

NEWSLETTER

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1/2 MONTH IN AUGUST!

There will be no classes the last two weeks (August 19-Sept 1st). If you only attend one session per week your monthly fee will be \$42.00, for those taking more than one session the monthly fee is \$55.

AUGUST EVENING CLASSES

For August only the evening sessions will be combined so there are sessions Tues., Wed, Thurs. for Yang and Chen Tai Chi and Pa Kua. See the schedule at the bottom of this page.

BEGINNING CLASSES SEPTEMBER

September is the next month for beginners to join the club. The beginning classes will be:
 Saturdays 10-noon
 10-11 Chi Kung Basics
 11-12 Tai Chi/Pa Kua instruction
 I will also be including beginning Chen Tai Chi at this time only.

THINGS AHEAD

Just like the old school days, September marks the beginning of our year. Things to come:
 Mondays: refining 7&8 sanshou
 Tuesdays: section 5 and tuishou
 Wednesdays: am - Yang sword
 pm: 48 form & sword
 Thursday: linking 8 mother changes.

AIKIJU WORKSHOP SEPTEMBER 20th

Saturday 2:00-4:30
 2:00-3:30 Beginning \$10.00
 3:30 - 4:30 Partner Form Refinements \$10.00
 both sessions \$15.00
 pre-registration required

First, I would like to thank everyone who participated in the 1997 Internal Arts Festival: Guests, instructors and participants. Wow . . . we made it work!

A SUCCESS!

The level of instruction and classes taught were exceptional. Some of the best: Michael Gilman, Harold Naka, Bob Iden, John Camp and then the 'superstars': Masters Gao Fu, F. Yueng and Dave Harris. If you weren't there you sure missed a special weekend.

There were Tai Chi practitioners from Spokane, Vancouver and Kelowna B.C., Port Townsend, Bremerton, Yakima and of course Seattle. On Saturday we had a little more than 60 people he weather behaved and the park was just beautiful.

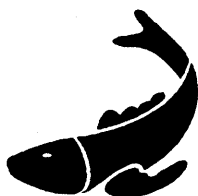
The classes covered Tai Chi, Pa Kua, Chi Kung and Tai Chi Cane but as usual at these events most of the 'real' practice and tai chi happened between and after the classes. At all times there was a group here are there practicing and sharing form, push hands, applications or weaponry.

Though everyone was a hit I think it's unanimous that the most popular would be the super stars: Master Gao Fu, Mr. Yueng and Dave Harris. On Saturday Dave gave a session on freehands and applications to a group of 40+ people. In addition he did several impromptu demonstrations that wowed the participants. While Dave was giving his session Master Fook Yueng arrived and played with a few of us. He did some freehand work demonstrating nerve techniques but he primarily focused on Chi Kung and principles. He lectured and answered questions from the group.

On Sunday we were very lucky to have Master Gao Fu arrive. Master Gao's back was in serious pain due to a hemorrhaged disk but that wasn't going to stop her, she came anyway. She lectured to the entire group on what makes and differentiates good tai chi practice and emphasized internal energy work and cultivation instead of merely doing outer form. Her message was "practice standing meditation to cultivate inner energy". She lead the group in standing meditation and then an exercise in developing the tan t'ien. At the end she lead some of us in the 24 form. No one had a clue she was in intense pain and as always her generosity in sharing her knowledge and skill was boundless.

Wow such a special treat. Thanks again everyone for helping make it happen.

