



"Mu In Bul Sung" No patience, no victory. Hangs in the Spring Branch DoJang.

"People learn martial arts for a variety of reasons. I have found the students who are most effective, who endure, and create the best results, tend to be those with sincere causes..."

No Patience, No Victory

by Grandmaster Kim Soo, 10th. Dan & Founder, Chayon-Ryu Martial Arts

Asking 100 different martial artists why they began studying martial arts would probably result in at least 100 different answers. All humans have unique experiences which shape and galvanize their lives, influencing decisions and choices they make. The larger the magnitude of these experiences, the greater the impact they have, either positively or negatively.

Humans have the gifts of ancestors' experiences in oral and documented history. Through stories told by books, pictures and videos, one can examine tragedies -- war, famine, pestilence, urban crime, natural disasters, industrial accidents. Human beings use such knowledge to change negative experiences into positive accomplishments.

I began martial arts training to regain my confidence. As a child, I was cheerful, active, and in good health. Then suddenly, in January 1951, my life changed forever; I was in the fifth grade. The Red Chinese, surprising the UN troops led by General Douglas MacArthur, entered the Korean War by overrunning Seoul. About 30-90% of the city's population left for the southern part of the country. My family was scattered; I walked with my mother and two sisters over 300 miles, along the railroad tracks to the city of Masan.

We survived by doing odds and ends. I sold newspapers in the morning, and at night made kim bop (Korean hors d'oeuvres similar to sushi) with the youngest of my sisters. The next day, in the afternoon and evening, we would sell it to volunteers in the Korean Army camp in Masan. One morning, while delivering newspapers, I noticed a man training in the cold winter air with no shirt on. He was hitting a makawara board. I came back and watched him training several times. One day he shouted, "You want to learn something?" He started teaching me kima sae chiruki (horseriding stance).

This young man (22-23 years old) taught me until, one day, he disappeared. Fortunately for me, about that time we found my father. It was hard to make a living in the south of Korea then; my parents decided to move back to Seoul, sneaking at night over the Han River (a river that runs through the city). Around the same time, the Red Chinese returned back to North Korea, after which UN forces recaptured Seoul.

I returned to the fifth grade; I'd received some academic instruction in the Masan refugee camp, so I was able to do better than some other students. One of my teachers who thought I was very bright, suggested I take the middle-school examination and skip to the seventh grade. My father and mother approved; I took the test and passed it, entering Chung

Aug Middle School. When I first started, everyone was friendly; we all knew each other well.

Most kids didn't have a chance to go to school during the war, so they stayed in the same grade for two years. The kids in my class were three years older than me; before long they started fighting me ("Power of the Balance"). Since they were bigger, meaner, and stronger than me, I lost. I didn't have any brothers around to help; my brother was much older and not around, so I only had my sisters to influence me and teach me the "feminine things," such as cooking -- not how to fight. As a kid I was quite a pretty little boy. I look back now at old pictures and see that this did not help me much, either. As a result, guys jumped on me after school, saying, "I want to fight you!"

Day after day, I fought, I lost. I began to lose all my confidence; pretty soon I couldn't even talk correctly. I developed a stutter even after a few minutes. I also lost confidence because of sixth grade mathematics. I'd missed it! Also by this time I was actually very shy. Korean mathematics teachers of the time had very mean attitudes. They would ask the class, "Do you know this?" in a very confrontational way. The class would all respond, "Yes, we know this," in a monotonous tone of voice. If I asked a question, the teacher would respond, "Don't you know that?" -- scolding me. I was so shy that the few times I asked a question, I was embarrassed, so the teachers would call me stupid.

Finally, I was too shy with girls. If a girl passed me, I couldn't lift my head. My face would turn red. I really wanted to learn something to build my confidence which would help me out of my ongoing situation.

