

August 15, 2010

2nd Dan Speech

Jodie M. Wilson

Jodie Wilson here again...amazing how time flies. Hard to imagine that just a couple of short years ago I was standing, tears, blubbing and all, in front of most of you getting ready to receive my 1st Dan. At the time, I wasn't sure what to expect once Master Lee tied the coveted black belt around my waist. I knew intuitively that as soon as I received that honor I suddenly wouldn't be able to take on a slew of assassins, throwing a flurry of blocks, punches, kicks, and 540 turn snaps leaving heaps of hulking, bruised, and broken bad guys in my wake. I knew it but I could and still can dream. As I stand before you, I am tasked with defining what it means to be a black belt. That is a hard question since after working for years to achieve my black belt goal I thought maybe I would feel different having arrived and all. I'm here; I'm in the club, right?

Life is a series of journeys rolled up into one journey that is our existence and, ultimately, what we will leave behind when we are gone. Although Taekwondo is not a religion, it teaches many of the same basic principles as many successful religions or philosophies do in the form of the Eleven Commandments of Taekwondo: loyalty to your country, respect your parents, faithfulness to your spouse, respect your brothers and sisters, loyalty to your friends, respect your elders, respect your teacher, never take life unjustly, indomitable spirit, loyalty to your school, and, my personal favorite, finish what you begin. I proved that I can finish what I begin by receiving my black belt, however, what I didn't realize is with that honor I began the real journey; that of the rest of my life.

A 1st Dan Black belt symbolizes mastery of the basics with enough understanding to teach others. This wasn't a new concept for me since I had been formally teaching classes out in Maple Valley since becoming a Red belt. One difference is that over time, working the basic stances, blocks, strikes, and kicks and teaching others, I have become more and more aware of what each movement means and, given the needs of the individual student, how to convey these concepts and help them to master each movement. Each person is an individual with different skill levels and learning styles. Being an

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instructor requires changing your perspective to better understand your student and devise new and improved ways of saying and demonstrating the same thing. Sadly we live in a society of instant satisfaction and gratification. Taekwondo is the opposite, it is the journey to perfection, and since perfection is not attainable, the highest level black belts still have room for improvement. As a black belt, I am a student in everything I do: how can I be better and how can I help others be better. In the last two years, I have lost 25 pounds of fat, gained 6 pounds of muscle, finished my first round of P90X, overcome injuries and other setbacks and become healthier than I was before. Perfection is not just that of movements and poomses we learn but the ability to clear the mind or emptying of your cup of all mental noise, preconceptions, self-doubts, worries, past experiences, and maybe the fight you had with your spouse or kids earlier that day, etc. and being completely present in the moment. This practice is unbelievably helpful in all aspects of a person's life not just on the mat. Dealing with people that you have had troubles with in the past are so much easier if you can empty your cup and be completely present in the moment, see the situation for what it is unclouded by your preconceptions, and work for positive solutions. Being a black belt is a constant state of mind.

As a black belt I must look beyond me. Many think that Taekwondo is an individual sport. Yes, there is a lot of self-reflection, introspection, and time spent ***clap, clap, clap*** practice, practice, practicing. But one thing that people not in the art fail to realize is that Taekwondo is a community, beyond even the dojang. Being a black belt is spreading the word, the joy, skills, and the understanding of those Eleven Commandments so that when I am gone there is a larger community of martial artists spreading Taekwondo, because I will finish what I start.