

My Journey in Taekwon Do and life.

I have never considered my life as particularly exceptional. And writing a history of my life has always seemed like a waste of time because I truly didn't think anyone would be interested and although I have done some things for which I am truly proud, talking about them is hard. Remembering accurately is much harder than I thought it would be and keeping things in the correct order is harder still. Memories have a tendency to get jumbled up and as I try to recreate a timeline of my life, I have had to really look at the pictures I have stored and things that give me a verifiable anchor to a particular time and event. I am going to try to include the pictures that I think match a particular event or time that I am talking about because they help me keep things straight. I have reached a time in my life, however, where I do want to look at a collection of things that I have done, if for no other reason than to try and determine if I have made a positive contribution with my life. I have always said that when I pass, I want to know that I made a difference. There is no greater test than a history of one's life and so I will attempt one of mine. I think that I also want to share my recollections of my life with some people that are important to me because they might actually want to know more about my experiences. I can only hope that what I have done might be some small inspiration for a student to help them become better, or at least I might be able to entertain or make people that know me smile. I think I also want to relate my experiences so that some Yomchi students might get a better understanding of their heritage. I'm hoping some of the other seniors might also decide to document their history and add to the heritage of the organization. So I will relate what I can remember. I want to start by saying that this is what I remember and may be filtered through my perception. If someone else remembers things differently, they have their perspective.

I have also decided to note places in this narrative that I have tried to practice the tenets. I truly believe that the greatest gift that Taekwon-do has given me is through the tenets. They are the soul of Taekwon-do, and what elevates it above mere exercise. I have had students ask me to explain the tenets many times, but everyone must strive to attain the tenets in their own ways. They have helped me answer questions about how to handle situations in my life and given me guidance to help me through difficult situations.

There are a couple of things that I want to include that don't fit neatly into a history of my work or Taekwon Do. The first was when I won tickets to some Denver Bears baseball games. That was the minor league team that played in Denver at what was called "Bear's stadium". As an incentive to students, the Denver Bears offered free tickets to any child that got straight "A's" on any semester's grades. If you took your report card to the stadium, they issued the tickets. My father liked baseball, so he went and got the free tickets, but I wasn't allowed to go. He took some of his friends from work to the games. I was still proud that I won the tickets.

The second thing was that I was nominated by one of my teachers and selected to attend the Colorado Boys State program. It is a week of Civics activities that ended with us getting to go to the Capitol building in Denver and sit in the legislators' chairs in the Senate and House, and learn how bills were introduced, sent through committees, voted on, and passed. I got to be a

state senator for a day, and it gave me a lifelong appreciation for the legislative process.



The other major accomplishment was to be chosen to represent Rotary District 545 on a 3 month Group Study Exchange program to southern Africa in 1977. One of the judges that I worked for in Lakewood was a Rotarian, and put my name in. There were several thousand applicants and they narrowed it down to 25 with resumes, and interviewed us for the final selection. They picked 5, and it was a pretty intense interview. One of the questions that they asked us during the interview was if we were prejudiced. We were going to a section of the world where apartheid was being practiced. I immediately answered “yes”. When they asked me to explain, I told them that as a probation officer, my judgment would be influenced by the experiences that I had had with different types of people. At one time, my house had been burglarized. It would be hard for me not to be prejudiced against burglars. I told them that what was important was that I recognized that I was prejudiced, and therefore could make sure that that prejudice did not influence my decisions when it came to how I treated people. They told me later that was the answer that got me selected.

We went to South Africa, Malawi, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), and Swaziland. In this picture we were meeting with Ian Douglas Smith, the Prime Minister of Rhodesia.



I represented the legal profession, one member was a store owner from Greeley, Colorado (who later became a Colorado State Senator), a professor from Colorado State University in Ft. Collins, a farmer from Cheyenne, Wyoming, and a businessman from Lafayette, Colorado. We were also accompanied by a Rotary chaperone. We would move to a new location every 3-4 days and stayed in the homes of local Rotary members. We got to visit some really fantastic locations because the Rotary members were very well connected. We were able, for example, to visit the white rhino preserve in Kruger National Park, which is normally restricted because of poaching. We visited Victoria Falls in Rhodesia, and they allowed me to visit Salisbury Central Prison, accompanied by the Attorney General for Rhodesia, and speak with inmates about their conditions and why they were in prison. It was a truly amazing and fascinating 3 months. After we came home, we would visit District 545 Rotary clubs and talk about what we learned. Two years later, a group from Southern Africa came to visit Colorado and Wyoming. I believe that this was an example of trying to build a more peaceful world.

I think that I will start with my Taekwon Do history, because that has the most documented times, because of my certificates. This is a chronological timeline of my testings, with the certificate numbers and promotion dates:

Dans

1st. ITF A-1-114 9/12/70 Boulder, Colorado

2nd. ITF A-2-56 6/7/72 Denver, Colorado

3rd. ITF A-3-44. 2/9/76 Denver, Colorado

4th. ITF A-4-38 1/25/80, Denver, Colorado

5th. ITF A-5-22. 12/8/84 Boulder, Colorado
6th. ITF A-6-15. 6/22/90 Grand Lake, Colorado
7th. ITF A-7-10. 12/2/95 Broomfield, Colorado
8th. YCTA-8-1. 6/2/01 Albuquerque, New Mexico (when we formed YCTA)
8th. ITF USA-8-2002 Las Vegas, Nevada (Choi Jung Hwa)
9th. YCTA-9-1. 3/10/07 Denver, Colorado

I will try to put some context to each time period. I will start out with my history from starting lessons to my 1st dan test:

I started lessons earnestly about a month after I started at the University of Colorado as a freshman in September of 1966. I had earned an NROTC scholarship, which was my only chance to go to college. My father had informed me when I started high school that on my 18th birthday, I was out of his house because that was when the law said he was no longer responsible for me. He said he would not contribute anything to my living expenses and I was on my own. This was also during the Vietnam war and we had a draft. It was tied to your birthday and determined how likely you were being drafted. My birthdate drew #5, which basically guaranteed me a free ride to Vietnam as an Army infantryman. When I was awarded the NROTC scholarship, it paid tuition, fees, books and paid me a monthly subsidy to live on. It also would allow me to go to Vietnam as a Naval Officer, rather than Army infantry. (One of the earlier miracles in my life). Four years later, another miracle would allow me to graduate from college when I really didn't study for finals because the United States invaded Cambodia and the University went on strike.

They housed all the NROTC freshmen in a brand new dorm named Williams Village. One of the other NROTC freshmen told me about a new class that was starting for something called Taekwon Do, which none of us had ever heard of. It was at the field house (which at this point had a dirt floor because they used to hold rodeos there) and was being taught by a South Korean exchange student named David Kang.



The first night I showed up, there were over 100 people. David had very limited English language skills and the first class was a complete disaster. We spent the entire class trying to line up. Taekwon Do classes are structured so that straight lines, which are essential to class order, are maintained during class. It is a ritual that allows an instructor to control a class and observe the students. Senior students line up to the front, and the right, facing forward. Without lines, a class would be chaotic. The next class there were only 3 students that came back, and I was one of them. Everyone got so frustrated that they just quit. The classes were free, so they had nothing to lose. I was very used to being frustrated so I kept coming. I believe that I was trying to practice the tenet of perseverance. Without it, I would have quit and never been involved in Taekwon-do.

At this point a little explanation of my lack of any type of athletic prowess is in order. So you can understand why Taekwon Do became so important to me. When I was 18 months old I developed rheumatic fever. My parents were living in Hillsboro, Texas at the time, which is where I was born. Hillsboro didn't have a regular hospital, and the facility where I was born was a sanatorium, to treat tuberculosis. My father worked for the US Postal Service and put in for a transfer to Denver, Colorado so that I could be treated by Dr. Marianne Gardner, who specialized in treating rheumatic fever at Children's Hospital in Denver. Her treatment was successful and I was fairly healthy growing up, but they were concerned with the likelihood that

I would develop heart valve issues or a murmur as I grew because of the rheumatic fever. I was not allowed to take PE classes or play any sports until I reached junior high school. I was cleared and my first PE class in junior high was terrifying and I remember it like it was yesterday. My first day we were supposed to climb a rope attached to the ceiling, touch the top, and climb back down. Needless to say, I never did climb that stupid rope, and even seeing one today gives me a cold sweat, even 60 years later!

Because I was tall in junior and senior high school, I was always encouraged to play basketball. I had absolutely no coordination, had never played basketball, couldn't dribble or shoot, and REALLY sucked. My PE teacher felt that the way to make me better was to make me do pushups. I grew to hate basketball, and still do to this day. (I think I was always trying to find something that would impress my father, who watched sports nonstop at home.) But because I had no coordination, I wasn't able to compete at regular sports like baseball or football with kids that had been playing since elementary school. The only sport that I found where everyone was equally inexperienced was lacrosse. I played for three years in high school and we actually took state one year. I can't honestly say that I was any good, but at least I didn't completely suck. Needless to say, my goal of impressing my dad with athletics didn't pan out. He never attended any of my games.

So when I started Taekwon Do and everyone else got frustrated and quit, I was used to being frustrated because I had never developed basic coordination in any other physical activity and just kept showing up. I was finally doing this for me, not to impress anyone else. After 3 months I was the most senior student in the class and David promoted me to green belt. I was NOT a green belt, skill wise, but compared with the other students, I was ahead. I also took over all administrative duties for David because he really was limited in his English. I had been heavily involved in clubs in high school and had a bit of administrative experience. I got the club registered with athletics, signed us up for legal workout space, arranged for the students to pay fees through the athletic department (because I thought that if they paid something for it they might value it more) and for those fees to go to David for teaching (he had been doing it for free). I just kept working out and eventually actually started gaining some skill. The class was gradually growing as David's English improved. I was lucky enough to learn all the terms, technique names and class commands from a native Korean speaker. I was a language major and always had an ear for languages. I had declared Spanish major, because I was thinking at that point in my life that I would be a Naval officer for the rest of my career, or in the alternative, a translator for the United Nations (boy was I naive) Spanish was always really easy for me so I took the easiest route. Little did I know how much knowing Spanish would aid me as a parole officer in New Mexico.

Throughout this narrative, I refer to my instructor, David Kang, as David, and not Mr. Kang. This is a serious breach of etiquette and needs some clarification. Both he and I were 18 years old. He had never taught a class as the head instructor before. Our relationship also had a social component because we were also friends. He asked me to address him as David, and I did. I didn't know enough at that point to know how to separate formal and informal conversations, so I just did as he asked. He addressed me as Walt, or as "green belt", but it is acceptable for a senior to address a junior less formally, but a junior should not address a senior informally in public.

When I was a green belt, David said that he wanted to host a tournament at CU. It became my responsibility to coordinate setting up the tournament with the University. Luckily Sereff's school had several people who had experience setting up a tournament and somehow we were able to pull it off. This was an open tournament, that allowed students from any style or school to enter, as they all were back then.



The front row, from the left, is Russell Perone, a 3rd dan from the western slope whose name I can't remember, Sereff who was a 3rd dan at this time, Jin Yong who had a school in Arvada, a Korean I never met, Baek Moon Ku, Baek's wife, David Kang, Bernie Maxwell, Mike Joy, and Stan Harris. I am way in the back row under the "T" in Tournament. This was in 1967.

Back then David was with the Mu Duk Kwan organization (which explains the trim on his uniform, that had black around the neck, which other kwans didn't have). By the trim on the uniforms, you can see how many Mu Duk Kwan black belts there were. Sereff isn't wearing Mu Duk Kwan trim as his instructor at this time was Shim, San Kyu, who was Oh Do Kwan. David's instructor was Baek Moon Ku, seated in the middle, who was a Mu Duk Kwan 7th dan, under Kang Ik Lee. He established the Se-Il Rocky Mountain Taekwon Do Association.



The International Taekwondo Federation didn't exist until 1966, which is when I started CU. The Korean martial arts were divided into kwans, or schools, each headed by an 8th degree black belt, the Kwanjang. Mu Duk Kwan was one of the major kwans. One of the largest of the kwans was Oh Do Kwan, headed by General Choi Hong Hi, and Nam Tae Hi. In 1966, General Choi was able to unite all the kwans into the ITF, but many of the Koreans in the US were still loyal to their old kwans.

There are a couple of other things that I need to explain at this point.

After the end of the Korean War, the entire economy of South Korea was in ruins. The heads of the schools didn't have to worry because their students took care of them, but the lower

ranked instructors were on their own. Many migrated to the US and started teaching all over the country. The dominant martial art in the US at that time was Shotokan Karate, a Japanese style. Americans didn't know much about the martial arts in the 1960's and one oriental instructor was the same as another for the uninformed. A lot of Koreans would move into a town and look in the phone book to see who was teaching in the area. If they found a Japanese Shotokan school with a 3rd dan instructor, they would open a school and advertise as a 4th dan. Americans didn't know the difference and figured that a 4th dan was better than a 3rd dan. The problem was the Korean was probably a 2nd dan when he left Korea. We say he crossed the International Dan Line when he passed the International Date Line and was a higher dan when he got here. The biggest problem was that the instructors stopped learning when they left Korea and unless they taught themselves, or found another higher ranked Korean in the US, they didn't get any better. There is a tremendous amount of learning at each of the dan levels and they started running into major problems when they would get a student up to the rank they were when they stopped learning because they didn't have anything left to teach them. In most cases they would set it up so that the student was teaching all the time, or they would treat them so badly that they would quit. Compounding the problems was that many kept promoting themselves to higher and higher rank, without the knowledge that was supposed to come with it. I have seen phone books where one year an instructor was a 4th dan, the next year he was a 5th dan, the next year he's a 6th, and so on, usually until they made themselves into a "Master". I truly believe that my instructor, David Kang, was probably a 1st dan when he left Korea and a 2nd dan when he arrived at CU, because he needed to outrank the Shotokan 1st dan that was teaching at CU at the time. But David had a high ranked instructor in Baek, Moon Ku, who let him keep advancing.

As you can see by my dates of rank, it took me a lot longer than a year to achieve the next rank. The ITF rule was the minimum requirement was the number of years for the next dan before you were eligible to test, and there were actual physical tests up to 7th dan, or "Master", which is a political promotion. You also had to be actively working out during that time. I did a physical test to 7th dan though, because Sereff did, which set the precedent. My 8th was political, after the general had passed and the ITF split into three factions.

