

INTERNAL WUSHU ARTS NEWSLETTER

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HAPPY THANKS GIVING

Needless to say there will be no class November 26th. We will have class on the 25th and 28th though. As far as December goes I will not be teaching from the 24th to Jan. 2nd. I do expect you to practice every day. December 5th, Saturday we will be in the park since the PNA is having their Winter Festival.

MORNING CLASSES

The Wednesday Tai Chi and Thursday Pa Kua morning sessions have moved to Discovery Park on Magnolia. If the weather is bad we will move indoors to my apartment.

CHEN TAI CHI MEMBERS

While visiting Shr-fu I had a cold so I had to sit and rest part of the time. Shr-fu gave me a massage technique to focus the chi

to heal my lungs. This technique is the same as Chen Jin Kung Tantien Circle, same visualization and symbolism involved!

IN A BEGINNER'S MIND THERE ARE MANY POSSIBILITIES, IN AN EXPERTS THERE ARE FEW

If you assume you know the form or principles you may miss the subtle differences and changes that continually take place. If you practice several styles approach each with a beginner's mind. Tai Chi is Tai Chi but the Yang and Chen styles still have very different flavors. All these arts are NEI JIA but the flavor of Pa Kua and Tai Chi are still very different. Don't blind yourself by assumptions.

INSTRUCTORS

There are as many reasons to teach as there are people taking up these arts. One point that has always stayed with me is from

Aikido Master Tohei. As he would lead the various warm ups and exercises he would emphasize to do them so everyone in the class could follow. To be a good teacher your students must be able to follow your lessons, movements or instructions. Patience in giving out the lessons and patients in waiting for the students to catch up.

The primary task for the instructor is to show and guide the student in building a strong foundation. Once the student has this they can proceed at their own pace and interest. Once good strong basics are established; should the student not see their instructor for a while they will still be moving in the correct direction.

The next step is for the instructor to show the student methods to discover their own art. To help them move beyond the stylized movements into finding their own unique style. This way the art belongs to the individual not the individual to the art.

A VISIT TO MASTER TCHOUNG

CORRECTION: SHR-FU not si or seh-fu., SHR is the proper Mandarin pronunciation to use, members of my club should call Master Tchoung SHR YEA.

This visit focused on more Tuishou and philosophy. The visit was a little bit better than the past primarily because we had a great translator with us, Felicia, Gene's student. With each visit Shr-fu is apparently becoming more intrigued with LAN CHAO WEI -Grasping Sparrow's Tail. This time there are six of them in section 1; one to each of the 4 directions, one to the heavens and one to the earth. The LAN CHAO WEI comprises four of the original 13 postures Tai Chi is said to have evolved from. These movements Shr-fu considers the most important. You can't practice these enough!

At lunch we talked about his daily practice and what he emphasizes for himself. Still meditation was first. He awakens at 5am and meditates for 45 minutes. He then walks for 20 minutes which was very important. Next 10 minutes of the ZHAN ZHUANG, standing meditation, then he proceeds to practicing Tai Chi Chuan.

This launched us into a deep philosophical lecture. Much I'm sure went over our heads, some perhaps couldn't be completely translated. My notes, which were taken in between bites, may not be complete. Here is a part of it in a nut shell.

The lecture started with meditation and seeking calmness and stillness. The quietude of the universe has a movement, an energy to it, it's not a dead or lifeless quietness. This energy is a breath that takes one year. Exhalation is spring and summer, inhalation is fall and winter. This is the breath of the universe. People it's said

breathe 18 breaths in one minute. In Tai Chi practitioners may achieve 12 breaths per minute. In meditation this can come down to 6 breaths a minute. As people get older their breath quickens and becomes shallow, then they die. The longer your breathing pattern the healthier your body and the longer your life can be. (as your mind calms your breathing deepens and slows). If the average person breathes 18 per minute then = 1080 per hour =25920 per day = 9460800 per year. (I got the impression that we each have a limited number of breaths per individual).

Genuine quietude is death. What we consider quietude still has activity to it, a movement so it's not genuine quietude. Our hearts yearn for quietude and peacefulness. This is why we seek Tai Chi, meditation and like arts. As we practice we get closer to the quietude of the universe. This yearning has the by-product of making us healthier and lengthening our lives. As we move in harmony with the universe we experience a little taste of this quietude.

True activity goes against the universe this true activity is chaos, helter-skelter and shortens our lives. The practice of Tai Chi Chuan has a progression to it as you practice daily. With daily practice you come close to harmonizing with the universal quietude thus effecting your body and improving your life.

WHAT AM I LOOKING FOR?

