

# TAEKWON-DO: A BROKEN FAMILY?

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Taekwon-Do (TKD) is an art of self-defence which was founded by General Choi Hong-Hi that has been through a series of bizarre and wondrous events. The exact date of the inception of TKD is unknown, but it was in development and the name itself was first mentioned in 1955.

Taekwon-Do is not only an art of killing, but also an art of empowerment which includes many responsibilities. Taekwon-Do can empower more than just the body - some practitioners can control their mental states through this martial art. TKD can erode or raise a practitioner's emotional state, can erode or empower families and countries. Practitioners can create or destroy reputations, careers or even friends.

Taekwon-Do can be summarised as an art with Five Tenets: Courtesy, Integrity, Perseverance, Self-control and Indomitable Spirit. In addition, there are also Five Virtues: Humanity, Righteousness, Courtesy, Wisdom and Trust. General Choi called the Five Tenets and Virtues the "Moral Culture".

Taekwon-Do has a history of secret service agents, gangsterism, and fearsome weaponry. General Choi wrote that Taekwon-Do is "able to take lives easily, when needed, by defending and attacking 72 vital spots using 16 well trained parts of the body".

Alex Gills, an investigative journalist, looked into the 'behind-the-scenes' history of TKD to discover a group of generals, aristocrats, soldiers, country boys, and party animals preaching a mix of Confucian values and slogans. Taekwon-Do has been connected with espionage, terrorism and gangsterism since the beginning of its creation. Many of the masters and grand masters lived through that time; some of them were even trapped in brutal war campaigns, secret agent missions and espionage. General Choi had put his students at risk and even had a student killed in a secret mission; he even put his own son at risk to promote the art.

Japanese Karate and T'aekkyon (A Korean Martial Arts) provided Taekwon-Do with a warrior's spirit. The early beginnings of Taekwon-Do were influenced by the Korean War, involvement of the US Secret Service, and eventually the stand-off between North and South Korea. Another large influence in the evolution of Taekwon-Do was the world of capitalism; the need for profit.

With such a chequered history, flawed leaders, convoluted politics, aggressive and deadly techniques, why would anyone want to join or belong to the Taekwon-Do family? Why would anyone train hard and train with black belts many times a week? The answers lie in the training itself and the belonging to a Taekwon-Do family.

Taekwon-Do is not just foot and hand techniques. It is integrated with the "Do" that considers moral, social and spiritual components. Training without the "Do" is training without the body and mind together. Correct and regular training with "Do" contributes to a healthy and strong body. Grand Master Lan of Germany iterated that when these powerful attributes are internalised, they will cause the development of a positive mental attitude. "Do" is a way of life shaped by our tenets.

Today we live in a world governed and guided by the many rules of politics, religion, ethnicity and social status. However, through Taekwon-Do, practitioners join a larger family; particularly in New Zealand, that is not governed by differences but by bringing together our similarities. Grand Master Lan in his article "Do" the way of life quoted: "We meet and get together to know friends from many backgrounds at many tournaments and seminars, particularly international tournaments and seminars. While we compete hard, our actions are governed by the basics of "Do" and through this we have a lot of fun and engage each other with respect. Our friendship thereby remains stronger and longer, and we have fewer problems or annoyances in this world. It is this humanity that will help us to build a more peaceful world."

**So, is Taekwon-Do a broken family?**

## 2 GENERAL CHOI'S FAMILY

***General Choi came from a broken family but with a good foundation to build a Taekwon-Do family***

General Choi's family tree can be traced back eighteen generations to the "Choson" Dynasty. The Choson Dynasty was a very structured society around the "three relationships and the five injunctions". General Choi was very serious about lineage and loyalty, especially the fifth injunction: Let faithfulness unite friends. The other injunctions abide by the Korean code: Honour your ruler, honour your father, honour your elder brother and assign man and wife with different duties. It is very difficult for non-Koreans to understand the Korean culture. General Choi's seriousness, of lineage and loyalty, has seen him reign over Taekwon-Do like a dynasty leader for more than 50 years. He has even quoted the poet Po-Eun's call for loyalty: "I would not serve a second master though I might be crucified a hundred times." (Po-Eun is one of the 24 patterns practice by Taekwon-Do practitioners. General Choi usually named TKD patterns after Korean poets or generals).

General Choi grew up in a small house in the village of P'yongwon, North Korea. He had his father's small, sharp eyes and a chin usually tilted upwards or cocked to the side, making him look far taller than his actual height of 5 feet.

His mother was from a wealthy family, but she hated his father as each time she gave birth, she had to leave the family home to bring up the new born in her own father's Confucian, but comfortable home. Her father treated her like a servant because in accordance to Korean culture, married daughters were not to return to their parents unless for visiting purposes. Choi's mother suffered this humiliation for the sake of all eight of her babies, only three of whom lived past the age of two. Choi was born weak and small and looked destined to die young as he was usually not well for the first four years of his life.

