

The JKD Wednesday Night Group

The Wednesday Night Group is unusual for a martial art group as it's a non-profit group which means that we do not charge for lessons. We are called the Wednesday Night Group because we meet every Wednesday night in my garage in Redlands, California. The purpose of this group is to preserve and promote Bruce Lee's art of Jeet Kune Do which some call original Jeet Kune Do, but we call Old School JKD. We teach JKD not to confine us but to liberate us, to share with others what we have learned, and to discover our personal expression of Bruce's art. We are fortunate to have two original Bruce Lee students to share their knowledge of Bruce's art with us. They are Bob Bremer and Jim Sewell. Since I started the group and it meets in my garage, I should give some information about myself so you know who I am.

While in the U.S.A.F., my family and I were stationed in Taiwan for almost three years. While I was there I studied Kuo Shu [Kung-Fu]. My wife was working as a teacher in the Taipei American School during the day and I was working in the evening at the Shu Lin Kuo Air Force Station. Since I had my days free I was looking for something to occupy my time. One of my friends recommended that I take up martial arts. I ended up learning six hours a day for six days a week. While in Taiwan I learned two types of Hsing-i, Tai Chi, Northern and Southern Shaolin, White Crane, and Monkey boxing. After my discharge from the air force, I continued work on my college degree. Since I had a wife and two children to support, I opened up a full time Kung Fu school in Redlands, California while starting as a junior at the University of California, Riverside campus in 1966.

In 1967 I saw Bruce Lee demonstrate JKD at Ed Parker's tournament in Long Beach, Ca and wanted to start studying with him right on the spot, but I soon realized that I would not have enough time until after I finished college. In 1968, I started a Master of Fine Arts program at UCR and no longer had time to teach martial arts full time. So I closed down my school and rented a hall in Redlands two nights a week where I taught what I called Chinese karate as hardly anyone had heard of kung fu let alone Kuo Shu.

In 1970 I received my M.F.A. and started teaching drama in high school. Soon after this my first student, Bob Chapman, and I, on the recommendation of Dan Lee, sought out Dan Inosanto. Dan who had opened up a backyard Jeet Kune Do school after Bruce Lee had closed his L.A. Chinatown school shortly before moving to Hong Kong to star in *The Big Boss*. We both felt privileged to be accepted in Dan Inosanto's backyard class. The class consisted of about 10 students. I got to meet for the first time such JKD luminaries as; Bob Bremer, Dan Lee, Richard Bustillo, Jerry Poteet, and Pete Jacobs. Later Chris Kent, Ted Lucay Lucay, and Jeff Imada joined a second class.

In 1973, Dan Inosanto honored me with the rank of Senior First and I was given permission to have a small Jeet Kune Do group. In Dan's backyard school it was always stressed that JKD was something special. There were certain techniques that Bruce Lee did not want given out outside of what we all felt were a small and special group. Dan told us that Bruce said, "If knowledge is power then why pass it out indiscriminately."

After Bruce's untimely passing, Dan opened up, with Richard Bustillo, the Filipino Kali Academy to promote Filipino martial arts as well as JKD. Since Dan made a promise to Bruce not to teach JKD publicly, he created a curriculum with four phases of Jun Fan Gung Fu which is what Bruce called his art before he named it Jeet Kune Do. His backyard Jeet Kune Do became a closed private class at the

Kali Academy.

At the same time I was teaching the principles of JKD and using them as tools to examine the martial arts I had learned up until that time. I found that much of what I had been teaching was not very efficient. For my own personal experience I kept some hsing-I and all of my tai chi for myself, but I had no desire to teach anything but Jeet Kune Do. Since I didn't want to teach JKD openly I closed the school and moved the senior group to my garage where we've been ever since.

When the summer martial arts camps started Dan asked me to teach there. He told Larry Hartsell and me that since he promised Bruce to not teach JKD openly, that we should teach JKD while he would teach Kali. The three of us taught together every summer until the Great Smokey Mountain Martial Arts Camp closed. Besides teaching in my garage one night a week the only other JKD teaching I did was the occasional seminar I would do for camp students who had a school of their own. Presently I only do a couple of seminars a year. I retired six years ago after 30 years of teaching high school.

