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## FOREWORD

By Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming

### Dear Friends and Readers

The first time I met my White Crane master, he told me if I wanted to be successful in learning Gongfu or accomplishing any other task, I must first learn patience, endurance, and perseverance. I must also learn how to conquer the biggest enemy of my life; my laziness. I asked him, how do I train and cultivate all of this? He said different people would find different ways of discipline and gradually he/she would be able to build up these virtues of life. Then, he said: "I think fishing is able to cultivate your patience and endurance."

In the summer, when I was sixteen, one of my big projects was 'going fishing'. I started with a bamboo stick from my backyard, found some line and hooks and I went fishing at the Green-Grass Lake about 40 minutes away by bicycle.

In the beginning, I was very excited and felt it would be fun to catch some fish. I set up a rule. 'No matter what, I must fish for five hours each day.' Days passed, I did not catch any fish. My enthusiasm had lessened significantly. The honeymoon period was over. I began to struggle deep in my heart. Should I quit or continue? I knew one thing: if I quit, I would have surrendered to myself and would never face myself again; I would be a failure. After a couple weeks of inner struggle, I set up a rule. 'If I quit before three months, I would jump into the lake and kill myself.'

Once my will was firm, I knew I had no other choice but to sit for three months. Weeks passed. Amazingly, I learned to calm down internally. When I was peaceful and calm, my mind became clear. I started to see my past and learned to analyze it. Gradually, I tried to understand my life and make sense of it. Then, I began to search for my future. What is going to be the meaning of my life? I learned how to keep myself calm and ponder. I soon realized that I had changed. My family and my friends saw the difference in me, especially in my expression.

After that summer, I started to plan for my life. One of the most important plans was to meditate. I searched for documents about meditation and also asked my master about the methods of meditation. The knowledge I obtained was limited. One spring day, when my family was cleaning the house, my grandma brought out a lot of old books that had belonged to my grandpa. I was surprised to find many ancient Qigong documents. I was so happy that my grandpa had also been interested in Qigong meditation. Unfortunately, I could not understand most of the documents since they were written with old Chinese styles.

It did not matter how much information I could get. I would ponder and ponder until it made sense to me. I became interested in collecting ancient Qigong documents and trying to understand them.

In 1974, I came to United States to study for my Ph.D. During the 1980s, many hidden documents were released both from Taiwan and Mainland China. In addition, my understanding of ancient Chinese writing was also improved.

Today I have gradually advanced my meditation and I apply what I studied from ancient documents into my practice. After so many years of study and practice, I started to realize the importance of the "Embryonic Breathing" meditation. This breathing is the crucial key of meditation that leads a Qigong meditator into the path of preserving, building up, and storing the Qi in the body. The most important part of this practice is the cultivation of the internal mind. I discovered that the "Embryonic Breathing" concept was actually originated from Lao Zi. Here I would like to offer you this chapter and see if you are able to comprehend it. If you are interested in "Embryonic Breathing," please refer to

my new book: Qigong Meditation – Embryonic Breathing.

### Dao De Jing(Chapter 16)

Approach (Follow) the nothingness (emptiness) to its extremity and maintain calmness with sincerity. Millions of objects (lives) are in actions which allow us to observe their cyclic repetitions. Though there are so many objects, each individual must repeatedly return to its root (origin). When it returns to the root, it means 'calmness.' When it is calmed, then it means 'repetition of a life.' When the life repeats, it means 'constant natural routine.' If (one) knows this constant natural routine, then (his mind) is clear (enlightened).

If (one) does not know this constant natural routine, then various unfortunate dangers could occur. If (one) knows this constant natural routine, then (life) is permitted. When life is permitted, then it is impartial. If it is impartial, then it can be completed. When it is completed, then it is heaven (nature). When it is heaven, it is the Dao. If it is the Dao, then it can be long and the death of the body will not be near.

