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Master Yang Jun
President

In Memoriam

Jeremy Blodgett: 1967-2006

Ten years ago in China, Jeremy Blodgett and I were talking about our dreams for the future. I wanted to bring together Yang Style Tai Chi students in an association to develop our skills as a family of international friends. He wanted to learn Chinese, earn his MBA and pursue a career based in Asia. We started with nothing, and now the Association has 30 Centers in 12 Countries. With out his help I do not think we would have developed so successfully. More than that, in the course of working together we became very close friends. Let me tell you our story.

The first time I met Jeremy was in Sweden during the Summer Seminar, 1995. I could speak no English and he had very limited Chinese; he said kind words to my Grandfather and me, smiled a lot and was very friendly. After the Seminar the three of us toured Stockholm, talked over dinner and became friends.

Later that year a group of 25 American students came to China for an International Tai Chi competition

held in Handan. A week earlier Jeremy and Bill Walsh came to Taiyuan. They stayed in my house and practiced with me in the apartment's courtyard. At that time it was very rare to have foreign guests in your personal home and my neighbors were quite interested in these two big men playing Tai Chi. During that week we went out often together.

The Handan trip was wonderful, our group was very well received and during a visit to our family's ancestral home, there was a large group of children who created a spontaneous parade, which delighted Jeremy and he played the part of parade leader. These were very happy times.

After the competition we returned to Taiyuan with this group for a Seminar with my Grandfather and it was here that Jeremy told me of his dream to come live in Taiyuan, teach English, learn Chinese and study Tai Chi. I contacted Shanxi University and four months later he returned to Taiyuan to start teaching.

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Fang Hong and I wanted very much to learn English, so we attended Jeremy's classes. I could understand very little, but I could tell he was an excellent instructor: friendly, interesting, and energetic.

It was during this next period of two years that we began to develop the concept of the International Association. In 1995 very few people in China had personal computers, it seems hard to believe but especially laptops were quite rare. We started with certifying three Centers; Michigan, San Antonio and New York. I wrote in Chinese and Jeremy would translate and produce the documents on his computer. It was during this work that we became very close friends.

While he was living in Taiyuan, no matter how cold the weather he would always come to Yingze Park on the weekends to practice with the group there and made many, many park friends. He continued to study privately with me and would also attend public classes in the park. His Chinese was improving day by day as was his Tai Chi!

During the New Year celebrations, the restaurants were closed down. Jeremy had no place to go, and so he joined with our family. He ate often at my grandfather's, my mother's and my uncle's place and we all really became close friends together. He was a stranger in a strange land, far away from home during family celebrations and so we took him in to our family. Later he would do the same thing for me when I moved to Seattle.

Also during his stay in Taiyuan, we began to have international students coming to study with my Grandfather and me and very often Jeremy would open his home to these guests and translate for them. He understood the life of the traveler, always went out of the way to be friendly and helpful, hosting friends from all over the world. Many people remember his kindness and warm spirit of friendship.

In 1999 I moved to Seattle, Washington to begin building my dream of an international association. At every step of the way my good friend Jeremy was there to help: finding me an apartment, a school location, advertising, translating my classes and substitute teaching. All I had to do was focus on teaching my classes and building my student base. We lived in the same apartment building, and Jeremy returned the many kindnesses he had received in Taiyuan. He was the man who dealt with the lawyers, the accountants, the tax people, immigration, so many details of the business of creating an international association. I do not think I would have made this difficult move, changing cultures and languages so successfully without his help.

As he began to translate my Grandfather's Seminars many people would remark on the excellence and quickness of his skills. Remember, this was after only two years of formal Chinese study! I feel he was one of the best translators our family has ever worked with; very smart, having a good background in Tai Chi theory and

practice and very close to us personally as well. Much of the English that I use now when I teach I leaned from listening to Jeremy translate my grandfather over and over. The phrases, the word choices I all remember from Jeremy's work. He helped me to become a better teacher.

We worked together to create the first newsletters, what would eventually become this Journal. He did the editing and I did the layout; actually they were not very pretty, and when my friend, our designer Marco Gagnon, took a look he laughed and said, "You know, I think I can help you out with this thing".

After this period of helping each other so closely to realize our dreams we began to drift apart. Naturally, he wanted to pursue his MBA degree, which he had delayed during my transition to the United States. As my student base grew, more people were coming forward with a variety of skills to help us become established. He moved away from Seattle, to continue his life's journey.

I can't believe his journey is over. Our birthdays are on the same day; he was one year older than me. I called Hong Kong to wish him a Happy Birthday, left a message on his phone, not knowing that he was already gone.

Finally, I want everyone to celebrate this wonderful person, this warm and friendly fellow traveler. Many years from now, when the pain of his loss has become more bearable, we will still see the solid results of our work together, we will still remember Jeremy Blodgett. ☯



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All Tai Chi Chuan enthusiasts are invited to submit articles, letters, and pictures for publication. Both critical and complimentary letters concerning the form and content of this journal are welcome. Please send correspondence in electronic format to: editor@yangfamilytaichi.com or mail to:

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"A doctor that takes care of a disease after it has manifested is a mediocre doctor, a doctor that takes care of a disease before it is manifest is an excellent doctor."

The Yellow Emperor

Taijiquan in Menopause

By **Dr. Vera Lazzeri** | Firenze, Italia

The menopause is not a disease, otherwise all the women from a certain age on would be sick! On the other hand, however, we do feel it, like all the hormonal changes, with various types of symptoms.

A study¹ conducted on a great number of resident women in the USA and of various ethnic origins, shows that symptoms such as the hot flashes and the night sweats are independent from the social class, from the ethnic group and from the culture and therefore unequivocally connected to the hormonal changes. Does this mean that we cannot do anything about it? Yes, but we can do something to decrease the bother. The Hormone Replacement Therapy can be a short path for this, however it is not exempt from dangers, presenting an increased of risk for cardiovascular diseases and breast cancer.

The other way, more demanding, but side effects-free, is found by changing our lifestyle. If we analyze the above survey in the depth, we notice some

variations related to some symptoms: let us focus on these to draw some useful indications.

Hot flashes and night sweats: the Chinese and Japanese women suffer less in comparison with the western women. Here we might think about the differences in the diet, in fact the Oriental women eat much more soy (rich in phytoestrogens) than the others.

Urinary incontinence: the Chinese women, in comparison with the westerners, show a markedly decreased prevalence, followed by the African-Americans.

This can indicate a different awareness of the pelvic muscles, due to a cultural difference. Besides that, the symptom is present among the Latin-Hispanic women in about a third more than in comparison with the westerners.

The cultural difference is in the different acceptance and awareness of their own body: the Oriental culture doesn't make distinction between body and spirit, as in our Latin-Christian culture, that tends to deny the needs of the body.

We can start practising Taijiquan at any age, in fact in Taijiquan you use mental intention, not brute strength, and if you practice gradually and constantly, you can achieve excellent results. This is not a pill that you take according to your needs. **Perseverance and regularity are basic requirements.**



I think that the thirty per cent increase in the Latin-Hispanic population (and I believe the Italians to be included) in comparison with the westerners, is related to the difference of background in sexuality among the Catholic women and other Christians.

