



Newsletter

of the
International Tai Chi Chuan Symposium
on Health, Education and Cultural Exchange

Issue 1 May 2008

Welcome to the first issue of the Newsletter of the International Tai Chi Chuan Symposium on Health, Education and Cultural Exchange. This, and subsequent newsletter issues will bring to you the latest information and announcements on Symposium development along with information of interest on the Symposium venue, Vanderbilt University and the host city, Nashville Tennessee.

What began as an obscure martial arts technique has blossomed in recent years to be a world wide exercise phenomenon. Tai Chi Chuan is one of the fastest growing fitness and health maintenance activities in the world today. Classes in Tai Chi Chuan are now found in community centers, senior centers, parks, recreation programs and health education classes across this country.

Fueling this popularity is a growing body of scientific research that supports the anecdotal claims of health benefits for practitioners of the art. Consequently, Tai Chi Chuan has been endorsed by a number of health promoting organizations which include the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, and the Arthritis Foundation.

Designed to provide a unique insight into Chinese culture and the art of Tai Chi Chuan, this Symposium will be the first of its kind in the United States. During the first week of July 2009 at Vanderbilt University, the 5 leading Chinese Masters of Traditional Tai Chi Chuan will participate in an International Symposium designed to foster continuing interest, development and growth of this treasured art. There will be educational forums on the many documented benefits of regular practice as well as Master classes in each Traditional Style. This Symposium will offer a great opportunity to learn about the evidence-based foundation and best practices of Tai Chi Chuan and to observe the highest levels of skill and performance of this magnificent art.

NEWSLETTER SCHEDULE with Master's Interview

May 2008 – Master Chen Zhenglei (*This Issue*)
August 2008 – Master Yang Zhenduo
November 2008 – Master Wu Wenhan
February 2009 – Master Ma Hailong
May 2009 – Master Sun Yongtian

SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULE

Symposium dates: 5 - 10 July 2009

5 July 2009 – Check-in/Registration
6 July 2009 – Symposium Begins
6-10 July 2009 – Symposium Workshops, Academic Sessions, Special Events
10 July 2009 – Symposium Ends

WEBSITES

www.taichisymposium.com

Contact : info@taichisymposium.com

Nashville, Tennessee : www.visitmusiccity.com

Vanderbilt University : www.vanderbilt.edu

Vanderbilt Facility Map (with campus tours)
www.vanderbilt.edu/conferences/maps.html

Residence Halls on Campus

Click on the Residence Hall below to see amenities

Memorial House

www.vanderbilt.edu/ResEd/main/Memorial.php

Hank Ingram House

www.vanderbilt.edu/ResEd/main/East.php

Gillette House

www.vanderbilt.edu/ResEd/main/Gillette.php

Main dining hall, campus market and café

<http://commons.vanderbilt.edu/commonscenter>

Vanderbilt/Nashville

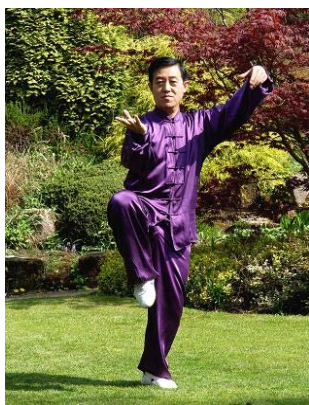
www.vanderbilt.edu/nashville

A Conversation with Master Chen Zhenglei

By Dave Barrett, translated by Master Yang Jun

"In China we say that if you practice for one day you get one day's benefit, with daily practice you can steadily improve. If you don't practice for one day you lose ten days of development. So practice everyday without stopping! Western students must understand this clearly. Practice everyday!"

