



PAWMA
Pacific Association of
Women Martial Artists

Hard and soft
Working together
Become complete

PAWMA News

Uniting and empowering a diverse community of
women and girls in the martial arts.

Vol. 34 No. 2

Spring 2011

[PAWMA Camp 2011](#)

Labor Day Weekend, September 2-5, 2011, Seattle WA

[Camp housing information.](#)

[Register Today](#)

Editor's Note: This issue of the newsletter focuses on Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu which has gained tremendous popularity over the past decade. Our first article is used with permission by www.graciemag.com



When the Ladies Tap Out Stereotypes

Mohamad Jihad

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Female participation is becoming quite commonplace at Jiu-Jitsu tournaments. In ever greater numbers, fighter girls put on a show all their own and lend further beauty to the gentle art. At any given championship or academy, the environment becomes less course and the mood, lighter. That's all quite ordinary when in the USA or Brazil, but in the Middle East, no one was expecting it. At least not so soon.



The girls at Emirates Cup, in Abu Dhabi
Photo: Cassuza Fornari's personal archives

When we found out, here in Abu Dhabi, that the project implementing Jiu-Jitsu in schools would also include girls, we weren't just surprised. I must confess, we were unconvinced it would succeed. Of course we knew how capable the female teachers were, but teaching grappling in a region like the Gulf was hard enough for the boys, imagine the girls.

Today, all the girls' schools in the project have keenly accepted Jiu-Jitsu. In February there was the first girls'-school competition, and on March 4 we witnessed a major female showing at the Emirates Cup. More than half the girls there competed wearing a hijab, a Muslim head dress covering the hair, proving how sport and tradition can go hand in hand.

After the tournament, broadcast live across the Emirates, several of our "girl warriors" received telephone calls from their family and friends, congratulating them on their participation. Or in other words, it was proof of family support and social regard.

Now we await the World Pro, in April, where the valiant ladies promise to show that, as far as Jiu-Jitsu is concerned, they are going to carry on tapping out stereotypes. Congratulations on your day, ladies.

Self-Actualization Through Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu

Valerie Worthington

There are so many hackneyed metaphors for life. Life is a journey. Life is a search for meaning. Life is what you make it. But part of what makes these metaphors seem a little bit overused is that there is a germ of truth to them. Life IS all these things. That's why every news article, book, and movie on Lifetime: Television for Women (serendipitously named, by the way) about personal growth, overcoming adversity, or even busting out with the perfectly timed witty comeback are, to me, powerfully new and eye-rollingly familiar all at once.

I think it's safe to say that most of us would like to conclude at the end of our lives that we lived the heck out of them, that the few regrets we might have pale in comparison to the treasured memories and positive legacy left behind.

Doing this is not easy -- hence all the articles, books, and Lifetime movies. Figuring out how to create those memories and contribute to that legacy -- how to live a life that realizes its full potential -- is the product of brutally hard work: trial and error, proceeding on intuition when every self-preserving impulse in your body is saying stop, keeping your own counsel



Photo courtesy of
Val Worthington

instead of doing what your friends and family expect of you. Oh, and in my case, it has required gallons of both tears and ice cream. And on top of this, there are no guarantees.

But in my case, there is also no alternative. Once I committed to living my life mindfully and taking responsibility for my happiness, I was like Neo, waking up from the Matrix all slimy and covered with electrodes. There was no going back. In equal parts, depending on my mood, I both blame and credit Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, which is the martial art I have practiced for 13 years now, with that awakening. How I found BJJ and my journey up till now are stories for another time. But the enduring reality is that for me, BJJ provides the instruction manual for a meaningful life.

Back when I was more of a neophyte, I had my hands, heart, and brain full just trying to navigate grappling techniques and get my body to do what my instructors and I were telling it to. But as I have progressed in the art, as I have developed a more sophisticated relationship with BJJ, I have learned as much about the kind of person I want to be as I have about these techniques: Patient. Humble. Persistent. Strategic. Confident. And most importantly, comfortable with discomfort. (Well, maybe “unfazed by close bodily contact, which requires a very forgiving sense of humor” is the absolute most important.) I have been given more and more opportunities to give back to the community of people that has helped me become a better version of myself.

