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FOREWORD

By Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming

Dear Friends

An elderly Chinese woman had two large pots, each hung on the ends of a pole which she carried across her neck. One pot had a crack in it the other was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water. At the end of the long walk from the stream to her house, the cracked pot arrived only half full.

This went on daily, for the next two years. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, miserable that it could only do half of what it had been designed to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be bitter failure, it spoke to the woman one day. "I'm ashamed of myself, because this crack in my side causes water to leak all the way back to your house."

The old woman smiled. "Did you notice that there are flowers on your side of the path, but not on the opposite side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, so I planted seeds there. When I walked back to the house, you watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my table. Without you being just the way you are, there would be no beauty to grace the house."

Each of us has our own unique imperfections. But if we're able to learn from some of the cracks that we've made in our lives, it can prove to be an interesting and rewarding journey. We've just got to take each person for what they are and look for the good in them.

If you read between the lines of this story, you will be able to grasp the full meaning; the message. I realize that there are many YMAA students who do not have a chance to practice every day because of other commitments. And I know that my instructors continually remind them to do so. It's the only way that you will improve. However, I also realize that there are many of you who have families. And during the summer months you want to spend time with them at the beach, at picnics or on vacation. I encourage these leisurely breaks. Some students continue to practice no matter where they go. If they can't do their form(s), they practice qigong or they meditate.

After returning to school, don't be surprised if you find a couple of flaws...or a few cracks in the pot. The bottom line is not to get discouraged and give up on every thing that your instructors have taught you.

It might be beneficial to all YMAA students if they noticed the flowers on their side of the path.

NEW DVD



Tai Chi Energy Patterns



by Ramel Ronos

2 DVD Set • NTSC

\$39.95, ISBN 1-59439-052-5

Code: D0525

YMAA Publications wishes everyone a healthy and happy summer! To welcome in these hot summer months, why not relax with a copy of Tai Chi practitioner Ramel Ronos latest DVD, *Tai Chi Energy Patterns*.

It's as good as his last best selling DVD, *Sunrise Tai Chi*. And rest assured that his latest DVD will also be a best seller. With his extensive tai chi background, Ronos shares with viewers much of the information that he has gathered over the past few years about the beneficial aspects of tai chi. In fact, the well-designed cover of *Tai Chi Energy Patterns* pretty much says it all. Ronos is one of the few tai chi practitioners to put his knowledge to work at the Dana Farber Cancer Research Center and the Tufts Medical Research Center in Boston. He offers six hours of helpful mind/body information focusing on four popular Tai Chi patterns; ward off, roll back, press and push. Ronos explains why he focuses his attention on these four core movements and why they can be used in all Tai Chi styles. Tai Chi can be a full time commitment and many practitioners, because of other commitments don't always have time to practice. Ronos says that tai chi can be incorporated into your daily exercises no matter what they may be. And these four movements can develop excellent health and vitality and boost your immune system.

I especially liked the way Ronos explained how a person can practice by themselves or with a partner. And the computer graphics that he uses to point out how each movement helps to circulate energy are fantastic. All of them make internal circulation much easier to understand. I don't believe there's a DVD presently on the market that uses these types of graphics.

DAN HOOD

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CANDLE TRAINING

BY DR. YANG, JWING-MING



In Chinese martial society, candles were once a popular training aid, because they were an important source of lighting in ancient times and thus were more readily available for practice. Today, they are seldom used for training. In this article, I'd like to introduce some examples of candle practice. Hopefully, you'll be inspired to train with them.

1. CONCENTRATION TRAINING: The most common use of the candle in martial arts is to train mental concentration and visual focusing. At the beginning, simply sit in a dark room and watch a lit candle with a meditative mind, calm and relaxed. You must practice until you can focus your eyes on the candle's flame and catch every detail of how the flame moves for at least a half-hour. This training is critical in a fight when your mind must be alert and the observation of the situation must be sensitive and accurate. At the beginning, it is hard to bring your mind to the candle for more than a few minutes. After you have practiced for a while, you will soon realize that through training you can reach this goal. After you have reached the goal of watching the candle with a concentrated mind and focused eyes, place the candle on a specially designed swinger. Repeat the same practice, except this time the candle is moving. After you have practiced for a long time and you have easily reached the stage of concentration, start to move your body around the moving candle and again practice the routine. Once you finished this phase, you can bring your mind to a more concentrated level and the spirit will also be raised because of the focusing practice.

