



HAN WOONG KIM

INDOMITABLE WILL

By Jose M. Fraguas

Master Han Woong Kim was born in Seoul, Korea and moved to America in 1988. He studied Martial Arts under his father, the founder of Jang Mu Won Hapkido, Grandmaster Chong Sung Kim. Master Kim was chosen from among his family to pass on the art due to his exceptional dedication to teaching. Currently a sixth degree black belt, he has operated his Martial Arts school in South Pasadena, California, since 1992. Master Kim's dedication to the "Jang Mu Won Hapkido Association," founded by Grandmaster Kim in 1964, has earned him the position of Vice President within the organization. As co-founder of "Jang Mu Won Hapkido International" and numerous educational DVDS, Master Kim has worked diligently to share this unique Martial Art with an increasingly broad audience.

How long have you been practicing Martial Arts?

I have been practicing Martial Arts since 1988. I have had training with people I knew from middle school, high school in boxing, kum-sul (sword), and sireum (Korean wrestling) but it's not official. Hapkido is my main style and Hapkido offers everything that I was interested in when I was younger. My teacher was my father, Grandmaster Chong Sung Kim.

When I first started to learn and train in Hapkido, movements did not come easily to me. I think because, early age to me, concept about Martial Art was every thing about power, breaking and wining which is quite different than Hapkido. When talking about Hapkido, a couple key words arise such as absorbing, blending, redirecting and harmony come to mind.

Would you tell us some interesting stories of your early days in Hapkido?

When I was a young boy in elementary school, I was traveling down my street in South Korea and I saw a Hapkido studio. The people there were working out and demonstrating various techniques. They were practicing with each other and in front of the window it said Jang Mu Won. I was looking carefully at Hapkido studios because I knew my father was doing Hapkido in the United States. I completely forgot about the name until I came over to the United States and I realized that Jang Mu Won was my father's organization.

Another story in the United States takes place during my early training days in Hapkido. Grandmaster Bong Soo Han (International Hapkido Federation Founder),



Indomitable Will



Grandmaster Tae Man Kwon (International Dae Moo Hapkido Association Founder), and other Masters of Hapkido gathered together for black belt promotion tests and tournaments. This was a great opportunity for me to meet all of the famous Grandmasters and Masters of Hapkido to learn both their personality as well as help me to see their take on techniques. It also allowed me to see the differences in different Hapkido interpretations. Each master had a category in which they considered to be their favorite. This also helped me to improve my Hapkido skills.

How has your personal expression Hapkido has developed over the years?

I came over to the United States in 1988, and basically since I had nothing to do (I liked Hapkido a lot), I came to the studio at 9 am with my father and went home at 9 pm. Also, I was kind of scared to do something else with my mouth (language). English was difficult for me. Hapkido didn't have to use language a lot. Instead we used our body language to do the talking. As time passed by, I practiced Hapkido to try and make my father happy, because I knew he would be happy as I was progressing. As I was getting better I was trying to fulfill my own happiness by trying to beat everyone's butt. This is when I was younger. However, currently, I am focused on educating students to become quality instructors to pass down the quality style of Jang Mu Won Hapkido. I am focused on making better students.

What are the most important points in your teaching methods today?

First of all, Hapkido is well known for being an effective and practical effectiveness in various situations. The techniques are dynamic and are known for its practical use for self-defense. I emphasize all students to be able to be effective both technique wise and execution of the technique in Technique-wise I want to teach all the students, to be able to defend themselves, when they are confronted with any type of bad situations.

Secondly, I emphasize that the student learns more about his/her body. They need to know about their body and their own limits. The student must know about body function, their weaknesses, strong points, and proper control of different parts of the body. By knowing every part of the body, this increases one's self-confidence because I believe that one's self confidence comes from fully understanding of one's body.

If you had only a one-hour class with a group of students, what it would be the most important things that you'd teach them?

