

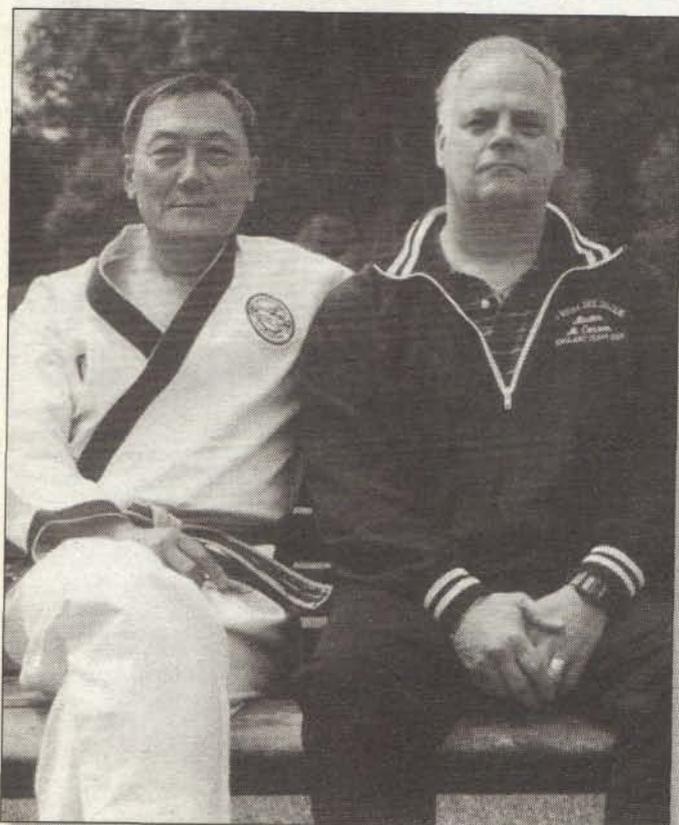
'The martial arts should be about brotherhood!'

Tang Soo Do Grandmaster Ki Yun Yi

with Master Martin Carson

Grandmaster Ki Yun Yi (8th degree) is one of the fittest looking sixty year olds you will see, with a physique and way of carrying himself that hints of a man half his age. He is also incredibly laid-back, with a gentle sense of humour and a genuine, modest nature. His principles are old-school, reflected in the fact that he turns down many more organisations than he allows join his IMA, tradition and family values at the heart of his philosophy.

Within that framework England's Suresh Nar (5th degree) has flourished to the point that not only is he hosting the organisation's 5th World championships but he is also proudly presenting three new Masters, trained by himself, to be inaugurated at the tournament, whilst also ensuring that the Grandmaster's sixtieth birthday is a memorable event. To this end, Master Nar invited TKD to talk to Grandmaster Yi and American Master Martin Carson (6th degree) on the eve of the championships.



TKD-KMA: This is your fiftieth anniversary within martial arts-how do you stay motivated for such a period of time?