When Choi was six years old his father deserted his wife, taking two of his children, including Choi, with him to live with a *kisaeng* woman, a Korean geisha. It was during this time that Choi learned to gamble, smoke and drink. His new stepmother was addicted to Opium, his father was naive, obstinate, deeply indulgent, and finally lost so much money in gambling that he sold his once owned brewery. His stepmother passed away at the age of 38, and as was custom, Choi's father returned to his first wife. His mother hardly spoke to Choi after he returned home. He was ten years old.

He spent many years on his parent's small plot of land, helping in the garden, feeding animals, growing and planting vegetables and making tofu. He was brought up under the Korean custom of the father eating first during meal times. His mother would place rice and dishes on table for his father while the rest of the family waited. Choi and his brothers would peek through the holes in the door to see if his father would leave some food for them.

Even though he gambled heavily, Choi's father was regarded as a miser. Despite this, when Choi was 15 years old, his father paid a calligraphy instructor, Han Il Dong, a large sum of money to teach Choi Calligraphy and T'aekkyon (A Korean Martial Arts). His parents wanted to strengthen his weak and skinny body.

General Choi's younger days were full of gambling, drinking and smoking. His rebellious and stubborn nature was seen as signs of confidence. He once wrote "A man of confidence fearlessly pursues what he thinks is right, though 10 million opponents might rise against him" as was quoted by Confucius. Choi was also much like his father; enjoying cards and drinking wine.

In spite of this, General Choi was brought up with very strong Korean culture and values. In particular were filial virtues, followed by education, where the ideal student must master both heart and mind. His studies focussed on Confucian learning which became a fundamental part of his life, and later a great part of the basis of Taekwon-Do. Some of these fundamentals can be found in the main section of the 700 year old first volume of the "Great Learning". These four books centre their writings on the premise that:

*Wishing to order well their States, they first regulate their families.*

*Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivate their persons.*

*Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts.*

*Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts.*

*Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge.*

Regulate. Cultivate. Rectify. These Korean ideals lived within General Choi, and later in Taekwon-Do. If you were to replace the word "States" with "Taekwon-Do" in the above passage, you can see how it is so integrated with Taekwon-Do.

However, these values were very much broken when General Choi planned to regulate and cultivate a game of cards: Poker. In fact Taekwon-Do began as a result of the outcome of a Poker game in 1938 when Choi was 20 years old. He was about to travel to Japan to complete his education, which is a common dream for Koreans. His mother had been saving up for his education, working from dawn to midnight, selling tofu and sewing clothes to save the money. She put the money away in a belt and sewed the seam of the belt shut each time. One day his mother showed her son the money belt and told him "Be careful not to lose this".

That night he snuck out of the house and met up with his friends. The young Choi loved playing Poker any chance he could get. He was an expert on a Korean strategic poker game, Hwatu cards. He could spot cheaters and could probably cheat the best players. However, at this table the gamblers were professionals. He staked his money, laid down the colourful cards, but as the game progressed, he was not doing too well. He continued gambling, hoping to win back his losses. However, he soon lost all the money given to him by his mother for his studies. Choi managed to convince the other players to play until dawn hoping to win back his losses.

At the table was a famous local wrestling champion, Huh Haak-Soon. At the end, the wrestler stood up and said, "The purpose of gambling is to win money and I've waited long enough." General Choi wanted to attack Huh Haak-Soon, but the wrestler was bigger and a champion, whereas Choi only knew a few kicks and dodges from his training in T'aekkyon. Somehow there was a bottle of ink nearby that Choi threw at the wrestler and hit him on the forehead. The wrestler fell on his back, with ink and blood on his face. Choi walked over and took the money from the wrestler's pocket, counted out what he had lost and ran away. No one stopped him as everyone knew that the wrestler would hunt him down.

Choi left for Kyoto one day earlier than expected as he ran from the fight and the wrestler. He avoided going home to avoid his parents and actually fled the police and the town by walking 16 kilometres to Pusan Port to board the ship to Japan.

Choi took up the Japanese martial arts Shotokan Karate when he was in Japan, as he felt anxious about his past and wanted to prepare himself to face the wrestler when he returned to Korea. At the age of 24, Choi finished his middle school in Japan and gained a second degree black belt in Karate. When he returned home, Choi was ready to face the wrestler but the wrestler avoided Choi when he learned that Choi had learned Karate, and that Karate could kill with one blow.

This experience was dramatic in Choi's life; he would embroil himself in conflict, then flee and seemingly be on the run forever. This humble and conflicted beginning of Taekwon-Do has been reflected in the history of both General Choi and Taekwon-Do.

