

MASTER GEDO CHANG

AND THE KOREAN ART OF HAPKIDO

SAM PLUMB interviews Master Gedo Chang, one of the most respected Masters of Hapkido in the world.

MORE THAN three years ago I interviewed Chicago (USA) based martial artist, Master Gedo Chang, exclusively for *Fighters Magazine*.

Since that time Master Chang has become a regular visitor to Britain and his reputation and influence has grown tremendously throughout the UK. He heads the World Hapkido Union which has its headquarters in Chicago. I decided it was again time to invite Master Chang to give an interview for the readers of *Fighters*.

Sam Plumb: Of all the cities in the USA, why did you choose Chicago as your headquarters?

Gedo Chang: I wanted to spread Hapkido and its philosophy to as many people as possible and Chicago is a big city which is ideally situated for this purpose.

SP: Why did you form the World Hapkido Union? Was it a political move? Aren't there already too many Hapkido organizations?

GC: To me an "organization" doesn't mean much. Beginning students will be attracted to organizations who advertise that they are the biggest or the best. I don't advertise. People who study martial arts should understand that they shouldn't be bothered too much about martial arts organizations. They should be concerned about the instructor and the quality of teaching.

SP: Do you have competitions or tournaments in your system of Hapkido?

GC: No. It is impossible to judge Hapkido evenly and fairly because of its characteristics. (Hapkido utilizes not only kicks and

strikes but also joint-locks, throws, pressure point attacks and ground-fighting).

SP: Can you tell us about the value of **traditional** martial arts?

GC: Nowadays martial arts are becoming commercialised and

corrupted. I feel sad about this. Martial arts are becoming sports and students are only concerned about who is winning and who is losing. They do not pay attention to the philosophy of their martial art or the discipline it can offer in their daily lives.



At a recent Hapkido seminar in Nottinghamshire, Master Chang shows students how to lift a man with one finger using Ki (the body's internal energy).

SP: In your seminars you lecture about love and non-violence. How can you promote love when you teach your students powerful kicking, striking, joint locking and throwing techniques?

Two different paths

GC: There are two different paths in the martial arts. As the student progresses in his training he will gain confidence and perform his techniques better. Some instructors may emphasize street fighting while others favour competitions. Because of this there is a danger that some may abuse their skills. As the student gains experience he should be taught how to control hatred, selfishness and other impurities. As instructors we must teach how to neutralize these impurities. Sometimes in competitions, the fighters become arrogant and hate each other. This is harmful. You must empty your mind of these impurities and you will experience inner peace. If you ask someone, "What is peace?", they will say it is a state which exists after war. This is the external or physical type of peace. The war martial artists should be fighting is internal because of our human failings. With experience we can control negative emotions and learn to love. After all, who can resist love?

SP: Do you teach weapons?

GC: Yes, after black belt level. It is only after black belt that students become mature and experienced enough to learn weapons techniques. One of my former students in America opened his own Hapkido school, which was not approved by me, and started teaching weapons techniques from white belt. He is teaching very small children weapons techniques just to gain more students and money. This is very irresponsible.

SP: Do you accept black belts from other schools of Hapkido as your instructors or students?

GC: Yes but I would re-grade them until I acknowledged their

ability and they must learn my techniques.

SP: In Britain most Hapkido instructors are non-Korean. Do you feel that non-oriental instructors can offer as much as a Korean?

