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UNIVERSAL TAE KWON DO FEDERATION

Promotion Test Paper

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In the spirit of the late Grand Master Han Cha Kyo, this promotion test paper is my vision of what a martial artist is, what a martial artist should personify, what the future of the UTF should be and what I can do to promote that future.

As a student of Grand Master Han and his personally taught instructors, I have developed my own interpretations of what the great Grand Master's visions were. I do not presume to know what the late Grand Master's thoughts and personal goals were. I am writing on my experiences from the Grand Master's and UTF Instructors' classes, and from the friendships I've developed with the people sharing Han Cha Kyo's Philosophies.

Han Cha Kyo

Han Cha Kyo, was a Tae Kwon Do Grand Master with the skills to be a world champion martial artist. In the martial arts community he was well known for his feats in the demonstration teams he traveled in. He had the ability to deliver destructive shock waves and thrusting forces of levels that most would not believe possible from a human being. He also had the ability channel this energy for the purpose of healing the human body and mind.

Grand Master Han was also a great motivator and instructor with the connections and know how to build a world championship team of martial artists, but this was not the path he chose. For the most part his students were not highly talented people with the physical abilities to excel naturally. The Grand Master's champions were challenged, average or above average people whom he used his teaching methods to help them to make the most of themselves. He surrounded himself with everyday people and inspired them to grow to levels beyond where they otherwise would have gone.

The Grand Master had genuine way about him that inspired trust. He used that trust to open people up to his benevolent ways. He sought out people with physical or mental disabilities and gave his time to help

them reach beyond their limitations. He would find people with injuries and use his mastery of energy and knowledge of the human body to heal them. Many times Han Cha Kyo took confused teens under his wing and showed them a better path through his way of training in Tae Kwon Do.

I believe the Grand Master would seek out these challenged people not only out of his own community service, but to build a reputation for the future of the art. If he could show that people of all ability levels could benefit from Tae Kwon Do the art would reach more people. The end result would be a much more powerful act of community service.

Master Han presented learning experiences to help us understand that the growth starts at a relative point. With personal achievement being the goal, comparing yourself to another is less important than looking at where you came from. For example, working with many different types of people taught us to learn these lessons from whomever we were working with. Classes generally had a wide variety of ages and skill levels working together. Even the way we traded partners was designed to mix the highest level practitioner with the beginners and adults with children. He would also teach us to find ways to challenge ourselves even while working with a small child or less skilled student.

All students were encouraged to donate their time to working in special needs Tae Kwon Do programs. Usually there were more than one special needs programs running out of the Masters school at any given time. Along with many other benefits, seeing the positive effect a relatively small achievement had on a chair or bed bound child helped us maintain perspective of why train.

Tournament fighting was not an important part of the Grand Master's vision. With winning being the main goal of tournaments, the mind and skill sets are focused on how to beat a competitor. While there certainly are benefits to learning to play a game well, the Grand Master didn't believe this was the most beneficial path for the UTF. The focus on personal growth is diminished when success is hinged on winning or losing a competition.

The Grand Master taught us that perseverance and hard work would help us grow but not only at the task that we are working on. He taught us that it would pay off in ways that we may not expect. He would push us very hard in class. He would demand us to always strive for excellence in our technique, and at the end of the class tell us that we train to improve our character more than to be great fighters.

Every class ended in a discussion about lessons on character and spirit through the tenets of Tae Kwon Do. All of the discussion topics had an underlying message. That message was observation. We were being taught to observe ourselves and our surroundings and to learn from our perceptions. We were taught to develop what the Grand Master called "Big Eye – Little Eye". Part of big eye-little eye is being aware of and having the ability to foresee the effect small actions had on the larger outcome. Whether it is how a subtle change in one's physical alignment affects a technique or how our actions affect a relationship. We were to watch for and predict the ripple effect that our behavior had on the larger communities that we live and work in.

Intermediate and advanced lessons in self defense or sparring were never contrived preset responses to preset attacks. We were taught to be spontaneous and to adapt to the unexpected. We never knew what to expect at a promotion test. This type of training is very effective for martial artists to be great combat adversaries. Grand Master Han's intentions went beyond the combative skills. He wanted his students to learn to adapt to the unexpected and to make the best of our lives as the world changed before us.

