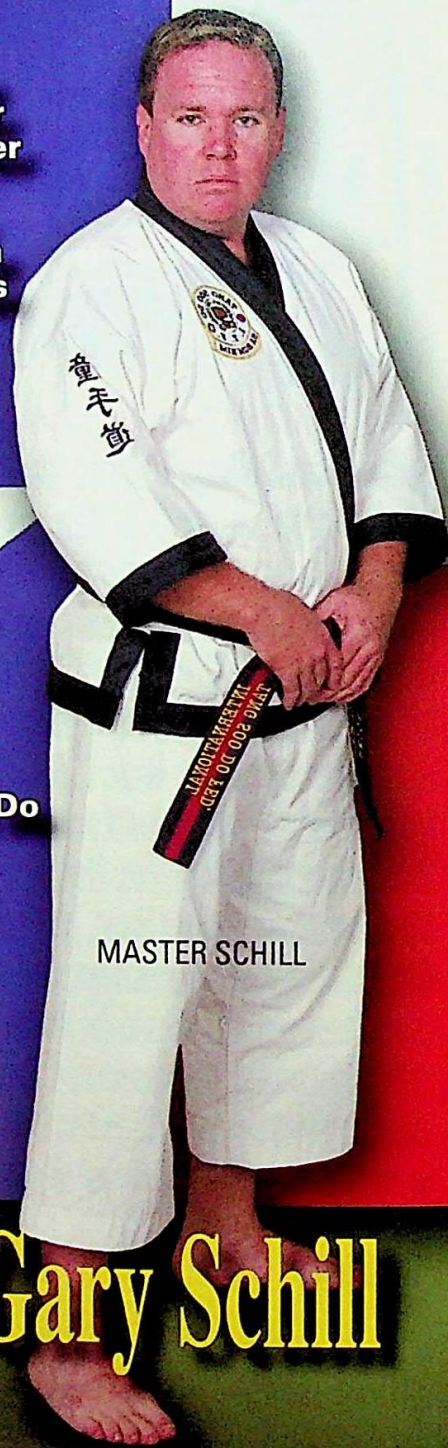


In the heart of Texas can be found two Tang Soo Do masters who talk the talk and walk the walk of their martial art. Master Ben Johnson of Austin and Master Gary Schill of Cedar Park are both members of the **International Tang Soo Do Federation** and praise its founder and head, Choong Jae Nim Master C. S. Kim for his strong ethical and moral leadership as well as for laying a firm foundation for growth, development and excellence for all International Tang Soo Do Federation members.

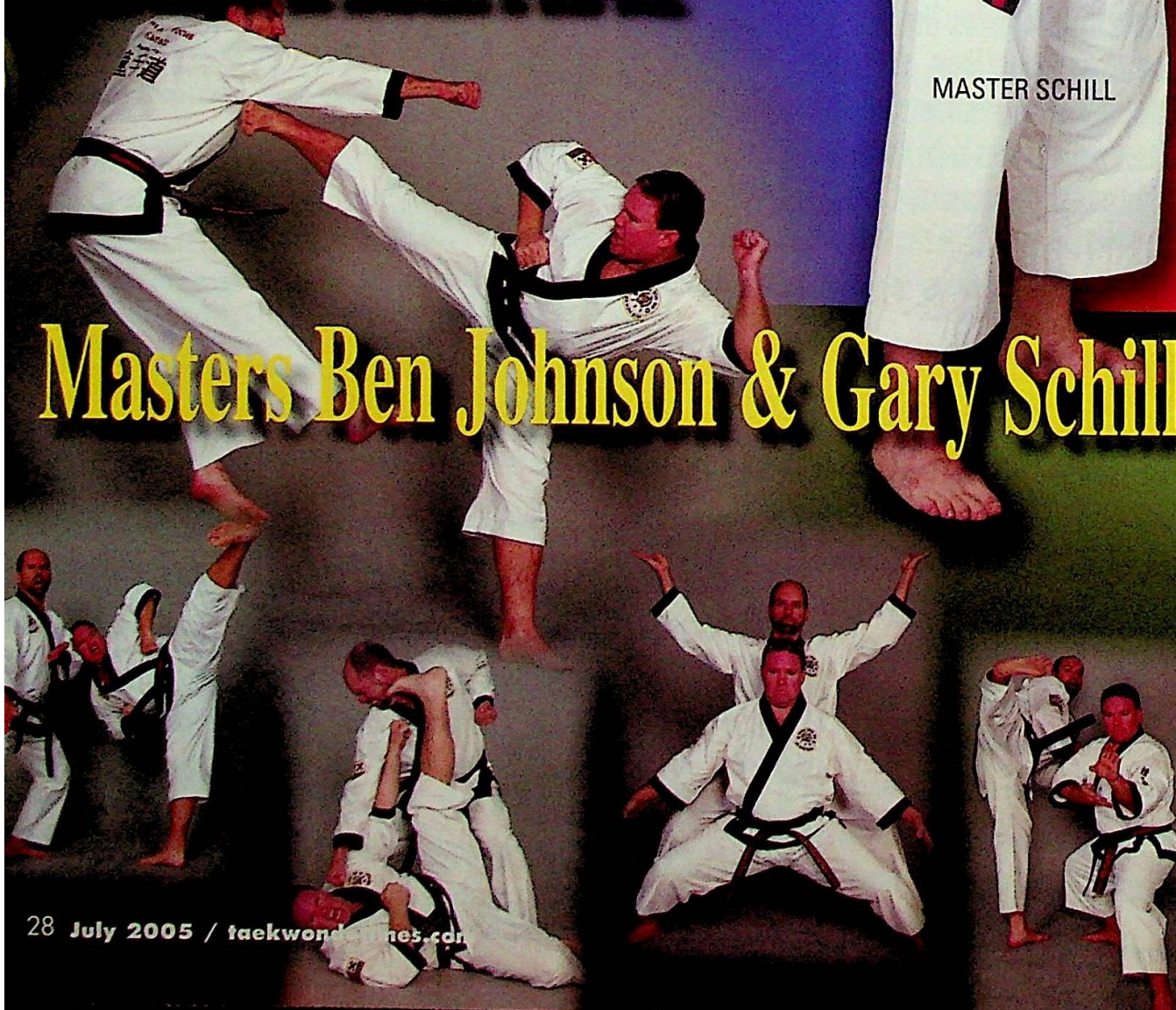
The feeling is mutual. Choong Jae Nim Master Kim was quoted as saying: "I'm so excited that the International Tang Soo Do Federation has a great presence in Texas with Master Ben Johnson and Master Gary Schill!"