When David promoted me to green belt, we were using the old Mu Duk Kwan (also known as Tang Soo Do) ranking system, which for colored belts was white, 3 ranks of green belt, two ranks of red belt, and one rank of dark blue belt, just before black belt. When I was about to test to dark blue, David joined the ITF and we went to the ITF ranking system, which meant that I was a red belt for about 2 years. I started in 1966 and tested to 1st dan in 1970. I had started getting a lot better when I earned my red belt, in about 1968. I went from 135# to 195#, and it was muscle. David had me enter tournaments, and I started winning. At one point I won 31 tournaments in a row without losing a match, and I was state red belt champion 2 years in a row.

The first year that I won the State Championship at red belt, my parents were still living in Commerce City, Colorado. I drove down from Boulder with the trophy in my car. It was pretty impressive, a 5'6" tall trophy. I sat it in the front room of my parents house and my father asked, "What's that?" And I said, "It's the State Championship trophy, I won it yesterday." He said, "Can't eat it." And he went back to reading the paper. I packed it up and went back to

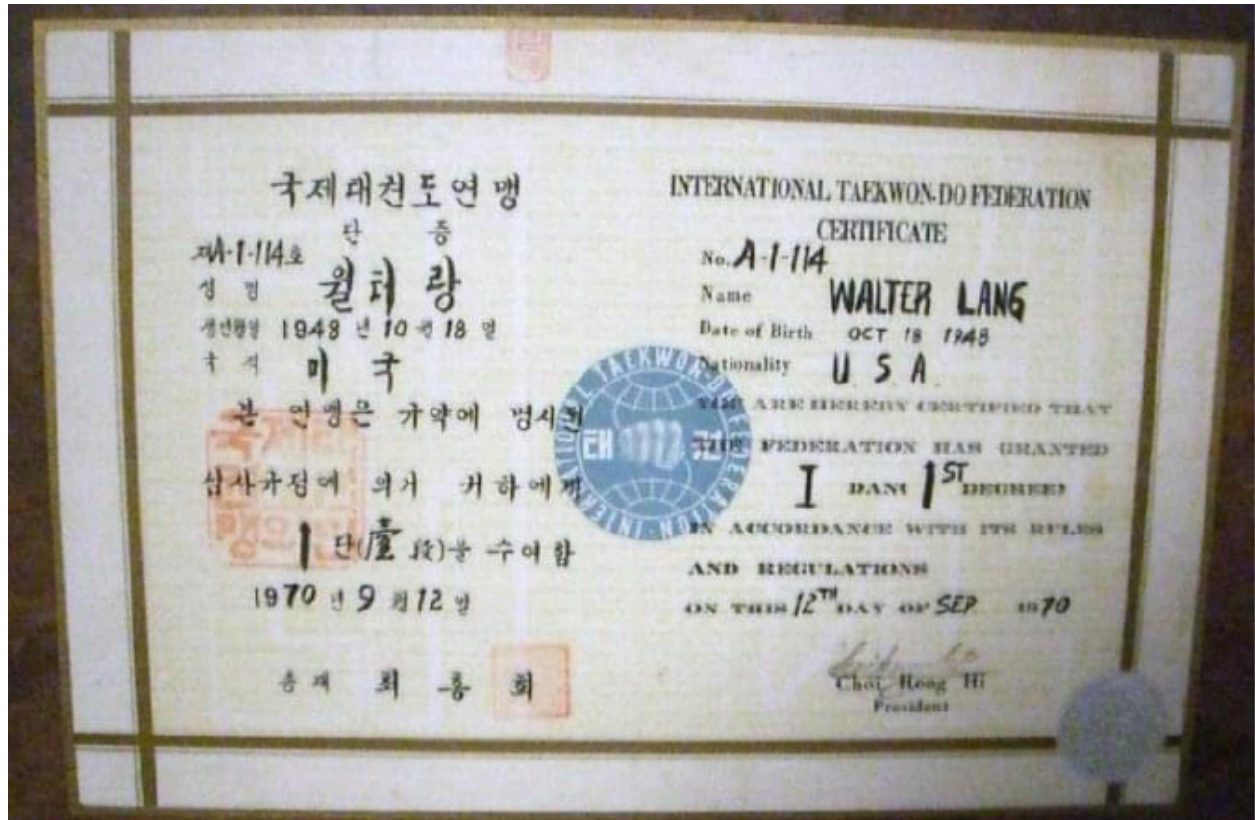
Boulder. I didn't visit home much after that.

I was entering about 3 tournaments a month in several states. My specialty was sparring. I also entered pattern and breaking competitions, but I was much better at sparring than I was at patterns. A lot of people were very happy when I tested to black belt. As an aside, my first tournament as a black belt, I was put up against a 4th degree black belt in my first match. In those days they didn't split the divisions. Black belt was black belt. Needless to say, he wiped the floor with me. After the match, he said, "Welcome to black belt". Another well deserved humility lesson. That was right before I shipped to Vietnam and I didn't compete again until I got back.

About 6 months before I graduated from C.U., on a Saturday morning, I attended a colored belt testing at the school of Bobby Kim, who was a Mu Duk Kwan 6th degree that Sereff had sponsored into the US after Baek Moon Ku (David Kang's instructor) had left for Cleveland the year before. David had been working out with Kim, because they were both Mu Duk Kwan, and I attended his classes every Saturday as a red belt. On this morning I was told by David that I would be running the floor during the colored belt testing. There was Bobby Kim, 6th dan, David Kang (my instructor at CU), 2nd dan, and a 4th dan in Hapkido named Mr. Moon, who I had never met before. Moon was completely bald and looked a lot like a Buddhist monk. The Koreans were all dressed in suits, as they always did when they were on a test board. There were about 30 students testing for various colored belt ranks, up to red belt. We had adopted the ITF ranking system about a year before this. I ran the floor and after the closing meditation the lower level students were allowed to leave the floor, but I was told to kneel in the middle of the gym and given the command for meditate. I was sitting there, eyes closed, and I heard the Koreans get up and leave the room. I'm thinking this is some mental thing, so I didn't move for about 10 minutes. I heard them come back in, they called me to attention, and I saw that they had changed into their uniforms. So David tells me that they have decided that I should test to 1st dan. I had to do the first 9 ITF patterns, step sparring with David, breaking, and then I sparred each of them, starting with David. Second was Mr. Moon, who didn't do anything except block with his hands and feet. He knocked me down 4 times with head butts. Apparently that was his specialty. Last was Kim, who had been 3 time National Sparring Champion in Korea. I was able to learn a great deal of humility that morning. When they finally got bored with slapping me around, I was presented with a black belt. I can't explain the emotion of that moment. I wore my uniform to bed that night. It was getting close to graduation, and I was afraid that I wasn't going to be tested before I left. I couldn't ask about the test because that just wasn't done, ever. I had spent literally months getting ready, but I hadn't been told anything about my testing, so I was very relieved for a while once it happened.

So the following Monday was class at Sereff's, and I couldn't wait to show off my new belt. (The humility lesson apparently didn't sink in, but that was about to change) I walked onto the floor and Sereff looked at me and said, "Who the hell made you a black belt?" It was clear that he was NOT happy. I had naturally assumed that Sereff and Kim had discussed it and decided that I would test. I was so wrong. I found out later that they had discussed it, but Sereff wanted to be the one who tested me.

Understand that the Monday night class was Sereff's senior students, all black belts, that I had been invited to attend as a red belt. They saw Sereff's reaction and that I had done something to really make him angry. Reading the room, I went back to the dressing room and put my red belt back on. When I walked back onto the floor, Sereff says, "No, no, If you want to be a black belt so damn bad, we'll test you tonight." I got to go through the whole process again, but when we got to sparring, all the students thought I had somehow insulted Sereff, and were not happy with me. That was a fairly painful 45 minutes. Keep in mind that pads hadn't been invented yet. After the class, Sereff announced that he was promoting me to 1st dan. I got to test twice in one week with no advance notice for either one.





This history led to my lack of sympathy for students that weren't ready for a testing for which they had 3 months warning beforehand.

I spent so much time on getting ready for the black belt test that I pretty much neglected my academic classes after midterms, which I barely passed. The last semester of my senior year, 1970, the US invaded Cambodia. There were massive student protests all over the country in response to the invasion. At CU, the president of the University said that in honor of the student protests, anyone who was passing their classes at midterms couldn't be failed if they didn't complete the coursework. I was working out about 6 hours a day. We had our CU Boulder classes on Tuesday and Thursday nights from 6:30-8:00 and 8:00-9:30pm. I worked out at Sereff's gym on Monday and Wednesdays and at Bobby Kim's classes on Saturday. I had workouts with sparring partners every day, because we never knew when the test would be. This could legitimately count as a miracle, but I hate that a war was what allowed me to graduate. But I did graduate and I was promoted to black belt (in two organizations) both in May of 1970. I can also say that the only time I'd ever seen my father express any pride in me was when I was commissioned in the Navy and he actually pinned my bars on at the ceremony. He was Navy enlisted and was at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. He actually saluted me. That moment was surreal.



I graduated from the University of Colorado, Boulder campus, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish with a minor in psychology. On the same day, I was commissioned in the United States Navy as an Ensign and given orders to report to the USS Haleakala, AE 25 in Concord, California (about 30 miles up the Sacramento River from San Francisco).



After I got my orders and reported to my ship, I couldn't work out at all. I was immediately sent to CIC officer school, since I was going to be the new CIC (Combat Information Center) officer aboard the Haleakala. My main responsibility was to get information from the various radar equipment on the ship and advise the Captain on the best way to deal with any threat, be it aircraft, surface ships, or underwater vehicles. I was also the Electronic Materials Officer, responsible for maintaining radar and radio equipment, and the Intelligence Officer, responsible for disseminating classified information to personnel that needed the information. Navy officers often had multiple jobs, especially on the smaller ships. The next 6 weeks was 12 hour days learning all the things I needed to know as quickly as possible because we were due to deploy to Vietnam in 6 weeks. CIC and Intelligence School were at the big Naval base in San Diego.

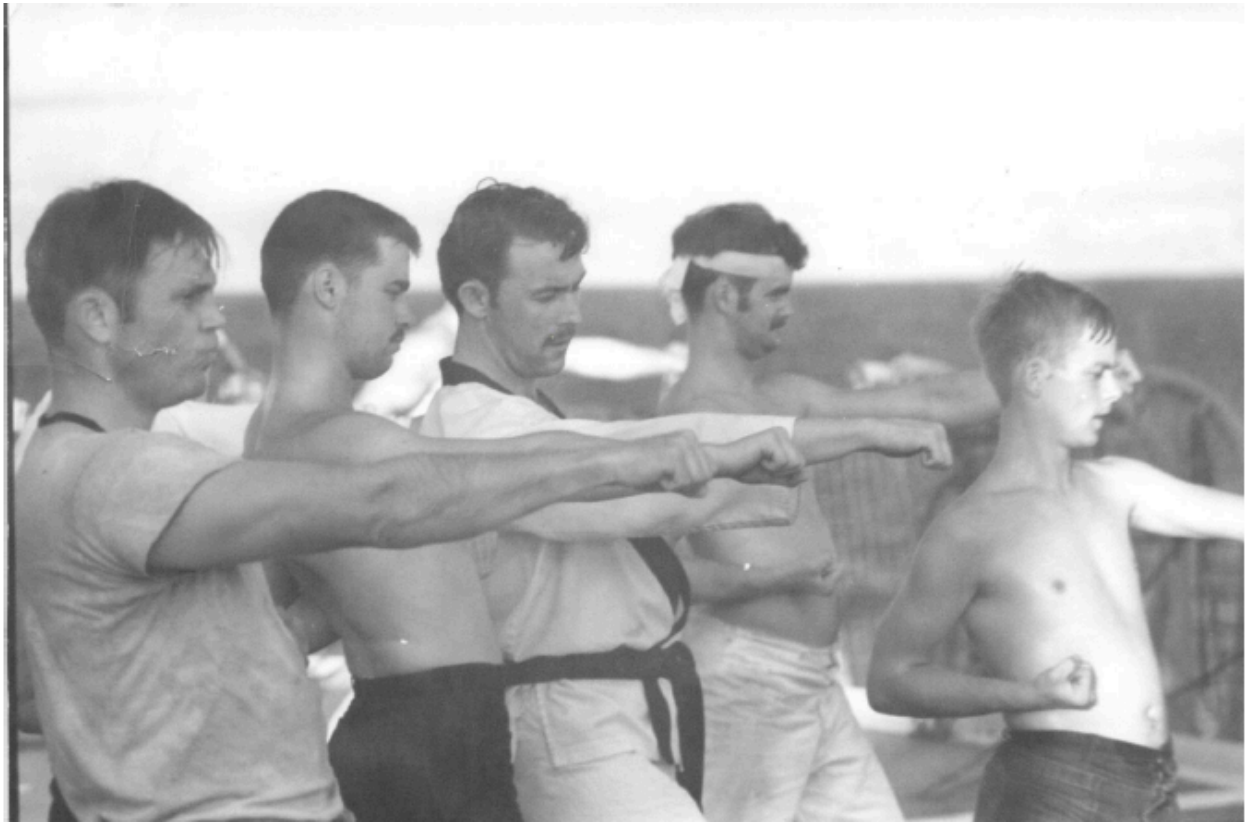
We left for Vietnam and I had my hands full adjusting to this very different life aboard ship. Normally officers have at least two 4 hour "watches" each day. At sea my watch was on the bridge, learning how to pilot the ship, including learning all the rules that govern how ships interact with each other. The rules are fairly uniform throughout the world and all sailors understand and follow them. It's just like traffic rules when driving, except the rules at sea don't change depending on where you are. You also have to learn how your ship reacts to different situations. Stopping a 50,000 ton ship takes a lot longer than a car. Also the number of propellers that a ship has affects turning, stopping, and maneuvering. There is a lot to learn, but honestly, I loved it. Our captain was a quiet, reserved, unsocial person. He also terrified me because he knew so much more than I did about just about everything. All interactions with him were completely serious business with no hint of humor, and I was always convinced that he thought that I was less than useless. He reminded me of someone else in my life and so I

started a quest to try and impress him. I decided that I would try to qualify as: 1. Officer of the Deck (underway) - which is driving the ship in the open ocean; Officer of the Deck (alongside) - much more difficult driving the ship during an underway replenishment; and Engineering Officer of the Deck - requires knowledge of the engines, boilers, and propulsion systems. The last one required me serving watches in the engine room with the ship's engineering crew, which CIC officers seldom did. I was able to qualify for all three. The hardest, by far, was the OOD alongside. One little mistake driving the ship when it was 20 feet from an aircraft carrier doing 15 knots, passing them 500# bombs can be catastrophic.