The mind-body-spirit unification is a main focus of the UTF martial arts technical training. Every class includes exercises that utilized specialized breathing techniques along with strengthening or stretching isolated muscles and muscle groups. Properly executing the breathing exercises requires focusing on internal core muscle regions that are not easy to feel. The awareness and strengthening of these internal regions is the foundation to building good Tae Kwon Do Technique. It also cultivates an environment of self awareness. Focusing on internal energetic forces helps us to shut off the ego and chatter in our minds that we tend to have from the stress and materialism of our culture. I remember Master Han telling me to "just live your life" when I was wrapped up in trivial problems that seemed so big to me at the time. The effect that the Masters classes had on me after a difficult day put my problems in perspective to the point that I would wonder why I was so upset earlier in the day. After years of these experiences my way of seeing life improved as did my quality of living.

The emphasis on growth was not only taught as direction for the individual. The art needed to grow as well. The ways of the past were good but it is our goal to make it better. Grand Master Han taught his students that the way we learn and what we learn should continue to grow and change. We always tried new ways to learn and perform techniques. In class a consensus of students would study the way we practice a technique and look for better ways to practice and modify exercises. We were asked to observe, question, think and feel what we were doing and not just to believe and repeat what was shown to us.

In the late 1980s the Grand Master started asking students to make suggestions for what they may think would be good tenets other than the five already in place. After some time maybe a year or so the Grand Master made an announcement that he would be adding two new tenets to the original five. The new tenets are *community service* and *love*.

What Han Cha Kyo did when he added to the tenets was to send profound messages to his students. Our art is truly an art, an art where even the core principals, our guidelines for thought and behavior are open for growth and improvement. It is an art of life that we can use to help clarify and develop our own integrity. It is a way of life that we can always question and improve upon. Our art is not for us to keep to ourselves for our personal benefit but, to build better communities for all to benefit from. These communities range from circles of friends to families and extended families, martial arts communities, and from neighborhoods to countries. For me the most important message is that all of our principals, guidelines and behaviors have an underlying driving force that keeps us on track. That is the tenet of Love.

### What is a Martial Artist

To be a modern day civilian martial artist is to live life working to master combative skill sets while never intending to go into combat. Why do we work so hard at these skills? Why is this not a waste of our precious limited time? I'm quite sure that for many people this makes little sense but, if others new the impact it has and how it enhances lives; many more would join the ranks.

For me, I was drawn to martial arts because I felt a need to be empowered. I never had a desire to be in combat. I did have a desire to prevail if I were attacked or needed to fight for another. While those desires are somewhat motivating, they are certainly not enough to keep me training for as long as I have been.

More so, I needed a path to walk. If I would have found martial arts to be a sport like tennis or golf or even boxing, I may have enjoyed it enough to stick with it for a while. Eventually I would have lost interest. There are many fun sports to play that require a fraction of the dedication while having great entertainment value. Tae Kwon Do is much more than a sport and it kept drawing me back. Thirty two years later, I am a Martial Artist. Looking back on the experience, the martial training did not turn out to be what I thought it would be and the journey has become more than I ever dreamed it would be.

The refining of techniques such as integration of breathing, relaxing while producing force, seeing and reacting to multiple attacks, and progressing in a direction while not over-committing all require endless work. The gains are small and mostly go unnoticed. Over time we grow as technicians but, the more valuable pay off is in the parallel growth that occurs in our lives. If you look at any of these skills you can see how they can be very valuable while facing the challenges of our lives. Consider the skill of seeing and reacting to multiple attacks. Imagine being more able to calmly recognize multiple problems that challenge us in our lives, quickly prioritize them, and deal with them individually or more than one at a time while not losing sight of the others.

The practice of forms is another example of how our training transcends beyond the art and into our lives. Learning a prescribed set of movements becomes an endless endeavor of refinement to the highest levels of precision, relaxation and energy. Moving with power and dynamics while applying all of the fundamentals of the art is something that can always be improved upon, regardless of your level of proficiency. We keep on working on forms as long as we are martial artists. We never stop. Through this perseverance the form becomes an intimate part of the martial artist. It is something that continues to grow as long as you continue to work at it. This slow rewarding path builds ethics, devotion, spirit and love in the martial artists' character.

