

1982 Class Notes

Fourth Spring Workshop
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan

"Slowly the flower unfolds and I begin to smell the sweet fragrance it holds." Nancy Lasseter

Many deep rooted thanks and hugs to Central Michigan University, Don Beere, associate professor of Clinical Psychology; Greg Borgerson, therapist and psychologist? and Carole Howard, associate professor of Physical Education.

Love to Mr. Lui. His astounding energy, sharing spirit, philosophical snacks (and cracks) (and don't forget those magic tricks) helped immeasurably in dissolving the lines among us ... by the end of five days of fumbling and flying, we celebrated our learning, our frustrations and our togetherness - high chi! Mr. Lui: "Under the law of differentiation, we have individual talents and tastes. Under the law of similarity, we have common spirit."

"Some emphasized a passionate giving of themselves to each movement, a process which Mr. Lui would call a 'falling in love with the movement' or insert of the spirit into form."

Unrandom Tips from Lui (all notes were transcribed under the covers with a flashlight)

"In T'ai Chi we make use of the current to sail - work with the laws of Nature, not against."

Relaxation is the No. 1 principle. Objectify yourself, and you will become relaxed.

Inhale: slower, shorter, more curved (store the energy)

Exhale: straighter, longer, harder (release the energy)

No sharp corners so the energy can travel through freely. Why do people get tired? They get stuck.

Bouncing back is a natural force. Don't move until the energy (chi) sinks and you can feel it. Then bounce back with the natural bouncing force of the chi.

Lower/coil your body (make it very small) to gain power

A circle within a circle; the confused, multiple or triple circle, the highest art of T'ai Chi, is where many circles are happening simultaneously (and continuously) in the body, all initiated from the very center of the body, the area around the waist and base of the vertebrae.

- * Paradoxical truth: when you want to move extremely fast, move extremely slow; when you want to be extremely hard, be extremely soft.
- * When practicing at home go slow, then fast, then slow again.
- * Grasp Bird's tail: retreat and sink at the same time.
- * Snake Creeps Down: Let the circle bring you up. Watch your hand as it comes up on the circle; it will help you lift up.
- * Making fist: as if holding a piece of cotton soaked in water. Hold firm, but not hard enough that you squeeze the water out. (Punch as if touching a baby but within this lightness, there is potential firmness.)
- * As you move, you will need to constantly shift the positioning of your feet to learn how to keep your weight centered. The more advanced you become, the most subtle the shifts until they become almost imperceptible.

Each time you do T'ai Chi, you gain more strength.

During the workshop, Mr. Lui introduced his new eight beauties (renamed the eight tortures by the class). These movements were new experiences in "constructive discomfort" (learn to enjoy the pain!). For those of us with short memory, here are the notes I could decipher. (Many of these directions apply not just to a particular movement, but also to the form in general.

1. Row the Boat

"Who pulls the arms down? The body!"

Mr. Lui described this seemingly simple movement as the hardest of them all.

- * Have the image of your arms resting or floating on the water
- * As the body pulls the hands back, turn the palms up (to build more power)
- * Completely relax the upper body (drop shoulders); then body weight will sink down.
- * Keep experimenting with bending the leg lower, "sinking" lower, while still keeping the back straight.
- * Push: arms soft and flexible; wrists relaxed; hands form a diamond shape. Front knee in between the arms
- * 70% of weight on front foot when go forward (When you get strong, keep all weight on the back foot.)

"It takes a long time to coordinate the body; it has too many egos."

2. Rubber Band (trains the waist to become increasingly flexible)

"The organic concept is total self-movement with no separation of powers. T'ai Chi is not the movement of the organization, but of the organism."

- * You bounce like a rubber band, soft, yet elastic
- * Two hands level, and eye follows the front hand
- * Relax the body. Advanced: don't bend the leg; let the body press the leg down.
- * Always crouch down a bit before pushing forward.
- * When you pull your hands apart, at the end they will go up, almost as if you are flying or reaching the crest of a wave.
- * Two styles: 3/4 weight on front leg, then when you go back, heel up on one foot so all the weight on the other leg

(Again, when you get strong, all the weight on back leg all the time)

3. Dancing Circle

"When you are at the center of the circle, you can deal with infinity.

