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**THE BUTTERFLY
THAT CAN KILL!**
CHANG DUNG SHENG OF
CHINESE SHUAI CHIAO

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CHANG DUNG SHENG

Chang Dung Sheng was the most disciplined boxer I met. I never saw him smile and seldom heard him speak. Severe, the product of a spartan existence, he asked for no favors and gave none." Robert W. Smith



Authors DeMaria (left) and Chema (right) stand with Chang.

Chang Dung Sheng has emerged unique from China's pugilistic history. He is a living legend; his life and career are indelibly written in the annals of Chinese *wushu* (martial arts). For those who choose to believe in the traditional concept of the "master," let the faithful take heart . . . There is Chang Dung Sheng!

Documented in the book *Asian Fighting Art* is a picture of Chang Dung Sheng (Shang Tung-Sheng) among an elite gallery of Chinese boxing masters. It shows him at a very muscular 17 years of age, already an undefeated champion. His uncanny quickness and agility in footwork and hand-skills had earned him the reputation of "The Flying Butterfly."

Today in his 70s, Chang remains the epitome of what one would think a *legendary* martial artist should be. Chang is most famous for *shuai chiao* (pronounced swhy jow). It is in this 5,000-year-old martial art that he has earned the title of grandmaster. *Shuai chiao* is the oldest form of combat in China's written history, dating back according to legend to Huan-ti, the "Yellow Emperor."

Shuai chiao has been called Chinese wrestling because of its emphasis on knocking the opponent to the ground; sometime during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.) it was imported to Japan, where it later influenced the development of judo. Chang believes it to be the most devastating type of kung fu; a comparison which is probably permissible since many other fighting styles are familiar to him. He is also thoroughly in command of tai chi chuan, pakua and hsing-i. In fact, Chang is the *originator* of the so-called "fourth style" of hsing-i, known as hsing-jin. He has also developed his own style of tai chi chuan which is taught around the world and known as Chang-style tai chi chuan. He is skilled in the seldom seen shaolin styles of *lo-han* and the eight-hands form of *ba shou*. Double-edged sword, broadsword, staff, spear, tri-sectional staff, and *kuai* (tonfa) are part of his arsenal of weapons.

But of all the styles of kung fu, *shuai chiao* is Chang Dung Sheng's lifeblood. Each *shuai chiao* technique bears the internal composition of yin-yang; that is, a twofold element. The opponent may find his head and upper torso being slammed into the ground while his feet are swept out from under him. The opponent might find his leg captured or grabbed simultaneous with a strike to his throat.

Over the years Chang has learned to maximize the effectiveness of his technique. He has become well known for his ability to perceive the weak as well as the strong points inherent in a technique. He attacks his opponent's weak-points and uses the appropriate technique focusing on the

by Frank DeMaria and Peter A. Chema
Photos by Frank Rubinetti and A. Robert Sbarge

THE BUTTERFLY THAT CAN KILL

man's weakness in order to defeat him quickly and easily.

The tornado-like power which Chang generates from shuai chiao technique is derived from a combination of directness, precision, and the ability to entrap. The shuai chiao moves are direct, quick and to the point. The falls from shuai chiao throws are usually so stunning and crippling that there is little need for judo-like groundwork; however, the ability to entrap an opponent must not be underestimated. When a shuai chiao practitioner successfully applies a specially designed grab or lock, it is highly unlikely that his opponent will escape.

Chang, himself was born in 1905 in Hopei and began his training at an early age. His instructor was the renowned master Chang Fen Yen who was noted for his BaoDin style of shuai chiao, the most famous of the three styles in China. Chang Dung Sheng quickly worked his way up to become the master's number-one student and later married his teacher's daughter.

After becoming proficient in fighting skills, he traveled to Peking where his reputation preceded him. There he fought and defeated all challengers. His victories gained recognition in China and his combat experience increased. Chang then left the Peking area and traveled throughout Mongolia, challenging the best fighters in that part of the country. Chang defeated them all and garnered unanimous acclaim by defeating the heavyweight Mongolian champion Ke Lee.

In the early 1930s, Chang taught at the Central Kuo Shu Institute in Nanking, which had been established by the government to preserve the national martial arts.

Chang never retired from the combat arena even while teaching. In 1933 Chang emerged number one in the Fifth National Athletic Meet—a very popular event in China. He also captured the championship at the Seventh National Athletic Meet held in Shanghai in the 1940s.

Chang, already nearly 70 years old, was invited to Morocco as a guest of His Majesty King Hussein in 1975. There he demonstrated his forms and techniques. During his demonstration, Chang was unexpectedly attacked by a high-ranking black belt of another Oriental fighting system. Chang quickly back-stepped and pivoted to his attacker's rear, catching him with a strike and throw which catapulted his attacker to the ground and rendered him unconscious. King Hussein was so impressed that he presented Chang with a rare sword inlaid with jewels.

In Taipei, Chang taught at the Central Government Police Academy for nearly 30 years. His defense techniques are now being utilized by police agencies throughout the world. They are also standard curriculum in law enforcement academies in New York and in Texas.

Chang is a realist. He is also a firm believer in ancient ways and customs. He commands respect, discipline, courtesy and obedience. Nothing short of perfection is accept-

able to him. Even while training as a youth, he would go to various masters to seek instruction in the one specific technique which each master had been famous for. Chang acquired over 50 specialty techniques in this way.

In recent years Chang has expressed a desire to "pass the baton" of kung fu knowledge to the rest of the world, especially to the West. In Taipei in 1979 Chang initiated an unprecedented event.

Since then, Chang has visited the U.S. several times and has traveled from coast to coast demonstrating his techniques. He has also toured Scandinavia, Canada, and Germany.

His activities in the States have further increased of late. In February 1982 Chang organized the International Shuai Chiao Association headquarters in Ohio. He has since presided over two U.S. National Shuai Chiao tournaments, where teams from New York, Ohio, Texas, California and Illinois fought for the championship. In October 1982 shuai chiao practitioners from around the U.S. assembled for promotional examinations personally supervised by Chang.

Even today at the age of 77, Chang is an advocate of physical conditioning. Each morning he rises at 4:30 a.m. and starts the day with longevity exercises followed by kung fu practice. He is a firm believer in the use of Chinese herbs and prepares his own elixirs to which he attributes part of the secret of his health. Chang insists on a proper diet and personally selects all of his own foods. Being a strict Moslem, he does not eat pork.

Chang also indulges in the Chinese art forms of music and painting. He is an accomplished performer on the classical Chinese instrument, the *nanhoo*. He is also a singer of Chinese opera.

A loner of sorts, Chang is extremely self-reliant, an ancient warrior alive in the 20th century. Chang often expresses his feeling that real kung fu people are hard to find. An old Chinese proverb similarly reflects that "Many are called, few are chosen." One fact is certain. Chang Dung Sheng is one of the chosen few!

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