

The Official Publication & Voice of the  
Bruce Lee Educational Foundation

# BRUCE LEE

**MILLENNIUM ISSUE!**

**Conditioning**

**Bruce Lee's  
Isometric Workout**

## **Bruce Lee's Kicks!**

**Historical**

**A Conversation with  
Bruce Lee on  
Martial Art**

**Beyond the Physical**  
"Liberating truth  
is a reality only in  
so far as it is  
experienced and  
lived by the  
individual himself;  
it is a truth that  
transcends styles  
or disciplines."

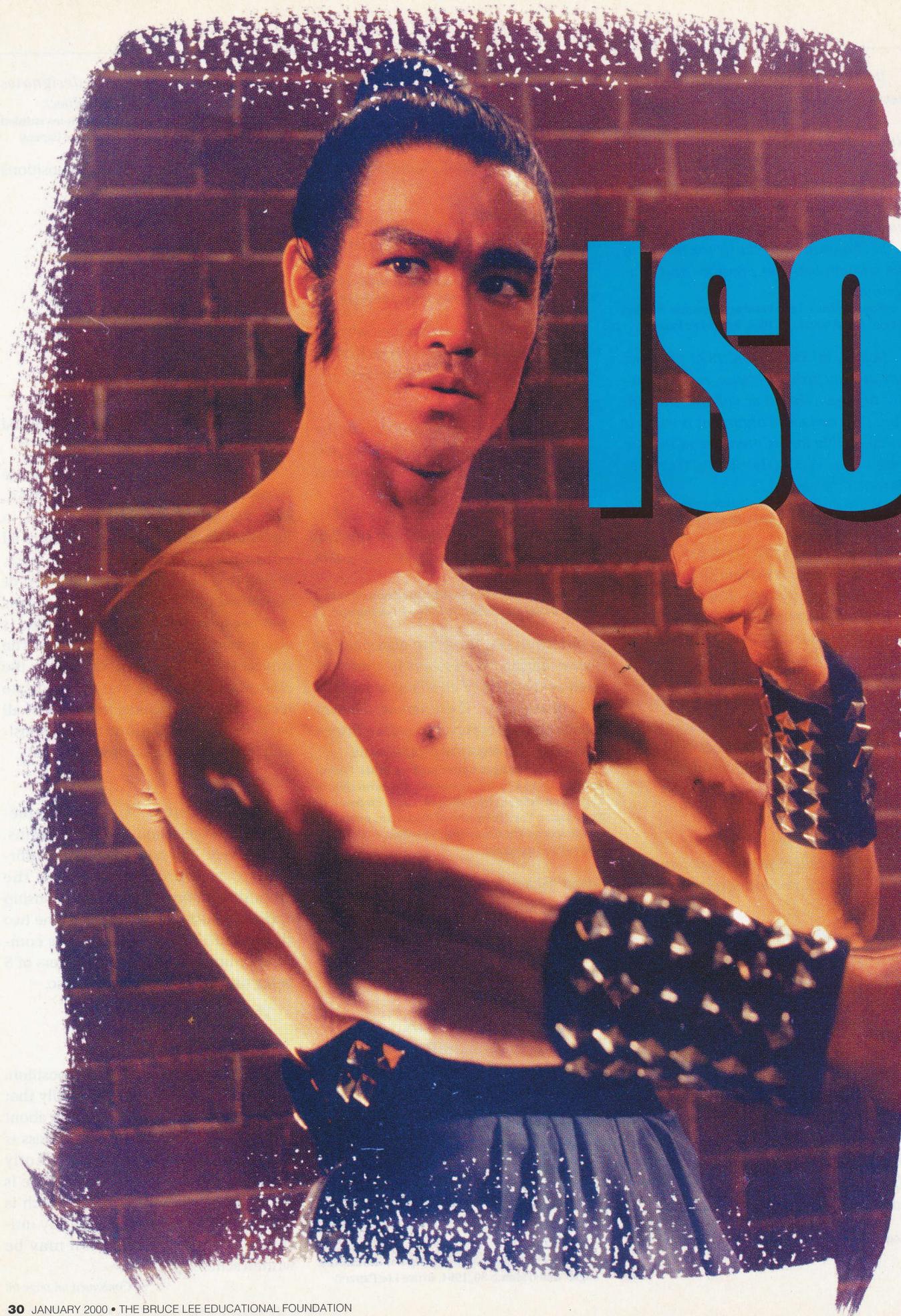
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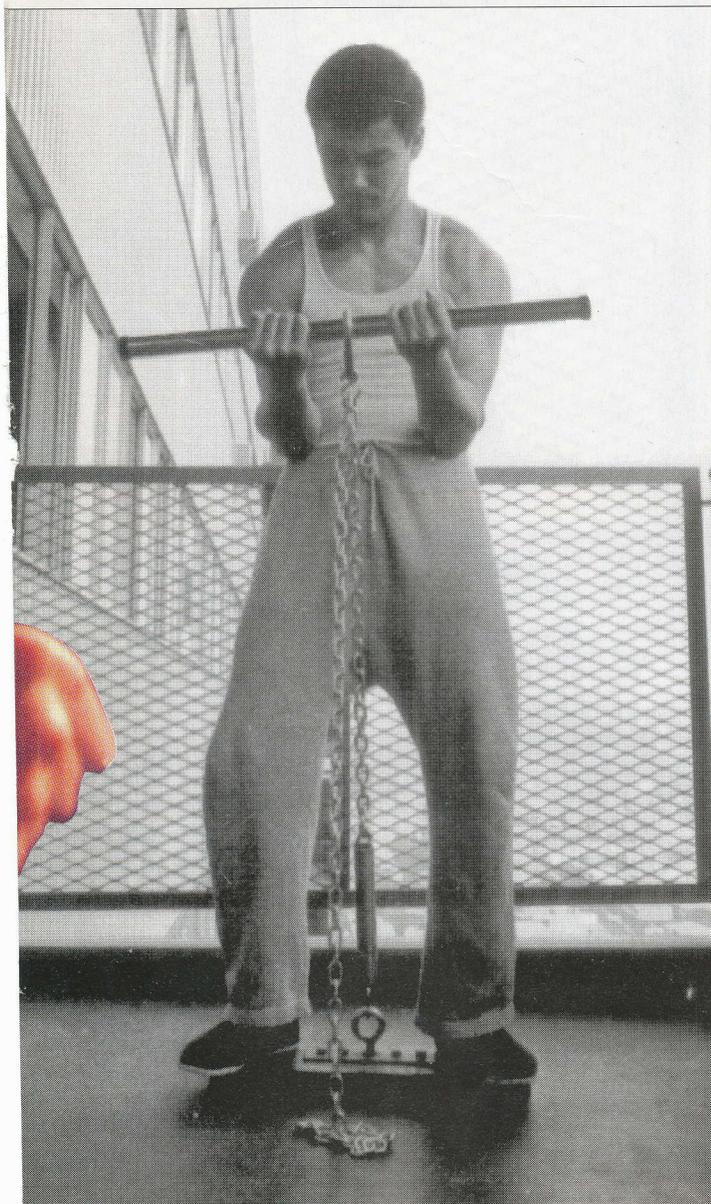
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*Bruce Lee*



