

July 2011 – Volume 3, Issue 7

# THE DRAGON'S LAIR

**NEWSLETTER OF THE IRON DRAGON KUNG FU AND KICKBOXING CLUB**

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**"IRON SPIRIT, IRON WILLPOWER, IRON BODY"**



**JULY 2011  
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## **COMMENTARY**

Ahhhh....summer is finally here! You'll notice that the back parking lot has been paved and is all ready for our annual outdoor workouts. One thing missing though.....people to actually work out! As in years past, summer is a surefire trigger for that dread disease LAZYITIS! Sure there is a lot more to do in the summertime. Vacations, family gatherings, weddings blah, blah, blah.....

Look at! (Grabs you by the shoulders and starts shaking!) Get your head wrapped around this and get it wrapped quick....time waits for no man! The clock ticks inexorably forward. A missed workout can never be made up! You can either progress from day to day, getting stronger and stronger or you can do nothing and get weaker and weaker! In the words of the "father of physical culture" Bernarr McFadden (1868-1955)... "weakness is a crime"! Take heed! Don't be a "criminal"! Get back to your Iron Dragon workouts and you will appreciate the summer in a fit and unstressed body!

As of July 2011 Iron Dragon is entering into its 15<sup>th</sup> year of operations! I look forward to many more years of teaching students the time proven methods of our 1,500 year old art of Shaolin Hung Gar Kung Fu! We will be celebrating our 15<sup>th</sup> year anniversary with a party on Saturday, August 13, 2011. I hope that you will be able to attend!

Now..... let us jump into this month's issue of "The Dragon's Lair"!

Enjoy!  
Karl, Sifu

## **PHYSICAL CULTURE**

**BERNARR MACFADDEN 1868-1955**

**FATHER OF MODERN PHYSICAL CULTURE**

*As many of you have discovered by now, martial arts training encompasses far more than just fighting techniques. It is a holistic lifestyle that develops a healthy mind, body and soul. In this modern era of cross-training, we at Iron Dragon embrace any methods that will further this ideal. Physical Culture as advocated by Bernar McFadden is part and parcel of the training to be found at Iron Dragon!*

The term “Physical Culture” to me refers to any method that improves the performance of the human body through natural means. Read that again..... “improves the performance of the human body through natural means”. Obviously, building muscle in and of itself for narcissistic purposes and by any means possible, with no physical function ie. Bodybuilding is not what I call Physical Culture. No, for me physical culture is a part of the holistic training regimen we perform at Iron Dragon where physical training is merely a component of our strategy to improve the overall well being of our students as stated in our club creed: IRON SPIRIT, IRON WILLPOWER, IRON BODY.

The words of Bernarr McFadden were a great influence on me as I began training at 13 year’s of age. I would like to share with you now the inspirational story of Bernarr McFadden, father of modern physical culture!

Bernarr Macfadden was born Bernard Adolphus McFadden on August 16, 1868 in Mill Spring, Missouri. Years later (once he had established his fitness revolution) he would change his first name to Bernarr, feeling that his name should sound like “the roar of a lion”. LOL! In addition he felt that Macfadden was a more masculine spelling of his last name. Clearly it was important to maintain a very, very masculine image back in the day!

Bernarr was born to an alcoholic father and a sickly mother. At an early age the boy was orphaned as both parents succumbed to illness. He was shuffled from relative to relative for a number of years and once overheard his relatives say that he was as sickly and weak as his mother and would soon be dead as well. Macfadden recalled later in life, that this was the impetus that set him on a life long quest to become strong and healthy. At age 11 Mcfadden was sent to live and work on a farm. The daily physical labour quickly changed the weak youth into a strapping 13 year old! (Damn, I wish we could do that with some of the youth I see today! LOL!)

At age 13 Bernarr moved to St. Louis, Missouri and took on a desk job as an office boy. By age 16 his health had deteriorated again and he would go on to describe himself as a “physical wreck”!



*Macfadden at fourteen*

McFadden experienced a proverbial “lightbulb on” moment as he realized that hard physical work on the farm had previously changed his weak body for the better. He correctly concluded that his vocation as an office boy had ruined his health and physique. He immediately found various jobs that involved a great deal of physical labour. At the same time, Mcfadden set about designing a program of physical exercise utilizing dumbbells and long distance walking. Over the years, he built an impressive physique and as is common to those that have made such physical improvements...his confidence soared!

Still in his early teens Macfadden joined a gym and became a highly skilled gymnast. He was taken under the wing of Champion Professional Wrestler George Baptiste and became an accomplished wrestler as well! Macfadden went on to defeat more than a few heavyweight favourites in public matches.

