

**David Barrow's 25th Anniversary Celebrations
Sunday 9th July 2000, Sheffield, England**



Although Tai Chi Chuan is rooted in a philosophy going back thousands of years, and the creation of the art is generally regarded to be around 400 - 500 years in western terms it is actually very young. Not until the mid 1960's did we see tai chi and internal arts migrate to western shores and we had to wait until the 1970's to see anything of substance in the UK.

One of our early pioneers was David Barrow who had travelled to Shanghai, China to train with the now legendary Ma Yeuh Liang. It seems that David's quest to find a good teacher first took him to New York to meet with Sophia Delza who had a connection with the Wu Family in Shanghai. Having arranged the necessary introductions David moved to the source to begin his training.

How should one celebrate a 25th Anniversary? The traditional way is to gather a few friends and family together, have a nice meal and entertainment. This is what we were treated to on that Sunday night in July. Over 100 people gathered in the local hall (which David regularly used for his classes) with a number of Wu stylists from across the country and overseas. Special guest was Mah Jing Bao, son of Mah Yeuh Liang and Wu Ying Hua (daughter of the founder of Wu Style Tai Chi Chuan). Ma Jing Bao is resident in Germany and he was accompanied by his representative, Martin Boedicker who had become a good friend of mine as a result of him driving me across Germany for over 8 hours when I attended the German Netzwerk Conference earlier this year.

Before our excellent buffet dinner we were treated to a range of demonstrations of Wu Style Tai Chi Chuan including a faultless Hand Form performed by members from across Europe, who had never met prior to the event. Martin and a colleague introduced us to a range of pushing hands techniques and Master Mah took over moving smoothly and gracefully through a number of routines culminating in some impressive Fa Jing applications. He went on to demonstrate technically impressive Spear and Sabre routines, the latter of which he employed a beautifully hand-crafted Sabre, custom-built by the Royal Swordsmiths, Wilkinson Sword. After dinner the pleasures became aural when two friends of David's treated us to a range of opera classics.

It is obviously a milestone for David Barrow to achieve 25 years but it also gives us an opportunity to realise that the seeds have been sown and, with much tending and nurturing, we are beginning to see the benefits of the art in many parts of western life. Now that we're beginning to move forward from the early stages of our tai chi adolescence, we are slowly starting to come to terms with the responsibility of taking it forward into adulthood. The demonstrations we saw that night in Sheffield illustrated the care and responsibility that is being applied in the training and development of tai chi chuan in the hands of David Barrow and his friends. Like their mentors in the Wu Family hard work and dedication will let them take it forward to their Golden Jubilee!

Ronnie Robinson