

# PENTHOUSE

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Greetings Russell:

Just a note to say hello and let you know that Laurence Gonzales has been assigned to do the story. Let's hope for the best. If all goes well it will be 2-3 months before it reaches print.

If you have any questions or would like to speak to me I'll be in the office July 8-12. I'll be out of town the 13-20.

Have a great time. I'm so excited!!!!



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The Martial Arts Cult of John C. Kim  
Laurence Gonzales

When Scott Lohmann was 18 years old, he had been a wrestling champion in high school and weighed almost 200 pounds, but he still felt vulnerable on the street. He worried that he would be unable to stand up with impunity to all comers. He feared that he might get hurt if he really had to fight. He wanted more control. He wanted, in his own words, "total confidence at all times, in every situation." It was in that frame of mind that he went in search of a school at which to study martial arts. He couldn't decide: Karate? Kung Fu? Ai Ki Do? Hap Ki Do?

Finally it was nothing more complicated than the ad in the yellow pages that got him. The ads for most schools had a telephone number and perhaps a list of what disciplines they taught. But there was one that had paragraph after paragraph of exhortations in glowing descriptive language that seduced and cajoled the reader into believing that this was the place where he or she would learn the ultimate martial art and a discipline and philosophy for all of life. The ad for the John C. Kim style school of Chung Moo Quan, was festooned with images of tigers, and said that students, "learn to jump, roll, kick, punch, sweep, slide and spin. Agility, timing, flexibility, speed, power, coordination and control are all part of Chung Moo Quan training. The patience, determination and confidence which come from training and successfully developing these skills can benefit the

student throughout his entire life." The text of the ad was carefully worded to appeal to just the sort of person Scott was back then: Young, vulnerable, afraid, with low self-esteem and a need for control. Someone who wanted to be given The Answer.

The school claimed to teach eight martial arts simultaneously. The advertisement featured a photograph of Kim in the act of leaping into the air--it was impossible to tell exactly how high. He appeared suspended in mid-flight, feet and hands directed outward as if for attack. He wore a black uniform. The ad said he was "champion of all Asia registered to Asia 9th Degree Black Belt." He seemed to be flying.

It was perfect. The subtle suggestion was that Scott could escape himself, his fear, his self-loathing. He could, quite literally, fly above it, he could vanish and reappear as a tiger. The pain would dissolve and be replaced by total control, complete peace of mind, absolute confidence. He was sold before he walked into the school for his first, free introductory lesson.

"What do you want out of this?" they asked him. Instructors crowded around him for the initial interview, writing down his answers.

"I want confidence on the street," Scott told them.

"Confidence," they repeated, and they seemed to laugh among themselves.

They asked him a lot of personal questions. Was he married? What kind of car did he drive? Did he have any bank accounts?



Stocks and bonds? Did he have relatives who might help pay for his training if he ran low on money? Was he willing to work an extra job if he had to? They avoided Scott's direct questions about how much, exactly, it would cost and how long it would take. Instead, they told him to come into the studio and get dressed for his free lesson.

"I had brought a black uniform," Scott told me. "Because I like black. I put it on and went out into the studio. And the next thing I knew, the uniform was literally ripped off my back. Someone came up behind me and with a single stroke, it was gone, and I was standing there in my shorts."

"No one wears black except The Master," the instructor told Scott. "Put on your street clothes."

Scott was astounded and frightened. He thought he could handle himself pretty well physically. He was, after all, a 200 pound wrestling champion. And yet someone had come up to him and ripped the clothes right off of him, and he had been helpless to do anything about it. Humiliated, he put his street clothes back on and came out into the studio for his introductory lesson.

The instructor walked up to Scott and stood face to face with him. They looked at each other for a moment. Then, as quick as a snake, the instructor hit him in the solar plexus. Scott found himself airborne and flew across the room, landing on the floor in a heap beneath the mirrors. "Wow, are you weak!" the instructor said with a laugh. "That's baby touch. You get knocked down by baby touch. You weak."



Then they asked him to hold a pose. He was put into a contorted position, legs splayed, body turned in a torturous spiral, arms outstretched, fingers clenched. "Of course, I realize now what I couldn't have known then," Scott told me. "That only a mime could hold a pose like that for so long. But at the time, all I could think of was how weak I was. The instructor was right: I was in deep trouble."

Then the instructor started working out with Scott, pounding him with blow after blow, chopping, striking, beating, advancing, as Scott tried ineffectually to block the punishment.

