



National News

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of Australia Inc.

Can Taoist Tai Chi reduce health costs?

At least 43 percent of adult Australians are not doing enough regular physical activity to benefit their health according to recent government studies. Physical inactivity is the second biggest cause of ill health in Australia, after tobacco. The studies found that physical inactivity was associated with stroke, colorectal cancer, breast cancer, hypertension, heart disease, non-insulin dependent diabetes, falls and depression. And this burden of ill health not only causes suffering but has other costs: the annual direct health care cost attributable to physical inactivity is around \$377 million per year. Governments are now recognising this challenge and are investing in programs to encourage physical activity.

These facts highlight the benefits of Taoist Tai Chi as a gentle exercise for the whole body and mind – benefits not only for individuals, but for the community at large. From the many stories told by our own members in Australia and around the world, we know that Taoist Tai Chi is a remarkable practice for improving health and for enhancing our sense of well-being and our outlook on life. There is a growing medical and scientific literature documenting the benefits of Tai Chi as well. For example, a recent study in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* concluded: “Tai Chi appears to have physiological and psychosocial benefits and also appears to be safe and effective in promoting balance, control, flexibility and cardiovascular fitness in older patients with chronic conditions.”

An appealing feature of Taoist Tai Chi is its suitability for people of all ages and health conditions – you do not need to be in top shape to start. It is a ‘no impact’ exercise so there is very little risk of jarring, sprains or other injuries. For the 43 percent or so of adults who are currently not getting enough exercise, these aspects could be very helpful for them to make the transition to a regular routine of physical activity. The friendly, non-competitive environment within the Taoist Tai Chi Society is another feature that attracts people.

“Tai Chi appears to have physiological and psychosocial benefits and also appears to be safe and effective in promoting balance, control, flexibility and cardiovascular fitness...”

Archives of Internal Medicine

As reported elsewhere in this newsletter, the Taoist Tai Chi Society is involved in an exciting new initiative where our volunteer instructors are teaching Taoist Tai Chi as part of a degree course in youth, health and physical activity at Edith Cowan University. In another initiative, we are running regular classes for patients in the Multidisciplinary Pain Clinic at Royal Brisbane and Women’s Hospital. These are just two examples of innovative ways to make the health benefits of Taoist Tai Chi available to more people in the

Continued on page 8



Contacts

Queensland
07 3357 5600
qld@taoist.org

South Australia
0423 776 955
sa@taoist.org

Victoria
03 9686 8805
victoria.au@taoist.org

Western Australia
08 9339 1331
westaustralia@taoist.org

New South Wales
02 9212 7517
nsw@taoist.org

Australian Capital Territory
02 6249 6117
act@taoist.org

International Web site
www.taoist.org

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contents

- News from the National Centre 2
- Quiet Cultivation Centre a step closer..... 2
- International Awareness Day..... 3
- Innovative program at Edith Cowan University 3
- Coming Together — Amalgamating The Taoist Tai Chi Society Of Australia 4
- Music and Taoist Tai Chi Classes..... 5
- Insights from a New Zealand workshop 7
- Book Review 8



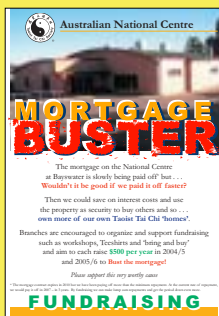
News from the National Centre

During 2004 we have been busy at the National Centre. There are many people who give of their time and effort to help keep our building looking its best.

The centre has recently obtained a new computer for the office, with the help of funds from the national, state and local Bayswater levels of the Society. We have also taken delivery of new banners to be hung in the practice hall – from New Zealand, New South Wales, and Brisbane.

Earlier in 2004 we had a leaking roof which meant plasterboard had to be replaced in the bathroom. The leakage also caused problems with the electrical system and some plumbing problems. These have all been dealt with. The two fixed windows (from the office and the foyer) have been replaced with sliding windows.

