

Photos by Ed Ikuta





# THE FURIOUS PACE OF JEET KUNE DO

...WHERE HAS IT BEEN?  
WHERE IS IT GOING?

By Gilbert L. Johnson

"LEARNING JEET KUNE DO is not a matter of seeking knowledge or accumulating stylized patterns, but discovering the cause of ignorance. If people say JKD is different from 'this' or 'that,' then let the name of JKD be wiped out, for that is what it is, just a name. Please don't fuss over it."

So said Bruce Lee. He insisted that JKD is not a style to learn or imitate. Rather, it is a collection of basic concepts, observations of combat motion and philosophies of attitude that were gathered and developed by Bruce Lee. As such, JKD became the personal expression of that man, the amalgamation of Lee's mind and body. Without him, that unique expression is

gone and he left no structures to build a style upon.

There is, however, a flame of the original JKD that still survives. Had Lee kept his concepts, observations and philosophies to himself, they would have dissipated with his death. Fortunately, he had the ability to teach. There are probably only four men with whom Bruce shared a significant amount of his JKD concepts, and these men have continued to develop and teach those ideas—Danny Inosanto, Daniel Lee, Ted Wong and Taky Kimura. JKD, like so many living things, must remain in motion, in use—to survive. It is these four men and their students who are now the circulatory system that



Photos by Ed Ikuta

keeps JKD alive. JKD today is the expression of this handful of people.

Danny Inosanto is one of the few people actively teaching JKD. He studied with Bruce for some five years, and has added one JKD class to his school of Filipino stick fighting in Torrance, California. Altogether, he has nine classes. Four groups study the Filipino arts primarily—kali, arnis and escrima. He holds four unorthodox wing chun classes that are modified with JKD basics. Wing chun is the Chinese art, well-known for its sticky-hand techniques, from which Lee developed much of his original JKD. Inosanto is planning to eventually convert his wing chun classes into JKD classes.

The ninth class, held twice a week, is his main JKD class. As a complement to the JKD training, all the students of that class are also taught the Filipino stick fighting arts.

"In the future," says Inosanto, "that will be a credential of all my regular JKD students. They'll all have training in the Filipino arts, because the stick fighting fits so well into the flow of JKD. Bruce could handle the sticks naturally, because the principles are all the same."

A typical JKD class workout begins with a two or three-minute warm-up skipping rope. Then, students go

through a number of stretching exercises developed particularly for the legs. These are followed by precision training on the focus gloves. The lead side is specifically emphasized here, and the feeder will shift the target areas with a glove on each hand, keeping the attacker on the move for two minutes. The pairs trade gloves until each man has worked both sides. From there, the instruction covers five main areas.

Sparring, the first area, is the life-blood of a JKD class. The students spar full-contact with boxing gloves during this practice, and are allowed to put on protective padding. Here, Inosanto often restricts the students' environment forcing them to fight under various conditions.

#### NEUTRALIZE AND ATTACK

"There are three environmental variables," he says. "Conditions can change the number of people you're fighting with and against, the number of weapons you can use and the kind of terrain. We can alter two of these in the school. I can change the number involved by making them fight one on one, two against one, two against three or four and so on. They can develop certain approaches and learn to fight—even under restricted conditions—by limiting themselves to, say, the front

hand and front leg or just hands and short stop-kick or whatever."

After sparring, the class usually begins its "trapping hand" practice. These are hand immobilizing techniques from wing chun, modified in JKD for more economical angles and body positions. The basic idea is to neutralize the opponent's weapons, and attack simultaneously.

The third segment of the class is abbreviated as "energy drills." During this practice, students learn to react to their opponents' slightest pressure, flowing with it to feed their next attack motion. The exercise is similar to the escrima hand roll or the Chinese single-hand chi-sao.

Inosanto says that the grappling segment of JKD has been neglected to an extent, because of their lack of mats. The class works on a cement floor occasionally practicing chokes. But trips, throws and takedowns—important elements of "in-fighting"—are not yet a substantial part of the class workout.

Weaponry, the fifth facet of Inosanto's breakdown of JKD workouts, employs the use of stick, staff, baton and blade.

