

When I was forty two years old I decided that I would enroll at the Chicago School of Chinese Martial Arts with the intention of embarking on an exercise program that offered more than the typical health club routine that many people are accustomed to these days. Having studied martial arts for a brief period when I was much younger, I knew that it had all of the elements that I was looking for such as stretching, strength building, mobility, agility, and also skills that would not only improve my health but also teach me to defend myself if necessary.

What I really appreciate about this school is the commitment it has to a traditional Chinese martial art. The Northern Shaolin Seven-Star Praying Mantis fighting style has been preserved through a long line of teachers and is infused with a rich history of Chinese philosophy and culture. It is an aggressive, effective, and sophisticated system of fighting that takes many years to master. It is not an eight week course in self defense or a mixed bag of fighting tricks; but rather it is a traditional art that when approached with commitment and diligence can not only transform one's body but potentially one's life.

In the beginning the new student is introduced to fundamental principles that will establish a solid foundation to build upon in the future. There are exercises to build strength in the legs, drills to establish correct posture and movement, and forms to develop proper ways of blocking, kicking, and punching. Slowly, and at a pace that the new student determines by their own commitment, progress is made and a new way of thinking about the martial arts develops. The instructors are competent, patient, and committed to helping students reach the goals that they've set for themselves.

Having started in a later period of my life I was also interested enhancing and promoting good health as I move forward. The martial aspects of Chinese Kung Fu are part of a great tradition that incorporates the healing arts as well. Along with vigorous physical training the school also offers lessons in Tai Chi and Qigong, health promoting treatments utilizing acupuncture, and Chinese medicinal herbs which used together have all improved my training and have helped to enhance my balance, strength, and cardiovascular capacity. My experience as a student has been a positive one, and I would say to anyone considering exploration in the martial arts to stop by and see for themselves what the Chinese traditional styles have to offer.

Robert Blum

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert Blum". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the printed name. It is underlined with a thin horizontal line.