



Interview with Bette Rice by Cindy Campfield

When Bette first heard about tai chi some 20 years ago, she thought “Oh, that’s something I’d like to do.” She viewed it as a moving meditation, which was what drew her to tai chi because she likes expressive movement and has what she describes as a “monkey mind” and felt tai chi would give her a way to focus that mental energy. But she was unable to begin her study until she moved to Portland about five years ago. Her first teacher was a bit of a shock, instructing that students should only watch and listen to the teacher for several years before actually being allowed to learn the movements! Needless to say she did not stay with that teacher. Around 1993, Bette found a teacher at a Portland senior center that made the form interesting and accessible and began learning the Yang Family Style Short form and later the Long form. In 2006 she moved to Bend and was fortunate enough to find the same form being taught by Charla Ranch and classes that happened to be at about the same level. She just loved Charla who offered new insights and inspiration.

Bette found tai chi difficult to learn at first and did not feel she was very apt at learning it: “Now you have to understand, I am not adept, I am not accomplished at all at chi tai but it is something I love doing and have patience about, it’s just this ongoing process I’ll never finish, it will always be kind of an on-going thing.” In spite of feeling somewhat inept initially she was convinced that she was supposed to learn tai chi, so she kept at it. Today she is able to perform the part of the long form she has learned well as a moving meditation and keeps studying the rest. Since she's not certain she would be self-disciplined enough to keep a consistent practice on her own, she finds that taking classes keeps her practicing as well as learning. “And thank god I’ve always found teachers who are very patient with where I was at. I can do the same thing over and over again and with each new teacher it comes on a new level for me and I internalize it in a different way and it’s quite wonderful.”

Bette feels that tai chi has been part of her path in life since she first discovered it, even though she didn’t have the opportunity to learn it for many years. Once she did begin her practice, Bette says: “I have loved it from the moment I started.” Tai chi has helped her stay grounded and connected which helps her deal with some physical problems. As a result of a lower back injury she began to be careful how she moved which, over time, caused her upper and lower body to become somewhat separated in her mind as well as how she actually used them. Tai chi has helped her use her entire body in balance. This in turn has helped her with balance as well. For Bette the physical

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benefits of balance and flexibility are a happy by-product of studying and practicing tai chi, but the biggest benefit is good mental health - being centered, grounded and being able to let go. She also finds that tai chi helps bring energy into her system, although a long practice is tiring.

In addition to tai chi Bette studied dancing as a child, tried yoga and decided it is not for her, T.M., practiced some qigong and quite a bit of Feldenkrais (her daughter Allison is a certified Feldenkrais teacher). Feldenkrais classes are, after all, called “Awareness Through Movement.” Bette finds Feldenkrais very compatible with the tai chi in terms of both philosophy and practice. She feels that learning tai chi, while it takes a long time, allows for the chance to accept your own knowledge and position within the study. “It gives you permission to progress at your own speed and to be where you are—no matter where you are it’s ok.”

In terms of having a practice schedule Bette finds that she is mostly spontaneous. “I do very little in rigorous routine; I’m not very self-disciplined about routines...[but] I do practice almost every day,” though rarely at the same time. However, she does make herself practice the lessons taught in class as soon as she gets home so she can remember them and try to incorporate them. Her one big problem practicing at home is her cat loves the tai chi energy and keeps rubbing against her feet and interrupting the flow of the form!

Bette never had a lot of memories of her life experiences when she was young. She always attributed this to simply having a poor memory. Then at one point in her life it occurred to her that it was because she had not been “present” or paying attention to her life as she was living it, her mind being otherwise occupied. At that point she had a trip planned to New Zealand and made a conscious decision and effort to be present and pay attention to what was going on during this trip. As a result, and to her great delight, she retained extensive memories of the trip. She finds tai chi helps her maintain her awareness, pay attention and to be present in the moment.

Bette also finds a social benefit to studying tai chi. Having recently moved to Bend she does not know a lot of people here and has found tai chi a good way to meet compatible, open minded and interesting people. Classes are always fun.

Studying tai chi helps her on her spiritual path. Her path today does not involve learning new ideas, but rather on getting rid of the clutter of ideas she has accumulated over the years, of simplifying her life and getting down to the basic ideas and concepts that give life meaning. She finds that doing is the best way of exploring and expressing her spirituality – doing for others as opportunities arise, often in the form of cooking for friends and family and doing for herself in practicing tai chi. ☯

Photo courtesy
Central Oregon Internal
Arts Association

World Tai Chi and Qigong Day
April 2008 at Farewell Bend Park





T'ai Chi Ch'uan

Movement

By Chris Matthews

While there are many different positions in Tai Chi they all contain some common aspects and one of these is movement. The form, once begun, continues to move until it is finished. The classics discuss the fundamental aspect of yin and yang and the exchange of energy. While it can be said that yin corresponds to stillness and yang corresponds to maximum movement you must remember that each contains the other so that within yin is yang and within yang is yin. Therefore within maximum movement there is stillness and with stillness there is maximum movement. Another way to look at this is that at the precise moment when one position ends is the same moment when the next position begins. Or think of this in very subtle terms, breaking each moment into smaller and smaller moments, and seeing how as each little piece is ending the next piece is beginning. Without an ending there can be no beginning and without a beginning there can be no ending. You may be thinking that this is all very obvious and intellectually you may understand this but the goal is to allow the body to understand this. Nothing happens by itself, it is always the result of something else that occurs.

