

## Wing Tsun Vancouver Goes To The Island March 31-April 1, 2007

On March 31, 2007 Sifu Ralph Haenel and seven of his Wing Tsun Vancouver students set off for Vancouver Island for the first WT seminars there in over 10 years.

The ferry trip over was spent in the cafeteria, eating delicious burgers... fuel for this day's later Wing Tsun workout! We were also regaled with some of Sifu's interesting tales of the early EWTO! Once we landed at Swartz Bay we were off to John Kaiser's Wing Chun school in Langford. Yes, John is our own Gary Kaiser's brother. Gary had already traveled to the island and met us at John's. All of us were quite happy the traveling was over and ready to get moving!



Sifu Ralph with John Kaiser and his students.

John, four of his students and one guest instructor were waiting for us when we arrived. Sifu began by instructing John's group on the use of the Siu Nim Tau form in overall stance stability and power generation. This is one of the important opening exercises in Sifu's Wing Tsun Core Concepts Seminars.



Stance training with Siu Nim Tau.



Gary and Ciprian practise Lat-Sau.

The students from WT Vancouver were put to work on what I like to call the "No More Student-Level Lat-Sau" progression, starting with the idea of punching around and through your opponent's defenses. This theme continued throughout the seminar and as Sifu said, we must now learn to hit differently, using our whole body and with the requisite relaxation.

I can tell you, my neck wishes Edmond had not listened to that advice!

John's class continued on the Core Concepts, learning how we generate power in Wing Tsun and that with a refinement of their techniques, they could do the same. One of John's students was a wrestler and quite a big and strong looking guy. Sifu demonstrated how WT is able to counter a strong wrestler using relaxed and reflexive movements. John's student had trained with a number of good wrestlers and said Sifu Ralph exhibits the same type of relaxed control.



The challenge for us as students is always keeping that level of relaxation when under pressure! The WT Vancouver students continued by working on a variety of Lat-Sau entries designed to illustrate different angles for power-generation.

After the seminar we relaxed while Sifu, Phillip, Neil, Rob and Edmund checked into their Victoria Hotels. The relaxation was halted by Vancouver giving up two goals in the first period... About half an hour after the "hurry up we're starving" phone calls, we all went to a local Langford Italian restaurant for a much-needed dinner!

Special thanks to John's lovely wife for the half-time snacks and to both of them for having myself, Ciprian and Trevor stay at The Hotel Kaiser! I would like to note that the complimentary room also came with a morning coffee service.



Day two saw a very early rise (6:45am) as breakfast before the second seminar was crucial!

The second seminar took place at Ray Van Raamsdonk's Wing Chun School in Victoria ([www.springtimesong.com](http://www.springtimesong.com)). Like John's school, Ray has converted his garage into a Wing Chun training room. It is nice to see such dedication to teaching and training!



As with Saturday's seminar, the Wing Tsun Vancouver Students continued work on our Lat-Sau entries while Ray's class was shown the Core Concepts. I did not mention that at Saturday's seminar we all spent about 15 minutes on the Wing Tsun Chi Kung form where long periods of time are spent stretching out muscles and joints to achieve the resultant increase in striking power. Even after a few minutes, this way of practicing the Siu Nim Tau can become unbearably painful and is often quite a surprise for first timers! Sifu Ralph demonstrated this form training on Sunday as well and many were shocked to hear how we do this for 3 hours every few months at Wing Tsun Vancouver.

Believe me, it hurts for the whole 3 hours!



Ray had almost 20 Wing Chun students attend Sunday's seminar and it made for a great amount of energy in the kwoon.

What Ray had to say:

*"I have been to many seminars in my life. I would give this seminar 5 out of 5 stars and wouldn't hesitate to recommend it to any group of Wing Chun practitioners regardless of the lineage. I think open minded martial artists from other types of arts would also get a real appreciation of Wing Chun from Ralph's seminar. For our members this seminar has again confirmed that Wing Chun is indeed a very deep art. I would say that few people including myself can really teach this art very well. But I am also always learning and improving and Ralph Haenel is definitely a very good model to follow. If Ralph is willing then we would love to learn more things from him."*



What we realized by the middle of the second day was that we were all learning and applying the Core Concepts, just in a more advanced way for the Wing Tsun Vancouver students. It is always refreshing to see, no matter how long you train, that WT is an ever evolving art that can constantly be worked on and improved upon.

After Sunday's seminar, a few of us had the chance to do some poon-sau (rolling) with Ray's students. It was nice to feel the difference between our poon-sau styles and have a chance to get some feedback. We all look forward to developing a further friendship with our kung fu "relatives" on Vancouver Island.

Thanks to all who welcomed us and we look forward to seeing you again soon!

