

YMAA NEWS



ISSUE 84 * DECEMBER 2007



Swords after two weeks of intense training at the YMAA Retreat Center

3 Foreword *by Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming*

As the year winds down and we have past another anniversary, I'd like to thank all of my instructors

4 A Review of the General Principles of Qigong *by Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming*

In order to understand Qigong, one must understand several concepts. The first of these is Qi

6 A Focus Found in the Forest

by Bryan Campbell

We spent each day clearing and burning brush, inoculating logs for a future mushroom farm, eating and training together five hours a day

7 What Makes a Good Sword or a Sword Good? *by Justin Bowman*

Is it the steel, the geometry, the furniture or the feel? I think it's the sum of all parts

8 First Light of Morning *by Tony Chee*

How can we keep the moments of great clarity and vision so they are continually leading our lives?

9 A Good Example to Follow

by Jeffrey Pratt

I was asked to write about women's role in the martial arts generally and one woman in particular

10 YMAA 25 Years *by David Silver*

October 1, 2007, YMAA celebrated its 25-Year Anniversary. There were many phone calls, letters and emails of congratulations

12 A Masterful Accomplishment

by Dan Hood

Most people who study or practice martial arts seldom if ever think about becoming a Qigong practitioner

EDITOR'S CORNER

I just read an interesting article in the Tufts Health & Nutrition Letter titled *Big Bellies Spell 42-44% Bigger Heart*.

It began with the writer's humorous sentence "*IF YOUR BELLY enters the room before the rest of you, a new study finds, you may be headed for the cardiac ward.*"

Some people may find that sentence funny. Others may take it extremely serious because they could very well fit into that category. For the past few months, we've heard on television or read in newspapers and magazines how overeating can cause obesity in both adults and children. However, researchers warn that there is something to be considered before going on a crash diet... something important that you should know about.

According to the Tufts article, researchers continue to search for more accurate predictors of a person's potential heart-disease risk than the familiar body-mass index (BMI), Carlos Iribarren, MD, of Kaiser Permanente of Northern California and colleagues set out to see whether obesity in the abdomen matters more than overall obesity. They looked for an association between risk of developing heart disease and a measurement called sagittal abdominal diameter (SAD). Your SAD represents the distance from your back to your upper abdomen, midway between the top of the pelvis and the bottom of the ribs; researchers measured SAD when subjects were standing.

The researchers studied nearly 200,000 men and women patients at Kaiser Permanente who had checkups between 1965 and 1970. The patients were allowed to participate in the study for an average of 12 years. The subjects were divided into four groups, or quartiles, based on SAD, and their heart-disease rates adjusted for age, race, BMI, educational level, smoking, alcohol consumption and women's use of hormone replacement therapy.

The findings, published in the American Journal of Epidemiology, showed that men with the biggest bellies, those in the upper quartile of sagittal abdominal diameter had a 42% greater risk of developing coronary heart disease than those in the trimmest group. Among women, the quartile with the biggest SAD measurements was at 44% greater risk than the group with the smallest SAD scores.

The authors concluded, "Standing sagittal abdominal diameter was a strong predictor of coronary heart disease independently of BMI, and added incremental coronary heart disease prediction at each level of BMI" when used in conjunction with BMI versus SAD measurements.

Previous studies have similarly suggested that waist-to-hip ratio is a better predictor of heart risk than BMI.

In conclusion, I've noticed throughout my Tai Chi training that very few practitioners have, as the writer stated in his first paragraph, "big bellies." Most seem to be in very good physical condition. I'm not saying that practicing Tai Chi or any other martial art is going to keep you thin, but they certainly do help to burn calories...maybe not a whole lot...but some. So the bottom line is to add some aerobics into your workout. Walking, jogging, jumping rope all help. All are very important especially with the Holiday season upon us.

Dan Hood
Editor, YMAA Newsletter

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The YMAA Newsletter Wants to Hear from You!

As the number of YMAA Schools throughout the world continues to grow, Dr. Yang believes that it is important to promote a spirit of unity. One of the ways we can do this is through the YMAA Newsletter and the YMAA website. We invite all YMAA Schools to submit articles on any Martial Arts and Qigong topics, including moral stories, training ideas, and health information, as well as anything concerning the YMAA organization. Photos to accompany the articles are also encouraged.

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Foreword

by Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming



Dear Friends and Readers,

As the year winds down and we have past another Anniversary, I'd like to thank all of my instructors for keeping their schools up and running despite the fact that beginning next March, I'll be devoting all of my time to the YMAA Retreat Center in Northern California.

For many of my past and or future students this may come as somewhat of a surprise. However, after 35 years of teaching Kung Fu, I think it's about time for me to turn my attention to something that I've dreamed about doing for nearly that long. I've had a lot of time to think this over and not a day has gone by when I didn't entertain the thought of preserving Chinese culture and popularizing traditional martial arts here in this country.

We must be honest with ourselves first before we can be honest with others. The root of my honesty lies in what I have seen happen to not just Chinese martial arts but martial arts in general. It's not what it use to be when I first came to the U.S. in 1974 and six years later founded my first school in Houston, Texas. That is not to say that my colleagues throughout this country have not done a wonderful job. There are many good teachers and they operate very good schools. However, to become a teacher in the future you must possess a greater knowledge of not just one, but many styles. You don't want to impart information that is not credible or doesn't hold weight. Nobody gains anything from that.

It would be very difficult today for me to say to somebody, "If you really want to learn real Chinese

martial arts, go to China." Before I came here from Taiwan, maybe I could have said that, but not now, no way. In fact it wouldn't surprise me that in another 50 years, maybe it'll be the Chinese who'll come here to learn Chinese Kung Fu.

