

COMBAT & HEALING

The Magazine Of The World Taiji Boxing Association



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COMBAT & HEALING

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ABOUT THE COVER

Two of our longest standing members, Jim Marincic and Les Anwyl. Jim has been with Erle Montaigne for over ten years while Les has been with Erle for over 14 years. Both have evolved in their training quite differently, but have come to the same end after many years of training.

We have an article from Jim in this issue and one from Les will follow in a future issue.

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WORLD TAIJI BOXING ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CAMP

By Geoff Weiss

Being my first camp with the W.T.B.A. and having experienced many such martial arts training camps, I was prepared for strict discipline and hard training. Well, the training was certainly there, but discipline? There was, refreshingly little or no discipline. In fact this camp was more like a gathering of old friends and new, with a wonderful social atmosphere. Even when the boss, (Erle Montaigne) was not at the camp, training continued with the other instructors from around the world sometimes right through the night. It was sometimes a great effort to rise at the arranged 7.00 each morning when Erle arrived for the first lot of training. No whistles, no gongs to herald the start of training, Erle would just begin whether or not we were there, we soon realized this and hurried down to the training area.

Even when the boss, (Erle Montaigne) was not at the camp, training continued with the other instructors from around the world sometimes right through the night.

This year, I am told, saw the largest number of people attending with at one time over 70 training. They came from all States bar the NT and

from five different countries. The New Zealand girls were very strong with the whole three instructors arriving well before the official opening of the camp for training with Erle, as did Axel from Adelaide and Les from Sydney.

The first two days were taken up with renewing old acquaintances and meeting with the first timers. On the third day, the training began officially.

Erle told us that it did not matter if we all didn't remember the whole thing, as long as we remembered the first two palm changes

This year Erle concentrated on bagwa and at the beginning, told us that we would try and get through the whole circular form! I thought this an impossible task, but at the end of the fifth day we had learnt the whole form with the sixth day left for much needed revision. Erle told us that it did not matter if we all didn't remember the whole thing, as long as we remembered the first two palm changes as this is the essence of bagwa. All of us remembered the first two changes and about 70% remembered the whole bagwa circular form. A great thing this was, to come to a camp not knowing anything, and to leave with the whole bagwa form! Most of us arrived with our respective teachers and will

be able to now carry on with this most intricate and beautiful martial art.

The morning after the first day's training, many of us thought that we would never walk again!

The morning after the first day's training, many of us thought that we would never walk again! I personally crawled out of my bunk and took quite a time before I could actually stand up straight. But as the morning's training began, we soon forgot about the soreness with our brains taking over in the soreness department.

Bagwa was not all that was being taught. Many of the instructors wanted to go over many areas that they already knew and some new areas such as the advanced pauchui form and san-sau. This form is a way of learning about continuous attack at a fa-jing level and basically "never giving a sucker an even break", as Erle puts it. I was not doing this form, being a relative beginner, but watched as some of the others were being taught and it looks absolutely explosive when done correctly.

Other instructors were busy doing what Erle now calls "joining arms" as opposed to "push hands". This is where we learn about dim-mak and how to fight rather than just pushing and pulling as is done in most other taiji schools.

The area in which the camp was held is called "Midg-inbil Hill" which is about 30 minutes drive to the S.W. of

helpers prepared each meal and everyone was satisfied, even if some of the meat eaters were running to the loo every hour or so! A good clean out for them as all meals were vegetarian.

During brief moments of rest, I asked Erle some questions about the camp.

G: What difference is there with this camp to previous years.

E: I think that this camp is the nicest of our camps so far. And this is because most of the people attending are now all old friends and really love to meet each other and catch up on what they have each done over the past year. It also has to do with this great camp area, it's really laid back. The last camps we had were at a Police Boys camp and it was a bit restrictive with everything having to be spotless when we left etc. The people

And that adds to the relaxation of the whole camp.

I think that every martial art has its time, and this was the time of bagwa. Worldwide

G: Why did you concentrate on bagwa this time?

E: I think that every martial art has its time, and this was the time of bagwa. Worldwide, there seems to be a swing towards bagwa. I think that this has to do with its being one of the last "unknown" martial arts, and people think that there may be that last bastion of mystical about it.

G: What do you mean by that?

