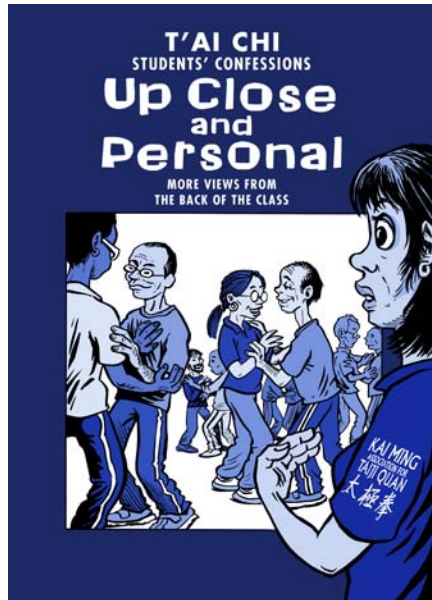


Kai Ming Association Newsletter

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Up Close and Personal.

2nd Book at Last!!!! The story behind it.

Seven years after the first book from our club "**View from the back of the class**" was published we thought it may be time to "let loose" on the Tai Chi world the second book of "confessions".

We learnt a lot from the first attempt, and so have spent the last year looking through students and instructors stories that have been forced out of them, I mean submitted to us! And realised that we had twice as much material than had been in the first edition.

Therefore we started book three at the same time which we hope to publish in the New Year. (still room in it though if you are working on a submission at the moment, mentioning no names Graham and Don. !)

As you can imagine this has taken up a great deal of time over the last year but we think it will be well worth it.

The format is different in this second one as we have put it into definitive chapters on subject matter e.g. Meditation, Health, Martial etc. Hopefully this will make "dipping in" much easier.

We need feedback to see if you feel this works better so that we know whether to carry these criteria into the 3rd Book.

Yet again Instructor Hunt Emerson has been amazing at coming up with the graphics for the front covers (for both new books) he seems to know just what we want. How can one man have so much talent?! And I am sure if you buy the book he will sign the front cover. That has to be worth it. LOL sorry Hunt!

Despite the time consuming nature of "getting it all together" it has reaffirmed how much Tai Chi brings into many lives. Putting together the "Tai Chi Journeys" chapter really brought this home to Mark and I, stories of real inspiration that hopefully will help others to stick with "the programme" when at times their journey seems long and hard.

We also realised how long some of our students and Instructors had been with us and supported Kai-Ming and Painting the Rainbow over the years and that is why this book is dedicated to them all.

It is available on Kindle (Amazon) with hard copies due any day now. Get your orders in as it's a great read for all the tai chi enthusiasts out there...



Chen Man Ching said, "Invest in loss"

"Invest in loss" so that the awkward strength may pass away. The meaning is simple but tricky, and many people work without result because of a basic misunderstanding. It means not to make winning in the Push Hands exercise a goal at all. It does not mean to make losing a goal, however, as some do who retreat rather than yield. The latter, produces the strange 'Push Hands Dance' that allows students to move endlessly through a pretty pattern, fantasising that they are growing in skill because they are not winning and usually fall back easily at the slightest aggression. It means to focus your attention on listening to you, opponent's body, using your hands as antenna to 'hear' the tensions that vibrates though the muscles as he attacks or moves, or prepares to attack or move. Try to set up the channels of return, to yield freely to

attacks to you, insubstantial side, to absorb and return attacks to your substantial, rooted side; to never resort to awkward strength but to wait patiently, sinking, correcting posture, listening, and practising. One day your reward will come when, continuing to practice and refusing to use awkward strength, you are amazed to find that your opponent is suddenly the one who is losing, and yet you are doing nothing new to cause it. Be forewarned: excitement and self-praise will immediately bring you down. The ego and emotional excess are fundamental enemies of spiritual development.

Extract from Tao & T'ai Chi Kung - Robert C. Sohn



A Thought for Christmas

On Christmas eve I went to midnight mass, at a little church just outside Catshill, Worcestershire.

