



# INTERNAL WUSHU ARTS NEWSLETTER

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

## 1995 FALL SCHEDULE

	TUES.	WED	THURS.	FRI.	SAT
		am Yang Tai Chi		private	9-10 am Dragon Palm
7-8pm	Yang Tai Chi	Chen Tai Chi	Pa Kua	lessons	10-12 Basic/beginners class
8-9	Advanced (weaponry)	Tuishou	Free Hands	1/2 hr \$20	1pm misc.

### WOW

Imagine waking up, looking outside to see a beautiful calm lake. In the background stand green covered mountains with white clouds weaving their way through the valleys. Gourmet vegetarian meals prepared for your breakfast, lunch and dinner. Being surrounded by students seeking to share, learn and delve deeper into the principles of Tai Chi Chuan for an entire week. Well . . . you missed it if you weren't there. The summer Kootenay Tai Chi camp was WONDERFUL. Thanks Rex, Harold, Mike, Kevin and everyone who made it great. Thanks especially to Briggs.

I'd like to share two of the many fresh perspectives I learned that week.

*"The forms are a table of contents; each form is a chapter that needs to be read (researched). What's the use of having a book in your library if you don't read it?"*  
- Rex Eastman

*"Camp is where I come and play tai chi; now I go back to daily life where I try to practice it."* - Harold Naka

### FALL 1995

#### CLUB PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Basic fee \$55.00 monthly.

1st additional hr class (another night 1 hr session) \$65 monthly.

2nd additional hr class \$70 monthly

Club fee is due the first week of each month.

New Beginning Class: In this class I will focus on the O'mei Chi Kung, body structure, basics, classics and principle of the Internal Arts (Tai Chi and Pa Kua). This will be a two hour class session on Saturday 10-12.

### MISC. SESSIONS

Sept. 2nd - GROUP PRACTICE!!! 9:30-noon  
Sept. 16th - club picnic 1-5pm  
Sept. 23rd - free hands 1-2:00pm \$10  
Sept. 30th - Pa Kua 8 Palms 2-4 \$10

## CLUB PICNIC

1-5pm - Sept. 16th

Discovery Park **south** entrance just inside in front of the church on the hill top. Bring the gang.

## Annual Club Demo

TUESDAY, SEPT. 19TH, 7:30-9  
ROOM #7

Workshops with Mark Johnson  
I Ching - 10/21&22 - 2-5pm \$85  
Feng Shui - 10/21&22 - 9-1pm \$95  
info: 771-0230

## NEW CLASSES SEPTEMBER LET YOUR FRIENDS KNOW!

Beginning classes start  
Sat Sept. 9th, 10-noon.

### A NEW COLUMN

This summer I've been inspired to work on a booklet as a study guide to developing skill in Pa Kua Chang. In order to keep the momentum going and to get feedback I will be featuring it as a several part article in the next few newsletters. This first installment actually deals with all the internal arts. Developing good study habits and principles of study and practice. Each month I will include another chapter. When I complete the manual it will be a week by week practice suggestion and schedule. For the newsletter I will include similar recommendations for T'ai Chi students.

### WEEK ONE:

(for tai chi members as well)

Zhan Zhuang / Ding Gung

Take a basic meditation posture and hold it for 50 breaths at one practice at least once a day for an entire week (ideal practice would be am and p.m.). Be here with 100% complete alertness and mindfulness. The Zhan zhuang is one of the most important chi kung and rooting exercises you can ever do.

### NEW BOOK

An important resource book for Pa Kua students:

**Sun Lu Tang's**

**Study of Pa Kua Chang**

translated by

Joe Crandall & Helin Dong  
copies available from Victor.

