



Peter Jones

Taiji Pa-Kua Internal Fighting Arts

P

eter Jones is the most senior Erle Montaigue accredited instructor in the United Kingdom and chief instructor and founder of Taiji Pa-kua Internal Fighting Arts - the oldest established school teaching the Erle Montaigue System in the UK and perhaps in the world - currently based in Ammanford, Wales.

Peter's association with Erle, both as one of his closest personal friends and students, stretches back to almost 35 years! Anyone, who knew Erle or trained with him for any length of time would be aware of that, as Erle would often talk about Peter in his classes.

Peter trained with Erle across the UK as well as in Australia. In fact, when Erle would visit the UK, he would often stay with Peter at his house in Wales - where they would train in his living room - such was their friendship. There wasn't much that Erle would not discuss with Peter and as the years passed he would become one of his closest confidantes.

Erle bestowed many accolades upon Peter, as he had trained consistently without any breaks for over three decades, making him his Chief of Foundations in the UK. He is one of only a handful of instructors certified in both the WTBA syllabus and the Erle Montaigue syllabus.

Prior to Erle's move to Wales, it was Peter who would organise and teach at all the major UK camps. In fact, several of the UK and European instructors have trained under Peter in some capacity over the years.

In 2004, when Erle finally moved to Wales, his location was not that far from Peter, who due to his work schedules would find it difficult to attend Erle's monthly sessions. However, that did not stop the two friends from meeting up and training. In fact, Erle would regularly visit Peter at his classes in Ammanford and train with him there.

Peter Jones is an intensely private man and tends to keep himself to himself. Our friendship began when we first met at Erle's memorial a few weeks after he had passed away in early 2011. We had already been talking with each other on the phone for a short time prior to that meet.

I had seen Peter earlier around 2000, when Erle was teaching at the Patti Pavilion on the Mumbles Road in Swansea. I remember Erle excitedly rushing off the stage to greet two guys who had walked into the hall whilst he was teaching and had taken a seat by the internal doors. At the time, I wasn't aware of Peter Jones, however, in the later years as my own relationship developed with Erle, he'd often talk about 'Jonesy' - saying, "You two need to meet up, you'll get along!"

Well, in 2011 we finally met! Sadly, it took the passing of both our friend, mentor and teacher to bring us together. However, there was a bitter sweetness in this in that it was our own unique bond with Erle - one of mutual friendship, love and respect - which now bound us together.

Over the years our friendship and bonds have grown stronger, so much so that I believe, apart from Erle, I am probably the only person who has managed to coax Peter out of Wales and come visit us in Leicester on a regular basis - where my own students look forward to learn from his knowledge and experience.

Peter and I do not just have Erle and the love of Taiji in common. We are both Star Wars and sci-fi geeks - although I love my comic books a bit more than him! We literally talk daily with each other on the phone and our topics range from Taiji, training and what's the latest on Netflix, and the bugger always binge watches a series to get ahead of me!

Peter is a regular contributor to Lift Hands magazine and his articles on The 12 Deadly Katas and Trapping Hands have been a hit with our readers. He has a wealth of knowledge and experience and both our training paths have followed a similar course - and why wouldn't they since we both had the same mentor and guide.

When I began to put the concepts of Lift Hands together, Peter was the first person that came to mind, along with Colin Power. I wanted to have both their input into the magazine.



At Erle's memorial gathering in 2011

With 2019 looming upon the horizon, coinciding with the 30th anniversary of Peter's school, Taiji Pa-Kua Internal Fighting Arts, I couldn't think of a better time then now to shine the spotlight onto the man - a man who has dedicated his life to the internal arts and epitomizes the Erle Montaigue System in particular!



First Meetings - Peter Jones with Erle Montaigue and Anthony Court circa 1989

NB: Hello brother Peter Jones... thank you so much for giving Lift Hands the opportunity for this interview.

Before we begin, I'd like to congratulate you on behalf of myself and our readership on the forthcoming 30th anniversary of your school - Taiji-Pakua Internal Arts - as well as a big thank you for your contributions to Lift Hands Magazine!

