

ITFNZ

A view by Peter Graham on the Past, Present and Future

Mr Peter Graham

PAST

In the beginning there was Master Young Ku Yun.

7th degree black belt of the International Taekwon- Do Federation and controller of what is now referred to as the Oceania Region for ITF.

Based in Brisbane, Australia, Master Yun built what was to become one of the strongest Australasian martial art organisations in this region.

He achieved this with his magnetic personality, his unquestionable physical ability and the help of many dedicated students who, despite what was to later transpire, owe a debt of gratitude to this man who taught them the majority of what they have learnt of the art and in some cases, charted the course their individual lives have taken.

The conception of what was to become IITNZ took place at 1750 hours, 28 March 1981 at the Burma Lodge in Wellington. The meeting was attended by 22 student members who elected Mr Evan Davidson to the chair.

This meeting had been called to set up a steering committee to facilitate a National body. To affiliate to the South Pacific TKD Federation which had been recognised by General Choi Hong Hi, Founder and President of ITF.

This very important meeting was attended by;

Messrs

TAIREA (Padre)
MORAN (John)
RATANA (Mike)
MAORIKAVA (Tere)
JOSEPH (Wayne)
HEMANA (Harry)
TING (Francis)
COTTON (Mark)
MOKE (Nick)
McBRIDE (Russell)
FAU (Tufa)
MATHESON (Ian)
TAPUNI (Roy)
TAYLOR (George)

NG (Norman)
DAVIDSON (Evan) Chairman
HALL (Richard)
OOI (Sonny)
KAURATI (Francis)
GRAHAM (Peter)
McPHAIL (Paul)
MEYRICK (Paul)

All foundations were here laid for what was later to become the organisation we have today although at that time it was voted to adopt the Australian TKD Confederation Memoranda and Articles of Association. Mr David Lange was also adopted as Patron. Little else was achieved at this gathering other than the election of Officers to the Steering Committee.

These were;

PRESIDENT Bill McPhail
VICE PRESIDENT Peter Graham
SECRETARY Graeme Rounthwaite
ASST. SECRETARY Paul McPhail
TREASURER Norman Ng
ASST. TREASURER Wayne Joseph
AUCKLAND REP. Tere Maorikava
CENTRAL REP. Padre Tairea
WELLINGTON REP. Harry Hemana
SOUTH ISLAND REP. Evan Davidson

On the 3rd July 1981, ITF (NZ) was registered as an Incorporated Society and on the 14 June 1981 the first meeting of this Organisation took place in Palmerston North.

It was an exciting time with our own Constitution to be formulated, logos to be designed, National Tournaments to be organised and lines of communication to be established. The enthusiasm was infectious and at times our fledgling Executive were close to being out of control due largely to their inexperience and their frustrations that it seemed to take forever to make anything happen.

The objectives for that first year were;

- A) To arrange a National Tournament
- B) Select a team to represent NZ in Indonesia
- C) Arrange pamphlets and other promotional material
- D) Promote the Chang Hon style of TKD in NZ

E) Contact any other groups throughout the country to see if they were interested in joining our organisation under Master Yun.

After a settling down period of some twelve months or so, the fruits of the Foundation began to manifest themselves in the form of increased memberships and the opening of new branches. In hindsight, this may have happened too quickly as in some instances clubs were being abandoned as fast as they were opening. It required hasty action on the Executives part to bring things into line so that some semblance of order was brought to bear without dampening enthusiasm!

By the end of that first year we could boast 12 branches and a paid up membership of 485. The breakdown of these members was as follows:

UPPER HUTT 71
STOKES VALLEY 15
WELLINGTON 18
MIRAMAR 51
KHANDALLAH 46
LEVIN 20
PALMERSTON NORTH 93
MASSEY UNIVERSITY 38
WAIOURU 18
PAPAKURA 45
SOUTH AUCKLAND 59
GREY LYNN 11

By April of 1983 the number had dropped to 10 branches and a total of 417 Students.

KAIKOHE 27
PAKURANGA 130
PALMERSON NORTH 60
MASSEY 30
LEVIN 21
UPPER HUTT 35
KHANDALLAH 37
MIRAMAR 43
STOKES VALLEY 18
WELLINGTON ONE 16

In August of 1983 the Foundation sent a team of 6 to Fiji where they represented us with distinction. Things were at last starting to move.

1984 saw a small increase in membership but it was not until 1985 that we were to break the 500 barrier. Mr Paul McPhail shifted to Auckland that year and opened a club in Manurewa with 110 potential students lining up on the first night!

In that year the Nationals were held in Auckland with a record number of 143 participate. Perhaps some of the increased interest in martial arts at that time could be attributed to the release of the movie 'Karate Kid' which created the same fever amongst the young as 'World Wrestling' was to do five years later.

Until this time, the Foundation had been operating on an affiliation fee of \$ 1-00 per student per year (about \$500-00 p.a.) plus whatever other monies we could raise through the running of tournaments etc.