All lives originated from nothingness, therefore, in order to see the repetition of lives, we must first reach this nothingness. This nothingness is called the state of Wuji (No Extremity), where there is no discrimination of Yin and Yang. It is a neutral state of everything. Therefore, nothingness here means the emptiness of the emotional mind and material world. In order to reach this state, the first step is to maintain extreme calmness of both mental and physical bodies. Then you will be able to see the actions of all lives and understand their repetitions. Even though there are millions of various living objects, each individual, at the end, must return to its origin (root). It is from this origin that the initiation of life begins again. When one has returned to this origin, it is calm, quiet, and peaceful. When new life is initiated again, the natural constant routine (Chang) will be repeated. If you know this constant natural routine, then there is no doubt about life and you will have become enlightened and understood the meaning of life. If you do not know this routine, then you rub against nature, and consequently various disasters may occur. If you are able to follow the natural routine and way of natural rules, then your life will be long and healthy. This is what the "Dao" means.

Embryonic Breathing is to keep the mind at the Wuji state. In order to trace back our origin, we must first know how to keep our mind at the center. This center means the center of the Qi (Real Lower Dan Tian), and also the center of the spiritual being (Upper Dan Tian). As mentioned earlier, one of these two Polarities is Yin and the other Yang. The Real Lower Dan Tian provides the quantity of Qi, so the physical body can perform its life with vigorous energy and physical strength. The Upper Dan Tian (spiritual center) governs the usage of the Qi and improves the quality of the Qi manifestation. These Two Polarities are connected through the spinal cord (Chong Mai). Physically, there are Two Polarities, but in function, they are one, and cannot be separated. When your mind is able to remain in these Two Polarities (Embracing Singularity)(Bao Yi), then you are able to conserve and govern your Qi effectively and efficiently. This is the key to longevity and maintaining health.

# Fighting Cancer

## Discovering Qigong's benefits

BY CATHY KERR

*In part 2 of her article, Cathy talks about some new challenges she faced while battling cancer. Kerr practiced qigong at YMAA under the watchful eye of Tai Chi instructor Rami Rones.*

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Four times over the next two years, my IGG protein would rise and threaten to require treatment. I would pour on the Humans Unite with Heaven and Earth and the level would drop. One month, it dropped by 20 percent, from 5 to 4 g/dl. The world-renowned myeloma specialist at the Cedars-Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles, Brian Durie, M.D., thought that something in my life, perhaps something I was doing, had caused it. I believed that it resulted from the intense application of this one exercise.

Meanwhile, Rami was happy that the cancer seemed to be arrested in its climb. With the new sense of application that came over me after I finished Master Liang's (qigong) seminar, I was now practicing five to six hours a day. But he warned me that my practice was unbalanced: I was too riveted by one exercise, which I didn't understand, and pursuing qigong as an occult art instead of a practice with straightforward principles. The package of exercises, he explained, if done with focus and persistence, would draw on the same principles and, presumably, elicit the same reactions as the mysterious Humans Unite with Heaven and Earth, but in a more balanced and more gradual way. I didn't listen. I pursued the entirety of my practice but I boosted the time I spent on Master Liang's exercise and unleashed a special energy. Yet every time that I poured it on, I would lose my emotional resilience, becoming thin-skinned, easily saddened, and tired.

In retrospect I see that I was not focused on the experience but chasing a result, trying to lower the protein level. I saw myself as a qigong pioneer. I would control the disease only through qi exercises. I was still searching for a magic bullet in the form of a biomedical explanation for what had happened to me in Master Liang's seminar — the physiological changes I had experienced, including the drop in my IGG protein. I began to realize that I was not alone in my mistake.

### Toward a New Career

In 1998, Rami was chosen by the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute to lead a study to look at whether qigong or low-impact aerobics strengthened the immune system to resist relapses of cancer. Donna Neuberg, the very smart biostatistician at Dana-Farber who designed the study, told me she saw qigong as exercise plus mindful relaxation, which might convey the benefits of both. This study was a step forward, but it also became a source of frustration to me. According to Neuberg's hypothesis, any relaxed or fluid, rhythmic type of walking should work as well as qigong.