At YMAA Headquarters in Boston, we've traditionally split up Shaolin and Tai Chi classes because younger people between the ages of 15 and 30 wanted to pursue the more rigorous, more challenging Shaolin training. But we never discouraged them from practicing Tai Chi to soften their hard style. Those who did, found Tai Chi more challenging, because it's more internal than external. Theoretically, any young person who

can master both styles is way ahead of the game... they can almost call themselves a Jedi.

Now at 61-years-old, I want to turn my attention to the YMAA Retreat Center, to train 10-15 exceptional

young students willing to commit to 10 years of living and training in the mountains. This is my dream, my goal, my legacy. Hopefully I'll succeed and I hope to see you there in CA to join in the training.

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming is a world renowned author and teacher of Chinese martial arts for more than thirty five years.

He founded the YMAA organization, with more than 55 schools in 18 countries, and is now building a new project in the mountains of California. For more information about this project, please visit www.ymaa-retreatcenter.org.

"...not a day has gone by when I didn't entertain the thought of preserving Chinese culture and popularizing traditional martial arts..."

A Review of the General Principles of Qigong

by Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming

In order to understand Qigong, one must understand several concepts. The first of these is Qi. Qi is the foundation of all Qinese medical theory and Qigong. It corresponds to the Greek “pneuma” and the Sanskrit “prana”, and is considered to be the vital force and energy flow in all living things.

There is no western definition of Qi. However, according to the experience of Qigong practitioners, Qi can be best explained as a type of energy very much like electricity, which flows through the human or animal body. When this circulation becomes stagnant or stops, the person or animal will become ill or die. Qi can also be explained as a medium of sensing or feeling.

For example, when a person’s arm is hurt, the Qi flow in the nerves of the arm will be disturbed and stimulated to a higher energy state. This higher energy potential will cause the Qi to flow to a lower energy area, especially the brain, which is extremely sensitive to disturbances in the energy flow. This causes the sensation of pain. In addition, the difference in energy potential will cause the flow of blood to increase in that area to begin repairing the damage. Therefore, Qi, the nervous system, the Qi channels, and the brain are intimately related to each other and can not be separated.

The second concept the reader should know is that of Qi channels, which circulate Qi throughout the body. For the most part the main Qi channels are found with the arteries and nerves. A glance into any anatomy book will show the reader that large sheaves of nerve fibers accompany the arteries throughout the body. The channels do also. Like the arteries and nerves, they are protected by the body’s musculature, so that they are hard to affect directly. There is one spot on the body where a channel is very exposed, and that is the funny bone. This spot is called Shaohai (少海) in acupuncture and belongs to the Hand Shaoyin Heart Channel (手少陰心經), and here the channel and median nerve system coincide. A light tap will numb the entire forearm, which demonstrates the extreme sensitivity of the channels, as well as the control they exert throughout the body. Just as the arteries have branches which supply the tissues and organs with blood and carry away waste, the channels have branches (called “Luo”) to supply the body with

Qi and to carry messages to the brain and organs. As mentioned above, this energy circulation system is under the control of the mind, whether one is aware of this or not.

There are twelve main channels and two major vessels in the human body. These twelve channels (actually pairs of channels, one on either side of the body) are related to different internal organs. When the Qi is stagnant in one channel, the corresponding organ will be disordered. One of the major techniques of acupuncture is to stimulate the channel with a needle. This increases or lessens the circulation of Qi, and helps bring the malfunctioning organ back into balance. The two major vessels, which are not associated with particular organs, are called the Ren Mai (任脈) or Conception Vessel, which runs down the center of the body in front, and the Du Mai (督脈) or Governing Vessel, which runs down the center of the back and the head.

Acupuncture Points

The third concept the reader should understand is that of acupuncture points, which are also called “cavities” (Xue, 穴). Along each of the channels (as well as elsewhere on the body) are spots where the protective muscle is less thick than usual or the channel is closer to the surface. These spots, which are called cavities because they can often be felt as small depressions or concavities, are more sensitive than other parts of the body. These are the spots used for acupuncture, and they are also points of attack in the martial arts. Acupuncture recognizes more than 700 cavities, although only 108 cavities are used by the martial artists. The application of power to one of the 108 cavities can result in pain, numbness of some part of the body, damage to one of the body’s internal organs, unconsciousness, or even death. Of these 108 cavities, 36 are death cavities. That is, one strike can damage an internal organ, causing death. For

example, the cavity on the heart channel found in the armpit (Jiquan, 極泉), if struck, can shock the heart so severely that it goes into fatal spasms. The 72 remaining cavities are not death cavities, but striking them can cause numbness or unconsciousness, provided exactly the right spot is hit at the right time.

The fourth concept the reader should know is that the circulation of Qi is governed by the time of day and the season of the year. The Qi is circulating within the body from conception to death, but the part of the body that is the main focus changes around the clock. However, Qi circulates continuously within the two major vessels without being affected by time. Because of the variability of Qi circulation, it is essential that the student be knowledgeable about it to be able to use it effectively.

The most important thing to remember is that everything is controlled by the mind. Western science has proven that we use only 30 to 40 percent of our brain capacity. If a person could train himself to use more than this amount, he would be a genius. Science believes that this can be done through meditation and concentration training. It is well documented that a hypnotized person can do things that are far beyond what is possible for him when in a normal state. Meditation is a form of self-hypnosis that can lead you toward this sort of increased performance.

In Qigong training the mind controls the flow of Qi, just as it controls other body functions. Everyone has experienced ways in which his mind causes reactions in his body. Thinking about frightening things can make you sweat. Thinking of a tense situation can cause you to tense up all your muscles so much that your whole body becomes sore. In this case your mind caused a chemical reaction, i.e. the generation of acid in your tight muscles. Your mind can also relax your body just by thinking about it.

Many people are using this approach to control their pulse or blood pressure without drugs.

