



Wudang

A MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER



From Sifu Paul

November is here, our gateway into winter. It's also the month of Thanksgiving and a time of gratitude. There is much to be thankful for at the studio. In this issue: a recap of our autumn vision meeting, important changes to the class schedule, a memorial to the late Doug Anderson, and more. With gratitude to all of you.

Autumn Vision Meeting Recap

In early October, we held our autumn vision meeting and get-together. The meeting was well attended, productive, and fun. Amy Sparks was on hand to create a graphic recording of the meeting, which captured, with creativity and craft, the highlights and essence of the meeting.

The graphic recording will be hanging in the studio for the month of November (see the reproduction on p. 2).

The meeting began with a review of the progress and accomplishments from the past year. Todd Nesser created a slideshow beginning with the studio's new mission statement, our new logo, posters, newsletter, stationery, T-shirts, our outdoor sign, and the debut of our new website, which is just about ready to launch. The new site features a fresh, clean design and many videos highlighting the various practices that we teach at the studio. The website is the culmination of a huge effort by Todd as well as all his innovative and elegant graphic design work from the past year. We are grateful and fortunate to have him as a member of our studio. The presentation ended with photographs of our community from the past year, with many images from our

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Remembering Sifu Doug Anderson

A personal reflection by Paul Abdella

On October 18, my teacher, mentor, and friend, Doug Anderson, passed away from a brief but fatal illness. He was 68. Doug had more than 50 years' experience in the martial arts, which included black belts in Chuan Lu karate and Kenpo karate, a red sash in Southern Praying Mantis kung fu, and advanced training in Wing Chun and Wa Shu kung fu. He went on to create his own system of martial arts, which he called Eclectsis. He was also a federal air marshal service-training instructor, teaching crew member self-defense through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Doug was a graduate of St. Thomas University with degrees in philosophy and psychology.

What for me began as a student-teacher relationship with Doug in martial arts trans-

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Collaboration and celebration were the themes of the autumn vision meeting

Meeting Recap

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Golden Rooster Greet the Dawn celebration from last spring. It was quite a display.

Next it was time to finalize our new vision statement. Small groups were formed and were asked to evaluate and revise five vision statements that had been created beforehand. There were spirited discussions in all of the groups, and the energy in the room was palpable. Each group returned and read the revised version of their chosen vision statement. They were all excellent and inspiring. Mission statements are concrete descriptions of what an organization does, and vision statements are aspirational and describe what an organization hopes to accomplish in the future. They are flexible in nature and can evolve as an organization changes.

Our new vision statement is: "Dedicated to integrating body, mind, and spirit through T'ai Chi and other movement and meditative arts to help foster self discovery in an expanding community."

The meeting concluded with some food, social time, and suggestions from the members about classes they would like to see added or changed at the studio. Some included creating practice time for members to come and do solo or partner practices, adding self-defense classes, and expanding meditation and qigong to other days and times. See the graphic recording for a more complete listing.

Thanks to everyone who attended and helped to shape the direction and future of the studio.



Upcoming Classes and Schedule Changes

Beginning in December, the following classes will begin and replace those currently in those time slots.

Monday: Weapons class 7:30–8:30

The weapons class will begin learning the cane. If you would like to give weapons a try, the cane is the perfect place to begin. It features basic movements that have simple applications that contain elements of both the sword and the saber. Open to members who have finished the Solo Form.

Tuesday: Pushing Hands Foundations 6:00–7:15

Pushing hands are partner practices that develop skill in sensing movement patterns and learning to control and redirect them. Pushing hands are a bridge between understanding the movements of the Solo Form and its use as a martial art. This class teaches

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Amy Sparks captured the brainstorming of the Autumn Vision meeting in a graphic recording

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the fundamentals of Ward Off, Roll Back, Press, and Push. This is a great introductory class for beginners and experienced practitioners alike.

Internal qi breathing and bone-rooting qigong opens every class. Open to members who have finished the Solo Form.

Tuesday: Tai Chi 43 Postures Form: new and review 7:15–8:30

The 43 Postures Form teaches an application for each of the postures in the Solo Form in the order they appear in the form. Come and learn the first sequence, called Symmetry 1, if you are new, or come and review the Symmetries you already know and learn some additional training methods that will deepen your skills. Open to members who have finished the Solo Form.

