

**Shin Dong-A Monthly Magazine
April 2002**

**Chong Woo Lee, Kukkiwon Vice President,
Involved in Choosing the Winners and Losers of the
Sydney Olympic Games**

**Kukkiwon Vice President Chong Woo Lee's Shocking Confession
of Olympic Competition Results Manipulation!**

The Shocking Confession from Taekwondo's Past by Chong Woo Lee, the Vice-President of Kukkiwon

- His involvement in manipulating results in Sydney Olympic matches
- The battle for leadership of Taekwondo between Hong Hi Choi and Un Yong Kim
- The inside story of the awarding of a 6th degree Taekwondo black belt to Un Yong Kim
- The early stages of Taekwondo and its origin in Karate
- Debate about whether the original calligrapher of "TAEKWONDO" was Syngman Rhee or Chung Hee Park
- How Taekwondo became an international competitive sport

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Executive Board Member, United States Olympic Committee (1984 – 1988)
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Dr. Yang is the President of the International Council for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, Sport, and Dance (ICHPER-SD: www.ichpersd.org)

Dr. Yang was a candidate for WTF Vice President in the 1989 election held in Seoul, Korea. However, as usual WTF President Un Yong Kim appointed all WTF Officers and Executive Council members instead of holding a democratic election, as stipulated in WTF Rules and Regulations. In 1989, the WTF informed Dr. Yang that it would suspend him for 2 years if he agreed to resign from the position of President of the Pan American Taekwondo Union, and otherwise he would be expelled by the WTF. Dr. Yang refused to resign as PATU President and chose rather to be expelled to demonstrate against the WTF's dictatorship and its ongoing corruption including its financial exploitation through the WTF Kukkiwon Dan certification program of PATU countries and other members around the world. Dr. Yang presided over and followed the agenda of the 1990 PATU General Assembly meeting in Puerto Rico which included his voluntary resignation announcement and the election of his successor Mr. Rafael Serrano as PATU President to serve out the remaining 2 years of Dr. Yang's term. ***

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[Reporter's Opening Comments]

In November 2001, "Sin Dong A" covered the resignation process of President Un Yong Kim, "The Emperor of Taekwondo". Last year, the Taekwondo community in Korea rose up against a drastic personnel turnover [in Taekwondo leadership] as well as obvious cheating which took place at the Korean National Team Trials in April. In response, President Un Yong Kim reacted emotionally and became entangled in the matter throughout the rest of the year. During that time, the two sides clashed. It was the Alliance for Taekwondo Reform Movement against President Kim and his supporters. At the end of a lengthy power struggle, a catastrophic situation was resolved by President Kim's retreat from the front lines, and yet the seed of discord was not completely gone.

Taekwondo in Korea moves and centers around three power bases: The Korea Taekwondo Association (KTA), Kukkiwon, and the World Taekwondo Federation (WTF). Not long ago, the KTA elected Former National Assemblyman Chun Suh Koo President over Assemblyman Yoon Soo Lee. Eventually, Koo assumed the position of President. Meanwhile, Un Yong Kim secured the position of President of the World Taekwondo Federation for a 4-year term at the WTF General Assembly Meeting in 2001. The problem at issue was Kukkiwon. In the midst of demonstrations by the Alliance for Taekwondo Reform Movement members last year, President Kim resigned from the position of President of Kukkiwon.

Page 291, Shin Dong-A, April 2002 *Kukkiwon Vice President Chong Woo Lee on Taekwondo's Past and A Shocking Confession!* [A full-page picture of Chong Woo Lee takes up this page.]

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The consequences resulting from the events of the 2001 Taekwondo situation were enormous. First of all, the Vice-President of Kukkiwon, Mr. Woon Kyu Uhm, who had held the position for a long period of time under President Kim, agreed to resign at the demand of the Alliance for Taekwondo Reform Movement. Moreover, Mr. Yoon Taek

Lim, Deputy Secretary-General of the World Taekwondo Federation, a long time close associate of Uhm, who had been involved in referee and judge selection for the national team trials, was detained on charges of obstruction of public business and charged with breach of trust and malfeasance. Furthermore, President Un Yong Kim and his son, Jung Hoon [John Kim], ended up being investigated by judicial authorities.

Chong Woo Lee (75), the Vice-President of Kukkiwon, together with Uhm, the former Vice-President, was a key player in the development of Un Yong Kim's mythology. Lee was the one who brought Un Yong Kim to the Taekwondo community, and through Lee's important positions in the KTA, Kukkiwon and the WTF, he united various Taekwondo branches under a single name and promoted Taekwondo as a competitive sport. It is the general view in the Taekwondo community in Korea that if Vice-President Uhm was in charge of the organization, Vice-President Lee was the brains for Un Yong Kim. Nevertheless, Lee is known to be a person who also criticizes President Kim. On March 5, 2002, a reporter paid a visit to Vice-President Lee at Kukkiwon. It was the fourth meeting with him.

"I Have No Ambition Anymore."

[Reporter's Question]: Taekwondo has been limping along for a year now. As a result of events, Un Yong Kim has stepped down from the front line, and some of those involved were even arrested. How would you comprehensively evaluate the situation, looking at the events of the last year?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "There are various rumors circulating, but it is inappropriate for me to mention any specific individual's name. Because I was not involved in it directly, it is hard to say. At any rate, I think bringing in a person with many problems (Yoon Taek Lim, the Deputy Secretary-General of the World Taekwondo Federation) was the cause of the trouble."

[Reporter's Question]: I believe that when any organization runs into problems, the senior members should take responsibility. What did you do during the turmoil within the Taekwondo community during this period?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "I have always believed, even now, that Un Yong Kim is the man who made Taekwondo what it is today. If today's Taekwondo has progressed this much under his progressive leadership, we have to recognize his accomplishments, despite his faults. My advice to the people who protested and demonstrated against him was: Seek to resolve the problem with a forgiving mind. I propose that we create a responsible body to oversee Taekwondo, so that Un Yong Kim will not go astray. My reasoning was that it is still too early for Korean Taekwondo to continue without him."

[Reporter's Comment]: The Board of Directors of Kukkiwon asked Un Yong Kim to return; nevertheless, once again it resulted in turmoil. In January 2002, the Alliance

for Taekwondo Reform Movement demanded that ‘all members of the Board of Directors should also take the responsibility and resign’.

[Reporter’s Question]: At the time when Un Yong Kim resigned from Kukkiwon, my understanding is that you assumed a certain behind- the- scenes role.

[Chong Woo Lee’s Response]: “When I heard the demonstrators intended to go to Un Yong Kim's home and office in the the National Assembly Building, I thought it should be stopped. Considering that Un Yong Kim, in his own way, has contributed to the advancement of Taekwondo does he deserve such public dishonor? At this juncture, my intention was, as a first step, to ask him to resign and to take his resignation, and then to have him come back afterwards when things calmed down. So I went to see him at his office in the National Assembly building, dragging my painful legs. At my suggestion, he wrote a resignation letter. I showed the resignation letter only to the student representatives and asked them not to disclose it publicly. They read it to the group of demonstrators and this was shown on T. V. I was very angry and shouted at them, “Why did you make me look like such a cruel person?”

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[Reporter’s Question]: Are you in favor of Un Yong Kim's return as President of Kukkiwon?

[Chong Woo Lee’s Response]: “Of course, I am. Kukkiwon and the World Taekwondo Federation are closely connected to each other. Un Yong Kim secured a legitimate 4-year term at the General Assembly Meeting of the World Taekwondo Federation last year. Therefore, it would be good for him to be President of Kukkiwon. The people in the Alliance for Taekwondo Reform Movement do not listen to me. I am old enough now not to be greedy or to want to do anything anymore. If the Alliance for the Taekwondo Reform Movement is truly for Korean Taekwondo, they have to offer Un Yong Kim one last chance.”

