

Timothy Tackett, serving with the Air Force on Taiwan, earned a 2nd-Degree Black Belt from the Taiwan Kuoshu (Chinese martial arts) Association.

Tim Tackett Spent Two Years on Taiwan, Where They Teach Such Fighting Styles as 'The Imaginary Fist' and 'The Drunken Monkey' Photography: Pete Thatcher; Lt. Boyd Earl, USAF



KUOSHU:

Chinese Fist & Foot Fighting



"Kung-fu?" asks Timothy Tackett. "I understand that's the term used in the United States for Chinese self-defense. But I was on Taiwan for two and a half years and I didn't hear the term used there."

"The word the Chinese used for 'martial arts' was *kuo-su* or *kuoshu* pronounced (*guo-shoo*). This just means 'martial arts' in general and not any particular technique. A karate school in Japan or Okinawa will have just one name but will include a number of different *katas* (forms), some to develop speed, some for power, some for litheness, etc. In the Chinese system each 'form' is considered an art of its own with its own name. Most Americans are used to the Japanese way of naming things and this might be why some confusion exists here about the Chinese martial arts."

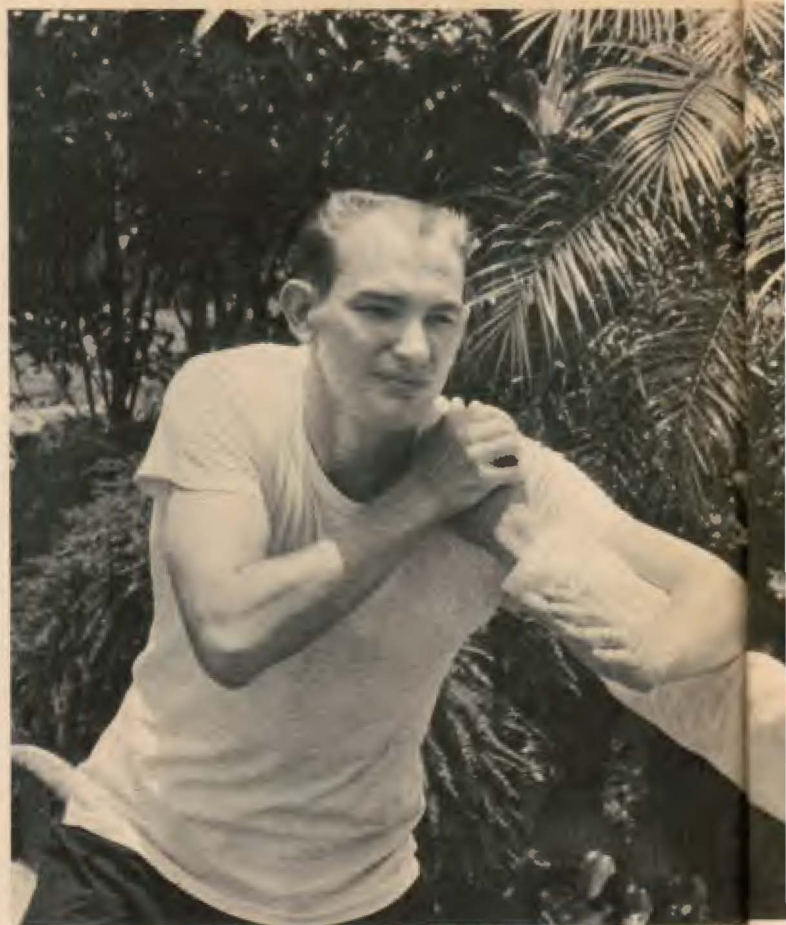
The Tacketts on Taiwan

Tim Tackett, 23, is a lanky crewcut student at San Bernardino College in California where he's majoring in education and drama. He and his wife went to Taiwan in May 1962, he to serve in the special service's office of the Shu Lin Kou U. S. Air Station (he was in the Air Force then), and she to teach.

At the time he arrived in China Tim Tackett had a young American's usual background in sports: a little basketball and baseball, some high school football. He belonged to a YMCA judo club for a month but never became really involved.



