

## **The Times of Argentina's Master Daechol Yang and his Taekwondo Jidokwan**

By Manuel E. Adrogué, July 2020  
[www.taekwon.com.ar](http://www.taekwon.com.ar)

This is an abridged translation of an article I recently published in Spanish, in which I have only left the parts that I consider have interest to the English-speaking world.

This is the story of a boy who became a man through his martial art, but it is also the story of a family that emigrates, that of two cultures that meet, a time that will never return and deserves to be known.

Ten years ago I published a 200-page rendition of the history of Argentine Tae Kwon Do as an annex to the Spanish language edition of Alex Gillis' acclaimed book "A Killing Art. The Untold History of Tae Kwon Do". One of the persons about whom I had to write was Master Dae Chol Yang, who along with Master Lee Chong Seo were the instructors to my own teacher, the late Grandmaster Pedro Florindo. I owe my mentor and friend Pedro the Taekwon-Do I practice, as well as those two gentlemen who in turn taught him.

In 1967, Tae Kwon Do arrived in Argentina brought by Han Chang Kim, Nam Sung Choi and Kwang Duk Chung. When Kim decided to travel and forge a future in Argentina, General Choi Hong Hi, president of the International Taekwon-Do Federation, commissioned him to spread Taekwon-Do here. Kim found her two companions on board of the Dutch cargo ship that was bringing them to South America. Two years later Young Whan Kim, also an ITF member, came from Song Mu Kwan, who settled in Rosario city. Over time other teachers from Korea continued to arrive. In the book I mention about 30 who came over more than 20 years. Curiously, the first of all those Korean pioneers, Han Chang Kim, has remained until today as the iconic Father of Argentine Tae Kwon Do.



*Kim Han Chang's famous scissors kick*

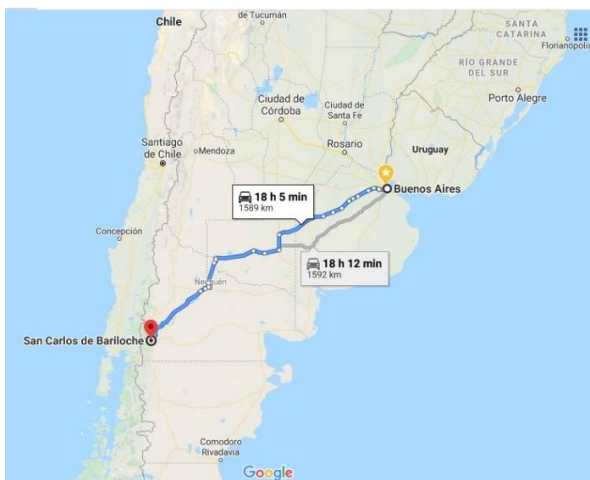
The physical feats with which Kim surprised in youth, his clarity of thought in maturity, and his affability today at 80 years of age explain his validity. For a long time Kim maintained a demanding personal training because he considered that his obligation as representative of Korea in Argentina was to have a superlative level, and that is the secret behind a quality that even today is remembered with amazement. Given that I have a close relationship with him, on one occasion I dared to ask him, almost abusing his confidence, which of all the Korean teachers in Argentina were those that he considered to have the highest level as practitioners Kim looked at me and answered without hesitation, with the expression of talking about things that matter: *"Lee and Yang. Lee the best technician, Yang the best fighter. They were great."* Unfortunately, since they left active teaching in the late 1970s, few in Argentina today know of these two teachers.



*Lee Chong Seo and Yang Dae Chol,  
notable pioneers of Argentine Taekwondo*

The walks of life are strange. Although I have known many Korean instructors, I had not met neither Lee nor Yang, my martial grandfathers. Lee lives in the United States and his health situation prevents communication with him. Yang lives in Bariloche, at the Argentine Patagonia, 1,500 kilometers from my residence in Buenos Aires.

Back to when I wrote the book, Felix Solas (a high ranking and very knowledgeable Korean martial arts teacher) had provided plenty of information about Yang. But last February I went to Bariloche for summer vacations with my family. A call from Grandmaster Kim to Master Yang paved the way for an extraordinary meeting.



*Yang lives in Bariloche, a ski resort at the  
Andes range, 1500 km from Buenos Aires*

The meeting was at a café in downtown Bariloche. Master Yang made a great impression on me at a personal level, and revealed an incredible piece of history, never known until now, connecting the history of Ji Do Kwan and his own family. During the following months I kept asking questions and pulling the string against Master Yang's reluctance to be on the spotlight. His students were tremendously helpful, and so I have been able to put together this article.



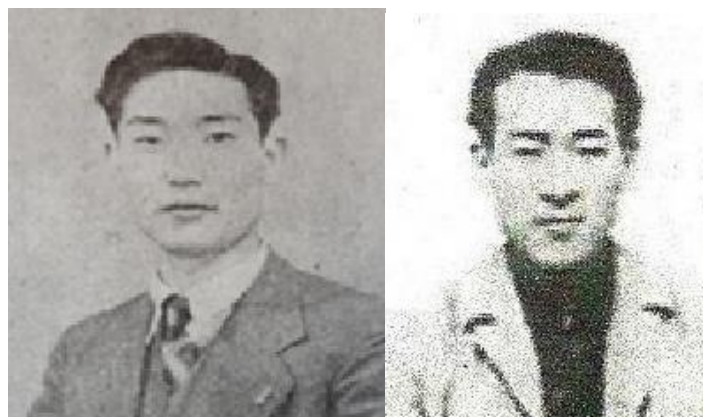
*Yang Dae Chol and Manuel Adrogué, February 2020*

