



MELBERT LEE JR. – 7TH Schichi Dan

Below are the martial art stepping stones of my martial arts growth with the Karate Five organization.

White Belt (Hachi Kyu)	1979
Orange Belt (Shichi Kyu)	1982
Green Belt (Go Kyu)	1985
Brown Belt (Ik Kyu)	1986
1 st Degree Black Belt (Sho Dan)	1994
2 nd Degree Black Belt (Ni Dan)	2000
3 rd Degree Black Belt (San Dan)	2001
4 th Degree Black Belt (Yo Dan)	2002
5 th Degree Black Belt (Go Dan)	2007
Karate 5 Sensei	2010
6 th Degree Black Belt (Roku Dan)	
7 th Degree Black Belt (Schichi Dan)	

How do you tell a brief biography in a few words? You don't but here's a good attempt. Around six years of age, I recall the biggest and most dreadful picture of a dragon. The picture was painted on the wall of the late Master Harold Long's dojo located above the Trailway Bus Station off Gay Street in downtown Knoxville, Tennessee. I spent several minutes looking and wondering why or what made the dragon so life like when I had never seen a real one. It wasn't long before I started putting the puzzle pieces together. It wasn't the physical attributes which made the dragon real but the dragon that breathed inside the hearts of the legends, masters and sensei. I watched the dragon's fire burn through the sweating and continual practicing and desire for perfection that came from their hearts—not knowing the little dragon which lay dormant in my own body.

Soon the stage was set while my eyes watched and my ears listened but my mind couldn't comprehend. I saw Sensei Lee, Wilson, Faulkner, Brabson and Mrs. Wilson practicing over and over at the dojo or wherever they could get together preparing for the walk of the martial arts and still I could not comprehend. They still continued showing me as I watched the demonstrations and performances of graceful and fluent moves come together forming a story of gracefulness and survival in oneself.

The more exposure I received; I could slowly feel the dragon growing inside me. It wasn't long until I approached my father (Master Melbert Lee Sr.) about the desire to take lessons and immediately—the lesson began.

The first thing he told me was I'm your father at home but at the dojo I'm your Sensei. I thought that's easy to fulfill but to my surprise reality had not kicked in. Second, came the workout and discipline—needless to say it was hard work—work that was not comprehensive to me. I spent time after time crying at the dojo on Wilson Avenue (YMCA) until I was fed up with tears and did the most natural thing most kids would do. Quit!

It didn't take me long to get over the hurt feelings so I would go back again and again repeatedly quitting on several occasions. I did this until I was nine years old. The beginning of my walk in the martial arts had begun like the dragon whose eggs have finally hatched. What I mean is no more tears—I was willing to work and endure the pressure--these combinations along with discipline.

Humility, faith and love shaped and formed the dragon evolving in me—even today. Isshinryu is my foundational art but I have cross trained in Sanuces Ryu and Vee-Jitsu. The only time away from my training was during my athletic career playing football, basketball, track and weight lifting. After high school I continued on to college at Middle Tennessee State University where I pursued a football scholarship. After returning to Knoxville I began playing minor league football with the Knoxville Crusaders. My efforts were pretty successful until my shoulder injury.

I respected and appreciated the high standard of training I receive from the Karate Five School. After receiving my black belt I realized what I thought I knew was just the beginning of knowledge that was ahead. Upon my promotion to NiDan I was named an official instructor. My competition in different tournaments has been rewarding. In 2002 I won first place in the men's heavyweight division and crowned the Isshinryu Hall of Fame Kumite Grand Champion.

My training in Isshinryu Karate continues today under Grandmaster Maurice Msarsa, Grandmaster Willie Wilson, Grandmaster Melbert Lee Sr., Master William Mason, Sensei Daryl Cox and Sensei Jon Whitehead as the dojo Sensei and mentors. I'm currently cross training under Grandmaster Jeff Delaney and Professor Lisa McManus in Modern Arnis which became a part of the Karate Five curriculum in 2002. I am grateful for all who have contributed and helped me take my training to a higher level. My goal is to continue my growth in all areas of karate and life. "We must all remember we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us."

(BIO TO BE UPDATED)



Sensei Lee is known for his powerful strength in the martial arts and never fails to amaze seminar and demonstration attendees of his amazing agility and control as during this demonstration as shown in this photograph.



Although Melbert Jr. won the men's heavyweight division in 2002; he was crowned the Isshinryu HOF Kumite Grand Champion and gone on to receive numerous awards and recognition.



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