

Founding of the USTU
by Ken Min
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The United States Taekwondo Union was founded in 1974 as the AAU Taekwondo Committee, then renamed as the US AAU Taekwondo Union in 1981, and was finally incorporated as the US Taekwondo Union in 1984.

After four years of learning at Oglethorpe University and the University of Georgia, I received my Master of Education from the University of Georgia in 1966. Instead of continuing my doctoral degree studies at Georgia, with instructorship in taekwondo and judo, I moved to the Big Sky Country of Montana, married the former Ann Kaylor of North Carolina, and worked as a part-time instructor at the University of Montana while preparing to complete for my doctoral degree in Education. The first year I taught judo and wrestling as credit courses and organized taekwondo at the University of Montana as an extra-curricular activity during the evening. The Montana Taekwondo Club is still very active.

I then moved to Eastern Montana College, Billings, as Assistant Professor of Physical Education. I taught health education, judo, taekwondo and soccer as Physical Education credit courses and founded soccer, judo and taekwondo teams. At Eastern Montana, I was able for the first time to participate in local, state and national judo championships, and to organize local, state and regional taekwondo events. I was also able to open my eyes to the possibility of becoming acquainted with national sports leaders of the AAU and NAIA, as well as the USOC. As a matter of fact, I was fortunate enough to meet Mr. David Rivenes, then AAU President of the State of Montana who later became National AAU President, and Dr. Frank Spechalske, a member of the NAIA, who recommended me to the USOC Judo Committee as the sole representative of NAIA since I was then serving as Vice President of the US National Collegiate Judo Association. Montana is where my private life stabilized with the birth of a daughter, Sylvia and son, Kwan, and my professional life began with a focus on the martial arts. These connections and friendships gave hope to my ambitious goal of making taekwondo an official AAU and NAIA or NCAA sport.

I left Montana in 1969 to accept a position at the University of California, Berkeley as a full-time faculty member of the Physical Education Department to teach judo, karate, and other classes. I was told that the number of candidates for the position was more than one hundred.

I arrived at Cal with enough experience in the AAU, US Judo Federation, and AAU Judo Committee as a delegate and national officer to give me the necessary background to establish a major organization for taekwondo followers. The full-time position I filled was developed by the late Dr. Henry Stone, a wrestling coach and PE faculty member who had studied and introduced judo to the PE Department in the 1930's. Dr. Stone is the individual who spearheaded and founded judo as an AAU sport, benefiting from his wrestling connections and support. He has been called the Father of American Judo and

his valuable collection of AAU correspondence was my blueprint for the successful bid for taekwondo independence in 1974.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, in the late 60's and early 70's, there were and still are abundant styles of martial arts, especially the Japanese and Chinese styles of judo, kung-fu, karate, kendo and aikido. Korean karate (taekwondo) was just taking hold when I began teaching karate-taekwondo as well as judo courses in the PE Department at Berkeley. I also initiated a taekwondo club team and revived the judo club team to compete in local, state, and eventually national championships, which required my involvement in the constant ongoing efforts to develop an organization and to mandate policies of competition and rank recognition for the long term growing vision of taekwondo. To be effective, an organization had to be formed which would be recognized by all taekwondo instructors who operated schools in the state of California and eventually at a national level. Unity and harmony are the best means of development to fence the ongoing competition of different martial arts styles, especially for safety concerns in the higher educational setting.

Even though there had been an extensive effort by instructors in California to organize taekwondo, we faced continual disappointments for over two years in organizing at a state level. Meanwhile, karate became an official AAU sport in 1972, led by Mr. Nishiyama, a Headmaster of the Shodokan group in the USA and instructor of karate at UCLA. Karate's acceptance by AAU forced us to follow the karate competition rules at the nine UC campus championships. These championships were formulated to promote sports events for non-NCAA sports at the University of California nine campus locations through intramural sports activities at each campus and were an even greater motivation for separation of taekwondo from karate at a national level. The Amateur Athletic Union of America governed all amateur sports policies in the United States, including selection of Olympic Team members, even though the NCAA and NAIA trained the majority of athletes through the universities.

After participating in the 1st World Taekwondo Championship in Kukkiwon, Seoul, Korea as Secretary General of the American Taekwondo Association and Team Manager for the United States team, I thought that I was now at the right place at the right time, as a faculty member at the University of California, Berkeley which secured my steady income, and with experience as well as good connections. On top of that, all the necessary documents of judo's endeavor to become an AAU sport were made available to me by Mrs. Henry Stone. Her husband had developed judo into an AAU sport in 1952, and she was then working on the staff in the Department of Physical Education.