Some of you may have noticed that in the last year or two I've been slowing down the amount of forms taught and the speed in teaching them. It's become clearer and clearer that the faster anyone learns a form the faster they forget it. Also, the more corrections are required in the following years. Unfortunately some of the corrections don't happen without a great deal of effort.

What I'm looking for is a consistency in the quality of the movements within the form. Just having you memorize the form isn't enough for me. I know some of you are frustrated at not learning faster but I'm looking deeper, beyond the mere memorization of the movements. Even though you may intend to refine them later, by that time you'll have enough to study and learn so you won't have the time then either. Though I'd like perfection in the movements it's not practical, especially if you're just learning the beginning forms. Every form we learn within the system is a building block for the next form and level, as is each movement within a form.

PATIENTS! If you get a movement easily this gives you more time to research it and work on deeper levels. Don't be satisfied with merely learning and copying them. Master each movement, one at a time. Have you mastered the movements in the Chi Kung, Inner Palms, or other basics? Instead of being concerned with the next form or movements look at what you have. If you are focusing on what you want or don't have you aren't paying much attention to where you are now. Though the various forms are enjoyable in their diversity and training don't short change what you have. Each form is a piece of coal that needs to be nurtured by your focus, heat and internal pressure in order to become a beautiful diamond. This diamond is your strength, health, calmness and centering.

PA KUA CHANG My first goal and what I look for in your practice is a balanced, fluid and controlled walk. You learn and practice this in the **INNER PALMS**. As I watch you practice the Inner Palms I shouldn't see a difference in your walk between Pushing Down the Earth and Monkey Offers Fruit. This shows me your legs are gaining strength and flexibility, your body alignments and center are in harmony, and your mind is learning to sink, concentrate and calm down.

As you proceed into the 8 changes it's easy to hide weak legs but not a weak body or an unfocused mind. The Inner Palms strengthen your body and chi so you can become stronger with the complexity of the 8 changes without causing damage to your body. The other Pa Kua Chi Kung also contribute greatly to this as well as to the martial applications later. If you don't learn the lessons from the Inner Palms (especially proper body alignment i.e. knees!) you'll be getting weaker. These two, the Inner Palms and 8 changes, will give you certain body habits you won't be able to violate as you move to the continuing forms. If you don't have these basics there is no hope of developing Fa-jin power or efficient application skills.

TAI CHI CHUAN The same holds true here. If you don't practice and study the basic steps properly, controlling your center and weight, knees over toes and moving carefully you'll get weaker instead of healthier. Even a slight weakness like shifting into a stance too quickly can whittle

away your knee structure little by little until your knees complain loudly and you can't practice at all. Poor alignment also can result in upper back pain. Master Cheng, Man-ching said progress in Tai Chi is made by a paper's width each practice, this is also true of bad habits that may cause structural damage.

Did you know that practicing the basic step correctly will help to develop a good Snake Creeps Down? There is an attitude that only practicing side leg stretches and Snake Creeps Down will help you get lower. The first building block is to develop strong, flexible legs, balance and control. If you are practicing section 1 correctly your legs are in training for Snake Creeps Down as well as Separation of Leg and everything else. Check list: Are your feet flat with even pressure, Are your knees well bent but over your toes, Are you sitting in the posture, Are you in large frame Tai Chi, Are you working on Peng Jin?

If your postures are large your legs and hips are stretching and at the same time getting stronger. Be sure your basic stance is shoulder width and sitting low, your thighs should feel it. Snake Creeps Down is just the next level of this. Once we finish the long form your basics and foundation are set. There is no longer a need to concentrate on the foot work, centering, and alignment. The next level is how to focus and use your power efficiently, regardless whether you practice Tuishou or weaponry the foundation is solid. As the classics say; if you disregard the principles then practicing for years will be of no help.

NURTURING OURSELVES

As the winter season arrives, especially around December, things begin to get quite hectic. As the reason gets going, sometimes it may seem to pull us in all directions. Make time for yourself! You're the only one that can do it.

We nurture ourselves and our spirit by our involvement with the club and practicing our art. Give yourself a present of giving yourself some self-time. Each day either morning, lunch or evening give yourself some time to rest and heal from the other activities. Practice a form, read a book, listen to music, go for a stroll, anything just for you. Make a ritual of it to give yourself some continuity and peace. Without a clear mind and healthy body nothing matters. Do something for yourself to make you healthier and centered. A sanctuary for half an hour or more, each day.

ANOTHER BOOK

If you have an interest in wholistic healing or herbalism there is a great book out with easy explanations and information about herbs from Chinese and Western traditions. **Balancing Yin and Yang in our lives.**

THE HERBS OF LIFE

by Lesley Tierra \$15.00 at Zenith Supply