

**TKD** *TaeKwonDo*  
**TIMES**

# Hall of Fame

International Grandmaster of the Year  
**Byong Yu**

Chief Master of the Year  
**William Clark**

Master of the Year  
**Seong Ji**

Instructor of the Year  
**Sung Son Yu**

School of the Year  
**Susan Whitfield**

Competitor of the Year  
**Steven Lopez**

# International Grandmaster of the Year

## Byong Yu



Grandmaster Byong Yu, Ph.D., of Los Angeles, California, is a force of nature. His name and reputation is synonymous with the word excellence. This charismatic grandmaster is known worldwide for his accomplishments in martial arts. But he also has become a mover and shaker in the fields of construction, real estate, tourism, film production and distribution—as well as earning several advanced degrees from a prestigious university. Not bad...considering as a young boy, Byong Yu was diagnosed as developmentally disabled. Convinced that he would become a burden to his family, doctors told his parents to put him in a corner of the room and let him die.

Byong Yu, who was born in Kyung Ki-Do, South Korea, in 1935, was known in his village as “Ugly Boy,” yet he refused to let his spirit be broken by the taunts. His destiny led him to a wise and gifted martial arts master who accepted him as a student. In the years that followed, Grandmaster Yu used the philosophical wisdom instilled in him by his master to triumph through the Korean War, years of poverty, and homelessness.

After immigrating to the United States in 1964, Byong Yu, who had earned his bachelor’s degree in Korea, struggled to live the American dream, and a personal tragedy almost shattered his spirit. However, in the grueling process of rebuilding his life, he managed to become a martial arts legend, first by becoming one of the biggest winners on the tournament circuit and garnering championships in 58 countries, earning the nickname of “Lightning Bolt,” and then by concentrating his efforts to become the best Tae Kwon Do instructor possible while pursuing his advanced degrees and other vocational interests.

Over the past forty-plus years in the United States, Grandmaster Yu, who is a World Taekwondo Federation ninth-dan, went on to achieve two master’s degrees in physical education and economics, and a Ph.D. in physical education, sports medicine and nutrition from the University of California. He produced,

wrote, directed, and performed in the *World Masters Expo* that was seen in almost all 50 states and in 22 countries throughout the world. Also, he began collecting accolades: induction into the Martial Arts Hall of Fame, Golden Masters Award, Lifetime Achievement Award, and was named the Martial Art “Man of the Century.” Grandmaster Yu has received commendations from 36 kings, queens and presidents.

Dr. Yu was vice president of M.G.M. studios for seven years, and has been involved in the making of many films, four of which earned Academy Awards as Best Picture of the Year. He was an instrumental force for bringing the Olympics to South Korea in 1988, and introducing Tae Kwon Do as an Olympic sport for the first time. He currently serves on the senior advisory committee for the WTF. For the last ten years, Dr. Yu has been a mediator between North and South Korea, and served as a visiting ambassador to North Korea. He is the founder of the “38<sup>th</sup> Parallel Project,” which is dedicated to the advancement of a peaceful and unified Korea.

Grandmaster Yu’s life story is being chronicled in a full-length feature film project entitled *Monkey Man*, for Warner Brothers. In addition, he is writing two books on nutrition, and currently serves as Vice President of Special Projects for Warner Bros.

TKDT proudly inducts Grandmaster Yu as its 2007 International Grandmaster. His accomplishments are too numerous for all to be included. His stature in the martial art community is unparalleled. Dr. Yu writes in his book, *Inside U: How to Become Master of Your Own Destiny*: “I have triumphed over countless obstacles that I have faced in my lifetime. Yet through it all, I have managed to fulfill my destiny and come to intimately discover who and what I am.”

And who and what he has become is the complete martial artist, using his intelligence, physicality and spirit to improve and to inspire the lives of others and, in the process, making his own dreams come true.