Choi's family had both strong Confucian and non-Confucian values. His father had studied the works of Confucius, read the classics, and even became a doctor of Chinese medicine. As with many traditional Korean families, the Choi family was laden with obligations, traditions and superstitions, some so strong that his grandmother once kept his nail clippings because of the belief and respect of every part of one's body.

However, non-Confucian values such as traditions related to superstition, shamans, and sorcerers, traditions attuned to the nature of things, to insight and freedom also thrived in his family. These traditions and superstitions lived within Choi. This opposing conflict was starkly apparent when obedience to traditional Korean life and Confucian values lived right along-side rice wine and geisha girls. Attacking a man after losing a poker game seemed to fit into these non-Confucian values.

General Choi married in his early teens to a girl who was much older and much taller than he, through a marriage arranged by his father. They had a daughter, Soo-Jook Choi. The young mother became a servant in Choi's parent's household, adhering to the strong Korean custom of "child marriage" or the marriage of someone very young.

Later, Choi married a second wife, a beautiful woman who he had stared at during the many banquets he had at a *kisaeng* house. They had a daughter, Mee Yun. He had left his first wife and first daughter, Song-Jook Choi for his second wife, and for the rest of his life he would rarely talk about them, just as his father had not spoken of his mother. Later, Choi and his second wife had another daughter and a son. His son, Jung-Hwa, would spend many nights lying on the floor behind Choi as he played Poker with other Generals. Jung-Hwa would inhale the smell of the appetizers brought out one by one, and the aromas floating through the air of cigarettes, sake, and Johnnie Walker.

After Japan had surrendered in the Second World War and the Americans had arbitrarily decided that the 38th Parallel would divide Korea into North and South, the Cold War began between the Communist North backed by Russia, and the Nationalists backed by the United States in the South. General Choi's life had so far been one long battle raged against his father, the wrestler, Japan and the Cold War.

Choi had been imprisoned during the Second World War and on his release he wanted to make good all the promises and prayers he had whispered, to realise the vision to make something of himself. General Choi wanted to build a Taekwon-Do family from his Confucius foundations and Korean Culture.

### 3 HOW BROKEN WAS THE ORIGINAL TAEKWON-DO IN EARLY YEARS?

*Taekwon-do hides a history of secret service agents, gangsters, connected to espionage, and terrorism. It was disintegrated from the beginning.*

Taekwon-do has its beginnings in the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division of the Korean army who were based on Cheju Island. In 1953, the then General Choi summoned Nam Tae-Hi to teach Tang Soo Do (Way of the Chinese Hand) to this new military division. By 1954, the division was confident enough to organise a demonstration for South Korea's president, Syngman Rhee. General Choi wanted to show President Rhee the great soldiers from his division.

Thousands of soldiers and the President watched Nam and his soldiers complete patterns, self-defence, bayonet-defence and sparring. This included the demonstration of Nam breaking a pile of 13 clay roof tiles with a single downward punch. The President was amazed and asked General Choi what the new martial art is called. President Rhee was a nationalist, hated the Japanese and would not approve the soldiers practicing Japanese martial arts such as Tang Soo Do or Korean Karate. Someone said to the President that it was Tang Soo Do. "No, it's T'aekkyon" the President countered. The president later instructed General Choi to teach the T'aekkyon martial art to more Korean soldiers.

Nam and General Choi faced a dilemma as they could not teach the Koreans Karate and call it T'aekkyon. Eventually they took the best of Tang Soo Do and added some T'aekkyon. They needed a new name urgently but the President liked the name T'aekkyon. Finally, on April 11, 1955, they called a dinner party at General Choi favourite *kisaeng* restaurant, Kugilgwan, a Korean Geisha House. It was attended by the nine *kwans* (gyms), two of which belonged to General Choi. A ballot was cast, but everyone except Nam and General had chosen the name Tang Soo Do. Nam and the General came up with the name Taekwon-Do. No final decision was made at this party, and later the President still did not agree to call it Taekwon-Do.

Later, there was another party at another luxurious *kisaeng* house that included the President's right hand man. Luckily for Nam and Choi, someone convinced this man to accept the name of Taekwon-Do, and he in turn convinced the President.

By 1956, despite General Choi best efforts and threats, only two *kwans* controlled by Choi used the name Taekwon-do. By 1959, General Choi finally unified other martial arts leaders and formed the Korea Tae Kwon Do Association (KTA). All nine of the *kwans* joined. Choi forced his way to become the president and later claimed to be Taekwon-Do's sole founder. This was a crucial event as this was the only time Taekwon-Do ever seemed to be a single reluctant family.

Soon General Choi began writing the Taekwon-Do book and developing many of the techniques of Taekwon-Do. Finally in 1960 he issued the second edition "Introduction Tutorial to Taekwon Do" and moved quickly to promote Taekwon-Do. His own two Kwans, Oh Do Kwan and Chung Do Kwan, were doing well, including running many satellite schools. He even prepared fourth-Dan black belts in a special academy for instructors who would then be "posted" overseas to promote Taekwon-Do.

