



The Newsletter of the
**Twin Cities T'ai-Chi Ch'uan
 Studio**
 2242 University Ave
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Wu-Dang

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www.tctaichi.com
 email: tctaichi@minn.net

Complimentary for studio members.
 \$6.00 subscription for others.
 Please send requests to address at left.

NEW SCHEDULE

Beginning June 15th there will be two new classes opening. The Monday night 7:30 Weapons class will be covering the T'ai-Chi Sword Form, both instruction for those who have recently finished the Solo Form, and corrections for those who already know the sword form. We will also teach the 13 Wu-Tang Sword Energies, T'ai-Chi Sword Form applications, and the Combined Wu-Tang Sword Fencing Form.

The Wednesday night 8:30 Pa-Kua class is now open for anyone to join, the class will be learning the Swimming Dragon Form, Chase-Hands, and do a Pa-Kua Weapons review.

The Tuesday night 8:00 Praying Mantis class is also open and will be learning the Siu Gar Sek hand form and the Green Dragon Staff form.

The Wednesday night 7:30 Hsing-Yi and Saturday 9:00 Meditation classes are closed for now. All other classes remain the same. The fall schedule has a lot of changes in store and if you have any suggestions, concerns, or questions, always feel free to ask.

Annual Summer Retreat

This year's theme:

**Professor Cheng Man-ch'ing
 and the genius of his T'ai-Chi**

Short form, 4-directions push-hands,
 and Ta Lu will be taught and explored.

Take three days this summer and join us August 14-16

See Page 7 for full details.

Report From the Board

By Rondi Atkin

As reported in the *Wee Wu Dang*, the Board has decided not to hold the Frolics fundraiser this year. There were a few reasons for this decision: First, the planning for this type of event is larger than we can handle on an annual basis. Second, our venue from last year, which was inexpensive and allowed us to keep our expenses down, is no longer available. Third, and most important, the Frolics was conceived as a method to garner extra or special funds. Thanks to everyone's support last year, we raised enough to pay off a long-standing debt and provide us with some carry-over.

The Studio's 2009 budget included income from a similar event. However, the Board decided instead of relying on an annual fundraising spike from a single event, continued steady income would better serve the Studio and led to the Board's decision for a minimal dues increase. As of July 1, dues will increase \$5 per month (see chart below). This is a standard cost-of-business increase, and, as longtime studio members know, dues have not been raised since September, 2005.

Monthly Dues Schedule as of July 1 2009		
Full Time		1 Class/Week
Single \$75	Student \$55	Single \$55
Two \$125	Seniors 65+ \$55	Two \$95

If you feel that this increase is more than you can afford, please speak to Sifu Ray.

Making the Repeated Unrepeatable (while being repeated)

Kurt Swanson (4/09)

One troublesome obstacle in our practice of Tai Chi is boredom. Every day, practicing the same routines, again and again. Right then left, facing this way then that. Keeping the eyes open, then closing the eyes and doing it again. This time faster. Again, but this time slower. Again, from the last High Pat on Horse. And so on, and so on. At the studio, then again at home. Day after day, month after month, and through the years. It seems that with such repetition we cannot avoid encountering some degree of boredom at some time in our practice.

In repetition, is it at all possible for our practice to be truly unique, alive, fresh, and new every time we move from Wu Chi? Can a Single Whip be different from all other Single Whips executed a thousand times before yet still be a Single Whip? Can the repeated be unique, incomparable, and unrepeatable?



We could ask ourselves Why do we get bored in our practice? Doesn't boredom come when our seeking does not lead us to what we desire? Or, perhaps boredom comes when we judge ourselves to have attained our wants, leaving us feeling finished and with nothing seemingly left to do.

