

NEWSLETTER

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CLUB LIBRARY

2 WEEK CHECK OUTS

Please be mindful when you check out a book or tape from the library that you don't keep the books longer than 2 weeks or the videos longer than a week. There are certain books and videos that are popular and people are waiting for them! Also be sure to sign out and cross off when returning.

GRANDMASTER TCHOUNG OFFICIALLY RETIRED

Grandmaster Tchoung is recovering well after his by pass surgery but this has forced him into complete retirement. (I'm told after the first week he had the nurses doing tai chi). Anyway the Vancouver club is now taught and directed in the expert hands of Laurens Lee and Tim Glasheen so sifu's club is in good hands and will continue as a base for his wisdom and teachings of the internal arts.

SATURDAY SESSIONS MOVING

Due to the construction at our usual place in Woodland Park this month we will officially move to the area by the tennis courts on 50th and woodland park way. This is the area directly east of hwy 99 just off of 50th street. There is one parking lot and one circular drive around. I will park at the parking lot. Though this is a little farther from the Phinney Center there are restrooms to use which was a problem at the other site.

AIKI JO/T'AI-CHI PARTNER CANE

Saturdays 9-9:45 Beg May

Starting the first Saturday in May I will begin to teach the partner cane and partner aiki jo (short staff). This is the same form only slightly adapted to the cane or staff. These sessions are an intermediate and advanced class

so only members who have had weapon training before are welcome to join this group. In addition to our club members we will also have a few local aikido students joining us for practice. Since I will be gone a couple of Saturday in May this session will span May-mid July. On the days I'm gone it will give you time to practice and refine what you know.

Chan Ssu Gung & Zhan Zhuang

Also beginning in May will be the start of another chi kung method in the basics/beginning class: Saturday 10-noon. For the next two months we will primarily focus on the Chen Tai Chi Chan Ssu gung and Zhan Zhuang/I-Chuan. These tend to be more martial type of chi methods.

SUMMER RETREAT

July 25,26,27,28

Visiting instructors so far: Michael Gilman, John Camp, Bob Iden, myself and some surprises visitors. In the June issue I will have a list of the instructors, times and sessions they'll be offering.

KOOTENAY TAI CHI SUMMER CAMP

August 24-30th

\$425 Canadian \$360 US
This summer the guest instructors will be: Harold Hajime Naka, John Camp, Arnold Porter, and Rex Eastman.

Kootenay Tai Chi Center
Box 566, Nelson B.C. Canada V1L 5R3
(250)352-3714 phone/fax

TOO MUCH AGAIN?

One thing you'll notice, if you're working on more than one form or art, is that the more you are studying the less slack I'll give you. Beginners or students struggling with one form is very natural and common. However, if you are learning two forms or arts I expect you are doing so

because you have the time and energy to devote to both. The more forms you are learning the less patients I have for members who are forgetting the forms or claim not to have had time to practice.

There should be no tension created because you're constantly trying to fit your practice into your life, or keep up with the class sessions. If so, stand back and take another look at the reasons you are in the club and why you are practicing.

PRACTICE FOR THE MONTH

Take a movement of, lets say 100 mph. Now cut that in half, 50mph. Now reduce the 50mph by half and you have 25, now reduce that by half We never come to a complete stop; you don't get nothing from something. This is the same principle in our arts referred to in the classics as: the movement may appear to stop but the intent continues.

As you practice be sure your movements never stop or become dead. You may drift into a posture and linger there (like a boat in a lake) but there is still a sense of movement, a drifting, a lingering. Keep this in mind for the next month as you practice.

There are no breaks!

FORM COMPLETIONS

The following have completed the Chen Tai Chi Pao Chui: Rick Bodzewski, Cedar Acosta, Derryl Willis, Evie Gryniewski, Laurie Kawasugi, Brian Hansell, and Francine Seders.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL

CHEN TAICHI WORKSHOP

APRIL 13TH, SUNDAY 12-3, \$10

First part will be on the 48 (refinements and applications) the last hour I'll work with those on the Pao Chui and the sword. (no metal swords permitted in parks!) LOCATION: Washington Park Anacortes PREREGISTRATION REQUIRED!