I have been dreaming about this survey for a long time, when I was working as a urologist and particularly in my practice as a urodynamist. I became convinced that the Asian women must have less problems in the pelvic floor and that the common belief that the urinary female incontinence due to childbirths was incorrect. In my urodynamist practice I could see how contracting the pelvic floor, or even being aware of it, was difficult for the women I treated (they belonged, of course, to the previous generation: I hope that something has changed by now). I blamed our Catholic culture for this, especially in the phobic attitudes towards female sexuality, which was understood as something dirty and dangerous, something to deny.

Of course I could not demonstrate anything, especially at that time (about 20 years ago): in Italy there was only one ethnic group, only one religion. When I said that we should not blame childbirth for the urinary incontinence, instead we should think about how the women simply push to urinate (more times in the day, every day) since they always squeeze their legs together, people looked at me as if I were mad, maybe also because there were very few female urologists at that time. This survey is supporting my viewpoint and I am happy to share it with you.

Stiff or sore joints, but also racing heart beats, forgetfulness and difficulty sleeping: increased physical activity was associated with lower prevalence of these symptoms.

PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF THE SYMPTOMS

As Master Yang Zhenduo said in his recent interview (Journal 18), when we live better we have also time to take care of ourselves and our health, we devote more time every day to our health, we practice Taijiquan, and our emotional condition will improve.

We can start practising Taijiquan at any age, in fact in Taijiquan you use mental intention, not brute strength, and if you practice gradually and constantly, you

can achieve excellent results. This is not a pill that you take according to your needs. Perseverance and regularity are basic requirements. By the way: the “regularity” is essential in order to enhance the natural defences of the human organism.

“But I don’t have time!” Do you shower in the morning? Or do you skip it because you don’t have time? Do you eat every day? Do you make up? Do you shave? Do you get dressed carefully? Of course, you do it! You have found the time for these things, and now they are part of your daily schedule. Well, if you want to practise Taijiquan, you should make it become a part of your way of life. This doesn’t mean becoming an ascetic, just simply taking care of yourself.

Urinary incontinence: will be controlled as the first thing. Sinking the breath into the abdomen and keeping the tail bone upright is good for your pelvic floor, which will become more and more toned, and present or future problems of stress incontinence will be solved. When we will have learned to relax our pelvis well, we will learn also to control our bladder detrusor muscle, and hence control the urge of incontinence.

Stiff or sore joints: after some months of practice our body will feel more flexible. By the time the movements have become more homogeneous and fluid; the joint pain will become a faint memory.

Hot flashes and night sweats: come from a surge of energy, therefore they need more time to be controlled, because one needs to develop a good mastery of one’s own energy. In any case the habit of applying intention, being watchful and relaxed will help to control the anxiety, which is an ever present component in the hot flashes. This will not only give a great benefit to ourselves, but also to our relatives. The millennial Chinese culture offers an immediate and easy remedy: breathing calmly, concentrate the intention on the dan tian, while you enter the nearest Chinese gift shop and buy a beautiful fan: you can find fans of all forms and for all purses. Choose the one you like most and fan yourself as much as you need with calm, cool demeanour. You will acquire an even more fabulous look!

1 Relation of demographic and lifestyle factors to symptoms in a multiracial/ethnic population of women 40-55 years of age; E. B. Gold et al., American Journal of Epidemiology, vol.152, no. 5, 2000



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A MEMORIAL FOR
JEREMY BLODGETT



Jeremy Baker Blodgett, 'Jerry', Beloved Son, Brother and Friend: June 19, 1967 - June 12, 2006 Died suddenly and unexpectedly in Hong Kong on June 12, 2006. Jerry was a graduate of Minnetonka High School, Minnetonka MN, and Trinity University, San Antonio TX. In 1996 he moved to Mainland China and began teaching the first International Accounting course offered at Shanxi University. In 1998 he co-founded The International Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan Association and in 2004 earned a dual-degree in the Global EMBA program at the Chinese University in Hong King. Jerry spent much of the last 10 years in China working and teaching, most recently with Bayer Material Science. He was an avid piano player, supporter of the Spirit of Hong Kong and enjoyed Tai Chi, writing and traveling throughout the world. Jerry will long be remembered for his sense of humor, infectious laugh and unending thirst for knowledge.

A memorial fund has been established in his name to benefit education in China. Contributions may be sent to the Jeremy Blodgett Memorial Fund, c/o Wells Fargo Bank, 1200 Silver Lake Road, New Brighton, MN, 55112.

*"I am alive like you, and I am standing beside you.
Close your eyes and look around, you will see me in front you." - K. Gibran*



Echoes of a Friend

A Memorial for Jeremy Blodgett

Jeremy's travels around the globe created a circle of Tai Chi friends that will long remember his spirit and contributions to the Art. The following stories are but a few of the many memories gathered from those of us who have known him over the years in the Americas, in Europe and China.

USA:

Each of us stands with our heads bowed in grief but we do not stand alone. We stand, hand in hand, in a circle that stretches around the world. If not for your fervent efforts this circle would not exist as it does today.

Written words and images will tatter and fade as years go by but what you helped to build, a circle of friends that stretches around the world, can live on forever. It will live on if we remember the dream you served so diligently. It will live on if we care about one another.

Right now, we feel a stone in our hearts, its weight difficult to bear. If we keep this stone in our hearts and turn it again and again to stir our memories, surely this stone will eventually transform to the bright light we knew as you. Thank you, Jeremy, for all you gave to us.

Holly Sweeney, Director, Montclair Center, New Jersey

One of the most significant memories I have of Jeremy was in the Hong Kong Airport in 1995 where I was waiting to fly to Taiyuan, China where I planned to spend a week in a hotel before joining our official Chinese trip. As I sat on the floor in the airport reading a mystery to pass the time, I was startled by a kick in the foot. I looked up, and there was Jeremy, towering over me with a big smile and a warm hug. Not only did we meet by surprise, but that day turned into a whole week of exploring Taiyuan together. He was struggling with his Chinese at that time, but understood and

spoke just enough for both of us to get by. Two years later, he was doing simultaneous translations for Master Yang.

All of us who knew him were amazed both at his talent and his warmth toward those of us who shared his love of Tai Chi and Chinese culture.

Bill Walsh, Director, New York Center

While on the 2002 China trip we attended the director's dinner meeting with Master Yang Zhenduo. When we got to the banquet room the first two tables filled quickly. Jeremy, Bill Wojasinski and I sat at the last table with the members from the Taiyuan group who were officiating at the tournament. The meal was filled with local delicacies. With each new dish Bill would challenge me just to try it and then we would look to Jeremy to find out what we were eating. While trying one particular dish, Jeremy asked one of the officials what the dish was and then translated that it was fish eyes. Stunned, I put down my chop sticks. Always one for detail, Jeremy excused himself and said that it was specifically squid eyes. Everyone laughed at my reaction to the translation. I did end up going for seconds on that dish. It was great to share an exotic meal with good company. Jeremy was a kind soul and will be missed by all.