This early Taekwon-Do family was quickly broken in autumn 1961. On May 16, 1961, a coup d'état lead by General Park Chung-Hee succeeded in installing a new government and General Park became President Park. He had been asked by martial arts leaders to help reunify the martial arts in South Korea. President Park authorised a name change of the Korean Tae Kwon Do Association to Korean Tae Soon Do Association, effectively erasing General Choi and Nam's Taekwon-Do.

General Choi and his Taekwon-Do were marginalised. The Taekwon-Do family never became a single family from here on in. However, General Choi and Nam persisted and hosted the first Taekwon-Do tournament in Korea in 1962 and began their mission to force martial arts leaders to revert to the name Taekwon-Do. The relationship with the President of South Korea became worse and eventually General Choi was sent to Malaysia as an

ambassador whilst Nam was sent to Vietnam to teach soldiers to kill communists with their bare hands.

General Choi spent many years developing his martial arts while he was in Malaysia. It was here that he further developed the foundations of Taekwon-Do. From the year 1962 to 1964 General Choi started a number of associations in Malaysia and Singapore promoting and building Taekwon-Do. During this time, the 24 patterns in Taekwon-Do were developed together with many new techniques.

Meanwhile, in Vietnam, Nam Tae-hi trained soldiers in Taekwon-Do which was then used heavily in the Vietnam War and became very popular in gyms. It was estimated that over one million civilians and soldiers studied Taekwon-Do during that time. One of the main pioneers was Nguyen Van Binh who trained more than 60,000 students from his Oh Do Kwan from 1962 to 1975.

Meanwhile, General Choi and a number of his Taekwon-Do pioneers had been travelling and giving international seminars, spreading Taekwon-Do. He even assembled a demonstration team called the "Ace Demo team". The members were Han Cha-Gyo, Jong-Soo Park, Joong-Keun Kim and Jae-Hwa Kwon. They promoted and demonstrated Taekwon-Do to a number of countries including Turkey, Malaysia, Singapore, West Germany, Egypt, and Italy.

General Choi then went back to South Korea with the mission of again trying to reunite the 9 *Kwans* under the name of Taekwon-Do. In 1965, he managed to change the name of the Korean Tae Soo Do Association, KTA back to Korean Tae Kwon Do Association which reunited the 9 *Kwans*. However, everyone refused to take the patterns developed by Choi in Malaysia. They continued to teach the Korean Karate patterns. Soon the martial leaders organised a martial arts coup d'état and ousted General Choi.

On March 22 1966, General Choi created the International Taekwon-Do Federation, with the assistance from Lee Chong-woo and Uhm Woon-kyu of the KTA. It consisted of 9 founding countries, mainly the countries that General Choi and the Ace Demo team visited. Within two years, ITF spread to 30 countries and Taekwon-Do expanded quickly in South Korea when the Ministry of National Defence issued the order that the armed forces must train in martial arts.

However, ITF and KTA became competitors rather than a family of Taekwon-Do martial artists. The split had created alignments to groups with great political connections as anyone who wished to succeed in South Korea needed deep roots somewhere in the martial dictatorships. Some groups aligned to the South Korean Ministry of Educations and others to the Korean Athletic Associations. General Choi aligned ITF with the notorious Korean CIA, despite their reputation of torture and human rights atrocities. In order to gain influence with the political party, General Choi appointed the KCIA (Korean CIA) creator as the ITF's honorary president, with other KCIA agents placed in the ITF's leaderships. The reputation of ITF was further tainted by the East Berlin Incident. In 1967, a number of Taekwon-Do executives, instructors, pioneers and students were involved in a number of kidnapping missions, in particular the East Berlin Incident; a mission that abducted 203 Koreans from seven countries. These incidents led the South Korean President to authorise special KCIA agent Kim Un-Yong to take control of Taekwon-Do and to merge other martial arts against General Choi's Taekwon-Do.

ITF and Korean Taekwon-Do were no longer working together. General Choi no longer had support from the KCIA, the Prime Minister's Office or the Presidential Security Force at the South Korean centre of government the Blue House. Taekwon-Do family was badly broken.

## 4 DIFFERENT FAMILIES OF TAEKWON-DO

### *The many families of Taekwon-Do nearly destroyed Choi and other Taekwon-Do pioneers*

In November of 1972, Kim Un-Yong built a Kukkiwon (World Taekwon-Do Headquarters), on top of a mountain in Yoksam-dong, Seoul. With the full support from the Prime Minister Kim Chong-P'il and the Korean regime, Kim transformed Korean Taekwon-Do Association to World Taekwon-Do Federation (WTF), creating a separate family to General Choi's International Taekwon-Do Federation. Later South Korea severed all ties with ITF.

