



NWMAF March 2021 Newsletter

News for Our Members, Friends, and Supporters

"Empowering women and girls to achieve personal and collective strength, safety, and well being through martial arts, healing arts, and self-defense education"

Special Training: We Persist

By Natalie DeMaioribus, NWMAF Events Coordinator

After careful analysis of our finances and obligations, as well as member input from our survey, we decided that the safest course was to make this year's conference 100% virtual, like last year. I know, I know! We're all disappointed too. But the health and financial risks of an in-person event were just too great. As the board has been saying to each other, let's find ways to make this year epic... and then next year will really be off the charts!

The good news is, we can move forward with selecting trainers now that we've chosen a format. Soon you'll start hearing about this summer's offerings! In the next couple of weeks we'll be working out registration costs and structure and revising volunteer roles and needs.

Theme: We are stubbornly saving the "RISE" theme for an in-person event. In honor of our collective endurance in the face of disease and stress and overall non-normalcy, we have chosen the theme **We Persist**. This community is still here. We will still be here a year from now, or a decade, or a century.

Thank you all for your continuing patience and flexibility as we continue to slog forward through the pandemic. Next year: in person or bust!

From the Chair: Making Martial Arts History

By Lissette Fitzgerald-Delgado, NWMAF Board Chair

For the most part, I believe that we are all inclined to try to blaze a new trail for others to follow. We are driven to leave our mark in the world somehow, whether through action, the written

word, legend, or even in the memories of those whose lives we touch. Of those who seek to find the new, only a handful are able to create something so meaningful that it simply cannot be ignored, categorized or forgotten. These are the luminaries of the time.

The World of Martial Arts is no different in this respect. In this realm, luminaries come around once in a lifetime, true teachers that kick the slow evolution of the traditional Martial Arts into high gear, sparking mutations that forever change our movement, our philosophy, and, hopefully, our understanding. Teachers like Morihei Ueshiba, Ed Parker, and Bruce Lee revolutionized the arts and galvanized entire movements of faithful practitioners and disciples all fiercely loyal to their founding fathers in the ways they best see fit.



Unfortunately, sometimes the arts suffer under the weight of the defense of so many, when the viewpoints are so vast and varied; and, because the founders have passed on from our world, they are viewpoints that can never be truly resolved for no other reason than the Instructors with the answers are not here to settle them.

Still, our Instructors did not leave us empty handed. They left behind a wealth of knowledge, in their writings, notes, journals, videos, interviews, and blood, sweat and tears on the mat, free for us to assimilate, analyze, interpret and apply to the best of our abilities. We have but to seek out the answers to find them. The question is, how many of us still seek to answer the questions?

The Secret Back Fist

Many of the Martial Arts we practice today house numerous factions, associations, and federations, all of whom believe and insist that they alone have the secrets of the founders, that only they can truly convey the meanings and teachings of the art as they were meant to be learned. The unfortunate result is infighting within the art itself. That staunch loyalty to the style simply becomes the means by which the student is kept from discovering for him or herself the path the founders laid out. Often, those very students get caught in the cross-fire of a feudal society within the Art that can end in resentment and eventually abandonment of the path.

We can thank, in large part, the dark shadow of business marketing that looms over any dojo that hopes to make a decent living, for this Curse of the Secret Back Fist. Let's face it, as a wise, not-so-old Instructor of mine once said, "Money might not buy happiness, but poverty doesn't pay your bills, and if you want to train, you have to eat." Economics are, in part, at the root of many of the disagreements between styles of the same art that we see today.

How? A dojo that wants to keep its doors open needs to drive new students to its mat, so that, as some students leave, the spot is immediately filled by a new, paying member. But, with so many options available to a new or prospective student, each dojo has to find a way to shine

and stand out from the crowd. And there you have it, The Secret Back Fist. It really is that simple.

Is This What the Founders Wanted?



As students, we must maintain a discerning eye. We must be willing to ask ourselves: Is this really what the art is about? Is this really what the Founder wanted me to learn? Is this really what he foresaw or hoped his art would become?

I cannot personally imagine Sijo Lee or O'Sensei, both of whom worked throughout their lives to birth philosophies that were uniting and open, would have wanted their teachings to become fragmented, sectionalized, and, in some cases, stagnant under the weight of "Tradition." I believe that they'd hoped the arts would continue to evolve in their absence, in harmony. Evolution is sometimes a messy endeavor to which many feuds can be attributed as well; however, in some cases, it seems as though the disagreements are less about the course the art should take and more about the person guiding a particular path.