Michael Coulon, Director, New Hampshire Center



FRANCE:

We first met Jeremy in the spring of 2000 in Seattle. We appreciated his engaging personality, mixed with the coolness of an English Gentleman, his strength and his sensitivity. He was a self-willed man of the modern times who didn't hesitate to settle abroad to follow a Master, as did disciples in the old times, embracing the culture of a foreign country, cutting short for a while his own roots and his motherland. He gave us wise advice during the creation of the Paris Center. His simultaneous translation of the lecture of Master Yang Zhenduo in Seattle was simply amazing. Now, we often think of him as a model, while translating Master Yang Jun during his seminars in Paris.

We won't forget his short stop in Paris, via London, when he was still preparing his WBA degree in Hong Kong, during a visit to Europe. It was springtime; the weather was beautiful and pleasant. One afternoon at sunset, we were enjoying a beer mug on the terrace of a café in Trocadero, a famous place facing the Eiffel tower, on the other bank of the Seine River. We were talking about Association, about the good things of life, about Hong Kong, and our mutual projects. We also won't forget the taiji practice in front of our home, playing the 49 Form, and the great advice he gave us about our practice.

Now he is gone. The exciting projects, our talks, the good moments we had together, his advice, and his aspirations still keep a living place in our memories and in our hearts, forever.

*Duc & Carole,
Directors, Paris Center, France*

GERMANY:

The first time, I met Jeremy, was in 1995, when I came to my first seminar with Master Yang Zhenduo. I remember that it was he, who gave me a heartily welcome and made me feel comfortable in this new situation. Later I met Jeremy in 1997 and 2002 in China. Before our competition in 2002 Jeremy and I were told that we had to perform together in the same arena. We met outside practicing together, Jeremy gave me some corrections, I did the same on his form. Because I sometimes went to slow and he was quite sure in his timing of the competition form, we decided not to worry but just go together. So we both didn't feel alone in the arena, and we won first and second place! We didn't have much time to be

together, he was so busy in China, but still I felt, we were building a new friendship!

When I met him again in 2005, we were very happy to come together, and we decided to meet in Cologne, when he would come for business later that year. He spent 3 nights in our home, and again we had a great time together. In the day time we were practicing push hands together and during the evening classes I gave my students the opportunity to learn from Jeremy, which my students as well as Jeremy himself very much enjoyed!

I believe that there are more lives than only one, and I wish that he is happy, wherever he is now.

*Frank Grothstuck,
Director, Cologne Center, Germany.*

SWEDEN:

In the summer of 1995, Sweden held its first seminar for Masters Yang Zhenduo and Yang Jun. Two Americans attended and one was Jeremy. Although he was 27 years old, he was rather innocent and green, so his coming to Sweden was a bold step for him. The friends he made here and his first close contact with the Masters Yang opened up a whole new perspective of how he wanted his life to be. After the seminar, he went back to San Antonio, stayed and worked very hard for 6 months to make enough money to live in Taiyuan and studied Chinese. He gave up his apartment and sold his car, got a contract to teach English and accounting at Shanxi University. Over the years his letters to me were of his journeys and Tai Chi, Qigong and "Chinese experiences", his personal struggle to change and to be more "open". Many of us have met Jeremy over the years in China or the States, and he was always helpful and polite and made numerous friends who were fond of him. I, like so many of his friends, I am sure, wished that he could have turned to any of us in his time of need. We are all much saddened by his tragic death and I truly hope that all of us in this Tai Chi family know that there is always someone who will listen. Struggles and problems are part of our development and it is made easier by the knowledge that we are all in the same boat and have each other for support.

Jeremy's journey has ended and may he rest in peace. He will be remembered in our hearts.

*Therese Teo, Director,
Stockholm Center, Sweden*

ITALY:

After our last meeting in China in July 2005, Jeremy came to Europe in November - December of 2005. He also came to my house in Italy for 3 days. I got the chance to let him visit some essential places in our region and I also invited him to lead a special Taijiquan class with the little group we have in the city of Terni. We moved into an old XVII century church that now has become a theatre in a lovely little village which Jeremy liked very much. There we had two very beautiful hours that we spent together following his class. Right after that we had a wonderful dinner at a country house where, besides enjoying the good food, we had the chance to talk until late about Life & Taijiquan together with about 8-9 friends and students. Jeremy really liked sharing those moments together and he was pleasantly surprised at the good spontaneous feeling he could feel with people he never met before.

I liked his way of being part of our big Taijiquan family; we all know how hard he worked for it and how precious were his help and creative skill. He told me he had the dream to have one day from Master Yang Jun the assignment of managing the Asian department of the Association as he wanted to live in China as long as he could to keep on practicing and teaching Taijiquan and working for our association.

Good bye dear good old friend, although there are tears that I cannot stop coming down from my eyes I don't believe in what we call death and I hope to keep on meeting each other every time we really feel it in the deep of our hearts.

*Claudio Mingarini,
Director, Rome Center, Italy*

BRAZIL:

Jeremy came to our country in 2003. It was a great surprise for my husband and I to receive his phone call telling us he was to come to Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, to finish some studies on his MBA. He stayed with us for some days, resting and having fun, we chatted a lot about so many subjects, he was so intelligent and nice to talk with, a person who was always looking at the best side of all situations. He had a lot of fun with our dogs (six at that time) and loved the Brazilian food!! I remember him at the lunch table, amazed about the colors of the food. We had long talks about the future of Tai Chi in Brazil and in the world.

One funny event: At our Center he was practicing with our Brazilian friends. I'm studying Chinese, and always try to say the Chinese names of the form. The day Jeremy was there, I have to confess, I was so ashamed

because he could hear my bad Chinese... When I asked him about that he said, "Not to worry, I couldn't understand a word". We laughed a lot together. We can hardly believe Jeremy has gone. Thinking about him is to remember such nice friend and brother in the Tai Chi community. We are very sorry and it's really hard to write about him not being among us, without tears in our faces.

*Angela and Roque,
Directors, São Paulo Center, Brazil*

CANADA:

I first heard of Jeremy from Yang Jun, who was telling me how Jeremy was helping him with all the procedures for his moving to the United States as well as with the creation of the Association, and how much he was a good friend, a good person.

I met Jeremy for the first time in China in 2002. He was all smiles and seemed very happy to help the other participants, rather than concentrate on his own performance.

As we both had heard about each other from Yang Jun on many occasions, we were very happy to meet in person for the first time. We became friends almost instantly and Jeremy "took me out" in China and we went to places where I would never have gone by myself, not being able to speak mandarin. We discussed a lot and we became confidants quickly.

I always was impressed to receive emails from him telling me: Hi Marco, I am in Brazil, in Italy, in Germany, etc. What a globe trotter! Jeremy loved traveling and had friends everywhere in the world.

Jeremy, I will remember you as generous, smiling and friendly. I consider myself as extremely fortunate to be your friend!

