

INTERNAL WUSHU ARTS NEWSLETTER

A.T.Dale - P.O. Box 77040 - Seattle WA 98133-

This newsletter is for students of the Internal Wushu Arts and interested parties. The intent is to give greater depth to some subjects and to share my studies and current learning from various teachers. This will also keep members informed about events, workshops and changes in schedules.

My hope is the newsletter will motivate and encourage students in their own research. Mailing subscriptions \$10 yearly

Keep in mind: There are no wrong styles. What's important is that your life benefits from your studies and practice.

ATD

Teachers:

Be your own disciple!

Too often we'll say to one another, or over hear, "They just don't train as we did, they don't have the same dedication." Of course we can't go back, everyone comes from a different situation, there is life to deal with, now is now, and. . . we only have control and real influence over our own training.

As teachers and instructors of any art, the ideal situation is someone who has a passionate interest in what we teach, the time and drive to practice daily, and perseverance.

Train yourself as you would want your students to train. Be an example. If, however, you feel you're passed that stage, I suggest you become a beginner in another

field. Or, become your students student.

CHI KUNG WORKSHOP

Sunday, July 17, 11-4

Avant-Gardens, Mt. Vernon

I will present an over view of the various Chi Kung methods and how to focus on chi kung to get the results we're looking for. We will explore: O'mei, Tai Chi, Pa Kua, Kun Lun, Tien Shan, Wild Goose, Misogi, and Tree chi kung. Please sign up as soon as possible.

1993 NEWSLETTERS

Booklet available \$5

TUISHOU WORKOUT

Sunday July 31, 11-1 Mt.

Vernon, all levels

KOOTENAY TAI CHI CENTER WORKSHOPS

HSING I CHUAN

Summer Retreat

August 1-5, \$200 US

SNOWFLOW

Tai Chi/Snowboard Playshop

December 9-11, \$225US.

information in my file box or:

Kootenay Tai Chi Center

P.O. Box 566

Nelson, B.C. Canada V1L 5R3

(604) 352-3714



PALM ENERGY

What part of the hand is being used, where is the energy? Does it focus in the fingers, palm, knife-edge, or knuckles? For the next month I'd like you to study within your forms where the energy in the hands are expressed within each movement.

The attacker is never wrong!

The same is true in tuishou! Our practice is to surf our partners force, wherever it goes. When you'd like to complain about your partner or their movements, first try to figure out what you're doing incorrectly.

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are strictly my own that I use within our club. You'll find everyone teaching tuishou has their own interpretation of what 'real' tuishou is.

JOINT HANDS - is the practice of the various exercises of tuishou for softness and sensitivity without pushing. The concern here is the pattern and techniques of hand movements.

PUSHING HANDS - is the practice of taking advantage of your partners openings and tensions, moving them off

balance. You work on rooting and issuing energy.

FREE HANDS - includes the above with the addition of strikes, wrist grabs, sweeps and trips. Softness and lightness are emphasized with self-defense techniques.



TUISHOU PARTNERS

Unfortunately class time is limited. Instead of 'practicing' tuishou we spend the time learning the next step in the progression and working on various refinements. With members as so many different levels it's hard to run the class any other way. What I hear most often is: "I'd like to practice more but there's no one to practice with." What about setting up a Saturday informal practice session, or another day of the week? With so many people complaining about lack of practice partners, there should be a few of you that can coordinate your schedules. In my file box will be a list for you to sign-in on and state your best free times for practice. The more people you practice with the greater your skill level will reach. If you're interested in a Sunday Tushou practice contact Kathleen Dolan 283-5731

THE FIGHTING MIND

The tendency to jump to conclusions or assumptions, the urge to hit someone from what they've said, the overwhelming urge to correct someone, the urge to prove or say what you know, frustration arising from someone's action or words. The more we try to control someone or something, the more control it has of us. We set up a situation where it can push our own buttons.

Words and sounds do have power, but much of the time we permit the words to control us due to our lack of centerdness. The fighting mind is one of the 'things' that moves us outside of our circle of strength; physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. Severe want, fear, and greed are other manifestations of the fighting mind.

