

Moo Duk Kwan's Leader Speaks Out!

An exclusive interview with the Founder of the Moo Duk Kwan, Grandmaster Hwang Kee, as translated by his son, Master H.C. Hwang, Chairman of the TAC.

By Trent K. Suzuki

INSIDE KARATE: "What were your hopes and dreams when you first envisioned the concept of the Moo Duk Kwan?"

HWANG KEE: "At first, my own personal motivation was to effectively deal with the end of World War II and the Japanese occupation, then achieve Korea's independence. After that, I wanted Korean martial arts practitioners to have a good understanding of Korean Moo Do (martial art). I felt a sense of responsibility to introduce Moo Do qualities and to combine the physical, the scholarly, as well as the spiritual aspects. I wanted to improve the overall quality of Moo Do in Korea."

IK: "How do you feel about where the Moo Duk Kwan has gone in its first 50 years?"

HK: "Over the last 50 years, due to World War II, then later the Korean War, there has been much political change along with personal strife. It has been very difficult for my dreams to come true. But I never lost the faith nor gave up on my goals during those hard times. The only thing that kept me going was my belief in the Moo Do spirit, in that I had to show the way with action! This 50th Anniversary Celebration is the culmination of the first part of my dreams. I am very happy and proud that the Moo Duk Kwan and its practitioners have been able to stay together as a strong, whole unit. I did my best to



The vast followers of the Moo Duk Kwan participate in the clinic taught by Grandmaster Hwang Kee.

keep those ideals alive and strong, even when it was difficult. At this time, I hope all Moo Duk Kwan practitioners will embrace the concept of the Moo Duk Kwan philosophy and join me for the next 50 years of the growth of Moo Duk Kwan history!"

IK: "What do you hope for the Moo Duk Kwan in the next 50 years?"

HK: "I am going to continue to research and teach the Art of Soo Bahk

Do Moo Duk Kwan to make it stronger for the membership. I would also like the members to increase their study of Soo Bahk Do Moo Duk Kwan and continue to improve in the area of quality, because although the quantity of membership is important, it is not as important as the overall quality! My third hope is that through the concept and spirit of the Moo Duk Kwan teachings, the practitioners can hopefully better understand the concept of harmony, which

can be a key contribution to better human relationships for increased world peace!"

IK: "What is it about the Moo Duk Kwan's development that you feel is unique in trying to achieve the goals that you had?"

HK: "In my teachings, I tell the practitioners to always strive for the Moo Do philosophy of developing one's character. This idea is extremely important and can be applied through the practitioners' actions so they can have more than just physical meanings. Their actions should come from an external, internal, as well as a spiritual peace of mind, like Moo Do. Soo Bahk Do Moo Duk Kwan is not coming from a sport oriented mind set, but from a mind set focused on improving the overall person as a whole."

IK: "We are all aware of the tremendous sacrifices in your own life that you have given up to achieve your dreams for the Moo Duk Kwan. Would you do it again?"

HK: "Yes, I would do it all again, but I would of course need to have my youth back as well! However I would do it again, because I have this endless hope for my original dreams of world peace



(Above) The Moo Duk Kwan practitioners from all over the world await the entrance of Grandmaster Hwang Kee on stage at the Seoul Education and Cultural Center. (Right) Grandmaster Hwang Kee enters the ceremony, flanked by members of the Korean government.

through better understanding of the Moo Do spirit. But I feel happy and confident that I have demonstrated the model after which I would like to see things continue to mature. I am very comfortable with the abilities of the Senior members of my organization, especially in the United States, to carry on my dreams when I am gone."

IK: "What characteristics would you ideally like to have your Dan (Black Belt) members to possess?"

HK: "In the Orient, developing the ideal character of a person is very important. I would like my Dan members to be like this, a very sacred, wise person with

a "to do," or "high morality" for life. The Dan member should be able to react to the physical aspects of training, to have the proper stimulation to react quickly to any given situation. The Dan member should be of high character, with an open mind, and the ability to control negative human instincts such as greed, temptation, and ego, that can have tremendous influences on your life if you do not keep your discipline high. Our Moo Duk Kwan training helps to keep control over these negative desires, to keep temptations in check, and allows us to take control and keep good balance and harmony in our lives."

