

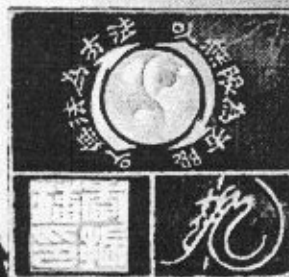
"KNOWING IS NOT ENOUGH"

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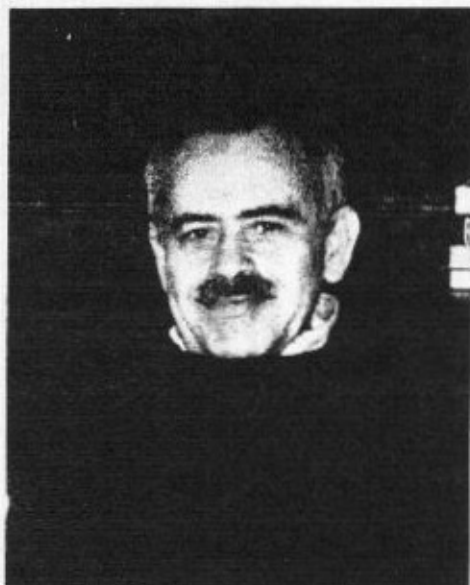


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THE "KNOWING IS NOT ENOUGH" INTERVIEW

This Month: Steve Golden Interview Conducted By Paul Bax



Steve Golden: One of Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do's "best kept secrets."

For the better part of 30 years, Steve Golden has been one of Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do's best kept secrets. An original student of Bruce Lee's at Bruce's Los Angeles Chinatown school, Golden was one of his sifu's most attentive students.

Although renowned for his phenomenal trapping skills, Steve Golden is actually well-versed in all aspects of Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do. Steve's martial arts background began when he first crossed paths with Kenpo Karate pioneer, Ed Parker in 1959. Steve studied with Parker for a period of some seven years -- until he had the good fortune to meet Bruce Lee. Steve once related to me that, while he had met many martial artists who have espoused what they termed "the philosophy of martial arts," it is his belief (based upon first-hand experience!) that Bruce Lee was the only one who was ever able to actually infuse his martial art with a functional and practical philosophy -- and it is this philosophical aspect that Steve stresses (along with his considerable technique knowledge!) in his many seminar appearances. To this day he considers Bruce Lee to be the greatest martial artist he has ever experienced, and he has plenty of anecdotes to support his contention. Witness the following:

"I remember that I didn't think that anyone could hit me if they told me ahead of time what technique they were going to throw. Then one day I visited James Lee's house with Ed Parker. Bruce Lee showed up and told me to

stand five feet in front of him and to 'try and stop me from hitting you in the face with my right hand,' which Bruce then proceeded to do -- repeatedly."

Steve joined Bruce Lee's Chinatown school in 1967 when Bruce first opened it and, for over 25 years, he has continued to share the art that Bruce Lee shared with him, teaching a small group of students in Oregon and Washington and doing national seminars. One of the most gifted -- if unheralded -- instructors of Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do, it is our pleasure to present Nucleus member Steve Golden as the subject of this month's Knowing Is Not Enough Interview.

-- John Little

How did you first become involved in the martial arts?

I think I was 12-years old when I really got interested. I used to read *Popular Science* and *Popular Mechanics* and they always had those "Defend Yourself" type ads. I sent for everything they offered. Kind of funny now that I think back on it because I didn't have anyone that I wanted to defend myself from, but I was intensely interested and wanted to take lessons. The only school I could find was a Judo club and it was about 30 miles from my home. Being 12, I didn't drive so I couldn't get to any classes. It wasn't until 1959 that Ed Parker did a demonstration at my

high school. I was more than a little impressed. And I had a driver's license.

Describe your training with Ed Parker.

It was great. I signed up for a three month course. Classes were every Tuesday and Thursday from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. By now you've probably figured out that I continued after the three months. I practiced constantly and, after four months, I was invited into the intermediate class. That was from 8:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. At 9:00 p.m. everyone had to leave and the doors and shades were closed. That's when the advanced class worked out. No one was allowed to watch. Talk about inducement to practice. Well, I did make it into the advanced class and used to be on the demonstration team. That was really fun. Ed would take us to schools, gyms, hotels and anywhere else that people were interested in martial arts. When we did a demo, we went hard. I'm still surprised that we didn't kill each other. Oh sure, someone would get their face smashed into the concrete or there would be a fractured rib now and then, but nothing really serious.

