



*“The nature of Ving Tsun is to lead you to
your own personal Freedom.”*

– Moy Yat

Message from Sifu



Sifu Jim Kragtwyk Training the Pah Chum Do

Simplicity - One Big YES

As time goes by on my Ving Tsun journey, the things my Sifu Walter Jakimczuk has said dozens of times ring true:

“Don’t be in a hurry to get bad”

“Invest in loss”

“Relaxation is key”

“I don’t like to fight, I like to hit”

“Ving Tsun is based on simplicity”

This last truth seeps deeper into my cellular being each time I train. I have witnessed a common pattern with many practitioners in this art—myself included. With our need to try and understand something, we often times make it more complicated than necessary.

The dominance of left brain thinking and cognitive functions demands that we have comprehensive intellectual understanding of things in life. We seem to want the comprehensive road map laid out in front of us before we are willing to take a few more steps along the path. Having some awareness of a concept, theory or technique is useful, if for no other reason than to give the left-brain, monkey-mind something to play with and keep it distracted, while the right-brain experiential and sensorial intelligence is feeling things and making adjustments along the way. It is in this latter practice, of direct sensory experience with a sensitivity of how to “listen”, where the true understanding and illumination of this art comes from.

I have often said when instructing Ving Tsun that our kung fu is ultimately a felt-sense as much as it is self-defense. We use terminology to describe forms, techniques, exercises and a conceptual framework. We use our eyes to guide proper placement of our body in relation to self or others. These are only guides, or like a flashlight illuminating the next steps of where you want to go, but you need to take the steps. What this means is that being mindful of body sensations while you train is what will allow your own martial brilliance to emerge. The deeper understanding will come later.

This somatic mindfulness allows you to develop sensitivity to all physical sensations, and with that sensitivity, allows you to discern and make adjustments to proper technique or position. If you are thinking excessively or needlessly while training, your growth in the art will be stunted or blocked. This somatic awareness initially develops when we practice our forms. We are given a set of sequenced movements and postures to begin the journey of internalizing certain structures or patterns. This self-sensitivity is a foundational necessity in order to develop sensitivity with others. If I am unaware of my own inflexibility, tension, looseness or imbalance, I will not have these abilities with others. Of course, this can be expanded to all life realms, not just martial arts.

My mindful study of these somatic cues allows me to learn, adjust and improve. I seek for the full-body *YES* in any moment of training. I mindfully link those *YES*es with others and the magical tapestry of Ving Tsun expands its weave in the nervous system. As I continue my quest for the somatic links of that full body *YES*, my kung fu ultimately becomes one felt-sense *YES*; no matter what movement or position my body is in. Upon contact with an opponent, the unconscious and patterned wisdom of the training emerges to find the *YES*, even as things may change quickly and dynamically with an opponent.

At the highest expression of this art, your whole kung fu is just a constant felt-sense *YES*. That *YES* being the occupation and control of the centerline with straightline intent, including all the harmonized attributes of relaxation, timing, sensitivity, balance, coordination and orientation, with the guiding principles of save time, save energy and save movement and assisted with a cluster of supporting ideas and idioms. The full martial expression of occupying the centerline in this manner is "I never get hit and I can hit anytime I want." One can never know how close to this ideal we will come, but when the aim is set this high, one will certainly achieve much.

This one somatic *YES* is the ultimate expression of Ving Tsun simplicity. All forms, techniques, movements and postures disappear and only the *YES* remains.

-Sifu Jim Kragtwyk



Club Photo
with Grand Master Walter Jakimczuk & Sifu Colin Young

Visiting the West Coast

From April 20-25th, Sifu Colin Young and I visited our brothers and sisters of the Sunny Tang Victoria kwoon. We spoke on the various aspects of the Faat Do, while

hopefully providing insights into the Ving Tsun culture, with anecdotes featuring the late Grand Master Moy Yat and my Sifu, Grand Master Sunny Tang.

Our legacy is one which carries profound depth and understanding of the Ving Tsun system, rooted in the teachings of Grand Master Ip Man. Sifu Sunny Tang straddles the old and the new, providing the Hong Kong connection of direct contact with the great Ip Man and his Sifu, Moy Yat, while establishing the seeds for growth here in Canada. My Sifu was fortunate enough to be present when Ip Man held court at various tea houses, dispensing insights into his views, character and keen sense of humor. Thus, Sifu learned by simply spending time with these knowledgeable Grand Masters. Few people realize that Sifu was given the nickname "Rocky" by Ip Man, and that it was set in a chop by late Grand Master Moy Yat. So here we have my Sifu, who has his feet set in the Three Worlds; past, present and future, as he strives to promote Ving Tsun tirelessly, ensuring that this legacy continues to shine for future generations.

