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February 24, 2010

Nestled along the front range of Boulder, Colorado is a wonderful school of Seven Star Praying Mantis under the guidance of a person who is completely dedicated to all aspects of the style, Sifu Michael Wang. I started at the school shortly after Sifu Wang came to the area and now that I have been practicing there my only unfulfilled wish is that he had come to the area sooner so I could have started my training that much earlier.

Sifu Wang is a humble and approachable teacher who guides his students with a gentle but firm hand. His greatest wish is to have students with a strong desire to improve to the best of their abilities, who have the humility to learn the principals of the mantis system as it was passed to him and the generations before him. The training is not easy, but under his guidance, I have been able to obtain a level I did not think I would be able to achieve. Yet with the depth of his knowledge, I feel I have a long way to go. While I often find this daunting, I also feel excited because I have confidence that he will be able to steadily lead me to higher levels of accomplishment and deeper understanding of the subtleties of the art.

The extent of Sifu Wang's commitment to his style is such that he will often recommend to prospective students that they look around at other schools before they decide what school is most suitable for them. The result is that the students who have given some thought to their own goals and interests, and who return to the school, are students who themselves have the seeds of commitment to the style and are open to learning what it has to offer. Not everyone is able to dedicate themselves to the style, and the result is that the size of classes is often small. Running a school without compromising the principals of the hard training involved, even if it means fewer students, is by no means easy with the financial considerations of modern times. That Sifu Wang does this I feel speaks strongly of his commitment to the style and his own integrity. Incidentally, it is also a benefit for the students since it means we get to train with other people who have the perseverance for this kind of training, students who are willing to take the time to lay a strong foundation to structure a set of skills which will become ingrained in them. In addition, since the classes are smaller, there is also a higher degree of individual attention.

In addition to the direct training Sifu Wang's gung fu students receive, they also benefit from his knowledge of tai-chi, chi-gung, and Chinese medicine. Since all of these areas are complementary to each other, Sifu Wang's students receive instruction from a perspective which is well-balanced and contains a deep understanding of the art, which to me qualifies him as "sifu" in the best sense of the word.

Sincerely,

Erick Winston