

INTERVIEW WITH MASTER  
**SUN YONGTIAN**





/ SUMMER 2022 /

JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL YANG FAMILY TAI CHI CHUAN ASSOCIATION



- 3**      **PRESIDENT'S LETTER**
  
- 5**      **THE NATURE OF PENG ENERGY;  
DISCUSSING WARD OFF ENERGY WITH MASTER YANG.**
  
- 9**      **DISTANCE RANKING**
  
- 10**     **INTERVIEW WITH MASTER SUN YONGTIAN**
  
- 13**     **SEMINARS**
  
- 14**     **WARRIORS AND YANG FAMILY TAI CHI**
  
- 16**     **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NIMBLENESS  
AND CENTER STABILITY**
  
- 18**     **OUTLAWS OF THE MARSH, A PODCAST BY JOHN ZHU**
  
- 26**     **STEALING BOXING**



# President's Letter



**YANG JUN, President**  
*Transcribed by Edward Moore*

**D**ear Association Members, first I would like to say thank you to everyone for continuing to be a member of the Yang Family Tai Chi Association. The pandemic has been going on for almost two and a half years and during this period of time most people have been affected and have had changes in their normal lives. I feel very much fortunate and glad to have been able to travel and teach seminars recently. After over two years have passed I have finally visited Europe again and it really feels... It's hard to find the language to describe what it is like to meet everyone in person and to see everyone's faces. Many of them have followed the seminars for many years and I was really glad to see everyone and to talk with them. It makes me want to be very dedicated while teaching the seminar and to do my best.

I was very happy to be teaching the seminars, and I really enjoyed it. For this trip I went to Paris, Bulgaria, and also Spain. At the beginning I actually was quite worried and concerned, but after meeting people I felt glad to make this trip and to see people after such a long period of time. Many people came to greet me and thank me for teaching, and they sometimes made me feel tears in my eyes from the feeling of being able to teach tai chi in person again after such a long time. We have still been teaching through the internet but the feeling is different in person. When I speak with students and they respond, I can see their expression and it really feels different. So, this really made me feel glad and I very much enjoyed teaching. I think people know that I really enjoy the food when I am traveling. Everywhere I went in Europe: Paris, Bulgaria, and Spain, I brought back a lot of good memories. We were eating delicious food and people were chatting

together. Through this, I could feel that people are starting to put the pandemic behind them and are moving back into normal life. I felt very happy with this journey. Even though there was still a little worry and concern because each country has different requirements and it was always a concern because if you are not careful it can affect your trip. However, overall I have been able to safely return home.

Next, I would like to talk about some events that the Disciple Council is organizing. The Yang Family Disciple Council is a community of self-organized disciples whose purpose is to unite the Yang Family Disciples. They are working to lead and guide the disciples for future events and planning, and also to continue the legacy of Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan. Last year, to commemorate one year since my grandfather passed away, the Disciple Council planned a couple of events.

During my grandfather's birthday we organized an event that will become an annual tradition in the future. At this time we recorded a video from every Yang Family Tai Chi practitioner to celebrate the event of his birthday and also as a memorial to remember him and celebrate his many contributions to Yang Family Tai Chi. I would like to encourage every one of our members, directors, and instructors to save this date and to use the moment to gather the students together to remember and celebrate my grandfather.

We would also like everyone to create a video while performing Yang Family Tai Chi in a recognizable place with a famous building, landmark, or location like the Space Needle in Seattle, or Mt Rainier, or the Eiffel Tower in Paris. We would like to have a good showing from everyone so that we can collect those videos and edit them together so we can demonstrate Yang Family Tai Chi to the world. I encourage all instructors, center directors and members to help organize these events. Even though we understand that the pandemic is not over yet, people are starting to get back into their normal lives. I am also very happy to be gradually getting back into a normal schedule for teaching seminars and I hope that I can see everyone at a seminar in person soon, I look forward to seeing everyone! ☺



# THE NATURE OF PENG ENERGY

**MASTER YANG JUN INTERVIEWED**  
BY EDWARD MOORE

*Edward Moore: Shifu, thank you for meeting with me today. I was wondering if we could talk a little about peng jin. Peng jin is such an important part of tai chi, but I've noticed that there are not very many words written about it in the classics. How would you describe peng jin?*

**Master Yang Jun:** To describe peng jin in English we would also say peng energy. We have to consider two parts to understand it. The first part is the kind of energy, the second part is related to the technical side. Every technique we use comes with energy, the peng energy or technique. It doesn't matter if we call it technique but you have to use technique and energy together. In tai chi chuan we have 8 energies, but we consider peng as

the primary one. Tai chi chuan follows the philosophy of yin and yang. On the energy side we want to have the yin and yang feeling (soft and hard). How can we balance the energy? We actually use this word: peng. In Chinese, the character is special, so if today you try to type it in a computer you cannot find it because it was created especially for tai chi.

Peng (棚) is extended and expanded but soft. This is a description of the peng. It is like a kind of expanding. From the character point of view we can understand it this way. You can find it in a Chinese dictionary but not in the simplified one, only in the more full dictionary. That is the basic description of peng. Based on the tai chi energy, that gives the idea



that through the inside being expanded, you can find balance between the soft and the hard. Sometimes we say tai chi energy equals peng energy and all the other energies only differ on the technical side. Peng energy is related to extension. Things from the inside expand, like a car tire or basketball. When you charge the tire with air, you know that the center is soft, but through the expansion of the peng, the tire has this kind of pressure. If you have a balloon, you probably feel that it is soft, but you can also feel the strength.

**Edward:** *Strength through the expansion.*

**Master Yang:** Yes. it's not like a solid kind of hard, like a rock. You feel the energy, but it does not give you a stiff feeling. The inside of the ball is soft. It has strength because of the expansion, but it is not solid and hard like a rock. We call this kind of method "relax". Understand that "relax" is the energy training method. Through this relaxation method you will receive the peng energy.

**Edward:** *I have read that peng energy can be described as a kind of buoyancy, and you have mentioned in the past that it is like the water that holds up a boat. Is it helpful to think of peng energy like this?*

**Master Yang:** It is. I think this description is even better. For example, if we describe peng energy like a tire from a car, you might imagine that it feels hard, but to describe it as water, this kind of

floating, support gives you a better way to describe the energy of the peng. The water, like the air, also fills up the empty gaps. Wherever there is an empty gap, the water fills the gap and fully connects. This is very much like tai chi energy. So, we don't want to leave... If you build a relationship with your opponent, they should feel like you are water, and anywhere they try to move into it there is support. It's like the peng energy inside gives this kind of expansion like water. It gives this kind of feeling so there is no empty gap because the peng is there. For example, if the feeling with the opponent is too hard, it can often make you disconnect too much, but this kind of water feeling is fully involved with you, goes with you. This is a good description or imagination of what ward off energy looks like, feels like. And by the way, this is related to what I mentioned in the beginning. Understand that the 8 energies... basically, understand that one part is about energy type, which is based on yin and yang philosophy. Hard and soft need to be balanced, and we use peng as tai chi energy. This is about the energy type.

The second part is the technical side: how to use the techniques to control your opponent, to achieve balance with your opponent. All of the energies that we call the 8 energies are based on tai chi energy. The techniques such as ward off, press, push... all the energies, have different techniques that you can identify from the exterior, but behind that, they are all the same. They have

this kind of buoyancy. This supporting, connecting feeling that fills the empty gaps.

**Edward:** *I've also heard people describe peng energy like an archery bow.*

**Master Yang:** Yes. This also can be useful because the bow has a string that also is kind of internally extended. Through changing the bow shape and also the string of the bow, you create a kind of spring. You should understand that ward off is not limp. The water is also not limp, because it does have energy to make you float. The water, when unified together, does demonstrate strength, hardness. There are many different ways to understand peng energy. For instance peng is also like a Mongolian tent (yurt) that is made with a springy and flexible material. We want it to be flexible and expanding. Personally, I prefer to use the idea of the inside being charged by air, and of the water flowing, but I do also like to describe it like a bow because through the idea of the inside being extended, you feel the tension like a bow expanding, this kind of strength.

We can use different ideas and perspectives to help understand peng energy, this kind of energy. To describe it as a bow, I think this is one way to help people to understand. Particularly, when we are internally extended, you feel on your back, that your back is open like a bow and when we have the ward off shape in the arm, you feel it's like a bow opening.



“ One of the functions of peng is like a spring through the external being extended. Your body, your arm in contact with the opponent feels like a spring. ”

**Edward:** *So these are all just different ways to try to understand peng energy?*

**Master Yang:** Yes.

**Edward:** *I remember in the past you said that in general, tai chi energy is peng energy, and that often the other tai chi energies are mixed with peng energy. Even in the left ward off form, the left arm has peng energy, but the right hand is pushing down. It seems to me that peng energy is in every tai chi form and movement. I think you already talked about this above.*

**Master Yang:** Yes. Something that we didn't mention is related to the technique part of peng. One of the functions of peng is like a spring through the external being extended. Your body, your arm in contact with the opponent feels like a spring. It absorbs the energy from your opponent. This gives you a good ability to keep your center of balance. Peng energy has one function from the technical point of view: to guard your center and keep you from directly facing your opponent's energy so that it doesn't affect your balance. You can use peng energy to contact and to absorb the opponent's strength, so that it yields or directs your opponent's energy off of your center. So this is one function from the technical side. The second function on the technical side is to contact your opponent and connect with your opponent, and to use peng to join with your opponent together. This is another technical function. When we demonstrate ward off, we often feel

extended from internal, and from the outside we see a round shape. The energy point can be on the outside of your arms. Sometimes when we use the contact/connecting function the ward off can also be in the top inside of the forearm too. So, this is about understanding peng energy from the technical side.