E: People love to think that there is still that unknown martial art that will impart great powers upon them with not much work, as taiji was about twenty years ago. Those who could not get the martial art of taiji right, and who learnt that there is nothing more mystical than simple hard work,



Les Anwyl, Bagwa Staff

Murwillumbah in the mountains at the North of the State of new South Wales and not far from the Queensland border. The area is sub-tropical so even in early Spring, it is quite warm during the days. This holiday camp is the ideal sight for a martial arts training camp as it is set in natural bush with other activities available, such as canoeing, horse riding and archery, along with some beautiful bush walks. The living area is bunk style with ten people in each hut with its own shower and toilet. Erle, with the aid of some able



World's Largest Bagwa Circle

who own this camp just expect it to be clean when we leave.

then called it a health art and only that. Now it's the turn of



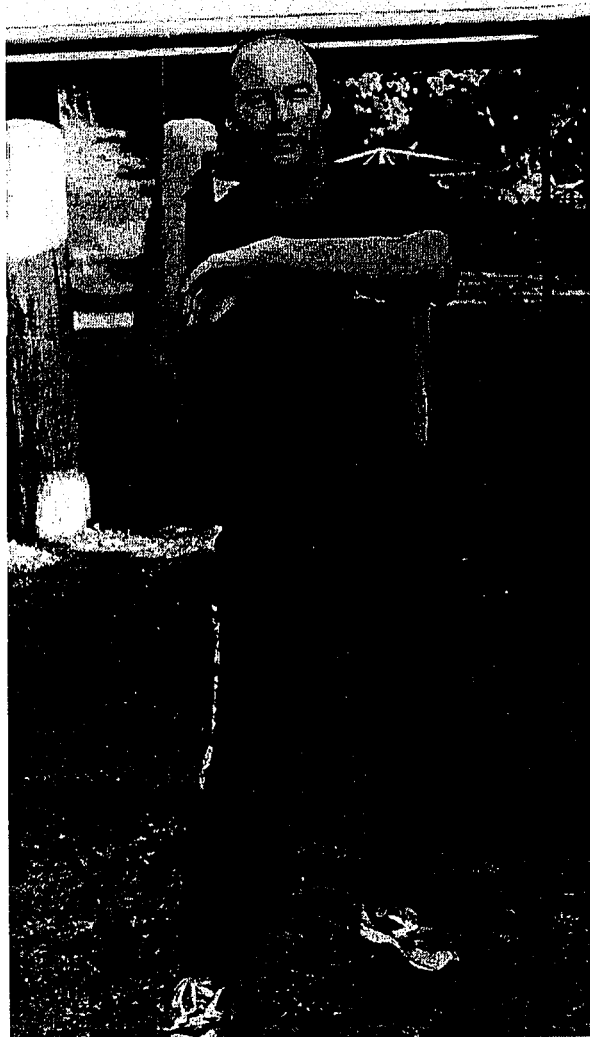
Almost The Whole Group

bagwa. There will be many who take up this great internal art because they think that they will become supermen, but in the long run, will realize that in order to gain the great health and martial benefits, will have to do much hard work as you are all finding.

Yes, whenever I teach anything, I like to leave the mystics way behind.

G: So, is it your idea that by leaving us all legless, you are showing that it requires hard work to learn it?

E: Yes, whenever I teach anything, I like to leave the mystics way behind. Those who would only learn one minute part of the form over many years, or those who would only do forms for the rest of their lives and expect to become superman. These will give up learning from me because its just too hard for them. All of these people here have been coming for many years and along the way, the weak ones have dropped off leaving me with only the strong ones



Allan Williams

who wish to learn the whole system.

G :
But why give so much, many, especially those senior citizens who attended, will never be able to learn the whole lot surely.

E :
No, they will not, but as I said to begin

with, if they are able to get just the first two palm changes, then they have the essence of what bagwa is all about and if those two are all they ever practice will gain great health benefits from their practice. But I am noticing that many of them are already understanding the whole system and they will not forget it. Thanks to Annie.

G: Annie?

E: Yes, the most wonderful lass from New Zealand. Annie has been with me for many years and taken it slowly. Now, she is teaching the whole group when I leave off. She takes you all over the whole thing many times after I go and teach the others.

G: I looked and heard in horror when someone from

this group wanted your attention. Not the customary, "master" said quietly, or someone comes up to you and gets your attention with a bow, but rather a loud "ERLE"! To me



John Ross & Peter Dawkins

that sounded quite disrespectful.

E Well, Geoff, you too will learn about Erle's filopastry if you stick with us. We are all equal human beings, and it wastes time to come over to me, so a quick, loud holler gets my attention and I come quickly to the group. Nothing disrespectful about it, I too call out to people if I need them, so why shouldn't they call out to me? You will learn that I am

not a master, I am Erle, I am not sifu, I am Erle. And everyone here is my equal and respect is given from both sides, but this is real respect and not some bullshit respect because

they want something from me, they all respect me, and me them.

G: I think, from what I see, it's more than just respect, they all have a great amount of love.

E : Yes, that's true, when the camp finishes each year there are a few tears. I think that because of the way of the warrior, we have created many wonderful bonds between all of these people and the new ones immediately feel this and are brought into this love.

G: What do you mean by "the way of the warrior"?

E: Many think that this means push ups and training in water-falls, having a few dojo sparring sessions etc. The way of the warrior is not just being able to fight, it means much more than that.

The way of the warrior is not just being able to



Billy Keefer

fight, it means much more than that.

