

# INTERNAL WUSHU ARTS NEWSLETTER

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**SIFU VISIT JUNE 27TH**

**SUMMER WORKSHOP AUG. 15-16**

**CLASSES IN THE PARK NOW!**

**WORDS YOU SHOULD KNOW**

Many of the words and descriptions of our form don't have an exact English translation. Sometimes one word may describe a series of physical requirements needed so our forms will be correct.

PENG - on the one hand Peng(pung) is one of the opening postures in Tai Chi

Chuan. On a deeper level it is an energy, a state of body structure. Muscles soft yet full and rounded. Peng jin is ward-off energy.

Peng ar bu jiang = ward off but not stiff, is one of Master Gao's favorite sayings. Peng jin is as if the body is a properly inflated tire.

FA JIN - Explode energy, release energy. Fa is to release, let go. It can refer to letting go of tension, strength, or power. Jin is a refined trained strength and energy/power. Jin is a combination

of body coordination, timing, softness, looseness, mind focus, chi and technique.

SUNG - Relaxed, soft, heavy. Sung ar bu shea = relaxed but not limp. Another of Master Gao's sayings. Relaxed but still lively.

HUA - Neutralize. This means more than just yielding but to neutralize a movement in order to have the opportunity to attack.

LAO KUNG - an point in the middle of the palms used to either draw in or extend energy. It's thought of as a 'window' for the energy to be used.

## BODY MAGNETS

I have often heard that in order to sleep soundly, your bed should face north/south with the headboard north. All the Nei Jia and Chi kung emphasize that you start the forms, either facing or with your back to the North. This seems to make sense with the magnetic poles but I haven't met anyone yet who really can feel a difference in their practice. There are various places and directions that feel right, but nothing greatly noticeable with North and South. I do believe, however, that as our sensitivity increases it should make a difference.

Just recently on the news they reported a geo-biologist discovering that the human body has about 7 billion tiny magnets inside it.

Acupuncture and Chinese medicine are based upon the flow of the various energy currents in the body and keep it in balance. There are also maps of the earth's meridians. A friend of mind studying the energy meridians of the earth says that the corner of Woodland park, where we practice in summer, is a key spot where several strong positive currents cross.

Sifu's method was to walk around an area to find where we were most comfortable. If you are comfortable, then your practice will be of good quality, whether you face north or any other direction. We are continually effected by many subliminal flows, patterns, and circumstances. Perhaps one day we will understand why, how and when these forces are at work. Until then let your comfort level guide you. Our main principle is to relax, so if you aren't comfortable you can't relax. If you have a favorite spot to practice and a certain direction, maybe on a subtle level all the currents are flowing harmoniously.

## A BEGINNER TO A CONTINUING MEMBER

The more you know or study.....the more I expect. What I expect from a beginner or a new member in the club is very different from what I expect from a continuing or an advanced student. Naturally sometimes things change gradually, sometimes quickly. This also changes depending upon how many classes you may be taking. Things will also differ if a new student is joining a beginning class or stepping into a continuing session.

When I have strictly a beginning class I don't have a strong expectation of the students. The primary focus is to expose them to the art and principles to see if it's something they would like to continue. In Tai Chi it's usually the Chi Kung and section 1. The idea is to relax, not try too hard and become acquainted with the movements. In class we'll do quite a few basic drills to make it easier for the students to remember the movements. I don't expect beginners to set up a daily training/practice session on their own. If a student decides to take more than one style at the same time I do expect them to keep things clear, their need for practice increases.

Once a student has passed the basics: section 1, inner palms, then my expectations increase. These forms are a very important part of our basics and if a student continues I expect them to practice these along with the new forms and movements *daily*. As we get further into the various systems the movements and complexity increase. If you don't keep up and practice what you have now it becomes almost impossible to play catch up later. I expect you to remember last weeks lesson, if you don't you probably didn't practice, this is your responsibility. In a small group this isn't as big a problem as in a larger group. The group will move steadily forward, each week will be one or more new movements. Practice and repetition become more important as you get further into the form and the art. If you miss a session, then you should grab a class member or make arrangements for a private lesson with me or an advanced student to catch up.

April 25th we had a wonderful opportunity to visit Sifu Tchoung, Ta-Tchen in Vancouver B.C., attend class, share lunch and ask Sifu many questions. Our group was 15 members, from beginners to advanced students, along with members from Deborah's and Shaun's club. I've made arrangements to visit every other month from now on. If you missed the last visit try not to miss the next one in June. It's an understatement to say the visit and teaching was fantastic.

