



Wudang

A MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER

12/20



From Sifu Paul

Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.

—Soren Kierkegaard

When we approach the end of a typical year, events of the past 12 months are examined and reflected upon as we formulate and announce our resolutions for what we hope to achieve in the year ahead. To say the year 2020 was not typical is an enormous understatement.

The January 2020 issue of *Wudang* featured the welcoming of three veteran members to our talented team of tutors; an article on expanding your T'ai Chi practice; the announcement of new classes in the Fan, Symmetry 5, and the Inner Smile meditation. My opening greeting pointed out that the Solar and Lunar New Years were in the same month this year, with the Lunar beginning a new 12-year cycle; I ended the piece stating, "May the year ahead be all that you can imagine." I think it's fair to say no one imagined the year that lay ahead.

In January, we had only just begun to hear about COVID-19, as there were no cases in the U.S. By the end of March, it had spread to 170 countries, with cases in the high six figures; our studio closed its doors on March 19 to comply with a local ordinance to control the spread of the virus. In anticipation of an imminent school closing, Todd Nesser and I filmed eight practice videos for members to use during the shutdown, which I hoped would be short-lived. As the spring weather warmed, I cautiously scheduled an "unstructured" practice in the park; there was a 10-person limit on social gathering. Studio member Theresa Cirra recommended two parks near the studio as possible meeting places. I



chose the most visible and easy-to-find park near the highway. Masks were required.

That first practice was a bit surreal—part masquerade and part family reunion. Friends and members walked from their houses, cars, and bikes and warmly greeted each other while awkwardly negotiating their distance. I called for everyone to warm up on their own for 10 minutes so as not to seem like a class then do a 5-minute Qigong of their choice, followed by a group Solo Form.

Any attempt to conceal that we were part of a group engaged in a common activity disappeared when the Solo Form began. To our credit, we maintained a safe social distance for the duration of our practice. For all its unfamiliarity, it was a real joy to be together and practice T'ai Chi again as a group. A few members brought their T'ai Chi weapons and ran through some forms at the end; a few others walked with me a long block to nearby Hampden Park to consider it as the location for our next practice.

I have taught private classes there and had many personal practices in Hampden Park over the years, so it was an old friend; a little

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"To say the year 2020 was not typical is an enormous understatement."

slice of paradise, and perfect for T'ai Chi. It would be our new home and studio, twice a week, for almost 7 months. Life is a paradox sometimes; Mother Nature produced a malevolent virus, but also nearly perfect weather for us, for the rest of the spring, summer, and fall.

The pandemic disrupted life as we knew it in ways large and small. Unfortunately, it was only the first act, as the whitewater of conflict and tragedy flowed from Memorial Day into the summer and beyond. Our practices found a centering and calming rhythm at Hampden Park as we continued with our meet-ups despite the surrounding civil unrest. We added 30 minutes before the official start time of the practice to accommodate beginners and people who hadn't finished learning the form; Kim Husband, LaVonne Bunt, and Christopher Knutson were always there to welcome, help teach, and guide anyone needing assistance. The park became a place of community, solace, and healing.

I was busy trying to get virtual classes up and running on Zoom, but technical problems, especially around sound quality, delayed our online start-up. Todd and his wife, Amy Sparks, were instrumental in helping me resolve those and many other issues behind the scenes. Studio member Fran Myers funded and arranged for the replacement of our ceiling fans and office/dressing room lights in order to help ready the space for a reopening.

I headed to Asheville, NC, in late July for some advanced training in Healing Tao meditation and Qigong studies. The trip was penetrating and restorative for me. Christopher led the park practices in my absence. Finally, in early August, we were online with virtual T'ai Chi classes.

The golden tones of late summer morphed into autumn with its waning light, crisp, cool air, and beautiful color. Our dedicated board of directors (John Grey, Tom Hautman, Ed Phillips, Morgan Willow, Dave Sagisser) had approved moving forward with our fall fundraiser, as we had received matching-grant funding. The fundraiser was underway and

doing well. Many of our members have been supportive in paying quarterly dues since March to help offset our overhead; it was humbling to see additional funds coming in and matched by a generous donor. By mid-November, we had reached our \$5,000 goal! An additional \$2,500 in matching funds became available; in mid-December, we raised and matched that amount with 10 days left in the quarter! To say that I'm grateful for the generosity and outpouring of support comes up short; overwhelmed comes a little closer.

