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The Mix Family 4 Generations of Martial Artists

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One Master's Amazing Story

An Amazing Mix

By Tim Lemke

Seven-year-old Aria Mix smiles beautifully as she ducks under the arm reaching for her and pulling just so, she hangs on it like a swing, sending the man flying in a giant arcing roll. Her brother Jasper, age ten, grips the man's arms and drops straight down into the splits, throwing his assailant over his head. The two 'assailants' are their father, Master Jason Mix, and their uncle, Lucas Mix. Meanwhile, Master Susan and Bill Mix disarm two knife-wielding student-assailants, before grabbing Jasper and Aria's hands and continuing their "walk to the library." This is a common scene from one of their Mix family martial arts demos, often practiced and demonstrated at their Redmond, Washington, martial arts organization, Enso Center for International Arts.

The Mix family members were students of the late Grandmaster Kwang Sik Myung, founder of the World Hapkido Federation and a student of Yong Sool Choi, founder of Hapkido. Master Jason Mix fondly remembers his teacher talking about the idea of Hap in martial arts. "The idea, he said, that the ultimate goal in life and martial arts is serenity in a clear and peaceful state of mind and that this could be cultivated through vigorous practice while maintaining a calm and concentrated mind." Master Mix's quiet, earnest demeanor and the story of the Mix family as martial artists attest to their connection to Hap and their goal to benefit the community and the world around them.

With four generations in their family currently practicing martial arts, it truly is a way of life for them. It's been a long road to get here from their beginnings as white belts many years ago and has been an amazing evolution. In fact, this year marks the 25th anniversary of their start in teaching martial arts.

Susan and Bill Mix started martial arts with their two sons, Jason and Lucas, and began practicing together right from the beginning. Susan explains, "We wanted to find something that would combine intellect with physical activities, something that would bring our bodies and minds closer." Jason nods in agreement, "And it brought us closer together as a family at the same time."

For Master Susan Mix, it was the first real physical thing she tried after reconstructive surgery on both her knees to correct a congenital knee problem. "Seven surgeries and thirty years later, I'm still at it!"

The entire family studied intensely for many years to become black belts and in 1985, Susan started a school in Seattle and began teaching with her son Jason, who was 14 at the time. Soon, the family



Tai Chi – on Enso Center Deck. Front row: Aria, Jasper, Galina Lemke, Susan back row: Beth Lovitt, Jason, Kim Daniel, Adele Swan, Dan Lovitt, Lucas

was teaching at many schools in various community centers throughout the Seattle area.

Over the years, the Mix family worked tirelessly at building up martial arts as a community, contributing and connecting with many other martial arts organizations throughout the Seattle area and beyond. And the harmony and peace they continually strive for didn't end off the mats, but saturated their lives, encouraging harmony within as their family grew and changed along with their schools. Even when rearranging work schedules or covering each other's classes, they always strove for harmony in their daily lives.

Bill Mix is a fifth-dan black belt in Hapkido, fourth-dan in Tae Kwon Do, and first-dan black belt in Aikido. He has studied Reiki for years and has achieved level one. Having worked for 32 years as a social worker with Child Protective Services, he feels without a doubt that Hapkido has affected his career positively. "I'm not fearful of things that maybe others would be. It gives you options about boundaries, presentation." Bill has taught Hapkido in low-income housing environments and specializes in teaching at-risk youth and those with learning disabilities.

Master Susan Mix, who along with her sixth-dan rank in Hapkido, is also a sixth-dan in Tae Kwon Do and a first-dan in Aikido, has taught martial arts full time for 25 years and achieved the honor as the first female master in the World Hapkido Federation. Her congenital knee problems encouraged the family as they built and evolved their curriculum, to consult many medical professionals regarding healthy alignment of the knees and the back. The knowledge they've gleaned over the years has helped tremendously with their teaching of people with disabilities.

Her perseverance and continual immersion in the martial arts community helped her convince her 85-year-old mother, Adele Swan, to begin studying Tai Chi in the last few years, under the tutelage of her grandson, Master Jason Mix. Adele was a stage actress in New York City and was with a traveling repertory company before marrying and having a family. She continued to do extensive small theater work while raising her family.

Dr. Lucas Mix is not one to sit idle. While continually studying Hapkido over the years and achieving fifth-dan status in both Hapkido and Tae Kwon Do, as well as first-dan in Aikido, he has earned a doctorate in evolutionary biology from Harvard, written a primer on astrobiology for NASA, and has published the book, *Life in Space*. He achieved his Master's of Divinity from the Church Divinity School of the Pacific and has been ordained a priest in the Episcopal Church. He has taught Hapkido and Tae Kwon Do at the University of Washington, Harvard, and Berkley. Currently, he is the Episcopal Chaplain at the University of Arizona in Tucson and teaches Hapkido there as well.



Susan's Class

Master Jason Mix is a sixth-dan in Hapkido and Tae Kwon Do and a second-dan in Aikido. After studying for several years, he has recently achieved master status in Reiki. He has devoted his

life to martial arts. He started teaching full-time at the age of sixteen and has had many schools over the years, with hundreds of students brought to black belt. He started teaching as principal instructor of the Redmond Enso Center in 1986, making it one of the longest running schools in Redmond. He has studied Tai Chi for over 15 years and his knowledge of various martial arts and their



Aria pins Jason

intricate histories from extensive research makes him almost an encyclopedia of martial arts knowledge. In his free time, he has translated much of the *Muye Dobo Tongjii*, the Korean Martial Arts Manual, from its classical Chinese characters. He is the main instructor for the Hapkido, Tae Kwon Do and Tai Chi programs at Enso Center.

