

**THESIS**

**A JOURNEY IN THE MARTIAL ARTS**

**MOO SHIM**

**BY**

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This thesis puts forth several concepts that have evolved over my 34 years as a student of the Martial Arts. It is only a piece of a journey that is still in process. Like all life journeys, they cannot happen without the help, mentoring and leadership of individuals that have gone before us. I feel that it is important to chronicle significant instructors and events that have brought me to where I am now. I would also add that this brief summary is not meant to be all inclusive and does not do their contributions justice. After acknowledging my Masters, I would like to look at the concept of Moo Shim from several different perspectives. The first perspective explores expectations and perceptions, their relationship to us as Martial Artists on our quest to be the perfect warrior and in our life journey. The concept of centeredness and Moo Shim as it pertains to body soul and spirit. How Moo Shim, as a result of martial art training, creates new neuro pathways from the interaction of Ki energy and physical movement. Discovering who we are, what our destiny and calling on the earth really is and how Moo Shim plays a role. And finally, living in the present and why Moo Shim cannot exist in any other form.

I began my training in 1973 with Dr. Roger Pray in Salt Lake City Utah. I knew from the first moment that my Taekwondo training began that this is what I wanted to do. During my training as a white belt I overheard a green belt explaining to my instructor that while he was in Japan on his Mormon Mission, he trained in Karate. This sounded like a great idea to me and I approached Dr Pray and asked him how I too might go to Japan and learn Karate. Politely, he explained that I was training in Taekwondo and if I wanted to do that I would need to go to Korea and that his instructor Master Bobby Kim (Master Wong K Kim) travelled to Korea regularly. If I was serious, maybe he could help. And help he did. Thanks to the efforts of Master Bobby Kim, one year later, I had moved to Seoul and was sponsored for my permanent visa by the Korean Taekwondo Association.

In Korea I trained and received my first dan Kukkiwon black belt under the instruction of Master Hyung Ro Lee in February of 1975. Master Lee moved to New York 2 months before I returned to the States and we lost contact.

Back in the US I continued my training and attended the University of Wyoming. At that time I opened my first dojang and took my students to Denver for testing under Master Bobby Kim. After my first semester concluded, I approached my parents with the idea of quitting school, training for 6 months so I could move to Denver and try to get a job with Master Kim. Oddly, they did not approve of my idea. So I quit school anyway and moved to Austin Texas to be with some of my Taekwondo friends from Korea. I was reading Black Belt Magazine and I saw an ad that read: *If you are a Black Belt and want to teach Taekwondo but don't know how to run a school Call this number.* The ad was for the American Taekwondo Association, aka ATA under the direction of Master H. U. Lee. Upon the direction of Barry Lehan, I travelled to Omaha to work with Master H. U. Lee and Master Dale Craig to learn their

system of Taekwondo training and business management. As a result, in June of 1976 I opened my first full time Dojang on State Street in Salt Lake City directly across the street from Ed Parkers World Kenpo Karate Head Quarters.

In 1978, I closed my school and moved back to Wyoming to take over my Father's ranch. From that time until 1984 I ran a Dojang in Riverton and for a short time also in Lander Wyoming. At that time I was involved in the Point Karate Circuit and was a rated fighter and forms competitor. I had the privilege of demonstrating Taekwondo at a cancer benefit. To do so I incorporated Taekwondo movement with music in order to demonstrate the uniqueness and beauty of the movement to non martial artists. This was the introduction of musical forms to the Rocky Mountain area.

In 1983 I was reading a Taekwondo Times and I saw an article about Jay Warwick. We had become friends from meeting at Tournaments. He had just been to the World Championships in Copenhagen. In a phone conversation with Master Warwick I learned about the USTU and the upcoming Nationals in Chicago. Master Warwick explained that this was the type of fighting that I had done in Korea and that it was on its way to becoming an Olympic Sport. Not only was I interested but I took 4 of my Black Belts to Chicago and went full speed ahead.

By 1986, I was the State President of Wyoming on the Board of Governors for the USTU, one of the top 8 feather weight fighters, third dan kukkiwon from Master Bobby Kim and by late summer had been accepted to be a full time resident athlete at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs.

