

# INTERNAL WUSHU ARTS NEWSLETTER

JULY 1993

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

## THANKS

The week intensive practice went great. My thanks to all who could attend and all who survived. It was much more than we usually do in class as far as a workout and the quantity of classes. My congratulations to those few who came to classes they knew nothing about and followed anyway. Aside from the energy it took to add the extra practice it also took quite a bit of courage and openness. My wish is that the week opens up new areas not seen before in your practice, helped some of you move out of your plateau, and inspired your practice. After

we recover I'll see if I can schedule another this fall.

## SHIRTS AVAILABLE

I have club shirts available sizes L & XL for \$12, and a limited supply of sweatshirts M & L for \$21. If you're interested in past issues of the Newsletter, I have some 'old' copies, pre-spell checker, from 1989-1992 in a booklet for \$5. Newsletter cost for non-members \$10/yr.

Tuesday, Yang Tai Chi will extend to 9:30 so I can work with members on Tuishou and Sanshou. I will be teaching Saturday classes: July 3rd & 24th. I will be out of town on two Thursdays: July 8th & 29th. If there is any interest we can have one of the Pa Kua sessions on Friday, July 2nd. Let me know if you'll make it ASAP.

## AUGUST:

I will be gone August 6th - 16th. I won't be able to teach any Saturday classes in August so you'll have plenty of time to perfect what we've covered.

## JULY:

\*\*\*\* *Masters Gao-fu & Lu Gao-ming visit October* \*\*\*\*

## ARE YOU CREATIVE?

We can learn to live with passion and spontaneity, trusting our intuitions, letting go of our preoccupations.

In many traditional cultures, art, like spirituality, saturates daily living. As the Balinese put it, "We have no art-everything we do is art."

Creativity is a vital force without which we can exist, but not truly live.

Creativity is an essential part of being human. It is an on going flow, within us and around us, that we can all open up to if we are willing to let down our guard.

The primary purpose (of some artists) is to explore the act of creation as a spiritual practice, as a way of awakening to our true nature and contacting the beauty and mystery of our lives.

Everything we really need in order to feel a sense of aliveness and creativity is already inside. And not only is it inside of us, but if we follow it we will have an interesting life.

If you start to poke a hole through your fear, this process becomes a metaphor for being powerful in your life.

Basic Guidelines for Art (Life):

- \* Trust your intuition
- \* Stay in the present
- \* The process is what matters, not the product
- \* (Don't analyze what you've done)
- \* Special talent is not necessary
- \* Practice, practice, practice.
- \* Anything done with a profound consciousness or with total awareness is artful.
- \* Necessity is often the mother of creativity.

*Quote from Utne Reader, March/April 1992*

## DISTRACTIONS

*Your practice is only as good as your focus.*

How good do you want to be? What do you want out of practice? Will your practice give you the desired results? If you can talk during practice your skill level must be high enough you don't need to practice.

CHATTER & distractions minimize what you can get out of practice. If you're practicing any of the form and carrying on a conversation, how can you feel what's really happening? In order to achieve the inner levels of the art: the chi/jin, the sensitivity, or the inner wisdom, requires your

undivided attention. The sad thing is we get satisfied with superficial skills and accomplishments so we stop short. After knowing the techniques and movements of the form, Tuishou and Sanshou we assume we have it. Or that just keep repeating the movements at this level will result in greater skill and understanding. This is why there aren't many highly skilled practitioners.

It's like peeling an onion, there is layer after layer. The 'peeling' is done by our complete focus, not by mere repetition. As we advance this becomes even more important and powerful. It's one thing in Tuishou and Sanshou to help your partner with information but *chatter* siphons your attention from the 'inner' teachings and sonar you should be developing depth to. If your interest is in greater skills devote your attention to studying the process and situations inside your partner as well as yourself. If your interest is in the social situation then practice with someone with similar goals. Your chatter can rob them of valued practice and insights.