The most important addition to the group was Bob Bremer. After he retired as a crane operator, Bob started showing up on Wednesday nights. From Bob we've learned a great deal. We've learned many of those small details that make JKD work in the real world. We began to really analyze everything we had learned. He emphasized that JKD was about efficiency in unarmed combat and not the accumulation of techniques. He showed us the importance of really spending time on the basics so that we would not need to keep adding and adding techniques.

A little over twelve years ago an original Chinatown student started showing up. Jim Sewell studied at Bruce Lee's Chinatown school for a little over twelve months and has a first rank certificate. We have been fortunate that other people want to learn what we teach and be able to share it with others, and they now have groups in various parts of America as well as Europe. A list of those instructors can be found on our website which is <http://www.jkdwednite.com>. You can either contact them directly or email me at thtackett@msn.com.

I'm often asked why we have just a small group. For us at least, we feel that the best way to learn Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do is on a one to one basis. Up to this time the JKD Wed. Night Group has not felt the need to expand. But since we see that there is a lot of confusion about just what Jeet Kune Do is, we feel it is now our duty to come out of the garage and share our knowledge of Bruce's art so that his original teaching will survive to inspire future generations, which brings us to our philosophy of teaching JFJKD.

The danger of quoting Bruce Lee to try to back up your particular point of view is that some of his writings seem to contradict one another. For example, he writes, "Unlike the traditional approach there is never a series of rules, a classification." At the same time in his own personal notes he lists techniques and principles. It must be remembered that his writings come from different periods of his development and we need to realize how martial arts in the 1960's were bound by tradition. Remember that the title of his seminal essay was Liberate Yourself From Classical Karate. With this in mind the Wed. Night Group attempts to use what Bruce taught during the third and final phase of his evolution as our guide to our personal liberation. Once you've really learned the core you then have a method or way to look at other arts and take what you need or can efficiently use for your personal JKD. Which leads us to the question just what learn means?

We've all read or heard the quote that in JKD we should know the principle, follow the principle, and finally to dissolve the principle. Does know the principle mean that you can spend a few hours in a

seminar working on something as complex as the hammer principle so that you at least know it when you see it. Later you see somebody do it and you say to yourself, “Oh that’s the hammer principle I know that.” We don’t feel that anyone really knows the technique. We’ve spent part of every Wed. night class for six years working on the hammer principle, but none of us feels that we really know it. To know it means to us that we can stand two feet away from a person, tell him you’re going to hit him in the forehead, let him try and block your attack, and touch his forehead every time. Bruce Lee could do this. We can’t yet. He knew the technique, but we are not yet there, although we feel we’re on the path. So we’re a long way from dissolving the technique, which means you no longer hit; it hits.

Bruce Lee has been quoted as saying that in JKD you must constantly study all other martial arts. The main question is just what did he mean by study? The Encarta World English Dictionary defines study as, “to learn about a particular subject by reading and researching”. Bruce Lee had an immense library full of martial arts books. He had most of the books ever written on western fencing. As far as I know he never took western fencing lessons. He never became a western fencing teacher. His genius was that he could draw out the essence of western fencing and then adapt its theories and principles to his way of combat. From fencing Bruce adopted and adapted the 5 ways of attack and broken rhythm among other things.

The JKD Wednesday Night Group believes that you should become familiar with as many martial arts as possible. At the very least you should understand and have an answer for their delivery systems. We agree with Krishnamurti who said, “Self knowledge is a continuous process”. That’s why our group has an open door policy. Any martial artist from any style or system is more than welcome to visit us and share his or her knowledge. The only thing we know for sure is that we don’t know everything.

What we want our student to do is to be able to do the core curriculum of Jeet Kune Do, make it his or her own, then adapt, evolve, and add what is their own. That will be their JKD. But we also feel that they shouldn’t add what goes against the basic principles of JKD and call it Jeet Kune Do. Remember that any architectural principle is based on a strong foundation. Let the core curriculum be your guide to the building of your foundation and let the house you build on top of it be your own.

For the first time in our 30 year history the Wed. Night Group is coming out of the garage so to speak and is looking for people who might share our basic philosophy and really want to delve into the basics of JKD. With this in mind, some of our instructors are now willing to teach privately and do small workshops or seminars to further promote and preserve Bruce Lee’s art of Jeet Kune Do. If interested, you can contact any of our group through either our website or my email.

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<http://www.jkdwednite.com>