

Wudang

Twin Cities T'ai Chi

05/23



TEACHING THE ART, SCIENCE, AND SPIRIT OF T'AI CHI

From Sifu Paul

Greetings, everyone,

If winter comes, can spring be far behind?
~Shelley

Spring has finally arrived. As the memory of our nine-inch April Fool's Day snowfall melts away, the budding plants and birdsong are welcome replacements.

Grandmaster Wai-lun Choi turned 84 in March, and I celebrated 41 years practicing and teaching T'ai Chi on April 10. An important and beloved teacher and friend in T.T. Liang's lineage of American students, Paul B. Gallagher, passed away in March (see our special tribute below).

There is much activity at the studio this season and on into the summer. A new quarter begins: T'ai Chi in the park opens soon; new classes, times, and teachings; a summer get-together; and more. I look forward to seeing you at the studio and online.

Upcoming Classes and Schedule Changes

- **Beginning T'ai Chi Section 1:** Saturdays at 11:00 A.M.—12:15 P.M.
- **Beginning T'ai Chi Section 2 and 3:** Saturdays at 10:15 A.M.—11:30 A.M.
- **Beginning Solo Form Fundamentals:** Wednesdays at 12:30 P.M.—1:45 P.M.
Once you have been oriented with six Saturday Solo Form classes, you may also join this class.
- **T'ai Chi in the Park:** Wednesdays at 6:00 P.M.—7:15 P.M. Begins May 17. (There will be no Zoom class.)



- **Solo Form Refinement:** Thursdays at 6:00 P.M.—7:15 P.M. (in studio and on Zoom). If you have completed learning the Solo Form, this class will help you refine the form postures and integrate the core principles of T'ai Chi.
- **T'ai Chi Beginning Sword Completion and Weapons Review:** Thursdays at 7:30 P.M.—8:30 P.M. through the end of May.
- **T'ai Chi Beginning Double Saber Form:** Starts Thursday, June 1, at 7:30 P.M.—8:30 P.M. If you have finished the Solo Form, you may join this class. This is a great practice for developing dynamic bilateral movement patterns in the hands and feet. It's also a lot of fun.
- **Advanced Weapons Class:** Saber and Double Saber Form solo and partner patterns. Mondays at 7:30 P.M.—8:30 P.M.
- **Beginning Symmetries:** Tuesdays at 6:00 P.M.—7:15 P.M. This group is currently working on Symmetry #2.

See page 6 for our tribute to Paul B. Gallagher.

- **Advanced Symmetries:** Tuesdays at 7:15 P.M.—8:30 P.M. This group is currently working on Symmetry #5.

Save the Date

Come and join us for our annual Twin Cities T'ai Chi Summer Social!

Date: Saturday, August 12, 2023

Time: 4:00 P.M.—7:00 P.M.

Location: Wabun G Picnic Area, Minnehaha Regional Park, 4655 46TH Ave. S., Minneapolis

We will enjoy a catered box lunch from D'Amico and Sons, connect with our community, meet our newest members, do a little T'ai Chi, and have fun. There will also be a short demonstration to showcase what's currently being taught at the studio.

There will be a sign-up at the studio and online to reserve your spot. Details to come.

T'ai Chi in the Park

Our annual outdoor T'ai Chi Solo Form class in the park will begin Wednesday, May 17, at 6:00 P.M. (weather permitting). We will meet at Hampden Park (993 Hampden Ave., St. Paul, MN 55114) under the large linden tree at the southeast end of the park.

Those who haven't finished learning the Solo Form can come at 5:30 P.M. if you'd like to get corrections and learn some new movements.

- The T'ai Chi class begins at 6:00 p.m. with a short lesson or movement practice.
- That's followed by warm-ups and Qigong.
- Then we do a full Solo Form together, finishing around 7:15.
- A 20- to 30-minute weapons review follows before we head home.

The Wednesday-night Zoom class will be suspended until fall. Please join us in the park—there's nothing like practicing T'ai Chi out in nature! See you there.



Spring/Summer Shirt Sale

A message from our Activewear manager, Drew Johnson:

We had great success getting our two studio shirt designs rolled out recently. We now find ourselves with a little bit of extra inventory. So we would like to offer the following promotion for all members and guests:

Buy any 2 pieces of Activewear—including sweatshirts—and receive a new Qi (Energy) shirt *free*. (In stock inventory only; cash or check payment only.)

These shirts are great for practice or to wear anywhere, and they help promote the studio.

