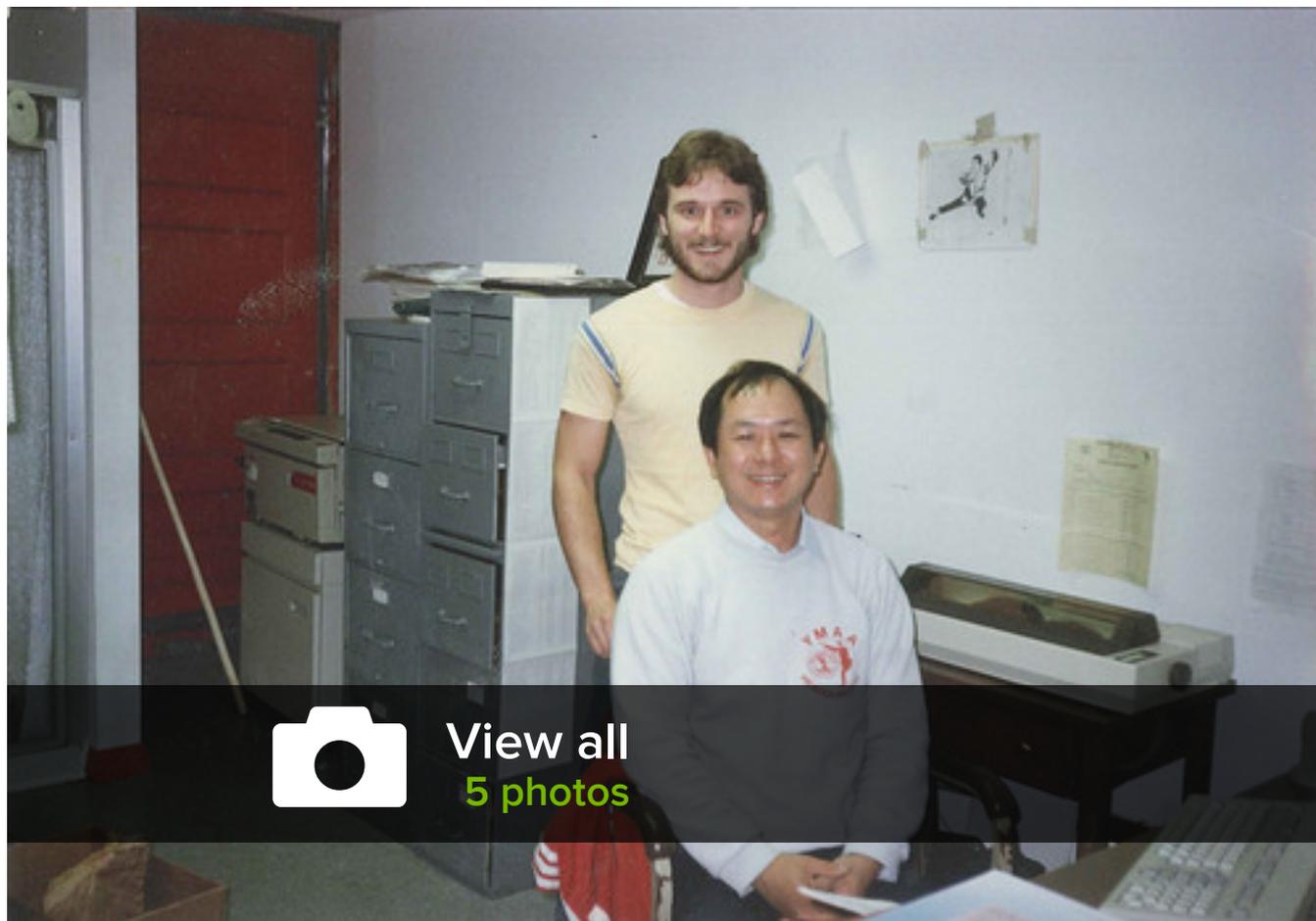


YMAA Publication Center is 30 years young!

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David Ripianzi (standing) and Dr. Jwing Ming Yang in the old office in 1987.

YMAA

According to the Department of Labor Statistics, the survival rate of small businesses over 15 years old in the U.S. is about 25%. Technological developments have put many publishing companies in stress or out of business. But YMAA Publication Center, a small company focusing on books and DVDs of Asian martial arts - mostly [Chinese Martial Arts](#) - has survived for thirty years and continues to grow and thrive.



