

# Mr Ip Chun

## Honorary Fellow

### Citation

Born into a wealthy family in Foshan, Canton, in 1924, Mr Ip Chun was the elder son of Master Ip Man, the grandmaster of Wing Chun martial arts. His childhood was quite well-off until the age of 14, when Foshan was occupied by the Japanese and the Ip family fortune dwindled. Driven by destitution as a result of the economic malaise in his hometown, Ip Man came south to Hong Kong to make a living, leaving his son behind.

In 1962, Mr Ip came to Hong Kong at the age of 38 to be reunited with his father. Although he was the heir to the grandmaster, he himself never practised Wing Chun in Foshan when he was young, and the thought never crossed his mind while he was doing clerical work in Hong Kong, at least not at first. However, seeing the success of his father's disciples in raising families and buying properties through martial arts instruction, the idea of mastering the craft and passing it on began to take shape in Mr Ip's mind. At the time he was living in his father's school. He could hardly get to sleep in the evening when his father's disciples came over to practise, so he stayed up to watch the class. In time, he mastered the secret art of Wing Chun. By listening to his father's explanations, he grasped the function and execution of each move and its role in the form. With the refinement of his movements, he made rapid progress in Wing Chun. He soon became a competent teaching assistant.

Despite his exceptional talent, Mr Ip was not well-known, apart from being the son of Ip Man, until his father's death in 1972. Bruce Lee's death in 1973 triggered a Kung fu frenzy in Hong Kong, but even then Mr Ip only taught Wing Chun in his spare time. Some of his students found success promoting Wing Chun overseas. In the 1980s, they invited him to visit. This was the beginning of his international martial arts teaching career. Since then, he has made a few trips overseas a year to pass on the wisdom of Wing Chun and promote Chinese culture. From 2001 onwards, Mr Ip started to take Wing Chun back to China by touring and lecturing in the Mainland.

Since the turn of the century, Ip Man has been the subject of a series of martial arts films that have reinvigorated the genre. Originally the Hong Kong and Chinese film industries were not optimistic about the prospects for the film *Ip Man*. Yet with the increasing tension between China and Japan, the story of Ip Man defeating the Japanese excited the Mainland Chinese audience. Mr Ip went on another tour to promote the film as consultant. In the end it became a huge hit worldwide, raising awareness about Mr Ip's many contributions.

The true spirit of martial arts is not defeating an enemy, as in the film, but in teaching humankind how to live in harmony. The true spirit of martial arts is tolerance. This is why, despite Mr Ip's background, he has never been prejudiced against other martial arts forms, a trait common in traditional martial artists. With this liberal mindset, he has never turned down any student, nor has he ever taken offence if a student chose to learn from other masters. The true spirit of martial arts is selflessness. Even though Mr Ip is pleased to teach in sports clubs, gymnasiums, universities, and his own home, he has never opened a martial arts school in his own name – quite an unusual decision.

Nevertheless, he is now celebrated worldwide for his role in upholding the proud tradition of Ip Man Wing Chun, an essential part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Hong Kong in particular and Chinese culture in general. He has done so for over half a century and will do so until he draws his dying breath. Mr Chairman, I hereby present Mr Ip Chun for the conferment of an honorary fellowship.

*Citation written and delivered by Professor Lau Chi-pang*