I will be at the studio on Saturday, May 13, 10:30 A.M.—1:00 P.M., to help fit sizes for everyone. Give a gift to a friend and have your T's and sweatshirts in time for spring and summer!



Contact Us

For timely updates, follow Twin Cities T'ai Chi Ch'uan on Facebook.

Email: mail@tctaichi.org

Website: tctaichi.org

Phone: 651.767.0267

All articles and other content written by Paul Abdella unless otherwise noted.

^

Tai Chi in the Park resumes May 17.

Hampden Park
993 Hampden Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55114

Photo by Dan Polsfuss

The Six Senses of T'ai Chi Ch'uan

We experience life through our senses. The five classical senses of sight, smell, hearing, touch, and taste are often the primary ways we navigate through the world around us. There are now more than 30 senses identified by science that form an intricate network of receptors that transmit and receive information and allow us to move, perform, live, and experience life at a deep level.

Six of these senses are integral to the correct practice of T'ai Chi Ch'uan. The regular and correct practice of T'ai Chi will develop these senses throughout one's life.

1. The Balance Sense: Equilibrioception

An essential element of T'ai Chi Ch'uan is the sense of balance and orientation and our relationship to the force of gravity. The vestibular system detects the position and movement of the head in space. When we move our heads, we activate the vestibular receptors in the inner ear that coordinate posture and balance. The downward pull of gravity also activates the vestibular sense and allows us to know which way is up or down, left or right, and forward or backward.

There is a constant flow of these directional changes in the Tai Chi Solo Form—one moment turning right then left, at once squatting down, then rising up on one leg, then stepping downward and backward. The vestibular sense begins to decline after age 40. The practice of T'ai Chi Ch'uan has been shown to boost the vestibular sense in several studies, even if taken up later in life. The only requirement is practice.

2. The Spatial Orientation Sense: Proprioception:

We can climb stairs without looking at our feet, touch our nose with eyes closed, and perform complex aerial maneuvers such as twisting high dives and gymnastics (at least some of us can) and still maintain spatial



orientation. This is due to the proprioceptive signals sent through the central nervous system to the proprioceptors—sensory neurons located in the muscles, tendons, and joints. These signals interface with the visual system and the vestibular system to create an awareness of our body position in space during movement and in stillness.

In T'ai Chi practice, these receptors help us rely less on visual input in our form, help refine the shapes of our postures, and guide us in partner practice, providing feedback to detect levels of force, structural alignment, and the ability to move and flow around objects.

3. The Internal Sense: Interoception

Interoception is the sensing of internal signals from our bodies. We know when we're hungry or full, have a stiff muscle in the calf, and that our heart is beating rapidly after exercise. These signs of inner awareness are all interoception signals.

There is constant communication between the

<

Proprioceptors help us rely less on visual input when doing T'ai Chi.

brain and our internal organs, including our cardiovascular system, lungs, and gut. More nerve fibers ascend from the gut and organs to the brain than descend from the brain, and the heart and gastrointestinal tract both generate their own electrical activity, adding to the visceral input to the brain.

The T'ai Chi Ch'uan Solo Form is an internally focused movement practice. The slow movements, deep breathing, and quieting and focusing of the mind lower brainwave activity and stimulate the vagus nerve, which runs from the brain downward through the internal organs, intestines, and several muscles. It integrates with the parasympathetic nervous system—the branch responsible for calming the body down. When the body/mind is deeply relaxed during T'ai Chi practice, we sense an inner warmth and subtle vibration that are generated in the belly and torso, indicating increased blood flow and parasympathetic activity.



4. The Temperature Sense: Thermoception

Our skin is the largest organ of the body and the only one that can be palpated externally. There are at least six receptors in the skin,

each designed for a different temperature range. They communicate with the brain to monitor changes in temperature.

When the outer temperature gets hot or cold, the appropriate sensors fire to signal a change. The sensor will stop firing if the exposure is prolonged, allowing us to adapt to the temperature. Internally, the body maintains a state of balance among all its systems, including temperature, in order for the body to survive and function correctly. This is called homeostasis.

The long-term, correct practice of T'ai Chi Ch'uan will “stimulate the Qi (Chi) to flow,” resulting in increased blood oxygen saturation and oxygen diffusion. This creates a feeling of inner warmth and tingling from the slow, relaxed movements, deep breathing, and calm mental focus. Electromagnetic energy is the primary energy in the universe. The Qi in our bodies is bioelectric energy, and our bodies are living electromagnetic fields that include heat and light.

