

國際楊氏太極拳協會

The Newsletter of the International Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan Association



Tai Chi Chuan

Number 9 • Winter 2002

## SHARING CHINA MEMORIES

Wonderful stories of the  
Tai Chi Adventure in China



THE 13 FORM  
By Master Yang Zhen duo

TAI CHI CHUAN IN  
2002 AND BEYOND

An Interview with Masters Yang Zhen duo  
and Yang Jun

# Letter from the President

*2002 has been a great year. There are many great events that we will remember for a long time.*



Yang Jun

President

Translated by Hon Wah Chan

**D**uring the summer, the Shanxi Yang Style Tai Chi Association successfully hosted the 20th Anniversary of the founding of the association and the Second International Tournament of Traditional Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan. Close to a thousand people took part in the ceremony and the audience numbered over five thousand. This was the biggest crowd in Yang Style Tai Chi history. The International Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan Association was also very successful in hosting foreign guests at these events. There were 249 foreign guests and another thirty more people coming from Taiwan and Hong Kong. 149 people traveled together on the tour of Eastern China and Beijing. 98% of the guests were members of the International Association, indicating that we have great support from our members. I would like to thank all the members that helped organize and took part in these events.

There were many memorable events that occurred during the Taiyuan activities. The International

Association initially arranged for a hundred guests to perform the 49 Form during the Opening Ceremony. We ended up with 140 Tai Chi players coming from ten different countries and speaking many different languages. We had only ninety minutes to rehearse before the opening day; it took an hour just to have the 140 guests lined up to enter the stage. We performed uniformly during the Ceremony and left a great impression on the audience. The local newspaper even showed the picture on the front page.

During the competition, the foreign guests' performances left a great impression on the Chinese participants and the audience. They agreed that the foreign guests have shown great improvement in their Tai Chi training. The foreign guests also demonstrated good sportsmanship –not seeming conceited when winning and not becoming disheartened when losing. Many foreign guests had outstanding results. Frank, the director from Koln Center in Germany, won First place in the Young Men's' Hand Form and Saber division and Second place in the Sword division. The International Association also arranged the ranking examination during the competition. Over forty members with the International Association participated in the ranking examination – this again is the biggest group involved in the history of the ranking examination. During the opening ceremony, the teams from Brazil, U.S.A., and Sweden performed folk dances and gave the audience a grand entertaining experience.

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*Tai Chi  
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All Tai Chi Chuan enthusiasts are invited to submit articles, letters, and pictures for publication.

Both critical and complimentary letters concerning the form and content of this newsletter are welcome. Please send correspondence in electronic format to: [editor@yangfamilytaichi.com](mailto:editor@yangfamilytaichi.com) or mail to:

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During the stay in Taiyuan, foreign friends enjoyed the traditional Chinese Opera and visited Pingyao – an ancient town from Ming dynasty. They also visited the Qiao Family Garden (where the Chinese movie "Raise the Red Lantern" was filmed) and the Jin Temple. In Shanghai, the group visited Pudong and the riverfront. In Wuxi, the group visited Lake Tai and tasted the fresh lake seafood and met with the local Wuxi Yang Style Tai Chi Association. In Tongli, the group experienced the canals of a river town from the Ming dynasty. In Hangzhou, the group visited the ancient Lignin Temple and the beautiful Lake West, and tasted the special West Lake Lon-ging (Dragon well) tea. In Beijing, the group visited the Great Wall and the Ming Tomb, and tasted the famous Beijing ducks. Great memories of the China tour: the hot summer in Southern China and the over three tons of luggage we brought with us!

Eighteen Directors of the International Association came to

the Taiyuan events and had dinner with the managers from the Shangxi Tai Chi Association. This further enhanced the friendship among various Associations. The International Association has made a change in the administration staff. Based on Jerry's Karin's request, Jerry gave up his position as the International Association Vice President. Han Hoong Wang is the new Vice President and Nancy Lucero is the President's Assistant.

After the Taiyuan trip, the International Association held two successful seminars in Seattle and Buffalo. We will add two new Yang Chengfu Tai Chi Chuan Centers by the end of 2002.

To me, 2002 has been especially memorable. I felt great pressure in organizing such a huge event. Although we had a successful event, we came across many difficulties along the way. Whenever I faced new problem, many people would volunteer to help. I felt grateful and

was supported by the warmth coming from our extended family of Tai Chi friends. I will never forget the support from my wife, Fang Hong. As many of you may know, my son was born during the China tour. I was unable to stay with my wife in Seattle. Again, I would like to thank my wife for her understanding and support of my career. I also want to thank my friends in Seattle that had helped with my wife's delivery. My son, Jason Yang (Chinese name Yang Ya Jie), was born on August 3. He weighed 8 lbs. and 12 oz. Now I have a daughter and a son. That would form the word "Good" in the written Chinese Character, "Hao"! ☺





# SHARING CHINA MEMORIES

The following members have graciously taken the time to send these wonderful stories of their experiences during our Tai Chi Adventure in China.

Jorge Alberto Catino from Sao Paulo, Brazil

I'd like to share with all members of the Association, as a proof of my (our) thanks to Grand Master Yang Zhenduo and Master Yang Jun, my impressions of that marvelous trip. Perhaps I was more encouraged to put in lines my feelings, but I am sure of the agreement of the rest of the Brazilian team with this sincere writing:



Brazil Team

the time helping us to prepare, technically and more importantly, emotionally. All of us, teachers and students, made efforts in time, practice, organization, money, etc. to reach our goal, all the time with joyfulness and joviality, as real comrades.

## IMPRESSIONS OF AN ADVENTURE IN CHINA

At the end of the 2001 Sao Paulo Seminar, Masters Yang Zhenduo and Yang Jun invited us to the Second International Tournament the Association was organizing in 2002 at Taiyuan city.

