

YANG FAMILY HIDDEN TAIJIQUAN TRADITION

WINTER 2004

VOLUME 12 NO 2

AYMTA JOURNAL



**Two Messages from Wang Yen-nien
Pushing Hands
Rencontres Jasnières
Teaching Taiji and Film
Jieqi and Zhongqi for 2005
Exchange: Europe & North America**

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Editors' Notes

Cover: That's Kay and me. A granddaughter of two of our students sat in on class as we were demoing one of the duans. The sound system is in the center playing Laoshi calling the breathing and the moves. We leave it to you to interpret the remainder.

Akai's out of Touch: As you'll read on the *Directory of AYMTA Member Instructors* page, Akai is out of postal range, so, if anyone is in touch with him, we miss him as a contributor and Adviser.

**PLEASE RENEW YOUR
MEMBERSHIP NOW:
DON'T WAIT!.**

—Don

President's Message

Congratulations to the members of AYMTA, which is preparing to enter its 13th year of existence. It is an organization built upon the wonderful and useful idea of continuing the legacy of Wang Yen-nien and the taijiquan that he has taught to the world for over 50 years. It has been a pleasure and an honor to work with the past and current board members towards this goal. I look forward to seeing the organization grow and find even more success in the future.

John Cole, Jim Carlson and Gretchen MacLane will join Don Klein and Charlie Adamec to form the new Board of Directors for the years 2005-2006. Between them there are many years of accumulated taiji success and great life experiences. Gretchen will be the only one new to participating as a director of the board and will be in very good hands in regards to getting up to speed on matters of interest and import.

I have served twice on the board of directors and, upon leaving, wish to reiterate how vital this organization is to the continued practice and growth of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan. Although our membership numbers have held steady at around 100 people in the seven years that I have been involved as a writer or board member, I think we as an organization have a great opportunity ahead of us.

When I meet someone, for instance, who has just started to practice taijiquan (or other internal martial arts) I like to ask them to tell me something about the history of the discipline they are practicing. Or even the name of the style they practice. Often it is too early in the process for this to register—a simple word or two about the general style or family is the response. The discussion might turn towards a slightly deeper investigation of lineage, though an understanding of the relationship of his/her teacher to his own teacher, etc., is seldom revealed. Few schools have the depth of clearly defined and documented history that is the heritage of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan. We have AYMTA, the European organizations, the Taiwan organizations and, most importantly, Master Wang himself to carry on the history and practice of Yangjia Michuan. If someone wants to learn about what we study, they can go to <http://www.aymta.org>. They can become a member, bring good ideas to the organization, receive two journals and two newsletters a year—all filled with information and articles about the state of what we practice.

And what is the state of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan? Those of us on the board of directors have asked this question many times. As have the many members of our sister organizations around the world. How do we proceed, as individuals, as members of the schools we may belong to (or lead), and as participants in the worldwide practice of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan? What are our priorities? What does it mean to be a serious student/teacher of this lineage? What are the things that we attain from the diligent practice of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan? What do we—or can we—give back to ourselves and to our community? Although it is possible to practice in a vacuum, to be your own little taiji island and not have contact with others, the very nature of taijiquan practice is that it involves others, attracts others and is really part of a larger community. We are all after similar things: health, happiness, attaining high levels of skill and knowledge.

Three ideas for focusing and building a more successful AYMTA

- 1) Help to create the regional growth of AYMTA in the United States by developing schools, teachers and organizations within each of six areas—Northeast/Southeast, Midnorth/Midsouth, Northwest/Southwest—six regions in all. Promote events within each region, with money to support teachers traveling between regions for classes, seminars and other events. Work to create a true Yangjia Michuan Network in the country. It's a long-term goal – just like the development of taiji skill. It will not be accomplished in one board member's term. In tandem with this regional development, every other year we could make money and planning available to support a single United States event (a celebration) designed to appeal to members and to gather them for a period of time in one place.
- 2) Give incentives to teachers and schools to grow yearly AYMTA membership ranks. For instance we could dedicate advertising/promotion space in the *Journal* and on the Web site to the top three schools in terms of members who have signed up by February 1. If the membership ranking changes prior to the second *Journal* (i.e., more members join a school) then the promotion spaces in the second journal of the year could reflect this (the promotion pages, for instance, could be a half page for the school with the most members, then quarter pages for the second- and third-ranked schools). Other incentives could include discounts, T-shirts, awards, and other good ideas that directors and members could come up with.
- 3) Focus most of the work of the board of directors and membership on two areas: the *Journal*/Web site (which are real strengths of the organization) and on increasing membership numbers and teacher training. For instance we, as an organization, have had numerous discussions relating to "teacher certification" and have gotten nowhere in regards to implementation. This is not the kind of training I am referring to. More useful would be the structure discussed above, in which AYMTA, through promotion and some financing, helps to facilitate and support teachers from established schools (or with more experience) to visit other schools for seminars and practice. This would develop the kind of regional awareness and member interest that could help to raise the work of this organization to a new level of usefulness. From a practical standpoint, in relation to the *Journal* and Web site, we could help to facilitate an information database with input from groups and individuals across the country. This database could include research about practice insurance, health insurance, small-business advice for teachers and school leaders, teaching tips, and other useful knowledge and ideas. This would be ideal material for a "premium" section on the Web site – free to members, a tempting mystery for those watching "from the outside." Lastly, I would recommend on the Web site and in the journal a "Communications to the Board" section, which could be answered by one or more board members and would, ideally, create a sustained give-and-take option amongst members.

Best wishes to everyone and may your taiji practice flourish. We are truly fortunate to have found something as useful, challenging, rewarding and pleasurable as the system that Wang Yen-nien has passed on to us.

It's up to us to make the most of it.

Thomas W. Campbell

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Letters to the Editor

This is a response to the article by Christian Bernapel on his experience and use of sounds in taijiquan (*AYMTA Journal*, Vol. 11 No. 2, Winter 2003). I have used the “Xi/Hu” breathing commands to help students focus and to help clear my own mind.

At one time, our Ardmore school was sharing a large space with a karate school. One of the offerings of this karate school was a self-defense workshop, which was verbally aggressive by design. On occasion this workshop would be taking place in the next room, while I was teaching. As we were practicing the first duan, from the next room could be heard shouting: “What the @\$ is your @\$ing problem!!!! How ‘bout if I kick your @\$ing &%\$?!!!!” and the like. I always teach my students to take such situations as opportunities to train their minds to focus. To help them, I would call out the breathing “Xi! Hu!” shouting from my dantien. I would envision these sounds as surrounding them and protecting them and helping them to focus. Of course, everyone heard the shouting from the next room, but no one complained about it. Everyone was in a pleasant mood after class. This told me that we were successful.

For myself, there are times, though they are seldom, when I am attacked by uncontrollable, negative thoughts. These kind of thoughts are so savage and irrational that the ancients referred to them as demons. When one is suffering from them, one believes that they are, in fact,

demons and not simply figments of our psyche, as the psychologists tell us. When under attack, even the intensity of sitting meditation can be more of a torment than a help. At these times, I find a solitary place outside and have a “Xi/Hu Practice.” This practice consists of calling out the “Xi/Hu” commands as loud as I can, while going through the form. “Calling” out the commands is not quite right. It is closer to the truth that I roar them at the demons such that the very ground quakes. Naturally, this can only come from the dantien and not simply from the vocal chords. At the end of the form, when the battle is over, silence and peace reign again and the demons are vanquished.

Like surrounding the students with sound, I believe that I am vibrating out positive energy that fills the entire practice area. This is not based upon any tradition, but was inspired by reading about Master Wang practicing his “Xi/Hu” commands in the woods, while he was in the military. The results are based on my own experience, and I stand by them.

Best,

Bede Bidlack
Still Mountain T'ai Chi Center
Ardmore, Penn. • Cambridge, Mass.

In response to your previous discussion about eliminating or changing the AYMTA's objectives “to develop the art of self-defense,” I'd like to offer the following thoughts:

- Any change to the AYMTA objectives or mission should contain a clear reference to the importance and value of understanding and incorporating the martial *and* civil sides of our art.
- Without Yang, there is no Yin—both are necessary to find balance.
- Without energy or force, there is no opportunity to neutralize.
- AYMTA strives to maintain a historical lineage whose roots are in the martial arts—and these should be clearly visible.
- Martial intent is essential to understand our postures and movements.
- Tuishou, Sanshou, Sword and Fan are all important ways to be informed by the form and to express the underlying Taiji principles.
- Softening our objectives in the interest of becoming more “politically correct” or to be in closer alignment with our European cousins serves to weaken our purpose and our direction.
- If we turn our backs on this—we become no different than many of the other Taiji form variations that focus on health and movement ... and we progress toward becoming a lost art.
- We are supposed to develop our steel—but keep it concealed in cotton. Without the steel—we are just cotton ... fluff.
- In our school (Still Mountain T'ai Chi Center) we teach Taiji from both the civil and martial perspectives and view both as essential.
 - I recently performed a demonstration of YMT first section to 60 attendees of our annual Taijiquan picnic (mostly instructors and players—all lines—heavy Chen, Yang Short and Long Forms, Wu, Sun).
 - The most seasoned, skilled and humble of all of the practitioners—a 20+ year practitioner of Yang Long Form came up to me after the demonstration and said two things:
 - I have a very good teacher (thank you Bede Bidlack and Scott Rodell),
 - The form is very pure in its origin—and not widely known.
 - After watching this person demonstrate the long form and push with the senior students and instructors—it was clear he had excellent skill and understanding.
 - Our subsequent dialogue about “my teacher(s)” focused on the fact they had emphasized the correct things in my training to make sure that: 1) I understood and incorporated the basic fundamental principles (feng song, verticality, waist is the commander, step like a cat, and fair lady's wrists); 2) I practiced the form with a developing understanding of where the dui fang was, how dui fang would interact, and what martial applications could be made from the motions, and 3) Yi moves the Qi, Qi moves the body ...
 - Interestingly—the things he identified as critical are the very historical “basics” that we emphasize in our school—and things that I've never seen addressed in any significant way in the six+ other schools where I studied at one time or another ...
 - His comments were that most schools do not emphasize any of these basics—because they have lost or chosen not to teach the martial side of the art, and did not appreciate the value of the fundamental principles.
- Our school, as with Great River Taoist Center (Washington ,D.C.), is focused on ensuring a fundamentally balanced perspective and application of the civil and the martial—steel hidden in cotton.
- It is fine for AYMTA to change the wording of our objective, so long as it reflects the development and practice of our YMT from both the civil and martial perspectives.

Marc Andonian
Ardmore, Penn.

The Teacher's Speech to New Students

老師對新同學的談話

By Wang Yen-nien

Translated by Yuan Wang

Hello Everyone:

It has been a long time since I last saw you. I hope you will enjoy the vitality you'll feel from practicing Taijiquan.

We used to practice Taijiquan in a strict order: we had to lay a solid foundation in the form (*quan jia*—Fist Frame) before we could practice Tuishou. But now we've found that we can practice some basic Tuishou motions together with the form. This helps us to make our body flexible. At first practicing form alone may be boring.

Tuishou is a lot of exercise. One can be sweaty within minutes by practicing it due to the heat it brings (but it takes half an hour to warm up by practicing Taijiquan alone). Don't forget that its purpose is not only to keep fit (usually, an athlete feels his/her muscles become stiffer when he/she is over 35—the key is that Qi Energy circulates inside the body. One cannot tell from the outside, but Nei Dong (Inner Circulation) maintains the health of your inner organs. It is the inner motion that is the foundation of being healthy. There will be problems with your inner organs if inner motion doesn't work well and then disease will follow.

Therefore, it is best to practice Yi and Qi together in the basic Tuishou. Yi is the feeling of strength. When Yi is moved by Tuishou, it becomes Qi. In other words, practicing Yi strengthens one's flexibility and increases sensations, whereas practicing Qi is to do an exercise of sending out and receiving the Qi Energy. Basic Tuishou motions are the preparation before the exercise. When one is adept in using Yi and Qi, one won't need to consciously make an effort to control them; it will happen naturally. Without this control, it would be like a street fighter who strikes repeatedly without any grace or victory.

The basic Tuishou motions are easy to begin with but gradually get complicated. They are derived from the Shi San Shi. New learners will soon grasp it with the help of well-trained students. Students can help each other to improve their Neigong). Our aim is to regain adolescence, not to fight. Any motion in the form can harm people. For example, Gao Tan Ma doesn't look like an attacking motion, but if one uses it to attack somebody's throat with Nei Jin, the damage can be fatal. We should never fight with these skills since they can harm people easily.

One needs to practice Tuishou to help improve ones' form. For instance, the body needs to be in harmonious motion or it will be clumsy. The feet are the foundation of the body. They should move in harmony with the body. Your feet should not move without purpose while your body follows clumsily. The feet should only move where the body intends for them to move. Please make sure you stress on being harmonious.

Teacher Wang Yen-nien in Tainan
Jan. 3, 2004

新同學們，大家好：

好久不見，希望大家都能越練越年輕

以前我們練習太極拳的順序是拳架還沒練完，就不能練推手。可是現在發現推手的基本動作可以和拳架一起配合練習，能把腰腿早些靈活起來，否則先練拳架，初期都是比較呆板的。

推手的運動量很大，可以在幾分鐘之內增加熱量而且出汗。(但是練拳可能要半小時，身體才慢慢熱起來。)注意要用內勁才看得出功力，不是用力，是用意。用氣。不是只有肌肉關節練得好，(一般的運動員在 35 歲就已經是高峰，以後就要往下降了。)主要是體內裏的氣一直在循環，也就是內動，外表看不出來，可是內動對內臟的幫助很大，所以說內動是真正健康的基礎。沒有內動，內臟容易出問題，內臟一出問題，許多病痛就跟著來了。

所以基本推手要先練意配合氣，意就是聽勁，而動起來推人就是氣。也就是說意是練靈活和敏感度，而氣是一種推出丟又彈回來的運轉。基本動作是運動前的準備動作，用意用氣習慣並且深入之後就不會再用力了，否則推手就會像打架鬥牛一樣，只有蠻力。

推手的基本動作是由容易而後難，漸進複雜，但也離不開十三勢的範圍。由已經會的人帶領新同學，很快就會被帶起來了。大家互相提攜幫忙，互相增加內力，往去老返童的目標而練，絕對不是為了比賽打架。拳架的每個招式都可能使對方受到傷害，比萬說高探馬，用內勁打在喉頭上，就不只是皮肉痛而已。既然一出手就能傷人，所以我們是不敢輕易使用。

拳架要有突破，得靠推手協助。比萬說上下要相隨否則就轉化得不自如，因為腳是根，腳若要動，就要隨身轉，而不是腳動身才動。請大家練習的時候一定要注意。

師王延年于台南
93年1月3日

An Intersection Between Teaching Taiji and Film

By Thomas W. Campbell

Taiji will improve your golf, but golf can not improve your taiji. - Wang Yen-nien

The above statement is worth exploring and will bear much fruit of discovery if considered in terms of your own life and the things you do that make you unique and whole.

I am pretty sure that Master Wang is not limiting the discussion to experience on the fairways. I do not remember when I first heard him say it or if he referred to tennis or golf. Of course, he could be talking about swimming, cooking, accounting, whatever your personal life obsessions are. The point is the same, regardless.

That Taiji will potentially improve the other things you do in life might seem obvious to those who practice it. Is this true of other martial arts, sports, exercises etc? Probably not. The principles and skills that one develops by studying Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan—and taijiquan in general—can clarify and elucidate the important things that we do with the rest of our lives.

I've been fortunate to discover the art of teaching over the years and know enough about it to say, with full certainty, that one is always learning. Both sides of the teacher/student divide should gain from classroom experience. Most importantly, you have to "be there" to be a really effective teacher. You can't mail it in. You should always find a way to share your natural wonderment and enthusiasm for whatever it is that you teach.

I've taught film, video and media production at both grade-school level and (currently) at college level. It's a lot of fun and can also be extremely difficult. Whatever you teach, you have a great responsibility to the profession and craft that you have been entrusted to pass on. And you will find, if you keep an open mind, that you have lots to learn from your students.

In taijiquan class I work for and with my teacher, coaching newer students and also demonstrating advanced training. I also lend support to a larger structure, and provide a sign of continuity from a class perspective. At the university I teach what I make a living from.

What are some of the experiences which cross over between the two experiences? What can we learn at the intersection of teaching taijiquan and teaching film and video production?

The Basic Exercises—Where It All Begins

At the very beginning of our taiji practice are the basic exercises. We practice them in every class, and at the beginning of our personal practice. The leg massages, the basic exercises, the one-person tuishou exercises and then form practice (some combination of performing the Thirteen Postures and parts one, two and three of the long form) is an ideal structure for practice. In the second part of the class comes time to practice other forms, weapons etc.

In traditional classrooms, especially in teaching something known as "the arts," a sense of structure is fundamental to success. There is already a built in sense of anarchy to the idea of telling stories and "making movies." You especially find this in

young kids who are asked to think for themselves. Given the time and opportunity to consider and develop ideas the process can become fun.

People who have practiced taiji for any amount of time might recognize a moment like the following, but in your own particular setting.

The train is jerky and unsmooth in its flight, stopping early, lurching onward. But you are focusing inward. Your weight is full in the arm that holds the overhead bar and in the opposite leg. You feel the movements almost before they strike the train, the bar and finally your arm. The position feels natural and you are not threatened or thrown by the chaotic outside forces.

