



# *Pa Kua Chang*

JOURNAL

Vol. 5, No. 6

Sept/Oct 1995



*The Ba Gua  
Zhang  
of  
Wang Shu Jin*

王 八  
樹 卦  
金 傳  
師

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## **Pa Kua Chang** JOURNAL

Published bi-monthly by High View Publications,  
P.O. Box 51967, Pacific Grove, CA 93950  
Phone: (408) 622-0789  
Fax: (408) 622-0787  
Orders: (800) 413-8296  
E-Mail: HighView@visionsoft.com  
Editor: Dan Miller  
ISSN: 1065-2264

### **About the Pa Kua Chang Journal**

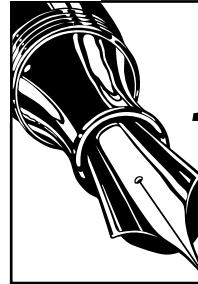
The *Pa Kua Chang Journal* is published six times a year. Each issue features an interview with, or article by, one or more Ba Gua Zhang instructor(s) from mainland China, Taiwan, the United States, and/or Canada. The interviews will report on each instructor's background, current program, training methods and teaching philosophy. By utilizing this format, the intention is to give students an opportunity to get to know prospective teachers and to let teachers possibly gain insights and ideas from learning about the activities of their colleagues.

Chinese names and terms will be romanized using the pinyin system of romanization except when an instructor prefers his name romanized differently. The title of the Journal appears in the Wade Giles system of romanization as it was the system we started with and we kept the original title. Whenever possible, Chinese characters will be listed in parentheses following the first appearance of Chinese terms and names in each article.

The ideas and opinions expressed in this journal are those of the instructors being interviewed and not necessarily the views of the publisher or editor.

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## **Editor's Corner**

### **Oops!**

In the last issue on page two there was a typo concerning the year of Sun Xi Kun's birth. The year read 1833, but should have read 1883. My mistake, sometimes the fingers slip on the key board. Thanks to all of you who wrote or called to mention the typo.

### **Visit Us on the Internet**

Three weeks ago I did not know what a "home page" was, now I have one. Amazing. Everywhere I turn these days I am bombarded with talk of the Internet. I always swore that I would stay away from it because I sit in front of this computer way more than I'd like to already. I didn't need another reason to sit in this chair. I'd much rather be out practicing martial arts or picking my banjo. But it seems that the Internet is the wave of the future. And thanks to David Shapiro and the rest of the group at Limited Infinity, who have opened a World Wide Web site dedicated to Chinese Martial Arts and Chinese Health and Healing, I didn't have to do much work

David Shapiro of Limited Infinity has this to say about his company: "Limited Infinity uses the modern technology of the Internet to preserve the ancient knowledge contained within the fields of healing and martial arts. Through the Internet's World Wide Web and Gopher systems, Limited Infinity offers free space for well written articles on any subject concerning healing or martial arts in both their traditional and modern forms. In addition, we have developed a low cost, high quality Internet sites for schools, companies, suppliers and individuals involved in the commercial aspects of these fields. Our goal is to provide the community with a resource for serious research into the philosophy and evolution of these traditions. In order to help practitioners and students pursue their interests, we are compiling a comprehensive source of information concerning schools, suppliers, relevant laws and case studies. Our future projects involve on-line conferences, live video links, and virtual seminars. Limited Infinity is located at <http://infinity.dorsai.org>"

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Those of you who have computers and like to ride the Internet, take a look at Limited Infinity's Web site and give our new set up a browse. Along with listing all of our catalog items and a *Pa Kua Chang Journal* back issue directory, I will be posting excerpts from upcoming books that we are working on and listing new catalog items as we get them in. The internet address is <http://infinity.dorsai.org/highview>. I can receive e-mail at the following address [HighView@visionsoft.com](mailto:HighView@visionsoft.com).

*continued on page 29*

### **On the Cover**

**Ba Gua Zhang instructor Wang Shu Jin (1904 - 1981) is shown demonstrating Ba Gua in 1960**

# An Introduction to Wang Shu Jin and His Ba Gua Zhang

In Volume 2, Number 2 (Jan/Feb 92), of the Pa Kua Chang Newsletter we printed an interview Kent Howard conducted with his teacher, Huang Jin Sheng, one of Wang Shu Jin's top Ba Gua students and thus we already briefly touched on Wang's Ba Gua Zhang in this Journal. In this issue we explore Wang Shu Jin's Ba Gua in more detail, once again through Huang Jin Sheng's student, Kent Howard. The following article gives a brief introduction to Wang Shu Jin. Most of this information was gathered during an interview conducted with Zhou Yi Sen in September 1992 in Taipei, Taiwan. Zhou was the man responsible for bringing Wang Shu Jin to Taiwan from mainland China in 1948 and remained his close friend until Wang's death in 1981. Those interested in reading more about Wang should refer to Robert W. Smith's Chinese Boxing: Masters and Methods (now available through High View Publications).

The internal styles of Chinese martial arts were primarily introduced to Taiwan in the late 1940's by mainlanders who were fleeing Northern China as a result of the Nationalist government's retreat from the Communist opposition. Prior to this time, most of the martial arts that were practiced in Taiwan were Southern styles of Shaolin which had come to Taiwan from Fu Jian Province. Styles such as Golden Eagle, White Crane, Monkey Boxing, and Tai Zi were prominent on the island before the Northerners came.

The majority of the Northern martial artists who were able to get out of the mainland were coming from port cities such as Tianjin, Shanghai, and Qingdao. Those who found themselves at more inland locations, such places as eastern Hebei and Shanxi Provinces, during the Nationalists retreat were unable to get out of the country from their landlocked locations. Therefore most of the Northern styles we see in Taiwan were from Hebei and Shandong Provinces.

One of the most prominent martial artists who came to Taiwan in the late 1940's was Wang Shu Jin (王樹金). Not really known for his martial arts on the mainland, Wang was from Tianjin and had studied Ba Gua and Xing Yi in Tianjin with the famous Zhang Zhao Dong (張兆東) while he was living there and working as a carpenter. Although Wang started studying with Zhang Zhao Dong in 1923 at the age of 18, Wang's close friend Zhou Yi Sen (周益森) said that Wang never became one of Zhang Zhao Dong's "inner door" disciples.

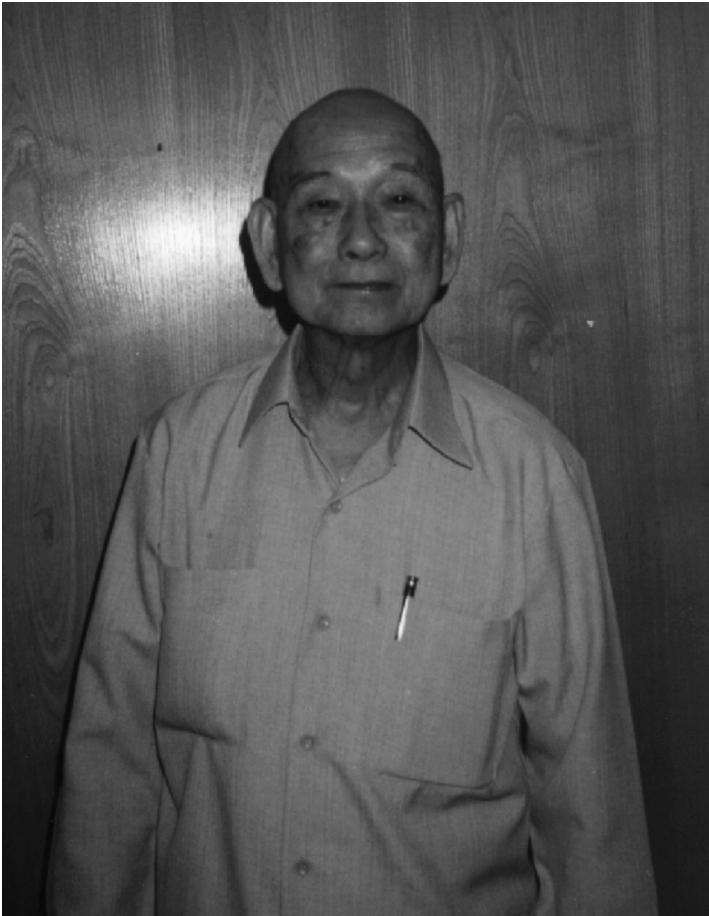
Wang Shu Jin also had occasion to study with Zhang Zhao Dong's Xing Yi friend, Wang Xiang Zhai (王鄉齋), the originator of the Yi Quan (意拳) and Da Cheng Quan (大成拳) systems for a full year in 1934. Wang Shu Jin later taught Wang Xiang Zhai's standing

methods in Taiwan and felt that standing practice was an important part of any martial arts training. In one of his two books on Ba Gua Zhang, *Ba Gua Lian Huan Zhang* (八卦連環掌), Wang Shu Jin also reports having studied with 90 year old Xiao Hai Bo (蕭海波), an instructor who was said to have studied near E Mei mountain in Sichuan Province. In addition to having studied Ba Gua Zhang and Xi Yi Quan on the mainland, Wang reports that he also studied a style called *si lian quan* (四連拳 - four connected fist) which was similar to Chen style Tai Ji in its hand methods and movements. It is not known when Wang studied this style. Although Wang also taught Tai Ji in Taiwan, he did not learn the Tai Ji that he taught until he moved to Taiwan and studied with Chen Pan Ling (陳洋嶺).

Wang Shu Jin is probably better known than his fellow mainland contemporaries in Taiwan to those in



Wang Shu Jin (1904 - 1981)



**Yi Guan Daoist Zhou Yi Sen, shown here in 1992, was the man responsible for bringing Wang Shu Jin to Taiwan**

the West who practice Ba Gua and Xing Yi because he lived longer than most of them, he was featured in Robert Smith's books, and he taught many foreigners (both Westerners and Japanese). His 5'8", 260 lb. frame was also not easily overlooked.

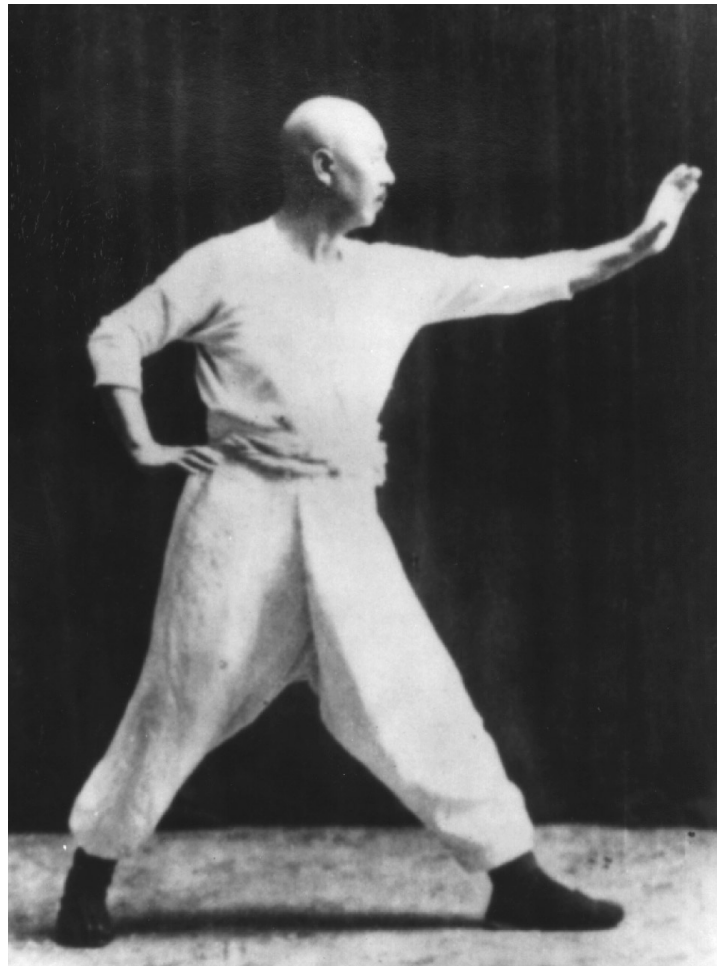
Although Wang was a prominent martial artist in Taiwan, not many martial artist know that he was even more prominent in religious circles, and it was because of his religious prominence that he was brought to Taiwan. In Tianjin, Wang Shu Jin was a leader in the religious sect known as *Yi Guan Dao* (一貫道). *Yi Guan* means "consistent" or "unwavering," *Dao* means "Way." The practitioners of Yi Guan Dao refer to it more as a philosophy than a religion. In his book, *Ba Gua Lian Huan Zhang*, Wang Shu Jin states that after having spent a short time studying with Zhang Zhao Dong he became interested meditating, Buddhism, and becoming a vegetarian. Zhou Yi Sen says that Wang became an Yi Guan Daoist when he was in his early twenties. It is not known if Zhang Zhao Dong was an Yi Guan Daoist.

Many of the martial artist who lived in Tianjin were also very active Yi Guan Daoists, including Zhang Jun Feng (張峻峰), Wu Meng Xia (吳孟俠), and Sun Xi Kun (孫錫筭). When I interviewed Zhang Jun Feng's wife, she stated that the reason Zhang Jun Feng and Wang Shu Jin were such good friends and had such mutual respect for each other was that although Zhang was

senior to Wang in the boxing circles, Wang was senior to Zhang in Yi Guan Dao. In his first book, Wang mentions that in 1951 he and Zhang Jun Feng began practicing martial arts together.