I conducted extensive research through all the published material of the judo case. In the meantime, I developed documents to demonstrate why taekwondo should be an independent sport/art. A survey at that time published by Black Belt Magazine, the oldest USA martial arts monthly magazine, indicated that the Korean style of karate was the most popular, followed respectively by the Japanese and Chinese styles (Refer to attached). This was consistent with my own survey of national university martial arts activities (Refer to attached).

Also, competition rules differ between the non-contact, stop-go scoring system of karate and the ongoing competition of taekwondo. Another reason was that the world federations were different since karate was led by the WUKO (World Union of Karate Organizations) and taekwondo by the WTF (I was the official delegate from the US to the founding of the World Taekwondo Federation), one in Japan and the other in Korea with their own language as official terminology (refer to attached). I emphasized that two different styles competing together would result in extensive injuries since taekwondo is contact with 70% kicking techniques, while karate is non-contact with 70% hand techniques.

Whenever I had the opportunity to convince the AAU and NCAA decision makers or opinion spreaders such as the media, I expressed my strong feelings about the misconception that karate is karate, whether it comes from Korea, China, or Japan. After an extensive campaign and effort, I was invited by AAU President David Rivenes to attend an Executive Committee meeting which was held in West Yellowstone, Montana on October 8-13, 1973. I left the university by automobile after class on Friday afternoon, 10/12/73, drove overnight from California to Montana to participate in the meeting on the following day. Of course, I drove 80 miles per hour just about all the way without stopping except to fill up the gas tank (and pay a speeding ticket in Idaho. As a matter of fact, traffic violators had to go to the courthouse to pay the ticket before leaving town). I was fortunate that Nevada and Montana did not have speed limits back then. Well, I made it on time for the Saturday, 8:00 AM meeting. The same distance today takes me two days to drive, which demonstrates how desperate I was to accomplish the impossible objective. When I arrived, I noticed a few Korean instructors were involved as Korean Style Karate Representatives for the AAU Karate Committee meeting.

I was able to present my case thoroughly, distributed brochures to each member of the Executive Committee, and for over 40 minutes answered critical questions from the AAU Executive Committee members. The result was successful and I was overwhelmed with the joy of historical accomplishment, guided by a **single handed plan and execution**. Mr. Rivenes was the one who trusted my word and gave me an opportunity to present the taekwondo case, and the majority of members of the AAU Executive Committee responded positively.

The Executive Committee approved the resolution, pending passage at the next AAU Executive Committee meeting scheduled for May 1974 even though I made a successful move to quietly pass the Executive Committee to eliminate possible active opposition from karate leadership, in which I succeeded. But I had to let the world know about the AAU taekwondo movement since official approval of the Board of Governors action would come at the AAU Convention in Washington, DC in October 1974. This would require nationwide support of AAU Delegates, and I had to organize national taekwondo leaders from whom I needed extensive assistance, plus becoming affiliated with a world taekwondo federation for their support.

The immediate action, I thought, was to choose leaders from the different Kwans, which were considered academies or schools of taekwondo in Korea, since American taekwondo participants applied for rank through their own Kwans. I needed help immediately and selected the World Taekwondo Federation as the official international affiliation. I contacted the WTF Secretary General, Grandmaster Jong Woo Lee, and asked him to provide names of leaders in the United States with whom I could work. Since I had been away from Korea for over 10 years, I began to actively educate myself about the Korean Amateur Sports Association (KASA) and the Korean Taekwondo Association (KTA).

The KTA was formed in 1961 by joining together nine different Kwans (schools), and then became affiliated with KASA in 1962 (refer to attached). Mr. Un Yong Kim was elected its new president in 1971; his plan was to build Kukkiwon which opened in 1972, and then organize the 1st World Taekwondo Championship at Kukkiwon during May, 1973 in which I participated as US Team Manager for two out of the three teams which represented the United States, with a long story to tell. This was the inaugural assembly of the world taekwondo movement and I was the US Delegate. The president of KASA was Mr. Taik-soo Kim, who was also the Majority Floor Leader of the Korean government's ruling party. Mr. Chang K. Young, was an IOC member and publisher of the Korean national daily newspaper, Hankook Ilbo, and Mr. Un-Yong Kim was vice president of KASA and KOC.