ISO

# Bruce Lee's METRIC TRAINING



**Y**ou're on the ground, grappling with an opponent when he suddenly attempts to lock one of your arms with a Juji-gatame (straight arm bar). Your arm is bent and the opponent is trying to straighten it. Suddenly you tense your bicep muscle and forearm as hard as possible against his pulling force, "locking" your arm in a static, bent position for several seconds and effectively denying the opponent the arm bar as you either escape the attack or counter it.

In the above scenario, your ability to contract your arm muscles and maintain a static, or "isometric" contraction for those vital few seconds has saved you from a situation which might have had very painful consequences. Bruce Lee was very familiar with the use of isometric training methods as a way to help increase a person's strength, and used them extensively in his workouts during the mid-to late 1960's. He also set up an isometric program for Dan Inosanto to include in his own physical training. So what are isometrics and how can a person use them?

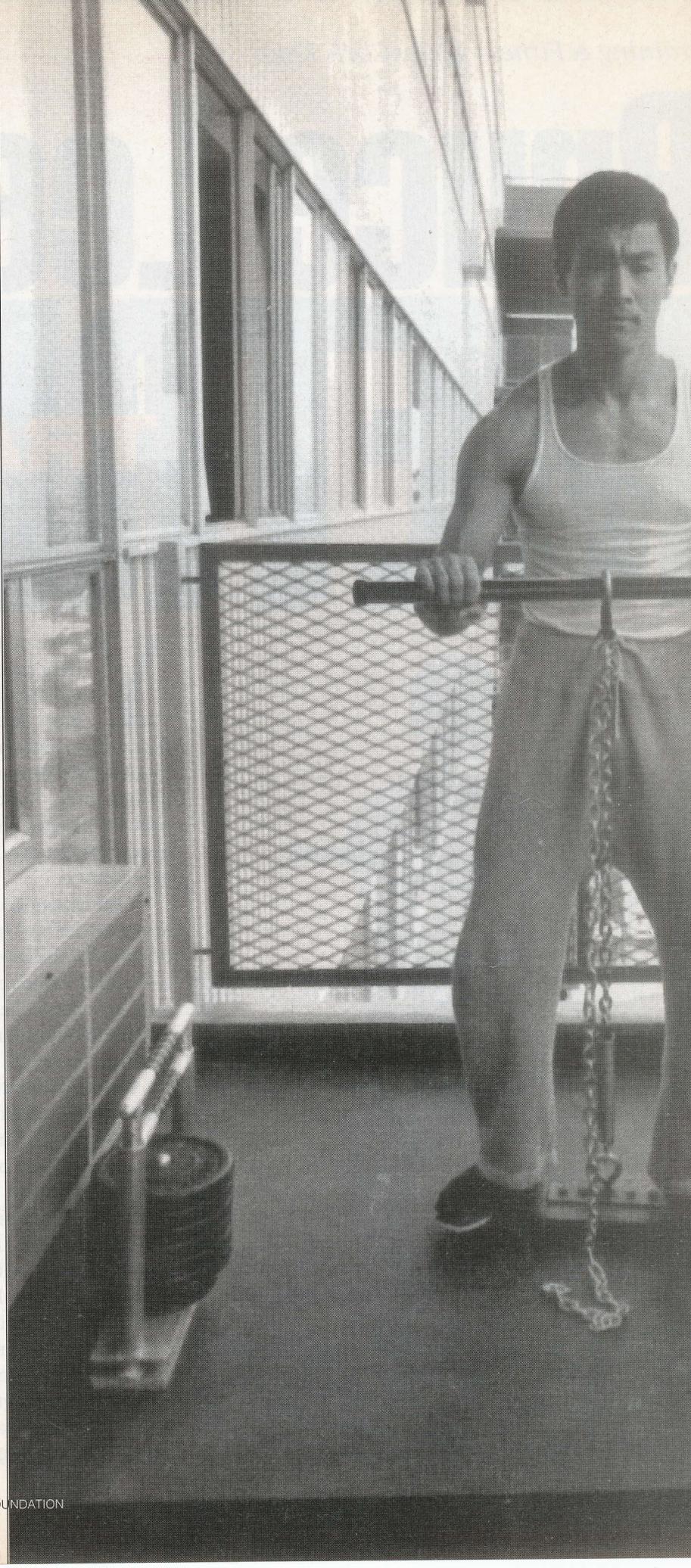
Isometrics are a method of physical exercise in which one set of muscles is tensed or contracted, for a period of seconds, in opposition to another set of muscles or an immovable object, such as a bar in a power rack or even a wall. As opposed to isotonic exercise such as weight lifting, during which there is a change in length of the particular muscle or muscles involved, in an isometric contraction there is no appreciable change in the length of the muscle or muscles. This is due to the fact that the muscle is unable to shorten because of the magnitude of the resistance against it.

In order for isometrics to be most effective, it's necessary for the person using them to concentrate upon exerting all possible pressure against the immovable object. Bruce concentrated on generating 100% maximum effort while performing each movement in his program.

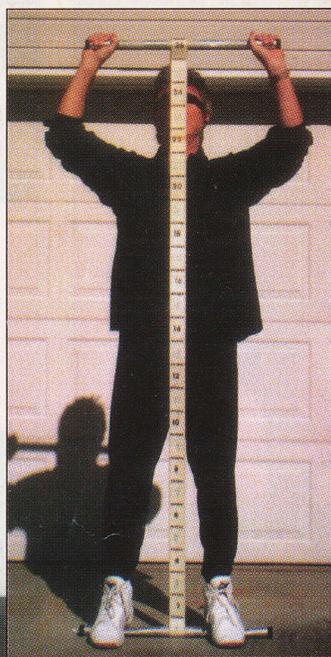
**Bruce Lee was very familiar with the use of isometric training methods as a way to help increase a person's strength.**

