

Growing up in Hamilton, Indiana was actually uneventful. We lived in the country and my parents owned Franz Nursery, a plant one not the children one. Hamilton is a small lake town with very little population. Since we lived on the other side of the county line I actually attend elementary school in Butler, Indiana. It was easy to make friends since there were not too many kids at the school. As a student in elementary school I received good grades and wasn't too unruly. I occasionally got into mischief but nothing detrimental or out of the ordinary for kids that age. The biggest problem I had was that I would get bored rather easily with school work or sitting still. I required a lot of action in my life and this typically got me yelled at. My competitive streak first showed itself in 3rd grade during math classes. A girl in the class and I were at odds ends in doing our homework and going for the highest grade in the class. If she had the highest it made me work harder and eventually I won out getting a 98% in the class to her 97%. Even though we competed for grades, we actually were quite good friends. This will play out in my later years as a competitor in the martial arts.

All through my elementary years I was never much of a follower or leader. I simply showed a side that I would do what was in my best interests and typically stayed out of major trouble until my sixth grade year. During my sixth grade year our teacher, Mr. Bazow read us the book by SE Hinton called the "Outsiders". I was fascinated with this book and the type of environment it came to show us. It is about kids separated by social class and their warring. I think this is perhaps the first time that I made up my mind that I do not care who a person is, what their financial status is or where they live, eat, etc. This book had a dramatic impact on my life and was one that would eventually get me into some hot water at times when dealing with a certain class of people.

Another life changing event occurred when I was in sixth grade. Our math teacher, Mr. Culley had a seizure during our class. He violently erupted and flung himself around, on the floor and eventually passed out. This happened while he was yelling at a student in class. I had never seen anything like this and it quite frankly scared the crap out of me. This is the first time I had ever seen epilepsy and I spent many hours in the library studying what causes this. It also led me to begin my studies in to hyperactive children...which I had the symptoms of showing with my restlessness and lack of concentration at times. Today we called this ADD or ADHD.

During my early childhood years I only had a few people that I was good friends with. One was Brett Nelson the other was Mark Crowl. Eventually Brett moved to Florida and then to California where he prospered in the technology field. Mark and I grew out of friendship with each other as we entered high school, but he is best friends with my old brother (Kirk) and we still maintain our friendship today. As I grew older I began to hang out with kids from Edgerton and Bryan, Ohio as well as Hamilton, Indiana. I ended up being a bit of a loner though because I was not into smoking, drinking or drugs as some kids were. I wasn't much of a party animal through my teen years...mainly because I trained six days a week at Karate, but also because I found no joy in wanting to get drunk or smoke some pot because the other kids thought it was cool. During my junior year of high school I combated drugs rather heavily at our school and was a crusader for Youth for Christ. I truly enjoyed it but it did make me some enemies.

From my 8th grade year until my sophomore year in school I was constantly bullied by several other kids. Most of the reason was that I was not willing to "go along" with the typical social stereotypes. In others I was friends with whoever I chose to be, if I didn't want to do something the other kids were doing (primarily wrong things) I would say no. I had confidence in myself and this made me a target for their criticism. I basically just stuck to myself, did my homework, played some sports and practiced my Karate (which was my passion in life). I was fairly popular at the school and had a lot of friends. The bullies were your typical thugs, or druggies who like to single out the good kids and make fun of them. I never had a problem with the names or other stuff but when it escalated to physical bullying is where I drew the line. My first fight was in 9th grade. A kid named Scott Miner, who was a green belt in Karate from another school, came to our school during a basketball game to stick up for another kid named Chad Shelton who I had a problem with early that week. During the game Scott came up to me and threatened me. I simply laughed it off but as I was leaving the game to go to the dance he approached me and had three seniors there to make sure I would fight. I repeatedly told him I did not want to fight and my problems with Chad were not his concern. Then WHAM...the pain shot through my jaw like

ramming your bike into a brick wall. It was on. We fought for about three minutes until I had him on the ground and was slamming his head into the concrete. Then I was kicked in the ribs by our athletic director to get me off of him. This was a good thing because I had no intention on stopping the head pounding at the time. As we sat in the office waiting for our parents to arrive I looked over at Scott. His face was red hamburger like mess with blood all over it. He was weeping and in constant pain. I actually felt bad and apologized to him letting him know I did not want to fight him again. All I remember was that he said "Yeah I was pretty stupid to take you on". Well maybe but after this fight I had gained a bit of a reputation that would get me in trouble in later years as I was now known as one of the tough kids at Eastside High School, a tag I had tried to avoid but could no longer.