Different people have different ways of self-actualizing. For me, the years I have spent learning my martial art have helped me move far closer to becoming the enlightened person I am capable of being than any other job, person, or circumstance ever has. It’s not putting too fine a point on it to say that grappling makes me far more bearable to be around than I would be if I didn’t train. (Ask anyone who loves me who has had the misfortune of interacting with me after a forced absence.) And I am always a hit at cocktail parties when people ask, “So what do you do?”

They’re either fascinated or sorry they asked.

Valerie Worthington is a black belt in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu under Johnny Ramirez and John Ouano of New Breed Academy in Santa Fe Springs, CA (<http://www.newbreedacademy.com>). She is one of the principal instructors for the Women’s Grappling Camp (see WomensGrappling.org for further details and to register for the next camp.) In 2006, she chucked her “normal” life to embark on a Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu walkabout, during which she traveled the country in search of good grappling, good insights, and good diner food. She found all three, but is always looking for more.

Spirit Rising - PAWMA Camp 2011 Planning Update

Camp registration is open! [Register for camp early](#); rates go up August 1.

The PAWMA board is pleased to report our camp planning progress. For more details, go to [Camp and Events](#).

Camp theme: *Spirit Rising*

Thanks to board member **Rosanne Boudreau** and the women of **Tuyê't Tan Dojo** for brainstorming camp themes and giving us a wealth of creative choices. *Spirit Rising* beautifully and succinctly expresses the positive approach we take to life and training, and how we embrace the challenges that life throws at us.

Class locations

We've arranged for Saturday and Sunday classes to be held at the [Miller Community Center](#), 330 19th Ave E, Seattle WA 98112. ([See map for location.](#))

Friday's opening ceremony and class, and Monday's final class and closing ceremony will probably be held at one of our Seattle sister schools. We'll post that information on the [Camp and Events page](#) as soon as we finalize those plans.

Teachers

Vice president **Silke Schulz** is heading the teacher selection committee. Although teacher selections haven't been finalized, the group of applicants promises a strong, diverse slate of teachers on a par with past PAWMA camps.

Housing

Members who were at the member meeting at Camp 2010 will recall the frank discussion about PAWMA finances and the future of camp. Our current situation means a departure from the all-inclusive model of past camps in favor of a conference-style event.

While this enables us to keep the base price of camp relatively modest, camp participants will be responsible for arranging their own housing and meals. Board member **Patty O'Linger** has put together a range of affordable housing and meal options for everyone who comes to camp.

Hotels

We have reserved blocks of rooms at two local hotels. Visit their websites to learn more. Say you're with PAWMA when you **book your room before July 15** to get the PAWMA group rate.

The group rate is not guaranteed after July 15, but is subject to room availability. Split the cost of a room with one or more of your training sisters to make it even more affordable.

[6th Avenue Inn](#)

2000 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98121

Phone: 206-441-8300

Toll-Free: 1-800-648-6440

Email: info@sixthavenueinn.com

[Map - scroll to bottom of page](#)

[Hotel Nexus](#)

2140 N. Northgate Way
Seattle, WA 98133

Phone: 206-365-0700

Toll-Free: 800-435-0754

Email: info@hotelnexusseattle.com

[Map and Directions](#)

Dojos

If the very traditional martial arts experience as a student sleeping on the dojo floor appeals to you, sister schools in Seattle have graciously offered space to a few women willing to “rough it.” Space is very limited and is offered on a first come-first served basis. Email Patty O’Linger housing@pawma.org. Shower facilities are available. There may be a modest fee to help offset the cost of utilities.

Hosted Housing

We will do our best to connect women arriving from out-of-town with local women martial artists who can provide a place to stay during camp. If you are interested in staying in someone’s home, email Patty O’Linger housing@pawma.org describing your housing needs. Please note if you have any specific requirements or conditions, such as pet allergies.

Seattle PAWMA Sisters: we are appealing to you to host out-of-town guests during camp. Email Patty O’Linger housing@pawma.org with a description of the accommodations you can offer, including transportation to classes.

Meals

For members, we’re providing lunch for the annual member meeting on Sunday. Let us know any special dietary needs when you register and we’ll do our best to accommodate them.

