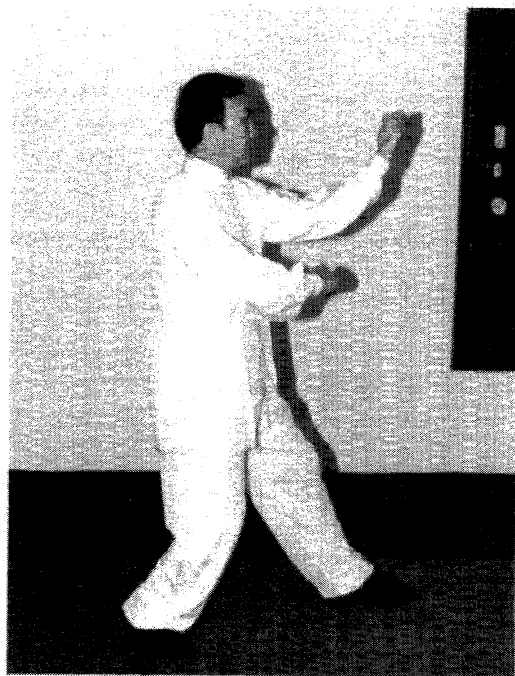


♦ Kung Fu For Life

An Interview with:
Master Huang Chien-Liang
 conducted by: Andrea Cheng



Master Huang performs the Tsuan Chuan (Drilling fist).

The following interview was obtained via phone conversation in late 1994. Andrea Cheng conducted the interview in Mandarin and it was later transcribed into English by Robert Brewer.

Master Huang Chien Liang is the current Vice President and a founding member of the International Chinese Kuoshu Federation. He is also President of the Pan-American Chinese Kuoshu Federation. He is the only full heir to the 63rd generation Tien Shan Pai Master Wang Chueh-Jen. Master Huang has such a lengthy list of achievements and accomplishments, it would take an entire page to write about them all. He currently resides and teaches in the Baltimore, Maryland area, and sponsors the annual Kuoshu Nationals. Please read on and get to know him yourself...

Ed.

HJ: The first question is: at what

time did you first become interested in kung fu?

It was probably about 1960. At that time I had asthma. Back then I was living in Malaysia. I was young; I really didn't know what I was doing, how best to study - just sort of got together with some people and started. I didn't really make anything out of it... studied some stuff that was all mixed together... just didn't really know what I was doing.

In the early 60's I started to get a little bit better. I began to study more intensively, but it was still a little of this and a little of that. Mostly because at the time my goal in studying was just to improve my health in general. At the time, I was studying one of the external arts, called *Lan Chuan*, and it didn't cure my asthma 100%. In 1966 when I arrived in Taiwan, I began to study Tai Chi Chuan. After studying Tai Chi Chuan, I began studying

Northern Style Chang Chuan, that is to say, I gave up on the Lan Chuan.

HJ: How old were you?

Let's see... I was about twelve years old. Now, after I studied Tai Chi Chuan, my asthma was cured. That's why I say that Tai Chi Chuan is very good for curing asthma. Since I began studying Tai Chi Chuan 'till today it's been over 25 years, and I've never had any recurrence of asthma.

HJ: Who was your Shr-fu?

My primary Shr-fu was Wang Chueh-Jin. He was also known as the Double Broadsword King, because his skill with the double sword was exceptional. He was from Mainland China. In 1948 when the Communists occupied China he came over to Taiwan with Chiang Jieh-Shyr. After arriving in Taiwan he began to spread the Chinese Martial Arts. He came over with Chen Pan-ling... That is to say, they came over about the same time.

HJ: Did he himself begin the China Kuo Shu Hui, or was it he in cooperation with others?

When he came over, he was still in the military special forces. He was a very small, slight man by stature. When he was in China his ability in the martial arts was already pretty well known. Therefore, the government had him train special units in the military. He was in the first graduating class of the Chung Yang Kuoshu Kwan. After he came to Taiwan he got together with Chen Pan Ling. You could say that Chen Pan Ling was their leader. He was the Vice-President of the Chung Yang Kuoshu Kwan. The two of them then started to spread their martial arts. So it was only after that time that Taiwan had some Northern-style martial arts. Before that it was all Southern-style.

