

Totally TaekwonDo

The Global Tae Kwon Do Magazine

May 2022 Issue 159



Sturdy Links



**Catching Up With
Simon O'Neill**
*Author of The
Taekuk Cipher*

**“Never Quit, Git
Back on the Horse”**

“Never Quit, *Git* Back on the Horse”

By Casey Jones



Casey's father braining a young gelding to lead by a halter.

“Dad, I’ve never broken a horse before.” I pleaded.

It was late summer of 1964 and I had just turned 12 years old. My father was working a young gelding in the next pen on our ranch. He hollered back, “Just saddle him up and get on.”

I peered through the wooden fence at a young Shetland pony that was agitated and bucking in one of the corrals. He was unhappy and disgruntled by his confinement. I knew from watching an older brother train a Shetland they were unpredictable and often mean. Glancing again through the fence, the pony appeared more menacing by the minute.

A strong breeze blew across my face and quickly dried the meager droplets of sweat on my forehead. We had had little rain and the prairie of eastern New Mexico was parched and brittle. My ears picked up the faint sound of the wind singing through the dry grass. An occasional tumbleweed danced across the small trail leading from our old truck to the corrals. A few hundred feet farther, the windmill’s blades picked up speed and filled the air with a soft whoosh and clang sounds of metal pumping water from deep within the earth’s core. The cool fresh water was gushing from the spigot into a small pond where several head of cattle were drinking.

I approached the corral gate carrying a bridle, small blanket, and my old saddle.

Opening the gate, I timidly walked closer to the skittish horse. He nervously backed up to the nearby fence, so he had nowhere to turn. I laid the blanket and saddle down on the ground and pulled from my pocket a wad of alfalfa. As he munched on the green hay, I gently placed the small bridle over his head, slipped the bit into his mouth, and tied the reins to the nearest post. I softly rubbed his back and whispered, "Easy boy." Within a few minutes, I had managed to saddle him and climb on.

I gradually nudged him toward the middle of the corral and thought, "Boy this was too easy". Suddenly he became aware that he was no longer tied to the fence. He reared his head and charged, aiming straight for the water tank at the other side of the pen. The pint-sized stallion took several leaps forward, jumped over the edge of the tank, and threw me headfirst into the frigid water. The icy chill slapped my face. I was in shock over the sudden rollercoaster events.

My face scraped the bottom of the tank, and pain seared through my scalp. Every inch of the tank underwater was covered in slimy algae making it difficult for me to stand. I reached for the edge of the trough and pulled myself up and

crawled out of the watery casket. My water-soaked boots sank about a half inch into the manure covered dirt.

The Shetland was thrashing about, stuck half in and half out of the tank. Grabbing the reins, I jerked him up and his front hooves soared back and over the edge of the tank. He was somewhat dazed from the freezing water and seemed calmer.



Casey age 4, on Rocky ½ Shetland, not the Shetland written about in this article

My father's voice in his southern drawl yelled from the other pen, where he was teaching the gelding to lead by the halter. "Git back on that horse!"



Casey age 4 on a Brahma Bull

I knew that I had to immediately comply, or my backside would be greeted by his leather belt. My father was stern, and I never questioned or disobeyed him without regretting it.

Wiping my wet hair, matted with the dark green slim, away from my eyes; I grimaced from a burning sensation on my cheek. I reached for the

saddle horn, placed one foot into the stirrup and was back in the saddle within seconds. My wet britches felt as if they were glued to the leather saddle.

My father glared over to the fence; droplets



*Casey is middle top row, getting her green belt.
Students at Force of One in Clovis, NM*

of chewing tobacco seeped from the corner on his mouth. "I knew you could do it. *Never quit, always git back on the horse!*"

Many times, over the years, his message would echo inside my head "Never give up! Never quit! Always *git back on the horse.*"

At the end of 1999, I retired from a major airline, decided to leave Colorado, and moved back to New Mexico. Through-out my flying career, I jogged 3-5 miles on every layover. Running kept me lean enough for the airlines' standards for weight which were very strict at that time, and it was a great way to discover a new city. I developed a passion for almost all forms of exercise including, cycling, and swimming. But as I grew older, I became more and more complacent. Several injuries ended my ability to run, and I had evolved into somewhat of a computer nerd. To be honest, I was lazy. I had plenty of excuses of



Warm Up Drills

course, i.e. I had written a book, gone back to school for my doctorate, and was developing my latest career, building websites. Then at the end of February 2021, I walked into Force of One, Martial Arts School located in Clovis, New Mexico, and met Master Eric Suan.

