

## ROOTS OF HONOR

I remember something my grandfather told me one time while we were fishing. I commented on a tree near the lake. "Look at that great tree over there. It is so tall and has such huge branches." He remarked, without looking up, "That tree would never have grown so tall if it did not have strong roots." This is true of all things. No one knows this better than Grand Master Kim Soo.

He has been honored for his life's achievements. And there have been many. But he would have never of been the man that he is without the nurturing from someone special. This person was his mother, Duk In Lee.

Duk In Lee had a hard life. She was born and raised in the country. She was from a poor noble family, "Yang Ban". In early Korea there were four classes of people. Yang Ban was the second highest class. This was an environment of hard work and poverty. She married Grand Master Kim's father, who was financially well off and from the city. He was a Japanese army officer and a pharmacist. It was common for wealthy men to marry a country girl. She was to take care of the house and the family much like a maid-wife relationship. Extra marital affairs were common in these households and it was no different at the Kim's house.

This environment was not conducive for a healthy home life. Grand Master Kim was the youngest of five children. The oldest son was a major discipline problem. He spent most of his time drunk and threatening his family with a samurai sword. (After Japan's occupation, there were a lot of swords available in Korea. He would start drinking, get mad, disrespectful and threaten family members with the sword.)

Grand Master Kim also had three older sisters. They were very dominant toward young Kim Soo. This feminine environment coupled with their constant bullying was resulting in problems of poor self-esteem.

To make matters worse, young Kim skipped a grade in school. This made him an object of bullying as well. He was younger and therefore smaller than the other boys in his grade. He was a cute boy with a baby face and was picked on by every bully at school. This reinforced the poor self-esteem problem. He walked around with his head down, never making eye contact and developed a stuttering problem.

His mother could see that her favorite child needed some help. She knew that there was nothing positive for him to learn at home. He needed some kind of formal training to learn the lessons necessary to win life's battles. She decided that martial arts was what he needed.

He began his training under the supervision of a neighbor. This training was unstructured and inadequate for the needs of young Kim Soo. So he joined a karate school and began his formal training. As with most children, His need for training and his desire to play with his friends came into conflict. He began trying to skip class. His mother would have none of that. She would insist that he attend class, hand him his uniform and send him on his way. Grand Master Kim acknowledges without a doubt that if his mother had not been so insistent he would have quit. His internal enemies were stronger than he was at that age but not stronger than his mother.

Grand Master Kim characterizes his mother as:

Sincere Buddhist

Very intelligent although with little formal education

Kind

Patient

Forgiving

Humble

Positive attitude

Charitable

Believed in karma

Believed in the next life would be better

She would travel into the mountains and pray for “KONG” for young Kim Soo. She taught him that life is a blank page. You have to write on it yourself. You had to design a step-by-step plan to achieve your life’s dream. He gained his mental and physical strength, under the guidance of his mother, from the “DOJANG”.

*January* Every lunar calendar February 15<sup>th</sup> he celebrate the memory of his mother. Asian tradition declares that the oldest son should conduct a formal ceremony to honor their mother’s memory. The oldest son came into conflict with this Buddhist tradition when he became a Christian. The ceremonies became inconsistent and upon his death ceased completely. Tradition states that if performed by a younger son it would bring misfortune. Grand Master Kim did not believe this to be true. He was extremely thankful for his mother’s guidance and insisted upon continuing this honoring tradition for his mother. He burns inscents, gives a glass of water and bows with great respect. He continues this tradition to this day....Remembering....Honoring. This tradition is being passed on to his son, Sean and hid granddaughter, Sydney, a tradition of respect and never forgetting where they came from.

Whenever Grand Master Kim needs counseling or is battling a physical problem he calls on his mother for guidance. He will meditate or just speak to her with the knowledge that she is always listening. She always answers him through inspiration and dreams. “The answers just come.”

Greatness always comes from strong roots.