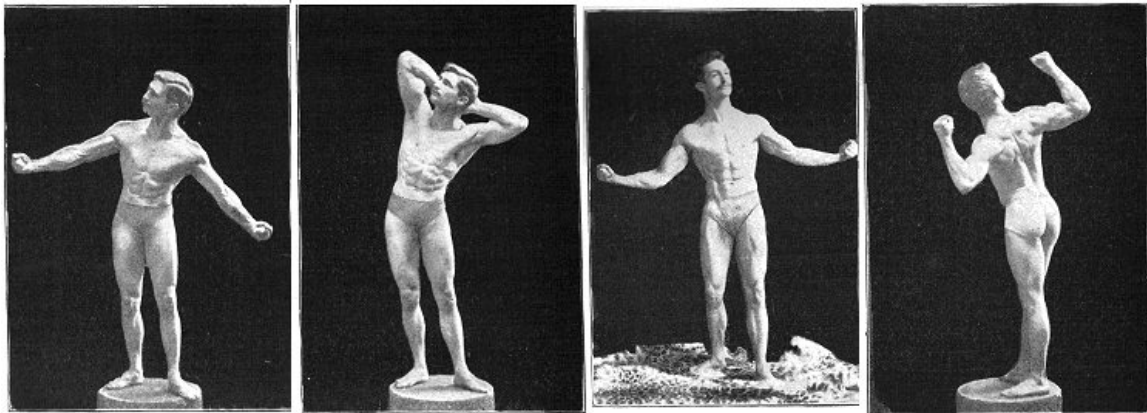
Macfadden became a ravenous reader of books relating to physical culture, nutrition and fasting, spending much time in the local library during this period

Around 1887 Mcfadden opened his first physical training gym under the banner “Bernarr Mcfadden – Kinestherapist – Teacher of a higher Physical Culture” and became an acclaimed trainer. He ambitiously wrote a number of training and diet books but was rejected by the publishers due to his poor grammar and spelling!

To rectify this, in 1889 Mcfadden became a trainer at a military academy in Bunker Hill, Illinois in exchange for tuition at the school. Mcfadden was able to improve his writing skills and when he approached publishers again, his novel “The Athlete’s Conquest” was eagerly published and went on to sell extremely well!

By 1893 Macfadden’s exceptional physique (for the time) prompted a request for him to demonstrate some commercial exercise equipment at the 1893 World’s

Fair in Chicago. Macfadden was extremely well received and sales of the equipment were exceptional!



In 1894 at age 26, McFadden moved to New York and started a new physical culture studio. It was at this time that he developed a commercial exercise machine that he sold quite successfully. In addition, he continued to write his own pamphlets and booklets on health, diet and physical training.

1897 saw McFadden on a 2 year tour through Europe where he provided physical culture seminars and gave exhibitions of posing similar to modern day bodybuilding.

While on his tour of Europe, he was frequently asked if it was possible to acquire subscriptions to a physical culture magazine. Sensing an opportunity, McFadden returned to New York and set about establishing his first magazine "Physical Culture". The first issue hit the stands in March 1899 and was an immediate success! In fact, "Physical Culture" went on to become the most successful Physical Culture magazine ever! It remained in print for over 50 years!



Over the years Macfadden received many letters from his readers describing the amazing transformations they had made in their lives through physical training. He decided to publish these "success" stories in a new publication that he called "True Story". The magazine was an immediate success and resulted in numerous spin off publications that would enable Macfadden to establish a publishing empire!

When I began writing this article I had no idea as to the extent of Macfadden's contributions and influence in so many areas beyond physical culture. There is so much more to tell about this great man! Join me in next month's issue of "The Dragon's Lair" for part 2 of the story of Bernarr Macfadden, father of modern physical culture!

## **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

### **LEGENDARY MARTIAL ARTISTS WING CHUN AND HUNG HEI GOON**

This article first appeared in our Apr.2009 newsletter. I've revised and reprinted it here for those who may have missed it before.

*The overthrow of the Ming Dynasty by a powerful border tribe known as the Manchu in 1644, imposed the Ching Dynasty upon the Chinese populace. Oppression gave rise to much anti-Ching sentiment. Several underground rebel societies sought to restore the Ming Dynasty. Many of the rebels hid within the Shaolin Temples of Northern and Southern China and were aided in their activities by the sympathetic Shaolin monks. The Northern Shaolin temple was destroyed by government troops around 1674 as a result. Many of the monks escaped to the south and were absorbed by the Southern Shaolin temple. This month we focus on the originators of two of the most popular styles of Kung Fu.*

#### **Yim Wing Chun - Kung Fu Innovator**

Rebel activities continued in the Southern Shaolin Temple as the monks struggled to develop a new style of Kung Fu (based on efficient and effective techniques) that could be transmitted quickly to rebel fighters.