Another Winter Solstice is upon us, that long, dark night that completes a long, dark year, this time with the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. Often, the focus in any given year is on the return of the light, the literal and symbolic rebirth into springtime. Personally, I've always loved the darkness for its own inherent power and energy and its seduction into stillness; winter represents and is aligned with the water element, symbolizing wisdom and the unconscious. We've all been forced to adapt and change, reassess, and examine our lives in new ways. Hopefully, deep wisdom will guide the way for us all. If T'ai Chi Ch'uan is part of your path, Twin Cities T'ai Chi Ch'uan will be here for you.

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"We've all been forced to adapt and change, reassess, and examine our lives in new ways."

To Know the Dark

To go in the dark with a light
is to know the light.

To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight,
and find that the dark, too, blooms and sings,
and is traveled by dark feet and dark wings.

—Wendell Berry

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

Closings and Openings

There will be no Zoom class on Thursday, December 24, or on Thursday, December 31.

All of our other regularly scheduled classes are still in play.

There will be a return to limited live classes for members on Saturdays 12:30–1:45 and Wednesdays 6:00–7:15, beginning January 16. There will be a separate email for details on how to register and join the class.

Saturday, January 2, 12:30–1:30

We will ring in the new year with a special 1-hour seated meditation practice of the Inner Smile and Heart Rhythm meditation.

The Inner Smile creates an internal experience of deep self-acceptance throughout the body, and Heart Rhythm meditation opens the heart's power through the heartbeat and the breath.

(This one-time practice takes the place of the T'ai Chi Solo Form class, which resumes the following week.) Open to anyone.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3535791224?pwd=V2ZjMzZHMFF-BWHlqMjJxOCtDZG44dz09>

Meeting ID: 353 579 1224

Passcode: tctc

The Five Family Styles of T'ai Chi Ch'uan

Part 3

Yang Luchan, the founder of Yang Family–Style T'ai Chi Ch'uan, taught his complete T'ai Chi system to his two sons, Yang Pan Hou and Yang Chien Hou. In keeping with the kindness and transmission he received from Chen Chang Hsing, Yang Luchan also taught disciples from outside his family clan, some of whom went on to innovate and develop styles of their own. The following

biographical sketch profiles these innovators and the T'ai Chi systems they created and concludes our look at the five families of T'ai Chi Ch'uan.

Wu (Yu-hsiang) Style

Wu Yu-hsiang
(1812–1880)

Yang Luchan was teaching T'ai Chi Ch'uan in Yangnian County, where he was from; he was teaching in the building that housed the apothecary



owned by the Chen family, where he had been introduced to Chen Family T'ai Chi so many years before. The building that housed the apothecary was owned by the Wu family.

Wu Yu-hsiang and his two brothers had learned a Shaolin-based martial art from their father. When they saw Yang Luchan teaching and witnessed his high-level skills, they were spellbound and asked if he would teach them. They were among his early students and, over time, became senior students of the Grandmaster. Wu Yu-hsiang also learned from Chen Ching Ping of the Chen family, and he studied his small-frame Chen-style form for a short period of time.

Wu Yu-hsiang was a scholar and nobleman who came from a wealthy family. He became a tutor to Yang Luchan's sons and taught them how to read and write. His cultured background undoubtedly fostered his ability to write, as there are important and influential written works on Tai Chi Ch'uan theory attributed to him (e.g., Exposition of Insights Into the Thirteen Postures) that have become part of the canon of T'ai Chi classics.

Wu Yu-hsiang's brother, Wu Deng Qing, discovered a manuscript hidden away in a salt shop, which was the T'ai Chi Treatise, a classic on T'ai Chi principles attributed to Taoist Wang Chung Yueh. Wu Yu-hsiang studied the manuscript and the principles

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Limited live classes
to resume in January.

outlined in the treatise deeply; this helped shape the development of his own style and understanding of T'ai Chi. The form Wu Yu-hsiang taught initially was the Old Yang-Style form of his teacher, Yang Luchan. He later modified his form to a small frame, with rounded, circular postures and high stances.

