



Grandmaster Kim Soo's first woman student in Texas was Margaret Wilhite in 1969. He promoted Terry Gerson to First Dan in 1974, as his first woman Black Belt. Roxanne Van Pelt followed in short order.

One of the highest ranked women martial artists in the world is a Chayon-Ryu Black Belt of 6th Dan rank -- Master Kim Geary, founder of Austin's Kim Soo Martial Arts.

Master Geary joined Chayon-Ryu's Austin branch in 1975 after studying Shorin-Ryu for a year in Mexico. A Texas state-certified petroleum engineer, she founded a Chayon-Ryu branch in Lubbock before joining the Downtown Houston training hall. Renowned for the power and elegance of her forms, and the fighting spirit and strategy of her sparring, Master Geary opened Austin Kim Soo Martial Arts in October 1990.

She has four times (1986-88, 1993) been chosen to teach Chayon-Ryu at the National Women's Martial Arts Federation (NWMAF) "Special Training" summer camp for women, held each year, usually in New England. This international summer camp brings women martial artists from Europe, America, Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, and Asia, to study with the top female teachers in the world, a small number of whom are chosen from many applications. In 1994 Master Geary hosted the first Texas "Special Training" in history.

Master Geary also taught Chayon-Ryu in 1991 at the newer summer camp of the Pacific Association of Women Martial Artists (PAWMA), which serves women

Women in Martial Arts, Women in Chayon-Ryu

by Kit van Cleave, 4th Dan Black Belt

As with most of life, martial arts trends are cyclical; change is part of growth, and human growth and progress are the true intent of the martial arts.

Eastern history abounds with tales of women warriors. Some were royalty; others were daughters of royal houses. Many rights for women in early Oriental history were ensured; only as male-dominated societies began to form were women relegated to a second-class position in Eastern countries.

In contrast to the many tales of Oriental women warriors, after the medieval period, only one European woman, Jeanne d'Arc (St. Joan of Arc, patron saint of France), is considered a true warrior heroine.

Eventually, St. Joan was burned at the stake -- not, as legend purported, for "being a witch," but for insisting on retaining, and wearing, her "male" (war leader) clothing. This was after a rape attempt in her jail cell, while she was wearing a dress as demanded by the church court.

While Elizabeth I of England was considered the most brilliant royal head of Europe during the Renaissance, she was not an active warrior heroine. Even Eleanor of Aquitaine, who "rode bare-breasted to the Crusades," was war-wise known only for her ongoing battles with her husband, Henry II of England.

Recurrent Irish tales of warrior women, Druid leaders, and Celtic queens abound; but with the exception of the pirate leader Grainne ni Malle, they are mostly the stuff of legend, not biography.

Compare this trend with the fact that in the Orient, a Buddhist nun founded Wing Chun style of Chinese martial arts!

In the early days of Eastern war-states, noble families hired, or developed, martial artists to teach the family self-defense. As societies became more complex, warriors were not necessarily blood-relatives of the noble lord, but true to each other

in the martial-arts-avid state of California and its upper-state neighbors on the U.S. western coastline.

Currently, Grandmaster Kim Soo's Houston highest-ranking women teachers include: Kit van Cleave, 4th Dan, Chief Instructor, Kingwood Chayon-Ryu and three-time NWMAF Trainer; Uyen Pham, 4th Dan, faculty, North Harris Community College and AWTY International; Peggy Magee, Karen Hoffman, and Darlene Saunders (Chief Instructor, Houston Area Women's Center self-defense classes), 2nd Dans; and First Dans Lorna Hubbell, Dawn Anderson, Tasha Kim, Ana Woolf, Patricia Ferraro, Kristin Sommer, Rosa Ortiz, Shirley Gonzales, and Angela Davis.

From Master Santiago Rangel's Rosenberg Chayon-Ryu dojang are Second Dans Debbie Hough, and Ann Karlo; and First Dan Ann Johnson.

From Master Gary Wortham's Woodlands dojang came 1st Dans Stephanie Wortham and Patricia Haygood.

Master Geary's Austin dojang (currently operated by Masters Rick Fine and Mark Wise) has produced First Dans Debra Templeton (Texas Martial Arts Hall of Fame Black Belt of the Year 1997- Eclectic), Madelaine Johnson, Kristy Kepple, Jenny Hammer, Glenda Embree, Mary Evan, Beverly Baker, and Becky Veach.

Baytown Chayon-Ryu, under Master Conrad Pickens, has 1st Dan Eva Gonzales.

From Master John Blankenship's Austin Chayon-Ryu dojang are 2nd Dans Dr. Scott Hovroka and Doris Heinenn, and 1st Dans Dale Rudin and Sharon Moor.