In Qigong training concentration is the key to success. By concentrating attention on the abdomen and doing certain exercises, Qi is generated and circulated throughout the body. This leads to the development of extra energy and its more efficient use, allowing the martial artist to strike with tremendous power and to resist the penetration of an opponent’s power into his body.

The amount of Qi that can be generated is determined largely by the person’s ability to concentrate.

Several common ways to raise Qi to a higher energy level

The first way is called “Wai Dan” (外丹). In this method, Qi is stimulated at a particular location in the body by continued muscular exertion combined with concentration. For example, if a person holds his arms

extended in one position for several minutes, the shoulders will become very warm from the Qi accumulation. When the tension is relaxed this higher energy will flow to places with a lower state. Wai Dan exercises have been in use in Qina for

many centuries. Wai Dan was later coordinated with martial techniques by the Shaolin monks.

The second way of increasing Qi circulation is called “Nei Dan” (內丹). In this method Qi is accumulated at the Dan Tien, a spot an inch and a half below the navel. When Qi has accumulated sufficiently, then the practitioner uses his mind to guide the Qi to circulate in the two major vessels. This is called the “Small Circulation” (小周天). After mastering the Small Circulation, the practitioner will then learn the “Grand Circulation” (大周天), in which the mind guides the Qi flow through all of the twelve channels. This method has been practiced by Tai Qi devotees since the thirteenth century.

The third common way is acupuncture. In acupuncture the needle pierces the skin and musculature layer and stimulates the channel directly. When it’s stimulated Qi will be built up and circulate.

The fourth way, which is one that has been used in western medicine, is massage, which stimulates the muscles, building up local Qi, which circulates more freely because the muscles relax.

The last common way is friction or rubbing a particular area of the body hard enough to generate heat and stimulate the skin.

There are a few other ways to build up local Qi, including slapping the skin and acupressure, which is classified somewhere between massage and acupuncture. Of the five methods mentioned above, Wai Dan and Nei Dan are the only two that can be applied for martial purposes. The others are for improving health.

Excerpted from the book Qigong-Health and Martial Arts, published by YMAA Publication Center, 1998

...in Qigong training concentration is the key to success...



Bryan practicing Taijiquan at the Retreat Center

A Focus Found in the Forest

by Bryan Campbell

EDITOR NOTE: *The 6th working training camp held recently at the YMAA Retreat Center in Northern California offered a little something for everyone. Dr. Yang Jwing Ming, invited several candidates for his 10-year training program to participate. One of those participants was Bryan Campbell from Marshfield, MA. He describes in detail what he experienced while there.*

We spent each day clearing and burning brush, inoculating logs for a future mushroom farm, eating and training together five hours a day. Because our days were so full, time didn't matter. In the end, each one seemed to drift by just as calmly as it began. There are a number of positive things that I attribute to this camp, two of which I'll never forget: our method of training, and the people who I trained with. They were the catalysts that allowed me to take away from this camp a focus that has carried into my training. It's an experience that will last me a lifetime.

Before the camp, my training was scattered, somewhat out of

control. I was spreading myself too thin practicing everything but not spending enough time on any one thing to gain any skill. The camp's strict schedule had a large impact on the effectiveness of my training. For example, we worked on four particular things; basics, reaction, staff, and taiji. Even if I felt that I didn't make much progress in one of those areas each day, I'd go back to it. The second time around was much easier as I went deeper into the feeling of the technique. Practicing the skill over again while continually searching for a deeper experience helped lay the foundation for growth.

One night, while practicing centering, I was reminded to be quiet and listen rather than always talking. What did this mean? Simply that I was not totally aware of my environment but instead moving forward (into action) without any direction. It was obvious that this was a common trait; one that carried into the rest of my training. Previously, I had reached a plateau where I was putting in the time and effort towards training but

was not progressing. I realized what was missing: paying careful attention to the practice itself. I needed to listen to the body movement, and separate those movements that felt smooth and natural from those that were tense or strained. The next day I was able to carry this mindset into my jin training and made fantastic improvement. I am now in the process of assimilating these improvements into my forms and techniques.

My first experience at the YMAA Retreat Center was at the construction camp. We didn't have much time to train. However, being surrounded by so many excellent martial artists really pushed me to achieve much more at home. The experience at this camp was very much the same. The focus the candidates had for their lives motivated me to sharpen my direction as well. Each candidate was drawn to the 10 year program because they thought that their participation would push their personal development to the limit. I was surrounded by people who were making their lives exactly as they planned. You could say that this attitude towards life is contagious. It has rubbed off on me, has helped me focus on my own life, achieve my own goals.

Now that the camp is over, I have to make sure that I assimilate what I had learned into my life. I have to keep listening and searching for a deeper feeling in my training and directing my life externally towards richer life experiences.

Underlying all of this is a focus which needs to be carefully nurtured so that it will manifest itself into all aspects of my life. The YMAA California camp laid the foundation for many rich experiences to come.

Bryan Campbell is a Physics major and trains at YMAA Boston Headquarters

What makes a good sword or a sword good?

by Justin Bowman

Is it the steel, the geometry, the furniture or the feel? I think it's the sum of all parts that makes a sword inherently good. But let's not forget the balance which is the single most important variable in the construction of any weapon.

It's similar to the sails on a sailboat since it's the sails that determine how smoothly the boat can be handled. Even a perfectly balanced forged and tempered blade won't cut butter if the owner doesn't know how to use it correctly. In other words, what separates one sword from another is the person who's using it.

Swords available to those who practice Chinese martial arts today are almost always mass-produced. These swords and other items sold through many dealers online and in magazines hardly qualify as weapons under most laws. The majority of them are priced at the \$50-to-\$300 range and mostly constructed of 420 stainless steel considered to be very cheap and very soft. Even the sharpened versions are rarely, if ever, designed to withstand a strong impact from cutting hard targets. That's because most of these swords are designed to be used for forms training and nothing more than that.

