

I first studied Karate at the request of my fiancé 23 years ago. What started out as a 3-credit physical education course toward my bachelor's degree from California State University Long Beach, quickly turned into a life changing experience. I don't remember what material was covered in Physics, or Thermodynamics the semester of 1989, but I can vividly remember pouring my heart and soul into Karate. After the college semester ended, the Karate passion continued on for 2 more years as I joined the nearby dojo. I studied hard, advanced quickly, and benefited from improved stamina, endurance, flexibility, and strength. I was lucky enough to join a style that (in my opinion) promoted a safe, healthy, and challenging atmosphere that inspired me.

Unfortunately, my mother fell ill to breast cancer in 1991 and I moved back to Michigan to support her. After exhausting my search for a nearby Karate dojo in Michigan, I was unable able find a suitable martial arts substitute within a 90-minute radius of my new Michigan home. That very same year my wife and I were blessed with our first child. As a result, Karate took a back seat for several years. Meanwhile, I trained alone occasionally, but eventually my inspiration for Karate faded. Over the next 18 years, I ventured into Korean martial arts and also a rather non-traditional Japanese form of martial arts for a 1-year and 2-year period respectively. Both of these journeys were terminated due to a combination of cultural differences, travel distance, and/or physical injury that I incurred.

Now fast forward several years. I'm sipping coffee on a Sunday morning browsing through the Rochester Community Education & Enrichment Program Guide, and come across the JSKA posting. A quick phone call with Sensei Dan Hunt satisfied my curiosity to train again. Somewhat unique from my experiences, I quickly became inspired again. The style was similar to where I began 23 years earlier, and the dedication, quality, and wisdom of the instructor(s) at JSKA-Rochester are second to none. Most important to me is Sensei Hunt's promotion of a safe, healthy, and challenging atmosphere – along

with the inspiration that I glean from JSKA-Rochester. Without these important attributes, there would be no commitment on my part to train and improve.

Why, at my age, should I study Karate again? I've learned that education is the best investment you can make in yourself. Here, I'll use the word "education" broadly to encompass the knowledge, wisdom, and physical well-being gained from the study of karate. I enjoy the benefits of increased strength and energy, the increased flexibility, the cardio workout, the challenge, the desire to improve, the new friends, accomplishing individual goals, and the satisfaction of helping others achieve theirs. For me, it was never about being able to fight better, but rather just improving my own life. One of the secrets in life, in my opinion, is to make a list of things that you like to do and make a concentrated effort to improve/achieve them. As a parent, I coach/mentor my children that they can achieve anything – but it comes with the following caveats. They must have the drive to learn and stay dedicated to achieve the goal. With persistence and dedication, improvement will eventually result. I tell my children that we all have busy schedules, but with just a little time and training each and every day, we can learn to handle the basketball better, or learn a new trade, or read a book, or study karate. A day that goes by without improving something about your life is a wasted day. It's about setting realistic goals – and making progress toward achieving them. It's about finding things in life that you enjoy, and pursuing them. For me, Karate will be on my list of things to improve upon for several years to come.