



Villains don't stand a chance with Kato who clobbers them with gung-fu and with this three-sectional staff, used as a club.

is "THE GREEN HORNET'S" version of GUNG-FU GENUINE?

by Maxwell Pollard

Actor Bruce Lee, who plays the dynamic Kato, admits it's slightly hoaxed up for dramatic effect, but don't let anybody fool you — he's a topnotch expert of this ancient Chinese art. This is the first of a series of two articles.

BRUCE LEE, the Kato of "The Green Hornet" TV show who can obliterate an ordinary-sized mob of hoodlums in a matter of seconds by using gung-fu, says there's too much hocus-pocus about the martial arts these days.

(Bruce is Cantonese and prefers to pronounce his art as "gung-fu" instead of "kung-fu.")

He contends that some martial arts instructors couldn't stand the gaff if they became involved in a street fight.

All of their knowledge about forms and stances wouldn't do them any good. He charges that some teachers favor forms, the fancier and more complex the better, and seem to be obsessed with super-mental power like Captain Marvel or Superman.

Mr. Lee admits that he himself contributes partly to the theatrical aspects of this ancient Chinese art that dates back several thousand years. But he does it for the sake of dramatic effect. For instance, in a close-quarter encounter with a villain or a group of villains, the script may call for Mr. Kato to uncork some devastating kicks to the head.

Any hood with even a smidgeon of knowledge of self-defense would immediately knock you off balance if you tried to use your legs in that fashion when you're trading blows up close, Mr. Lee explains. The real gung-fu calls for a much wiser line of attack.

As far as the TV show is concerned, it's flashy and full of showmanship. But as Bruce explains it in his clipped British accent:

"Some of the techniques used are not what I practice in gung-fu. For instance, I never believe in jumping and kicking. My kicks in actual gung-fu are not high but low, to the shin and the groin."

Even if the director insists on it, Bruce Lee will not permit gung-fu to be put in a bad light on TV, just for the sake of heightening the action. He refuses to go along with any suggestions for long, drawn-out western styles of brawling, despite calls for this type of fighting in the script.

"The Green Hornet" went to a limit of thirty weeks and could have gone longer but for the sad fact that it lacked realism and played it straight instead of satirical. Folks just refused to believe the masked characters were real.

In the story Bruce Lee co-starred with Britt Reid who is really Van Williams. As Kato, Bruce played the faithful friend and companion to Reid as the crusading, crime-busting newspaperman from the Daily Sentinel. The latter adopted the guise of "The Green Hornet" in his fight against crime and corruption, with Kato serving as bodyguard.

Behind their black masks they set out with grim determination as a two-man vigilante committee to uphold law and decency in the community and they did a thoroughly efficient



20th Century-Fox TV Photo

job of exterminating the trouble-makers. And they always did it in short order.

We spent four hours recently with Bruce Lee at lunch, and then at the Black Belt magazine office. We came away with a deep impression that this energetic young man was more than just a Hollywood actor, but actually a man who takes his gung-fu seriously.

A vibrant personality with piercing black eyes and a rather handsome face full of animation, unlike the inscrutable poker-face westerners usually associate with the Oriental, the 26-year-old Mr. Lee looks like the actor that he is. Yet he actually lives the role of the clean-living villain-exterminator that he plays on TV.

Lee neither smokes nor drinks and he strives to keep physically fit at all times. Even before breakfast he starts the day with a mile and a half run with his great Dane dog Bobo, two finger pushups and additional workouts in the afternoon. On week-ends he heads for Chinatown for more sparring.

The five-foot, eight-inch, 145-pound advocate of gung-fu is as springy as a cat and his hands are quicker than the eye.

Twice during the four-hour session, he spurned invitations to a cup of coffee. He chose milk the first time, and a bottled soft drink the second. Nattily attired in a grey suit and looking quite dapper, except for the hair that seemed to crowd the back of his neck, he agreed that he needed a haircut, scolded

himself for it and said a visit to the barber was overdue.

Although in "The Green Hornet" he disposes of the bad guys in short order, there have been suspenseful moments during the 30-week run of the TV series when Kato had to employ every trick in the bag to rescue the Green Hornet from the mob's clutches.

Even though Kato's techniques are not always genuine because even he has to unbend a little to meet the dictates of the script, this is no reason to suspect that he doesn't really know gung-fu. Actually he has been a student of this mixture of western fencing and boxing since he was thirteen years old — and that's half of his lifetime.

This talented young Chinese was born in San Francisco in 1940 oddly enough, although his family came from Hong Kong. His father, Lee Hoi Chuen, was a Chinese opera star and had come to San Francisco for an engagement. It was while the family was in San Francisco that Bruce arrived in the world.

