

# Tai Chi Chuan

45 / WINTER 2020





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YANG FAMILY  
TAI CHI



JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL YANG FAMILY TAI CHI CHUAN ASSOCIATION

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## Master Yang Jun's 2020 Seminars

A seminar with Master Yang Jun is a fun, inspiring learning experience that you will never forget. It is one of the very best ways to quickly improve your skill and understanding of Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan. His great ability to clearly teach the finer points of tai chi chuan and link tai chi theory to practice will help you learn how to perform the movements and understand in depth why they are performed the way they are. This greater depth of understanding will allow you to refine your own daily practice of tai chi chuan long after the seminar is over so you can continue to improve. Grandmaster Yang Jun's precise, clear teaching style and his patient, kind personality makes him a favorite teacher for many Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan practitioners around the world. Attending a seminar is also a great way to meet new friends who share your love of tai chi chuan.

### JANUARY 31 - FEBRUARY 4

— Bothell, WA USA —

#### DIRECTORS AND INSTRUCTORS SEMINAR

Contact: Fang Hong  
fanghong@msn.com

### FEBRUARY 15 & 16

— Redmond, WA USA —  
Seattle YFTC Center

#### PUSH HANDS

Contact: Nancy Lucero  
Phone: +1(425) 202-6140  
seminar@yangtaichiseattle.com  
www.jotform.com  
/81077612315149/

### FEBRUARY 29 - MARCH 4

— Kunming, Yunnan China —

#### DISCIPLE TRAINING

Contact: Fang Hong  
Phone: +1(425) 869-1185  
fanghong@msn.com

### MARCH 13 - 15

— Chengdu, Sichuan China —

#### TRADITIONAL HAND FORM

Contact: Fang Hong  
fanghong@msn.com

### MARCH 20 - 22

— Cuernavaca, Mexico —

#### SWORD FORM

Contact: Daniel Corona  
Phone: +52 5556735682  
daniel@yangfamilytaichi.com  
kungfu.com.mx

### APRIL 11 - 15

— Paris, France —

#### April 11 - 13 HAND FORM

#### April 14 PUSH HANDS

#### April 15 SABRE FORM

Contact: Duc Nguyen Minh  
Phone: +33-(0)9- 620 683 65  
duc@yangfamilytaichi.com  
clubchevry2.com/tai-chi3

### MAY 1 - 3

— Sao Paulo, Brazil —

#### Instructor: Master Fang Hong ESSENTIAL FORM

Contact: Angela Soci  
Phone: +55 11 3884 8943  
angela@yangfamilytaichi.com  
www.sbtcc.org.br/cursos

### MAY 23 - 24

— Galicia, Spain —

#### HAND FORM

Contact: Miguel Angel Rojo  
Phone: 0034 670 24 95 54  
budo@newstyle.e.telefonica.net  
www.taiji-quan.es

### MAY 29 - JUNE 1

— Rome, Italy —

#### MAY 29 SABER

#### MAY 30-31 HAND FORM

#### JUNE 1 PUSH HANDS

Contact: Anna Siniscalco  
Tel: +39 068610590  
+39 3473405939  
anna@yangfamilytaichi.com

### JULY 1 - 5

— Winchester, Va U.S.A. —

#### July 1 TAI CHI GONG

#### July 2 - 4 TRADITIONAL

#### HAND FORM

#### July 5 PUSH HANDS

Contact: Pat Rice  
Phone: 1 (540) 667-7595  
atocrice@verizon.net  
www.shentaijiwushu.com

### SEPTEMBER 4 - 6

— Danbury, CT USA —

#### TTM-1: ESSENTIAL FORM

Contact: Mari Lewis  
mari@yangfamilytaichi.com

### OCTOBER 10 - 13

— Siegen, Germany —

#### October 10 - 12 HAND FORM

#### October 13 PUSH HANDS

Contact: Uli Hoffmann  
Phone: 49-271-22550  
ulihoffmann@  
taiji-schule-siegen.de  
www.taiji-schule-siegen.de

### OCTOBER 16 - 18

— Rome, Italy —

#### INSTRUCTOR SEMINAR

Contact: Claudio Mingarini  
Phone: 39068610590  
claudio@yangfamilytaichi.com  
www.taichiyangfamily.it

### NOVEMBER 7 - 8

— San Ciprián - Lugo, Galicia,  
Spain —

#### HAND FORM

Contact: Miguel Angel Rojo  
Phone: 0034 670 24 95 54  
budo@newstyle.e.telefonica.net  
www.taiji-quan.es

### NOVEMBER 19 - 22

— Sao Paulo, Brazil —

#### NOV. 19 PUSH HANDS

#### NOV. 20-22 TRADITIONAL

#### HAND FORM

Contact: Angela Soci  
Phone: +55 11 3884 8943  
angela@yangfamilytaichi.com  
www.sbtcc.org.br/cursos



If you wish to host a seminar, please send your request to Head Office at [info@yangfamilytaichi.com](mailto:info@yangfamilytaichi.com).

# President's Letter



YANG FAMILY  
TAI CHI



**YANG JUN, President**

*Transcribed by Edward Moore*

**A**t the end of May 2019, thanks to everyone's support and help, we put on the third International Tai Chi Chuan Symposium in Selvino, Italy. People from 22 countries joined us at this event. Many people really worked together to prepare and support this symposium. The teaching seminars of the masters ran very smoothly and the people who attended them found the teaching very helpful. The academic presentations of the scientists also went very well, and the information presented was valuable and interesting. People enjoyed the events that we organized and we brought the whole tai chi family together for the opening ceremony. The Regional Governor who manages several provinces was there, and the mayor also gave a speech to congratulate our group on the event. People also shared their culture and performed on the stage, and this was one of the warmest moments of the symposium. I was very excited to see people from different nations performing their cultural expressions because it made me feel that we can cross different culture backgrounds to meet together. Tai chi comes from China, but belongs to the world.





“ Next year is my grandfather’s 95<sup>th</sup> birthday, and we would like to host another Yang Style Tai Chi Tournament. Yang Family Tai Chi has been handed down through the generations of the Yang family since Yang Luchan, and we have been able to spread Yang Family Tai Chi all over the world because of my grandfather. ”

This year has been one of the most challenging years. After we finished with the Symposium, we traveled to China to focus on several big events there. The Yang Style Tai Chi Tournament was hosted in Linfen, Shanxi Province. This is the first tournament we have held since we started to organize in China. This event also helped to spread Yang Family Tai Chi in China. More than 1500 participants and 147 groups joined this tournament. This event was hosted for three days from Oct 12-14th. The mayor and the Senator came to congratulate us on the event, and the chairman of the Shanxi Martial Arts Association also attended the opening. The director of the sports office from Linfen city also attended. We had teams from 23 different provinces at this tournament. This time, the tournament was only for Yang Style Tai Chi practitioners. We would also like

to create a high level of tournament for the Yang Family soon since we have had so much success spreading Yang Family Tai Chi in China.

Next year is my grandfather’s 95<sup>th</sup> birthday, and we would like to host another Yang Style Tai Chi Tournament. Yang family Tai Chi has been handed down through the generations of the Yang Family since Yang Luchan, and we have been able to spread Yang Family Tai Chi all over the world because my grandfather. Yang Zhenduo was the first Yang family member to travel to the West and teach there. My grandfather started to spread tai chi in the 1980’s to the West, and today many people’s lives have been affected through tai chi because of his contribution. My grandfather is also the longest living member of the Yang family. Next year is his 95 years birthday, and we want to gather together as a tai chi family

to celebrate and share our culture in China. His birthday party will be held on August 9th, and on August 11th we will start the tai chi tournament. We would like for everyone to bring their own national culture to his birthday party and perform something for the opening ceremony. I hope that all of the foreign visitors will organize a team to perform during the ceremony, and I would like each of you to join the international group to perform at this event.

Next July, I will be travelling to North America to celebrate the anniversary of 30 years since my grandfather began to teach there. Pat Rice is the one who invited my grandfather and me to the US in July of 1990, and next July we will host an anniversary celebration in Winchester VA. We would like for everyone who has studied with my grandfather to join us in this special celebration. ☯



The The International Tai Chi Chuan Symposium in Italy was an unforgettable, positive, and encouraging experience.

# The International Tai Chi Chuan Symposium

**BY ANNA SINISCALCO**  
**Yang Yamei**  
*Director of IYFTCCA  
Rome affiliated school  
Insieme Per fare*

**B**eing able to meet the direct representatives of the officially recognized traditional styles is a fundamental opportunity for a tai chi chuan practitioner and researcher, and it is so rare to have it take place in your own country.

“ It is really inspiring to be able to grasp the particular aspects of each different style, while at the same time to witness their common roots, just as Master Yang Zhenduo said, “all the practitioners of tai chi chuan are part of one big family”. ”

I remember when I first started practicing tai chi chuan. In Italy there were no schools or masters who were in direct contact with the Yang family. It was 1996 when I was lucky enough to meet my first tai chi teacher, Claudio Mingarini. Already an expert teacher in various styles of kung fu, he was constantly searching for the sources of the teachings he had received, and in particular, he was looking for the origins of Yang style Tai Chi Chuan.

Believing in the value of the sources of a discipline, and recognizing the greatness of the opportunity to know and study with a master of a true lineage, I decided to commit myself to realize a dream, to bring Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan to Italy. Working hard alongside Claudio Mingarini in 1998, we brought Master Yang Zhenduo and his grandson Master Yang Jun to Italy, organizing the first tai chi chuan seminar directed by Master Yang Zhenduo and Master Yang Jun, from the 8th to the 14th of June. Master Yang Jun is now the 5th generation lineage holder of Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan.

Twenty years ago it was very difficult to get in touch with a Chinese master. Just think about the bureaucracy, the difficulty of finding Chinese language interpreters, and the fact that YouTube did not yet exist. Furthermore, nobody had ever seen a member of the Yang family practicing or teaching in Italy.