How did you first meet Bruce Lee?

I think it was in 1964. Bruce used to stop by Ed's school in Pasadena to talk to Ed. I think it was about the Hollywood scene, but I wasn't interested in that so I never asked --



The "father of American Kenpo Karate," Ed Parker (center) was a huge influence on Steve Golden's (back row, second from right) early martial development.

but I was interested in Bruce. I don't think that he ever got out without us questioning him. He always took the time to show us things and play around.

What immediate differences did you notice in JKD and Kenpo?

This might surprise you, but at that time I didn't see much difference. The punches were a vertical fist and the side kicks used the flat of the foot and heel, instead of the "knife edge." But that's small stuff! You should understand that we all relate and compare new things to what we already know, and I knew hundreds of combat techniques from Kenpo. So, for example, when Bruce taught us trapping drills, I considered them new techniques. Sure, they were different techniques from the Kenpo Techniques I learned but it wasn't like it was really that revolutionary. No, it took years before I realized what Bruce was trying to teach me. Looking back on those days, I think of those days as the time that Bruce turned on the lights but I didn't know how to open my eyes.

Would you say that Ed Parker had a different interpretation of fighting than Bruce Lee?

Of course he did. In Ed's world of combat, your actions had a predetermined set of actions. In Bruce's world, nothing was predetermined-- except, of course, that he was going to win. If you look at Kenpo using JKD theory, Kenpo doesn't look so good because it makes too many assumptions. But looking at Kenpo that way does not give you a true representation of what it was really like. I keep hearing people say that "JKD is Bruce Lee," but I don't hear people say that "Kenpo is Ed Parker." But it's just as true. You can look at Kenpo and tear it apart through theory, but in reality Ed Parker made it work. And with Ed's personal teaching, I made it work too, until I met Bruce.

Did Parker harbor any ill feeling towards Lee since several of his students enrolled in Bruce's Los Angeles Chinatown school?

I'm pretty sure that he wasn't thrilled with the situation, but it wasn't like you might think. It might sound like Bruce came along, showed me something new and I deserted Ed. That's not what happened. I had been with Ed for over seven years. Ed was almost always at the school teaching me and the other advanced students. But, for the last year before I left, Ed was spending more and more time away from the Pasadena school. He was involved in his other schools and in dealing with the Hollywood crowd. So, at least for that period of time, he was not teaching me -- so who left who? Ed and I remained friends. I had moved to Eugene, Oregon. He used to come there to do seminars for local Kenpo schools and I'd bring my students. He was so friendly to me and my students that the Kenpo people in



Under the attentive eye of Bruce Lee (center), the Chinatown school in downtown Los Angeles became a martial art laboratory where serious students learned the ultimate nature of unarmed combat. Pictured here are Nucleus members (from left to right) Jerry Potect, Daniel Lee, Bruce Lee, Steve Golden, Pete Jacobs and Bob Bremer. The signs hanging in the background were made for Bruce by Nucleus member George Lee.

town got real cool toward me after that. Ed was also a bodyguard to Elvis Presley and he would sometimes be in Eugene when Elvis was performing there. During the day Ed would come to my home. He came over for Thanksgiving dinner one time and the next day he put on a private class for my students. Ed was really a great guy. And, I might add, a superb martial artist and a genius in developing his system.

Describe some of your first training sessions under Bruce Lee at the L.A. school.

There were a few different flavors while I was there. We always started with a warm-up and some heavy exercising. We moved on to footwork, kicking, trapping, sparring, and a lot of questions and answers. When Bruce was there teaching, he would teach new things. When he wasn't there, Danny Inosanto would lead the class through what Bruce had previously taught. In all cases, the door was locked promptly at the beginning of class and the door and windows were colored so no one could watch. We occasionally had visitors and I noticed that we only practiced basics during those classes. It was like: "You can watch but you're not going to see."

Some have said that the L.A. school was casual in one sense, and strict in others. Could you please give us your take on this topic?

