

A Grandmaster Remembers: **BRUCE LEE**

The subject of a revealing new documentary released as part of *Bruce Lee: The Dragon Collection*, Dr. William Cheung, Grandmaster of Wing Chun style martial arts, recalls how he introduced the movie legend to kung fu.

Standing calmly on the well worn, interlocking blue mats on the floor of a Brisbane martial arts training hall, an elderly Chinese-Australian man relaxes in front of the rolling cameras, focuses and begins.

What at first looks like a series of gentle tai chi movements soon turns into a series of blinding strikes, kicks and deflections. Before long, the 69 year-old Melbournite is unleashing rapid fire chain punches against two of his student-instructors and crashing the highly fit younger men to the floor with ease.

But it's not until he picks up his old set of 'nunchakas' – which he laughingly says he hasn't even touched in 20 years – and begins to whirl the wooden handles around his body, that for an eerie moment everyone in the room filming and watching silently agrees: William Cheung moves exactly like Bruce Lee.

And that is no coincidence. Dr. William Cheung, who is both a practitioner of Chinese traditional medicine, as well as a world renowned Grandmaster of the 'Wing Chun' style of martial arts, was not only one of Bruce Lee's earliest and closest friends – he is the very person who first introduced the young Dragon to kung fu. His story is presented in the world premiere bonus documentary, 'The Grandmaster & The Dragon', found only in the special collector's release *Bruce Lee: The Dragon Collection*, out on DVD this month.

"Some fifty odd years ago, I met a skinny young boy," William recalls. "Bruce and I grew up together on the back streets of Hong Kong," he says, but it was "early one evening, on November 27th, 1949, [when] I had just finished my home work, [that] my uncle turned up unexpectedly and took me to a party. Not until we got to 218 Nathan Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, in Kowloon, did I realise we were going to the child star, Lee Shiu-loong's ('Little Dragon's') 9th birthday party."

Young Bruce Lee was indeed a childhood star before he made it big in Hollywood, but unfortunately his fame, as William reveals, only sought to attract the attentions of organised crime groups like the Triads, who deliberately targeted celebrities for recruitment

and, failing that, for special harassment and bullying.

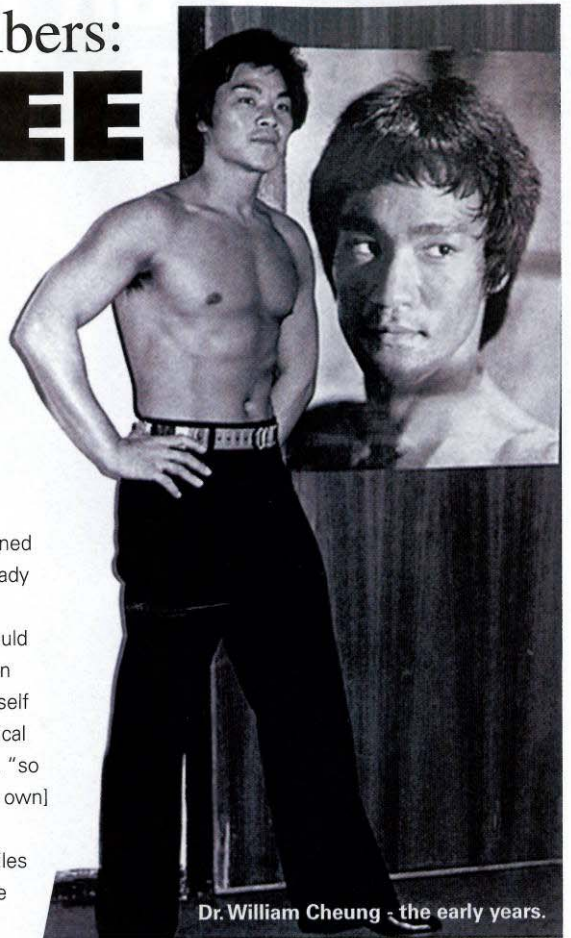
By the time he was 13, Bruce's somewhat privileged background was no great protection and he turned instead to his friend, who was already training in Wing Chun, for his help. Bruce "suggested to me that it would be better that he trained Wing Chun kung fu so that he can defend himself against bullies and unwanted physical challenges" says the Grandmaster, "so I brought him up to meet with [my own] Grandmaster, Yip Man."

Master Yip Man liked Bruce, smiles William, "from first sight," but more dramas were to follow. Bruce still "had to get his parents', especially his father's permission" to do the training, and even after that, Bruce "progressed so well" the Grandmaster continues, "that he was giving the senior students some problems in friendly sparring."

Financial pressure from what became an unfortunate faction of jealous seniors meant that Yip Man "reluctantly told Bruce Lee to go, and secretly told [another student] Wong Shun Leung and myself to give Bruce private tuition." In fact, with his friend's weekend coaching, Bruce went on to win a coveted inter-school boxing Championship.

The charismatic Grandmaster Cheung continues to chat easily, but the remainder of his stories, as it turns out, will have to wait. As the film crew hang on his every word, they quickly realise that even kung fu masters need to break for lunch.

***Bruce Lee: The Dragon Collection* will be available exclusively at JB Hi-Fi from 4th November.**



Dr. William Cheung - the early years.