HJ: Who taught your Shr-fu?

He had many, but probably the most important for Bei Pai Tien Shan Pai was *He Da Shun*. He was also called *He Yan Ch'ing*. Everyone in the Mainland has two names. He had many teachers.

HJ: Besides your Shr-fu, who else have you studied with?

In Taiwan I studied with one other Shr-fu. He is still alive... his name is *Chen Jing Bao*. He was a student of *Chen Pan Ling*.

I studied Hsing-I Chuan with two people: *Chen Jing Bao* and *Wang Chueh-Jin*. So my Hsing-I comes primarily from that taught by *Chen Pan Ling*.

HJ: *Chen Jing Bao* is still alive?

Yes, he is. He's in his fifties. He now lives in Tai-chung.

HJ: Does he still teach?

Yes, but not much. Because most of his students became teachers, he doesn't teach any more. He is for the most part retired. Now he spends his time with Geomancy, feng shui...

HJ: Do you understand feng-shui? No, not really.

HJ: Did you study die da or acupuncture from him?

I studied die da, but not acupuncture.

HJ: How about Chinese medicine?

♦ Master Huang (cont.)



A posture from the Gi Hsing (Chicken form).

No, not really. Only a little. Through study of die da I learned a little Chinese medicine.

HJ: *From whom did you learn tui na?*

Chen Jing Bao. Actually my studies of tui na were relatively shallow. If you study chi kung pai da, you should study some tui na. Sometimes when you do pai da, you feel tired. Tui na can help increase your circulation, so we learned a little.

HJ: *When you studied that, along with massage did you study bone setting?*

Yes, I studied bone setting. But I didn't study acupuncture. My teacher wanted to teach me, but I didn't study.

HJ: *Do you teach tui na?*

No, I do not. I don't feel that I have the experience.

HJ: *Then of all your students, none have studied tui na?*

No, none. In America, it seems that you're not really allowed to teach it. My students, those who are close to me, if one of them gets hurt I will help heal them, but besides that I

won't help others. Because, in America, if you go to help someone, you can still be sued because you don't have a license. So usually, I will only help those students who have been with me a long time.

HJ: *Oh, I see. Now, for the next question: how long have you been teaching kung fu?*

In Taiwan I was a short-term assistant teacher. In 1973 I was invited to come here to teach kung fu, and have been teaching ever since. For the first two years, I was helping others to teach, and after that, I opened my own school.

HJ: *When you were assisting in Taiwan, who were you assisting?*

Wang Chueh-Jin. Because his external study was Tian Shan Pai. I studied

Tian Shan Pai with him. So our fighting, lei tai technique, all was studied under him.

HJ: *Did you participate in the lei tai when you were young?*

No, never. From 1955 to 1957 my teacher trained several participants for the Lei Tai. They fought very well. After that there were a lot of people who studied our style; once you've won, everyone takes notice of your style, copies it. So after that, my teacher did not send any students to compete in the Lei Tai. Our kung fu was stolen by others. After that, we were not allowed to compete. After I got to America, I worked with some students and in 1980, for the first time sent them to compete in the world Lei Tai competition.

HJ: *Where was that?*

In Hawaii, 1980. That was the third annual World Competition. It was then that I began sending students to compete. At that time, one got second place, another got third. In 1983 I just went to the meeting; I didn't send any students. I had just moved from Cincinnati, Ohio to

Maryland. I just went to the meeting; I didn't send any fighters. In 1986 I was head coach of the U.S. team and Vice-President of the United States Chinese Kuoshu Federation. I sent one student, and he became champion. After that, I became the trainer of the American Team. In 1991 I became President of the American National Martial Arts Association. I began to help in training participants for the Lei Tai. There were some people in San Francisco who weren't very clear as to how to fight, so I gave them a hand.

