



Internal Fighting Arts

Chen Family Masters Set Up 2009 Workshop Tours of the U.S.

Grandmaster Chen Xiaoxing 2009 Tour

These workshops offer an outstanding opportunity to see great masters in person, get valuable corrections on structure and movement, and if you're lucky you'll get to feel their power, as Sifu Ken Gullette did in the photo at right.

Chen Xiaoxing will make the following appearances in the U.S. this year. Contact the sponsors for information on times, locations, and curriculum.

April 18-19 -- Chicago, IL Contact Andy Loria (aloria@uchicago.edu)

April 25-26 -- New Jersey Contact Mitch Magpiong (mitchmagg@aol.com)

May 2-3 -- Washington, D.C. Contact Stephan Berwick (stefan@truetaichi.com)

May 9-10 -- Seattle, WA Contact Kim Ivy (kim@embracethemoon.com)

May 16-17 -- San Diego, CA Contact Bill/Allison Helm (tao@taoistsanctuary.com)

Chen Xiaowang's 2009 U.S. Tour Schedule

August 15-16 -- Washington, D.C. Contact C.P. Ong

August 22-23 -- Flushing, NY Contact Ren Guangyi.

August 29-30 -- San Francisco Contact Tony Wong

Sept. 5-6 -- San Luis Obispo, CA Contact Liu Yu

Sept. 11-13 -- San Diego, CA Contact Bill/Allison Helm

Sept. 18-20 -- Seattle, WA Contact Kim Ivy

Sept. 25-27 -- Chicago, IL Contact Andy Loria

Oct. 3-4 -- Troy, MI Contact Han Hoong Wang

Oct. 7-11 -- Miami, FL Contact James Cravens



Grandmaster Chen Xiaoxing demonstrates chin-na with Ken Gullette during his 2006 U.S. Tour. He stayed at Ken's home for a week and conducted a workshop at Ken's school.

New Bagua DVD Teaches Basics

Sifu Ken Gullette has completed his first in a series of DVDs on Cheng style Baguazhang -- "Bagua Basic Skills." The DVD includes more than 90 minutes of training in the following:

- Circle-walking patterns and stepping techniques.
- Eight mother palms and basic fighting applications.
- Moving and stationary pole exercises and fighting applications.
- Tea-serving exercises (bagua's answer to silk-reeling and fighting applications of the tea-serving exercises.
- Eight Basic Palms form and fighting applications. This is a basic practice form involving circle-walking and energies from eight different palm postures.

Purchase the DVD through www.kungfu4u.com or Sifu Gullette's online school at www.internalfightingarts.com or on his blog at www.internalarts.typepad.com. Free e-book with purchase.

My Favorite Techniques

Insights into techniques and body mechanics for more powerful self-defense with Tai Chi - Hsing-I - Bagua



Lazy About Tying the Coat

A common movement Chen tai chi forms,, *Lazy About Tying the Coat* contains many fighting applications. In the second photo on the left, you can see a shoulder strike as the weight is shifted. In the third photo a shoulder or palm strike is obvious. The left hand is drawn across the abdomen and waist as you shift the weight and complete the movement.



One of the many fascinating things about the internal arts -- to me anyway -- is the large number of applications for self-defense hidden within most movements.

Lazy About Tying the Coat is one of my favorite techniques against a kicker. It's a takedown that's difficult for a kicker to defend against.

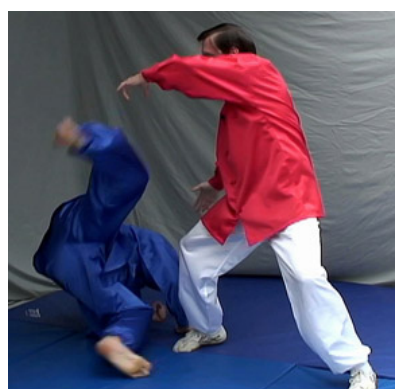


In the photos on the right, taekwondo black belt Tom Revie throws a roundhouse kick to the stomach. I step in and absorb the kick while grabbing his leg (photo 2). Anticipating the kick is crucial so your timing can be right. You want to close the gap so you can snake your right hand over his neck (photo 3).



Push downward with the right hand and upward with the left (photo 4). The attacker goes tumbling. It's important to remain in a centered stance and not tilt your own body to the right. Close into the right kua as you turn the arms.

Each month, this page offers insights into fighting applications and the body mechanics that make the internal arts powerful.



Fitness for the Internal Artist

Strength Benefits of Standing Stake

One of the reason Chen tai chi masters have legs of steel -- they practice standing stake. Ren Guangyi says he was made to stand in this posture for hours at a time when he began training in the Chen Village. It's an outstanding chi kung exercise, and it strengthens the legs for the rigorous training required of Chen tai chi. Zhang Zhuang also helps you calm the mind and body, develop peng energy, and you can even do dan t'ien rotations while doing this exercise.

