

Silat Seni Gayong

An American Woman's Perspective in 2010

MY name is Jen Para. I am a first-degree black belt under Cikgu "Sam" Sheikh Shamsuddin. I first wrote an article for Seni Beladiri Magazine in May of 2005 entitled "Silat Seni Gayong- An American Woman's Perspective."

I have since continued training in Gayong under the instruction of Cikgu Sam, trained in

by Jen Para

Gurulatih United States Gayong federation (USGF)



Malaysia, helped facilitate in two Silat programs, Human Weapon and the National Geographic Channel's Fight Masters: Silat, featuring Cikgu Sam and Cikgu Joel Champ, both of USGF.

I have been fortunate in my training and opportunities. I have trained with and met several Gayong masters in Malaysia who have welcomed us, and most of whom I still keep contact with.

I have learned many things from these various teachers and their students. They all have their talents and strengths, and I have learned things from all of them.

My most memorable Gayong moment in Malaysia was meeting the late Cikgu Siti Kalsom (picture).

As a female student, she was an inspiration and role model to all Gayong students particularly females.

When I started training, I was the only woman in our group. I had never heard of Silat before,



With her keris.



and the martial arts I had been exposed to had very limited women participating.

Cikgu Sam told me about Cikgu Siti Kalsom and all her accomplishments in Gayong. When I finally got to meet her, it was a great experience. I was fortunate to have interviewed her for Seni Beladiri's May 2006 issue, "Interview with Cikgu Siti Kalsom- Head of Silat Seni Gayong"; she answered all my questions and allowed me to write the article.

She was a great practitioner and leader of Gayong. When I train, I try and aspire to be like

her.

I started training in Silat Seni Gayong in July of 2001. I started after one of my friends put me in a lock on the sidewalk in

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With Cikgu Sam.

Chicago.

I kept training, even though most of my original group had stopped. Over the years our group gained and lost students, changed training locations numerous times, and ultimately ended up at a college, College of DuPage in Illinois with Malay Silat a college class.

We have a USGF club at the college also that helps promote Silat on campus and in the surrounding community. I have trained through cuts, bruises, strains, sprains, surgery, and once squished by getting fallen on two weeks before flying to Malaysia.

I have trained through many new students, through a couple people who really didn't like training with a woman, and through many other challenges that most everyone faces who train in anything for any period of time. I keep training in Gayong because it fits with me.

I like that Gayong is more aggressive, it is used to stop a fight quickly. As a woman, I would want a fight to end quickly; it is not in my best interest for a fight to last a long time.

Gayong allows me to use what works best for my size, my opponent's size, the situation, etc.

As I have moved into an instructor position within USGF, I have new challenges. Training is still training; the technique is still the technique.

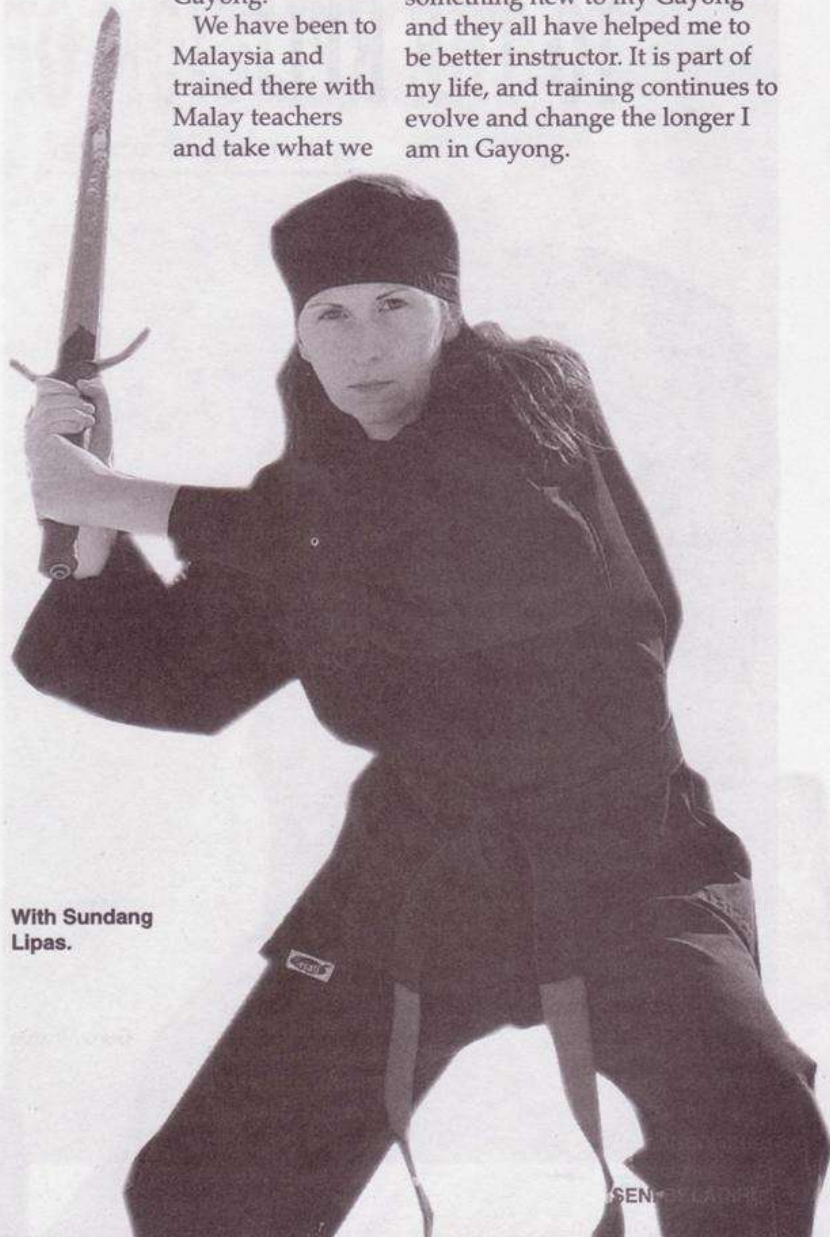
What challenges I face, are explaining more of subtle nuances of Gayong to American students. Cikgu Sam has taught all his senior students about the subtleties of Gayong.

We have been to Malaysia and trained there with Malay teachers and take what we

learned and apply it in our USGF group. New students need to know information beyond the techniques, having been to Malaysia and having first-hand knowledge of training there, it is up to me to help explain the "why" questions that get asked of us.

I encourage all the questions because it can help deepen the understanding of Gayong. The hardest part in teaching is "translating" Malaysian culture as I understand it for American students of Gayong who have never traveled to Malaysia.

I am thankful for everyone who I have met both here and in Malaysia. They have all brought something new to my Gayong and they all have helped me to be better instructor. It is part of my life, and training continues to evolve and change the longer I am in Gayong.



With Sundang Lipas.