

# LINDA LEE CADWELL INTERVIEW



— By Chris Kent —

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**Chris Kent and Linda Lee Cadwell**  
(Photo by Sarah Leilani Kent)

### **Introduction**

I have had the privilege of knowing Linda Lee Cadwell for over forty years, and I can say without hesitation that she is one of the most courageous and admirable people I have ever had the honor of knowing. In spite of the tragedies she has endured in her life she exudes a positive attitude towards life and a zest for living. Following Bruce Lee's untimely passing, Linda returned with her children, Brandon and Shannon, to live in her hometown of Seattle, Washington. After a year there they returned to Los Angeles, California, where she continued her education at UCLA and Cal State University Long Beach, graduating with a BA degree in Political Science, and being admitted to Phi Beta Kappa. Linda then went on to get her teaching degree, and taught kindergarten class for a number of years in Torrance. Through relatives in Boise, Idaho, she met and eventually married Bruce Cadwell, who at the time was a stockbroker for Morgan Stanley and also a highly-rated amateur golfer. Linda and Bruce are now both retired yet very active and enjoying their nine grandchildren.

Linda is also a very private person who prefers not doing interviews. However, she graciously agreed to this one, which took place on the patio in the peaceful back garden of her home. My daughter, Sarah, who has known Linda since she was two-years old and refers to her as "Auntie Linda," accompanied me to videotape the interview and shoot photographs.

Self-effacing in manner and soft-spoken, there were, however, several points during the interview when Linda's enthusiasm bubbled over and she became quite animated in making a particular point, such as when describing an altercation Bruce had with another gung fu person. Linda gave each question she was asked the time and thought it deserved then answered by expressing herself honestly and openly.

In the interview we discuss the role that Linda played in Bruce's development – Personally, I have said numerous times that I believe she was instrumental in Bruce achieving his goals, etc. – She has always downplayed it and said that "it was Bruce, he was the one would do it all." -- But personally I think it would have been much more difficult for Bruce if he didn't have Linda in his life -- They were like Yin/Yang, two halves of an indivisible whole --

Here is the interview:

***“I think the most important thing in Bruce’s life was his family.”***

**C:** I know for a fact that you are a very private person and prefer to remain out of the limelight. However, as the woman who was the wife, best friend, confidant, and partner of Bruce Lee, you hold an esteemed position within the hearts and minds of countless people around the world. I am sure that, like me, they thank you for agreeing to do this interview.

**C:** In the nearly 42 years since Bruce’s passing, a lot of things have happened. For many people it would have been easier to forget about everything, but you’ve always been there for both Bruce and the fans. I want to thank you for that and ask you -- where do you find all that strength and courage to walk on?

**L:** I think you just answered the question, Chris. And that is from Bruce’s philosophy – you walk on. And that’s what he would have wanted me to do. And, as the mother of his children I have always felt that it was important for my children to know

their father. They were very young when he died – Brandon was eight and Shannon was four, and so I thought it was always necessary for them to remember their father, remember the significance of his life and know how it has affected their growth as well. So I think it just goes without saying that is what the mother of children does.

**C:** There is an old saying which states, “Behind every great man, there’s a great woman. A lot of people talk about the things Bruce did for other people, how he helped them grow – myself included. Can you take a moment and tell us how, in your opinion you helped Bruce to grow as a person, or enriched him as a human being?

**L:** Well, I tell you what, I think the most important thing in Bruce’s life was his family. Before all the stardom and publicity and attention – I think he would have given all of that up for his



**A proud Bruce Lee with wife Linda and their children, Brandon and Shannon.**

Photo by Linda Palmer.

family. That was the most important thing to him. And so as to my role of being his wife and mother of his children, I think that I grounded him in that way. And together we were a unit. He and I were very complementary partners. He was vibrant, full of energy, right out there, you know – and that’s not my personality. I’m more “behind the scenes” and prefer to stay that way. And I think that that was something of value to him. And I think the fact I was someone who just, as he said once, I just let him be, be who he was, and not try to change him or interfere with his personality. And I think also that I was someone in his life that he completely and thoroughly trusted. And when he was in a business like he was, that is something of a rarity, or something that you have to search for, is those friends and family who you can always depend on. And of course it was two-way.

**C:** My next question is built right around that. We know that you and Bruce complemented each other well. You were like Yin and Yang, if you will. In what aspects of life do you think you were the yang and he was the yin? Were there specific times when those roles were sort of reversed and you had to take the stronger or Yang role? What are the subjects in which your help was the most requested by Bruce?

**L:** You know, I think probably in every marriage, a really good marriage, there are times when the partners switch between Yin and Yang. And of course he was the more Yang figure in our relationship and in his own expression of himself. However, I think that fact that he went through many struggles in his life, many obstacles to overcome, and sometimes felt down – and I think that’s when I could at least be a listening post to him and perhaps achieve more of a Yang role there – but not as explosive, or wanting to change him in any way, but to be there when there were times when he was trying to overcome something.

**C:** That’s what I meant. For instance, when he suffered his back injury and was required to stay in bed for a period of time. And that relationships are rarely fifty-fifty (percent), sometimes they are seventy-thirty, and those do switch and they do move around...

**L:** Yes, that’s absolutely right. But also, I would have to say, that after Bruce passed away was when I probably had to assume more of a Yang role – because then I had to be the mother and father to our children.

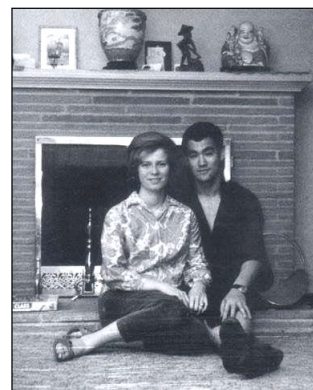
**C:** You have done an admirable job there...

**L:** (Smiling) You can tell that by my children.

**C:** When a couple spends years together, they tend to become a little like the other person in some aspects, or they pick up, manners, gestures, etc. With the time you spent with Bruce,

were there any things you kind of picked up from each other (and specially Bruce from you)?

