

Tai Chi makes its way to Park City



Tommy Kirchoff and Master Fu Sheng Long in Vancouver.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TOMMY KIRCHHOFF

Master Fu Sheng Long will act as instructor for the nine-day seminar

By CASEY R. BASDEN

Of the Record staff

It is hard to determine when the Chinese art form of Tai Chi originated. Having been passed down from generation to generation, it is a practice common in the Asian country. It is known, however, that the martial art is derived from what is known as Chi Kung, a 5,000 year old health mode based on relaxation.

Now Tommy Kirchoff, a local resident, is bringing Master Fu Sheng Long, a grandmaster of the Fu Style internal arts, to Park City. A nine-day seminar will be held Oct. 17-26 that teaches the basic breathing techniques and 24 forms of Tai Chi.

The seminar acts as a pilot to determine whether or not there is local interest in the ancient art. If successful, Master Fu and Tai Chi could become a permanent mainstay. After the seminar is over, Kirchoff will make a decision about having the grandmaster teach full-

time in Park City. "If everything goes well, I would hope by the first of the year, but I don't know."

A Vancouver resident, Master Fu began martial arts at age four. His father and grandfather also practiced the Fu Style, which is a combination of various martial art forms. As a result of the grandmaster's experience, he has taught his craft all over the world. So why would someone with this background choose to settle in Park City?

"Truth of the matter is, he's 57 and needs to start making more money for retirement...He really loves to teach. I know the interest level in Vancouver is so stifled," explains Kirchoff.

According to Kirchoff, there are approximately a million Chinese living in the Vancouver area. It does not matter how talented you are, it is difficult to prosper when so many practice the same art form.

And not only does Kirchoff hope to make Master Fu an instructor in Park City, but Kirchoff himself would also like to teach. "I have a background in martial arts." But he is also quick to say that Tai Chi is different. "It's an art form that takes place within your body."

Although the craft is composed of fluid movements and is said to improve

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health, it is confusing as to why a craft that can also be used for self defense is considered an art form. It is something that does not have a definitive answer.

"That's the million-dollar question. Why are the martial arts an art?" says Kirchoff. "As Bruce Lee would say, 'No matter what you learn, by practicing it, you are changing it. It becomes an expression of your body.' I think it's your expression of these styles that makes it an art."

Tai Chi is practiced for many different reasons, and people of all ages can enjoy the craft. According to Kirchoff, Wushu,

translated "martial art," has several different components. Forms are choreographed performances lasting between 30 seconds and five minutes, which is similar to a gymnastics floor exercise. Sanshou is like kickboxing and Push Hands is a soft competition where two competitors try to push each other off balance while defending themselves by redirecting the pushing of the other.

"In talking about it, you can't experience it without experiencing it. It's an internal style. You get your body and brain to connect as one. It does make you feel really good," says Kirchoff.

With this seminar, people of all ages are encouraged to partic-

ipate. Because Tai Chi is focused on interior expression rather than difficult physical motion, young children as well as the elderly can feel comfortable joining classes.

According to Kirchoff, "This is something that a 15-year-old kid can do next to mom or dad. In basic Tai Chi, nothing happens real fast, it's real slow... It is really a health avenue. It's for health."

Even Kirchoff's mother has taken to the practice. For the two, it has actually been something of a common interest. "She really likes the Tai Chi. I think it's a really neat thing and she thinks it's a really neat thing when few

other things we agree on."

So, after a year-and-a-half sifting through the Tai Chi community looking for an instructor to bring to Park City, it looks as though Kirchoff may have succeeded. "When the student is ready, the teacher will appear."

The Tai Chi seminar is from Oct. 17-26 at the Creative Buildings Too, 2024 Sidewinder Ave. in Park City. Registration is \$100 for a five-hour session, \$165 for a 10-hour session and \$225 for a 15-hour session. Seniors are \$75 for a five-hour session weekdays from 2-3 p.m. One-hour sessions are \$20. Call Tommy Kirchoff at 513-5234 for more information.