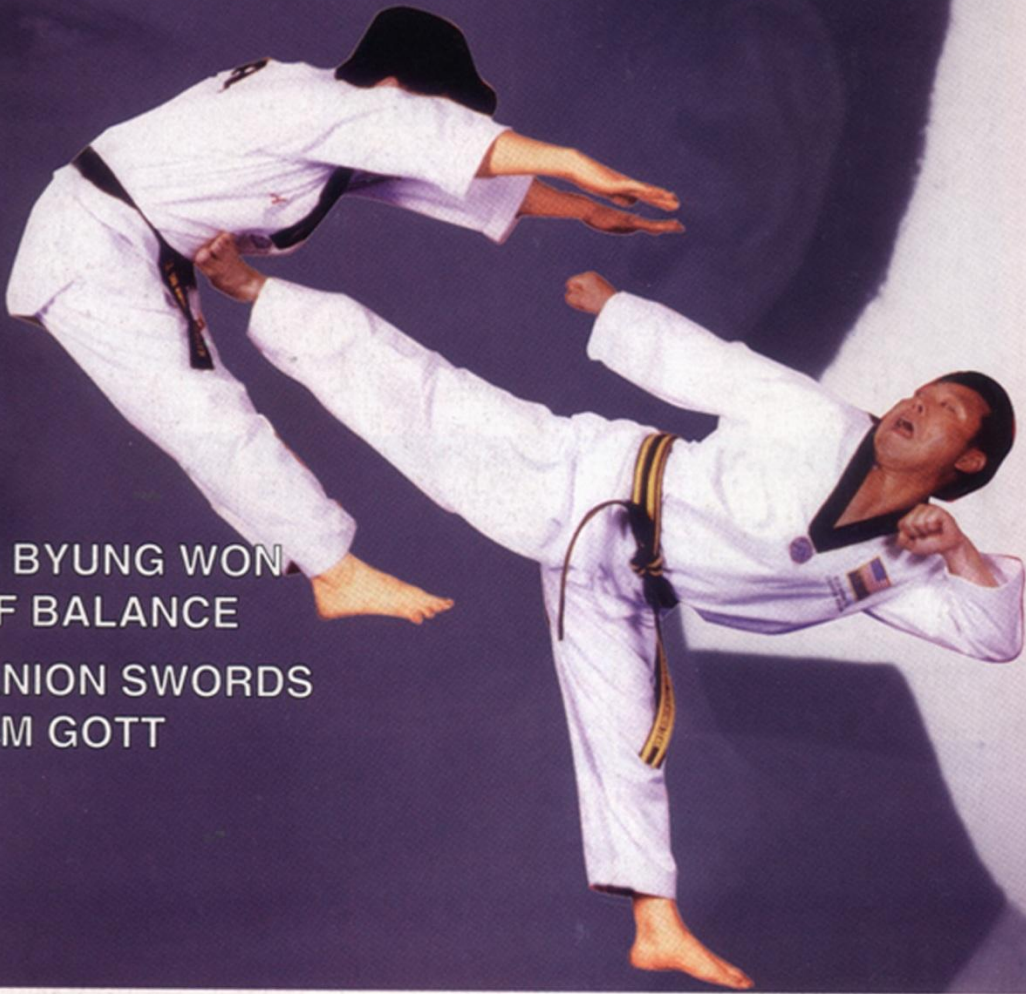


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The Magazine of the Dedicated Martial Artist



MASTER KANG BYUNG WON
A QUESTION OF BALANCE
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Raul Ries: Spiritual Warrior

By John Frattarola



Master Raul Ries
Kung Fu San Soo
October, 1994

I first met Dae Woong Chung in 1973, not long after I had become a Christian. Master Chung and my Kung Fu San Soo instructor, Jimmy Woo, were friends, as they both were the first in their respective martial arts to open studios in Southern California.

