

## **Inspirational Martial Arts Stories 2004**

From: [www.your-martial-arts-resources.com](http://www.your-martial-arts-resources.com)

### **Fighting for another chance:**

From: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/england/london/4097859.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/london/4097859.stm)

(December 21, 2004):

Thalidomide victim Ray "Duch" Peter was born with two club feet and underwent numerous painful operations as a child to have his legs straightened.

As a result he has had to walk with crutches for most of his life.

But this didn't stop him from becoming a criminal known as "The Regulator" selling guns and drugs.

The former gangster, from Lewisham, south-east London, said he has now turned his life around with a mix of martial arts and music.

He hopes his story, told in his autobiography, "A Fighting Chance", will have a positive impact on young people by teaching them to stay away from crime.

"Guns, drugs, you name it, I've done it," he said. "In fact, it's better for me to tell you what I've not done."

"But I am not proud of what I have done but I feel that my story needs to be told.

"I wrote the book because I wanted to put back into society what I had so dearly squeezed out.

"I wanted to put together a message together for kids to say that prison is not cool, it destroys and takes away years of your life."

Mr Peter, who is now married with four children, walks with the aid of crutches and £4,000 splints, made from titanium.

He spent most of his childhood in care and most of his adult life in prison for various offences.

One of the "worst moments" of his childhood was when he spent time at Princes Lodge in Limehouse, east London, which he described as for "down and outs".

"It is where I came across all sorts and basically got caught up in a world which I couldn't escape from," he said of the place, now called The Mission.

Between the ages of 16 and 35 he spent nine years in some of Britain's most notorious jails, including Belmarsh Prison.

But the turning point in Mr Peter's life came when his son told a teacher he was going to get his father to shoot him when he got reprimanded at school.

"I was in prison at the time and when I heard this I was so ashamed," said Ray.

"I decided that I was not going to allow my son to be a gangster. I knew I had to stop what I was doing."

Although he had an unhappy childhood, one of Mr Peter's best memories was being looked after by a family from Singapore and became a karate expert.

As well as martial arts, he also has a passion for music.

He formed a band, Harlequin, 18 years ago and now hopes to land a record deal.

"I want to show disabled people and everyone really that there is a fighting chance. "There is life after prison. If I can do it with my disability, anyone can do it," Ray said.

Mr Peter feels prison has given him another chance.

"The prison system saved me and I have now moved my life on," he said.

"I'm ashamed of my past but my life is now brilliant.

"I'm enjoying life, I have been given a chance, and I'm going to make the most of it."

### **He's still kickin':**

From: <http://www.yorkdispatch.com/Stories/0,1413,138~10024~2581878,00.html>  
(December 12, 2004):

70-year-old excels in martial arts

Shannon Morris didn't want to be like many senior citizens -- inactive, sitting at home, nursing aches and pains and just growing old.

A little more than two years ago, when he was 68, Morris, of Lower Windsor Township, decided to take his grandson to a karate class. While his grandson only lasted two classes, Morris, now 70, is preparing to take his test for a green belt and has competed in a few karate tournaments.

"It was tough the first six weeks, I had to wake up all those muscles," Morris said about learning karate.

A family man all his life, Morris never had time for sports.

"I was busy raising four children and working," he said.

Now the gray-haired gentleman can't get along without karate. While on vacation in Colorado Springs, Morris lasted three days before calling a local karate school to see if he could join in on a class.

No time for rocking chair: Morris' wife, Arla, thinks it's great that her husband isn't sitting at home, wasting away in a rocking chair.

"I love it," Arla says, "he loves it and I can see a big difference in his activities."

His doctor agrees, and told Morris, "I don't know what you're doing, but keep it up."

His blood pressure is low, his weight is down and while taking a stress test recently, "I just tore it up," saying that his performance was better than most men half his age. "I feel better when I go home (after class), no sleeping pills, no medication."

