



Xin Qi Shen Dojo

Very Lucky Indeed!

As time goes on, and I meet 'masters' of Taiji Quan, Qi Gong, or Bagua Zhang, I haven't met many that live up to the skill that I've seen and experienced from some of my teachers. When I look back it makes me very happy, honored, and feeling supremely lucky to have been able to study with them. The most recent real master I had the privilege to meet and push hands with was master Feng Zhiqiang, Madame Gao Fu's teacher and our grandteacher.

Though there are many teachers who talk about the possible, high skill levels to be attained. I've always followed those that can exhibit those skills regardless of lineage or background.

This summer I had the opportunity to meet someone introduced as a master of Taiji. The second I touched hands with this person I was very confused. I dare say I've touched hands with softer Wing Chun and karate people. This person was suppose to be highly skilled at push hands, however he used lots of strength, power, and force very much like some Wing Chun students do while practicing Chi Sau. He claimed I was too soft ☺ which pleased me greatly since all my teachers have said I need to be softer. He said I wasn't giving him anything and to use more power. So instead of using strength I added more Peng to increase pressure. Through out this encounter I could feel him trying to apply or find techniques but he couldn't find the opportunity.

When touching hands with Dave Harris, Master Tchoung, Master Yueng, or Master Feng there was no feeling of force or pressure. There was a touching of hands, a softness, a lightness, and no feeling of anything about to happen. When they decided to push or apply a technique it's only felt after the fact. There is no

indication that anything is about to happen. All you know is you are either flying through the air or you are tied up in a knot and don't know how you got there. There is no feeling of being manipulated, pressured, or hurt. This is the skill of a true master, you don't feel a thing until it's over.

It saddens me to think that the world of the internal arts is going hard style. More and more of these new masters are teaching at an inferior level which also makes the self-defense applications less effective which lowers the skill level of the new groups learning the art.

What about the principle of using 4 ounces to deflect a thousand pounds?

What about invest in softness in order to develop great skill?

What about listening energy?

Even if this instructor was able to throw me around, this still wouldn't have been a direction I would pursue, having had the benefit of my teachers. I've seen the potential of practicing correctly and tasted the results. That's where I hope to go.

The most frightening technique is the one, that while you think you're attacking, you find yourself thrown or locked having no feeling as to how you got there. Visually it happens so subtly that you can't see it either. My goal is to get as close in skill to my teachers as I possibly can so it's their advice I will follow.

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THE DOJO STORE

Available in limited quantities:

Bagua Crescent Knives \$70.00
Bagua Needles \$80.00

The above items are custom made by Dale Ellyson. Due to the time and material requirement check for availability before ordering. If the item is out-of-stock it may take up to 9 months for the order to be available.

VIDEO TAPES:

The catalogue of the tapes are on the web site. These are not instructional tapes. They demonstrate many of the forms we practice in class and can be uses as a refresher.

T-SHIRTS & SWEAT SHIRTS

Also in limited quantities. We have blue and maroon shirts of the current dojo logo and other assorted designs. These shirts will not be reordered except for the Taiji man shirts.

Catch up! I'm waiting for you

You can't turn a sow's ear into a silk purse! Fortunately that's not so with people. What I mean is we all have ability to improve if we are self-aware and persistent in our improvement.

Advancement in the internal arts, gaining any skill as a martial artist or as an energy practitioner, is very, very slow. As we learn and practice it's like making a cake; we're continually mixing the ingredients. This needs to be done carefully and thoroughly, otherwise the cake won't turn out. After this process, then it's a long baking time for the habits and skill to begin to emerge. Nothing comes fast, easy, or *just* happens.

A teacher can show you applications and techniques very early in your practice, but you're learning merely tricks at this point. If you've had any training in martial arts what happens is that you do the techniques you see as hard-style adaptations. Though this may work, the subtlety and effectiveness doesn't develop nor does the skill of an internal artist. The potential freedom of movement and action doesn't grow since the body, nerves, and listening skills aren't being developed. What happens is that your mind just learns more techniques in the same manner that are hardwired into your muscle memory. You react to the attack instead of surfing or adapting and using the attack.

I'm waiting! Until you're ready to 'hear' and understand what I'm saying and trying to teach about internal arts applications I'm not able to teach them. As I said earlier, progress in the internal arts is a very slow, careful, and mindful process. It's important to understand how the body moves, how energy and power are utilized. How the mind, intent, and focus all move in complete harmony. This is our practice, not the mere movements or applications.