Little was known about tai chi chuan, and only in very restricted environments. For many people, a tai chi practitioner was something to talk about in social gatherings, and little was known about the effects of this practice on health.

After 20 years, medical research has made significant progress in understanding and enhancing this discipline. Since 2005, YouTube has become a showcase of videos and interviews of various kinds and quality. With social networks you are in immediate contact with the whole world, and a lot of information can be shared in real time.

From that first seminar of 1998, Master Yang Jun wanted to realize an even bigger dream for us Italians: the symposium. Thanks to the work of the director of the Yang Family Tai Chi

Center of Milan, Giuseppe Turturo, and of Rome, Claudio Mingarini, the extraordinary dedication of Ylaria Fiora, all the volunteers and supporters, students, teachers, directors of affiliated schools and center directors, the International Tai Chi Chuan Symposium in Selvino gave us the opportunity to meet the current masters of Chen, Wu, Wu Hao, Sun and He styles, thus experiencing the value of meeting a master and hearing his teachings first-hand.

It is really inspiring to be able to grasp the particular aspects of each different style, while at the same time to witness their common roots, just as Master Yang Zhenduo said, “all the practitioners of tai chi chuan are part of one big family”.

And there at the international Tai Chi Chuan Symposium, like a big family, we shared ideas, training, proposals, and projects. Much has been done in the field of research, and much more will be done. It feels good to share and grow, drawing tradition, science and people together. ☯





**T**he Yang Family Tai Chi Awards are presented at a special event that occurs during the International Tai Chi Chuan Symposium. These awards recognize the many contributions of our association members. Thank you for your hard work and dedication!

## 2019 RECIPIENTS

### PRESIDENT'S AWARD

*For outstanding commitment and service to the association*

**Fang Hong Laoshi**

**Pam Boyde**

**Han Hoong Wang**

**Ray Tom**

### DIRECTORS AWARD

*For significant contributions to the growth and development of the Association*

**Fernando De Lazzari**

**Duc Nguyen Minh**

**Claudio Mingarini**

**Giuseppe Turturo**

**Angela Soci**

### ASSOCIATION AWARD

*For outstanding support and participation in YFTC events*

**Martine Salane**

**Mari Lewis**

**Edward Moore**

**Andy Lee**

**Carolyn Fung**

### PRESIDENT'S AWARD OF RECOGNITION

**Ylaria Giorgia**

*Fiora, chief Administrator and Manager*

**Giuseppe Turturo,**

*VP and Director of Marketing and Fundraising*

**Fang Hong,**

*Chief Financial Officer*

**Pam Boyde,**

*Senior VP and Director of Program Development*

**Claudio Mingarini,**

*Financial Officer-Italy and Director of Volunteers*

### PRESIDENT'S CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION

**Ray Tom,**

*Symposium Executive Committee*

**Fernando De Lazzari,**

*Director of the Yang Family Tai Chi Cup*

**Mihály Vadas,**

*Director of Productions*

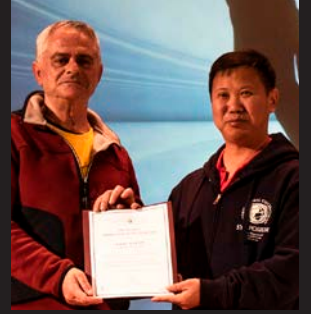
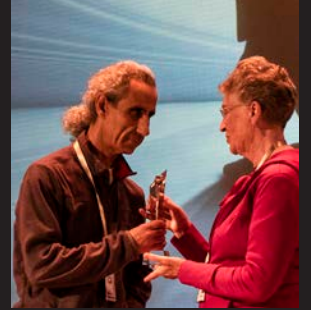
**Dan Schulz,**

*Director of the Academic Program*

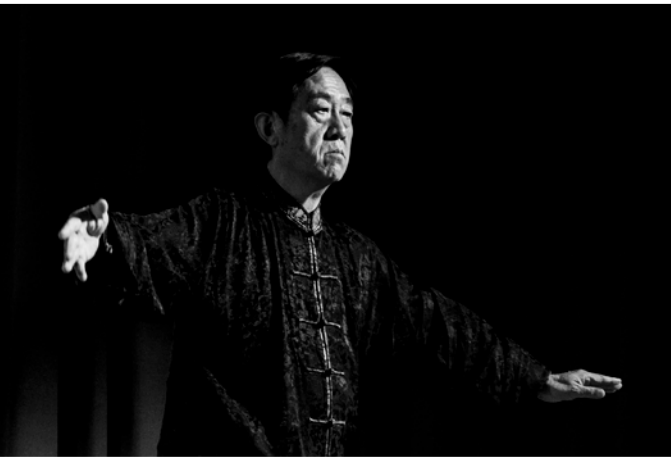
**Pat Rice,**

*Chief of Tournament*

















# THE INAUGURAL YANG FAMILY TAI CHI CUP

INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENT OF YANG STYLE TAI CHI CHUAN

BY: **FERNANDO DE LAZZARI**

杨雅信 Yang Yaxin

EQUILIBRIUS - Centro de Tai Chi Chuan

On May 26<sup>th</sup> of this year, the inaugural Yang Family Tai Chi Cup took place in Selvino city in Italy during the 2019 International Tai Chi Chuan Symposium. It was a special event that invited all practitioners of Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan to come together in friendly competition. It was the first time that the many schools of Yang Tai Chi Chuan have gathered in one place. The tournament was a reunion of Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan players that demonstrated the interesting diversity of variations that have developed from many generations of family members and disciples.

Many Yang Family Tai Chi association members took part and many of them applied for duan ranking levels as part of their participation in the tournament.





The tournament was for both individuals and groups with events in Hand Form, Sword and Saber forms. The categories were in five divisions for both Males and Females:

**TAI CHI CHUAN: HAND FORM**

- Yang Family Essential Form
- Simplified 24 movement
- Other Yang Style

**TAI CHI JIAN: SWORD FORM**

- Yang Family Tai Chi Sword
- Other Yang Style Tai Chi Sword

**TAI CHI DAO: SABER**

- Yang Family Tai Chi Saber
- Other Yang Style Tai Chi Saber

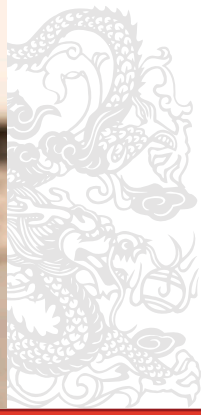


It was an incredible and memorable event where we could see many beautiful tai chi performances from around 100 different practitioners. They showed us the beauty and grace of tai chi chuan and the audience loved it.

We will definitely have more events like this in our future, and everyone in the association is looking forward to this. We hope to see you there! ☯







An Interview with Grand Master Yang Jun about the history and Importance of Yāo Fǎ (Waist methods) in Traditional Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan

# XING-YI'S FIST, BAGUA'S FOOTWORK, TAI CHI'S WAIST

形意拳, 八卦步, 太极腰  
XÍNGYÌ QUÁN, BĀGUÀ BÙ, TÀIJÍ YĀO

INTERVIEW BY: **MEGHADAB ABDI**  
(YANG Yǎ SHÈNG 杨雅笙)

**M**y first encounter with the methods of training the waist in Yang Family Tai Chi made me feel extremely happy. Tai chi always has a surprise for you, each step you take you can understand there are endless other things to learn and experience and this for me is a source of joy and happiness. I felt that I was being taught the missing link I was searching for in my tai chi practice, the skill that could guide me toward the next step (to become hard). When Shifu, Master Yang Jun, was explaining the methods in detail and performing them, I could

see how far one's skill could go if he or she would dedicate enough time to master these methods, although it's not easy to do so. I decided to learn more about the waist methods, about its history, benefits, and key points. This led me to ask Shifu to kindly answer my questions in the form of an interview. I would like to sincerely thank Shifu for his time, for his patience during the interview and for sharing these precious insights with all of us. It's because of him that we have the valuable opportunity to grow continuously. Thank you Shifu!



MA: Would you please share with us what Yāo Fǎ (waist methods) are?

GMY: When we are practicing tai chi chuan, one important area is about how we turn the soft into the hard, and this requires our whole body coordination. About coordination in theory, in the classics there are many parts that already mention the waist. When we say coordination, one part is physical coordination, external coordination, and that would be how the footwork (步法, bù fǎ), the body techniques (身法 命意愿头在腰隙) and the hand techniques (手法 shǒu fǎ) are all coordinated together. The key point in coordinating these three things is the waist. This shows the importance of the waist methods. That's why in theory it is said "use your waist to lead the four limbs to go" and "your waist is like the life source of the energy" because it really controls the energy. And sometimes they say the waist is the dominator that controls your energy's release and even the position you are heading to release the energy. That's why the waist is so important. It's because of the coordination. We need the energy to be changed from soft to hard.

MA: Explain more about the sentence "The life source is in the waist area" which is mentioned in the Ten Principles.

GMY: This sentence in Chinese is 命意源头在腰隙 (mìng yì yuán tóu zài yāo xì.) It is more like the life source depends on the waist. It is not referring to the energy source. The energy has two sources: Externally, from your feet, which is the root, and internally, which is related with your dantian (丹田) area, and is how you manage your breathing and coordinate your internal with the external together. That is what this sentence is talking about. It is difficult to translate this sentence into English. So the energy source comes from the root which is the feet, and the waist is where you control the energy.

MA: Can we consider the dantian to be this life source?

