



MELBERT LEE SR.  
The field . . . Martial Arts  
KuDan (9<sup>th</sup>) Degree Black Belt

I was born in Greenville, SC. and moved to Knoxville, TN, in 1961 and a graduate of Austin High School class of 1966.

In 1969 I married my lovely wife Susie Naomi (Ray) Lee. We have two sons (Marvin & Melbert Jr.) a Daughter (Misty) and seven grandchildren.

Before high school I received an injury on my right hip playing football, but I did not let it deter my dreams of going beyond my physical limitations.

My interest in Karate began when Jim Maples and I would sit at work and talk about martial arts. In 1972, I began training under Grandmaster Harold Long (deceased). Master Maurice Msarsa, Cas Cox, Glen Webb, Jim Maples (deceased) and Master Allen Wheeler (deceased). After eighteen months of training, I received my black belt. I was given the opportunity to start teaching the youth in the inner city community.

I started teaching at Phyllis Wheatly Y.W.C.A. From there my partner and I, Master Willie Wilson, moved to the East Side Y.M.C.A. In 1980 along with three others (Fredrick Brabson, William Faulkner, Linda Wilson) the nucleus of the original Karate Five founders was organized and became the first generation of the Karate 5.

Later, Karate Five created a program called Kids' Day which brought together children from different communities of Knoxville's inner city for a fun-filled day of creative activities.

In 1977 I began additional training in Sanuces-Ryu under Grand Master Moses Powell (deceased), as well as Vee-Jitsu, under Grand Master Florendo Visitacion (deceased).

- On April 18, 1974, I was the first Afro-American to be nominated to the board of directors of the IKA.
- Later, I was nominated Sensei of Sensei two years in a row.
- I received the Lifetime Achievement award in 2000.
- I was Renominated to the board of IKA in 2001.
- I was certified to rank of Hachi-Dan on May 4, 2002.
- I was inducted into the International Isshin-ryu Karate Hall of Fame on August 4, 2002. Inducted into the World Karate Union Hall of Fame in 2003.

With a strong desire to learn more and amplify my skills in the art I am currently began training under Grandmaster Jeffery J. Delaney (Hawaii) and Professor Lisa McManus in Modern Arnis.

With over 30 years of experience, I share my knowledge of martial arts by being open minded to those who have a desire to learn. Being a Sensei is a rewarding thing to me because you are able to observe your students grow physically, mentally and spiritually in Jesus Christ and find themselves doing things they thought were impossible. It builds up their character and puts discipline in the individual.

- Carrying on the tradition, my son Melbert Lee Jr. (4th Dan ) won first place in the men's heavy weight division and was crowned the IHOF 2002 Kumite grand champion.
- Grand daughters, Donitra and Myshauna Blair, were promoted to (blue belts) in July 2004.

At the time of this writing, the Karate 5 consists of Master Willie Wilson, Master Melbert Lee, Sr., Master William Faulkner, Sensei Jon Whitehead and Sensei Daryl Cox. The Sensei and mentor of the Karate 5 is Grandmaster Maurice Msarsa.

Master Lee received "Dragons Forever Tab" from Grandmaster Denny Shaffer at the 2006 IHOF Tournament in Gatlinburg, TN.

(Biography to be updated)