



## Kai Ming Association Newsletter

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Chinese New Year 2014 The Year of Horse

Happy Chinese New Year. 2014 is the Year of the Horse, which represents a desire to better one's self through hard work, positive energy, warmth and intelligence.



### STABILITY

Jason Yeung likens the Tai Chi form sequence of *SEPARATE AND KICK WITH HEEL* as taking on the look of a circus high wire act!!! Balanced on one leg arms thrust out to the sides for stability he has a good point.

It is one of the most challenging moves you will encounter in the form.

It is just as challenging to the experienced student so beginners should take consolation from this.

Once you are accustomed to this sequence of moves it can be quite enjoyable to practice. Within it is a nice ebb and flow.

When feeling unsure or unfocused, you may start to wobble, become unbalanced, and occasionally calamity! You fall.

We know that the lower one's root, the more stable the posture. This move

however, has three limbs making dramatic outward gestures, so it is logical that when that when coupled with the nervous anticipation that may accompany a difficult move such as this, your stability may be compromised.

So let's split this into several aspects:

**PREPARATION:** Is your body in proper alignment and stable from the previous move. Are your feet and joints flexible? Is the mind calm? Is the leg low enough to the ground that it does not disturb your balance too greatly.

**LIFTING THE LEG:** The weight must be settled deep into the root before lifting the empty leg outward. While the arms are used to counter balance the leg movement as it goes up and out. One must remember that moving the whole outward in this way transfers a great percentage of the body weight away from one's centre of gravity.

To this is added the momentum of the rising leg, also going out away from the body. It can be no surprise then that balance is challenged

**BRINGING THE LEG IN:** You must try and bring the leg in toward your root rather than let it drop back. Though gravity is the primary force at work as the leg comes back, if the focus is on the gravitational pull, it may create a bounce in the body. If however, you keep the focus on the root, the force will be transferred into the ground and you will remain more stable.

**COMPLETION/TRANSACTION:** If you feel a sense of relief on completion of the move you were probably anxious about it before you even started, aim for this relaxation before you begin the move. This move above all requires strict adherence to the Tai Chi principles. It is a great chance to hone your skills. Whether the leg is being lifted high or you are stepping out comfortably low, the only difference will be the mechanics and, most importantly, the mind-set.

### A PIANIST'S TOUCH

(thoughts on powers of relaxation)

Claudio Arrau the great pianist (1903-1991), a native of Chile, was a child prodigy who had his debut at the age of five. Known as a remarkably thorough and expressive musician, he kept to a rigorous practice and touring schedule his whole life. Arrau spent years carefully analyzing the movements involved in piano-playing. He advocated keeping relaxed and letting the weight of the body and gravity do most of the work. Arrau was able to practice for up to fourteen hours a day without fatigue, in part due to his ability to keep relaxed.

In an interview late in life Arrau said, "If you keep your body relaxed, the body is in contact with the depths of your soul. If you are stiff in any joint, you impede the current, the emotion, the physical current—what the music itself dictates to you—if you are not relaxed, you won't be able to let it go through into the keyboard."



### TRAINING IN HONG KONG PART 2

This is part two of my training in Hong Kong. The Friday class consisted of the same vigorous warm up as before, followed by 'form work'. There was very little verbal instruction - it was a case of follow the moves as best you can and as the Sifu spoke very little English this did not cause me any real problems, apart from when a sharp turn occurred and I found myself facing the wrong direction!! Due to the warm conditions, a few breaks were required to hydrate and this gave me the opportunity to speak to some of

the other students, whose English was very good. Some of them had worked in the U.K., Canada and USA. They were interested to find out what style I practiced and pleased to know that Tai Chi was popular in the U.K. The majority had only started Tai Chi when they had retired as they had been too busy while at work; there were half a dozen younger members who had been training for a couple of years. Sport is encouraged in Hong Kong for the children but mainly the more popular sports like rugby, tennis, cricket etc.

The second half of the training session consisted of the 54 Step Straight Sword Form. Although I have experience of the Broad Sword, I had not practiced the Straight Sword so this was a new challenge for me, especially as there was no verbal instruction. One of the students kindly lent me a sword and provided a brief lesson on the correct way of holding this and then it was dive in and have a go. The next hour or so, for me, was very interesting and I started to realise why so many people love this very beautiful form and why it takes so long to master. After a while, the Sifu did spilt the group and provided me with some extra guidance, showing in detail various moves and hand positions. During one of the breaks, two younger women demonstrated to me what they called the 32 Step Straight Sword Short Form. This was very fast and dynamic and they performed it with real style and grace. They told me that it was a “local” form and they had been practicing it for about seven years.