"This went on for nearly an hour. They beat the shit out of me," he said, remembering the day. "When I got home, my arms were swollen up to twice their size. I was a wreck, bruised all over. I didn't know what had happened to me. I had no idea how out of shape I was." Scott was in a panic. He knew he had to get to work and really devote himself to training or he would be easy prey on the street. Scott had had plans to go to college and become a lawyer. His grades were pretty good, and he thought he could do it, but now he found himself caught up with a schedule of Chung Moo Quan classes that seemed to take over his life. In fact, it was already too late. Scott's life had been taken over, and he didn't even realize it. And he was destined to spent six years in the thrall of the John C. Kim martial arts cult before he got himself free. Even now, two years after leaving the cult, he is still controlled in some ways by it, and he knows it. When I visited with him and another former instructor who had escaped

the cult, I watched in amazement as they slipped into pidgin English, as if their first language were Korean.

"I was in culture shock when I first went there," Scott said. "Once you walk through that door, it's like you're in a temple. It's like you're in Korea with a bunch of white guys running it, acting like Koreans, talking like Koreans. It's surreal. They speak pidgin with accents, but they're these big white jocks. Suburban white doctors's sons speaking pidgin English."

The first thing they taught him was that total loyalty to the school was demanded. Rituals were used to enforce brain washing. Before leaving home to come to school, he had to call. The calls were scripted, so that everything he said was programmed into him beforehand, a well-known brain washing technique used by the Korean military.

"Hello Head Instructor," he was told to say. "Be all right to say this is Student Lohmann?" Everything was posed as a question beginning with the broken English phrase "Be all right?" (meaning "Would it be all right?")

Next Scott would have to ask, "Be all right to ask if yourself care for anything?" Although Scott didn't know it at the time, this was an opportunity for the Head Instructor to ask his students to bring him vital necessities, such as food. The instructors told the students it was a chance to show loyalty to

the school by doing something for the school. In fact, the instructors had no money, because the school had taken it all. They had to prey on new students in order to feed themselves.

Finally, Scott would have to ask permission to come to school. "Be all right to step into school now?"

Once at the school, the ritual would begin again, with Scott having to ask permission to enter, permission to do something for the school, permission to change out of street clothes, permission to stand, sit, warm up, hold a pose. Practice would begin with Scott being made to hold a contortion-like pose until his muscles gave out, until he became sick, until he dropped. Then he would practice movements, blocking and striking for hours on end. "Our moves had to be exact, or we got hit."

"Body builders were easy to sign up," another former instructor, Russ Johnson, told me. "Because we'd bring them in and have them hold a pose like this for five minutes. They'd be sweating bullets. They'd fall to the floor gasping. And they'd go home thinking they'd done all this incredible weight lifting and they were totally out of shape. We called them Rockheads. They'd be apologizing. They'd be humiliated. And they'd sign up, because they wanted to improve." Russ, a solidly built, sandy-hair former Chun Moo Quan instructor, wore a T-shirt that displayed his well-developed biceps and also showed the foot-long scars that traversed the triceps behind each arm. They were the result of surgery necessitated by compartment syndrome, a potentially fatal



complication, which he contracted while being punished by his Head Instructor at the John C. Kim school in Minneapolis. He was forced to do so many push-ups that the tissues of his inner arm were damaged and had started to die from lack of circulation. The arms swelled up to enormous size and had to be slit open from behind to prevent the skin from bursting.

Johnson had to live with his arms slit open for five days, and then skin grafts were necessary to close the arms back up. He was in the hospital for 16 days, released on a Saturday, his arms bandaged. The school had him back teaching class that Monday. He was told to teach with his arms folded and have another instructor demonstrate the moves. Someone had to help him into his uniform. Despite the abuse, Johnson stayed with it another year and a half. In all, the John C. Kim school took eight years of his life.

For three and a half years, Johnson passed out fliers for the school. The fliers had to be aligned east and west, because they had on them a photograph of Kim, and it was considered sacrilege to align the Master's head north and south. In fact, all John C. Kim students were expected to sleep aligned from east to west. "When I first came there, I was roughly awakened at three in the morning," Johnson told me, "and told I was sleeping wrong. I had to get up and empty my water bed and reorient it east and west before they would allow me to go back to sleep."

"You felt off-balance from the beginning," Scott agreed.

