

Totally TaekwonDo

The Global Tae Kwon Do Magazine

January 2012 • Issue 35



Interview With Master
John Black

Special **FREE** supplement from issues 35 & 36,

‘In Memory’
of Master Jonny Black, 8th Dan

Who passed away recently (August, 2013)

- so those that did not know him personally, can learn about his life and why he was not only highly respected, but much loved by so many!

**TOTALLY
TAE KWON DO**
The Global Tae Kwon Do Magazine

Produced and Published by:
Harrow Martial Arts
in association with
Rayners Lane Taekwon-do Academy

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Editorial

Issue 35 - January 2012



Happy New Year to all our readers and welcome to the first issue of 2012.

In this issue we have a great interview with Master John Black which makes great reading as he's a very interesting personality. I have seen things about him in the MA press for years and he always seemed a very 'get up and go' type of instructor - which, after reading the interview I am not surprised at, due to his army roots. I met him for the first time last year and found him very approachable, but more so, very funny and very humble.. Some things that are sometimes rare commodities in such high grades, hence why I felt an interview with him would be great and here it is!

We have an interesting article on the sine wave, which should have you ITFguys and girls thinking, plus we have the final part of the 'break falling' series - something your all now doing right?

Lots for our WTF readers this month including an interesting look at how Koryo has changed its kicks over the years and applications to the Kukkiwon poomsae to get you thinking!

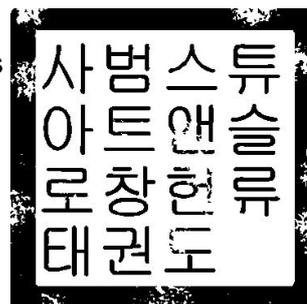
We also have the final part of the 2011 book survey, listing the books that you good folks felt were the best of the bunch. This section, named "Other" TKD books, was for books that either didn't fit the previous categories or transcended both. Though the No.1 book may come as no surprise to many, the rest of the top 20 is pretty different from the 2009 poll and should prove interesting for all!

So, its back to training for everyone and with that in mind I have an article about Motivation and Setting Goals which I hope some will find useful, as all to often, some go to training without thinking where they wish to go and simply trundle through each class - but having your mind set on a place you wish to be, will ensure you get there much faster and make your training so much more productive!

Right, I'll leave you to enjoy this months offerings.

All the best,

Stuart Anslow
Editor



An Interview With **Master John Black** **8th Dan**

By John Dowding, 4th Dan

I first met Master John Black when I was a 9th Kup and he was a Fifth degree and I was immediately struck by how friendly, enthusiastic and approachable he was. His knowledge was apparent and he had time for everyone and would give it freely. I am now a Fourth Degree and Master Black is an Eighth Degree and he is still as friendly, enthusiastic and approachable to all as the very first time I met him. I interviewed Master Black during the PUMA British Championship back in October 2011 and it was a genuine pleasure to listen to his experiences and gain his perspective on the Martial Arts. I'm proud that PUMA has Masters like John Black, and I'm proud to call him an inspiration and a friend.



Can you just give us a bit about your background?

I was born in Glasgow and was the oldest of seven brothers and sisters. My mother was Catholic and my father was Protestant. I was the only protestant in a Catholic school and the area was pretty rough. You had to be in a gang to survive. We eventually moved to Southampton with my mum and again it was a rough time and being the eldest I was the one who looked after everyone else. I finally was able to join the Army when my Mum agreed to sign the papers.

When did you join the Army and how old were you at the time, what regiment?

I joined the Army when I was 16 at Wyvern Barracks in Exeter that was in the 1970's,

partly junior soldiers and partly a training company where I did my 18 weeks training before joining the Royal Hampshire Regiment when they were reformed, I eventually joined the regiment at Colchester Barracks.

I believe you first became involved in the world of self defence and boxing during your military career, can you tell us a bit about this.

In my training as a recruit there was a Sargent a PTI (physical training instructor) Dickey Dawes who was a Shotokan black belt and I used to see him doing training and think "that looks good", so I got chatting to him and he did a few lessons with us, we did a bit of self-defence in the army anyway as a recruit, basic self-defence to look after yourself, and I

thought I want to do something like this when I get to the Regiment I want to carry this on, and that's how it started off.

You must have travelled a bit and had some interesting postings?

*Well my first posting was Northern Ireland as a young boy of seventeen, it was my first tour in Newry in Ireland and it was a big eye opener, you don't think you're going to get into anything like this and then all of a sudden its reality, you know you do the training and yes it is getting to you that is a reality but it's not reality until we are on that boat coming from Liverpool to Belfast, and they get you up at five o'clock in the morning and everybody is upstairs and as we are coming into Belfast we are getting bricks thrown at us, we are not even off the ship and we were getting stoned by the builders, spitting and shouting at us, you know "go home you *****" "you know that sort of thing. And I thought "were not even off and on the soil!" It was little bit scary. And then we had the journey to Newry, I was in the four tonner as we called them,*

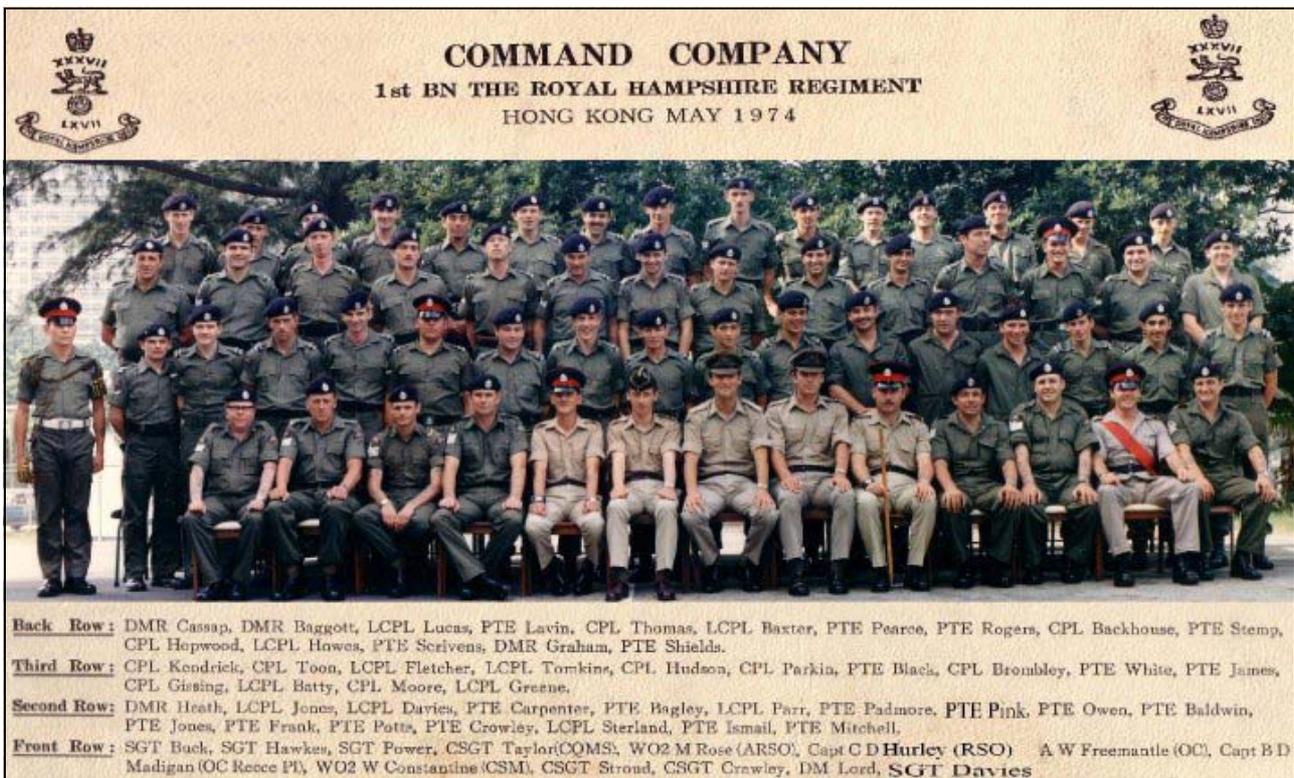
the army vehicle that carried all the weapons, and we hadn't slept much on the boat and we were dropping off and getting bumped about by the road, and then we get to Newry and there is a welcoming committee with another load of bricks!

