

Real estate, martial arts do mix for Bronx resident



This week, Maurice Elmalem will attempt to break his old world record of breaking 75 sheets of 1/8 inch thick glass.

By Daniel Gesslein

With three world martial arts records and a successful real estate firm that is helping to rebuild the Bronx, Maurice Elmalem appears to have it all. However, that is not stopping the globe hopping, martial arts legend, who calls this boro his home, from trying to break his own world records and entertain fans at the same time.

Elmalem is a martial arts icon. He is a four-time world Tae Kwon Do champion who has been involved in the martial arts for 30 years. He is one of many martial artists

Please turn to Page 13

Real estate, martial artist

Continued from Page 1

to perform at Roseland at the Oriental World of Self Defense this Saturday, produced by Armando Mojica. In addition to Grand Master Aaron Banks, will be World Karate Champion and Bronxite Jerry "Fast Feet" Fontanez. The show will start at 8 p.m. and tickets are available through Ticket Master.

Born in France, Elmalem has lived in Morocco, Israel, and Canada before settling down with his wife and four children in the Bronx. He entered the martial arts world at the age of 10 when he was living in Israel. Growing up in some hard neighborhoods, Elmalem wanted to learn self defense. He said it helps him deal with stress and develop new strategies to handle problems.

"It's a very challenging sport to me."

Elmalem has broken three world records and hopes to beat some of his own this Saturday. In 1998, he broke the record when he threw three bricks in the air and smashed them with his forehead. In 1989, he broke 75 sheets of glass with his elbow and 48 sheets with his hand, without cutting himself, both of which created new world records.

"It takes a lot of experience and a lot of guts. You must be crazy do such things."

Elmalem first became involved in glass breaking while being challenged by his employees at a construction site for his firm Maurice

Contractors and Designers Inc. They knew he broke boards but encouraged him to break a few sheets of glass. Never one to shy away from a challenge, the martial arts master sliced through the glass with only a minor cut and started down the road to world records.

His firm built some of the storefronts and created some of the landscaping for the Bay Plaza Shopping Center. A licensed realtor, Elmalem owns property on White Plains Rd. and Allerton Ave.

Among his other achievements, Elmalem helped to make Tae Kwon Do an event into the next summer Olympics. He said people should stop looking at the violent aspect of Tae Kwon Do and other martial art forms and see the movement of the body similar to gymnastics.

On Saturday, Elmalem will work on old favorites while at the same time showing new moves. The world champion will attempt to break a board in mid air. He will leap across fire to break boards. With fierce kicks, he will break 10 boards set on fire. He will also attempt to slice through 80 to 90 sheets of glass with his elbow to break his own world record.

Elmalem said he continues to compete and strive for new challenges because he sees it as an evolving art form.

"I don't want my art to die so I'm going to hold on to it for as long as I can," he said. "There's no reason for me to slow down. It's something I really enjoy doing."



Martial arts' icon Maurice Elmalem shows off his awards.