At the time I was serving as Executive Secretary of the American Taekwondo Federation, an organization of Korean-American taekwondo master instructors in the USA primarily located on the West Coast which was responsible for the selection of United States team members for the 1st World Taekwondo Championship. Primary participants from Mooduck Kwan-affiliated leaders held the US Trials in Dallas. The Trials were organized by Master Ahn Ye-Mo, who was supposed to serve as Team Leader but could not make it at the last minute. Therefore, Mr. Kang Myung-Kyu and I had to raise funds to travel to Korea, and Mr. Jack Hwang of Oklahoma City was selected as Team Leader at the last minute to raise enough funds to take 10 competitors. The Seoul Organizing Committee allotted five athletes to represent the East Coast and five to represent the West Coast; however, without our advanced knowledge, another individual arrived from the United States with a second USA team and was given the Midwest territory to represent. The situation was out of our control at that time, but this convinced me more than ever to affiliate taekwondo with an official national amateur sport's governing body, at that time the AAU of the United States of America which we represented with honor and responsibility.

I needed all the support I could get to successfully organize a taekwondo movement, so I contacted President Kim Taik-soo of KASA as well as the World Taekwondo Federation President Un Yong Kim and asked for their support for the United States AAU taekwondo movement. Upon my recommendation, and without hesitation, President Un Yong Kim extended an invitation to AAU President Mr. Dave Rivenes, AAU Administrator Jim Stevens, and myself to visit Korea from April 16-21, 1974. This was the first ever visit to Korea of any United States amateur sports leader. This visit

established the foundation to make AAU taekwondo the sole representative to the World Taekwondo Federation, as well as help create an exchange with other sports and collaboration of sports politics in the international arena between AAU and KASA, as well as opening the door for continual exchange among sports and sports leaders.

At that period I referred to all those instructors who competed in judo and also taught taekwondo in the USA as members of the Judokwan because they were teaching taekwondo as well as judo, even though they earned their black belt from different Kwans and maintained those affiliations. As a matter of fact, some of them began training in taekwondo earlier than judo and their knowledge and skills in taekwondo were much higher than in judo. However, they competed in judo as a combative sport and trained in taekwondo as martial or self defense art. Judokwan was just a nickname I used from time to time when we got together in the early stages of the AAU taekwondo movement. The Judokwan members provided enormous support and participation in the formation of the USTU since most were trained in the physical education field and were already experienced with national sports organizations after establishing their dojang, studio, or teaching station at the YMCA's or colleges, etc.

I had been very involved with local, state and national organizations after taking the full-time position at Eastern Montana College. I gained experience, especially in the field of judo, including positions such as President of the National Collegiate Judo Association, Chairman of the Collegiate Committee of the US Judo Federation, Chairman of the Judo Committee of Montana, and also as a member of the USOC Judo Committee with a 6th Dan black belt in Judo. I also held a 6th Dan black belt in taekwondo, founded the Northwest Karate-Taekwondo Association and held numerous tournaments while in Montana which are still active in the Northwestern region of the USA. Taekwondo was becoming increasingly popular through the Vietnam war and had been in line for national organization since the formation of the World Taekwondo Federation in 1973.

After accepting employment at the University of California, Berkeley because of my teaching qualifications in judo and other sports, I was extensively motivated by the late Dr. Henry Stone's success as a wrestling specialist who then adopted judo and became of Father of American Judo. I had been attracted by taekwondo ever since high school where judo and taekwondo were taught in the same auditorium. But even though I had an extensive competition record in judo, I was not able to compete in taekwondo since it was not organized as a sport until about the time I left Korea. Nevertheless, I started teaching taekwondo when I arrived in the United States, first as a graduate student instructor at Athens, Georgia in 1963 when Joe Corey was a student at Georgia. I also provided demonstrations at half time during varsity basketball games in the NCAA Southeastern Conference. When I took the job at Berkeley, I was challenged by karate powers such as Mr. Nishiyama, Shodokan boss in the US, as well as the UCLA karate instructor, along with his followers at the other nine UC campuses. Since karate became an AAU sport in 1972, I was asked to follow the rules and regulations of karate, of which I was not familiar since I was acquainted with taekwondo competition rules. As any educator knows, competition rules are the major guidelines for the curriculum development of physical activity instructors which meant that I should change all my beliefs of

taekwondo to karate. This directly motivated me to prevail in my philosophy and techniques of taekwondo.

Of course, I supported karate as an AAU sport. Therefore, I conceived the idea of all martial arts under an umbrella policy by structuring judo, karate and taekwondo with an open door to accept gung-fu or wushu as part of the martial arts umbrella, similar to the aquatic sports of swimming, diving and synchronized swimming. This was another effort at begging to get into the AAU, using the same method as I had used to structure the Berkeley Martial Arts Program which, by the way, is still highly successful. I strongly believe that to be in the driver's seat of our destiny is a better position to be in than the passenger's seat even though it is a steep uphill struggle and endless challenge. Another philosophy was to plant seeds and nurture them to grow healthy and faster for friendly, constructive competition among different forces to serve society better.

