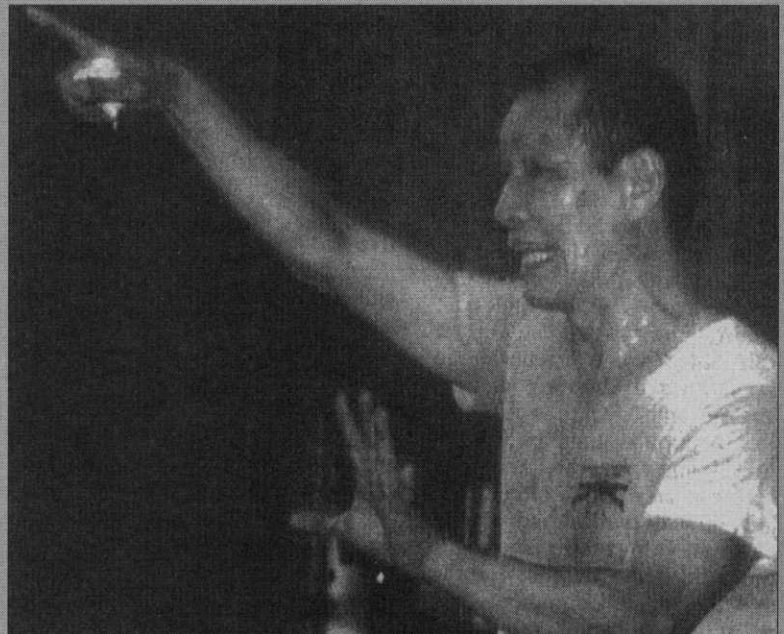


# The Force of Chung Do Kwan Tae Kwon Do

The idealism of the original kwans ("schools") in Korea was unique and special. It was such an important force that all of Tae Kwon Do practiced throughout the world today derives in some way from these early roots. Of the original nine kwans, Chung Do Kwan, started by Master Won Kook Lee, was the first. Its leadership was passed along to Duk Sung Son in the 1950's. He took the modest-sized "Blue Wave" school and built it into the largest kwan in Korea. Here is the path that he invites all to follow, even today.

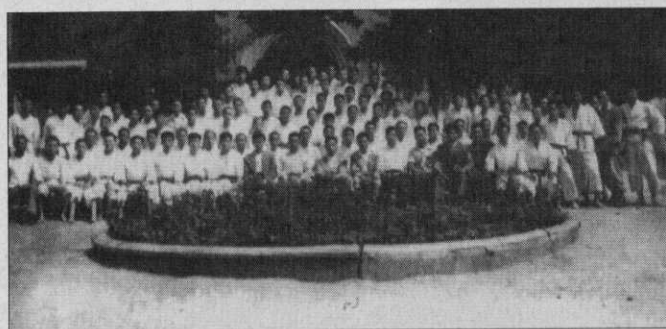
By Annellen & Alex Simpkins, Ph.D's

Following the Japanese occupation, Korea searched for native inspirations to help reawaken its strength of character which had been submerged under Japanese rule. The government decided to draw upon the power from the indigenous martial arts by uniting all of them together into one national sport. The first conference of the National Board of Advisors for Chung Do Kwan met over



*Grandmaster Son teaches with the same intensity he expects from his students*

dinner on December 19, 1955. Duk Sung Son was an active participant in the process. He attended many top-level meetings with government and military officials and helped to create the new all-encompassing name, Tae Kwon Do, and shape its future.



(Top photo) Grandmaster Duk Sung Son sits (second from left) with government and military dignitaries in 1953. He helped in the process of nationalizing Korean martial arts and to create the name "Tae Kwon Do," which is commonly used worldwide today. (Below) After a promotion test in 1957 at the headquarters of Chung Do Kwan in Seoul.