Wang Shu Jin was brought to Taiwan on September 27th, 1948 by a fellow Yi Guan Daoist, Zhou Yi Sen. In an interview conducted with Zhou, now in his eighties, in September 1992, Zhou said that in 1947 an Yi Guan Dao leader had died in Shanghai and he had gone to the funeral representing the Yi Guan Dao from Taiwan. While at the funeral, Zhou met Wang Shu Jin and because of Wang's stature in the Yi Guan Dao community, he asked Wang to come to Taiwan and help him with the Yi Guan Dao movement there. Zhou said that at that time Wang Shu Jin was an important figure in Yi Guan Dao in the mainland.

Yi Guan Dao, which is a practice based on Daoist philosophy but embraces all five of the main religions in China (Daoism, Buddhism, Muslim, Christian, and Confucian) as "differing expressions of the same universal and unwavering Dao," originated in Shandong Province and was first called *Xian Tian Da Dao* (先天大道 - pre-heaven great Way). In 1928 the mainland government suppressed the religion. This was due partially to the fact that members of the five main religions were a bit unnerved by people who accepted all of the various religions as holding equal truth.



**Wang Shu Jin's Xing Yi and Ba Gua teacher was the famous Zhang Zhao Dong**



**Wang Shu Jin with some of his students in 1959. On Wang's left is Zhang Yi Cheng. Zhang, who was considered by many to be Wang's best student, is now teaching in Los Angeles and occasionally holds seminars in Northern California**

Additionally, there were many influential people in society and in martial arts who belonged to Yi Guan Dao and the government felt uneasy not knowing what these people were up to at their meetings. Sect members were put under surveillance by the government and as a result the practitioners of Yi Guan Dao had to go underground and form a somewhat secret society. At one point in time, during the late 1920's and early 1930's, there was an organized government persecution of Yi Guan Daoists in Tianjin and several of the well known martial art practitioners who were also Yi Guan Daoists left the city at that time.

When the Nationalist government moved to Taiwan, the government surveillance policy continued and so when Wang Shu Jin came to Taiwan, his role in Yi Guan Dao was kept secret from most people. Wang's role in Yi Guan Dao in Taiwan was that of a full priest. As such he kept his head shaved, never married, and was a strict vegetarian. He ran an Yi Guan Dao group in Taichung and would also lecture at other Yi Guan Dao temples around the island.

When Wang Shu Jin first came to Taiwan in 1948, he lived with his friend Zhou Yi Sen in Taipei. Later, Zhou found Wang a place to live in Taichung, a city about 80 miles south of Taipei. Although he traveled frequently, Wang maintained his residence in Taichung

the remainder of his life. He built his first martial arts school there in 1948.

Wang Shu Jin was very well known for taking full force blows to the belly from martial artists in Taiwan, Karateka in Japan, and even Western Boxers. It is said that Jack Dempsey once tried Wang's belly. Zhou Yi Sen said that in Japan there was a Karate practitioner that was famous for his ability to break 20 roof tiles with one strike. He hit Wang's stomach and bounced off like he was hitting a tire inner tube. Although Wang's martial arts practice obviously helped him develop this skill, Zhou Yi Sen said that because Wang worked as a carpenter when he was young, he was naturally very strong before he even started practicing martial arts. When he began martial arts practice, that natural strength he had as a youth blossomed. Zhou said that Wang practiced very hard. Wang told Zhou that when practicing on the mainland they practiced five hours everyday and the rule Zhang Zhao Dong made them adhere to was that during the course of the practice session they were not allowed to become short of breath or practice with power.

Zhou Yi Sen said that Wang often talked about Zhang Zhao Dong's skill. Wang said that Zhang's *tui shou* (推手 - pushing hands) was especially good, his feet were lightning fast and his movements very smooth. Wang said that Zhang was so quick and



**Wang Shu Jin (back row center) with his Tai Ji teacher Chen Pan Ling (front row center) in 1957**

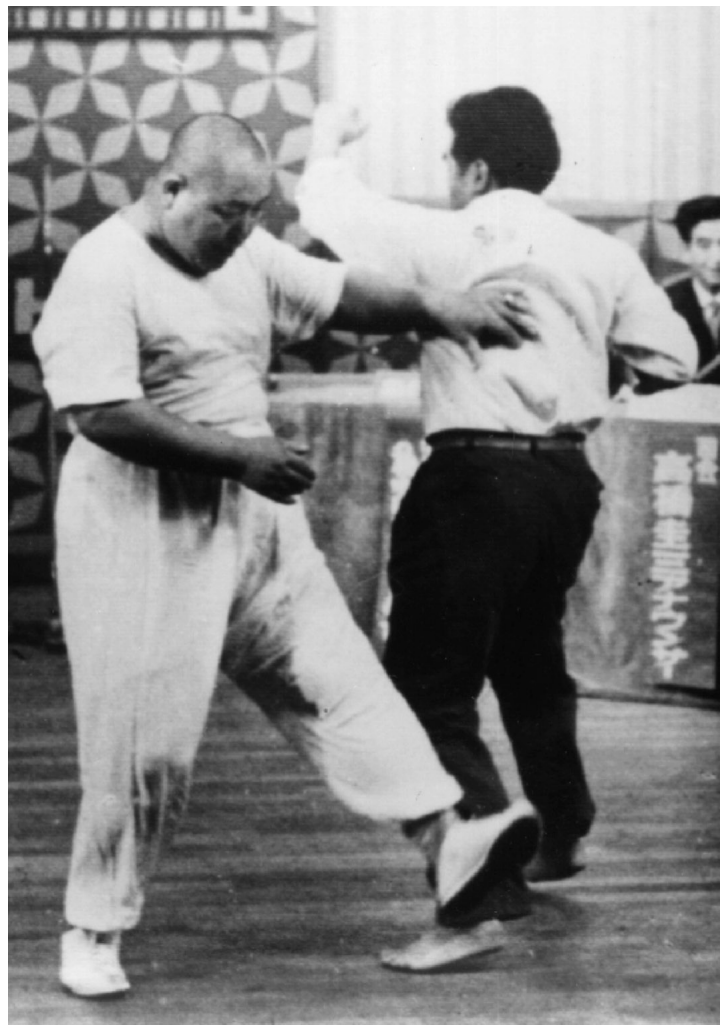
his skill so precise that he was not afraid of anyone, even if they approached him with weapons. Wang had told one story of Zhang Zhao Dong being faced off against a small gang of bandits. To demonstrate his strength and skill, Zhang took a horse by the neck with his hands and strangled the horse to death. After seeing this the bandits retreated. Zhou said that Wang often admitted that his own skill never came close to that of his teacher.

When teaching students, Wang Shu Jin would typically start beginning students holding static standing postures (see photos on page 23). The *zhan zhuang* (站樁 - post standing) method was practiced to teach the students rooting and stillness. From the standing postures, students would then begin to practice Tai Ji Quan to learn centering and energy awareness. The Tai Ji Quan that Wang taught was the synthesized style developed by his friend Chen Pan Ling.

Chen Pan Ling (1890-1967) was one of the few Northern boxers in Taiwan who had reached a degree of notoriety in mainland China before the revolution. After gaining a martial arts foundations learning Shaolin from his father, Chen Pan Ling studied Ba Gua with Cheng Ting Hua's (程庭華) son Cheng You Long (程有龍 - also known as Cheng Hai Ting- 程海亭), Xing Yi with Li Cun Yi (李存義), and Tai Ji with Yang Shou Hou (楊少侯) and Wu Jian Quan (吳鑑泉), among others. In 1927-28 Chen Pan Ling went to the Chen Village to study the Chen style of Tai Ji Quan.

After moving to Taiwan, Chen Pan Ling created his own synthesized style of Tai Ji Quan which integrated the essence of the different styles he had studied and put them together in one form. Wang Shu Jin began studying this form with Chen shortly after he arrived in Taiwan and studied it for 4 or 5 years before he began teaching it to his own students. Wang Shu Jin spread Chen's Tai Ji form widely both in Taiwan and Japan.

In addition to teaching in Taiwan, Wang Shu Jin made trips to Japan to teach martial arts and spread Yi Guan Dao, the first trip being in 1959. He made numerous trips to Japan before he passed away, sometimes staying for many months at a time. In his first book, Wang indicates that the total combined time he spent in Japan between 1959 and 1978 amounted to ten years. Although Wang taught martial arts in Japan, the main reason he traveled there was to spread Yi Guan Dao, which he did very successfully. Because of Wang's work, there are now several hundred thousand Yi Guan Daoists in Japan. Wang also had many martial arts "converts." Wang's schools still thrive in Japan and several of his students from



**Wang Shu Jin demonstrating his Ba Gua on a Karate stylist in Japan on NHK television's "Guess My Secret" (a "What's My Line" copy)**



**A meeting of Wang's old students on Pa Kua Mountain in 1976. Huang Jin Sheng is seated in the position of honor at Wang Shu Jin's right hand. Wang Fu Lai, who took care of Wang Shu Jin in his later years is in the top left corner of the photo in the last row.**

Taiwan still make trips to teach in Japan. In fact, Wang taught many more students in Japan than he did in Taiwan.

Wang Shu Jin may be even more widely known in Japan than he is in Taiwan for his martial arts skill. Top ranking Karateka routinely challenged Wang's skill and were always defeated. As a result, he influenced the study and practice of martial arts in Japan. Today Chinese martial arts are quite popular in Japan and Wang Shu Jin's demonstration of skill, both privately and in public (he appeared on Japanese national television) helped to popularize them. In fact, many of the Americans and other foreigners who spent time studying with Wang either did so in Japan, or in Taiwan after first having heard of him in Japan.

Wang Shu Jin's Ba Gua consisted primarily of an assortment of basic exercises that developed foundational skills, circle walking with static postures, set two person drills and improvised partner exercises, and sitting meditation, followed by, or in conjunction with, the practice of two forms: *Ba Gua Lian Huan Zhang* (Ba Gua Continuous Linking Form) and *Ba Gua You Shen Zhang* (八卦游身掌 - Ba Gua Swimming

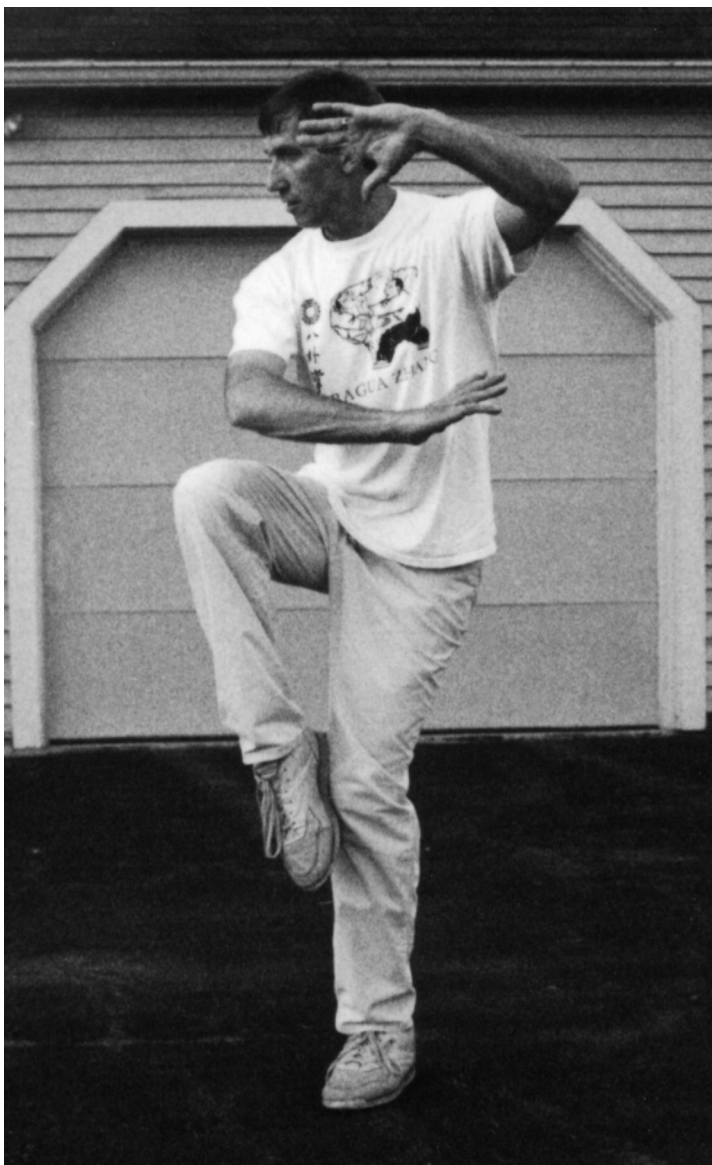
Body Palm).