Sifu is now semi-retired from teaching, he teaches through his students club. According to Francis, Sifu's most advanced and long time student, Sifu teaches a small select group now. During our class the instruction covered the very basics of the art to some very, very advanced levels, simultaneously. An example of this was the instruction and demonstration of the Tai Chi Sanshou, sections 7&8. What beginners may have seen was the proper way to grab or hold during the various movements. Advanced members all understood the lessons as nerve techniques hidden in the Sanshou. This type of instruction went on the entire class, from the Chi Kung to the Tuishou.

Every time I visit Sifu, his skill is better and much more subtle, more powerful than the last visit. Each visit I'm amazed at his skill and power. I can't comprehend anything beyond the level he demonstrates, then the next time he blows me away again, better than the last visit. Sifu is now 82 years old, his skill is much greater than when I first started studying with him 20 years ago. He is the living proof of the Tai Chi classics, stories and the result of correct, diligent practice.

I asked Sifu how his skill kept increasing dramatically every time I saw him. Two of his secrets are: *proper breathing and relaxation*. In all the applications he emphasized **DO NOT USE STRENGTH!** Over and over again he threw us around smoothly and easily. Not once did I feel any strength or force, just power. It's really frightening flying backward and not being able to feel where his power and strength come from. His touch is very soft and relaxed, next thing you know your feet are off the ground or you are hit. While pushing hand, he told me to neutralize his movements, it didn't work! You can't neutralize what you can't feel. His power came straight forward but there was no sense of where it was coming from or what to do about it. When he did give me something to feel he was leading me into a trap, he'd fold and I was in the air again. This happened over and over again.

Part of my conscious mind is still trying to understand what was happening. It's like tasting a flavor you've never had, then trying to tell someone about it. It's very, very frustrating.

Shaun asked Sifu what he was working on at his level of skill. Sifu repeated the six points to he told us to strictly follow in order to advance:

1. Relax
2. Postures must be correct
3. Breath and movement coordinated
4. Know the applications
5. Tuishou practice
6. Let the chi move, no strength used.

What Sifu had was power, not strength. He emphasized that each cell of the body should be relaxed and soft. Relaxation must be deep. Each posture needs to be structurally correct. Peng jin throughout your body, everywhere. If the postures aren't correct the chi can't move freely or correctly. Each posture must be done slowly, carefully, and mindfully. Every movement has a specific breath that determines the timing and function of the

movement. On one of my earlier visits I asked Sifu what he considered the secret to his skill, PROPER BREATHING was the answer. The breath helps focus and guide the Chi, it also increases the ability to relax and store energy. When we practice the forms on our own, the timing is determined by our breath. Some movements issue energy, these are exhalations. Some store energy before you can issue, inhalations. Single Whip has two inhalations and two exhalations, do you know where they are? If you don't then your timing and function of Single Whip is incorrect.

APPLICATIONS! Knowing what each movement in the form is used for, it's function. If you know the application then your mind has a certain focus as you perform the movement. This focus guides the chi to certain areas as you practice. Without this all you are doing is Chi Kung, not Tai Chi Chuan. Why does the hand have to be in this position? Why are certain things done a certain way? Study and examine all your forms.

Sifu has always emphasized Tuishou. Not just the Joint Hands sensitivity but the true pushing. This trains softness, how to root and how not to use strength. You can't learn this any other way. Tuishou teaches true and deep relaxation if you practice correctly and sincerely. It works both in the mind and body equally.

Do not use strength, let the chi do it. Sifu said he was working on pushing with just chi. This is the hardest thing to understand not to mention trying to do. We are so caught up in feeling our own strength and how to manipulate things with it, trying to control something else. Touching Sifu proves there is a level beyond strength. Softness does have power. At our level of advancement we need faith in following the principles. Experiencing Sifu's skill helps inspire us to practice and trust in the guidelines and Classics. Sifu's friend, Cheng Man-Ching said no one achieved his level of skill because on one had the faith to practice correctly and trust softness.

Sifu has had over 20 teachers and has spent almost his entire life seeking other masters and practitioners of the internal arts. He claims Cheng Man-ching was the best. While teaching in Taiwan he practiced Tuishou with Cheng Man-Ching, they were good friends. Cheng Man-Ching helped him develop his Tuishou skills.

The topper to this visit was Sifu presenting me a scroll of writings passed to him from Cheng Man-Ching containing the principles and teaching that Cheng considered the most important. I will try to have it translated before the next newsletter.

Sifu's teaching and presence is very loving and generous. He is truly a man of the Tao. The entire time we were in class and visiting with him he was sharing his understanding of Tai Chi Chuan joyfully. He wasn't say, "I can do this", he would do something and say "Tai Chi is wonderful". He truly is a Master.