



GREETINGS & CHANGES

Dear Tai Chi Player:

Greetings! On behalf of everyone associated with the Tai Chi farm I wish you the warmest of holidays and an especially Happy New Year. In relationship to your internal practice I hope that this will be the year that the reconstruction of Yang Lu Chan will become reborn; that the practice of Tai Chi will become "grand ultimate," or supreme.

I would like to thank the residents who volunteer to maintain and organize the functions of the farm. In particular I would like to thank the many instructors and masters who have conducted classes, sometimes under trying conditions, and have helped us all to expand our knowledge and practice. It is through their efforts that the very existence of the farm is justified. It is through their efforts that the concept of a "Tai Chi Community" is created. It is through their efforts that the reconstruction of Yang Lu Chan will grow from an embryo and become an adult.

There are other people whom I wish to shower with blessings and benedictions. There are a great many people who devote their time to seeing that the newsletter appears. Writers, editors, lay-out people, people involved in addressing and posting the final product, and so on. More and more people continue to subscribe to the newsletter. Your interest and donations are greatly appreciated. Thank you!

And of course the many friends who have helped Tai Chi Farm with the physical work which has gone on at the farm. The many projects, such

as the construction of the Wu Chi Pavilion, such as the finishing of the Chang Building, and a great many landscaping projects. This type of energy has sort of percolated beneath the surface and inspired many of us. The donation of physical work is analagous to donating blood. Some of you have gone through a great deal of trouble in transporting donated construction materials. These materials have all been alchemically trnasformed into Chi.

Perhaps most of all I want to salute the workshop participants. Since the farm is created for the transmission of a very special knowledge from one generation to the next, and with an inner understanding of the development of Wu Chi into Tai Chi, I surely wish to recognize that the recipients, the students, are just as important as the givers, the teachers. Both teachers and students have had to struggle with somewhat primitive living conditions during their stay here. Their dedication has no doubt improved the quality of what they took with them.

To briefly recapitulate the history of the farm. The closing for the purchase of the property was in 12/84. I felt the need for a special place that different stylists of Tai Chi Chuan could come to pool their knowledge and work with each other cooperatively; because of my own personal experience in struggling to pass my knowledge forward. From its inception the Tai Chi Farm was to be regarded as a forum for exposition, an arena for learning of a potential universal approach for learning of different manifestations of Tai Chi. By

having a public place for meetings, a lovely natural setting for camping in clement weather, a meditational retreat, a real place devoted to Tai Chi. The continuity of our study can become stronger and more consistent. By being of service in this manner Tai Chi players can all help each other.

The source of income was made possible by the very modest monthly royalty checks from the books I have written. Because there is no fixed financial source, certain problems, such as lack of water, proper toilet and shower facilities, lack of electricity and heat, as regards the cabins in the rear of the property especially, have been insolvable. I recognize the need to provide visiting dignitaries with more auspicious housing. I have been stymied by the local municipality in constructing other residential units. They request not only legal subdivision for each individual building, but a master plan as regards the entire future development of the entire property.

Tai Chi Farm has been on this property for 3 years and a lot of progress has been made. The question which remains: At the present rate how long will it take to realize the aim? Will we make Yang Lu Chan wait to become reborn while we struggle to build a kitchen?

The Warwick property has inflated in value. An economic analysis of the funds needed to build housing, gymnasias, etc. is quite high. In light of this, it has been decided to seek other surroundings and a new property near Ithaca, New York has been located. The funds generated through sale of the Warwick property will allow us to enjoy a property almost 10 times the size: 1256 acres. Situated on one of the highest points in central New York state, it affords breathtaking panoramic views of the beautiful countryside. From this magical spot, it is easy to become enchanted and to want to stay forever meditating on the top of the world. A place like this can really broaden your horizons!

The main building, once a ski lodge, is ideal for our use. The large lounges provide indoor practice space with huge windows overlooking the view from the mountaintop. The lodge has 26 rooms, including kitchen, bathroom, and dormitory facilities to accommodate visiting Tai Chi players. It can sleep 100 and feed more. The parking area accommodates 100 cars.

Approximately 950 acres of the property are wooded and 350 acres are in pasture and lawn. This allows ample space for outdoor practice areas. There are ponds and streams on the property. Ski slopes and trails also provide additional recreation facilities.

Access is easy by road or by air. Cortland is 9 miles away and Ithaca is 26 miles away. Large cities are in close proximity: New York City, 230 miles; Syracuse, 40 miles; Binghamton, 51 miles. A network of highways and interstates makes travel easy.

