

TRUENEWS - OVERLAKE

The TRUE way of the warrior is honor, strength, and love.

April, 2019

Edition 144

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Memories of Training with SBN Zoppi

By GJN David Barrett

I first learned of SBN Thomas Zoppi and True Martial Arts from my neighbor. I was in my early 20s, washing my truck when Keith stopped by. He is a friendly guy with a lot of different life experiences, so he always had something interesting to share. This day he was talking about his martial arts class and was wondering if I would like to try it out. What an intriguing idea... Me, learning martial arts. Why not?

I met Keith at the doctor's office... the school at that time only had about 6 students. We had the use of an office to call our school. I met SBN Thomas Zoppi, who was then a Yu Dan Ja Nim, 2nd DAN Black Belt. I learned that he tried different martial arts but choose Tae Kwon Do mostly because of his Instructor, SBN Danny Di Vito.

I always wanted to learn martial arts, and this seemed like the perfect opportunity. SBN Zoppi was smart and tough, my neighbor was here, so it felt safe. My girlfriend thought it would be fun. My girlfriend and I signed up and started the journey.

School was two, 2-hour classes a week. We had a 5- or 10-minute break after the first hour to get water or practice what we had just worked on. SBN Zoppi was amazing at getting the most from his students. We trained old-school back then. Think military boot camp that you were paying to attend.

I have so many memories of training with SBN Zoppi. He was tough but also compassionate. He knew when to push but also how to push his students. I've never met anyone that was so motivational before. I recall my first free form. I didn't want to even try. I sort of refused to get up when it was my turn. Ultimatum time... "Stand up and try or leave." Sounds harsh but it was just what I needed. So, there I stood, deer in the headlights, frozen. That was when he said, "Just try some punches and blocks, maybe do some of the moves from your form..." And I did. I sucked, but I tried!

I remember watching SBN Zoppi doing warm up, just doing some middle punches. He was so fluid and smooth, but there was such incredible power behind every punch. I said how much I liked his punches. He just smiled and said thanks. Nothing else was needed, and I was now motivated to make my moves as smooth and powerful as his.

We used to go to tournaments as a school. Always an interesting and aspiring adventure. So motivational. As martial arts continued to grow, the tournaments continued to grow too. Some were well managed and very fair. Others, not so much. I think that was why SBN Zoppi wanted to start our own Friendship Tournaments. It was TMA and a few other schools from the Overlake area. These tournaments were smaller than the huge public tournaments, but they were fair and fun.

I remember Arnis Camps. We had a student that had a cabin and ten or so acres in Central Washington. We'd go there once a year and just focus on Arnis. We learned what SBN Zoppi learned from Grand Master Remi Presas's Arnis Camps. We continued these camps until we really didn't have a place to do them anymore.

I think that one of my best memories with SBN Zoppi was how he continued to innovate his system of American Chang Moo Kwan Tae Kwon Do. Public tournaments don't work, so do our own. Basic hand techniques aren't working, so create Form Basics. As students became higher ranks, add new forms and kicks. Tae Kwon Do is amazing but we need more, add Arnis. We continue to innovate in SBN Zoppi's tradition.

That is probably the most important thing I learned from SBN Thomas Zoppi. Whether it was fighting or the entire American Chang Moo Kwan system, if it is working, keep it, build from it. If it isn't working, fix it. This is a good life-lesson for everyone to walk away with.

Upcoming Activities for April/May

April 6th	Arnis Seminar, 10:00 am (no make up class)
April 8th – 12th	Spring Break Camp, 9:30 am – 12:30 pm
April 12th	Black Belt Club Seminar, 6:30 pm
April 26th	Tae Kwon Do Test, 6:30 pm
May 4th	Arnis Seminar, 10:00 am (no make up class)
May 24th	Tae Kwon Do Test, 6:30 pm
May 27th	Memorial Day, TMA Closed

NOTABLES

CONGRATULATIONS STUDENT OF THE MONTH – RAEHAN & ROHAN BALIGA

Raehan and Rohan are advanced blue belt students who have been training with us for three and a half years. From the start they have been quiet, motivated students. Both of them are eager to learn and always try their best. They each have their own strengths, which often complement the other's, and they work hard to improve. It is a true pleasure to have Raehan and Rohan in class. Keep up the good work!

Welcome Our Newest Students

Pradhyun Bingi, Vernik Bhat, Jaynil Kansara, Vivaan Khandelwal, Mahdiya Khwaja, Ethan Schleyen, and Diya Sivaraman

Welcome to the Black Belt Club

Aarya Bhoite

Arnis Promotions for March

Blue Belt: Elizabeth Berg, Genevieve Spangler, and Ivan Tarapov

Tae Kwon Do Promotions for March

Adv White Belt: Mackenzie Carver, Ananya Chittimalla, Tanish Kurni, Hakan Saydag, and Kaan Saydag

Yellow Belt: Kenzie Crooker, Isaac Davis, Sarah Froh, Nogah Mugarbi, Ananya Pathak, and Yeong Seo

Adv Yellow Belt: Chantal Bissonnette

Green Belt: Idan Arbel, Sahasra Meenakshi Chennamaneni, Medhasvi Durki, Nadav Dvir, Itamar Gendelman, Laura Ittner, Samuel Ittner, Joseph Moreau, Jyothi Panchapagesan, and Roi Ronen

Blue Belt: Ben Green, Sanskar Gupta, Sanskriti Gupta, and Omkar Page

Adv Blue Belt: Kyra Mohr, Aarav Srivastava, and Advaii Srivastava

Brown Belt: Dafna Apple and Jai Bindlish

April Training Anniversaries

One Year: Nathan Haile and Benjamin Paris

Two Years: Tiernan Conklin

Three Years: Gavin Cooper

Four Years: Rachel Benincasa and Robert Nguyen

Nine Years: Rakesh Velagapudi

Fifteen Years: Illaria Wessling

Twenty-four Years: Jennifer Berg

Thirty-five Years: GJN David Barrett

April Birthdays

Kolos Barkoczi, Leda Barkoczi, Ananya Chittimalla, Paul Cullivan, Shawn Diem, Sanskar Gupta, Sierra Harden, Maryam Iqbal, Karol Jamison, Hemanth Kambhampati, Vivaan Khandelwal, Nancy McKinley, Anya Nanda, Richard Nguyen, Lisa Owen, Siddarth Shankar, Chris Spangler, Howard Stein, Maria Tarapova, Krstiina Tulleau, and Lucas Xue

We apologize if any of the above information is incorrect. Please submit corrections, in writing, at the front desk.