

After several weeks of investigating many different styles of Martial Arts, I made the decision to enroll in Tang Soo Do. Ten short months ago, I registered at Master Ki Yun Yi's dojang where I now hold the rank of Fifth Gup, green belt. What was an ordinary day to most people, was a day filled with excitement as I arrived for class. I was anxious and excited because this night I would learn the results of my recent test for Fourth Gup, brown belt.

As I entered the dojang, I was greeted by my fellow students. I bowed to those of higher rank and returned the bows of the lower ranking students. Early in my training, I learned that bowing to one another was not only a way of greeting your fellow students, but of showing respect which plays a predominant role in Tang Soo Do.

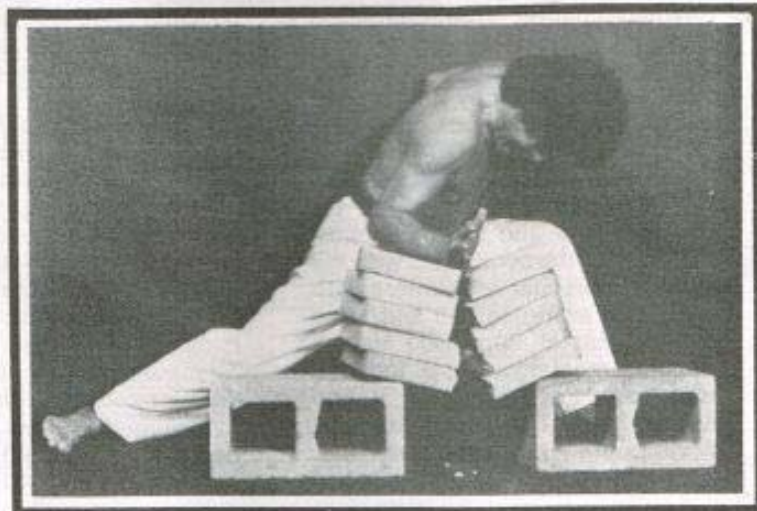
The dojang was alive with students making use of punching bags and weight machines; they were sparring with friends, stretching and practicing new techniques. The senior ranking student called the class to attention, "Cha Ryut!" The class grew quiet and all activity ceased. Our head instructor had entered the dojang. Master Yi had taught Tang Soo Do for many years before coming to the United States and has been living and teaching here for the past nine years.

## *Class With A Tang Soo Do*

# MASTER

## *Ki Yun Yi*

*by FLORENCE SOLOMON*



Photographs by Mike Brohy



**ABOVE:** *With great skill and confidence, Master Yi executes a flying side kick.*  
**OPPOSITE PAGE:** *Master Ki Yun Yi.*

The students quickly lined up according to their rank. The senior ranking student lead the class in a salute to the flag. Then each student sat on the floor with legs crossed and recited the Five Code Spirit of Tang Soo Do.