Where is the San Shao form?

The San Shao form has always been a part of the studio curriculum. It has been changed gradually over time and is in need of some refining and recalibration in order to open it up for general classes again. Its return will be announced sometime in the future.

Wednesday: Healing Tao 7:30–8:30

The month of December will feature a Healing Tao sampler. On December 6, we will practice the Inner Smile, a seated practice designed to bring a practitioner to deep states of self-acceptance and gratitude.

On December 13, we will practice the six healing sounds/five animal frolics. This is a seated, standing, and moving practice that clears negative emotional patterns affecting the five vital organs. This is a dynamic and easy-to-learn practice that leaves you feeling clear and revitalized.

On December 20, we will practice the micro-cosmic orbit, the most well known of the Taoist alchemy practices. This meditation moves qi in two deep energy channels in the body, bringing increased circulation and healing throughout. There is both a standing and seated practice.

No experience is necessary for any of these practices. Come and see what they're all about.

Beginning January 3, we will begin learning the Wudji Gong Primordial T'ai Chi form. This is not a T'ai Chi Ch'uan form but a qigong form with two simple patterns to learn. Wudji Gong means “develops skill for entering the Supreme Mystery.” Primordial T'ai Chi is a bridge between the cosmic infinite Self and our physical finite self—a magical, powerful, 800-year-old lineage ceremony. It integrates the magic square of feng shui, the dynamic inner water/fire coupling of Taoist alchemy, the healing benefits of medical qigong, and the earthly transmission power of China's original T'ai Chi form! 7:30–8:30 for 12 weeks. The cost is \$144 for nonmembers, free to members.

Saturday: Eclectsis: Boxing Fundamentals 9:30–10:30

Learn the fundamentals of boxing and acquire the five elements of martial arts—speed, timing, accuracy, power, and foundation—through carefully selected drills and practices. Great for reflexes, conditioning, and understanding the core principles of martial arts. This class is safe, fun, and open to new members.

Saturday: 12 Animals of Liu Ho Pa Fa 10:30–11:30

The 12 Animals class will begin learning the Crane, which teaches T'ai Chi-like folding techniques. Open to new members.

Saturday: 43 Postures Form 11:30–12:30

The 43 Postures Form teaches an application for each of the postures in the Solo Form in the order they appear in the form. The class is now open to members who would like to begin learning Symmetry 1. Those who have been working in Symmetry 5 will begin Symmetry 6.

Restoring a Gratifying Ritual

In the past, we always did a full round of the T'ai Chi form in every class. The fullness of our schedule now makes that impossible for every form class. We added extra time on Saturday to do the form every week but cannot do this for every class. It's a great joy to do the form together, so we will reinstate that practice on the last form class of the month—Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday (which has two form classes). Looking forward to generating that group qi!

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Class schedule
changes and updates

Remembering Sifu Anderson

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formed into a life-long friendship. Few people have had such a diverse, far-reaching, and positive impact on my life.

Meeting Doug

I began practicing martial arts at the age of 10 in the sport of Judo and continued in that martial art for 6½ years. Simultaneously, at the age of 13, I joined the wrestling team at my school. By the time I was 17, I had fluid buildup and chronic pain in both knees and was forced to discontinue both of those activities. I sampled a couple of martial arts afterward that would keep me off of my knees but didn't stick with them. I enrolled in art college right out of high school but dropped out after a year, feeling disillusioned with the curriculum there. With strong interests in art, martial arts, and music, I was without a direction for those activities and began working odd jobs to earn a living.

A friend from high school told me about a kung fu teacher he was studying with in a private class at his buddy's house. He went on at length about this teacher's skills and what he was learning there and invited me to join the group. I accepted the invitation.

The class met briefly in one of the members' homes and then moved to a more permanent

location—the second floor of a blue-collar saloon in St. Paul called Johnny White's bar. There was still the buzz of the Bruce Lee craze in the air that had started a decade earlier, so that perhaps tainted the expectations that I brought with me when I arrived for my first class.