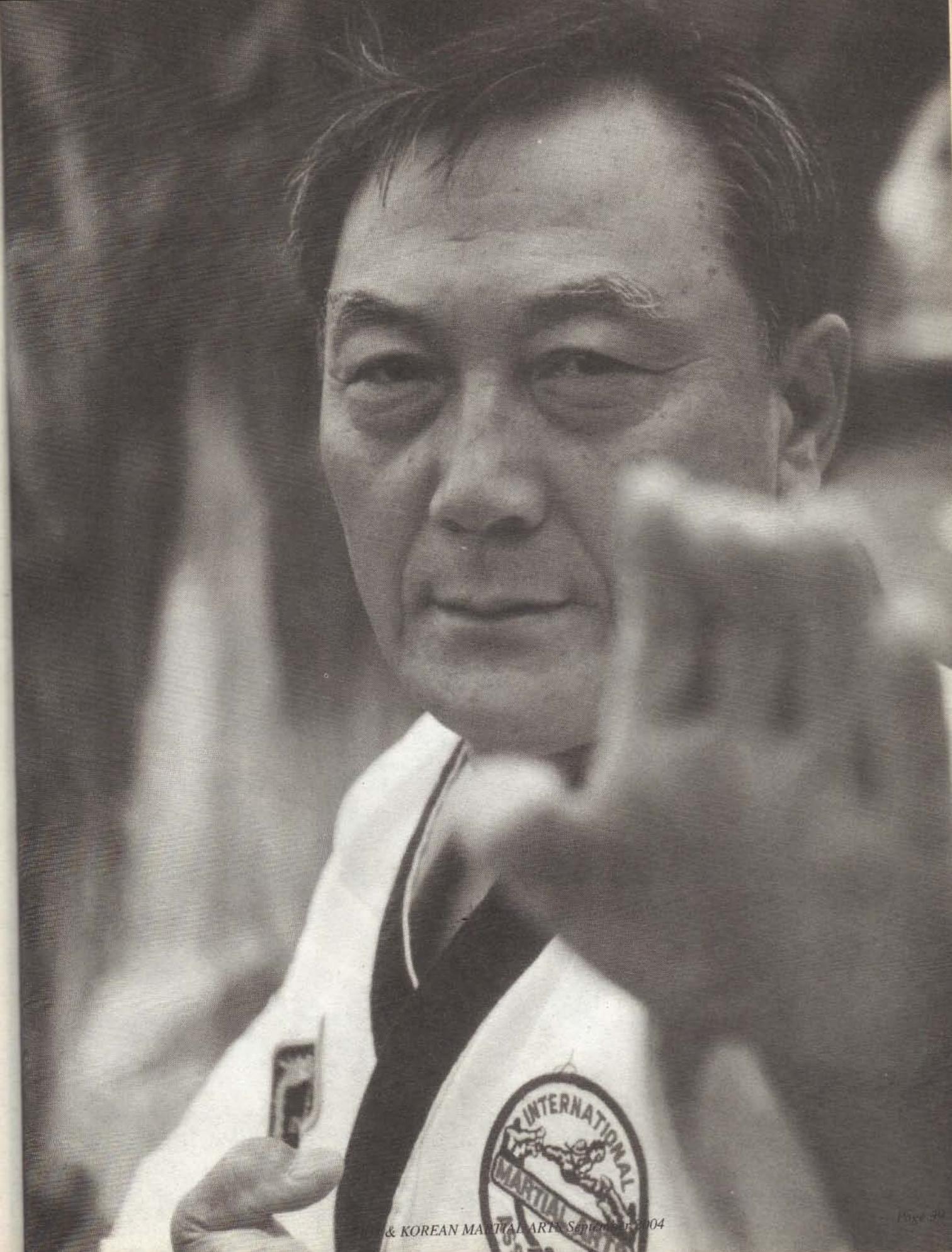
Ki Yun Yi: Actually, it's a little bit over fifty years and I guess you need to motivate yourself in different ways and it's important to have a lot of good people around you to let them motivate you too, so it's a give and take thing. I was fortunate to have 'Marty' and Master Nar and they keep me up because I need to be at the top to teach them, so I had to work hard myself.