I was now coming to the end of the class but before I left one of the older ladies, Faye, who had been my “interpreter” came over and handed me gifts for myself and my wife. The gifts were two hand-made beaded Ying Yang tassels which she had made herself (see photo). She told me that she only gives these to her friends and I was her friend and Tai Chi Brother – she said they were for good luck. I must say I was very touched by her kind gesture. In fact, I was very impressed with how friendly, helpful and open the people are in Hong Kong.

It was with a touch of sadness that I left my Hong Kong Tai Chi friends. The experience had been wonderful, and it was so interesting to try another style at source and mix with the locals who had a real love of Tai Chi.

Don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone and try something new, it can be very rewarding.

Neil Rankine, Instructor.



### MY STUDENTS DON'T WANT TO DO PUSH HANDS

I've heard this said, yet if push-hands is an integral part of tai chi what is it that has been putting them off the idea, until now? In previous newsletters I've discussed the power of words as ‘the word is not the thing’ so in this situation, another aspect to consider is relevance and/or context. When push-hands is only considered from one perspective then maybe it doesn't seem relevant or even appropriate so I thought I would discuss some of the many and varied facets of push-hands to enable connection to a wider purpose and thereby find relevance. Often the term ‘pushing hands’ is taken literally with the intention outward and forward, pushing and shoving, whilst trying to grab onto the ground in some sort of egocentric challenge. Yet a more descriptive term would be sensing hands where the aims are:

- To develop sensory acuity
- To connect with your partner
- To connect to the ground
- To connect to the flow of energy of interaction
- To blend, neutralise and redirect

With this in mind, let's look at some potential applications of push-hands (Tui Shou). The first and most obvious is the martial application of off-balancing and uprooting your opponent. The next is the polar opposite where the aim is to sense imbalance in a person with the aim of rebalancing them to the point that they

feel more stable and safe. Jenny said there is a more obvious application of being close enough to have a chat about what was on TV last night whilst attempting some sort of partner dance that sneaks under the teachers radar.

The first part of push-hands should actually be called connecting-hands as the aim is to meet and connect with your partner/opponent. The next stage is to connect the energy pathway to the ground or to become aware/attuned to the energy pathway to the ground. The final stage is application. Regardless of your use of push-hands, only the final stage changes as this is the stage of application or usage of the energies developed/refined within push-hands and in-turn tai chi practice in general. Mindful practice of application is essential.

The main failing in push-hands is the initial connection intention (or purpose of connection intention). By connecting with the intention “I reach out and connect with you to develop kinaesthetic awareness, of who and where we are in space. To develop proprioception” we connect to our own balance and awareness. This sensory acuity (calibration) is key to our development what ever the end goal.

Application comes from mindful connection with purpose; it doesn't matter whether you intend to off-balance or re-balanced the connection stage is the same.



Reach out and connect to your partner; take that connection and connect it to the ground. Next neutralise, redirect and apply. Neutralise means ‘take to neutral’ it does not mean run away from or resist. For the pusher it may initially feel as if they could still push yet they are not able to direct the force without losing balance. At the next level the pusher will feel as if they are falling into emptiness which is the stage at which they lose their connection to the ground. The next stage is where you either choose to accelerate

them into a waiting wall or rebalance them into safe stability.

So back to the question of why bother with push-hands. The simple rule is “to off-balance, don’t let your opponent connect to the ground” or “to re-balance, reconnect your partner to the ground”. This disconnection or connection creates either panic or peace of mind so next time you consider how to present push-hands ask yourself “what is the purpose?” because it is an amazing practice tool that can both harm or heal; I should know, I’ve used it for both.

Mark Peters



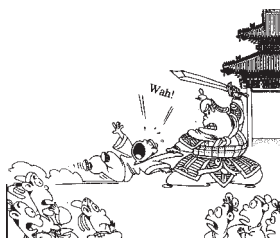
If you have any friends who have arthritis/heart problems/chest conditions or just feel that at the moment they need gentler exercise than a regular class, please recommend they take a look at the Kaiming website and click on the Painting the Rainbow link to access a class that would provide this in their area; or contact Mark or Jenny for a chat about their specific needs.

We are currently finalising the new PtR DVD which will include both seated and standing chi-kung forms plus a relaxation and pain management section. We hope to have it finished and available very soon.

### WORLD TAI CHI DAY APRIL 26th

This year we’re planning a big one!! In connection with Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (BOSF) and Active Parks, we are planning a world tai chi day event to be held outside the Council House in Birmingham City Centre (near the fountain).

Spread the word, rope in your tai chi classmates and even your unsuspecting friends. More details to follow so watch this space, the website and check with your instructors. The largest event yet was Centenary Square where we had over 150 people so lets top that!!



