



“Relax and calm your mind. Forget about yourself and follow your opponent’s movement.”

- Ip Man

Celebrating 30 Years Grandmaster Sunny Tang & Grandmaster Walter Jakimczuk



Grandmasters Walter Jakimczuk and Sunny Tang with Sifu Jim Kragtwyk, Mark Watson, Sebastian Malette and George Lam

“This event was a beautiful testimonial of a long-standing relationship between two human beings committed to the art of Ving Tsun and its students.”
-Sifu Jim Kragtwyk



Group photo of our kung fu family at the banquet celebration, Holiday Inn in Kanata, Ontario



Sifu Jim Kragtwyk with Mark Watson and Sebastian Malette



Conditioning!

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.



Sihing (older brother) Tim Personn demonstrating Siu Nim Tau to Sidais (younger brothers)

The Ego's Journey in Kung Fu

All my life I've been called an overachiever. Ask my parents. When I was a baby, I skipped the crawling stage and started walking right away instead. As a child, I sneaked into the grown-up section of our local library. Later, I became a teenager who obsessed over turning eighteen, the

age of legal maturity in Germany, my country of birth. And when I finally learned the English language, I did not rest until I could 'pass' as North American. To be sure, this desire to move on to the 'next big thing' has served me well in my educational and professional development. But, as I have come to learn, this drive—call it perfectionism, ambition, or ego—also takes a toll; it prevents us from being 'in the moment,' as the saying goes. In other words, it may make us too restless to see the gifts each of these moments can bring.

I'd say that the art of kung fu—with its endless opportunities for growth—is uniquely suited to teach this lesson. It's a lesson I have to take in over and over again and a lesson I forget and then have to relearn. The most recent moment for such learning came to me when I achieved the green sash of our system. I had entered the club upon the recommendation of a fellow academic who had said that Ving Tsun afforded him the ability—so rare and sought after by those of us who spend the majority of their time in their heads—to be 'in his body.' I had reached a point in my young career when the stresses and anxieties of a competitive graduate program were becoming increasingly harder to manage. So the leap from the 'combat sport' of academia to a true martial art seemed not too far. Truthfully, I had no idea what to expect when I walked into the kwoon three years ago. There was nothing but an unclear intuition that I needed a counterbalance to my investment in the life of the mind. Above all, I soon learned that the desired balance would require me to work on my will, the source of my successes thus far.

My time with Ving Tsun flew by at first, in the same kind of happy fascination that I have since seen on the faces of new club members who are just starting out. Everything is mesmerizing, even addictive. Every new technique is a world to explore, and the learning curve is so steep that any ideas of mastery seem downright silly in the beginning. Again, my drive led me to move on fairly quickly from new challenge to new challenge: from Siu Nim Tau to Chum Kiu; from Dan Chi Sau to double-hand Chi

Sau. Then, one day, I suddenly had the required training hours for the green sash and I found myself becoming a senior in our club. With the pride I felt at this achievement also came a fair bit of questioning and confusion: What did it mean, I asked myself, to no longer be a beginner? Would I, as a green sash, now also have to be really good at kung fu to do justice to my new sash level? And what did it mean to be good? Did it mean I now always had to win?

With these ideas in mind, the classes I attended in the following weeks were frustrating. This was probably also true for my training partners, who faced a student who tried to apply every technique in a ‘superior’ way. I had become someone who tried to ‘win’ in Chi Sau drills. Suffice to say, I experienced a fair bit of ‘failing’ during that time. And for good reasons. Given the way we train, with older brothers and sisters instructing younger ones, there is always a Sihing or Sije who will show you your limitations. During that time of reorientation after becoming a green sash, I would frequently try to overcome such limitations by applying a technique more quickly or more forcefully, to prevail over my fellow kung fu practitioner. It wasn’t until my Sihing Mark pointed this out to me that I realized that I had to reconsider my approach to training.