There were half a dozen other guys there, including my friend, who introduced me to the instructor. Doug had a wiry build and spoke quickly and intently, but he was friendly, put me at ease, and made me feel welcome. He asked if I had any background in martial arts, and I told him about my Judo and wrestling. He assigned one of the class members to show me some basic stances, footwork, blocks, and strikes in the Southern Praying Mantis style. The movements were foreign to me, but I became engrossed in them, and the time passed quickly. Doug called everyone together and gave a short talk to wrap up the class. In addition, he told everyone they needed to get a notebook and start recording their lessons, as they would never remember everything from week to week and month to month.

This was the first of many lifelong habits that I have retained from my time spent with Doug. I have filled many notebooks from all of my teachers over the years, but the first was a red spiral-bound notebook with the handwritten title on the front cover: My Kung Fu Journal. As I opened its covers for the first time in many years, I saw just how much Doug was teaching to an eager 21-year-old, and just how much his teaching and ideas got inside me and have continued to influence all aspects of my teaching to the present time.

This influence manifested in different ways. He taught me how to learn martial arts, how to practice them, how to remember in my body, how to analyze movement kinetically to improve efficiency, how to be creative within a traditional system. He introduced me to Taoist philosophy and the concepts of qi and yin and yang and how to apply them to real-world practical things, how to use psychology and strategy to avoid a fight, how to

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In memory of
Sifu Doug Anderson,
founder of Eclectsis



win fights before they start and how to end them quickly if they start, how to fight multiple opponents, how to train for speed, how to produce short power, how to gain flexibility while retaining elasticity and strength, how to concentrate, and how to meditate. He taught me how to teach and speak in front of a crowd.

On the subject of teaching, I come from a family of teachers. My parents were teachers and both of my siblings are teachers. The last thing I ever wanted to do was be a teacher. Doug was dynamic and charismatic as a teacher and made teaching seem attractive and worth doing. I now feel that teaching is the most important vocation for the simple reason that all professions rely on high-level teaching to produce high-level practitioners and citizens. There are other elements, of course, like hard work, aptitude, and opportunity, but good teaching is at the center. As for the self-made creatives and entrepreneurs, they have simply accessed the teacher within. This is the prime directive of a teacher: to wake up the inner teacher inside the student. Doug gave me an opportunity to teach and, most importantly, he showed me that I was a teacher.

Doug became my mentor, and we became close friends. I was the best man at his wedding, and he was a keynote speaker at my

wedding many years later. I met my wife Mary through Doug.

The Gauntlet

Eventually Doug moved the school out of the bar and into the basement of a rundown fourplex in St. Paul. The rent was cheap—as in free. One of the students lived upstairs. The basement was large, dark, and dirty. It had long, dark corridors opening into small rooms on either side that were full of junk or were empty.

Doug had almost completely abandon teaching classical martial arts by then and was in the first phase of teaching his own style of martial arts that he called Eclectsis, from the root word eclectic—to draw from many sources. A key feature of the style was how to use and quickly adapt to your environment when in a threatening situation.

The basement was perfect for this. Doug trained us in our main room to deal with a single opponent one on one, then two on one, and then three against one. The final phase was to walk the gauntlet. Several classmates were planted in the empty rooms and in the shadows of the long, dark corridor while the student in training would walk cautiously from one end to the other. Random attacks would appear out of nowhere from either side, and we were to use our training to ward them off. Lots of bruises, no real damage.

This exercise and others like it were to develop in us the core ingredient in the Eclectsis arsenal: speed. Doug had very fast hands and feet—a gift that came naturally. He also possessed an analytical mind that broke down the elements of his own aptitude for speed. He created a method for developing speed in himself and taught it to his students. He called it Fast Flexes/Flash Hands, a simple and brilliant method that rewired the nervous system for speed and could be applied to any sport or activity.

Doug intended to publish two training manuals (he felt books were too slow!), the first on the upper half of the body, the second

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Sifu Doug Anderson demonstrates his legendary flexibility while sparring with a classmate (c. 1970s)

on the lower half, then follow up with videos that teach the system in real time. He found a publisher and produced the first volume; the second volume and videos were never released.

Doug also introduced his method of stretching and gaining flexibility to a national audience through an article in *Inside Kung Fu* magazine called “Muscular Yin and Yang.” I did the illustrations for the article and set up the photo shoot that would prove that his method preserved strength in extreme ranges of motion. The photo featured Doug in a full side splits suspended on a block under each foot. The photo commanded attention; the article got noticed, too, and it launched his program on stretching.

