

Meditation—Fitness for the Spirit

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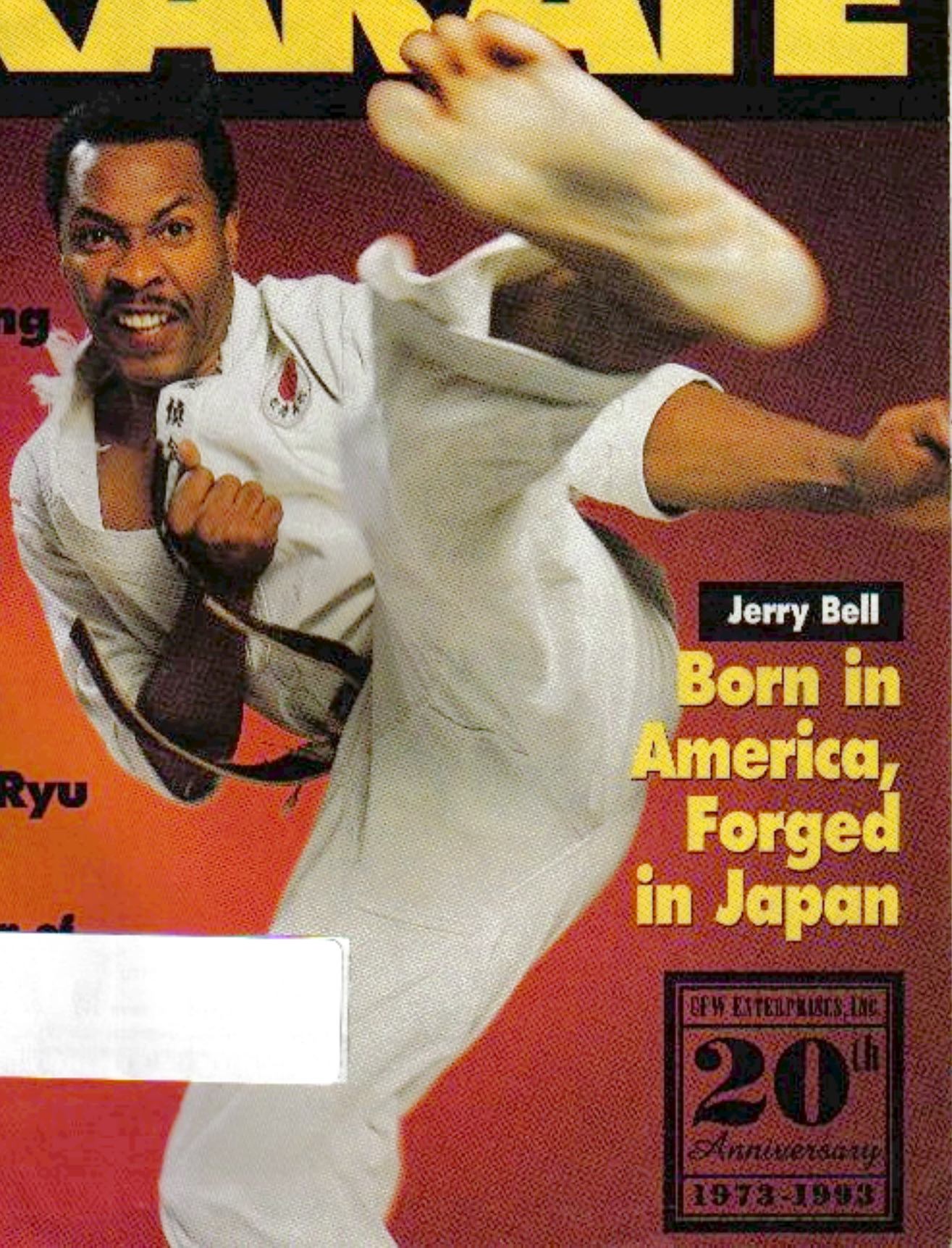
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The
ABC's of
Throwing
Knives

How to
Get
Really
QUICK!