The first step in beginning to develop as an internal stylist is to give

up, invest in loss. Here I'm talking to anyone with prior martial arts experience. As you learn the forms you will automatically reference back to what you think should be the application or result instead of listening to the process of the movement or a 'new' outlook on the same movement. Your muscle memory may take over which will hinder internal skill development. While doing self-defense techniques you may just revert to past habits. This may be fine if you're not interested in internal skills, but it's a huge roadblock to progress. As you apply your technique, can you feel where your partner's balance is? Can you feel where their tension is? Can you feel which part of their body is tight? Can you feel when they want to move? Can you feel them thinking about their next move? Can you feel where their nerve points are?

Until you are able to feel some of these things we can't work on deeper applications or move in a direction to develop higher skills. Dave Harris is an excellent example of the potential of internal skills. In the process of an attack or movement he can branch out in any direction, any action that is the most efficient for that moment. Basically he surfs the attack and energy coming in instead of reacting to it. In addition there are usually at least three applications going on at the same time when he has his hands on you. Those who have worked with Dave know that every single move you make is the wrong one. It's like being in quicksand, each move and struggle takes you deeper and deeper down.

Hard-style applications, when compared to internal arts, tend to over react to movement. It may not be the application but in the manner it's done. There may be excess strength, force, or tension in the action. Overkill. Have you ever noticed yourself, as you were driving, gripping the wheel excessively tight? Why?

Choking the steering wheel won't make you turn faster or react faster, just the opposite. It wastes energy and inhibits a natural response.

Wu-wei, non action, isn't no action, it's moving when necessary and naturally. As Master Cheng Man-Ching would say: "Let the meat come to the hook."

If you are still using strength or muscling your way through a form or application we can't begin to train *fa-jing*. If you aren't able to keep the six harmonies and five bows we can't move into quick or advanced training since you could damage your knees, shoulders or other important structural alignment.

If your movements aren't smooth and controlled I can't trust you to practice effective applications since you may endanger your partners. Until your movements show smoothness and coordination we can't move into the study of the internal arts. I'm waiting to see patience, compassion, gentleness before moving into more effective applications.

Are you listening? As we do applications and push hands in the basics class we're learning and drilling basics skills. I watch! Unless I've said free play, if you branch off of the basic patterns or drills I won't go to the next step since I can't trust you to practice the current lesson. For example: it takes lots of force to push a 2x4 through a thick plastic tarp. This can be equated to basic applications of deflect and punch. You'd have to generate lots of power to really damage a partner with a punch. Using a needle however, you only need a fraction of the force the 2x4 needed to penetrate the plastic. As we practice advanced applications less force is needed to cause injury. If you lack control or self-awareness then it will endanger your partner. We can't have that!

CHEN FAMILY TAIJQUAN ILLUSTRATED

By Chen Xin

HARDNESS AND SOFTNESS / *Gang & Roe*

Those who are ignorant and make judgments from the external appearance usually consider Taiji Quan an art of softness. They don't understand that it is through prolonged training that the hardness is transformed into softness, and then the softness again produces hardness so that there is no apparent shade of hardness and softness.

This art cannot be called soft, nor can it be called hard. It is correctly called Taiji, meaning hardness and softness merged without trace.

Because of the long effort required, accomplishment depends on ones' perseverance. An important point is that this accomplishment be developed naturally. One must not hasten for quick results.

Purely yin without yang is soft hand, purely yang without yin is hard hand. One yin with nine yang is like a rod. Two yin with eight yang is scattered hand. Three yin with seven yang is still hard. Four yin with six yang appears good. Five yin with five yang makes wondrous hands. With wondrous hands, each movement is a Taiji, and the yielding and redirecting lead into void.

The yin-yang principle in Taiji is that in hardness is implied softness and in softness is implied hardness. When hardness and softness complement each other, there are endless variations to lead into void.

TRANSITIONS

In doing each posture, you must consider the places from which your hands should start, where they should pass through and where they should stop. You also contemplate what is the external form and what is the internal strength. All these should carefully go through your mind.

Between two postures, you should carefully study how the end of each posture should be merged into the movement of the next posture so that the energy is continued smoothly. When movements of each two consecutive postures are smoothly continued as if they were one posture, all postures in the whole series will be connected up with continuous energy as if you are doing a single posture...

If you do the exercise with solemnity and not just conforming to the external forms, your spirit will fully reach the destinations and you will avoid the apparently aimless movements.

A principle in Taiji Quan is to have full, continued spirit without interruption. Students who try to stop before they finish a posture will have their energy interrupted and spirit scattered. Some students try to start a second posture before they finish the first one. With such haste, how can they carefully examine the starting and ending points of their energy and how can they do it with full spirit! Students who want to speed up usually fall into such pitfalls and never succeed.

