

HISTORY

Although Taekwondo is a modern martial art, its roots can be traced back over 1,400 years to the southern tip of the Korean peninsula; the kingdom of Silla.

This kingdom was the subject of constant attack from its two neighbors, Baek Je and Koguryo. Silla needed to build a powerful fighting force that had strong leadership to keep its independence.

Silla formed an elite warrior class called the Hwa-rang (way of the flowering manhood). These men practiced strict mental and physical discipline, following a code of conduct created by a Korean Buddhist monk, Won Kang:

1. Be loyal to your King
2. Be obedient to your parents
3. Be honorable to your friends
4. Never retreat in battle
5. Never kill unjustly

These warriors practiced with the traditional weapon arts using the spear, bow, sword and the hook. They also established forms of unarmed hand and foot fighting into their system.

Soon these young warriors gained respect among their enemies and under Hwa-rang leadership the three kingdoms united for a while.

From 1905 – 1945 Korean martial arts were banned in Korea because of the Japanese occupation in the country. Even though they were banned, the art of Taek Kyon was secretly kept alive.

After Korea was liberated from the Japanese, General Choi Hong Hi joined with the new Korean army and dedicated himself to teach the martial arts to his men. He realized that they would need a complete Korean art. He then developed his own style based on Kaek Kyon, Soo Bak-Gi, and Karate. He named this new art Taekwondo; which literally translated to “way of the foot and fist”. On April 11, 1955, at a special conference, this name was accepted.



General Choi, Hong Hi
Founding Father of Taekwon-Do
President of the International Taekwon-Do Federation

THE HISTORY AND HERITAGE OF THE TAEKWONDO “PLEDGE”

Before and after every class, a pledge is said by students and the instructor. The pledge is based upon the code of the Hwa Rang warriors of the Silla Dynasty. General Choi Hong Hi, one of the first founders of Taekwondo, updated the code and turned it into a pledge that for decades all the Taekwondo students around the world pledge to:

1. Observe the tenets of Taekwondo
2. Respect instructors and seniors
3. Never misuse Taekwondo
4. Be a champion of freedom and justice
5. Build a more peaceful world

Today, before class, a pledge is always said that is very similar to the original pledge.

Sir, I will keep the tenets of Taekwondo, to bring honor upon myself, my family, and my instructors.

After class, we say the tenets of Taekwondo to remind ourselves of our pledge.

THE FLAGS

American Flag

Every class at Family Karate begins and ends with a salute to the flag of the United States. Our short, silent pledge of allegiance is a bow, the traditional Taekwondo demonstration of honor and respect. In saluting the flag, we are indicating that we are proud to live in the United States and that we are grateful for its tradition of liberty and its laws that allow us peaceful assembly to study Taekwondo.

The Stars and Stripes of the United States is probably the best-known symbol in the world today, but there is some mystery surrounding its origins. Congressman Francis Hopkinson claimed to have designed it and Betsy Ross' grandson claimed that she made the first one, but historians doubt both stories. Also, there is no record of why red, white, and blue were chosen. Five years later the same colors were chosen for the Great Seal on the United States, and the meaning of its colors were listed as red for hardiness and courage, white for purity and innocence, and blue for vigilance, perseverance, and justice.



What is clear is that on June 14, 1777 the Continental Congress resolved that “the Flag of the United States be 13 stripes alternate red, white and the Union (replacing the British Union Jack) be 13 stars white in a blue field representing a new Constellation”. George Washington said of the stripes “The red from our mother country (England), divided by the white stripe of liberty to show that we are separate from her”.

The flag has come to be known by several terms of endearment; The “Red, White, and Blue” and “Stars and Stripes” are distinctive nicknames. Francis Scott Key first came up with the “Star-Spangled Banner” in 1814 when he wrote the poem that became our national anthem. William Driver was a 21-year-old sea captain leaving on his first command in 1824 when his mother and friends gave him a United States flag as a farewell present. He names his flag “Old Glory” and proudly flew it on voyages the world over.

The flag went through many transitions, including having stars and stripes added when new states joined the Union. In 1818 the number of stripes was set back to the original 13 and a new star was to be added to the flag on the Fourth of July after a new state joined the Union.

During the Civil War, President Lincoln refused to have the stars for the southern states removed from the flag. Since 1960, the United States flag has had 13 stripes and 50 stars.

THE FLAG OF TAEKWONDO'S HOMELAND

In many Family Karate schools, the Republic of Korea's flag has an honored place next to the American flag. This is to remind us of Taekwondo's birth place.

The Korean flag is very unusual in its design. It does not represent any great event or person in Korean history. It does not portray Korean geography or politics. Instead it prompts us to think about our relationship with our fellow man, our world and our universe.

The central symbol is the yang/um in Korean, or yang/ying in Chinese. This ancient symbol represents all that is opposite but complimentary in perfect balance. It portrays harmony between the concepts that cannot exist without their opposite – light and darkness, masculine and feminine, good and evil, active and passive, construction and destruction, hot and cold, and so on.



The symbol in each of the four corners continues the same theme. The symbol in the upper left represents "heaven" and the symbol in the lower right represents "earth". The symbol in the lower left corner represents fire. The symbol in the upper right represents water. The Taegueki's theme of the continual struggle for balance and harmony is vital to the student of Taekwondo. Too much rain will destroy a crop as surely as too little. Too much pride will destroy a martial artist as surely as too little.