Were you involved in training in any other Asian Martial Arts while you were in the UK at that time?

I was interested in martial arts long before the Bruce Lee film was launched, but when the film (Enter the Dragon) was released we all went down, me and the lads to the premiere in Colchester, and thought Wow! The guy is awesome! I went to London to Leus Jacob who was doing a style of Kung Fu, he was a Mongolian and his Kung Fu style was like Mixed Martial Arts even then in the seventies. I went to London a couple of times and had a few lessons. There was also lad in the Army who was a red belt in Taekwon-Do under Master Rhee Ki Ha and I did a bit with him and thought this is alright.



Army Demonstration



You were shortly being posted to Hong Kong. There must have been a huge amount of excitement at the thought of being posted to the home of Bruce Lee and the Chinese Martial Arts.

After the film we were all thinking yes! Wing Chun that's his style and that's what we want to do when we are in Hong Kong.

What was the reason for your posting to Hong Kong at that time and what role did the British Army have there?

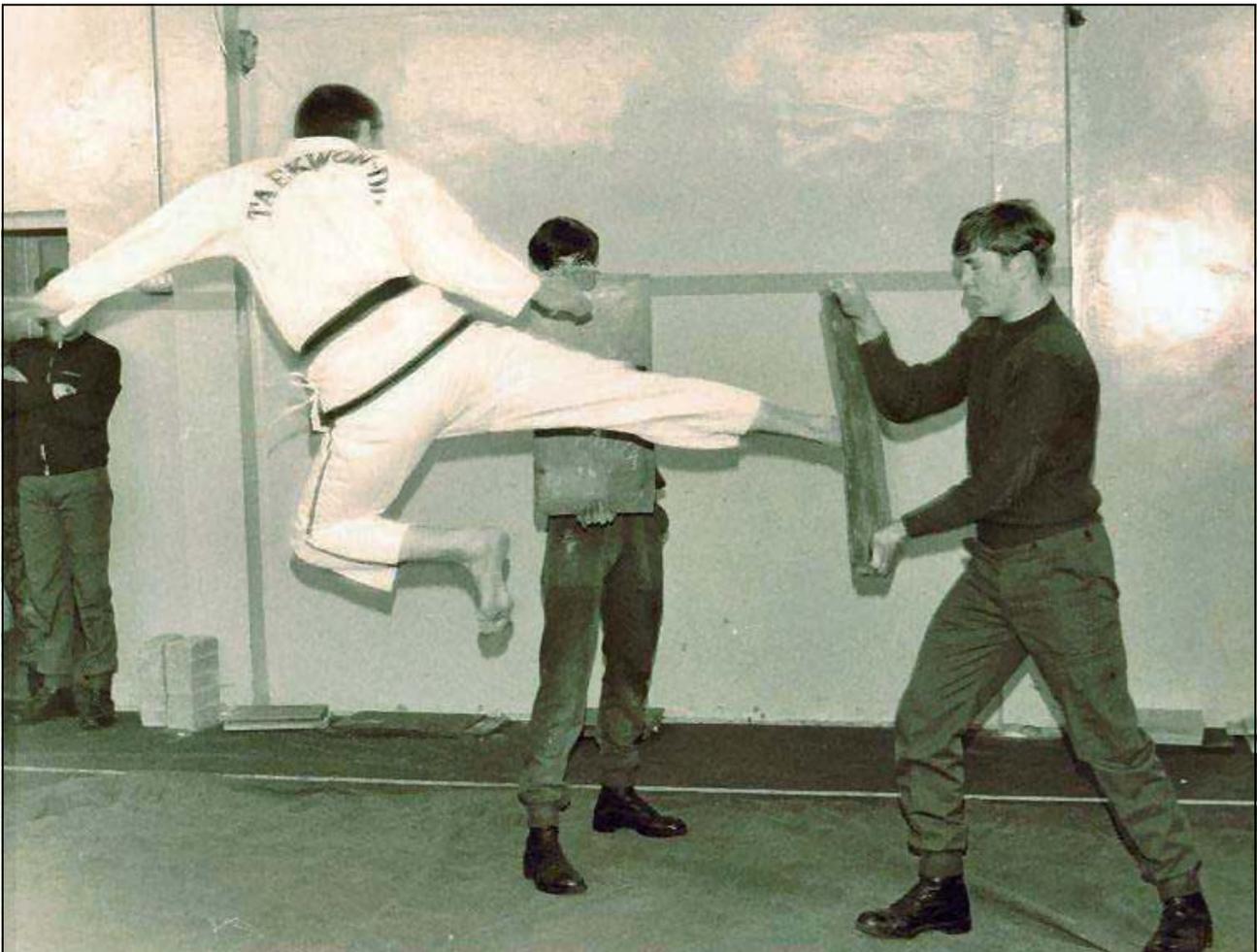
We were over there to stop the immigrants coming to Hong Kong from China, but our other strategy was to show force because at that time the balance between China and the western world it was felt that they could attack at any time.

What was the atmosphere like in Hong Kong at that time, as the Vietnam War was in full flow, so it must have been a pretty strange and dangerous place with American Servicemen on R & R and the influx of Vietnamese boat people.

It was a very dangerous place because we were also there because the boat people were coming from Vietnam and they were in a terrible state coming off the boats.

Untreated wounds, some of them were dead, and we had to put the survivors into refugee camps and these people were on our side, well you know side of the Americans. What we didn't know was that some of the bad guys were on the boats as well and had got in amongst the refugees and were there to assassinate some of the top political figures who had become refugees or people who had sided or helped the Americans.

Part of my duties was to patrol the camps and I was a green or blue belt at the time, and I was walking round the camp at about twelve o'clock at night and there was a basketball area with a load of guys all in sitting stance and I thought they were doing Karate, then as I was watching they started doing Saju Jirugi and Chon Ji and I thought "blimey that's the same style as I'm doing". So I got chatting with the chap who was teaching and he had been a Captain in the Vietnamese ARVN Special Forces who were trained by the Americans and he was a third degree Taekwon-Do black belt, and he was trained in hand to hand combat which was his Taekwon-Do. I developed a great rapport with him and others and used to take them clothes and stuff to help them



Army Demonstration

out. He told me he was part of a five man fire team with the American Rangers and they would go into areas behind the lines taking out Viet Cong sympathisers or other important targets that had to be done silently with no messing so hand to hand was very important. He told me that Taekwon-Do was an awesome weapon but that during Special Forces training in Vietnam they lost one person a week who either got killed or badly injured. He said they had loads of other injuries, broken arms, legs, sternums but they actually lost one a week, because they had to train for reality, using real knives and just one mistake with a knife or a fatal blow and that was it. I was laughing thinking he was joking, then I spoke to my instructor Lee Chong Oh who was also ex Special Forces and he just looked at me and said "that would be about right" that's all he said!

