



# MASTER MARCUS MURTAUGH

*Two Decades Of Training,  
Teaching &*  
**TANG SOO DO!**

By Zak Szabo



Recently, I had the opportunity to spend time with Tang Soo Do Master Marcus Murtaugh. Master Murtaugh is a Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania-based Tang Soo Do instructor under the direct supervision of Grandmaster C. S. Kim, the president and founder of the International Tang Soo Do Federation. Master Murtaugh teaches full time and has dedicated his life to the spread of traditional Tang Soo Do.

Master Murtaugh has received many accolades during his years as a martial artist from serving as a board member on the International Tang Soo Do Federation's Technical Advisory Committee to "Martial Artist of the Year" to tournament champion. Recently, Master Murtaugh talked with me about his experiences as an instructor as well as maintaining his special abilities through decades of training.

**ZAC SZABO: Master Murtaugh, tell us about your early years.**

**MASTER MURTAUGH:** I was born and reared in Eastern Pennsylvania in the South Hills of Pittsburgh, about ten miles from the city of Pittsburgh. I am the youngest of three children. **Were there early influences that manifested into your interest to study martial arts?**

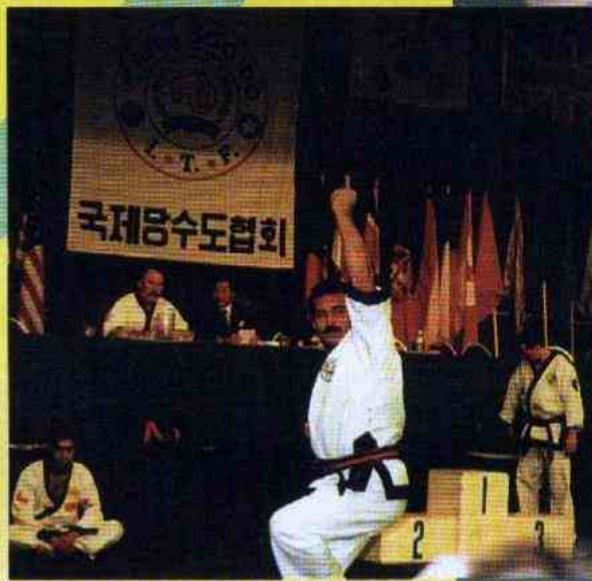
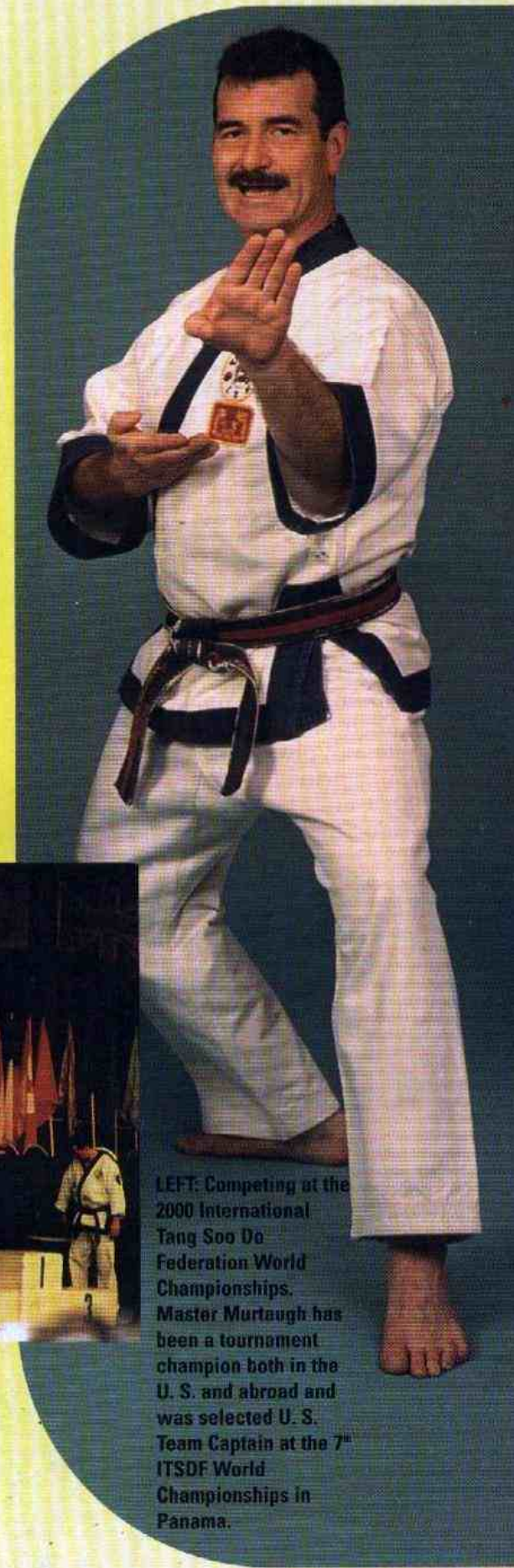
I can recall two early influences that happened about the same time. Around 1960, I was about seven or eight-years-old at the time, a teenager from the neighborhood bought a martial arts book. At this time in America, martial arts were not well-known so, as you can imagine, seeing this text intrigued me. It sparked my interest; it looked so impressive. His book was one of the very early prints of a martial art book that gave step-by-step instructions on generic or, should I say, basic Karate movements. As my friend learned from the book, he would attempt to teach me the moves. I don't know how correct it all was but, nonetheless, that interest led me to where I am today.

