



The Newsletter of the  
**Twin Cities T'ai-Chi Ch'uan  
Studio**

2242 University Ave  
St Paul, MN 55114  
(651) 767-0267

# Wu-Dang

Vol. 17, No. 1  
September 2009

[www.tctaichi.org](http://www.tctaichi.org)  
[mail@tctaichi.com](mailto:mail@tctaichi.com)

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

## NEW SCHEDULE

By Ray Hayward

Our current schedule will remain the same except for the Thursday evening classes. From 6 to 7 p.m. we will have a solo form class that will include all the usual warm-ups, meditation, and instruction, except that we will be teaching Professor Cheng's short form. This will be an extension of the short form work we covered at this year's retreat. From 7 to 8 p.m. will begin a cycle of pushing-hands covering basic drills, methods, advanced drills, and a variety of practices. From 8 to 9 p.m. we will continue the Wu-Tang Sword fencing class. If you have any questions about classes, the current schedule, or future schedules feel free to talk to me or Paul.

## Letter From the Board

By Rondi Atkin, Chairman

Despite the economic downturn in our country, TCTCC continues to get new members. However, over the past year, current members have lost jobs and are unable to pay dues. As a not-for-profit agency, we are dedicated to providing instruction to as many people as possible, and we can offer temporary or partial abatement of dues for members who are experiencing financial hardship. If you have experienced a loss of income but would like to continue studying, please talk to Sifu Ray. On the other hand, if you are lucky enough to not have been hurt by the economy, consider making a donation (there is a link on our website at [tctaichi.org](http://tctaichi.org), you can use a check anytime, add funds to your dues checks and note it on the memo line, or donate to our upcoming annual contribution drive). And whether you give or receive assistance, please know that it will and should be confidential.

### **Beat the Winter Blues Saturday Night Seminars**

**October 24**, 6-8pm: Renaissance Lute  
With Richard Griffith

**November 14 or 21**, 6-8pm: Intro to Astrology  
With Pat Kaluza

**January** (date to be named), 6:30-8:30pm  
Chinese Culture, Calligraphy &  
Paper Cutting with Ying Liang-Sorman

**February** (date to be named), 6-8pm: Resiliency  
With Anita Ryan

**March** (date to be named) 6-8pm: Pairs Shiatsu  
With Cat Marx

Coming October 1!  
From Shu-Kuang Press

Silk:  
Meditations on T'ai-Chi Ch'uan

Poetry by Morgan Grayce Willow  
Designed by Todd Nesser

Reserve your copy now. \$15 per paperback.

## Steel Refined a Hundred Times Over

By Ray Hayward



*"The real magic of discovery lies not in seeking new landscapes, but having new eyes."*

- Marcel Proust

Why do we keep practicing the same things over and over? Does repetition have to be boring? How can I keep my practicing new, fresh, and constantly improving? These questions arise usually after the newness of completing the sequence and gaining certain skills with the solo form wears off. The I-Ching, or book of changes, says the only thing that doesn't change IS change. This means everything is changing, expanding or contracting, becoming gross or subtle, seeking movement or stillness. How does this all fit in with our daily practice of T'ai-Chi? Both Master Liang and Master Choi addressed this in their teachings. Here are some of their ideas, as well as a few of my own.

Sometimes after finishing a round of the solo form, Master Liang would look at us and say "pig iron" or "cast-iron." He was referring to the line in the Classics that says "When the energy is mobilized, it is like steel refined a hundred times over." This alludes to the alchemical process of transforming iron ore into spring steel. The numerous repetitions of heat, beat, and cool change the metal from something brittle and full of impurities, into something that can bend like a spring and be sharp as a razor. Master Liang was referring to our execution of the solo form and, through our limited amount of repetitions, how much we had gone along the process of refinement. He would say we go from iron ore to pig iron to cast iron to steel to pure steel and finally to spring steel. Gradually our tense, off-balance, jerky movements became relaxed and graceful, full of balance, smoothness, and truly deserving to be called postures. He would say we are becoming steel, meaning refined, not stiff. This process requires daily practice in which we made observations and corrections, seeking instruction and feedback so we could make the movements

more and more correct. Like the pebble that causes an avalanche, gradually corrected parts of postures turned into whole sections that become natural and free moving, culminating in a solo form that from beginning to end is relaxed and sunk.

Master Choi always emphasized the practice and mastery of the basics. Many times he said, "The basics are advanced, but you must refine them." For Master Choi, the refining process consists of making a movement relaxed, harmonious, and capable of speed and power. He also looked at the refining process as a deepening—from learning and practicing a technique to the technique becoming an instinct and skill—from something you think about to something you can do. Even though he is the Grandmaster and lineage-holder of the style that boasts the longest form with the greatest amount of postures, Choi said the best forms are the ones with a small amount of movements that can be done with a greater number of repetitions in the time you have to practice. He stressed that you have to practice a posture 335 times to begin to make it instinctual. Because of this, Master Choi said single-movement training, taking one posture and doing it over and over, was the way to refine a movement. We then take the refined movement and link it in a sequence.

