

T'AI CHI

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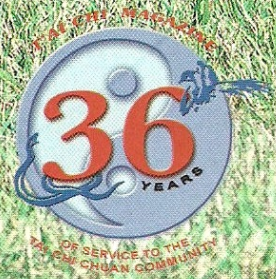
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# Feng Zhiqiang 1928-2012

## By Wang Fengming

Feng Zhiqiang was born in 1928 in Shulu county of Hebei province, China, to a family with generations of martial artists.

His own martial arts practice started in childhood with Shaolinquan, Tongzigong (flexibility exercise), and Tongbeiquan.

In 1948, he was accepted as a disciple of the famous qigong master Hu Yaozhen and started learning Taoist qigong, Taiji stick and ruler qigong, Xinyi Liuhe, exhaling and inhaling technique, and other skills from master Hu.

In 1953, the foremost seventeenth generation master of Chen family Taijiquan, Chen Fake, accepted Feng as a disciple, and Feng started learning Chen style Taijiquan.

Indebted by the detailed teaching of his two masters, Feng worked hard for decades and his painstaking efforts of combining the training of qigong and Taijiquan proved to be a road to success. His skills reaching the realm of perfection, he earned the nickname "The Giant of Taiji."

In addition to his consummate skills, Feng was also accomplished in the field of researching technical theory. He produced a number of best-selling books, such as "Taiji Hunyuan Qigong," "Chen Style



Feng Zhiqiang

Taijiquan Real Combat Techniques," "Introduction to Chen Style Taijiquan," and "Chen Style Taijiquan 48 Movement Form."

In order to promote the development of qigong and Taijiquan and to further spread the arts, Feng conducted workshops in more than 20 provinces and cities in China and organized a nationwide qigong course, instructing classes in person as well as through correspondence.

In 1979, after repeated invitations, he visited Chen Village (Chenjiagou, Wenxian county, Henan province) to impart Chen style Taijiquan. He also conducted international workshops in America, Mexico, Japan, Singapore, Finland, Sweden, and Spain among others.

Dozens of organizations in

China and abroad have appointed Feng as honorary chairman, honorary professor, consultant, and other titles. Given his decades of teaching and great number of students around the world, it can truly be said that he did an outstanding contribution in disseminating the Chinese culture and in developing and promoting the arts of qigong and Taijiquan.

Owing to his attainments in qigong and Chen style taijiquan research, Feng was nominated as the President of Beijing Chen Style Taijiquan Research Association, Vice Chairman of the Beijing Wushu Society, and a Member of Council in the Chinese Wushu Society.

As a strong and influential figure in the martial arts circles, he earned the respect of numerous qigong and Taijiquan enthusiasts around the world. His achievements in the martial arts world were also recognized by high Chinese officials:

Wan Li, the Head of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and Rong Gaotang, the Leader of the State Sports Committee both met with him.

Feng Zhiqiang passed away on May 5, 2012, in Beijing and will surely be missed by all who knew him. He left behind a rich legacy in the Chen style Xinyi Hunyuan Taijiquan system that he created.

Following are some stories recollecting the life of Feng Zhiqiang.

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Wang Fengming, Edison, NJ,  
is a disciple and son-in-law of  
Feng Zhiqiang. •

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## Power Exceeding One Thousand Pounds

During the nineteen-sixties, Feng Zhiqiang worked at the Beijing General Electromotor Factory.

One day, when he was working nearby, there was a sudden abnormal noise coming from a core of an electromotor being carried by a crane in the workshop.

The core was escaping from the crane rope. Feng, noticing the danger, made a sudden big stride forward and caught the huge falling thing.

All the people on the spot were shocked by what Feng Zhiqiang did. The electromotor core weighed 1100 pounds. To lift that sort of weight, seven or eight strong young men needed to work hard together.