The father passed away three years ago in Hong Kong. His interest in the martial arts as an aid to the Chinese theater helped inspire Bruce later in gung-fu.

Actually, Bruce Lee's real name is Lee Jung Fan.

"Bruce is a name I later acquired because it was westernized and easy to remember," he explains.

The family returned to Hong Kong when he was three

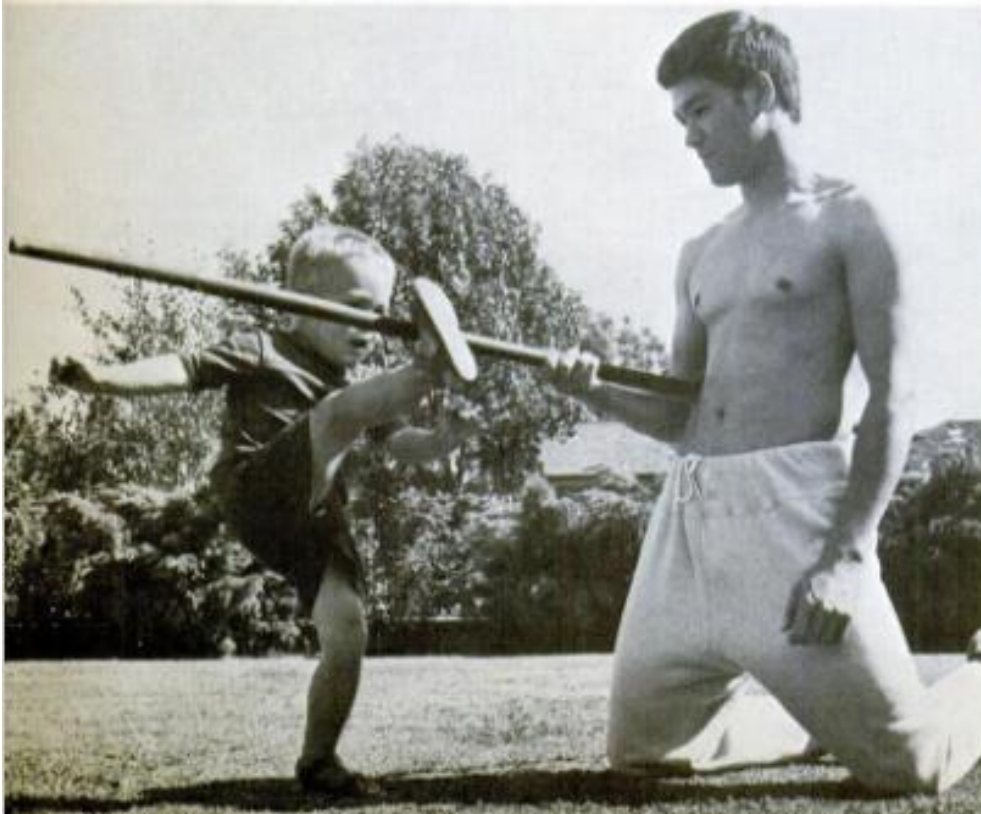
Home Is Where the



Bruce Lee, wife Linda and their 2-year-old son Brandon, with pet dog Bobo make a happy family. The Kato of "The Green Hornet" is teaching gung-fu to his wife and son, who are apt students.



Every morning before breakfast Bruce Lee and his faithful Big Dane, Bobo, run a mile and a half to unlimber those muscles and build up stamina.



Bruce Lee's son Brandon is only two, but already a high kicker, as one can see from this practice session between daddy and son.

Action Is

Bruce Lee doing two-finger pushups, a daily ritual to tone his body. Bruce's eye-gouges can be most upsetting.



For a change of pace, Bruce Lee tries a pushup with each thumb. If you think it's easy, try that on your piano.



The hoodlum exterminator of "Green Hornet" fame goes through a shoulder building exercise outside his home.



Isometric exercises for developing those forearms. Although Bruce weighs only 145, he packs heavyweight power.



Bruce Lee's sidekicks are devastating. With these exercises on this springy device, he builds up his legpower.



months old but he always had a hankering to return to the United States and that dream was later realized.

As a kid in Hong Kong, Bruce recalls nostalgically, "I was a punk and went looking for fights. We used chains and pens with knives hidden inside. Then, one day, I wondered what would happen if I didn't have my gang behind me if I got into a fight. I decided to learn how to protect myself and I began to study gung-fu."

His school of gung-fu emphasized a lot of hand techniques, almost like boxing, and it probably helped him later when he captured the Inter-School Boxing Championship of Hong Kong. He also managed to snatch still another prize during those teen-days — the cha-cha championship.

Bruce has two brothers and two sisters. His mother still lives in Hong Kong and he occasionally talks to her over the telephone just to say hello. He is the fourth youngest child in the family. An older brother, Peter Lee, won the fencing championship of the British Crown Colony.

