



INTERNAL WUSHU ARTS NEWSLETTER

A.T.Dale - P.O. Box 77040 - Seattle WA 98133 - (206)283-0055 - subscriptions \$12/yr.

CLUB ITEMS

Club T-shirts Lg	\$15
Pa Kua Chi Kung Bk	\$8
Misc. Videos	\$35
'94 Newsletters	\$5
'93 Newsletters	\$5

SATURDAY CLASSES

Mar. 11 - group practice 9-11	free
Mar. 18 - SIFU VISIT	
Mar. 25 - short staff 9-11,	\$10
Apr. 1 - 7&8 9-11,	\$10
Apr. 8 - free hands 9-11,	\$10
Apr. 15 - group practice 9-11	free
Apr. 22 - tuishou 9-11,	\$10
Apr. 29 - short staff 9-11,	\$10

SUMMER WORKSHOP

Sat & Sun - July 1 & 2nd
Mt. Vernon WA

\$60 per day/ \$100 both days

Each day will be divided into three parts.

I will be focusing on adapting our studies of chi kung in order to boost our practice in forms and tuishou work. The theme this year will be "LISTENING ENERGY".

MORNING CLASSES

Bring gloves and a sweater. We will start moving classes outside weather permitting.

GARDEN LOVERS

Avant-Gardens is having it's open house March 4&5. I-5 to exit 224, turn R, turn L, turn R onto Hickox Rd. 1795 Hickox Rd., Mt. Vernon (360)428-5974.

KOOTENAY TAI CHI CENTRE

SUMMER RETREATS

Box 566

Nelson, B.C. V1L 5R3

(604)352-3714

(Rex contributed an article this issue pg 4)

KUNG FU SUMMER RETREAT FOR CHILDREN & TEENS

August 1-5

\$240 Canadian \$200 US

TAI CHI CHUAN

August 13-19

\$395 Canadian \$335 US

This year Harold Naka, Harvey Kurland, Rex Eastman and myself will be the staff.

PA KUA CHANG

August 21-27

\$395 Canadian \$335 US

Mike Smith, Rex Eastman, and Bob Algera will be instructing.

INTERNAL WUSHU ARTS NORTHWEST TAI CHI CHUAN ASSOCIATION

Teaching Certification Of
Master T.T. Tchoung's
Tai Chi Chuan

In all of t'ai chi chuan and the internal arts there are many who teach after just a few months of lessons. This is an attempt to keep the quality of those teaching Master Tchoung's system high and to help students check the credentials of those claiming to be teachers of our lineage.

Master Tchoung issues certificates to those who have completed the system: sections 1-9, tuishou, sanshou and weaponry. This we call Chief Instructor Certification. It takes much time and effort to complete the system and many students, do and are able to, teach before completing all forms. Also, some aren't interested in pushing hands, partner work or completing the entire system. Harvey and I have put together the following levels of certification. Feedback is appreciated.

(The Northwest Tai Chi Chuan Association was founded in 1975 by Master Tchoungs advanced students in Seattle as an extension of the Chinese Tai Chi Chuan Association of Canada.)

Those interested in being certified must:

1. demonstrate the forms with correct body alignment and mechanics
2. All movements must adhere to proper tai chi principles.

LEVEL 1

APPRENTICE INSTRUCTOR

tested and passed simplified/short form or any section greater than 2 and less than 6

LEVEL 2

LONG FORM CERTIFICATION 1-6

LEVEL 3

PUSH HANDS CERTIFICATION

2 hands - 4 hands (walking & stationary)

Da Lu - basic rooting & 8 energies of t'ai chi chuan

LEVEL 4

TAI CHI WEAPON CERTIFICATION

Tai Chi Sword - Tai Chi Cane

LEVEL 5

ADVANCED CERTIFICATION

partner form & fast form

sections 7 8 9

LEVEL 6

CERTIFICATION TO TEACH

all of the above

LEVEL 7

CHIEF INSTRUCTOR CERTIFICATION

Issued By Grandmaster T.T. Tchoung

Learning From Lousy Teachers

by Harvey Kurland

In the December 1994 Internal Wushu Arts Newsletter I wrote about looking for a teacher and various teaching models. I talked about the mystification of t'ai-chi and t'ai-chi instructors, a process which leads to some students making the teacher into someone he is not. When teachers don't live up to those mystified expectations the students become disillusioned. This mildly delusional behavior i.e. mystification of the teacher, meets some type of emotional need. This is what Bob Engel, a Cheng Man-ch'ing stylist who studied with Liu Si Hung in Taiwan, calls the "Cult of the teacher". (Note: Liu is the official inheritor of Cheng Man-ching's school in Taiwan) the adoration of the teacher which supersedes rational thought is related to what R.D. Laing called mystification. Could this be replacement of a parental role or just a search for meaning?