More and more employees heard the story, and among them were some young people, who, out of curiosity, tried to pursue Feng to show his gongfu. They even bullied him to provoke him into action, but he always smiled in return and refused to show them anything.

There was an amateur wrestling team composed of twelve strong and vigorous young men at that time in the factory. One day when Feng was passing by their training ground, the wrestlers saw him. They gathered around him and asked for a fight.

Master Feng could not refuse this time. "You can line up and push me then," he said.

The young wrestlers then lined up in single file like a train and the first one on the line put both hands on Master Feng's abdomen.



Yin Fu Cannon Fist

Following a "1...2...3...Push!" all twelve young men pushed forward exerting themselves to the utmost. Master Feng descended his body, rotated his dantian, and made the whole line of young men fall to the ground.

Coincidentally, during an international wushu training course held in Shenzhen City, a foreign trainee invited seven trainees to test Master Feng's gongfu. The progression of events was the same as with the wrestling team, and a reporter who happened to be there took a photo.

### Defeating an American

A veteran worker came to the physical therapy room on the campus of the Beijing Sports College (Beijing University of Sports) on September 2, 1981. The man looked very strong, with thick eye-

brows and big eyes. He was Master Feng Zhiqiang, invited there as a massage therapist.

A short while later, martial arts coach Men Huifeng came in accompanied by a strong looking man from America. The American came there every day to have massage therapy. In fact, he did not come for medical service, but for learning Chinese massage technique.

After the massage, the therapist, called Li, asked the American, "Don't you want to meet Master Feng?" The American was surprised: "Master who?"

"Master Feng Zhiqiang," Li smiled.

The strong American was the coach of the American Research Society of Martial Arts.

He was thirty-three years old and over 1.8 meters (5.9 feet) tall. He weighed more than ninety kilos (198 pounds).

Also, he was a Judo gold medalist in America. He started to practise Monkey boxing and Shaolin boxing when he was six years old, and later Aikido, Xingyi, Bagua, and Taijiquan. He had visited more than fifty countries, including India where he spent two years learning Yoga.

Before China, he had visited Southeast Asia and Hong Kong and had not found his match.

Being enormously proud of his success, the American had come to visit Beijing Sports College and had sought out several Taijiquan and Xingyi practitioners with whom he had tested skills. "I won't meet with people like them any more. It's a waste of time," he said



in dissatisfaction.

As for Master Feng Zhiqiang, he first learnt Tongbei boxing from Han Xiaofeng who came from Cangzhou.

Next he learnt Xinyi Liuhe and Taoist qigong from Hu Yaozhen who came from Shanxi province. In 1951, he started to learn Chen style Taijiquan from the famous Chen Fake who came from Chen Village in Henan Province.

Feng was taught the essence of techniques of Chen style Taijiquan and he could be said to be Chen Fake's most brilliant disciple. He had competed with martial artists specialized in Tongbei boxing, Paohui, Xingyi, Bagua, and wrestling and obtained their admiration for his gongfu and virtue.

After the initial greetings, the American performed several postures and hand techniques of Monkey boxing. "What do you think?" He asked.

"Your upper body was powerful, whereas your lower body looked unstable," commented Master Feng.

The American certainly was not convinced. He "modestly" invited Master Feng to show some hand techniques. "All right, you attack and I deal with it then," Master Feng said.

The strong American was extremely glad. Using full strength, he charged Master Feng like a hungry tiger. Master Feng raised his both arms to meet the attack.

He quickly dropped his shoulders and elbows and moved his left knee between the American's legs. In Taijiquan terms, Feng's movements would be "Guide the opponent to enter into emptiness."



Feeling that he had met nothing and that he was leaning forward, the American immediately withdrew to regain balance. However, with Master Feng's right knee blocking his left knee, he could not keep his balance.

Master Feng tapped his chest to distract him, and then explosively emitted force with both hands. Before reacting, the American was



Feng Zhiqiang with Zhang Xuexin.

tossed backward. The result might have been serious if there had not been people catching him from falling to the ground.

