



Sifu Clive Potter
Presents
the

Wing Tsun Files

**THE WAY OF
WONG SHUN LEUNG**

Introduction

Many people ask me why Wong's way of Ving Tsun is so different than other Sifus. Essentially I can only apply this question to the United Kingdom as that is where the question is asked and that is where I know the question is true. For example one very noticeable difference is the way the Wong's system turns. In many styles of Ving Tsun in the U.K., when the practitioner turns he puts most if not all his weight on the back leg which of course moves him away from the opponent. Wong system turns on the centre of gravity giving more control of the opponent. Years ago when Anthony Kan and I were learning we were aware of this difference and wondered, even though to us Wong's way made more sense, that perhaps we were wrong as most styles of Ving Tsun in the U.K. placed the weight on the back leg when they turned. Of course we stayed with what made most logical sense. There are also many other ways that other different Ving Tsun schools have similarities that are different from Wong's thinking. Personally, I have viewed many, many ways of Ving Tsun over the years, but never have I found a way that is as simple, as efficient and as direct as Wong's. Indeed, if I had I would be there! Much Ving Tsun in the U.K. is more rounded, defensive and prettier than Wong's.

However, to find why Wong's way is so renowned and different to other Ving Tsun we must look at the past. One obvious pointer is the experience that Wong gained in what worked and what did not from all the real fights he had when he was young. Another is the relationship he had with Yip Man which had a bearing on the knowledge he gained. For this I would like to quote from an article by Dave Peterson and Enzo Verratti called "Ving Tsun by Definition". I hope they don't mind me borrowing their words.

"It has been often suggested that Yip Man taught in a fairly unsystematic way, tending to pass on skills according to the student's size and reach. It is also said that he didn't have much time for his slower, less intelligent or less diligent students and actually taught few people the entire system in person. This in turn led to many people learning by observing others training, rather than first-hand, and that quite a few actually learn "second-hand" or even "third-hand" version of Ving Tsun filling the gaps in their knowledge with guesswork based on what they could recall seeing others do, or even worse, making it up out of their own imagination! This, of course gave rise to the variation in technique (and the interpretation of these techniques) extant today among instructors of the same generation, not to mention those of their younger Ving Tsun brothers and sisters.

Of all of Yip Man's students, Sifu Wong Shun Leung probably spent the longest time under his tutelage because it was Sifu Wong who did most of the teaching in Yip Man's school, whereas most of the other senior students opened their own schools and went about doing things their own way. Wong was therefore, always close to his teacher, could confer with his teacher and, observe his teacher, thereby picking up many of the subtleties which his peers never did. Sifu Wong was also the one Yip Man student who always put everything he had learned to the test, so he soon developed what can only be described as an intimate knowledge of the Ving Tsun system. Becoming known throughout Hong Kong as "Gong Sau Wong", or "King of Talking with the Hands", Sifu Wong took the Ving Tsun system to a whole new level and was never defeated in dozens of real life encounters with practitioners of a myriad of martial styles."

Certainly, when I was in Hong Kong last November 1999 for the "First World Ving Tsun Conference", it was clear from what was said on stage that Wong Shun Leung was highly respected by his peers. Dave Peterson also gave a rousing speech as to how many Ving Tsun teachers have "lost the way" making their techniques pretty and indirect. What amazes me is how it appeared that many people including Wong's peers agreed with Dave Peterson but I have never seen any evidence of anyone doing anything about it! This leads me nicely in to quoting a little more from the same Dave Peterson and Enzo Verratti article:-

"What is more disturbing and frustrating is that many very intelligent people blindly continue to follow such instructors, even when confronted by convincing arguments which clearly prove that what they are doing does not conform to a logical approach. Instead, they take what is basically a simple straightforward method and turn it into one that is complicated and less efficient. So many Ving Tsun practitioners invent endless sequences of defensive actions when what is clearly the obvious message of the system is that 'attack is the best form of defence.'"

Dave Peterson's message is one that I completely concur with. Wong once said to me if you want to develop your Ving Tsun you must keep one formula in mind. Does the idea you wish to develop make it more simple, more direct and more efficient?

Long live the way of Wong Shun Leung!

Clive Potter

Index

Title	Details	Page
The Master Returns	by Rusper Patel Master Wong's 1990 U.K. seminar Featured in "Combat" magazine	21
Positive Attitude in Ving Tsun	by Clive Potter Develop the right kind of approach in fighting Featured in "Combat" magazine	43
The Ving Tsun Punch	by Clive Potter The science of punching correctly Featured in "Combat" magazine	7
The Wong Shun Leung Interview	by Rusper Patel Interview prior to Master Wong's 1993 U.K. Seminar Featured in "Fighters" magazine	23
"Beimo"	by David Peterson Wong Shun Leung's approach to real fighting Featured in "Inside Kung Fu" magazine	16
Centerline Theory	by Clive Potter featured in "Combat" magazine	33
Hong Kong - The Home of Modern Ving Tsun	by Clive Potter Clive Potter's 1994 visit to Master Wong's school in Hong Kong Featured in "Fighters" magazine.	18
Sifu Wong - A Passion for Wing Chun	by Daniel Poon Report on 1995 Wong Shun Leung Seminar Featured in "Qi" magazine.	38
Wong Shun Leung Seminar - 1995	by Clive Potter Report on 1995 Wong Shun Leung Seminar Featured in "Combat" magazine.	35
Wong Shun Leung - The Early Years	Article from "Inside Kung Fu" magazine	10
Discussions with Master Wong Shun Leung and Master Tsui Sheung Tin	Article of a discussion that has been documented and produced on the Internet.	28
The Death of a Legend	A compilation of articles by David Peterson to mark the passing away of Master Wong	46

In the memory of
Master Wong Shun Leung.
May his thoughts and teaching live on for ever.

Someone who is looking at Ving Tsun and has not spent enough time with a teacher, properly will not know enough footwork. He will not understand the mobility involved in Ving Tsun, the angles of attack, the kicks in all situations. He will therefore want to add kicks for all situations. He will therefore want to add something else to the style that he thinks is better for the sake of not knowing.

(Wong Shun Leung)

THE VING TSUN PUNCH

by
Clive Potter

One of the aspects that has made Ving Tsun famous, is its short range centreline punch. To produce power at such a range, accuracy of technique is essential combined with the forward body movement used with the punch. The punch has to do two jobs, hit the opponent and uproot his stance. The punch does not hit by using just the fist and arm; it uses the whole body.

THE FIST

The hand, though closed into a fist, should not be clenched tightly as this stiffens up the forearm and wrist and hampers speed and flow of motion. Neither should the fist be suddenly clenched tightly on impact, as this causes a split second delay after impact to allow the fist to relax before moving on. This makes punching jerky, reduces flow of motion and strangles forward power. It is however, important

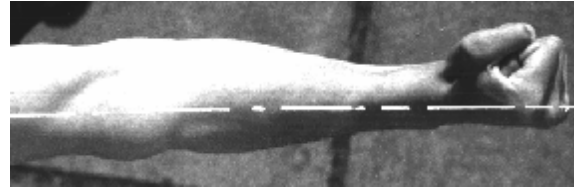


Fig. 1



Fig. 2

that the striking knuckles, the two lower knuckles, are in line with and therefore supported by the elbow when hitting as in Fig. 1. The fist always travels in a straight line from where it is to its target. This is usually along the centreline and is aimed at the opponent's centreline. (See Fig. 2). It is also important that the attacker is "square on" to the opponents centreline when executing the punch. (See also Fig.2).

When punching, extending the shoulders or over-turning the waist will divert the forward power to a different direction causing the attacker to be more vulnerable to being successfully blocked.

For continuous punching it is important that all forces are lined up with the opponent's centreline. In Fig.3, student Mark Potter's back cocked fist is pointing in the wrong direction therefore when it is used to punch its wrong cocked angle will cause a slight downward motion on contact with



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

the opponent, thus diverting some of the forward force in a different direction. Fig. 4 shows the correct angle of the back cocked fist. The direction of force is pointing towards the opponents centreline, therefore on contact all force will be directed forward. The fist itself when in the cocked position, should be lined up with the two lower knuckles pointing at the defendant's centreline. (See Fig. 5) On contact however, the fist gives an upward twist directing the forward force at a slight upward angle. This gives a small uprooting effect to the

opponent's stance and also gives the punch more penetration. (See Fig. 6). There are more details of techniques for uprooting the opponent's stance later in this article.

THE ELBOW

In Ving Tsun one of the basic rules in all actions is the awareness of the elbow and its specific distance from the body which connects it and the arm to the body. The punch is no exception to this. When punching, awareness is not in the fist but in the elbow; the elbow drives the fist forward. Correct POSITIONING and MOVEMENT of the elbow is essential as part of the techniques to develop power and support the fist. In Figs. 7, 8, and 9, student Rusper Patel shows the path of the elbow. In Fig's. 7 and 8 the path of the elbow is wrong. In Fig 7 the elbow's motion causes the direction of force to lift too greatly loosening the elbow's distance connection with the body and making it too easy to over-extend the arm. In Fig. 8 the elbow's direction will cause a downward arc as the fist



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

makes contact. This therefore directs some of the forward force away from the target. In Fig. 9 the elbow's movement is correct, being directed forward at solar plexus level as long as possible until it has to rise to join the line of the arm. This action will provide the maximum forward force angled slightly upwards forcing the opponent off balance and therefore uprooting his stance. This will only be effective if the correct distance is kept when contact is made with the target.

CONTACT DISTANCE

Contact distance must be correct to be able to deliver the punch with an uprooting effect. In Figs 10 and 11 student Rusper Patel punches student Robin Gillott. In Fig. 10 the contact distance is too far away causing



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13

punch contact to be at the end of the arm's reach. In Fig. 11 the contact distance is correct. Notice the distance of Rusper's elbow from his body on contact which should be the distance of the little fingers to thumb of his outstretched hand. In this way the punch directs the force through the opponent at a slight upward angle forcing him off balance and uprooting his stance. Fig. 12 shows how all these techniques are combined with the forward movement of the stance, thus adding further power. Effectively the punch is aimed right through to the back of the opponent's head. Fig. 13 shows two different aspects. Of course with every force there must be an equal and opposite force. The arrows show that providing a forward force in a slightly upward direction, the equal and opposite force is



Fig. 14

towards the ground thus student Mark Potter a stable anchorage when his fist hits the target. Note that the angle of the forearm on impact is nearly the same as the angle of the back leg. The dotted line shows the whole line of force supporting the punch which runs from the fist to the ground provided the elbow is of the correct distance from the body to "connect" this line.

An experiment can be conducted to show how uprooting force can work. In



Fig. 15

Fig 14, "B" adopts a strong low stance. "A" attempts to push him back off stance. Note that his forward force is parallel to the ground. The arrows show that there is nothing supporting the equal and opposite force. In this way the stronger person will prevail. In Fig. 15, "A" applies his force in a slightly upward direction, and though he is now pushing with one hand instead of two, he will have not too much problem in uprooting and pushing "B" back off his stance. Note that the equal and opposite force for "A" is supported by the ground, but for "B" there is nothing behind him

CONTINUOUS PUNCHING

Ving Tsun's basic attacking technique is its continuous punching. In this technique each punch should target precisely the same point. This accuracy is practised near the end of the Siu Lin Tau form when three or more punches are executed. Each punch is focused on the same point as the previous one. Multiple punching onto the same point together with moving forward in stance, serves two purposes which are most apparent when attacking someone bigger and tougher than oneself. If the opponent can take the first punch without too much damage, then the second hitting the same point will do a little more damage. The third, fourth, and so on hitting the same point will eventually disable the opponent. Hitting repeatedly on the same point combined with forward movement of the stance to upset the opponent's stance, prevents him from being able to retaliate, as he will be occupied in retreating to try and keep his balance. In a "real" situation, once the first punch gets through, the continuous punching and moving forward, if not blocked, should continue until the opponent fails down or is disabled. In this way, the Ving Tsun punch becomes a formidable weapon, the returning fist drawing down and opening up the defence of the opponent.

WONG SHUN LEUNG

- THE EARLY YEARS



"Self-defence is only an illusion, a dark cloak beneath which lurks a razor-sharp dagger waiting to be plunged into the first unwary victim.

"Whoever declares that any weapon manufactured today, whether it be a nuclear missile or a .33 special, is created for self-defence should look a little more closely at his own image in the mirror. Either he is a liar or is deceiving himself.

"Wing Chun Kung Fu is a very sophisticated weapon; nothing else. It is a science of combat, the intent of which is the total incapacitation of an opponent. It is straightforward, efficient and deadly. If you're looking to learn self-defence, don't study wing chun. It would be better for you to master the art of invisibility."

— Wong Shun Leung

Rather peculiar words, you might say, coming from an individual who'd spent over 30 years of his life teaching kung fu; yet somehow there's a rather uncanny philosophical depth to the man who actually instructed Bruce Lee in wing chun and inspired William Cheung to enter Yip Man's school at the age of 13. Wong Shun Leung, the most senior phenomenon in wing chun today, earned his rank and title where it really counts - in the streets. Now, at 48 years of age, he's still far from being a pacifist. With a series of jagged scars along his knuckles and a piercing glare in his eyes, he gives the distinct impression that he's already witnessed a fair share of human folly and its consequences. With the wisdom of a veteran, he guided us through a period in Hong Kong's recent past where fame flew like the wind before a fist as wing chun became a household word.

Born in Hong Kong on 8 May 1935 the eldest son of a Cantonese traditionalist doctor, Wong Shun Leung grew up in the hard world of broken bones, bruises, poultices, and amidst shelves of herbal medicines that had been devised over thousands of years to remedy internal injuries of every kind. As a child he was exposed to fantastic legends of almost superhuman men who controlled and used their bodies like fierce weapons and always against innumerable odds. And because his father was well acquainted with the local kung fu community, Wong would find himself encountering a fair cross section of Hong Kong's warrior elite and wondering just how powerful and skilful they really were. His curiosity and interest in the martial arts, in fact, grew almost on a daily basis. By the time he was eight years old, he could be found sitting in the dark corner of some local cinema watching the last vestiges of silent kung fu movies. To add impact to Wong's already blossoming imagination, his grandfather just happened to be a very close friend of Chan Wah Shan, the first of Yip Man's wing chun teachers. Both grandfather and father would describe in detail Chan's martial prowess, especially in one particular incident when Chan was already an old man, he publicly defeated a fierce young fighter in Fu Shan.

As fate would have it, Wong Shun Leung soon discovered his first and most favourite hobby, fighting. School became somewhat a boring proposition for the young Wong, so he began frequenting various isolated locations such as the tall apartment complex rooftops and secluded parking lots in Hong Kong, where extracurricular activities could be carried out without interference from the police. Here most local vendettas, gang warfare and personal grievances were settled with a sense of privacy. These duels were not without a sense of honour, however, and Wong quickly learned the rule of etiquette involved, hit first, ask questions later. As his skills began to improve, he developed relationships with a number of martial arts students who eventually convinced him to study formally.

Between the ages of 15 and 16, Wong tried a number of kung fu styles and settled first on tai chi chuan, then eventually on Western boxing. He liked boxing the most, because he considered it most practical for street warfare. He found an instructor and began working out in a gym regularly.

Unfortunately, a day came when Wong accidentally socked his coach a bit too hard in the face. The coach, infuriated, proceeded to pound Wong into a pulp. Bleeding from both nose and mouth, he then managed to corner his coach and knocked him out stone cold. From that day on there were no more boxing lessons, Wong had lost respect for his teacher.

Wing Chun, at that time, was a relatively unknown style of kung fu and as Yip Man was the only known teacher, Wong had never had an opportunity to witness a real wing chun fighter. However one day his cousin introduced him to Ao Yuing Ming, one of Yip's junior students. Ao was about 30 to have a match with a southern praying mantis stylist named Law Bing.

Although Ao was much younger, weaker, and less experienced than Law, it became evident to everyone present that Ao's martial art was technically much superior. By the time Law had driven his opponent to the edge of the balcony, he himself had already decided to study wing chun. The match ended peacefully and Yip Man had a new student. Wong, however, was still quite sceptical of this new kung fu system until he by chance observed one of Yip's senior students, Lok Yiu, toy with a northern praying mantis stylist named Lam. Lok Yiu was so skilled that he seemed to be making a joke out of the whole event. This impressed Wong enough to incite his curiosity further; he wanted to meet Yip Man.

During the third day of the lunar new year celebration when most of Hong Kong remains at home, Wong, then only 17 years old, went in search of his next door neighbour, who was none other than Law Bing, at Yip Man's studio. Law was absent, but there were a few junior students practising chi sau (sticky hands). Wong's first impression of this method of training was far from flattering. To him it was an impractical form of movement that limited a fighter's capability to withstand any attack that didn't come head-on, face-to-face. He made the ultimate error in any martial art circle by scoffing at the style itself, comparing it unfavourably to the sophistication of Western boxing.