There's nothing very special about JKD training equipment. Uniqueness there, is a product of creativity—the effectiveness of the equipment rests on

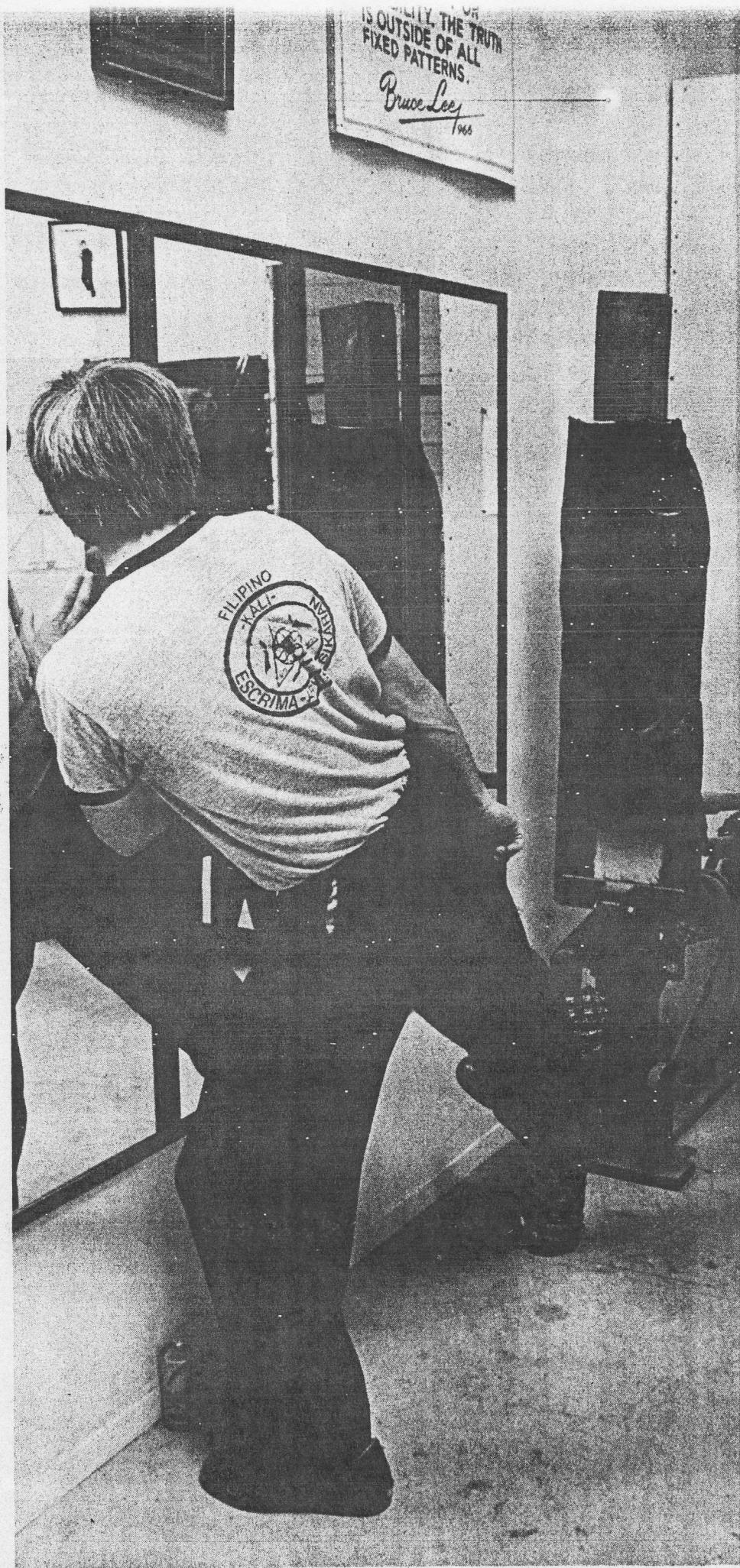
REALITY is the key to JKD training and exercises are designed to come as close to reality as possible. Richard Bustillo (left) launches his initial movement into the focus gloves of Jerry Poteet, who makes the exercise "come alive" by varying the location of the targets. Former students of Bruce Lee, the two now assist Danny Inosanto teaching JKD and Filipino stick fighting. Right, Poteet demonstrates the use of dummy with an attachment to accommodate the low stop-kick. Lee discarded the equipment because of its lack of mobility and it's now used mainly for beginners. All photos by Ed Ikuta.