**Edward:** *Master Yang, how does peng energy help us to stay connected to another person in applications?*

**Master Yang:** If you are acting as water, when your opponent's energy comes into you like a boat, when they put more weight into it, you just absorb it. When the boat gets lighter, you move into it. If you can act like water when you meet the force, you absorb it. When they leave, you fill in the empty gap. You will remain in contact with the other person, with the opponent. That is an important part, actually, you need to demonstrate the correct energy type and also keep your mind calm. Do not plan and act by external movements, by yourself. Instead, forget yourself and go with your opponent. Only when you can put the opponent as the one in the first place then you can go with them.

If you put yourself as a priority, and start thinking about what you want, then you often create a disconnect. That is why in the classic theory we say “Shě jǐ yī rén” 舍己依人 (forget yourself, give up yourself. Do not make yourself the center). By forgetting yourself, you can go with the opponent. If you can forget yourself and not put yourself in the



center, then you can join with the opponent as one. I'm not sure if this is the right way to describe it. It's hard to give a good explanation. Yi ren is to rely on something, or to be unable to separate from something. For instance, the feeling like two people in love, they don't want to be separated. They rely on each other. They only want to be together, to be one. Maybe this is a better way to say it: when you are not too self-centered, you will find it easier to join together with the other person. That is the idea in the classic theory.

**Edward:** *So you forget yourself so you can go with the opponent. You can join together like one so there won't be any resistance or separation.*

**Master Yang:** Yes. It's like a water/boat relationship. The water and the boat stay connected. You are acting as the water and it will be easy to stay connected to the boat because you keep absorbing, supporting, and filling in empty gaps. This is a good description, or way to imagine how we can keep contact with the other person.

**Edward:** *Is there also a complementary tai chi relationship within the deng-cheng footwork technique? The pushing/supporting of the deng-cheng is stable and rooted and it sends the energy from the feet to the body. Peng energy and deng-cheng seem to have similar relationships.*

**Master Yang:** Yes, basically it's the same. We want you to have this kind of relationship, one is water and one is a

boat. One is giving the energy and the other is absorbing it. Do not act like both are the boat, or both are the water. If both are the water, they will collapse. Basically, it is a yin yang relationship. With peng energy, we often use the example of our relationship with an opponent. With the footwork however, you normally don't have direct pushing or absorbing contact with an opponent, so you have to base it on your self-practice. You have to base it on yourself to have a complementary relationship. Also, even though you may not be touching the opponent with your lower body, sometimes from the pressure that your lower body receives from contacting the opponent with the upper body, you can also have the justification for a yin yang relationship.

Often, when you feel that you are losing the feeling of a yin yang relationship, you will be close to losing your balance. So, it's different from the upper body, where you are often in contact with the opponent. Sometimes the lower body is in contact, but mostly it's the upper body. With the footwork, sometimes there will be contact with the opponent through the energy explosion of a kick, or we use a kind of blocking with the footwork to keep the opponent from moving away, which is more like tripping your opponent and affecting their balance. This is not very often like the complementary exchange of energy with the opponent that we do with the arms.

**Edward:** *I remember you saying many years ago in the Seattle School that peng jin can be like a gel. When someone applies energy to it, the peng energy absorbs and slows the force, like stirring a gel with a spoon. Am I remembering this correctly? What is the relationship between the applied force and the gel feeling?*

**Master Yang:** Yes, for sure. Actually the reason you have this feeling is the water-like effect of absorbing your opponent's energy and filling the gaps to achieve that. Most of the time we would describe this as what the sticking energy feels like. The sticking actually feels more like a gel. But the way that you can achieve that feeling is through peng energy. This kind of water-like relationship with the opponent's strength. It is like gel, but you achieve it with the water-like feeling filling in everywhere. This gives people a way to imagine what sticking energy feels like to perform with an opponent. If you are too much like air, it can be too empty, and the opponent can move in a totally free way. You won't be able to affect your opponent enough. You need to have enough internal extension to be like the water and fill in the gaps. We use water as an example because it has enough of this concentrated feeling. It is like air pressure, if there is not enough air pressure, it cannot support the plane to fly. But water has more of this feeling. For example, the material on the roads, asphalt, is very sticky like glue. It's like a kind of gel. It's about creating the relationship of the energy. Some people will feel like



“ Self-practice is an important way to find the correct shape, correct extension, to find a centralized position and the correct amount of peng energy. ”

more than water, some people will feel like less than water. This is a personal preference, but they are all correct because lighter can mean freer to move, and heavier can affect the opponent's balance more and make them slower, make them feel more controlled. This is about the difference. Each part can have an advantage. It doesn't mean one is better than the other, it's just about what is best for you to make a change at the moment.

*Edward: How can we continue to study and deepen our understanding of peng energy?*

**Master Yang:** Well, to study peng energy, you need to do it in two ways. One way is self-practice and the other way is with a partner. With self-practice, you can achieve what the external shape should be, what it's supposed to be. For instance, we want the rounded shape to look open, like a rounded bow: open, extended, and also with internal extension, which is relaxation. You can achieve the correct amount of internal extension to make you able to move in an agile way and also not be too empty. Self-practice is an important way to find the correct shape, correct extension, to find a centralized position and the correct amount of peng energy.

Even within the self-practice you can still achieve this through two ways. One way is through standing still practice and the other way is through sequence

practice. The sequence practice helps you to make changes in different positions and shapes while using peng energy in the correct way. To make transitions without losing or emptying out the feeling, and without having gaps. The sequence helps you to feel like every transition is full, and like water, filling in everywhere. This is how sequence practice can help you.

Then for the other part, you need to practice with an opponent because the opponent is the one who can help you learn not only about your own center, but to understand from your opponent and to join together with your opponent and train in a complementary way. You learn how to find the yin yang relationship, and you learn how to do this through changing yourself to achieve balance. So that is how practicing with another person can help you. Sometimes when we do it by ourselves we are basing our understanding on yourself and how we want to do it, but when practicing with another person we have the opportunity to not only base it on yourself, but also to base your understanding on an opponent and how you adjust yourself to achieve balance with the other person. This is about training and learning about peng energy, and for the other energies we use this same method.

*Edward: Thank you Shifu!*







# DISTANCE RANKING

*Distance ranking is a virtual method of examining candidates for ranking using video conferencing technology. The Association offers distance ranking for members who live in remote areas or regions where ranking is not readily available. It is organized through the Ranking Department and available for the Eagle Ranks only. Distance ranking components are currently the same as those for standard ranking.*

The first Ranking Department Distance Ranking Event was held on April 9 & 10. There were a total of 15 candidates from 8 different countries ranging from New Zealand to Colombia to Bulgaria and places in between. The department plans to hold at least 3 ranking events each year. The next one is scheduled for this summer.

*For more information email: [distanceranking@yangfamilytaichi.com](mailto:distanceranking@yangfamilytaichi.com).*

The department would like to extend a special thanks to Nancy Lucero, Director of the Redmond Yang Family Tai Chi Center, and her examining committee for test driving the distance ranking procedures last year. Their experience helped us fine tune them for a successful inaugural department event this year.





# INTERVIEW WITH MASTER SUN YONGTIAN

INTERVIEW BY: JIM PAYMAR  
Interpreter: Fang Hong  
Transcribed by: Bruno Repetto

*Jim Paymar: Master Sun, thank you so much for joining us for the discussion today, thank you. Master Sun, tell me about your style of tai chi. How long does this go back in history with your family?*

**Master Sun Yongtian (SY):** This style was created by Grandmaster Sun Lutang, combining the three internal martial arts of xingyiquan, baguazhang and tai chi chuan.

*JP: But how long ago did the family begin tai chi?*

**SY:** From 1912.

*JP: From 1912, ok. So 107 years that your family has been practicing tai chi. How has it changed since it began in 1912?*

**SY:** 1912 is the time that Sun Lutang started to develop Sun Family Tai Chi. He combined three fists into one, baguazhang and xingyiquan were already created much earlier.

*JP: Last night we saw six different masters practicing different styles of tai chi. How are they all different? Why are they all different?*

**SY:** Tai chi chuan has a long history because of their different backgrounds, different times and different people. So this is why they are different.

*JP: Have you changed the style of tai chi of your family since you started practicing?*





**SY:** Yes, I think so. Because of the times changing, and everything changing, the form has changed.

**JP:** *When you were a little boy, Mao Zedong was the leader of China. Things have changed so dramatically in China. Has tai chi changed as well?*

**SY:** Yes, I think so. Tai chi has changed towards a more modern, better, style.

**JP:** *So has tai chi evolved, or changed because of the... You had the Communist Revolution, you had the Cultural Revolution, and now China is a world power, and a very fast-paced society; has that created change in tai chi itself?*

**SY:** Yes, because of the fast-paced work schedules for people in modern style, people may find themselves exhausted, that's why there have been changes in the style.

**JP:** *Because of all of the changes in China, becoming a very fast-paced society, with people working very, very long hours, six days a week, is it important that they bring tai chi into their lives in order to calm themselves down?*

**SY:** Yes, because they are exhausted and off-balance, practicing tai chi can make their qi and their blood have better circulation, and help their minds calm down and build their body up.

**JP:** *Do the big Chinese companies that employ many, many thousands of people, do they integrate, or give their workers opportunities during work to do tai chi?*

**SY:** Yes. I was CEO of a big company before I retired. All of our employees practiced tai chi, and that was our company's culture.

**JP:** *If you had to describe tai chi for people who do not know much about*

*it – especially in America, we see older people practicing in parks very slowly, we do not see a lot of young people practicing tai chi – how do you describe what tai chi is?*

**SY:** I have a son, a student in America, who does not know tai chi, and at first I asked him to do the form, and gradually after practicing for a long time, he began to understand more about tai chi culture.

**JP:** *How would you describe the “tai chi culture”? What is tai chi culture?*

**SY:** Tai chi culture, from the Yijing (I-Ching), is a traditional Chinese culture, and especially in our Sun style, we ask people to go forward and back together, and this is our philosophy, and in our real life, our social life, we do the same thing.