Part of this issue is also respecting your partners and class mates. One of the rudest things you can do is stand in front of a member trying to practice their form and talk to them. If they engage you in conversation then it's different. Any practice time is valuable. For some, class time is the only time available to practice and study, their only quality time. There are enough natural distractions to block out without adding more to it.

If you need to talk with someone try to be out of ear shot of the group, and keep voices low. Though you may be satisfied with your own accomplishments, please respect other members right to practice under optimum conditions.

THE TEACHER

A teacher is someone responsible for the entire art. The transmission of the art on all levels; it's history and its future. In many European languages the word 'to teach' is the same word as 'to learn'. Though teachers may not be a master in all areas of the art they must know all areas of the art in depth. The purpose of a teacher is to help others achieve their potential, to help them in their direction and nurture them so they may achieve success. Whereas fighters can focus their entire attention on skills and hard physical training, the teacher must know the meditation, health, and energy levels of the art. The teacher must be a complete road map of the land in order to be useful.

The teacher's drive is like a researcher's, they're driven by the exploration of the art, discovering the inner layers with a strong need to share their discoveries. There is something in a true teacher that isn't satisfied with just knowing and understanding, but a need to get others to understand and explore the same thing. On one level it looks like the teacher is being generous with their sharing, but they have no choice. A teacher has a thirst and greed to know more, and for all others to know more. The excitement for a teacher is in two parts: First, in the discoveries and understanding of their own practice. The second enjoyment is when a student finally reaches their own discoveries and understanding.

The purpose of a teacher is to become useless to the student. The student should out-grow the teacher and move into their own learning. The art itself is the true teacher. As you practice, the art will speak through the forms, applications and meditations. This is where the art begins to take on a life of its own to the mindful practitioner. The teacher keeps pointing in the direction hoping that the student will begin to 'see' and 'understand' what the teacher sees. The teacher points to the tall tree, describes the fruit, the sweet taste. As the student practices (climbing the tree) they will eventually get up high enough to see the fruit, eventually they'll get close enough to pick it and get a taste. It's at this point when the student truly understands what the teacher has been talking about all this time.

A teacher in the martial arts or any field involving healing and energy is in terms a parent. Please forget the limited term teacher implies in the west. A teacher is one who guides, demonstrates, nurtures, challenges, and points to one or many directions. A true teacher guides on all levels, mind, body and spirit, either directly or indirectly. A good teacher is one who demonstrates the art by their life, not only their words.

The martial arts has many different words classifying students. In our language we have words like: apprentice, disciple, follower, trainee, student, ... I know several teachers

who after taking a workshop from a famous teacher claim themselves as students of that teacher. On a superficial level this may be true, but unless the master acknowledges this and begins to train the student, the bond isn't truly there. When I first began to study with master Gao-fu it was a weekend workshop. She took me to such a depth of Tai Chi in the first 10 minutes it completely transformed my art. Still, if that was the only teaching I had from her I couldn't claim I was her student, even though the level of her teaching transformed my entire art. The most appropriate word for a true student is an apprentice.

Simply coming to class and taking lessons according to our culture makes you a student of that instructor. From the instructor's view this is not so. At this level you are a visitor, being exposed to the surface of the art. Becoming a student requires you making a commitment to the art and the teacher, this only happens with time. Over the course of time and classes you are proving your interest and dedication level to the art and the instructor. There are members of the club who have been around many years that are still visitors, and some after a few months are students. What you say doesn't matter, how you practice and study does. Saying you really want to study the art deeply doesn't mean anything if you don't follow through with practice, showing an eagerness to practice diligently. It doesn't matter whether you advance quickly or not, whether you pick up the movements quickly or not. An instructor can see even the subtle changes in your movements that indicate you are sincere and that you practice. What matters is that you put the effort in what you've been taught and the attempt to pay attention to the guidelines of the art. Actions speak louder than words, actions actually demonstrate your sincerity.