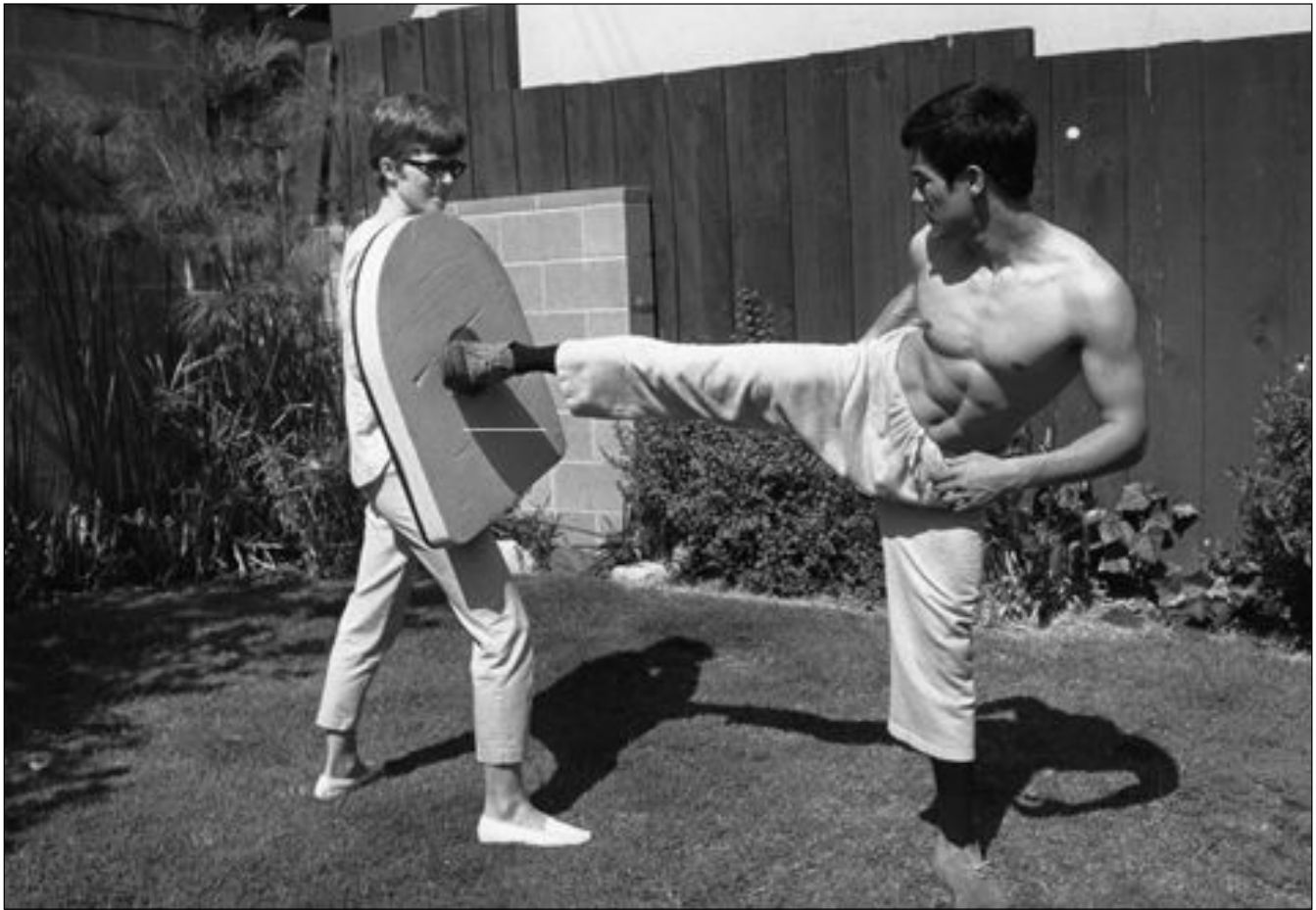
**L:** (Thinking) Well, I would say that everyone has to find their own way of life – the way that they express themselves. I saw the way that Bruce would express himself, how he would stand up for what he believed in, and I think he gave that gift to me as well -- especially after he was gone. But as far as little mannerisms go... (Smiles and shakes her head, no)



**C:** If you could have changed anything about Bruce's personality, his way of being, his quirks... would there be something?

**L:** I don’t think you should go into a marriage with the idea of changing the other person. However, life changes as you go along, and as Bruce always used to say, “To change with change is the changeless state.” So it’s like that water flowing – you never step in the same water twice in a river. It’s always flowing. So you always have to go with the change. So I think that in the relatively short time that we were married, nine years, I think we were able to achieve that. Because there were so many changes –we moved often.

You know, I married a gung fu instructor, and he turned out to be a worldwide movie star ... (Smiling) There were a lot of changes along the way. And there were times when we were very, very poor. And then, better times. And so to be able to adapt to that and keep the same relationship – And so no, I don’t think I would have tried to change anything in him. And I think you have to remember in answering all the question is that Bruce passed away when he was only thirty-two years old. So he was very young, really. I say that from the vantage point of having become much older... (Smiles) – But, I think that his personality was so fiery, so vibrant, so driven to achieve, that I think, hopefully, with age, and maybe with the influence of myself and our family, that maybe he might have mellowed a little bit, and found a little bit more patience, and found that “sometimes slow and easy does it” – So I would hope that, just for the sake of his own personal happiness, because sometimes he would get so upset about certain things, like script changes or whatever – Or incompetence, that’s what used to drive him crazy. So I think as he aged he would have adapted those personality traits more.



**Linda and Bruce, training in the back yard.**

**C:** I think it is very easy for people to tend to forget the age he was when he did leave us, and they gear everything around today and what is going on. They just forget that he was thirty-two years old...

**L:** Yes...

**C:** Do you think that Bruce would have become the great Bruce Lee that we know nowadays without you?

**L:** Yes. He was really driven to achieve, and he had so many great plans and projects that he was always thinking about. So, yes, I think he would have continued to achieve. I think, however, without the grounding of his family, that he might not have achieved the same degree of happiness. So it's hard to say, but I think that was very important to him.

**C:** I think that is another thing that has been neglected by people for years. It's plainly obvious from your comments how important that family was to Bruce's overall being. Everybody sees this personality, but few people have been "behind the

scenes" – as I said, you have always been a very private person...

**C:** The 1960's were years of massive changes and revolution in the USA (racism, Vietnam, social revolution...). How did you and Bruce live that time and what were yours and Bruce's thoughts about what was happening?

**L:** Well, I have to tell you again, that Bruce was just in his twenties, and was so focused on his career path. We didn't really pay a lot of attention to current events. Of course we were aware of them. And the Vietnam War was so close to China and Hong Kong. So we were aware of what was going on – that China was closed – that we could not visit China during those years was influential. We didn't really read the newspapers or watch the news much just because we were involved in other things, and our children were very young. However, there were incidents that happened during that time period, like Martin Luther King was killed, and Robert Kennedy, and of course John F. Kennedy as well, and others.

***“You know, of course I miss Bruce and always will,  
but he lives within my heart, and my mind...”***

And it all reflected on some of the themes and cultural changes which were going on -- and the racism factor. And then there was the fact that Bruce experienced the negative side of racism himself, when he was trying to make his way into the Hollywood film scene, and you know, like after he did the Green Hornet, which was a terrific breakthrough for him, he had a great deal of trouble getting other roles in Hollywood. And everybody knows that he was the inspiration for the TV show that finally became “Kung Fu” – and should have starred a Chinese person. But the studios wouldn’t bank on an Asian star at that time. And lo and behold, when we look back in hindsight, he was instrumental in some of the ways that people looked at different races and cultures.

