



FLYING

Since age 13 the martial arts have been at the center of Master Collins' life, but it took inspiration from a Grandmaster for him to quit his secure career in the airline industry and fly to a higher level of personal and professional satisfaction.

MASTER RICHARD COLLINS, JUNIOR
tang soo do



HIGHER

With Jeffrey "Zak" Szabo

Jeffrey "Zak" Szabo: I understand that you and your father began martial art training together.

Master Richard Collins, Junior: Yes. I was only four-years-old at the time, I started training in the martial art of Tang Soo Do in Davison, Michigan, outside Detroit, Michigan. I began training with my father, Master Richard Collins, Senior, in 1969. My father became an instructor at the school, and I continued there as his student. He has devoted his life to martial arts and has had a small school for over 24 years. He has not done it for monetary gain but for the love of teaching his art. He has been a big inspiration in my life and has always supported whatever I would like to do.

At sixteen, I finally received my black belt. In the 60's, 70's, and part of the 80's, the rank of black belt was never given to anyone under the age of sixteen, regardless of how many classes you attended, or how many years you had put in at the school.

When my father began teaching at his own school in Lapeer, Michigan, I began my career as an instructor at age 13. Although I wasn't an official black belt, according to the rules of the day, I still helped my father as his assistant. In all the years of my youth, the only activity I participated in was martial art training. Along with school and homework, the only thing that mattered was helping my father and training and teaching Tang Soo Do.

Even as a teenager you really didn't participate in any other activity except martial arts?

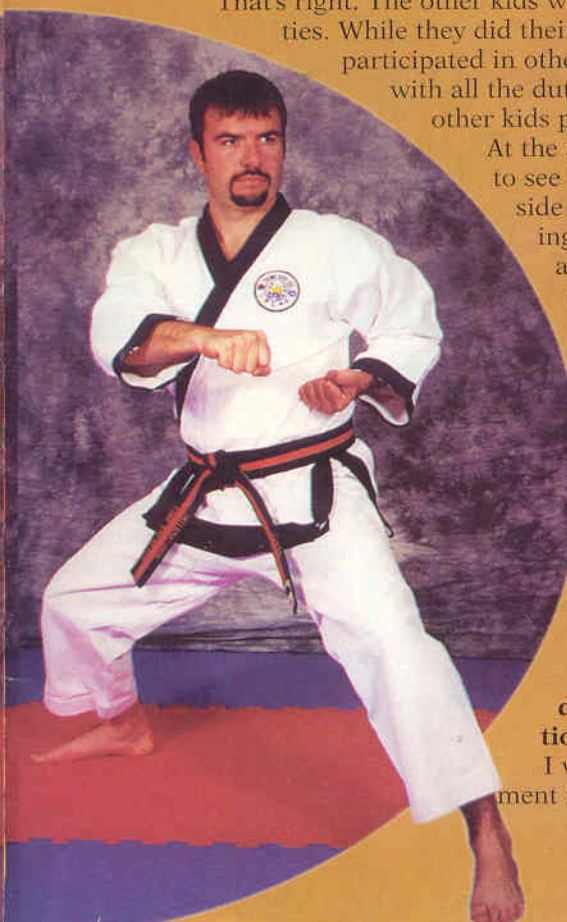
That's right. The other kids were doing things like playing and other school and recreational activities. While they did their everyday activities, had odd jobs, worked at fast food places, and participated in other teenage activities, I spent every day that I could assisting my father with all the duties required from any assistant instructor at any Karate school. The other kids played, and I worked hard at becoming a martial artist and instructor. At the age of seventeen, I entered the Marine Corps. This is where I was able to see the positive effects that martial art training has on a person's life outside the Karate school. My years of dedication to helping my father; training, learning respect, discipline, self-esteem, and over all physical fitness, along with the ethics taught in the martial arts, helped me to accomplish more than I ever thought I could as a Marine. I excelled in these areas and was able to move up in the system faster because of it. I was able to become an aircraft mechanic and learned to fly planes. Today I am still a pilot.

