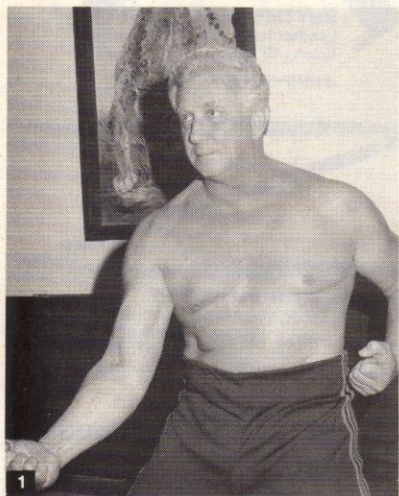


Gene L. Chicoine's

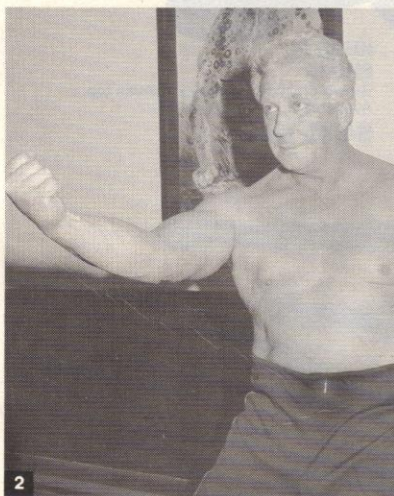
# Chinese Strength Program

## If you want to be strong, you must return to your roots.

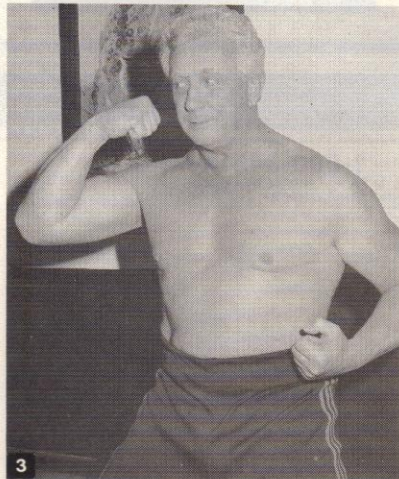
By Gene L. Chicoine and Henry Braumbaugh



This shows the extension of the chest and shoulders, similar to weight training, but also represents an excellent example of the "baseball" glove effect of the stomach from the iron vest exercise.



The arm grab. The arm is level with the floor before grabbing.



This position shows the arm grab as it is curling around.



The position of the arm grab as the lift of the arm reaches maximum height.

**M**any articles have appeared in past issues of *Inside Kung-Fu* asking what is most important: forms or techniques.

Yet, we continue to marvel at the tales of the old masters and their capabilities. This also includes some of the present-day masters.

I think most people walk into a Chinese martial arts training hall and expect that one day the teacher or master will whisper some secret that is going to instantly make him invincible.

I have said throughout my years of teaching that if we could bottle it or put it in a pill, we could all become millionaires overnight, and sad is the student that waits for this.

