

A Taoist Master's Search for his Chinese Ancestry

Part Two

Chungliang Al Huang

Chungliang Al Huang recently made a pilgrimage in search of his parents' ancestral homes and tombs in Fujian and Hainan provinces in China. What he found, after 60 years in exile was heartbreaking and encouraging at the same time. His mother's ancestry is from the Imperial Manchu Dynasty. The family tombs were badly destroyed during the cultural revolution by the Red Guards. His father, who rose to be one of the highest ranking generals in the Nationalist Taiwan, also had his family tombs devastated, but they were recently re-instated because of the changing political climate of the Beijing government towards the Taiwan Chinese. One recent reversal was an acknowledgment honoring Huang's father with a Gold Medal of Heroism for his role during the Sino-Japanese War from Hu Jingtao, president of the People's Republic of China. Master Huang came back to his father's ancestral home, to receive the gold medal and to reinstate the general's place in the Huang Family shrine. Here are a few early excerpts from Master Huang's Family Memoir in progress:

My Father--- A Man of Many Qualities

When my father was born at the beginning of the 20th century in the small village of Ya-qian of Wen-Chang County on Hainan Island, China, his given name from a Confucian scholars' family, was Bao Xun 寶循, literally, "the child who is a treasure because he follows the righteous way". Later, as many grownups do in China, when liberated from family's superimposed tradition, father chose his own adult name to be Zhen-Wu, 珍吾, "I value and honor my own being"; with a pen name for his writing and poetry, and for family and close friends, Jing Shan 靜山, "contemplative mountain" or "quiescent mountain". For my father, it was a lifelong dance balancing the three qualities of his given and chosen names.

海南島 Hai Nan Dao. "Ocean South Island" or "the Island at South China Sea", is a tropical island located geographically at the southernmost tip of China. It had been a place to banish officials and scholars who had offended the Emperors, (usually in ideology, not in crime), exiled as far away as possible from the northern capitals, such as Beijing or Xian. The most famous of these historic figures was the great Sung Dynasty poet Su Tung-po (1036-1101), who spent his final years (1097 to 1100) in utter despair on the island; during that time he also wrote some of his most touching immortal poems. Tracing our Huang family tree, many of our elders firmly believed that our Huang ancestry went as far back as to the Sung Dynasty, and were indeed members of the poet's entourage in exile.

Father was a precocious child who at age eleven, was selected by the village elders at the Huang Association to copy the family genealogy. In his teens, he was also appointed by the village to be in charge of modernizing the antiquated one-teacher school (learning through memorizing Confucian classics) into an innovative educational system following Western ideas of multidimensional curricular studies.

This was the time when Dr. Sun Yet-sen was gathering momentum of patriotic forces in Honolulu and Japan, which eventually would succeed in overthrowing the declining Manchu Dynasty. Only twenty-



Mother

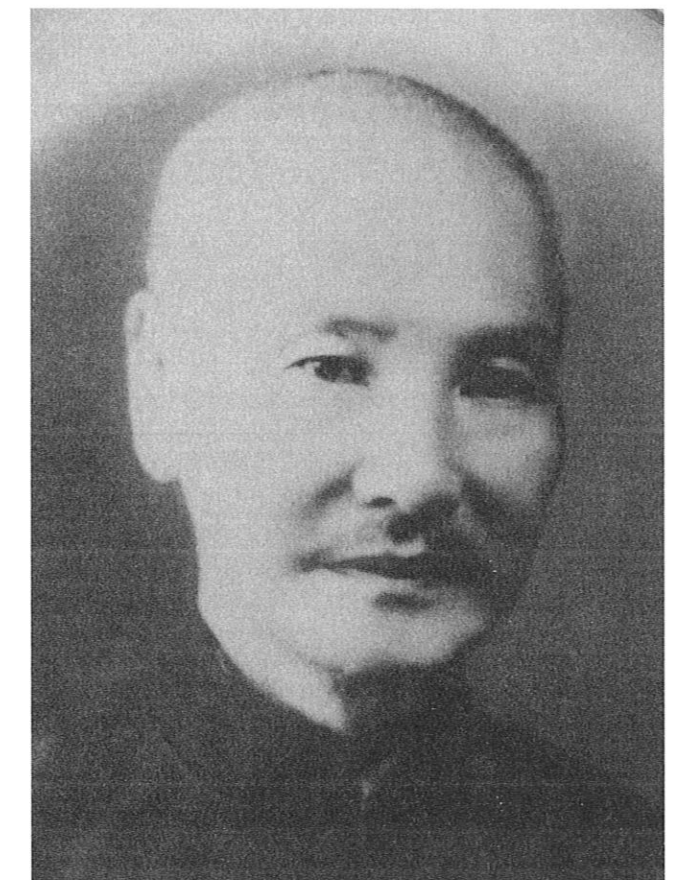
one years old, Zhen-wu ventured on to become the principal of Hwa-nan Middle School in Malacca, and took up the editorship of a progressive newspaper in Kuala Lumpur, rooting for Dr. Sun's vision of a new China, in Malaysia.

