

# a week to remember

It seems bizarre, but even after several years in the martial arts, I didn't really have any contacts in the United States until after moving from Canada to my present home in the Republic of Korea. After a number of years residing here I began writing for a number of periodicals and my network grew exponentially. One of the contacts I came across was quite an unusual figure. He was a blind martial arts expert originally from New Jersey in the United States. Why he was and still is such an amazing figure in the martial arts world is better described in an article I wrote about him in May 2011 issue of this magazine.

One of the truly impressive accomplishments Chief Master Robert J. Ott had under his belt was a Korean martial arts seminar he spearheaded in 2009. This united some of the best and brightest in the Korean martial arts world. It was unparalleled in his region of the USA. But it wasn't enough. Shortly thereafter one of my editors, Laura Stolpe said this individual wanted to know how many masters I did know

in Korea and areas of expertise they possessed. I took that as a challenge of course and sent an e-mail detailing the masters and styles I came across in my decade of study here.

Little did I know that would start one of the closest friendships I have ever had, in or out of the arts? Robert's passion and sincerity stunned me to say the least. His breadth of

knowledge of the Korean martial arts was second only to his curiosity to learn even more.

It didn't take long for him to enlist myself and a close friend and instructor of mine Jae-Sik Yang to introduce the ancient art of Taekgyeon to the Northwest region of America. This predecessor to the majority of existing Korean arts will be covered in a later issue.

Due to the openness of my new friend's mind I got rare insights into the planning, building, implementing and running large scale martial art events. In many minor ways I even had opportunity to assist him and his association.

August 2011 came quickly actually and I flew to Seattle to start another chapter in my story. Nothing could have prepared me for what happened that week. The lake house at which I resided was beautiful and was on the edge of the most breathtaking lake I had seen in a very long time. With the reputation of the weather in that part of the country we were truly blessed.

*GM MacKenzie opening ceremony by introducing Robert as host.*



*Left to Right: GM Jung Kyung-Hwa, GM James McMurray, GM Rudy Timmerman, GM Ott, GM MacKenzie, GM Geoff Booth*

Within seconds of arrival my team (including Taekgyeon Grandmaster Jung Kyung-Hwa and Master Shin Joung-Kun) and I was taken care of by Chief Master Ott's carefully chosen assistants who saw the entire trip that we wanted for nothing. A buffet of various kebobs and cold beers greeted us upon our arrival as well.

That evening I also met my overseas friend and legendary Sin Moo Hapkido grandmaster Kenneth MacKenzie who welcomed us warmly into the fold.

The next day comprised of meeting other legendary figures in the world of Korean martial arts such as:

- Grandmaster Michael De Alba
- Grandmaster James McMurray
- Grandmaster Geoff Booth
- Grandmaster Billy Lee Burchett
- Grandmaster Rudy Timmerman
- Chief Master John L. Godwin
- Chief Master Kevin Janisse

All of these gentlemen were surprisingly friendly and open to the arrival of newcomers from the other side of the world. Not to mention the accomplishments of each man would take a book at least to detail.

That night I took a turn at showing some of the skills I developed over the years in the women's self-defence workshop. It was certainly an unusual feeling and experience from teaching back in South Korea.

**Presenting Martial Artists of the Year award to Cameron. Behind: GM Burchett, Master Shin Joung-Kun, GM James McMurray, Gm MacKenzie. In front: GM Jung Kyung-Hwa presenting Cameron with the Taekgyeon Staff (Cameron accepting staff). CM Ott on the right holding Cameron's Trophy (already presented)**



**CM Ott presenting GM MacKenzie with gift (sword and stand)**

Wednesday saw the arrival of the dozens of participants from various parts of North America. From then to Saturday was a blur of banquets, seminars (meditation, Hapkido principles, Taekgyeon, etc.), giveaways, water sports and Korean music/ dance performances.

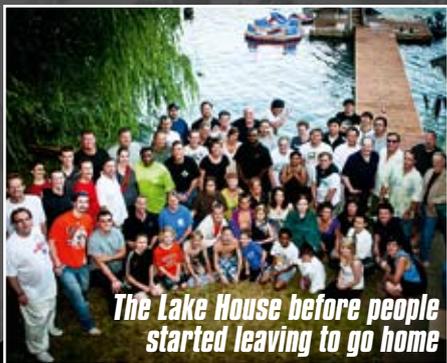
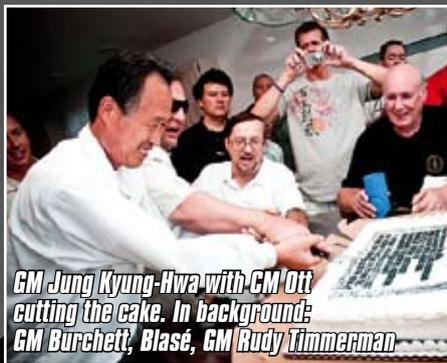
One of the highlights for me was to meet a young lad I wrote about in the previous issue of Fighters Magazine, by the name of Cameron McFadzen. It was a rare treat to get to meet and even teach him and his mother. By the end my Korean entourage and I even spent our last day in the country with him, his mother and step-father.

It reminded me that martial arts overcome all boundaries whether they are physical, racial, linguistic or geographical. They also form bonds that time can't erase. Thank you to you Cameron, Jennifer and Jeff for teaching me that.

As my business is in martial arts promotion more or less it was wonderful to see not only the reaction of Westerners to Taekgyeon, but to see the Koreans' reaction to the passion, sincerity and sweat of the attendees. It was truly an







eye opener for them as well. Sometimes the image of Westerners successfully mastering the martial arts comes across as unlikely. Thank you to those of you who broke that stereotype. You acted as ambassadors for our countries for those few short days.

At the end of it all, my close friend CM Ott and I sighed and collapsed into chairs on the decks of his summer lake house. We laughed, cried, and shook our heads over some of the various events that transpired that short week.

Then we decided 2013 had to be even better. From anyone else I would smile and nod thinking it simply wishful thinking. But as anyone who has met him would say, if anyone can pull it off he can.

*Master Guy Edward Larke has dedicated his life from a young age to the pursuit of the martial arts, Asian culture and hopology. It led him to Korea in 2000 and has lived there since then. He lives in Seongnam city with his wife Gi-Ryung and son Alexander. He holds black belts in Taekwondo,*

*Hapkido, Taekkyon, Bon Kuk Kumdo, Korean kickboxing, Karate-do, Wushu, Cheonji-muye-do, and various other arts. Currently he teaches Taekwondo, Karate and Cheonji-muye-do full time in addition to writing for various magazines and running Kisa-Do Muye & Marketing. He can be contacted at kisa\_do\_muye@yahoo.ca.*

**By Master Guy Edward Larke**

**GM Jung Kyung-Hwa, CM Ott (shaking hands) at the Opening ceremonies: in front of the head table (sculpture faintly in background)**