From 1986 -1988 I served Taekwondo in four major areas. I was Team Captain of the resident athletic program at the Olympic Training Center and lead the program in conjunction with the US National Team Captain, Master Dae Sung Lee. I represented Taekwondo to the US Olympic Committee and spoke and demonstrated Taekwondo in over 100 engagements, mostly to Olympic Corporate Sponsors. I was the senior master Instructor along with Master Dae Sung Lee under the instruction of Master Sang Chul Lee at his Dojang, the US Taekwondo Center. This position was continued until '92 when both Master Dae Sung Lee and I moved and opened our own US Taekwondo Centers. I continued as an active member of the Board of Governors of the USTU. The learning curve that I experienced from 86-92 was enormous. I learned many things from many great Taekwondo people. I would like to say that spending everyday training, teaching, coaching and learning from Master Dae Sung Lee was unequalled. I believe he is one of the great minds of Taekwondo. My journey has been so greatly enriched by him it is hard to describe.

In 1993 I opened US Taekwondo Center of Aspen Colorado and have been here ever since. In '96 I embarked on a journey to put Taekwondo on Television. It was brutally difficult but after much hard work I produced one Pay-Per-View and a series for ESPN. I called it PRO TKD and it was beautiful as only Taekwondo can be. I established ratings for the first time ever for Martial Arts, got coast to coast radio and newspaper coverage for the first time ever and was represented by William Morris, another first. In 2000 I changed my Dojang name to PRO TKD and developed an entire,

duplicatable dojang system that is still in place and functioning well. During my time under the instruction of Master Sang Chul Lee for 86-2000 I received my fourth and fifth dan Kukkiwon.

In 2005 while attending a Martial Arts Expo in Las Vegas, I reconnected with Grand Master Joon P. Choi. We had known each other since the mid eighties and he was there teaching Kimoodo. We had a nice reunion and I took his class and have been doing Kimoodo ever since. I have been training with Grand Master Choi since that time and have become a Kimoodo instructor.

Currently I run a full time Dojang. In 2008 I was inducted as a Martial Arts Commissioner and I am the Commissioner for the state of Colorado. My passion for Taekwondo has only increased over the years. In the last 10 years a phenomenon has been taking place that has me on a new and exciting learning curve. Many of the things I learned in my early training I did them because I was told to do them. Now in the witness of my own body, I understand why. Light bulb moments are a beautiful and exciting thing. Much of this awaking has come in my understanding of ki energy and Moo Shim. Even though my mindful understanding of Moo Shim has grown over the years of my formal martial art training, Moo Shim began for me all the way back in my childhood.

My journey did not begin in the days of my youth, like martial artist and film star Jackie Chan, bartered into the Chinese Opera, spending countless hours daily in regress training. No, I was raised in a small town in middle of Wyoming. Not only was there a lack of anything Asian, there was no martial art schools to be found. Even though my interest was firmly intact and could only be pursued by sleepovers with my friend Desi with judo books from the library and a mattress in the basement. This proved to be short on skills but long on fun. What I would only come to realize much later in life, was how my summers growing up in the wilds of Wyoming would prepare me as a martial artist and the person I would become. At that time I did not know of the concepts of Moo Shim but the premise and foundation had already begun.

I was born in 1955 to Cynthia and Robert Fuechsel. My mom was a housewife and my dad was a veterinarian. We lived on the outskirts of town. This facilitated my dad's large and small animal practice. During the summers, we moved out on our Ranch about ten miles north of town, on a hill looking over the Wind River. Spectacular view or not it was remote and isolated from town. From my perspective, all my friends got to spend their summers playing baseball and riding their bikes to the cement pond (that's a swimming pool for all of you who didn't grow up with the influence of Jed Clampet). I had to endure long summers with no TV and was forced to be outside riding my horse, playing in the river, exploring in the woods with my brothers with first our bb guns and later graduating to our 22s. It was torture.

