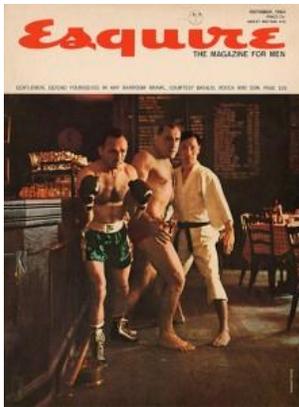


## Grandmaster Duk Sung Son

*Written by: David Schwartz*

In this day and age where sport style Tae Kwon Do is so prolific, it may surprise many to learn that there is a whole world of Tae Kwon Do which at its core believes in the principal of strong blocks and a single strike so powerful that a fight would ideally end in one blow. No man was a greater champion for this approach to Tae Kwon Do than Grandmaster Duk Sung Son. *Grandmaster Son passed away a year ago this week and as a former student, I feel a responsibility to share his unique contributions to the art of Tae Kwon Do with the broader Martial Arts community.*

## Early Days In Korea



To paint the picture of GM Son, we must start with the background of his instructor, Won Kuk Lee. As a university student in Japan, Won Kuk Lee had studied directly with Gichin Funakoshi, the founding father of Shotokan. Under Funakoshi's instruction, Lee had obtained the rank of 4th Dan. Such high rank was quite rare at that point and Lee had distinguished himself as both a student and instructor. Upon the end of the Japanese occupation, in 1944/45, Lee established the Chung Do Kwan (Blue Wave Gym).

The Chung Do Kwan is considered to be the first Dojang opened in Korea's post-occupation era and along with numerous other Kwans, they would come together and unify under a single national Martial Art. This newly established Martial art would represent the strength and dignity of the national identity the Koreans were now free to express, it would be Korean, not Japanese, and the name of this art would be **Tae Kwon Do**. Despite the rich heritage of an ancient Korean art called Tae Kyon, which had been secretly practiced during the occupation, the Japanese influence during the period of 1910-1945 was obviously great in many aspects of Korean culture and the Martial Arts were no exception.

The forms studied in early Chung Do Kwan were essentially Shotokan forms due to Funakoshi's having been Won Kuk Lee's instructor. Despite being Karate forms in origin, the Chung Do Kwan began to become increasingly unique in their execution. While other styles, such as Tang Soo Do had a noticeable Chinese influence, Chung Do

Kwan had developed a unique emphasis on powerful kicks and crippling blocks. Grandmaster Son studied under Won Kuk Lee and began teaching in 1942. By 1953 Son had become the second President of the Chung Do Kwan in Seoul, having assumed leadership upon Lee migrating to Japan.



In the 1950s Grandmaster Son had numerous prominent teaching posts, Son was the Chief Instructor of the Korean Army (ROK), Hongik College, and the Korean Military Academy. Son was indeed a founding father of Tae Kwon Do as he was one of the leaders who actually chose and ratified 'Tae Kwon Do' as the name by which the newly unified art would present itself.



## **New Forms of Tae Kwon Do And Move to New York**

Among his contributions, Grandmaster Son introduced two new forms (the Kuk Mu series), for training of the Korean military and thus expands the Chung Do Kwan curriculum to now include forms that were Korean in origin. Trained as a boxer in his teens, Son placed a tremendous emphasis on physical conditioning; this combined with the power Chung Do Kwan had begun to root itself in, and the deep stances from the Funakoshi era, a unique style of Tae Kwon Do was formed.



Seeking to free himself from the Post war political upheaval, and to focus on his passion for practicing and teaching Tae Kwon Do, Grandmaster Son moved to New York in 1962 where he would establish the Tae Han Karate Association, then in 1967 the World Tae Kwon Do Association. Son was a featured demonstrator at the World's Fair in NY 1965-66. Throughout the 1960s, he traveled by bus & train to universities across the Northeast, teaching daily at multiple locations and developed a large, dedicated student body, many of whom began teaching themselves.



Eventually Grandmaster Son would establish a permanent Dojang in New York City which would also serve as the World Tae Kwon Do Associations Headquarters. In 1968 Grandmaster Son wrote along with Robert Clark, one of the definitive Tae Kwon Do text book "Korean Karate- The Art of Tae Kwon Do". A follow up book "Black Belt Korean Karate" was published in 1982. Grandmaster Son personally taught all his classes and led class regularly until 2010. Grand Master Duk Sung Son died March 29, 2011 in, Newport, RI and left behind an enduring legacy.

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**David Schwartz** is an avid practitioner of Tae Kwon Do who received his first Black Belt from Grandmaster Son in 1988. When he's not teaching Tae Kwon Do at Drexel University in Philadelphia or attending a workshop, he enjoys traveling the world and has been to 49 of the 50 states as well as Germany, England, Italy and Scotland. He is a senior writer for Pimsleur Approach, a leading retailer of language learning courses including **How To Speak Brazilian Portuguese** and **How To Speak Japanese**.



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