The problem, it seemed to me, is that researchers at Dana-Farber and elsewhere were looking only for "hard" changes in physiology: measurable changes in natural killer cell activity or in the ratios of various components of the immune system, ignoring the experience of qigong. It misses what I saw in my friend John (Bianco). For instance, it does not capture the practical ways in which the exercises helped him feel strength and vitality during a very difficult time — a time when he was supposed to be dying.

Researchers have not asked people about the texture of their experience. How do they feel when they engage in a therapy, such as taking a pill or practicing qigong or meditation? How does it change their understanding of themselves and their condition? How does it change their experience of the disease?

I have taken these questions as my own challenge. With the help of Professor Byron Good, a medical anthropologist at Harvard, I studied the qualitative methods and theoretical concerns of medical anthropology, and I have brought these concerns to a new working group at Harvard Medical School chaired by Ted Kaptchuk, a doctor of Oriental medicine and assistant professor. I became an investigator in a randomized controlled trial of acupuncture for repetitive strain injury. An article of mine on the Dana-Farber trial was accepted by a well-regarded journal. And I became a coauthor of a paper by Harvard's Placebo Group addressing some major controversies in the field. By this time, I had been working with Rami for more than five years. I practiced meditation and qigong about three hours a day.

### Turning To Treatment

Last year, as I was growing ever more excited, even agitated, about my new research, I had to face the limitations of the qi practices and my own ability to control the disease. After five years of watchful waiting, my disease began to stir, and for four days every month I began taking high doses of a steroid called decadron, which attacks the myeloma cells in the bone marrow. When the protein wasn't falling fast enough, my oncologist and I decided to add thalidomide, and the two medications now work synergistically to drive down the myeloma protein level.

Such treatment can have serious side effects. Steroids prevent sleep; they can cause outbursts of rage, even psychosis. In my limited experience with patients, oncologists, and psychiatrists, psychological disturbances resulting from steroid treatment are surprisingly common. For me, the qigong exercises have helped tremendously. Although on the days I am treated with steroids I can feel a roaring in my ears, as if I were next to a rushing brook, I have used Embrace the Tree and other exercises to stay connected to myself — to feel my feelings, control my appetite, and let me sleep. I have had very few problems with the steroid therapy.

I learned, first as I avoided treatment and then as I dealt with its effects, that emotions and physical sensations move in concert and that practices such as qigong affect both. This should not have surprised me — the local PBS station broadcasts testimonials to the mind-body connection every week. But reading or hearing that mind and body are connected is not the same as visceral experience.

On a biting cold day last winter, over coffee, I asked John,



the engineer turned patent attorney, how the practice helped him. His answer was simple: "Whatever exercise Rami told me to do, I focused on 100 percent. I did every exercise, including the little finger and wrist rolls, as though it were the most important exercise in the world. I was completely mindful and tuned in to each exercise, no matter how small and unimportant it seemed." I envisioned John going through his routine, checking off each finished exercise, with a focused mind, but without much interest in the underlying principles.

My own answer to the question is more elaborate. When I started qigong, I was emerging from a major depression, bursting with a lifetime's grief over hiding my daily sadness and fear from myself. Although I could keep the sadness under wraps for much of my day, even simple exercises — letting the arms float up and down rhythmically — could leave me in tears. Indeed, just gently bringing my awareness to my throat or my heart regularly produces almost unbearable waves of feeling. Master Liang's Humans Unite with Heaven and Earth tapped most deeply into this mind-body-emotion channel. I still don't understand the drops in the protein level this practice seemed to elicit. I have no proof of the link and haven't been able to replicate the declines. These changes, which helped me delay treatment for so long, are a lingering mystery: gifts of grace, providence, the Tao. It is difficult to say more than this.

Rami likes to think of John and me as temperamental opposites: John simply did the exercises that Rami told him to do; I created my routine daily based on my assessment of that day's needs. Making my decisions has created inconsistency, jumping from one exercise to another, trying to replicate what I felt long ago in my seminar with Master Liang. I have only now come to see the importance of the qi exercises that cultivated stillness and quiet awareness. In my standing meditation, I am more focused, and in all the exercises, I direct my awareness to the center of my body, what Chinese tai chi masters call the dantien, the place from which all action is said to originate.