On this trip, my objective was to clarify the importance of understanding the Faat Do (cultivating the mind) and its vital importance to the physical presentation of Ving Tsun. Once the mind has clarity as to theory/principle, then the "chi" (life energy) is vital and the function of form/technique is powerful and unobstructed. We therefore train drills and forms incessantly, in order that maturity of technique arises... the Faat Do breathes life into technique. Through training, we investigate thoroughly our skill set until it becomes instinct/automatic. Thus, we are able to adapt to whatever shape is presented, such is the manifestation of our Kung Fu. Like water, we conform to any container and enter where the smallest fissure is detected through touch. Each aspect of the system gives us qualities that enhance our martial skills. In generations past, one trained technique for years. Maturity of technique was only achieved when principle/theory was "uncovered" by the student. As Michelangelo once said about his famous statue David, "David was always in the marble, I simply released him." When a student begins to *uncover* principle/theory on their own, then they truly come to understand the art. This results in confidence and ownership of the art. Learning occurs when one is invested, their eyes are open and they penetrate to the essence of the art ... this does not occur immediately, but is revealed to the student by training the mind and the body.

When we hit an impasse in our training—and we will—we tend to become discouraged; instead, view this as an incentive/challenge to train harder. This will forge your character for the many tasks at hand in fighting, but also in the challenges that life throws at you constantly. There is no character without challenges, and there are always challenges... Life will see to that, as we all can attest. Hence the idiom:

"If you don't work hard when you are young then you will have nothing in old age."

Consistency in class will be our forge.

"Cultivate the mind by studying the Faat Do," say the sages past and present. Your Kung Fu will definitely improve, since you are using the same mind for all learning. Interestingly, once you have penetrated the teachings of Ving Tsun, you will then come to see its application to all walks of life and also be able to see the relationship of the various martial arts styles by mastering the one. Ving Tsun is a gift, thus you must be "present" and allow learning to be a bodily process. We are an art that deals with energy, thus we use as much energy as required (yin/yang) resulting in spontaneity and depending upon context. Students learn to deal with energy in steps; gradually allowing them to acquire skill, confidence and power. But more importantly, there must be a feeling of trust and respect among students, which leads to a lifetime of learning and solid relationships.

During my visit, I was continually impressed by everyone's commitment to training, respect and caring for each other. This is a testament to Sifu Jim Kragtwyk's character and sincere dedication to the students and the art. Mark Watson is continuing this great tradition and working diligently to carry the mantle of Sifu Jim... this is an onerous responsibility, which few understand. It requires a belief in the inherent goodness in all human beings... We all strive for our birthright, which I believe is divinity, arriving in compassion.

Continue your studies joyously, with a huge dash of seriousness, on both the intellectual and physical level! Allow the Faat Do to guide your Saam Faat, discovering this tremendous treasure we call Ving Tsun.

Every time I visit the west coast I feel rejuvenated by all of you wonderful people, and blessed that we had the opportunity to spend time together. Each class is an opportunity (a gift) to improve your skill set, understanding and most importantly relationships with one another. Thank you. Until we meet again.

Note: I use the spelling Ving Tsun which late Grand Master Ip Man used to differentiate our Kung Fu from the various branches.

Special mention to Mark Watson, for his hard work for the benefit of all...

Raj and Tim for their continuous support and behind the scenes efforts...

To my long-time friend and student Eric and darling Holly, for graciously hosting me at their home.

Love you ALL, Victoria
(almost forgot...there is a legend among us...?)

-Sifu Walter Jakimczuk

Click the link below (or cut and paste) to see one of Sigung Walter's videos from the April Retreat. This one is on Jong Sau and forward energy. "Do the business."

<https://www.facebook.com/heidi.erhardt.7/videos/g.125470091463/10211238681216188/?type=2&theater>

Special Thanks to Sifu Colin Young for sharing generously from his years of experience. Click below for this video that captures his clean and astute explanations, truly an example of straightline centerline teaching!