When you get to camp, we’ll have a list of nearby restaurants for you to choose from. We’re also looking into arranging for a few food carts to be parked at the Miller Community Center during meal times.

Transportation

Seattle boasts an excellent public transportation system. Visit the [Camp and Events page](#) for links to information on the [King County Transit website](#).

If you plan to rent a car, consider using Hertz Rent-a-car and use discount code 047z0001.

Seattle PAWMA Sisters: can you help drive people and their gear between hotels and classes? Email Patty O'linger housing@pawma.org to offer your services and let her know how many people you can drive.

This year's camp will be different, but life is about change and how we meet and embrace the challenge of change. With spirit rising, working together to support one another, we can make this a great camp.

Martial Arts and Me

Lily Pagle

I was born in Japan to a Chinese immigrant family. My father was a progressive. Against the grain of Japanese society, he believed in equality for women and encouraged me to explore outside of the narrow scope of traditional gender roles. Growing up with two brothers, I took a liking to “boy” activities - especially combat sports. Watching kickboxing, boxing, and wrestling matches on TV was a family activity that we enjoyed weekly. And when the TV was off, my brothers and I would toss each other around, imitating our heroes on the screen.

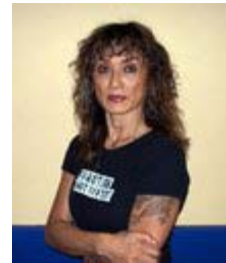


Photo courtesy of
Lily Pagle

When we hit our teen years, both of my brothers began taking Karate and Kung Fu lessons. Girls, however, were not allowed in any of the martial arts schools in my hometown. So, instead, I focused my sights on other sports, like skiing and scuba diving.

I came to the U.S. in my mid 20's. I got married, had kids, and led a busy life as a working mother. I didn't even think about doing martial arts for a long time.

Then one day my husband, Alan, expressed interest in doing Judo. He thought that it would be a good activity for our three kids, as well. We decided to check out a school in our area called East Bay Judo Institute (EBJI). I walked in without any idea of what to expect. But watching the kids in the Judo class, I began to reminisce about my own childhood and how I would wrestle with my brothers. So without hesitation, I enrolled my entire family - my husband, my three kids, and myself, to take Judo lessons. At the ripe old age of 40, I was excited to take on this new adventure.

Doing Judo at EBJI was like nothing I had ever done before. The school produced Olympians and World Champions; training was rough. But it made me feel like I was in the best shape of the 40 years of my life. I enjoyed challenging myself and I dedicated myself to it. At 44 years old, I competed at the national level. A few years later, I earned my 2nd degree black belt.

It was around that time that the Ultimate Fighting Championships came out and I first heard about Mixed Martial Arts and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. I was curious about these sports, but there were no places to train in our area. Without a school, Alan and I just decided to gather some friends and train on our own, wherever we could find space. Soon after, we found the organization Straight Blast Gym International (SBGi), which helped us build our casual training into a school. By 2002, we had formed Modern Combatives or ModCom MMA, the first Mixed Martial Arts gym in the East Bay.

Joining SBGi has been the best thing to happen to our gym. Being an affiliate of a larger organization lets us be a part of a community of gyms all over the world. SBGi has provided us with a great support system and has helped us so much over the years. The greatest support has been from SBGi president, Matt Thornton. He has been a relentless advocate for people, regardless of gender, age, size, color, creed, profession. I am only one of a very small number of female members and quite possibly the oldest member of SBGi, yet Matt has always made me feel included. In such a competitive and male-dominated sport, Matt's support has helped me be strong and carry on.

My greatest supporter has been my partner in training and in life, my husband, Alan. The only reason I've come as far as I could in martial arts is because of Alan's love, support, and encouragement. While I travel all over the world for seminars and training camps, Alan stays behind and takes care of our gym. When I'm too sick to teach a class, he'll cover for me. It's nice to have someone to trust and rely on. In business, and in marriage, we help each other out and work as a team.