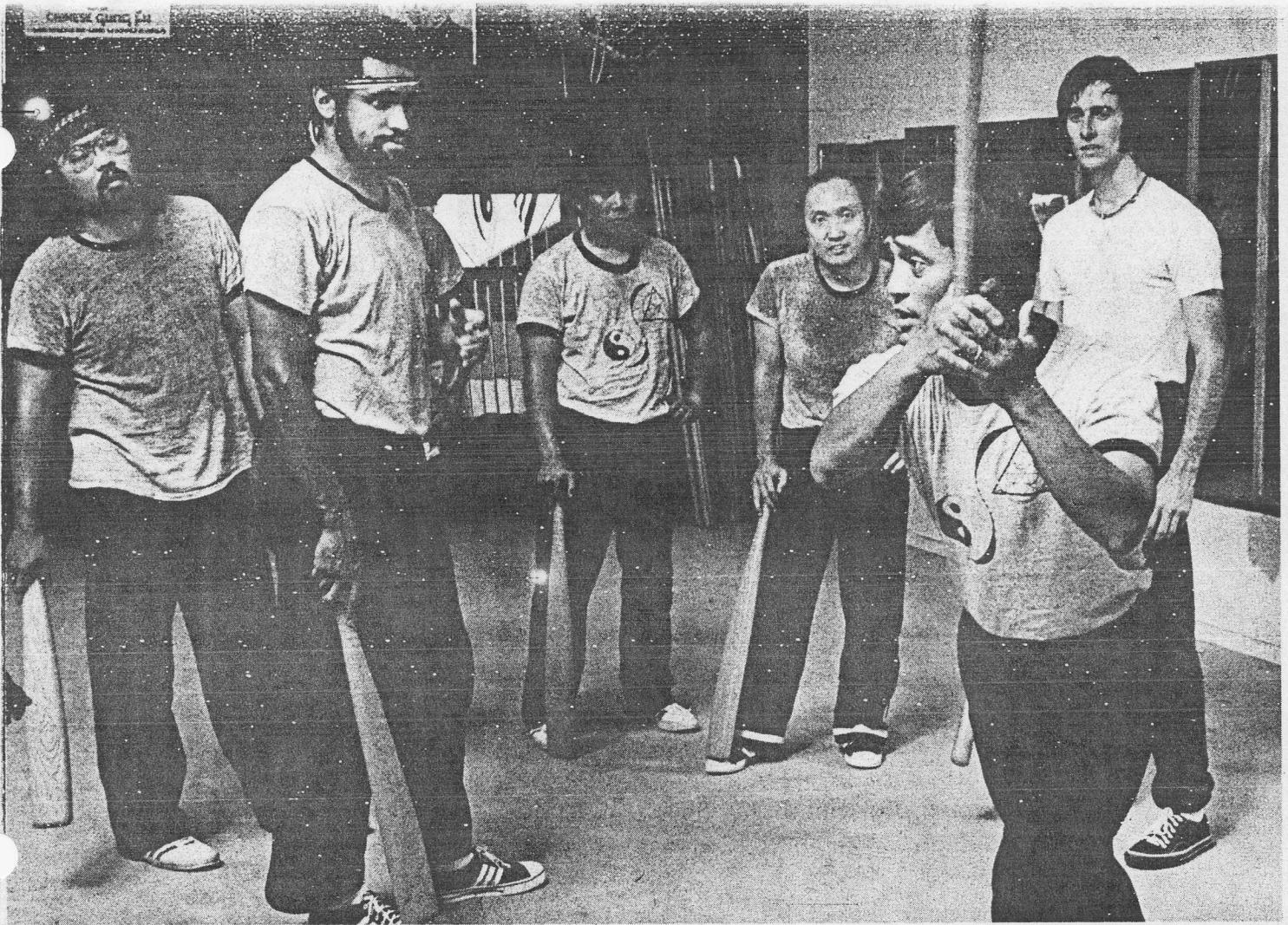
the unique way it's used. Bruce Lee used the heavybag. So do a lot of martial artists. But Lee may have used it more like a boxer than would the average martial artist. While unloading powerful kicks and strikes into the bag, he would also practice his specialized brand of footwork, his bobbing and weaving, his timing. The bag to him was not a motionless blob to pound on. Instead, he would imagine it moving and fighting.

Some things he could actually get to move. One was the top and bottom bag. The top and bottom disappears the instant it's hit and returns just as fast. If it isn't hit squarely, it returns at some awkward angle. The usual idea is to develop a rhythm, but Lee went a step further and learned to vary and break the rhythm.

Another of his favorite pieces of equipment was a small plastic ball suspended from the end of a length of chain by a six-inch cord. The cord gives the ball flexibility when hit, and the chain restricts its motion somewhat. Here again, kicks and strikes are not thrown from a static position, but rather as part of shadow boxing to practice balance, control and accuracy *in motion*.

