

A backyard workout: Bruce Lee (left) shows Ted Wong (right) the fundamentals of landing a hook kick on a moving target (circa 1968).

Had you been training long at the Chinatown school when Bruce Lee took you as a private student?

TED WONG: No. In fact, he came up to me in that very first class and asked me my name, and where I came from. When I told him I came from Hong Kong, he knew that I spoke Cantonese. At that time there were probably only two or three Chinese people in his class, so he took me out for a cold drink and started talking to me. I really didn't have any previous experience in the martial arts, and he knew this. I think he kind of felt sorry for me, so he gave me some advice at that time. I remember later that he once told me, "Ted, you need to work on your basic requirements." I didn't know what he meant by this, and so I asked him, "What's that?" Bruce just smiled and said, "Well, you need some muscle." (Ted laughs). So, he said, "Why don't you come over to my house and I'll get you fixed up in that department." So I went to Bruce Lee's house and he drove me over to a place that sold barbell sets, and nutritional products. The York Barbell Club owned the store and Bruce Lee had me buy some "Crash Weight Gain" powder and a good basic barbell set.

Who manufactured the weight gain product?

TED WONG: Bob Hoffman, who used to publish Strength & Health magazine, manufactured it. I purchased two cases of the weight gain powder. I remember that the directions called for me to take "one can a day." Bruce also had me purchase a bench press and then he set up a special program for me to train on.

Do you remember what that program consisted of?

TED WONG: Well, basically it was just a general conditioning program consisting of bench presses, press-behind-the-neck, deadlifts, bent-over rows, squats, sit-ups, curls, reverse curls, and things like that. I performed two sets of 10 repetitions per exercise and worked up in reps, but I never performed more than 20 repetitions. This routine was

performed three days a week with the weights, and then I did two days a week with martial art.

How well did the program work for you in "putting on muscle?"

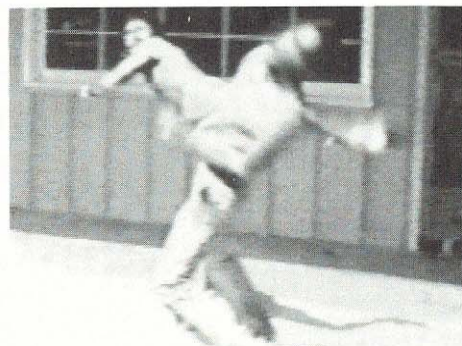
TED WONG: It worked really well! Bruce Lee weighed me first and then constantly checked my progress to see how much weight and size I increased. I believe that in three months I went from 132 pounds to 147 pounds -- a total of 15 pounds gained -- and it was all muscle. It was the heaviest I've ever been. I found, however, that if I didn't keep taking the weight gain powder and hitting the weights that I couldn't maintain that bodyweight.

How long did it take you to notice progress in your martial arts training once you started training privately with Bruce Lee?

TED WONG: Pretty much right away. I was pretty gung-ho and pretty intense. The way that Bruce Lee spoke and taught you conveyed that he meant serious business. He always tried to condition your mind to try and give you the proper example of how to train. Bruce had me running with him in addition to the martial arts and weight training, and then I'd go out to the stores with him to get certain types of vitamins. He would tell me what to get and what they did for your body.

Were there any other physical fitness devices that Bruce Lee thought would be helpful for the martial artist?

TED WONG: Bruce Lee always was working on ways to improve his supplemental conditioning for the martial arts. I remember that he had me buy a weighted belt -- not a weightlifting belt, but a belt that weighed about 10 pounds that you wore around your waist. He had me run with that as a form of progressive resistance to both the muscles and the cardiovascular system, as both the heart and the muscles had to work harder to carry



When not teaching, Bruce Lee would often use Ted to practice his choreography techniques, such as this spinning wheel kick, performed to check optimal camera angles to capture martial arts movements.

my body over the distance I was running with this additional weight. I even sparred wearing that. I didn't really know at the time how quick my progress was, but because of his personal attention and advice, I really began to progress quite quickly and catch up to the level of the rest of the students.

You were also in the unique position of being, not only one of Bruce Lee's closest students, but also one of his closest friends. Can you comment on this?

TED WONG: Well, I just feel that I was tremendously fortunate. I'm very thankful to this day. When you think about having the opportunity to study martial art from Bruce Lee, I've got to be one of the luckiest guys in the world, particularly since he taught me when I had no previous martial art experience. Bruce Lee usually only taught people that already had experience in martial arts. He took me in and made me not only his private student, but also his friend.

Something else that I find interesting, and that many of our members may not be familiar with, is that you were actually with Bruce Lee on the day that he founded the name "Jeet Kune Do." Could you tell us that story?

TED WONG: Well, it's both a very long story and a very short story (laughs). One day Bruce Lee came up to me and during the course of our discussion he said that he wanted to come up with a name that would really identify his own art. He had been doing a lot of thinking about it, he told me, and wanted to have a name for -- I shouldn't say his "style" because he never believed in style or system -- but in his way of fighting. It was all his own and had evolved to the point where he thought he should have a name to identify his own art. So, that's why I think at that time he chose the name "Jeet Kune Do." He named it in Chinese first, and he said that he thought the name was really appropriate. And then he said that he wanted to go up to UCLA where one of his friends was a linguistics professor and who would know what the correct phonetic spelling of it would be in English. This was around July of 1967.

When he named his art "Jeet Kune Do," was that because at that time his art laid specific emphasis upon "interception (i.e., the "Jeet" in Jeet Kune Do), rather than on, say, a "block and then strike" combination, such as were to be found in most of the other martial arts styles of the time?

TED WONG: I think interception was the cornerstone of Bruce Lee's art at that time, but interception can be applied in many ways. It doesn't mean blocking, and yet it also can serve as a block or a preventative measure in avoiding an oncoming blow. Intercept means to stop your opponent as he progresses or