



SECRETS OF THE MASTERS

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Terry Wilson

**Terry Wilson:
The Martial Arts'
"Foot Soldier" of Fortune**



THE MARTIAL ARTS' "FOOT SOLDIER" OF FORTUNE

Adventurer Terry Wilson has traveled the world working in the entertainment business, winning five Emmy Awards in the process. But wherever he went and whatever he did, the martial arts were in one way or another a closely-related part of his life. In fact, Wilson's spent some 30 years in pursuit of martial arts excellence. This is his intriguing story.

By John Corcoran



"I warned you about ever comin' here again, Wilson," snarled the 15-year-old bully.

"Yeah, this time we're gonna' kick yer ass real good," added his buddy.

The third bully just stood there, not saying a word but he, too, wanted a piece of Terry Wilson. The reason for this confrontation was because Terry and his friend Mike, both of whom went to West Carrollton High School, had the gall to venture 10 miles down the road to go bowling in Miamisburg, thus invading the turf of the rival school.

This fight actually started three years prior when these same bullies chased Terry out of a local movie house. Once they discovered that he wouldn't fight back, they made it a habit to seek him out and at least embarrass him, but more often, beat him to a pulp in the process.

"I said drop the ball and get the hell outta here," warned the leader of the gang. "When he said that, I replied, 'Okay' — and smacked him between the eyes with the 16-pound bowling ball I was holding."

However, today was different. They didn't know it, but Terry had been studying karate for almost a year.

"That was back in the very early 60's," recalls Wilson today. "Long before Bruce Lee and Chuck Norris had made the martial arts a household word via the big screen. Back then, especially in Dayton Ohio, only a few people had ever heard about karate. And when they did, most of them called it 'that Jap fighting stuff.'"

Wilson chuckles as he thinks back to the incident in the bowling alley. "I knew what Custer must have felt like when he saw all those Indians coming at him. I was really scared, but those guys had bullied me long enough and it was time for me to fight back."

At that time Wilson wasn't quite a green belt and his fighting skills at best were limited, but he had mastered the *kiai*, karate yell.

In addition to his accomplishments in the martial arts, Terry is also a five-time Emmy award-winning television director, producer and on-camera host for shows like "PM Magazine" and numerous syndicated specials.



"The martial arts gave me a foundation from which to grow," says Wilson. "After a few months in the dojo I lost the blubber gut I'd supported since grade school and was finally able to see my shoes. But the most important thing I got out of the arts was the confidence that it gave me to do other things." One of the things this quick-witted black belt went after was a career in radio and television.

"I said drop the ball and get the hell outta here," warned the leader of the gang.

"When he said that, I replied, 'Okay' — and smacked him between the eyes with the 16-pound bowling ball I was holding. His eyes went crossed and he

fell backwards like a big ol' tree that had just been chopped down.

Then I turned and swung the bowling ball at his pal and nailed him right between the legs. Strike! He too fell to the floor gasping for air, and the third guy just ran away.

The really funny part is that after it was all over with, I remembered I forgot to kiai. So I gave out a loud KIAAAAA, then dropped into a cat stance. And that's what everybody at the bowling alley saw — me in a karate stance standing over two bullies.



Terry doing a flying sidekick at the Universal Studio Karate Stunt Show with the Urquidiz family (above).

Terry with Fumio Demura during a '74 Karate Special (far left).

Terry directing Eric Lee for a Karate Special in 1974 (left).



Terry at 15 doing his first radio show on WING in Dayton, Ohio.

Terry gets a smooch from Seymore the Sea Lion during a "PM Entertainment" segment at Sea World.



Terry and "Judo" Gene LeBell horsing around on Waikiki Beach Hawaii in 1976.

"We trained on mats [in jujitsu], but once a week we worked out on a hardwood gym floor. If you didn't know how to fall properly, you learned real quick because that floor was very unforgiving. And when we tested, it was against razor-sharp Bowie knives and broken bottles. More than one guy would end up needing a stitch or two. But we knew that it was better to get cut by a friend in the dojo than by an attacker in the street."