2. JIN TRAINING: The second most common candle practice is to train jin or martial power, (penetrating and focused) Simply use the lit candle as a target for your jin. For example, for punching jin training start from a distance that, when you extend your arm completely, the space between your fist and the flame is about five inches. Concentrate your mind and focus your punching power on the flame and try to extinguish it. Only when your power and mind are focused will the pressure and wind generated from the punch extinguish the flame. Increase the distance between the fist and the candle only after you have trained for

a while and can extinguish it four out of five times. If you can extinguish the candle from the distance of one foot, then your power must be focused and penetrating. When this power is used to attack your opponent, your power will reach deep into the internal organs.

3. QI ENERGY TRAINING: In the internal martial arts, the candle was commonly used to train the concentration of the mind and the focusing of qi. When the mind is concentrated to a high level, the qi will be led strongly. The training is very simple. Sit in front of the candle and form your hand in the sword secret, which is performed by extending your second and middle finger while touching your ring finger and pinky to the thumb. This hand form will allow the qi to extend beyond the fingers. Modern research indicates that bio-electricity is strongly related to qi, and that the external effects of qi manifestation are caused by this bioelectricity affecting the environment. For example, when this electricity is led to the fingers, it can create a disturbance in the air and generate wind. This wind will make the candle flame move. Naturally, this takes many years of correct practice. Further research into the relationship between qi and bioelectricity is definitely needed. I would welcome any information the reader may have regarding such research.

These three examples are only offered for your reference. As long as you understand the training theory, you may think of many other ways to train with candles. It's simple, inexpensive and effective. It's also one of the best ways of training your patience and perseverance.

NO FIRST STRIKE IN KARATE

By Lawrence A. Kane

"He who strikes the first blow admits he's lost the argument."
- Chinese Proverb

Karate is first and foremost a defensive art. This essential tradition is best described by Gichin Funakoshi's famous saying, "*karate ni sente nashi*" which translates as "there is no first strike in karate." While this statement is absolutely true it is also commonly misunderstood, often to the detriment of practitioners who find themselves in serious trouble the first time they take their *dojo* (training hall) learning to a real fight on the street. Following Funakoshi's admonishment they tend to wait until they have already been attacked and very possibly struck with force before taking any action. By then it is often too late.

To be clear, *karateka*, like most martial artists, are taught to avoid seeking conflict. This convention helps practitioners of potentially lethal arts behave in a manner appropriate to interaction within polite society, something I think we'd all agree is a positive thing indeed. This mindset is so important that it goes beyond mere words and is even reflected in the training methods and physical movements of the art. For example, every *kata* (formal exercise) in *Goju Ryu* karate begins with a defensive technique.

The challenge is, then, to make that defensive move work to your advantage. What many don't realize is that defensive techniques when executed properly are designed to be just as fight stopping as offensive ones. After all, these arts were developed before the advent of modern medicine. In those days almost any injury suffered in battle could ultimately prove fatal through infection or other collateral impact.

The ancient masters understood that if they were to only block an adversary's attack he would continue to strike until either they did something more effective to disable him, or they were beaten into a bloody pulp, or he decided to stop of his own volition. Consequently every martial application, including the defensive ones, were designed in such a manner that they could be used to end a confrontation as quickly as possible. Despite advancements in technology, the nature of hand-to-hand fighting remains much the same today as it was in ancient times.

Here is where the confusion lies. To many "no first strike" implies waiting for an adversary to attack then trying to successfully counter when you are already injured or out of position from the force of your attacker's initial blow. After all, once you block the first strike another is inevitably already on its way so you are effectively behind the count before you begin. In order to decipher the true intent of Funakoshi's statement we must understand three Japanese terms: (1) *go no sen*, (2) *sen no sen*, and (3) *sen-sen no sen*.

Go no sen means "late initiative," blocking and riposting after an enemy has already attacked. This is the method that new practitioners are initially taught. It means to receive or block a blow and then to strike back. It is a great learning method because it breaks advanced techniques down into



small movements but it is not practical on the street where you are likely to become overwhelmed by a determined aggressor. This is elementary karate, abandoned quickly once any significant level of skill has been achieved.

Sen no sen means "simultaneous initiative," intercepting the adversary's blow just after it begins. This is an intermediate form of karate, using quickness and power to simultaneously attack and defend, cutting off the opponent's strike before it makes contact. This is where we begin to find street-worthy application.

Sen-sen no sen means "preemptive initiative," cutting off a blow before it even starts. Practitioners sense that an attack will be forthcoming and then cut it short before the aggressor has the chance to transform the mental desire to attack into the physical movement necessary to execute that desire. This is the ultimate goal of martial training insofar as self-defense is concerned, advanced karate.