Perhaps a more appropriate question is Why do we even seek in the first place? Perhaps we seek because the ego (that troublesome psychological center which is and creates the self-image) is built upon shifting sands and it knows this, and as such the ego tries to ground and strengthen itself and to overcome fear and incompleteness. Over time the driven ego builds an image of who we are, and continues to create an image of who we want to be in order to overcome who we are. And although this can be what brings us to begin a Tai Chi practice, it will eventually precipitate the downfall of our Tai Chi practice. Through Tai Chi the ego seeks the spectacular, and when the ego does not find the spectacular, boredom ensues. And sometimes we quit.

Can the ego fix the problem? But wait, didn't the ego create the problem we now wish to fix? As the ego works to overcome or circumvent its fears and shortcomings, it only revises itself using the same, recycled material, and thus the root of the problem—ego-centric activity—continues. Fundamentally, nothing has really changed, has it? Regardless of its efforts, the ego will inevitably come to believe that Tai Chi has not or will not fulfill its desires and it will get bored. And thus, when left in the hands of the ego, our practice continues to be a daily, mundane chore.

What if the ego process of seeking were to cease altogether? When we seek something, we will most likely find that which we seek. But isn't that which we seek merely a vision created and desired by the ever-unsatisfied ego? If the ego-built self image can be immediately dissolved, there will be no more self image that distorts and darkens the world, and there will be no self image to repair or complete. If we were to put an end to psychological seeking (and paradoxically put an end to not-seeking) we come to a quality of being where our practice is not bound psychologically in any way to previous practice or desired future practice; our practice thus gains its complete freedom and Tai Chi becomes genuinely new, fresh, alive, and vibrant every time! With this no-seeking-and-no-not-seeking quality of the psychological mind, we experience the inherent movement and beauty of each Single Whip directly and without the burden of judgment or desire, past or future. Every Single Whip, regardless of how often it is repeated, becomes the first and the last Single Whip; every Single Whip becomes unique, incomparable, and joyful simply in and of itself and nothing more.

I suspect that through intense awareness we can come to see clearly the activity that brings about the desire for the spectacular, and in that same moment of clarity, the need for the spectacular will cease to exist. And out of this a whole new way of practice will appear—a way of practice that is *truly* genuine and one that cannot be described or shared in any way, only experienced directly. Aspirations, needs, and expectations no longer drive our practice; the cause of boredom is immediately removed and the repeated becomes unrepeatable (even as it carries on repeating).

USKSF Tournament

By Dominick Veldman

Saturday, May 30th I attended the 4th Annual USKSF (United States Kuoshu Federation) North Regional Tournament. Kuoshu means National Art in Chinese and refers to all of the Chinese traditional martial arts. After hearing from Mike Sauter about the competition last year, I wanted to check it out for myself. So following him, and Josh Lynch there were myself and our school cheering section: Matt Peterson, and Justin Hall.

Having never participated in a tournament myself, I didn't know what to expect. The event started off with a Lion Dance performed by the Green Dragon Kung Fu Association from Robbinsdale, and a few Masters Demonstrations performed by some of the organizers and local teachers. They showed a good amount of T'ai Chi: a Chen Style sword, and open hand form, and a Yang style San Shou (different from ours, but recognizable). Also demonstrated were Chinese Fast Wrestling and a Wu Dang Chi Kung set.

The morning got under way with two of the events I had entered running at the same time. Fortunately they let me go first in one division and last in the next. Unfortunately my Chain Whip went first followed by my T'ai Chi Sword. So I had to start the morning with my most Yang and follow it with my most Yin... Not ideal, but a fun challenge. My Chain Whip was effectively disqualified for being too Wu-Shu. It surprised me, but I respected their wish to keep their traditional division from getting dancy! They kindly permitted me to re-show the form in the Wu-Shu division later in the day. It was cool to see the other Open Weapons Division forms: a 3-section staff, a 2-section staff, another chain whip, eagle claw daggers and a double knife.

The T'ai Chi weapons division was another mixed bag of forms with my, and another sword, a knife, and a woman doing Horse Fly Whip. I was so jealous! I wanted her toy... Despite feeling a bit shaky from the adrenalin rush the judges liked my sword and awarded me 1st place.