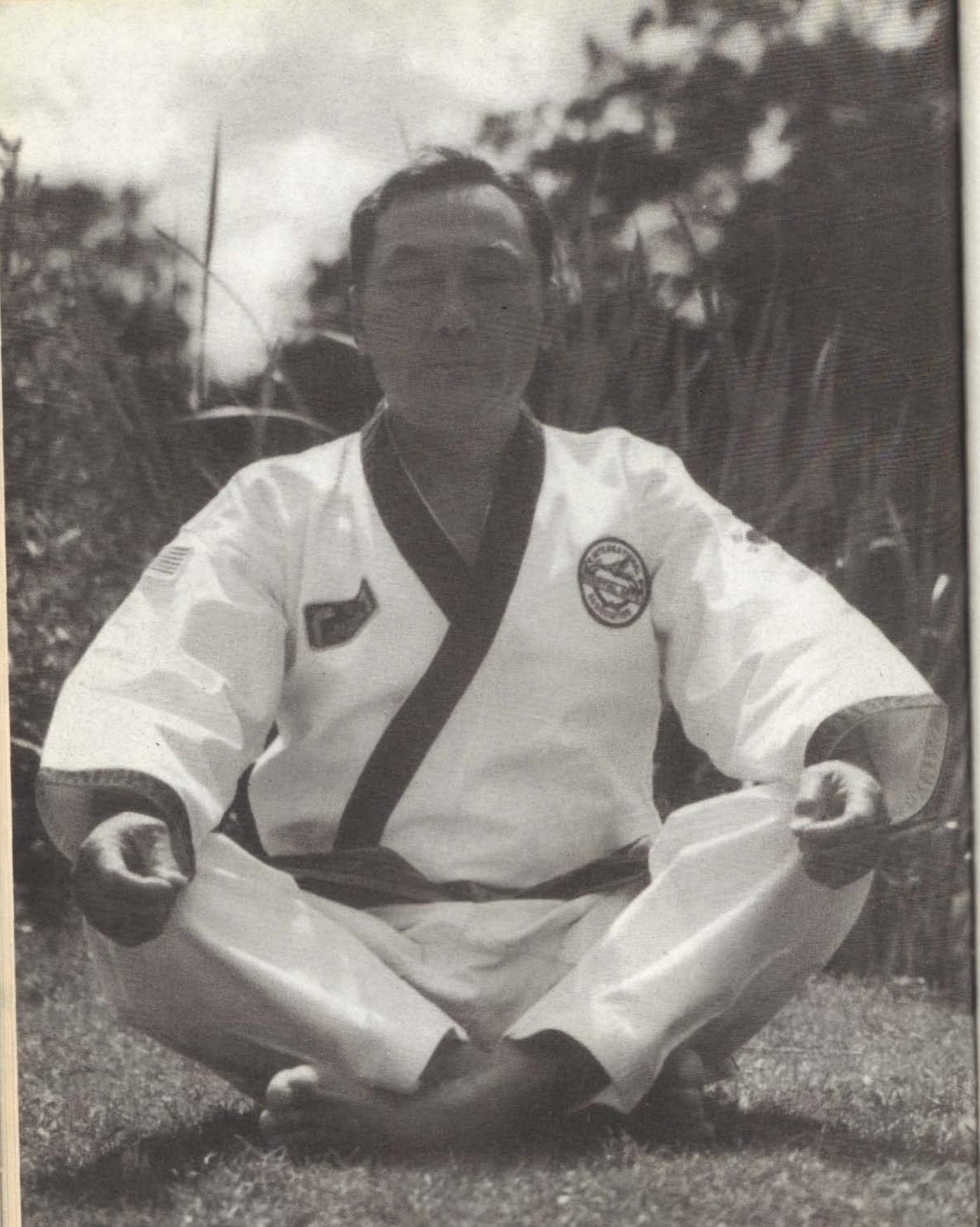
TKD-KMA: How does the Grandmaster motivate you Marty?

Martin Carson: First of all, by his example, being in the gym every day, working hard and then the time he takes with all students-the time and effort that he gives makes the difference for every student as it draws their intensity out, just by seeing him working as hard as he does. If he works hard, then everybody works hard.

TKD-KMA: You are in incredible shape, with the body of a man half your age. What's your secret, Grandmaster?

Ki Yun Yi: To represent different bodies and organisations I need to stay in shape but it's just normal workouts, nothing





special, just some cardio and watching what I'm eating and the basic routines that you do every day. I think anyone can do it if they have the determination.

TKD-KMA: *Martial Arts can change dramatically over fifty years, what are your views on these changes?*

Ki Yun Yi: As far as change goes, it's because different generations have different mind-sets, different ways of thinking and it is good to develop new things but I think they can forget what they had before and it's good that a few people still try to maintain the traditional Tang Soo Do and I hope that those people continue to do that. Until the day that I die, I want to keep what I have, that's why I don't have too many fancy things, other than what's in my head and what I know.

TKD-KMA: *You are the president for the International Martial Arts Association for Tang Soo Do, what do you see as your responsibilities in the role?*

Ki Yun Yi: I need to keep updating my knowledge and do what I am supposed to do, mentally and physically, and make sure that everybody works together, not too much of this 'what can you do so that you're the best' and stuff like that.

TKD-KMA: *What's your view on this aspect, Marty?*

Ki Yun Yi: His role is the guidance and keeping Tang Soo Do, within the association, very traditional and yet still

moving towards the future. The best thing he has brought to the martial arts in general is the fact that he's a very open individual and is willing to expound upon his knowledge to the best of his ability. Traditionally, martial arts was done with repetition and following of your leader and that's what he does—we follow his example by keeping ourselves in shape, no matter what.

TKD-KMA: *How do you handle what is an almost political, diplomatic role?*

Ki Yun Yi: I was involved in some larger organisations until my senior instructors retired and I said 'either you follow me or go to a different organisation; we don't need to create politics'. I hate politics and I don't think there should be any within traditional systems. We don't have any problems because I don't like politics and if there are problems they are always free to come talk with me and resolve them.