HJ: *With regards to Chinese martial arts: as President of the Federation, what are your plans for the immediate future?*

It is my hope that we can have a team that will win in the world competitions. I'm talking about a team, now. Of Richard Lee's students, there are three women who won the competition. One of my students won as well. This means that the way we train for the competitions is useful. I hope our standards in the men's division will rise as well. For instance, your sending students to participate this time was an excellent opportunity to do so. Sometimes, you may have studied kung fu to a very high level, but don't have very much experience in sparring. You need experience so that you can use it in fighting. You should also pay attention to moves that will easily score points with the judges. Nowadays, if you use a traditional style, and only use a traditional style, it can be hard to score any points. You want to pay attention to things that will be easy for the judge to see. You should include some Chinese Shuai Chao. The standard of your fighters is very good. Have you studied any Shuai Chao?

HJ: *Yes, a little.*

It would be good to add some Shuai Chao moves. Most important is to be able to avoid being taken down. Because if you are taken down, you lose two points. So it is best if you can avoid this.

HJ: *Is it your hope that in the future our federation will become very large?*

Yes. After becoming Presi-

◆ Master Huang (cont.)

dent, I divided the federation into four regions: North, South, East, and West. Each area has a vice president. But, except for my region, none of the others has done very much to expand, to propagate the art. Next year we will re-elect the president. It is my hope that you will help us to spread the martial arts and the Federation.

HJ: *Really? If there is anything at all that you need, please don't hesitate to tell us.*

It would be great if you could attend more functions. To be able to spread it... well, it's good for everyone's health. In a world-wide perspective, if you can win some awards in the world competition, this helps you to be seen as a leader. In America, there are many people who study the martial arts. In the 1992 world championship, our team took third place. I hope next time we can get second place; it would show some improvement.

HJ: *Yes. Our feeling about martial arts in America is that there is little accord. Everyone does his own thing. There are too many 'leaders', too many opinions.*

This is one of the great flaws of people who study the martial arts. Everyone says his kung fu is the best. No one is willing to teach the people who are going to the competition.

Take for instance those who I am coaching in California. I'm teaching them how to use their art to fight. They already have a good base. Now I can tell them certain areas to which they must pay attention while in the Lei Tai, and they will progress very quickly. So, next time they participate in a competition, they can get pretty good marks. Now, you have already begun participating in the Lei Tai: what's most important now is to get more experience.

HJ: *Exactly.*

If you can come up with some good competitors, then the year after next we'll certainly do well at the competitions.

HJ: *Yes, we hope that every one's standard will rise.*

In the end, in the Lei Tai, you must know how best to thwart someone if they go to throw you. This is very important. Because, as soon as you're taken down, you've lost two points. If you don't get thrown down, then you don't lose those two points, and may be able to throw your opponent.

HJ: *Do you teach every day?*

I teach less these days. Now I'm busy as President of the Federation. I'm also Vice-President of the International Chinese Kuoshu Federation. I often go to Taiwan, other countries, to look around and observe.

This year, this month I'll be going to Germany. At the beginning of next month, there will be a competition in Brazil. I'll be going there.

My work for the coming year is to train referees for the Lei Tai, because America does not

have a certified referee program. Some people go to Taiwan to learn, but in America there is no such training. I have the idea that we'll have a referee seminar next year. If they are higher level instructors they can attend the A-class seminar. Besides knowing the whole set of scoring, they also need to learn how to referee the Lei Tai. The Junior Instructors can only do the scoring. So, we'll try to do both types of seminars next year.

HJ: *Do you call your Hsing-I Chuan by another name?*

No, I just call it Hsing-I Chuan. I don't have many students, and mostly teach private lessons. I'm not teaching Hsing-I to a big group of students. Those who want to learn Hsing-I, I teach Hsing-I, but Hsing-I is only a part of what we teach. There are only a few students who study it.