Recently Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming, founder and president of Yang' Martial Arts, conducted a workshop at his YMAA California Retreat Center. I was lucky enough to attend. During the camp, we cleared brush, got to know the other members of the camp and practiced our swordsmanship. The 16 participants and I each used a sword ranging in price from \$50-to-\$200. Those swords took some punishment. However, in all fairness to the manufacturer, I will not name models, companies or retailers. Usually a company furnishes the author of a review with some product to beat up but not this time. So my review will be honest and forthright and include no special bias towards a manufacturer.

The targets for the tests were 1 1/2" thick hard wood and tan oak logs. We hacked away at them again and again, some with more success than others. The two higher priced swords performed a little better than the others fourteen although they were all pretty much the same sword with a slightly different design. The two higher priced blades were made of high carbon steel much better than stainless for actual use.

The handles on these swords were affixed with an epoxy resin and boasted decent fittings. The other fourteen looked exactly the same once the fittings were

removed, overly flexible blades, rat tail tangs and a cheap fittings adorned the low end blades.

After two weeks of abuse, all of our swords were pretty battered even the high carbon ones. The most common damage occurred on the blade, the edges just couldn't stand up to the impact. The other problem, were the handles. Every one of them turned on the tang by the end of the camp. Here's where it pays to be cautious. The handles on these swords could fail even during forms training and care should be taken to inspect the sword before and after each use.

The positives of training with one of these swords: the flexible steel won't chip or crack and send a piece of debris flying through the air. This is a possibility with a tempered steel blade or even a wooden sword. The other positive is the amount of accuracy and the quality of form one needs to cut well with one of these swords.

The main purpose of these swords is forms training. That should always be considered when you decide to cut something with a sword of this quality. Most likely the sword will be destroyed. A sword actually intended for the rigorous use of cutting practice can cost anywhere from \$250 (on the net) for a production sword up to \$5,000 or more for a hand made sword. The best thing

Swords condition after continuous and vigorous usage at the YMAA Retreat Center daily training



about modern production swords is that they're not antiques and can actually be used in training. Before you buy any sword (or other weapon) you should consult your instructor and/or classmates. Try to handle as many different types as you can. Taking into consideration your style and body type you should be able to find a sword to fit you and your budget. There are many good blades out there for the martial artist. Diligent research will surely be rewarded. But remember the lesson of the day: you get what you pay for.

Justin Bowman has helped build the YMAA Retreat Center, and is an avid practitioner of blade martial arts

Things to consider when sword shopping

1. Purpose (will it hang on the wall or be used for forms or cutting).
2. Your school or style of martial arts.
3. Steel types (high carbon steel is easier to sharpen and holds an edge longer than most stainless steel which is usually hard to sharpen).
4. Price.
5. Furniture (looks are more important to some than others).
6. The most important thing to remember is that a "swordsmen or woman is not their sword."

What I think makes a good sword

1. Balance/geometry.
2. Traditional construction methods and materials.
3. Full Tang construction.
4. Tempering.
5. Value.
6. Furniture.

First Light of Morning

by Tony Chee

How can we keep the moments of great clarity and vision so they are continually leading our lives? How can we find and connect deeper to others, our surroundings and ourselves; stretching our boundaries to achieve more?

There are answers offered by philosophers, priests, monks, professors and wise people, but ultimately I think those are their answers. It holds true in the context of their time and life experiences. Yes, it is also true that, fundamentally, the basic essence elaborated still applies to us all no matter what. However, with so many apparent different descriptions, how does one see through the clutter and distill what is the recurrent pattern? More importantly, how does that translate into our daily lives and actions? Would it not be simpler, and even more effective, if we avoided all together spending time going through them and, in alternative, just live finding and creating our own answers? After all, wasn't this what some did, finding the answers along the way?

But what is the relevance of this

musing? It is because these questions or better yet, the conscious recognition of them will, I believe, help avoid being satisfied or trapped into the comforts and distress cycles of the conformed life. For example, we are reaping the outcome of a vision cultivated many years ago; when Dr. Yang's decision and promise lead him to keep the arts alive. It determines and affects lives.

Though the day may be filled with chores, duties and distractions, how can we retain those fleeting and minute moments of great inspiration? What is the key to maintaining them so they can nourish us in doubt or fear? The answer may just be simply: practicing it. The proverbial "regulating until no regulating", whether through daily practice, meditation, prayer or rite, so it can keep us focused and aligned with that moment of clarity and vision.

I lived away from home in Portugal for almost one year, spending time in Boston or Northern California. All that I had fit into a backpack, and after a while, I found that there was not much need for anything else after all. It made clear to me what was materially essential and aware of how important some people are in my life, and the value of really connecting and sharing. That realization was multiplied manifolds

when I pondered on Dr. Yang's comment: "when you're under twenty years old, you count time by years, at twenties, you count by months, at thirties you count by weeks, at forties by days, at fifty by hours, at sixties by minutes, at seventies by seconds, and by eighties you just wait..." The time is really now to follow the lead of those moments of great inspiration and clarity.

For many of us in YMAA, it is a transition and decisive time – with Dr. Yang initiating the project of the Retreat Center. Although the change was foretold, expected, and planned, it is, nevertheless, challenging because it shifts our long-built and perceived Boston foundations. It is also challenging because it needs support and participation. It is the apogee of one man's vision, with all its limitations and grandeur. Needless to say is this road has its costs, requiring that barriers and boundaries be stretched and, at times, be broken. But that is the nature of things.

Seeing how far one can go when a vision is clear, such as Dr. Yang's, how can I just live day to day without taking the responsibility for my own search for deeper and greater clarity and pushing my own boundaries? How can I just lay dormant even after the first light of morning, waiting for someone else to awaken me?

