

Kung Fu master sensei's in town

No Karate Kid, Gong Wei Xu's the real thing

by Steve Labarbera

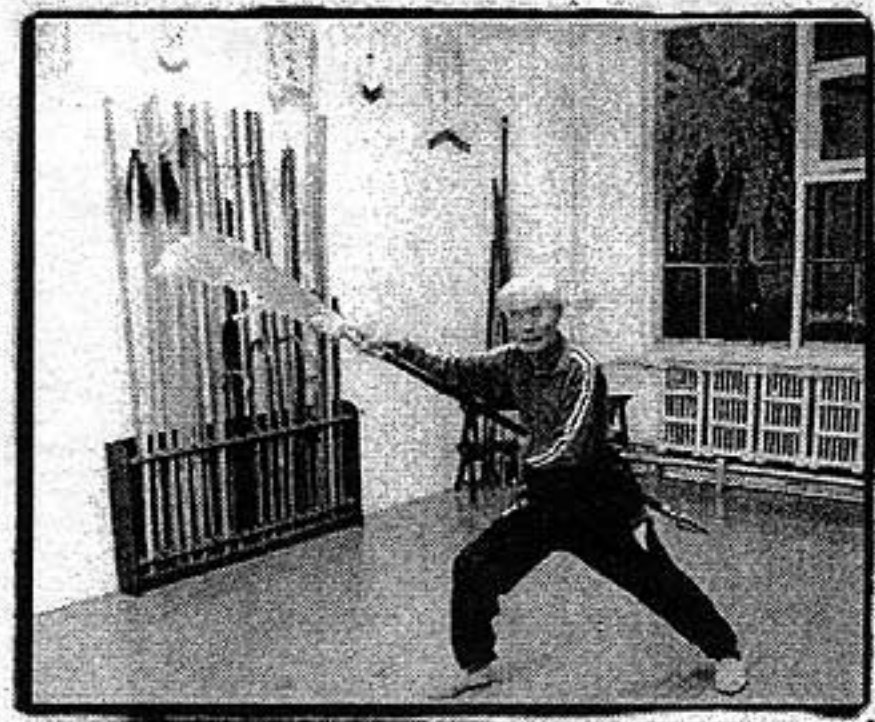
For people whose sole conception of martial arts masters doesn't extend past The Karate Kid's Mister Miyagi, Gong Wei Xu's in town to show them a thing or two.

Xu is no Hollywood sensei. An eighty-two year-old Grand Master in northern-style Kung Fu, Xu is the real thing. He has a school in Vancouver, but for the next two weeks, he'll be passing on the tricks of his trade to eager Montrealers at the Shaolin White Crane Kung Fu club.