Yip Man was quietly observing all this. As could well be expected, one of the students challenged Wong. I turned out to be a short but sweeten counter. Wong's opponent hit the deck in a matter of seconds. Yip, being somewhat upset, asked if Wong would like to try one of his more senior students, his own nephew for instance. Wong agreed.

This time his opponent was a much more serious fighter, but Wong still managed to throw him around the gym like a rag doll. Yip, by now raging inside with all the insult Wong had afforded him, suggested that perhaps Wong might consider trying him on for size. Recollecting the last incident with his own boxing coach and noticing that



Wong practises blindfold chi sau.

Yip appeared pretty much over the hill in comparison (Yip was 56 years old). Wong decided that this match was going to be a real "pushover". Even though Yip had very large hands and strong forearms, Wong felt that he could easily tire out this thin old man by using some fancy footwork and moving around him.

Yip was by far the greater strategist. He carefully manoeuvred his opponent into a corner and just when Wong was halfway through a kick to the midsection, Yip pushed him on the chest knocking him, off balance, into the wall. Yip quickly closed the gap and executed a rapid-fire six to seven blows into Wong's body just hard enough to let him know that he could have done real damage if he had wanted to. Wong was amazed at Yip's speed and control. He knew he had found a master at last and asked permission to study with Yip.

Yip, however, felt that Wong was not really sincere in his request and was just about to refuse him when a much senior student, by the name of Yip Bo Chung, arrived. Bo Chung was in his mid-30s, five-foot, ten-

inches tall, and as strong as an ox. Everyone had named him "Big Scrub-brush" because he was so proud of himself that they felt he could wear down an opponent with his boasting alone. Here was a newcomer for him to test his skills upon; so he decided to square off with Wong. This time Wong was going to get run through the washing machine. Bo Chung punched and kicked the daylights out of him. Not one to be discouraged however, Wong, on the eighth day of that same lunar new year, formally submitted himself as one of Yip Man's students. One day during practice Wong overheard Yip Man in conversation with his most senior student, Leung Sheung, during which he stated that he felt the "kid" (Wong) would probably, in a year's time, make a name for wing chun in Hong Kong.



Wong demonstrates a defence against a kick.

The prophesy turned out to be incorrect. It didn't take Wong a year, it took him three months. Weighing in at slightly over 105 pounds, Wong turned to some serious "scrapping." No holds barred, he took on every challenger and beat them into the dust. He developed such a bad reputation as a scrapper that people nicknamed him the "Flying Soot", a type of filth that results from a fast fire and manages to stick something dirty on you when least expected.

Wong's enemies were not few and far between either. After demolishing a foreman in the Public Works Department by the name of Wong Kiu, he found himself confronted by a whole group of challengers, most of them reputedly paid by Wong Kiu. Finally the number of people willing to fight him, even for money, diminished into nothingness. Between the ages of 18 and 19, Wong had fought over 50 bouts, most against opponents larger and stronger than himself, and had come out the victor. Suddenly wing chun shot into the forefront of Hong Kong gossip. Here was a style that really achieved results!



Wong practises chi sau with one of his students.

Cheung, then a chief detective in the Royal Hong Kong Police's Criminal Investigation Department, had a number of sons who were being tutored in the martial arts by a varied group of teachers. The oldest son, Kong, was a swimming partner of Wong Shun Leung's younger brother. So when Kong's kung fu instructor decided it would be in the boy's best interest to leave the Southern Chinese "four styles" system and take up wing chun, it was only natural for him to go to Wong Shun Leung. Kong was a sceptic, so the two of them decided to have a match. Wong had very little trouble in the fight though, so Kong became convinced that wing chun was his next step.

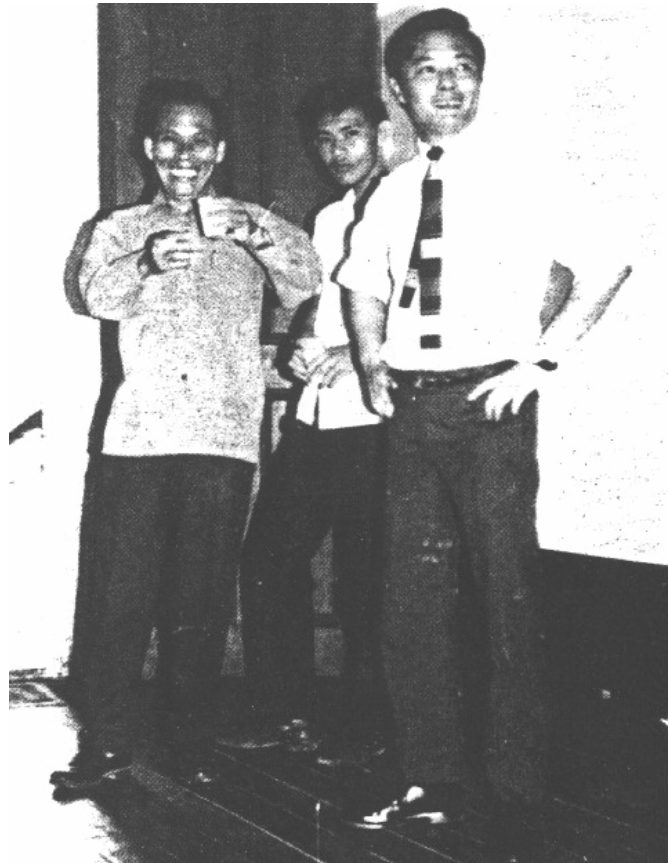
One day, as the two of them were practising siu lim tau (the first pattern of the wing chun system) in Kong's garden, Wong started to demonstrate the proper formation and use of a block called tan sau which involves stretching the arm out toward your opponent, palm-up. Suddenly a voice shouted from above then "Oh, so you want a handout? I'll give you 20 cents for that!"

Both men looked up and saw a tall young boy standing on the balcony watching them. Wong asked the name of his new audience, so William Cheung, Kong's younger brother, was formally introduced.

"Does he practice any type of kung fu?" asked Wong. "Yes, and he really likes to fight," said Kong in reply. Wong asked William if he wanted a match, whereupon William, smiling, rolled up the sleeves of his Chinese jacket and came right down. It wasn't really much of a contest because, as Wong knew, the boy was only about 13 years old, seven years his junior; but there was a special quality about William. He was extremely fierce, for one thing, for a boy of his age. He wanted to take up the study of wing chun immediately, but as his brother opposed it William had to wait. Kong was afraid that if his younger brother learned wing chun he would be very hard to control. As it was, William already had a bad reputation for fighting and was said even to use weapons if necessary. His father had already suffered too many headaches as a result.

The day came when Kong left for Australia. William lost almost no time in attending Yip Man's classes. He learned very quickly, and before long he was seen following Wong's footsteps as a local wing chun terrorist. Somehow, during this time, William had developed a close relationship with another boy of his own age. They would often go out on fights together, and one day, William brought his friend into Yip Man's school.

That's the first time Wong Shun Leung ever saw Bruce Lee. Wong noticed that as Bruce began to study wing chun, he didn't really seem all that sincere; consequently his progress was slow. He also had a tendency toward laziness, Wong felt, and whenever he got into trouble with an opponent or the law he would depend on either William or his father's police connections to bail him out. Bruce always looked up to William as a fighter, and when William left for Australia at the age of 18, Bruce found himself



Wong enjoys a lighter moment with his friends.

suddenly alone and stranded in a hostile environment. It was then that he turned to Wong Shun Leung and started to take wing chun seriously.

During the time of Bruce's enrolment at the St. Francis Assisi Secondary School in Sham Shui Po, he had managed to talk a number of his classmates into learning wing chun. But as Bruce began to have a change of heart toward his own training, he tried to find a method of cutting deeper into Wong's class time. He approached Wong one day and asked for private tutorship; but when Wong refused, Bruce found an alternate solution. He would run over to Wong's house after school in advance of his classmates. When they arrived for practice they would find Lee sitting on the steps looking rather disappointed. He would claim that Wong was not present, so they'd all leave together. Not long after, Lee would return and get his private lessons with little hindrance.



Yip Man leads Wong and his bride in the marriage tea ceremony.

Bruce Lee studied almost every day with Wong for a period of one and a half years. During this time he proved to be a very clever and innovative student. Wong felt that Lee's strongest point lay in his chi sau practice. He had begun to develop his reflexes to such a degree that he was able to respond instantaneously to just about any force applied by an opponent's attack. Lee would have continued with Wong for quite a longer period but fate would have it that his complicated lifestyle and attraction, for fighting forced his parents to send him overseas to study. From that point on, barring occasional visits by Lee to Hong Kong either for filming or to see his parents, Wong's relationship with Lee was carried on through the mail.

When Bruce first started teaching wing chun in the States he would often write to Wong to clarify certain technical aspects of the style. As he continued to develop in his martial abilities and throughout the creation of jeet kune do, Lee kept Wong well informed of his theories and progress.

Wong Shun Leung was the type of man Lee could

relate to. He was a true fighter with an analytical approach to the martial arts. When Lee finally did arrive in Hong Kong, he would visit Wong and the two men would talk theory and technique for seven or eight hours a day. It was during one of these marathon discussions, just prior to Lee's death, that Bruce said he felt perhaps he should never have started jeet kune do. When Wong asked him why, Lee explained that although in theory jeet kune do was an advanced system of combat, in practice it didn't seem to work because it was too difficult for a teacher to teach the somewhat abstract style to a number of students with varying capacities and expect them not to become confused.

Bruce Lee himself had learned in a traditional way. He first fought in the streets to gain experience and then tried to develop his own experience and ideas into a new format. He had learned all the elements of chi sao, but it was difficult to base his new teachings strictly on wing chun. A link in the chain was missing. Wong suggested that perhaps Bruce was trying to cover too much ground in too short a period of time. But on the other hand, Wong agreed absolutely with Lee's analytical approach to combat. In order to keep abreast of the times, he too felt that one should not always accept what is being served without testing its validity.

Today Wong, like Bruce Lee, is innovative in his thoughts. Although he appears to teach in a very authoritarian and traditional way, upon deeper inspection he's very ready and willing to advise and elucidate any queries a student might have. He also believes in teaching Westerners, which is in direct opposition to the mandates of Yip Man.

Traditionally, Chinese masters refused to accept Western students due to two factors one, hostility still remaining from the Boxer Rebellion and two, the fact that most Westerners are much larger and stronger than the average Chinese. (It would be quite logical to assume that, given his size advantage, if a Westerner were to have the same level of expertise in kung fu he would be able to defeat Chinese opponents.) But Wong insists that a good student, regardless of race or creed, is still an honour to his teacher. Sometimes the least expected student becomes the most outstanding. It is the duty of the teacher, he feels, to give everyone who so desires a fair chance. Wong explained to us some of the twists that fate had brought to the wing chun system in the past.

Dr. Leung Jan was a renowned martial artist and excellent combatant during the earliest recorded years of wing chun history; however his eldest son did not have the capacity to carry on the style's fighting tradition. This task was therefore allotted to Leung Jan's most outstanding student, Chan Wah Shun. But although Chan was a fierce scrapper, he lacked the necessary intelligence to analyse his own style in detail. In this way Leung Bik, Leung Jan's eldest son, was superior. He was well-educated and could distinguish the chaff from the wheat. But when both men later went into the bone doctoring business, Leung Bik found Chan was a powerful competitor who not only netted most of the available students, but most of the local patients as well. Chan also managed to relate to the local townspeople of Fu Shan better than Leung, so Leung left for Hong Kong and became a silk merchant.

Yip Man studied under Chan Wah Shun for two years until Chan's death. After that he continued his studies under Ng Chung So, one of Chan's senior students, until an incident occurred in which Yip, only 16 years old, killed someone in a fight. As his parents were very wealthy they were able to transfer Yip almost immediately to

Japan in order to avoid any further difficulties with the authorities. He later travelled to Hong Kong and began attending the St. Stephan's school for boys.

Yip was a real troublemaker. He would fight almost constantly and even upon occasion beat up the school's Indian doorman. One day, one of his classmates suggested that perhaps Yip wouldn't mind matching fists with a wing chun teacher. Yip agreed and soon found himself face to face with an elderly man. Much to Yip's surprise the old fellow defeated him with relative ease. Yip asked to join the man's classes and found out that his new teacher was none other than Leung Bik.

Leung was very clever and analytical as a teacher, which impressed Yip very much. Thus, eventually Yip Man became the product of two masters, one a better fighter and the other a better teacher. Regardless of who Yip learned most from, Wong feels today that Yip's own admirable qualities, both his martial proficiency and his cleverness, more than in. dictated something about the man.

Since the deaths of both Yip Man and Bruce Lee, wing chun has gone through quite a number of changes. Whenever any particular style becomes popular, it's bound to attract those who seek fame and fortune. Wong Shun Leung is somewhat of a purist in this respect. He realises that a style's popularity will often redirect some of the original theories into new avenues, but he sincerely hopes that the original precepts are clearly understood by all who wish to alter them. In that way perhaps the best ingredients may not be lost in the process. It was for this reason that he agreed to demonstrate some of wing chun's basic techniques and theories on a videotape entitled *Wing Chun - The Science of In-Fighting*. Theory, on the other hand, can go through levels that even video may not be able to capture. When asked about some of the more important aspects of wing chun kung fu, Wong was able to explain the following:

Wing chun is the science of using the right amount of force at the right time in overcoming an opponent. Using the least amount of energy to accomplish this goal means that one is economising motion. The basic premise of wing chun, therefore, is the economy of motion. To begin with, according to Wong, the style's primary strike is a punch in which the hand and forearm are curved slightly upward upon impact. There's a very good reason behind this motion, which few practitioners really understand. A straight-hand punch allows the force of an opponent's

body to travel back along the arm and into your body, thereby causing a certain amount of instability and reducing reaction time by just a fraction of a second. The wing chun punch, on the other hand, creates another outlet for the opponent's force down along the angle of one's wrist toward the ground. In this way one can hit as hard as one likes as long as the timing is correct.

Chi Sau is a prime example of economy in motion, Wong says. According to Newton's law of inertia, a body will stay at rest unless it is acted upon by an outside force, and once in motion will remain in motion until opposed by an outside force. Combat involves a series of high-speed movements, the forces of which act upon one another. During some of these movements, such as a block for instance, the opponent will forcefully displace your arm in a direction away from your intended target. It will take you a few microseconds at least to get your arm back in the proper alignment to attack. Chi sao teaches you how to overcome such inertia so that your attack never wavers an inch from its



Two men involved in an actual Hong Kong challenge fight.

decided path. It is a very difficult practice to master, but after years of training it is said to develop both elasticity and softness in your muscles as well as a tremendous control over reflexes.

Constant chi sao practice also teaches strategy. You begin to feel a pattern in your opponent's movements, allowing you to sense the proper angle of attack. According to Wong, the highest achievement in wing chun is to be able to allow your opponent to guide you into the exact method of attacking and defeating him.

Some Western pugilists might claim, pretty much as Wong did when he first entered Yip man's gym, then chi sao would be useless against an expert Western boxer. Wong himself now feels that most boxers, by using a leading stance, are allowing the reverse arms to be at a disadvantage due to an increased distance from the opponent. The jab is fast and efficient but it must still come within range to be effective. This is where the wing chun man moves in. Once inside a boxer's inner circle, chi sao methods match two hands to one.

a result of this slight inadequacy many boxers have altered their stances to confront opponents in a more head-on fashion. Finally, at very close range, where most styles eventually resort to grappling, wing chun attacks become much more efficient.

Many kung fu practitioners look upon the wooden dummy as an ideal way of toughening up the hands and forearms, and nothing more. Wong reminds us that although it is made of a hard substance, it still represents a

man with arms and legs. The purpose of the dummy is to develop proper timing in an attack, that is, to intensify one's ability to block and punch both at the proper angle and simultaneously.

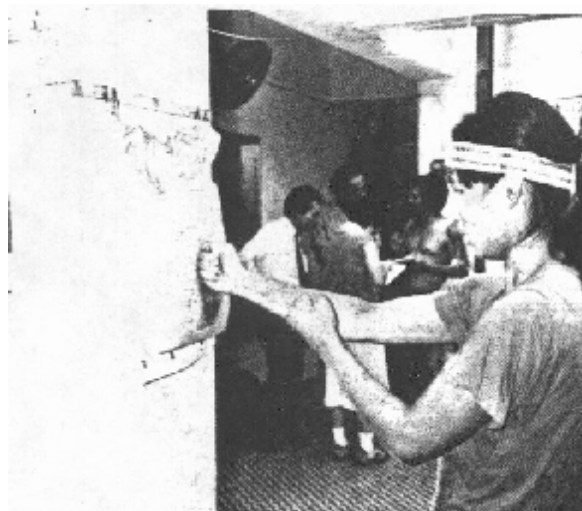
The premise of the dummy is continuity. A teacher can distinguish a student's progress by just listening to him or her practice on it. The sounds alone indicate whether a student has developed the proper co-ordination and technique necessary for learning the higher wing chun functions. If your angling, speed, stance, or pattern is wrong, a good teacher can correct you almost blindfolded. Once again, economy of motion is the name of the game.

