

HISTORY AND FOUNDING OF THE NATIONAL BLACK BELT KARATE ASSOCIATION

The roots of the National Black Belt Karate Association (NBBKA) as it is known today, began in the 1940's with the founding of Tang Soo Do in Korea by the late Grandmaster Hwang Kee. Under him was the student Grandmaster Kwon Ahn.

While on active duty with the U. S. Air Force in Seoul, Korea, then Third Degree Black Belt Benjamin Burkes was a student of Grandmaster Kwon Ahn. Coinciding with the end of the Korean War was the migration of Moo Duk Kwan Tang Soo Do to the United States. In 1965-66, Mr. Burkes along with then First Degree Black Belt Maynard Stanley started a karate school called the University Karate Academy on Jefferson Avenue near the University of Cincinnati. It was the first Korean karate school of any style established in Cincinnati, Ohio. Among the beginning students that first year were three young men, Michael Posey, Charles Emery, and Joe Thompson. Right on their heels in 1965, two other students arrived, Kenneth Robinson, and Robert Harris.

Grandmaster Ahn was invited to Cincinnati by Burkes and Stanley. The wife of Master Burkes at the time was an employee of the U.S. Immigration Office, and with this advantage, arrangements were made to bring Grandmaster Ahn to Cincinnati. Grandmaster Ahn resided with Master Burkes and his family until permanent residence was established.

A branch Tang Soo Do school at the Rockdale Temple was established in 1965 and was already the location of Master Eugene Field's Kodokan Judo class. Here, under the instruction of the late Grandmaster Stanley was the new martial arts studio for Joe Thompson, Charles Emery and Kenneth Robinson and Robert Harris while Michael Posey remained with Grandmaster Ahn at the Jefferson Street school.

Grandmaster Ahn later invited friends and relatives to the city. Soon afterwards, Grandmaster Ahn assumed the business control of the University Karate Academy. Grandmaster Ahn consequently co-founded the Ohio Tae Kwon Do Association, therefore separating his martial arts relationship with Grandmaster Hwang Kee and Tang Soo Do and with Burkes and Stanley. Grandmaster Ahn's last official rank in Tang Soo Do was 6th Degree Black Belt.

Michael Posey, Joe Thompson, Charles Emery and Ken Robinson each earned their First Degree Black Belt at the turn of the decade. With these new stand-out black belt holders, the growth of Tang Soo Do in Cincinnati gained tremendous momentum. Begun by the late Grandmaster Stanley and continued by Grandmaster Emery and Grandmaster Thompson, the Avon Center became the next Tang Soo Do martial arts studio. Subsequently, Grandmaster Stanley opened a school at the Pleasant Ridge Community Center, from which Grandmaster Robinson then branched off with his own school in Lincoln Heights. At that time, Grandmaster Posey left the Jefferson Street school to begin the karate school at The Seven Hills Findlay Street Neighborhood House. Grandmaster Posey also had the opportunity to train under Grandmaster Hwang Kee when he visited the United States.

The National Black Belt Karate Association (NBBKA) was established in 1973. The structure consisted of two components; a for-profit component, NBBKA, Inc., and a non-profit component, NBBKA Foundation. There were nine founders which included the following by their seniority: George Wharton, Lamont Turner, Walter Fagan, Michael Posey, John Johnson, Charles Emery, Joe Thompson, Ken Robinson, and Robert Harris. The first president of the association was Walter Fagan, the second John Johnson, and third Michael Posey.

In 2004, there was a reorganization of the NBBKA. The NBBKA Foundation was continued under the direction of Senior Grandmasters Michael Posey and Joe Thompson.