I know from talking to you that you had

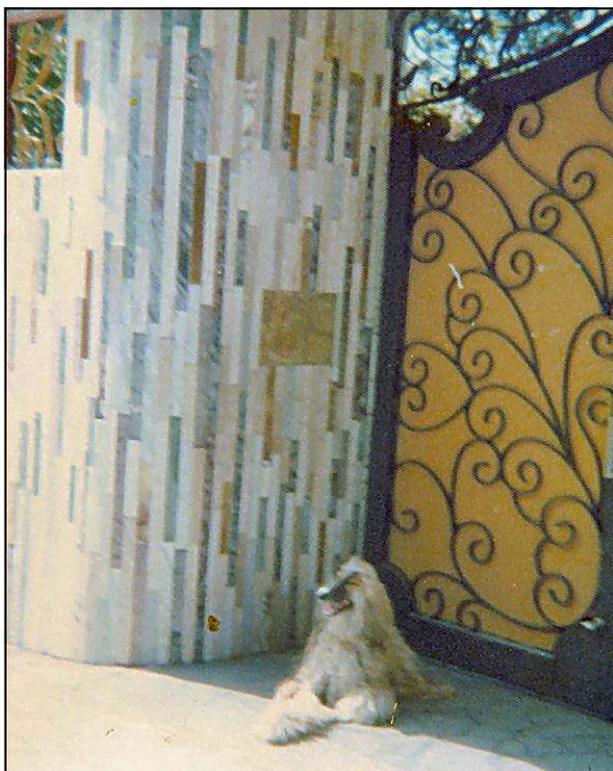
a great night out at the Cinema in Hong Kong can you tell us a bit about that?

Yes, it was after Bruce had died and there was a new film out starring Bruce Li, who was supposed to be the new Chinese Martial Arts Superstar and it was a premiere and I managed to get a ticket. It was huge and there were loads of people outside who couldn't get in. So i was sat there with an Asian lad who spoke English and I was the only western guy in the cinema, and I was thinking this is going to be really good. The lights went off and the film started and within a couple of minutes I thought "this guy is rubbish, nothing like Bruce Lee" well that was it the Chinese were going mental, they were throwing their ice creams and all shouting in Chinese, and then all of a sudden someone ripped up a chair and threw it at the screen and they all started joining in throwing chairs, the lad I was sat next to grabbed me and said "we had better go,

they are not happy, they are shouting that its not the real Bruce Lee, its false and they are upset” so we left pushing our way through all these rioting Chinese.

Tell us a bit about your visit to the home of Bruce and your brush with the Hong Kong Police.

When we got there it was not long after he died, and there were loads of stories going round, one of them was that he had been threatened by Triads who wanted him to smuggle drugs for them, and so his death had been faked so his family would be safe, there were loads of “sightings” of him supposedly practising in the garden of his house, lights in the house being on, that sort of thing. Well the house was about six miles away from where we lived in married quarters. So I thought I will take the dog and a camera and have a look at his house. I had been looking for his house for about six months and had eventually found it. It had big golden letters on the front which was his name in



Master Blacks Dog outside Bruce Lee's House

Chinese. So I got there and tied the dog up, climbed up on the wall and it was a beautiful house with lovely Asian formal gardens, and there I was snapping away, sat on wall with no cares in the world. All of a sudden up come all these Police cars and they all jump out pointing guns at me and shouting in Chinese, I didn't have a clue what was going on. I jump down off the wall and I'm waving the camera at them and trying to explain. So they grabbed me and handcuffed me and put me in one of the cars. There was an Officer who could speak English and he

was asking me what I was doing so I said sorry and I explained to him that I was a Bruce Lee fan and was taking some pictures. That changed things and he said “ah we are all Bruce Lee fans too!” They took the cuffs off me, and gave me a bit of a talking too and let me go. It could have caused an international incident at the time with me being a soldier and getting arrested. But they let me go, looking back it was funny but it wasn't funny at the time when they came screeching up and started pointing guns at me!

How long after being posted did it take you to find martial arts school and were you looking for a Kung Fu school at that time?

When I went to Hong Kong my mind was made up. My second day there we took over from the Black Watch. One of the Black Watch guys was a Taekwon-Do Black Belt and we got talking and I said I'm thinking of taking up Wing Chun and he said “look I don't want to put you off but we have Taekwon-Do” he said “it's a Korean

form of Karate” and I went I don't really want to do Karate I want to do Wing Chun, Bruce Lee's style. He said “just come along and watch there is a big demonstration in the gym” So I thought I have nothing to lose I will go along. So five hundred squaddies packed into this gym and we watched this demo which absolutely blew me away. From Breaking to Forms, Self Defence, Weapons and the kicks! Im thinking” what?” I had never seen it before, double side kicks! And the power of the breaking, sparring with no gear, it was just amazing to watch. So two



Master Blacks Instructor Lee Chong Oh

hundred and fifty squaddies signed up to do Taekwon-Do right there and I was just one of them.

What was the name of your Taekwon-Do instructor and was he an ITF member?

My first Master was Young Son Sun but he left because the General was spreading Taekwon-Do, and so he was moving the ITF Masters around all over the world, so Master Lee Chong Oh took over the beginning classes for us.

Tell us about your training at that time and your experiences as a non Asian student, was there much resentment from the Asian students or were you just accepted as a fellow student.

My training days were Monday, Wednesday, Friday but I was training on all the other days because I was really passionate about it, it gets you like a bug. And for the first two months all we did was walking stance walking up and down. And I remember he had the Taekwon-Do "bible" and we had to read about Moral Culture

and what the General said about Moral Culture and about the Hwa Rang youth group, and I thought when are we learning to fight and kick? All we would do was walking stance and sitting stance punching up and down the Dojang. He had a cane and if you were not in the right stance he would hit your hands and legs. He would say "you are soldier you can take it" then boof! he would whack you, for anything fist not clenched, whack! If you were doing press ups, if you couldn't do them he would hit your hands or sit on your back!. "Now! Do it!"

He was great, he was ex Korean Special Forces and a sixth degree black belt. He was very skilled in Hapkido as well and we did a lot of self-defence from the first grade. I actually jumped my first grading I didn't do a yellow tag and went straight to yellow belt because of the time we had trained. I remember he brought in a bag of belts and everyone lined up and was saying to me "ask him if we passed" So I thought I'll do it and asked "Sir did we

pass?" he looked at me and said "No you did not Black, but everyone else did" and he gave everyone else's belt out except mine, I was there thinking I'm sure I was as good, cos you do don't you? And everyone was looking at me and I was now having to line up at the back of the line behind everyone with a new belt, I'm thinking what's going on? Anyway I thought I'm not asking again! Two weeks later he walked in and gave me a yellow belt and said "Black you can wear this now" I said thank you Sir! I learnt my lesson that you never ever ask about passing a grading. Every time after that I never asked, he would bring the bag in and leave it there sometimes for two months! Anyone who ever asked about grading results always got the same answer "you didn't pass!"

