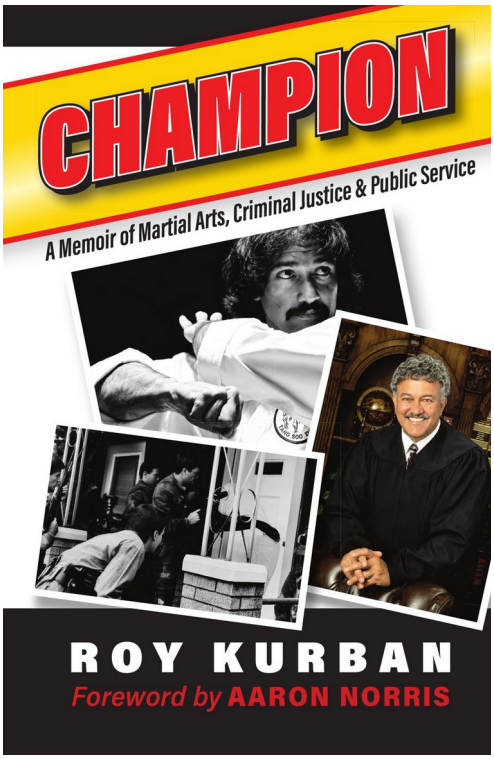
CHAMPION

A Memoir of Martial Arts, Criminal Justice & Public Service

A champion in the martial arts. A champion in the criminal justice system. A champion for anyone just trying to get back up.

ROY KURBAN

with Melinda Folse · Foreword by Aaron Norris



"If you take anything from this book, learn how he cares about people, takes pleasure in the success of others."

JERRY VENNUM Retired chief of police, Dalworthington Gardens

Published November 17, 2026 · 312 pages · more than 100 photographs

Paperback $26.99 · Hardcover $37.99 · Group discounts · Review copies available on request

Five Crow Press · Fort Worth, Texas · fivecrowpress.com/champion

Media contact: Melinda Folse · melinda@fivecrowpress.com · 682-540-7379

INSIDE THIS KIT

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Everything a reviewer, producer, host, bookseller or event planner needs, in one place.

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FOR SPECIFIC REQUESTS

Review copies, interviews and high-resolution photographs: **melinda@fivecrowpress.com** · 682-540-7379

Group, school and institutional orders: **orders@fivecrowpress.com**

Book page, buy links and this kit: **fivecrowpress.com/champion**

OVERVIEW & SPECIFICATIONS

The Book at a Glance

Playground, ring, badge, bench and second chances.

A champion in the martial arts. A champion in the criminal justice system. A champion for anyone just trying to get back up.

At 12 years old, Roy Kurban found himself pinned down on a school playground by a bully, and when that bigger boy leaned over him and spat in his face, there was nothing he could do about it. At the time, he could not do a single push-up.

Four years later he walked onto the floor of the Meadowbrook Recreation Center's makeshift dojang in Arlington, Texas. He bagged groceries to pay for one taekwondo class a week under Master Allen Steen, and learned to fight in the first raw years of American sport karate, alongside police officers and construction workers who knew what a real fight was. He went on to 120 tournament awards, 78 first-place and grand-championship finishes, and 13 Hall of Fame inductions, including the Black Belt Hall of Fame's 1980 Man of the Year.

What that training gave him had less to do with trophies than with the lesson that would inform the rest of his life: you cannot always control what happens to you, but you can master what you do next. He carried it into a patrol car as a Texas peace officer, onto the bench for 16 years as an elected Tarrant County justice of the peace and 10 more as a visiting judge, and finally into the Tarrant County jail, where, as Chief of Reentry for Sheriff Bill Waybourn, his former student, he leads a program for people who have decided to change the course of their lives.

CHAMPION is the whole journey, told plainly and with humor, with more than 100 photographs, most from Roy Kurban's 50-year archive.

> **For readers of *Just Mercy*, *Writing My Wrongs* and *Same Kind of Different as Me***, and for anyone who came up in the martial arts, wore a badge, served on the bench, or believes in second chances.

BOOK SPECIFICATIONS

TITLE	**CHAMPION**
SUBTITLE	**A Memoir of Martial Arts, Criminal Justice & Public Service**
AUTHOR	**Roy Kurban with Melinda Folse**
FOREWORD	**Aaron Norris**
PUBLISHER	**Five Crow Press · Fort Worth, Texas**
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FORMATS	**Hardcover · Paperback**
EXTENT	**312 pages · more than 100 black-and-white photographs**
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ISBN: HARDCOVER	**979-8-9897274-9-0**
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CATEGORIES	**Biography / Law Enforcement · Sports / Martial Arts / Karate · Social Science / Penology**
DISTRIBUTION	**Amazon · Ingram (bookstores and libraries)**

FROM THOSE WHO KNOW HIM

Early Praise

Students, colleagues and the friend who wrote the foreword.