A good example of our fighting mind moving us outside our circle of strength and off balancing us, is when we practice our body pushing relaxation exercise. We can see this especially with someone who hasn't done this exercise. As the hand approaches to push the shoulder, the person being pushed ends up rocking forward to meet and resist the push. At this point there is no center, all the weight is on the ball of both feet. An extreme example of this is the person being pushed loses their balance and stumbles forward. Even before contact the balance is stolen. Actually it isn't stolen, it's given to the pusher by the fighting mind. Our partner may just be reaching out to touch our shoulder, not to push. On the other side of this, in applications, when you cause the attacker

to rock forward, this is called a 'leading' technique or a 'signal'. As our art matures this is one of the highest levels of applications, having the opponents balance before contact. If you look at the 1993 club demo with Dave Harris in slow motion you'll see he uses it in every movement. The same is true of the founder of Aikido or Master Tohei if you've seen any video of them. As soon as there is an aggressive action toward them, FIGHTING MIND, they lead the intent of the attacker instead of merely dealing with the physical body, weight and mass. In slow motion you can see a certain connection between attacker and defender, at normal speed it either looks fake or like MAGIC! In Aikido the goal is to lead the attacker's mind. In Tai Chi and Pa Kua we have several names for this: leading energy, neutralizing energy, following energy, sticking energy . . .

This level of skill can only come when our mind is calm and centered, (and the body is very well trained in movement). The defender's mind has to be calm and alert in order to 'surf' and 'listen' to the energy of the attacker. Then, it's not manipulating the opponents force, it's respecting the direction of their force and energy, listening to it and then leading it, not trying to control it.

Enough of that, what our practice and study should do is first, teach us to relax: mind and body. This permits the mind and body to center. In our solo movements we kneed our body and mind as we practice. Letting go of our tension and tightness, learning how to thread our movements smoothly together, to use our intent to lead the chi in our movements. As our mind begins to lead the chi we discover tightness and tension within the muscles and body, blockages that we can use the movement and breathing to loosen and open up so the chi can flow freely. As we relax we can permit the weight and energy to sink down when necessary, to shift easily when necessary, to expand or coil when necessary without any delay. This happens gradually when we practice and 'let go', just move. The more we try to control our movements exactly, or be perfect, the more tension we bottle up and the more problems. Part of the fighting mind is **trying** to be perfect, this creates an unbalance within ourselves.

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS PERFECTION so get use to it! The best thing to **do** or not to **do** is practice and simply let your mind notice and watch the practice. **Feel** the practice. In the body-pushing exercise what we want is to notice how our body responds to the pressure our partner applies to it not react to the pressure. We need to let go, relax and sink. Our body is like a piece of seaweed and our partners push is the water current. As the pressure comes if we either resist it, going to meet it, or pull away from it, it 'gives' our partner our balance and energy. It's best to remain neutral, be aware of the situation so we can make the correct decision and permit the proper action to take place when necessary.

Trying to second guess an action only ties up energy and wastes it. How many times has your 'rehearsed' speech gone exactly the same when you've had a discussion with someone? How many times has the worrying you've done paid off when the situation has arrived? I know, it's easier said than done. This is why we practice to relax, sink and center.

The solo movements help us find and learn about our center, tensions and fighting mind. The partner work tests us in our progress and also teaches us deeper levels. It gives us feed back. It also brings us into deeper levels of the fighting mind and tensions to help us loosen up, release and

understand them. Ideally we should approach tuishou and sanshou with an open attitude, 'LETS JUST SEE WHAT HAPPENS' When our partner is punching at us it's not that easy to stay calm and not over-react. LET THE MEAT COME TO THE HOOK! Once the attack comes inside our circle of strength, onto our work bench, we can take proper and safe action. This is the difference between fighting and self-defense. In fighting we have to beat the other person, in self-defense we can do anything to keep ourselves from being injured. The primary goal is not to be hit, running away is self defense. In tuishou a demonstration of the fighting mind is forcing a push, needing to push our partner far, 'trying' to push our partner, resenting being pushed. Ideally within the practice we want to be aware and 'notice' when our partner is off balance, or tense then let them know. Listening to the energy and flow of the practice, listening to our own tensions and tightness that our partner will help us uncover. *Just being alert.* Our goal is to center and learn about ourselves, deeper and deeper. Our practice moves us in that direction. Physically our bodies become relaxed, softer, stronger and healthier. Our minds get to see its reflection in our partners actions and our own 'problems' with them as we practice. Our solo practice brings many things into our consciousness that we normally tend to ignore: mental tensions, habits, etc. We need to let go and seek our center, calmness and relaxation. As we progress spiritually we can see how alike we all are, how immature we can be, the wonders of nature, of life, of kindness, of sharing and play. As we practice perhaps we can move above our own fighting mind into a mature and centered individual. There is no me, no them, it's us.

Always Practice Gently

Tuesday nights, as we progress deeper into tuishou, remember to be gentle, even when practicing hard pushing. A callous action or movement can cause a slight injury or hurt feelings. When things speed up a bit, remember to slow down. When practicing applications take into account your partner's physical size, strength, training, and level of advancement.

VISITING

Why is there a need to talk during class instruction or when practicing tuishou?? My personal view of chatter is a resistance to going deeper into the practice, or a laziness to work harder and deeper. In tuishou we should have all levels of awareness open and listening. If you're trying to concentrate don't you quiet down and focus? Aside from my teachers I don't know of anyone at the level to be able to divide their chi and attention in practice and have a productive study session.