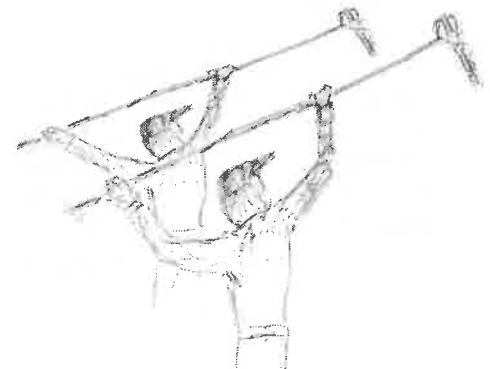
Or you might be sitting on the subway train (or bus) because you are carrying a number of heavy bags – or equipment. And you see someone who is comfortable, relaxed, weight easily distributed, and you suspect this person does not practice taijiquan (or you see someone who you personally know – and are aware they do not practice). This becomes a confirmation of the taiji principles – relaxed and comfortable, inner focus and easy breathing, a way to endure, to accomplish an otherwise more difficult task.

The Basic Posture and Sound Recording

Sound is often an afterthought on film and video productions – there are too many "important" people and tasks that need to be accomplished. But the sound recordist must be attentive to sound recording – always finding a way to put the microphone as close to the source as possible. Thus the idea of a "boom" pole, an extension that allows the sound person to place the microphone in ways that maximize recording levels.

The duration and complexity of a shot does not take into account the needs of the sound person. If a wireless microphone is impractical (crowded or static-filled frequencies often negate their use) the sound person may find themselves reaching, extending, projecting, for long periods of time, always the first one ready and last to "cut."

The same principles that guide the practice of the basic postures, can be practiced to make physical tasks more bearable, and less dangerous. In the graphic we see the background sound person holding the boom and directional mic over his/her head. Extending the arms so that the joints lock, pushing the shoulders upwards, feeling the heels of the feet start to leave the ground—these natural principles of being physically



and emotionally centered.

The foreground sound person has relaxed shoulders, sunken elbows, slightly rounded back, and has sunk down onto the bubbling well of the foot. By following the principle of full and empty, he/she could move weight between back leg/front arm and front leg/back arm every minute or two on long takes. By practicing your neigong breathing, and focusing the breath to the dantien, you make your root stronger and limbs seem less receptive to fatigue and pain.



Snake steps/Circle steps—Hand Held Camera

In lower body taiji movements we often practice the use of snake steps and circle steps, allowing us to move gracefully and evenly forward and backward in balanced half steps. This type of stepping movement, slow, circular, sliding just above the surface of the ground, also allows us to sense and avoid entanglements with other feet, shrubbery and a variety of typical obstacles.

The development of snake-step and circle-step skill generally begins with learning the Thirteen Postures. Once the student has progressed from learning parts one and two of the introductory form they are ready to explore moving forward and back while using the eight upper-body movements. When practiced with a partner, for instance while doing Ba Fa, we coordinate the study of form, application and movement.

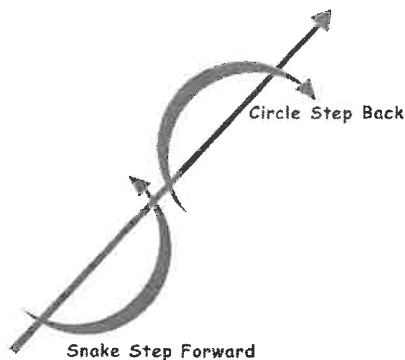
Taiji helps to break down physical inhibitions—we learn to participate with others in exercises that involve physical trust—in tuishou exercises we develop balance, a strong lower body and the flexibility to protect our center by deflecting and/or avoiding strikes. With experience and developed skill we gain confidence in our abilities to work with others, to anticipate their needs and actions, to feel comfortable and centered.

Camerawork, for video or film, has undergone a trend towards mobility with the abundance of small high quality cameras used today. Hand-held images, whether simulating “reality,” in journalistic and documentary terms, or used in other ways to simulate points of view, are found throughout television and the movies. In a twist of irony, the smaller cameras are more difficult to handhold successfully than larger ones because there is less weight to support. So how can a camera person train to become adept at the art of hand-held camera?



In film and video classes, without out explicitly teaching taiji, I have introduced exercises and concepts that allow students to improve their production skills. Like most creative processes film is a collaborative environment—the best work is done when people get along and have a good understanding of who each other are. We can develop collaborative exercises that set up challenges which can be overcome through cooperation.

Before beginning the following exercise basic principles of taiji should be introduced and discussed in class. Again, the idea of relaxation, untensed shoulders, sinking the elbows and deep but



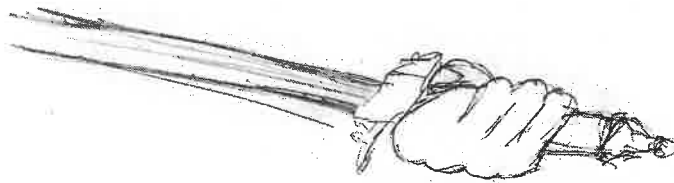
easy breathing can be discussed. It is not a taiji class so a little bit can go a long way. Like anything new, some students will get it and some will take a bit longer. You will also need to include a short introduction and demonstration of snake steps and circle steps.

One student (a) is the camera person, another (b) is the guide and a third (c) is the subject. Holding a small video camera, student (a) faces the subject and student (b) faces the same way, but is behind the camera person and rests hands on his/her shoulders.

This exercise should be done without verbal communication between the participants. Student (c) will begin a simple performance that involves moving forward, sideways, back, etc. Maybe as a waitress/waiter, dancer, someone who moves to and fro. The movements should be very slow to begin with. The camera person (a) is focused on the image being recorded – his/her view is very restricted. The guide (b) must be the camera person’s eyes and together they will strive to develop a sense of working as one. With practice the participants will develop an ability to respond to subtle cues, a slight push or pull of the hand, moving the camera where it must go as though one person were in command.

Taiji/Life Connections

There are many links that can be made between the study of taijiquan and the craft of film and video production. The sword and the camera, for instance, each using the focus of one’s Yi (intent) to allow for the precise movement of Qi, the precise strike of the sword blade, the perfect placement of the camera’s frame. We train to move our swords with precision and exacti-



tude, we train to focus our eye (our yi) to find the exact point in space that will illustrate what we wish to say within the frame of the story. Neigong breathing and meditation training allow us the ability to find a quiet place within ourselves, even as the world tosses and turns (such as on a film set). The give and take of tuishou practice, two people trying to “understand” each other through touch and movement - from an actor’s perspective this training could be invaluable.

We can apply our taiji training to other aspects of our lives with the potential for many positive rewards. Try it with your own lives and careers. It’s truly the gift to ourselves that keeps giving well beyond the time we finish our daily practice.

Tom Campbell practices and teaches in New York City.

EXCHANGE: 2003 Workshop at Baker Camp, Harriman State Park, New York

By Nicole Henriod
Translated by Gretchen MacLane

To Doreen, Sue, Henry and the others.

Tuesday morning, July 29, I was sitting with Sabine in a large Airbus 320, destination New York. We were invited together to the second course organized by Robert Politzer at Baker Camp, Harriman State Park in New York, from July 31 to Aug. 3. Sabine was there to lead a push-hands workshop, I to represent the Collège des Enseignants.

This amicable formula of exchanges between Europe and the U.S.A. was initiated by Jean-Luc Pérot (Amicale) for the Festival at Madison, summer 2002. Thus we had Jim Carlson's visit in November 2002 and later that of Charles Adamec's (November 2003). Americans unfamiliar with the supports that we have in Europe got to know Amicale and the Collège. It even seemed they envied us! Even more reason to honor the New York invitation and speak of projects with them.

New York, Wednesday, July 30.

We have a little less than two days before the workshop start for us to recover from jet lag and get on American time. The best way was to do as our neighbors did: up at 6:30 a.m. and jog in the park. For us, taiji. Where we went was a wonder. Fresh air and mist rising from the river. We stayed at the most northerly point of Manhattan island where the Harlem River empties in the Hudson producing thus a contribution of welcome freshness. The rest of the day we walked, walked, nose upward because of New York's famous skyscrapers, so that we would arrive at 7:00 p.m. for Robert's class at the YMCA on West 63rd Street. "Too fast," declared Sabine at the end of the 3rd Duan. This remark was welcomed good-naturedly, "This is New York, my dear."

Thursday afternoon: leave by car for Baker Camp. We left New York City on Broadway, the bridge, then in a little more than an hour on the highway we arrived at the place of the workshop. We had been warned that we were lodged in "rustic cabins." All sorts of pictures had filled our imagination. Actually it was necessary to understand "cabins." In French we speak of *cabine de plage* (beach hut) or *cabine téléphonique* (phone box), so I was expecting a very small, tiny, even futuristic sort of box area to sleep. Eventually and concretely they happened to be nice bungalows.

These small log houses were set on a hill in deep forest leading to a lake surrounded by beautiful and savage nature. Incredible! So near the immense city, a Walt Disney countryside with deer, squirrels and raccoons. We had been told it was a "pristine place," but translate "primitive." The beds were primitive also.

We all gathered before the evening meal for some words. There were 20 in all, Robert's students and students and teachers from afar: California, Michigan and Wisconsin. Everybody already knew of Sabine and Robert spoke of the pleasure to welcome a taiji sister and of their years in Taiwan at Laoshi's side.

When it was my turn to be presented as the (French-speaking) emissary of the European college John (in the spirit of the media diatribes) declared, "She is a spy."

The tone was established: humor, a lot of humor, laughs, levity mixed with a desire to learn, to understand, to experiment. *Voilà* a succinct picture of our small fleeting community. In this country where french fries suddenly became "freedom fries" to avenge

Chirac's "treachery," we were received with kindness and friendship.

The theme of the course: integration of form and *tuishou*. Robert wished to push forward the relation between the two disciplines. He led the workshop on some form applications (Grasp the Sparrow's Tail, Seal It Closed, Brush the Knee Twist Step, Wield the Pipa). Sabine directed the *tuishou*, mixing great strictness with small creative exercises of her own invention that delighted all of us. Humor added to the play, at one with finesse and discovery. Robert showed each time the evidence of the incidence of form in *tuishou* and vice versa, astonishing himself with relations that he had not seen before. His enthusiasm was contagious. Sabine trained us in softness and relaxation. "Don't be fast, just relaxed." To her eyes the "this is New York" justified nothing and she searched to install the calm, the essence of taiji, that is in Taiwan, France, Hawaii and all other places in the vast world.

The course was intensive. The day began at 6:30 a.m.: an hour of practice was led by different teachers. The workshops followed after breakfast at the rhythm of three per day, the last after the evening meal. The weather did not permit a profitable swim or paddle in the small canoes at the lake. So, while all of Europe was plagued with heat, on this side of the Atlantic the entire summer had been unusually rainy. We had little sun, for mostly the weather was gray and humid, with an intense storm that surprised us as we were practicing on the tennis court that served as our exercise field. Once we got to shelter in the largest cabin, our shoes soaked and hair in strings, under dazzling flashes of light and in deafening noise of thunder we fervently dove back into the work untroubled by the violence of the elements.

Like all courses the one at Baker Camp ended the final night with a banquet and jokes and songs (the talent show). Unhappily a bug attack and rain (once again) brought an end to our patience and cut short the moment of simple convivial happiness.

In spite of a very full schedule I managed on the morning of the last day to meet with the nine teachers present at the workshop. I wished to speak to them of the Collège, of possible exchanges and collaborations. They enthusiastically discovered that there was a book (Hervé's) on the ancient sword form. After consulting the sample I had brought, they ordered 20 immediately. I've learned since that Hervé has even proposed a version in English. *Excellent!* If the Europeans are No. 1 in meeting, Americans are No. 1 in printing: think of the excellent AYMTA *Journal*. If the project to create a journal of the Collège succeeds, the possibility of exchanging articles and information will enrich both. Finally I spoke of a projected course gathering in Europe with all the YMTaijiquan teachers. The idea appealed to them and the Atlantic doesn't seem to be a barrier.

It's good to leave friends with projects that will find us together again. It's less difficult.

Goodbye Gretchen, Terri, Kay, Kathryn, Ilana, Jim, Don, Tom and Robert. I had a wonderful time with you and your students. See you in Europe, Summer 2005. [See page 34.]

Nicole



EXCHANGE: Rencontres de l'Amicale 2004

By Kay Reese and Don Klein



In reviewing Jim and Charlie's past articles on their experiences at Rencontres de l'Amicale, we thought what more could be written—they've covered it all. So perhaps to some extent we paraphrase:

Don: What an exhilarating experience to be a group of some 200 people who all practice YMT and at many and various levels!! We arrived a week early and spent the night with Claudy Jeanmougin and family, and then took off to use Bayonne as center to explore the Basque French/Spanish seacoast region. We'll omit our various mishaps for person-to-person relating. I'll let Kay do most of the talking and slip in now and then.

Kay: We arrived back in La Rochelle a day early, as did the Italians. We had a delightful breakfast with them, and then went out to explore the town.



La Rochelle is an old seaport with three towers from different eras of history. It was also the last French town to be rescued from German occupation during WWII where it had served as a German submarine port. At present it has a wonderful aquarium and is the headquarters for Jacques Cousteau's research center. The old town's narrow stone streets now are pedestrian walks with shopping malls that would delight any tourist. Since

La Rochelle is a seaport, seafood is plentiful and abundant.

The workshop sponsored by Amicale Association GRDT (Groupement pour la Recherche et le Développement du Taiji quan: <http://oms.angely.net/clubsangeriens/taijiquan.htm>) started on Thursday afternoon. It was wee bit late getting

started due to traffic delays caused by a major marathon that went past the center where we stayed. Registration was followed by greeting many friends and dinner. We were soon to find out that all meals were multi-coursed complete with cheese (fromage) and flowing wine.

Don: We also discovered the French aperitifs of *pinard* and *pastis*. We sadly missed seeing some of our European friends who could not attend, but met many new people, including the Italians and Hungarians.

Even though Amicale is a European umbrella organization of YMT Associations, the French traditions of liberty, fraternity and equality (borrowed explicitly by the Americans and the Taiwanese) imbue the gathering. Except for administrative tasks, everyone is equal, can request a workshop, can put on a workshop, give his or her ideas on any facet of YMT without fearing censure, and is concerned with everyone else's growth and initiative.



Kay: The next morning found us up at 6 a.m. with 180 other people doing warm-ups and 13 Postures until breakfast. After breakfast a large blank chart was presented. People started suggesting topics for the day's workshops. This happened each morning. After the schedule was agreed upon, teachers volunteered to teach the different sessions. Since my French is almost non-existent, I took classes that I could learn from mostly by observation. If I totally misunderstood, most of the teachers spoke some English and could make necessary corrections. What I found in most of the classes was a lot of applications of the moves that were being presented. Many classes were outside and I was glad that I had my winter coat along.



The first class that I took was Fan taught by Christophe Lephy who loves to teach weapons. He spent a lot of time developing a link between the body and the fan. These warm-ups really improved all the fan movements. My next workshop was the third part of Third Duan. We only worked on the first part of this section but it was a good detailed study of the moves.

MENUS (Nous nous excusons auprès de nos végétariens pour la tendance iodée des repas)		
	Déjeuner	Dîner
	C'était très bon!	
JEUDI 11	A tous les repas: vin rouge ou rosé, café ou thé ou autres. Le digestif est à offrir aux copains au bar...	Salade de gézier (Vég.: salade composée) Filet de cabillaud à la crème d'ail Flan de carottes Plateau de fromages Marbré de poires au caramel
VENDREDI 12	Assiette de crudités Noix d'entrecôte rôtie (Vég.: Flan de légumes du chef) Pommes sautées Plateau de fromages Tarte feuilletée de pommes à la cannelle	Salade Andalouse Paëlla du Chef Plateau de fromages Nougat glacé aux amandes
SAMEDI 13	Salade tiède d'aile de raie Suprême de pintade aux quatre épices (Vég.: surprise du Chef) Mousseline de celery	Pineau des Charentes Plateau de fruits de mer Filet mignon au miel (Vég.: filet de loup de mer) Salade de chèvre chaud
	Plateau de fromages Salade de fruits	Pâtisserie Vin blanc et rouge
DIMANCHE 14	Terrine du Chef à la confiture d'oignons Choucroute de la mer Plateau de fromages Tiramisu	BON RETOUR

Don: I was indoors learning applications with Claudy, then becoming roaming photographer.

Kay: After lunch I worked with Sabine on Fan again. This time emphasis was on getting the flow of the sequence and moves that needed extra work. My last class that day was taught by



Gianvittorio Ardito on part of Second Duan. Again it was specific work on a small section of the Duan. By the time we finished the sun was down and everyone was ready for

social hour and dinner.

Don: I joined Kay in Sabine's workshop and then again took on photo duties.

Kay: Every day small sections of all the duans were taught to those who knew the duan but with special detailed instruction of that particular section. There were also classes for beginners of the duans, baton (pole), old sword, fan and saber.



The next day I changed my class structure to more unknown areas. The first one was time spent exploring hand and foot co-ordination with some very complex exercises by Marc Appelmans. The second morning class was a seated



form for seniors and students with disabilities. After lunch I found two other students who wanted to work on New Sword form. Since we didn't have an instructor, we worked out the moves together and corrected each other. New Sword is not considered as rewarding as Old Sword among many of the Europeans. Some day I hope to learn the old form. The last class of the day was Fan again. This teacher spent a lot of time on the applications and breathing. It was a different presentation of fan than I had ever had before. Each of the three fan classes offered something different and was rewarding.

Don: I was with Daniel Rosza exploring *Taille Chi Chuan*, removing as photographer, on to a lecture by Charles Li on the Six Unities, and finally—whereas Jim had to lead morning practice, Charlie to give a speech—I was asked to present a workshop (kindly translated by Monique Routhiau).