### Where Yang's Taekwondo came from

Yang's martial pedigree must be understood with the knowledge of who he learned from, as the following line of genealogy shows. Here is his "blue blood" in Taekwondo:

- 1) Yoon, Kwae Byong and Chun, Sang Sup
- 2) >>> Lee Jong Woo
- 3) >>> Yang Dae Chol

Let us check Yang's martial ancestors:



*Yoon, Kwae Byong and Chun, Sang Sup*



**Yoon Kwaë Byong** (1922-2000) had learned karate in Osaka from the Okinawan teacher Kenwa Mabuni (founder of Shito, student of both Shuri expert Itosu Anko's and Naha's Higaonna Kanryo). Moving to Tokyo to study veterinary medicine, he entered the Shudokan school in Kanken Toyama, becoming the third Korean to receive black belt from that teacher. Toyama had also been a student of Itosu, as well as Yabu Kentsu and various other specialists in Okinawa, and lived seven years in Taiwan learning Kung Fu. Later, in Tokyo Yoon opened the Kanbukan school (韓武館 "Korean martial house", Han Mu Kwan in Korean), a famous training center where many of the Koreans in Japan practiced, such as Choi Yeong Ui (famous under his name Japanese, Masutatsu Oyama) and his Goju ryu teacher, So Nei Chu. Yoon became a well-known innovator in Tokyo, very adept at contact combat using bogu (in Korean hogu, vest), something that Mabuni also adopted and represented a break in Karate because at that time the practice of free sparring was not common. Furthermore, Yoon was an expert in bo / kun (long stick) and wrote a book on the subject together with Hiroshi Kinjo. Upon returning to Korea in 1948/9, Yoon was hired by Chun Sang Sup, the founder of 研武館 Yon Mu Kwan, to take over the Kong Su Do (Karate Do) classes at the gym, where Yudo (Judo) and Kumdo (Kendo) were also taught. Yon Mu Kwan was one of the five practice centers where Karate had begun in Seoul around 1945. Master Chun had learned Karate in Japan with Gichin Funakoshi, and disappeared during the Korean War, which is why Yoon ended up succeeding him. in the gym together with Lee Jong Woo, Chun's third student in seniority. Between Yoon and Lee they decided to change the name of Yon Mu Kwan to Ji Do Kwan (智道館 "house of the path of wisdom"). Over time Yoon's Kong Su Do was taking elements of Shotokan that Chun had taught, according to what prevailed in Korea by then.



**Lee Jong Woo** (1928-2015) began practicing in 1946 under Chun. Before starting his formal practice, Lee was already an accomplished fighter with good boxing skills. In addition to his natural aptitude and an environment conducive to frequent fights, he had received military combat training. When Chun disappeared during the war, Lee continued with his successor Yoon Kwaë Byung. This means that Lee was indirect recipient of Shudokan (which came with a pinch of Kung Fu), Shotokan, boxing and, most importantly had a big appreciation for practical fighting. Lee became famous for his fondness for chayu derion (free sparring), and quickly stood out among the greatest Korean instructors of the new generation. He was in fact the co-director of the school at the end of the 50s, and formally took over as head of Ji Do Kwan in

1967 (some say in 1971) until 1988. In the mid-1950s Choi Hong Hi stated that the discipline could no longer be called Kong Soo Do 空手道 or Tang Soo Do 唐手道 (since they were the Korean words for "Karate Do"), and proposed the name Tae Kwon Do 跆拳道. In September 1959, the school heads agreed to form the Korean Tae Kwon Do Association, replacing the 1954 Korean Kong Soo Association. In 1961 Choi was politically weakened, and then Lee, as the representative of Ji Do Kwan in the association, proposed changing the name "Tae Kwon Do" to "Tae Soo Do" 跆拳道 which was supported and became the name of the Association from 1961 until in 1965 Choi finally won the struggle.. On the other hand, Lee wanted to develop a national martial art movement - in that, he agreed with Choi Hong Hi-, and considered that the existence of different Kwan (schools) was the cause of inconducive rivalries, for which he long advocated for the suppression of the nine Kwan. The merger of all schools was decided in 1977 by the president of the Korea Taekwondo Association, Kim Un Yong. In addition to being a fierce practitioner, Lee was one of the great figures in the key years of Taekwondo

development, vice president of the Kuk Ki Won, and was a strong promoter of combat Taekwondo. His school became famous for generating the best fighters in Korea, and in that respect, he continued Yoon's line, although technically he strayed far from Karate. Looking at the story from a distance, it is a great paradox that Lee Jong Woo insisted on the suppression of the Kwan, and at the same time achieved such a high level of recognition for his Ji Do Kwan school.

### The Yang family emigrates to Argentina

The Yang family came to Argentina in batches. Dae Chol arrived in the country on July 4, 1970, at age 19, along with his brother, Dae Kyu, 14. They had spent 15 days in Osaka processing their visa at the Argentine consulate, and then flew via Vancouver settling in Buenos Aires. Their father Yang Jong Ik, 48, had arrived a year earlier in a leadership position at an agricultural Korean colony of Choele Choel, in the Patagonia. The eldest sister Hee Joo arrived in Argentina along with her husband in 1971, and by 1974 the family move was completed with his mother and three younger siblings.



*The Yang family in Korea. At the upper right, Dae Chol.*

Yang Senior had been part of the high command of the army in Korea with the rank of Colonel. He was part of the generation that refunded the armed forces with the Republic of Korea in 1948. Since the armistice of July of the year 53, the communists stalked with military apparatus on the nearby border, but above all they infiltrated the country, which was struggling to get out of poverty. The reason why Yang, someone with a highly developed military career and already past his youth, had decided to emigrate with his entire family was related to the political climate in Korea, rarefied after the military regime established in 1963 with the assumption of the president Park Chung Hi. Yang was of Republican convictions and had a critical view of the regime. Park used to push high-grade comrades in arms out of the way by appointing them overseas ambassadors. He had done so with Choi Hong Hi, assigned to Malaysia in 1962 and 1964, and Yang had been offered the same appointment for Sweden. But Yang had rejected it, and since then his situation in Korea had worsened.