It's a major milestone in anyone's journey, so please tell us briefly, how did your martial arts journey begin?

PJ: Thank you! It's wonderful to be here talking to all your readers.

I began with boxing. I was a young boy at the time, about 8 years old, the local boxing club was only a few steps away from where I lived!

A few years later I started doing judo, which I enjoyed as a teenager and after that I began Lau Gar Gung Fu. I had already started doing Taiji by this time as well. I eventually gave up Lau Gar to focus on my Taiji.

NB: What made you choose your particular style of martial arts?

PJ: I simply felt that Taiji was better suited to me.

NB: So, how did you come to the internal arts - who was your first teacher?

PJ: I was looking for a class in the Swansea area. I, along with a few friends found a Taiji class and decided to go and have a try, and I enjoyed it. The instructor's name was Anthony Court, and I stayed with him for about four and a half years - you could say I had the Taiji bug!

NB: What was it about the internal arts which attracted you to them?

PJ: The martial and healing aspects which Erle was teaching.

NB: So, how did you come across Erle Montaigue and where did you first meet?

PJ: It was while I was training with Anthony Court. He came in one day and said that he had found this guy called Erle Montaigue teaching the Yang style. So, we ended up training in Erle's system as a part of the World Taiji Boxing Association (WTBA).

Anthony invited Erle to come over to Carmarthen in Wales and this was the first time we met.

NB: What was it about Erle's system which appealed to you and how did it differ from what was being taught at the time?

PJ: I started off learning the Chen Man-Ch'ing style of Taiji with Anthony Court, but after meeting Erle we started learning Yang Cheng fu's form which Erle was teaching at the time, I just liked the way Erle taught - no nonsense or magic!

NB: How many times a week did you train and how difficult was the training?

PJ: I was going to classes four days a week and having a private class every Sunday for about four years. The training wasn't that difficult - having said that, I enjoyed everything I trained in so I just got on with it!

NB: You are regarded as one of Erle's oldest students and someone whom he regarded a close personal friend and confidante, what was it like training with him way back in his heydays?

PJ: It was brilliant to have someone like Erle putting you on the right path - that was priceless!

One of the times when Erle came over from Australia in the early 90s to do a workshop, he was staying with me. We were sitting down in the house just having a chat, next thing I know Erle's up on his feet saying come on let's do something?

Bearing in mind that we were in my living room, we ended up going over the A and B side of the Pauchui, small San Sau, and the Bagua circular and linear forms!

There was never a dull moment with him around. I learned so much.

NB: You went across to Australia during the 90s, how was the experience and what are your memories about that trip?

PJ: When I went over to Australia, it was the first time I had jumped on a plane to go anywhere on my own at the time! I had a long stay over in Hong Kong before heading to Australia. When I got to the camp, I remember Erle asking the guys, "Where's Peter?" After spotting me in the room he walked over and gave me a big hug, asking "Are you ok? I said, "No, missing my family!" I think he knew that anyway. Erle told me about the first time he went away from his family. We both had a tear in our eyes, but had a good laugh afterwards. He always knew what to say and when to say it, to make things better. Erle said, "Look" come up and stay with me." The following day after training, we headed off to Erle's house. I remember Erle had a VW Beetle at the time and he wasn't a fast driver, it took bloody ages to get to his house, but saying that, it was



Above and below: Erle with his main training partner Stuart Le Marseny in Carmarthen, Wales - 1989





Images from Pembrey Country Park, Llanelli - Summer Camp 1994

Top left: With Peter Smith and Carl.; Top right and above fooling around with Bill Barnes.
Middle: Group photo

was great for sightseeing.

It was great once the camp started. We trained in Yang Lu-ch'an Taiji form and the Qi Disruption Katas, over the two weeks. We had an awards evening, where Erle gave me a, 'Dedication: Certificate For Hard Work For The WTBA in Wales' This was in September 1996.

