

Fall Newsletter 2024



Wu Tan Alaska

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Acknowledgements

A big thank you to Paulette and Shu-Ping for donating their laptops to help with our zoom sessions and general administrative tasks. Thanks to you both things are running more smoothly before and after classes.



Looking back: Wu Tan students and family gathered for a Potluck in July followed by a discussion session with Master Wong. Several local students attended but Wu Tan Kwong students Masako and Jenny from Australia also attended virtually. A 4-week course in the Pi Qua Dao was provided by Sifu Kevin. **As we wind down from a short but productive Summer**, we are planning a Fall potluck. Master Wong is in Taiwan for a while, but instructors' class and meditation sessions will continue on Zoom when he is available. **Watch for notices via email** for events as Wu Tan Newsletters will be quarterly for the next year.

Upcoming Events

Kung Fu Basics Seminar

Lao Si Shannon Gularte
1:30-3pm October 19th & 20th (Sat -Sun)
General Cost: \$100 or
Senior/Youth: \$55

Pao Chuan- Long Fist Seminar

Sifu Krystal & Lao Si Shannon Gularte
1:30-3:pm -November 16th & 17th (Sat-Sun)
General Cost: \$100
Senior/Youth: \$55

Harvest Wu Tan Potluck-

Sunday October 27th 1:30-3pm
Come in costume, bring something baked

Meditation Session w/ Master Wong

Sunday October 27th - 3-4pm

Q & A with Master Wong:

How does one's practice change as the level of kung fu improves over time?
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Pictured Above: Master Wong and Kevin Walle **Left:** Gathering for Potluck in July 2024



Pictured Below: Tyson, Katie, Shu-Ping, Padraic, Katie, Paulette, Irwin, Derek, Carson, Clint, Patrick, Spencer



Also pictured Nick, Krystal, Nita, Monica, and Shannon

Right: Emily and Shu-Ping working on Xingyi 5 Elements two-man fists.

A thought from my practice:
In application of the **Six Harmonies**, I choose one as an emphasis. This by nature brings all the harmonies in sync due to my mental state.

1. Hands with feet
 2. Knees with elbows
 3. Shoulders with hips
 4. Heart with mind
 5. Mind with chi
 6. Chi with force
- Emily Walle-

Dear Readers,

Please submit short writings and /or reflections on your kung fu practice for publication in our quarterly newsletter. All submissions will be reviewed by the Sifus and Master Wong.

Submit to:

info@wutanalaska.com



Group photo from the Piqua Dao Seminar

Pictured left to right: Spencer, Paulette, Derek, Carson, Monica, Clint, Nari, Irwin, Kevin, Patrick, Leilani, Nick, Krystal, Padraic, Nita, Katie, Shannon

A short essay on kung fu – Kevin Walle 臥凱文 (Disciple of Master Kurt Wong)

Tao – Dao – the Way. What is it and how does it – or should it – relate to my understanding and practice of the Traditional Chinese Martial Arts [Kung Fu]?

Most translate the idea of “Way” into “Path” – and this is not incorrect. However, “Method” or “Manner” is an interpretation which should be investigated.

Kung fu styles include techniques for various possibilities of combat or cultivation by way of “forms” and “drills” consisting of combinations of individual “techniques”. Overall, most techniques are shared by all styles (punching, kicking, grabbing, throwing) – so what makes “styles” different from each other? Is it simply the name given to the form/style? With no actual difference in the method used to achieve/apply the technique? Is it simply a matter of “tactics” (one style punching in advance versus another punching in retreat)? Does the only difference lie in those few techniques which are not shared (Praying Mantis “Hook Hand” for example)?

In fact, each “style” of kung fu has its own “Way” of expressing these techniques in a much more fundamental manner than simple mechanics or choreography.

Each style has its own “Way” of responding to influences – both in terms of combat and cultivation.

The Way of each style is not made up of forms, drills, techniques, and names – these are all merely images that may appear (or have appeared) for practitioners seeking to follow/cultivate the Way of that style. We memorize and practice and seek excellence in this practice not because memorizing and “knowing” all the movements is the goal but because we hope that following in the literal “footsteps” of the ancient Masters we can possibly grasp the how and why of the Way which allowed them to take those steps in the first place. In this same way, “perfecting” all the skills, techniques, and forms of any given style does not equate to becoming a “Master” of that style – this requires going beyond, between, within, and without until one finds themselves walking in the same “Way” that gave birth to the forms, drills, and techniques of the style in question in the first place (and even this is certainly no guarantee).

Knowledge is – by definition – limited and limiting. Understanding is not bound in this same way. It is impossible to “know” every possible response to every possible stimulus (attack) but truly understanding a “Way” of responding gives rise to successful responses to any stimulus (attack).

Question: Sifu, I was hoping we could discuss how one's practice will change as the level of their Kung Fu improves.

That's an excellent question Emily!

