

Derrico's Black Belt School—200 South Central Avenue

Years ago, my son Jake and I were really into karate tournaments, sometimes going to as many as 12 to 15 in a year. After we earned our black belts my wife, Judy, thought it would be a good idea to start a martial arts school in Abbotsford, hoping the income would help pay for our tournament addiction. I think my instructor, Mr. Likes, and Judy got together on the subject, because one day Mr. Likes said to me, "Why don't you start a little karate club out there in Abbotsford?" Mr. Likes offered to help me get started.

At the time, Mrs. Derrico and I were full time dairy farmers and I resisted the idea of starting another business because of my responsibilities on the farm. And there was also the thought

"Do I really have the patience to teach kids?" My son, Mat, said he would be willing to do my chores on the days I had to teach if I really wanted to start the school. So, with that obstacle out of the way, I gave in. I told Mrs. Derrico, "If you can find a place big enough to hold classes, we will start the school, with one condition. You have to be one of the students." She agreed.

Mrs. Derrico and one of her friends went on the mission of finding a suitable place. They heard that the old National Guard Armory was available because the Guard had built a new armory. They talked to the owners, and we went to inspect the place. It was cold, dingy, and very dirty, but we decided that we could make it work. We got a propane heater and spent several nights after our dairy farm duties cleaning up and painting. We finally saw it all coming together and started advertising the opening of our new karate school in Abbotsford.



Mr. Derrico teaching a class.



Exhibition of students at the Marshfield location during June Dairy Days.

At the time there were some people in the area that knew a little about martial arts that were very skeptical about us being successful with a karate business in Abbotsford. They said this area was farm country and that nobody would be interested in paying for martial arts lessons. They speculated we would not make it. They didn't know us very well. If you put a challenge out there and tell us we can't do something, we will prove we can.

We started our first class with 10 people in December of 1991. Classes were on Tuesday & Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings. By the end of the



Several of the first graduating black belt students.

first year we had an enrollment of about 40 students. By the end of the second year our enrollment was 100. When Mrs. Derrico earned her black belt, we expanded into Medford. We then opened a location in Thorp and had three schools. In the year 2000 we decided to open in Marshfield, so we closed the Thorp location and combined those students with our Abbotsford school.

We now have schools in Abbotsford, Medford, and Marshfield. The three schools are open five to six days a week and have 59 scheduled classes per week. We have an enrollment of over 450 students and five employees. We have graduated 198 students to black belt, 47 of which still continue to actively train. We are a very active and competitive school. Our students compete in many local, state, and national tournaments. Our school has a reputation of having some of the best forms and sparring people around.

I'd like to say that those skeptical people who knew a little about the martial arts back in the beginning, (and a very little about us), still do!

Also see [Rose Brothers](#) story.

Also see [McCain-Johnson Company](#) story.

Also see [Upham Manufacturing Store](#) story.

If you have any additional information (including pictures) regarding this business or location, we would really appreciate you contacting us and sharing. We will add information whenever possible.

For questions, or for sharing additional information, please contact us at schnitzl@charter.net. Please include what story the information relates to. Attach your text information in the form of a word document, please no PDF's. Photos should preferably be in jpeg format.

For additional stories on the historical sights and businesses of Marshfield, visit our website at: <http://www.marshfieldgenealogy.com/QR-Codes-of-Historical-Marshfield.html>.