**JP:** *What is qi? Where do you find it in your body? Do you find it in your mind, is it in your eyes, is it in your heart, is it in your soul, is it in your spirit?*

**SY:** Can you rephrase this question? It's kind of hard to explain, as it spans many topics.

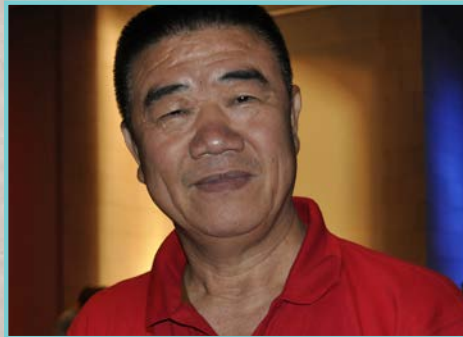
**JP:** *So, qi, as I understand it, is an energy. So where does it begin? Does it begin in the brain, does it begin in the sight, does it begin in the breath, does it begin in the heart, does it begin in the soul, does it begin in the spirit, is it all one?*

**SY:** In tai chi, there is a saying: “the body and the mind neutralize each other.” Movement and stillness neutralize each other. When we try to lift heavy stuff, our mind and our energy cooperate to make this possible.

**JP:** *When you start your tai chi exercise, and I imagine you exercise and do your*



“ In tai chi, there is a saying: “the body and the mind neutralize each other.” Movement and stillness neutralize each other. When we try to lift heavy stuff, our mind and our energy cooperate to make this possible. ”



#### INTERVIEW WITH MASTER SUN YONGTIAN

*form just about every day or every other day, you do it often. When you begin to do tai chi, what is the first thing that you do? Do you quiet yourself down, do you stop thinking, do you direct your body? How do you begin your tai chi form?*

**SY:** Yes, we first have to clean our minds, make our minds calm, and then we start.

*[Editor's Note: Master Sun cellphone chimes as he responds to this question.]*

*JP: Does he use the cellphone that beeped in his pocket as he starts?*

**SY:** <Chuckles.>

*JP: (Just making a joke. <Chuckles.>) So, some of the other masters I have talked to say that tai chi is preventative medicine. If you practice tai chi, you will have less sickness, less disease, less problems with your knees and your elbows, and your ligaments and your movements. Do you believe that to be the case?*

*[Editor's Note: The interpreter indicates that Master Sun used technical terms in his answer, and that she needs to look up the proper translations. After a pause, the interviewer and the interpreter then agree that the answer given by Master Sun involves the terms “preventative”, “intervention”, and “pathology.”]*

*JP: That's ok. I'll ask a simpler question: does tai chi help prevent a person from getting a disease such as rheumatoid arthritis, or [having] tears in their ligaments, or...? Does it make them healthier?*

**SY:** Yes, but people have to be directed or instructed by a teacher, because the student must distribute their weight properly over their legs, and doing it correctly helps prevent diseases.

*JP: What about mental disease? Depression, dementia, Alzheimer's disease, as people will get older, I've read that it can help decrease the level of emotional and mental stress, depression and dementia.*

**SY:** Yes, in my experience, for people with depression, practicing tai chi will decrease the level of depression.

*JP: What about children who have Attention Deficit Disorder? Will tai chi help to calm them down so that they can focus more in school, and become better students?*

**SY:** With infants, it's hard to get them involved in tai chi. Only when they are older can they be exposed to tai chi and its philosophy. So yes, it will probably help them.

*JP: Final question. Where do you see tai chi going in the future? Do you think that more and more people will start to do tai chi as they learn about it? Because not everyone knows about tai chi. They don't know what it is. Do you think it will grow over time?*

**SY:** As more people learn that tai chi is a really good exercise for their body, I'm sure there will be more people that will join in practicing.

*JP: Thank you very much!*







# Master Yang Jun's 2022 Seminars

**June 11 – 14, 2022**

— *Royal Oak, Michigan, USA* —

**June 11-12: ESSENTIAL FORM**

**June 13-14: SWORD FORM**

**June 15: 9:30-11:30 am: FRIENDSHIP GROUP PRACTICE**

Contact: Fang Hong  
fanghong@msn.com

**September 16 – 18, 2022**

— *Danbury, CT USA* —

**SEPT. 16: SABER FORM**

**SEPT. 17-18: SENIOR FORM**

Contact: Mari Lewis  
mari@yangfamilytaichi.com

**October 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

— *Siegen, Germany* —

**OCT. 1-3: TRADITIONAL HAND FORM**

**OCT. 4: PUSH HANDS**

Contact: Uli Hoffmann  
ulihoffmann@taiji-schule-siegen.de

**October 7 – 9**

— *Rome, Italy* —

Contact: Claudio Mingarini  
Phone: +39 347 3635333  
iyftcca.italy@gmail.com

**October 15 – 16**

— *Lugo, Spain* —

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

**November 12 – 15**

— *Ribeirão Preto, Brazi* —

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

**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. Master 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.

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





# WARRIORS

*and Yang Family Tai Chi*



BY CINDY FRUSHA

**M**y work for the Veterans Administration Hospital began in November of 2018. I was one of the first and few tai chi instructors to be hired as full time employees.

Having personally received medical treatments in military hospitals for 20 years as well as being the daughter of a Force Recon Marine, I was familiar with the trauma, both physical and mental, that our military members experience.

My students are made up of mainly veterans and staff whose age ranges from mid twenties to late seventies. Also, their reasons for being referred to my classes range from mobility issues, balance issues, post trauma stress disorder, traumatic physical injuries, high blood pressure, depression, anxiety, range of motion due to stroke, etc.

Through their practice of Yang Family Tai Chi and our qigong exercises they are finding relief from these issues. Some have experienced very dramatic results. They truly enjoy my classes and some attend two or more times a week, both in person and via live video classes.

I have incorporated the Tai Chi Kung, Essential forms, as well as the Wellness Exercises, Yang Style Shibashi Qigong, tai chi ball exercises, and teacup exercises based on Shifu's waist training exercises. Our 103 practice was interrupted for my advancing students by the shutdowns. Now that we are gradually opening for in-person classes we are progressing again towards the 103, the senior form and all hand forms. In the hospitals, we are not allowed to practice martial application but I demonstrate through the eight energies and five directions. The





tai chi ball and teacup exercises help my standard practice, seated, standing assist and wheelchair students to understand moving from the waist, and in identifying the physical (lower) dantian and how it pertains to the movements through the postures. This also helps them innately develop an understanding of directing energy throughout the body by strengthening the core and spine. This also improves balance, proprioception and mobility.

We begin classes with loosening exercises, tai chi ball and teacup exercises, stretching, and balance challenges. We then do tai chi practice or qigong depending on the student's level and if via video, close with a 5 minute meditation practice. My students talk about using muscles they didn't know they had and joints popping in a good way. Also, feeling relaxed both mentally and physically after class.

From 2020 to present, I have served on a national committee of Human Resource members and VA ( Veterans Affairs ) tai chi instructors to rewrite the K.S.A's (knowledge, skills and abilities requirements) for the VA to hire more tai chi instructors. The minimum requirements for beginning instructors is 150 hours from a recognized certifying body plus 50 hours of monitored teaching experience. There are additional requirements of knowledge and understanding which go well beyond memorizing postures.

Earlier, I mentioned the fact that my father was a war veteran. He suffered with untreated PTSD for years. His flashbacks were so powerful, he would not recognize me. He would ask, "Who are you? Little girl, you better go home." In his mind's eye he is in his machine gun pit being fired upon. One of the many battles he served

was The Battle of Chosin at the age of eighteen.

In these moments, I would see the 18 year old war hardened version of my father. I called these episodes walking daddy home. These episodes occurred more commonly in the last months of his life. Gradually, I could convince him they couldn't hurt us because we were not there in the battle, we were home. He would look at me mystified, saying, "Where is home?" This is something I wish for no one.

My father passed away in October of 2020.

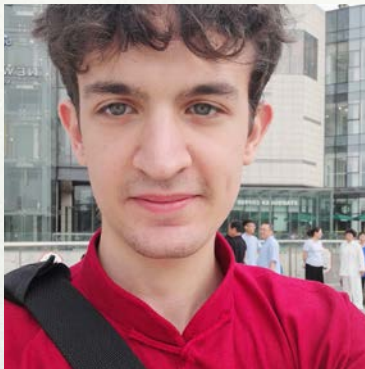
Having these experiences with my father plus my own experiences, have helped me better relate to my students from a place of understanding.

My students truly enjoy and appreciate our classes and so do I!



*The Relationship Between*  
**NIMBLENESS** *and* **CENTER**

# STABILITY



BY JOSHUA NEUHAUS

**N**imbleness, also referred to as agility, is the ability to make transitions between the full and empty of energy and weight. This means you can become light and intangible even from a state of being heavy and strong and vice versa. In lay terms you might also simply call it the ability to change from one stance to another effortlessly. Center stability is the ability to keep our physical balance, akin to a boat remaining upright on top of the waves or simply a deeply rooted tree withstanding the blowing of wind. Looking at the words themselves nimbleness speaks of a lively quality of adaptation and

change while center stability firstly speaks of a rooted, immovable quality completely lacking any desire for change.

Yet, nimbleness and center stability are far from simple opposites as they rather work towards the same effect. The boat, for example, is nimble in how, despite constantly keeping its course, it yields to the forces of the waves, when poor navigation or build would otherwise let it topple. The rooted tree is nimble in how, despite constantly seeking to stand upright, its crown is light and able to yield to the wind no matter how often the wind switches direction – with a strong root and soft wood,



even strong winds won't topple the tree. As such, nimbleness actually enriches our ability to keep our physical balance.

Yet, interestingly enough, we often have a choice to make between the two. Do we prefer to be more nimble or more stable – do we choose a smaller stance with short, quick and light steps, or do we challenge ourselves to a low stance with long strides and a higher difficulty of lifting our feet from the ground? We all know that a lower stance will make it much more difficult for an opponent to push us off our balance. Master Yang often jokes that we are actually the most stable when lying down. At that point we have all kinds of leverage to prevent another person from moving us, starting with the full of our own weight and then extending to beneficial use of the ground and our own structure to absorb nearly any amount of human pushing or pulling force. Nonetheless, an issue is presented when facing a force that should be yielded to or dodged rather than absorbed. If the tree was able to simply walk away from the person carrying an ax, that surely can only be seen as beneficial to the tree. While the tree can't hope to ever walk away from an ax swing, humans can – but only if they don't slow themselves too much with a stance wider than their ability supports.