Our ranch was about eighty acres along the west side of the river. Across the river on the east was about a one hundred thousand acre section of the Wind River Indian Reservation. There was only one section of a thousand acres that was owned by a non- Indian named Carl Herring. The rest was a vast river bottom wilderness that seemed endless. My dad leased a five thousand acre section on the river bottom to run our cattle on. Only thing was that there were no fences to speak of and even with lengthy and repeated instructions to those cows, they would not always stay where they were supposed to. So, regularly we rode in search of our cows and in river bottom exploration. In retrospect, these

childhood experiences formatted the foundation for my first martial art training in the concept of, “empty mind” or Moo Shim. My training began during those summers of exploration.

In the west, we hear of concepts that talk about “empty mind”. If you are a fan of the “Last Samurai”, Tom Cruise had “too many minds” and was in search of “no mind”. As my western mind tried to wrap around these concepts, a progressive and ongoing understanding emerged. Empty mind does not mean that you are void of thoughts. It is more a kin to being void of perceptions and expectations. If we look at the theory that for every attack there is a counter attack then for any given attack one can anticipate the opponents counter. Following this knowledge, the anticipated counter can then be countered... The trap to the martial artist becomes that one’s opponent also perceives the anticipated counter. Their counter was based on the same theory only anticipating that sequence with their own twist to the outcome. Now this scenario plays endless options and possibilities. This is starting to sound like “too many minds”; however the answer once again becomes “empty mind”.

Now let’s look at the animal kingdom. When they engage in a battle how much time have they spent on strategy? The martial artist needs to move away from the concept of attack and counter and move toward action and reaction. In doing so, you eliminate falling into the false perception of your next analytical move. Instead you allow for the energy of movement to dictate what the correct reaction would be to the initial action.

So why train? Without training there is no data bank in place for reaction. Training provides the greatest computer on the planet, your mind, with the necessary data input to calculate the response. Training also initiates neuro pathways that start out as a vague cow trail and with repetition become a four-lane highway. Repetition not only refines and perfects the motion but also defines the efficiency of motion. This efficiency reduces resistance and friction and allows an unrestricted flow of speed and power. As the physical pursues its path toward perfection it is still guided by the mind. Moo Shim then becomes the weapon of fluidity directed by the foundation of your training.

Let’s examine the “empty mind” from another perspective. You come to a room. The sign above the door labels the room, blue room. Before entering the room your mind already perceives that the room is blue. It is now a natural assumption that the room is blue. Here in lies the trap. What if the room turns out to be red? The perception was that this is a blue room so how do you deal with the red? The answer is that when you entered the room with the mind of Moo Shim, there is no perception of color. It’s just a room. Now whatever happens with the room can be reacted to without assumption and expectations, “empty mind”.

Moo Shim is also about your center. Your center holds a relationship to who you are. In one sense it is located in your center or your belly. In another sense, it is a point of your energy ki or chi life force. In the physical aspect of this in the martial arts there are many ways to enhance this energy and perfect its flow and power. In developing our center in the soul realm, the perspective begins with who we are. So who are you and what is your destiny? This is a very individual question but as martial artists some broad strokes can be painted. We have embarked on a journey in the military arts. It doesn’t matter what your style is the journey consists of countless hours of repetition and training. Why? Who

are we and why do we have this passion? What fruits can be achieved by discipline, dedication and perseverance? What purpose is there in the perfection of punching and kicking? Many of these questions for our soul can be answered in who we are.

During my childhood summers without the distraction of “too many minds”, TV, constant entertainment with friends and activities etc., there was time for only hearing the thoughts in my own head. These days with iPod, video games and cell phones, how much time is really spent listening to the thoughts in our heads? These countless and continual distractions not only make it hard to hear the thoughts in our head but keep us from understanding who we are. If we don’t know who we are we have no center. Without a center, we have no course of direction. The purpose for our lives has not been contemplated or defined. The lack of identity makes us weak and easily swayed by the multitude of data that passes before us. “Too many minds” becomes a long way from empty mind.