This transition is not guaranteed, but at this point it does seem likely. Obviously, the Warwick property needs to be sold and closed, before the necessary funds will be available to purchase this new property. However, for the above cited reasons Tai Chi Farms cannot have workshops this summer. We plan to resume them in the summer of 1989. The Chang San Feng Festival, for the summer of 1988, will not be cancelled. At this point I do not know where it will be held. I will notify you at a later date.

Something Tai Chi Farms do wish to do this summer is to open the Warwick property to our many friends and supporters as a meditational retreat. While it cannot be guaranteed, it is likely that the property closing will not occur for at least 6 to 8 months, if that quickly. Therefore those of you who would like to come here and stay for a while are welcome. We will be charging a very modest \$50.00 a week. If you wish to stay longer the fee is negotiable. Those of you who wish to avail yourselves of this very exciting opportunity please send checks or money orders only, no cash, to Mark Bassell, at POB 275, Unionville, N.Y. First Come, First Serve!

In closing, I again wish to thank all and sundry, wishing you a prosperous New Year, and hope that the support, which has been inspirational continues as we re-locate to Ithaca, hopefully. The Tai Chi Farm wishes to provide a foundation for an international Tai Chi Community. A place where personal rebirth and breakthrough is possible. Happy New Year!

A special thanks to Mark Bassell who helped to write this letter.

Sincerely,

周宗樸

Jou, Tsung Hwa

HONING THE RAZOR; Mastering the Art of TAIJIQUAN

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I often think of the process of searching for mastery in the art of Taijiquan as similar to honing a razor, especially like honing the blade of a Taiji chien to a fine edge. When you first start to sharpen a blade's edge, you use a coarse material to abrade away large amounts of metal and in the early stages of sharpening, it is obvious to even the untrained eye that a blade is not truly sharp. But, as you come closer and closer to attaining an exquisitely fine edge on a razor, you must use more care and you must use softer materials. Another thing about a razor is that you can not truly appreciate the difference in sharpness between two razors until you put them to work, i.e. until you shave with them.

The inferior blade will drag and scrape your face and is inefficient. The truly "razor sharp" blade, when it cuts, it slices the beard hairs smoothly. Well the same is true between the inferior Taiji player and the true master of the art. Although, to the untrained eye, the difference between the appearance of the performance may seem trivial or very subtle, when the art is put into usage, as in self defense, it becomes quite evident as to the world of difference. I feel that there are two major differences between the mediocre Taiji player and the master. One difference is that the master has an exceptional grasp of body mechanics and kinesiology. Whether he has formally studied these disciplines or not, it is my experience that true masters of the arts seem to have an intrinsic knowledge of effective body movement, a concept known in Chinese as "tsung chin" or efficient force or energy. They are thus able to summate mechanical forces in the body and utilize the physical aspect of power from movement at its greatest potential. The Taiji classics speak of the importance of the waist and of the rooting of the individual. These concepts may be transferred from sifu to student quicker through demonstration than the person could learn in hours of classroom instruction on biomechanics or kinesthetics.

The second area in which the master distinguishes himself is through his ability to

circulate, concentrate, and project his qi or internal power (also spelled "ch'i"). To arrive at this point, the Taiji practitioner must master the microcosmic and the macrocosmic energy circuits of the body. This takes years of persistent effort. It is unfortunate that many Taiji players these days are neglecting to cultivate true internal energy and this is often evident as you watch them play the form. Those who see Taiji only from its use as a calisthenic may be seen "floating" through the form. They are insubstantial and are unbalanced in that they are too yin. Taijiquan is about balance and without the ability to use the qi and to send it into all parts of the body, the art becomes a pretty dance, nothing more.

Those who are too soft and float through the form slowly and who never speed up the form or do push hands, are missing the fullness of the art. It is like having artificial flowers. It may appear real to the casual observer, but it has no life, no aroma, no flavor. They have taken the "ch'uan" or pugilistic capacity from the art and it should be called something other than Great Ultimate Boxing.

I feel that the comparison with a razor sharp Taiji gim (chien) is a very good one. The excess metal (awkward movements) are ground away through practice until a fine ultimate edge exists. The Taiji sword is sharp, flexible, and yet, has a firm base from which the flexible tip receives support. The sword is "dead" without the vibration of qi coursing through it. Without the qi, it is merely cold metal, no different from a kitchen blade. The Taiji player without the power of qi is like a paper figure floating in the wind.

For the Taiji player to rise to the dizzying heights of a master, first he must put in time and energy (kung). He must understand the underlying philosophical principles of the art and how to apply them (e. g, five elements, eight trigrams, four directions, yin/yang balance, nature of qi, etc.). After this, it is a matter of hard work, right practice, right diet, and perseverance. As you cannot turn a slab of raw metal into a shining Taiji blade in minutes, you can't become a master in a month. It takes time to..... "Hone the Razor".

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