Each student is an investment for the instructor. Beginning students take the most time and energy to be introduced to the art. The investment is in the art, the individual and humanity. If you don't know the alphabet you most likely can't read. Once you've been taught the alphabet you need to study and work with it until you find it easy. Only then can the teacher begin to teach you reading skills. If you don't know the alphabet it's a waste of time for the teacher to try to teach you reading. As a visitor in a class you are learning the alphabet.

Once you've been introduced to the art, as you put more effort toward the art, the teacher also puts in more effort. It's a 50/50 deal. On the one hand it's always more enjoyable to teach someone truly interested. But, at the same time certain lessons can't come until you are consistent and somewhat comfortable with what you have. If you still have trouble with your basic footwork, weight shifting, or structural problems I can't even begin to talk about the energies and imagery of the movements. They'll only distract you from what you need to work on. Your actions prove to the

*PRACTICE:  
Random acts of  
KINDNESS  
and  
Senseless acts of  
BEAUTY*

teacher your sincerity, and these actions will bring you to a level that will enable the teacher to give you more. This begins the process of being a student. You and the teacher are working together to help both of you uncover the art. You put effort in, the teacher puts effort in. By teaching, the instructor is studying and learning on an intricate level that mere practice can't achieve.

As the art gains depth within the individual then there is a possibility of the student moving into the 'disciple' or 'trainee' level. At this level the teacher begins to put 70% interest in the students training. At this point the student truly has a Shr-fu, someone who is committed to pass on the tradition. This is where the two of them study the art together and the teacher tries to push the student to their limits of understanding and effort. This teaching is also very much non-verbal. It may be in or out of class, it may be known or unknown to the student. It may be on technique or energy, it takes many forms.

There is no such thing as paying for lessons with a true teacher. The true teaching isn't in a quantity that can be bought or measured. Some lessons may be a tiny seed that will lay dormant for years before sprouting. Some may be as easy as showing an easier way of moving your hand. The bottom line to all this is actually: how to live and uncover your nature and move toward your potential. Studying is putting yourself in a situation to see if you can use your mind to figure things out. Use your tools to build what you were told to build or what you want to build.

Come to class with deep buckets. When you enter a class you pre-set what you will gain from the class by your attitude toward the class and toward your practice. If you are talking on the phone as someone else is giving you detailed instructions for some task you won't hear the instructions. If you're there to socialize and play you don't have any room

for lessons to be integrated, if you want depth you'll miss most of what's going on. There is limited room in a shallow bucket. If, however, you come attentive and alert the depth increases. You may not understand everything but it's all going in to your bucket.

Everyone has their own talents and paths. The teacher isn't special, just someone with a certain talent and skill able to impart the art. At the same time an excellent teacher for one person may be awful for another. The chemistry just may not be there. With all the diverse groups of personalities, not to mention teaching styles which are actually the teacher's personality, not everyone will mix smoothly. Certain teachers may have a talent for teaching one area only. As you study the art you will eventually outgrow your teacher, least to a certain extent if not completely. If you don't speak German you shouldn't be studying with someone who only speaks German.

#### THANK KATHLEEN DOLAN

If you liked the series on the FIGHTER, POET, MARTIAL ARTIST, SCHOLAR, ATHLETE AND TEACHER, Kathleen is responsible. After I did the first article she put me on the track of doing the others. I had no intention of it at the beginning. Thanks Kathleen ☺ ☺ ☺ If you have an idea or questions you'd like an in-depth answer to let me know.

#### BOOKS:

- THE TAO OF TAI CHI CHUAN - Jou, Tsung Hwa
- THE FUNDAMENTALS OF TAI CHI CHUAN - Wen-Shan Huang
- \*\*THERE ARE NO SECRETS - Wolfe Lowenthal
- \*\*TAI CHI CHUAN TA WEN - Chen Wei-Ming
- \*\*THE WAY OF ENERGY - Master Lam Kam Chuen
- KI IN DAILY LIFE - Koichi Tohei
- \*\*THE ESSENCE OF TAI CHI CHUAN - Lo, Inn, Amacker, Foe
- \*\*CLASSICAL PA KUA CHANG - Johnson, Crandall
- \*\*THIRTEEN CHAPTERS - Cheng, Man-ching
- \*\*LIANG ZHEN PU - Li Zi Ming
- CHI KUNG Health & Martial Arts - Yang Jwing-Ming
- VITALITY, ENERGY, SPIRIT A Taoist Sourcebook - Thomas Cleary

---

## WALKING THE CIRCLE IN PA KUA CHANG

Relax, take a deep breath, loosen your muscles, empty your mind, sink. This is the beginning. Not only of Pa Kua, Tai Chi, or your workout but your day and all tasks within your day. That aside, then we can begin to talk about techniques.

