

INTERNAL WUSHU ARTS NEWSLETTER

September 1992

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BOOK REVIEW

Yes, another book to buy!

THERE ARE NO SECRETS by Wolfe Lowenthal \$12.95 This is One of the most inspiring books on Tai Chi and the Nei Jia I've read. It's written by a 10 year student of Cheng, Man-Ching while he taught in New York. The book

covers lessons, classes, and time the author spent with the Master. This book is great for all studying the Internal Arts.

DEMONSTRATION

September 10th, Thursday 7:30-9pm, Special guest: ZHANG JIE These demonstrations help show interested people the range of the arts and what we teach. Hopefully inspiring new members to join. Bring friends!

USE IT OR LOOSE IT

Intelligence has its draw backs. We use our minds to be creative, to find more efficient and easier methods to do many tasks in our lives. One of the problems is that easier isn't necessarily better or *healthier* for us. I use to know quite a few phone numbers, off the top of my head, until I got a phone with a quick dial feature.

The mind is like the body, if a muscle isn't used it weakens. As we advance in the Nei Jia our circles become smaller yet still contain the same power (if not more) than the large frame postures. Don't confuse small frame with easy or small movements, small circle applies to your applications. As you practice keep your postures large and rounded, in particular check your stance: Are the knees bent properly? Are your feet the proper width apart? Are you rushing the kicks or kicking low because it's easier, less strenuous?

A friend of mine had bursitis, it was painful to move his arm in a large circle so he didn't. Gradually his circles became smaller and smaller, weaker and weaker. After switching doctors the new doctor gave him a several of range-of-motion exercises to do every day. The movements were painful at first but over a period of 4 months his range increased and the pain was only at the perimeter of his reach.

If we cheat our stances as we practice to make it easier (there should never be any pain) our body will become weaker. The purpose of the Nei Jia is to become stronger, relaxed and healthier. To live a long, healthy life. If we look around, the main problem with the elderly is weak legs, due to taking it too easy. My grandfather could out walk me, it was hard keeping up with him in even in his 80's. This was due to the island not having many cars, he had to walk everywhere. The Chinese say, 'Strong legs = a healthy body.' Our legs are considered our second heart since they help pump blood to the rest of the body. If we practice correctly with good postures we should stay strong, healthy, and physically fit as we get older. Just look at Sifu or Master Gao-fu, 82 and 76 years old and agile, healthy and strong. Our future health is up to us, grow weak or stay healthy and fit.

This sounds like an easy choice but it's plenty of work. Aside from the physical exercise, practicing correctly, the hardest part is the discipline required. The mind must be strong and determined, we must really want to stay healthy. Practicing the postures correctly we must be on guard against being careless or thoughtless in our practice. We must be diligent in our practice, daily practice and study. It doesn't matter what forms we know or use to practice, only what we are consistently practicing.

Our spirit exercises our mind, our mind exercises our chi, our chi exercises our body. There are no short cuts on this mountain.

THE WHOLE BODY IS A HAND, THE HAND IS NOT A HAND

Last month I had a translation of the writing I received from Sifu. One very important point Sifu has emphasized since I can first remember is the phrase: *In the solo form it's the body that moves, not the hands.* The hands follow the body's movements, it's the body that supplies the power and force. Don't use strength in your hands or palms, this chokes the chi and no power, fa-jin can be issued. Cheng Man-ching emphasized visualizing the chi flowing out through the Lao Gung point in the center of the palm. At the same time you connect this to the Yung Chuan point in the center of the foot.

This is especially true when pushing hands or working on applications. Your partner should not feel any strength or intention in your hands or arms. If you can soften your arms it should feel like a wave moving toward your partner. How can you resist a wave?

One interpretation Sifu uses is that the entire body is a Hand. Each part can be used to strike or neutralize an attack, your body has the flexibility of your hands.

For this month I'd like you to focus on two things. First, try to soften your arms completely as you practice. This does not mean going limp, just soft like cotton. Second, let the energy move to the head top, suspend the head top without letting the neck get stiff. Keep the neck loose.

OUR SUMMER WORKSHOP

It worked! It was fun and transformative. After reading the book, THERE ARE NO SECRETS, I decided to make the theme of the entire workshop be: LET GO AND OPEN UP: physically, mentally and spiritually. Instead of focusing on specific movements or forms I wanted to try to get everyone to completely relax and let go so the chi and mind could flow unrestricted. Friday we started with the solo forms and the principles of the classics. Lifting the head top to open the spinal column, letting go of the shoulder strength to open the shoulders, sinking the tail bone to open the lower vertebrae and the hips. By Sunday I felt like each joint in my body had about an 8" space between them.