"I am still Grandmaster Kurban's student. That will never change. . . . If you take anything from this book, learn how he cares about people, takes pleasure in the success of others. Learn from Roy D. Kurban and you can create success for others too."

JERRY VENNUM · Retired chief, Criminal Investigation Division, Tarrant County Sheriff's Office; retired chief of police, Dalworthington Gardens

"A rare few individuals make such a mark on history that having the opportunity to unfold their life in a book is not only earned but a tribute to their craft and life. . . . You have an opportunity by reading his book to walk alongside Roy Kurban."

DENNIS COX · Retired chief of investigation, Denton County District Attorney's Office

"What truly separates Roy is the respect he earned from those around him—from his students."

AARON NORRIS · From the foreword

"I was cocky and thought I would wipe that smile off his face. Let's just say I learned humility that night."

DENNIS COX · On meeting Kurban in a sparring match in 1972

"Time after time I was greeted by someone at a door who told me, 'Oh, I know Mr. Kurban. He taught karate to my son, grandson, neighbor, or friend.'"

DENNIS COX · Retired chief of investigation, Denton County District Attorney's Office

"Some top-tier fighters thought the smile was fake at first but found out that win or lose that big smile was still there. . . . The smile is real!"

JERRY VENNUM · Retired chief of police, Dalworthington Gardens

Review copies are available to reviewers, media, booksellers and event hosts on request: melinda@fivecrowpress.com.

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media contact: Melinda Folse, Five Crow Press · melinda@fivecrowpress.com · 682-540-7379

From Playground Target to Champion of Second Chances

Karate legend, lawman and judge Roy Kurban tells his story in CHAMPION

FORT WORTH, Texas (Nov. 17, 2026) — Roy Kurban was 12 when a school bully pinned him to the playground and spat in his face. He didn't have the physical strength to do a single push-up. In CHAMPION: A Memoir of Martial Arts, Criminal Justice & Public Service, published today by Five Crow Press, Kurban tells how that boy became a national karate champion, a Texas peace officer, a Tarrant County justice of the peace and, finally, a champion for people who made bad decisions but don't have to be defined by them.

At 16, Kurban bagged groceries to pay for one taekwondo class a week under Master Allen Steen at the Meadowbrook Recreation Center in Arlington. He came up through the "Blood and Guts" years of American sport karate and built a record of 120 tournament awards, 78 first-place and grand-championship finishes and 13 Hall of Fame inductions. In 1980, the Black Belt Hall of Fame named him Man of the Year, an honor previously given to Chuck Norris and Bruce Lee. Today he is a ninth-degree grandmaster in taekwondo and teaches at Strawn Martial Arts Academy in Strawn.

Then he carried the same discipline into law enforcement. As a commissioned Texas peace officer, he became known for talking wanted men into handcuffs without raising his voice, and he co-created a handgun-retention course used across Texas and taught to the U.S. Air Force.

As an elected Tarrant County justice of the peace for 16 years, and a visiting judge for 10 more, he watched too many people go to jail because they couldn't pay a fine — and found another way, letting them work off fines serving the poor at Mission Metroplex in Arlington, Texas.

Today Kurban is Chief of Reentry for the Tarrant County Sheriff's Office, where he leads Pathways to H.O.P.E. (Helping Offenders Pursue Excellence), a program open to every one of the more than 4,000 men and women held in the county jail on any given day.

"I'd trained my whole life for this role I never could have imagined," Kurban said. "I spent 50 years on the dojang floor doing exactly that: taking people nobody believed in — or who didn't believe in themselves — and making them champions."

The book carries a foreword by Aaron Norris, who met Kurban at a taekwondo tournament in Seoul around 1970, when both were serving in the U.S. Army in Korea, and more than 100 photographs, most from Kurban's 50-year archive.

"If you take anything from this book, learn how he cares about people, takes pleasure in the success of others," said Jerry Vennum, retired chief of police of Dalworthington Gardens and a longtime student of Kurban's.