Kim began globalising the new brand of Taekwon-Do, and at the same time General Choi's ITF Taekwon-Do had gained tremendous popularity around the world. In fact, it was very confusing as their names sounded nearly identical. Even the acronym of "WTF" and "ITF" are almost identical sounding.

The WTF family expanded rapidly, converting and elevating Nam Tae-hi to the position of founder of the famous Oh Do Kwan while Uhm Woon-kyu, Lee Chong-woo and Hyun Jong-myung developed the WTF patterns which contained techniques similar to those of Karate and ITF.

In 1975, WTF Taekwon-Do was very popular in South Korea. Kim noted that there were 721 Taekwon-Do experts teaching in 48 countries with over three million students, including 300,000 black belts. In Canada, General Choi stated that ITF had twenty million students around the world. Regardless, it was the most popular martial art in the world at that time.

There were major defections from the ITF to the WTF family at this time as General Choi was seen to have co-operated with North Korea communists, which at the time had the same connotation as the term "Al Qaeda terrorist" in today's world. A conflict in West Germany between Heinz Marx and Kim Kwang-il resulted in the German association leaving ITF and joining Kim Un-yong's WTF and similarly, organisations in Turkey jumped over to WTF. The family of WTF continued growing and in 1974, the South Korean regime managed to get thousands of gyms, both ITF and non ITF over to WTF. Even the US Amateur Athletic Union accepted WTF and not ITF as member.

In 1975, the General Association of International Sports Federations (GAISF) accepted WTF as their member, which was the key step for WTF being accepted into the Olympics. Kim managed to include WTF into international events like the Asian games, South America Pan-Am games and even the international soldiers' sports competition. Kim had managed to marginalise ITF and General Choi. KCIA agents were also believed to bribe and threaten Koreans and General Choi's pioneers to move over to WTF.

General Choi devoted all his energy and was obsessed with saving Taekwon-Do from Kim. During the Korean Cold War, General Choi turned to his long time enemy, North Korea, with an ambitious campaign to expand Taekwon-Do around the world and challenge South Korea and Kim. He planned to train large numbers of new instructors to post them around the world to counter and corner WTF everywhere. General Choi turned to his old enemy Kim Hyung-Wook (the Wild Boar of the KCIA) for funding the campaign. General Choi had a difficult time getting support for this campaign and many ITF Masters and Instructors worldwide still felt South Korea was technically at war with North Korea and distanced themselves from it. General Choi persisted and finally he managed to gather a team of 15 martial artists who were brave enough to visit North Korea.

All this in-fighting within Taekwon-Do, WTF, ITF, the politics of Park Chung-Hee, the North Korean Cold War and the many different families of Taekwon-Do nearly destroyed General Choi and other Taekwon-Do pioneers.

By 1980, many of the top Korean instructors had defected to other non ITF organisations, only about a dozen remained with General Choi. Jhoon Rhee Taekwon-Do, led by Jhoon Rhee, remained independent from WTF and ITF. Rhee trained many national champions and is considered a pioneer of Taekwon-Do in America. He is known as the "Father of

American Taekwon-Do". Through the marketing of many sparring competitions, Rhee's family of Taekwon-Do gyms grew rapidly across America. In addition, Pat Burleson, Mike Stone and Rhee opened many gyms and were involved with celebrities like Chuck Norris, Bruce Lee and Muhammad Ali.

There are many other Taekwon-Do families staying independent of WTF and ITF. One of the original masters, Grandmaster Choi Kwang Jo, started his own martial arts; Choi Kwan Do, incorporating yoga based training into Taekwon-Do. Choi Kwang Jo is currently based in Atlanta but his Taekwon-Do family has grown all over the world, including a number of schools in New Zealand. Then there was the Universal Taekwon-Do Federation started by Grandmaster Han Cha Kyo in the 1980s but who later joined the WTF family.

Another original master, Grandmaster, Park Jung Tae, started the Global Taekwon-Do Federation in 1990 mainly due to ITF associations with communist North Korea.

Master Joe Cariati, who had assisted General Choi on most of his seminars, worked tirelessly with Master Choi Jung-Hwa. He had witnessed conflicts between pioneers, organisations, father and sons, and heard so many lies that he finally quit ITF and set up International Chang-Hon Taekwon-Do Federation (ICTF).

In this part of the world, Rhee Taekwon-Do, under the leadership of Master Chong Chul Rhee had the first and the biggest Taekwon-Do school in Australia. He is regarded as the father of Australian Taekwon-Do. Rhee Taekwon-Do is also very popular in New Zealand. However, it too was once affiliated with ITF and has no relation with WTF.

