

- Ts'ai Kuanlung (Daddy) - 蔡光隆
- Ts'ai Kuoyen (Kid) - 蔡國彥
- Ts'ai Owen - 蔡文宗
- Chang Hsitzung - 張文溪
- (作者誤將「溪」與「宗」加在一起)

Chiao Sheng

by
G. B. Talovich

Ts'ai, Ts'ai, Ts'ai, Chang, and I went climbing. The first Ts'ai, Owen the dentist, had phoned to ask if I'd like to climb at Lungtung (Dragon Hole) with his friend, Chang Hsitzung of the Chinese Himalayan Expedition. Daddy Ts'ai (Ts'ai Kuanglung), having climbed a dozen years, is one of the elders of rock climbing in Taiwan. His son has the fine name Ts'ai Kuoyen, meaning An Erudite Scholar for the Nation, but I'll call him Kid, because he was only a

scrawny sixth-grader and climbed better than I.

We headed north in Daddy's cracker-box Subaru, and turned east at Keelung port onto the Seacoast Highway. We passed under Chinkuashih, out of sight high above the road. Though there are few climbable cliffs in Taiwan's mountains, gentle slopes are practically nonexistent. The scenery of Chinkuashih is so beautiful that the Japanese heir-apparent had a house built up there during

the Occupation, but the American Air Force bombed it flat toward the end of World War II. Facing Chinkuashih is Thunder Peak with its large, black, triangular face.

"Two guys climbed that last summer," Daddy told me, "but when they were rappelling down, their anchor broke."

"What happened?"

He crooked his index finger, the Chinese gesture for death.

Chiao Sheng. Photo and map by G.B. Talovich.



We rounded tiny Nosehead Horn harbor at Taiwan's northeastern tip, then chugged into the tunnel under the lighthouse: there in the sunlight before us lay Lungtung Bay. About a kilometer straight ahead across the bay ranged a row of cliffs. We planned to climb the first corner, not far from the Dragon, a perforated reef formation which resembles a dragon swimming in from the sea.

We decided to go as two ropes. Daddy, Kid, and I would go up the east face of the main buttress, and Chang would decide where to climb with Owen. I watched carefully to see just where Daddy climbed the buttress, because Chinese are not given to detailed instructions: figure it out for yourself, that's what your brain is for. Daddy disappeared over the first hump, and as I played out line, I watched Kid, still unroped, scrambling around. He insisted on wearing a floppy, wide-brimmed orange hat. The wind knocked the brim over his eyes. He was so lithe and steady that I found myself hoping the brim would stay in his eyes a bit longer... just a little slip, smartass—don't they teach you in school about respect for your elders?

Daddy called for me to follow. Kid sat down to watch as I headed up the 5.9 buttress. No way I'm going to fall in front of you, brat. I went out of sight over the hump, and started giving the chocks an extra yank: Kid was cleaning.

When I climbed around to the north side of the buttress, I found Chang's rope cutting across my lead. Chang and Daddy were both out of sight above me. "Hey! What's going on here?"

Owen, directly beneath me, leaned back and studied the situation. "That's where Chang went," he offered helpfully.

Daddy's head appeared over the edge up there. "Go past under his rope, then find a place to wait for Owen to climb through."

"Hey, Chang! How about some slack on your rope there?"

I traversed under the white rope, then looked at the main face in front of me. Fortunately, I found a bucket big enough for half of one foot, and some nice holds above it. I put in a chock and tied in. Daddy tied me off above.

Hanging there waiting for Owen to climb through, I let my mind wander back to my college days, when this area was accessible only by boat or by one narrow, grueling path. I used to hike out

in the summer and camp at the foot of the other end of this row of cliffs. Nights were spent in my trusty Stephenson's tent, trying to avoid notice by smugglers, Coast Guard, and mosquitoes. Days were given to snorkelling in that clear, blue water, among coral beds and thousand upon thousands of incredibly garish tropical fish colored like an acid freak's hallucinations. I'd always wanted to climb these cliffs but had never been able to find another climber...

Owen was about three meters below my rope. Chang had given him no easy route to follow. "Real good, Owen! But if you touch my rope, I'll whip you off!" I swung the line from my waist menacingly.

"Ch'u niteh," he smiled. ("Shove it.") He wiped his face on his shoulder. "Why don't I find some twigs so you can make a nest there?"

"Just climb, turtle."

"What's wrong, don't you like it there? Don't you want to stay? Okay, you may leave." He reached up and gave my rope a tremendous twang. I clutched my anchor.

"Let's call Chang's new route *Chiao Sheng*—Crossed Rope," he suggested brightly. I had other, choicer names for it, but I kept them to myself. I watched his ankles, then his soles pass overhead.

