



“Some walk the bow, I walk the string”

-Moy Yat

Message from Sifu

Welcome to our club's first newsletter! My name is Sifu Jim Kragtwyk and I am the lead instructor at our Wing Chun Kung Fu club. I hope you enjoy exploring this glimpse into the amazingly effective self-defence system of Wing Chun Kung Fu. It is also an artful and embodied expression of oneself that goes beyond self-defence. It is a way of physical fitness and a philosophy for navigating life's challenges and opportunities. It enhances your emotional and social intelligence by being part of a committed community that celebrates and works out conflict in a healthy way that deepens relationships, trusts and bonding. Through this you will develop self-esteem, confidence, improved moods and an increased capacity to not only survive, but also thrive through life.

I have been studying this art for 25 years and it never ceases to yield profound benefits in all these realms. I guess that is why I am still as passionate and enthusiastic about this art as I was the first day I walked into my home club and met my Sifu (teacher) and participated in a class. This art, invented by a woman, trained by Bruce Lee and spread through the Western world through the Grandmaster Ip Man can transform your life with its infinite embodied wisdom and through the solid relationships you will develop with your kung fu brothers and sisters. This is a place to belong.

What would need to happen for you to allow all these gifts into your life?

Summer of 2015

The summer kicked off with a camping trip to Englishmen river in June. This trip featured some beautiful weather, plenty of games played, and stories shared around the campfire. Waterfall chi-sau and excellent food highlighted the trip.

On the August long weekend, the club went to the Cariboo on a week-long retreat far away from technology and civilisation to train, have fun, and generally chill out. Seven club members made the journey, along with assorted girlfriends/spouses/children/partners. We departed Victoria early on Thursday morning, hoping to reach the farm by that night.

Unfortunately, Cam's car decided to be temperamental on the Coquihalla highway. About halfway between Hope and Kamloops, while climbing a large hill, the temperature gauge began to spike. The car was old, a '96 Neon, so that made sense. He pulled over, opened the hood, and ate a poptart while the car cooled itself off. During this time Evan and Kevin foraged in the roadside scrubs for edible plants, of which they found several. About fifteen minutes, one poptart, and several mystery road-plants later, they got back into the car to continue their journey. They were successful for another hour or so. Ten minutes past Merritt, however, the car lost all forward momentum, which was unfortunate considering they were on a large hill, going 120km/hr, at a 45 degree incline. Cam pulled off to the side, thinking it was overheating again. They waited for it to cool before continuing on. Five minutes later, the same thing happened. And again, and again. Eventually, they realized that they weren't moving any further. This left them at the side of a road... in a desert, at 2 in the afternoon in 35+ degree weather, waiting for a tow truck from Merritt. They hung out in a ditch on the side of the busy highway, sincerely hoping that no vehicles hit the car. Did we mention that they broke down right around a blind corner? Because they totally did. They eventually made it to Kamloops, where thankfully Evan had a brother who graciously let our intrepid heroes stay with him. The next day they disposed of the corpse of Cam's irreparable neon, rented a car, and made it to the retreat within a few hours.

The retreat was four days of training, hot weather, lakefishing, archery, and really good food. It turns out that the club has a number of excellent cooks. Kevin's butternut squash soup was fantastic, as was Zach's Saturday-night meatpocalypse wherein he cooked for everyone what may have actually been an entire cow. Kung fu training requires protein, and everyone was reasonably certain that they all ate close to their respective bodyweights in ribs and roast. Zach had the honour of catching the largest fish of anyone, with a decently-sized burbot. Said burbot also swallowed the hook and proceeded to stab Cam when he attempted to remove it. On Sunday night, Kevin also went to war with The Swarm. Upon returning to his cabin, Kevin noticed that a light had been left on. Unfortunately, that light was located directly above his bed. More unfortunately is that this light had attracted possibly every fly, gnat, and

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The training portion of these camping trips is simple: at any moment, regardless of time of day, you may find yourself doing Wing Chun. Although there were set training periods, kung fu came up at all times of the day.

Both camping trips featured students testing for variously-leveled sashes with Sifu.

This past July we also had the good fortune of having Sifu Colin Young, who is a Gold sash in the Sunny Tang Wing Chun family and operates the North Bay Wing Chun club, visit and instruct some of our classes. One of the many benefits of the Sunny Tang family is the wealth of skilled practitioners who make the time to make visits such as this. In addition to having him instruct some classes and benefit from his wisdom and experience, we were able to enjoy a couple of social nights out with him, his wife Danielle, one of his students Mike Forth, and his wife Tanya.