I soon understood what had led me to this place. In my hurry to ‘make things happen’—to get better, or win, or simply to place a hit—I had neglected the ancient principle of Wu-Wei (non-doing). It is an attentive passiveness that does not force anything, and that—as Bruce Lee points out in his commentaries on the Chinese martial arts—frees the martial artist “from striving and straining himself.” This made sense, I thought, and the beautiful images I found in the *Tao Te Ching* for the mystical art of artlessness resonated deeply with me. However, the more I tried to apply this attitude to my training, the more I asked myself whether there wasn’t a fundamental paradox at work here. Surely, I thought, some ambition is required to continue training, to analyze one’s structure and skill in the

pursuit of minute changes in one’s technique to advance in the system of Ving Tsun. How, then, could I forfeit any striving without giving up on improvements to my kung fu?

As Sihing Mark told me in one memorable class, what was required was balance; a balance of ego and flexibility, of asserting and yielding. I’ve since tried to figure out what this balance might look like. My results so far are inconclusive and perhaps subjective, but I believe that enthusiasm and fascination with the art of Ving Tsun are important, and that curiosity about different people’s way to implement it is indispensable. Better yet, pair these traits with humour and compassion at your own inevitable moments of frustration, and your training—if not your kung fu in general—may take a step forward. When a new person now enters our club, I often tell them that what I truly cherish about kung fu is a conception of ‘failure’ that is unlike any I have ever encountered in my culture. ‘Failure’ is a welcome, though humbling opportunity for growth, both technical and spiritual. In that case, I’d say, it ceases to be ‘failure’ and becomes something altogether different. When I train now, I try to follow this new mind-set. And I will no doubt ‘fail’ at that too, but hopefully more often than not with a smile to myself.

- Tim Personn, Green Sash



Line drills



Heather Pesta training with Ida Becskereki

From Black Belt to Beginner

Entering a new martial art has always been an exciting adventure for me. Although I spent fifteen years training in Aikido, I also studied Shorinji Kempo and Iaido along the way. When I moved to the Island, I was starting a new life with my two kids and a new job.... so why not start Ving Tsun too? At first I was surprised by how slow and meditative the forms were (especially coming from some dynamic and intense Aikido training). My first gift was the mantra “slow down”, followed by many more including, “relax” and most recently, “engage”. I’d like to share how these three mantras relate across my training in both Aikido and Ving Tsun.

For those of you not familiar with Aikido, it involves redirection of energy via sinking one’s centre and guiding your opponent via wrist locks, throws and pins. I was very fortunate to have trained with a variety of teachers, both here in Canada under Kawahara Sensei as well as in Japan. In some cases, while practicing Aikido as a second-degree black belt, I found speed to be advantageous (especially against 3 or more attackers). Also in Aikido, we train to attack with real intent. I love going fast, and therefore I loved attacking, which often led to being thrown halfway across the mats. I found myself in an art that fed my ‘need for speed’ versus balancing it. By contrast, learning to slow

down when practicing Siu Nim Tau and the structure of Ving Tsun has been such a beneficial challenge. Not only do I have a better opportunity to learn and correct myself as a beginner, but it has helped me to slow my mind and body down in all kinds of situations. From high pressure boardroom meetings, to balancing two kids on a fifteen-hour trip. After I slow myself down—I promise this does actually happen once in a while—I find it much easier to relax.

In Aikido training, we would often do very slow and very long breathing exercises and meditation: “Close your eyes, breathe in through your nose and allow the air to sit as low as possible in your diaphragm, then exhale controlled and slow.” That training has helped me to link my breath to relaxation of my body. When practicing Ving Tsun, I’ve noticed that my shoulders and tension will sometimes rise up. I feel so fortunate to have wonderful older brothers and sisters around to help me notice this. At first I was just telling myself to relax, however recently, I’ve been pulling from Aikido to breathe in and sink to my centre. This may look a bit strange as I take a moment to breathe then sway from side to side randomly, but it has helped. Sinking to my centre leads me also to notice my legs and feet.