In the photos at right, I'm putting a beginner, Tom Revie, into the proper position. It may seem easy, but it takes many months and a LOT of corrections before your muscle memory will allow you to recreate the position. In the first photo, you can see the way most people stand. They believe they're standing straight, but in fact, they're leaning backwards.

Notice how he's leaning back in the top photo. The key to the "centered" stance is to be able to draw a line from the ear straight down through the shoulder, through the hui yin point, and to the area between the ankle and the bubbling well point. The weight of your body is balanced in the center of the feet--not in the heels or toes. Draw the head up and tuck the chin slightly. You'll feel as if you're leaning forward slightly but in actuality, you're in a straight and centered stance. After a while, it will feel natural. Relax the knees, sink the body, and feel the burn.



The Philosopher's Corner by Sifu Ken Gullette

Connecting -- Becoming One with Your Opponent and Your World



Philosophy isn't a big part of most martial arts these days. I owe a debt to Sifu Phillip Starr for being the first instructor (and the only one) I've had who made philosophy a key part of the internal arts. One of the most important concepts, besides maintaining your center at all times, was to "connect" to the people and the world around you--including any opponent who may stand before you.

You can practice connecting with a partner or opponent by several means--but you have to rise above your own ego and detach from your own emotions. By "centering" and putting part of your mind on your dan t'ien, you then try to feel your opponent's intent and energy. What is he or she thinking? When is the attack coming? If your opponent seems angry, what is the cause? Try to *become* your opponent. This can happen if you stop seeing yourself as separate.

This can help you with difficult people at work, at home, in a tournament or in a real self-defense situation. I've had tournament opponents who were angry. I connected and rose above emotions, even congratulated them when they scored a point. When you connect with others, you empathize with them. Your intentions are neither positive or negative. When you connect to the world around you, the idea of polluting the world is intolerable. It's when we feel superior to the world around us that we don't care about the consequences of our actions. Next issue, we'll explore some connecting drills that you can do in class with partners to help begin this process.

Guest Editorial by Sifu Phillip Starr

AN INTERVIEW WITH ZHAO DAOXING Part 1

This is an interview with Mr. Zhao Daoxin that was conducted in the 1980's by Huang Jitao and translated by Andrzej Kalisz. This interview reveals what Chinese martial arts were like back in the early part of the last century and provides some real insights into the current state of the Chinese martial arts.

Zhang Zhaodong (1865-1938): Also known as Zhang Zhankui, my martial arts grandfather was born in Hejian, Hebei Province. He moved to Tianjin in 1877 to try to find a job (at the age of 13!). Here he met one of the most famous Xingyiquan boxers of the time, Li Zunyi. He eventually became Li's sworn brother and Li introduced him to his own teacher, Master Liu Qilan (who was one of the eight disciples of Li Luoneng, the founder of Xingyiquan). Both Li and Liu made Zhang train hard so that he could master the Xingyi system. At the age of 16 he met Cheng Tinghua, one of the foremost disciples of the founder of Baguazhang kung-fu, Dong Haiquan. Although some people claim that Zhang trained under Dong, that is untrue. In fact, when Zhang initially asked Cheng to teach him, Cheng refused.

Later on, Zhang assisted Cheng by testifying in court regarding the purchase of some land. Because of his testimony, Cheng was awarded the land and he agreed to teach Zhang. Cheng and Zhang became great friends and Cheng was very intrigued by Zhang's performances of Xingyiquan. Cheng saw that Zhang was very, very skilled and never referred to him as a "student." Instead, he referred to him as a "close friend" and Zhang even lived in Cheng's house for some time. It was during this time that Cheng learned Xingyi boxing from Zhang and a number of other Xingyi practitioners. Cheng was killed during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900.

Zhang returned to Tianjin and worked for the local city government in Tianjin as a bounty hunter. In 1911 he and several other kung-fu teachers formed the Martial Arts Association of Tianjin. He also worked as a bodyguard and was reknowned as a peerless fighter. When he was older, he returned to Beijing and was known to thrash young Chinese hoodlums who were trying to intimidate the older people in his neighborhood. In his twilight years he also spent a good deal of time working to develop his own system, Xingyi Bagua. This system would combine the power of Xingyiquan with the fast, elusive footwork of Baguazhang. Perhaps this is why my own teacher, W. C. Chen (who was a student of Zhang's), worked so hard to combine Xingyi, Bagua, and Baixingquan.