Everyone who knows me will tell you I'm not overtly Christian but Christmas time is different, it has its own special memories for all of us, good and bad. For me it is a peaceful, special and almost magical time.

We stood up with the congregation to sing "It comes upon the midnight clear"; I must have sung this hymn a hundred times during my life, and like many never really took notice of the words.

This time, suddenly as I came to the last verse 2 lines stood out, why I don't know, but they seemed to make sense of many of the world's problems and what we need to do.

These are the lines, interpret them how you will but do think about them....

Oh hush the noise, you men of strife,
and hear the Angels sing.....

Hunt Emerson takes a look at form practice and the tai chi classics

The Conker Man

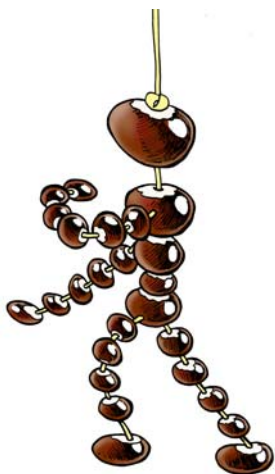
*In motion the whole body should be light and agile,
With all parts of the body linked
As if threaded together.*

One of the things I love about T'ai Chi is the opportunity it gives for Visualization.

I'm a cartoonist, and I think and function in a pictured, diagrammatic fashion. I like images such as White Crane Spreads It's Wings, and Tiger Returns to the Mountain, because they open up all sorts of visual explanations to me about the nature of the T'ai Chi movement they describe.

The quotation above, from a classic T'ai Chi text, offers a potent Visualization, one which I have been trying to apply to my T'ai Chi for some time.

The image is **The Conker Man**.



Did you collect conkers as a child? I certainly did. I was raised in the country, surrounded by fields and woods, and we'd end up with hundreds of conkers. More than we could ever use for conker fights. So one of the things I used to do was string them together to make crude puppets.

The Conker Man would have a string coming out of his head conker, to hold him up – just like we have in T'ai Chi. And his body and limbs would be segmented into conkers connected by strings, as fluid and relaxed a body shape as could be imagined. Very T'ai Chi.

As a T'ai Chi exercise, try to imagine yourself as a Conker Man – or Woman – but, instead of string, your conkers are

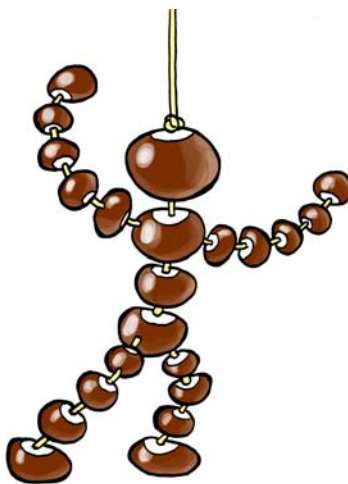
strung on elastic. So, when you move your limbs, there is a give and return. **Every push is also a pull.**

Think of this as you read again the line from the Classics.

*In motion the whole body should be light and agile,
With all parts of the body linked
As if threaded together.*

You Are Conker Man.

Apply this Visualization to one move of the form – to Repulse Monkey.



We go into Repulse Monkey from Fist Under Elbow – take that position (or visualize yourself doing so).

Now, as you move into Repulse Monkey, your weight and balance is taken on your right foot, which presses into the earth. Your body lifts – your conkers expand – you step back with the left foot, and as your body is moving backwards, the extremities – your “hand conkers” – are still moving forwards on their elastic, until they are brought back by the change in weight and position of your pelvis and shoulders. **Every push is also a pull.**

Your “elastic” contracts and your Conker Man sinks to his earth-root, ready to push this time his *left* foot, into the earth, and send his Conker Man flying again, light and agile. His body segments move in series, and they are linked with elastic so they respond and react each other smoothly and fluidly.

This all sounds very fanciful, but it's how I try and make my body work in T'ai Chi. We have several complex arcs of movement working in our bodies as we practice our Form – for example, changing weight from one foot to another affects

our upper bodies and shoulders, while at the same time there are circular arcs through our arms and shoulders. As part of my efforts to make these differing functions work smoothly together, I Visualize my Conker Man.

