

The "KNOWING IS NOT ENOUGH" INTERVIEW

THIS MONTH: TED WONG!



Close friends: Bruce Lee (left) and Ted Wong (right) became fast friends shortly after their first meeting in 1967. Here they take "five" from a backyard workout at Bruce's house long enough to pose for a quick snap shot.

For the benefit of some of our members who may not know, how did you first meet Bruce Lee?

TED WONG: I first met him the day that he opened up his Chinatown School. I'd actually been around him some six months prior to that, but I didn't have an opportunity to introduce myself to him.

Where was this?

TED WONG: He was training with a couple of his students in Chinatown. At that time it was just a big room in a theater that was used as a recreation room by the Chinese community in Los Angeles. People would go there to play chess and ping pong, and Bruce Lee used that same place to go and train. A friend of mine had told me about it and that was actually how I first heard about Bruce Lee. So I went there on a couple of occasions but just sort of stayed in the background and watched him. I was a little too intimidated to just walk up and introduce myself. And then a few months later, February of 1967 to be exact, it was on a Saturday morning, my same friend told me that Bruce Lee was opening a school. And that was the first time that I formally met him.

Ted Wong probably spent more time with Bruce Lee during the development of his art of Jeet Kune Do than any other individual presently living. More importantly, the two men became great friends and more often than not what little spare time they had was spent in each other's company. Ted received certification in Jeet Kune Do directly from Bruce Lee himself and was Bruce Lee's last private student. In looking at Bruce Lee's daytime diary for the year 1967, one sees that Ted Wong was first invited to Bruce's home on April 20th of that year. This would prove to be, in the words of Humphrey Bogart, "the beginning of a beautiful friendship," that would endure up until Bruce Lee passed away on July 20, 1973.

For years Ted Wong has taught privately, usually to only a handful of dedicated individuals who would make the trip to his home in Monterey Park, California to train in Ted's backyard. He is a humble man, a dedicated man, and a man fiercely loyal to Bruce Lee, in terms of both the art he taught and the message he communicated. Linda Lee Cadwell recalls that Ted's teaching is perhaps the purest strain of her late husband's art and is quick to seek Ted's counsel on matters pertaining to the technical aspects of Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do.

Ted Wong is also, as were all of Bruce's closest friends, the most decent of human beings. Time and again he has foregone payment at seminars, and even gone into his own pocket in an effort to help spread the teachings of his sifu, Bruce Lee. In this day and age, such altruism is considered shocking. When Ted Wong speaks, he speaks with the air of unimpeachable authority, and we at "Knowing Is Not Enough" are very pleased to be able to present this in-depth interview with Ted Wong to our readers and members of Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do.

— John Little

What was Bruce Lee doing during that "opening day" of the Chinatown school?

TED WONG: He was giving a lecture and talking about his art. It was really quite an eye-opener for me listening to him talk about his Gung Fu. It wasn't Jeet Kune Do when the Chinatown school first opened, he hadn't yet coined the term [Editor's note: According to Bruce Lee's daytime diaries, the

Chinatown school opened "officially" as the "Jun Fan Gung Fu Institute" on Thursday, February 9, 1967 one month before the official cancellation of The Green Hornet TV series. It was on Sunday, July 9, 1967, some five months later, that the art of "Jeet Kune Do" was conceived]. I was fortunate enough to be there and to sign up for his class, and the rest is history.



It was at this "official" opening of the Los Angeles Chinatown branch of the Jun Fan Institute, that Ted Wong (right foreground, back to camera) first got his chance to meet Bruce Lee (background, lecturing).