

# Reminiscing fondly about my days with General Choi Hong Hi

By ITF President Prof. Ri Yong Son

My Taekwon-Do journey began in secondary school in Chongjin City in North Hamgyong Province. I trained Taekwon-Do alongside handball practice. It is widely known that my country is renowned as the Motherland of Taekwon-Do, thus it is popular and considered an obligation for everyone to learn the art from a young age. However, I continued training Taekwon-Do as a practitioner, progressing in the martial art through to university. I participated in competitions and won medals, including gold placing occasionally. During my university studies, I dreamt to continue Taekwon-Do and became determined to succeed in it. I decided to join the Korean Taekwon-Do Committee immediately after graduation to undertake Taekwon-Do professionally.

seminars on several occasions. At my 4th Dan grading examination conducted by General Choi in 1989 at Pyongyang, he kindly invited me to his hotel and asked me to be part of the team developing the Taekwon-Do Encyclopaedia, consisting of 15 volumes, for its revision. I worked on this project until 1991. During this time, I was able to receive General Choi frequently in my country as he came to check and examine our work. I was deeply honoured to have even been able to receive personal, one-on-one lessons from General Choi during this time. Back then, it was of my honest opinion that General Choi was a strict and rigid person, being a military General, as everyone was usually afraid of approaching him. However I learnt that he was a generous,

kind and even humorous person. Although he would be stern with me, especially when correcting mistakes and wrong techniques, he spoke encouraging words and was supportive when I was doing well, believing in my talent and promising future. After all, he did appoint me as the Demonstration Team Member of ITF in 1990. In short, I was very fortunate since following this, General Choi took me as an assistant to his international seminars. He even personally sent me as an

ITF instructor to teach Taekwon-Do in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in 1993, and then

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### MARTIAL ARTS

#### North Korean experts give C.R. goodwill show

By Adam Beitz

**THE GAZETTE**  
CEDAR RAPIDS — A near capacity crowd at the Paramount Theatre recoiled with Sun Hui Kim as she jumped back from a stack of bricks she had tried but failed to break with her right elbow.

It must have hurt. But just then, for the first time last night, one of the North Korean taekwon do black belts on stage broke a half-smile. It was Kim.

She looked sideways at the

crowd, held a finger in the air to say "just you wait," and returned to the stack of three bricks sitting on cinder blocks at the center of the stage.

Laughter went up in the crowd and scattered applause broke out to encourage the young woman with short, straight black hair.

Kim gathered herself and attacked the bricks again, putting all of her weight into it. This time the bricks fell in



Lindsay J. Carmack/The Gazette

North Korean taekwon do demonstrators perform a break at the Paramount Theatre in Cedar Rapids on Wednesday. The team of experts was brought here by Woo-In Jung on the first Goodwill Tour of the United States.

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I was fortunate enough to have my skills assessed by the late General Choi Hong Hi, and graded by him during his

to Malaysia in 1994 for both 6 months. In 1996, I came to work at the ITF HQ as the Treasurer, at the personal invitation of General Choi Hong Hi. My honoured relationship with General Choi Hong Hi developed, starting from the works for the Encyclopaedia, until the time of his passing. He inspired a lot of things in me, both mentally and technically.

If it were not for him, I would not be able to reach my goals as I have today.

General Choi has no doubt, left behind an abundance of wisdom for people like myself, and for the up and coming generation of Taekwon-Do practitioners around the world. I will always remember the words of inspiration he left with me during our time together.

***“The entire world is now endorsing Taekwon-Do as a Korean Martial Art. This means that Taekwon-Do was born in Korea, and furthermore, its future depends on Korea. It is up to Koreans like yourself to ensure its progress. Do not forget your mission and obligation until you die. That is why I pour all my energy and my entire soul into you, in the hopes that you will follow my path, without shaking or swaying from the true and original art of Taekwon-Do.”***

The following are my Taekwon-Do career and sports achievements over the years:

2nd place at the Inter-Province Handball Competitions of the National Championships in the section of the School Clubs representing the North Hamgyong Prov. (1982)

Taekwon-Do practitioner & trainer (1981-1988)

Qualified as the International Instructor & Umpire (1989) and Taekwon-Do Master (8th Degree Black Belt)

Member of the Taekwon-Do Demonstration Team (1990-1995)

Elected & served as the Treasurer of the International

Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF) located in Vienna, Austria (1996-1999)

Served as the Vice Director of the Korean Taekwon-Do Committee (2000-2003)

Elected & served as the Executive Director General of ITF (2004-2011)

Served as the Vice President of the Korean Taekwon-Do Committee (2012-2014)

Elected & serving as the President of ITF (2015 - present)

Elected & serving as the President of the International Martial-Art Games Committee (2015 - present)

Elected & serving as the Vice President of the DPR Korean National Olympic Committee in charge of the Martial-Art development (2015 - present)