Well, we had a very casual atmosphere. There were no uniforms and no ranks. We all went on a first name basis. Bruce was Bruce, Danny was Danny, Jerry was Jerry and I was Steve. I'm still Steve, as a matter of fact

laughs. It sounds strange now to hear people calling Bruce "Sifu" or any other title. If we had a question about anything we just asked. I'd say something like, "Hey, Bruce. How does this work?" It may sound like lack of respect based on how formal things seem to be getting now, but that's the way it was then. And I can assure you, no one lacked respect for Bruce Lee. And none of us needed permission for anything. But, when we were working out, we were damn serious. We went hard and put everything into it. We would not have had it any other way and neither would Bruce. And I'll tell you something about being serious. Bruce once told me that he was going to kick me and that I should get back as fast as I could. It doesn't get any more serious than that. I've never moved back so fast in my life -- fat lot of good it did. His kick still knocked me across the room into a concrete wall and I thought he broke my ribs -- and that was while moving away from him and wearing two chest protectors!

What were the sparring sessions like at the L.A. school and what did they evolve into?

When I was there, the sparring I did was pretty controlled. It was frustrating though. Not just for me but also for Bruce. I remember him yelling at us, "Don't just move around -- move with a purpose!" He was pretty upset and he kept saying that we were just moving around. I thought we were moving for a purpose. I wanted to hit my opponent and I didn't want him to hit me. That was my purpose. It took me about six years before I realized what he really meant. Now I understand why he was so frustrated with us.

So what did he mean?

If it took me six years to understand after Bruce's personal instruction, I don't think it would do any good to try to explain it now in just a few words. Sorry, Paul.

Okay. Didn't you witness Bruce Lee sparring a Tai Kwon Do practitioner? Did you ever view Bruce Lee in sparring sessions with any other martial artist?

Yeah. It was frightening to see how easy it was for Bruce. The Tae Kwon Do black belt mentioned that he knew Bruce had good hands, so Bruce said that he would only use his feet. They went pretty hard and the guy really tried to kick Bruce. It was amazing. Every time the guy kicked, Bruce got just barely out of range and just as the guy's foot came down, Bruce held his kick up to the guy's face. I mean, a roundhouse kick right up to the guy's nose or a side kick up to the guy's temple. Bruce just held it there. The guy didn't even see the kick coming, and when he saw the foot there he jumped and kind of screamed -- Bruce wasn't even trying! This guy putting everything he had into getting Bruce and yet Bruce was barely putting out any effort. If it was for real, it would have lasted until the first kick. I'll tell you something, if you didn't experience Bruce first hand, then you'll never really know how good he was.

Please recall your personal sparring sessions with Bruce Lee.

I'd love to but there weren't any. The closest I ever got was once, he told me to really try to stop him any way I could. I actually did very well for the first three quarters of a second! But then he had my arms trapped and his fingers in my eyes -- Man! What a nasty feeling. But what can you expect? I was only a black belt with seven years experience.

Your forte is trapping. Explain what makes trapping work in a real confrontation.

(Laughing) I know how I got that reputation but that's a different story.

and not one for publication. And, yeah, I am good at trapping. People keep asking me to do seminars on trapping. And it's an excellent seminar so it reinforces the notion that trapping is my forte. I suppose that I should feel honored that people think I'm so good at trapping that it must be the best thing I do. But actually I'm much better at other aspects of Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do. If you are talking about the Five Ways of Attack, I'm better at Direct Attack, Progressive Indirect Attack and Attack by Drawing, than I am at Trapping. These are pretty easy to demonstrate, but are much more difficult to teach and use well.

But you asked what makes trapping work in a real confrontation. I read over and over that "trapping really doesn't work." People say that they have seen numerous fights and have never seen trapping work. When I pin them down, they admit that they have never seen someone try trapping in a real fight. So I'll answer your question in a round about way -- why doesn't trapping work in a real fight? Because people don't know how to use it. I'll even go so far as to say that most people don't even know what trapping really is, and how it should be used. But think about this: Bruce used it. I can use it and it's actually much easier than you would think. So if it doesn't work for others, maybe they are doing something wrong.

Why is footwork so important in JFJKD?