Andy



	Club	AUGUST 5-14	Schedule
TIME	TUES	WED	THUR
7:00	CHI KUNG	CHI KUNG	CHI KUNG
7:30	APPLICATIONS	APPLICATIONS	APPLICATIONS
8:00	YANG TAI CHI	CHEN TAI CHI	PA KUA
8:30	CHEN TAI CHI	PA KUA	YANG TAI CHI
9:00	PA KUA	YANG TAI CHI	CHEN TAI CHI

TRAINING: SLUGGARDS AND PERFECTIONISTS

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WE ARE ALL DIFFERENT

The practice of T'ai-chi ch'uan is for yourself. Doing t'ai-chi is a process of self awareness and discovery. Some students like to compete, while others don't. There is no right or wrong of it. For example, feedback and interaction at competitions should be used to help students to grow. It can help to raise your level, motivate you and help you get through plateaus. Many students are inspired afterward to train harder. But everyone will do the art differently. Grandmaster Tchoung told us that to do t'ai-chi correctly you have to hold to the basic principles, but that students do not need to do the form exactly alike. Unfortunately in some tournaments the ideal goes back to the military training model that many martial arts use; where everyone has to look the same. To do this would make students more like robots. This is because everyone has a different "Energy" and body type. This energy is reflected in how they do the form. To do the form exactly like someone else is to deny our own energy. The Taoist concept stresses the individual. Have a good time doing your art and enjoy the differences in the styles. The concepts are the same. It's all the same, only done differently.

TRAINING MEANS EXERCISING TOWARD A GOAL Exercise means human movement or physical activity, usually in a recreational sense. But in my ancient exercise physiology texts, "Work" was interchangeable with exercise. After all, chopping trees, throwing bales of hay or climbing trees is not much different physically than walking on a stair master or lifting heavy weights. Training is exercise or work toward a goal, it is practicing KUNG-FU. Another idea is "playing" t'ai-chi, which was expanded on by Rex in an earlier IWA issue. This "Playing" is the less obsessive, "have a good time as you exercise", idea. In many ways playing is healthier and leads to less stress and conflict. Serious (Obsessive) martial artists may recoil immediately at the use of "play". But then a reaction may be a clue in itself, to lighten up.

There are a variety of goals that t'ai-chi ch'uan students have. Two very different goals are: 1) To learn or master the art form or martial art. 2) To reduce the negative effects of stress with a low intensity exercise and promote good health. But, other patterns also emerge: 1) putting off training until the time is right, i.e., not exercising OR 2) on the other extreme, going toward a perfectionist or obsessive over-training mode. The first Goal #2 goes well with Playing t'ai-chi as that helps in

reversing stress. The second pattern #2 adds stress.

There are extremes: *Sluggards and Perfectionists*. Most people play t'ai-chi as a health promotion exercise and stress reduction technique, but others want to achieve a high level of martial art or get into the competitive side of it. Some get very competitive, obnoxiously so. But we should all be aware that the art is a personal experience and used to benefit ourselves. If we feel healthy and serene, we can interact with others in a pleasant manner. This benefits society as well.

Some people can be so obsessed with competition and training that it overshadows other parts of our lives to the point of ruining relationships or driving them to give it up. I have known several people who because of this imbalance, burned out and then gave up training altogether.

I think we need to strive for balance in our lives. To try to be perfect or overtrain is one trap, the other is to do nothing. Both are extremes. If you exercise regularly, doing t'ai-chi or any other light aerobic activity, you will be doing yourself a favor. The fact is, regular exercise is one of the most significant factors to make you more healthy. I would be happy if most students just exercise 30 minutes, 4 to 5 days a week. On the other hand some people become obsessive and their whole life is consumed by training, they become one dimensional, obsessive. At least it is a healthy obsession, unlike overeating, drinking or taking drugs. There are exercise addicts.

In martial arts often the motivation is to be the toughest. Even though today many are striving for the "Prettiest Form". If one is too invested in doing a perfect art or beating others, that may mean getting sucked into the trap of perfectionism. Constantly trying to prove oneself and compare oneself to others is an internal stressor and can cause mental distress. This can also be related to being overly judgmental and aggressive. Some have given up training altogether because they could not be as perfect as they wanted, and that fact stressed them out. In reality there is small minority of top athletes in any sport, and part of that is genetic. That elite group of performance athletes is being continually being replaced by younger athletes.