At that point it could take over 10 years to learn the existing Shaolin Systems. There was a need for a system that could be learnt in a shorter period of time. It is my belief that this style was the predecessor of a style that was to become known as Wing Chun Kung Fu.

Around 1768, the Southern Shaolin temple was also destroyed by government troops because it was accused of harboring anti-Ching rebels. All but 5 of the Shaolin Masters were killed during the destruction of the temple.

One of the Masters, a nun by the name of Ng Mui had been heavily involved in the development of the new technique and continued to teach layman followers after she escaped the destruction of the Temple.

One of her students, a young woman by the name of Yim Wing Chun had spurned a suitor and had been challenged to a fight as a result. Ng Mui trained Wing Chun and formulated a strategy that would allow a physically weaker fighter to outmaneuver a stronger opponent. Wing Chun easily disposed of the suitor with the techniques she had learned from Ng Mui. Subsequently she refined the technique and taught it to her husband who then passed the technique on to his own students. Ng Mui named the technique Wing Chun Kung Fu to acknowledge the unique contributions made to the style by Yim Wing Chun.



**Yim Wing Chun practicing on  
The Wooden Dummy**

The style was then passed on to succeeding generations until an aging master named Yip Man taught it to his student.....Bruce Lee!



**Yip Man with student Bruce Lee**

### **Hung Hei Goon - Founder of Hung Gar Kung Fu**

As mentioned in the preceding story , there was much anti-Ching sentiment both in the general population and within the walls of the Shaolin Temples. Another style that was created during the tumultuous period after the destruction of the Southern Shaolin Temple was Hung Gar Kung Fu.



**Hung Hei Goon as portrayed in  
A popular Shaw Bros. Film**

The Abbott of the Southern Shaolin Temple (at the time of its destruction) was Gee Sin - a master of the Tiger System of Kung Fu. Gee Sin had sheltered a Tea Merchant by the name of Hung Hei Goon after he had a business conflict with Ching nobles and was forced into hiding. Gee Sin trained Goon in the Tiger system (which was his expertise).

After the Shaolin Temple was destroyed and Gee Sin killed in its aftermath, Hung Hei Goon escaped into the countryside and began teaching the technique to the Ming rebels. He is said to have married a master of the Crane System by the name of Fong Wing Chun (not the same person discussed earlier in reference Wing Chun Kung Fu) and learned that system as well.

Hung then went on to synthesize what became known around 1805 as Hung Gar Fu Hok Pai - Hung Family Tiger Crane System which combined the best techniques from both systems. Many rebels were said to have taken refuge on the Red Opera boats of Southern China and it is here where Hung propagated his new style. The style went on to become the most popular of the 5 Southern Chinese Kung Fu Family systems and is now practiced worldwide!

Many different lineages of the style exist today and the forms practiced within these lineages are slightly different from one another. In one case, Ha Say Fu Hung Gar, the forms are completely different! Regardless, the underlying principles of the system remain the same. The style as practiced at Iron Dragon Kung Fu club has descended from the Lam Sai Wing Branch and is descended further from the Chiu Kau lineage that exists to this day! If I have managed to tweak your "interest", why not come out and try a Traditional Hung Gar Kung Fu class at Iron Dragon!.

### **TRADITIONAL HUNG GAR TRAINING** **CONDITIONING THE FISTS, PALMS AND FINGERS**

Conditioning the hands has long been a part of the kung fu practitioner's regimen. Traditionally, this form of training was done in order to prepare the

hands for use as an offensive weapon. In order to strike with the fist it is necessary to make the fist as hard as possible and impervious to pain.

In modern society it is up to the individual martial artist to determine whether or not to undergo this form of training. Modern society does not condone the carrying of weapons. Conditioning the hands provides an alternative. Think of this as carrying a pair of brass knuckles with you at all times except that the brass knuckles are your conditioned knuckles.

At Iron Dragon the method used to condition the fist is a regimen of frequent knuckle pushups - pushups performed on the first two knuckles of the fist instead of hands. Over time the nerves in the fists are destroyed so there is very little pain sensation in the knuckle area. This is an irreversible change. Accompanying this change is a characteristic growth of the first two knuckles (as calcium deposits accumulate in the area) and a thickening of the skin over the knuckles in the form of calluses. This change is reversible and the knuckles will shrink in size and calluses will disappear with lack of conditioning.