AVAILABILITY

CHAMPION: A Memoir of Martial Arts, Criminal Justice & Public Service, by Roy Kurban with Melinda Folse. Foreword by Aaron Norris. Five Crow Press, Nov. 17, 2026. Hardcover, $37.99, ISBN 979-8-9897274-9-0. Paperback, $26.99, ISBN 979-8-9981967-0-6. 312 pages, more than 100 photographs. Available now on Amazon; bookstores and libraries can order through Ingram. fivecrowpress.com/champion

ABOUT ROY KURBAN

Roy Kurban is a ninth-degree grandmaster in taekwondo, a 10th-degree black belt in karate and a 13-time Hall of Fame inductee. He founded the American Black Belt Academy in Arlington, trained more than 10,000 students and today teaches at Strawn Martial Arts Academy. A former Texas peace officer and 16-year Tarrant County justice of the peace, he is Chief of Reentry for the Tarrant County Sheriff's Office. He and his wife, Janette, live in Willow Park, Texas.

ABOUT FIVE CROW PRESS

Five Crow Press is an independent publisher in Fort Worth, Texas. Its tagline, Stories That Make a Difference, is the test it applies to every book it takes on. fivecrowpress.com

Review copies, photographs and interviews are available on request.

# # #

BADGE, BENCH AND BLACK BELT

About the Author

Roy Kurban

Roy Kurban began his martial arts training at 16, under Master Allen Steen in Arlington, Texas, bagging groceries to pay for one class a week. He came up through the golden age of American sport karate: 120 tournament awards, 78 first-place and grand-championship finishes, 13 Hall of Fame inductions and, in 1980, Man of the Year in the Black Belt Hall of Fame. He is a ninth-degree grandmaster in taekwondo and the author of Kicking Techniques for Competition and Self-Defense (Ohara, 1979).

He founded the American Black Belt Academy in Arlington, trained more than 10,000 students and today teaches at Strawn Martial Arts Academy. A former Texas peace officer, he spent 16 years as an elected Tarrant County justice of the peace and 10 more as a visiting judge, and he is now Chief of Reentry for the Tarrant County Sheriff's Office. He and his wife, Janette, live in Willow Park, Texas.



Roy Kurban · high-resolution photo on request

FAST FACTS

- 120 tournament awards; 78 first-place and grand-championship finishes (1968–2000)
- 13 Hall of Fame inductions · Black Belt Hall of Fame Man of the Year, 1980
- Ninth-degree black belt, grandmaster of taekwondo · 10th-degree black belt in karate
- Among the first professional kickboxers in the United States
- Author of Kicking Techniques for Competition and Self-Defense (Ohara, 1979), more than 30,000 copies sold
- More than 10,000 students trained
- Texas peace officer · co-created a handgun-retention course used across Texas and taught to the U.S. Air Force
- 16 years as an elected Tarrant County justice of the peace · 10 years as a visiting judge
- Chief of Reentry, Tarrant County Sheriff's Office · leads Pathways to H.O.P.E. (Helping Offenders Pursue Excellence)
- Served with the U.S. Army in Korea, where he trained under Grandmaster Won Chik Park

Short bio (50 words), for programs and introductions: Roy Kurban is a ninth-degree taekwondo grandmaster, a 13-time Hall of Fame inductee and the Black Belt Hall of Fame's 1980 Man of the Year. A former Texas peace officer with 26 years on the bench, he is Chief of Reentry for the Tarrant County Sheriff's Office. He lives in Willow Park, Texas.

FOR FEATURES & INTERVIEWS

A Conversation with the Author

Roy Kurban, in his own words.

Q. You were a bullied kid who couldn't do a push-up. What did karate give you?

Remember, you're talking to the guy who had a bully sit on his chest and spit in his face. So I was excited to walk anywhere with a black belt on and face the toughest guys in the world, win or lose. I was in big company. Of course I wanted to win, but I was so happy just to be there. People paid money to watch me fight. I couldn't believe it.

Q. What were tournaments like in those early years?

There was zero money in it. If you were making money, you had a job or you were teaching. You went to the tournament, you got a trophy, and the whole goal was to learn as much as you could from the other fighters, get as good as you could, and bring it back and teach it to your students. We fought on concrete floors with no pads, so you'd better block what was thrown or you'd lose your teeth. I'm living proof. We'd try our hardest to beat each other, then sit down that night and laugh together. It was a glorious time.

Q. Tell us about beating Bill "Superfoot" Wallace.

Bill was the fastest fighter I've ever seen, before or since, and he'd beaten me by a point every time we fought. So for a whole year I practiced fighting with my right foot in front, to take away his body attack. That morning he asked me to warm up with him, and I warmed up with my left foot in front. He tattooed me all over. When we bowed in for real, I smiled real big, stepped out right foot in front and never put my left foot in front again. Just before time was called, he dropped his arm and I caught him with a backfist. A year of planning, for that one moment. I loved him then, and I love him now.