Because you don't want to get hit. With few exceptions and if done correctly, Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do utilizes little or no blocking. Without making this an instructional paper, I'll just say that blocking is the least efficient and potentially the most dangerous way of handling an attack. So one answer to an attack is

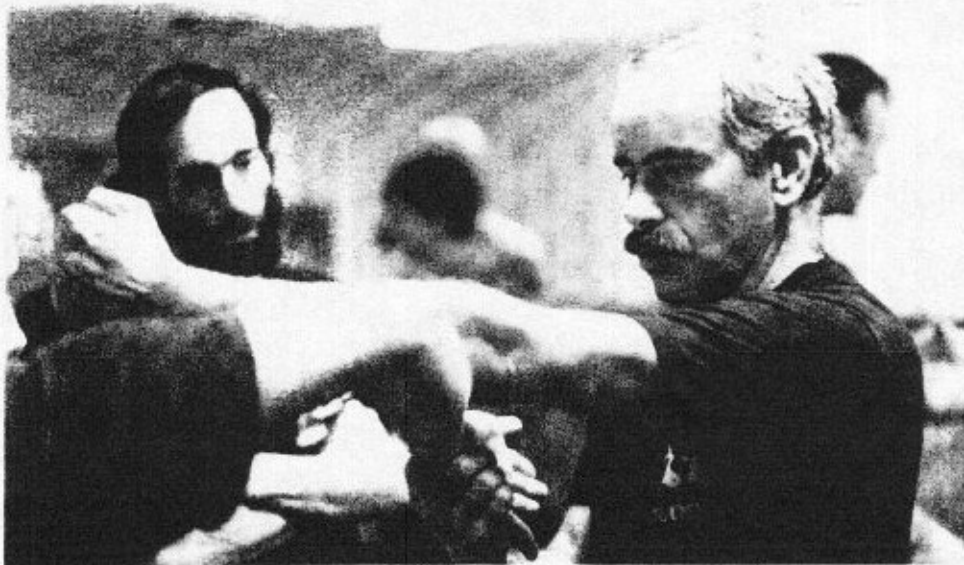


Going back a long way: Nucleus members Jerry Poteet (left) and Steve Golden (right) have been friends since the days they used to workout together at Bruce Lee's Chinatown school in the late 1960s.

to not be where the attack is being targeted. If you can't move well, you get hit. Of course, the other reason is because you want to hit. Without good footwork you pretty much have to wait for your opponent to happen into your range before you can attack. It really is not a good idea to let your opponents dictate your actions. It gives them far too much power. I know that Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do mentions that your opponent's actions will determine what you do. But that does not mean that your opponent should force you to do anything.

Just over two years ago the Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do Nucleus was formed. In your opinion, what is the purpose of this organization?

Okay. The purpose was and is very simple: Bruce Lee did not have a standard system, so most of us learned different things from him. In addition, by the nature of one's personality, we each interpret what we learned somewhat differently. Since Bruce's death, the JKD shown to the public has been from a very few people. Now there are hundreds of people claiming to teach JKD and many of them teach their own interpretations of JKD. Although the public is getting some excellent information, we were concerned that much of what Bruce did and taught to others would be lost. With that in mind the Nucleus decided that our purpose would be to educate the public in what each of us learned from Bruce. That includes all Nucleus members who could contribute to this knowledge and also anyone outside of the Nucleus who learned from Bruce Lee and was willing to add to this knowledge. We are trying to be careful not to present our own interpretations, but only to



Although most martial artists are familiar with Steve's considerable reputation in trapping, Steve is extremely skilled in all facets of Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do.

present what Bruce actually said and did. When and if we teach anything else, we would not use the name Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do. The Nucleus also decided that it had no interest in policing the JKD community. We are not criticizing or condemning anyone teaching or claiming to teach JKD. Instead, we will show what we learned to the public. Each person can then make up his or her mind regarding what others are teaching. I've heard it said that we are making JKD "a static system" and "by its nature that would destroy it by not letting it evolve." It is true that JKD is not static and changes based on the individual's needs. But I look at Bruce's teachings as giving others the same base that I had. And I look at Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do as the tool that gives you the basis for deciding what path your evolution should take. It forces no path on you, but allows you to make an intelligent decision rather than concluding that JKD is anything you want it to be -- which, by the way, it is absolutely not.

JFKD has already been subjected to criticism by certain camps. Some claim that you have ignored the qualifications of people such as Dan Inosanto and that you are promoting -- in terms of exposure -- other lesser known students of Bruce Lee. What are your feelings about this?