Kay: The second evening was the banquet, with more seafood than I ever have seen, and dancing into the wee hours. Our last day started with an informal meeting of AYMTA and Amicale representatives and ended with a workshop of



the complete form of First, Second and Third Duans. The room that had started completely filled at the beginning of First Duan ended about three quarters empty by the end of Third Duan. Most of us are still learners.

It was a wonderful conference with people who love learning the forms and improving their taijiquan and love being together.



Don: We returned to Claudy's and Madeline's for three days to be included in their fluid family life with interweaving laundry, meals, sophrology, homework, chores, school (Madeline and the children), explored Saintes, and attended Claudy's classes in Angouleme and Saintes. Then off to Paris with no room at the inn but managed to meet up with Sabine the last night for her class assisted by Isabel, Jean-Luc and Michel, with an opportune tasting of the Nouveau Beaujolais on the night of its arrival.

It's inconceivable why more AYMTA members don't apply to attend Amicale. As the four of us who have attended attest: *it is absolutely worthwhile and enlivening. Your taijiquan will not only improve but expand and you will make many new friends and acquaintances.*



Amicale 2005 will be hosted by ATCHA at Les Balcons du Lac d'Annecy: http://www.village-vacances.com/accueil_en.html. *Amicale 2006* will be hosted by Association Wu Xing near Rome.

What decisions: both the special Teachers College Meeting in Anjou in July 2005 followed by Rencontres Jasnières and the Rencontres de l'Amicale in November 2005 in Annecy (there is also Jeux d'Epee in late August). Then in 2006, the "YMT Reunion, Conference, Workshop, Practice" in Taipei in August and Rencontres de l'Amicale in Rome in November. *AYMTA members will become world travelers.*



Reflections on the Weighted Rear-Leg Posture

By Serge Dreyer
Translated by Don Klein

In our Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan keeping the weight or root on the rear leg is frequently mentioned as the salient characteristic of the style, a specific whose practicality and abstractness seems underexploited to me. While I reflect openly on this aspect, I do not aspire exhaustiveness. I look to a possible evolution of our style, going beyond tradition with its undeniable contributions but which I find in some respects hardening. If the “guardians of the form” claim the right to define for others what must not be done, I prefer to focus on what can be done. The investigation of the potential of a posture, of a practice generally, seems to me more fertile in terms of efficiency (creative and so productive) than its reification. As such, I embrace the comments of François Jullien (“*Penser d’un dehors*,” p. 270), for whom Chinese thought conceives reality as a process, far from fixed images that make cabbages fat in Europe of the *doxa* on China of which the otherness (Jullien speaks of *hétérotopie*) is perceived such, that it remains stuffy in an exoticism of good quality. In another formulation, otherwise, I much love this reflection of Gourmont’s Rémy, “When one presses always on same sort of thoughts, the same sort of acts, one is buried there, one is engulfed there. It is necessary to walk more lightly on the surface of things.”

Returning to the weighted rear-leg posture, one must walk lightly and agilely to avoid double-weightedness. Before investigating walking, more exactly movement, it is first necessary to verify if this posture is truly the defining characteristic of our style. By observing sequences (duans), one notices that the paradigm is far from being resolved since movements as in *tuishou* (push hands) and *lou xi ao bo* (brush knee twist step) of the first duan, for example, end on the front leg. It is not less true than the general tendency that effectively emphasizes the rear leg. When one looks at *tuishou*, the tendency seems inverted. Indeed, looking at random photos and videos of trainings, some photos of M. Wang’s first book (the demonstration of *fajing* with a partner), the superiority of the front leg is noticed. The book on *yongfa* (applications) abounds with applications being made on the front leg. There is a disparity between the formal dimension of our practice (duans and basic exercises of the *tuishou*) and its informal dimension (free-form *tuishou*).

It seems useful to describe the rear-leg posture. It is characterized, according to the teaching of Wang Yen-nien, by a distribution of more important weight on the rear leg. In term of functioning, it is defined by the capacity to avoid a sweeping/reaping of the front leg, marked practically by the heel of the front leg not being stuck to the ground. I make several remarks on this description:

1. The distance between rear leg and front leg is not specified so that one observes in numerous photos splits that, in spite of the raised front heel, would not resist a well-executed sweep. I suggest in this respect a specialized entrainment to refine the criteria of the posture.

2. Such as one can observe it in duans and the basic exercises of the *tuishou*, the heel of the front leg is lifted excessively, provoking tensions (contractions) in the calf, that echo in all the body and negatively affect the mobility of the follower.
3. This signature posture does not take into account the possibility a sweeping on the rear leg and thus doesn’t prepare for a potential movement to counter this possibility.

Beyond these this, I am interested in the creative potential of the rear-weighted posture in the informal, that is, the free-form *tuishou* henceforth. Taijiquan is supported and fertilized by the concept of yin and yang, all postures generate this pair. It is so with regard to the front-leg posture that receives all its value from the rear-leg posture. In my observations and my experience of *tuishou*, the front leg is a powerful posture and rooted in term of resistance to a push and equally for a push. Moreover, depending upon the situation, the reaping of the front leg is not as easy as it claimed in theory; I participated enough as competitor and trainer in tournaments with work of legs to be authorized to assert this (the skeptics can participate in the annual tournament in Great Britain to convince themselves or examine the videos of Chen’s tournament *jia gou* in China). The front-leg posture works most of the time on a shifting of the body from rear leg to front leg and vice versa. The rear-leg posture favors springiness and graceful mobility with the potential availability of the front leg. Clearly this is a generalization because other parameters, notably various tensions, disrupt this practical bipartition. In other words, a follower remaining on the rear leg can, for example, respond with absorbing in answer to a push rather than moving back if he did not cultivate an internal disposal in the unforeseen. It is exactly in this register that I would like to reflect: by cultivating and then by applying in free *tuishou* a rear-weighted posture for a brief moment, one observes the ease of followers in the movement, turning, spinning, disappearing in front of the partner/opponent, taking risks that in other styles appear to be mistakes when it does not degrade only to the “therapeutic” version. Investigation of this approach is also beneficial for the practice of duans by concentrating on the notion of spring, this “chink” between the postures that makes real movement alive.

It is an appeal to creativity that motivates this article. Our rear-leg posture will express its “juice” only if it is pressed, if it is experimented with throughout its variabilities (narrow or wide steps, high or low positioning, etc.) and in its complement (experimenting with the various the front-leg rootings). One will then be able to see our style opening up and shining above the others because of its peculiar stance, yet without becoming calcified (as do some “secret” school rites), because as Jacques Prévert roguishly claims, “*Ce n’est pas à l’école des Beaux-Arts qu’on peut apprendre à voir l’incendie d’une forêt.*”

DON'T PUT IT OFF: RENEW NOW

羨君意氣與天高
勤煉太極專修道
營營翼翼為門生
才高九斗勝萬金

歌頌



歌頌

羨君意氣與天高
勤煉太極專修道
營營翼翼為門生
才高九斗勝萬金

Gēsòng

xiàn jūn yìqì yǔ tiān gāo
qín liàn Tàijí zhuānxiū dào
yíngyíng yìyì wéi ménshēng
cái gāo jiǔdǒu shèng wànjīn

Ed: As Ann writes, this piece is relatively uncomplicated; my rendition maintaining the seven syllable line follows:

Praise (for Laoshi)

*Will and spirit reach the sky
Taiji cultivates the Dao
Unceasing care for students
Talent transforms all to gold*

Briefly Noted

The Catalog now offers three CDs issued by Taiwan:

- **YMT Duans.** The 80-minute audiotape extracted from *Teacher Training Course Video* by Wang Yen-nien in 1996, now released on CD.
- **Set of three CDs** of Wang Yen-nien leading the basic exercises and forms at the Grand Hotel teaching area, from the 1970's.
- **YMT Weapons:** CD of Wang Yen-nien calling out the breathing and the names of the movements for Yen-nien Taiji Fan, Wudang Sword, Kunlun Sword. Recorded in 1999.

See the catalog (p. 37) for more details.

Sabine Metzlé Fan DVD: *Eventail Yangjia Michuan Taichi Chuan*, Club de Taichi Chuan de Versailles, 7 Rue de Béam, 78000 Versailles, France, narration in French. A very rich visual documentation of Sabine performing the entire fan form and then isolating specific sections for more detailed explanation.

Claudy Jeanmougin continues his voluminous print output with *Ji Ben Dong Zuo, Exercices de base, Yangjia Michuan, Approche biomécanique et énergétique*, GRDT Ecurat, France, 2004, in French. The translated title is self-explanatory: *Basic Exercises, Biomechanical and Energetic Approach*. Claudy applies his extensive osteopathic and anatomical knowledge to the Basic Exercises and offers a few more. He notes in the introduction, "Without having studied anatomy, Mister Wang Yen-Nien had always the intuition of the correct positions which do not cause damage to the structure. Worried about the health of his students, he has never neglected the details of individual precise corrections." As is usual, the book is lavishly illustrated both with anatomical details and consecutive figure drawings of the exercises.

Jeux d'Épée

August 26-28, 2005

The first international JEUX D'ÉPÉE meeting took place in Saintes, France in August 2004 with six instructors teaching various aspects of sword.

This project was initiated by the IFAM Institute (l'Institut de Formation aux Arts Martiaux internes). Its purpose was to bring together people who practice all kinds of Taijiquan (and other martial arts) so that they might exchange experiences and work together. When you practice with a sword, you usually play according to the "form" (of your own school); finding a partner isn't always easy. However, both partners must understand the subtleties of the rules before they can apply them. This is necessary for Taijiquan to keep its essence when practised with a partner.

The IFAM Institute will organise a second meeting on Friday 26th, Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th of August 2005. Six instructors will supervise four sword classes and two pole/staff classes

Contact Jean Luc Saby <jlsaby@wanadoo.fr>

To Gold Mountain Daoism School of Internal Alchemy Members and Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan Practitioners

金山門金丹道楊家秘傳太極拳

By Wang Yen-nien
Translated by Wang Yuan

Hello Everybody:

I haven't seen you or written to you for a long time. Therefore I write this letter to give my greetings: may you improve your *gongli* (energy), and have a good life. Your teacher is not only as healthy as ever, but has also improved his *gongli*. This is the benefit of practicing Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan and the Gold Mountain Daoism School of Internal Alchemy.

Doing Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan and the Gold Mountain Daoism School of Internal Alchemy are the most appropriate exercises to improve one's inner and external energy. Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan is the best school among all of the schools of Daoism and Kungfu. We have to work according to its rules persistently in order to understand this complicated art. Only through continuous study can we see the true benefits. But I've heard from students in Europe and America who say that there are people teaching other ways to improve *wugong* (*kungfu*) under the title of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan and the Gold Mountain Daoism School of Internal Alchemy. This just proves that they know what the best school is, but they are not able to teach it in an authentic way. They chose to take the wrong path, thinking that they were taking a shortcut, but in the end they will be doomed to fail. It is just like the old Chinese story: A man was standing on the ground. He looked around and found that the East Mountain was very high, so he ran to climb the East Mountain. But before he reached the top, he looked back and found that the West Mountain seemed to be higher. Since the East Mountain was not the highest, he hurried to run down the slope in order to climb the West Mountain. He ran and ran until he reached the West Mountain. So much time had been wasted. He believed that the West Mountain was truly higher than the East Mountain. He started to climb the West Mountain until he looked back when he had finished one third of the climb. Which mountain was higher? Still, the East Mountain was higher than the West Mountain.

All his life was wasted in running back and forth. He never reached the peak of the mountain. The moral is: When you are studying, you have to make your choice and hold true to it. You cannot try to practice other *kungfu* by thinking that they are better than ours. You will waste too much time by doing that and you eventually will fail. I hope all you students will be masters of one trade but not be distracted by the heterodoxies, or you will waste so much precious time and fail in the true study. What I want to tell you is to commit to one direction. I have been working on keeping the traditional theory and method of Gold Mountain and Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan for more than 70 years. My good health and energy is evidence of this.

諸位弟子及同學們:

大家好，很久沒有寫信也沒有和大家見面，真是久違了，所以特寫此信問候大家:功力精進，生活安好。師不但健康如昔，且功力日益精進，毫無減退，這就是憑我金山門金丹道及楊家秘傳太極拳內外雙修的功夫而得到的效果。

道家金山門、楊家秘傳太極拳是修道及武藝中最深也是最正確的一種學問。所以要一直不變地按照修行和練武的正確路線前進，不可半途轉換，才能得到真正的效果。可是最近聽到從歐美的同學來台或通信告訴我說:有部份人打著金山門楊家秘傳太極拳的名號，可是他教的卻是其他門派的武功和修道方法。這證明他明知金山門和楊家秘傳太極拳是最好的，可是他教不出來，卻走了其他的旁門邪道，以為其他的好練，走錯了路線結果一無所成。過丟中國有一句話就是:站在平地向東看，東山好高，西山很低。就登東山，登山不到三分之一，回頭往西看，又覺得西山比東山高，嗯，東山不夠高，趕快下來，往西山跑，跑。跑到西山，耽誤了好多時間，到了西山，一看西山的確很高，就登西山，登山不到三分之一，他又回往東看，究竟是哪個高?一看，東山還是比西山高。

所以他東跑西跑，把一生的精力都跑完了，他也沒有上高山。這表示你學習一樣武藝必須要專一，不要看到別的比我們好，這樣來回亂學，耽誤了很多時間，最後那一個都沒練成。希望我們的弟子和同學們要專一而深研之，不要為旁門左道而迷惑心性，否則不但失掉很多寶貴時間，又一無所成。以上這些話就是告訴大家，不要三心二意變換方向，老師遺七十多年一直不變保持金山門楊家秘傳太極拳傳統的理論及方法，才能有今天活到九十多歲的健康身體及功力。

Some students are too smart. They think they can change the form (*quanjia*) or modify the theory. They have fooled many new students but this is not good since they are cheating themselves and wasting others' time. Gold Mountain Daoism and Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan are the highest and most profound art forms. It is regressive when people try to change the basic form and *jianfa* (sword art) before they even understand them. This is like sliding down the slope farther away from the true form of *kungfu*. Doing this is not good for your own health and your understanding of the art. Therefore, it is the biggest mistake. One who chooses to take this path will definitely fail. I hope all you co-learners and students respect the knowledge and frame of motion that have been passed down from our forefathers. Only through keeping this in one's mind can one take the road to promoting one's health, prolonging one's life span and entering the level of the Great Dao. I hope you will not be too smart as to modify our forefathers' knowledge with your wrong ideas, or you will go further and further away from Daoism and *kungfu* art. I hope you will realize the danger and come back to the truth if you have started to make a mistake, and if you haven't, you will be alerted and stick to the main road and study in depth. I haven't talked about this before, but now I see the danger that may easily lead you to the wrong path, so I have to urge you to come back to the correct way. I hope this article will help you to stay true to the traditional and correct way.

I planned to come and visit with you, but my family thinks that it is not good for me to travel that far because I am getting old. This is the reason I haven't visited you for two years. Still, I have been exercising and I will go abroad to visit you again when I can regain my youth by exercising Taijiquan. I am exercising very seriously and I have felt it working. When I finally succeed in this study, it will not only be my personal achievement, but also a living testimony for people. I am confident that I will visit you soon and talk about Daoism and the Taijiquan art. You can write to me about whatever suggestion you'd like to give me after reading this article. I hope you all will write to me to give your advice for the development of the Gold Mountain School and Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan.

I send all of my best wishes to you. May you be healthy, may all your wishes come true and may you make progress in your *gongli*.