As such, neither the stability gained from a low stance nor the agility inherent to smaller steps are flawless. Tai chi lies in the balance and co-existence of the two.

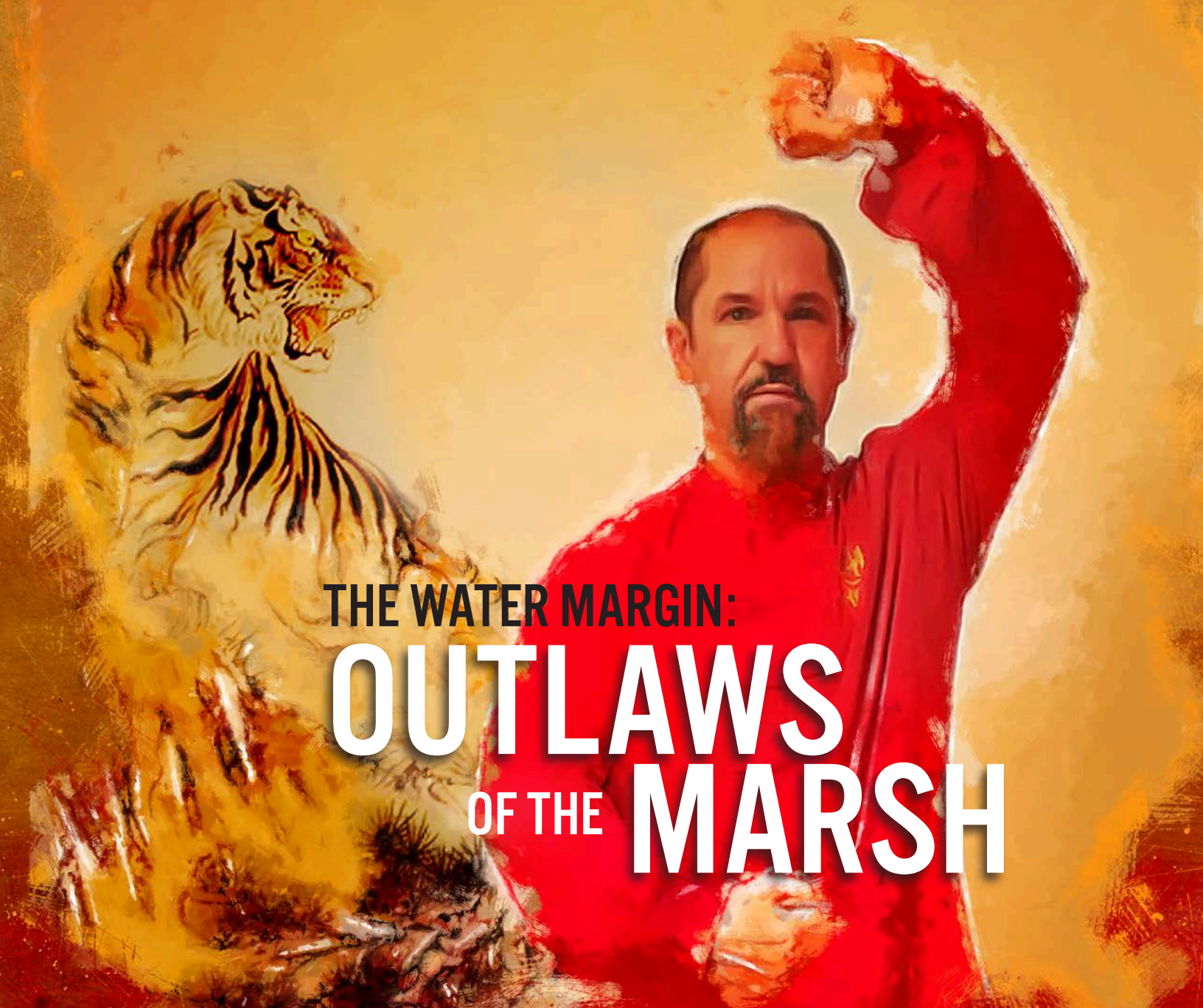
Our training should enable us as much as possible to integrate both at the same time and the good news is that improving one aspect will usually also improve the other.

While strengthening the lower body and improving flexibility to enable agility even in a low stance is an obvious advantage for the practitioner, there is a set of prerequisites for nimbleness that one should consider, covering awareness, body shape, body angle, weight location and energy. In terms of awareness, it is important to find a calm state of emotion. Being overly angry, sad, pre-occupied or happy can affect both our ability to breathe as well as our ability to nimbly make changes and adapt. On the external side we look to the ten principles to correct our body shape while making sure that our body angle matches our footwork and that our weight is put into the bubbling well. In terms of energy, we aim to smooth out internal blocks and resistance so that we may find the ability to yield and flow. These points allow our *qi* to sink to the *dantian*, improving our overall balance. The ability to yield strikes me as particularly crucial for improving nimbleness, as based on it we learn to follow the transitions between the full and empty of energy. The ability to follow in turn relates to our ability to make our upper body light and this lightness is where nimbleness stems from to begin with. At the same time, lightness of the upper body is a source of stability, showing again that stability and nimbleness go hand in hand.



“ If the tree was able to simply walk away from the person carrying an ax, that surely can only be seen as beneficial to the tree. While the tree can't hope to ever walk away from an ax swing, humans can – but only if they don't slow themselves too much with a stance wider than their ability supports. ”





# THE WATER MARGIN: OUTLAWS OF THE MARSH

Introduction by  
EDWARD MOORE

**H**ave you ever wondered why there is a movement in tai chi called “Strike the Tiger”? The answer is that the history of tai chi is connected to the history of literature in China. The name Strike the Tiger comes from a famous work of historical fiction that is generally thought to have been written in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The epic story is called 水浒传 (Shuǐhǔ Zhuàn), and is usually translated in English as The Water Margin, or Outlaws of the Marsh. The story is set in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century, and it is regarded as one of the four classic novels of Chinese literature. The novel is set in the early 1100’s, and is inspired by actual historical events.

Much in the way that the legends of Robin Hood and the Knights of King Arthur’s Court are woven into the culture of the Western World, The Water Margin has a wide cultural imprint in Chinese History. Although The Water Margin seems similar to Western fantasy stories, it’s not necessarily great read-

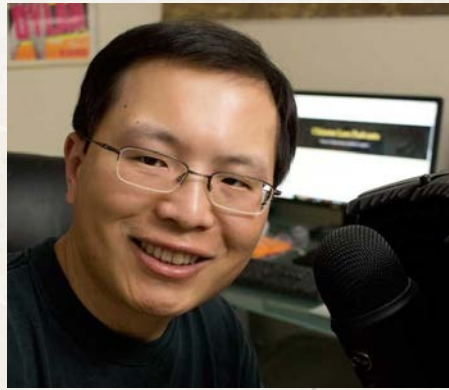
ing for kids, since there are violent and vulgar elements. There is actually a traditional saying that translates as “The young shouldn’t read Outlaws of the Marsh, while the old shouldn’t read The Three Kingdoms.” (The Three Kingdoms is one of the other four classics of Chinese literature.)



The story has been passed down through oral traditions, many published editions, and the story has proved itself to be very enduring over time as it has been adapted into opera, fine art, comic books, and even video games. One testament to its widespread appeal is the 2019 exhibit at the San Francisco Asian Art Museum called Tattoos in Japan. This exhibit of the extraordinary woodblock prints of the Japanese artist Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797–1861). Kuniyoshi's print series One Hundred and Eight Heroes of the Popular Water Margin (1827–1830) was inspired by a Japanese version of The Water Margin in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Water Margin has been translated into English many times, first by Pearl S. Buck, the American Pulitzer and Nobel Laureate, in 1933. There are many different English versions of the story, because it is a serious challenge to translate in a way that is both accurate and readable. The story is very long and complex, and requires a lot of time and patience to get through. One more accessible way to explore The Water Margin is through a free podcast called Water Margin Podcast: Outlaws of the Marsh. The creator of the podcast is a native Chinese speaker and communications professional, John Zhu. John approaches The Water Margin in an accessible and humorous way that feels more like listening to a friend tell a story, and less like a slog through a giant, translated historical novel. As an introduction to the podcast, we have included a transcription of the beginning of the story. If you want to listen, please start at episode one, which comes before this one, and gives some background information for the story.

- editor.



A PODCAST BY JOHN ZHU

## WELCOME TO THE WATER MARGIN PODCAST

Last time, I laid out some background information to give you some context for the novel. This week, we dive into the narrative. Now, I mentioned last week that the novel is set in the reign of the Huizōng emperor, sometime in the years 1119-1125. But to start us off, we are actually going to go back four emperors and about 60 years, to late in the reign of the Rénzōng emperor in the year 1058.

The Rénzōng emperor sat on the throne for about 42 years, from 1022 to 1063, and his reign was generally considered a time of prosperity. But late in his reign, something went wrong.

Early on the third day of the third month of the year 1058, the Rénzōng emperor held court as usual. He sat down on his throne and the court officials bowed. Then the chief of ceremonies declared, "If you have business to report, then do so now; otherwise, court will be adjourned." Cause, you know, the emperor has to get back to his busy life of leisure.

But on this day, there WAS business. From the ranks of the officials stepped forth the prime minister and his deputy. They told the emperor, "A plague is raging in the capital, and countless civilians and soldiers have fallen victim to the disease. We hope your majesty,

in your forgiving and benevolent spirit, will reduce prison sentences and cut taxes, so as to pray to heaven for relief for the people."