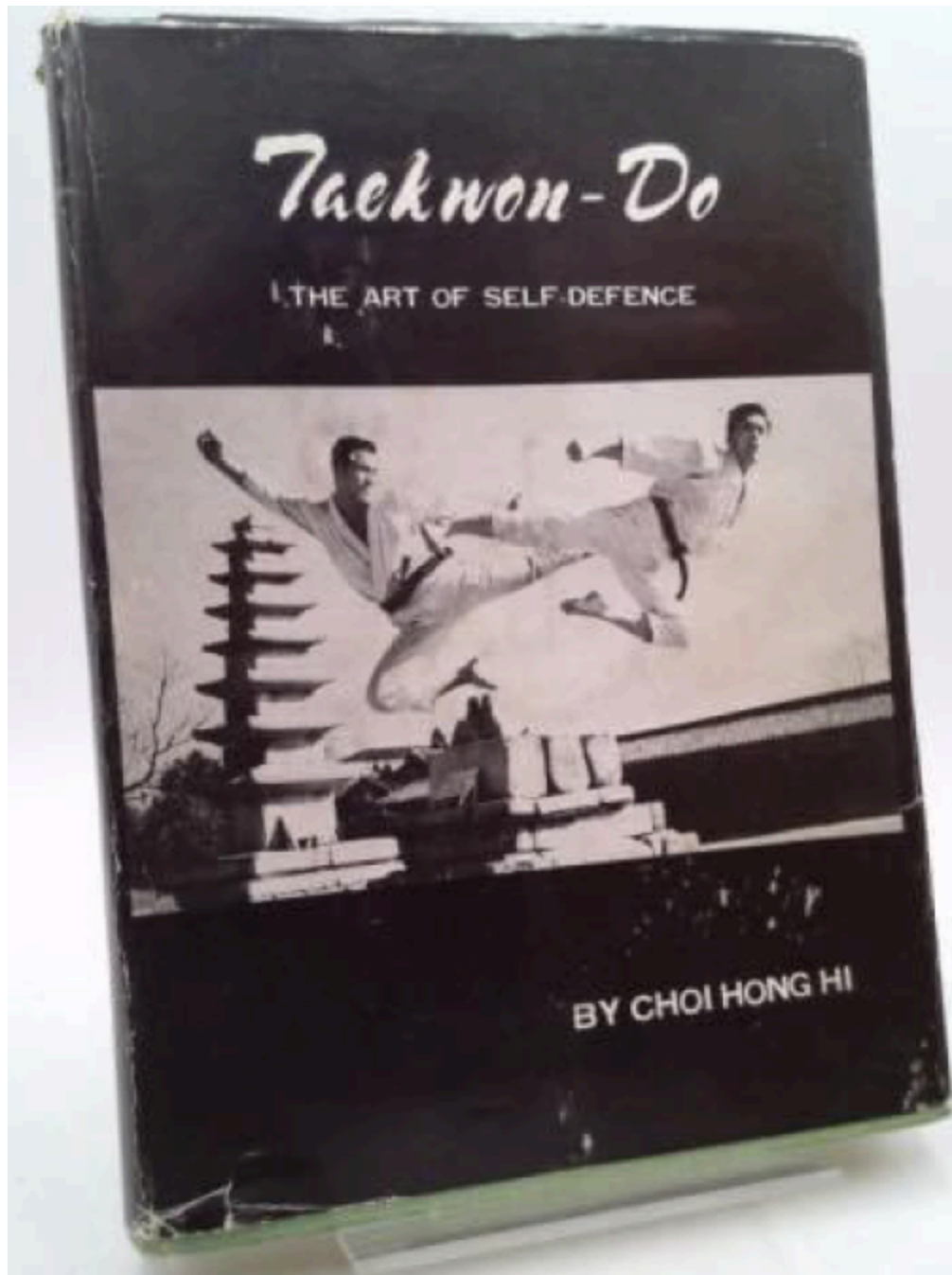


This is in CIC aboard Haleakala. I have had the mustache ever since.

At sea, sometimes you have a bit of free time. To be sure, there is plenty of work, but the ship runs 24/7 and there are times when you are done with duties. The Navy spent considerable time and money developing a paint that has to be replaced every 6 months so the sailors would always have something that needed to be done and would keep them busy. When the Executive Officer found out that I was a black belt, he convinced me to start a class on the ship. We had a helo deck big enough for a large helicopter to land on, where we could hold classes. Turns out quite a few people were interested and it was a real morale booster. So I started teaching a class, beginning on Sundays, on the helo deck, weather and assignments allowing.



This is one of the classes, in the Tonkin Gulf. The person farthest to the left is the Executive Officer, Commander Macfarland. There were people from all over the ship, officers and enlisted, which is fairly unusual as officers and enlisted seldom mixed for anything social. Fraternization was frowned upon. The class was an exception. I also started working out on my own doing my patterns over and over. As a lower rank, I HATED patterns. I didn't see the purpose. All I wanted to do was fight. The time I spent on the ship just doing patterns really taught me how important they are and I know that I became a much better teacher later on because of that. I started analyzing each pattern, looking for why those moves were so important at that level of learning. All I had as a reference was the General's book, and I read every page many times.



I started seeing the absolute genius of how the patterns were constructed. I started using patterns as a physical form of meditation, which is what they were designed for in the first place. I always thought you just did patterns so that you could test to the next rank. I started seeing the personality of each pattern, with different rhythms and emphasizing different muscles and types of coordination. I started to understand why breathing, loosening and tightening muscles at the right time and fluid movement were so important and what made Taekwon Do different from the other martial arts. I probably learned more about Taekwon Do

during that time on my own than almost any other time in my journey. This is also the time when

I first started to realize the importance of the tenets. Being in a war zone, 3000 miles from home, gives one many opportunities for practicing perseverance and indomitable spirit..

I came home between my two deployments to leave my car in Colorado during my second 9 month deployment, and Sereff set up a special class just for me the weekend I was home. Several senior black belts attended, and Ernie Harris dislocated my jaw and knocked out two of my teeth when we were sparring in the class. I also knocked him out and we had a great time. I reported back to my ship with a badly swollen face and a huge black eye. The XO asked what happened and I said that one of my friends had sparred with me and had gotten a little carried away when we were having fun. I think he was impressed that I wasn't upset about it at all. I also learned that I could take a punch.



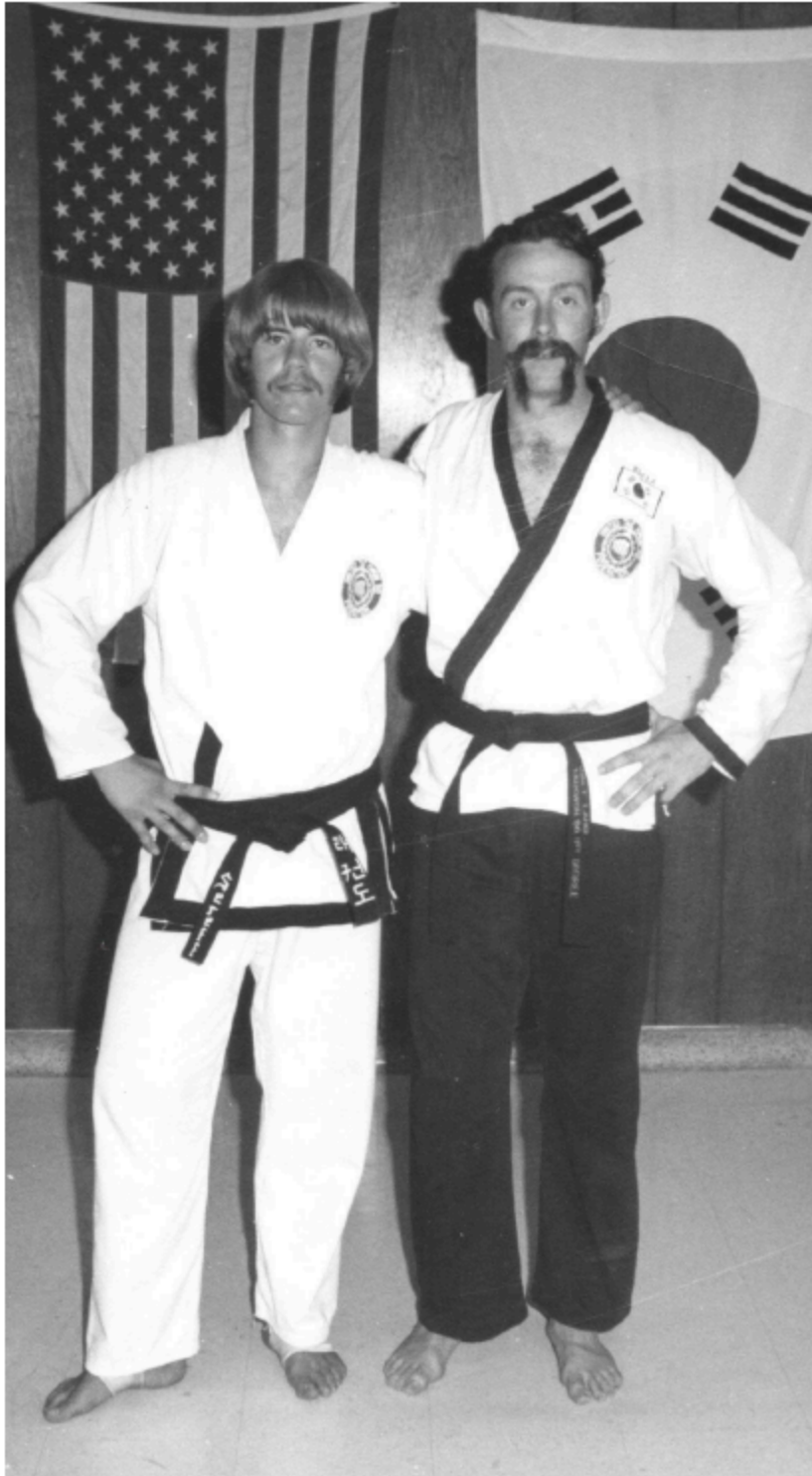
This is the car that I drove home in 1971 to store while I was on my second deployment, a 1970 Corvette convertible. I really loved that car. It was stolen shortly after I returned to Denver after I got out of the Navy.

I continued teaching on the ship until I left. In 1972 the Navy had its budget fairly severely cut by Congress. The war was becoming more and more unpopular. Because of that the Navy Department decided to decommission quite a few ships to cut expenses. I was offered an early out, 2 years ahead of my normal out date, if I would forgo some of my benefits. I had already

received a college education and I was having some serious problems with the war effort, being able to see some uncomfortable things close up, so I jumped at the offer. I was separated in late 1972 and returned to Denver. When I was in Vietnam, my parents had moved to Phoenix, so I took a tiny studio apartment near the capitol in Denver.

When I returned to Denver, I had no idea how I would make a living. My Spanish major didn't qualify me for much of anything, as being bilingual in Denver in 1972 wasn't really an asset. The skills I received in the Navy weren't in high demand that far from the sea. Piloting a ship doesn't really translate into anything else. On the other hand, in 1972, a college degree did meet a lot of requirements for management jobs, as did my experience as a supervisor. Unfortunately, there was a tremendous amount of animosity towards the war and anyone that participated in it. I was literally spit on, wearing my uniform, before my discharge. There were a couple of times when I came dangerously close to seriously injuring someone that confronted me, but because of what I had learned through the tenets, I was able to control my temper. Self control is a very important tenet to learn. Anyway, I was having a hard time getting work. I had gotten back in touch with Sereff as soon as I got home and started working out with him. He was ex-military, a marine, so the war wasn't a problem; in fact, he had kept up with my Navy career while I was deployed.

This picture was taken a few months after I got home after my discharge. The person in the picture with me is Charlie Eberhardt, with whom I had a rivalry for many years, but we were still really good friends. Sereff would always tell me how great Charlie was, and what a good student he was. Note the belt that Charlie is wearing. Little did I know that Sereff was telling Charlie how great I was, how many tournaments I had won. It set up a rivalry that made us both much better. The uniform is one I had made in Hong Kong, because of the soot on the helo deck where we held class on the ship; the white pants would get really dirty so I had them made in black. I had Mu Duk Kwan trim on the top. The mustache also wasn't regulation, and I let my hair grow out after I came home.



Anyway, when I let Sereff know that I was having trouble finding a job, he said that I could take over his school at 2301 East Colfax, and he would pay me \$750/month until I could get a better job. He also had a student who was a realtor who had a house up for sale in a sketchy part of town, and who was having trouble finding a buyer, even though the price was just \$11,000. I, of course, hadn't established any credit at that point, so Sereff cosigned the loan, and I got the

house. The mortgage payment was a little over \$150/month and the house was fully furnished. A little old lady had lived there alone and when she died, her family, who all lived on the east coast, didn't want to deal with it, and sold it to me at a cheap price. They didn't want any of her stuff, as they were apparently estranged, which I always thought was very sad. So thanks to Sereff, I had a place to live and a job.