After a bit of a break the other internal styles all performed at the same time, and it was myself showing the 5-Element Change Form from Hsing-Yi, another gentleman showing a different Hsing-Yi form, and a young woman showing a Ba Ji form

(Eight Extremities). I received 2nd place in that showing, rightly losing to her very crisp form. I did get my favorite comment of the day from her. She said: "You do internal styles don't you? You look like you do internal styles. Internal style people always shoulders down..." I'll take that! Unfortunately a trend began at this point: whenever Mike was demonstrating, so was I. So I mostly missed his Da-Mo Sword, but what I saw looked great.

Next up the Wu-Shu division met. Of course that meant that Mike was performing his General Yang spear on the other end of the arena... For which I understand he got a much deserved and hard-fought 3rd.

The Wu-Shu weapons consisted of a staff form, a knife form, and my 9-section whip. While I was disqualified in the morning, and my afternoon performance was weaker, I still won out with 1st!



The pushing hands division had been canceled as no one signed up to participate. When I overheard one of the Judges lamenting this, and discussing getting an informal group together to play anyway, I said count me in. So for the second time that day, my Yang Chain Whip preceded my T'ai Chi... As it turns out one person did eventually sign

up, and they found eight more (including our own Matt Peterson!) It consisted of a round-robin format, where everyone had one, two-minute session with everyone else: Fixed step, one minute per leg. Winner to be decided by whomever "cleanly" pushed their opponent out of their stance most (Cleanly meaning without falling, or being pulled out of their stance at the same time.) Matt made the best showing in my opinion. He didn't 'win' the most rounds, but he managed, after only one year of pushing hands practice, to remain soft, and relaxed no matter how hard or aggressive his opponent! That is a win to me. Several of the players in the bout were clearly more or less beginners, but one or two really knew what they were about. After 9 wins and no losses I got my last 1st of the day. It was a great experience getting to try pushing hands with

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complete strangers. With our class mates, we have an understanding, a relationship. With strangers you have to figure out what they know, and learn their bodies much faster.

Again I missed most of Mike's Praying Mantis form in the next arena... I did get to see some of it over the shoulders of the pushing hands players and what I saw was sharp and crisp. Mike's Mantis forms always come off strong!

After the last of the forms competitions there was another Masters Demonstration. This time it was a Hung-Gar 9-Point Rake form (Cool but I'm ok without that weapon... Might make my yard nervous), a Praying Mantis form (and the guy did it in a SUIT and TIE, very Agent Smith!) and another Fast Wrestling demo. Then came the Lei Tai Division.

The Lei Tai is full contact fighting. I would say sparring, but sparring implies nice... I did not participate, but was proud to stand in our team's corner for Mike and Josh for their matches. Mike won his bout against a seriously hard hitting Hsing-Yi fighter. I think I felt the round kicks Mike landed in the guy's ribs. After Josh's bout we skipped the closing ceremonies in favor of a good dinner before a long and very late drive home.

Looking at the tournament as a whole, I couldn't be happier that I went. The Judges and Sifus were all very open and approachable. After each competition they made sure to let people know they could feel free to ask for feedback from any of the judges. I made sure to talk to every one of them. Sometimes their feedback was superficial or presentational touches, but other times they had interesting and different points of view than we might ordinarily hear at home. I think it's good to get out of our comfort zones every now and then and see what else is out there. I know what size fish I am in our pond, but sometimes you need to seek other waters to compare yourself to others. An experience like this is a chance to look around and see what everyone else is up to; it lets you ask "Am I where I need to be, doing what I need to be doing?" Looking around, I can confidently say we have it great here at Twin Cities T'ai-Chi Ch'uan Studio. But don't take my word for it. Come with me next year and see what's out there for yourself.

Tai Chi, the Ultimate Exercise?

By Brad Olson

(Reprint of a Paper Submitted for a Class)

East Meets West

"T'ai-Chi Ch'uan (Tai Chi) is the whole world's exercise," according to Master T.T. Liang. Liang, who had over 50 years experience in the Chinese martial arts, told this to his students. What he meant is that Tai Chi is accessible to everyone.