At the Beginning, change was difficult

I believe everybody has different ways of doing their practice. Okay, this means that their practice changes as their level of kung fu improves, overtime. This is very normal. I think this has to do with each practitioner's understanding of their study. Now, I can only speak for myself. My beginning Fung Fu practice, it was learning the movements itself. As I recall, I spent a lot of time, from the help of my kung fu brothers, correcting my stances, styles, because I studied Tai Kwon Do for many years before learning Kung Fu. In a way, this way kind of slowing down my progress in the beginning, because I really needed to work on my stances, to get basics corrected before I could move on to another level. And so even though I practiced for a long time, I still had the flavor of Tai Kwon Do in the beginning. You know, there was nothing wrong with Tai Kwon Do, it was just different focuses, such as the punches. In the kung fu punches they would extend the shoulder but in Tai Kwon Do they didn't extend the shoulders out. So I spend a lot of time working on the basics foundations, changing my body styles, changing the stances. It was very difficult for me to adapt to a new style and discipline.

Learning the moves, forms and usages were very intriguing



Kung Fu forms were very intriguing to me because I was not sure in the first place if I could manage those strange looking moves due to its difficulty. I would love to be as fast and as accurate as Master Su's Lan Jie form when I first watching him performed while I was much younger. You know, learning how to defend myself was important to me when I was young. So at the beginning, I started with the forms, the movements, and tried to get those flavor into my system. And so once I got that into my system I started learning how to use it, you know, the application became very important to me at the time. I shared my beginning skills with our neighborhood youth, they were very impressed as I could recall. Because I could easily overcome their street techniques, even if they were in Boxing, Karate or Tai Kwon Do or others. I loved to defend myself and frequently used my Kung Fu skills to control the situations, this included my Taiwanese

military experiences. Ah, so I did lots of sparring and working with other style's practitioners, I believe that those people who I sparred, they might hear about my hard core training, and would like to check it out. I also went back to my Tai Kwon Do class to spar with the black belt guys. I thought I did pretty well because they had to stop me in the middle of the sparring. In other words, the usages of Kung Fu did work!

More forms, applications and power training

So, in the beginning of my Kung Fu practice I was focusing mainly on the forms, leaning how to move like a Kung Fu practitioner. Secondly, I spent time in learning the usage of Kung Fu, the application. Thirdly, working on the power training as Grandmaster Liu recommended. Very quickly, I got to work on the power training in Baji Chuan. I remember when I was in Taiwan Wu Tan, I trained every day for hours, spent a month in Great Immortal Temple for summer camp, and the Kung Fu training was very serious and intense. Later I realized that power training is so important



because it would help to deliver powerful strikes or kicks, it would also add more advantages to my Kung Fu reality. I loved to have a contest with my Kung Fu brothers to see who could withstand for a long time in stances. Most of the time I won the competition of longest stance practitioner, I remember I could stand for a long time. Of course, some of my contemporary brothers could do the same. You know, standing longer doesn't mean that you are better or have a better Kung Fu. It doesn't, it just means that you are stubborn. It's only a competition, right? Try to be the best for the competition. And that was just for fun, you know, a lot of power training and Baji training. And still didn't really know the Baji Jing in the beginning, I was just doing a lot of stances training thinking I could gain power, miraculously it did. I really spent time at power training to improve myself, to build that resource. That is the kung fu energy and so forth, but most importantly was that I enjoyed those type of torture :)

Continuing education and further training

When I moved on to US, I tried to gather as many forms and styles as possible. When I taught in Alaska, I didn't have enough material to offer. So I was trying to learn from other teachers along the way, it probably took me 20 plus years just to gather as much forms and styles that were passed down from Grand Master Liu and other Masters. Initially I did that for this reason,



and spent a lot of time and effort to collect as much as I could. We invited Master Liang, Ji Tse (梁紀慈) to teach Baqua and Long fist, invited Master Jason Tsou (鄒家驥) teaching Saber, Baqua and Praying mantis, invited Master Adam Hsu (徐紀) teaching Chen Tai Chi, long fist, Swords and many others, invited Laurie Cahn (闕蘿莉) teaching San Tsai Jien, long fist, Chen Tai Chi and many others, she was a very experienced practitioner from Master Adam Hsu's school in San Francisco, invited Master Su, Yu-Chang (蘇昱彰) teaching Baqua fist, Double sticks, Secret Door Mantis, Deer Horns and many Qi Gong , invited Master Lu, Chang Kuei (盧長貴) teaching Tai

Chi Saber, Baqua, Baji Chuan, Pao Chui and many others, invited Master Tony Yang (楊曉東) teaching Baji Sword, Eight Elbow Mantis forms and many others. We incorporated all Grandmaster and Master's best forms and styles to come up with our own library collections as well as our school training goals and objectives. It was awesome to have those masters in Alaska to fulfill my long yearning Kung Fu dreams. It was almost an impossible task because it was so hard and expensive, but yet expansive in Kung Fu knowledge collections for such a short time period.