Wang Shu Jin published two Ba Gua Zhang books which detailed his practice methods and his two forms. They were: *Ba Gua Lian Huan Zhang* ( *Ba Gua Linked Palms*) and *Ba Gua You Shen Zhang* ( *Ba Gua Swimming Body Palms*). *Ba Gua Linked Palms* was published privately in 1978. Wang's second book, *Ba Gua Swimming Body Palms*, was published as a joint venture of the Division of Physical Education of the R.O.C. Ministry of Education and the R.O.C. National Martial Arts Association. It appeared in 1980 shortly before Wang Shu Jin passed away. Neither book is still in print.

Beyond the two empty hands forms, Wang Shu Jin also taught weapons forms. However, all of the forms practice was primarily only a template which the students used to develop the proper mechanics of movement and principles of practice. Wang was a very practically oriented teacher and a seasoned fighter. As such, Wang emphasized the principles and usage over of the movements when he taught Ba Gua. (For more details on the principles of Wang's Ba Gua, see Kent Howard's article on page 17).

# Wang Shu Jin's Ba Gua Zhang in Boston

Since moving back to the United States in 1992, after spending ten years living in Taiwan, Kent Howard has maintained a fairly low profile in the martial arts world. *Pa Kua Chang Journal* readers may remember Kent from the interview he conducted with his teacher Huang Jin Sheng (黄金生) that was printed in Volume 2, Number 2 (Jan/Feb 1992) of the *Pa Kua Chang Newsletter*. Shortly after this interview was printed, Kent returned to the United States with his family and has settled in the Boston area. When preparing this issue focusing on Wang Shu Jin's Ba Gua, I called Kent and asked if he would like to submit an article about the Ba Gua he learned from his teacher Huang Jin



**Kent Howard executing the "Yellow Dragon Turns Over" maneuver from the fourth section of Wang Shu Jin's Ba Gua Lian Huan Zhang**

Sheng, a top student of Wang Shu Jin. Kent agreed and subsequently submitted the excellent article which begins on page 17.

As a prelude to Kent's article I thought it would be interesting to conduct an interview with Kent so that readers would know a little more about him and the time he spent training in Taiwan. The interview, which was conducted on August 3rd, 1995 is as follows:

## **When did you first start studying martial arts?**

It was back in about 1972. I started with Chinese Kenpo when I was living down in Florida. I studied it in Florida for a while and then went back up to Kansas and continued the study. Altogether, I think I studied Kenpo for about two and a half years.

Shortly after that I went to Hawaii. Actually I went to Hawaii to live on three different occasions. When I was in Hawaii I studied Ba Gua for a very short time with T. Y. Pang and then later ended up with his senior student, Pat Hodges. So, I actually learned most of my Ba Gua in Hawaii from Pat Hodges.

## **How long did you study with him?**

The actual time I spent with Pat in Hawaii was about three years, but we have been friends ever since. I visit him every time I pass through Hawaii and I exchange videos with him all of the time. We are still good friends. Pat is only one year older than I am and so we are contemporaries and have a good relationship.

## **When did you first go to Taiwan and what was your purpose in going there?**

I first went to Taiwan in 1981 because I received a scholarship to study there from a University. I was in my senior year of college and took a one year scholarship to go study in Taiwan. My major in school was East Asian Languages and so I went to the Taiwan Normal University to study Chinese.

I went there at first with the intention of staying one year, but I ended up staying three semesters, a year and a half. Then I came back to the United States for one semester in 1983 and finished my degree, got married to my Taiwanese wife and then moved back to Taiwan. When I came back to school in the U.S. she came with me. We got married in Kansas before we went back and then we got married a second time in Taiwan.

I had only been in the United States for about 9 months before I went back to Taiwan to live. After I finished my undergraduate degree I got a graduate scholarship to study in Taiwan. I went back with the intention of going to graduate school, but I never did really. I took the money and went to study at a place



called the Mandarin Training Center and I was there for less than a year. I didn't graduate from there because it was more of a language training facility than a graduate school. I was supposed to enter graduate school back in Kansas, but I didn't want to go back. I took the graduate scholarship and used the money to study Taiwanese actually. I found a Taiwanese language school that had been run for thirty years by an American catholic priest.

**Did you pursue martial arts when you first went to Taiwan?**

I studied martial arts pretty much the whole time I was in Taiwan. I first studied the Southern style arts such as Golden Eagle and White Crane. I looked for a Ba Gua teacher, however, I could not find a teacher that I thought was near the ability of T.Y. Pang and Patrick Hodges. The stuff I saw did not look like Ba Gua to me, so I didn't pursue it. I looked around in the parks and I practiced with Ba Gua people and picked up some things, but I never became anyone's student.

**When did you meet your Ba Gua Zhang teacher, Huang Jin Sheng?**

I lived in Taipei city for six years and then I moved down south when my wife and I decided to open up our own English language school. We moved down to a place called Pu Li. It is down in the middle of the island near Sun Moon Lake. It was there that I found an old mainlander who taught Yin Yang Ba Gua. I did a little of that with him. I also called around to the next county and to Tai Chung to the martial arts associations to locate a Ba Gua teacher and finally was able to meet Huang Jin Sheng.

I had read Robert Smith's books and had heard about Wang Shu Jin and that he had taught in Tai Chung. But I knew Wang had died around the time I arrived in Taiwan. I assumed that he had taught lots of students, but I couldn't find any in Tai Chung who were listed anywhere. Finally I looked into teachers in Chuang Hua county, which is the county next to Tai Chung, and I found my teacher.

**After having studied these other arts in Taiwan and having seen some other Ba Gua teachers, what was your first impression of Huang Jin Sheng?**

I was unimpressed. I had been doing T.Y. Pang's Sun Xi Kun Ba Gua for about seven years, practicing on my own. It was kind of like my daily exercise. Huang's stuff was very plain looking compared to what I was doing, which was very dynamic, changing from going very low to coming up high, wrapping yourself up in complicated twisting and turning motions, etc. To me Huang's stuff looked almost like Xing Yi on a circle. I was unimpressed, and he could tell I was. So we kind of shook hands, he showed me his Ba Gua and I showed him mine and he said, "let's be friends." He said that our Ba Gua styles were obviously incompatible. I asked him why and he said that if I wanted to practice his Ba Gua I was going to have



**Ba Gua Zhang instructor Huang Jin Sheng working with the Ba Gua Staff in Chuang Hua, Taiwan, in June 1992**

to give up my Sun Xi Kun Ba Gua. He said that the things I was doing, such as bending over backward as far as you could go were, what he called, "breaking the *qi*." He said, "In my style, we don't bend backwards. We always keep the back rounded." I finally agreed to give up the Ba Gua I had learned before and study with Huang.

**Why did you decide to do that when you were not impressed with the Ba Gua he was doing?**

I was impressed with him as a person. From the moment I met him I felt he was an amazing guy. Number one, he had the cleanest house of any martial arts teacher I ever saw. It was sparkling, you could eat off the floor. He also had the cleanest bone setting clinic I ever saw. I had been treated in several and sort of apprenticed a little bit in one. I was impressed with that. He was very upright and moral and a very kind person.

Anyway, I decided that this guy was experienced and I would go ahead and study with him, and it worked out.

**What did he start you with in terms of the Ba Gua practice.**

Because he saw that I knew the basics of Ba Gua and the stepping and all of that, and obviously had



**Kent Howard with his teacher, Huang Jin Sheng, and a few of Huang's other students at Pa Kua Ch'an Buddhist Temple, the group's usual morning workout spot**

practiced the form I was doing for many years, he started me right into the *lian huan zhang* (continuous linking palm) form, which is the first form in Wang's system. We started right into the single palm change and the double palm change and on through the rest of the form.

He taught me pretty fast - one change a week. I actually missed one week so it took me nine weeks to learn the form the first time through.

**When I met Huang Jin Sheng during one of my trips to Taiwan he showed me a nice set of Qi Gong warm up exercises. Did you work with those right away? In other words, was there any other training supplemental to the form?**

Yes, for the first two weeks I was there, he should me the warm up set. After that we started learning the form, one change a week. He also had some static standing practice. He taught me several of the standing postures from Wang's system, but there was one posture in particular that he liked to use more than the others. It was with the two palms pointing down toward the floor and the fingers pointing in toward each other and held near the *dan tian* (丹田). It was one of Wang Shu Jin's posture which my teacher felt was the most useful.

**Standing practice has become quite popular in the U.S. What were some of the principles your teacher emphasized in the standing practice which might help those that are out there practicing it?**

Actually, the write up Tim Cartmell gave in the *Xing Yi Nei Gong* book you guys published was excellent. It touched on all of the points my teacher emphasized and is written very clearly. In fact, I have photocopied that section of the book and given it to my students who are learning the standing practice.

**When you first started learning the forms with him, what kind of general principles did Huang Jin Sheng emphasize?**

He was constantly correcting posture trying to ensure I was consistent with Wang Shu Jin's eight points of posture throughout the form. Wang had eight points of posture and three points of the body that the eight points pertained to. One point, or "word," is the character for "drop." This pertains to dropping the shoulders, dropping the wrists, and dropping the elbows. Another of the points pertains to the character meaning "round." You round the shoulders, you round the arms, and round the waist. Huang would go over each one of those and constantly correct the postures. (For a description of all eight of these principles see page 22.)

The points were used as guidelines for every posture you transitioned through. He said every posture had to be *yi guan* (一贯), or internally connected, and permeate the body. From head to toe it had to be *yi guan*. One of Wang Shu Jin's main focuses in teaching was this idea of *yi guan*, Wang Shu Jin used this phrase in his books quite frequently.

**So when you finished learning the *lian huan* form, were you taught another form right away?**

No. Even though I said it only took me nine weeks to learn the movements of the *lian huan* form, we actually spent a whole year working on it. After I finished learning the movements of the form the first time, we went right back to the beginning with the single palm change and started going into detail. He taught me the straight line practice of the single palm change, the straight line practice of the double palm change, and other things like that. We worked out many of the details of the form movements and studied variations of the main theme of the form.

I was always pressing him for uses of the movements as well. Whatever I asked him to show me, he would, but not directly. If I were to ask, "What does this movement do?" He would say, "What do you think it does?" I'd have to go home and then come back with an idea of what I thought the application of the movement was before he would show me anything. Even if I got it wrong, I at least had to try and think about what the movement might do. I'd show him what I thought the movement was used for and then he would usually say, "No, no." And he'd say, "Hit me." I'd strike at him and he would show me how the movement was used.

He was a very "hands on" teacher. If I couldn't get something right he would often have me put my hands on his body. He often talked about his concept of "falling back from the center," this *luo kung* (洛空) idea. He had me put my one hand on his abdomen and the other hand on the small of his back and he would do the single palm change, or whatever, and have me feel what the spine, the abdomen, and the sides were doing. That was how Wang taught too. However, the problem with Wang was that he was so fat it was difficult to feel. You had to almost use a little imagination. He said a lot of the students didn't get it. Wang would say, put your hands on and feel and it was like putting your hands on a barrel, you couldn't feel much. But my teacher said that if you developed good listening energy and could listen with your hands, you could feel Wang's internal movements. My teacher had developed this skill because he had started training in bone setting skills at about the same time he started with Wang, back in 1955. So he had that kind of listening energy.

**You said you worked on the *lian huan* form for about one year, when did you start the next form?**

Well, what happened was that I realized he was not taking me where I wanted to go. I wasn't going really deep. I was getting the mechanics of the internal, however, I felt I wasn't getting the really deep part about how you bring out the *fa jing* (發勁) and these sort of ideas. So one day he told me quite frankly, "Look, until you become an Yi Guan Daoist there are certain things about Ba Gua that I am not going to tell you.

**Before that had he mentioned Yi Guan Dao to you?**

Never. Now, I had seen a lot of people coming and going at his house all the time. I had seen the people living there and I had seen people coming to visit him from time to time and being very reverential toward him as if he were a priest or a minister. So, I asked him about these things from time to time, and he would tell me a few things and give me books to read, but he had never really talked much about it. As soon as he told me that there were deeper things to learn in the Ba Gua but I had to first be an Yi Guan Daoist, I said, "Yes, I'll become an Yi Guan Daoist."

**If I'm not mistaken, his house is like an Yi Guan Dao Monastery, isn't it?**

His home is in a five story building and the building is Yi Guan Dao from the second story up. There are two dormitories on the second and third floors and there are just mazes of Japanese screens with doors that slide back and forth and make little rooms. There are always different numbers of people staying there that have come in for various events. There is a certain core of women who live there. Yi Guan Daoists will choose to accept either men or women into their homes as acolytes. He chose to take in women. On the fourth floor of the building is the actual temple. Then on the fifth floor is where his quarters are.

**So what did becoming an Yi Guan Daoist entail?**

He began training me in Yi Guan Dao philosophy. I attended lectures up on the fourth floor. I would take notes from the lectures and ask questions. After a short period of time he told me that they were going to do an induction of new members. I asked him if I



**Huang Jin Sheng demonstrating a Ba Gua application on a student, June 1992**



**Kent Howard with his teacher Huang Jin Sheng in front of the Yi Guan Dao alter in Huang's home/Yi Guan Dao temple, 1994**

could take part, and he said yes. We had a secret kind of ceremony that lasted for about three hours. I had to be prepared for it and was told what to say, when to bow, when to kneel, when to sit and all of that sort of thing. Part of the ceremony was someone whispering in my ear certain secret incantations. It was quite an affair. It was almost grueling. Luckily it was during a cool part of the year.

