

The Karate Kid: Discipline helps control asthma

By Jackie Hogden

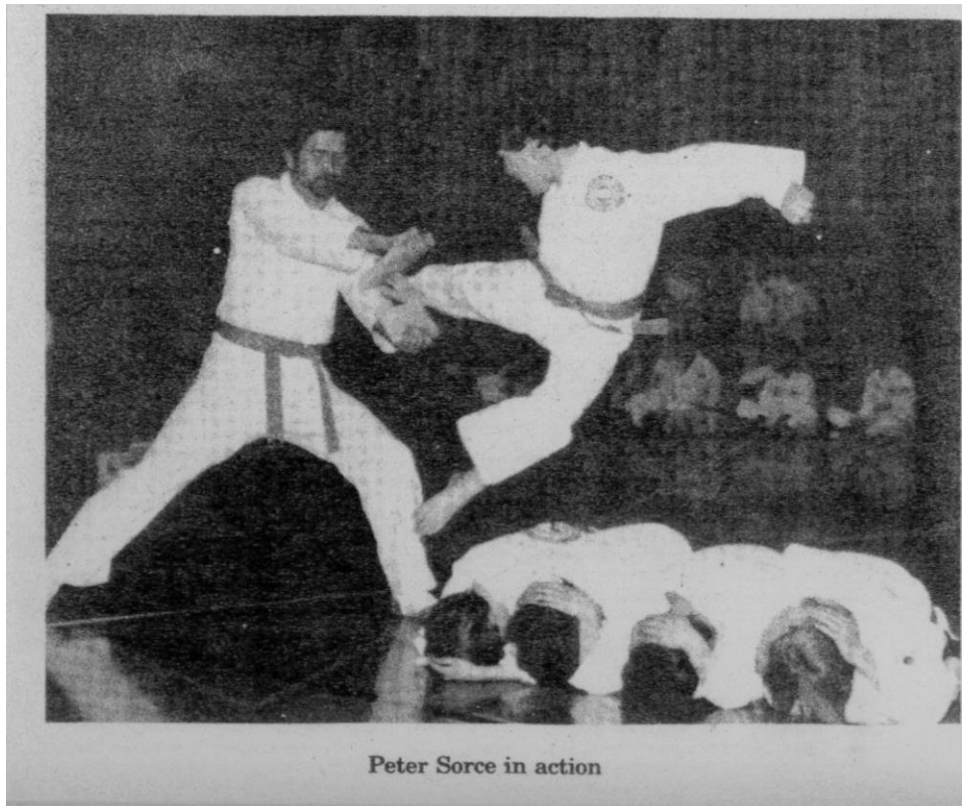
At age 6, Peter couldn't do a sit-up or pushup.

Peter's physical strength and stamina was less than that of other children his age. An asthmatic condition prevented him from romping the way most children do.

His mother, Colina, said it was difficult to watch him play and be stricken by a sudden asthmatic attack. But today, three years later, instead of heartache, she feels great pride.

Peter just earned a black belt in Tae Kwon Do, (Korean Karate), a coveted achievement that takes most who strive for it many years to earn.

"He does pushups on his finger tips," Mrs. Sorce said of her son. Proper medication, coupled with exercise and disciplined command of his body have lessened the frequency and severity of Peter's asthmatic attacks.



He saw a karate demonstration at Summerfest sponsored by the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Department, Mrs. Sorce said. When Peter expressed an interest in learning the art, she said she decided to encourage him.

"I wanted my son to be able to hold his own ground."

And that he has. Since entering competitions on his way to earning a black belt, Peter has won 40 trophies for sparring (fighting), breaking boards and forms.

At the American Tae Kwon Do Championship competitions held recently in Illinois, Mrs. Sorce said Peter leaped over five adults and successfully broke two boards with his foot. Peter said he finds “breaking” to be the greatest challenge for him.

“You have to hit (the board) with the right part of your foot or hand. If you don’t, you could break your toes or fingers,” he said. “Sometimes it happens.”

Peter said he enjoys sparring the most because, “I’m good at it.” Sparring events require extreme precision. Peter explained that the intent of sparring competitions is not to physically ham the opponent.

Points are scored by sweeping movements of the feet and hands that are extended within two inches of the opponent’s body. For example, he said, two points are scored for dashing a kick within two inches of the opponent’s head; one point is scored for snapping a hand movement within two inches of the opponent’s stomach.

A sparring match lasts two minutes. Peter explained that a three point advantage is needed to win. If both contestants should be tied at the end of the two minutes, “you get into what’s called ‘sudden death’”.

In that event, the person who gains the next point, wins, he said.

Peter practices four or five days a week at D.A. Yun’s Black belt Academy on 27th St. Peter says he hopes to some day open his own karate school. He currently helps instruct students who have lower black belts than he does. He also hopes to achieve “at least” a seventh or eighth-degree black belt.

Mrs. Sorce is pleased with her son’s achievements and aspirations. In addition to his shelves of trophies, she said he has gained respect for others and a sense of strict self-discipline. “They teach him a lot more than fighting,” she said.

Breath control and meditation learned in Tae Kwon Do classes apparently have helped in controlling asthmatic attacks. She said he has never suffered an attack during a competition. While practicing, if he does get tired, he tells the instructor he has to rest, she added.

Peter said he usually feels confident before a tournament. If he wins he feels “Great,” he said.

Peter must wait one full year before testing for a second-degree black belt status, according to the principles of the discipline.

His achievements thus far, as well as his proven dedication, are sure indicators that Peter will reach the goals that he sets for himself.