There is some contention as to whether wing chun has developed any footwork or not. This is due to a false conception resulting from two factors: one, very few wing chun practitioners stayed with any master long enough to learn the footwork; and two, most matches involving wing chun were decided without the need for footwork. According to Wong, there is no logical or practical reason for teaching a student advanced footwork until he's already mastered hand techniques. The reason, he feels, is that the hands are able to continue in motion with little effect on one's general stability; but when the leg has left the ground, it must eventually return to the ground, otherwise the advantage is strictly the opponent's. In

order to maintain stability, the legs must be confined to attacks below the waist. Wing chun has basically eight leg strikes, which are all tailored to speed and efficiency. There are two primary footwork patterns used to control one's distancing, but what few people realise is that wing chun also has a form of chi sao created strictly for the legs, called chi kuk. There are a fewer number of techniques involved, but the theory is the same as for the hands. Most wing chun practitioners have had little exposure to these techniques.

Even less well known is the practice of wing chun weaponry (such as the double sword and long staff). There are a very limited number of qualified weapons teachers in the world today, probably because weapons have always been the last on every master's teaching agenda. Wong says he will eventually demonstrate these forms on another videotape, but he is reluctant to have students attempt weaponry prior to mastering the wing chun hand and leg patterns. His reasoning is quite logical. A weapon may be considered an extension of the hand, but unlike the hand which can, by pushing or pulling, control an opponent's distancing or force, a weapon is limited by weight and structure. By studying weaponry too early, the student will either lose or alter his concepts of distancing, speed, and control. His overall stability, stance and footwork will suffer as a result. If he cannot control his own movement without an object in his hands, then how can he expect the object to assist him in any way? Wong feels that any teacher who suggests learning weaponry prior to mastery of the other wing chun forms should reconsider his own intentions.

Wong Shun Leung is an appropriate example of a man who has become his art and vice-versa. He started as a gifted fighter, studied both the physical and mental aspects of wing chun, and finally became wing chun spiritually. He's a man who can be either soft-spoken or outspoken depending upon the situation at hand. He has learned to understand his own limitations and thereby the limitations of others. His demeanour is calm, relaxed, and his intent unwavering. He is philosophy without embellishment, like an old sword that doesn't appear dangerous at first, until you've tasted its razor edge!



One of Wong's students; the All Asian Women's Martial Arts Champion practises punching.

“ BEIMO ”

Wong Shun Leung’s Philosophy of Real Fighting

by

David Peterson

The following article is a personal account of what Ving Tsun master Wong Shun Leung feels, are the main lessons he has learned about combat through his experiences of "beimo" or skill comparison, a somewhat subtle way of naming the many full-on fights he had with practitioners of literally dozens of Chinese and other fighting systems during his 40 plus years as a Ving Tsun devotee. The "beimo" is a long established tradition in the Chinese martial arts and in the Hong Kong of the 1950s and 1960s. One name continues to shine like a beacon when discussing "beimo". That name is Wong Shun Leung, student of Ving Tsun patriarch Yip Man, classmate and trainer of Bruce Lee, and the man who became known in martial art circles as "Gong Sau Gong", the "King of Talking with the Hands". During these celebrated "contests", which took place on rooftops, in back alleys, behind closed doors, in the countryside and anywhere else that was found to be convenient, Master Wong is said to have never lost a fight, and most witnesses claim that the majority of exchanges took no more than three techniques to determine his victory. Quite a few of these "contests" were arranged by a journalist who was keen to conduct these "tests of skill" to obtain exclusive articles for his newspaper, "The Star". Unlike the tournaments of today, these were "real" fights where rules and protective clothing were unknown, where serious injuries could and, occasionally, did take place, and where there was absolutely no room for "martial magic". The "beimo" was a no-nonsense contest of who was best. From these experiences, and with much discussion with his teacher, Grandmaster Yip Man, Master Wong developed his skills to what can only be described as an incredible level, and in doing so, brought the Ving Tsun system to the attention of the Hong Kong martial arts community. He is even credited with modernising the way in which the system is taught, even to the point of convincing Yip Man himself to rethink some concepts or techniques and actually change them or delete them from the Ving Tsun forms and drills. Simply put, Wong Shun Leung helped revolutionise what was already a highly effective fighting form and raised it to an even higher level of efficiency. He has influenced many people over the years. The late Bruce Lee was an obvious example (his art of Jeet Kune Do utilised many of the concepts Wong put forward during the time that the two were training together and then later corresponding), and he continues to "spread the word" about his very practical approach to developing combat proficiency. This article has been translated from the original Chinese by his Australian student, David Peterson, who speaks both Mandarin and Cantonese dialects, and a teacher of the "Wong Shun Leung way" at the Melbourne Chinese Martial Arts Club, which he founded in 1983 following his "discovery" of sifu Wong's method after more than ten years of less-efficient Ving Tsun training.

Master Wong's Narration

The kind of fighting I am referring to in this article is not that which one might see in the boxing ring, because this kind of fight has been restricted by all kinds of rules and regulations, turning it into a game or sport which is far removed from real combat. What I am referring to here is the "real fight", free of rules and restrictions, whether it be as the result of a conflict, or by mutual agreement. Because fighting is relative, the opponent's build and strength can and will directly affect the result of the conflict, therefore it is difficult to assume to know the outcome. The classic Chinese Art of War by Sun Tzu states, "In warfare, first lay plans which will ensure victory, and then lead your army to battle; if you will not begin with stratagem, but rely on brute strength alone, victory will no longer be assured." Each of these approaches can affect its counterpart in terms of cause and effect. Indeed, when it comes to the business of fighting, I fear that in an article of this size there is still much that cannot be adequately dealt with. But now I would like to discuss the most common mistakes made by Ving Tsun practitioners so we can learn to avoid them. Chi Sau The chi Sau (sticky hands) exercise is a reflex training drill that must be practised repeatedly to develop skilful, quick and alert responses to satisfy the basic, essential requirements of the Ving Tsun system (**i.e., intercept what comes; pursue what departs; when the hands are freed of obstructions, attack instinctively**). These are basic but profound principles which, when properly understood and drilled through chi Sau, prepare the Ving Tsun practitioner both mentally as well as physically for what should take place when one engages with the enemy and so, one gets into the contact condition from the very start. If detailed explanations are not given to the novice student, he will tend to overindulge the skill of Chi Sau, inventing his own interpretations until he ends up following a totally incorrect form of Chi Sau which leads them straying from the intended path. For example, too much emphasis on the idea of "sticking to the hands" will cause such bad habits as "chasing the hands" of the opponent and thus totally contradict one of Ving Tsun's most basic fighting principles. At the beginning of the "young idea" (siu nim tau) form, one is taught the concept of "chi ying", or facing the opponent square-on, to facilitate favourable positioning even before the fight has commenced, allowing punches to be thrown along the shortest possible line with the most direct attack made on the opponent prior to contact being made with each other Never is one asked in the basic form to consider doing

"sticky hands" with the enemy; the range of motion possible by the hands is so wide that if one goes about "chasing the hands", the result is like a children's game – you go left because he makes a sudden turn left, then you go right as he does. The result is that you always allow your enemy to dictate your actions, ending up in a passive position and unable to attack your intended target so, **when fighting, one should fix one's eyes firmly on the target with only one idea in mind; that of attacking the enemy most simply and directly. Fight the opponent, not his arms.** It is only if your attack meets with an obstruction that you have to change to attain your goal and this is where "sticky hands" comes into play, as a means to an end, with that end being the winning of the fight.

The strike-second philosophy.

Winning or losing often depends on who watches for his chance to attack the enemy first when both sides are fighting. As Sun Tzu said, "When an invading force crosses a river in its onward march, it is best to let half the army get across, and then deliver your attack." You will reap twice the result with half the effort if the attack is launched with such favourable timing as the opponent's intention, developments and movements can all be readily determined. Should this strategy be applied, the opponent will find it especially difficult to co-ordinate his body, making advance or retreat virtually impossible and the loss of the fight by him inevitable. A common error made by inexperienced Ving Tsun practitioners is to throw their punches from too far away, leaving a lot of distance between their opponent and themselves. When engaged in combat with opponent never be impatient. **Do not launch an attack until there's a distance of one step between you and your enemy,** then launch a sudden attack so as to force the enemy to be caught totally unprepared. Launching a sudden attack in this way, one gains the advantage of an extra step toward the enemy, making it extremely difficult for him to react in time, the result normally being a feeble attempt to move half a step to the right or left, or else retreat straight backward. This makes it easy to remain in contact with the enemy, maintaining control of the situation by affecting the enemy's balance and positioning. You, therefore, avoid giving him the chance to attack first and take away his opportunity to manage the situation.

Surrendering excessive ideals

Having excessive ideals with regard to fighting will cause one to be far too nervous. Ving Tsun theory is flawless if one can accomplish it absolutely, but a theory is only just a theory; never can a person reach such a state of perfection, for human beings are all apt to make mistakes at some time or another. In normal combat situations, most opponents are of more or less equal size and strength. Everyone has two hands and two feet, strengths and weaknesses", etc. Each is subject to the same conditions and so each has to fight hard. The most determining factor overall is the level of skill each fighter possesses. If the possibility of your winning is 70 percent, there is still a 30-percent possibility of being attacked. If we look at world championship boxing contests, even the winner of the match has to take many blows from his opponent in the course of a bout. Nowadays, however, many Ving Tsun coaches make exaggerated boasts and purposely turn simple things into is the height of shame. It would be a far better idea to prepare the student both mentally and physically before fighting, informing them of the realities of fighting, especially that it is expected that one may have to take one or more blows upon one's own body in the course of the fight. Thus, when engaged in fighting, you will not be full of misgivings and be at a loss as to what to do. For a fight to occur, both parties must be within the distance whereby they can attack each other. Both have equal opportunity to attack, yet there is no time to think of the fight in terms of punches and kicks. The skills and experiences brought about by routine training will be brought into full play at this time. The question of victory or defeat is more or less an open one, to be determined by what one has within. No matter what happens, one must never hesitate once the engagement has begun. To do so will bring about many unnecessary troubles. The high kicks that one often sees in the movies that are performed continuously with consummate ease are, in reality, without foundation. If applied in a real fight, it is difficult, if not impossible, to land a second such kick should the first one be successful. Whether or not the enemy falls down, he will be out of position for any follow-up kicking technique to be effective. Perhaps, if the enemies hit by a side kick and retreats backward in a straight line, you may have the opportunity to kick continuously, but the laws of physics make such a situation highly unlikely. If the enemy is fearful of the fight, he will draw back quickly and your second kick will surely fail since your first kick would have also failed to find its mark; the timing rhythm is all wrong just as in dance and music. Only those who hesitate will be punched. One must retreat or advance as the situation dictates, or else the chance to control the situation will disappear in the twinkle of an eye. The above points will not teach you how to win, but will help you to decrease your mistakes as much as possible. In fact, if you want to win, it will depend on whether or not you practice hard and persistently, your will to win the fight, perseverance, the development of physical power and confidence.

HONG KONG

The Home of Modern Ving Tsun

by
Clive Potter

April 1994 and it was time for another visit to Hong Kong to learn and train under the world famous Master Wong Shun Leung. His school is situated on the second floor of a block of flats in Kowloon. Visitors can recognise the school from the large sign on the front wall outside. This also is the home of the headquarters of the Hong Kong Ving Tsun Athletic Association's meetings on Wednesday afternoons when many well known instructors from Hong Kong meet to discuss their business.

The school is open for training from 4pm to 10pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. There are special classes on Saturdays and Sundays are set aside for



Master Wong watches a student practising Chum Kiu.

free sparring using protective equipment. Though physically not that large, the school has many practitioners training at various times throughout the afternoon and evening. Around the wall of the school are mirrors, the Ving Tsun wooden dummy, six and a half point poles, butterfly knives, punch bags, protection equipment and a large marble plaque which has inscribed upon it, the nine commandments of Ving Tsun which all students are expected to adhere to.

The Nine Commandments of Ving Tsun

1. Behave well and keep the spirit of your Kung Fu skill.
2. Understand the concepts to become gentle and a patriot to your country and respect your parents.
3. Respect your colleagues and be co-operative.
4. Control your sexual urges.
5. Practice Kung Fu diligently.

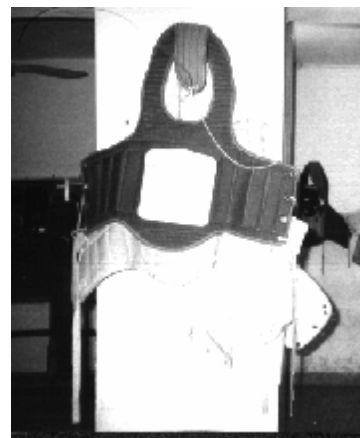


Clive Potter exchanges kicks with Master Wong.

6. Keep calm and controlled. Do not fight without a very good reason.
7. Be tolerant and understanding to other students.
8. Help to protect the weak and needy using your martial art skills.
9. Keep the rules of your teacher.

It must be noted that these commandments are a direct translation of the Chinese writing on the wall of Wong Shun Lung's school, and are therefore an interpretation of the Chinese language by the actual translator. The meanings in Chinese may be subtly different than we may understand being European. I would therefore like to make comments on them as follows:

1. This may concern the proper use of a martial art. It should not be used to gain power or bully.
2. This may concern the philosophical concepts of



Some of the protection equipment used for sparring on Sundays.



Master Wong poses with Clive Potter and a group of students.

Ving Tsun, to be controlled and show loyalty and respect to family and country.

3. This is quite self explanatory to respect, help and co-operate with one's friends and colleagues at work, in Kung Fu or in private life.

4. This may have a few different interpretations. There is some belief amongst the older Kung Fu generation that sexual activity can sap the 'Chi' from the body. If this were to be the case it would mean that one would have to refrain from any sexual activity to realise one's full potential at Kung Fu! However a more modern and realistic interpretation could be to be faithful to your true partner, do not be tempted to stray and be unfaithful.

5. This is self explanatory. The only way to be good at Kung Fu is

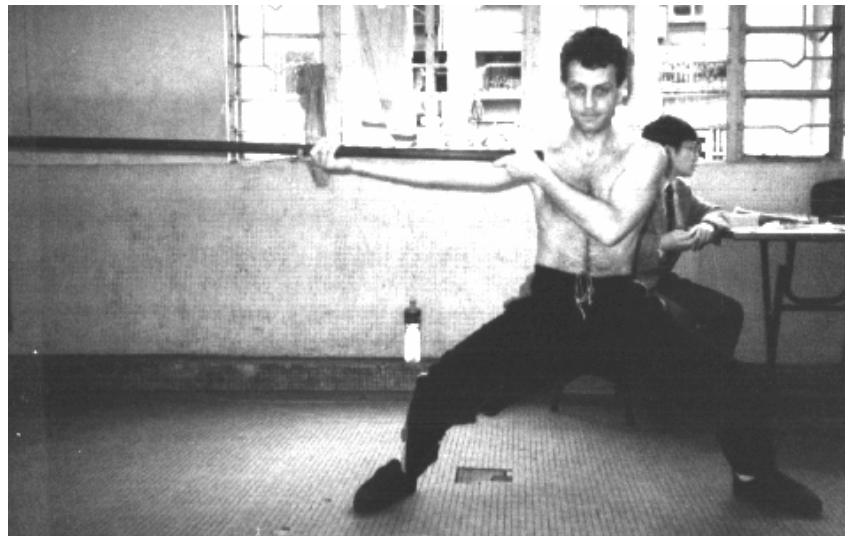
to practise hard. The teacher can only show the way. The rest is up to the student,

6. This may mean that one should be calm in a situation and only fight if absolutely necessary. One should try to find non-violent ways to solve a problem and only fight if there is no other alternative.

7. This links in with point '2' and '6' and may have a message concerning the need for patience with people and problems.

8. This may concern coming across a person being bullied, taken advantage of, robbed or attacked. Kung Fu skill may be used to help save them from the attacker.

9. This is completely self explanatory.



A German student practises the long pole.



Clive Potter, Lok Sau's with Master Wong.