The
Lightning
Hands of
Kosho-Ryu
Kempo

The Return of
Bruce
Lee



Jerry Bell

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The Return of

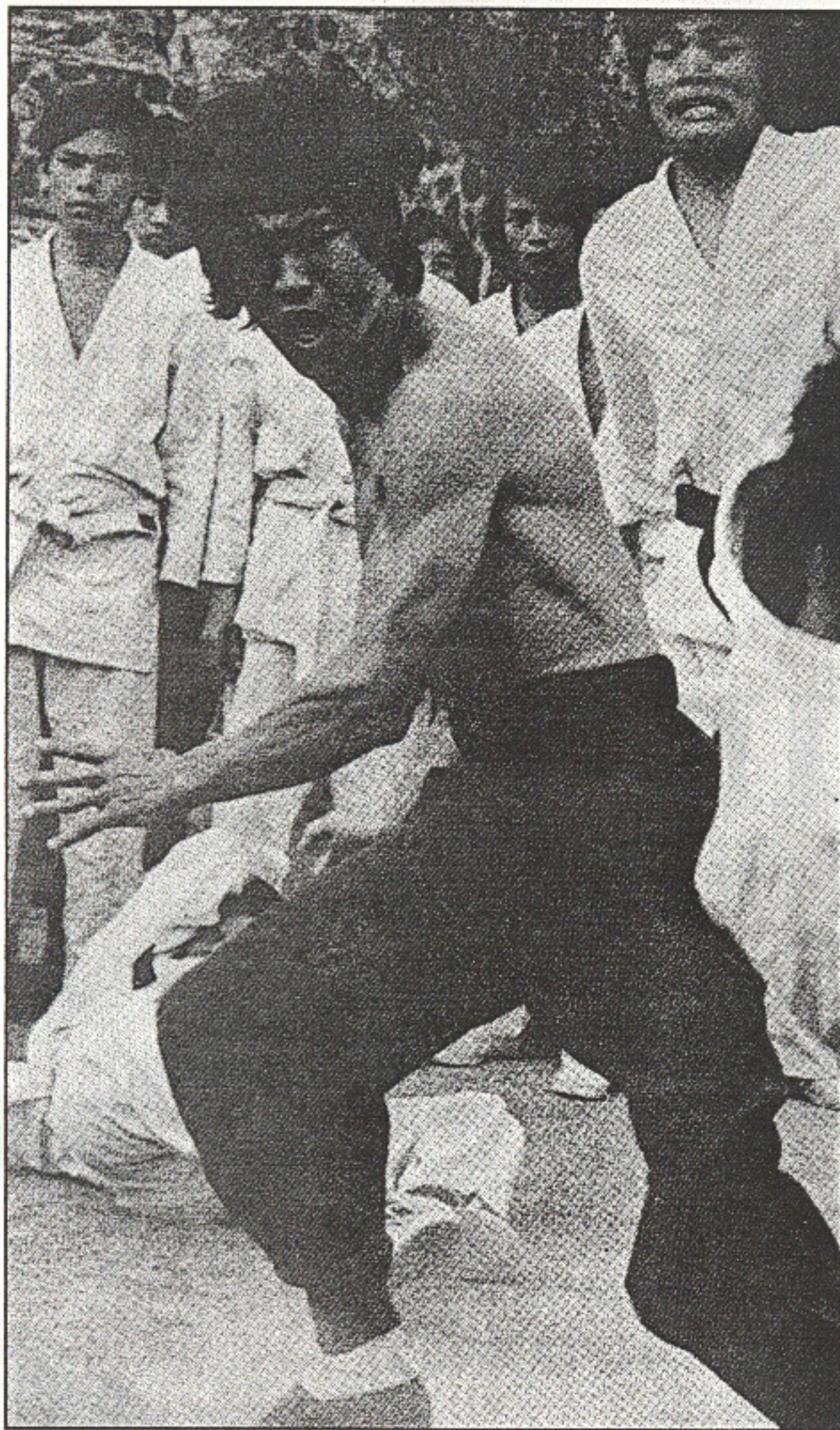
Jeet Kune Do

Some called it "evolution." Others called it "devolution." Nevertheless, after Bruce Lee's sudden and unexpected death, many of Bruce Lee's successors made massive changes in his teachings. Today, two decades after the loss of their si-gung, many followers are seeking to resurrect the original teachings of "The Little Dragon."

By Paul Bax

Nearly 20 years after the passing of Bruce Lee, the resurfacing of his original JKD is occurring all over the country. Practitioners such as Jerry Poteet, Ted Wong, Lamar Davis II, and Bob Bremer have all begun to highly publicize their preferences for Bruce Lee's original crystallization of his art. One educator who has attempted to "redact," or retroactively analyze the original intent of JKD's founder, Jerry Beasely, feels the concept method is





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"dead" as far as public interest, and feels Bruce's original art is making a dramatic comeback.

In this article, we hope to investigate the possible reasons behind the fall of JKD concepts and the rise of Jeet Kune Do — the original "style of no style."

