

Feng Zhiqiang

Contributed by Pan Houcheng, translated and edited by Chen Zhonghua
Wednesday, 17 October 2007
Last Updated Thursday, 29 November 2007

A Standard for Martial Art
-The Story of Grand Master Feng Zhiqiang-
by
Pan Houcheng, Shanghai
Edited and translated by Chen Zhonghua

Master Feng Zhiqiang is a famous contemporary Chinese martial artist. He is an eighteenth generation grand master of Chen Style Taijiquan and the creator of the Xinyi Hunyuan Taijiquan System. Currently Master Feng is an executive member of the China Martial Arts Association, vice chair person of the Beijing Municipal Martial Arts Association, President of the Beijing Chen Style Taijiquan Research Association and President of Zhiqiang Martial Arts Academy. He is also honorary chairman, advisor and chief coach to many martial arts organizations both in China and abroad.

Born Into Martial Arts Family

Master Feng was born in 1928 in his ancestral home in Sulu County, Hebei province. At the time he was born, the Feng family was a famous martial art family in Sulu County. His great grand father, Feng Laomei was a "Wuju" (similar to a Master's Degree in martial arts) in the late Qing Dynasty. Master Feng Laomei was an expert in the broadsword, archery and was a horseman. He had superior martial art skills and had unusually strong arms. Master Feng's father did not practice martial arts but his uncle was good at Shaolin style. Influenced by local culture and family traditions, Master Feng developed a strong interest in martial arts from early childhood. He often imitated his great grand father when he was practicing. He also loved to listen to his uncles martial art stories. His great grand father passed away when he was eight years old. His family went on a decline but his interest in martial arts grew stronger. After his eighth birthday, he requested to learn martial arts. His uncle allowed him to learn Shaolin "Tongzigong", "Zhuanggong", "Damo Yijinjing" and other forms. He then embarked on his martial arts career. His uncle became his introductory master to martial arts. Young Feng Zhiqiang was a born martial artist. He had both the physical and intellectual predisposition for martial arts. Though his great grandfather did not bestow any martial arts to him, he did give Feng Zhiqiang the physical power. In four years, he already laid a solid foundation for martial arts. He progressed with lightening speed. Feng Zhiqiang was a mischievous boy. He was competitive and was afraid of nothing. He had a sense of justice. Whenever there was a fight against a local scoundrel, he was always there. Because he had a big head and huge eyes, he was nicknamed "The Big Eyed Tiger". This name was known for miles around. Kids regarded him as their "king" and the bad boys tried to stay away from him. As a result, his parents received many complaints about him. At the age of 12, his parent sent him away to Beijing to stay with relatives so as to keep him away from trouble. He became apprentice in an electrical motor manufacturer. His parent's attempt to lead him to a skill that will help to make a living in fact lead him to a martial art career.

XINYI POINTS THE WAY

At the time there were two famous people in Beijing. They were both excellent representatives of the internal martial arts. One of them was Grand Master Hu Yaozhen who came from Shanxi Province and was famous for his practice and combination of Taoism, martial arts and medicine. He was known as "Single Finger Conquering the World". The other famous person came from Chenjiagou of Henan Province. He was Master Chen Fake, 17th generation Grand Master of Chen Style Taiji. He was known as "Taiji, the One and Only". There were many, many legends about the superb martial arts of Grand Master Hu Yaozhen and Grand Master Chen Fake.

It would be a dream of life time for any young person of the day in Beijing to become a disciple of these two famous masters.

Of course, Feng Zhiqiang heard about all of this and wanted to meet these two masters. However, because of the special circumstances of the time and the traditions; there being no one to introduce Feng Zhiqiang to either of the masters, he had to put aside his admiration for these two people. There was no way at the time for him to meet them. Luckily one day he heard by chance that one of his martial art brothers came from the same hometown as Grand Master Hu Yaozhen. He asked his martial art brother to try and introduce him to Master Hu.

The first time Master Feng met Master Hu he was somewhat disappointed because Master Hu was not as he expected him to be. Master Hu was not any different than a normal person. He wasn't bigger and as a matter of fact he looked quite feminine. His fingers were very thin and soft, his face was full of kindness and always had a smile. This made Master Feng quite suspicious of his skills.