When Dr. Sun entrusted Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek to head the Huang Pu Military Academy, the first major training school for young cadets and officers for the armed forces in 1922, father laid down his brushes to pick up the guns, following his bliss on his heroic journey in answer to the call he felt. He was the first overseas Chinese to pass the rigorous entrance examination to enter the Academy, and graduated from its first class, cum laude. He continued to faithfully, never to veer, in a lifelong dedicated service to the mother country. Zhou En-lai, later the Premier of Communist People's Republic of China who welcomed Nixon to China in 1973, was appointed Dean of the School of Political Science at the Academy. (Zhou was to become the matchmaker who brought my parents together after my mother graduated from the sixth class of the same academy. She was brought by Zhou to be briefed by Zhen-wu, who was then the president of the Academy's alumni association.)

My mother—A woman warrior

When my mother was born, she was named by her Mandarin scholarly family, Hui-Zhen, "brightly wise - chastely persevering." As a precocious teen, she was renamed, Zheng-Ying, "Uplifting-heroic spirit", to justify their daughter's all around qualities of a son's talent and the promise she showed to become someone truly special. Later, as a young adult, already a rebel who defied all traditions to become a revolutionary, mother joined the Northern Expedition to fight the warlords, and enlisted as one of very few women cadets at the Huang Pu Academy. She graduated cum laude from the sixth class and was immediately recruited by the "Blue Shirts", the Chinese equivalent of Central Intelligence (CIA), to engage in espionage work, posing as a nurse working in Japanese managed hospitals in Nanjing and Shanghai. She changed her name to be simply Shi, "truthfully real and original". Then, finally, after settling to be the wife of an important upstanding man and the mother of six children, she changed her own name again to sublimate her personal frustration, to be Zhi-Chang, which means revealingly, "My Will/Ambition Will Be Fulfilled!"

With all these evolving identities of many names in both my father and mother's lives, they tell the tale of these two multifariously complicated personalities, who lived in an equally complex era that was the tumultuous



Grandfather Lee



Mother and me

modern China of the 20th Century.

My parents' life stories were intimately inter-woven into the fabric of a complex tapestry made up of this astounding era of modern Chinese history, which was full of strife, conflicts, change and transformation, both internally and outwardly. It began at the dawn of the 20th Century with the fall of Manchu Dynasty, and the birth of the Republic of New China.

After decades of a "closed door" policy by The People's Republic of China, we are just now beginning to learn about this emerging World Power. China — the "Sleeping Dragon of The Middle Kingdom" has awakened to take her place on the World Stage. Finally, from the West, we may begin to understand China beyond the antiquated stereotypes from Marco Polo's memoir after his return from the Kublai Khan's Mongol court, and other sparse, personal reports from Christian Jesuits such as Mateo Ricci during Ming Dynasty; and, in the 1920's and 30's, from books by Christian missionaries' children, Pearl S. Buck, "The Good Earth", and later, Lin Yutang's best-selling, "My Country, My People"; and from biochemist turned sinologist, Joseph Needham, in his voluminous lifelong work of detailed research studies in the voluminous "The Science and Civilization of China".

Since 1949, the People's Republic of China had closed its "Bamboo Gate" for two and half decades while the West was obsessed with Communism, trying to crack open the "Iron Curtain" of the Soviet Union. Then, Voila!, in 1973, Richard Nixon and Henry Kiss-

inger were at the banquet table at the Great Hall in Beijing with Mao Tse-tung and Zhou En-lai, toasting "Gum Bai"! with rice wine. Together, with the "Ping-Pong" diplomacy, and violinist Isaac Stern's journey, riding on the universal language of music with the surprise hit documentary film, "From Mao To Mozart", we started to gain fresh insights into the New China.

Fast forward to the spectacular "coming out party" of China at the Beijing Olympics in 2008. Less than two years later, another eye-popping Shanghai World Exposition is now happening to dazzle all the China watchers from the West. Clearly the twain of East and West are finally meeting!