Recently, after some unexpectedly good test results, Rami asked whether I had done anything differently with the practice that might have contributed to the result. I described a change in my arm position during a particular standing exercise. Exasperated, he cut me off, "Don't you get it? It's not about any one exercise. It's about balancing all of them. It's about deciding to do the exercises every day even when you don't want to. It's about cultivating stillness inside while you do them. It's about creating an internal context that lets your entire system function better."

I do get it, most of the time. As a researcher I remain interested in the how and why. But as one who has finally begun to learn to live in her body, I no longer need a scientific study to help me interpret what I feel in my bones.

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**Cathy Kerr**

## The Wei of The World

### Tai Chi Knows No Boundaries

Early one morning, a group of about 200 New Zealanders quietly began doing their t'ai chi. However, what they were actually doing was spearheading an unprecedented global T'ai Chi movement that would include 700 events in 56 nations, on 6 continents. The global event unfolded on Saturday, April 12th, 2003, as World T'ai Chi and Qigong Day efforts unleashed a myriad of hitherto unknown health benefits.

*The San Francisco Chronicle* and *The Wall Street Journal* did stories on World T'ai Chi and Qigong Day, and Qigong's expanding popularity across America (respectively Russia's *Omsk Daily News* did a feature article on World T'ai Chi and Qigong Day's birth in the US, and how it expanded across the entire planet). Other papers across the US and Canada did articles exploring the health benefits of both T'ai Chi and Qigong.

Past years have seen coverage of the annual global T'ai Chi/Qigong celebration on CNN, Fox News, *The New York Times*, *The South China Morning Post* and hundreds of other media outlets worldwide. Why has this event swept the globe? Those who enjoy T'ai Chi and Qigong often enjoy sharing it with others. There is a "group" energy that adds to the pleasure of flowing through the forms. However, those who benefit from these wonderful health benefits also like to share them with people who've not yet learned about them. World T'ai Chi and Qigong Day enables practitioners worldwide to do both.

These worldwide mass events provide a uniquely photogenic story for the media to cover which in turn enables organizers to provide T'ai Chi/Qigong medical research on health benefits found at [www.world-taichiday.org](http://www.world-taichiday.org) (Resource Library). The media can then share this information with the public. This translates into hundreds of thousands — even millions being exposed to T'ai Chi Qigong who otherwise might have never heard of it.

Those of us who teach T'ai Chi and Qigong have all had students who have found great relief from balance disorders, chronic pain, allergies, asthma, high blood pressure, or a host of other ailments. Therefore, the collective goodwill of exporting this information to the masses worldwide is a very gratifying experience for all participants involved. This is also magnified by the shared "group energy" of doing T'ai Chi and Qigong with tens and even hundreds of thousands worldwide.

This unique event unfolds time zone by time zone at 10 am on the last Saturday of every year. Its aim is to spread like a flowing T'ai Chi or moving qigong form, that unites all human beings across national, economic, racial or ethnic boundaries, to connect all of us, or rather provide a respite from the delusion that we are all divided.

In World War I, during a Christmas cease-fire, opposing troops came out of their trenches and played soccer. This was reported by the



**In Brazil, 25,000 people celebrated World Tai Chi/Qigong day**

world media. Some historians feel this powerful image actually hastened the end of the war. Is it possible that the world seeing T'ai Chi Qigong players of all races, and across all national borders, playing T'ai Chi and Qigong together in a global flowing movement might add and accelerate a healing connection for the entire human race? Who knows, but it's worth a try, since it's fun and helps people learn some healthy practices anyway, why not?

All styles and all schools of the various forms of T'ai Chi and Qigong are welcome and invited to join in. At the official website [www.worldtaichiday.org](http://www.worldtaichiday.org) teachers are invited to list their school's events, so those in their area can locate them when they click onto that web site. They can even print out and use the 4 Free Organizing Kits to help organize an event, and to maximize its success, attendance, and media attention. The information in the Resource Library on medical research on T'ai Chi and Qigong can also be passed on to students, local healthcare, business, and education, and to all local, regional, and national health media.