Looking at spiritual centeredness, if the question of how do you become enlightened was proposed, many of us would picture sitting in a lotus position on a mountain top or living in a secluded monastery with monks. Why? What goal would we hope to attain? Could a piece of this answer be in understanding who we are? What our destiny and purpose on the earth is? Why is it that many students leave their dojangs remarking how good they feel, how clear their head is, how focused they feel? That is not a one-sentence answer type of a question but I will endeavor to provide a limited answer for the purpose of our discussion. In your typical one-hour martial art class, the student follows a strict set of protocols and guidelines. The student enters the training area and shows respect for the area where they train by coming to attention and bowing. Coming to attention is not only physical but also mentally at attention. Whatever was going on in the day stays outside. It is now time to train and follow the instructors’ commands. The class is lined up in a very specific order and again brought to attention and bow. The training begins as the instructor leads the students through the curriculum of the day. There are multiple repetitions assigned with each movement. The mind is engaged in dual hemisphere gymnastics as it feeds the body impulses as it endeavors to imitate the data coming in through all the sensory receptors. Energy is expended and all systems strive to keep pace with the demands set before it. Without focus and concentration there is no way to follow the pace. Signals of fatigue and exhaustion are disregarded as distractions that hinder the focus needed to continue. As the class nears completion, again everyone is brought to attention and bow. Deep breaths are taken and sweat is wiped away. The mind is clear, the body has released a multitude of chemicals and all seems right with the world. Why? Could it be single focus and concentration centering us in a new and fresh way? Is this the elusive empty mind?

Now let’s visit the concept of centeredness in Korean martial arts terminology: chun shin tongue il. This would be defined as concentration of the mind, body, spirit and emotion. What does it mean to be centered? Why is this such a sought after goal? Let’s look at the phenomenon that we all experience from time to time, you have the sense that someone is watching you and you look in the direction that you feel it coming from and someone is. How did that happen? What did you feel? Why were you aware of it? How often does it happen that you are not aware of? A piece of the answer is energy. You felt energy and you looked to see what it was but in fact you did not see it at all; you felt it. Another illustration of this is the blindfolded Master that wards off multiple attackers. He does not see them so

how does he know they are there? (A note to the reader, he would be generic) So if he feels them what does he feel? For myself personally, I have experienced throughout my life the ability to sense a presence in the woods or mountains and turn and see an animal that otherwise would have gone undetected. I did not hear them nor did I know that they were there but still I was drawn to see them. In the fast paced world that we live in there is an unending onslaught of chaos. Many become over stimulated by the bombardment of too many people, electronic devices and countless invasions on, in and around our space. This phenomenon makes it difficult to sort through all the data input that we are receiving and what and how to filter it. This further complicates the ability to sense and feel those things we ought to be in touch with. This leads us back to how do we become and remain centered in the midst of so much chaos around us? It becomes imperative to know who we are. What our destiny and purpose is. These are not easy goals to attain but they are attainable. A starting place would be in listening to the thoughts in our own mind; undistracted. This requires discipline. Discipline takes effort. By nature, just like water, we take the path of least resistance. Maybe that is because we are 65% water. As martial artists, we fight to overcome this and persevere with discipline to win the battle over mediocrity. It is only when we are calm that we can sense the energy around us. If the pond of our mind is not still, how do we detect the ripple caused by the pebble? To quote a modern expression for this, "there is a disturbance in the force". We would have no idea of that disturbance without first being still from within. You cannot detect a ripple if you are a raging river.

Growing up along the Wind River was a blessing that I did not understand in my youth. I spent many hours with the sounds of nature as my background and the chorus of my mind was left uninterrupted. Unconsciously, who I was began to take shape. My thoughts became rooted and grounded. The confidence that emerged was shaped by my surroundings. They were not built from chaos but from the environment that God had created in His perfect workmanship. We are designed to be at peace with ourselves, with others, with our surroundings and with our Creator. Daily there is adversity that would rob us of this peace. Once again a battle has been defined. As martial artists we train for the battle. My early martial art training was not as conventional as Jackie Chan's but it was training. It was training that I will be forever grateful for. In those days, I had no way of knowing the journey that I was on but such is the case for us all. Our destiny has already been written, it is our responsibility to accept it and follow it to the best of our immaturity. There is enough conflict and chaos out there that we need not have conflict and chaos with ourselves and who we are supposed to be.

