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## **How Often?** by **David M. Valadez**

Deshi: It does not seem that we can tell much from the number of years one has been training. Though it may violate common sense, maturity seems to be akin to something else. The ranks are filled with folks that have “decades” of experience and little to show for it.

Sensei: In such cases, the number of years is more insulting than it is supporting. Still, most consider the number of years training as the more telling sign of skill and of achievement.

Deshi: What criteria would you use to determine maturity in one’s art?

Sensei: Time spent on the mat – not in years, but in hours. (Getting a calculator) If a person trains three times a week – one hour each time, after ten years that person will have only accumulated 1,560 hours of training. If you divide that up into days, after ten years they will have accomplished only sixty-five days of training – about two months. On the other hand, if someone has trained in our schedule fully, training at all classes, that would give them fifteen hours per week, 780 hours per year, 7,800 at the end of ten years. If you were to divide that up into days, they would have amounted 325 days of training. A person training at every class will have amounted the same ten years worth of work of someone that only trained three times a week in merely two years’ time. No matter how you look at it, it is insulting that someone can do a decade’s worth of work in just two years, or two decades worth of work in just four, or three decades worth of work in just six years. A person who would suffer such insult is wiser not to boast of decades gone by.

Deshi: Then the question as far as maturity goes is not “How long have your trained?” but rather, “How often do you train?”

Sensei: It has always been that, and it will always be – at least for those mature enough to ask it of themselves.