With the perspective of time, many exiles from the Park regime can be found, many of them comrades-in-arms who, even though being anti-communists, looked critically at the radicalization of the government. Choi Hong Hi himself secretly went to Canada in the early days of 1972. So did General Choi Duk Shin, who had been Chancellor of Korea (previously, as ambassador to Germany in 1965, had assisted Choi Hong Hi by organizing tours of promotion of Taekwon-Do). While in Japan, in 1977 Choi Duk Shin announced that he was forced into exile in the United States, which caused a commotion in his homeland. Anyway, the situation in Col. Yang was different: his political distance was not as far and, in fact, he maintained a relationship with the Korean authorities in Argentina.

Colonel Yang, in addition to his military career, had training as an acupuncturist, was a lover of music and a man of martial arts, a veteran practitioner of Kumdo (剣道, in Japanese, kendo). The decision to go into exile is forced and is never pleasant. Men know that it is easier to mobilize when there is a project ahead. Yang, with a life made and a family in his care, would turn the page to restart his life in American lands with an illusion. And his dream was the romantic idea of settling in idyllic South America, in the Río Negro valley to work the land.

#### A fierce fight and Colonel Yang's decisive intervention.

But let's go back two decades in our history until the end of the 1940s. At that point in time Yang was the head of an infantry division, and in the framework of compulsory military service he had adopted the policy of attracting, protecting and promoting talented young people by incorporating them into his unit. Under his command, Yang managed to gather musicians - he liked opera - and all other manifestations of talent, including boxers. He liked being surrounded by interesting people. In addition, this served to organize boxing exhibitions and entertainment shows for the troops in moments of relaxation.



*During his stay at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, Col. Yang presents a gift to General Arthur Pence, in charge of the Tactical Engineering Command (Oct. 1954)  
On the right, on horseback in his usual activities in Korea.*

On one occasion, when being driven in a jeep by his staff, Colonel Yang heard howls and sounds of disorder. As he ordered to stop the vehicle and upon turning his head, he saw a remarkable

scene. A group of soldiers had a man surrounded, who, cornered, backed towards a bridge and shouted at them in a threatening manner. Then they went on him, as he was moving furiously, knocking out almost ten military policemen, scattered on the ground or thrown into the river like rag dolls, something worthy of an action movie. Such feat had been achieved exclusively using kicks and blows with agile feline movements. After a while, the man was controlled by military personnel and arrested. Yang fixed his attention on that person's situation, because despite being a martial arts man and used to dealing with boxers, he had never seen anything like it. He found out that, for having caused serious injuries (there are versions that mention a fatal victim), the arrested "superman" would face a military court and at best a prison sentence for decades, although more likely summary execution before a platoon. The person under arrest was called Lee Jong Woo and he was a Kong Su Do black belt. Yang got involved in the situation, moved his influences, and sponsored him ever since, getting him out of jail. Yang became his guide and mentor, helping him to become that great referent of the Ji Do Kwan that he ended up being, one of the makers of modern Taekwondo. This episode has not been public until now. The life of Lee Jong Woo, and the own development of Taekwondo in Korea, were rescued by Colonel Yang, witness of that memorable fight on a bridge. We can only speculate what direction Taekwondo would have taken in Korea if Lee Jong Woo had ended his days in a military prison. Lee was indebted for life to Colonel Yang.

### Raising a Tiger.

When his son Yang Dae Chol turned 12, the Colonel made a special request to Lee Jong Woo: "Help me make him a man." Lee applied himself to it, and for a long time Dae Chol was seriously instructed at his school. There he trained very hard, under a harsh, competitive climate, where the older ones used to hit the beginners without too much consideration. It was a hostile environment in which only those who withstood the pressure survived. Yang Junior was up to the task, but at age 15, Dae Chol felt the tedium of routine, and decided to stop going to class without telling his father. After two months without seeing the teenager in the dojang, Lee asked the Colonel what was happening to his son who was not going to practice. That resulted in a conversation between father and son. When asked by his father, Dae Chol replied that he did not want to continue practicing Taekwondo, something inappropriate for a son to decide in a Korean family at that time, even less with the father being military officer. With a toughness not exempt from affection, the father said to Dae Chol: "You have to do some sport." Then Yang Junior told him he was going to train boxing. The Colonel did not like the idea, because the atmosphere surrounding boxers was not the best, but he did not object. In fact, he had a boxing school under his patronage. Physically well-developed for his age, Dae Chol practiced boxing enthusiastically for a short time, and as he got better, it seemed to him that he was beginning to be well regarded by the group of fighters in the gym. One day he was summoned to a special sparring session, which he thought was a recognition of his skill and dedication. That day they literally beat him to the point of being dragged out of the ring. Faced with such a beating, he understood that he should not show up there anymore, and that he should return to Taekwondo. It had been his father who had passed down the instruction to make his son understand how things were, And Dae Chol understood. Martial art was the instrument chosen by his father to educate his son. In the following years, Yang trained with devotion, and ended up being an extraordinary fighter, one of the promises of the Ji Do Kwan hotbed.