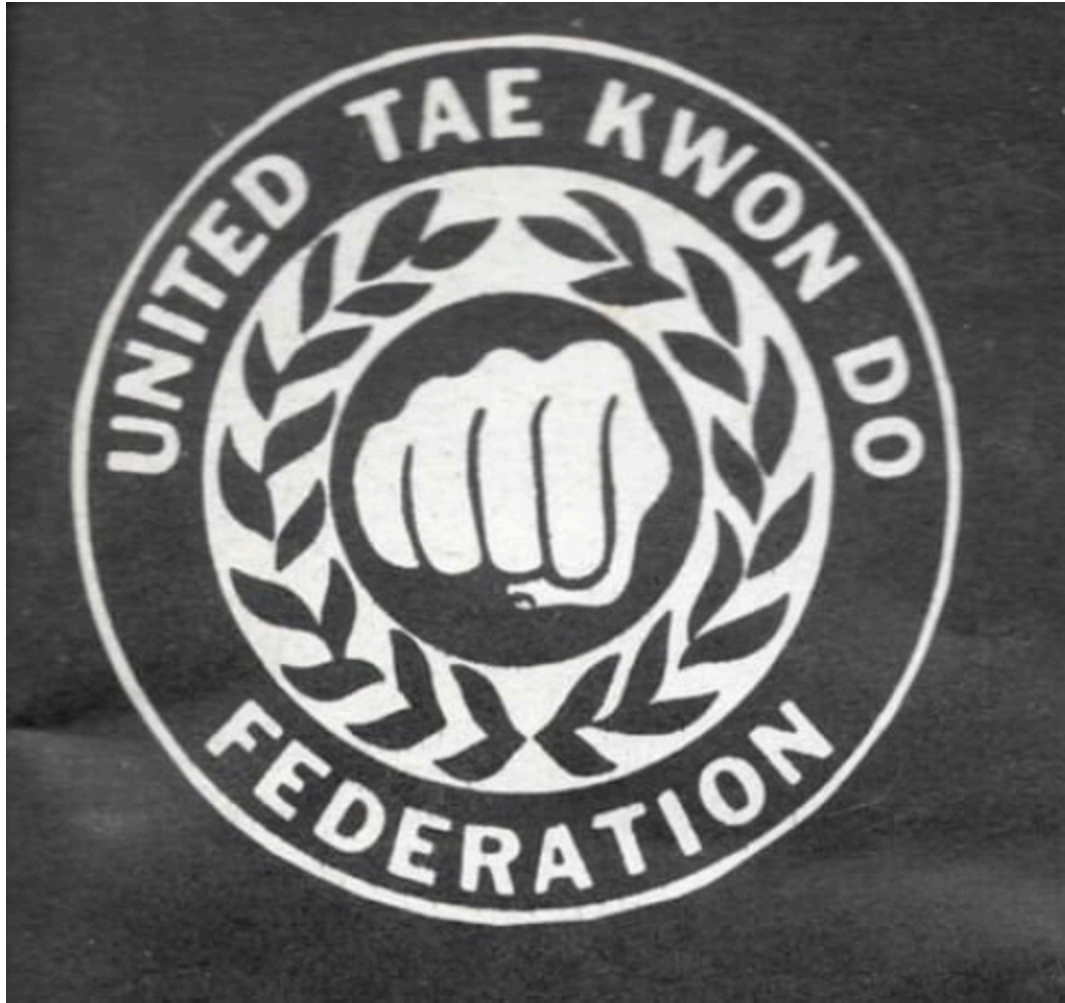
I was teaching every day except Sunday at the school. We had classes for credit in the afternoons for CU, Metropolitan Community College, and DU. I went up to Boulder to see what was happening up there. I had been gone for a little over two years, and in that time Sereff and Bobby Kim had a falling out, and Kim had taken over the Boulder class. But, as is usual for the higher ranked Koreans, he didn't teach in Boulder; he sent a 2nd dan up to teach. There were about 50 students, and they were still working out in the field house. The only student who was still there from when I had been there was John Sharrah, who was now a high red belt. He had a student who he was working extra with named Tom Gliver. They had both come down to the class Sereff held for me when I was home on leave and watched what happened. I started going up to Boulder every Tuesday and Thursday night just to teach John and Tom. Students from the other class started watching, and one by one started working out in our class. I made a point of not criticizing the other class or the other teacher. The courtesy tenet demanded that I not criticize the other teacher, or the other class. After about 3 months, I had all the students and the other class folded. Sereff was pretty happy with it.





Tom Gliver and John Sharrah.

while I was in Vietnam Sereff met the General and decided that he would join the ITF. He had been in business with another black belt named Larry McGill, and they had formed United Taekwon Do.



After I had been back a little more than 6 months, running the school and taking Boulder back, Sereff announced that the General was coming to Denver and I would be testing to 2nd dan. (I had warning this time!) I had purchased the General's book when I was still a colored belt because David said it was the best book out on Taekwon Do, and we had changed over to his patterns when I earned my red belt, so I knew who the General was. I had studied all the pictures, the patterns, the training guide, and I read everything over and over because it was the only reference that I had when I was aboard ship in Vietnam.

The day came for the General's arrival and we learned that another high ranking Korean was accompanying him named Nam Tae Hi, who helped the General form the ITF. The General wanted to meet me the night before the testing, so we had a small reception for him at the school. This is General Choi, Larry McGill, Nam Tae Hi, and me the night before the test:



The day of the testing it occurred to me that I would be performing these patterns before the people who had invented them. When I got on the floor for the first pattern, Kwang Gae, I had no idea what the first move was, because I was staring straight at the General and my mind went completely blank. Since I was the only person testing to 2nd dan, I was on the floor all alone, so I couldn't follow anyone else. I stood there for what seemed like 10 minutes (it was actually 10 seconds) and was just going to give up. When I moved my hands from the ready stance, muscle memory kicked in, and I finished all three patterns with minimal mistakes (or so I am told, my memory is still a blur). On my hand break, I was punching a red house brick. They are pretty stout, but I had practiced several times and knew I could do it. What I didn't count on was doing the break at the new athletic facility where they had just installed a rubberized running floor. The floor absorbed a lot of the power of my punch and I ended up sustaining a compression fracture on my left hand on the first attempt. I looked at Sereff and he motioned me to do the break again. I broke the brick on the second try, with two fractured bones in my left hand. I'm not sure if this was an example of perseverance or indomitable spirit. I believe indomitable spirit means to go on even though you think you are going to lose. I had no idea that my hand was hurt until that night when I went to the hospital and got the cast.

This was the night after the testing and we introduced the General to Coors beer. John Sharrah and I are kneeling, Tom Gliver is on the far right in the glasses. Ted Walker is standing, far left behind Nam Tae Hi.



Before he left, the General came to Boulder to visit my class. It was a big honor.



This is the publicity photo that we used for the Boulder class for a long time, it is Ted Walker and Tom Gliver doing the kicks:



So this takes me to my second dan.

During this time frame, I had some very important changes in my work life. While teaching the CU credit class, I had a student, Barry Goldstein, who was the director of a juvenile group home for delinquent youth in Arvada, called Jefferson Hall. One day he asked me if I knew anyone that might want to work weekends as relief for the house parents who lived at the residence. It was a large, 5 bedroom house in a residential neighborhood in Arvada. It was run by a Board of Directors, was registered with the state and housed referrals from the courts in the metro area, but mainly received residents from Lakewood since they had the largest municipal court in Jefferson County. The person needed a bachelor's degree, and he was having difficulty finding anyone willing to spend weekends supervising juvenile delinquents. It didn't pay much, but I told him I was interested. He was thrilled and hired me on the spot. He was supposed to go on vacation in a week and wanted me to start the next weekend. I started the following weekend and was supposed to be there 24/7, from Friday night until Monday morning, when the regular house parents would return. Monday came and no house parents showed up. They apparently had called and left a message that they quit and wouldn't be back. Barry was somewhere in Europe and I had no one to contact. I decided that I couldn't leave, got another instructor to cover my classes, and stayed at the group home until Barry got back. This situation involved integrity and perseverance. I had given my word, so I couldn't leave, and I was going to stay there as long as necessary. The Board of Directors for the group home was so impressed that I didn't just leave, that they offered me a job as the Assistant Director/Court liaison for over twice what I was making teaching. I was able to keep teaching Boulder, took over the Denver YMCA class on Monday and Wednesday, and continued working out with Sereff on Friday. (I didn't sleep much during that portion of my life). After working for about 2 years with the Lakewood Municipal Court, which sent some of the kids to the group home, I was offered a probation officer job. After about 2 years, I was promoted to

Chief Probation Officer, eventually supervising 5 probation officers, preparing the budget for City Council, and developing a first of its kind shoplifter offender program that earned me a "Law Day" award. I was the Chief Probation Officer with Lakewood for about 10 years.

After I reached 2nd dan, I worked on expanding the Boulder club, and I took over the classes at the Denver YMCA. I ended up teaching at Boulder, CU Denver, Metro Community College, the University of Denver, and the school at 2301 East Colfax. I was traveling to compete in regional tournaments and got as high as 4th in the western US in the PKA (Professional Karate Association) rankings:

PROFESSIONAL Karate Summer 75 cents

Quarterly ratings of the national and regional top-ten competitors

4 **WALT LANG** - Denver, Colorado In an area that is known for numerous childish displays of unsportsmanlike conduct, Walt Lang remains aloof. If he would conduct a seminar on maturity and sportsmanship, there would be a lot fewer fracas in the Denver area. Lang is a pupil of Chuck Serreff which explains his proficiency with his legs. Walt won the Four Seasons Fall Tournament in Denver which helped him soar in the ratings.

HONORABLE MENTION:

1 AL DACASCOS - Denver, Colorado	JACK ADAIR - N.M.
2 JIM HARKINS - Boulder, Colorado	MIKE AWAD - Az.
3 DAVE PETTIGREW - Las Cruces, New Mexico	JOHN BOISVERT - Co.
4 PETE RABINO - Phoenix, Arizona	JOE BOND - Utah
5 WALT LANG - Denver, Colorado	MIKE COFIELD - Az.
6 NATE PINO - Albuquerque, New Mexico	TOM KELLY - Utah
7 JOHN BATTIE - Utah	CLIFF MILLER - N.M.
8 JAMES STEVENSON - Denver, Colorado	RUSSELL PERRON - Co.
9 STEVE MARTIN - Albuquerque, New Mexico	MIKE REDDICK - Co.
10 KEN LAMBERT - Denver, Colorado	C.R. ROBE - Co.
	MIKE SANDOS - Co.
	TOM TRIPP - Co.

ROCKY MOUNTAINS

1. Robert Battie - Utah
2. George Pullen - N.M.
3. Ken Lambert - Colo.
4. Steve Martin - N.M.
5. Cliff Miller - N.M.
6. Nate Pino - N.M.
7. Walt Lang - Colo.
8. C.C. Diggs - Colo.
9. Roland Jenkins - Colo.
10. (Tie) Dan Catabagan - Colo.
10. (Tie) James Stevenson - Colo.

HONORABLE MENTION:
Sam Gonzales, Bob Caswell,
Jack Adair, Tom Tripp, Joe Bond, Mike Reddick

Boulder was growing huge, with over 300 students at its height. I decided that I would need help with the classes, and thought that the best way to do that would be to pick students in my various classes who showed promise, either physically or mentally, and think of ways to give

them extra instruction, physical and mental. Therefore, I devised the “family” that would get the extra attention. I thought that the mental side of the art was just as important as the physical, so things like weekend camps, classes in my backyard on the weekends, reading books that I thought taught oriental culture, playing D&D, and subtly setting up competitions to see who could be the best, could help add motivation. The corporate world calls this kind of thing “team building”, but the chosen group really started excelling. This was not lost on the other students, and the entire level of technique vastly improved. At one point Boulder students had received “Best Test” scores at every black belt testing for several years. The students themselves created bonds with each other that I have seen persevere for decades.







Around this time, Sereff told me that he was putting together a big demonstration match at the Denver Coliseum and we would be competing against two teams from out of town. One was a team coached by Nam Tae Hi, and the other by Jhoon Rhee. These were “all star” teams and it was the last time I competed:

Our A team was me, Ernie Harris, Dwayne Cook, C.R. Robe, and Mike Winegar.



The Jhoon Rhee team had the Whorley brothers, and three other tournament champions from the east coast.