HJ: *Could you please explain a little bit: when you teach your students, what kind of teaching style do you use? Every Shr-fu has a different method. Some will teach a student just as much as he can absorb, others are not that way.*

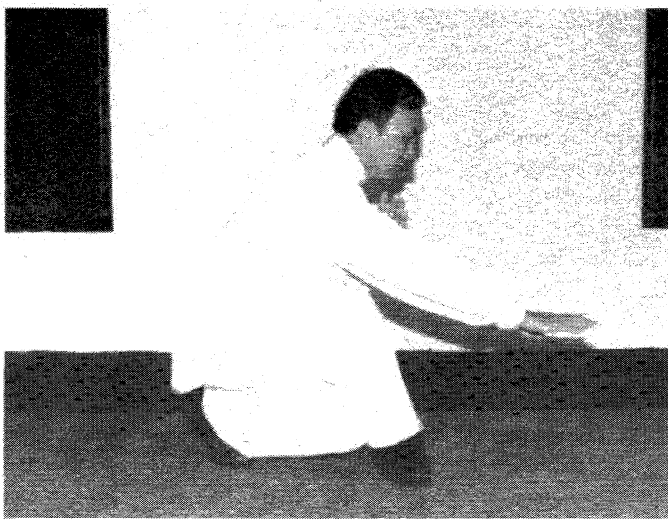
For the most part, students are arranged in classes that last about an hour. As to the students— if they are able to absorb a great deal, we teach a little faster. If they're not as quick to catch on, we teach a little slower. If they study to the level of black-belt, they can choose what they want to study: Di Kung Chuan. Regardless of the direction the student would like to go, I'm willing to teach them. Or if they want to continue to study more Tian Shan Pai, I will teach them that.

HJ: *So they can pretty much study what they want.*

Only once they've gotten their black-belt. In the beginning, everyone starts out the same. Tai Chi Chuan is a different class. The Tai Chi students are different, apart. As to Hsing-I and Pa-Kua, each is a different class.

HJ: *What do you feel is the best method of training? That is, to get your student to learn the fastest.*

I'm not altogether certain what is the best way. Everyone has a different point of view. I still tend to hold to



A posture from HeBei Hsing I's Yen Hsing (Swallow form).

◆ Master Huang (cont.)

the old, traditional ideas in that if a student doesn't apply himself very sincerely, I won't make the effort to correct him. They must have spent a lot of time and effort in it before I will personally teach them. Therefore, when students first begin to study, I don't teach them at all: my assistants do the teaching. If they rise to the more advanced classes, then I teach them. If they don't work hard, I won't teach them.

HJ: *In your opinion, if a student wants to study Hsing-I chuan, from what aspect should he begin studying?*

First I teach them the basics of Hsing-I stances, stance-work and footwork. That is, in Hsing-I, how one moves. Then I begin with the five elements. Once we start with the five elements, I also teach them Hsing I Zhuang (standing). If they can learn San Ti Zhuang in a year, then I teach them a different standing posture. The first year I teach them one standing posture. In the second year I teach them a different standing posture. Because we believe that in Hsing-I, the San-ti stance is most important.

HJ: *True. Now, when you say "teach them a different zhuang fa", can you give me an example?*

The first year we just teach them the san-ti position.

HJ: *And in the second year?*

"I tsou Zhuang" and other standing postures.

HJ: *These methods of training, are they your own, or are they traditional methods?*

Yes, I learned the traditional way, and Chan Zhuang was one of the methods. When you study with a teacher, things go a little slower. Nowadays we do things faster. Of the students I've taught in the past, if any wanted to study Hsing-I Chuan, it was my hope that they study at least two years. In two years I can at least finish teaching them Hsing-I's basic forms. If the student wants to learn to use this

to fight, I'm willing to teach them. That is, to fight using Hsing-I styles and methods. If the student just wants to study form, then I just teach them that. Not every student wants to learn practical applications: there are those who study just to improve their health, or to learn about chi. Some students are too theoretical. This I don't emphasize in the beginning.

HJ: *Is this because it is only after they've studied and made some progress that you can discuss this with them?*

Yes. Theory is something that



Master Huang strikes a pose from Sir Hsing (Snake form).

you yourself come to know slowly through experience. If you don't come to it through experience, and it's just told to you, it's not very clear. If you tell someone too much theory, they get the feeling that they have a very deep understanding. They won't spend a lot of effort to learn on their own. Maybe you've had this same experience. There are a lot of people who can talk theory. But those who can do it, those who can apply it, are rather few.

HJ: *Yes, you're absolutely correct. As to theory, if you have a*

Hsing-I student who studies many years, will his physiology and thinking change?