**C:** I think a large part of the new generation didn’t experience any of that, which is part of what this interview is all about. They don’t read about it or have never read about it, and so they just automatically think, “Oh, he’s this person...” – and it’s, “No, no, he went through a lot of different things and was instrumental in creating a lot of changes.”

**L:** But that’s ancient history... (laughs).

**C:** But I think it’s something that, to use Bruce’s vernacular, to see the “totality” of an individual as a human being, I think that’s necessary.

**C:** Among the thousands of public pictures of Bruce Lee, there aren’t any pictures of your wedding day. Is there any special reason? Were there any photographs taken that day?

**L:** (Smiles and laughs) – There were no photos taken on our wedding day – and I don’t say this with any pride at all – in fact, I’m kind of embarrassed, that our wedding happened kind of suddenly – because we had planned to elope, to run away and get married. My family would not have approved of me marrying outside my race. And while I have to say -- my mother had genuine concerns for my well-being; that I might have suffered discrimination or had a hard life marrying outside my race. That was the thinking then, especially for my mother’s generation.

So we kind of surprised them with, “Guess what, we’re getting married.” (Laughs) – It’s a long story there, but... So my mother and my grandmother attended the wedding, and Bruce’s wonderful friend Taky Kimura was his best man. And we did get married in a congregational church, but there was nobody taking pictures, because it was just that many people there. And then we got on a plane and flew to Oakland. Yes, I never got to

wear that white wedding dress – but those are little extras and superficial things. I’m not proud that we did it that way, but knowing how my family felt about it, that was the way it was.

**C:** What is it that you miss the most about Bruce? What did you appreciate most about his everyday life?

**L:** You know, of course I miss Bruce and always will, but he lives within my heart, and my mind, because I still know the things that were important to him and the philosophy of his life, and that has helped me as well. I miss him mostly as the father of my children, and how things might have been different had he been there and seen them grow up. But we try to do our best – and always keep him in mind about how he would have been as a father to his children. I miss his vibrant personality. He was always so much fun. I always say no one has ever made me laugh as much as Bruce did – all the little antics and jokes. He was a great joke-teller.

**C:** Again, I think those things are important because people have preconceived views and misperceptions of individuals through the time. You know, “He was always serious,” etc. – Other people such as Taky have mentioned the fact that Bruce was a joker too. A lot of people didn’t see that side or were not privy to that side of him.



**Taky Kimura with Linda in Seattle.**



**“ . . . he liked the idea of just sitting around in a place like this – the beautiful outdoors.”**

**C:** Andre Morgan referred to Bruce as “a man who walked in two worlds” with regard to Asian cinema and Western cinema. But he was also a man who lived in two different cultures; Chinese and American. What did Bruce like and dislike the most about the American way of life?

**L:** He did like the American way of life. He thought America was a place of new ideas. From the very beginning – the creation of America -- and all the ideas that spring from being an American. As we can see over all the years – very innovative, inventive people came from America. And so it was a new place, a fresh place, a place where he could display his ideas and find an avenue for their expression.

He liked the living here -- the fact that there’s more space. You know, Hong Kong is a very crowded place – many, many people. So he liked the idea (indicates garden in which we are sitting) of just sitting around in a place like this – the beautiful outdoors. He loved that idea -- more privacy because of that. And for the most part he liked American people, because there’s a lot of diversity. And most people he found outgoing and nice, and he liked that.

Just to make clear, Bruce was born in America, in San Francisco, but at three months of age he went back to Hong Kong, and grew there until he was eighteen years old. So he was totally immersed in his Chinese culture.

**C:** What did Bruce like and dislike the most about the Chinese way of life?

**L:** He loved the Chinese way of life as well. On the American side you have - New! - Fresh! - Ideas! In the Chinese you have age-old wisdom, going back thousands of years, right? So he loved that and studied a great deal of Chinese philosophy. He liked the Confucian principles for a model of a way to live... And he liked Chinese food!

**C:** Rice?

**L:** Oh yes! Must have rice! That’s the first thing I learned about Bruce. He loved the way Chinese people eat. He loved that a Chinese meal has a lot of variety in it. In a Chinese meal there are several different plates, several different dishes. As opposed to, say, an American diet where you have a piece of meat on the plate, then a potato and a vegetable or something. He thought that was a little boring.

He also liked the Chinese language. Of course he grew up speaking Cantonese, but he always had these expressions that really could not be duplicated in English. It really is a beautiful way of expression; the Chinese language. He thought in his mind in Chinese, but he was very educated in English as well.



**Bruce Lee and members of his family.**

**C:** Is there anything he did not care for in either place regarding living?

**L:** As I've alluded to, the living conditions in Hong Kong are more difficult – and it became more difficult when he became more well-known – because he was idolized in Hong Kong. In the years before he passed away – when he was making the four-and-one-half films that he made, it became difficult for him to just live a normal life. He couldn't walk down the street without lots of people following. He couldn't eat in a restaurant without being interrupted. And he had to worry about the safety of his children because it is just a big city. They were not free to just go out and play in the yard or cross the street or anything like that, because it's just too crowded, too many people. So in that way he liked it over here in America more.

**C:** It seems to me it's that confluence of Yin and Yang again – not opposites but rather complementary...

**L:** I would say that whereas he lived in America and lived in Hong Kong, I would not consider him a man of two worlds, especially now, so many years later – I would just consider Bruce a man of the world. He belongs to the whole world.

**C:** In 1965, you and Brandon accompanied Bruce on a trip to Hong Kong to meet his family. What was your first trip like, as Caucasian and an American going to Hong Kong?

**L:** It was very exciting – it was a great opportunity. Brandon was very little, a babe in arms – and a wonderful opportunity to meet his family. I did not have the opportunity to meet Bruce's father, who had been such a great influence in his life, due to the fact that he passed away one week after Brandon was born. But his father knew that Bruce had a son, the first grandson in the family, and was very happy about that.

So we go back to Hong Kong and the living conditions are completely different than what it would have been in America. We lived with his family – his mother, sister, brother, auntie -- and several other people lived in this flat (apartment), not a house but a flat on one of the busiest roads in Hong Kong –

Nathan Road – and so that was just a different experience. It was so hot and humid...it was difficult with a baby. And we didn't have air conditioning. It was just different. However, the lucky part is, I was twenty years old. I was like, "Wow, this is fun. This is great. I love it!" You know, new experiences.

**C:** Did you develop an affinity toward any one particular member, and if so, why?

**L:** I would say, probably with Bruce's mother, because eventually she did come and live in the United States. And so we had a lot of time to spend together. So I think of all of the family members I was probably closer to her.

