

## WHY I CHOSE TO DO KUNG-FU

By Monique Crook 1980

I began Martial Arts about 2 years ago because I saw it as a way to develop my self-confidence, concentration and fitness. I chose to do Kung Fu because my Dad can sometimes teach me at home and it would enable me to improve my fitness without doing strenuous, strength oriented workouts as in Karate.

Once I joined I discovered that Kung-Fu was not solely based on sparring and bag work, for it covered an extensive range of topics including the development of flexibility, strength, accuracy, power, body control, weaponry, breathing exercises and most of all coordination.

I also realise how important it is for all of us to have the ability to defend ourselves - especially for women who constantly fear that they will be raped, mugged, murdered or become a victim of domestic violence. With the increase of violence in today's society, it is essential to know how to defend yourself.

We practice techniques that do not require a great deal of strength (ideal for women) but are still effective - usually aiming for vital points such as the groin. This is particularly good if you are encountered in a cramped area and do not have much room to move.

Body control, power and accuracy are important elements of Kung Fu. Bag work enables us to work on such things. Accuracy is just as important as power because it is necessary to hit your attacker in the right place the first time - if not you may not get another opportunity to strike back. You must be able to control your body movement - aiming for areas that are vulnerable not aiming for the impossible.

Attackers prey on people who lack in self-confidence and appear incapable of defending themselves - therefore it is important to be confident, relaxed and alert. In Kung Fu we switch partners regularly so you will learn how to defend yourself from an attack by a tall person, a muscular person or an average sized person.

We learn how to apply techniques, such as arm locks, that can control a person by a simple "twist of the wrist" without actually injuring them - or that enable us to follow up with other more damaging techniques, if necessary. We learn how to disarm a person and use their weapon to our advantage. This includes weapons such as the common knife or stick. We also learn to use whatever is available to us at a time of attack:

- A rolled up magazine can be useful (shove it into the attacker's Adam's Apple, strike into the groin or poke the eyes with it)
- A rolling pin can do a lot of damage (particularly if you strike the head with it)
- Car keys can be used to gouge a person in the eyes or groin (learn to have your keys ready to open your car or house door, not only will they serve as a handy weapon but this will save you time and reduce your vulnerability while you fish around in your bag when you reach your car. Try not to park in dark areas and always make sure that there are no unwelcome people hiding behind or inside your vehicle before hopping in)
- Even our choice of briefcase, handbag or personal jewellery can assist in self defence (bags with large clasps or rigid sides can be used to injure an attacker, a heavy metal bracelet can be raked across the attacker's eyes)

We also learn how to link various techniques together to cope with a wide variety of scenarios and we work very hard to ensure that such techniques become conditioned reflexes.

As well as the obvious benefit of being able to defend myself, I never realised that Kung Fu would have such a dramatic effect on my personal development. Since starting training, I have become much more self-confident, more alert, much fitter and find that I am able to concentrate and to focus much better whether at Kung-Fu or at school. As a result, my marks at school have improved dramatically, I am able to withstand peer group pressure to do things that do not accord with my personal ethics and have been complimented on my improved presentation and communication skills. I believe that this will all help me to develop my career when I leave school, as well as assisting me to become a better person all round.