*Marco Gagnon,
Director of Department of Outreach and
Development*

CHINA:

Jeremy shared with me his dream. He wanted Taiji players from all over the world to have the opportunity to go to Taiyuan to teach English, learn some Chinese, but most importantly to practice Taiji in the parks with his friends. He understood that Taiji, like music, needs no translation.

Jeremy was a legend in Taiyuan. His friends showed kindness to me, as a reflection of their love for him. I know that they would want to share stories with you, but since they do not speak English, I will do it for them.

When Jeremy first arrived in Taiyuan, he spoke little Chinese, but three years later, he was able to converse fluently, not only in ☯

mandarin, but in the local Shanxi dialect as well. Yao Junfang pointed out that his Chinese progressed further than their English. Shifang, who was like a brother to Jeremy, told me that once they were eating on the sidewalk outside Jeremy's favorite dumpling restaurant, across from Yingze Park. People stopped to stare at the tall, lanky American speaking fluently in their dialect. Jeremy turned and said, "Why are you staring? You would not stare if I were Japanese or Korean."

The next time you go Taiyuan, I hope that you will join the morning Taiji practices in the park. In this way, you too will be able to share Jeremy's dream and his indomitable spirit will live on.

*Glenda Quarnstrom, visiting Professor,
Shanxi University, 2005*



Yang Chengfu's Ten Essentials insured that the practice of Tai Chi Chuan would improve people's health. It is impossible to overstate the importance of these Ten Essentials in identifying the elements that make Tai Chi Chuan a healthful practice. Without the Ten Essentials, it is doubtful that Tai Chi Chuan would be recognized all over the world as a unique exercise system that offers special benefits to those who practice it.



LOOKING THROUGH THE LENS OF SCIENCE AT THE TEN ESSENTIALS OF TAI CHI CHUAN

PART 3

Written and illustrated by Holly Sweeney | Director, Montclair Center, New Jersey

PART I. B

Looking at: "Song yao", "Loosen the waist", continued

In the first part of this essay (Journal #18) we examined the physical properties of muscle tissue. We learned why muscle fibers produce greatest force when they are at "resting length". Understanding the biomechanics of actin and myosin filaments within muscle tissue begins to unravel the riddle of "loosen the waist": when muscle fibers loosen, i.e. return to their resting length, they become stronger because they have the greatest number of bonds between the actin and myosin filaments. To imagine what this kind of strength is like, we could imagine a piece of rope. A piece of rope has a certain amount of strength because of the way it is made. Strength, in a rope, is the ability to resist being pulled apart. Muscles, at resting length, have a similar kind of strength because of the number of actin and myosin bonds.

In the second part of this essay, we will explore the overall architecture of our body structure and discover why "loosening the waist" increases stability during movement.

On all journeys of discovery, it is best to set off with a guide. We will begin in the company of Leonardo Da Vinci, who was one of the fathers of the science of biomechanics. In his drawings and notes, he went beyond an artist's rendering of human structure. Leonardo, a natural born engineer, tried to figure out how human structure worked. He was intrigued by the versatility of the human body and sought to understand how it could move in so many different ways without falling apart. Unlike a wagon or a catapult, which had to be in a certain position to maintain structure and function, a human body could be turned upside down, or on its side, or on its belly and it could still maintain structure and function. How could the human body be so flexible, so stable and move in so many

different ways? This was the question that inspired Leonardo to make a series of drawings that are referred to as his "cord drawings" and to scribble an observation in his notebook that said: "Every muscle uses its force in the line of its length." (1)

What Leonardo observed about human structure, the idea that he illustrated with his cord drawings, was that human structure was based on the physics of tension. (In the world of physics, tension, by definition, is a pulling force.) Leonardo's observation was absolutely correct but its significance was overlooked, in the Western world, for a long time.

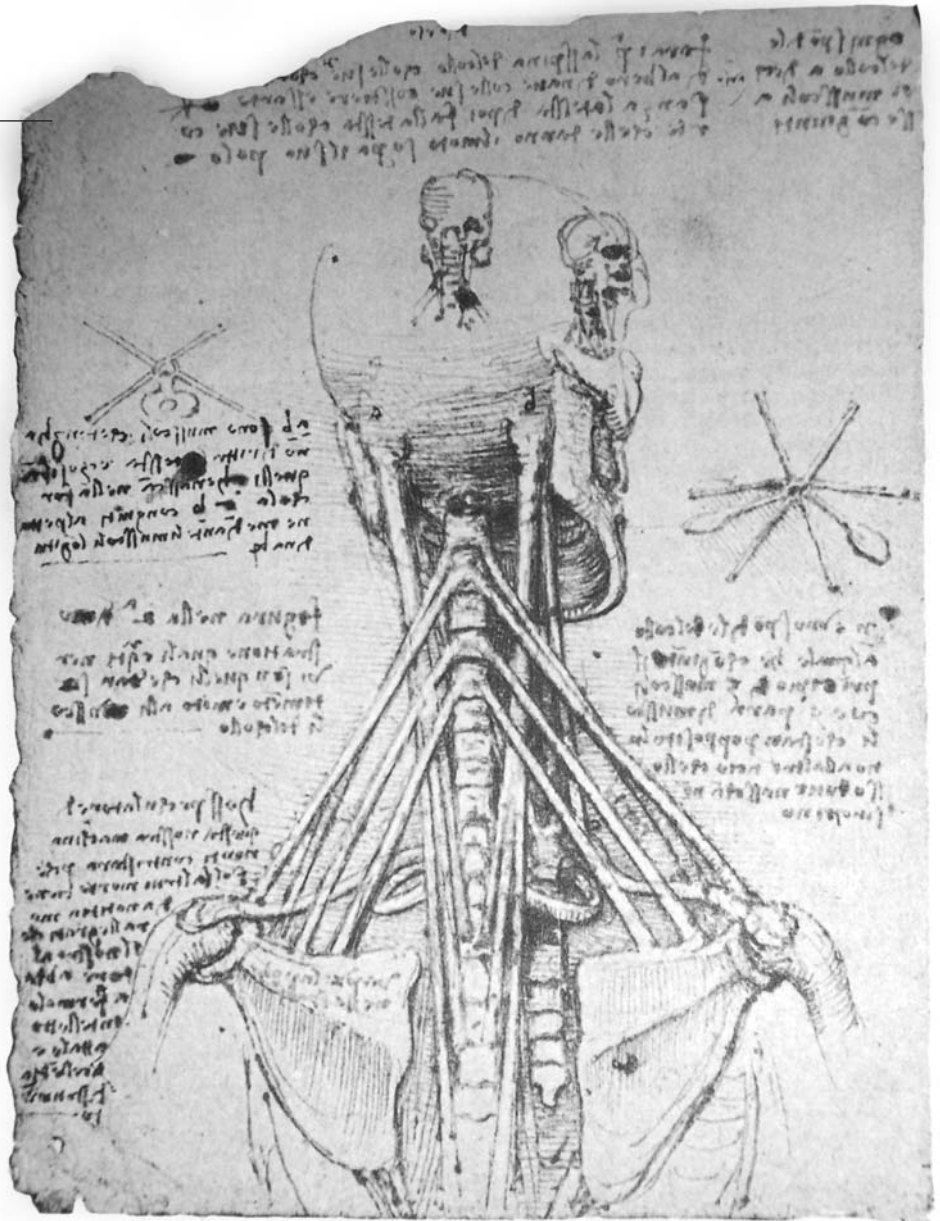
To understand Leonardo's thinking, let's look at a structure based on the physics of tension that is familiar to all of us: a bicycle wheel. A bicycle wheel has at least 12 wire spokes which "pull" a circular tire rim toward a center hub. If all the wires exert an even pull, the wheel can maintain structure during movement and resist falling apart

