

After the Fire

By Chief Master Robert J. Ott
Certified Correspondent of Tae Kwon Do Times Magazine

It seemed that no matter where I was or what I was doing, there was only one thing on my mind, and that was receiving the July 2008 edition of Tae Kwon Do Times magazine. I was uncertain what day it would be arriving, but knew that it would be soon. After almost 30 years of studying Korean martial arts under some of the best instructors in the world, I was without question a dedicated reader of this fantastic magazine. There was a period of time in my life, when reading the magazine was impossible. I was learning how to see life again after being blinded in a violent crime. Through a loving family, fellow martial artists and the old ancient philosophy called "pilsung" (Certain Victory), I found the ability to find and see life once again.

As I pulled up to my driveway in my new 2008 H2 Hummer, driven by my Administrative Assistant, Karley, I was informed that my builder, who had built and sold us our home, was going over some blue prints in the driveway with one of the subcontractors. It was the first time he saw the black 2008 H2 Hummer with the writing on the side that states the following:

Flowering Warrior Enterprises

- *Motivational Speaking
 - *Self Defense
 - *Personal Empowerment
 - *Private/semi private lessons
- www.certainvictory.com

It also has the picture of my logo. "Wow!" I heard my builder, Doug Dixon, say. Apparently the letters looked good with the dark tinted windows and chrome. The writing was a silver/purple, showing nothing but class. After getting out of the vehicle, I heard Doug ask, "What does pilsung mean?" I had customized license plates that said "PILSUNG" and I knew I was going to be sharing the definition quite often.

Before I could even put my hand out for a shake, I heard Karley say, "The magazines have arrived! There you are on the cover!" Needless to say, I

never even made it to the handshake. Instead, I turned off to the right, shifting gears, feeling like a magnet being pulled toward metal. As I made it to the top steps of my front porch, I put out my hand to receive a magazine. I stood there staring at the cover. A smile was stretching across my face, portraying an indescribable happiness. Everything about my numerous years of study, challenges in life, victorious battles, and my ability to take a negative event and make it positive, making a difference to others across the country was in this magazine. The cover of Tae Kwon Do Times had me throwing two fellow martial artists. The article I wrote for the magazine was entitled "The Eyes of Kidokwan." It discussed the philosophies and principles that I learned through Korean martial arts that allowed me to overcome and continue to move on with life, both in who and what I am as a human being and a martial artist, even though I am now blind.

This was more than my first cover. The true uniqueness of this cover was that a completely blind practitioner was demonstrating what many other fantastic Korean martial artists could have also done. The picture was much larger than what the eyes of any reader would initially come to see. I personally don't know how many other martial arts magazines have ever placed such a significant demonstration of indomitable spirit on a cover, but I do know that the most powerful part of what comes from the study of the arts is, at times, also forgotten. Thus "The Eyes of Kidokwan" is not about the physical techniques that a blind person is capable of doing, instead it is about the way of the mind and the fire that lies within the spirit of a man who has learned to take his challenge and turn it into a positive difference bringing vision to all who become part of his path.

Upon the arrival of the magazine, a ball of fire that I have always kept in my dantien (the red field, three fingers below the navel) began to expand. I felt it not only throughout my body but in and around my life. It seemed like I was becoming an important tool for various events, schools, businesses and even fellow Moosa (martial artists).



My first stop from the Great Northwest was San Francisco. I was invited to become the key note speaker and an instructor for a Global Sin Moo Hapkido Seminar. At first, I was informed that I was going to be teaching one class that was focused on what I wrote in the TKDT article, the topics of "black on black" and "touch to touch." It turned out that there were many people who wanted to experience what I had to share. Two other classes were being taught at the same time as mine, but sadly they were empty, since everyone was in my classroom wanting to learn and comprehend my methods. During that two-day event, I ended up teaching two other classes on joint locks and takedowns while with the help of my two assistants, sold over \$2300 in books, audio books and CDs. In conjunction with that I was signing more autographs than I had ever before. Each student wanted a signed TKDT magazine along with a photo standing with me.

