

Master Carla Bennett

Tang Soo Do Forever!



Master Carla Bennett's first experience with martial arts was when she attended a tournament in 1975 and observed a very beautiful, strong, and intense woman performing a bong hyung (form) while seven months pregnant. She was so inspired by the balance of the woman's warrior and feminine spirit that she can still see her when she thinks back to that day. At that time she was a college student and did not have the time or money to begin training.

During her years at the University of Las Vegas (1977-1979), Master Carla met a fellow student, John Bennett, who had begun his Tang Soo Do training in Korea in 1972. He was instructing at a club on campus. She began training with him, married him, and then moved to Reno, Nevada, where they opened their own Tang Soo Do club. They have been married and teaching Tang Soo Do together for over 27 years!

Tang Soo Do training has been a wonderful learning journey for Master Carla. Even though she is still strong and agile at half a century, the body does not quite respond as it did 30 years ago. The wisdom of age has guided her into several areas of the art that have advanced her

martial development. She enjoys the grace and fluidity of Tang Soo Do sword training, and the development of internal energy. She has trained in both areas for about 15 years.

Ki Gong training (developing the electromagnetic field) has become an integral part of her development since ki aids the body in maintaining speed and accuracy of technique, healing of injury and maintenance of youthful health. Master Carla believes that this has helped her maintain a high level of ability in Tang Soo Do, which is primarily a hard style martial art. A few years ago the World Tang Soo Do Association (WTSDA) developed a World Ki Gong Club within their organization that promotes internal training.

There are several accomplishments Master Bennett is most pleased with in her martial career. The WTSDA requires research papers for dan promotions. In 1996, her fourth-degree paper became the first World Tang Soo Do journal. (Editor's Note: Tang Soo Do recognizes fourth-dan as Master level in the art.) The topic was the "Principles of Ki and Ki Gong." Martial training requires mind, body and spirit development and the journal validated that she indeed had a mind, in addition to the physical qualities necessary to practice Tang Soo Do.

The WTSDA has many dedicated and talented women in its organization. Master Carla Bennett is the first and presently only woman in the WTSDA organization to achieve the level of fifth-degree black belt. To wear this rank is a humbling honor.

A few years ago she was appointed as the WTSDA's Director of Region 2. She set a main goal to unify the vast region: Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and Utah. It was difficult to function as a cohesive whole but she believes unity has been accomplished with the help of the other masters and great studio and club owners in the region. They have several events throughout the year that bring the studios together for training, information sharing and fellowship.

As with any achievement there is always a wonderful support group in the background. She credits her passion and longevity in Tang Soo Do to several things: She believes that she is blessed to have had the wisdom and opportunity to become and stay a member of the World Tang Soo Do Association. Under the direction of its founder and Grandmaster, Jae C. Shin, the organization has developed into a very large family who actually gets along with each other. The encouragement, camaraderie and support they have for each other—regardless of country of origin—has helped Master Bennett in her journey.

Master Carla is grateful to have raised her biological children (ages 20 and 22) who have been training since age three, as well as many foster children, in the WTSDA. She believes society as a whole has lost its extended family atmosphere and the family she has found within the WTSDA has been a great substitute. She feels most blessed to have her husband, John, by her side, stating, "He has been my greatest source of encouragement and support through my journey."

Master Bennett reflects on her career, saying, "Many people have never understood why, with my athletic abilities, I chose martial arts. To me it was a great way to achieve my goal: A life of strength, balance, protection, family unity, and community all wrapped up in a single package.... The World Tang Soo Do Association."