

Chapter 4

A MYSTERIOUS OLD MAN

Hong Kong

1964

Seeing what is right and not acting is cowardice

見義不爲無勇也

(*jian yi bu wei wu yang ye*)

*The Analects of Confucius* (論語)

Confucius (孔子, 551-479 B.C.)

Confucius, of the Spring and Autumn Period (770-474 B.C.), is the best known Chinese philosopher. For thousands of years the ruling class embraced his teachings because he stressed *loyalty to the emperor and love of country*. To become a man of honor or a commendable person became the goals of literary and military men. The word *yi* (義) refers to honorable and commendable deeds.

*Seeing what is right and acting courageously* (見義勇爲, *jian yi yang wei*), and *encountering injustice, draw a sword to help* (路見不平, *lu jian bu ping* 拔刀相助, *bu dao xiang zhu*) are folk idioms which remind us to come to the aid of people in distress.

Helping others is a virtue expected of every *Kung Fu* practitioner. Otherwise, why learn *Kung Fu* at all? The martial artist should be prepared to help the oppressed, the bullied, and the downtrodden. While as a philosophy the pen may be mightier than the sword, in

certain instances, fists – judiciously used – are the only practical solution. Such was the case in the following incident involving Duncan Leung, *Wing Chun Warrior*.

Duncan and a friend were queuing for cinema tickets at the London Theatre in Kowloon, which was situated on the northwest junction of Nathan and Austin Roads. (The theatre has since been demolished and replaced by a modern building housing a cinema of the same name). Outside the theatre, illegal hawkers were busy selling preserved pickles, fruits, candies, roasted walnuts and other delicacies. The pavements were usually so crowded with people – ticket holders, pedestrians and hawkers – that one literally had to squeeze oneself through the mob of people to pass through.

On this particular day, there was a sudden eruption of yelling and cursing. People scattered in every direction to find the source of the commotion.

Two young hawkers, sellers of roasted squid, were ferociously beating an old man who appeared to be in his sixties. Their fists were raining down on him. Prostrate, he lay on the ground without moving. People in the crowd watched the beating, but nobody came to the old man's rescue. They didn't dare: everyone was deathly afraid of the triad's swift revenge. Not a policeman was in sight. That was during perhaps the most corrupt period in Hong Kong's history when it was the rare policeman who was not on the take.

Still swearing at the old man crouching on the ground, one of the young toughs brought back his leg in preparation for a vicious kick to the head. From out of nowhere, Duncan appeared before the hawker. Turning to face him, the hawker threw a punch with his right fist. Duncan slapped it aside with a right *guan sau* (搥手).

Then, *turning his horse*, he *covered* his right side with a right *lop sau* (攞手) and simultaneously slapped his left palm on the right side of the villain's neck, sending him tumbling to the ground. The hawker landed on some of the burning charcoals that had spilled from the small stove on which he roasted dried squids. He was too busy smothering incipient flames on his trousers to fight any more.

The moment the first hawker landed on the ground, his companion attacked from behind. Now *turning the horse* to the left, facing him, Duncan *covered* a left punch with his left forearm, simultaneously punching his opponent's nose with his right fist. As his now bleeding enemy wobbled, Duncan followed up with the *Wing Chun chase*, kicking him to the ground. Both hawkers fled the scene in panic.

Duncan helped the old man up and asked him what had happened.

"Thank you, young man. Somebody pushed me from behind and I accidentally knocked over some roasted squids. They just attacked me. They probably took advantage of my old age. You have guts. Please give me your name and tell me where you work." He was grateful.

"That's all right. I am an insurance underwriter at Sun Life of Canada. The company is in the Gloucester Building in Central."

A few weeks later, while sitting behind his desk, Duncan noticed an elderly gentleman beckoning him through the glass partition outside the office. For a brief moment he could not place the visitor, who reminded him of the incident and handed Duncan two boxes of dripping ice cream.

"Young man, thank you once again for your help. You are brave and righteous. There is something I want to teach you. I think you

are the right person to receive it.”

“That’s not necessary.”

“I am going to teach you some deadly fighting techniques.”

“You’re kidding!” Duncan was perplexed. His visitor must surely be joking. After all, he was helpless on the ground against those hawkers, and he was going to teach Duncan fighting techniques!

“You have doubts?”

“I am surprised, really surprised, because if you know these techniques, why didn’t you defend yourself in the first place?”

“These techniques that I am going to impart to you are not for fighting at a distance. These techniques are for close combat only. But once you have your opponent in your grasp, or he grabs you, there is no way he can get away. He is as dead as a caught fish.”

Duncan was, at any rate, intrigued. There would be no harm in seeing whether the old man knew what he was talking about. It was lunchtime and there were few people in the office. Duncan invited him to the coffee room. The old man stood behind him and poked a single finger into a point on Duncan’s back.

“Try your best to get away from me.”

No matter how hard he tried, there was no way he could escape!

“Once you are in my range, you are dead.”

The old man showed an amazed Duncan several more techniques using vital points on the body. He was absolutely right. It was deadly stuff! He had never seen anything like it. In the future, these simple techniques would prove invaluable, as well as giving Duncan the confidence that he could finish off his opponents once they were within his grasp.