Training is run informally, with everyone learning and sharing their skills with each other. A typical training session for a practitioner who has learnt the various Ving Tsun forms would be to first practise Sil Lin Tau, Chum Kiu, Bil Jee, the Wooden Dummy, the six and a half point pole and the butterfly knives. Once these were completed he would team up with another practitioner to train at Chi Sau, bridging techniques, and other two man training drills including two man six and a half point pole drills. In this way, students may find that they are both teaching and learning within their sessions, depending on the level of skill their partner has attained. Approachable Master Wong Shun Leung is always approachable to ask questions with regard to the various techniques. Throughout the training he keeps a fatherly eye on all the students. At various intervals he will approach a student to explain how that student should really be executing a certain technique or how



Master Wong beside the grave of Grandmaster Yip Man.

to approach the problem the student finds himself in. When this happens most of the other students stop their training to gather round the Master and watch, listen and learn.

The informal and friendly atmosphere lends itself to giving the students the confidence to ask questions, experiment with techniques and stimulates an open enquiring mind. Not only do many Chinese students from Hong Kong frequent the school, but also other Ving Tsun practitioners from countries such as Great Britain, the USA, Germany, Australia and Switzerland.

The time of year was a special time for paying respects to the late Grandmaster Yip Man. On Sunday the 10th April many Ving Tsun teachers and practitioners including his two sons gathered by his grave near the New Territories town of Fan Ling. Drinks accompanied by roast pork and roast chicken were consumed by all with some also placed on the grave for Yip Man. Many people lighted incense and bowed three times to the grave and then place the incense by the grave as a mark respect. It was good to see so many Tsun schools united together in a common occasion.

THE MASTER RETURNS

by
Rusper Patel



Master Wong demonstrates Chum Kiu.

April 1990 saw the welcome return of master Wong Shun Leung for a well received seminar in St.Albans, Herts. He had come at the invitation of two of his students, Clive Potter and Anthony Kan.

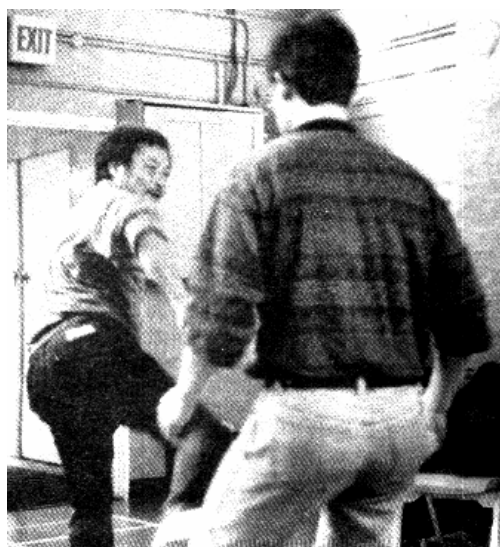
The seminar opened with Master Wing emphasising that we, as martial artists, should not allow ourselves to be governed by Ving Tsun, but should instead, be able to adapt the system to suit the situation; we should be the masters of Ving Tsun, not for Wing Chun to be the master of us.

Master Wong then performed the first form, Sil Lin Tau and broke this down into its elemental parts with explanations. He went on to explain the reasons why centreline theory is so important in the Ving Tsun system and demonstrated this by showing how an opponent would find it more difficult to absorb force directed at the centre line as opposed to either side of it. Next he explained the dynamics of the Ving Tsun centreline straight punch. He suggested that many boxers might rather throw centreline straight punches instead of hooked ones, but were unable to do so because of having to wear gloves. He continued by stating that there was one section of the Sil Lin Tau form that should be performed slower than the rest. He said

that the reason for this was, that some times we are training very much against our natural reactions. Therefore, to perfect certain moves so that they become a natural response, they should be practised slowly with the maximum concentration. Master Wong, although stressing the importance of practising forms, thought that actual two man chi sau training was the most effective method of learning how to apply the moves of Ving Tsun.



Demonstrating the Ving tsun kick.



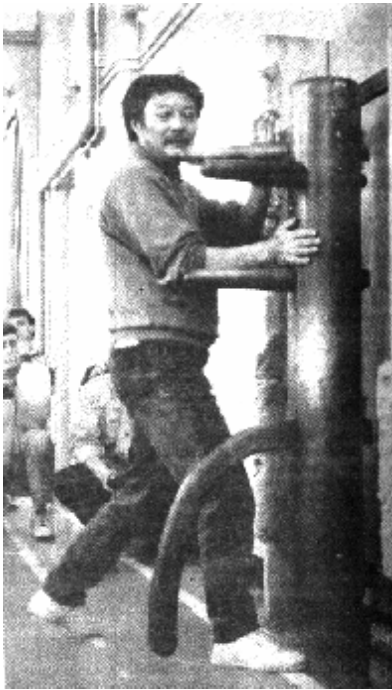
Showing low side kick on Sifu Anthony Kan.

The second form, Chum Kiu, was demonstrated and explained. Master Wong said that whilst performing Sil Lin Tau, the practitioner should focus on an imaginary centreline in front of him. Chum Kiu, however stressed the opponent's moving centreline. Correct stance shifting was next shown with reasons given for pivoting on the heels rather than the balls of the feet. The former gave maximum power without sacrificing reach or economy of motion. The familiar bong sau technique was demonstrated from various angles. Master Wong said that Bong Sau is better used at very dose range once contact has been made, or from long range if executed from an prepared stance. Bong Sau was not considered by Master Wong as a good initial block or bridging

technique as it did not in itself threaten the opponent's centreline. The relationship between Chi Sau and actual combat was detailed. Master Wong felt that many inexperienced Ving Tsun practitioners would attempt to perform unnecessary chi sau in a combat situation, trying to stick the opponent's hands rather than attacking the centreline. The main weapon in

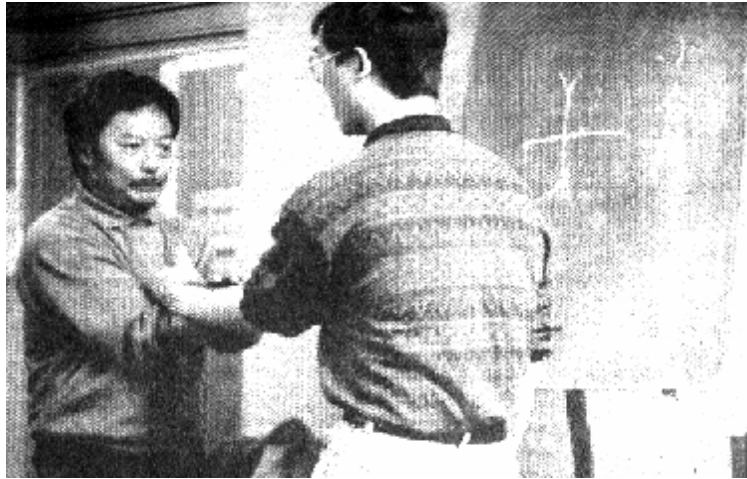


Po Pai section of the Wooden Dummy.



Pak Sau and strike.

Ving Tsun is the centreline punches and chi sau would only be required if a punch were to be blocked. Only then would subtle sticky hand moves be required to be able to attack the opponent's centreline again. Chi sau training creates the skill to find the gaps in the opponent's defence to be able to attack the centreline, as opposed to following the opponent's every move and becoming exhausted.



Tan Sau, Fook Sau demonstration with Sifu Anthony Kan.

Master Wong Shun Leung next showed the Ving Tsun kicks; front heel kick and side kick. Both are performed low. The foot travels from its stance position to the target in a straight line thereby utilising the equal and opposite force being directed towards the floor to gain power and stability. Kicks are aimed mostly at the opponent's centreline and are never executed above waist level, this being their maximum reach parallel to the floor. This also allows for quick stance recovery.

Last of all Master Wong performed the first sixty moves on the wooden dummy. Several concepts and explanations were offered for many of the moves such as incorrect moves being corrected in following moves which would be helpful to the practice of chi sau. Pak sau, man sau and Po Pai were explained in detail, the latter for use particularly where there was some obstacle behind the opponent that he could be pushed unto or over. Unfortunately time eventually beat the enthusiastic Master Wong and the seminar had to draw to a close.



End of the seminar. Everyone gathers for photos. Left of Master Wong is Sifu Clive Potter. Right of Master Wong is Sifu Anthony Kan.

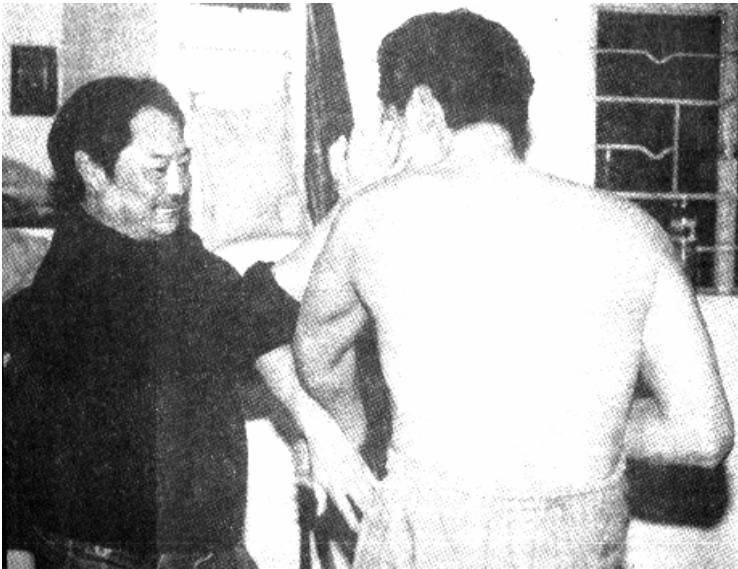
After all the recent heated articles appearing in martial arts magazines concerning different viewpoints of Ving Tsun,

it was refreshing to see so many Ving Tsun practitioners from different schools throughout the country, come together under one roof to listen to the famous Master Wong Shun Leung. Many people had travelled far to hear ideas that may have opposed their own prior to and after the seminar, but all were able to listen and show their appreciation and respect for the Master with a good round of applause at the end.

A MASTER TALKS

An interview with Master Wong Shun Leung

By
Rusper Patel



Sifu demonstrates the idea of always attacking the opponent.

SIFU WONG SHUN LEUNG has been involved in martial arts for nearly 40 years. His experience began like any schoolboy, by becoming involved in local fights. This developed into an interest in martial arts. He made a name for himself by successfully fighting, for Ving Tsun, against representatives from other schools of martial arts. Now his reputation is world-wide as a teacher of Ving Tsun Kung Fu. He has a very realistic and practical approach to his teaching. Throughout my time in Hong Kong, students from all over the world have come to train with him. There have also been many reporters who wish to interview him. Usually they concentrate on his relationship with Bruce Lee and do not tap his own knowledge of martial arts. The next few pages are an attempt to tap this knowledge and to give people an understanding of Wong Shun Leung's theories of Ving Tsun Kung Fu.

What made you first interested in training martial arts?

When I was young, I was a small person and I believed that practising martial arts would give me more confidence in life.

What kinds of style did you practise?

I first trained in boxing and tai chi before being introduced to Ving Tsun.

Were you interested in fighting generally or did you see only the sporting aspect?

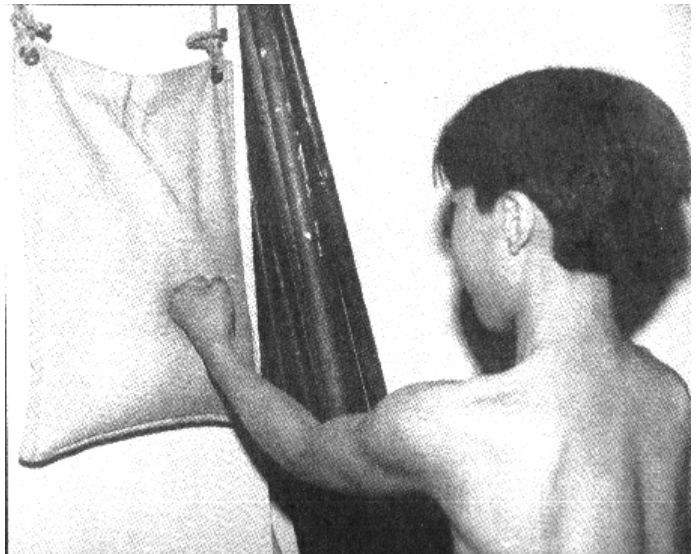
I was mainly interested in the practical applications of martial arts.

What attracted you to Ving Tsun and made you stay with the system?

At first I had the wrong idea about martial arts, I thought that they were for self defence only. I liked the principle of Ving Tsun which stated that attack was the best form of defence, The training idea of Ving Tsun was to make you strong enough to attack an opponent, otherwise it was felt that you would be unable to defend yourself successfully. Through training the forms we realised that, unlike other martial arts, there were no fixed moves in Ving Tsun. That is to say, if I attack in one way you must respond in a certain manner. Ving Tsun stipulates the use of concepts and principles, and there are techniques to follow these "ideas".

How did you train Ving Tsun under Yip Man?

Training always began with the first form, Siu Lin Tao and then single arm chi sao (sticky hands training). Once familiarity with this was achieved then simple double chi sao was trained. When our Sifu (teacher) saw that we were competent with basic hand positions he would teach us the footwork. We had to move backwards and forwards



Punching training is important to enable strong attacks to be delivered.

using our stances. When this was learned, turning the stance followed by lap sao was taught. Chum Kiu and Biu Jee, the second and third forms, were taught next followed by the wooden dummy. If the student is competent here then I will teach the long pole. However the case of the butterfly knives is slightly different. I can't teach the techniques to just anyone. This is not because of any secret or any prejudice, but because the ideas behind the movements are different to the empty hand ideas even though

they look similar. Teaching the knives to a student who has a weak grasp of the basic Ving Tsun idea may cause him confusion. Ever since I have been teaching, I have followed almost the same sequence of teaching as Yip Man. The only way by which I differ is that after Chum Kiu I teach about one third of the dummy form. Following this I will teach the student Biu Jee and then the remaining dummy form.

Grandmaster Yip Man asked me why I taught this way. I felt that the movements of the first third of the dummy closely resembled the first and second forms. However the last two thirds of the dummy form had theories and movements which resembled the third form Biu Jee.

How does the training differ from that in other styles?

Other styles would place much emphasis on the training of forms and combination techniques. Ving Tsun ideas will not allow this method of training. Ving Tsun theory will not allow any fixed responses or combinations of techniques. A Ving Tsun fighter will use the theory to find a technique for the given situation. His daily practise will give him the reflex to automatically select the right technique. It should not matter what technique follows the previous one as long as they fit the theory and flow through and not put the fighter in vulnerable or awkward positions. It is therefore important for the student to



Basic Chi Sau positions.

practice the reflex action so he may apply the theory of Ving Tsun to various situations created by any opponent. Grandmaster Yip Man used to be of the belief, and this is shared by many of his students, that it is your opponent who will teach you how to hit him. I often see students training who are trying to think too much how to hit their opponents. This is wrong because the student has preconceived ideas as to how he should move and how the opponent might move. When fighting, your opponent should also be free to move how he likes, he will not think as you. Hence your movements will be determined by his actions. If your intentions are to hit your opponent above all else, then you may over commit yourself or allow your opponent to attack you easily. It is far better to allow your opponent to guide you during the fight and show you how to hit him.

How did you train mentally and physically for your matches against other styles?

For such a fight, you must train hard to just develop the self confidence to enter such a match. You must, by way of your self confidence, "how that you can win. When Wing Chun practitioners go to fight and are defeated then the mentality is not think that the other person is better than himself. Instead he needs to ask himself what were his mistakes to invite the attack. This is the kind of positive thinking which any fighter must possess.

You were a strong fighter long before you began Ving Tsun. Did you find the concepts immediately useful or only certain techniques?

I am very small, so large people used to attempt to take advantage of me. I had many opportunities to fight and use Ving Tsun. I found the concept of always making my actions attacking the most useful. Ving Tsun never, never speaks of just blocking an attack but rather to counter with another attack. Offence is the best form of defence. For example if for nine out of ten seconds I am concentrating on hitting you, then for nine seconds you must be defending. I therefore have a better chance of striking you. I never think or speak of just blocking an attack but rather how to counter attack an opponent. The skills gained from chi sao should enable my attacking force to somehow continue towards the opponent.

Which is the best way to train in Ving Tsun?

The best way to train is to find an experienced coach and trainer. The student must trust such a person and believe in him to follow closely his instruction. The student must know his ability too, and work hard for improvement. The Ving Tsun student is training to be a fighter and so must be able to withstand some punishment as well as launch strong attacks.



Positions can be trained on the wooden dummy.

