

OVATION



FORMER ARMY CAPT. SONKI HONG

AGE: 35 **HOMETOWN:** Santa Monica, Calif.

POSITION: Owns Sonki Fitness; leads fitness "boot camps" and vacations for civilians; five-time World Fitness Champion; former intelligence officer and top graduate in fitness from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y.

You've always loved athletics. How did you get involved in physical fitness training in the Army? I enjoyed training because of my passion for and background in fitness and also because it was a chance to get to know the soldiers better, form a bond, and help them get in better shape.

Are your fitness boot camps for civilians just like military training? There is a component of military training in the exercises, but the key element of military instruction I incorporate is mental discipline and strength. To get up at 5:30 a.m. to work out every day takes a lot of mental strength, and it's what drives success in terms of fitness. ... We focus on total body fitness and getting stronger and faster. I also encourage teamwork. ... Participants share a great camaraderie, and it makes the whole process a lot more fun.

What gave you the idea for your fitness vacations? Most people on vacation spend their time eating, relaxing, sightseeing, and drinking. I thought, 'Why not create a vacation where people can be active and have fun but come back home in better shape with a new zest for life?'

What skills did you learn in the military that help you run your business? Leadership skills. I employ trainers and I have [more than] 130 clients with many different personalities and fitness levels that I have to lead and inspire. I learned stress- and time-management skills. There's phenomenal stress in the military, and you have to learn to ... make the best of it, which helped me overcome the stress of building a business ... I also bring honor and integrity to my work. Having lived under the honor code in the military, [I] do business the honest way.

What fitness advice can you give other officers? Maintain the pride and honor of having been in the military, and take care of yourself by making fitness a lifelong habit.

"Having lived under the honor code ... [I] do business the honest way."

Visit the Sonki Hong Fitness Web site, www.sonkifitness.com, for more information about boot camp classes, fitness vacations, fitness tips, and inspirational stories.