From Eastland Chayon-Ryu TX was promoted Shelley Harbin, First Dan.

Chayon-Ryu women in other states include:

Master Charlotte Hwang, 5th Dan, Chief Instructor, and 1st Dans Ronda Fleming, Robyn Fleming, and Kristin Gonzales, Tucson Chayon-Ryu, AZ. From Master David Mitchell in North Carolina are Alice Parada, 2nd Dan, and Shannon Boyd, 1st Dan. Other First Dans are Juanita Brady, Chief Instructor, West North Carolina Chayon-Ryu, NC; Susan Clark, Chandler, AZ; Martha Wong, San Francisco, CA; Sheena White, Shreveport, LA; Sandi Morgan and Paula Peter, Joplin, MO.

through martial arts. Thus, the tradition evolved of non-related warriors of the same style calling each other "brother." (Loyalty to the lord remained strong in these new "extended" families.)

Upper-class women were taught martial arts until more recently in Asia. Japanese women, for example, came to adopt the *naginata* (sword on staff) as their principal weapon. It had originally been an anti-mounted-warrior weapon, used to dehorse a rider, or against the horse itself. Women of Japan turned it into a whirling, slashing offensive and defensive weapon, holding men at more than twice arm's-length.

After the division of work in Eastern societies was delineated into "male" and "female" roles, rarely did the two paths meet. Clans were for male warriors only; so were war arts. Women were not invited, wanted, or expected to participate; those who showed any interest were considered strange.

As martial arts moved to America in the mid-20th Century-- from Japan, with U.S. soldiers after World War II, and from Korea after the Korean War -- this trend continued. American men had learned *karate* or, after 1965, the sport of *taekwondo*, while serving in an all-male army; martial arts was "for men only."

Most Caucasian males teaching martial arts in the late 1940s and 1950s did not teach women (unless they were relatives). Moreover, Oriental masters in America those decades were rarely teaching outside the family; even if they were, they did not teach Caucasians.

Not until the early 1960s (when, in Seattle, Bruce Lee began teaching anyone who met his standards) was the general public slowly invited to study martial arts - - if they were male. Lee's willingness to teach non-Chinese was very controversial at the time.

When Grandmaster Kim Soo, founder of Chayon-Ryu Martial Arts, came to Houston TX from Korea in 1968, he had suffered discrimination as a boy in Korea under Japanese hegemony, and knew the cruelties of lack of opportunity. Thus he was determined to make martial arts available to anyone -- including women and girls -- who wished to study seriously.

After all, Grandmaster Kim's purpose in coming to the U.S. was "to teach martial arts teachers," as his first

Women in Chayon-Ryu who have corrections or rank updates to this article should contact webmaster5@kimsookarate.com

visa read. Chayon-Ryu is a synthesis of the best features of all the classical martial arts of Asia - *karate, tae kyon, chu'an fa* (commonly called *kung fu* in America), *Okinawa-te*, and the sport of *taekwondo*, plus the mat arts of *judo, jujitsu, aikido*, and *hapkido*. In a system which was influenced by great teachers of many cultures, it made sense that Chayon-Ryu would be open to all; race, religion, age, and sex were never disqualifying factors, as they were in many other U.S. schools in the 1960s.

By the mid-1980s, female Chayon-Ryu students began to increase, in part due to the role-changing women's movement of the 1970s. But a dramatic increase in crime (particularly crimes against women, such as rape, abductions, and woman battering) was also a factor. In summer 1991, Grandmaster Kim Soo offered four Sunday self-defense seminars free to Houston women, assisted by his women Black Belts. By 1992, more than one-third of all Grandmaster Kim's dojang students were female.

That same year, for the first time in the 30 years he's been on faculty at University of Houston, women comprised 60% of the enrollment in Grandmaster Kim's huge classes at this urban university. White belt women students have also increased substantially in Chayon-Ryu's 75 dojang across America.

Today, when Chayon-Ryu is the largest martial arts system in the southwestern U.S., with a five-year requirement to First Dan, Grandmaster Kim Soo undoubtedly has more active women Black Belt instructors, and more women students, than any other master teacher in the country.

In addition to providing splendid teaching skills, working well with adults and kids, and adding organizational, publicity, and promotional expertise, Chayon-Ryu women Black Belts have made a point of assisting junior-rank women to complete their first section of study, and achieve First Dan Black Belt level.

This networking and support trend will surely continue, and with Grandmaster Kim Soo's philosophy that all Chayon-Ryu students are of equal value, the number of women studying and teaching Chayon-Ryu will proliferate.