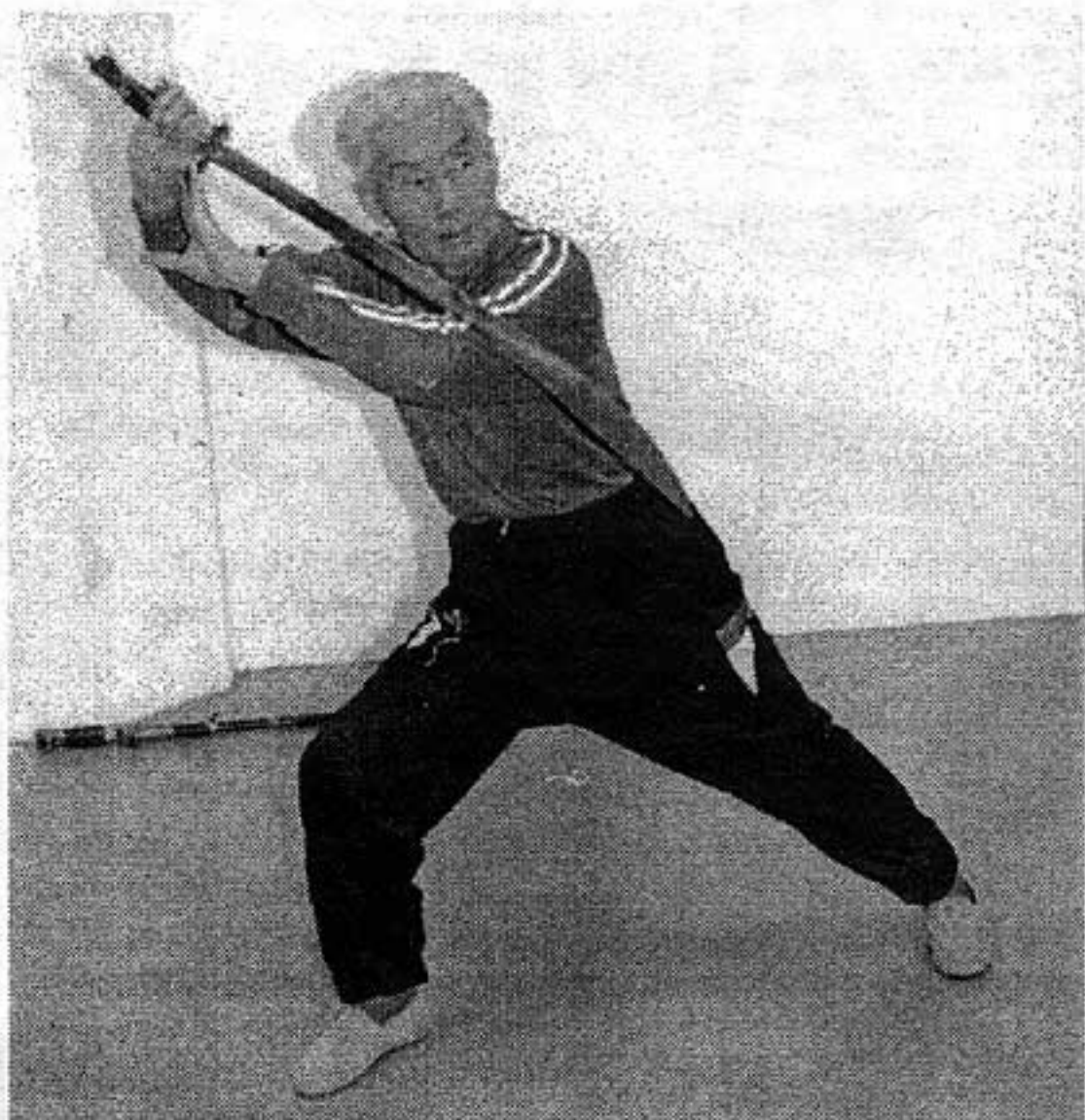
Born during the first world war in a small village in China, he took up martial arts as a hobby while in his teens. By the late 1930s, he was in Shanghai learning from the masters of the Central Chinese Military Academy. He later taught in various places throughout China until he came to Canada about ten years ago. Nowadays, aside from his teaching duties in Vancouver, he hits the road to teach students for one month a year in Montreal and another in Toronto.

Sounds like alot for an eighty-two year-old? Not for Master Xu.

During his stay here, he has already taught as many as four 90-minute classes in a single day. And it's not like he just sits there barking orders at his students; Master Xu still jumps and kicks better than people one-quarter his age.



World-famous kung fu master struts his stuff



STEVE LABARBERA

Gong Wei Xu Nearly 70-years of ass-whuppin' experience

Xu has a number of appreciative students who are making the most of the opportunity. Being taught Kung Fu by Gong Wei Xu is like learning to drive from Mario Andretti.

"Basically, he's a teacher's teacher," says Lorne Bernard of Shaolin White Crane Kung Fu.

"It's great because we have a really fantastic martial arts master and he's open to Concordia students, so people can get something special."

This is the third consecutive year that Bernard has brought Xu to Montreal and he plans to continue doing so as long as

the master is willing to teach. Which begs the question, why is an eighty-two year-old man still teaching martial arts?

"I want to leave a legacy. I want to pass on my art and share it with others," says master Xu through an interpreter. "I plan to teach as long as I am physically able to do so."

Master Xu is very much in demand in eastern Canada because his two best styles are Tai Chi Chuan and Cha Chuen, neither of which are taught by anyone in Montreal. As if all this weren't enough, he also has eight prestigious titles, including honorary president of the Eastern Canada Chinese Martial Arts Federation, and director of the Canada Chi Kong Research Institute. ●

Unfortunately, Master Xu will only be teaching in Montreal until November 5. For information, or to enroll in one of his classes, contact Shaolin White Crane Kung Fu, 1435 Bleury, suite 104. (Tel.) 843-5177.