World political heavyweights have officially recognized the health education efforts of World T'ai Chi and Qigong Day including the United Nations World Health Organization. World T'ai Chi and Qigong Day has been officially proclaimed by the governors of California, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, North Carolina, Utah, and others, as well as by mayors of cities all across the US.

Many of the world's major T'ai Chi and Qigong organizations have supported World T'ai Chi and Qigong Day's creation and efforts, including *The Hong Kong Martial Arts Association*, *The Canadian Taijiquan Federation*, *The European Taiji Federation*, *The T'ai Chi Union of Great Briton*, *The National Qigong Association*, and many others. World T'ai Chi/Qigong Day has sought to support the efforts of T'ai Chi/Qigong publications, organizations, and practitioners worldwide.

All World T'ai Chi/Qigong Day services and resources have always been free since the beginning of the event, to enable it to grow endlessly. This event has nearly doubled in size each year since it's birth, and it is educating media, business, healthcare, and individual people on a massive scale to the emerging research on T'ai Chi and Qigong benefits.

The U.S. National Health Institute is investing \$500,000 to research qigong's health benefits this year. As research expands, media coverage will also expand. World T'ai Chi and Qigong Day participants will become public servants in that they'll make sure their local, regional, and national media is updated each year to this research and its growing benefits to society.

Everyone is invited to join the world in a morning T'ai Chi and/or Qigong movement at 10 am on Saturday, April 24th, 2004. It costs you nothing, but offers the world so much.

*Bill Douglas, Founder of World T'ai Chi and Qigong Day,  
[www.worldtaichiday.org](http://www.worldtaichiday.org)*

## In The Street

### Is there such a thing as a fair fight?

It was 3:00a.m, the end of a very long night. My shift at the bar where I worked as a bouncer started 12 hours ago, but it seemed like an eternity had passed since then. During the evening, my partner and I had broken up several altercations between intoxicated customers, thwarted the attempts of countless minors trying to enter the bar with false IDs and even helped a police officer arrest a very belligerent young man who was allegedly selling drugs.

Later as I stood at the bar's front door watching patrons stumble out into the cold morning air, the one thing I wanted most was to just get home and climb into bed. I was exhausted from the long hours—sore from those altercations and in a sour mood due to our clientele—a mixture of middle-aged men, drug dealers and unruly college kids. Not to be overlooked was the group of bikers who usually dropped by for a beer and a bite to eat. Ironically, they were the best behaved of the lot.

Standing beside me was Brian, a tall lanky bartender whose expression barely hid his contempt for those he had served that night. Just as the last customer was leaving, he shouted; "Fight! Mike there's a fight out there!" Without hesitating, I rushed out the door and there, right in front of me, were two inebriated middle-aged men, fighting over a young lady.

After sizing up the situation, I circled around the man standing on the lower end of the sidewalk and quickly steered him away from his adversary. In doing so, I became the target of his rage. Almost immediately, he turned on me throwing a barrage of punches. He was not a trained fighter, but that didn't matter because just one of his powerful punches would have been enough to floor me. I blocked some of his blows in somewhat of an awkward manner, and ducked a few others. Finally an opening presented itself. I lunged forward, pushed hard into his stomach with both hands and he doubled over and fell backwards. After hitting the sidewalk, the desire to fight left him. He tried to get up but could only manage to roll over on all fours. I whirled around and spotted the other assailant fist raised and ready to strike.

At that exact moment everything became surreal, and as strange as it seemed, I knew where, when and how he'd throw his punch. His eyes were filled with anger but the second he lashed out, I ever so slightly stepped to one side of him. One moment I was there and the next, I was not. As his fist went sailing into nowhere, the force behind it made him lose his balance. Because this happened on a sloping sidewalk, covered with ice and snow, he fell right on top of me. I tried desperately to get out of his way but it was too late. There was a crash, and we both went rolling down the sidewalk locked in each other's arms. During our descent, my opponent made several attempts to gouge my eyes and grab hold of my hair. I just prayed that he didn't have a gun or knife.