Mark Sihing has been using the word “engage” and this has resonated with me. The word “engage” to me has a strong yet flexible connotation in martial arts. I recall using it to remind myself to recognize where my energy is coming from (arms or core). I can appreciate the power of feeling my feet connecting to the ground, then utilizing that energy as it connects up through my legs, hips, and arm structure in past arts. As a beginner in Ving Tsun, I’ve noticed I sometimes have a bad habit of charging in with my “T-Rex size” arm muscles first. I have also been very used to training without shoes on and, to be honest, it has taken a lot of adaptation to have them on. I still truly believe it’s important to empty one’s cup when learning anything new. So far I have found my Ving Tsun training to be subtle with so much potential for power.

I have found many connections to past martial arts (good and bad) that I feel will help me during my Ving Tsun journey.

Engage my feet first, relax to my centre and for goodness sake slow down!

- Heather Pesta, White Sash

CLUB CAMPOUT – HEATHER LAKE



Welcome to our new students:

Ian Cudmore
Andrew Welby

Welcome back!

Jay Messenger and Wendy Hamilton

Special Events

* **June 2019:** Book Club

Selections from *Attached*.

by Amir Levine, M.D. & Rachel S.F. Heller, M.A.

* **July 2019:** Club Camp Trip and a visit from Sifu Colin Young and Sincere Ip

UPCOMING

* **August 2019:** Kick Ass Kindness

A Mixed Martial Arts Gathering & Fundraiser

* **September 2019:** 7th Annual

Moy Yat Ving Tsun Sisters Retreat

www.VingTsunSisterhood.org

Click or cut and paste the links below to see several videos from recent classes:

CONDITIONING VIDEOS

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SIZE DOESN'T MATTER

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CHUM KIU

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Editor: Heidi Erhardt

Copy Editor: Nat Rogers

Note: We use the spelling Ving Tsun, which late Grand Master Ip Man used to differentiate our kung fu from the various branches.

Please check out our Facebook Page

(@WingChunYYJ) and website

(www.victoriawingchun.com) for more

information about Ving Tsun, Sifu Jim

Kragtwyk's talks on various aspects of the system and instructional videos.

The Art of Change



7th Annual Kung Fu Sisters Retreat

MOY YAT VING TSUN



SAVE THE DATE!

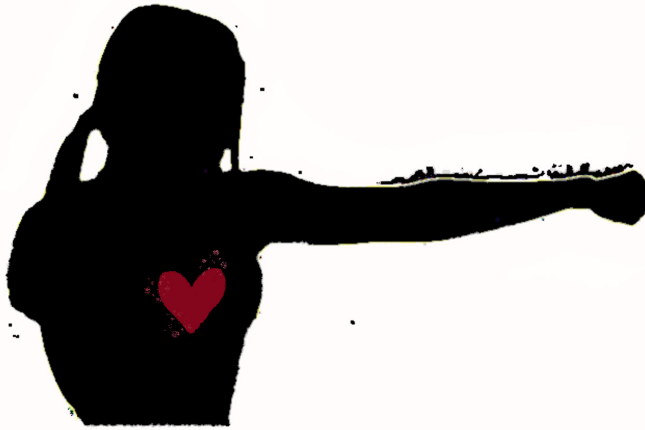
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VICTORIA, BC, CANADA

\$450 CAD all included

Payments can be sent via [etransfer](#) or PayPal to thenatmaster@gmail.com.
For PayPal, kindly check the payment option "Sending to a Friend" and change currency to CAD.
For more information please email Heidi at heidielana@yahoo.com or see vingtsunsisterhood.org

kick@ss kindness

08.25.19



Martial Artists' Social and Fundraiser

Do you have a passion for Martial Arts?
Let's come together for a good cause.

Sun Aug 25, 3-5PM

Picnic Too, 1019 Fort Street, Victoria

\$20 per person, Includes Appies.

Drinks (alcoholic and non) available for purchase.

**All proceeds to Woman
in Need Community Cooperative.**