For 5½ hours a day Tim Tackett practiced Northern style shao-lin (above) and chen-na Chinese jujitsu (below) with Shun Mo-hui, an expert in the Monkey School. They practiced outdoors in a public park in Taipei.



Yuan Tao, in his seventies and still very active in several of the Chinese martial arts, is shown here practicing several types of Northern shao-lin and in the exercises of 'ai-ch'ü.



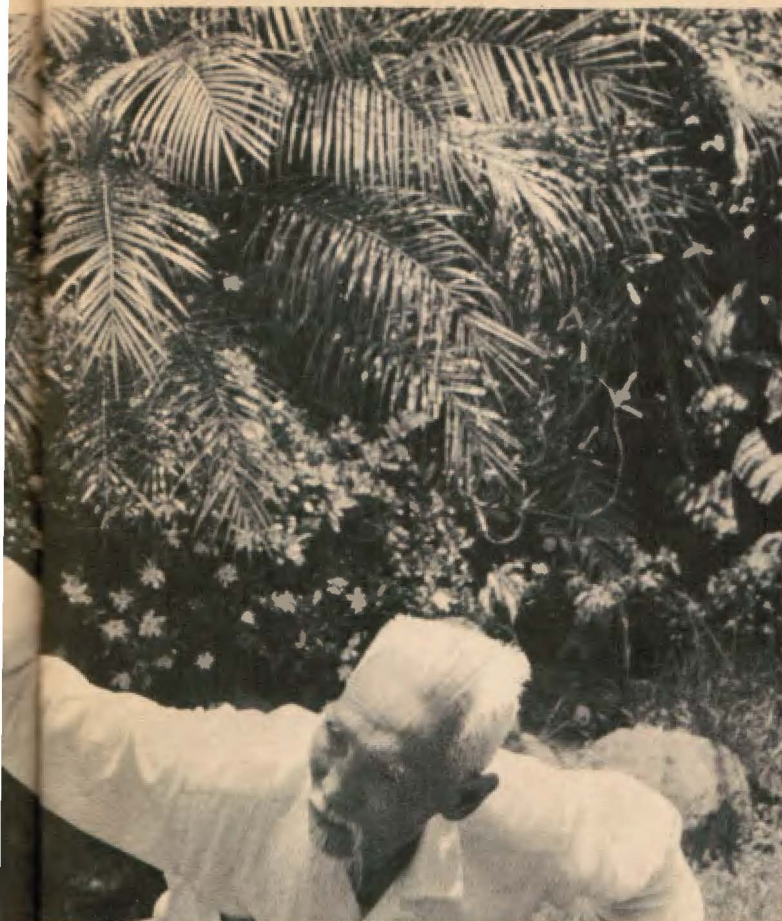
"I had a real easy desk job at Shu Lin Kou," he says, "and all I was doing besides that was eating and sleeping. I realized I was going soft and I figured I'd better get into some kind of athletics. Since I was in China I thought I should take something Chinese.

"Mr. C.M.S. Chen came onto the base one night a week to teach the Chinese martial art *hsing-i* (sometimes pronounced *hsing-ye*), and I signed up. *Hsing-i* as Mr. Chen described it (he speaks excellent English) means 'imaginary intellectual fist;' 'fist' because it involves blows and kicks, 'intellectual' because it involves developing the mental power called *chi*, and 'imaginary' because in practice the *chi* has to be extended outward toward imaginary opponents.

"I suppose this is very much like aikido. Mr. Chen taught that the power of *chi* was developed in the area of the lower belly called the *tan-t'ien*, and was brought forward by imagining that one had 'heavy arms.' While one was developing *chi* one learned the blocks, counters, punches and kicks of *hsing-i*. These could be delivered with ordinary physical power until and unless the *chi* was developed.