Sen-sen no sen, cutting off an attack before it is fully in play, looks an awful lot like a first strike yet is still a defensive movement. This is what Funakoshi really meant: striking to cut off an impending attack is okay while instigating unwarranted violence on your own initiative is not. If you can walk away from a confrontation you absolutely should do so. It is not only morally the right thing to do but it also allows you to avoid serious legal, psychological, and/or medical repercussions as well. Most rational people would agree that picking fights is simply a bad idea. In fact, the more dangerous you really are the less you should feel a need to prove it.

To clarify further, Funakoshi wrote, "When there are no avenues of escape or one is caught even before any attempt to escape can be made, then for the first time the use of self-defense techniques should be considered. Even at times like these, do not show any intention of attacking, but first let the attacker become careless. At that time attack him concentrating one's whole strength in one blow to a vital point and in the moment of surprise, escape and seek shelter and help." Notice that he wrote, "at that time attack him" as opposed to "after he strikes launch your counterattack." *Sen-sen no sen* is fully consistent with this approach.

Clearly martial artists should only engage in physical violence if there is no other choice. Sometime around 506 B.C. Sun Tzu wrote, "To win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the highest skill. To subdue an enemy without fighting is the highest skill." There are many peaceful ways to settle a disagreement, anyone of which is preferable to a physical confrontation. If you cannot escape from danger, however, that does not mean that you must stand around waiting to get hit before you can act in your own defense. This is especially important in multiple attacker and armed aggressor scenarios where hesitation will most likely get you mutilated or killed.

MY TRAVELS WITH A QIGONG MASTER

BY YANGLING LEE JOHNSON



Qigong Practitioner Yanling Lee Johnson followed the experiences of her friend Karen as she traveled through Germany and Eastern Europe with a world renowned qigong master.

This is my last day in Bratislava, where we wrapped up an amazing two-month journey with my teacher, Xu Mingtang. We're now driving back to Budapest where we'll hop on a plane that will fly us back to China.

My time in Hungary and Slovakia was filled with so much learning and observations. In each place Mingtang treated many patients and then tirelessly taught seminars at night. It was amazing watching him work, watching him heal others and witnessing some profound transformations. He really understands body mechanics, and Qi energy.

While in Hungary, a 65-year-old woman (who looked more like 75) came in a wheelchair. Solemn almost sad, she and the other two people she was with handed Mingtang medical papers from her doctors explaining her condition. After looking at them, Mingtang said, "If your condition is really as bad as these doctors say, I have no method to treat you. But let's see what is happening."

He checked her pulse and looked at her with his 3rd eye (as he does with all his patients) and said, "No problem. This is not serious and you will recover." The woman immediately covered her face with her hands and began crying. Before seeing him, she was convinced that she was going to die. In an instant, she realized she would live. It was incredible to see the serene look that came over her face and how relaxed her body became as Mingtang treated her.

According to him, she had too much "fire" in her liver. This caused "wind" in her body that made all her tendons weak and also affected other internal organs. She thought she had developed asthma and the medication her doctors prescribed irritated her liver, making the "fire" worse. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, this is not considered a serious problem, one that a patient can easily recover from. In Western medicine, the prognosis was just the opposite: no practical way to treat her condition.

This was just one of many astounding treatments I witnessed. Sometimes when Mingtang was unsure how to treat a patient, he meditated with them. Or using his Daoist principles, he communicated with his late teachers many of whom lived centuries ago or were a part of his family. I tried to absorb everything that I witnessed. It'll probably

take time to fully understand deeply all that I am learning.

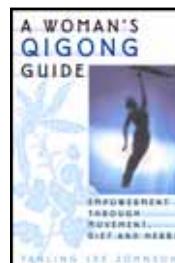
Mingtang has also been treating me for a chronic problem that I've suffered from for 18 years. He's the first person to "see" it and diagnose its cause. It's hard to describe how powerful his Qi is and how it feels when it enters your body. All I know is that it's finally helping me to heal.

While we were in Hungary and Slovakia, Mingtang taught us level IV of Zhong Yuan Qigong which deals with knowledge and learning from and communicating with other forms of life such as trees, rivers, birds, dolphins, etc. There's so much knowledge and wisdom available to us; we just need to learn how to be use it.

Recently Mingtang taught Level I qigong again in Bratislava during which time he introduced and had us practice one of the main exercises called Big Tree (basically you stand in one place, relax, hold a ball of Qi in front of your navel and imagine you're a tree.

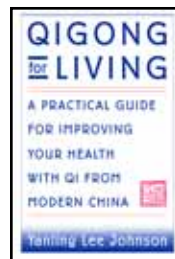
His practice has healed so many other people throughout the world. I am grateful to him for helping me stay on the path toward recovery.

