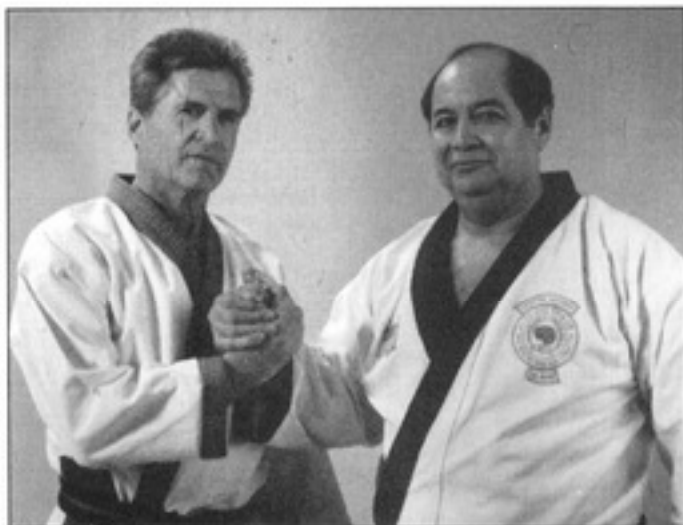


Soo Bahk Brothers

Two Californians Spearhead the Resurgence of One of Korea's Original Martial Arts. **By Trent K. Suzuki**

I am sure you have heard the old saying "They had trained so long and became so close, they were like Brothers in the Martial Arts!" Well, you may never see such an accurate depiction of that old adage than with the unique relationship and lifetime accomplishments of Master Andrew Ah Po of Sacramento, California, and Master Victor Martinov of Rolling Hills Estates, California. These two outstanding martial artists were both critically instrumental in organizing and establishing the roots of the United States Tang Soo Do Soo Bahk Do Moo Duk Kwan Federation, the only organization in the nation affiliated directly to the founder of the Moo Duk Kwan, Grandmaster Hwang Kee(Kwan Jang Nim).

Years before the U.S. Federation was even thought of, these two dynamic martial artists were paving the way for martial arts growth in the early days of karate in California. Although separated by over 300 miles, Ah Po and Martinov met as red belts traveling the state karate circuit in the early 60's. They both experienced tremendous success on the open karate tournament circuit in the 60's and 70's, winning several state and national championships in both forms and fighting. They found a common bond in their training, as both followed rigorous and physically demanding training regimens.



Masters Victor Martinov and Andrew Ah Po.

