



Internal Fighting Arts

Chen Ziqiang Impresses at Berlin Seminar

by Andreas Bogk

Member of InternalFightingArts.com

I had the pleasure of visiting two seminars with Chen Ziqiang (pronounced “Zih-chin”) during the last days here in Berlin. The seminars were organized by the German Neijiaquan Association. Chen Ziqiang, for those who don’t know, is the son of Chen Xiaoxing and nephew of Chen Xiaowang. He leads training at the school in Chenjiagou, and is considered to be one of the best practitioners of his generation.

The first seminar was titled “Introduction to Push Hands”. Introducing the single handed and double handed routines without steps took about 15 minutes, the rest was spent, to my pleasant surprise, on applications (mostly chin-na, but also the occasional throw or push). Chen Ziqiang took the time to give corrections to every participant (we were about 20 people), and even though his English is minimal, he’s very good at pantomimic communication and usually gets his point across. I regret not having time for the more advanced push hands classes, but I imagine they have been equally good.

The second seminar was on fajin. I didn’t quite know what to expect, and we weren’t clued into it until the second day. We started the first day learning a couple of moves that looked like coming from the Er Lu, with lots of jumping, stomping and general emission of fajin using fists, elbows, shoulders and arms. The second day went on like the first one, but at the end we were told that all the moves and postures we had been learning would be put into a small form in the end, which Chen Ziqiang promptly demonstrated. I’m looking forward to learn this form tonight, on the third and final day of the seminar. Again, Chen Ziqiang put a lot of effort into explanations of the moves, correcting all the details, and making sure that the whole group of students made sufficient progress. Sometimes, the explanation just consisted of hitting the wall full force with some part of the body,



Chen Ziqiang (right) practices with his father, Grandmaster Chen Xiaoxing (left) in the Chen Village. Looking on is Chen Bing.

so we would know the intention of a certain move, often he would invite members of the group to attack him to demonstrate an application.

A recording of the form we’re learning in the fajin seminar can be found here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xfiOaPmjy3w>.

I wholeheartedly recommend Chen Ziqiang’s seminars based on my experience. He’s not only a top player, but also a pleasant teacher.



Chen Ziqiang leads a practice of students in the Chen Village. Photos courtesy CCTV.

My Favorite Techniques

Insights into techniques and body mechanics for more powerful self-defense with Tai Chi - Hsing-I - Bagua



Closing the Form - A Strong Self-Defense Move

Every movement in a Tai Chi form is a fighting move. No matter where your hands are--even if it looks like a “transition”--there is a self-defense application. In a workshop last month, Sifu Ken Gullette led participants through some of the fighting applications of the Chen 38 form.

In the photos on the left, an application for the final movement--Closing the Form--is shown. In the top photo, Sifu Gullette has snaked his right arm under his partner's armpit. This can be done against a punch or in a grappling situation.

In the middle picture, his hands come over as they do in the closing movement. Each form ends the same way, bringing your hands up and over, then lowering them to waist level as you sink the body and drop your energy.

The purpose of the dropping of energy is demonstrated in the bottom photo. With your opponent's arm locked, a powerful closing of the body and dropping of the hands will break or seriously injure your opponent's shoulder. Fa-jin would also be used in a real-life self-defense situation.

In the upcoming DVD on the Chen 38, Sifu Gullette includes video from the workshop and with his students that show fighting applications of all 38 movements of the form. The DVD was supposed to be finished by the end of May but additional shooting was needed.

It's important to do each movement in a Tai Chi form with the proper intent, and the intent in the closing movement is a closing of the body and downward energy in the arms.



The Philosopher's Corner by Sifu Ken Gullette

At a workshop by Grandmaster Chen Xiaowang in Rockford, Illinois a few years ago, we went to a Chinese restaurant during the lunch break. As usual, students gave Grandmaster Chen a lot of space, and I noticed that as we ate, nobody was sitting in front of him. The students had chosen seats away from him. He sat without talking to anyone, eating his lunch. “He probably wants to be left alone,” one student said.

I'm not one who puts people up on too high a pedestal. After a few minutes I decided that it was silly for everyone to act like this master of tai chi was more than just a man. I went over and sat in an empty seat right in front of Grandmaster Chen. “I heard that you edit your own videos,” I told him. “Do you do that on a computer?” He was a little puzzled, and his interpreter helped to translate. Grandmaster Chen's eyes lit up and he talked with quite a bit of passion about shooting and editing his videos.

I didn't understand half of what he said, as he tried to speak English, but he obviously enjoyed talking about it, and I enjoyed the chance to provide him with some conversation. In a Kung-Fu TV episode, someone asked Caine, “What kind of man are you?” Caine replied, “Just a man.” It's proper to show respect, but acting as if a tai chi master is someone other than a man -- to cower and bow and scrape as if he's some sort of God -- is ridiculous. It violates the Taoist philosophy to avoid seeing other people as separate from you or better than you, and vice-versa. If you ever have the opportunity, you'll find that even a tai chi master appreciates it if you connect on something that you're both passionate about -- something other than kung-fu.



Guest Editorial by Sifu Phillip Starr

The Martial Spirit

I believe it was Mark Twain who said, "It's not the size of the dog in the fight, it's the size of fight in the dog." That's a pretty fair description of "martial spirit."