I'm aware you did eventually manage to train in the art of Wing Chun, can you tell us who you trained with and a bit about your Wing Chun training?

It was just after we had managed to get out of the Cinema and I was still with the lad who was with me when the Chinese kicked off and who said we should leave. He said to me "would you like to come and meet my Master, I'm here to learn Wing Tsun, not Wing Chun, Wing Tsun" so I said yes, ok I would love to meet him, He told me that his Masters name was Grandmaster Sifu Leung Ting.

Anyway we got to a block of flats and I said to him "is this his Dojang?" and he said "no this is where he lives, we will go and see him" Well I thought here we go, he just wants to get me into the elevator and he will pinch my money, so I get my back against the wall, and in my mind I'm thinking go on just try it! I'm imagining all these moves in my head and he is just talking away to me and I'm watching him thinking yea yea in a minute!

So we get to a door and I'm still thinking that its going to be full of Triads and drugs. An Oriental guy came to the door and said "come in, come In" and was very

welcoming. I was introduced to him and explained that I was interested in Wing Chun but was doing Taekwon-Do. He had a lot of magazines that were called Real Kung Fu and he was doing an article on Bruce Lee and he asked me what the westerners thought of him. I told him that he was my hero and got talking to him. Sifu said "ah yes he used to train with me and Professor Ip Man who was my instructor" well I was like Wow!

Anyway we got talking and before I knew it, it was four o'clock in the morning just talking away about the martial arts. He told me that Ip Man had fallen out with Bruce Lee because Bruce was taking his Wing Chun out onto the streets to see if it worked. He said if he hadn't made it as a film star he probably would have been a gangster. He wasn't into robbing people but he would challenge others to fight. He said he was a man beyond his time, but after they fell out that was when he started to develop his style.

So I started to train with Sifu Leung Ting after he asked me to. I said that I couldn't afford to because I was already training in Taekwon-Do, but he said "no, no free, come and train with me for free" and I went to his gym and it was a little place, really small but with a wooden dummy, and pads on the wall to punch, you had to go up stairs in this block to get to it, there was another room that had a bed and there was stuff all around, and that was where they used to train. So I trained with him there regularly and he was lovely.

Why did you eventually decide to stop Wing Chun and devote yourself to the art of Taekwon-Do.

Well I was training in Wing Tsun and I was taking the stuff I was learning back to Taekwon-Do because I wasn't very experienced so I was trying to use the stuff I was learning with the Taekwon-Do, you know the straight hands and techniques, my Instructor asked me if I was training elsewhere, so I told him and he said that

he knew Sifu Leung Ting and thought he was really good, he never spoke badly of people. He told me he thought he was a very good man, but said that I was confusing both arts and needed to concentrate on one in order to be good at one, I said "well cant I do both Sir?" He replied with a story and said to me "if you are hunting animals and the animals split into two directions you must make a choice and follow one path, and decide which animal you want to track" he explained that it's the same principle with martial arts. You have to become proficient at one art and understand it inside out, and then you can do other things, but it doesn't influence your style or the way you teach, but you have other stuff that makes it stronger or better for you. So I said "Ok Sir" and he said that I had to make up my mind whether or not I wanted to do Taekwon-Do, he said if he would be happy if I did, and would also be happy if I chose Wing Tsun. Sifu Leung Ting had wanted me to do an apprenticeship with him for five years, he was going to buy me out of the Army, I would have had to live in that little room where you couldn't swing a cat which

wouldn't have gone down to well with Patricia who I am married to! , I would have enough money to live on and food and clothing. I would have to train for five years solid and at the end he would pay for a flight back to London, England and I would open a Wing Tsun academy, get that off the ground and up and running and he would then send a Chinese Wing Tsun instructor over who would take over running that one and I would go to another part of the country and open another Academy and so on. I was going to be the English Ambassador for Wing Tsun who paved the way for the Chinese instructors. I thanked Sifu Leung Ting for the opportunity but explained that I had made my mind up to stay with Taekwon-Do as I was a blue belt and felt I should stay with it to get my Black Belt. He was very understanding though and told me I had made a wise choice. I became very good friends with him but eventually lost touch.

How would you describe your first black belt grading and how and when were you presented with your first black belt?



Army Patterns Demonstration



I was training every chance I got, every chance. So three of us from the Army were ready to do our black belt, it was me and the others were Barney Thomson and a guy called Harry Harris from Plymouth. Well Barney got sent back on the advance party to Northern Ireland so he couldn't take it. I didn't even know I was taking it until my instructor said "Black I want you to come to the school and take your black belt" I said "Sir I'm not ready I need to practise more" and he said "You have practised enough you are ready" So me and Harry were going "but Sir?" and he just said "No you are ready" That was on the Monday and the next training session was on the Thursday so he had given us the two days to prepare!

So we turned up and we went through the grading, we did the same as we do now. Introduced ourselves name and grade, then we did all the patterns, we did line work, then kicking drills, three step sparring, two step sparring. Then we did self defence which was the one step but it was freestyle and we did breaking which was knifehand two house bricks, punching downwards through eighteen slates, turning kick through four inches of wood,

no focus! Flying side kick over six people one board and that was it, but you had to break, you were allowed one focus apart from the turning kick. Luckily I went through as the adrenalin was going. We had been training doing loads of breaking anyway. Then we sparred, first against our own grades, and you sparred everyone.

Then he lined up all the black belts from first degree to fourth degree and we had to spar all of them, one on one, two on one and we had to show control, there were no pads and you had to spar with power and focus but you must not hit. You were not allowed to hit! I'm not exaggerating there must have been between ten and fifteen black belts and you just went from one to another one and it seemed like you just had nothing left by the time you got to the fourth degrees, just nothing left no power, slowing down, just nothing left couldn't breath just battered!

I went home to Patricia and I was just bruised all over, my arms my legs I couldn't walk for a week after. And you don't know if you have passed and I wasn't going to ask! My posting to Hong Kong was coming to an end and I was due to fly out in the

afternoon and I got a call from Master Lee Chong Oh asking me to come down to the Taekwon-Do Dojang, so I went down there with Patricia and my friend Jimmy Sayso and I was wearing jeans and a t shirt. We got there and I entered and took off my shoes and Master Oh said to me "Black I want you to spar" I said "Sir I haven't brought my Dobok" and he just looked at me and said "do you need your Dobok in the street?" so I said "no Sir", again he had a load of black belts lined up and I had to spar them and I'm thinking what is going on here? I had really tight jeans on and couldn't even throw a kick so I did my best and spent a lot of time trying to dodge them, sweat was pouring off me! My shirt was soaked. He stopped us and said "Black I have something for you" and took out my black belt with his and my name and ITF on it and gave me a Dobok. I hadn't paid him for the grading and he said "Black when you get home you send the money over to me" Which I did! It was a fantastic moment!