ITF member Master Zac Szabo had conversations with the two Texas masters who revealed much about how their personal and professional commitment to Tang Soo Do has made all the difference in their lives.



MASTER SCHILL

Masters Ben Johnson & Gary Schill





MASTER JOHNSON

Deep In The Heart Of TANG SOO DO

MASTER ZAC SZABO: To begin, would you like to talk a bit about background?

MASTER BEN JOHNSON: My mother was born and reared in England. She is the kindest, most loving person I think I've ever met. I don't think I've ever heard her say a harsh word about anyone. She is living in an assisted living community here in Austin and I'm truly blessed to be able to spend time with her. My father was raised in a very poor family during the Depression years and that had a profound effect on him. He was always very careful with money but had a genuine love for people that were in some way disadvantaged. My father was a World War II combat veteran and experienced the true horror of war. He rarely talked about it but when he did, it was always with a tremendous sense of sadness and pain. After returning from the war, he finished college and attended an Episcopal seminary. He was a priest in the Episcopal Church for over 50 years until his death a few years ago. I was brought up in a structured home but one that allowed freedom of expression and fun. My parents raised four very different children.

I have two older sisters and one older brother. My oldest sister, almost eighteen years my senior, is a retired English teacher living in Wales. She operates a small business that deals with old books and pottery. She loves the country living in Wales and the slower pace of life there. My other sister was a Hospice nurse for many years and recently completed her education to become an Episcopal priest. She is currently serving in a church just outside Houston. My brother is a school psychologist. He also has formal education in commercial art and paints the most wonderful watercolors.

My father always told me that I was the athlete in the family. I played high school football and ran track. Well, I participated in these sports. I was never the best player but I did learn a lot about commitment, teamwork and dedication. During high school I had always done very well in math and science classes. However, my passion was history. When I started college I majored in American his-

DEEP IN THE HEART OF TANG SOO DO

right to focus on the dojang full-time. For a while it was difficult to make ends meet from a business perspective but over time, the school grew and became more successful.

tory with the goal of following in my father's footsteps and becoming an Episcopal priest. I planned on working as a history teacher in an Episcopal high school. I realized sometime during my freshman year that I simply did not have the calling to that profession and was instead just trying to please my father. The priesthood is certainly a

"The value I see in my students growing and learning is far greater than a hefty paycheck."

lifelong career that must be followed only for the right reason. I soon changed my major to computer science. I graduated from college in 1983 with high honors. Even as I started my professional career in the high tech workforce, that desire to teach was still waiting to be realized.

My parents were very proud that all four of their children completed college and three of them received advanced degrees. Being a life learner was something my parents instilled in all of their children.

When did you begin training in martial arts?

I started training in Tang Soo Do just after my thirtieth birthday. I had always been interested in martial arts but never did anything about it. I had suffered a severe knee injury playing football and felt my physical limitations simply made martial arts impossible. After eight knee operations and the necessary physical therapy, I was not interested in risking another knee injury.

My stepson became interested in Tang Soo Do after a local instructor visited his elementary school. His interest grew and we decided to enroll him for classes. After watching classes for several weeks, I began to think, "I can do this!" I spoke with the instructor about my limitations and he encouraged me to start slow and see how things develop. Well, I've been aggressively training for over fifteen years (without a single knee injury).

My personal training strategy has always centered around incremental change: Don't try to go too fast. Your body can learn amazing things if you give it time to adapt and strengthen. Sudden or extreme movements can cause injury. I am a bit limited in a few techniques that I simply can't execute full speed on one leg. Yet, I can practice and improve...but most importantly, I can teach others and watch them triumph in areas where I can't.