On Saturday we worked on the mind, to understand the non-fighting mind. This is not only a centered mind but one that is open and clear like a calm lake. We were able to confront our fears and our wants. Our controlling attitudes would display themselves in the applications and we were able to let them go for a period of time. The more we 'let-go' the more powerful our applications were, our chi and intent had minimal blockages. Throughout the day the mind was able to let-go more and more, tensions began to dissolve. Saturday night we did Beijing Pa Kua Chi Kung that focuses entirely on gathering the chi and storing it. Then we moved onto the Pa Kua Tuishou and sticking methods. The Tuishou flowed smoothly and easily.

Sunday we focused on listening energy to enhance our relaxation and openness. The lesson was how we don't need to receive or take responsibility for a negative force, whether it's a movement or emotion. We were able to go into freestyle applications, the group moved as if dancing, it was great. In addition to the workshop we also had quite a bit of great food making things complete.

We were also lucky to have a special visitor, Gao Li-ting. Gao Li was able to attend Saturday and aside from his participation in the workshop we were treated to a performance of the Chen style Tai Chi Broadsword. THANKS TO ALL WHO CAME

SIFU VISIT

We had another great Sifu visit. Sifu will be turning 83 years old soon and everyone is invited to a practice and picnic on September 12th beginning at 10 am. The site is Ambleside Park in northwest Vancouver, across from Stanley Park. If you are interested in going I have maps.

Sifu started us working on the new Chi Kung and modification of the O'mei Mt. Chi Kung. We worked on: Stirring the Cauldron, Snake Creeps Down, a new version of the Crane and Mandarin Duck. Sifu's Snake Creeps Down still 'creeps down'. He emphasized the need to keep the legs strong for health, Tuishou and application purposes.

We worked on a new version of section 1 which combines the principles of the Pa Kua. He feels that the merging of Pa Kua and Tai Chi will bring greater results.

During Tuishou he tossed me around like a rag, again! He also taught the three training techniques for learning and developing Fa-jin and listening energy TING JIN.

My nervous system got a workout as he demonstrated all the proper nerve grabs in the Sanshou. Each time he demonstrates on me he finds a new one, at least new to me. His fingers can be as soft as a mist or as hard as steel spikes.

RIDING A GREAT WAVE

The most important part of our visits to Sifu is just being around him and 'feel', 'borrow' his energy. Getting a booster shot from his chi. When exposed to someone of his skill and power we can't help but be affected by it.

I've often harped on the subject of practicing on your own instead of following the group. How important it is to turn your attention inward and discover your own Tai Chi Chuan. Beginners definitely need to follow and copying, once you know the forms then you must research each movement on your own in order to permit the art to develop.

There is a saying in the arts that without personal instruction/contact with a master you won't truly understand the essence or higher levels of the art. The Master's chi, personality, power is able to lift you to a higher level when you are ready and open to it. Once the door is open to your own Tai Chi then this transformation can happen. It requires that you open yourself and 'go with the flow'. This happened to us during our visit.

Sifu's presence has a great energy to it, a few of us were able to 'let-go' and open up as he led us through the long form. Those who weren't set on doing their own form were able to tap in and do Sifu's form. Since we didn't know the changes in section one we had no choice and that set the stage for the remainder of the form. Without looking directly at him we could just move through the form and when we turned in his direction we were in sink with his movements. By the end of the form we had a nice buzz and energy from his practice.

This was one case where doing our own form would have been a disadvantage. We were able to do the form and experience a level beyond our own capabilities. This is most important with the Tuishou or Sanshou. While learning the movements, training techniques and forms, contact with the master isn't as important since our attention is on memorization and basics.

Once the basics down, contact with someone of a higher level can lift us and advance our skill level greatly. This is a non-verbal communication, a harmonizing of spirits and true body learning from body wisdom. The subtlety of the movement, lightness of the touch, softness, effortlessness, and chi can't be verbally taught, its absorbed as through practice, through physical contact. Lessons like these can replace years of regular practice. The bottom line is still the same though: A strong foundation and good basics are needed first., an open thoughtful mind second. Lastly, diligent practice. Advanced students may try this technique as you're learning the advanced form, open up an ride the wave. At that level it's a great aid to learning. □