The Contributions and Mistakes of Un Yong Kim

[Reporter’s Question]: There are many people in the Taekwondo community who would compare Un Yong Kim to former President Chung Hee Park [of The Republic of Korea]. They have both achieved a great deal, and they have also made big mistakes. How do you see it?

[Chong Woo Lee’s Response]: “Today’s Korean Taekwondo could not have been internationalized if it were not for him. For many years, when it was difficult for people in Taekwondo to obtain ten won [Korean currency] anywhere, Taekwondo was being developed with the help of senior officials, wasn't it! Do you know how much money was raised by Taekwondo people when Kukkiwon was being built? Maybe, several million won! It was a shame. Everyone in the Taekwondo community went out

to collect contributions, and they could not collect any more than that. To tell the truth, I contributed nothing. At that time, people would look to Un Yong Kim, not even thinking about contributing anything, themselves. It has changed now. Now it is different, even though Taekwondo instructors were perceived as being like gangsters during the 1960s. Myself, although I was the President of Chi Do Kwan, I didn't get married until I was 42. At that time, no decent family would let their daughter marry a man who used his fists. From such a beginning stage, today's Taekwondo has been developed. Therefore, Un Yong Kim's accomplishments should be recognized."

"Un Yong Kim's character flaw is simple. He has an extreme way of thinking that things will not get done unless he does them himself. Even though it is true that he worked very hard, it was possible because Taekwondo people helped, wasn't it? He would not admit it, though. He thinks that if it were not for him, nothing would have been done, because Taekwondo people do not know how to do things well. One more thing, he is a man who is afraid of any organized group dissenting with him. If he perceived that a group had strong organized power, he only listened to that group, and therefore sometimes he had to pay quite a price after lending his support to persons with many problems by listening only to their one-sided story."

[Reporter's Question]: I know that you are also critical of the "Taekwondo Reform Alliance Movement.

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "The Taekwondo Reform Alliance Movement tends to follow its own emotions rather than consider Taekwondo's advancement. Not knowing these people well, it is difficult to judge. There are rumors. I cannot speak out loud, after hearing rumors. There is one thing I would like to talk about. They say that they fed Un Yong Kim, and Un Yong Kim diverted their money into his own pocket, but this is out of the question. Any attempt to clarify this will only hurt our feelings. Blaming each other's faults should be put aside at this point, and it is better to talk about good things that were done."

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[Reporter's Comment]: Vice-President Lee guarded his words. During the interview last year with Shin-Dong-A, he occasionally sharply criticized President Kim; however, he appeared to be absolutely protecting President Kim this time. This seems related to his recent effort to see Kim return to the presidency of Kukkiwon. Nonetheless, he drew the line at unconditionally supporting President Kim. This is kind of 'support but with reservations'.

[Reporter's Question]: President Kim took a decisive role in the process of Taekwondo being accepted as an Olympic Sport, and also as a member of the IOC he carried on vigorous sports diplomacy. If this is true, realistically, he deserves great respect, but it seems that this is not the case.

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "It depends on the way you think. We should talk about a painting only after viewing it as a whole, not after looking at just one part. I,

myself, have many regrets concerning him. But this is a personal issue. The important thing is how Taekwondo as a whole is moving forward.”

[Reporter’s Question]: There are many rumors about Kim’s family being involved in Taekwondo affairs. What do you think about this?

[Chong Woo Lee’s Response]: “During a long reign in office, you cannot prevent having this kind of problem. For example, when a soldier becomes an officer, the soldiers in her husband’s unit also treat the wife very well. If he is a general, she is treated even better. She is the wife of a person who controls the whole army. When you look at recent news reports, many articles have been continuously appearing implicating cases about the son of the Korean President. It seems I am not the proper person to discuss these issues. So make your own judgment about this.”

[Reporter’s Question]: Previously, you complained about the Internet business.

[Chong Woo Lee’s Response]: “Someone proposed the creation of an Internet website for Kukkiwon and the World Taekwondo Federation for the purpose of carrying out Taekwondo business. I projected a budget estimate of 85,000,000 Won for this. Also, this businessman was willing to pay an additional 30,000,000 Won after the entire installation was completed. Then, it was estimated that Kukkiwon and the World Taekwondo Federation were estimated to earn 115,000,000 Won just by sitting still. I told the person in charge about it and waited. There was no answer. Meanwhile, by hearsay, the deal couldn’t be made, because the relationship between someone and myself was not good. My feelings were hurt, because personal feelings should not be involved in business affairs. Why should personal matters be involved in a business affair, I argued. Later, I found out that Un Yong Kim’s son had already completed a contract. I also heard that a sum of money was paid and then returned. I yelled at them and called them ‘a bunch of bastards’. ‘I am the renowned Vice-President of Kukkiwon, an advisor to Un Yong Kim and you dare to trick me?’ I could have understood it if he had talked to me openly. If the son or someone else had contracted the business arrangement already, nothing else could have been done. Why do I have to be made a fool of by this kind of secret?”

Dealing with Judges is also a Skill

[Reporter’s Question]: Looking back at President Kim’s footsteps over the past year and thereafter, it seems that Un Yong Kim’s behavior tended to cause certain issues to become problems, when it was not necessary. The following major statement that he made is a typical example: "Kukkiwon was built out of my own private funds."

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[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "In the past, the Security Office at Blue House was stronger than the office of the cabinet ministers. With his Blue House Security Office background, he could easily get all the help: land was obtained through Seoul City Mayor, Tae Shik Yang, as a kind of donation, but with deferred payment; building materials were contributed free of charge from various places. I know this well, because I was working under Un Yong Kim in an executive role. It appears to me that President Kim believed he was the only man who could have [built Kukkiwon], and [the remark] was very imprudent. Even if it were his achievement, he would have been more highly praised if he had been more modest, but he couldn't do that. Even though he knew that his tail would get caught, he told the lie anyway. To tell you the truth, that is my complaint."

[Reporter's Question]: What do you have to say about Kim's behavior shown at the Salt Lake City Winter Olympics?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "For once, we need to think about his situation. Beginning with the selection of Salt Lake City as the site of the Olympics, there were various scandals circulating. During the election process for the IOC President, he would have had some sort of conflict with the IOC leadership. Therefore, we have to understand that [whatever Kim said at the Olympics] should be understood as a political gesture rather than imposing some big implication upon the statement itself. He is a straightforward person, and he cannot hide his emotions."

"I can see through his thinking clearly, after serving him for a very long period of time. Un Yong Kim is a man with a strong desire to win and a strong driving force. He cannot stay still when the records of Korean athletes get worse. With a lot of talk domestically about his son's troubles, if he praised the Salt Lake City Olympics in spite of criticism against him, he must have had certain unspoken reasons of his own."

[Reporter's Comment]: Lee spoke openly, recounting an anecdote that happened at the 2000 Sydney Olympics emphasizing Un Yong Kim's strong desire to win. If you ruminate over the details of this incident, you will come to realize how severely Korea is addicted to elite sports.

"When Korean athletes captured a small number of medals, Un Yong Kim was so distressed that he just looked at me and didn't say anything. At that time all the Korean athletes in the other sports had been beaten, and the last hope was for Taekwondo. Kim said that 'even though we won 3 gold medals in the 4 weight divisions, because of the quota system we did not even enter 4 divisions, so we actually had to give away 4 gold medals. It was no different from giving away 4 gold medals to other athletes.' During these hectic times, the hosting country Australia took whatever they could take, and Un Yong Kim went into a rage."

"At that time, as the Vice-President of the World Taekwondo Federation, I was responsible for all technical matters for the Taekwondo competition. When we assigned referees prior to the competition, I was the one who decided most of all who was to be

assigned or not assigned [for each match]. I could not openly ask judges to take care of Korea, could I? So when I hit the judges' backs, some were sensitive enough to understand what it meant, while the insensitive ones did not understand at all. I could not ask them to look after [Korean athletes], [I could only tell] them to be fair, however when Korea was defeated, I could not help but change my attitude. Then, I shouted to them, 'What made you judge that way'."