"Master Feng, you are extremely good. Extremely good," the American praised in less than perfect Chinese while making a thumbs up gesture.

Modestly, Master Feng showed his little finger and said, "I am like this in China. There are many who are better than me."

### Chen Style Taijiquan Returning Home

Chen Village in Wen County, Henan Province is the birthplace of Chen style Taijiquan where grandmasters have risen in every generation. Grandmaster Chen Fake was the representative of the seventeenth generation as his gongfu was considered the best.

In 1928, Grandmaster Chen Fake left Chen Village for Peiping (Beijing), where he settled down and started to teach Chen style Taijiquan. Starting from that time, Beijing became the centre of Chen style Taijiquan.

In 1976, the "Cultural Revolution" ended, and it was like the coming of spring when the earth comes back to life. Chinese wushu and other traditional culture started to regain vigor again. A campaign for systematic preservation of the traditional wushu was launched nationwide.

However, people in Chen Village were in difficulty as Taijiquan in the village was seriously affected during the "Cultural Revolution."

An invitation letter from Chen Village reached Feng Zhiqiang. It was written by Zhang Weizhen, the secretary of the Communist Party of the village.



Zhang, representing all the people in the village, earnestly and sincerely invited Zhiqiang to Chen Village to teach Taijiquan.

Later, the secretary came to Beijing together with Master Wang Xian, the deputy secretary and principal of Chen Village Wushu College, and they visited Feng to reaffirm the invitation in person.

Mr. Chen Boxian and Mr. Chen Xiaowang, nineteenth generation successors of Chen style Taijiquan, came to Beijing as well, in order to accompany Grandmaster Feng to Chen Village.

Grandmaster Feng felt the trust the villagers put in him. Recalling how Grandmaster Chen Fake trained him and entrusted him to develop Chen style Taijiquan, he accepted the invitation.

He paid three visits to the village and passed on all he had learned from the grandmaster to the martial artists of the nineteenth generation.

He taught them the Taoist standing post among other exercises. From then on, an important neigong exercise has been added to the curriculum of Chen style Taijiquan.

Also, the people of Chen Village often visited Grandmaster Feng for advanced training. It was always a pleasant matter and a relief to Grandmaster Feng Zhiqiang to witness that Chen style Taijiquan was flourishing.

### **At the Gathering of Prominent Figures in Beijing**

After national push-hands competitions were resumed in 1982, several competitions had been held. However, at the competitions, most competitors often bulldozed each other as



their technique, generally speaking, was not very advanced. They did not compete in the Taijiquan style. Some people even started to doubt the applicability of the techniques described in the classics of Taijiquan. To tackle this problem, Chinese Wushu Research Institute decided to host a national workshop on Taijiquan push-hands.

The workshop opened at a training center run by the Chinese Wushu Academy in a suburb of



Beijing in 1990. Prominent representatives of each style and champions of various competitions participated in the workshop on invitation.

At the workshop, some people believed that some of the rules of the contest restricted the application of techniques, whereas some others complained about that the small area made the competitors bulldoze or drag each other in contest.

As for Master Feng Zhiqiang, representative of Chen style Taijiquan, he believed that it was the competitors' low standard of gongfu that caused the bulldozing and dragging in competitions.

Consequently, the promotion of competitors' level of gongfu and techniques was the most effective way to tackle the bulldozing problem.

Following the agenda, during the practice of push hands, the champions of various weight classes were invited to do push-hands, and the experts were invited to provide technical instructions whenever problems emerged.

Naturally, Master Feng, among the prominent masters, acted as a major instructor.

When two competitors got in a bull—bull fight, Master Feng intervened. He pointed out that they were deadlocked because neither side dared to relax.

At this moment, one side should dare to relax in order to “Guide the opponent to enter into emptiness” for neutralizing the opponent's energy.