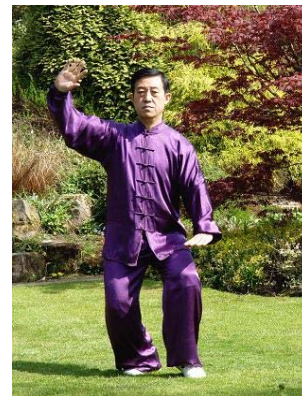
Master Chen Zhenglei was born in 1949 into a family with over 300 years of martial arts tradition. He is widely recognized as one of the leading exponents of Chen Style Taijiquan in the world today. His Uncle, Chen Zhaopei (1893-1972),



was his main instructor along with another Uncle: Chen Zhaokui (1928-1981), the son of Chen Fa-ke. Chen Zhaopei left his home village, Chenjiagou, in 1914 and established himself in Beijing as a martial arts instructor. The story goes that he set up a platform at one of Beijing's main gates and for seventeen days accepted all challenges, either single or multiple, and was victorious in every fight.

Displaying his deep skills and magnanimous character in victory made his reputation and for the next 30 years he taught in a variety of places across China. In 1958 he returned to Chenjiagou to find the old training halls abandoned and his relatives engaged in a struggle to survive a series of natural and political disasters that had devastated the surrounding farmlands and reduced the villagers

to a pitiful state. Recognizing that the future of his family's illustrious traditions hung in the balance, he moved back to Chenjiagou and began to revive the training regimens that had produced so many generations of excellent martial artists. Persevering through famines and political upheavals gradually the next generation began to emerge under his careful guidance. Out of this group of students came "The Four Tigers of Chenjiagou": Chen Xiaowang, Wang Xian, Zhu Tiancai, and Chen Zhenglei; all of whom have gone on to revive and expand the prestige of Chen Style Taijiquan.



When we were in Handan this past September, Master Chen Zhenglei was kind enough to sit down with myself and Yang Laoshi for the following conversation. I began by asking him about something we had seen on our recent trip to his ancestral village, Chenjiagou.

DB: I'd like to start by asking a personal question. Yang Laoshi told me that you used to be a farmer. When we were driving out to Chenjiagou yesterday, we were surprised to see all the roads completely covered with corn kernels drying in the sun. Did you work the corn harvest?

CZ: Yes!

DB: Is this done completely by hand?

CZ: Now we have some machines but when I was a farmer we did it completely by hand.

DB: So then it is spread out to dry?

CZ: Nowadays it is a little bit easier but they still dry the corn by hand and use it through the winter.

DB: How is it used?

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CZ: We'd use it for food, also to brew alcohol, feed the chickens and pigs. Also corn is used as a material in medicine and it can be made into oil.

DB: The reason I ask is that at that time it must have been very difficult to work as a farmer and also train in Taijiquan.



CZ: Yes, I paid double than normal people in time, working as a farmer and training.

DB: So how did this work? Would you train early in the morning or after work?

CZ: Generally we would practice at night. The village schedule is different than working a factory job. At the factory your shift starts at 8am, we however had to rise at

dawn, go out to the fields, work hard and then come back for breakfast. After breakfast again we would be out in the fields all day.

DB: So you would farm by day and train by night. Chen style is characterized by very tough and intensive training. Your generation had to work the fields and then endure this difficult study. In spite of this Chen Style has maintained its high standard of excellence. Tell us how this has been accomplished.

CZ: My teacher, Chen Zhaopei, would tell us of his training experiences and his 30 years of teaching in different places. He gave me a lot of ideas about my practice. He'd look at our group and notice that some were not training quite so hard. He would tell us that these techniques were a treasure of our family passed through eighteen generations. If this transmission stopped with the nineteenth generation and could not go on, we would be ashamed to face our ancestors and we will also disappoint future generations. So everybody would be let down if we did not work hard. Because Chen Zhaopei spoke to us in this manner, our group, including

me, felt a great duty. From a very young age I began to tell myself I must continue our family tradition. It doesn't matter how hard the work is, how tired I may be, everyday I cannot stop. In the early 1960's even we farmers had a hard time feeding ourselves. There was famine all across China. When I was young during those years many times we had not enough to eat: no meat, no flour for noodles. We ate wild vegetables and sweet potatoes. So my body couldn't get enough nourishment. When I was thirty I weighed only 58 kg. (127 lbs.). Very skinny.