General Choi eventually moved him to Ethiopia to teach and there was a war there at the time and I lost contact with him. I would love to find out where he is because I would like him to know that I never gave up. He said to me "Black you must promise to me that you will never give up Taekwon-Do you must keep doing Taekwon-Do and teaching General Choi's way do you understand, you must teach my way but my way is the General's way" I would love him to know that I never gave up but I don't know if he is still alive.

We have all heard stories of Martial Arts schools in Asia "challenging" each other, did you ever come across anything like this and were you involved in any "underground" challenges to defend the honour of your school?

There was a demo with all different martial arts, we were the last ones to go on, you had all the Chinese Kung Fu styles like Praying Mantis, Five Animals all on and then before us was the Karate and we

were last on, the display blew the public away with all the kicking, breaking and sparring, but the Japanese group that were there were very disrespectful, laughing during the demo and saying that Taekwon-Do was flimsy, not strong.

I didn't know what they were actually saying as it wasn't in English but it was clear enough. All the Chinese Taekwon-Do lads were getting very uptight and aggressive and I could feel there was a bad atmosphere. I asked Master Lee Chong Oh about it and he told me that they were being disrespectful to Taekwon-Do. I was only a blue belt so wasn't actually in the demo, as it was just black belts and I said "Sir shall I go over and say something" he said "Black, Why? We try to live the tenets of Taekwon-Do and the moral culture General Choi has taught us, so I go over there and I beat the instructor up badly, where does that get me? Disrespect from other Arts because I lower myself to the same level" I said "I understand Sir" He said to me "what do you think about the demo Black" and I replied that our demonstration had been brilliant. He said "all martial arts are good, all the demonstrations were good, I said "yes Sir but Taekwon-Do was better" He replied "that's your opinion Black but all were good, all were good!"

Anyway I went to the Dojang later that week and some of the Chinese students were bruised with fat lips out and a bit battered. There was a lad there named Willy Wong who was a black belt and he had adopted me as his brother, I asked him about it and thought it was because of sparring and he said "no no! they went and beat the Karate Instructor up and his students" I couldn't believe it; it was just like the film *Fist of Fury*! I said "what? You went round and beat up the instructor and his students?" He just looked at me and went "yes" I still couldn't believe it and asked him how many went and took part he looked at me and said "only four of us" I asked him how many of them and he just



Master Black Training

replied "a few" so I said you must have been hurt and he just said "not as bad as they were" I asked him if this went on all the time and he explained that if someone disrespected their Master they couldn't lose face so they would arrange to meet secretly and fight, and challenges were common between Chinese Kung Fu styles against the Korean Art. I asked him if we had ever lost and he just smiled and said "all the time I have been doing it, No!"

During your time in Asia did you come across any tournaments and if so what were they like, were they in the style of films such as Bloodsport or more like the tournaments we are used to today.

A lad I knew called Jimmy Saysoo married a Chinese girl and because of that a Kung Fu Master took him on which was unusual for a Chinese Master to take on a westerner, and he trained with him for a year before he died the then was taken on by another Master who trained him in Hung Gar style. He was also an Army boxer and

we all used to train together and swap techniques. His Kung Fu Master said he would put him into a tournament because he thought he would do well. So me and my wife Patricia and Jimmy and his wife were invited to this I Kung Fu Open Championship. A big venue, a big arena for the fights and all different Kung Fu schools, it started at about three o'clock in the afternoon and goes way into the early hours of the morning, there's food and everything for the spectators and a bit like a western boxing match with tables and people are drinking and eating.

t started with weapons and Jimmy did a spear form and then Nunchucks and did very well and picked up some points. Then it was onto the sparring, and it was same as we do now, so he had about ten fights before he made it to the quarter finals and he was just destroying people! They were doing all the traditional style with big long stances and all the five animals hand movements trying to grab and so on and

Jimmy was just moving round up on his toes and using bits of Kung Fu, bits of boxing double jabs and following up with kicking as well. They just couldn't handle him as he wasn't fighting in the traditional way.

He went all the way through and got to the finals where he was against the champion who had not been beaten for five years, he was a Kung Fu Instructor and he was really good, we had been watching him and he would adapt his fighting style depending on how his opponent fought. I thought Jimmy was going to meet his match but the fight started, this guy started with the traditional long stance and fancy hand movements, but then changed his style and tried to copy Jimmy's style, but he just wasn't as fast as Jimmy who was a very good boxer.

Jimmy just moved around and then would slip inside and use his punches then use different range and switch to kicks like turning kicks and side kicks. The lad was bruised and kept getting knocked down and the fight was five rounds. Every round Jimmy was winning, anyway the fight stopped and the Judges came up and announced "Gwailo win!" they called him that as it was a name for a foreigner.

Well the place just erupted because a white person had won. The lad who he

had fought was battered and bruised and was with his helpers and as Jimmy was walking off towards us the lad got up and was shouting and screaming and started to run at Jimmy who had his back to him, I shouted a warning to Jimmy who looked round and saw him coming and just



Master Black and Kung Fu Champ Jimmy Saysoo

stepped in and side kicked him Boof! He went flying into the tables and the crowd and it was chaos, and Jimmy is still standing there looking at him, now Jimmy was a real fighter and he goes "whos next?" and I'm thinking "oh my god!" He just looked at me and said "John you got my back" and my wife Patricia is looking worried and I just didn't know what was going to happen next. Jimmy's wife was crying now begging us to leave, as the

Chinese crowd were very upset. Jimmy casually grabbed his stuff and his Master came over to him and said "Jimmy I need you to leave, people are not happy that he has been beaten" Jimmy offered to go over and apologise for humiliating him, but his Master just said "no you must leave now" So as we were going out another Chinese Kung Fu stylist came over and said to Jimmy "you think you are tough" he then challenged Jimmy to a power blocking contest, just blocking each others arms as hard as they could, so Jimmy accepted that and beat him as well which didn't go down well, and I'm still thinking "what is going on??"



Master Black Training

So we got out got into the nearest taxi and got away, it was in the Hong Kong papers next day that a Gwailo had won this championship. It did get a bit nasty but could have got a lot worse and we were a bit lucky there!

Read the concluding part of this interview in next months Totally Tae Kwon Do

magazine, including Master Blacks selection process for Army Bodyguard, his tour of N.I., a demo for Princess Anne, a Commendation for Bravery, tea and biscuits at Grandmaster Rhee, Ki Ha's house and a free dinner with General Choi, Hong Hi, plus of course his thoughts on the art of Taekwon-do!

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An Interview With **Master John Black** **8th Dan**

Part 2

By John Dowding, 4th Dan

Welcome to the second part of my interview with Master John Black 8th Degree. In the second part Master Black tells of his experiences as a serving soldier during the worst of the “troubles” of Northern Ireland. Non UK readers may not be aware that this was particularly violent conflict largely based on Religious sectarianism which took place in Northern Ireland and spanned four decades during which the British Army was deployed. During the time Master Black was serving, bombings, shootings and punishment



attacks by paramilitaries on civilians and soldiers alike was daily news in the UK along with bombing attacks on UK civilian and military targets on the mainland. Master Black tells his stories not with an air of boastfulness or bravado but with a humble respect for all involved in the conflict, as you would expect from someone coming from a family of mixed Protestant and Catholic parents. I hope you enjoy reading the second part of this interview as much as I enjoyed interviewing Master Black, a truly genuine and humble Master and Man.