TRAINING CHANGE IN PA KUA CHANG

Part II

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PARTNER TRAINING:

The best way to develop "changing ability" skills is through partner training. There are many types of partner drills and several ways a drill can be focused to train a fighting aspect. The two basic types that I know of for training "changing" skills are pre-arranged forms and free form. In both it is very important that you have a trustworthy co-operative partner. I recommend your teacher supervise the training. It is critical that you both understand what it is you are trying to accomplish in the session. You must talk about the session and how it will be conducted and what you are trying to accomplish. It is very easy in partner drills to get caught up in the emotional competition of the exercise. This will lead to poor technique and sloppy performance. Your overall skill will actually deteriorate if you let this happen. Remember you are training a skill. Beat your partner up on some other day when the club is holding "DEATH MATCHES".

Prearranged forms are simply any two man form that you know. If you do not know any, create one. Just make sure that both of you have the moves down correctly and exactly. Then go through the prearranged forms as smoothly and fluidly as possible. Start slow and make sure that you can perform the routine without breaks or hesitations in the movements. As with the equipment training, you should strive for a "flowing like water" feeling. Be sure to complete each movement before you go on to the next movement. Do not get ahead of your partner or counter his technique before he completes it.

This is a co-operative exercise. Play so that both of you benefit. The speed at which you perform the exercise will naturally increase as the two of you practice over time. Do not try to go fast. It will only defeat the purpose of the training. I recommend 15 to 20 minutes a day on this exercise. Add forms as they become easy to perform. After three months you should be ready to move on to free form.

In free form "change" training you will now apply your considerable skill into a free flowing movement. This training is similar to sparring in that you and your partner attack and defend spontaneously. As before, be sure that you both are clear about how the session is to be conducted and what you are trying to accomplish. You are training your "changing" skill so do not be concerned with scoring on your partner or powering

through his defense. You should strike lightly at any openings you create and defend any attacks you receive. Go lightly but change often. Speed is not important in this exercise. It is more important to create automatic reactions to the spontaneous situations. Move continuously. Do not stop when you hit the target or get hit. Keep moving and flow into the next technique, attack, defense, palm change, or stepping pattern. You are again striving for the "flowing like water" feeling as before. This should be easy to attain after having done the previous prearranged training. I recommend only 5 to 10 minutes at a time on this exercise into a sparring session. I also recommend that your teacher monitor this type of exercise.

THE NEXT LEVEL:

Up to now you have been training your body to change movements as needed. After going through the previous three exercises, your body should be fairly reactive. You will be able to see or create openings in your opponent and often anticipate his sequence of moves. This will be especially true if you have had the same partner through out the training. However, your training is far from complete. Now you should be doing some serious analysis about your skill. First analyze your free form sessions. Have you been able to block, defend, or evade your opponents attacks? Are your techniques the appropriate ones? Do you need to improve your techniques, your footwork, your response to stimulus? Part of learning "change" is learning how to change your training to correct your deficiencies. You need to be brutally honest with yourself here. Evaluate your abilities in comparison to the experiences you are having at practice. Correct your mistakes. Consult with your teacher as to your deficiencies and how to correct them. Do you need to improve your techniques, your timing, your strategy, or maybe your attitude? Next evaluate your abilities as compared to another style. If you can arrange to free form with someone from another style., I would recommend it, as long as you are both clear about the intent of the exercise. What sometimes happens is that you will have a strategy that should work against the opponent but does not. You need to evaluate yourself to determine if it is your body that can not perform or if your strategy is incorrect. Either way it is important to correct what you are doing. Think through ways to do things differently. Try different things out until you have success. Vary the techniques in their sequence and their timing. Vary your strategy against the same opponent until you have success there. Then vary your opponents..