Being able to do Martial Arts at an older age helped me challenge myself in other areas of my life. I went back to school at age 48 and earned a master's degree in Counseling Psychology (specializing in Child and Adolescent Psychology). And I've been able to use my expertise in counseling in combination with Martial Arts to help many children and adolescents with their self-esteem, behavioral problems, and anger. Together with Alan, I also taught Judo and self-defense classes for the Berkeley PAL (Police Athletic League) Program, a non-profit organization that promotes positive activities for at-risk youth.

For the past 9 years, I have also been working as a Sports Psychology Consultant and have worked with college athletes and amateur competitors. More recently, I have been helping coaches of various sports through coaching workshops and seminars. I have been the ModCom Competition Team Captain since 2009 and helped competitors achieve their goals, both physically and mentally, even coaching one of our members to become 2010 World Jiu-Jitsu Champion.

Last year, at age 60, I was awarded my black belt in BJJ by SBGi president Matt Thornton. To earn a black belt, one must be evaluated as a coach and exhibit a full understanding of the concept of BJJ and the SBGi training/teaching method. And on top of that, as a SBGi tradition at

belt testing, one has to endure what is called the “Ironman,” in which the tested have to go against everyone in the room with a higher ranking belt. It was a grueling experience: a little old lady up against 12 big, burly, young men, but I survived and can be proud of my accomplishment. I may very well be the oldest female BJJ black belt.

People ask me how I’m able to do combat sports at such an old age. Determination? No. Super human nature? No. The simple answer is that I’m having fun. Just like I used to with my brothers.

Board News - Planning for the Future

When is a retreat an advance? When the PAWMA board comes together to plan for PAWMA’s future. Over the weekend of February 12-13, the PAWMA board of directors held a retreat at the Portland home of **Tracy Reith**, president, for a weekend devoted to planning camp and discussing strategy and tactics to take the organization into the future.

Camp 2011

Saturday was taken up with planning for our 34th annual training camp over Labor Day weekend in Seattle WA. For an update on the significant progress we made with planning camp, see the article [Spirit Rising - PAWMA Camp 2011 Planning Update](#).

Strategic Planning

Sunday was devoted to strategic planning and discussing policy.

Vice president **Silke Schulz** guided us through an identification of PAWMA’s

strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, also known as a SWOT analysis. We also listed the skills and capabilities possessed by board members and the membership in general, and examined the marketing situation we face. This is just the beginning of developing a solid strategic approach to strengthen the organization.



Front row, left to right: Aarin Burch, Rosanne Boudreau, Patty O’Linger. Back row, left to right: Silke Schulz, Tracy Reith, Jennifer Sweigert, Nikia Fenlin, Elaine Powell. Not shown: Helen Yee. Photo courtesy of Tracy Reith

Avenues for Growth

One concern put forth by board member **Aarin Burch** is how we can expand racial diversity on the board, as well as the membership in general. As part of building and strengthening the organization, we can target outreach efforts to schools that are more diverse because of the areas in which they are located and the arts they teach. Maintaining and promoting diversity of all kinds is crucial part of the PAWMA mission, and needs to be incorporated into our long-term growth plans.

One key to our long-term growth is the Regional Representative system, revitalized thanks to the organizational efforts of Silke. She has enlisted a number of enthusiastic reps who are reaching out to women martial artists in their local communities. If you're interested in being a PAWMA regional rep, email Silke Schulz regionalreps@pawma.org. Two of our regional reps have even created Facebook pages to promote PAWMA in their areas: **Michelle Johnson**, Portland OR has started [Female Martial Artists in Oregon](#) and **Sue Langdon**, Las Vegas NV has started [Vegas Ladies of Martial Arts](#).

Another area we can expand on to aid our growth is financial grants. Board member **Rosanne Boudreau** is investigating grant opportunities that can help PAWMA put on camp and other events. She has assembled a team of six people to find and write grants.

Transparency

We discussed ways in which we can make the board and the business it conducts more transparent to the membership. We will begin by publishing a monthly board report, summarizing the results of board meetings.

We feel the newsletter can serve as an effective marketing tool if non-members, as well as members can read it. Beginning with this issue, we have removed the need for members to sign in to PAWMA.org to read complete articles. Access to past issues will continue to be a member-exclusive benefit. Mindful of concerns about internet privacy, we will not publish the names and/or photos of anyone who wishes to remain unidentified on the Web. We will seek the explicit permission of any person named in an article or shown in a photo.

