

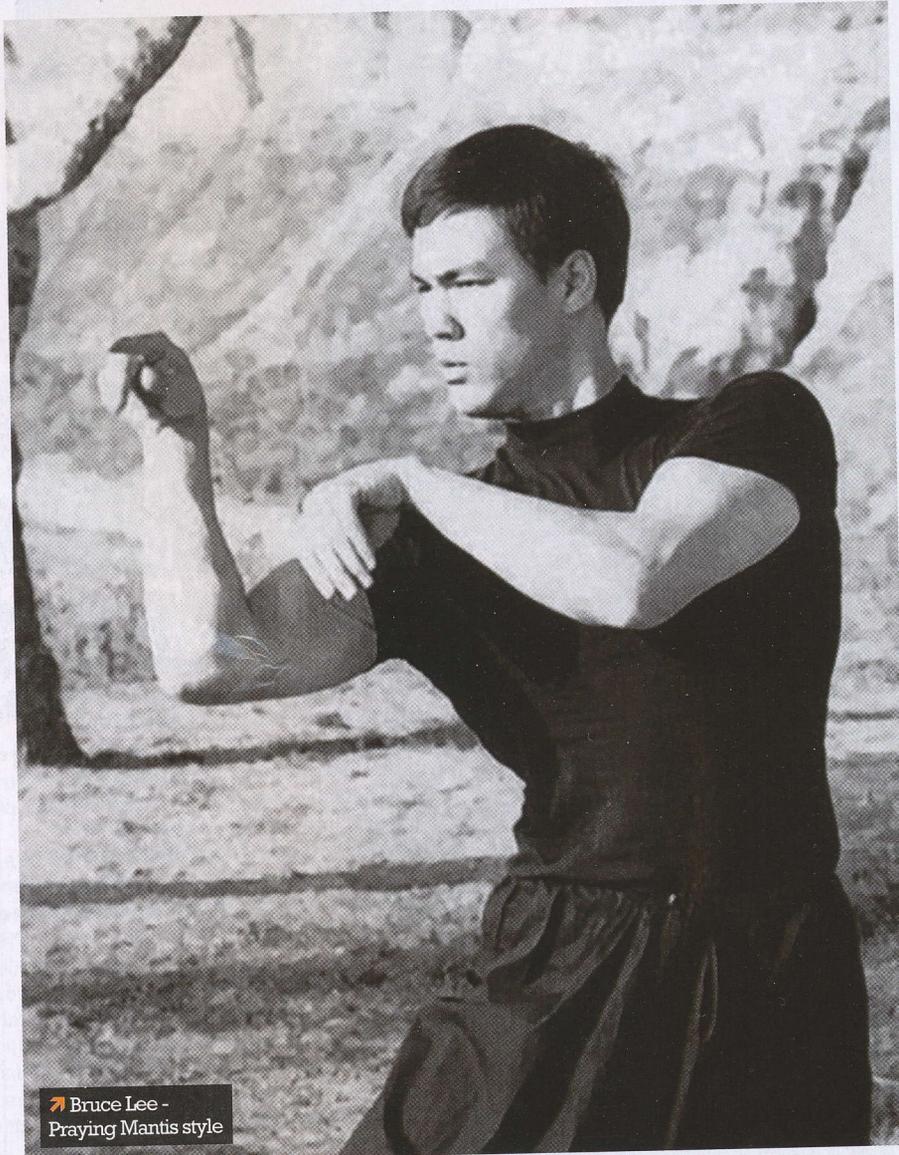


JKD COLUMNIST **CHRIS KENT** PASSES THE PAGE TO DAN INOSANTO, WHO ASKS, WAS BRUCE LEE ANTI-FORM?



➤ Bruce Learning Tai Chi from his father

Numerous blogs and articles have appeared concerning JKD, Bruce Lee, and the practice of forms. Most of them have dealt with the practice of a form known as the 'Ung Moon Form' (which I wrote a short piece about a while ago). I thought it might be helpful for readers to look at Sifu Dan Inosanto's article on this subject which first appeared in a column he wrote for *Inside Kung Fu* magazine some time ago. In it, he discusses not only Bruce's attitude toward forms, but also his own attitude toward them. - **Chris Kent**