Thin or overweight, young or old, everyone can do Tai Chi, including those who are in or out of shape, according to Liang. Tai Chi can also be practiced by those who are healthy or not, according to Liang. In fact, after being diagnosed with cirrhosis at age 46, Liang started Tai Chi. Liang died in 2002, and lived to the age of 102.

Ray Hayward, one of Liang's certified disciples and head instructor at the Twin Cities T'ai-Chi Ch'uan Studio, has dedicated his life to the study and promotion of Tai Chi. His website is www.tctaichi.com.

According to Liang, "T'ai-Chi Ch'uan is an ancient form of Chinese classical dance created about 700 years ago by Chang San-Feng. Two of the fundamental principles of this dance are health and self-defense."

Tai Chi, when practiced correctly, can be a lifelong endeavor, something that one can practice well into his or her nineties. Tai Chi can be practiced every day without side effects, according to Hayward. He also said that Tai Chi exercises the body in such a way that it strengthens the body while increasing its flexibility.

Not only can Tai Chi be practiced every day, countless benefits can arise from practicing this martial art correctly. Hayward said Tai Chi is centered on one word: circulation. He said it circulates the blood, food, oxygen and carbon dioxide in the body. It reduces stress. A single round of Tai Chi exercises every muscle in the body, without jarring effects, according to Hayward. This is one reason why people can do Tai Chi, and benefit from it.

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Hayward, who has studied Tai Chi for 29 years, agrees with the statement that Tai Chi is the ultimate exercise. Hayward's teacher, Master T.T. Liang, taught the majority of his students from ages 78 to 88, and taught up to six hours per day during this time. "Tai Chi is for your whole life," Hayward said.

When asked if Hayward would recommend Tai Chi to someone who wants to be physically healthy, he said "Oh yeah." But, physical health is more than just the muscles in your body, he said. "Tai Chi is the complete human being," Hayward said. It incorporates calmness, and digestive health. But, this does not happen overnight. According to Liang, only after daily practice and many years of it will someone obtain perfect health.

One of the key aspects to keep in mind when practicing Tai Chi is relaxation. However, relaxation can go beyond your training sessions. The way one breathes in Tai Chi, with the diaphragm, as opposed to the chest, can promote relaxation in everyday life. Some of the philosophies and concepts from Tai Chi can be applied to everyday situations, according to Hayward.

When done correctly, the effects of Tai Chi can be felt immediately, according to Hayward. A person may feel more relaxed, happier, muscles will not be as tight, and breathing will be deeper and more relaxed. These feelings will be heightened as one continues studying the art. These feelings will reach even higher levels when you delve into the more advanced stages of the art, according to Liang.

As far as time commitment, Hayward said that at a minimum, one should practice Tai Chi for 30 to 40 minutes per day, every day, if possible. However, he said that if one were to practice Tai Chi for one hour daily, then that person could accomplish great things in Tai Chi.

Hayward agreed that Tai Chi is the ultimate exercise, and that it is a martial art that can be practiced by anyone. Master T.T. Liang devoted half of his life to Tai Chi. But, learning Tai Chi can never be rushed. "No patience, no fun in life," Hayward said. One needs to be patient in order to gain the benefits of this ancient martial art, and to carry them into everyday life.

Shu-Kuang Press Presents a new sword!

It's shorter, lighter, with a smaller handle.

A prototype is available at the studio.
The price is \$500 for the base sword.
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Poetry by Morgan Grayce Willow
Designed by Todd Nesser

Reserve yours now. \$15 per paperback.

Twin Cities T'ai-Chi Ch'uan Studio

Will present at the Dragon Festival
At Phalen Park by Lake Phalen in St Paul
Saturday, July 11, 12:15-12:45pm

Talk to Sifu Ray if you'd like to take part in
this exciting and inspiring demonstration.
Come to the 11:30 Saturday class to work
on the routine and join the Dragon demo
group.

