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LIFE BALANCE

Jack & Alesia Harvey

The Harvey family has mastered not only the art of Kuk Sool Won but also the art of blending family life with life in the dojang—and finding time for work, charity, friends, and one another.

By Donette Goodlett
Photography by Michael Hart

FAR LEFT: The Kuk Sool husband and wife team of Jack and Alesia (Lee) Harvey with son, Sean.

Husband and wife team, Jack and Alesia (Lee) Harvey, have very busy lives. They own two Kuk Sool Won™ schools in the metropolitan area of St. Louis, Missouri, which each offer up to 30 hours of classes every week (with at least one of the Harveys in attendance for each class) and frequently participate in demonstrations outside of regular class hours as well. They also have a seven year-old son, Sean, who must be helped with school, homework, and other activities. On top of all this, Lee Harvey works a regular, full-time job outside their school. She says, "If we didn't all practice Kuk Sool, we'd barely see each other. Instead, all three of us are together every evening. Sean has a table in the office area for his school work and art work, and we have another space in the building where he can play. Every day we get to exercise, have fun, and see our closest friends. Our lives are very busy, but incredibly full and rewarding. Our martial art is the key to making our lifestyle work."

Throughout the year, the Harveys hold entertaining school events that encourage strong ties between students and instructors. For instance, after each belt test, students enjoy having a formal promotion ceremony followed by a friendly potluck gathering; at the school's recent 15th anniversary celebration, held on a sweltering summer's day, students and instructors found a fun way to cool down with a water-balloon fight; and a beautiful state park is the setting for a three-day weapons training camp. At the end of the year, students from both the Harveys' schools celebrate the holidays at the nearby O'Fallon school with a formal awards dinner and dance.

In a different twist on fundraising, each year as a remembrance of 9/11, the students pay to participate in a charity demonstration. The students showcase their martial arts skills before family, friends, and spectators to benefit local organizations such as Paralyzed Veterans and Backstoppers, a group that provides financial support to families of police, paramedics and firefighters that have lost their lives in the line of duty.

Every April, most of the Harveys' students compete or help out at the St. Louis Kuk Sool Won™ tournament. "The first few years of the tournament, it was held in May. We had so many conflicts with proms, finals, weddings, and Mother's Day that we started scheduling it for the last Saturday in April. Often, this is the same weekend we celebrate our wedding anniversary. Somehow, that seems completely appropriate for our life," comments Master Harvey.

As busy as the Harveys are with their school activities, they are kept even busier by the students who consider them an important part of their own lives. Weddings, birthday parties, graduations, baby showers, and other events reflect the close relationships between the students and instructors. A third-degree black belt invited the entire school to attend his wedding in 2006, while in another wedding two years ago, Master Harvey gave away the bride (a second-degree black belt at that time) to a young man she had met at the world competition in Korea. Another classmate performed the ceremony and Assistant Master Lee was the Matron of Honor and the wedding coordinator. The bride and groom then left the ceremony after a walk under swords that were held by classmates in ceremonial uniforms.

Master Jack Harvey has been actively involved in Kuk Sool Won™ for the majority of his life. He started training in Galesburg, Illinois, in 1974. Master Harvey has traveled to Korea several times with Kuk Sool Won™ founder, Grandmaster In Hyuk Suh, where he participated in tournaments, demonstrations and interviews. He was awarded his fifth-degree in Korea

by Grandmaster Suh in October, 2002. He opened the first Kuk Sool Won™ school in Missouri in 1991. He has trained more than one hundred students to black belt level, many of whom still attend classes regularly. After having to move the school's location three times to accommodate a growing student population, the Harveys purchased a building in St. Peters, Missouri, to serve as their main location.

Assistant Master Lee Harvey started her martial arts career in California in 1988. "When I first started practicing, I had just gotten out of a difficult relationship. I wanted to learn some skills that would let me defend myself if I needed to. It didn't take long before I was attending class just for the joy of practicing. I loved the hard physical work, the self-discipline, and the mental effort it took to succeed. Kuk Sool Won™ quickly became central to my life, and I trained five to six days a week. When I moved back to Missouri in 1990, I was very disappointed to find that there were no schools within four hours of my home. Barely a year later, Jack moved to St. Charles and opened his first school. Within a few months, I was back to 15 hours and more of practice a week, and within a few years we were starting to build a new life together. I'm still amazed at how lucky we were to come together after starting almost 2000 miles apart." She has trained and taught with Master Jack for 15 years.