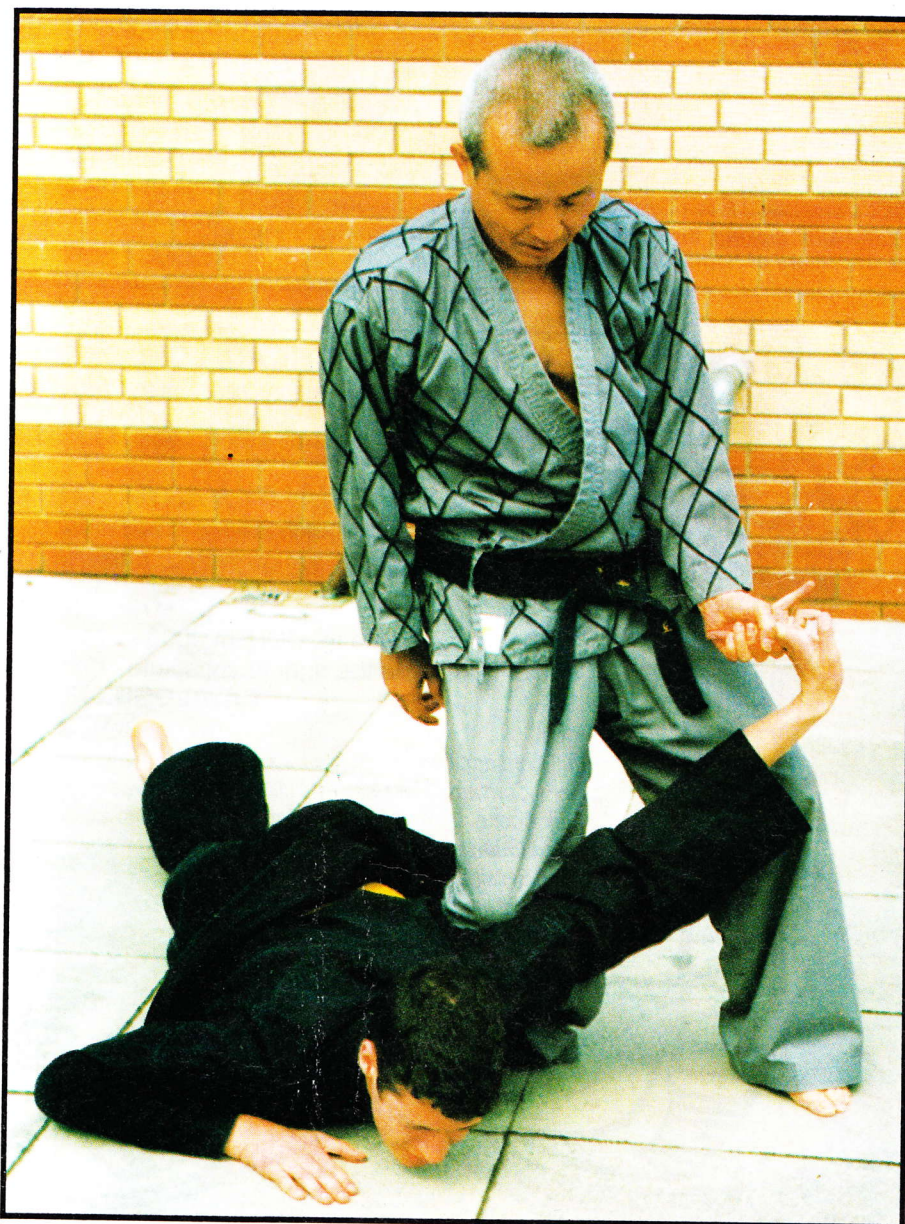
GC: There are a lot of phoney instructors both Korean and non-Korean. If a Korean wishes to study English he should study it from an Englishman. That doesn't mean to say that you can't learn from a foreigner but learning from an Englishman your English will be better. The same goes for studying Hapkido - it is better if you study from a native Korean.

SP: Master Chang, I know you lecture about education. What is your main concern about education in today's society?

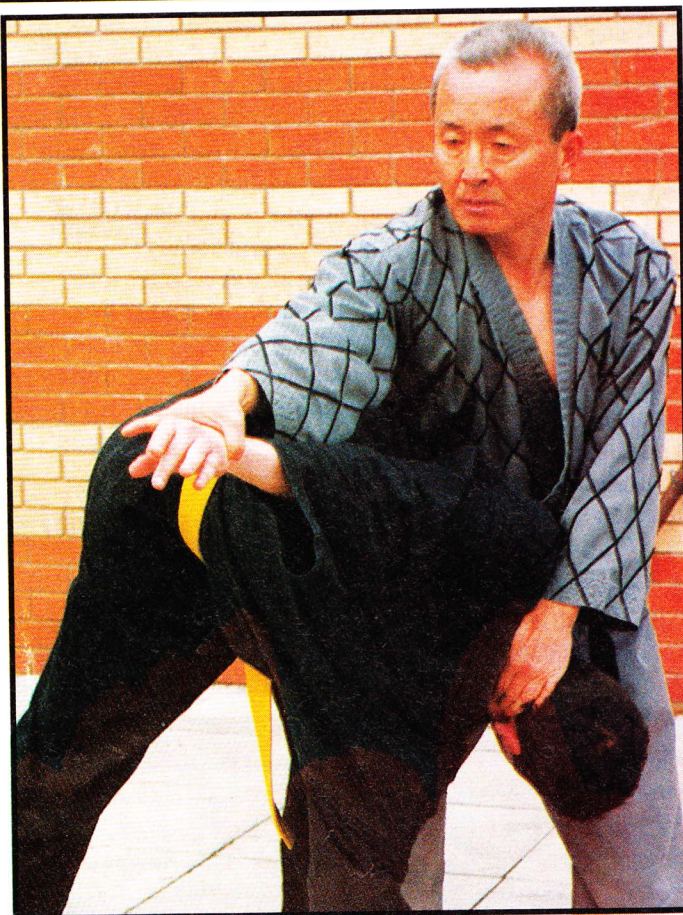
GC: Discipline. These days people are taught only vocational training, particularly in America. They are taught how to get a job but not discipline or love etc. A child may say he wishes to study art or a foreign language and the parents say "No! You must study Engineering to get a better job". This is the wrong attitude. We cannot control the environment. We are no longer living in a primitive society. Gradually, the human mind has become dried and concerned only with material things.