Always, impressed by the Koreans' dedication and self-discipline in their practice of the martial arts, I took my two young sons, Raul Jr. and Shane, to Master Chung's Tae Kwon Do studio in Covina, California, so that they could observe that type of fierce and determined dedication and discipline up close.

A slow friendship began to develop based on mutual respect for one another's art, skills, accomplishments, and character, and thankfully, has grown over the years, as we've both become older and hopefully, a little wiser.

It is a great honor and privilege to participate in the launching of Master Chung's new magazine, Traditional Martial Arts. I wish him the best in this new venture.

For 28 years, beginning in 1965, Master Raul Ries was a devoted student of legendary Kung Fu Master Jimmy Woo. Over the years, Woo became a father figure to Ries, whose own home life was ravaged by his father's violence and alcoholism. As a result, by the time he was in high school, Ries was an angry and violent young man himself, in many scrapes with the law and ready to fight at the slightest provocation, real or imagined. Perhaps that's one of the reasons Woo took such a liking to Ries. He, too, had led an extremely violent life as a youth, fighting often and fighting to kill.

Woo, of Chinese ancestry, had inherited the ancient art and fighting technique of Kung Fu San Soo from his great-great grandfather, who, about 150 years before him, had been taught the secrets of San Soo by Chinese monks who had taken him in as an orphan. The sacred book of the secrets of San Soo was passed down to Woo's great grandfather, then to his grandfather, father and finally, to Woo himself.

Woo took his inheritance and legacy seriously, coming to America and training some of the world's finest and most respected Kung Fu instructors, one of whom was Raul Ries.

Following a tour of duty in Vietnam as a U.S. Marine, Ries began studying under Woo in 1968 like a man possessed. Deadly determined and undaunted by anything, Ries quickly earned his black belt and opened his own studio in Covina, California, in 1971. By that time, though, he was already a husband, a father, an adulterer, and a physical and verbal abuser of his wife. His life was spiraling dangerously out of control when something happened that would change his life forever.

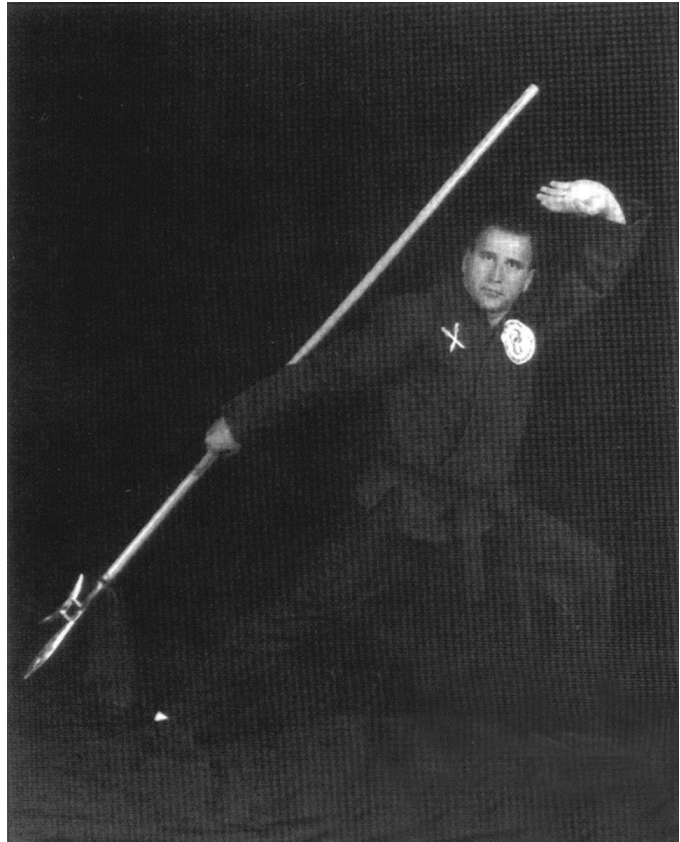
On Easter Sunday evening, 1972, Ries anxiously paced the ransacked living room of his home in Azusa, California, checking and rechecking the rounds he had just loaded into his hunting rifle. Having discovered the packed suitcases of his wife and two young sons stacked neatly near the front door when he arrived home from a weekend camping trip, Ries, in a rage, had torn the house apart, smashing furniture, photos, and punching holes in the drywall. He knew that his wife had had enough after five long years of physical and verbal abuse. He was determined, however, that she was not going to leave. He would kill her and their sons before he would let her walk out on him.