5. The Pain Sense: Nociception

Pain is a part of practice, but it's also a part of progress. Being able to distinguish between destructive pain that results in injury and constructive or developmental pain—discomfort that builds the body within a sport or activity—is critical to cultivating skill and vitality in T'ai Chi practice.

It wasn't always understood that there was a separate sensory system for pain. There are three types of nociceptors (pain receptors) in the body: cutaneous (skin), somatic (bones, joints, muscles), and visceral (body organs). Nociceptors have a minimum intensity of stimulation, based on a person's pain tolerance, that trigger a signal sent to the spinal cord and then to the brain that cues a pain response. Different types of nerve fibers deliver fast, sharp, localized pain or slow, generalized, dull pain.

Regular practice over time with proper alignment and training methods, along with

<

Practicing T'ai Chi stimulates Qi, the bioelectric energy in our bodies.

<

We must distinguish between destructive and constructive pain when building our practice.

distinguishing between destructive and developmental pain/discomfort, will keep our T'ai Chi Ch'uan growing and evolving without injury.

6. The Time Sense: Chronoception

Our bodies are full of clocks that keep time at different intervals. Our circadian clock is set to a 24-hour cycle. There are monthly cycles (infradian), annual cycles (circannual), and clocks tuned to smaller intervals like heart rate, blood pressure, and sleep.

But clocks are mere tools that measure time, and time is a conception based on change. All things seem to change. They appear, exist, and disappear over various scales of time. Much of the change within us goes unnoticed; a hundred million cells are born every minute and a hundred million are destroyed; the lining of our stomach and intestines is replaced every few days; the outer layer of our skin is replaced every two to four weeks; our nails are replaced every six months; and we

replace our skeleton every 10 years. We're more of a fluid, continuing human process than a human thing.

Our perception of change creates our sense of time. Our actions and experiences are the markers of time, and they are meaningful to the degree that they have captured our attention. Often, we show up for something—even something we wanted to do and were looking forward to—only to get lost in thoughts of the past, future, or fantasy. We are there, but only sort of.

Each moment can be profound when given our full attention. The deeper value of a somatic practice like T'ai Chi Ch'uan is the necessity of bringing awareness and attention to what's going on around us and within us in order to move and flow in harmony with the dance of the Solo Form in real time. Those are the practices of pure magic—when time disappears altogether.

*Time is relative; its only worth depends upon what we
do as it is passing.*
~Albert Einstein

<

Each moment of
practice can be profound
when we give it our
awareness and attention.



Wudang

Twin Cities T'ai Chi

05 \ 23

IN MEMORY OF PAUL B. GALLAGHER



Paul B. Gallagher

1944–2023

In March of this year, my senior classmate and T'ai Chi friend, Paul Gallagher, passed away at his home in Asheville, North Carolina. Paul was a prominent scholar, healer, writer, teacher, and martial artist, specializing in T'ai Chi Ch'uan, Pa Kua, and other internal styles and practices. He was one of T.T. Liang's first students in the United States.