The student of Ving Tsun must also be smart enough to know how to apply the concepts of Ving Tsun to survive a situation. In the old days I did not teach for the money and so I could teach whom ever I wanted. I usually taught people who had the potential to become strong fighters. Now circumstances are different, if you are keen to learn, I will teach you. My living is now made by teaching Ving Tsun . The old students would do anything that I, as a coach, asked them to do. I was not gaining any financial reward. The student could trust that I would only ask him to do something beneficial to his training. Sometimes I would also provide food for my students after training. Hence money would not stand in the way of a good student's progress. Those students whom I taught were very often already of athletic build. This was gained from their participation in other sports. I found that those students who participated in endurance sports were more geared to applying Ving Tsun correctly. They could apply the forces in a continuous stream over a long period of time as is Ving Tsun `s requirement.

How does the teaching of Yip Man differ from the way you teach?

Yip Man taught in a traditional manner. This meant that Yip Man would give some information only once in a while. If you were not alert and missed the point, then hard lines. He would expect the students to grasp the whole meaning from, maybe, one or two words of explanation. Of course, he welcomed questions and discussions which showed that a student was thinking for himself. Hence the information was not evenly distributed. Some students might get little bits of loose information, whilst others received more information. You had to be able to read between the lines to arrive at an answer. There was no systematic manner of explanation. Grandmaster Yip Man also had a different attitude to that which I have. He used to believe that teaching one good student would be better than teaching ten bad ones. Hence, he would not spend too much time with a student whom he thought not worthy of his time. This is why some teachers of Ving Tsun teach in different manners. From Yip Man's one word of explanation they may have got the wrong meaning which they now pass on. Their grasp of the ideas which Yip Man gave depended very much on their intelligence, attendance to class and on their training attitude. This is not a criticism of Yip Man but rather it reflects the attitude of the time which was very much traditional. Wherever and whomever I have been teaching, it has been my preference to convey the information to all people in attendance. I try to treat everyone equally during my lessons and seminars. If therefore, students are allowed such free interpretation as that which Yip Man allowed then the students may take Ving Tsun as an art. In fact it is a skill. We are not performing for an audience but rather doing a job.

How do the hand boxing forms relate to chi sau?

If we use the analogy of basic English language, the Siu Lin Tao is the ABC of Wing Chun. When learning Chum Kiu we learn to make some words. Open progression to chi sau we can express those words as sentences. However, the application and mentality of Biu Jee is different. A situation must be very bad before the concepts of Biu Jee are used. In this form we must consider outside influences. For example, is there a wall behind us or a chair nearby? Biu Jee teaches us that in some situations events may be such that rules will be broken and that a fighter may use anything that works to survive. It is this form which teaches us that in Ving Tsun there are no absolute situations, no perfect conditions when you are fighting for your life. The chances are that you will not be fighting when you want or on your own terms. There may be no warning and your first initiation to the fight may be an injury. You may be sitting, standing in any position. Biu Jee will make you aware that things may not go your way.

How does chi sau and the forms relate to combat?

Many Ving Tsun people don't know how to fight. In chi sau you will practise those techniques which you have learned from the forms. We are training our reflex actions for certain situations created by our opponents. Some people have the wrong idea that chi sau is to teach you to tie up your opponent or stick endlessly to each other's arms. It is not. It is to train the reflex ability to continue your attacks if they have been deflected. In a true fight we must fight in reality. It should be our intention to do whatever is necessary to survive the situation. It is our mentality to combat which will teach us how to hit the opponent. If you are kind hearted you may try to play with the opponent's arms, whilst doing him no harm. Confidence in chi sau may result in over confidence in a fight. However, delay in an attack will only give the opponent more time to attack you. You, as the fighter, have the responsibility to attack your opponent and to try to finish him off in the shortest time and not to waste the time doing unnecessary fancy techniques. If you don't finish him he will finish you. If you don't want to finish him and he doesn't want to finish you then why are you fighting.



Lap Sau exercise is a good all round drill.

What difficulties did you find whilst learning chi sau and other Ving Tsun techniques?

When I was learning, from the beginning, my Sifu wanted us to lay good foundations. That is, he wanted us to practise the basics slowly and diligently, as his own Sifu had instructed him to do so. It was only by taking time to lay these solid foundations that any of the normal complications could be resolved in a progressive manner. Only by understanding the theory from the beginning could any errors be reasoned out and corrected.

What are the most common mistakes which you find with students nowadays?

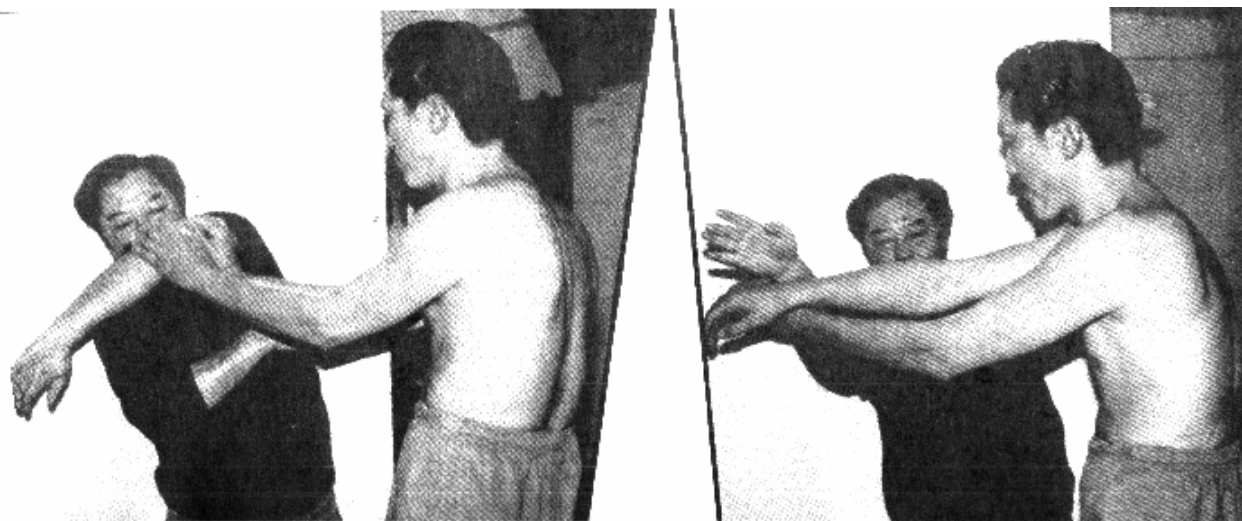
Some students still put too much emphasis on pre-set combinations. Quite often the students already have this idea from books, magazines and by talking to friends. They don't understand how to apply the concepts of Ving Tsun. This means that the students are concentrating too much on the individual technique rather than seeing the whole situation. They cannot appreciate the theory which would suggest a technique.

Most students are not able to concentrate all their time and energy on learning martial skills. However these same people want to attain a reasonable level of skill. What should be trained the most, for people with limited time?

There is no quick way of learning Ving Tsun. You must train diligently at it. What you put in will form the basis of what you get from it. I have shed a lot of blood for Ving Tsun. Broken bones, cuts, etc., are common for this kind of training. This may scare many people but you are learning a combat art and we are not here to play about. Superficial training will only mislead people into believing that they have special skills which in fact no one can possess. Fighting is savage business and will usually cause injuries to both parties. Soft training will not prepare you for this.

Many new schools are opening which claim to teach only self defence or complete martial systems. How can a seemingly traditional system, like Ving Tsun, compete with these styles which appear to give the public what it wants?

I believe that to get the full picture of a martial art you must study a complete system under one good coach. It is, often, only a business gimmick to advertise quick self defence techniques or magical powers. There are many stupid people in the world who will believe in mystical powers to protect their bodies from attack, they don't want to train hard but wish to take a short cut, Those who train hard and drip sweat and blood will know whether they stand any chance in the fight or not, whilst those who haven't will always be in doubt and hide behind their beliefs. If there was a really easy way of becoming a superman then we would all train this way – after all who



Master Wong uses a Biu Jee technique to escape a dangerous position.

wants pain all the time. You could also say that if some kung fu could make you a superman then the Olympic Chinese boxers would train in it and never lose.

Do you feel that there is any difference between a traditional style end modern self defence?

The object of Ving Tsun is to teach you how to hit your opponent. It should teach you to use the simplest method to hit your opponent. Any martial art must teach you this concept if it is to offer fighting techniques. The idea of a self defence class as opposed to a martial arts class may be in the minds of students, or put in the minds of students by teachers wanting to encourage business by seeming to address a topical subject. There is no easy way of defending ourselves without being strong enough to attack as well. We must train hard to achieve this for ourselves under a coach who is willing to offer the correct advice and training.

Many instructors teach chi sau in such a way that the student will never expect to be hit by his opponent In a real situation and against a competent opponent do you feel that training in any martial art can eliminate the possibilities of getting hurt?

If you don't want to be hurt then maybe you should run away and not fight. If you are training Kung Fu then you may need to fight and by your training be able to absorb and give punishment.

Do you feel that Ving Tsun has any limitations? Many students like to combine boxing with kicking, throwing and grappling on the ground to develop eclectic systems.

In training Biu Jee we are taught to be free. The first forms tell us about normal situations. Biu Jee is for the abnormal situations. The ideas in Biu Jee sometimes will contradict normal Ving Tsun ideas in order to allow the person to survive in a bad situation. We are told to do what is necessary to survive and so there are no limitations. Styles have different concepts and objectives. With Ving Tsun we want to attack our opponent in a very direct and savage manner. Other styles will contradict this objective by attempting non-direct tactics. If we combine them our objectives can become confused in the heat of the fight. We will be less effective.

Do you consider Ving Chun to be style or an expression of concepts?

An expression of concepts. Wing Tsun does not have to be done to the letter. Only enough needs to be done to fulfil the requirements of the theory. An example, of the above is the fixed elbow position. The beginner is taught simply to keep his elbows as close to the centre line as possible. This is the concept. Once we are good at this, we need to relax our elbows rather than stick rigidly to a position and restrict our movements. The skills which we develop in wing Tsun will allow us to relax our arms and to use the fixed elbow position only when needed. After all the elbow belongs to the fighter and not the fighter to his elbow. They work for you.

How does Wing Chun differ from other styles? Are any styles similar or also good for fighting skill?

I am now teaching Ving Tsun and am in no position to criticise other kung fu systems. But I would like to say that many styles ask men to imitate animal positions. Humans don't have the ability to imitate some positions. For example some animals can leap around from here to there quite easily because they have long tails to help them maintain balance. We humans don't have such a tail to aid us and so some techniques may not be natural.



Master Wong deals with an opponent's roundhouse kick.

Therefore when someone asks me what animal style Ving Tsun is I could say "human style". We use the weapons which nature has given to us for the best of our ability. We also train in a realistic manner by allowing our opponents the freedom to attack at will. In this way we have an infinite supply of situations by which our opponents can check and test our technique.

Now you have trained and taught Ving Tsun for almost 40 years, can you give a simple definition of Ving Chun?

The Ving Tsun idea brings out your in built animal instincts to protect yourself and to do the most harm to an aggressor in the shortest possible time. All people have the animal instinct to fight when they

are born, it is a natural thing. Our day-to-day life in so called civilisation has tamed this instinct. For example we do not need to hunt for our food, we can obtain it in a supermarket. As a teacher of Kung Fu I often appreciate the way women fight each other. It is often the case in the animal kingdom that females are more vicious than the male counterparts of the same race. When women fight they may not use bong sau or tan sau, but they do use Wing Chun principles. Very often they will bite, pull hair, gouge eyes and scratch. There is nothing wrong in these techniques, they are direct and give the opponent a great deal of pain. They fight from instinct to survive. When men fight they often try to be fancy to impress others. It is Ving Tsun way to harm the opponent in the shortest possible time and to suffer the minimum damage. If you are not trying to achieve this goal then why fight?

Discussions with Master Wong

Shun Leung and Master Tsui

Sheung Tin

During the week of 20th September 1990, we had the honour of meeting Master Won Shun Leung and Master Tsui Sheung Tin from Hong Kong. Master Tsui Sheung Tin was the third official student of the late Grandmaster Yip Man in Hong Kong and Master Wong Shun Leung was probably THE most famous fighter of the Wing Chun clan in the early 1950's. Bruce Lee was a student of Yip Man but it was mostly Wong Shun Leung who taught Bruce Lee his Wing Chun.

Yvette Wong invited the two masters to visit the city of Victoria, B.C. for a holiday and at the same time arranged for them to give a two hour seminar. During their stay, she had frequent opportunity to clarify various points about Wing Chun. We hope some of these points will help the current generation of practitioners with their Wing Chun. After reading these points again, I am amazed' at how many things these masters said in a very short seminar. They were literal!;, overflowing with knowledge. These points were translated by Yvette Wong from the Cantonese talk that Master Wong Shun Leung gave. This means we may not have captured the true essence of all that was said.

- Ray Van Raamsdonk

Siu Lim Tao

The first set is like your alphabet. It allows you to construct words and sentences. Without it you cannot construct anything. It is the basic foundation of the Wing Chun art. Many of the concepts of the later sets already have their roots in the first set. For example the Jip sau (trapping hand) of the second set, is a combination of the first set Jut sau (jerking hand), and the first set Tok sau (uplifting palm; the movement performed after the Bong sau).

The stance is done pigeon-toed in order to have a stable solid structure. It is like a camera tripod or pyramid. Triangle structures are the most stable of all structure A wider different stance is not as flexible. Also when you get tired a different stance will cause you to collapse to the ground. The Wing Chun stance will still hold you up because of its triangular characteristic.

Crossing the hands down and up in the first set defines your vertical centre line. you draw a straight horizontal line and use a compass to mark a cross above and below the straight line, then by joining the two points, you get a vertical centreline This line is the centre of the horizontal line. All actions in Wing Chun are done through this centreline.

Crossing the hand down and up doesn't seem to have any apparent useful purpose because the action looks so simple. But if you perform this movement correctly, you will have the proper structure and use of force for applying a Tan sau and punch defence. For example, none of the strong students at the seminar could prevent Master Tsui Sheung Tin from lifting his Tan sau up. With the Tan sau he could unbalance anyone. With the Fook sau and Bong sau he could do the same thing. When someone gave Master Tsui Sheung Tin a heavy punch, he applied an effortless uplifting Tan sau from the crossed hand position, to really whack that person's force away. The person was really shocked by the explosive force. (Note don't interpret this as Master Tsui Sheung Tin advocating hitting force away. He was just illustrating the strength of proper structure.)

If you punch down your centreline when you are facing an opponent all of your force will go to the opponent's centreline. It won't be deflected to one side or the other. In this way he will receive the full impact of your force.

The punch in the first set is done with wrist action, with the elbow down. In this I way you use the ground for support. This gave Bruce Lee's one-inch punch a lot of force. If you put your elbow out, it twists your body and the ground is not helping support the punch. If the elbow is out, some of the force will be lost. In many movements, you should analyse your line of force in order to maximise that force. If for example you punch with your shoulder raised up, the force line goes from your fist, up your arm and out your shoulder. This is much weaker than if you had the force line come up from the ground.

The Huen sau or wrist circling is to train your wrist to have the wrist force you need for a strong punch. Also it helps strengthen the wrist so it doesn't bend during the punch and injure the wrist. The circling hand is also used to change your position relative to the opponent once you have made a mistake. For example if your opponent throws a right punch and you apply a right hand high Tan sau, your head is open to his left punch. By circling the top hand you can change your position so you no longer create this opening.

The Wing Chun art has to do with economy. If we make a mistake, how can we recover our position? For example, if someone throws a right punch and you use left Bong sau, this is a good Bong sau because you aren't worried about the opponent's other hand. But if you use a right Bong sau against an opponent's right punch, your head and lower rib area is left exposed to the opponent's left punch. Now suppose a low left punch comes. You can use a shift towards the right with a right hand high and left hand low Gan sau to recover your position. Likewise if an opponent punches with a left high punch and you use a left high Gan sau, your side and head are open to the opponent's right punch. You can use a shift and left hand high Kwun sau (right low Bong and left high Tan) to recover your position.

Master Tsui Sheung Tin used the Tan sau, Bong sau and Fook sau structures very effectively to deal with all kinds of force. You could not lift his arm, but you could not prevent him from lifting his.

When you do the first set, just relax and let all your force come out naturally. You can sometimes apply a small force but sometimes you have to apply a very strong force. The first set tells you how that force can best be applied.

The side Gum sau can be used if an opponent grabs your wrist and elbow. In this case you can just use a Gum sau and shoulder hit to get rid of his force and counterattack. Even if your arm is twisted behind your back, you can escape with minimum force by straightening the arm, and turning the wrist in such a way that you can apply a Tai Chi or Aikido type of straight arm throwing action to throw the opponent over. You have to apply the technique correctly so that not much force is required.