On nervous impulse, Ries switched on his television set to see and hear Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa, California, talking about the forgiving love of Jesus Christ. Angry and skeptical at what he was hearing, but unable to bring himself to turn off the set, Ries became mesmerized by the simple message of the love, hope, and peace of a God who can be known personally. All of the physical and verbal abuse he had suffered while growing up as the oldest son of an alcoholic father, could be washed away by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. No matter what he had done in his life, Smith had reassured him on the screen, God wanted to forgive him. No sin was too great for God to forgive if a person was only willing to humble himself and surrender his life to Jesus Christ.

Surrender, though, was a foreign term to a man who held a black belt in the martial art of Kung Fu San Soo, who was a former Marine point man in Vietnam, earning two Purple Hearts, and who was basically a hardened killer at heart who loved to hurt people any way that he could. He had trained himself physically, mentally, and emotionally to never surrender. In fact, a sign displayed prominently in his Kung Fu studio read, "You can take my life, but you can't take my confidence." For Ries, surrender seemed out of the question.

However, as he continued watching and listening to Smith simply explain and describe the awesome and eternal power of the love of God, Ries began to weep, dropping to his knees in front of his television set. For the first time that he could remember since he was a little boy, he was finally able to cry. This time, though, the reason was not the damaging blows of an angry drunken father, but the personal and reassuring touch of a loving and forgiving heavenly Father.

When Smith prayed, inviting people to receive eternal salvation through Jesus Christ, Ries prayed along with him, asking God to fill his heart with peace and love. God immediately answered his prayer that



night and changed his life. He also learned an important lesson: before a man can surrender to God, he must be broken and understand that he is defeated in himself. Even now, twenty-three years later, Ries has not forgotten that spiritual principle.

'The night I was waiting to kill my family," Ries says, "something told me that I had reached the end of my road. Here I was, successful in my own business, financially secure, respected and feared in the martial arts, a decorated war veteran, yet totally empty inside. I knew when God spoke to me that night that Jesus Christ was my last and only chance."

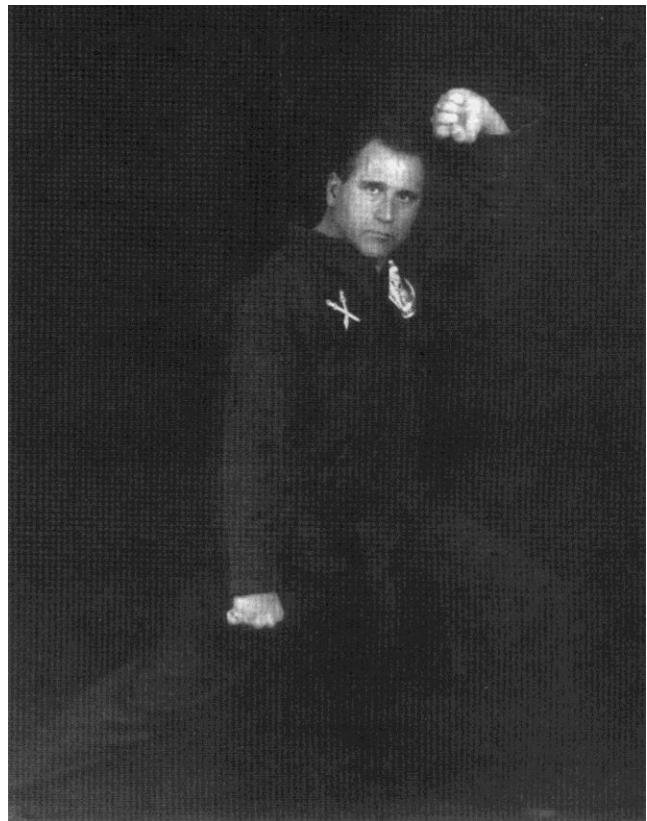
God set the terms of Ries' unconditional surrender, and immediately began molding and shaping him into a gifted and powerful speaker, evangelist, Bible teacher, and pastor. From a home Bible study of seven people, and a lunch time Bible study on the campus of his former high school in Baldwin Park, California, Calvary Chapel of West Covina was born.