The garden is coming along and we have recently planted 100 native drought-resistant plants (funds donated from all WA Branches) and spread a truck-load of mulch. Another busy bee in October saw Maddington and Bayswater branches combining efforts to spruce up (weed) the garden and do general cleaning and maintenance of the building.



National Centre Mortgage Buster

All Taoist Tai Chi Society branches are invited to help with the Mortgage Buster fundraising for the National Centre. If each branch is able to raise about \$500 for each year for 2005 and 2006, we will make a big dent in the

mortgage! For details please see the poster sent to all branches.

Commemorative poster for the National Centre

A poster has been developed to celebrate the grand opening of the national centre. It includes photos of the centre and the grand opening. The poster is being distributed to branches.



Quiet Cultivation Centre a step closer



New plans for the Quiet Cultivation Centre (QCC) have been submitted to the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC).

The QCC will be part of the Society's 100-acre International Centre in Orangeville, which is in Ontario, Canada. A central part of Master Moy Lin-shin's vision for the property, the QCC will be a major facility for quiet retreat and study of Taoist arts including meditation, chanting, and Taoist Tai Chi. In 2002, the NEC (the agency that regulates real estate development in the Niagara "heritage" region) had approved a first concept of the QCC, which involved a single three-story building with courtyard. However, upon fleshing out technical drawings, it became apparent that the initial concept would be too costly. To remedy the situation, a second concept, segmenting the functions of the QCC into a campus of separate buildings, was developed in the Fall of 2003.

In a nutshell, the new concept integrates the entire Orangeville Centre into a greater ensemble resembling a campus, with nodes of human activity dotting the periphery of a central courtyard. **The property will consist of three concentric areas divided by a lower, a middle and an upper gate, following the Taoist metaphor of energy cultivation in the human body.** These gates will segregate the zones of vehicular movement from those of pedestrian strolling, from those of reflective meandering. Running through these gates will be a spinal axis leading to the single-story temple building.

The existing structures (Health Recovery Centre and other buildings) sit to the West of the planned inner courtyard, which will be delineated to the East by landscaping features. Several residential cottages, totalling 48 meditation rooms, will be pleasantly scattered here and there. Two other essential features will be: the so-called Ceremony Hall, a free-spanning structure three times the size of the current practice hall, where members will practice internal arts, and the Sixty-Deity octagonal hall.

The contract for project management and construction of the centre has been awarded to Delcan, a Toronto-based multi-national consultancy in architectural and engineering services. The expected overall cost is in the region of CDN \$10 million. It is hoped construction will start in 2005.

Continued on page 8



International Awareness Day



In September 2004 Barbara Leitch (Toowoomba) and Sue Owen (Sydney) were sponsored by the Society to travel to International Taoist Tai Chi Awareness Day in Toronto, Canada. Barbara here tells of her experience.

At first I had to keep pinching myself to realize it wasn't a dream – I really was at the Orangeville International Centre – the hub of our Taoist Tai Chi world.

The delegates from the other 27 countries began arriving, and mealtimes became a truly international event of many languages and customs. Not often do I sit at a table for a meal with folk from 9 different countries! The influx of people began in earnest on Friday, and Saturday morning revealed bodies in sleeping bags everywhere. It was amazing how these hundreds of people were housed, fed and transported without fuss.

To do Tai Chi in a group is a good feeling, but I had never been in a group consisting of hundreds before! The three politicians' speeches each revealed the respect with which the Society is held in Toronto and the police precision riding team gave a magnificent display on their Harley Davidson motorcycles.

Back at the Centre after a very long parade around the streets of downtown Toronto, about 900 hot lunches were served, again without fuss. I realized the specialness of the Orangeville Centre that day — it is 106 acres of freedom — a quiet, relaxing retreat from the hustle and bustle and “tar and cement” confinement of the city life where most us live.

The whole event was an incredible experience. Thank you for making this experience possible for me.



Awareness Day, Nathan Phillips Square, Toronto in Sept 2004.



University students are learning Taoist Tai Chi as part of a university course in sports and physical activity education.

Jill Clemson tells how students are (mostly) enjoying the sounds of silence.

