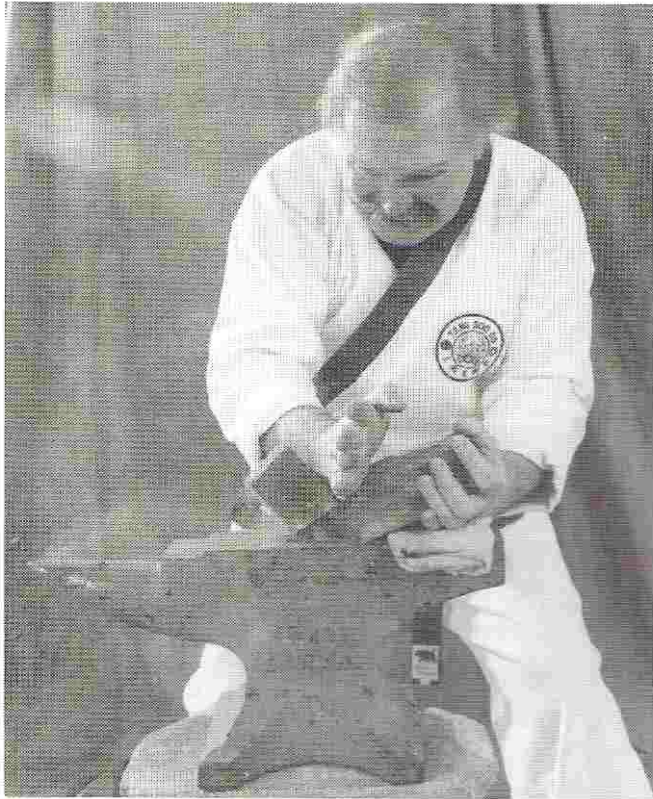


# Tang Soo Do Bridges the Generations



**Master Joe Goss, Sr. breaking a red brick with a chop.**  
*(Photo by Chuck Mamula)*

by Joe Goss, Sr.

Often my wife will say to me "you and your son are so much alike." She will usually say this after becoming exasperated with one or the other of us. However, there is probably a lot of truth in her statement and it is only partly due to genetics.

I started training in martial arts in 1962 at the local YMCA with my first instructor Master Mike Dignan. I studied both Judo and Isshinryu karate. Master Dignan had studied on Okinawa and was the middle weight Judo champion of the island and trained in karate under the founder of Isshinryu karate. After returning to the states he was asked to teach at the local Y. My friend Rich Redden, and I were his first two students.

I was very fortunate to have started my studies under Master Dignan as he taught traditional martial art both physically and spiritually, and set the stage for my future martial art training.

Often I tell my students stories of what my training was like when I first started martial arts. In a word it was brutal. Classes were 3 hours long or longer and you would practice one technique hun-

dreds and even thousands of times. So you became very good at doing a throw or a reverse punch.

Master Dignan would also tell us stories of the ancient martial arts' masters and their exploits to instill confidence and martial spirit. Many of these stories I still relate to my students today.

When I graduated from High School, I went to Canada for a short period for schooling and then enlisted in the United States Air Force. My first permanent duty station was Edwards Air Force Base in the Mojave Desert.

The first thing I did when I arrived was to find a martial arts instructor. It turned out that there was no karate or judo club on base. Someone (I can't remember who) told me of a sergeant who worked in the mail room who was a black belt in judo, so I looked him up.

It turned out that this person (Dan Galbreath) had spent 11 years in Japan and trained at the Kodokan (the World headquarters for Judo). While in Japan, Mr. Galbreath also studied Shotokan karate under Master Hidetaka Nishiyama (later the chief instructor from the Japan Karate Association.)

He and I started both the Judo and Karate club at Edwards Air Force Base. While I was stationed there Master Nishiyama came to the U.S. and we went to meet him in Los Angeles. It was a great thrill for me to actually meet a person that I had only seen in a book ("Karate" by Nishiyama and Brown).

On weekends I would go to LA and train at Nishiyama's school. Again, we trained like crazy people-classes were long and hard and many people quit. It was really a case of only the strong survived. Mr. Galbreath having lived in Japan for as long as he did was steeped in martial arts culture, traditional martial arts culture, which was absorbed by me like a sponge.

After being stationed in Germany where I taught both Judo and Karate at the club on base, I was discharged and returned to Johnstown. While in Johnstown, the physical director of the local YMCA asked me to start a program. (My original instructor was no longer teaching at this time.) So I started teaching



both Judo and karate. In 1974 I opened my school and it was during this time that I met Kwan Jang Nim C.S. Kim. Grandmaster Kim had recently moved to Pittsburgh and was sponsoring a tournament. I received an invitation and called him on the phone. At the tournament we met and talked and we immediately liked each other. After the tournament I started training with Grandmaster Kim and have been with him ever since.