In Pa Kua, to my knowledge, there are four stepping patterns. You usually hear about only three, my guess is that since two of them are fairly similar they are grouped into one. Also, various styles only use one of the stepping patterns. We have: Snake step, Chicken step, Lion step, and Camel step. The Snake step is our primary stepping pattern since it incorporates strengthening the legs merged with fluid footwork. The Chicken step strengthens the legs but doesn't help with quick movements. The Lion step is used in weaponry and applications, it's a normal type of stepping. The Camel step I've heard described but it's not very common.

Aside from the basic strengthening and stretching of the legs; the Snake step increases the legs versatility in use with leg sweeps, foot hooks, and trips that the other steps don't enforce. There are many methods of doing the Snake step, some very solid and basic to others: active, floating and light. If you can't tell by now, I prefer the Snake step.

Relaxation is one of our hardest goals in addition to being loose. The Snake step requires that your ankle becomes very soft and relaxed. The name 'Snake step' come from the fact that your toe moves forward like a snake moving through the grass, your toes are the snake's head. Your front foot need to hover above the ground or slide along the ground. The sliding is better at the beginning so you can 'listen' to the ground with the ball of your foot. In order for your foot to be in the correct position you have to relax your front ankle. It needs to be loose and soft. Any tension in your ankle shows itself by your toe pointing upward, as in regular walking. The back foot has all your weight pressing it into the ground, your chi steams into the ground. It's important that your weight is evenly distributed on the back foot. This, not only saves your balance but also your knees. If you rock onto the ball of

**IT WENT GREAT!** Another successful weekend workshop. We had 10 members and worked out from 9:30 to 5pm. Since my back was still a bit sore the intended schedule was changed and we primarily worked on the TaiChi Staff/Spear and Pushing hands. Thanks to all who came, I had a good time.

your rear foot as you step you may hyper-extend your knee, very bad position to put pressure on your knee. This also keeps you from stretching and strengthening the rear leg properly. In the advanced practice there is a slight forward extension but the legs should be stretched and strong by that time. Beginners should NEVER do that type of step until strong and advanced enough.

Your foot slides forward in the scissor step as your weight shifts. Scissor step is actually the action of your legs and thighs sliding past one another like scissors cutting. Correct Pa Kua walking should be heard, you should hear the brushing of your pant legs whenever the inside foot steps forward.

In order to save your balance (and your knees) and to train your waist properly the inside foot steps directly forward. In a way it cuts you off as you attempt to walk the circle. You are not walking a rim or a perfect circle. The inside foot steps straight ahead to stabilize your body and knees and it scissors forward. There is a style that doesn't do this with their stepping but the majority Pa Kua lineage from Tung, Hai-Chuan describe this as the correct stepping. It's the outside foot that slightly toes in that causes you to walk the circle. This begins to train the legs and feet to work on foot hooks and trips. Though this leg doesn't come close enough to scissor the inside leg, the foot still 'snakes' forward.

The step ends with the knees touching. If they don't you're most likely unstable and not working the legs properly. This, knee to knee position 'wraps' the leg and hip muscles and opens up the lower back. This is very important for chi development, opening the meridians of the legs and lower back. This is training, not fighting. You would not use this posture for applications, but it's used as training to make the applications possible and strong. After training this way it's very easy to wrap your foot around your partners, or weave between their feet and footwork. The 'wrapping' stretches and strengthens the muscles, develops rooting skills, teaches balance, and encourages the chi flow. This stance is our first Zhan Zhuang posture: Monk Lifts Bowl.