Teacher Shang Shouzi Yen-nien

July 21, 2004

Taipei School

有部分本門的弟子自作聰明，以為可以改拳架，可以改理論，會花言巧語騙了好多後輩和同門弟子，這樣不但害了自己，又騙了別人的時間，這是很不好的現象。金山門的修道及楊家秘傳的太極拳已經是登峰造極，最高深、最奧妙的學術，現在的人根本還沒練到就要改以前的拳架，改以前的劍法，這是練武的下坡路，一直往下掉，不是為了自己的身體。自己的武學而發揮，所以是最大的錯誤。走這一條路的人最後一定失敗，不會成功。希望各位同道同學一定要尊重上輩所傳授下來的學識與動作，保持不變，才能追到前人成佛成仙的路上，才能畏命百歲，健康長壽。希望大家不要自作聰明改變你所學的原來傳統傳下來的學問，錯用自己的新的思想，這會與道學和武學越離越遠，希望有則改之而沒有的人要注意傳統的學說，按原路深研下去。以前老師沒有講過這些話，可是現在看大家的一舉一動很容易走入邪途，我不得不把你們拉回來，往正路上走，希望你們看到這篇文章之後，有則改之，無則嘉勉，能真正回到傳統的路上來

本想出國時與大家見面再講，可是因家族反對，認為我年歲大不宜出遠門，所以這兩年都沒有出國。可是我仍不斷地練習，真正練到返老還童，能再年輕，再出國和大家見面。我是很認真地在練而且現在已經有一點效果，等將來真正成功以後，不但是我個人的收穫，也是大家的活教材。我想不久後，我會出國和大家見面談論道法和拳法。以上我所講的話大家看了以後，有任何的建議，都可以寫信給我作為參考，為金山門楊家秘傳太極拳未來的發展建言，希望大家多來函建議，最後

祝 各位同道同學
身體健康 萬事如意 功力精進

師 上壽子 延年

2004年7月21日

於台北道館

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節氣 中氣

Jiéqi and Zhōngqi for 2005

In his talks on Daoist Neigong Wang Laoshi especially recommends sitting for 20 minutes before and after the times the sun enters a new 15 degree ecliptic, called Jiéqi (minor or sectional term) and Zhōngqi (major or principal term).¹

春雨驚春清穀天
夏滿芒夏暑相連
秋處露秋寒霜降
冬雪雪冬小大寒²

Chūn yǔ jīng chūn qīng gǔ tiān
xià mǎn máng xià shǔ xiāng lián
qiū chù lù qiū hán shuāng jiàng
dōng xuě xuě dōng xiǎo dà hán

Zhōngqi and Jiéqi for 2005 ³			
	Chinese Name	English Name	UTC (GMT)
23	Xiǎo Hán	Small Cold	01/05/05 06:03
24	Dà Hán	Great Cold	01/19/05 23:22
1	Lì Chūn	Beginning of Spring	02/03/05 17:43
2	Yǔ Shuǐ	Rain Water	02/18/05 13:32
3	Jīng Zhé	Awakening of Insects	03/05/05 11:45
4	Chūn Fēn	Division of Spring (Spring Equinox)	03/20/05 12:33
5	Qīng Míng	Pure Brightness	04/04/05 16:34
6	Gǔ Yǔ	Corn Rain	04/19/05 23:37
7	Lì Xià	Beginning of Summer	05/05/05 09:53
8	Xiǎo Mǎn	Ripening Grain	05/20/05 22:47
9	Máng Zhōng	Corn in Ear	06/05/05 14:02
10	Xià Zhì	Arrival of Summer (Summer Solstice)	06/21/05 06:46
11	Xiǎo Shǔ	Small Heat	07/07/05 00:17
12	Dà Shǔ	Big Heat	07/22/05 17:43
13	Lì Qiū	Beginning of Autumn	08/07/05 10:03
14	Chù Shǔ	Limit of Heat	08/23/05 12:45
15	Bái Lù	White Dew	09/07/05 12:57
16	Qiū Fēn	Division of Autumn (Autumn Equinox)	09/22/05 22:23
17	Hán Lù	Cold Dew	10/08/05 04:33
18	Shuāng Jiàng	Hoar Frost	10/23/05 07:42
19	Lì Dōng	Beginning of Winter	11/07/05 07:42
20	Xiǎo Xuě	Small Snow	11/22/05 05:15
21	Dà Xuě	Big Snow	12/07/05 00:33
22	Dōng Zhì	Arrival of Winter (Winter Solstice)	12/21/05 18:35

Add your Time Zone to UTC to arrive at local time and date:
+8 for Taipei (Standard Time), -5 For EST, -4 for EDT, -8 for PST, -7 for PDT

¹ See previous issues of the *Journal* for elaboration of Zhōngqi and Jiéqi: Spring 1998, Fall 1999, Winter 2003.

² A mnemonic poem to remember the Jiéqi. Tang Hanliang (唐汉良), *Lishū bǎi wèn bǎi dá* (历书百问百答), Jiāngsū kēxué jìshù chūbǎnshè (江苏科学技术出版社), 1987.

³ See <http://e-service.cwb.gov.tw/docs/V3.0/astronomy/calendar/data/2005cal.pdf> for this and other material including solar and lunar calendars, and holidays.

There are downloadable spreadsheet versions of this table that will calculate the date and time for any time zone: Excel: <http://aymta.org/Journalh/jieqi.xls>. Open Office: <http://aymta.org/Journalh/jieqi.sxc>.

Basic Chinese Swordsmanship and the Taijiquan Student— Experience With an Intensive Introductory Seminar

By Marc Andonian

My friends and I, as young children, used to love to display our skill, power and bravery in mock swordplay. We were always in high spirits as we brandished our weapons made from branches or broomsticks—that is, until someone got hurt... Today, like millions of moviegoers, I love watching swordsmanship as a spectator sport.

Swordplay, in genres ranging from tales of the King Arthur's Round Table to swashbuckling pirate movies to the recent bevy of Asian-themed films such as "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," "Kill Bill" Vols. 1 and 2, "The Last Samurai" and "Hero," is always exciting. The action is fast, the risk is great and the "good guys" always seem to triumph. And, when coupled with special effects, this ancient art becomes almost magical.

When I was first learning taijiquan, I asked when we could learn a sword form. The answer was reminiscent of a scene from the TV show, "Kung Fu," where Master Kan tells Kwai Chang Caine (David Carradine): "When you can take the pebble from my hand, it will be time for you to leave." I was told that I must develop a level of skill with taiji form first before I would be ready to learn a taiji sword form.

For martial-arts students, the study of swordsmanship is generally pursued as a way to develop one's skill through extension of the body and spirit through the weapon as part of a form. Trying to learn a sword form before a student has developed an appropriate level of skill could result in the acquisition of bad habits. Errors in posture or movement are typically amplified when a sword is used in a taiji form. This advice made sense, so I was content to wait until my teachers thought I was ready.

Periodic discussions with my teacher, Bede Bidlack of Still Mountain Tai Chi Center (www.stillmountain.net), and his teacher, my master teacher, Scott Rodell, author of *Chinese Swordsmanship—The Yang Family Taiji Jian Tradition* and director of Great River Taoist Center in Washington, D.C. (www.grtc.org), led to the design of an introductory seminar on Chinese swordsmanship. The seminar was designed to provide an introduction to Chinese swordsmanship, not to teach a taiji sword form. It was built around the principles and cuts of the Yang family taijijian sword form, but did not require experience with taijiquan—though it would be helpful.

The course started with a reminder that swordsmanship, like any martial art, is very, VERY dangerous—and that we alone were responsible for ourselves and our safety. We were told that we should absolutely expect to be injured, perhaps seriously, in the course of study and practice. What *had* we gotten ourselves into, we pondered. Equipped with eye protection and wooden practice swords, we began our journey.



Dian

We started with an introduction to the basic parts of the sword (blade, guard or *hushou*, handle or pommel, tassel). The blade has three basic sections or zones: first zone—the very sharp tip, used for thrusting; the second zone—the sharpened area from the tip to the middle of the blade used for cutting or slicing; and the third zone or *forte*—the last 6 to 9 inches from the middle of the blade to the handle that provides strength. Next, Scott spoke about materials and construction methods of swords (various types of metal, layered in a three-plate, sandwiched construction). He showed us a number of antique jian swords, along with some sabers so we could see, touch and handle these weapons. Scott demonstrated that swords can "sing" when struck, and that the quality and duration of the sound, like crystal, says a lot about the quality of the sword.

Next, we learned about the proper etiquette of presenting, drawing and handling a sword—regardless of whether the blade was sharp. Whenever presenting a sword, we were told to treat it as if it was very sharp. Never pick up or draw another's sword without permission.

We were taught that correct technique to draw a sword for inspection is to hold the

sword firmly in one hand, with the flat of the blade parallel to the ground. Holding the handle in one hand, push the scabbard away from the handle, then "float" the sword out—being careful not to damage the blade. A jian sword has two sharp edges, and improper insertion or removal from the scabbard can damage the sword, scabbard or the swordsman.

Scott emphasized that jian are weapons—regardless of whether they are made of metal or wood. He chuckled saying that we would, no doubt, shortly find out how even our wood practice swords can be dangerous. He emphasized that the foundation of good swordsmanship is in the mastery of the basics. Scott indicated that the basics are challenging to master, and are often overlooked by students eager to begin learning a sword form. He mentioned that many who practice swordsmanship make very simple mistakes that, if done with a real jian with a sharp blade, would leave them with deep lacerations or fallen limbs. For us to develop any sense of proficiency—we should count on practicing each move ten thousand times. Wow!

Once we were suitably familiarized with the basics of the jian, Scott taught us the fundamentals of proper grip. Like golf, one's ability to control a "weapon" is founded on a good grip. Improper technique in golf leaves the player out searching for miss-hit balls. However, in swordsmanship, a poor grip can leave one without limbs or life. To properly grip the sword, the swordsman grasps the handle, with the flat of the blade perpendicular to the ground—so that the sword forms an extension of the forearm. The swordsman "shakes hands" with the handle, so that it is held loosely, but firmly. The thumb wraps around the handle and overlaps the middle two fingers. Holding the handle firmly, but within a cupped palm, allows for a fluid, circular movement needed for many of the motions and cuts. The opposite hand makes a sword talisman—first two fingers extended, thumb overlapping ring and baby finger.

As a southpaw, I found that I was naturally picking up the sword with my left hand, while my fellow students had it in their right. I asked what impact that would have—and was told that a good swordsman could handle a jian in either hand with equal ability. Several taijiquan sword

forms start with the sword in the left hand—then transfer to the other side, but in real swordplay, the sword can and is used in either hand. We would spend significant time working both sides during the seminar. Interestingly, some movements were easier in the nondominant hand—perhaps because the ability or natural tendency to “overcontrol” was not as developed.

With a proper grip, we moved onto the basic stances—a bow posture, with about 70 percent of the weight in the rear leg (Michuan) or the forward leg (public style). Our feet were to be flat on the ground and waist facing forward. The sword is held in the hand of the forward leg with an upward 130-degree angle, with the opposite hand making a talisman that supports the hand holding the sword at the wrist. As with taiji—the swordsman is always rooted and



Ci Defense

ready to release *fajin* energy or power. We also practiced moving from standing to ready position.

When at ready position, with the flat of the blade adhered to the back of your left arm—both arms hanging, I became aware of the real/potential danger of a sword. If holding a real jian with sharpened blade a slight mishandling of the blade at ready position could easily fillet your triceps, deltoid or latissimus dorsi muscles—self-defeated before one starts. Scott’s warnings were beginning to make more sense. As one moved to a basic opening stance, it was easy to bang or nick one’s self, again resulting in potential self-mutilation. Who needs an opposite—a *dui fang*—when one can defeat one’s own self so easily.

Scott said that these basic cuts are the foundation of the Michuan sword form, and virtually all other sword forms. We began our journey through the eight basic sword cuts used in jian sword forms: 1) *Dian* (pointing), 2) *Ci* (thrust), 3) *Liao* (sliding upward slash), 4) *Zha* (downward poke), 5) *Pi* (split), 6) *Duo* (overhead chop), 7) *Mo* (wipe) and 8) *Hua* (slash). Scott said that these basic cuts are the foundation of virtually all sword forms. Each has a series of

targets and, with proper execution, is very effective. The targets are small, so precision is important. While a hit or strike in an empty-handed form can stun or incapacitate the *duifang*, a properly executed strike from a sword can leave the opponent with punctured vital organs or severed limbs. The motions are often swift and direct, the “battles” short, as a single successful strike can end the match ... unless of course, you are the Black Knight from “Monty Python and the Holy Grail.”

We began with the *Dian*—or pointing strike. This is a one-to-three inch short-energy “poke” that can pierce body cavities or sever tendons or rupture blood vessels. To be effective, it must be aimed and executed accurately, and can be difficult to use. Perhaps this is why Scott says we need to practice each move ten thousand times.

Next we moved onto the *Ci*—or thrust strike. This long-energy piercing motion uses the first zone of the sword and penetrates the body deeply. This cut seems pretty simple, until you understand that its effectiveness is dependent on the precision of the strike. Usually the targets are the heart or aorta, the throat, or the deep arteries/veins of the leg. When successfully executed, the circulatory system is disrupted and blood pressure drops, then the opponent.

Onward to the *Liao*—or a long-energy drawing cut. This cut starts with the sword tip pointed at the *duifang*. The blade is rotated so that the flat can be used to deflect an oncoming strike. The sword is rotated downward (like the hands of a clock, in one or the other direction), and then an upward drawing cut is delivered to the underarm or armpit, or between the legs. In each case accessing deep blood vessels and musculature. Clearly this is an effective move but the circling of the blade is very challenging. Scott Rodell and Bede Bidlack made the moves look easy, and assured us that all of the moves will become second nature, with disciplined practice. Again, after at least ten thousand repetitions.

With tired wrists, we moved onto the *Zha* or downward poke cut. This short-energy cut is somewhat like the first cut we learned (*Dian*) in that it only penetrates one to three inches. However, the targets for *Zha* are the shoulder joint, throat or thigh so the strike must be executed with precision. To execute the *Zha*, the sword is circled vertically somewhat as in the *Liao* cut—using the flat of the blade to deflect a blow. The blade continues to circle overhead—with the tip pointing downward where it is directed to a target (e.g., shoulder).

Our wooden swords were getting heavy with the practice, but with a short break we

moved onto the *Pi* cut. To the beginner, this cut seems achievable—if delivered as a short chop to the wrist. In this use, the blade would sever the tendon that controls the opponent’s thumb—hence their ability to hold a sword. As with several of the other cuts, the *Pi* can be executed with a downward beat of the blade to deflect an oncoming cut. The motion continues downward and circles up so that the sword comes down overhand onto the *duifang*’s wrist. We found that our wrists didn’t rotate very well with this move, and that a proper grip was very helpful for this cut. Allowing the sword handle to swivel within the cup of the palm, facilitated our efforts to let the blade freely rotate in a more orbital motion. I’m sure practicing the moves ten thousand times would loosen up these joints.

Next—we learned the *Duo* cut—which was the only time we used two hands on the sword. In this cut, we found that we could use the blade in an upward beat to deflect the *duifang*’s blade, then bring the sword down hard in a percussive chop. If executed properly—with good follow-through—this could sever a limb or cut deeply into the skull or shoulders. With each of these cuts, we would learn and practice the motion, but with clear understanding of the intended targets.

Thinking about the underlying purpose or intent of these moves results in visualization of significant corporal damage—spurring blood and fallen limbs. All of the students “felt” the reality of these images—and developed a healthy respect for the martial intent in this “art.” Scott said that we needed to understand and train with a clear sense of what each of the cuts was intended to accomplish. Without this fundamental understanding, we would just be waving a sword in the air and never develop any real kung fu.

Once we had finished the *Duo*, we moved on to *Mo*—an interesting cut using a wiping motion to come up under the *duifang*’s sword moving it off center, then allowing a short percussive cut to the thumb. Executed effectively, the opponent’s thumb is



Zha

damaged or removed—along with their ability to hold a sword. Like the rest of the movements this one takes practice.

We finished our introduction to the cuts—with the *Hua* or slash cut. This movement can use both short or long energy, and involves some side-to-side motion—pivoting around a central point, while keeping the sword tip pointed at the *duifang*. The cut can deflect the *duifang's* sword—moving it off center—before executing the cut—a slice or poke to the throat. This was a particularly difficult move to get the hang of for many reasons: 1) it was executed from center to shoulder height, with the blade parallel to the *duifang's*; 2) the wrist moved in an arc, while keeping the tip of the sword on *duifang's* center; and 3) the motion balances around this “air fulcrum” in its mo-

worked on deflections, while the other practiced a strike. Switch sides, then shift hands . . .



Hua

During the drills, we all took a few “hits”—bumps and bangs, and “touches”—with varying levels of reaction. Scott regularly reminded us—that those “hits” would have caused significant damage if a real sword were in play. While we might have taken some satisfaction that we could have used the sword effectively—it was clear that most of the hits were because we were not in the right place—not because the sword cut was effectively executed. Also, many of these “injuries” were self-inflicted as we worked through the adolescent awkwardness of these new movements. Our respect for this art continued to grow. Tired from the day’s work, we adjourned for a team dinner at a local Chinese restaurant and a good night’s rest.

The next morning, we resumed our intensive seminar—with a brief review of each of the moves, and some more structured two-person drills. Stiff and overloaded with new information, we persevered in our drills. Our night’s rest and dreams allowed much of the information from the previous day to take root, and there was noticeable improvement in everyone’s technique. While we were still an awkward lot—we weren’t clobbering ourselves as much . . . and the drills looked like drills. So, Scott turned up the heat one more notch.

We spent a couple of hours working on “free drills”—in slow motion first, then with progressive increases in speed. The word of the day was “slowly . . .” but there was a natural acceleration in all of our efforts as the unpredictability started the

adrenaline flowing. When moving with the drills you develop a false sense of security as one person executes a strike, while the other executes a matching deflection. A B A B A B . . . the sequence would go. Then, we’d reverse and go B A B A B A . . . so we all got practice with execution and deflection. But with the free drills there were few patterns . . . and more bonks and bruises.

The senior students and the instructors could engage in knowledgeable and fast cuts and deflections on instinct, and the novices moved along steadily. Interestingly, when the novice was paired with a senior student the unpredictability resulted in a number of “landed hits” on the senior students. Of course, they were probably holding back, but the randomness due to lack of knowledge and skill was actually an asset. The newbies didn’t know they couldn’t do “this or that move” for whatever reason and senior students were sometimes not prepared. Perhaps there were only eight to nine thousand repetitions on their journey.

Tired from a hard two days, we ended with some demonstrations of Scott and Bede and other senior students. It was quite beautiful to watch the moves and countermoves be executed effectively—postures and movements with precision—as long as the speed and tempo were managed. As the movements were executed in drills or sequences, you could see how they could be linked into a cohesive form.

However, as teacher taught student, and student tried to “show the teacher” that the lessons had been learned . . . the tempo increased. With the growing frenzy of activity, precision was sacrificed and the motions became more erratic. The transition from “form to function” was in play. Truly amazing to watch—particularly with a healthy dose of respect for the difficulty and danger involved.

We ended our 16-hour marathon “introduction” tired and fulfilled. We had been introduced to a great deal in a short time. While we would forget much of what we had been taught, we would remember more than we thought, including the underlying lessons about the importance of swordsmanship as part of a martial artist’s training



Duo

tion. We found that one of the reasons this is a difficult move is because you can easily forget the connection to your root when you are engrossed with moving the sword.