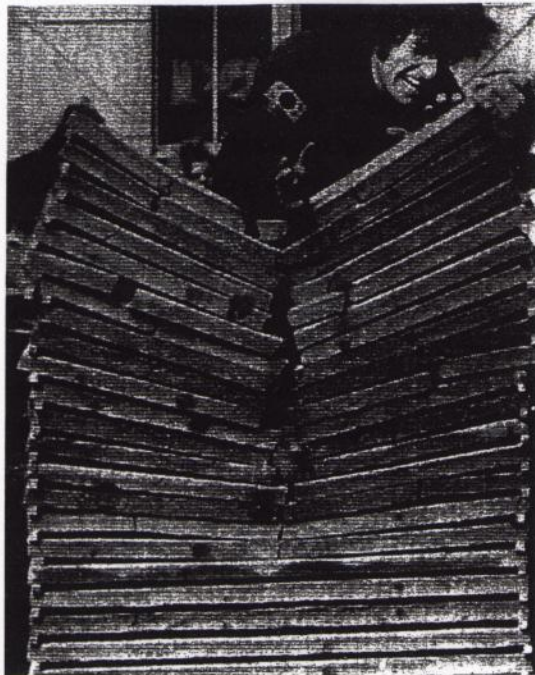
The next day it was all over school about how I had beaten up a gang from Miamisburg using 'Jap fighting.' From that time on the bullies kept their distance, not realizing that I couldn't really live up to the reputation that the rumor mill had created."

Martial Arts Rank and TV Emmy Awards

More than 30 years has passed since Terry's Wilson's first fight, and in that time he has learned more than how to just kiai. Holding a 5th dan in shorin-ryu karate, a 4th Dan in shorinji-ryu jujitsu and a shodan in judo, Wilson has become a versatile and respected martial artist.

In addition to his accomplishments in the martial arts, Terry is also a five-time Emmy award-winning television director, producer and on-camera host for shows like "PM Magazine" and numerous syndicated specials.

"Before I got into karate I was a fat kid whose only ambition in life was to see how many hamburgers and chocolate sodas I could suck down in a day," Wilson says. Then one day I saw a karate demonstration on TV and decided to give it a try. That was in 1962 and I've been doing it ever since.



"I did a marathon where I stayed on the air for 900 hours non-stop," Wilson says. "I sat in the window of a local restaurant for more than a week. One of the many weird things that happened occurred at about 120 hours into my stint. I began to hallucinate and thought my mike stand was a snake. So I let loose with my best shuto and chopped it, one of my turn tables and an amplifier to bits."

Terry breaking two-inch cement blocks during a demonstration in 1976.

"The martial arts gave me a foundation from which to grow. After a few months in the dojo I lost the blubber gut I'd supported since grade school and was finally able to see my shoes. But the most important thing I got out of the arts was the confidence that it gave me to do other things."

One of the things this quick-witted black belt went after was a career in radio and television. During high school he worked on weekends as a disc jockey for WING radio in Dayton, Ohio, and during the summer he got a job in television at WLWD-TV, where he was a stage manager for a the A.M. show hosted by a local guy named Phil Donahue.

Tough Jujitsu Training

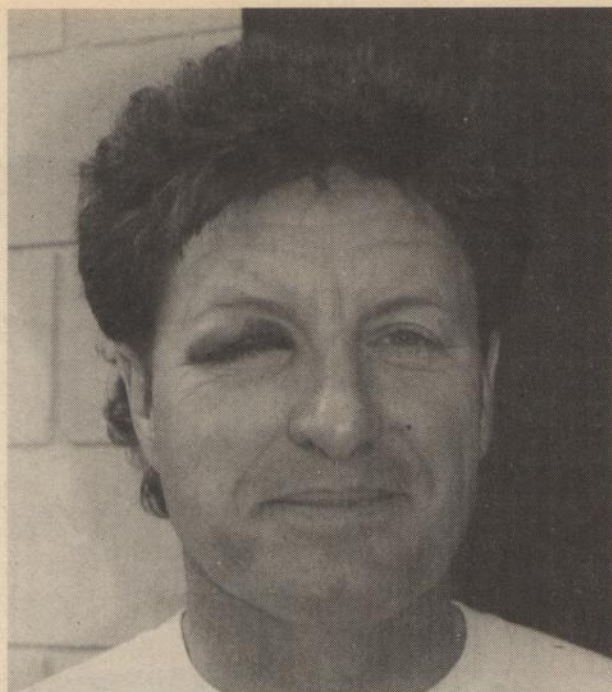
During this time Terry trained seven days a week.

"I would do judo two or three days a week and then go to karate class almost every night," Wilson recalls. "Then I met a brother from the University of Dayton who had a small group of hardcore jujitsu students. After working out one time with them I knew why they were few in number. They played hard."

But playing hard was right up Wilson's alley and the lessons he



Terry Wilson with "Money Mania" Co-Host Jo Ann Simmons. "Money Mania" was the first combination home shopping program and game show in the country in 1987.



Terry after the 1991 National Jujitsu Championships.

