

## Learning from Hardship and Tragedy

Written By Jason Murguz as told by Grandmaster Kim Soo

Last year Chongjae-Nim spoke to me and Mr. Pete Nuygen about several times in his training when he learned from either his own hardships or the hardships of others. I have written before about how important it is to take correction from instructors in the proper way, and to understand that our instructors only want us to learn the true way or *Do*. As we get to the Black Belt level the thought may be that we know it all and don't need correction. Chongjae-Nim's experiences show us that students can learn just as much from their own hardships and the hardships of others if they are attentive and patient.

The first instance that Chongjae-Nim told us involved him being beaten up or "slapped around" as he described it by some people from a different university. In his story he said he was walking on a campus while wearing another school's colors or logo. Some students saw this and approached him, slapping him and giving him a hard time.

"I was 3<sup>rd</sup> degree Black Belt at the time, and I didn't know what to do. Should I kihop, or get into some formal stance? I went home and cried in my bed. If we were in the Dojang, I would have defeated them, but out there in the world I didn't know what to do. So I came up with practical self-defense so I don't have to worry about a stance or anything like that. I just react."

Chongjae-Nim took a situation that was embarrassing and instead of dwelling on it he innovated a new form of training so that not himself, but others could learn a more complete art form that would be useful in their everyday lives. The next memory that Chongjae-Nim shared with us involved sparring in the dojang.

"I remember sparring with another student who happened to be cross-eyed. Because of this, whenever he would round kick I wouldn't be able to tell if he was kicking high or low. If I blocked high he would hit me low. If I blocked low he would hit my face. It was so frustrating. I went and I cried in my bed. I wept and thought, how am I going to handle this? What can I do? So I came up with Scissor Block, or round kick block. Next time in class, he would kick but I didn't care where because I could block anywhere he could kick with new block."

Again Chogjae-Nim took a situation that defeated him and made it into a stepping stone to success and knowledge. Finally I will relate a sad story that Chongjae-Nim shared with us that changed how we practice practical self-defense.

"I had a black belt student that really got into scuba diving. He would go all over the world diving in different places. One day he was sitting in a bar or restaurant minding his own business and didn't notice a man watching him. It turns out the man was looking at his Rolex watch. The student finished with his food and drinks and left. While he was unlocking his car he was hit in the head with a tire iron by the man who had been watching him. He was in comma for a while and then he died. I was very sad. He was a black belt student. So I came up with practicing practical self-defense with the defenders back to the attacker. That way when the defender hears a sound like a clap or a kihop, the defender turns and reacts. I want my students to always be prepared and ready. This was a very sad situation, but out of it many people learned a valuable lesson."

I think it was this last statement that has stuck with me the most. Chongjae-Nim wants us, his students, to always be prepared to defend ourselves if the need arises. He also wants his students, to learn from their defeats, weaknesses, and short comings. We often learn much more from our failures than from our victories. I know for me personally, not breaking a brick on my first try at my Black Belt test stuck with all the way until I did break one during my 2<sup>nd</sup> Dan test. Breaking that brick meant so much more to me than succeeding the first time. Sometimes, it is in our failures that we find our greatest successes.