The Two Schools

"There is a Southern school and a Northern school of practically every Chinese martial art. Mr. Chen taught Southern *hsing-i* as well as Southern *shao-lin*. Up to the



of the Chinese martial arts, gave Tackett introductory lessons in sev-
i-ch'uan.

rank of Brown Belt we learned the basics of *shao-lin*; after that Mr. Chen stressed two *shao-lin* offshoots, the 'White Crane' school and *t'ai-chu*.

"This last is very similar to the Okinawan Uechi school of karate described in Geroge Mattson's book *The Way of Karate* — lots of finger strikes and open-hand palm blows. In fact a karateman who studied Uechi-ryu visited us from Okinawa and when we saw his *katas* (forms) we said 'Hey, that's the same thing we're doing.'

"Mr. Chen (Charlie Mei-shou Chen) is about 50 now. He holds a 7th-Degree Black Belt in Southern *kuoshu* and a 5th-Dan Black Belt in Japanese Kodokan judo. He's a native Taiwanese. The Japanese occupied Taiwan for about 50 years, up to the end of the last war, and whatever their behaviour in the rest of China they seemed to have been good administrators on the island. The Taiwanese seem to remember them fondly and they left their mark on Taiwan culture.

"The Southern (Taiwan) schools of the Chinese martial arts, for instance, have copied the Japanese system of colored belt ranks. The Northern schools make no distinction of rank."

The Taiwanese, an island people, have never been fully convinced of their Chinese-ness, and when Chiang Kai-shek

and his Nationalist government fled to the island after their mainland defeat by the Communists the Taiwanese did not give them an enthusiastic welcome. In the course of getting settled on the island Chiang's army and secret police committed some ruthless repressions against the natives and today, at least as far as Tackett observed in the martial arts, the northern refugees and the southern islanders keep themselves mutually apart.

Bloody Matches Suspended

About ten years ago, he says, island-wide matches were held between the two martial schools but these were stopped due to the large numbers of dead men and cripples remaining after each meet. Who came out on top? Well, if you ask the Southerners they'll tell you they did and if you ask the Northerners they'll tell you *they* did. Today matches are held locally and points are scored when one is hit lightly.

According to Tackett the art of the Northern school is more stylish than that of the Southern. The movements are faster, the feet are used more lavishly to kick and the kicks are delivered straight-legged, without snap. He says the Northern techniques were determined by the northern weather, which of course is cold. The practitioners dressed in bulky cold-weather clothing developed big, pressing techniques rather than techniques relying on snap. "The Northern style includes a lot of foot-sweeping," he says, "because you can do that with a straight leg."

Without expressing his opinion he mentions the theory that the Southern techniques were conditioned by the fact that early practitioners worked out on the decks of the sampans that crowd the southern rivers — thus the absence of acrobatics, high kicks and jumps. The kicks are delivered with a snap (so as to keep one's balance on a shifting deck?) and the kick is always aimed below the stomach.

Training in Two Schools

The training is different too, says Tackett, who took up the Northern style for his last six months on Taiwan. (He spent the first two years with Mr. Chen and he holds a 2nd-Degree Black Belt in Southern *kuoshu* from the Taiwan Kuoshu Association.) "The Northern school's training program does not utilize free-sparring. Its form practice seems to express more finesse and seems superior to the Southern school, but the techniques are harder to learn. The instructor will not stop to explain the movements nor slow down for you to follow. When you ask him to explain a movement his answer will be 'Don't worry about the exercise — if you keep doing the forms eventually everything will make sense.' In about ten years.

The Northerners also practice a lot with weapons—staves, chains, knives and swords, lances, etc. This is something the Southern schools don't do. The Northern schools do not have a rank system and the training uniform consists of whatever you have on, though often thin, loose, black trousers are worn with T-shirts or sweat shirts. The Southerners use the Japanese judo uniform. Northern practice is usually held outdoors in a public park while the Southerners work out in gyms."



Chief Instructor C.M.S. Chen, 7th-Degree Black Belt in kuoshu, teaches Southern style shao-lin boxing to U. S. Air Force officer Boyd Earl in the Taipei gym.