After that, the next day in fact, a couple of things happened. One, I was invited to partake in the early morning practice with the others who were long time students. Two, within the first five minutes of the practice session, which started at 6:00 a.m., he began teaching me things that he had never taught me before.

**In requiring you to become an Yi Guan Daoist before opening up some of the deeper parts of the martial arts, was he testing your character or loyalty or something of that nature?**

There are certain parts of Ba Gua that are quite vicious in nature and some of the other aspects that deal with internal energy that he will not teach to a non-Daoist. Wang Shu Jin was the same way. He may have had hundreds of students in Japan and Taiwan, but, I am told, he taught very few of them the real stuff unless they were Yi Guan Daoists. If you meet someone who claims to have been a student of Wang Shu Jin

and they don't know much about Wang's involvement and position in Yi Guan Dao, then they were probably not a very close student.

Because Wang Shu Jin was one of the elders of the Yi Guan Daoist movement in Taiwan, I hear he was even more severe than my teacher in regard to not teaching the deeper parts of the art to non-Yi Guan Daoists. I'm sure that there are those students who studied with Wang and did not become Yi Guan Daoists who got a lot of the physical movements and routines. But from what I hear, he probably did not talk in depth about the internal aspects of those movements.

**Could you say something in general about what Yi Guan Dao is and what it is about?**

Yi Guan Dao is really pantheism. It is mainly a Buddhist and Daoist faith. It also embraces the general principles of Confucianism, like being upright, loyal, and honest, being a good person, etc. But mostly it is of Buddhist and Daoist origin relying heavily on Daoist cosmology and Daoist philosophy, especially coming out of the *Dao De Jing*. But they do not embrace only these philosophies. They also quote, for example, from Jesus. They revere what they call the five religions or philosophies: Daoist, Buddhist, Confucian, Muslim, and Judaism/Christian. They consider these to be "five facets of the same jewel."

They promote world peace in their belief that the jewel has facets that each shine brightly in different reflections of the light. Unfortunately, because they embrace all religions, they are enormously unpopular with everyone.

**I know the Yi Guan Daoists were persecuted in China. Wasn't the religion also outlawed in Taiwan for a while?**

Yes, it was. It wasn't actively persecuted, but they were under surveillance a lot. The reason being that you had a lot of very powerful people belonging to what was almost like a secret society, and it was scary to outsiders. Powerful politicians and military leaders were involved in Yi Guan Dao, and the others were wondering what they were up to. There were also a lot of martial artists who were Yi Guan Daoists and throughout history in China they (the martial artists) had been known as trouble makers.

**What kind of things did you do after you became an Yi Guan Daoist? Was there Yi Guan Dao classes or events that you attended?**

There were always lectures going on and there were guests coming through. My teacher would call me and say that a certain priest was coming through from the main temple and I should come on up to meet him. I would do that. There were also festival events at the main temple in Tai Nan that I would attend. I would meet people and discuss the philosophy at these events.

There were also regular prayers. I would go to my teacher's house early in the morning at about 5:30 a.m. and we would go up to the fourth floor to pray in

in a ritualized way. It kind of reminded me of Tibetan Buddhist bowing and kneeling and repetition of a prayer. It was very ritualized. We would do this before the morning practice and sometimes we would do it afterwards as well. There were special feast days and religious holidays. Of course, anytime we met in the evening for a lecture or whatever, we would all get together and pray first. First the men and then the women, in that fashion.

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***Yi Guan Daoist revere what they call the five religions or philosophies . . . They consider these to be "five facets of the same jewel."***

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**When you became an Yi Guan Daoist and began to receive the deeper parts of the teaching, what kind of things were taught?**

Well, the teaching was based on the "center." This area that is three vertebrae up from the sacrum and between there and the *dan tian*. That being your center of gravity and center of energy production. We learned how to use that and how it fits in physically with the rest of the body, how to manipulate it, and how to open it up. I learned a lot of exercises that taught how to "open up the center." There were movement exercises and some breathing exercises. Plus we concentrated on this center as we did the Ba Gua Zhang forms.

**Did he go back to the *lian huan* form as a template for teaching these new concepts?**

Yes, we went right back to square one. It opened everything up for me. You have probably seen a picture of Wang Shu Jin doing the "crouching tiger" posture. It looks like a forceful, straight ahead move that you bowl people over with. Huang showed me how to maneuver around someone. How to read their energy, let them come in and do what he calls *luo kong*, or "fall into emptiness," and then circle around. From there you have twenty things you can do to them. He showed me that as you circle around back, it was the crouching tiger posture that was being employed. The tiger leaps behind.

There were things that I thought I saw in the postures the first time through that were not exactly performed that way. I found that what most people would interpret as a direct hit application was not applied that way at all. At that time I began to understand and work on developing his concept of what I call in English "evade, encircle, and entrap." You read their energy, move in a Ba Gua fashion to evade the hit, let them hit air, and then you encircle them. It could be encircling an arm, or their entire body. Then you entrap them in some way. You can use *kou bu* (扣步) or *bai bu* (擺步) to entrap their feet or something of this nature. Your idea is to put them in a position where they can't hit you and you can do anything to them.

All of that sounds interesting in theory, but Huang can really make it work. He can do it. I've even tried to jab at him like a boxer as fast as I could. The jab would come in just shy of his chin and then I would be extended too far. When I pulled my jab back, he would be on me. It was as if I had sucked him right in. He would be on my chest and around my side before I knew it. I was told that Wang Shu Jin could do the same thing even though he was fat.

The skill is in reading the energy coming in and sticking to it having it suck you in with the return. This is one of Wang Shu Jin's six martial art principles. It is called *Wu Ji Bi Fan* (物極必反). It means that when something reaches its apex, it has to return because the energy has been dissipated.

**In order to develop this skill and its associated feeling and timing, sense of space and distance and rhythm were you taught a series of two-person drills or practice sets?**

We did some. We did not do many. My teacher did not like preset drills. It was more along the lines of the students asking such questions as, "how do I get



**Wang Shu Jin standing in the "Crouching Tiger" Posture**



**Kent Howard demonstrates an application of the "Yellow Dragon turns Over" technique from Wang Shu Jin's Ba Gua Lian Huan Zhang**

in?," or "how do I effectively absorb this attack without getting hit." He would ask us to punch him and he would demonstrate it two or three times. Then he would pair us up and we would try it. Then we would work for a period of time on that one piece. But we didn't learn all of the drills that Wang Shu Jin taught. Wang had a lot of drills that he had learned or that he had invented himself and presented them in a very formal fashion. My teacher was at the point philosophically where he did not like static drills. He said that you had to develop it intuitively or you would never get it. It was more of a "feeling" than a repetitive "technique." I'll have to say that in that respect it was a little difficult to study with him. Wang Shu Jin, and others who learned with Wang, tended to stick more to the prearranged drills. My teacher wanted us to go beyond that and it was tough to do, especially for beginners. You could learn a lot from him if you were ready to learn in that way. But if you were not ready to learn in this method, which meant having a background of martial arts experience, you really couldn't pick up a lot sometimes.

**So after studying the *lian huan* form for so long, were you able to move onto another form?**

Yes, I eventually learned the "swimming body" form. You could see the first form in the swimming body form, yet it was done in a very continuous fashion and the movements were shortened. By that time Huang wanted you to be able to hit with power, or *fa jing* out of any movement, doing it on a shorter line and on the circle without stopping.

The *lian huan* was a developmental form which eventually led you to the swimming body form. Learning the swimming body form first would not be a very good idea. The movements are not as crisp, and the power is not as extended as the *lian huan* form. Therefore if you do not already have power and the knowledge of correct body angles prior to learning the swimming body form, then you really cannot do much with it. The swimming body form is a continuously moving execution and the practitioner should be able to apply power anywhere in that continuum.

In the *lian huan zhang*, when you execute the movements they are crisp and it is obvious where power is being applied. The same kind of thing in the swimming body form just hits through and circles right around with no stopping and no obvious application of power. If you are not ready to hit through the opponent with that kind of power without it knocking you sideways or disjointing you, then it will not work.

**So then the basic structure of your teacher's system consists of the warm-up exercises and the two Ba Gua forms?**

There is actually a lot more. There are things that he handed off to me sort of down the road because I had come there with some experience. When I started studying with the big class in the morning, there were things that he was teaching beginners that I had not seen before. I was a little frustrated by the fact that he thought I was good enough when I came to him that I didn't need the basics because I would have loved to have learned them.

So slowly over time I picked up most of the set formulas that Wang taught, the standing postures which Wang began with, the straight line stuff, the single exercises, etc. I picked up all of this stuff when I went to work with the beginners class.

**Having had a bit of martial arts experience before you went to Taiwan and then going there and finding various teachers and arts to study and finally finding Huang Jin Sheng and his Ba Gua, could you say something about the process of studying in Taiwan. Did your perceptions of the Chinese and Chinese martial arts change over the ten years you spent there?**

I went there pretty green. I had had two years of Chinese language before I went there, and that helped a lot, but my skills were still pretty poor when I arrived. In the martial arts classes it primarily consists of people positioning your arms and legs because, unless

your Chinese language skill is adequate, it is difficult to understand martial arts principles. I actually stayed away from internal styles when I first got there until my linguistic legs were under me. I had the experience of going to New Park when I first got there and listening to some of the internal style teachers and they would start explaining things in Chinese which was over my head linguistically. Yet the Shaolin people explained things in a way that was much more concrete and they would execute a more physical movement that you could really understand.

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***Personally, I don't tell people that I was in Taiwan unless the worm it out of me. To me it doesn't matter where someone got it, as long as they got it.***

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So I stayed with Southern Shaolin styles for a while. I did something called Golden Eagle for a while, followed by something called Tai Zi. I studied these for about three years. Tai Zi is named after a famous emperor who is said to have invented it. It is one of the indigenous Fu Jian Province, thus Taiwan, styles. There are actually three: Southern White Crane, Golden Eagle, and Tai Zi. I studied all three of these. Tai Zi has elements of the other two. It is a very short, fluid system - a real "go for the balls" style. Really nasty stuff. And this is what I wanted at the time because my previous training in Northern Shaolin in Hawaii and various places had left me with a lot of pretty forms and no fighting ability. So this stuff was very effective in the fighting realm.

**So as you began to get more comfortable with the language you felt more comfortable studying the internal styles?**

Yea, I started doing Tai Ji first because I still wasn't finding the Ba Gua that I liked. At that time I wasn't excited about Xing Yi. I did Tai Ji with a couple of teachers. Over the years I was looking around at Ba Gua and studying a little bit with various teachers, but never really staying with one individual teacher. As far as Ba Gua, I was mostly just doing my Sun Xi Kun stuff.

**Do you feel that the language skill is necessary to be able to learn the internal arts in Taiwan?**

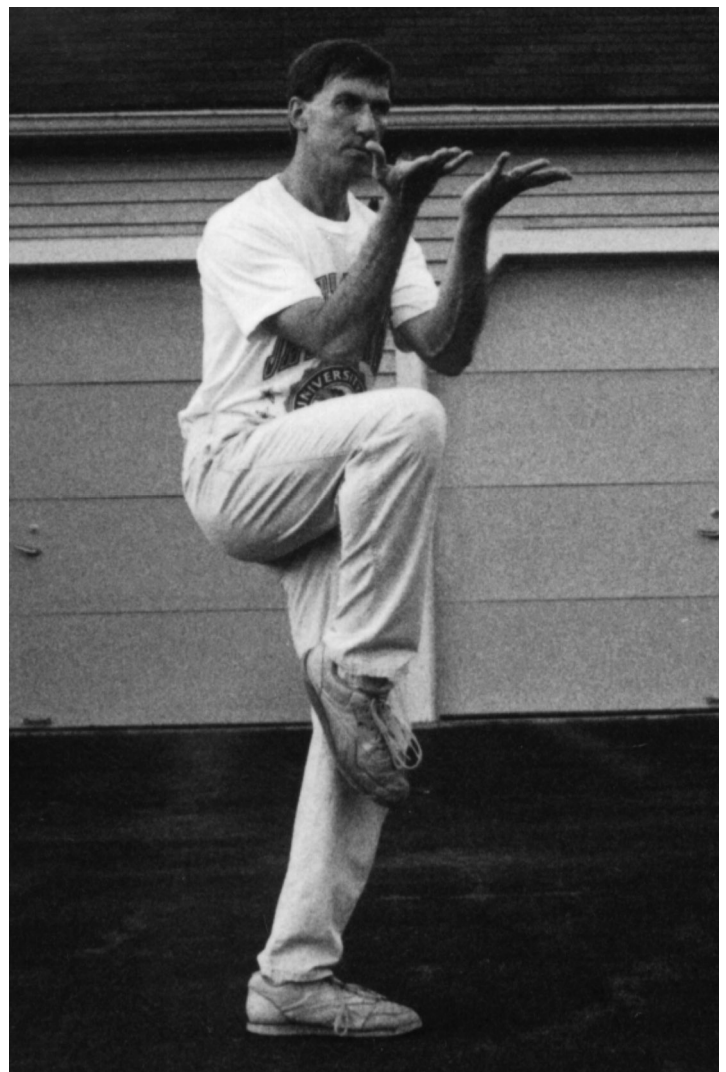
Very much so. Once my language skill improved I could listen to a Tai Ji or Ba Gua teacher and really understand what they were saying. If you learned the physical movements themselves, that was one thing. But to go deeper you really had to get involved in asking questions. If the teacher begins to talk about internal energy and you don't have those words in your vocabulary and a very good understanding of them in Chinese, it makes it very difficult to follow. I think if someone were to go over there to study and did not

know Chinese, they would get in trouble right away unless they stayed with a Shaolin tradition. Of course a certain depth of knowledge in previous practice helps.