Morris works out two or three times a week at York Shotokan Karate School. Instructor, Master Tony Abel, says Morris is an inspiration to him and all his students. Morris is the oldest student in Abel's class, the next oldest being a 60-year-old black belt.

"I take my hat off to Shannon for what he is doing," Abel said. "He pushes himself over and above what he (Morris) thinks he's capable of doing."

That doesn't mean, however, that Morris doesn't have limits while practicing karate.

"I can do everything out there on the floor except spin real fast and summersaults," Morris said, laughing.

It's obvious, while watching Morris practice kicks, that some moves are difficult due to his aging joints. But the dedication is there and Morris puts all his effort into every move he makes.

Such effort has led to Morris competing in, and winning, several karate tournaments. He recently competed in a tournament in York where he was the next oldest person in his age group was 35.

Morris defeated the 35-year-old in a light-contact fight, where the judge awards points for kicks and punches to the body of the opponent, to take first place.

Morris also placed first in the Kata Division, where the participant must perform a series of practiced blocks, punches and kicks to show their technique.

Morris also helps the instructors with the children's classes.

"They're all 4-to-8-year-olds and the instructors can use a little help," Morris said. "It's a pleasure."

As for his future in karate, Morris realizes his age will keep him from ever reaching black belt, but he will be satisfied to be the oldest-living green belt, a mid-level belt.

"I try to set realistic goals," he said when asked if he aspires to earn his black belt. "I'd just like to be a really good green belt and to know that I earned every little bit of it."

And as for other seniors trying out karate, Morris says he would "definitely" suggest it.

"It's not easy to get started, but it's definitely worth it."

### **90-year-old man still teaching kids judo:**

From: <http://www.modbee.com/24hour/weird/story/1880204p-9806308c.html>  
(December 3, 2004):

LINCOLN, Neb. - Paul Owen turned 90 this week, and he's still getting his kicks from judo. "I don't know what keeps me young," Owen said. Maybe it's the kids he teaches at John Roseberry's Sho-Rei-Shobu-Kan Martial Arts Center in Lincoln.

Owen, a fourth-degree black belt, easily keeps up with his exuberant students between ages 4 and 12. He instructs them on throws, holds, kicks and other basic movements.

Owen picked up the sport at age 40, taught for almost 40 years and then went on hiatus because he couldn't compete as he had in the past.

"I guess I thought I was too old," he said.

So for a decade, Owen stayed away from the downtown dojo where he taught hundreds of judo novices. He decided to resume teaching the sport he loved two years ago.

Two weeks ago, Owen received a plaque to commemorate his 50 years of judo. Lincoln police Capt. David Beggs, Owen's student 30 years ago, said Owen does a great job working with the young students.

Owen picked up judo after being invited to a class at the University of Nebraska in the 1950s. He became friends with John Roseberry who eventually started his own dojo.

"I was a student and a teacher," Owen said.

Roseberry said Owen has always had a knack for judo. He'd hold his own at the few tournaments he attended, even though he was in his 50s.

Outside the dojo, Owen exercises three times a week. He runs on a treadmill, rides a bike and lifts weights to keep his muscles toned.

"The guy is phenomenal," Beggs said. "I hope I'm still alive at the age he is."

### **Danny, Michelle keep kicking down barriers:**

From: <http://phillyburbs.com/pb-dyn/news/111-11262004-406867.html>  
(November 26, 2004):

One swift, well-placed kick foiled a would-be attacker, bolstered Michelle Yohn's confidence and showed her mother that karate class was working.

Yohn, 29, is barely 5 feet tall, battles chronic asthma, is legally blind, has mild mental retardation and is prone to seizures.

Despite those challenges, six years ago her kick proved powerful enough to send a teen thug writhing in pain when she was walking through the woods to a store near her Falls home. The teen came up behind her and shoved her hard. Unsure if she was being attacked, Michelle turned and gave him a swift kick. She ran as he fell to the ground.

