

# Taijiquan JOURNAL

---

## Finding Simplicity in Taijiquan

I've been giving much thought recently about how to teach and practice the taiji form. For many years, I approached the taiji form as something that needed to be mastered—in sequence and in detail. Then I reached a point in my study when I began to understand that the form was really a vehicle for the taiji principles—relax, align, step empty-footed, and so on.

Lately though, I find myself examining taiji from yet another angle. For over a year now, I've been teaching an ongoing taiji group at an agency that works with people who have mental illness or brain injuries. The agency, highly respected in the community, gives comprehensive support to clients including classes, health assistance, housing, and jobs.

The students are a delightful bunch. In most ways, the students are no different from my other students. Some come early, some on time, some arrive halfway through the class. Some come for the taiji, others for the exercise, and some, simply to be in a social setting. Some quietly follow along with whatever we do in class, and others pepper me with questions.

There are, however, three particular challenges for me in teaching these classes, challenges that have brought me to examine many of my presumptions about how best to teach taiji. These challenges include:

- varied attendance due to frequent changes in the work schedules and transportation problems

- memory and balance problems for students due to either illness or medications.

- varied levels of taiji experience among students—in a given session this can range from zero to four years.

For these reasons, I've begun to investigate how to "simplify" my teaching methods. How can I present the material more clearly? How can I make its intricate choreography easier to grasp? Am I better off creating taiji-like exercises instead? How do I find the essence and flavor of a given move instead of relying on a sometimes too set and linear choreography?

Interestingly enough, these students are more "flexible" in some ways. As an example, they were very open to accepting me as their new teacher, even though they'd spent several years working with someone else; they also tend to be very flexible about what we do in class.

This exploration has benefited my personal taiji practice as well as how I teach. It comes down to a search for simplicity.

—Barbara Davis

## TAIJIQUAN WORLD

### Look Out, Tournament-goers...

A **taiji-playing robot** has been created in China. Named Huitong, it uses senses of sight, force, and balance, and has some capacity for dialogue. This humanoid robot with “independent intellectual property” can perform taijiquan and saber. Maybe it could compete with the origami-folding robot invented recently by a doctoral student at Carnegie-Mellon University? And speaking of origami, artist **Joseph Wu** has created a couple of taiji figures. You can view them on his website gallery at [www.origami.as](http://www.origami.as).

### Taiji Helps Reduce Swelling

In an Australian study, taiji has been shown to **help breast cancer patients** with post-surgical arm swelling. A modest amount of daily taiji reduced swelling about 9 percent. They also had improvement in range of motion and reported that their arms felt less heavy. The study will be published soon in the *International Journal of Lymphology*.



## IN MEMORY



We are very sad to report the loss of **David Chen**, artist and taiji teacher, who passed away December 25, 2005 at the age of 50 from complications after surgery. David was the creator of many unique pieces

of whimsical and probing original art that graced the covers and pages of *Taijiquan Journal*.

David was very active in the taiji community on the east coast of the United States and taught at his school Wuwei Taichi in Maryland.

At his death, David was putting the finishing touches on a book of taiji wisdom and art. Some selected works from that book can be seen on his website [www.wuweitaichi.com](http://www.wuweitaichi.com). David's generosity, spirit, and his unique take on taiji will be sorely missed.

**Wang Jurong** passed away December 25th in Houston, Texas at the age of 77. Madame Wang was daughter of Wang Ziping, and began martial arts training as a young child. She became an influential figure in China's martial arts as a professor of wushu at the then East China Physical Education College, and as a leading wushu coach, judge, and leader—positions in which she was often the first woman to serve. Wang had lived in Houston, Texas since 1989, teaching at the Houston Institute of Chinese Martial Arts and Medicine. Wang was named Woman of the Year in 1995 by *Inside Kung Fu Magazine*, and in 1997 received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the USA Wushu-Kung Fu Federation.

# Q&A

Outside obligations are forcing me to take a substantial break from attending taiji class. How do I keep my taiji on track during that time?

L.W., Albuquerque, New Mexico

**A:** Try setting a goal of what you would like to accomplish during your time away. Make that goal somewhat challenging so that you're not just marking time.

- Get some pointers from your teacher before you leave. Ask, "If you were me, what would you focus on to get to next level? What are the one or two burning issues that I have to work on?"

- Create a bridge between where you were in class and where you think you'll be when you return. Envision where you'd be if you were still in class. Make sure to practice every day while you're gone from class; that will make for a smoother transition when you return.

- Try keeping a practice diary or log to help you keep on track. Note whatever is helpful to you: content and time practiced, insights about mechanics of movements, random jottings, and so on.

- Take some time to read: taiji books such as the *Taijiquan Classics*, or books specific to your style, or taiji-related writings such as Laozi's *Daodejing* that can be inspirational and enlightening.

Consider, too, the importance of learning "self-teaching" skills. Being your own teacher for a spell provides you with that challenge. You'll have time to hone your self-awareness and self-motivation. It gives you a chance to rediscover the joys of taiji practice.

---

*Cheryl Powers is associate director of Great River T'ai Chi in Minneapolis, Minnesota.*

## REVIEWS



### **Advanced Secrets of Tai Chi Chuan: Teachings of Grand Master Doc-Fai Wong**

Edward Calph  
Chinatown Publications, 2004  
\$14.95 US, pb, 85 pp.