In Hong Kong Bruce always kept in mind the fact that he was born in the United States and was therefore destined for American citizenship when he reached the voting age.

At eighteen, he fulfilled that long-time ambition and set out for the United States. He went to San Francisco, spent six months there and met some karate men who were impressed by his athletic ability.

"They wanted me to start a dojo in San Francisco but I wasn't interested," Bruce recalls. "I wanted to further my education, so I went to Seattle to study philosophy at the University of Washington."

To make ends meet, he took odd jobs, but he recalls, "I was too lazy for that and began teaching gung-fu on the side."

However, he never lost interest in philosophy and is deeply interested to this day in such subjects as Taoism, Zen, Christianity and other religions.

During his three-year sojourn at the university, he met blue-eyed, blond-haired Linda Emery on the campus. A love affair blossomed and the college courtship turned to marriage.

Today he and Linda live in Southern California with their two-year-old son, Brandon.

"My son is probably the only blond-haired, grey-eyed Chinaman in these parts," says Lee with a chuckle.

He is teaching his wife the techniques of gung-fu so that she will be able to defend herself if anyone should ever dare to attack her, and he also intends to give the child a martial arts education as he grows up, so that he will be able to defend himself.

However, Bruce Lee stresses that when it comes to women, he has no illusions about their ability to defend themselves against a brute, particularly if it's a big one.

"I advise any female learning gung-fu that if they are ever attacked to hit 'em in the groin, poke 'em in the eyeballs, kick 'em on the shins or the knee . . . and run like hell," he says.

Bruce Lee is probably "the highest paid martial arts instructor in the business." Teaching is what he does when he's not performing before the cameras. He charges \$50 an hour when he goes to the home of a student and \$27.50 an hour when the student comes to his club. This includes actors, businessmen and high-ranking karate instructors.

"If I find a black belt who likes to spar, I charge nothing because I really enjoy the company," he says.

Bruce Lee operates three clubs or "kwoons" as he prefers

to call them. They are located in Seattle, Oakland and Los Angeles. In Seattle, the "kwoon" is directed by Taky Kimura; in Oakland it is simply called "The James Lee" and in Los Angeles, the club is located in Chinatown and directed by Danny Inosanto. They are all non-commercial and there are no signs anywhere on the outside to identify the establishments.

Bruce Lee is not given to exploiting his name at these kwoons. But there was a time when he thought seriously of establishing a chain of schools under his name across the country, but he didn't think it was the right thing to do because "I don't think money is everything."

Interest in gung-fu has mounted and increased steadily since "The Green Hornet" went on the air. Because the masked characters played it straight instead of gagging it up in satire, the series didn't turn out to be another eternal "Bonanza." Nevertheless, it helped stir interest in the ancient Chinese art.

Bruce Lee appearances are in demand in many parts of the country. He puts on demonstrations at fairs, public parks and at club meetings and is paid anywhere from \$2,000 to \$3,000 for a single appearance.

While "The Green Hornet" didn't capture any Emmys, there has been a widespread demand for re-runs, and is already being syndicated not only in this country but on TV stations in Japan, Thailand, Argentina, Puerto Rico and Canada. It may also soon be shown in England as well.

"I never know where it's showing until the fan letters start coming in," he relates.

Recently, Bruce made a guest appearance in "Ironside," starring Raymond Burr of Perry Mason fame, and more movie contracts appear on the horizon as producers become aware of this talented young Chinese athlete-actor.

His popularity is shown by the reception he receives wherever he goes. The fans are happy just to touch him, even if they don't get his autograph. They want to meet "the Kato" and they want to know how he is able to knock off those bad guys so quickly.

"This sometimes becomes a terrifying experience," says Bruce Lee. "After my personal appearance in Madison Square Garden this summer at the karate tournament, I started to make an exit through a side door, escorted by three karate men. I was practically mobbed outside and I had to leave through another side door." Earlier in a personal appearance in Fresno, he was scratched, kicked and gouged by riotous fans who just wanted a word with him. The kids were out there in full force.

With all his knowledge of gung-fu, he said afterward, "I couldn't protect myself."

About sixty percent of the fans are boys, and it's surprising the number of girls who adore this TV idol.

"People ask me as an actor, 'how good are you really in gung-fu?' I always kid them about that. If I tell them I'm good, probably they'll say I'm boasting, but if I tell them I'm no good, you know I'm lying." I also tell them, "believe half of what you see and nothing that you hear — and remember, seven-hundred-million Chinese can't be Wong."

(Next month, *Black Belt Magazine* will delve into Bruce Lee's training and his style of gung-fu, Jeet Kuni Do, the Way of the Stopping Fist.)

