

Sharing your stories with Simone Kaplan

Patricia Kent was born in London in the mid 1940s and spent her childhood years playing in the bombed rubble of the East End. She read the book *A Town Like Alice* when she was a teenager and knew that she wanted to live in Australia. She emigrated to Adelaide in 1968.

At the age of five, her father started taking her to the training hall, dojo, where he practiced judo. She sat on a mat and watched him. This is where she found her "calling". Her purpose and life journey has been to "shine a light on the body, mind and spirit connection through her love of martial arts". This has been central to all she does.

Nearly 40 years ago, when her children were teenagers, Patricia's tai chi training began, with the Australian Federation of Wu Style Tai Chi. She trained extensively with Kentokan Martial Arts School and with Master Liu Wan Chun in Melbourne, as well as doing numerous trips to also train in China.

"In 2019 Master Liu took an Australian team to China to compete in an international tai chi competition with 34 teams and nearly 400 participants.

"We were awarded gold, not for technique but for demonstrating the soft, internal strength of Tai Chi."

In providing service, Patricia "just shows up" but the powerful stories of her students are really that of inspiration, community and miracles. A young dad, for example, broke his back and found Patricia's classes to help with his rehab. He was committed and practiced what she taught every day. When he didn't turn up for Term 2, Patricia followed up and found he had recovered enough to get back to work. The doctor managing his recovery was dumbfounded. She also has "mature goddesses", students in their 80s and a 90-year-old, reporting health benefits.

Even during Covid, Patricia and the community never stopped training. One on one outdoor sessions by the lake, even in the snow. People knew the benefits.

Patricia has a grace and humility that is inspirational. Her philosophy trickles out to the Trentham community. She keeps an old tradition of tithe, where 10 per cent of student class fees go into a special box. Every month the class decides which charity or community business needs support. This warmth and giving is full of love and generosity. When the 2021 storm happened, Billie with the coffee cart, set up in town to offer free coffees for the SES and CFA. Patricia's class donations were given to Billie that month. "The greatest exercise for the heart is to reach your hand into the darkness and lift someone up," she says.

Patricia found Trentham by chance, when searching for a special gift for her daughter's 21st present. She had a recommendation to visit Helen at Jargon who designed a cape to "wrap her daughter in a Mother's love". It was years later, after living in Tasmania for some time that Patricia and Raoul decided to move to Trentham.

Patricia and Raoul, who died in 2013, certainly lived a love story for 20 years. They trained, taught and were devoted to each other. When Patricia introduced Raoul to her parents, they discovered an incredible connection. Both her father and Raoul had trained with the same sensei (teacher) in London, her dad in the 50s and Raoul in the 70s. Raoul was skilled in the hard, external karate while Patricia in the soft, internal tai chi and chi gong. They set up a beautiful cottage together which exudes warmth, humour and humanity.

"When we reach outside of ourselves that's when we find contentment within. It's not about needing, wanting and looking for it," Patricia says.



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