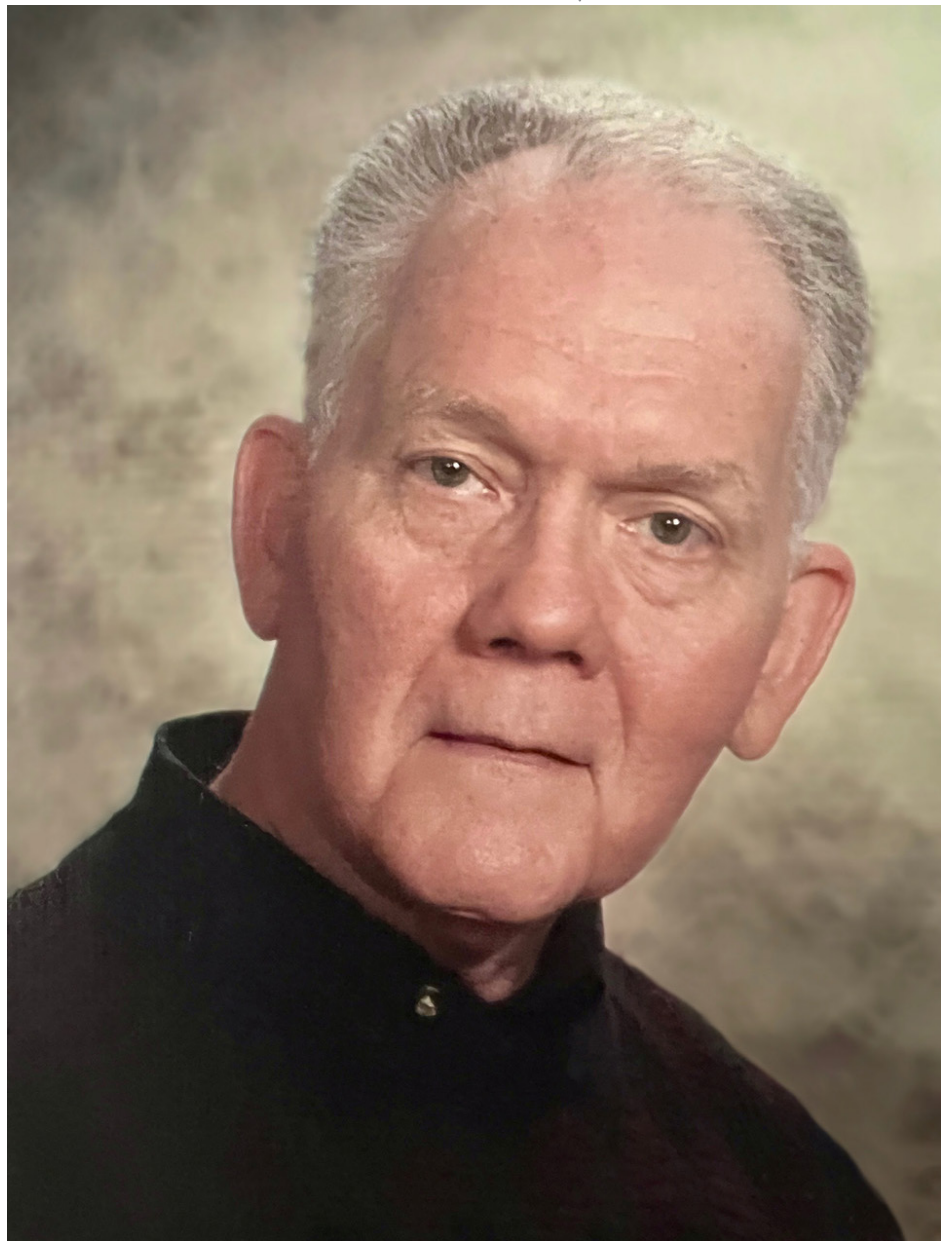
In the early 1960s, Paul met and studied briefly with Edward Maisel, a writer and early teacher of T'ai Chi, whose book, *T'ai Chi for Health*, was among the first published in the West in 1963.

Paul then met his first real teacher of T'ai Chi, dancer and choreographer Sophia Delza, who had learned Wu-style T'ai Chi in the late 1940s in Shanghai from the famed Master Ma Yueh Liang. She taught Wu-style T'ai Chi in New York City, and her book, *Tai Chi Ch'uan: Body and Mind in Harmony*, was published in 1961. Paul took the train and subway weekly from Boston to Manhattan to study T'ai Chi with Delza for four and a half years and began teaching as her representative in Boston.

Meeting the Master

On one occasion, a friend told Paul of an "amazing" T'ai Chi master who was to give a Yang-style T'ai Chi demonstration in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Paul eagerly attended. The Master was T.T. Liang.

Master Liang gave a lecture and showed a film of himself performing various Yang-style practices. Although disappointed that Master Liang hadn't demonstrated his T'ai Chi in



person that day, Paul spoke to him after the demonstration, sensed Liang's energy and the depth of his understanding of T'ai Chi, and knew he wanted to see him again.

Uncertain of how to approach Master Liang, Paul called and asked if he could read and study the T'ai Chi classics with him. The

classics are historical writings from past masters delineating the core principles of the art; they were regarded by Master Liang as essential to comprehending the deeper levels of T'ai Chi. An American wanting to study the classics got his attention, and a date was set to begin.

legal pad on which to write in English and books of the classics written in Chinese. Over a three-week period, they covered all of the texts, line by line.

This meeting turned out to be fortuitous for both men, as it became the basis for T.T.

Liang's book, *T'ai Chi Ch'uan for Health and Self Defense: Philosophy and Practice*, which Paul edited and for which he also wrote a forward. A first edition came out and sold well enough that Random House published the book in 1974. It has been in print ever since and has become an essential book on the T'ai Chi classics, enriched by Master Liang's commentary on them, for over 40 years.