2011 Member Meeting

We hope you plan to attend the membership meeting at PAWMA camp this year. We already have a number of vital issues to discuss, and we will provide lunch. Here's a preview of what's on the agenda. If you have other topics you feel are of interest to the membership at large, email Tracy Reith president@pawma.org.

- Alcohol at camp
- Changing the date new board members start their terms
- 2012 camp

- Adoption of a code of conduct
- Feedback about pluses and minuses of the conference-style camp model
- How well is the board meeting your communication needs

For items that require voting to change the bylaws, we will publish concrete proposals in advance of the membership meeting, in the next issue of the PAWMA News.

We got a lot of planning done in two short days. But we also managed to squeeze in some fun, too. Board member **Patty O'Linger** opened up her school for us Saturday evening. We sparred, tried out each other's forms, pushed and played. It was a good reminder of what the organization is about: women coming together to practice and share their martial arts.

*Corny jokes are a presidential prerogative.

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Part 2

What It Is, What It Does, What It Means

Valerie Worthington

Now I'm going to try to explain this martial art, this Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, with which I have a relationship arguably as intimate as those spouses, siblings, and parents and children have with each other. I freely admit that it has come to envelop my body and brain, and even my soul.

The analogy of my relationship with Jiu-Jitsu as being akin to a romantic relationship is actually pretty apt. When I first started training BJJ, I immediately started crushing. Hard. I thought about it when I wasn't with it, and when I was with it, time stopped; hours would pass without my notice and feel like seconds. It could do no wrong. It made me smile to myself. If I could have texted and IMed with BJJ on Facebook, I would have. I didn't go so far as to imagine myself married to BJJ, but maybe that was because on some level I knew it was just a matter of time. Indeed, my relationship to BJJ has deepened, matured, and become more complicated. And I'm in it for life.

Here's the clinical definition: Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, or submission grappling, is a martial art that is performed on the ground, like wrestling, only it's okay and often advantageous to be on your back. Practitioners vie for positions on their opponents that give them points, which matter in competition, and ultimately the opportunity to apply finishing holds like joint locks and chokes. It sounds violent, and it looks weird if you don't know what you're watching, but "jiu- jitsu" actually means "the gentle art" in Japanese. And for the initiated, it can look as beautiful as dancing-and it takes dedication to develop the grace, body awareness, and technique to

approximate that beauty. If you've ever watched the Ultimate Fighting Championship, you've seen Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. It's the stuff that happens when the fight goes to the ground.

T-shirts abound within the grappling community that say things like "Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu changed my life." And the people wearing them are not being flip. For a lot of practitioners, the art quickly becomes about far more than the definition I just gave. What's described above is what makes it so fun and challenging, but it doesn't capture the profound impact the requirements of a Jiu-Jitsu lifestyle can have on an individual's mindset, priorities, and even beliefs about themselves and the world.

At the risk of stereotyping, grapplers tend to be clannish; they want to get together, and they want to train, watch, and talk Jiu-Jitsu with each other. Further, people who train Jiu-Jitsu tend to want to support other people who train. I know I fit that part of the stereotype, and one of the motivations I have to continue in Jiu-Jitsu is that, now that I have some experience, I want to contribute to the community that has supported me in my journey. I want to pay it forward. And the Women's Grappling Camp (WGC) is one way I can do this.

Grappling is a male-dominated sport, though that is changing. There is room for women in grappling, as evidenced by the support I and my female grappling friends have received on our paths, from the many men who have taught, challenged, and encouraged us along the way. What is not as available to the majority of female practitioners is the regular opportunity to train with higher level women. With WGC, I and the two other main instructors, Emily Kwok and Felicia Oh, are able to address this need by providing instruction, support, and camaraderie to campers who may be the only women in their academies and crave reality checks that they are not crazy because of this. Camp participants come to a hosting academy for 3-5 days of training, discussions, and community building around the sport we love. And then we go back into our everyday grappling lives and continue to pay it forward.