# STANDING POSTURE #1

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The basic standing posture we do in my class is called *t'ai-chi (taiji)* standing but is commonly called the Wu Chi (wuji) standing posture in other schools. We call the Wu Chi stance the beginning stance of the form with the heels together and toes outward. It symbolizes emptiness, the circle which later turns into the *t'ai-chi* posture which is with the feet parallel about hip or shoulder width. The best picture of wu-chi stance is seen of Sun Lu T'ang standing heels together in what he call Wu Chi, in his Hsing-I text. The basic posture is with the feet parallel about hip-width apart. Head is up with the line between the top of the head (bai hui), hui yin, and bubbling well points (yung ch'uan). The back is straight, hips tucked under so tan t'ien is in line with the ming men. The hands are held to the sides with the fingers down. The knees are slightly bent in line with the toes. Relax and let the tension drop down to the feet. Concentrate on the tan t'ien. Breath naturally with the diaphragm. The eyes are closed if you are inside or look far away if you are outside. Hold this position for twenty to thirty minutes for optimal effect. This is used as a drill for rooting and grounding, as a chi-kung, health and for meditation. Classically it is done for thirty to sixty days before adding other postures. Only benefits are gained from doing it, not thinking about doing it.

Standing is done to reduce stress and calm the mind. In certain conditions the Chinese or Oriental Traditional Medicine (OTM) practitioners may have patients do relaxation exercises such as this standing drill. Another popular hand position is with the hands circling in front of the tan t'ien.

For example, in liver energy problems, meditation and relaxation training is used to calm the mind. Anger and irritability are said to be related to the liver. One physical problem related to this is fibrocystic breast disease which is common in Western women. It can be part of a liver energy syndrome. These need to be diagnosed by a licensed OTM practitioner. The relaxation or meditation exercise is base of the treatment. Herbal medicines are used which may contain bupleurum, paeonia, poria, atracylodes, tang kuei, licorice, etc.

The diet needs to be adjusted as well. OTM experts believe the following should be eliminated from the diet: caffeine, black tea, cola, coffee, alcohol, tobacco, greasy foods, fried foods, spicy foods, meat, diary products, trans fatty acids, and unprescribed drugs. Soya bean products seem to be a good substitute as they have a protective effect. Researchers suggest Soya binds with estrogen receptors, protecting the body from excessive levels and environmental estrogens. One researcher found Iodine supplements (100 mcg/day) seemed to be

of benefit (But there is toxicity in too much iodine. Too much iodine can cause Hashimoto's thyroiditis). Some holistic doctors recommend antioxidants such as vitamin E (400 units), vitamin C (500 to 3000 mgs), Selenium (also toxic in high doses), oil of evening primrose, beta carotene 25,000 units, flaxseed oil, etc. Eat more whole grains, fruits and vegetables. This is also similar to PMS, liver disease, and stomach/spleen problem diet.

Aerobic exercise is of benefit too. It helps relax the body reducing the bad effects of stress, as well as strengthening the cardiopulmonary system. While aerobic exercise primarily strengthens the heart, the Chinese believe it strengthens the lung ch'i. The lungs are symbolized by the element metal and is said to strengthen the kidneys which in turn benefits the liver. For older people or those with a low aerobic capacity, *t'ai-chi* and *pa-kua* are good aerobic exercises. For young people or high aerobic capacities hill walking, stair walking, jogging or bicycling may be better.

The five emotions can cause disease as well. OTM believes too much fear disturbs the kidneys; anger effects the liver; joy the heart; grief the spleen; depression and anxiety the lungs. According to Dr. M. Hashimoto "Interior causes of diseases arise because of psychic stress generated by the five emotions. The stress created by emotional disturbances can have a very strong effect on the body as a whole. . . an organic weakness alone will not cause an illness unless it is accompanied by psychic stress." (Japanese Acupuncture, p 26-27) This is a good reason to practice the standing meditation and *t'ai-chi ch'uan*.

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.

# A STUDY GUIDE TO PA KUA CHANG GETTING A GOOD START

BY A.T.DALE

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*The internal arts teach principles of mind - body - spirit coordination and refinement. They are not a stylized pattern or a model to force yourself into.*

This is not intended for those who practice Pa Kua Chang for enjoyment, relaxation, exercise, or self-defense skills. The purpose of this manual is to help those interested in reaching into the depths of Pa Kua Chang. Into the wisdom, self-insight, and philosophy that its practice can unveil.