At that moment I was not so sure about my technical and economic possibilities to be part of such important event, partially because I was aware there were so many Sao Paulo practitioners more skilled, and partially because the economic effort was not easy. I knew this feeling was shared among my mates. But as the year 2002 became closer, our enthusiasm about the trip was growing and growing, and our teachers were training us hard and we decided about our participation. Then, I abandoned my doubts and faced that commitment.

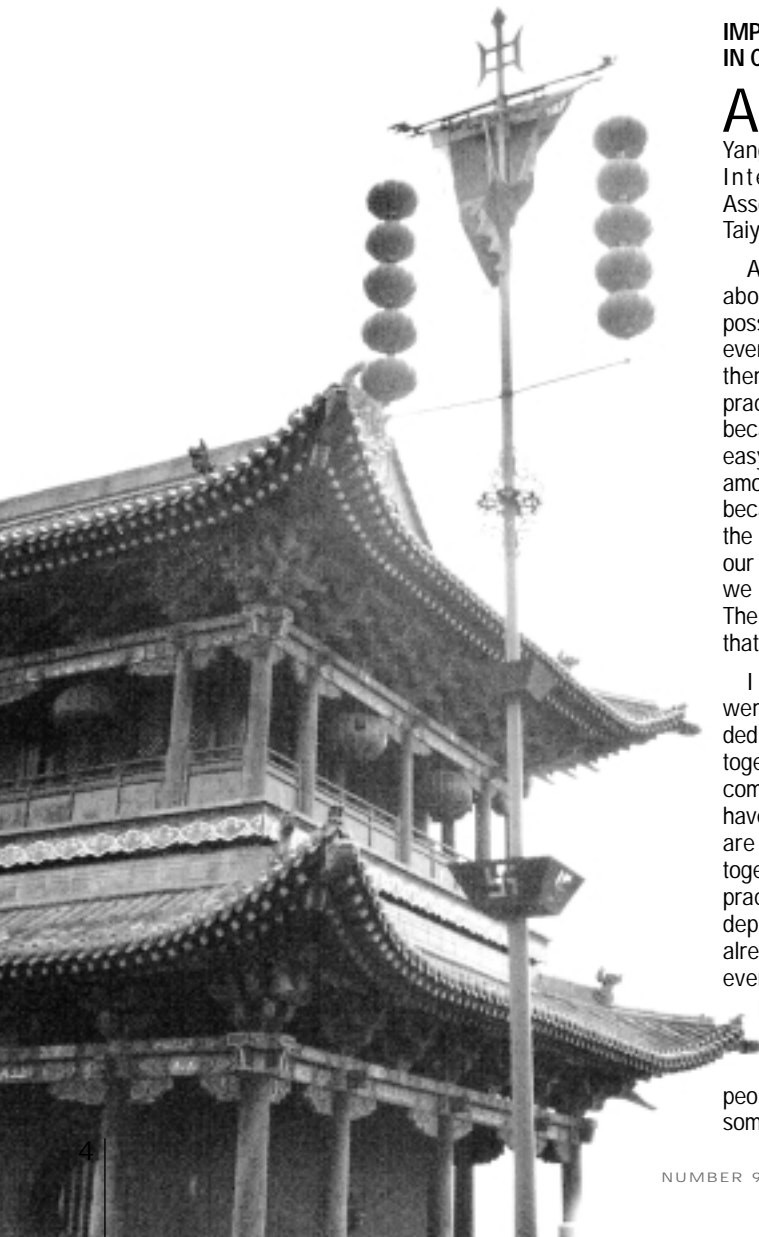
I and my mates, in the same manner, were joining energy, money, and dedication until we were a group, drawn together by friendship and the common commitment to Taijiquan. Some of us have been friends for 10 to 15 years. We are well known, we learn and stay together all that time, meanwhile we practice what we like: Taiji. When the departure day was approaching, we already were really a team. Imagine, we even learned to dance together, to present a folk performance at the Opening Ceremonies!

In that team were included some people not able to make the trip, for some reasons, but they were with us all

At the departure day, there were hopes and some reasonable fears about the tournament and the trip, but the joy ever present was our companion. The flight was long, we were tired but the jokes, the cheerfulness were the antidotes. In my expectations were some fears: I was considering "we are going to a unknown and distant country, with a difficult language, how will those people be, how will they receive us?"

Fortunately, the reception was the best possible. After the long trip, we were welcomed by very kind people, English speaking, who helped us from that day to the end. Translators and guides were substituting for each other, some times speaking Spanish, sometimes Portuguese, every time able and disposed to help and solve any problem for us. From that moment, there was growing in my mind a feeling of unity, the sense of closing with any human being from any corner of the world. All my fears gone away, I felt I was a partner, a brother to all the people I encountered: among the great family of Taiji practitioners and more than that, on the Taiyuan or Beijing streets, among all the people around us: drivers, hotel employees, and members of the organizer's crew.

The first ceremony we attended in Yuyuan hotel, the only fully Chinese-spoken, was amazing because the meaning that not only the older Chinese students but also some western students became disciples of Masters Yang Zhenduo was clear for us. I know this is not common, it was an honor for me to be a part of this event.







In the second ceremony, the Tournament Opening, in the Delegations entrance when I was in the middle of the about 300 or more people, surrounded by a mass of thousands filling the Stadium, I cried, filled of that huge emotion and happiness and wanted to remember all that to leave in my heart for all my life. I never will forget that moment; I think this was the deepest emotion of the whole trip. We also assisted the greater Masters, starting with Yang Zhenduo, Yang Jun and following with several other styles Masters. We were proudly part of the 140 foreign delegate's short form performance. We made our folkloric presentation until joining with the others countries performers to dance together in the middle of the stadium. Beautiful. Unforgettable. After the Opening Ceremony, a Taiyuan journal reporter asked me to write some words in my native language. I wrote: "Here and now I can feel that World is really One". So I expressed the feeling to be part of one Family: the human being, across borders, across races, cultures, languages, ages, genres.