"Nothing like that has happened before," Michelle said of the attack.

According to her mother, Linda Price, "After she started karate, I always wondered if she'd have the force of mind to defend herself. When that kid tried to push her, her reflexes kicked in. I figured he was just being mean. Now at least I know her instincts will kick in. That let me know it's working."

Today, Michelle has a brown belt. After seven years of martial arts, she's practicing for her black belt test at the Tiger Schulmann Karate Center, where she takes lessons. She plans to

test for her black belt in February.

"She's thinking, 'I like it. It's fun.' I'm thinking, 'It's self-defense,' " Price said.

Michelle's fiance, Danny Piccari, 23, of Middletown, began taking karate classes a year ago as a fun Friday night outing with Michelle.

"For me, it's more or less exercise," said Carol Piccari, Danny's mom. "I'd do anything to keep him fit. Exercise - that's my main thing with him. He can't get too heavy because it's a strain on his heart. He has an artificial conduit in his heart.

"The self-defense part is just a bonus," Piccari said. "It was just another opportunity for Danny and Michelle to share something together."

Danny has Down syndrome, a speech impediment and other ailments. Like Michelle, he doesn't let anything stop him.

"Getting better," Danny said recently about his martial arts skills as he wiped his forehead.

Danny and Michelle are in love and have dated for five years, originally meeting at a Bucks County Special Olympics event. They live with their parents, but plan to start living together on their own after a July 2006 commitment ceremony.

Though Michelle and Danny's families would prefer they marry, if they did so, the couple would lose some of the Social Security benefits that would enable them to live independently, their mothers have said.

Their mothers don't believe physical and mental disabilities should prevent their children from having a happy life together, but they want them to be ready for life on their own.

For the past two years, the moms have been assembling the state services Danny and Michelle will need to live independently, including Section 8 housing, an in-home support person to check on them regularly and reliable transportation.

Danny is a part-time customer service associate with the Langhorne Genuardi's supermarket, where he bags groceries, stocks shelves, returns carts and performs light maintenance around the store. Michelle is a part-time bagger for the Morrisville Giant supermarket. She also works once a week interviewing the mentally disabled for services through an organization called Bucks County Creating Satisfaction Together.

Danny's father, David Piccari, has taught him how to shave. Michelle's mom and stepdad, Russell Price, have taught her to use her limited vision to write checks.

But Michelle's mom wanted to know that her daughter could fight off an attacker. For that, she took Michelle to Tiger Schulmann Karate in Feasterville.

"Originally, I was going to do the first 150 classes so she could learn self-defense because she's little and out in the world," Price said. She decided to continue the lessons when she saw how much Michelle liked it.

Thad Campbell, the center's owner, said Michelle is ready to test for the black belt. The next test is in February, he said. She'll be evaluated for strength and flexibility, basic skill, close-range self-defense, wood-breaking skills and sparring, Campbell said.

"Her technique is excellent. Her punch and kick and the strength of her punches and kicks are excellent. We just have to get her into shape with her asthma," Campbell said, adding that she also needs to develop more stamina.

"She'll be watched by three different instructional sensei. She's going to have to break some wood, and she's going to have to spar for 10 minutes in a row," he said.

Disabilities haven't stopped Michelle from excelling in the martial arts, he said. "She is currently a brown belt level four, the highest level she can be before achieving black belt," Campbell said.

Michelle is unassuming about her karate skills, but anyone watching her train could hear the sound of her punches as Danny blocked her fists using a hand-held pad. When it was time for Danny to practice on Michelle, he took some goading.

"Come on!" Michelle beckoned as she blocked his tap. Campbell, who was walking among the class of five sparring partners, tried to get Danny into the fighting spirit. "Hit her, man!" he yelled. At that, Danny landed a decisive punch on the blocking pad Michelle held up.