Q. And when you lost?

The next time we met, I caught him with a kick to the head, but three of the five judges were out of position and didn't see it. Then he caught me, and he won. He tried to hand me the grand champion trophy. I said, "No, Bill. One day it works for you, and one day it works against you." If you fight your fight and do the very best you can, you can't feel bad. You only feel bad if you weren't prepared.

Q. In the book you teach a soldier who had lost a hand. How did that start?

I was working out alone in the gym at Fitzsimons Army Hospital in Denver when this young man in patient clothes walked in with a smart mouth and asked if I wanted to fight. "Sure," I said. When he came back in his uniform, I saw his hands. One was mostly missing, blown off in Vietnam. Then he asked me, "Would you train me?" Everything changed in that moment. His name was Jack Adair. He trained and trained, started placing in tournaments, and earned his black belt in Boulder, Colorado. He was my first black belt.

Q. Who shaped you most as a martial artist?

I was blessed with nothing but great teachers. My two greatest teachers were Larry Caster, here in America, and Grandmaster Won Chik Park, the best of the best, who I trained with when I was stationed in Korea.

Q. What support did you get from home for your karate dreams?

My dad won the Bronze Star in World War II, and when I was fighting he was not that impressed with my karate dreams. The night I brought home my first big trophy, he asked if I was finally done with karate and ready to go back and finish college. I told him, "Dad, I can finish college at 40. But I can't fight like this when I'm 40." Turns out I was right on both counts—and I did graduate from college at 40.

Q. What do you tell the men and women in Pathways to H.O.P.E.?

The line I can almost still hear Grandmaster Park say: "If you get knocked down seven times, you must get up eight times." When something goes wrong, and you have a big failure in your life, you don't quit. You get back up. My job now is to make sure they have a chance.

FOR EDITORS, PRODUCERS & FEATURE WRITERS

Story Angles

Eight ways into the CHAMPION story, sorted by the readers each one reaches.

Each angle pairs a suggested headline with a short hook. Roy Kurban is available for interviews, features and podcasts; review copies and high-resolution photographs are available on request.

FOR LOCAL & GENERAL MEDIA

1 From Playground Target to Champion of Second Chances

A bullied Arlington kid who couldn't do a push-up becomes a national karate champion, a peace officer, a justice of the peace and the Tarrant County jail's chief of reentry. A North Texas life told end to end.

Best fit *Fort Worth Report, Fort Worth Magazine, Star-Telegram, DFW morning shows.*

2 His Student Grew Up to Be the Sheriff

Bill Waybourn was 16 when he started training with Roy Kurban. Decades later, as the newly elected sheriff, he called his old instructor out of retirement to lead the jail's reentry program.

Best fit *Local news, Parker and Palo Pinto County papers, civic newsletters.*

FOR MARTIAL ARTS MEDIA

3 Inside the Golden Age of American Sport Karate

Concrete floors, no pads and no prize money: a champion who fought Bill "Superfoot" Wallace and Joe Lewis on what the era was really like, and why they laughed together after.

Best fit *Black Belt, Taekwondo Life, whistlekick Martial Arts Radio, Sidekicks.*

4 The Tenets, Taken into a County Jail

A ninth-degree taekwondo grandmaster on how the discipline he learned from Grandmaster Won Chik Park became the backbone of a jail reentry program.

Best fit *Martial arts podcasts and school newsletters, Hall of Fame and association publications.*

FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT & CRIMINAL JUSTICE OUTLETS

5 The Judge Who Found a Better Answer Than Jail

Over 16 years on the justice court bench, Kurban watched people go to jail because they couldn't pay a fine, and let them work it off serving the poor instead. Many kept volunteering after the debt was paid.

Best fit *Texas justice court and judicial education publications, In Chambers, court and bar newsletters.*

6 Talking Wanted Men into Handcuffs

A martial arts champion who rarely needed to use it: restraint, respect and the handgun-retention course he co-created for Texas officers and the U.S. Air Force.

Best fit *TMPA Blue Grit, Cops and Writers, CLEAT and police association media.*

7 The Last Forty Hours: Inside Pathways to H.O.P.E.

What happens in the program open to every one of the 4,000-plus people in the Tarrant County jail, from the man who leads it, and why he tells graduates he hopes never to see them again.

Best fit *American Jails, reentry and second-chance podcasts, Fort Worth Report.*

FOR VETERANS' MEDIA

8 A Soldier in Korea and the Lesson of Getting Up Eight Times

Serving in Korea around 1970, Kurban trained under Grandmaster Won Chik Park and met Aaron Norris at a tournament in Seoul. Later, at Fitzsimons Army Hospital, he trained a Vietnam veteran who had lost a hand into his first black belt.