Then, started the tournament stresses: the need of self-organizing to know beforehand the presentation order, the commitment for my part in the group presentation, more anxiety previous to my individual performance, the (many) satisfactions with the good scores each of us get, to make time to take pictures of my mates, to be part of some short tourist travels between performances, all the intense situations spread over occurring all together. The breakfasts and lunches with the expectations about the day's events, the more relaxed dinners, talking happily about the facts of the day, the falling in bed with all the exhausted body and the joyful soul. All fulfilled with jokes, happy encounters, animated chats in many languages with all kinds of people.

Finally (all things must end) came the Tournament closing ceremony: more happiness with the awards winning, the "competitors" congratulations (there was no competition but friendship, as the banner at the arena entrance said: "Friendship first, competition second").

Then, another adventure begun: a touristic marathon with visits, hotel check-ins and check-outs (each hotel better than previous, we had no complaints of any hotel or restaurant in

the entire trip). We traveled by Shanghai, Wu Xi, Su Zhou, Tong Li, Hang Zhou and back to Beijing in 7 days! Each city had many amazing things to see, we trained in the early morning with the Masters, made four or five visits a day, wonderful lunches and dinners, Opera, shopping and free walks seeing, buying, meeting people, experiencing the hospitality of the people, the warm welcome at every place.

It was so few days for so many adventures. It seems like we lived three months in fifteen days.

When I was in the Beijing airport, ready for departure to Brazil, I started to be nostalgic about great people I met: Bill, trying to organize (and sometimes doing); Frank, enduring the Brazilian unreliability in the German-Brazilian bus with stoicism; Mina and Coco, the translators-guides that ever helped for any trouble; in the tournament and all the places and trips; Josefina, Juan and Daniel, the Spanish translators in many travels; Master Yang Jun ever present to solve any problem simple or difficult all the time with a smile; the drivers enduring the tardy Brazilians without complains; Darla present in all places and times with her camera; my new friends of San Antonio, Texas; the Michigan people I meet and chatted with at Great Wall trip; the jolly Italians so similar to us; the friends from Sacramento and Sweden and so many more I talked with. I especially remember that Chinese senior I met in the arena, my companion in performance, who asked me to take a photo with him and his family. I do not know his name, maybe we will not meet again, but I know we are brothers.

I expect to come back to China. I hope to be again in the arena, to join again with all those people. I hope see and learn from Master Yang Zhenduo again. Perhaps next time I will make more and deeper contacts with all the Taiji practitioners, as we met in Wu Xi. Maybe I will like to visit more Taiji related localities, such as the Wu Tai Mountain. But at any rate I know I will return with gladness to live again those unforgettable moments.

GARY LEE from Madison, Wisconsin

**A DREAM COME TRUE**

China! I was finally going to that mysterious, exotic land, after years of dreaming about it.

Flying halfway around the world, even in the company of good friends, takes a toll. But even after jet lag wore off--indeed, for the entire three weeks I was in China--my amazement never wore off. From the first day in Beijing, I was agog: millions of people in cars and buses, on bikes, on foot--all going with the flow (a phrase that took on new meaning); and of course, a seemingly endless supply of vendors hawking their wares at our obvious group of tourists. I saw my first Chinese opera in a teahouse in Beijing just a few blocks from Tianamen Square. That distinctive music, which I previously did not like, now captivated me.

From Beijing, where the only people who paid us any attention were the vendors (most of whom spoke at least some English), to Taiyuan, where nearly everyone stared at us but few could speak English. In some ways the whole trip was characterized by contrasts: from the cosmopolitan Beijing to the provincial Taiyuan, from the huge cities to the cultivated countryside, from the massive amount of construction (as Paul Lenhard said, the crane should be the national bird)

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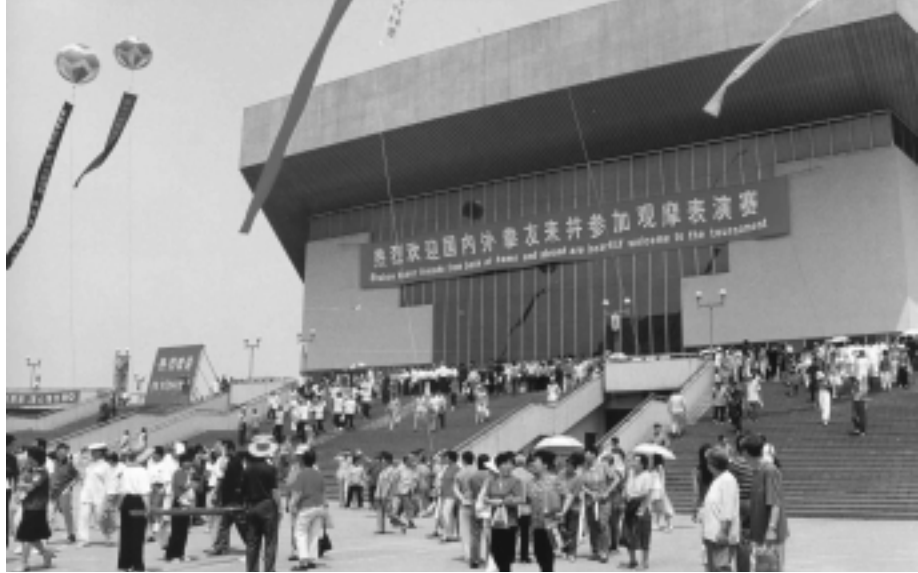
Bill Walsh, Frank Grothstueck  
and Jeremy Blodgett

to the matching amount of buildings in disrepair or in rubble, from the incredible beauty of the gardens and parks to the difficult conditions of public bathrooms. I was experiencing culture shock for the first time, and I am still dealing with its after effects.

Amid all the strangeness, the newness, was the welcome sight of faces familiar from various workshops in



USA • Michigan Team



the U.S. over the years: some I met in Portland, some in Virginia, others in Montreal, and of course many in Detroit. Traveling with this group for a couple of weeks afforded many opportunities to get to know these taiji friends better, and was itself a great experience. Add to that the other international players and the wonder of the whole experience is magnified.