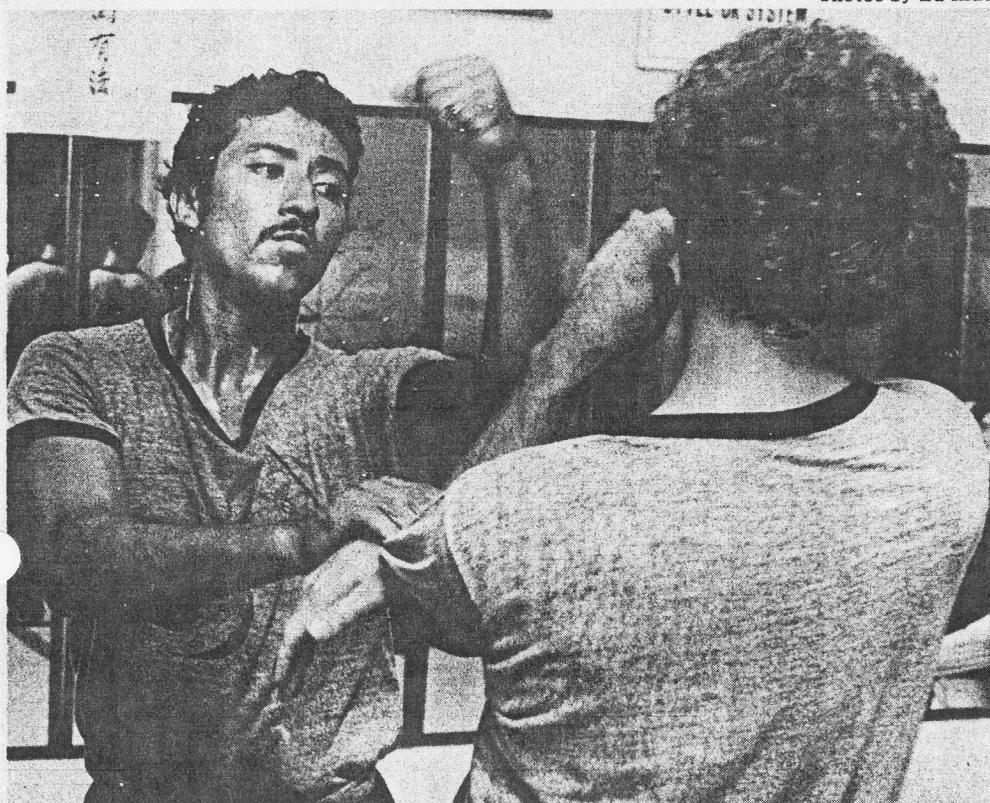
According to his students, Lee seldom practiced by repeating static,





FLUID ENERGY is stressed in all phases of JKD training, whether it's with weaponry or the empty hands. Above, Danny Inosanto instructs part of the advanced class in concepts of motion, escrima style. The students use plastic "Fat Albert" bats to get the feel of a follow through. Below, Moises Torres practices the energy flow of "trapping hands" with defender John Young.