Growing up in the sixties and on an Indian Reservation my experiences presented me with a clear picture for the saying "don't judge a book by its cover". The rural community of my youth followed the Archie Bunker gospel. Narrow-mindedness was the norm and the acceptance of change was as welcome as a root canal with no medication. Indians were judged on sight alone. As I followed the hairstyles of Paul McCartney, family and friends of my parents that I had grown up with would not give me the time of day. I was labeled a "hippie". I experienced the opposite of "empty mind" and became too familiar with being judged by those who spew their hatred and poisonous words without discrimination or thought of the damage they are causing. All of us can think of times when we have been guilty of judgment before we have walked a mile in the other person's shoes. As martial artists this can be a painful trap. Judging our opponent is error. This error causes us to engage in the battle thinking

this is a blue room. The battle will have enough surprises without us walking into it with preconceived notions that stem from a figment of our imagination. A true warrior will only engage in the fight with the “empty mind”. The concept of the “empty mind” can serve us in many aspects of our lives. We need to lead by our own example. The discipline of our daily training and its fruits becomes who we are. Such is the code of the warrior.

Now let's take this theory and lifetime of personal experience with Moo Shim and apply it to the daily growth of our students. When a new white belt begins, they are explained the rules of protocol that they are to follow. Upon entering the dojang, come to attention and bow. When you come to attention not only is your body at attention but your mind is at attention. Whatever has been going on during the day is to remain outside, now it is Taekwondo time. This is the beginning of Moo Shim. Leaving everything outside is probably one of the hardest things that a student is asked to do. Only having your mind on Taekwondo time is a beefy goal to attain. But, the foundation is laid and the journey begins. A great strength of Taekwondo is that because we are asking people to do so many things that are so foreign to them and the amount of concentration needed to engage both hemispheres of the brain and follow instructions, they have very little energy left to engage in other directions. They are being forced into Moo Shim because they have no other option available. I have all my students learn the Korean for what they are doing. Yes Korean is the universal language of Taekwondo but attaching a foreign name to a new neuro pathway forces the brain to make a whole new file under that heading. Even though that was not the original intent the outcome is very productive for the student to explore new mental possibilities which in turn releases untapped potential. If as Sabumnims we are to help the students be all they can be and discover who they are, the sheer nature of Taekwondo makes our job easier.

To me, one of the biggest obstacles in our lives are fears. The confidence that comes from the many disciplines of Taekwondo enables us to meet fears head on. By disciplines I mean everything from the new routine of coming to the dojang to train, the new physical and mental challenges, learning the rewards of repetition, perseverance and overcoming, not to mention that they are learning a Martial Art and the ability to defend themselves. All of these are huge adjustments that new students have to make and develop into their lives and their daily routines. As Sabumnims, we have been in this routine for so long we can't imagine life without it. It has made us the people we are and the journey that we are expecting others to take so that they can be like us. Fears are the biggest derailer of that course of action. One example of this is the courage demonstrated by students to get up in front of us and belt test. The ones that can't find that amount of courage start finding all kinds of excuses why not to go to Taekwondo. Once their fears take hold of them they are living in the opposite of Moo shim. Fear has the ability to choke the life out of people and rob them from their potential. Our minds have to at least have fears in check before our mind can be calm enough to even consider Moo Shim. The transformation that occurs from white belt to red belt is truly beautiful. The reason for that transformation is the overcoming of fears. Once you can see either past or through your fears change can occur. The concept of understanding who you are can now start to be realized. The vehicle that facilitates that is Taekwondo. Moo Shim allows the student to become more than just a kicking and punching robot. They grow through the physical phases of Taekwondo as well as the emotional and

spiritual phases by applying Moo Shim to their training. For my students there is another quantum jump in overcoming their fears when they transition from red belt to black belt. It is also at this time that they have the ability to start appreciating the concepts of Moo Shim and to try to incorporate them into their push for the black belt as well as their daily lives.