# Chief Master of the Year

## William Clark



A natural leader, Chief Master William G. Clark was born September 11, 1947, in Jacksonville, Florida, the eldest of seven brothers. He excelled athletically, even playing semi-pro baseball his senior year in high school. A pivotal turning point, both personally and professionally was his 1965 move to Omaha, Nebraska, to work for his Uncle Bob. It was in Omaha that Master Clark began his martial arts training and in 1968 he met the late Grandmaster H. U. Lee, Chief Master Richard Reed and Chief Master Robert Allemier. Grandmaster Lee became his respected instructor and mentor, and Chief Masters Reed and Allemier his life long friends and colleagues.

During the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, Chief Master Clark was an intense and strategic competitor within the American Taekwondo Association (ATA) and on the Open Tournament circuit, winning the Professional Kickboxing Association (PKA) fighter of the year, the ATA National Championships, as well as many other titles. He moved back to Jacksonville in 1971 and retired from competition in 1978 to focus on his schools, instructor development, and the growing Songahm organization.

Beginning as one of the first students of the ATA, Chief Master Clark became one of the architects of what is today the largest single style martial arts organization in the world, helping to craft the Songahm forms and design the Songahm System of training. Today, he, the other members of the Masters’ Council, and Grandmaster Soon Ho Lee, carry on the vision and protect the legacy of the Songahm Founder, the late Grandmaster H. U. Lee.

Equally comfortable and commanding on the mat and in life, Chief Master Clark applies what he has learned from the ATA and the Songahm System to the martial arts industry at large and is a sought-after mentor and speaker. Expecting professionalism and loyalty at all levels of the industry, he challenges others to dig deep, and do more. He calls on them to stand up for who they are and what they believe in, recognizing that traditional martial arts is not about just training the body, but training the whole person. This standard for excellence is demonstrated in the quality

of his students, instructors and masters.

One of the hallmarks of his success is his ability to balance respect for tradition with the need for innovation to meet the dynamic needs of our changing culture and society. He knows which elements are essential for retaining the integrity of the tradition of the art and which areas are open to modernization and transformation. Consistently producing cutting edge programs and training systems for students and martial arts professionals alike, he is not afraid to try new methods or ideas, and is always looking to learn more.

As of November 2007, he owns or co-owns 50 schools and has personally trained five masters, mentoring dozens more. He has hundreds of instructors and has impacted countless students. He is the largest single school owner/operator nationwide and is a regular keynote speaker at the Martial Arts Industry Association’s Annual Las Vegas EXPO. Chief Master Clark has been inducted into both the ATA and Songahm Halls of Fame, and is consistently named one of the top ten most influential Martial Arts Professionals nationwide.

With all of the accolades, achievements and awards, Chief Master Clark treasures the friendships and relationships of his loyal friends and family the most, truly striving to make a difference. His view of success and what is important can be summed up in one of his favorite quotes, which is often attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson –

“To laugh often and love much; to win the respect of intelligent persons and the affection of children; to earn the admiration of honest citizens and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to give of one’s self; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to have played and laughed with enthusiasm and sung with exultation; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived - this is to have succeeded.”

## Master of the Year Seong Ji



Master Seong Ji, owner of Major Tae Kwon Do, in Lilburn, Georgia, humbly says that the key to his success is respect. At age 43, he has come to understand that by giving respect to all—no matter the age of the student—an instructor not only teaches respect, but also heightens the students' enjoyment of Tae Kwon Do as well. When his students enjoy Tae Kwon Do, they have the opportunity to gain the wonderful benefits characteristic to all martial arts.

Born in 1964 in Ansong City, South Korea, young Ji began his studies in Tae Kwon Do in elementary school. By the time he was twelve, he had earned his black belt. This accomplishment gave him incredible personal strength. To Seong Ji, having a black belt gave him a way to handle the difficult tests of life, be they mental, physical or emotional. It was the self-respect that he gained as a black belt that he considers to be the key to his success.

