

# THE THREE MASTERS OF THE SOO FAMILY

By Floyd Soo, 6th Dan, United States Korean Karate Association

Grandmaster Sang Kyu Shim (Moo Duk Kwan Pin #180) came over to the United States in the early 1960s with Moo Duk Kwan founder Hwang Kee's instructions to help organize Moo Duk Kwan schools in the U.S. He formed the Detroit Tang Soo Do Association and opened several schools in the Metropolitan Detroit area. Mr. Shim was awarded the rank of first-dan while he was still in high school in South Korea, and gained several years of experience teaching Tang Soo Do to American Servicemen, as well as Korean natives. One of those Americans was an Army SP3 by the name of Dale Drouillard. Mr. Drouillard (Moo Duk Kwan Pin #757) became the first American to attain the rank of first-dan. These two gentlemen became friends and Mr. Shim actually moved to a different location to continue teaching Mr. Drouillard when he was reassigned to a new base in S. Korea.

On a side note, it was in the following year that Carlos "Chuck" Norris also attained the rank of first-dan in MDK-TSD (Moo Duk Kwan-Tang Soo Do). Of course, Mr. Norris and Mr. Drouillard brought their knowledge of "Korean Karate" back to the States with them and began to share their newfound knowledge by teaching classes of their own. Other American Servicemen also began teaching Tang Soo Do and Tae Kwon Do in North America. In an attempt to unify the Moo Duk Kwan schools in the U.S., GM Hwang Kee would send some of his Korean Masters to the U.S. with that intent. GM Shim was one of the very first of these Masters.

My sister Annie and I began our training in MDK-TSD in 1967 at the ages of 12 and 13 respectively. That's when Master Shim's Detroit Tang Soo Do Association opened up a club near our home in Royal Oak, Michigan. Ironically, our first instructor there was Dale Drouillard, a third-dan by then. (Grandmaster Drouillard is now a ninth-dan and is still actively teaching in the Detroit area.)

Shortly after my sister and I began training with Mr. Shim, he left the Moo Duk Kwan, aligned himself with Gen. Choi Hong Hi, and formed his World Martial Arts Association and Tae Kwan Do Times with Chung E. Kim,

Dr. Yang Ahn, Jung Nam Lee and current Publisher Woojin Jung. At the time, we were not paying a lot of attention to the politics in TKD; we just enjoyed the tough, disciplined training. Even though we were in our mid-teens, Master Shim expected us (in training and testing) to meet the standards of the adults. In 1969, during our first-dan test, we had to break four one-inch boards (unspaced) with a jump (spinning back) kick, before we could qualify. Master Shim was an incredible influence and role model for both of us, and eventually our younger brother Vince, too, who started training at the age of nine.

In 1973, Annie and I moved to Kalamazoo, Michigan to attend Western Michigan University (WMU). There, we met Mr. [HYPERLINK "http://www.mikemarch-koreankarate.org"](http://www.mikemarch-koreankarate.org) Mike March, a third-dan in Moo Duk Kwan-Tang Soo Do (Pin #10,724) at the time. Once we watched a class or two taught by Master March (now a seventh-dan), we knew we had found a new home. He was strict, powerful, fast, smart and had great control. You could see that he demanded all those qualities from his students, too. He had a very talented group in his club. The WMU Karate Club was affiliated with Karate Institute at the time and was very active in tournament competition in the Midwest. Master March had competed from coast to coast and was ranked in the top ten in several different martial arts magazines.



**The Mott siblings in China in 1986.**



**Bill "Superfoot" Wallace  
and Vince Soo**

Master March trained and tested with Grandmaster Hwang Kee and was awarded his Master Instructors (fourth-dan) rating in 1976 by GM Hwang himself. Annie and I continued our commitment to excellence by training with the "best of the best" at a time when the "Karate craze" was at its peak. Even though most of the members of the WMU Karate Club competed actively, Master March always taught MDK-TSD with self-defense as the primary purpose of the art. Grandmaster Hwang Kee instilled the highest standards of performance in the WMU Karate Club through Master March. In keeping with the traditions and standards demanded by Grandmaster Hwang Kee, Master March formed the United States Korean Karate Association in 1975. The USKKA became a force to be reckoned with in the Midwest when it came to great technique, discipline, honor, integrity, quality instructors, and skill in application.

My younger brother Vince joined us in Kalamazoo in 1978 and also joined Master March's club. He had started his training with Mr. Shim back in the Detroit area and attained the rank of first-gup before he relocated to Kalamazoo. The three of us trained hard together and due to some friendly sibling rivalry, we never let up on each other. We pushed each other hard, but more importantly, we were each other's coach and best friend on the dojang floor. Eventually, Vince attained the rank of first-dan under Master March.



**(L-R): Masters Floyd Soo, Dale Drouillard, Kang Uk Lee, Annie Soo-Mett & Vince Soo at a recent traditional Tang Soo Do Seminar in the Detroit area.**

The three of us trained with Master March several times per week for years, then decades. Because we didn't give her any special treatment, Annie could hold her own with any of the guys in the club. There are several stories of the guys (including Master March) fighting her extra aggressively during free-sparring, so she would be better prepared for a real self-defense situation. She was strongly encouraged to fight them back just as hard and she was always up to the task.

On November 21, 1987, all three siblings tested together in front of Master March. My sister and I were awarded our fourth-dans and Vince was awarded his third-dan that day. A few years later, Vince was also awarded his fourth-dan. On that day, a bit of MDK-TSD history was made. It was uncommon for there to be three Master Instructors in the same family, and even more unusual for all of them to be siblings. This was confirmed by Grandmaster Kang Uk Lee (tenth-dan, Moo Duk Kwan Pin #70); he would introduce the three of us together during his classes/seminars and actually comment on the fact that this was a rare occurrence.

My sister, brother and I are still actively training and teaching MDK-TSD. We have sought out the highest ranking, most senior MDK-TSD masters in the world, like GM Kang

Uk Lee in the U.K.; GM Chung Il Kim (tenth-dan, Moo Duk Kwan Pin #475) in Chicago and GM Dale Drouillard (ninth-dan) in Detroit to train with them whenever we can. My sister and brother still live in the Kalamazoo area and still train regularly with Master March. (I drop in whenever I can.) We have all become friends, as well as fellow MDK-TSD Master Instructors. We still strive for that excellence we grew to know and love since we all started our training in this martial art.

From 1973 (1978 for Vince) to the present, the three of us have been training with Master March. He still demands the highest standards in technique, speed, power, skill, courage and honor from his students, just like Masters Drouillard and Shim did when we all started. As anyone who has trained in the USKKA knows, these standards have not been compromised in any way, even more than three decades later. I teach ten classes per week on average in the Detroit area; while Master March, my sister and brother are still training and teaching in the Kalamazoo (Michigan) area.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Master Floyd Soo is sixth-degree in Moo Duk Kwan-Tang Soo Do, with additional background in Tae Kwon Do, Judo, Aikido and Okinawan weaponry. Master Soo teaches in the Clarkston, Lake Orion and Pontiac, Michigan area. He is a true "hands on" Master Instructor teaching classes for all ranks and all ages on a weekly basis. He personally teaches at least four classes per week of five to seven-year-olds, as he is dedicated to encouraging kids of all ages to live a healthy, respectful lifestyle.