After your tours in Asia I know you were deployed to Northern Ireland and did several tours over there during some of the worst times of the conflict. How many tours did you do?

I did five tours in all including the worst of areas, Londonderry was awful we were getting petrol bombed all the time, stones thrown at us, sniped at, they even stole vehicles to put mortars on to use on the camp. Part of our duties was to get the Irish public on side with the Brits. So we would have the kids come into the camp to watch films, play football and other activities. After a while it seemed to be working as the petrol bombing incidents went down. It was difficult though because the IRA thugs would beat up the kids,

badly break limbs even on kids as young as six years old as punishment for collaborating with the Brits.

That sort of stuff was never on the news and it was one of the hardest things about being there, what they did to their own people. For instance we had been outside for 48 hours on duty in the snow protecting the Catholic area and making safe after a loyalist bomb threat. One of the residents was an old Catholic lady and she brought us out tea and biscuits as it was so cold, a week later she was in hospital with two broken legs, a lady in her seventies! And that's when you start to feel the hatred for people who could do something like that. That's when it starts to become personal.

What were your duties in Northern Ireland?

I was PT (Physical Training) staff, so I was in charge of keeping the lads fit and keeping their morale up. If they had time off I would arrange table tennis, pool, films stuff like that. But I was also bodyguard for Major Stockton one of the Officers of the camp. Its quite a funny story how I got the job, I was PT staff and I was put forward by my boss, who thought I would be good because of my martial arts background and it was my fifth tour so I knew the ropes. The Major needed a bodyguard as he was on the IRA hit list as an assassination target.

So I went for an interview, I remember that Major Stockton looked at me and started laughing and said "Corporal Black so you want to be my bodyguard, what is the difference between you and the two chaps there?" Well these two soldiers were there for the job as well and they were big guys, fit body building boxers and I was only a skinny little thing. I said "Well Sir I could probably take them out no problem" well Major Stockton was still laughing so I said "I could give you a little demonstration Sir?"

Major Stockton just looked at me for a moment and said "No need for that Black you have got the job" Major Stockton told me to ask the Sergeant Major to dismiss the men that were waiting for interview as he didn't need to see anyone else. On my way out I had a bit of banter with the two lads who had been waiting. They couldn't believe he had just given me the job and said to me "what is so special about you then?" I said "well lads I can probably move a bit quicker than you", as I said it I threw out a few quick techniques to each of them and said "there you go, that was your temple, that was your head and you, I have just broken your leg" I didn't touch them but said "there you go you didn't even see it" I laughed and turned round and walked off but as I did my heart was pounding and I was just thinking to myself "that's it there going to get me for that!"

So after that I was sent for CQB (Close Quarter Battle) and close protection training when using vehicles all specialised training which was great!

I'm aware you were awarded the General Officers Commendation for bravery after an incident in Northern Ireland, can you tell us about the event



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Master Black - Princess Anne Demo

that led to this being awarded.

We were out on routine patrol with a new Officer who had no experience of Northern Ireland. Major Stockton ordered us to take him out and show him the area that we patrol. So it was Thursday night which was the day the Irish usually got paid. So as we are patrolling the Creggan Estate it's pouring with rain and we go past the Pub which is packed and there are two bodies on the floor!

*There was a big bloke outside who had obviously just knocked them out. So the new Officer saw this and barked out an order along the lines of "stop that immediately my good man!" Well, I just thought "****" and the Officer goes up and tries to arrest this guy, well the Irish guy just grabbed him and threw him against the Landrover and he just sort of slid down it.*

We had the Police RUC (Royal Ulster Constabulary) with us as they used to

come on our Patrols but they just looked at the situation and refused to take any action or get involved. So the Officer barks "Corporal Black, arrest him!" so I get out of the vehicle and as I get out the Irish guy pulls out a knife, there is a big crowd gathering and it could be the making of a riot. The Officer looks at the knife and says to me "shoot him" I said "Sorry Sir?" he repeats "shoot him" so I said "its not the way we do things Sir" I gave my weapon to one of the other lads and said "I will try and talk him down and restrain him when I get in close, as soon as I get in back me up"

All the time the crowd is getting worse and they are starting to throw stones, the RUC don't want to know. So there are eight of us and the rest of the lads are trying to hold the crowd back and keep control. The Sergeant Major is calling for backup as we are outnumbered and the worst thing would be if the crowd manage to isolate

one of the lads and get his weapon then is going to be really nasty. It looks like I'm massive as I've got my combats, on and a flak jacket and waterproofs so I got close to him and he slashed at me, I moved back quickly and didn't realise it at the time but he had slashed me all the way through the waterproofs and the flak jacket and had actually just managed to break the skin and cut me, but at the time I wasn't even aware of it. So he is giving me loads of verbal abuse about what he thinks of the English and how he is so pleased that we are in his Country and could we stay a bit longer, you know the sort of thing!. I'm calling him Sir and trying to calm him down and he is having none of it! The Officer is still calling for him to be shot and the Sergeant Major is trying to calm the Officer explaining that we can't just shoot him.

As all this is going on one of the Army lads moved around and the Irish guy just took

his eyes off me for a split second and then just lunged at me, as he did I stepped back and caught him with a back kick, I had no idea how hard I had hit him but I heard the breath come out of him, I saw him dropping to his knees and as he dropped he let go of the knife and put his hands down, as he did that I ran round behind him grabbed his neck and pulled him back so he was on top of me, and I wouldn't let go. I had my arms round his neck and my legs around him and I'm holding on for dear life, we are rolling around on the floor. I felt him go limp but I still wasn't letting go. Then the lads are going "Blackie let him go he's unconscious" but I still wouldn't let him go. When I did let him go I thought "oh my god I've broken his neck" it took about five minutes for him to come round, and I had broken his sternum with the kick and almost killed him with the stranglehold.

People think you're a hero but I was just



Master Black - Princess Anne Demo

lucky with the kick. My legs were jelly I was out of breath, my heart was going and it was like time had slowed down. Major Stockton put me in for the General Officers Commendation for that. I had to do a special Taekwon-Do display with some of the other lads at Whittingdon Barracks, Lichfield in front of Princess Anne and that was where I was awarded the Commendation. But I wasn't a hero I was scared stiff at the time, it just happened that I caught him right with the kick, it was just luck but there wasn't a choice the Officer wanted him shot, I would have shot him in the leg to take him down if it was necessary but we were in a bad situation already, by the end of it there was a full scale riot and we needed backup when it arrived, but it could have gone a lot worse.

Do you think obtaining your black belt helped you during your active military service?

Yes most definitely, not only my military training but my martial arts training helped a lot. As you know Taekwon-Do is the original military art, so the whole objective of the art is to develop a w a r e n e s s , confidence, discipline and courage to handle any situation that is thrown at you. It was once taught to me that bravery is the capacity to perform ones duties with honour and courage even when you are scared half to death, which was most of the time. My Taekwon-Do training was what helped me to develop a brave heart really, and carry on even though every time we went out we didn't know what was going to happen or if we would come back. It was a

terrible time with shootings, car bombings and you just never knew. The Hwa Rang youth groups code of honour came to mind as the military was very much that way.

When you returned to the UK from Hong Kong was your ITF black belt recognised by the ITF group in England, the UKTA.