Innovative Program at Edith Cowan University

Imagine three new Beginners' Tai Chi classes of around 25 people, with no-one over 22 years of age. Dr Ken Alexander, the course leader of the BA (Educ) BSocSci (Youth, health and physical activity) degree at Edith Cowan University, invited the Taoist Tai Chi Society of Western Australia to contribute to the first year unit Physical Activity, Body Culture and Identity. He and Lenney, a lecturer, wanted to include an 'eastern' approach to exercise.

...the calming of the atmosphere is almost palpable

I volunteered to teach Taoist Tai Chi for the first half of the semester and fronted up with some trepidation in August. The classes take place over eleven weeks. Three back-to-back classes of aerobics, weight-training and Tai Chi each last for three quarters of an hour, so by the time the third group arrive, they're really tired. They respond gratefully to the moments before the set when asked to settle into their feet and relax, and the calming of the atmosphere is almost palpable at times.

...a couple of participants found it too quiet!

Discussion time evinced the usual things; “why don't we do it

continued on page 4

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to music?” and “I can’t remember it.” I told them about Master Moy and the world-wide spread of branches. The fact that I wasn’t being paid to teach them caused some interest and a positive reaction. As a teacher, I enjoyed instructing these groups of young people. Most of them were interested and tried hard to do the movements. It did provide them with a different perspective and they were intrigued by the notion of stillness in movement, quite different from their usual exercise, especially for one student who is a member of the Australian rugby B squad. Students frequently arrived with injuries incurred during the other two sessions or while playing sport. In one discussion we considered that exercise may at times have very little to do with health!

Part of their assessment is to keep a journal and I was very curious to find out whether they were enjoying Tai Chi. I wasn’t privy to the journals, but Lenney tells me that most of them liked it, a few declaring they’ll continue with Taoist Tai Chi when this class finishes, with only one or two wondering why on earth they had to be put through it. This was fine though, as long as they reflected on this reaction, made sense of it and related it to the western forms of exercise they study. A couple of participants found it too quiet!

Jill Clemson

Coming together – Amalgamating the Taoist Tai Chi Society of Australia

Currently the Taoist Tai Chi Society of Australia’s members are the Taoist Tai Chi Societies of WA, Queensland, NSW, and the ACT, along with the members of the Australian Instruction Coordination Committee. Branches in Melbourne and Adelaide operate under the Queensland Society.

Over the years, it has become increasingly evident that this ‘federated’ structure is less than ideal both for practical and philosophical reasons. It is difficult and clumsy to ensure that each of the constitutions of the Member Associations is consistent with each other and with TTCS Australia, and the duplication of legal entities has meant repetitive work, administrative arrangements and greater demands on our resources, both financial and human.

Philosophically, the current structure falls short of Mr Moy’s wish for members of National Taoist Tai Chi Societies to be people rather than organisations. The Taoist Tai Chi Society of Australia has therefore sought the views of the member organisations on amalgamating all the separate Associations into one legal entity, the Taoist Tai Chi Society of Australia. All the member Associations and several branches and individual Society members have commented on the proposal, with 100% of responses supportive of amalgamating. In addition many helpful suggestions were given about the best ways to organise finances, member and branch representation, and other aspects of the single new organisation. A subcommittee of the Taoist Tai Chi Society of Australia will now begin working out a draft structure, Constitution and process for amalgamation.

Societies in Spain, Germany, Canada and the USA have either completed or are in the process of amalgamation and we will be checking with them to learn from their experiences. We hope to have the process well underway by the middle of 2005 and completed by 2006. Watch this space!

Heath Greville



Aims and Objectives of the Taoist Tai Chi Society

- To make Taoist Tai Chi available to all
- To promote the health-improving qualities of Taoist Tai Chi
- To promote cultural exchange
- To help others

Music and Taoist Tai Chi Classes



By Paul Crowe

The following article was written by Paul Crowe, a member and instructor of the Taoist Tai Chi Society in Vancouver, Canada. Paul wrote this letter in response to questions of why we do not play music in our classes. In addition to experience coming from over 20 years of practice in Taoist Tai Chi, Paul has also completed 2 Masters Degrees dedicated to the study of the Taoist tradition and Taoist practices for self-cultivation. Paul is currently completing a PhD also on the same subject and is teaching courses on Chinese thought and culture at the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University. We hope this article provides insights into the logic and meaning behind some of the Society's guidelines.