What is a Martial Artist? Why is it different than being an athlete? First and foremost, we integrate tenets into our training. This is necessary due to the liability and responsibility created from teaching people techniques that are designed to cause extreme physical damage to an adversary in combat. The integration of tenets does much more than help us to avoid unnecessary violence. It creates an environment of thoughtfulness and personal reflection that becomes part of the martial arts training from the first day a student joins the class. As the student grows in the art, one is expected to grow not only technically but also become more astute in the meaning and application of the tenets. As a student advances in rank, he must be an example and a leader to his juniors. Being a good example of character is as important as technique and knowledge of combative skills. Students are given the responsibility of teaching more junior students early on. These leadership skills help the student to implement what they have learned and helps to motivate the student to be a better example for his junior.

### What does a Martial Artist Personify

As I was expressing in the last section, being an example for other martial artists in the community is of utmost importance. Within the martial arts community it helps support the character that we aspire to. This naturally expands into the larger communities that we are part of. Practicing good character at the workplace, social events, family events or when in public sets an image for the martial artist and the

martial art community. Setting this positive image will help the martial arts community grow through the respect and acceptance of outsiders.

Being a good example outside the martial arts community is crucial for the growth of the martial arts schools. Our interactions with people in our communities must be done with respectable moral actions and leadership. The last thing we need is for a leader in a Tae Kwon Do school to be caught up in some kind of scandal of questionable morals.

A martial artist should receive wisdom and information from others openly. Human nature has most of us guarded against opening up to outside ideas. The fear of showing weakness by not being correct or having the best idea can stunt our ability to grow. These feelings are fear based and deceiving. Showing openness to learning from others can be perceived as having wisdom and confidence in one's self. To be the best leaders we can be, we need to draw on others' wisdom and creativity. We must surround ourselves with competence and allow the community to influence itself in positive ways. When we as leaders are seen as open to others' wisdom, the attitude of openness will propagate through example and help build a healthy community.

Working with other martial art schools is good for our art and can help us to grow as martial artists. Trading seminars with instructors of other styles of martial arts can help us to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses in our own art. Thus enhancing our own art of Tae Kwon Do.

Good physical condition is important. We should be hard working and consistent with training. As we age we must be aware of what is best for our body. As each of us age in our own unique way, we must master ourselves and discover a path that allows our training to give us the most benefit. In order to keep our body and mind strong we must modify our training to preserve strength and flexibility while continuing to refine our own personal art. This will help us to receive the benefits of training long into our elderly years.

What should a UTF martial artist personify? We should show gentle strength in leadership, good moral values, calm decision making and openness to others ideas. A martial artist should be a champion of freedom and justice, and always stand up for what we believe is right. We should help our art to be seen as a healthy way of life that is available to all people, not just the young and strong.

Traditional martial arts schools, today

How do we popularize a system that is inherently incompatible with a society that is wrapped up in instant results and immediate gratification? To experience being a martial artist in a way like I have explained earlier, one must love what the experience has to offer. It requires enough patience to forget the outcome and enjoy the journey.

It has been a challenge for schools of the western cultures to teach traditional eastern martial arts with integrity while popularizing them enough to keep schools profitable. There are a limited amount of people willing to train in the way the arts were taught when they were first introduced to our culture. The training methods of most traditional eastern martial arts can be too harsh and repetitive for westerners. Most schools in commercial locations are forced to adapt their arts in ways that weaken their art to keep the classes full and to make rent. Softening of the teaching methods and making promotions easier are

commonplace. This is especially true when it comes to teaching children. Large children's classes are what pay the rent in most schools.

Much of the financial pressure on commercial schools has been relieved by classes being taught in multiple use centers like the YMCA, community centers or health clubs. Today martial arts instructors rarely teach as a main livelihood. This trend has been good for the martial arts because instructors can focus on quality instruction more than keeping classes full enough to stay in business.

One concern for these types of programs is, many times the classes are small causing the instructor's commitment level can waiver. Class programs come and go, and often the students only get a taste of an art before the program is canceled. This of course diminishes the experience and the overall public standing of martial arts schools in general.

