



MASTER ART VAN DER LEE
THE NETHERLANDS

How Taekwon-Do saved my life



TAEKWON-DO AFTER A HEART ATTACK





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MY HEART ATTACK

In 2008 I suffered from a heart attack... during Taekwon-Do training. I was 53 years old and I was pushing myself real hard, We played loud music from a boom-box, encouraging my students to work harder, push-ups, sit-ups, squats, running, jumping... I drilled them hard and I pushed myself even harder to set a good example for my students.

Although I was heavily breathing for more air, I still pushed on. It was a Black Belt class, so there were only advanced students who were used to severe training. I have always felt strong, agile, indestructible and invincible because of my Taekwon-Do training which I started in 1977. But suddenly, there it was.... I felt something snapping in my chest and there was a sharp pain between my shoulder blades.

I had to sit down and I immediately knew what was happening... I knew I was suffering from a heart attack. I did not become unconscious, so I told my students to stop and turn off the music. My student saw I was in trouble and with scared faces they asked me what was wrong.

Because in my work as an IT-manager at the Ministry of Economic Affairs, I was also head of the Emergency Response Officers. We regularly trained in First Aid, CPR, how



to clear the building in case of a fire, the use of an AED, etc. So, I knew what was happening to me, because I recognised the symptoms of a heart attack. I told my students I needed to be rushed to the hospital and not wait for an ambulance to come. I knew this was against First Aid protocol, but I did not want to lose a single second to get to professional help. They put me in a car and drove as fast as they dared to the hospital, which was not far away.

Arriving at the Emergency Department, I was rushed into an emergency room where the doctor checked my pulse,



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my blood pressure and made an electrocardiogram. After this, they brought me to an operating room where they locally sedated me and with a catheter they opened the cholesterol-clogged coronary artery. The entire time all this happened, I was conscious, I could talk to the doctors and answer their questions. I thought I was saved and I would return to Taekwon-Do training within a few weeks.

But this was not the case. I stayed in the hospital for a few days, so they could monitor me. The surgeon came to visit me and told me that I needed surgery, because my problems were far from over. Four main arteries were narrowed and would certainly cause problems in the future and a few other arteries (not main arteries) showed signs of narrowing.

The case is, that I am familiar with heart problems in my family. I come from a family with six children: three boys and three girls. All the men and my mother in my family have heart problems. So, my father, my mother and my two brothers already had heart surgery. And I am no exception to this, I also suffer from hereditary burden.

I knew these heart problems ran in my family and years before they happened to me, I had promised myself NOT to have heart problems! I never smoked and I never drank alcohol, I usually ate healthy food and I practised Taekwon-Do all the time. But still... it did happen. A week later I was to undergo surgery. I said goodbye to my wife and my children, because they also told me that three percent of the people who have this kind of surgery, do not survive... That was a very emotional moment for us. On the other hand, I could not believe that this could be the end of my life! I still had so many things to do and to learn. I could not abandon my loving family and my students.





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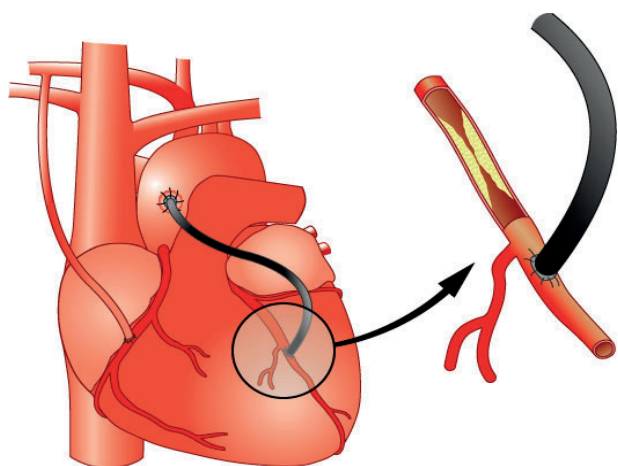
TAEKWON-DO AFTER A HEART ATTACK



