

March, 2015

Taekwon Masters, Instructors, Assistant Instructors and Fellow ITF Practitioners,

I wish to share a sad, but inspiring story about the indomitable spirit and perseverance of a young ITF student.

At my request, this short essay that follows, was submitted by my student to document her recent experiences.

I only hope that this story of one girls journey can touch and inspire our adults and young people alike!

BIOGRAPHY

Marina Keryakoss, born April 30th, 2000 , came to Miller's Taekwon-Do Academy as an 11 year old girl who could barely run, had difficulty with balance and flexibility, and was not very athletic to say the least. From the first day she started training there was a tenacity coming from within her, and regardless of how much she struggled with coordination and athleticism, she was dedicated from the very beginning.

As time passed, Marina became more and more committed to her training, surpassing students with less work ethic, even though they may have started training before her silently motivating her peers to train harder and give a better effort in the Dojang.

Before long Marina was training 3-4 days a week, was answering all questions posed during class exhibiting knowledge of Taekwon-Do beyond the rest of her classmates. In January 2014 she was voted by her peers "**Best Overall Student**" of 2013 at Miller's Taekwon-Do Academy.

Marina began training 5-6 days a week, and by October, 2013 Marina would grade for her Red Belt(2nd Gup). Continuing to train at a relentless pace, Marina would be ready to grade for her "I Dan" and successfully grade on August 30th, 2014.

Since attaining her “I Dan”, Marina has continued to train rigorously, while some of her peers have fallen by the wayside, quitting as soon as they pass their “I Dan” grading. Thus, it is the standard at Miller’s Taekwon-Do Academy that all juniors wear the junior Black Belt until 16 years of age, though our founder General Choi recommended the age of 13years old(General Choi’s Condensed Encyclopedia: Fifth Edition-Page # 373).

However, I have sent formal request to the President of Canadian Elite Taekwon-Do Federation/INO#239, to grant this exceptional young lady(though she will turn 15 this coming April 30th,2015) the privilege of wearing the full Black Belt in recognition of the example of maturity, contribution and dedication demonstrated on such a high level as well as being consistent in her efforts both in and outside the Dojang.

It is my honour and privilege as an Instructor to witness such a fine example put forward by such a young person.

Marina Keryakoss and young ITF members like her are the future of Taekwon-Do!

T.L. Farmer, ITF CAN-5-1022

Essay Submitted February, 2015 by Marina Keryakoss CAN-1-1837:
ONE BLACK BELT'S JOURNEY

Taekwon,

My name is Marina Keryakoss, and I am a 14 year old junior I degree black belt. I am an ITF member training at Miller's Taekwon-Do Academy in Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

On November 11th 2014, my father passed away due to illness. My father was always the one who dealt with our family finances and paperwork, and my mother never handled much of it. So along with continuing to do what your usual teenager needs to do, such as household chores and schoolwork, I've had to try to deal with my father's passing, and I have also needed to take on the responsibility of taking care of all of our family documents and paperwork. I have had to do many things to assist my mother since my father's passing, which I never imagined having to do.

Once I get home after school, I check our mail. I look through the mail in our mailbox, and read anything important. As well as dealing with our physical mail, all of our e-mails are sent to my e-mail account, so it is my responsibility to monitor emails as well. I check my account regularly, and whenever we need to reply to any e-mails, or send any information and/or documents to any companies (such as car and home insurances, utility, etc.), I am the one who prepares, types and sends them out.

Whenever my mother needs to go to any meetings (such as in banks), we make sure to schedule them when I can attend as well. I go to translate for my mother as needed, because my Mother's english is a second language for her, but I also go to know what is happening and what we need to expect in the future.

Throughout my life, my father was always the one in the family to support us financially as well. While my father was ill, we were able to get support from the government because he was too sick to work. After he passed away, the Ontario Disability Support Program would still support us for three months. Before this time ran out, my mother needed to find any full time job. After about a week of constant searching online and in person, I finally found a job in the industry she prefers, and that offers the exact hours she wants.

Our family's passports all expired this past summer. We never got around to renewing them while my father was with us, so once he passed away, it became my job to renew them. I was the one who filled out all of the forms, and I gathered the other documents we needed as well. I also went to the passport office with my mother, where we had to wait outside, in the cold, for nearly an hour, until we finally continued to wait inside and renewed our passports.

With a lot of assistance from the funeral home, we also applied for Canada's death benefit and survivor's pension. The funeral home did provide the forms and filled them out for us, I still went to provide our information, and I also sent in the missing information afterwards.

After my father passed away, we had to file life insurance claims. I filled out the forms needed, and then we sent them out.

Eventually, after filing our life insurance claims, we received a letter saying that our claim has been denied. We did not want to simply accept this, because we have been paying premiums for nearly five years, so I found a law office that deals with these types of issues online. We went to a consultation meeting with them, and it is now in their hands.

We have been living in our house for nearly five years, and our mortgage term is nearly over. We had to renew our mortgage, as well as remove my father's name from the mortgage. I contacted the mortgage broker via e-mail, and I told her what we were looking for, and then she sent all of the paperwork needed. We went over all of the forms, and then my mother signed them. I sent the forms, along with the other documents that were requested, to the mortgage broker. Everything has gone smoothly so far to this point.

On February 11th, my grandfather (my mother's father) also passed away. My mother was definitely affected more than I was. My grandfather lived in New Zealand, along with my grandmother and my aunts, so we weren't involved in his funeral. Our family and friends that live here still come to see my mother to offer support, and I was the one to clean while my mom was at work, and then receive and entertain our guests with drinks etc.

We still aren't done dealing with everything that we've been faced with, and we never truly will be. New things always come up in life, and I am planning on helping my mother as best I can along the way. I would have never been able to do this if it weren't for the way my parents raised me. My father always expected the very best from me. He wanted me to do the best I could do in everything I did, such as in school and taekwon-do. He didn't want this for himself, but he knew it would help me in my future. Thanks to him and his extremely high expectations, I have high expectations for myself, and I am able to help my mother this much as we support each other through this time. I am hoping that I will be able to support her even more as I get older, because she has done so much, and continues to do so much for me as I grow up.

Taekwon,
Marina Keryakoss, ITF CAN-1-1837