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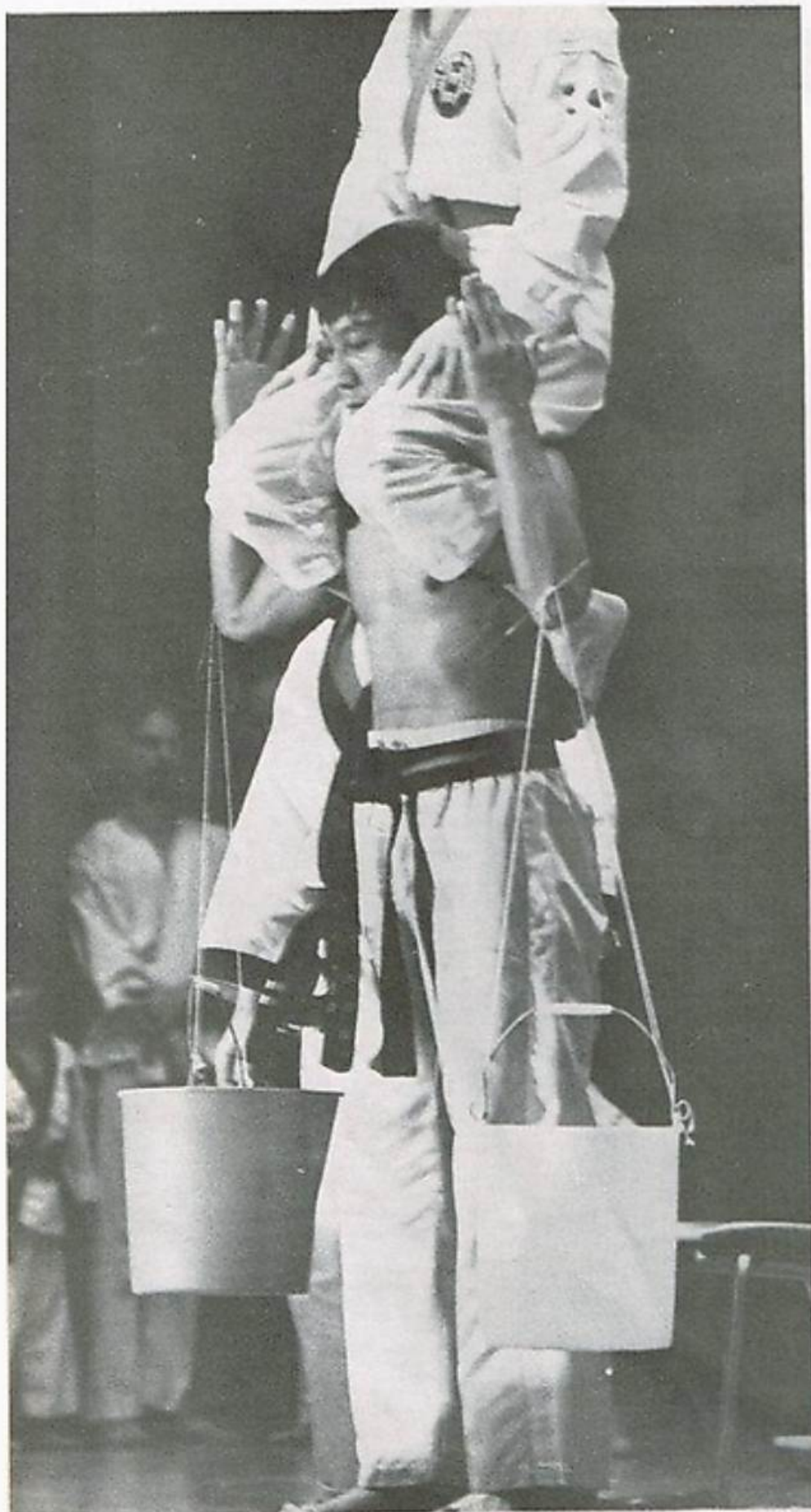
**Loyalty to country**  
**Obedience to parents**  
**Honor Friendships**  
**No retreat in battle**  
**In Killing, choose with sense and honor**

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The five codes are the support and backbone of the Tang Soo Do philosophy. Master Yi taught each student from the first class that knowing and understanding these five codes were necessary and vital if they wished to master this martial art. The first three codes are self-explanatory, but the last two are complex and needed his explanation. Master Yi explained that "No retreat in battle" could be applied to everyday situations: that each individual has an obligation and responsibility to finish work assignments, home chores and other tasks to the best of their abilities. The fifth code, "In killing, choose with sense and honor," means that we should avoid unnecessary conflict. As students, we are taught that Tang Soo Do is not to be used as you would a game at a party or in a playground. We are taught to use our skills only in self-defense, when no other means are available and to use our skills to protect those who are defenseless.

Training begins and warm-up exercises are first on the agenda. Despite a child's natural agility and flexibility, it is very important that even they do stretching exercises to avoid injuries and strained muscles. After stretching, the class begins their regimen of push-ups, sit-ups, trunk twists and various leg stretches. After the exercising and stretching are completed, the students return to their original positions.