**You mentioned that there were two influences...**

Actually, my other influence, as funny as it may seem, came from watching variety shows on television. As I said, at that time martial arts were not as well-known as they are today. Variety shows portrayed the mystique with amazing demonstrations by experts in the martial arts who were usually breaking some hard object with their hands and feet, or just breaking something off someone's head! I guess I was like a lot of other children and adults who are captivated by the impressive demonstrations by martial art masters. Those demonstrations excited me enough to be in this profession to this very day. However, anyone who really studies a true martial art knows that impressive demonstrations are just a small part of it.

**When did you begin your formal training in martial arts?**

As you know, training in martial arts was not a popular thing to do where and when I grew up. There was little known about the martial arts, and there were definitely not many schools in the Pittsburgh area at the time. My interest, although always with me, took a back seat to all of the other distractions and interests that fill up your teenage and young adult life; but with the desire still there, I searched out a school at the age of twenty-eight.



**LEFT: Competing at the 2000 International Tang Soo Do Federation World Championships. Master Murtaugh has been a tournament champion both in the U. S. and abroad and was selected U. S. Team Captain at the 7<sup>th</sup> ITSDF World Championships in Panama.**

## MASTER MARCUS MURTAUGH: TWO DECADES OF TANG SOO DO!

### Was Grandmaster Kim your first instructor?

Actually, no: I signed-up at one Master Kim's branch schools under the direction of Mr. Scott Johnson. I did not meet Grandmaster Kim until my first belt promotion test.

### Why did you become a Tang Soo Do instructor?

I have always considered myself a student, and still do, but I distinctly remember being an orange belt and wanting to become an instructor. I realized this from the beginning of my training.

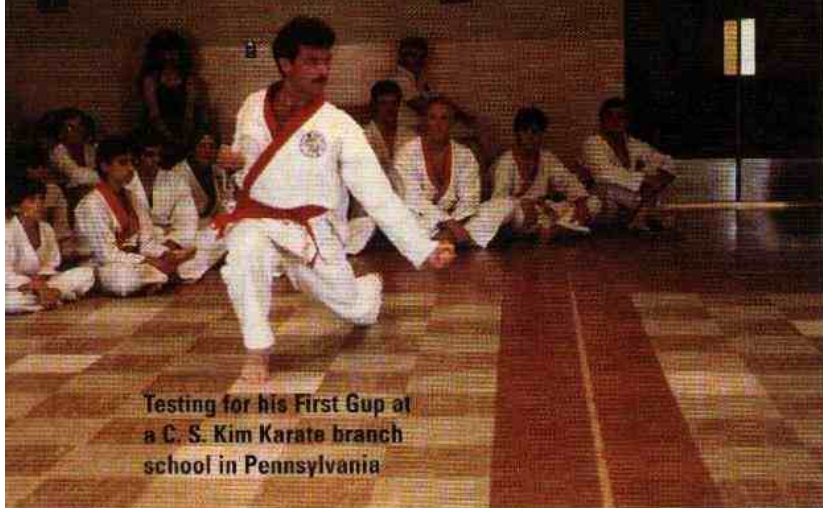
Watching my instructor, seeing how he taught and dealt with his students made me think that it would be a great way to spend the majority of one's day. And I never grew tired of Tang Soo Do; I would train on my own before and after class and at home. I felt that if I could do this for a living, it would be both a rewarding and an enjoyable experience. I would also like to add that I really saw a need in society to guide and direct our youth. I felt the need to contribute to young people's lives and I wanted to be a person in their lives that would help them make the right choices. With drugs and alcohol, and even peer pressure, our children need a lot of direction. I felt if I could become an instructor, I would be able to be

