

Heather Gallagher

School: Alpha UPKUDO

Instructor: Master Anne Radke

Member # 11-590A – Since August 2011

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My journey with UPKUDO began just over a year ago while in search of an athletic activity for my daughters. As we entered Alpha UPKUDO on the first day of class Master Anne told me that they were in the midst of a series of classes focusing on life skills and that parents were encouraged to participate. Noticing that my daughters were the only girls I decided to join in the class to make them feel more at ease. I instantly felt a sense of welcome and began discovering firsthand the true spirit of UPKUDO. I participated in all the life skills classes that month as well decided to attend one of the Thursday night adult classes, I was absolutely hooked and well the rest is history.

The great people of UPKUDO have become a part of my extended family. I have grown to love and respect each of my Dojo brothers and sisters for their unique qualities. There are just entirely too many to name but a few who have made the greatest impression and been the most influential. Although we have met only once Sir, you certainly left an impression. I recall thinking to myself what a great presence you had, how you entered the room so subtly but at the same time quietly commanding, all eyes fixated awaiting your message. At the time of the seminar last year my time with UPKUDO had been short; my positive and memorable encounter helped to solidify my belief in this system.

Master Anne, the strongest and most sincere woman I have ever met, she is my Master, my friend, and genuinely cares about everyone around her. Sensei Debbie Tully, I absolutely cannot take my eyes off her during Kata or sparring, her technique is sharp, precise and powerful, everything I aspire to be some day. Sensei Liz Tatum, she has the patience of a Saint, so very caring, great at communicating and giving practical application of a technique to ensure that is fully understood. Mr. Jacob and Mr. Jeremy, so young yet so mature, responsible and respectful; I sincerely believe that many of their stellar traits can be attributed to the UPKUDO system. To me being selected as a Kelegion Kai would be a great honor, a position I would take sincere pride in. I believe wholeheartedly in UPKUDO, as a Kelegion Kai I will educate, emulate and pass on all teachings bestowed to me.

There are many life experiences and what I deem character defining moments that have led me to this place in my life. First and foremost being my upbringing. I was raised in a rural community on an 87 acre farm by a very large, hardworking and traditional family. Daily life on the farm taught me responsibility far exceeding those in my peer group. While most kids were getting off the school bus in the afternoons to run home and watch TV, my brothers and I were tasked with daily chores; tending fields, feeding animals and working in or harvesting food from the garden. We were given responsibilities and the expectation was to get it done, without the need for someone constantly watching over your shoulder.

I grew up next door to, and spending time, with my grandparents and my great grandmother, it was always instilled in me to care for and respect those who have lived life beyond your own years. The most profound people in my life have been my father and grandfather, both men of genuine character, honest to a fault and each living by the code that a man's word is his bond. As I began to develop into a young woman I wanted to stretch my wings and see what the world had to offer, there was a long line of Navy men in my family and I decided to become the first woman to enlist. At the young and naive age of 18 I joined the US Navy. At the time I saw it as a way to escape the confines of a small town, see the world and get a college education. Looking back on the day that I decided to join the Navy; not knowing that this was the single most pivotal moment of my entire life. Born from this decision have been so many life experiences that set me on the path to become the woman I am today.

I've traveled the world, lived in and experienced the people and cultures of Japan and Italy, so eye opening to see how differently other countries live and how over indulgent, self-entitled and unappreciative we in America can be. One of the most significant transformations for me was in my personality. Once very shy, incessantly introverted, lacking self-esteem and self-worth, easily a follower and persuaded into believing in the opinions of others. Over time the scales shifted, still an introvert of sorts, but completely freed from the confines of the shell I once would hide in. I am my own woman, strong, independent, and stubborn as the day is long. I find it very liberating to have become very comfortable in my own skin, able to march to my own tune and never afraid to stand alone in a crowd.

The Navy also aided in molding my work ethic. Do your best and give it your all, because I took well to this philosophy I advanced in rank and responsibility very quickly, often placed in positions of leadership and authority. After a 6 year tenure I was at a crossroads, 3 months pregnant with my first child, newly married and had decided that I would leave the service and dedicate my time to being a stay at home mother. Now anyone who knows me well now will laugh out loud at the thought of me doing this, but at the time I honestly thought that this would make me happy. And so the decision was made, I had separation paperwork in hand and my discharge date was set.