“When people think about Ving Tsun, often the first thing that comes to mind is an art with really good hand techniques. What they don't realize is the amazing footwork that is found in the system. We can even see in the opening of Sil Lim Tao that before any of the hand techniques begin, we focus on setting up the horse. I know we all put a lot of emphasis on our hands when training in class, but please take the time to perfect your footwork, because if you don't have a good horse then you can't have good kung fu!”

Such visits and camping trips are the part of training at the club we refer to as “the kung fu life”, where we get to experience the community and family that is integral to good kung fu. Beyond the training of Wing Chun, we develop understanding of the importance of giving back to and being a part of something bigger than ourselves. This is the underlying foundation of training, to be able to enjoy great Wing Chun and become better people too.

Training

Each article features an account of what a particular new and senior student in the club is focusing on in their training. This way we can appreciate where someone who is just starting and someone who has been a practitioner for a little while are coming from.

“Wing Chun is all about being efficient and taking the path of least resistance, but it's unfortunately much easier to academically understand something than it is to embody it. While training, I often find myself in a situation where my limbs are tight or tangled with someone else's, with no idea how to proceed. The academic answer is always to follow the path of least

resistance; find where they are weakest, and go there. In practice, that principle is often obscured by thoughts and brains. What if I do this? What if I go here? I could probably strike their throat if I do this. All of these thoughts detract from the reality of efficiency--if you see or sense an opening, fill it. It is easy to fall into the mental trap of overthinking without realizing it, but by the time the realization hits, it is far too late. In a drill, the consequence is merely an awkward pause, but in a real situation the consequences could (and probably will be) much more dire. Hesitation leads to rigidity, which leads to telegraphed motions, which leads to injury as the other guy hits you a bunch of times in the time you spent thinking about how to hit him.

Nobody likes getting hit, so the best course of action is to limit the thought process while focusing on a drill. While training, I do my best to disregard the past and the future in favour of living in the *now*. By focusing on the *now*, I can more easily process the physical sensations I am being fed, in order to more efficiently take advantage of any holes or flaws in my partner's form. Once I find those holes, I can fill them with whatever is most logical at the time. It doesn't matter if I've done the same technique ten times in a row; the partner dictates what technique I use based on what kind of hole they leave. If they leave the same hole, I'm going to fill it the same way each time. The drive to not repeat the same thing over and over must be replaced with the desire to control centre, fill any holes, and strike. Thoughts will only get in the way."

-Cameron Young, Blue Sash

"My name is Adrien Leduc and I joined the West Coast Sunny Tang Wing Chun club in late April. I can't say enough positive things about this club and the people who are a part of it. Sifu Jim Kragtwyk and the other club instructors and members all bring enthusiasm and a great attitude to every class. The art itself is both beautiful and powerful and our club's lineage stems directly from the great Ip Man.

What appeals to me about Wing Chun Kung Fu is that it puts the emphasis on one's own personal journey; it's not about how good someone else is or how many ribs you can break with one punch. As members, we are

encouraged to "own our own Kung Fu." Members are taught and guided and mentored and yet, at the end of the day, where one ends up with his or her Kung Fu is ultimately up to them. If we demonstrate patience and perseverance – and if we put the practice in – we can go far. Moreover, there doesn't seem to be a "ceiling" for Kung Fu knowledge and ability - even longtime practitioners have room to learn and grow.

It's important to note that this club is about more than just paying your monthly fee and coming to class. As Sifu says, this club does not provide members with "Kung Fu from a vending machine." When you become a member, you become part of a family. Your fellow classmates are your brothers and sisters and outside of class you're given the opportunity to take part in countless fun activities like dirt biking, camping, and Saturday dim sum.

I feel proud and privileged to be a member of this club. In the eight weeks that I have been a member, I have found that my confidence has grown. My physical health has improved. I've incorporated stretching into my daily routine. I've honed my focus and concentration.

As with most martial arts, there is an element of internal discipline incorporated into Kung Fu practice. How we conduct ourselves both in and outside of class. How we treat others. All of this – the internal discipline, the quality instruction, the great atmosphere, the personal journey aspect – it's made me really feel at home. To anyone reading this and thinking to give Kung Fu a try, I encourage you to consider West Coast Sunny Tang Wing Chun." –Adrien Leduc

Congratulations to the following students on attaining their new respective sash levels during the summer:

Fiona Galvin (white), Samantha (white), Christina Chan (green) and Cameron Young (blue).

Excellent work!

Edited By: Cameron Young and Zach Lewis