a positive influence for our young people.

### Any teaching experience before opening your school?

Yes, I helped my instructor teach private lessons and some group classes. I always yearned for the chance to help and gain confidence by teaching others. Doing that also solidified my desire to teach for a living.

**BELOW, from left:** Testing for his Fifth Dan (seated second from left). Testing for his First Dan (back row, third from right).



Testing for his First Gup at a C. S. Kim Karate branch school in Pennsylvania

### How did you find a place to train?

At that time, I was working in a health club and one of my co-workers was a student at one of Grandmaster C. S. Kim's Karate schools. He showed me some of the things he had learned and talked a lot about it. I finally made the decision to find out for myself what it would be like to train in an organized setting. When I got there, I was hooked! I really felt that I could not pass-up this opportunity.

### Why did you believe that it was an opportunity that you couldn't pass-up?

Well, along with all of the things that friends, books and television impressed me about Karate training, I saw some things lacking in my life; not physically, but spiritually. I felt that I needed something that would teach me control and discipline. When I learned that martial art training could do this for me, it became apparent that I needed it in my life.

**RIGHT:** Talking to his students after a belt test at his school.

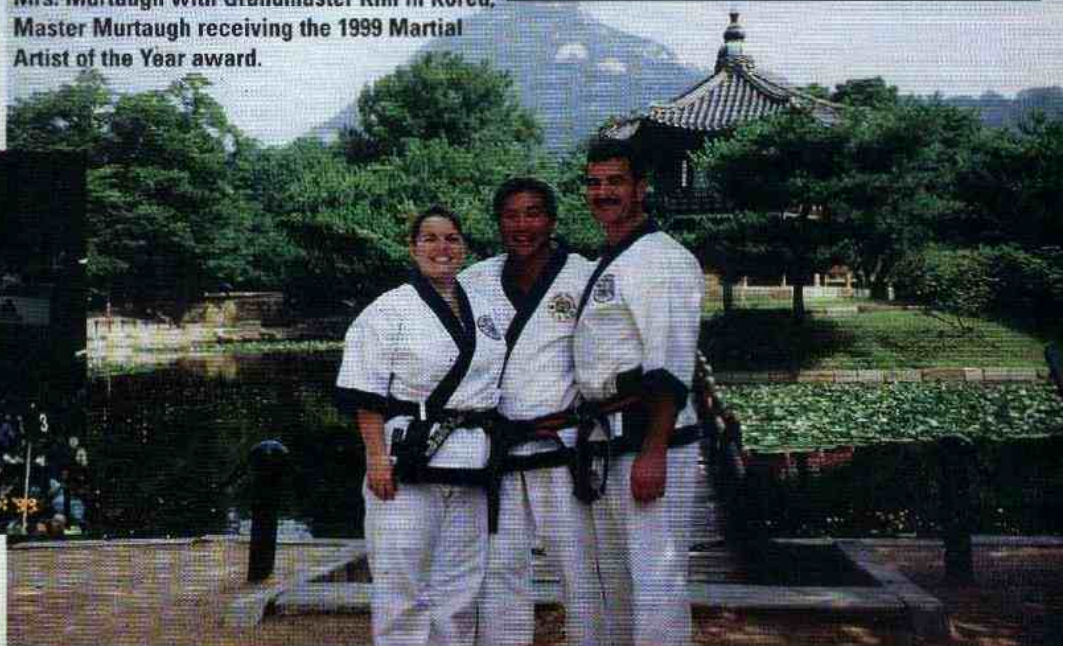


"He not only displays great technique, he displays a great attitude and knows the true meaning of loyalty. He was chosen to be on the Technical Advisory Committee of the International Tang Soo Do Federation not only for what he can do physically but also for his inner strength which is an example for all to follow. In tournament competition, whether in victory or defeat, he demonstrates a winning attitude and technique every time he competes. He is very well-liked throughout the Federation, I believe, because of the things that I know that he is. I am surely glad to have him with us in the International Tang Soo Do Federation."