Figure 1

even under very heavy load. (We've all seen photographs from the circus of an elephant riding on a bicycle wheel) The bicycle wheel works because the hub remains suspended in the tension network of wire spokes and the compressive load, of human or elephant, is distributed around the rim of the wheel. The tension of the spokes is the support network which distributes and attenuates the compressive forces placed on the wheel. Buckminster Fuller gave this kind of structure a name; he called it "tensegrity structure", a contraction of 'tension integrity'. Other familiar tensegrity structures are tennis rackets and snow shoes and the human body. (II)

Now, let's take a look at one of Leonardo's cord drawings to see his prescient vision of tensegrity in human structure: Figure 1, of the neck.

This drawing shows that Leonardo was trying to figure out how a flexible spine could support the heavy weight of a head on top of it. In Figure 1, he shows the actions of neck muscles, exerting pulling forces along the lines of their length, to support the head in an upright position. In the little diagram sketched on the right side of the larger drawing, you can see that Leonardo drew something that looks somewhat like the spokes of a wheel. To the left of the larger drawing, he sketched a schematic diagram of the top vertebrae of the neck, the atlas. It is clear from these diagrams, that Leonardo understood the idea of tensegrity and how it applies to human structure. He understood that muscles, acting along the line of their length, stabilized human structure by applying tension from many directions, just as a



bicycle wheel is stabilized by the tension of the spokes.

If we now look at Figure 2, the "waist" area of a human skeleton, we can see how the lines of force created by "sinking the hip" (back arrow) and "opening the kua" (front arrow) stabilize the lumbar spine in much the same way as the action of the neck muscles stabilize the cervical spine. In both the cervical and lumbar regions, the spine is stabilized in an upright position by the action of muscles pulling in a downward direction. We can visualize how this works if we imagine putting up a tent: we stabilize the tent by stretching cords from the center pole and staking them down to the ground. If the stakes remain

firm in the ground, a network of equal pulling forces stabilizes the center pole, if one of the stakes comes loose, the tent will fall down because the forces of tension acting on it are no longer equal and balanced. (III) The example of the tent helps us understand why "sinking the hip" and "opening the kua" contribute to stability in the waist area when we practice Tai Chi Chuan.

Leonardo's drawing of the "waist" area, Figure 3, shows that Leonardo understood how the lumbar region was stabilized by the tension forces exerted by groups of muscles. In Figure 4, we can see how the lines of action of different muscle groups stabilize the lumbar region. The lower

Figure 2

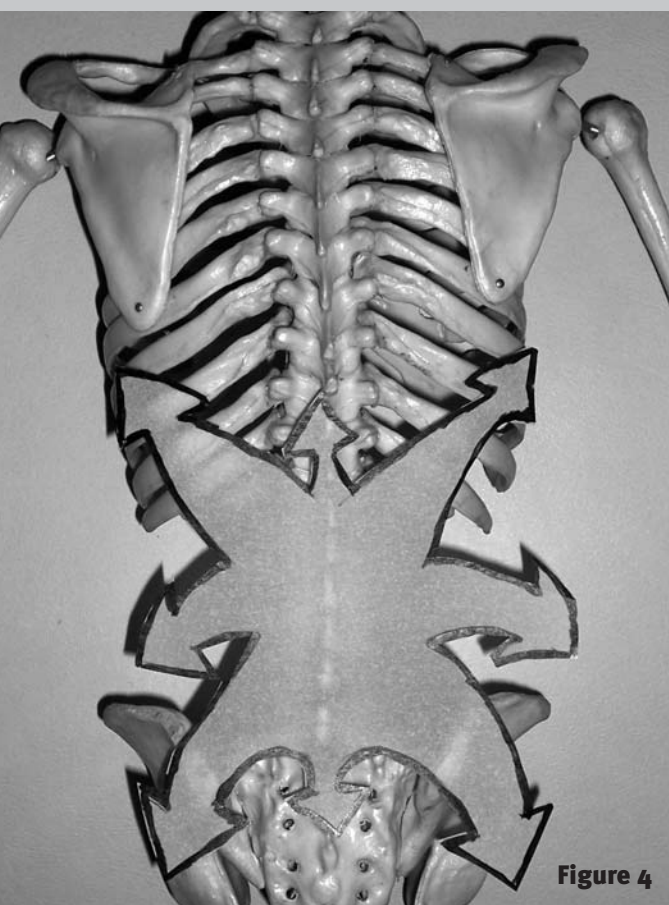


Figure 4



Figure 3

lumbar area is like the hub of a bicycle wheel suspended by the lines of action of powerful muscles groups: the latissimus dorsi reaching up toward the arms, the gluteus maximus reaching down toward the legs, the erector spinae extending up and down along the length of the spine, the internal obliques and transverse abdominals pulling toward the front of the body. (IV) The arrows placed over the skeleton in Figure 4 show the directions of force exerted by these muscle groups. The arrows also show, in a schematic way, what is meant by “loosening the waist”. “Loosening” means undoing, coming to resting length. We can see that this loosening must happen in many muscle groups at the same time. “Loosening the waist” means an expansion up and down as well as side to side.

As we learned in the first part of this essay (Journal #18) one value of allowing muscles to come to resting length has to do with maximizing the strength of individual muscles. According to the principles of tensegrity

structure, which we explored in this second part of “Song yao”, the other value of “loosening” has to do with creating an even balance of tension. With all stabilizing muscles at resting length, they are like the spokes of a bicycle wheel, exerting the same amount of tension on the hub. Equal levels of tension, exerted by our muscles, is what stabilizes our structure and keeps it from deforming or falling apart when it is moved or placed under load.

In subsequent essays, we will explore “Hang xiong ba bei” (contain the chest and lift up the back), and “Chen zhui jian zhou” (sink the shoulder and drop the elbow) to understand how these essential principles work with the principle of “song yao” (loosen the waist) to create stability, strength, and efficiency in our practice of Tai Chi Chuan. ☯

RESOURCES FOR THIS ARTICLE:

- I. *Leonardo Da Vinci, on the human body.* O'Malley and Saunders. Pg. 88
- II. *Movement, Stability, and Low Back Pain.* Vleeming, Mooney, Dorman, Snijders, Stockhart. Pgs. 159-160.
- III. *Mechanical Low Back Pain.* Porterfield and DeRosa. Pg. 77
- IV. *Mechanical Low Back Pain.* Porterfield and DeRosa. Pg. 67

An early Tai Chi master once wrote that the ultimate purpose of learning Tai Chi was to live forever in the spring season of your life. Tai Chi is not just for longevity, but also for robustness, even at an old age.