Chi (氣) Development in Progress

But later when I was in the middle age over 40s, I felt that I started getting into my Chi development. I thought the Chi development was a part of very important process in Kung Fu practice, because even though a person's not practicing, chi development is always there, should be there at all times in my opinion. So I spent another 25 years on chi development, even up till now. In short, Chi development means that the practitioner should always be aware of the breathing internally, watching your chi flows and consciously paying attention to your chi movement as a result of your Kung Fu training. Because this will enhance your practice even if you are not working out physically. So I would say probably 40 plus years on chi development, and breathing exercise, and so my chi is always connecting to my Dan-Tien, and I do that type of practice daily and it will become natural. So, the Chi development should be in process and come into play in my Kung Fu living. The form came first, application came later, the power came third, and the chi arrived, even though the chi was happening in that process earlier, but I focused on the chi more later on. Intent is the drive force for the chi movement. Yi (意) –intent

is a very important asset in movement forward in one's Kung Fu practice. Yi moves to Chi, Chi conducts the moves and movements tied to all muscles, tendons and bones. When one moves with the intent, covered with the Chi is a good practitioner in Kung Fu. Jing of course is hiding inside of the Chi and Yi.

Spirit (神) development & Qi Cultivation - a refinement of Kung Fu

Okay, then when I grew older, the spirit was something that had to do with the mind (Yi) practice, the mind practice had to do with the chi, so the mind, it is on the upper level, the spirit is even higher. When I say spirit, it means that the essence of one's practice. A person's spirit, it is a refinement of the ultimate Kung Fu practice. So as I grew older, I felt that the spirit development and the chi (Qi) cultivation were my practice focus, and it came naturally. You know, it is not something I intended to change or follow Grandmaster Liu's practice method, No, it just came naturally. And so I feel that to follow that natural course of your practice will be ideal. Because a true master, they don't memorize all the 150 forms or the 360 forms like Master Su did. When Master Su did his practice in the older days, he only did one form. Okay, or two forms, at most. That was how I practice lately.



Practice Piqua to quick regain Chi Integrity

Often, I also practiced a lot of Piqua because the Piqua body slapping could build up my chi and energy rather quickly, within one or two days. Let's say, if I didn't practice for a week, or two weeks, but when I did Piqua practice, boom, it would help to reboot my energy and Jing, just like that, it was very effective for me. So each person should find that one style or movement to reboot yourself if you don't practice daily. Okay, once I had that energy, I would practice Baji, a slow Baji practice, watching my energy, and then I watched all my limbs, all the joints, all the forms. I would pick and choose any styles if I had more time, you know, even picked some basic moves, or practiced basic moves, let's say Xingyi for example, or something else. I would watch each step of the moves, brought up my awareness and pay attention to the whole body, all the joints, spine, everything, altogether as one. So that, I was not working on all various



forms and styles, no, it would be too much for me. I would only focus on something specific, like a few moves from the long fist, or Tai Chi or something that I wanted to practice that particular energy.

Along the line with the form practice, the power training, the chi cultivation, the mindfulness training, and the Yi training, everything should be altogether. It should be a wholesome picture, and there should not need a sequence of practice, it should be just practice at your own will.

And there should have no schedule either, but the person could build a pattern, uh, for example I was doing the Piqua, 4 lines in slow motion, working on body slaps to stimulate my Chi & tendon. After that I would do some basic Baji stance training, or slow Xiao Baji to build up my energy level. Sometimes I would work on a few Praying Mantis moves respectively, or Xingyi – one move like Pi Quan, very simple and direct. When I was walking in Taipei, I would pose some Tai Chi postures in the park, or Baqua circling walks without any forms, just to get a feel or connection. Take Shao Kai Men (Little open door) for instance. It was all spontaneous, and when I did that, I would try to connect to the Qi from the nature if possible since I could feel it. Connecting the Qi from the Heaven and connecting the Qi with the Earth sounds abstract, but it did exist just like air. A good part of my practice was to enjoy the energy from the nature and felt really comfortable once they were all in harmony. This meant that they (the nature) knew our connection and we knew their connection and we all knew as a whole. Isn't that a beautiful thing to do? But if you don't feel anything is okay, no need to try to imagine but just enjoy the presence of your body, mind and the environment.

In my latest development of Qi cultivation & nourishment would be a good example of going along with what I mentioned above. So I kind of disappear in practice of connection the energy with the nature in a sense. I didn't have my own identity because I really didn't think too much in the middle of Qi Cultivation, I could only felt that I was together with this nature, and that was it.

And so eventually when I practiced, you know just like the other day when I was waiting for bus, my wife was next to me and I said to her 'let me see if I could connect this Qi?' So as soon as I opened my hands, it was all connected and I completely embraced the Qi into myself internally, and then flushed it all the way down to my foot, and I said to them (the nature-heaven & earth) - thank you very much, to this force, to this energy. I believe that Kung Fu

practice in the end needs to be in harmony with heaven and earth (天人合一), altogether as one. One might disappear without one's own identity because it was just oneness with the universe collectively and with the Nature! It should be good, peace and content within.

At that moment, I realized that we could really fulfill ourselves if we just kept working at our own pace without rush, at our own readiness, at our own willingness, and be happy about where we are. You know, let's not try to be competitive, or to compare, or be judgmental to others. Just be content with where we are and keep moving forward on our journey.

I am here sharing this with you Emily. That is my present moment of Kung Fu practice.

A poem came to me after I took the picture below today.

層層疊疊彩氤氳

青青盈盈生升平

宇心臍光三光漾

心寬平和祥瑞暢

