

Monday, December 24, 2007

Relaxing and sinking til January 1.

While I am away for the rest of the month, I have pre-programmed Underdog to release one short blog entry daily. Also, while the blogosphere slows down for the end of the year, this might be a good time to review our archives and our static website. The above video shows the power of the t'ai chi that I practice physically, mentally, and in the practice of law. Being interviewed is Robert Smith, who is the first Western student of t'ai chi master Cheng Man Ch'ing, with whom Professor Cheng spars in this video. The title of this blog entry comes from one of the five principles of t'ai chi, which are: relax and sink firmly rooted into the ground; separate the weight in yin-yang fashion; keep the body upright as if the head is suspended from the heavens; turn from the waist; and keep the wrists gently unbent. Mr. Smith taught t'ai chi to my teachers Ellen Kennedy and Len Kennedy, apparently in the same place -- Glen Echo Park in Montgomery County, Maryland -- where I studied with the Kennedys, where they still teach, and where free t'ai chi practice sessions still take place every Saturday at 7:00 a.m., no matter what the weather or date. Mr. Smith was in Taiwan with the CIA when he studied with Professor Cheng and with plenty of other Chinese martial arts masters and mega-beings. Having fled to Taiwan so as not to live under Communist rule in mainland China -- where a treasure trove of t'ai chi practitioners lost many of their practicing and teaching gifts through the banning of t'ai chi during the years long Cultural Revolution -- Professor Cheng supported the United States' participation in the Vietnam war. I look beyond their politics to cherish the t'ai chi gifts they unselfishly have shared with the world. Professor Cheng ended up opening and running a t'ai chi school in Manhattan, during the era of hippies and the free love that he apparently firmly disagreed with. He upset many Chinese traditionalists by widely opening his Manhattan school to all races, rather than limiting enrollment to those with ethnic Chinese backgrounds. From that school sprouted great teachers, just as what happened with his students in Taiwan. Professor Cheng was a master of the five classic Chinese excellences: t'ai chi, Chinese medicine, painting, poetry, and Chinese calligraphy. To master even one of the first two is a monumental feat. When I am in a tough courtroom situation, sometimes I summon strength by imagining I am accompanied by Professor Cheng, my trial practice mentor Steve Rench, and my friend and spiritual teacher Jun Yasuda. Jon Katz.

Posted by Jon Katz in Persuasion at 00:02

This was excellent and inspiring . . .

Thank you . . .

May your every day be a holy day . . .

Every moment a holy moment . . .

Namaste

Anonymous on Dec 29 2007, 09:56

Hi, Shaman- Thanks for your encouraging words.

1995 was the first time I saw Ben Lo present a lengthier video of his teacher Cheng Man Ching doing t'ai chi. It was amazing. Then came YouTube versions of Cheng Man Ching and other Chinese boxing masters.

To order DVD's and books by and featuring Professor Cheng, check out some of the following:

- Two films made by Professor Cheng (I don't know if it's on VHS or DVD): <http://scheele.org/lee/cmvideo.html> .

- DVD of Professor Cheng doing t'ai chi and sword:
<http://softanswertaiichi.com/cm-c-tai-chi-form/cm-c-37-form-postures-tutorial-dvd.html> .

- Wuwei T'ai Chi's site has a great list of Professor Cheng's material: http://www.wuweitaichi.com/book_video.htm .

Have a great week. Jon

Anonymous on Jan 1 2008, 19:58