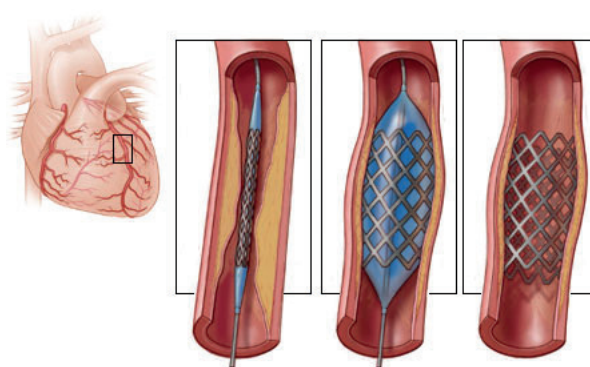
I was taken to the operating room where I was sedated and everything went black. Obviously, I survived the operation and I woke up with a tube in my mouth to help me breathe. I was so happy to be alive, only I felt like I was run over by a freight train. The surgeon had made an incision in my chest with a scalpel and then used a bone saw to cut through my sternum to open up my chest.

With a vein, they took out of my right lower leg, the surgeon made four by-passes, replacing coronary arteries. I also received six stents in other veins. A stent is a very small metal mesh to keep a narrowed vein open. So, a lot of maintenance was performed on my body. Of course, I still have the scars on my chest and my leg that always remind me of this life-saving operation. I had to stay in hospital for two weeks so the doctors and nurses could monitor my progress. Every day a physical therapist took me to the hospital gym where I had to exercise. I had to work on a home trainer bicycle and I had to walk on a conveyor belt, so my body got used to moving again. And then finally the word came: I was discharged and I could go home!

Picture of a by-pass



Picture of a stent



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Since my operation I use a lot of medicine every day. I take:

- Acetylsalicylic acid (to keep the blood flowing)
- Nebivolol (for the blood pressure)
- Amlodipine (also for blood pressure)
- Atorvastatin (to keep the cholesterol level low)
- Losartan kalium (for the functioning of the liver)

After my discharge from hospital, I was not able to return to my normal life as I was used to. Working at the Ministry of Economic Affairs was out of the question, my body and mind were not up to that. I was still monitored by the hospital and I had to follow a revalidation program with other people who also had suffered from a heart attack. Once a week I went to a training hall where physical therapists made us exercise a lot to strengthen our hearts again. This meant running, stretching and a lot of other drills. It felt good to be working out again.

I thought I was doing well and I looked forward to my Taekwon-Do training I intended to do again. I knew my dojang was in good hands because my twin sons (both International Instructor) had taken over the instruction of our students.

But I was wrong. Although my body was healing fast, my mind was something entirely different. One day, when I was in my revalidation program, my vision narrowed. It was like I was looking through a tunnel that was getting more and more narrow.

I still managed to sit down against a wall and call for help and then I passed out. I woke up on a stretcher from ambulance personnel and as it turned out, I had been unconscious for about half an hour and when I recovered I felt ok again. Nobody could tell me why this had happened. But I started to think that maybe the operation had not gone well, maybe I was going to have another heart attack, maybe I would not survive now...



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So, I became afraid. I tried to put these feelings aside by focussing on other matters like my family and my Taekwon-Do, but that did not really help. Once in a while a felt pressure building in my chest area like I was constricted. I had trouble breathing and I became dizzy and nauseous. This happened from time to time and when that happened, I thought I was dying. I even went to another hospital for a second opinion! Maybe the operation had not turned out all well, but when they internally examined me in the other hospital, everything was good.

I made another appointment with my surgeon and he described me yet another pill: Oxazepam. This is a tranquillizer and this really helps me through the agonies when these occur. Up to these days I occasionally use Oxazepam.

I was also advised to consult a psychologist to talk about my fears. Talking to a psychologist? Me? No way! That is for weak people, not for warriors like me.... But I went anyway and I never thought that really talking about my worries and fears helped me confronting them and give them a place in my mind. A safe place. So, it was not just the healing of my body that was important, my mind needed healing too. So, in the next weeks I went to my psychologist and we talked just about everything and it became clear that I was afraid of losing everything that was dear to me: My wife, my children, my family and Taekwon-Do.

