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**When Charlie C.H. Lee says litigation** stokes his competitive fires, you listen. After all, he's a five-time world karate champion, a seventh-degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do and a member of the Black Belt Hall of Fame.

"I hate to lose," says the 44-year-old construction law/government contracts specialist. "I prepare mentally for litigation the same way I used to prepare for martial arts competition. Knowledge is power. You have to be better prepared than the other side."

Lee was 3 when his parents moved from Seoul, South Korea, to northern Virginia. His late father worked as a chef, his mother as a cook, and they raised four children—a dentist, a cardiothoracic surgeon and two lawyers.

"My parents didn't have a college

education, but they worked very hard, and all their kids went to college," Lee says. "They lived the American Dream."

Serendipity gave Lee an early boost. His mother was best friends with the wife of Jhoon Rhee, known as the father of American Tae Kwon Do. At age 5, Lee began taking lessons from him in downtown Washington, D.C. "What stands out in my mind is his philosophy about being a complete person through knowledge, honesty and strength."

By age 14 Lee was a black belt, and he started competing on the Karate World Tour in 1983, while earning a



## Enter the Courtroom

Charlie C.H. Lee, a five-time karate world champion, carries his martial-arts values into the legal world

business degree at Virginia Tech. Within three years, the 5-foot-8-inch, 130-pound Lee was a North American Sport Karate Association (NASKA) world champion. It was the first of five straight world crowns.

Lee competed through law school at American University. On the very day in 1989 that he won his fifth world title, he learned he passed the bar exam. It was his last tournament.

One intense focus replaced another. The mind-set remained constant: outwork and outthink your foes. "Timing's everything in both the martial arts and the law," he says. "Flexibility and speed are needed, too. You can't be rigid. You can't procrastinate."

Since founding Moore & Lee with Robert Moore in 1999, Lee has built a national practice, representing primarily large general contractors whose projects include power plants, large-scale commercial projects and condominiums, among others. He's tried cases all over the country.

As his caseload has grown, karate has receded. "I don't practice regularly anymore. I don't have the agility I once had, although I'd like to think I have more wisdom. But I run and lift weights, and I'm probably in better shape now than when I was in my 20s."

Still, the mention of a 1989 cover shot in *Karate/Kung Fu Illustrated*—showing Lee delivering a gravity-defying mid-air kick—elicits this observation: "Just within the last couple of years, I thought I could still do that, but now..." He laughs.

Since 1991, Lee has owned a martial arts school in Herndon, Va., and he serves as NASKA commissioner. "I've trained over 20 world champions, and a lot of them have opened their own schools. Some are doing movies in Hollywood."

The attorney met his wife, Brenda, on the martial arts circuit, and she herself is a former world champion (lightweight fighting division). Their children—Danielle, 15, and Brandon, 14—hold black belts.

Lee also hosts the annual Charlie Lee Nationals/World Series of Martial Arts, a three-day NASKA tournament in Reston, Va., that draws 1,500 competitors from around the world.

"The martial arts are a way of life,"

he says. "They're about discipline, respect, perseverance and honor. The values I've learned I carry with me every day."

—Tom Barry