In addition, this manual is to be used over and over again, at least once a year. Pick it up and start over, nurture the foundation of your art and see what is uncovered this time through. We can get so caught up in our forms, classes and pieces of the art that we lose sight of the core. We get distracted by the many, we look at the forest instead of noticing how beautiful the tree is. Each year start all over for a month to nurture the foundation.

### *Practice Just To Practice*

#### *The Secret Is In The Basics - Simplicity*

In my own practice and teaching, over the last 26 years, I have gone back to basics continuously - yearly. This isn't because I teach beginning classes, this has been in my own practice. Researching the postures, the training, the feelings, the energy: seeking a greater understanding. Each time I go back to the beginning there is much, much more than I saw the previous time. If basics are boring to you, you are not practicing correctly or mindfully. Practice only gets boring when the mind wanders, or when there is no depth to our study. When I talk about depth I am referring to all levels: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual hence forth referred to as Mind - Body - Spirit levels. Also let me add: **TEACHING IS NOT PRACTICING!** So teachers. . . don't count your classes and teaching time as your practice. Unless you are ignoring your students as you teach and are focusing 100% on yourself it's a poor excuse for a practice, it may be a workout but not what I'd call a practice session. Also learning a form is not practice.

### **THE THREE MISTAKES**

In my teaching experience there are three great errors I see students (and myself) making in our study and practice that hinder our progress. The first is impatience: What's next? When can I learn the next form? I know that movement already. Learning several forms at one time. How long will it take me to learn? How fast can I learn the system? How long does the form take? I want it all, I want to learn the complete system. (These last two are my biggest problems. Noble yet big obstacles to advancement, understanding and progress.) We need to focus on the individual movements that make up the form instead of the entire form.

Superficial practice and study is the next mistake in practice. The grass seems always greener on the other

side; the forms you don't know always look neater, more powerful, more efficient than the ones you already know. So . . . you get through the forms you know in order to get on to the next ones. You merely memorize the patterns so you can perform them in order to move on to the next, to store them away, or show that you know them.

Practice each change, each form, each posture so you know it inside and out. Practice so the movement are very comfortable and natural. If there is even the slightest forgetfulness, or uncertainty of a movement lets face it; the form or movement isn't understood, you don't know it.

The third mistake is forcing the postures and forms into what Pa Kua Chang should look like. Or more accurately, trying to force your forms to look like your teachers or other practitioners. We are all build differently, we have different flexibilities and body limitations to deal with. This mistake results many times in injury, not immediately but gradually over a period of time. Physically it can lead to knee problems. If your stepping patterns aren't correctly ingrained in your body, if your balance isn't stable, if your body alignment and centerline isn't always correctly maintained I can guarantee you will end up with knee or ankle problems. Another problems will show itself in your upper back and shoulders with greater tension and pain. It's like watching a computer screen set at an odd angle, you'll get a kink in your neck. All these problems are corrected if the basics are drilled and practiced mindfully for hundreds of hours. You want the basic body mechanics to be so ingrained in your muscles that you can't violate certain safe body dynamics as you start moving faster and quicker, regardless of what you are doing. The other area is forcing your body into a posture that's too advanced for your physical condition, or isn't designed for your particular body type. The low squatting posture called *Pu Tui Yo Shen* (snake creeps down in t'ai-chi) should adjust to your body structure, not you to the posture! You don't want to strain your knees or back by trying to force your body into a position beyond its safety limits. It has taken your instructors years to achieve their level of flexibility, give yourself time.

People see an experienced Pa Kua Chang practitioner walking the circle, gliding smoothly in a low, sitting crouch. This is not for beginners! This is a result of years of persistent practice that has enabled the muscles to stretch out, strengthen so that the practitioner can walk the circle - comfortably/easily - at this level. If you practice with correct body alignment, within the correct guidelines of practice you will gradually begin to achieve a pa kua body. It will be your pa kua body however, not a replica of the one you saw walking the circle. If you're 6'4" there is no way you'll get as low as someone 5'4". You will not look as compact as them, but that doesn't mean their form is better or more correct than yours.