Many isometric exercises do not require complicated or expensive training equipment. The majority of the time, Bruce used a power rack to work his isometric program. However, he also worked the same exercises on a portable isometric training device that was made for him by one of his students, George Lee. You can buy the equipment necessary to build your own portable isometric training device at any decent hardware store. (As I do not currently have a power rack, in the photographs I will demonstrate the exercises on a portable isometric training device that was given to me as gift by my instructor, Dan Inosanto). The following eight basic exercises were used by Bruce Lee to build up the basic requirements:

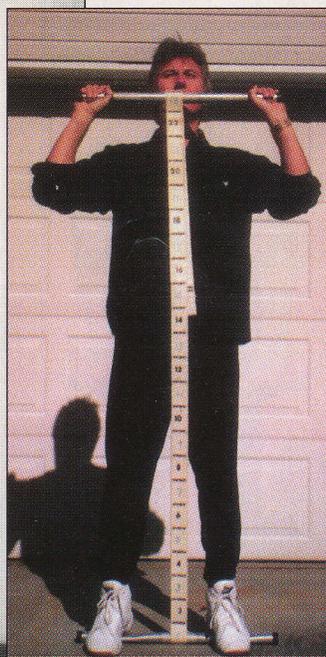
1. Press Lockout
2. Press Start
3. Rise on Toes
4. Pull
5. Parallel Squat
6. Shoulder Shrug
7. Deadlift
8. Quarter Squat



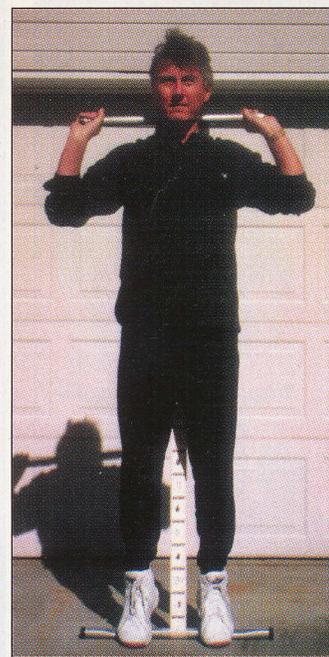
## THE BASIC EIGHT EXERCISES



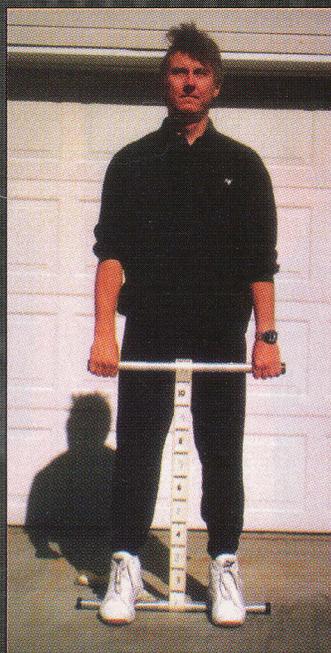
**1) PRESS LOCKOUT:** Set the bar at a height of about 3 inches below full lockout position, with your arms extended overhead. Grip the bar with hands about shoulder-width apart. Look straight ahead. Tighten your leg, hip and back muscles, and push upward against the bar as hard as possible for 6 to 12 seconds.



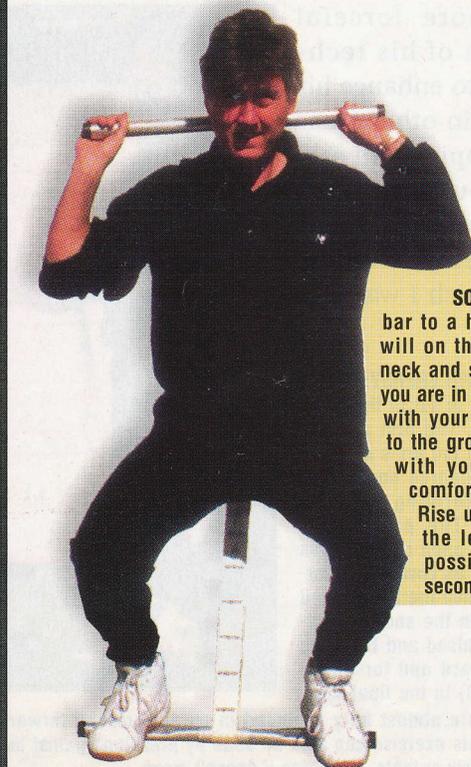
**2) PRESS START:** Set the bar about chin height. As with the press lockout, place hands about shoulder-width apart. Focus your eyes straight ahead. Tighten your leg, hip and back muscles, and again push upward against the bar as hard as possible for 6 to 12 seconds.



