

Joe Airey's Martial Arts Journey
6th DAN Black belt
November, 2016



Martial Arts have been a personal interest for more than four decades. Bruce Lee's Enter the Dragon and David Carradine's Kung Fu popularized Marital Arts in American culture during the 1970s, resulting in increased demand for training and the establishment of many Martial Arts studios, some more reputable than others. Early experience in the study of Martial Arts was unfortunately tainted by months of training followed by the school closing its doors without notice.

The early 1980s involved a move to Saudi Arabia to work as an engineer. This facilitated an association with Sensei Pete Murphy (now Grand Master Pete Murphy), a then 2nd Degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do. Sensei Murphy ignited a renewed sense of excitement in the Martial Arts, and he acted as both teacher and mentor. That sense of excitement was evident in a quote taken from a personal journal in July, 1985 in which was written: "I am determined to keep at this (Martial) Art until I master it." Under Sensei Murphy's direction basic and advanced skills were learned and practiced, including how to effectively teach Martial Arts to others. Seminars were attended, and competition was experienced through participation in numerous tournaments. The rank of high brown was achieved prior to returning to the United States in 1988.

During that same year an association was established with Grand Master Ralph Krause and his ASKA black belt protégé's, Sensei Gene Archer and Sensei Mickey Archer. The reputation and skill of Grand Master Krause was widely known, as he was a pioneer in the teaching of Martial Arts. A personal interview is recalled with Grand Master Krause about prior experience and training, and he decided it was appropriate to re-test for high brown under his guidance. It was also required to complete the established hours of training and teaching under ASKA rules to meet black belt testing standards. This was

an exercise in humility, and required nearly a year to complete. However, in retrospect it was both thoughtful and proper, and enhanced the value of the ultimate goal. Hard work was required to meet Grand Master Krause's expectations, and that effort resulted in a successful black belt test at his Alameda NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS of ASKA and studio during July, 1989. There was a great sense of pride when Grand Master Krause awarded the new black belt. This was the realization of a long-time goal, but in reality was only a step in a much greater journey.

Martial Arts training continued under Grand Master Krause, and during the next decade there were successful tests for 2nd and 3rd degrees. In addition, during the 1990s training was pursued under Grand Master Larry Ritchie at the Black Belt Academy in Houston, Texas, and in basic and advanced defensive tactics at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia. In 1993 a commitment was made to be one of the instructors at the ASKA training facility located at the Southwest Denver YMCA. That commitment continues to this day.

A relationship with Grand Master Krause and ASKA enabled the furtherance of a lifelong study in Martial Arts. December, 1999 was the final test before Grand Master Krause, resulting in being awarded a 4th degree. The process of working toward the requirements to achieve a 5th degree was under way when Grand Master Krause passed away in 2008.

The passing of Grand Master Krause was not the end of the journey, but a transition that has been made possible through a continued association with the larger ASKA family and the inspired leadership of Grand Master Hien Pham. Hand selected by Grand Master Krause to continue the ASKA legacy, Grand Master Pham has endeavored to perpetuate Grand Master Krause's vision of ASKA as a Martial Arts association grounded in tradition, inclusive of all styles, and in service to the Martial Arts community. There is a strong sense of pride in the association with ASKA, with Grand Master Pham, and with the many ASKA students and instructors encountered over the years. A recent promotion to 6th degree by the ASKA Board of Directors is acknowledged humbly and with much gratitude. To quote Grand Master Hee Il Cho, "I know now that this attachment to Martial Arts is nothing transient, but will be with me for as long as I live." I intend to continue to pursue my attachment with Martial Arts throughout my life.

Joe Airey's