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Belgacem's School of Cho's Tae Kwon Do

4th Degree Thesis

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I was introduced to Tae Kwon Do by my dad during 1990 when I was only five years old. My full life since then has been associated to the Korean art on so many levels and it was also through Tae Kwon Do that I would eventually meet my husband and also, if I am being honest, find my 'niche' in life. My dad and I have always been part of the same school, throughout different associations, and it was not until we joined the AImAA that I truly began to really appreciate my training and understand the spiritual side of the martial arts. I began training when I was 5 years old – 17 years ago. There is nothing else in my life that I have devoted more time to. Not School, not university – nothing.

Although my journey in Tae Kwon Do has been long, most of it was throughout my childhood and adolescence; a time that I feel you do not appreciate or fully understand how much Tae Kwon Do will affect you and your life. However, it had a huge impact on how I lived my life outside of the school. The older I got, and the more my friends and I started going out and socialising, the more I found it harder to motivate myself to go to class, however I still attended every weekend. I never felt 'right' if I did not train. Like all my friends, I got weekend job while I was at school. However, I only worked on a Saturday as I had class every Sunday. At the weekends, my friends and I would go out but while they were all recovering on the Sunday morning, I was at the Tae Kwon Do school.

In my late teens, I became close friends with my instructor through working together outside of the school. Eventually we became more than friends and are now married. It was through our friendship that I began to see Tae Kwon Do as more than an interest I had. It was more than a hobby and interest to him, and so I began to help our more on the administration running of the school, and help teach the children's classes. Karim had and still has so much enthusiasm for Tae Kwon Do and Grandmaster Cho that I guess it rubbed off on me. I began to understand how beneficial it was to me and not just in the physical sense. When I began university, I arranged my classes so that I would finish early on the days when I had class at night, I would avoid being too committed to any

sort of club or group through university as it would have meant time away from the school and my training.

I have many years experience when you look at the length of time that Tae Kwon Do has been a part of my life, however, I am still learning and when I look at the depth of talent and knowledge within the AIMAA I feel like a beginner. As I said earlier, most of Tae Kwon Do journey happened at an age where I did not think about anything other than my patterns or theory. I also had little knowledge of the associations we were part of except for the names and their badges. I also had little knowledge of Grandmaster. While spending time with Karim, he would constantly talk about Grandmaster Cho. When we joined the AIMAA, he was delighted and so excited about getting involved. It was only when we joined the AIMAA that I started to learn more about Grandmaster. I remember my first trip to Dublin to train with Master D'arcy. I was so nervous and excited. The training was fantastic and the people were so nice. Master D'arcy constantly spoke about Grandmaster, how the AIMAA was a family and that Grandmaster was our father. He was so passionate about it that you couldn't help but come home with a buzz. It was here that I really began to enjoy my training as an adult. Karim and I often go to Dublin to train with Master D'arcy and every time is just as exciting as the first, and we are constantly learning.

The AIMAA summer camp in Arizona was my first live experience of Grandmaster Cho, and what an experience it was! Grandmaster's seminar was amazing. I saw first hand exactly why everyone was so in awe. I could not believe that I had so little knowledge of this man, who was clearly the best martial artist I had seen. Since then I have been lucky enough to train with Grandmaster both at HQ in Hawaii and the recent summer camp in Florida. Each time has been better than the first. I learn every time and always come away with a refreshed enthusiasm to teach and train. This year's summer camp was originally scheduled for the week of my wedding, which meant that Karim and I could not attend. There are no words to describe how upset I was when I thought that I couldn't attend. I cannot thank everyone enough, especially Grandmaster, Miss Jasmine and Mr Li for their help in allowing my honeymoon to be at the summer camp. It was a

great way to begin married life. I deeply appreciate everything that was done to move the dates. It just proves how special Grandmaster and the AIMAA are.

Tae Kwon Do has shaped my life and made who I am today. I have never known my life or myself without it and hopefully never will. While my friends are recovering on Sunday mornings from the previous nights antics I am at the school teaching and training. When they are arranging holidays or trips away I opt out as I have class and would rather go on a holiday where I had the opportunity to train. Even on my wedding day my dad had arranged for the younger students to come to the hotel in their suits to see me end my single life as Miss Shaw and begin my new one as Mrs Belgacem. As my dad said, it summed up how Karim and I met, and how we will spend our life. There is not a day goes by that I do not think of Tae Kwon Do or talk about it. I do not think that anyone outside the martial art truly understands the commitment, even my own family and friends.