**C:** When Bruce became successful in Hong Kong and you relocated there to live, what was living there like for you?



**Bruce and Linda's house in Hong Kong.**

**L:** When we went to live there it was a different mind-frame than our first visit, because for one thing, we would be living in our own space. At first we lived in a flat as well, and then Bruce did so well then we were able to live in a house, which is a very rare experience in Hong Kong.

We had our own house, and it was surrounded by walls, as many houses are in Hong Kong. So our children had more freedom then. And it was a different mindset for me because I knew we were going there to live. We had sold our house eventually in the United States – really for financial reasons – we couldn't maintain two houses. So I knew we were staying for a certain amount of time. Also, I knew we did not expect to

***“But my favorite movie of his is “Way of the Dragon.”  
And the reason I like that movie so much is because his character is  
so much like the real Bruce at home.”***

stay there forever. So it was just kind of a time period in our life. I enjoyed living there, and it was exciting times because Bruce was making movies and success surrounded him. It was a wonderful time in our life and I wouldn't trade it for anything. However, I'm glad we didn't stay there forever as well.

**C:** Most people are not aware that you speak Cantonese as well. I remember you telling me about being at an event with a group of Chinese women and they were speaking in Cantonese and they didn't realize that you understood what they were saying...

**L:** (Suddenly launches into a phrase in Cantonese then translates into English) -- “I can speak some Cantonese, but I've forgotten a lot.” And yes, I could tell when people were talking about me. And it wasn't always good either. It kind of made me feel bad sometimes. I'd walk into a store and they'd say [in Cantonese] “Oh, Lee Siu Loong's wife is here. She's kind of fat...” – (Laughs) – or whatever.

Actually the incident you mentioned happened in the United States many, many years later – say about twenty years ago. I was sitting at a table at an event. It was a big table of about ten people. And some Chinese people just happened to be sitting there at the table.

And they were conversing with each other in Chinese – And, they did not know who I was, okay? So I just said something to them in Chinese and yes, they were quite taken aback. And they have watched what they said ever since. (Smiles)

**C:** When asked, Bruce always talked to the press about your great virtues and it's evident he was very proud of you. Is there any message or reference or gesture or blink or something to you in his filmography? Something that you can see in a film or episode of a TV series and say: “That was for me!”, or “He took that expression from me” or similar?

**L:** You know, I don't think there's anything specific like that. But my favorite movie of his is “Way of the Dragon.” And the reason I like that movie so much is because his character is so much like the real Bruce at home. I mean, you can see him doing those very funny things, and very comedic, and it just seems like the natural Bruce. So, I really like that. However, I don't think he's sending me any messages across the film. (Laughs)



**Scenes from “Way of the Dragon.”**

[In the film] I think Bruce is drawing on his own experience, when he first came to the United States – even though he could speak English, he did not speak idiomatic English, you know.

And so sometimes he would misunderstand or say the wrong thing, because he didn't really understand the meaning. Along that line, I have to say that he educated himself into colloquial English. I have books of his where colloquial phrases are underlined. So he wanted to blend in. He didn't want to be like a “fresh-off-the-boat” Chinaman and not understand. So I think his own experience is what led to some of the comedy parts in Way of the Dragon.

And you can kind of see some of Bruce's more vulnerable side in that movie. He was kind of like playing the peasant person who is in a different culture. And of course he was that a little bit like that when he first came to the United States. I didn't



**In a photo taken before they were married, Linda Emery practices a Jun Fan Gung Fu technique against Taky Kimura as Bruce Lee observes.”**

know him when he first came – but just that kind of innocent, vulnerable person. And so he had experienced a little bit of that, but you don’t see that so much in the other movies because he is this “strong” character all throughout.

**C:** So it was like he was drawing on his own background...

**L:** Yes.

**C:** Bob Clouse and Fred Weintraub have both commented that they feel that *Enter the Dragon* would never have been possible without you. What are your thoughts about this? Is there any particular situation in which your help or interaction was crucial to get things done?

**L:** Well you know, Bruce, in the first place, decided to go to Hong Kong to make movies, because he could not get himself on the stage, as a star, in Hollywood. And so, I always say, instead of going through the front door in Hollywood, he went to Hong Kong and came back to Hollywood through the side door. And the side door was “*Enter the Dragon*.” It was the first

American-Hong Kong co-production, and it was going to lead to his returning to Hollywood and having a much greater variety of films offered to him. It was going to be very important that this film work out, that it be a great film. And this film was full of problems from the very beginning; from the script to the American crew working with the Chinese crew – nobody could speak the same language. It was fraught with difficulties.

One of the biggest difficulties was in the script. Bruce had certain ideas that he wanted to insert into the script. He felt that the script as written had no “meat” to it. It was just an adventure action film. And he wanted it to be better than that. So he had ideas, he was writing and inserting scenes, and the producers were like, “Come on, we’ve got to get going. We don’t have time for this.” And so they were always kind of butting heads. [They would say] “The script is fine. C’mon, let’s go.” And Bruce was like, “No. My by-word is quality. And I don’t see quality in this script.” So it was getting kind of desperate because everything costs money when you’re making a movie – you’ve got a set, you’ve got actors ready to go, and

nothing is happening. Now the only part I played in this was talking to Fred and Bob and saying, “You guys better listen to him, or this is going nowhere. And he has good ideas and they are going to make the movie a lot better. But just be patient. He’s getting to the point. But you’ve got to give on both sides.” And that’s eventually what happened.

**C:** So you were kind of like a “buffer” for him in a way.

**L:** I guess so... the “go-between.”

**C:** It’s amazing because *Enter the Dragon* is still considered the benchmark of martial art movies... by that I mean non CGI movies that have a lot of special effects.

**L:** And you can recognize the scenes that Bruce put into the film. I mean, just small, little things... when he’s teaching the young boy and the finger pointing to the moon, and all that. That’s totally Bruce. He inserted those kind of scenes.

**C:** What’s your opinion regarding the Bruce Lee exploitation that occurred across the years?

**L:** Well, in the beginning, when Bruce had just passed away, the first several years or so, there were a number of “Bruce Lee’s” coming out. -- Bruce ‘LI’, Bruce ‘LE’, or whatever, making films and confusing the public for one thing, and not doing a very good job. However, I would say in hind sight, that it was very complementary to Bruce that people wanted to copy him.

The JKD World

**C:** There have been a lot of changes in the JKD world over the last forty two years. For example, there are now people teaching JKD whose students wear uniforms and belts or sashes. Didn’t Bruce move away from those sort of things?

**L:** When I first started learning gung fu from him, he had vests that we would wear and it would have a Yin/Yang symbol on the chest, and depending on your level, the color of the Yin/Yang symbol would change. So it was a ranking system.