As with Jiu-Jitsu itself, any description I can give of the camp will fall short in conveying what the experience can be like. But with 6 camps under our belts (pun intended) in the past 2 years and more planned for this year, including a Mothers' Day weekend edition at Gracie Tampa, in addition to other projects and programs, we are doing our best to help people experience the t-shirt. Jiu-Jitsu really does change lives and we're grateful that we get to contribute.

Going to the Ground: from Kajukenbo to Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu

Julie Kirby

It's often said that it's better to build from the ground up but, I've found that in the martial arts, it's also possible to build a strong foundation by going from stand-up to the ground.

After training in Kajukenbo for 15 years I became intrigued by the ground fighting art of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. I had watched in amazement as slender Royce Gracie completely dominated his much larger opponents in the first Ultimate Fighting Championships using grappling techniques from his family's martial art of Gracie Jiu-Jitsu. I was hooked. Starting as a white belt in a completely different martial art was daunting but I realized that adding ground fighting techniques to my stand-up skills would help me become a more well rounded martial artist.



Photo courtesy of Julie Kirby.

My first months of training in Gracie Jiu-Jitsu really pushed me out of my comfort zone. Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu is a very close contact style and rolling around the mat with my male training partners was distracting. Those first months were also humbling. Even with my extensive martial arts background (I'm ranked at second degree black belt in Kajukenbo, after all) I would regularly get my butt kicked, while free grappling, by a 12 year old boy.

Now, 12 years later, I feel completely comfortable with the close contact and I do my fair share of butt kicking while sparring on the mat. I've also come to appreciate the strong martial arts foundation I've gained by starting with stand-up training and, later, going to the ground.

Julie Kirby trained for 15 years at Seven Star Women's Kung Fu in Seattle, Wa. and is ranked 2nd degree black belt in Kajukenbo. She currently is ranked at 3 stripe purple belt in Gracie Jiu-Jitsu and trains at O2 Martial Arts Academy on Oahu, HI. She has taught Gracie Jiu-Jitsu basics and sparring at three PAWMA training camps.

Sweaty Betties Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu: A Team for All Women

Karin Spirn

Co-edited by Leia Asanuma

It's a sunny September Sunday and twenty-five women are crowded into a small Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu studio. These women are Jiu-Jitsu practitioners from all over the San Francisco Bay Area. Normally, they would probably only encounter each other as competitors at tournaments. But on this day, they have gathered to attend a seminar with the world-renowned teacher and competitor, Leticia Ribeiro.

Connection and cooperation between female Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu practitioners is the mission of the Sweaty Betties, the all-female team that sponsored Ribeiro's seminar. In addition to their regular weekly training in co-ed classes, the Betties get together twice a week for all-



Photo copyright Guru Khalsa.

female training sessions, once at Gracie Jiu-Jitsu Academy in Oakland, where the seminar took place, and once at Bay Jiu-Jitsu in San Francisco. While the majority of the Betties are regular members of these two sister academies, all women are welcome, and training sessions regularly include practitioners from neighboring schools.

“The Sweaty Betties do not believe in bitter rivalry between teams,” says Mollie Khangensing, team organizer and founding member. “We welcome everyone. We work for the love and growth of the art, exchange of knowledge, and technical development as well as creating bonds between women from different teams.”

Like many martial arts, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu is dominated by men. In recent years, the numbers of women practitioners have been growing steadily. In many ways, the sport is well suited for women. Because Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu emphasizes strategy, flexibility, and balance, skilled practitioners are able to defeat larger and stronger opponents, as evidenced by the common practice of open-weight divisions at tournaments. The wrestling techniques used in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, mainly practiced on the ground, are often more intuitive and comfortable for new female

students than standing styles of martial arts that emphasize punching and kicking. Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu also provides practical self-defense techniques that will allow a woman to fall without injury and escape if she is knocked to the ground by an attacker.

In speaking of balance both on and off of the mat, the women of the Sweaty Betties describe the important spiritual aspect of their training as well. “This is my meditation,” said member Chrissy Winograd. “Without this time working on being calm and focused under pressure, I don’t think I could survive my daily life.”

The Betties are an active competition team, participating in national tournaments such as the Pan American Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Championships and the U.S. Open Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Tournament. They are also regular competitors in local tournaments, including Jiu Jitsu by the Bay and Jiu Jitsu by the Sea.

