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THE ULTIMATE IN MARTIAL ARTS COVERAGE

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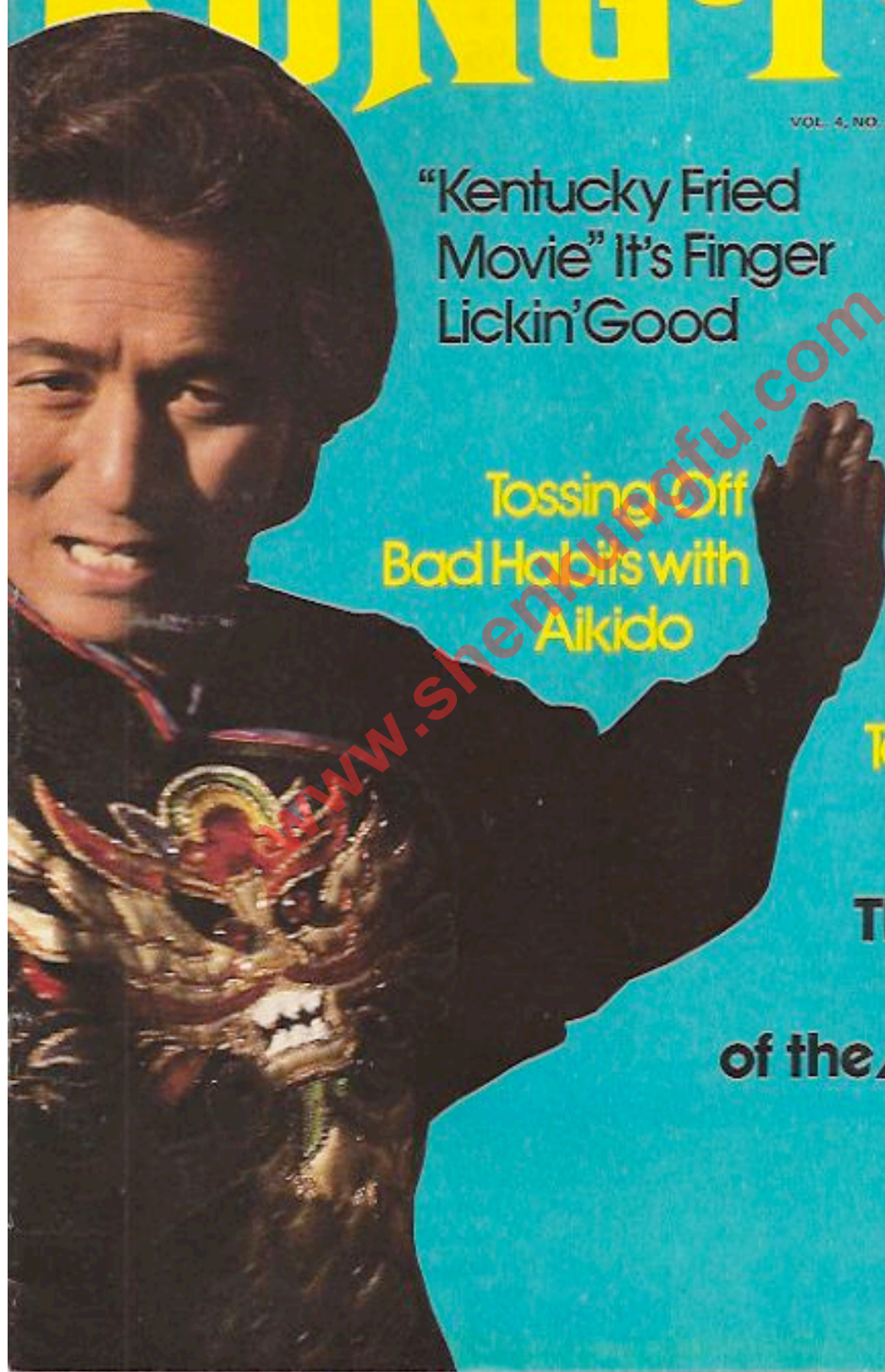
"Kentucky Fried
Movie" It's Finger
Lickin' Good

**Kung-Fu
Sifu Builds
Body,
Mind
and Spirit**

Tossing Off
Bad Habits with
Aikido

Teaching
the Tao with
Tai Chi Chuan

The Beautiful
"Barbelles"
of the Martial Arts



Building the Body, Mind and

Article and Interview by GEORGE FOON



Sifu Frank Primicias of Los Angeles, California, has been around the martial arts scene for the last seventeen years. A well rounded individual, he's studied a number of different styles and systems including kajukenbo, kenpo and the style he himself teaches, choy li fut.

