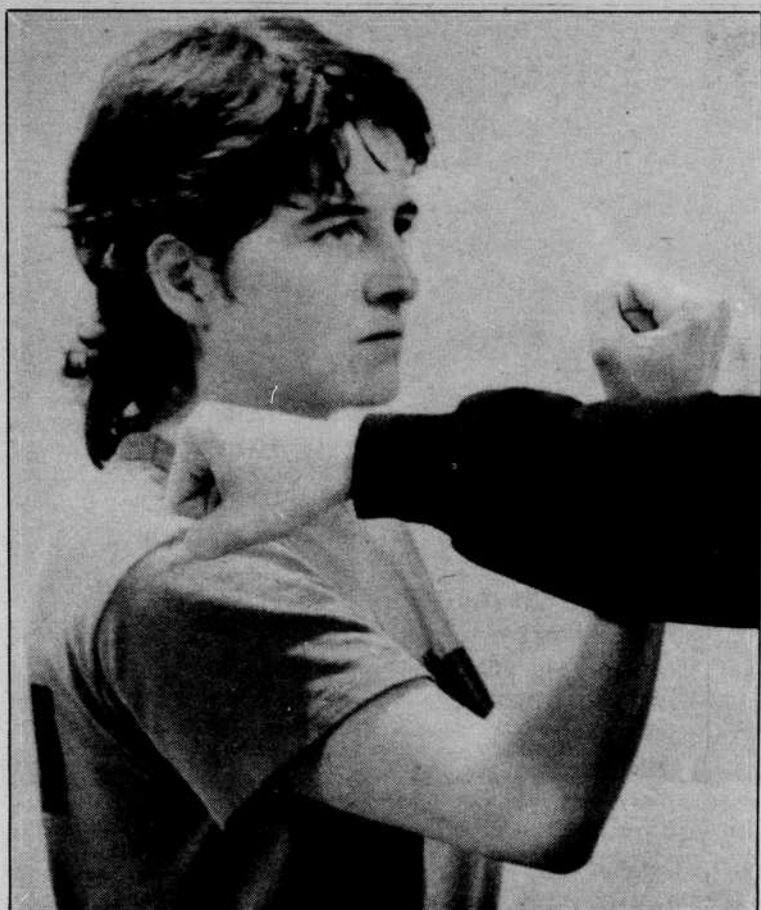




PHOTOS BY KIRA SHREM

Amazon Kung Fu

A Woman's Place

Photo Essay by Kira Shrem

*Spirit.
Strength.
Grace.
Integrity.*

One hand is the fist of power, the other of friendship. One's power is shielded by friendship, and together the two meet in a spirit of cooperation.



Classes at Amazon Kung Fu begin in a circle with this two-handed salute, each person acknowledging that for the next two hours she will train in an atmosphere of trust and respect.

Some women have trained for many years; others have only recently begun. Some were victims of rape, joining the class to regain some personal power; others joined because they wanted a martial art which challenges them to practice self-defense with the fluidity of a dancer.

The style is called Chuan Fa, and the system is Kajunkenbo Kung Fu. Kajunkenbo combines the martial arts of karate, judo, ju jitsu, kenpo and Chinese boxing. Classes at the kwoon, or place of training, include sparring or fighting, punch attacks, grab arts, and katas and pinyons.

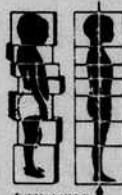
Sparring teaches one to block, kick and use the hands with the strength of a street fighter, while maintaining the control that allows one's partner to trust that she will not be hurt. Punch attacks and grab arts are as they sound—reactions to being punched and grabbed. Katas and pinyons are series of moves which suggest the visualization of opponents. When done with power from one's center they are truly beautiful to watch.

Adding to the intensity of a powerful technique is one's first weapon, the voice. A punch accompanied by a kiai, or a sound that comes full from the diaphragm and fills the room with its pitch, can take one's breath away. The kiai is power in its own right, used to plant oneself firmly in control and establish the right to take up space.

Amazon Kung Fu is a safe environment where women and children go to train hard and trust well. It is this bond which encourages them to return to the kwoon week after week and year after year, to train where they know it is okay to be strong and powerful, visible, vulnerable and graceful.

Beginning classes started Tuesday, April 7. Amazon Kung Fu welcomes women and children who are interested in training. If you would like to observe a class or need more information call and leave a message at 687-1629 or 345-6490.

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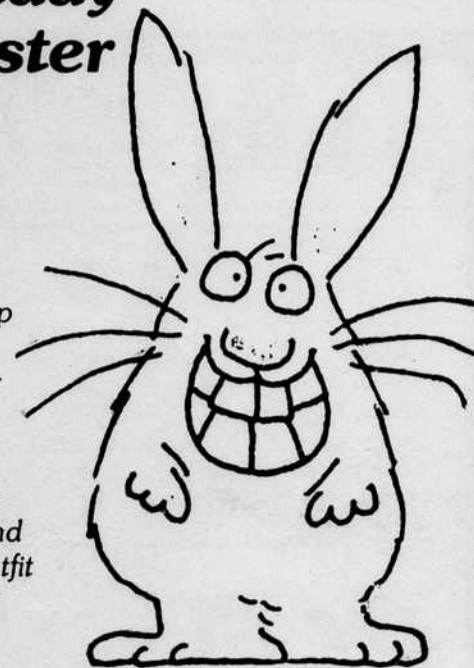
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