Yang practiced the competition style of the Korean Tae Kwon Do Association ("KTA"). Ji Do Kwan was the school to which two thirds of the Korean champions of that time belonged, and Yang, graduated as a black belt in 1965, had become a fierce and forceful fighter, very fast. He



was high and very strong, especially in the legs, since in summer he practiced cycling, and in winter, ice skating, which made his kicks fearsome for their explosiveness and power. Years later, Yang's students in Argentina used to joke that his Sabum had calves as big as thighs. To prevail among thousands of Taekwondo athletes, superior physical, technical and mental aptitudes were necessary, and that is what training in Korea was about. Long and literally traumatic sessions of Chayu Derion (free sparring) taught to temper the character and to develop precision, power, speed, coldness, and tactical ability.



*The coats of arms of the Korea Taekwondo Association and the Ji Do Kwan  
The symbol of Ji Do (the "way of wisdom") has the shape of Daruma,  
legendary Buddhist who seeks enlightenment, surrounded by 8 petals  
that allude to the 8 Buddhist virtues and Mugunghwa, Korea's national flower.*

In 1967, when he was sophomore in high school, at his first tournament Yang became champion in the juvenile division. From then on he entered the tournaments reserved for the best. That same year he was chosen to represent Seoul in his category in the National Olympics, in which he came second. The following year, his high school team participated in a tournament in which mostly university teams participated. Although they did not make it to the finals, they received a special mention for their combative attitude.

He then entered Seung Kyun Kwan University in Seoul on a scholarship as a member of the Taekwondo team. Yang participated in numerous metropolitan and regional tournaments. In 1969, as soon as he entered the adult category, his team won 2nd place in the Presidential Cup. His intervention in many championships extended until the moment of moving to Argentina. At that time he was about to complete his 2nd year of Journalism.



*In 1967 Dae Chol Yang (3rd from right, with medal around his neck)  
competed for the 1st time and became champion representing high school  
Kyong Hee Kodung Hakkyo*



### The three phases of Taekwondo evolution in Korea

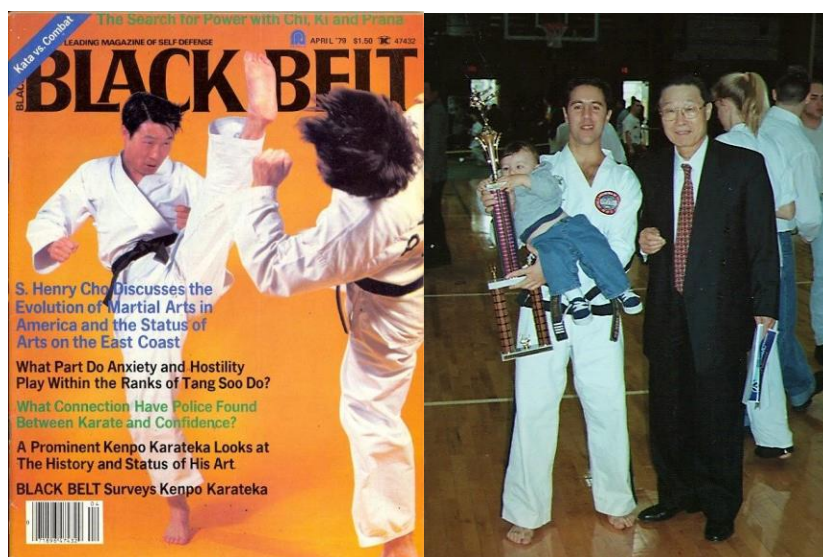
In general, people are not aware of how much martial arts changed in just 40 years in Korea. Between 1930 and 1970 the transformation was extraordinary, because from the Karate practiced by Yoon to the Taekwondo of Yang, with only one generation in the middle, the conception of training changed completely, going through three stages: (1) Korean Karate, (2) Classical Tae Kwon Do, and (3) Competition Taekwondo. Argentina received excellent teachers of those three varieties.

Karate fighting at Yoon's time was based on using techniques found in the forms (形 kata, which is pronounced hyung in Korean) that had passed from Okinawa to Japan. Blocking with the forearms, preset combat with punches while pulling the opponent's wrists, countless knuckle blows to the hardening post, and "dirty fight" tactics were the way in Yoon's time they prepared for combat. Little mobility, a good share of strength. In this framework, the use of protective vests allowing free combat was a turning point, initially just an experiment carried out by very few schools in Japan, including Yoon's.



*Taekwondo competition in the sixties*

Korean Karate was strong, fairly static, kept the gravity center low, and had a linear conception. The proper use of time and distance, and the power of the blow were the core of such Taekwondo, whose motto was to end the combat with a single blow. Its main weapons were straight punches and a few rather short kicks, mainly with his back leg. Repetition of forms was very important, as they were regarded as the ideal of combat. In Argentina, Nam Sung Choi was an impressive exponent of this modality. Internationally, Sihak "Henry" Cho opened the first US Taekwondo academy in New York in 1961. Cho had learned from Yoon Kwe Byong, and was an undisputed leader of the generation of Ji Do Kwan that still promoted "Korean Karate".