The 50th Anniversary of the Moo Duk Kwan

By Trent Suzuki

As a loyal practitioner of Soo Bahk Do Moo Duk Kwan for the past 16+ years, I have had many memorable experiences in my travels throughout the United States as well as abroad, from Europe to the Pacific Rim. However, I was deeply moved and honored to be asked by Senior Ko Dan Ja's Andy Ah Po and Vic Martinov to be the media correspondent and representative to cover the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Moo Duk Kwan to be held in it's birthplace, Seoul, Korea. Most importantly, I was to be allowed to interview the Founder of the Moo Duk Kwan, Grandmaster Hwang Kee, the only remaining living founder of a prominent martial art style!

As the events unfolded according to plan, all representatives from every country where Soo Bahk Do Moo Duk Kwan is practiced came together in a unique display of brotherhood and Moo Do spirit. There were representatives from the United States, Canada, England, France, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Australia, Mexico, Malaysia, Argentina, Iran, Pakistan, Puerto Rico, and of course the host country, Korea. We interacted with each other beautifully during the weekend's festivities, all meeting under the one common umbrella, to celebrate 50 years of hard work and success, the Moo Duk Kwan!

Following is a daily synopsis of the weekend's activities, followed by a brief history of the Moo Duk Kwan:

Thursday, September 21, 1995- The representatives from all

over the world began to filter into the Seoul Education and Cultural Center, which was to serve as both the housing as well as the site where the 50th Anniversary Celebration was to take place. We arrived in the evening and spent the night socializing with other members of the Moo Duk Kwan!

Friday, September 22, 1995- All representatives who wished to demonstrate during the ceremony on Saturday met to have their presentations examined and critiqued by members of the U.S. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), led by Master H.C. Hwang, Chairman of the TAC. Other members of the TAC are Master W.Y. Chung, CO, Master Lawrence Seiberlich, MN, Master Russ Hanke, MI, Master Andy Ah Po, CA, and Master Vic Martinov, CA. It was a long, but enjoyable day, as 22 demonstrations were looked at, streamlined, and finally accepted by the TAC as suitable to be viewed by Kwan Jang Nim Hwang Kee, as well as the rest of the Korean community.

Saturday, September 23, 1995- The official 50th Anniversary Ceremony is to be held today, however the demonstration teams have several hours of practice and rehearsals to do first. We had to coordinate all our efforts with the other countries' representatives to make sure the Ceremony went off like a grand performance, much like the Academy Awards! We were expecting not only Grandmaster Hwang Kee, but several important members of the Korean Government, as well as other leaders in the Korean community, not to mention the vast news and media coverage. Finally the time arrives and the Opening Ceremony begins. Kwan Jang Nim is escorted into the Cultural Theater by Senior Ko Dan Ja members, followed by many Korean dignitaries. His entrance is met by a thundering



IK: "How do you feel that their training in the Moo Duk Kwan's ideals have helped to forge these ideal characteristics?"

HK: "I feel a good instructor helps to keep the ideals strong. The instructor gives good motivation, good guidance, and helps the practitioner keep the balance and harmony that we are striving for. The key is to stay consistent in training and to practice, practice, practice! You will gain experience from the repetitions, as well as be in a healthy state of mind and be a good role model for the junior members."

IK: "In your opinion, what is the difference between a martial art like Soo Bahk Do, and Tae Kwon Do?"

HK: "Tae Kwon Do is more like a sport than a martial art. In competition, they both share positive aspects such as developing good sportsmanship qualities. But in a sport, action is guided by certain rules, where there is a winner and a loser. In a martial art, you have Moo Do spirit, which has no rules, and embodies a deep, spiritual philosophy. It is about life and death. I would very much like to see more of a clear separation between Moo Do and sport, because one is about life, the other about winning

applause and ovation as he is escorted through the crowd and on to the stage where over 150 of his Soo Bahk Do students are gathered and ready to demonstrate their Moo Do spirit.

Kwan Jang Nim greets the crowd through his son, Master H.C. Hwang. Other Korean dignitaries also speak, giving praise to a man who created an organization solely to work towards world peace through his Moo Duk Kwan's values regardless of race, nationality, and political or religious beliefs. The demonstrations then take place, with performances including: a 6 year old Korean boy doing a solo hyung, a team of elderly Soo Bahk Do Dans and gups doing a synchronized hyung, several sparring exhibitions, and many spectacular board breaking demonstrations. These performances gave an overall flavor of Weh Gong (external power), Neh Gong (internal power), and Shim Gong (spiritual power), which are key elements in expressing Kwan Jang Nim Hwang Kee's Moo Duk Kwan values. Later that night, a special 50th Anniversary banquet is held in Kwan Jang Nim's honor.