After the fight with Scott a bunch of people wanted to be my friend and it was interesting because they all had problems they wanted me to take care of for them. When they found out that I wouldn't...they eventually left my friendship. This did not bother me as I was not about to fight for fun or any other reason as this was not what I was learning from my Karate training. My junior year though, everything changed. The bullying became much more physical and threatening. A lot this had to do with the fact that I was hardcore against drugs and drinking and propagated it around the school, in the school newspaper (I was editor) and I exposed a few parties where drugs and drinking were taking place. This made me some powerful enemies, but none more powerful than Jack and Ken. I remember their last names but don't think they matter at this time. About a month into my junior year these two guys were sitting behind me at a Youth for Christ assembly. They kept spitting on me and hitting me in the head. As the assembly ended I was walking down the bleachers and Ken shoved me. I fell about two steps and spun around to see who had hit him. He wanted to fight and I simply ignored him. As I rounded the corner he confronted me, both Jack and Ken (who were both much bigger than I am). I kept trying to get out of the fight but Ken head butted me and it was on. Something inside me snapped and I beat them both silly. At that time it was perhaps the bloodiest fight they ever had at the school and I caused major damage to both. When they tried to suspend me from school I fought back using the newspaper, pamphlets around the school against bullying and my friends who witnessed the entire thing from the beginning to the end. This was the step in my life that led me to set the precedent on how I teach the 3 Foot, 2 Foot and 1 Foot self defense rule in Aiki Te Ryu Karate. I was not suspended but was put on probation for the rest of the year.

I had three more fights at school that year, all of them were from my "new" reputation and two were with new kids at the school who moved there from the "big" cities. All the fights ended quickly with them now wanting to become my "friend" since I thumped them. I had no interests in hanging with the tough crowd, but I did have a few friends that were good fighters and liked to fight. It is kind of funny. After my fourth fight no one ever bullied me again. It was at this time that I began watching the school for bullies. If I saw someone picking on another kid at the school I intervened and ended it. I remember the feelings of worthlessness it gave me and never wanted to see another kid go through that. I had two friends that helped me and basically put an end to the bullying at our school. We were the Guardian Angels of Eastside High and patrolled the hallways to end the bullying. It worked. Our senior year was a great one with little or no violence and everyone accepting each other for who they were. Many said I was the cause of this who change, but I believe it was because the entire school supported it and began changing at that time.

My senior year I had a few altercations, but only one at school. About February of 1988 my best friend decided to cheat on his girlfriend with the girl I was dating. I confronted him about it and he laughed it off, so I told him if he did not tell his girlfriend about what had happened I would do it. He became threatening and told me if I did we would fight and he would hurt me bad. I was already given a warning that if I got in any fights, defensive or otherwise I would be expelled from school my senior year and would have to repeat it. Well I was not about to do that, but I did tell his girlfriend about what had happened because I believed it was the right thing to do as she was also one of my best friends. After Government class ended he confronted me in the hall wanting to fight and I would not. He said he was going to wait by my car after school and "get me". I told him I would bring a teacher with me and I was not going to fight him...mainly because he was my best friend and friends do not fight. I finally got tired of his yelling and said go ahead and hit me if you want to but I will not fight back. He did nothing but as I

turned to walk away he punched me in the mouth over my shoulder. It broke out my front tooth. I immediately spun around and grabbed his throat pinning him to the wall with my fist drawn back ready to knock his teeth out but I stopped. In a split second I realized he was not worth me getting expelled nor worth fighting for any reason. I let go, picked up my tooth and went to the office to get a pass to leave and get it fixed. The next day at school all the teachers came up and said they were very impressed with my self control, but the students were not that impressed as they began picking on me about being the "toothless wonder" who lost a fight. Even though I knew in my mind I could have hurt him and won something began to stir up immense feelings of violence inside me. I spent three days trying to laugh off the insults and ignore them but then this one student pushed me to far. He had been one of the first to pick on me about the fight and it kept growing and growing until I finally had all I could handle and right in the middle of Psych he hit me in the back of the head as he walked by. My Psych teacher saw it and did nothing so I spun around and hooked kicked him in the head so hard he flew out of his seat. I walked over to him and asked him if he wanted to stop being an "asshole" or if he wanted more. He never bothered me again and had a nice shiner for his stupidity. Even though my teacher saw this, he did not write us up...nor did he say anything at all...he simply began class and it was as if it never happened.

All in all I would say that I had a regular life as a child. Made some friends and lost some but it would all play an important role in how I teach the martial arts to kids as I grew older.