When we say that once begun the form continues without breaks or interruptions until the end we need to understand another concept that is inherent within Tai Chi and that is change. This is the purpose of movement, to promote and embrace change. As we move from one position to the next we are changing the position of the body, the feet and the hands. Again this may be obvious but the implication of change goes far beyond this simplicity. Change must occur within movement. By this I mean that the speed and tempo of the movement must constantly be changing to adjust to the flow of energy within the body.

Change must also be allowed to occur within the body.

A movement begins from nothing. Prior to the movement starting it has no motion, and the mind is empty. An infinitesimal moment before the movement begins the mind forms the idea of the movement. Not the whole movement, just the portion that is immediately in front of it. It is the intent of the mind that supplies the change necessary for the movement to begin. Just as your car cannot go from rest to maximum speed in zero time neither can your body.

All movements can be broken down into the following three periods: beginning, middle and end. In the beginning the movement begins from nothing and slowly over time builds speed and energy. The period of no movement also corresponds to maximum stored energy. During the middle phase of the movement the speed will remain fairly constant but may vary as directed by the energy. The middle period corresponds to maximum working energy. At the end of the movement the speed must go to zero and so the speed of the movement must begin to decrease prior to the end of the movement. The end of the movement again corresponds to maximum stored energy.



The following table is intended to generalize some of the facets of this subject. Do not try to extend some of the generalizations across a particular movement, such as single whip. Instead look at the generalizations with the microscopic parts of the movement single whip.

<u>Period in movement</u>	<u>Speed</u>	<u>Energy</u>	<u>Characterized by</u>
prior to beginning	zero	maximum stored	internal movement
beginning	slowly increasing	stored energy being changed to working energy	internal movement creating external movement
middle	constant	all energy changed to working energy	external movement
end	slowly decreasing	working energy being changed to stored energy	change from external movement to internal movement
after end	zero	maximum stored	internal movement

As you can see from the above table the periods labeled beginning and end are the two periods with the most change in terms of both energy and speed. Everyone is pretty clear on where the prior to beginning, after the end, and middle periods are. It may be instructional to note that when learning new movements is these three periods that are what most students really learn. However, it is the beginning and ending periods that are the most critical and also the hardest to recognize and perform. Without the beginning and ending the movements the form will not be linked and the energy created during the movement will not complete its flow. Since one of our goals is to store energy in the body it is important to allow the movement to complete itself.

In science there are two types of energy: stored energy which is called potential energy and working energy which is called kinetic energy. A dam is a good example of these two types of energy. The water behind the dam is the potential energy and it just sits there waiting to be useful. As the water is released it begins to flow downhill and slowly gains speed. This falling water is the kinetic energy and at some point towards the bottom of the downhill flow the water is made to hit a paddle attached to a wheel which causes the wheel to turn, doing work. After all of the energy has been taken out of the water (turning successive wheels for instance) the water will have arrived at the bottom of the hill and will again sit waiting to be used in some way. Kinetic or working energy must always find an end and become potential energy (i.e., there is no such thing as a free lunch).

We are looking to accomplish the same thing with Tai Chi. We want to boost the amount of stored or potential energy we have in our bodies. Just holding the energy in place does not accomplish this goal. We must find a way to change the potential energy to kinetic energy and at the same time draw in some more kinetic energy so that when we change it back to potential energy we have more than we started with. ☺

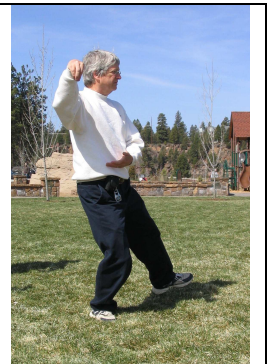


CENTRAL OREGON INTERNAL ARTS ASSOCIATION



SUMMER DEMONSTRATION

**T'ai Chi, Bagua, Hsing- I
and Qigong**



SUNDAY - JULY 13, 2008

12 – 3 PM

AT ASPEN MEADOWS IN SHEVLIN PARK

The Central Oregon Internal Arts Association (COIAA), dedicated to furthering the understanding, awareness and knowledge of the traditional Chinese Internal Arts of T'ai Chi, Bagua, Hsing-I and Qigong, will be holding their first summer event – a potluck picnic with demonstrations and group participation in some of the Internal Arts.

Participate in demonstrations by:

- ✚ Joyce Burke Brown on the benefits of the Internal Arts
- ✚ Paul Benton with Yang Style Tai Chi Short Form
- ✚ Sandra Curry with Jade Woman or 1000 Hands Buddha Qigong
- ✚ Chris Matthews with Push Hands partner drills

Aspen Meadows is the first picnic area on the left as you enter the park. This event is for the whole family--there's plenty of space for kids to play and for the rest of us to demonstrate, practice and participate in the Internal Arts.

All interested parties are invited; membership in COIAA is not required.

For additional information please call Chris Matthews at 788-5232.

For more information on COIAA please visit our web site at www.centraloregoninternalarts.com