Providing support and camaraderie for competitions is one of the major missions of the Betties. “We encourage women to keep training and competing, even though sometimes it’s challenging in a male-dominated environment,” said Khangsensung. “While we value the support of our male training partners, men often have different reactions to the stress of competition than women do. It’s really helpful to have other women to talk to about strategies for managing stress, cutting weight, and being aggressive on the mat.”

While the Betties do not have an official teacher, they invite many skilled teachers, both male and female, to lead their weekly training sessions. Past teachers have included Brazilian-Jiu-Jitsu black belts Stephan Goyne and Vernie Inocencio, Judo Olympian Sayaka Matsumoto, and Sweaty Betties teammates Heidi Sachs and Sarah Boyd.

Frequently, the Betties sponsor special events that attract students from beyond their regular membership, such as a co-ed “Yoga For Grapplers” class at Oakland’s Monkey Yoga Shala. Leticia Ribeiro’s seminar was so popular that a second seminar was added later the same day to accommodate the overflow of interested students. A total of fifty-five students attended the two all-female seminars, which covered techniques from standing throws and chokes to on-the-mat joint locks. Ribeiro, a third-degree black belt and five-time World Jiu-Jitsu champion in the featherweight black belt division, has become a friend of the team, as has her assistant for the seminars, world-champion purple-belt Mackenzie Dern.

On March 6th, the Betties hosted a special class to benefit garment workers in Cambodia. The class was led by Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu world-champion and animal-welfare activist David Meyer. Meyer recently returned from Cambodia where he met with women’s rights activists fighting for better working conditions for garment workers. The Betties hope this event will launch them into a new mission: giving back to their community. Bringing women together has been so important,” says Khangsensung. “Now I would really like us to contribute to something even greater.”

Switching Gears

Jennifer Argle

“Put eyes”, he gestured with his fingers towards his own eyes. He said more, but I couldn’t understand his English, nor did I speak Mandarin like he did. However, his gestures made it clear what needed to happen for me to make the technique work.

“Yes! Yes!” he said, after I repeated the technique with the necessary corrections. “Don’t forget to put eyes!”

This was in my Wing Chun class. The class was supposed to be a brief interlude on my way to taking Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. Time, energy, and finances dictate only one extra martial arts class at a



Photo courtesy of Jennifer Argle

time. For the past three years I’ve been taking a style of martial arts called Cuong Nhu. Cuong Nhu is a mix of seven different martial arts, including Wing Chun and Judo. I love the class and have no intention of quitting anytime soon, but I don’t get to focus on Wing Chun much and I was curious about it. Also, I’m a grappling fanatic which is why I chose BJJ over a Judo class.

After the first couple of weeks of Wing Chun I’d gotten used to the new horse stance. After two months I’d even gotten used to

keeping my shoulders stock still while doing Wing Chun punches on Tuesdays and Thursdays and allowing them to move freely on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays when I was in Cuong Nhu.

The Wing Chun class at first appeared structure-less by comparison to the other martial arts I’d been exposed to. Beyond doing the Sil Lum Tao form at the beginning of class, there is no other warm-up. The rest of the time is spent working, either with or without a partner, on whatever technique we want.

The instructor might walk around giving people specific things to work on, or not. We can talk whenever we want, work alone on the bag or wooden dummy. It doesn’t seem to matter.

Additionally, the class doesn't have the traditional markers that allow me to gauge my progress. There aren't any gis, so no belt levels. Everything I do in class is "good" with little to no real critique from the instructor.

Some people would revel in this, but I like a bit more structure in class, especially as a beginner. It gives me a solid starting position for moments when my mind wanders, lets me know how I am doing in class, and it makes me feel secure. For nearly a month in the Wing Chun class I felt lost and almost stopped going, because of this.

I have stuck with it, though, mostly because it became clear early on that the deceptively simple techniques hid a web of traps and attacks I could only imagine. My curiosity about Wing Chun has only grown since.

And I've gotten used to the loose structure and almost no warm-up in my Wing Chun class and I've developed a new appreciation for my Cuong Nhu dojo and what I get there. However, this brief foray into Wing Chun is getting longer and longer and now I'm wondering if I'll ever get into a Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu class.