See www.dragonfestival.org

Happy Birthday Grandmaster Wai-Lun Choi and March 13-15 Visit

Even though it was Grandmaster Choi's 70th Birthday I thought that all of us at Twin Cities Tai Chi Chuan Studio were receiving all the presents. As soon as I heard Grandmaster Choi was coming for a visit and was going to have 2 seminars I signed up as fast as I could.



If you were not lucky enough to be there I will attempt to go over some of the highlights. On March 13th from 7-8PM there was book signing at Minnesota Karate Supply martial arts store in Maplewood. Grandmaster Choi and

Sifu Ray Hayward signed many copies of "Real Gold Does Not Fear the Fire." It was a festive book signing that all enjoyed and one I will always remember.

Now for the Seminars. How often does a person get lucky enough to see and listen to a Grandmaster? I was so excited about his visit I arrived a half an hour before the doors of the building were to open. When both seminars were over I was so glad I came. I am awe-struck about how this visit would lead to seven pages of notes and drawings.

Grandmaster Choi's first seminar was for Xing Yi on Saturday. We began by doing The 5-Elements across the studio's floor. The Liu Ho Pa Fa seminar was on Sunday that started off with The Main Form from Liu Ho Pa Fa.

Here are some notes. (All quotes are from Grandmaster Wai Lun Choi.):

Xing Yi Seminar:

- "Get the whole body together, start together, stop together."
- "Body like a bow, hand like an arrow."
- "Use waist to move hand, [when the] hand [is] out [it] never comes back empty."
- "Wood-element punch: [when you] pull in to [wind up to] hit, inhale. [When you] exhale, [it sends the punch out like] sending an arrow out."
- "How to make body harmony? Use whole body."

Liu Ho Pa Fa Seminar:

- "Animals [are always] on alert or they might get killed. [They have their] body united by instinct."
- "Mind means Chi. Chi means power. Confidence means power. Chi means confidence. Chi means mind."
- "Put the 2 bows together, knees and chest. Hand is arrow, Pull the bow then shoot."
- "If you watch Clint Eastwood westerns: on the outside Clint Eastwood and the bad guy are both waiting to reach for their guns. The bad guy is all tense—hand on his gun, Clint Eastwood is all relaxed smoking his cigar. By the time the bad guy uses three actions to pull his gun Clint Eastwood has already shot him and is smoking his cigar. In Martial Arts it is the same, use one action for one breath."

On Saturday evening Grandmaster Choi had a surprise 70th birthday party at Mai Village in St. Paul, the food and conversation were great. I wished Grandmaster Choi a happy 70th birthday. I told him Thank you for everything and I hope to see you soon. I hope everyone had as much fun as I did.



Xing-Yi Seminar



Liu Ho Ba Fa Seminar

Tai Chi for Health Defense

By Bryan Steenerson

The other day I came home early from work, not feeling well with the beginning of a sore throat and slight cough. "I'm not going to get sick." I kept telling myself and immediately went to the liquor cabinet and poured myself ½ gram of Russian cognac. After sipping on this without water so that I could feel the smooth burn in my throat I changed into my workout clothes. I went through the entire stretch routine and started the first section, moving slowly through each movement, trying to feel as if I was swimming through the air. I moved straight into the second section, holding each kick in the air for no less than 10 seconds, never moving quickly, but maintaining a slow steady pace. By the end of the second section sweat had collected on my brow. I moved into the third, weaving through the fair ladies, feeling the power of the push with step, and finally ending with standing meditation.



After my heart slowed down and my breath was deep I jumped right into Hsing I. I started with the warm-ups. Meditation, twenty repetitions of each element, 2 repetitions of each element moving across the room feeling the nine joints and attempting to move them together. I went into the first Hsing I form, working on the nine joint harmony and transitions from each position to the next, after the last metal element posture I stood in standing meditation once again. By now my shirt was damp with sweat.

