



COMBAT & HEALING



The Magazine of the World Taiji Boxing Association

Issue No. 32 March 1998

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The Magazine Of The World Taiji Boxing Association
December 1997 Number 31

EDITOR

Erle Montaigue

ART DIRECTOR

Ben, Eli & Katalenas Montaigue

INSPIRATION

Sandra Montaigue

USA

Al Krych

Canada

Mike Babin

Europe

Peter Smith

Ken Johnson

WTBA Secretary

Mause Eaglen

Internet & Computer Consultant To The WTBA & MTG.

Patrick Conley USA

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POSTAL ADDRESS:

POB 792

Murwillumbah NSW 2484

Australia

(61-2) 6679 7145

Fax: 61-2-6679 7028

Email: Taiji@ozemail.com.au

<http://www.ozemail.com.au/~taiji>

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Fighting Arts Magazine for his input.

Front Cover:

Mr Ng Siu-wing, our WTBA representative for Hong Kong

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Congratulations to **Bob Young**, the new Editor for **Black Belt Magazine.**

Tai Chi International

Finally, a well balanced commercially available magazine on Taiji. Erle Montaigue is the Australasian Correspondent for this magazine and will have an article in each issue.

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St Vincent's Publishing Co.

French Drove, Thorney

Peterborough PE6 0PH: England. Ph:/Fax +44 (0)1733 270072

Australasian Fighting Arts Magazine

The longest continually running Martial Arts Magazine in the world. Erle Montaigue has had a column since 1983. Back issues available.

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Learning traditional methods of standing ch'i-kung, whether stationary or moving, can be an effective long-term method of improving physical/emotional health as well as an essential aspect of the serious study of any internal Chinese martial art.

On a self-healing level, chi-kung teaches you to generate, refine, store and circulate internal energy by harmonising the body, breath and mind.

STANDING CHI- KUNG

Michael Babin

Body

You must "abide by the lower tan-tien" (the area roughly between the navel and the top of the pubic bone) as this is said to be our centre of gravity as well as containing many vital organs.

Tan-tien literally means "elixir field"; a concept derived from the ancient Taoist alchemical experiments used to try and discover the elixir, or formula, of immortality by heating and distilling a variety of minerals and herbs. {Gunpowder, liquid mercury and a variety of metal alloys being among the many accidental, and sometimes beneficial, by-products of such experiments}.

During their meditative practices, the Taoists experienced sensations of warmth and movement in the lower abdomen when they focused their attention on that part of

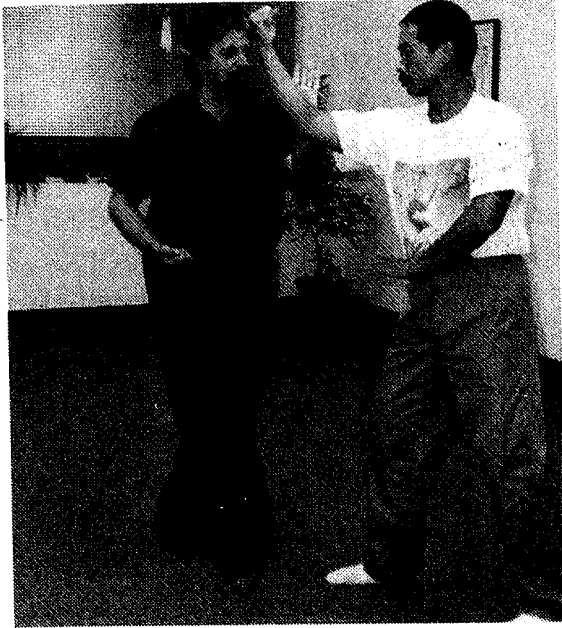
the body. They thought of it as a process similar to the one in which they used a bellows (the lungs) to fan the fire (the yang "heat") under a crucible (the lower abdomen) containing substances (blood, the chi you were born with, hormonal fluids, food & drink) that could be blended and refined to distil higher forms of chi.

Even though the body doesn't seem to do much work aside from holding itself up in a relatively still fashion, it is actually re-learning muscle usage and body mechanics

Even though the body doesn't seem to do much work aside from holding itself up in a relatively still fashion, it is actually re-learning muscle usage and body mechanics so that the spine is stretched, relaxed and energised to easily and efficiently support the head and internal organs. The legs and hips are loosened and strengthened while the knees re-learn to naturally provide shock-absorption for the spine/head.

Using a standing as opposed to lying or sitting posture also means there is less chance of getting drowsy. As the joints and body loosen without getting "mushy", the ch'i is better able to circulate

as it is supposed to. Think of it as the chi being circulated through hoses, which are often partially impeded by kinks of varying degrees. The chi inside cannot flow as it should until the kinks are removed.



