest moment is one I am most ashamed of. I was always told to go for the win regardless of the cost. At a state-championship tournament, I could have won, but the price was the better lesson. I had trained for months, winning tournament after tournament to earn the opportunity to be a state champion. The feeling at the event was nerve-racking, the atmosphere electrifying, and all I could do, while doing the splits on two chairs and meditate, was think *Win, Win, WIN!*

First was the forms competition. I gave it my best shot. The moment before they called the winners' names was so intense that I was sweating, both from my performance and the suspense. I won a third, which meant that I needed to win the second competition—fighting—to be the state champion. Trying to be friendly, I decided to talk to a fellow competitor. He spoke only Spanish and, since I barely did, it was a difficult conversation. Then I overheard someone say, "This is going to be a breeze. Look at our competition. The guy might be tough, but don't worry about that Douglas trash" (my hometown).

At that moment I felt a rage build inside me like nothing I had ever felt before, and I decided to show him what a piece of Douglas "trash" could do by eliminating him. First his friend and I were up. You need to earn at least five points to win a match, with a kick worth two and

a punch worth one, and the win if you hit either the head, chest, stomach or ribs. So I beat him six to nothing and went through a couple of other matches until it was time for the match for first place, and my state championship.

I started the match by observing what he could do, and I noticed that when he jabbed, he left his ribs open. So after a jab, I lifted my foot and drove my heel into his ribs as hard as I could, and he went down crying. He insisted that he could continue, and since I hadn't done anything illegal, the match continued. This time I again set my target for those ribs and nothing else, just as I was taught. He made the mistake of another jab, and I did the exact same move, only this time I went in further, and then something strange happened at the end of my foot. Then I landed a right cross (a move I could break boards with) into his ribs and become that year's Arizona twelve-to fourteen-year-old Boys State Champion. I admit I felt a little guilty for hurting him so badly, but that is what I thought I was supposed to do.

When I discovered he had suffered a broken rib, it struck me that I am not some sort of animal. I am a human, and I could have just talked to him about what he had said. I should have won the traditional way—getting points, without force. Now I realize that what I did was wrong, and am still ashamed of that day.

I had forgotten that being able to forgive and forget is what separates humans from beasts and so hurt another because he made fun of me. When I saw him hurt, I realized how I should have felt, but I was manipulated not to feel it. Winning that state championship should have been my crowning achievement, but it wasn't.

By being cruel and heartless, I have carried this burden with me. I never had the chance to tell him that I was sorry. I'd been angry and decided to do the opposite of what martial arts tells us is right. Later when I won a grand championship, I tell this story to those who claim how good I am. Compassion is the key element to combining a clear conscience, with a kind heart and soul.