About a year after my surgery, I started Taekwon-Do training on a regular basis again. I was in a very bad shape; I had no stamina, no flexibility and no strength. But with the help of my instructors, I slowly built up my strength again. I loved practicing Taekwon-Do again. I was recovering really well and in 2010, I successfully tested for 6th degree in the city of Utrecht, in the Netherlands and in 2016, for 7th degree in the city of Paris, France.



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So, why write about all this now?

Over fifteen years have passed since I suffered from my heart attack. This changed my life in a major way. Of course, my body is damaged, a part of my heart is not functioning anymore. Also, my mind was shaken: how could this happen to me? I could not believe it.

And now, I am writing this thesis as a part of the demands to be promoted to VIII-degree. Now that I am growing older, I am thinking about the past more and more. Things I have done, things I have not done, things I should have done, things I should not have done and things I should have done better.

Suffering from my heart attack was the most traumatic event that happened in my life. I know I pushed it from my mind and I even tried to push it out of my memory, but this is not possible. Thinking back about it all, makes me feel very sad. And these sad feelings can really make me feel depressed and that influences my life. But, they say that time heals everything. In my case I think that also applies to me, the traumatic memories are fading away and that is why I have found the courage to think and write about it.

What lessons can be learned?

First, you cannot control everything in your life. You can try to anticipate on a lot of things you might encounter, but things usually happen in a different way than you expect. There is an old saying: “change what you cannot accept, but accept what you cannot change”. Most people want to control the things in life, but that is almost impossible to do. If you really accept the way of life, then you find peace in your heart and mind.

Second, you only have one body. A man’s life expectancy is about eighty years. You want your body to function properly for at least these eighty years, but rather more. So, you have to take care of your body, keep it in shape, drink a lot of water, eat healthy food, don’t smoke, don’t drink much alcohol, although a glass of red wine once in a while keeps the blood thin. And of course, don’t use drugs.

Third, do things that make you happy. I am so lucky that next to my dear wife and beautiful children, I found another love of my life: Taekwon-Do. When I am in my dojang, wearing the dobok, I feel happy. Happy that I can practise Taekwon-Do techniques, tutoring my students, and share this with my fellow instructors.



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Happy when I am training with people of our association or participating as a referee at one of our tournaments. Happy when attending an IIC, meeting friends from other countries I met in the past years who share the same passion. Happy to see the Technical Committee, led by GM Hector Marano, whom I met in 2006 for the first time and still be amazed what a great knowledge and wisdom he possesses.

Epilogue

The surgeon who performed the heart surgery on me assured me that I also survived the operation because of my strong body. All the years of severe training really paid off: Taekwon-Do saved my life!

I think the surgeon is right about that and I am sure that when you train in Martial Arts, you develop a strong mind as well. I think that is one of the things General Choi Hong Hi meant with “Indomitable Spirit” The will to survive.

Thank you TAEKWON-DO!





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CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME:	Art van der Lee (male)
DATE OF BIRTH:	October 27th 1954 (69 years old)
PLACE OF BIRTH:	Rotterdam, The Netherlands
MARITAL STATUS:	Married
CHILDREN:	Three, 2 boys (twins, both VII-degree) and 1 girl (I-degree)
PRACTICING TAEKWON-DO:	Since 1977 (47 years)
DEGREE:	VII (H-7-7)
CLUB (owner):	OHDOKWAN (www.ohdokwan.nl)
OCCUPATION:	Retired, former IT-Manager, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Musician

DEGREE CERTIFICATES

I	H-1-484	June 24th, 1984 (ITF-Netherlands)
II	H-2-68	January 17th, 1994 (ITF-Netherlands)
III	H-3-36	June 21st, 1996 (ITF-Netherlands)
VI	H-4-26	December 22nd, 1998 (GM Choi Jung Hwa)
V	H-5-17	June 4th, 2006 (GM Marano)
VI	H-6-9	November 20st, 2010 (GM Marano)
VII	H-7-7	November 26th, 2016 (GM Marano)