Zhao Daoxin (1908-1990): Zhao Daoxin, originally known as Zhao Enqing, hailed from Tianjin. He trained under Zhang Zhaodong and within a short time, was able to defeat many well-known fighters in the area. In 1930 he attended the National Martial Arts Competition in Hangzhou and won the championship. He went on to study under Wang Xianghai, a student of the famous Xingyi master, Guo Yenshen (known as "Divine Crushing Fist"). Wang would eventually found the Yiquan system. Zhan was one of his best students and it was Wang who gave him the name, "Daoxin."

Zhao was skilled at applying modern scientific knowledge to explain various facets of traditional martial arts and he ultimately created his own method, which became known as Xin Hui Zhang.

Huang (The Interviewer):

"So, is traditional wushu (martial arts) not effective for fighting?"

Zhao:

"People from traditional styles say that modern wushu from the national institutes is just "flowery forms" but that doesn't mean that the traditional practitioners themselves possess true "gongfu." The wushu from the national institutes neglects the fighting aspects of martial arts, while traditional wushu practitioners only talk about fighting. That doesn't mean that they have any real fighting skill."

Traditional wushu, as it's taught nowadays, is just like contemporary wushu...it's mainly about training forms. Moreover, there are many symbolic or ritualistic gestures, which have nothing to do with fighting.

Looking at it from the point of view of training, these schools still use old methods that are not very effective. In theory, training routines should develop practical fighting skills but, in fact, they're more like methods of meditating or developing patience. It's just so much useless effort.

I don't know how many dozens of thousands of people practice traditional martial arts in China but I doubt that there any very many (if any) who could prove their worth on the international fighting stage."

Starr Commentary: Sound familiar? It should. I often speak against calling contemporary wushu a true martial art. It's really just a martial performance, which has no practical fighting value. However, the vast majority of current "traditional" kung-fu schools are no better; they practice forms and very little else. The few additional training routines that they utilize are not very efficient in so far as developing real fighting skill is concerned.

The "symbolic and ritualistic gestures" to which he refers, are found in many schools of kung-fu. They often involve waving the arms about and moving into very nice-looking stances but they have virtually nothing to do with fighting; there is no practical application for them. Oftentimes, they are/were used to identify the style from which a given form is derived.

Clearly, Zhao is unimpressed with the quality of both contemporary and traditional martial arts as they are being taught in China (remember that this interview took place in the 1980's).

Huang:

"But in the days when foreign fighting experts and strong men came to China, Chinese masters of that generation defeated them repeatedly."

Zhao:

"If there really are so many examples of Chinese masters defeating foreigners, why are the Chinese the only ones who talk about it? Why don't the foreigners mention it? Maybe they don't want to talk about being defeated.

However, I ask how many Chinese were defeated. We don't talk about that because it would be humiliating. Anyway, we don't know about the proportions as to victories and defeats.

And if Wu Song (a famous Chinese martial arts hero) had fought a cat instead of a tiger, there would be no reason to praise him for centuries. So, what kinds of opponents were these foreigners who our masters defeated? My teacher, Zhang Zhaodong, met a Russian "strong man" and I fought a Danish boxer. Other friends of ours had similar encounters...but our opponents were defeated after just one blow! There was no real fight...but that was because traditional Chinese martial arts didn't meet real fighters!

In those days, you could become famous because you'd defeated a foreigner and that wasn't too difficult because none of the foreigners were real experts!

Even more challenging was fighting with other Chinese at that time. No foreigners signed up for the leitei tournaments in Hangzhou or Shanghai. The people from traditional styles, even if they were monks or great masters who were famous, either got hurt or were too afraid to fight. The winners, although they were supposed to represent their traditional systems, used completely different methods of training for these fights."

Starr Commentary: I guess I'd never really thought about the fact that the foreigners who fought the Chinese back in the early part of the last century weren't champions in their own countries...in fact, most of them weren't well-known at all! So, to defeat such opponents is not necessarily indicative of great skill.

He is correct in stating that foreigners did not participate in the leitei tournaments. These were fighting events that were conducted on specially-constructed platforms of various kinds. And he says that those who won these events trained in methods outside of their traditional systems, reinforcing his position that many of the old, traditional forms of training were ineffective.

Huang:

“Could you tell us your opinions and views regarding Chinese martial arts?”

Zhao:

“There isn’t much time, so I will only outline some issues. This will not be a very systematic discussion and because people always talk about the advantages, I will speak about the problems.”

Huang:

“First, tell us what you think about the internal and external divisions and the divisions of styles based on territory (northern and southern styles).”

Zhao:

“If we want Chinese martial arts to develop, we need to reject divisions. I’m not saying that such divisions are meaningless but they only partially describe the differences between styles and say nothing about their methods of fighting.

