



# **Broadway Family Karate**

*Personal Development Through the Martial Arts*

## **Warrior Personal Strength:** **Courtesy**

### **Lesson #4: George, Lila the fox terrier, and** **courtesy.**

1777 was a tough year for George. He was commander of the Continental Army, leading American soldiers in the War for Independence. Their opponents were the British Army, led by General Howe. He was determined to defeat George and his soldiers, and capture Philadelphia – the largest city in North America.

As the year went on, George and the Continentals fought many battles against the British in the countryside around Philadelphia. George and his soldiers were inexperienced – they still had a lot to learn about how to work together effectively. They fought the British Army with courage and determination – but they usually lost.

General Howe and his Army finally captured Philadelphia late in September. He hoped that now George and his soldiers would admit they were in over their heads, would give up fighting for Independence and just go home. George and his soldiers were discouraged by their defeats, but they weren't going to quit.

Instead, George decided to attack. Part of the British Army was now at Germantown, just north of Philadelphia. George planned to take them by surprise. He led his soldiers out

quietly in the middle of the night, and attacked the British Army just before dawn.

George and his soldiers did take the British by surprise. But a thick, heavy fog came up just as they began their attack. It was so thick that many of the Continental soldiers lost their way. Some became so confused and so scared in the dark and the fog that they started shooting at each other. That just made the confusion worse.

The British soldiers were surprised and confused as well. They retreated back into the middle of Germantown. They weren't just running away. They started regrouping under a big tree to protect themselves better from the attacking Continentals, and to try to work out just what was going on in the fog.

General Howe galloped up on his horse into the middle of the British soldiers. He didn't stop to ask what was going on. Instead, he started scolding them. "For shame! For shame!" he shouted. "You're running from a scouting party!"

At that moment, some of George's soldiers wheeled up a cannon just down the street and fired it at the British soldiers under the tree. In the hurry and confusion and fog, they missed their aim – the grapeshot they fired went high, rattling through the branches just over the heads of the British soldiers.

All of the British soldiers, including General Howe, knew that small "Scouting Parties" didn't haul cannon around with them. This was a serious attack in full force by the Continentals. General Howe stopped scolding and galloped off again. He didn't stop to apologize.

More and more British soldiers began to march in from Philadelphia and deploy for battle. Too many of the Continental soldiers had lost their way in the night or in the

fog, and didn't know where they were or what they should do. Very reluctantly, George ordered them to retreat. They were all bitterly disappointed. The Continentals had come so close to winning – but the British soldiers were formidable opponents, brave and resourceful in adversity.

It was a long, weary march from Germantown back to their camp. A stray dog – a fox terrier – followed along with George and his soldiers as they trudged. After they reached camp that evening, one of the Continentals noticed the dog had a collar. On that collar was the dog's name: Lila. The owner's name was there as well: General William Howe. The soldier carefully picked up the dog, and went straight to George with it.

What to do about Lila? Keep the dog, turn it loose to fend for itself, or return it to General Howe? George himself had many dogs back at home in Virginia. He named them Topsy, Truelove, Ragman and Sweetlips. He had a dalmatian named Madame Moose. George liked dogs a lot – much more than he liked General Howe.

George had to deal with General Howe regularly over the care of soldiers wounded or taken prisoner in the fighting. They sent each other letters by special messengers under protection of a Flag of Truce. These weren't friendly letters – as commanders of opposing armies, George and General Howe were declared enemies.

Even so, George did his best to treat the British commander with courtesy and respect. George knew that, even as they fought against each other, he needed to sustain a civil relationship with General Howe that set some limits to the conflict. Enough people were being harmed by the fighting as it was. His letters to General Howe were firm and assertive, but always polite. George always used the commander's proper military rank – he addressed his letters to “General William Howe.”

General Howe refused to return this courtesy – he wouldn't write to George as "General Washington". As far as he was concerned, George wasn't a real General – he was a rebel chieftain fighting against his lawful King. The closest he ever came was sending a letter addressed to "G. Washington, esquire, etc., etc." George had sent that one back unopened. After that, the letters came addressed "From General William Howe", and began just with "Sir". He avoided using George's name or military rank at all.

This wasn't really courteous. It wasn't respectful. It was only barely polite. It certainly wasn't the way George treated General Howe. But for the good of the soldiers being held as prisoners by both armies, George accepted both the letters and the behavior.

And now he had General Howe's pet dog. George took some time to decide what best to do. Then he gave his orders: bathe, brush and feed the dog – and then return Lila to General Howe under Flag of Truce. George sent a note with Lila:

"General Washington's compliments to General Howe. He does himself the pleasure to return him a dog, which accidentally fell into his hands, and by the inscription on the Collar appears to belong to General Howe."

The rumor among the soldiers of both armies was that General Howe was delighted to have Lila back, safe and well. But he never replied to George's note – he never said, "thank you".

## Discussion Questions:

- 1) General Howe scolded his soldiers for running from a scouting party – a small group of enemy soldiers. Were they really running away – or were they reorganizing to defend themselves? Was he treating them with courtesy and respect? Should he have tried to find out what was really going on before he started scolding them?
- 2) General Howe sent letters to George addressed “From General William Howe” and beginning with “Sir”. He wouldn’t use George’s name or military rank – he refused to write to him as “General Washington”. Do you think he respected George? Was he treating George with courtesy? Why not?
- 3) George addressed his letters to “General William Howe”. He was firm and assertive in his letters, but always polite. George knew that General Howe didn’t respect him. Why do you think George continued to treat General Howe with courtesy?
- 4) General Howe’s pet dog, Lila, followed along with George and his soldiers after their defeat at Germantown. George had Lila washed, brushed and fed – then returned to General Howe under Flag of Truce with a polite note. Was George being nice to General Howe because they were such good friends? General Howe was happy to have Lila back – but never wrote back to George to say, “thank you”. Who do you think behaved with courtesy?