Photos by Ed Ikuta



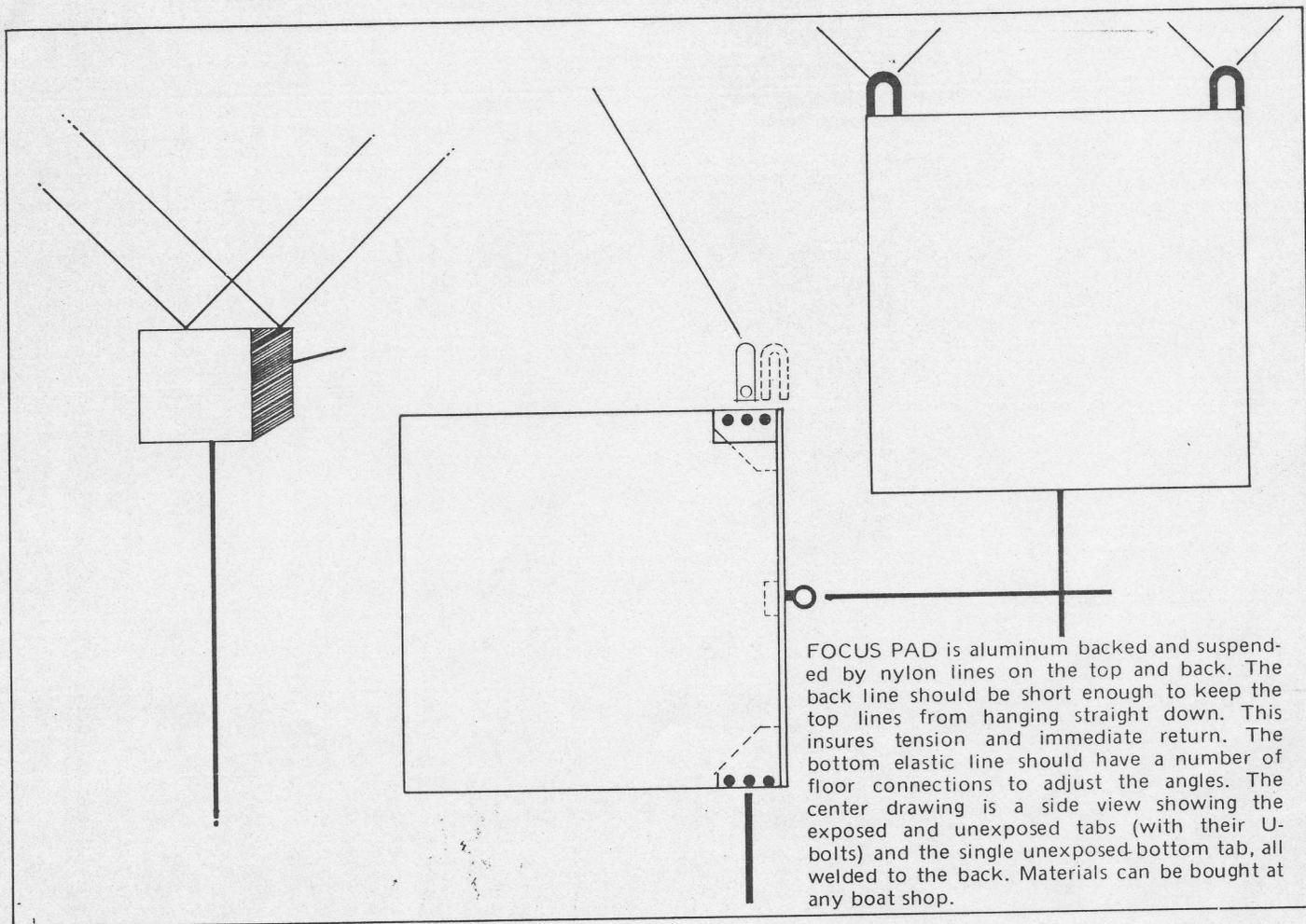
single techniques at an imaginary target. Instead, he liked something he could hit, especially something that demanded accuracy in motion.

Nearly all Bruce Lee's equipment was handcrafted or modified by Herb Jackson, one of Lee's students.

"The equipment didn't have to be elaborate to be effective," Jackson says. "But it did have to be durable. Bruce would break nearly anything on the market. What he was usually after was anything that could simulate a man being hit. It had to *feel* like a man being hit. At first, I tried hydraulic shock absorbers for him to kick. They've still got some models at Danny Inosanto's. The problem with that was the continued resistance after you hit it. When you hit a man really hard and fast, his weight is there and then it's gone. Equipment with shock absorbers offers resistance all the way through the kick. It's not the same.

"Bruce really had a problem, because people didn't like to hold kicking or punching pads for him. One man had his arm dislocated just holding a focus pad. And there weren't always people around, so Bruce needed devices to simulate a man's actions or reactions.

"Some things I made, like a



full-sized, man-shaped makiwara, just didn't have the right feel for him, and he'd use them for a while and never touch them again. One thing he did like was the suspended focus pad. It was a six-inch square of firm foam rubber, covered with vinyl and suspended by a series of elastic and nylon lines. It was completely adjustable to any height or angle, and reacted to a strike much like a focus pad. The only difference was, if you didn't hit it exactly right, it would just wobble around your strike. But if you hit it direct, it would shoot away from your fist and then pop right back. You had to be exact. Only Bruce could really appreciate something like that."

Feel and mobility seemed to be the key to Lee's JKD equipment. He described combat as "constantly changing, fluid motion," and applied his training to that end. He didn't pound on a braced makiwara. He didn't slice the air with dance. What he did, might best be described as pounding a dancing makiwara. Such activities, his contemporaries feel, gave him abilities few could touch.