So, with an introduction (a long day) and practice of each of these movements, we began to work on some two-person drills. This quickly removed all sense of security that we actually understood any of these basic cuts. There is a real difference between practicing with an air *duifang* and working with a real person as your opposite. We worked through each of the cuts—working with the sword in each hand—in a series of two-person drills. One person

Marc Andonian is a senior student of Bede Bidlack and teaches at Still Mountain T'ai Chi Center in Ardmore, Penn.

新年快樂 Xīnnián kuàilè as we welcome in 鷄

the Year of the Rooster 乙酉 yǐyǒu 22nd year of the Sexagenary Cycle

Non-Competitive and Competitive Taijiquan Pushing Hands?

By Henry Oliveras

Taijiquan pushing hands is considered a martial art tool by some and a form of two-person meditation by others. There are many styles and kinds of push hands emphasizing stationary positions, moving step, free step and more. With all these types of pushing hands and martial arts practice we cannot but ask ourselves,

1. "How do I know if what I am doing is truly healthy for me?"
2. "What attitudes should I take concerning pushing or being pushed?"

Everyone's journey is different according to the individual state of each person at a particular time and all should be allowed to grow into and out of things. That withstanding, I suggest we look at practicality, the human organism and the basic needs of the human condition. Inevitably, we must look into why we are entering into Taijiquan practice. This means reflection and seeking insight into our own condition. Whether it is martial arts, meditation or health that we seek, we should look for practicality and attitudes that develop and forge a fluid, healthy and happy spirit, mind and body, and a system that encourages continued practice throughout the remainder of life.

Taijiquan, a System of Health?

When I came to Taijiquan, I did not know it was a health system or meditation. I understood it was a fighting system that incorporated meditation thereby falling into the category of "health system" and I understood it would require lifelong persistence in solo and group practice to achieve high level in all platforms believing, and confirming that for me, the ability to identify the intentions of myself and others and to learn to respond appropriately through interaction that is friendly and mentally and physically challenging, was a worthy pursuit.

My interests quickly shifted from merely the martial to the spiritual, medicinal and practical martial art properties that I believe preoccupy the mind and psyche constantly. Time management would be required if I was to transform my life and being. Having realized some basic human needs I found Taijiquan time- and cost-effective. I would have daily exercise, meditation and a relaxed yet scientific martial arts program all in one time investment.

Making three honest lists in each category and seeing which list is greater may give insight into what we are "truly" looking to get out of our practice and study.

Survival: Defense (against assailants, old age, shame, your own and the world's ignorance, etc.).

Food: Nourishment in all its forms (food and the ability to get more, meditation, acceptance, love, exercise, etc.).

Shelter: A place to put your physical body where it will be safe from the elements (meditation to reside in the soul, friends that console and warm, family, etc.).

It is my opinion that most if not all of our actions stem from supporting one if not all of these categories. All of these categories are important and devastating when deprived, none so much as "survival" more directly "self-defense" at all levels; physical, spiritual, emotional, and psychological. Without this, the other categories are not sustainable regularly enough to support what we would call a more or less healthy and productive existence or "harmony."

Inquire into what are the things you are looking for?

1. Motivation,
2. Competition,
3. Friends with like interests,
4. A possible mate,

5. Martial arts for protection,
6. Martial arts for exercise,
7. Therapeutic,
8. Improved health,
9. Meditation,
10. Place to get away,
11. Relaxation,
12. Life direction,
13. Looks beautiful,
14. Enlightenment.



Group Practice Versus Solo Practice

As in all physical systems, Taijiquan appears not to be for everyone though it is my personal opinion that everyone can benefit on many levels from these types of spiritual martial art practices. Whether solo or group these types of martial, spiritual and meditative systems are simply good exercise. They improve mental and physical flexibility, strength of muscles and bones, stamina, general movement and grace, and more. Often what you want to get out of the practice and what you may be coming out of this practice with will differ and it is just as good, if not better, than getting what you want. Many players that learn the form or move on to pushing hands stop going to classes, focusing on the failures rather than the process. Others are truly motivated and do well on their own but mostly they lose interest and motivation and stop altogether. Group practice keeps a player going in solo practice, some do it because they do not like practicing alone, and still others to keep them in the right company, and I am certain there are many other reasons. Below are just a few.

Reasons for Group Practice

1. Friendly Competition,
2. Encouragement,
3. Company,
4. Positive Atmosphere, and
5. Guidance through example and corrections.

Reasons for Solo Practice

1. Builds fortitude,
2. Self-reliance,
3. Determination,
4. Character,
5. Relaxation,
6. Meditative, and
7. Private, striving for excellence without distraction.

Again, the decision to do group or solo practice is purely a personal one though it is my opinion that they compliment each other and should not be separated if possible. I move onto those that move into two-person Taijiquan either for martial arts or meditation. The checklist will be a very good tool for these individuals in particular. Those that are looking to expand themselves through competition-style pushing hands will find it has many good things and some possible setbacks, as does any type of competition art.

Training Competitively

1. Builds character, self-esteem and intensity.
2. It lends attention to detail in everything.
3. Strives to excel and grow.

4. It impresses the importance of following rules and good sportsmanship.

These are just a few of the many other good things. Differences in upbringing, cultural biases and personality distortions may cause negatives to emerge:

1. Rage,
2. Jealousy,
3. Unnatural desire to overpower, conquer and control,
4. Inflexibility in mind and spirit,
5. Missing opportunities for other possible attacks and defenses outgoing and incoming, and
6. Overcommitment to and use of overly large counters and attacks.

Looking at Traditional Chinese Medicine We Find the Following:

1. Regular anger and frustration stimulates the wood element (liver/gallbladder meridians). If left unchecked, excess or a deficiency through overuse or lack of activities or attitudes that nourish the entire system bring about excess or a deficient condition.
2. Desire to excel and disappointment affects the fire element (heart/small intestine and also the triple warmer/pericardium).
3. Nervousness causes water element (bladder/kidney) stimulation and overstimulation is possible.
4. Inability to let go affects the metal element (lung/large intestine).

Everyone wants to do well but often forget the laws of nature. Everything excellent comes through an investment of time and practice. Persistence is really the greatest requirement. Those that do not adhere to these rules are, more often than not, mutations that either benefit surroundings or have an adverse effect, though beautiful they may or may not be. The statement "true skill comes without effort" means much to me. It means fun combined with much time, much work and many failures.

Non-Competitive Training

A tiger or bear playfully mauling its less-sensitive and responsive recipient, Master Kauz assumes nothing is solid and finds the easiest path to the center of balance without offering a pushing or a striking surface. Through continued work with Herman Kauz we hope to understand that it is not enough to simply push or be pushed, it is equally important to notice possible eight posture attacks. Focusing on safety and addressing possibilities that might occur on the streets, against an aggressor with some degree of talent or skill in adapting who does not know rules but seeks only to find deficiencies and strike with hand or cutlery may very well be a more practical approach which means studying techniques that would disqualify one in competition.

When Training in This Forum:

1. It is important to focus equally on the evasion of incoming through the four-ounce theory (never invest or allow more than four ounces of pressure on the body) and simultaneous attacks.
2. Stay on the center (body) and find the off-balancing point.
3. Use (and do not allow yourself to be used through) tense arms. Bypass or use tense arms as a steering wheel. Four-ounce theory applying.
4. Control or mislead the arms; when defending control the lead hand/arm while entering to make contact with your hand on the body.

5. Remember that inflexibility leaves room for being cornered and failure to stick and control is rewarded with a friendly soft pat indicating that you have left yourself open and did not recognize, adapt or evade in time. Done playfully and without malice, this helps both players adapt to changing situations.
6. Learn to make space by turning, folding, using up and down and side-to-side appropriately.
7. Tensing up is considered a move and is taken advantage of. If an attack is tense, telegraphed or holds more than four-ounces from the onset, strike immediately or evade first causing a miss and playfully attack accordingly with push, palm, chop, fist, etc., without malice or destroying power.
8. It is important to not miss the target and your job is to use little effort when controlling while causing your partner to miss.
9. Stay light through the four-ounce theory. This lightness affords adept changes and adaptations.
10. Practice Stationary regularly. Though many complain that stationary is limited, it promotes flexibility in mind and body and puts persons in situations that promote finding the strongest and safest position, timely adaptation and evasiveness addressing deficiencies. The player that agrees to play defense puts their rear leg six inches away from a wall, if one is available. This helps teach a player to create time through space and motion, and notice and disturb things early or as they develop.

Attitude That May Help:

1. A relaxed and playful attitude is best.
2. Take note of your partner's strengths and weaknesses and correct them in first yourself and then your partner if appropriate and well received.
3. Seek not to overdo with large and gross movements. This is a distortion.
4. Work smart not hard.
5. Don't be overanxious. This is the same as tensing up.
6. Take advantage of what is overdone.
7. Focus first on offering no resistance by being sensitive to any touch and not allowing more than four ounces of pressure to land on any part of the body even if you must give up your position to do it.
8. Focus on being evasive and flexible misleading your partner.
9. Seek to use as little power as possible exchanging power for precision.
10. Seek to adapt your positioning to ever-changing situations.
11. Remember that your partner is not really pushing you. You are allowing yourself to be pushed.
12. Remain balanced.
13. Remember that there will always be someone with greater skill so practice, win and lose correctly and for the benefits that will come with time.
14. Remember that in the absence of many hours per day or much talent, improvement generally comes in five-year increments. So settle in.
15. Show appreciation.
 - ❖ Remember that your partner is affording you a great opportunity to learn on a level that is difficult to attain with solo practice alone.
 - ❖ Do not injure or dishonor your partner unnecessarily.
 - ❖ Follow the rules. How you lose is as important as how you win so keep to the principles

Henry Oliveras is full-time Zen Shiatsu Neuromuscular Therapist, a private and group Chen Style and Cheng Manching's Yang Style Taijiquan & Medical Qigong instructor on faculty at the New England School of Acupuncture. Check www.thenaturalwayhol.byregion.net or email thenaturalwayholistichealing@hotmail.com for information on a March Medical Qigong Workshop with Henry and an April Push Hands Workshop with his teacher Herman Kauz, a direct student of Cheng Manching, in Arlington, Mass..

Question for Members

Should an objective of AYMTA be “to educate the public that a purpose of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan is to ... develop the art of self defense” as stated in the current Bylaws?

America West Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan Association (AWYMTA) was founded by Wang Yen-nien, Akai Jong, and Julia Fairchild on 3/21/1992. The original Bylaws ratified by the Board of Directors¹ on 11/15/1992 included

Article II. PURPOSE

Section 1. YMT

- A. To promote health, prolong the life span, calm the mind, and harmonize the spirit.
- B. To develop the art of Self- Defense.
- C. To provide the entry-level of the Great Dao.

In the February 1993 issue of the *AWYMTA Journal* (Vol 1, No 1), Akai glossed each section of the Bylaws and wrote the following regarding Self-Defense:

YMT for Self-Defense

For self-defense, all styles of martial arts are effective. The important things are:

1. Make sure the principles of the style you choose are right for your personality. You can then say that this is “your style.”
The most important principles of YMT are Relaxation and Softness. Based on these principles, Yang Luchan, Banhou and Jianhou were all invincible.
2. Find a true teacher of “your style.”
Make sure you trust and respect “Your Teacher.”
If you do not trust your teacher, how can your teacher trust you? If you do not respect your teacher, how can your teacher respect you? If your teacher does not trust and respect you, why should he/she teach you the art of self-defense?
No teacher would appreciate being attacked by his/her own student.
3. Study and practice hard, continually and persistently, until your body, your mind and your soul unify to become an extension of “your style.”
When you go to a tennis tournament, you choose your own racket, compete within your own level and by the rules of fair play. In order to win, how much do you have to practice? If you lose, you always can come back to the next tournament.
If you must defend yourself, it could happen at any time or place, with no rules. The attackers are aggressive, may have more experience, be armed with weapons, and ready to endanger your health, your life, your property and your pride. How much do you have to practice in order to win? If you lose, you may never have another chance, or, at least you will never be the same person.

When AYMTA succeeded AWYMTA, much of the original bylaws were retained; *Section 1* of the *Purposes* above is included under *Objectives and Purposes* as “To educate the public that the purpose of YMT is to promote health, to prolong the life span, to calm the mind and harmonize the spirit, to develop the art of self-defense, and to provide the entry level to the Great Dao.”

The issue was first addressed when Julia Fairchild asked that the self-defense phrase be removed and in an email discussion which was published in the Summer 2001 *Journal*, pp. 6 ff. The Board of Directors had voted negatively at the 4/22/2001 meeting.

It was reintroduced as the 8/15/04 Director’s meeting. Two suggested options were sent to the members: to replace the phrase with “to understand the art of self-defense” or “to understand the art of self-defense and applications.” Only a handful of the membership responded, but some additional options were suggested²:

- Dropping the self-defense aspect would be inappropriate. The objectives were not “objected to” by Wang Laoshi before they were finalized by the BOD way back when. A rewording would be OK. The *idea* of “understanding the art of self-defense and applications” is better. What about adding something like: “The scope of self-defense and/or applications will vary by individual instructors.”
- I agree that dropping the discussion is not the right answer. I think it’s good to add “applications” to the phrase—not sure about the word “understand” vs. “develop.” One word Laoshi has used a lot that I’ve grown to like is “investigate” which presumably results in some understanding and may or may not result in developing.
- Perhaps we can change the line “to develop the art of self-defense” to:
“To foster and develop a deep understanding of the form and its martial applications.” The martial art implications are perhaps something better left to each teacher to decide for him or herself.

A combination might then be “to educate the public that [a] purpose of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan is to foster and develop a deep understanding of the form, investigating its martial applications and the art of self-defense.”

Please email, write or make your views known to a member of the Board of Directors.

¹ Julia Fairchild, Juliet Heizman, Akai Jong, Michiko Kato, George Lin, Jonathon Meeske, Sheri Rushing, Sam Tomarchio, Wang Yen-nien, Harry Wu.

² See also Marc Andonian’s “Letter to the Editor” on page 2.

2004 Push Hands Workshops with Serge Dreyer

By Charlie Adamec

When you first begin to practice pushing hands it is like being on a boat setting out from a small harbor. As you move toward the open sea, the land and all of its familiar reference points begin to disappear into the distance. Finally you are out in the wide-open waters with nothing to reference except the sea, moon and stars

I wish I could give the opening statement a bit of poetic closure with quotation marks and an attributive source, but I can't. Serge Dreyer did say something very similar during the summer 2004 workshop in Benicia, Calif.. I won't pretend that I caught even two-thirds of what he really said, as this was the fourth and final day of the workshop. Serge's generous stream of taiji knowledge had filled into and overflowed the banks of my little pond called attentiveness. Fortunately there were 40 other diligently working participants on hand. So, what may have flowed by me probably made it into our collective pool of knowledge to hopefully circulate back into the greater taiji community.

Serge gave the "setting out to the open sea" analogy in response to someone's question about why would we want to get involved with free pushing hands in the first place? An interesting point because, after all, we do have these very good two-person exercises in our YMT tradition.

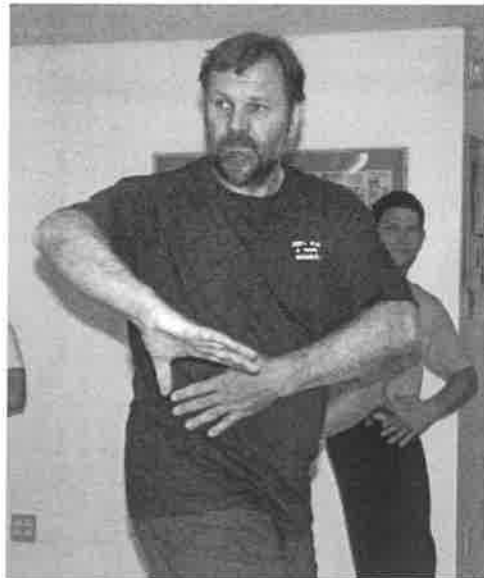
Would our taiji practice be hindered from growth if we just remained with basic exercises? For me, this question really dropped a match into the lantern of investigation.

It is quite a challenging endeavor as it is to learn the techniques of the basic YMT exercises. After that comes the art of adapting these techniques to fit with various partners. Those with a taste for the subtle refinement of their art could practice these exercises throughout their entire lives and surely find something new and wonderful every time. But when I



think about that earlier idea of sailing free from familiar reference points, it perks up an eyebrow to the notion that perhaps there's a little something else to be experienced as well.

When comparing push hands to sailing, practicing the basic exercises might seem like



learning to navigate a small boat in an established lake recreational area. The water itself would certainly be there as well as constantly changing winds that would require one's fullest attention. Such a location would be ideal for really developing all the essential skills that should be part of any seaworthy sailor's nature. A comfortable start, but would the sanctuary of the well-defined lake begin to hamper someone's enthusiasm. This might not do, especially for the heart that wishes to be open to all the ebbs and flows of the world. A heart that is kept buoyant by having no clue as to what's coming next and rolling with it. This lively moment occurring at every moment—without a moment's pause. For me this is the experience for free pushing

and it is an experience that makes it worth testing unknown waters.

It's also worth adding that the first bold venturing from the shoreline can be a bit daunting for most of us. I can certainly understand why someone might set sail without any guidance only to return to the landlocked life vowing to never again dip so much as a big toe into the water. Such personal growth calamities can be lessened with careful guidance from someone who has tested the air of the open sea and returned many times to tell of it. I feel that Serge Dreyer is that kind of teacher.

Only a few people on hand at the workshop had ever studied with Serge. Most only knew of him through his reputation and his role as an AYMTA adviser for the past few years. Yet I had the impression that most folks deemed the workshop to be a relatively safe environment before they arrived. Serge's open mind and disarming manner only served





to solidify those feelings.