Did you begin training to improve your physical limitations?

No. My initial interest in the martial arts was centered around the self-control and discipline. I just loved the regimented training, challenges of trying to improve and the feeling of accomplishment when I reached new belt ranks. It wasn't until I had been training for a few years that I started to realize the benefits in terms of self-defense, fitness and most importantly the wonderful mental benefits of training. The reasons I started training are still part of my desire today but the full scope of benefits weren't apparent until I actually started training.

Do you teach full-time?

Yes, I teach Tang Soo Do full-time. We opened Aim and Focus Karate, on February 1, 2000. For two years I continued to work during the day and teach classes in the evening. The company I was working for had to close and we decided the time was

I've come to realize that making a lot of money is no longer a goal of mine. In the past I've been successful financially and lived in a large house, but that kind of success is very fleeting. The value I see in my students growing and learning is far greater than a hefty paycheck. I have thought about returning to the technology sector but I've never given it serious consideration. I just couldn't give up my school or my students.

What was your occupation prior to opening your school?

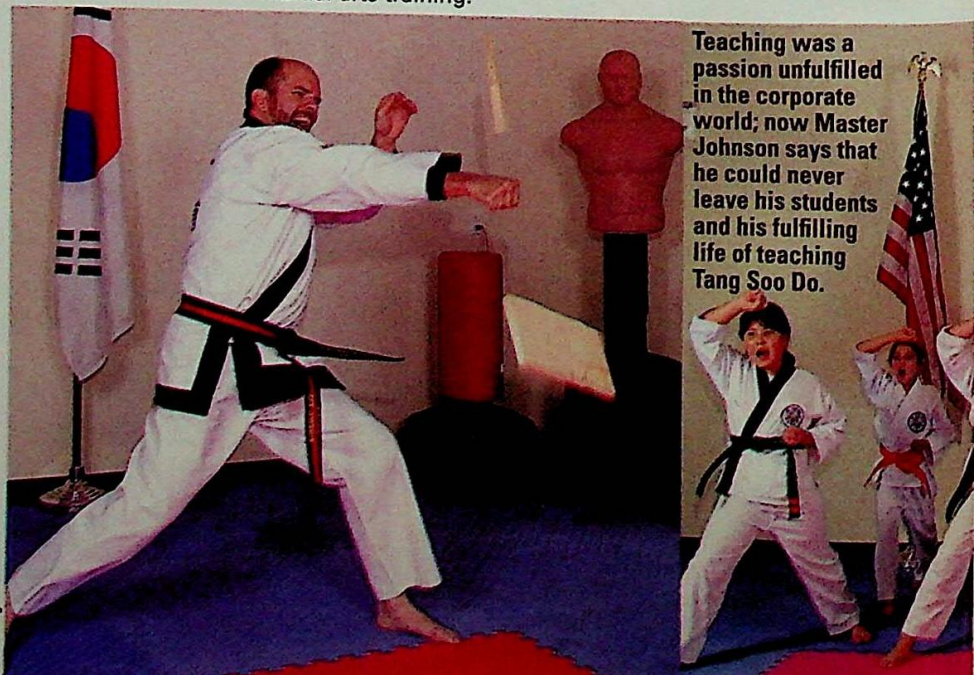
I started with IBM in 1983 straight out of college. I truly enjoyed working for IBM. It's a great company and I spent 15 years there. I had a wide range of technical jobs and management assignments. I achieved success in terms of advancement and salary.

As the dot.com explosion occurred across the technology sector, I felt it was an opportunity for me to really make a difference at a smaller company. I found what I thought was the perfect opportunity as the Information Technology Director for a small startup Internet print company. It was a wild ride for two-years. Sadly, the company was not ultimately successful and had to shut down operations. One of the hardest jobs I've ever had to handle was closing down the Austin location and telling 80-plus people that they were out of work. I spent almost a month closing down the operation and handling all the details

"We are always operating at capacity during a time when other daycares are struggling to keep their after-school programs operating."

needed to empty a building. I literally locked the doors and turned out the lights. It was after this experience that I felt like I needed to focus on something that wasn't "just a business" or "just a job." I took some time off with my family and then started focusing on my dojang full-time. **Is your school open during the day or only in the evenings?**

We teach a few morning classes for students that can't attend at night or would just like to get a little extra training. However, the bulk of our schedule starts at 2:30 pm with the release of the local elementary schools. We offer an After-School program that features the advantages of a traditional daycare with the tremendous added benefit of martial arts training.



Using the martial arts program as the framework, we offer a unique environment for the children. They receive martial arts instruction and have dedicated homework time all while working within a very structured environment. They learn self-confidence and improve self-esteem. The schools think we're great, as do our parents. We are always operating at capacity during a time when other daycares are struggling to keep their after-school programs operating.

We have a short break in the early evening as the children are leaving the after-school program before the evening

"My entire family trains in our school. We all 'walk the walk.'"

students being to arrive. We easily shift gears into a more traditional martial arts environment. We recently moved into a new facility that was specifically designed to accommodate our class schedule and student base. Our after-school program provides a wonderful community service without detracting from our primary purpose, teaching Tang Soo Do.