Over the years, Tae Kwon Do has developed many branches, many styles with different emphases. Nearly every country around the world today practices some form of Tae Kwon Do. People look at the leaves on the trees and sometimes forget about the roots from which the branches originally grew. Chung Do Kwan has continued the root traditions, carrying on the old ways of training, conveyed through the spirit of Grandmaster Son. Under his dynamic leadership, Chung Do Kwan Tae Kwon Do has kept its original distinctive nature and developed even further.

Grandmaster Son oversees the thriving World Tae Kwon Do Association (WTA), with over 400 schools. Master Jae Bock Chung, located in Madison, Wisconsin, serves as the organization's director. Eight other masters are designated in regions throughout the U.S. A WTA member can go to a school anywhere in the country to work out, from Stanford University Tae Kwon Do Club on the West Coast to the Harvard University Tae Kwon Do Club on the East Coast. They will find the workout faithfully performed in the traditional way, with basics, forms, sparring, and three-step sparring.

### Historical Times of Trouble

Now 73, Grandmaster Son looks back on the early days and reminisces. "World War II ended and there were many American soldiers around: lieutenants, majors, and they all went to Seoul," he remembers. "It was a lot like Times Square. After the Japanese left Korea, everything was confused. There were many gangsters in Seoul. They threatened people and wielded a great deal of power because the police force was too undeveloped and weak to control all the crime.

"Fighting was rampant. People used their fists. Soldiers were being knocked out. There was a lot of violence and killing. The kwans stepped in to help the police. Anyone with a black belt in Tae Kwon Do was given an honorary badge. They offered us pistols, but we told them, 'No, we don't need a weapon. We have our Tae Kwon Do. My students joined in to help keep the peace.

"Chung Do Kwan had a good reputation, [was] known for power," says Son. People respected the honesty, discipline and great strength [of

these men]. Koreans were looking for power, hoping to put an end to all the confusion."

Grandmaster Son worked with the other schools to build the reputation of Tae Kwon Do in general. "When people saw the patch, they respected it." Through the moral force of Tae Kwon Do, the Koreans were able to find strength and courage to reclaim their country from the havoc of confusion and crime, to rebuild and to reform.

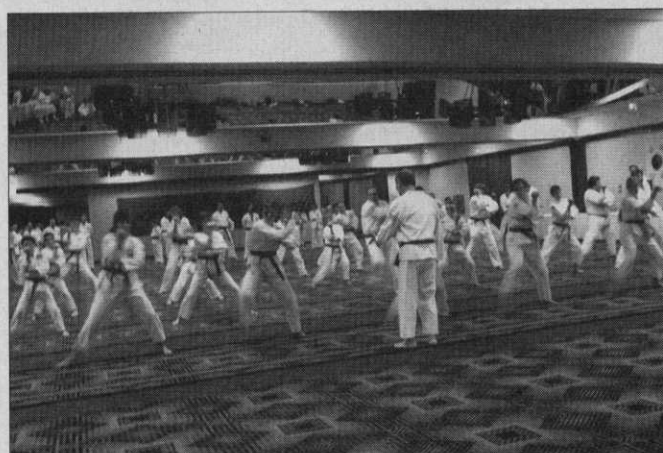
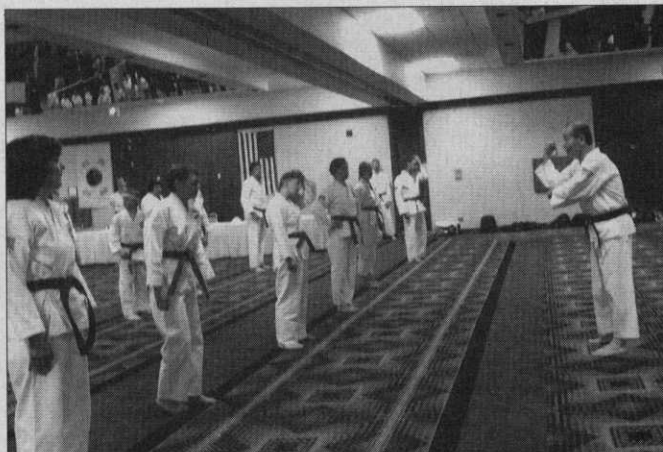
Son explains how Chung Do Kwan also helped individuals on a personal level. Many youth in this chaotic post-war period found themselves in the middle of the social problems which plagued the country. Much like the violence which troubles our youth today, young people in Korea became embroiled in drinking and violence. Grandmaster Son influenced many to change their ways.