GMY: The dantian is a little bit lower than the area we consider as the waist. Where we call the waist is on the back, some people like to say it is where the mingmen (命门) point is. But I consider it as an area rather than a point. It is on the back, the area that is pushed out when we relax the waist. That is what we call the waist area. The dantian is different. It is internal, more like the center of the abdominal area. So we can't say that the position of the dantian is the same as the position of the waist. They are different. I think you also learned from Chinese medicine that the dantian is a key point, I don't want to say acupuncture point, but more like an energy source, like qì hǎi (气海), the ocean of qi, which is where you are going to store. More like a prenatal area, as we say in abdominal breathing. To relax this area and have the open-close motion, and through this abdominal breathing, the qi can sink into the dantian. The waist is considered external in relation to the dantian, which is internal.

MA: What are the origins of this practice, and when did it appear in Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan? How it evolved through time?

GMY: This is hard to say because the waist has always been an important subject. It's hard to say who in the Yang family is the originator of this, I cannot even say who is the founder of tai chi. Since the very beginning, the classics already mentioned it, and it has been there since the founding of tai chi chuan and has been important ever since. So we didn't really change the priority and importance of waist method over time so that it would gradually become important. It has been important since the beginning. Therefore, for sure the waist training has always been important. When you are learning tai chi chuan in class, no matter how much the teacher understands tai chi chuan, they all mention that the waist is important. And sometimes they don't even know how to train the waist, but they still mention that it is important. Because the classics mention it from the very beginning and provide a very clear definition, how you move, how you involve the waist, it's all mentioned there. So I will not say that this is Yang Family's special method.

MA: Although the importance of the waist is already mentioned in the classics, how does training the waist differ between the families of tai chi?

GMY: Yes, about how to train the waist, every style has its own method. However, I can say that they are quite similar. For instance, I compared Yang style's method with Chen style and it is basically similar. I also compared with the Wu/Hao style and I can see they use a lot of vertical methods in their movements. I would say that the Wu style is very similar to Yang style. So regarding the waist methods in each style you can see differences and similarities as well. Therefore, if you understand the overall method of training the waist, it doesn't matter what style you are practicing, you can still use it. Actually, I teach some practitioners who practice Chen style and they can adopt it.

MA: So the waist training methods have always been a major part of all the traditional schools of tai chi chuan, right?

GMY: Yes, because tai chi theory doesn't mention any particular style. Besides, before the 1940s, there was no such thing as different styles, it was simply called tai chi chuan. They really didn't say Yang style, and so on. After the new China came to be, people started to differentiate between the styles based on what they could see from the family representatives. It's not good that today we have so many styles. There are more and more people saying I'm this style, or I'm that style. In my personal opinion, I don't like that we are going in the direction of separation rather than of union. We should be one big family. This is my personal understanding, and if we want to do great things we have to be unified, not too much divided. It's the same as when we practice tai chi chuan: arms, feet, waist and different parts of the body are different and we practice to make them unified together. So many of the tai chi chuan styles' methods are connected with our life.

MA: So now that you mentioned the division that has happened among the styles, and considering the importance of unification and the disadvantages of division, I have a question. Right now in Yang style we have the traditional Yang Family style, and the disciples of different generations also teach slightly different versions. In particular, the Beijing form (24 movement form of Standard tai chi chuan) and similar styles that appeared after 1956, look like Yang style but they do not follow all the principles of Yang Family and despite the similarities, there are obvious differences. Do you think when teaching students, we should not emphasize the traditional characteristics of Yang Family Tai Chi and not try hard to make them aware of the differences in order to let them know the authentic Yang style? To value the similarities but to be aware of the differences, do you think this should be done?

GMY: There is a history about this. When the 24 form was created, there were a lot of negative opinions and people were thinking that this is going to destroy the traditional arts. There were lots of arguments during the 1950s, 60s, 70s, even 80s, and people talked a lot about this. I believe even today that there are still some teachers who have negative opinions about the Beijing form or, as some call it, the Modern form. However, in my opinion the 24 form helped tai chi spread a lot. It did a lot of promotion. Today, when we talk about tai chi chuan, what exactly do we mean? To different people, it has different meanings, and how can one say that I practice the real tai chi chuan? We cannot define that anymore. Also, people practice tai chi chuan for different purposes, and I believe most people who are practicing tai chi chuan consider it as one form of exercise and mainly for improving their health. There are around 5 to 10 percent of practitioners who are pursuing tai chi chuan as a martial art. They are very much involved with the tradition, theory, understanding its philosophy. And some people use tai chi chuan for the understanding of life, using its philosophy to understand life and extend the practice into their lives. This group of practitioners are no more than 10 percent of all tai chi chuan practitioners. Most people practice tai chi to have some exercise, and I would say if these people do not have the wish to understand more about what tai chi is, we cannot say that what they do is not tai chi, right? So you still should consider their practice as tai chi. They are doing tai chi as well. This is regarding the 24 form and those kind of forms. If they meet their purpose, then it's tai chi for them. I really don't want to limit anyone who



practices. For example, someone says I'm a practitioner and then you say, "no, no, you are not doing tai chi." This is not the correct way to do it and I don't like this. One thing is clear, you should appreciate the way you are doing tai chi and appreciate how others are doing it. We don't want to bring in negativity and to say I follow the traditional way, you follow the modern way. I don't really want to go that direction; we can share. They can show their beautiful performances and the difficult moves they do that is for the demonstration and competition purposes and the traditional way can share its beauty that is more connected with culture, theory, philosophy, and principles. We should appreciate the way everyone is doing it, then we can be together. If we argue who is better and so on, then we would spend all of our time arguing. Therefore, in my opinion we should self-appreciate and appreciate the practice of others, and we can then be unified together this way. This is my personal opinion.

MA: What are the shared characteristics of the waist methods of different styles? Are there any unique characteristics specific to the Yang Family waist methods as compared to other styles' waist methods?

GMY: I would say all styles have these methods; they all have horizontal, vertical and mixed circles. Sometimes, because the performing characteristic of a style is different, they use one circle more than the other. For example, I see that in Wu/Hao style they use a lot of vertical circles, and in Chen style, they use a lot of figure eight (mixed circle) in their movements because they continuously turn left and right, and in order for their energy to be smooth and continuous they have to use the figure eight waist method a lot. This doesn't mean they have this and don't have the other. They have all of it. Because of the performance characteristics of a style, some of these circles might be more obvious to the eye. For example, in most of the Yang style practitioners you can see their waist method as a horizontal circle but this doesn't mean we don't have figure eight or vertical circles. So regarding the waist methods I do not say that it is unique to Yang style and that other styles don't have it. It's not true.

“ In the past, everything about tai chi chuan was kept secret because at that time martial arts were more important, you know, people could take advantage of others if this art was passed on to the wrong hands. ”

MA: As far as my understanding goes, you are the first generation of the Yang family to teach these methods openly to the public. We are indeed very fortunate as students to have the opportunity to learn these skills since in my experience they totally change the way one practices and feels tai chi. Please tell us when did you decide to do that and for what reason.

GMY: In the past, everything about tai chi chuan was kept secret because at that time martial arts were more important, you know, people could take advantage of others if this art was passed on to the wrong hands. As you know, the theory, the classics, everything was secret. They didn't mention it or teach it until they could trust you. This was the requirement of that time, to protect the art as we have always wanted to pass the art to the righteous person and even today it is the same. We always want to find the right person who is righteous and can make the art continue to move forward.

Before the development of other weapons, the sword, saber and staff were quite important. Now they are not that important. You don't see anyone carrying a sword with them anymore. And it is often not legal to carry weapons with you. Today, society is different. The way people live has changed. Lots of people like tai chi and practice it. However, it is not the same way it was in the past. Back then, they practiced full time. Nowadays everybody has a job, and if during the day you have time to practice for one or two hours, you are considered a very serious practitioner. Some people only practice twice a week, some even once a week. Therefore, it doesn't matter what the teacher talks about; if the practitioner doesn't put in the time to practice and would not be able to physically perform it, it is just there, as a theory. It's like having a book that you don't read. You don't know what it says although you have it. That's why the theory gradually became more accessible and open to many, and even though it is open and accessible now we cannot find a lot of people who are good, you know, to be in the top level of tai chi. In the past, a high percentage of practitioners could become good. But today, certainly, martial arts are not as important as they were in the

past. Before, to be an important person, one could become a scholar doing administrative work like officials, or become top level martial artists and become military soldiers and officials like generals and so on. In the past, in order to become a general, you had to be really good in martial arts. Martial art adepts were equally important as scholars, therefore practitioners put in their full time and energy in this direction in order to gain high positions to serve the nation. We don't use this method anymore; things have changed. It's the time of information and people can even use computers as weapons and so on. Tai chi is a perfect way to improve people's health and that's why I say no martial art can be as popular as tai chi. It is not because tai chi is very special or better than all the other martial arts, it's not about that. It is because of its health benefits that more people are involved with tai chi. Therefore, publishing information or teaching methods nowadays is not as important as before. Even if you publish (or teach) everything (about tai chi), people still need to put in a lot of time and energy to practice it like a full time job; only then can they acquire that skill. Otherwise it doesn't matter whether you teach it or not.

**MA:** So today more information and teachings are available but less people dedicate their life to master them, right?

**GM:** Yes, that's one reason. The other is because tai chi chuan is quite popular today. There are more and more teachers teaching it and teachers' levels of skill are quite different. The teachings of some of these instructors are not quite clear. So if we have the correct information, it is better that we share it to make sure people are doing it the right way and this is good for the art to continue.

**MA:** Now that the waist methods are being taught openly, when should students start to practice them? Beginners, or those who have finished learning the 103-movement hand form?

