

# INTERNAL WUSHU ARTS NEWSLETTER

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P.O. Box 77040 - Seattle WA  
98177  
(206) 283-0055

## BEGINNERS

Here are some helpful hints for learning easily.

1. Don't try too hard, take things gently. It takes time to get things, don't rush. Follow the session, relax and enjoy.
2. Don't try to remember it all. As the class continues over the month things will get easier to remember. The harder you try to remember the more difficult you make it. Each week you'll be able to remember more.
3. Play at home. Instead of practicing try to play with the movements you've been taught. Don't worry about practicing wrong. Over time you will slowly begin to focus on correct and specific movement. When you have time go through some of the things you 'sort of remember.
4. Don't worry. As a beginner you have a right to make mistakes, not understand, and not get it. Enjoy it while you can. As you advance this privilege slips away.
5. You practice and study for yourself. You should enjoy it, if you don't find something more fun and interesting to you.

What would be the most important things to practice? For Tai Chi members 1. Basic step 2. Chi Kung. For Pa Kua 1. Walking the Wuji 2. Inner palms. These help you develop strength, focus and the body vocabulary so you can move to the next level.

Your first goal is to relax and strengthen your body. In all the Wushu you begin from the ground up, the NEI JIA also works from the inside out. If your legs are weak, you are weak. Weak legs = no balance or possibility of balance. In addition to strengthening your legs the

stepping methods also stretch your calves, ankles and thighs. If you are interested in advancing quickly then you should work on the walking and stepping every day.

**CONTINUING MEMBER** Tai Chi: do all your movements display the ripple of power? Pa Kua: are all your movements extended

## CHEN TAI CHI CLASS CHANGE

As of February the Chen Tai Chi sessions will no longer be a group lesson/session. Class is Wednesdays 7-8pm. I will work individually with members during this time on what ever level they are on. Each session you will be tested on the previous lesson before moving on.

## ADVANCED YANG WORKSHOP

February 12, Friday we will work on the inner connection and studies of the long form. If you don't know any of the sections you can't attend. We will not be working of the postures of the form though I may be testing various sections. The fee is \$10 the time is 7-9pm.

## ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

This February will make my 25th year in the martial arts. We plan a dinner celebration at Louis Cuisine: March 5th, 7-9. Sign up by March 1st.

## SYMBOLISM: NUMBERS

For a beginner just learning the forms and warm-ups is enough to think about, perhaps this is all you want. As you advance the real work is to focus your mind and chi as you do the various forms. What to think about, where to focus your mind, where to focus your attention, which type of breathing do you do. Another dimension of this is the symbolism involved in these arts. Since these arts are influenced by Chinese culture, Taoism and Buddhism many of the forms and names have a traditional meaning that goes along with them. Some of the meanings related to the forms have been lost but many are still common to the Eastern way of looking at things. Some of the symbolism is also universal and you can find them in Indian, European, Native American or any culture. The names of some postures evoke images that may give a poet or artist an inner understanding of the movement. Here are a few of the simple generalizations:

**ONE** - the empty circle, the Tao, unity, the center, WUJI. In Tai Chi this is symbolically the beginning of the forms,

before the opening. We bring everything into one. We unify our mind, body and chi to begin our practice. All other thoughts emptied. In Pa Kua we walk the WUJI circle, empty our minds, focus on the empty circle to permit this unity. When you relax and calm down you become one.

**TWO** - Yin/Yang, duality, complimentary opposites. The minute movement starts you have two, YIN/YANG duality. Instead of viewing them as good Vs bad they are two extremes incomplete in themselves. Be move back and forth between the two extremes seeking balance. This is what we learn and study as we practice the forms, the shifting from yin to yang to yin... It's not black or white, it is varying shades of gray. If the weight shifts too far forward you'll fall forward, if too far back you'll fall down. In Pa Kua we proceed into the INNER PALMS this begins the first movement, the yin and yang, be beginning of change, transformation.

**THREE** - the triangle, Heaven-Earth-Mankind the three powers in this world. The three powers and three levels seem to be universal. We stand between heaven and earth. In the NEI JIA everything seems to be referenced to the three powers: advancement, development, defenses, attacks, relaxation, meditation, breathing, chi kung. When you study the three powers it gives you a method of charting your advancement and practice schedules.

**FOUR** - the four directions, corners, a square, complete balance. Grasping Sparrow's Tail is representative of the four directions. PENG, LU, JEE, AN are the four techniques which all Tai Chi evolve from. If you understand these you understand them all. This also relates to the powers of the various directions.

**FIVE** - the five elements, the four directions and the center, the earth. Everything in Chinese culture is related to the five elements. The five elements enable things to be categorized to be understood easily. WATER/winter, WOOD/spring, FIRE/summer, EARTH/late summer, METAL/fall. Summer/FIRE is the season for heat problems, this relates to the heart and circulatory problems.

The value of the symbolism is for each individual to determine. If you understand the meaning, or can see it in the form or practice the concentration you gain, the focus and feeling can be very important for your own practice. It can be used to bring you to a deeper level of insight.

# FIGHTER, POET, MARTIAL ARTIST, SCHOLAR, ATHLETE, TEACHER

This is a continuation of last months column.