One of the main fears about testing besides performance anxiety is not living in the present. The fear of the past, pressures the fear of the future. Neither is in the present and Moo Shim can only occur in the present. The “what ifs” of the future dictate the panic of the present. True growth, healing and maturity can only happen in the present. Scientifically, the body can not heal or regenerate if you are not present. That also implies that the mental state has a direct effect on the health and well being of the physical. When people experience trauma, often times they go to a state where they can survive. This place is usually in the mind and it takes them away from living in the present. Taekwondo has the ability to force you into the present and provide avenues to restore you back to the present. Now let’s look back at the white belt that is just trying to get through class and has no idea of what is coming next or how they should be doing it. They are in a state of Moo Shim but they don’t even know it. As we grow in our understanding of who we are and of whom we are as martial artists, coming into the dojang and leaving everything outside should be easier. But is it? Are we able to master these things or does our ongoing increase in our knowledge of these things make it just as hard to find Moo Shim?

A plum line for my life is the Bible. It speaks of all the worrying in the world can’t change one thing. So why do we worry and stress over things that we can’t change? The Bible also talks about past being the past. So why do we let ourselves be influenced and ruled by our past? Our past is there to learn from not to be controlled by. The references for daily disciplines are too many to mention so I will site a few for the point. Moses in the wilderness could only get food and water daily. All of their needs were provided for daily. Jesus said “Give us this day our daily bread”. The list is long but the point is that it is necessary for us to live in the present and in the day. We cannot change or know what will happen tomorrow. It is enough of a task to stay present to learn from and experience the day that is at hand. Just like the physical of Taekwondo, you can’t kick in the past or kick in the future. So why live in your mind in the past or worry about the future? As warriors we can’t fight a battle in the past. We can learn from what occurred and take that information into our present training. We can’t win a battle in the future until it is fought. The energy released and responded to in combat is instantaneous. It is easy to state these facts but to live them and to walk them out is very different. Because much of what we are talking about is energy, we all have a daily allotment of energy. When we use it up our body requires sleep to restore our energy. It makes sense that we should be good stewards of our energy. When energy is put towards the past or the future, that is energy spent. It becomes a waste of energy and now there is a lack of that energy. If we were able to be in a regular state of Moo Shim, there would be more energy available because it is not being used up in non productive directions. To be in this regular state of Moo Shim there are some contributing factors that would have to be in place. One is absence of fear which would result in a state of calm or perfect peace. This is not in outward appearance only but this would be at a cellular level. The cellular level is also where energy is first made. We would also need to have confidence. There is much to having confidence. Being students of Taekwondo we can have a certain sense of confidence that we are safe physically. But confidence is really more about who we are

and walking in the knowledge of that. That then leads us to all the big questions of life. Who am I and why am I here? If I just understand that then there is the pausing for the question of what do I do daily with that information?

I recently found myself at the bottom of the Grand Canyon with a group of geologists. One of them that knew that I was a student of Martial Arts asked me what was my philosophy of life? I answered him that I try to get through each day without causing harm to anyone. If I can do that, then I'm OK with my day. If I can show love and mercy to those who I come in contact with, then it has been a good day. We as students of taekwondo and as Sabumnims lead by our example. We are in a position of leadership and responsibility. Harming people with our skills is easy. Harming them with what we say or do is just as easy but carries a more lasting effect. Showing love and mercy requires effort and effort requires an expenditure of energy. That energy changes lives and has a lasting effect. As we try to understand who we are and why we are living on the planet earth at this time, one thing for certain is that each day we will spend energy. It is up to us to make the choices of how we will spend it. We can cause harm or we can show love and mercy. We can be in Moo Shim or we can allow our fears to yank us to the left or to the right and at the end of the day we have been off course. Discipline, we practice it we talk about it. It is a product of our life as Martial Artists. This day choose to be disciplined. Choose to flow in the energy of Moo Shim. Choose to not harm your fellow man. Choose to show love and mercy. It's your energy, you choose.

I would like to make note of one important coincidence, but since I don't believe in coincidences, I will call it fate or the destiny that I was always to walk in. When I was living and training Taekwondo in Seoul Korea in February 1975, I tested for my first dan Kukkiwon and now as fate and or destiny would have it, 34 years later and the Kukkiwon is having its first test in the US and I am taking part in it and now testing for seventh dan. Who would have thought.