There will certainly be change.

HJ: *According to what you've seen, in what ways will they change?*

As an example, I have one student who came to study. He had a lot of trouble with his back. But after I gave him Chan Zhuang, his back was fine. He also lost a lot of weight. When you practice Hsing-I, you use up a lot of energy, and burn a lot of fat.

HJ: *What about a person's reactions?*

Reactions will of course be very good. Because if we teach practical application, we put a lot of emphasis on stepping. If you don't understand the stepping, you won't be able to use it. You'll be too rigid. If you have taught them proper stepping, they will be more lively. Hsing-I is an internal art, so as to temperament, it makes you very cool headed, not easy to get over-excited.

HJ: *Does it affect your thinking?*

Thinking is rather sharpened. It can make you rather calm and tranquillized. Once you're in a tranquil state, there are a lot of things you can call to mind, quicken your intellect. When you practice, you can more easily achieve the standards you have set for yourself. If you do Chan Zhuang, it can help you to understand things better, but if you don't do it, the opposite will happen. It will improve all aspects of your thinking.

HJ: *That's true. Do you and your students practice meditation?*

Yes, I practice meditation and teach it. I studied Taoist meditation.

HJ: *In studying kung fu... those students that you teach, do you teach them Taoist Meditation?*

Taoist Meditation. Usually, internal styles have standing meditation. When studying internal arts, if you do not do standing meditation, your root will be weak. Therefore, Chan Zhuang

◆ Master Huang (cont.)

is a must. It depends on the individual. If they want to study meditation, I can teach them Taoist meditation.

HJ: *From which Shr-fu did you learn meditation?*

From Teacher Liu Pei-zhong

HJ: *Liu Pei-zhong was... a contemporary of Chen Pan-ling?*

No, Liu Pei-zhong also came over with Chiang Jieh-Shyr to Taiwan. After he passed away, I continued to study meditation with Chen Jing-bao. He had been with Liu Pei-zhong longer-- his meditation was already very good-- so I continued with him. I often called to Taiwan. You have to get a very good foundation so you can understand your teacher, so you know where the meridians are, how to guard the points, etc.

HJ: *Next question: Fah Jing. Do you teach this to your students?*

Of course! Yes, I do teach this, but none of them can issue any energy. These days, there are very few people who practice this.

HJ: *Right, fa jing is easy to talk about, hard to do.*

Some people learn empty handed, then they use posts, Grass Dragon Posts, or objects like sand bags. One way is empty handed, one way is to practice with objects.

If you want to fa ching, you must practice with empty hands. If you don't first practice empty handed to a certain level, then use the sand bags, you'll be tense, not relaxed. Then you will start using the strength from your shoulders. Therefore, every way has a step to fa ching; you must learn every step very well. Then when they learn these steps completely you can teach them to fa ching. After you have taught them fa ching, you can teach them how to use objects to speed the process. This is the way we teach, but not many people learn this.

HJ: *In your opinion, what are the most important aspects of fa jing?*

The most important thing is to be effective with your movements. In practicing fa jing, you must understand the proper method before you can be successful. You could say "fah

jing" is Nei-Kung. Fah jing uses Dan tien's chi. Moving along *Jin Chi Shieh*, it continues up through the spine to the middle region. It then travels in the shoulder blades to the shoulders, down the arms to the hands, which then strike out. One thing to remember is that a high level practitioner can apply fah jing with any part of the body. Fah jing always uses small moves because the dan tien chi, not the physical motion, makes the energy. In external systems, one uses long motions. At high levels, this power is called *Jin Dao* or *Tan Li*. Fah jing is generally a motion of 3.3 inches or less. If you don't understand the proper method, you will fall back to using physical strength.

HJ: *Doubtless many students have asked you this question... what is chi? What are your opinions?*

Chi? (Laughter) Simply stated, it is life force.