One of my most memorable personal encounters happened a few hours before my first solo event in the competition. I found an open hallway where some people had been practicing. As they finished and left, I was just about to start when a woman walked in, dressed in pink silks. She said something to me in Chinese, and I responded in English that I did not understand. Somehow she communicated to me that she wanted to watch me go through the form. Although this was not really what I wanted to do at that moment, to be polite I began the form. Almost immediately she stopped me to offer a correction, and she proceeded to work through the whole form with me, offering dozens of corrections, taking at least 45 minutes. She reminded me of my teacher, Han Hoong Wang, in the precision of her movements and in her attention to detail.

Much to my consternation, however, I soon realized that she did many of the moves slightly differently from my understanding of what not only Han taught but also what Grandmaster Yang and Master Yang Jun taught. At the same time, many of her corrections were the same ones that Han had been telling me about for years. After we had worked through the whole form, I thanked her and asked her if she would now perform the 49 for me. She graciously did so, and I was impressed with her taiji--she was obviously a high-level player and teacher. (At the awards ceremony, I believe I saw her receive the gold medal in her group.) Not being skilled enough to absorb any new ways of doing things, I decided to focus on her reinforcement of the corrections I knew I needed, and to let go of the rest. I will always be grateful to her.

For me, as incredible as the Great Wall, the Buddhist temples, the Forbidden City, the terra-cotta warriors, and even the Xian dumpling dinner--as fabulous as all these were, the highlight of the trip was Grandmaster Yang's tournament. The opening ceremonies were dazzling, from the Masters' demonstrations to the group performances (including, of course, Holly and Bill's ballroom dance). But my greatest thrill would come during the competition, as I

中国山西传统杨氏太极  
The Second International Invitational Traditional Tai Chi





was waiting my turn at the 49 Form. Following my teacher's wise advice, I was preparing by doing some basic qigong, and as I calmed down I took a long look around the arena. That was when it fully hit me that I was now in China and about to do Master Yang's form in his presence, at his tournament. The feeling of excitement was indescribable. It was not nervousness or anxiety (though I had plenty of that too); rather, it was more like awe--in fact, the only comparable feeling I had was on seeing the Grand Canyon for the first time. Though my performances were unremarkable compared to the rest of the competitors, I am proud to say that I did the forms as well as I ever have. I could not ask for more.

So many other places and people of note: Sonny, our cute but incredibly assertive guide in Taiyuan; the park in Taiyuan where we did taiji at 6 am each morning with hundreds of other players; Dave Barrett, whose humor overcame the innumerable schedule changes (WWHHYY?); the several Chinese operas we saw; the Chinese acrobats and the Shaolin monks in Beijing, the dancers, acrobats, and musicians in Xian; Paul Lenhard, who kept many of us laughing throughout the trip; a great ping pong match in the basement of the Wuxi hotel with my friend Chris Kaiser; on one plane ride a pleasant chat with Frank Grothstueck, the young German center director who impressed us all (including the judges) with his beautiful taiji; the bus driver for the last leg of our trip, who stoically loaded our excessive baggage onto the bus and then, when we were all on the bus and he thought no one could see him, he let the agony show on his

face in a grimace, leaned against the side of the bus, and wiped his brow, but wheeled us through Beijing and Chengde with great skill and good humor.

I must mention my teacher, Han, the one without whom many of us would not have made the trip at all: not only did she work very hard last year to train us for the competition, but she encouraged us the whole time and most importantly, perhaps, she had fun with us, teaching us how to eat certain kinds of bony fish and how to suck the brains out of the fish's head (not to mention how much she helped in bargaining for the best prices on many wonderful purchases).

Most amazing was Master Yang Jun, who not only shepherded many of us through airports but during the competition kept everything moving smoothly, including delivering water to the judges, answering silly questions from people like me looking for a place to practice, adjusting our tour schedule as needed, and so much more. His intelligence, patience, and endurance are remarkable.

I haven't told a fraction of all that there is to tell, and if you think I've been effusive, all I can say is come along next time and I think you'll see that my words are pale compared to the experience itself. I can't wait to go back.

Rob Steig from Virginia USA

1. The four of us is in the Virginia group had a wonderful afternoon climbing the "wild" Great Wall at Huanghua Chang Cheng (Yellow Flower Fortress), an unrestored section way up in the mountains 60 km north of Beijing. There was hand-over-hand climbing clinging to little trees, etc., and we were moderately delirious when we arrived back near the bottom at an improvised cold drink stand in a farmyard. As we sipped our drinks we noticed a disused

agricultural tool that had a definitely martial air about it (like an old harpoon) and we said: "There MUST be a FORM for that thing!" Pat Rice, being both very knowledgeable about taijiquan and very creative, immediately demonstrated the correct and, to most people, long forgotten form for this deadly instrument. We are hoping the Chinese government will standardize the form and promote it worldwide. As a long weapon, it may be an Olympic hopeful (if enough can be obtained from the manure piles to which they seem to have been consigned)!

2. The Virginia group was out early one morning at Beihei Park and watched this man practicing his calligraphy with a brush and water, on the pavement. We had just practiced our form and became conscious as we observed him that we were being offered excellent instruction in use of the waist, relaxation of the body, economy of effort, and focused intent. Both performances were fleeting - our form stopped, and the calligraphy evaporated - but each left a memory that will last a long time.



Han Hoong Wang and Terese Mei Teo have been formally recognized as Disciples of Master Yang Zhen Duo

Sweden Team



影合赛邀请国际届第  
g Style Tai Chi Chuan Competition • Shanxi China





Canadian Team

Cathy Hardacre from Michigan USA

**I Love you Clear, Clear to China!**

Years ago when I kissed my son good-night, we would exclaim how much we loved one another. One night he asked, "What is the furthest place you can think of, Mommy?" I responded, "China." To that he said, "Well, then, I love you clear, clear to China." For years those words became our nightly ritual of affection. Twenty-four years ago I couldn't have imagined actually traveling to China.