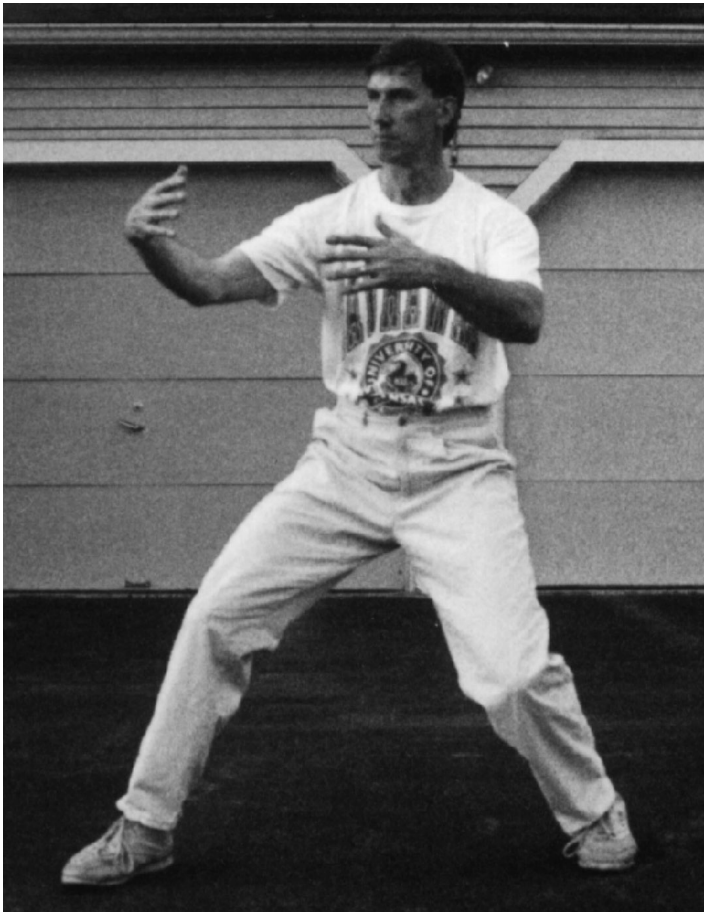
One thing to do if you don't know Chinese well is to find a good translator. When I first got there I would often go to class with someone who knew the language much better than I did and have him help me.

**By the time you met Huang Jin Sheng, your language skill was fluent wasn't it?**

Yes, I was reading and writing in Chinese by then, even having dreams and nightmares in Chinese (laughter). However, if you compared my language skill to someone who really stuck with the book studies for a long time, like Tim Cartmell, his Chinese is probably much better than mine. I stopped studying Chinese full time in 1984. I really just lived there. It was my home, it was where my family was, I had a full time job, so I didn't have as much time to study the language in a scholarly manner. I got very fluent in a very basic everyday way. But still I have to reach for the dictionary when trying to translate poetry or the *Dao De Jing*.



**Kent Howard demonstrating the "Monkey Offering Fruit" posture**



**Kent Howard practicing one of Wang Shu Jin's zhan zhuang postures**

**Having spent ten years living and studying martial arts in Taiwan, what kind of advice would you have for those who would like to go study there?**

I would recommend finding an English speaking teacher. The language is the biggest hurdle in understanding what you are doing. A lot of things in martial arts are really hard to interpret unless you are good at the language.

Getting to know the culture is another helpful thing. I found you had to know the culture well to learn there. But as an off-shoot, I'd like to say that once you bring it back, it doesn't have to be Chinese at all. You can forget the culture and you don't have to speak any Chinese. I rarely use Chinese terms in my class here. I always try to translate all the terminology into English.

I think the people that train in China and then come back here and stick with a strong Chinese tradition in their teaching probably were not very deeply involved in the culture or didn't know the language very well, so they are grabbing hold of that pretty hard. The "old timers," the people who spent a very long time in Taiwan, like Ken Fish or Tim Cartmell, can easily translate things to English without thinking about it. I'm sure that Tim does not dress his students up in silk uniforms and have them learn Chinese table manners and vocabulary.

People who were there for a short time and really wanted to be involved with the people and the culture,

but didn't have time, are the ones who hang on more to the cultural aspects when they return to the United States. It seems that they do this to try and let everyone know that, "I studied in China!" Personally, I don't tell people that I was in Taiwan unless the worm it out of me. To me it doesn't matter where someone got it, as long as they got it.

**What kind of work did you do in Taiwan?**

I was administrating English language programs in Taipei for several years. Then in 1989 my wife and I started our own school and had that for three years and then opened a second school. We sold our interest in those in 1992 before we returned to the States.

**So you came back to the United States in 1992?**

Yes, I came back and first got a job in the Seattle area and stayed there for about six months and then I moved to Boston in 1993.

**Have you been teaching Ba Gua there?**

Yes, I teach for a local recreation commission and I just teach enough students to keep my hand in it. I mainly wanted to teach here because every time I show somebody this stuff, I learn something. I teach a core of six to eight people. We are only doing Ba Gua and I am teaching them exactly what Huang taught me.

**Do you do any of Wang Shu Jin's Xing Yi in Taiwan?**

I did bits and pieces here and there. My teacher taught me some Xing Yi just to help explain different types of energies and ways of using the waist and the back differently - sort of a more direct type of energy. We would then take that energy out of the Xing Yi move and bring it right into a Ba Gua move, like the crouching tiger, and we would go on a straight line with that. He would show me that it was the same. But as far as learning the exact Xing Yi forms, no I didn't do that.

**Are you sticking with your core group of six or eight, or are you accepting new students?**

Well, you know, I'm still learning myself. I workout with one of William C.C. Chen's senior students doing his Tai Ji. We mainly work on the push hands and then put on boxing gloves and seeing how it works. We practice the William C.C. Chen "New York City" style - which is Tai Ji with an attitude.

I also have been learning Bill Paul's nonviolent self defense system which is based on internal martial arts. As far as my teaching goes, I am only teaching the Ba Gua. But because I have a job and a family, and I am practicing these other things, I only want to teach one or two nights a week.



# WANG SHU JIN'S BA GUA: PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

BY KENT HOWARD

In this article Kent Howard, who currently lives in the Boston area, discusses the principles of Wang Shu Jin's Ba Gua and demonstrates their utility in martial application. Each section of this article discusses principles which he was taught by his teacher Huang Jin Sheng, a twenty-five year student of Wang Shu Jin. In the article Kent makes use of many translated quotes taken from books written by both Wang Shu Jin and Huang Jin Sheng.



A photo of Wang Shu Jin taken from his first book *Ba Gua Linked Palms*

## Wang Shu Jin (王樹金)

Wang Shu Jin performed *Tai Ji Quan*, *Xing Yi Quan*, and *Ba Gua Chang* with equal ease. However many of those who studied with him only learned his *Tai Ji*. This was because Wang always started new students with *Zhan Zhuang* (Post Stances) and *Tai Ji*. Later he would move them on to *Xing Yi* or *Ba Gua*. There were those who saw him use his martial arts in sparring or fighting situations who believed that most of his martial ability translated itself through *Xing Yi*. However, when Wang Shu Jin decided in 1972 to set down his martial arts in book form, it was *Ba Gua Zhang* that he turned to. Those in his inner circle say that he always considered *Ba Gua* to be the highest expression of the internal martial arts, and the most difficult to obtain mastery in.

Wang Shu Jin's two *Ba Gua* books were *Ba Gua Lian Huan Zhang* (八卦連環掌 - *Ba Gua Linked Palms*) and *Ba Gua You Shen Zhang* (八卦游身掌 - *Ba Gua Swimming Body Palms*). *Ba Gua Linked Palms* was published privately in 1978. Translations of portions of this text make up the bulk of Robert Smith and Allen Pittman's *Pa Kua: Eight Trigram Boxing*. Portions of several sections of Wang's book were adapted faithfully by Smith and Pittman with the exception of the form, which is somewhat different from Wang's presentation.

Wang's second book, *Ba Gua Swimming Body Palms*, was published as a joint venture of the Division of Physical Education of the R.O.C. Ministry of Education and the R.O.C. National Martial Arts Association. It appeared in 1980 shortly before Wang Shu Jin passed away. Neither book is still in print.

## Huang Jin Sheng (黃金生)

My teacher, Huang Jin Sheng, lives in Chuanghua, Taiwan a city just south of Taichung. He is a Jie Gu or Chinese Osteopath by profession and studied internal style martial arts with Wang Shu Jin from 1955 until 1981 when Wang passed away. He is also an Yi Guan Daoist lay-priest and was interviewed in the *Pa Kua Chang Newsletter*, Vol 2. No. 2.

## The "Center" (中心)

An idea which is essential in understanding Wang Shu Jin's *Ba Gua Zhang* is the concept of the "center" (中心 - *zhong xin*). Although the concept of being

## An Example of Xin Xin Xiang Ying



1



2



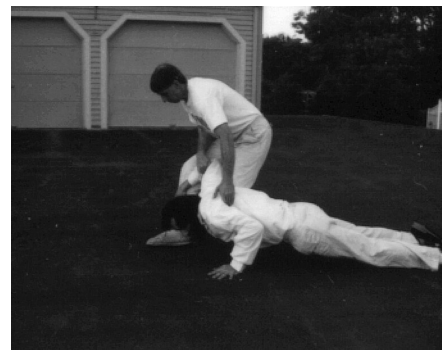
3



4



5



6

centered and centering often arises in discussions about the internal martial arts, the exact nature, use of, or even location of this center has proved illusory. In Huang Jin Sheng's treatise on Wang's internal teachings, called "A Study of the Six Principles of Ba Gua Zhang," the idea of the "center" arises again and again. (all six of these principles were listed in the interview with Huang Jin Sheng in *Pa Kua Chang Newsletter*, Vol. 2, No. 2)

In his elaboration of the first principle, *Xin Xin Xiang Ying* (信心相應), loosely translated as "A Complete Rapport of Body and Mind," Huang talks about three physical and spiritual centers in the body: the middle of the head, the *dan tian* (丹田), and a third one located near the spine at the third vertebra (vertebra lumbalis III) up from the sacral area, hereafter called the "center." These three points in the body form a triangle. The "center" is the "master" of the upper and lower points and regulates and controls them.

To locate this area, stand up straight and place the fingers of one hand at a point just below the navel. Place the fingers of the other hand on the area near the base of the spine just up from sacrum. Bunch the fingers of the forward hand and spear the finger tips in and slightly upward toward the spine. If you drop your coccyx and allow your body to softly retract from the push, you should be able to feel this "center" push against your other hand so as to make the VLIII area protrude outward. It is this feeling of slightly retracting

the area around the navel, dropping the coccyx and "falling back on" (lowering your center of gravity) and relaxing and filling the "center" which precipitates the feeling of *luo kong* (洛空 - fall into emptiness).

There are three auxiliary calisthenics taught by Huang Jin Sheng designed to open and develop the "center": they are called "shrimp swimming," "frog jumping," and "turtle walking." In "shrimp swimming" for example, you lie on the floor on your side with your hands clasped together and extended over your head. From there you scissor at the waist so your head and knees close together. This action propels the area of the sacrum backward across the floor. "Frog jumping" and "turtle walking" teach how to 'spark' yourself forward using whole-body movement from the "center" from squatting and kneeling positions respectively.

As Huang Jin Sheng writes on the *Xin Xin Xiang Ying* principle: "The 'center' is the starting point for all movement. Using the 'center' to strike, you can make every cell of the body roll up into a spinning force. This is what is called 'When the one moves, the whole moves'....No matter how you move, the movement arises from its own will. You do not use strength; you use whole-body power. Thus you achieve the purpose of training the outer body from within."

In the *Xin Xin Xiang Ying* example shown above, the meaning of this principle when expressed as a relationship between you and an opponent translates to, "two minds in complete rapport." This means that

## Examples of Luo Kong



A1



A2



A3



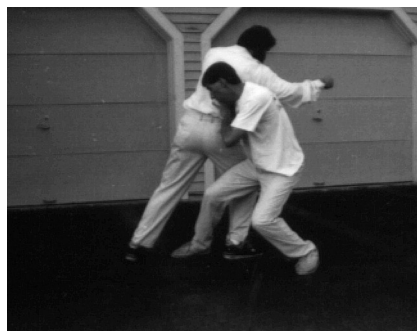
B1



B2



B3



B4



B5

you become one in movement and intention with the opponent. You join with his intention and energy and utilize his inertia, combined with gravity, to join his motion and direct him to a disadvantageous position.