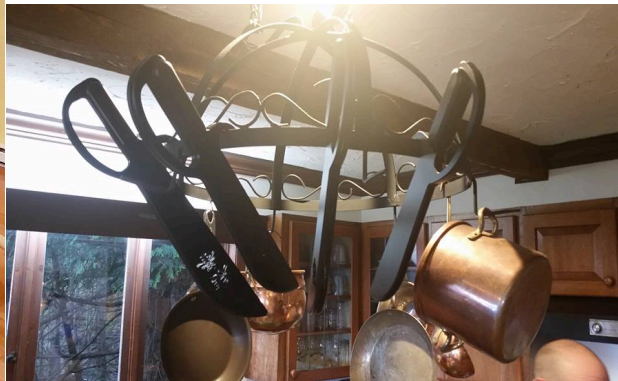
<https://www.facebook.com/heidi.erhardt.7/videos/g.125470091463/10211292758928097/?type=2&theater>



Grand Master Walter Jakimczuk & Mark Watson
training Biu Kwan

Special Events

- * October 2016: Instructor Retreat on Salt Spring Island
 - * December 2016: Annual Club Christmas Party
 - * December 2016: Sifu receives Martial Excellence Award
 - * Sigung and Sijo inducted into the Kung Fu Hall of Fame
 - * January 2017: Mexico Retreat
 - * April 2017: Ving Tsun Intensive with Sigung Walter
- ### UPCOMING
- * August 2017: Club Camping Trip
 - * September 2017: 5th Annual Kung Fu Sister's Retreat
 - * November 2017: Senior Grand Master Sunny Tang's China Tour



Training

Each newsletter features two discussions: an account from a particular new student, and an account from a senior student. These write-ups are focused on what that individual is working on with their training. This way, we can appreciate different perspectives rooted in different skill levels and experience.



Grand Master Walter Jakimczuk training with Raj Pal

Change is Necessary

I've been training Wing Chun since early in 2010 and would like to share an epiphany I had with you. Just before I attained my black sash over 2 ½ years ago, I thought I had rushed up to it. I felt that I didn't spend enough time on Siu Nim Tau before greedily moving on to Chum Kiu... Not enough time on Chum Kiu before hungrily moving on to Biu Chi... Not enough time on Biu Chi before wanting the Mook Jong. I did, however, train Jin Tsui for an adequate amount of time, following the late GM Moy Yat's curriculum, before throwing the pole countless thereafter. This is probably why I experienced several "light-bulb" moments while I enjoyed repeating and playing with the 6 1/2 point Kwan form, possibly more times than any other form cumulatively. I believe the Pah Chum Do form accentuated attributes that helped me to find strengths (and weaknesses) in myself. But I couldn't help but wonder how much more effective my path may have been had I slowed down with the first three forms...

Years ago, when Sihing-Mark received his black sash, it was Sisook-Wade's encouraging words to him (I was eavesdropping) over a dinner honoring his black sash, that stuck with me. He simply said to him "now it's all academic". Regurgitating and ruminating on those words when I received my black sash helped me to realize that I didn't learn too fast, I simply hadn't been applying the Faat Do nearly as well as I could have. For those who attended my seminar on the Faat Do, at the end of April,

you hopefully walked away with my own revelation: "once you know the physical side (the six forms and Chi Sau progression), you are by NO means a "master" of Ving Tsun. That just marked when I purposefully began really studying this remarkable system. I had only just completed the Ving Tsun alphabet and some words, but still had to learn to write Ving Tsun sentences. Learning how to create poetry is now my metaphoric centerline, the path to get there is via the six attributes, the three principles, the supporting ideas and the fifty idioms. Only when I commit to studying those with mindful repetition, do I notice my physical representation of Ving Tsun Kung Fu improving.

If I were to go back 7+ years ago and ask advice from myself... I'd reuse Sihing-Mark's advice: Pick two items from the Faat Do every day and focus on them until you feel that they have revealed something... anything. Then substitute out the revealing one and pick another... and repeat. Change is good. Change is necessary. Don't just repeat what you did last class. Instead, change how you think about it while you're doing it! For example, if you focused and learned something from two new components from the Faat Do every 1 ½ weeks, you will have gone through all 70+ after one year. Then, repeat and revisit each of them for another year and continue to repeat. This shouldn't just apply to your Ving Tsun. Try it out on your relationships (partner, children, work, etc.). I truly believe that it will not only make your Ving Tsun Kung Fu better, it will also make you a smarter and better person (academically and spiritually). I used to consider myself an atheist. Now, instead, I am learning to believe in myself.

Speaking of change... as most of you know, my journey is leading me away from Victoria to follow the footsteps of my Sihing Michael to Costa Rica. There, I plan to further improve my application of Faat Do, while Michael and I train new training partners to help us on our Ving Tsun journeys. Pura Vida!