Attending Kyung Hee University, the world's first university to offer a bachelor's program in Tae Kwon Do, solidified his future as a Tae Kwon Do professional. Master Ji was in the inaugural class of the university that is located near Seoul, South Korea. It was an exciting time to be a Tae Kwon Do student!

Master Ji followed Korean tradition and joined the South Korean Army after his first two years of college. The South Korean Army assigned him to instruct Tae Kwon Do. Aside from providing his first opportunities to teach the sport he loved, it also offered him an education in philosophy and mental fortitude. In this environment, he clearly understood the benefits of his art and the solid foundation it provided him. After three years as a military instructor, Master Ji returned to Kyung Hee University.

By 1990, Master Ji had earned his B.S. in Tae Kwon Do, opened his first school, and started a family. A series of fortuitous events led him to the United States where he was submersed in a different culture, a different language, and a different landscape. After teaching in the Midwest for almost six years, a new chapter began in the life of Master Ji.

When the doors of Major Tae Kwon Do opened in 1996, in Lilburn, he was the only instructor with just two students. Quickly Major Tae Kwon Do was bursting at its 1600-foot seams and the school had to change locations. But just as quickly, it outgrew its second location and returned to its original location—with three thousand additional feet!

Currently with over 300 students, Master Ji still considers himself to be a student. Every day his students teach him how to be a better teacher, he said. As a humble man, Master Ji's greatest pride comes from each student enjoying his classes.

Master Ji tells his newest students: "When you plant apple seeds, you wait three years to get an apple." One of the greatest challenges he faces is that students today want to give up if they have difficulty with a move. This has become his challenge, to keep his classes exciting, while drilling the basics to improve skills over time. The greatest thing he hopes to teach his students and their parents is that if a student has a setback, or even a difficult time with a move, that is when they need their parents or a support person to give them confidence and respect for their abilities. "You need to believe in their abilities and keep them working...through the difficulty," says Ji. If the student leaves Tae Kwon Do during a difficult time, a cycle of self-doubt is learned rather than a cycle of determination, self-respect, hard work, and success. It is this cycle that makes students of all ages confident and successful.

Having over 400 students earn their first-degree black belts under his tutelage, over 200 second-degree black belts, and a large number of third-degree black belts, Master Ji is very excited and looking forward to becoming a grand-master in a special "Master Examination." The event will include his first students who will also be testing for their "Masters" degrees in Tae Kwon Do.

## Instructor of the Year Sung Son Yu



Master Sung Son Yu has studied the martial art of Tae Kwon Do for over 30 years and has 20 years of teaching experience. He holds a fifth-degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do and second-degree black belt in Hapkido. He has won many national and international Tae Kwon Do and martial arts championships. In 1999, he achieved his lifetime goal of becoming a master instructor at Champ Tae Kwon Do Academy. In 2004 and 2005, Champ Tae Kwon Do Academy was named one of the top ten traditional martial arts schools in the world by the World Martial Arts Research Foundation. In 2005, his after school martial arts program was also recognized as one of the top ten in the world by the same foundation.

Master Yu began his teaching career at Tiger Lim's Martial Arts University in Texas. He continued his teaching experiences at Fort Hood Army Base, Texas; Black Belt Academy in Oregon; Fort Richardson Army Base, Alaska, and Champ Tae Kwon Do Academy, the largest martial arts school in Alaska. He has participated and conducted seminars on women's self-defense, community safety and awareness programs, mostly in Alaska, but nationwide as well. Due to his efforts, Master Yu has attained an international reputation as a martial arts master and educator. These are the opportunities that afforded Master Yu the experience to understand how to better teach each student effectively.

Master Yu's school is structured in such a way that the student must gain discipline by adhering to strict rules. By this structure his teaching style of martial arts flourishes. His three main philosophies are to inspire, to motivate, and to educate. These are his tools for success. Champ Tae Kwon Do Academy offers two programs that embody his teaching philosophy. They are the after school martial arts program and the family program.