However, as he moved along he felt that wasn’t important, and that should not be the goal of why you are studying gung fu, or any martial art. However, I don’t criticize anyone who follows a belt system or the “reward” system because they’re in a business, and have to please the customer. The belts are not the essence of martial arts anyway, that’s just the ornamentation, you know? And Bruce tended more toward simplicity rather than ornamentation.

But I think he would have been... upset is not the word, really, about how JKD has evolved over the [years]. If he were here, I believe it would not have changed in the way it has evolved



**Linda and Bruce on the set of  
“Enter the Dragon.”**

throughout the world, and how different people teach it and how they teach things that Bruce would never have done, and have ignored exactly what Bruce was doing in his lifetime. So there has been a corruption, I would say, of the name JKD, and people have used it for their own profit and glorification. However, Bruce said and he wrote, “JKD is just a name. Don’t fuss over it, it’s just a name.” The most important thing is to follow the way he developed his own JKD...

**C:** To use it as a tool or a vehicle for yourself?

**L:** Yes, he used it as a tool or a vehicle for himself.

**C:** How do you feel Mixed Martial Arts relates to Bruce’s art of Jeet Kune Do? How is it similar and how different?

**L:** I know that some people consider Bruce to be the “grandfather” of mixed martial arts. And I think they get that idea because they know that in Bruce evolving into his own way of martial arts, Jeet Kune Do, he did study many different ways of hand-to-hand combat. Whether they’re Eastern or Western or ancient or modern – Boxing, fencing, he studied all kinds of martial arts. And he drew from different areas those things that were useful to him, and rejected what was not, and adapted certain techniques to his own way of doing something. His Jeet Kune Do was all about the way ‘he’ did it.

Now mixed martial arts, from what I understand is when people that have studied one or more kinds of martial art. The combatants may be from different disciplines. But the difference between MMA and Bruce’s way of martial art is that

there is no thinking or self-diagnosis by most students. Most instruction consists of copying a certain instructor. Whether it's the way you hold your fist or the way you kick, whatever, this is THE way to do it. There's no thinking about it, there's no putting your own 'self' into the movement. So I think a lot of the mixed martial artists are... they are what they are because they came from a certain instructor. So you might have a Tae Kwon Do guy fighting a Ju Jitsu guy, or something... but they don't go "outside the box" of their own training. So, in that way, I think the complimentary part of saying that Bruce was, in part, the founder of MMA is that they are copying something that Bruce did, in that expression, but the negative side of it is not getting the point of that you should need to think outside the box that is imposed on you by a certain instructor and find your own self-expression.

**C:** A lot of people say that's happened, however mixed martial arts is still primarily a combative sport. And so often, when you talk about JKD with people they'll say, "Oh yeah, I know, that's like mixed martial arts." And if you then ask what mixed martial arts is, they'll say, "It's Muay Thai, Boxing, and Jiu Jitsu." And my take on JKD is that it is about moving away from all these names, and that "martial art" is a single, cohesive unit versus "martial arts" where we just add a lot of stuff...

**L:** And as you said, mixed martial art is a sport. Bruce never thought of Jeet Kune Do, his study of martial art, as a sport. It was self-defense. And of course there were the philosophical aspects of Bruce's art, rarely mentioned in regard to MMA. But as far as the physical aspects, it was for self-defense.

**C:** Bruce's philosophy informed everything he did, especially when it came to martial arts. How important are the philosophical principles Bruce espoused to the actual art of JKD itself?

**L:** I think in general... this is a general statement, that most people who study martial arts do not get the philosophical side of it. And I think people who have really studied Bruce's writings can see how the philosophical part works with the physical part. Just, as an example, you know Bruce always talked about "water" – water flows and it fits into any container. And as a physical concept he displayed the very same thing in his Jeet Kune Do – how you've got to flow with the opponent. So I think that the two are intertwined, the physical and the philosophical, and I think it's great for those people who have

been able to arrive at that concept in their own mind and see how they work together, because that is really studying Bruce's art.

**C:** There seems to be a great deal of revision going on with regard to JKD History. You were an eyewitness to Bruce's development and many if not most of the events which took place in his life. For example, the now famous, or infamous, fight that took place in Oakland concerning Bruce's right to teach non-Chinese. There is a whole revision going on with regard to what actually took place, how it happened, etcetera. As someone who was physically present at the time, would you like to comment on this?

**L:** Yes, definitely. I was there at that event when martial artists from San Francisco came over to Bruce's school in Oakland and there ensued a fight. I was there. The background has been 'revised' and changed and there are many different versions of why they met on that occasion.

One of those stories is that he shouldn't have been teaching non-Chinese. I think that's only part of the story, because there were non-Chinese that were studying the arts in San Francisco.

A few, a minority amount. Bruce was teaching people of all different races, and women as well. So that was just part of the story. Plus the fact that he had married outside his race. Some people didn't like that.

And there were instigators in that incident. I would say that the person who fought Bruce was kind of a 'puppet' who was put up to it. Pretty much a "victim." So there were other people saying, "There's this new kid on the block, who just

moved here, to the bay area..." That would be Bruce... "... and we, as the San Francisco martial arts group, want to see what he's got. So we're going to challenge him." And so they came over to Oakland.

Yes, I was there, in the room, when the fight took place. And regardless of what anybody reads about it, I am the only one here today to say exactly what happened...(Smiling)...on our side of it. James Lee was there and I was there and Bruce was there. And this person came with his group, and they were in the studio, and they said, "Well, now let's set up the rules, and we'll just have a little sparring match here. And Bruce was like, "You've gotta be crazy. You came here and challenged me, and you want to make rules? That's not what martial arts is for. It's not a sporting event."



**James Lee and Bruce Lee**

***“So anyway, the fight ensued. The other guy was overwhelmed by Bruce’s explosiveness at the beginning of the fight, and he began to run, actually run.”***

So anyway, the fight ensued. The other guy was overwhelmed by Bruce’s explosiveness at the beginning of the fight, and he began to run, actually run. It was a small room...(indicating with her hand)... but there was a doorway that went into a back room and a doorway that came in. As he ran around, Bruce pursued him.

He ran through one door and back through the other door, and ran around a couple of times, and then, at that point, Bruce got him down on the floor and stood over him like this...(holding her fist up in the air and pointing downward at an imaginary opponent on the ground)... and said to him in Chinese ( “Fook m fook?” ) which in Chinese means “Do you give up?” And Bruce said, “Tell the other guys you give up!” And that is what happened. I don’t know where all these fantastic stories come from – that the fight lasted twenty minutes – that Bruce did not get him down on the ground. He did! I saw it...right there. (pointing to her head and closing her eyes) I can see it and hear what he said in my mind, as clear as day.