A regimen of basics are then undertaken. Basics consist of high and low blocks, various kicks and punches that will later be used in forms and sparring. I watched Master Yi attentively as he demonstrated a low block, "Ha Dan Mahk Ki." With my classmates, I repeated the command and executed the block. Master Yi moved among his students, checking the hand positions, stances and the power used for execution. He noticed that one



*The single most important factor in achieving martial art excellence is training the mind.*

student was blocking too low and her body angle was incorrect. He repositioned her and explained why positioning is so important. The basics continued as he demonstrated, explained and called each technique by name.

Master Yi, Secretary General of the World Tang Soo Do Association and Chairman of the Technical Advisory Committee, strives to promote precise uniform techniques. Many times a student is sent to the mirrored walls to practice a difficult block or kick. The technique is usually practiced until the student can do it correctly and with comfort. Master Yi's criteria is simple and direct: each student is expected and required to perform techniques to the very best of his or her ability, regardless of their rank.

After a brief rest period, the students prepare for forms, or *hyung*. Tang Soo Do forms require a great deal of concentration, balance and control. Master Yi stresses the importance of practicing forms, because they are an intricate part of Tang Soo Do. Many times, Master Yi will work with a student to help him perfect a form, or simply to correct a particular part of the form. As a student strives to perfect his forms and concentration, he many times expe-

## As a student strives to perfect his forms and concentration, he many times experiences improvement in other areas of his or her life.

periences improvement in other areas of his or her life. I have noticed an increased ability to concentrate and have found this very rewarding.

There are more tangible rewards for hard work and diligent practice of our Art. Entering a recent competition, I chose my highest form for presentation. Although my score was high, I did not place. Master Yi noticed my disappointment and spoke to me; his words were encouraging. He talked to me as my instructor and friend, explaining that although the movements of my form were crisp and my gaze immovable, my show of

strength was not what he knew it to be. He put his hand on my shoulder and said, "We'll work on it, perhaps the next tournament you will receive a trophy."

"Line up!" was the resounding command and the next part of the class began. The students paired into couples and began a series of attacks and blocks. As one glanced to meet his opponent, he found Master Yi as his partner. Master Yi watched the student's face and detected an expression of apprehension. He realized that students are sometimes shy and awkward when they begin Tang Soo Do, especially when they're paired with a master. Mr. Yi strives to help each student gain confidence in themselves and instills in them the belief that with hard work and perseverance, they can achieve their goals; and that the only time one truly fails is when you stop trying to fulfill those goals.

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Total control of mind and body are needed as Yi demonstrates his renowned and crowd pleasing split kick.


The command to bow was given and the sparring began. Master Yi effortlessly performed several combination kicking techniques. Noticing his student/partner would at times turn his head or close his eyes, Yi explained how very important it is to keep your eyes open and always on your opponent. Nervously, the boy made contact with Master Yi with a side kick. Yi clutched his stomach and pretended to be hurt. The student looked stunned, a smile on Master Yi's face gave encouragement and a more relaxed student continued his sparring with vigor and improved technique. The student was praised for his improvement. The sparring ended and each student bowed to his partner and repeated, "Ko Map Sum Ni Da" which means, thank you.

After a short period of games to release the stress of class and the recitation of the Five Code Spirit, the class was over. An anxious hush came over the students that had tested for a higher belt, as they waited to hear the results. Master Yi stood in front of the class with the results in his hand. I stood tense and excited, waiting for my name to be called. Finally, I was called to the front of the class. I bowed to Master Yi, turned away and removed my belt. As I turned to face him, he wrapped my new belt around my waist. He shook my hand and gave his congratulations. I turned proudly toward the class and bowed as they applauded me.

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**"A martial artist is made, not born. . .students who work hard will succeed."**

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As I was leaving the dojang, I reflected on the times I was discouraged and Master Yi gave me the encouragement that I needed to meet my goals. He felt that a martial artist was made, not born, and students who work hard, develop confidence, and know they will succeed. I looked at my new belt and at Master Yi. I thought to myself that my new belt is worth all the practice and hard work; I smiled proudly as I left the dojang. 



*Perfecting forms is perfunctory as Master Yi repositions a student's hands.*



*Praise for a well done side kick builds confidence and enthusiasm.*



*Master Yi often works with his students to help them perfect their techniques.*