The backward hit in the first set could be a rear groin hit or grab. It is not often used. But if someone grabs you tightly from behind, you bring your hands close to your body and slide them behind you. This may cause your opponent, while still holding on, to bend his groin area away from your attack. This will give you some room to manoeuvre in order to apply another technique.

The elbow up and chop to the side action should be done in a natural sort of way. If someone pushes your elbow, then by spreading out your hand in a relaxed way they will be unbalanced.

In the Kwun sau part of the first set, Master Tsui Sheung Tin brought his palm back to the side of the body, with the fingers pointing up. He used this if his arm was pressed to the centre, to make the force of the opponent go off to the side.

The low palm part of the first set is done differently by different first generation students. Master Wong Shun Leung and Master Tsui Sheung Tin said some do it this way, or this is how it was taught, but we prefer this variation much better. The original version of the first set low palm movement is that a Tan sau comes out, followed by a Chum sau, followed by a circling hand, followed by a low palm hit then a grabbing hand, followed by the fist being pulled back. In Master Wong Shung Leung's version, the Tan sau is followed by a Gan sau, which is followed by a Tan sau, followed by a Huen sau, followed by a low palm hit, followed by a grabbing hand and then the fist is pulled back. This change was incorporated as a result of some fighting experiences. Now many teachers of Wing Chun do it this way.

Some people think that the first set brushing the arm action is to get rid of a strong grab on the wrist, but this does not work. The real idea is if you are controlled, like by the elbow, then you can use the idea from this action to regain the centre position.

The third set: Wong Kiu's idea of regaining the centre does not really conflict with Wong Shun Leung's idea of unusual situations or Augustin Fong's idea of emergency situations.

Chum Kiu

If you throw a left punch at someone and they use the right Bong sau, you can pull their Bong sau down with your right hand to pull them off balance and then hit with the left hand. If the guarding hand is lined up with the wrist, then the opponent will have no protection if he is really pulled down. He can't recover with a sideways Pak sau. But if the guarding hand is held closer towards the shoulder, will naturally block the incoming punch.

Also, if the Wu sau (guarding hand) is in the centre, like we have it, then a hit can come to either side of the Wu sau. But with the hand towards the shoulder, which is actually your new centreline when you are shifted, the opponent's punch can only come to one side of your guarding hand. This makes the punch easier to deal with.

The second set has three quite different variations of the Bong sau. One is to really whack the opponent's arm away. Another is if your Bong sau is already in contact with the opponent's arm, and he is pressing you - for example, their left arm presses your right Bong sau. In this case you can change the Bong sau to a Lan sau. The Lan sau is performed with the wrist higher than the elbow, not level, in the Wong Shun Leung version. This brings the opponent's force down.

The double Bong sau in the second set, is not really used in a double way. Also the wrists in Master Wong Shun Leung's version are not together. This movement tells you how to use the Bong sau in combination with a moving stance in order to get rid of a force. For example, if someone tries to put his arms around you from the front (a front bear hug), you can create a circular defence by putting your left arm in the Tan sau position, and your right arm in the low Bong sau position. At the same time, charge into the opponent to unbalance him. The opponent's arms have hard time crushing you because you've created an extra circle around you (circular defence). Also if your arm is grabbed, you can charge in and change to a step and Bong sau to get rid of an opponent's force. Part of the second set assume you already have contact.

In the second set, Master Wong Shun Leung starts with the left low Gum sau, followed by a right low Gum sau. Tsui Sheung Tin does six sliding down hands (same as Wong Kiu) in the first set, followed by six punches.

The Bar arm (Lan sau) in the second set should not be done high (shoulder level) or else it isn't a practical movement. The Lan sau should be performed at about the solar plexus level. The use of this movement is, for example, if your right arm has been grabbed and a left punch is coming, then your left bar arm jams that punch before the punch gets too far. There are a variety of these kinds of jamming movements. If the Lan sau is too high, then the Lan sau is not effective for jamming any punch.

Bil Gee

The third set elbow action can also be used to escape from a wrist hold.

The first and second sets cover what to do in ordinary kinds of situations. The second set shows how to build up words and sentences with your vocabulary from the first set. The third set however is different in concept. It tells you how to deal with unusual situations (Augustine Fong says emergency situations, this now make sense). For example, if you have many opponents or if you are pinned against a wall or are on the ground, or the opponent has crossed your arms. Wong Shun Leung once told someone that the third set is for crowd fighting. Wang Kiu said this was not true because any set could be used for crowd fighting. However, the real meaning of Master Wong Shun Leung's comment was for unusual situations.

The first and second set and sticking hand training tells you never to cross your hands. The third set actions tell you to always cross your hands. To a beginner, this must seem very illogical and confusing. But the reason for crossing is to analyse those kind of situations.

If you up against a wall and your elbow is pressed, you can use [?] to get the force off your elbow. But if your elbow is pressed, and your elbow is in a high position (Like over your head), you have to change the line of force towards the side (in the direction the opponent is pushing). For example, if the opponent pins your right elbow over your head and you are against a wall, you can get his left hand off your elbow by sliding your left hand from outside of your elbow towards the left because that is where his force is being directed.

If you hold two hands in front of you and your opponent grabs them from underneath, you can bring your hand close to your body and use the third set downward pressing elbow to get their hand off. The leverage created with this movement is such that it is very hard for an opponent to hold on. This is useful for a smaller person being grabbed by a larger person. It's usually not the case that a smaller person tries to grab a larger person. Also when the hand is open, it can get closer to your body. It also seems to twist in such a way that extra leverage is added to remove the grip.

The third set foot circling movements can be used in two ways: one is if your opponent steps in, you sweep him to the ground with a circular crescent kick; another is if a kick comes in, you deflect the kick to the side with your foot. Use feet against feet and hands against hands. Don't use your hands against feet because you want to save your hands for hitting high.

Wong Shun Leung has a crossing down and up movement in the third set as well. Master Wong Kiu's version does not.

The bending down movement of the third set is meant to be used if you are smashed to the ground or against a wall. You recover from this position by using your hands first, not your head. The variations used by different practitioners don't really matter. What matters is the concept and idea behind what you are doing. In the case where you are smashed against a wall and the person has a broken bottle, it is still better to come out with the hands first rather than your head.

Master Wong Shun Leung and Master Wong Kiu both perform the circling hand followed by a Fook sau as opposed to some variations which use a back of the wrist deflection followed by a pressing hand (flat Fook sau). This movement is used to recover from a bad position.

One use of the Man sau is to defend against an opponent from the side. The attack can be a hitting attack or you can simply be pressed from the side.

Against a hook punch, Wong Shun Leung used a Bil sau structure combined with straight punch or palm. His Bil sau catches the hook punch near the elbow and really whacks your hook punch back. At the same time you are hit hard by the other hand. If you apply this technique incorrectly, then the punch ends up hitting your head. Master Tsui Sheung Tin used the Tan sau structure and sometimes the Wu sau structure against various parts of the arm to handle the force.

Questions and Answers

· Master Wong Shun Leung, can you comment on some of the fights you have had?

When we won in a fight, we weren't always happy just to win. We tried to figure out how to win in a better and more economical way. The best is always if only a single action is required. Try not to use two actions. Like when kicking, Wing Chun doesn't like to lift the knee first and then kick because this is a two step action. Also the line of force is wrong because your kick will not have ground support. Instead, your kick will transmit back to your body to off-balance you. This is why Yip Man's kick in the second set looks a bit funny at first. We want to travel in a straight line from the ground to the target, not lift the knee first.

· Can you comment on boxing?

In boxing, the style has changed over the years from crouching to being more and more vertical. Also people used to jump around, but the modern boxer like Tyson just moves in flat footed to demolish his opponent in a scientific way. In Wing Chun a person does not bob as in boxing. When two beginners fight it doesn't matter how they fight, but against professionals it makes a difference. Even a smaller [person] is better off to keep the body vertical and step back, then to bob and weave. This is because the hand can move faster than the body. Boxing is still like a game because there are rules for how you can hit and how you can't hit. If you attack someone and they bend their head, then in Wing Chun you can still hit them with your hand even without pulling your hand back.

· What is the idea of the Chain punches in Wing Chun?

In Wing Chun if you throw two fast punches to someone's head they'll be knocked out. The first punch causes the brain to go to one side of the skull. If a quick second hit comes, the person is knocked out. If you withdraw the hand to give the second punch, then the brain can recover (will have more time to recover), but if you don't give this time then a knockout results.

· How can you deal with a good kicker?

Against a strong kicker there are two ways to fight. If you are experience just go into their centre and hit. But if you aren't, then back up. Each time the opponent misses, he will lose one degree of confidence. After a while you have more chances.

· *What is the idea of the wooden dummy?*

The idea of the dummy is that we do make mistakes. When we do, how can we recover from those mistakes in the most economical way? How can we minimise the error we have made?

· *What can you do against the low side kick?*

For low side kick attacks, Wong Shun Leung uses the feet. For knee attack, he said if you hit straight the knee cannot really get you. Against the Thai boxing round kick Wong Shun Leung kicks straight forward, rather than use a clashing force with a Bong leg. This forces the kicker straight back.

· *Of what use is the Chum Kiu Jip sau movement?*

One use is as follows: if someone grabs your shirt you can use the first set Jut sau combined with an uplifting palm to injure the arm of the opponent. This is more economical than the Judo method of grabbing the hand and twisting it.

· *Why do the hands go up and down in section four of the wooden dummy?*

In section four of the wooden dummy Wong Shun Leung said there is no up and down palm movement to start it off, it's a forward pushing palm movement.

· *What is the third set foot circling action used for?*

The third set foot circling action is used for:

foot sweeping,

foot interception,

circling steps to chase an opponent who is very mobile and tries to evade from side to side while trying to throw sweeping hook punch' to your head.

· *What is better, the spear or the pole?*

Wong Shun Leung said the long pole is the Wing Chun weapon instead of the spear. He said the long pole can deflect lighter weapons out of the way easier.

· *What do some other Wing Chun Sifus you have seen do wrong?*

Some have too much movement when they defend.

· *Was Yip Man good?*

Wong Shun Leung said if he wasn't good then he would never have joined up. He said Yip Man was very good.

· *Did Yip Man teach all of the principles or did you figure them out?*

Yip Man taught many of the principles but we also figured some out from experience and long discussions. Wing Chun teaches you how to think. People have found that Wing Chun principles can also be applied to other areas of one's life.

· *Can you comment on the effect of a punch?*

Wong Shun Leung said that when you punch the head the brain hits the side of the skull. If the brain is against the side of the skull and a second hit follows, then damage and a knockout results because there is no cushioning possible. This is why Wing Chun has its rapid fire punches instead of the pull back approach.

· *What kind of art is Wing Chun?*

Wong Shun Leung said that Wing Chun is an attacking art. The idea is to hit straight right away. Don't have any roundabout motions.

· *What is a tip for our sticking hands and for real Wing Chun?*

Don't play with hands. Try to hit the opponent each time.

· *We have heard that you taught Bruce Lee. Can you comment on this?*

Bruce Lee was good. All of the credit cannot go to the teacher.

· *How does Wing Chun approach knife fighting?*

Wong Shun Leung said he has faced multiple opponents armed with knives However on the subject of knife fighting training, Wong Shun Leung said Wing Chun does not send you out to get killed. Even if you can defend against eighty percent of the knife attacks, the remainder will get you killed. A lot of defences are not realistic because the knife can twist around. Sometimes a kick to the hand is used.

· *How do we bring the Fook sau to the centre in the Chum Kiu form?*

In the second set when you chop to the side and bring the Fook sau to the centre, the elbow moves first because this is a shorter distance. It really whacks the arm and then comes straight forward towards your head.

· *Can you comment on some of the Wing Chun shapes?*

Master Tsui Sheung Tin said the shapes are not as important as the structure. This is more important than the sticking feeling with the Fook sau exactly level. Both masters felt that the flat Fook sau is very bad and is use only because people can't do the other Fook sau properly. The flat one is bad because you can't punch as fast from this position.

· *Is the Fak sau or neck chop used a lot?*

Master Wong Shun Leung never teaches to hit the neck because once his finger tips caught someone's neck and that person almost died. He instantly went pale.

· *How does the Tan sau elevate?*

The Tan sau structure is elevated as one unit in order to handle force. The arm never bends from the elbow.

· *How can you respond to a grab?*

If you hold two arms out in front of you and someone grabs them, then you can use the third set elbow movement to escape. Bring the hand right in to touch the body. If the hand is held in a fist, it doesn't work. Then press down with the elbow.

· How can you escape from a rear arm lock?

To escape from a rear arm lock, straighten the arm by choosing the best line of force. The hand turns and goes in an upward direction. Then step in and unbalance the opponent.

· Can you explain a bit about what Wing Chun is?

On the subject of what is Wing Chun, Master Wong Shun Leung said that if you make a mistake then you learn how to minimise that mistake. You learn to recover quickly. So in essence he was saying that Wing Chun is really about being economical in your actions and use of energy.

· How much did you train when you learned Wing Chun?

Wong Shun Leung said they trained six days a week, six hours a day. Bruce Lee learned for about one and a half years and then went to the USA.

· What is the literal meaning of "Wing Chun"?

Wing Chun means "Springtime Song"

· Why are there differences in Wing Chun terminology?

Yip Man did not pass on all these things. Some terminology like Ding sau is made up because they really didn't have a term for some of these things.

· Do the Hong Kong Police still use Wing Chun?

The Hong Kong police do not really want to use Wing Chun now that much because it is too aggressive an art. They are supposed to just help and protect people, not attack them.

· Have you taught any women who are good ?

Wong Shun Leung has not really taught too many woman except the all Asian champion who was a very aggressive woman. She is now married and out of it.

· Could we see some sticking hands between the two masters?

Wong Shun Leung said that you would not see too much because it is like when two teams who are good play together, they are so evenly matched that it looks boring. The same is true when you watch a match between two equal judo players.

· Can you comment on the straight line concept?

Wong Shun Leung said when you kick a football on the side it will wobble and won't fly straight, but when you kick the football dead centre the football flies straight and the most force is transmitted to the ball. Therefore we hit people in the centre as well.

· Is the triangle theory of any use?

Wong Shun Leung said the theory of triangles is very important in Wing Chun, because this is a very stable structure. It is used not only in the theory of our stance (like a pyramid or the Eiffel Tower) but also in the angles of our arms.

· Of what use is the Can sau and the Huen sau?

The Gan sau is used to recover from a Bong sau mistake. The Huen sau is used to recover from a Gan sau mistake. A mistake is when you apply a technique which leaves you open, exposed or vulnerable on one side.

· Do you have a lot of drills when you teach?

In Hong Kong we don't use a lot of drills. We teach sticking hands and build everything into it.

VING TSUN CENTRELINE THEORY

by
Sifu Clive Potter

POSITION OF CENTRELINE



Fig. 1

Fig. 2

One of the most important aspects of Ving Tsun Kung Fu, is the understanding of centreline theory and thus angles of attack and defence. Indeed, once stance is in place, the first two moves of the first form, Sil Lin Tau, is the tracing out of the centreline, using the arms like the arcs of a compass. (See Figs. 1 and 2)

It is widely recognised in Ving Tsun, that practitioners think of themselves and their opponents as having a centreline as in Figs. 1 and 2. It is also said that if the attacker or defendant turns, then the centreline shifts its position to the side. (See Fig. 3). However, a different and simpler way of thinking of this concept, could be to visualise the centreline as a spindle which travels down through the centre top of the head, through the inside of the body and



Fig. 3

Fig. 4

out through the groin. (See Fig. 4). This being the case, many of Ving Tsun's theories can become easier to understand. Whether face on or sideways, the centreline is always there, in the same place.

ATTACKING AND THE CENTRELINE

It is important when attacking, to attack the opponent's centreline. To hit



Fig. 5

either side enables the defendant to turn on his centreline "spindle" and to a certain extent, absorb the blow. (See Fig. 5). Hitting on the centreline itself does not allow the opponent to turn on impact and forces him to move back, upsetting his stance. (See Figs. 6, "a" or "b").

Having said this, turning the opponent on his centreline "spindle", can be used to the attacker's advantage. When offered an outstretched arm, that is one that has overreached its correct elbow position from the body, a palm strike/push on or behind the elbow, directed to one side of the centreline, can turn him, upset his balance and place him in a more vulnerable position (See Fig. 7).

Another aspect of thinking of the centreline as a spindle running through the inside of the body, is when punching. When aiming for this centreline, a punch will have more penetration because instead of aiming to hit with the full extension of the arm on contact, the punch will be

executed at a closer distance so that the fist can reach the centreline that runs through inside the body. This also has the advantage of the elbow being bent on initial contact with the opponent, thus maintaining the correct elbow distance from the body for as long as possible and creating a more uprooting force to the opponent's stance.