I'll give you my own perspective: I will teach what I learned from Bruce Lee. Does this mean that I'm ignoring, say, Danny's [Inosanto's] qualifications? Well, I suppose it does. But you didn't you ask me about my also ignoring Ted Wong's qualifications, or Taky Kimura's qualifications, or Jerry Poteet's, or Pete Jacobs' -- or every other person who studied from Bruce. I am aware that many

people have excellent qualifications, but I rarely make a point of it when I teach because that's not what I'm teaching. And I have never claimed that others are not qualified. But what does any of that have to do with the fact that I can teach people what I learned from Bruce Lee? Perhaps someone can explain to me what anyone else's qualifications have to do with my teaching. Now, about "promoting other less known students of Bruce Lee," if you mean "promoting" in the sense of exposing them to the public, then "less known" is all the more reason to promote these people. If we stay out of the public's eye, we can't very well share with them what we learned, from Bruce Lee. Why are some people getting so upset? You know that Bruce Lee did teach more than one person. And by the way, "less known" does not necessarily mean "less qualified."

What has bothered you the most that the critics of the JFKD Nucleus have said?

The same thing that bothers me whenever people repeat what they hear without trying to determine what the truth is. Like, "it must be true because I heard it somewhere" or "read it somewhere." And most of the comments are very vague like, "They show disrespect..." When I ask for one instance, all I get is a blank look. Most people realize so many of the derogatory statements against the Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do Nucleus come from people who think they have something to lose by our existence. I am not sure why they feel so threatened. Perhaps it's because people might see what Bruce taught us and it would bring up questions about what they are teaching. Perhaps they are afraid that someone is going to steal all their students. I'm not really sure. But no matter what they think, my training area still holds only eight people and has been full for twenty years. So sleep easy.

Another JKD organization, The JKD Society, folded some years ago. Why do you feel this organization failed and what differences and goals do you see between the Society and the Nucleus?

Until Linda Lee Cadwell spoke to me about the purpose of the Jun Fan Jeet Kune

Do Nucleus, I had always refused to join any JKD organization. So I have no knowledge about The JKD Society or about any other JKD organization.

Some people view JKD as nothing more than the accumulation of techniques or learning every eastern martial art possible. What are your views on this approach?

Some people are quite mistaken in their interpretation of Bruce Lee's art. I see it over and over again in JKD, in other martial arts and in everyday life. People want to learn but only so far as it doesn't interfere with what they already believe or with what they prefer the truth to be. They spout Bruce's words where convenient, and ignore them where they may cause some discomfort. It may be a lot more fun to accumulate and learn more things so I don't blame people for doing so, but I don't understand why they justify their actions by calling it JKD. Bruce said to simplify. Does that mean accumulate? JKD is not -- I repeat, not -- an accumulation. It is simplifying to the essence of a combative art. Having said that, I do understand that there must be a phase of accumulation before you have anything to simplify. But that phase is not the one that results in Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do.

How valid are the principles of JKD when applied to the fighter's of today?

Why should anything have changed today? Getting hit hard still hurts as much today as it ever did. Awareness is still important. Bruce didn't develop JKD just to handle existing systems. He developed it based on the principles of combat and those certainly have not changed.

In closing, where do you hope to see The Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do Nucleus in the next ten years?

As long as people are interested, we will continue to teach and educate. We will continue looking for people who can and do teach Bruce Lee's art and encourage them. We will not be a policing organization nor will we waste our time and energy looking for people who are misrepresenting Bruce Lee's art. The Nucleus will continue to be a non-profit organization. It will continue to solicit help from all those who are willing to help paint the true picture of Bruce Lee and his art of Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do.

Steve Golden, one of Bruce Lee's original students is now available for seminars and workshops by calling 208-375-8885. Paul Bax is a long-time researcher and historian of Bruce Lee and his art of Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do. He has compiled many of his interviews with key JFKD figures into a book entitled *Reflections of Bruce Lee*. For ordering information please write to Paul at 2266 Romaine Creek Road, Fenton, MO 63026.



A "Golden Moment" caught on film: Steve (left) demonstrating the fundamentals of Hand Immobilization Attack (H.I.A.) on-stage before a crowd of over 400 people at the First Annual Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do Seminar, held in San Francisco in January of 1997.