AS students and instructors of Taoist Tai Chi we have inherited something much more than a beautiful form of slow motion exercise. Master Moy Lin Shin, through his efforts and insights, gave us a very rare gift, crafted through centuries of trial and error by leaders of one of the world's rich spiritual traditions. In this, the first generation after his death, the responsibility falls upon each of us to preserve and develop this gift. One of the challenges we face is embracing change and evolution, both of which have been constants in the history of Taoism, without compromising the core spirit and integrity of the tradition. This requires wisdom, intelligence, and flexibility (a sign of strength in Taoism).

Over the years before and following Master Moy's death, a perennial difficulty has surfaced. The basic and simple approach to instructing Taoist Tai Chi has been augmented in a variety of ways. Some examples would be introducing basic "Qigong" (Ch'i-kung) exercises, breathing exercises before or after class, playing music while practicing the set, or practicing techniques from other Tai Chi schools and styles.

There are times when these practices reflect an attitude of flagrant disrespect for the founder and the tradition of cultivation he

transmitted to us. These cases are easy to deal with, as the problem and the solution are readily understood. In many cases though, these additions to the standard class format are well-intentioned, arising out of a sincere desire to improve the experience for the students but stemming from a genuine misunderstanding about the nature of what we are practicing.

This misunderstanding is not surprising when we consider that for many of us our most basic ideas concerning who we are and how we fit into the world are rooted in European cultural assumptions. These assumptions include a belief that somehow the collection of functions subsumed under the vague and mysterious term 'mind' are fundamentally separate from the body. This implies that exercising the body is quite separate from cultivation of mind and or spirit. This assumption is not

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He aimed to teach
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present in Taoist traditions where exercise exists on a continuum of cultivation of the whole person. Failure to recognize this very basic cultural

divergence can lead to viewing Tai Chi as little more than a tool for achieving "physical fitness." This, in turn, affects our expectations as students and instructors.

There are very few instructors who have not occasionally felt that what they are teaching might not be stimulating enough for students and wonder: Is there too much repetition? Are these students tired of the same exercises class after class? We begin to wonder what more we can offer to sustain interest and enthusiasm. These questions reflect an active interest in the students, which is a valuable thing, but they also reveal a lack of confidence in the simple methods Master Moy employed and this lack of confidence is often rooted in a misapprehension about why his methods were so simple.

Mr. Moy grounded the simplicity of his approach in the belief that the Tai Chi he taught was a foundation for meditation and indeed was a form of meditation in and of itself. His goal was not to amuse, excite, or entertain us. He aimed to teach us how to still our hearts while we were in motion and, for those who chose to

continued on page 6



The illuminating mind is constantly still.

If it moves then it responds to the myriad transformations.

Although it moves, its basic substance is constant stillness.

The misleading mind is constantly moving.

If it is still then a myriad thoughts arise.

Although still, its fundamental substance is constant movement.

“Diagram of Illuminating and Misleading” attributed to Taoist teacher Li Daochun (fl. ca. 1288) and translated by Paul Crowe.

practice, while in the stillness of seated or standing meditation.

Much of modern life revolves around distracting ourselves and filling our senses. Televisions and radios hum in the background at work or at home. Our journeys through the city are littered with noise and advertisements. Desirable products beckon to us from shop windows. Less and less do we experience silence, solitude, and empty time for reflection. Taoist priest Mui Ming-do, co-founder of Fung Loy Kok Institute of Taoism, explained once that it is much more difficult for us in modern times with hectic, demanding lives and a myriad distractions to cultivate the Tao.