T.T. Liang didn't accept payment for this time spent studying the classics, so Paul invited Master Liang to his home for dinner as a

small gesture of appreciation for his generosity. Master Liang arrived at the appointed time, and while waiting for dinner, he asked Paul "Do you know Shoulder Stroke?"

Liang Said Yes

Although Paul could perform the solo posture Shoulder Stroke, Sophia Delza hadn't learned the martial applications of T'ai Chi; as a dancer, her interest was in the movement practice of the solo form.

"Give me Shoulder!" commanded Master Liang.

T.T. Liang was 72 years old at the time. Not wanting to hurt the elderly gentleman, and not quite sure how to do Shoulder Stroke, Paul gave Master Liang a gentle bump with his shoulder.

<<

Paul Gallagher visits with Master T.T. Liang on the occasion of Master Liang's 100th birthday.



Paul was well positioned to benefit from this study with Liang; as an academic, he had degrees from Boston College and Harvard. He was a scholar well versed in Daoist arts such as herbology and Chinese medicine, dietetics, Qigong and meditation, and the *I-Ching*. He was a linguist who spoke several languages, including Mandarin Chinese, and had already practiced T'ai Chi for several years.

When they met, Master Liang had a yellow

The training will pay dividends that you can't even imagine if you just continue day by day.
~ Paul Gallagher

“This is not Shoulder Stroke—show me something!” insisted Master Liang.

Paul had a background in karate and decided to fulfill the request, this time striking firmly with his shoulder. Liang didn’t budge.

“Very strong—still, so stiff” was Liang’s assessment.

Paul asked Master Liang to please demonstrate his Shoulder Stroke application. Paul braced himself as Liang unleashed his Shoulder Stroke, sending him 15 feet across the floor. Paul humbly asked Master Liang if he would accept him as his student. T.T. Liang said yes.

Paul began learning T’ai Chi in Master Liang’s apartment in Boston, along with two other students. They were the first three of his students in Boston. T.T. Liang taught his T’ai Chi Ch’uan system in New York, Boston, Minnesota, and Florida, with students numbering in the thousands.

Over time, Paul learned T.T. Liang’s complete T’ai Chi system, which included Solo Form, weapons, and partner practices, and began teaching T’ai Chi himself.



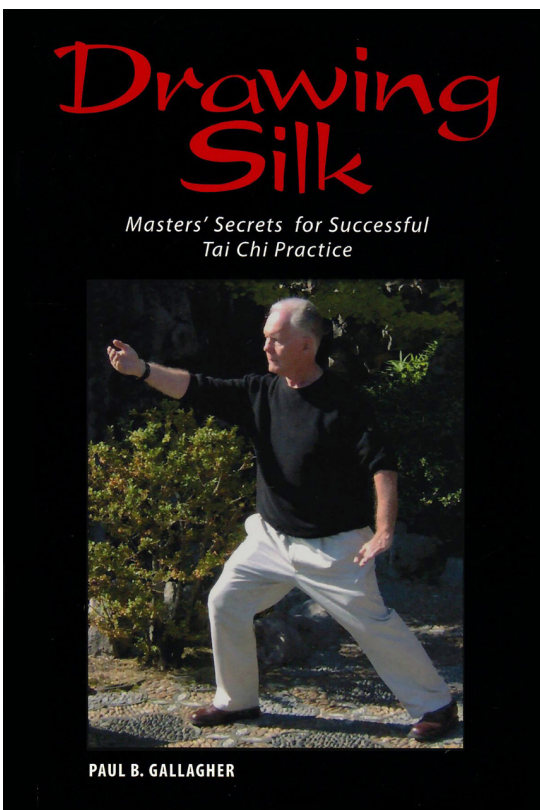
A Legacy in Print

Writing is often an outgrowth of teaching. It may begin with notes taken during or after a class with a master teacher, fleshed out more fully in order to concretize a lesson so as to recall it for later practice or just confirm it was understood. Notes may evolve into lesson plans and evolve again into written articles on a given topic.

Paul began to write articles for a Tai Chi newsletter that later evolved into *Tai Chi* magazine, the only magazine at the time devoted exclusively to the practice of T’ai Chi Ch’uan. Over time, he had written a body of articles on different aspects of T’ai Chi Ch’uan and began to shape them into a book.