### Luo Kong (洛空)

One of the key elements to understanding Wang Shu Jin's internal martial arts is the concept of *luo kong*. The phrase *luo kong*, as with many Chinese terms dealing with internal martial arts, expresses a meaning which cannot be found in any dictionary. The definition normally given is, "to fail in an attempt." Although this is the general outcome for an attacker who meets with *luo kong*, the definition itself does little to explain the feeling one has when applying it.

To explain the practitioner's feelings we need to look at the phrase's meaning. *Luo* means "to fall or drop," and *kong* means "empty." A translation in English could be "fall into emptiness" or "drop into a hole." In Ba Gua Zhang, *luo kong* refers to falling back on the "center." Huang Jin Sheng explains it as the ability to absorb your opponent's attack by making a hole for him to fall into, or as some martial artist say, letting him "hit air."

As the opponent strikes, the defender will *luo kong*, allowing the attack to penetrate harmlessly. This is similar to absorbing the energy of a shove in a Tai Ji Quan pushing hands exercise. The secret to using *luo kong* in Ba Gua Zhang, however, is being able to absorb energy while you are moving in and encircling an opponent. This "letting go" while countering is a

## An Example of Evade, Encircle, Entrap



1



2



3



3 (side view)



4



5



6

very difficult feeling to get because you are literally trying to absorb an oncoming blow, stick to it, and penetrate all at the same time.

To use *luo kong* properly it is important to develop a very sensitive touch which has to be directly connected to your “center”. When an incoming movement is felt on the fingers, it must be directly translated to the “center” which will initiate a sympathetic counter movement. Wang Shu Jin taught many exercises aimed toward developing this “center.” Sitting meditation, standing postures, static circle walking postures, and the Ba Gua Zhang form itself all taught different aspects of the centering. But more important than these are two person sets and improvised drills which develop this listening energy, or sensitive touch.

In Wang’s Single Palm Change (see page 26), there are two instances where the practitioner must *luo kong*: when you *kou bu* (扣步) to turn and meet the attack, and when you disengage from the “crouching tiger” form to move back onto the circle. Both of these instances of letting go and dissipating the incoming tension on your body set up a counter movement which effectively negates the attack while opening up an avenue for penetrating or encircling the opponent’s defenses. *Luo kong* may be found in every major step, turn or general change of “energy “ in Wang’s Ba Gua Zhang forms.

The first of the *luo kong* examples shown on the

previous page demonstrates *luo kong* being used in evading a strong attack. The second example utilizes *luo kong* to slip inside with the *lian huan zhang* #1 (single palm change).

### Evade, Encircle, and Entrap

Although evade, encircle, and entrap are three separate terms, the movements they imply follow one upon the other as to become inseparable to the eye. You evade an opponent’s attack as you encircle and entrap him, which then sets up an evasion of his counter.

If the attack is a punch (as in the example shown above), you *luo kong* and let it slide by (evade) as you *bai bu* (摆步), or toe-out, and circle around the outside of the striking arm (encircle). Your next step is a *kou bu*, or toe-in, which completes your move to the side or, depending upon the angle and momentum of the attack, to the rear of the opponent. Here, from either the side or back of the opponent, you are in a superior position to control of the opponent’s elbow, shoulder, neck, waist or even legs—through the knees and *bai* or *kou bu* (entrap).

Evade does not mean to dodge or side step, which would create too much space between you and the opponent, but to move in and past the attack while you let the blow brush by as closely as possible. This

## *An Example of Absorbing, Trapping, and Applying Leverage*



1



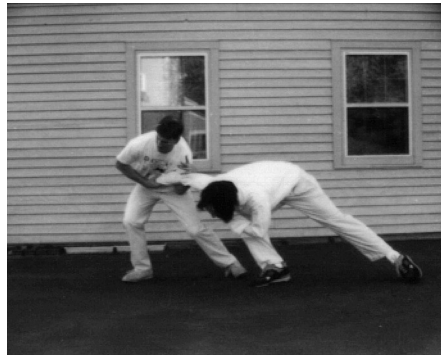
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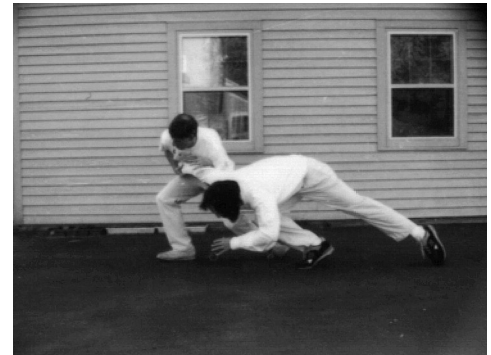
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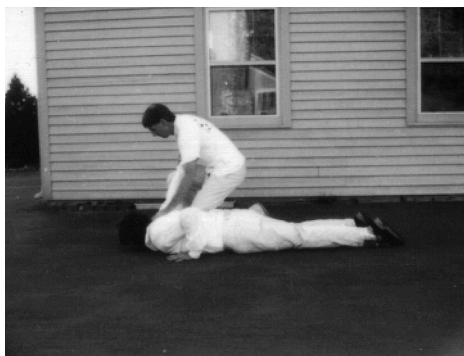
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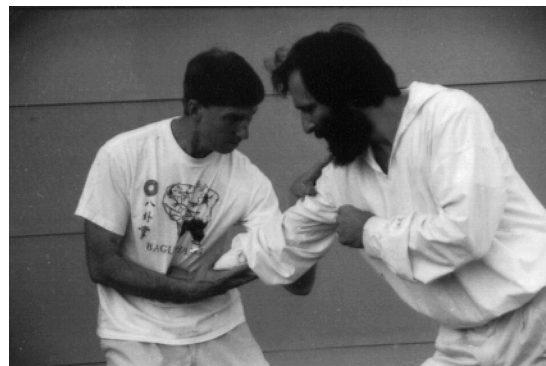
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**Close up of arm lock in photo 4**

sets up the encircling movement where you stick to the opponent's body while you penetrate to his side or rear. The feeling is one of melding with the opponent's movements as if slow dancing with a pretty girl—that is to say you follow along without grabbing too tightly or bumping into your “partner,” while trying to stay as close as possible. You entrap the opponent not so much by applying a lock or a hold, but by moving into a position to do either, or even follow with a throw or a takedown. The key to entrapping is in positioning and sticking.

In Li Zi Ming's book, entitled *Liang Zhen Pu Eight Diagram Palm*, he quotes a passage written by the originator of Ba Gua Zhang, Dong Hai Quan, which conveys more aptly the feeling of the above:

*"...Mr. Dong Hai Chuan enumerates three definite ways to fight against the enemy:*

1) *When anyone attacks, I can neutralize it and then strike back at the same time. This called the Mutual Advance Method.*

2) *When anyone attacks, I intercept it and strike back at the same time. This is called the Stop and Intercept Method, i.e. to break the attack and to attack back simultaneously.*

3) *When anyone attacks, I evade and redirect it with footwork. This is called escaping and “melting away” or “melting away like a shadow.”*

In his conclusion: "Of the three ways, the first is better than the second. While the third way is the most complicated and profound and can only be used when the technique has been developed to a level of mastery."

This is clearly what Huang Jin Sheng meant when he said, "The highest level of Ba Gua Zhang is not being there when the attack arrives." Or, as Dong Hai Quan said, "melting away like a shadow." Surely this must go beyond even the highly developed skills of evade, encircle, and entrap. This is evade, encircle and evaporate.

### **The Eight Secrets to Ba Gua Zhang Practice**

In both of the books Wang Shu Jin wrote, *Ba Gua Linked Palms* and *Ba Gua Swimming Body Palms*, there are sections on "The Eight Secrets to Ba Gua Zhang Practice." These "secrets," or "key points," are presented in eight, one-character principles which



are a guide to both external postures and internal feelings. These form a conceptual base upon which all subsequent techniques are built. Each of these eight concepts focuses on three areas of the body.

**The Three Ding's** (三頂 - the highest, outermost point)

The head floats upward; the palms turn and press outward; the tongue reaches to touch the roof of the mouth.

**The Three Kou's** (三扣 - to button; a hook)

The shoulders turn inward hollowing the chest; the back of the hands turn inward and the toes lightly grip inward to cup the soles of the feet; the teeth meet without tension (Button your lip!).

**The Three Yuan's** (三圓 - round, circular)

The back is rounded; the chest is rounded (in a concave manner); the "tiger's mouth," between the thumb and index finger, is stretched and rounded. (When this is combined with *kou* and the spreading of the fingers, the hand will have an "outwardly stretched" and "inwardly wrapping" feeling.)

**The Three Min's** (三敏 - sensitive)

The mind must be sensitive in order to adapt quickly to changing circumstances; the eyes must be sensitive to be able to anticipate a line of attack; the hands must be sensitive to the touch, so you can move first and gain control.

**The Three Bao's** (三抱 - to embrace or hold)

The *dan tian* embraces the *qi* to keep it from scattering; the mind embraces stillness, so you will not panic with sudden changes when meeting the enemy; the breast embraces the internal organs keeping them from danger.

**The Three Chui's** (三垂 - hang down; drop)

The *qi* descends to the *dan tian* making the body as stable as a mountain; the shoulders drop naturally and lead the elbows; the elbows hang downwards rounding the forearm.

**The Three Qu's** (三曲 - to bend)

The inner joints of the wrists, elbows, and knees bend to form crescent shapes; the joints will have a bouncy strength for quick movements in and out.

**The Three Ting's** (三挺 - upright; to pull up)

The back of the head rises, which flattens the neck and allows the *qi* to flow unimpeded to the head; the coccyx tucks in and slightly upward to straighten the spine and power the four limbs, allowing the *qi* to fill your whole body; this action also lifts the knees and pushes the heels into the ground for a stronger root.



Wang Shu Jin demonstrates his eight standing postures

### Wang Shu Jin's Advice on Learning Ba Gua Zhang

In his book on Zhang Zhao Dong's Swimming Body Ba Gua, Wang Shu Jin wrote about four "subjective" rules for success in the art passed down to him by his teacher:

- 1) You must first make a commitment to practice diligently. This decision will be the "motivational power" of your success.
- 2) You must have perseverance. In training it is hard to avoid meeting with difficulties and suffering. You must overcome them and practice daily without fail.
- 3) It is essential to understand that the Ba Gua Zhang form is of a continuously moving nature. You must grasp this concept in the beginning. Only then will you be able to understand the movements and changes.
- 4) Strengthen your knowledge of *ning*, *zuan*, *zheng*, and *guo*. No matter which movement of Ba Gua Zhang you practice, it will contain these four elements in both

intention and energy:

**Ning** (擰 - to twist): "The waist twists, the hands twist, and the legs twist." An example of this principle can be seen in the Ba Gua Zhang "Guard Stance." The palms twist and turn outward, the upper body twists from the waist toward the center of the circle, and this action causes the thighs to twist inward.

**Zuan** (鑽 - to penetrate): "In the penetrating palm there is twisting; in the twisting palm there is penetrating." The penetrating and twisting actions produce a feeling of drilling, as in Wang's Double Palm Change. The advancing palm turns over 180 degrees in a drilling action which begins in the legs, moves up through the waist and is translated into the shoulders and arms. The practitioner must remain "internally soft and externally firm, like a snake wriggling through a hole."

**Zheng** (爭 - here is used to represent the concept of *cheng* [撐 - to stretch out]): "Stay outwardly stretched



**Wang Shu Jin poses in the "guard stance" in his book *Ba Gua Swimming Body Palm***

in intention and energy." When you drop the shoulders and elbows while extending the palms, it stretches the back and the outside of the arms in a way that creates a heightened surface tension from the center of the spine to the tip of the little finger.

**Guo (裹 - to bind or wrap):** "Stay internally wrapped in intention and energy." The stretching of the back, twisting of the waist, plus the penetrating and twisting motion of extending the palms precipitates a relaxed compression of the abdominal area. This feeling is not brought about by any conscious contracting or filling of the area around the *dan tian*, but more as a natural outgrowth of proper practice of holding the postures while walking the circle. Both *cheng* and *guo* can be felt most obviously by a beginner while walking the circle in the Guard Stance.

### **Standing Practice**

In Wang Shu Jin's first book he wrote: "You must practice *zhan zhuang* (站樁 - post standing). No matter which type of martial arts you practice, *zhan zhuang* training will be a basic requirement. In olden times, students had to practice *zhan zhuang* for one or two years before they were allowed to learn any forms.

Therefore, each generation produced outstanding martial artists.

"In modern society, people have changed their way of thinking. If you had such strict requirements today, there would be few who could accept them. At the very least, you should use the postures from the Ba Gua Zhang forms as a type of *zhan zhuang*. But, you must practice these postures everyday. A few examples of *zhan zhuang* are introduced in this book. Not only will these train your waist and legs, but they will also speed up the growth of your internal energy. The longer you practice *zhan zhuang*, the more stable and rooted you will be.

"In the first five postures shown, you should stand flat footed with the feet about shoulder width apart. The important point is to direct the power to the heels. The last three postures flow one to the other. The important point is to distribute the weight 40% on the front foot and 60% on the rear foot." (see the photos of Wang Shu Jin holding the standing postures on the previous page.)

