

My Time and Experience in Martial Arts By Lynda Niemczak Hatch

Hello, I'd like to introduce myself... I was born with a profound hearing loss but it was not discovered till age 6 months when my parents took me to a pediatrician. I'm the only one in my family that has this invisible physical disability. But my loving parents had trained me well, and they also made sure I received my education starting from two and a half years old in special education for hearing-impaired, and onto elementary through high school, and then through four years of college with a Bachelor's Science degree in Computer Sciences.



After graduation from high school at age 17, I started in karate during my first semester at a local junior college, Henry Ford Community College, in Dearborn, MI, where I met my future husband Dave Hatch in September of 1969. It was held after classes on a weekly basis. At that time, Dave was an assistant instructor in the art of Japanese Shito-ryu. From that point on, I continued for the next two years there, plus I enrolled in the karate club called Karate/Judo Schools of America a year later where Dave was a student. My big thanks were to my mom and dad for



in this art as they had hard-earned money souls. After that, I Business for another forward to April 1977... I attained my black belt college graduation with a bachelor's degree (1974). When testing for black belt, I had to spar males, Sensei Dave included, late at night around nervous after working long hours at my job. The with 30 seconds of continuous fighting & rest, plus katas (forms). If I moved around go longer than 30 seconds. Boy, the sparring part seconds, and the resting part a lot shorter. I gave flying colors. At that time, I was the only female to earn this ranking before K/J Schools closed down in 1978 or 1979.

invested quite a bit of their for me. God bless their attended Detroit College of two and a half years. Fast about two years after my (1973), and my marriage against five black belt 11pm. I was tired and test involved in six rounds blocking, and 30 seconds of without throwing, it would seemed longer than 30 my all, and I passed with

Between 1977 and 1985, Dave & I still had practiced and sparred on and off with different people in four Karate/Judo of America locations in the Metro Detroit area. We were kind of bored with it when a friend of Dave's from work mentioned about Dan Inosanto coming into Lansing, Michigan for a weekend seminar at the campus of Michigan State University. At that time, we thought it was too far to drive... ha ha ha!!! Little did we know that we would later travel much further than Lansing. Both of us, with this friend, went anyway as we knew at that time that it would be the only opportunity to see and meet Dan Inosanto, Bruce Lee's top student, for the first time in our lives. Dave & I were fully prepared to see him act aloof, cocky, and/or tough with an attitude of know-it-all when we approached him. I was really nervous and apprehensive, and the reason behind it was seeing him in pictures from magazines appearing mean... never smiled at all. Well, after we came up to him to say hello, and Dave introduced ourselves, my initial impression had immediately dissolved. I was blown away by his gentle and kind demeanor, plus his rare smile. I immediately felt relaxed knowing this man was above board, and his mannerism had squashed my initial consternation of meeting him. From then on, Dave & I enjoyed participating in our very first seminar with Dan Inosanto, along with Larry Hartsell and Chris Kent. It lasted 8 hours each day, and we were overwhelmed and burned out but we totally loved everything we had seen and experimented. I loved the variety of motions and flows of Kali sticks and knives, Silat and JKD trapping. In my eyes, it was completely different and exciting and mind-blowing. The sponsors for the weekend seminar were Dan Timlin and Tammy Williams. After that, they taught us some basics in Kali, Silat, and JKD in a couple of private sessions. This March 1985 seminar was another major turning point of my, and Dave's, long and challenging journey in learning new arts and expanding our horizon in martial arts.

When I first began attending seminars and camps with Guro Inosanto, and during Dave's candidacy and then apprenticeship, I had never thought of being part of the Inosanto Instructor program. My intention was to support and help Dave reach his goals in the program, and that was it.