Bob also believes that some students study these arts as a way of experiencing and learning about Chinese culture, rather than the art itself. As the old Chinese saying goes, "500 miles away, the customs are different."

"Any glimpse of Chinese culture is solely based on that teachers background and may not have any relevance to the culture of another Chinese person."

Do you want to learn more about Chinese culture and history? Then enroll in a class at the University. After all would you seek out Mike Tyson or a local football coach to experience or learn about American culture? If you did, you would get an interesting slant, wouldn't you?

I also discussed knee alignment. If anyone is interested in this, an early version of my 1985 work on knee alignment and t'ai-chi will be published in the April 1995 *Inside Kung-fu* magazine.

After reading the December article, Jim Kuhn, a t'ai-chi teacher under Sifu Dale, talked to me about the role and responsibilities of the student in all of this. He believes that the sincere and motivated student has the burden of responsibility to learn even from the most difficult and untalented teacher. This all assumes the teacher is a good technical model. Sifu Andy Dale, chief instructor for IWA, also wrote in the past about the responsibility of the student and what the teacher expects from a student. We believe the onus to learn is on the student.

Other than those teachers who dissociate themselves from their students, most want their students to learn

competently. I know from my point of view I want my students to excel. When they do well it makes me feel good. To learn competently, the student must: 1. Show up for class, 2. Be attentive in class, 3. Practice diligently outside of class and 4. Train mindfully. The more hours of correct mindful training, the faster the student learns.

This assumes the student really wants to learn the art of t'ai-chi ch'uan, pa-kua chang or hsin-I ch'uan (Heart-mind boxing). Some students attend class as they would an aerobics exercise class. They intend to get their exercise there and that is the end of it. There is no desire to learn a system or an art and there is no mindfulness. Though people who just do it for exercise can achieve good health benefits. To delve deeper and learn the art of t'ai-chi ch'uan there must be desire and motivation. Without that, it will be an exercise class only.

"What you want to do, you will do. Your motivation gives you self discipline."

The motivated student will train regularly. When people attend my class and tell me they are "Looking for self discipline", I know the chances that they will make it through the quarter are slim. Learning t'ai-chi or doing anything, is not based on self discipline. It is based on motivation and desire. It meets your needs. In my view, it is misleading for exercise teachers to tell students they need self discipline. It doesn't exist without motivation. And if you are motivated, you have it. Of course the teachers are the ones who are already motivated, so they have what appears to be self discipline. They work out for hours because they like to, it meets their needs. Some instructors can psyche people up to exercise on a short term basis. There is a whole industry based on giving people short term motivation. But very few people stick to anything they do not like to do. Motivation can be from a need to be the badist dude in town, to achieve mystical powers, a drive to learn an art, or to keep healthy. We all have our reasons to train and ghosts to deal with. When that motivation or reason to train ends, then the illusion of self discipline evaporates. I train because it makes me feel good. I enjoy the movement and aesthetics of the art. If I feel down or irritable, after working out for an hour I felt great. Others find they stay healthy when they work out, that is their motivation. Some LEARNING FROM LOUSY TEACHERS CONT. delight in the practice and the movement. Some are into the social part of it.

In the old days, most PE teachers were stern taskmasters. As an exercise physiology professor once said, PE teachers are mesomorphs, push themselves hard, sweat and bleed when they work out, and enjoy it. They enjoy ascetic activity, that is their motivation. They have little patience for the people who aren't like them. No wonder people didn't like PE. Yang t'ai-chi is ideal for those people who don't like to sweat and bleed when they workout.

The first step to learning is to show up to class. In structured classes, if you don't attend every class you will hold back the group and fall behind. If your primary motivation is better health and getting exercise, then you need to exercise at least three times a week. So you have to show up to class and make up the other sessions on your own. If you miss classes, you won't get the minimum amount of exercise needed for the health benefits. If your primary practice is in class, then you have to show up. If your motivation to be healthy is not strong enough, then you will miss classes. But there is no need to get too compulsive, *so stay home and rest if you are sick*. Overtraining is the bane of the over zealous "Good student", and is another issue.

The serious student has awareness, As Andy often tells his students class is for learning and practice, **not conversation**. Serious students watch everything the teacher does and listens to everything the teacher says. They aim to understand. They will concentrate on everything they do, i.e. practice mindfully. When they don't understand, they will ask questions. They will try to figure out why things are done, rather than rotely following along. They will attempt to apply what they learn. The secret is to practice mindfully and correctly.

“Perfect practice makes perfect.

Practicing Errors Makes Them Permanent.