When I came back I had a couple of weeks off, Pats parents lived in Chippenham and I couldn't find an ITF Taekwon-Do school, I did find a WTF one that was run by a chap called Fred Lowe and his brother Dave Lowe, they were in the Percy Boys club in Bath and were under a Mr Li from London who was a 6th Degree. So I went along and met them and explained I was an ITF black belt and they said they would accept my grade no problem in the WTF, but he said there was an established ITF Master here in the UK and that was Master Rhee Ki Ha. So they gave me the address for him. I explained that I would like to train with them but wanted to stay ITF as I had promised my instructor that I would stay true to the General's way. He said he understood and it was no problem.



I had gone back to Northern Ireland where I set up my first Taekwon-Do school for the Army as a lot of the lads wanted to do Taekwon-Do, I couldn't grade anyone as I wasn't a high enough grade myself. But I said that I could just teach them what I knew and advise them on how to improve.

Anyway I wrote to Mr Tom McCullum and Master Rhee and they replied and said that

as my black belt wasn't an English ITF belt I would have to sit my black belt grading again at the Academy in Glasgow. Because I was used to my instructor I thought it was some kind of test of my character, as that was the way he did things. I thought they wanted to see if I would say "sod you I will do it on my own" so I wrote back and said yes, so I got a week off from the Army to go and do it, I had relatives in Glasgow but I went straight to the Academy.

Well there I was a young lad and it was pouring with rain, I was soaked through. I was met at the door by Master Rhee's wife who brought me in and said come up stairs and dry yourself off, she made me a cup of tea and gave me a biscuit. So I'm sat in the flat and Mrs Rhee is in the kitchen, the door opens and in walks Master Rhee Ki Ha, Master Kim Sung Ung and General Choi! I'm sat there eating a biscuit and they all walk in!

They cup of tea went one way and the biscuit went the other way and I'm jumping up to attention all flustered, Mrs Rhee saw this and was laughing at my surprise. I looked at Master Rhee who I had never seen before and he is big for a Korean, and he was looking at me in a really stern way, and I'm thinking "Oh my God! His look could kill you as well!"

So I'm shaking and stammering and I

introduced myself and he said "Ah you are the Soldier?" And there was the General and I said I was really pleased to meet him and he said "So you are Soldier, would you like to come with us for something to eat?" I'm like, "Sorry Sir? Me Sir?" Master Rhee just looked at me and said "Yes you! The General has asked if you would like to join him for something to eat!" I was totally

tongue tied and Mrs Rhee was still cracking up in the kitchen. So I went for a meal which they paid for and I didn't really say a word I just sat there in awe.

General Choi asked my how long I had been in the Army and I just stammered again" eh, um, eh, about eh, I trained with Master Lee Chong Oh in Honk Kong Sir!" The General said "Ah Mr Lee Chong Oh, how is he?" and I just didn't know what to say and I've jumped up to attention again at the table in the restaurant and Master Rhee is looking at me and smiling and I didn't know what they must have thought of me!



Bridgwater martial arts instructor John Black leaps into action at Sunday's Black Belt Demonstration at Sydenham Sports Centre of Tae Kwon-Do, the Korean art of self-defence.

After that we went back to the Academy and I trained there all week with the other black belts, General Choi took some of the sessions. We had to perform Chon Ji for the General. Master Kim was an awesome kicker and he would make our jaws drop with his kicking. At the end of the week there was the black belt grading and just before that I was called to the office of the Academy and Tom McCullum was there

and told me that Master Rhee said I did not have to take the grading and they would accept me as an ITF black belt. I was over the moon and told them I was honoured. I was going back to Northern Ireland and they told me to be safe and the General wished me well.

Can you tell us about your training when you returned to the UK from active service in Ireland?

When I came back to England I was like a wandering traveller and I trained with anyone I could. I trained with Paul Drury who was Shotokan at the time. He became my very first student in Taekwon-Do a long, long time ago, before the ice age! Mr Drury is now a Master himself in various martial arts and is very successful martial artist with his own academy. I met Mr Keith Hughes at that time, when he was



a red belt then in the UKTA. I would train with any martial artist in any martial art I just love all of them. As I said I had to travel to Scotland and I met Master Rhee Ki Ha who is a great outstanding man and martial artist. I was posted to Lichfield in the Midlands and I trained with PKA kickboxing under Steve Arthur for over two years until I found a UKTA school in Nuneaton under Master Dave Oliver, and I also used to look after Master Sergiew's schools for him when he was away competing with the UKTA. I trained under all of the founders of the TAGB including Master Mike Dew who I am eternally grateful to for his training, leadership and friendship. The TAGB are a great organisation no doubt. During that time I

met many outstanding martial artists from both the UKTA and the TAGB and I thank them all. I trained under and was graded by Grand Master Hee Il Cho for my 2nd Degree through to my 4th Degree, took my 5th Degree under the TAGB Committee, my 6th Degree in Korea with the ITF-C, then my 7th under PUMA and my 8th Degree from Master Cariati and the ICTF.

I have been training for 38yrs plus. Now I am with PUMA who I'm very proud, honoured, humbled and privileged to be part of this most excellent organisation. PUMA is keeping the great man's legacy alive and kicking. PUMA is still growing and going from strength to strength and in my opinion PUMA is working for a better organisation that follows Gen Choi's legacy that is fair, respectful, honourable and that lives and breathes integrity.

A commitment to truthfulness and a belief that honesty is the best policy. PUMA strives for trust and confidence as that's what builds exceptional relationships, where Masters and instructors inspire students. Master Gayle and Master Ogborne are not only my best friends, they are my true brothers. I would not be where I am now without them. They are exceptional, outstanding, inspirational kind men and martial artists. I just want to thank them. It should be them who are eighth degrees! I have tried many times to give it back, they call me Master? But I'm just a humble student of this great art that the General has left us. I think I have a long way to go before I deserve to be called Master. A long way!



Master Black with Masters Ogborne and Gayle

I've trained on some of your seminars and you have a wealth of knowledge of self defence techniques, weapons techniques and techniques from other Martial Arts, apart from the Wing Chun and TKD training what other arts have you studied?

In the Army you get taught some unarmed combat, but whenever I was posted and couldn't find a Taekwon-Do School I would train with other styles and you pick up things don't you? My Taekwon-Do Instructor had a wealth of knowledge; I learned stick fighting from him. He trained us how to use a knife, how to use a rifle properly for thrusting, the bong stick, grappling, this is what I mean, in the seventies we were doing what they call mixed martial arts now! We were doing that, we would do throws, groundwork, all of it!

So you are a firm believer in cross training?

Definitely! I mean Taekwon-Do is a great martial art, all arts are. But how can I

ridicule another martial art if I have never done it? If I have never ever stepped on their Dojang floor and sweated with them? How can I say oh that art is crap? You can't and no one should ever do that! People shouldn't run down other arts. People should try other arts and see what they offer and how awesome they are. It's like people say ah Taekwon-Do that's just a kicking art, but it isn't there is so much more. People just need to do more than look.

What particular element of Taekwon-Do is your favourite?

All of it! There is not one bit of it I don't like, nothing at all. I do like the Do more, but I love all of Taekwon-Do it's a great art, I'm not saying it's the best art as we have our weaknesses, same as any other art but as long as we know that we can develop our style to be strong, cant we. It is a great art!