Every Day on the Mat Makes History

Both Sijo and O'Sensei started as students somewhere. Every time they set foot on a mat, a little piece of the history behind their arts was written. Sijo's very first Pak Sao was as a student of Wing Chun under Yip Man in 1954, O'Sensei's first throw as a Daito-ryu Aiki-jujutsu student under Takeda Sensei, founder of that system, took place in 1915. These were moments that became history. They were the launching pad for arts that transformed the world of Martial Arts as a whole, but it all started with one student, one day, on a training mat at a dojo, just like so many others.



What do I mean to say with all of this? While innovators like Lee, Takeda, Parker, and Ueshiba are one in a million, every day that we, as students, train, every step we take on the mat, every time we speak about our styles, our philosophies, our movements, our instructors, and our heroes, we have the opportunity to write a little piece of the history of Martial Arts.

When we dispute the merits or faults of one style over another, we may be influencing a future leader, or even ourselves. When we bicker over who has the right or the means or truth to carry on the tradition of the art, we risk its evolution, its mutation, its ability to become more than we can imagine and actually blossom into that which its Founding Mother or Father knew it would become.

We must be watchful, always, of our words and actions on and off the training floor, because every day we practice our art, each time we apply a principle or uncover a new aspect of its philosophy, anytime we pass on the knowledge we have gathered from our Instructors and experience, we make Martial Arts History.

In health,
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Healing Arts: What does it mean to you?

By Janis Freeman, Healing Arts Coordinator

The term “healing arts” has a broad definition and can include a variety of practices that promote wellness, healing, and resilience. We turn to the healing arts in times of crisis, for emotional and physical well-being, and to support our training and practice in the martial arts.

What does “Healing Arts” mean to you? We’re asking! Please tell us all about it in our poll question here: <https://www.nwmaf.org/Sys/Poll/22673>

As we work to more clearly define the role of healing arts in the NWMAF, we would love your input!

School Spotlight: Stryker Leap Martial Arts



In this edition of the School Spotlight, we are highlighting member Katie Sonderman's school in Boise, Idaho.

1. What is the name of your school, and where is it located?

Stryker Leap Martial Arts in Boise, Idaho

2. What style(s) of martial art is/are taught at your school?

Bando

3. Tell us something about your school's martial arts(s).

We are the only female-led Bando school in Idaho.

4. Does your school teach other programs besides martial arts?

No, we are a very small school.

5. Who is/are the teacher(s) at your school?

Myself (Katie Sonderman) and my two daughters help out.

6. When did your school begin? Who are its founders?

In November 1994.

7. How has your school changed over the years?

It's changed by what we accept on the mats. I used to have a very political view when it came to martial arts. Since having children, I have really changed my strict traditional habits.

8. Does your school have a mission statement? Tell us about your school's goals or vision.

Heal The World, Begin With You.

9. How many students attend your school, and who are they?

I have about 40 students. They are mothers, fathers, college age, but no children, unless training with their parents.

10. Share a unique or interesting fact about your school.

My mother opened the school in the back of our home growing up, I took over when she passed away.

12. What is an interesting tradition you have at your school?

We allow a church to use our space on Sunday's, and now they all train!

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Your school could be next!

Martial arts, Healing Arts, and Self-Defense schools of all sizes are invited to be interviewed for our School Spotlight. To have your school spotlighted in a future issue, simply reach out to Fundraiser@nwmaf.org.

Member Spotlight: Rose O'Reilly-Hoisington



NWMAF Wonder Women

This month we feature Rose O'Reilly-Hoisington, who trains Brazilian jiu-jitsu, boxing, and jeet kune do, and is a founding member of Voice of a Warrior (VOW) Self-Defense in Oregon. The following is a personal essay about her journey in martial arts and self-defense.

Quiet is only a five-letter word.

And "Rose is quiet," is just a short sentence, feather-light and easy to say.

It was easy to hear, until it wasn't—until it had been said so many times I felt the weight of each utterance settle over my shoulders. I carried it with me through high school, from day one to graduation. It made sense—what if I said the wrong thing? What if people stopped liking me? It seemed infinitely easier to become a mirror to whatever they were thinking, feeling, or wanting from me. Nodding and smiling had never strained my relationships.

Eventually I recognized the *quiet* was a cage.

I tried to give it the slip as I moved ten hours away for college, hoping that a new start might mean a new me, but it clung to me with a white-knuckled grip.

When I was displaced from my picturesque University of Montana over credit technicalities, I was forced to return to Oregon. The 2016 election was in full swing, and it felt like I had lost every scrap of control I had ever possessed in the world.