And when all that was done, we had the entertainment for the evening - Erle singing a few songs.

After each day's training at the camp, it was off to Brisbane with Alan Williams to his classes. Alan at the time was the Chief Instructor for the WTBA.

NB: Over the years you organized many workshops for Erle, as well as his main representatives - such as Stuart Le Marseny and Al Williams. How hard was it organizing these camps in the UK, especially since the internet digital revolution hadn't quite hit yet, so all things had to be done by fax or phone?

PJ: I just took everything in my stride, a lot of envelopes and a lot of phone calls!

NB: Erle bestowed many accolades upon you, including Chief Instructor For Foundations in the UK - how did that make you feel? What other achievements are you proud of?

PJ: It was a great honour that Erle thought I was up for the job!

In May, 1998 Erle gave me, A Lifetime Member Award. There are only four of us who have ever had this award, in the whole of the WTBA.

In 2003 Erle made me WTBA Senior Instructor 5 Degree Chief of Training Basics UK.

NB: Erle tried to move to the UK several times before he finally managed it at the end of 2003. I know you were involved in helping him trying to make those moves, how hard was it - what memories do you have of those?

PJ: Yeah, Erle did try to move years before he eventually made it to the UK.

I remember there was this one time I had the postman knock my door telling me I have a parcel for you. Bloody hell! It wasn't one parcel it was boxes of Erle's master videos. I remember not long after, Erle telling me he had to put the move on hold for now [this was his first attempt at moving to Wales]. So, I asked him what do you want me to do with all these videos? He replied, "You can tape over them or keep them - you will be teaching me them back one day!" Obviously I laughed.



Above: Peter training the Pauchui with Erle in his living room.



Above: In Hong Kong en route to Australia - 1996

NB: It's interesting that you should say that! I remember Erle coming into class one day in Llangadog... all excited about the Yang Cheng-fu form. He had stopped practicing it for some time and he told me that he had started reacquainting himself with it in your classes. I remember him telling me, "That Peter Jones, he's an excellent instructor! I'm relearning the Yang Cheng-fu form from him, I had forgotten how good it was! Tell you what Nas, he must've had a bloody good teacher!" I started laughing, as he complimented himself in complimenting you. All joking aside, technically speaking you are probably Erle's only student who ever taught him something back! How often would Erle come to visit you in Ammanford?

PJ: He would pop down to my class and would end up taking my lesson. This happened on more than one occasion! Erle came down with the boys once, but mostly he came alone.

He would call me to see if I would be in class first.

There were times when he'd just show up and on days when I wasn't there - he'd take the class and then phone me and tell me about it later, saying how "Bloody brilliant" it had been! These are great memories for myself and my students too.

NB: What are your fondest memories of Erle?

PJ: Erle and I had a great friendship over the years, we had many conversations about many things. But the only thing I will say is, thank you Erle for being you and giving me all the memories you did throughout my path in Taiji and as a friend.

There was the time, however, when I was in Australia, when I went to stay up at Erle's place. Anyway after a lovely evening it was time for bed, so Erle showed me where I was going to sleep. I jumped into bed, Erle asked, "Do you need me to tuck you in?" I said, "I'm good!" As Erle was walking out of the bedroom he turned around and said matter of factly, "If you hear any noises at night, don't worry, there's a snake living in the attic just above your head - he hunts at night!"

He was chuckling saying this, but that night I don't think I had a lot of sleep, I was shitting myself!

NB: Any other anecdotes or funny stories you'd like to share of your time with Erle?

PJ: Erle had come over from Australia and he was staying with me, there was one morning when we were having breakfast, and I turned around and saw Erle cutting into a big block of cheese!

So, me being me, I asked him, "I thought you didn't eat cheese?" He looked at me and told me to "Shut up, I'm on holiday!"

Well, we both started to laugh, so this was one of those funny stories!



