



AMERICAN LEGION Columbia Post 300



Where's Roger?

Roger Chang - COL US Army(ret)



“Where’s Roger? He was there!” asked a puzzled Bob McGregor looking at a half-century-old Army commissioning photo his mother took.

My disembodied hand protruded at the very end-roughly at belt level-next to two giant-sized cadets Ron Lafond and Bill Nuffer.

Was being short and small my Achilles heel?

In New York City junior high school, I angered a chattering student with my request, “Please be quiet in the library.” He towered over me by head and shoulders. He waited at my school crossing post to beat me to a pulp.

In high school, my scale tilted a mere 95 pounds as a junior and senior. Television commercials pictured a 95 pound weakling getting sand kicked in his face by a tall muscular bully who steals the weakling’s girlfriend as he looks on helplessly.

In college, an unshaven man wearing a reeking tattered winter coat cornered me on an empty Boston subway platform at 9 pm. Our church served busloads hot Chinese dinners on Sunday evening.

In my seventies, an aggressive young man recently out of prison demanded, “Just give me fifty cents.” Trying to empty parking meters, he watched until I stood alone in Baltimore.

Self-defense library books triggered learning as a young boy. Walking to free karate classes at Coes Neck Park in high school sparked lifelong practicing. My twig like arms pumped out 600 pushups nonstop for wrestling in high school and college. Crunching 180 bare knuckle pushups, helped earn my first Black Belt at 65. My speed break punch split a flying karate board apart. Teaching double sword twirling in different directions at the same time in the Howard Community College Martial Arts Club at 68, earned a second Black Belt degree from Bando Grand Master John Collins.

My clean white tissues clotted the junior high school bully's bleeding nose. The gushing crimson fountain made his breathing difficult. One punch ended my threatened beating.

Tipping the scales at 95 pounds completely naked, allowed me to wrestle varsity in high school. On stage to thunderous applause, our Coach presented me the coveted Physical Fitness trophy for being "a mountain of a man".

In college, the would be mugger on the biting cold subway platform asked, "You know karate, don't you?" I answered, "Yes." He backed off removing the pungent smell to exit uninjured.

In my seventies, recognizing my clenched metal Kubotan, "You're going to fight me, aren't you?" challenged the Baltimore panhandler. Deadly silence followed. He spun around to trot away uninjured, empty handed, while muttering dire warnings.

Prior to 30 years in uniform, I stood first but hidden as the MIT Army ROTC Distinguished Military Graduate. The towering Ron second and Bill third ranked cadets allowed my right oath hand to escape.

Where's Roger?



Last Speed Break for First Black Belt



A Mountain of a Man