One day, my neighbor said, "Let's go to the Kong Soo dojang." I watched people doing martial arts, thinking it looked pretty difficult. I saw green belt students practicing sparring, and thought, "Wow! How do they learn that? How do they know how when the other student is coming in, to block?" My confidence was already low, so my reaction was, "That's not for me." When encouraged to go inside the dojang, I said, "No, I'd like to just watch."

I got beat up at school again. My friend said, "Let's go to the dojang." When we got there, I hesitated. He said, "Why are you afraid to go in?" I'm looking through the window, and people inside were calling, "Come on in and sit down!" Instead, I just ran all the way home. I came back many times after that, to look through the windows.

Finally, one day, I walked in with my friends, got introduced and signed up for classes. At the beginning I felt everyone was watching me. Many people started at the same time as me, but soon only one person still continued training with me. Every

week new people started but few continued. It looked so difficult to me, too, but I kept studying.

One of my teachers was very mean teacher. Teaching me down block, he would lose his temper and yell at me. I already had low confidence; he was confusing my mind. "Turn around!" he would shout, but I didn't know which way to turn. One day he whipped me for "not following instructions." I got scared and ran home. It was then that I said, "I won't be that kind of a teacher when I become an instructor." That's what I learned from him -- I wanted to help people who "acted stupid" like me, who wanted to gain in confidence.

I continued to train and received my Black Belt at age 13. I discovered people were friendlier; the world treated me differently for my accomplishment. One of my new friends was a boy who beat me up; now he wanted to go to the movies with me and buy me lunch! Everyone seemed to suddenly treat me with respect. I said, "I'd like to be a martial arts instructor someday, to help others realize the benefits of this training." But I didn't want to be an instructor who "got by" on tricks, like scaring people if they didn't train seriously. That kind of teacher doesn't last, or deserve respect.

My accomplishments as a martial arts instructor didn't just happen; they were the result of intense planning. When I made Black Belt at 13, I began to think seriously of what was required to be a good instructor. As I got older I determined not to be like 90 percent of other Korean teachers, many of whom came to America expecting to be a financial success just from being in the United States.

When I was in high school, I started a martial arts club. Some 100 of my friends signed up because of my reputation as a teacher. Throughout high school I had a good time; everybody was nice and respected me. I didn't have any more problems. At Han Kuk University of Foreign Studies. I was an assistant instructor to Grandmaster Park Chul Hee. I taught the first Korean President Sygmon Rhee's bodyguards, which was an honor. I also taught the Korean Military Intelligence Group (MIG) self-defense and combat arts and was asked to join the group (but I was too young). When I was old enough, I joined the Korean Army 8th Division, stationed near the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) before the Vietnam War started.

There I had a class of over 500 people so I had to roll up a newspaper and shout in order to be heard. Later on, I developed laryngitis and for two weeks I couldn't talk. I stayed in the army for almost two years, then returned to university to concentrate on my studies.

Before I served in the army, I was getting B-, C, C+. Then I thought, "Studying martial arts was meant to make me better -- to help me improve myself." There I was, a fourth-degree Black

Belt, and people who weren't even white belts were getting better grades than me. Something was wrong. I needed to apply my mental and physical powers, to upgrade my study skills.

When I focused my mind on academic classwork with the same intensity as I did in training, my grades improved; Cs were turning into As. One of my teachers thought I was cheating. At first he wouldn't even look at my tests; he would give me an automatic C. When I started going off by myself and taking the tests, he changed his mind. He said, "Kim Soo is a fourth-degree Black Belt and he is also getting all A's!" I started another club; all the members were fellow honor students. In recognition of this, I received a special commendation from the University Chancellor which today hangs in the office of my downtown Houston dojang.

People learn martial arts for a variety of reasons. I have found the students who are most effective, who endure, and create the best results, tend to be those with sincere causes, like building confidence. The result is evident in the huge explosion of good Chayon-Ryu instructors today. I teach my instructors to have a gentle and natural teaching method; this is an embodiment of my Chayon-Ryu Martial Arts system, which has changed my life for the better.