In their initial meeting with potential students, the Harveys ask them what they're looking for in a martial art. Over the years, Jack and Lee tallied a variety of responses: self-defense, weight loss and fitness, self-discipline and self-esteem, stress relief and competition opportunities. Others showed an interest in learning the tradition and history, while some had a desire to learn what they've seen in the movies. But when some of those same students were asked years later what they liked best about their martial art school, the responses were much less varied and carried a distinct theme: family. What makes a traditional, formal and disciplined martial art school feel like family to diverse, modern, 21st century Americans who live in an ever-changing society?

Master Jack Harvey has some ideas. "I started training over 30 years ago. Classes were small and very hard physically, but my classmates were like brothers and sisters to me. Everyone was supportive, and encouraged each other to succeed and do their best. From the beginning, when I opened my first school 15 years ago, I wanted to have that kind of feeling at my own school. The late Master Bob Zefo was a tremendous influence on me, and I used him as a role model for how I wanted to run my school." Master Bob Zefo was a fifth-degree black belt and a 31 year veteran of Kuk Sool Won™

> "Our martial art is the key to making our lifestyle work."

Assistant Master Alesia (Lee) Harvey with Grandmaster In Hyuk Suh prior to winning overall Black Belt Grand Champion at West Point Military Academy in 1996.

Grand opening of the Harveys' dojang in St. Peters, MO, February 2001. From left to right: State Representative Bruce Holt; Master Jan Butler (Davenport, Iowa); Sean Harvey; Asst. Master Alesia (Lee) Harvey; Master Jack Harvey; Walter Dimmick; Master Ed Sanchez (Galesburg, Illinois) and Mayor Tom Brown.

October 2000: Master Harvey is invited to help represent the United States at the Cultural Festival in Gyeongju, Korea.

Kuk Sool Won Texas Tournament in 2003. Left to right: Asst. Master Alesia (Lee) Harvey; Master Jack Harvey; Grandmaster In Hyuk Suh, with Sean Harvey; Alesia's father William Brooks; Jason Fisher and Kelly (White) Fleites.

Kuk Sool Won Seminar in Galesburg, Illinois, in 1976. Master Jack Harvey is fourth from the left.

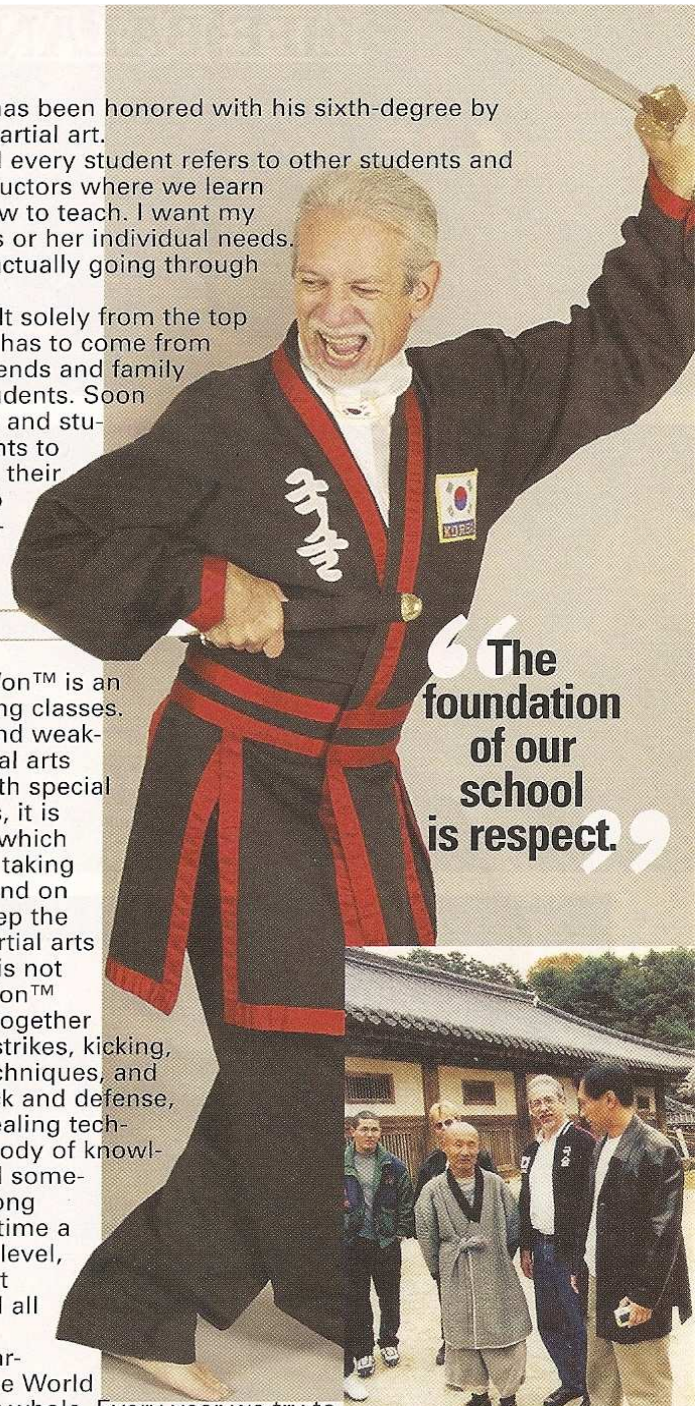
out of Knoxville, Illinois. Master Zefo passed away in 2006 and has been honored with his sixth-degree by Grandmaster Suh in January 2007 for his contributions to the martial art.