Inspiration applies to people of all ages, from three to seventy-plus years old, male or female, from special needs to athletic, all with varying degrees of skill. With these different abilities, one aspect remains the same—spirit!

Master Yu motivates students by his example and dynamic teaching methods. He leads classes, infusing students with his high energy and inspiring them to push themselves to be the best they can be. Champ Tae Kwon Do classes are varied to challenge the mind and body no matter what the skill level or physical ability. Master Yu has developed his educational programs by fulfilling the needs of each of his students. In a recent leadership class, he stated, "If you have 300 students, then you must have 300 different teaching methods." Structured mental and physical activities instill strong winning habits and develop character, leadership and practical life skills.

Once students are inspired, students are motivated to continue training and improve physically, but more importantly, they improve mentally. By continually setting goals, achieving them, and then setting new goals, students build winning habits and come to realize their own internal power. By teaching these positive life skills, his students learn the elements of character, which are the Tae Kwon Do tenets: Courtesy, Integrity, Perseverance, Self-Control, and Indomitable Spirit. Master Yu believes that people respect each other not because of their physical strength but because of their character.

The Champ Tae Kwon Do student creed was written by Master Yu, which specifically reflects his beliefs and is repeated at the end of every class:

I will develop self-confidence, discipline, responsibility, and respect for myself as well as others. I will practice diligently and learn self-defense, for health and mental growth, never using self-defense in a negative manner. I will obey my parents, teachers, and instructors and set a good example for others to follow. I shall keep a positive attitude at all times.

## School of the Year Susan Whitfield



Susan Whitfield's journey in Choi Kwang Do began through her children. Fourteen years ago, she began a search for a martial arts program for her twin sons to build their self confidence and coordination. In Choi Kwang Do, she saw firsthand the tremendous mental and physical benefits and decided to join her children in training.

While training, Ms. Whitfield realized the positive impact Choi Kwang Do had in transforming lives. She soon became eager to share her newfound passion and inner strength with others. After being certified under the Choi Kwang Do Martial Art International Organization, Ms. Whitfield began teaching both children and adults at Choi Kwang Do schools throughout metro Atlanta.

"Choi Kwang Do offers students the building blocks for life through its stages and goal setting," says Ms. Whitfield. "Students are in a continual process of learning and constantly striving to do their personal best. These are important lessons to becoming successful and happy that can last a lifetime."

In 2002, Ms. Whitfield's passion become her full-time profession as she left the corporate world to become the owner and instructor of Suwanee Choi Kwang Do Martial Arts. She teaches both children and adults at her school, and also offers on-site instruction in Choi Kwang Do to eight additional childcare facilities during the daytime.

As an instructor, mom and successful business owner, Ms. Whitfield takes great delight in teaching her students how to achieve their goals. "Through goal setting, students learn self-control and gain a greater self confidence. And with Choi Kwang Do, students learn they can do anything they want to do if they believe in themselves," stated Ms. Whitfield. And, as Ms. Whitfield works towards her Master's level certification, she continues to teach by the principles that caught her attention years ago—helping her students achieve their goals through enthusiasm and motivation.

Ms. Whitfield's philosophy toward building a successful school rests on the premise that she strives to create a safe, positive and nurturing environment for all students. Instructing students through positive reinforcement and

encouraging each student to do their personal best, free from competition or harsh teaching tactics, sets the tone for creating a true and meaningful learning experience for everyone, from her youngest students to her adult students and instructors.

"I strive to treat every student with respect and try to make each feel as if he or she is the most important student in the world. I take pride in getting to know all of my students on a personal level in order to encourage them to do their personal best in all aspects of their lives," said Ms. Whitfield. "I take pride in partnering with parents and teachers of my young students in order to ensure that they are demonstrating good self-control skills and proper behavior at home, at school, and in our martial arts classes. I strive to involve myself in their lives in order to reinforce the positive standards that are set forth by Grandmaster Choi in his martial art."