**GM:** Actually, I don't want to put a limit for it. Some people can adopt the horizontal circle very easily and you can teach them that circle. Then later after they can do it you can mention the vertical circle. A lot of people struggle with the vertical circle for a long time. But I don't think the teachers should be limited when to teach the methods to students. The position of students today is different than in the past. Teachers and students are more friendly. In

the past, teachers were in control, and students were over-controlled. Today, students can ask you anything, no matter if you are happy about it or not, and they put pressure on you in order to make you do something. Today, keeping the class interesting for the students and making them feel satisfied have become important factors contributing to our classes' quality. Unsatisfied students, some of whom get hurt sometimes, some fearing the teacher, or feeling that the teacher is not satisfied with them all the time; this is not a good method for spreading tai chi today.

Even though we do have some learning sequence, for instance we recommend to warm up first, then doing still practice (Zhan Zhuang), then practicing the form, then single movement energy explosion practice, not everyone follows this sequence today. Some people feel very satisfied with standing practice. They practice it for too long and then they might not want to practice the form. Some people find standing practice too boring and so they don't do it, and go directly to practice the form. You, as a teacher, cannot say "no, no, you have to practice standing for fifteen minutes", then they will not like it. So today the teachers follow much of the students' wishes. I discussed teaching strategies with Master Chen Xiaowang and he also has this kind of opinion because we have lived in the West and have tried to adopt teaching methods for students with different cultural backgrounds. He told me the same thing. He said "whatever they want to learn, I show them. I want to make them interested in and involved with tai chi in the first place. When they are involved and continue to practice, I tell them you need to go back and do this, then do that and so on, only when they feel they can't do it. So it's not necessary to force them to do things your way. Let them be part of it, to find a balance. If you are totally disconnected and they feel you don't care about them, then they probably won't care about it as well. Maybe they will think tai chi is not right for them and they might quit. I would say this is not generally helpful for the spreading of tai chi."

We cannot use the traditional way of teaching today because it is too hard. Doing standing practices, practicing fundamental skills (基本功 jīběn gōng) to build strength, and foot techniques (步法) for years before the student can begin to learn the form. But today it is different, even learning the



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sequence today is different. Now we teach all of the sequence one time and we use a modified teaching method compared to the traditional one because the traditional way is not going to work in today's society. In the past, teachers only talked a little, they didn't want to teach you that much, they would show it to you a couple of times and asked you to do it and try to feel it. If the student couldn't do it or feel it, they would become unhappy with you, then they beat you. They would perform the application of the movement on you and would hit you and asked you, "do you feel it?" if you say "yes, yes, I feel it", then they would ask you to do it. They talked to you less but they would give you the actual feeling. Today, for sure we are more polite. We cannot do what was done in the past. We do not exactly apply the movements on students, as they might become unhappy, but we intend to explain more. This is today's method. So I would say we shouldn't think that the traditional method should not change. Since the time when Yang Luchan taught the royal family in the Forbidden City in Beijing, the teaching methods have changed, and it has always been changing since then, and I believe in the future it is still going to be changed.

Therefore, we choose the simple way and try not to make people feel it is difficult. We teach them now, and later we can add to it and they would be open and put everything together. The seminar teaching is different because we consider the people participating already have the foundation and are not absolute beginners. So the seminar's teaching methods cannot be used in regular classes. It is more concentrated, designed for a few days' program. We design seminars for people who already have the foundation.

**MA:** What are the benefits of practicing Yang family waist methods?

**GM:** In the beginning when we start this practice, we mostly pay attention to our external movements, how to move the feet, legs, hands and so on. Then gradually we should shift our attention from the external movements into the energy aspect, that is, what is the best way to deliver the energy in a unified manner. This is related to coordination. This coordination still includes your body for sure, legs and hands, but the key point now is the waist. Without the understanding of the waist you will never be able

to deliver the energy correctly. As we say, from "becoming familiar with the movements" (招熟) to the "understanding of the energy" (懂劲 Dǒng jìn)". These are the practice stages and if you can't make this energy understanding to get into a self-understanding of this area and to perform it, you won't feel you have improved. So I would say one of the benefits of the waist method is coordination. Through physical coordination it will help you to understand the energy performing, and that makes you feel you can do something, to gain self-understanding. As you know "understanding of the energy" has two parts: one is

understanding yourself, the other understanding the opponent, right? So how can we understand ourselves? It's about understanding energy, so you should be able to unify the energy, and it all narrows down to one point: how you use your waist. The waist, as I mentioned in the beginning, has two functions: one is leading your four limbs to go; and two, it is controlling the release of the energy and your position in sending the energy. Without the waist method people struggle and easily become stiff because they want to deliver the energy but they are unable to do it. So the main benefit would be coordination. The other benefit is that our spine become more flexible. Many people give me feedback about their waist issues, like pain and lumbar disk problems, etc., got better. It's a very good exercise for the spine. So, from the point of view of tai chi chuan, it improves coordination and helps you to gain self-understanding of the energy. And from the health point of view it's beneficial exercise for the spine. Besides, if you want to do single movement practice, you cannot do it without the waist.

**MA:** Does this set of practices have the potential to be practiced separately like the silk reeling exercises of the Chen style for example?

**GM:** Yes, it can be practiced separately as fundamental training (基本功). We can make a variation and make it softer, it will be very good for health. For instance, you

“ The waist, as I mentioned in the beginning, has two functions: one is leading your four limbs to go; and two, it is controlling the release of the energy and your position in sending the energy. ”



stand in one place and do the Cloud Hands continuously. This is a very good waist method practice. We can combine different things together and create something new. Yes, indeed this is the future. We can use such creation to meet the needs of certain groups of people. For example, we can create tai chi for kids. You know we cannot make kids become quiet and calm. We should exhaust their energy by doing more energy explosion to let them be excited at first. Then we can adjust the practice and make them calm. To ask them to be calm in the first place would be very difficult for kids. Nobody said Yin should be first and Yang should follow. We can be Yang first and Yin second; it depends from which point of view we are looking at it. So I don't want you to put a limit like this is what we can do and this is what we can't. Through learning tai chi we learn a method, then when we are clear about the method, we should be able to make anything if we follow the sequence, the rules. For sure, there are also external things that we should take care of, like lineage issues. After that, you can be the path and discover it by yourself. Whatever the method, if it is good for improving your teaching of the students, and makes them interested in practicing, then I would say it is a good method.

MA: So do you intend to create a stand-alone set or routine from the Yang style waist methods in the future?

GM: Actually I'm going to, to meet the needs of different groups of people. For example, we have tai chi for wheelchair for special people, tai chi for recovery for people who are recovering from illness and we have published articles about it already, I think in the WeChat platform maybe. And for sure tai chi for kids. However right now, I don't want to create many new things because that way people's minds may become distracted. First we want our main methods to be successful. And after that for sure we will take care of different groups of people.

MA: I have one specific question about the Bāzi, the zi 字 is pronounced in the fourth tone. Chinese it's '8字'. ("Figure 8") waist method. While doing the form or solo practice of each of the movements, especially in transition points, should we always use the Bāzi method to ensure continuously connected movement (xiāng lián bùduàn 相連不斷)?

GM: Yes. The energy moving continuously relies on one method that is circular,

meaning that without the circle you would always stop (the energy of the movement). Changing direction and from storage to release it always involves circles. This method we call it figure eight and actually, that is not an accurate name. Because it is never really a flat figure eight, maybe if we use the name "S" curve it would be better. It is more a 3D movement bending to any direction. So, about your question, it's correct, but one thing you do need to understand: When the circle is too big, then it is hard to be straight and hard to release energy. Therefore, the circle should be limited in how much you use it. The bigger it is, the harder it is to make the body upright. So it is correct but it also should be precise. You need to know how much, and not overuse it. The student might hear the teacher say that we should use it and then start to use it a lot. Then it's hard to keep the body upright. That is not a good usage.

MA: So it's a balance between being straight, and doing the curved movements: like Yin-Yang?

GM: That's right. Do not overuse it.

MA: To finish, I would like to ask a question about the title I chose for this article, "Xing-Yi's Fist, Bagua's Footwork, Tai Chi's Waist" (形意拳，八卦步，太极腰). Is the skill to control and harness the way of the waist the central theme in Tai Chi practice? Do you agree with this huge emphasis on waist in tai chi?

GM: Sort of. If I want to say this phrase, Yao is not my first priority, I would put Song (松) as the first priority. Because without the right type of energy, without the softness, Yao is not easy to use. Yao is very very important, but the method of relaxation (song), I would put it in priority. Tai chi is the art of "the soft and the hard" (刚与柔 gāng yǔ róu), and relaxation is the key to make you soft. Then the waist is the second key to make you achieve hardness (运柔成刚 yùn róu chéng gāng.) So if you are only soft, without the waist methods to coordinate and unify the whole body together you cannot be hard. Also, if you are stiff, the waist would not function. Therefore, relaxation is the first stage. I say waist is very important to train in the physical understanding of the practice. However, without relaxation you cannot use the waist. Song makes you soft and Yao makes you hard, so both of these methods are very important.