At the studio, many times you hear the instruction to go from a certain part of the solo form to another. I can tell you from my own experience, I see in many people's faces: Are we going to do that again? What a lot of people don't see is the look on their face after they've done the repetitive practice. Either they have the look of calm and centeredness or of deeper understanding of a correction that has come alive. Indeed, we can see the dirt on own backs, but sometimes we can't see the enlightenment on our own faces. The sequence is one of the ONLY things that doesn't change when we practice the solo form. Because we practice the same form every day, that becomes the anchor in the turbulent ocean of mind, body, and spirit. We get to see, on a daily basis, our bodies change, whether we are progressing or not, and how our mind can affect our body just as much as our body can affect our mind. Even if the earth didn't

tremble, we had no great awakening spiritually or physically, when we're done with the form, we are 20 to 30 minutes older, wiser, and little bit further on our alchemical journey.

One time we had a professional dancer studying at the studio. She was capable of memorizing a great number of movements in very long sequences. I learned two important lessons from her. One was that no matter how much movement and sequence you can memorize and execute, if they are not relaxed, sunken, and following the conditions laid down in the Classics, then you're not doing T'ai-Chi. Another lesson I learned came after asking her if she ever danced any of her previous choreographies or sequences from shows that she was no longer performing. She told me no. I wondered at that. When I am continually learning and putting together new sequences and ideas, when do I get to the refining, deepening, and understanding? By practicing the same sequence daily, I get to see how my balance improves with

age. My body gives accurate feedback on flexibility, relaxation, coordination, and many other sensations. I get to study how differently my body moves and my mind thinks and my energy flows on a day-to-day basis. Master Choi told us that our bodies talk to us every day and that we just need to listen.

Like the peeling of an onion, it's the process of peeling, not reaching the middle, where the progress happens. The saying, "It's the journey, not the destination," rings true for daily practice. After practicing T'ai-Chi daily for more than 30 years, I can say that only the sequence is the same. The experience, benefits, and adventure are always new and exciting. For me, familiarity breeds enlightenment, and the enlightenment is in the details. It's a new day; it's a new solo form. Enjoy!

## H1N1 (Swine Flue) and the Studio

By Lynn & Tim Dennis

First, an interesting bit of flu trivia:

*Q: Why are younger people a higher priority for the H1N1 flu vaccine?*

*A: The 1918 Spanish flu was an H1 virus, and, after the epidemic, it circulated widely until about 1957. People born before 1957 are likely to have developed some immunity to an H1 type virus.*

### Ways to stay healthy:

- Stay informed
- Avoid close contact with people who are ill (being within about 6 feet). Influenza is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people.
- Take everyday actions to stay healthy and avoid infecting others.
  - Wash your hands frequently with soap and water. Alcohol based hand cleaners are also effective.



- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Stay home if you are sick. If you are sick with an influenza-like illness (fever plus at least cough or sore throat and possibly other symptoms such as runny nose, body aches, headaches, chills, fatigue, vomiting and diarrhea), you should **keep away from others for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone (without the use of fever-reducing medicine).**

### Some things we could do at the studio:

- Make sure that both bathrooms are supplied with soap and paper towels at all times. Suggest eliminating use of cloth towels during cold and flu season.
- Follow the above precautions
- Wash hands frequently. Consider putting bottles of Purell in dressing rooms or office.
- Have Clorox wipes available to clean studio weapons etc.

## The Real Tomatoes of T'ai-Chi

By Kurt Swanson



The philosophy and practice of T'ai-Chi are full of paradoxes that are sometimes difficult for the rational mind to comprehend: great loss and great gain, soft and weak overcoming

hard and strong, a martial art practiced so slowly that even a teenager in the morning could take us down, to name just a few of the more well-known ones. I'd like to add a few of my own to this list.

For beginners, I always thought that the T'ai-Chi lifestyle would be a great way to grow old gracefully and with dignity. But the funny thing is, the more I do T'ai-Chi, the younger I feel! We all know about the increased physical relaxation, flexibility, and strength that result from a regular practice of T'ai-Chi, as well as the increased bounce in our step, and we are also quite familiar with the inner benefits, such as greater calm and stability in our emotional worlds.

Our teachers show us how to remove life's physical, emotional, and intellectual obstacles, as well as how to flow and blend with life rather than work against it. We are better able to sort through all the stuff in life, giving us the ability to see more clearly the bare essentials that are necessary for happy, healthy living. And a regular practice of T'ai-Chi is simply fun and provides never-ending education that touches on all aspects of our lives.