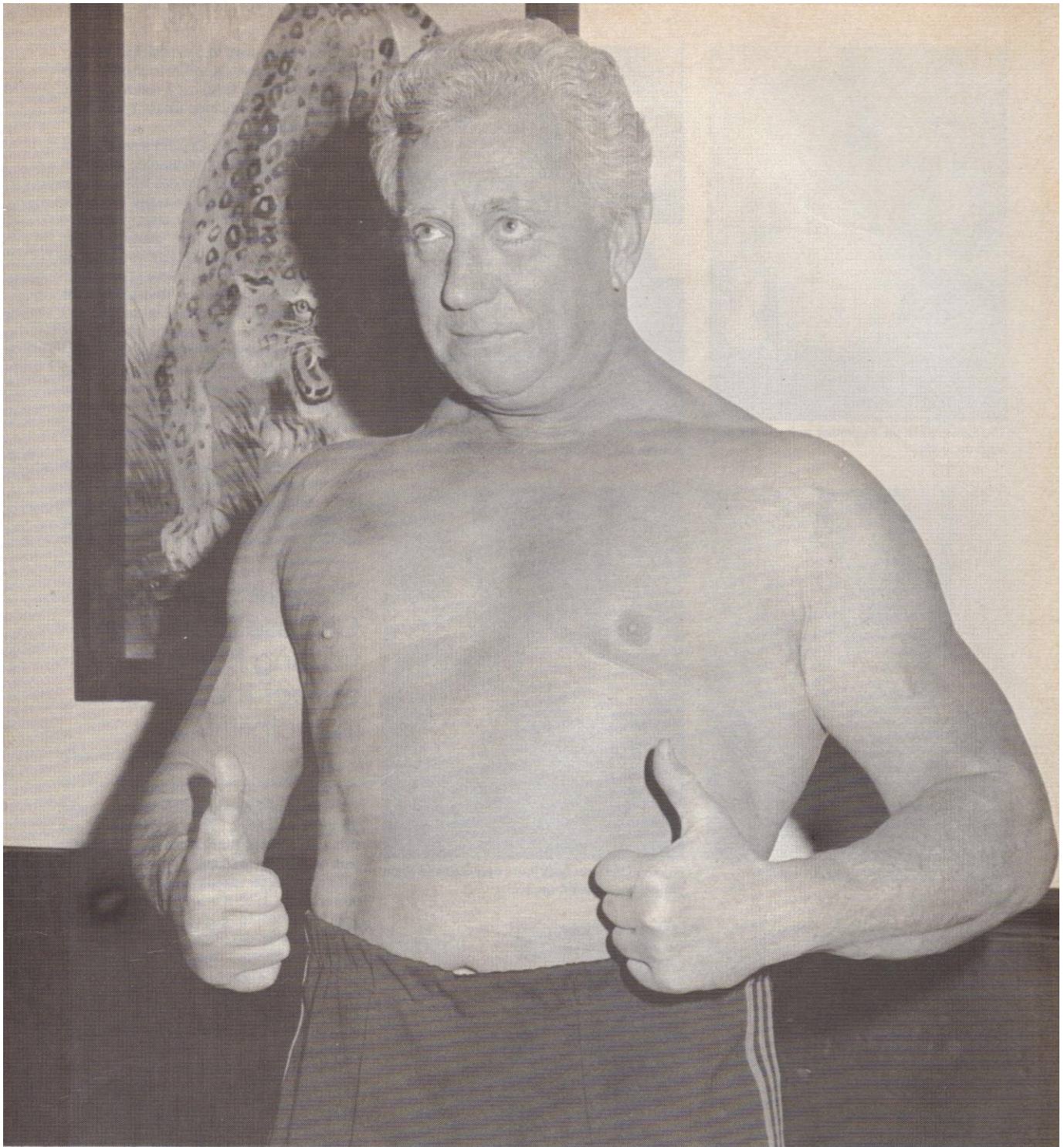
In my 43 years of training, I have taught my students the many Chinese exercises that are a must if one wishes to be great.

No athlete, regardless of his personal choice or endeavor, becomes great without a lot of hard work in his exercise program.

We sit in front of our television sets and marvel at some of these nationally and internationally known sports figures. No constant practice of any technique or form will accomplish this physical miracle. Like everything else in the art, it will not be acquired without doing leg stances from which all forms and techniques begin, and the exercise and strength programs that are necessary to make them work. They will not work unless one also has the strength and power to combine with his martial arts knowledge.

A big problem that exists today is that we have forgotten what the old teachers taught, and that was very little unless they liked you. The iron palm, muscle change, and iron vest styles are but a few and they did not advertise what their individual skills were until you tried to compete with them; then you learned too late.

Some of my peers have made statements that my late teacher, (shuai chiao grandmaster) Dung Sheng Chang, was not known for his hand training. But he was extremely skilled



No matter how much you practice a form or memorize a technique, it will not become effective unless you supplement your studies with a specific weight training program. Those who think they can accomplish the ultimate without weights are only fooling themselves, Chicoine notes.

in black-hand techniques and constantly used them to defeat opponents.

There are leg stances and strength programs for every style and they should be initiated into the students from their very first day of training. If they are fortunate and catch the teacher's eye, then special programs will be inserted into their training.

This is a major problem in the martial arts today; everyone wants to start at the top and

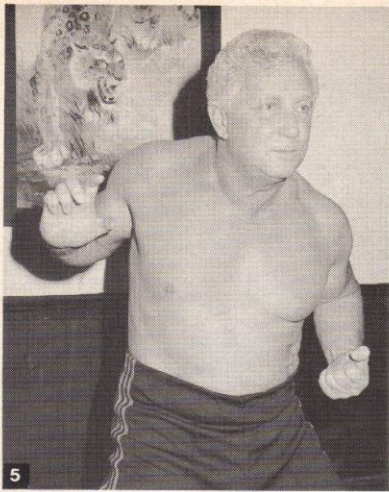
work down. Their main interest is to look good and learn as many forms and techniques as fast as the instructor can teach them, but they don't want to take the time to do the necessary work to go along with them. This will slow down the training and also the student's interest and you lose a student. However, it is the loss of income that is really missed.

It is almost fruitless to use a technique against an opponent that will not injure that

person bad enough to instantly stop him. I was taught from the beginning that one effective block and one good punch is sufficient.

We have put too much time into teaching students to fight sport karate or kung-fu to the point where we are losing sight of the real martial arts. The martial arts are a way of life, physically and mentally.