TKD-KMA: *You moved to America in 1974 and I hear the screening process before you were chosen was very tough.*

Ki Yun Yi: At the time it was tough and I just couldn't put into few words how hard it was because it was all the martial artists dream to go to a different country to teach and make a living. Luckily I got the ticket and now I'm here and meeting a lot of good people. When I went to America I had visions for my Tang Soo Do career and my family and in



reality I didn't have too many problems because I had taught some American personnel in Korea. It's not easy to settle and it was Marty who gave me my first colour television (laughs) I had never seen a colour tv in Korea! Fortunately I had a lot of good people surrounding me and making me comfortable.

TKD-KMA: *What were your goals at that time?*

Ki Yun Yi: The main thing was I wanted to develop Tang Soo Do in different parts of America and show what the true martial art can do for people. There are so many martial arts in the States now, so it's tough. We're a little organisation but what we have is very solid and we work very hard and what I emphasise is that we may not have 20,000 members but we truly know what Tang Soo Do means.

TKD-KMA: *What was it like on the other side of the fence, Marty?*

Martin Carson: (laughs) I remember the first day he came in...the training has changed and in the beginning he was a scary guy. I can still remember the third class and we were working out really hard, sweating well and he's at the back of the dojang kicking the concrete wall with his big toe until he took a chip out of it (laughs). I had to ask him why he was doing that and he said that some days the board is a little higher when you do the jump front kick and instead of

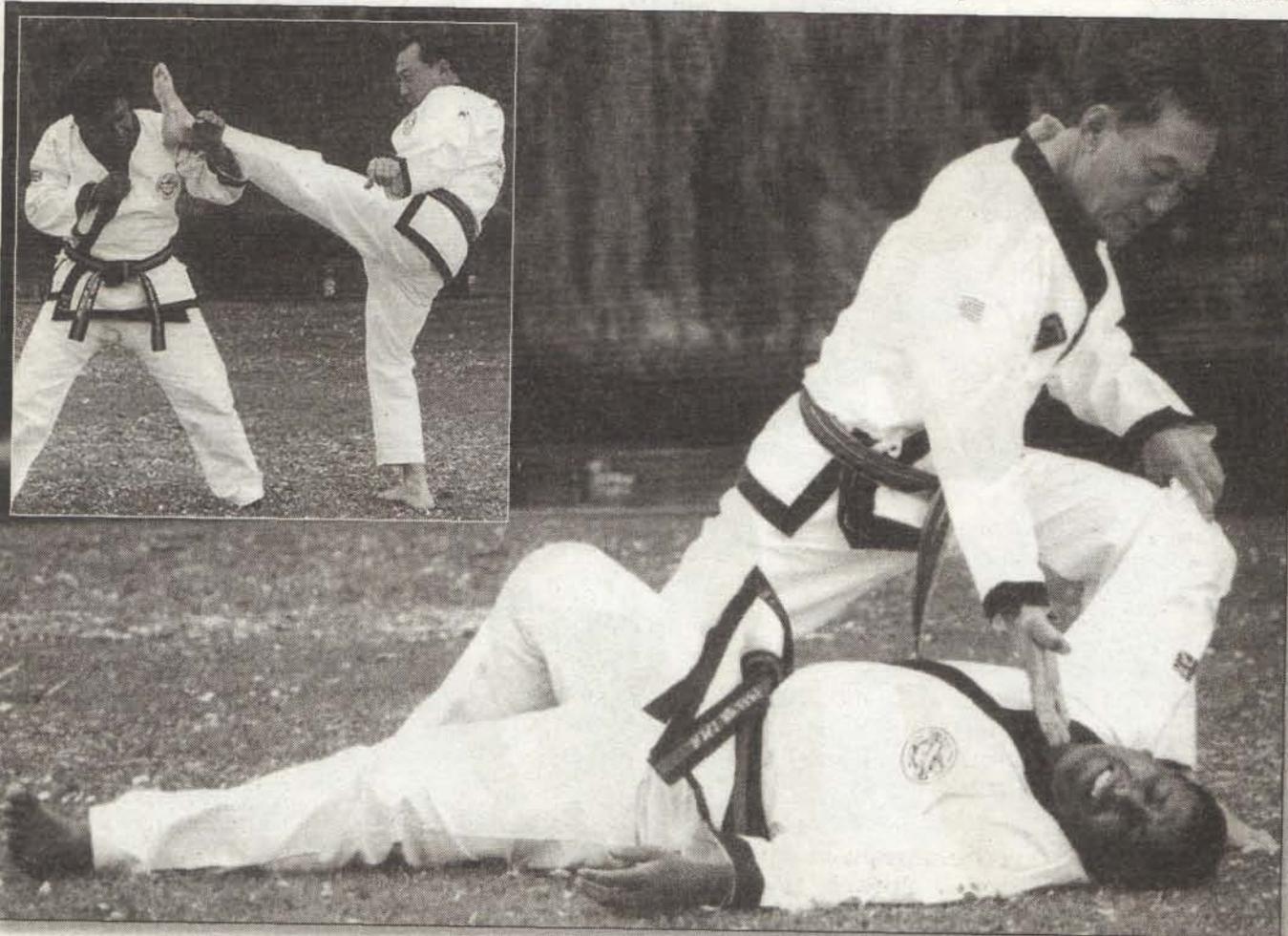
the ball of your foot your toe better break the board! So it is a different philosophy.