Many people ask the question why I want to be a fourth degree. I know that I am very young, and still have a lot to learn but I would like to do it for the female students in our school. We do not have a lot of female students, and those that we do have are young. I would like to encourage them and show them that they too can continue in Tae Kwon Do regardless of their gender. One girl in particular, who is very talented, almost left. Her parents came and spoke with me, and said that she was finding it difficult as she was the only girl in the school and did not want to come any more. I was disappointed as she is naturally talented and seemed to enjoy her training while in class. She was only 8 years old. I am very glad to say that she is currently still training and seems to be enjoying it more than ever. I have tried to convey how Tae Kwon Do has helped me, and I would like to help other young girls get the same benefits that I have. I want to be a positive role model for all our young female students. There are too many young girls drinking on the streets, wasting their time at school and who have no ambition or goals in life. I want to encourage discipline and self respect in young girls.

There are a few people I would like to thank for helping me throughout my journey in Tae Kwon Do. First and foremost my instructor and husband Karim. He has taught me for the past eight years and been my best my friend for the past six years. Everything I have learned has come from him. He encourages me to be the best that I can be and to be myself. Tae Kwon Do brought us together and together we share a love and passion for the martial art. Karim has made a large impact on my life both inside and outside the school. As my instructor he has pushed me to my limit and due to our personal relationship it has not been easy! I know that it is all for my own benefit and that he believes in me as a martial artist and an instructor and for that I will be forever grateful.

I would like to thank my dad for introducing Tae Kwon Do to me. Without him I would not be here, I would not have Tae Kwon Do and I would not have met my husband. I would consider myself close to my dad, and find it easy to talk to him about anything that has happened in my personal life. I would like to believe that one of the reasons for this is our shared interest in Tae Kwon Do. I would also like to thank my mum and sister. Neither are involved in Tae Kwon Do and have no desire to be, however, they have both been patient and interested when I talk about it. They have put up with my dad and I discussing school related issues and events, have helped out on numerous occasions when required and been supportive. It is a common bond between my dad and I and I know that this may have been difficult for them both to comprehend at times, so I appreciate their patience.

Lastly, I'd like to thank the students of our school. I have learned a lot through teaching and observing others in class. We are very lucky to have committed and passionate students, who help out as much as they can within the school. Additionally, many have offered their help outside the school and within our home. The AIMAA truly is a family unit, who are closer in more than Tae Kwon Do relations. As an association we have everything that we need. It is all possible because of Grandmaster Cho, who leads by perfect example and I hope to continue that onto our students.

I aim to improve myself both personally and as an AImAA instructor. My instructor and husband and has taught me so much that I cannot thank him enough. He leads by example and lives his life as close to the aims to achieve as possible. Tae Kwon Do IS his life, not just an aspect of it. Going forward I want to be more like him. I am aware that I am still learning, and want to continue learning from everyone from our white belts in the school to Grandmaster Cho. My aim for myself after my testing is to better myself as an AImAA instructor and to help promote the AImAA through my students and how I teach them. I look up to people like Mrs Ameris and Miss Jasmine Cho. Watching Miss Cho teach the children at HQ last year was great, she so full of enthusiasm and so loud for being so little!

I consider myself to be quite a confident person however; my confidence tends to waiver in the presence of a large crowd, especially if I am the centre of attention the way you are in a teaching situation. But if the task is not a challenge, it is not worth doing.

I am still young and i suppose you could say immature. I still get very nervous before I teach a class whether it is children or adults. However, regardless of how nervous I am, I get a great buzz from teaching the children. I still find it very difficult, but when a 5 year old retains some information that you have had a hand in teaching to them, there is nothing to describe the buzz that comes from it. I always remember the first time that I taught the young students. I was almost dancing about when they completed Sajo Jurigi on their own – they ranged from 4years to 6years. It is extremely satisfying also when they can explain why they cross high or show comprehension on techniques. Teaching really is a satisfying job, even with the adults. I am probably one of the youngest members of my adult student base, and yet they all show me an enormous amount of respect and value my opinion. The most nerve racking experience when teaching our adult class is that I am basically a child compared to them but no one reacts to me like that. In time Ii know that I will overcome my fears but not the nerves!

This is my first thesis that I have had to write for sitting a testing. I wanted it to be personal and hopefully give you an honest view of how I see AImAA, our students and

myself. I feel that in order in order to others to see you for you, it is important to be honest with yourself. My main worry about being centre of attention is about been viewed as incompetent, it just a personal fear that I have. However, I know that realistically it is not true, I am able and I try my best. That is all that you can in whatever it is that you are undertaking. I truly love Tae Kwon Do, the AIMAA and having a positive influence on the youth of today. My instructor made me a better student, person and instructor, and continues to push me forward in my teaching career. I hope that I can also do the same for my own students, and encourage their passion for the martial art.