Sunday, September 24, 1995- A clinic taught by Grandmaster Hwang Kee was given today. It was quite an honor to actually train under Kwan Jang Nim's watchful eye as he made corrections and gave praise to over 600 students! The clinic's theme centered on Moo Do philosophy with Kwan Jang Nim Hwang Kee covering topics from hyungs to sparring techniques. It was a fitting climax to a very historic weekend in the martial arts community!

"The Moo Duk Kwan (Institute of Martial Virtue) was established on the basic principles of philosophy in order to con-

tribute to human development in Weh Gong (external power), Neh Gong (internal power), and Shim Gong (spiritual power). This Moo Duk Kwan philosophy is based on Do (Tao), the philosophy of No Ja (Lao Tzu).

Kwan Jang Nim Hwang Kee, who is the founder of the Moo Duk Kwan, had discovered and studied Soo Bahk as a traditional Korean martial art in 1957 and named it "Soo Bahk Do." He then started to teach Soo Bahk Do to the members of the Moo Duk Kwan. The Moo Duk Kwan system has taught its members not only the techniques of Soo Bahk Do but also the ethical and Moo Do (martial art) discipline, which the Moo Duk Kwan has maintained as a precious tradition.

As a result of many years of hard work by Kwan Jang Nim Hwang Kee and all of the Moo Duk Kwan practitioners, the Moo Duk Kwan has earned its reputation of high quality both in techniques and Moo Do discipline, which is remembered, and talked of, by many martial arts practitioners worldwide; however, there are very few practitioners who have an accurate knowledge of the Moo Duk Kwan and its history.

The Moo Duk Kwan was the largest and strongest martial art style in Korea from its foundation in 1945 until April 1961, since May 1961, it has faced political conflict for over 30 years, which has created extreme difficulties in its development. The political conflicts had created a lack of visibility and stifled the rightful presentation of the Moo Duk Kwan led by Kwan Jang Nim Hwang Kee. 

"Excerpts from "The History of the Moo Duk Kwan," By Grandmaster Hwang Kee



(Above) Grandmaster Hwang Kee addresses the crowd, translated by his son and chairman of the TAC, H.C. Hwang. Seated are various Korean dignitaries and members of the Korean Government. (Left) Grandmaster Hwang Kee poses with Michael Wiener (left) and the author, Trent Suzuki (right).



to meet the criterion, standardization, and follow the specific guidelines that have been set forth."

IK: "Thank you very much for your time Kwan Jang Nim, I wish you continued good health and much prosperity!"

HK: "Thank you."

Obviously, Grandmaster Hwang Kee is a unique and very special individual. He has given, and continues to give so much of himself, not only to his own practitioners, but to all of humanity. His contributions to the martial arts, regardless of style, are endless and we are fortunate that he is still alive and strong, and continues to expose us to different facets of his Art, as well as his overall insights to life in general. I feel deeply honored and grateful whenever I am privileged to be in his presence and can only hope those of us in Soo Bahk Do Moo Duk Kwan can continue his dreams of world peace through the Moo Do spirit! "SOO BAHK!!!"

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and losing. Also, conflict often occurs in sport whenever there is competition between Senior and Junior members. This idea is poor for balance and harmony between members. Keeping the idea of seniority is vital for the perpetuation of the Art, for discipline, as well as to keep the lineage intact, all the way to the Founder. It is critical to keep the Moo Do spirit alive, to teach the mental discipline and history of the Art and pass it down!"

IK: "How do you feel about practitioners who have left the Moo Duk Kwan, yet continue to call themselves Moo Duk Kwan?"

HK: "I know they are trying to use the positive impact from their previous association with the Moo Duk Kwan to give their organizations legitimacy and some

sort of history. Obviously they are proud of their connection to the Moo Duk Kwan, which makes me feel good because they realize where their roots are and where their natural connections lead to. In reality though, for them to continue to claim affiliation to the Moo Duk Kwan is neither morally, legally, or ethically right. They are literally misrepresenting the Moo Duk Kwan for their own personal gains, because after all, there is only one Moo Duk Kwan!"

IK: "How do you feel about these ex-Moo Duk Kwan practitioners coming back?"

HK: "Our doors have always been open, which I feel good about morally. However, in order to have respect toward the Moo Duk Kwan Art, they would have