All of this makes us feel younger, more positive, and leaves us with greater enthusiasm for the experiences of life. Externally, we T'ai-Chi players may appear to behave like a bunch of old people sneaking up on trees, but internally, and more importantly, we feel much more like a bunch of lucky immortals simply enjoying the actual presence and beauty of the trees for the first time ever.

Another paradox I have encountered is that the more I practice T'ai-Chi the more time I seemingly have! When embarking upon the study of T'ai-Chi, we may wonder how we can possibly fit a regular practice of T'ai-Chi into our days already filled with kids, schoolwork, mortgages, full-time jobs, and never-ending household maintenance. But I think we humans are masters of and slaves to a phenomenon that might be called "psychological time"—a perceived

sense of time that we can vary through psychological processes. When we are bored or are performing some loathsome task, we seem to have too much time, and when we are having fun or are too busy, we seem to have not enough time. Busy lifestyles thus contribute greatly to the perception that we do not have enough time in the day for what needs to get done, including T'ai-Chi.

But a steady practice of T'ai-Chi has a way of slowing the complex machinery of psychological time. Life interests and priorities begin to shift and simplify; crap is eliminated, problems lessen, and time seems to open up. Certainly one needs time to perform T'ai-Chi, just as the Earth needs time to circle the sun and spin upon itself. But T'ai-Chi has a way of opening up space in mind, thus creating more time to practice.

Moreover, I no longer *want* anything from T'ai-Chi, nor do I *expect* anything from T'ai-Chi, yet I surprisingly continue to *get* when I do T'ai-Chi. In fact, it seems the less I desire T'ai-Chi, the more I seem to gain and consequently the more I practice! How much of our T'ai-Chi experience has gone unnoticed because we are too busy thoughtfully reminiscing and anticipating? How much of our T'ai-Chi has been missed because we were too busy trying to resurrect a previous feeling or insight? And how much have we misunderstood because we were too busy wondering about what was to be when we got there? The greatest benefits from T'ai-Chi, I believe, are discovered in the here and now of our practice, and I'm not so sure we can be in the here and now when we are wanting or expecting something from T'ai-Chi.

Those of us who were old enough in 1980 might remember hearing Carly Simon singing "anticipation is making me late...is keeping me waiting" to, of all things, an upside-down bottle of Heinz ketchup on TV. If Carly Simon were a T'ai-Chi player, she would be singing about the anticipation that is keeping us late, keeping us waiting for T'ai-Chi enlightenment—not ketchup. I'm thinking that maybe the real tomatoes of T'ai-Chi are in the here and now and not necessarily stuck in the bottle or on the French fries (or in my case, on my lap). T'ai-Chi enlightenment is not in the relished daydreams of reminiscence or anticipation. It simply is where it always has been and always will be—in the unembellished here and now.

## Tea Cookies

By Kim Hayward

The Retreat is always full of surprises and this year was no different. Saturday, Matt & Katie Peterson put together a lovely and educational afternoon tea. Katie supplied us with the recipe for the cookies she served at the tea. Thank you Katie!



"Fourteen in One (Master Recipe)"

Recipe makes 7 dozen 2½ inch cookies.



Mix any of the following into the dough to make cookie variations:

- 2 teaspoon lemon or orange zest
- 2 tablespoons poppy seeds
- 1 cup flaked coconut (Katie suggests

toasting it first)

- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 6 tablespoons finely minced candied ginger

In a large bowl, beat on medium speed until very fluffy and well blended:

- 2 sticks unsalted butter (room temperature)
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Add and beat until well blended:

- 1 large egg yolk

Add and beat until well combined:

- 1 large egg
- 2 teaspoon vanilla

Reduce speed to low and beat in just until combined:

- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour

Divide dough in half and wrap in plastic wrap. (I made the dough into a tube shape.) Refrigerate until firm, about 1 hour. (I sliced the cold dough into 1/4 inch pieces and placed them on the cookie sheet.)

Bake at 375 until golden brown, 6-8 minutes.



## Class Schedule for September 15, 2009—January 15, 2010

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)		6:00-7:00 pm Professor Cheng's Short Form (all levels-join anytime)		10:00-11:30 am Eclectsis (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)		7:00-8:00 pm Pushing-Hands (prerequisite: Solo Form completion, or after 10/1 instructor permission)		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 (enrollment closed)		8:30-9:30 pm Pa-Kua Swimming Dragon, Chase-Hands, Weapon Review (enrollment closed)		8:00-9:00 pm Wu-Tang Sword (enrollment closed)		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 Thursday, November 26, Thursday, December 24, and Thursday, December 31.

**Twin Cities T'ai-Chi Ch'uan Studio**  
**2242 University Ave W Suite 207**  
**Saint Paul, MN 55114**

**FIRST CLASS MAIL**