**GRANDMASTER C. S. KIM**

"With drugs and alcohol, and even peer pressure, our children need a lot of direction."

**CLOCKWISE: Grandmaster Kim demonstrates the finer points of a side snap kick; Master and Mrs. Murtaugh with Grandmaster Kim in Korea; Master Murtaugh receiving the 1999 Martial Artist of the Year award.**



## MASTER MARCUS MURTAUGH:

TWO DECADES OF  
TANG SOO DO!

"...I believe traditional  
Tang Soo Do is the  
best activity a person  
can do at any age."

"...there's so  
much practice to  
do and so little  
time to do it!"



Practicing self-  
defense with a  
student: his wife,  
Nancy Murtaugh.



### When did you open your own facility?

Soon after I received my black belt, I had the opportunity to teach under the direct supervision of Grandmaster Kim. With his permission, I opened my school in 1988 in Beaver County, a suburb of Pittsburgh. The school's name is C. S. Kim Karate, and is under the direction of Grandmaster Kim. **It's been 14 years since you opened your own school, what has kept you in this profession?**

Many factors have helped me with my success as well as staying with this profession over the years. I feel that the most important factor is teaching a traditional martial art like Tang Soo Do in which long term personal development is the ultimate goal. The philosophy and techniques being timeless, so to speak, don't follow fads or trends. Tang Soo Do has staying power. Another thing that keeps me motivated is the guidance of my instructor and the senior masters that I work with everyday.

**"Your muscles have a memory... they will do things fast and correct when they are supposed to."**

Their knowledge and experience of how to teach and deal with people are invaluable to me. I thank them daily for their direction.

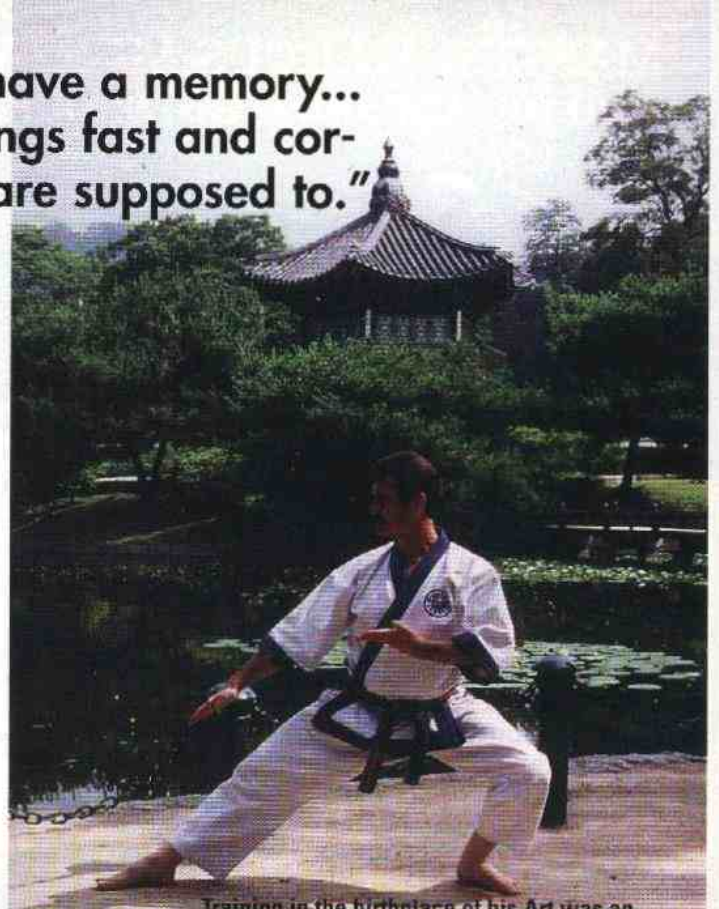
**I know that you serve on the Technical Advisory Committee for the International Tang Soo Do Federation.**