Seven years ago, however, lunch with my friend Patrick led me to China—in a roundabout way. On a Saturday afternoon in September at the school where he supervised the enrichment classes, he introduced me to the Tai Chi instructor, Han Hoong Wang, also the director of Yang Cheng Fu Tai Chi Chuan USA, Michigan Center. She allowed me to observe her class. Having read about the art of Tai Chi and its health benefits, in addition to seeing her class, I decided right then to take lessons. I signed up for the class the following week.

That class—and the teacher—changed my life forever. Soon my once-a-week class turned into classes three times a week and seminars with Masters Yang Zhen Duo and Yang Jun. Over the next seven years I grew accustomed to the fluidity of movement, gaining strength and balance. Moreover, my overall health and well being improved tenfold.

After my sixth year of instruction, Han Hoong Wang explained that she would take a group of students to China for the 20th anniversary celebration and tournament in Taiyuan in July of the following year. I wanted to go but my fears attempted to convince me otherwise. I had never been on an airplane (unless, of course, you count the 50-minute flight in 1986). Would I be able to handle the 18-hour flight? The heat of the orient? My uncertainties about competition? Possible illnesses? All of these questions taunted me. Fortunately, my family and friends convinced me to stop "whining" and to get my passport.



USA • New Jersey



USA • Manchester

That year flew by. As the months turned into weeks and the weeks turned into days, we practiced for what seemed like countless hours. My excitement grew, as did my nerves. The day arrived. My Tai Chi buddy, Martine (a seasoned traveler), generously gave up her bulkhead seat, so that I would be more comfortable—Thank you! Thank you, Martine!

The International Tai Chi Chuan Association and its president, Master Yang Jun, took care of all travel accommodations in conjunction with the tour group. The hotel employees, wherever we stayed over the course of our trip, treated us like kings and queens. They couldn't do enough to welcome us or to present us with the comforts of home—and then some!

Steeped in a rich history, China not only met—but also exceeded—all my expectations. From the Great Wall to the magnificent temples to the buried clay warriors of the Terra Cotta, China presented many wonders, the likes of which I couldn't have imagined in my wildest dreams. Chinese Gardens overflowed with vibrant bursts of color and splendor. Shopping at street side markets run by local artists and merchants offered a taste of an ancient way of life, yet we Americans, true to form, did more than our share of shopping. Chinese teas and Operas quenched our thirst for Chinese culture. The silk, jade, and clay teapot factories offered more than a glimpse of Chinese industry. Trips on gondola-type boats introduced us to native inhabitants of small villages and their seemingly tranquil ways of life. Over and over again I was certain I'd wake from this magnificent dream. When we touched down in Detroit three weeks later, only then was I certain it was no dream—although I was ready for bed.

Next month my son's wife will have their first child, a much-anticipated son. When I kiss him goodnight I can tell him with confidence, "I love you clear, clear to China," a whole beautiful world away!

Martin Middlewood from Vancouver, Washington

Plane flights to Beijing  
Tai Chi grows loud in green parks  
Suddenly the busses

Long Taiyuan bus ride  
Mountain stone terraces steep wet  
Then once more tai chi

Breathing Jinci's green air  
Ancient cypress whisper low  
Chanting monks float past

Suzanne Trojanowski from Michigan USA

During the Tournament all the participants were so friendly and encouraging even when people did not speak the same language. It was pretty amazing to see that many people all doing the same form that I learned. All the people of different ages from different countries and we all know the same form.

A special moment for me was after the awards ceremony when two of the Chinese women in my category both grabbed my hands and pulled me over so someone could take our picture. The spirit at the competition was so happy and warm.

Sonia Sinn and Larry Moe from Michigan USA

Among the many wonderful experiences we had on the trip, the most memorable was the opening Ceremony of the Tournament. That morning, all the local and international teams queued up outside the stadium behind their corresponding team signs waiting to go into the stadium. Our Michigan group, dressed in cream silk Tai Chi uniforms, some wearing red white and blue scarves, were all neatly lined up and in high spirits.

When we marched into the stadium, we were greeted with a packed crowd of several thousands in the stands on all four sides. The cheering crowd was clapping and waving enthusiastically at us, and we excitedly waved back with equal fervor as we circled around the stadium to reach our spot in the middle of the floor. The warmth and intensity emanating from the roaring crowd overwhelmed us. It gave us such an emotional lift that the feeling lingered with us long afterwards. For us, it felt like an Olympic moment.....truly unforgettable.



USA • New Mexico



Participants from France



LOOKING AHEAD

# Tai Chi Chuan

## in 2002 and Beyond

*An Interview with  
Masters Yang Zhenduo and Yang Jun  
Conducted and translated by Jeremy Blodgett*

**JB:** At the Taiyuan competition this summer we got to see many Yang style practitioners, but some practiced quite differently than we do. Why are there so many different types of Yang style Taijiquan now?

**YZD:** In looking at it now, there is a lot of Yang style Taijiquan. But, all of the Yang style Taijiquan appearances are not the same. You are Yang style, she is Yang style, and that one is also called Yang style, but they all are practiced differently. Why are they different? I think this is related to the history of Yang style. My father in his middle age had long standing top students such as Beijing's Chui Yi Shi and Hangzhou's Niu Chun Ming. These senior students were accepted by Yang Cheng Fu in his middle age. The completion of Yang style Taijiquan was when my father reached the time of his old age. If you look at my father's pictures, the postures of his youth are different from the postures of his senior years.

The students that he accepted in his middle age didn't just practice Taijiquan; they had also practiced external martial arts. But don't say that his later students were different from Yang Cheng Fu because of their external martial art foundations. Yang Cheng Fu was himself different in his middle age and senior years. So in looking at it now, his top students have had many students themselves, compounding the differences resulting from Yang Cheng Fu's personal development during this time difference



of several decades. So in arriving at the explanation for the differences in Yang style in this way, it is very obvious and very objective. Because Yang Cheng Fu himself was different, can the senior students he accepted in his middle age and senior years be the same as him? It is not actually possible. For example, Zheng Man Qing and Dong Yin Jie are both old students of my father. You say who is correct and who is incorrect? To say who is good and who is bad is very difficult.

