

Delva R. Mandrell

Past USJJF Board Member

Member – US Ju-Jitsu Masters Caucus



Delva R. Mandrell started her way of life in the Martial Arts in 1976 at the age of 29. Her Korean instructor Dr. Guansu Sohn from Seoul was here in the United States advancing his education. Delva started going to the mens class with the thought of learning Street Defense only.

With the encouragement of her Korean instructor, she achieved her 1st degree Black belt in 1983. He certified her at the Kuk-Ki-Won in Seoul with the World Tae Kwon Do Federation after his return to his country.

Mandrell then served as an assistant instructor in 1981 where she taught until 1985. In 1985 Mandrell was introduced to Bruce Bethers who was the Executive Director of the YMCA in Norman, OK. He inspired and built so much energy in Mandrell that an explosion of activity happened. Mandrell built strong foundations in Shihan-Ryu Karate-do, jujitsu, and judo, and then started her own school in Chickasha, OK in 1986. When other black belt men told her that no one would come to a woman's school she was even more determined to make it work.

Mandrell picked up belt rank in Okinawan Goju-ryu from Chris Pullman in Wetherford, OK. At that time she realized all martial arts had very much to offer and that if all forms were linked together they would complete a strong circle of knowledge to protect yourself with. This is how her school gained the name "Circle of Iron Martial Arts Academy". Bethers promoted Mandrell to 2nd degree black belt in 1988.

Delva had been working with the police department rape crisis centers, and the D.H.S. trying to gather as much information on defending yourself at home, work, and the street as she could. Then she took that information to the public by doing demonstrations and speeches everywhere that she could go. Taking her message to churches, schools, senior citizens centers and organizations of every kind, even in front of Wal-Mart stores and on the main streets of local small town heritage days, Delva never asked for monetary compensation. Word spread rapidly about Mandrell's abilities and she was sought by many for her instruction and guidance. Because of her efforts, the Circle of Iron Martial Arts Academy gained many more students and the school grew rapidly.

Mandrell was promoted to her 3rd degree of black belt in 1993. She promoted six of her black belts to the rank of instructor giving her time to help organize the YMCA in Chickasha, OK. With the help of a Local business woman Maria Burkhead, and the guidance of her dear friend Bruce Bethers, and the National YMCA director Jorge Candon; Mandrell, Burkhead and Bethers contacted all of the necessary movers and shakers of Chickasha and the ball was rolling finally after many meetings and fundraisers.

Mandrell served on the YMCA board of directors for three years and the advisory board for three more years. She also helped the YMCA by teaching several children's karate classes. The YMCA now has 920 active members and is still growing rapidly. Not content to rest, Mandrell saw that there were many young teenagers on the street needing something to do. She took as many of them as she could into her school for free and the only thing asked in return was that they would use the martial arts and discipline that they learned from her as protection for themselves, and to help the elderly with work that they could no longer do.

At the beginning of class Mandrell would hand out "we are proud of you" ribbons to the students who were good citizens in any way, made good grades at school, or did special work at church. Delva strongly believes that if you tell a child he is doing one thing wrong, you need to tell them that they are doing four or five things right at the same time and always in a kind way.

Mandrell was approached by many men, women, doctors, school teachers and police officers for private lessons because their busy lives left them unable to attend the public classes. She built a private school in Ninnekah, OK. and has been working with these people from 1996 until the present. She was also promoted to the 4th degree of black belt in 1997. Delva has also served as a member of the Board of Directors, United States Ju-Jitsu Federation.

Delva's current Martial Arts rank are as follows:

- Yondan (4th Degree Black Belt) in Shihan Ryu Karate-do
- Yondan (4th Degree Black Belt) in Tae Kwon Do
- Nidan (2nd Degree Black Belt) Shihan-Ryu Ju-Jitsu
- Nidan (2nd Degree Black Belt) US Ju-Jitsu

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