**3) RISE ON TOES:** Set the bar at a height where it will rest just above your neck and shoulders when you stand in front of it with your back straight. Grasp the bar with your hands in a comfortable position. Keep your knees and hips locked tight, back straight, and neck turned slightly back. Rise up on your toes and press upwards on the bar as hard as possible for 6 to 12 seconds.



**4) PULL:** Set the bar at a height 6 to 7 inches below your navel, and where your arms are slightly bent. Grasp the bar with your hands again approximately shoulder-width apart. Rising up on your toes slightly, look up slightly, and pull upward as hard as possible for 6 to 12 seconds.

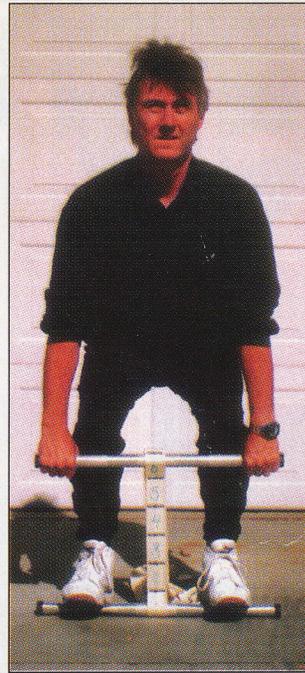


**5) PARALLEL SQUAT:** Adjust the bar to a height where it will rest on the back of your neck and shoulders when you are in a squat position with your thighs parallel to the ground. Grasp bar with your hands in a comfortable position. Rise up, pushing with the legs as hard as possible for 6 to 12 seconds.

## THE BASIC EIGHT EXERCISES *continued*



**6) SHOULDER SHRUG:** Set the bar to a height where it will be in hands when your arms are fully extended downward. Grasp the with hands about shoulder-width apart. Shrug your shoulders upward as hard as possible, keeping your arms and legs fully extended at all times.



**7) DEAD-WEIGHT LIFT:** Adjust the bar to where it will be about 2 inches below your knees when you are holding it. Keeping your hands about shoulder-width apart, your head up, hips down and flat, push hard with your legs and pull up as hard as you can.



**8) QUARTER SQUAT:** Set the bar to a height about 4 inches below where it would be if you were standing erect. Place the bar across the back of your neck and shoulders, and grip the bar with your arms in a comfortable position. Push upward against the bar by contracting the muscles of your thighs as hard as possible.

