

1993: The Year In Review

JKD

THE NEXT GENERATION

BY, JERRY BEASLEY, ED.D.

Nineteen ninety three marked the 20th year since the death of the immortal Bruce Lee. Perhaps no year has been more eventful. Of course, the major news of '93 was the tragic death of Brandon Lee. In Chinese tradition the son (Brandon) was heir to the family art (Jeet Kune Do). Most of us looked forward to the day when Bruce Lee's only son would accept leadership of the art. Now it will never happen. Many of Bruce's original students are becoming visible to show others what Bruce had taught them.

The movie "Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story" was a box office success in '93. An excellent film, it portrayed the real story and the real motivator (Linda Lee) behind the development of JKD. Of course there were the typical "Hollywood" inaccuracies regarding the historical development of the art. Ultimately, however, the movie presented the manner in which Bruce developed, and Linda supported, what has become the most popular martial art in recent history. We can only hope that Mrs. Linda Lee Cadwell will encourage a sequel.

Michael DePasquale, Jr. KI publisher/editor, has done such a phenomenal job promoting this magazine that we receive letters from all over the world from individuals eager to talk about Bruce or JKD. Our goal has been to provide an avenue for expression to the typical fan and student of JKD. As a consumer advocate of sorts, we have faithfully listened to and reported your views and concerns. Sometimes the topics in the column were controversial. Sometimes, according to your responses, the information was exceptional. We thank you for your encouragement. Now here are some of the topics that received the most feedback.

The home study of the Tao was by far and away the most popular topic of the year. We had participants from across the U.S., Canada, Europe and Asia. For 1994 (next issue) we'll begin teaching a program on the physical skills of JKD as presented in the Tao. We hope to select a few students to participate in a video class. Of course there is no cost for our programs, which are presented as a service to our readers.

Quite a few of you have said very wonderful, encouraging things about my interpretation of JKD. Some have written to compliment me, but at the same time some have requested information regarding my authority/certification to teach JKD. I appreciate your concerns. Most of you know that I traveled the country in the early '80's taking Dan Inosanto concepts seminars. I greatly admire Dan. Obviously I learned a lot from him. He is a master's master. I dedicated my first JKD book to Dan. I quit taking the seminars only because I grew tired of the kali/silat. They are great arts. I was only interested in the actual Bruce Lee material and less interested in Dan's masterful extensions of the concepts.

It was not until I had the incredible opportunity to study martial arts (first karate/kickbox-



ing and later jeet kune do) with Bruce Lee's top fighter, the legendary Joe Lewis, that I really became interested in a certification program in JKD. I am pleased to tell you that I have received certification as a full instructor of Jeet Kune Do from Mr. Lewis.

It is historical fact that Bruce Lee taught different students different (but similar) interpretations of JKD based on the students' psychological makeup and attributes. Lewis was and always has been the fighter. A Karate Illustrated/Black Belt panel of experts unanimously voted him the title of "The Greatest Fighter of All Time." In Lewis, Lee saw the fighting spirit and trained him expertly in the fighting skills of JKD.

I must say that in all honesty I have had the privilege of training with many of Bruce Lee's original students and their proteges. Joe Lewis is the ultimate fighter. He is the fighter whom Bruce Lee trained and the person whom Bruce Lee (when he was alive) desperately wanted to acknowledge his training in Jeet Kune Do. Joe has always taught JKD. Most people preferred to call it karate sparring or kickboxing. Some recognized the JKD principles; others did not. Mr. Lewis (a father himself of a fine young son and daughter) was greatly moved by the death of Brandon Lee. To pay his respects to his teacher, Bruce Lee, Joe is now beginning to teach JKD seminars. He, along with Ted Wong, will be featured at our annual original JKD summer camp June 17-19 at Radford University (Radford, Va.). If you have ever longed to see the awesome fighting potential of Jeet Kune Do, we encourage you to contact Mr. Lewis for a seminar.

Another hot topic for '93 was the "Return of the Original Jeet Kune Do" article published in Inside Karate. We addressed the topic in this column. A lot of people supported the reintroduction of the historical or "original" art of jeet kune do by original students of Bruce Lee. For some reason the popularity of the original art may have caused considerable alarm among some proponents of the highly successful concepts method of JKD. In a May 5, 1993 letter to C.F.W. Enterprises, a frustrated Paula Inosanto claimed that it was not so much Bruce who taught at the Chinatown school, but her husband, Dan Inosanto. She claims that Dan taught "90 percent" of all classes and that they are offended by students who betray him by teaching what everyone is now calling the original art.



Paula further asserts that Dan is the "head of family" for Jun Fan/Jeet Kune Do and that anyone who does not recognize this is "uneducated." She claims that many of us (including myself) are phonies seeking glory and your money.

It's not hard to understand how one instructor could teach karate (or kali) to one group of students, boxing (or silat) to another group, and taekwon do (or muay thai) to a third group. After a few years, let's say the instructor passes on and the students get together. One day a group of the instructor's students starts demonstrating karate and another group watches and protests, "That's not like what he taught us!" Who's right?

Bruce Lee was a brilliant martial artist and teacher. He was more than capable of teaching different methods to different students. If you ever see his personal students Ted Wong perform, you'll note that Mr. Wong's JKD is very different from that of Bruce's top fighter, Joe Lewis. Yet they both share the philosophy, principles, concepts, attributes, and strategies of JKD. Dan Inosanto was in charge of the Chinatown school, true, but he had no authority over the JKD instruction of Ted Wong or Joe Lewis. To claim that he is the only one who could learn or perform or teach JKD is to belittle the abilities of Mr. Wong, Mr. Lewis, and Mr. Lee. It is sad that the Inosantos had to resort to these actions, which only serve to further separate opposing schools of thought of Jeet Kune Do. The unfortunate result of Paula's letter is that some people are using it to attack others who may have been mentioned, further compounding the harm the letter initially caused.

No one person or group owns Jeet Kune Do. All of us share in the knowledge and benefits of the art. Bruce Lee wanted to be recognized as a master of martial arts. Today he is idolized by thousands. His contribution to the art "JKD" is being spread by hundreds of instructors. Let's let 1994 be the year in which we come together as one family of JKD with no leaders and no followers, just practitioners experiencing the wonder of JKD.

About the author: Dr. Jerry Beasley is certified as a full instructor of Jeet Kune Do (strategies) under Bruce Lee's top fighter, the legendary Joe Lewis.