At almost 70 years of age, I was by far the oldest "kid" in the class. During the first month, a few students were uncomfortable with my presence. I was an outsider and older than their parents. During one evening class as a white belt, I was in line waiting for my turn to break boards. The student instructor asked me how many I wanted. Without hesitation I said "FIVE"! He immediately placed five boards on top of two cinderblocks used to hold them up off of the mat. I was completely unaware that everyone was watching. The first fist strike nothing happened, not even a wobble. After my second strike the five unbroken boards seemed to glare back at me in utter defiance. "Stop hitting like a girl!" An inner voice screamed, echoing my older brothers in childhood. My entire universe swiftly fixated on the boards, one on top of the other. I slowly inhaled, mentally pulled up my cowgirl britches, and with one quick sweep my right arm came up. The air around me grew heavy, every inch my body felt as if it was hardening. Nothing was going to stop me from shattering those boards. NOTHING!

BAM! I struck the boards with all my might, breaking all five. One of the cinderblocks fell over because it was also, broken. Suddenly everyone including parents were clapping and giving me a thumbs up. As I walked back to the line, I said to the students waiting for their turn "Never quit, never give up!" My father's voice was ringing in my head "Always *git* back on the horse!"

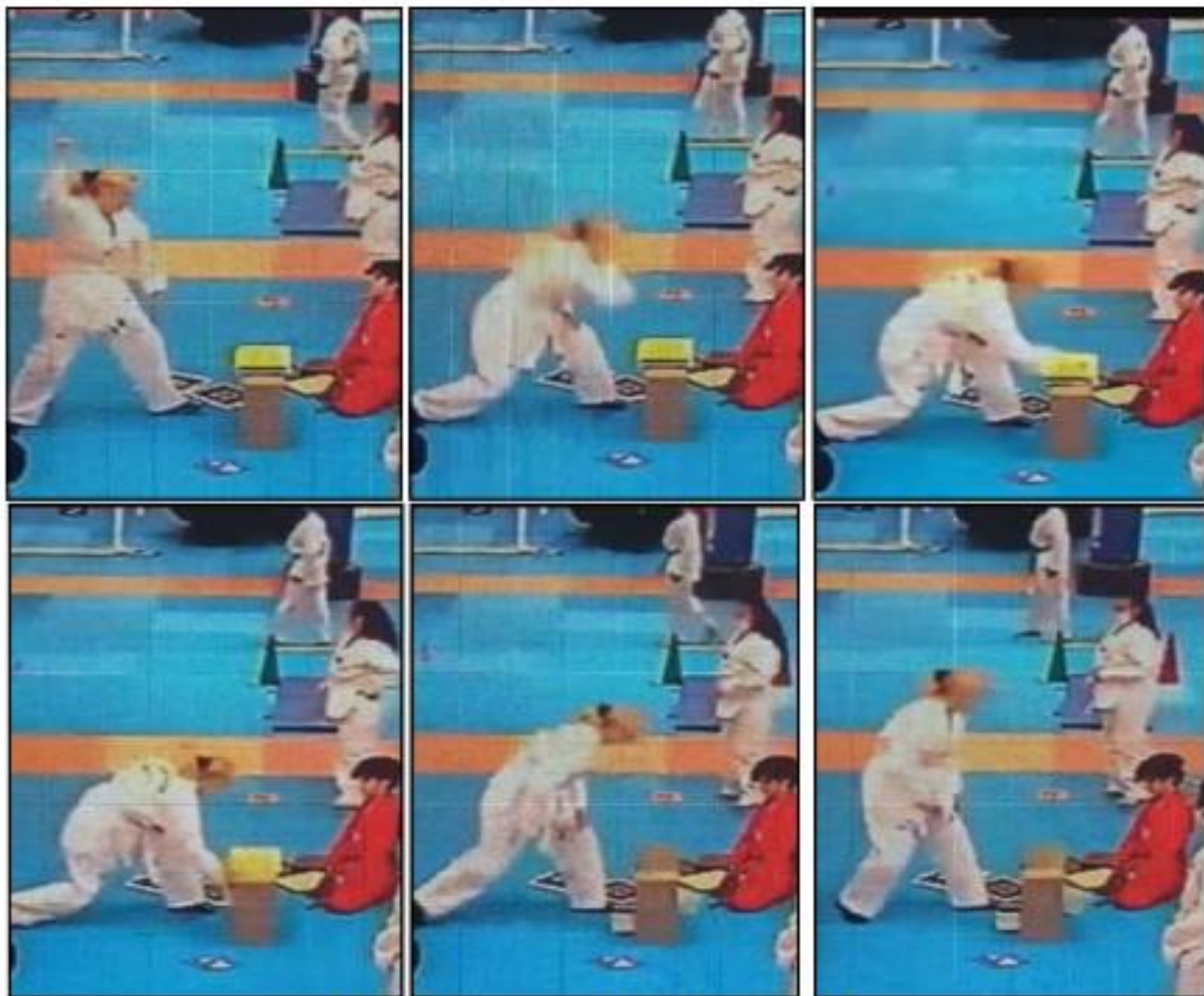
Because of my five seconds of fame, the students were suddenly more accepting of my presence. Master Suan had also, told the entire class, "Anyone despite their age, old or young deserves respect for getting on