To do Taiji Quan, you must contemplate how the end of one posture is connected to the next posture, and how the energy is continued during the transition without interruption. At the end of the previous posture, you must wait until your spirit is fully expressed before that posture is considered concluded. When the previous posture is fully arrived, and the surplus spirit goes beyond your physical reach, the opportunity of starting the next posture begins. The starting of the next posture is interlocked with the ending of the previous posture, not only in movements but also in spirit.

When the ending and beginning are skillful, there is no gap between the two postures. This is the meaning of gaining completeness. When you understand this, the movements will all be smooth and splitting bamboo is without effort.

(Chen Xin (1849-1929) was a renown master of the Chen Family Taiji Quan)

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

In the first year of your study in the internal arts, regardless of Taiji or Bagua, there are certain BASICS that you should have a definite grasp of as members of Xin Qi Shen

Dojo.

You should know the following:

- A non-movement
- Fire above water
- Wuji
- Three curves & Five Bows
- Three Powers
- Six Harmonies
- Seven Stars
- Kai/He
- Ni/Shun
- Xu/Fa
- Peng
- Jin Zhang Li Da
- Su Ting Fei Ting
- Power Ripple
- Methods of power
- Circle of strength
- Work bench

NEWS

Master Gao Fu now has her own web site with all current information about her classes and workshops.

www.seattletaij.com

If you haven't checked it out yet go to

www.gilmanstudio.com

Michael has been teaching taiji on line and on the TV for a local network. For more information go to his web site.

www.embracethemoon.com is Kim's web site and has information regarding various workshops.

Kootenay Tai Chi Retreat Aug 17-23

www.retreatsonline.net/kootenaytaichi

email: chiflow@uniserve.com

Nei Gung Bang Class

Starting in February there will be a Saturday, 1-2:30 pm class on the Nei Gung Bang. This is a trial class, at the end of the class we'll see if this should be an ongoing session.

Each week will work on a different section plus self-defense applications.

- ↳ Qi Gong
- ↳ Chan Si Gong
- ↳ Qin-na (joint locking)
- ↳ Applications (self-defense - 4 basic forms)

Will all be included. For club members it will be an extra \$10 per month. Those only taking this session will be the regular monthly fee \$70. This will also be a good basics class for beginners. If there is interest this will be an ongoing class.

WUJI.COM

8316 8th Ave NW
Seattle WA 98117



Thanks John Thanks Dave

In November John Camp came down for a visit and taught a workshop on Fu Family Bagua. John is one of the 'uncles' of our club. John and I both trained under Sifu Tchoung's system. In addition John has trained with many other instructors of Taiji, Qi Gong, Bagua, and Xing-I Quan. If timing works out I hope to have John down at least once a quarter to teach and share his knowledge of internal martial arts.



Another treat this autumn! Dave Harris taught a Roushou/Yueng Quan workshop for the dojo. The best description to date of Dave is the Gandalf or Dumbledore of the martial arts! Gentle, unassuming yet very skilled. Dave is another 'uncle' of the club we're luck to have visit once in a while.

JANUARY CLASS SCHEDULES

BEGINNING SESSIONS:

- ➔ **Chan Si Gong** Wednesdays 6:30-8:30 This class will be for beginners and those interested in Chan Si Gong. The first month will be strictly working on Chan Si Drills to set a foundation for form work.
- ➔ Saturdays 1-2:30 (February) Nei Gung Bang: Each week will focus on one section of the Nei Gung Bang including self-defense drills. If there is interest this will become an ongoing class session. The Bang (short stick) is an exercise tool for meditation, qi gong, form work, foot work, joint locks, applications and self-defense. The 4 section form taught is one of our basic club warm-up forms.
- ➔ Monday Roushou 7-9pm: There is a sign-up to start a new group. I require 4 or more to start. Roushou is soft hand drills to increase efficiently in applications and self-defense. The new group will proceed through the basic drills for one year. Commitment to the class is essential.

CONTINUING SESSIONS:

Yang Taiji: As a group we will work on section 3, push hands and sanshou.

Chen Taiji: We will be working on the symmetrical 48 form, Chan Si Gong, push hands, and the pao chui.

Bagua: This winter we'll focus on Qi Gong, 8 Changes, and partner forms.

PRIVATE LESSONS:

I will be adding more time for private lessons on Wednesday early afternoon. \$20 per 15 minutes for non-club members. \$15 per 15 for those enrolled in classes.

Monday, December 23, 7-9pm, Dojo Workout

Come and practice or socialize if you have the time. The dojo will be open with no scheduled class, just an open practice session for holiday stress relief.

We may not have control over politics or world affairs but even the smallest drop of water in a cup of tea creates some type of change.

As we try to improve ourselves, as we practice kindness and work toward integrity, our presence does have an effect.

Lets not forget this and keep diligent in our practice.

Happy Holidays,

Andy