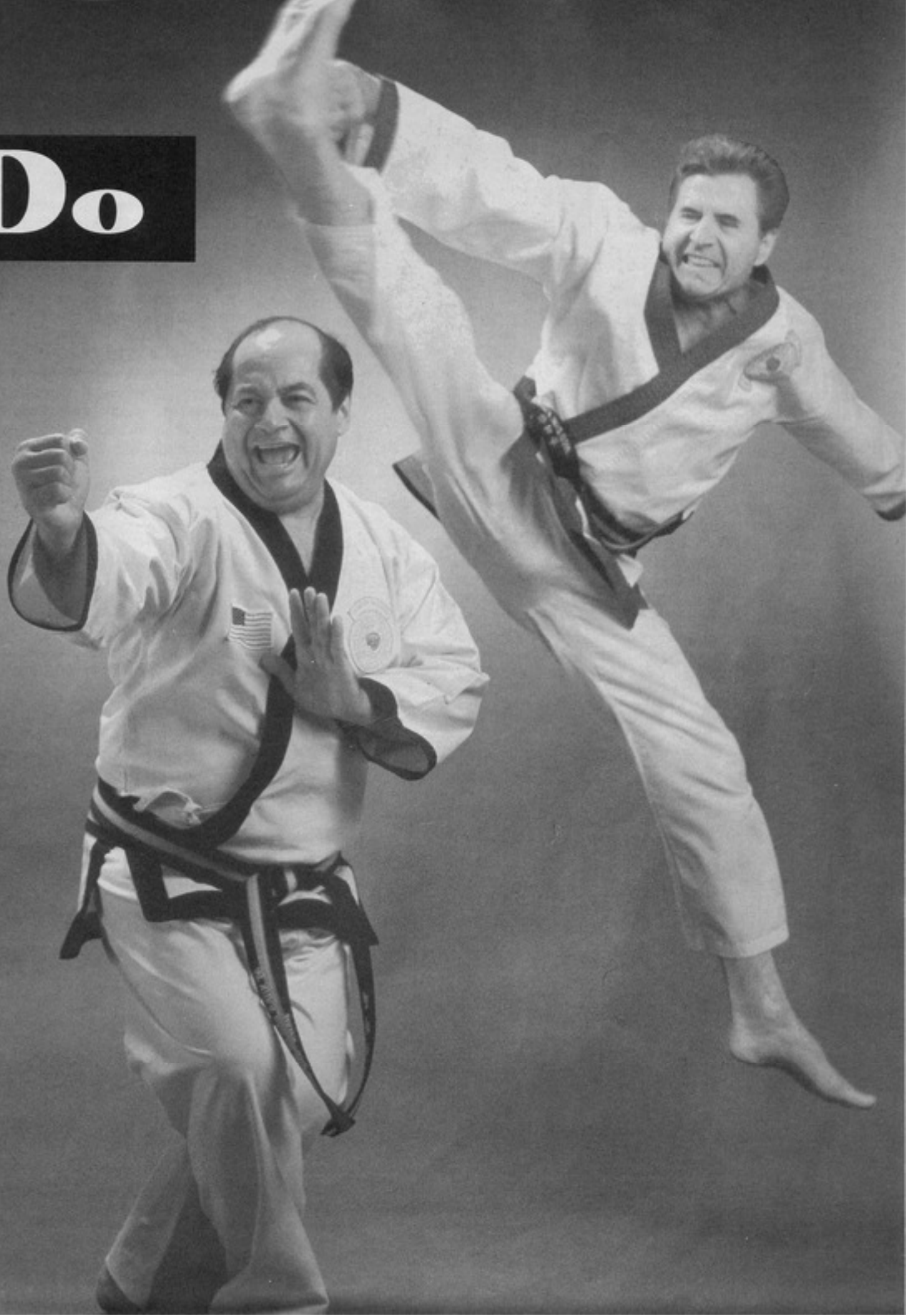
They found themselves training together to share workouts and other technical information, as both strived to be the best Tang Soo Do practitioners they could be. In 1966, both tested for black belt ranking in Torrance, California, Ah Po achieving Dan #10187, and Martinov Dan #10189. Subsequently, these two would test again together for 4th, 5th, 6th, and in 1993, 7th Dan ranking. The fact that both wanted similar things out of their Tang Soo Do Soo Bahk Do training was evident in that both had a burning desire to maintain their

roots and keep strong ties to Grandmaster Hwang Kee in Korea.

Here is a brief biography on both, followed by an interview:

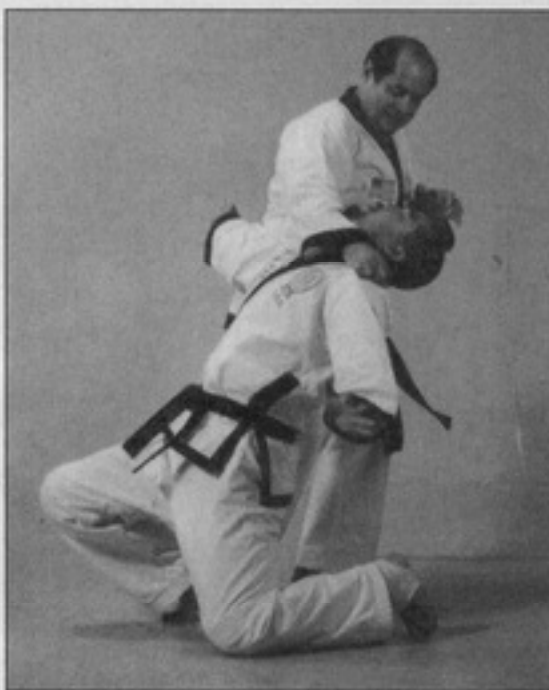
Master Andy Ah Po was born on May 22, 1941 in Hilo, Hawaii. Master Ah Po began his martial arts training early in his youth and studied Jiu Jitsu, Kung Fu, Tai Chi Chuan, Shotokan, and Kendo over a 12 year period prior to his exposure to Tang Soo Do Soo Bahk Do. Ah Po began his Tang Soo Do training in 1959 under the guidance of Master Mariano Estioko (#759). Master Estioko was the second American ever to achieve Dan certification in Korea. Master Ah Po is one of the two Senior Masters (Ko Dan Ja) of Region #9 (encompasses California, Nevada, and Hawaii), a charter member of the U.S. Tang Soo Do Soo Bahk Do Moo Duk Kwan Federation,

Do



and has served on the Board of Directors in various capacities, including Chairman. He is an appointed member of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), a committee of Senior Ko Dan Ja deemed responsible by Kwan Jang Nim for maintaining and supervising traditional, technical, and philosophical excellence and standardization across the country. He still manages to teach classes of all levels on a daily basis, and holds monthly Dan clinics on a variety of topics. Master Ah Po is in constant demand to conduct seminars across the nation, and is also highly sought after in Europe, having recently returned from seminars in Germany and Australia.

Master Victor Martinov was born on July 29, 1936 in New York, New York. Master Martinov started his martial arts training in 1959, studying Yoshinkai Aikido with Master Virgil Crank in Lomita, California. Master Crank was a direct student of Sensei Shioda Gozo, one of Uyeshiba Sensei's early black belts. Master Martinov also trained with Yoshinkan Masters' Kimeda, Yusuda, and Takeno, the ladder being Shioda-Sensei's Uke (#1 student, literally means "one who is thrown"). Martinov holds the rank of 2nd Dan in Aikido. Martinov began his Tang Soo Do training in 1961 with Chuck Norris (#2819) in Torrance, California. Master Martinov is the other Senior Ko Dan Ja of Region #9, a charter member of the U.S. Tang Soo Do Soo Bahk Do Moo Duk Kwan Federation, has also served on the Board of Directors in various capacities, including several terms as Chairman, and also is an appointed member of the TAC by



Grandmaster Hwang Kee. In 1974, Martinov trained at the Korean Soo Bahk Do Association Headquarters with Grandmaster Hwang Kee, helping to set the stage for the birth of the U.S. Federation. During that same trip, Martinov trained at Yoshinkan Headquarters in Tokyo, Japan. Martinov has a complete training facility at his ranch, and holds workouts on an invitational basis. His Friday night workouts are legendary in the Southern California area.

TRENT SUZUKI: "How did the USTSDSBKMDK Federation come to be?"

VICTOR MARTINOV: "In the early years, as a follower of Grandmaster Hwang Kee and as President of the American Karate (Tang Soo Do) Association founded in 1968, I felt a great responsibility to our members to tell them the truth about our Art. I felt it was important to inform them about the

Art's origins, who its creator was, and to keep open lines of communication with the Korean Soo Bahk Do Association in order to maintain our roots with Kwan Jang Nim. I began corresponding by letters and phone calls to the Korean Soo Bahk Do Association in Seoul, Korea in 1968.