We've expanded. I'm proud to include this article from a friend on the east coast. Regardless of the arts we follow as I've always been told "It's all the same".Andy

The Value of Wisdom

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Wisdom....an intangible thing, but one which requires great knowledge which can only be attained through life experience. What is the real value of such wisdom? And where does respect come into play? What is the full impact of the translation of "Wicca Craeft (Craft of the Wise)"?

We often speak the old adage that "With age comes wisdom", yet seldom is that wisdom given the weight and respect that it deserves. More often, people of today simply humor their elders, thinking that they just aren't "with it". We all must strive to remember that this wisdom comes hard. It comes from lessons learned on a lifetime's journey. It comes from making mistakes and then seeing, with clear hind-sight, where the error was made, or why the chosen action actually worked. It comes from listening to those who have walked the path before you, who have paved the way for you and thereby make your path easier. It comes from respect of the elements, respect for other lives as well as your own, and from plain common sense. There it was....Respect. One must respect all things and all beings as well as one's self in order to command that respect from others. Wicca teaches us this. We learn to listen to the lessons of our elders and our ancient ancestors. For it is in their words and lives that we find knowledge. Knowledge is power. Power to overcome most any obstacle. Power to make our lives as peaceful and rewarding as possible. Power to heal the sick. Power to guide our lives toward higher productivity. Power to be all that we are and more.

When you encounter someone who has walked the path before you, be it the Wiccan path, or something of the mundane world such as a co-worker who has done a certain task before you, respect that person's knowledge and experience. Use it to your advantage. If we all show each other that respect, and if we all choose to listen to the wisdom of the ages....perhaps we can all learn to live together more harmoniously. Its time to stop the insanity....weapons in our schools...kids killing kids....the rape and pillage of our Mother Earth....the disrespect of the aged....church burnings....hatred and intolerance of anyone for any reason. Its simply time to stop. By learning to respect ourselves, we will respect others. By listening to the wisdom of our elders....and yes, our ancestors....we will learn how to overcome any

PA KUA CHANGE TRAINING CONT:

This is a never ending process in that as you grow and change physically over time so will your skill level and ability to perform certain techniques. So like the old masters you will need to "change" what you do and how you do it.

LAST COMMENTS:

We are in a modern age where physical combat is rare. Most people will go through their entire lives without needing these skills. My opinion is that you should be doing this because you enjoy it. If you need self defense, go buy a gun and learn how to shoot or hire a body guard. If you don't enjoy the training, don't do it. Go dancing instead!

Victor Crandall

obstacles that are in our paths, and we will make great leaps toward the next century....and toward the healing of our Earth and all creatures who depend on her. Wicca....the Craft of the Wise??? You bet it is!
nitewing

It was ten years ago . . .

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It was ten years ago that I ventured for the first time at the Phinney Center in a class with Andy Dale, a T'ai Chi Ch'uan instructor. I was not exactly sure what T'ai Chi was about but I had heard it was good for the health and did not require a lot of physical skills. "It is exercise in slow movement" I was told . . . Considering I was already 54 years old and was not exactly in great physical shape I was not interested in aerobics, ballet dancing (which I had done when I was young), tennis or any other sports. I could have done jogging or walking but I always found this boring unless I am going somewhere. To walk around Green Lake is not my idea of exercise. or relaxation. It might be great for some but it is not for me. T'ai Chi sounded the right thing: it was not competitive and I could practice at my own pace. I was not wrong in my vague view of T'ai Chi Ch'uan but I was totally mistaken in thinking it would be easy and not exacting. Since then I have learnt a lot about T'ai Chi as an art and as a philosophy and I have never regretted the painful first months of tedious, repetitive steps. My only regret is that I did not start sooner.

What has T'ai Chi Ch'uan taught me?

Physically' the practice has improved my balance, my flexibility, my breathing.