"My number one student came into the school one day and told me about a friend who had been taken into a gangster's car the night before and driven away. The young man found himself in a bad area of town with a lot of trouble. Knowing the area and many people, I went down there to look for him. I found him with his hands and neck tied. "I questioned him, 'Were you drinking last night?' The young man refused to answer. I reprimanded him firmly. 'What are you doing, going around fighting? This is very bad! Look at you. You aren't so strong. You're weak!'

"He hung his head, ashamed, and said, 'I'm sorry. Please help me.'"

"I replied, 'If I teach you, you cannot go around fighting anymore. You will give Tae Kwon Do a bad name.' After that, he was more humble. He changed his attitude and stayed out of trouble."

Grandmaster Son helped many to find inner strength and take a positive path in their lives. When he talks, people listen. His influence on his students was and continues to be profound. Their lives change. Striving for the best is a key value, expressed by and in direct action.



Grandmaster Son touches the lives of his many students. Here he instructs in the fine point of forms.

Despite all the changes which took place in Korea, life was very hard during this period. Grandmaster Son was invited by one of his students to come to America to teach. He decided to make the move, and found himself truly welcomed.

He explains, "When I first arrived, much of the American teaching was not high caliber. People learned a little karate in the army. When they returned home, they opened a dojang. I arrived in America and the very next day I started teaching!"

He found a great demand for his Tae Kwon Do classes. Americans were eager to learn, with four to five people joining every day. He opened satellite schools at Brown University, New York University, West Point, Fordham, and Princeton. He traveled to each site regularly to ensure top quality teaching. His schools multiplied and his organization grew. Today there are hundreds of schools.

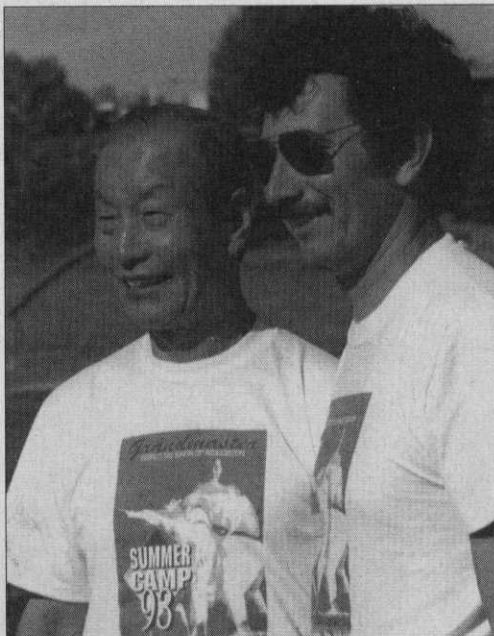
### Silence Is Golden

Asked if his Tae Kwon Do classes were taught like the classes in Korea, he answered, "I teach the same, the old way. I don't think it will ever change. Always strong technique. In Chung Do Kwan, basics are done with everybody together, doing their very best, very strong. Then the belts separate into their different levels.

"Lots of schools do ten minutes of teaching and then talking about their families. You must sweat and concentrate! After a two-hour workout, the whole class is tired! Everybody asks me the same question, 'How do I learn more?' I answer them, 'Practice, practice, practice! No questions, just do your best.'"

Grandmaster Son's workouts are gruelling when performed as expected. "You must finish a good workout with everybody tired," he says. He is his own best example of these teachings, working up a tremendous sweat in his workouts. That's Chung Do Kwan, Grandmaster Son-style.