Tai Chi for Health PROGRAM

By **Carl D. Meeks and William W. Wojasinski**
| *Kentucky Center*

“Is Tai Chi Chuan practice the reason for your longevity?”

“Not directly. Tai Chi Chuan helps cultivate a relaxed spirit.”

Having a relaxed spirit is the secret of longevity.”

- Interview with 105-year old Tai Chi Chuan Master Wu Tu-Nan.

Welcome to the Tai Chi for Health Program. Tai Chi is one of the great cultural heritages of China. Long accepted in China as an ideal exercise for lifelong well-being, people today practice Tai Chi as an art, a form of preventive medicine, a health maintenance program as well as in fitness programs and therapies worldwide.

Beginning as an ancient Chinese martial art, Tai Chi has evolved through the ages as a highly refined system of exercise and personal development. It consists of a series of slow, continuous movements designed to relax and develop the entire body. The aim of the carefully structured sequence of movements is to build up the body's internal strength, suppleness and stamina. Tai Chi is an ideal part of an overall health program by reducing stress and gently building strength, endurance, flexibility, balance and coordination. Studies have shown Tai Chi to be an effective health-enhancing program for a variety of medical conditions to include:

- Arthritis & Osteoarthritis
- Diabetes
- Hypertension
- Fibromyalgia
- Anxiety & Depression
- Stress Reduction
- Osteoporosis
- Headaches
- Back Pain
- Poor Posture & Balance
- Weight Management
- Post Surgery Recovery

The Tai Chi for Health Program is a comprehensive 10 week course of study that will explore, in detail, the important aspects of Tai Chi Chuan. The focus of the program will center on the 13 Posture Form of Traditional Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan as created by Grand Master Yang Zhenduo, 4th Generation Yang Family and internationally recognized bearer of its rich heritage. The program will also address how the practice of Traditional Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan provides the positive benefits to both physical and emotional health. These benefits include: joint mobility, higher energy levels, significantly improved balance and coordination, expanded respiratory capacity, strengthened circulatory and immune systems, more restful sleep - to say nothing of mental health benefits for complaints ranging from depression and insomnia to stress and anxiety.

Tai Chi is truly a wellness-promoting system that goes far beyond simple exercise. Although not a “cure” for many of the conditions addressed in this program, practicing Tai Chi has a significant positive impact on the health of someone dealing with these conditions. Tai Chi promotes healing and lifelong wellness. This quiet, mindful practice, as you relax and focus on your breath, your balance, and your posture can be your “rock” in a fast paced, hectic lifestyle. ☯

Once learned, Tai Chi is a treasure that will last you a lifetime.

TAI CHI HELPING SENIORS : *Cognition and Kinesthetic Awareness*



*A Scientific Research Project on Traditional Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan at the
Clinical Hospital in São Paulo - Brazil - By Angela Soci*

In 1983, Professor Roque Severino, Director of Yang Chengfu Tai Chi Chuan Center in São Paulo, Brazil gave a talk at a Health Conference for Doctors and Psychologists about the importance of the preventive systems which come from China. His talk included an introduction on Traditional Chinese Medicine and Exercise Systems such as Tai Chi Chuan. At that moment the doctors present in the conference were very curious about the subject but effectively there was not yet space for the development of research projects and academic works related to this area, although many of them were quite interested.

From that time 23 years have passed and the interest of the medical establishment has only increased. What used to be regarded by some as “non-western and therefore not reliable health treatments or systems” are now the object of deep study and research. They wish to understand and apply these techniques in treatment systems, to prevent many diseases and to cure many others. Among the subjects of interest to our Doctors, Traditional Chinese Medicine is one of the most

important. Since the 1970’s acupuncture has gained great respect and is now part of our Medical Universities specialty curriculum. Now, the preventive systems are receiving the Doctor’s attention and so are Chinese Traditional Exercises, especially Tai Chi Chuan.

The Yang Chengfu Tai Chi Chuan Center in São Paulo, which has been teaching Traditional Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan since 1978, has been invited by the Clinical Hospital of São Paulo to develop a scientific research project about the benefits of Tai Chi Chuan for human health. This great opportunity is just beginning and this year we are designing our first research project to evaluate Tai Chi practice and produce scientific data.

The main idea/purpose of research using the Traditional Yang Style Tai Chi Basic Stances and 13 Short Form is:

1. To evaluate the memory achievements of Seniors
2. To evaluate the functional improvements of Seniors in accordance with a Physiotherapy test.

TARGET AGE GROUP

Seniors aged 60 years and older.

Instructional method:

The project will last six months, meeting twice a week, for a one hour class.

The research will take place in the Memory Department for Seniors within the Senior Service of the Clinical Hospital of Medicine University and inside the PROPES – Healthy Aging Program Promotion.

Inclusion Criteria

- Women aged 60 years old or more.

- Not practicing any kind of physical exercises.
- Having complained about their own memory.
- Having referred complaints about their memory from relatives.
- Objective confirmation about loss of memory detected by cognitive tests.

Exclusion Criteria

- Patients with DSM-IV for diagnosis of dementia and depression.
- Chronic Etilism
- Serious psychiatric problems.

- Recent trauma or surgery in the CNS.
- Using medications strong enough to disturb cognition system.
- Clinical condition related with memory deficit.
- Significant abnormalities in blood chemistry.

The qualifying Seniors will form one 20 person group which is going to practice Tai Chi Chuan in classes and there will be a control group of 20 people without any interventions. Both groups will be evaluated every 3 months.

TAI CHI FORMS USED

We'll divide the project period in three trimesters

First trimester:

The focus will be on the correction of the posture and strengthening the leg muscles and so we'll be teaching the following Basic Stances: Standing position; Horse stance; Bow stance, Empty stance, and exercises for changing from one stance to another, coordinating body positions by connecting arm and waist movements and some basic steps of the 13 Form.

Second trimester:

The focus will be on stretching and strengthening, making the body flexible and so we'll be exercising especially some parts of the Traditional Form in a repetitive way such as: Cloud hands, grasp bird's tail, roll back, press and push, and some Classical Chinese stretching exercises (Chi Kung) to create greater flexibility in the spine.

Third trimester:

The focus will be on accomplishing the objectives of improving memory and gaining functional improvement. We'll be teaching the 13 Short Form, besides reviewing and practicing all the former exercises as well.

WHY THE HOSPITAL IS INTERESTED IN THE PROJECT

Nowadays in Brazil there is a crescendo of interest in Preventive Medicine. It is an idea that is gaining tremendous attention within the medical establishment and they are looking for alternative ways to treat their patients. Dr. Wilson Jacob, Director of the Elders Department at The São Paulo Clinical Hospital, took 20 years to create a space where he invites professionals from alternative areas to develop research using the Hospital's resources, medical implements and instruments, including those Doctors who are in their PhD. studies inside the same Hospital

who are interested in these research projects. This space was named PROPEs which means Health Aging Promotion Program.