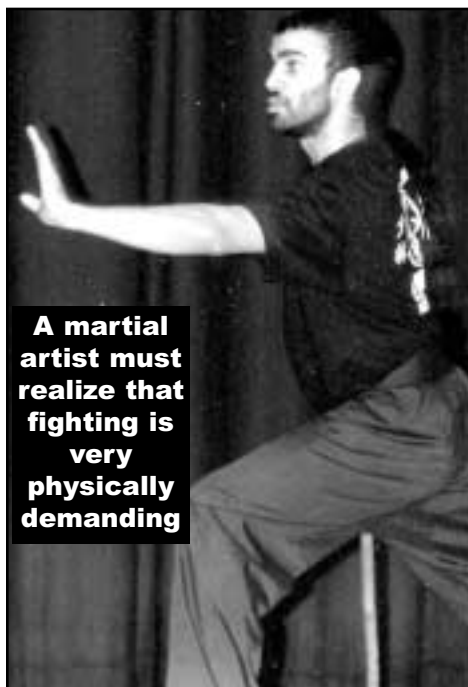
My attacker ended up on top of me with a distinct advantage. However, as he tried to get up, I punched him in the jaw and then managed to roll over on his chest in what is known today as the "mount position." I was finally able to choke him by using the lapels of his coat.

Yet, before I could render him unconscious, a crushing weight fell upon my back and from somewhere behind me I heard the bar manager screaming: "break it up, break it up!" It was during all of the confusion that the manager, a big man who weighed close to 300 lbs. ran out and sat astride my back. Beneath me lay my drunken opponent who not only had to contend with me but the managers extra weight. He gasped for breath, groaned, and then finally screamed aloud, "Oh God get them off me!" Except, for my pride and dirty clothes I was uninjured, but my opponent had to be taken to the hospital for several fractured ribs. What had begun for me as a very chaotic event, one, which I had gained some control, quickly ended up as a scene right out of the key-stone cops.

Whenever a martial artist asks me about street fighting and what may or may not be the best tactics I always tell them this story because throughout the years it has served as a good example of just how chaotic and uncontrollable a street altercation can be. A street fight/self-defense situation never turns out the way you expect. Yet, this often is over looked at times in our training.

Since 9/11, I've noticed that many instructors are emphasizing the self-defense aspects of the fighting arts more than they have in the past. While this is good, often not addressed in teaching self-defense is the nature of the beast. Or more simply put, the chaos and violence are all an integral part of a street confrontation. Far to often when it comes to teaching combative aspects, especially by an instructor who has a lack of experience in this area, there is a tendency to "gloss it over" with quick fix approaches. Many of which are not based on sound judgment nor first hand experience. The following explores some of these areas.

**The Illusion of Ease:** One common belief is that for a trained fighter it's an easy process to meet and defeat an assailant. This even includes an unarmed practitioner pitted against an armed one. The latest phase in this "illusion of ease" is the one I saw while browsing in a local Borders Bookstore. As I sipped my coffee, I came across a martial arts book that showed various means to defend against a variety of armed attacks. Some of the explanations were well founded, but one in particular that caught my interest was the segment on how to disarm an opponent armed with a hand grenade. It involved a long intricate process that showed how you grabbed the grenade from your opponent's hand, threw them to the ground and then placed the grenade beneath them while diving for safety. Having been in the military I had the pleasure, or shall I say displeasure, of throwing a hand grenade and several questions came to my mind. First, most grenades have a three-second time delayed fuse. This is done so that you have time to throw the grenade, but your opponent doesn't have time to pick it up and throw it back at you. In my opinion grappling with your opponent, throwing them on the ground and then placing the grenade beneath them would take more than three seconds. Unless of course you're Rambo or one of those other action heroes we see in the movies.