Grandmaster Son's philosophy is in the classic tradition of Zen. ("Son" is also the Korean word for Zen.) "Suzuki Roshi says it well,



Grandmaster Son with one of his seven fifth-degree black belt instructors, Ron Geoffrion.

"The more you understand our thinking, the more you find it difficult to talk about it." The purpose of my talking is to give you some idea of our way, but actually it is not something to talk about, but something to practice. The best way is just to practice without saying anything."

Several years ago, a reporter from Omni magazine interviewed Grandmaster Son for an article covering many styles of martial arts. He had heard a lot about ki ("internal power") from other stylists and asked Grandmaster Son his opinion.

Recalls Son, "Energy, I say, 'mystical force.' Son jumps up and, hand on his stomach (to indicate the center of the body's ki), throws a punch above my head. I swear I feel the air shake. The explanation, like Tae Kwon Do, is unadorned, direct, and powerful.

### Forms

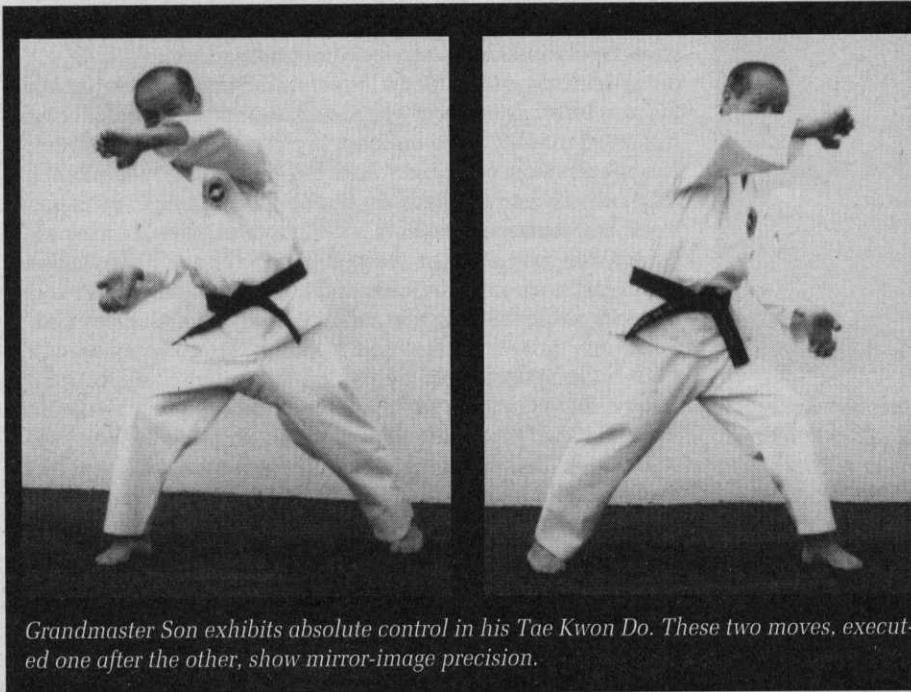
Grandmaster Son's traditional position concerning the meaning of moves in forms is unusual in modern, innovative times. The

connection with meaning, in his teaching, is made by doing the form. The practical interpretations or applications of the moves from forms are always secondary.

The form transcends its interpretations. Be fully attentive, not directing the stream of thought with a particular notion of the moves. Concentrate. Empty the mind while focusing on the motions themselves. Being and doing become one. Then wisdom will come from within.