Ms. Whitfield feels strongly about creating a positive teaching environment for her students. She has had tremendous success in teaching young students over the years, and she is always amazed to see what wonderful things even very young students can learn and accomplish from their training in Choi Kwang Do. "I have students who begin their training with me at age two or three, and by ages six or seven are achieving first-degree black belt rankings! And, what an amazing feeling to see the wonderful development of young children as they become true leaders and role models among their peers! Setting the standards for 'always doing one's best and never giving up,' the fundamental philosophy behind 'Pil Sung' in Choi Kwang Do, sets an amazing standard by which to live by."

As Ms. Whitfield's martial arts school continues to grow and expand, she credits her successes to having a wonderfully committed and dedicated teaching staff. "I am truly blessed to have such a wonderful group of Assistant and Head Instructors at our Suwanee Choi Kwang Do School! They allow me to continue building the school, one student at a time, and they follow the same teaching philosophy of treating each student with dignity, kindness, and respect."

## Competitor of the Year Steven Lopez



Even if you've never met Steven Lopez, take a look at his competition record and you'll be sure of one thing—he knows how to compete and win! For over 13 years, Steven has been medaling and placing in major Tae Kwon Do competitions across the globe. His first taste of victory came in 1994 as he took the bronze in the World Cup Taekwondo Championships. Since then, Steven has consistently shown his determination in each match, winning his first Olympic Gold in the year 2000 and was again victorious in 2004 at the Athens' Olympic Games.

That's right, Steven Lopez is a two-time Olympic Gold Medalist, as well as being the only qualified U.S. team member (at the time of this publication) for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. But these aren't his only feats that qualify him for Hall of Fame induction. Lopez has also captured the Gold at the World Taekwondo Championships four consecutive times, with the fourth win coming at the championship event held in Beijing in May of 2007. In a sudden death match against South Korea's Jan Chang-Ha, Lopez claimed his sixth victory in one day, as well as securing his own place in Tae Kwon Do history. With two Olympics Golds and four consecutive World Taekwondo Championship titles to his name, Lopez had become the most awarded competitor in Tae Kwon Do—ever. Lopez describes the experience as "unbelievable." Adding, "I threw my hands up in the air and thanked God. It was just surreal."

Steven began training in Tae Kwon Do at the young age of five, when his older brother, Jean, began his training. They practiced together in the family's garage in Sugar Land, Texas. Today, Jean Lopez is now Steven's coach, and Steven's other siblings, Mark and Diana, are all also world champions. In fact, you could say the Lopez family is the most "winningest" family in TKD, when in 2005, Steven, Mark and Diana, all coached by big brother Jean, each won the Gold in their corresponding divisions at the World Taekwondo Championships. This made the Lopez family the first in history in any sport to ever claim World Championship Titles in the same event.

So how do they do it? Visualization. Steven Lopez says that his physical preparation for major events varies little from his regular routine. During the first month of training, Jean has Steven and his siblings focus on building strength and as they move closer to the match, they switch focus to strategy and tactics. According to Steven, most of the preparation is mental. From the first day, months before a major competition, Jean walks them through the first day of sparring. "He takes us there," says Steven, "from that first step into the ring, to the roar of the crowd." The Lopez's visualization technique puts them "more at ease," says Steven. "On the first day of competition, it's like you've already been there," making Steven calm and ready to compete. "When he (Jean), has you visualize yourself at the first place podium, placing your hand over your heart...it's the winning edge you need," remarks Lopez.

Despite being the most decorated competitor in Tae Kwon Do history, Lopez still has more in him. "I'm not at the top yet," he remarks, feeling he can always improve and do more. He is currently training with his family in Sugar Land for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and his third Olympic Gold.

Watch for Steven Lopez in future issues of TKDT as we cover his road to Beijing.