Because you all practice traditional Yang style and may have not seen other styles, we invited many different people to the competition allowing you to see how people from other styles practice. Representatives of Chen style, the two Wu styles and Sun style were all present so that everyone could open their eyes.

Chen Long Xia, Li Ming Di, and Li Ya Xuan's son-in-law all came to represent other styles. Li Ya Xuan was my father's disciple. Also, Niu Chui Ming's nephew from Hangzhou and Niu Chui Ming's disciple attended. Zheng Man Qing's student from Taiwan came. Some of the invitees were not able to come such as Ji Hong Bin who is over eighty years old, but his student and association representative came. Also, a group of Xu Ri Zhong's students came. So you were able to come here and see that even though all are Taiji and many are Yang style, they are all not the same. We could learn from them and broaden our horizons. But it does not exist who is good and who is bad or who is right and who is wrong because history has created this condition. The purpose for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary was to further widen our outlook. We are all friends and were able to increase our knowledge of Taijiquan through being together and observing.

We need to understand that regardless of how you look at it, all Taiji practitioners are of one family. It should not be as it was in the past when people were suspicious of each other and would create trouble. This is not good. We need to support one another. Through exhibitions like the one just held in Taiyuan we can see that each kind of Taiji has its advantages. For example, if you like Li Ya Xuan, you can practice Li Ya Xuan's style of Taiji. Whichever kind you like then practice that one. Our goals are

all the same: conditioning the body and improving health; and further developing the cause of Taijiquan.

In looking at the Taijiquan cause now, why has it been able to receive the great attention and encouragement from the National Sports Ministry? It is because Taiji benefits mankind, with many people using Taijiquan as a method for maintaining health. This is a very meaningful thing. So we work today in order to better develop this activity. It is easy to understand why it has been able to develop so well already. Not only do people practice, but after a certain time of practice they also teach. Through this way Taijiquan scope gradually increases with more and more practitioners.

We hope that the overall skill level can continuously develop. In looking at it now, it has developed relatively well and we hope it can be even better. Now there are many Taiji hobbyists. But with the increase in practitioners, teachers are relatively lacking. People who

practice really well are still not that many. So now we have a duty to better disseminate Taiji technique, allowing even more practitioners to improve their practice and make their bodies even healthier.

**JB:** *What is the current overall state of Taijiquan in China?*

YZD: Looking at the present state, Chinese martial arts, and especially Taijiquan, are developing quite well in China as evidenced by the development of the Shanxi Association. The Shanxi Association is broad in scope with over 30,000 members and 80 branches. At the Shanxi Association annual competitions, there has been a clear increase in the number of participants each year. Not only is the growth in the Shanxi Association related to the members' hard work, but also to the general growth of Taiji in Shanxi Province and throughout China. Taijiquan is precisely in accordance with the needs of society and therefore the country has called upon everyone to practice Taijiquan, creating many opportunities to do so. The National Sports Ministry has attached importance to Taiji and it organizes events like the ten thousand person demonstrations. Especially after the appearance of Fa Lun Gong, everybody practices Taijiquan in order to boycott Fa Lun Gong. Not only are middle-aged people practicing, but also now many youth practice Taiji, especially Yang style.

Another reason that Yang style has developed well in China relates to the creation of the nationalized forms. The origin of these forms is Yang style, with some fa jin from Chen style and hand techniques from other styles added in later. Generally speaking the foundation still is Yang style. All these reasons contribute to the successful growth of Yang style Taijiquan in Shanxi. Shanxi Province is the birthplace of xingyiquan and there should be a lot of xingyiquan practitioners, but in Taiyuan it is seldom seen as most people practice Taijiquan. So, the development of Shanxi's Taijiquan, when looking at the whole country, has been quite good.

The overall development of Taijiquan in China can best be exemplified by recent ten thousand man events. In China there have been three different ten thousand-man events. The first time this

kind of large exhibition was held was in Beijing's Tian An Men Square in the late 1990's. The second one was in Sanya and the third was in Hong Kong.

In March 2001, the "First World Taijiquan and Health Congress" was held in Sanya (a city located on Hainan Island in the south of China). This congress, organized by the Chinese Martial Arts Association, was the grandest in scale ever held in China with over four thousand athletes alone and over ten thousand total participants. For just the Japanese there were over three hundred, with many people from other countries as well. The National Sports Ministry invited Yang Jun and I to demonstrate, give lectures and hold classes. We were warmly welcomed by everyone.

In Hong Kong in December of 2001 the "Ten Thousand Man Taijiquan Assembly" was held. The Chinese Martial Arts Association and the National Sports Ministry sent people to participate in this event. I and people from other styles, including Chen style's Chen Zhen Lei, served as the representative members. At this time, the Chinese Martial Arts Association specifically established a representative team for Chinese martial arts. Once in Hong Kong, Yang Jun and I also demonstrated and taught classes.

At the Sanya meeting Li Jie, the Chairman of the Chinese Martial Arts Association and Director of the Center for TaijiQuan Events, declared that China should make Taijiquan activities more widespread. And, two years ago the month of May was proclaimed "Taiji Month". At this time there was an even more widespread calling on everyone to practice Taijiquan, resulting in the recruitment of even more students. So, at present, the condition of Taijiquan is very good, with many practitioners.

**JB:** *The National Sports Ministry has been so active in the development of Taijiquan. Why did they decide to implement a ranking system?*

YZD: The ranking system is new and has just been put into place. It was assimilated from foreign experience, possibly Japanese judo and karate. Through it you have an evaluation of your gongfu. From rankings athletes have an appraisal and a comparison. It is good for the athletes as well as for the people who work in the martial arts field. Not only is it based on the martial arts



aspects, which are concerned with conditioning and health, but it is also based on the requirement to produce written works, leaving behind your experiences for future generations. Advancement is step by step, finally arriving at the highest realm. Your skill improves, and your knowledge of theory improves as well. The goal of rising to higher levels creates a stimulus and generates an impetus to improve. These are the basic principles of the ranking system.