"The foundation of our school is respect. Every instructor and every student refers to other students and instructors as 'sir' or 'ma'am'. I have special classes for my instructors where we learn not just the Kuk Sool curriculum, but where I can teach them how to teach. I want my instructors to know each and every student, and to recognize his or her individual needs. Instructors should lead by example, and foster camaraderie by actually going through the classes with their students."

Assistant Master Lee adds, "It's not something that can be built solely from the top down. The instructors can promote a family environment, but it has to come from the students as well. When students attend classes with their friends and family members, it's easier for them to be supportive of their fellow students. Soon it becomes a self-perpetuating situation. Because the instructors and students are so accepting and encouraging, it's easy for new students to join. When those new students quickly feel comfortable in class, their family and friends are more likely to join as well. Then, we try to make it easier for family members to join by offering special discount rates for families. We've had a lot of families take advantage of our programs. They may not be very successful financially, but they've been invaluable to help foster the kind of environment we want to have at our schools."

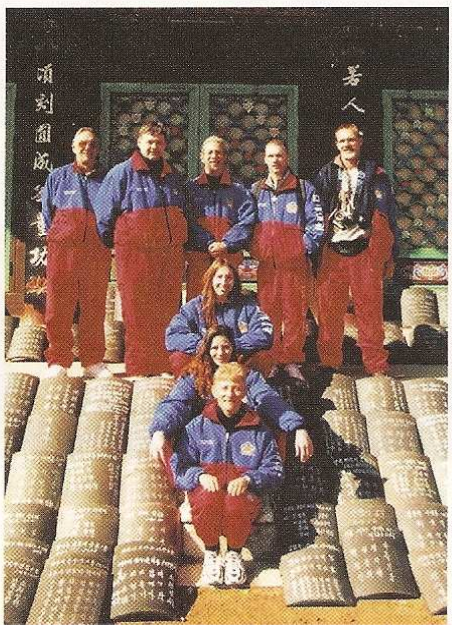
Both instructors agree that the fact that they teach Kuk Sool Won™ is an important factor in their ability to keep so many families attending classes. Master Harvey explains, "Each student has different strengths and weaknesses, as well as his or her own unique goal for personal martial arts training. To accommodate every student, from a five year-old with special learning needs to a 70 year-old student with physical restrictions, it is imperative to have a large toolbox of techniques and skills with which one works. There are many times when a parent and a child are taking lessons in the same class, when couples are learning together, and on occasion, a grandparent sparring his grandchild. However, to keep the feeling of a family, of everyone's being a member of a team, martial arts instructors have cohesiveness in each class taught: each lesson is not separate in itself, but rather part of a complete plan. Kuk Sool Won™ is a systematic study of all of the traditional fighting arts which together comprise the martial arts history of Korea. It incorporates hand strikes, kicking, joint locks, pressure points, throws, falling, grappling, animal techniques, and a large variety of weapons. In addition to these methods of attack and defense, however, Kuk Sool Won™ is also concerned with the study of healing techniques and the development of internal power. This enormous body of knowledge not only provides each student with the opportunity to find something at which he or she can succeed, but it also provides a lifelong learning experience for all students. Regardless of the length of time a student has been a part of class, regardless of the student's belt level, there is something new to learn and practice. This is a martial art that never gets boring and that offers something for all ages and all capabilities."

