

Wang Kung Shou Dao

BY BOB LOWEY

It was in the pre “Kung Fu” TV days when an old school friend (I was still in my late teens) informed me that her boyfriend was involved with some “secret Chinese fighting style” and would not tell her anymore about it.

After haggling with the chap a number of times, he eventually introduced me to the ‘School’ and I was accepted after waiting at the door at each class over a period of 3 weeks before gaining access to this clandestine martial art, Wang Kung Shou Dao, in the early 70’s - late 1972 if I remember correctly.

Having previously struggled with Judo and Shotokan Karate over a period of years, I had been seeking something a little more challenging intellectually as well as physically.

There were 12 students in the class being instructed by Joe Bell, our teacher. The training was gruelling and I’m glad I had a few years of Shotokan prior to this. It helped prepare me for the low training stances... but not the cuts, fractures and bruises that followed.

During the first year, I had to learn 3 basic forms that were similar to Goju Ryu, to provide a foundation of hard and soft movements fundamental to the teaching of this family art.

To progress to the advanced forms including Qigong and weapons training, I had to demonstrate the 21 movement form, the “Hornless Dragon”, in 5 seconds, immediately followed by a six minute, full contact boxing match without body armour or gloves. Our teacher and senior students assessed our performance.

Needless to say, I failed the form but passed the bout with only minor injuries. During the re-examination 3 months later the form performance time was increased to 6 seconds; four of us succeeded to advanced training.

During these early years we should remember the terms “Kung Fu” and “Qigong” were not well known. Furthermore, only the seniors and advanced students were allowed to learn the Qigong techniques. They were in a separate room away from others where they discussed “Qi”, “channels of energy”, and Neigong exercises. A number of students left at this stage as they now considered the school a cult or a black magic sect

involved in metaphysics!!

Although our system was called Wang Kung Shou Dao, this was an abbreviation, as Chinese martial art terminology, in the West was still very uncommon. For us to learn “Wáng de gōng de shǒu de dào”, (王的功的手的道), or “The way of the hand of Wang’s work”, was a mouthful. Hence it became known as Wang Kung Shou Dao.

Forms were all taught in English with some reference to Chinese terminology such as Quanfa, Bagua, Kung Shou, Tui Shou, etc.

Our Grand Master was Wang Jo-Mei who transmitted the theory and practice to Master Bill Forbes in 1952. Grand Master Wang was born in Wuxi in 1882 and returned to his father’s family home in Ledu, Qinghai Prefecture in 1884 and was later sent to Qutan Monastery near Qutanzhen for his education.

Without going through the full history, our Grand Master, suffice to say, in his later years was involved in the Tongmenhui¹ (Alliance Society) in Tokyo, Japan, governed by Sun Yat-sen, the Xinhai Revolution² and rebellion against Yuan Shikai³ in the then Nanking (now Nanjing).

In 1924 Grand Master Wang became a member of the staff at Whampoa Military Academy⁴ in Guangzhou but withdrew his support of Chiang Kai-shek following the April 12th incident or massacre at the Shanghai International Settlement⁵.

Further travels took him back to Japan, India and eventually the UK, settling in Edinburgh in 1952 where he befriended the family of Bill Forbes and became Bill’s teacher. Bill was already practising Japanese martial arts at this time.

It wasn’t until after the death of Wang Jo-Mei and the development of his proficiency in the art that in March, 1970, Bill established the first study group for the advancement of Wang Kung Shou at St. Serf’s Church in Shettleston, Glasgow and a second group later in November of that year in Manchester.

Advanced forms and techniques included Black Dragon, Mallard, Eagle Claw, 5 Animals, Long Range Fist, Broken Wing, Bagua (Sun Lu t’an), Sword, Sabre, Staff, Hook Swords, Guandao, Sanjiegun, Butterfly Knife and more.

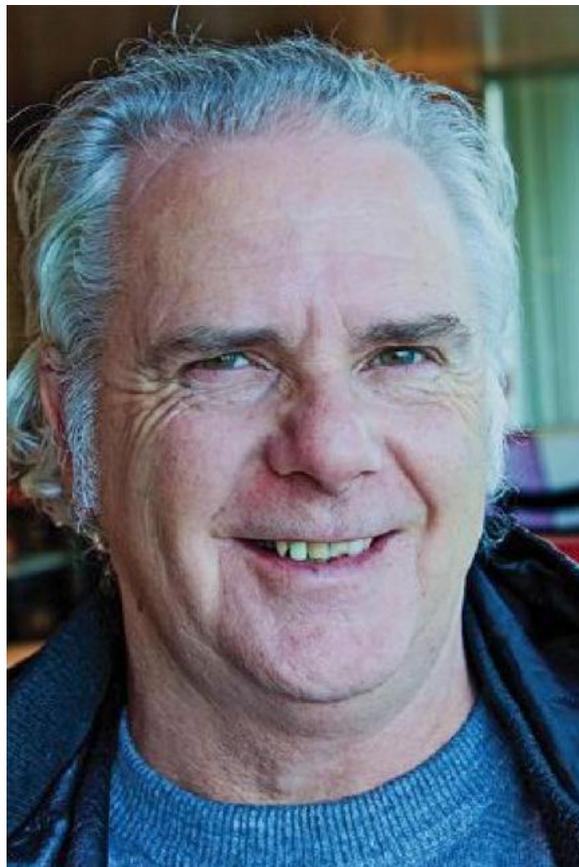
I became an Instructor of the art on the 1st

March, 1979 and established my School – the 7 Stars School of Taijiquan in 1985. Having taught for over 30 years, I retired three years ago. I can now only dedicate time for workshops at home and overseas as other projects occupy my schedule.

Although my main practice today is Wudang Xuanwu Pǎi, following my initiation into this study by my Teacher, Grand Master You Xuande, I still refer back to my original tuition of Wang Kung Shou Dao as it is so comparable to many of the Wudang Forms.

My Qigong practice comes from the tuition of Daoyin Yangsheng Gong of Professor Zhang Guande and Master Gordon Faulkner.

1. *Tongmenhui was a secret society and resistance movement founded by Sun Yat-sen in Tokyo on August 20, 1905. The intent of the society was the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and the establishment of a republic.*
2. *Also known as the Revolution of 1911, was the combination of strikes and battles that finally lead to the overthrow of the Qing dynasty, the last imperial dynasty of China. This ended over 2000 years of imperial rule.*
3. *Yuan Shikai was a late Qing military, war lord who later was the President of the Republic of China (March-June 1916) following the abdication of the last emperor, Puyi.*
4. *The Republic of China Military Academy, considered to have been one of the most prestigious institutions in China at the time and was led by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek. Following the retreat of the Nationalists to Taiwan, the academy continued to operate under communist rule, as it does to this day.*
5. *Start of the labour and anti-imperialist movement following the shooting of Chinese protestors by the British Shanghai Municipal Police.*



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