MADAME GAO FU

It all started when I got a phone call from Martin. He had just run into a visiting tai chi master from China, would it be OK to bring her by the club to watch and perhaps exchange demonstrations, she was interested in what tai chi was being taught here and meeting the instructors in this area. My first thought was: Not everyone from China is a tai chi master, an assumption that is always made. I said no problem we have class tonight.

Martin arrived with Master Gao Fu and her assistant/translator Gao Liting. She watched us patiently go through the first part of class, fortunately I hadn't seen her perform. (While studying with Master Tchoung we've had many visitors from China to demonstrate for and I wasn't nervous having her watch.)

Gao Liting explained that Gao Fu was assistant to the Chen instructor Feng Zhiqiang (b. 1926- who I didn't know of at the time) and she had just finished a workshop in Sweden. Would we be interested in seeing Chen style tai chi? I had studied Chen style a few years prior and didn't like it, I was soon to see the Chen instructor I had didn't know what he was doing. Everyone cleared the space and Master Gao Fu walked to the center, stood for a minute then began. My mouth dropped open, WOW! This was the real thing, a true master. With her first movement she embodied all the principles of the tai chi classics in addition to: beauty, grace, power, elegance, and such focus as to draw everyone in to her tai chi. Master Gao Fu was 74 at the time. When she finished we were spellbound, she asked if we practiced any of the other tai chi sets, she'd like to see them. Nervously I did the Yang Broadsword, she did the Chen and Yang broadsword, I demonstrated the sanshou and she demonstrated the traditional Yang sanshou. After the demonstration, I told Martin to sign me up for any and all workshops she'd conduct during her

visit. In the first five minutes of the following workshop her insight and teaching helped transform my tai chi to deeper levels of relaxation and energy understanding. Members of the club can testify that my teaching and the momentum of the classes changed dramatically.

Her teacher, Master Feng Zhiqiang, is the last old generation Chen masters in China, Gao Fu is his assistant, recognized as one of China's living treasures and one of the top women tai chi masters of China. She was sent as representative of the Beijing Chen Tai Chi Research Society at a request from Sweden for a two week workshop on traditional Wushu. They had left Beijing the day after the Tiananmen Square incident. Our fortune to have them visit was due to Gao Li's connection to the incident so he wasn't able to return to China. A friend in Seattle sent them air fare to visit and the rest was our good fortune.

*“ I didn't really like
tai chi at first ”*

Chen tai chi was kept a family secret until the early 1800's. Even after this time it wasn't taught very openly until Gao Fu's grand teacher, Chen Fake (1887-1957) moved to Beijing and began to teach. Feng Zhiqiang is known as one of Chen Fake's most accomplish students. Madame Gao Fu has been fortunate to study with Chen Fake's two top students, the other being Tian Xiouchen (d. 1984), senior to Feng Zhiqiang. When Tian Xiouchen died, Madame Gao Fu was asked by the tai chi association to take over his classes, at this time she began to study with Master Feng.

In her youth, Gao Fu didn't have any interest in tai chi chuan or anything to do with traditional Chinese teaching. Living in Tsing Tao, the port city for Beijing, her father did much business with France and she loved everything foreign. She began her study of tai chi in her 50's when she saw someone in the park practicing tai chi sword, she had to learn it, it was beautiful and graceful. However, she thought the tai chi solo form was silly and boring, she didn't like it. She was told she had to learn the

basics first, the tai chi solo form, so grudgingly she started to study Yang tai chi chuan. After a period of time she was lucky to meet a famous graduate from the Nanjing Wushu Academy, Master Jiang Yukun (d. 1980) who was a senior student of Yang Chenfu. For the next six years she studied under Master Jiang. Master Jiang was very strict and taught her: Yang tai chi chuan, sword, broadsword, staff, spear, partner set, and Chen style. She practiced diligently to the point where her forms were a model of perfection. In the mid 1970's, she was invited to teach Yang-style in several Chinese cities. People would compliment her forms but she said there wasn't much 'internal' to her art, her teachers primarily emphasized movements and forms. In 1980 she began training with Master Tian Xiouchen in order to refine her Chen tai chi. According to Gao Fu, Tian's specialty was stances, postures, footwork, and the 'inner work'. He wouldn't explain what to do, the students would put their hands on him as he would do a movement to feel the inner tai chi and energy work. In only six months she was assisting him in teaching classes. After studying primarily the outward form for years, she found it very difficult to work on the internal and felt like she had to begin all over again. This is one reason she feels it's so important to teach the internal from the start. It's almost impossible to go back and correct the bad habits and patterns learned from practicing empty and shallow. In 1984 Master Tian died and Master Feng offered to continue her training. Under Master Feng, her tai chi skills have flourished and she has developed her own superb teaching techniques. In the early 1990's, Master Feng presented her with a special citation in recognition of her talents as a tai chi teacher and her contributions to the art of tai chi chuan.