Modern people only give a value to what they can see and touch. I would like to teach the people there are very valuable things even it is not a tangible or touchable. Such as Gi (Chi) that is life force and

energy exists in everybody and everywhere but you can not see or touch.

Martial Arts are nowadays often referred to as a sport... would you agree with this definition or Hapkido is a purely Martial Art and not a sport?

Hapkido is fully an art form. I'm not saying that the sports aspect of the Martial Art is not valuable. Our organization is still teaching the art of Hapkido, that keeps traditional value of the art with innovative self defense ideas.

What are the most important qualities for a student to become proficient in Hapkido?

The two important qualities for a student to become proficient in Hapkido are dumbness and patience. Dumbness does not refer to the person being stupid. When you put on your uniform, you do not think too much so you are not losing your focus. Your mind must be clear. Smart ones think too much which is not necessary so they are losing their focus and the purpose of that particular activity.

You must also have patience in order to accomplish your goal in Martial Arts. The World Cup soccer games just finished. As you seen on TV, every player does not score a goal every time they play. They keep playing and someday they will make a goal. If you stop playing you will never have the chance to make a goal. Your Martial Art journey is the same thing. Do not stop working and someday you will be a black belt and you will accomplish your goal in Martial Arts.



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Indomitable Will

When teaching the art of Hapkido, what is the most important element; self-defense or sport?

Again, Hapkido is the art of self-defense. The Jang Mu Won Hapkido curriculum provides students to experience realistic situations and under different scenarios with live partners (not the imagination, such as imagining a strike, kick, twist, etc). This allows for the practitioner to effectively practice under a realistic setting and to experience how techniques will feel against a real person.

Forms and sparring ... what's the proper ratio in training?

Sparring is for a realistic self-defense situation, where you are able to execute your strikes or techniques against an opponent. Sparring presents more of a realistic situation and how your body will react. Form is the body work that defines each particular technique and the philosophy behind each technique. Both forms and sparring are necessary to become proficient in each art. It is up to the individual to decide which one he/she wants to practice more. If the individual wants to practice for real life situations, they will dedicate more time to sparring. However if the individual wants to work with the full components of mind, body and peace, form should be emphasized more. The proper ratio differs from each individual.

Who would you like to have trained with that you have not?

Grandmaster Chong Sung Kim. It is not because I miss my father. I've trained in the Hapkido for enough time to have the eyes to recognize who is a true master. I've never seen a Hapkido Grandmaster who was as deep and wide as my father.

How important is competition in the evolution of a Hapkido practitioner?

Some say the negative things about the competition in a Martial Art, but I think there is a good thing about competition in any Martial Art practitioner for motivational purposes. Self-awareness is also important to know where you are. It is important to train with different people and different styles of all levels to gauge where you are at.

That opportunity allows me to know about myself and my overall progress of where I'm at.

How do you think a practitioner can increase his/her understanding of the spiritual aspects of the art?

Learning the proper maneuvers and techniques couldn't be that hard as long as students focus and discipline him/her with patience but understanding the spiritual aspect of the art is a little bit of a different path to learn. Of course, it varies from each person and their interpretation of what they're learning. The true way of increasing the spiritual aspect of the art is supported by a good curriculum, set by the experience of Grandmasters and/or Masters that are passed down from generation to generation. Secondly, there needs to be guidance from the Master instructor who is dedicated their lifelong commitment to the art in a lifelong manner.

What Hapkido can offer in these troubled times is practical self-defense?

Hapkido offers practical solutions to different scenarios. Second, Hapkido can provide self-confidence for students. Hapkido also helps to harmonize both body and mind into one.

Is there anything lacking in the way Martial Arts are taught today compared to how they were taught to you when you started training?

There is a good thing about comparing with the old days. A lot of good information are available to students and tools that are introduced in the Martial Arts community which helps to leads to better quality of instruction for the Martial Arts community overall. This helps an instructor to form a better connection with the student in order to fully understand what is being taught. Those are good things, but still there is too much brain work, not enough body work.