**JB:** *In the old days in China, was it not the custom of people with talent to conceal their skills? Therefore, is the ranking system for Taiji not in accordance with the traditional customs?*

**YZD:** I feel this does not matter. It is not at all like the Daoists. Mainly it is a way to provide a promoting function enabling athletes to improve. The problem is not that great.

**JB:** *What hurdles does the International Association still have to clear?*

**YZD:** The International Association needs to do the organizational work well. The organizational aspects are very important. During these years Yang Jun and I have continuously worked on the organization of the Association and it looks pretty good now. In only a few years it has developed to 24 centers, which is not very easy. To be able to have today's success is due to everyone's support. This is to say that without a common language, it would not be possible. Because everyone has the same aspirations of wanting to practice and explore TaiJiQuan, it has been able to develop internationally.

**YJ:** Now, one of the main problems for the International Association is organizational in nature. How can everyone gather together in order to better develop Taiji? The task is to coordinate the centers and the Association. Because everyone is so far apart and people have different ways of thinking, occasional conflicts arise. Another main problem is how can the Association better popularize and develop Taijiquan, allowing even more people to participate in its practice?

In general, the Association has developed fairly well in its first few years with many people applying to open centers. We are even more diligent than

before as we have some experience now. In the very beginning, we did not have much experience and developed too quickly making it impossible to immediately deal with all the problems. Now, we are gradually maturing but we still don't have a lot of experience. We must depend on each other's support and help because one person cannot do the work alone. In order to work well, everybody must come together.

**JB:** *Why did you decide to establish the International Association in America?*

**YZD:** From the facts, we selected America for the headquarters of the International Association because it is large and TaiJi has developed well there. It is a comparatively democratic country with better overall conditions, including economic and geographical factors. It is not very convenient to travel to China from some countries but is convenient to travel to America from both Europe and South America. Using America as a base for the International Yang Style Taijiquan Association is good for the development of Taijiquan.

**JB:** *What are your plans now after the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration?*

**YZD:** My age is gradually increasing. There is a Chinese saying to the effect that the mind is willing, but the body is not strong enough. That is to say my spirit is not as plentiful as it was in the past. Now, from many aspects, my physical strength is lacking. But, I still need to try my best. Both at home and abroad, I still need to participate in some events when necessary. But, my strength is not full as it once was.

**JB:** *Do you think you will ever retire?*

**YZD:** Regarding my work I retired early, but regarding this Taiji undertaking, it still cannot be said that I have completely retired. For example in the Shanxi Association, even though I am old and my energy is limited, I still need to manage some things. But, I try to do less and try to let the younger people do more. And for the International Association I still need to travel to other countries to help develop it.

**JB:** *When you look back on your career, what are the highlights for you?*

**YZD:** For many years now I have frequently traveled to Europe, North

America, and South America, but I still feel the deepest impression of all is from the recent events in Sanya in Hainan, and in Hong Kong. China has organized three ten thousand-man events and I have been able to participate in two of them. And, for both I have been fortunate enough to serve as the representative head of the Yang family. I feel very honored and happy to have participated in them, especially the Sanya event. There, of all the different representatives of Taijiquan selected by the National Sports Ministry, I was the eldest.

Time has not overlooked me and my life has passed extremely fast. Regardless of how you look at it and how much time you say is left, I have already lived over half my life and it is not possible that I have a lot of time remaining. In the past children called me "uncle". Later they called me "uncle" using a term which meant older than their father. Then later they called me "grandpa". Now, when some kids see me they call me "old grandpa". All this illustrates that my age is becoming advanced. At seventy-seven years old, I was the eldest among the teachers in Sanya. To have seen the great development of Taijiquan at the Sanya event, my heart felt immensely grateful and happy.

**JB:** *One last question. Everyone knows you have provided a great contribution to Taijiquan. How do you feel about this?*

**YZD:** Regarding Yang style Taijiquan, my great-grandfather created it. But, up until my father's time, no one in the family had traveled to foreign countries. Later, some disciples took Taijiquan abroad, but actual members of the Yang family were not able to travel abroad. From the bottom of my heart I feel very happy to be doing this work, to disseminate it. But, in my generation, I have been able to travel to many countries, providing a contribution to mankind. So when I think back on this point, I see that we serve as the representatives of the Yang family, taking what my great-grandfather created and introducing and spreading it to the peoples of the world. I feel that this is very meaningful. We popularize what my grandfather created. ☯

(Special thanks to Jeremy Blodgett for his excellent work on this interview. Look forward in our next issue to part 2 of his conversation with the Masters, wherein Master Yang reminisces about his early days of training and offers his insights into developing skills and improving one's practice.)