Taking up a martial art

SP: For the person who is thinking of taking up a martial art, how would you advise them on coaching a school?



Gedo Chang pours the pain on Hapkido student Nick Tomlinson.



Painful joint locking, throwing and pressure point techniques are the trademark of Hapkido.

GC: The key question is who is the teacher there? It is a difficult question to answer because it takes time to find out who is a good teacher and who is not. If a school displays many trophies from tournaments the beginner may think that school is good - but this is not necessarily so because winning many tournaments doesn't always make a good instructor. But I can see how this would appeal to the beginning student - the Western society is very

competitive.

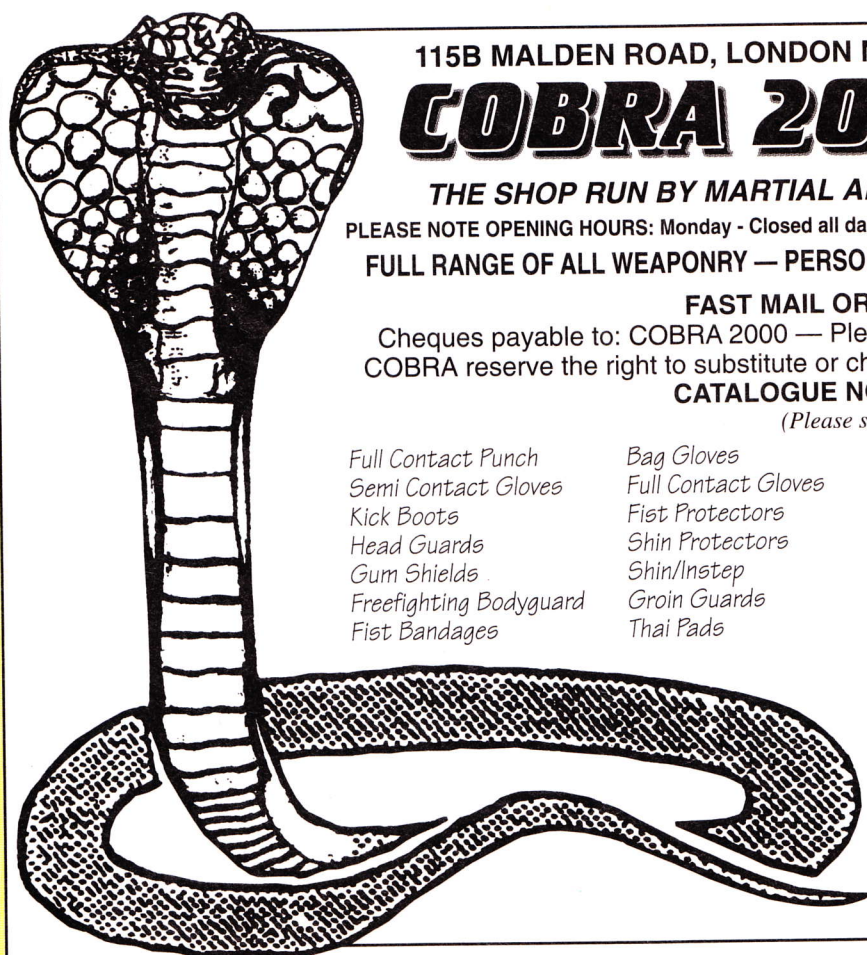
SP: I know that your students are very loyal to you. These days it seems many students forget about the hand that feeds them.

GC: For many students the first goal is to get a black belt. As soon as they get a black belt they stop training. They feel that they have accomplished their goal and there is nothing else their martial art can offer. Some students betray their Master and go elsewhere. The student should first ask permission from his Master before they train elsewhere. The genuine Master will say "Yes! Of course." If the Master says "No! Other martial arts are no good!", then the student must leave.

SP: Master Chang, thank you for your time and knowledge.

GC: It is always my pleasure.

Anyone wishing further information on Hapkido should write to Mr S Plumb, The Academy of Korean Martial Arts, 10 Sheffield Road, Creswell, Worksop, Notts. S80 4HG, enclosing a large S.A.E. or telephone 01909 723023.



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