Mike Babin with Student & WTBA instructor, James Chan

As standing becomes more natural for you and the lungs expand and the joints relax, blood circulation improves, often lowering high blood pressure and preventing/alleviating conditions like varicose veins and haemorrhoids.

You do have to be careful physically about your posture. Even if you practice correctly, your legs and lower back may get quite sore at first, but this is normal, especially if you are stiff/tense by nature. In addition, make sure that your knees stay aligned over the toes and that you are not leaning backwards by the end of your

practice time.

Breath

Your goal is natural breathing, especially in terms of improving your health, and this involves gently inflating the lower abdomen when inhaling and deflating the lower abdomen when exhaling. In this way, you slowly retrain the diaphragm to rise and fall over a greater range so that the lungs are used more efficiently.

This also helps to augment the capacity of the lungs while the

greater diaphragmatic movements produce a massaging effect on the internal organs, thus improving the functions of the digestive, reproductive, urinary and endocrine systems. As a result of this, “internal massage”, it is quite common to get quite “gassy” when practising — so don’t get embarrassed if you belch or pass wind.

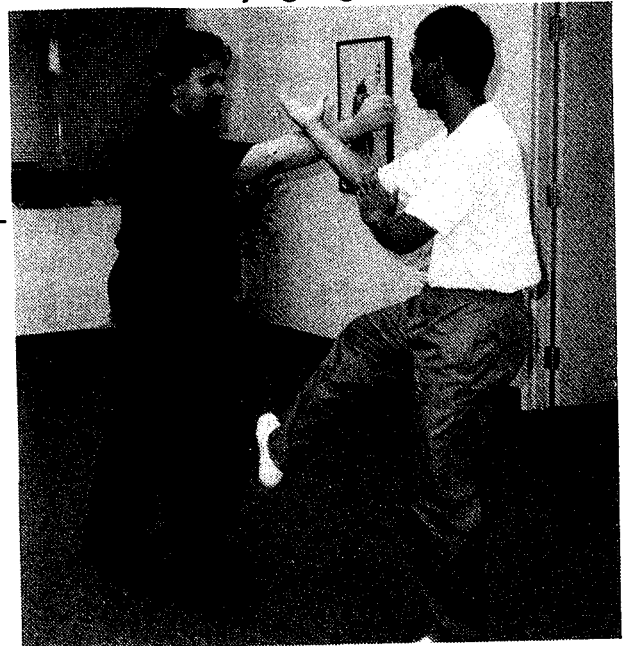
It is important to remember that “sinking the qi to the tantien”; does not mean forc-

ing the lungs to over-inflate or swallowing air or distending your belly by forcing it outwards. You want your entire lower torso to learn to GENTLY expand and compress in time with the breath, not turn yourself into a puffer-fish!

Mind

Although it’s difficult to do, the conscious mind must be encouraged to give-up its obsession with endless mental activity; the Chinese refer to it as the “monkey” because it’s always making noise and scampering around causing trouble.

In the beginning, it is important to concentrate on “quieting” the mind as opposed to consciously trying to circulate the energy. You’re not trying to go into a trance,



Mike Babin with Student & WTBA instructor, James Chan

hypnotise yourself, leave your body, communicate with spirits or become superman

— just relaxed and connected to “what-is” as opposed to separated from it.

Paying attention to the area below the navel is one method to achieve this; silently counting your breaths is another; creating your own short phrase (e.g. “This calms and heals”.) and repeating it silently to yourself works for many; practising outside in the midst of trees or flowers (weather permitting) and contemplating what is around you is also a good way of quieting the mind.

You may experience a variety of phenomena while standing for longer periods of time. Please, remember that they're harmless and will stop as your training progresses.

You may experience a variety of phenomena while standing for longer periods of time. Please, remember that they're harmless and will stop as your training progresses. Conversely, if you feel nothing unusual, despite training twice a day, it doesn't necessarily mean that you have



wasted your time. Each of us is different in how we experience the meditative process.

Conclusion

Your first many months of training are designed to begin creating and storing a plentiful supply of high quality ch'i; hence eating a balanced diet of natural foods while moderating your sexual activities and consumption of alcohol as these drain ch'i from the body and/or stress the kidneys.

As in all aspects of your training, whether you are a beginner or experienced meditator or martial artist, it is pointless to learn bits and pieces of many systems or confuse knowing one or two methods/forms with knowing an entire system.

Any competent method of standing ch'i-kung can, in the long run, make you a better person and a better

martial artist. The methods are simple — and “magical” in the best sense of that word — if you work at them!

New Tapes from Moon Ta-gu Books

MTG162

Push Hands Corrections Volume Four

This tape carries on with this excellent series delving into the intricacies of push hands at its most advanced level.

