

The T.K.D. Flash

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The National Newsletter of the United States Taekwon-Do Federation

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Master Ricky Todd hosted a U.S.T.F. Referee Certification Course on March 14 at Axe TKD.

The Maestas Team Challenge was held on March 21, at the Apex Rec Center in Arvada, CO.

Master Ricky Todd and Axe Taekwon-Do are sponsoring the **Second Annual Axe Taekwon-Do Tournament** at Bellevue, Nebraska, on May 9. Master Tom Cope is the Tournament Director.

A Black Belt test will be conducted in Casper, Wyoming on April 4.

Grand Master Mike Winegar will instruct a Class B U.S.T.F. Instructor Seminar on April 25 & 26. Contact Headquarters for details.

The Utah Cup Tournament will be held on May 30.

Grand Master Winegar taught A Class C Instructor course to over 46 students On February 21 and 22 at Broomfield CO. One of the highlights was the kicking section of the program, something new in the Class C program. There were a few more updates to add to the USTF Patterns book that is currently at the printer. U.S.T.F. continues to set the high standard it ought to.

The United States Taekwon-Do Federation's **National Championships** for 2009 will be held on June 26 through 28th in Kelso, WA. The Tournament Director is Washington State Director David Mason, who can be contacted at 360-601-7713. Check out tournament materials at www.mountainview.cmasdirect.com



Nice tuck! Grand Master Mike Winegar unloads during the Class C Instructor's seminar in February.

The Utah State Championship Tournament will be held November 7.

The Region 5 Black Belt Regional Test for 2009 will be held on July 18 in Madison, WI. Master Renee Sereff will preside.

In over thirty eight years of teaching Taekwondo, Master Gary Meek, VIII Dan, life-long member of the United States Taekwondo Federation (USTF), has had the honor of presenting numerous first degree black belts. But on February 15, 2009, he did something he's never done. He presented not one, but two Honorary 1st Degree Black Belts.

These black belts were not presented for years of training, but for years of upholding the tenets of

Taekwondo. Charlie and Nadine Freese have been involved with the United States Taekwondo Federation for many years, Charlie as a supportive father and Nadine as both a student and active parent. They appreciated the discipline and respect Taekwondo taught their children, partially because of their careers in the Air Force. They were proud when both their children earned black belts. Their son Tom earned his I Dan, then went on to become a paratrooper in the Army and serve multiple deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan. He is preparing for his 4th tour in Iraq this year! Their daughter, Catherine, earned her III Dan. She recently earned her Masters in Counseling and is going on to her PHD! Charlie and Nadine never thought they would have the honor of receiving their own black belts, but things were about to change.

Charlie and Nadine have been through what many might call a lifetime of trials. In the fall of 1996, Nadine was in a serious head-on auto accident that left her with a broken hip, shattered knee cap, multiple fractures in the ankle, and a broken arm. She was medically discharged from the Air Force due to her injuries. In December the same year, Charlie was diagnosed with congestive heart failure (CHF), a degenerative heart condition. This diagnosis was immediately following Charlie's retirement after 25 years of service to his country in the Air Force.

Throughout the next few years, Nadine struggled to overcome the injuries she suffered from the accident. During this time, she trained periodically with Master Meek, but due to her extensive injuries and the ongoing pain in her hip and her fused ankle, was never able to earn her black belt.

Charlie, being the supportive husband and father, celebrated each Taekwondo achievement his family made as if it were his own. Seeing his children progress in Taekwondo was something he took pride in. He pushed Tom and Catherine to train hard and to uphold the tenets. It wasn't until years later that everything Master Meek, Charlie, and Nadine had taught their children would become a very active part of their own lives.

Over the years, Charlie's CHF took a toll on his body, and in October of 2006, his doctors decided to put in a pacemaker/defibrillator. Over Christmas, Charlie and Nadine noticed his pacemaker incision wasn't healing properly, so they took him to the hospital. The doctors decided to remove the



The Freese Family: from left, Catherine, Nadine, Charlie, and Tommy.

pacemaker and encouraged Charlie to begin the process of getting on the transplant list. His family pushed for him to do it, but he was reluctant at first, unaware of how weak his heart had gotten.

A short time later, Charlie was readmitted to the hospital and he agreed to be put on the transplant list. Due to the severity of his condition, he was moved to the top of the list. The family was told that there wasn't much time left. Tom took a few days leave from his duty at Fort Bragg to spend time with his dad. Four days later, literally a miracle happened, and a wave of relief came over the family when a heart became available. On February 26, 2007, Charlie received his new heart.