In our project we have a team involved because our research is related with two different subject areas. So the Gerontologist is Dr. Juliana Kasai, the Physiotherapist is Dr. Priscilla Rosa, the Neurologist is Dr. Rosangela Negri. The Tai Chi instructor is Dr. Priscilla Rosa under the supervision of Prof. Angela Soci who has developed the system to be applied during the research.

EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation process involves two kinds of tests related to each one of the studies to be done.

1. Functional research, using the Berg Balance Scale which consists of 14 items as described below:

BERG BALANCE SCALE

BALANCE FEATURE	SCORE (0-4)
1 Sitting unsupported	—
2 Change of position: sitting to standing	—
3 Change of position" standing to sitting	—
4 Transfers	—
5 Standing unsupported	—
6 Standing with eyes closed	—
7 Standing with feet together	—
8 Tandem standing	—
9 Standing on one leg	—
10Turning trunk (feet fixed)	—
11 Retrieving objects from floor	—
12Turning 360 degrees	—
13Stool stepping	—
14Reaching forward while standing	—
Total Score (0-56):	—

INTERPRETATION

- 0-20, wheelchair bound
- 21-40, walking with assistance
- 41-56, independent

2.The Rivermead Behavioral Memory Test (RBMT) was designed to assess memory skills related to everyday situations. This test is useful to predict everyday life task memory problems in patients who have experienced brain damage through injury or illness.

The RBMT includes the following subtests:

- Remembering an appointment
- Remembering a short route: immediate and delayed
- Remembering a belonging
- Remembering to deliver a message
- Picture recognition
- Orientation
- Story recall: immediate and delayed
- Remembering a name
- Face recognition

The test takes 20-30 minutes. Two scores are available: a screening score that offers a simple way to estimate whether a patient is likely to have everyday memory problems, and a profile score, a more sensitive measure of change. Four parallel forms of the test are included allowing accurate measures of change over time. Adult norms are provided for ages 16-69 and 70-95. The adult version has also been successfully used with adolescents from 11 through 15 years of age.

The results of this research will be ready by November 2006, and we will be glad to share with all you the publications which the researchers will issue. From our perspective, we are very sure the results will bring us clear ideas about the benefits of Tai Chi Chuan for health and will also serve as an inspiration for many to practice this marvelous art!



From #48: Turn Body, Right Heel Kick | #49: Two Peaks Box Ears | #50: Left Heel Kick |
#51: Turn Body, Right Heel Kick | #52: Step Forward Deflect Parry Punch | #53: As Though Sealed and Closed

太极拳



After the right heel kick, draw in the right leg.



Use the waist to lead the body, turn to the right by 45°, pivoting on the left heel. At the same time, close both arms in front of the body, held at 45°; keeping the right leg in an upright position.



Shifting forwards, circle both arms downwards, turning in both arms with the fists facing in. Keep both arms rounded and remember to lower the shoulders by sinking the elbows.



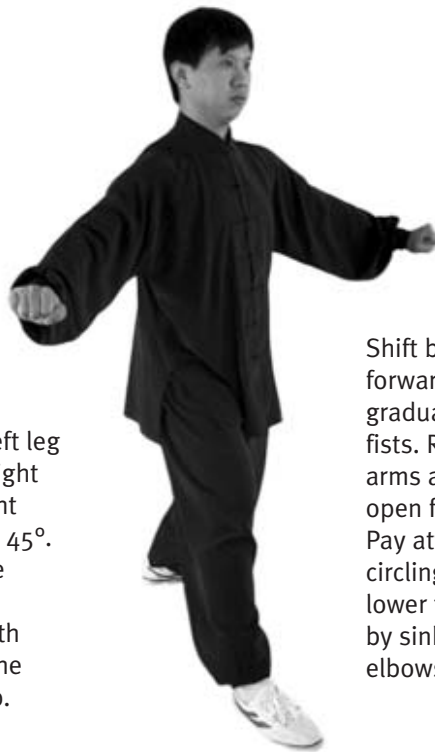
Continue to shift weight forward, circle both arms downwards and gradually cross both arms with the right arm outside and the left arm inside.



Stand up and raise left leg with left toes curved down in ward-off form. Ward-off both arms upwards in front of the body and gradually open both palms.



Sink onto the left leg and lower the right leg with the right foot pointing at 45°. Keep the stance shoulder width apart. Circle both arms down to the side of each hip.



Shift body weight forward, both palms gradually forming fists. Rotate both arms and circle them open from each hip. Pay attention during circling the arms to lower the shoulders by sinking the elbows.

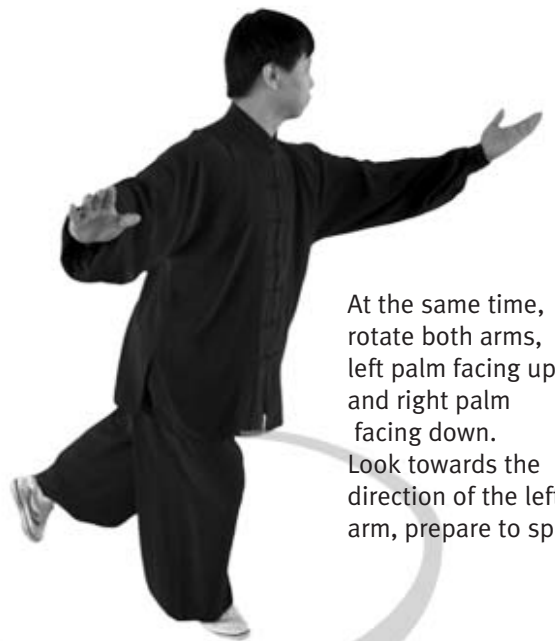


Shift forward to form the bow stance. At the same time, both fists strike forwards and up from each side. Keep both arms rounded and settle both fists slightly. Focus the energy point at the knuckle of the index finger of each hand.



Open both arms, left heel kicking forward. Keep the left arm in the same direction as the left leg.

Draw in the left leg, sinking onto the right leg and extend the left leg backwards.



At the same time, rotate both arms, left palm facing up and right palm facing down. Look towards the direction of the left arm, prepare to spin.

太极拳



Pivoting on the ball of the right foot, use the waist to lead the body, turning 360°. After the spin, the left leg is placed behind the right leg with the left foot pointing at 45°. During the body's turn, the right arm circles downwards, draw in the left arm.



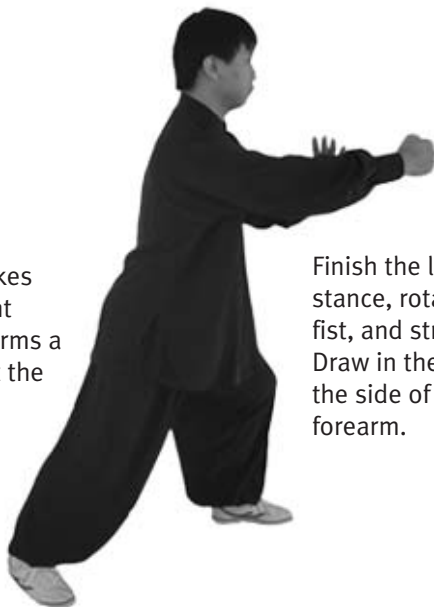
Circle the right arm upwards and close both arms in front of the body. At the same time, stand up and raise the right leg.