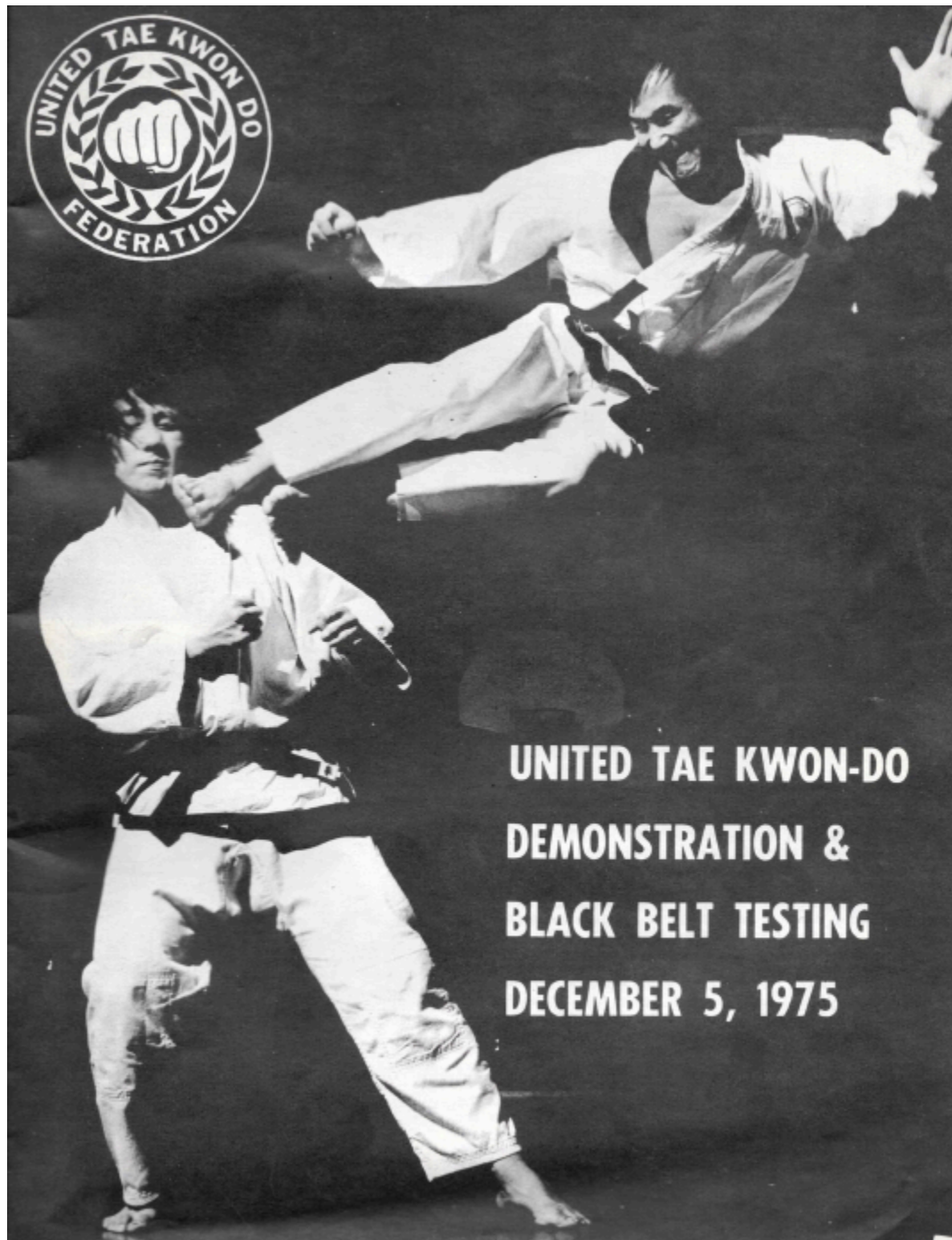


I honestly don't remember the Nam Tae Hi team, and they may have withdrawn because of a spat between Nam and Rhee. Rhee's team beat us, but the most memorable part was the introduction of hand and foot pads. We had never seen pads before and only had 2 days to practice with them before the match. Before this we fought bare knuckle and we had to have control. Pads changed all that, and there was no longer an emphasis on control and focus in technique. This match also had a rule that if you touched the ground with anything but your feet, your opponent got another point, so knocking someone over was a premium. Mine was the first match. My opponent knocked me over with a back-fist as his opening move, and got 2 points. I adapted fairly quickly, and his back-fist wasn't a match for my side kick (also, the bottom of the foot isn't padded). I beat him 23-4. I was the only one on our team who won, however. Jeff Whorley fought Ernie Harris, one of Sereff's best black belts. He swept Ernie over 10 times. Ernie was a big guy and hadn't been swept before. He was completely out of his element. Ernie lost without scoring on Whorley. Dwayne Cook fought a guy that outweighed him by 100# and lost. C.R. Robert was my size and did really well, but lost on points. Winegar lost badly, unable to adjust to pads and new rules. That night was a premonition of what was to come with tournament competition in the future, with pads completely changing any emphasis on control and focus. My probation career was taking up a lot more of my time and I didn't have time to train to maintain my competitive level, so I concentrated on teaching rather than competing.

I wanted to relate something that occurred at the competition at the coliseum that is one of the best examples of courtesy that I have ever seen. Our team finished second to the Jhoon Rhee team, as I said, and I was the only member of our team that won my match. At the end of the

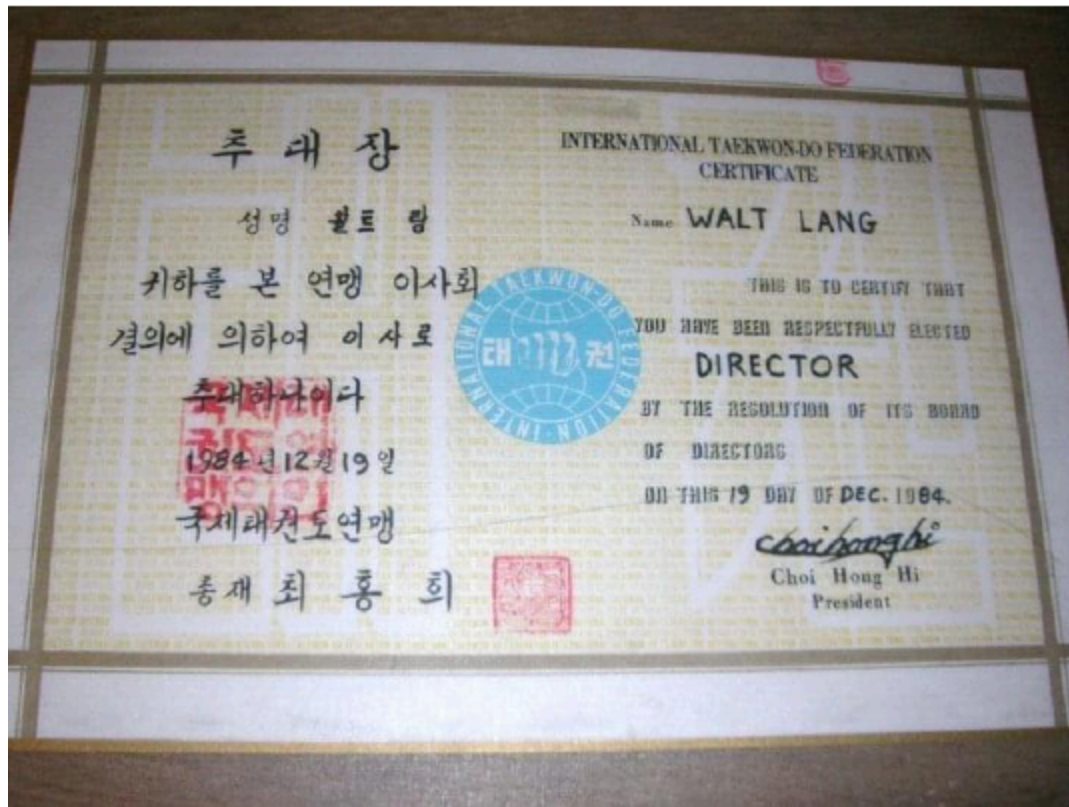
match we all lined up and we were awarded Seiko watches. Their team got gold watches, and we got silver. After they presented the watches, the man I had defeated came over and traded watches with me. He said that I deserved the gold watch since I had defeated him. I objected, but he insisted. I have seldom seen any more selfless act of courtesy than that.

The General returned to Denver for my 3rd dan test in 1975. He brought another Korean with him, Park Jung Su. Park was the General's bodyguard, and a very impressive person.

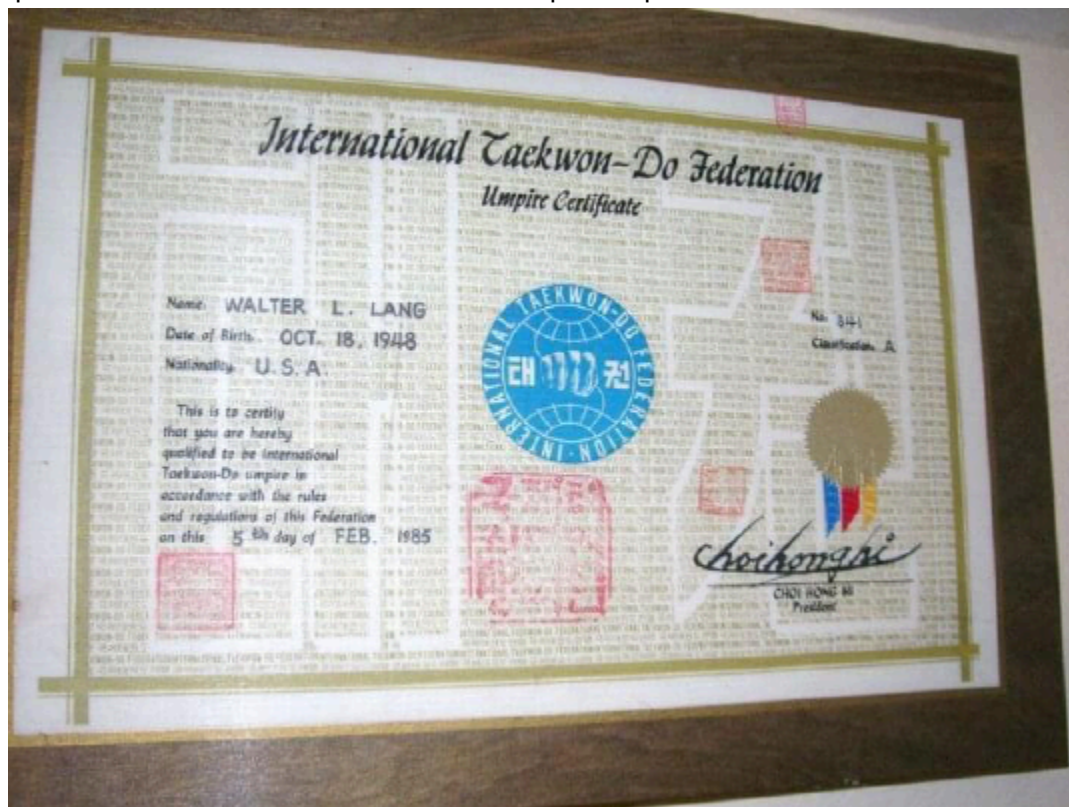




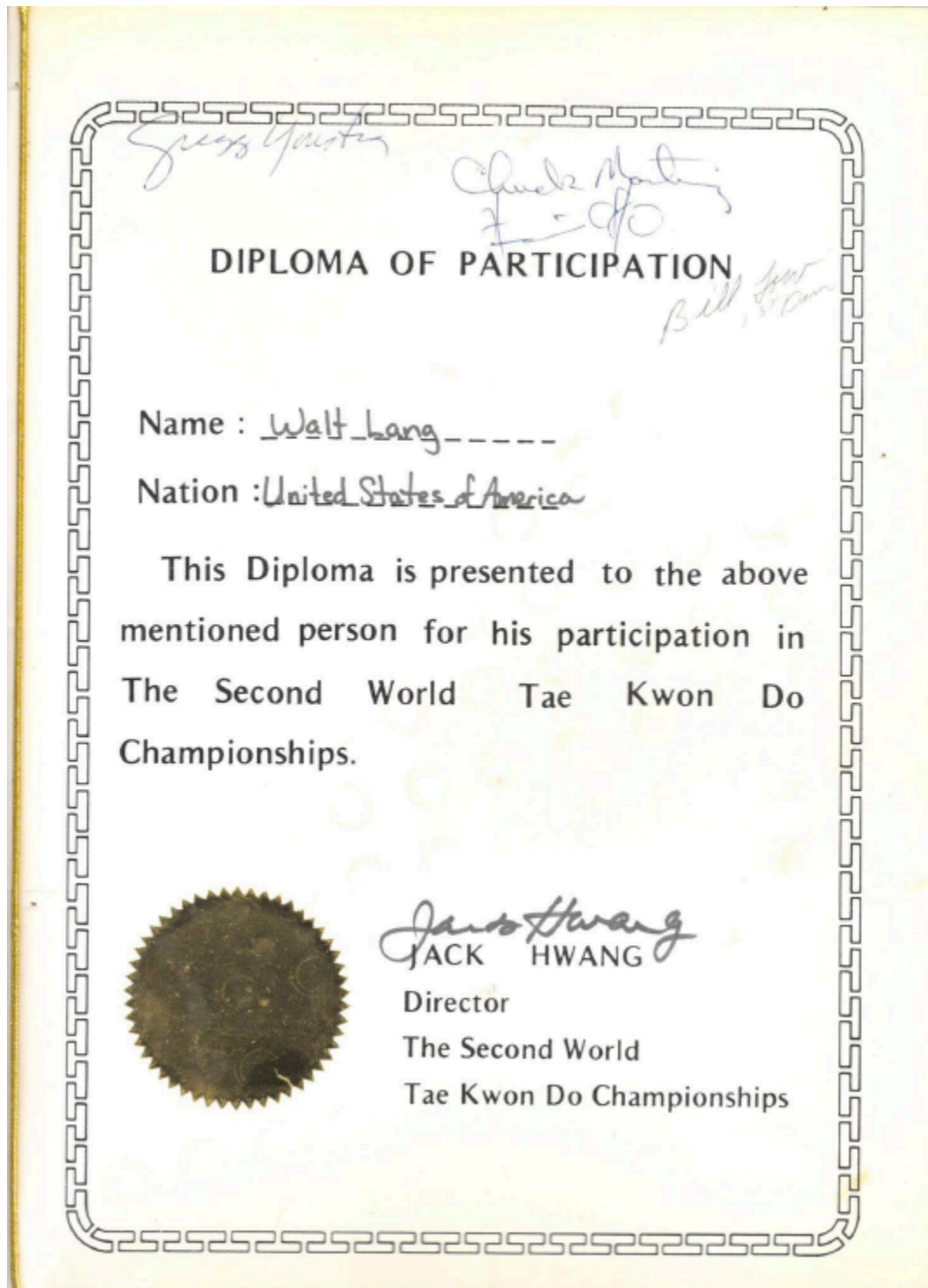
I received my 4th degree in January of 1980. Back then, 4th dan was important because it meant that you were recognized by the ITF as an International Instructor and were allowed to teach Taekwon Do outside of your home country. You had to attend and pass an International Instructor course and be awarded a certificate. One of the larger honors I received was being named a Director of the ITF. Each country had 2 members on the board and I was named for the US. The position was for 2 years.



I also passed a course that allowed me to become a class A international umpire, which qualified me to referee at the World Championships:



In 1977, I attended the second World Championships in Oklahoma City. Sereff made me assistant coach, but I really didn't do anything.



In 1980, we had the World Championships in Glasgow, Scotland, and I was assistant coach and actually took care of our second team, as they allowed us two.



I had such a great time there as I am of Scottish descent. In 1984, I was coach of the US team to the games in Athens, Greece.