A dear friend of mine named Mike Biggs did three tours in Vietnam with Special Forces. Mike didn't strike a particularly imposing figure; in fact, he looked pretty much like any other ordinary guy. He was a far cry from the "Rambo" image. Mike emphasized that most Special Forces operators didn't look like contenders for a Mr. America title. Sure, they were fit...but they didn't sport the bulging arms and chests that Sly Stallone does. They looked like ordinary guys but they possessed a quality that most people didn't.

Tenacity.

When they set out to do something, they wouldn't give up. They had real grit, absolute determination, doggedness. The Rambo look-alikes usually washed out of training pretty early.

In martial arts we talk a lot about training with spirit, performing forms with spirit, applying techniques with spirit. It all sounds alike, but these are all actually different aspects of the same thing. In this short lecture, I want to talk briefly about training spirit.

Training spirit is the kind of spirit shown by the Special Forces operators. It's setting your jaw with resolve, and tightening your guts with intestinal fortitude. It means that you won't give in because you're tired or sore or too sweaty. It means "gutting it out."

I don't believe that this kind of thing can be taught in words. It has to be directly experienced. You have to push yourself beyond what you think you can achieve. It helps to have an instructor who'll assist in the pushing, and a senior classmate who will encourage you to keep going and not give up.

In the old-fashioned karate training halls of the past, the sensei (teacher) or his assistant would warm up the class with drills of basic techniques. This was a spirited exercise and some of the younger (as in newer) pupils would often begin to falter, giving in to their fatigue. The sempai (older brother; senior) would call out to them, "Hold on!" to encourage them to "keep the spirit" and not give up.

In time, the junior students realized that they were capable of doing much more than they had previously thought they could do. And that's one of the reasons for this kind of training.

Keep in mind that strong spirit isn't everything. If your spirit is strong but your technique is bad, you'll probably end up as a wet spot on the ground. This is what happened to the Japanese troops who fought U.S. force in WWII. The Japanese believed that their fighting spirit would overcome the superior firepower of the Americans.

Not.

On the other hand, if the Japanese had had the same kind of firepower as we did, the war would have been much more difficult. Even with their inferior weapons, the Japanese were a formidable foe.

So - your technique (weapons) must be strong. That means that they have to be correct and that means that you've got to sharpen and temper them through constant, rigorous training. The rigorous training not only strengthens your technique; it also develops a strong spirit.

But if your technique is incorrect, you'll be at a real disadvantage when the chips are down. Rigorous practice of incorrect technique simply reinforces bad habits. So make sure your technique is correct.

The training of spirit begins early with my students, in exercises such as *(continued next page)*

A Visual Illustration of Peng Jin -- Expansive Force



Peng jin is the most important “energy” in the internal arts. If you are practicing Tai Chi, Hsing-I or Bagua and you have not made peng jin a key element of each movement, it’s very likely you aren’t doing these arts--you’re just moving in ways that imitate the arts.

Grandmaster Chen Xiaowang says peng jin is like the engine of a car. You can lift the car off the ground and race the engine as hard as you want but the car isn’t going anywhere. Put the car on the ground, and the ground strength gives the engine (peng jin) its power. Peng jin is an expansive force. The photos above illustrate the concept. When you push a large beach ball (in this case, a workout ball) into water, energy builds. When you let the ball go, as in the 2nd photo, the ball springs out of the water. The expansive force of peng must be maintained through every movement at all times. Learn this and the quality of your art will increase.

The Martial Spirit

(continued from page 3)

holding a horse stance in class. They’re told that if their legs give out and they fall, that’s okay...as long as they get back up and keep trying. BUT if they give up and sit down, that’s a no-no. In the case of falling down, it just means they have weak legs. We can fix that. But if they sit down it’s a sign of weak spirit and that’s another story altogether.

Training when you don’t feel like it, forcing yourself to go to class when you’d rather be doing something else...that’s also an indication of spiritual strength.

Push yourself beyond your limits. After all, you’re the one who put them there. You’re the only one who can ultimately help you overcome them.

Sifu Phillip Starr is the founder of Yiliquan. Sifu Ken Gullette earned a black sash in Sifu Starr’s system. Starr was inducted into the Inside Kung-Fu Hall of Fame in 1991 and is the author of *The Making of a Butterfly* and *Martial Mechanics*. Both are available on amazon.com. His new book, *Martial Maneuvers*, will be released this summer. He lives and teaches in the Omaha area.

Internal Fighting Arts is published by www.InternalFightingArts.com. Address--1517 13th Street, Silvis, Illinois 61282. Phone (309) 912-9544. Email ken@internalfightingarts.com. Copyright 2009 - Ken Gullette. The images and content are protected and may not be reproduced or distributed without permission.



Two Free Weeks Offered To New Members of Internal Arts School

New members of Sifu Ken Gullette’s online internal arts school -- www.InternalFightingArts.com -- are now offered two free weeks to try out the site before they are billed.

There are more than 300 video lessons on the site in Chen Tai Chi, Hsing-I Chuan, Baguazhang, and Qigong. New lessons are added almost daily with detailed instruction in forms and techniques. Members also have access to downloadable e-books and audio files. Those who decide to cancel within the first two weeks are not billed for the regular member fee of \$19.99 per month.