

The journey ...

The journey is the reward. My students have heard me say that many times.

My journey in Taekwon Do began in 1974. I was 16 and walked into a local gym in Bathgate in the East of Scotland, where some kind of Martial Arts training was taking place. Now, this was a time when Kung Foo films were huge and Bruce Lee was a god. I watched in awe and was immediately drawn to the power and excitement of what these men were doing.

And aye, it was all men! There and then, I went up to the instructor and asked if I could join. I remember the look of confusion on his face. He was genuinely taken aback and told me they'd have to have a meeting to decide whether a woman would be allowed join. The verdict was I could join as long as I was prepared to fight like a man. So that's what I did. In fact, I had to be tougher than the men. I couldn't give them any excuse to hold me back from progressing through the ranks.

Well, forty-five years later I'm a 9<sup>th</sup> Degree Blackbelt and hold the title of Grand Master. I'm one of only two women in the world to hold that title. I opened two Taekwon Do gyms in Scotland. Nothing fancy - in fact, some might say they're kinda run down. Just small premises in industrial estates – freezing in the winter. But in these gyms, champions have been made and many of the masters and instructors teaching today were trained there.

It hasn't been an easy journey. Sexism and bigotry tried to block me at every turn. To say there were many who resented a woman in their world is an understatement, never mind one who was attempting to rise above them in rank! But Perseverance is one of the tenets of Taekwon Do, as is Indomitable Spirit, and I have both in abundance. Or maybe I'm just bloody-minded!

When I died in 2019, I asked that there be no funeral or ceremony. I want my legacy to be the progression of Taekwon Do. General Choi, the founder of Taekwon Do, teaches

that we should strive in life, not to accumulate possessions which we can't take with us, but to instead build a spiritual legacy based on what we leave behind for the welfare of others. That's the way to gain immortality – the spirit is perpetual, material is not.

I have spent my life teaching and promoting Taekwon Do. I founded the United Kingdom TKD Federation and hosted many European and World Championships. I've proved women can rise to the highest rank in the very male-dominated world of Martial Arts. I've overseen the promotion of many female Blackbelts. Some say I'm tougher on my female students than the male ones and maybe that's true. I won't give the men any excuse to say the promotion of a female student hasn't been fairly earned. So, yes, my female Blackbelts have to be better than their male equivalent.

A perfect example of this is Miss Julia Cross. This wee girl walked into my gym – eleven years old - and began her training. I wasn't easy on her; I worked her hard but she never gave up. She rose to every challenge and made the journey from white belt all the way to 6<sup>th</sup> Degree Blackbelt. She became Taekwon Do World Champion - six times, European Champion fifteen times and the only person, male or female, ever to achieve six world titles in ITF Taekwon Do. Oh and last year, she was appointed MBA for services to Taekwon Do! That makes me a very proud instructor.

The skills and strengths you gain on your journey in Taekwon Do benefit every area of your life. Physical fitness is the tip of the iceberg; much more is the ability to push yourself beyond what you ever thought you were capable of. To surprise yourself with strengths you never knew you had, mental, physical and emotional. To never give up. Don't ever think it's just a sport, it's an art, a Martial Art, and it becomes a way of life. And I'm proud to have dedicated my life to bringing Taekwon Do into the lives of so many and to bringing women into the world of Taekwon Do.

My legacy is every one of those Blackbelts I've promoted and especially every one of those female Blackbelts. And every woman and girl inspired by those female Blackbelts

as they tie their white belt and take that first step on their own journey to Blackbelt.  
Because a Blackbelt is just a white belt who never gave up.

**Grand Master Sutherland: 'The Miss'**

**Pauline Lockhart**