Of the methods in the John C. Kim schools, both Scott and

Russ agreed: "We were brain washed from the moment we walked in."

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But that was only the beginning. When they entered the school, both students were told that the best way to proceed was to start with group lessons. If the student could afford private lessons, that was recommended. "You're body will develop faster," they were told. "You'll progress faster." In Scott's case, he entered private lessons at \$55 a month plus a \$20 initiation fee. It all seemed so reasonable. How could he go wrong at those prices, he thought? He was not prepared for mind control and what it could do to an otherwise reasonable person's ability to think things through.

At school six days a week, working out for hours at a stretch, Scott was subjected to stimuli, pain, and sacrifice that psychologists familiar with the process have described as being identical to the brain washing techniques familiar to many foreign military governments. Subjecting Scott to sensory overload made him more suggestible. Long periods of being forced to hold a single position or to repeat the same motion induced trance-like states identical in their effect to hypnotism. In a hypnotic trance, people are far more open to suggestion. Authorities on mind control have explained that repetition, deprivation, bombardment, isolation, disruption, introduction of a new language and new terms, are all part of the technique of brain washing used during the Korean war against POWs.

After only one month, Scott was told that he had a rare

opportunity to join a Black Belt course. There was an opening. He had to act fast. "Your body will change faster," they told him. "Your mind will be that much sharper."

Scott was exhausted for constant exercise, but convinced that Chung Moo Quan was the path for the rest of his life, the only path to power, to complete control over his body and to total confidence on the street. The only thing Scott wanted to know was, "When can I start?"

"How soon can you bring down a thousand dollars?" they asked him. Scott brought it down immediately and began paying, in addition, \$100 a month to maintain the course.

All mind control experts agree on one thing: The greater the sacrifice, the stronger the commitment, and the harder it is to break the bond of loyalty between cult and victim. Scott now worked out more than ever before.

Russ said, "When you go in there, the place is so well organized and the respect toward the instructors is so great that it almost puts a halo over these guys heads. They're taught how to manipulate people's minds." Everyone was vulnerable. Russ was young and taking drugs when he was recruited into the cult of Chung Moo Quan, but others were professionals with a lot of money.

Russ said, "I had to find out detailed personal information about somebody when they'd come in and ask about signing up for lessons. I'd become his buddy, then I'd go back and the instructors and I would talk about how to get him into the Black



Belt course."

Scott said, "They'd find out what you wanted out of life and they'd promise you that." His first payments were not for the full course, but for only one quarter of the Black Belt course. He signed a contract that he was not allowed to read or keep, which is a clear violation of the law.

The Attorney General's office in Illinois has brought suit against John C. Kim and his schools on behalf of students who were defrauded, and one of the attorneys there told me, "We're fighting and fighting and fighting. We alleged that they bought properties with money they fraudulently received from the students. I feel confident that we've put forth good allegations. The property belongs to students. They own the property. The fight is over the money."

Indeed, the whole school seems aimed at one thing: A shakedown for money. Once they had Scott in the Black Belt course, subtle changes began to take place in the way the staff treated him. They would let things slip about The Master, John C. Kim. Kim is an enigma, not only to his students and instructors, but to the law enforcement authorities of several states now as well. Starting in about 1970, when Kim evidently was a janitor somewhere in Illinois, he began opening schools of martial arts and claiming to be "champion of all Asia." Korean martial arts experts say there is no such title and that no Asian champions have ever heard of Kim. Nevertheless, the instructors at Kim's

schools had begun to tell Scott, Russ, and the other advanced students that The Master had special powers. He could fly, for one thing. The photograph of him in the Yellow Pages, showing him leaping high into the air, was actually a photograph of Kim leaping between two buildings in downtown Chicago (so they said). They showed the students another photograph, in which a corner of one building was visible in the lower right of the frame, and the skyline was discernible in the background. On the wall of the school Russ attended in Minneapolis there was a sword and uniform said to belong to Kim. The students were told that if they ever touched it, they would freeze. Their muscles would lock, and they would be unable to move. The only way to unlock them was to call The Master himself, and if they had to call Kim, everyone would be in big trouble. The Master could "kill without touch." They said that Bruce Lee, who died under mysterious circumstances, was actually killed in that fashion. A high-level belt of some unthinkable degree was brought over from Asia to do the job, it was said. Chung Moo Quan instructors hinted that it was Kim himself who had killed Bruce Lee. They told the students that the President of the United States uses ten percent of his mind. "Master uses 99.999 percent." They said, "When Einstein died, he regretted not knowing more about his body." And they told them that a good Chung Moo Quan instructor lived to be 160 years old.