After hearing Feng Zhiqiang's martial art quests and experiences, Master Hu smiled and said, "You are meant to be a good martial artist but this way of practice will not get you anywhere in this field. Feng could not understand. He thought out loud to Master Hu "I learned Shaolin from childhood and studied Tongbei very hard, I can lift heavy stones and I can break rocks and bricks. How can you say this does not work?" Master Hu put on a serious face and said "Chinese martial art encompasses a large repertoire of knowledge. It is not only about brute force. The way you are practicing is the destruction of your body. It is the destruction of the physical body that your parents bestowed you." Destruction? Feng had never heard of words like this before. He had only heard that real kung fu comes from real hard practice. Master Hu knew that at this time it was difficult for Feng to understand. He asked Feng to hit him. Of course Master Feng said he did not dare to as a student. Master Hu said, "I will let you hit me anywhere that you want." Feng used 30% of his power and hit Master Hu twice. Master Hu urged him to hit harder. Feng thought, well, he asked for it. "Don't say that I have no respect for my elders." With the third punch he used all his power. He used the technique of the "Canon to the Sky" and hit Master Hu. It was a fast punch and was full of power. But when the fist landed on Master Hu it was as if Feng had hit cotton. Feng was taken aback. He then felt a tremendous force bouncing back at him. He was bounced 3 meters away against the wall. Upon landing he saw stars and broke into a cold sweat. When he came to, he realized he was not hurt. He looked at Master Hu, who was still standing there as if he had never moved. Subconsciously, Feng thought that he had hit a wall of qi. He did not see Master Hu move. He was totally perplexed. As he was thinking, Master Hu said "It's my turn now". Feng thought, "Well, when I hit you, I wasn't prepared to defend myself. But now I am ready for you." So he summoned up all his power of the dozens of years of training into this one chance. He thought he was standing as firm as a rock on a mountain. Then Feng saw Master Hu walking towards him and stretching out one finger. Master Feng was watching carefully. He did not dare to be careless. As he was gathering all of his strength to fight back a strange feeling came over him. He did not know what it was but suddenly a strong force came out of the tip of Master Hu's finger. He felt a shock on his body as if being electrocuted. The whole body was bounced back and flew backwards. He landed again on the same wall. "What kind of kung fu is this?" Master Hu smiled, "This is called internal qi gong. It is called The "Qi Gathered Into One Bullet and it comes out to one point." Suddenly Master Feng realized what he had heard before, "Single Finger Conquering the World". This is real! He felt that he had seen real martial art and what he had been seeking for all his life was right in front of him. And this man standing in front of him is the man he wanted to learn from. He knelt down in front of Master Hu. From this point on, Master Hu Yaozhen became Feng Zhiqiang's third martial art master.

He studied Internal Qi Gong and Six Harmony Xinyi Quan from Grand master Hu Yaozhen. He studied the gathering of qi, the nurturing of qi, the training of qi and the training of mind intent. Starting from the santi stance to dantian, he studied the Four Limbs, the Five Elements and Six Harmonies. He studied the Four Hands, the Twelve Shapes and 24 Hands. By then he started to understand the meaning of internal martial arts. Day in and day out, year in and year out with his hard work and previous foundation Master Feng's martial art improved rapidly. His temperament also improved, he became more calm and collected. He became a famous martial artist within the Xinyi style.

SETTLING DOWN IN Taiji

In two years, under the guidance of Hu Yaozhen, Feng Zhiqiang's Xinyi Neigong was already at a very high level. Not only that his heavens (Small and large heavenly circles) and dans (the three dantians) were open, he had reached the level of converting the qi into spirit. He also opened the "Heavenly Gate" and closed the "Earthly Door". One pellet of Hunyuan Qi moved around his body at will. The five bows in his body were giving him springing force. When he lifted heavy weight it would appear light to him. These two years of training had fundamentally transformed him. Whenever he compared skills with other people, one touch would decide the outcome.

Just at the time that he was starting to appreciate his good fortune with Master Hu, Hu was also planning the future of his protegee.. Master Hu was a person who achieved Dao. He realized that his favorite disciple was not only a martial art genius but also possessed the ability to combine different styles into one to create a new style. China has a huge repertoire of different martial arts. Each style is only a drop in the ocean. The viewpoints of each style and the restrictions of different styles were not fitting for the advancement of Chinese martial art. They were not befitting for the training of individual martial artists either.