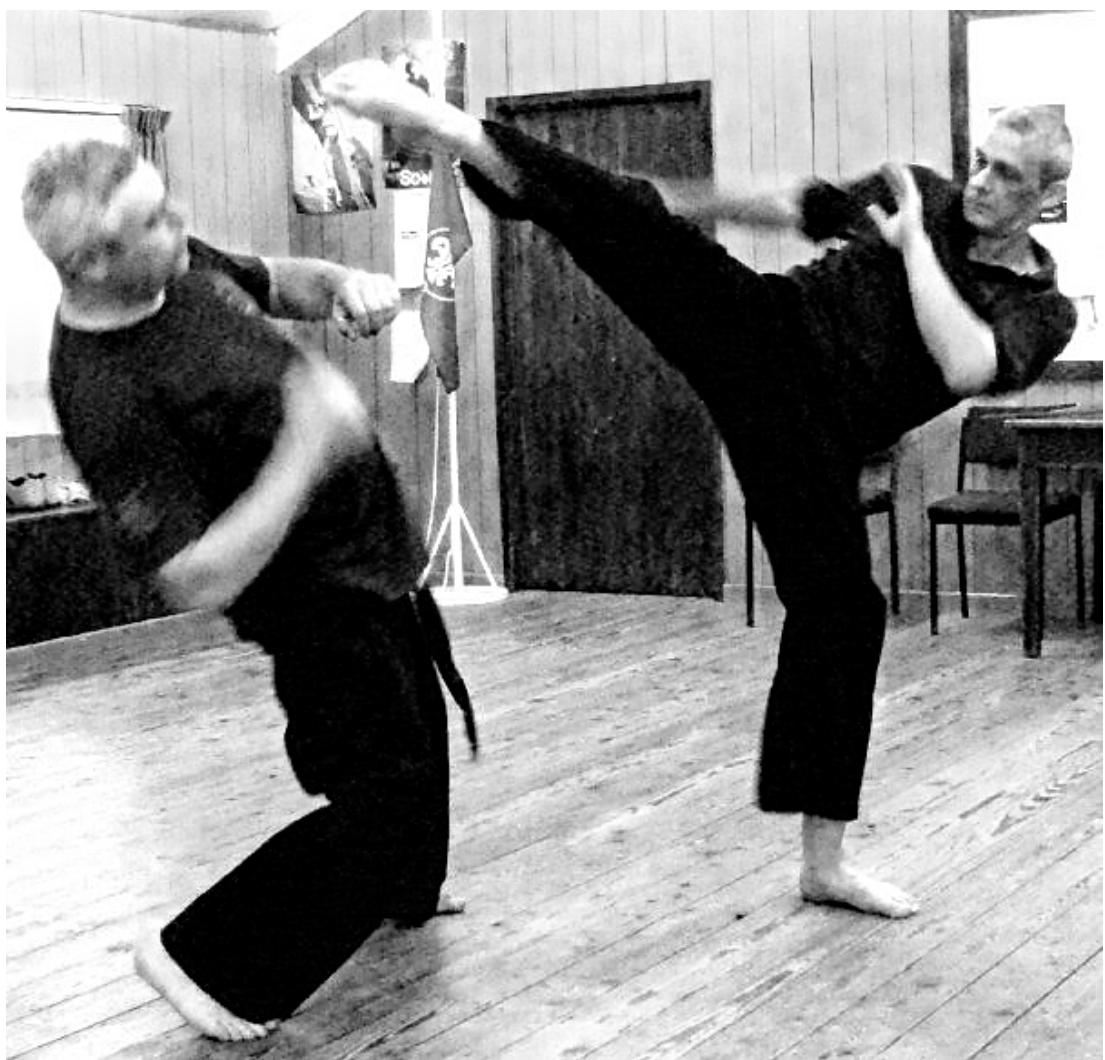
Above: With Erle and Al Williams in Australia - 1996



Above: With Ken Johnson and Al Williams in Australia - 1996



Above: With Erle in Woodgreen, London outside Jim Uglow's school - 1994
Below: Training in Wales



NB: [Laughing] I could tell you a similar story about him eating my chicken steak!