[Reporter's Question]: Do you mean to say you made an effort to ensure that Korean athletes perform their best and receive fair judging? If not...

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[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "That is correct. When they were told, 'Be fair', they read my intention and sensed it. I was in charge of this kind of manipulation and I carried it out. Without it, we could not have taken any more than one or two gold medals. That sort of thing was accepted and worked out because we were Korean, not from other countries."

[Reporter's Question]: I watched all three final matches where Korean players fought, and based on what I observed, I believe that all three Korean athletes won.

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "Only watching the final match would not be enough. In order to understand it as a whole, you have to pay very careful attention beginning with the first match. In this sense, it is not that simple. There are so-called tactics. That is, you kill the strong opponent beforehand. We are not the ones who kill [athletes]. The judges do. When you tell judges to do their job fairly, they know what to do and they do it. From the beginning of the preliminary games, you have to perform 'gagae-chigee' [branch trimming]. If not, at the end you will be in trouble."

"There is no such thing as Fair Play"

[Reporter's Comment]: Vice-President Lee uttered the words, 'gagae-chigee' [branch trimming]. As a major method of manipulating results, it refers to the handy method of eliminating potential rivals at an early stage. For example, if there is athlete 'A' who might be strong against a Korean athlete, by eliminating 'A' in the preliminary contest, you are helping the Korean win. In the sports community, during the time of the '86 Seoul Asian Games and the 88 Seoul Olympics, there were many rumors that the 'branch trimming' method was being used in competitive combat sports. However, there had been no official admission of any instances.

[Reporter's Question]: In 2001, this was an issue at the time of the national team trials and the World Taekwondo Championships as well. My understanding is that some judges made unfavorable decisions for athletes from certain schools.

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "Out of their carelessness. Shallow [without skill] tactics do not work. The way they did it was certainly detected."

[Reporter's Question]: Do you mean that 'branch trimming' is inevitable in order for Korea to retain its reputation as the strong Taekwondo country?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "Yes, I do. If a formidable person goes out as a judge, it is difficult to do it the way we want. It is also difficult to kill the Korean athlete's opponent at the final match. Therefore, from the beginning, you should have a good grasp as to which country is strong. Assigning judges is a skill. That is, so and so country will be in the competition. So and so country should not get into the finals. Therefore, so and so should be killed this way."

[Reporter's Question]: From the point of view that Taekwondo is a sport which puts its emphasis on courtesy, isn't that 'tree trimming' unjust behavior contrary to good sportsmanship?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "When judges play tricks, the outcome of a match is reversed. If a judge says he did not see [a point], that is the end of it, and he can make repeated deductions of points. For this reason, I did this (Moves his hand horizontally across his throat) to one of the judges. He was the one who caused the defeat of a female Korean athlete, by giving her a deduction. I gathered the judges together and instructed them absolutely not to call deduction of points, but to give a 'choui' [pre-warning] for the first and second time, and then a 'kyungo' warning for the third one. In spite of my instructions, he made deductions. After the match, I shouted at him, 'You cannot do that! Do you have a problem?' After this match, the attitudes of the judges changed completely."

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[Reporter's Question]: 'Critically speaking, it seems to me that 'gagee-chigee' [branch trimming] is a precise way to manipulate results'.

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "If this was disclosed openly, it would be a disgrace for Korea. But this is a reality. For example, if there were a final match between two strong competitors representing Korea and Germany, we would not make Germany lose in the final. If we perceived that the Korean athlete would have the disadvantage in a match against the German, we would 'kill' this German athlete before he reached the final."

[Reporter's Question]: I don't think that's fair. Upon hearing these words of the Vice-President, I am worried that Korea might cause some misunderstandings about the way Korea is maintaining a good reputation as a strong power in Taekwondo through the use of result manipulation.

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "This is related to the national interest. This is a sensitive issue. When Korean Taekwondo is destroyed, there will be chaos and then

athletes' spirit will fall to the ground. Foreign athletes' skills have improved drastically. This [result manipulation] has been possible, because Korea has dominated the leadership. Sung Dong Kim in short track [Salt Lake City Olympic Games] is the same case as this. There is no fair play.”

[Reporter's Question]: Do you mean that in almost all the international games including the Olympics, this sort of unwritten rule is applied?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: “Yes, a country that holds dominant leadership is always a strong country [in that sport's standings].”

[Reporter's Comment]: In sports, the theory of the strong nation holds true. During the 1992 Barcelona Olympiad, the competition chart turned out to be unfavorable to Japanese athletes. They redid the chart. Again, at the 1988 Seoul Olympics, a gold medal was placed around a Korean boxer's neck after an unsatisfactory performance. That is not all. In Korean wrestling matches, bunches of ghost (bogus) players are registered in the competition schedule chart. Moreover, we hear that regardless of the sport, there are many stories of judges being bribed. It is common sense that in the category of ball games, the interests of the strong nations are reflected in the choice of competition site, time, competition schedule chart and judge assignments. Sportsmanship is an important factor in enhancing the appeal of sports, but factors outside the competition have a constant influence on the outcome of the competition.

[Reporter's Question]: It is known that Japanese Judo, [as the originator of the sport] takes advantage. Mr. Vice-President, if you hold a high position, do you think you are entitled to exercise this level of privilege to that extent?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: “I don't think I am entitled to do it completely. The point is we have to revive our national spirit. When we take home gold medals from the Olympics and international competitions, our national morale is greatly increased. If this story is going to be put on the Internet . . .”

[Reporter's Question]: What is your estimate of how many gold medals our Taekwondo would be awarded if we competed fairly without privilege?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: “We would reap half, at the most. If not, up to 40 percent. Out of ten weight divisions, we could hope for 4, and 6 would go to other countries. You could count on three out of ten.”

Now, the Results Should be Judged by Machine

[Reporter's Comment]: Vice-Chairman Lee revealed his indirect participation in the result manipulation, and looked uncomfortable, because it cannot be regarded as fair, even though it was an inevitable choice for the sake of the national interest. In fact, a direct cause of the turmoil in the Taekwondo community was a dispute about biased

judging at team trials last year. Vice President Lee said that he has been working for a long time on a plan to improve the ambiguous Taekwondo scoring rules.

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[Reporter's Question]: When I read the Taekwondo judging rules, they indicate that a player earns points when his offense is strong and precise. I think this means that these standards could be differently interpreted at the discretion of individual judges.

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "Now, we have to move to the next stage. I don't know even the first thing about science. But I diligently researched and developed electronic chest protectors. If we adopt them, disputes over judging will largely vanish, but we still don't use them. A society in which a human being cannot trust another human being is an unfortunate society. Now, we cannot trust judges. It is unfortunate to say it, however my viewpoint is that at this juncture, we have to rely on an electronic device. By using the electronic scoring machine, points are given as you hit, when the hit misses, the score does not go up. The power of the hit is scientifically measured and appears on the scoring machine."

[Reporter's Question]: In this way, we can recover the fairness in Taekwondo competition nationally to a certain degree, but it might be a disadvantage for Korea in the international arena. In the case of boxing, since the adoption of computerized scoring, there are weaknesses.

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "If we stay at this stage, Taekwondo cannot ever go forward. When people judge, emotion is involved. Such as, 'in order to kill Korea, someone did it that way. Someone saw the hit and denied that the competitor was hit . . . Everyone has such a bias. Therefore, relying on scoring machines could bring us peace, presumably."

[Reporter's Question]: It appears to me there have been some issues concerning unfair Dan [black belt] promotions. There are widespread stories that any school that does not have a good relationship with the association [Korea Taekwondo Association] suffers.

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "When those incidents occur, suspicions get amplified repeatedly. That is why we need machines to make decisions. When machines do these jobs, things will be solved clearly. If they do not pass, they cannot break the machine."

[Reporter's Question]: You stated, " All Taekwondo people are sinners" when you were speaking during the last Dan promotional examination fee problem.