Most of who we know as the great masters probably fell into the exceptional athlete category when they were young. Often they do not teach the method that got them where they are now, either. That is to a high level of skill. As later in their training they find other types of exercise has more meaning for them and that is what

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Intention in Sparring

by Victor Crandall

One of the simplest ways to become effective in your sparring or free hand play is to add constant intent to attack. A common trap I have found, especially when playing free hands, is to be too focused on the feeling of attaching to the opponent and forgetting to attack. Another common trap is to get too caught up in defending or worrying about your defense so you forget to attack. To be an effective fighter, you must attack at some point in time. No matter how good you are, you can not defend forever. A continual attack will eventually penetrate your defense. Consequently, you need to attack (or run) to survive a real encounter. In order to attack, you must have the intention of attacking (Dull). What I have found that works for me, is to constantly hold a mental focus (intention) of touching or hitting a target. I let my body sensitivity take care of defense. As long as I hold the intention, the body will find an opening and hit the target. In performing this I do not have a specific attack or technique in mind. Rather I have the intention to hit or touch the opponent. I let my past training and constant repetitious drilling take over the body. When an opening appears, the body will feel the emptiness or lack of resistance and flow into the hole. This is like an ocean wave flowing around a rock. If you hold the intent, you will eventually flow around the defense into an opening and complete the attack. Please note that this is different from setting up an opening by using a specific attack sequence or techniques. Most martial arts styles create openings through combinations of attacks. This is a totally different concept relying on your sensitivity and intuition instead of technique. However, anyone should be able to do it.

The prerequisite to being able to do this, is that your body must already be trained to respond and execute techniques without thought. I described how to train this ability in an earlier article (How To Get Good). A way to train intent is to use the "invest in loss" concept. Free play with a partner holding your attack intent. Get the feeling of flowing in and around his defense until you are able to touch him at will. Do not be concerned about getting touched yourself. Use your sensitivity to ward off or redirect his attacks but maintain your intent to attack. As soon as his attack ceases there is an opening somewhere. You should be able to flow into it. This concept involves a great deal of sensitivity. The only way I know to train it is to practice with a partner

and trust your intuition. Think of yourself as water flowing around a rock. Stick with the training and you should be able to add a new dimension to your skills.

BUYER BEWARE: I have written several articles now and I feel it is best to insert a warning. These articles are my opinions. Naturally everything I write has come from somewhere be it my teachers, books, or experiences. In many cases I have forgotten where the ideas came from. I may have modified something, or combined ideas from several sources. The concepts and ideas may or may not be applicable to you. You need to consult your teacher and follow his/her direction. Your teacher may not agree with my opinions. He may have a more in depth approach or different angle from what I present. You may not be at a stage in your training where the concepts are appropriate. So I leave it to you to trust nothing, question everything, and determine your own truth. I lie a lot.



TREE MEDITATION

Although the property line separates us so that I may not touch you,

I stand with you for this hour in solidarity,
and notice the changing forces around us -
the conning and going of hard rains,

the breeze rippling your branches, and the stillness behind it,
the lighter, then darker gray of the skies above us,
the drifting movement of wooden ducks in the pond between us.

Although I am human and move about the earth,
today I can appreciate the way you have stood in one place for
forty years or more -

the seasons - the sun, moon, stars -
the animals, insects, and birds -
and my kind - all moving around you -
some needing you, some apparently not -
some noticing you, some apparently not.

Yet I know of our connection - yours, mine and theirs.

Although I am human and may not cross the line between us,
we are bonded this hour by our downcast eyes.

Your eyes, turning away from the clearcut devastation
beginning at your roots and marching over the hills behind you -
your eyes weep for your missing brothers and sisters.

My eyes, turning away from other human faces
as we pass each other in this Buddhist place of retreat -
my eyes weep for the seriousness here, the lonely lack of human
interaction and eye contact.

Just as you miss the trees in your fold,

I miss the laughter in mine.

Just as you stand alone this hour, so do I.