It is important to note that conditioning of the knuckles is restricted to the first two knuckles in most martial arts styles. A proper punch uses the first two knuckles as the contact surface. By focusing the impact into the first two knuckles the impact is much more concentrated and will penetrate deeper. This will result in a greater transmission of force than if the force is diffused over a larger surface of the fist. Boxers have long proved that they are stronger punchers than martial artists however they are generally incapable of the board breaking feats of the martial artist. The martial artist is capable of focusing more force into a smaller striking surface thus creating a deeper penetration in the strike. This type of strike is much more destructive.

Since the bones of the hand are not fully formed in children and young teens, this form of training should not be undertaken by those age groups in order to avoid disfiguration of the hands. Given that such training will result in larger knuckles and thick calluses, it is understandable that most women may want to avoid such training as well. For those who do not want to undergo such training, there are alternative striking areas to use. We will discuss this in future issues of this newsletter along with other hand conditioning techniques.

Special attention should be paid to the skin of the knuckles as it begins to form calluses over the area. Often this skin will become dry and subject to cracking. Once the skin cracks it will usually result in the callused area falling off. This is counterproductive as it is the layered callusing that we wish to develop and build further levels of callus upon. If the skin over your knuckles starts to get excessively dry it is best to apply Vaseline or some other moisturizing lotion to the area to prevent cracking.

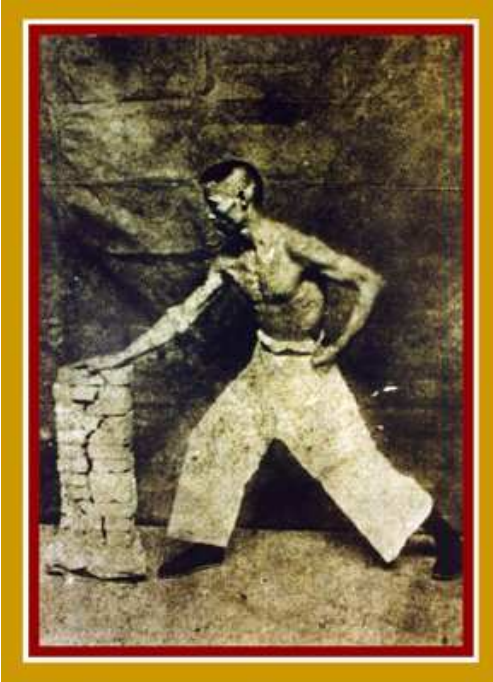
Conditioning the fists for striking is recommended as a bare minimum; however Kung Fu men of olden days took such training even further. They conditioned not just the fists but also the palms and fingers!

The palm was conditioned through the striking of progressively harder substances contained in cloth bags. This method is known as Iron Palm training.



A beginner would strike a bag filled with peas and then work up to bags containing pebbles and finally iron filings. Such training would be done over a period of close to 4 months at which time a simple maintenance program on the Iron filings bag would be adequate to keep the palm hard. The use of Dit Da Jow or Iron Palm Liniment is important in this practice as it helps to prevent the disfigurement of the hand by healing the bruises that are inevitable with this kind of training. Once the initial 4 months of training is completed the practitioner is able to test his palm by breaking a concrete block!

Iron Palm practitioners were capable of some pretty impressive feats. A master of the 1920's, Ku Yu Cheong was capable of breaking a stack of 12 bricks at an apparent bodyweight of only around 130 lbs.!



**Ku Yu Cheong breaking 12 bricks**

Nowadays, it is rare for anyone to take up such practice since it is extremely time consuming and repetitive. In addition, such practice takes time away from the more important practical training. The hardness of your palm will be of little matter when you are unable to strike your opponent!

Training the fingers was done with two purposes in mind. Conditioned fingers could be used for striking (usually soft tissue targets) and also for grabbing. One method of conditioning fingers for striking was to thrust the fingers into progressively harder substances such as Peas, gravel, sand and iron filings. Such training required the use of the same Dit Da Jow liniment as that used in Iron Palm training to avoid disfigurement of the fingers.

To train the grip strength of the fingers, masters of old would use gold fish bowl training. They would fill a gold fish bowl with progressively heavier materials and then train the fingers by grasping the mouth of the bowls utilizing a tiger claw.

Sandbag training in which a bag filled with sand is thrown and caught with alternating hands utilizing the tiger claw was another method of improving grip strength.

The most popular method of improving grip strength these days is the use of fingertip pushups. A variation is to use less and less fingers. In fact, back in the early 1970's I recall seeing my Sifu Martin McNamara doing pushups with just his thumbs! I'm not sure if he is still able to do that but I was blown away by this feat when I first saw it!