I was a successful judo competitor in the early 50's but instead of pursuing the chance to compete for Korea in the 1964 Olympics, I came to study in the United States. I thought that making taekwondo an AAU sport would open up the opportunity for taekwondo to become a combative sport of the Olympic program, along with judo. Judo's acceptance as an Olympic sport gave me the encouragement to continue although it would be a long shot in the midst of dominant European sports where the Olympics were conceived and developed.

Ever since karate became an AAU sport, I had accelerated my efforts to make taekwondo an independent sport in the AAU and have used all my 37 years of experience and energy, based on my life's philosophy of "know yourself, know your opponent, and respect your opponent". At that time the challenge was educating taekwondo master instructors as to why we should join the AAU. In the 70's most taekwondo instructors in the United States were operating taekwondo as a business venture instead of promoting taekwondo as an educational endeavor such as swimming and gymnastics.

Taekwondo was accepted by the AAU at the 87th AAU Convention, Shoreham-Americana Hotel, Washington, DC. It was accepted as an official sport by an overwhelming majority vote of 814 to 149 on the last day of the convention, October 13-19, 1974 after being defeated one day earlier due to the Karate Committee's aggressive campaign against taekwondo admission. We Judo Committee members along with AAU Judo Chairman Wey Seng Kim, the late Professor In Soo Hwang of Yale University, AAU Basketball Committee Chairman Frank Spechalske, and members of the Wrestling Committee were active in an overnight groundwork session to successfully re-introduce taekwondo as an official sport at the end of the Convention while some of the taekwondo master instructors headed for a golf outing after its defeat in the first round.

With recommendations from Grandmaster Jong Woo Lee, Secretary General of the World Taekwondo Federation, 33 taekwondo leaders in the USA, plus a few judo leaders, and the AAU leadership, we joined together to organize the inaugural taekwondo leadership of the AAU taekwondo movement. As I recall, up to this point I was exhausted and did not desire to become part of the leadership of the new AAU sport

which would require an extensive sacrifice of personal investment and family life. Therefore, I asked taekwondo leaders, headed by the late Grandmaster Ki Hwang Kim, to recommend a national leader for Taekwondo Committee leadership. After meeting among themselves, they came up with the recommendation of Mr. Jay Hyun from Minnesota as Vice-Chairman who would continue as Chairman after the first term of two years, under the condition that I would serve as Chairman since I had known enough to make taekwondo an official AAU sport which would require an extensive effort to establish groundwork.

I accepted to run for Chairman, with the slate of candidates of Jay Hyun, Vice-Chairman; Chuck Portnick of Ohio as Secretary-Treasurer; and Henry Cho as Technical Director. The immediate agenda was propaganda of the newly developed Taekwondo Committee of the AAU to all taekwondo leaders and practitioners, those who still identified themselves as Korean Karate or simply Karate. A fortunate development was that the 1st World Championship had already been held in 1973 and the 2nd would be held in 1975 in Seoul, Korea. We, the committee leaders, determined to organize the 1st National AAU Taekwondo Championship immediately to be hosted by an established organization such as Yale University and Dr. In Soo Hwang who had a rich experience in hosting judo events. Professor Hwang was able to introduce taekwondo as an official program at Yale University, along with judo. Incidentally, the 1st Taekwondo World Championship held outside of Korea was hosted by Mr. Kyung Sun Shin who had a strong judo background and owned a highly successful martial arts supply company, then and today.

Recruiting responsible leaders to fill a national sports organization position without funding was the same as going West with nothing but a healthy body, mind, and spirit. Nothing but the title of AAU was given to the martial arts world. There were no funds or manpower provided, and everything was some new kind of challenge. We are talking about the most powerful, most advanced country's national organization with a democratic procedure of conducting business in all respects. Fortunately, the World Taekwondo Federation was established one year earlier with the dynamic leadership of President Un Yong Kim and furnished the necessary assistance. The WTF provided a timely schedule for worldwide organization by holding world championships and issuing technical regulations on time. We held a very successful national championship on April 25-26, 1975 at Yale and duly selected the United States Team for the 2nd World Taekwondo Championship. We successfully bid to host the 3rd World Championship in the USA which was approved by the 2nd Assembly of the World Taekwondo Federation prior to the championship on August 26-30, 1975. The USA 2nd World Championship Team was organized with a total budget of \$132 operating expense and \$9,300 team expense which left a deficit fund of \$(1,226). All funds came mostly from donations by those who believed the AAU taekwondo movement was the only answer for permanent United States taekwondo development for future taekwondo athletes compatible with wrestling and judo in the near future.