As Primicias puts it, "For the past seventeen years, I've been participating in a romance, a beautiful romance that I'm sure will continue for the rest of my life. That romance is with the martial arts."

Following up on the advice given him by his kajukenbo instructor Sensei Richard Tokumoto, Primicias went in search of a strict kung-fu style and came across his current love, choy li fut. After studying for some time under Sifu John Lem, Primicias opened up a school of his own at 719 N. Virgil in Los Angeles where he strives to teach the higher goals of martial arts through the three-fold development of body, mind and spirit.

Unlike many instructors, Primicias makes a point of stressing the spiritual side of the martial arts as much as he does the physical conditioning and self defense aspects. It makes for a unique philosophy and in the course of a recent interview with IKF, Primicias laid it all out to share with you, our readers.

IKF: How do you adapt kung-fu to your daily life?

PRIMICIAS: I don't look at just the physical aspect. There's no difference, because philosophically, everything you do in life is related — not just when you're in the gym, at work or in church. It's all one big thing.

As far as the physical benefits, you get sufficient exercises in training, but it takes more than training to get good health. You have to have proper diet, for one thing. I was a vegetarian for over 10 years. However, I do eat a little meat now—not meat, fish. I never eat beef or pork. I don't drink or smoke.

If you're really concerned with physical development, it's going to carry over in every part of your life, not just when you're in the gym.

I practice yoga, which is again tied in with this in the spiritual aspect of training. There are a lot of students who are searching for a little more than the physical training and don't know where to get it. There are



Spirit through Kung-Fu



schools around and some of them are very good schools with very good teachers. But for some reason, few teachers go into the philosophical aspect. Maybe its more now, maybe its less. I don't know. From my own experience, I don't see that many.

IKF: You mentioned mental development. Can you give us some examples?

PRIMICIAS: Yes, the type of mental training is very rigorous because the physical is very rigorous even at the beginning level. You go through a very extensive workout, drills and whatnot, sometimes doing as many as 300 pushups. Then, having all the students line up against you and forcing yourself to keep going—even though your body just keeps giving out—until you last long enough to develop your second wind. This is the type of training we go through, always contact.

IKF: So physically you're exhausted but your mind keeps you going right?

PRIMICIAS: Right. But of course that was the physical observation of it. The mental effect, of course, is being aware of some of the different stages and striving to overcome them. This is where the philosophical aspects such as Zen and yoga came in.

IKF: So, its sort of like what Jack Dempsey said. "The winner gets up when he can't."

PRIMICIAS: Yeah, that's one aspect of it, that's true. Another aspect that comes in is your state of mind. See, when I say forcing, where you're sort of, well, just centered where you see things you did not see before.

IKF: Awareness?

PRIMICIAS: Yes.

IKF: Do you have more than one school?

PRIMICIAS: I did but I had to close my other one down this year. As I'm sure you've been aware, the interest in martial arts has been dropping quite a bit the last few years.

IKF: How do you view it?

PRIMICIAS: The majority of people who trained in any school and stuck it out, they have that desire to learn. You will have people in any school who will come and go just to see what it's all about. I want to bring out that the students who have trained here for awhile, I'm really proud to call my students. They show the willingness to learn and they're willing to put out. Well, it just gives a lot of sound satisfaction to the instructor to see how well the student is progressing too.

IKF: Where do you think the trend is going?

PRIMICIAS: I know in my own opinion, I would like to see my students in the martial art become more aware of the benefits we are all receiving from all of this and strive to better ourselves in a overall way, rather than just fighting amongst themselves. I want them to strive to develop the mental and spiritual aspects as well.

That's really what it's all about to me. The physical aspects are really just the secondary thing. The primary purpose for the development of the martial arts even in the very beginning, even in the monastery, was the development of the individual.

IKF: So it becomes a complete cycle you think?

PRIMICIAS: Well, I think it should. I hope it will. Not only for the art, but for all the people involved. There are so many people who could benefit but just aren't aware of it. They think it's just breaking boards or beating up somebody and don't realize how much more they can get out of it.