Stretching



Pad Work



Some stills from a short video of Casey's break.

You can view the video here:

<https://www.facebook.com/1009449134/videos/10221810425742387>

And here is another video from a different angle:

<https://www.facebook.com/1009449134/videos/10221804642957821>

the mat”.

I have become the unofficial “grandmother” to many of the young martial artists. Being in class with them is one of my greatest joys each week. Within one year, I moved up in belt ranking and tested for my purple belt. Over and over parents come to me after class and tell me how I have encouraged them to exercise. They admit

that they were shocked that a “kid” my age was in the class. But why should that stop anyone? It had taken me months to make the decision to step onto the mat. I knew that I was going to feel awkward at first. But I also, knew that within a few years of effort, I would be one of the instructors wearing a black belt.

I have been athletic most of my life, but

TaeKwonDo is by far the greatest workout I have ever experienced. Even though I am very sore after each class, I am sleeping better, my posture has improved, and I am more mentally alert. I believe that the aches and pain that comes from the intense workout, saves me from some of the physical deterioration which is normal with aging.

The rewards are numerous: increased flexibility, improved muscle tone, better coordination, lower blood pressure, improved heart rate, stamina, and balance. The other benefits are particularly advantageous for older adults. For example, TKD boosts self-confidence, relieves stress, improves brain health, and teaches self-defense to a population that is very vulnerable to being preyed upon by criminals. In addition, many research studies have shown that physical exercise is extremely effective in the treatment and lowers the risk of developing Alzheimer's. As baby boomers age more Americans are susceptible to this deadly disease.

My father's sage advice directly corresponds to several of the basic tenants of TKD, perseverance and an indomitable spirit. Many times in life I have had to change directions, follow a new or different path. But instead of saying the words "I can't or I quit" I live by three simple words "How can I?"

My advice to "kids" of all ages, if you really want something then get on the mat and when you get bucked off, *git* back on the horse. Failures are normal, if you are actually doing something with your life. The only people that never fail, are the ones that never try. With patience and determination, you can become skilled at almost anything at any age.



Doing The Forms



Chatting with other students at Force of 1

The Five Tenets of TaeKwonDo

Courtesy
Integrity
Perseverance
Self-control
Indomitable Spirit

Force of One School in Clovis, New Mexico

Master Eric Suan, 5th Dan Master Instructor, started Martial Arts and Boxing at age of 6. He enlisted in the US Air Force which permitted him to live, train, compete, and instruct for 11 years in Okinawa, Japan. After 22 years, Master Sergeant Suan retired from active duty at Cannon Air Force Base, in Clovis, NM where he owns and runs Force of One. The school specializes in Olympic Style Taekwondo, Mixed Martial Arts, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, Cage Fitness, Weapons, and Little Dragons. Master Suan's teaching philosophy is combining the gentleness of a mother and the toughness of a father.

<https://www.facebook.com/Forceofone>

<http://forceof1.com>



A dying breed of vigilantes struggles to survive as infighting and hidden enemies attack it from all sides...

One man stands tall amid the chaos...

But can he save his friends – and himself?

FIND OUT IN

THE DOJANG

A NOVEL BY MAREK HANDZEL

AVAILABLE NOW ON AMAZON

