

## Students prove you can succeed at any age

Renee MacGregor, 17, and Ralph Moore, 75, earn their karate belts together at Ancaster martial arts studio

By Christine Hahn  
Staff Writer

A mugger better hope he never makes the mistake of approaching Ralph Moore. This 75 year-old resident with gleaming blue eyes and a warm smile just became one of the oldest people in Ontario to receive his red-black belt in karate.

Ralph said while he doesn't expect to ever have to use his well-honed self-defence skills, he faced the sparring aspect of karate with a bit of trepidation.

"I told my sparring partners 'You might kill me but you're not going to scare me.'" On the opposite end of the age spectrum is Ralph's friend Renee MacGregor, 17. Both train together at Griffin Martial Arts Studio at Ancaster Industrial Park.

Ralph began karate lessons at age "72 and a half" after having a life-long dream of succeeding in martial arts. During his working years, he owned his own civil engineering business and spent time in the air force. During his early years, knowing martial arts would have come in handy, said Ralph.

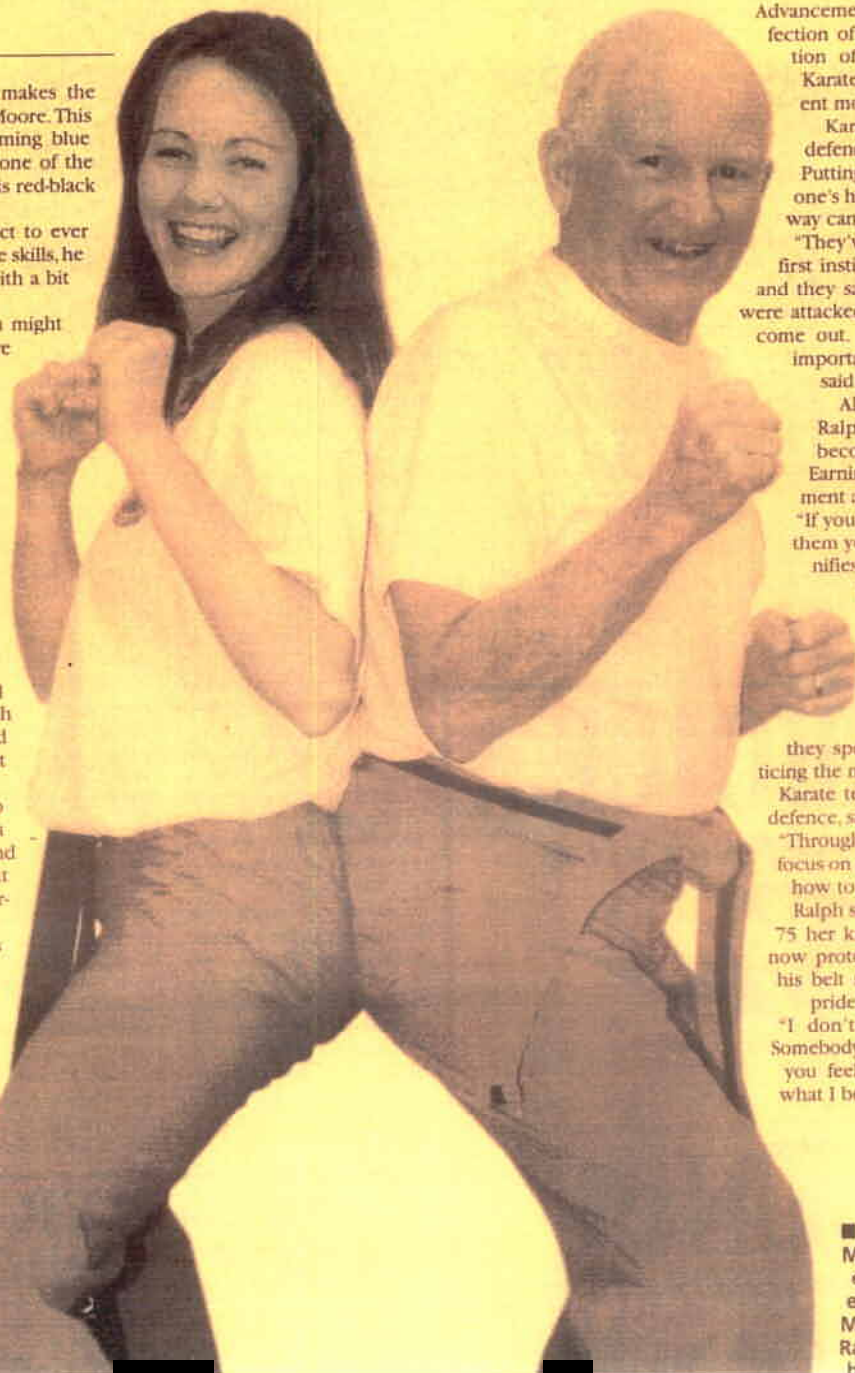
"When I was young and single and if I had taken martial arts, a fight with another fellow only would have lasted for one punch," said Ralph. He will test for his black belt in June.

Renee will also never have to worry about defending herself in a crunch. With her slight frame and friendly demeanor, the patrons at Russ-tee-Woods where she works, particularly those of the male gender, are shocked when Renee informs them she's a black belt.

In fact, in order to earn her black belt, Renee had to fight six males and she taught one of them a lesson for hitting her.

"The guys at the restaurant think, oh yeah, you're just a little girl, you couldn't hurt anyone. When I show them some of the moves, they're shocked," said Renee.

Renee, an honors high school graduate, began karate four years ago and has never looked back. She holds down two part-time jobs and spends three nights



Advancement in karate depends upon the perfection of each move and the perfect execution of routines, backward and forward. Karate students must learn up to 39 different moves.

Karate also teaches students how to defend themselves from a surprise attack. Putting pressure on a certain part of someone's hand or twisting their thumb a certain way can cause excruciating pain, said Renee. "They've asked a lot of women what their first instinct would be if they were attacked and they say it would be to scream but if you were attacked and you screamed, nothing would come out. You have to learn that the most important thing to do is hit then run away," said Renee.

All women should take karate, said Ralph, who added what it teaches becomes a lifelong skill one never loses. Earning a black belt also makes a statement about a person, Ralph added. "If you go to apply for a job, you should tell them you have a black belt because that signifies a lot of things about a person's personality," said Ralph.

To earn their belts, Ralph and Renee were observed by seven judges and in their routines, there is no room for mistakes. The test is more than two hours and both Ralph and Renee said they spend hours each week at home, practicing the moves.

Karate teaches people much more than self-defence, said Renee.

"Through karate, I've learned how to totally focus on something, I've learned discipline and how to achieve."

Ralph said his wife thinks it's hilarious that at 75 her knight in shining armor husband can now protect her. Because of that Ralph wears his belt and a youthful outlook on life with pride.

"I don't believe it should relate to age. Somebody said don't grow old with regrets, if you feel like doing something do it. That's what I believe."

■ Renee MacGregor, 17, and Ralph Moore, 75, show their martial arts expertise. Renee has already earned her black belt from Griffin Martial Arts Studio in Ancaster. Ralph, who currently has a red-black belt, will test for his black