A Good Example to Follow

by Jeffrey Pratt

I was asked to write about women's role in the martial arts generally and one woman in particular. I'm not so naive as to say that there is no gender bias in the martial arts today.

However, I'm a man and I have only trained seriously in one organization, so I don't feel qualified to discuss such an important topic. I lack the correct perspective. I will say that I have been fortunate to be taught by and train with some incredible martial artists, many of them women.

I have been in competitions on a national level and I've seen as many brilliant female competitors as I have male. As far as I can tell, after twenty years in the martial arts gender has nothing to do with being a good martial artist. Axie Breen is a good martial artist.

I've known Axie for a few years now. She is a regular student in the Push Hands class that I teach on Saturdays at YMAA Boston. I cannot recall a single incident during my times working with Axie when her gender mattered. She's an excellent training partner and is regularly sought out by her class mates. Axie willingly helps in teaching less experienced students. She also volunteers her professional skills as a graphic artist to the school.

Recently she advanced a level in rank in her Taijiquan training. I was lucky enough to be at the testing where she qualified for her new rank.

Axie trains both Shaolin and Taijiquan at YMAA and is one of a handful of women at the school and to the best of my knowledge the only woman who currently studies both arts. It was lots of fun watching her perform in front of Master Yang, Jwing-Ming. She possesses a self-deprecating sense of humor, humility and dedication to her training equal to anyone with whom I ever worked. If I had to name the qualities necessary to be a good



Axie Breen, student and teacher at YMAA Boston Headquarters

student of the martial arts those three; humor, humility and dedication top the list.

While testing, Axie demonstrated a real knowledge of the material she was performing, counters to qin na techniques for Shaolin and taijiquan applications. Her sense of humor and humility are obvious when she accepted correction and instruction from Master Yang on the finer points of her technique. She was grinning, smiling or laughing in appreciation of Master Yang's comments while down playing her own successful efforts. She does a great imitation of Homer Simpson's "doh" when she makes a mistake perceived or real. She dealt with my own comments graciously and incorporated them into her technique even though my thoughts added a higher level of complexity to what she needed to do.

Axie's performance showed a depth of knowledge on the theory that underlay the Taijiquan applications she was performing. I frequently see her making notes on the material covered in class. The questions and insights she puts forward in class have benefited the entire student body and made me think along new tracks. Making a teacher think is a great thing in a student. Axie is a good martial artist and representative of YMAA if more people (regardless of gender) were like Axie, we'd all be better off.

Jeffrey Pratt is a senior YMAA Taiji instructor and regularly teaches classes and seminars at YMAA Boston Headquarters

YMAA 25 Years

by David Silver

October 1, 2007, YMAA celebrated its 25-Year Anniversary. There were many phone calls, letters and emails of congratulations.

But, this important event passed quietly, as Master Yang was busy preparing for his annual Fall tour of Europe. He again taught in the UK, France, Belgium, Poland, Italy, Spain, Portugal and this time included Chile and Qatar. He has traveled like this to teach twice a year since the 1980's. The man is a machine! Truly a man on a mission.

25 Years. What does this anniversary really mean? In fact, Dr. Yang started teaching long before October 1982. We've all read his epic biography or heard it in interviews; he taught his fellow students in his early training and during college and the Air Force, he formed Martial Arts training clubs wherever he went, he taught while he got his Ph.D. at Purdue, and up until he began his career as a mechanical engineer. During this dark and depressing period he was forced to work long hours for little reward, his training and teaching stopped, and his health suffered. Then he went for it, and jumped out of the matrix. He decided his life would be his own, and thus began the long uphill battle to teach and publish and inform the world about the true nature and depth of the Chinese martial arts. And he has succeeded.

Slowly YMAA has grown from the first classes in Dr. Yang's driveway in the North Shore of Boston into an international organization of 55 schools in 18 countries, with the help and hard work of countless others, including Mei-Ling Yang and the Yang family, Robert Was and Adam Wypart (Poland), Erik Elsemans (Belgium), Victor Marques and Pascal Plée (France), Ludi Romeo, Vincenzo Russo, and Alessandro Iori (Italy), Pedro Rodriguez, Victor Casqueiro, and Tony Chee (Portugal), Corlius Birkill (South Africa), Alex Kiesel, Jeffrey Pratt, James O'Leary, Jim Noble, Leslie Takao, Joe and Carol Best and many, many others in Boston, MA and elsewhere in the USA.

And so, for over 35 years, Dr. Yang has taught, while simultaneously writing two or three books and videos at a time, and he traveled the world teaching classes in dozens of countries. Hundreds of thousands of YMAA students and attendees at seminars, lectures and



YMAA Boston World Headquarters Seminars



Dr. Yang in International Seminars



Dr. Yang and family



Nick Yang and Dr. Yang

demonstrations have seen him perform, listened to him speak, and felt his intense love for the Chinese martial arts, Qigong, and Meditation. He has changed so many peoples' lives for the better, and through this very hard work, he has achieved his goal of planting the seed for future worldwide continuation of the Chinese arts. Now, at age 61 he will focus his energy towards the California Retreat Center where a few select students will become immersed in the daily study of an expanded YMAA curriculum for the next ten years. This new goal is to transmit all his knowledge to an even deeper level than what he has previously achieved.

"In order to preserve the Chinese martial arts to the profound level as in ancient times, a student must live and train in an environment similar to that in ancient times. The Retreat Center will be a model for the development of other intensive training centers around the world." *Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming*

Instead of slowing down, progress for Dr. Yang and YMAA has recently gained momentum. In 2003, David Ripianzi, a long-term student of Dr. Yang from the early years, purchased the publishing company so Master Yang could free up some of his limited time and energy. YMAA Publication Center, Inc. is committed to continuing the tradition of releasing high-quality instructional titles, based on Master Yang's comprehensive models. In 2005, Roger Whidden of Massachusetts was conferred the title of Taiji Master, which by definition makes Dr. Yang officially a Grand Master, and makes Li, Mao-Ching, our Great-Grand Master. Many other senior YMAA instructors are working toward completing their chosen curriculum, and may become masters themselves, fulfilling Master Yang's dream of raising the standard of Chinese martial arts and popularizing them throughout the world.