“ So if you are only soft, without the waist methods to coordinate and unify the whole body together you cannot be hard. Also, if you are stiff, the waist would not function. ”

— 2020 —

# Winchester Celebrations

SAVE THE DATES FOR  
THESE “TRIPLE CELEBRATION” EVENTS

**JULY 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 2020**

WINCHESTER, VIRGINIA, YANG CHENGFU CENTER / SHENANDOAH UNIVERSITY ATHLETIC CENTER

*Additional Information available February 2020*

Pat Rice, Director, Winchester Yang Chengfu Center Director  
111 Shirley Street, Winchester, VA 22601 USA  
540-247-2283

## CELEBRATION EVENTS

- ☛ **30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Yang Family first visit to North America 1990 Winchester Virginia!**
- ☛ **Grandmaster Yang Zhenduo's 95<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party!**
- ☛ **Grandmaster Yang Jun, 5<sup>th</sup> Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan lineage holder, Instructional sessions!**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

Chinese Martial Arts Demonstrations, dedicated to Grandmaster Yang Zhenduo in conjunction with celebration events in China August 2020

Lecture by special guest Nick Gracenin: Tai Chi Classics

July Fourth USA National Independence Day Celebration Fireworks

Triple Celebration Chinese Banquet

All-American Picnic

\*\*\*Master Fang Hong and Jason Yang are joining all events\*\*\*

## TOURS

**June 27, 28, 29**  
Washington DC, including Mount Vernon

**June 30**  
Area day-tour of the famous Shenandoah Valley of Virginia

**INSTRUCTION** by 5th Generation Yang Family Lineage Holder Grandmaster Yang Jun

Wednesday, **July 1** Tai Chi Gong Form  
Thursday, **July 2** Traditional Hand Form  
Friday, **July 3** Traditional Hand Form  
Saturday, **July 4** Traditional Hand Form

**Special Instructional Event**  
Sunday, **July 5** Push hands



## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Date/Day	Hours	Event	Location	Notes
June 26 Fri	All day	Arrival	Winchester	
June 27 Sat	Tour 9:00 depart	Tour Day 1	Bus to Washington DC, tour DC	overnight DC
June 28 Sun	All day	Tour Day 2	DC Day 2 and Evening Potomac River Dinner Cruise	DC continued tour Overnight DC
June 29 Mon	Morning Lunch Afternoon tour and return	Tour Day 3/return	DC Day 3 and Mount Vernon, home of George Washington	DC morning, Mount Vernon afternoon
June 30 Tue	Local tour	Tour, local area	Winchester area Shenandoah Valley	10:00-4:00, lunch
July 1 Wed	9-12 3-5	Instruction Day 1 Tai Chi Gong Form	Wilkins Athletic Center, Shenandoah University	Instruction
	7:15-8:45	Evening lecture	Guest	Guest lecturer Nick Gracenin, <i>Understanding the "Tai Chi Classics"</i>
July 2 Thu	9-12 3-5	Instruction Day 2 Traditional Hand Form	Wilkins Athletic Center Shenandoah University	Instruction
	7:30-9:00		Armstrong Auditorium Shenandoah University	Friendship Demonstrations
	9:00-11:00 pm		Ferrari Room	Birthday Party
July 3 Fri	9-12 3-5	Instruction Day 3 Traditional Hand Form	Wilkins Athletic Center, Shenandoah University	Instruction
	6:30-8:30 pm	Baquet	China Gourmet	Celebration Chinese Banquet
July 4 Sat	9-12 3-5	Instruction Day 4 Traditional Hand Form	Wilkins Athletic Center Shenandoah University	Instruction
July 4 Sat	9:00 pm	Fourth of July USA Celebration	Winchester City Park	Fireworks by City of Winchester
July 5 Sun	10-1:00	Instruction Day 5 (Half day) Push Hands	Wilkins Athletic Center Shenandoah University	Instruction
	2:00	Picnic	Location	All-American picnic
July 6 Mon		Departures		



IN MEMORIAM  
MASTER WU WENHAN

1928 - JULY 29, 2019

BY: NANCY LUCERO

It is with great sadness that we share the news that Master Wu Wenhan recently passed away. Master Wu was instrumental in researching and writing about taiji history. I was fortunate to be in his company and to watch his mastery at the 2009 International Tai Chi Chuan Symposium in Nashville. His spirit and work will be missed. He is now playing in heaven with his taiji family.













SYMPOSIUM PRESENTATIONS

# MOVEMENT THERAPY IN THE TREATMENT OF LUMBAR DEGENERATIVE DISC DISEASE

BY: GREG MOORE MD  
JAMES FOX PHD

Low back pain, specifically from lumbar degenerative disc disease (DDD), is a leading cause of disability and health care costs globally. With around 3 million people affected each year, finding mechanisms to cope with the pain from DDD is a high priority of the health-care community. Taking a novel approach, a therapeutic exercise program incorporating Tai Chi principles was introduced to patients experiencing symptoms of DDD. A positive response demonstrated the need for further research, prompting a review and analysis of the literature to further pave an avenue for continued research.

Dr. James Fox and Dr. Gregory Moore created and implemented a movement therapy program for individuals experiencing back pain related to injury or degenerative spinal disorders. Dr. Moore's specialty in spine intervention, rehabilitation and sports

medicine, combined with Dr. Fox's training and experience in tai chi chuan, qigong, and Traditional Chinese Medicine provided a sound framework for using movement as a therapeutic tool for patients. Their approach in developing therapeutic exercises uses a combination of principles of mind-body modalities, such as those incorporated in the 10 essentials of tai chi chuan. These exercises are intended to be an educative process where the patient learns (through guidance and instruction) to maximize the benefits of the exercise and perform the movements using whole body coordination.

Dr. Fox introduced patients to this technique first through controlled spinal extension exercises, starting patients in a seated position and lifting the head to engage the muscles in the patient's back. As the individual progressed through the program, he or she would move to a standing position, resem-





#### CHRONIC LOW BACK PAIN IN THE US

- Impacts 29% of the population
- \$200 billion in annual healthcare expenditures
- 33 million people disabled
- 120 million lost workdays annually
- Opioid Crisis

#### COMMON PAIN GENERATORS OF THE SPINE

- Muscular
- Ligamentous
- Vertebral Bodies
- Discogenic
- Spinal Stenosis
- Facet-mediated
- Spondylolysis
- Sacroiliac Joint

bling the opening movement in tai chi. Pressing on the bubbling spring helps to balance the body in this movement, and the muscular response of the controlled spinal extension reduces the pressure of the vertebrae on the spinal discs. Learning how to activate deeper areas of the muscles without any assistance is a goal emphasized as patients progress through the program. Over a five year period, 1200 patients were exposed to the treatment effect. About 800 of these patients returned, and approximately 82% of this population reported a reduction in low back pain, at least temporarily. There were also many reports of increased activity levels.

As a result of the positive feedback from this program, the need for a study assessing its efficacy arose. Six English databases were electronically searched for randomized controlled trials (RCTs), peer reviewed articles, and meta-analyses consisting of a combination of key words including “tai chi,” “musculoskeletal,” “balance,” “posture,” “pain,” and “spine.”

Fifteen studies were selected based on relevance to the objective, methodological strength of study (RCTs- study population, duration, sample size; Peer reviewed articles and meta-analyses- number, variety, and quality of sources in addition to journal impact factor) outcome assessment, and study results. Four studies focused on balance and posture among the elderly. Five were in musculoskeletal system pain and benefits. Three were in neurological disorders. Two were in knee, and one was in spine. The trials were generally small and of low methodologic quality.

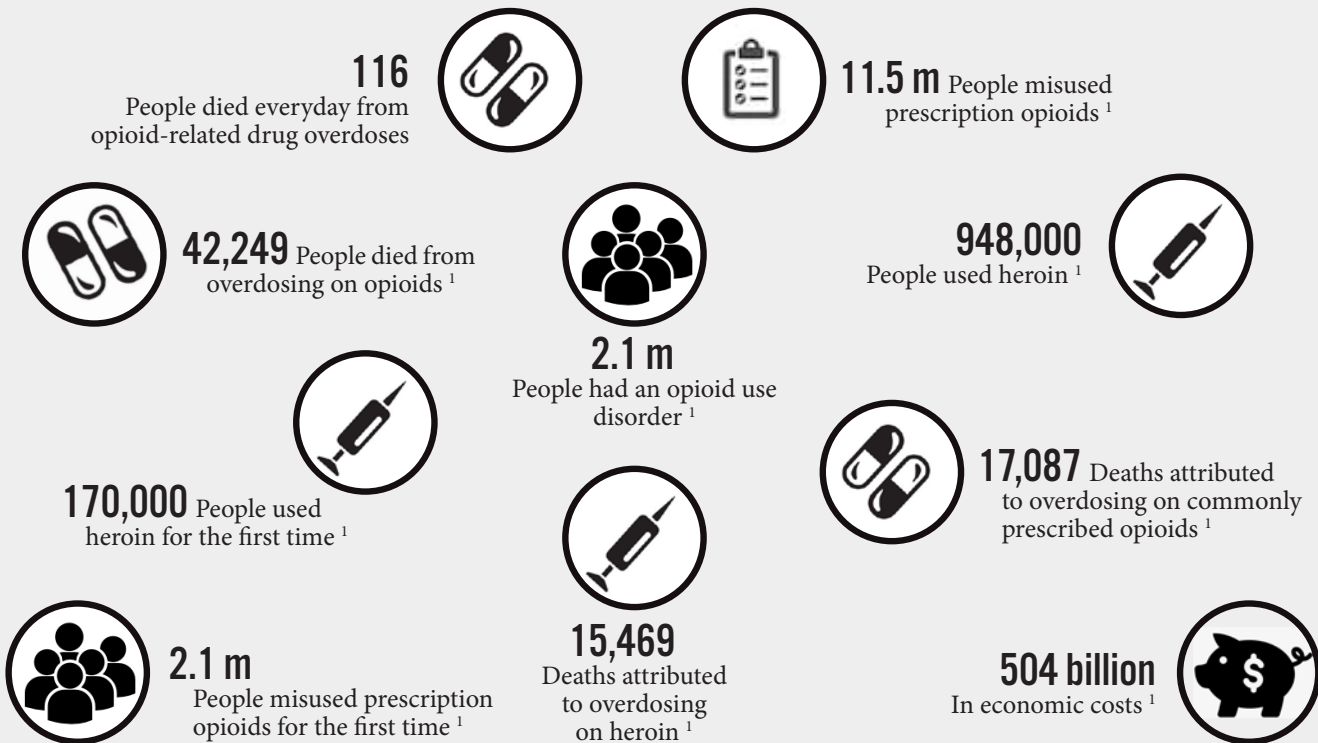


The results of the literature review demonstrated tai chi's slight positive role in improving balance and posture, but each lacked the statistical strength to support this claim. Improvements were associated with a reduction in falls in the elderly population, improved joint strength in both the spine and knees, gains in mobility and balance for those with some neurological disorders, and musculoskeletal pain reduction. This analysis in conjunction with the results of the exercise program has been used to identify strengths to this approach in the treatment of degenerative spinal disorders, providing an avenue for further research.