In addition to "dancing makiwara," Lee used anything he thought would develop his "tools", as he called them. If a particular muscle needed work, he might lift weights in a way that would

work only that muscle. His methods of development were applied directly to whatever he felt needed developing. If he wanted to develop accuracy for eye strikes, he worked on dummies with ballbearing eyes he could hit. If he wanted to develop his low stop-kick to a man's knee, he would kick at a padded, leg-shaped pipe with spring action, which would react like a man's bent leg. If he wanted to work on reflexes, he would pour his own reflexes into equipment that would respond with equal fervor.

The only requirement for JKD training equipment is that it come as close as possible to reality. More often in full-out movement, reality couldn't stand up to Bruce Lee's reflexes and power, and it was then that he turned to equipment.

#### THE SECOND GENERATION

Five people who trained with Bruce Lee are now studying with Inosanto. They include Daniel Lee, Bob Bremer, Jerry Poteet, Pete Jacobs and Richard Bustillo. Bustillo and Inosanto are partners in the Kali Academy (the school's official name) and both Bustillo and Poteet help instruct the classes. Their senior, however, is Daniel Lee, who

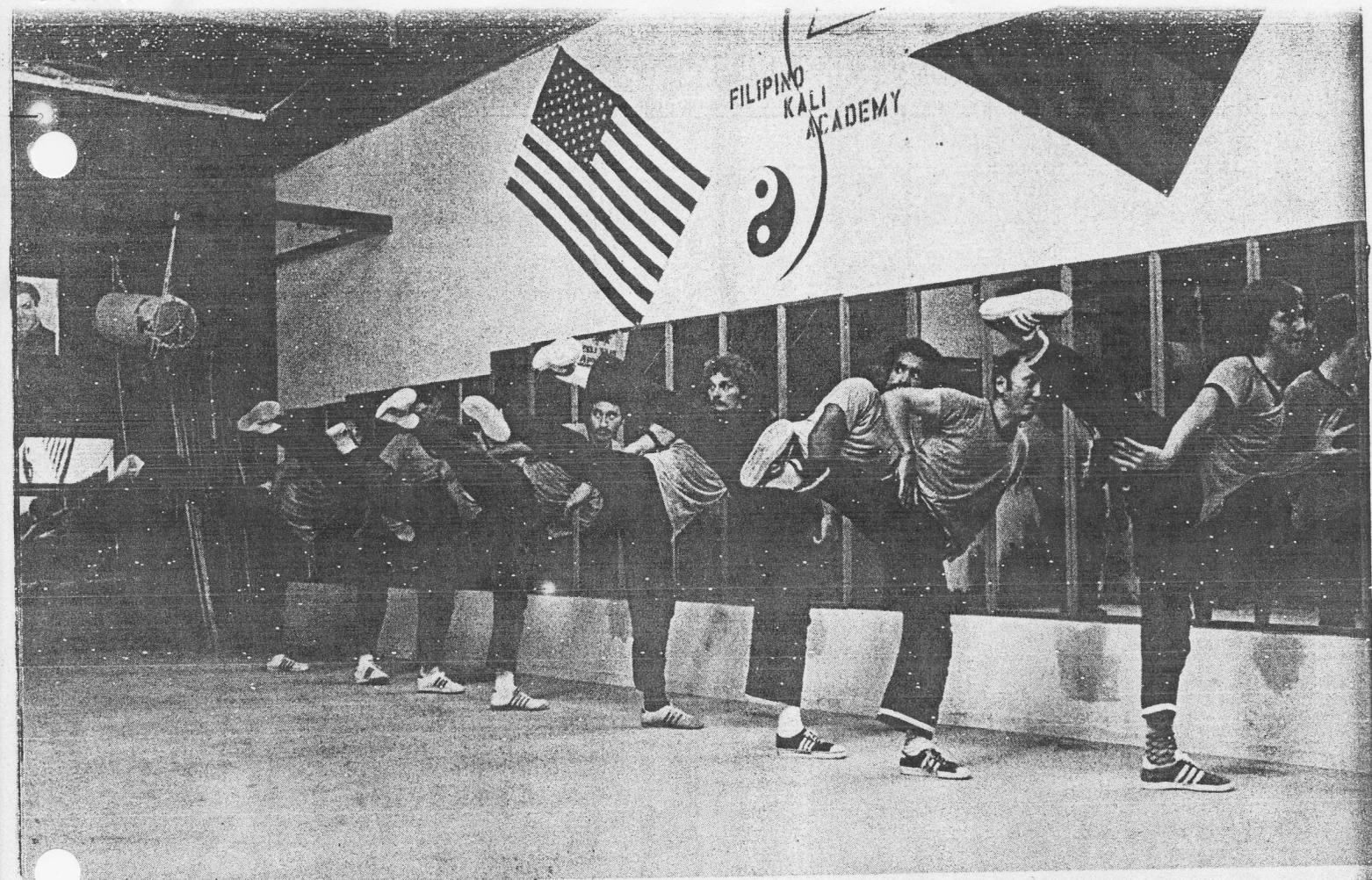
takes over for Inosanto in his absence.

