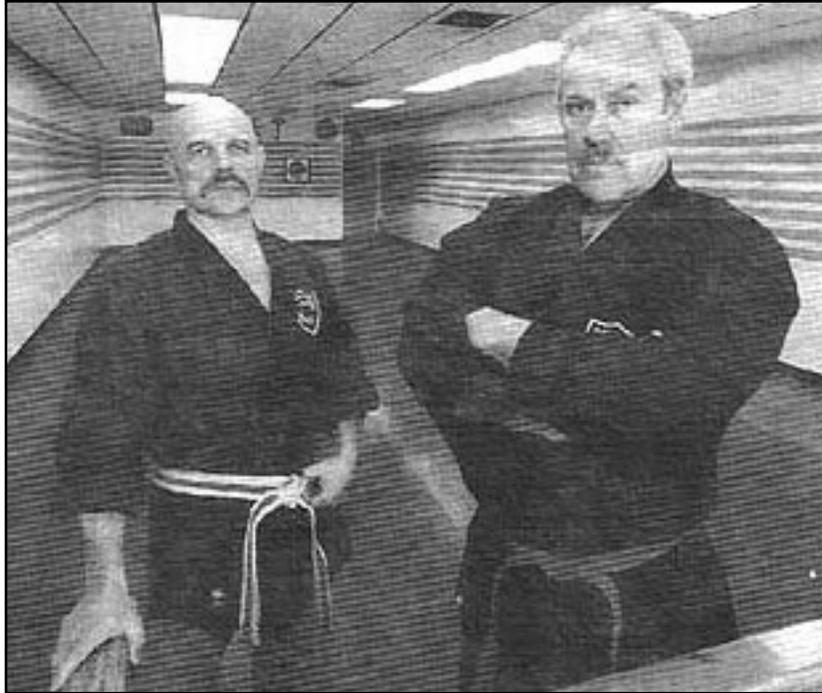


## **SPORTS / Defensiveness as an Art / Tai-Zen, a 'new' martial art, joins the mind and body:**



**Lenny Romeo, left, is an instructor in Tai-Zen, which was created by Howard Tague, right, 37 years ago.**

**BY CALVIN WATKINS. STAFF WRITER**

MIKE DOYLE is talking defense. Though the topic is rarely riveting in sports, it can mean everything in the game of life. And in the art of **Tai-Zen**, it is all-important.

**Tai-Zen**, which loosely translates to "body and mind" in Japanese, is a relatively new form of martial arts created by Howard Tague about 37 years ago.

It teaches people self-defense without the offense. *"There are lots of strange types of martial arts for people who want to defend themselves,"* Tague says from his Long Island office in Selden. *"It's low-profile. It's not confrontational. There is so much misinformation out there that we try to teach something different."*

Tague says he's imparting the right information - how to defend yourself in almost any situation against any type of opponent. **Tai-Zen** is a form of jiu-jitsu that involves some of the principles of physics - gravity, leverage, momentum and centrifugal force - and applies them to a concept of battle.

Tague and his instructors explain that **Tai-Zen** teaches people to defend themselves in situations ranging from life-or-death to petty annoyances.

Other, more commonly known forms of martial arts include kung fu, tae kwon do and karate, and are available for people who want to learn how to defend themselves.

*"It could be a mugger who grabs you behind the neck," Tague explains. "We will teach you how to fend off the mugger. Or suppose a person tries to choke you. We can help you get out of that."*

Master Sum, chief instructor of S.Y. Kim's Tae Kwon Do School in Corona, says **Tai-Zen** is centered more on reaction than action. Tae kwon do and other martial arts, on the other hand, are disciplines that often require making the first move, Sum says.

*"It's a little different from what we do," Sum says. "There is a difference in the technique. All different types of martial arts have their own technique."*

Tague, who is a chief grand master in the system, is a black belt and a hypnotherapist. His resume also includes work as a bodyguard and as a detective for law firms. *"It was harder to teach years ago," Tague, 60, says of Tai-Zen. "But now I've been getting the message across."*

It's a message many are hearing. *"I have a lot of respect for the people teaching me this," says Doyle, a lawyer who is based in Kew Gardens. "The basic learning prepares you for incredible things. It gets you ready for the untrained guy coming at you." Doyle says he's no tough guy, just someone who practices law. But if someone gives him trouble, watch out. "The teaching is so extensive," he says. "We look at one fine point for months at a time." Even Doyle's wife, Cathy, says the program is very important. "Mike is in love with this, so it's very hard for him to be objective," she says. "But I went to a few classes and when I walked out I was more confident in handling myself if somebody grabbed me. This class is great for women."*

Tague counts among his students police officers, lawyers and other professionals, many of whom have become black belts in **Tai-Zen**. Each class is taught by black-belt instructors with a minimum of 10 years' experience. It can take years to become a black belt in the system that spends extensive time on each basic task. The average time to reach the intermediate level is two years, Tague says. Depending upon the student's understanding, the advanced level can take up to three years, he added. In addition to the physical techniques of **Tai-Zen**, the instructors spend a lot of time going over the legal aspects of using the martial art.

*"[The advanced level] relies heavily on the legal recourse," instructor Lenny Romeo says. "You just can't hit a man if he appears to attack you. You can't go around just punching people. People like the spectacular stuff and [Tai-Zen] doesn't demonstrate that."*

Romeo and Doyle were attracted to Tai-Zen because of its slow-moving pace in teaching the art. *"I've always been involved in martial arts since I was young," Doyle says. "I've tried to do all forms of it, but I was missing something. But three and a half years ago, I discovered this."*

Tague says: *"Traditional battles don't work anymore. I give my students credit to allow somebody to come after them. It's been revised to the modern-day situation. This is for people with everyday lives. I don't believe you study to fight a person. [Tai-Zen] teaches a person to bring body and mind into one."*

There are two Tai-Zen locations on Long Island: Selden and Garden City Park.

Contact the Tai-Zen Self Defense Academy in Garden City Park at (516) 741-4994, or Selden at (631) 732-0055 for more information.

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