- * Not much weight on front leg
- * Bring the waist down to pull down the front
- * The palm that is up is on the same side of the heel that's up (without weight)
- * When pull from the center, it's very strong
- * At home do very slow (for accuracy), then very fast (for total body movement), then slow again.

"All movements are spirals in the forms of circles or arches."

4. Ward Off, Roll Back, Press and Push

Old yoga aphorism: "Inch by inch, it's a cinch; yard by yard, it's awfully hard."

Old Lui aphorism: "Inch by inch, thousands of time - don't miss one day."

- * Ward off from the waist, the center. (For the longest time I could not grasp moving from the center until this workshop when Mr. Lui described the center as the sacrum, or lower spine.)
- * When you go to the left, the right side is the axis, and

vice-versa.

"When we go a distance we must first traverse the space that is near; and in ascending a height, we must begin from the lower ground."

Confucius

5. Cloud Hands (this strengthens all the internal organs; people use this movement for physical therapy)

"Cloud Hands is for moving the waist – the waist must turn to be strong."

- * If you have problems relaxing the arms, make circles in the air like a pinwheel (body the hub, arms the spokes of a wheel), first alternating each side, then simultaneously. This loosens the shoulders (and gets you into the swing of things).

Let the waist bring the arms to the right and left

- * After awhile, lower and wider. Steps should be noiseless and back vertical.

6. Repulse the Monkey in Place

"To yield is to be strong. One can always unyield – that's much easier than yielding. Only when you can be extremely pliable and soft can you be extremely hard and strong. Bend and you will remain whole!"

- * Body weight on rear leg, one palm up, other palm down
- * Sink (to store energy) before bringing arm f
- * Inhale, hands forming a big ball; exhale, press down and forward
- * Learn to bring the arm forward from the waist. If you move from the arm, it's very weak; if from the center, very strong.

Make sure there's connection between waist and hand, and one hand and the other

7. Complex Cloud Hands (renamed "Storm Clouds") (re-renamed "Going too fast to catch")

"Learn to do that which you don't like."

This movements defies description; it is impossible to clear the confusion on paper. Mr. Lui's energy is at such a level that two days into the workshop he was doing this movement differently than the first.

"Imagine no bones, no flesh in your body - only air."

8. Fancy Fan through the Back

Getting this one could drive you mad. "Never sacrifice health for the sake of art."

This is like regular Fan through the Back but with an inner circle added; one arm outside the other circle inside before the push. The only way to get this one is by being there.

CLASSIFIEDS:

T'ai Chi baby boom (all things grow on the Tao). Baby boom to Terri Horwitz and Susan Kimmelman, long, long-time students of Mr. Lui's; founders of "Cloud Hands" in Chicago, and co-authors of Tai Chi Ch'uan, The Technique of Power.

T'ai Chi is a commitment to change.

Baby to be born in December to expectant parents Bob Adams, another long-time Chicago (then San Francisco, then Chicago again) student of Mr. Lui's, and his wife, Teresa- It is reported that doing T'ai Chi pregnant is like dancing while carrying a bag of groceries. Keep centered!

Three scholarships were donated at this workshop by Greg Borgerson who manages at least six weekly practices in the Saginaw, Midland and Bay area. In fact, according to Don Beere, a lot of the success of T'ai Chi in this area "comes from Greg's fantastic contributions."

Soon there will be a "Mr. Lui at the workshop" videotape available. Contact Dr. Don Beere, Psychology Dept., Sloan #138, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859 for further information.

Jean Muldavin's tofu spread (many of us enjoyed this at the workshop):

1 box tofu, drained, combined with J T palatable Brewers Yeast and tamari to taste. This takes a determined arm to mix.

One of the great secrets to true relaxation is an empty spirit. Everyone is precious and unique in this sacred vessel, God's world, and envy is spiritual suicide. The energy generated by the movement of T'ai Chi comes from one common loving source which takes care of us all as we learn to harmonize, both internally and externally, with Universal laws and become whole again.

An often quoted Chinese proverb is that one picture is worth a thousand words. You asked for pictures. You got 'em, including Mr. Lui in his air chair and a whole lot of "high chi!"

Since the workshop, my form has gone light years and I'm still not even close. Love Jane