In fact in my new book, the second in the series on Dim-Mak, I devote a whole chapter to the "way". This includes the way we think about mother earth, how we relate to each other, how we love each other, how we relate to every living and inanimate object on the earth. This is the way of the warrior. Being able to fight is just a minute part of it all.

G: Tremendous enthusiasm and energy at this camp. Why?

E: I think it's just the general energy of the whole group joining and growing. At



Big & Little, Annie Blackman & Axel Post



Our Other Two Kiwis, Deb Harte & Lyn McAllister

each camp, many of the instructors stay up all night training, mainly to train with Axel, he's just so strong and tall, but a lovely person to boot, as all of our people are. If they aren't so, they soon leave.

G: One of the women complained of a stiff and sore neck on the first morning but after a few minutes of bagwa, was as right as rain!

E: What bagwa lacks in "formal" healing studies, it makes up for in sub-conscious healing. This is because the whole form was invented by men of genius who knew about body and mind and energy flow. The whole form is geared

towards healing, so anything wrong is fixed up almost immediately.

G: But I noticed that you were working with very deadly dim-mak strikes which were taken from the circular form with some of the advanced instructors.

the applications are beautiful in the way they act upon the human body and the reaction between the doer and the person being done.

E: Yes, in the beginning, it is not important and in fact it is detrimental to learn the dim-mak applications of the circular form. For the martial art, we have circular joining arms and the more martial linear form. At an advanced stage, the students are taught the very beautifully deadly applications of the circular forms.

G: Beautifully deadly? That sounds like an anomaly.

E: No, the applications are beautiful in the way they act upon the human body and the reaction between the doer and the person being done.

When people see these "hidden" applications, they are sometimes, gob-smacked, to use a Ken Johnson phrase.

G: Some of them, I would not expect to work against a very large person, but you seemed to just pull or attack to certain points and even the larger people go flying.

E: Nothing special here, there are points called "pull" points which when activated, one is unable to resist and bagwa makes great use of these points. You will notice that we always fight two or more people and bagwa just doesn't take care of the one and then face the other, but rather it completely immobilizes the one and then takes him right out of the action, then the second or third are easy to face with the first one or two completely out of the way. But it is the same with taiji. We are given really complicated techniques which under normal situations would be almost impossible to execute. So if we are able to execute these in a sort of way, then the more basic and easier techniques become second nature. Some of the techniques, especially those against multiple attackers remind me of rugby (football) players, when they spin, sidestep, bob and weave their way through many potential attackers. It's the same in bagwa, we actually take one attacker, spin him around so that he is thrust in front of the second attacker etc. This gives us the time to be ready in these situations.

The whole of bagwa is living filopastry, all we have to do, is to do it, and we then understand

our own filopastry from within.

G: What about the philosophy.

E: You haven't been listening Geoff, it's "filopastry". The whole of bagwa is living filopastry, all we have to do, is to do it, and we then understand our own filopastry from within. We don't have to read someone else's words and then try to emulate them, we learn our own way. "Do not follow the path of others, make your own path so that others wish to follow it". And here's another that I picked up from Sidney Poitier recently which relates to my own teaching and learning. What it means is that in the beginning when we start to learn, we think that we know it all, we know more than others. As we progress into "old person-hood", we know that we are not better than anyone, and that they all have the knowledge that we have inside. He said: "I have come this far armed with only the knowledge of how little I know". It's true, I sometimes teach people, and think that they actually know more about life than me, especially the older ones. I like to ask the older people questions and find out how they got to where they are now. Here I am, a mere fledgling as far as life is concerned and I am teaching them! This is not right, the older people should be revered and we should be learning from them. Sure, mere physical things, perhaps other younger people know more, but in the life arts, it is the older ones who know. And the way of the warrior is not the martial arts, but life arts.

G: I thought that you didn't give filopastry lessons?

E: You ask too many questions.

G: Are you holding the camp here again next year?

E: Yes, the annual 7 day camp will be held here each year, but the two day one in the Autumn will be held at Kataidja, the W.T.B.A.'s training camp run by Stuart Le Marseny. It's up here too, but further in towards Murwillumbah at Nobbies creek.

Push hands is the weak link in taiji and when we bring taiji down to that lowest link, then we weaken the whole of taiji.

G: Talking about that, you're holding a 3 month live in camp from February 1994?

E: Yes, Stuart is arranging all that. He will be taking the bulk of the training with me going down for an hour or so each day to check them out etc. It's a great opportunity for people to learn huge chunks of information, especially those from overseas. So far we have people from seven different countries coming, fifteen people so far with another five who aren't yet decided.

G: The W.T.B.A. has spread hasn't it.

E: We now have schools in over 25 countries, even in Iceland, mainly due to Ken Johnson in Norway who is a great ambassador for the Association. Ken just fronts up to schools and asks to show them his stuff, and most of the instructors are immediately hooked. So because of Ken, we now have schools in Cyprus, Norway, Sweden, Poland, The North Pole! Iceland.