The next step in continuing this research is to assess the efficacy of this movement therapy program in pain reduction among those with Lumbar DDD compared to standard techniques. The hypothesis is that those who undergo movement therapy will notice the most significant pain reduction and meet more therapeutic objectives than those who do not participate in the program or undergo traditional physical therapy. The direction of future research is driven by goals of reducing patient opiate consumption, relieving pain, improving function and well-being and providing evidence for tai chi's positive role in movement therapy programs among those living with Lumbar DDD. ☯



## THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC BY THE NUMBERS (IN 2016)





“ So you see, tai chi is the most important thing in my life. It is the only thing that I do, that I’ve done, and that I will do. ”

Interview with Grandmaster Chen Zhenglei







# THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF MY LIFE

INTERVIEW BY: **BY JIM PAYMAR**  
INTERPRETER: **FANG HONG**

Jim Paymar (JP): Master Chen Zhenglei, thank you for seeing us today and talking about Tai chi. The first question I have is: What does tai chi mean to you? What is the essence of Tai chi?

Grandmaster Chen Zhenglei: tai chi Chuan for me is the most important part of my life. I was born in Chen Chiagou, which is very famous for its tai chi Chuan. I was a child there, and practiced there, and lived there for a long time.

When I was eight years old, my uncle retired and returned to Chen Chiagou. He told us that we have a duty, a responsibility to carry on our family style. If it stops with our generation, it's going to be very bad. It'll be our fault.

My uncle left Chen Chiagou one night in 1928, and retired in 1958, and came back to Chen Chiagou. During those 30 years, he taught tai chi in many cities around China and gained the respect of many people. When he first left, he was young and in order to gain the respect of people, he decided to become a teacher of tai chi.

So you see, tai chi is the most important thing in my life. It is the only thing that I do, that I've done, and that I will do.

How long have you been practicing tai chi? How much time do you spend every day in practice or teaching?

I started practicing tai chi when I was 8 years old. I am now 70 years old, and so I have spent 62 years practicing. I started teaching when I was 20 years old, so I've spent 50 years teaching.

When you wake up in the morning, are you peaceful? Do you begin thinking about tai chi? Is tai chi who you are as a person, your being, who you are?

When I wake up at 6 in the morning, I practice tai chi. When I have time at night, I practice tai chi. That's my life.

Do you have to keep practicing in order to maintain and get better? Do you always improve the more that you practice? You've been teaching for 50 years, and when you get up in the morning and you start your day doing tai chi, does it help you get better at tai chi because of this practice?

Tai chi chuan is sometimes called tai chi culture. They have elementary, they have middle school, they have high school, they have college and they have masters degrees. We have three staff, five layers of kung fu.

When you get new students that are just starting out, what do you tell them that they need to do, that they need to progress and become better at tai chi?

The first thing I tell them is about the moral part, and then let them know a little bit about the theory of tai chi. But the most important thing that I first tell them is about the moral part.

Explain what the moral part is? What does that mean?

That means that they need to respect their teacher, their instructor, their Sifu. And to follow the rules.

Every person is different. When you teach, do you need to take into account the fact that every person is different, and maybe, they need to be taught in a different way so that they can understand how to perform tai chi and learn the forms?

Yes, and for different people, use different ways to teach them. So if they want to be a martial artists, we go in this direction. If they want to concentrate on health, we go in that direction.

In your view, what is the most important aspect of tai chi chuan? What do people get out of tai chi chuan? What do they get from practicing tai chi chuan?

Tai chi chuan helps people to calm their mind, relax the body, and calm their breath. Practice can change a person's character. And after practice, when their qi goes down, it affects not only their physical body, but also their mind is open and they don't mind the small things.

I do much Yoga, and they talk about the "monkey mind", where the mind goes round and round and round and people cannot stop thinking. Does tai chi help you to calm your mind so that you are not thinking about a million different things and that you are just thinking about yourself, your mind and your body soul?

Yes, we do the same thing, calm the mind, empty the mind so that the qi goes down.

Does calming the mind calm the body?

In the past 8 years, at the University in California, research was conducted on Chinese medicine, qigong and tai chi, it was found that tai chi is a calm-the-mind, calm-the-body type of movement.

If a person has an ailment, a sickness, a depression, stiffness in their bodies, fast heart, can't breathe good, can tai chi help them to become healthier, even if they are older?

When I teach, I always tell the students that one of tai chi benefits is a strong body and that it helps neutralize our mind. For the five systems in our body, for example, the circulation system, tai chi is very good for the five systems. Secondly, for those that want to go deeper, such self defense, there are even more benefits, it is more interesting for this kind of student. And Thirdly, it makes the students' social life more peaceful.

When my son takes Karate, there they describe qi as being "energy". Can you describe for me what you believe is qi?

Tai chi chuan is an internal martial art. It is not important what the form looks like. What is more important is the feeling of qi. People learn to feel qi through practice, and so they gather and they gather energy. The more qi they gather, the stronger the body becomes. This includes the human body's electricity.

As you sit there today, do you feel qi through your body?

There are three levels of kungfu. Once you reach the third level, you are going to feel qi. If you haven't reached the third level, sometimes you can feel it, sometimes not.

What is the most rewarding aspect of teaching tai chi for you?

I have a very healthy body, I have a very happy family, I have a healthy family of disciples all over the world. When I travel the world teaching, my students tell me that after practicing tai chi, they feel better, that their bodies, and their families are happier. That is my reward.

When you think about tai chi, many of the Masters have said it's more of a culture. Is the culture derived from spiritualism, from Confucianism, from Daoism, the Yin and the Yang?

The basic culture in China is tai chi culture. It has been established over 5,000-6,000 years. It doesn't matter what philosophy you may think of, what matters is that you follow tai chi culture. The central concept of the tai chi culture is that Yin created the Yang, the Yang created the Yin, and they exchange culture. All is guided and created by this philosophy.

You are 70 years old now, and you've seen many, many changes in China since you were a young boy. Now China is very fast-paced, things are much different, people are running around and they are working extremely hard. How does tai chi help them to calm down, to reduce stress, to become happier people, given the new environment in China?

Since our life in China is very static, by the time we get to choose a sport, many people choose tai chi for health. Tai chi doesn't require much to practice. All we need is comfortable clothes and sufficient space.



You mentioned earlier that tai chi has helped you to have a happier family, that your family is more peaceful as a result of tai chi. Do you think that if more people in the world were to practice tai chi, we would have a more peaceful world?

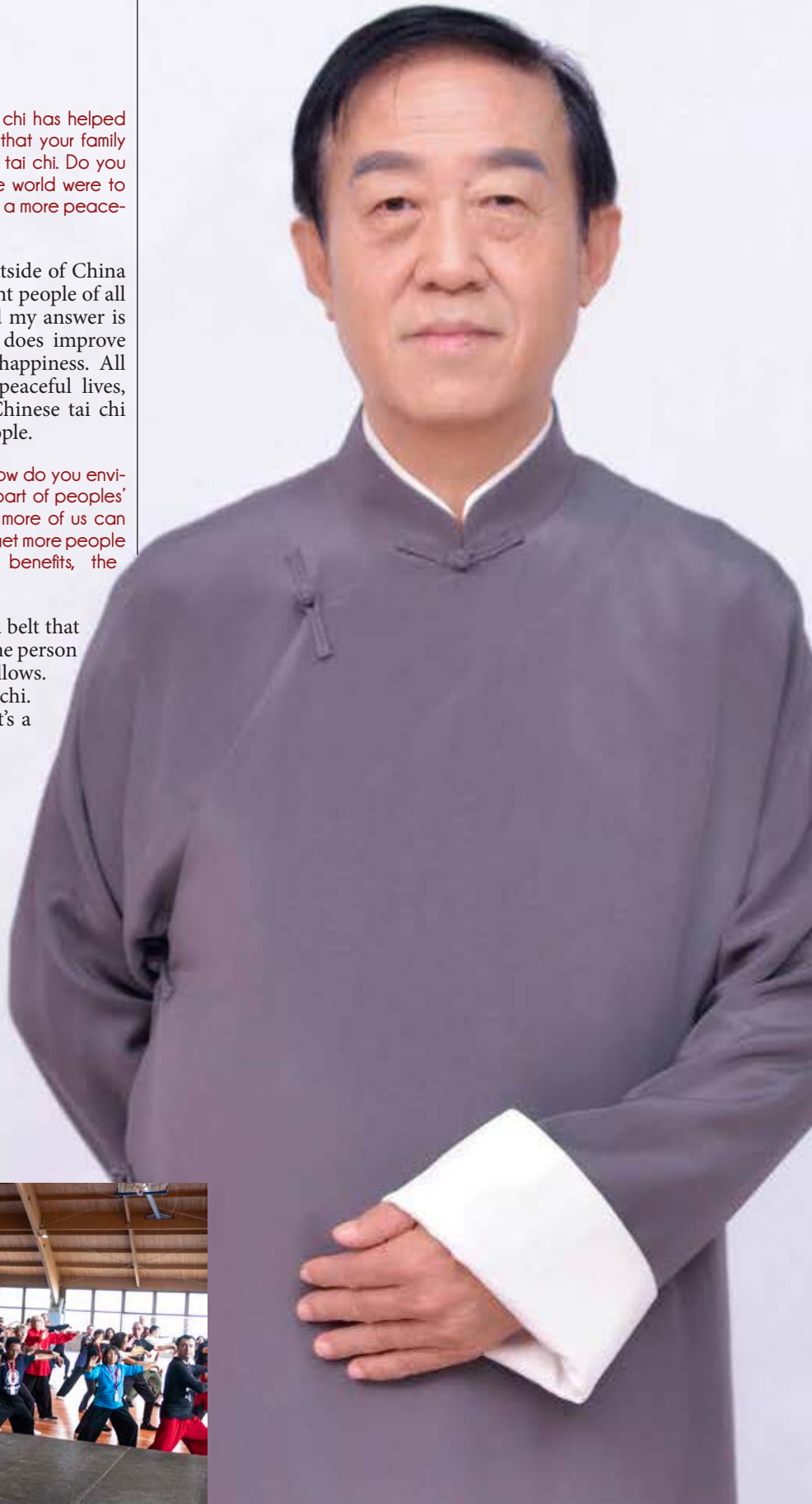
Yes, I have been teaching outside of China for 40 years, and I have taught people of all races all over the world, and my answer is in the positive. Yes, tai chi does improve people's lives and families' happiness. All of them wish for no war, peaceful lives, healthier bodies. And the Chinese tai chi chuan can bring those to people.

