

I am sorry that I cannot be with you for this great event. It is a proud and exciting day, not only for Grandmaster Ameris, and for all of us who know him, but it is also proud day for the Martial Arts Community.

Many, many years ago, I responded to the door bell of the rectory in Natrona Heights. I found myself looking into the skeptical eyes of a young black haired kid. With absolutely no enthusiasm the kid said: "I'm Philip Ameris. Sister Regina Claire told me **I had to** come over here and introduce myself to you". And then he waited.

Although newly arrived in Natrona Heights, I had already heard of this kid. He was supposedly a boxer and Karate fighter, who had his own martial arts school in New Ken. In classical Martial Arts, reputations and rumors are meaningless, so I was very interested in finding out who this kid really was.

He did not want to come into the house. He seemed to want to get the introduction over with as soon as possible. So we talked on the porch.

To say he proved to be a surprise is an understatement. This young man was a rarity for an individual of any age, he was absolutely authentic. There was no braggadocio or tough guy attitude. He was enthusiastic about martial skills in particular and life in general, (the Diner, not so much). He wanted to learn all he could, and he wanted to fight. When talking about fighting, he never indicated how good he was, he never degraded another fighter, he just talked about what was. He also mentioned in passing his dream, that I thought to myself was totally unrealistic, to be on the cover of Black Belt Magazine one day.

As we talked, I realized this very young man, had an extraordinary sense of justice. He actually conceptualized the wish to help make things "right" for people. "Not for nothin." He wanted to help the underdog. And even back then he had no time for those he described as "B-S'ers". These values have remained constant, and have motivated this man his entire life, both in his pursuit of Martial Arts, and in his chosen profession with the unions.

In that initial thirty minute contact, I realized I was meeting an exceptionally talented, extremely intelligent, profoundly gifted and utterly authentic human being.

Evidence of his intelligence and wisdom, came just a few year later, when he chose in marriage, an exquisite woman to be his life long helpmate and companion. They would complete each other in the grand journey of their lives. The love of Philip and "his" Jeanne, has become a blessing to all who are open hearted, and fortunate enough to come into their sphere of influence.

Because of their journey together, there is a little more hope in our world that traditional values will be passed on. And because of their love Philip jr. and Jimmy will be their blessings on generations to come.

To those who know Grandmaster Ameris as a Martial Artist, and as a person, his life speaks for itself. Words and titles are only a shadowy hint of any reality.

On July the 11th, the Wedding anniversary of Philip and Jeanne, Grandmaster Hee IL Cho, and the AIMAA, officially proclaimed to the entire Martial Arts community, something you who are gathered here already knew. Philip Ameris is the personification of what the Martial Arts strives to be.

I personally thank the man, Philip Ameris, for his friendship, his lifetime of support, and loyalty. I thank him for his faith, his example of authenticity, dedication, and integrity. And I thank his beloved Jeanne, for enabling all of this to happen.

I am a simple man. When I began Martial Arts, in 1950, Everyone is seen as a student. Even the most advanced teachers had teachers. I think that is why I have never understood the complexities of titles and designations used to qualify and quantify martial skills.

For example I have never completely understood what the term Grandmaster means in the real world. Now that Philip Ameris, the kid from New Kensington, has earned that most prestigious title, I know exactly what it means, and it is **Awesome!**

Thank you Grandmaster Ameris, and Mrs. Ameris. The years have been a profound privilege for me.

Father Connolly