I chocked in another anchor and called for Kid to climb up to the other side of the traverse. I think it took me twice as long to climb that high. I began to wonder if there wasn't some way I could knock him off, inconspicuously.

We ate lunch at the top, looking across the bay at the Nosehead Horn Lighthouse. I pointed out the old path on the other rim of the bay, barely visible now, and told them about the shortcut from the lighthouse, straight down bamboo thickets, and out through someone's pigpen. Strangers were rare in those days, before hiking became popular. One resident had been totally mystified when he went out to slop his pigs and found an unkempt, backpacking *Ah-doh-ah* (Bignose) tiptoeing gingerly through the pigpies...enigmatic Westerners...

After lunch, we picked our way up a briarpatch, hoping for an easy walk off, only to be met by a Coast Guard sentry waving us back with gun and bayonet.

"Turtle," someone grumbled.

"You have to sympathize. I bet he's never had a chance to do that before."

"Yeah, I bet we made his day. Now he has something to write home about."

No one wanted to rappel. We chose to downclimb the easy north face unroped. Daddy led, I took the rear. One traverse led under a slight overhang. They all passed easily. I discovered too late that my 180-cm frame wouldn't fit past. My shoulder caught on the overhang. I bent my knees to hunch under, and levered my feet off the ledge. Frantically I jammed my right arm to the elbow into a godgiven crack. I put both feet securely back on the ledge. Bowlegged, gripping the slight bulge between my knees. I found a handhold for my left. I jammed with my nose. I couldn't find an earhold. "I'm stuck," I muttered into the crack, hardly daring to breathe.

"Stay right there," Daddy called. "I'll climb up and belay you." He climbed over me—literally over me, because I was glued right on top of a nice vertical crack. He carefully passed up my back, reaching around my waist and over my shoulders for holds. He considerately refrained from stepping on my head. Chang came up underneath and guided me back left so I could rope up. Going back up that easy mantle, my bleeding left arm gave out, and I clutched the ledge with a rib. Whoof! Once roped, I tried the traverse again, but still couldn't squeeze through. I fell. Daddy caught me. I downclimbed the crack he had come up. Calling his medical expertise into play, Owen examined my wounds, and told me I needed two fillings, and possibly an extraction.

After that, even Kid wanted to rope up. Owen misjudged his distance, and sprained an ankle jumping off the last meter of the climb. I began to feel better.

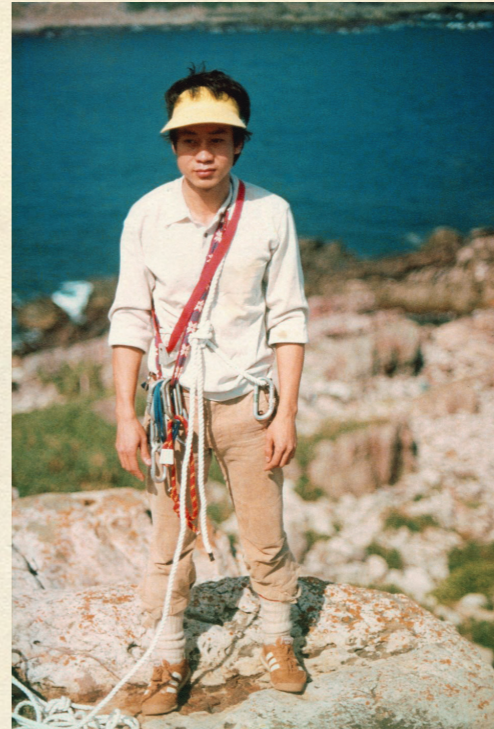
Kid spent the rest of the afternoon pitching hunks of coral at innocent seabirds. One propitious chunk bounced off the cliff and landed on his head—my first genuine proof of the fulfillment of prayers. Owen and I, the hobbling wounded, sprawled on a large rock to watch Chang and Daddy free-sole up and down the spires. The whump-whump of waves and skritchskritch of climbing boots eventually lulled me softly out, to dream of luminous fish wearing orange hats, scampering up and down sandstone cliffs.

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From Left: Ts'ai Kuanlung (Daddy), Ts'ai Owen, Chang Uenxi. 陶維極 / Ts'ai Owen
 左起：蔡光隆 (蔡爸)、蔡文宗、張文溪。 陶維極 / 蔡文宗

Ts'ai Owen 陶維極 / Ts'ai Owen
 蔡文宗 陶維極 / 蔡文宗



From Left: Ts'ai Kuanlung, Ts'ai Owen, G. B. Talovich 陶維極 / Ts'ai Owen
 左起：蔡光隆、蔡文宗、陶維極。 陶維極 / 蔡文宗



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