I think this is my final question. How do you envision tai chi becoming more a part of peoples' lives around the world so that more of us can become peaceful. How do we get more people to know about the health benefits, the mental benefits of tai chi?

I describe tai chi as kind of a belt that connects different people. One person moves, and everybody follows. Everybody knows this is tai chi. It's not a spoken language, it's a body language.

One phrase, one sentence that you would use to describe tai chi chuan?

Tai chi chuan will be the way of life for all human beings. It should bring health to humanity. ☯



Grand Master Chen Zhenglei at the 2019 Symposium





# STEALING BOXING

- CHAPTER 12 -

The Master  
Returns to the Field;  
A Sword Gleams in  
the Moonlight

Stealing Boxing (偷拳) was written by Gong Baiyu (1899-1966).

It is a fictional martial arts novel that is loosely based on the life of legendary Yang Family master, Yang Luchan.





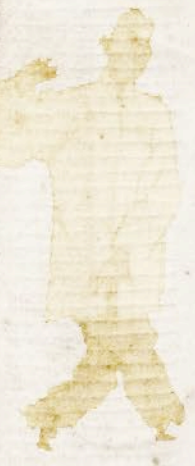
### **STEALING BOXING RECAP:**

Master Chen was recovering from his recent illness, when the house was mysteriously set on fire. The silent young man heroically rescued the master from the flames, as the other disciples put out the fire. The footprints of whoever started the fire were found and traced on paper. To add to the mystery, the body of a man named Butterfly Cai Er was found near the city wall. Master Chen remembers the mysterious letter that was anonymously delivered in the night, and wonders if someone was trying to protect him.






## STEALING BOXING



In mid-September, Master Chen had recovered from typhoid fever. After resting for another ten days, he felt stronger and refreshed, so he told his disciples, “You are focusing so much on taking care of your patient that I’m concerned your taiji training has been neglected. Tomorrow, let’s have the silent young man clean the training field and wipe the weapons so that we can get back to work.”

The master’s temperament towards his disciples was very strict, but they also knew that he cared about them. When he was sick, they were all completely dedicated to caring for him. Although Master Chen remained in his stoic disposition and did not thank the disciples, he felt grateful in his heart towards them, and sat in his chair with a smile on his face. The disciples were very pleased to see that the master was happy. They all sat around him, reporting on how they had been training, and what methods they were practicing. Each of them related parts of the training that they did not feel clear on, and asked Master Chen if he could please correct them.

Master Chen looked around at the assembled disciples and then spoke in a happy tone, “The weather today is very nice and there should be a bright moon tonight. Everyone should meet on the training field, and I will practice also. I will also have an opportunity to see how your taiji skills have been developing since I’ve been resting.”



Geng Yongfeng and Tan Yongnian heard Master Chen’s words, and were happy to set the plan in motion. Together with Fang Jiakuan, they notified the other disciples that Master Chen would teach again at last. They sent a messenger to Fang Zishou and then ran to the alley to find Qu Jinshou. After this, they opened the courtyard door and

told the silent young man to clean the training field right away.


As the silent young man hurried to clean the field, Geng Yongfeng told him, “The master is in good spirits today, so he will teach for the first time since he got sick. Clean up all the weapons and shelves. Master looks so happy that I think he might show us all the secrets of taijiquan.”

The silent young man nodded excitedly and hurried to clean up the field. He wiped the dust off the weapons and used an oiled stone to vigorously polish the weapons on the shelf till they all shone brightly. Gen Yongfeng, Tan Yongnian, and Qu Jinshou also began to work together to get ready. Although Master Chen had only been sick for one month, there hadn’t been a real practice session for nearly half a year.

Soon Fang Zishou also rushed over and asked happily, “Is Shifu in a good mood today?”


Geng Yongfeng replied, “Today Laoshi is very happy. He wants to practice martial arts under the moon. It’s a good thing that you are here today. I’m not sure how many forms Laoshi plans to teach, but you shouldn’t go home. Stay here for the night so that you don’t miss a thing.”

The four disciples gathered on the training field in anticipation. They had already spent the afternoon in the sheds and fields practicing the forms that they had learned before. After everyone had eaten dinner, they all drank tea and talked for a while. Then, Mas-




“Today Laoshi is very happy. He wants to practice martial arts under the moon. It’s a good thing that you are here today. I’m not sure how many forms Laoshi plans to teach, but you shouldn’t go home.”





## The Master Returns to the Field; A Sword Gleams in the Moonlight



ter Chen led the group of disciples out to the training ground.

As they walked out into the field, the sky was a cloudless deep blue. Stars began to appear in the early night sky, and the weapons on the rack reflected the clear moon. Sparkling blue lights danced on the blades, gleaming on the sharp polished edges.

A lantern stood at each corner of the field, but the dim light did not reach very far. The silent young man waited until Master Chen had assembled the disciples in front of the shed, and then went to turn up the lights so that they could see. Master Chen saw this and called out. “Do not turn up the lights. The moonlight is so bright. Put the lights out. The moon is brighter than the sunset now.” He then casually said, “We are going to practice gongfu now, so you can go and rest.”

Master Chen waited as the silent young man extinguished each light, and left the field. After the door had closed and he was gone, Master Chen addressed the assembled disciples. “How have you been training these past few months? Has there been any improvement?”

Geng Yongfeng started to answer Master Chen, but his voice wouldn't come. He looked towards his taiji brother Tan Yongnian for help. Tan Yongnian replied, “In the past month that Shifu was not feeling well, we all felt very worried and couldn't focus. Recently though, we started working hard in the mornings and evenings, barely taking a break. If we get confused while training, we ask our brothers for help. Sometimes they have the answer, and other times we are still confused.”


Master Chen turned to Geng Yongfeng, who smiled and said, “The taiji is vast and deep, and we often have questions that are difficult to answer. The younger brothers ask me

when they have questions, but sometimes I don't have the answer for them. Shifu often says to use four ounces to move a thousand pounds. I do understand, but when I try to use it, it often doesn't seem to go very well. The fifth younger brother asks me to correct his forms, but I still don't really understand the light force (jing).”


Master Chen smiled a little at Geng Yongfeng's sincere modesty, and spoke, “I often see this occur in a student's education. Some comprehend the words of the teaching, but then don't really understand it. Some gain an understanding in their heart, but then cannot express it with their mouth. This is the nature of gongfu, that one must pass through to enter the internal level. This process can't be rushed because the essence of taiji is gradually comprehended with the entry of personal gongfu. Over-explaining things can slow the process down. .

Master Chen slightly coughed and then spoke slowly, “The subtlety of taijiquan method is in here”, and he demonstrated a gesture.

“This method is based on the taiji symbol. Some people say that the source of the symbol is Taoist, and is difficult to make authentic, but we are not concerned with this. We only speak about the use of the taiji, regardless of the source of the symbol. According to the symbol, the theory goes from the phaselessness to the phase, and from the quiet to the vivid. Of the thirteen forms, ward off, roll back, press, push, pull, split, elbow, and body strike relate to the eight lines. Advance, retreat, guard left, look right, and settle are related to the five elements. The five elements and the eight lines are unified into the thirteen methods. It is the boxing of taiji. Each element is used, and if it is not enough, it will not work. Beginners often feel lost, and taiji feels like a fascinating mystery. The taiji thirteen forms are ever-changing, and the forms








are all connected. The boxing forms in attack and retreat can use quietness to control the active. When practicing, you have to think about it. Yinghua introverted, holding energy as one: this is refining qi and condensing spirit. The qi goes through the dantian, and the weight is not shaken, making it quiet as a mountain, but moving like a river. When they are hard, I am soft. The body can stick, and they follow me. When they don't move, I don't move. When they move, I get there first. Use defense as offense."

**“ You mentioned the Brush Knee Step form. If the opponent uses Iron Legs to Sweep the Pile, or Lotus Kick to try to attack our base, we can use Brush Knee to break him. ”**

Master Chen looked around at the faces of his disciples to see if any of them had understood. Next, he asked his third disciple, saying, “Yongfeng, you explain it in your own words and they can listen. I ask you, what does this mean? If the opponent does not move, I don't move. If the opponent moves, I move first. What is this for? Is the key to the opponent's victory to get started early and move first, or is it to let the opponent's tricks come out? Why is it better to wait?”




Geng Yongfeng had been following Master Chen for years, and had been familiar with the theory for a long time. He replied: “With our tai chi chuan we must use the soft to control the hard. We must employ skillful force to sink the qi so that we can control the attack. If the enemy does not move, then I don't move. This is ‘using quietness to control activeness.’ Although the body does not move, the qi spreads into the four limbs and secretly prepares the mind to control the opponent. The enemy sends out energy, but

we do not blindly wait to be attacked. When the opponent's qi comes out, his balance will diminish. At this time, we can use tai chi chuan to take advantage of this energy, and to attack. We do not need to rush. This is how we get there first: by using following and flexibility to take the lead.

