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*Kind
Sweet
Skilled
Beautiful*

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The next few newsletters will focus on my teachers: their backgrounds, how I met them, how they taught, and stories either about them or that they told. These are excerpts from a book, in progress, about my teachers. *Andy*

Master Gao Fu



As I was getting ready to go to class one evening I got a phone call from Martin Mellish, a Seattle Taiji teacher. He said he had just run into a visiting Taiji master from China. She was interested in meeting local Taiji clubs and would it be OK to bring her by my class. I said sure and I'd see them later.



Gao Fu & Me 1988

Now, going through my head at the time was; "Martin, not every Taiji practitioner from China is a master!" I was jaded by my study with Tchoung Ta Tchen. Often I'd arrive early for his classes and there would be a group of Chinese gentlemen talking with him. He would say, "Andrew, sword." and I'd have to do the set or any set he requested. Early on I was super nervous since I assumed they knew Taiji or were masters. Most of the time it turned out to be the local restaurant owner or other proprietor. The ones that were Taiji practitioners usually weren't very good. After a while, demonstrating didn't bother me.

That evening Martin showed up with Master Gao Fu and her student/translator Gao Li Ting (no relation). I welcomed them and was asked if it was OK for them to observe. Yep, so I lead the class through the first section of our Symmetrical Yang Taiji form. At this time in my study I had decided I would spend the rest of my life trying to perfect Tchoung's teachings and Yang style. I



Gao Fu & Feng

really didn't want to learn another form or style. I was done with learning more, I just wanted to polish what I had.



The adventurer
Hot Air Balloon Ride

After we completed our form I went over to talk with them. Gao Fu wanted to see more and wondered if we could exchange demonstrations. Being young, naive, and arrogant, I agreed. She got up and said she would show us the Chen 48 form. OMG The split second she started to move my jaw dropped. My thought was 'Oh Shit'. Every movement had power, connection, intent, as well as relaxation and softness. Her skill was definitely obvious and no doubt about it, this was a master of a very high level. I found out that she was considered one of China's living treasures. WOW

After finishing the Chen 48 form, she asked what other forms or style's I practiced. Very nervous and self conscious, I thought fast and decided to do the Yang Sanshou, our 7&8 form, since it wasn't



Gao Fu - Tien & wife

a very well known form. Gene and I did a nice job of going through it. Also, thinking she only knew Chen style I felt safe. She clapped politely then she and Gao Li Ting got up and went through the traditional version of the same set! Later I learned she knew the entire Yang Cheng Fu style since her first teacher was a student of Yang Chengfu. Lastly I decided to do our Yang Broadsword Form from the Tung family lineage. Later on I found out she really loved it. She finished off the evening by going through the Chen Broadsword.

I was just amazed at her skill, modesty, and politeness. As they prepared to leave I told Martin to sign me up for any workshop or classes she'd be teaching, even if it was knitting!

Her first class was at Madison Park and included almost every Taiji instructor in the Seattle area. She tried to teach us the beginning of the Chen 48 but didn't count on how hard it was for us since we were all Yang style people. However, in the short workshop I gained more depth and insight into Taiji than I'd had in quite a while. She introduced me to the power of Taiji energies. When I returned to my club I made everyone start all over from the beginning. Those interested in learning real Taiji loved it, those just wanting to learn forms not so much.



Nipponkan Demonstration

the better your Taiji is be more cake you can eat. After that, while out and about we'd always have to visit a bakery or get sweets.

HISTORY

During the cultural revolution Gao Fu's husband was jailed as a dissident. Their children were sent away and she was sent to a work farm. It was a practice that once a week the supervisor of the team would have to report on the team. It was also expected that one of the members would be accused of

After this session she said she'd like to teach a class for the instructors in the area. This included Harrison Morretz, (two of his assistant instructors), Shoko Zama, Martin Mellish, Cosette Lecille, and myself. We started meeting at the UW Arboretum parking area by the Japanese Garden. It



Instructors class

was late fall and very cold but we continued to learn the Chen 48 form outside in the cold. Shortly after that I was invited for private lessons.

something wrong and punished. Gao Fu said she refused and then was sent to a factory. While at the factory a large box fell on her damaging her back. After the cultural revolution her husbands health was extremely bad so she had to care for him continually.

She really didn't like Taiji since she was an athlete in her youth playing tennis and other sports, also Taiji was for old people. One day she saw a Taiji master practicing sword in the park. She loved it and asked him to teach her. This Master was



Simu - Gao Fu - Tchoung

Zhang Yukun, an advanced student and instructor for Yang Chenfu, the lineage head of the Yang Taiji Family. He told her she had to learn the basics first so she started learning Yang Taiji. Taiji served to help her focus on more pleasant things as she had to take care of her husband.

Gao Fu wouldn't accept payment for the private lessons so I



Me - Gao Fu - Fook Yueng

volunteered to drive her and Gao Li Ting around for their errands and tasks. One day driving them home after a class we were driving up Olive Way on Capitol Hill. As we passed

Gao Fu's forms were excellent but during a demonstrations a Taiji master came up to her and said, "your forms are very pretty but there's no Taiji or internal going on." This master was Tian Xiao Chen. Tian was one of the 4 top students of the Chen Family Taiji lineage holder Chen Fake. Visiting with him she was accepted as a student and became one of his top students, they became good friends and she took over his teaching after he passed away.

Pacific Desserts I told them that it was a dessert restaurant. Gao Fu asked if we could go there so I turned the car around and we went for dessert. She looked at the case of cakes and told Gao Li to order a slice of each, and whatever we wanted. The server had this amazed look on his face since no one had ever done that. We sat there slowly eating; Gao Fu with 7 pieces, Gao li with 5, me with 3. I could barely finish my 3 pieces but Gao Fu finished all 7. At the end, with a super sugar buzz, I said that it proves



Gao Liting-Gao Fu-Feng-Martin-?