Original Intent

First, let's discuss the confusion behind what constitutes Bruce Lee's JKD. Bruce Lee first studied Wing Chun primarily and then a few northern styles while in Hong Kong. After coming to America, he kept close to his original Wing Chun style until his encounter with a "My-Jong-Law-Horn-Kuen" practitioner. The circular techniques of this style negated Bruce's straight line punches. Eventually, Bruce got close enough to the retreating foe to use a take down where he held the opponent helpless.

Bruce was less than happy with the time it took him to end the fight. In a previous match against a karate practitioner, Bruce finished the fight in only a few seconds. Wing Chun was too rigid to deal with this unpredictable art. Bruce knew he had to change his style of fighting to compete with the barrage of styles out there. He also needed to increase his stamina, since he was very tired after the fight.

This started Bruce on his revolutionary process of creating a more effective approach to fighting. Bruce started to observe every martial art possible by reading and viewing what limited films of martial arts available back then. He also enrolled in a beginning judo class, which is not well known to the general public. His teacher, Shuzo Kato, said Bruce was a dedicated student who mastered the basics of judo easily. Bruce also began his weight training program on a long visit to Hong Kong in 1965.

Before Bruce left the states, he was involved in the 1964 Internationals. His stunning performance left the audience in awe, and he began showing his departure from Wing Chun. The demonstration of his high speed gap closing was the first clue to his evolution in the arts. As time went on, and Bruce's knowledge kept growing, things were still gradually changing in his approach to fighting. Eventually the fencing stance took the place of the Wing Chun stance (Bruce's version) along



with fencing footwork combined with Western boxing's bobbing and weaving and its arsenal of knockout punches.

Leaving Wing Chun Behind

This is a good time to bring up the fact of Bruce's departure from Wing Chun. In the past several years, many Wing Chun practitioners feel that Bruce simply renamed Wing Chun as JKD. The fact of the matter is that one of the reasons Bruce continued to develop JKD is that he never learned the complete Wing Chun system, so it would have been impossible for him to do this. Show me a Wing Chun person with JKD's light, evasive fencing footwork, high speed gap closing, and arsenal of kicks, and I'll show you where Bruce and Elvis shop at K-Mart on weekends.

The other problem has been deliberate misinformation propagated by people seeking to cash in on Bruce's

The key is to learn Bruce's original teachings first, and then expand upon them.

reputation. For example, one well-known karate practitioner met Bruce at the Internationals. Bruce asked him to show him his arsenal of kicks, so the practitioner did. Over the years, the rumor grew that this man had taught Bruce his kicks, in spite of Bruce's obviously superior kick-

ing ability. Furthermore, anyone with even an elementary familiarity with martial arts can see the difference between Bruce's Northern Chinese kicking and this practitioner's Korean kicks.

What JKD is Not

Now that we've defined what Bruce was performing at the time of his death, let's talk about what he wasn't doing. Since Bruce's death, the addition of Kali has confused many people. Bruce first saw Kali at the '64 Internationals. It's been said he highly respected Ben Largusa's performance. At this same tournament, Bruce met Danny Inosanto. Inosanto had just begun his training in Kali. Bruce and Dan became close friends. It is well known Danny played "devil's advocate" to Bruce's maverick attitude. The fact of the matter is Kali wasn't taught or explored at the LA Chinatown school.

Dan did introduce Bruce the double

sticks of Kali before he left for Hong Kong in 69. At this time, it is reported that Bruce took a dim view of it. When Bruce returned from Hong Kong, he had spent more time with the sticks coming up with his "own method". Inosanto has stated what Bruce was doing resembled Largo Mano. The kicker of this particular interview came when Inosanto stated, "With no previous training, Bruce came up with a system of Kali that already existed".

The confusion about Bruce's connection with Kali is partly from his double stick performance in *Enter The Dragon*. Once everyone viewed the movie, they felt Bruce just had to be an expert in the art. In fact, most Kali practitioners were upset by this segment as it was almost all improvisation and didn't even remotely resemble sophisticated Filipino arts. Furthermore, Bruce also used nunchaku. Does this mean he was an expert in Okinawan Kobudo? Obviously not. With only the best intentions in mind, Danny has confused the public with his addition of Kali. The confusion doesn't stop there. In the late eighties, Pencak Silat starting to become popular. Inosanto also had an interest in this art. Bruce's name started popping up on certain videos mentioning Bruce added the art to JKD before he died. Get out the shovels, guys 'n gals! It's getting thick!