So anyway, it’s kind of amusing really, the way people want to change the idea of what happened. And I feel that the poor guy who was put up to fight Bruce was not expecting this when he came, because his guys were like, “We’re just going to spar, and you know, play act.” And so he was as much a victim as anything else. And I understand he’s a very good martial artist.

**C:** Yes, we’re just seeking clarity on what took place.

**L:** Yes, and the big change that took place there was that Bruce was chasing this guy around the studio and at the end of three minutes he was winded. And he realized that he had not been doing enough exercise, so that he was in better shape. Before this time, Bruce had not done a lot of aerobic exercise. After all, it was shortly before this event took place that Bruce was a student at the University of Washington. He was teaching gung fu but he did not have a lot of time for doing his own exercising. It is obvious to the observer that Bruce went through a transformative change in his physique after this encounter.

He incorporated cardio training as an important part of his fitness. So that was one outcome of the fight. Plus, he was using his Wing Chun at that time, because that was what he had studied under Yip Man, and that was what he was teaching up until that time. And it really was the beginning of, “Let me re-think how this fight went, what I was doing that didn’t end it

sooner.” Because he had other fights before. In Seattle there was a karate guy that had challenged him, and that was over in eleven seconds. So he was really re-thinking, and that was the beginning of what became Jeet Kune Do.

**C:** Over the years we’ve seen the stories of some of the noted martial artists who went to Bruce for instruction change their story – from “he was my teacher” to “we just got together and exchanged ideas, etc.” – Again, as someone who was physically present when this took place, what is your take on this?

**L:** You’re right. I was there when some of the noted martial artists would come over to our house, and they did want instruction from Bruce. They wanted to see what he was doing, and they wanted him to show them. But the thing is, people who have achieved a great deal, in any field of expertise, pretty much have big egos.

And when you’re talking about a physical art, even bigger... (Laughs)... And so, it’s kind of... especially since Bruce isn’t here... So it’s easy for them to say, “Oh yeah, we were just



**Bruce Lee and Joe Lewis.**

exchanging techniques.” But that really wasn’t the case. The noted martial artists of the time, they came to seek something from Bruce.

**C:** Indeed Bruce had that genius within that made him achieve a lot of great goals in his life. How do you see the importance of your role in the preservation of his figure worldwide?

**L:** Well, ever since Bruce Passed away I’ve always thought it’s my obligation, and gladly so, to show people what Bruce was doing so that it can benefit other people’s lives as well. And that’s been bolstered by, from the very beginning, the number of letters that I get all the time and personal meetings with people for the last forty something years.

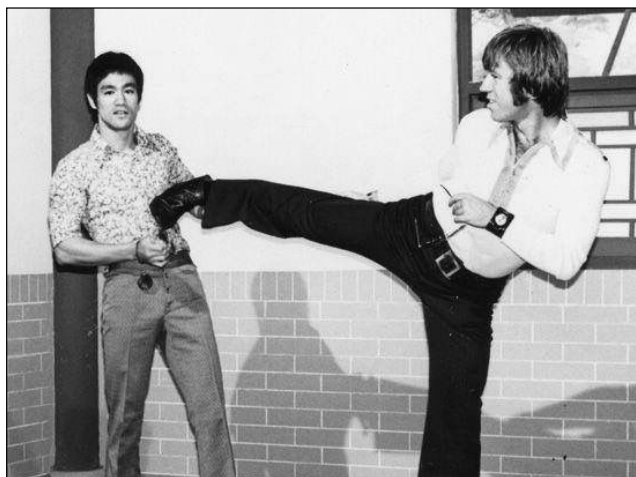
These have enhanced that idea within me that “this is something worth preserving.” Bruce’s ideas, his insights, his overcoming obstacles, this is something that helps people. And it’s not confined to any culture or society or ethnicity or religion. It cuts across all of the borders, and so, because he had been such an important figure, I feel it’s very worthwhile for me to support the preservation of his art and science.

**C:** Let’s discuss the Bruce Lee Foundation, because I know that there are great new changes coming with regard to it. I think we need to start by clarifying for the public the differences between the Bruce Lee Foundation and Bruce Lee Enterprises, as while they are interconnected, they are in fact two different entities. Yet people get the two confused. Can you explain the difference for people?



**L:** Yes, that’s correct. The Bruce Lee Enterprises is the portion that takes care of people wanting to use Bruce’s image and likeness for profit. So if somebody wants to make a t-shirt or a coffee mug, or make a film about Bruce or something, they need to come to Bruce Lee Enterprises for permission to do that, because that is something we inherited when Bruce passed away. And in the laws of this country, if you don’t take care of something that you own, you virtually give it away.

**C:** Right...



**Bruce Lee and Chuck Norris.**

**L:** So in order to have some control of the way Bruce’s name and image is used, it’s the function of Bruce Lee Enterprises, which is run by our daughter, Shannon.

The Bruce Lee Foundation is the not-for-profit arm of the business, and it seeks to follow and to give to the world the message of Bruce, and to let people know what Bruce was doing -- how it can help them. One of its concentrations, its core values, is education, because, as we know, Bruce was probably the most self-educated man I’ve ever known in my life.



He studied constantly; he was always evolving, always learning. So along that lines the Foundation sponsors scholarships for deserving students, and this year, it’s going to be announced on the newly revamped Foundation website that we are having a project called “75 for the 75th.” And that means that we’re trying to raise seventy five thousand dollars for Bruce’s 75th birthday to fund the scholarships program.

And there are many ways in which we want to involve people who come to the website, to help this come to fruition. They can do things like set up their own fund-raising sites of Facebook or have a team event, like run a marathon or something, with donations going to the Bruce Lee Foundation, specifically for that purpose. So that’s one of the projects of the new Bruce Lee Foundation.

Another area that the Foundation is working on is the Jeet Kune Do side of things. There's going to be more information on the website about the impact of Jeet Kune Do in the world. That will include the physical and the philosophical.

We will have on the website Bruce's own writings, perhaps some videos showing Jeet Kune Do practitioners, and various things along that line. We want people to know it's not anything to do with certifying instructors or anything like that. It's just, "This is what Bruce was doing in his lifetime and here, we want to share it with you."

**C:** Simply sharing information...

**L:** Yes, sharing information. The Foundation also wants to sponsor a project called "Martial Arts for Kids," and this would be for underprivileged kids who don't have access to any martial arts training.

And we hope to involve other martial art schools around the country to offer 'scholarships' to their facility to teach kids. That's one of the projects planned.

Also, we are always working towards the "dream" project which we call 'BLAM,' which means the Bruce Lee Action Museum. That would be a bricks-and-concrete edifice that would house all of Bruce's library and his writings, as well as other aspects of his life, and further, educational opportunities in the museum, and offer other ways of people looking at how

Bruce's image has impacted people all over the world. So that's the dream project and we always want to let people know what we are doing, and look for their support as well.