Later in the class, Michelle flipped Danny over her back and onto the karate mat with a noticeable "thud." She cheered and laughed while he got up with a grin and rubbed his back.

"We've dealt with kids with any kind of disability you can imagine. I've taught students with cerebral palsy. I actually have a little brother with Down syndrome, and he works with me sometimes," Campbell said.

As for Michelle, she said, "I'll flip anybody. No problem."

### **87-year-old Paducah woman likes to 'kick and punch':**

From: <http://www.paducahsun.com>  
(November 19, 2004):

PADUCAH, Ky. - Estes Taylor isn't afraid of a good fight.

At age 87, she has a second-degree black belt and all the skills that go with it

"I can defend myself," said Taylor. "If I had to, I know I can. I haven't had a chance yet. I bet you would remember it."

She took up taekwondo at age 70 shortly after she was mugged on a Paducah street.

"He walked up behind me and pushed my knees in the back," she said. "I just went to the bank and had a shopping bag with \$1,100. Otherwise, I would have chased that little boy. I'm not a coward. I screamed to get rid of him. He didn't take anything."

Taylor then signed up for lessons at Hwang's Martial Arts in Lone Oak.

"I asked the instructor if I was too old to take karate," she said. "He said you're never too old. I just wanted enough lessons to learn self-defense. But it grabbed hold of me. It's very entertaining. It's very healthy and helps your muscles and makes you stronger."

Taylor demonstrated martial arts moves last month at the 18th annual Hwang's Martial Arts U.S. Open Championship and Expo in Louisville.

"I'm the oldest (martial arts student) in western Kentucky," she said. "And, as a matter of fact, in Louisville I was the oldest one there. There were people there from foreign countries and all ages."

More than 700 people participated in the championship, which was sponsored by Jung Oh Hwang, a 1984 Olympic silver medalist and owner of Hwang's Martial Arts in Louisville.

"An instructor grabbed me by the arm and ran me around the mat," Taylor said. "That showed I wasn't too old to run. They told me in Louisville I was an inspiration to them."

Taylor practices twice a week.

"I can do all kinds of forms," she said. "I can kick and punch. I can break boards. I can do all kinds of jumps, front kicks and side kicks. It's made me much stronger."

Taylor hopes to advance to third-degree black belt.

"I like the strenuous exercise," she said. "I think that's the greatest thing. I like to kick and smash. Children should take this for their own protection. It's very beneficial to them."

### **Breaking down barriers: Local girl is state champion in taekwondo special abilities class:**

From: <http://www.jg-tc.com/articles/2004/09/13/features/feat19.txt>  
(September 13, 2004):

Megan Schabbing likes to do the same things her friends do: go for bike rides, skateboard, play softball and basketball, and ride scooters.

But for Megan, accomplishing these things takes a little more effort.

Because of genetic problems at birth, she has a man-made left leg and wears an ankle brace on the other.

For the past year she has been enrolled in a taekwondo class at the suggestion of her doctor. But the new activity has been more than just therapy for Megan, she's become state champion.

She recently earned the title in Girls Special Ability Forms competition.

Megan is the daughter of Paul and Dawn Schabbing of Neoga. She's a 50-pound bundle of energy, just under 4-feet tall, and in the fourth grade.

Her taekwondo coach, Corey Coffrin with Coffrin's ATA Black Belt Academy in Mattoon, called Megan "awesome."

"Megan is so special. She is a junior leader and she ended up in first place in Girls Special Ability competition."

This was a new division in the state and Megan was the first in Illinois to open ground.

Coffrin said he tracks the progress of his students and when he couldn't find Megan's name in the special abilities category, he checked to see why.

The categories are divided by age, rank and special abilities, but he could find no such category for girls' special abilities in Illinois.

"It's very unique that she won and the state made a division for her," he said.

Points are accumulated in competitions held in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky and Tennessee, although Mrs. Schabbing said Megan usually just competes in Indiana and Illinois events.