Books by Yanling Lee-Johnson



A WOMAN'S QIGONG GUIDE

Empowerment Through Movement, Diet, and Herbs
\$16.95, 168 pages, 6 Illustrations
Code: B045/833



QIGONG FOR LIVING

A Practical Guide for Improving Health with Qi from Modern China
\$16.95, 192 pages, 21 Illustrations
Code: B058/116

MUST BUY

Tai Chi Practitioner Rami Ronés latest DVD has finally hit the market. (See page 1) Called Tai Chi Energy Patterns, it follows in the footsteps of his best selling DVD Sunrise Tai Chi supplying plenty of helpful information and guidance. Ronés, a YMAA tai chi instructor, is one of the few people working in the medical field who has shared the healing aspects of tai chi and qigong with the American public. His knowledge of both martial arts is extensive and he does a wonderful job explaining why it is so important to practice both of them together.

Ever felt guilty about missing a martial arts class at YMAA because you're feeling slightly ill? Well don't because you'll not only be sparing you're training partners and friends some misery, but also doing your part to stop the spread of an illness, be it a virus or the pandemic "big one."



VITAMIN FACT

A recent study of more than 35,000 women in Iowa found that those who consumed the most magnesium from food (more than 350 milligrams a day-about the recommended levels) were 23% less likely to develop colon cancer over 17 years than women who consumed the least.

RAISING THE BAR

Do "energy" bars really give you energy? Sure, but only because they contain calories and calories fuel the body. Energy bars (also called nutrition or sports bars) vary in how much protein, fat, and carbohydrates they contain, as well as in the vitamins and minerals that are added. The simple fact is they won't make you more energetic, stronger or faster. Bottom line: They are no better than other foods for exercise performance.



AVOID SECOND HAND SMOKE

According to a study of nearly 5,000 people in four U.S. cities, secondhand smoke, and of course, smoking, may increase the risk of glucose intolerance. Characterized by elevated blood sugar (glucose) levels, the condition is also called pre-diabetes because it is often a precursor to Type 2 diabetes. Over a 15-year period, people exposed to secondhand smoke had a 35% elevated risk of glucose intolerance, and smokers a 65% higher risk.

Purple grape juice has some of the same health benefits as red wine, according to a small study from Boston University School of Medicine. It found that people with heart disease who drank about two cups of Concord grape juice a day for two weeks had an increase in HDL ("good") cholesterol and a decrease in two markers of inflammation. The researchers attribute the benefits to polyphenols in purple grape juice, also found in red wine. (Of course, grape juice lacks alcohol, and alcohol itself, at least in moderation, is known to have heart benefits.) But watch out for calories: a cup of grape juice contains 150 calories more than most juices.

THE LOWDOWN ON ECHINACEA

A large, well-designed study in the New England Journal of Medicine has found that Echinacea has no effect on colds-it doesn't prevent them, reduce symptoms, speed recovery, or stimulate the immune system. This was true in people who started taking the supplement a week before exposure to the cold virus, as well as in those who began taking it at the time of exposure. Several other studies in recent years also found that Echinacea is worthless against colds.

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Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming

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EDITOR'S CORNER

The Spirit of the Moment
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Once a great singer, known all through the land for his skill and beautiful voice came to a town for a performance. Boso attended and was most impressed. Afterwards, Boso was introduced to him. The singer bowed low and told Boso that everyone knew he was a great Zen master and it was his honor to meet him. Boso said, "When I was a small boy my mother would sing me a song called "Happy" do you know it?" The singer said, "Of course, every child knows that song."

"Can you sing it to me exactly as my mother did so I can remember her?" asked Boso.

"I'm not quite ready can you give me a day or so to prepare?"

"Yes, of course," answered Boso.

A few days passed and the singer returned and asked Boso if he would like to hear it.

"No thanks I'm not really in the mood right now, maybe another time."

Over the years the singer would return to the town and ask to see Boso. Occasionally Boso would listen to the song,

but would always say, "That's not quite how my mother sang it. She always added more of this or that." And the singer would go off and work on adding this or that for the next opportunity to sing the song. In this way Boso imparted Zen to the singer.

Emphasizing enlightenment through meditation and insight is a good way to enrich a person's life and that's what Boso did for both himself and the singer.

The joy is in the journey, in the moment, not about getting this part right or that part right, but being able to emphasize one part or another at will, because each part has been examined, explored and installed in our bodies. We've just got to learn how to use it. Pay attention to YMAA instructors and see what they have accomplished for themselves. Then THINK (or meditate) about what they are trying to pass on to you.

It's all about embedding the skills to a level that has allowed me to get above the measuring stick. At that point I can be a fearless teacher.

What a great pleasure it is to have teachers who will play the Zen with me.

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