Then Master Feng, in his sixties, personally did push-hands with them and showed them how to prevent the bull—bull fight effectively.

He demonstrated two situations: first, when the opponent grasped his



arms and pushed with great strength, he moved his arms backward to lead the opponent, and then quickly sprang them forward to throw the opponent off as the opponent force was used up and the opponent had yet to generate new force.

Second, when the opponent gave him a push on the chest using full strength, he just turned from the waist to neutralize the opponent's force, and then quickly stepped out, emitted force and threw the opponent off as the opponent lost balance.

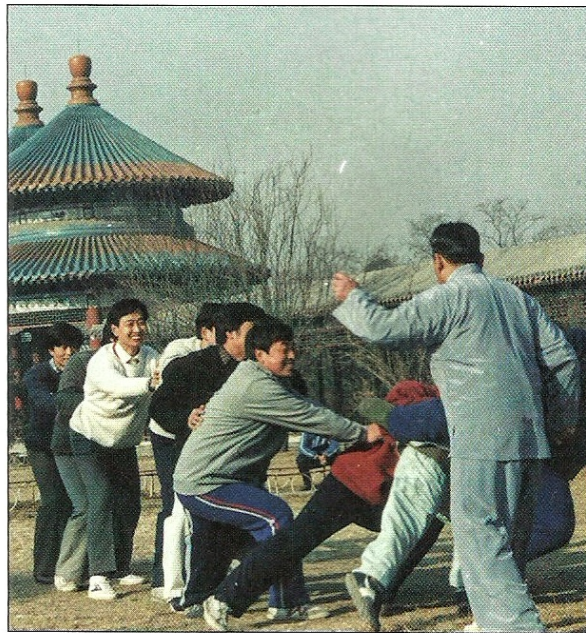
When the opponent stood up and grasped his arms and pushed once more, he employed the technique of "interchange between yin and yang" to neutralize the opponent's force and struck the opponent quickly down.

Master Feng's personal demonstration as well as verbal instruction was convincing and the competitors decided to spend more time and energy improving their techniques.

### Teacher of Famous Persons

At the farewell banquet of the National Taiji Push-hands Workshop, the representative of Henan Province, Zhang Maozhen, poured wine for the leaders of the National Wushu Research Institute, eminent representatives and champions.

"I was born in a family with wushu tradition. I have engaged in gongfu for decades and won some reputation in Zhengzhou City and elsewhere in Henan Province. At this workshop, however, after having wit-



Feng Zhiqiang pushes a line of students.

nessed Master Feng Zhiqiang's performance, I deeply feel that the pursuit of wushu is endless.

I very much admire Master Feng

and would like to take him as my wushu master and relearn Taijiquan from now on. All the leaders and friends at the banquet are kindly invited to testify my heartfelt hope," he said excitedly.

Very soon after he said that, Cao Zhilin stood up.

"I have practiced wushu for twenty years and devoted a lot of time and energy to push-hands. I won championships in the sixty-five kilos weight class in the Shanghai Push-hands Competition in 1982, 1986, and in the National Push-hands Competition in 1986.

"I know Taijiquan enables 'the weak to defeat the strong,' 'to adhere/connect/stick/follow,' 'neither separating nor fighting force head-on,' 'to guide the opponent to enter into emptiness,' 'to use four ounces to deflect one thousand pounds,' and 'to win with ingenuity.' However, in fact, win-by-preponderance has been unavoidable for me in push-hands practice.

"Having learnt push-hands and fighting technique as well as Hunyuan qigong from Master Feng, I got the secret.

"Especially, when I saw the techniques Master Feng showed several times, I deeply understood what profound art Taijiquan was. So, I want to be one of Master Feng's disciples in order to further promote my level of push-hands and skill in fighting," he said.

Enthusiastic applause echoed as they spoke. A toast was proposed to Master Feng and his two "disciples."•



Feng Xiufang in Lazy about Tying Coat. She is Feng's daughter.