“Four ounces can move a thousand pounds. Shifu, is this right?”

Master Chen said, “Zi Shou, Yong Nian, Jin Shou: you all say this is correct?” They all replied together. “Yes, Master Chen.”



That day, Master Chen taught on the training field. He did not remove his long robe, but while he taught, he made gestures to demonstrate the tai chi chuan forms one by one. The disciples were happy for this rare opportunity. The first disciple was Geng Yongfeng. He had many questions, so he asked Master Chen to perform the forms one by one. The 5th disciple Yong Nian asked Master Chen, “Master, the seventh form called Brush Knee stepping, the ninth form Hand Strums the Lute, the sixteenth form Needle at the Sea Bottom, and the 27th form Wild Horse Parting it's Mane., how to practice these? When I practice them, I always feel that they are not smooth. I have heard Master Chen say yourself that these forms can neutralize the enemies energy, expand the tai chi power to use the opponent's energy, and win the battle. But so far, I have not attained this skill at all.” He performed the movements, asking Master Chen to correct them.

Master Chen answered with a slight smile. “You mentioned the Brush Knee Step form. If the opponent uses Iron Legs to Sweep the Pile, or Lotus Kick to try to attack our base, we can use Brush Knee to break him. Used correctly, it can not only break through the opponent's form and delay his moves, it can also control his body so that he cannot





change easily. Then you should change the form, so that the enemy will be unable to escape. Use the Roll Back, and focus on lower body power.”

Master Chen then demonstrated the form, showing useful and important elements. Next, he showed the ninth form, Hand Strums the Lute.

Master Chen said, “This form of tai chi chuan is very important. The opponent walks straight in and uses the Black Tiger Steals the Heart and Black Dragon Comes out of the Cave to attack. I can use this form to break him. According to tai chi theory, wuji transforms into tai chi. Rely on stillness to control the active. Emptiness has real force, and it can be used to borrow the force of your opponent.”

Master Chen also performed the 16th form, Needle at the Sea Bottom, and the 27th form, Wild Horse Parting its Mane. After speaking about the main points in these forms, Master Chen then reviewed the forms with Yong Nian. The other disciples all followed along. After this guidance, Yong Nian understood immediately. The 4th disciple Zishou looked at his younger disciple Tan Yongnian and smiled to see that he was so happy to learn from Master Chen, that he seemed to have just won a big prize.

Geng Yongfeng was just about to ask another question when Fang Zishou brought an old sword to Master Chen, saying “Shifu, please look at this sword.”

Master Chen turned around to look, and then took the sword into his hands, using the bright moonlight to check the details. The sword was three feet, eight inches long. It’s green gauze sheath had been destroyed from wear, but the copper details looked very delicate.

Fang Zishou smiled and said, “This is a sword that I bought from an antique booth in Huaiqing, but it is very old. Shifu, can you please tell me if it can still be used?”

Master Chen lightly pressed the spring latch on the sheath, and the ancient blade slid out, gleaming in the blue moonlight. The ridge in the center was thick, but the blade near the edges was very thin. Master Chen flicked the blade with his finger and it rang out like the sound of a dragon. Master Chen touched the edge of the blade and asked Fang Zishou, “Where did you buy it?”

“At the antiques stall in Fuchen, Master.”

Master Chen said, “This is a fine sword, how much did you pay for it?” Fang Zishou replied, “I gave them five or six strings of coins, and I bought it six or seven days ago.”

Master Chen admired the sword under the moonlight. Everyone gathered around to see it. Master Chen said to the disciples, “This sword can be said to be a priceless treasure. You see, this is cast of essential steel. It is well balanced with strength and flexibility, and stronger than my sword.”

Fang Zishou said with joy, “Master’s sword cost thirty-five silvers. This must be my lucky day.”

Master Chen shook the hilt and it trembled. He said, “Good sword, but some parts must be fixed, and the blade is shaking out of the handle.”

Still holding the sword, Master Chen walked into the practice field saying, “I have been




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## STEALING BOXING



sick for a long time. Zishou, since you have showed me this sword, do you want to study the Unique Thirteen Sword Forms?”

Fang Sishou looked at Maser Chen with a smile and replied, “Shifu you are so kind to help us, but you only just got better from illness. I’m afraid that you might strain yourself.”

Master Chen said with a smile, “Zishou, it’s not that I am reluctant to teach you, but that your talents are limited.”

Geng Yongfeng, Tan Yongnian, and the others all spoke up, saying “Shifu looks strong and healthy now. Can we please see you practice a set? We have been looking forward so long to see you practice for us again.”

Master Chen said “Humph,” but then smiled and said, “I can see that Zishou plays this game well. You want to learn the sword form, so you brought this excellent sword to me.”

Master Chen had not guessed correctly about Fang Zishou’s intention, however. Fang Zishou felt deeply that Master Chen had saved his life when he cleared his name of the accusation. He knew that he could never repay the value of this to Master Chen, but when he saw the sword in the antique stall, he would see if Master Chen liked it and then give it to him as a gift. He had hoped to show filial piety to Master Chen, but the Master thought that he just wanted to learn the taiji sword form. Even though it wasn’t his intention in bringing the sword, Fang Zishou did want to learn the forms, so he wouldn’t pass up the chance.

Master Chen addressed the disciples, saying “Even though you students often misunderstand me, I still hope to pass on taijiquan essentials. It is difficult that you are slow to understand and lack patience. I have demonstrated the sword and fist forms many times, but I still have to explain them to you over and over again, and you still squint your eyes and try to understand. Do you think that the talks that I give on theory are full of empty words? You want me to talk about practical things, and leave out the difficult parts, but it can’t be like this! If we teach this way, I’m afraid that the spirit of the art will die away. Each of the forms must be practiced continually for twenty or thirty days, but you seem to think that my comments are troublesome. This is not trivial information! If the arrow is shot slightly off in the beginning, it will miss the target by a thousand miles. The foundation teaching must not be vague. Zishou’s temperament is impatient, and not very sharp-witted. If the basic practice is merely acceptable, you will be in trouble when you go into the details. If you are going to be impatient and quit halfway, I don’t want to teach you. Do you remember when I taught you “Lower the Horse, Bend Bow”? I only taught you for two weeks, but you couldn’t stand it. You need to be better than that. Now you all want to see the thirteen sword forms. I will go through it once, so watch carefully and learn. If your forms are not standard, you will need to correct them. If you haven’t learned these forms yet, then just watch me practice, and don’t worry too much about the details.”

The Moon had risen to the top of the night sky, and everyone felt refreshed by the clear moonlight. Master Chen stood looking at the night sky, and focused. Master Chen raised the warrior spirit and began to move. The sword began in his left hand, and the arm circled, exchanging the sword to the right hand.

“ The Moon had risen to the top of the night sky, and everyone felt refreshed by the clear moonlight. Master Chen stood looking at the night sky, and focused. Master Chen raised the warrior spirit and began to move.”







The empty left hand made the shape of the sword fingers and rose to the forehead. The shining tip of the sword pointed to the sky to perform "Fire and Burn the Sky". Master Chen smoothly changed to Green Dragon Explores the Claws, and then White Crane Shakes. Master Chen spoke as he moved, saying, "You pay attention and watch carefully."

Suddenly, the sword shined brighter with blue light, and moved swiftly forward and back, as body and steel seemed to merge into one whole energy. The body moved like wind swaying a tree, and the sword like an electric flash. The students all looked on, amazed by Master Chen's skill.

Master Chen performed the Dragon Gate Three Waves, followed by the closing movement and immediately returned to the starting place. He was standing exactly where he had began, sword back in his left hand. Even though he had recently been so ill, he was not out of breath. The disciples were so excited that they began to cheer. They were so happy to be able to watch the full thirteen form sword set.

Suddenly, a figure was moving quickly over the top of the wall by the field. Everyone shouted, "Who is that?" Master Chen walked two steps with the sword and shouted. "Is that the silent young man? Perhaps you also want to see the sword forms?"

The silent young man took a few more steps as if to go, but then returned to Master Chen. He gestured towards the sword blade and then pointed to the courtyard gate. Master Chen considered this. Perhaps he had just returned to put away the equipment when they had finished. He could have just waited at the house though, so maybe he was interested in learning taijiquan. Master Chen smiled at him, saying, "Do you want to practice taijiquan also?"

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The silent young man gestured toward the sword again, indicating that he would like to learn. Geng Yongfeng spoke up, saying, "This does not seem like a good thing. The Master loves to talk about martial arts and pass on the swordsmanship, but he is deaf!" Geng Yongfeng walked over to the silent young man, saying, "Have you forgotten the rules?" When Master is on the field no one can come in and out!" The silent young man bowed quickly in apology and turned to leave the training field.

Master Chen watched the silent young man leave and then said to the disciples, "It's getting late, so let's resume practice tomorrow." It was still soon after his serious illness, and Master Chen was feeling tired. As he regained his strength in the following weeks and months, Master Chen urged his disciples to train diligently each day. Often he would train with them, but sometimes they had to go on by themselves when he was busy. Many months passed in this way at Master Chen's house.

About a year later, a visitor came to Chen Village. Fu Jinannan was a first generation disciple of Master Chen, and he had been teaching taijiquan for ten years. Much time had passed, and it had been seven years since he had visited Master Chen. On this day, Fu Jiannan arrived at Chen Village with many gifts as it was near Master Chen's birthday. Besides this, there was also another matter that he had come to inquire about. ☯







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 journal are welcome. Please send correspondence in electronic format to: editor@yangfamilytaichi.com

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Xièxiè 谢谢  
Thank you