

2019 Winter

Xin Qi Shen

Sensei Dave Harris



Creative, kind, funny, insightful, caring, and brilliant are just a few descriptions that come to mind when I think about Dave. Though he didn't like the title Master, there is no doubt anyone touching hands with him would agree. If Master Yueng was Yoda, Dave was Obie one.

The first time I met Dave I really didn't meet him. Chuck and I were looking for a Taiji teacher. We heard about Taiji Master Raymond Chung who had a class in the Greenwood area.

In the block that currently has Ken's Market was a house or church-like structure. The sign outside said: North Seattle School of Karate. We walked up the stairs and entered. Raymond Chung was in the middle of class putting his students through 'running' pushing hands.

We sat down to watch and behind us was a corkboard with several photos. As I turned around there were several pictures of Aikido Master Koichi Tohei, Raymond Chung and this other guy. Raymond was very impressive so I decided to eventually join his class. Unfortunately by the time I wanted to sign up he had stopped teaching in Seattle.



Dave 1960's

It was 1972, Tohei taught a seminar in Seattle sponsored by my sensei Hirata, the Seattle Aikikai and the UW Aikido Club. During one of the breaks I met this guy that was in some of the photos I saw at the Karate school, his name was Dave Harris.

Dave was a 'hands on' guy. As we talked about martial

arts he started showing some Wing Chun. I was excited! (This time period was during the Bruce Lee era and everyone wanted to learn Wing Chun.) He showed some amazing stuff and invited me to his school which had just moved, four blocks from my mom's house ©

Chuck and I went to visit and were amazed by his skill and friendliness. After that we skipped Monday Aikido night to attend his classes. His students were a bunch of old guys who had been with him for as least 10 years. Needless to say they were very good but not near Dave's level. One of the students we called Uncle Don was the father of two of my judo

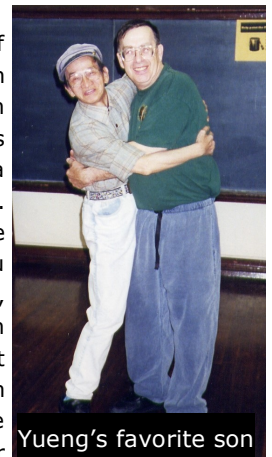
CLASSES - MON. & WEDS. 7-9 p.m.	Established 1963
NORTH SEATTLE SCHOOL OF KARATE	
David John Harris OWNER/INSTRUCTOR Res.: (206) 782-1170	Phinney Neighborhood Ctr. 6532 Phinney Ave. N. (Brick Bldg. on Dayton) Seattle, WA 98103

classmates. He had a third degree black belt in Judo.

We spent the first hour going through various drills and Chi Sau. The second hour he insisted that we learn the traditional Yang Taiji Sanshou so he'd have someone to practice with. This is before I started Taiji with Tchoung. Also, he was interested in the Aikido so we taught him that while he taught us the

Sai and various other forms.

Dave's new school was on the corner of 6th Avenue NW and 65th street in Ballard. Across the street was a bar, on the other corner was a gym. Needless to say there were occasions where a meathead would wander in and try him. The first occasion I witnessed, Dave was working with me on the Chi Sau when this guy comes in and yells, "Who's the teacher here?" He then comes up to us since we were closest to the door and is face to face with Dave. Dave says, "Can I help you?" The next second the guy tries to sucker punch him. I saw the guy drop to the ground, falling on his straightened arm and Dave holding the guy's glasses. The guy laid there for a moment then yells, "Far out." Dave helps him up and returns his glasses. The guy pretends to leave, turns and tries to punch Dave again. Straight punch to the chest, the guy flies back into the wall by the door. He eventually finds the doorknob and leaves. I've heard many stories like this.



Yueng's favorite son



Dave & Rick

This was one of the reasons Dave really didn't want anyone to know he did martial arts except within a small group of friends. His reputation was known in the martial arts field and he was challenged once in a while. (I have more accounts under stories that I heard from students and colleagues.)

Dave was an art and creative thinking teacher at North Seattle Community College. His teaching ability matched his martial arts skill. Also, he had done

several sculptures, ceramics, and paintings that I thought were awesome. (Beauty being subjective) Talking with his colleagues at his memorial, they all talked about his mastery in ceramics. Able to throw a pot effortlessly, then instantly change its shape several times so fast they couldn't see the transitions.