Quick rewind, back to 1937, Japan officially launched a full scale invasion of China.

Summer of 1937, Father was on a citizen's diplomatic mission to America, as an envoy, with the financial aid of the Overseas Chinese Association, with the goal of seeking support to fight the Japanese, and to warn the United States of the Japanese threat of global ambition. The Japanese "Manchu Guo" with the "puppet last emperor" Pu-Yi residing in Manchuria, was about to move south with armed forces. Mother, 8 months pregnant with me, pleaded with father to postpone his departure. It was clearly a bad time for father to leave; but he made the choice with the noble excuse of personal sacrifice, putting "country" above "family", and took off to America!

Mother was left alone to deal with a household of elders, and four small children. He relied on her



Father and Mother

own family, and our second uncle, Zhen-Hwa, another Huang-Pu Academy graduate; he helped to get our big three-generation household organized to escape Nanjing. This Chinese Capital a few months later would become the "slaughterhouse of the horrendous "Nanking Massacre." (This heinous crime only became fully known to the world in recent years!).

We waited in Shanghai for mother to give birth to me in the summer of 1937. August 13, Japanese began bombing this port city. With all the doctors and hospital staff gone, mother gave birth to me the following day in the vacuous maternity ward with only grandmother close by. Twelve days later our entire family was forced to escape on the refugee boat to hide in the hinterland of Fujian province during eight long years of resistance warding off the Japanese. (The dramatic episode on our refugee boat, encountering typhoon, shipwreck and rescue were already told in the previous story.)

Young General Huang in America

Imagine the thrill generated in all the Huang children of the small village in Fujian Province in southern China, hiding from the Japanese invasion, when a special package arrived from America. A package containing a treasure from our father, who made a souvenir recording to greet his family and children from the top

of the Empire State Building, Mor-Tien-Lo (the high pavilion that touches the sky) in the United States of America!

As we all gathered around the "His Master's Voice" RCA gramophone, all wound up to play the small record, the quivering voice of father began to reverberate from out of the lily-shaped amplifying tube:

"My dear wife and children: I am talking to you all from the top of the "Touch the Sky Pavilion". I am in Mei Guo (America, the beautiful country). I think of you all and miss you all. Hai-tze-men (Children), Hwei-liang, Chi-liang, Yu-liang, Hsiao-liang, Chung-liang (all of our names).... be good and obedient children, listen to your mother and grandmother, uncles and aunts...study hard...."

A whole different world from far far away was brought to us with this small vinyl disc...We played the record, over and over again... It was Magic!!

Father's journey to America gave him a chance to speak at many functions other than the obvious Chinese communities in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York and similar communities all over America. He was welcomed at The West Point Military Academy and was received warmly at a major banquet given by the Veteran's Administration in New York City. He traveled across the continent in a car with an entourage of a driver, a secretary and an interpreter, and was wined-and-dined wherever he went. The huge album of photographs of all his stops and official functions in America became a family treasure after his return; we, children would beg him to go through the album, page by page, telling us details of his journey, including the visit at the famous Huang-Shi-Gon-Yuan (Yellow Stone National Park), over and over again. ☯

Chungliang Ai Huang began practicing Tai Ji and studying the Taoist classics as a child in China. His seminal book, *Embrace Tiger, Return to Mountain: The Essence of Tai Ji*, published in 1973, a transcription of his teaching during the early days of Esalen Institute, has become a classic in 14 languages. His unique style of teaching his students to fulfill their "human potentials" has garnered accolades and nurtured students of life around the world. Thirty seven years later, this enlivening body of knowledge/wisdom, accumulated and crystallized into gems of structure guiding forces, are ready to be transmitted to those who truly wish to gain knowledge, wisdom and expertise to become what Chuangliang calls the "Living Tao Practitioners", the perpetual students of lifelong learning who have and will become mentors to others. For the very first time since the inception of the Living Tao Foundation 33 years ago, Master Huang is committed, in addition to continuing with his teaching, to include a training program to be held in August of 2010 at the River House, the home base of Living Tao Foundation's Lan Ting Institute in Gold Beach, Oregon. He will personally offer his lifelong learning, guiding those who are ready to be inspired by his work, to truly commit to concentrated in-depth studies, worthy to receive and take responsibility with this "Living Tao" legacy into their lives. Contact: www.livingtao.org or info@livingtao.org.