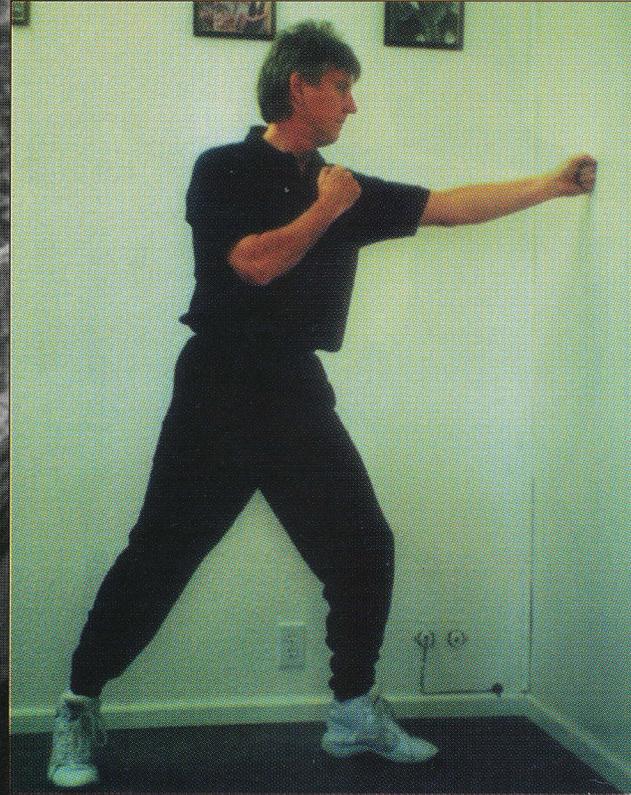
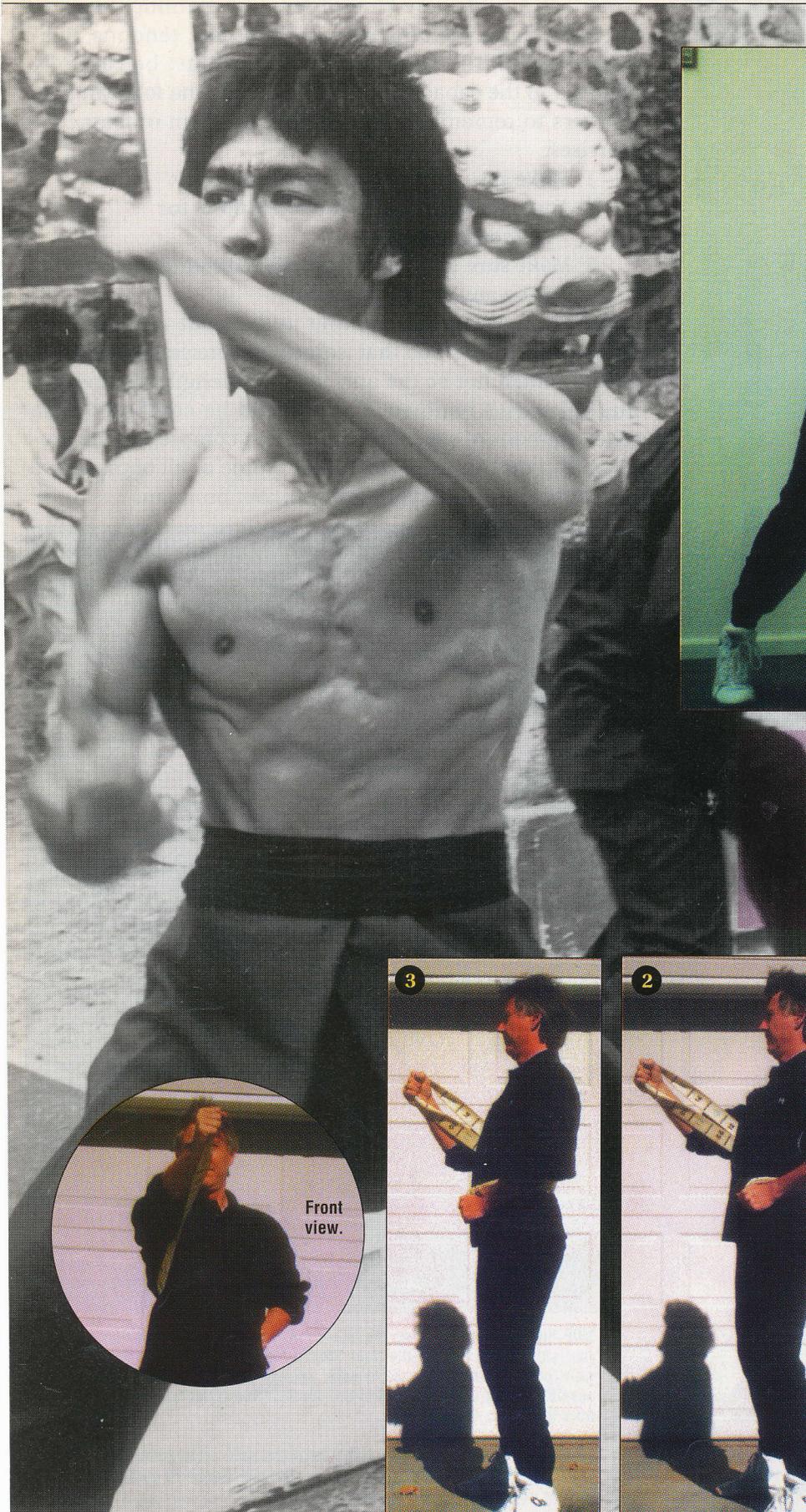
Lee also modified isometric exercises in order to develop more forceful application of his techniques and to enhance his proficiency in other areas such as trapping, chi sao, and even punching and kicking. The following are several different training exercises which I was told Bruce used:

**UPWARD/OUTWARD ENERGY:** In this exercise the bar is set at three different positions. The first position (1) is set so that the arms are bent to almost a 90-degree angle as if you were performing a bicep hammer curl. The palms face inward towards each other. Press your forearms in an upward and forward action against the bar as hard as you can. 2) In the second position the bar is raised and the arms are extend upward and forward a little bit more. 3) In the final position, the arms are almost fully extended in an upward and forward motion. *Note:* This exercise can also be done by pressing against the underside of a desk or table, providing it doesn't move.