From San Francisco, I jumped on another plane and flew over to Las Vegas. The next morning, I hopped on a helicopter and flew to the Grand Canyon. Once we landed inside the canyon, I stepped out of the helicopter and my photographer took numerous photos of me. After spending another

day in Las Vegas, I caught another plane back to Seattle. Once I arrived home, it was a combination of mailing signed, stamped and gold sealed TKDT magazines to people all over the country and into Canada. I was promoting numerous things from the magazine. The sales of my biography entitled Certain Victory increased and with each purchase the customer would receive an official signed magazine from me. Along with it was information on my seminars and speaking engagements that I offered. Between that and holding two different black belt tests during the summer, along with my title of President and CEO of Certain Victory Food Services, Inc., which feeds the ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) at Fort Lewis, it is safe to say that life is nonstop.

The two black belt tests consisted of a first-dan in Tang Soo Do and a third-dan in Tang Soo Do. Both times, each student was a prime example of how a test should be executed. Both of the individuals not only demonstrated excellent skills, but wrote excellent heart-felt essays. Upon the completion of these tests and demonstrations, the following people earned promotion: Robyn Goodwin, first-dan, World Kidokwan Federation; and Paul Turner, third-dan, World Kidokwan Federation.



Within a blink of the eye, I was back on a plane again flying to the East Coast. I spent two weeks in the Delaware Valley area (Pennsylvania, Delaware and New Jersey) holding seminars and speaking engagements. A southern New Jersey newspaper advertised that I was coming into town. Each seminar was a winner and each of the speaking engagements ended with a standing ovation. Going a step further, a Salem County newspaper did a fantastic article regarding my speaking to the high school students. On top of all of that, I was invited as a special guest to attend Grandmaster Kenneth P. MacKenzie's black belt ceremony. There was over 150 students testing and demonstrating at a large indoor soccer field. The honorable feeling it was for me to be sitting side by side with Grandmaster MacKenzie during this event is one I will not ever forget. Having known him since I was a child, I always looked up to him as not only a good true friend but a big brother as well. He was always by my side when I needed him the most.

After saying goodbye to my family in New Jersey and all my fellow Moosa, I hopped on a plane to the Bahamas. There I spent four days relaxing my mind and clearing my thoughts. Enjoying the saltwater and feeling the sand between my toes was a pleasure that has no words. Within that short trip, I picked the sunniest

day to go to the coast and had photos taken of me practicing my martial arts. The water was as blue as it could be and the surrounding areas were close to perfect.

It came to the point where I knew inside that it was time to go home. Not only to be there for my family, but to make sure that my business was doing well. Until a person becomes a President and CEO of a large corporation, he or she has no comprehension on the type of orchestrating, delegat-

ing and confidence that it entails. No sooner did I arrive home when, I received a phone call from a hospital located on the other side of the Cascade Mountains in a town called Yakima. Yakima is an area that has military training outside of the city area in a large tract of land that is much like a desert. Paul Turner, my recently promoted third-dan, had been crushed between two Stryker military vehicles, collapsing both his lungs and severely damaging his spleen. His lower back also suffered some possible bone damage.

Within a day, I was back in the Hummer with Karley, crossing the Mountains to go and visit him. There, I met his family and spent the day holding his hand. What was so amazing was the incredible realization that if he had his body facing the opposite direction he would have been crushed. For most people, it would have taken a long time to heal, but only three days after the injury he was sitting upright in bed. I held his hand and told him, "There is no question, Paul, that your Certain Victory will assist you in overcoming this injury."

Within a week he was sent home and within two weeks he came to the dojang with his dobok on and ready to teach again. I, of course, stepped forward and let him know how proud I was of him and that he wasn't going to be practicing martial arts in my dojang until I had a letter from a doctor.

