

## **Fighting in the Blood**

By Shawn Smith

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My career in the martial arts started with deciding it was okay to be me. I remember sitting on the floor coloring some pictures while my father sat on the sofa. I told him that when I grew up I was going to be a teacher or a nurse and have 100 children. I am a Registered Nurse in my “day job,” but who would have guessed that some day I would win first place with traditional straight sword at an international invitational tournament and continue towards a teaching career and owning my own martial arts school?

Ever since I can recall, my father had an interest in boxing. His father, my grandfather, fought on the street to earn a living. My uncle on my mother’s side won many medals in World War II prior to his death just before the war ended. So, as a little girl I would hear the adults around me discussing fighting skills and I learned from listening and watching my family. They say “blood will tell,” well, fighting was in my blood and Kung Fu fit the bill.

I started out training under Sifu Anthony Goh and have since continued my career under Sifu Tom Brocht. My specialties are Tai Chi and the straight sword and I now own my own school along with Sifu Tom Brocht, teaching others so they can learn what Kung Fu can do for them, as well.

Why do I love this discipline? In large part, it’s the complexity of the art that holds my attention, along with the students and teachers who have the love and dedication to improve. Improvement is the key. You can always improve and that never stops. Knowing the art allows you to know yourself and to accept yourself for who you are. As

a woman in the art of Kung Fu, I have found that I have had to fight my way to where I am. Women have to work twice as hard to prove they can make it. It is a male dominated art and we have to do our most, our best, and make it count. Sometimes, even though I've come this far, it can still be frustrating for me as a woman in the art. However, I continue to work to help others improve themselves and make my school a place to feel free to learn. After all, fighting *is* in my blood.