In 1992, at the age of 46, Terry entered the A.A.U. National Jujitsu Championships. "I thought it might be fun to get out there one last time and play with the kids, just to see if I still had it," Wilson chuckles. "Of course, I wanted to keep whatever it was that I still had in working order." After two days of competition, Wilson emerged from the tournament with a broken rib and a silver medal.

As the karate craze continued, Wilson was asked to produce and host a martial arts stunt show for the Universal Studio Tour.

"It was short lived but a lot of fun," Wilson recalls. "I got the Urquidez brothers and Maryanne Corcoran together and worked out a show that included a slow-motion fight scene, kata, weapons and some breaking."

A Move to Full-Contact Karate

Next, Terry took on the chore of directing television shows for the fledgling full-contact karate circuit that was gaining in popularity in the mid-1970s.

"I was there when full-contact karate was born. I was the guy who sat behind the controls and directed some of the most exciting fights in the early stages of the sport. I was there before a lot of rules got in the way of the various fighting styles."

"The most exciting match I remember directing was when the Thai fighters came to the Olympic Auditorium in Los Angeles and a riot broke out because the predominantly Thai crowd didn't like the decision between Benny "The Jet" Urquidez and the guy he was fighting."

Terry continued to win Emmy after Emmy while training with people like Ed Parker, Bong Soo Han and Gene LeBell.

"It was the best of all worlds for me," he says. "I was at the top of my profession and in addition to that I was learning from some of the most famous martial artists in the country."

On the Road

In the mid-80's, Terry left Hollywood for San Diego to pursue an on-camera career as host and story producer for "PM Magazine." After traveling the world for this program, he moved to Dallas to accept an executive producer's position for Fox Television. While there he created and hosted "Karaoke Krazy," a very successful variety show, in addition to producing Fox TV's "Kids Club."

"I left Fox to go on the road producing shows for "Emergency Call," Wilson continues. "That was an exciting experience. One time I remember being trapped inside a house that was fully engulfed in flames while working with the Nashville Fire Department. I was doing my own shooting for the show so wherever they went so did I. "Then, a few days later, I had to footsweep and roundhouse kick a guy who came at me while I was filming a fight during a street riot."

An Era of Isolation

With that show in his rear-view mirror, Wilson traveled to Mound House, Nevada, where he isolated him-

self in a tiny cabin to do some writing.

"For a long time I'd been making a lot of money for other people and I decided it was time to do something for myself. So I became a hermit in a small place located on the corner of 'No place and No Where,' Wilson joked. "My goal was to isolate myself from everybody and everything and work on a couple of books and develop a new television project or two."

Wilson's only companions were some wild horses that would wander down from the hills to sack-out in his back yard. His love for animals quickly tamed the usually skiddish critters, even to the point where they would eat from Terry's hand.

When he wasn't working on his novel or feeding his four-legged friends, Terry was working out. He built a *makiwara* (straw punching pad) in his backyard and wrapped a tree trunk with a piece of foam for punching and kicking.

"It was like the old days. I felt alive again. Training in all kinds of weather, day and night. I would pick out one kata and do just that kata for weeks, even months, until the moves and I were in complete harmony with my surroundings."

Coming Full Circle With His Training

Then, much to Terry's surprise he

discovered a jujitsu dojo in the nearby town of Carson City, Nevada. It would be here at the Nevada Shoshin Ryu Yudanshakai jujitsu dojo that he would come full circle with his training.

"To begin with, I couldn't believe that this tiny community actually had a dojo, let alone a jujitsu dojo," Terry says. "But what was even more amazing was the fact that the head of the school was a former classmate of mine! Clyde Zimmerman and I had trained together with Gene LeBell at the Welcome Mat Dojo 20 years earlier in Los Angeles."

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After two days of competition, Wilson emerged from the tournament with a broken rib and a silver medal.

"It was good for the other students to see Terry compete, says Zimmerman. "Anytime one of the senior instructors can get on the mat and do well it's an inspiration to the kids. And for an old guy he hoped that he could take a licking and keep on ticking," Zimmerman jokes.

Back in the Fast Lane

After finishing his novel, Terry returned to San Diego where he is currently producing a new television series and writing for several magazines including this one.

"My new TV show is called 'Street Combat,' and it's about real stories of the martial arts being used," Wilson says. "It's not a show about karate or judo, but like the show 'Top Cops,' we will find people who have used martial arts for self-defense and tell their story."