My legs are stronger. My body in general feels stronger. My job as an art dealer requires some physical work of lifting paintings and sculptures (sometimes quite heavy) and I have learnt through T'ai Chi how to carry things using my full body, particularly the legs

rather than just the arms, avoiding stress in the neck and shoulders and risk of hurting my back. From a car accident in 1960 I had a knee injury and was unable to kneel without great pain. Little by little I noticed that kneeling is getting easier, less painful. Injuries do heal with time but I strongly believe that without my practice the pain in my knees would only have got worse and have handicapped me. With my legs getting stronger, my balance has improved although I still have to work on it. I have not yet achieved total control on quick turns, kicks, standing on one leg and "snake creeps down". If only I did not rush these movements I would be fine! Easier said than done....

My flexibility is a little better. Practicing Pa Kua Ch'uan style has helped on both balance and flexibility. Walking the circle is perhaps my favorite exercise . There is nothing to remember, you can really empty your mind and just concentrate on one step at a time trying to keep the position of the body correct and at the same time relax. Working on the "Dragon Palm" has been an humbling experience. After a number of years of serious regular practice I was entitled to think I had achieved a certain degree of skill then a new form was introduced: the "Dragon Palm" and I was back to the beginning: awkward, stiff, lacking agility, grasping for air. I realized I needed more preparation, back to basics, back to tedious training. Perseverance is the key. Practice... practice... practice. I may do it better next time around.

What has improved the most is my breathing. It used to be very shallow (I spent too many hours studying when I was young, with my back rounded , neck tucked in the shoulders). With the Tan T'ien breathing I can feel how much deeper my breathing has become and how much better it feels. I never thought I would really enjoy such a simple act as breathing. All the Chi Kung exercises are helpful.

Mentally T'ai Chi Chuan has changed my outlook on life. I do not think I am boasting if I say that I am a better person than I was. My awareness and my sensitivity are more acute. I observe more. I think more. I am more willing to listen to other ideas and be more understanding, I am more open. I am more patient. I am more at peace with myself I am more in control of my actions. I have learnt not to be affected by trivial matters. I am wiser and happier . Is maturity the only factor? One learns from experiences encountered in daily life and ten years is a long time. But looking around at people in their declining years has convinced me that getting older does not necessarily mean getting better, far from it. It is also true that many people practicing T'ai Chi are not losing behind their pettiness, their sense of competitiveness, their mean disposition, their complexes and fears. I feel that these people are not practicing T'ai Chi, they are accumulating forms,

they can look very good and skillful, they might be dominant in push hands and believe they are very strong, but it is all on the surface. Maybe that is all they want to achieve and if they are happy that way that is great. I am more interested in the process of learning than in the result. I like the different styles (Yang, Chen, Pa Kua) because they give me different responses. I have to approach them differently. I am fairly well disciplined , but doing the same movement again and again would lack some excitement because I have not yet reached the point where I know how to dissect the movement completely. Learning different forms help me feel if I can keep the concentration long enough, if I can keep the connections from move to move. I am very happy reworking the same forms and starting from scratch because I can then practice at another level. The movements are already in me and the awkwardness has disappeared. The movements are already memorized so nothing gets in the way.

In the years to come I would hope to improve on my sword forms. I have not been practicing enough to feel comfortable with either the double edged sword or the broad sword. To get the connections from the feet to the tip of the sword seem an impossible task yet as well as relaxing the arm holding the sword. Here again patience and practice is the key.

My other weakness is partner work: applications, free hand, push hand are very difficult for me. It will take me at least another ten years to feel at ease with it.

I am somewhat surprised to have stayed with my practice of T'ai Chi Ch'uan for so many years and to contemplate continuing until I drop dead or my body or mind totally deteriorates . It has been and I assume will continue to be very rewarding. I am very thankful to Andy for his patience, understanding , enthusiasm and his continued support. I am also very thankful to all my partners for their camaraderie. The "esprit de corps" in the club is very special and I feel privileged to be a part of it.

Francine Seders, Seattle, February 1997

TANGO

(Is it dance, or is it yielding? (F&S!))

Under the surface of the water you are the current,

I am the kelp.

As you move toward me, as you touch me, lead me, bend me,

I don't drift away from you.

I supple to your soft embrace.

And when you eddy, I pause with you.

And now let's change. You be the kelp.

I will be the gentle force, the current, under the surface of the water.

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