Inosanto has a second generation group of whom he's especially proud. Some he describes as fighters, some as teachers. But all, he says, have been studying at the school for a good length of time and understand the concepts of JKD. They are Chris Nudds, Moises Torres, Tim Tackett, Seph Sephlamog, Ted Lucaylucay and Richard Lee.

"I have some students who can outfight many of these," says Inosanto, "but these are the people I feel really have an understanding of JKD, and may someday teach it."

There is another handful of people who trained extensively with Bruce Lee and have now gone their own way. One is Larry Hartsell, who Inosanto describes as a JKD "fighter." Hartsell was one of Inosanto's students carried over from Bruce Lee, and is "authorized" to teach the later concepts he learned from Inosanto. Hartsell lives in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Tony Luna is another. Luna is now a law student at the University of California at Los Angeles. Mel Quan also studied a considerable time with Bruce Lee, but is now retired in Los Angeles. Taky Kimura, who currently lives in Seattle, Washington, is a friend of the



LOCK OUT! Stretching exercises limber the JKD students up at the beginning of class and freezing the action in that position strengthens the muscles for kicks. Though kicks are practiced at varying heights, in combat practice they are generally kept low.

Photo by Ed Ikuta

Lee family and worked out with Lee from 1959 to 1965 when he was still a wing chun practitioner. Later, after Bruce developed his concepts of JKD (around 1967), he often traveled to Seattle and updated Kimura on his latest developments.

One of the most recognizable names among JKD students is Ted Wong, who studied with Bruce Lee off and on from 1967 to 1971, and again after Bruce returned from Hong Kong just before his death. So far, Wong has kept pretty much to himself. He meets once or twice a week with Herb Jackson, Robert Lee (Bruce's brother) and a couple of Robert's friends. Bruce Lee's son Brandon and wife Linda occasionally join them. Wong, who says he has no desire to teach, describes Inosanto as the primary instructor of JKD. Wong says that the family group of JKD hopes to eventually team up with Inosanto for their workouts, presently taking place at Herb Jackson's home. But because of the limited space there, the group's activities have been confined to basics.

"Jeet kune do," says Wong, "is adaptability, learning to move with the principles that your opponent fights under—and attacking its weaknesses." His comment shows the necessity of

working out with a variety of people, including practitioners of different martial arts. This may also be a definite influence on moving their workouts to Inosanto's, where each student is developed individually and the variables change with each personality.

Although JKD isn't treated as a style, there are some peculiarities of JKD movement that give similarities to all JKD students. There is enough similarity of movement for Bruce Lee fans to know when a man is trying to "copy the style of Bruce Lee." Those similarities, many feel, are most often superficial, lacking the responsive awareness of the average JKD student.

In addition, it is felt that as the personalities of the JKD instructors affect the personalities of their students, peculiarities of movement can often be detected which distinguish the different JKD groups.

"I can tell," says Ted Wong, "if a person is really a JKD student, or if he just picked up some techniques that Bruce used at one time. I can even see the difference between Bruce's JKD people and Danny Inosanto's JKD students, or between Jimmy Lee's and Taky Kimura's students, who all lean more towards wing chun. That's because

we all learned something different from Bruce. Bruce taught Danny Inosanto a lot of the trapping hand movement, for instance, and with me he worked mostly on footwork timing and speed-power. Only Bruce could be everything."

JKD today is, in fact, a different animal with every person. To Danny Inosanto, the Filipino arts are now a part of JKD, because Bruce Lee explained his concepts in terms of something Inosanto already understood. To Taky Kimura, primarily a wing chun practitioner, JKD is similar to wing chun. Bruce Lee taught the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar so that every person he taught could individually relate to it. So it stands today. There is a mistake in saying that JKD is "high wing chun" or is a "modified version of kickboxing" or is "karate" or "ju-jitsu" or any one thing. JKD, then is a combination of different things. What it was in the beginning isn't what it was just before Lee died.