(Inter)National Martial Arts Events

Germany

April 8-10

Women in Movement Martial Arts Festival

[Frauen in Bewegung](#)

Frankfurt, Germany

Top instructors, more than 35 great workouts. All styles welcome.

Contact Master Sunny Graff, info@fib-ev.com.

June 2-5

Modern Arnis Women's Camp

For more information and to learn how to register, contact Master Gabriele Roloff,

gabriele@modernarnis.eu.

California

Third Friday each month, 6:30-8:00pm

Friday Fight Night Open Sparring

Hand to Hand Kajukenbo Self Defense Center

www.handtohandkajukenbo.com

5680 San Pablo Avenue, Oakland, CA

Open to community martial artists of all styles. Space for upright matches as well as a mat room for judo and jujitsu. If you like, bring your sticks for Arnis or Escrima partner-work.

Mar 8 - May 10

Women's Self-Defense Class

[Program flyer](#)

CRC Kempo Karate

[CRC Kempo Karate on Facebook](#)

Centennial Recreation Center

Morgan Hill, CA

Florida

May 6-7

Women's Grappling Mini-Camp

The Camp will be held at Gracie Tampa in Tampa and it will include two full days of training and discussions, plus an optional Thursday night social event and Sunday open mat/troubleshooting session.

Visit <http://www.womensgrappling.org/wordpress/> for details

Minnesota

May 14-16

Sword Seminar

Guest Instructor: Sensei Michelle Benzamin-Miki

Feminist Eclectic/Five Element Martial Arts

www.femamartialarts.org

3010 Minnehaha Avenue South

Minneapolis MN 55406

New York**July 21, 2011 - July 24, 2011****NWMAF Self-Defense Instructors' Conference and Special Training
2011**

College at Brockport NY

Registration at www.nwmaf.org**National Women's Martial Arts Federation**www.nwmaf.org

Join us for an awesome lineup of workshops, workouts, networking and fun! Something for everyone, including:

- Sessions for self-defense instructors
- Martial arts workouts - many styles represented
- Self-defense strategies and techniques
- Classes especially for young martial artists
- Exceptional women trainers

Pennsylvania**June 2-5****Camp Suigetsu**

Milford PA

[Information and registration](#)

Camp Suigetsu is a martial arts camp featuring hard and soft martial arts, healing arts, and camp activities for all skill levels & abilities, all ages, and for all members of the family.

Washington

3rd Sunday each month, 10:30am-12pm

Open Sparring

Open to all styles and genders, \$5

Seven Star Women's Kung Fu

7starwomenskungfu.org

525 21st Ave

Seattle, WA 98122

Apr 10, 1:00-2:30pm

Monthly Meditation Classes

Taught by Anne Moon, no charge.

Seven Star Women's Kung Fu

7starwomenskungfu.org

525 21st Ave

Seattle, WA 98122

June 24-26

Seminars with Master Su Zifang

Olympia WA

Movement Principles • Taijiquan • Taiji Sword • Baguazhang

Special Weekend Discount: \$205-\$255

Single Classes: \$35-\$100

Private Lessons available

For more information, to register or schedule a private lesson, contact Debbie Leung

ChineseArts@earthlink.net.

It's another extraordinary weekend with world-renowned Master Su Zifang! Master Su trained full-time since a child with China's great martial artists in Taijiquan, Baguazhang and Xingyiquan and was named one of China's 100 Outstanding Wushu Practitioners by the Chinese National Wushu Association. Everyone is welcome from beginners to life-long practitioners of these and other martial arts.

March through August

Seven Star Women's Kung Fu 30th Anniversary Classes

[Class calendar](#)

From the Editor:

Thank you to those who contributed, assisted, and took the time to write an article for this newsletter. If you are interested in writing an article for the upcoming newsletter, please email Newsletter Editor at newsletter@pawma.org. The next submission deadline is June 1, 2011. Also, PAWMA is looking for Associate Editors to help develop content, as well as proofreaders and copy editors. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Newsletter Editor at newsletter@pawma.org for more information.