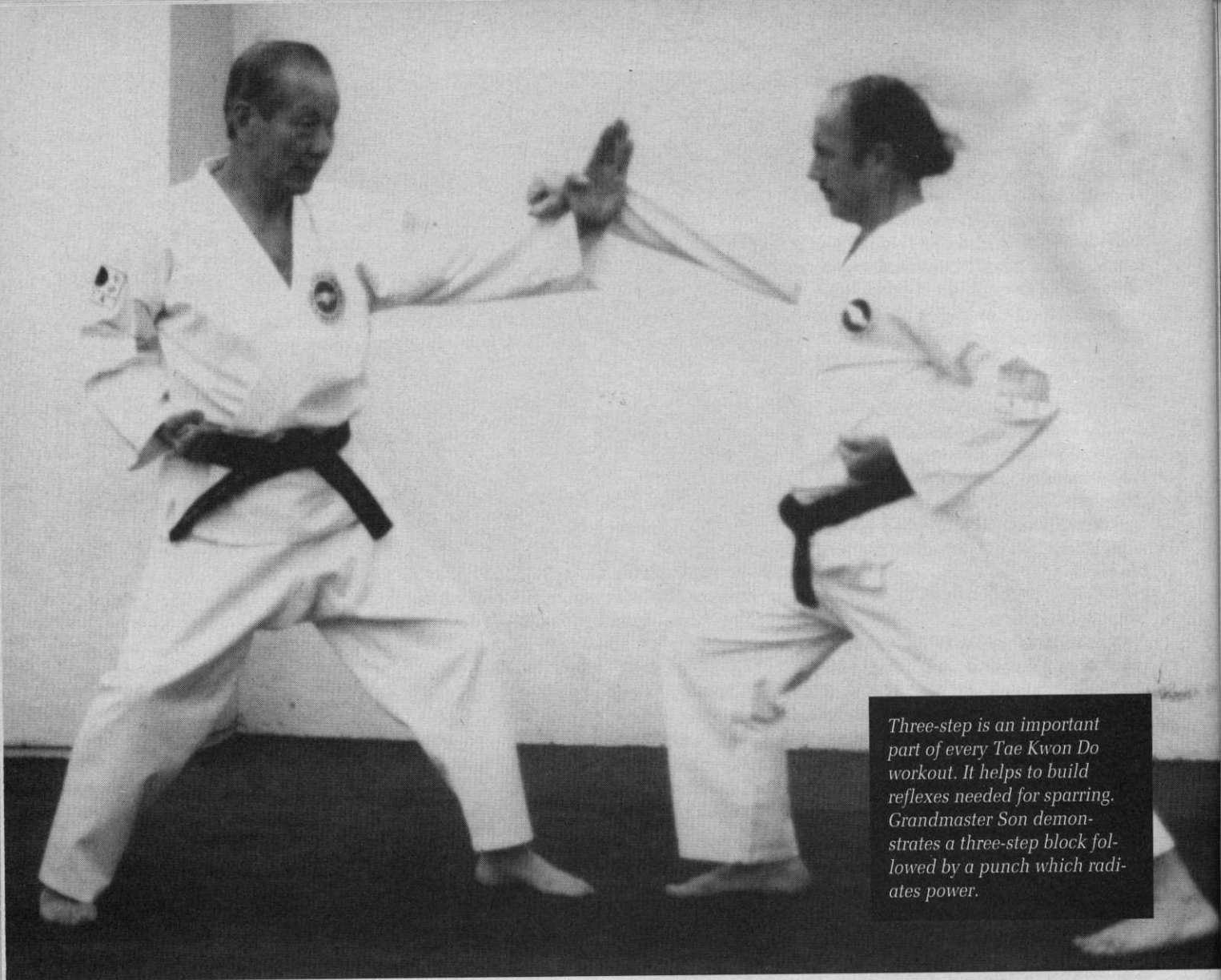
Suzuki, the Japanese philosopher, states, "This kind of thinking is always stable. It is called mindfulness. . . It is not necessary to make an effort to think in a particular way. Your thinking should not be one-sided. We just think with our whole mind, and see things as they are without any effort."

Interpretations disturb this manner of using the mind. The experience of the form is primary. Therefore, drilling in the forms themselves comes first, and is always the foundation, the core.



Grandmaster Son exhibits absolute control in his Tae Kwon Do. These two moves, executed one after the other, show mirror-image precision.