Currently, even within the ITF Taekwon-Do, there are 3 main ITF family groups. There is the ITF Vienna, led by Grand Master Pablo Trajtenberg, previously led by Grand Master Tran Trieu Quan. ITF Vienna's goal is to make ITF more family orientated and emphasis on the "DO" of Taekwon-Do. International Taekwon-Do of New Zealand is affiliated with ITF Vienna.

The other family group is ITF North Korea, led by Grand Master Pro Chang Ung, who has moved to Vienna, Austria. This family group wants to merge ITF with WTF and has the ambition of including ITF competitors to compete in the Olympics.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> family group is ITF Canada, led by Grandmaster Choi Jung Hwa, the son of General Choi, whose registered office is in United Kingdom. The focus of this family group is to bring Taekwon-Do to less privileged countries and is easily identified by the inclusion of kyups (shouting) into tuls (TKD patterns).

## 5 GENERAL CHOI'S IDEAS OF BUILDING A FAMILY AGAIN

*As General Choi passes on, the traditional Taekwon-Do falls apart; Olympic Taekwon-Do faces the same fate as WTF leaders go to prison*

General Choi's constant determination to unite Taekwon-Do started earlier than 1965, where his priority was to unify the 9 *kwans* under the name of Tae Kwon Do. General Choi used his connections with the government and military to politically manoeuvre his way through. He even threatened powerful men and finally convinced the President to accept the name Tae Kwon Do so KTA became Korean Tae Kwon Do Association again in 1965.

During his later years, General Choi once again rounded up his old warriors for a new mission to help reunite North and South Korea through the merging of his Taekwon-Do family, with ITF being based in North Korea and with WTF being based in South Korea. He wanted to take over all of Taekwon-Do and there were rumours that he was to meet with the president of the World Taekwon-Do Federation (WTF), Kim Un-yong. General Choi even created the last Taekwon-Do pattern called Tong-II which means "unification" to represent his vision of the unification of North and South Korea. It has a diagram that symbolizes the homogeneous race.

During one of General Choi's last Taekwon-Do seminars on April 20, 2001 in Toronto Canada, General Choi was attempting to reconcile with Grandmaster Park Jong-soo. Both of them had stopped speaking to each other since 1970 after the General accused Park of cooperating with Korean CIA in a plot to kidnap him. Grandmaster Park was once General's best disciple and had been considered to be his surrogate son. Grandmaster Park had been building the Taekwon-Do family since the 1960s in the Netherlands and Canada.

General Choi was also trying to reconcile with his son Master Choi Jung-Hwa after years of not getting along. Master Choi had been rebuilding Taekwon-Do since he was released from prison in the 1990s as he believed that the General was destroying Taekwon-Do with Cold War politics. General Choi wanted Master Choi to have a strong relationship with North Korea to help with reunification. However, Master Choi had been defying his father. Their relationship took a turn for the worse when Master Choi was elected as the ITF president in July 2001. General Choi warned him "I promised you, boy, that I will unite ITF and WTF within one year. When I do, I will give everything to Kim Un-Yong. I will never see you become president".

In one of the General's last seminars, General Choi asked the students to read his "Moral Guide" book, in which he encourages students to live justly and honestly. "Taekwon-Do is not only about punching and kicking" he said. It is about doing the right thing, which he has tried to do all his life, even when he seemed not to.

Taekwon-Do should be apolitical and most Taekwon-Do martial artists are weary of the espionage, gangsterism and politics, but the goal of reunification is admirable and attainable, if you consider the history of these men and their art. The history of controversy and conflicts between the two men, General Choi Hong Hi and Kim Un-Yong are from a different era and are now gone.

The men once fought, parted and had threatened to kill one another over politics and personal matters, but the Masters and Grandmasters knew they owed their fortunes and reputations to the General and as such everyone tried to reconcile past threats with present ambitions.

However, General Choi was diagnosed with cancer in 2002 and the ITF organisation began to split as fast as the cancer was spreading through the General's body. It was during this time the General uttered the words "My only son betrayed me". During one of Master Choi's hospital visits, the General looked at him and said "I don't want to see you, I don't want to see you". Their relationship had turned very sour. Even, his mother would shout at Master Choi accusing him of killing the old man.

On a day in May 2002, General Choi was surrounded by many of his loyal disciples, bodyguards and Master Choi at Toronto's International Airport on a flight to North Korea. It

was an emotional send off, where General Choi asked his son "Can you apologise to me on the internet?" and "You can apologise to my boys – to the North Koreans?" The two men could have resolved so much between them during this time but instead talked about the internet. One of the Masters took a picture of them before Master Choi watched the General depart.

On June 15, 2002, General Choi passed away in P'yongyang, North Korea. Apparently, at his death bed, Grandmaster Park Jong Soo heard General Choi's last will. The General appointed Chang Ung as his successor. He also heard him say "I'm the happiest man in the world, the happiest man in the world".