They taught their students that the American flag was shit, it meant nothing. Only the Korean flag had meaning.

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Today Scott finds it difficult to understand how he believed what he was told. When I asked him how he could accept that a man could fly, he shook his head and looked confused for a moment. Then his eyes went hard, as if he had fallen back into a trance, and he stared fixedly at me and said, "How do you know it's not true? Can you prove that God doesn't exist?" I said I could not. "You see? That's what they'd do to us. And when you're caught up in it, putting 110 percent of your physical and mental energy into working out, paying all your money to it, you get into this mind set where you'll believe anything."

Scott's description is precisely what mind-control experts call brain washing: You'll believe anything. Soon they asked Scott for another thousand for the second quarter of the Black Belt course, and he brought it in without hesitation, continuing to pay his \$100 a month.

A spokes person for the Attorney General's office told me, "If they perceive you have a lot of money, they have instructors stand on either side of you and pressure the money out of you. They don't want to tell you how much it costs, because it costs whatever you have."

One day they came to Scott and told him that Master Kim was going to have a birthday and that students were expected to give him presents.

"Four or five hundred dollars was considered normal. Nothing less than a hundred was considered acceptable," Russ said.



"They didn't want you to give anything except cash, because they said the Master didn't need anything," Scott said.

"They told us the Master didn't need our money. It was for the school. They were going to take the money and invest it in businesses and it would all come back to us. 'You're investing in yourself,' they'd tell us."

The instructors kept secret the fact that they themselves had no money. When Russ would call in the morning to ask permission to come to school, he would be ordered to bring food to the instructors and was told that it was an opportunity for him to do something for the school, to show loyalty, which was considered an important goal for every student. In actuality, the instructors were as poor and as much mind-control victims as their students. They had given all their money to the school and could not even buy their own food.

At first Scott and Russ were given the privilege of answering the phone, manning the desk, interviewing new students, showing loyalty, serving the school. But after a time, they both found that the instructors expected them to sweep up and close the school at night. They were told it was a great honor to have the opportunity to serve the school. Gradually, they were asked to add more and more chores to their already grueling days. Russ was sent out to put up flyers for the school. Scott and Russ developed a classic condition of cult victims, known as "doubling." They had two personalities. On the outside, they pretended to be "normal." But the moment they walked into the

"temple," they began to speak pidgin English with a Korean accent and began to act like the instructors.

They were taught from the beginning that people on the outside were "garbage." They referred to themselves as people who "practice," and anyone who was not in the cult--anyone who did not practice--was considered sub-human. They called the jocks who came in to learn martial arts "rockheads" or "no-minds." They called blacks "well-dones." Gays were "a little funny." They had a name for everyone. That technique, of denigrating outsiders, is a well-known mind-control technique used to solidify commitment to the cult. Inside the Chung Moo Quan cult, it was also used to discourage competition from other martial arts schools.

"I didn't realized what was happening to us then, but I can see it now," Scott said. One day he and other students were told to go and take lessons at a Karate school down the street. Before they left, their instructor said, "Whatever you do, don't let them hit you. Or you're through here." Scott explained that when you go into a martial arts practice session, you always get hit. To say you're not going to let someone hit you is like saying you're going to take a swimming lesson and not get wet.

Scott didn't understand how he was being manipulated then, but he went in to visit the competition with his mind set on not letting the teacher hit him. When he arrived, he told them he was a wrestler and had had no experience in martial arts. "I just said I wanted to take a sample lesson."

The teacher, who was a 45 year old master from Asia, said, "Let me show you some self defense moves."

"You're not going to hit me, are you?" Scott asked.

"No," the teacher said. But of course, he did try to hit Scott, in order to teach him his vulnerabilities. What he didn't know was that nearly a year of training six or seven days a week, hours and hours a day, had turned Scott into a fighting machine. Scott blocked the blow and responded by breaking the teacher's nose. "He had two black eyes. He was destroyed. How can you be a martial arts instructor and face your students with two black eyes?"

The practice of sending students to attack other martial arts schools increased. The Chung Moo Quan cult began to gain a reputation. Legitimate martial arts instructors called them Chung Moonies. When Kim's instructors would hear of that, they'd say, "He's getting a smart idea. Time for a lesson." And then dispatch a group of advanced students to tear the place up.