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The point Jim brought up was: if the student has a strong desire then he/she will work hard, practice, etc., and find a way to learn even from a lousy teacher who has good technical skills. The teacher can be mean, ill tempered or just holds back. Jim told me that when he studied flamenco guitar he wanted to learn from some very moody and difficult guitarists to deal with. But they played wonderful music. Some were unwilling to teach him. So he had to "Steal" the knowledge by listening and mimicking. By listening carefully and watching (awareness) he would pick up some of their art.

In t'ai-chi ch'uan and pa-kua change we have been faced with similar situations. Andy, the senior group and I were all highly motivated. We had the desire to learn and loved to train. Our fun was training. We were happy learning from Grandmaster Tchoung as he

was willing to teach us and push us along. But some other teachers would hold back, not teach, or teach badly; they were lousy teachers. My examples of teachers in the December IWSA article were all based on experiences we all had and shared. Andy studied with a well know master who not only used the "Follow the leader method", but would throw his students into walls and chairs if they asked a question he did not like. Talk about intimidating.

“The first secret of learning from lousy teachers is to watch carefully.”

In some schools, such as Aikido in Japan and in old fashioned t'ai-chi classes, there is little verbal instruction. For example when I visited Hombu Dojo in Tokyo, the instructors, Master K. Ueshiba and other masters, would demonstrate a technique several times. Then everyone would try to do it. At least they would do what they thought the demonstrator did. Many times there was little relationship between what the instructor did and what the students were doing. Some traditional t'ai-chi classes do the same thing. This is the "follow the leader" teaching method. They go through the form and everyone just follows along. This teaches awareness and "learning to learn" by watching carefully. This is a valuable skill to pick up; but not the best way to learn. Advanced students and teachers, by default in these cases, are excellent visual learners. In Japan, too much explanation is frowned on. If you explain too carefully to someone it is considered rude, as you are implying they are stupid. In these situations visual and kinesthetic learners will do well. In the case of Jim learning guitar, an audio/verbal based learning person can pull that off. Being able to learn by listening is a strength, but put a verbal learner in a visual setting and that can be a problem.

Regular practice **by yourself** is important. The student with the desire to learn will practice daily at home. You practice to your own rhythm and solidify your learning.

Students should watch closely, ask questions and pursue active learning for understanding. For example my initiation to t'ai-chi was with Grandmaster Kuo Lien Ying. Kuo did not speak any English, other than saying "Numbah One" when seeing something he liked. I would use any [LEARNING FROM LOUSY TEACHERS CONT.](#) translator I could find, often using his young son. I asked other students questions, watched everything and became a general irritant to them. I also trained 6 hours a day, split between morning and afternoon sessions, mostly on my own. I found that if I stayed late, until Kuo closed the studio at 10:00 after returning from hanging out with his cronies, I could get him to reveal

concepts, applications and new techniques. The group itself was cultist in its approach, e.g. insiders shaved their heads. It was an uncomfortable environment, but I learned his unique t'ai-chi, some pa-kua and Shaolin by watching carefully. I was luckily a visual and kinesthetic learner had the basics and picked up his forms quickly. Quick learning seemed to irritate senior students and his wife who seemed to view it as a threat. I found that to be odd. But that is another story.

After Kuo, I observed and worked out with many famous teachers who would give a little explanation or no explanation at all. But I found good teachers too. I happily found Sifu Tchoung who had an excellent systematic teaching method. Again, under Tchoung I trained many hours per day. Often cajoling other students to push hands with me on off class days. I also benefited by studying with Sifu Dave Harris in his blend of t'ai-chi, red boat style, karate-jujitsu and Aikijitsu. I observed many classes of famous masters who taught with a purely follow the leader approach and never corrected students. One such master had excellent skills that a visual learner could learn from, but most of his students floundered and developed bad habits. One had to watch closely to learn anything in his class so very few of his students got very far, but they did get good exercise and maybe that is all they wanted.

So I agree with Jim and Andy, that even in a bad situation if one stays aware, watches closely, asks lots of questions, and pursues active learning, one will be able to learn the art from even a lousy teacher who has good skill. And keep your eye open for a good teacher, they make learning a lot easier.

Harvey Kurland received his Masters Degree from the University of Washington and has dedicated himself to public health issues for the last 30 years. He has degrees in public health education and exercise physiology. He is a certificated chief instructor of t'ai-chi ch'uan by Grandmaster Tchoung Ta-Tchen and teaches at the University of California at Riverside and Loma Linda University. He also holds certification from the American College of Sports Medicine and International Sports Sciences Association.

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Stop Practicing Tai Chi

by Rex Eastman

I have a Chinese new year's resolution: I am going to stop practicing Tai Chi; I am going to quit training.

To practice or train implies to get ready for some future event. For the martial aspect this can lead to an obsession with becoming invincible: what if three guys jump you in a dark alley? What if a guy pulls a knife on you? "What if" becomes a dangerous obsession; like the old west gunslinger, you can invite conflict due to your contentions attitude.