**A martial artist must realize that fighting is very physically demanding**

Another factor to be considered here is the kill radius of an exploding hand grenade. Most have a 50-yard kill zone, which means that anyone more or less within a 50-yard radius will be either killed or wounded by the grenade's explosion. This can become even more complicated when you consider that some grenades are fragmentation types, which spew out pieces of metal while others may be incendiary models that use phosphorous to burn their victims to death. In this presentation of grenade defense, running away can never be considered an option, which by the way would have been my first choice.

This illusion of ease is also presented these days by many that teach the ever-popular "pressure point" attacks. While this can prove to be a very valid aspect of the martial artist's training, what many forget is if your opponent is intoxicated, angry, on drugs or all three combined, then their threshold for pain has risen significantly. A simple touch, tap or grab is not going to achieve the desired results. A strong uppercut to the jaw or a stomp to the knee, yes, but a finger lightly placed upon the temple or wrist will not. Fighting is a very physically demanding endeavor; one where time is measured in split seconds not minutes. When it comes to street fighting and street self-defense there is no illusion, it's tough, demanding and at times down right dangerous.

**Weapons:** In keeping with our hand grenade scenario the issue of confronting an armed opponent should always be kept in mind. If you can defend against an armed opponent then more than likely your chances against an unarmed one will be good. However what we often fail to understand is that; whenever a weapon is used, then your chances for survival diminish as much as 90 percent depending upon the skill at which the attacker can use their weapon. Should a knife be used, your chances may decrease as much as 50 to 70 percent. If it is a firearm and your opponent is at a range of say 10 to 15 feet, your chances for survival may decrease as much as 80 to 90 percent. These are depressing facts, but they need to be kept in mind if your object is to plan an effective strategy against an armed opponent. All factors need to be considered because you may have only one opportunity to exploit an opening in your assailant's plan.

Weapons are not to be taken lightly. You might be able to take a punch to the face or stomach, but when it comes to a gunshot or stab wound the effects can be fatal. Also in teaching weapons defense we sometimes forget that running is a very valid and effective option. Even the most skilled warriors in ancient times knew when and when not to fight. The call of retreat has been heard more than once in the fighting art's long history. This is a lesson we should not overlook especially in this day and age of automatic weapons.

**Your training has to fit the fight:** Far to often you will see the practitioner trying to make the fight fit their training instead of vice versa. This is very commonplace with many practitioners who often spend a lot of time trying to figure out just how kata/form movements can be applied to an engagement. The movement(s) will be viewed from all

angles, most of which are beneficial to the defender. What can be lost in this analysis is that the opponent used during the exercise is often a very willing one who wants the definition to work just as much as the defender does. Therefore the chaotic reality of a combative situation can and is overlooked. In actuality most fights/self defense situations occur at the most inconvenient times and places. More often than not you won't execute those predetermined responses found within your form or kata just as you have practiced them so often in the dojo. Instead you may be forced to utilize catch as catch can techniques, which may or may not resemble those you have practiced. In addition to this is the fact that your own surge of adrenaline will hinder your motor skills leaving you with the ability to execute only the most elementary of techniques. This is why many combative systems like military bayonet training utilize techniques that are based on a KISS system. Keep It Simple Stupid. They realize that in the heat of battle anything beyond a simple thrusting, chopping, or kicking action may be out of the question.

All fights are different: Experience can play a big role in how you perform in a street fight. However no two confrontations are alike. If you find yourself defending against the attack of a rapist or mugger then the nature or the engagement becomes a life or death struggle, one in which your intent will be to seriously injure, or maybe even kill your attacker. On the other hand, if you're involved in a dispute with an irate relative over a football game then breaking his knee may not be the proper response. A come along wrist twist or submission hold maybe, but breaking his leg over who did or didn't score a touch down is a bit much. This leads us to the legality of self-defense. The nature of your attacker's threat will determine to a large degree how you respond. For instance if a pickpocket takes your wallet, should you chase them down and then break their back?

Chances are that you may end up spending more time in jail for attempted murder than they do for stealing your wallet. Remember that the dynamics of each situation will determine how you respond.