"It was just like in the martial arts movies," Russ said.

Scott told of a time when three Chung Moo Quan students went in posing as college students. As the sample lesson progressed, they began disrupting the class to see how the 49-year-old master would respond and restore order. They would make smart remarks, talk out of turn, talk to other students--anything to create disorder. "Then, when he finally stood up to us," Scott said, "we hit him all at once. He was hit with two weapons, his own weapons, and got punched out. He was good. He surprised us. But



we overwhelmed him. Not even his son, who was there, would help him. His students just stood back and stared. When we moved for them, they scattered. He ended up with a concussion and broken ribs. He was told that he would die and his family would disappear if he reported it to the police."

In fact, the police were called in some cases, but they just backed out fast when they saw what they were up against. "Are you kidding?" Scott asked with a laugh. "The police? They're going to go into a nation-wide organization of martial arts experts? No way. When we'd beat someone up in the school, we'd pick him up and throw him through a curtain into the hall. When the police would come, all the students would say, 'He fell.' The cops would rather deal with something they can understand."

When police visited the studio, all the highest level instructors would line up to face them. They would do it just for a moment, and then they'd disperse, but it was enough. It sent a message. And there is so much lore and myth surrounding what martial arts experts can do, the police would be effectively neutralized. "I've seen cops actually quivering as they asked questions. These schools have reputations. As long as he was there, everyone would stare at him, like this:" And Scott made his dark eyes like burning coals in the mask of his face.

An interesting transformation was taking place in Scott's life. For one thing, quite apart from the cult aspects of the organization, the consumer fraud, the taking over of his life, in fact, Scott was being turned into a killing machine. The martial

arts training was effective. But Scott was also going a little crazy. "I'd be at a party or somewhere, and somebody would say something and I'd annihilate him right there without even thinking," Scott told me.

One day he was out on a date with his girlfriend and someone cut him off on the Interstate. He chased the car down and ran it off the road. When three guys got out, he beat all three of them so severely that they had to go to the hospital. Scott said, "I lost my girlfriend because of that. She saw me transformed from my 'normal' outside self into the monster I'd become inside the school, and she said, 'I never want to see you like that again.'"

At school after the incident, they told Scott that it was all right, he didn't need a girlfriend. In fact, cults control every aspect of their victims' lives and had told Scott not to have sex more than once a week, because it weakened the mind and drained the energy. In fact, cult experts agree that anything the cult can do to invade the personal life of its victim strengthens the bond of devotion.

Scott's rages were getting out of hand. He was becoming a menace to society. One evening he and some friends were at an outdoor bar, and a car went past with two guys in it. One of the group hollered, "Slow down!" more or less as a joke.

"He locked 'em up, smoking to a stop," Scott said, "and peeled back to us in reverse, and these two guys jumped out. One had an iron bar and the other had an axe handle. I had made up my mind to stay out of it. I was in a kind of transcendent state. I

just sat up on my motorcycle and watched. It didn't matter. I had complete confidence."

They beat up the other members of the group as Scott watched. And then they approached Scott with lust and menace in their eyes. Scott slid off the motorcycle and stood up to face them, arms folded, and he said, "Look. You don't have any idea what you're getting into here. You've had your fun. Why don't you just go home now?" But the one with the axe handle advanced. Scott snap kicked him and took the axe handle away. "It was like taking candy from a baby. It was like they were moving in slow motion," Scott told me with a wistful look in his eyes. There was a certain delicious quality to the ballet of violence he had learned. It had become part of him. The trance-like states were pleasurable, they were like drugs. "It was like I turned into a tiger. I could feel my human form drain away and I could feel my space being filled with a real tiger," he said. Now, with axe handle in his hand, he had the equivalent of a Tong Bong, a fighting stick Scott practiced with for hours every day. He was an accomplished stick fighter, and they had made him a gift of his favorite weapon. And he went into a hypnotic rage. He hit the other man, the one with the iron bar. "I didn't just hit him, I played with him." The stick hit his head on both sides at once, it seemed to move so fast. The man fell, taking blows all over his body, one after another, and then he got up and ran for his car. He closed the door, and Scott put the axe handle right through the window to hit him again. "I ripped my thumbnail off



going through the window. I couldn't feel anything. I didn't even think about the window being there, my hand just went through it like it was air."