IKF: Do a lot of your students come in here to learn how to beat somebody up?

PRIMICIAS: In the beginning, you're going to have a certain percentage of that. Yet, I believe that certain teachers and certain types of schools will affect certain types of individuals too. I've had a lot of students come in who were already involved in the spiritual aspect of training and are looking for something to help reinforce or help balance it. So, it works both ways. Some people who come in just for the physical aspect become aware of something deeper and stay for more. But each school and each instructor has something to contribute. And like I said, everyone supplies a need.

The thing I wanted to bring out is not how much better this school is or how much greater this style or whatever. The martial arts in general are so great that everyone should be able to benefit from it without being so narrow minded. We all have something good to offer.

IKF: Did you ever have to use your art for self defense?

PRIMICIAS: A few times. But I don't consider that important. I try to play down the need to use it, because you see, that's one of the things I point out to my students. It's not to be used for fighting. I make a clearcut differentiation of what's fighting and what's self-defense. When we have a choice to be made, that's fighting. The example I usually give in meetings is, if you're sitting here and somebody comes in off the street and they say, 'I don't like your looks, lets go outside.' Now, you go outside, you've got a choice not to fight. But if a guy comes off the street, looks at you and starts swinging, you don't have a choice. That's self-defense. But, that's not only limited only to yourself. If you have to defend a loved one, that's also self-defense.

IKF: So as far as the way you teach, what do you emphasize?

PRIMICIAS: I prefer to go more in to application in the physical aspect. But I also like to bring out in the student awareness of more than just the physical motion. Too many people just concentrate on just the

obvious. The physical aspects of the training. I don't know if they're aware of it themselves or just neglect to offer it to the students, because the training is so much more than just learning the movements for exercise or self-defense. And really, that's one of the things that really fascinated



beginning. I've had some experiences even when I was very young which really brought out the importance of the mind.

One example, I was going to take a bath and my mother was preparing the water. I went into the bathroom and stepped into the tub but the water was boiling hot. Immediately I jumped and ran to my mother for what you run to your mother for, and skin—where the water had touched was just bright red from the temperature. When I explained what happened to my mother, she said, "No, that's not true. I only stepped on the cold water." So, I went back to the bathroom, felt the water and it was very cold.

What had happened, in my mind I pictured the water as being very hot. I immediately had become scalded even though actually it was only cold water. So that was one incident. As I got a little older, I got a little more into martialism and became aware again of the effect of the tremendous effect the mind has on the body. Because of these experiences and some of the things I was already getting into, when I went into the martial arts, that effect was already there! Here was something I could relate to with my mind, not just a matter of reading about it. That was one aspect that really appealed to me. Not just the physical aspect, but going into the training of the mind, then using that training to go more into the spirit-training.

Q: Can you elaborate about going into the body, mind and spirit?

PRIMICIAS: Okay. For example, when we learn the horse position, in the beginning, there is a certain amount of mental fatigue and strain as one goes through. But to force yourself to stay there in spite of pain, is one means of increasing your willpower. And the mind is just like the body. If you want to build up your muscles, you have to exercise. Same with the mind. You have to exercise it too if you want to build it up. There are various things you can go through to develop your willpower. That's one little example. There are so many others.

Q: Can we go through some of the training to build the mind?

PRIMICIAS: Well, there are little things you can do and not just when you're in a gym. For example, when taking a shower, use warm water and when you finish, use cold water.



"Training today is softer than the old days. We were forced to vault heavy wooden saw horses, so if you missed the wood would cut into your legs. Today we use cardboard boxes and gloves instead of empty hands."



people don't like to do it because they like that nice warm feeling, even a little hot. But it takes a certain amount of will power just to do that.

In the Orient, especially in Japan, I know some of the exercises they advocate, like swimming in the river in the wintertime and in aikido they have breathing exercises in the snow. Those again are exercises where you have to exercise your will.

IKF: In other words, forcing yourself to do physical things that you normally wouldn't. Testing your tolerances.

PRIMICIAS: Sometimes, it's just taking the opportunity to exercise it. As I said to develop your mind you must exercise it just as you develop your muscle by exercising them.