Assistant Master Lee adds, "Not only is our martial art style particularly adaptable to all types of students, but as members of the World Kuk Sool Association® we get the sense of belonging to a larger whole. Every year we try to attend as many Kuk Sool Won™ tournaments as we can, because it's like going to a family reunion. We get to visit with instructors from around the globe and meet new members. It's



"The foundation of our school is respect."

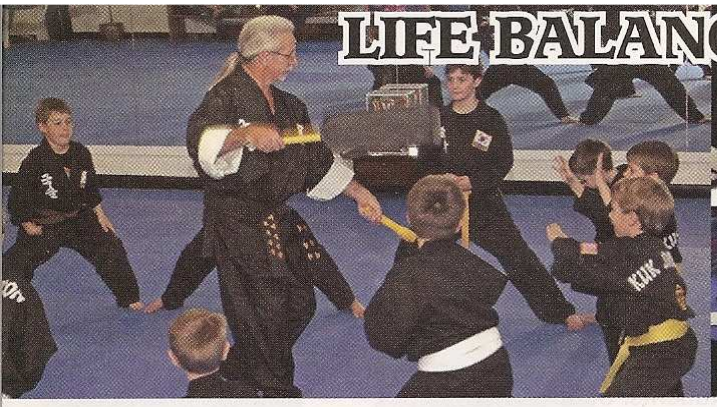
Master Harvey discusses ki training with Master Sung Jin Su, a local monk, and other team members at Halinsa Temple, South Korea, October 2000.



Master Harvey opened the first Kuk Sool Won school in Missouri in June of 1991.

Master Harvey led a team of students to compete at the World Championships in Gyeongju, SK, in October of 2002. Back row (left to right): William Brooks, Sr., Mark Allgeyer, Master Harvey, Jason Fisher, William Brooks, Jr. Seated (front to back): Denise Bauman, Kelly (White) Fleites, and Alesia (Lee) Harvey.

LIFE BALANCE



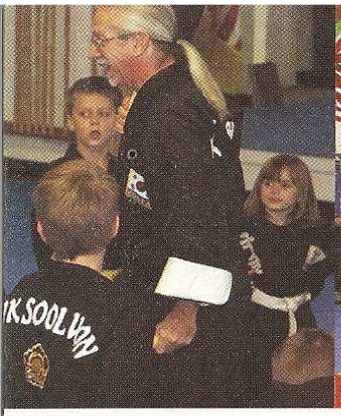
The Harveys train as a family. Here Master Harvey promotes his son, Sean, to his next belt level in August of 2006.

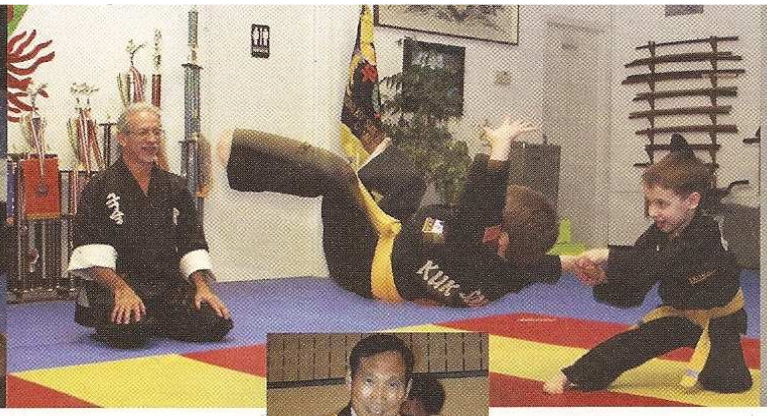
ABOVE LEFT: Master Harvey and some of his students enjoy a blocking drill. LEFT: The Harveys instructed students from the O'Fallon, St. Louis, and St. Peters Kuk Sool Won™ schools at a weekend weapons camp in August, 2006.

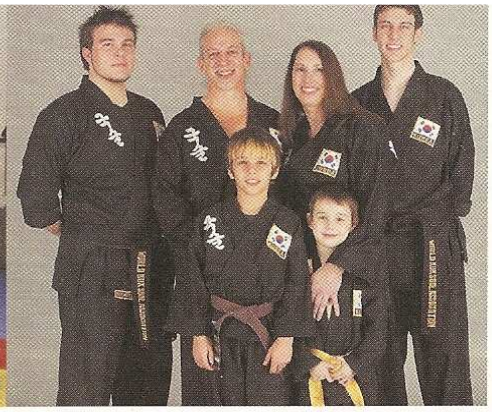
great when our students get to see how our martial arts practice can help bridge the differences between cultures around the world."

