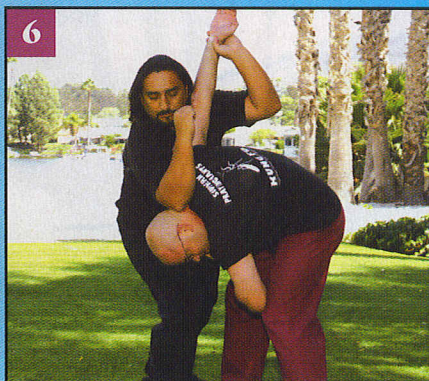
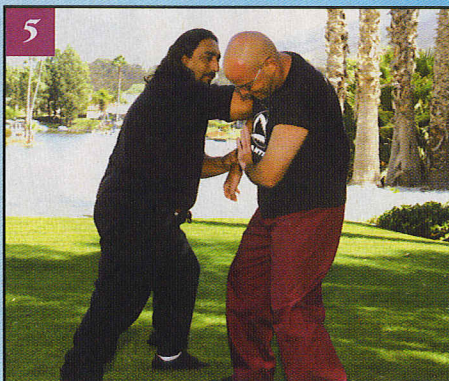




From a ready stance (1), the attacker opens with a straight punch (2). The defender blocks with his left wrist and then grabs the attacker's arm at the wrist and elbow (3). He pulls him closer and applies a palm to the right side of the head (4). An elbow to the chin (5) is followed by an elbow to the back of the head (6).

CHOW GAR'S DEVASTATING ARRAY OF CLOSE-IN STRIKES WILL SATISFY ANY KUNG-FU FIGHTER SEARCHING FOR AN EDGE

Models: Mario Figueroa,
Chris Arnold, Brady Chin



JOB

INSIDE

By Paul Whitrod

Excerpted with permission from Close-In Fighting Skills of Chow Gar Southern Praying Mantis Kung-Fu, by Paul Whitrod.

“It is very important that at some stage you free fight in the class. Occasionally you will get hurt, but this is one less bruise you may receive outside. If you do not like to spar, then you must practice two-person drills; you may even suffer bruises from these. If you do not like that, then perhaps you have no business practicing martial arts.”

—Paul Whitrod, sifu

Chow gar praying mantis kung-fu is a close-in and medium-range fighting system, whose techniques comprise soft and hard movements known as “gong” and “yau” that are circular and straight actions. The techniques are also classified as internal and external combined.

The three areas that comprise a complete martial art—other than its weapons—are hitting, throwing and seizing. Because of the close proximity of combat, the fighting skills of chow gar praying mantis use short-range strikes and seizing skills. Strikes are then combined with seizing skills to produce a formidable fighter capable of handling any situation.

Within the southern mantis system are key words that provide insights into the style. They are:

Choy—To Break

Na—To Seize

Da—To Hit

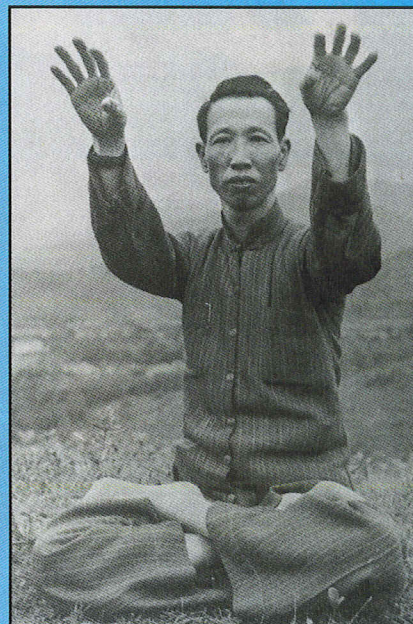
Jai—To Pluck

Lau—To Leak

Dul—To Lift

Sharn—To Dodge

Chow gar praying mantis grandmaster Yip Shui performing a form circa 1940.





“Three-step sparring begins the moment a student starts learning the forms.”

These skills must be applied to chow gar's 25 principles of fighting. The first four principles—float, swallow, sink and spit (fau, tung, chum and tow)—are power-training exercises that help the practitioner release a sudden burst of “gen” power through the arms, legs and waist, which produces an awesome fighting machine.