When attacking an opponent, one must always be sure to be "square on" to his centreline. (See Fig. 8). Overturning past this position when striking, can cause the forward force towards the centreline to be diverted to a different angle. (See Fig. 9).

In "Chi Sau" practice it can be said that each practitioner is continuously attempting to line his forces up with the opponent's centreline whilst at the same time trying divert the opponent's forces away from his own centreline. A simple example of this is in Fig. 10.



Fig. 6a



Fig. 6b



Fig. 7

"A" punches "B". "B" then executes a high Tan Sau through to a punch at the same time as changing his angle. "A" 's force is therefore towards "B" 's centreline whilst at the same time "B" 's force has been directed away from "A" 's own centreline. This kind of response to a punch has the advantage of hitting back and deflecting the opponent's attack all at the same time. This is therefore a more positive way of responding than blocking and then punching in which two moves are necessary.

TURNING

When turning, one must turn on the centreline "spindle". This is done using the waist. The area around the waist centre as shown in Fig. 11 turns "as one". The feet should follow the turn naturally and it is important that they turn with the fulcrum near the heel. [i.e. this being the base of the centreline "spindle" (See Fig. 3)]. Turning on the "balls" of the feet will actually shift the body to one side. When blocking, this shift would make the guard less positive and consequently give the opponent space to retaliate. When turning and punching simultaneously it would decrease the forward force of the punch, as the shift on turning would accentuate the equal an opposite force. It is important that the centreline remains stationary when turning.

If when turning, the body weight is wrongly shifted onto one leg, (See Fig.12), then the centreline is again shifted away from the opponent and will again have the same effect as described when turning on the "balls" of the feet. Having the weight all on the back leg also has one other disadvantage. If the turn has been executed with a block to guard the opponent's strike, and he then decides to move forward with another attack, the defendant will find it extremely difficult to retreat or move away. The result could be that he falls backward with his stance unrooted.



Fig. 9



Fig. 8



Fig. 10



Fig. 12



Fig. 13

Though the turn should be on the centreline without transferring all the weight onto one leg, in practice the centreline may move a little.

However, it should always remain within the body and between the feet. (See Fig. 13). This gives the stance better stability and enables the practitioner to easily move backwards if he needs to. If it is necessary to reposition the centreline in relation to the attacking force, then the whole stance, including the feet, should be moved.

Centreline theory is vitally important in the understanding of Ving Tsun. Using it, means that the body is used in harmony with the arms thus providing more power when striking and more control when deflecting.

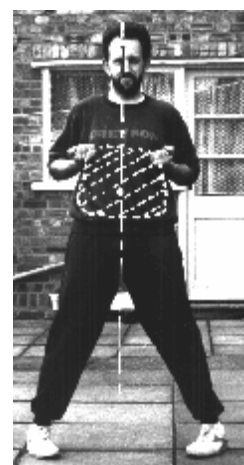


Fig. 11

Wong Shun Leung Ving Tsun Seminar '95

By
Clive Potter



Master Wong demonstrates Huen Sau in Biu Jee

The 2nd July heralded the Wong Shun Leung Ving Tsun Association (U.K.)'s highlight of the year, the yearly Wong Shun Leung seminar held in St.Albans, Hertfordshire. Master Wong had arrived in the United Kingdom after completing seminars in Germany, Holland, Switzerland and Poland. Included in the visiting guests who had flown with Master Wong from Germany was Senior Instructor, Philipp Beyer who represents Master Wong in Northern Germany.

Master Wong Shun Leung has been involved in martial arts for nearly 40 years. His experience began like any schoolboy, by becoming involved in local fights. This developed into an interest in martial arts. He made a name for himself by successfully fighting,

for Ving Tsun, against representatives from other schools of martial arts. Now his reputation is world-wide as a master of Ving Tsun Kung Fu. He has a very realistic and practical approach to his teaching developed by his experience on the street. Of course, some of Master Wong's fame in the West in recent years has come from his involvement in teaching the famous Bruce Lee.

This year Master Wong used the seminar to concentrate on teaching and explaining techniques from the Wooden Dummy and Biu Jee forms of Ving Tsun.

He first demonstrated about half of the Wooden Dummy form after which he described in detail with practical demonstrations what each move could be used for. He explained that throughout the dummy form the dummy's arms sometimes represented an opponent's right arm and left arm and sometimes the other way round.



There was much practise with examples of Chi Sau techniques



Left to right: Philipp Beyer, Master Wong, and U.K. Senior Instructors Clive Potter and Anthony Kan

He explained that the Biu Jee form is basically not an attacking form, but consisted of techniques to use when manipulated into a losing position. Biu Jee techniques can then be used to minimise your losses and escape with as minor damage as possible. One of these such situations could be described as when you are faced with multiple attackers and there are various techniques and concepts in Biu Jee to help you deal with this.

Throughout the whole seminar various dummy and Biu Jee techniques were taught to the audience and practised by them within Chi Sau. During these sessions Master Wong spent time going round

everyone helping them perform the techniques in the right way.

This year's seminar was felt by many to be one of the best that Wong Shun Leung had conducted in the United Kingdom since he first came some ten years ago. This was due to the large amount of "hands on" experience within the seminar to relate theory to practise and that he covered subjects that are not covered very often in seminars of Ving Tsun Kung Fu.



EVERYONE GATHERS FOR THE GROUP PHOTO

Sifu Wong

A Passion for Wing Chun

PART 1



There are many who claim to be the true head of the Wing Chun family, however the few that do have a genuine claim to such a title avoid all mention of it and regard each other as brothers. It is gratifying to know that with all the adverse publicity Wing Chun has had at the top, where it really matters, the skill is in good hands

In the space of 30 years Wing Chun has gone from a small but significant family style in Foshan, South China. to perhaps the most widely practised traditional style of Kung Fu in the world. Sure, Taijiquan is practised by millions, but the very best people know that the traditional training and the different styles of Shaolin are all very separate from one another. Wing Chun however, is a complete style covering forms, internal training, partner work, weapons and wooden dummy training. All of the modern Wing Chun masters are direct descendants of Yip Man, meaning that there is a relative amount of cohesiveness between that which one master practises and another does. Wing Chun owes a great debt to Yip Man. Over the twenty or so years that he taught many people studied with him, but few can claim to have inherited his skills. Wong Shun Leung is one of the few that can.

If there is one thing that comes across when you talk to him, then it is Wong Shun Leung's absolute faith in Wing Chun as a means to defend oneself, and his sincerity in trying to pass his experience onto the next generation. He may not have the detached objectivity that some masters possess, but he does have a certain honesty, especially when it comes to knowing the limitations of himself and what he studies. Although he regards Wing Chun as the perfect system, he is at pains to stress that it will not turn you to, in his words, a "super-man".

Exploding myths is one of his favourite pastimes. He laughs at the machine like chain punching practised by many unenlightened Wing Chun schools, pointing out that such tactics would never work in a real fight. Equally frowned on are the elaborate techniques that some Wing Chun schools favour. Like all Wing Chun practitioners, he stresses the economy of the style. Although Wing Chun's economy might allow a smaller person to defend themselves, or to remain effective even as you grow older. Wong Shun Leung makes the point that, against a highly trained opponent, Wing Chun allows you to sustain your attacks for a longer period of time, thereby ensuring victory.

No piece on Wong Shun Leung could be complete without mentioning his influence on Bruce Lee's development. Student of Yip Man, and someone who Bruce Lee respected as Sihing (elder brother), Wong Shun Leung is perhaps the missing link between Yip Man's Wing Chun and Bruce's explosive art of Jeet Kune Do.

Perhaps what Wong Shun Leung is known for most, are the challenge matches he fought against other schools. He is said to have fought up to 100 times in secret matches with no rules, and never to have lost. Where as some champions fight for glory, one gets the feeling that to Wong Shun Leung fighting was a scientific experiment. He simply wanted to know how good he was and how he could improve his Wing Chun. You can see by his relaxed and easy manner that he doesn't have anything left to prove.



Qi Mag: When did you first start practising Wing Chun Kuen and what made you start?

When I was 17 or 18 years old I started learning Wing Chun. I loved kung fu and chose Wing Chun because I thought it was the most scientific style and more reasonable than any other style.

Qi Mag: Did you have experience of any other styles before your started Wing Chun?

I studied kick boxing and Taijiquan, but I chose Wing Chun because I thought it was a better style.

Qi Mag: Did you do any pushing hands in Taijiquan?

My uncle taught me some. But after taking up Wing Chun I stopped practising everything else. I only did Wing Chun.

Qi Mag: Did you find that studying boxing and Taiji affected the way you practised Wing Chun. Did they give you any ideas about Wing Chun?

Boxing is a game and its ideas don't apply to Wing Chun. Wing Chun is completely different and won't be affected. It is a more practical style. A lot of Wing Chun is in the mind. The

actions or movements are not that important. What Wing Chun teaches is that it is more important to use what is in your head.

Oi Mag: Did you compete in any organised tournaments with rules?

Not in boxing. When I competed, it was in secret. We went into a room, and the door was shut and there were no rules. The government did not allow them. They were illegal, but we didn't care. We fought until the other guy was knocked out.

Qi Mag: When did you first meet Yip Man and what proved to you that his Wing Chun was the best?

When I went to his class, it was near the new year so there weren't many students. When I first joined, I sparred with his two of his students and beat



them even before Yip Man had taught me anything. Then Yip Man fought with me and I felt that the way that he beat me was so smooth and so convincing that I wanted to learn from him. He controlled me without hitting me at all and stopped my punches. I immediately recognised that I had been bettered.

Qi Mag: Was this because of Yip Man's power, or was it purely skill?

In those days Yip Man was very strong, but the way that he beat me was mostly skill. Then I was very young and strong too, but I recognised it was his skill that beat me.

Qi Mag: How old was Yip Man when this happened?

About 50.



PART 2

Wing Chun Kuen is said to be some four hundred years old. Its origins and early history are quickly becoming an area of a great deal of debate. Whatever the early history, today Wing Chun is perhaps the most popular Chinese style of Kung Fu.

The late grandmaster Yip Man is now a legendary figure in Chinese Martial Arts circles and the man responsible for bringing Wing Chun Kuen into the modern world. Yip Man taught many people and one of his most respected students is Master Wong Shun Leung.

In the final part of this exclusive interview Master Wong Shun Leung tells of some of his experiences of Yip Man and a little about the challenge matches he is now so famous for and how they affected his skill.

Qi Mag: You were with Yip Man for a long time, did you notice that Yip Man's style changed as he got older?

He didn't change much, just got lazier! (laughs). When he first taught Siu Lim Tao, there was no Gang Sau in the 3rd section, but Jum Sau instead. But after I had a serious fight, the Jum Sau was changed into a Gang Sau. In the fight, the other guy was a lot taller. I'd hit him so badly in the face that he couldn't see, so he knelt down and covered his head with one hand and with the other blindly hit out. I went to block with a Jum Sau, as in the form, but the punch went really low and still connected. I was hurt and had to take a step back, even though the guy didn't realise he'd hit me. Eventually I knocked his teeth out, and he collapsed, so I won the fight. When I went back and told my teacher what I had found out, he told me that when he learned from Chan Wah Shun, Chan Wah Shun taught Gang Sau in the form, this was because Master Chan was tall, but when Yip Man later learned from Leung Bik, Leung Bik taught him to use Jum Sau because of the sequence in single sticking hands. But after this incident, Yip Man changed the Jum Sau back into a Gang Sau.



Qi Mag: Do you have to adapt any techniques to suit western people?

The principle is the same. The actions and movements are secondary to the thinking. For example, "Hand free, strike forward" still applies, and if you push my hand down, I will go round and hit, so in this sense there is no difference. Wing Chun trains the mind.

Qi Mag: Do you have to adapt your own techniques when doing Chi Sau with a strongly built Westerner?

Again the principle is the same. The only difference is that you might use certain techniques more than others. But that is not to say that the style is changed in any way.

Qi Mag: Yip Man lived for nearly eighty years.

Would you attribute his long life to the practice of Wing Chun?

I can't be certain, but because you practice Kung Fu, you move all the time, and you are happy. Obviously in this case it lengthens your life, and if it wasn't for his cancer, he would definitely have lived into his nineties.

Qi Mag: Was he still very powerful up until his death?

If you compare like with like, say a 70year old ordinary person and a 70year old Yip Man, then Yip Man would be much more powerful. But say between Yip Man when he was 50, and when he was 78, then in this 50s he was a lot more powerful.

Qi Mag: Could he still control his younger students at that age.

It depends on who he was dealing with! Even with me, very few of my own students can deal with me. Yip man could play with a new guy, but with one of his experienced students, obviously he found it a little bit harder sparring with my students now, out of respect, some of my students won't use too much force, but at the end of the day, very few of my students can match me. The same case is with Yip Man. A lot of people thought that Yip Man was powerful then, but he himself thought that he could never be as good as when he was 50.

Qi Mag: Do you think that you yourself will get better as you get older, or do you think that your Wing Chun has completely matured?

I travel a lot, I never stop teaching. I haven't changed the principle The way I teach has changed to make it easier for others to understand. If I do make any changes, they are very small, so much so that I can't remember all of them. Wing Chun is such a good system, there is almost nothing to correct.

Qi Mag: Do you teach exactly the same as Yip Man, or have you made some changes?

Even if there is a change, it is hardly worth mentioning. My thinking might be slightly different to Yip Man's. Even in Yip Man's time, he fought a lot of challenges, but the challengers Yip Man had were different to the challengers I had. You see in Yip Man's time, a lot of Kung Fu practitioners fought with the hands low, or open, like crane style for example, or to the side. In my time, everyone changed to a more front style, square on. In the old days, they didn't do as much exercise, in my day they did, so the physique of my competitors was different to those of Yip Man's time. An dummy form. of a slight difference is in the last movement in the wooden dummy form. Most people say that you kick and then grind down the shin and stamp on the instep. I don't agree with that move. From my experience, as soon as you kick the knee, they try to move away, so you can't slide down the shin. Instead, I kick straight to the instep. A lot of people use the other explanation because they haven't tried it in a fight.



Qi Mag: Do you do any other physical conditioning other than practising the forms and doing sticking hands?

I swim a lot. I used to swim in competitions as well, and my brother is a swimming champion too. If you do more punching, then you will get a lot of exercise too. A lot of my students do a lot of running.

Qi Mag: The pole is physically demanding. Do you still practice it?

I teach it a lot, but I don't practice it any more!

Qi Mag: Do you think that practising the pole is still useful today?

No, you can't carry one, and if you get into a fight, then whatever you pick up is your weapon.

Qi Mag: Wing Chun has one inch power, 'tsun gin'. Is this developed in the forms, or is their other training?

In every move in each form you are already practising one inch power. Whenever you do Huen Sau and Jum Sau in the form, you are training the wrist for punching. On top of that you have to practice the punch by itself You can also practice hitting a sand bag from d different angles so that you know how to hit from fist happens to be, without having to pull it back first. Boxing moves the head to dodge punches, but in Wing Chun we don't, because the head can't be faster than the hand. Rules in boxing prevent hitting with the back fist, chopping, rabbit punching, etc. You can only hit with the front of the fist. Wing Chun is not a game, it is fighting, so you can hit with anything and any part of the fist without having to draw it back. So if my punch misses because you move your head, I can still hit you by following your head and chopping sideways without having to bring my hand back. But with boxing, if my punch misses, I have to bring my fist back before I can try and hit you again. A mistake is to move your head during Chi Sau. If you do this, you will lose your balance. The head is heavy compared to the rest of the body, so if you move your head from side to side you are not stable.

Qi Mag: Is Wing Chun suitable for women?

I have two famous female students that represent Southeast Asia. A lot of women are very good at the beginning, but later they become concerned about their looks. I teach a lot of film stars and actresses. They train Chi Sau, and after a while their shoulders become really muscular, and they start to worry so they stop.

Qi Mag: From the fights that you had, did you find that you needed to fight on the ground?

The situation where you need to wrestle is when both opponents want to grab. Western boxing is supposed to be hitting, but you still see situations where they want to hold on to each other This is because one of them is scared. If you are scared then you will try to hold onto your opponent It is very difficult for someone to lock or hold onto you if you know Wing Chun. You can stop the other guy holding or grabbing. If someone grabs you, you will only try to grab back if you are scared. But if you are not scared, then he cannot force you into a wrestling situation.



Qi Mag: If you trip and end up on the floor, can you still apply the principles of Wing Chun?

This situation can happen to anyone. If you learn Wing Chun you can cope with it better than someone that doesn't know Wing Chun.

Additional material from the seminar. Wong Shun Leung in conversation with his students and grand students.
Student: Do you always use a kick to bridge the distance to your opponent, or do you go in with the hands?
Move around until you are one step away and then you move in. It doesn't matter whether you use a kick or your hands, just step in. By the time you have moved in, it is very difficult to use kicks.