Wu Yu-hsiang passed his art on to his nephew, **Li I Yu**, who also wrote important works on T'ai Chi.



Li I Yu passed the art to **Hao Weichen**, a prominent martial arts figure at that time. Hao Weichen

passed on the art of Wu Yu-hsiang to his son and grandson. After three generations, the style was sometimes referred to as Wu-Hao style; Hao Style; Wu-Li Style; or simply Old Wu Style, in contrast to the much later T'ai Chi of Wu Chien-ch'uan. Hao Weichen, in addition to teaching his son and grandson, taught Sun Lu-t'ang, a renowned master of internal martial arts and founder of his own hybrid form of T'ai Chi Ch'uan. Wu Yu-hsiang's T'ai Chi style is respected and practiced as one of the five major styles in China but is not practiced much outside of the Mainland.



Wu- (Chien-ch'uan) Style T'ai Chi Ch'uan

Wu Chien-ch'uan (1870–1942)

Wu Chien-ch'uan was taught T'ai Chi Ch'uan by his father, Wu Ch'uan-yu (1834–1902), who worked as a bodyguard in the Imperial Court. As a bodyguard, Wu Ch'uan-yu was a professional martial artist, skilled in many styles besides T'ai Chi Ch'uan. He was a disciple of Yang Lu Chan and also a student of Yang Pan

Hou. Yang Luchan's prestigious position teaching T'ai Chi at the Imperial Court to both the Royal Guard and the Royal Family necessitated he modify his Old Frame Form due to the long robes with long sleeves that were required dress in the court. These garments restricted movement, so Yang Luchan created a small-frame form to accommodate this restriction while still retaining practical and effective techniques. Wu Ch'uan-yu learned Yang Luchan's small-frame form. He had many students, including his son, Wu Chien-Ch'uan, whom he taught from a young age.

Wu Chien-ch'uan became a highly skilled T'ai Chi practitioner; he was also an archer and equestrian. His early form was the same form he learned from his father, Yang Luchan's small-frame form. Over time, he began to refine his movements, adapting to a short parallel-foot stance and a 30° forward lean that created a straight line from the rear heel through the spine that both rooted and released energy easily. He also created a T'ai Chi "fast form."



The Wu and Yang families were close; Yang Cheng Fu and Wu Chien-ch'uan practiced Push-Hands together, and Wu called him Third Uncle, as he was a generation older but close enough to be considered family. Wu Chien-ch'uan, Yang Shao-hou, Yang Cheng-fu, and Sun Lu-t'ang all taught T'ai Chi at the Beijing Physical Culture Research Institute.

Wu Chien-ch'uan taught many students, including his sons and son-in-law, Mah Yueh Liang, who became his successor. Mah Yueh Liang and Wu Ying Hwa formed the Jian Quan Taijiquan Association, which promoted Wu Chien-ch'uan style T'ai Chi Ch'uan and spread it all over the world, making it the second most widely practiced T'ai Chi style in the world after Yang Style.

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Li I Yu

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Wu Chien-ch'uan

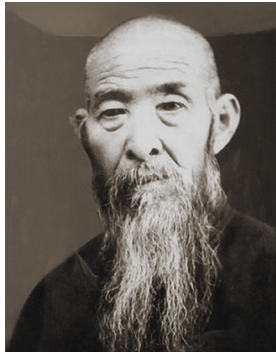
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Hao Weichen

Sun-Style T'ai Chi Ch'uan

Sun Lu-t'ang
(1869–1933)

Sun Lu-t'ang was born in Hebei Province with the name Sun Fu Chuan.



His father was a poor farmer who would barter some of his crops to get his son an education. He excelled in his studies, but they only lasted a few years, as high taxes and low crop yields forced his father to sell the family farm; his father died a short time later.