Huang Jin Sheng's advice about practicing *zhan zhuang* is not too place as much emphasis on the variety of postures as on the sincerity of practice. If you chose only one posture you liked and worked at it daily, you would benefit greatly. The important points are: keep the center of gravity at the *dan tian*; the feet remain rooted to the ground; breathe from the abdomen; concentrate on the center; the eyes gaze levelly, but look within.

### **Preparation for Walking the Circle**

To determine the proper size of the circle for your length of stride, begin by standing in the center of your practice area and taking one "giant step" outward. The length of this step will be the radius of your circle. You should be able to cover the entire circumference of the circle in eight steps.

To prepare for circle walking practice, or beginning the form, stand facing the east in a natural stance with your left shoulder toward the center and your feet straddling the line of the circle. Your shoulders should be relaxed with your arms hanging naturally and the palms facing the legs. The body should be upright, the spine erect, and the eyes gazing at the tip of the nose. (Don't gaze at your nose so hard that you cross your eyes.) Your mind should be empty with no conscious thoughts. This position is called the *Wu Ji* (無極) Stance. *Wu Ji* literally means, "without form." Philosophically, it refers to a mind completely devoid of thoughts or desires. Stay in this "stance" a few moments to clear your head and relax.

From the *Wu Ji* Stance, you move into the *Tai Ji* (太極) Stance. This is done by slowly "sitting" in your stance by relaxing and using "waist strength." The knees bend slowly but do not extend beyond the toes. The hips and inner thighs open slightly as if "standing astride" something. The shoulders open, turning the elbows outward. The palms face toward the rear and



slightly downward. The hands fill with energy which spreads the fingers slightly. The feeling is as if the arm from the shoulder to the fingers were a slack balloon which is filled with one breath of air. The abdomen is rounded and relaxed. The breath sinks to the *dan tian*; the weight sinks to the heels.

As you begin to walk the circle, the palms float upward and separate in what is called the “holding the world” posture. From there, you turn the waist toward the center of the circle and drop the arms into the classic Ba Gua Zhang “guard stance.” Wang Shu Jin called this posture, “Hands Embracing the *Yin Yang* Fish; Feet Treading on the Ba Gua Diagram.” [see photo in *Swimming Body* book, page 1, reprinted on the previous page.] Standing in the “guard stance” is a good time to go over the thirteen basic principles of circle walking and postural alignment which Wang wrote about in his, *Ba Gua Swimming Body Palms*:

### Basic Principles

**1) Empty Spirit; Raise Energy:** Keep the head erect and straighten the back of the neck. The back of the head should float upward, but it should be held naturally. Keep your gaze level.

**2) Contain Chest; Pull Up Back:** Keep the upper body erect. Do not pull up the chest. Wrap the shoulders inward; round the back. The chest is held comfortably, the *qi* should flow easily.

**3) Draw Together Lower Abdomen:** The area below the navel (the *dan tian* area) is a good place to accumulate the *qi*. You must keep the lower abdomen empty so the *qi* can sink. This is not achieved by hollowing the abdomen but by turning the upper thighs slightly inward and dropping the coccyx, which draws the area in and down. This is also called, “embracing the belly.”

**4) Breathe Slowly and Gradually:** Breathe through the nose, and do not use the mouth. The breath must be slow and even, like “a cloud floating in the sky.” (Taoists believe that if you feel the need to use the mouth to breathe, you are overexerting yourself and should stop to rest.)

**5) Coccyx Upright:** From the neck to the tip of the coccyx, you must be extended and erect. This will allow the spinal nerves to function normally during exercise, and your reflexes will be unimpeded and lively.

**6) Draw in Buttocks; Pull up Sphincter:** Relax the lower back from the waist to the coccyx. The coccyx will naturally tuck inward as the buttocks are drawn down. You should have the “intention” of lightly contracting the area between the anus and the genitals.

**7) Sink Shoulders; Drop Elbows:** The shoulders almost have the feeling of being “dislocated.” The elbows

hang downwards as if weighted. Only if the elbows drop will the shoulders be able to sink. In this way, the *qi* will be allowed to penetrate to the fingers.

**8) Tongue Touches Roof of Mouth:** The tip of the tongue touches the roof of the mouth between the upper teeth and the hard palate. Close the mouth lightly and touch the teeth together. The “tongue to the palate bridge” allows the *qi* to flow without blockage. Pressing too hard with the tongue, clenching the teeth, or closing the mouth too tightly, will blunt the *qi*.

**9) The Six Unities:** The mind and the *Yi* (意 - intention; conscious will; mental conception); The *Yi* and the *qi*; The *qi* and the *li* (力 - muscular strength); The hands and the feet; the shoulders and the hips. Only when these six points are united and harmonious will your movements be connected as one.

**10) The Yi is Commander and Chief:** The movements of the internal martial arts are arrived at through the mind, and Ba Gua Zhang is no exception. Internal energy and external strength must act as one with one intent. “In movement seek stillness.” [A bird flapping its wings is a “movement.” But, only if the “intention” is to fly will it actually lift off the ground. The bird must have the mental conception of flight in order to coordinate the thrust of its legs, the uplift of its wings, and the attitude of its body in order to take lift off the branch. Otherwise, its beating wings are only for show. Ba Gua Zhang is the same. You strike the enemy with the mind. Movement without intent is just exercise.]

**11) Legs Bent; Treading on Mud:** This describes Ba Gua Zhang circle walking. The walking is smooth and flowing. This is a special characteristic of Ba Gua. Do not walk upright; “sit” with both legs bent. As you step forward, keep the foot close to the ground. The toes should *kou*, or grip the ground lightly, which will cause the sole of the foot to hollow slightly. Step as if walking through mud. The heel and instep touch the ground at the same time. In this way, your weight will be centered. After lengthy practice, your step will be as light and quick and flowing water. As you step forward, the foot touches down lightly. The back foot is kept flat with the slightest intention of stepping up on something. The ankles brush by each other.

**12) The Waist Acts as the Axis:** When you practice Ba Gua Zhang, you use the turning of the waist to lead the four limbs. The body moves before the arms; the waist moves before the body.

**13) Spread the Fingers; Hollow the Palms:** The fingers spread apart; the thumb is held level; the index finger is held upright; and the other three fingers curl inward. The thumb and the little finger form a triangle; the palm hollows naturally. This palm is also called the “lotus leaf palm.”

## Wang Shu Jin's 'Single Palm Change'

The Single Palm Change of Zhang Zhao Dong's school is one of the simpler and more direct ones found in Ba Gua Zhang. It is reminiscent of Sun Xi Kun's Single Palm Change, but with more forward penetration and less waist turning at the end (see Sun Xi Kun's change on the cover of the last issue of the *Pa Kua Chang Journal*.)

1) Begin the change with the left foot forward, left hand held high inside, facing the center of the circle in the "guard stance." From this position you step forward with the right foot and *kou bu*, putting the heel down first and turning the toe inward. As you put weight on the right foot, you lift the heel of the left foot and turn it slightly inward. The feet are now lined up in an "eight stance," the toes point toward the center of the circle while the upper body twists at the waist to face the rear. The hands are still held in the same position. From here you continue to put more weight on the right foot, as you pivot on the ball of the left foot and turn toward the rear. At the same time, the left palm turns down toward the floor, as the right hand turns palm upward. Both arms are rounded. (You are now facing the rear.)

2) Slide the left foot forward on the line of the circle until you form the "crouching tiger" stance. A turn of the waist pulls the right hand back to the hip and propels the left hand forward. The weight is distributed 30/70 on the front and rear feet. You "sit" in your stance, opening the kua in the hips. The toe of the

left foot is slightly turned in (*kou*). From the palms to the chest, you have an internally wrapped, externally stretched feeling. The thumb of the left hand points toward the rear heel.

3) To maneuver back on the circle, open the toe of the left foot slightly, and turn the waist to the left. Move your weight onto the left foot. The left palm presses toward the outside of the circle without changing form. The right palm spears up under the right arm, and the tiger's mouth embraces the left underarm. The right foot slides forward and the two knees brush. As you turn the waist to the right (toward the center of the circle), the right hand slides under the left arm and both arms "*peng*" (wardoff) to the right. While you do this, the right knee rises until the thigh is level, then the toe kicks out. End the form by placing the right foot flat on the ground while turning the palms out fully into the right "guard stance."

During the Single Palm Change, the eyes follow the index finger of the forward hand. All movements are initiated by the waist. You should have a feeling of *luo kong* which initiates the change of direction at the beginning and end of the form. All movements should flow one into the other without hesitation. As Wang Shu Jin wrote about the Single Palm Change: "In each movement there is *yin* and *yang*; the substantial and insubstantial; both outwardly stretched and inwardly bound. The contradiction is that once you relax the muscles a new power will issue forth. There is both turning and twisting in the waist and arms. You move in with "silk reeling energy."



# *Wang Shu Jin - Combative Ba Gua*

by James Cravens

Those who knew Christopher G. Casey recognized that he was a man on a mission. He was American born and had a thirty year love affair with the Martial Arts before his untimely death in 1986. He was famous in his avocation - an international reinsurer, working for a company in Germany called Hannover Rhee.

He was a brilliant man whose interest in martial art was related to its study of energy, in particular the study of combative energy. With means, intellect, job complementation, his journey brought him to the Republic of China (Taiwan) in search of this boxing energy. He became Chief Liaison Officer of the Koushu Federation Republic of China, a division of the Ministry of Education to the United States and later to Europe. He took advantage of his position to study with some of the best teachers available that fit the category of energy master of combative martial art. His first teacher in Taiwan was Wang Shu Shen.

Wang Shu Shen was not in the best of health, but agreed to teach Casey. Wang taught a number of foreign students at the time. Casey observed some of Wang's classes and noticed beautiful Ba Gua forms being taught. While appreciative of what he saw, he asked Wang if he would teach him the combative side to Ba Gua. Wang agreed to private lessons. Casey brought an interpreter with him to the lessons in order to get maximum benefit in communication. Often, Wang's senior student was present especially when Wang was not in the best of health to help in the teaching of postures. Although limited in age and health Mr. Casey said that Wang was very adept at getting his instruction across. Once he asked his senior to demonstrate the power of the inch power in the movement being taught to Casey. Casey was unimpressed with the demonstration. Wang Shu Shen noticed Casey's expression and stood up to demonstrate his amazing close range shock hit. Casey felt that he never would forget this awesome display of power that he was able to receive and ride out.

Ba Gua has lacked an orthodoxy that has been present in Tai Ji Quan and Xing Yi. Casey felt that if anyone could establish a standard, it would be Wang Shu Jin. He began to help with the picture taking for a book by Wang Shu Jin. Wang died before the project was finished. Casey had a number of photos with Wang in Ba Gua and Xing Yi postures. Some were pictures of his senior student in the postures with Wang sitting nearby in approval. After Wang's death, Casey received some additional photos of Wang from his estate.

Casey was taught a form from Wang that was a little different than the forms that are usually seen. This was referred to by Casey as the "Combative Form" and was called "Eight Diagram Celestial Dragon Boxing." It consisted of Circle Walking, Eight "Changes" and Eight

"Animals". Each change consisted of from two to six movements and each animal consisted of from six to fourteen movements. The form progresses with changes moving to the circle walk and the circle walk moving to the animals. Every one of the eight changes is integrated within each animal. Everything is done on both sides and the form is totally symmetrical. There is a little less than 120 movements to learn in this form, yet it takes approximately an hour to do because of all the repetition and circle walking. Normal pace is a little faster than a typical slow Tai Ji speed. Done with a proper posture and root, the form becomes one of the all time grueling exercises. The form is not spectacular like some Ba Gua but is movement that corresponds to practical needs in combat. In spite of its combativeness compared to other Ba Gua, it is still very unique in that circle walking and large circle movement leads the observer who understands fighting wondering how this can be practical combatively.



**James Cravens with his teacher Christopher Casey**

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***Many may poke fun of the size of Wang Shu Jin, but none can say a word about his skill in technique.***

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The approach taken is a little different. When one demonstrates to others the application of Ba Gua, often a student will throw a right punch which stops and freezes while the demonstrator will cross over to a scissor stance to block. This is followed by the demonstrator either stepping with the other foot to pursue the opponent with a follow up or maybe will spin from the scissor stance into a follow up. While anything is possible, this is not necessarily demonstrating the combative Ba Gua properly. One way of thinking about application is that there are combative truths that apply across the board to every style in the world. Then there is Ba Gua movement. Now regardless of how well you can move, if you violate a fighting principle, you may pay dearly for it. Fighting principles are things like Non-telegraphic launching (explosion), deception, speed, power, distance, yield and counter timing, stop hit timing, etc. Now, many of us may have a perfect plan for fighting, but the fact is that things don't always work out, and many training methods only work on the idea positions for their technique. Ba Gua form causes one to move in many ways, that prepare one not only for the perfect moments, but also for the non-perfect moments. Therefore, in a demonstration against a punch, it would normally be more efficient not to cross over to a scissor stance, but to move out of the line of the attack in the most efficient way without crossing the legs and possibly simultaneously launching the counter. Or if one reads the punch well, a stop hit intercepts and is far more direct. But this doesn't "look" like Ba Gua. Maybe one should define Ba Gua. If it is a fighting style dedicated to the truth in combat, then it does possess those things which are direct, efficient and practical.