Master Moy spent his life trying to pass on a method of training that would give us the resolve and inner discipline to create spaces of silence and stillness for ourselves. The ability to be silent and still makes it possible for us

Mr. Moy was teaching us how to be simple, still, and quiet.

to deepen our meditation but it is also a vitally important ability if we are to understand and apply the principles of Tai Chi to our bodies. The body is infinitely subtle and complex and to apply the movements of the form in a way that can affect our health we must reclaim our ability to listen to and observe our body’s inner state in addition to matters of timing and balance. Master Moy’s form of Tai Chi is perhaps not the most beautiful or elegant style but that is a reflection of his belief that what matters is on the inside. To gain access to the inside we need silence and stillness.

As our internal stillness deepens, our practice becomes rich and deeply rewarding. Out

of that meditative practice comes a desire to share what we have experienced with others and with time the confidence to accept that it is the very simplicity of the external form and teaching that unlocks many of the health benefits and the profundity of the inner experience. Conveying the external form of the movements is already a great challenge but the real challenge lies in finding a way to show students how they can re-establish a connection with their own bodies. To do this we have to put aside concerns that they need more information, more techniques, more amusements, and accept that fundamentally Mr. Moy was teaching us how to be simple, still, and quiet.





Insights from a New Zealand workshop

In July 2004 Elisabeth Clevers-Schatten (Toowoomba) attended a 5-day workshop in Rotorua, New Zealand. The workshop focused on Taoist Tai Chi and the various arts offered through the Fung Loy Kok Institute of Taoism, which is part of the Taoist Tai Chi Society. Here is Elisabeth's report.

The workshop was a combination of Tai Chi and other arts such as chanting and meditation. The workshop leaders, Willie Chiu and Jim Nicholson from Canada, also gave talks on several topics.

For the Tai Chi part, the theme of the workshop was to complete all moves to their fullest extent and to find the Dan Yu in every move. We worked very hard on our Tai Chi and it was great to see the progress made over the five days. Many members experienced major improvements and served as an inspiration for the rest of the group.

On the first day, Willie Chiu gave a talk about our founder Mr Moy, the teachings he left with the Society, and how the Society operates since Mr Moy's death to ensure that his legacy is kept alive for the benefit of all members.

One of the interesting aspects mentioned in Willie's talk was that Taoist Tai Chi is an art and not a science. In art nothing happens to a simple formula, but creatively. Therefore it is best to keep an open mind and an open heart when learning Tai Chi. There is no one single right answer when doing Tai Chi.

Willie also emphasised that Mr Moy taught the dual cultivation of body and mind and that both are equally important. In that he followed the Taoist tradition. Tai Chi opens up the body and thus contributes to better health. But it is equally important to tame the heart by having compassion for others and doing things for others, by being selfless. This will also have

a positive effect on your health and on your outlook in life. That is why Mr Moy wanted the instructors and administrators of the society to be volunteers.

The Fung Loy Kok (FLK) activities at the workshop included chanting of the Bang Dao Yeen Sao Ging sutra and other shorter chants, and sitting and standing meditation. It was interesting to learn that Fung Loy is the name of an actual island in the south east of China, where it was believed the immortals live. The word "kok" translates as temple. Mr Moy incorporated the spiritual aspects of the Fung Loy Kok teachings in Taoist Tai Chi.

As part of the FLK activities Jim and Willie gave talks on the following topics:

- Jim Nicholson provided a translation of part of the Bang Dao Yeen Sao Ging sutra with some background explanations and interpretations. The sutra is approximately 1500 to 1600 years old and forms part of the Taoist Cannon.
- The Three Teachings – Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism. All three teachings had a great influence on Chinese life and culture. Confucianism teaches how to cultivate yourself through harmonious relationships with other people around you. Taoism teaches how to cultivate harmony within yourself, within your body and within the universe. Buddhism teaches how to be at peace, how to not be attached to things and how to practice selflessness. Jim explained how all three teachings influenced each other from the beginning and that many regard them as complementary. Fung Loy Kok follows that tradition.
- The Eight Virtues. They come out of the Confucian tradition

and have been part of the Chinese culture for a long time. In his talk on the Eight Virtues, Willie gave examples on how Mr Moy applied them in his life.