It was obvious that if we were to progress we were going to have to find ways to fund the operation at a higher level. To this end, a levy system was introduced whereby the Foundation received \$2-00 from each student that graded. This allowed the Foundation to perform in a more professional manner and not have to rely on the benevolence of a dedicated few who were prepared to provide their time (and in many cases money) at the expense of their family lives and personal financial situation to achieve the goals they had set ourselves.

This is still true today although for the first time, this year the Executive have decided it is time to start paying for some of the services being provided on the administration side.

Things were quite harmonious in those 'Heady' days and although there were some flare ups and minor personality conflicts, all in all we were all working towards a common goal which was to make ours the best and most respected martial art in the country.

I believe we did this and the highlight of this segment of our history would have to be the staging of the International Tournament in Wellington in 1985. I'm sure that to those of us who were involved, it does not seem over five years ago that this happened. From this we gained not only strength but also a lot of confidence. Confidence that we could achieve almost anything if we put our minds to it. Not only did we prove ourselves, we also made some strong and lasting friendships with practitioners from other countries and it is important now that these ties are forged into even stronger bonds if we are to progress.

At the time we were convinced that the World was 'Our Oyster' and we could do no wrong. Perhaps the problems that followed were the results of our vanity. There is a very old saying that says;

THOSE WHOM THE GODS SEEK TO DESTROY, THEY FIRST MAKE PROUD.

Looking back through the minutes of that time, I detect the faint rumbling of discontent and transcripts of a meeting called by Master Yun in Brisbane later that year (1985) now have the underlying tones of what could almost be termed 'Megalomania' about them.

Boards of Directors were formed with all types of grandiose titles handed out along with portfolios that would have made a modern revolutionise cringe. As is wont to happen at such gatherings, we filled ourselves with delusions of grandeur and maybe with the enthusiasm we engendered amongst our selves, we may just have been able to carry it off. But like many such Grande Plans, it founded for want of funding. Despite the assurance that finance would be forthcoming,

this never eventuated and those involved that had spent many thankless hours drawing up policy and budget requirements, were once again let down.

As it turned out, all this work was not totally wasted as it formed the basis for the development of the well-structured organisation we have today.

On Sunday 22nd December 1985, Master Yun called a meeting of seniors at the St George Hotel in Wellington and announced that Jung-Do-Kwan no longer existed and that the organisation that had previously been known by that name would now be known as 'Master Yun International Tae Kwon-Do'.

In 1986-87, expansion really took off. By the end of '87 membership had climbed to over 1,000 students in 36 branches.

Unfortunately this period will also be remembered for the aborted 'World Championships' that were to be held in Malaysia. Mystery still surrounds the reasons for the Eleventh Hour cancellation but the work that had gone into it from this end and the amount of money lost by the Foundation left a very bitter taste in our mouths as far as our conception of I. T. F.s organisational abilities are concerned.

Shortly after this however, the movement suffered another serious body-blow in the form of Master Yuns' decision to pull away from the ITF. Master Yun made this announcement at a special meeting held in the Terrace Regency in Wellington on the 26th October 1987.

To this day, there are conflicting stories as to who got rid of whom, but after reading the screeds of correspondence that was traded back and forth at the time, I'm inclined to accept the word of ITF regarding their request for Master Yuns' resignation for conduct unacceptable to the Federation.

Master Yuns' version of the facts convinced us at the time that he was in the right and at his request we, the Foundation, sent formal letters of resignation to I. T. F. headquarters announcing our decision to disassociate ourselves from them on the grounds that we felt our Master had been badly treated by them.

The direct result of this was that another wedge was driven in our ranks with some deciding to remain loyal to General Choi and the ITF, whilst the majority opted to stick with MYITF.

Having made this decision, the students and Instructors once again threw their shoulders to the wheel and worked tirelessly in the interest of Taekwon-Do, this time under the banner of 'Master Yun International Taekwon-Do'.

Once again, just when it seemed we may be coming out of the wilderness, the seemingly inbuilt self destruct mechanism came into play and rumbling began about radical changes being planned by the Master. These were to involve the very essence of our art. Altering such fundamentals as the grading system and the very patterns that make up the very fabric of the Original Taekwon-Do as created by its' Founder.

Attempts were made to dissuade Master Yun from what appeared to be the abandonment of TKD as we have been taught to practice it, but to no avail and with what was now becoming to manifest itself as complete arrogance and lack of feeling for those who had supported him and worked so hard at varying degrees of personal sacrifice (and for no financial return either given or expected) Master Yun responded by dismissing the Executive from his organisation.

In doing this, he gravely miscalculated the strong feelings of those Thinking members of NTNZ and in a specially called meeting of that body held at the Waipuna Lodge Auckland on 28 October 1989, the monumental decision to divorce from MY@ was made. Although some of his remaining (and blindly loyal) students tried to disrupt the course of the meeting with some strongly unethical manoeuvres, by far the majority saw the writing on the wall and voted accordingly.

So, once again the nucleus split and the two factions decided to go their separate ways. I will not dwell on this, other than to say that whilst I would fight strongly for the MYITF groups' right to make their choice, I deplore the way this was attempted and in hindsight I'm convinced that our present organisation is the better for their going.