Russ agreed that experiences such as that one were common in Chung Moo Quan. "We were told if someone on the outside messed with us to give them a quarter and tell them to call the Rescue Squad."

Scott and Russ got out of Chung Moo Quan in different ways. Russ was injured so badly and mistreated so consistently that he lost faith. It is common in cults, which deplete the followers, spiritually, emotionally, and financially, and then throw them away. Scott began questioning the cult. He was too smart for them. He wanted to know why, if Kim was God, did he smoke four packs a day? Why had he gotten divorced four times if he was the master of communication? "Why do I get these funny feelings?" Scott asked. "Why do I doubt what you tell me? Who is John C. Kim? What is Master trying to teach us?"

They told Scott he over-thought. "People who think get confused," they said.

But at the same time, they moved Scott up degree after degree. One day they came to him and told him that he was ready for their Olympic course. "I was so brain washed that I asked, 'Does this mean I'm ready to go to the Olympics?'" Scott laughs about it now, but it's a sad laugh. "I still hadn't become a black belt but they moved me up to the Olympic Course. They

laughed and called me a no mind. No! This is so that your body will change much faster. You're going to be that much closer to being master." The first stroke was \$5000. "Everything was in cash," Scott said. It was considered incorrect to pay any other way. Scott's weekly hit went up to \$300. They also began escalating their testing fees. The first test cost \$100. The second was \$200. Fourth section was \$500. Fifth section was \$1000. Sixth section cost \$2000. Meanwhile, each quarter of the Olympic course cost another \$5000.

Students were expected to do more and more work at the school and also to buy supplies and even to pay the bills. "We cleaned at night, we bought paper, pens, envelopes, stamps, toilet paper," Russ said. Students bought rugs, furniture, paint, fixtures. They always had to bring receipts to the school so that the school could claim the expenses on tax returns. Part of the state's case against John C. Kim involves such illegal practices. The IRS and FBI are also involved in trying to prosecute Kim.

"They'd even have a student pay the electric bill," Scott remembered. "They'd say, 'Go to hardware store and buy this list of items.'" A new school was being built. The instructors told a friend of Scott's that the master said it was all right to take lumber from a lumber yard if he left a penny. So the student loaded a truck with \$1000 worth of lumber and drove off after leaving a penny. The police caught him in the act. When the new school was built, the students provided all the labor for free. Highly-placed instructors in the school were allowed to start

businesses and use students as free labor. In some cases, the students were paid, the pay was claimed on the taxes of the business, and then the students were made to "donate" their pay checks back to the school, another area of interest for the IRS and the Attorney General's office.

Scott and Russ had both advanced far enough that they became part of the con. They would sit down in the office to figure out how much a new recruit could be bringing in. Russ said, "We'd ask how much money you owe. Can you borrow money? Can you sell anything? And we'd come up with a figure. That was the cost of the course. Then we'd run you dry." They got all new students to sign what they called the DDM form.

"What's the DDM form?" I asked.

"Death Doesn't Matter," Scott said with a smile. "If we kill you, you can't sue."

When Scott began to confront his superiors about the questions he had, they threatened to kill him. One day in class, 15 high-degree belts surrounded him, threatened him with weapons, and told him to straighten up. They also told him that John C. Kim drank Pine Sol and his system was so strong that it didn't effect him. They told him that Jesus Christ had decided to come back as John C. Kim. They told him that Kim had allowed himself to be captured by the enemy during wartime and had made his arms swell up to burst his bonds and then plunged his fist into the skulls of his captors and pulled their brains out. They told him



that Kim sat on a rock in the wilderness for 40 days, meditating, that he died and came back to life again, that he was the reincarnation, that he was God. He went to live with tigers in the forest and developed secret forms for killing. He could run on foot from Minneapolis to Duluth in 45 minutes. He could walk on water. He studied under the grand master Wang Po. Kim sat in a basement for three days meditating by candle light, and when the master came back to see Kim, the master threw two peas at him. Kim picked up his sword and diced the peas in mid-air before they fell.

"I think Kim is gay," Scott said. "He had a real phobia about women and gay men. He has a lot of very deep psychological problems." They could not sign up a female student on the first day of the month until a man had been signed up. Even if a woman came in with money, ready to pay, they would put her off until a man had been signed up.

Kim had a lot of phobias. The students could never say the number four, because it was unlucky. "We had to say 'three-plus-one' if we wanted to express four," Russ said.