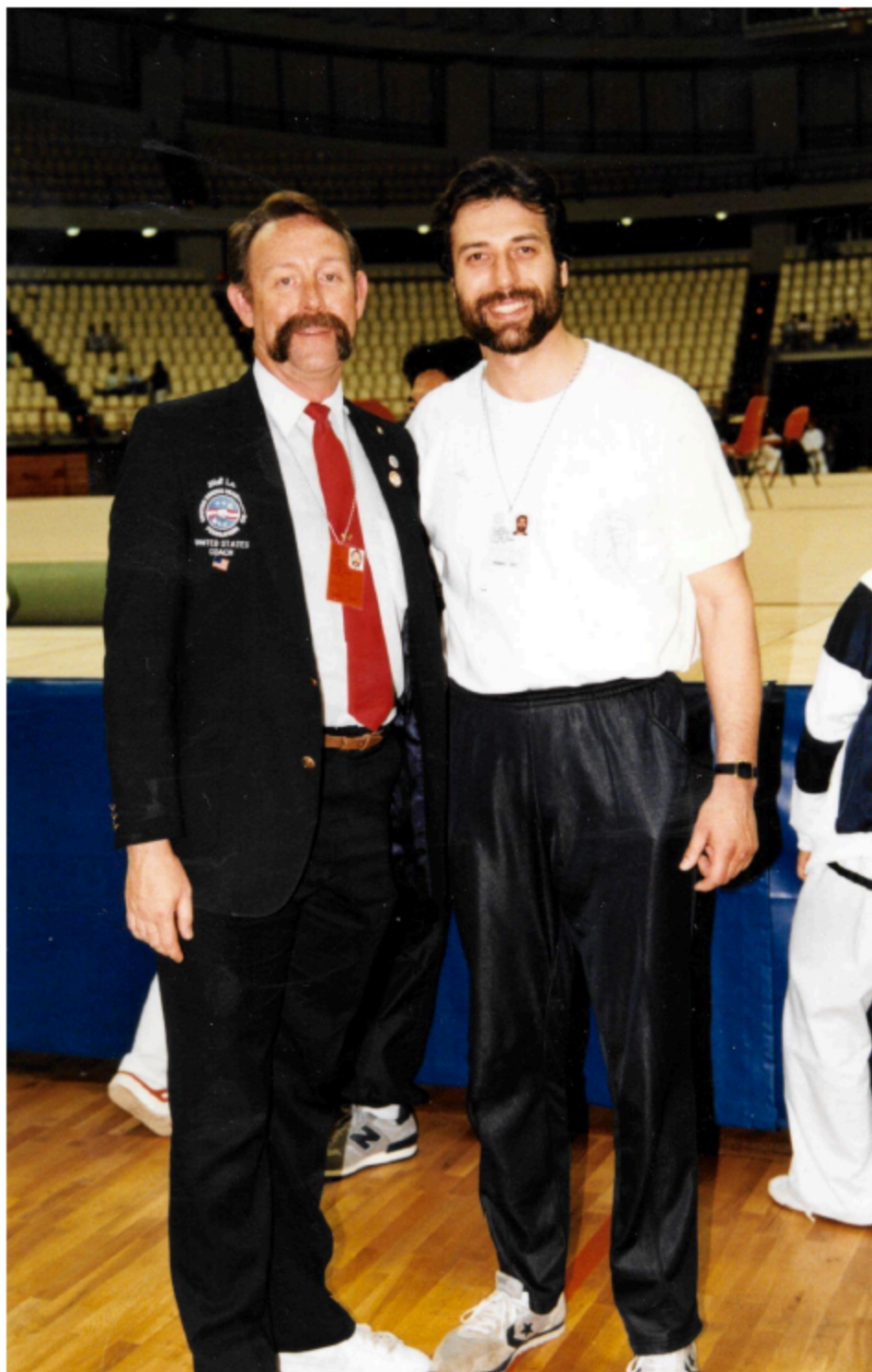


Getting to travel has been a real privilege and to get to share the experience with a lot of

wonderful people is a highlight for my life.



GM Wim Boss, Head Referee for the World Games in Athens, Greece



With GM Dimitris Kosmoglou, coach of the Greek team



GM Sabree Sahlee, highest rank in Malaysia



With GM Tony Phelan and GM Robert Howard, the Irish coaches to the World Games.



Working out with He Il Cho.

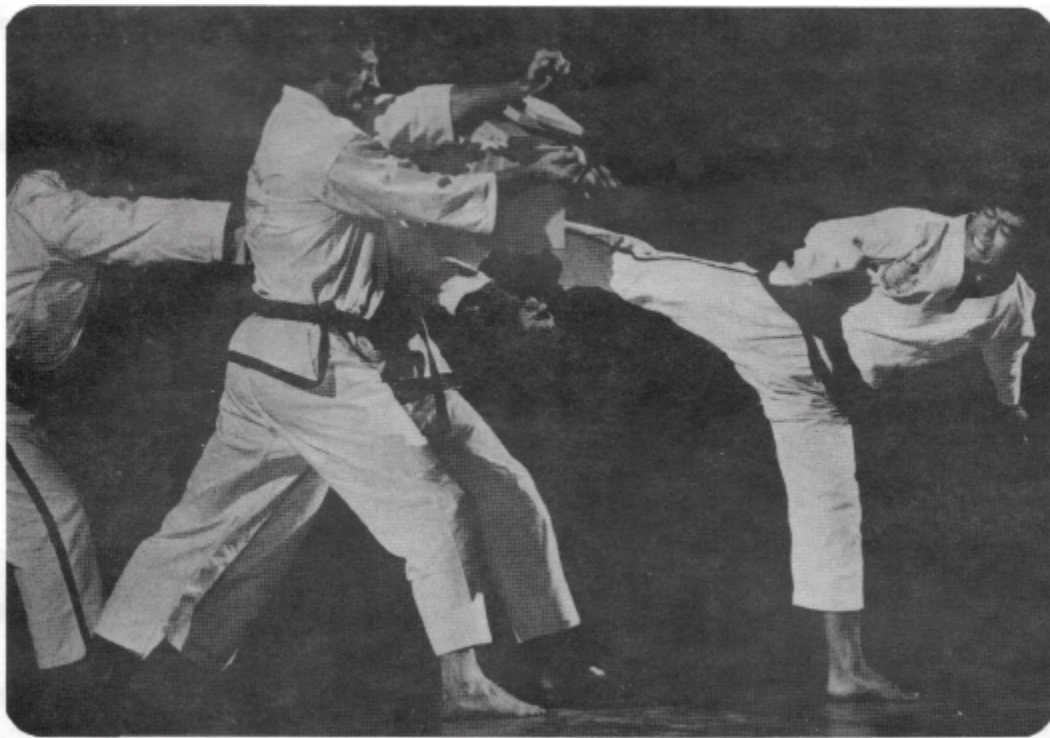


With my dear friend GM Mel Steiner, who has been my friend for over 30 years.

There came a time when Larry McGill and Sereff parted ways and Sereff established the United States Taekwon Do Federation.



During this time, Sereff brought in an instructor that the General described as his adopted son, Ra, Yung Chul. Ra had lost one hand in a farming accident as a child, and the General had taken him in. I was fortunate to work out with him many times before I left Denver. Dale Burkhardt and I are holding on this break.



Mr. Ra Yung Chul, 6th Dan, breaking four boards with a back piercing kick.

Taekwon Do was progressing as usual and Boulder was at its height. I was informed by Master Sereff that I would be testing to 5th dan and we were setting it up in Boulder. It turned out to be my second best testing ever (my 6th dan test was the best, which will be explained later). I was

able to set everything up just like I wanted. One of the students made a board holder that could hold two sets of boards so that I could do double breaks. I rigorously practiced my patterns and for the first time in any test, I didn't mess up any of them. I did a self defense routine that started out against one opponent, then two, then three, adding one opponent at a time, working up to five people attacking at one time. For my breaks I did a double side kick, 4 boards each station, double twist kick, 3 boards each station, double hook kick, 3 boards each station, an 8 board sidekick power break and 6 roofing tiles punch.





It was a good night.

In 1985 my life changed dramatically. When you read about midlife crisis, you never think it's you. Looking back, I was definitely in a midlife crisis. I had been Chief Probation Officer for the City of Lakewood for 10 years and had grown to hate my job. I had done just about everything possible at the municipal level. I couldn't apply for a probation position in a felony court

because no one wanted to hire someone that had been a Chief PO somewhere else. They figured I would be second-guessing their procedures and trying to change things, which I probably would have. The parole career wasn't open because in Colorado they are completely separate from the probation system. Parole is under Corrections, and probation is under the Courts. Parole Officers in Colorado are armed and have to get LE certified, which I wasn't. I got increasingly bored and unhappy in the job. I visited New Mexico to attend the International Balloon Fiesta and I was introduced to a County Commissioner from a county just south of Albuquerque. We started talking about corrections. He said they were looking for a director of juvenile detention and with my background, I would be perfect for the job. I told him I was very interested. He said there was a County Commission meeting in 3 weeks, when they were hiring, and if I wanted to apply he would talk to the other 2 commissioners. He knew that none of the other applicants had my experience and he was certain I would have the job. I asked the person who I was staying with if I could possibly move in; he said yes, so I went back to Denver and put my house up for sale. I gave Rob Tobin power of attorney to handle the sale, packed up, and moved to Belen, New Mexico. I moved into the house of the person that I had been visiting during the Balloon Fiesta and waited for the County Commission meeting. When I went to the meeting, I was informed that another County Commissioner, Ray Gabaldon, who I found out later completely runs the commission, had hired his brother for the job (I might have noticed that the house I was living in was on Gabaldon Road!). There was a contingency offer on the sale of my house, so I couldn't go back to Denver. I was unemployed for the first time in my life, and didn't know what I was going to do. I ended up pulling all my PERA retirement money out so I had money to live. The house took 6 months to close on the sale because the buyers had to sell their house first (I learned not to do contingency contracts). Perseverance and indomitable spirit came into play all during this time in my life.

I started applying for probation officer positions, but in New Mexico probation and parole are combined under the Corrections Department, and they always hired probation/parole officers from the prisons. So I couldn't even get an interview. I was getting desperate, and I found out that New Mexico State personnel office had a test you could take that would suggest jobs that you were qualified for. I took the test, and I was qualified for something called a Classification Officer in Corrections. I had no clue what that was, but during the test, one of the questions was to calculate an inmate's release date, figuring in good time and original sentence. I apparently aced the test, and I was asked to interview at the medium security prison close to where I was living. It was a 5 minute interview and there were 200 people that had applied for 3 positions. I didn't think I had a snowball's chance in a furnace, but they called me that evening and asked if I could start the next day, which I did. They wanted an immediate hire and I didn't have to give notice, since I was unemployed. The Chief Classification Officer, Allison Arthur, took a liking to me and really taught me a lot. She actually liked that I had been a supervisor for 10 years, and started grooming me to take her job when she left. That didn't sit well with officers who had been there for years, but they didn't show any initiative or put in any sort of extra effort, which I did. I quickly got a good reputation in Corrections, and was promoted to Chief Classification Officer 18 months later when Allison left. After a year as Chief I was up for Deputy Warden, which would have been a huge raise. The Warden called me in and said that I was the most qualified person for Deputy Warden, but he was promoting a Hispanic because he had been informed by the union that he wasn't promoting enough Hispanics. Oh, and by the way, I would need to train him. I was tempted to just quit and walk away, but again the tenets

saved me from making a bad decision. That is when I started looking for probation/parole positions. There was one open in the Albuquerque Parole Unit, and I was hired. The Warden was furious. He said I was a traitor and not a team player (I found out many years later that he kept me from being promoted to supervisor several times). I had a learning curve because parole is very different from probation, but I was lucky in that the unit I joined was comprised of some truly outstanding people who taught me everything I needed to know. I was with the parole unit for about 10 years when they restructured the division and made a bunch of changes.

Through all of this, I stayed connected to Sereff and the USTF, attended summer camps, and was made the director for Region 4 for the USTF and continued overseeing 4 states. During the USTF summer camps I decided to hold extra classes for red belts to give them a little extra before testing for black belt. I was trying to practice courtesy by giving extra instruction to the red belt students. At times, I believe, it also helped make a more peaceful world. Those classes became kind of infamous for being extremely challenging, but the red belts loved them.



With two Maori red belt students from New Zealand that presented me with a Maori bow and arrows after I taught the extra red belt classes at World Camp

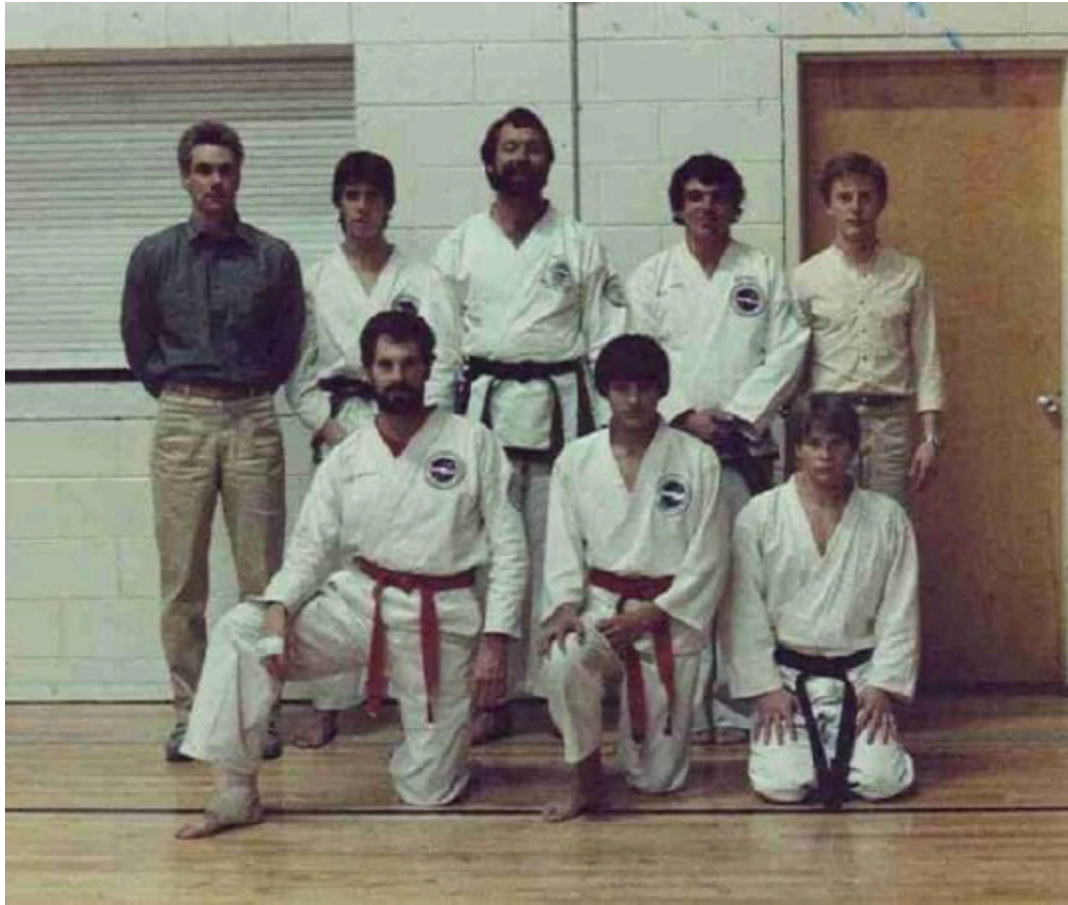
Sereff also would send me to visit schools, teach seminars, and do testings with our affiliated schools. I visited Grand Master Steiner's school in Miami, Grand Master Wheatley's school in California, and several others. I oversaw Texas, and our school in Odessa, Texas, owned by Fabian Nunez, who is now a 9th dan also. He has joined one of the organizations that were created after the General died. We are still friends.