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "The remark meant we were all sinners including myself. As it says in the Bible, when the crowd was told 'Anyone who has not committed a sin, cast the first stone at this woman'; no one did; we should live life with a heart like this."

From 1st degree Kwon Bup to 9th degree Black Belt in Taekwondo

[Reporter's Comment]: Vice-President Lee was born in 1928 at Chang Shin-Dong, Seoul. His father moved to Seoul from Echon, Kyung Ki-Do. It is known that his father lived in the guest quarters of Byung Hee Sohn, who was an activist involved with the national independence movement as the representative for Chun Do Kyo. Vice-President Lee entered the School of Applied Fine Arts at Seoul National University after he graduated from Kyung Shin High School in 1949. The following year, his education was interrupted by the 6/25 Korean War, and he began martial art training. Although he entered the art school with the intention of transferring, in the face of war, he had to change his life's path, he said.

[Reporter's Question]: When was the first time you became involved in the martial arts?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "It was right after the Liberation. I suppose it was a dream of my adolescence around the age of seventeen, and I had the vague hope of becoming an unbeatable martial artist. When I heard there was a particular place in So-Gong-Dong, Seoul where they could train someone in the 18th method [known as a Chinese form of martial arts] I went there. It was a Judo school during the Japanese occupation period, and they used to put out a sign saying, 'Chosun Yeon Mu Kwan' in which they had a Judo Division and Kwon Bup Division. From then on, I learned Karate in the Kwon Bup Division. Kwon Bup is the same as Japanese Karate. Since the national pride was concerned, we called it Kwon Bup instead of calling it Japanese Karate."

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[At the top portion of this page appears a picture of members of the Alliance for Taekwondo Reform Movement preventing Un Yong Kim's car from leaving the parking lot at the Olympic Parktel Building, following the cancellation the Board of Directors' meeting of the Korea Taekwondo Association on October 29, 2001].

[Reporter's Question]: In the movies like 'General's Son' or 'Sirasoni' set in the time right after independence in Korea, we often saw movies about 'Joomok' [which means 'fist' but refers to gangs]. Did these people learn Karate, too?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "As far as I know, there were no gangsters who learned Karate the right way. They appeared to be strong fighters, because they ran around in groups beating people up with sticks. But if they ever fought with real martial artists, I suppose Doo Hwan Kim or Sirasoni would have been completely beaten up. Now and then, there were cases of some losers among the martial artists who would join the gangs, because they could not succeed in sport."

[Reporter's Question]: At that time, was Karate called Dang Soo Do?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "Some people used the term Dang Soo Do. Some called it Gong Soo Do. In Japanese, either Dang Soo or Gong Soo each translates into Japanese as Karate. Individual studios are named Dang Soo or Gong Soo or Kwon Bup to seem unique, but they are the same thing."

[Reporter]: Vice-President Lee, did you open the Ji Do Kwan school while you were learning Karate at Chosun Yeon Mu Kwan?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "In the beginning, Judo was the major martial art course at Chosun Yeon Mu Kwan with a small section of Kwon Bup in it. However, the Chosun Yeon Mu Kwan was put into service during the Korean War. Byung Suk Lee, the President of Chosun Yeon Mu Kwan was a nationalist. So, people in the Kwon Bup Division moved out of the center to another location due to the delicate political circumstances. The Korea Gymnasium, which was located at Ulgiro 3rd Street, was then the site of the Ji Do Kwan."

[Reporter's Question]: What Dan did you attain in the martial arts?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "It took me over a year to become a first degree black belt, then 2nd degree black belt and 3rd degree black belt, and then the Korean War broke out. By the time Seoul was liberated, I was going to test for 4th degree black belt, but I had to have appendix surgery. So, I received my 4th degree black belt through a recommendation while others took the performance test. After the Association was established, I received a 9th degree black belt. At the beginning, I received the 1st degree black belt in Kwon Bup and then I became a 9th degree black belt in Taekwondo. The name changed."

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[Reporter's Comment]: When people talk about martial art ranks in the Taekwondo community, as often as they spice their food they raise the question of Un Yong Kim's actual Taekwondo ability. Taekwondo people call Un Yong Kim 'The Honorary 10th degree black belt'. There are two meanings to this. While they value his contribution to Taekwondo highly, they raise a question about his technical ability in Taekwondo."

[Reporter's Question]: What motivated President Kim to be interested in Taekwondo?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "He just had a great interest in the martial arts. From his high school years, he practiced and taught himself."

[Reporter's Question]: What is President Kim's technical level in Taekwondo? In the Taekwondo community, there are many different opinions about this.

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "Mr. Byung In Yoon, a teacher of physical education at Kyung Dong High School, used to come in to Chosun Yeon Mu Kwan and he started a Kwon Bup class at the YMCA. Un Yong Kim studied there. He is a graduate of Kyung Dong High School. I have no idea what his exact grade level is. Mr. Kim has never spoken of it."

[Reporter's Question]: Taekwondo people gave President Kim the title, 'The Honorary 10th Degree Black Belt'.

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "While I was in Ji Do Kwan, I gave him a gift, a 6th degree black belt. At that time, the black belt was awarded for someone's contribution, even though the person might not have the technical ability. At that time, a black belt did not necessarily mean the person had the technical skills, exactly, but rather it symbolically reflected experience and character."

[Reporter's Question]: Perhaps, I do not know much about the martial art community, but isn't it only normal to progress from the first degree black belt step by step?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "Now it is but then it wasn't. The president of a Kwan [Martial Art School] has the discretionary privilege to award a black belt certificate to someone considered to be a person of excellent character. For this reason, it is strange to dispute this, based on today's standards. People in general tend to think that the awarding of black belts should be according to athletic ability, but it is not exactly so, nor does the black belt certificate parallel one's ability. After ten years of learning, many still have terrible skills. I do not have any black belt degree in Judo; however, I once beat a 4th degree Judo black belt."

Gift of 6th Degree Black Belt in Taekwondo to Un Yong Kim

[Reporter's Comment]: During an interview with 'Shin Dong A' last year, Vice-President Lee described in detail the events of President Kim's coming into the Taekwondo leadership. It is said Vice-President Lee had plans to bring together the various Kwans [schools] in the Taekwondo community through using President Kim's political influence. However, some Taekwondo people differed with him.

[Reporter's Question]: It is known that the Director for the Korean President's Security Service, Jong Kyu Park, played a big role in realizing President Kim's entry into Taekwondo community.

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "Of course, it is true. Park had a great interest in sports. In the old days, Park contributed a lot to enable Ki Soo Kim to become a World Champion boxer."

[Reporter's Question]: As far as I know, Park used to give a generous allowance to national elite athletes, didn't he?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "He contributed a great deal to the development of our country's sports. I know that many people are indebted to him. Of course, President Chung Hee Park gave support also. When I asked him to accept the position of President of the Korea Taekwondo Association, Un Yong Kim responded to me that he needed to obtain permission from three individuals. My wild guess is that the three individuals were Jong Kyu Park, Jong Pil Kim, leader of the ruling party, and Park, the President of Korea."

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[Reporter's Question]: Did President Kim have a direct connection to President Park?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "No, he did not. Since he was serving in an official position, it might have been necessary to get permission. It was possible because Jong Kyu Park, the Director of the Presidential Security Service, was his direct superior. He served as an escort for Jong Pil Kim on numerous occasions, and the President was the final decision-maker. I have no idea whether Un Yong Kim met with these three people directly in person."

[Reporter's Question]: The President of the ITF (International Taekwondo Federation) Hong Hi Choi says that Kim's entrance into Taekwondo was a political conspiracy.

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "When he opens his mouth, he tells lies. It is not worth responding to that. He is a bad person under the sky. Some badly informed people think he is someone great, but he is a man without a gall bladder [inconsistent]. I know him well."