While all four skills are important, sink and spit are vital to chow gar fighting mastery. Float (fau) comes into play when the techniques are in a state of neutrality with the energy of “qi” central; sink (chum) means to root oneself, which will close off any openings and add stability; swallowing or withdrawing (tung) is

practiced along with chum is practiced with the chest withdrawn and the qi used in a reverse action; and spit (tow) is used to release power or energy.

When the chest is drawn and the back is rounded, tung hung is created. Hand techniques are more efficient and effective when tung hung is practiced.

CHOW GAR FIGHTING SKILLS

Before we discuss the fighting skills of chow gar Southern praying mantis kung-fu, we must understand the meaning behind san dan (three-step sparring) and how we can put such principles into action. It is only natural that the tech-

niques we are learning can be used when a self-defense situation arises.

Information learned during class must be practiced over and over so the movements become instinctual in nature. Three-step sparring is among the most essential aspects of chow gar southern praying mantis kung-fu.

Many believe three-step sparring practice is action performed during sparring drills. In other words, one sparring partner will throw a set of three techniques and his partner will answer with a set of three techniques. While this action will build a response, it does not constitute three-step sparring. In actuality, three-step sparring begins the moment a student starts learning the forms.

Here's how it works: A student learns the forms and techniques; then he breaks down the forms and techniques through applications and sensitivity training; finally, he practices sparring using the moves that he has acquired.

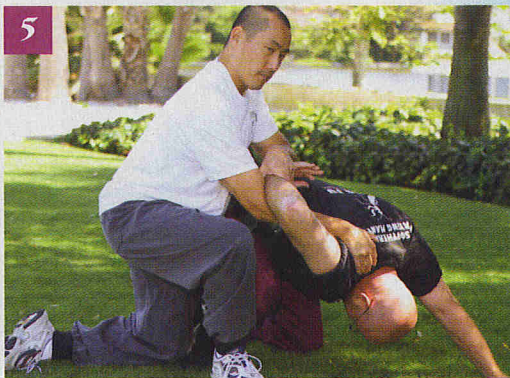
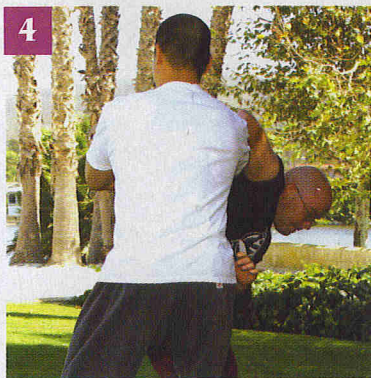
CHOW GAR BASICS

Chow gar's destruction skills are designed to put the opponent out of action before he has the chance to release an attack. These techniques are taken from chow gar's solo forms and two-man fighting forms. When using these skills understand that you must find your opponent's blind side to initiate effective destruction techniques. These special skills are used in conjunction with fast footwork and quick strikes to bewilder opponents.

Destruction techniques target special points on the limbs, including: the wrists, elbow points, shoulder points, feet, ankle points, inside shin points and knee points. Paramount is excellent tim-



Moving in on your opponent when being attacked closes distance. Here, as the attacker comes in (1), the defender blocks the left (2), raises the foe's right arm (3) and strikes to the midsection (4).



4 From an on-guard stance (1), the attacker opens with a strike to the midsection (2). The defender grabs the wrist and either strikes under the armpit or places the attacker in a lock (3). He twists around the attacker (4) and locks him on the ground (5).

ing, good footwork and coordination of the movements.

CHOW GAR FORMS

Every form within chow gar southern praying mantis must include throwing, striking or seizing/grappling skills. These skills are then combined with the ten different directions and performed on the high, middle or low gate areas.

A single section of the form may contain many movements strung together like bead on a string. These individual movements shed light on how techniques are initially used and what follow-ups may be available. Timing and a deeper meaning of the movements are discovered through practice.

Take a wristlock, for example. If done correctly, the wristlock will pull an opponent forward and done, leaving him open to a variety of secondary movements, such as strikes, kicks and more locks.