The lectures showed that the Taoist Tai Chi Society is more than just a "Tai Chi Club"; for those interested it also offers guidelines on behaviour, conduct and values, especially in relation to the interaction with other people and how to lead a better life. It draws on a very rich and ancient culture without being old-fashioned and stale.

Since most of those attending the workshop were instructors and engaged in the administration of their local branches, we also did some planning exercises, working on the following questions:

1. How do we attract new members
2. How do we keep members
3. How do we plan for /address our major challenge

For the first two questions we had to use our success stories as a base. We separated into smaller work groups for discussion and then reported our findings to the whole group. Some interesting ideas were circulated and both Willie and Jim shared freely from their many years of experience. But it also transpired that every club around the world (at least New Zealand, Australia and Canada) faced the same issues and problems.

It was an excellent and very varied workshop, which covered a lot of ground. It certainly deepened my understanding about Mr Moy's teachings and that what he left us is so much more than "just" Taoist Tai Chi.





Taoism: The Enduring Tradition

By Russell Kirkland, Routledge 2004

An interesting book by a leading American scholar of Taoism sheds new light on the history and meaning of Taoism. Professor Russell Kirkland's book pays particular attention to a little-known ancient text called the *Nei-yeh* (*Inward Training, or Inner Cultivation*), from about 300 BC.



This text dates from about the same time that the more well-known *Tao Te Ching* is thought to have originated.

Kirkland says *Inward Training* has a more explicit focus on the cultivation of internal energy or life force (*chi* and *ching*), compared to the *Tao Te Ching*. The very first chapter of the *Inward Training* text refers to the possibility of human beings cultivating their internal energy:

The vital essence (*ching*) of all things:
It is this that brings them to life.
It generates the five grains below
And becomes the constellated stars above.
Then flowing amid the heavens and earth
We call it ghostly and numinous.
When stored within the chests of human beings,
We call them sages.

Thus, from its inception Taoism has interweaved the training and transformation of body and mind. Hence its long-standing focus on practices that generate health and well-being. These practices are carried out in a holistic way so that the practitioner gains a deeper connection with "a cosmos comprised of subtly linked forces" (Kirkland, p. 192).

Kirkland writes: "In Taoism, the fundamental activity in which one ideally engages is a *cultivation of*

reality, which takes place through a newly experiential engagement with a specific set of subtle forces, structures and energies, which are inherent to one's personal reality. In part, one learns ...that *all* those structures and energies extend

throughout *all* that is real, both within one's personal experience and throughout what unperceptive minds regard as the external universe" (p. 194).

Kirkland adds that the Taoist approach to the cultivation of reality "was never a selfish pursuit" but rather was practised by "dedicated practitioners ...in such a way as to extend the resulting benefits to others around them" (p. 208). There is a strong resonance here with one of the aims and objectives of the Taoist Tai Chi Society: to help others.

Along the way, Kirkland uses the results of recent scholarship to debunk a number of myths about Taoism – for example, that Taoists were primarily concerned about longevity and living longer; that Taoism is simply about 'going with the flow'.

There is much in this book that is consistent with my own experience of learning from Master Moy and other members of the Taoist Tai Chi Society. I recommend the book to anyone interested in learning more about the Taoist tradition.

For those interested, a translation of the *Nei-yeh* is available: Harold D. Roth, *Original Tao: Inward Training (Nei-yeh) and the foundations of Taoist mysticism*, Columbia University Press, 1999.

Peter Cook

New Zealand and Australia raise \$50,000 for QCC

During the past two years the Australian and New Zealand chapters of the Taoist Tai Chi Society have been raising funds to contribute towards construction of a meditation room for the QCC. For example, funds paid by many members to do half-day local workshops have mostly been devoted to the QCC project. The initial target of CDN \$50,000 has now been reached and these funds will be passed on to the Fung Loy Kok Institute of Taoism in Canada. Further fundraising will continue.



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community. And of course we offer many other classes throughout Australia, including those at senior citizens centres, nursing homes and retirement villages. But clearly, there are many more people out there who could benefit immensely.

Peter Cook, PhD
President, TTCS Australia

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