Then why the form, and all the other movements. The form is very important in even combative Ba Gua because it prepares one to move in countless directions and ways, which may be required in those not-so-perfect moments of combat. I don't choose the scissor stance to fight from, but I will find myself needing excellent transitional movement that makes it worthwhile to master the scissor stance. Sometimes I will be forced into positions that require strong scissor stance changeability.

Secondly, the form provides extended minutes in which one must stay in the "boxing posture" which is one of the great advantages in using the internal principles of boxing. While this posture is not always needed in every moment of combat, it is the beginning of posture and movement and the changes needed in combat begin with the posture. The tucked hip position is very difficult for extended minutes. Some of my

students talk about doing the whole Ba Gua form etc., but when I ask them to do the form not cheating the posture or root at any point, they usually cannot go past one eighth or one quarter of the form.

One may ask why this is necessary. It is not so one can fight. There are great fighters in many arts and sports of fighting. The variables that give success in fighting are many and include spirit, intensity, will and the mind. It is necessary if one wants to become all he can be. If one has experienced the energy of real fighting, one notices that it is very difficult to keep the energy and root/posture down. It is natural to rise. In combative Ba Gua, Joint Hands is practiced which is one of the unique Ba Gua dueling exercises. When one practices trying to control energy, he or she finds that it is far more possible when one develops the ability to stay down when under pressure. The form becomes a battery charger for this strength and energy/Posture. One can be a great fighter outside this posture position that I am promoting, but it is my belief that the same fighter could become much better, control energy better, and be far more changeable if this posture and strength is developed.

Wang was interested in the low kicks of Ba Gua. He had a 55 gallon drum filled with sand and covered with carpet that he use to kick. When questioned about these kicks, he seemed quite sensitive about the subject. In addition, Wang taught Casey the Ba Gua Ring Ruler. This steel ring was covered with leather and used for a couple of purposes. It floated down the arms and up the shoulders during the form reminding the body that it must always be loaded not only on the *Yang* side of the body and technique, but on the *Yin* side as well. The ring can also be manipulated to practice *qin na* vising during the form movements. Another use of the ring is to bounce the ring non stop on the arm with clockwise or counter clockwise movements. This is similar to Wing Chuns Mook Jong pounding.

Another topic Casey learned from Wang Shu Jin is that of the upper root and lower root. The upper root is important but less important than the lower root. You destroy the lower root and you automatically take care of the upper root. The reverse is not always true. Secondly, the body state of the practitioner must be studied and pursued. For example, the form is first taught with what we will call a *Yang* body state. This is a heavier tension in the body. It does not mean rigidity, but it is firm and pliable. It has yield potential and has projection potential. Now when arm touches arm, if one assumes that he can overpower another persons arm to obtain a better position, he will be caught unchangeable when one is overpowered by the opponent. If, however, one has a powerful projection that overpowers most people, can he also develop in the same body state, a changeability that can instantly change technique not to overpower but to go around the force without delay. It is a difficult skill, but Wang taught such a skill. Many may poke fun of the size of Wang Shu Jin, but none can say a word about his skill in technique.



*continued from page 2*

Wang Shu Jin was very famous for his boxing walk. He seemed to float and be on a special set of wheels. Mr. Casey said he never witnessed a martial artist that put himself in defensive positions so well. He had made the boxing as simple and natural as walking. The rolling foot is one of the unique skills one can develop in stepping. It takes exercise in the foot in order to roll properly and it takes timing as well. I am amazed at some of the steps that are used in some methods of Ba Gua. Please don't misunderstand. Anything is possible. Everything can give exercise, but some of the ornate methods of movements have been borrowed from other arts such as Chinese opera. The sliding opera step is a step that is depended heavily on the shoe type, surface, and environmental set up. Is it useless? No, but it takes the boxing away from the natural walk. While an application can be found for any movement, its functionality (the opera step) is brought into question for combative development.

Hopefully, this brief article has brought a little glimpse of my teachers experience of learning combative Ba Gua from the great Wang Shu Jin. My teacher and myself are believers in the Synthesis approach to the study of Martial Art. My teacher studied from various teachers who were excellent in combat energy. Again, while different in many ways, each teacher believed that the excellent boxer pursues truth in combat regardless of the label or name on the cover.

Schools often have a sign above the door. Some of these schools attempt to teach what the sign says. Others don't try to teach what the sign says. Some think they are teaching what the sign says but are mistaken. Whether this sign is literal or symbolic, it is important that one honestly teaches what the sign says. If you say your Ba Gua is combative, you better understand combat as well as Ba Gua. If your Ba Gua is for health, state it as so. The teacher that pretends will usually be discovered.

The sign that my teacher used was "the pursuit of truth in realistic energy boxing". That sign probably would not do too well commercially. Because of Wang Shu Jin and others, he was inspired in this direction. I think he found himself in good company.

*James Cravens is the current President of Chinese Boxing Institute International. This organization has a number of curriculums in various Chinese Boxing styles and topics. For more information write: CBII, 1040-D West Prospect Road, Oakland Park, FL 33309-6451 or call 305-938-6992.*

### **1996 Ba Gua Zhang Calendar**

Ever since we started publishing the *Pa Kua Chang Journal* and including photographs of the old Ba Gua masters I have received numerous phone calls and letters from people wanting copies of some of the photographs so they could hang them in their school or workout space. I have been reluctant simply because it would have been a lot of work to make single blow up copies of these pictures for those who wanted them. But now I've come up with a solution, a Ba Gua Zhang Calendar for 1996.

Each month the calendar will include a photo approximately 8"X10" in size of one of the first few generations of Ba Gua masters, among them: Dong Hai Chuan, Yin Fu, Zhang Zhao Dong, Li Cun Yi, Sun Lu Tang, Fu Zhen Song, Cheng Yu Xin, Liu Feng Cai, etc. These photographs will be suitable for framing and hanging up as single photos for those who want specific photos to hang on their walls. Others can hang the calendar and enjoy a different photo every month. I anticipate that these calendars will make great Christmas gifts.

### **Sun Xi Kun**

Last month we had Sun Xi Kun on the cover performing his Single Palm Change. We received several calls from individuals who were disappointed that there was not anything inside the issue about Sun Xi Kun. Sun is one of those individuals who is not easy to gather a lot of information on, but we are working on it. Because Sun moved from Tianjin, to Nanjing, to Hong Kong, and then finally to Taiwan where he died, it is difficult to find much biographical information on him. I am currently talking with, or tracking down, individuals who knew him or studied with him in all of these various places. We plan to feature him and his Ba Gua, including information about his teacher, Cheng Yu Long, and some of his students, in a future issue.

There are many well known instructors of Ba Gua that we have yet to feature in the Journal, Liu De Kuan, Wu Meng Xia, Han Mu Xia, Ma Wei Qi, Shi Ji Dong, etc. For the most part we have not featured these instructors because it is hard to gather a lot of information on them. However, we are continually working on it and will eventually print articles on all of them. So if your lineage has not been properly represented yet, don't worry, we will get to it.

### **The Single Palm Change**

After last month's issue on the Single Palm Change I received letters and calls from various individuals who also wanted to add that their Single Palm Change was performed a little differently than the variety of changes we chose to show. I thank everyone for their input and it proves to me that there are in fact many different valid variations of all moves in Ba Gua Zhang.

### **Fifth Anniversary Back Issue Sale**

This issue of the *Pa Kua Chang Journal* marks the end of our fifth year of publication. To help our readers and potential readers celebrate we are offering the complete set of 30 back issues at a discount price of \$90.00 (\$15.00 off the current back issue price). You must purchase all 30 issues to get the discount, single back issues are still \$3.50 per issue.

# *Warriors of Stillness:* *Meditative Traditions in the Chinese Martial Arts* A New Book by Jan Diepersloot

It seems as though everyone in the internal martial arts world these days is talking about standing practice. And for good reason! As Wang Shu Jin writes in the section of his book *Ba Gua Swimming Body Palms* in the section titled "Wang Shu Jin's Advice on Learning Ba Gua Zhang:"

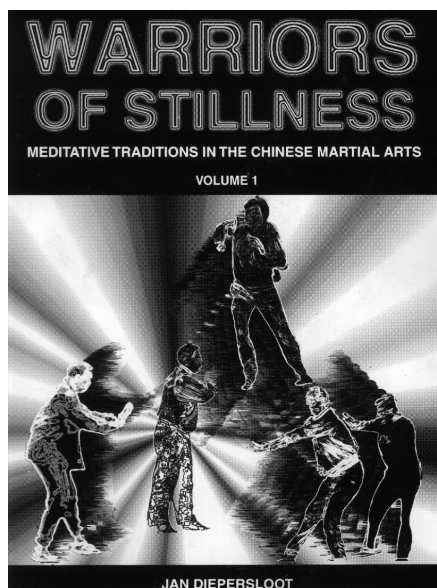
"You must practice *zhan zhuang* (standing postures). No matter which type of martial arts you practice, *zhan zhuang* training will be a basic requirement. In olden times, students had to practice *zhan zhuang* for one or two years before they were allowed to learn any forms. Therefore, each generation produced outstanding martial artists."

For the last few years I have received numerous phone calls from individuals looking for information on standing practice and Yi Quan. Unfortunately, in the past, there have been very few good books in English written on the subject. Jan Diepersloot's new book *Warriors of Stillness* is the first book which addresses the "meditative traditions in the Chinese Martial Arts" in a comprehensive fashion. Diepersloot not only addresses the theory, philosophy and technical aspects of the standing practice, he also expounds on how this practice is applied in practical two person drills and martial applications.

Jan Diepersloot, senior student of Yi Quan and Tai Ji instructor Fong Ha, has spent over twenty years studying the martial arts meditative traditions, such as Yi Quan and Wu Ji Standing. He trained with such notables as Yi Quan instructors Han Xing Yuan and Dr. Yu Peng Shi, both students of Yi Quan's founder Wang Xiang Zhai, and has trained extensively with Wu Ji Standing advocate and push hands instructor Cai Song Fang.

In his new book, *Warriors of Stillness*, Diepersloot details all theoretical and practical aspects of meditative traditions in the Chinese martial arts and teaches the utility of these practices by explaining how the benefits of static posture standing practice extend to partner practice and martial arts technique.

The book, which is 226 pages in length, begins with Diepersloot's personal accounts of his teachers and his experiences in practicing the meditative aspects of the internal martial arts. In the next section titled "Being Mindful of the Center" the author explains how to cultivate the center point of the body, the center line of the body, and discusses the Wu Ji Qi Gong practice as a healing art.



The next section of the book addresses the cultivation of a foundation in martial arts practice by taking what was developed in the static standing practice and beginning to add footwork and body movement, including details of the "Grasp Bird's Tail" sequence from Tai Ji Quan and other exercises aimed at combining the various theories and principles addressed in the first section and beginning of the second section.

In the third section of the book, the reader advances from the solo practice to partner practice. Here the ideas and theories studied thus far in the book are put into practical martial arts usage. Many two person

drills and exercises are presented in this section.

In discussing the theories, principles, and practices presented and explained in the book, Diepersloot draws primarily from the teaching of Cai Song Fang of Shanghai and Canton, China. Cai is famous in both Shanghai and Canton for his push hands skills and has traveled to teach here in the United States on several occasions as a guest of San Francisco Bay area Tai Ji and Yi Quan instructor Fong Ha. I had the great pleasure of meeting with Cai Song Fang during his trip to the United States in 1991 and can attest to his high level of push hands skill. I think that all practitioners of internal martial arts will gain from reading the teaching of Cai Song Fang in *Warriors of Stillness*.



**Cai Song Fang demonstrating his push-hands skill on Fong Ha in Albany, CA, January 1991**

## **Pa Kua Chang Related Periodicals**

**Qi: The Journal of Traditional Eastern Health and Fitness:** Insight Graphics, Inc., P.O. Box 221343, Chantilly, VA 22022 - Steve Rhodes and his crew at Insight Graphics continue to provide readers with interesting information relating to all aspects of Traditional Eastern health and fitness. The magazine is produced in a very high quality format.

**Journal of Asian Martial Arts:** 821 West 24th Street, Erie, PA 16502 - This is a high quality publication which provides well researched articles in a scholarly fashion.

**Internal Strength:** Watercourse Publishing, P.O. Box 280948, Lakewood, CO 80228-0948 - A new periodical dedicated to bringing the reader practical information on all styles of internal arts.

## **1995 Calendar of Pa Kua Chang Workshops and Seminars**

<u>Instructor</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Contact for Information</u>
<b>Park Bok Nam</b>	Switzerland	6-8 Oct 95	Mac Prahin 41 22 312 2777
<b>Wai Lun Choi</b>	Minneapolis, MN	12-16 Oct 95	Ray Hayward (612) 331-3122
<b>Kumar Frantzis</b>	New York, NY	21-22 Oct 95	Frank Allen (212) 533-1751
<b>Park Bok Nam</b>	Richmond, VA	4 Nov 95	Glen Moore (804) 794-8384

### **The Next issue of the Pa Kua Chang Journal**

**will feature:**

- **The Eight Mother Palms of  
Ba Gua Zhang**

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