How could I get it back?

The University of Oregon was similar to UM except that it was bigger, less personal, and not particularly interested in making sure one transfer student out of 20,000 had integrated well. I struggled to fit in again. On a whim, I took a women's self-defense course offered by the student recreation center. It was a two-part class, taught by a four-person team. The first instructor we met was Ryan Kelly, who casually mentioned his life's ambition of studying as many martial arts and self-defense systems as he could find. The other three women are familiar names for most of you to read: Jocelyn Hollander, Justine Halliwill, and Jessica Stainbrook. All of them seemed powerful and inspiring—I found myself wanting what they had.

I flew through that first ten-week course, loving it for the confidence it sparked and hating it for the light it cast on all my fears and insecurities. *Persistence* is a word we use often when teaching empowerment self-defense, and my own reluctance to speak up for myself was the most persistent obstacle I have ever faced. The instructors were wonderful, and the student teaching assistants were just as supportive.

With encouragement from our TAs, I started training Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu at a local gym to supplement what I was learning. I spoke with my instructors and signed up to begin assisting with each class I could jam into my schedule. I probably sat through those classes between ten and fifteen times before I graduated, and with each iteration I felt like I was learning something new. By the time graduation approached, the women's self-defense team had organized an instructor training and I jumped at the chance to attend.

While all this was happening at the university, I had been training Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu for almost two years and assisting one of our upper belt instructors with her monthly free self-defense workshops. We would teach one a month in Eugene, Oregon, and then another in Coos Bay. It was good and exhausting and energizing. I would often lament not being able to major in empowerment self-defense.

Somewhere in the middle of this, at no particular point I could recognize, I had shaken off my old enemy, the stifling quietness that had dogged me for so long. Now when I walked through downtown, or rode the bus, or wrestled a man two times my size on the mats, it felt like I carried a fierce, tempered self-love inside my heart. If I didn't want to do something, I had learned what felt like the most important secret: the knowledge that I could just say, "No."

I moved to Portland, and together with my friends and teammates, created a nonprofit called Voice of a Warrior with the purpose of making empowerment self-defense accessible to communities in Portland. None of us had ever created a nonprofit before—I had volunteered with plenty, but not as an administrator. But we were stubborn. We chased our goals and purpose even as we descended into the chaos of the pandemic. I'd like to say I fearlessly led us over, around, under, and through every hurdle laid in our path. Truthfully, I led terrified, tripping over everything and wondering if I was cut out for this kind of work.

Now, after flailing, worrying, and teaching some really good workshops, I can say it was all worth it. Voice of a Warrior is starting its second year going strong. The future's uncertain, but I have hope, some cool jiu-jitsu moves, and determination to learn, share, and grow.

Self Defense in Action

By Martha Thompson

Have you seen the memes on Wednesday on the NWMAF member Facebook page spotlighting Empowerment Self-Defense (ESD) and ESD-related research, books, social media, and resources? We've recently spotlighted:

- Research by Jocelyn Hollander on the effectiveness of ESD program WomenStrength
- Wendy Rouse's book *Her Own Hero: The Origins of the Women's Self-Defense Movement*
- Facebook page Trans-Aunt May Supports You All the Way
- Thousand Waves resource *Five Fingers of Self-Defense*

Check it out and if you have recommendations for ESD research, books, social media, and resources, please send them to selfdefense@nwmaf.org.

We invite you to contribute your self-defense stories, either to Martha at selfdefense@nwmaf.org or directly to the newsletter at secretary@nwmaf.org.

Youth Program Notes

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.

Looking for Leaders: Board Members Wanted!



It's Board Election time!

One of the most important ways to support the NWMAF is to serve on the board of directors. Election time is here again, and the following positions are open for nominations:

- **Treasurer**
- **Membership Coordinator**
- **Development/Fundraising Coordinator**
- **Youth Coordinator**

Each board member serves a 2-year term, with a commitment of one 2-hour meeting a month. Board members receive free conference tuition, room, and board during their service.

Board positions are open to all those who've been active members for at least one full year.

To nominate yourself or another member, please send your resume and platform statement (why you'd like to serve on the board and what experience you'll bring to the position you're applying for) to members@nwmaf.org by **April 1**. Elections will be held May 1

Upcoming Board Meeting

The next NWMAF Board meeting is **March 28**. 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 Lissette, chair@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 **March 26**, and will be approximately every four to six weeks thereafter. Send contributions to secretary@nwmaf.org.