As a teacher, Serge's personality was enjoyable: no shifty-eyed hidden agendas or airs of one-upmanship. He enthusiastically put himself into the middle of the event to share as best he could the art he has loved for so much of his life. Seeming to never be without bright eyes and a comfortable smile, he eased into every push-hands situation. And what's more, no one could push him.

So even had someone strutted into the workshop with the idea of showing whom the boss really was, it would not take too long to discover that there was something formidable within this relaxed and open manner.

I hope that I have not given the impression that Serge stepped through the door and the first day we all began free pushing as if we had been doing it all our lives. Not at all, for the shoreline was the place to be for hours of practice in a variety of basic exercises. Some were from Serge's Bagua and Xingyi background; most were in some way derived from his years of study with Wang Laoshi. There was lots of emphasis on detail and seeming endless repetition. Reckless abandon was not the way in which we eventually set out to sea.



Serge made a point of free pushing with each and every student. This created some time for others' practicing what they had learned and blending it into free pushing. Although everyone had something from his or her personal experience to bring to the workshop, Serge's individual approach to the art had each working from the place of a beginner. Whatever it was that our collective pool of knowledge had become by the end of the workshop, it was not for the lack of trying that we arrived at it. I really like the expression "not for the lack of trying," as it speaks to the high character of any student who is willing, however lightly, to tread outside of the known and comfortable. But, while paying tribute to the willful student, the expression also cuts a little slack for the stumbling oafishness that often accompanies such a bold endeavor. To me, that accepted

entwining of the two is itself a part of the learning experience and a wonderful outcome. There is no venturing out to sea without the possibility of some sort of capsizing present at every second. Fortunately the supportive and light-hearted atmosphere left big disasters with no place to find expression.

Okay, that's enough of me speaking for "we." Here's some other folks' experiences, generalized and detailed, laconic and elaborate, reflective and descriptive.

Viviane Chen

The workshop helped bring home a "real" sense of push hands for me. Some of the concepts Serge tried to bring home to us were:

SOFTNESS First of all the delightful SOFTNESS of his practice helped me to feel the more powerful contact that comes with greater connection softness. I loved playing seagull, learning to sink, rise, fly and sink again to feel more deeply flow, dexterity, and softness from spine to fingertips. On the third day he demonstrated an example of the benefit of this deeper softening, connection and awareness as he applied a lu/push to my arm with his hand, it felt like every inch of his skin and hand

that could make contact was able to do so from the softness and then when he softly, spiraled from waist to wrist, the power transmitted through the softness and the adhering was maximum



ACCEPTING Serge's focus on teaching us to expand our capacity to ACCEPT a partner's move was invaluable for me. Two of the applications were: 1) When we are pulled, allowing ourselves to fall into the move in a balanced, energized way, we allow ourselves to relax and open more deeply into the partners intentions. 2) We worked on accepting by

paying attention to "hollowing the chest," while maintaining our center and accepting.

TANGENCY I loved and his teaching of free-step push hands; we first practiced the bagua spiraling step. His point is that in fixed step push hands he observes we tend to go into our fear more, pushing and straining and using force. The moving-step push hands helped me to bring greater attention to the



moment-to-moment flow. And by applying the gentle spiraling bagua step to partner work, I could see very clearly the benefit of creating tangency to a partner's move.

GENERAL LEARNING He asked us what we wanted to learn, I spoke of wondering what I was doing there, it was for me to think of an effective "push" or "testing" move, even in a learning, healing approach. He suggested practicing coming to the middle place, between competition and being "blocked."

He gave me the perspective on how to view and break down situations more clearly and focus on my strengths rather than reflexive throwing up my hands in flustering fear or hand pushing. By allowing myself to accept being closer to a partner, he showed how for the "littler" people, to apply the greatest leverage by applying a move, for example a lu, from closer to the center of gravity, as opposed to with an extended arm or hand.



Serge gave freedom, reminding us to take ownership of our taiji form and push hands by 1) understanding the potential in the form, 2) to apply the moves in accord with the requirements of our own body in motion and in partnership, 3) and to align with the integrity of the form by finding how it most suitably works for each of us

Serge summarized by describing how the root concepts energizing Chinese calligraphy and taiji, are the same. I came home to see a glimmer of possibility for the spirit of taiji push hands within this body's expression. The brush and ink on paper expresses the spirit of the hand. They are the physical constraints, like our bodies. The various forms of movement are the styles of calligraphy. The potential is for each of us is to manifest through our individualized flow a true expression of the form. Every true artist's brush stroke and movement through a style and form is the same and yet unique. The conditions are always the same and never the same, the finite and the infinite forever dancing and still.

It was utter enjoyment to push hands with our group for four days, thanks to John Cole for hosting the workshop in Benicia.

Jan Phillips

Many thanks to John Cole for arranging the July 2004 tuishou workshop held in Benicia. I don't get many opportunities to push hands with people these days and I'm selective about the environments in which I will do so. John and Serge created a safe, educational and fun atmosphere. It was wonder-



ful to connect and stick with taiji friends from various parts of the United States and Mexico. I was glad to finally meet Serge and was grateful for the opportunity to learn from him. It's amazing how a seemingly small change brought to my attention after decades of practice can transform me and my practice instantly. I enjoyed Serge's tuishou instruction and appreciated how consistent his presentation was with my experience of Master Wang's teachings. I look forward to the next educational and harmonious tuishou gathering and hope that the AYMTA community will support similar events. We're fortunate to have so many talented teachers amongst us. Thanks again to John, Serge and all players.

Bourke Harris

During my opportunity to push with Serge Dreyer, upon a gentle incoming push, he encouraged me to "accept it" and to "have no fear." My normal response was to deflect or to move away. Serge helped me to begin to understand how to hollow my chest and thus negate the push and possibly, almost instinctually, continue with an arm sweep. It was a new experience. "It is much stronger to accept it," he said several times. "Let your opponent tell you what to do." At the beginning of the four-day workshop, Serge said that an important value of "pushing hands" was to assist in the cultivation of an ability to understand others and he commented on the spiritual value of the practice. I sensed that the manner in which Serge pushed, the stepping, his expertise and genuine gentle nature, tended to move the nature of play in the direction of softness. I am grateful that Serge came to share his gift with us.

Don Klein

I clearly waited until the four days had melded into vague gestalts: the wave, with the small of the back alternately concave and convex, a concatenating figure S from the ankles/knees/hips to the chest/shoulders/arms/hands; the spiral, the spiral, *la spirale*—in every motion; the absolute necessity for the upper and lower body to initiate and complete together. Softness, letting go in every aspect.

John Cole

Rarely does one meet a Renaissance man of Taiji. Thank you Serge, for spreading your contagious enthusiasm for YMT by sharing your unique and clear understanding of "Pushing Hands."

At the conclusion of the Benicia workshop, Serge stayed around the area for a few days that had to include a visit to the nearby Napa Valley region. With a suitcase full of wine bottles enroute for France, he made his way across country to the Great River Taoist Center in Washington, D.C., for a two-day workshop. Here is some of what was experienced there.





Bede Bidlack

It was wonderful to meet someone like Serge Dreyer Laoshi who has been practicing push hands for so long. He was very open with his rich experience, provided by thousands of push-hands matches. One aspect of push hands that I have been thinking about since the workshop is of push hands as a game.



Much of Serge's teaching reminded me of my collegiate wrestling training, when problems from competition are presented and solutions follow. For example, if I am pulled, I can step in for single arm sweep even though I will probably have both feet in front of the duifang. The duifang will be crowded enough that a slight movement will cause the duifang to lose her balance. Problem ... solution.



This may seem to many readers as utilitarian and encouraging competition, which may discourage further development. However, Scott M. Rodell Laoshi made an astute observation that perhaps one must go through a phase of great competence, in a competitive sense, before one can move on to higher

levels of understanding. I would add to this that someone, like myself, may be dimwitted enough to need the solution told to him, because he has not been able to figure it out. For example, there is what I call the "sweeping arm of death." This is a move utilized by the brute, who has plenty of muscular strength (*li*), and attacks the hip by pushing sideways, across the dui fang's center. This is a problem I have not been able to find a solution to on my own. I simply cannot turn out of it. My only solution was not to allow the dui fang to get it in the first place. Serge answered the question: "But what if he does?" Solution: turn the waist into it and push with the other hand.

Having collected enough solutions to be competitive, now I am able to forget about winning. It is enough to know that I could win. Now I can alter my style of push hands to allow for further development. I can take a shorter stance, as Serge insisted (see

his article in a previous *AYMTA Journal*), which may initially make it easier to push me, but exposes me to more subtle energies that will eventually improve my listening energy. With improved listening energy, I can now learn more from the push that just uprooted me. Thus the training has a method to it. The stages should not be bypassed, nor should they be rushed through. Rather each stage of training has its own lesson to teach.



Herein lies the wisdom gleaned from this workshop. As practitioners, we should be more aware of the taiji player that we are rather than being too focused on the taiji player we want to be. One moves from one stage to the next in one's own time, provided one is practicing sincerely. There is the painful memory of an early classmate of mine, who practiced diligently and showed great promise. He wanted so much to grow in his

abilities that he attempted to surpass this competitive stage. His internal energy did not develop fast enough for him, so he tried to use no strength (*li*) at all. Basically he pushed like his arms were noodles and did little by way of deflection. Naturally, he got pushed all over the place. Discouraged, he assumed that the promises of taiji were empty. The next time I saw him, he had invested his time and energy into weight lifting. What a shame.

As teachers, we must avoid two mistakes. First, we must not push students to unrealistic expectations. If we constantly chastise students for using strength (*li*) when they have not developed the internal energy (*jing*) or skill to use it, we run the risk of giving students unrealistic expectations of their level of skill and of taiji. (This is not a mistake Scott made with my friend above. My friend came to his own conclusions, without talking to Scott about his discouragement. One day, he simply stopped coming.)





Second, we must not “move students along.” It is not unusual for a student to come to me and complain that the class is moving too slowly. This kind of student measures progress by how many moves he knows. What students often don’t realize is that they are learning lessons and gaining abilities that they will only come to appreciate in hindsight. We must not move students along so as to

keep them in the school for much-needed tuition money. This is giving in to economic pressures and ultimately making taijiquan a commodity. By doing this, both taijiquan and the student are cheated.

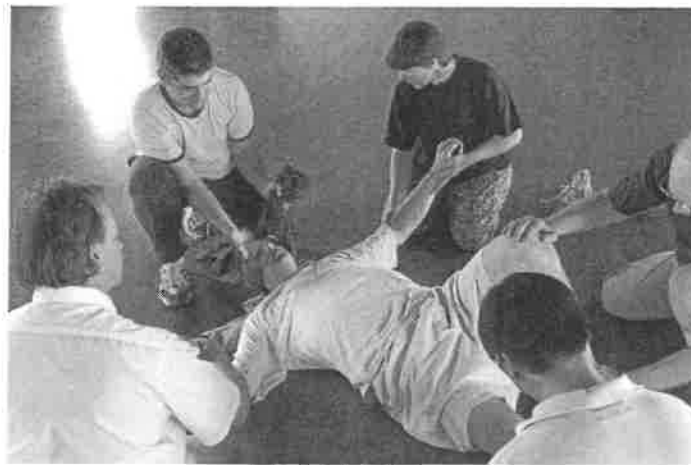
The learning of taijiquan has stages to it. Perhaps one of these stages is seeing push hands, not as some exercise where everyone is supposed to feel happy, but as a game to be won. Having won it, then the taiji player can realize the emptiness of this sort of victory. Next, she can choose to lose and learn more. If we can’t win at the game of push hands in the first place, can we really say that we can “invest in loss”?

Greg Wolfson

I found Serge to be modest, extremely skilled and entirely focused on pursuing the essence of taijiquan. Even though he was an international tuishou champion, he did not dwell on his successes but instead told us about particularly difficult matches he had had and how tournament anxiety affected his skills. He shared these experiences to underscore how important staying calm and letting go of oneself is in developing good tuishou.

In order to cultivate this feeling of “letting go,” one exercise in particular stands out. One student takes a short stance and al-

lows two partners to push him from in front and behind. The student’s objective is to yield and stay rooted as long as possible while using the arms to stay gently connected to the pushers. Of course, under such an assault no one was able to hold their ground for more than 10 or 15 seconds. What was instructive about the exercise was the mindset it instilled. Serge exhorted us to accept the inevitable loss that we would be pushed over and to yield completely to both pushers, not resorting to any stiff-arm tactics to stay upright. Serge’s point was that if we take this attitude into tuishou and truly accept an incoming force, our movements will be effortless and offensive opportunities will present themselves. However, if we remain attached to the ego that doesn’t want to get pushed around, tension will make yielding impossible and stiff, muscular aggression will be the only alternative.



Serge’s presentation of fajin technique as “a wave” was also very enlightening. He demonstrated how a pronounced “rolling” of the back and spine could transmit an energy wave through the body, much in same way energy is transmitted through a whip. Serge then showed us how this wave is tightened during application so that there is less delay as the wave travels through the body and into the duifang. For me, his demonstration clarified the

difference between transmitting energy through the spine and merely catapulting one’s stiff upper body at the duifang.

Looking back on the seminar now, I realize that many of Serge’s key points were exactly the same things Rodell Laoshi teaches us at Great River. It was Serge’s slightly different perspective and manner of presentation that jostled us out of our comfortable rut and made us see things anew. And that is perhaps the greatest benefit of his visit.





1994 Report from Rencontres Jasnières

By Scott Chaplowe



After a wonderful time last summer 2003 at RJ, despite the atypical rain, I figured it could only get better this year with some sun. Well, I was not let down. It was beautifully sunny this year, which enhanced the special gathering and sharing among taiji practitioners, internal martial artists, and other enthusiasts. Furthermore, the festival was even more fun and informative this year because Serge Dreyer, who was absent last year due to work on his Ph.D. dissertation, was in attendance at RJ this year—Serge is one of the principal founders of RJ and one of my primary teachers/friends.

For those as yet unfamiliar with RJ and its fine reputation, it is a festival where people of various styles, levels and languages gather to share knowledge and play martial arts in a safe, supportive community. It takes place during the last Fri./Sat./Sun. of July at in the rural countryside of France, (about two hours south of Paris). Most people camp at the RJ site in a comfortable, “bourgeois” camp setting suitable for tents or campers, but some people stay at the very quaint



lodgings nearby in the picturesque wine countryside. Since the late 1980s, this event has attracted people from around the world, and for good reason. I see it as part of a larger trend in the martial-arts community stressing cross-fertilization and sharing among the many beautiful styles, systems and schools of martial-arts.

The festival was structured in the same successful format that it has followed for years. There were two periods of workshops in the morning, during which about 20 different teachers from around the world taught various classes ranging from form and weapons to pushing hands. In the afternoon, after a period for lunch and siesta, people met out on a field for open, noncompetitive pushing hands—an extremely valuable opportunity to play with a variety of people of different sizes, shapes, skills, backgrounds and attitudes.

This was my second year teaching at RJ, and I taught two classes in taiji staff, and one in taiji “throwing hands.” Both classes went very well. In “throwing hands” we used interactive, partner exercises to explore applied taiji movement in response to incoming strikes. Just as we train in pushing exercises to better understand and internalize the principles of internal martial arts, we likewise trained in partner exercises involving strikes, cultivating an understanding of body positioning, alignment and martial counters to spontaneous movement.



The Taiji Eyebrow Staff class was especially well received as it introduced an interactive partner form sequencing staff movements together into a flow. Staff is a wonderful traditional weapon that reinforces the fundamental basics of internal energy, stressing generation, absorption, rooting, sensing and projection. Somewhat like interactive exercises in pushing hands, or “throwing hands,” this class was both fun and informative in that participants not only learned a form, but learned a role A and role B that they then did with a part-



with grass below, blue sky above, and surrounded by trees and lake water to push in a free, open, noncompetitive way. Suffice to say it is just beautiful. After an introduction to the whole gathering about the structure and guidelines of the pushing, a bell would ring every 10 or 15 minutes, signaling for people to change partners. This year, in addition to the open pushing hands, Serge Dreyer had a class at the same time on the side to introduce pushing to beginners, which turned into a rather large class as people of all levels stepped in.

Am I going to RJ next year? You bettcha!—(If I can get the time off). I highly recommend RJ to anyone, at any level. It is a wonderful way to pursue your interests in taiji, while experiencing a lovely part of Europe and meeting a variety of fine people from all over the world. Some teachers organize extended workshops in the days just prior or after RJ, which

ner. Such movement stresses listening, spacing and timing in the interactive staff play.

In addition to my classes, I had time to take another teacher's class during the morning session I was not teaching. This year I participated in the class taught by Cornélia Grüber, a taiji teacher living in Switzerland, and who has participated in RJ for years. Cornélia's class focused on a 20-step partner san shou form. One of the special things about RJ is that teachers can be students, and vice versa. There is little pretence of the "omniscient teacher," and I saw many of the teachers participating in other's classes, including the ones I taught. For me, it is always fascinating to throw myself into something new, and I very much enjoyed Cornélia's class, working through a new form, memorizing new steps and meeting new people.

Following a noon lunch in which one can eat fine cooked food at the eating area prepared just for RJ participants, or eat self-prepared food with friends in camp, people meet in a large field for the afternoon demonstrations and pushing. The demonstrations are a fun and informative way for martial artists to share their art, and test their concentration while performing in front of a large group. Last year I did a solo demonstration of a staff form, but this year participants in my class performed with me the partner taiji staff form I taught. This was really a good exercise to do, forcing us to refine our form, concentrate, and we had some good laughs too.



