

## Remembering T. Y. Pang

A friend turned me on to Mr. Pang's Taijiquan class as a way to help me regain use of my injured knee. I started classes with him on November 20, 1974, at his Academy of Chinese Wushu at 1166 Fort St. in Honolulu. Within 9 months I was back to 100% and hooked on Taijiquan, also Baquazhang, and to a lesser extent, Xing Yi Quan. I am still practicing today.

Mr. Pang was a most unusual person. He was "Mr." not "Master" in his classes in Honolulu in those years. He said he did not have enough time to devote to the arts to be called a master. I don't think he meant it, but it was typical of him.

Arriving from Hong Kong, he was invited to Honolulu to be a visiting philosopher associated with the East West Center there. According to him he has disagreements with the Philosophy Department and left the University of Hawaii. He began teaching his Chinese martial arts in a store front in Kaimuki (a district in Honolulu) and immediately impressed the locals. That was quite a feat since many high level martial artists have passed through Honolulu, and the locals were jaded.

When I started with him he was teaching on the top floor of a 100 year old building in the middle of downtown Honolulu on Fort Street. As far as I know he made his living teaching the Arts and practicing acupuncture. The word was that he was very good at traditional Chinese medicine, but I only saw a bit of that side of him and am in no position to evaluate. I did attend his acupuncture classes and got a sample poking which made me a believer in the power of the needles. I also got herb medicine from him which greatly helped me heal an injury. So I am a believer in his skills in that regard.

At Fort St. he held Taijiquan classes two days a week (I recall them to be Monday and Wednesday) in the morning, and Monday thru Thursday in the evening. Each class was 1 ½

hours long and consisted of two 20 minute sets of the traditional Taijiquan Yang style that he learned from the Tung (Dong) family in Hong Kong starting in May, 1950. On Tuesday night, after Taijiquan, he taught a one hour class in Baguazhang, which he said he had learned from Sun Shihkun in Hong Kong. (In his book, *On Tai Chi Chuan*, ISBN 0-9612070-1-9, he said that he was in high school in 1949 and moved to Hong Kong in 1950. Sun died in 1952, so they had about two years together.) On Thursday night, after Taijiquan, he taught a one hour class in Xing Yi Quan, which he also learned from Sun. On Tuesday and Thursday nights he also taught a couple of sets that he created. I think one was “Plumb Blossom . . .”, and I don’t remember the name of the other. Since I was a new student and was simultaneously leaning Taijiquan, Baguazhang, and Xing Yi Quan, I was not able to absorb these other two sets. My loss.

A restaurant size 5 gallon hot water boiler was always on during the classes, and many people enjoyed hot jasmine tea during the breaks and after class. Pang had a cup in his hand much of the time, especially when he was talking about martial arts and philosophy.

The first two sets of the Taijiquan class in the evenings were taught by Pang’s right hand man, Bill Hu. Then there was a short break, and Pang would teach the final set of the night and answer questions. Pang also taught both the Baguazhang and Xing Yi Quan classes. During the morning classes he had some help teaching, but I don’t remember clearly who helped him. He did have one girl assistant named Sherry, who was a former dancer and was amazingly flexible.

Pang’s physical ability was extraordinary. To demonstrate the Taijiquan “Snake Creeps Down” posture he would bend his right knee until his butt was about three inches off the ground, while maintaining an upright posture with his spine vertical. (This was especially impressive to me since I grew up in New Hampshire and nobody squatted like that. It took me about ten years to even get close to being able to sit down like that.) Then, to emphasize his students that they

should not have their weight on their left foot, while squatting on his right foot he would raise his extended left leg off the floor, position his foot toe out, and then place it back on the floor. Then, keeping his butt about three inches off the floor at all times, he would transfer his weight from his right foot to his left foot. Then while squatting on his left foot, to emphasize that the right foot should then be un-weighted, he would lift up his right leg off the floor. The only person I knew who could duplicate that feat was his assistant Sherry.

On my first day at class in 1974 I purchased a 36 page book written by Mr. Pang. It was somewhat crudely copied on to 8 1/2 by 11 papers and folded in half with the pages sewn together in what I was told was a traditional Chinese way to bind books. That small book is one my treasures. It contained much of Pang's philosophy and thoughts on practicing Taijiquan. But the best part to me was at the end of the book. A list of 12 comments summarized how we should practice and conduct ourselves. The title of the list was "Rules to be Forgotten". That said it all. I don't remember the rules. . .

Pang's command of the written English language was truly extraordinary in my opinion. I have been a student of English composition most of my life, and I still think he had a remarkable ability to convey his thoughts. All the more amazing since English was not his first language.

I studied with Mr. Pang for about two years at that Fort St. studio before moved to Orcas Island in Washington. He had a profound impact on my study of Chinese martial arts which persists to this day, 41 years later.

Aloha, Mr. Pang.

Chip Ellis

Honolulu, Hawaii

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