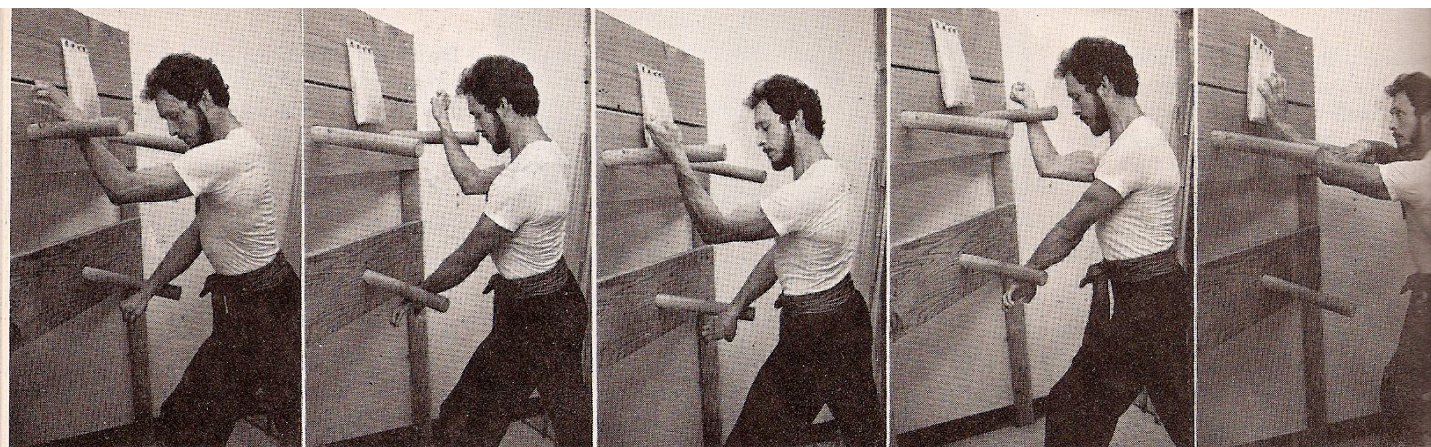
IKF: So you develop through the physical?

PRIMICIAS: Well, we're in a physical world so we have to use that as a medium. But it's not the real goal. Some people do take that as the goal and that's why they concentrate on learning so many sets and so many techniques. They're not satisfied until they learn more than somebody else. But the number doesn't mean a thing. What you're really developing is yourself. That's what the martial arts provides—a means of developing yourself in all aspects, not just how well you can do the movements.

IKF: Okay, let's go into the spiritual side now. Can you elaborate?

PRIMICIAS: One thing that concerned us from the very beginning is the life force. The Chinese call it the chi, the Japanese call it ki. Well, in the yoga system it's called the prajna. One of the first things a person can work with in developing it is called prajana yana, which literally translates into life-force control. There are various forms of prajana yana that can be used and some of the very beginning stages involve breathing exercises. That's why you find a lot of people advocating breathing exercises. But prajana yana actually goes a step beyond that. It's not just a physical means you're working with because you're actually working with energy which may be related to the breathing. Then various stages from the prajana yana to go on to various stages of meditation. But there is a specific science for this. It's not just a matter of sitting down and closing your eyes like some people think.

IKF: Basically, how does your class go, say your beginning class. What do you stress?



A firm believer in utilizing traditional training devices that really work, Primicias (above) runs through simultaneous blocking and striking techniques on the practice dummy.

Below, the choy li fut practitioner runs through a hand set on a striking bag to work on his focus and condition his hands.



PRIMICIAS: Well, one of the main things a person has to overcome is learning the body coordination. Some systems are more difficult to learn in that they require more coordination. For example, if a system has a block and a punch—blocking with one hand and punching with the other—and that's all we have to worry about, then it could be relatively simple. But if you're learning to block, strike, cover, and kick with both hands and the legs simultaneously, then it becomes more difficult to learn. For that reason, first thing we emphasize is body coordination.

IKF: What kind of things do you do to train for coordination?

PRIMICIAS: We have beginning techniques and also strikes. Rather, you just do a separate exercise which is used only for that purpose. We use movements that are actually related to what they will be using. That way, they'll know that strike already, and will be using that movement as a means of developing their coordination. From there, we give preliminary instruction of the application of the movement. We have too many people

go for long periods of time doing movements without really knowing what they are.

IKF: Like a kata or a form?