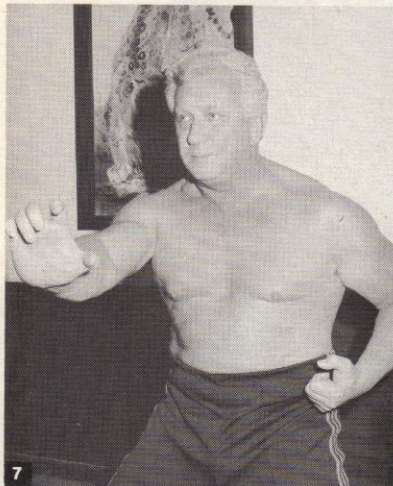
It was just six years ago that all the old



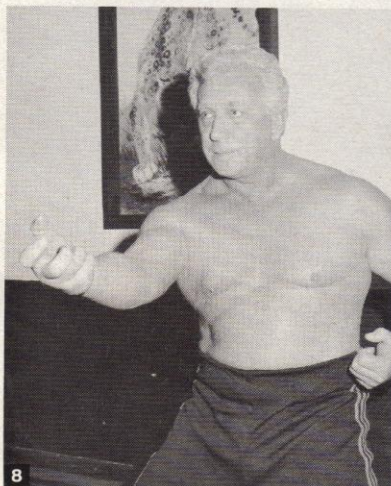
**5** The arm grab in the beginning as it pushes out from the body.



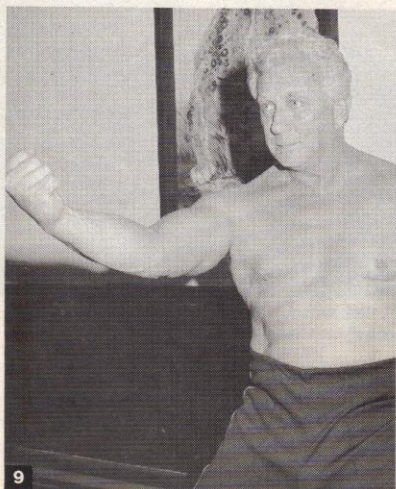
**6** The hand assumes a tiger claw position. This is the posture for pushing out in front of the body.



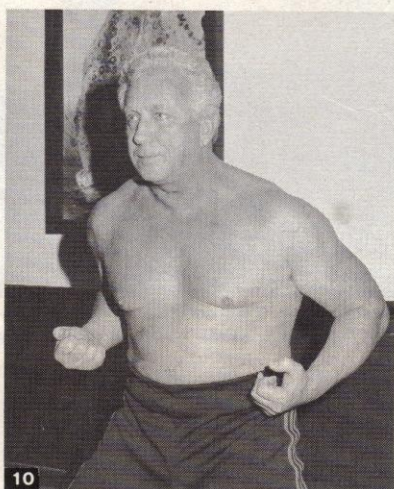
**7** Completed movement of pushing exercise.



**8** Now curl the wrist back into a tiger claw and begin pulling back toward the body.



**9** Close the hand to complete your pull toward the body.



**10** The finished position. Pull your hand back into a closed-fist position.

teachers and my own told me that I had finally achieved the status of a real martial artist. This shocked me at the time, but I realized for the first time what everything meant and how it melted together.

Many students think they are martial artists as soon as they put on a uniform and take their first lesson. I can now see that there are very few people who have really made the martial arts their life, and a large percentage of that is completing the many exercise programs needed to at least give you that one part of the personality to achieve your goals.

As I previously mentioned, the training starts as soon as the class starts. Leg stances and simple arm grabs are taught in the first six months of his training, after which the student should double his power and can at least make punches and kicks begin to work. As the student's knowledge is expanded, so must the exercise programs to coincide with the forms and techniques that are being taught.

Next will come the tiger, leopard and crane exercises, then iron vest, muscle restructure, iron buddha, stone warrior and the list goes on and on. Weightlifting can be added after several years of internal exercises — as Chinese

**“People walk into a Chinese martial arts training hall and expect the secret to invincibility.”**

— Gene L. Chicoine

exercises grow from the inside out and weights from the outside in. Then a marriage of the two will complete the first and most important part of physical training. The weightlifting is different than the standard body building and powerlifting, so as not to lose speed that has been achieved to that point. Most of the programs were developed by the Taoist and there are numerous ones just for health, just as there is in chi gung. The saying “One must be able to take a blow to give one or take a fall to throw” is not a fairy tale. Once the body has been conditioned, so has the student's confidence.

Most martial artists and all professional sports people start going downhill physically at middle age. This is a natural phenomenon. The Chinese exercise programs will allow you to get better and stronger the older you get. It is true that one has to peak at a certain time, but there's no reason to push the process.

I have been called old-fashioned by my students, but so was my teacher and his teacher before him. His physical achievements are known worldwide today, so maybe, just maybe, the old ways are the best.



*About the Author: Gene L. Chicoine is president of the International Shuai-Chiao Association. Henry Braumbaugh is one of Chicoine's top students.*