Right heel kicks forward and open both arms. Keep the right arm in the same direction as the right leg.



The left palm strikes forwards, the right palm gradually forms a fist, set the fist at the right hip.



Finish the left bow stance, rotate the right fist, and strike forward. Draw in the left palm to the side of the right forearm.



Rotate the left arm turning the left palm upwards; open the right palm, facing up.

Shifting forwards, the left leg steps out preparing the bow stance. At the same time use the turning waist to separate both arms.

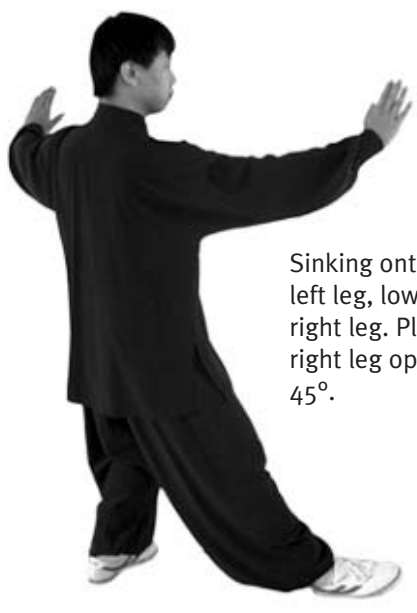
Circle the right arm to the left, bringing the left arm across to the right by passing it underneath the right arm.



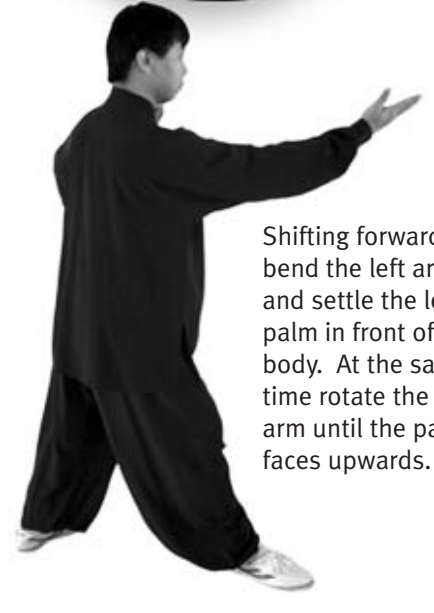
FRONT VIEW
Transition from right heel kick into step forward
deflect parry and punch



After the right heel kick, draw in the right leg.



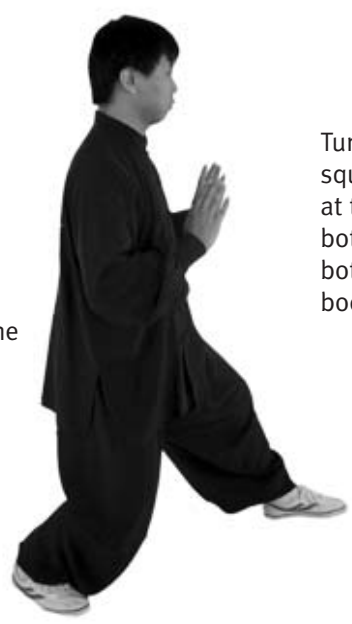
Sinking onto the left leg, lower the right leg. Place the right leg open at 45°.



Shifting forwards, bend the left arm and settle the left palm in front of body. At the same time rotate the right arm until the palm faces upwards.



Shifting backwards, rotate the torso to the right. Separate both arms.



Turn the body until it is squarely facing forward; at the same time rotate both arms and settle both palms in front of body.



Shifting forwards into the left bow stance push both palms forward.

WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE:

*The 25th Anniversary Celebration
of the Shanxi Yang Style Taijiquan Association*
e³

The 3rd Traditional Yang Style Invitational Tournament

July 14 to 16, 2007 | Shanxi, China

Mark your calendars and make you plans for a very special event next summer. The Association has put together yet another fabulous China Adventure trip combining touring, Taijiquan study, practice, competition and friendship. Full details will be forthcoming in our next issue. Two lengths of tours are offered:

TOUR PACKAGE 1

- July 11** **Stay in Beijing**
Arrive Beijing
- July 12** **Stay in Tai Yuan**
Fly to Tai Yuan
- July 13** **Stay in Tai Yuan**
Entire day of practice and preparation for all tournament participants
- July 14** **Stay in Tai Yuan**
Morning ceremony and afternoon tournament, there is a tour to Yu Ci city for those who are not participating in tournament.
- July 15** **Stay in Tai Yuan**
Entire day of tournament. There is a tour of Changjia Garden for those not participating in tournament.
- July 16** **Stay in Tai Yuan**
Morning tournament, afternoon closing ceremony, evening Dinner banquet.

- July 17** **Stay in Beijing**
Seminar in morning, afternoon fly to Beijing
- July 18** **Stay in Beijing**
Visit The Imperial Palace
- July 19** **Stay in Beijing**
Visit Great Wall
- July 20** **After breakfast, complete tour.**

TOUR PACKAGE 2

- July 11** **Stay in Beijing**
Arrive Beijing
- July 12** **Stay in Tai Yuan**
Fly to Tai Yuan
- July 13** **Stay in Tai Yuan**
Entire day of practice and preparation for all tournament participants
- July 14** **Stay in Tai Yuan**
Morning ceremony and afternoon tournament, there is a tour to Yu Ci city for those who are not participating in tournament.
- July 15** **Stay in Tai Yuan**
Entire day of tournament. There is a tour of Changjia Garden for those not participating in tournament.
- July 16** **Stay in Tai Yuan**
Morning tournament, afternoon closing ceremony, evening Dinner banquet.
- July 17** **Stay in Kunming**
Seminar in morning, afternoon fly to Kunming

- July 18** **Stay in Kunming**
Visit Stone forest.
- July 19** **Stay in Kunming**
Entire day seminar.
- July 20** **Stay in Dali**
Fly to Dali, tour Er Hai and watching Bai Dance
- July 21** **Stay in Dali**
Seminar in morning, afternoon tour Li River
- July 22** **Stay in Li River**
Seminar in morning, afternoon tour Eastern Venice --- Da Yan Old City.
- July 23** **Stay in Zhongdian**
Five hours bus drive to Xiang Ge Li La, on the way, we will visit Cha Ma Gu Dao, Tiger Jumping Gorge, Zang Dancing.
- July 24** **Stay in Zhongdian**
Entire day seminar.
- July 25** **Stay in Zhongdian**
Morning seminar afternoon visit Buda Temple --- Song Zhan Lin Temple and Bi Ta Hai Temple.
- July 26** **Stay in Kunming**
Morning fly to Kunming, seminar in afternoon.
- July 27** **Stay in Beijing**
Seminar in morning, afternoon fly to Beijing.
- July 28** **Stay in Beijing**
Visit The Imperial Palace
- July 29** **Stay in Beijing**
Visit Great Wall.
- July 30** **After breakfast, complete tour**

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