-Raj Pal, Black Sash



Raj Pal training with Tim Lui

The Path to Compassion



Sifu Jim Kragtwyk and Heidi Erhardt mounting the boards

Tang Fu Fung, Grand Master Walter Jakimczuk, writes in our training manual, *“Family members always respect and trust each other in order for relationships to grow and strengthen... Your growth as a human being depends on developing these strong relationships... Avoid putting up barriers that will imprison your growth; open your heart and mind to eternal growth. This, I believe, is the path to compassion that binds us all on this journey.”*

It was you...many of you reading this newsletter that brought me to the decision to join the club and commit to learning Ving Tsun. I am acutely aware how effective ‘relationship’ is at growing me. The potential for growth by studying a martial art like Ving Tsun is exponential, in that it trains the body, mind and if one truly dedicates oneself, the soul. The Faat Do, the principles and supporting ideas, the six attributes and 50 idioms all have Life applications that will evolve the practitioner beyond body and mind. With focus and intent, chi is cultivated. And Like Sigung so adeptly articulates, it *“is the path to compassion that binds us all on this journey.”*

I’ve trained other martial arts a little...Tai Chi in San Diego in my twenties, a lot of Brazilian Capoeira in both California and Hawaii and a little Aikido and Jiu Jitsu. Buddhist Vipassana Meditation has been my ongoing Practice for the last 5 years, but it wasn’t until just recently that I was able to feel the place where Ving Tsun is meeting all of those practices. I loved the slow meditative movements of Tai Chi, and the encouragement to cultivate chi...like in Siu Num Tao. Aikido was practical in how we were taught to also sit in our horse, as well as use the other’s energy against them. Capoeira had earned my respect, when I learned that the African slaves in Brazil had told the slave masters that they were simply dancing...yet they were training and

preparing for rebellion, to claim their freedom. Ving Tsun has a similar, very relaxed cunning side to it, that ultimately will take an opponent by surprise.

My meditation practice has helped me to see blind areas in my life and in my body, leading me to deeper personal peace and freedom. Ultimately, the Faat Do speaks to all of this. Which is why I wanted to gift Sifu Jim and the kwoon with the wooden art pieces, reminding us all to stay on our own “Centerline” while moving “Straightline” toward our goals. They were so well received that Sifu then asked me to make more, highlighting the three principles and six attributes. I was delighted that they were appreciated and grateful to have something to contribute to the kwoon...something that came from my heart and was inspired by my creativity and desire to enter more deeply into the system.

It was an incredible opportunity for me to meditate on the principles and attributes as I formed the Chinese letters. Martin Yao was instrumental in confirming the correct forms for the letters, thank you Martin! It was such a beautiful process... I gathered the wood beneath the ancient Gary Oak tree outside of the home we shared with Kurt and Cindy in Fernwood. Searching for the right wood as a backdrop, I finally chose birch, wanting to use all local Victoria materials.

As Sifu, Sigung and Raj have so eloquently expressed in their articles, everything we learn in Ving Tsun relates to our lives. I’m at the very beginning of my journey, but it has become so obvious to me the need to ‘relax’ in order to cultivate ‘sensitivity’. These two attributes are my greatest focus at the moment, as I tend to move quickly and need to learn to relax in confrontation. Similarly, staying on my “centerline” and moving “straightline” toward my goals has already supported me to ‘Save Time’ ‘Save Movement’ and ‘Save Energy’ in SO many aspects of my life—specifically with my career.



Faat Do and Ving Tsun Principles

The Spring Intensive with Sigung was an ideal opportunity for me to completely immerse myself in the art. It was an opportunity to allow the Faat Do to begin to “settle my muddy waters” as it was consistently woven within our physical training, guided by Sigung Walter and Sisook Colin. I’m looking forward to another immersion this Fall with my Kung Fu sisters, Natalie Rogers, Helen Guilding and Christina Chan. It will be incredibly instructive to train with women from other clubs internationally, and deepen with my Sije from the kwoon.

I’m grateful for this kung fu Family and the Path that I see before me.

-Heidi Erhardt, Red Sash

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

Eben Hensby (Red)

Jarrad Reddekop (Blue)

Natalie Rogers (Red)

Eric Burnett (Black)

Heidi Erhardt (Red)

Tim Personn (Red)

Excellent work!

Welcome to Our New Students:

Tim Personn
Heidi Erhardt
Günter Zieser
Ida Becskerek
Peter Johnson
Nicholas Gallant
Parker deBruyne
Marcus Wille
Rocky Tung
Laura McIntyre
River Lloyd

Edited by Heidi Erhardt