**Conclusion:** Can today's martial arts training be of value in dealing with self-defense scenarios? Yes it can, provided that we stop for awhile to analyze our training and take time to understand what we may or may not encounter in the street.

Two of the greatest weapons that the study of a fighting art provides are a developed sense of awareness that teaches us to be not only in tune with ourselves but also our surroundings and the ability to develop physical responses to dangerous situations. Both can help us greatly in dealing with potentially dangerous situations should we be forced to. However, when I consider some of my past "street experiences," even with all the knowledge available today and with all the instructors out there teaching great self-defense, I'm still a firm believer in: The fight you can walk away from is the best one of all.

*Michael Rosenbaum is the author of two books: "Okinawa's Complete Karate System Isshinryu" and "The Fighting Arts Their Evolution from Secret Societies to Modern Times".*

## YMAA AROUND THE WORLD

### KEEPING EVERYONE INFORMED

Almost every person that I've ever met during my 10-years of martial arts training seemed to be searching for some sort of spiritual enlightenment. I always wondered how long it would take them to reach their lofty goal.

By contrast there were others who really didn't seem to care. As long as they looked halfway decent while practicing their gong fu, everything around them appeared to be moving in the right direction.

**Kathy Yang**, the daughter of **Dr. Yang Jwing-Ming**, certainly was not, by any stretch of the imagination, in the latter. She continuously excelled in everything she did, not only during her high school and college years, but long after.

There came a time when she had to temporarily "sever" her ties with the school and strike out on her own. And even though she may have departed, it's apparent that she has not forgotten the meaning of two important words; dedication and devotion.

Kathy explained in a postcard received at YMAA several weeks ago, what she is searching for and soon hopes to find:

*Dear YMAA,*

*In a movie I saw before I left for Europe, a man said, "There is no light without shadow." I am only beginning to understand the depth of these words.*

*I sit in a small, quiet café in Amsterdam, Holland as I write my heart to you. There is so much I am learning about my self here. In this city where the idea of sex and drugs are so legal, I am learning that life is not actually made up of "right" and "wrong", nor "good" and "bad," but of "light" and "darkness" and "positive" and "negative."*

*I am teaching Taiji sword on the weekends. With each movement of the blade, I am practicing the lost art of truth.*

*We have all forgotten that the martial arts were created to fight only one enemy - the ignorance of our minds.*

*The sword is a weapon of light.*

*My greatest hope for my spiritual journey is that I may seek out the darkness in my own mind, cut through ignorance, and win the princess in my heart.*

*This is the toughest training I have ever faced, the Gong Fu of the mind, and it has been the greatest joy of my life.*

*I wish you all the same hard training.*

*Kathy*

That huge snowstorm that dumped nearly twenty four inches of snow on Boston and surrounding communities several weeks ago didn't stop two well known Tai Chi practitioners from traveling.

**Jeff Rosen**, YMAA tai chi instructor, and **Afaa Weaver**, former student, bumped into each other on a train heading to The Big Apple. While in New York City, Weaver, a Simmons College professor, gave a talk on the Daoist arts and health as part of an exhibit at the Studio Museum of Harlem. He spent last Thanksgiving week in Taiwan as a guest of honor at the XXIII World Congress of Poets. And he recently wrote an article that is scheduled to appear in an upcoming issue of *Taijiquan Journal*.

**Knowing the proper technique to use is very important**





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### Editor's Corner

Time goes by so fast. It seems like only yesterday that I wished all of my colleagues and instructors "Happy Holiday(s). And here I am, doing it again. I have no idea how many of our readers, if any, make New Years resolutions, but this year I plan to make one. I would like to help someone outside of my immediate family enjoy Christmas next year. I haven't yet figured out how to do this but I will be working out a solution. I enjoy the end of the year holidays and I hope that everyone is able to enjoy them as much as I.

### Dan Hood

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### Attention Authors

YMAA Publication Center continues to seek manuscripts on Martial Arts and Qigong. If you've got a book, let us know.

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