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(TRAINING: Continued from page 2)

they teach. Hundreds of people go through the same training, but only a few become the really top "elite" athletes in the art. It is not the style, but rather the combination of method, intensity of training and genetics. You don't have to be that good at it to get the benefits, though.

To get the beneficial effects you just need to exercise regularly, not be perfect. For example recreational joggers who run a little faster than a walk, are getting great physical benefits from the regularly done exercise, even though they will never win a race. The same follows for t'ai-chi and pa-kua, just doing it regularly is its own reward.

The obsessive exercisers may actually have poorer health, just as we see in marathon runners who have a tendency toward weakened immune systems. They are like workaholics, i.e. exercise-aholics. Perfectionists don't know how much is enough, they think more (of anything) is always better. Learning another form, exercising another hour, looking for a new extra class, are symptoms of excess. Many "Form collectors" fall into this category.

Perfectionism is a cultural, religious and family ideal. By telling us we must be perfect, this idea goes against acceptance of our humanity. In reality mistakes are made and it's natural to make mistakes. Even the mythological masters had their dark sides. Some were opium addicts, sex addicts, alcoholics and some had deeply hidden anger and hostility which was manifested in brutality. Remember Andy's pa-kua teacher who would trash students for asking questions? Yang Shao-hou was said to kill or seriously hurt his students. The founder of pa-kua was a eunuch, others had eating problems. Just like today, some old masters probably were just jerks, ego maniacs and control freaks. (Yet they have many students who like that approach, what does that tell you about the students?)

The constant search for power in the martial arts always makes me wonder, how much is enough? When does the search for the art end and obsession begin? Can there be too much? In the more martial variations, if you have 101 killing techniques, why are you looking for number 102? Not many people make their living as warriors today, other than the military and police, so what is the motivation? Do the art because it is fun and a valid form of exercise.

Perfectionism is a potential emotional trap for those who constantly need to compare themselves to others, which can lead to unhappiness and emotional

burnout. This is clearly seen in runners, where overuse problems abound and divorce due to their obsession with running is not uncommon. Related issues are control and need for power, which are inversely related to self discovery. These may be a cover-up for other problems.

Perfectionism also keeps people from exercising or participating. They feel if they cannot do a perfect workout, they won't do it at all. I've done that myself. I used to have a structured 2 to 3 hour workout. If I could not get to do that routine, I would not do anything. Now If I can get 30 minutes in, I feel good about it. Doing even ten minutes is better than not doing anything. Just as they say in Buddhist meditation, "10 minutes of meditation is ten minutes of Buddha.

"Not doing" is another sign. Another pitfall of perfectionist thinking is if they can't do something well, they won't do it at all, or even try. This limits fun activities and adventures. It is a paralyzing mind set. If you do t'ai-chi, you still get the benefit; just as if you jog slowly you get that benefit. Perfectionists have to detach and not worry about doing everything perfectly. In Buddhism there are the four noble truths. The first is that life is suffering. Suffering is caused by attachments and desire. Letting go of these attachments or desires will help one to not suffer as much. Having to win all the time or be perfect is a major attachment. Perfectionism is an attachment that causes suffering (for you or others). Letting it go and allowing yourself to fail, without holding on to it, will make you happier in the long run. John Bradshaw cautioned, "Perfectionism sets us up for being measured, which in turn sets us up for perpetual disappointment. Perfectionism is boundariless... You can never do nough. It takes courage to do battle with these perfectionistic systems." Of course that is not an excuse for not exercising or not learning to do the art correctly. The internal arts should help us to be healthy and more fully functioning human beings. They should help to kept balance in our lives, not take them over.

CONTINUED NEXT MONTH

Harvey Kurland received his Masters Degree from the University of Washington and has dedicated himself to public health issues for the last 30 years. He has degrees in public health education and exercise physiology. He is a certificated chief instructor of t'ai-chi ch'uan by Grandmaster Tchoung Tachen and teaches at the University of California at Riverside and Loma Linda University. He also holds certification from the American College of Sports Medicine and International Sports Sciences Association.