Now, you might be scratching your head and wondering what tax cuts and criminal justice reform have to do with combatting a public health crisis. Well, tax cuts and amnesties were considered acts of kindness and mercy, things that could curry favor with heaven in the hopes of securing good fortune. Emperors would often do things like that on special occasions like naming an heir or, in this case, when there's trouble brewing. So the Rénzōng emperor immediately told the Hànlín Academy to write up a draft decree, proclaiming a general amnesty for all prisoners and canceling all taxes.

The Hanlin Academy, by the way, was a government institution that started in the 8th century. It was a group of elite scholars, and one of their most important jobs was to decide on the official interpretation of Chinese classics, which then set the tone for the imperial examinations through which aspiring scholars earned government offices. Basically, if you wanted a government job, you needed to toe the official line for how the classics were interpreted. But another part of the Hanlin





Academy's job was to basically serve as the emperor's communications department, writing up and sending out his proclamations and decrees. So, imagine if the president of the United States put together a government office comprised of Nobel Laureates in Literature, and they had the power to decide how Mark Twain should be taught in schools, and at the same time they served as glorified secretaries and wrote the president's speeches, emails, and tweets. Of course, now that I think about it, that might not be such a bad idea these days.

Anyway, the decrees were written and sent out, the prisoners were released, the taxes were canceled, and yet, for reasons totally beyond me, the plague stubbornly refused to stop. This concerned the emperor greatly. So he summoned his officials and asked them, "Ok, the giant tax cut did NOT lead to better health care outcomes like you promised. So what's your plan B?"

Another official now stepped forth and said, "The plague is decimating our soldiers and citizens. No one is safe. In my humble opinion, in order to end this pestilence, your majesty should summon the Divine Teacher of the Daoists, who is part of a papal line that dates back to the Han Dynasty. Ask him to come to the capital right away and conduct a great prayer service in the imperial park. That will save the people."

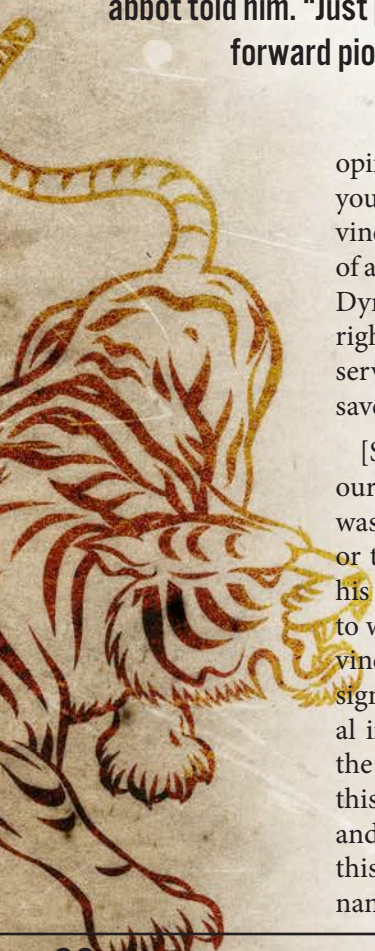
[Sigh] Ok, I see we're really earning our paychecks this month. But since that was the only idea presented, the emperor took up the suggestion and ordered his secretaries in the Hanlin Academy to write up an edict to summon the Divine Teacher, which the emperor then signed. He also issued a bunch of royal incense sticks with the decree. Now the emperor needed someone to go find this Divine Teacher, deliver the decree, and bring him back to the capital. For this job, the emperor tapped a marshal named Hóng Xin.

Now, during the Song Dynasty, a marshal was a military post, but it was often held by people who were NOT soldiers. The founder of the Song Dynasty was a general under the previous regime, and he came to power when his troops ... umm ... spontaneously declared him emperor while they were out on campaign. So from the beginning, the rulers of the Song Dynasty were paranoid about the military taking matters into its own hands again, so they put the military under the command of civil officials. So when you hear me mention Marshal so and so in this novel, instead of picturing a seasoned soldier who rose through the ranks of the army on the strength of his military service, you should picture a scholar or, worse, a good-for-nothing who attained his post by currying favor with the right people.

Anyway, back to the story. So this Marshal Hóng was ordered to go to Dragon and Tiger Mountain in the prefecture of Xīnzhōu, where he was to present the decree to the Divine Teacher, a certain Priest Zhāng, and bring him back to the capital to perform the necessary prayer service. The emperor lit some imperial incense in court and personally handed Marshal Hong the decree. Marshal Hong dared not dally, so he immediately took his leave and set out with a few dozen men. His attendants carried the decree and a golden box containing the imperial incense sticks. He mounted his horse and his party set out.

Now, when government officials traveled, they had state guesthouses to stay in along the way, so Marshal Hong and his entourage had their accommodations taken care of throughout the trip. After a few days' travel, they arrived at their destination, and all the local officials came to welcome this envoy from the imperial court. A messenger was dispatched to the Temple of Supreme Purity on the mountain to let the abbot and other Daoists there know that, hey you've got a VIP coming, so roll out the red carpet.

**"If you wish to save the people, you must not harbor any regrets or thoughts of giving up," the abbot told him. "Just press forward piously."**





The next day, the local officials accompanied Marshal Hong to the foot of the mountain, and there, they saw a flock of Daoists descending from the temple. They were beating drums and ringing bells, playing saintly music, bearing incense and candles, and hoisting banners and canopies as they came to welcome Marshal Hong. Together, they traveled up the mountain to the temple, which was truly impressive.

All the Daoists in the temple, from the presiding abbot to the lowliest novice, came to welcome the imperial envoy and escorted him to the Hall of Three Purities. There, they asked him to place the royal edict on an altar. This done, Marshal Hong asked where the Divine Teacher was.

To this, the abbot answered, "Marshal, you must understand, our current Divine Teacher is known as 'Pure Serenity.' He is of a very exalted nature and cannot be bothered with such mundane matters as welcoming and seeing off visitors. He has built a thatched hut atop the mountain to meditate and cultivate his spirit. That is why he doesn't live in this temple."

"Well, I have an imperial edict for him, so how do I get an audience?" Marshal Hong asked. "Please leave the edict on the altar, and none of us will dare to read it anyway," the abbot said. "Please come to the abbey for some tea, and then we can figure it out."

So the entourage now moved into the abbey, where the marshal sat down in the middle, and attendants served up tea and vegetarian dishes. After the meal, the marshal once again asked the abbot, "Since the Divine Teacher is in his hut atop the mountain, why don't we send someone to invite him to come down to receive the edict?"

"Sir," the abbot replied, "our Divine Teacher IS at the top of the mountain, but he has an unusual knowledge of the Way. He can ride the clouds and mists, and no one knows his exact whereabouts. Even we rarely get to see him, so how can any of us get him to come down?"

And by the way, being in touch with the Way was kind of the whole point of Daoism. In fact, the Dao in Daoism means the Way, and it was believed that if you were really in touch with the Way, you could do magical things like fly or make things turn into other things or live to an extraordinary age. So it's kind of like being in touch with the Force.

Anyway, Marshal Hong was not going to take no for an answer. He had to answer to the emperor, after all.

"Then how do I get to see him?!" he said, starting to lose his patience. "A plague is raging in the capital, and his majesty has sent me to deliver an edict to invite the Divine Teacher to perform a great prayer service to quell the pestilence and save the people. What can I do?"

The abbot told him, "To help his majesty save the people, you must demonstrate your piety. Eat no meat, bathe, and change into simple cotton garments. Then, carry the edict on your back, carry burning incense, and proceed up the mountain on foot alone. There, bow and proclaim your invitation aloud. Then maybe you will get to see the Divine Teacher. But if you are not sincere, then your trip will be in vain, and you will not get to see him."

"I have been eating vegetarian meals since I left the capital," Marshal Hong grumbled. "Isn't that sincere enough? Fine, I'll do as you suggest and go up the mountain tomorrow."

At 5 a.m. the next morning, the Daoists got up and prepared scented water and a vegetarian meal for Marshal Hong. He bathed in the scented water, and then changed into a new cotton garment and strapped on straw sandals. After the vegetarian meal, he wrapped the imperial edict in a piece of yellow silk and strapped it across his back. In his hand he carried smoking incense in a silver incense burner. The Daoists then accompanied him to the mountain behind the temple



**"To help his majesty save the people, you must demonstrate your piety. Eat no meat, bathe, and change into simple cotton garments. Then, carry the edict on your back, carry burning incense, and proceed up the mountain on foot alone."**



and pointed him in the right direction.

“If you wish to save the people, you must not harbor any regrets or thoughts of giving up,” the abbot told him. “Just press forward piously.”

Taking his leave of everyone, the marshal said a prayer for divine assistance and began his solo ascent. The winding path seemingly led up toward the sky, through a mountain that truly seemed like the sanctuary of immortals, shrouded in mists, with awe-inspiring cliffs, babbling brooks, and strange rock formations.

Marshal Hong forged ahead, climbing over hills and fighting his way through the twisting, overgrown path, undeterred by the difficult journey ahead and wholly committed to his cause as his figure began to fade into the distance... oh wait, no, he's slowing down, a lot.

Barely a mile into his pilgrimage, Marshal Hong's legs and feet were already getting sore, and he was starting to stagger. He didn't complain out loud, but in his mind, he was thinking, “I am an important official of the court. In the capital, I slept on double mattresses and dined on banquet dishes. Even then I didn't have much energy. What the hell am I doing out here in straw sandals, climbing this mountain? Who knows where the hell that Divine Teacher is? Why do I have to suffer?”

Nonetheless, he staggered on. The things we do to save millions of plague victims, you know? But another 50 steps or so, and he was doubled over and panting hard.

Just then, a strong wind blew through the hollow he was in, and when it passed, a roar thundered from behind the pine trees, and a giant tiger with bulging eyes, a white forehead, and striped fur leaped out.

“Oh crap!” a stunned Marshal Hong cried out as he tumbled backward onto the ground, while the tiger, glowering with fangs and claws, circled with eyes

fixed squarely on this human who was obviously in no shape to run away.