Do you feel that you still have further to go in your studies?

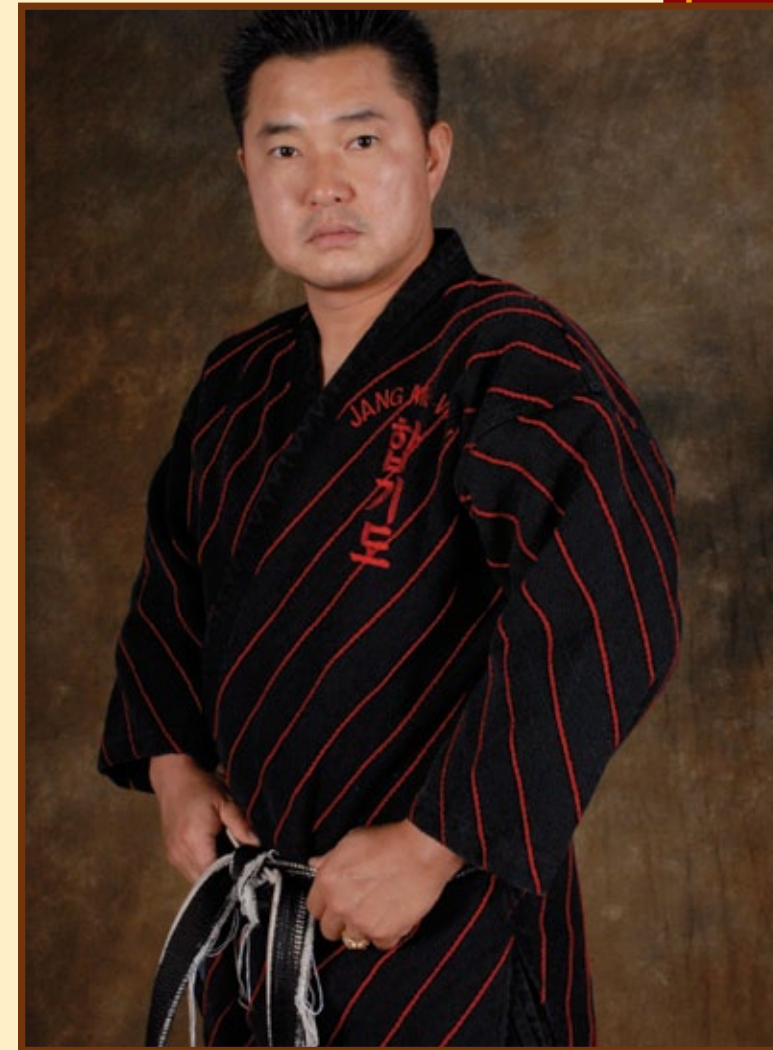
My training never ends. Every day I'm learning something new. I'm wearing my black belt around my waist, but white belt is still around my heart.

What advice would you give to students on the question of supplementary training?

Running is great for building up endurance. Weights are recommended for adding strength and also creating flexibility. Commercial dojangs hold only an hour long class (more or less) and most people cannot come every day due to their busy schedules. People attend class two to three times a week. In order to be more proficient, supplemental training is recommended to make up for the time that is missed at the dojang. This also helps to round out the physical aspect of training that works different muscle groups that are not used while training in the dojang or it can help on improving the muscle groups that were worked during training.

Why is it, in your opinion, that a lot of students start falling away after two-three years of training?

It is the trend and scene of rapid changed modern society. Nowadays, people are looking for something that comes quick and easy which does not require a lot of work and effort. For example, when you go on the internet, with one click you can find something that is



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fun instantly. But Martial Arts class is not like this. It requires a lot of patience, focus, self-discipline, sweat, and pain, which is not like outside culture.

Have been times when you felt fear in your training?