**C:** Do you serve any role in Bruce Lee Enterprises?

**L:** With regard to Bruce Lee Enterprises, Shannon runs the business, and she has done and is doing a magnificent job. Shannon, I must say, is so much like her father – and she was only four years old when Bruce passed away.

So over all the years she has been able to know her father better through friends talking about him, through his writings, and she has adapted so many principles to her own life.

And she is doing a terrific job, because there's endless controversy in the martial arts world, as you know, and I think she is very strong in overcoming things and following her own path. So Shannon runs the business and I'm the "emeritus" position, you know...



**Left to Right: Mike Stone, James Coburn, Chuck Norris, Bruce Lee.**



**Linda congratulates a young martial artist with Down syndrome as he receives his black belt.**



**Linda with Bruce Lee Foundation Director, Richard Grewar, at a Foundation event.**

**C:** At the 25th Anniversary graveside ceremony that the JFJKD Nucleus held in Seattle, you read the original eulogy that you read when Bruce was laid in Seattle, in which you stated that you believed that energy never disappears but is merely transformed. What do you feel happens when we depart from this plane of existence?

**L:** Well, that's such a personal question because I think everybody has their own ideas of what happens, because we don't know. And I think it's wonderful when people have such a faith that they believe they do know what's going to happen. I'm sure that brings them great peace of mind.

My personal feeling is that energy never disappears. Matter, which is our own bodies, can disappear, disintegrate – but the energy that makes up our soul, in my mind, does not disappear. I don't know where it goes but I believe, and I hope, that it is recycled, so that the soul of Bruce Lee might make its way into a newborn child, and manifest itself in some way... (Smiles)...

Maybe that's what happened to Bruce, maybe that's what made him so spectacular, such a deep-thinking person. So I like to think that, I like to think that energy does not go away or disappear. I like to think that it really, physically cannot. If energy doesn't disappear, where does it go?

**C:** Maybe it doesn't go to any one individual. Maybe it can disperse out and hit thousands of people, I don't know...

**L:** Yes, maybe it could go into an animal. We don't know.

**C:** If events hadn't happened as they did, and Bruce was allowed to continue with his life, how do you feel he would have continued to evolve in the various facets as (a) a martial artist, (b) a filmmaker, (c) a philosopher?

**L:** Well, this year he would be 75 years old. And I imagine he would (a) be in terrific shape, having kept up his martial arts and exercise programs... (Smiles)... I hope I would have been able to keep up with him... (Laughs). I think he may have continued to be a filmmaker. He loved the avenue of film as it speaks to so many people, and he always wanted to show the beauty of martial arts, the beauty of his Chinese culture, and probably would have expanded from there. So if he did not stay in the film business it would probably have been, or be more because of the politics and the business end of it. But he would never have run out of ideas.

As a philosopher, he would have continued to write and to read, to evolve. He said he was never arriving at a place. There was never going to be a place where he said, "I have learned everything there is," or a place where, "I am mature now." He was always maturing along the way, always continuing to learn. And I think he would have done more of that. I can imagine him being sort of an ambassador across cultures.

I could see him traveling around China. He's regarded as their native son now. They have so much respect for him. And traveling around the world, being invited to give talks... I can imagine him doing that kind of thing, while still maintaining a quiet, peaceful home life.

**C:** Bruce was a man who had a great passion and sense of vision for both martial arts and film. Do you feel it is important for people to have a sense of passion and vision today?



**Linda addresses crowd at the opening of the "Do You Know Bruce Lee?" event at the Wing Luke Museum in Seattle.**



**Linda proudly shares Bruce’s legacy with the world in the hopes that it can benefit others in their own lives.**

**L:** I certainly hope so. I certainly hope that young people, and all people, have this passion for life. But I think that passion has to be directed to finding a person’s purpose in life. What am I here to do? How do I get there? How do I map this out to get there? And then use their passion to ignite their ideas and get to that place where they can find their purpose in life.

Bruce’s way of doing that was self-examination, constantly, self-evolving, self-actualization – accumulating knowledge but not in the sense of just getting more into him, but using the knowledge he had accumulated to find a way to honestly express himself. That’s what he was always focused on, on being honestly expressive.

**C:** How do you feel that Bruce’s philosophy fits in with today’s complex and rapidly-changing world?

**L:** The world is rapidly changing and a lot has a great deal to do with technology, social media, and that kind of thing. And I think it would have been a great boon to Bruce’s philosophy, and is, because that’s something that the Bruce Lee Foundation does so well – disseminating Bruce’s philosophy. You know, a lot of people still think Bruce Lee was a martial artist, an actor – but are now getting to that point where they know his insights into how to live a better life are available to them as well. And this is one of the goals, the core values of the Bruce Lee Foundation. The Foundation has adopted Bruce’s philosophy of

Living Courageously, Living Authentically, and Living Your Potential. It’s a call to action for people to follow that path.

**C:** Which is so important in today’s world. The “be like water” principle seems more vital than ever...

**L:** Yes, Bruce’s analogy with water is even more influential today... (Smiles) ...But that water is moving a lot faster nowadays, so it’s important to be flexible and flow with the water, while still maintaining your own beliefs.



**Linda graciously chats with people attending the 25th memorial service for Bruce Lee at Lakeview Cemetery in Seattle.**

**L:** Well, I've had many changes in my life as well. I think that the "water" principle is how you adapt to changes. So that has been influential for me. Also, the idea of living in the present. I think it's also important to stay in the present – today, what is happening now is most important. Because if you linger in the past you don't grow. And if you look only to the future, well, you had better plan it right today. And so I think I like that idea of staying in the present.

**C:** Do you have a favorite philosophical quote or expression from Bruce? Something that has a personal meaning that makes it stand out over the rest?

**L:** There are so many wonderful quotes of Bruce's. But I love the one where he says, *"Under the heavens we are all one family."* I think, "Gosh, if the whole world could think like that, how much better it would be." That's one thing. I have a favorite quote that I will read to you... (picks up and opens "Wisdom for the Way").. It's from the little book that Shannon put together that is composed of Bruce's quotes. And I guess I'm more reflective on this now I've reached this ripe old age... (Smiles)...

But Bruce was thinking about this when he was in his 20's and 30's, which is quite amazing to me... He says... (Begins reading)...

*"I don't know what is the meaning of death. But I'm not afraid to die. And I go on non-stop, going forward. Even though I, Bruce Lee, may die someday without fulfilling all my ambitions, I will have no regrets. I did what I wanted to do, and what I've done, I've done with sincerity and to the best of my abilities. You can't expect much more from life."*

So I think it's important for us to keep that in mind. The vagaries of life... that we never know what's going to happen the next minute or the next day. And so, what we're doing along the way is more important than thinking ten, twenty years down the road, or what we might leave for our children or something. It's just 'live in the present, do the best you can.' I think that's important.