You didn't want a career in the military?

No. After serving in the Marines I began a career in the airline industry as a "wrencher," or mechanic. As a professional in the airline industry, I still continued training and teaching Tang Soo Do. Even in the Marine Corps, I never abandoned my martial art training. My demanding career with the airlines kept me busy, so my martial art teaching career was only part time. I had to travel quite a bit in my job and I always liked to find a place to train when I would visit other cities on business.

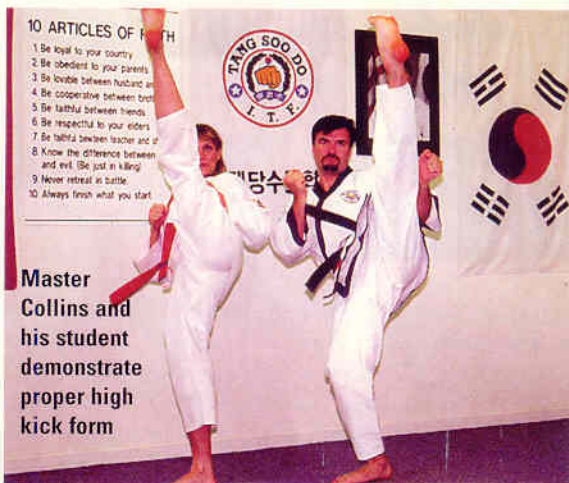
When did you first meet C. S. Kim, who is the founder and president of the International Tang Soo Do Federation, the organization to which you now belong?

I was sent to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, for a temporary station assignment for the airline company that I worked for. While I was there I wanted



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Growing up in the martial arts. Right: Master Collins with his sister in 1972 and with his father, Master Collins, Senior.



Master Collins and his student demonstrate proper high kick form

to train, as I always did, while I was away from my school. I contacted a nearby school, and it happened to be a branch school of Master C. S. Kim.

The branch school instructor welcomed me with open arms to train! I was so impressed with their friendly professional attitude that I requested information on meeting with Master C. S. Kim. After meeting with him for the first time, I was so excited that as soon as I got back to Michigan I called a meeting with my father and the senior instructors at our school. We all decided from that one meeting with Master Kim to join the International Tang Soo Do Federation. It turned out to be the best decision I ever made! Within one year of our meet-



Master Collins conducts class at his Davison, Michigan, school



Grandmaster Kim with Master Collins and his special friend, Collette, and his daughters, Courtney, Megan and Amanda



Mastering advanced weaponry skills is mandatory for high level black belts in the ITSDF system.

ABOVE: Hosting a black belt seminar with ITSDF founder and president, Grandmaster C. S. Kim. It was not a thumbs-up, but a fist-up event!



LEFT: Barefooted sword defense training with his father in 1978. **RIGHT:** Master Collins with two of his students, Lisa Wilson and Andrew Pack, who have won world championship tournaments.



ing with Master Kim, I had quit my career with the airlines, opened my school full time and become a full time Tang Soo Do instructor.

What finally inspired you to give up the financial security of your job in the airline industry and open a full time school?

Master Kim, who taught me not only the positive physical effects of Tang Soo Do, but--what really changed my life--its philosophy. He also gave me the encouragement to open my own school on a full time basis. This has had an amazing positive impact on my life. I started with one small school and now it has grown to five main training centers and 14 satellite programs in just six years.

What role do you play in your school system now that it has grown so large?

I oversee all the instructors, with regard to Tang Soo Do instruction, and the business operations as well. I want our organization to be the largest, with the highest quality facilities and teaching; all the things that our traditional art has to offer.

With so many schools and students how do you maintain quality within your school system?