PRIMICIAS: Yeah. I like to relate everything to something useful so it can be used for self-defense. As far as the physical aspect is concerned, as we pointed out, we want to gain health but we also want to learn self-defense. That's what makes the difference between this and martial arts of other forms.

IKF: The way you teach then, your

students are aware of each movement and they do not memorize a complex form without knowing what its for.

PRIMICIAS: As a matter of fact, they may learn several techniques before they even complete a form. But at least they have an awareness about how the motion can be used and with that mental image, they can learn it better.

IKF: So there is a form along with application in the earlier stages?

PRIMICIAS: Oh yes, we have forms.

IKF: What do you teach next?

PRIMICIAS: Once you develop coordination, you can go more into

forms and break them down for application. As far as application is concerned, I also like to go into contact. But I don't force everyone. I mean, some people want to and some don't. Those who wish, we use equipment, so no one can get hurt when you're running through the motions. That way, you not only learn the motions but you learn the proper distance. And you visually make contact without actually injuring the body.

IKF: So your classes are geared toward the individual? Not everybody goes through the same training?

PRIMICIAS: They all have to go

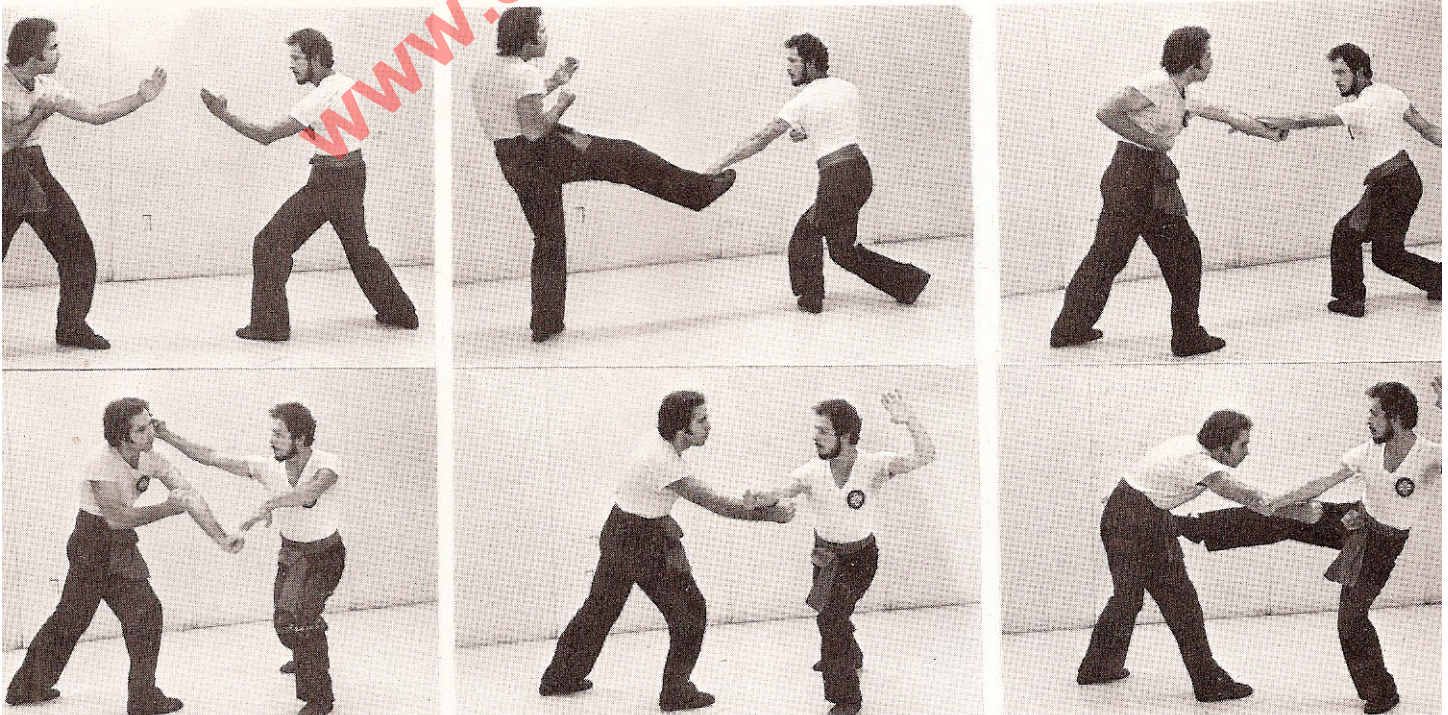
through the basics, but as far as applications on contact, I don't force everyone to go into contact. They have to be willing. They may not be willing in the first stage, but as they develop a little more confidence, then a student may be willing to do it. As far as the physical is concerned, even I want the students to be able to use it if necessary for self-defense. But again, as I stressed in the beginning level, we have periodic meetings, show films, have discussions,—discussions on various books covering various aspects of philosophy—so students become aware even at a early stage, that it is