### The UTF Tomorrow

Our mission states that we are to "spread the teaching of Tae Kwon Do...". It doesn't suggest how far reaching or for how long. Some questions come to mind. What are our goals? Do we want to train to enhance our own lives and pass the art on to a few people who happen to find us? As we all know eventually people move on. The nature of staying as small as we are creates an unsure future at best. Being a small organization has its advantages. We can focus on our quality of training and not worry about the problems of dealing with growth and power struggles that larger organizations must deal with. If we remain on the path that we are on we reach a few people, hopefully enough to carry on with the art as we know it. There is a good chance that it may fade away in the next ten or twenty years. Offshoots of the art may develop (already have). We trained for a large portion of our lives, it was great and perhaps that's all we really want to achieve. That may be okay. But, if that is so, in my opinion, we need to admit that to ourselves and each other. If we believe we have a responsibility to do our best to pass on this cultural jewel to as many people as we can. If our intention is to give our art the best chance to survive many years to come, then we had better get to work.

We have some very talented young people in our organization. We have great technicians, teachers, marketers, administrators and business people. The problem is, we all have livelihoods other than martial arts and most of us have families that require a large portion of our energy.

I can envision the UTF being a fairly large organization with more than 500 students if we were to tap into the populous of the Chicago area and have growing schools in other more rural communities. If branches opened in other major cities the possibilities would be greater. I do not believe this is possible without full time paid leadership and a clear plan of organization. I believe there would have to be staff on payroll for administrating and marketing multiple programs.

It seems that a more realistic future for the UTF lay somewhere between the two extremes. If we identify and utilize the talents that we have in place in the UTF we can support each other more effectively. I believe that most, if not all of our people are willing to share their skills with other schools. I've seen it recently with a member sharing certificates in an email. It seemed like people were shy to comment or incorporate the documents. I'm not sure why but I think it was because we have no official mechanism in place for approving such documents so people didn't know how to respond. Perhaps the Kodanja or a newly formed board could meet regularly to work on approving policies and procedures.

Several years ago I laid out a "one step sparring" system that increased the difficulty of the attacks as the student became more advanced. When I first wrote it out I sent it to the UTF to see if any other schools wanted to use it. It needed some work and I made some changes to it but I never heard of it being shared or implemented into other schools. We still use it in the Prescott school today. I also have worked on a written self defense system to help the UTF programs to be more consistent. It was a slow work in progress and eventually it got set aside due to work load and life in general. If we had regular communications regarding the new ideas I may have been more motivated to follow through with the work. My intention is not to place blame. My own work is fully my own responsibility. I am merely suggesting that fellowship and common interest can be a motivator.

If the Kodanja were to meet regularly as a sort of board of directors, ideas brought forward could be discussed and voted on. We could work on improving our marketing tools and share them with schools that choose to use them. Work could be done to create and improve on our written programs for beginners and intermediate students. The responsibilities of event planning could be shared.

Training programs to help school leaders be better marketers and recruiters could help. Knowing how to teach the art does not automatically make someone good at running a school. How do we keep enrollment up? Dropout rate can be a big problem. We need to be able to run a school like a business. Many of us running schools don't have the background to cover all of these bases. Pulling together more by using our resources of talents would help us to support each other.

Perhaps the UTF should file as a nonprofit organization. That could help the mission to be seen in a more positive light. With the help of an attorney (we have at least one in house) schools may also be able to file as nonprofit entities, possibly as joint ventures with the UTF. Insurance may be able to be shared.

How can I help to promote the future of the UTF

For most of us including myself, finding time in our busy lives to take on extra responsibilities can be quite a chore. Making time to train is just part of living for me but, when it comes to committing to extra work I have to have a good reason spend the energy. The Prescott Arizona UTF school needs to be rebuilt. Over the past five years it has dwindled to just a few people. Some things would have to change in my livelihood before I commit to the time it would take to build another school.

I am willing help the UTF in a way that I would reasonably be able to commit to. Maybe some of my ideas for organizing the UTF could be adopted. If so, I would gladly help the Kodanja structure the meetings. Do to my distant location, the meetings would have to be conference calls or internet based for me to be involved.

Being part of putting the written training programs together would be something that I'd be interested in. I have some ideas on how to build quicker reaction time and good habits for self defense and sparring. These systems could be easily organized if a few of us came together with our ideas and experiences.

No matter what the near future holds, my passion for Tae Kwon Do is strong. I am blessed to be able to have martial arts such an integral part of my being. Grand Master Han, Master Irvin, Master Langlas, Master Helman and Master Connelly and all the great friends that I have learned from have given me gifts that have brought great happiness to my life. Giving back to the martial arts as much as I possibly can is the right thing to do.

