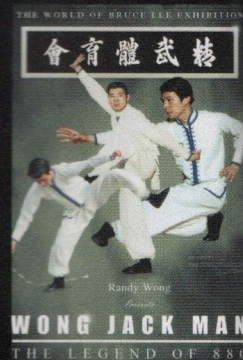




Oakland 1964

The Challenge that Became Legend, The Legend that Became Bruce Lee



By Emilio Alpanseque

Last November, the San Francisco's Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture hosted the 2nd "World of Bruce Lee" Exhibition, organized by the acclaimed Bruce Lee fan and collector Randy Wong. The exhibit celebrated the 76th birthday of martial arts legend Bruce Lee and the 50-year milestone of Lee's groundbreaking role in *The Green Hornet* TV show. In addition, the lineup also included a special tribute section to the highly regarded Master Wong Jack Man, who was one of the first masters to openly start offering Chinese martial arts lessons in the US in the '60s (first in San Francisco's Chinatown and for several decades later in the same Fort Mason Center's building where this exhibition was held), and who famously battled Bruce Lee in a no-holds-barred match in 1964, a fight that is said to have profoundly altered the course of Bruce Lee's life and martial arts path forever.

This once-in-a-lifetime experience was honored with many special guests such as legendary Hollywood still photographer Dave Friedman (assistant cameraman on *The Green Hornet* and unit photographer on the classic *Enter the Dragon*), who brought with him an outstanding collection of vibrant images of Lee that only he was able to capture during those days. Other guests included Master Malia Bernal, one of Wong Jack Man's most famous students; Master Rick Wing, also a longtime student of Wong, writer of several books on the Northern Shaolin style plus the e-book, *Showdown in Oakland: The Story Behind the Wong Jack Man - Bruce Lee Fight*; Charles Russo, author of *Striking Distance: Bruce Lee and the Dawn of Martial Arts in America*; Jeremy

Arambulo, creator of *A Challenge*, a comic book tale based on Wong Jack Man and his fight with Bruce Lee; along with other surprise guests.

First Generation Students Speak Up

Many first generation students of Wong Jack Man's Jing Mo Athletic Association, also known as the "880" since it was located at 880 Pacific Avenue in San Francisco's Chinatown, were in attendance. In fact, the organizer of the exhibit is one of them himself: "I am presenting a tribute to both Wong Jack Man and Bruce Lee at my 'World of Bruce Lee' exhibit this year", explains Randy Wong. "Wong Jack Man was my sifu from 1969 to 1971 before Bruce Lee rose to fame in Hong Kong. Having witnessed Master Wong in his prime, I can attest to his extraordinary martial art skill. Whatever your interpretation and opinion of the few facts that surround their fight could be, I speak from firsthand knowledge and experience to say that Wong Jack Man has been unfairly and unjustifiably vilified as depicted in print and film; foremost in regards to the reason for this legendary clash and its outcome."

Another of Master Wong's first generation students, Sifu Robert Louie, also comments: "Looking back, it is strange that two martial arts masters had crossed their path over 50 years ago and as history has it, both became heroes. One of them is Bruce Lee, an icon in the martial community and famous in the entertainment world which in many ways influenced many people to make them better in their lives. And although people took advantage of his name for notoriety or monetarily after his death, he is a hero because of his own accomplishments. The other is Sifu Wong Jack Man, who will also be remembered as he enriched his student's lives in many different ways. He inspired and touched all of us deeply, teaching us to believe in ourselves, to be honest, patient and, most importantly, to observe the martial arts morality and ethics."

Unveiling the Truth

Randy Wong has a lot to say around this famous confrontation: "First, there was no personal animosity between them leading up to their fight and it was never due to Bruce Lee teaching non-Chinese as it has been propagandized all these past decades. Like Lee, Wong also had non-Chinese students at that time, being Master Malia Bernal one of them." In this regard, Sifu



The original first generation students of Wong Jack Man; left to right – Rick Wing, Michael Chong, Arthur Chin, Chock Lee, Randy Wong, Malia Bernal, Herb Leung, Robert Louie and Bendrew Jong (also in the picture is younger generation practitioner Jason Louie)



Louie adds, "Yes, people wrote numerous accounts that made Sifu Wong Jack Man to be a villain, a gangster, a coward, a dirty fighter, a person who hated non-Chinese; that is because everyone wants a bad guy, someone who people can freely write lies because they fear no retaliation in what they write. In reality, Sifu was the opposite of what people wrote. To say he had a strong backing of other Kung Fu masters of San Francisco's Chinatown or to be part of the Chinese mafia is laughable to say the least. But by living through his entire character assassination, Sifu Wong taught us that as long as the truth is known within, it does not matter what others write or say."

Back on topic, Randy Wong comments: "Wong Jack Man and Bruce Lee were virtual opposites. I really view their fight as the embodiment of the Daoist metaphysical symbolism of yin and yang, two halves of a whole, a pair of interdependent opposing forces. Ironically, their coming together in a battle was perhaps necessary for their

individual completion – most certainly for Bruce Lee, as this single fight was a major turning point of his life and the catalyst that led to his creation of Jeet Kune Do. This challenge fight was real and all-out. By the few remaining credible accounts of those present, the two squared off and then clashed in a vicious flurry of blows. Hands and fists were flying; blows were deflected, blows landed, all in a rapid blur. At the fight's end, both men walked away from their duel without serious injury, a testament to the skill level of each. Neither men felt he had lost. The actual outcome will be forever open to controversy and endless debate. I ask all fans to open their minds and put aside this decades-old story." ☺

Emilio Alpanseque currently teaches in El Cerrito, CA and can be contacted through his website EastBayWushu.com. He invites all readers to support Randy Wong's next "World of Bruce Lee" exhibition coming in July 22, 2017. Find more information at: [facebook.com/World-of-Bruce-Lee-Exhibit-2015-598352063637501/](https://www.facebook.com/World-of-Bruce-Lee-Exhibit-2015-598352063637501/)



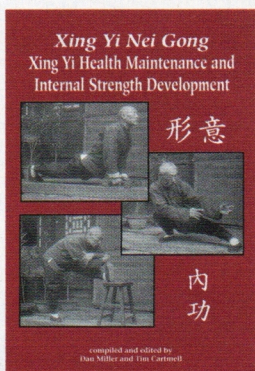
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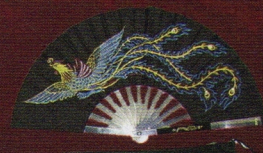
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