MTG163

The Ninth Qi Disruptive Form

This tape has not been edited as yet, and may not be for some time. The reason is that these forms are so special and I do not wish to find all nine published by someone else before I am able to get around to it myself in my series “internal Gung-fu, The Complete System”. It is only available to fully qualified WTBA instructors at present!

MTG164

Small Frame Form Volume Four

A must for anyone who wishes to take their taijiquan on to the internal level.

March Camp: From the Centre

*By Josephine Anderson
(Canada)*

If one had to summarise the most important lesson learned at the camps, it is “from the Centre,” not simply in terms of the form itself, but as it applies to our daily lives.

Movement from the Centre as Sloppy Tai Chi

The Tai Chi form is movement from the centre. The form appears “sloppy,” like a rag doll dropped down and then lifted by other hands. The doll’s body is soft and malleable to the slightest pressure from the outside. But once the pressure is applied, her body contracting in on itself, her limbs fling out simultaneously. The doll’s arms and legs are without will, or muscular tension, almost like dead weight. And yet, an arm or a leg, which is a passive element controlled from and responsive to the centre, is still vigorous and very much alive. Like the rag doll, the expansion of our energy is dependent upon the degree to which we have abandoned ourselves to a deep centre; that is, a centre whose source is outside us, but to which we belong as we uncover its power in the practice of our form.

The form appears “sloppy,” like a rag doll dropped down and then lifted by other hands.

How grotesque to see the way the rag doll moves on stage: falling under the impact of set-backs, yet popping up again.

Each time she gets up, she seems freer, more independent than before. She exhibits a certain “shiftlessness” and daring in her pranks. From their succession a character springs forth. And yet, she retains that endearing child-like elasticity — flopping down with her hands raised in the air, getting up with her hands sweeping down. This simultaneous strength and vulnerability is the effect of delivering herself up to the outside forces of the drama, stretching her personality to the limits so that she becomes the sheer energy of life itself — a series of impromptu adjustments to its “shifting” harmonies. What an astonishing equilibrium she has achieved — “a finesse of sloppiness” — between the activity of the centre and the passivity of her limbs, between the possession of the entire world-stage and a “carelessness” as to what may happen next.

Her moving out from the centre and her moving back into the centre are the two essential components of the Tai Chi Form. They harmonise, like the breaking of waves onto the shore and their withdrawal again into the ocean depths.

What constitutes the dynamic of waves is a blending of the active and passive forces. The waves are “passively active” in that they are “possessed onwards” by the mounting depths of the ocean itself, and “actively passive,” because they are “pulled” back into its receding centre. But more than this, the advancing and receding forces themselves converge: the

waves, which pull back from shore, and those which are advancing, approach each other in inverse amplitudes, and meet with the peak of one wave “inside” the trough of the other. A huge tidal wave is formed, and it rolls towards shore in a series of diminishing waves, until it arrives as nothing more than a stream of water.

The wave is dissipated there, lost, and yet consummated in a newly created union with the land, absorbing its salts and minerals, and taking them back into the ocean depths.

The wave is dissipated there, lost, and yet consummated in a newly created union with the land, absorbing its salts and minerals, and taking them back into the ocean depths. The waves from both sides, which have completed a cycle of work, meet and interact again, and the whole cycle is reset into motion. The apparent activity of the waves rests upon the motion of the sea itself, and beyond that, upon the motion of a universal centre.

We see how Tai Chi mimics nature, and, to that extent, teaches us about our own human nature. Having explored and developed the interaction of the limbs with the centre — of the passive with the active — we find ourselves, without re-

alising it, becoming masters of the inner life, and its rhythm between abandonment and self-restraint, reliance and autonomy, renunciation and growth.

Movement from the Centre as Small Circle Tai Chi

Truly, the ruling factor in the doll’s strength is her abandonment to the broad centring forces of the world-stage. Outward abandonment, however, means inward retrieval, a concentration of those outside forces within us, and the close integrity of our limbs with the centre that can be achieved through small movements. As such, “Sloppy Tai Chi” is, in its own way, and can lead to Small Circle Tai Chi.

In each movement of the form we entertain some goal of action, and to this goal a greater co-ordination of limbs is directed. And nowhere is this more apparent than in the hands, the most articulate extremity, where the mind’s intention (the insubstantial) and the body’s action (matter) meet in that one moment of communicative force (brute force is reserved for times when we have no choice, but here, we are concerned with energy in its healing and spiritual capacity).

How often do we see practitioners of Tai Chi neglect the hands because they have no sense of the “the action,” and have lost “the centre” through which a greater interdependence of limbs delivers the action. They carry their upper body in

one block movement over the lower body, and their hands, like “stumps of shoulder,” can do no more than trace a roughly parallel course with the centre. Their hand motion is degraded to a function outside the centre, too inarticulate to be contained by the unity of the action.

