

Finding My Teachers

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There is a Chinese proverb which emphasizes that when the student is ready, the teacher appears. Here is the story of how I met two teachers who became very influential in my life. The first introduced me to the vast riches of Chinese culture in general, and Taijiquan specifically. He then—whether I was ready or not—gave me an introduction to my second teacher, who showed me through example how to live in a Chinese world.

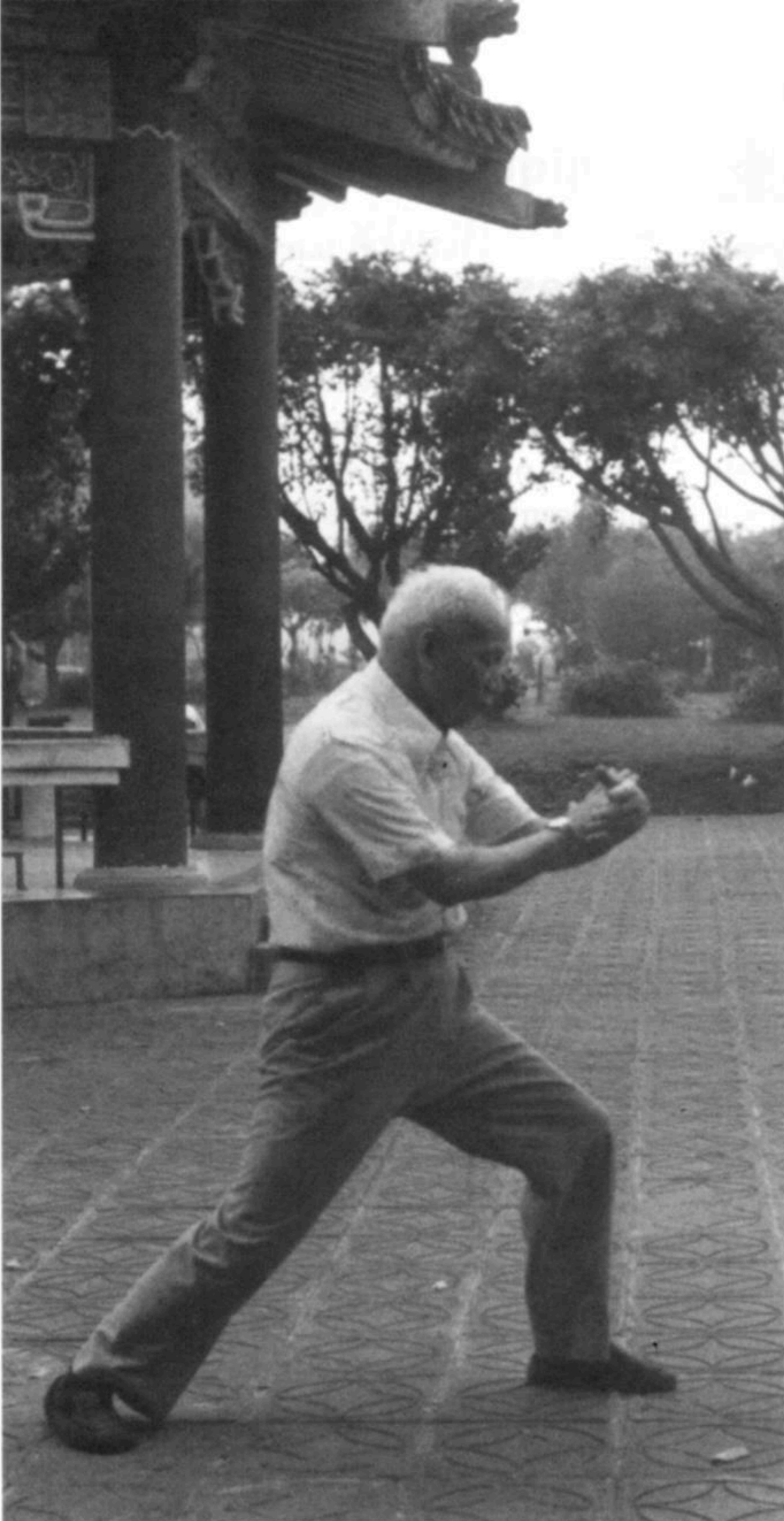


Photo: Michael DeMarco

Yang Qingyu, in a Taipei park.

Mr. Harold Chow (Zhou, in pinyin) was a refined gentleman who first introduced me to Taijiquan. He worked in the library and also taught Mandarin where I went to college. In the fall of 1973 I stumbled into his office and asked about his language classes, and, after our short conversation, decided to enroll. It was weeks later when I realized that he didn't flinch once after the many times I incorrectly pronounced his surname as the "chow" in chow mein and chow chow, the Chinese dog.

Seventeen students enrolled in Beginning Chinese, and everyone finally learned to correctly pro-

nounce "Chow" like the English name "Joe." Since only two of us continued into Advanced Beginning Chinese, the next semester allowed more contact between teacher and student. During these wonderful days of sing-song tones and kindergarten-level Mandarin, Mr. Chow also started to teach me Yang-style Taiji at pre-arranged times in whatever classroom was devoid of students. If anyone had an

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