Later, ITF split into three separate groups. One led by the North Korean, Grandmaster Chung Ung, one group lead by his son Master Choi and the third group led by those remaining black belts who refused to join the other two.

Trademark battles followed in courts and the three groups eroded into many smaller factions. One of the lawyers involved in the lawsuits said "Everyone wants to know what they're getting, 'What is my cut?' they asked. It was all about money, individual power, and politics.

Over at the WTF camp, it was much the same. There were politics and "power plays" within the WTF organisation and in particular Kim Un-Yong's methods of securing the vice-president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). It was very controversial as Kim was rumoured to have used bribes to finance his run for the role of IOC Vice President, to be the second most powerful person in the Olympics. He was even accused of undermining a bid by South Korea's city of P'yongch'ang to host the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Kim was successful in bringing Olympics to South Korea through his "Operation Thunderbird" in 1988 and having made Taekwon-Do an official sport at the 2000 games via his "007" operation. However, Kim became a scapegoat for South Korea's loss of the Winter Olympics to Vancouver, Canada.

Later on, the South Korean police raided Kim's home to find \$1.6M in foreign currencies in his safe. Investigators and prosecutors found a total of \$5M in gold, diamonds, gems and foreign currencies. Kim resigned from South Korea's National Assembly, the World Taekwon-Do Federation and the Korea Taekwon-Do Association. Finally in June 2004, Kim was found guilty of embezzling more than \$3M from sports organisations and having accepted more than \$700,000 in bribes. He was sentenced to two and half years in prison.

It was the worst crisis within the WTF organisation. Many of the national associations closed, country by country. Kim's networks fell apart and many of his close Taekwon-Do family began to distance themselves and began quitting WTF. The KTA elected a new leader Koo Cheon-Soo, however he and his advisor, Lee Seng-Wan, were also arrested for bribery and rigging the KTA elections. Lee was sentenced to 7 years in prison.

After so much controversy, WTF elected Choue Chung-Won to be the new president. He has been successful on many fronts, in particular, retaining Taekwon-Do's inclusion in the 2008 and 2012 Olympics. Choue developed a strategic plan for WTF which included setting up the Fair Play committee to ensure the fair play spirit of the sport. His reforms aimed to make the martial art more action packed in the ring and most important more professional in the WTF office.

The next generations of organisers, both at ITF and WTF, have more humble plans of making athletes who win medals. They are becoming more transparent to the public than the past. Finally, we are seeing the Taekwon-Do dictators retiring.

## 6 PROPOSED STRATEGIES FOR A TAEKWON-DO FAMILY

*The strategy is to unite ITF Taekwon-Do;*

*Uniting ITF Taekwon-Do led by Grand Master Prof. Chang Ung,*

*ITF Taekwon-Do led by Grand Master Choi Jung Hwa and*

*ITF Taekwon-Do led by Grand Master Pablo Trajtenberg.*

*Accepting WTF Taekwon-Do as a different martial arts style*

There are many different martial arts in the world today - Just take Chinese Kung Fu for example. Each school within the art has different techniques and teaching methods and their organisations are not structured as one true umbrella organisation to manage and control all of the Chinese Kung Fu martial arts. Most of the Chinese Kung Fu styles are family based, developed through generations of Grand Masters. Usually there are closely guarded family secrets only known to privileged family members. The management of these different Kung Fu styles is usually family based and certainly not a global well organised umbrella organisation. Even Tai Chi Chuan is not a fully global organisation.

Similarly with Taekwon-Do, this martial art does not have a homogenised umbrella organisation, in particular between ITF and WTF organisations. Both styles have very different teaching methods and very different techniques. We must accept WTF and ITF as different martial arts styles. It is simply not possible to merge the two styles together.

Many of our Grandmasters and Masters, including General Choi himself, tried unsuccessfully to reunify the two organisations. They sought to meld the chaotic mix of 'hard' martial styles, with the new and traditional styles into a single association that was truly "Korean" but failed badly as outlined in the last chapter.

The three ITF organisation practice similar techniques and teaching methods, and have similar broad reaching goals as well. As a first step it is possible to unite the existing three ITF organisations together. This strategy is not new and has been discussed in many different ITF congresses. One in particular took place in Vienna, Austria, on September 12, 2009. In this congress meeting, Grandmaster Prof. Chang Ung (Chang Ung ITF) met with representatives from the ITF under which we practice, headed by the previous chairman, Grandmaster Tran Trieu Quan. It was the first step taken to unify these two organisations together.

During this meeting, Master Nobile (Chang Ung ITF) talked about the efforts and progress of merging with WTF. Master Nobile expressed his great optimism for the scheduled future talks. The Congress was advised that Masters Bos and Ferrando (GM Tran ITF) would also report to their respective Board and Congress in Argentina at their next scheduled Congress meeting on November 27, 2009 during World Championships. However, progress has since been slow and is locked into a rigid division but held within this stalemate is the similar story of the political division of Korea itself.