➤ Bruce Lee - Praying Mantis style

# WAS BRUCE LEE AGAINST 'FORMS'?

By Dan Inosanto

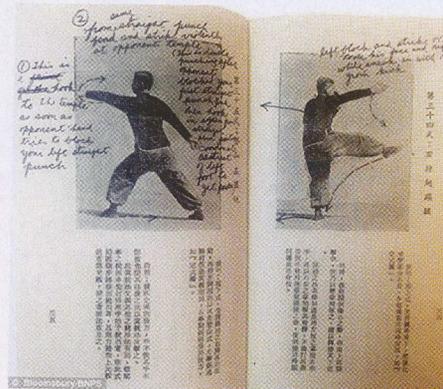
A misconception exists that people who study Jeet Kune Do are anti-form. Nothing could be further from the truth. They have an understanding of form, and as such, can practice a freelance version. It is like 'having no form as the form'.

Learning proper body mechanics is the main reason for form. Also important is learning to identify and interpret what natural body weapons are produced when doing the form.

This was Bruce Lee's philosophy in practicing

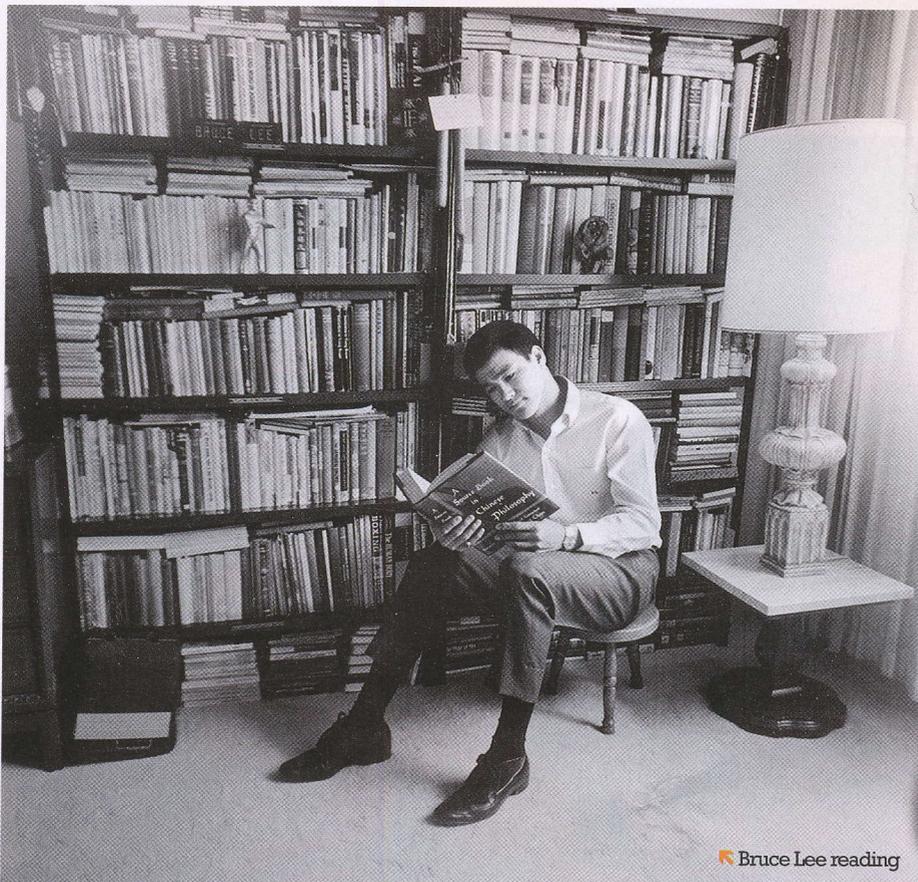
the form with no form. It does not mean he practiced form without form. Having 'no form' is ignorance. Having 'no form as the form' is transcendence.

Many people ask me why Bruce Lee was anti-form, why he hated the practice of form. Let me clear this misconception once and for all. Bruce often said to me, "The lesser expression can be found in the greater, but the greater is not found in the lesser." Simply put, form is part of your personal expression, but your personal expression is not always developed through the practice of form.



➤ Bruce Lee hand written notes in Praying Mantis book

Bruce was among the better forms men I have seen in my years in the martial arts. I saw Bruce perform classical Chinese Gung Fu sets with beauty, precision and power. I saw him perform sets from Choy Li Fut, Southern Praying Mantis, Northern Praying Mantis,



Bruce Lee reading

Tai Chi Chuan, and different styles that employ kicks. Bruce Lee had an appreciation for classical forms, but separated this part from his martial art training. He felt forms should be labelled 'martial arts gymnastics', and not be included in martial arts terminology.