Grandmaster Son helped many to find inner strength and take a positive path in their lives. When he talks, people listen. His influence on his students was and continues to be profound. Their lives change. Striving for the best is a key value, expressed by and in direct action.



*Three-step is an important part of every Tae Kwon Do workout. It helps to build reflexes needed for sparring. Grandmaster Son demonstrates a three-step block followed by a punch which radiates power.*

**Chung Do Kwon has continued the root traditions, carrying on the old ways of training, conveyed through the spirit of Grandmaster Son. Under his dynamic leadership, Chung Do Kwan Tae Kwon Do has kept its original distinctive nature and developed even further.**

Is there any good reason for expounding upon theories in Tae Kwon Do? "When it's late at night and you're too tired to train," responds one of his 4th-degree black belts. "I train, then I think over what I learned afterwards — for the next six months or so."

### **Three-Step Sparring**

Three-step is a patterned, rhythmical interaction, which permits the student to practice block-and-counter combinations with a partner. Whenever you learn a martial art, you learn action and reaction. In three-step, you perfect both sides of this equation.

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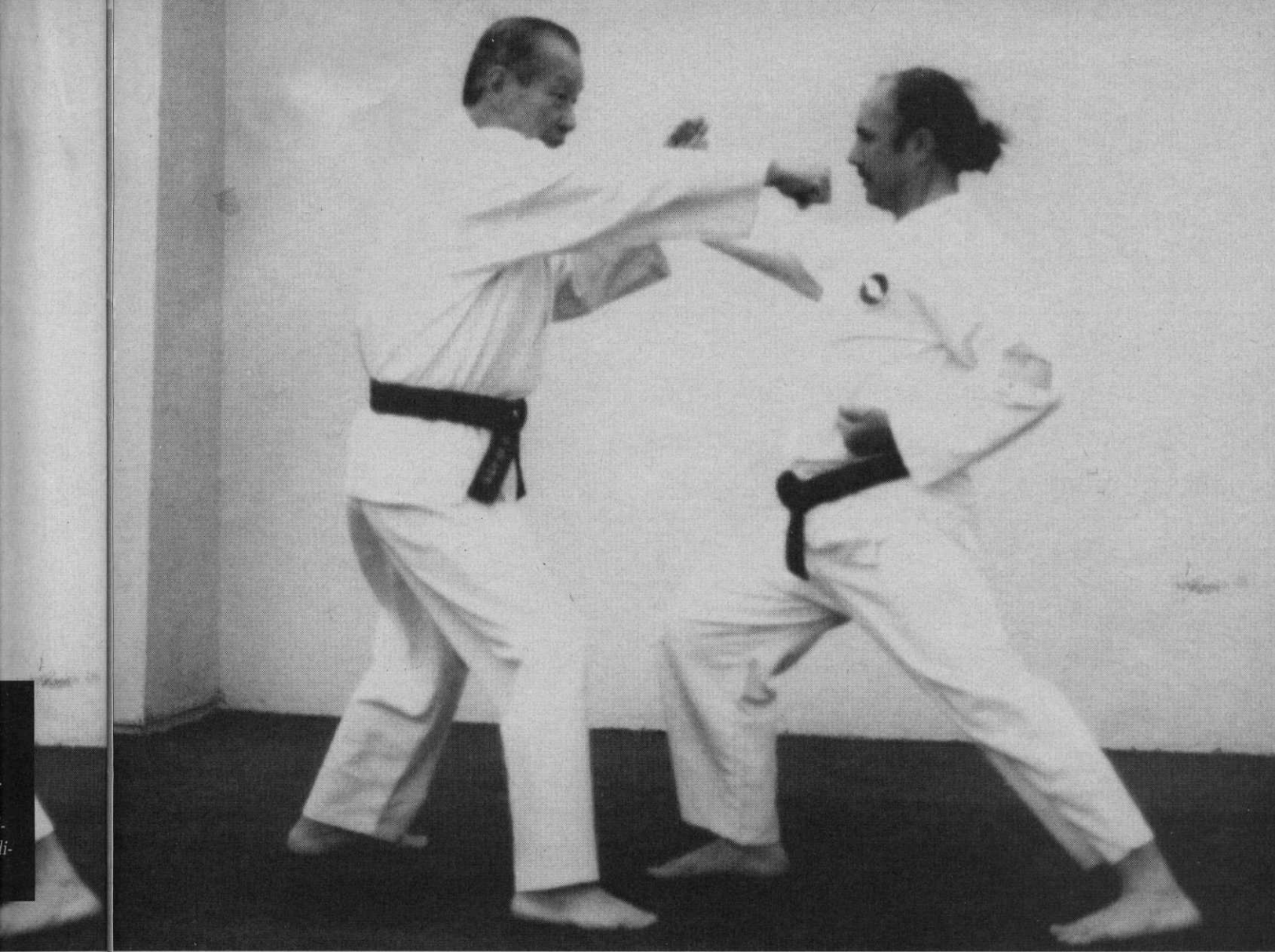
Grandmaster Son has unique views on this formal exercise, which makes it different from other styles which use it. He does not believe that students should learn hundreds of three-steps. Rather, it is best to master a small number of techniques which use the basic Tae Kwon Do weapons: blocks, kicks, punches, elbows and knife-hands.