continued page 4

MUSCLE - STRENGTH - POWER - FORCE

It's difficult enough to translate certain words from one language to another. It's even harder, if not impossible, to transfer the meaning of experience and feelings, even in the same language. When we talk about energy, *CHI*, what are we really talking about? What level, what kind or type of energy? Listening energy? Sticking energy? Life energy? Vitality? Even with these categories there are many levels and distinct definitions depending upon context and application (healing or martial). Words just can't translate the true meaning of some of our most important principles, especially in the internal wushu. Perhaps this is why some of the classics say we need guidance from a true master in order to understand. The gap between American and Chinese thinking is so great we can't expect a direct translation to be sufficient. In addition to this, in the martial arts world, you have the descriptions and names of movements with hidden meanings, in codes, poems, and martial slang. In Japanese these poems and formulas are called Kudens. These phrases were used to convey the inner meaning of the forms to the true students so outsiders couldn't understand what was being said or taught. Some terms were a short-hand to save time in explanations. Some were also used as meditations to take the student into a deeper understanding. In Aiki jujitsu one kuden translates as, "Be a good thief." When an instructor says this they want you to be softer and lighter in your movements. Steal your partner's balance without them knowing. Yang Chengfu would say, "Don't put your meat on my shelf" meaning you were using too much strength, heaviness, and sluggish energy. In Tai Chi we have a certain definition of terms: soft does not mean weak, rooted does not mean heavy, light does not mean floating, relaxed does not mean limp.

In the various teachings of the internal arts we see a common phrase 'Don't use strength'. 'The internal arts don't use strength, they use Jin.' 'Softness overcomes strength'. We also see words like 'Fa Li' (releasing strength) or I - Chi - Li (mind, chi, strength) must be coordinated. On the one hand it tells

us not to use strength, then on the other it says to coordinate strength.

Even in the English language we have many meanings for strength. Strong mind, strong smell, muscle strength, strength of character. . . When you read a translation saying not to use strength replace the word strength with muscle. Don't muscle the movement. In class I call this 'localized strength', brute force. This type of strength refers to the strength of an oxen, very limited, bulky and clumsy. When the work Li appears as something to be used or coordinated in a movement then think of it as total body coordination. I'd call this snake like power: strong, flexible, lively, and united. These two descriptions can be compared to the strength of a weight lifer verses a gymnast. The gymnast in addition to being strong, has to be agile and flexible. This is the type of control we should be developing as we practice. Relaxed, yet fit, healthy and pliable.

Localized strength causes us to float and be stiff. It segments our body and severs any rootedness and power we have from the ground, we might as well be standing on roller skates. If our shoulders or elbows are up we are floating and weak. Just try to push something this way, we end up pushing ourselves away. *LIGHT BUT NOT FLOATING* is a common saying in the internal wushu. Movements should be smooth, soft and fluid but not airy. All power is issued from the feet. The legs generate the power, this is transmitted to the hip and waist, guided to the shoulders and elbows and released from the hands, whip like. This is the strength we're looking for: Fa Li or I - Chi - Li.

Once this coordination has become smooth and fluid we begin having access to fa jin power. Jin can be thought of as force and power. It is the result of every muscle in our body coordinated with every joint in our body, coordinated with our breathing, coordinated with our mind focus, coordinated with our energy. Everything working 100% harmoniously in any direction, any time we choose. Absolutely no inner friction in our body or mind to hinder the release of this power.

This, in conjunction with timing and good judgment, is what has given the old masters an apparent super strength lasting into old age. It's not muscle, it's not magic, it's skill resulting from years of practice and training. The result is kung fu.

ATD

MADAME GAO FU

continued:

In her search to understand and perfect her tai chi, Gao Fu has studied with masters and experts of the Yang and Wu tai chi methods as well as chi kung. One master, she studied with specialized in teaching how to use the 'intent' in practicing tai chi forms. Gao Liting mentioned once that Master Gao Fu would skip festival celebrations in order to refine her tai chi practice.

We owe a great deal of thanks to Harrison Moretz of the Taoist Research Center for enabling and arranging Master Gao's current visit. Master Gao's first visit elevated the teaching skills of four of Seattle's tai chi instructors, but also her presence and energy brought together the various tai chi teachers and clubs in Seattle that continue to this day. There is much more open and friendly communication between the various groups. Now that's real tai chi.

ATD

