

## **The Mysterious Energy of Taijiquan** by Chip Ellis

I'm a pragmatist, a show me kind of guy, a skeptic. I never thought I would be recounting to you a first hand experience with the mysterious energy of Taijiquan. But, here I am.

For years I have read stories about various masters incapacitating their opponents with relatively light touches. And for years I have told my friends that I would love to meet such a person because I just didn't believe the tales. I wanted to feel it for real.

Much to my surprise, I got my wish this past March. I was training during a weekend seminar with my teacher, Dong Zeng Chen. I hadn't seen him for about two years, and he was showing us his new "Dong Style" Taijiquan.

As we held one of the postures, he moved among the class, making corrections as he went. When he got to me he lightly grabbed my left wrist to adjust my position slightly. His touch was extremely painful! It was a complex feeling, like a strong electric current, a burning sensation, underneath the skin where he was touching. It was like there was an extremely hot sharp instrument encircling my wrist and cutting into it. It was all I could do to keep my reactions in check and not pull my arm away from his grasp! He held my wrist for just a few seconds and then went on to the next student. After he let go the feeling persisted for about five minutes. It hurt!

I must emphasize to you that he did not squeeze or twist my wrist with any degree of force. His touch was soft and light. But the burning sensation and sharp pain were very real. And yet there was no mark on my skin to indicate an injury.

Later I began to doubt what had happened to me. But one of my friends gave me some confirmation of the experience as we discussed what had happened. He had been pushing hands with Dong Zeng Chen during one of the class sessions. As they pushed he told me that Dong's arms felt very different from other times they had practiced together.

Now it is common in writings about the energy of Taijiquan to say that a person's arms should feel like an "iron bar wrapped in cotton". But in this case, according to my friend, Dong's arms felt like "razor sharp red hot triangular bars wrapped in cotton". So much so that to touch his arms was a painful experience. For the record, my friend is at least as much of a skeptic as I.

During a private moment later I discussed these experiences with my teacher. He told me that he had intentionally applied this energy to give us a taste of it. Thank you for the gift! Now I have a new goal to keep me busy for another thirty years!

Which brings us to the subject of how to train oneself to reach such a skill level. I have known Dong Zeng Chen for twenty years. And I have seen how he practices during most of that time. The skill he showed me in March was the result of his diligent practice over

almost 50 years. Not only does he practice his Taijiquan, but he also does a lot of Qigong each day. And, as a result of his regime, he only needs about four hours of sleep each night.

So now I'm a believer. I now accept as fact the ability of at least one Taijiquan master to deliver a highly painful light touch to a skeptical subject. What does it take to reach this skill level? Lots of talent, hard work, and good teachers.

If you are inclined to try to develop the mysterious energy of Taijiquan, I hope these words help you on your quest. Good luck!