The only other important fact that should be recorded of this time, is that the ITFNZ owe a huge debt of gratitude to the Senior Instructors who had the strength of their beliefs to break from MYNF. Without the support of such people as Mr Norman Ng, often regarded as the Father of Taekwon-Do in New Zealand, Evan Davidson, Paul McPhail, Rocky Rounthwaite and many more than these pages can hold, TKD as we know it in New Zealand would have almost disappeared.

PRESENT

At the time of writing, student numbers which were decimated at the time of the 'Split' have almost returned to the original figure and by early next year I predict that this organisation will be able to boast the highest number of practising TKD students that this Country has ever seen.

Perhaps even more important than these growing numbers, I perceive a feeling of camaraderie that I don't think has been there in the past or, if it has, it has never been as strong as it is now.

One of the areas this is most obvious, is in the retention of people in the higher ranks and the fact that these people who are to be the future lifeblood of the organisation, are prepared to become involved in the running of things in a way that has never been seen before. This is encouraging, as without this commitment, all the hard work and frustrations we have endured over the years will have been for nought. It is heartening to attend regional meetings now and see more and more new faces of people who are not only prepared to accept responsibilities which may be thrust upon them, but are also keen to put forward their own ideas as to the running of THEIR Foundation.

The biggest inhibitor to our growth at the moment is of course finance but I see this as being a temporary obstacle and an area of concern that will be self-righting in the next twelve months or so-. Expenditure that has been incurred since we went our own way has mainly been of a 'One Off nature and although there will always be the odd unexpected expense, on the whole the financial side is in good health.

These past twelve months have been some of the most harrowing that any organisation of our type could ever endure and the fact that we have come through it so well is directly indicative of the calibre of people within our ranks.

FUTURE

And so, where do we go from here?

As I see it we are now at the crossroads. In one direction we have the possibility of returning to the I.T.F. In the other we could decide to stay on our own and remain completely independent.

Both choices have their benefits and disadvantages.

To take the first one first let us look at the benefits of returning to the ranks of I.T.F.

A) We immediately gain International Status which, whilst not being all that important to the junior yellow belts, certainly cuts a lot of ice when attempting to gain recognition from sponsors, the media, or Government Funding bodies such as the Hillary Commission for Sport. Sure, we will be able to progress without handouts or sponsorships, but the speed at which this is done will be greatly slowed.

B) The grading system we operate at the moment allows for us to grade up to 2nd degree black belts by a panel (no less than two) of fourth degrees. This is in line with the teachings of I.T.F., which states that a black belt may grade students up to half his own grade. e.g. 4th degree may test up to 2nd; 6th degrees up to 3rd etc.

As 4th degree is the highest rank in New Zealand (and it will be two to three years before any of those are eligible to grade up) it is imperative that we have access to some form of grading our black belts 2nd dan and above.

Affiliation with the International Taekwon-Do Federation will provide that facility.

Whether this means a pilgrimage to the United States of America or, bringing a suitably graded black belt to New Zealand once a year is of little significance so long as the result has acceptance in the overall Martial Art World.

C)) If we are to progress and become the organisation we plan to be, it is imperative that we provide our students with the most up to date training available as far as teaching techniques and physical improvements to patterns are concerned.

Because of our logistical isolation in the world, it is obviously important that we maintain close contact with those that are a little closer to the action, so to speak. What we have to decide, is whether we want to follow Taekwon-Do as taught by the Founder and his official Organisation, or do we want to wander in the T.K.D. wilderness that so many other groups seem to have done over the years?

Now let's examine the other option.

A) These past twelve months or so have been the first in our short history where we have been literally 'Masters of our own Destiny.

In that time we have progressed more than in the preceding eight years except perhaps for the first eighteen months of our existence. Do we need anyone to tell us how to run ourselves?

B) We must face the fact that any involvement with an offshore organisation is going to involve some financial cost to us. The enigma is to know what that figure should be. It would obviously have to be fair to all concerned and in fairness to our members we would have to be convinced that we were getting value for their money.

C) Maintaining the status quo would ensure us a steady income and a chance to shape our own future in whatever direction and at whatever speed we consider appropriate but without outside funding or the ability to attend overseas seminars or tournaments.

CONCLUSION

The ultimate choice of course would be to have the best of both worlds and I do not see why this should not be possible.

Our structure, rules and teachings are all based on I.T.F. formulae and the decision to evolve along that path has really already been taken. As I see it, what has yet to be decided is how much autonomy and financial sacrifice we should be prepared to make to be taken on board by an International body.

For a start;

What do we want?

Access to higher grades.

Access to International Tournaments.

Access to International seminars & camps.

Access to Government funding.

Updates on new techniques.

What don't we want?

Loss of discretionary control.

To have funds siphoned off overseas as in the past.

To be isolated from other T.K.D. students throughout the world.

To be forced to affiliate with factions we do not feel compatible with.

It is my belief that the ultimate would be for I.T.F.N.Z. to make application to rejoin I.T.F.....BUT NOT AT ANY COST.

To this end I look forward to the outcome of further discussions with General Choi in the New Year in the hope that an amicable solution can be arrived at, one that can be beneficial to all concerned and so ensure the future of a great Foundation.