An instructor in New York says he has a contact in New Mexico who claims his instructor traded Silat with Bruce. I mentioned this rumor to JKD practitioner Fran Joseph. She replied "Why would Bruce go back to kindergarten when he's been to college?"

The biggest problem has again been the public's search for the "ultimate art." Often, when Inosanto would study another art out of curiosity, the unenlightened would say, "Hmm. Inosanto is studying this art. It must be even better than JKD." Additionally, some of the people who taught Inosanto as little as one or two moves would often represent that they were his teachers.

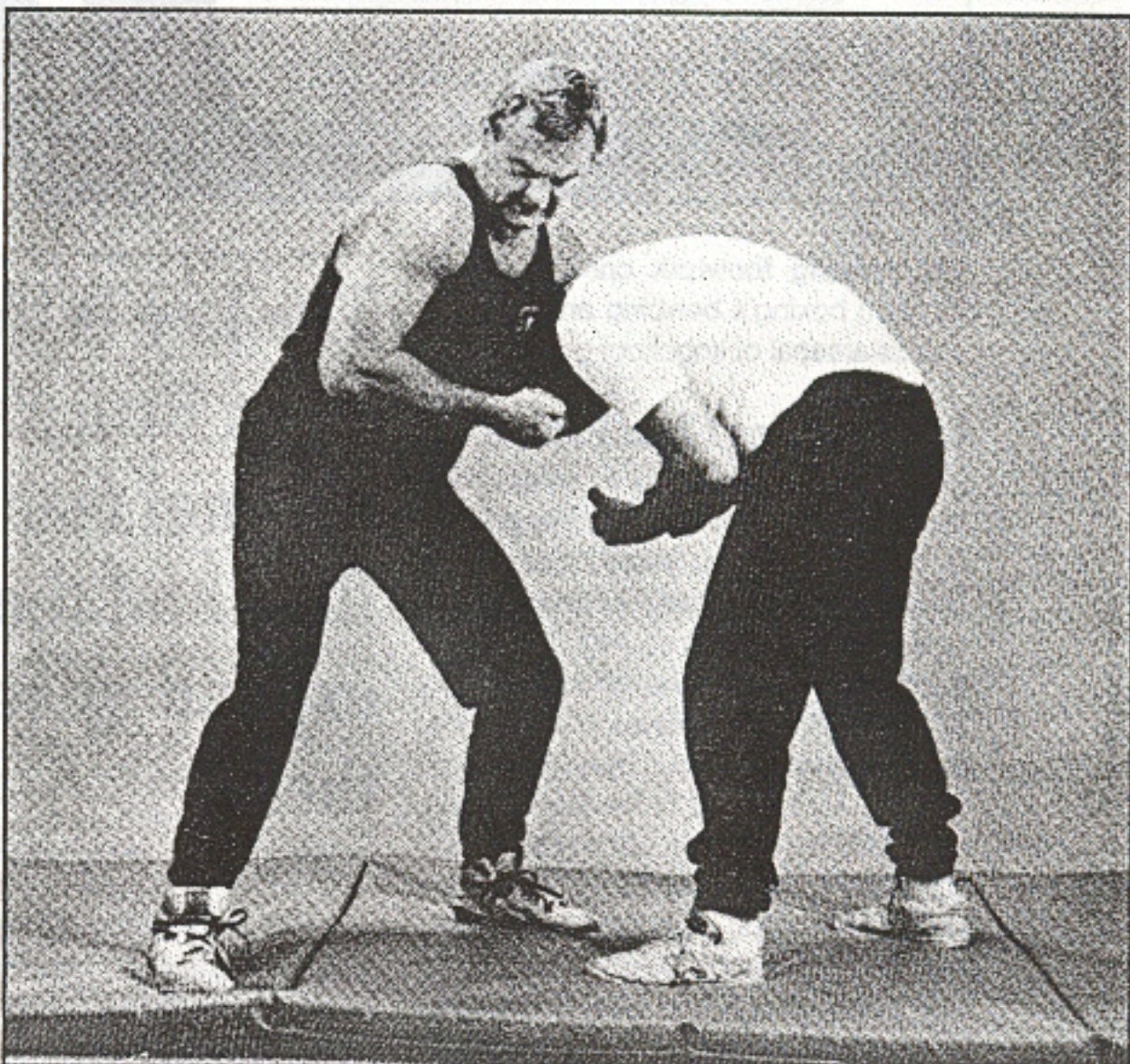
Meanwhile, Back at the Kwoon...