[Reporter's Comment]: Vice-President Lee showed a temperamental response when I uttered the name, 'Hong Hi Choi'. The relationship between these two was very sincere during the years after the restoration of independence when every master was opening Taekwondo schools. Nevertheless, now Lee speaks of Choi degradingly as a fraud. What is the reason for this? In an effort to clear up the question, we have to first review the background of Hong Hi Choi.

Hong Hee Choi was born in 1918 in Hwa Dae, Ham Kyung Buk Do [a Province of the North Korea]. After his graduation from Japan Central University and Seoul English Military School, in 1961 he was chosen first President of the Korea Tae Soo Do Association (later the name was changed to the Korea Taekwondo Association). He served in the Army and as Commander of the 6th Army Corps; he, as a Karate black belt holder, created his own Taekwondo systematic structure.

Relationship with Hong Hi Choi, Fortunate and Unfortunate

[Reporter's Comment]: Hong Hi Choi went into exile in Canada in 1972, and it has caused people to hold many conflicting views about this [his exile]. Much has been said both for and against him. A considerable number of South Korean Taekwondo people allege that he had embezzled public funds while he was a foreign diplomat [Ambassador to Malaysia], and that the authorities ordered him to return home. [They allege that] when Un Yong Kim came to the Taekwondo leadership, Choi sensed a crucial situation and fled to a foreign country. On the contrary, Choi wrote in his book Taekwondo and I published in 2001, "It was inevitable that I would have to leave Korea, because I opposed a revision of the constitution [of the Republic of Korea] which would have allowed the President to run for a 3rd term, so I was facing a confrontation with Chung Hee Park's regime."

Choi vigorously criticized Chung Hee Park's regime while he was in Canada. Beginning in the 1980's, he visited North Korea frequently, and promoted Taekwondo mainly on military bases. Because of his pro-North Korea sentiment, Hong Hi Choi's name was a subject considered taboo in South Korea. Choi was active as the President of the ITF, which he founded in 1966. Nevertheless, after Un Yong Kim launched the WTF in 1973, Choi was pushed out little by little in the international competition [for organizational supremacy]. With the admission of South Korean-led Taekwondo as an official sport in the Sydney Olympics, the curtain fell on the rivalry between North and South Korea for Taekwondo leadership.

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[Reporter's Question]: The 'Name Nominating Committee' for which President Choi played a leading role, decided on the name 'Taekwondo' on April 11, 1955. The Encyclopedia Britannica, a world-renowned encyclopedia, says that Hong Hi Choi is the founder of Taekwondo. You acknowledge this, don't you?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "When Hong Hi Choi converted 'Taek Kyon' into Chinese characters, he wrote 'Tae Kwon' by his own decision, alone. Tae Kwon is made up of 'Tae', which means the 'axis of the earth' and 'Kwon' meaning 'fist'."

[Reporter's Question]: In the book he wrote, Taekwondo and I, he indicates that the name, Taekwondo, was chosen unanimously through a discussion process by a number of people.

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "It was not unanimous, because not everyone consented."

[Reporter's Question]: Hong Hi Choi asserts that beginning in 1949 he conducted research for 9 years by himself and developed modern Taekwondo while he was serving in the military.

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "That is not even worth evaluating. Byung In Yoon, who established Chang Moo Kwan at the YMCA, and who taught Karate to Un Yong Kim at Kyung Dong High School, met Hong Hi Choi in Japan and asked him to work with him, but Hong Hi Choi refused. Later, Hong Hi Choi, at his military base, integrated various forms and created a martial art that is all Japanese. He created it from Karate techniques. The basis was Karate and the name was Taekwondo. We, who accepted Karate as it was from the very beginning, are actually the genuine ones. Later, Hong Hee Choi requested Dr. Rhee (Syngman Rhee, The President of Korea) to write the calligraphy for 'Tae Kwon' but Dr. Rhee did not comply with his request."

[Reporter's Question]: But, in Hong Hi Choi's book, he writes that President Syngman Rhee did write the calligraphy for him.

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "That is a lie. That one was written by Hong Hi Choi. That was Choi's calligraphy. President Chung Hee Park later gave the official calligraphy for 'Taekwondo' to Un Yong Kim. If Choi had received the one from the President [Syngman Rhee], he would have evidence. He fabricated the story after we received the calligraphy written by President Chung Hee Park in 1970, because he did not want to appear inferior to us. Before that, I had never heard Hong Hi Choi bring out the story of having received the calligraphy. If he had received it, why hadn't he made it known to the public by then?"

[Reporter's Question]: Taekwondo was called Tae Soo Do before Taekwondo. How was the word, Tae Soo Do created?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "When I was living in Han Nam Dong, behind the Foreign Minister's residence, Hong Hee Choi's house was located right across the street from mine, next to the Islamic Mosque. So we met frequently. Not long after 5.16 [a military coup], Hong Hee Choi suggested that we use the word 'Tae Kwon'. In response, I asked, 'What is Tae Kwon?' It is 'a modified form of Karate', I replied. Then, the words Tae Soo Do, which means a combination of Karate (Dang Soo, Gong Soo) and Taekwondo, came up. We also talked about the meaning of the words. 'Soo' is open hand and the word 'Kwon' is closed hand, or fist, therefore there is no difference whether it is open or closed. I remember we discussed it as he was on his way to work, and he was wearing a pistol. It was at the time when he was the Commander of the 6th Army Corps."

[Reporter's Question]: Why did you oppose changing 'Tae Soo Do' to 'Taekwondo'?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "I asked him why he had to change it again, once it had been decided. Hong Hi Choi put pressure on the Korea Amateur Athletic Association, and as a result the situation became very complicated. It was the time immediately after the military coup, when military people were assuming many important positions. Despite my argument against the Sport Association changing the name, after everything we took down the sign 'Tae Soo Do' and replaced it with 'Taekwondo'."

[Reporter's Question]: In Taekwondo and I, he wrote that you confronted him during a meeting to unify Taekwondo and opposed changing the sign to 'Taekwondo Association'. When Taekwondo received more votes than Tae Soo Do, you cried with your two feet stretched out and said, 'I will make it Karate' [rather than Taekwondo or Tae Soo Do] and will fight with my life'.

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "He is crazy. Would I cry about such a thing? On the contrary, he is the one who always wept when he was drunk saying, 'All I have is two people (Vice-President Lee and former Vice-President Woon Kyu Uhm.' 'I have no one to trust.'"

I oppose Unifying South and North Korean Taekwondo

[Reporter's Comment]: In Taekwondo & I, President Hong Hi Choi's negative feelings toward Vice President Lee were completely exposed. He went so far as to write this: "Chong Woo Lee has no Taekwondo technique and is a master of plotting and flattery; he was connected with Jong Pil Kim, Chief of the Central Intelligence Bureau. This was evidenced by the fact that at one of the first class Woo E Dong restaurants, after some wine, he sat beside Jong Pil Kim and they whispered to each other frequently."

[Reporter's Question]: What do you think is the reason that President Choi described you in a negative way?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "I was probably his strongest enemy. That is the reason. Why did he scheme against me after I even created the International Taekwondo Federation (ITF) for him? Hong Hi Choi treats Taekwondo as his personal possession. He does not have any international sense at all. He ended up taking money and giving out black belt certificates all the time. That is why people who used to support him in the beginning turned around and left him."

[Reporter's Comment]: President Choi makes his own point that his relationship with President Chung Hee Park became uncomfortable due to his opposition to the revision of the constitution that would allow a third presidential term, and there was an organized plot in the Taekwondo community that might harm him.

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "That is a lie. That guy is famous for getting around situations by cooking up different stories. He tells stories one way in one place, and then when he is asked, 'Isn't this story different from the one you just gave few minutes ago?' he manages to gloss over it saying, 'That one was a joke and this one is the real story.' During President Chung Hee Park's term when Hong Hi Choi was serving as Ambassador to Malaysia, he was called home and accused of embezzlement of official government funds. Meanwhile, Un Yong Kim, who was working for the Presidential

Security Service for the Blue House, was coming into the Taekwondo leadership, and Choi slipped out and ran away. I can give you a lot of evidence of his lies.”

