



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

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Wu-Dang

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

NEW SCHEDULE

By Ray Hayward

Beginning Saturday, January 16th the meditation class at 9 a.m. will be focusing on five methods of Qi Gong. If you didn't attend the sitting meditation portion, it doesn't matter for this part of the course is new, all are welcome.

On page 2 you will find a schedule for the 6-7 Solo Form Refinement class, and it is open to all those who have finished the solo form. Tuesday night 7-8 Push-Hands/San-Shou is now open to those who have finished the Solo Form.

All other classes are either continuing or accepting new members as the schedule states on the back of the newsletter. ☯

RUNNING WATER

DOES NOT BECOME STAGNANT

By Ray Hayward

Every few years, I write about the benefits of and need for students to take private lessons. Just recently I had a string of private lessons with people who had been attending the Studio for more than 10 years but hadn't taken a private in a long time. Most were shocked to get a couple of pages of corrections, helpful hints and general updates. If you don't change the oil in your car, would you expect it to run smoothly? Do you grocery shop only once a year? How about brushing your teeth? (I won't even go *there!*) The point is that your solo form is as much a part of you and your daily life as the few basic maintenance examples I just cited. Let's take a quick look at what group classes can do for you, and then some (more) words about private lessons.

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Beat the Winter Blues Saturday Night Seminars

January 30, 6:00-8:00pm
Resiliency with Anita Ryan

The "I" of the Storm: How find—and hold—your center amid chaos. Tap in to your inner resiliency to bounce back when times get tough. Just follow these three steps: 1. Imagine it! Quantum thinking is the key. Release your thoughts to produce peace instead of panic. 2. Create it! Harness specific techniques to build a space for working on your resiliency. Then shift your thinking. 3. Practice it! Become your own coach. No longer rely on outside sources to bring you back to a place of well-being and internal health.

February 6, 6:30-8:30pm:
Chinese Culture, Calligraphy &
Paper Cutting with Ying Liang-Sorman

Chinese New Year!

We will be celebrating the Year of the Tiger beginning with a demonstration on February 27th at 5PM at the Studio. After the demonstration we'll hold an altar ceremony and awards ceremony. The festivities at the studio will be followed by a banquet at U Garden where we'll be doing buffet for \$14 this year. Sign up is posted.

Gung Hay Fat Choy!

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Group classes, which are mainly taught at the Studio, serve many purposes. They teach different styles and sequences, and provide access to teachers on a wide scale of times and days. Group classes provide lessons that cover a variety of levels and abilities. Many of our lessons are arranged so that everyone can get something for their practice. We don't teach to the lowest common denominator, but aim somewhere in the middle of the experience and knowledge of the people in a class. One thing we can't do in a group class is give a lot of individual attention; it's just not fair. That doesn't mean that, if you don't receive a correction, everything is perfect.

There just isn't time to make all the corrections that need to be made. We will point out things to individuals when we can, but group classes are a democracy, with everyone having equal access to the material and the teacher.

Private classes are a whole different story. What are the reasons for studying privately? There are those who simply can't attend any of the classes in our schedule. Others want to study a subject not in the current schedule, some want to go over a past class. Some students are really fast learners, while others need private classes to just keep up with their classmates. In a private class, the teacher and

subject are focused on you and your practice. Master T. T. Liang used to say, "You can't see the dirt on your own back," meaning that we can see others' mistakes in the solo form but that we can't see our own. In a private class you will be corrected, guided, taught and given homework, all tailored to you. Individual lessons can make a huge difference. You might return to group classes and see that many people are working on your self-same corrections. Or you might see your lesson carefully constructed to fit a large group.

So, are you ready to schedule a private class? I suggest one per season; that's only four a year. At the very least, once a year is a must. If you have been studying Taiji more than five years, you NEED to check in one-on-one with your teacher regularly, and I am not saying this to generate business in a slow economy. Just because I charge \$60 an hour doesn't mean that that is what my private classes and my time are worth. It means I am willing to accept that price. Some private lessons with Master Liang were priceless. Some classes with Master Choi were \$250 an hour - and worth every penny. If you are behind in your solo form corrections and can't afford a private lesson, I will provide one with a sliding fee scale - or just give you one as a gift. I also can teach two people at the same time and they can be split my fee. It's that important. ☯