## The Three Fearlessnesses Cheng Man Ching

Last Month we discussed the first fear, Eating Bitter which is the fear of the bitterness of hard work/training. This month looks at second and third, do not fear loss and do not fear ferocity.

**Fear of Loss** - One of the basic principles of Tai Chi Chuan is to give oneself up in order to follow others. Commonly understood, to give in and follow others means that one will suffer loss. Therefore in the first chapter of the Thirteen Treatises Cheng said that one must learn to suffer loss.

How does one go about learning? By listening to other people’s attacks – not only without resistance, but without attempting to counter. One may pay special attention to four ideas: “sticking”, “connecting”, “adhering” and “following”. then one will be able to easily neutralize.

This is not anything that a beginner, or a careless person, can do. It is not easy for a beginner to suffer loss, but if a person is afraid to suffer loss, then it is best that he not take up the study. If a person desires to learn Tai Chi, he must begin with suffering loss.

To learn how to suffer loss one must understand that it is the same as not being greedy for gain. When a person is greedy for small gain, in the end he will suffer small loss. When he is greedy for large gain, in the end he will suffer great loss. Conversely, if a person is able to suffer small loss, in the end he will acquire small gain, but it’s only when a person is able to suffer great loss that in the end he will have great gain.

When a person is wise, he must want to attain health and functional self-defence. In order to do so he must grasp Lao Tze’s principle of “concentrating one’s chi to become resilient”. Can a person be like an infant? This is the principle of Tai Chi Chuan. This is the place from which the student must start to learn.

Let me repeat: “When one is wise, in order to attain the body of discipline (health) and function (self-defense) one must concentrate one’s chi to become resilient like an infant”. Achieving that, he has learned the wonder and the method of suffering loss. The essence is contained in the song: “Let great strength be used to attack me; that strength will be diverted as if a thousand pounds by four ounces”. Then a person’s resiliency has reaped its effect.

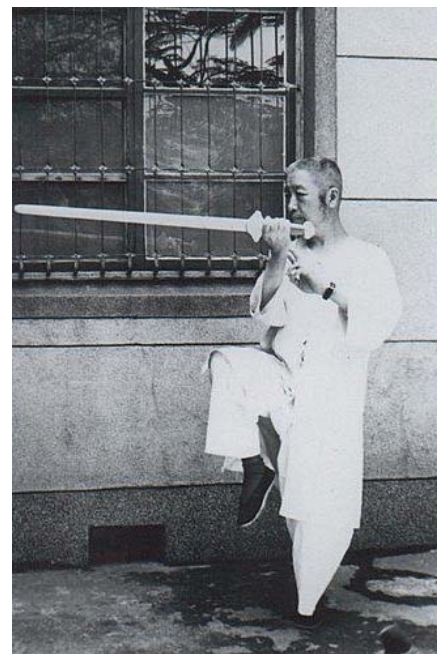
**Fear of ferocity** - Lao Tze said of a child lying alone in the wild, “A rhinoceros’ horn will not harm it. A tiger’s claw will not tear it. A soldier’s sharp weapons will have no place to land. It is because the baby has no concept of death”. Lao Tze also said, “There’s nothing under heaven that’s more yielding and more resilient than water, yet when it attacks stronger things, it always overcomes them”. Elsewhere he said, “The most resilient under heaven overcomes the strongest under heaven”. He is not talking about ferocious things like the rhinoceros, the tiger and the armed soldier. He stresses the quality of water, saying that nothing can overcome the resilient. This is what is meant by, “If I have no body, how can any harm befall me? No matter how ferocious the weapons are that oppose me, they are no threat”.

When there is fear, one’s psyche, one’s spirit and one’s body – the atoms in the body – must also be tense. When there is tension, one cannot be loose or relaxed. If a person cannot be relaxed, how can he be resilient? When he is not resilient, he must be hard, he must be rigid. Therefore for one to really understand the principle of Tai Chi thoroughly, one must have the spirit of great fearlessness.

Then it would be like Mencius’ saying

*“If the mountain of Tai should collapse right in front of me, my face would undergo no change of countenance”.*

It is because I have cultivated the greatness of chi. This is also what Lao Tze meant when he spoke of concentrating one’s chi in order to become resilient. When that is so, one will be fearless in the face of ferocity.





## SPELT RISOTTO WITH BUTTERNUT SQUASH WALNUTS & GOAT'S CHEESE

**INGREDIENTS**—1 x 750g (26 oz Squash such as butternut) or bag of pre-cut chunks.

About 8 sage leaves chopped  
2 garlic cloves crushed.  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper  
2 tbs olive oil  
1 red onion peeled and chopped  
200g (7 oz) pearled spelt rinsed well  
750ml (26fl oz) hot vegetable stock plus a little extra if needed.