DB: In spite of this you continued to train and we can see clearly the results of your dedication when you perform today. My question concerns the next generation and international students as well, how should we dedicate ourselves to training?

CZ: Of course, because China's situation has changed, not many people are willing to work this hard. On the one hand, I use the same methods as my uncle to encourage my students. I tell them about my training experiences. If I hadn't worked this hard at Taijiquan I would probably still be a farmer. Now I travel all over the world and have many students. Also today we have many more convenient aids to our study: books and videos. It's much easier to study than before. In the past, the training was limited to only males inside the family, very restrictive. My feeling is that all people should be taught openly. Before, these techniques were



used to protect your life in a fight. Now it doesn't matter how good you are, anyone can use just one finger to pull a trigger and kill you. Today this is a cultural art which I would like to share with the world. I meet many foreign students and I can see their love of Taijiquan and many wish to learn. I feel a duty to develop and share these traditional arts. In the past fifteen years I

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have had study materials translated into eight languages. My foreign students have helped with this work. What one teacher can do is limited, with these study resources the effect is greater, and anyone can buy them and study.



DB: I think no matter what language or culture, the student of Taijiquan is faced with a problem: if we practice by ourselves sometimes the practice can be very dry, empty of content. Can you offer any suggestions as to how we can make our practice richer, having

more content and feeling of purpose?

CZ: What you have mentioned about other students, I also have this problem, this same feeling. We want to create an ongoing interest that leads to regular practice without stopping. At the beginning one learns the basic forms and motion sequences. At that time if you don't have a good teacher to give you corrections and guidance it's difficult to continue your development. It's easy to drop out of the practice. On the other hand, with a good teacher this is less likely to happen. But if everyday you practice in the same way it is natural to become bored. So what can you do? You can pick up your sword or saber, different weapons, practice a little push hands. If you eat the same meal everyday you'll lose your taste for that dish. When your teacher can lead you to the level where the external techniques are combined with internal intent, when the Qi can permeate the whole body, when you have that feeling, then with each practice there will be improvement. When this feeling improves with each practice you can spend less time with your teacher and more time in self study. It will be easier to continue because you have this feeling. Without this rich feeling during practice it is easy to lose interest and drop out.

DB: My first teacher always encouraged us by saying, "Catch the feeling!" Sometimes the feeling is there for just a small part of a

sequence, but maybe with the next practice a little bit more.

CZ: In my experience with western students I know that sometimes they only practice once a week, sometimes twice or three times a week. Because they don't practice everyday this kind of feeling develops very slowly. In China we say that if you practice for one day you get one day's benefit, with daily practice you can steadily improve. If you don't practice for one day you lose ten days of development. So practice everyday without stopping! Western students must understand this clearly. Practice everyday! Not once or twice week.

DB: This is great advice. I don't want to take too much of your time, but I do have one more question. When you practice today and you hear the voice of your teacher in your mind, what is he saying?

CZ: In my younger years when I practiced I was quite serious about my work. My whole life I have followed the teachings of my uncles, Chen Zhaopei and Chen Zhaokui. When they taught I always watched very carefully. At that time my deep feeling was that I wanted to grow up to be like them. I listened to their voices and watched their motions closely. At that time there were no recorders or video cameras. My eyes were the camera and my mind was the recorder. If I needed to check something I would sit down, close my eyes and review. If I was not satisfied with my practice I would check my memories and think about my Uncles. Sometimes I would hear them criticizing my efforts, using rough language to spur my practice onwards.



DB: So you still hear this?