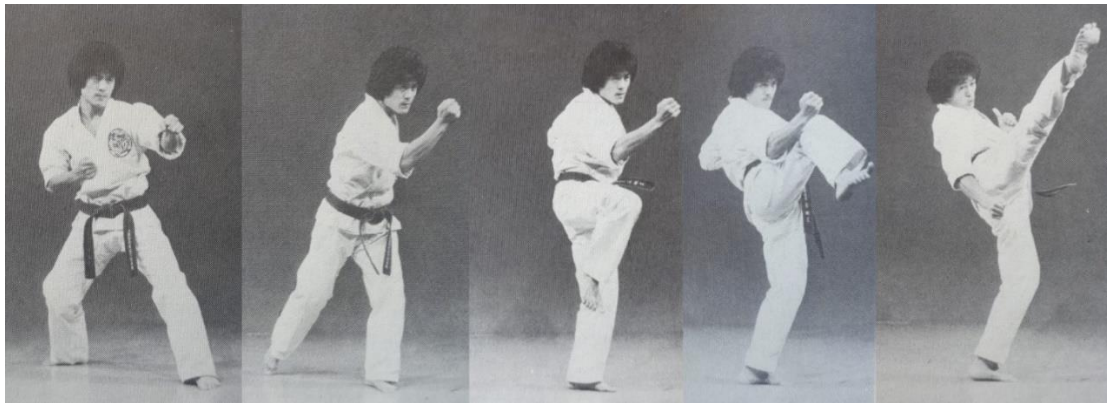


*Mi first Black Belt had Ji Do Kwan Master Henry Cho in its cover.  
During 2000 I competed at his New York tournament.*

By the mid-1960s, a different mode of practice had emerged, which can be called Classical Taekwondo. The height of the center of gravity became variable, and a greater number of techniques were trained, combining the linear with the circular, making sparring more surprising and attractive. Kicks became longer by projecting the hip towards the target and pivoting the support foot as far as possible, increasing reach and power. It became customary to use the instep on round kicks, and back spinning was added. Jumping and acrobatics increased, breaking was practiced, and the number of techniques multiplied. The added techniques were as much original creations, as well as inspired by parallel martial traditions (Hapkido, Kung Fu - called 拳法 Kwon Bop in Korea). Forms were no longer seen as the only combative ideal, but they remained important, at a point of balance with free sparring. In Argentina, Han Chang Kim, Kim Young Whan and Chong Seo Lee represented that line.

Finally, towards the end of the 1960s, Competition Taekwondo emerged. Koreans are practical and innovative people, with unbeatable common sense. Their great virtue is the ability to take things that already exist to a new level, reinventing them brilliantly. People like Lee Jong Woo thought that the best way to learn to fight was by fighting, and that it was necessary to test training through competitions. In 1963 the Korean Taesudo Association organized its first full contact competition. Ji Do Kwan, powered by Lee Jong Woo and Chun Il Sub (the brother of the late Kwan founder, also experienced in boxing and a taste for contact combat) promoted that type of Taekwondo, which ultimately distrusted forms for learning how to fight. Thus, in Korea it was decided to take a substantial evolutionary leap, cutting the conceptual ties with Karate, since Competition Taekwondo was delivered from traditional forms because they were considered a drag. New rules determined that sweeps and punches to the face were prohibited, and full contact kicks to the torso and head were allowed. Little by little, the situation was set for the Korean practitioners' highest aspiration to come true: knock out the opponent with a kick to the head. This led to the development of movements that did not exist in Karate, such as turning kicks, descending kicks, profile changes, etc. Progressively practice of movements in traditional forms that did not seem to be useful for fighting was abandoned. Compared to the greater technical range that Classical Taekwondo posed (which also insisted on forms, and today can be identified with Tang Soo Do and ITF Taekwon-Do), Competition Taekwondo offered fewer techniques, although all of them with undeniable speed and power. The center of gravity went higher in motion (with a compressed

ready stance), and the fast and deceptive displacements served to adjust the distance and change the rhythm before the rival, generating the confusion necessary to unleash a defining kick. Punches were few but lethal: their purpose was to break the rival's sternum through the vest, or at least incapacitate him for the rest of the fight. Kick fighting rose to the category of an art in itself, one of high precision, with spinning, semicircular kicks and downward kicks applied without mercy, integrated by a variety of feints. Sparring became highly strategic, and the punch of the chest was an essential and lethal weapon at short distance. That was Dae Chol Yang's Taekwondo.



*Chong Lee and his famous "explosive kicks" (as the name of his book)  
from Ji Do Kwan. Poetry in motion.*

Despite this trend, the forms (later called “pumse” 品 勢) had not been formally abandoned, and Yang students practiced the Palgwe, which had been developed by the KTA in 1966, along with the old Koryo, Kumgang, etc. (The definition of which should be the official forms of the KTA had motivated a dispute with General Choi at the time). Yang's forms used narrow and long stances that hard on the hip muscles for stability (one of the few connections with Toyama's Shudokan can be found there), although forms importance was relative, for it being a fight-oriented school. Yang's Taekwondo was light years from Karate. The entire practice revolved around combat, without protectors of any kind, with a degree of violence that would be considered unacceptable today. The students were regularly hitting each other. Yang's signature move was an inclement circular kick with the instep to the abdomen, followed by a fist that landed against the chest of his rivals falling forward while the foot he had kicked swung back. As a talented kicker he was, Yang insisted on setting the side kick, the round kick (almost a modified front one) and the hook kick from the same preparation lifting the knee up and forward, similar to how the famous Bill "Superfoot" Wallace would do many years later, albeit Yang would mostly use his back foot. Maximum power, maximum speed, the least possible movement. If someone wants to understand what Korean competitive Taekwondo was like in the 70s and 80s, just look at Ji Do Kwan's most famous exponents, brothers Simon and Philip Rhee in the “Best of the Best” film saga. Even with the distortions typical of a film, a remarkable kicking set up technique can be appreciated.

Within Korean Taekwondo there were strong differences. The first generation of founding teachers from the original five schools (Chung Do Kwan, Moo Duk Kwan, Song Moo Kwan, Yon Moo / Ji Do Kwan, and Chang Moo Kwan - originally YMCA Kwon Bop Bu) had been replaced by a second generation. In turn, some of these groups had split, so the Kwan had multiplied to nine. Their leader had tried to establish an association recognized by the Government. Meanwhile, Gen. Choi, with the political weight of his military rank, made many of them uncomfortable, managing to impose the name "Tae Kwon Do". The participation of Koreans in



Vietnam made Taekwondo widespread in the military and battle-tested, increasing Choi's overall influence. He also insisted on other changes, mostly resisted, until there was a sort of truce, according to which Choi would dedicate himself to promoting Tae Kwon Do in other countries, and the other leaders, through the Korea Taekwondo Association, would deal with its development in Korea. Thus, in 1966 Choi founded the International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF) and all those black belts - from whatever origin - that traveled abroad passed to the orbit of General Choi.