Tuesday Night (6:00-7:00 p.m.) Solo Form Refinement Schedule		
1/19 Understanding and applying the Taiji Classics	3/9 Understanding and applying the Taiji Classics	4/27 Understanding and applying the Taiji Classics
1/26 Introduction to the Staff	3/16 Choi Style T'ai-Chi	5/4 Choi Style T'ai-Chi
2/2 Introduction to the Staff	3/23 Choi Style T'ai-Chi	5/11 Understanding and applying the Taiji Classics
2/9 Understanding and applying the Taiji Classics	3/30 Choi Style T'ai-Chi	5/18 Choi Style T'ai-Chi
2/16 Introduction to the Staff	4/6 Choi Style T'ai-Chi	5/25 Choi Style T'ai-Chi
2/23 Introduction to the Staff	4/13 Understanding and applying the Taiji Classics	6/1 Choi Style T'ai-Chi
3/2 Understanding and applying the Taiji Classics	4/20 Understanding and applying the Taiji Classics	6/8 Understanding and applying the Taiji Classics

TURTLES, CRANES & IMMORTALS by Ray Hayward

When Master T.T. Liang first came to Minnesota, he gave a demonstration of T'ai-Chi Ch'uan at the Minnesota Zen Center in Minneapolis.

After, the abbot, Katagiri Roshi, commented on Master Liang's appearance and demeanor. He said Master Liang possessed:

The round belly of Buddha,
The white, wispy hair of Lao-Tse,
The thin Legs of a Crane,
The rounded back of a Tortoise,
The high forehead of an Immortal,
The large ears of a Bodhisatva,
The piercing eyes of a Taoist hermit,
The energy and power of a young warrior,
And the booming voice of a god.

Master T.T. Liang told us that we should imitate these excellent qualities of the turtle;



As the turtle carries its home on its back, we should carry that which is most precious with us at all times.

As the turtle eats mud, plants and insects, we should not be too fussy over eating fancy foods or great quantities.

When the turtle is threatened, it dives into the water, runs away or pulls its head into its shell, which teaches us to avoid conflict.

As the turtle is slow and takes its time, we should get rid of worry, hurry and stress so we might live long lives like the turtle. ☸

THE GRAVITY OF BALANCE by Kurt Swanson

Few things have been as transformative in my T'ai-Chi practice as getting to know my body's center of mass and its importance.



Our center of mass (hereafter "CM") can be described as a point in space that represents the whole or the "average" of our body, if our body is to be considered as one unit of mass. Scientists and engineers, while working in the world of classical physics, use the concept of CM when they need to understand the "average" behavior of a body that is still or in motion. Sometimes the CM is referred to as the "center of gravity".

Generally speaking, the CM is located in the body and in the region of the navel (the region of the Dan T'ien). I say generally because we are all physically unique and the CM does not have a fixed location within the body — its spatial relationship with the body changes as the body moves! Tilt your head forward and your CM moves forward and down some. Raise an arm or two and your CM moves up some. Raise a leg forward and your CM moves forward and up some. Eat some food and your CM moves. In fact, while just sitting still, your CM moves (though imperceptibly) because your asymmetrical heart expands and contracts, thus changing the spatial distribution of your body mass with every heartbeat.

If the CM were to be projected straight down to the floor, it would show up on the line that connects your two feet. If you are in a bow stance, then the projected CM will be on the line but closer to the forward foot. If you are in a horse stance, the projected CM will be exactly between your two feet. And when in a stance where you are balanced on one foot (kicks, cat stances, heel stances and roughly 90% of posture-to-posture transitions), the projection of the CM will be at the rooted foot. As you move through the solo form, the projection of your CM on the floor will slide back and forth along this imaginary line that connects your two feet.

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Gravity of Balance continued from page 3

The exact location of our CM at any given time, therefore, depends on the location of each body part in relation to the whole at that time. As you can imagine, the exact mathematical relationship between your body and its CM is a complex, mundane one, but when viewed in its more sensual, poetic way, this relationship becomes a lovely dance between two intimate, interdependent partners (the body and its CM) as one moves through the form.