Final Note.

While thinking about this Exercise, another Visualization came to mind, which I'm still working on.



Isolated and frozen, Fist Under Elbow is a strange, crabbed body position, which resembles images in medieval drawings.



And so to is the Hold The Ball at the other end. In between we have a lyrical, fluid Renaissance of movement through Repulse Monkey that sees the body light, agile and threaded together.

As I say, I'm still working on that one.

**What lies behind us
and what lies
before us are tiny
matters compared
to what lies within
us.**

Ralph Waldo Emerson



I love this poem as it justifies my love of wine and is a tribute to Cheng Man Ching's good taste.

Confucius said to place no limit on wine.
That's good! For I've drunk too much to count.
If there were any limits,
I know my joy too would be shortened.

Wine does not make men tipsy,
wine is never at fault.
As for dealing with a drunk,
one need not fear his anger or hate.

In dodging the frost or hunger,
a drink is the best answer.
When surrounded by the four walls of sadness,
wine is the victor that breaks the siege.

When cold or heat makes life miserable,
a drink in your hand keeps your step sure.
Riches and honours can make a man arrogant,
a snifter will make them meek mice.

On earth you may be called a king,
but the drunk roams the galaxies!
When issues of life or death are discussed next to wine,
conscience makes its voice heard.

Today I extol the virtues of wine,
as a golden elixir that cleanses the bones.
When drunk, I put myself to sleep,
and never allow myself to become obnoxious.

In drink all my affairs find repose,
meekly I recline and begin to get comfortable.
Liu-Ling knew nothing of wine,
my sighs show that I alone understood.

Pour me another pitcher!
Toasting anyone was never very hard.
Cup after cup, glass after glass,
heavy eyelids drape the night to a close.

Poem by Prof. Cheng Man Ching

Jamaican Christmas Cake

Traditionally the fruit in this Jamaican Christmas cake is steeped in port and rum for at least 24 hours, or longer if you can. Enjoy its glorious flavour. Tried and tested many times by Jenny and I.

Ingredients

- 250g (9oz) dried ready to eat prunes
- 200g (7oz) dried ready to eat dates
- 450g (1lb) raisins
- 250g (9oz) sultanas
- 200ml (7froz) port
- 6 tbsp rum or brandy
- 100g (4oz) unrefined cherries

For the cake mixture:

- 250g (9oz) butter
- 250g (9oz) dark muscovado sugar
- 5 size 3 eggs, beaten
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 250g (9oz) self raising flour
- 1 tbsp mixed spice
- 1 tbsp ground cinnamon
- 100g (4oz) glace cherries to decorate if liked

You will need:

- 9in 23cm round, deep cake tin, greased and lined with baking parchment

Preparation

1. Chop the prunes and dates with scissors and place in a mixing bowl with the raisins and sultanas. Pour over the port and rum or brandy and cover with cling film. Leave for 1 day or up to a week to soak, stirring occasionally. Do not soak the cherries.
2. Set the oven to 160c, 140c, fan, gas 3. Place the butter and sugar in a large mixing bowl and beat with an electric mixer until light and creamy, then gradually beat in the eggs until smooth, adding a little flour if the mixture curdles. Stir the flour, spices and 100g glace cherries into the creamed mixture with the soaked fruit. Mix well, then spoon into the cake tin and level the top

3. Bake for 30 mins, then reduce the oven temperature to 150c, 130c fan, gas 2 for a further 1 1/2 – 1 3/4 hours until a skewer comes out clean. Allow to cool for 1 hour then turn out and cool on a wire rack. Decorate with extra cherries if liked. This cake will keep for 2 weeks in a cake tin, but as it is very moist should not be kept for any longer.

If you enjoy it as much as we do its best to slice and freeze it; helps preserve it longer plus helps you ration it haha...



Tai Chi Desk Calendar

£6.00 each (limited stock)

Each year we do a desk calendar for the club but didn't do one last year. We had lots of request so decided to bring it back this year.