## THE FIGHTER

Basics are basics! Without them you have no where to go, no foundation, no strength, no direction, and no possibilities. With each of the above reasons for studying the arts the psychology changes depending upon which direction you choose to focus your study. The art will also change and adapt to your personality and life regardless of the direction you choose to emphasize. The Internal Arts are a method of learning and studying principles, these principles are basic body structure, mechanics, self-awareness, energy awareness, and self-study. You don't become the art, the art adapts to your life and situation. It's you.

**THE FIGHTER** Once the basics are established (3 yrs) a person who wants to train as a fighter has to have a certain paranoia about their vulnerabilities (your weakness is your downfall). In the past, studying these arts meant you had to know how to fight, it was a life or death situation. Challenges were common, if your training wasn't good you were defeated, crippled or possibly killed. This was the encouragement for practicing. The poet, scholar, teacher, healer part was given attention after the fighting skills were excellent, there was no choice. I don't consider a person wanting to learn self-defense the same as a fighter. These two are very different. The self-defense aspect I'll cover in the martial artists column, here I'm dealing with the person who is interested in fighting.

Traditionally your life was on the line if you were a known practitioner of any style. In the early days of PA KUA, being a fighter meant you were employable. The top fighters were hired as escorts and body guards for the rich when they traveled. At one point PA KUA had a reputation as the top style so PA KUA practitioners were the most employable. It turns out whichever art the royal family liked was the best art to be expert in.

Training as a fighter you set out to **do** something. You seek to fight, you have to hurt, neutralize and counter the opponent. **YOU HAVE AN OPPONENT** the minute you have this idea you are very separate from others. My emphasis in teaching and the focus of this club is the opposite. Instead of seeking separateness we need to eliminate our separateness. This is one of the reasons why I don't approve of competitions or tournaments for tuishou. What I seek is to develop a **NON-FIGHTING MIND** viewing others as friends, family and teachers instead of threats. As a club the more we help each other grow and learn the better it is for us individually, the minute there is the attitude of being better then, or beating so and so the harmony and safety for growth and nurturing each of us stops. In self-defense you have the option to run away, seek an 'out', a fighter has a different

mission. A fighter is fighting to fight, to win. There is a goal to beat the other person, there is a gain in beating the other person. Slightly different is being a policeman, they don't have the option to run away or ignore it a dangerous situation or confrontation.

The responsibility of a fighter is to stay in top shape and technique. This means training every day to sharpen the skills of the art. Instead of the chi kung practice being for health it's for iron shirt and power training to be invulnerable to strikes. It's to develop power, to get stronger, to become more dangerous. This takes much more work and concentration than health chi kung. The hands and arms must be tough for striking. I'm not talking about a sport or recreational fighter here, sports have nothing to do with a real fighter in my view. A fighter makes his body a weapon, in the fight there are no rules except to win and survive. The sport aspect limits the dangerous moves, sets restrictions on striking areas etc. A fighter has to know the easiest and best methods for his particular body type and size to get the other person, no restrictions, full contact, all out.

Though I've known a couple of people who trained with this attitude it's not practical or useful for current society. I've met some Rangers in workshops that after their training are incapable of joining society. In training who can afford to get seriously injured in practice? Who has the time to train like a fighter? The modern equivalent is the sports fighter, the attitude is similar but the real danger isn't. A sport has a safety zone to it. This reminds me of the Aikido people who begin Aiki Jitsu. In Aikido you practice with wooden swords and knives. Eventually the black belts move quickly and confidently at disarming the attackers. In Aiki jitsu you use real knives to practice. The margin for error isn't there. All of a sudden the movements are slow and clumsy when a real knife is introduced. There is a big difference when the safety zone is removed, the difference between playing and really training.

Some people are brought into the arts because they want to learn to fight. The real reason is to learn self-defense. In order to be a fighter you have to be willing to hurt others. In self-defense you hurt others as a response you saving yourself should you need to. The two personalities are very different.

Next month the poet and the artist.

**BUDO IS NOT WINNING  
OVER OTHERS, TRUE  
BUDO IS WINNING OVER  
THE MIND OF DISCORD  
WITHIN OURSELVES.  
NEVER DEFEATED MEANS  
NEVER FIGHTING  
Budo = martial way, study  
of martial arts philosophy  
and theory.**

### ARTICLES TO READ

In the past I have lost several articles and books that were borrowed from the file box. I will still bring various articles to read but you will have to come early to read them, or come to a class you are not enrolled in if you would like to read one of the Tai Chi or Pa Kua magazines.

### AVANT-GARDENS OPEN HOUSE

The last Saturday and Sunday February 27th & 28th, 9 to 5 Avant-Gardens Retail Nursery, my home, will have its yearly open house. If you are interested in plants or a nice drive to the country come on up. I-5 north to Exit 224, R turn, L turn onto Cedardale, R turn onto Hickox Road, drive 3/4 mile, Avant-Gardens is on the left. 1hr from north Seattle.

### IN MEMORY

*A year ago January 12th a wonderful lady and great healer passed away, Whitney Alexander was a sweet and kind person. Pa Kua members owe a special thanks to her for helping make possible our continuing growing knowledge of Pa Kua.*