After around two years, I felt I was impeding Dave's progression and concentration during seminars so I myself decided to "drop out" of seminar participation, and at the same time, still provided support by driving to seminars, writing notes from blackboard, and the like. The reason was there wasn't much time for explanation after demos by Guro Dan and then practiced moves/techniques for a minute to five minutes before next demo. Moreover, it was difficult at times for me to read lips and follow demos by an attacker (ex. Guro Dan) and receiver/feeder (ex. Joel) simultaneously. And, I would do

motions when Guro said to not do, and Dave had to correct me taking up more wasted time, and causing needless frustration. So, I felt it wasn't fair nor helping us in the long run. In the meantime, we kept on working together at home and in our martial art classes. It took me a while to learn and understand Kali and JKD trapping. It went on for two years till Dave achieved his apprentice instructorship in 1992. I was thrilled to death for him, and I eagerly returned into martial art seminar scene with improved confidence and skill... plus being with and supporting my husband and partner.

Now in making the long story short... First day during a Toronto weekend seminar in around 1995, Sifu Dave left me to help someone having trouble with a Kali technique. So here I was standing alone looking around, and there were a lot of people with double sticks hitting back and forth (heaven 6-count). Then I noticed two young males hitting too high (above their heads). Watching this scenario in front of me, I debated with myself on whether to help them or leave them alone. Then, a few seconds later, I walked up to them, and showed them how to relax by lowering their arms and shoulders to a comfortable position, thus relieving muscle tension, and use the top part of sticks for striking at head level. They performed better with ease. Dave observed what I was doing, and he was surprised by my action in aiding them as I hadn't done before since our first Inosanto seminar. He thought I was capable and qualified to be part of the instructor program under Guro Dan in spite of my hearing impairment. With my permission, Dave & I asked Guro after our Michigan seminar in 1996, and he approved of the idea. Simo Paula invited me to participate in the August 1996 Instructor Conference at the Inosanto Academy of Martial Arts in California. I was so excited, overwhelmed, honored and humble about the whole thing but I took his approval seriously as it was meant for me to stay focused and committed. After five hot days of exhaustive training, Guro Dan presented me with the two first-year instructor apprenticeship certificates (Filipino Martial Arts & Jun Fan/JKD), and these accomplishments had really made my day. Also, I was in heaven when posing with the legendary Guro Dan Inosanto for pictures. Amy Tucci was also awarded for Associate Instructorship, and I still have the picture of us together. May she rest in peace. Good memories...

Since then, Sifu Dave & I have continued attending seminars, camps and annual instructor conferences regularly and consistently (except 2007-2009 instructor conferences due to my dear parents' deaths and their estate). Plus, we teach evening classes three times a week, including private sessions. Now, to shorten my story... Finally, in March of 2013 at the academy, I was presented, by Guro Dan Inosanto, with the Full Instructorship in both arts. Most importantly, I wouldn't obviously be where I am without my husband and best friend Sifu Dave Hatch's undying love, patience, and support from the beginning. He has helped, and still is helping, me understand the finer points of these arts which are always interesting and intriguing, including other arts like Wing Chun and Muay Thai kickboxing and their histories. (In Ajarn Chai's relentless request, I finally wrote an article two or three years later detailing about my involvement in the art, and my eventual apprentice testing in year 2000. This article can be found in the Inosanto website and also in our Attributive Martial Arts website. Later, I received the Associate Instructorship in 2005, and then Full Instructorship in 2010).



Both of us believe in fitness in both mind and body, and it has paid off well... so far so good. In thinking retrospectively, there were several twists and turns that popped up throughout the years, sometimes frustrating but sooner or later it can be rewarding with learning experiences. Also, obstacles are temporary and they shouldn't stop someone from perseverance in practicing and progressing. All of us have good and bad days, and at times, beyond our control. Taking a brief break, and go back into training does help me a lot. With my profound hearing loss, I have broken free of others' perceived limitations on me. Never let naysayers stop your dreams and goals in life without your consent. One of my mottos is... keep going and never give up, and never look back for too long except to refer and learn from experience.



After this recent achievement, I want to remain active in martial arts as part of my never-ending journey in growth, development and knowledge. So I look forward in continuing training and attending seminars, and the annual Inosanto Instructor Conference in the coming years with our old friends as well as making new friends. All in all, I'm truly blessed to be part of this wonderful Inosanto family of positive, open-minded, and talented martial artists. Thank you for reading, and God bless you.