### **SPIRITUAL SUNDAY AT IRON DRAGON**

*Let us look deeper at the meaning behind what I call "Spiritual Sunday". I have found that the more relaxed pace of life on Sunday is conducive to the contemplation of our over 1,500 year old martial art of Shaolin Kung Fu\*.*

It all started back in circa 527 AD with the arrival in China of the Indian Buddhist Monk Bodhidharma. The man was born into an Indian Royal family but was so taken by the Buddha's doctrine (as conveyed to him by his mentor Prajnatara) that he gave up his material possessions and station in life to become a humble monk!

Bodhidharma is not the only noble to have made this life altering change based on a sudden awakening to the Buddha's teaching. Often, I have thought about this. Imagine the strength of the words that inspired these men of wealth to give up everything in order to spread the teachings of the Buddha!

Many times I am asked if the Buddhist teachings that are intrinsic to our martial art will contradict a student's religion if he or she is not a Buddhist. My answer to that is no! The teachings in our art that advocate peace, humility, tolerance and compassion are principles shared by all the world's major religions. Though passed on to us by Buddhists they should be viewed not as religious teachings but as a philosophy that was wisely melded to the art of Kung Fu to prevent the misuse of a deadly fighting art.

\*Hung Gar Kung Fu is a form of Southern Chinese Shaolin Kung Fu

### **DRAGON LAUGHS**

Good Ol' Gary Mac.....always good for a laugh!!!!

I was creeping his FACEBOOK page recently when I came across this little gem!

He's a dead ringer for Mr. KLEEN !!!! Bahaha!



VS



Just when I got up from the floor and recovered from his last shenanigans, my Facebook revealed another Gary classic! Now he's BATMAN!



Dude, I hope you change out of that black T-Shirt every once in awhile! LOL!

### **PROVERBS TO LIVE BY.....**

## **To know the road ahead, ask those coming back.**

**Chinese Proverb – Author Unknown**

### **PONDER UPON THIS.....**

*Chinese wisdom, proverbs, traditions, etiquette and history were as much a part of the art of Kung Fu as the physical fighting techniques that were taught. In keeping with that tradition, it is hoped that this, one of many proverbs to come, will enhance our students' martial arts experience for many years. In this day and age where many cultures have come together we are fortunate to receive proverbs of wisdom from many different cultures. It is my intention to present proverbs of any culture that are relevant to our training goals. These proverbs are intended to foster a dialogue about some of the less obvious facets of our art. The proverbs are purposely kept simple so students will ponder their significance and relevance in their own lives and experiences. Going forward it is hoped that all students will contribute to our monthly proverb. Short proverbs or wisdom from any culture that are relevant to the goals of our Martial Arts Community / Club are welcomed. Email: [ajaxdragon@hotmail.com](mailto:ajaxdragon@hotmail.com) to submit your contribution.*

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **July 23, 2011 – Saturday – Peterborough, Ontario**

Iron Dragon's very own Daniel "Dynamite" Di Giovanni will make his debut at 165 lbs while Pat "Train Wrecka" Rhodes 3-1 will compete in his 5<sup>th</sup> amateur bout at this event! Pat will be looking to extend his 2011 win streak. He is 2-0 in 2011 competition!

### **July 30, 2011- Saturday – 15th Annual Iron Dragon Kids Summer Party and Iron Dragon Watergun Massacre**

All Lil' Dragons and Young Dragons are invited. The party will begin at 12 pm and will conclude at 3:00 pm after the annual water gun fight which I expect to win for the 15<sup>th</sup> year in a row....as usual!!!



Look at all the  
Soaking Wet Victims  
after the Iron Dragon  
Annual Water Gun Massacre 2010  
Lot's more where that came from!  
**BRING YOUR CRYING TOWELS!**

**IRON DRAGON**  
**KUNG FU KICKBOXING CLUB**  
IRON SPIRIT. IRON WILLPOWER. IRON BODY

**August 13, 2011 – Saturday - Iron Dragon 15<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary Party  
8 pm – until?**

Iron Dragon will host a reunion party for past and present Iron Dragon members. I will try to contact as many past members as possible and hope to see you all for a great time! Let me know if you'd like to help in the planning and preparation. This event is for Adults only please. Oh alright Paulo...you can come too! LOL!

**UNTIL NEXT TIME.....**

What an action packed July we have coming for Iron Dragon!!! I hope you all continue to enjoy the summer!

Until next time.....keep KUNG FU FIGHTIN'!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITiSzFp4arg>



Karl, Sifu