As time went on I became good friends of Dave and Geri. We were pretty much family though Dave was a very private person and didn't share too much about his life and family. From about the mid 1980's, after our classes we'd meet at the Winchell's and eventually the Pastry Case in Wallingford to discuss martial arts. Mostly I'd be learning from him and listening to his ideas from philosophy to teaching and applications.

Dave was a strong influence on me. One example was during a class we both attended where the instructor's skill wasn't all that great but his knowledge was. After the instructor showed an application I made a comment about it being kind of awkward and inefficient. Dave turned to me saying, "Maybe so, but look at his footwork, it's really fascinating."

Often he'd bring me out of my narrow view to see other options and look for them. We'd be looking at a picture or a book and I'd say something like the stances aren't very good. Again he would come back with, "It might just be just the angle of the camera because this guy is pretty good."



Dave's true character

The week before Jay and I moved into our Ballard home we decided to tear down the kitchen backsplash the contractor had put in so he could redo it. Jay and I were there around 11:30 at night when there's a knock on the door. Dave and Geri were driving by and wondered if anything was wrong. We filled him in and said our good nights. Fifteen minutes later Dave returns with a toolbox and for the next two hours helps us tear it down.

Dave would try to study with anyone coming through Seattle. Early 1960's he started to study with Master Fook Yueng who eventually named him first son in his teachings. He traveled weekly to Richmond WA to study with Sid Woodcock studying Shinobi Gumi Aikijitsu. He was the one responsible for bringing Raymond Chung and Tchoung Ta Tchen to Seattle to teach Taiji. He attended all of Koichi Tohei's seminars in Seattle. When Bagua Master T.Y. Pang arrived we both signed up as well as when Master Zhang Jie started teaching. He also attended workshops taught by Master Gao Fu. The list goes on.

HISTORY

Dave's father had a bakery on Greenwood Ave. across from Ken's market. He worked in his dad's shop which is probably



Dave & Sid Woodcock

where he got those big forearms kneading dough for bread. He went to the University of Washington and during that time was also studying Karate. I can't remember the name of his instructor or the club but after achieving his shodan he decided to leave due to the unsavory character of the instructor and organization. The instructor eventually went back to Japan. Dave started his own school across from his father's bakery.

GERI HARRIS

I can't talk about Dave without including Geri. When I studied with Dave she was always watching the class, every class. Though she didn't do martial arts, when I got stuck on a form she'd yell out the next direction and move to me. A little know fact is that she had won first place in an archery competition while in school.

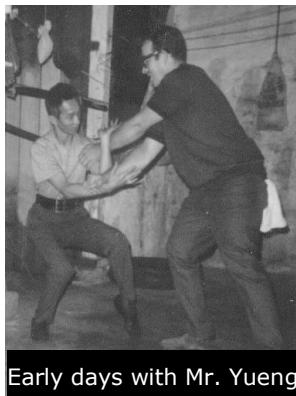
All of us owe a great deal to Geri since she was responsible for all the pictures and most of the video's we have of him and his art. She tried to record everything, sometimes being very obtrusive.

Dave was devoted to her as she to him. However she was a bit insecure and unfortunately made Dave promise that he wouldn't permit women in his class. This is fact! It was not Dave's decision. At other clubs he didn't play favorites, he'd give time to all participants. This is why I started sponsoring several workshops featuring Dave. This was one way I was able to open enrollment to women interested in studying with him.



Geri

They both were very frugal. Geri would be sure to fill up an entire VHS tape, on the 8hr mode, before giving it to me to copy. I was lucky that Dave wanted me to have backup copies of all his tapes. I had 10, 8hr tapes converted. I've also been given various workshop tapes from Dave's top students. To this day I still haven't had a chance to view all of them but I was smart enough to digitize them. He gave me permission to sell them if there was interest to help support my dojo. My online collection are some of those tapes.



Early days with Mr. Yueng

Knowing Dave since the early 1970's I had the privilege to see his progression in teaching over the years as well as his skill advancement. In addition, seeing him getting softer and lighter, how his art moved from technical to amazing effortlessly scary. When I started only seeing him monthly, he'd be leaps ahead of the last time I touched hands with him.

He was a martial arts wizard.