

## \* *The Fist of Hwang Kee*

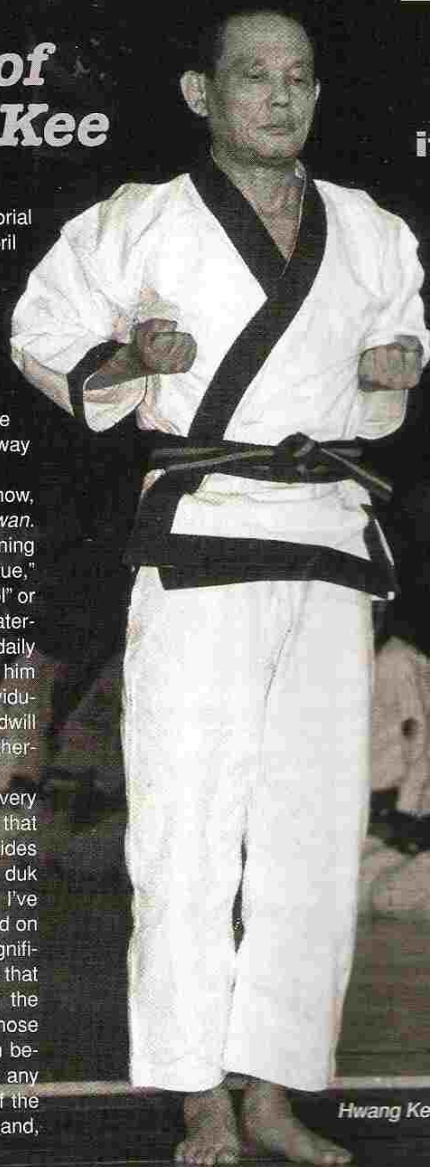
I just read Robert W. Young's editorial about what was on his bookshelf (April 2007) and was inspired because he said that one of the books he keeps at home was given to him by my grandfather, Hwang Kee. "He was as nice a man as you could ever hope to meet," Young wrote. That meant a great deal to me because he emphasized martial arts practice as a way to forge character.

• For those of you who don't know, Hwang is the founder of *moo duk kwan*. Moo is the character for martial, meaning "to stop conflict." Duk translates as "virtue," and kwan can be interpreted as "school" or "brotherhood." He started a martial fraternity. He loved to train and did so on a daily basis. Founding the fraternity allowed him to mingle with other like-minded individuals. He even hosted international goodwill tournaments in Korea to promote brotherhood.

If you've been in the martial arts for very long, you've probably seen an emblem that shows a fist with a wreath on both sides and a scroll underneath. It's the moo duk kwan fist or at least a version of it. I've spoken with people who had it tattooed on their arms but were unaware of its significance. It's too bad they don't know all that it symbolizes. The scroll represents the ever-evolving quest to learn. Hwang chose not to have a black belt in his system because it's a finite color—it cannot get any darker, hence it represents the end of the journey. A martial artist, on the other hand, never stops evolving.

A positive attribute that's seen more often in the mixed martial arts than in traditional schools is sharing. A stand-up fighter

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Hwang Kee

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who practices *muay Thai* won't hesitate to sign up at a Brazilian *jiu-jitsu* school to balance his skills. That mind-set can help foster world peace through human relations, which my grandfather firmly believed in. Training hard with someone you don't know can promote understanding and transcend language barriers. Consider the following, which comes from the training journal I kept in high school:

"We both smile and put our arms around each other's sweat-drenched bodies, and together we walk away from the battlefield. It is funny how just in that small period of time we both think of every possible way, method, technique and combination that would have allowed us to land a blow effectively. Yet as we walk away, we are friends, partners, brothers ... we become one through the 10 minutes of life we experience that is all our own."

Those lines describe a sparring match I had in Korea with a *hapkido* practitioner named Jung Un. He introduced me to the concept of economy of motion. His guard was so relaxed that he barely seemed awake, yet when he struck, he was like a cobra. He also taught me how to leg-check kicks. I returned to the United States and showed my old training partner the leg checks. His investigation into them altered his path in the arts, as well. If more people recognized the value of sharing, the world would be a better place.

A few years ago, I attended a *sambo* seminar conducted by Scott Sonnon, who's simply amazing at what he does. He's also one of the most genuine men I've ever met. His RMAX tribe is a brotherhood of martial artists from various backgrounds who come together to train in an egoless environment. There are other groups that share this spirit. I implore all martial artists to create a movement in which we share what we know and learn things we don't know. The well-being of our society and our descendants depends on it.

It's time to raise a nondenominational fist and unite in the spirit of the giants' shoulders upon which we stand. Just as four fingers and a thumb come together to make one powerful fist, we must come together to let the public know that we're more than just a bunch of thugs or jokers making funny noises. We are people of character who contribute to our communities. **Fist!** ✊

*About the author:*

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