Just a little more than a year ago, Megan's doctor told the Schabbings if they would enroll Megan in a dance or martial arts class it would help her balance.

While a dance class didn't grab Megan's attention, martial arts did. So about a year ago the Schabbings explained the situation to Coffrin.

"She was their first such student and they were excited. We (Paul and I) didn't know if she should be in a one-on-one class, but Mr. Coffrin said, 'no, in this you advance as you're ready.'"

So she began a regular class with no special abilities category, and instructors use the same teaching methods as they use with other students.

"Megan has inspired other people. She's fantastic!" Coffrin said.

"She now competes in tournaments against kids all over the state with limb disorders, muscle disorders or down syndrome," Mrs. Schabbing said.

Megan's goal is to earn a black belt.

"It takes perseverance and confidence," Megan said.

She has a blue belt now and tested for her brown belt on Friday. From there, she'll need five more belts to reach her goal.

Her parents say they have always tried to treat Megan like any other child and let her do what she wants to do. But the problems at her birth were a surprise to everyone.

Mrs. Schabbing said her pregnancy in 1994 was normal except that Megan was in the breech position.

Just after the Cesarean delivery, she remembers hearing a nurse say the baby would need physical therapy because her legs were turned.

"A few hours later a doctor said she would lose both legs because they were not functional, or she would need multiple surgeries to keep them."

The condition Megan was born with is called Tibial Hemimelia, and with it, part or all of the child's shin bone (tibia) will be missing. Amputation is usually done between age 1 and 2.

In Megan's case, it was just after her first birthday that she lost the leg, and for the first 3

years of her life she had a cast on one leg or the other.

The Shriners Hospital in St. Louis provided most of her prostheses and braces, and all of her surgeries and orthopedic checkups have been done there.

She got her first artificial limb at 14 months and walked on her own at age 2½.

Megan has been in physical therapy since age 3, but this past year, because of taekwondo, her physical therapy sessions have been reduced.

Mrs. Schabbing credits taekwondo for improving her balance and coordination.

"She spars, falls, gets knocked down and pops back up and keeps on going," Mrs. Schabbing said. "She never gives up."

Megan said, "I can stand on one foot now."

With her man-made leg, she doesn't kick the same as everybody else. But she can still kick higher than her head.

And this brown-eyed blonde can break boards using her hands and elbows, her mother said.

Megan said she wasn't concerned about any pain involved with breaking boards (which are actually made of plastic with some perforation).

"If you go fast, you hardly even feel it, but if you go slow, it hurts even more," she said.

Megan goes to taekwondo two times a week.

"Prior to her class to learn more, she also helps teach two different classes. That is a part of the junior trainee program she was invited to be in," her mother said.

She assists instructors in camouflage to blue belt colors for Tiny Tigers age 4-6, and helps teach white and yellow belts for students 6 and up.

In addition, Coffrin's class gives students an added incentive to do well in school.

Students who achieve straight As on their report card" get a patch that says "A Team."

Megan wears one on her jacket, along with her State Champion logo.

"We can see taekwondo has given her discipline, confidence, improved her coordination and leadership that she will carry with her forever," Mrs. Schabbing said. "And she has fun."

### **With tae kwon do, Richland woman is kicking cancer:**

From: <http://www.tri-cityherald.com/tch/local/story/5344450p-5282803c.html>  
(July 26, 2004):

Duane and Lorrie Reid and their two daughters just received their black belts. The feat comes three years after the Richland family decided to enroll in Tae Kwon Do classes and

despite Lorrie being diagnosed with breast cancer in January.

Lorrie, 37, didn't let weekly chemotherapy treatments in Seattle get in the way of her goal.

"My first thought was, 'I don't want to stop,' " said Lorrie, who had a partial radical mastectomy and has been undergoing chemotherapy since March.

For two months, Lorrie was limited to lower body exercises because she didn't have full movement of one of her arms.

