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MARTIAL ARTS, FITNESS AND HEALTH

GRANDMASTER KOANG WOONG KIM

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Tae Kwon Do*

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FOCUS ON YOUTH

GIRLS CAN DO IT TOO!



Tricia Anne Thomas has a "go-gettun" attitude—and she doesn't take a back seat to anyone, including boys!

Text and photos by
Jane Hallander

Most kids learning karate either practice a traditional Japanese style or an Americanized version, such as kenpo. It's rare that you find an 11 year old who is proficient in both, and even rarer that the student is a girl.

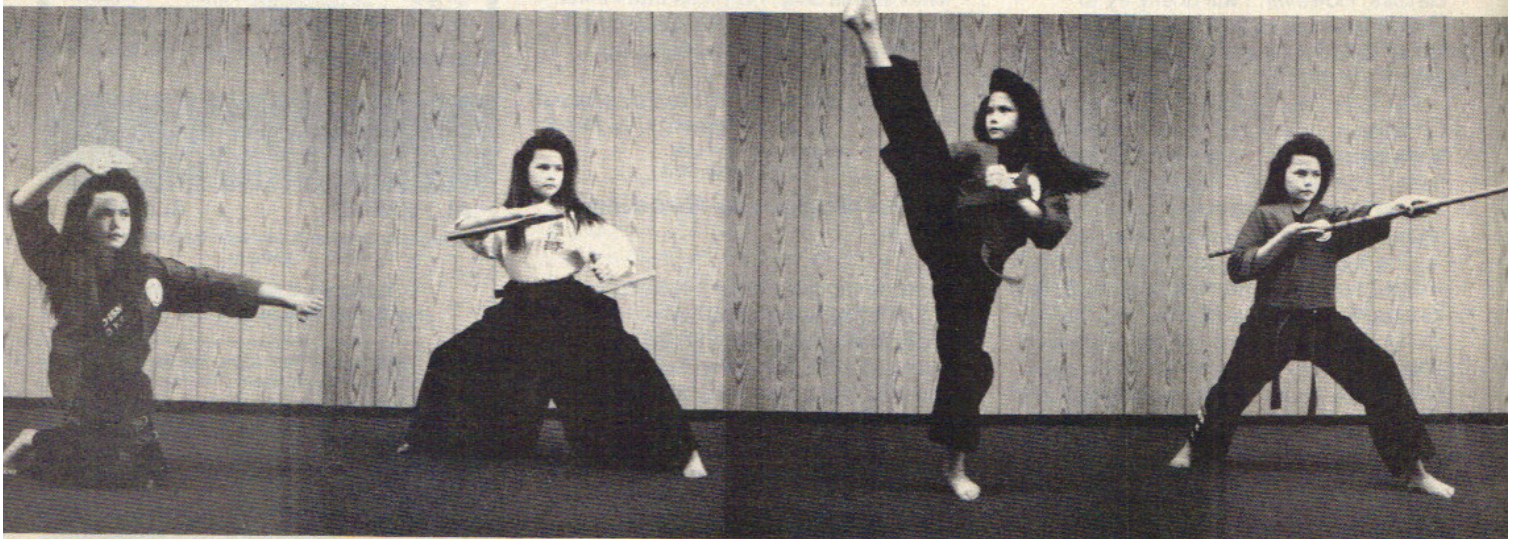
In this day and age of liberated women, Tricia Anne Thomas is the perfect example of a new generation of female martial artists. Although she's only 11, Tricia is a

Tricia poses with some of her trophies. It isn't uncommon for Tricia to return from a tournament with five trophies and four grand championships!

martial arts whiz, competing and winning in hard style and weapons kata with her Japanese forms. Then she switches to kenpo for open and kenpo forms and sparring—and wins those events too! It's not uncommon for Tricia to come home from a tournament with four first places, including five grand championships. She has even won first place at Ed Parker's noted International tournament in traditional kata.

Tricia's Japanese style teacher is her own father, Thomas N. Thomas, an instructor of traditional Japanese karate. Her kenpo teacher is Bill Grossman, who has a school in South San Francisco, California.

Unlike most 11 year olds, Tricia has no



Across: Tricia performs a kenpo form; with her favorite traditional weapon, the tonfu; performing a kenpo form; and executing a weapon form with a staff.



Above: Performing with her kenpo instructor, Bill Grossman
Right: With her two instructors, Grossman and her father, Thomas, N. Thomas.



problem expressing her feelings about martial arts and what it has done for her.

"The essence of martial arts is harmony of body and spirit. That means that martial arts builds confidence and physical fitness, while you're learning self-defense. Besides that, it gives me a common interest with my father," says Tricia. Pretty profound words for an 11 year old, but she means every word.

"I don't compete for trophies. I compete for my karate school. I'm proud to represent my father and Sifu Grossman's school," continues Tricia.

Although she started training with her father on a one-on-one basis, Tricia chose Grossman's kenpo school because there were many students her own age at the school.

"It's like having the best of both worlds. I'm a private student with my dad and part of a big family at the kenpo school," says Tricia.

She dreams as big as her martial art accomplishments. She wants to become a doctor someday, while also teaching martial arts. She says that if she cannot do both, she'll teach karate.

As a future martial arts instructor, Tricia wants to see more girls get involved. "There are not enough girls in martial arts. Everybody thinks about boys when they think about martial arts, but girls are just as good. They can do anything a boy can do in martial arts," says Tricia.

She likes to spar with boys, believing that there's no reason they cannot be sparring partners. She even takes a liberated position that girls and boys could fight each other at tournaments.

"After all, self-defense is usually against male attackers, so why not train on an equal level with boys," explains Tricia. "I compete with boys in kata competition, and I'm willing to compete with them in sparring."



Left: Working out with her older sister, Tammy. **Below:** Performing a kenpo form.

She was overjoyed when her older sister Tammy joined the kenpo school. It meant another girl in the school. She has already bested the boys' push-up, sit-up, chin-up and arm wrestling records at her elementary school, and she's not a big 11 year old.

Of course, it may run in her family. Her father has always encouraged Tricia to be as good as she can at whatever she does. Her older brother is a good role model for her—he's a college football star and weightlifting champion.

"People think boys are stronger than us. They aren't really. Besides, girls need self-defense training nowadays, more than boys do," asserts Tricia.

Tricia may be ahead of her time in the competition ring, however she's also a great example of an upwardly mobile young lady. She believes that women can be as good at teaching martial arts as are men, feeling that men respect good female martial artists. She sees tournament competition as a large part of that respect. According to Tricia, tournaments give her a chance to test her skills against someone else. She likes weapons' competition best, but only slightly more than the other events she competes in. She even wants to compete in Japan, showing them that Americans are also good martial artists.

At the end of every year Bill Grossman gives an award within his school called S.W.A.T. It means Super Winning Attitude Team. To be eligible students must have a superior attitude, good grades and good attendance throughout the entire year. Tricia with her winning ways is a recipient of the S.W.A.T. award. ■