By January 1972, Choi's relations with the regime had deteriorated so much that he feared for his life, and he had to escape to Canada, where his student Park Jong Soo was residing. Choi maintained that the International Federation headquarters had moved with him. This was rejected in Korea (Taekwondo was a national matter), where his actions were thought of as treason and the more than 70 ITF gyms in Korea were closed. Between 1972 and 1973, the great project of a central gym in Seoul's Gang Nam area dedicated to Taekwondo, under the name of Kuk Ki Won was developed. The World Taekwondo Federation was also created, promoted by the government with the plan to transform Taekwondo into an Olympic sport. In parallel, Korea did everything possible to sabotage the ITF's efforts to subsist, pressuring Koreans around the world to abandon that organization. Almost without instructors and on the verge of bankruptcy, at the dawn of the 1980s Choi made a desperate final move by accepting the offer he received from the North Koreans: they would join forces, and with their financial aid, the ITF spread behind the iron curtain. Thereafter, Choi stabilized the situation of the tiny ITF in unequal war against the South Korean government. To market the ITF, he started increasing the contrast of its style against that of the WTF, whose combat rules started to become less "realistic". In the early 80s at ITF tournaments foam pads were adopted allowing punches to the face so the difference became significant. In the West, Choi presented the ITF as the original version of Taekwondo, allegedly of higher quality and closer to its military past. That is the "game" that he played during the 80's and 90's.

#### Dae Chol Yang becomes an instructor in Buenos Aires



After the Patagonian farming experience, upon the arrival of Dae Chol, Colonel Yang settled in Buenos Aires, where he became very influential in the Korean community. He then devoted himself to his profession as an acupuncturist, in addition to continuing with the training of Kumdo. In that connection, Yang provided technical advice to the Japanese Association, even contributing with the donation of practice equipment.

When Gen. Choi visited Argentina, they met at Yang's house as comrades-in-arms, as well as being both opponents of the Park dictatorship. Korean politics briefly were alive at the Río de la Plata. Obviously, Gen. Choi's exile in early 1972 was a pivotal moment in his relationship with Colonel Yang.





*Dae Chol Yang kicking a bag*

As an instructor, Yang was brutally demanding. Taekwondo was a fighting art for him, and his students had to learn it. Yang led by example, undergoing a strong training regimen. In the bureaucratic aspects, Yang processed his students' ranks through the Korea Taekwondo Association and Ji Do Kwan, directed by his own Sabom. This made a difference with the rest of the teachers in Argentina, who reported to the International Taekwon-Do Federation. Until the mid-1970s, on every visit to Argentina by General Choi, when he asked him to join the ITF, Yang's father told Choi to leave his son alone, and Choi complied, given the respect they had for one another. The Yangs' relationship with Lee Jong Woo, who had become an important authority on Kuk Ki Won, was unbreakable. Both Yang and Choi had always been ardent anti-communists, so when voices began to spread about Choi's relationship with North Korea, Col. Yang took distance from him.



*1974 demonstration at a park. Yang wore a dark jacket and sparred against two. Olga Alderete, 1<sup>st</sup> female black belt in Argentina at far left.*

When one asks about Yang's personality, those who treated him the most agree that he was always a very respectful person in relation to the Korean teachers who had arrived before him in Argentina. Even though he was bringing the new Competition Taekwondo, which was a trend in Korea, and had with impeccable credentials and his family's political leverage, he never sought the limelight but respected the seniority of the other teachers. .

Yang had a wild side that he had learned to unleash in every fight, and he was still a twenty-year-old who liked to go out for drinks with his students after practice, from whom he learned about the new world that was opening before his eyes. . Some of his closest students say that in the 1970s Yang had a natural rebellious tilt against the hard pressures of his father and the responsibility he felt for being the eldest of his brothers. Those feelings were combined with his admiration for his father. His students witnessed that inner tension, as well as his temperance, which led him to avoid conflict, and his understanding character, always attentive to the needs of those around him. Over the years, there were many occasions when Yang offered a hand to those who needed it, or that he knew how to forgive and understand weaknesses that he felt as intrinsic of human nature. That compassion was combined with harsh treatment towards his students during classes, who learned to fight as he had in Korea, although without incurring cruelty that he had suffered.



*Dae Chol Yang surprises a student with one of his kicks.  
You could never tell where they would be coming from.*

Yang made a strong impression on his students because he had similar age, and earned their respect not through a formal gap, but because it was really scary to face him in free sparring. Han Chang Kim says that, shortly after Yang arrived in the country, he had been told that Yang was very good, and so he took him to a place where Kim was teaching the police: "When the time came for sparring, as I wanted to see how good he was, I indicated that he should fight three black belts at once. He liquidated them!!! In less than a minute all three had been sent to the floor. He was very fast." In Yang's classes, the fights lasted three rounds of three minutes, full contact to the body, and strong but controlled kicking to the face. Those who practiced

with Yang lived a reality totally apart from any ritualistic idea of martial art. Little time for poomsae, much for pounding. He had never stopped being a boxing lover. Taekwondo according to Yang was synonymous to fighting in a practical, athletic and very intense sense. Olga Alderete started practicing with Yang in 1970. Very small in size, she had an unusual taste for physical activity. She was into dancing and competed in sports gymnastics, and when necessary, she was not shy of character. When she saw what Yang was doing, that display of physical dexterity, the exquisiteness of movement, combined with power, it caught her forever. At the Kumazawa martial arts center the few women who joined the class soon left chased away by bruises. Back then, there wasn't even a women's locker room at the gym. Olga joined the group of students, all men, and managed to be treated on equal terms. To the practices of Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, there were informal additional training sessions in the group. Taekwondo for them was six days per week. With Yang, the belts were white, blue, red, and black. For a long time Olga hid from her mother that she practiced martial arts: it was something that would have been forbidden to her because it might be considered unfeminine. Once totally fanatical about Taekwondo, with her brother Carlos they learned boxing from a former champion who was the manager of the building where they lived.