For the next few months, Charlie worked hard towards his rehabilitation, with the hopes of going home with a second chance at life. While Charlie rehabilitated, Nadine dealt with preparing

Pictured with
Master Gary
Meek are
Honorary First
Dans Charlie
and Nadine
Freese.



their house for Charlie to come home. A full renovation had to be done to create a sterile environment, which kept Nadine and Catherine focused on the house. On April 20, 2007, Charlie finally came home.

Charlie and Nadine were faced with an unexpected emergency complication 48 hours later. He was back in the hospital, not from complications with his heart, but from a ruptured colon. He was taken into emergency surgery to have the toxic poison removed from his body. Once again, the family was told the prognosis was grim. Tom and his family rushed home again, with Tom's third deployment to Iraq looming just days on the horizon. Tom deployed, not knowing what Charlie's outcome would be.

Weeks later, little by little, Charlie began improving. He fought hard to bring his body back from another near death experience. Meanwhile, Nadine worked full time and was at her husband's side during all her spare time. Charlie was moved to a rehabilitation hospital over an hour away, and still she traveled to be with him, staying in a nearby hotel every weekend.

After 15 long months of recovery, Charlie was finally well enough to come home again. Still in a wheelchair, he was able to take care of most of his own

needs. He attended physical therapy several times a week while undergoing dialysis 3 times a week. He did well for a while, but in October 2008, Charlie's body began rejecting food and he started getting weaker. Nadine's full time job became taking care of her husband. In January of 2009, Charlie's body was unable to keep up and he was rushed to the emergency room.

Charlie was hooked up to breathing machines and feeding tubes, and the family was called to come to the hospital once again. The doctors told them they were unsure why Charlie's body was declining. After many tests, the doctors said Charlie was experiencing temporary paralysis due to neurological problems, and again, the prognosis was uncertain. Nadine went back to spending her days by Charlie's side at the hospital while he began rehabilitating again.

It was during this time that Master Meek felt the need to recognize not only Charlie, but Nadine as well due to the way they were exemplifying the tenets of Taekwondo. Master Meek approached Grand Master Charles E. Sereff, IX Dan, President and Founder of the United States Taekwondo

Federation, and Master Renee Sereff, VIII Dan, with the idea of honoring them. It was decided that on behalf of The United States Taekwondo Do Federation, Master Meek would present Charlie and Nadine with Honorary First Degree Black Belts. Master Meek traveled from North Carolina to Nebraska to do the presentation while Charlie was still in ICU at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. This was done at Master Meek's personal expense as he felt it was something that needed and deserved to be done.

In late February 2009, Charlie was transferred back to the rehab center an hour away from Nadine. Still committed to his recovery, they celebrated the second anniversary of his heart transplant. Tom is preparing for his fifth overseas combat deployment this fall. Regardless of the outcome, Charlie and Nadine will continue to fight, showing tremendous perseverance and indomitable spirit. Just in case anyone doubted them, one day recently after waking up unable to talk, Charlie made a fist with one hand, punched it into his other hand, and mouthed the words, "Keep Fighting."

March 5, 2009 Lahaina, Maui

Sir:

Master Renee' Sereff taught for Mr. Randy Casco, VI Dan, USTF Hawaii State Director's Class. Mr. Casco has taught at this school since 1982. His students

train in a small gym at the Rec Center. Mr. Casco attended the University of Northern Colorado and trained with Grand Master Winegar. After graduating he went back to Maui and has taught Physical Education and Taekwon Do. The Taekwon Do class is an elective at the school. Special Thank you to Mr. Casco for keeping the Taekwon Do dream alive in Hawaii! One of the things that makes Mr. Casco stand out is that he encourages his Taekwon Do kids to participate in school athletic activities even if it takes them out of Taekwon Do for a while because he feels that Taekwon Do is for life and after the students graduate from College, they can start training again. He has had some help with his success with some of the Black Belts he has trained, including his wife, Stacy Casco. Wayne Cochran, Black Belt and instructor calls himself an old hippie and owns Maui Surfboard Company. I am sure between Mr. Casco his sons and Mr. Cochran, they have taught half of the Black Belts and families in the USTF how to surf! We sincerely Thank them for their hospitality and kindness! Mr. Kanoa Casco, Black Belt and Mr. Wayne Cochran, Black Belt spent several hours in the water with Master Renee' Sereff's grandsons this trip and we are happy to report, all of them did learn how to surf! If you get to Maui, be sure and train with Mr. Casco!

--Submitted by Master Renee Sereff



Master Renee Sereff and Mr. Casco's class in Lahaina