Because I always studied traditional martial arts, Tang Soo Do was easy to adapt to. I visited Grandmaster Kim one Saturday and he taught me the first 11 Hyungs (forms) of Tang Soo Do. Later I would visit Grandmaster Kim and he would teach me the other forms that I needed to know for Samdan (3rd degree black belt). I learned the forms I needed to know for Samdan on the night before I tested.

Well 22 years later and I am still with Kwan Jang Nim Kim and still learning. People are often surprised when they find out that I have an instructor. These people are, of course, people who don't train. Those who train in Tang Soo Do realize that you never stop learning. Some of the most important things I learned concerning Tang Soo Do, have been on a plane while traveling with Kwan Jang Nim.

**What was it like training my son and now teaching with him?** It is something I have never given much thought to.

When I first started teaching in Johnstown, my wife was a student in the class. I didn't meet her in class, we had met before I started teaching. I would treat her as I would treat any other student in the class, so much so that many of the students didn't know that we were married.

When my wife was pregnant with my son, I remember a discussion we had about the yet unborn child. My wife said, "What if he or she doesn't want to do martial arts but wants to do something else?"

I remember saying that the child will be an individual and that you can not live your life through them, they have to choose what they want to do.

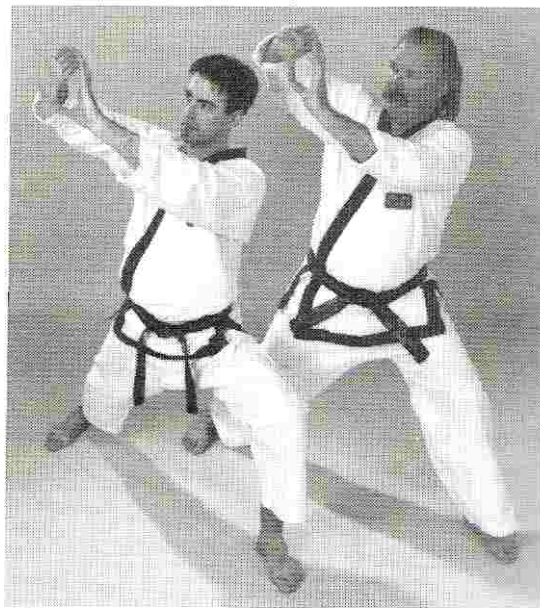
When my son started training it was his decision. I tried starting him at 5 years old, but that was too young. My son, however, was raised under the circumstances that are unusual today. My school is located next door to my house. So my son had both parents with him at home when he was growing up. It is the same situation that would have existed 200 years ago in this country and the rest of the world. So I believe this had a lot to do with how he turned

out.

As with my wife, most of the students were not aware that Joe was my son. I treated him as I would treat any other student. As a child he was a big "I can't do it" person. I would show the class how to do an outside/inside kick. Then I would go around and correct the students. I would get to him and I would get "I can't." This was probably because I was his father.

If adversity and hardship do build character then my son has plenty of it. His early time in Tang Soo Do was not easy and sometimes not pleasant. My son as a child went to many tournaments and had things done to him that were unfair and tolerated it. I never went to the officials and complained, I would not lower myself to do that.

When I go to tournaments today I am usually an official, and at every tournament a parent comes to me and complains. Usually I do not give them much satisfaction. However, they find someone who, af-



**"I treated him as I would treat any other student."**

ter they have raised a big enough fuss, will give their child a trophy. What lesson has their child learned? He has learned that if you complain enough you can get what you want even if you don't deserve it.

This kind of attitude doesn't develop a strong character in an individual. A person who is raised by parents of this type will always look to someone else to solve their problems. They will not be able to take care of themselves. They will not have the confidence to handle obstacles that confront them in life.

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Since both of us train in and teach Tang Soo Do, it gives us much to talk about. There are business considerations and martial art subjects to discuss. Things like tournaments and clinics. He was a big help in the editing process in the ITF (International Tang Soo Do Federation) video tapes. Since both schools are located in Johnstown and are only 12 minutes apart we are still together a lot. We sometimes switch locations for a change of pace.

I have to give most of the credit to how our family operates to my wife. She runs the business aspect of the schools. This allows me to concentrate on the teaching. She also is the most responsible for how my son turned out. She is the balance in both of our lives and I admit has been the mediator between my son and me.

*About the authors: Joe Goss, Sr. is a 7th dan and Joe Goss, Jr. is a 4th dan and are both Masters. Both have schools in Johnstown, PA.*