Student: Where do you look to pick up the signals from your opponent so that you know when to move in?
Usually look at the centre of the chest. If you have a weak opponent, then you can look him in the eyes, and it might scare him away.

Student: What do you look for or go for if there is more than one person attacking you?
If there are many people, then you must keep moving. Don't stand still. Don't give them a target, and try to deal with them one at a time. If you keep moving, it is difficult for them to find a target. If you stand still, it is very easy for them. The worst thing you can do is to grab one of them, or let one of them grab you, because then you prevent yourself from moving.

Student: What if some one uses fake punches to confuse you?
Don't worry about it. It doesn't matter whether the punch is fake or not. There are hundreds of styles of attacking, and you can't anticipate them all. Forget about what they do, and stick to what you know. If you do a fake punch, then that punch may actually connect, and then you do a real punch and that one may miss! Which is fake and which is real? In other words, you don't care whether it is a fake punch or a real punch, because when it comes you can still use it to close in. You do the same thing. If your opponent fakes to the left and the real punch comes from the right, I will go straight down the middle, between the two punches. He does one then two, but I just do one.

Student: Does Wing Chun ever use fake punches?
No, Wing Chun will never use a fake punch.

Student: Often, when someone punches, you try to go on the outside, but it is very difficult to do. Do you go for the inside or outside?
Usually it depends on whether you punch first, or your opponent punches first. In Wing Chun you always face your opponent. If he hits you first, and you then turn to face him, you will be on the inside. But if you hit first, then you don't want to go to the opponent's front, so you go on the outside.

Student: Is it best to let your opponent to make the first move, or doesn't it matter?
This is a very difficult question to answer Normally I prefer to wait and let the other guy hit first. If you let him hit you, then he tells you what he is going to do.

Student: So you prefer to counter attack?
Yes, mostly, because there is less chance of making a mistake. They hit first, and you counter.

True masters are very difficult to find and it is always a fascinating experience meeting and talking to one. Hopefully this article will go some way in conveying this experience. Sincere thanks go to Master Wong Shun Leung and his representatives, Anthony Kan and Clive Potter.

VING TSUN

A Positive Attitude

by
Clive Potter



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

line. If the opponent's attack is not down the centreline, then the Ving Tsun practitioner will hit first, as a straight line is the quickest way to the target. This is combined with the Ving Tsun stance thrusting the body forward from the back leg thus dissolving the opponent's attack. If the opponent's attack did happen to travel down the centreline, then the Ving Tsun practitioner must still think "attack", and deflect the opponent's attack with his on the way to the target. Fig.1 gives an example of this. "A" punches "B". "B" then shifts his position and applies an upper gan sau deflection which follows through to a punch in Fig. 2. Note how the gan sau is aimed at the opponent's centreline so the block can follow straight through to an attack. Being of positive thinking "B" does not think he is blocking then attacking. Rather he is counter-attacking and happening to block along the way. If we think of attacking as being positive and blocking as being negative, then "B" has turned "A" 's positiveness into his own positiveness. He has immediately reversed the situation to his favour. This is also true in Fig. 3 and Fig. 4. A Tan Sau deflection is followed through by a palm strike.



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Part of the effectiveness of any martial arts system is governed by the attitude and approach of the person using it. This may be described by some as "the way" of their martial art. Until a person has trained and practised in his system for some time, he may find that in a combat situation, his character governs his approach. A shy or non-aggressive person may be too defensive, applying too many blocks only attacking on the rare occasions he feels it is absolutely safe to do so. On the other hand, a person with an aggressive personality, may try to ignore the blows he is receiving and blindly hit back at the same time.

The right approach is particularly important in Ving Tsun as much of its effectiveness depends on having a positive and focused attitude. One major aspect of positiveness in Ving Tsun can be described by the following. When attacked, a Ving Tsun practitioner does not think "block" but thinks "attack". To block is negative thinking. Instead, he tries to be positive when attacked by launching his own attack at the opponent's centre

In "Chi Sau" practise this approach should also be apparent. Chi Sau training should be positive and realistic. The opponents should fight each other not each other's arms. In simplistic terms, each opponent is attempting to line up his forces with the other's centreline whilst at the same time directing the opponent's forces away from his own centreline.

Another technique to improve positiveness is to make sure that every move that is made threatens the opponent's centreline. To block with no simultaneous attack is negative and gives the opponent the opportunity to launch his own attack.



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

the forward force away from the opponent's centreline. In Fig.8 "A" attacks "B" with his fist, feet and body travelling down the line towards the opponent's centre thus hitting the target with maximum force.

Positive attitude is therefore closely linked to being focused on the opponent's centreline both mentally and physically. Having said this, being focused on the centre does not mean that the practitioner is oblivious to his surroundings and what may be happening there. Part of the focus training derives from the slow "Lut Sau Jit Chung" section of the first here is training in prying force, the focus of such prying force and focus of attention on the target's centreline. In this section, each arm that is executing the moves is focused on the centreline by making sure that the forearm is pointing towards the imaginary

In being positive the practitioner should always be aware of the shortest route for his attack. If one attack is deflected

the next possible "line of attack" must be found. In Fig.5 "B" deflects "A" 's right hand attack. "A" is then attempting to come round with a left hand attack. This is wrong as it is not the most direct tine of attack. In Fig.6 "B" again deflects "A" 's right hand attack, but "B" finds the next direct line of attack and follows through down that line.

It is also important to focus the whole body movement down the line of attack towards the target. When "B" counter attacks "A" in Fig.5 he must make sure that his body and feet travel down the same line as his fist towards the opponent's centre. in Fig.7 "A" attacks "B" down the line of attack, but his right foot travels slightly out to the right causing his body to move in a different direction to his fist. This is wrong as it diverts some of



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

the opponent's centre, would be like someone with a gun being ready to shoot an opponent. He would be most effective, threatening and efficient to always make sure that his guns were pointing at the target so he can be ready to fire at any time. In Fig.11, "A" 's forearms are not pointing at "B", therefore any attack cannot proceed straight at "B" 's centre if the elbow is to drive the fist forward without any circular motion to compensate. This

opponent's centre. In this way the elbow is directly behind the fist both being on the line between the two practitioner's centres.

This concept is important in combat so that if one hand is diverted the other is also aimed at the opponent's centre as a back up ready to attack. In Fig.9, "A" is in the "on guard" position but his left forearm is not lined up with the opponent's centre. This means that if his right hand attack fails, he cannot fire with the left; it would be trapped. In Fig.10 both hands are lined up correctly so that if the right is stopped the left can fire immediately at the target. This means that in a continuous exchange of techniques it is possible to flow and find an immediate new line of attack as soon as the previous one is diverted.

In the "On guard" position, it is also important that the forces (forearm direction) are focused on the opponents centreline so that any attack can be direct and down the line of attack between the two practitioner's centres. An analogy of this situation of keeping the forces lined up with



Fig. 11



Fig. 12

would direct some of the forward force into a different direction. In Fig.12, "A" 's forearms are directed at "B" 's centre and it can be seen from the photo that "A" can attack "down the line" with no deviation of his force.

Practice at developing a positive attitude is an ongoing exercise which to a certain extent can be improved by thinking about one's attitude and approach to a combat situation. It can be said that the "Lut Sau Jit Chung" section of Siu Lin Tau is also of extreme importance in such training in the development of a focused attitude and force. Such training should result in every move being focused on the opponent's centre causing his centreline to feel continuously threatened.

DEATH OF A LEGEND



*One of the last photos ever taken of Master Wong.
(Nov. 96)*

Following what doctors in Hong Kong described as a 'subarachnoid haemorrhage' and lapsing into a coma lasting 17 days, wing chun's "King of the Challenge Match", sifu Wong Shun Leung, passed away peacefully on January 28th, 1997... he was just 61 years of age. Wong had been with a group of friends at the "Wing Chun Athletic Association" on Sunday January 12th, enjoying a few games of cards and Mahjong when he complained of feeling unwell. Soon afterwards he collapsed into a coma from which he never awoke.

Known as Gong Sau Wong in Cantonese (literally the "King of Talking with the Hands"), Wong Shun Leung demolished dozens, some say hundreds, of opponents during the ages of 17 and 32, testing his skills and knowledge on the streets and rooftops of Hong Kong. He faced opponents of many disciplines, from kung-fu, karate, Western boxing and many other fighting styles, and it was said that he never took more than three punches to finish a fight. Wong sifu, it has been stated by all who knew him, never lost a fight in all his years of beimo, or "comparison of skills".

Wong considered Wing Chun as a SKILL, not an ART, and saw nothing wrong with using ones skills. In comparing skills and art, Wong Sifu has been quoted as saying, "...if A and B have a fight and B gets knocked out, then everyone knows that A won. There's a winner and a loser. However, in music, you can like someone's guitar playing or not like it and it doesn't matter. Because it's an ART, you can't PROVE that one painting or piece of music is better than another. However, in Kung Fu, you can prove your skill in such a way that there is no doubt! This is the difference....in other ARTS,

beauty may be in the eye of the beholder, but in MARTIAL ART, the only judgement is whether or not it works!" Statements such as this one are characteristic of the very down-to-earth approach that Wong Sifu has to combat, and he certainly has the fighting record to back up such a beliefs.

Exploding myths was one of his favourite pastimes. He laughed at the machine like chain punching practised by many unenlightened Wing Chun schools, pointing out that such tactics would never work in a real fight. Equally frowned on are the elaborate techniques that some Wing Chun schools favour. Like all Wing Chun practitioners, he stressed the economy of the style. Wing Chun's economy might allow a smaller person to defend themselves and enable you to remain effective even as you grow older.

As a result of these experiences, Wong became the means by which Grand Master Yip Man made changes to the system for the benefit of all wing chun practitioners. Many modifications were made by Yip Man to forms, drills and techniques following Wong's matches with other stylists, such as after one memorable fight that took place in Taiwan where Wong sifu was unable to completely deflect one particular low attack thrown by a crouching opponent. After much discussion with his teacher, Wong was shown a technique which could be added to his basic siu nim tau form so as to take into account the particular shortcoming in his repertoire. Wong continued this tradition throughout his life, always prepared to make changes to his teaching methods or techniques when real life experiences showed that a weakness existed in wing chun's ability to deal with particular situations.

Sifu Wong was also widely known as the man most responsible for the early development of the late Bruce Lee, with whom he trained during the late 'fifties. At that time, Yip Man was doing less and less teaching and left Wong sifu with the responsibility of looking after many of the classes (in fact, Wong taught for Yip Man from the mid 'fifties through to 1969 before finally teaching in his own right, following his teacher longer than any other disciple, giving him a far greater insight into the system than any of his contemporaries). The result was that Lee, who was around five years Wong's junior, became his student as well as his classmate. Later on, after moving to America, Lee corresponded with Wong, seeking his advice and guidance over the years, and many of Lee's fighting concepts reflect the concepts taught by Wong Shun Leung.

Whenever he had the chance, Lee would meet with Wong when in Hong Kong, and they would spend hours discussing and testing ideas. Sifu once spoke of an occasion when he and Lee began discussing martial arts one evening, commencing at around 7.00pm. They were still at it at 7.00am the next morning, having talked, trained and tested their ideas all night! When Lee was shooting "Enter the Dragon" in Hong Kong, he even invited Wong sifu on to the set to discuss the fight scenes and there is footage of Sifu "sparring" with an extra on the set contained within the documentary "Bruce Lee: the Legend" to verify this.

Most people have heard of a young Bruce Lee sitting on the steps of his teacher's home, telling his classmates that the teacher was too ill to teach them. What most people do not know is that it was Wong's house that he sat outside of, turning away his friends so that he could have a private lesson. It turns out that Wong knew what he was up to and Lee turned up at his very next training session sporting two black eyes. Wong sifu had indeed given him the hard, realistic lesson that he had wanted, much to his classmates amusement!

As well as his achievement in wing chun, Wong Shun Leung was also highly regarded in Hong Kong for his traditional medical skills. A herbalist and bone-setting specialist, following in the tradition of his father and grandfather before him, Wong spent much of his time treating patients from all over the Colony when not teaching wing chun. There was many a time that his students benefited from his knowledge of easing the pain of bruises and sprains gained during training sessions at his Hong Kong kwoon.



Master Wong with Bruce Lee and Raymond Chow on the set of "Enter the Dragon" - (1973)

Also noted for his calligraphic skills, Wong sifu spent hours writing classical Chinese poetry as a form of relaxation and active meditation. His expertise in this area was outstanding, most especially considering the fact that he had left school quite early and much of his skill was self taught.

Since the early 1980's, Wong sifu had travelled to Europe and the United Kingdom on a regular basis to present seminars and workshops to his devotees, and his itinerary took in Australia from 1985. He became a seasoned traveller and loved recounting tales of the places he had visited. He also made trips to Canada and the USA, but he always called Hong Kong home and had decided to remain there despite not being too keen about the hand over taking place later this year. For a while he had thought about living in Australia as his sons spent time studying

there, but in the end it was Hong Kong that was to be his final resting place.

Just a few months ago, Wong sifu was invited to travel to China by the "China Wushu Research Institute" in Beijing. Sifu headed a five day seminar for China's top Police and Special Forces instructors. This was an unprecedented honour bestowed upon Sifu by China's "Public Security Bureau" which, although having many 'in-country' experts to choose from, chose him to coach their top experts in the field of martial arts and personal security. The exchange of information was an overwhelming success and he was given an open invitation to return anytime by an enthusiastic and grateful audience. He was also featured on Chinese television, as well as in the Chinese print media, including many high profile martial art journals published in that country. Accompanied by a number of his Hong Kong and overseas students, Sifu made a lasting impression in the 'Peoples' Republic'.

It seemed that Wong sifu was finally about to reap the rewards that had eluded him for so long, with book, film and video projects all being negotiated. The most significant of these was probably the planned "Legend of Yip Man", to star Donnie Yen in the principal role, and Wong Shun Leung had been approached to be the consultant and fight choreographer, a task I might add, which he had undertaken on at least two occasions in the past, but for much lower profile projects. Unfortunately, Sifu won't be there to add his guiding hand to the film should it still go ahead. Past student of Wong sifu and comedy film superstar, Steven Chow Sing Chi, was one of many who had planned projects involving Sifu, in his case to do with the "Hong Kong Bruce Lee Club" of which he is president. Just a few months earlier, at the unveiling of a life-size statue of Bruce Lee commissioned by the comedy star himself, Chow and his former teacher discussed the possibility of a series of interviews and books concerning Wong's recollections of Lee.

Wong Shun Leung's funeral was a very moving affair for his family, friends and students. Taking the form of the traditional two-day ceremony, the funeral service contained much in the way of imagery and ritual, the immediate family, Sifu's wife, two sons and daughter donning the traditional white robes worn on such occasions, as did his brother and sisters. His students, both local and overseas (including men and women from England, Germany,

Austria, Switzerland, Holland, Poland and Australia) also wore a white sash and badge indicating their relationship to their teacher.

The entire hall where the ceremony was conducted, and the entrances and hallway leading to it, were filled with floral tributes of all shapes and sizes, from Hong Kong and places all around the world. Reading the tributes written upon the wreaths and banners was like reading a who's who of the martial arts, indicative of the respect that Wong Shun Leung commanded amongst his peers.

Wong Shun Leung is gone, the man has passed into legend but his influence will live on through the efforts of his students, both in Hong Kong and around the world in the many places where the "Wong Shun Leung Wing Chun Association" has set up schools dedicated to spreading the skills and knowledge given to us by our dear departed Master. While Wong Shun Leung was not one to take titles seriously, preferring to be known simply as Sifu by his students, in our humble estimation he was one of the greatest Masters of wing chun in this or any other century.

There are fighters, and there are teachers, but few individuals have the experience and expertise in both areas that Wong Shun Leung had. He was renowned for his unparalleled fighting skills and for his depth of understanding and uncanny ability to impart this knowledge to his students. His passing now leaves an incredible void that is unlikely to ever be filled by another person with the same enthusiasm, skill and, most importantly, integrity and honesty for wing chun that Wong Shun Leung displayed throughout his life.

Charlatans will continue to come and go, people will continue to be fooled by men and women who lay claim to having amazing martial skills, but those of us lucky enough to be touched by real greatness will always consider ourselves the most fortunate. Teachers like Wong Shun Leung are "one-in-a-million" and the chance of meeting another of his calibre in our lifetime is next to impossible. Above all else, sifu Wong Shun Leung was a man of great integrity, a man whom we loved, and a man we will remember forever. We were incredibly fortunate to know him, and we will strive to keep his memory alive in everything we do from this time onwards. We love him and we miss him dearly.

Thanks for everything, Sifu. Rest in Peace.

Wong Shun Leung.... 1935-1997