Yes, and let me tell you, I was surprised and honored that Grandmaster C. S. Kim thought enough of me to appoint me to this committee.

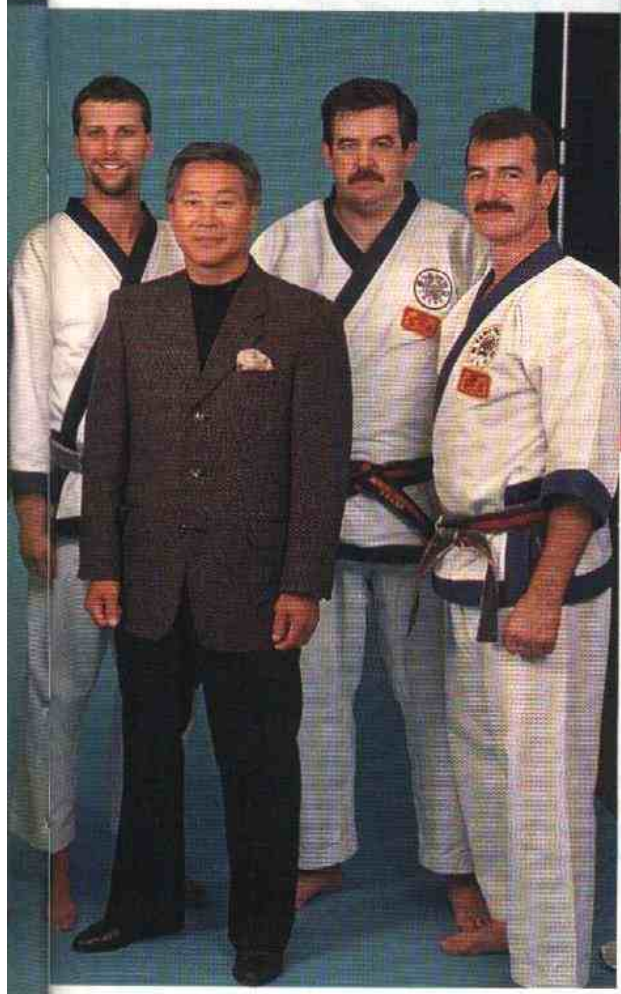
**What are the duties of the position?**

It is our job to assist Grandmaster Kim on the technical requirements for all of the International Tang Soo Do Federation schools worldwide. The standards are demanding and many. Master Kim selected the committee to assist with decisions on basic techniques as well as other aspects of training such as requirements for promoting students in rank and assisting him in his weekly travels all over the world to conduct classes and seminars on the teaching and the philosophy of traditional Tang Soo Do.

**With all the responsibilities to your students and fellow instructors, do you have time for personal training and conditioning?**



Training in the birthplace of his Art was an outstanding experience not only for Master Murtaugh but for all who joined their Grandmaster on the journey "home."



**ABOVE:** Receiving dan certification from Grandmaster Kim. **LEFT:** At the TKDT photo shoot from left: Master Mike Neil, TKDT publisher Grandmaster Chung Kim, Kyo Sa Nim Joseph Fitzgerald, Grandmaster Chun Sik Kim, Master Wynford Williams of Wales, and Master Murtaugh

I make time for it. It is important as an instructor to stay on top of everything, including conditioning ourselves as instructors. **Do you mind my asking how old you are?**

In November of 2002, I will be 49 years old. I wish I could say somewhere in my mid-twenties! **Why is that?**

The body changes in my age group.