Several other groups performed during the demonstrations, including Cornélia's class, as well as some memorable solo presentations.

The demonstrations were followed by probably the most unique and certainly one of the most special features of RJ: the open pushing hands. It is hard to imagine this large gathering of people on a field



is an excellent way to make more out of your visit. Last year and this year I participated in the workshops after RJ taught by world-class taiji teacher, Lauren Smith, on taiji movement and pushing hands.

Taiji, learning, laughter, delicious food, excellent wine, nature Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about RJ.



Scott practices and teaches in Southern California.

YMT practice in Japan

By John R. Whittaker

One of the many interesting benefits of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan (YMT) study here in the United States is the potential for study and practice with teachers in foreign countries. At the AYMTA Website, <http://aymta.org>, a listing of contact individuals in various countries can be found to assist in finding teachers in the countries where there is a YMT presence.

Mrs. Lynne (Yoshie) Wada, 80, has been learning and practicing YMT form and study under her teacher, Chris Nelson, in Long Beach, California, for about two years now. The Long Beach group is part of a loose affiliation of YMT students and teachers in the greater Los Angeles/Long Beach area using "Southern California Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan" as our name.

After 27 years of teaching in elementary education, primarily instructing at the sixth-grade level, Lynne retired. She then taught English as a Second Language (ESL) at an adult school for a time. Her son, Randy, is a top executive at the Japan headquarters of an international corporation. For several months in the



spring of 2004 Mrs. Wada visited Randy and his family at their new home in the Tokyo area. Her desire to continue regular YMT practice in a group context was so great that we sought advice from Ms. Kayoko Imai, the Japan YMT contact teacher. Lynne was referred to Mrs. Seiko Yamada, who was teaching in a local prefecture. Over a two-month period from April through June Lynne attended six practice classes taught by Mrs. Yamada.

For Lynne the half-hour train ride and 15 minute walk to Mrs. Yamada's practice hall was quite an adventure. Although she speaks a California dialect of Japanese, not being able to read the signs in Japanese added some complexity to



Mrs. Yamada and Mrs. Wada

Lynne's first trips to class. She emphasizes the great cordiality with which she was welcomed to the class, and the special attention that Mrs. Yamada devoted to her during her practice there. She says, "The exercises and Thirteen Postures [13P] were taught exactly like you and Chris teach. This was comforting." Mrs. Yamada introduced Lynne to one of the YMT fan forms, and presented her with a fan as a parting gift. Lynne wants



everyone to know that Mrs. Yamada, "welcomed me with open arms, and made me feel at ease and a part of the class. She was gracious, with impeccable manners, and the epitome of a perfect Japanese lady."

A diagnosis of osteoporosis and the admonition from her doctor that falling would create grave consequences gave

Lynne impetus to find a way to improve her balance. So having heard many positive things about taiji and how it could improve one's balance she joined a class offered by Chris in the Long Beach Parks & Recreation department's Senior program. She says, "Learning balance is a very challenging thing for a person my age. In the beginning it [learning the 13P] was extremely difficult, I couldn't associate the movements to anything, but now I see a pattern in my head, which I never saw before. Kinesesthetic learning was something so foreign to me before."

Lynne laments that she has come late in life to practice of taiji, but with humor relates that Mrs. Yamada's students were very much interested in "How does a person your age get the energy to practice YMT?" She found that in Mrs. Yamada's class, "The taiji tempo was painfully slow, but beautiful. We used a music tape for the exercises and the 13P." A gift that Lynne was able to provide to her Japanese classmates was a demonstration to Mrs. Yamada by her of the first 13P change that Master Wang announced in 2003. Both Don Klein and Harry Wu, after their independent trips to Taiwan in the late summer 2003, had introduced that first 13P change to U.S. students and teachers.

Lynne wants to encourage all persons interested in improving their physical balance to consider taking up YMT as a life practice. YMT is part of her life now, and along with many other members of the Southern California YMT communities has begun learning the Kung Fu derived staff form, variations of which are known by many YMT practitioners. There's nothing like that flashy opening snap kick to spin the staff in a circle to wow onlookers—especially when you're 80 years old.



John practices YMT in Southern California.

2005-2006 AYMTA Board of Directors



Charlie Adamec

I have been studying YMT for almost twelve years. This will be my second term as an AYMTA board member. In my first term I was able to visit with some of the European YMT community on two separate occasions. In 1998 I visited with some of the Taiwan YMT community and had an opportunity to study with Master Wang for a short period. I teach YMT classes on a weekly basis as well as continuing to study with my teachers. I occasionally teach workshops at different YMT schools. I am currently working towards being a Licensed Acupuncturist. Hopefully that will come about before the end of this board term.

Jim Carlson

My involvement with Taiji started soon after receiving acupuncture treatments from Tsuei Wei in Oakland, Calif. Tsuei Wei, a student of Master Wang, also headed up the Taoist Center in Oakland and taught Taiji. His advice that Taiji would be greatly beneficial for my bum knee certainly rings true today. I studied at the Oakland Daoist Center for about 6 years under head instructor and my mentor, Jim Douglas. During my last year in the Bay Area I also studied with Sam Tomarchio who first taught me much of the Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan form. The past 9 years I have been living in Southwestern, MI with my wife Christine and son Jack. I offer classes in Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan at my Rouhe Daoguan in Mendon, MI. If you find yourself in Southwestern MI, stop by.



John Cole

My odyssey with Chinese culture and philosophy began with White Crane Gong Fu, Acupuncture and Dr. George Long in 1971. I met Tsuei Wei in 1973 and began studying Daoism, Buddhism, Qi Gong, Meditation, and Yangjia Michuan TaijiQuan the following February. In 1978, I became a California Licensed Acupuncturist and began private practice. I was authorized as a teacher of Tibetan White Crane Gong Fu and Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan in 1979. I opened Daoist Martial Arts in Vallejo, CA in 1980 and began teaching White Crane, Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan, Qi Gong, and Meditation. In 1993, I was voted Chief Instructor of American West Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan Association and was a member of the board. In 1994, I was awarded a Doctoral Teaching Certificate as a Daoist Teacher of the Sixth Generation from Grand Master Wang Yin-Nien of the Gold Mountain Daoist School. From 1999 to 2001, I was the president of American Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan Association, and in 2000 became the coordinator of the Gold Mountain Daoist School of Jin Dan.



Don Klein

I'm retired: ex-college faculty and software engineer (sequentially). When I was teaching I passed up the opportunity to study with Gia-Fu Feng while he was a visiting faculty at my college. So my first taijiquan experience ended up being a variant of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan taught by a student of H. H. Lui's (a classmate of Don Jones). I was also learning traditional Yang style from Frank Fong in Omaha NE. Our teacher moved away leaving an orphaned class; Kay and I were teaching beginning taiji and a student of Julia Fairchild's showed up. Shalamee didn't enroll in the classes, but lent us Volume I of *Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan* and a video tape of Laoshi playing the form: a form we recognized - however different our execution of the moves were. (Somewhere in the same timeframe we started attending biannual workshops with George Ling Hu, not knowing that he had been a student of Wang Yen-nien's and a friend of Lui's.) When the New York workshop with Wang Yen-nien was cancelled, we located the only known YMT practitioner in Michigan, Jim Carlson[↑]—2 hours south of us in Centreville, convinced him to return to teaching taijiquan, and traveled to Taipei to study at the Yen-nien Daoguan only a few months later.



Gretchen MacLane

I've been an actress, choreographer, drama teacher, proofreader and copy editor. Most treasured dance project: in 1980, funded by a National Endowment for the Arts Choreography Fellowship, I reconstructed an Anna Pavlova duet, "Autumn," music by Glazunov, from 26 bas-reliefs by Malvina Hoffman, and had the opportunity to interview people in the dance world who remembered Pavlova. In January 1995 I began YMT study with Robert Politzer and six months later my husband, George Vlachos, and I attended the Festival in Strasbourg, a taijiquan treasure.



Teacher Profile: Mike Basdavanos

Unlikely events are the ones that can have the greatest impact on your life and so it seems that a series of such events began my journey toward understanding what unlikely events are the ones that can have the greatest impact on your life and so it seems that a series of such events began my journey toward understanding what it is to be a Human Being. One morning my older brother Jim and I set out to Sunday school dressed in little woolen suit coats and bow ties. This was the beginning of summer sometime in the late 1950s before the spread of air conditioning, and as you can imagine we were not comfortable. When class ended we ran home and ripped off the coats proclaiming that we were never going back there again. My parents—ever resourceful—didn't stop looking for ways to divert our energies to the Good and so came music lessons. When it was clear this wasn't enough, I wound up in a Karate class (Tang So Do) with my friend Neil Ehrlich and actually began to learn ZaZen sitting meditation.

This class was a little different than most, I wasn't a high-ranking belt in the system but Neil was already a black belt and encouraged me to come to this morning class with mostly black belts. We actually sat for about a half hour before we began to work. Later, I became aware that there were two Japanese students living at the school and that they were doing something different than we were. It was called Aikido and when they performed technique it looked dynamic and miraculous to me. After all the smaller one would always start out in seated position while the larger one would run full tilt at him and then go flying off to the side without the other fellow making a move or breaking his sitting position. I really *didn't* know what to think, it was just too weird.

I kept getting beat up at the Karate class so my interest waned (I later realized that I was up against four nationally top-ranked fighters and didn't stand a chance!), but when Neil called me up and told me that there was a free Taijiquan class that we could take I had seen enough Internal Martial Arts to be interested even though I had no idea of how this stuff was supposed to work.

That class was on Saturday mornings at 7 a.m., not the brightest time for a teenager with serious Friday night "rituals." But we were enthralled by the idea of Chinese Martial Arts and dragged ourselves out of bed and to Robert Smith's class for several weeks. The challenge of slowness and rooted standing and the grace of the practice was clear in Bob Smith's form and when I found out that he had been in the CIA it added to the mystic power of what I was seeing. I decided to go to the evening classes and stayed with it off and on for several years. I went to the Xing-I and Ba-Gua classes also and was having great fun with all this.

In his book Robert Smith mentioned Wang Yen-nien as a master of softness relaxation and that Master Wang had been the first person to accept him as a Taijiquan student. He spoke a little about breathing and Qi and used examples from the realm of Autogenics and auto-kinesis that were intriguing and hard to believe. He spoke about a fellow named MacPhearson who could move objects with his mind alone and that there were studies going on about how he could do this. In addition he brought in the idea of healing as a natural aspect of the body instead of something that was caused by white-coated people in clinics. People in his class had recovered from all sorts of illnesses from paralysis to cancer and swore that Taijiquan was a major factor in their recovery. It was beginning to dawn on me that this was something broader and deeper than just Martial Arts and I wanted to find out more ...

It took several years for this to happen. It wasn't until 1981* that I met Scott Rodell, Johnson Thomas and B Wardlaw who had formed an alliance that was dedicated to bringing Taijiquan teachers, Zen Buddhist Meditation Masters, Taoist Meditation and Qigong practitioners and Zen Yoga to the area. All of this was completely new. This kind of workshop series with such a broad scope was a very new idea. Groups and teachers would support their particular teacher but not go beyond that idea



or practice. Here was a chance to try different practices and see them in action from the masters of the respective systems. I volunteered immediately and became a member of the Great River Taoist Center and supported the activities of the Center for the next 10 years or so. At the outset my Taijiquan studies were focused on form (Cheng Man Ching style) and push hands and some weapons training. It seemed that our intention to bring the masters to us had created a lot of energy and the GRTC was a popular place to study and meet fellow players. One after another T. T. Liang, William C. C. Chen, and Laoshi Wang Yen-nien came to teach and pull us up the ladder another rung or two. We in turn traveled to study with other teachers. I had great experiences with Paul Gallagher, Ray Hayward and Alan Tillotson, all students of T. T. Liang.

After having sponsored William C. C. Chen and T. T. Liang we thought it would be a good idea to send Scott over to Taiwan to seek out Mister Lieu who was a senior student of Chen Man Ching. Mister Lieu didn't begin teaching until 10 a.m. so there was a lot of time for Scott to check out other teachers that might be of interest. He attended Master Wang's classes and when he heard that Laoshi was a Taoist he immediately invited him to come and teach meditation at Great River. This was a great breakthrough in my understanding of Taoism. I had read translations of the classics like the Tao Te Ching, and Chuang Tse's works and spent time studying the I Ching and using its wisdom in daily life to the extent that I could understand it. (As one examined different translations one could see how deeply misinterpreted some of the text had become.) After Master Wang's meditation workshop all the texts changed their meaning for me. I looked for the Qi in every aspect of training and life. Sweating became a way of life ...

I was teaching the Chen Man Ching style at Great River but I began to learn the Michuan style as Scott brought back more and more information from his training in Taiwan. His single-minded focus on learning Taijiquan was a great benefit to me and others at Great River and our skills increased as we got to learn new things. Scott and I would practice several times a week in the morning and in this way I learned the first and second duan of the form and T. T. Liang's sword form with the tassel used as a weapon too. Technique was more important than philosophy to me at this point and I wanted to compete and test my skills in push hands with other Taijiquan players.

It was then that the GRTC began to consider sponsoring push-hands tournaments in the United States so we could develop skills to participate internationally. Scott and I traveled to Taiwan to compete

* All dates are according to my recollection only; please excuse any errors.

in the International Taijiquan Competition in the fall of 1986. Within two days of arriving in Taipei, we were nearly blind from the conjunctivitis caused by pollution. I remember standing on the curb waiting for a bus and then moving away from the curb to the side of a building to try to get more oxygen into my lungs. (It's gotten better since then ...)

Lack of oxygen aside, this was a great experience and my first experience of Master Wang's class in downtown Taipei. I remember squaring off with another student and having him run full tilt toward me at the sound of the whistle. This was not the push hands I was used to ... the encounter injured my foot and told me that I would be playing with a different conception of push-hands. When the day of the competition came I was paired with a student from Master Wang's daoguan, a journalist as I recall. He was about my size and when we were checked in, the judge took our eyeglasses away. We looked at each other with the same thought, how am I going to see this guy? Then realizing that our minds were focused on the same dilemma we laughed and went out to play. The stadium was by and large empty and I remember wondering where the spectators were. After all wasn't Taijiquan a popular sport in the ROC? After asking about this I was told that the U.S. women's soccer team was the preferred spectator sport and we were nothing special. What was special was the demonstrations of form and Qi that were presented, varieties of movement and grace that were as beautiful and powerful as anything I have ever seen. Many different types of Taijiquan were shown and the world of Taijiquan seemed to be larger than I had thought. When it was over one thing was clear, that most of the people competing in the tournament were using Li or muscular force and not Qi and Internal energy. I began to get discouraged about where the practice of push hands was leading me. I really wanted to understand the internal and thought that competition should move in this direction to be a legitimate example of the Taijiquan Art.

I believe that our tournaments at GRTC were in the spirit of Taijiquan with skills of yielding and softness valued over brute force. As a judge I never awarded points to a technique that I could see was forced and muscle-bound. I also gave points to people who could yield better than others. Neutralizing force was, for me, a higher skill than pushing. We also did not separate men and women in the first competition and this led to a final round in which both genders were represented. The result was women competed up to and including the final round and placed second in the middleweight division. (A friend of mine who has a degree in Physical fitness told me about testing the force of a kicked ball against a pressure plate that was done in his college classes. The results were the same for men and women indicating to me that if we all were to use the springing, coiling energy of our legs Taijiquan would be a skill of equals.)

Unfortunately our next tournament wouldn't allow gender neutrality because of sanctioning by the AAU. I believe that this division of genders contributes to lessening of skills over all in the Taijiquan world and that women and men should be able to practice push hands together without a problem if they are using real Taijiquan skills.

I competed once more in National competition at the 1989 Taste of China Competition in Winchester, Va., where I did the Yang Style Sword form with fighting tassel.

Around this time I started to really want to devote my attention to doing the YMT form because most of the training that I had received in push hands was from Wang Laoshi's workshops and from refining skills among students of YMT. This led me to eventually stop teaching Cheng Man Ching style and start Dancing Mountain in 1992 as a school featuring YMT as the only Taijiquan style. I enjoy the YMT form and have been happy with this decision and with the blessing of Wang Laoshi to begin.

Throughout the 1990s I spent lots of money and time traveling wherever Wang Laoshi was teaching in the United States or Europe and have many fond memories of experiences with friends in Europe, Taiwan and the United States. Dancing Mountain sponsored Wang Laoshi in 1993 to teach the 13 postures in Washington D.C.

In 2000, my regular job as a piano rebuilder came to an end with the closing of the shop by its owner. I was left wondering what to do, but not for long ... another signal of serendipity came when my friend Colette Thomas invited one of her friends who had recently graduated from massage school to dinner. She told me that the school offered a full certification course in Shiatsu (Acupressure). This sounded like something that would relate to my Taijiquan and Taoist background and be of help to my students and others. I spent my savings and borrowed to go to school for 18 months. (Taijiquan wasn't a big income-producing endeavor for me.) This path has now blossomed into a regular bodywork practice, and with the help of John Cole, a therapeutic Qigong practice as well. I have also gained a greater understanding of the way in which Taijiquan can foster energy development through study of the Extraordinary Meridians used in meditation, Shiatsu and Qi-based bodywork. I think that many people fail at Taijiquan because their bodies are too weak to do alternating leg practices and they need to start with more basic practices and learning about Qi to keep up interest and get to the Taiji level ... I am now very aware of helping students to alleviate any discomfort caused during practice before they leave the studio to go home.

I believe the main goal of any Taijiquan class is the health and well-being of the participants and have found that working with Qi almost always makes people feel better no matter what shape they were in before class.

