



## SUSAN MORITZ

**Age:** 52

**Rank:** Blue Belt

**Occupation:** Attorney at Law

**City of Residence:** Virginia Beach

### **Why did you decide to study the martial arts and what are you getting out of it?**

I started with tai chi while obtaining an MBA at George Washington University. I continued my tai chi studies with several interruptions, and learned the Chen Pan Ling version of tai chi chuan from Terry Price, who was teaching at Virginia Martial Arts in Chesapeake. My husband studied with me but got a little bored with tai chi, and I wanted to learn the broader aspects of tai chi, including grasping (chin na) and other techniques.

I met Bill Odom by accident at a car repair shop. He was working on his first flier for the school. We talked, and I ex-

plained why I liked tai chi. I have trouble with my back and can't do some things other people can, like get thrown a lot. He told me about his background and tang soo so. He was very open to being flexible in his training and in accommodating older students. He was preparing to retire from the Army and seemed to understand that older people don't heal as quickly as young people, and that some people can't do everything.

Because he was willing to accommodate older students, I told my husband about it. He thought it was fantastic and became Bill's first student. I started a month after that. I've taken some time off for professional studies and because of back problems, but I slowly built back up again. Now I avoid falls. I wear an elastic brace under the gi, and I routinely do back exercises to strengthen my back and the "core."

I have found that karate has given me more strength and coordination. It has very real aerobic benefits (which tai chi generally doesn't) and it is fun to break boards. I'm not very fond of the sparring or the wrestling aspect (i.e., jujitsu). I have not been taught to fight and I would prefer not to. I would be happy just to kick and punch bags and do forms. However, sparring is part of the art and to the extent that I have to, I will.

on leverage and the maneuvering of their own bodies *around* an opponent's. (Jujitsu literally means the "soft" or "gentle" art.)

Today, in much of the world, the preferred form of jujitsu is Brazilian, thanks to the efforts of a man named Helio Gracie and his sons. Odom met Gracie's oldest son, Rorion, while commanding the infantry brigade in Korea. He had invited the Brazilian martial-arts pioneer to the base to give a seminar and was so impressed with the technique and teaching method that he brought Gracie back several times. The Army has since incorporated Gracie techniques into its general training manual.

Odom supplements tang soo do training with instruction in the Gracie method because he believes it is more practical and more immediately useful than karate is as a method of self-defense.

"The beauty of Gracie jujitsu is that it's very realistic," says Odom. "It provides that little bit you need to get out of a real situation where you can stand up and run away. The idea of hitting someone and hurting them is not practical [for beginners] — and I think for most people it's not desirable."

In any event, while a skilled practitioner of tang soo do can be a formidable fighter, it takes years to master the art. Techniques from the Gracie method, by contrast, can be learned very quickly.

In my time at the Academy, I have found that I much prefer the repetition of forms, kicks and punches to the self-defense work. I'd like to think that if I ever do get into a scrape, the Gracie techniques I've learned will come in handy. But the real attraction for me lies in the potential grace and power of tang soo do.

Odom can relate to this. "I love the way bodies move," he says. "Had I not gotten into this, I would have been a gymnast. It goes back to Daredevil. The ability to do things unaided, without equipment, to be able to *fly* — those things always fascinated me. The flexibility, the jumping — it's just very cool. And that's one of the reasons I focus so much on forms. I love forms and still practice them just because I enjoy it."

At the same time, he says, the soldier in him wants to teach people to fight so they can protect themselves. And he believes the credibility of his school depends upon his ability to do so.

"I want people to say [of any of our students], 'Yeah, he can hit; his jujitsu's good; you don't want to mess with him. But he also has beautiful form.'"

In striking this balance, Odom has attracted an interesting mix of students. Some share Odom's love of form; others, like Cook,