Master Harvey concludes, "I don't ever see myself retiring. Even if my son should someday decide to take over the everyday teaching at our schools, I'll still be involved. I can see someday spending more time traveling to more Kuk Sool Won™ events than I do now, and maybe just teaching the black belt and instructor classes, but martial arts will continue to be an integral part of my life. I'm extremely fortunate to have found a partner that feels the same way. I look forward to many more happy and

Kuk Sool Self-Defense Techniques







ABOVE: Students Tom Simmons, Alex Lemen, and Faith Kasper wait for instructions from Master Harvey. ABOVE RIGHT: Master Harvey teaches his son, Sean, and fellow student Jeremy Josar a combination joint lock and throwing technique.

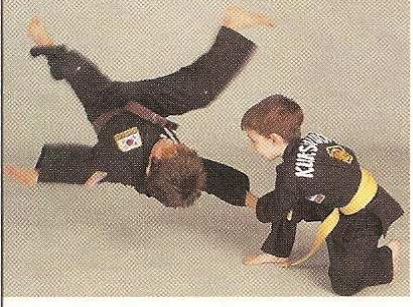
healthy years of training and teaching with my wife and son. The family that trains together, stays together."

With that said, young Sean sits down at his table to work on his spelling homework. Before that moment, he was busily playing with friends that he has made while their parents and siblings take class. Assistant Master Lee Harvey flips through tournament pictures to see what needs to be copied and what needs to be stacked as gifts to students and instructors. She answers the phone and encourages another caller to come in for lessons; however, she is interrupted to help with the growing number of young students attending a beginning children's form class. Master Harvey oversees the dojang; frequently stopping to encourage, support, and train the youngsters and their parents who hope to one day deserve to wear a black belt. The five family units in attendance prove what Master Harvey stated, "The family that trains together, stays together." ●

Sean Harvey and Grandmaster In Hyuk Suh at the Kuk Sool Won World Championships in Houston, Texas in October 2006.

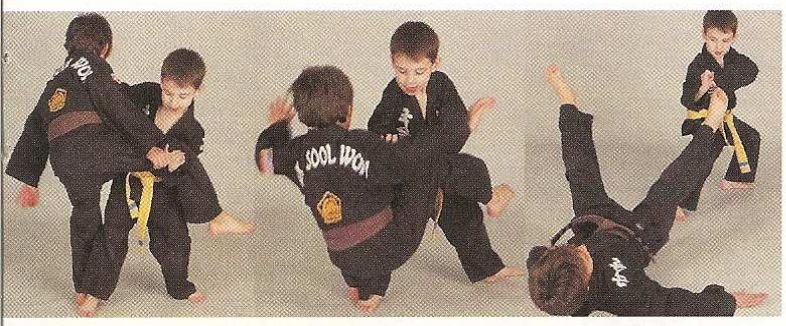
ABOVE: Several of the Harveys' advanced students volunteered to demonstrate techniques for this article. In the back row, from left to right, are Ryan Faulkner, Master Jack Harvey, Assistant Master Lee Harvey, and Matt Faulkner. In the front row are Sean Gouveia and Sean Harvey.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Donette Goodlett is a high school English teacher in St. Charles, Missouri, and a third-degree black belt in Kuk Sool.



