

The Teachings of Feng Zhiqiang

By Marvin Smalheiser

There were many aspects of Feng Zhiqiang's life and teachings. Martial arts were certainly the foundation of his life's work. But there are many other aspects, notably his teachings for health and self-cultivation.

He was endowed with a strong constitution and martial art ability but beyond that he was focused on how people could nourish their mind and spirit as well as their bodies.

There were several articles in **T'AI CHI Magazine** featuring Feng Zhiqiang. One was by Yang Yang Ph.d. and Scott A. Grubisich in June 2000 and two more in October 2001, one by Marvin Smalheiser and another by Malcom Dean and Brian Guan of San Francisco.

In the article in the June 2000 issue of **T'AI CHI Magazine**, by Yang Yang, Ph.d. and Scott A. Grubisich, Feng emphasized the practice of gong. "There is an old Chinese saying: 'You will get nothing, even if you practice all of your life, if you do not practice gong.'" Gong as in Gongfu, refers to certain quality of effort and this effort over time which produces merit. It is more important than just practicing forms.

He said "Gong practice is the foundation; it is bigger than Xiu Lian. Gong practice strengthens internal qi. It is the process of collecting the qi from nature to replenish our human energy.

"After accumulation of gong, then you practice gong. Then [during the quan practice] you transfer the gong to the internal organs, the



Chen Linking Saber

meridians, the marrow, and to jing/qi/shen.

"After transferring, you absorb and digest. If you don't have the raw material, what is there to transfer and absorb?"

Feng also emphasized Xiulian, which he said primarily refers to mind and behavior. The article explained that Xiulian is a kind of spiritual exercise, encompassing morality, purity of thoughts and behavior.

So the practice of Tai Chi Chuan is done with Xiulian, spiritual exercise, encompassing morality, purity of thoughts and behavior.

Feng said that "In the martial arts community, people refer to improving de (virtue or integrity) and technique simultaneously.

"It is called practicing both dao and martial art. There is a reason. Without de, people may use the art to do bad things." He added that "If your de is not good, your art and

technique cannot possibly reach a high level.

"We have to improve our de when we pursue the art. You can talk about dao after you improve your de and master the art."

Feng said that the mind should be cultivated before practicing quan. He said that "It is not an easy job to xiulian our mind and body. It cannot be done in one day. So we are practicing our mind and body, practicing our courage and practicing our jing/qi/shen."

Feng said that when you use Tai Chi to fight, you need big gongfu to defeat people without hurting them.

The big gongfu can also prevent evil things from happening. It will scare people from doing bad things."

Feng also said that when he retired from his job in the early 1980s, "I recalled I never hurt another person. I am very happy with what I have contributed to society and the world within such a short period of time."

Regarding Hu Yaoshen and Chen Fake, his two most important teachers, Feng said Hu introduced him to Tai Chi and Chen Fake.

"My two teachers had reached a very high level. They reached this level because of the high level and purity of their de (integrity). I know this from personal experience."

He said the two men never said bad things about other people. "If they felt others' art was good, they would say, 'not bad.' If they were average, they would say that it was 'OK.' If their art was poor, they would say, 'I just cannot understand.' They always exhibited mod-

eration, never excess.

In an article in the October 2001 issue of **T'AI CHI Magazine**, Feng advised students to continually adjust their training to correct mistakes and to reach higher levels. "You need to nurture yourself so you can go beyond the cleverness of technique, the need to punish your opponent and to insure that your skills and practice are long lasting."

Feng said that the most important training is the training of qigong and neigong for at least 45 minutes to an hour each day. This can be qigong methods, hunyuan silk reeling exercises and Tai Chi form. He said the order of importance is qigong training, forms practice and weapons training.

"You have to do it for a long time. Your skill comes from accumulation of your gongs (skills at various training techniques)," he said. "When you training, you must learn how to nurture your energy. If you accumulate energy without nurturing the energy, it will soon be gone."