Paul’s book, *Drawing Silk*, was self-published in 1988, with a second printing in 1989; a third edition came out in 2007. The book is a compendium of his articles and other writings on a wide range of T’ai Chi topics:

- the T’ai Chi classics
- T’ai Chi philosophy
- 10 guiding principles of three masters
- the complete T’ai Chi system
- the lost art of T’ai Chi etiquette
- cultivating a T’ai Chi body



^

Paul Gallagher practicing Pa Kua

<<

"Drawing Silk" is available on Amazon.com.

- Daoist stories
- and more.

The book is unique among texts on the topic of T'ai Chi and is essential reading for the serious practitioner of the art.

Lifelong Learning

Paul studied other martial arts and with other teachers, most notably the Pa Kua and T'ai Chi master B.P. Chan in New York City. Paul had some experience with Pa Kua and wanted to pursue it in more depth. After meeting Master Chan and seeing him move—and transforming some inner resistance to taking on the long-term study of Pa Kua, especially as it required yet another commute

from Boston to New York—Paul asked Chan for instruction and was accepted as his student.

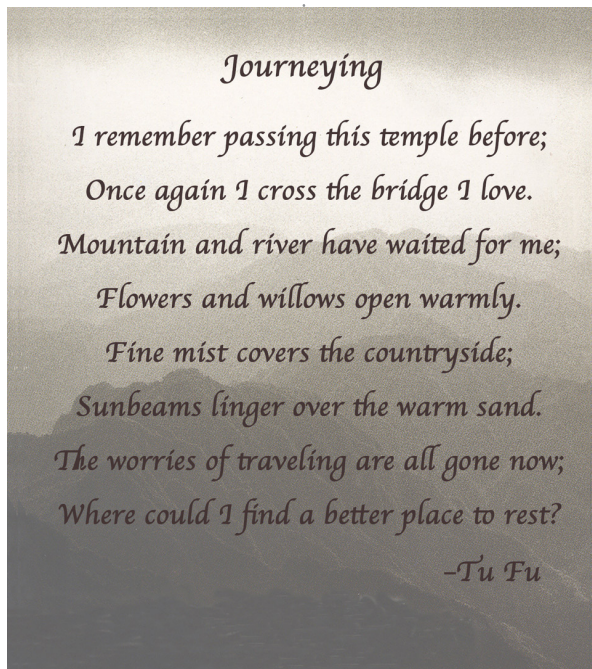
The commute into New York required that Paul rise at 4:15 A.M., leave at 5 A.M., and drive the four hours into the city to make a 9:00 private class, then stay for the 10:00 public classes and return home in the evening. This went on for four and a half years.

“Just to get the learning, I had to put out energy, and be disciplined, and have some inner strength. What it really taught me was to really value the teaching. The drive was tedious, then it became beautiful. Being in the energy orbit of the master was always an uplift. It was a teaching by itself. It was so rewarding.” [For more on this, see Paul's article: “How to Be a Real Taiji Student.”]

A Fortitude of Spirit

Eventually, Paul left Boston and founded the

Deer Mountain Taoist Academy in southern Vermont. He lived there for most of the 1980s and '90s, immersed himself in his own practice and writing, taught local students, and hosted an annual retreat that attracted students and adepts from across the country. He then moved to the Blue Ridge Mountains of Asheville, North Carolina, where he remained for the rest of his life.



After 55 years of T'ai Chi practice, Paul felt the most important quality it developed in him was “a fortitude of spirit,” and the other aspect was “the joy of doing the movements.”

“I didn't have any Qi—little by little, as the energy came—doing a round [of T'ai Chi] felt good—it was the energy. First you have to call the energy—it takes you

a long time; you have to learn the sequence, get relaxed with it, get smooth with it—it could take a couple years. So, at first you have to put that effort in to call the energy. But at some point, the energy calls you. Practice is not drudgery, I'm going to wake up, I'm going to do this, and I'm going to feel so good. That was the reward.

“The training will pay dividends that you can't even imagine if you just continue day by day.

“I am really immensely grateful for every day of my life.”

Recommended Resources

- *Drawing Silk* by Paul B. Gallagher
- *T'ai Chi Ch'uan for Health and Self-Defense: Philosophy and Practice* by T.T. Liang, edited and with a foreword by Paul B. Gallagher
- Ray Hayward's interviews with Paul Gallagher; available on YouTube

<

"Journeying,"
translation by
Ken Cohen