In Celebration of Sensei Jaye Spiro’s 75th Birthday

By Martha Thompson, Self Defense Certification Coordinator

I first took a class with Sensei Jaye Spiro in July 1992 at the National Women’s Martial Arts Federation annual camp. I had started to study karate the previous fall with now Shuseki Shihan Nancy Lanoue and Sei Shihan Sarah Ludden, Thousand Waves Martial Arts and Self-Defense Center. Although at the time, I didn’t know anything about Sensei Jaye, I immediately realized I was taking a class with a master teacher who was humble, compassionate, and talented.

Over the past three decades, I have had the good fortune to learn more about Sensei Jaye and the many contributions she has made to advance the status of women and to improve the well-being of local, state, regional, U.S., and international communities.

In that spirit and to celebrate Sensei Jaye’s 75th birthday, she and her wife Su Ferrari are planning a Winter 2023 trip to Guatemala to share Empowerment Self-Defense with girls of Hope Academy. Sifus Jennifer and David Hope-Tringali are the founders of Tree 4 Hope, a 501(c)3 organization committed to providing a brighter future to children and their families throughout Guatemala. This school is one of their projects and they are also Mejishi Arnis students. Please consider donating to this program by clicking on this link: https://tree4hope.networkforgood.com/projects/1664
Sensei Jaye is a 9th degree black belt in Ai Mute Shotokan Karate and a 6th degree black belt in Modern Arnis. Sensei Jaye started on this path when male martial arts practitioners were generally hostile to women and she persisted, opening doors for thousands of other women and girls who came after her. She founded Mejishi Martial Arts over 40 years ago, teaching martial arts and self-defense to thousands of students.

As a co-founder of the National Women’s Martial Arts Federation and a member of the teaching team to offer the first model Empowerment Self-Defense course at the annual NWMAF conference, Sensei Jaye has had an enormous impact, going beyond her own school, to create an amazing space for so many, who like me have experienced the wisdom, power, and joy of training with cis and trans women and girls and nonbinary/gender nonconforming people from many different martial arts.

Sensei Jaye has received multiple honors for her work in the martial arts and the profound impact she has had on opening doors for so many. She has been inducted into the Michigan Karate Hall of Fame, the Modern Arnis Hall of Fame, The Association of Women Martial Arts Instructors’ Hall of Fame, and the Midwest Women’s Hall of Fame. She has received numerous awards from NWMAF, including two times being awarded the Member of the Year Award in addition to the Founders Award and the Award of Excellence.

Please support her and Su’s work to bring Empowerment Self-Defense to girls in Guatemala. https://tree4hope.networkforgood.com/projects/1664

Welcome New Board Members

An enthusiastic welcome is extended to Lisa Susko as the incoming NWMAF Events Coordinator, Florence Vincioni as incoming Marketing Coordinator, and Coty DeLacretaz, our new Healing Arts Coordinator. We can’t wait to see where you will lead the organization!

If you are interested in joining the Board in a leadership role, we are actively recruiting for Board Chair. Please send a statement of interest and your resume to vicechair@nwmaf.org.

Events - The 2023 Conference!

By Lisa Susko, NWMAF Events Coordinator

2023 Conference has a Date: July 26-29, 2023 and a Place: North Central College, Naperville, IL. What it doesn’t have yet is a NAME! Submit your ideas now to Conference Name Submissions

Members Special: January Training, featuring Georgia Verry

By Benita Comeau, Martial Arts Coordinator
Members are welcome to join this special training session online with trainer Georgia Verry

**Session description**
The so-called "hard" martial arts aren't commonly known for facilitating mindfulness. When taught appropriately, trauma-informed kickboxing becomes a way for trauma survivors to be in the present moment more safely than through meditation.

In this session you're invited to learn more about trauma informed kickboxing and then try a full session. You're invited to learn how to use stretching and kickboxing techniques to practice body scans, using kickboxing to practice regulating our emotions and using kickboxing to enter ‘flow states'. No experience required!

**Bio:** Georgia (she/her) is a Kyokushin karate black belt, pro level Muay Thai fighter and BJJ blue belt with 15 years experience in martial arts. Georgia combined the knowledge from her bachelors degree in exercise physiology, martial arts experience, peer reviewed literature, informal research and advice from a team of psychologists to create The Fight Back Project - a trauma informed kickboxing program for female identified survivors, offered both online and in person.

Georgia hosts The Fight Back Podcast, hosted the first international conference for trauma informed martial arts coaches and offers online training programs for conscious combat coaches that want to create bespoke trauma informed programs unique to their experience and martial art.