"I later found out Andy had also been corresponding with them independently. We started unifying our efforts and found out that Kwan Jang Nim very much wanted to start a United States Federation of his art of Tang Soo Do Soo Bahk Do. We welcomed this as an opportunity to insure, not only for our students but for all



(1) Master Andy Ah Po squares off against Trent Suzuki. (2) As Suzuki executes a stepping center punch, Ah Po side steps into an inside block. (3) Ah Po immediately follows with a lateral elbow strike to the ribs, (4) followed by a high reverse punch to the chin. (5) Ah Po then grabs the sleeve and executes a rear leg roundhouse kick to the chest. (6) Without setting the kicking leg down, Ah Po sweeps Suzuki's front leg out into a takedown.

the practitioners in the U.S., the direct guidance and teachings of Grandmaster Hwang Kee. In 1975, Grandmaster Hwang Kee came to the U.S. and called for a national meeting which was held in Burlington, New Jersey. This historic meeting was the cornerstone of our present Federation. Grandmaster Hwang Kee was present at that time, guided our development during every subsequent meeting and leads us now as he oversees all international affiliates of the Korean Soo Bahk Do Association Moo Duk Kwan."

AH PO: "The beauty of all this was we could finally get some roots planted here in the United States. The Federation could bring all those with previous Tang Soo Do training who were lacking guidance or not under a senior instructor, under one unifying body, with an organized charter, rules, guidelines, etc. We had seen some of our American counterparts giving out their own rank certificates, promoting students without any direct link to Kwan Jang Nim. We wanted to keep the strong ties of our lineage through Grandmaster Hwang Kee and Korea, that is why we never gave out our own ranks like the others."

IK: "What sets the USIKDSBKMDK Federation apart from other martial arts organizations?"

AP: "Our Federation is a non-profit organization of national and international practitioners and studios which stress high performance standards and preserve the traditional aspects and principles of our Art. The Federation provides standardized training tech-

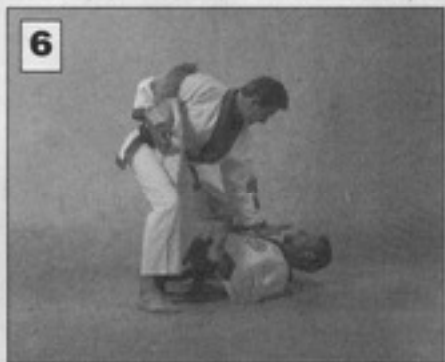
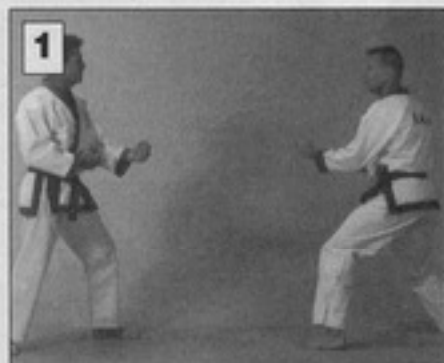


niques and forms, administers efficient Gup and Dan testing certification procedures, national and regional activities and seminars, and advanced training opportunities. Finally, the Federation offers business consultation, national advertising opportunities, and above all, gives us direct access to our original founder, Grandmaster Hwang Kee and his son, the Chairman of the TAC, Master H.C. Hwang."

VM: "We have a very unique, yet traditional method of testing any practitioner who is eligible for ranking of 4th Dan and above (Ko Dan Ja), as well as those who wish to test for the rank of Sa Bom (Master Instructor). This Ko Dan Ja (Senior Master/ Master Instructor) testing process is an extremely grueling, 8-day examination that is held once a year in the Fall at Federation Headquarters in Springfield, New Jersey. The days (and nights) last anywhere from 12-16 hours of training on

the mat, with another 4-5 hours of homework and written projects. We are evaluating physical, as well as emotional and spiritual development. We want to test the candidate's ability to deal with many types of hardship, and try and develop the human being to the fullest extent."

AP: "For the first 7 days, we test and observe every aspect of their training of the past 13+ years. From physical ability in basics, hyungs, self-defense, sparring, weapons, and teaching ability, to internal and spiritual areas. Our goal is to develop the complete human being, able to handle the many hardships that life can bring."