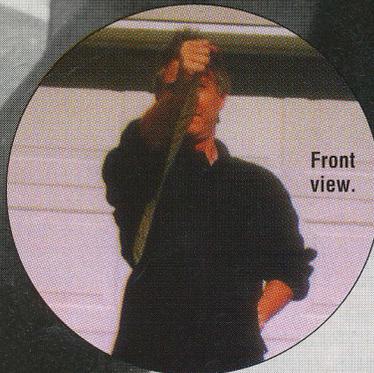
## SPECIALIZED ISOMETRIC EXERCISES



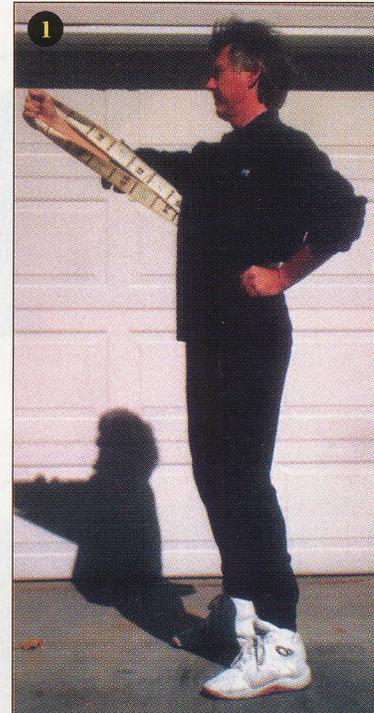
Front view.



**STRAIGHT PUNCH:** In this exercise a skip rope is used to help develop more forceful application in your straight punch (below). Again, three positions are used. These are: (1) arm almost fully extended. (2) arm partially extended. (3) arm almost in ready or starting position. *Note:* This exercise can also be performed by pressing your fist against a wall (above).



Front view.



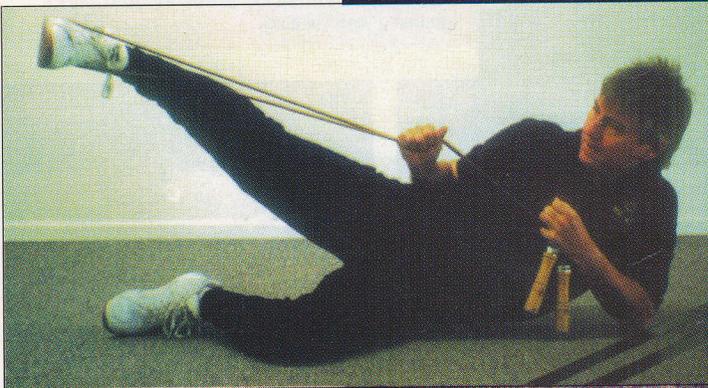
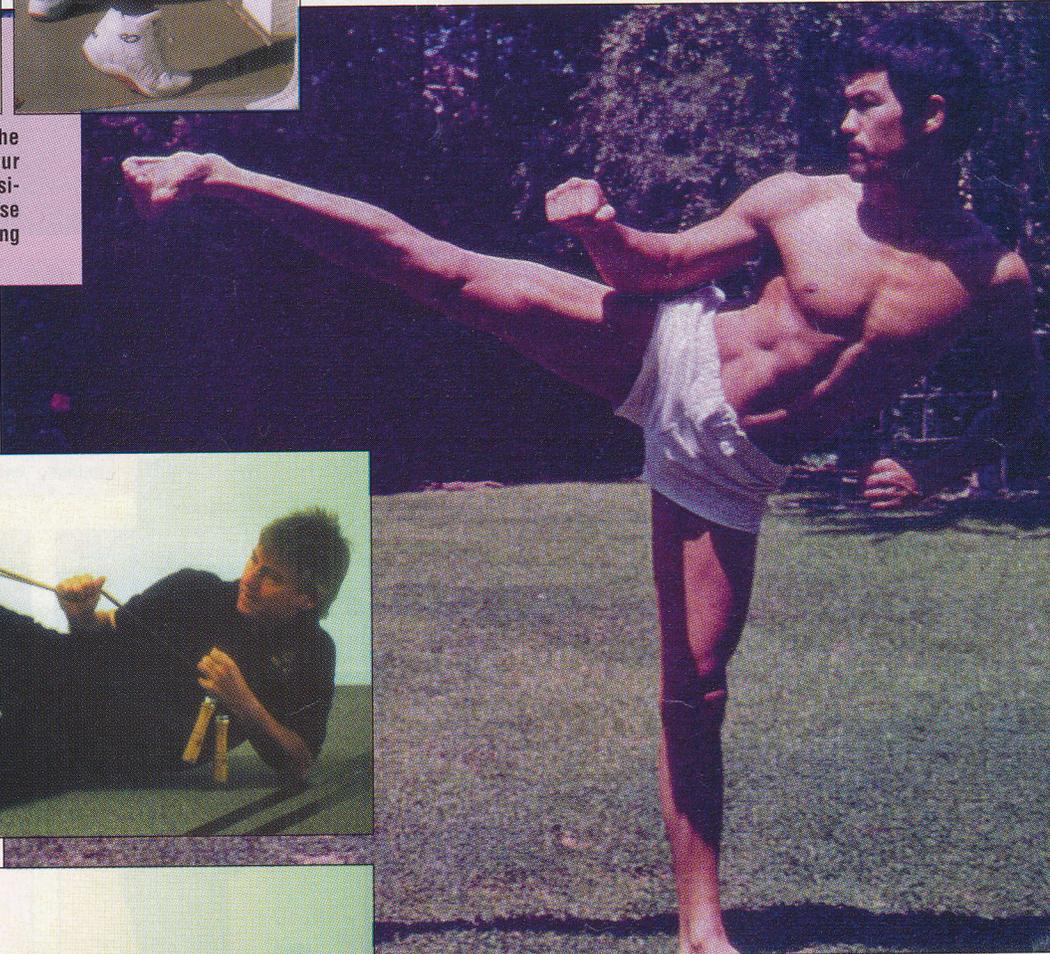


