

New Branch Schools Spread Chayon-ryu By Richard Griffin



The only joy greater than running your own branch school dojang is having Grandmaster Kim Soo visit you and your students, as he did in our Wimberley dojang April 17, 2010. I was proud to show him our dojang and students; in fact, I can't think of any other personal accomplishment in my life that even compares with the rewards of operating a branch school.

I trained in Chayon-ryu in Houston from 1970 to 1988, and I clearly remember Grandmaster Kim Soo

imploping us Black Belts to move away and open a branch school to spread our system of Chayon-ryu. Of course, I also remember thinking that I wasn't about to move away just for the sake of opening a branch school.

I moved to Kerrville from Houston in 1988, and I knew that was an opportunity to open a branch school. I was teaching a few students in my garage and looking for a space to lease when I was hit by a car while riding my bicycle. I suffered a severe leg injury that took me several years to rehabilitate.

I resumed training in Chayon-ryu after I moved to Austin, Texas. When I moved to Wimberley almost two years ago I picked up where I left off in Kerrville. I started teaching in a room above my garage to keep expenses down and test the market. After only a few months I had too many students for that space. I found a small space to lease in March 2009, but by December 2009, I had already outgrown that space and had to expand yet again. My new space is already reaching capacity.

Grandmaster Kim Soo has known me since I was a young teenager. During his recent visit to Wimberley, he commented on how happy I was, and without my having to explain, he knew it was because of my teaching in my school. It is true. I love what I am doing.

I had a good friend who was 3rd Dan in Chayon-ryu, and a few years ago he moved to another state. He told me: "Now I am going to have to find a new place to train." My response was: "A new place? Why don't you teach Chayon-ryu?"

I realize that it can be a daunting thing to ponder. Opening a school is a big responsibility—a long term "obligation." Start small. Teach anywhere you can find space that is free. Wait until your student growth warrants a larger space devoted to starting a school.

Master Rangel just celebrated 35 years of teaching in his Rosenberg branch school. I remember when he opened his school, and I remember envying him for having the guts to do it back when

nobody else had paved the way. I am willing to bet that he has too many fond memories to count. I say that because, after having my own branch school for just 21 months, I have accumulated many great memories.

If you are reading this and you are a Black Belt, then we share something in common. If you trained long enough to reach Black Belt, you did so because of the rich benefits of training and teaching in Chayon-ryu. Grandmaster Kim Soo came to this country to share the benefits of his teachings and knowledge with you and with me. Now it is our turn to carry on his great legacy and the system he founded here in 1968.

We don't have to leave the country without our family and with no money in our pockets; we just have to teach where we are. Now Grandmaster Kim Soo is returning to Korea with plans to start a school there, which may actually prove more challenging than starting a school in the USA in 1968. Follow his lead and his example, but not out of a sense of obligation, but for the journey and the growth that awaits you.