And then, the tiger let out a mighty roar and bounded off down the rear slope, leaving Marshal Hong sitting under a tree, with his teeth chattering and his heart clanging like 15 buckets swinging up and down in a single well. His pulse might have been racing, but his body was paralyzed, and his legs were as limp as a rooster that just lost a cock fight. The only thing running was his mouth as he just kept muttering oh crap oh crap oh crap.

It was a long while after the tiger had disappeared before Marshal Hong managed to pull himself to his feet. He picked up the incense burner off the ground, relit the incense, and continued his ascent, for which I have to give him some credit. Of course, he complained about it the whole way, grumbling, “If the emperor had not sent me on this mission with a deadline, I would not have suffered such a fright!”

But he had barely finished grumbling when suddenly, another strong gust of wind swept through, blasting him with foul-smelling air. In that moment, Marshal Hong heard a loud hiss, and he saw a giant snake, as thick as a bucket and dappled with snow-white spots, slithering toward him from a bamboo grove.

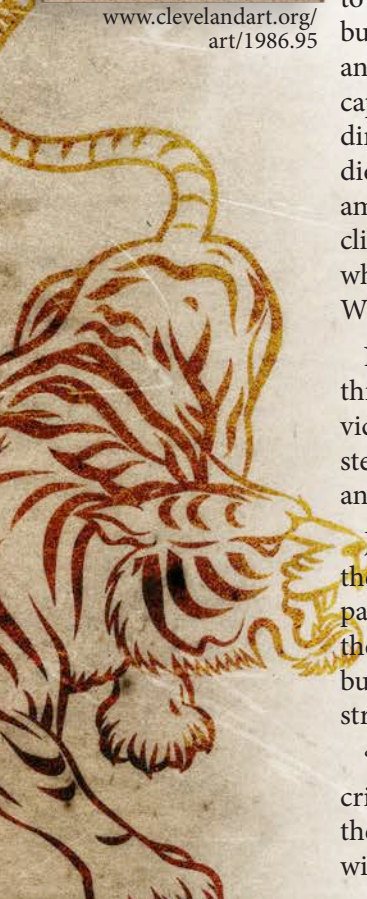
“I'm done for!” Marshal Hong cried as he dropped the incense burner and fell backward next to a spiral-shaped rock.

The giant serpent quickly slithered toward the rock and twisted itself into a coil. Golden sparks shot from its eyes as it opened its mouth and flicked its tongue. Marshal Hong could feel another gust of noxious fumes hitting him in the face, leaving him so terrified that it was as though his soul had left his body.

And yet, just like with the tiger, the giant snake took a close look at this hapless human and then slithered down the mountain side and disappeared. Only then did Marshal Hong get to his feet.



[www.clevelandart.org/art/1986.95](http://www.clevelandart.org/art/1986.95)





“Lucky me,” he thought. “That snake nearly scared me to death!”

Feeling goose bumps all over his body from his close encounter, Marshal Hong now started to curse the abbot of the temple. “How rude of him to play such tricks on me and scare me like this! If I can’t find the Divine Teacher, that abbot will be hearing from me when I go back down.”

Nonetheless, the mission remained, and Marshal Hong picked up his incense burner, straightened up his clothes and his bundle with the edict inside, and prepared to resume his journey. But just then, he heard another sound coming from behind the pine trees. Oh crap. Now what?

Actually, this one was NOT so threatening. It was the melody of a flute, drifting closer and closer. The marshal looked in the direction of the music and saw a Daoist novice, just a boy, riding backward atop a yellow ox, playing a metal flute with a wide grin on his face.

“Hey boy, where are you from? Do you recognize me?” Marshal Hong called out to the kid. But the boy ignored him and just kept playing his flute. The marshal called him a few more times before the kid burst out laughing and pointed at him with the flute.

“Are you here to see the Divine Teacher?” the boy asked.

Surprised, Marshall Hong said, “You are just a young cowherd. How do you know such things?” Smiling, the boy said, “I was attending the Divine Teacher in his hut earlier, and I heard him say, ‘The Renzong Emperor has sent a Marshal Hong with an edict and incense to this mountain. He is summoning me to go perform a great prayer service to save the land from a pestilence. I will ride a crane and fly there.’”

“I figure he must have left already,” the boy continued, “so he’s not here. Don’t go any farther. There are lots of poisonous creatures and ferocious beasts in this mountain that can kill

you.” “You better not be lying to me,” Marshal Hong said.

The boy chuckled and gave no reply, instead just continuing on his way while playing his flute, disappearing around a hillside.

Marshal Hong now thought to himself, “How could that kid know so much about such matters? The Divine Teacher must have told him to do so. That must be it.”

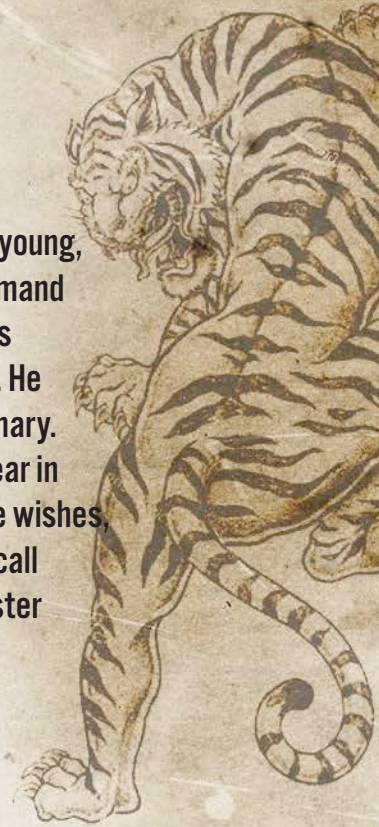
So now, he had a choice to make. Keep going up or turn back like the boy suggested. With his close encounters with the tiger and the snake still fresh on his mind, the boy’s words were all the reason Marshal Hong needed to turn back. So he retraced his steps and descended the mountain. The Daoists greeted him at the foot of the mountain and escorted him back to the abbey. Once he sat down, the abbot asked him whether he met the Divine Teacher. And that’s when Marshal tore him a new one.

“I am an important court official!” Marshal Hong seethed. “How could you have me traverse mountain paths and endure such hardship? I almost got killed! I got midway up the mountain, and a giant tiger jumped out, scaring me out of my boots. Then, a giant snake stormed out of the bamboo groves, wound itself into a coil, and blocked my path. I’m lucky to make it back alive! You Daoists are playing a trick on me!”

“Sir, how would we dare to show any disrespect to a high official?” the abbot said. “That was the Divine Teacher testing you. This mountain does have snakes and tigers, but they have never harmed anyone.”

Marshal Hong now continued his story. “I was struggling to go on but was just about to press forward when a boy novice came out from behind some pine trees, riding a yellow ox and blowing on a flute. I asked him if he knew who I was, and he said he knew all about me and that the Divine Teacher said he was leaving for the capital this morning on

**“He may be young, but his command of the Way is remarkable. He is extraordinary. He can appear in any guise he wishes and people call him the Master of the Way.”**



a crane. That’s why I came back down.”

When the abbot heard this, he told the marshal, “Sir, you missed your chance! That cowherd IS the Divine Teacher.”

Huh? Come again?

“How can that rustic little boy be the Divine Teacher?” an astonished Marshal Hong asked. “This Divine Teacher is extremely unusual,” the abbot explained. “He may be young, but his command of the Way is remarkable. He is extraordinary. He can appear in any guise he wishes, and people call him the Master of the Way.”

“I saw him with my own eyes and did not recognize him. What a missed opportunity!” Marshal Hong lamented.

“Sir, don’t worry,” the abbot consoled him. “Since the Divine Teacher said he was going, then by the time you return to the capital, he would have finished the prayer service.”

That put Marshal Hong’s mind at ease, and the abbot now ordered a meal prepared for him. They stored the imperial edict in a casket for royal documents for safekeeping in the Hall of Three



Purities, and then burned the imperial incense in the hall. Then, they feasted deep into the night, vegetarian-style, before Marshal Hong turned in.

The next morning after breakfast, the abbot and other Daoists at the abbey invited Marshal Hong to take a sightseeing tour of the premises. Now THIS was walking that he was happy to do, and who can say no to a little fun excursion on a business trip? So the entourage set out, led by two novices. Marshal Hong and his people oohed and ahed as they toured the various impressive halls and walkways on the temple grounds.

Later on the tour, the group moved to the rear of the walkway on the right side of the temple. There, Marshal Hong spotted a building with walls as red as peppers, and vermilion-colored lattice work on its two front windows. The front double doors, though, were clamped shut by a lock as thick as a man's arm, and a dozen strips of paper had been pasted over the seam between the two doors. The papers were stamped with countless red seals. Below the front eaves hung a red plaque inscribed with characters of gold, which read, "The Hall of Suppressed Demons."

"What is this place?" Marshal Hong asked.

"A previous Divine Teacher locked demons in there," the abbot replied.

"What's with all the paper on the doors?"

"After that Divine Teacher locked the demons in there, every Divine Teacher since then has personally added a strip of paper to seal the doors, warning their disciples that they must not open the doors. It would be terrible if the demons escaped. The last eight or nine generations of Divine Teachers have sworn to keep the hall closed. The lock has been filled with melted bronze. Who knows what's going on inside? I have been in

charge here for 30 years, and yet I only know what I've been told."

Now, if I was a superstitious man living in 12th-century China and I came upon a locked building called the Hall of Suppressed Demons with a bunch of keep-out and no-trespassing signs, and I'm told that the building does exactly what its name says, my inclination would be to just leave well enough alone and move on. But Marshal Hong had other ideas. His curiosity had been piqued, and it demanded satisfaction.

"Open the door; I want to see what the demons look like," he told the abbot.