At GM Wheatley's school in California



At GM Steiner's school in Miami



Black belt testing in Reno, Nevada



I got to meet and become friends with some great people.



At Mr. Humphries's class in Gunnison, Colorado.



At the General's seminar in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada.



And one of my favorite memories is when the Kiwi's from Australia and New Zealand taught the General the Haka, the Maori War dance. He had a great time.

Back in Albuquerque, I started teaching classes for the Albuquerque Police Department after I was transferred to Probation/Parole



And my parole unit.



I also was teaching black belt classes for several Albuquerque area black belts that had been in other associations, but were practicing our patterns. They joined the USTF and I conducted their testings. I was gaining a reputation in Albuquerque and all over New Mexico. One instructor, Steve Blakeley, in Portales, New Mexico, was teaching at Eastern New Mexico University. We later held several successful summer camps there. He had a fairly good size school, and started coming to my black belt classes and decided to join me. He has been with me ever since and is now an 8th dan (he has since retired and moved to Granville, Texas).



At this camp we had a person representing every rank from 10th gup to 9th dan

In 1990, Master Sereff was conducting a World Camp in Grand Lake, Colorado, and the General was going to teach a seminar at the camp. We had 200 attendees from all over the world. I was told that I would be testing to my 6th dan in front of the General. No pressure. 6th dan is the last test that is an actual physical test. Promotion to 7th dan is more political than

physical because of practical reasons. If you have studied long enough to qualify for 7th dan, you are no longer young, and the physical tests are more challenging. So I needed to have a good test. I was the most senior person testing, so for most of my test, I was on the floor alone. Again, no pressure in front of the General, and 200 black belts from all over the world.

The night before my test, Sereff said that the General wanted to see me. I was somewhat concerned, but I had talked with him many times in the past and was just curious about what he wanted to tell me. There are 24 patterns in Taekwon Do. When you test to 6th dan, you have been taught 23. The last pattern, Tong-Il, isn't taught until you make 6th dan. The night before my test, the General taught me the last pattern, alone in a room, one-on-one. Not only was it an incredible honor, it was a pretty good indicator that he thought I was going to pass. The next day my testing went very smoothly, although I had pulled a hamstring right before the test. I didn't even feel it until after the test, something about adrenaline, I think.

The General was also famous as a master calligrapher. After my testing, he presented me with a calligraphy scroll that he had made me. It is one of my proudest possessions and I have it mounted behind protective glass, on acid free backing in a frame on my wall. It translates to "Steadfast as the Mountain". It has my name and the date of my promotion. I guess the fact that he had prepared this calligraphy before my testing was another fairly strong indicator that he thought I would pass.

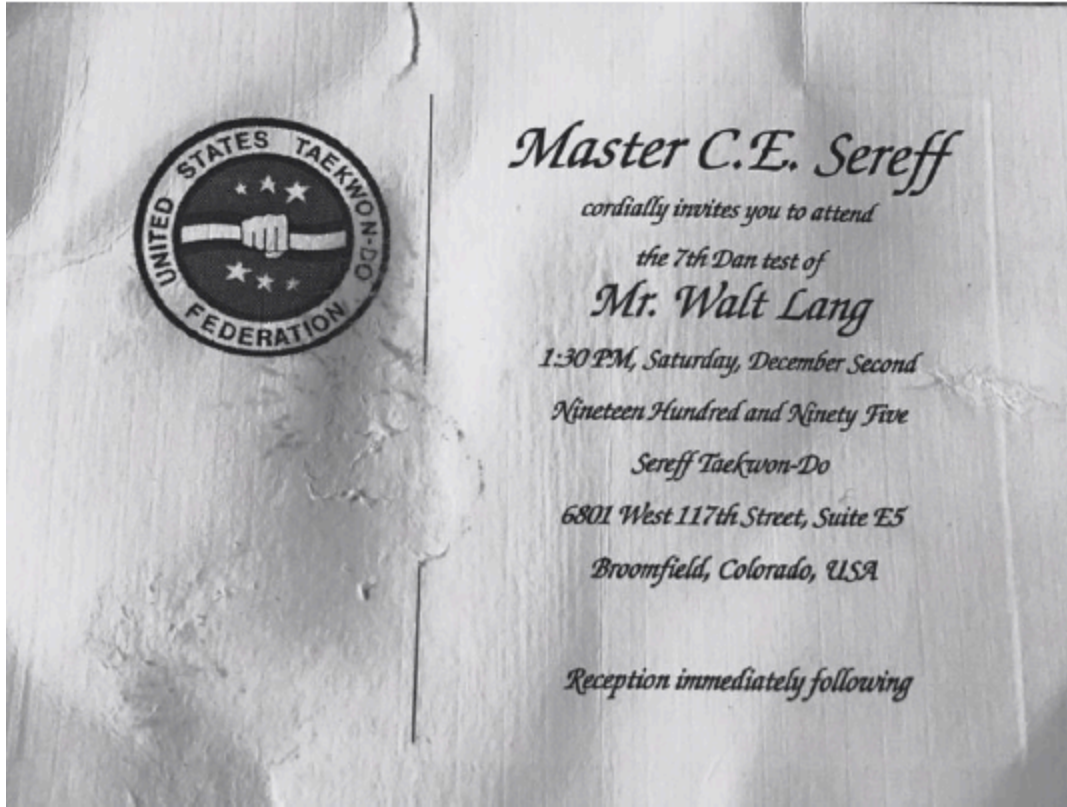




At one of the summer camps several of us were invited to the General's room for dinner. He personally cooked us dinner, and explained that it was a tradition that an instructor would sometimes cook a meal for his students. That was a tradition that I carried on with my students.



In 1995 Sereff announced that I was to be promoted to Master, 7th dan. I traveled to Denver, and tested in Sereff's school in Broomfield. This was noteworthy because I was Sereff's first student to be promoted to Master. Although a physical test isn't required, Sereff had a physical test when he was promoted to 7th (the first non-Korean to be promoted to Master) and had kind of set the precedent, so I also did a physical test. On the first move of Tong-II, the very pattern that the General had taught me, I stepped back with the wrong foot and had to start over. We got a good laugh out of that. Actually, they all did; I was mortified. Anyway, the rest went well and I was promoted to Master. That goal was unimaginable when I started Taekwon Do. Sereff opened the door for the rest of us.



During this time period, my work life had a few ups and downs. The Probation/Parole Division of the Department of Corrections in New Mexico is headed by the Director of Probation/Parole, who is a political appointee by the Governor. Therefore we would usually get a new Director whenever we got a new Governor. Because the position paid about \$100k, and the Director generally didn't get involved in the day to day operations, there were administrations during which I never met the Director, and hardly knew their name. It was usually a reward for political help getting the Governor elected. That changed after I had been in the Parole Unit for about 5 years. We got a Director who wanted to be hands-on, and took an active role in how the Division was run. His name was Mark Radosevich, and he was a retired State Police Officer. He reorganized the 8 Units in Albuquerque and made them all the same, so that parolees were spread out across all the units and caseloads were equalized. It actually was a good thing but the old guard didn't like change, and fought it. They lost. I had applied for 4 supervisor positions over several years, and was denied because of a certain warden. There were two times when the people on the interview panel called to congratulate me and I had to tell them I didn't get it. The new Director had found out about a new program in Florida called "Drug Court" that was having phenomenal success with drug offenders, and decided we needed one in Albuquerque. He met with the District Court and decided one PPO (Probation/Parole Officer) would be assigned "on loan" to the Court, and my name came up. He also knew what the warden had done, and didn't like someone interfering in internal Probation/Parole business. He funded a trip for me, the District Court Judge who would be supervising the new court, and himself to visit the first Drug Court in Florida. After we returned, I was sent down to the District Court and met with the District Court judge who had just been appointed by the Governor.

In New Mexico, District Court judges are appointed, and then have to get elected to the position in a partisan election. After that, they have to get 57% of the vote in a nonpartisan retention election every 4 years. They gave this new judge the Drug Court because if it was a success, it would help him in the partisan election. If it failed he would probably lose the election, since he was a republican running in a predominantly democratic county, so, no pressure.

The first day after I was assigned to the District Court, I met with the judge who had gone on our trip to Florida, Richard Knowles, and I asked him where I could find any policies or procedures that the court had for the Drug Court. His answer was that there weren't any because he hadn't written them yet. That, along with a short trip to the first successful Drug Court in Dade County, Florida, was the beginning of my Drug Court education. The premise was simple: take non-violent drug offenders and put them in a program that would test them frequently enough to catch any use, and provide immediate, graduated sanctions for any breach of the rules. It was completely behavior modification, and completely different from how the criminal justice system usually works. It could take months for anyone on probation to be sanctioned for testing dirty on a drug test, and it was either a slap on the wrist or prison. There was no middle ground. That is completely against any behavior modification theory, and had a dismal success rate. 75% of parolees violated their conditions, usually for drug use, and were returned to the institution.

I had to learn all about drug testing and what was available in New Mexico. I talked with people all over the country that were setting up programs, and I learned so much. I helped pick the treatment program that would be working with us. I wrote or edited all the policies and procedures, testified before the legislature to secure funding, and developed a great relationship with the Albuquerque police department. I was teaching a free Taekwon do class for police officers at the main police HQ building. Some of my students were becoming higher ranked police officers, and I was able to coordinate establishing a probation/parole office in every police sub-station in Albuquerque, so police in the field could get immediate accurate information about people on probation or parole. The Director, who was a retired police officer, fully supported that effort.

I also got involved in the Trumbull neighborhood association, in a section of town that was called the "War zone" because of the amount of drug crime in the area. I had been going to the meetings to try to get neighborhoods to support the Drug Court. The president of the organization pushed me to get more involved and I did; eventually, I was elected vice president. I didn't have a lot of free time during that section of my life.

Our offenders were drug tested at least every 3 days (made possible by new, accurate, inexpensive drug testing), and if dirty they went to jail immediately, but for one day on the first dirty test, three days on the second, a week on the third and subsequent dirty tests. They went to jail for contempt of court, which can't be appealed and doesn't affect the underlying sentence. They found out very quickly that they couldn't game the system, and they would get caught every time. Life would get increasingly uncomfortable until they decided it was in their best interest to quit using. Then we started building a support structure, work, housing, and family participation, and we started having success. We kept detailed records on graduates,

and did extensive records checks every year after they left the program. After 5 years, our recidivism rate was less than 5%. We got legislative funding and drug courts were introduced in all the district courts in New Mexico.

Needless to say, Judge Knowles was elected, and we worked together very closely for over 7 years in the Drug Court. We still have a really close relationship, even though we have both since retired. He was an extremely competent judge, and one of the most intelligent people that I have ever known. I helped him move when he got divorced. I helped him move again when he married an ex-DA, Sandy Clinton, who became a municipal judge. She helped us start a Drug Court in the Municipal Court. We went to their house for Christmas dinner every year for over 10 years, until Richard retired and moved to Arizona. We still call each other on our birthdays. I am incredibly proud of what we were able to accomplish. We started the New Mexico Association of Drug Court Professionals that helped establish several new courts, and get funding for existing ones. This is the good part of this section of my life.

Now for the bad parts. One of the people who was responsible for putting me in the court slot was a woman named Erma Sedillo. She was the supervisor of the Community Corrections department within Probation/Parole, and had really spearheaded starting the process of establishing the Drug Court. She had a lot of political pull and without her, none of it would have happened. After about 2 years, when I had the program running and Corrections increased the number of officers assigned to the unit, I was finally promoted to supervisor. Erma and I started having differences about how the program was developing, and the judge sided with me, which really upset Erma. During one state conference that I was in charge of, I removed Erma as a speaker because we had paid an out-of-state expert to come in. She was furious and stormed out of the conference.

With the election of a new Governor, we got a new Secretary of Corrections, and Erma was appointed Deputy Secretary. She decided that I needed to go. She called me up to Santa Fe on a Friday afternoon and told me that she wanted to fire me, but the legal counsel wouldn't let her, so she was demoting me and removing me from the Drug Court. I was transferred to the Pre-sentence Unit as a regular officer. She was banking that I would quit. I almost did, but I was 55 years old and this was all I had ever done. I didn't think I would be able to start over from scratch, so I decided to swallow my pride and stay. Judge Knowles was pretty upset, but really didn't have any way to influence the Corrections Department. He got me in touch with a very good labor attorney, and we decided to appeal to the State Personnel Board. I had a hearing before a hearing officer that upheld my demotion, but we appealed that to the full board after we found out that Erma had dinner with the hearing officer the night before he rendered his decision, which was a huge conflict of interest. The State Personnel Board unanimously overturned the hearing officer's recommendation, and he was disciplined for his actions. I was ordered reinstated as a supervisor with all back pay and benefits. The legal counsel for the Corrections Department met with my attorney, and said if I would agree not to sue Corrections in Federal Court, they would authorize a \$10,000 cash settlement, without admitting wrongdoing. The largest part of the cash went to my attorney, but she was worth it. She told me that we would undoubtedly win in Federal Court, but that it might take several years. I was over it and just wanted to get on with my life, so we accepted the settlement offer. Without the tenets guidance, I never would have made it through this part of my life.

About this time the New Mexico Legislature ordered the Corrections Department to establish a new unit that would monitor sex offenders that were being released on parole. They had been ordered by the personnel board to reinstate me as a supervisor, but there weren't any open supervisor positions except this new unit, so they asked me if I would accept the job. I knew it was risky, because if it failed I could get some continued harassment from Erma, who was still Deputy Secretary, but she had been cautioned to leave me alone in the settlement. I have always had trouble turning down a challenge, so I accepted.