We are excellent at managing the location of our CM implicitly when engaged in physical activity that we are familiar with, such as walking, running, jumping or standing up. But T'ai-Chi brings with it a new type of movement that requires us to work attentively with our CM (at least in the early stages of learning T'ai-Chi). And when we are balanced on one foot during our solo form, location of the CM becomes especially paramount. If we wish to remain balanced on one foot, *the only place for our CM is to be precisely over our rooted foot*. If our CM is not over the rooted foot, a “torque arm” is created and gravity pulls us down and around our rooted foot. In other words, we pivot and fall down unless we counterbalance quick enough.

So, location of the CM becomes a very important part of our T'ai-Chi. How can we best work with our CM? Psychologists and neurophysiologists have identified primarily two types of human attention. The first is an involuntary, reactive type of attention that evolution has hardwired into our brains for our own safety and well-being. When we hear the hiss of a snake, a twig snap behind us, the sudden cacophony of crows or see something large or colorful pass through our visual field, our attention is immediately “grabbed.” This is a “bottom-up” type of attention, and we possess it in order to increase our chances of survival.

When balancing on one foot, any imbalance is certainly going to grab our attention. We react decisively to imbalance because, if we don't, we may fall over and injure ourselves (thousands of years ago breaking a leg or a hip could easily result in an untimely death). And because we are prone to focusing on potent emotions, such as those associated with falling over, it's no surprise that we often focus wholeheartedly on our imbalance rather than on the location of our CM.

But we humans are also capable of another type of attention — a voluntary, proactive, “top-down” form of attention that allows us to willfully focus

on one thing in particular (and sometimes to the exclusion of all other things). This type of attention can be hugely beneficial because it gives opportunity to enhance our performance while working on a task, such as studying a business or scientific problem, creating music or poetry, appreciating something of beauty, or performing T'ai-Chi.

Although the simultaneity of these two types of attention can provide internal conflict (“I *must* focus on my CM, but I *really* don't want to fall”), human consciousness is capable of choosing to emphasize the top-down form of attention instead of allowing the more troubling bottom-up form of attention

to dominate. Instead of focusing on that which threatens us, such as falling, we can instead choose to focus on something more positive, such as the proper location of the CM throughout the solo form. Placing our attention on the CM, to the exclusion of our fear of falling, reveals our CM, which can be “hidden” by physical and psychological tension. With proper attention to the CM, our balance improves, empty steps become smooth and truly empty, and kicks are much less apt to be paired with flailing arms, little hops or sneaky touchdowns. ☯



Note from Sifu Ray: My mother, Lillian, and my aunt, Margaret, both passed away in December, my mother on Monday the 21st and my aunt on Monday the 7th.

When I joined my first Karate school, my mother scratched up the \$15 for the first month's tuition. She said she would pay for the first month and buy my uniform but that she couldn't put the monthly expense in the household budget and I would have to get a job if I wanted to continue.

My aunt, who lived two streets over, called me one day and asked if I would mow her lawn two times a month. When I said I would, she then asked how much my martial arts lessons cost. When I told her \$15 a month, she said she would pay me \$30 a month for the mowing, and she continued to pay that much for snow-shoveling and leaf-raking, as well.

I deeply miss these two wonderful women who had always supported me on my martial arts journey. I appreciate all the cards, the words of comfort and condolence, and the beautiful flower arrangement. Thank you.

"The wind of change merely ruffles the leaves of time, while the tree of life itself remains firmly rooted in eternity." Donald Norfolk

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Class Schedule for January 15—June 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 Chi-Kung (all levels-join until 2/15)
6:00-7:30 pm Solo Form (beginners only)		6:00-7:00 pm Solo Form Refinement (instructor authorization required) see schedule pg. 2	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 Cycle 1: T'ai-Chi Sword, Energies, Applications, & Fencing (enrollment closed)		7:00-8:00 pm Pushing-Hands & San-Shou (prerequisite: Solo Form completion)	7:30-8:30 pm Hsing-Yi Ch'uan: Level I: 5 Elements (enrollment closed)	7:00-8:00 pm Pushing-Hands (prerequisite: Solo Form completion, enrollment closed until 3/15 w/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 Bok Yuen Tow Toe Hand Form & Basic Hands (join anytime)	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 (join anytime)	Pa-Kua 64 Mother Palms (enrollment closed)				

NOTE: The Studio will be closed Monday, May 31 for Memorial Day.

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FIRST CLASS MAIL