The pilot program will feature kempo master Sam Kuoha. "When Sam was a young cop he had a couple of hair-raising situations where his martial arts skills meant the difference between life and death," Wilson explains. "'Street Combat' will be like a



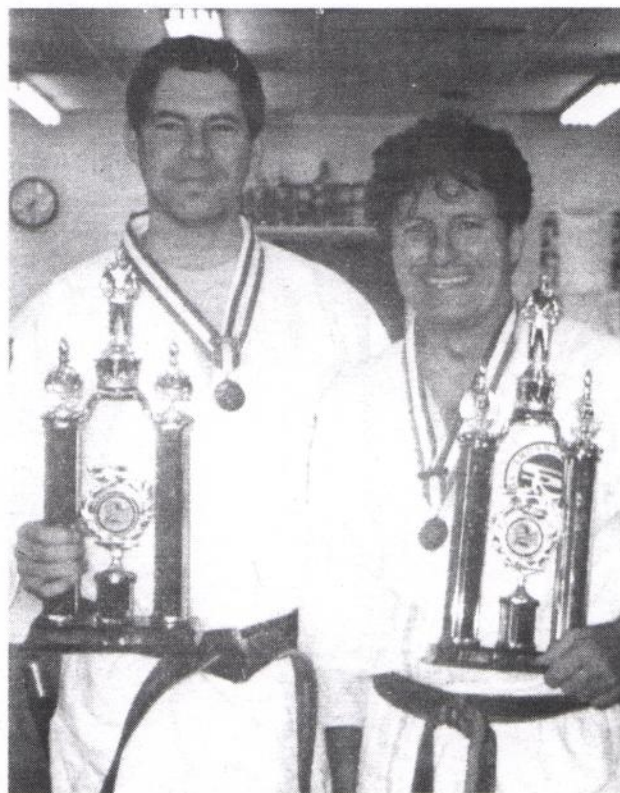
A Surprising Prized Possession

"For me the martial arts is a way of life, a foundation from which everything I do in life grows," Terry Wilson says. "Over the years, I have had the good fortune to personally train with some outstanding teachers in karate, judo and jujitsu. From these talented men and women I owe a debt of gratitude that I try to repay every time I teach someone else what they have taught me."

So what is his most prized possession of his career?

Even more than my Emmy Awards and my martial arts trophies, the one item I prize the most is my original jujitsu gi. It's held together by a few stubborn threads, as is my first black belt. I got it in 1962 and have been wearing it ever since.

My original karate gi, which I got a year earlier, didn't hold up quite so well. It looks like it went through Richard Nixon's paper shredder. Over the years I've had numerous karate gis, but the old jujitsu gi is like a Timex watch. It takes a licking but keeps on tickin'.



After a tournament with Jujitsu teammate, John Chatwood.



Terry with the Leopard Lady of Mission Beach, a story he did for "PM Magazine" in 1984.

Terry with Malia Dacascos and Maryanne Corcoran during the taping of the Emmy Award winning documentary, "Karate, Kung-Fu and the Art of Self-Defense" (below).

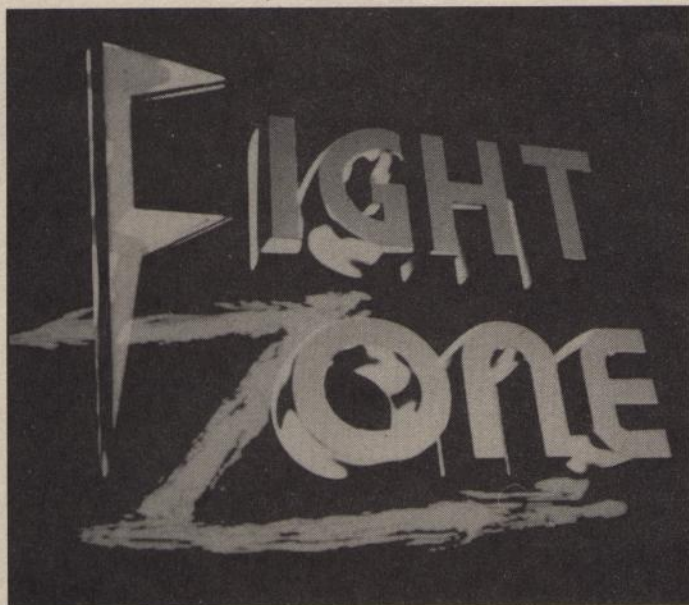


mini-movie starring the actual participants as we reenact their story."

Wilson pointed to one of his head shots (the picture an actor uses when auditioning for a part). "When that guy was 21, he thought he was going to own Hollywood by the time he was 25. Now all he wants to do is rent it for a while."

Indeed, Terry Wilson has had his proverbial 15 minutes of fame several times over. And now, armed with three original screenplays and two new television projects he hopes to once again conquer Tinsel Town with the same effectiveness in which he executes his favorite throws.

John Corcoran has written millions of words about the martial arts in a body of work encompassing books, magazines and screenplays.



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