Our school has a wonderful family oriented atmosphere. We have parents training with children, siblings training together and spouses working out side-by-side. My entire family trains in our school. We all "walk the walk."

What is your teaching philosophy?

Every student is different and as such requires a slightly different approach. We have standard testing requirements and training guidelines that everyone must follow. Yet, how an instructor interacts with students must be unique. Some of my younger students need firm direction with no doubt about what is expected. Others require a slightly softer approach...not easier, just a little more consideration in terms of what they will respond to. I feel this is critical to being successful with children. They need to know

there are firm boundaries and schedules that must be followed, but they also need to feel they belong.

Respect is a two way street. You simply can't demand respect from your students. You must also show them respect in return. I often tell my students that it is much worse for a black belt to half-heartedly return a bow to another student than for a white or yellow belt to forget the proper way to enter the dojang. The senior students must lead by example. Etiquette and protocol are very

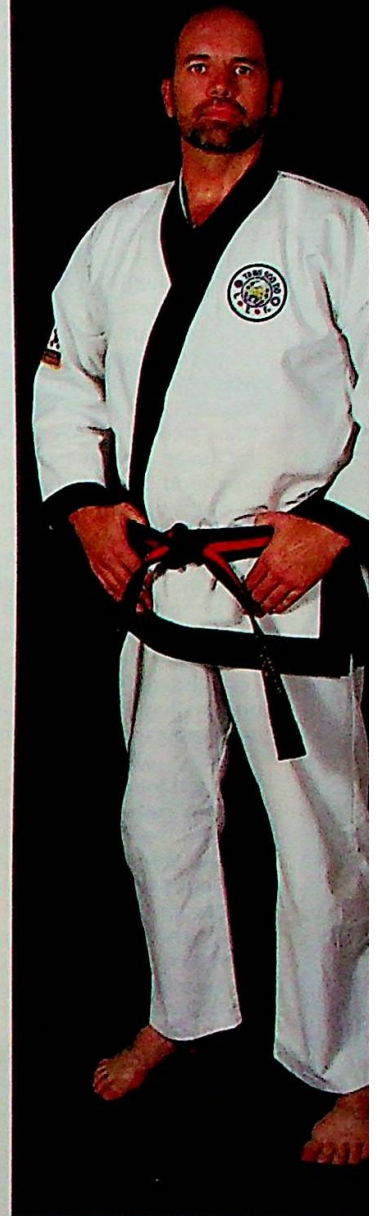
important in any martial arts school. You can't expect younger students or junior

students to follow a strict set of guidelines if they see others not following the same rules.

New students are excited about being in the dojang and readily learn to bow when entering the school. They face front and formally bow, executing the process just as they were shown by the master instructor. The problems sometime happen when the red belt or black belt student that has been training for years casually enters the dojang with a half-hearted bow. They've done it so many times that it has lost its luster and appeal. As an instructor, you simply can't let this happen. I often ask my senior students, "Do you think I bow when I cross the floor

even when no one is in the dojang?" They will look me in the eye and know the answer is "yes." The most important time to bow and show good respect to the dojang is when no one is watching...when no one will know that you did what was right. **What is your personal exercise regimen?**

I truly love to train in the dojang. Some of my best workouts are in the morning when no one is around. I can



Master Ben Johnson

DEEP IN THE HEART OF TANG SOO DO

turn off the "instructor mode" and simply work out. I love to teach but I also love to train. I rarely get the opportunity to simply be a student in class. When I get the chance, I jump at it. As I get older, I realize that I must focus additional energy on stretching, warm-ups and cool downs. There was a time when I could just change into my dobok and step onto the floor for a heated sparring class. Now I need to properly prepare my body for strenuous workouts. I've also realized that my body doesn't recover as quickly as it once did. I can line up with younger students and train with them all night long. The difference is that they can get up the next day and do it all over again. I find that harder and harder to do as I grow older.

Another exercise passion of mine is cycling. Over the years I've participated in several MS 150 rides between Houston and Austin. I really enjoy peddling around central Texas. The exercise is great and it's just great to be outdoors. The climate in Austin is mild enough that you can ride virtually all year round. Of course, that means a few rides when the temperature is hovering near freezing and lots of rides when the temperature is in the high 90's. The idea of incremental change is so important. If you train on a regular basis, your body will adjust to the temperature changes and you'll have great rides. You just can't decide to start serious cycling in the middle of August in Texas. Just like you can't start training in Tang Soo Do with 360-jump-back-kick!

Why did you become a member of the International Tang Soo Do Federation?

I joined the ITF when my instructor, Master Donnie Meadows, moved his school to the ITF. I was a red belt at the time and had almost no exposure to our previous federation. I simply trained at the dojang and worked on the required material. When we joined the ITF, almost

"Choong Jae Nim Master Kim was the inspiration for the name of my dojang, Aim and Focus Karate."

immediately Choong Jae Nim Master C.S. Kim made a visit to our school. I can remember how impressed I was that he would come all the way to Austin to visit a new school in the ITF. When he arrived and I had an opportunity to train in clinics with him, I realized what a wonderful part of my training had been missing. As a member of the ITF, we had access to other senior master instructors and their students. I developed friendships with other martial artists around the world. There was an instant acceptance and fellowship. Now as a master in the ITF, it is my turn to help foster that sense of belonging. I have to reach out to new students or black belts and make sure they feel appreciated and welcome in our federation.