Yang's first students to receive black belt in 1972 were Ernesto Carrillo (his whip like semi-circular kick to the abdomen was as hard to avoid as divine punishment), Ricardo Burman (he used to fly his rivals off the *maru* with his side kick), Luis "Gino" Ciavardelli (I had the honor of sparring with him, according to Florindo he was one of the best students that Yang had, a great fighter, very good with his kicks), Ángel "Lito" Bruno (a kick artist), Ismael Paez Montero (who had a special affinity for his Sabom), and Olga Alderete (the first female black belt in Argentina)..

In Rosario city, there was a group of black belts that had been formed by Young Whan Kim. Among them, Carlos Mattos and Miguel Nasini (today both 9th Dan) stood out, as they have always been considered two top technicians in Argentine Taekwondo. When their teacher moved to the United States in 1974, they had the privilege of receiving periodic visits in town from different Korean teachers, including Yang. Mattos says: *"Yang had an impressive level, but you could also tell his quality as a person. I sparred with him several times. Although he could have run over me, he pulled back and got down to my level so that we could do both without making me lose face. I remember that at the end he pressed the gas pedal a little, making very clear to me that he had held his horses. Yang had a type of movement that no other Korean teacher had. Once he had Miguel and I for several hours teaching us a set of scissor steps, feints and rapid footwork which made impossible to know where he his attack would come from."*

In October 1975, the First National Taekwondo Tournament was held at the Obras Sanitarias Stadium. All schools would experience their fire baptism in free-style sparring wearing Korean style bamboo stuffed leather vests. Each of the leading Korean masters presented a team of black belts, and (since all such masters lived in Buenos Aires or its surroundings) an extra team was made up with competitors from other parts of the country that were students of other Korean teachers.



*Right to left: Jae Gun Kim, Han Chang Kim, Nam Sung Choi, Lee Chong Seo (in dobok), Chung Kwang Duk (behind the flag), Yang Dae Chol, Kim Pyong Taek, Kim Yong Hung. Back row from right, Cirelli, Lanciotti (with headband), Ouro and Marano (at center with black trim)*

Olga Alderete recalls: *"By that time there had been an issue in Yang's group, so only Gino Ciavardelli, whom I had just married, and I went to the tournament. As I was very small, I assumed that they were going to put me in the mens lightweight division. But they prohibited did not allow me to compete because I was the only woman registered and they didn't let me fight against men, even though I was more than used to such situation. So I had to resign myself to coach Gino, who played a great role, because Master Yang and the other Korean teachers were busy with other functions in the tournament."*

<b>Black Belts</b>	
<b>Team Han Chang Kim</b>	Aquino, Romano, Borjas, Diehl, Sanz, Chun Sik Byon (lightweight champion), Cirelli
<b>Team Chong Seo Lee</b>	Florindo, Verdún (heavyweight champion), García, Chang Uk Choe
<b>Team Kwang Duk Chung</b>	Gurtler, Barbetta, Camodeca
<b>Team Nam Sung Choi</b>	Sánchez, Ouro (middleweight champion), Lobato, Marano
<b>Team Dae Chol Yang</b>	Ciavardelli (Burman, Bruno, Páez and Carrillo did not compete)
<b>Provinces Team</b>	Mattos, Nasini, A. Villanueva, Laurino
In the blue / red belt división competitors included del Prado, Fuentes, Godoy, Lanciotti, Capalbo, Salim, Pinto, Ramisch, O.C. Martín and Vaccaro. Team results were 1st Team KD Chung, 2nd Provinces Team, and 3rd Team HC Kim.	

Starting in 1976, when Chong Seo Lee (who functioned as an elder brother to Yang) retired from teaching, Lee's black belts -Pedro Florindo (he would later become a major name in Argentine Taekwondo), Carlos Verdún, Abel Salim, Félix Solas, "Tito" Guzmán and Juan Carlos Mangoni (an extraordinary and most gifted fighter, among the very best ever in Argentina)-joined Yang's group. This made a curious re-enactment of the affinity between Moo Duk Kwan and Ji Do Kwan that had existed in Korea decades earlier, when such schools resisted the unifying attempt by Gen. Choi.





*Excerpt of a rank booklet with the names of Lee Jong Woo and Yang Dae Chol*

Among Yang's students from the mid-70s, in addition to those named above, Jorge Diciano, Alberto Romano, Roberto Cornejo, Oscar Reynoso (an excellent fighter), Ricardo Ermoli, , Carlos Alderete (Olga's brother, who started after her under Burman), Roberto Pereyra (originally a student of Burman and today a benchmark for WT Poomsae in Argentina), Ricardo Sánchez, Roberto Scigliano (Carrillo's student), Emilio Lias and Mónica Cordero.