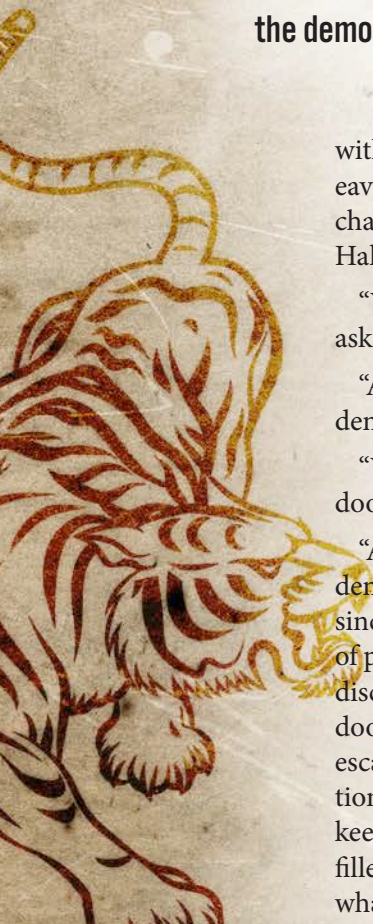
"Sir! This hall MUST not be opened!" the abbot said. "The previous Divine Teacher had decreed that no one may open it."

"Nonsense," Marshal Hong said with a laugh. "Y'all are just making up lies to trick the people. You're making claims about taming demons to make your sect's powers look good. I have read many books and have never seen anything about taming demons. Spirits only inhabit the nether regions. I don't believe there are any demons inside! Open it at once and let me see the demons."

But the abbot kept pleading, telling the marshal that if the doors were opened, there were going to be bad consequences and people were going to get hurt. But by now, the marshal had grown weary of hearing no and he started to throw his weight around. He pointed at the Daoists and said, "If you don't open the doors for me, then when I get back to court, I will tell his majesty that you Daoists prevented me from delivering the imperial edict and refused to let me see the Divine Teacher. Then I will tell his majesty that you have set up this building to perpetuate a lie about demons to deceive the people. I'll have your religious orders canceled and have all of you branded as criminals and exiled to some distant land."

Well, the guy was a court official, and

**Spirits only inhabit the nether regions. I don't believe there are any demons inside! Open it at once and let me see the demons."**





the abbot knew when to change his tune. So he summoned a few members of the temple who worked as blacksmiths. They first peeled off the pieces of paper, and then they broke the lock. The doors were pushed open, and the entourage peered inside and saw nothing but darkness.

The group stepped gingerly into the hall. It was pitch black and you couldn't even see your hands. The marshal ordered his men to fetch a dozen or so torches. When these were lit, they saw that the hall was empty, except for a stone tablet in the center. It stood about 6 feet high and sat atop a stone statue of a turtle, which had sunken halfway into the damp earthen floor. On the front of the tablet were mystical scripts and signs and symbols that no one could understand. Marshal Hong then walked around to the other side, and there, he saw four words on the back of the tablet: "Open when Hong comes."

Well, ain't this a coincidence? Marshal Hong, of course, did not believe in coincidences. He was delighted and said to the abbot, "You all tried to stop me, but look, how did my name end up here hundreds of years ago? It says, 'Open when Hong comes.' Clearly I am meant to open this, so what's the problem?! I think the demon must be under the stone tablet. Go get a few more blacksmiths and have them dig it out."

"Sir, we must not disturb this!" the abbot pleaded again. "Or it could cause great harm. It's not safe."

Wait, I'm sorry. Did you, a meager Daoist priest, just say no to me, an official of the imperial court? Marshal Hong did not take kindly to this, and he shouted, "What do you Daoists know?! The tablet clearly says it should be opened when I come. Why are you trying to stop me?! Go get the men I asked for!"

The abbot tried time and again to talk the marshal out of this, but to no avail. So the abbot had no choice but to get some people together. They first laid the

tablet down on its side, and then they started digging out the stone turtle statue. It took a lot of digging before they got the thing out. And then, they started digging into the soil underneath it. After about 3 or 4 feet, they discovered a large stone slab some 10 square feet wide. Marshal Hong wanted this dug up as well, much to the chagrin of everyone who, you know, actually had to do the digging. Their objections were noted and ignored, and so they lifted up the slab.

Under the slab was a seemingly bottomless pit. As soon the workmen removed the slab, a great ripping sound was heard, and a black cloud shot up out of the pit, accompanied by a sound that seemed to make the heaven and earth tremble. This cloud tore through a corner of the roof and whooshed into the sky, where it broke up into more than a hundred golden rays that shimmered and then dissipated in every direction.

Screaming in fear, everyone threw down their tools and scampered out of the hall, running over each other along the way. Marshal Hong himself was goggle-eyed with mouth agape and a face the color of ash. He ran out to the porch, where he found the abbot bemoaning whatever it was that just happened.

"What demon was it that just escaped?" a breathless Marshal Hong asked.

Uhh, maybe you should have asked that BEFORE you insisted we tear down the DO NOT OPEN signs, knock over a tablet, dig up a stone turtle, and lift up the slab of rock that covered a bottomless pit? To see what demon it was that had just escaped, tune in to the next episode of the Water Margin Podcast. ☺



*To listen to the podcast or find a link to your podcast platform, please follow this link:*

**[www.outlawsofthemarsh.com/listen](http://www.outlawsofthemarsh.com/listen)**





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

**\*Gong Baiyu 1899-1966 was a famed martial arts novelist from Shandong Province. Stealing Boxing contains a fictionalized account of the lives of Chen Changxing and Yang Luchan in the Chinese martial arts novel tradition.**

**-Translated by Ken Ning and adapted into English by Edward Moore.**





# STEALING BOXING

- CHAPTER 16 -

## Catching a Thief With a Spear

BY GONG BAIYU

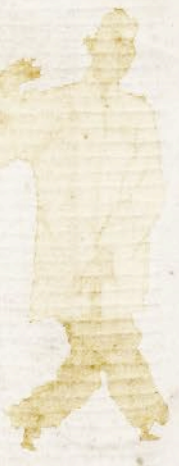
Translated by Ken Ning,  
emended by Edward Moore

Master Chen skillfully demonstrated the tai chi spear movements in the moonlit courtyard as the disciples looked on. They all watched him eagerly, thrilled that the master was giving them a rare performance, but it was interrupted when they heard someone spying on them from the top of the courtyard wall. Master Chen abruptly stopped his movements, his spear still shaking with energy as he yelled out angrily, "Who is there?" His eyes widened as they searched across the dark stones above.

Fu Jiannan, the most alert of the group, dashed over to the wall, anticipating his master's order to chase after the hidden figure. He reached the wall in a few strides and jumped up with skill. On the top of the wall, he looked both directions, but he didn't see anyone on the wall, and only heard the insects of the night. The mysterious figure had already disappeared.

The third disciple, Geng Yongfeng watched Fu Jiannan jump up the wall, then shrugged and followed after him. He also quickly





climbed the wall. The other disciples all shouted and began to follow him. Master Chen shouted sternly after them, saying, “You don’t all need to go! Tan Yongnian and Qu Jinshou, go to the inner courtyard and guard the family! Zhu Ruifu, run to the firewood storage and granary in the backyard and check there!” Master Chen was about to give another order to Fang Zishou, but then saw that he had followed the others up to the top of the wall.

Master Chen walked closer to the wall. He still held the spear in his right hand. With his left hand, he held his robe and then sprang to the top of the wall in one motion. From this high vantage point, Master Chen scanned the scene below for any movement.

The bright moonlight still shone across Chen Village, and Master Chen could see a dark figure rushing along the outside of the wide

practice field beyond the wall. The person seemed to be heading towards a dark alley at the edge of the courtyard, where they could easily disappear from sight. Fu Jiannan was close behind, running quickly after with his spear still in his hand. The third and fourth brothers were also catching up, and one shouted, “Let’s search on both sides of the courtyard to see if there are any others!”

Hearing these words, Geng Yongfeng remembered that someone had set a fire recently when the master was sick, so he turned and hurried to check the granary. When he arrived there, he saw that Tan Yongnian was already guarding it, so Geng Yongfeng rushed to the front yard again. Fang Zishou lost sight of the thief and whirled around, searching the night, then sprinted off down the path again. He shouted “thief!” loudly as he ran so that everyone would hear.

Fu Jiannan was the first to reach the fleeing figure. He gathered his breath and shouted, “Hey thief, it just got dark, why are you already on a rampage?” Fu Jiannan brought his spear up, summoned his strength, and thrust the spear at the center of the figure’s back. As he thrust the spear forward though, he felt something like a gust of wind blow over his head and the figure was no longer in front of him. Someone had flown over him in the dark. Fu Jiannan was startled. He saw something out of the corner of the eye, and then turned to see the shadowy figure rush through a doorway. Geng Yongfeng and Fang Zishou appeared in another doorway, and saw the thief escaping. All three brothers ran after with their spears in hand. The thief turned back momentarily to see them and then rushed away into the shadows.

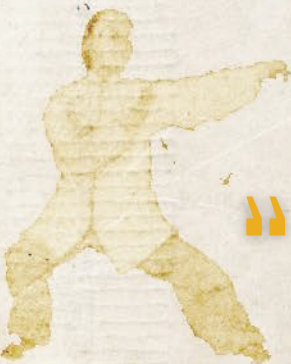
Fu Jiannan noticed that the thief was heading for the front yard, but then turned when he realized that it was being guarded. The culprit seemed to be familiar with the layout of the Chen Family house. The thief changed direction and pulled open a corner door. Fu Jiannan realized that from there the thief planned to escape to the back courtyard where he could cross the wall and disappear into the narrow streets and alleys. The three brothers pursued the thief quickly in different directions.

The eighth brother was still at his post protecting the granary from the top of the wall and as they approached Fu Jiannan shouted, “Hey, stop him. This little one is a thief!”

The eighth brother jumped from the top of the wall to the ground and then rushed towards the culprit with his spear raised. He yelled out, “Hey thief! How dare you come here and spy on us, who do you think you are?”

They could see the figure more closely in the courtyard, he was a small man, and he turned, looking for an exit. He quickly

“ He still held the spear in his right hand. With his left hand, he held his robe and then sprang to the top of the wall in one motion. ”







climbed the wall in front of him, but once he jumped down, he saw that the next courtyard was guarded by several disciples. Everyone yelled at him, but he jumped back up to the wall and ran off again.