I grew the unit to exactly what the legislature wanted, and made the Secretary of Corrections look really good in front of the legislature. I expanded the work the unit was doing, and had 12 officers under me. We were real time tracking about 100 sex offenders statewide, 24/7, to make sure they stayed away from schools, their victims, and anywhere the Parole Board had ordered them not to be. We caught several offenders doing stuff they shouldn't, and had them immediately arrested. We also started auditing all the unit throughout the state to make sure everyone was doing what they were supposed to be doing. We caught a slew of potential problems, and got them corrected before they became major issues. We got some outstanding publicity busting some high visibility sex offenders, and all the Region Managers were really happy that we had uncovered problems they didn't know about, and let them fix them before anyone got indicted. It was a win-win, and our reputation was growing. One night we busted a sex offender who had attempted to contact his victim but nothing had been done. We looked into it, and someone high up in the Corrections Department had intervened in the case and ordered the officer to ignore the violation. Turned out it was Erma's relative, and she had personally intervened to make sure he wouldn't be revoked. I didn't know the parolee was related to Erma, or even that she was involved when we reported it to the Parole Board, but at a meeting about a week later, the Secretary of Corrections pulled me aside, said that my unit had saved the Department a several million dollar lawsuit, and he was personally grateful. The same day that I was officially promoted to the new unit (The Response Center) supervisor, Erma was fired. The irony was almost overwhelming. I continued as the supervisor of the Response Center until I reached the time that I could retire. The Director called me in when I submitted my paperwork for my retirement, and asked if I would be interested in a Region Manager position that would have been a major raise. I decided that I had had enough, didn't want to deal with the stress any longer, and I retired. Our retirement gives me 80% of my highest 3 years average salary for the rest of my life. With Social Security, I make about what I did when I was working.

The relationship between Master Sereff and myself started to sour after my promotion to Master. I had a major disagreement with his ex-wife Renee. She had basically taken over Sereff Taekwon Do, and was mostly concerned with making money. She was constantly saying that the organization was low on money, and she wanted to raise fees and dues on everyone. Sereff and I had a long talk about Renee. I had several students in New Mexico that couldn't afford the test fees for the black belt testing. Basically it cost \$100/dan; that was what the ITF charged. USTF was charging the same, which effectively doubled the cost. If a family had a father and son that started about the same time, which happened often, and they were both ready to test for 2nd dan, that added up to \$800 for the both of them. We had a lot of families in the rural areas such as Portales, who simply couldn't afford that. I asked that in certain cases

if we could waive the USTF test fees. We couldn't do anything about the ITF fees, but the USTF fees were completely up to Sereff. Renee said absolutely not. No fees would be waived and if they couldn't pay, they couldn't test. We had huge yelling matches on this subject. I basically told Sereff that it was me or her, and he picked her. She was a fairly successful realtor. She owned the building that Sereff's school was in. She told Sereff that if he sided with her that she would guarantee him a comfortable retirement, and take care of his sons also. It was an offer that he couldn't turn down, and we agreed to part ways. She wanted me kicked out of the ITF, but Sereff wouldn't do that, and I retained my rank and was allowed to remain with the ITF in good standing. Staying in the USTF and keeping my mouth shut would have been the easiest thing to do. I had always been loyal to Sereff and I was forced to choose between being loyal to him, and being loyal to my students. I chose my students. It was one of the most difficult decisions I have ever had to make, but integrity only left me one option. I saw friends that I had known for 30 years brand me a traitor and have nothing to do with me. Others remained friends and would come visit me whenever I had an event in Denver.

So, I left the USTF, and Renee branded me as a traitor and said any USTF school or instructor couldn't have anything to do with me. Boulder was 15 miles from Broomfield and had been tied to Sereff since I left, so they really had no choice but to join Renee. I had a few friends that knew the real story and stayed friends, but they couldn't publicly support me. My senior students, Doug Arnold and Kevin Andresen, I was completely sure would stay with me. Doug did, Kevin didn't.

In 1995, I had a meeting at my house with Doug, Steve Blakeley from Portales, and Floyd Griffin from Oklahoma (who left USTF to join me), and we decided to start our own organization. We named it Yomchi Taekwon Do, after the tenet "Integrity".



After that, in 2002, the General died. Because he had never named an heir, there was a huge struggle about who would control the ITF. The General's son, Choi Jung Hwa, claimed to be the heir but the organization where the General had his headquarters also claimed to be the real ITF. There was also an organization, associated with the North Korean government that claimed to be the legitimate ITF. The General was buried in North Korea. This power struggle has continued to this day, and now there are at least 3 ITF's. Also, after the General died, many instructors went on their own and formed their own associations while few were trying to stay

true to how the General had taught. There were also a large number of Koreans that emerged saying that they were all the original pioneers of TaekwonDo and theirs was the “true” way.

I had initially decided to support the son. I had known him from several years before when he accompanied his father to a couple of seminars in Denver and translated for him. At that time he was a 3rd dan when I was a 5 th dan. We traveled to meet with him and find out about affiliate membership. He decided to promote me to 8th dan, since my time was up. We talked with him over the course of about a year and it became evident that he was interested only in making money. He was an excellent practitioner, as you might expect from the son of the founder. He demonstrated the best break that I have ever seen. He did a jump split kick, triple side, 5 boards total. I thought he might just be lucky, but he did it 3 times in a row. But we soon found out why his father didn't name him his heir. We asked him to come do a seminar in New Mexico. He said he would as soon as we gave him \$10,000. I then decided that we didn't need a Korean to make us legitimate.



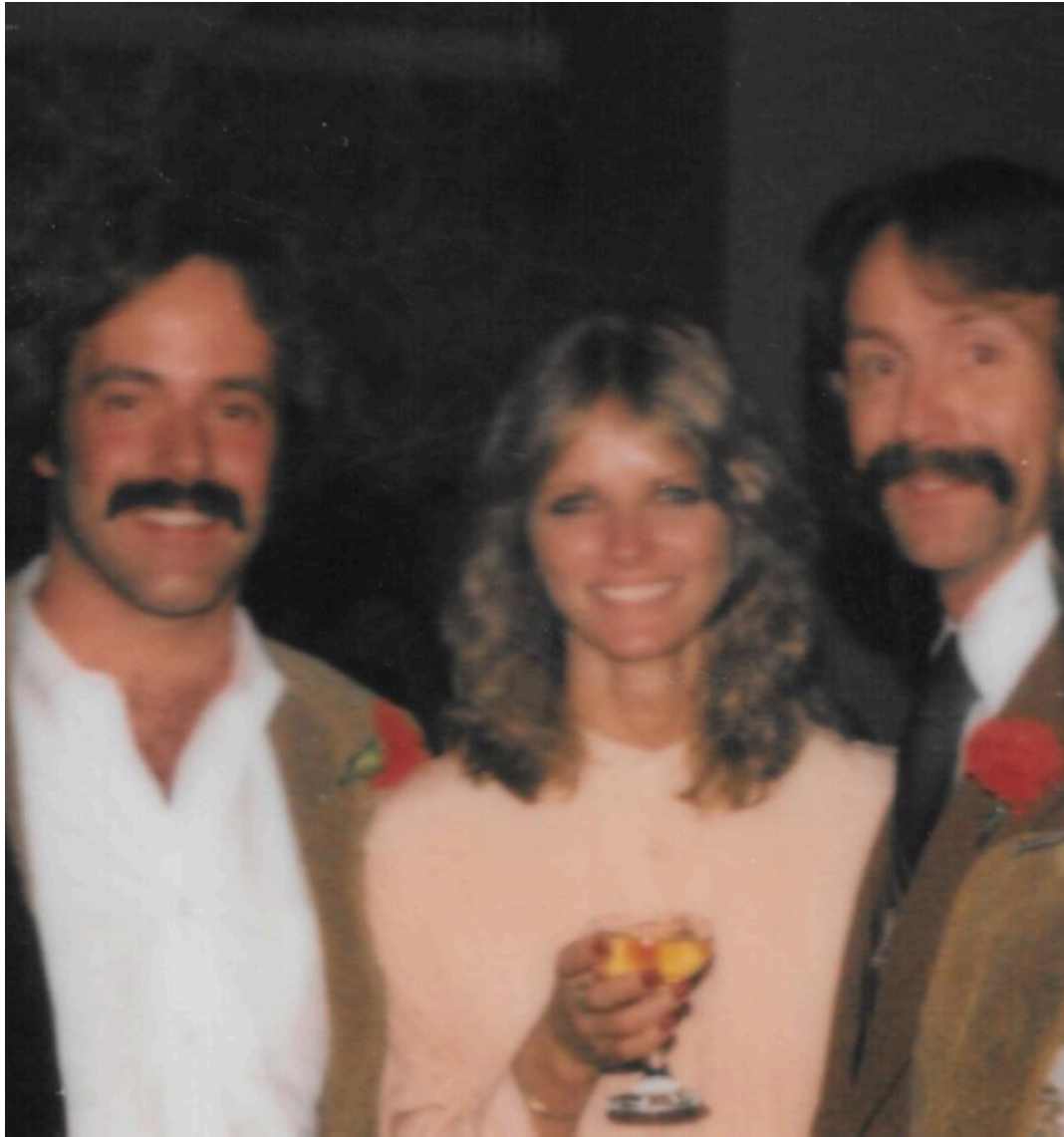


There have been several private students over the years. I truly think of these people as my family and having them in my life has been my greatest privilege and joy.



The first “family”, Mike Boespflug, Kim Staudt, Tom White, George Bean, Karl Nicoletti, and Mike Scott. I have recently reconnected with Mike Scott, and George Bean after over 30 years

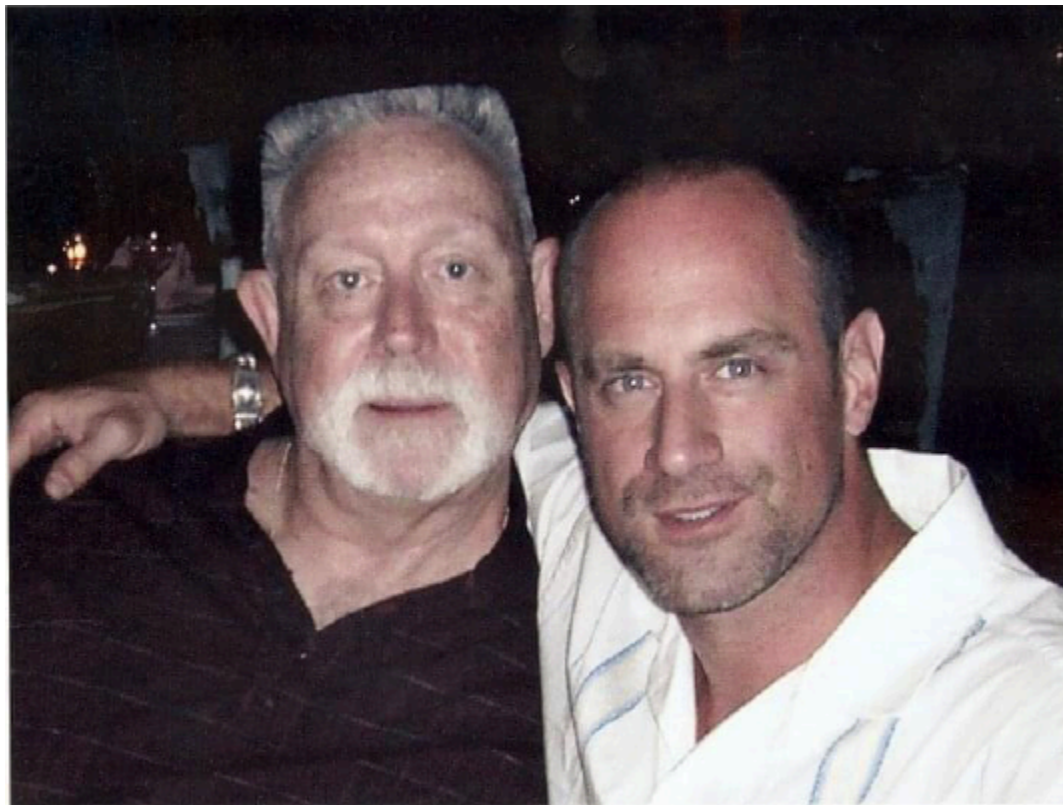
Tom White and I had a security company that did concert and private security.



Here we were guarding supermodel Sheryl Tiegs. We did concerts at the Denver Coliseum for John Denver, Bad Company, and Kiss, and we were hired to do security at the original Texas Jam, called the Texas World Music Festival, which was a three-day festival held over the Fourth of July weekend in 1978, and encompassed rock and country at the Cotton Bowl; the headliners were The Beach Boys and Willie Nelson. We worked for 72 hours straight, and were paid \$6000. I also got to spend a week afterwards at a hotel in Dallas paid by the promoter. It was intense.



This is a class in my backyard at my house.



One of the family became a successful actor, Christopher Meloni, who came to visit us in Albuquerque. (In the following picture he is the one flipping the bird.)



We decided to have an old time picture taken.



John Sharrah was my assistant instructor at CU for many years.



Karl Nicoletti



Tim Cornelius was Doug's roommate in college and they helped each other workout.



I have relied on these three for the last 15 years and I would trust them with my life.

In mid 2007, I was contacted by several other 8th dans from several locations around the US that had formed their own organizations. Their people were pressing them to be promoted by their organizations to Grandmaster. For all of the history of the ITF, there had been only one 9th dan, the General. Before he passed, he promoted Rhee Ki Ha, in England, and Sereff in the US to 9th degree, Grandmaster. So the door was open. These other 8th degrees were my juniors, and didn't want to go to 9th degree ahead of me. The Yomchi Board of Directors decided that I should be promoted to 9th degree within the Yomchi organization. We held a promotion ceremony in Denver in 2007, which was attended by several 8th degrees from several organizations. Traditionally, the head of the schools (kwans) in Korea had the title "Kwanjang", which I assumed for the Yomchi Taekwon Do organization. Most of the people in these two pictures are now Grand Masters. Unfortunately we have lost GM DeBaca, and GM Tompkins.





Doug is an 8th degree and I am promoting him to Grandmaster in the summer of 2024. At that point, I will completely retire. I'm no longer able to travel or teach and Doug will take over as Kwanjang. I do not want to fail to name an heir, as I have seen what that causes. I will be Doug's advisor and retain my rank. He has been my senior student for over 40 years and is my first student to start with me as a white belt and earn Master rank. He has been one of my most loyal students throughout everything and Yomchi Taekwon Do wouldn't exist without his hard work.