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DR. ROBERT REY Celebrity Surgeon Is a Warrior at Heart

BY EDWARD POLLARD

Age: 45

Home Base: Beverly Hills, California

Where You've Seen Him: *Dr. 90210*, *Entertainment Tonight*, *Se7en*

Martial Arts Experience: Greco-Roman wrestling, taekwondo, hapkido, Brazilian jujutsu

Dr. Robert Rey has risen to celebrity status as plastic surgeon to the stars, but his true passion is the martial arts. Born in São Paulo, Brazil, Rey was raised in an atmosphere of poverty and bullying. Even after American missionaries sent him to Utah, things didn't change, for he was singled out there, as well. It wasn't until he was chosen to help fill a vacant position on the wrestling team that his life took a turn for the better.

"I was the smallest guy in my high-school class, 5 feet 4 inches tall and 94 pounds," he said. "Suddenly, when I learned Greco-Roman wrestling, my whole life changed. I became very popular. All the girls wanted to date me, and the boys that gave me a hard time very quickly stopped."

But the tough times didn't stop. Rey had 18 years of study ahead of him before he would become a celebrity doctor and TV personality. That forced him to put his boyhood desire to learn judo on hold. "I emerged and found a taekwondo school in Boston that really hit the spot," he said.

Later, after Rey relocated to Beverly Hills, California, he started searching for an instructor. "I asked who was the best teacher in Los Angeles and was directed to grandmaster Jun Chong in the Miracle Mile District," he said. "After eight years, I finally got my black belt—in taekwondo and hapkido—in June 2006. It isn't easy balancing training with a family, kids, a busy practice and television."

The doctor recently had a chilling encounter that required him to put his martial skills into action. While flying from Austin, Texas, to Los Angeles, he heard a scream and then the sound of someone running. "I saw two or three people trying to tackle a guy," Rey said. "A

couldn't unleash a punch.

"Guess what saved the day?" he asked. "He made a mistake that a fighter never makes: He turned his back to me and started running to the cockpit to open the door. I was able to put a head lock on him, and the guy



PHOTOS COURTESY OF E! NETWORKS/BJERKE

tiny stewardess tried to stop him, but he just threw her [aside] and kept running forward. I thought, I've got to do something because this guy's going to try to open the cockpit door. So I tapped this big monster in front of me and said, 'We've got to take this guy down,' and he said, 'I agree,' but he was still belted. I was unbelted already, so I jumped into the aisle. The guy turned, then tried to kick and punch me. Even more bizarre, he tried to bite me."

Rey's reflexes caused him to switch into kicking mode, but he quickly realized that there was insufficient room to let one fly. And because a crowd had formed around the troublemaker, he

went to sleep. I threw him in the seat, we tied him down, and the huge guy and I held him down. When we arrived at the airport, the FBI and airport security piled in and took him away. It was a harrowing experience.

"Within a few days, I was cross-training in everything—*capoeira*, *jeet kune do* and *Krav Maga*. Finally, I walked into the Gracie Academy in Torrance, California. I realized this is what saved me on the airplane, so I signed up. Since I'm Brazilian, it means I've come full circle. I've been taking Brazilian jujutsu ever since, and I'm a much more balanced martial artist." ❦