No sooner did this traumatizing thing occur when I received an email from the office of Major General, Patricia D. Horoho, asking me if I would be the key note speaker for 600 people at 2008's Holiday Ball. This event was held at the Official Convention Center in the city of Tacoma, Washington. The General is in charge of Madigan Hospital at Fort Lewis, one of the largest hospitals in the country. She had listened to me speak briefly at a fundraiser for soldiers. I was honored to be asked to be the key note speaker and took on the invitation.

That same week, I received another call from a group called the Wounded Warriors, a group that has been developed in the last several years. The reality is because of our advancement in medical technology we are having more Wounded Warriors coming home from war than dead soldiers. In many ways this is a fantastic thing, but in many other ways challenges have arisen due to the care

and need of these soldiers, who for the most part, end up with some type of disability. We now have less than 3000 deaths from the Iraq war and over 30,000 wounded. This is a fact that will continue into our future. The truth is, the U.S. Army asked me, an individual who demonstrated the ability of going from a victim to a survivor, to possibly help bring that positive strength, courage and indomitable spirit back to these men and women. The more I thought about it, the more I realized that this was going to be one of my most challenging speaking engagements. I took on the obligation because my feelings are that if those men and women can be our soldiers who fight for freedom and independence, then the least I can do is to help when they come home to once again rebuild the freedom and independence they used to have in their lives. Through speaking to the Wounded Warriors, I was assisted by the U.S. Army in selecting the most challenged Warrior to donate raised money to support and assist with his or her needs.



On Saturday, December 20, 2008, we held the annual North Pole Party that usually has over 150 people in attendance. Through raffle tickets, small local businesses and the money I made throughout the year doing seminars, speaking and selling my books, we were able to donate to a loving person who just needs a little help. This soldier went by the name of Trey and he suffered a gun shot wound to the head. The scar was quite wide and deep. It traveled from the forehead all the way to the back of the neck and around to the bottom of the ear. This man is a proud husband to his wife Brandy, and a special father to two beautiful, young ladies who are like angels from heaven. This year, the amount that martial arts, speaking engagements, local businesses and caring corporations raised, allowed us to give this Wounded Warrior over \$12,500.

Today, I find myself living into another year filled with new and positive journeys, sharing the gift along with my special wife, Kimberly, in raising our two wonderful children. I am both holding and teaching seminars, as well as hosting workshops with special martial artists who go by the names of Grandmaster Rudy Timmerman, Master Steve Seo, Grandmaster Kenneth P. MacKenzie, Grand-

master Michael De Alba, and others who will be spending time here at my dojang. None of us can know for sure what tomorrow will bring, but it is all so true that what we put into life each day can make for our tomorrow.

Once again I go back to Shin Gong (the way of the mind) and I see the Um and Yang in motion, sharing with me the cohesion of what giving and making a difference for another can give back to one's own self.

Since the day the magazine was put in my hand there on my front porch and the fire inside started filling me with drive, lust and passion to make a difference, I can only say that my blindness and love of life reminds me that: "After the fire...the fire will still burn!" **TKD**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: For more information on Robert J. Ott, his seminars and motivational speaking, the World Kidokwan Federation, Flowering Warrior Enterprises, up and coming seminars (Grandmaster Rudy Timmerman June 21, 2009 and Master Steve Seo August 14, 15 and 16 *see the two-page advertisement in this edition) and the book, *Certain Victory*, available in hard, soft, audio and e-book, please visit certainvictory.com.

Seeing With My Eyes

When our life can be looked at from the outside of its shell, only then will it become clear to see, that the journey we travel is, without question, a purpose only to be shared once with all others.

This is what I see with my eyes...
Life is a gift that must be expressed, nurtured, and loved by using both self love, and extending our love to all humans and living creatures of the world.

This is what I see with my eyes...
Live it to the fullest and try not to feed the darkness, for we, as people, are the light and through every challenge we have the power to reach in deep and do what is right.

This is what I see with my eyes...
We must stop living the thought that only by seeing can one start believing.
We must start living by understanding the reality- that true believing- is the greatest and grandest way of our seeing!!!

This is what I see with my eyes...

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