INTERNATIONAL INSTRUCTOR CERTIFICATE

November 1st 1998 - Nr. 915

Instructor Plaque Certificate - Nr. 18014

Original metal school plaque - Nr. 5378

IUC

2005 - Cologne - Germany - International Referee A - Nr. 919

Participated as referee in the World Cup 2008 - Riva del Garda - Italy



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IDC

Online DO-course - 30/10 - 13/11/2022 - Nr. 006-0151

IIC's

1995 - Cologne - Germany

with General Choi Hong Hi

1998 - Arnhem - The Netherlands

with GM Choi Jung Hwa

1999 - Cologne - Germany

with General Choi Hong Hi & GM Choi Jung Hwa

2006 - Cologne - Germany

Grandmasters Marano, Trajtenberg & Bos

2007 - Steenokkerzeel - Belgium

Grandmasters Marano, Trajtenberg & Bos

2009 - Miesbach - Germany

Grandmasters Marano, Trajtenberg & Bos

2010 - Utrecht - The Netherlands

Grandmasters Marano, Trajtenberg & Bos

2011 - Benidorm - Spain - IIC & 1st ITF-Convention

Grandmasters Marano, Trajtenberg & Bos

2013 - Oostende - Belgium

Grandmasters Marano, Bos & Ung Kim Lan

2014 - Treviso - Italy

Grandmasters Marano, Bos & Ung Kim Lan

2016 - Paris - France

Grandmasters Marano, Ung Kim Lan & Master Paul McPhail

2018 - Amsterdam - The Netherlands

Grandmasters Marano, Ung Kim Lan & Master Paul McPhail

2022 - Dublin - Ireland

Grandmasters Marano, Ung Kim Lan & Master Jerzy Jedut

2023 - Vienna - Austria

Grandmasters Marano, Ung Kim Lan & Master Jerzy Jedut



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NATIONAL PARTICIPATION

1998 - 1999 - President of Dutch National Governing Body

2003 - 2004 - Member of the Technical Committee

2010 - 2019 - Member of the Technical Committee

2019 - Present Day - Member/Examiner of Taekwon-Do Teacher Committee

OTHER

- November 2012 - 2-day seminar with Master Jaroslaw Suska
- National referee since 1995
- Organiser of 3 National Championships - 1995, 1996 and 2012
- Referee at the 3rd ITF World Cup - Riva del Garda, Italy - 2008
- Organiser of the annual Beach Training Day. This is a free training for all association members located at one of our beautiful Dutch beaches
- Founder of the annual Grade Training Day
A free technical training for association members from 10th to 3rd grade
- Co-Organiser of a money-raising event for the ALS-foundation
- Co-Organiser of another money-raising event for the Foundation against Childrens Cancer



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CONTRIBUTION TO CH'ANG HUN TAEKWON-DO

Well known writer of Taekwon-Do books, Mr. Stuart Anslow, contacted me (through a Taekwon-Do forum) for his research on “Kihap” in the ITF Taekwon-Do patterns. In the early days we yelled at several places in the, then called “Hyung”, Chon-Ji to Choong-Moo. Mr. Anslow didn't know where in the pattern the Kihap should be expressed. As a collector of Taekwon-Do books, I possess the five books of the late GM Jhoon Rhee (published from 1970 to 1974 by Ohara Publications). In these books GM Rhee pictured the exact place where the Kihap was yelled. I made a list of these Kihap and send this list to Mr. Anslow who was very grateful. As a reward Mr. Anslow mentions me in his acknowledgements in his three volume books “The Encyclopedia Of Taekwon-Do Patterns” I am very proud of this acknowledgement and glad I could help Mr. Anslow.

HISTORY

As a little boy I was always very active. Running, jumping, climbing, etc. At school I was very good in gymnastics, but also often I was fighting with other boys because they called me names because of my partially Indonesian heritage. My mother came from the island of Java in the Indonesian archipelago. When I was in elementary school in the 1960's, it was rare to be of a different 'colour' in the Netherlands. When my mother learned that I was fighting a lot, she told me to start with martial arts training, to learn more about self-control. What a wise woman she was.

