

Black Belt Beginnings

Battling Lupus with Tang Soo Do

By Bob Clyde

This is a story about a Philipsburg, Pennsylvania, woman and her life-long battle with systemic lupus. It's also about her determination and commitment to deal with her illness and never give up or quit, like so many kids and adults do. People, friends and family do not understand lupus, or maybe they don't care to. They think it's all in their heads. It's not. When you see a person wake up every morning in so much pain and they still say everything is okay, they're not. That's where Tang Soo Do came in to play a major role in her life.

This woman started taking Tang Soo Do lessons about ten years ago. Her masters knew about her illness and worked with her. She struggled, but never gave up or quit. Approximately two-and-a-half years ago, she began receiving treatments for her Lupus, which caused her to lose all her hair and drastically drop weight. Down to around 70 pounds, she still wouldn't give up. She told me that she would like to go to Florida to compete at the World Tang Soo Do Tournament. How could I say no? If it wasn't for her commitment and dedication and the dedication of her masters and what Tang Soo Do had done for her, I really don't know if she would be here today.

The following, "True Spirit" was written for a local newsletter in the Philadelphia area by Karen Moran.

I have a question. Have you ever seen 'ki'? Ki is the internal energy. Have you ever witnessed pure energy or see the soul of a person? We did. It was at the World Tang Soo Do Karate Tournament in Orlando, Florida, in 2004.

She was easy to spot. Although she was small, she carried herself much larger than she seemed. It was the black, red and yellow flaming do-rag on her head and the heavy makeup that gave it away. She was very sick. Her body may have been failing, but as I met her in the sparring match, her spirit was rising to the surface. She whooped me in the first round.

She was serious. She was also the happiest. She looked threatening in a tournament way, but she was the only person out of the 20 or so of us that bonded us and made new friendships blossom. She was the group hugger and the cheerleader of the group. But then we saw it - I saw it. She did Sip Soo (forms).

As this Cho Dan Bo started her forms, she slowly gathered her energies and you could feel it. It was

strong—intense. I can say it felt like a magnet. You could see every fiber of her body gathering energy. It was intense. To watch her do her forms felt as if she was in complete harmony with her mind and body. I felt her raise her energy level to the point that when it came time for her to kihap, it came forth like a dragon emanating from the bottoms of her feet through every vital point in her body and out through the top of her head and from her mouth. It was forceful and I say it was scary. It was like the most primal and powerful energy I had ever seen. She won first place.

Even though she seemed weak, she was stronger than all of us put together. She was centered and she knew where she needed to draw upon her spirit. The point is that because of her spirit, the words 'can't' and 'fear' are not in her vocabulary.

When I got home from Orlando, I had a renewed sense of excitement about my future. I was invited to the black belt test and I prepared for it so I could do my best. I was nervous until I walked into the cafeteria and that spirited person I met in Florida ran into me face to face. I still didn't know her name and I had no idea that she was from Pennsylvania, but we greeted each other like good friends. We were excited to see one another because we were both testing. I told her that she had inspired me and I admired her spirit. She told me that she believes that is why she was placed on this earth—to inspire people. By the way, her name is Tammy.



Mrs. Clyde with World Tang Soo Do Association founder and head Grandmaster Jae Chul Shin

Much has happened since the previous story. Tammy has given speeches to the public and some support

groups about Lupus and she uses Tang Soo Do in her presentations. She trains three to five times a week with her instructors, at least one hour a day at home every day, and she rests on Sunday. Studying theory after training is a must also.

She has received the following awards and commendations: 2002 Lancaster Female Cup Grand Championship; 2003 Commendation from the World Tang Soo Do Association; 2004 Commendation from the World Tang Soo Do Association; 2004 Central PA Female Cup Grand Champion; 2005 Region 8 Senior Dan (black belt) Female Cup Grand Champion; 2006 Valley Forge Senior Dan Female Grand Champion; 2006 Western PA Senior Dan Female Grand Champion; 2006 Central PA Senior Dan Female Grand Champion; and 2006 World Tang Soo Do Senior Dan Female World Championship Cup Grand Champion.

In closing, I would like everyone to know how proud I am of this person. She is the love of my life and my wife of 23 years, Tammy Lee Clyde.

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