YMAA means In-Depth. When people see YMAA on a book, seminar, DVD, or on a teachers' credentials, they know they have found an authentic source of detailed instruction. We all have Dr. Yang to thank for setting

such a high standard. Dr. Yang has not only passed on his love for the arts and for teaching, but also his tradition of publishing. Ramel Rones, a disciple in Boston since the 80's, has performed with Dr. Yang in many books and videos over the years and has gone on to become an author of best-selling books and DVDs himself. And, he works as a Mind/Body Consultant using the healing arts of Qigong and Taiji to help people dealing with cancer, arthritis, and other common ailments. Kathy Yang, who is now finishing her studies of Traditional Chinese Medicine in the UK, contributes her qigong medical theory knowledge as a co-author in the new Five Animal Sports Qigong DVD. Taiji Instructor Jeff Pratt of Boston has become a sought-after writer of editorials. Chin Na Instructor David Grantham is co-authoring an upcoming book on Taiji Ball. The students at the Retreat Center will also be encouraged to study the process of transmitting the knowledge that they learn into published works.

Though there are far too many to mention, other accomplished students of Master Yang include acupuncturist and teacher Tai Ngo, composer and conductor Dr. Russell Steinberg, senior Shaolin Instructor and currently in the US military George Dominguez, Director of the US Martial Arts Council Sifu Jeff Bolt, and thousands of others.

"Many students from the early generation have moved on to pursue their own dreams and raise their families. Their contributions, twelve-hour training days, and friendship to YMAA and fellow students remain a permanent part of our legacy. In the mid 1980's, Master Yang purchased a run down building (Chinese Restaurant, Laundry mat), and with the help of this generation of students, was able to transform the building into a large open space training studio, keeping the New England weather outside! Thank you Reza, Mike, Christer, Fu, Rosie, Jay, Jim, John, David, Mark, Gil, Bob, Steve, Rami, Wen, Foster, James, Joe, Jeff, Jenny, and so many others. One nail, one board, one bucket at a time. The building remains strong."

David Ripianzi

How many people have current or future careers as teachers, writers, healers, and martial artists based on their studies at YMAA? How many people incorporate the principles learned at YMAA, martial morality and self-discipline, into their daily lives? All because Yang, Jwing-Ming decided one day as a teenager "Some day, I will be a martial artist."

Where would we all be if we weren't a part of YMAA? How have YMAA and Dr. Yang changed your life? He is living proof that "If you can see it, you can be it." What have you accomplished in the last 25 years? What will you accomplish in the next 25?

When Master Yang teaches the Qigong and Martial Arts that he loves so much, the audience shares his fascination and excitement about the subject matter. Discussions often digress into a deeper conversation about life, the universe, and everything. Many of us have had mind-expanding philosophic conversations during classes with Dr. Yang about Taiji, and Wuji, and physics, (and extraterrestrials) and ways to become a better person and realize your full potential.

Above all, Master Yang always encourages each of us to ponder and search for the meaning of our lives, establish goals, and then to follow our dreams with determination, humility, and a high spirit.

So, congratulations and thank you Master Yang. Congratulations to everyone involved in Yang's Martial Arts Association, and to everyone who is teaching the arts they've learned through YMAA, and helping others to enjoy a better quality of life. Master Yang, not only have you planted the seed, this 25-year accomplishment is the strong root and trunk of a giant tree that will continue to grow and benefit humanity for centuries.

In reality, YMAA has only just begun.

David Silver is a YMAA certified Qigong assistant instructor teaching in Cape Cod, MA and works as the video producer/director for YMAA Publication Center

A Masterful Accomplishment

by Dan Hood

Most people who study or practice martial arts seldom if ever think about becoming a Qigong practitioner. Either the course of study is too hard or maybe to them it just doesn't present any type of physical challenge.

Bill Buckley a YMAA taiji assistant instructor, says unless you understand Qigong and can master the concept, there'll always be something missing in your practice both mentally and physically.

I put together a list of questions that I thought would inspire more people to follow in his footsteps.

How long have you been a YMAA student/instructor?

I've been a YMAA student for 13 years, but a student of the martial arts for nearly 30 years. While an engineering student at Tufts University, I studied Shotokan Karate and eventually became captain of the Tufts team. Several years later, married with two young boys, a nanny noticed my Karate team competition photos. Turns out that she was and still is a student in Andover and she encouraged me to try Tai Chi. In 1993, I began studying with Master Yang, Jwing-Ming in Andover. Alex Kiesel was my first regular Taiji instructor, soon followed by Jeff Pratt. I received a certificate for completing the Yang Style Long Form from Jeff in 1995. As a new father, I was challenged to keep up my career, family and training at the same time, but I stuck with it. I knew there was more to the martial arts than punching and kicking, and I wanted to get to its root. I received my Red Stripe in Taiji in 2005, and my qualifications to teach Qigong in 2007.

When did you first become interested in Qigong?

When I first began to learn Taiji, I would practice on my own. Since I didn't know many of the movements, I would repeat the warm-up and Qigong motions. It was the first time I had ever felt Qi, and I was intrigued by my ability to generate it and move it around. I had been trying to learn meditation for some time and Qigong offered me a path to quieting my mind. While the Taiji required far too much active thought to be meditative, the simple movements of Qigong, along with focus on

my breathing and energy flow, allowed me to settle my mind. It was really exciting for me to get my first taste of meditation; I was hooked.