**C:** If you were asked to sum up Bruce's overarching philosophy in a single sentence, what would it be?

**L:** I think this is what Bruce would have said, that he chose the path of self-knowledge over accumulation of facts... and the path of self-expression over image-enhancement. And that he did reach his destiny with a peaceful mind. And I think that that is the overarching goal of his life. And I hope of mine and of others... that the important thing is to reach that level where you feel you have peace of mind.

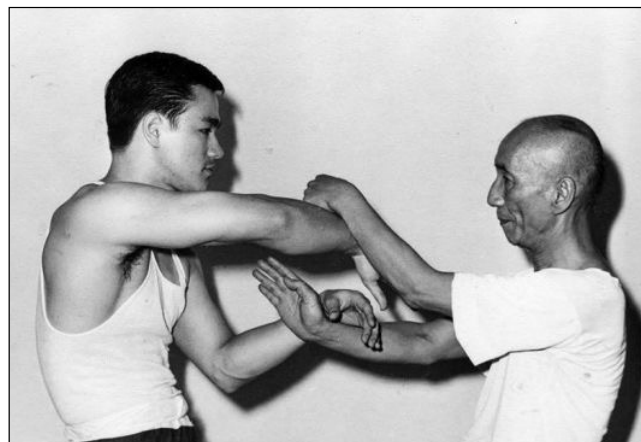
**C:** In the same way Bruce served as a guide and a role model for so many people around the world for so many years, was

there anybody that served as a guide for him? Someone he looked up to as a role model?



**In London to promote her book, "Bruce Lee – The Man Only I Knew," Linda watches a young martial artist demonstrate his kick.**

**L:** Well, I tell you what, he certainly looked up to his father, and learned a great deal from him. Certainly his instructor Yip Man led him down a path of enlightenment. And from then on, I think that he did such a wide variety of reading, from all the old masters, the philosophers from ages past and present ... he learned from very successful people.



**Bruce Lee training with his instructor, Yip Man**

He learned but he didn't pattern his life [after them]. He didn't want to duplicate someone else's life... he wanted to find his own way. But it was always important to him to see where others have been, how they achieved their success, and what their thoughts were, in order to inculcate that into his own being.



**Linda, Taky Kimura, and his son Andy Kimura standing at Bruce and Brandon Lee's resting place during 25th memorial service for Bruce.**

**C:** So rather than having any single individual, he again looked at the totality...

**L:** He did...

**C:** And then draw from all of these sources what worked for him or that he felt was useful?

**L:** That's exactly the idea of Jeet Kune Do. -- accept what is useful, discard what is not useful, and keep what is specifically your own.

**C:** What would you like to see people draw from Bruce's legacy?

**L:** I would like to think that people would be motivated to action in their own lives, not just the everyday rut that people get into... but to be motivated, to put Bruce's insights into their own life. And to be inspired to have the confidence to go that route so that they could live courageously, live authentically, and live their potential.

**C:** How do you feel Bruce would most like to be remembered?

**L:** I think he'd most like to be remembered as a self-actualized human being. That he's not different than anybody else. He doesn't want to be idolized as a star... that is just something that other people put on you, that "title," as he said in some other interviews.

But he wanted to be accepted as just a normal person who had looked deeply into his own life and did what he could. In other words, he wanted to seek his own truth, and would hope that other people would be motivated to do that as well.

**C:** As a person, how would you like to be remembered?

**L:** Well, I guess the most important role I've played in my life is being a mother. By the way, we are not only honoring Bruce this year for his 75th birthday, but Brandon would have turned 50 this year... so that would have been something, to be the mother of a 50 year-old. (Laughs)

**C:** So is there going to be something with regard to Brandon, or is it going to be combined?

**L:** It's combined this year. When we have an event it will be called "75 – 50." And that will be on the new website.

**C:** Wow, I still remember my first meeting with him. He was around nine years old at the time. And while I never met Bruce, I remember thinking, "Wow, he looks a lot like his father and he has a temper like his father too."

**L:** (Smiles) True... Yes, Brandon was so much like his dad. He was really going places in his career, and would have been terrific. He would have had a terrific future.

**C:** I feel the same way. I met him numerous times throughout his life and had lunch with him several times when he was doing the movie, "Rapid Fire." It was a totally enjoyable time. He was so down to earth and natural.

I remember him saying one time, "Let's go back to my trailer, I've got to show you my new car I just bought." And then Shannon stopped by and he said, "Oh, Shannon is working as my assistant and I've got her doing all my errands for me!"

**L:** (Laughing) –Yes, he liked to boss his little sister around but all in fun. And he was funny too. Oh my gosh, Brandon was funny. He could tell jokes and act out scenes just like his dad. I know he'd be real proud of what Shannon is doing.

**C:** And in relation to Bruce, how would you like to be remembered?



**Linda Emery, member of the cheerleading squad at Garfield High School in Seattle.**

**L:** Well, I think I was his biggest cheerleader... (Smiles).

**C:** And you were a cheerleader... I've seen the photographs.

**L:** (Laughing) – I was a cheerleader, that's right. And I think he knew, and took with him the fact that I loved him dearly and wanted him to succeed. But I didn't love him because he was such a fantastic martial artist or a movie star ... it wasn't like that. It was his being the father of my children and our family, and that's the way I looked at him.

*THE END*





## **Chris Kent**

With over 40 years experience, Chris Kent is widely acknowledged as one of the world's foremost authorities on Jeet Kune Do, and has gained international recognition for his knowledge and leadership in perpetuating the art, training methods, and philosophy developed by the legendary Bruce Lee. As a teacher, professional consultant, and speaker, Chris has traveled the world, teaching and sharing the benefit of his expertise in the art and philosophy of Jeet Kune Do with thousands of people.

Chris has authored 3 of the highest rated books on Jeet Kune Do: *The Encyclopedia of Jeet Kune Do*, *Jeet Kune Do - The Textbook*, and *Jeet Kune Do Kickboxing*. In

addition he has both written for and appeared in countless martial art publications both nationally and internationally including *Inside Kung Fu*, *Black Belt*, *Martial Art Masters*, *Budo International*, *Combat* and *Martial Arts Illustrated*. He has also written and produced 3 series of training videotapes and DVDs which remain the standard of the industry. His latest book, "*LIBERATE YOURSELF! - A Guide to Personal Freedom*" and "*P.L.A.N. - Personal Liberation Action Notebook*" detail how individuals can apply the philosophical tenets of self-actualization utilized by Bruce Lee to their own lives.

Chris was a one of the co-founders of "The Bruce Lee Educational Foundation", a non-profit, organization created for the purpose of perpetuating Bruce Lee's art and philosophy for future generations, and for 5 years served as a member of the Board of Directors.

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