Please let your instructor know and get your order in as stock is strictly limited.

If you have any questions please contact Jenny or Mark for more information on **0121 251 6172**

The Conker Man Continues...

Jayne also submitted another take on the classics discussed earlier in this newsletter by Hunt, so I thought I'd share this with you too

"In every movement the entire body should be light and agile and all of its parts connected like a string of pearls".

Translation - The chi should be stimulated and the spirit of vitality should be retained internally.

There should be neither deficiency nor excess, neither hollows nor projections, neither severance nor splice.

The energy is rooted in the feet, develops in the legs, is directed by the waist, and moves up to the fingers.

Translation - The feet, legs and waist must act as one so that when advancing and retreating you will obtain a good opportunity and a superior position.

If you fail to gain these advantages, your body will be in a state of disorders and confusion. The only way to correct this fault is by adjusting your legs and waist. The same principle applies to upward and downward, forward and backward, left and right.

All the movements are to be directed by the consciousness within, rather by the appearance without.

When attacking above you must not forget below, when striking to the left you must pay attention to the right, and when advancing you must have regard for retreating. If an attack is proposed upward, the initial intent must be downward. If you want to pull something upward, you must first push downward, causing the root to be severed and the object to be immediately toppled.

The insubstantial and substantial should be discriminated. Each single part of the body in its entirety also has its insubstantial and substantial aspect.

All the joints of the whole body are to be threaded together without the slightest severance.

Jayne Wilson - Lichfield



Kai Ming – a moment to reflect

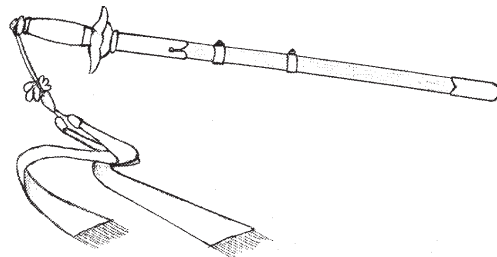
As Jenny and I write this newsletter, and draw the tai chi year to an end, we thought it would be an ideal opportunity to reflect on the journey so far.

Who would have thought that all those years ago, when we sat on our patio one sunny day, thumbing through the night school brochures looking for something to catch our eye that the tai chi journey would have brought us here. I often think of the quote from Yang Chen Fu “not all tai chi is the real tai chi, real tai chi has a different flavour”; after being fortunate enough to train with Nigel Sutton, and the amazing teachers he introduced us to, I feel truly fortunate not to have wasted years on faux tai chi but to have found the real thing.

That solid grounding, plus Jenny’s creative mind and medical background led us to *form Painting the Rainbow CIC* which just grows from strength to strength. A fascination of how the mind controls so much of what we do but yet we pay it so little attention to it, has lead me to an exploration of what I now call “Human Engineering”. This again was sparked by Jenny training in Hypnotherapy and practicing on me. As we develop a more Balanced Approach to mind and body the world of tai chi and chi-kung open up so much whether it be martial or health wise.

Mindfulness has taken off in 2015 as if it was some new great discover not something developed so long ago and an integral part of tai chi practice. Painting the Rainbow gives us the vehicle to enable so many more people to access tai chi and chi-kung, through the “*Tai Chi in the Park*” classes and well-being sessions spreading across the city.

This coming year it is our aim to bring this Mindful approach to Kai Ming and focus on the core syllabus (in addition to the 37 step tai chi form) of weapons, San-shou, push-hands etc. so these elements of traditional tai chi can come together to solidify real practical tai chi chuan. The monthly advanced training Sundays in 2016 will give us the space and time to do this and I’m really looking forward to the journey.



Monthly Training Dates

We hold monthly advanced training session in South Birmingham. If you are interested in attending or even considering training as an instructor, please ask *your* instructor.

9.30 to 12.30 (3 hours) - £25

2016 dates

10th January
7th February
13th March
10th April (my birthday)
15th May
12th June
25th September
16th October
13th November
4th December