My students are constantly exposed to other masters and instructors within the ITF. This helps them grow and improve as martial artists. These clinics and training

opportunities inspire and motivate my students in ways I can't. They have opportunities to learn from several different sources and benefit from the experience of different teachers. They aren't limited by the

knowledge of their instructor. Also, as a student my skills and knowledge continue to grow. Being in the ITF allows me to be a life learner as well...right along with my students.

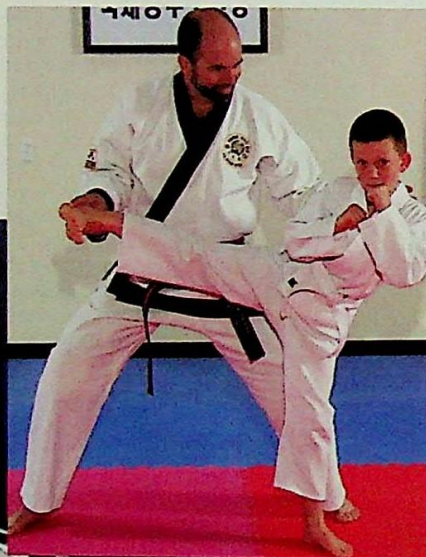
You seem to have a great admiration for Choong Jae Nim Master C. S. Kim.

Choong Jae Nim Master Kim is a true inspiration to me. He has been my instructor for many years. There was a time when I came to a crossroads with my first instructor. I was a Cho-Dan at the time and uncertain where to turn

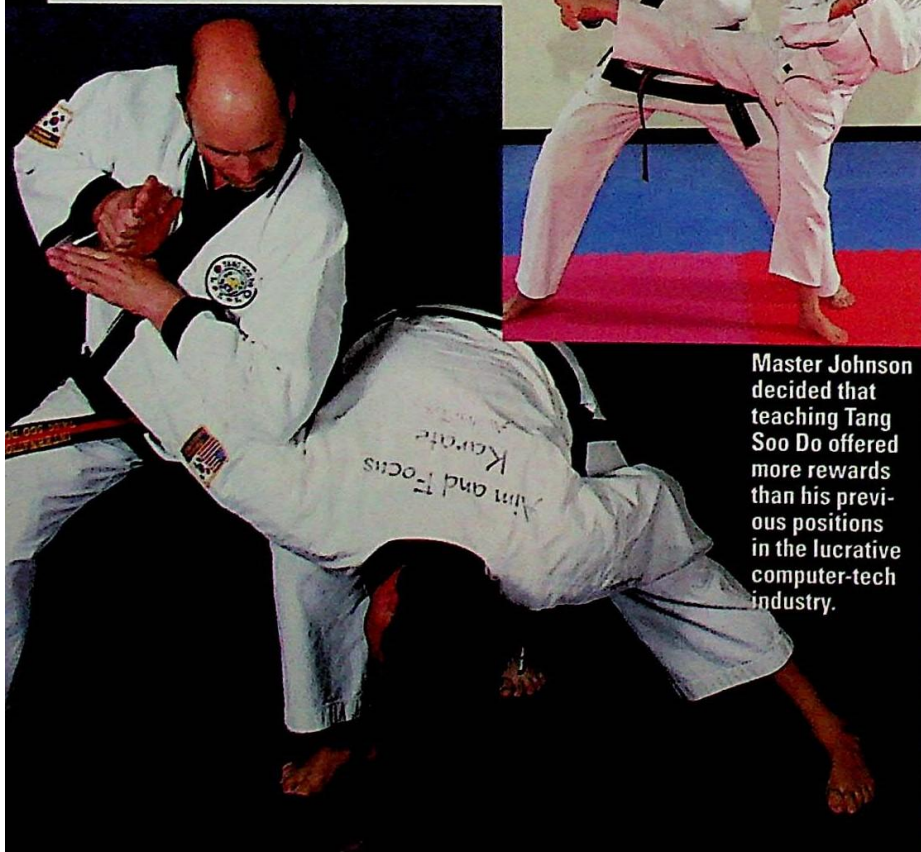
for guidance. I wondered if he would have time for a first-degree black belt in Austin. I didn't have a school or any students. I shouldn't have worried, my Sabunim was already looking out for me. He called me at home and asked me to be his student. He invited me to Pittsburgh to train at his headquarters. Master Patrick Leach, head instructor at the school, greeted me and put me to work. I knew this was the place for me.

Master Joe Bruno once told me that loyalty to your instructor was unconditional. I didn't understand that until Choong Jae Nim Master Kim showed me the way. My loyalty to him is unconditional. Period. He always makes me feel like he has my best interest at heart. Even when he has something to say that I don't want to hear.