To make ends meet, Sun Lu-t'ang's mother sent him to be a servant in a wealthy man's home for room and board. Lu-t'ang was frail and weak as a boy, and he was bullied by the wealthy man's son. Lu-t'ang met a local martial arts teacher who was willing to teach him a Shaolin-based martial art. Lu-t'ang wanted to learn martial arts so that he would grow stronger and no longer be bullied. He learned quickly and soon fell in love with martial arts. Lu-t'ang lost his position as a servant in the household after beating the master's son, who tried to bully him for the last time.

Lu-t'ang went to live with an uncle who owned a calligraphy shop, working and learning calligraphy. Through his uncle, Lu-t'ang met a scholar named Li Kuei Yuan, who saw him practicing his martial arts one day and offered to teach him the martial art Hsing-I Ch'uan. This is a style with powerful and lively footwork and straight-line attacks based on the Taoist theory of the five elements. In time, Li introduced Lu-t'ang to his teacher, the Hsing-I master Kuo Yun Shen. This began Sun Lu-t'ang's journey into the first of his trio of internal martial arts styles. Lu-t'ang worked hard and was worked hard by Master Kuo, and after 8 years, he had completed his studies.

Kuo Yun Shen recommended to his student Lu-t'ang that he study Pa Kua Chang, a circular, internal martial art based on the eight trigrams of the I-Ching; he introduced

Lu-t'ang to his friend, Pa Kua Master Cheng Ting Hua. Sun Lu-t'ang was now around 30 years old and studied intently for 3 years with Cheng, who gave him the name Lu-t'ang and told him to go and test himself out in the world and perfect his skills. Sun Lu t'ang practiced and persevered and became a highly skilled and well-known martial artist.

When Sun Lu-t'ang heard there was an accomplished martial artist coming to the area, he would make a point to meet them, not to challenge them but to make their acquaintance and possibly compare and exchange knowledge. Lu t'ang heard that Hao Weichen was in Beijing for a visit and went to the city to meet him. When he found Hao Weichen, he was sick from his travels and laid up in his room. Sun Lu t'ang found him a doctor and stayed and helped care for him until he recovered. Hao Weichen repaid this kindness by teaching Sun Lu t'ang T'ai Chi Ch'uan.

Over time, Lu t'ang mastered the Wu Yu-hsiang T'ai Chi he learned from Hao Weichen. He now had mastered three internal styles that he began to refine, explore, and integrate. T'ai Chi became his primary style, to which he added footwork from Pa Kua; follow-steps and leg and waist movement from Hsing-I; and soft body power from T'ai Chi while retaining the original form sequence. He wrote books on Pa Kua, Hsing-I, and T'ai Chi for posterity.

Epilogue

From seemingly disparate streams of knowledge that flowed forward from antiquity into the hearts and minds of its antecedents and early innovators, T'ai Chi Ch'uan was forged into an art of great subtlety, power, and beauty. Through the rise and fall of dynasties, through times of abundance and scarcity, the five families explored, experimented, and persevered to push the practice of T'ai Chi to its highest levels, at first hiding and withholding the art and then openly sharing and promoting it. With more than 100 million people practicing T'ai Chi across the globe and medical studies continuing to validate its numerous health benefits, T'ai Chi Ch'uan has truly become a practice for the whole world.

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Sun Lu-t'ang

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From disparate streams of knowledge and experimentation, a whole-world practice has grown.

Wu-Style T'ai Chi at Our Studio

The late Dr. Wen Zee of Shanghai, China, was a Wu- (Chien Ch'uan-) style master of T'ai Chi Ch'uan and senior disciple of Ma Yueh Liang, the successor to the founder of the style. He was trained in both Chinese and Western medicine (cardiology) and served in two hospitals in Shanghai.

He moved to the United States in 1993, where he served as a visiting scientist at the Arizona College of Medicine. He taught Chinese herbal medicine and T'ai Chi Ch'uan at the hospital's Wellness Center in Tucson, Arizona.



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The late Dr. Wen Zee visited our studio in 1998.

Below:

Sifu Paul Abdella and Dr. Wen Zee

He wrote numerous articles on T'ai Chi in Chinese martial arts and medical journals in China and the U.S. and co-authored two books with his teacher, Ma Yueh Liang. He is the author of "Wu-Style T'ai Chi Ch'uan: Ancient Chinese Way to Health."

