

Chayon Ryu

45th Anniversary Speaker's Notes

Good evening, I am very happy to see you all here tonight! My family, friends, instructors, and students. We are all here, together to celebrate 45 years of Chayon Ryu; in addition, I want you to look forward with me to the future of our system.

Leading up to 1968, I had been planning to leave Korea to teach abroad. I already had offers from a number of different countries to come teach: the Philippines, Mexico, Canada, and Columbia. But I turned all of these down, and chose to come to America instead. Why?

I wanted to preserve Grandmaster Yoon, Byung In's teaching, and be free from any pressure to conform to the movement towards sports, competition-oriented training. It was only in America that I could see achieving the independence and freedom to preserve his legacy, and continue to develop my philosophy of teaching, of Chayon Ryu, free from the influence of politicians or religious leaders. Martial Arts as education, as a pure art, as tradition, as a means of helping so many people improve the quality of their lives. This has made such a profound difference in my own life, and in the lives of the people I had already taught so far. How could I not do everything I could to preserve these traditional values, to continue to share them with people wherever I could?

People in Korea who were considering a move all the way across the Pacific, to this country, wanted to settle in places where there was already a strong Korean community. Of course, it's much easier, and more comfortable, to have that safety net and community. But I wanted to have a clean slate – to go somewhere where there weren't any major figures already teaching! There were people in California, in New York, in Washington. But nobody in the south; nobody in Texas. Everybody was afraid to come to Texas! They only knew what they'd seen in movies; and besides, why would I go somewhere where there weren't any Koreans? That was exactly the point 😊

I applied for a green card on my own – no lawyer, no official assistance. I thought carefully about what I was going to say, and prepared as much as I could. It was very expensive, applying for the green card! And no guarantee that I would be approved. The person in the immigration office was a huge man, so stern and mean looking. I saw down in his office, and he scowled at me across his desk, and said, 'Why do you want to live in America?' I was so nervous... my mind went blank! I forgot everything! All that preparation I had done – gone!

I looked at him, and said... 'America needs me!' He looked so surprised. America needs GOOD teachers! Sure, there are plenty of people who can teach how to kick and punch and fight; but who is teaching form, and classic traditional forms, and knows what they mean? Who is teaching for your health, for your quality of life? I gave him my resume: how I was the first Korean correspondent for Black Belt magazine, taught the U.S. and Korean armies, trained the bodyguards for the first Korean president. I talked about two forms: No Hai and Wan Shu. What the names mean, and how every movement in the forms have meaning.

He slammed his hand down on his desk, very hard! I was startled, and worried that was a bad sign. He stood up from behind his desk... and stuck out his hand to shake mine! He granted me 'third preference' status on my new green card – no boss, no need to have an employer or sponsor. I was going to be independent. Third preference was the highest level granted on a green card; it's what was granted to doctors, lawyers, professors. I was termed 'Professor of Martial Arts' – to teach American teachers.

I want to talk for a moment about our system. Ours. Tonight is not about me; it's about 45 years, so far, of training, of teaching, of continuously developing and refining the teaching method, of promoting more black belts so that YOU can turn around and teach as well. Our school, our Chayon Ryu system, should be preserved, protected, and continue to grow to help you, to help each other, to help future new students and future instructors. To foster these goals, we must focus ourselves on the training, and teaching. I do not want to see conflicts between individuals harm our higher goals. We all have different backgrounds, different origins; different political beliefs and so on. When we are together to train, to teach, to clean the dojang, that is our time to focus on our personal development and to help other people and our school. Conflicts over things like politics, ego, race, and so on should be left outside! Smile, help each other with your training, and focus on positive things in your life.

Teachers: I want you to be mindful to be humble, kind, and generous to everyone around you. Teachers should make the information accessible to the students. Do not use your position as an instructor for outside reasons – not to promote your outside businesses, or church, etc.

I want to thank all the students who have worked to make this evening a success, and everyone for coming together this evening to celebrate our first 45 years of Chayon Ryu. I would like to meet everyone again at our 50th Anniversary!

Martial Arts is my first priority; my mission in life, not my business. I will teach until I die – there is no retiring.