# THE 13 FORM

by Master Yang Zhen duo



1. Opening



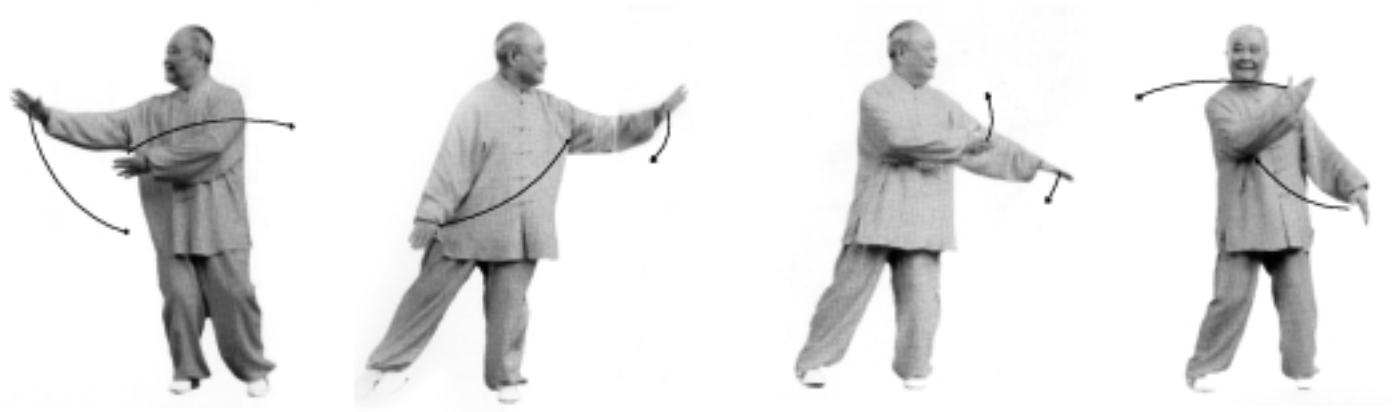
2. Wave Hands like Clouds,  
(one sequence only)



3. Single Whip







4. Punch under Elbow

5. White Crane Spreads its Wings



6. Brush Knee and Push



7. Hands Strum the Lute



8. High Pat on Horse



9. Thrust Palm



11. Step Forward, Parry, Block and Punch





10. Turn Body and Chop with Fist



12. Step Forward, Grasp the Bird's Tail



13. Cross Hands and Closing



# 10 PUNTI ESSENZIALI DEL TAI CHI CHUAN

Trasmessi oralmente da Yang Chenfu a Chen Weiming

## 1 - VUOTO, PRESENZA MENTALE, ALLINEARE LA TESTA VERSO L'ALTO PORTANDO L'ENERGIA ALLA SOMMITÀ\*

"Spingere verso l'alto l'energia (o con energia)" significa che la posizione della testa è allineata ed eretta e lo spirito si infonde fino alla sommità. Non dovrete usare la forza muscolare, altrimenti la parte posteriore del collo tenderà ad irrigidirsi e la circolazione del sangue e dell'energia non potrà essere libera e naturale. La vostra intenzione deve essere vuota, viva, presente (o libera) e naturale. Senza un atteggiamento mentale vuoto, vivo, libero e presente con la spinta energetica verso l'alto, noi non saremo in grado di elevare il nostro spirito.

## 2 - TRATTENERE IL TORACE E STIRARE LA SCHIENA

La frase "trattenere il torace all'interno" significa che il petto (o il torace) deve essere rilassato e leggermente richiamato all'interno favorendo la discesa del chi o energia vitale nel basso campo del cinabro (dan tian). Il petto non si deve espandere (o gonfiare) altrimenti il chi si blocca nella regione del torace rendendo pesante la parte superiore del corpo e leggera quella inferiore. Questa causerà facilmente una sensazione di galleggiamento nei talloni. "Stirare la schiena" significa fare aderire il chi ad essa. Se voi siete in grado di tenere il torace rilassato e leggermente richiamato all'interno sarete anche naturalmente capaci di stirare la schiena. Se siete capaci di stirare la schiena allora sarete in grado di emettere la forza dalla colonna vertebrale senza che gli altri possano opporvisi.

## 3 - RILASSARE LA VITA

La vita è la guida (il comandante) di tutto il corpo. Soltanto dopo avere imparato a rilassare la vita le gambe avranno forza e la parte inferiore del corpo sarà stabile. Ogni alternanza di vuoto e pieno deriva dalla rotazione del bacino. Da qui il detto: la fonte perenne del destino dipende dal piccolo interstizio del bacino.\*\* Se c'è carenza di forza nella vostra forma ne dovete trovare le cause nel bacino e nelle gambe.

## 4 - DISTINGUERE IL PIENO E IL VUOTO

Nell'arte del Tai Chi Chuan distinguere il pieno dal vuoto è la prima regola. Se il peso dell'intero corpo è sulla gamba destra questa è considerata "piena" e la gamba sinistra "vuota". Se il peso dell'intero corpo è sulla gamba sinistra, allora questa è considerata "piena e la gamba destra "vuota". Soltanto dopo avere compreso la distinzione di pieno e vuoto i movimenti di rotazione saranno leggeri, morbidi, rilassati e quasi senza sforzo; se voi non siete in grado di fare questa distinzione le vostre posizioni saranno pesanti e rigide (o impacciate), non sarete in grado di essere stabili e per un opponente sarà facile controllarvi.

## 5 - ABBASSARE LE SPALLE E FARE SCENDERE I GOMITI

Abbassare le spalle significa essere in grado di rilassarle, aprirle e lasciarle cadere naturalmente verso il basso. Se voi non siete in grado di tenerle rilassate verso il basso queste si alzeranno comportando una risalita del chi verso l'alto causando una mancanza (insufficienza) di forza nell'intero corpo. Abbassare (lasciare cadere) i gomiti significa rilassarli e lasciarli andare verso il basso. Se i gomiti sono alzati le spalle non possono affondare ed essere abbassate. In questo modo non saremo in grado di spingere una persona molto lontano. E' come "interrompere" il flusso di energia nelle arti marziali esterne.\*\*\*

\* Questa frase composta da quattro caratteri è probabilmente la più difficile da tradurre di tutta la letteratura del Tai Chi. Consideriamo ognuna di queste quattro parole in modo da assumere la funzione di predicato o frase-verbo. Un altro approccio evidentemente corretto sarebbe quello di considerare le prime due come avverbio e le ultime due come soggetto-predicato: "Vuota e viva, la sommità è energetica". Sono ancora possibili molte altre interpretazioni.

\*\* Nel pensiero cinese la vita tende ad essere considerata come lo spazio contenuto tra due vertebre piuttosto che una fascia circolare nella parte centrale del corpo.

\*\*\* E' pensiero comune che le arti marziali esterne come lo Shaolin usano l'energia da diverse parti o sezioni del corpo, contrariamente al concetto di energia "dell'intero corpo" del Tai Chi Chuan.



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