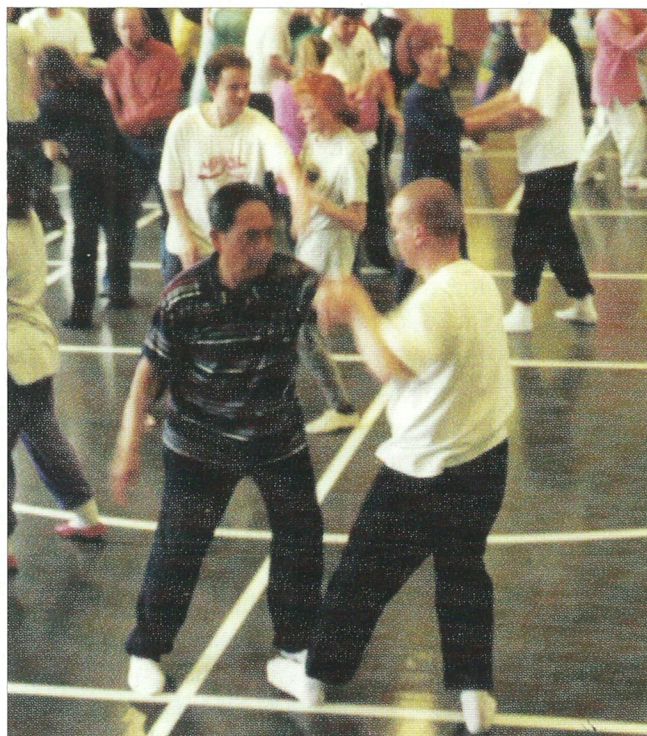
He also said: "You want to learn now to not lose your temper because this wastes your energy. You should also have a good life style so that you are not wasting your energy that you are working so hard to accumulate."

Skill is developed, he said, first through practice



Feng Zhiqiang with Gao Fu

of the forms and the various gongs, or sills. "Through these you can accumulate strong internal energy. Then when you approach another person or they approach you, you can use your energy to neutralize another person in such a way that there energy cannot be released."



Feng at a push hands workshop in Finland.

He gave the example of pushing hands with a big husky person who looks strong but has internal resistances from an internal energy perspective. "That kind of person's energy is broken in terms of electronic, magnetic and qi energy. So we can cover this person's energy so his energy cannot come out. You cannot only block the release of his energy, but you can borrow another person's energy by using the hunyuan way to make a circle and come back to this person.

"To take the other person's force inside your body and return it to him is called hunyuan, round circle method. You use internal energy to defeat the opposing energy that is internal or external.

Someone who is strong cannot always release his strength because when he tries to use it, you can use the reverse energy. So even though he is powerful, he cannot release his force."

Feng said that most people use hard force. And this hard force is always partial. It never uses the whole body. Tai Chi skill uses softness and the methods of stick and follow to let the opponent's hard strength slide away. When he slides away, then you can use your own force. The harder a person's external strength is, the more partial it is.

Feng said both of his teachers, Hu Yaozhen and Chen Fake had very high level push hands skills. Chen Fake was able to use silk reeling energy

in a very special way. "No matter how big or powerful the opponent was, he just used spiral energy and neutralized them so that they just fell down. I saw Chen Fake fight huge people and whenever they touched him, they became like small kids who didn't know how to walk. They would lose their balance like children once they touched him."

Regarding Hu Yaozhen, Feng said that you could not see his hunyuan qi, or spiral energy. "But the energy of his qi was just huge. It was a mixture of three energies: electronic, magnetic and qi. If one person hit him, he could not hurt him. His dantian was so powerful, when you hit him he could absorb you and bounce you out. One time a person tried to attack him while he was practicing standing meditation. The man hit him in the dantian and he bounced out about one meter high and then fell down."

"Gong," Feng said, "is an accumulation of energy as a result of your practice. It is energy you have



Feng Zhiqiang, center, with Yand Yang, left, and Chun Man Sit.

from nature and other things. Generally when we talk about gong or gongfu, it basically is a variable you can use to measure how high the energy accumulation is from certain practices."

Feng calls his Tai Chi Chuan Hunyuan Chen Tai Chi Chuan. Hunyuan is composed of the words

Hun, meaning mixed, and Yuan, meaning circle, so that together they encompass everything in the universe.

In the developmental process, he said, a practitioner should develop the crystal of qi. This crystal is located just below the belly button, about 1.5 inches. It is behind the acupuncture point shenque.

When the crystal has a minimum amount of energy,

it keeps people healthy. At a high level, it helps you to live longer and healthier. At a high level, someone may have some extraordinary powers.

The crystal itself, he said, is like a hollow ball, accumulating a mixture of dense energy. The core is empty, but inside it has congealed energy.

Before learning moving qigong or Tai Chi form, he said, students should practice stillness gong to help nurture energy, the brain, heart and the nervous system. The stillness gong training, he said, helps to accumulate energy to balance the consumption that can occur with some movement gong.

When doing the form, Feng said, the main thing is to pay attention to nurturing your energy. Then, he said, practitioners should focus on understanding peng and other basic Tai Chi energies. But, he said, it is not a good idea to constantly think of applications while doing the form. "If you think about fighting when doing the form, your qi inside will not be smooth."