Then an opportunity of a life time presented itself. For many years I had heard what I thought to be rumor, that there was the possibility for certain military specialties to serve White House duty. I was informed that the White House Communications Agency was coming to Naples, Italy for a recruiting assignment and that my name was on the list to be interviewed. I thought about this long and hard, my discharge date was to be up before they were to arrive. The requirements for being selected are extremely rigid; there can be no negative marks on one's service record, must be a person of integrity and moral character, absolutely no financial difficulties, and must be able to pass a very intensive back ground investigation to obtain a TS/SCI government security clearance and be allowed on the Presidential Support detail. My record was clean and I had never been in an ounce of trouble in entire life. I pulled my separation paperwork, and then preemptively re-enlisted for 5 additional years in preparation for the upcoming interview. The selection process was intense, even already having a government security clearance the background investigation took an entire year. Out of the 200 individuals interviewed in Naples that year, only 4 of us made the final selection. And so I served under

President George W Bush.

What a wealth of unique experiences in those years; direct tech support to the pilots of Air Force One and Marine One, the doctors, staff and Military Aids. I have been onboard Air Force One, driven and operated "Roadrunner" (communications van) in motorcade, made frequent trips to Camp David as well had complete and unrestricted access to the White House compound with the ability to walk directly up to the President himself without getting pummeled by Secret Service. This too was the launching pad into the career I succeed in today. On my arrival for duty my specialty and training for many years had been in telecommunications. The White House Communications Agency is a military entity in direct support of all Presidential travel. The Army specialties were the most dominate, an Army SGM read my orders and misunderstood my rating to be computer related rather that telecom, and so he placed me in the IT shop. I had intended to speak with the SGM and correct his mistake then I was informed that the IT shop was fixed mission and not required to travel much whereas the telecom units were constantly on the road. My daughter at the time was very young and I did not want to be away from home, so I kept my mouth shut and completely devoted myself to learning an entirely new specialty. How funny how this one mistake by the SGM laid entire foundation for my current career and success. I was a complete sponge, jumping into every project that I could and absorbing everything that those with years of experience in this field had to offer. I soon excelled and was placed in a supervisory position as well sent to school to become a Microsoft Certified Solutions Engineer (MCSE).

During my second year on duty I became pregnant with my second child. My hours were extremely long and my responsibilities pored over into my home life. At the time of Hollie's birth, her sister Hannah was 2; my husband was traveling in support of his job and never home. I was alone and struggling to care for 2 babies that were forced into daycare for up to 10 hours a day, and a demanding career that left me beyond mentally exhausted on a daily basis. This was not the life I wanted for my children, I did not want their memories to be filled with me being absent. Another monumental decision in my life, I gave up the prestigious career, walked away and traded it all for the wellbeing of my children. Never once have I looked back and had regret for this decision. We moved from Washington DC to Fort Worth Texas, my resume spoke for itself and I was quickly hired on as the lead Systems Engineer at Southwest Airlines. What a great company to work for, they made the transition from military to civilian life so easy for me, I will forever be grateful to them for that.

A couple years passed, my husband was still nearly completely absent, our marriage had been on the rocks for years and it was finally time to come to terms with the inevitable. We had a very amicable separation, and I with my babies, packed up the car and headed home. This had long been desire of mine but put on the back burner trying to support his ambitions of advancing his career. It was nearly 7 years ago that I made that drive cross country, never looking back. I came home with nearly nothing, didn't even have a job secured but knew in my heart that this is where I belong and where I want my children to be raised. Years later and endless hours of back breaking labor I, with the help of my family, have transformed what was once an empty cow pasture into our home. Living on the family farm where I grew up, passing on to my children the lifestyle and traditions once taught to me.

The single most important thing in my life is to ensure that my children are raised to be kind, respectful, considerate and productive members of society. I thoroughly believe that the most defining traits you develop as a person are gained from watching the behaviors of those around you. Explaining to a child the difference between right and wrong is not enough; you must walk the walk and consistently lead by example because they are always watching. The same is true for respect, this is something earned, not given.

I apologize if this has read as an autobiography, but in mind I could see no better way to explain to you why I should be considered for Kelegion Kai other than to detail my journey, the defining moments in my life, the decisions I have made and how I came to be the person I am today. My daughters and I joined UPKUDO together in August 2011, we attend every class twice a week together, we train at home together, and we have tested and advanced in belt ranks together. We are very dedicated to UPKUDO and have proudly represented our school and style in three public demos, attended your wonderful seminar last year as well will be present for the upcoming seminar in November.

We have also on many occasions come early to class to assist with sweeping, dusting and general cleanliness in the Dojo. When there is ever anything needed or requested we are always the first to volunteer and do our part. I have many qualities that can lend to the success of UPKUDO. As an Engineer by trade I am able to offer technical computer support and guidance that could otherwise be very costly, and have done so for Master Anne on a couple of occasions. I am by nature a very responsible person and consider myself to be a positive role model. As our school grows in numbers I see an increasing need for reliable and dedicated individuals to serve as assistant instructors, I believe I would serve UPKUDO well in this capacity.

I humbly request consideration in being selected into the Kelegion Kai internship and am graciously appreciative to have been recommended by my instructor Master Anne Radke.

Sincerely,

Heather Gallagher