(1) Master Vic Martinov squares off against Master Fred Messersmith. (2) As Messersmith attacks with a switch front roundhouse kick, Martinov executes a simultaneous parry left and trap right. (3) Using the momentum from the kick, Martinov uses his right hand to continue the energy of the foot past and over his head. (4) Martinov then closes the gap by simultaneously trapping the kicking leg and setting Messersmith up for a sweep and palm thrust to the chin. (5) Martinov thrusts upward through Messersmith's chin, sweeping him to the ground. (6) Martinov keeps downward pressure on the face and is in position to follow up if necessary.

The 8th day is devoted to the actual formal test, where the practitioners demonstrate their abilities in front of Kwan Jang Nim and Master Hwang.

IK: "It seems that, through the Art, you have had many memorable experiences together!"

AP: "Yes, it's true that many practitioners with our level of experience and training think they know enough and leave the parent organization to start their own and call themselves a grandmaster. However we will always consider ourselves students' first, instructors' second. There is only ONE founder of the Moo Duk Kwan, one Kwan Jang Nim, and we both want to go on record stating that we are forever loyal to, and are fully supportive of Grandmaster Hwang Kee and what he's trying to do."

VM: "We both appreciate very much what we have been given, and want to give back to the Federation. We are very happy to be a part of the perpetuation of Grandmaster Hwang Kee's Art. It's not so much a "way of," but a "philosophy of." It's about human betterment and maturity, we want very much to be a part of this. To stay is to know the truth, there is NO other way!"

AP: "We have remained silent for years because we wanted to make sure the main emphasis was on the Art and the Federation, not on individual practitioners. Now, due to some false claims being made in other literature, we wanted to come forward and set some things straight as to who and what is legitimate through Grandmaster Hwang Kee. Our history, lineage, and the Art itself is still evolving. We are traditional, and I want to emphasize that traditional does not mean outdated. Yet we continue to maintain the protocol, the Moo Do (martial spirit), the respect, and the discipline. We are modern in that our Founder is still alive and continues to expose us to new dimensions of his genius. Our techniques are time-tested, both in tournaments and in the street. How can those who have broken away say they are still teaching legitimate IKDSBD techniques when those same techniques are constantly being modified and scientifically streamlined by the Founder himself!"

IK: "I understand there is a major event occurring this year regarding Tang Soo Do Soo Bahk Do Moo Duk Kwan?"

VM: "Yes, Grandmaster Hwang Kee founded the Moo Duk Kwan (Institute of Martial Virtue) in Seoul, Korea, 1945. In September 1995, we will be celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the Moo Duk Kwan, to be held in its birthplace, Seoul, Korea, and sponsored by the Korean Soo Bahk Do Association. It

is the only system to be both registered and recognized by the Korean Government as a traditional Korean martial art. This recognition occurred as a direct result of a landmark Korean Supreme Court decision. Grandmaster Hwang Kee will be there to oversee the festivities, as well as actually teach some clinics! Kwan Jang Nim has invited all practitioners who have ever been affiliated with him to attend, which will allow his family to have the opportunity to celebrate together."

AP: "It is a historic occasion for the entire martial arts community. We are all excited and anticipate a memorable experience for

everyone who chooses to be involved!" Obviously, these two dedicated martial artists have accomplished a great deal in their cumulative

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70+ years of training, yet they maintain a pleasant honesty and humility about them that is refreshing and invigorating at the same time. They are true role models to those of us who are fortunate enough to have exposure to them, and we strive to have the courage and dedication to train as hard and follow their good example. My own personal martial arts training has forever been enhanced by the influence of these true Martial Art Masters. Soo Bahk! ■

Trent K. Suzuki, Dan #Z350 1, is a 3rd Dan, Certified Instructor (Kyo Sa), and a member in good standing of the U.S. Tang Soo Do

Soo Bahk Do Moo Duk Kwan Federation. He currently resides in the San Diego area and trains under the excellent guidance of Master Daymon Kenyon. Trent trains with Masters Ah Po and Martinov on a regular basis. Questions regarding the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Moo Duk Kwan can be fielded at USIKDSBD-MDK Federation Headquarters, (201) 467-3977.