Divisions in martial arts should be based on their methods of fighting rather than their methods of practice. And they shouldn’t be trying to fool people. They should express the movements of the human body and the development of real technique – not sect-like customs that have been nourished for hundreds or even thousands of years.

The divisions for Shao-lin, Wudang, Emei, and Zhongnan arts is only expressing the fact that communication was difficult in the old times. But that time is past. The internal-external division was made up by literati who were fascinated by the style that they practiced. They started calling their arts “internal family arts”; skillful writers creating flowery descriptions! The truth is that no one would say that he was representative of an external family art (because such styles did not exist). In fighting, there are no “styles.”

Starr Commentary: Zhao emphasizes the need to drop the idea of “internal” and “external” labels and focus instead of how each style approaches the subject training and fighting. He’s obviously unimpressed with Sun-Lutang’s coinage of the term, “internal family arts.” Sun coined this term back in the 1930’s. Prior to that time, the internal and so-called “external” styles never referred to themselves as such.

Huang:

“But the internal-external division is at least representative for the real division between soft and hard (styles) isn’t it?”

Zhao:

“This division is even more muddled. Some use it just to criticize other schools. When they talk about their own school they stress that soft and hard supplement each other; that internal and external are trained together. They maintain that they’re the only ones who keep a proper balance between soft and hard, while others tend too much towards one or the other.”

Starr Commentary: Here, Zhao states that the so-called division between “hard and soft styles” is very muddled. The so-called “soft” schools often like to criticize the “hard” schools and vice-versa. Actually, the two should be trained together harmoniously but, according to Zhao, most teachers tend to lean too far towards one or the other.

Huang:

“But the concepts of internal-external and soft-hard at least led to the sophisticated theories of internal training; from yi to qi to jin (“from intention to energy to power”...saying that intention, when combined with qi, begets real power).”

Zhao:

“Yi-qi-li and jing-qi-shen (intention, qi, and strength, and the concept of sexual essence turning to qi and then turning to spirit- this is an old Daoist idea)...those concepts, as related to internal training, are difficult to express

Host An Internal Arts Workshop with Ken Gullette

You can host your own internal arts workshop featuring Sifu Ken Gullette. If you can gather 20 students of Tai Chi, Hsing-I or Bagua, it's inexpensive to sponsor a 2-day workshop that will build your understanding and skill in the internal arts. The cost of the seminar would be travel, lodging, and meals for Sifu Gullette. The remaining profits would be divided evenly between the host and Sifu Gullette.

For example, twenty participants paying \$100 each for a 2-day workshop would total \$2,000. Deduct \$1,000 for travel, lodging and meals, and that leaves \$1,000 to divide between you and Sifu Gullette. If you have paid \$200 for rental space, you would divide \$800.

Workshops can cover many possible topics, from internal strength and silk-reeling energy to any particular form, fighting applications, etc. The topic of the workshop depends upon what you and other participants want to learn. Email or call Sifu Gullette if you are interested in sponsoring a workshop. Participants will also receive a DVD of the event. If a DVD already exists, participants will receive a free copy.

Interview with Zhao Daozing

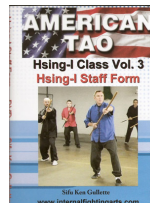
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in normal language. We could say that it is about using self-suggestion to induce feelings of comfort and strength. Nowadays there are new ideas that are at least as effective as these old ones, and they are more efficient for practical use."

Starr Commentary: It's true that the old Daoist training methods that were adopted by the so-called "internal" schools are difficult to express in normal language and many of the principles of these ancient concepts are couched in mysterious, hard-to-understand verbiage. Some teachers have modernized these ancient training routines, using terms and concepts that are more easily understood and more applicable to the martial aspects of martial arts (that's a nice way of saying that they're more easily applicable to fighting).

Sifu Philip Starr is the founder of Yiliquan and Sifu Ken Gullette's teacher from 1987 to 1991 (Ken earned a black sash in Yiliquan, learning the basics of Hsing-I, Tai Chi and Bagua). Starr was named to the *Inside Kung-Fu* Hall of Fame in 1991. He is the author of "The Making of a Butterfly," "Martial Mechanics," and his next book, "Martial Maneuvers" will be published August 4 and will be available at amazon.com and in bookstores. Sifu Starr lives and teaches in the Omaha area.

Check Out These Popular DVDs



Hsing-I Staff Form

Learn a powerful Hsing-I staff form plus fighting applications. Bonus section -- staff fighting techniques for any style of martial arts.



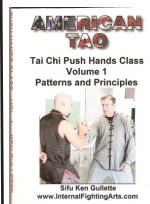
Hsing-I Straight Sword

Learn a great Hsing-I straight sword form and fighting applications. Bonus section -- straight sword techniques for any style.



Chen Broadsword Form

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