

# Parker *By Gary Ellis*

and blended his family system of Kung Fu with James Mitose's Kenpo. The circular movements of the Kung Fu blended well with the linear movements of Mitose's Family Kenpo System and Chow modified the system as he recognised it needed to be practical and highly effective in that days environment.

William Chow started Ed Parker on his lifelong quest for logical answers to his many questions. He taught him Master Key Movements which became the foundation blocks for American Kenpo Karate. Ed Parker credited Professor Chow with 10% of his sum total of knowledge. This training with Chow was to form the basis of Ed Parker's creation American Kenpo Karate. From these early days, experience, experimentation and thought provoking study, Ed Parker developed the system as we know it today.

Chow's classes had many talented Martial Artists in them. Some contemporaries who trained alongside Ed Parker in Professor Chow's classes were; Joe and Adriano Emperado (Founders of the Kajukenbo system), Paul Yamaguchi, Ike Kaawa, Bobby Lowe (Mas Oyama's representative in Hawaii), Fred Laura, Manny de la Cruz, Maaichi Oshiro (representative for Gogen Yamaguchi of the Goju Ryu style in Hawaii).

## **Ed Parker wrote after witnessing Professor Chow and the class training:**

*"At that moment a strong spiritual feeling penetrated the very depths of my soul communicating to me that Kenpo would become my life's work".*

## **Of Professor Chow he later wrote:**

*"Professor Chow never wasted motion. He reminded me of a mongoose fighting a snake. He was fast, precise and powerful".*

*"I cannot thank Professor Chow enough for setting me on a path of logical and realistic thinking".*

*"Professor Chow didn't actually teach me many of the modifications and developments I later came up with, but he started me looking for these other avenues. He gave me some Master Keys to open my own doors".*

Contrary to what some people believe Ed Parker never trained with James Mitose. In the early 70's Mitose visited Ed Parker at his studio and at his home over a period of sev-

eral months and they had many conversations on the Art. In time Mitose offered him the rank of 10th Degree black belt, Ed Parker's reply was;

*"I am not, nor have I ever been a student of yours; therefore I could never accept such a rank from you".*

In 1950 Ed Parker left Hawaii and went to Brigham Young University in Provo Utah. At the start of the Korean war Ed Parker enlisted in the US Coast Guard and served for three years. His ship frequently visited Hawaii and he was able to continue his training with Professor Chow. In 1953 he attained his 1st Degree black belt from Professor Chow. In 1954 he returned to Brigham Young University to complete his studies and he completed a Bachelor of Science Degree in Sociology with a minor in Psychology. Prior to returning to the mainland he had discussed with Professor Chow his desire to take Kenpo to the USA mainland and then bring Professor Chow over. He knew that if he had college degrees than he would be more accepted as a thinker as well as a fighter. Although Parker was to later become phenomenally successful Chow never joined him on the mainland and preferred to stay in Hawaii.

In 1954 he also opened his first private Kenpo club at Brigham Young University and U.C.L.A and he was asked to give a similar demonstration before 70 members of the City Police, Sheriff's Department and the Utah Highway Patrol. They were so impressed that he was soon instructing lawmen from all parts of the state. Selecting a group of the more advanced students, he toured the state giving many exhibitions. In December (of 1954) he married his wife Leilani Yap.

1956 saw Ed Parker's graduation from Brigham Young University and he and Leilani moved to Pasadena, California. Here he was to settle, raise his family of five children (Darlene, Beth, Edmund JR, Yvonne and Sheri), and eventually build one of the largest Karate organisations in the world and the International Kenpo Karate Association.

In Pasadena he met Bert Goodrich who owned a gym and he was invited to start teaching at the gym. Soon the gym



was bought out and Ed Parker was forced to go it alone. He then met Terry Robinson who was a physical trainer for Mario Lanza. Robinson seen one of Ed Parker's demonstrations and was very impressed. He soon introduced Ed Parker to many of the celebrity members of the Beverly Wilshire Health Club including; Elvis Presley, Robert Wagner, Blake Edwards, Robert Culp, Robert Conrad, McDonald Carey, Darrin McGavin, Jose Farrar, George Hamilton, Warren Beatty, Fabian, Rick Jason, Dick Martin, Elke Summers, Joe Hym, Brosnian Kaper, Joey Bishop, Nick Adams, Audie Murphie, Frank Lovejoy and many others.

In 1961 Time Magazine referred to him as; *"The high priest and prophet of the Hollywood sect".*

It was at a demonstration in 1960 at the Beverly Wilshire Health Club that Ed Parker first met Elvis Presley. At that time Elvis was staying at the hotel working on 'Wild in the Country'. After the demonstration Elvis made his way through the crowd and patiently waited his turn while others asked questions. He then introduced himself to Ed Parker;

*"I don't know if you have heard of me - but my name is Elvis Presley".*

Ed Parker was impressed with Elvis' humility and they immediately struck up a long-lasting friendship which was to last right up to Elvis' passing.

*"Elvis was a good black belt, he could take pain as well as dish it out".*

Elvis was a practicing Karateka for 18 years and his interest in Martial Arts was second only to his interest in music. He