Do you find Qigong beneficial? (Health wise/martial arts/meditation?)

In ancient times, when written language was either non-existent or not well known, wisdom was passed down through dance and song. The Qigong is a rare and special form of dance, filled with the wisdom of the ancient ones. It's common sense movements produce many physical, psychological and spiritual benefits:

- The practice of Qigong can alleviate pain and stiffness
- The classics say, "move the pain away": By moving a joint or body part, pain and stiffness can be reduced

- Qigong will help you control your breath and control your life - Breathing is the cornerstone to a settled mind and the primary strategy in Qigong.

- Stretching feels good! Stretching a joint or muscle activates the cells, releasing energy. This energy pours back into the body, nourishing all the cells in the area.

- Feeling connects us to our bodies - Qigong teaches us to feel our bodies, and requires focus and concentration. Much of the day I live in my head thinking all the time. The Qigong gives me a chance to move out of my head and into my body.

- Dual Cultivation is the Master's way - By simultaneously cultivating our body and mind, we can facilitate our spiritual growth and be healthy enough to enjoy its rewards.

These five benefits of the Qigong have had a huge impact on my life, and I believe have been major contributors to my overall health and wellness.

Who taught (or inspired) you to pursue Qigong?

It's uncommon in the USA to find someone with Dr Yang's skill, long-term commitment and teaching ability. He has always been an inspiration to me with respect to the martial arts. Beside Dr. Yang I have read some of Mantak Chia's works. Conversely I'm indebted to many of Dr. Yang's senior students, notably Jeff Pratt, Roger Widden and Lisa O'Shea, for sharing their knowledge and perspective with me.

I have also practiced Yoga for many years. My experiences in Yoga have compelled me to understand the relationship between it and Qigong. Since Yoga is far more popular and widespread in the US, I have been especially inspired to pursue Qigong. I'll continue to explore their common roots, benefit from both and share this connection with other Yoga and Qigong students.

You were recently certified to teach Qigong (February 24th, 2007) with the title of assistant qigong instructor. Do you plan to teach it and if so, what style - White Crane, or another style?

It has always been a personal goal of mine to teach the Taiji and Qigong. With my children in college, this goal is within range. I hope to begin teaching within the next 1-2 years, and increase my teaching as much as my schedule will allow. I plan to work on and am particularly interested in teaching: Taiji Qigong, and Taiji Ball Qigong. If I can build a community with some dedication I would like to work on Qigong meditation as well.

Where will you teach Qigong?

I will start in Portsmouth, NH and am open to the potential of teaching some classes at other locations.

Why do you think Qigong is so important to Chinese martial arts practitioners?

There's an old saying: "If you don't learn to meditate when you learn the martial arts, when you're old you'll have nothing to show for it." Qigong is the root of the tree. Taiji is a branch. Exploring the branches teaches you how the root manifests, but only by understanding the root can we understand & control the path of the branch. I learned and practice the martial arts as a path to enlightenment; the Qigong is the foundation of that path.



Bill Buckley shares a relaxing moment with Dr. Yang

How do you feel after practicing Qigong?

When I practice Qigong, I feel like water is washing over me. I direct the flow around to my mind and to other areas that I want to bring additional energy or concentration to. This is particularly true when I'm injured. I leave my practice feeling calmer, clearer and with a better sense of humor. I often say, Qigong is what brings me from the edge of the circle, back to the center.

Any additional comments?

Thanks for the chance to share my thoughts with the community.

Dan Hood is the editor of YMAA News. Bill Buckley is a student at YMAA Boston Headquarter

An open letter from Bill Douglas, WTCQD organizer

In the past, Fitness Manufacturers Association's report showing Tai Chi has become a #1 fitness growth industry in the US, has shown a couple of things. One, that Tai Chi and Qigong are powerful health and fitness programs, and two that the public has been learning very rapidly that they are.

In the past ten years World Tai Chi & Qigong Day, with your help, has spread emerging medical research through media, Professional Journals, and our popular website. Plus, when media reports on WTCQD, they report on your local work, through our "School Directory - 60 Nations" under "Everyone's Resources" at www.worldtaichiday.org.

World Tai Chi & Qigong Day's ongoing efforts to help support the health and healing work of Tai Chi & Qigong teachers, enthusiasts, and organizations worldwide, is making even greater strides forward, including mention in a major national and international health journal.

Last summer we broke new ground into mainstream medicine by presenting at the National Parkinson's Foundation National Annual Conference in Chicago, and recently at the ALS "Lou Gehrig's Disease" conference. Much more is happening very quickly, that all who know Tai Chi & Qigong's benefits, should be excited to hear.

YMAA RETREAT CENTER SUMMER SEMINARS 2008

Qin Na * Taijiquan * Qigong



The Summer of 2008 will be the inaugural season for YMAA Seminars at The Retreat Center, located in the alluring mountain terrain of Humboldt County, Northern California. Offering an ideal setting for escaping the agitations of modern society, training at the Retreat Center allows one to attain higher levels of skill and understanding. Following the popular seminar series held in YMAA Boston, MA, the various levels of topics such as Qin Na, Taijiquan, Pushing Hands, and Qigong, will continue under the instruction of Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming during the months of July and August of 2008. Due to the Center's remote location, registration availability is limited, which ensures smaller groups and a better quality of learning and interaction.

A Haven in the Mountains. Achieve Higher Skills. Attune with Nature
www.ymaa.com/seminars2008



For more information please visit our website for the most updated information. Feel free to contact us through the email seminars2008@ymaa.com, or call us at (617) 524 8892

TAI CHI INCLUDED IN MAYO CLINIC'S "TOP 10 COMPLIMENTARY MEDICAL TREATMENTS

Philadelphia's The Bulletin Newspaper Reports

Top 10 Complementary Medical Treatments From Mayo Clinic
By: Herb Denenberg, The Bulletin 07/18/2007

This is a gentle exercise (that is) derived from Chinese martial arts. It involves a series of postures and movements performed slowly and gracefully. It is recommended to improve balance in older people to prevent their falling.