I teach my instructors that you focus on teaching classes to your fullest potential and that your students will love you for it and you will be a success. I require my instructors to train with me personally at least one day per week. They must also attend business meetings as well as train on their teaching techniques while conducting a class that I attend. Afterwards, we debrief and talk about what worked and what didn't work. My father or I attend every testing to assure the art is not being modified and the students are learning what is required to become a suc-



LEFT: Black Belt Re-Certification Class. Master Collins keeps his black belts and his instructors on their collective toes by constantly upgrading their skills.

Youth are expected to embody the same dedication and commitment to excellence as the adults in the dojang.

Master Collins has 5 schools in Michigan: Gaylor (main school), Garden City, Flint, Davison, and Farmington. His students have 14 additional schools that belong to his satellite organization.



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cess in the martial arts.

What do you try to instill in your students who want to become instructors?

If they wish to be good instructors, they must love what they do and learn to have a personal approach to teaching. I try to teach them that along with keeping the traditional ideas that our art has to offer, instructors must also have good balance. You must be demanding, but you must also be caring. You also have to be disciplined yourself, and flexible to meet everyone's individual needs.

A good instructor will be successful if he or she believes that what they are doing has a positive impact on other people's lives, and instead of thinking only about monetary gain, they focus on teaching good traditional martial arts, and have a passion for doing the best they can for themselves and their students.

Do you still train with Master Kim?

Yes, and it is very intense. Master Kim has the ability to bring out the very best in you, regardless of how physically exhausted you become. He also gives all of us a lot of mental training that only an instructor of his experience can provide. The philosophy he teaches helps me to teach my students all that our traditional martial art has to offer.

So what you teach is very traditional?

Yes! The traditional systems have been tested through time and they are still here--the copies are fading out every day. I am proud to be a traditional school. Traditional martial artists have an inner pride and strength which they receive by learning from a true master in a traditional art. I have the good fortune to have such a teacher.

Personally, what is the most important aspect of your art?

Well, when I was in my teens, until I was about 23, all I wanted to do was spar. My dad would yell at me because I would spar his students for hours at each class. Then, as I began to truly understand the "Art" in martial art, my eyes were open to a whole new world. My instructor taught me the true essence of the traditional forms. After that my life, my attitude and my technique began to change. I noticed giant leaps, both physically and mentally, all due to the teachings on traditional hyung taught by a true master, my teacher, Grandmaster Kim.

Grandmaster Kim On Master Collins



Master Richard Collins Jr. exemplifies all the qualities needed to live the way of life of a traditional Tang Soo Do instructor. When he came to see me for the first time, I was impressed with his attitude. He also had a great personality. When he came to see me, he said that he did not belong to any organization and that he was a Tang Soo Do orphan. He wanted to join the International Tang Soo Do Federation, and I felt I could teach him not only kick and punch, but also the meaning of the way of life that Tang Soo Do teaches, and to live a humble and honest way of life.

Since our meeting he has become a very successful full time instructor. Master Collins

had a good career with the airlines so I was concerned about him leaving a good job and starting over as a full time instructor. Again, his attitude, his ability, and his loyalty put my mind at ease about his career change.

Traditional Tang Soo Do is a family and Master Collins is

a great member of our family. With my 50 years of experience, I believe that you should return all that you learn. Master Collins shows his integrity and shows me that he wants to give back all that he has learned, and for that, his future is very bright.



Master Collins credits Grm. C. S. Kim (above with Master Collins) for the inspiration to follow his dream of making martial arts his life's work.

Any last words?

I was teaching Tang Soo Do part time until Master Kim showed me a way that I could give back to our art and enjoy it as a full time instructor. I have been thankful everyday of my life to Master C. S. Kim and to my father, Master Richard Collins, Senior, for guiding me on the path I have chosen. My life has been fulfilled.

Written by Jeffrey "Zak" Szabo. Mr. Szabo is a Tang Soo Do instructor with Master C. S. Kim in Pittsburgh and is radio personality as well as a freelance writer.