[Reporter’s Comment]: During the time that President Hong Hi Choi was promoting Taekwondo on North Korean military bases, North Korean Taekwondo and South Korean Taekwondo were taking completely different paths. While South Korea was emphasizing competition and physical fitness, North Korea was developing Taekwondo as a form of combat martial art. For this reason, some people theorized that if we integrated the merits of South Korean Taekwondo with North Korean Taekwondo, it would enhance Taekwondo’s appeal [among the combat sports].

[Reporter’s Question]: What do you think about the recent suggestion, made by some people, that North and South Korean Taekwondo should be united?

[Chong Woo Lee’s Response]: “I oppose that. North Korea can become a national member of the WTF. Although Hong Hi Choi is leading the ITF, it is nothing more than a private organization. Do we have to compromise with a private organization?”

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[Reporter’s Question]: Do you see a need for combining the merits of North and South Korean Taekwondo? Since North Korean Taekwondo has a reputation for being strong in combat, isn't it possible to creatively adopt it?

[Chong Woo Lee’s Response]: “I also recognize certain technical elements that they have, nevertheless no one is capable of estimating their strength in real combat unless they actually compete with each other. The modern sports, however, will only advance in accordance with their standards of competitiveness. In the past, an individual might exercise alone, and a nation would preserve its own culture. Now, the world is one, and therefore if you don’t effect the transition [of the martial art] into some form of sport, you lose competitiveness.”

[Reporter’s Question]: Can we adopt certain technical elements of North Korean Taekwondo to advance our Taekwondo?

[Chong Woo Lee’s Response]: “There is a difference between demonstration and real competition. Therefore, we cannot evaluate their technical level by just watching only on a screen. In Taekwondo, when a person kicks or punches, eye development is more important than technique. The nervous system should be developed and the senses should be fast. Nobody knows until comparing these against opponents.”

“Korean Taekwondo fundamentals changed as it became a sport. Accordingly, if you look at the basic elements, people may assert that North Korean is better. It didn’t change as much, because North Korean Taekwondo did not become a sport. As a simple example, as you strike, you must relax your body. On the contrary, when I observe today’s competitors, they are using a lot of strength. North Koreans do the same thing. It

is also important to know that when you punch, you can just use your fist or you can put your body's weight behind the punch. A strong punch comes only when your body weight is added to the hit. This is a law of physics. Power is generated through weight and speed. Players tend to lose sight of this."

"Furthermore, our athletes kick with a straight leg frequently, kicking with their knee straight. That is no good. For a good kick, you should first of all turn your knee. For a turning kick, you should turn your whole body, not just your feet. There are only a few who perform it correctly. Consequently, it minimizes speed and power. At the present time, when I observe competitions, there are a lot of things that need to be corrected, but they are difficult to correct, because they have become habits."

[Reporter's Question]: Some time ago, President Un Yong Kim once expressed his intention of inviting President Hong Hi Choi. Do you foresee a possibility of a meeting between those two?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "Well, I have no idea as to what will happen. I have a feeling that it might be a political gesture. What are they going to do even if they meet now? At present, there is a power struggle between the son and father [between Hong Hi Choi and his son]."

[Reporter's Comment]: Numerous divisions have existed in the martial arts community following the liberation. They opened martial art schools and a majority of them taught karate. Vice-President Lee had the idea to unite them, and he vigorously pursued the idea and took charge of the preliminary work for this, asking former Vice-President Woon Kyu Uhm and the late Nam Suk Lee to cooperate with him. For this reason, he understands well in detail more than anybody the process of Taekwondo development.

[Reporter's Question]: I read in a book that there were over 40 factions all over the place after liberation. You have woven them one by one into a renewed form of Taekwondo, haven't you?

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[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "Not as many as 40. They were Ji Do Kwan, Chung Do Kwan, Moo Duk Kwan, Song Moo Kwan, Chang Moo Kwan, and Oh Do Kwan. If you add Yoo Pa [sub-factions], which was derived from these six, there are 9 Kwan. The Association rearranged them into 9 Kwan, according to its standards. Due to the different Kwan factions, we had difficult times. Therefore, I asserted that we should create a unified Kwan. However, one person opposed that, by saying, 'If it happens that way, everything will be gobbled up by Chong Woo Lee', so we ended up sharing office space in the same building on Ulgiro 6th street as headquarters for 9 Kwan. I remember the bustling scene. Nine Kwan were moving tables and so on into the offices."

“Over time, I consulted with Un Yong Kim, and we completely changed the Dan certification system whereby each studio used to give the exams and forward applications to the Unified Kwan [where the 9 Kwans had their headquarters]. We shut down the Unified Kwan headquarters and transferred the issuance of Dan certificates to the Korea Taekwondo Association. After that, the grandmaster of each Kwan lost control, and the Association took over the power to issue Dan [Black Belt] certification. I wouldn't say the root of the friction is completely gone, but I think, compared to the past, there isn't any.”

[Reporter's Comment]: Books written about the history of Taekwondo are divided largely into two notions. One category seeks to find Taekwondo's origin in the traditional martial arts [of Korea]. The other notion is as a new martial art created after the liberation [August 1945]. The Korean Taekwondo community has been talking about the former for a long time. But there is not much concrete evidence to support the idea that Taekwondo emerged from traditional martial arts. On the other hand, the latter idea has been asserted by younger scholars. These people say, "We have to honestly admit as a fact the theory that it came out of Karate and furthermore, we need to overcome Karate-like characteristics." In recent times, Taekwondo as a modern sport has clearly become distinct from Karate, but their thinking is that some elements of the Karate character still remain in the Poomse [forms]. Let us first review the literature encompassing the earlier perspective. It is written in Kukki Taekwondo [National Martial Art Taekwondo] (published by Kukkiwon in 2000) for which Chong Woo Lee served as a member of the Advisory Board: "In compliance with the timely circumstances that recognize the importance of martial arts, the establishment of different martial arts was stimulated such as 'Sun Bae' of the Koguryu Dynasty and 'Hwa Rang' of the Silla Dynasty in which Taekwondo was practiced to build body and mind as well as to serve as military arts." In the officially certified Physical Education Textbook (I) for Middle School (published by Kyohak-sa, 2000) the following is stated: "Taekwondo is our traditional martial art for the development of body and mind. It is a martial art containing our ancients' wisdom and soul inherited from the three Kingdoms of Korea., It was a compulsory martial art especially during the Kyoryu Dynasty and renamed as time progressed."

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Taekwondo in the Beginning was a Modified Version of Karate

[Reporter's Comment]: On the contrary, in the New Taekwondo Encyclopedia (2001, Byung Woon Kim of Kukkiwon & Young Yuel Choi of Kyung Hee University) the authors recognize a partial admission of the inflow of Karate into Taekwondo. The authors write, "Taekwondo met an opportunity to advance rapidly immediately following the liberation. Under the Japanese occupation, Taekwondo was influenced by Karate and largely modified from its original form Thus, various names that were used as Gong Soo Do, Dang Soo Do, and Soo Bak Do were unified under the name of Taekwondo." In another book, Taekwondo's History, Philosophy, and Spirit (2000, Yong Koo Ahn of Korea Physical Education University) the authors write, "We cannot deny the fact that

Taekwondo applied Karate's style form or used the names of Dang Soo and Gong Soo as school names. Even though it was only a partial influence, we must admit it to ourselves first and then overcome it. By accepting the fact, in modern times, that Taekwondo was influenced by Karate, the roots of the founding of Taekwondo will not be shaken because we admit this."

[Reporter's Question]: Many Taekwondo textbooks set the time of Taekwondo's beginnings as the pre- Three-Kingdoms Period. Even with all the historical assumptions, it seems somewhat extreme.