**HOOK PUNCH:** In this exercise the skip rope is used to develop your hook punch. Again, three arm positions are used. *Note:* This exercise can also be performed by pressing your fist against a wall.

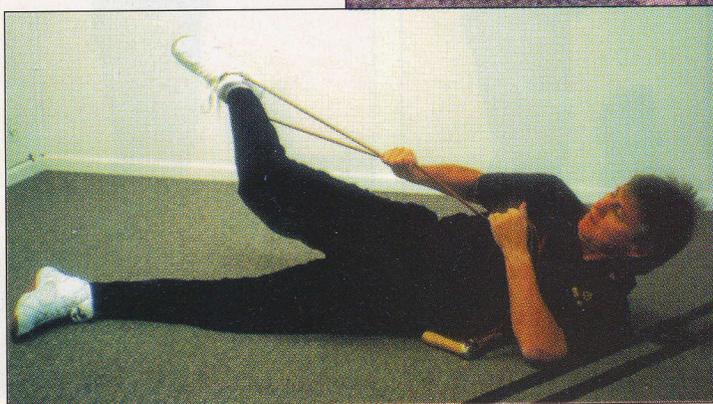
Isometrics, like any kind of strength training, leads to intensive demands on a person's muscles, tendons, ligaments and joints. Therefore demands must be carefully adjusted to the capacity of the individual. The following are pointers to remember when using any form of isometric exercises:

- 1) **Make sure to do the exercises correctly.**
- 2) **Apply maximum contraction (100%) for 6 to 12 seconds.**
- 3) **Make sure to breathe out while exerting pressure during any of the exercises.**

Bruce Lee was a firm believer in the value of isometrics. But he also understood that isometric exercises, while being useful, should not be the only form of strength training in a martial artist's regimen. They should be combined with other methods of strength training in a comprehensive program. You may want to incorporate some or all of the above isometric exercises in your own workout program.



**SIDE KICK:** In this exercise the skip rope is used to help develop your side kick. Lying on the floor (above left), hook the rope over your foot, and then attempt to push against the rope as hard as possible using a side kick motion. As with the other exercises, work three different positions.



**HOOK KICK:** Lying on the floor (left), hook the rope around the your lower leg, just above the ankle. Use a hook kick action to push as hard as possible against the rope.