A study conducted in the Netherlands found those who practiced tai chi had 50 percent fewer falls and fewer injury-causing falls than those who did not.

MAJOR NATIONAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL MAGAZINE TO MENTION WORLD TAI CHI & QIGONG DAY

Why Should Anyone Care if WTCQD gets Mentioned?

If you have benefited from Tai Chi & Qigong's multitudinous health benefits, and therefore want others to as well, this should be good news.

Although, for teachers, groups and organizations, there's more to be happy and excited about.

We get wonderful letters of encouragement from time to time from Tai Chi & Qigong enthusiasts and groups worldwide for our media work, including the 2005 "Media Excellence Award" from the World Qigong Federation.

Yet, beyond these supportive accolades and congrats when we announce a new media coup, like the national article, we also get the occasional flurry of letters from teachers who still seem to think we are a "competitor" or alien to their interests. We are not and that

issue needs to be addressed.

If those groups or teachers have influenced you, it is good to remind them that, World Tai Chi & Qigong Day is one of the only top rated tai chi websites on Google, that has a "by location" directory where schools can list their contact information. In this way when WTCQD is mentioned in a national magazine or newspaper, that's like an ad for your school.

In the past years, WTCQD has been mentioned by BBC Radio, USA Weekend (the most widely read newspaper in America), The New York Times, Reader's Digest, Parade Magazine (the most widely read magazine in the world) to name just a few.

When readers of these articles go to www.worldtaichiday.org, they see "Everyone's Resources" with a "School Directory" that sends them to YOUR local group or school.

Imagine how many millions of dollars a school would have to spend to get such publicity. This fall, due to the enormous amount of work WTCQD has put into creating a highly informative site on Tai Chi & Qigong, including our unparalleled "Medical Research-Search by Malady" feature, PT Magazine, the Professional Journal for the American Physical Therapy Association will be mentioning World Tai Chi & Qigong Day's educational features.

When readers go to our website, they'll be referred to "Everyone's Resources" and see the "School Directory" where your local group or school has been listed, if you filled out the form to have it listed.



WTCQD celebration in New York

We can all benefit, when we see ourselves as a Tai Chi & Qigong family, rather than competitors. Just as Tai Chi shows the mind and body that all the parts work best, when they relax and work "together," so does out global Tai Chi & Qigong community's body.

EDITORS NOTE:

Why should you care?

When WTCQD, presented at various health events like the National Parkinson's Foundation Annual Conference earlier this year, Douglas went to promote ALL Tai Chi & Qigong, all styles, and all local groups. He explained the medical research, and gave them a "taster" experience, and he advocated all the listed schools, groups at www.worldtaichiday.org for them to search when they got back home.

How does that work? Douglas said it works because at www.WorldTaiChiDay.org in the "Everyone's Resources" section, there's a "School Directory - 60 Nations" link that leads people to your local group or schools. At these conferences, the attendees, whether people with a condition, or healthcare providers specializing in those conditions, are from all over the nation and world. Thank you for your participation.

Dan Hood

YMAA SCHOOLS

楊氏武藝協會

For a list of officially recognized YMAA schools, please visit

www.ymaa.com/training/schools

Any school that is not listed on that webpage **IS NOT AFFILIATED NOR RECOGNISED** by the YMAA organization.

All current YMAA school directors are encouraged to open an web account at YMAA.COM to manage their school webpage information autonomously. This will also enable the creation of a good communication channel: keeping you updated with the latest information and events of the organization.

YMAA INSTRUCTORS

To view a list of qualified assistant instructors, instructors, and master of the YMAA program in Shaolin (少林), Taijiquan (太極拳, Tai Chi Chuan), Qin Na (擒拿, Chin Na), and Qigong (氣功), please visit the webpage located at

www.ymaa.com/training/instructors

Only the listed persons have been qualified by Dr. Yang and the YMAA organization. All active qualified instructors are encouraged to maintain an account on the YMAA website.

YMAA SEMINARS

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming travels extensively throughout the year and around the world offering seminars about martial arts, Qigong and meditation. For the latest information about the location, topics, and person to contact, please visit

www.ymaa.com/seminars

For seminars held twice a year (Summer and Winter) in CA and MA, please contact Mrs. Mei-Ling Yang.

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YMAA CALIFORNIA RETREAT CENTER

楊氏武藝協會加州特訓中心

A new project for the preservation of traditional chinese martial arts has been initiated by Dr. Yang. Currently, the Retreat Center is accepting students applications for the 10-year program. To find more information or view the latest news, please visit

www.ymaa.com/retreat-center

www.ymaa-retreatcenter.org

Email: ymaaboston@aol.com

YMAA PUBLICATION CENTER

楊氏東方文化出版中心

YMAA Publication Center has been a leader in publishing quality books and DVDs about martial arts, qigong, meditation, philosophy, and martial history. With more than 23 years of publishing experience, YMAA Publication Center continues to seek manuscripts on Martial Arts and Qigong. Interested authors can write or email:

David Ripianzi

YMAA Acquisition Dept.

PO Box 480, Wolfeboro NH 03894
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email: davidr@ymaa.com

At the YMAA Publication website

www.ymaa.com/publishing

you can find the latest books and DVDs published by Dr. Yang, or other renowned authors, teachers and masters of martial arts (Gong Fu, Taijiquan, Karate, Tae Kwon Do, etc.). Every month, the Publication Center promotes a "Deal of the Month" where you can get books, DVDs, software, traditional chinese silk training uniforms, music CDs, at high discount rates or bundled with other offers.

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