



Sage Advice for Martial Artists ... or anybody for that matter
by Scot Combs

Former US President Gerald Ford died the other day. He was the first to hold the office without being on a ballot for it. I'm not going to spend much time on his presidency; I want to look at what made him such a calm leader in, what were, tumultuous times. His presence and grace under fire won him the respect of people from all political perspectives. It seems to me that same grace and presence would serve martial artists as well.

As a youngster, Ford had a volatile temper. His, ever wise, mother required him to memorize and then recite Rudyard Kipling's "If" whenever he would lash out. Ford credited this tactic with helping him curb his temper and stay calm under extreme pressure. It's been, like, 30 years or more since I read "If", so I looked it up and found sage advice for martial artists ... or anybody for that matter.

Kipling's work speaks to the humility required to be a true master of martial arts and reminds me of *fudo shin*; the ability to see what must be done and the persistence to follow through. It's worth reading over and over. It's worth posting in the dojo. It's worth memorizing.

IF

by Rudyard Kipling

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you
But make allowance for their doubting too,
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream--and not make dreams your master,
If you can think--and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it all on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breath a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings--nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
If all men count with you, but none too much,

If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And--which is more--you'll be a Man, my son!