YMAA

Dr. Jwing Ming Yang is a living legend. Born in Taiwan, he suffered from poor health as a child. In his teenage years, he studied Shaolin White Crane from Maser Gin-Gsao Cheng as well as [Tai Chi](#) (Taiji) Chuan from masters Tao Kao, Wilson Chen, and Mao-Ching Li for more than 13 years. It was always his dream to share his learning with others. He got a Master's Degree in physics from the reputable National Taiwan University, a PhD in mechanical engineering from Purdue University and later worked for Texas Instruments. He started to share the arts by teaching in his early 20's and continued after he moved to the U.S. Then, he began his writing career on Chinese Martial Arts with a hope to spread and preserve the arts. It was physically and mentally demanding to work during the day and teach and write at night. Still, he authored four books and 2 videotapes in four years. However, he was not pleased with the products because he had to rewrite or delete a few important sections requested by the publisher. Desktop publishing was in its infancy and not widely available. Self-publishing was difficult, tedious, time-consuming, expensive, and messy. Dr. Yang recalled that he had to take a typesetting class at Harvard College. With unwavering determination, Dr. Yang quit his respectful and more lucrative job as an engineer and devoted himself totally to the arts in January 1984 and founded [YMAA Publication Center](#). At one point, he had a bad cold but could not afford to see a doctor. A couple of months later, it developed into pneumonia and he had to take a break. He finished his first book at the end of the year. The books printed in Hong Kong came back in boxes; the challenge was how to sell them.

David Ripianzi, a student of Dr. Yang with telemarketing experience, volunteered as a commission-based sales manager. At that point, Internet was used only by academia and Google founders Sergey Brin and Larry Page were 11 years old then. YMAA asked out-of-town martial art enthusiasts to send them their local Yellow Pages' sections of the bookstores and martial art schools. David made cold calls to bookstores and martial art schools near and far and sold books on consignment. Many told him that they never heard of the subject and were not interested. Persistence paid off. Gradually, they were

able to make an average of \$200 a month. In 1986, they contracted a wholesaler and business grew enough that they were able to afford to hire a part-time packer so Dr. Yang could concentrate on writing. Later, YMAA Publication Center had enough revenue to hire David to work one day a week. In 1989, they worked with another wholesaler in New York; the first check was \$9,000. David recalled that they were thrilled and felt very rich. YMAA hired David full-time the following year. Financial hardship was also felt in their office, whose roof leaked water all the time. With the help of students, they retrofitted an old building used for a restaurant, a Laundromat, and a grocery store. In 1994, YMAA Publication Center expanded and brought in other authors. In 1995, they signed a contract with the current distributor [National Book Network](#) (NBN). They also started to publish martial art related fictions.

As of now, YMAA has worked with 49 authors and published over 100 books and 90 videos (both VHS tapes and DVDs). Judged by the number of published titles, they are the largest English publisher in this niche market of Chinese Martial Arts. Through NBN and other foreign distribution channels, YMAA products are available in foreign countries. They have also authorized foreign publishers to translate and publish their books and videos in Italian, Spanish, French, Portugal, German, Russian, Japanese, Hungarian, Greek, and several others languages.

Since Dr. Yang's true passion is in teaching and writing, he hired David as the publisher once the company was in a stable condition. In 2005, David bought the company from Dr. Yang as the sole owner. However, Dr. Yang's publishing vision and philosophy have not been altered. Dr. Yang remains a member of the publishing board, reviewing books and DVDs submitted by prospects.

What I like about YMAA's publications is their high standard. Their books normally include editorial notes that explain Romanization of Chinese words, formats and treatment of Chinese words. They have references to original Chinese literature and the printing of Chinese characters. The appendices contain terminology and jargon in English, phonetic spellings and Chinese characters, and the translation and glossary of Chinese terms. All books are thoroughly indexed and with bibliography. They also encompass a massive amount of photos with clear markings of moving direction.

The digital age has brought uncertainty to the publishing industry. Facing a tumultuous landscape, YMAA Publication Center has strategized and quickly adopted new technologies. Now consumers can have their favorite title in a printed copy, a PDF file, an ePub (MOBI format), or in an enhanced eBook for certain titles (read "[Recommended: Simple Qigong for Health by Grandmaster Yang Jwing Ming](#)"). They stopped making VHS videos in 2008. Currently, they have nine videos on [Amazon Instant Video](#). You can watch videos instantly on [Amazon Fire HD](#) tablet, Amazon Fire TV, game consoles, smart TVs, mobile phones and other streaming devices. YMAA Publication Center turned 30 years old this year. They wasted no time in celebrating the milestone and created several mobile apps for iPhones, Android phones, iPads, and other tablets so now you can watch various instructional video clips for 20 minutes for free.

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Violet Li

Tai Chi Examiner