Well, the story goes like this: Participation by the USA Team of 29 contestants and officials in the 2nd World Taekwondo Championship in Seoul was funded purely by donations from the officials, the same as the 1973 USA Team in the 1st World

Championship where I, myself, served as team organizer and manager with experience in fundraising for the team.

The Committee began normal business in the promotion of AAU Taekwondo by establishing championship and competition rules and regulations and rank promotion which had never been introduced to the AAU. We had an agenda to cover competition rules adoption, rank promotion procedures, referee certification procedures, championship site for 1976, selection of 3rd world championship site, etc. at the national AAU Committee meeting being held in conjunction with the 1976 Convention at Braniff Plaza Hotel, New Orleans, LA during the first week of December. However, an unexpected thing happened after the USA Team returned from Seoul: Vice-Chairman Jay Hyon, slated to take over the position of Taekwondo Committee Chairman as my replacement, resigned on 11/12/75 due to a conflict in managing his taekwondo schools in Minneapolis plus spending time and personal funds for the AAU taekwondo movement as leader of the national organization. His resignation forced me to implement emergency measures to build the organization to carry out national taekwondo activities, which were expanding on all fronts, to meet the challenging growth as a national sports organization. I decided to have two Vice-Chairmen work for the position of Chairman by selecting Master Hwa Chong from the University of Michigan who had been active since 1975, and Dong Ja Yang who I recruited since he had succeeded me as President of the National Collegiate Judo Association and was a professor at Howard University with a similar academic environment to mine. These two gentlemen assisted me to build the AAU taekwondo movement from 1976-1979 until my second term as a national officer was over.

The National AAU grew steadily every month and year to establish a genuine official national governing body with strong ties to and support of the World Taekwondo Federation and Kukkiwon as the rank authority of taekwondo. Referee and technical clinics were held all over the states by all possible resources, national and international demonstrations and clinics were hosted frequently to prepare the USA taekwondo population for the 3rd World Taekwondo Championship in Chicago on September 15-17, 1977 under the sponsorship of Kyung Sun Shin, President of East-West Market Exchange. The 2nd National AAU Championship was held in Kansas City in 1976, and the 3rd was held in Berkeley, California in conjunction with the 1st North American Taekwondo Championship represented by Canada, Mexico, Puerto Rico and USA teams and sanctioned by the AAU and WTF. The 4th national championship was held in Washington DC at Howard University. In fact, all national officers traveled just about every weekend to carry the responsibilities of taekwondo development.

My final effort toward recognition of taekwondo by the US Olympic Committee was finally approved by the USOC at Lake Buena Vista, Florida on April 14-15, 1978. Taekwondo admission to the USOC was a crucial step toward applying for recognition by the International Olympic Committee, leading to eventual competition in the Olympic Games. It was a great feeling to accomplish the foundation of an organization for my great adopted country of the United States of America.

In closing, I would like to bring a few important facts as the IOC moves from Avery Brundage's pure Olympic amateurism to Samaranch's Olympic professionalism which changed the total picture of US amateur sports movement as the years go by. The NGB is the tail end of movements of a major force such as gender equality and the Amateur Sports Act passed by Congress. The total picture of the amateur sports movement was changed in the late 70's and even more so the Olympic Games. Commercial success of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics and finally the scandal of the International Olympic Committee will take another giant step for future amateur movement. Another point I would like to make is that the USTU is still run by volunteers and membership fees. Therefore, those who provide their time and effort by sacrificing their personal life and those schools that are continually increasing membership for the organization should be adequately recognized and rewarded.

Thank you for the opportunity to write about my involvement in building the foundation of the USTU movement. Like any other major venture, it began as a humble kitchen table operation with a lot of energy, enthusiasm, and personal funds and will grow ever stronger and popular, although there will be growing struggles from time to time like any other organization. I am very proud to have served in a positive way in my most productive age, and extend my gratitude to members of the University of California Martial Arts Program who provided an endless contribution to the development of the national and international taekwondo movement. They strongly believe taekwondo is a very important part of the educational process for the successful contribution to humanity.

Needless to say, I owe my successful four-year national chairmanship to all those who served as members of every sub-committee and special project, especially the national officers with their selfless commitment to the ongoing development of taekwondo as the best combative sport in the nation as well as the world, and to the nameless volunteers. I hope the United States will be able to provide visible leadership in world taekwondo development.

Thank you.

This article was written as a personal recollection side story for the USTU Historian on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of taekwondo's National Governing Body of the United States Olympic Committee. The story covers the founding and second term (1974-1978) of the United States Taekwondo Union, Inc. and can be traced through documents of the founding and early stage of the official taekwondo movement in the United States.