The biggest problem came from loyalty to the sifu. There was an unwritten covenant that one did not prostitute JKD to make a buck, and many of the original students would have been very wealthy men today had they begun teaching after Bruce's death. As controls became more

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Dan Inosanto



Larry Hartsell

JEET KUNE DO

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Fran Joseph and Jerry Poteet

lax and many individuals, rightly or wrongly, began calling what they were teaching JKD, these individuals were literally forced to come forth and begin educating the public.

Certain original students of Bruce and James Lee have surfaced to set the record straight. Bob Baker and Howard Williams, both students of James Lee, have resurfaced to demonstrate the JKD taught at the Oakland School.

After many years of shunning the limelight, Jerry Poteet has resurfaced to show what Bruce taught him in the LA School. Jerry once quoted Bruce as saying, "Modified Wing Chun is enough to handle 90% of the fighters out there. We're training for the other 10%". This shows Bruce was indeed impressed with his "discoveries" and probably wouldn't take it lightly to see they have been virtually discarded by some of his other students.

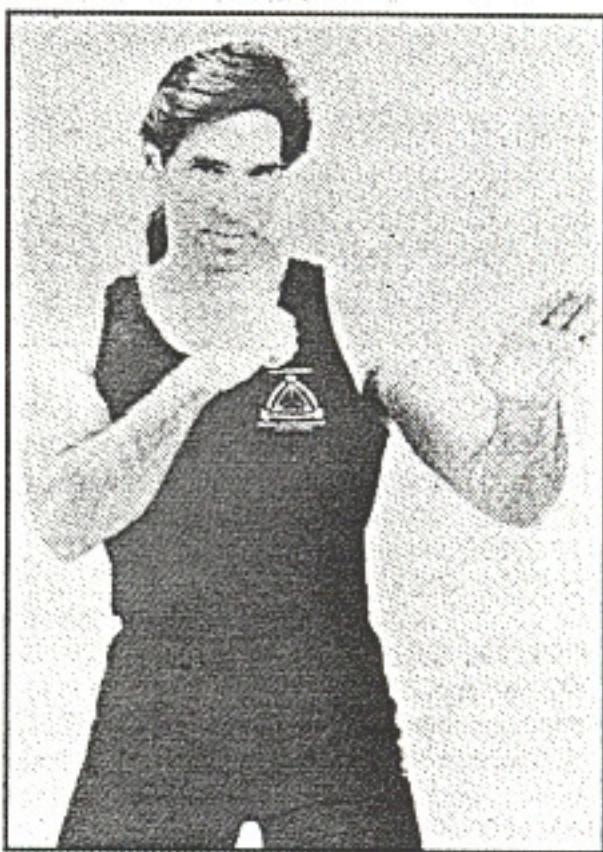
Other students of Bruce still practicing his original art are Ted Wong, Dan Lee, Bob Bremer, Pete Jacobs and Steve Golden. It is unlikely you will ever be lucky enough to train with any of these men, but Wong and Bremer are starting to become more available to the public.

Second generation students who offer quality instruction in Bruce's JKD are Lamar Davis II, founder of the United States JKD Alliance, Bill Holland, certified instructor under Jerry Poteet, Greg Lee, son of James Lee, and Vern Rochon and Fran Joseph, also certified under Poteet.

Why JKD Concepts?

Not to contradict myself, but why should all JKD practitioners eventually evolve to JKD concepts? Basically because Bruce's art in some ways was incomplete. The weapons training from Kali is an indispensable addition to Bruce's weaponless training. This is not to say Bruce himself didn't practice weapons. Obviously he did. He did not include this in his teaching to his students.

If you're going to learn weapons, Kali is the art! If you're not going to learn weapons, you should at least learn a realistic way to defend against them. The key is to learn Bruce's original teachings first, and then expand upon them.



Burt Richardson

If you attach Bruce's name to an art he never practiced, then you're just capitalizing on his success and name.

JKD concepts will continue to thrive, but with the comeback of the original art, concepts instructors will be answering a lot more questions about the origins of what they are teaching. Ted Lucaylucay tops the list of concepts instructors, followed by Paul Vunak and Burt Richardson.

Original students of Bruce who have chosen the concept method are Dan Inosanto, Larry Hartsell, and Richard Bustillo.

In the end, you must decide which path is best for you — the martial artist.

About the Author: Paul Bax is a freelance writer who practices JKD in Imperial, Missouri.