Unlike many cults, Chung Moo Quan was turning not out zombies who couldn't function. It was developing a skilled killer elite. Houston Attorney, Victor Makris, who has handled cases against Kim, said, "Their training is good. They will make you competent. That's what makes their schools that much more seductive."

"The martial arts teaching is good," Scott said. "You are a dangerous person, period. The way they train, you can't help but get good. During a 45 minute work-out, if your uniform touches the floor, you're in for beating. You learn agility and timing and grace. It's a matter of survival."

I asked Russ how he had come to believe the Kim mythology. "No one joins a cult," he said. "We just postpone the decision to leave."

When they couldn't postpone it any longer and they left, the school sent killers out to get them back. Scott and another high-degree belt have stood off attackers more than once since that time. But things began to change. There were too many police reports of beatings. There were too many complaints of consumer fraud, theft, slavery. At one point there was even the suggestion of murder.

Lynn Wirley is Assistant Attorney General for the state of Illinois. In November, 1989, she filed suit in the Cook County Circuit Court against John C. Kim for violating the Consumer Fraud Act and the Physical Fitness Act, which prohibits charging more than \$2500 per year. They listed the cost of Chung Moo Quan courses. The Black Belt course cost \$10,000. The Olympic Course cost between \$15,000 and \$20,000. The Instructor's course cost between \$20,000 and \$30,000.

The following year, the IRS and FBI began investigating Chung Moo Quan and Kim. A grand jury was convened to investigate

charges against the school. Meanwhile, Kim has vanished. He has an estate in Naperville, Illinois, 30 acres with house and trailers, all paid for and built by students. But evidently is not living there. Makris, the Houston attorney who was hired to represent Russ and others, said Kim might be living in Tomball, Texas, just outside Houston. The Tomball estate was described to be by Lynn Wirley as "hugh, with marble floors and chandeliers."

Makris said, "It's anybody's guess where he is." When I told him I was investigating the schools, he said, "I would advise you to keep your inquiries to a select few people. This could be dangerous."

When I spoke to Lynn Wirley about the fact that John C. Kim's representatives, such as attorney Nick Gallo, deny that it is a cult, she said, "It is definitely a cult. Anytime a person can be persuaded to sell his house and car, you have to be dealing with a cult."

Coercion is against the law. "One person was kicked in the groin when he seemed reluctant to sign a contract, and that convinced him to hustle right over with his pen. Some courses cost as much as a hundred thousand dollars. I have someone who paid a hundred thousand to the school. He's too scared to testify. This money was all paid in cash."

Since the early 1970s, Kim has opened schools all over the nation under various names, such as Chung Moo Doe, Um Yung Doe,



Bagwa Quan, and Chung Moo Quan. They are now in New Orleans, Philadelphia, Boston, Minneapolis, Chicago, Los Angeles, and elsewhere.

Scott and Russ and I were at lunch one day at a restaurant not far from the school where Scott taught and studied for six years--a crucial six-year period in any man's development, the time between the ages of 18 and 24. Farther away, in Minneapolis, Russ had spent 8 years, from the age of 16, doing the same. Now, together, these two cult victims, trained killers, sat down to eat, and I could see the problems they were having. They had been brain washed, and they were like surviving prisoners of war. Before they ate, they had been forced for years to put aside some food for The Master. It was a brain washing technique, but they were beaten if they didn't do it, and now, years later, it was difficult for them to eat lunch without doing it. I could see them look at each other, smile shyly, two big men, two trained killers, so vulnerable now. They made a conscious decision not to set aside food for The Master, and then they started to eat.

"I'm so angry sometimes," Scott said, "I can hardly see straight."

Russ said, "Sometimes I feel good and sometimes I feel bad. I grew up with them." And they betrayed him. They both suffer from depression now. "My personality was built in there."

They told Scott, "If you leave, you'll have nothing." And indeed, both Scott and Russ were afraid of going into the world and are now finding it difficult. But, he said, he feels he has

reached a stand-off with those who have been threatening his life. Scott said, "They fear me now. This is what they taught me to be."

As we were leaving the restaurant, we went out into the parking lot and were saying goodbye. I stood in the warm sunshine between those two big, well-trained martial arts experts, and I felt them move in close toward me. Scott's eyes went hard again, the way I'd seen them do when he demonstrated his moves one day. He stared at me, and I could feel him changing right before my eyes. "How do we know you don't practice?" he asked.