



Students and master bow before class

Kenosha's kung fu 'kid'



Now 74, the Rev. William Foster has taught kung fu to hundreds of students



Foster watches students practice at the Kenosha Youth Foundation

By **SHERYL LAHTI**
Staff Writer

His kung fu students call him "the most experienced Caucasian in the world."

Why would a man spend 50 years of his life practicing the Chinese art of kung fu?

The Rev. William Foster emphasizes, "We don't do this primarily for self-defense, although it is a most effective unarmed form of self-defense. Most of our people never use it as a first-strike in their lives."

"The aim of martial arts is serenity. Not peace of mind in matters of worldly circumstances, but the serenity deep within to face death, to have inner peace with equanimity."

There are physical benefits also.

Supplemented by such an art as tai chi (a series of slow, circular motions and postures to aid meditation and self-defense), Foster at 74 is fit as any 40-year-old. He says with a little pride that even at his age, his hands are as steady as ever.

Foster, chaplain of Kenosha

Memorial Hospital and pastor emeritus at First Congregational Church, has a crimson belt in kung fu — the third, master rank.

"You cannot go any higher than that," he said. "They can give me another after I die, but that's the only way. You start out with white and can wind up with white."

Foster began studying the Chinese art 30 years ago in Shanghai. He had lived and traveled in the Far East as a Methodist minister before hooking up in 1937 with Lo Wei Doun, his first teacher.

Foster came to Kenosha in 1968 when he was called to minister at First Congregational. He was accompanied by his wife, Donna, and four sons, William, David, Danny and Scott. Foster brought his art along, too.

Since the beginning, he has educated hundreds of people world-wide in kung fu. In Kenosha, he currently has about 200 students.

Unlike the Japanese and Korean karate form of martial art that teaches fighting, Chinese

kung fu stresses non-violence, control of body, mind and will. That has been Foster's challenge, to pass on the discipline.

As a tribute to Master Foster's accomplishments, his students honored him recently at a banquet. About 100 students came from as far as New York and Los Angeles to celebrate.

Ten-year student Kerry Connelly, saying that anyone who was once Foster's student remains one for life, summarized the spirit of the celebration this way:

"To do anything for 50 years is an accomplishment. But to do it consistently and with such enthusiasm is a lot. His enthusiasm for the art and willingness to take the time to instruct is encouraging."

"The most important thing in kung fu is the process. He imparts that to us — that there's never any end to it. The more you know, the more you find out you have to learn. He's always willing to learn more and impart that enthusiasm to us."

Kenosha News photos by Paul Williams



**Serenity
the goal**

Rev. Foster explains to students that "inner peace" is one of the main objectives of kung fu. At left, he looks on during an exercise. Foster says that good physical conditioning is one of the benefits of the discipline.