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "I am one of those who wrote that in a book. To be frank, we did not have much to come out with. At an early stage in the course of our introducing Taekwondo to foreign countries, when we said 'Taekwondo was a Korean traditional martial art', it was well justified and accepted. However, although there was a resemblance, it is in fact different. Should we consult [Taekwondo's] historical origins, it could be persuasive to say that Japan adopted their martial arts form from the Chinese martial arts, and it flowed into Korea later. Japanese people scientifically developed them by making many modifications from the Chinese martial arts. It seems that there remained a problem. Japanese people put emphasis on muscle strength rather than on flexibility in the course of developing the form of exercise. Accordingly, you cannot avoid the body movement being stiff."

"With this, we started competitions in order to make Taekwondo a combative sport. On the other hand, the Japanese kept Karate as an exercise form to be done by oneself without competition. The Chinese developed a flexible exercise with interacting [with a partner] hand movements. In this context, Taekwondo is not inclined to either side, but lies somewhere in the middle. To make it easy to understand, it is neither right nor left. Neither this nor that. Meanwhile, because we held competitions, we were able to improve drastically. As a result, China and Japan are learning from us now. Furthermore, their martial arts did not gain popularity, whereas in Taekwondo, young children enjoy hitting and getting hit rather than fighting by themselves."

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[Reporter's Question]: After the Liberation, did all the people who opened studios do Karate?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "The basic movements, such as the blocking and hitting techniques, were identical with Karate."

[Reporter's Question]: If that is true, do you mean there is no resemblance to our traditional martial arts forms?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "At a quick glimpse, it looks the same, but the basic techniques are completely different. Therefore, it should be determined that there are no similarities. Taek Kyun has transformed significantly recently. Since people who

practiced Taekwondo are learning Taek Kyun, the kick is being transformed into the Taekwondo style.”

[Reporter’s Question]: Is Karate the only martial art that had an impact on Taekwondo in the process of its creation after Liberation? No other influences at all?

[Chong Woo Lee’s Response]: “That is a candid statement. I am the one who wrote books bringing in various materials of all sorts, but now is the time to disclose the facts. All the masters who taught Karate got together and formulated basic Taekwondo forms, and I took a central role. It should not be a big issue now to disclose this fact, because we are at the top of the world.”

[Reporter’s Comment]: I (the reporter) took Taek Kyun classes for one semester during my college years. The teacher who lectured to the class at that time was Ki Hyun Do (The Chairman of the Taek Kyun Succession Committee), who studied under the late Master Duk Ki Song, who is considered the best-known Taek Kyun master. It is well known that if you study theories of Korean traditional martial arts, Taek Kyun comes first in the ranking. When talking about Taekwondo history, they emphasize its resemblance to Taek Kyun. At that time, Ki Hyun Do expressed his opinion that it is true, "Korean sentiments were reflected in Taekwondo, but from a technical standpoint, we can see that Taekwondo was copied from Karate." I cautiously asked Vice-President Lee a question concerning doubts Tae Kyun practitioners might have about Taekwondo.

[Reporter’s Question]: Our nation’s traditional martial arts basically move with three beats [motions] whereas Taekwondo is a sport that moves with two beats. What is your opinion about the assertion that Taekwondo is closer to Japanese martial arts than to our traditional martial arts, according to this particular fundamental fact?

[Chong Woo Lee’s Response]: “If you look at it from the viewpoint of Taek Kyun, that is a correct. I do not know much about beats. However, I know well the differences between Taekwondo kicks and Taek Kyun kicks. Taek Kyun kicks upward with a straight foot without bending the knee, and this form is not being performed these days.”

[Reporter’s Question]: When we begin Taek Kyun, we bow respectfully with our hands gathered in front of our body. On the other hand, in Taekwondo we place our hands in front of us similar to when riding a horse. There is an opinion that this is a Japanese, characteristic.

[Chong Woo Lee’s Response]: “That is using a Korean standard for an analysis of Japanese characteristics. In Japanese Karate various sects exist as well. Among those, there are many with varying postures. The important factor is how you move the hands and feet to generate strong power. In my view, you won't be able to find such striking power in Taek Kyun, however Karate has it. In Chinese martial arts techniques, that kind of power is not possible.”

[Reporter's Question]: Taekwondo uses straight-line [rectilinear] movements while Taek Kyun uses circular [curvilinear] ones. What do you think about the opinion that Taek Kyun is a successive form of the traditional Korean Martial Arts.

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "Well. Strength cannot lie. The straight-line strike has the greater destructive power. When I strike with my fist, in no case will a circular force reach the degree of power of a straight-line strike. In any case, the curve line cannot match the power of the straight line."

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[Reporter's Question]: In Korean traditional martial arts, was there a martial art that used the two-knuckle fist? There seems to be some room for argument.

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "Depending on circumstances, that is a true statement."

[Reporter's Question]: According to the book, the Moo Yae Tong Ji Bo [Martial Arts Report], it seems that our people's movement had more curved lines than straight lines.

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "That was a simple physical exercise, health workout or some other form. Of course, combative elements were added to a degree, but it is completely different when compared to the scientifically developed Karate."

[Reporter's Question]: Do you assume that, when evaluated based on technical standards, Korean martial arts are behind Japanese martial arts?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "At the present time, Taekwondo is ahead, since it has become a competitive sport. Japan was far ahead when Taekwondo was first created; it was inevitable, because Taekwondo is a modified version of Karate. At that time, Taek Kyun was the only Korean martial art, and it was taught as a health exercise by the Elder, Duk Ki Song. For this reason, movements were soft and were practiced for health management. In Taekwondo, in order to create strong power, you must initiate with relaxed movement. All punches must strike hard rather than push, in order to have power. For this, relaxation is required."

[Reporter's Comment]: Vice-President Lee initiated the transforming of Taekwondo into a competitive sport. He thought that every sport needed to be competitive in order to be commercialized; while others were emphasizing Poomse [forms], he was one step ahead in emphasizing competition. The beginning of competitive Taekwondo has significant importance. In competition, kicking is more effective than punching, because in Japanese traditional Karate, kicking is not seen. Regarding this, Jin Bang Yang, Professor of Taekwondo at Yong In University, said, "In Karate, there is no competition. Only hand movements and forms are emphasized. Therefore, kicking, sparring, and competition are crucial differences between Taekwondo

and Karate.” In other words, Taekwondo emerged from Karate’s shadow when it became a competition sport.

The Difference between Taekwondo as a Sport and Karate

[Reporter’s Question]: Please tell us your motivation for promoting Taekwondo as a competitive sport.

[Chong Woo Lee’s Response]: “It is simple. The martial arts, when performed alone, are exhausting. Skills are improved through competition, as the competitive spirit is cultivated in an effort not to be defeated during a match. While other schools were opposed to competition, saying ‘people can get killed’, our school (Ji Do Kwan) was holding competitions. Sometime after that, a competition was held at the school where Boo Min Kwan used to be located during the Japanese occupation. Students from our school won almost all the matches, while other studios lost because they hadn’t practiced competition style. I remember I barked back saying, ‘Nobody got killed’ when other studios were complaining and fussing that competition could kill people. Meanwhile, the other schools could not stand being defeated, so they practiced and competed aggressively. Later our school started losing.”

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“I thought Taekwondo should become a sport for competition from the beginning stage, if we wanted to upgrade the value of Taekwondo. I was criticized a lot when the competitors were injured, but the rate of injury was minimal. On the contrary, we must emphasize the improvement of skills that are enhanced every day when contestants fight. When you look at all the sports, boxing employs hand techniques using the fist, and therefore I decided we should develop Taekwondo as a sport emphasizing foot techniques. We restricted hand techniques and we developed competition rules for Taekwondo mainly emphasizing kicking techniques . . .”