**Many people over forty have begun training in martial arts.**

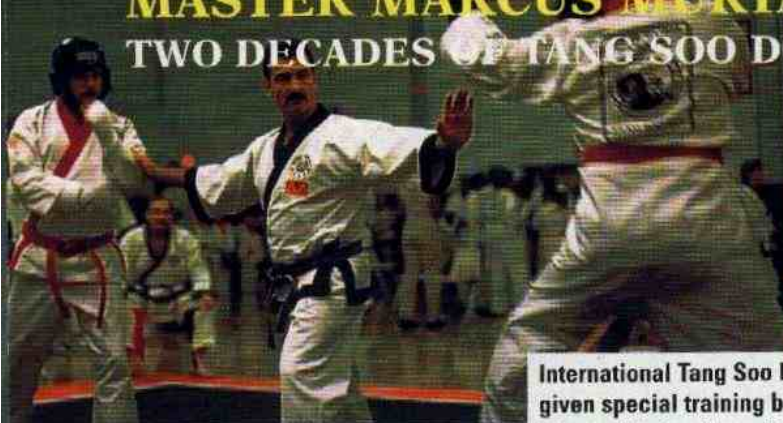
**Do you have any advice for them?**

I tell them honestly that I believe traditional Tang Soo Do is the best activity a person can do at any age. It is truly the best thing a person can do for themselves to improve their physical and mental well-being.

Physically, you get a complete body workout; you use all of your muscles through a full range of motion. You develop flexibility that, as you get older, helps prevent injury and increase energy, improve balance and coordination, and it provides the ever-important cardiovascular benefits.

However, I think the most important part of practicing a traditional martial art is the mental aspect. For adults in their 30's and 40's, stress release and peace of mind are invaluable. When you train, you are guaranteed one hour of time

# MASTER MARCUS MURTAUGH: TWO DECADES OF TANG SOO DO DELIGHT!



International Tang Soo Do Federation referees are given special training before they step into a ring. Here, Master Murtaugh applies what he has learned!

where your focus is not on work or stress; it's on learning and improving yourself so that you can go back out into the world and better deal with all of it.

### Do you have a personal training schedule?

Operating a school full time makes it difficult to have a routine schedule. Everyday I devote some time to Tang Soo Do. Unfortunately, there's so much practice to do and so little time to do it! I always emphasize the hand and foot basics of

I cannot fail to mention training once a week with Grandmaster C. S. Kim. During his weekly black belt class, we review our requirements and he corrects us if needed. He teaches us traditional Tang Soo Do philosophy and what it takes to improve our lives with its use.

### Speaking of Grandmaster Kim, I know that you have a strong opinion of him...

What can I say that would be enough? He is a rock of consistency from the day that I met him.



FROM LEFT: Master Murtaugh teaching the basics at a seminar in Newburgh, NY. With a student at a tournament. Teaching etiquette at the seminar in Newburgh.

training since they are the foundation to all that we do in Tang Soo Do training. I spend a lot of time with my hyung (forms) because they are the heart of our training and balance it off with other types of exercise as well. Several days a week, I do resistance training and cardiovascular workouts such as running or using my Nordic track.

### Has age slowed your training in any way?

The most frustrating part of getting older is the recovery time between workouts. The body doesn't repair itself as it does when you are younger, but I do notice that I train smarter to compensate for the longer recovery time.

### What do you mean by training smarter?

I've learned to pace myself and listen better to my body than when I was younger. When it comes to actually training in traditional Tang Soo Do, I don't always practice full speed or hard. I break things down and do them correctly paying attention to the quality of the technique. Your muscles have a memory. If taught correctly, they will do things fast and correct when they are supposed to.

He never stops. In all aspects of life, he daily demonstrates what he has learned through traditional Tang Soo Do. At 62, he has endless energy. He is a mentor and a guide; he truly "walks the walk" so to speak.

### Final words?

I would like to mention the support of my wife who is a fourth degree black belt. She understands how I feel about Tang Soo Do and the commitment it takes to be successful in this profession. The key to my success is her understanding and support.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Zak Szabo is a freelance writer and radio personality in Pittsburgh. He is also a certified instructor and teaches under the direct supervision of Grandmaster C. S. Kim and is a member of the International Tang Soo Do Technical Advisory Committee.