My Tae Kwon Do Journey

My Tae Kwon Do journey started with a demonstration that was presented to a summer education program where I was working. My first thought was WOW! The demonstration was made up of all different people. There were kids there from my son’s class and adults from our community. These people were not necessarily those that I would have thought to be athletic, but here they were doing some amazing athletic things! My second thought was I want to do that – and I want my family to do that! Mr. Meek described the idea of Pil Sung- certain victory over yourself and the things in your life that you want to overcome. This idea rang true to me. I wanted my family to be a part of this.

I shared with my husband the exciting demonstration and wondered why we hadn’t heard about it being in Lamoni. He was excited about it too. We just had to decide who was going to start with the boys. We decided that he would start with them and I would start with our daughter Megan, then four years old, when she was old enough. I waited 7 months before my patience got the best of me. Watching them made me want to do it more! I would like to thank Mr. Meek for encouraging us to join and changing my families’ lives.

I had been looking for something to enrich my life. I felt complete with our family and career and was looking for something to grow in my life. We started Tae Kwon Do and in the beginning it was just a physical activity. Then the more we got involved I noticed how much it affected the rest of our lives. All the tenets of Tae Kwon Do were being made apparent. As a parent I liked having another reference to help discuss the things I wanted my children to live by. Courtesy is treating everyone with respect. We come to Tae Kwon Do leaving our outside lives behind and we work and learn together. The martial art creates a structure of respect for the knowledge and experience of those who have come before us. I like the way that we teach people to be respectful with our words and body language. It is not just dependent on age or social status, but on knowledge and experience.

I remember a time at one of the tests I was asked what was one of my favorite tenets of Tae Kwon Do. Immediately integrity came to mind. Knowing that as an entire establishment we were ingraining in our students a sense that we uphold integrity as a school and a group of people. Integrity means that we will hold to our word. It also means that we will respect other people and their property. We were at a Martial Arts of America Tournament recently and I left a bag there accidently – which had my checkbook in it plus some of our kids’ things. I was frustrated because of the hassle it would be to stop the checks and change the account and everything that has to be done with a stolen checkbook. Then I remembered that Master Slatten was still there. I knew that if they could find it, then all the things would still be there. My husband called her and she was able to return our bag. I am pleased to say that there were over two hundred people there and I was sure that our things were still going to be intact. This is what integrity means to me, and I am glad to be a part of a group like that.

Perseverance is the one tenet I have learned the most throughout my journey. I don’t know if have ever been challenged in the ways that Tae Kwon Do has challenged me. The physical aspect has been difficult, making me wish I had started this a long time ago. However, I am pleased with what I have accomplished and have accepted my strengths and acknowledged my weaknesses. Mr. McKinney and I have talked about what it means to have a black belt attitude. It means to always try your best and not accept your perceived limitations, to push at your personal boundaries. It is something that I hope we can instill in our children.

In my job as a high school math teacher, I try to reassure students that confidence is something that is gained with experience and age. I only wish that I could package some of the confidence I have now and send it to myself when I was in high school. I wish I had Tae Kwon Do back at that age. It has given me a new confidence. Eye contact is important – more than just in sparring. I would like to thank Mr. Brenizer for teaching me how to use eye contact to my advantage. This has translated into my everyday life as well. I have gained confidence from knowing what my body is capable of and knowing that I can control what I am doing. I have noticed since I have started taking Tae Kwon Do I walk differently. I walk with my head up meeting people’s eyes with confidence. I know that was not always the case.

Indomitable Spirit is difficult to pin down to a few words. It is a way of looking and living life. Indomitable spirit is the encompassing idea of Pil Sung – certain victory over the things that are in your life. Taking the passion of Tae Kwon Do and applying it to all the things that you do - your career, relationships, activities and just living life. It is about knowing that you won’t give up on things. You may learn in different ways or need to approach it differently depending on your skills and talents, but as long as you are working towards your success and overcoming your challenges. It is even more than the hard work it is somewhere in your heart where you want to keep going and the passion and courage to keep going.

Tae Kwon Do is not just about learning forms and one-steps - the physical aspect, but how we adapt and use it in our lives. I would like to thank my parents, Bill and Phyllis Weaver, and my parents-in-law, Jim and Jeannie McKinney, for their support in taking care of our children so that Jim and I were able to pursue all the classes and activities in which we participated. Thank you for teaching me about family support. My family – Megan, Tyler, Ryan, and Jim, thank you for teaching me what are family can do together. Together we can do just about anything! I appreciate all the support and camaraderie that I received from the other 1st permanent brown belts and classmates. Thank you for the friendship and the hours of work and sweat. Thank you to Mr. Meek for introducing Tae Kwon Do to our family and inspiring us to love it. Thank you to Mr. Strade for showing me that discipline and fun can go together. Thank you to Master Slatten for showing how to make Tae Kwon Do my own, adjusting for my own personal needs. Thank you for inspiring me and being a great female role model. I would like to thank Master Hall for taking time to help me figure out my board break and work out different ways to think about the breaking. Thank you for exemplifying all the tenants of Tae Kwon Do. My last thank you has to be to Mr. McKinney. Thank you for understanding my desire to join Tae Kwon Do and making it your desire too. Thank you for helping me make everything we do a partnership, with me and our family. It has been a fun and educational journey – which has only really begun. I am looking forward to all the hard work for my next step – First Dan!