CHOW GAR FOOTWORK

Without proper footwork, you will be a welcome target for any attacker. You should be able to shift in any direction with ease. Choy gar practitioners are taught the triangular stance at the outset the shuffling aspect of the art. Solid yet light, your stance allows you to deliver low kicking techniques to specific dim yuet points on the legs, as well as to interlock your leg around your opponent's to stop him from kicking or escaping. The mantis system uses low kicks aimed at the legs and waist; they are easy to perform and often used in conjunction with hand techniques. The legs can be powerful weapons and are often used with the arms for several martial purposes. For example: to stop an

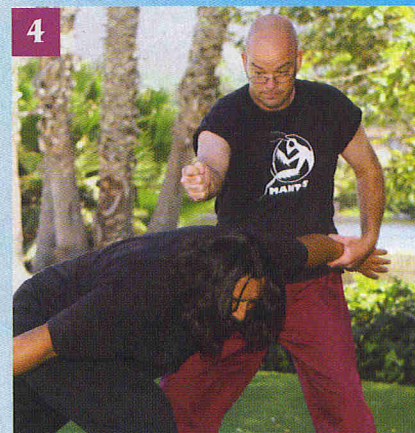
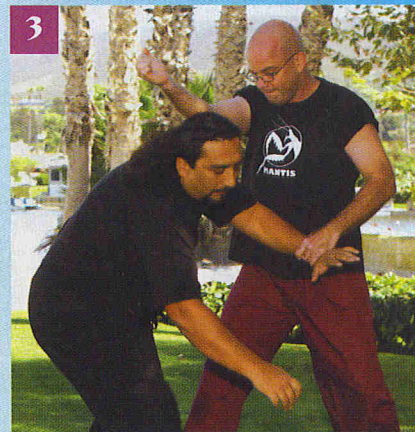
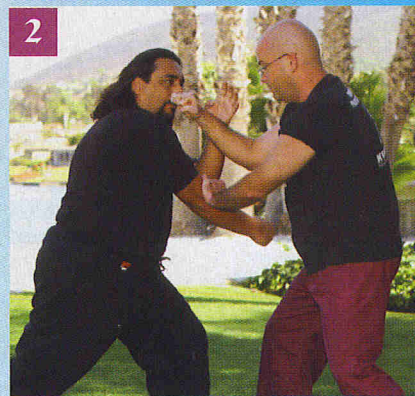
attack by using your foot or leg to block the opponent's technique; to prevent an attack by interlocking your leg on your opponent's; or to lock your opponent's arm or leg in a grappling fashion.

Another chow gar rule is that your legs should engage an opponent's legs while your bridge arms deal with his arms. A student must practice leg drills (chongs) to develop leg reflexes (baat doon kui sau). The body's repertoire of weapons can be used during fighting, including the fingers, fists, wrists, forearms, elbows, shoulders, hips, knees, feet, head and teeth. Everything must be trained to be used as a potential weapon. Never limit yourself to the fists and feet; the days of chivalrous combat are long gone. Your shoulders can be used to break your opponent's arms; your head can be used to butt; and your hips can bump. Never rely on one technique to get you through.

Sensitivity is what often separates the winner from the loser in a fight. You must feel your opponent's energy and force so you can divert and absorb his oncoming force. Secondly, you must learn to conserve energy by transferring hard to soft. Sensitivity training allows you to feel your opponent's movements and counterattack before he has had a chance to connect with his strikes.

Chow gar southern praying mantis is among the oldest and most respected Chinese martial arts systems in existence. Featuring devastating leg, arm and elbow techniques, as well as internal and external development, chow gar has more than enough to satisfy even the most demanding kung-fu stylist. 

Paul Whitrod was a closed-door student of chow gar grandmaster Yip Chee Keung, son the great grandmaster Yip Shui. The order the book, visit www.shenmartialarts.com.



1 Always try to finish any close-in situation quickly and decisively. In this example (1), the attacker's strike is blocked (2). At the same time, the defender steps on the attacker's front foot (3), turns his enemy around and pounds the back with a fist (4).