“Since some people objected that Taekwondo is a sport combining foot and hand techniques, and that eliminating the point for a punch is not fair, the rules have been modified now. Punches are allowed, but it is a violation if the punch is to the face. In any sport, there should be a unique factor to develop. In other words, soccer is a sport in which you kick with your feet. In basketball, you throw with your hands. These are the unique factors. Therefore, we decided to go with the focus on the feet. If we had created Taekwondo as a sport allowing contestants to clinch while they punched and kicked, the competition would have been unappealing.”

[Reporter’s question]: Where did you get the idea of making it a competitive sport?

[Chong Woo Lee’s Response]: “It is interesting to make two people fight each other, because they compete in order not to be defeated. Truly, a guy who has learned

Taekwondo must feel bad coming home after getting beaten up on the street. So, we have Taekwondo competition not only to make the hands and feet faster, but also for children to learn their timing! Eventually, competition improves their peripheral nervous system. I know this very well, because I have much practical experience.”

[Reporter’s Question]: How do you resolve safety issues?

[Chong Woo Lee’s Response]: “At the beginning, we used Gum Do helmets as our headgear [made of metal and bamboo]. So the attacker’s hands used to bleed and the one being hit used to get injuries from the head being shaken. To prevent this intolerable situation, we started to make the headgear out of a spongy material.”

[Reporter’s Question]: During my elementary school years, I learned Taekwondo for one year. I remember hearing frequently from the trainer that Taekwondo is a form of sport to develop self-discipline. Some indicate that due to the emphasis on winning competitions in Taekwondo, the self-discipline function is being diminished.

[Chong Woo Lee’s Response]: “That is correct. Taekwondo is a sport through which we nourish our character. So, we added the word ‘Do’ which means virtue. But we cannot disregard things that are more fun and enjoyable. Performing poomse [form] alone is lonely and difficult. That’s why we started sparring. When we practice sparring, the more you win, the more you feel triumphant, and you even lose sleep at night wondering why you lost.”

[Reporter’s Comment]: Political influence had a great impact on Taekwondo. We can easily understand this by looking at the past leaders [KTA Past Presidents]. Myung Sim Chae, Hong Hee Choi, Yong Chae Kim, Un Yong Kim, Pil Gon Lee . . . Moreover, Korea’s past presidents had a great interest in Taekwondo. On the birthday of President Syngman Rhee, a Taekwondo demonstration was presented. As a good example, under the military government, Taekwondo was introduced comprehensively at schools and military units. This was because Taekwondo is our national sport. On the other hand, it could be understood as a special association established since our national independence[in 1945] between political power and the martial arts community.

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[Reporter’s Question]: What do you think about the inevitable close relationship Taekwondo had with political power?

[Chong Woo Lee’s Response]: “When we invited Un Yong Kim to be president, he was in a better position than any other Taekwondo person to raise funds and get help in various ways. It is reasonable to say that there was no one else suitable in the Taekwondo community. In some ways, our resources were limited. In some ways, we used him, but in other ways, we were used. If we compare gains with losses now, it is true that what we gained was more than we lost.”

“Back in the years of the military coup, we tried to use General Myung Sin Chae, who could not offer a penny. Next, we invited Yong Chae Kim. He paved the way well, receiving support from the government, because he served as the Chairman of the Republican Youth Sub-Committee. He was able to ask for help through people in important positions. Following in his footsteps, Un Yong Kim undertook a big job . . .”

[Reporter’s Question]: There are some people in the Taekwondo community who are well known as former fist community [gang] members.

[Chong Woo Lee’s Response]: “It is difficult to say, because many of them practiced Taekwondo. The problem is that because of those peoples’ reputations for abusing others, we cannot erase the distorted image they projected. It is difficult to say, but some persons use Taekwondo people to control others who may be acting unreasonably. In the end, the other party is innocent and people like us [Taekwondo leaders who use them] are the sinners.”

[Reporter’s Question]: You mean, hiring people [gang members] for occasions such as General Assembly Meetings or Board of Director Meetings. . .

[Chong Woo Lee’s Response]: “It is not just for that. There were numerous occasions disrupted by insignificant issues. In order to ease such a situation, sometimes making these people [gang members] visible made for better circumstances.”

[Reporter’s Question]: You mean, they entered [the organization] because of the age-old factions in Taekwondo?

[Chong Woo Lee’s Response]: “That’s right.”

[Reporter’s Question]: A while ago, after many complications between two politicians, the Korea Taekwondo Association (KTA) elected the former assemblyman, Chun Suh Koo. Do you see any discord when a politician becomes a KTA President?

[Chong Woo Lee’s Response]: “Well, it depends on what he does. At first, everyone promised to do well, but afterward, the promises made to the public were not fulfilled. Frankly, people have a tendency to avoid Taekwondo people. That is why those circumstances arise. What I am going to tell you might cause Taekwondo people to beat me to death, but there are not many Taekwondo schools that collect the official examination fees [from their students] according to the regulations. It is time for us to repent and to put our hands over our heart.”

[Reporter’s Question]: Please explain the time you drew up a Jung Hwa Ja list in 1980 [list of people to be removed from the organization] for the National Purification Council [a special agency created by the military government in 1980].

[Chong Woo Lee’s Response]: “We were required to submit the list of names removed from our organization by the National Purification Council. Un Yong Kim was

seriously concerned. After discussing it with me, a list was made, and the senior officers made their own decision to withdraw. It did not make sense if I stayed as a senior officer after firing a bunch of other people. I stepped back as well from the front line. A while later, upon Un Yong Kim's request to the minister Kyu Ho Lee, I came back."

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He Who is Free of Sin, Let Him Cast the First Stone

[Reporter's Comment]: Korean Taekwondo is facing a great deal of problems now. On the other hand, it is evident that Taekwondo is a cultural product, which has been a big hit since the founding of the nation. Taekwondo's worldwide population is approximately 50,000,000. Taekwondo has had an impact beyond our imagination in the area of people's diplomacy, and its name is recognized everywhere. Accordingly, we shall construct a view for the future, as we talk about Taekwondo's history and its limitations. The reason is, Taekwondo should remain in the future as Korea's representative martial art and sport.

[Reporter]: How do you see the future of Taekwondo?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "The outlook is gloomy under these circumstances. There are many people who judge what others have done as nothing. This is exactly like someone complaining about the rice being cooked too watery, too dry or overcooked, while one does not even know how to either clean or rinse rice. We must not ridicule someone else's work. There are times when I want to say, myself, that I am the best, but we should not do that."

[Reporter's Question]: In the course of writing articles for Taekwondo, I heard numerous times that our research on Taekwondo is not sufficient. As the Vice-President of the Kukkiwon research department, aren't you the one responsible for this?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "As a matter of fact, I should feel that way; not much has been done. I have made preparations to do everything, including the electronic chest protector, technical research, and spending 45,000 Won in one year. . . After one year, our funding was cut off, and none was approved. We gave up everything. This community is a lot more complicated than anyone can imagine."

[Reporter's Question]: You mean, there is no monetary assistance?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "When we saw some positive result, we should have accepted it and added to it in a continuous effort, but it didn't work that way. That makes me think, 'Why do I have to go through this? Give me a break.'"

[Reporter's Question]: What do you have to do in the future in order to continue our national image as the originator of Taekwondo?

[Chong Woo Lee's Response]: "We have to forgive and unite. That's the only way. As I mentioned before, let those who are free of sin cast the first stone at that woman. That's it."

[Reporter's Comment]: The interview started at 9:10 am and ended at 5:30 pm. Vice-President Lee ordered rice with assorted vegetables in order to keep our interview uninterrupted. Despite his difficulties in sitting many hours due to his recent disc treatment, he answered all my questions without changing his posture, not even once. When he was explaining the differences between Taekwondo and Taek Kyun, he stood up and demonstrated with his masterful body movements, which were far from rusted by age. "For the second stage of Taekwondo, a successor for Un Yong Kim should have come along a day earlier", Vice-President Lee said. He calls for tolerance from Taekwondo masters and at the same time recognition for President Kim's selfless determination.