A wise martial artist should not be limited to one style. He should be a melting pot of all the rich martial art legacy. Through years of observation, Master Hu reached the conclusion that Chen Style Taijiquan was based on the philosophical theory of yin and yang with qi gong special breathing methods and traditional martial art. Other Taijiquan styles were derivatives of the Chen style. Chen style and Xinyi Quan both belong to Neijia Quan and the theories were rooted the same. He decided to recommend Feng Zhiqiang to his good friend, Chen Style Taiji outstanding representative, Master Chen Fake. On hearing this, Feng Zhiqiang was very happy but could not understand. He was happy to be the disciple of two of the most famous martial artists of the day. He couldn't understand because Master Hu's move to recommend him to learn Chen style was against the normal rules of the day. Why? Master Hu Yaozhen saw through him. He explained, "Taiji and Xinyi are one of the same. You can learn from Master Chen Fake, Chen style Taijiquan, and at the same time I will continue to teach you Xinyi Neigong. This is called double tracking. This will be very beneficial to you. You must treasure this. Your future is unmeasurable. Then he said, "Martial art is a rich legacy of Chinese culture. It is not a private inheritance of a family. Only when we rid ourselves of personal attachments to styles

and families; Only when we learn what is substantial; we will be able to carry on the legacy of Chinese martial art". These words from Master Hu Yaozhen deeply influenced Feng Zhiqiang in his life. Feng Zhiqiang's ensuing martial art career was an exemplary representation of the teachings of Master Hu Yaozhen.

Chen Fake deeply respected his good friend, Hu Yaozhen for recommending his favorite disciple to learn from him. He understood that it was no ordinary event. He knew that this young man was not a common young man. He seriously and happily accepted Feng Zhiqiang as a disciple. So, Chen Fake became Feng Zhiqiang's fourth martial art master. Several decades later, Feng Zhiqiang became successor and carried on the traditions of Chen Fake's Chen Style Taijiquan and promoted Chen Style Taiji to the outside world.

After he started double tracking with both masters, Feng trained even harder. In the meantime he graduated as an apprentice from the electric appliances repair shop, and searched for a way to make a living on his own. After he was set in his profession, he started practicing at four o'clock every morning. He practiced gong fa and he practiced the forms till about eleven o'clock in the morning. Every day he practiced seven hours. Starting from Xinyi to Taiji, from Six Harmonies to Silk Reeling, from internal training to external training, from static gong to mobile gong, from static post to mobile post, from single, barehanded training to paired training, from forms postures to push hands. He practiced Xinyi and Taiji at the same time. Static, mobile, inside, outside at the same time. Double tracking, double improving. During the eight years from 1950 to 1957, Master Chen Fake corrected Feng's form eight times and through those corrections Feng understood the essence of taijiquan and the true original practice method. At the same time he would present to Master Hu Yaozhen, Master Chen Fake's oral teachings and his own understandings. Master Hu would explain the theory of martial art to him. The theory of yin and yang. The theory of medicine and the theory of martial technique. This furthered his insights into martial arts. The seemingly different and yet same teachings of both masters are taking roots in him and are mixing in his melting pot.

In 1953 the Beijing Capital Martial Art Society was formed. Master Chen and Master Hu were the President and Vice-President respectively. This Society combined the research and practice of martial art into one. Martial art enthusiasts could receive good advice and training there. Feng Zhiqiang's martial arts brothers would go to the Martial Art Society every few days but Feng was there every day. Once he was at the Society he would first look after the daily chores for Master Chen and Master Hu. Whenever the Masters would have any time and when the Masters were willing, he would ask for guidance. He seized every possible opportunity for learning.

At this time Feng Zhiqiang received the order to be the training partner for Chen Zhaokui, son of Chen Fake and was therefore at the Society every night. This gave him another opportunity to listen to Master Chen Fake's personal and private teachings.

It did not matter whether Master Chen Fake was exchanging skills with outsiders or with his own disciples, he was always precise and serious. Feng Zhiqiang's taiji brothers wanted very much to learn to push hands but they were afraid of getting hurt by Master Chen Fake. Most of them concentrated their effort on training the forms. Feng Zhiqiang saw this as another invaluable opportunity to learn. Even though he too could not withstand the power of Chen Fake, he would not give up. As time passed on, it became an unwritten rule that whenever there was a test of a technique all brothers would happily let Feng have the "Happy Occasion".

As time passed and Master Chen became older, Feng Zhiqiang would normally exchange skills with visitors on behalf of Chen Fake. Because he had more opportunity for practice, Feng's kung fu progressed more rapidly and his reputation started to spread. He was commonly regarded as Chen Fake's senior disciple. "I have a senior brother, his name is Feng Zhiqiang, he is extremely intelligent and among our brothers, his kung fu is the best." These were the written words of Chen Zhaokui in his personal letter to Mr. Wan Wende of Shanghai.