Did you always plan to teach or is it something which just happened?

PJ: No it was something that just happened! I had never thought about teaching. Something happened at the time which put me on the spot - so, I stepped up to keep things going for everyone.

NB: That's interesting as something similar happened to myself! I've always stated that Erle's best instructors were those who never set out to teach - they were only interested in learning and developing themselves.

What is it that you most enjoy about teaching others?

PJ: It's seeing them trying and having a go, and when they get it, it's seeing the smile on their face to say look I can do it!

NB: What is the best advice you give to your students and others with regard to their training?

PJ: Always keep it real and enjoy the path your on!

NB: You must have had many students over the years, are you still in touch with them or have most gone their own way?

PJ: I still have students who have been with me for over 20 years now, but with students that have gone their own way, I don't really hear from them at all!

NB: That sadly is a very common story!

Now, I know you have also done TV work, how did that come about?

PJ: One of my students at the time knew someone who worked within the tv industry and they asked if I could do a demo video so they can see what I do?

The tv company was looking for someone to choreograph some fight scenes. They did get back to me and said it was too close to the real thing and they didn't want the actors getting hurt [insurance purposes]! But, saying that, some good did come out of it - I ended up working as an extra on a good number of tv programmes.

NB: So, what does Peter Jones like to do in his spare time - other then Taiji?

PJ: I love music. I play the keyboards and a bit on the old guitar. I live by the coast so its nice to go down there now and then - a good place to think, and do some Taiji.



Above: At home with Al Krych & Erle in Wales

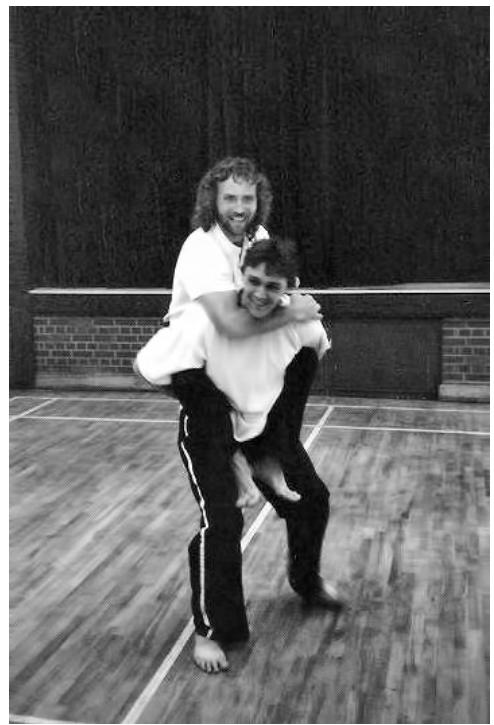


Above: Fooling around in London outside Jim Uglow's school - 1994



Teaching in Leicester 2016

Top: Nasser Butt, Colin Power, Peter Jones, Adrian Jones and Elliot Morris



Above & right: With Stuart Le Marseny in 1992

NB: If you had to re-live your journey again, would you do anything different or would you keep it the same?

PJ: It's been a good journey, a hard one, but like they say no pain no gain. If I had to do something different it would have been to put my family first, my training took over my life.

NB: Please, tell us, why after over 30 years, you finally decided to move on from the WTBA?

PJ: It was a tough decision, especially after being with the WTBA for so long! I stayed with the organization for a further 6 years after Erle's death - I didn't leave immediately and publicly stated my reasons when I did.

After my teacher's passing, I felt it was the right time for me to move on, so I wished the new WTBA all the best in the future and left.

NB: Brother Peter, thank-you for your time and sharing some memories with our readers.

We are looking forwards to your future articles in 2019 and hopefully, we can carry out further in-depth interviews on the various training methods and concepts of Erle's system, which he taught over the years.

And on behalf of all our readers we'd like to wish you and your family a very merry christmas and a peaceful and happy new year!



Left: With Bill Barnes during my official WTBA summer camp in Pembrey Country Park, Llanelli - 1994