How often do we see practitioners of Tai Chi neglect the hands because they have no sense of the “the action,” and have lost “the centre”

The motion of the hands should not merely “mimic” the centre, but occur naturally, as the final expression in a continuous and directed path from the centre. As natural action — action which sets out to achieve a goal — it expresses the internal structure rather just enacting the formal appearance of the movement. The hand motion is, therefore, small, smaller than other motions, the expression of chi concentrated to its final degree, where action either succeeds or fails in achieving the mark.

If we are trying to capture the mind’s intention in perceptible form, then motion must assume the elusive quality of thought. At the very moment of its surfacing, it is gone. Harsh lines are softened, wide curves are narrowed, the hand’s gestures merely suggestive in order to ensure the efficient carrying forward of the mind’s intention

from one movement to the next. Hence, there are no separate postures — no excess of movements exceeding their place — only their reciprocal containment within the work of mind.

With time, the thought of the task is no longer necessary. The mind is aware only of itself, and conducts the flow of energy through the body as one movement.

ture that Tai Chi works with us to increase the chances of success. The oceanic forces are “centred within myself” for my own advantage (the power of my action), while they, in turn, appropriate me to their centre for their own advantage (the power of their action upon the world).

We are children; dolls come to life, tracing figures in the wet sand of the seashore, di-

course by the winds and waves. Nothing is out there. Our ship appears to have fallen off into the night — just water and more water, black waves threatening to engulf us. It’s as if the world had barely started again, before land and animals, before the touch of God’s hand divided one thing from another for the sake of our human eyes. But one gesture from us, and another, and soon we’ve turned ourselves into a current in the sea, drinking up the whole abyss, one drop at a time, and catching up with that golden sail in the void.

After each incoming surf, we find it that much easier to regain our equilibrium. We learn to ride on the crest of waves rather than get caught in their mix. We perceive that not only are subject to the great oceanic forces,

but with Tai Chi, we can regulate and shrink the aperture through which the maelstrom is released into us, and eased away from us.

I’m getting closer to the ship. I now know that the ship has not fallen off into the abysmal night, but rises up in my interior world, little by little, until all things are summed up into that single peak of a sail, which reaches for the clouds, and becomes linked to the Great Centre.



Josephine at Mini Camp 97: 3rd from Left

It is in the interstices of small movement, then, that we find room for spiritual growth. Suggestive, elusive, yet definite and unerring, our hands become the signs for something hidden, something bigger than we are.

We float about minuscule in its presence, unable to fathom it, and, at times, besieged by it: we fail, we get sick, and we grow old. But as we are being continually tried and tested, we either break under the strain, or we reanimate ourselves to a higher calling. It is at this junc-

vided from the end of the earth by an endless expanse of water. We step into the shallow water and look seaward for the drama of the sand-figures to unfold itself against the misty horizon. We see our ship, remote and isolated, to which we cling, with our hearts as the source of our power, the centre of our order. But as the ship seems to be falling over the edge, where sky and water meet, we lose our sense of direction. We lose ourselves, and we panic. We dash deeper into the water in pursuit of the ship, but with our hand lifted to the sailor on the bow, we are thrown off

Taiji the training

What it handles and what it will result in.

By John Humphries

Your Taiji, your Supreme ultimate, is very personalised.

Most things done and taught as being Taiji are not. They are false, Bureau, and useless.

Real Taiji is dramatically effective. It goes to the heart of the matter and creates unbelievable results.

Health and body welfare.

A person starting in their Thirties, and training moderately, could expect to live 25 years beyond expectancy. And live in vigorous health and strength to the end.

Mentally, they will be exercised and challenged every day, ceaselessly working to understand and bring in ever-higher concepts of life and practise. Even the most basic form is subject to limitless refinement and improvement.

As training becomes firmly established and you learn how to use your whole body in various actions, you can begin to take control of your daily affairs

So month in and month out, year in and year out you will be reaching ever higher levels and getting closer to perfection, which is a physi-

cal, emotional, mental and spiritual construct.

Who takes the time and effort to enjoy and perfect Washing dishes, tying shoelaces, driving a car, and answering a phone?

As training becomes firmly established and you learn how to use your whole body in various actions, you can begin to take control of your daily affairs, which are really only Taiji forms done quickly, unconvincingly, and generally as irksome chores.

Who takes the time and effort to enjoy and perfect Washing dishes, tying shoelaces, driving a car, and answering a phone? These things, and everything else, can be brought into your Taiji training and practised joyfully and profitably, and finally mastered.

Emotional problems, social problems, family problems, work relationship problems, can be accessed and trained as part of the way. Things that are devastating to your happiness and comfort, and normally result in uncontrollable anger and upset, become a practice ground for training your love and peace and effectiveness.

You can watch these things rise, work with them, and watch them depart. You