A few years ago he visited my school and took me aside to talk with me about my training. He told me "last year you were good...this year, you're not...why is that?" I really didn't know what to say, but I knew he was absolutely correct. As I thought about my training I realized that I was taking shortcuts and not focusing on the details of my work. My forms were too quick and technique was suffering. I told myself to go back to square one and start fixing things. The next year when he visited, he smiled and simply said "good." We can always improve and we'll never get it perfect, but I knew I was heading back in the right direction. Choong Jae Nim Master

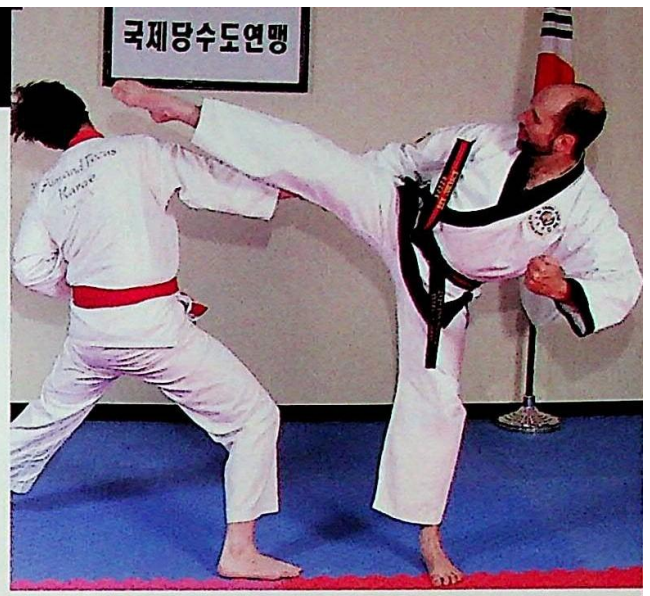


Master Johnson decided that teaching Tang Soo Do offered more rewards than his previous positions in the lucrative computer-tech industry.





LEFT: Master Johnson teaching at his dojang in Austin, Texas. RIGHT: Although an old injury may impair Master Johnson from executing some techniques, his form still looks great!



Kim is rock hard in his teaching style, but never cruel. He demands excellence and he always gives just that to his students.

As I approached my testing for Sabunim, I noticed that his focus during our conversations was shifting from technical discussions about technique to more topics about life outside the dojang. When he calls, he always asks about my family and how am I doing. We talk business only after we've discussed how I'm doing. His concern for me is genuine and heartfelt.

Choong Jae Nim Master Kim was the inspiration for the name of my dojang, Aim and Focus Karate. He once told me of his love of golf. He sadly said that he doesn't get to play as often as he would like. When he does get a chance to play, his golf partners would comment on how well he plays even though he didn't get to practice as much as the other golfers. He told them: "Golf is just like Tang Soo Do; the important thing to remember is aim and focus." I never forgot that lesson and when it came time to start my own dojang, "Aim and Focus" instantly came to mind.

As a member of the International Tang Soo Do Federation, how do you see your role in the organization?

The ITF has done wonderful things for me. It has provided tremendous guidance and support when I needed it the most. It gave my school instant credibility when I opened. It has provided me access to a large group of excellent master instructors all of whom will share their knowledge with anyone willing to ask. My cell phone directory has so many "Master" entries that I've lost count. These very busy instructors will call me periodically just to see how I'm doing and if there is anything they can do to help me.

I've learned the lesson well and now it's my turn. I need to mirror that same helpfulness and acceptance to my students and the students of other instructors. When a student walks up to me and says, "Sabunim, can you help these students with basic form number-one," I will gladly reply, "yes, sir" or "yes, ma'am." For the last several years the members of the ITF have had time for me, now it's time for me to step up and follow the well-worn path as an instructor in the ITF.

What are your personal goals for Aim and Focus Karate?

This year, there will be a black belt test for our first group of students that started as white belts at Aim and Focus Karate. I couldn't be prouder of this group. They have worked very hard and I'm very sure they will have an excellent test.

When I look at these students, I see the future of Aim and Focus Karate. I focus on the quality of my students and their training. It's not about how many students I can put on the training floor or test for black belt but rather

"While helping hold boards... I was seriously injured... with multiple fractures and facing reconstructive surgery."

the quality of the students we produce. I believe the Ford Motor Company once used the slogan "Quality is job #1." We train everyday with that idea in mind. We might spend an entire black belt class on basic form number-three or reviewing basic combination techniques. We don't move forward on senior material without reviewing and practicing our junior material.

I recently tested a group of adult students for first-gup. During a black belt class about a month before the gup test, I told the students that they were all expected to take the first-gup test with the red belts. They would be expected to test over all the red belt material. I also told them it would be an evaluated testing and not just a review. They responded with an excellent testing and really elevated the demonstration the red belts were able to achieve. It was a huge success for both groups.