Interested? [Join the Zoom link here](#) on Jan 8, 2023 at 06:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada). Meeting ID: 883 0537 0067, Passcode: NoLimits

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**Wonder Women: Our Origin Stories in Our Own Words:** Madiba Richardson

*As told to Lauren Bailey, Membership Coordinator*

**LB:** **How did you get started in martial arts?** [Ed note: Madiba trains Ai Mute Shotokan Karate at Meijishi Martial Arts, Sensei Jaye Spiro]

**MR:** So when we lived in Detroit, me and my sister we were just playing outside in our front yard, and one of the senseis at my dojo [Karen Brown] lives in our old neighborhood, and she told us about this Karate dojo and said we should go visit. I was too young to do it [about a year and a half old], but my sister started doing it at age four, and so I would copy her on the sidelines, like watch her. And when I was, I think, three, I started. My sensei said, “She can try
one class, and if she does good, she can stay,” and I guess I did really good. And my journey started from there.

LB: What made you keep coming back?

Motivation and my sister. I look up to my sister very much, and seeing her do it just made me want to do it all the time.

LB: Did you all practice at home?

MR: Yeah.

[Jelane: Lots of push-ups and sit-ups since Sensei Jaye always stressed push-ups and sit-ups. So the girls would do that in the living room all the time, and they'd run around the house because they'd have to do their laps. So they practiced laps and push-ups since that was a big thing when they were little.]

LB: What was the first year that you went to Special Training?

MR: When I was four. Well…

[Jelane: She went as a little one when she was three, to watch her sister. But then she participated when she was four.]

LB: What do you remember about that event?

MR: I broke my first board with a stomp kick.

LB: I've seen that picture! It's amazing! So what made you keep coming back to ST?

MR: I started to really love it, and me and my sister liked doing it. I liked my senseis. And it was very nice to kick and punch and it made me stronger so that I can stand up for myself and not get hurt if somebody's trying to do something to me. I think that's what made me want to come back.

LB: Do you feel like you've had to use the skills that you got in martial arts in your real life yet?

MR: Yes. A couple weeks ago, when one of my classes were over, I was waiting outside of my dojo, waiting for my mom, and this guy pulled up in his car and asked if I need a ride. Like, three times he asked me, and I said with a loud voice, “No!” And then I walked back in, and I told my senseis.

LB: Fantastic! Way to go. When you go to Special Training, are the karate classes your favorite classes, or do you like trying new things? And what kind of new things do you like to try?
MR: I like taking new classes so I can learn the other styles that people do and how to do them.

LB: What’s the coolest thing you think you’ve ever learned?

MR: Probably jump kicks, I would say. And my brown belt kata. I really like all my katas, but my kicks because they challenge me and they’re really fun to do.

LB: For the last several years, you’ve done us the honor of shaving Cathy [Chapaty]’s head as a fundraiser for ST scholarships. How many times have you shaved Cathy’s head now?

MR: Um, since I was six.

LB: And you’re eleven now, right?

MR: Yes.

LB: What would you say your favorite thing about your martial arts training is, your favorite thing about your personal journey?

MR: Probably doing new stuff and meeting new people at my dojo, because there’s a lot of people that come. Also, I teach a kids’ class. So I really love meeting new little kids, so I can teach, and I can get to know them better. I get to know the senseis better, even though I’ve known them for a really long time. And I get to know my classmates better.

LB: How old are the kids you teach?

MR: About 4 or 5.

LB: Do you think you’ll continue to train even after your black belt?

MR: Yeah.

LB: Do you have any goals for yourself?

MR: To keep pushing myself, even if it gets hard, and if I feel like I want to give up, I would just tell myself to keep going and like, you got this. Because sometimes, I just get so tired and I think, “I don't want to do this,” and so I just like to tell myself, “You got this.” There’s a sign in my sister's room, and it says, “A white belt always becomes a black belt.” And I always look at that, and that motivates me to keep trying and doing what I was, I guess, born to do.

LB: Yeah, absolutely. That's awesome. Is there anything else you want to say?

MR: Well, I guess, whoever else does karate, and they just feel like they want to give up or something, just, like, keep pushing yourself and don't give up and try your best, and your journey will get better.

With thanks to Madiba Richardson (and mom, Jelane), as told to Lauren Bailey, Membership Coordinator
Youth Members

By Jes Macalear, NWMAF Youth Program Director

Do you have questions, comments, or suggestions regarding improving the NWMAF’s youth program? Whether you’re a student, parent/guardian, or instructor, the NWMAF would love to hear from you. If you’re under the age of 18 years old, please write an email (with your parent/guardian or instructor) and send it from their email address to youth@nwmaf.org.

Upcoming Board Meeting

The next NWMAF Board meeting is December 11. Board meetings typically take place on Sundays at 2 pm Central time, via an online meeting site. If you are a member interested in attending, contact Thuy, vicechair@nwmaf.org, and she will provide you with log-in instructions.

Call for Submissions

Have News and Information to Share with the NWMAF Community?
We welcome your submissions of news, opinion pieces, fiction, or other writing related to our practices of martial arts, healing arts, and self-defense. We also accept art, photos, and comics! Our editorial board reserves the right to edit for space or content considerations. The deadline for the next issue is January 14, and will be approximately every four to six weeks thereafter. Send contributions to secretary@nwmaf.org.