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CZ: Yes, even now when I may not want to practice I hear my Uncles' voices pushing me, giving me energy to practice. It doesn't matter what difficulties I've been through. In the 1980's when I met people who wished to challenge me I'd hear my Uncles giving me confidence to win these challenges. Throughout my career I have been through five stages. Firstly, when I was a farmer up to the time I was 25 years old I was studying with my Uncles. The next ten years I was working in a factory while continuing my martial arts training. I was traveling around as a salesman and I made contacts with other teachers and I was able to benefit from these friendships and improve our factory sales.



During these ten years I would often represent our village at competitions. The third stage found me working with national sports officials and I became a professional

coach. I continued my training and began to teach a large number of students, some of whom won many competition honors. In the fourth stage I began to organize regional and national competitions. Now at the fifth stage I've got a job I really like, traveling internationally and sharing my family traditions. When I was living in Chenjiagou I focused on my own training and my individual duty to our family. At the second stage I began to travel and see that perhaps there might be a career in the martial arts. In the third and fourth periods because I met many other teachers and was working as a player, coach and manager, I began to realize this could be a very good family business as well. Now that I travel internationally meeting many people who have a love of this art, now my focus is on how we can spread Taijiquan. I've been working on books and videos and I feel a true calling to this work, it is more than just a business. I've been fortunate to receive recognition within China as one of the top ten Masters and I'm

getting a lot of support from my students and no longer have to work a factory job.

DB: Let me close by saying I think your career may have come a full circle. Again you are a farmer and you are planting seeds around the world and cultivating your family's art. I predict that you will have a rich harvest!

CZ: Now that China is open I wish to spread traditional Chinese arts throughout the world so that more people can enjoy Taijiquan practice.

(Suggested reading for more information on Chen Style history and theory: [Chen Style Taijiquan: The Source of Taiji Boxing](#) by Davidine Siaw-Voon Sim and David Gaffney, North Atlantic Books, 2002)

Master Yang Jun is 6th generation Yang family and President of the International Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan Association

Dave Barrett is the Editor of the The Journal of the International Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan Association

About Nashville

How Nashville Became Music City

From its very beginnings, Nashville grew from a foundation built on music. Music has always been the common thread connecting the life and soul of the city and its people. And visitors have always ventured here to experience the music that weaves such a fundamental pattern in its cultural, business and social fabric.

Nashville's earliest settlers celebrated in the late 1700s with fiddle tunes and buck dancing after safely disembarking on the shores of the Cumberland River, a spot now commemorated on First Avenue North with a replica of the original Fort Nashborough. Nashville's first "celebrity," the noted frontiersman and Congressman Davy Crockett was known far and wide for his colorful stories and fiddle playing.

As the 1800s unfolded, Nashville grew to become a national center for music publishing. The first around-the-world tour by a musical act was by the Fisk Jubilee Singers from Nashville's



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Fisk University. Their efforts helped fund the school's mission of educating freed slaves after the Civil War – and also put Nashville on the map as a global music center.

In 1897, a group of Confederate veterans chose Nashville as the site of a massive reunion. The event was held at the former tabernacle that would later become known as the Ryman Auditorium. So many former Confederate soldiers poured into town that a new balcony was built inside the tabernacle to accommodate their great numbers. It was dubbed "The Confederate Gallery," a designation still visible today as the Ryman continues to host an array of musical events.

In 1925, the establishment of radio station WSM and its launch of the broadcast that would be called the Grand Ole Opry further secured Nashville's reputation as a musical center and sparked its durable nickname of Music City. The Opry, still staged live every week, is America's longest-running radio show, in continuous production for more than 80 years. It ignited the careers of hundreds of country stars and lit the fuse for Nashville to explode into a geographic center for touring and recording.

Nashville has also become a hub for pop, rock, bluegrass, jazz, classical, contemporary Christian, blues and soul music. Artists like Matchbox Twenty, India Arie, Bon Jovi and Jewel, among many others, have come to Music City to write and record, and names like Michael McDonald, Sheryl Crow and Jack White have chosen to call Nashville home.

