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**Hwa Rang Do®: A
Hero's Journey
"Coming to
America" (part 2)**

**By: Grandmaster
Taejoon Lee**

An interesting story comes to mind about the Jang Choong Park. It was a large central park, very popular and frequented by many people for social activities, exercise, sports, and other gatherings, but it was also infamous for another reason, for fighting. Many times, my father would be challenged by the local gangs as my father and his high level instructors worked to maintain order and clean up the neighborhood. Often, they would meet at Jang Choong Park. My father would show up alone wearing his training suit with a pair of what I recall white wrestling or boxing shoes. At the time there were no sports sneakers or TKD shoes and the wrestling or boxing shoes were light and durable, hence it was his favorite choice. He would come to the meeting spot, greeted by the entire gang of about 20 to 30 underlings and the boss hidden behind them. He would call out the boss and ask him to go one to one. They would face off and with one swift punch, my father would knock down his opponent to the dirt. In those days, when you fought man vs. man, the one who got knocked down first would go to their knees and accept the winner as their "hyung" (older brother), regardless of age. If



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he does not surrender right away, then he would let his fallen opponent up onto his feet, then would send him to the ground again and again until he gave in. They did not wrestle and roll around on the ground. It was considered not honorable. My father faced his own battles alone and held himself accountable for all his actions, never blaming anyone or anything else, which made him truly heroic.

My father is not the type of person to gossip or talk badly about other people behind their backs, even to his family members. So, what I know is not what he told me directly, but the impressions and the feelings that I observed and felt, as well as from my mothers reflections and the things she shared with me on how my father felt during those times. Under the direct authority and mandate by the late President Jung Hee Park, my father attempted twice to create a one-unified Korean Martial Art. I am not going into details here, but you

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can view it yourself on YouTube (A three part series – Hwa Rang Do® The Untold Story of the Formation of the Modern Korean Martial Arts:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9L6wLtalQYc>).

Of course, the failing of the unification attempt of Korean martial arts as one Unified Korean Martial Art, was very disappointing and disheartening to my father. I think you could say that at the time when he made the efforts and led this unification, he was very optimistic, maybe a little naive, to the point of believing that as patriotic Koreans that they would all share the same common ideal and goal of putting up a unified national front in regards to martial arts to the rest of the world. But, that didn't take place and afterwards, I think he understood why. My father was an idealist, a warrior, and not a politician. Such is the case in history that warriors pave the way with their own blood, sweat, and tears only for the politicians to step in during the final hour to take the claim and its glory for their own selfish ambitions. In my opinion, it was inevitable, it was fate, it was his destiny, a moment when God intervened. Had the unification taken place, we would not have Hwa Rang Do as it is today. Its identity would have been lost in a conglomeration, a mixed match of many styles and



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forms, and its beauty buried in tons of bureaucratic, political mess. But, because the unification failed, he was able to go back to his Hwarang roots and return to his teacher, Suahm Dosa, asking for a formal approval to teach what he had learned under the banner of Hwa Rang Do.

Before my father had opened his school, Suahm Dosa was wise when he had told my father to not teach what he had learned to the public and only teach to his own children. He told my father this, knowing that he would not be able to keep the promise; that my father had to endeavor and exhaust his efforts being zealous with excitement and enthusiasm to share his treasure with the world. However, Suahm Dosa knew that this would not be the end, that my father would continue in his ambitions to spread Hwa Rang Do throughout the World and that he would have to endure much more hardship, suffering, and heartbreak. It was my father's destiny and Suahm Dosa realized he could not prevent it any longer and so, he gave my father his blessings. Suahm Dosa loved my father as his own child and wanted to protect him from the sufferings of the world and its people. He was a hermit monk after all, a person who knew the imperfections and the sinful nature of man. For it is true that every hero is faced with a dilemma when their power is tested as their blessing as well as their curse and so it was with my father.

In 1969, Suahm Dosa passed away, but before he died, he left the legacy of the Hwarang with my father and the burden to preserve its knowledge for the next generation. This immense responsibility fueled and brought urgency to his desire to share Hwa Rang Do with the World. Furthermore, with the announcement of Tae Kwon Do becoming the national sport and also with the failing of the unification of the Korean martial arts due to politics, and corrupt government officials, feeling betrayed by his own country, my father felt he had no other choice than to try to spread Hwa Rang Do globally, first with the United States, the most powerful and influential country in the World. In addition, during the 1970s America was the land of milk and honey, it was the promised land for many immigrants for a better life, a better future.



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