TKD-KMA: *Tell us about your famed kicking ability-didn't you use to jump over cows?!!*

Ki Yun Yi: Uh, yeah (laughs). We used to jump over little trees and then build up to a cow- we did a bunch of crazy things! And it wasn't a calf, it was a cow, but to do that it never just happens one time...you go underneath sometimes or end up just bouncing off of the cow (laughs) but you've got to do it! To a certain degree we also kicked the same branch on a tree, as we and it grew, but naturally the tree grew faster than our skill but that's the type of mindset I want to develop, that nothing is impossible up to a certain degree.

TKD-KMA: *You're inaugurating three new Masters, trained under Master Nar, in Europe. What does this mean to you on a personal level?*

Ki Yun Yi: As far as our association goes, it's a tremendous asset and I'm really excited about it. Personally, I'm grateful to those people to have stayed that long and become part of our life. I really think it's going to be a big thing for the European association and myself. As a Master, you probably have to work harder than regular 4th grade black belts, as I have a 4th grade testing and then, if they prove to be of good character, have good technique and work for the association,



then I let them test for Master rank. Master Nar has travelled frequently to the United States, so standards are pretty much the same and they definitely work hard in Europe.

TKD-KMA: You get a lot of calls to join the association yet you turn most of them down. Why is this?

Ki Yun Yi: I have been involved I lots of organisations in the past and what we have is little but it is family orientated. Every time when somebody calls I inform Master Carson and Master Nar and we discuss it and they must be of benefit to our family and to make a long story short it doesn't mean that just because they are a big organisation (that wants to join us) that they are qualified to join the IMA-we want to keep a tight family atmosphere.

TKD-KMA: With that family in mind, what do the World championships (in England the following day) represent?

Ki Yun Yi: It's a motivating event for our family and we make every effort to get together and meet each other, European and American families-it's a big time for them to get together.

Martin Carson: It's that bonding and the championships have grown tremendously. The first year we brought people over the total number was somewhere around thirty and this time it's about one hundred and six. It's that feeling of camaraderie between the two worlds and by bringing everyone together to compete as a family it just strengthens that closeness. To me, it's probably the most binding part of what the martial arts are all about, that brotherhood that the martial arts should be all about, who wins is really of little significance.

TKD-KMA: If I can bring Master Nar in for this one-how important is it to you that the 5th championships are being held in England?

Suresh Nar: Firstly it's promoting Tang Soo Do IMA in England and Europe, secondly it's a great honour and privilege to be hosting it because it's also Grandmaster's sixtieth birthday and so it's a great privilege to be celebrating this occasion with the Grandmaster here in the UK. In addition we have the three Masters inauguration at the tournament tomorrow, trained by myself, and this is a tremendous achievement for us here in the UK and for me it will be the highlight of tomorrow's event.

TKD-KMA: What are your plans for the future, Grandmaster?

Ki Yun Yi: Whoever wants to work with us, as a family member, then I want to expand more, it may only be only one or two (organisations) in ten years, I don't care, as long as they live and die with us, that's the sort of person I want to expand with.

For more info visit www.europeantangsoodo.com or contact Master Suresh Nar, Chief Instructor Europe 01234 766468.