Dr. Zee visited Twin Cities T'ai Chi in 1998 and gave lectures on Wu Style T'ai Chi, the T'ai Chi classics, and T'ai Chi and medicine and health and presented classes on Push-Hands and more. He stated that "the practice of T'ai Chi is actually a rest for the body and a period of pleasure for the mind and spirit."

With Deepest Gratitude

The success of the studio is the result of many people sharing their time and talents to bring our unique programs to the public. The following is a short list of our members who have helped so much this past year.

Our Board of Directors

John Grey: Board President, Tom Hautman:

Treasurer, Ed Phillips: Secretary; Morgan Willow and Dave Sagisser: At-Large Members

The board brings a variety of perspectives to every studio issue and collaborates on important decisions, manages and balances our budget, and keeps a detailed record of each and every meeting. They were so helpful and wise in helping me navigate through this difficult and ever-changing year.

Our Teaching Staff of Tutors

LaVonne Bunt, Lynn Dennis, Tim Dennis, Dan Frederick, Ruthann Godollei, Tom Hautman, Linda Hermanson, Kim Husband, Ralph Jerndal, Christopher Knutson

The studio is lucky to have a group of teachers with this level of experience and ability. It was a short school year, but you made it a good one; I look forward to when you can all teach again.

LaVonne Bunt

In addition to her teaching, Lavonne has always helped me with just about anything I ask; she has kept attendance records in every class and has kept the studio clean every week.

Tim Dennis

In addition to his teaching, when I look around the studio, I see all of the useful and beautiful things Tim has made that make the studio space work better; the puns are a bonus.

Tom Hautman

In addition to his teaching, Tom's position as treasurer is difficult and integral to our growth and stability. His detailed and accurate spreadsheets let me know at a glance about our finances and how much trust I have in him.

Kim Husband

In addition to her teaching, Kim has been my assistant for curriculum development, and she edits and does the beautiful layout and design of the newsletter—often on very short notice. She's been an ambassador for the studio, demonstrating and teaching in countless conventions and other venues; and she also manages our Facebook page; and still has the quickest comebacks in town.

Drew Johnson

Drew successfully took over our shirt production and sales and taught me the value of merchandising.

Dennis Kelly

My phantom marketing consultant, idea man, and friend.



Christopher Knutson

In addition to his teaching, Christopher helped demonstrate and teach at many of the conventions, has covered my classes, and offers me ideas for the studio's direction; the walks aren't just for exercise.

Nancy Mosier

Nancy became our business manager in 2016, helped shape both the business model for the studio and the board, and graciously stayed on longer than intended. She set things up so that when she stepped away this year, I could step in, with a smooth transition.

Fran Myers

Fran has been a tireless supporter of the studio and has been instrumental in bringing in important upgrades that make our practice space a much better environment to learn in and be in.

Todd Nesser

Todd has developed our branding, does all our print and online design, designed and

upgrades our website, and helps problem solve almost anything and everything I need help with. I wish that I could clone him, but he's one of a kind.

Ed Phillips

Ed is in the last year of his second term as secretary on the board. His detailed minutes act like a script for me, and they become my to-do list between meetings. He was a person who agreed to stay on from the pre-2016 board, when I needed help the most; I'll never forget that.

Steve Silver

My favorite mensch and creator of opportunities. Nothing more needs to be said.

Amy Sparks

When I can't figure something out, I call Todd; when Todd can't figure it out, he calls Amy. Troubleshooter extraordinaire, with a

"we can do this" attitude, she's helped me so much this year.

Craig Upright

Craig designed and sent me several safe-distance floorplans this year in anticipation of a return to the studio, plus many other resources to check out. This was a big help to me.

Mary Wynne

My beautiful wife and best friend, who has supported my martial arts and other worthy obsessions for most of my life. Quick to offer unfiltered advice from the heart, she always knows when to tell me to take my foot off the gas or hit the brakes. Thanks for all the love and laughs.

Our Members

You're the reason the studio exists. I appreciate your support more than I can say. Once a member, always a member. The door is always open—at least, it will be soon.