Another quality of Yang was his generosity. He never charged for the exams and he gave his students the belts. He had a decisive intervention that allowed Pedro Florindo and Carlos Verdún to travel to participate in the World Taekwondo Federation 1977 Championships held in Chicago. On that occasion Florindo and Verdún became the first Argentines to participate in a Taekwondo World Cup, and they did not even know that there was a division between the ITF and WTF (they thought they were simply going "to the Taekwondo World Cup" and they expected to see Gen. Choi there). Two years later, Yang also assisted Felix Solas on his trip to the 4th WTF World Cup in Stuttgart, Germany. With the significant presence of teams from all over the world and the vestiges of the old Korean Karate eliminated, the new style of Taekwondo dazzled. Although Korea concentrated most of the medals, Mexico, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands and the Ivory Coast also stood out. The members of the Argentine team were Solas, Portela, Ouro, Moreno, Yacobella and Filippa, and masters NS Choi and Ku officiated as coaches. Casagrande and Cirelli traveled to participate in the umpire course.

#### Changes in Argentine Taekwondo by 1977

In 1977 the arrival of Yong Chae Ku (a high-level instructor, with solid knowledge of sports Taekwondo), changed the picture. He came with the full endorsement of former Korean Ambassador Edgar Pérez Colman and the mandate of the World Taekwondo Federation to establish an official representation in Argentina. Such arrival stirred the waters in local Taekwondo seriously: what was basically a peaceful situation in which Korean politics did not affect Argentine Taekwondo, changed forever.

Korean teachers living in Argentina were not interested in politics, but nevertheless it was here to stay, along with the idea of replacing "martial art" Taekwondo with "sport" Taekwondo. In 1979 there were many events that combined and ended up opening a crack that had existed for years in the rest of the world, but Argentina had managed to disguise. Those concurring events were on the one hand, the visit by JC Kim and other teachers sent by the ITF that started to relate directly with Argentine instructors instead of Korean masters, and on the other the preparation of a national team for the WTF World Cup in Germany. That same year, Colonel Yang passed away. Everything changed, and the previous prominence of the teachers who had arrived in the country until 1970, like Yang, gave way to others who

were arriving. Ku was coming to formally introduce competition Taekwondo, as if it didn't exist here. Indeed it was Yang's specialty, but it had not been implemented in a manner to develop a "competition hotbed". The new narrative was "This is not martial art, but sport." For Yang, the son of a warrior and himself a champion, that was a distinction very hard to understand. In addition, his dedicated teaching since 1970 was being unacknowledged as if it had not existed. A sour feeling was trapped in his heart for years, while still finding his place in a land far from his homeland. His respectful nature towards the authorities that made him contain his drive to raise his voice, and chose to focus on moving on with his life.



*Lee Jong Woo during his 1984 visit to Argentina.*

Yang's most senior students had already become instructors, and by April 1980 Yang felt it was time for him to retire from active teaching. Political changes in national Taekwondo determined that in 1979 the oldest local instructors stayed at the ITF (or moved to it, in the case of Florindo) with the most notable exceptions of Casagrande, Carrillo and Burman, while the Koreans abandoned it moving to the WTF. Yang's students adapted to the new situation, Carrillo and Burman continued in the Argentine Federation under the presidency of Ambassador Pérez Colman, spreading what Yang had taught them, also remained on that side of the division. Alderete specialized in sports training and graduated from the prestigious National Institute of Physical Education. During the following years she oversaw the physical preparation of the female competitors in WTF Taekwondo, and she is based in Fort Lauderdale, USA, where she owns a training center. A Burman student, Oscar Nieva Quiróz, became a benchmark for Taekwondo in Paraguay, a path that led him to the Songham style (ATA), then Chuck Norris' Chun Kuk Do, and finally to Kudo, a Japanese full contact style. Several students from Verdún and Cirelli gathered around Florindo at the Escuela Argentina de Taekwondo, inheriting Yang's and Lee's kicking methods. Cornejo and Romano continued their practice with an outstanding teacher who arrived a short time later, a former Pro-Taekwondo champion called Im Hyong Man.

In a very short time, everything had changed for Yang. Ten years ago he had been ripped from his country. Now he had lost his father and the position he had been building was compromised. He had to look inside and rearm. At that time, it was a blessing to have found

Joo, that beautiful woman with whom he ended forming a beautiful family. Although Yang stopped teaching, his knowledge and his active contribution to Taekwondo continued for a long time, collaborating whenever it was required in the following years.



*In 1986 D.C. Yang was coach to the Argentine Team at the South American Taekwondo Championships held in Buenos Aires*

#### A new life in Patagonia

Yang moved with his wife to San Carlos de Bariloche around 1985. That became "his place in the world". Yang was an intense athlete, but his training was put to an end by two accidents that affected his spine - one during his own personal training, and another while skiing. So in Bariloche his focus shifted from Taekwondo, and with new goals in his life, he prospered in commerce and raised a family, proud of his children Jung Mo, Micaela and Naty, who became university graduates.



*Yang with students Cornejo, Lias and Romano*



\* \* \*

After several coffees, I was fascinated by this young "grandfather" of mine with whom I was only now able to meet. A true pleasure to listen to anecdotes and experiences that connect us through the generations and that I happily share. And when I later heard his students speaking of him as a "wonderful and compassionate" man, I knew this is a story worth telling. This is a martial arts story, that of, Dae Chol Yang the magnificent fighter who introduced competitive Taekwondo to Argentina.

But it is also a story about life, on how Lee Jong Woo fulfilled his promise to his friend the Colonel, how Dae Chol Yang was up to the high expectations of his father and more importantly his own destiny, as he used Taekwondo to become a man admired and appreciated by colleagues and disciples, one raising a family south of the Pampas against all odds, not much different to what the Cartwrights used to do in the Virginia plains



*The Yangs, a new generation*

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