### TO FINISH

50g (2oz) walnuts toasted and roughly chopped.  
50g (2oz) hard goat's cheese  
Small sage leaves for decoration  
2 handfuls rocket leaves optional.

### METHOD

Preheat the oven to 190c/170c fan/gas 5

Peel and deseed the squash and cut into 2cm (¾ inch) chunks. Tip these into a roasting tin, add the chopped sage and garlic, season and drizzle with half the olive oil.

Roast for about 25 minutes until tender and starting to brown at the edges.

Meanwhile start making the risotto.  
Heat the remaining oil in a large sauté pan over a medium heat.

Add the onion and cook until soft. Add the spelt and stir to coat in the onion. Continue to cook for 1 minute until the spelt starts to smell slightly nutty. Pour 150ml (5fl oz) of the stock into the pan, stirring all the time, until most of the liquid has evaporated. Gradually add the rest of the stock a ladleful at a time, stirring frequently until each ladleful has been absorbed and the spelt is tender but still has some bite, 20-25 minutes in total. Add the roasted butternut squash and walnuts to the pan. Stir to combine and check the seasoning. Shave over the goat's cheese, garnish with sage leaves and serve immediately, with rocket leaves on the side or scattered over, if wished.

### Training Dates

We hold monthly advanced training session in South Birmingham.

9.30 to 12.30 (3 hours) - £25

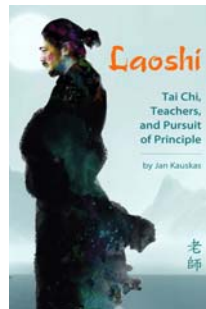
### Dates for 2014

9th March  
13th April  
18th May  
29th June

### Camp is planned for 3rd August

14th Sept  
12th Oct  
9th Nov  
7th December.

Laoshi: Tai Chi, Teachers and Pursuit of Principles  
By Jan Kauskas



A great new tai chi book is about to be released and I was lucky enough to receive an early release copy. The book focuses on the Cheng Man Ching style of tai chi and is by Jan Kauskas. Jan began studying the Tai Chi of Cheng Man Ching in 1987, initially in the UK, then the US and in Taiwan such as Wolfe Lowenthal and Liu Xiheng (Liu Hsiheng). The book is set out in 37 chapters to connect to the 37 step form of Prof Cheng.

The book opens with an interesting chapter following a discussion with his teacher on suffering which for me really connected to Prof Cheng's 3 fearlessnesses which carried into chapter 2. The book interestingly moves from first to second person and back as Jan discusses his experiences on his tai chi journey and Loashi (his teacher); this gives you a real feel of interaction and immersion into the journey as if you're there with him. I really connected to a comment from Jan's teacher as it's a phase we all go through, "We will be energized by the novelty of teaching and the status of being the teacher, but these thoughts only please the ego for a short time. To maintain freshness over time, you must become the instrument of the Dao and allow it to teach through you. You will then not only become good teachers, but will learn along with your students. There is also the added benefit of dispensing with lesson plans, learning outcomes, and other modern obstacles to

learning." Overall the book carries you along on Jan's tai chi journey and a warm and interesting way. I enjoyed the personal anecdotes and even his reference to Jimmy Carr the comedian. The book deserves a few reads as like Wold Lowenthal's "There are no Secrets" there is more depth to the content that first seems.

### YOU'VE TWO SCORE, THREE SCORE YEARS BEFORE YOU YET

*You've two score, three score years before you yet,  
And at the end of them your day is done.*

*A thousand plans you have before you set:*

*Is it worthwhile to weary over one?*

*Now, when the gods have made an idle day,*

*Take it, and let the idle hours go by;  
And when the gods three cups before you lay,*

*Lift them, and drain them dry.*

*Taken from "Poetry of the Chinese".  
By Sir John Davies.*

-- A great way to say take all your opportunities in life.

### FANCY TRYING SOMETHING NEW?

If you have any spare time when not practicing Tai Chi! and fancy doing something else creative take a look at the website [www.labanca.co.uk/Cookery-School.html](http://www.labanca.co.uk/Cookery-School.html)

We like to support our local businesses and La Banca is our wonderful local Italian Restaurant and they have just launched a cookery school on the first floor of their building.

All their courses as you will see are at weekends or evenings, (so no excuse) and you can learn fabulous Italian techniques used in their cooking, from pasta making through to tasty specialist breads.

They are lovely friendly people with great passion for their food that will spill over into you. And before you know it your friends will be begging for an invitation to your dinner parties.

(think I will give Mark a gift voucher from them for his birthday!!!!!!!)



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