

Interview with Dan McGiff (London)

What is your background in Taijiquan?

I began in 1980 with a Malaysian Chinese who practised the form as taught by Chen Wingkwong – one of Wu Jianquan's disciples. After he left England to go back to Malaysia I continued with this form under one of his top students, Gary Wragg. A few years after that we started to train the Wu Gongyi form under (Eddie) Wu Guangyu from Canada, who came over every year and taught workshops. I visited his Club in Toronto in the late eighties and attended daily classes there for one month. His students' ability was to a high standard and they trained very hard. I have also had other experiences such as a couple of months in Beijing learning with a student of Wang Peisheng. I also studied Chen-Style for 1 year. I met Master Ma in 1992 and started coming to Germany as often as I could to workshops. I was helped and encouraged a lot by the students, particularly Martin Bödicker, from whom I learned and continue to learn a lot.

Why did you start practising Taijiquan and why do you now?

I started Taijiquan following a bad motorcycle accident. I had previously tried Yoga and the Alexandra technique but found Taijiquan more interesting and challenging so stuck with it. It's difficult to say why I practise Taijiquan today as it has become such a part of my life. I suppose the main thing, if I look into the future, is to stay healthy and live as long as I can to see my young children grow up. Also, to share Taijiquan with others so that they can also have the benefits that I have enjoyed from it.

What was your most memorable Taijiquan event?

Probably visiting Shanghai and Hong Kong in 1992 with Sifu Wu Guangyu and some of his students from Canada. I had the opportunity to meet Master Ma's parents – Ma Yueliang and Wu Yinghua, in Shanghai and later in Hong Kong, Wu Yanxia and others. In Hong Kong they had a big gathering of Taijiquan people, with a banquet and demonstrations of forms and applications etc.

How is Taijiquan doing now in London?

The number of people training Master Ma's system is growing now. We have four other teachers as well myself. The students, although coming from different parts of the South East, have the opportunity to come together every 3 months when Martin and Freya Bödicker hold a workshop

here. We also travel to Sheffield for Taijiquan events with David Barrow. The feeling is very good here, we are attracting some nice people to train with and look forward to Taijiquan expanding into other areas in the South.