**NATURAL = COMFORTABLE**

In the internal arts all movements must be natural and comfortable. This doesn't mean that the body doesn't work, or that you don't feel the muscles stretching and working. Comfortable doesn't mean sitting on the couch resting. What it means is that the body is in a position it can relax and remain stable, yet still be mobile and alert. No GREAT effort should be needed to move from one posture to the next. If so. . . then you are putting your body in danger of injury. You are moving into postures that are too extreme for your strength and current ability.

It's OK to feel your muscles working, actually you should feel them working and stretching if you are practicing pa kua correctly. This does not mean pain! Pain means you've gone too far. If you're stuck in a posture or need great effort to move to the next posture you are at the edge and capable of injuring your body. Also, you are setting up bad habits as far as being mobile and agile - which is the core of pa kua chang. As I said it's OK to feel the muscles stretch and move but you should NEVER feel your joints in pain or straining while they are working. If while you are walking you feel the stretch on your knee caps you are too low for your body flexibility or stepping too far forward. Walk at a high level until your legs gain more strength and flexibility. Though walking should feel like your legs are working it should at the same time feel enjoyable on your legs - a *good* stretch.

The secret of these arts is self-knowledge. What are your strong points, weak points? What are your body limitations or talents? The only way to gain this knowledge is to study yourself as you practice and study the postures: pay attention, listen and investigate. And the only way this can happen is to take your time. As you walk do you teeter? Are you stable? Changing directions do you wobble? If so then go back to walking the wuji. Just walk, listen, adjust and correct yourself as you practice.

### HOW TO START

In order to arrive at any destination you need to plan first. Actually you need to figure out what it is you want, how much you are willing to invest into it (time/money/effort), and commit to it.

If you're traveling across country there are several options: take the most direct route, take the scenic route, take a vacation on route, visit friends on route, leave the trip open to changes.

Each of the above will require a different time schedule, different funds, different commitments. The same is true when studying any of the internal arts. Aside from the mere desire to learn the art it's important to spend some time on WHY . . . Why or more importantly WHERE do you want to go with this art. What do you want from it? Relaxation? Health? Exercise? Meditation? Self-awareness? Self-defense? Taoist philosophical applications? To keep busy?

Though you can start any class and begin to learn the art and progress; if you don't set the ground work properly you may not be able to achieve the deeper, the

advanced levels. Or you may have to spend more time, effort, money to get there.

As with the trip across country, first focus on your destination and the trip. Then you need to be sure your car will get you there. Is it a new or an old car. This question will greatly change the factors of the trip. Things such as the stress level when you are traveling, the possible extra expenses along the way, the safety of the trip. As we begin to learn the arts we must first understand ourselves. Our strong and weak points, our discipline or lack of, our drive, our learning ability etc.

If we're trying just to keep busy, relax, or some exercise it doesn't need to be a carefully thought-out plan, just go to class and follow along. However, to penetrate the layers of the art, research the depths of the art, gain skill, centering, and chi kung we need to have a clear plan so we can reach our goal, efficiently and quickly. By quickly I mean with the least obstacles in our way, primarily from ourselves. Also we must be realistic with our daily life situations. Accepting the timing required to achieve the depths. Actually our practice has to be of greater 'quality' if our life is busy. With work and family commitments practice may only be one hour a day, that hour, every minute should count as a high quality investment in your art.

If you want to go on a long hike into the deep woods or to do some mountain climbing there is great preparation needed. You don't just one day go and do it, at least without disaster. You begin a training program to build your strength and endurance. If you try too hard, too fast you'll suffer injury and be set back on your schedule.

Each brick is important, each brick must be level and snug with the other bricks. The foundation must be deep and solid. The taller the building the deeper the foundation must be. Any mistakes in the foundation and at the base floors will gradually become more apparent as the building gets bigger, floor by floor. This same principle applies should you want your Pa Kua Chang to develop skill, power and knowledge beyond just the health benefits.

*First Things First  
Perfect One Thing Above All Else*

LEVEL ONE: Just relax and feel, keep your body loose.

LEVEL TWO: exhale your tension and strength into the ground, inhale to the tan tien.

LEVEL THREE: empty your mind, no thought, emptiness.