Next I went into Baguazhang, two sets of each palm, eight steps in between each palm in a circle. Treading lightly with mud steps, feeling the ever changing twisting form, keeping mindful of the powerful applications, relaxing the body. After the fifth palm, I stood in standing meditation and went through the meditation poses.



Two hours had passed since I had started my first stretch of the night. My breath was calm and deep, my body slightly damp with sweat and my muscles relaxed and warm. I ended the night with a cup of hot tea and a movie. I awoke the next morning, and the soreness in my throat that had been there the night before had vanished.

Annual Summer Retreat:

August 14-16

Please come and join us for our annual summer retreat. Students of all levels can attend. Feel free to ask Sifus Ray or Paul or other veteran students about their retreat experiences. We will have a new brochure out any day now. Please take a look.

The theme for this year's retreat will be:

Professor Cheng Man-ch'ing & the Genius of His T'ai-Chi
Short form, 4-direction push-hands and Ta Lu will be taught and explored.

Check-in begins mid-afternoon on Friday, allowing time for you to settle in before dinner. After dinner, there is a short program, including an overview of the weekend. After an early morning practice, Saturday and Sunday are interspersed with classes, free time, and meals. There is ample time for strolling under the trees, getting to know your fellow Tai-Chi players, practicing alone or with others, or, if you choose, scheduling some body work. The retreat concludes late afternoon on Sunday.

The fees include your instruction, three meals per day, and towels, wash cloths, sheets, blankets and pillows for use in your dorm room. Bathrooms are communal, but stalls and small changing areas outside each shower are private. You will need your own soap and toiletries. Please note that the building is not air-conditioned, so a fan is often a great item to pack.

Meals are served cafeteria style, offering ample vegetarian options for all meals, plus a salad bar at lunch and dinner. During meals you can pick up as much ice as you'd like from their machine in the kitchen.

Consider bringing: your own practice weapons, notebook, and perhaps drinks or snacks for evening social time for yourself or to share.

Please tell us if you have requests for roommates, need for a ride or want to share your ride.

\$205 for the Retreat -or- \$225 for Single Room

Deposit of at least \$50 due by July 1.

Balance of fees due by August 1.

Please note on or with your check if you want a single room or have any other requests.

Class Schedule for June 15—September 15, 2009

Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Saturday	
12:30-2:30 pm Solo Form (all levels-join anytime)						12:30-2:30 pm Solo Form (all levels-join anytime)		9:00-10:00 am Meditation (enrollment closed)	
6:00-7:30 pm Solo Form (beginners only)		6:00-7:00 pm Solo Form Refinement (instructor authorization required)		6:00-7:30 pm Solo Form (all levels-join anytime)		6:00-7:30 pm Solo Form (all levels-join anytime)		10:00-11:30 am Eclectis (join anytime)	
7:30-8:30 pm Weapons T'ai-Chi Sword, Energies, Applications, and Fencing (prerequisite: Solo Form completion)		7:00-8:00 pm Pushing-Hands & San-Shou (prerequisite: Solo Form completion)		7:30-8:30 pm Hsing-Yi Ch'uan: Level I (enrollment closed)		7:30-8:30 pm Wu-Tang Sword (enrollment closed)		11:30 am-12:30 pm T'ai-Chi Review & Practice (prerequisite: Solo Form completion)	
8:30-9:30 pm		8:00-9:00 pm Praying Mantis Siu Gar Sek Hand Form and Green Dragon Staff (open to all until July 15)		8:30-9:30 pm Pa-Kua Swimming Dragon, Chase- Hands, Weapon Review (open to all until July 15)				12:30-2:00 pm Solo Form (all levels-join anytime)	
Liu Ho Pa Fa Mother & Sons (join anytime)	Pa-Kua 64 Mother Palms (enrollment closed)								

NOTE: The Studio will be closed Saturday, July 4 for Independence Day, and Monday, September 7 for Labor Day.

Twin Cities T'ai-Chi Ch'uan Studio
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FIRST CLASS MAIL