At the age of 30, Feng Zhiqiang already embodied the art of internal and external in the form of Xinyi and Taiji. His reputation as one with few equals spread to every corner of Beijing martial art world.

AMAZING POWERS

In the 1960s Master Feng was working in the Beijing Electrical Motor Company. In the workshop, motors weighing 1,000 jin (which is about 1,100 pounds) were being transported from one end of the workshop to another via an overhead hoist. One day while a motor was being transported, the steel cable that held the motor to the hoist came loose and suddenly the motor fell off the hoist. In a split second, Master Feng, who was working nearby, miraculously appeared right underneath the hoist. His two hands firmly took hold of the motor that was falling and placed it on the floor safely. This happened amid the screaming and shouting of the nearby workers. The electrical motor was saved. The workers at the workshop were shocked. When they came to their senses they realized what they had witnessed. The electric motor weighed about 1,000 jin and it normally took about seven to eight strong young men to move it. With the speed of its fall and its weight, what kind of power would it take to stop it? The workers approached Master Feng and asked "Didn't you know how much the motor weighed? Why didn't you get away instead of trying to stop it? Did you ever consider the consequences of your actions?" Master Feng answered "No, I didn't. At the time, I did not realize what was happening. I

do not know how I came be under the motor and how my hands grabbed it. The only thing I felt was that my dantian felt like it blew up and a hot gush rushed up the back of my spine. I stopped and caught the motor."

The workers in the company all had heard the amazing stories about Master Feng's martial arts but it was the first time they had seen the real amazing power of Master Feng with their own eyes. Without seeing this occurring in front of them no one would have believed what Feng had done. When the news of this traveled, everyone knew that the Electrical Motor Company had an amazing martial artist. Many young people driven by curiosity wanted to come and test him but Master Feng knew that these young people were not strong enough and just a little hot headed. No matter how they tried to "bully" him, he always smiled and never took the challenges seriously.

One day while Master Feng was squatting, working in the workshop, a fairly big and tall young man crept up behind him. This fellow had served in a combat unit in the army. He had a lot of training in Chin-Na and army combat fighting techniques. He had always wanted to try to test the kungfu of Master Feng. He saw this moment as a good opportunity. When he got close to Master Feng he suddenly pushed, hoping to shove Master Feng over from his squatting position. However, the moment he touched Master Feng's back he was thrown up into the air and then heavily on the floor. This convinced him wholeheartedly of the martial art ability of Master Feng.

At a different time there was a martial artist who did not believe that taiji could be used in fighting. He asked to test it with Master Feng. Master Feng agreed. When he punched Master Feng he felt that Master Feng's body shook just a little but he was still thrown out. Later Master Feng allowed this martial artist to press into Master Feng's body. As soon as he applied strength the martial artist heard Master Feng generate the noise of "heng" and "ha" from his Dantian. Then he was thrown out again landing solidly on the ground. He was dumbfounded.

Around this time the Electric Motor Company had a wrestling team. There were 12 members on this team. They were all active, strong young fellows. One day, as Master Feng was walking by the training ground of the wrestling team, the young wrestlers saw him and surrounded Master Feng, wanting to test his power. Master Feng knew he could not refuse. He smiled and said "Why don't all twelve of you line up together and push me together". The twelve thought that each one of them could produce several hundred pounds of power. If they all pushed together there would be at least two to three thousand pounds of power. How could they not move him. In a line, like a train, they readied to push Master Feng. The person in front put his two hands on Master Feng's stomach and on the count of three everybody pushed together. Master Feng stood there like Mount Tai of Shandong. He never moved an inch. Suddenly, Master Feng's dantian turned and all twelve wrestlers fell to the ground. This event caused all of the wrestlers to totally respect the power of Master Feng.

It was a coincidence that in 1987 in the International Wu Shu Training Seminar in Shenzhen, one of the fellow students wanted to test Master Feng's power and he invited seven other students to line up and push Master Feng in the same fashion as the wrestlers had. The same thing happened to all of the seven as had happened to the twelve wrestlers. These students too all had high praise for Master Feng's kung fu.

If you are interested in purchasing the qigong book by Grandmaster Feng Zhiqiang (there is a complete biography of him in it), please click [here](#).