In the confusion, someone yelled at the thief, saying, “Come down now!” The voice rang out like a heavy brass bell in the dark. Fu Jiannan was running furiously and about to catch up. Suddenly, he felt a brush from behind, it was Geng Yongfeng with his spear trained towards the culprit. Fu Jiannan ducked out of the way, and Geng Yongfeng launched the spear with great power and concentration. It flew through the air directly at the man as he ran on top of the wall.

They all froze and watched the arc of the spear as it flew towards the thief, but just before impact, the thief turned slightly to the side and caught the spear in his hand. They watched in disbelief as he twirled the spear in the air, unharmed. Several of the disciples spoke aloud “What a bold thief! How dare you?”

The thief seemed to hear them, and then he opened his hand, letting the spear clatter down the side of the wall. He lowered his head and looked downward and then suddenly jumped straight down and rolled on the ground near the inner wall of the house. Fu Jiannan and Geng Yongfeng rushed over to seize him.

The thief saw them approaching and jumped up, running away quickly towards the inner courtyard. A clear and powerful voice rang out over the scene saying, “Where are you running?” Everyone turned and saw a long shadow from the top of the roof on the opposite side where Master Chen was standing majestically.

Several of the disciples rushed into the inner courtyard one after another. Master Chen’s second grandson, Chen Shihe, seized a sword from the wall and sprang forward. He

jumped down the steps and closed the two doors that sealed the courtyard. The thief had no way to escape.

The fifth disciple rushed in, followed by the seventh and eighth disciples, who had been guarding the granary.

The thief stalked back and forth like a tiger, but it was too late because every exit was guarded by the disciples. Chen Shihe guarded the upper room, Qu Yongnian and Zhu Ruifu blocked the east and west corners. Fang Zishou and Tan Yongnian blocked the screen that led to the front door. Geng Yongfeng picked up a spear and ran to the moon gate across from the courtyard, blocking it menacingly.

The thief paused and everyone waited. Master Chen seemed to float down from his position on the roof as he held his spear and glided down the wall. His eyes glowed in the moonlight as he looked all around the courtyard. The thief seemed to be completely trapped.


Fu Jiannan saw that all of the thief’s escape routes were blocked, so he gripped his spear and ran directly towards the thief. When he was close enough, he swung the spear in a slashing arc, but the culprit quickly bent his body and stepped away. Tan Yongnian ran up and swept his spear close to the ground. Fu Jiannan cried out, “Sweep the legs!” Tan Yong sent the spear out vigorously, but the thief jumped more than five feet high, landed and then took off running. The disciples were amazed, saying, “What? Is this thief a master? Catch him!” Six disciples and five spears all flew towards the thief.

The thief rushed towards the moon gate, and seeing Qu Jinshou blocking it, tried to duck under his elbow to escape. Qu Jinshou



“They all froze and watched the arc of the spear as it flew towards the thief, but just before impact, the thief turned slightly to the side and caught the spear in his hand.”





furiously struck out with his spear, blocking the gate. The thief seemed to realize he was beaten, and he turned, rushing to where Master Chen was standing near the wall. He approached Master Chen and dropped to his knees, shouting, "Master, please forgive me!"

Fu Jiannan, the eldest disciple, shouted, "Tie him up!"

Everyone rushed over to begin beating the man, but Master Chen spoke out, saying, "Wait, who is this?" Tan Yongnian ran over and was preparing to deliver a powerful kick, but hearing his master's words, stepped over the thief without kicking him. The thief al-

most jumped up in defense, but knelt down again, saying, "Teacher, it's me!"

Master Chen dropped his spear and looked down in amazement, saying, "Who are you?" It was still difficult to see in the darkness.

Five of the disciples gathered around, their spear tips pointing at the thief as he crouched on the ground, not daring to look up. Master Chen cautioned them, saying, "Everyone just calm down now."

Qu Jinshou and Fang Zishou, still furious from the chase, dropped their spears on the ground and prepared to beat the man with their fists. Fu Jiannan shouted, "Younger brothers, tie him up first!"

Fu Jiannan saw the surprise in Master Chen's eyes and then knelt down to look more closely at their captive, saying, "who are you?" Suddenly, he said sharply, "Ha, it's you! No need to pretend anymore. Raise up your head! I've always wanted to ask what your story was and what you were looking for"

Master Chen's face had been red with anger, but then he raised his head with a big laugh and said, "No need to ask what he is looking for! It must have been very difficult for you to pretend that you couldn't speak for so long. I have been in the world of martial arts for more than 40 years, but I still got fooled by you. How could I have fallen for your act! Well, little man, you do have courage and ability!" Master Chen continued, "Jiannan, I tell you, this guy pretends that he is unable to speak a word and pretends to beg. I felt sorry for him and feared that he would freeze to death. I saved him from freezing in the snow and kept him here for over 2 years...three years! I thought I saved the life of a young disabled man, but he came with a hidden agenda. He came to my house to spy on me and to steal my martial art! To be tricked like this makes me feel like a blind old man!"

Master Chen fell silent and gnashed his teeth in anger. The disciples stood around watching, astonished. Many of them begin to yell at the silent young man, saying, "Why have you lied to us? What are you looking for?"

The silent young man looked at the four spear points surrounding him and shrank as he curled into a ball. He didn't dare move at all for fear of provoking more anger, and instead continued to beg for mercy.

Fu Jiannan stepped forward, blocking the menacing speartips of his younger brothers. He lightly prodded the cowering captive with his own spear and said in a lower tone, "Hey, get up. Bowing and asking for forgiveness isn't going to help. You need to tell us the truth as soon as possible. Which martial arts school do you belong to and what are you looking for here? Are you acting as a spy in order to steal our martial art? Do you want to steal gongfu so that you can go and kill someone for revenge?"

“He came to my house to spy on me and to steal my martial art! To be tricked like this makes me feel like a blind old man!”





In response to this, the silent young man slowly stood up within the forest of spears that surrounded him. His face was pale and green from fear in the light of the moon. He turned to Master Chen, saying, “Master, I really have had a difficult time, and you did save my life. I swear to heaven above that I don’t have any evil motives for being here. If I did, I would break into a thousand pieces right now in front of you”

Geng Yongfeng raised up his spear and brushed it across the young man’s chest, then quickly slapped him three times, saying “You are a thief and a dog, shut up! Our master saved your life, and yet you deceived him. Biting your tongue and pretending that you cannot speak... What do you want? If you are not wicked, why would you go to such great lengths to deceive us? Now I know who must have lit the recent fire!”

The young man listened and feared for his life, but he didn’t dare move. He finally responded, “Third Senior Brother, please don’t be so suspicious. The fire started from the outside and I was in the house all day with Master Chen. Master, I carried you out of the raging fire on my back. I really don’t have a bad heart, and if you will listen to me I think you will understand.”

The young man continued, “Now that my secret is known, I won’t hide anything anymore. I have been repaying Master Chen secretly because I didn’t dare try to trade my help openly.”

Now that the young man had finally spoken, he couldn’t wait to confess his innocence fully. He wanted to tell them everything. He opened his mouth, but it seemed that he had really lost the power of speech after faking it so long. He stammered, but could not say a word.

The eldest disciple, Fu Jiannan spoke up, saying, “Junior brothers, we are all angry, and for good reason, but randomly beating him won’t get us answers. He’s already speechless with fear. Let’s lock him in the shed where he can rest for a while, and we can interrogate him later.”

Master Chen listened to this and then stared at the young man fiercely. He seemed to decide something and then shouted, “Get up!” Fu Jiannan and the others grabbed the captive and walked him towards the practice field.

Master Chen spoke in a voice that was full of anger, saying, “Take him to the living room. I will interrogate him myself. He is a tricky one, and he has deceived me for three years. If I don’t personally break his legs, it wouldn’t be right.”

Fang Zishou turned to Fu Jiannan and said, “Eldest brother, watch him carefully and don’t give him any more chances.”

Fu Jiannan replied, “We will take care of it, younger brother.” He slapped the captive on the back with his hand, saying, “Alright, don’t be afraid now. As long as you are not a thief from another martial arts school, Master Chen won’t hurt you. However, you must tell the truth when he questions you.” He turned to the other disciples, saying, “Younger brothers, Shifu is very angry now, so let’s try not to make it worse. Something could go very wrong.”

“ Junior brothers, we are all angry, and for good reason, but randomly beating him won’t get us answers. He’s already speechless with fear. Let’s lock him in the shed where he can rest for a while, and we can interrogate him later. ”







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

2022 © International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association.

Any reproduction, in whole or in part, of the herein publication, is strictly forbidden, without the written authorization of the publisher.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
MASTER YANG JUN

EDITOR  
EDWARD MOORE

ASSISTANT EDITORS  
BRUNO REPETTO & JOSHUA NEUHAUS

PROOFREADING  
JOSHUA NEUHAUS  
BRUNO REPETTO  
SUSANNA WEGNER

GRAPHIC DESIGN  
MARCO GAGNON

CONTRIBUTORS  
CINDY FRUSHA  
JOSHUA NEUHAUS  
JOHN ZHU  
SUN YONTIAN  
JIM PAYMAR  
FANG HONG  
BRUNO REPETTO

YANG FAMILY  
TAI CHI



**HOME OFFICE**  
P.O. Box 786, Bothell,  
WA 98041 USA  
Ph: +1 (425) 869-1185  
yangfamilytaichi.com

**FOUNDER**  
Grandmaster Yang Zhen duo

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

President  
Master Yang Jun

Secretary  
Fang Hong

**PRESIDENT'S ADVISORY BOARD**

Therese Teo Mei Mei  
Angela Soci  
Claudio Mingarini  
Audi Peal  
Pat Rice  
Carl Meeks  
Nancy Lucero

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Fang Hong  
VP Administration  
Pam Boyde  
VP Operations/Executive  
Manager  
Han Hoong Wang  
VP Instruction & Standards  
Ray Tom  
VP of Policy