HJ: *Life force?*

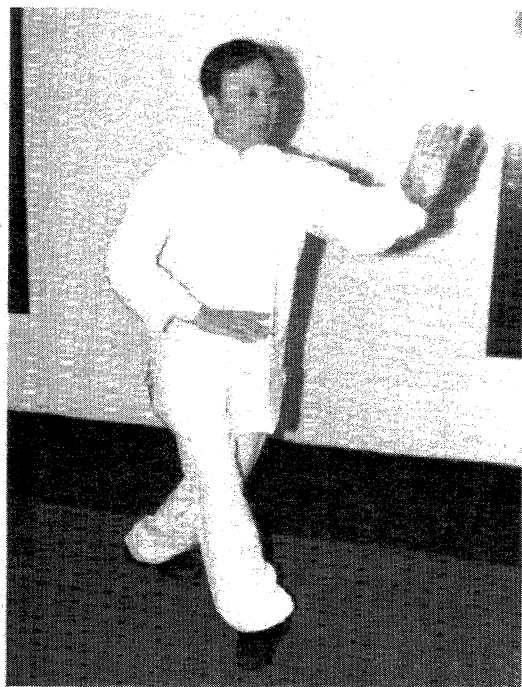
The way I usually explain it is... I use two characters. One is the chi in the air, the other is the chi within us. The first character includes nei chi, and pollution, and other things. The other chi is energy, life force. You can cultivate this chi from Chan Zhuang. You transform essence to chi, chi to shen, and shen to emptiness. It is easier to understand all of this from Chan Zhuang. If you just talk about it, it's hard to understand.

HJ: *We also have a lot of students ask if there is any relationship between fa jing and chi.*

Of course there is a relationship.

HJ: *Could you please explain?*

When you fa jing, you use little muscular force and movement. Without chi, you can't fah jing. As I said, you must use dan tien chi to fah jing. Internal power always uses chi. You must use the two in unison in or-



A posture from Ing Shyung Hsing (Eagle Bear form).

der to fa jing.

HJ: *Regarding philosophy, what kind of philosophy do you teach? When you are practicing forms, or meditating, or studying, or Tsou Zhuang, your philosophy, your theory, is what?*

Yang hsing. [Cultivating your inner qualities]

HJ: *Yang hsing.*

Yes, it's important that the students yang hsing.

HJ: *Do you use Taoism as the basis for this? Or Confucianism?*

I don't know very much about Confucianism! I'm really not clear on very much of Confucianism. What's most important is that now, times have changed. The value of kung fu fighting is not as high as before. But if you are interested in practical application, you must first learn the forms. However, in studying kung fu, there is one overriding importance, and that is to improve your health. If you are healthy, your life will be more fulfilled. That is to say, for people who study kung fu, it doesn't just improve their health, it influences their entire life. Because if you study kung fu well, your thinking will become

♦ Master Huang (cont.)

sharper, quicker. You'll become more able, more capable of accomplishing things. As to people who have not studied kung fu, their health won't be good, they will not be able to do things well, because when they're halfway through, they are already tired. Their working efficiency won't be very good. But if you've practiced martial arts, then your efficiency will be very good. All of this is to say, studying kung fu is a way of life. It helps your whole life. Affects your whole life. That is what I tell my students. But I don't know what kind of philosophy you teach your students.

HJ: *We teach Taoist philosophy.*

If students are learning meditation, we talk more about Taoism. If they are not studying meditation, we don't talk about it as much. Otherwise we'd be too religious.

HJ: *Huang Shr-fu, thank you very much..*

Thank you for doing me the honor of interviewing me.

HJ: *It is you who do us the honor.*

Master Huang Chien Liang continues to be the driving force behind the United States Chinese Kuoshu Federation. If you are interested in participating or offering your support, you may contact him through his headquarters at: 8801 Orchard Tree Lane, Towson, MD 21286-2142.

SEMINAR NOTES

Master Henry Look will be conducting a workshop on I Chuan at the U. S. Shen Lung Tang Shou Tao headquarters in La Mesa, CA on April 29, 1995.

Contact: Mike Patterson

The U.S. Shen Lung Tang Shou Tao Assoc. will be conducting a multi-day event on Hsing I, Pa Kua, Chen Tai Chi and Liou He Ba Fah in August of 1995.

Contact: Any Assoc. Rep.

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