"To be sure," said Bruce Lee, "life does not mean a partialized something, a frame. Life is never stagnation. It is a constant movement, un-rhythmic movement, as well as constant change." And life to Bruce Lee was JKD.

Most people agree that Bruce Lee

and JKD were inseparable, but few can really define his art or describe how it was developed. People who knew him, who listened to him express his ideas and watched him command combat motion, understand that Bruce Lee was a composite of many things. He was a unique blend of learning, personal philosophy, experience, training and emotion. And the same things that made up Lee comprised JKD.

Lee had a library of some 2,000 books of philosophy, combat, kinesiology and combinations thereof. Lee's knowledge and abilities didn't just happen; they were learned and developed through his association with other martial artists and through extensive reading and physical application. Lee's obsession with running, for instance, developed partly from books on aerobics. So in essence, many "JKD training techniques" are Lee's own blend of abstracts and particulars from a wide variety of sources. He collected them mainly for his own needs, but most seem applicable, at least in part, to almost any martial artist.

Lee's reading also greatly influenced his philosophies. It gave fuel to his ideas, which in turn fed uniqueness to his conversation and his physical movement. Concerning physical movements, he often told his students to "take that which is useful to you and discard the rest." He applied the same idea to his reading and, in the numerous pages where he transcribed his personal philosophies of JKD, there are quotes of Chinese I Ching and Tao, as well as words from sages such as Krishnamurti from India and Spanish philosopher Spinoza. His writing is liberally sprinkled with ideas he adapted from philosophers throughout history.

Karateka, particularly many of the "professional" fighters, ask what philosophy has to do with JKD or any other fighting. A simple example can be given by lifting a quote from Krishnamurti:

One cannot learn about oneself unless one is free, free so that one can observe, not according to any pattern, formula or concept, but actually observe oneself as one is... Intellectual concepts and formulas will not change one's way of life, but only the very understanding of "what is;" and for that there must be an intensity, a passion.

Add to that a similar quote from Lee:

You cannot see a street fight in its totality, observing it from the viewpoint of a boxer, a kung-fu man, a karateka, a wrestler, a judo man, and so forth. You can see

clearly only when style does not interfere. You then see it without "like or dislike," you simply see, and what you see is the whole and not the partial. There is "what is" only when there is no comparing, and to live with what is, is to be peaceful.

The parallels speak for themselves. The principles of JKD grew from the philosophies adopted by Lee—and his JKD concepts are as unique as was his particular adaptation of philosophical ideas.

But what about the new adaptations? If JKD changes with the personalities of each practitioner, will it eventually change altogether? To retain his observations as such and avoid the corrosion of handed-down interpretations, Lee began a book. When he died he left behind a thousand-odd papers and five half-completed volumes. Within his writings are facts specific enough to be discernible to any martial artist, and general enough to be applicable to any martial art. They're now being sifted, organized and edited to complete his book by 1976.

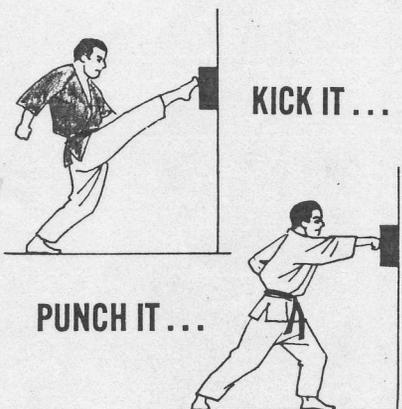
What JKD becomes in the future will depend on what the JKD people of today make it. Lee taught a handful of people what might be described as the most direct route to their own self-expression in the martial arts. They in turn are using similar methods to teach others. JKD, according to Bruce, was something that could only be presented on a direct one to one basis. The book can't do that, but it can possibly offer some of the JKD concepts that are applicable to anyone. There are JKD practitioners, and with the book there will be practitioners with JKD concepts. Though different, all perhaps will train with a similar purpose.

Jeet kune do believes that freedom has always been with us and is not something to be gained through some process of accumulation. We do not "become," we simply "are." The training is toward this "being" mind, rather than "having" mind. The transformed state is merely a state of "being" and not a state of "becoming;" it is not an ideal, an end to be desired and achieved. Sterile pattern merely distorts and crams its practitioners, and the mystical mind training promotes not internal power but psychological constipation. Whether it is inward or outward training, the JKD techniques are used to liberate the spirit rather than to bind the body.

So said Bruce Lee.



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