In the 1960's there were only Judo schools in Holland, so I took up Judo at a young age. And indeed, I learned about self-control. In the years after, I tried a lot of other Martial Arts like: Karate, Kempo, Aikido, Kendo, Pencak Silat, but none of these arts seemed to 'fit' me. Only, in 1977, when I was already 23 years old, I went with a friend to a Taekwon-Do class. And there everything fell into place: I was awed by the fast high kicks, the jumping, the turning and the enormous speed and power I saw. The instructor there was Mr. Eddy Fonseca, a student of Mr. Jan-Willem Stoker who was a pioneer in Holland for Taekwon-Do. Mr. Stoker trained under GM Park Young Soo, who was stationed in the Netherlands in the 1960's. From that day I was hooked on Taekwon-Do. It was sad Mr. Stoker was not associated to a National Association, and after several years he stopped with Taekwon-Do and started with Kickboxing.



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At that time, I was a 1st degree, not recognised by I.T.F. and I did not like Kickboxing which was only about sparring. I wanted to train Taekwon-Do, but there were no other Dojang in Rotterdam or surroundings. So, in the early 1980's I started teaching Taekwon-Do at a community centre in my neighbourhood. I did this for about 5 years and then, with 2 friends I started my own Dojang in 1989: Ohdokwan.

In those days there were two Taekwon-Do Associations in Holland: The N.T.A (Netherlands Taekwon-Do Association) from Mr. Karel van Orsouw and the 'ITF-Belangengroep' from GM Willem Bos. This group of GM Bos became 'ITF-Netherlands' in 1992 and in 1994 my dojang 'Ohdokwan' joined ITF-Netherlands.

A sad day in my life was, In February 2008, while during training I suffered a heart attack. I was rushed to the hospital where a clogged artery was opened and a week later, I went into open heart surgery. I received four bypasses and some stents to keep other main arteries open. It took me several months to recover. Months I was not able to train and teach Taekwon-Do, this was a very dark period in my life. The good news was: I survived and the surgeon assured me this was because of my strong heart and body. Thank you, Taekwon-Do!

Now, over 30 years later, Ohdokwan produced about 70 black belt holders, some of them competed/competing in our national team at European and World Championships. Ohdokwan has the most International Instructors of our national association. I am especially proud of my twin sons, both VII-degree and both instructing the national team and national association members, so the future of Ohdokwan is secure, when I am too old to teach. I think we are the only family in the world (father and sons) with three Masters. And then I am also very proud of my sixteen year old daughter, who recently earned her black belt, first degree.

I am a serious collector of Martial Arts books, especially ITF-related Taekwon-Do books. My library contains over 200 Martial Arts books. Very proud of my first volume of the 15-volume encyclopaedia signed by General Choi Hong Hi in 1999 and my condensed encyclopaedia signed by GM Choi Jung Hwa in 1998.



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Up to this day I am very proud to be a Taekwon-Doïñ, associated to the original style created by General Choi Hong Hi. I will practice Taekwon-Do as long as I can walk, kick and punch. And when I die, I want to be buried/cremated, dressed in my dobok, so I can still practice and perhaps teach Taekwon-Do in the afterlife.

RECENT

At this moment I am instructing a new school that recently joined our association.

This new school has a background in WTF, but having participated in our competition-circuit, they wanted to join the ITF-Netherlands. The instructor and students from this school come from ethnic origin like: Turkey, Morocco, Iran, Surinam and other countries.

This dojang is situated in a suburb of Rotterdam where a lot of people from these countries live, not the best part of town. These people have no money.

Changing Taekwon-Do style means new uniforms, sparring equipment, association-fees, etc. Charging this instructor and his students for lessons and graduation-fees would mean a lot of money for these people, so I instruct and graduate them for free.

General Choi said: Taekwon-Do is for everybody, regardless their gender, religion and origin. I think spreading ITF-Taekwon-Do all over the world is most important.

In 2015 I promoted this instructor to 1st degree ITF and in 2017 to 2nd degree, after 4 years of intensive training at our dojang.



**TAEKWON-DO FAMILY VAN DER LEE
THE NETHERLANDS**