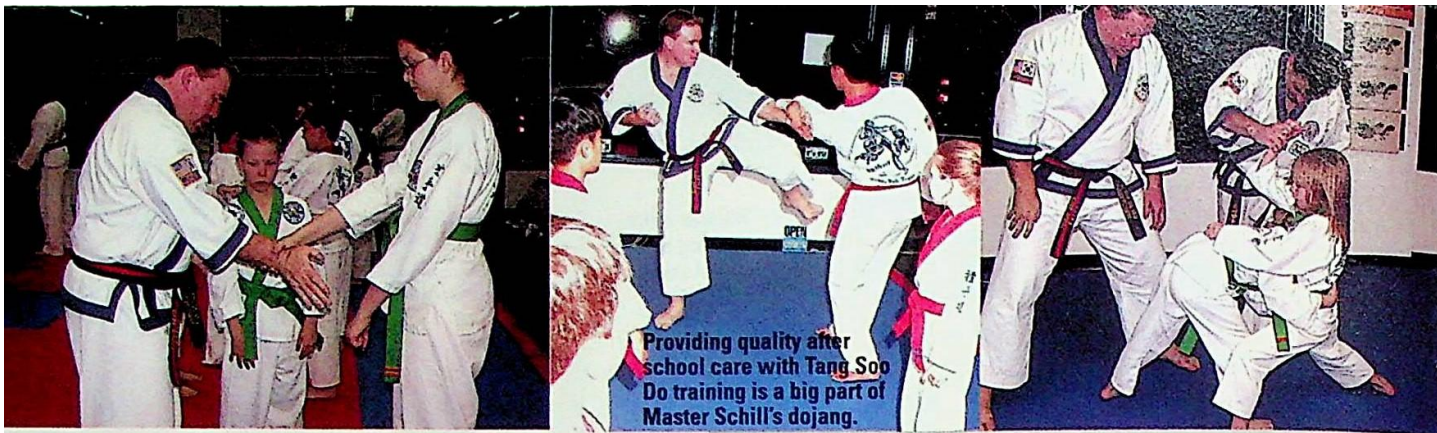
I started in Tang Soo Do somewhat late in life. My goal for Aim and Focus Karate is to produce students that are even better than I have ever been. I'd love to watch my students achieve greater success and continue to spread the benefits of our traditional Korean martial art Tang Soo Do.

Any closing comments?

In closing, I'd like to relate a few personal experiences. While helping hold boards during a black belt testing I was seriously injured. It was an unfortunate accident and left me with multiple fractures and facing reconstructive surgery. This could have easily been the end of my career in Tang Soo Do. The day after the injury, Choong Jae Nim Master Kim invited me to breakfast with the senior instructors. I was heavily medicated and had difficulty attending the meal. Soon after being seated, I had to leave the table to visit the restroom. Another black belt sat in that restroom and held my hand while I was ill. Everyone sitting at the table was my senior, yet Choong Jae Nim Master Kim waited to start the meal until I returned to the table. The food was getting cold, but he waited. I will never forget the honor and respect he showed me.

I knew that my injuries would heal and I would return to Tang Soo Do. There are a few physical lasting effects from the injury but a potentially negative event had an incredibly positive emotional effect on me. I won't embarrass the black belt that sat in that restroom with me by naming him in this article, just know that I will never forget his kindness or the excellent support he provided when I needed it the most.

The other experience I'd like to discuss revolves around the preparation for my Sam-Dan belt testing. I was training hard in preparation for my testing and particularly practicing the flying side-kick break. During one practice session, I badly bruised my ankle. Over the next few weeks, a serious staff infection took hold in the tissue



Providing quality after school care with Tang Soo Do training is a big part of Master Schill's dojang.

around my ankle. The infection was serious enough to force hospitalization and IV drug therapy. I was released from the hospital with strict instruction to not put any weight on the foot for at least two weeks.

My black belt testing was one week away. I requested permission from my physician to at least attend the event. She agreed provided I use a wheelchair. We rented a wheelchair and boarded a flight from Austin to Pittsburgh. I sat in a wheelchair and watched the black belt testing that I should have been participating in. I remember calling Master Leach at headquarters and asking him what I should wear. I wasn't sure wearing a dobok was appropriate. He told me: "There is no finer suit than a dobok." I sat in that chair and proudly wore my dobok.

On some level I was disappointed and frustrated that I wasn't testing, then I remembered my own words to my students reminding them that we don't train for rank or recognition. I looked down and saw my worn and faded belt and suddenly realized with a smile that this is what patience is all about. Even with all the sweat and practice I'd put into reaching the goal of testing for Sam Dan, I couldn't have been more driven than that moment....to do better....to do much better on my Sam Dan test. Patience and a burning desire to do better have been with me ever since that day.

I knew that in time my ankle would heal and I would be given the opportunity to test. Choong Jae Nim Master Kim always tells us to think in terms of years, not weeks or months. Focus on what is really important, not what can be achieved near term. This lesson allowed me to get back on my feet and continue with my training.

The lessons of Tang Soo Do don't simply stop at the door of the dojang. You carry them with you no matter where you go. They help to shape your outlook on life and your ability to enjoy life, no matter what happens. Tang Soo Do will always get you up off the floor and back in the game whether it's a sparring match, business presentation to a room of executives, family health crisis or any other life event.

TANG SOO!!!!

Master Gary Schill

MASTER ZAC SZABO: Begin by telling *TKDT* readers about yourself.