My studies are now moving into Medical Qigong that is beginning to be a certified practice in the United States. In China there have been facilities devoted to the use of Qigong and emitted Qi to cure illnesses that are stubborn and don't respond to medicine and techniques used in post-modern Western countries. I think that the future of health practices is the past in some ways. There is expanding use of traditional energetic techniques to relieve chronic stress of all types via a personal Taijiquan, Yoga or Qigong practice or help from energy therapists such as Asian Bodywork Therapists, Acupuncturists, Herbalists, Massage Therapy and many other energetic modalities. Also important is the idea that nutrition and herbal use can help us retain the body's flexibility and restore deficiencies of organ Qi to support good health. These things are not separate in Chinese thinking: exercise, Qi bodywork, nutrition and meditation are the foundations for health and longevity. So now my teaching includes many of these ideas to inspire students to expand their experience of Qi and deepen their well-being.

Mike offers classes in Gaithersburg, Md., through Relaxing Alternatives and at private homes in Silver Spring, Md. He also does private training sessions in Taijiquan and Qigong and is an Asian Bodywork Therapist certified by AOBTA and NCCAO.

Taiji in Your Life: The Power of Intention

By Dale Napier

Life Lessons

A university is a highly transient operation, even more so at the campus where I teach *taijiquan*—a commuter school that is often a way station for students who frequently move on even before graduation.

As a result my challenge as a teacher is to impart as much training as possible in a very brief period of time. This is difficult, given that taiji proficiency can be hurried no more successfully (and far more slowly) than a pregnancy. Increasingly my goal is to provide *life lessons* that taiji can bring us, along with the physical lessons that students seek.

This article is the first of a new column, "*Taiji In Your Life*," devoted to discussing lessons that can be taken directly from our practice of taiji. These lessons are no doubt, like the layers of the fabled onion, nearly limitless. Each column will be devoted to a specific topic, which be announced at the end of the previous column.

I invite everyone to submit further examples of their own taiji life lessons. They may be based on an announced topic, or if you wish, suggest a future topic.

Make it Real: The Power of Intention

Intention requires complete awareness and mindfulness of the task at hand, and the will to execute it purposefully. It brings every movement, every technique to life—and requires as a consequence that every movement be given full attention.

Intention means everything to success in martial arts. As long as it took me to realize this, it took even longer to realize that *success* (however you choose to define it) has the requirement of intention, no matter the area of endeavor. To want to do something, and to intend to do it, are very different matters.

Taijiquan

In taijiquan nothing can be accomplished without intention. You cannot attack someone or defend yourself unless you really intend to. I discovered this once in a class where my *stiff qi*, a lack of intention, caused a delayed response, and a resulting fat, bloody lip that never fully healed. If you launch an attack upon someone with intention, and that attack is not intercepted, that attack will occur and injury may accrue accordingly. In much slowed down practice, perhaps one-fourth full speed, injury will not occur, but contact will, such as knuckle to chin, depending on the target and attack.

This is one of the reasons why a feint is so difficult to effect: if not intended to be real, it will not be felt or treated as real. Not having the energy of intent, it will not be felt by the opponent. Unless it is felt to be real, the feint cannot draw the opponent into a vulnerable position. Indeed, the poorly executed feint *becomes* the vulnerable position through its weakness. One of the reasons I never worry about my students taking a swing at me (usually fearful and half-hearted) is that long before the attack arrives, I can feel their intention and know whether a response is required. Usually it is not; beginners know little of intention.

The importance of intention is emphasized across a broad spectrum of martial arts. Stephen K. Hayes, who introduced ninjutsu to America in the 1970s, devotes an entire chapter to it in his book, *Legacy of the Shadow Warrior*. In the art he then studied and evolved into what he now calls *Toshin-do*, students train to be sensitive to intention, to the point of being able to feel an unseen attack. Even today, the sole test for fifth dan in the *Bujinkan* (the nine-ryu system of Hayes' teacher, Masaaki Hatsumi) is the ability to avoid a sword attack which is unseen and unheard. Morihei Ueshiba, founder of *Aikido*, believed that an attacker was always at a disadvantage because he "disturbed the harmony of the universe." Both Hayes and Ueshiba were, in their own ways, describing something quite familiar to taiji masters: the ability to sense projections of *qi* (what the Japanese call *ki*) that accompany an attack circumscribed by *true intention*.

This is easily demonstrated in attack-and-counter drills, typically of the one-step or three-step variety. If the attacker "attacks" without intention, without spirit, there is no energy in the attack; hence, nothing to defend against. In such drills, the attack is useful only if, when not countered, it will continue to its logical end and strike the defender as intended. Otherwise, there is no energy for the defender to use, no energy to avoid or defend against. Without intention behind the attack, the defender can most likely do nothing at all and remain intact.

In taiji practice this is most obvious when working with a practitioner of what some call "spaghetti taiji." "Spaghetti taiji" is practiced limply rather than relaxedly, with no more purpose than to feel good. It has no intention, no martial arts basis. It is a problem I must often overcome with my beginner students, who are either tense and over reactive, or limp and under reactive. In training exercises, it is difficult or impossible to demonstrate a technique unless intention is behind the attack. In form practice, as discussed in the final section of this article, your form has no life without intention.

Life

In real life our use of intention is closely connected to how serious we are about our life plans. Some people make their dreams happen, while others spend their lives simply dreaming.

My earliest insight into this came more than two decades ago, when I fancied myself as an aspiring writer in the entertainment field. In 1978 I had an idea that I thought would be a good story, probably as a screenplay. One day, after the idea had gestated a bit, I went to a movie and was disturbed to see that three-quarters of my tale had been made into a movie already, leaving me in the dust, a great idea "ruined."

What ruined it? My own lack of intention. Writing at that point in my life, even though I was a degreed writer, was still more of a fanciful notion than a true intention. How could I have made it an intention? By knuckling down and putting my ideas on paper, making it work: exactly the process required to write this article, which itself has been germinating for some time.

Dr. Wayne Dyer spells out this lesson more fully in a recent book, *The Power of Intention: Learning to Co-create Your World Your Way*. The publisher's description says it quite well:

Intention is generally viewed as a pit-bull kind of determination propelling one to succeed at all costs by never giving up on an inner picture. In this view, an attitude that combines hard work with an indefatigable drive toward excellence is the way to succeed. However, intention is viewed very differently in this book. Dr. Wayne W. Dyer has researched intention as a force in the universe that allows the act of creation to take place.

I never "intended" to include this reference in the discussion, but the book serendipitously passed before my eyes just as I was contemplating the subject. Without fully reading the book I can not be sure, but I suspect I might take issue a bit with Dr. Dyer's interpretation of intention: whether a force in the universe or not, nothing you want to happen *will* happen without your intention for it to occur—unless you believe luck is the primary motive force in the universe.

Examine your own life. What do you want or plan to do that you never got around to doing? Not doing the thing is evidence of your lack of intention; some would say it is a mere fantasy. As John Lennon once sang on his *Double Fantasy* album, "Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans." What is happening in your life, and how does that differ from your plans? Take a lesson from taiji: convert your plans to intentions, and they will start to happen.

Exercises: Extension as Intention

The following exercises are not intended to fully describe the techniques in reference, but to consider certain aspects of the techniques in order to illustrate the required use of intention.

Ward off

Never make the mistake of proving *intention* through *tension*—instead use *extension*. In ward off, do not simply move your arms outward in a limp, lifeless manner—instead have them extend upward and outward from energy gathered, made possible from the intention of your body's movement.

From a left forward-posing stance, pull energy through the K-1 bubble spring point in the sole of each foot, pulling the energy up your legs. Your circling knees, then circling hips and waist, keep your qi rising up to unite at the perineum and continue up your back. As the legs circle and straighten for full extension and discharge, the arms come up, with the left arm leading, the right hand touching lightly behind the left wrist to create a connected circle enveloping a large taiji ball. At full discharge, the legs are fully straightened and extended, your left heel slightly raised; both feet are connected to the ground through the bubble spring.

At mid-back the energy splits and travels out the arms. Use the energy of the motion to extend fully through the arms, as a line of force travels through each arm and out the palm at the *laogong* point. In solo form practice a key element is to fully commit your intention through extending fully through your arms and out your palm. The power is manifested in a pliant whipping motion. Executed correctly, it will repel an attacker backward, helpless in all three dimensions. Without intention, your opponent will not only not be repulsed, but will rather penetrate your center to pin or attack you, helpless to further defend yourself.

Palm Strike to Heart

This movement takes place throughout the form—for instance, at the end of "brush knee twist step." Brushing the left knee with the left arm, we move our center forward as the right foot moves in, culminating with a right hand palm strike to the heart, or any number of choice targets.

In this exercise, focus on the left hand, the anchor. Practice it with a partner, who need only stand sideways to you. You move in with the attacking hand to move the person, ideally a "popping" motion.

Full intention of this attack is not manifested unless you extend not only through the palm of the attacking hand, but also through the palm of the anchor, in this case the left hand. In any attack manifested through the arms or hands, energy is discharged through both; both are fully extended through the manifestation of this energy, as it continues out through the *laogong*.

When explaining to students that in a hand attack, one hand may anchor the other, I use the illustration of a rope.

Imagine that you are trapped on the roof of a building, but you have rope you may use to help you down. You tie one end of the rope at a secure point at the top of the building; you drop the other end to the ground. Now you have a limp rope, just hanging there. There is no energy in this rope. You may climb down this rope, even rappel down with it, but you must do so carefully, and you may fall; all the energy expended will be your own. That rope is one hand attacking without having the other as an anchor.

Or you may have someone on the ground (for this example you are allowed to assume that there is indeed someone on the ground to assist) secure the other end of the rope near the ground. The dynamic tension thus created in the rope make it possible for you slide down the rope, your only concern being how quickly and forcefully you reach the ground—such is the power of the technique. A rope anchor at each end, those are your hands, attacking hand and anchor working in concert—*with intention*. Without intention, your arms and hands are limp spaghetti slapping against a wall.

Dale Napier, a writer and publisher, teaches Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan at the University of Houston. The topic of the next column is *Getting Real: Make a Connection*. You may reach Dale at "Dale Napier" <dalenapier@hotmail.com>.

WE ARE ALL VOLUNTEERS: A PLEA FOR SUBMISSIONS. As Sam listed in a very early *Journal*: Articles, Photos, Personal Experiences, Artwork, Poems, Anything related to TJQ, Neigong, Meditation ... And we continue to need proficient French-English translators.

Dale offers an additional option: if you can't think of a topic on your own or don't feel you have enough for a full article, consider responding through a *Letter to the Editor* or sending Dale a paragraph or two on either the next topic or a specific example in which you see a parallel between your taijiquan practice and an incident in your life.

TEACHERS' INTERNATIONAL MEETING

From 22nd to 28th of July 2005—France

4 p.m. Sunday to after breakfast Thursday

Next summer, the European College of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan Teachers is organizing an international meeting for teachers of our style. All American teachers are cordially invited to this event that we hope will be a fulfilling and friendly experience.

It will take place in a seminary and leisure center in "La Pommeraye" village near the Loire River in the west part of France, a lovely area with very good wine and beautiful castles (but what part of France isn't).

The center is located in a park with gymnasiums and meeting rooms. The bedrooms for one to several people are located in bungalows throughout the park. The food is excellent and the staff welcoming.

The Amicale 2003 meeting reported by Charles Adamec in the Winter 2003 *Journal* was held there. The only difference should be the sun and the warmer temperature.

There will be translation from French to English.

Do subscribe quickly. We are looking forward to welcoming you. Note, you do not need to pay in advance, only announce your intention of attending: Cost: 276 € full room and board

The date was specifically chosen to allow people to easily attend Rencontres de Jasnières on July 29 to 31 (2 hr., 126 km. east).

In Friendship,

The European Teachers

The general themes of the workshops will be the following:

- Shi san shi.
- Study and practice about exercises with a partner
- Study and applications of the principles quoted in the Classics.
- The Ba Fa and their place in the main handform.
- Vocabulary about Ba Fa and Wu Xing.
- Applications, yongfa, tuida and sanda.
- Movements in codified Tuishou, especially Peng Lu An Ji and Da Lu.
- Neigong.
- Committees, talks and discussions.

This program is not definitive: things can be modified or added. Not only are your own suggestions welcomed, but also we hope the Americans will themselves teach. Send your proposal to Jean-Luc Pérot jlperot@skynet.be. Although we all are from the same school, we don't have the same cultural approach and that will be interesting to share. That is the fundamental idea of this open workshop.



EUROPEAN COLLEGE OF YANGJIA MICHUAN TAIJQUAN TEACHERS' SUMMER MEETING 2005

Name _____

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City _____ State _____ Postal Code _____ Country _____

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I would like to subscribe to this meeting from 22nd to 28th of July 2005: Cost: 276 € full room & board.

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Directory of AYMTA Member Instructors

The following AYMTA members are Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan instructors in North America. The addresses listed are for mailing purposes only. Please contact instructors by mail, phone or email for specific information about class times and locations. If you are currently teaching Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan in North America, are a member of AYMTA and would like to be included in this list, contact the Treasurer, Kay Reese (address below under Michigan). If you are unable to contact an instructor or need additional information, please contact the Treasurer. If you are looking for an instructor outside of North America, consult the Worldwide Directory.

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AYMTA CATALOG

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BOOKS

YANG FAMILY HIDDEN TRADITION OF TAIJIQUAN, ILLUSTRATED AND EXPLAINED by Wang Yen-nien

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Photos and text fully illustrating Kunlun Jian form with Character-by-Character glossary of the KunLun poem and additional material on the Chinese Sword, the Basic Sword Exercises. 321 photo illustrations, 174 pages.

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LITTLE RED BOOKLET 2003 (3RD) EDITION

in Chinese and the Chinese phonetic system "bopomofo"; includes the names of the movements of the Sections 1,2,3, the Yen-nien Fan, the two Sword forms, the Long Pole, the Taiji Classics, and more; small pocket book format, plastic cover.

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YMT BASIC SWORD METHODS

Photos and Text on the 8 Basic Sword Cuts; list of WuDang & KunLun Forms in Chinese, Pinyin, English. 56 Pages.

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FANS

BAMBOO FANS, SPECIFY RIGHT-HANDED (STANDARD FORM) OR LEFT-HANDED (MIRRORED FORM)

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AUDIOTAPES, CDS

YANGJIA MICHUAN TAIJIQUAN by Wang Yen-nien – Audio Tape, CD

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Collection Series, CD Only

Set of three Audio CDs of Wang Yen-nien leading the basic exercises at the Grand Hotel teaching area, from the 1970's. One CD for each of the three rotation schedule days. Day 1/4: Basic Exercises (26 min.) and Sec.'s 1,2 of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan (32min.). Day 2/5: Basic Exercises (26 min.) and Sec.3 of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan (32 min.). Day 3/6: Basic Exercises (30 min.); Wudang Sword (9 min.); Kunlun Taiji Sword (8 min.); Yen-nien Taiji Fan (7 min.).

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VHS, DVD-Rs

Ensure that your DVD player will play DVD-Rs before ordering.

Although videos published by YMTI are available in various formats, the catalog only indicates those which AYMTA stocks.

WYN IN TAINAN (early 1970s) VHS, DVD

Wang Yen-nien demonstrating YMT Sections 1,2,3, Kunlun (Old) Sword, WuDang (New) Sword. A little dark but fun - no sound - looks like a Buster Keaton.

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WYN DEMONSTRATING YANGJIA MICHUAN TAIJIQUAN – VHS, DVD.

Videotaped in the early 1980s in Japan and in Taiwan, this tape shows Wang Yen-nien demonstrating the following: YMT basic exercises, YMT Sections 1,2,3, Tuishou basic exercises, Fajin exercises, Thirteen Postures and Kunlun (Old) Sword Form. The names of the postures are called out in Japanese. 99 minutes Video, DVD or VCD.

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WYN teaching Fan, 1st Duan and Basic Push Hands Exercises, with Julia Fairchild and Sabine Metzle assisting.

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NY YMT

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AYMTA

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JOURNALS

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AYMTA

What is AYMTA?

- The American Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan Association (AYMTA) is a nonprofit public benefit corporation. The specific purposes for which this corporation is organized are to transmit, perpetuate, promote and further the growth of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan (YMT) in the United States.

What is Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan?

- YMT (Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan), translated as Yang Family Hidden Tradition, was created by Yang Luchan. Yang Luchan passed it on to his son Yang Jianhou. Yang Jianhou passed it on to Zhang Qinlin. Zhang Qinlin passed it on to Wang Yen-nien. Master Wang, in order to prevent the loss of this art, has passed it on to all who are interested in carrying on the Yangjia Michuan style.

Member Eligibility

- Submit a completed and signed application form.
- Pay the annual fee.
- Support the purpose and objectives of AYMTA
- Members need not be YMT practitioners.
- Members are welcome from all over the world

The Objectives of AYMTA

- To promote and respect the quality and integrity of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan as taught and transmitted by Wang Yen-nien
- To conduct workshops and public demonstrations in YMT.
- To educate the public that the purpose of YMT is to promote health, to prolong the life span, to calm the mind and harmonize the spirit, to develop the art of self-defense, and to provide the entry level to the Great Dao.
- To provide YMT instructors for the public.
- To provide interested members with opportunities to develop the skills necessary to become YMT instructors.
- To provide assistance to member instructors in obtaining required documentation when requested.
- To help instructors improve their teaching and build consistency in teaching YMT.
- To publish a journal (twice a year) and newsletter for members

Annual Fee

- Regular: US\$35 per Year
- Family: US\$20 per Year
- Full Time Student: US\$20 per Year

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