The recently constructed Schermerhorn Symphony Center, home to the renowned, Grammy-award winning Nashville Symphony, anchors the downtown end of the recently designated Music Mile. The Music Mile is a symbolic stretch of roadway connecting the Symphony Center with the music district of Music Row, the vibrant new entertainment venues on Demonbruen Street, the Frist Center for the Visual Arts, the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, the Musicians Hall of Fame and Museum, the Music City Walk of Fame and the Sommet Center. The Music Mile perfectly

illustrates how the music of Music City is indeed a common thread throughout the business, cultural and entertainment sectors of Nashville.

Nashville's connection to music is unequalled, and its reputation as Music City has been consistently proven for over 200 years. Welcome to the most musical city in the world. Music City—the only Music City!

July 4th in Nashville ROCKS!

**Kick-off your Symposium
experience by attending the free
Music City July 4th celebration.**

A Music City Spectacular Weekend!

Each year, the city of Nashville opens its downtown Riverfront Park on the 4th of July to spectators wanting to enjoy free entertainment and fireworks for Nashville's biggest one-day event (drawing crowds in excess of 100,000). The celebration airs nationally on the Great American Country television channel. Country music artists perform while accompanied by the Grammy-winning Nashville Symphony. In previous years, the Pyrotechnics Association of America has named Nashville a Top Ten Best Fireworks Display in the US.

Vanderbilt University will reserve space for pre-symposium participants and post-symposium participants to reside in the residence halls if you want to attend the spectacular July 4th Celebration before the Symposium begins or stay to tour the Nashville area after the Symposium ends.

A look into the 2008 July 4th Celebration Offers a glimpse of the 2009 event

The 2008 event is billed as follows: "The July 4th 2008 celebration will be a day filled with

entertainment and fun and an evening of incredible entertainment and fireworks displays.



See the Nashville Symphony and amazing fireworks at the **FREE Music City July 4th: Let Freedom Sing!** event on **July 4th**. Then

take in the **Kenny Chesney & LeAnn Rimes: Poets & Pirates Concert** at LP Field on **July 5th**. Also scheduled to perform are **Keith Urban, Sammy Hagar and Gary Allan**. Wrap up your weekend with **Ringo Starr** at the Wildhorse Saloon on **July 6th**. “

Make plans to begin your Symposium with a rockin’ weekend of music and fun in spectacular Music City! Experience for yourself what makes Nashville special. It’s a city that resonates with life and vibrates to the beat of every kind of song. It’s a town that sizzles with American music, Southern hospitality, unbelievable cuisine and a boundless spectrum of nightlife. Come early and stay late to get the most fun and excitement that Nashville and the surrounding areas of Tennessee can offer.

Nashville Convention and Visitors Bureau Launches Music Site



The Nashville CVB is giving visitors a backstage pass to the city's music scene via a new, interactive music website. The site offers users an in-depth look at music in music's hometown with an interactive media player featuring music and video from multiple genres. Additional enhancements include live music venue showcases, songwriter profiles and a live music map that will engage visitors and promote the Music City brand.

Visit the new music site at:
www.visitmusiccity.com/music

Sign up for the latest Nashville E-News

Don't miss out experiencing a week in one of the liveliest cities in the U.S. Get the latest special offers & announcements on upcoming events! Music City's "Harmony" E-Newsletter is sent monthly by the Nashville Convention & Visitors Bureau to individuals who have expressed an interest in receiving information about Music City.

To subscribe to the monthly newsletter go to:
www.visitmusiccity.com/visitors/RequestENews

On-line Vacation Guide



With a multitude of outstanding attractions, events, tours, shopping, restaurants and live entertainment, it's hard to know where to start to find information on all that Nashville has to offer. The Convention and Visitors Bureau offers a Vacation Guide that provides planning information on attractions, shopping, sports & recreation, events, tours & transportation, lodging, dining and nightlife and entertainment. The 2008 version is currently available and will be updated to the 2009 version in the late Fall.

To view the Nashville on-line Vacation Guide, **Click** on the icon above.