

## Grandmaster Ah Po's Fall Weekend in Pittsburgh, II Submitted by Steve Harroun, South Hills Karate Academy

**Pittsburgh, PA, October 23<sup>rd</sup> through October 25<sup>th</sup>** – Kwan Jang Nim Andy Ah Po founder of the **Tang Soo Do Martial Way Association**, made his second trip to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania for the second time in as many years. **Grandmaster Ah Po's Fall Weekend in Pittsburgh** has become an annual event for Master Gene Garbowsky and students of South Hills Karate Academy. This annual event has materialized after Master Garbowsky's acceptance as a direct student of Kwan Jang Nim Ah Po in 2007. Kwan Jang Nim Ah Po was accompanied Sa Bom Nim Stephen Propst, 7<sup>th</sup> Dan who accompanies Kwan Jang Nim Ah Po on many such events across the world.

This year's event again drew Ko Dan Ja, Yu Dan Ja, as well as Gup students from a number of Tang Soo Do organizations and schools. In attendance this year included Master Kevin Watson, 6<sup>th</sup> Dan Shito-Ryu Karate-do from Myrtle Beach, S.C. Traveling from Sanford, Florida was Master Constantino Terrigno, from Two Dragons Tang Soo and Publisher of the website [www.tangsoodoworld.com](http://www.tangsoodoworld.com). Also attending were Master John Ennis and Master George Klinedinst, head instructors from the United Tang Soo Do Alliance who brought with them a number of Ko Dan Ja and Yu Dan Ja from their organization. Master Peter Oien's North American Tang Soo Do Association was also represented. Including the Dan and Gup students from South Hills Karate Academy there were over 150 participants across all events, almost doubling last years attendance!

This year's event included four different training sessions directly instructed by Grandmaster Ah Po along with **South Hills Karate Academy's 12<sup>th</sup> Promotion and Ceremony**. This year saw Master Garbowsky, Master Terrigno, the students of South Hills Karate Academy and other getting first hand training in the Combinations and Ill Soo Shik that are unique to Grandmaster Ah Po and the [Tang Soo Do Martial Way Association](http://www.tangsoodoworld.com). Two training sessions were held around these Combinations and Ill Soo Shik with Grandmaster Ah Po getting very in depth not only in the physical techniques but also the philosophy behind the techniques and practical self-defense. Master Garbowsky



Masters Watson (right) and Garbowsky Demonstrate

and Master Watson had the opportunity to demonstrate a number of the techniques marking the first time these two Masters had an opportunity to train together in a physical sense. The students of South Hills Karate Academy drilled for two days on the Tang Soo Do Martial Way Combinations and Ill Soo Shik under the watchful eye of Kwan Jang Nim Ah Po and Sa Bom Nim Stephen Propst until Grandmaster Ah Po was comfortable with everyone's progress.



Saturday October 25<sup>th</sup> proved to be a very busy day with **South Hills Karate Academy's 12<sup>th</sup> Shim Sa**. In addition, Kwan Jang Nim Ah Po instructed a **Chil Sung Hyung and Neh Ga Ryu clinic** as well as a **Ko Dan Ja and Yu Dan Ja Weapons Defense Clinic**. South Hills Karate Academy's 12<sup>th</sup> Shim Sa started promptly at 9:00AM. Over 65 students tested for Gup rank in front of a very distinguished testing panel with Kwan Jang Nim Ah Po conducting and looking for very specific things from the Gups. At the conclusion of the testing, Kwan Jang Nim Ah Po addressed not only the Gups, but also the Ko Dan Ja and Yu Dan Ja. He commended all testing students and mentioned that not only had he been impressed with their progress but also their spirit and attitude. He stressed the importance of following the Moo Do path and the execution of proper protocol in the dojang. As Kwan Jang Nim Ah Po put it, "With no disrespect to any other style, it is the tradition of protocol and etiquette in the dojang that differentiates Tang Soo Do from other fighting disciplines."



Denny Pruni (left) and Jeff Weir During A Ja Yu Deh Ryun Session

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Kwan Jang Nim Ah Po with Master Gene Garbowsky

Following the conclusion of the Gup Promotion, there was one more item that needed addressed by Kwan Jang Nim Ah Po before the start of the ensuing clinics. Grandmaster Ah Po called all in attendance to promptly line up by rank and at this time presented Master Gene Garbowsky with the rank of 5<sup>th</sup> Dan in Tang Soo Do. Kwan Jang Nim Ah Po explained the testing procedure that Master Garbowsky went through to achieve his promotion. It was a testing procedure that involved a four day intensive testing procedure that Master Garbowsky went through under the direct supervision of Kwan Jang Nim Ah Po during Master Garbowsky's January trip to Sacramento in January earlier in the year. Kwan Jang Nim explained that Master Garbowsky's testing for Oh Dan was not something that Master Garbowsky sought, but was a result of him becoming a direct student of Grandmaster Ah Po as well as his years of dedication to the art of Tang Soo Do. Kwan Jang Nim explained that he accepted Master Garbowsky as a student after careful consideration and the support and sponsorship he received from Master Stephen Propst, 7<sup>th</sup> Dan and senior member of the **Tang Soo Do Martial Way Association**. Master Garbowsky was deeply touched and honored to not only have been promoted to Oh Dan by Grandmaster Ah

Po, but to receive his promotion in front of all of the family, friends and his students. Master Garbowsky's promotion was received by a warm and hearty congratulator applause and of course a "Tang Soo!"

What followed was a clinic on the Chil Sung Hyung and Neh Ga Ryu style. This training session built on last year's training and stressed the difference of both Weh Ga Ryu and Neh Ga Ryu Tang Soo Do techniques and their differences to ensure their proper application. Kwan Jang Nim Ah Po was careful to explain that the late Great Grandmaster Hwang Kee, Founder of the Tang Soo Do system stressed the significance of ensuring that Tang Soo Do techniques are not only performed technically correct but also characteristically correct to ensure that the proper power associated with techniques are manifested.



The weekends training was capped off with Grandmaster Ah Po teaching a Ko Dan Ja and Yu Dan Ja weapons defense clinic that was simply unbelievable. Some in attendance had never had the opportunity to train under Kwan Jang Nim Ah Po and Grandmaster Ah Po clearly demonstrated why he is one of the most recognized and sought after Tang Soo Do Masters in the world today. This clinic emphasized clearly the effective and sometimes brutal techniques of Tang Soo Do. He left those attending wanting more!



The weekend finally ended with South Hills Karate Academy's Annual Banquet. There were over 50 attendees from South Hills Karate Academy and distinguished guests. One Ko Dan Ja who attended the entire weekend comment "In a nut shell, this year's event with Grandmaster Ah Po was simply one of the best events I have attended in my martial arts career. It is not too often that so many instructors and students of Tang Soo Do are able to get together and practice under the guidance of such a senior Tang Soo Do Master like Kwan Jang Nim Ah Po. I am already counting on attending next year!" If the past two years are any indication, start making plans to get to Pittsburgh in October 2009.