MASTER GARY SCHILL: My name is Gary A. Schill. I am a Master Instructor with the International Tang Soo Do Federation. I was born in the Azores Islands, on Laje Field, in March of 1965 to David and Helen Schill. My father, a career enlisted man in the Air Force, was stationed there. In 1967, we moved to Biloxi, Mississippi, and Keesler AFB, where Hurricane Camille hit a short time after our moving there. In 1969, my father was stationed in Midwest City Oklahoma at Tinker AFB. After moving, my father was sent to Vietnam where he did two tours of duty. When my father returned from Vietnam, we were stationed farther north in Oklahoma at Vance AFB in Enid. It was there that I had my first experience in martial arts with a Judo class at the base gymnasium.

In 1976, we were stationed in Germany. Almost two years later, my sister was diagnosed with a heart defect and we returned back to the States for treatment at Lackland

"... my business partner embezzled \$175,000... I had to start over again."

AFB in San Antonio, Texas. I spent the majority of my formative years in San Antonio and my family continues to live there. My father is retired military, serving his country for 24 years. My mother has been with La Quinta Motor Inns at the corporate offices for over 25 years. My sister is a schoolteacher in Northside Independent School District. I moved to Austin in 1995 during the tech boom. In 1998, I opened my school in a church gymnasium part-time and in 2001, I opened a full-time studio. My team, students and curriculum have been growing ever since. I have two sons who both train in Tang Soo Do and my youngest is an assistant instructor in our current school.

I initially started formal training in Germany at 11-years of age. My father, an Air Force NCO, was stationed at Patch Air Force Base in Stuttgart, Germany. I studied with an Army Sergeant in the recreation rooms of the housing facilities. I studied Tae Kwon Do and Jujitsu. As I said, my sister was diagnosed with a congenital heart defect



Adults and children are both given personal direction from Master Schill

DEEP IN THE HEART OF TANG SOO DO

and we were transferred to Lackland AFB, in San Antonio where she could receive treatment from one of the finest cardiology wings in the military. Due to these events, I did not resume my training until my early 20's.

In 1989, I had my own business and, unfortunately, my business partner embezzled \$175,000 from the company. This devastated me emotionally and financially. My parents, business partner and I lost our life savings in this company and I had to start over again. A close friend introduced me to a school where he trained in martial

Soo Federation. I learned so much from my original instructor, much of what I still teach today. However, the

International Tang Soo Do Federation allowed me the opportunity to have a structured curriculum way above second and third-degree black belt to even the master ranks. This was very appealing to me because of the goals I had set for my school and for myself.

Are you a full-time martial art instructor?

I opened my own school in August of 2001. I had been a senior account executive in the software industry and had just accepted an offer from another company that offered me an incredible opportunity both financially as well as career advancement opportunities.

I took a trip with Choong Jae Nim Kim and 87 of my ITF Tang Soo Do brothers and sisters to Korea and China. We trained and spent time together for almost two weeks. I knew during the trip that I was not doing what I loved to do. I knew that I wasn't really happy and I longed to have more control of my destiny. When I returned to Texas, I spoke with my family and to the

Grandmaster. I called the company that I had just taken the offer from and told them that I had decided to take another path.

Our goal was to get the school ready within thirty days, August 15, the day before public school started. It was important to have our After-School Enrichment Program up and running for the first day of school. With a lot of hard work and perseverance, we accomplished our goal. We started out with 20 students from the church and enrolled 23 after school program students. Now we have over 250 students in all of our programs.

You mentioned that you owned your own business prior to opening your school. Has that experience helped with operating your dojang?

I previously owned two businesses. My first business was while I was in college in the financial services industry. I owned that business for over seven years. In addition, I owned a service business that tracked unauthorized credit card charges, as well as offering other services, for its customers. That is where I learned my most costly but rewarding business experience. As I said, one of my



International Tang Soo Do founder Choong Jae Nim Master C. S. Kim with organization masters and members. Master Schill and Master Johnson are left, second and fourth from left.

"My relationship with Choong Jae Nim Master Kim has afforded me the opportunity to train all over the world including Korea and China."

arts. I was really looking for something to help me get refocused and rededicated to my passion. The school was Dragonfoot Karate Institute, a Tang Soo Do school not far from the military base. My instructor was Anthony Linson.

Sabunim Linson was just what I needed at that time in my life. He helped me get refocused and he whipped me into shape. I fell in love with the art and spent all of my spare time training. I started assisting in the children's classes and I knew that I had found my calling. I tested for Cho-Dan November 24, 1993. I remember the test like it was yesterday. The test was hard and very challenging but Sabunim Linson's philosophy is that when you test for black belt, you will know that you have earned the right to wear the belt. The test lasted about eight-hours but it was the most gratifying feeling I had ever had. After that test, I knew that I had been through a personal war and won.

In 1995, I moved to Austin, Texas, with a major career change to the high-tech sector. I found another Tang Soo Do school and met Choong Jae Nim Master Chun Sik Kim, the president and founder of the International Tang

BELOW: At Master Schill's dojang and with ITF black belts