Since the passing of General Choi, each of the ITF organisations has been hosting separate World Championships. I remember Grandmaster Rhee Ki Ha once said that ITF stands for International Taekwon-Do Family. I believe it is about time that we bring our family together by the very first small steps of having a first ITF World Championships open to all 3 ITF organisations.

The overall goal is to merge the three organisations into one single umbrella organisation. To achieve this, there must be open and honest conversations along with process for a transition. We must put aside the barriers of politics, religion, ethnicity and social status to form an umbrella organisation that brings us together as a family though our similarities.

To kick off this bold goal, a formal project must be setup, appropriately resourced with a team of dedicated Taekwon-Do practitioners to achieve the objectives of the project. All 3 ITF organisations should be the sponsors and should fund the project. A project board should be established consisting of members from each of the organisations. This project

board will govern the project to achieve the bold goal of forming a single global ITF Organisation.

A number of proposals have already been discussed at many different congress meetings. Many of the proposals have been thrown out or did not manage to progress any further. Some of selected proposals have been through implementation but none has been successful. This proposal strategy is a little different as it seeks to merge the 3 existing ITF organisations rather than creating a new global organisation. The merged single global organisation will be a non-profit organisation established to promote Taekwon-Do globally and to bring us together as a family through our similarities.

I propose a new board be setup to govern ITF at a global level. This board should consist of elected members only. There should not be any appointed members to this board. The first board should be limited to only 6 board members consisting of elected members from each continent of the world; Europe, Asia, Oceania, Africa, South America and North America.

An elected board member can be any registered and paid up member. Each continent will hold their respective elections to vote for a representative by the casting of a vote by a registered paid up member.

The ITF Board should then establish an operational team with a professional CEO (Chief Executive Officer) to run operational activities at a global level. The Board should execute the merger strategy to merge the existing 3 similar existing operations groups into one operational group. It is expected the first phase may simply consist of all key members from each ITF organisation's operational group to review the key functional areas below.

a) Technical committee

Objective: To achieve consistency and high quality in Taekwon-Do teachings

b) Tournaments Committee

Objective: To achieve high quality in World Tournaments

c) Umpires Committee

Objective: To achieve high quality Umpiring at World Tournaments

d) Ethics & Discipline Committee

Objective: To ensure all ITF activities are carried out in an ethical manner

e) Master Promotion Committee

Objective: To test and promote qualified candidates for 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Degree black belt

f) Development Committee

Objective: To assist ITF, its national members and its instructors to develop and manage their business

g) Communication Committee

Objective: To achieve high quality in internal and external communications.

Other committees may be set up as required by the board to meet the objectives of the board and to implement any approved strategies.

Other operational areas will need to include the Financial Management, Administration, Database Management and Website management of the Global ITF organisation.

There is no need to make any organisational changes to any of the Taekwondo organisations of each country. They can operate as usual either as private businesses or non-profit organisations. There is no need to change any of the organisational business structures or terms of reference. It is simply a change of alignment to a single Global ITF organisation which is created from the merge of the existing 3 ITF organisations.

I propose the operations group should initially focus on technical seminars to bring all groups to consistent and high quality teaching and umpiring. There should be multiple concurrent seminars across all continents to achieve this bold objective.

The next major event should be the first single ITF World Championships to be held every 2 years hosted in a country chosen through a bidding process. This event will be hosted with the assistance from the Global ITF organisation. There will be no changes to any existing regional championships. They can carry on as usual but in alignment with the rules of the ITF Global Tournament committee.

The Global ITF organisation will be funded by individual members through a fees structure to be determined by the board. It is expected each member will pay a fee to their local club or school, plus an annual fee to their country's ITF organisation. A portion of the country's annual fees will then be for the ITF Global organisation. It is expected that this fee be a nominal fee for the Global ITF organisation to subsidise the operational cost of the organisation.

It is expected that the Global ITF will organise different types of seminars across the world. These seminars will be one of the many sources of funding for the organisation. Sponsorships should be another option for the organisation as it provides the sponsors the capability to reach a global audience providing global presence and exposure.

One of the biggest challenges facing the project team would be executive support to kick off the project as there are still many politically charged and money related individuals reluctant to change. Our martial art, Taekwon-Do, is integrated with "Do" as a way of life shaped by our tenets. We must continue to use self-control and perseverance to work on the difficult and challenging tasks ahead and to demonstrate indomitable spirit. We must work towards an organisation that will bring us together for the benefit of all. It is time to come together to be part of a Taekwondo family. Let's put aside our differences in politics, religion, ethnicity and social status. Let's form a family that comes together through our similarities; An International Taekwondo Family (ITF).

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