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“What you’re seeking, is seeking you!” –Rumi

“The road to a friend’s house is never too long.” –Danish Proverb

Written exclusively for my friends at Ideawek 2020.

I have always been a Bruce Lee nut. I remember as a kid after going to the cinema I would re-enact the scenes and the screams and the confidence. It was amazing. I would use my left thumb to flick the “blood” from the side of my mouth. As a kid I didn’t think about what drove me to this martial artist. The feeling of invincibility, the ability to cure injustice, the ability of the common man to take their rights back from the bullies.

When I moved to Seattle in early 2001, I had no idea I would be on the same soil as one of my heroes. I had all the books authored by Bruce and it unraveled, Bruce had gone to UW (*pronounced U-Dub*) and studied philosophy. I also found out that Bruce had married from Washington State. They had met at UW. I did go to Lakeview Cemetery where Bruce is buried to pay my respects. I did see Brandon next to his dad.

I did go to Chinatown hoping to find traces and hints about this master. It was my weekend chore to go down to Chinatown and search for Bruce’s students. I was so naïve. Bruce had died in 1973 at 33 years old and it’s like the misty Seattle rain had washed all the hints away.

Seattle Chinatown is not that big of an area. It can easily be maneuvered by foot. When I saw a King Fu dojo, I would walk past it but it took me a few times to gain the confidence to pop my head and ask the trainer if he had learned from Bruce. I was in awe when he said, yes. It turned out to be a farce and I never joined.

It was by chance that I found the names of Bruce’s students: Tim Tackett and Dan Inosanto. I was able to email Tim Tackett and ask: I am in Seattle and looking to learn how to express myself (code words found



Sifu Taky Kimura and me at Taky’s Backyard Barn in Woodinville turned Dojo – Seattle Jun Fan Gung Fu Club 2002

in Bruce's books). His art was to find the cause of his ignorance and express oneself honestly and not lying to oneself.

Tim was gracious to say that Taky Kimura was still in Seattle and I should reach out to him and he even gave me a phone number to call. I called Taky. Hello, my name is Abdallah. I have been looking for you all over Chinatown. Sifu Taky as he's supposed to be addressed in formal way said he used to have a grocery store in Chinatown and they used to train in the basement but since he closed down the grocery store they've been training in the barn in his backyard in Woodinville. I am welcome to visit. They workout twice a week, Mondays and Wednesdays 8pm – 10pm. The Woodinville dojo was a barn fitted by the students into a dojo. It had gym rubber floors and a hanging heavy bag and a wooden dummy. A picture of Bruce right upfront high on the wall looking down on us. There was a US flag draping down and Bruce's modified Yin Yang black flag "Having no way as way, having no limitation as limitation."

Do you know those black cloth slip-on shoes you see in old Chinese movies? Well this sucker picked a pair. I also picked up a pair of training pants. The ones that sag to the knees. I am a real fan so I wanted to go all out. I can't remember the exact date I went to Taky in Woodinville of 2002, but he had me sit respectfully on a chair and watch.

Then after training he asked why I was there and I did say I wanted to learn how to express myself like Bruce did. Taky was adamant that Bruce was a philosopher and that was his gift.

I was invited to come again and I was respectfully asked to sit and watch again in full gear. I was ready but Taky was trying to measure my persistence. Taky didn't charge any money for these trainings. He felt he owed it to Bruce and to keep his remembrance going. Isn't that just unbelievable?! Absolutely unbelievable!? Where's the sales pitch and the required kimono for class. There was none of that. What is going on here?

The group of brothers and sisters that trained had been with Taky for a couple decades, some more some less. He asked that when I come to class to leave my ego at door. He asked me to empty my cup. He asked me to practice with my brothers and sisters. Taky would even call me sometimes "brother". That feeling of respect and tranquility was everywhere in that dojo. That led to a sense of humility and acceptance that we are here to learn and not to impose our knowledge.

We always started with a salute to Bruce then Taky then the senior students. Then we worked out hard and practiced and practiced until steam would start emanating from the top of our heads in that cold barn. It

was an amazing workout. For two hours straight. At the end, Taky would ask us to do a pseudo-sparring session in pairs where you scored when you lightly tapped your brother or sisters forehead and they had to do the same. This made sense rather than having to kick each other's behind.

I was hooked to Taky and the group. I trained religiously every Monday and Wednesday for almost four years. I did my best to never miss a training. I got rid of those Chinese shoes – they really hurt my feet. Oh my God, they were SO uncomfortable and bought a pair of Asics wrestling shoes. They were just perfect. I also started to wear a tracksuit like Bruce. We had no belts no colors nor stripes or stars.

Taky's tips to me were, which initially made no sense, You are a work horse, I need you to be a race horse. Well, how do I become a race horse? I wanted to know. I kept practicing and practicing and gave it all I had. The glaring fact about the folks that were at Taky's were the common (wo)man. A landscaper, a stunt man and his fiancée, a student videographer, an immigrant from France who is a footballer, an Asian accountant. We all shared our love for Bruce, Taky, and the art - just global citizens.

They were all very good. I like to steal this saying from Taky. He kept saying that he had two left feet. Yep me too. Everyone was better than me and I had two left feet also.



Sifu Taky Kimura

Source Youtube.

Taky likes to share stories about Bruce.

You see, Bruce was continuously evolving and pushing the envelope to be the best version of himself. Bruce landed with Wing Chun in San Francisco in his blood from Master Ip Man. He probably was Ip Man's most famous student. When Bruce was exposed to Western Boxing, he incorporated it in his art. Then once he was exposed to fencing, he incorporated that too. Then boxing, then baseball, and on and on and on. Bruce was always in fights to test his research.

The trail from Hong Kong to San Francisco to Los Angeles and back to Hong Kong, you will find a different and ever improving Bruce Lee. The Bruce Lee that landed in San Francisco was a traditional Wing Chun practitioner. Then when Bruce left Seattle, he left Taky with Jun Fan Gung Fu, a modified form of Wing Chun and then left Los Angeles with the art of Jeet Kune Do to Dan Inosanto. Which was totally a metamorphosis to a better and more lethal art form.

"You must be shapeless, formless, like water. When you pour water in a cup, it becomes the cup. When you pour water in a bottle, it becomes the bottle. When you pour water in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Water can drip and it can crash. Become like water my friend."

Books authored by Bruce Lee (John Little has a done a great job in compiling some of Brue's works after Bruce passed. John Little had exclusive access to the personal archives)

https://www.goodreads.com/author/list/32579.Bruce_Lee