Moving up, there is a habit of sticking out the butt in order to take the work off of the legs. This puts pressure on the lower back in addition to not developing the legs, root and health properly. As in Tai Chi the hips are tucked slightly. In Pa Kua we say you should look like you're sitting as you circle. This tucked hip position stretches the lower back slightly, opens the energy channels at the base of the spine and unifies the torso and legs. This is a requirement in order to begin to root. If the butt is out and the lower back is swayed there is a 'kink' in the skeletal structure and in the meridians and chi flow. One problem is working too hard at this. If you stand up against a wall with your back you should touch the wall with your lower back. That's enough! If you tuck too much your stomach muscles tense up or you hold in your stomach. This position develops your center and base of power. It unifies the trunk of your body so when you

develop power there is no hindrance to FA-JIN. All your power and strength is available at all times to all directions.

Regardless of art, this will curtail you getting anywhere. Those who take it easy on their postures and legs are never able to develop true power and skill. They're a shallow rooted tree, if rooted at all. Don't be kind to your legs in practice if you want to advance.

The upper body is relaxed and empty. The shoulders 'sit' on the hips, or rest on the lower body. Even when twisting. All our twists come from the waist, NOT THE HIPS! If the hips turn into the circle or twists you have no root, no stability. If the hips twists you can't do the footwork properly. Footwork first, waist second, hands third. The upper body should seek an emptiness, a hollow feeling. To get a taste of this just walk the circle in either Pushing Down the Earth, or Hands Floating on Water for 1/2 hr.

After this is when we can think of our other basics: Flame above the water. The hips are water, sinking into the earth, a large heavy lake. The waist and spinal column up to the head top is like a flame flickering upward to the sky. This opens up the meridians and channels of the spine and directs the chi to circulate up to the head top. As you do this, keep your neck loose and soft! Don't force the head up. **Now all you do is walk.**

**INTERNAL WUSHU ARTS**  
**Seattle**  
 Evenings:  
 Yang Style Tai Chi - Tues 7-9:30  
 Chen Style Tai Chi - Wed 7-8  
 Pa Kua Chang - Thurs 7-9  
 at: PNA 6532 Phinney Ave N.  
 Summer: 58 & Phinney Ave N (Park)  
 Mornings:  
 Yang Style Tai Chi - Wed 9-10:30  
 Pa Kua Chang - Thur 8-9:30  
 at: Discovery Park  
 Sanshou (advanced) -Sat 10-12 PNA  
 Fee: \$45 monthly - one style +\$5 additional styles  
 Private lessons \$30/hr  
**Mt. Vernon:**  
 Sundays  
*Affiliate Clubs:*  
**University District:**  
 Gene Burnett - 547-7293  
 senior citizen classes available  
 Cedar Acosta - 721-3139  
**Vashon Island:**  
 Deborah Goldhaft - 463-3601  
**Tacoma:**  
 Betty Jones - 564-8121  
 Randy York - 564-5810  
**Snohomish area:**  
 Shaun Munger  
 P.O. Box 202  
 Sultan, WA 98294  
**Application specialist:**  
 Dave Harris - 782-1170  
 PNA 6532 Phinney Ave N.  
 highly recommended  
**Los Angeles:**  
 Harvey Kurland -(714)796-3332

TAI CHI SUMMER RETREAT SCHEDULE	
(basic outline, more detailed one in my file box)	
7am	CHI KUNG
Breakfast	
9	CANE/SWORD/STAFF/DEFENSE
10	PRINCIPLES/APPLICATIONS
11	TUISHOU
lunch	
3	CANE/SWORD/STAFF/DEFENSE
4	APPLICATIONS
5	philosophy
Dinner - sharing 8:30 Healing	
TO BRING: Warm sleeping bag, foam mattress, warm clothes, gloves, rain gear, loose clothing, running shoes, swim suit, flashlight, towel, soap...Open mind and good will.	