

# Biography

## Grandmaster W.L. "Tommy" Thompson

Grandmaster Thompson has spent a lifetime studying Tae Kwon Do and other styles of martial arts along with teaching for over 40 years.

Grandmaster Thompson became interested in martial arts in the late 60's while he was a member of the U.S. Air Force stationed at Shaw AFB, South Carolina. After his release from the military, he continued his martial arts training at the Chambersburg YMCA under the Free State Karate School located out of Hagerstown, Maryland. At the YMCA, he was able to study a style of Tae Kwon Do called Chung Do Kwan which was brought to this country by Grandmaster Jhoon Rhee, the Father of American Tae Kwon Do.

The Tae Kwon Do class continued to be taught by the Free State Karate instructors until the Chambersburg YMCA decided to establish their own class. On January 11, 1976, Grandmaster Thompson was promoted to 1st degree black belt by the Free State Karate School instructors and was offered the position as the coordinator of the martial arts program.

He continued his affiliation and training with the Free State Karate School. Then he started taking classes at the Jung Sim Do Korean Karate School which allowed him to study another style of Tae Kwon Do. At the Jung Sim Do Korean Karate School, Grandmaster Thompson also began training in Hapkido and weapons (e.g., bo staff and sword) under Grandmaster Seung Kil Choi.

Between the time he received his 1st degree black belt and June 19, 1987, Grandmaster Thompson was able to complete his promotional testing for black belt in the following ranks: 2nd degree awarded by Sensei Stoss, 3rd degree awarded by Master Clark, 4th and 5th degree awarded by Master Woods.

To become eligible for promotion, a black belt instructor must be in good professional standing; continue actively training; and contribute to several years between time-in-rank. Grandmaster Thompson continued his training in Tae Kwon Do under Master Woods at the Cobra Karate School in Hagerstown, Maryland. Then in the 90's, he began training in Danzan-Ryu Jujitsu which is a Japanese style of martial arts where he was awarded his black belt certification on October 1, 2008 by Sensei Hebert.

While continuously training with high ranking martial artists, Grandmaster Thompson was able to expand his knowledge and skill in black belt empty-hand and weapon forms/katas, he was eventually promoted to his 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th degree by Grandmaster Iber.

In 1995, he was honored for all his accomplishments and belt ranks by the Pennsylvania Society of Black Belts. On October 1, 2016, he was awarded his 10th degree black belt by Grandmaster Iber which is the highest belt rank that can be awarded to a martial artist.

Grandmaster Thompson continues to practice and teach at Cumberland-Valley Tae Kwon Do class located at the Chambersburg Memorial YMCA.