White belts up through the highest-ranked black belts are required to practice the original set of white belt three-steps. Each block, though moderated carefully while executed, is potentially forceful enough to break an arm when performed at black belt level. Every counter must be decisive, capable of causing severe damage. Every punch, block, and counter should have speed, focus, accuracy, balance and power. With years of time and repetition, practitioners build physical and mental armor to handle the intensity. Tempered with absolute control, pairs of students move back and forth briskly, with no one harmed.

### **Free-Style Sparring**

No-contact sparring sets this style apart from many others. One student recalls, "I've been to dozens of open tournaments. They begin with mini-peewees and on up all day. Anyone can enter as long as they have head gear, hand and foot gear. By 11 p.m., kids are lying on the sides, noses gushing, parents yelling, 'Kill 'em Johnny.'"

"Grandmaster Son is adamant about no contact in his Tae Kwon Do. The most upset I've seen him is when he sees contact. Usually it happens with brown belts. Their control is not so good. He sees contact, and he is right out there, agitated, saying, 'Never this, never, never, never!'"



Sparring is the personal expression of all that the student has learned. Grandmaster Son feels that specific combinations should not be taught by the instructor. It is for the student to process all that is learned in basics, forms, and three-step and then express it creatively. Free-style becomes so closely linked to one's core that, as one veteran practitioner said, "You can always tell what kind of day you are having when you get out on the free-style floor."

### The Path

From its very inception to the present day, Chung Do Kwan Tae Kwon Do, through the dynamism of its leader, Grandmaster Son, has influenced thousands of students to become better men and women. How does Son's Tae Kwon Do penetrate to the core of the human being? Says one of his many students, "He digs into people; he makes them perform. I come to class from my job sometimes very, very tired. It takes me about an hour and fifteen minutes to travel to Mr. Son's school, and many times I'm tired and really don't feel physically like I want to work out. But when I come here its like instant pep. Just watching the man pumps the adrenaline through my body and makes me perform."

Something he stands for, something he projects, brings out each person's potential.

A fourth-degree black belt in his organization once asked her brother, a fellow fifth-degree traveller, "Why do we do this? Why do we go to class every week? Why do we go to these training camps, these seminars? Why do we keep doing this, year after year?"

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His answer was immediate, direct, and deeply felt, "Why is a rock? Why is a tree?"

Suzuki wrote, "In our everyday life we are usually trying to change something into something else, or trying to attain something. Just this trying is already in itself an expression of our true nature. The meaning lies in the effort itself."

The rest will follow naturally. Therefore, the path is clear. ■

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