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 52)



As in most martial arts schools, the emphasis in Primicias' classes is on self defense. At left, one of his women students illustrates the best method of polishing off an attacker approaching from the rear. Stepping to one side, she strikes her assailant in the groin and breaks his grip with an upward arm strike. Positioning her left leg behind the man's knee, she delivers an elbow slam to the midsection and finishes him off with a palm strike to the groin area again.

Below, Primicias runs through a basic sparring technique with one of his students. Note the smooth circular action and the potential force evident in the whirling-like action of the counter. After blocking his opponent's straight kick and the left jab counter, he rolls through with his hammer strike to the temple, follows through with his circular motion and wraps it up with a kick to the mid-section.



(continued from page 21).

more than just coming in here and learning a few movements and going home. It's learning to develop yourself and being aware that you're trying to develop yourself. Not just from a physical level, but trying to strengthen your mind and your whole awareness in life. Because it is a way of life and most people don't realize that. The people that first come in aren't aware of it, but as they train a little longer and feel the inclination, then they can achieve something deeper. But, not everyone is interested in going deeper.

IKF: Are those the ones that leave?

PRIMICIAS: That, or else they only concentrate on the physical aspects when they're in school. We're all individuals in a big world and we're all interested in different aspects at different times. But there is a time and place for everyone.

IKF: In other words, they get out of it as much as they want.

PRIMICIAS: That's right. That's up to the individuals. That applies to anything. You only get out of it what you put into it.

IKF: You try to make them want more though?

PRIMICIAS: Oh yes. Periodically we try to have meetings and you might call it a little pep talk to tell them they have to put more effort into it to get more out of it.

Occasionally the students like to go to tournaments and participate. I don't force anyone to go. I find that if the students find it stimulating, it

makes them train a little harder. Then it has its purpose. But if they spend all their time just preparing for tournaments, then they're getting away from the purpose of training.

IKF: What do you do to get more out of your students?

PRIMICIAS: I bring up an indication of how we can develop ourselves or what can be done through the training of the mind. If you sit in front of the TV day after day and night after night, you can't expect much development. You want to develop it, you have to exercise it. The mind has so much power. We're all aware of some of the things people can do after years of training in the martial arts. Break boards or whatever, have people chop wood on your chest, stick your hands in boiling water. I mean these are the things being done in demos around the world at one time or another. These people train their minds to have the ability to do these things. Yet, two years ago in glendale, there was a woman who had been in a car accident and her child was pinned under the car. She got out and pulled the car off her little kid. Now that's the same woman that had trouble carrying in the groceries the day before.

That's the power of the mind. The difference was there was a required emergency. The dire necessity of the moment removed the mental obstacles that at times limits us. But with training, here you're making a conscious effort to develop yourself and remove

some of these limitations.

My yoga teacher said, "take the word can't out of the dictionary, out of your vocabulary, because it's a very negative vibration. You should never say I can't do this or I can't do that." Maybe you're not able to do it at this moment, but if you keep striving and working towards it, you will be able to do it in the future.

So it's just a difference in attitude. And that's the whole difference right there. The attitude is the reflection of your mind.

IKF: So all this is really your research and Choy Li Fut is just a starting point. Someone opened the door and all this mental thing is yourself, your own development?

PRIMICIAS: No, it's been around forever.

IKF: But it can't be labeled under Choy Li Fut.

PRIMICIAS: No, it can't be under Choy Li Fut. It's just what I feel is a significant part of all martial arts training no matter what style you call it.

IKF: But Choy Li Fut offers you what you want most out of the arts?

PRIMICIAS: I've seen a lot of styles. But Choy Li Fut, I consider it an outstanding style. I never regretted learning it. It evidently must be pretty good. I believe that's why it's become the most popular Southern style in China. I guess I'm not the only one who thinks it's so great.