Jason's children, Jasper and Aria, can't truly remember a time when they were not practicing Hapkido. Both children are very energetic and aware that Hapkido is a way of life. Aria, seven, is currently working towards her brown belt. She recently wrote in a paper for her last belt test, "I've practiced martial arts at Enso Center all my life. Doing Hapkido makes me stronger and helps me learn many new things...It's fun that my whole family does martial arts together."

Jasper, now a black-belt candidate, reflects what the whole family feels in a similar paper, "Martial arts helps me focus better in my life because I can focus even when I'm distracted or irritated.

Enso Center is not really a building or a place. It is a community because I have friends of all ages there."

Together, over the years, these amazing martial artists have harmonized their energies, along with their many students, to build a truly remarkable community in their non-profit Enso Center for International Arts. In 2005, the Mix family bought 12 acres of land outside Redmond, Washington, on which to build their vision for the future of Enso Center. After several years of patience, work and countless volunteer hours, the Mix family opened the doors to the new location of Enso Center in May 2008.



Susan pins Bill



Jason jumps toward Zach Daniel & Rachel Lovitt



Jason throws Jordan Cunningham, Matthew Amaral, & Allison Amaral

Reflecting their own history in the arts, many families now study together at Enso Center. Many of these families are now black belts and continue to study, work out, teach and support the center, each contributing in their own unique way.

"I really feel that we've created an environment where people can grow," Master Jason states, referring to Enso's mission statement and its close connection with the idea of Hap. "Our mission is to promote awareness, understanding and harmony internally, interpersonally, culturally, ecologically and ideologically." Using the knife-edge of his hand to gesture emphatically in the air, he continued, "I believe, and my teacher believed, that martial arts has to be true on all levels. It should be true martially, internally and philosophically. And our mission as an organization reflects that."

To that aim, Enso Center has hosted several seminars on internal, interpersonal and cultural concepts including Tibetan meditation, Qui Gong, teaching workshops, Haiku workshops and many others. Jasper, after one Haiku workshop, went on to have his haiku published in a Japanese paper, *Asahi Weekly*. Other aspects of the internal self are not overlooked at Enso, as massage therapy and acupuncture are also offered.

Classes in Tae Kwon Do, Tai Chi and archery are also offered at Enso as a regular curriculum, as well as a new kind of class called Adaptive Recreation. This recent addition uses the principles and tenets of Hapkido to teach young adults with developmental disabilities, mostly autism and Down syndrome, with the goal of gaining a better mind and body connection. Over the past two years, students have made amazing progress in this class in their coordination and balance.

Ecologically, the organization has done its part as well, with many student volunteers taking part, along with the entire Mix family, in a stream restoration project on their property. With 12 acres of forest and fields, many more ecology projects are planned.

Enso Center offers three separate week-long martial arts summer camps each year for youths. It's not uncommon to hear many varied languages among the hushed voices of the diverse group of families at the final children's demo at the end of the week. Master Susan states proudly, "In one camp, we counted over 17 different languages! There are many different points of view accepted here, and we celebrate that."



Enso Center Board members with their families
(front L-R) Rebekah Lovitt, Jasper, Aria (back L-R) Galina, Lemke, Zach Daniel, Bill, Kim Daniel, Susan, Chuck Daniel, Jason, Jessica Bie, Lucas, Dan Lovitt, Beth Lovitt, Rachel Lovitt

(Right) Enso Center for International Arts

Adaptive Rec class – (front L-R) Kendyl Hair, Sandy Johnson, Jennifer Levesque, Sara Garland, Sarah Egly (back L-R) Mike Brent, Cristine Cech, Erica Swanson, Aaron Witek, Matthew Loudon, Taylor Hall, Galina Lemke



The diversity celebrated within Enso Center is partially a result of the diversity of Hapkido itself. Hapkido, with its rich heritage, includes in its repertoire an amazing number of techniques: striking, kicking, joint locking and throwing, combined with weapons such as soo bong (little stick), chung bong (middle stick), chong bong (long staff), cane, rope, fan, knife, spear and sword, plus many others. With a few core principles, Hapkido becomes a method of self-cultivation and a way of life.

The Mix family emphasizes these principles as they relate to other arts (especially Tae Kwon Do, Aikido, and Tai Chi). Master Jason Mix has taught seminars in several U.S. cities, Canada and Belgium. "With such a great variety in this martial art, it's up to us to find the direction in which we want to take it. I feel that Hapkido is a community service, that can be beneficial to all and I want to reach out to the world with Hapkido." 🇺🇸

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Born in 1979, in a suburb of Seattle, Tim grew up in a rural area of Lake Stevens, Washington. Twenty-two years later, having survived an adventurous childhood of snowboarding, motorcycles and even jumping out of planes, he graduated from Central Washington University with a Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations. He has studied the martial arts for 11 years and is a second-dan black belt and sometime instructor in Hapkido and Tae Kwon Do at Enso Center. Tim studies martial arts more than he writes and rides a red Suzuki GSX-R1000 in the Seattle rain. He met his lovely wife while studying Hapkido and is a firm believer that martial arts improve every aspect of life.

