

1 On 1 With: Dave Hebler

ELVIS' FORMER BODYGUARD TALKS ABOUT PROTECTING THE KING, STUDYING WITH ED PARKER AND DEVOTING HIS LIFE TO KENPO

INSIDE KUNG-FU: How did you meet Ed Parker?

DAVE HEBLER: In 1958, I was in the Air Force stationed at March AFB outside of Riverside, CA. It was there that I started training with some Hawaiian guys who were practicing something that they called kenpo. They knew that I was getting out of the Air Force the following year and enrolling in school at Pasadena City College. They suggested that while I was there, I should look up this kenpo guy named Ed Parker who had a school just a couple of blocks from the college.

On or about June 1, 1959, I took their suggestion and after enrolling at PCC, I went to Ed's school where I met him for the first time. He took me out on the mats and showed me some moves (actually a bunch of moves). I instantly knew that I wanted to learn how to move like that so I signed up then and there and took my first lesson the next day.

IKF: What was it about Ed's teaching style that attracted so many great martial artists?

DH: The attraction for me was (in no particular order):

- His unbelievable speed and power (I wanted some of that);
- His ability to tailor his material to complement me and then push and encourage me to develop my personal skills;
- His ability to create a challenging environment that allowed (and encouraged) me to become the best that I could be;
- He never wanted to produce a bunch of students who were robots just executing material in strict compliance to a set-in-stone way of doing things.
- He encouraged (in no uncertain terms) his students to take what it was that he taught them, adapt that material to suit their individual physical and mental make-up and thereby allow them to develop their own personal style of kenpo.

IKF: How did you become part of Elvis' bodyguard crew?

DH: I went to a black belt workout at Ed Parker's school in Santa Monica, CA, one day in July 1972 along with about 20 other kenpo black belts. So, there we were, hav-



ELVIS PRESLEY & DAVE HEBLER - 1974

Hebler in class with Elvis Presley.

ing a great time smacking the heck out of each other when I noticed a commotion at the door and in walked Elvis Presley. I said to myself, "My goodness, that's Elvis Presley, what's he doing here?"

Anyhow, Elvis ended up on the mats working out with us and I ended up as his training partner. We all had a great time and I guess that Elvis really enjoyed beating on me because a few days later he came out to visit at my school in Glendora.

It was then that he gave me a gold "TCB" necklace and asked me to join him as one of his bodyguards. Obviously I said yes and that was when I became a member of the "Memphis

Mafia" as we were called then and now.

IKF: What were your responsibilities?

DH: Basically the personal protection of Elvis and his family, both at home in various personal activities and on the road at concerts and personal appearances. Did a lot of coordination with various law enforcement and private security agencies as well as with lots of concert venues.

Mostly though, I had the awful job of keeping all of those love-starved females from jumping on Elvis and killing him with love. I often had to sacrifice my own body to save his. What a crummy job, huh?

IKF: It's been said that Elvis loved martial arts. Was he good at it?

DH: Wow, tricky and difficult question to answer fully. I guess that the best way to answer that question is to say that Elvis Presley was the greatest entertainer that ever lived. He was not the greatest martial artist who ever lived. His instructors thought that he was good enough to be awarded a black belt and who am I to argue with their decisions?

His contributions to the martial arts in general and kenpo in particular were substantial, because of his public and



Dave Hebler, as captured by artist Ed Parker, Jr.

private support and genuine love for the martial arts. I mean, he wore a kenpo patch on his guitar!

IKF: What was he like offstage?

DH: Basically, Elvis was a really good guy, with a terrific sense of humor (he really was funny). He was fun to be around, down-to-earth and the most generous person I ever met. He was a caring and decent human being who genuinely loved his family, friends and fans.

Sadly, he became addicted to prescription drugs and those drugs definitely affected his personality as well as his body in extremely negative ways. I know that those drugs took a really decent person, turned him into a pale imitation of the real him and then killed him. The world lost the greatest entertainer who ever lived and those of us who were lucky enough to have had a personal relationship with him, lost someone who we considered family.

IKF: It's common knowledge that Elvis wanted Mike Stone dead. How did you help keep him alive?

DH: OK, here's the deal: Guy is in a marriage gone bad. In fact, this one is about over. Guy finds out that soon-to-be-ex is having an affair. Guy goes ballistic (never mind that the guy is not exactly Mr. Innocent himself). Guy (among other things) wants to see the other guy dead. All his friends are talking to him to basically get him to calm down and get his head working right. Eventually, he does and the respective parties in this little drama go their respective ways in peace. Sound familiar? Happens all the time.

IKF: Tell us about your new martial arts organization.

DH: Dave Hebler's Gift of Power is a martial arts organization whose primary mission is to provide a wide variety of quality services to its membership. These services include:

"I had the awful job of keeping those love-starved females from jumping on Elvis and killing him with love."

Training Opportunities:

I have gathered a teaching staff of 15 professional, world-class instructors whose teaching expertise and "on-the-ground" real-world experiences in a variety of very real and indeed dangerous situations, is, I believe, unique to any single organization that I'm aware of. Members of Gift of Power will have the opportunity to acquire some or all of the exceptional knowledge that these outstanding instructors can provide through their various workshops and training materials.

One example of the kinds of expertise available to our membership can be found in the practical applications of Trevor Sherman and Fred Mergen in their much-acclaimed "Kenpo Combat Science" training program. Their suggested curriculum includes:

- A basic but continuous fitness program that intensifies as rank increases.
- Approximately 100 self-defense techniques based on "relevant" attacks.
- Numerous clinch and takedown strategies both offensive and defensive.
- Approximately 30 submissions and submissions defense from eight ground positions.
- Approximately 10 boxing and kickboxing striking and footwork combinations chained together (resembling sets).
- In addition, a sound and fundamental Brazilian jiu-jitsu, muay Thai, American kickboxing, judo, women's self-defense and sharp-edged weapons offense and defense system is available.

Additionally, training programs with an emphasis on law enforcement apps, counter-terrorism tactics (covert ops), bodyguard training and security (VIP protection) tactics are available as well.

IKF: How can someone get more information of Gift of Power?

DH: Visit www.giftofpower.org or e-mail dave@giftofpower.org or info@giftofpower.org. ☎

Dave Hebler On:

Elvis: "He was fun to be around, down-to-earth and the most generous person I ever met."

Ed Parker: "At his base, Ed Parker was very much about practical solutions to self-defense situations."

Elvis' Death: "I know that drugs took a really decent person, turned him into a pale imitation of the real him and then killed him."