Best fit *KDVA, VFW Magazine, American Legion posts.*

RETAIL & BULK ORDERS

Ordering & Group Sales

For schools, departments, academies, dojangs and dojos.

CHAMPION is available now on Amazon in hardcover and paperback, and bookstores and libraries can order it through Ingram. For groups, the book makes a gift that means something: black belt graduations, academy classes, staff, volunteers and program graduates.

GROUP PRICING, DIRECT FROM FIVE CROW PRESS

COPIES	DISCOUNT	PAPERBACK ($26.99)	HARDCOVER ($37.99)
10–24	10% off	$24.29 each	$34.19 each
25–49	15% off	$22.94 each	$32.29 each
50 or more	20% off	$21.59 each	$30.39 each

Paperbacks and hardcovers can be combined to reach a tier. Signed bookplates are available on request. Shipping is quoted with your order.

HOW TO ORDER

Email **orders@fivecrowpress.com** or call 682-540-7379 with the number of copies, paperback or hardcover, and where to ship. We'll send you a quote and an invoice.

Pair it with a talk: Roy speaks to martial arts, law enforcement, judicial, civic and faith groups. Ask about pairing a book order with an appearance.

RETAIL

- **Book page and buy links:** fivecrowpress.com/champion
- **Amazon:** hardcover and paperback
- **Bookstores and libraries:** order through Ingram (ISBNs on the specifications page)

FOR PRODUCERS, BOOKERS & HOSTS

Interviews, Talks & Signings

Everything you need to book and introduce Roy Kurban.

Intro a host can read (about 30 seconds): *When Roy Kurban was 12 years old, a school bully pinned him to the playground and spat in his face. He couldn't do a single push-up. Four years later he walked into a karate class in Arlington, Texas, and he never stopped getting back up. He became one of the champions of the golden age of American sport karate, the Black Belt Hall of Fame's 1980 Man of the Year, a Texas peace officer, and for 16 years an elected justice of the peace. Today he is Chief of Reentry for the Tarrant County Sheriff's Office and the author of CHAMPION. Please welcome Grandmaster Roy Kurban.*

TALK TOPICS

Get Up Eight: Failure, Discipline and the Second Chance

Civic clubs, faith groups, reentry and recovery organizations, graduations.

From the Ring to the Bench: What the Martial Arts Taught Me About Justice

Judicial education, bar associations, law enforcement trainings and academies.

The Blood and Guts Years: Inside the Golden Age of American Karate

Martial arts schools, banquets, Hall of Fame events and tournaments.

On Teaching Champions to Be Champions

Schools, youth programs and coaches.

FORMATS

Keynote or session (30–45 minutes) · talk plus Q&A · reading and signing · martial arts seminar with student demonstration · radio, podcast and TV interviews, in studio or by phone or video.

SUGGESTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. You open the book on a playground with a bully on your chest. Why start there?
2. What was sport karate like before there was any money in it?
3. How did you finally beat Bill "Superfoot" Wallace?
4. What did the martial arts teach you about being a cop, and about being a judge?
5. Why let people work off fines instead of sending them to jail?
6. What is Pathways to H.O.P.E., and what do you tell the graduates?
7. Your student Bill Waybourn grew up to be the sheriff and called you out of retirement. What was that call like?
8. What would you say to a kid who's being bullied right now?

BOOKING

All interview, speaking and signing requests go through Melinda Folse at Five Crow Press: melinda@fivecrowpress.com · 682-540-7379. Roy Kurban works full-time at the Tarrant County Sheriff's Office, so please allow a few days to confirm a date.

THE PUBLISHER

About Five Crow Press

Stories That Make a Difference.

Five Crow Press is an independent publisher in Fort Worth, Texas. Its tagline, Stories That Make a Difference, is the test it applies to every book it takes on: stories that can make a difference for someone and need a publisher when the traditional path is not available or desired.

CONTACT & MEDIA INQUIRIES

MEDIA CONTACT	**Melinda Folse, Five Crow Press**
EMAIL	**melinda@fivecrowpress.com**
PHONE	**682-540-7379**
GROUP ORDERS	**orders@fivecrowpress.com**
BOOK PAGE	**fivecrowpress.com/champion**
WEB	**fivecrowpress.com**
MAILING	**Five Crow Press · 3101 W 6th St, #470833 · Fort Worth, TX 76107-2778**

Scan for the book page

Buy links, early praise, an excerpt and this kit: fivecrowpress.com/champion

Review copies, author interviews and high-resolution photographs are available on request.