But by mid-May, Lorrie was again attending classes four to five times a week. She even attended evening classes on days she had morning chemotherapy treatments in Seattle, said Wes Lewallen, owner and head instructor of Pacific Kicks Jhoon Rhee Tae Kwon Do in Kennewick.

Although Lorrie returned to her full load of classes, she didn't expect to test for her black belt. But on the day of a pre-exam for black-belt candidates, Lewallen called and asked if she thought she could participate. Her first reaction was to say no. But she ultimately participated in the pre-exam, a grueling test all students have learned since beginning classes. It included sparring, technical kicks and stretching.

"It's kind of like everything I had was on that mat that day," Lorrie said.

She and her family were awarded black belts July 16 at Pacific Kicks. They were four of 20 Tri-Citians who achieved the highest of the nine belts.

Lorrie is convinced that Tae Kwon Do has helped her improve her chances of beating breast cancer. She read research material that said three to eight hours a week of exercise can improve the survival rate of a cancer patient.

Lorrie finishes chemotherapy in August and then will undergo six weeks of radiation therapy.

"They consider me totally cured," she proudly exclaimed.

Duane and their daughters, Shelby and Kenna, consider Lorrie a role model and a motivator for achieving their goals of earning black belts.

"If she was doing it, we had to do it," said 13-year-old Kenna.

In addition to watching his wife's success, Duane conquered his own lifestyle obstacle.

Duane, 36, says Tae Kwon Do helped him quit smoking.

His last cigarette was just a few days before starting classes at Pacific Kicks three years ago.

"I said, 'If I'm going to do this, I'm going to do it right,'" Duane said.

Duane has enjoyed his training so much that he looks forward to getting off work and going to class.

I started to crave coming here," he said. "That's held up right until today."

For their daughters, Tae Kwon Do has provided exercise, discipline and a boost in self confidence.

"It's been a big confidence builder for me," said 9-year-old Shelby. "I can do things I never thought I could do."

The biggest improvement Shelby has seen is higher marks on school tests.

Kenna finally learned how to do a cartwheel when she started taking Tae Kwon Do classes. She's also a lot more physically active.

"I get my exercise because I don't do school sports," said Kenna, a Chief Joseph Middle School eighth-grader.

Both girls have competed in international Tae Kwon Do competitions and have placed in the top three in their age categories. In addition, Shelby was one of four students who were given an outstanding score on their black belt test, Lewallen said.

The biggest benefit the Reids get from being involved in Tae Kwon Do is support and friendships from fellow students.

"It's part of our family," Lorrie said.

### **Cancer fight woman carries torch:**

From: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/england/tyne/wear/3842295.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/tyne/wear/3842295.stm)  
(June 26, 2004):

A Tyneside woman who has battled breast cancer has been chosen to help carry the Olympic torch through London.

Kathleen Jones, from Whitley Bay, North Tyneside, was nominated to be a torchbearer by her son Stephen, 14.

He was so impressed with her attitude after she was diagnosed with cancer in 2000 and despite a year of treatment she gained her martial arts black belt.

She showed courage and now helps to teach children to show what they can do with a positive attitude.

The Olympic flame started a 31-mile journey across London at 1100 BST on Saturday starting at Wimbledon.

The first four-minute miler Sir Roger Bannister and Tim Henman were the first torch bearers and others involved are Sir Steve Redgrave and Heather Mills-McCartney.

Mrs Jones, 47, was nominated by her son after a nationwide search by Samsung for unsung heroes to join the team to carry the torch.

She is one of 146 runners and will run 400 metres with the torch on Saturday afternoon.

Her son Stephen said: "After she got cancer she had to stay out for a year so she lost all her fitness.

"And it took a lot of determination to get back to where she was and achieve something and there are not many people who can say they have done that."

The torch relay started in Sydney, Australia, on 4 June and is travelling through 26 countries and 33 cities before arriving back in Athens for the Olympic Games.