As Ries continued to surrender spiritually by faithfully teaching God's love and forgiveness systematically through God's Word in a simple verse-by-verse and book-by-book style, God continued to bless, increasing Ries' congregation to twenty-five, then to two hundred, then to eight hundred, and then to well over a thousand. In 1978, Ries and his growing congregation purchased an empty Safeway supermarket in West Covina to house their church. The past seventeen years have witnessed a phenomenal growth in attendance as weekly estimates place the congregation at close to seven thousand adults.

Through the '70s and early '80s, Ries held Kung Fu exhibitions and demonstrations in parks, high schools, colleges, and police departments, teaching his art and skills, as well as sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to anyone who was interested. Because of that physical and spiritual tenacity, empowered by the Holy Spirit of God working through Him, Ries has been able to lead thousands of people into a loving personal relationship with honor and privilege of leading his friend and Kung Fu Master Jimmy Woo to Jesus Christ just a few weeks before Woo's death in 1992, and to preside at his funeral.

"One of the greatest honors for me, both as a Christian and as a student of Kung Fu, was to lead my friend and teacher, Jimmy Woo, to Jesus Christ, and then to proclaim publicly at his funeral that he had indeed been born again and transformed." Ries said. "I look forward to spending eternity with Jimmy in the presence of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Ries' early life and dramatic conversion have been chronicled in the books *Fury to Freedom* and *My Husband, My Maker* by Harvest House Publishers, and in the film *Fury to Freedom* by Gospel Films. His Vietnam experience is featured, along with six other veterans, in the film *A Quiet Hope* by Logos Media Group. He has also written a book entitled *Hear What the Spirit Is Saying*, also by Logos Media Group.





With the purchase of an 85,000 square-foot corporate building on twenty-eight acres in Diamond Bar, California, three years ago, Calvary Chapel of West Covina became Calvary Chapel Golden Springs of Diamond Bar. The new building houses a two thousand seat sanctuary, a fellowship hall, children's classrooms, a bookstore, and Bible school. Ries emphasizes that Calvary Chapel Golden Springs exists as a testimony of god's love, power, and faithfulness, to meet the needs of those who are lost and hurting spiritually by freely sharing the love and Word of God.

While others in similar situations have slowed down their pace over the years, tempted to rest comfortably on past laurels, Ries continues to maintain a full pastoral schedule, teaching five times a week to his congregation, aside from other speaking engagements, teaching Kung Fu twice a week at his Diamond Bar studio with his brother Xavier, and holding evangelistic crusades throughout Southern California under the banner Somebody Loves You Crusades.

Ries believes he has been given a special mission in life, and he is determined, as best he can, to complete that mission.

"God gave me a brand new life twenty-three years ago, and showed me what real power really was. I just want to be faithful to Him, letting everyone know that they can have a changed life, too, if they would only surrender to Jesus Christ. I'm still a fighter at heart, except now I'm fighting for souls."

Ries can be heard regionally around the country on the radio Bible teaching program Somebody Loves You with Raul Ries (in Southern California on KWVE-FM and KKLK-FM). He has been married for twenty-six years to his wife, Sharon. They have three sons. Ries also holds a doctorate in theology from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, and three Masters degrees from Azusa Pacific University in Glendora, California.

For more information on the ministry or martial arts teaching of Raul Ries, write to him at 22324 Golden Springs Drive, Diamond Bar, CA. 91765



散手功夫