To practice Tai Chi for health implies you will not become healthy until you "get it right". Still get the occasional cold or flu? Obviously you aren't practicing right because they tell us that Tai Chi leads to perfect health.

Do you practice Tai Chi for spiritual advancement? Hope to someday become enlightened? Practicing up for enlightenment really misses the point. Again, we have this ideal of perfection that trips us up every time.

Are you practicing for performance or tournament? While we are told that Tai Chi is not a performance or competitive art, practicing for these reasons makes the most sense to me. As least you are preparing yourself for a real event, not some hazy future ideal.

Old Chinese Sifu's usually say they play Tai Chi. They are doing it now. Not for the future, but for the fun of it. We can play Tai Chi like people play music: our instruments are our bodies. We can play Tai Chi like children play games: "let's pretend". Let's pretend that our Tai Chi is perfect already (it is a perfect expression of our individuality at that moment). Let's pretend that we are really having fun playing through our forms. Let's pretend our push hands games are like jazz muscisans jamming. Let's have fun!

Anyone wnat to play with me?

We do what we can!

As our mind wanders we tend to get side tracked by unimportant matters and either waste energy/effort or get stuck. In a group situation this often comes as opinions (judgment) about our classmates. On another level I see this also as a self-criticism and at times beating ourselves up for not being perfect. Whatever 'perfect' implies.

Comments and thoughts like: Why does so and so even come to class, he doesn't practices. They should put more effort into doing the form correctly they are so sloppy. I don't practice enough, I should find more time to practice.. Gee, I still don't know that move.

We do what we can, when we can.

I'm not saying you should justify your laziness but don't put more pressure on yourself, project it onto someone else or accept someones projection. The ideal situation would be to be able to spend two hours each day practicing and studying the art as a part of our daily schedule and while in class mindfully refining each movement and transition. Attending every session. . . Asking the correct questions, and researching, diligently practicing the art. PERFECTLY! or at least close to perfect. Class time should be a sanctuary from our daily life.

We all fall into the trap of commenting on someones attendance or training habit as if ours is the example. L E T I T G O. As we know with our own practice, sometime practice goes just wonderful, sometimes not. Some weeks you may be able to practice every day, sometimes not.. As a teacher I've heard may excuses: "I need to be more disciplined", "I'm sorry, I didn't have time to practice the new move last week and I forgot it." "Oh you're gonna kill me for asking that question again." "I'm sorry. . ." Next time try to be more creative with excuses if you want to make them. The most creative excuses I've heard was when I was ice skating. "The barometer has changed, my balance is off!" "The moon in is Taurus, it makes jumping dangerous today!"

Only your teacher may have the right to be frustrated at another students lack of practice, not achieving their potential or whatever. As a teacher of course it is frustrating to see someone with talent or potential and not able to work towards it (but it's definitely no concern to other member). You don't know what's going on in their daily life, work, family etc. They may be doing their best and what they can within their situation, or as Harvey's article stated *they may be getting just what they want from class*. This may be the teachers' frustration (and the teacher's lesson in 'letting-go') but as far as classmates go, don't worry about another's' practice.

Guilt wastes energy. First, pay attention to your own art. Accept your life's schedule and fit practice into your life without guilt. It's fine to have a goal or wish to be

able to practice one hour morning and evening (keep that goal in mind so the energy will move in that direction) but don't beat yourself up for not being there now. Our health and well being are the priority. Are you able to take at least a half hour for yourself and rest daily - no distractions just quiet time reading time, or listening to a nice piece of music? First work on finding that time so you can completely rest, then think about fitting more practice time or whatever into your daily or weekly routine. Nurture yourself first. Our practice and the art should fit into our life, not our life fit into our class and practice (unless you teach).

Second, coming to the class session should be something to look forward to, not a dread that you didn't do your homework or you don't have it perfect. Perhaps next time it'll sink in, or be easier. It usually is.

As you advance (passed section one or inner palms) there are certain expectation, such as a certain quality of the forms and postures you know. But intermediate and advanced students also have the option of just coming to class and practicing, not learning a new form until they feel ready and are able to invest effort into the advanced study. Beginners just have to come to class, listen and try.

If you do notice someone's practice in class try to understand what's good about it. What can you learn from their practice? Don't criticize, learn.

Sometimes you'll advance quickly after you've taken some time off. It's a good idea to skip a weeks practice or class session at least once a year if you're a regular member. The break usually will give you a better perspective so you can see things fresh. When I say take the time off I mean willingly, not because you can't attend class because of something else.

Enjoy the now, learn how to nurture your life. We need to learn to simplify and make things easy since we live in a hectic and complex society.

LISTEN YOU WHAT'S NEEDED, NOW.

ATD