*Advanced Secrets of Tai Chi Chuan* is an unassuming but robust compendium of the ideas of one of the well-known teacher, Doc-Fai Wong. The book makes a good practice companion.

*Advanced Secrets* is much like the art of taiji itself in that its simplicity (only 85 pages) belies its density and impact. Author Edward Calph has recorded concepts and useful training tips learned during twelve years of study with Doc-Fai Wong, a student of Hu Yuen-Chou, one of Yang Chengfu's last living students. The book emphasizes the martial aspect of taiji, with the premise that understanding the fighting identity of taiji enhances its benefits for everyone. —M. Lukas



### **Classical T'ai Chi Sword**

Petra & Toyo Kobayashi  
Tuttle, 2003  
\$18.95 US, pb, 174 pp.

This book gives a nice, clear presentation of Yang style sword as taught to the authors by Chiang Tao Chi, a student of Cheng Manch'ing. The book has helpful technical details about the sword, grip, methods, and history. Photographs with directional arrows, verbal descriptions, and foot charts make this a surprisingly easy book to use.

The book presents the thirteen sword techniques, and follows with the sword form sequence with valuable application techniques for each posture. Eyes, sword fingers, stepping, and sword exercises are among other topics discussed.

This book is highly recommended for those wishing to examine the sword form in detail. —B. Davis

Dear Friends,

Welcome to *Taijiquan Journal Newsletter*! We hope you'll enjoy keeping up on the field of taijiquan through this free, online newsletter. The print edition of *Taijiquan Journal* went on hiatus after the Fall 2004 issue. All back issues are currently available; quantities are very limited, however, so don't delay.

*Taijiquan Journal Newsletter* will come out several times per year. For the time being, the newsletter will be available without your having to sign up for it. If you'd like to receive email announcements of when new issues are posted, please send your email address to [newsletter@taijiquanjournal.com](mailto:newsletter@taijiquanjournal.com). If you are so inclined, donations of \$10 per year are welcome to help defray costs of newsletter production and web maintenance.

On our website you can also find information about back issues and merchandise that we carry.

Please spread the word about *Taijiquan Journal Newsletter*—it's free!

I'll be at **A Taste of China** this summer teaching and taking classes—hope to see you there or at one of the other great events this summer!

Barbara Davis

[www.taijiquanjournal.com](http://www.taijiquanjournal.com)

### Spring-Summer Events

#### World T'ai Chi Day

April 29, 10 a.m. Check your local listings.

#### Zhang Sanfeng Festival

June 1-4, East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania  
[www.TaiChiFest.com](http://www.TaiChiFest.com)

#### A Taste of China

June 28-July 7, Winchester, Virginia  
[www.atoctaijiquan.com](http://www.atoctaijiquan.com)

#### International Forum on Taijiquan

July 17-21, Thunder Bay, Ontario  
[www.taijiforum2006.ca](http://www.taijiforum2006.ca)

#### Taiji Legacy

July 21-23, Plano, Texas  
[www.CHINWOO.com](http://www.CHINWOO.com)

## TAIJIQUAN JOURNAL

BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE

[www.taijiquanjournal.com](http://www.taijiquanjournal.com)

### *Taijiquan Journal Newsletter*

Published by Taijiquan Journal

Editor: Barbara Davis

Contributing editors: Mary Lukas, Cheryl Powers

©2006 Taijiquan Journal

No part of *Taijiquan Journal Newsletter* may be reproduced in any form without permission. Readers are welcome to make one copy for their own use.

Taijiquan Journal

P.O. Box 80538

Minneapolis, MN 55408 USA

612-822-5760

[www.taijiquanjournal.com](http://www.taijiquanjournal.com)

*Taijiquan*  
JOURNAL

PO Box 80538

Minneapolis, Minnesota 55408

[www.taijiquanjournal.com](http://www.taijiquanjournal.com)

# INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON TAIJIQUAN 2006

A CELEBRATION OF ACADEMICS,  
SPORT, CULTURE AND HEALTH

July 17-21, 2006

THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO  
MARTIAL ARTS  
CAPITAL OF CANADA

陳式太極拳

楊式太極拳

吳式太極拳

吳式太極拳

孫式太極拳

現代太極拳



Master Chen Zhenglei  
Chen Style

Master Yang Zhenhua  
Yang Style

Master Wu Wenhan  
Wu (Hao) Style

Master Eddie Wu Kwong Ye  
Wu Style

Master Sun Hongshan  
Sun Style

Master Zeng Naifang  
Modern Style

Bringing together, for the first time in North America, six of the world's top Masters of the traditional Chinese Family Schools and the New School of Taijiquan, this is a "must" event for anyone interested in any aspect of Taijiquan, from the theoretical to the practical. The Forum offers the unprecedented opportunity to interact with six of the world's top Masters and will feature workshops, showcases and special events.



International Forum on Taijiquan 2006  
c/o Confederation College International Education Centre  
1450 Nakina Drive, Box 398, Thunder Bay, Ontario P7C 4W1  
Email: info@taijiforum2006.ca



Visit our website for more information or to register: [www.taijiforum2006.ca](http://www.taijiforum2006.ca)