So far, I have enjoyed my training and how I've trained. I think I am lucky because I am surrounded by a lot of great people and great training partners. But I remember the most nervous moment I ever had – the demonstration my techniques in front of just Grand Master Bong Soo Han, Grand Master In Shik Hwang, and my father. I was really nervous because I was in front of legendary Hapkido grandmasters and they were also watching me with my father. HUUUU! You know what I mean.

How do you remember the figure of you father, Grandmaster Kim?

To Grandmaster Kim, Hapkido was everything in his life. He dedicated his life to Jang Mu Won Hapkido. My mother always complained about my father. She complained that he doesn't do anything or know anything except for Hapkido. As a son, I wished that he would've enjoyed his life more outside of Hapkido. However, as an instructor, he lived a very honorable and dedicated life in Hapkido. I really respect my father for his life's dedication to our art. Like my mother, right now, my wife is saying the same thing to me.

What are your views on weapons training?

Weapons are an extension of your body. Weapons are fun to work with and they help to improve coordination. They also help to increase your stamina and strength. It is a great way to condition your body. Jang Mu Won Hapkido trains with short stick, middle stick, long bo, sword, rope, cane, and many other weapons. They are fun to work out with. It gives you a better

understanding of your body and how you can push yourself to the limits.

What are your thoughts about doing thousands of repetitions of one single technique in training as in the old days? Is it a good training method?

As a Hapkido expert, yes, it is a good training method. Nowadays, as a student, I don't think it is good. Not many people have that much patience to do techniques thousands of times. As I mentioned before, as an instructor living in modern society, we are never afraid or never hesitant to adapt to new methods of training. This helps to fit the different people who live in modern society into training in Martial Art. By having a well organized curriculum, people are able to learn repetition many times to become a master of that move without doing the same technique thousands of time.

How important is the Martial Art philosophy to the art of Hapkido?

Martial Arts without philosophy are not Martial Arts. Jang Mu Won Hapkido empha-

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sizes the three principles of Hapkido. These principles are water, circle, and harmony. In the beginning of training, we help the students to adopt these principles to every aspect of their techniques. As your training progresses and your training becomes deeper (such as becoming a higher belt or reaching an instructor level), those principles become part of everyday life and not just the technical aspect of executing techniques. The details of our philosophical principles are vast and detailed so anyone who is interested in learning more information about our principles can be found at our web site.

What is it for you that is so appealing in this style of Hapkido and why?

Hapkido really works for the self defense aspect and it works with different components of Martial Arts. Hapkido will work in any type of situations. We have kicking and punching which covers distance attacks. We have throwing and sweeps which is very cross-combat. We also have joint locks and pressure points. Pressure points and joint attacks can be used by all individuals. We also have weapons techniques so we can defend against weapons. We also have breathing exercises which is called Dan Ki Woon Gong, which helps to generate more energy throughout the body. This also shows the proper and better way of how to breathe effectively. Hapkido, the single term of the art, truly provides the all around aspects of self-defense.

How do you like to train yourself? Has this changed over the years?

My training is teaching the people five hours a day, Monday through Saturday. This is a great way to train myself and refine the techniques in our curriculum. Currently I'm more focused on refining and set the curriculum for the breathing exercise which is called Dan Ki Woon Gong that was founded by my father, Grandmaster Kim but it was not yet completed. That is my biggest journey at this point in time.

What advice would you give to an instructor who is struggling with his or her own development?

Patience, focus, and an open mind to look at things.

Finally, what advice would you like to give to all Hapkido practitioners and Martial Artists in general?

All Hapkido practitioners should be proud of themselves because we are teaching and studying such a great art. Check out our Jang Mu Won Hapkido. I personally guarantee that you will find more details about Hapkido and you will see how we define Hapkido with innovative ideas.

For Martial Artists in general, we all believe that Martial Arts are an essential part of society. What and how we do today will affect the future of Martial Arts. We all should have some kinds of responsibility and duty to pass down to future generation, like other Martial Artists before our time. Let's keep the traditional value of the Martial Art with developing innovative ideas for our new next future generations. 🐉