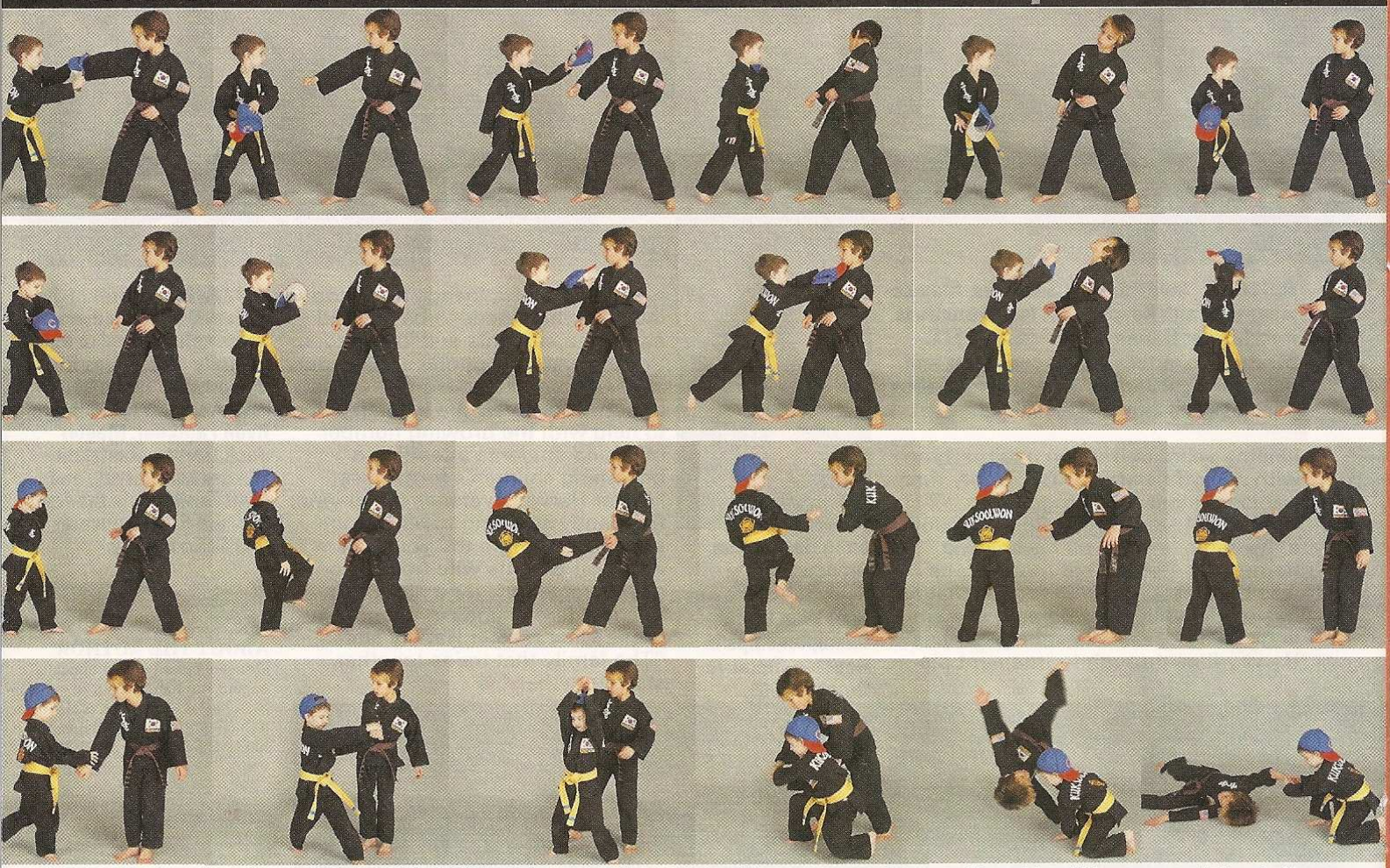
Kuk Sool Throwdowns

Sean Harvey defends against an attack from a larger child. He blocks two punches, trapping the opponent's hand on the second punch. He disrupts the opponent's balance with a kick to the head, then executes a joint lock, steps through and throws the opponent to the ground. Both children and adults are taught throwdown techniques.



LEFT: When an opponent attacks with a round kick, Sean blocks the kick, trapping the leg. His other hand grabs the opponent's jacket at the shoulder, disrupting his balance. Sean sweeps the opponent's standing leg, knocking him to the ground.

LIFE BALANCE Kuk Sool Self-Defense Techniques



ABOVE: Sean blocks a punch with his ball cap, then uses the cap to strike pressure points on either side of his opponent's head. He turns the cap around, and uses the bill to strike a pressure point in the throat. He replaces his cap and kicks his opponent in the stomach to disrupt his balance. Sean grabs his opponent's hand, executes a joint lock, steps through, and throws this opponent to the ground.

Adult Techniques

ABOVE: Master Harvey blocks his opponent's round kick, trapping the leg and locking the ankle. He turns, twisting the ankle and knee to execute a leg throw.

Adult Techniques

All technique photos by Michael Hart

Assistant Master Lee Harvey defends against a round kick by first blocking the attacker's kick, then trapping the leg. Her right hand hooks over the top of the leg as she spins toward the attacker. An elbow strike to the opponent's solar plexus brings his head down, where she can hook his neck with her left arm. She then executes a hip throw.