Bruce soon dropped the practice of classical forms and replaced them with forms that were set, yet they were not set. It was more of a freelance self-expression type of shadowboxing. While Bruce practiced form, it was more of the free-expression variety, using his imagination on different types of opponents and situations. He used this practice to develop agility, balance, dexterity, economy of motion, flexibility, endurance, power, speed, imagination and mobility. It was also helpful in developing familiarisation

and identification of body tools and the lines they could travel. Timing, rhythm and reaction to a stimulus are often hard to develop through the use of forms. Because they all need an opponent to be effective, Bruce believed training was lost through the practice of classical forms.

In the early stages of Bruce's training, he went through forms to understand forms. I do not

think he advocated to complete denial of classical forms. However, he was trying to say that if you stay with form for the sake of form and cannot separate the practice of form from the actual reality that it will soon become a detriment to your martial art efficiency. A good martial artist should be able to separate what is used for ring combat, what is beneficial for tournament competition and what constitutes good exercise. Bruce often maintained that forms have their place. What he was trying to say, however, was that some martial arts instructors of the 1960's placed so much emphasis on forms - their appearance, complexities, difficulty, length and power - they lost sight of the original purpose, which was as an aid to combat efficiency.

I like Bruce's concept of shadowboxing, which is more of a freelance version. However, sometimes there are movements like wooden dummy techniques I like to perform over and over in a set pattern. I also practice the forms from the Villabrille-Largusa system of Kali, which are split into two areas, a set pattern of predetermined movements, and a personal, creative freelance form against imaginary opponents. I also like to practice Tai Chi chuan on a daily basis. In addition, I practice penchak silat traditional forms.

Like my Indonesian Penchak Silat instructor Paul de Thouars, I feel you can fight with form if you understand the usage of form. This is a concept I stress to my JKD students. If you separate the practice of form from the reality of combat, you will have no problems. The utilisation of good form is paramount in any martial art as long as it brings about the most economical and proficient mechanical motion of the body in combat. This is why

Ed Parker

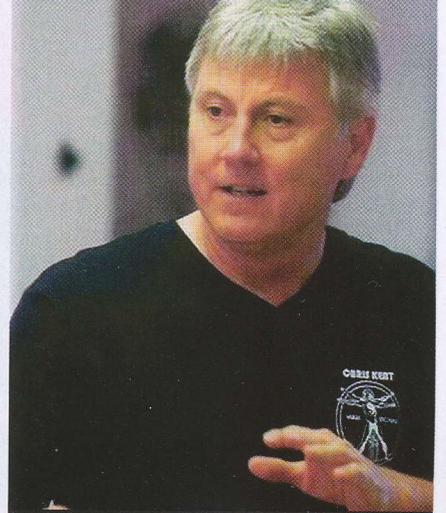
the movement of form should be as close as possible to reality.

Form definitely has a place in martial arts training. It is beneficial if it categorises and serves as an encyclopaedia or dictionary of movements as Ed Parker often stresses in Kenpo Karate. The key is not to be 'bound' by form. As an example, most of us in the Jeet Kune Do family appreciate the classical forms of Wu Shu, even if most of us do not physically practice these forms. The majority of Jeet Kune Do practitioners prefer to freelance. It is not that we are anti-form, but that our form is flexible enough to suit our personal needs. - **Dan Inosanto**

I hope this sheds a little more light for people on the way Bruce Lee actually felt concerning martial art forms.

■ **CHRIS KENT**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR...



## CHRIS KENT

Chris Kent is widely acknowledged as one of the world's foremost authorities on Bruce Lee's martial art known as Jeet Kune Do and has gained international recognition for his knowledge and leadership in perpetuating the art, training methods, and philosophy developed by Lee.

He has authored 3 of the highest rated books on *Jeet Kune Do: The Encyclopaedia of Jeet Kune Do*, *Jeet Kune Do - The Textbook*, and *Jeet Kune Do Kickboxing*. In addition, he has written for numerous martial art publications both nationally and internationally including *Inside Kung Fu*, *Black Belt*, *Martial Art Masters*, *Budo International*, *Combat and Martial Arts Illustrated*. Chris is married with a daughter and lives in Boise, Idaho, U.S.A.

For further information on Chris please go to:- <http://www.ckjkd.com/>