How often do you teach, and do you still find time to train yourself?

Nearly every day, I teach Friday, Saturday and Sundays and I try to train every day, I do Body Pump and Body Combat as well but everything is geared towards my Taekwon-Do. I work shifts so I work around them, I try and go through my patterns every day, you know just walk through them. I think they are the foundation, I try to do my stretching and I work on ideas for when I teach. Although I will often get there and change it all around anyway!

A lot of your students become very accomplished kickers, do you place a strong emphasis on this aspect in your classes.

Yes I do, I do, because Taekwon-Do comes from the military and is a very physical art and I believe that because of this no one can teach us about kicking. We can learn from other arts and pick up things, but when it comes to kicking we are the masters of the kicking art. Drills develop your fast twitch fibres so you can kick fast and kicks can be developed so no one should be able to get near you. I

mean my Master when he sparred you could not get near him, he was so quick with both hands and feet and if you did get in close he would just throw you or sweep you and you would be on the floor thinking "where did that come from?" He would be using low kicks, spinning sweeps. I'm an eighth degree now and I know I'm nowhere near as efficient as he was; I have so much to learn. I can't do now what he could do then!!

You have a very strong belief in the "Do" of Taekwon-Do and I have seen you grill a few people really intensely at Black Belt Gradings on this aspect, and I think its fair to say I never want to be on the receiving end of one of those stares. Can you explain why this particular aspect is so important to you?

When I stepped up to get my black belt I felt humble, and you have to know the aspect of the art that is important, the values of the Hwarang youth group, the Generals philosophy of moral culture, the five tenets. The tenets are very important!



Master Black Training In Greece

I mean we don't live them, we try to live them but we don't live them. We talk a good talk but a lot of the time we don't walk the good walk. I think Master Gayle does, out of all of us he is the one that walks the walk and talks the talk. I'm not perfect but I can try and those five tenets if every body in the world followed them it would be a great world to live in.

It's the same in the Army as the Hwarang, you are a family and you honour your enemy as well. It's the same philosophy as the 300 Spartans, the indomitable spirit. You see that courage now in the British Army in Afghanistan, they are often outnumbered but they still carry on.

High grades like us shouldn't take things for granted and think "oh well this doesn't apply to me, I don't need to make the effort" We need to set an example. People who don't follow the etiquette or the Do by thinking they are different and for instance turning up scruffy to a grading they have students at are just disrespecting the Masters and the PUMA philosophy. The

example needs to come from the top. There is never a bad student there is only a bad instructor! If a student has a bad attitude it's not the student, it's the person who has been teaching him, because that person should be pulling the student up.

I know it was important for you to test physically for your 6th Degree and without going into too much detail you had suffered a few health problems previously but you were still determined to do a physical test, why was that so important to you?

It was a great honour to get my Seventh and Eighth degrees but I didn't have to test for them. I was glad I was able to test for my Sixth Degree and be given the opportunity on two occasions, my first time was under Master Choi Hung Hwa and I got through half the grading, but Master Choi didn't fail me at that time he gave me the opportunity to carry on the grading later at the Worlds in South Korea which was brilliant. My point score from the previous time was still valid so I thought I would have to just carry on and complete the two





senior patterns, but oh no! Master Gayle was on the panel and insisted I start at Chon Ji and go all the way up. Master Oldham made me go through So San and he would say “stop, what is that move, where does the sine wave start?” and so on, luckily I got through! Physically it was hard but it was great to do it. I have always been physical and it’s just me, if I had rested when I was ill I would be better today but you don’t do you? You just think you’re invincible but your not. I’m always inspired by people who have overcome some real problems such as Cancer and still get out there and do it, that’s why its important to me.

I was there when your 8th degree was presented to you by Master Cariati and Master Stanley, Obviously at the time it was a complete surprise, I remember it was at a tournament and the whole place just erupted, very emotional, how

did you feel at the time?

I had no idea that Master Gayle and Master Ogborne knew. I said to Master Cariati that I had no idea why I was being given it and he told me that they had been investigating my background for months. I still even now have to pinch myself! I never ever, ever thought that in my Taekwon-Do career I would get to Eighth degree. Never ever! I was happy when I was a third Degree! Then I was Fourth and thought “wow this is it!” There are better people than me that should have it, Master Gayle should have it! I did try and give it back as I thought that it should be Master Gayle. Master Gayle had already said that he would not accept it and if he says it well that’s it. So it was just me. It’s a great honour to get that prestige, it’s like winning the lottery to me! I just want to stay humble; as Eighth degrees go I’m pretty poor!

Since gaining your 8th Degree exactly how many press ups have you made Master Ogborne do?

(laughs) Do you know Sir that's the only reason I enjoy being an Eighth Dan! I can get him back all the time! We have a bit of banter as he used to call me a Junior Master! We have a lot of banter and I love being part of PUMA. I haven't lost my passion, I may have lost the drive to get out there and leaflet and try to get students in, but I haven't lost that passion to put my Dobok on or to teach, that is what I love doing! Master Gayle says "Oh you must take it easy!" No! If I die in my Dobok that's what I want, I want to die doing what I love! It's better to die in a body that's done lots of stuff rather than die in a body that's done nothing!

What has been your most memorable moment in your TKD journey and why?

Meeting Master Gayle and Master Ogborne, seriously right from day one I hit it off with them, and they have always been there. They are really true friends. Yes we have made mistakes, we all do, they are great guys. I don't think we always get it right but as long as we listen to good people, and we say to ourselves "wait a minute lets sit back here and listen, and yea you know what, we are doing this wrong" that is the way PUMA has to go. You can't have us as the Masters and just carry on with" this is the way we are going stuff you lot" attitude. We have to listen to people, I'm a great believer that if you look after the people in your association they will look after your association. We are only successful because of good people as instructors and

students. That is why Master Gayle keeps PUMA small, we have had loads of people who want to join us but he won't take just anyone on, it's about quality. Another great man is Mr Dennis Salt, I would love to see him a Master, he is just a great man, never lets anything get to him, we have great people who are inspirational to me, both as instructors and competitors. As long as we can keep that respect and build truthfulness and great friendships between Masters and Instructors and make sure that everybody feels they can have a say, when we have a meeting no one should feel "oh no I cant say that in front of the Masters" Yes they should tell us, because if nobody tells us honestly we don't know things are wrong and cant change them for the better. As the General said "My whole life is devoted to Taekwon-Do" and that is how it is for Master Gayle and he inspires me and leads the way.



Master John Black, 8th Dan

And finally what do you think is the most important attribute and quality in a Martial Artist.

It's got to be attitude. I think you have to be humble as

well and truthful with yourself and other people. I cant do the physical things I did earlier now I'm older so its about the Do and passing that on to the young ones coming through, pass on that Do and the way the art should be taught and practised and pass on the General's legacy.

Thank you Master Black on behalf of Totally Tae Kwon Do magazine for taking the time to do this interview, it has been our pleasure.

"It's got to be attitude, I think you have to be humble as well and truthful with yourself and other people. I can't do the physical things I did earlier now I'm older so its about the Do and passing that on to the young ones coming through, pass on that Do and the way the Art should be taught and practised and pass on the Generals legacy."

— Master John Black, 2011



Rest In Peace - 2013

A much loved Master of Taekwon-Do