Over the next few weeks, the old man taught Duncan at the home of Tang Di-sheng (唐滌生), the great Cantonese opera

composer. At the time, Duncan was training to become a jockey. Every morning he would drive to the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club in the New Territories for lessons. Since his home was on Hong Kong Island and the harbour ferries did not start service early enough, he rented the ground floor of Tang's house in Kowloon Tong. It took Duncan only a few days to learn all the techniques. The rest of the time was spent practicing with the old man.

In parting, the old man admonished Duncan that the techniques were only to be taught to people on the side of good. Accordingly, he has confined the teaching of the old man's techniques to the U.S. Navy SEAL Teams Two and Four, the FBI, the Virginia Police SWAT Team and other law enforcement agencies in the United States and overseas. He never saw nor heard from the mysterious old man again.

When asked if he had not been afraid that the hawkers might have sought help from fellow gang members, Duncan replied:

It is just like *Kung Fu*. If you have to think, you are always too late to react. If I had to think then, logic would have told me not to get involved. But my gut feeling told me that I had to go. It was spontaneous. When it was over and I looked around and saw nobody coming, me and my friend went into the theatre and watched the movie.

*Guts* means will and courage. You need both. You need courage to apply your will and you need will to activate your courage. It is confidence, really. If you have confidence, you will have guts. Would you jump into deep water to save a drowning person if you didn't even know how to swim? If you don't know *Kung Fu*, how can you have the confidence to fight against a much bigger and stronger adversary? Once you have confidence in your own ability,

you can and will fight when the time comes.

Mind you, this type of courage is nothing compared to someone who, not knowing how to swim, plunges into deep water to save a drowning person, or who, not caring for their own safety, rushes into a burning house to save another person. These are the people we call heroes. They've got real guts.

“Duncan, what is *cover*?”

𠄎位 (*kum wai*) or 蓋位 (*gai wai*) is a Cantonese term. The Chinese character 𠄎 (*kum*) does not exist in Putonghua, the official Chinese language. 蓋 (*gai*) is the equivalent which means *cover* in both Cantonese and Putonghua.

*Cover* is unique in *Wing Chun*. In *Wing Chun* we do not block; we *cover*. It is both a technique and a strategy. Because it does not exist in any other martial art or *Kung Fu*, it is the major difference separating *Wing Chun* from the others. Every *Wing Chun* practitioner should know how to *cover*. Without learning this, you cannot protect yourself. *Cover* is the cornerstone of *Applied Wing Chun*. It is a defensive move which enables you to be a fraction of a second ahead of your opponent. It is anticipation, both in defense and in offense.

When you see an offensive move coming at you, and you respond, it is blocking. But when you sense or anticipate an offensive move on the part of your opponent, and you initiate a defense even before it begins, it is *covering*. To see and to respond is slower than to anticipate and to initiate.

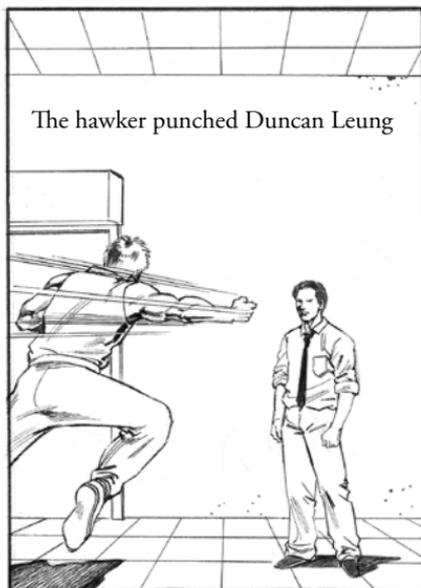
In defense, you can actually see your opponent's advance. Try to visualize this sequence. For example, if he throws a right straight punch at you, he is more likely to follow up with a left punch, because you are expected to block the first punch and expose your right side for his second punch. Instead of blocking, you *cover*

your left side with any *Applied Wing Chun* techniques, snapping, slapping or rotating with your bridge arms. Immediately after the first contact, you shift your *horse* forward and *cover* the anticipated exposed right side before his left punch can even reach you. Whether he is feinting or not with his left punch, you *cover* that area anyway. By the time his left punch reaches you, your bridge arm or arms are already there, waiting comfortably for him. Meantime, you are not idle. Immediately after the second contact, one of your fists is already on its way to your opponent's exposed areas, which become targets at your mercy.

Simultaneous defense and counter-attacking is another *Wing Chun* specialty; we simply call it *cover and attack*. You always cover first. Your priority is to protect yourself in advance, whether in defense or in offense.

Self-defense is a birthright. To learn martial arts or *Kung Fu* is to exercise that right. Instructors of any martial arts systems or *Kung Fu* styles should be able to teach you how to protect yourself. Those with little fighting experience cannot teach this.

As a strategy, you deliberately leave an area *uncovered* in order to lure your opponent into a trap. Once he swallows the bait, not only will he leave exposed areas for you to attack, he will also experience, to his regret, *Wing Chun's* simultaneous *cover and counter-attack*.



The other hawkler charged from behind



Duncan turned his *horse*  
and punched his nose...



...chain punched...



...and kicked

