

Donald J. Burns

“When the student is ready, the teacher will appear. When the teacher is ready, the student will appear.” This old oriental philosophical saying depicts both the story of Don Burns’ teaching career at Indiana University and his life in general. In his own words Don expanded upon this philosophy:

The Korean term *kunja* can lead to an understanding of the philosophical foundation of the martial arts. *Kunja* is “a person of virtue, a true ‘gentleman,’ a wise person.” We refer to the term *kunja* in order to bring to our consciousness the idea that we should always be striving for excellence and balance, not only with physical technique, but in the entirety of our lives, a life where it is important to respect ourselves and others. It is a commitment to STRIVE for perfection. I feel that it is important that students have opportunities to study all sides of the martial arts—the physical sides (hurting and healing), the mental sides (philosophical and intellectual), and the spiritual sides (character development). Knowledge of all aspects of the martial arts will help a student to balance his or her development as a martial artist and, more importantly, as a human being.

In 2006 Don retired from Indiana University, having overseen the largest martial arts instructional program in the United States. At the time of his retirement, this program typically enrolled between 1,500 and 1,700 students per semester. In reflecting back on the program that he almost singlehandedly developed at IU, Don remarked:

One of our goals as teachers was to motivate students to want to continue the activity which we are teaching them after the class is over. I feel if I can get a student to join one of the martial arts clubs, start taking lessons at one of the martial arts schools in town, or in their hometowns, I have accomplished one of my major goals as a teacher. It means that I was able to stimulate that student’s interest in the martial arts over and above just getting a grade in class. I really feel a sense of pride when one of my students finally gets their black belt and starts to teach their own club or classes after they graduate and leave Indiana University.

Don’s professional dedication to the martial arts began early on. He began teaching and learning judo in 1961 in the United States Air Force, where he served as a physical conditioning specialist, a combative measures instructor, and a massage therapist. As a brown belt in judo and a second-year undergraduate student at IU Bloomington in 1967, Don began teaching judo for the School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (HPER). He graduated in 1969 with a B.S. in Physical Education and decided to continue at IU with a graduate teaching assistantship to teach judo and fencing. In 1970, as a second-semester graduate student, he was asked to become a part of the HPER faculty as an instructor and martial arts coordinator. Two years later he finished his M.S. in Physical Education and received his second-degree black belt in judo from the United States Judo Federation (1972). Shortly thereafter he co-authored with Stephen Thompson a teaching textbook on judo entitled *An Introduction to Judo for Student and Teacher* (1973; revised 1976). Always interested in the self-defense applications of the martial arts, he set out to expand his knowledge of other martial arts, and specifically, the study of taekwondo, a Korean form of karate. Don received his first degree black belt in taekwondo in 1975 and the seventh in 2001; the fifth is considered to be a “master” level.

His book *An Introduction to Karate for Student and Teacher* (1977) was designed not only to be a basic skills and foundations text but also to be a teacher’s manual to help inexperienced instructors in an introductory-level karate course.

In 1974 Don added another martial art to his portfolio, hapkido, a Korean martial art that is a combination of judo, karate, and the Japanese martial art of aikido, but specializing in street defense and police control techniques. The first IU hapkido course was introduced in the summer of 1974, and Don was the founder and first instructor of the

IU Hapkido/Self Defense Club in 1983. He received his first-degree black belt in 1976 and seventh-degree black belt in 1998, and published *An Introduction to Hapkido for Student and Teacher* in 1996. Since 1980 more than 340 of Don's hapkido students and more than 400 of his taekwondo students have achieved their black belts.

Don is the recipient of many honors and recognitions, and presently serves as the president of the United States Hapkido Federation. His list of awards includes Outstanding Club Sport Advisor, Division of Recreational Sports, 2004–2005; Faculty Teaching Award, Department of Kinesiology, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001; Black Belt (seventh degree), United Taekwondo Instructors Federation, 2001; Black Belt (seventh degree), United States Hapkido Federation, 1998; Seichem Master Tera-Mai Seichem, 1998; Touch For Health Instructor Energetic Life Balancing Institute, 1994; and Reiki Master Usui Shiki Ryoho, 1993.

In retirement Don plans to be involved in a number of activities, among them the completion of three books with his daughter Jennifer Beebe, who has a fourth-degree black belt in taekwondo and a third-degree black belt in hapkido. Jennifer, incidentally, is teaching martial arts at IU in 2006–2007. Don also plans to take more trips to Yosemite National Park to visit his daughter Bridget Rabon, who works as the general manager of the restaurants and hotels in the Yosemite Falls area of the park. One of Don's true joys is his wife, Janiece Jaffe, a jazz singer in the Bloomington area. With Janiece's performance career, they will together enjoy many opportunities to travel, home and abroad. Don also plans to continue to be active with the taekwondo and hapkido clubs on campus, as well as workshops in massage and reiki, and treatments for individuals.

David Skiroin