



Keith's Story

When I was very young we moved to Australia. I was bullied in school for being the only POME (a derogative term) for the only English kid in the school. My mum could not stand the heat so we moved back to the UK to South London where I was born and raised.

This was in the late 1970's when there was a major recession on, 3 day working week, union strikes, no money and little job prospects. My dad found part time work and we lived in a guest house for a year until being moved to a large council estate in Brixton.

To survive I was made to fight for money, sounds crazy today but it was one of those underground things that went on. If I won I got things, if I lost I got nothing. It was tough but even at an early age I realised what works and what does not in a street situation.

We then moved around a few times and ended up in Crawley. I had not been to school since Australia as my mum taught me due to the awful schooling at that time.

I then went to Thomas Bennett school, the largest school in the south of England at the time, and guess what? Yes, bullied again. At the time there were Mods, Skinheads, Punks, etc, however I did not like any of that and preferred Rockabilly music, don't know why but i still love it today. However, I did not fit in so another few years of fighting, eventually they gave up with me. I would not back down and I was who I was, and still am so as you can see I have had my fair share of trouble.

When I left school I was active in Royal Marine cadets, ran cross country for them and I was going to sign up to the marines as I had also trained the leadership course at Lympstone Devon where they are stationed. I just loved the regiment. My dad, being a II World War veteran asked me not to, and for respect to him I didn't, something I regret in some ways today but in others, well, I am still here! I did join the Territorial Army for a while but that's a story in itself!

I then started playing American Football for Crawley Raiders. We trained 3 days per week and played matches at the weekends. I played for around 3 years playing Free Safety, a role that was good for my build on the defence team, versatile and I loved it.

I then did the usual when young, girls, pubs, clubs, alcohol, only trouble was it was a rough old time, so more punch ups were the order of the day. I never started them, sometimes just wrong place wrong time I guess, still it's a part of my life that has given me experience.

My father died suddenly from a heart attack, it was a shock and I had to think that I had daily members to look after, this actually made me take a hard look at myself and realised that life is not just a long party, sure enjoy yourself but i felt i had no substance in my life.



I got into Martial arts by watching a Demonstration being held by a Wing Chun Martial Arts guy who was coming to Crawley, at the old sports centre. I could not believe the speed and how he just dominated people with his speed and skill! I signed up to classes, being honest I was not that good at first, too tense but I was there every week, week in, week out. I started to train at other venues, twice per week, then three times a week, then four, after a few years I ended up my Sifu's Assistant Instructor and also took my own small class in Burgess Hill.

I have been training in Wing Chun now for over 20 years. I am a 5 TH PG degree Black Sash and teach Wing Chun for WCKUK Crawley.

I was also interested in defending assaults from weapons so started researching and found Krav Maga. I liked the look of it so went to Bristol and did some weekend bootcamps to get an idea on what Krav was like. I liked the change of mindset it gives you, the self defence aspects and principles it gives you which is different to a martial art. I also enjoyed the pressure testing and stress testing it put a whole new way of training to me and so I signed up for an 18 day in depth krav maga instructors course. This was brutal and I must admit, its one of the hardest things I have done physically and mentally in my life! I was battered, could not move, smelled of deep heat and had to really push myself to get out of the hotel bed to get to the training room. I could hardly move but I knew I wanted this so much so just kept going!

I became an instructor for this large krav organisation, and eventually after some time left to start my own due to some differences of opinion. I set up my own company CROSS KRAV MAGA ACADEMY, we use what works no matter where it comes from and the system has evolved and moves with the times. I have trained in other self defence systems, I instruct for some of them. I constantly push myself to keep learning and to keep up my own training.

I have taught Knife assault defence in the United States with NLB (No Lie Blades). I have become professionally qualified with recognised teaching qualifications. I go abroad to train tactical firearms, teach self defence for our own company HERT(Hostile Environment Response Training) and teach Police officers, Close protection officers, Door supervisors and I have a scheme where we teach all the emergency services at a discount.

I teach full time now. I started teaching when I had a full time job and it got too much to do both so now I love what I do. I help people gain confidence, overcome fears, gain skills they may need for work, get people to be fitter and stronger, how to protect themselves and their loved ones and have built an ego free environment where everyone helps each other,

Keith Collyer - Head Coach
CROSS KRAV MAGA ACADEMY