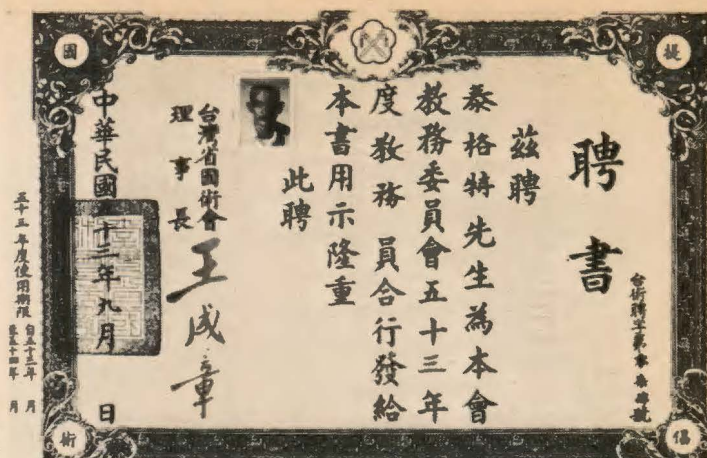
Tim Tackett with his family, Timmy Jr., 1, and Kimberley, 3. His wife Geraldine taught Second Grade for two years in the American School in Taipei.

The Chinese people practice the arts not for self-defense, says Tackett, but primarily for exercise and health. It is quite common to see a whole office staff practicing *t'ai-chi ch'uan* (slow motion exercise with self-defense applications) on the sidewalk between 6:30 and 7:00 in the morning.

Tackett studied Northern *kuoshu* under Shun Mo-hui, 37-year-old master of "monkey-style" *shao-lin*, who started practicing his art at the age of three. He also studied a bit of *t'ai-chi ch'uan* and Northern *shao-lin* under Mr. Yuan Tao, who is 70 years old and still an active instructor.

Chinese Animal Styles

"You hear quite often of these animal styles like 'Monkey,' 'White Crane,' 'Bear,' etc.," says Tackett. "These were developed originally from observations of the movements of animals. Take the Monkey style for instance: you've seen how a monkey will pull a banana off a stalk, with his wrist bent so that the fingers are pointing back



Tim's instructor's certificate from the Taiwan Province Kuoshu Association.

toward himself. In Monkey-style *shao-lin* a punch is caught with the hands bent-wristed like this and pulled out of the way; then without changing the position of the hands you strike the attacker in the face with the backs of your wrists. It is typical of the Northern schools that a blocking hand will retaliate back up the length of the attacking arm into the face or throat; left and right combination punches are not generally used."

Animal styles, he says, serve to fit a self-defense style to an individual's body type: someone with long arms and legs, for instance, would concentrate on the White Crane school, bearish types on the Bear school, etc.

"The Drunken Monkey"

Tim found a particularly interesting style to watch was one called "The Drunken Monkey." Some adepts will work on all the joints of their bodies until they can dislocate them at will. As someone tries to push them around or get them in armlocks or wristlocks they will pretend to be drunk, dis-jointing themselves, bending in extraordinary ways and seeming to come apart — always frustrating any attack.

"I had a very easy schedule in the Air Force," says Tackett, "and for two years I was able to devote three and four hours a day four or five days a week to my study of Southern *kuoshu* under Mr. Chen. Six months before I left I took up Northern *shao-lin* with Mr. Shun Mo-hui, practicing from 7:30 in the morning to 1:00 in the afternoon in a public park in Taipei. Mr. Shun also interested me in *chen-na*. This means 'grasping and breaking' and consists of armlocks, wrist-twists and other techniques similar, I suppose, to ju-jitsu.

"Most of the instructors on Taiwan could not speak English so they had few if any American students. Mr. Shun seemed very pleased to have me as a student — he taught me free of charge — and he said it was his hope that his art would live after him and perhaps through me become established across the Pacific."

Maybe Mr. Shun's ambition will be realized: Tim Tackett recently opened his School of Chinese Karate at 12 North Sixth Street in Redlands, California, and about a dozen local citizens have already started their study of the little-known and often misunderstood martial arts of China.

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Kuoshu — The Karate of South China