The Calendar

One of my most memorable collaborations with Doug came early on. I had drawn a picture of Bruce Lee that I gave to him as a gift. This sparked an idea. He wanted to produce a martial arts fantasy calendar capitalizing on the excitement that followed the release of the first Star Wars movie a year earlier. Doug loved comic books, science fiction, and martial arts and action films. He also wrote martial arts and science fiction, including a story that foreshadowed *The Matrix* 20 years before the original film hit theaters.

Doug wrote out a list of about 25 legends of the martial arts that we culled down to the 6 that I would draw and add a fantasy element to. We couldn’t afford to print 12 images, so we had one image with two calendar months on a page. There were no personal computers or graphics programs then, so I had to produce the numbers pages by hand. We had 5 months to create it, draw it, print it, advertise it, and sell it by Christmas. Then retire. I had never done anything like this before. The pressure was on.

Everything but that last part—the retirement—came to pass. The calendar came out in 1979. We sold calendars—just not enough to recoup our investment. It was a disappointment, but good things flowed to us from the experience. I also got to work closely (and intensely) with Doug.



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Sifu Doug Anderson
poses for a drawing by
Sifu Paul

The Shaolin Monk

During this time, I continued to train with Doug. We were spending training time but also social time together. Actually, our social time was usually training time. We would go out and eat, play some pinball, then return to one of our back yards, where I would receive a private lesson that would often last for hours. I would get corrections on things I was working on, and Doug would show me forms he was creating: strange and unusual hand combinations, strikes, kicks, strategies, freestyle sequences. My head would be swimming with ideas, and my practice advanced rapidly from these sessions.

On one occasion, Doug showed me a form he said he was learning privately.

It was beautiful and hypnotic and unlike anything I’d ever seen before. I knew that I wanted to learn whatever it was. I asked him what he had just done, and then I asked if he would teach it to me. He said it was T’ai Chi. Doug had taken up T’ai Chi with a local instructor. The T’ai Chi instructor had arranged to do a barter with Doug in order to learn some of his practical fighting system.

In response to my request for T’ai Chi instruction, Doug said he wasn’t finding much

time for T'ai Chi anymore, or for the exchange, and asked if I would like to take over the barter arrangement for him. He would set it up with the T'ai Chi instructor. I began doing sessions with the T'ai Chi teacher, whose name was Vern. On our third class, Vern told me of a famous T'ai Chi master who had moved to St. Cloud and that he himself had recently begun to study with him. He very humbly said I would be better off studying with the master and very generously said he would arrange for me to meet him. There were no guarantees he would take me as a student; all I could do was ask.

The first person to ask was Doug. I explained what had transpired and that I had an opportunity to learn from a high-level practitioner of T'ai Chi, and did I have his permission and blessing to study in St. Cloud? Without hesitation he said yes. Vern and I drove to St. Cloud the following Saturday to meet T.T. Liang.

Doug had taught me enough protocol to ask his permission and enough to know that I shouldn't meet Master Liang empty-handed. I brought with me some tea and incense, which were traditional tokens of respect, and decided to frame one of the images from the calendar as a gift. I chose the first one that I had drawn, called "The Gauntlet." It depicted a monk in the Shaolin temple having his skills tested after completing his training in the rigorous Shaolin temple style.



*The birds have vanished into the sky
And now the last cloud drains away.
We sit together, the mountain and me
Until only the mountain remains.*

~ Li Po

Vern and I arrived at master Liang's house. I was introduced, shook his hand, bowed politely, and offered him the incense and tea, which he accepted then set aside. The framed artwork was in a bag at my feet. It suddenly felt excessive, and I decided not to give it to him.

Master Liang knew why I was there—to join the Saturday class that had been meeting for a few months. He asked if I knew any T'ai Chi. I was honest and said that I had just started learning. He paused and then said he was sorry, but the group was too far ahead of me, and with no real experience, I probably couldn't catch up.

To say I had been excited about the possibility of learning from T. T. Liang is an understatement. To say I was disappointed by his response is another one. My heart sank to my feet.

I thanked him, shook his hand, and said I had one more gift: a drawing that I had done and wanted to give to him. He took it and looked at it. He asked for confirmation that I had done the drawing. I said yes. Then he really started to study it. In a moment he said, "Beautiful. I know this monk. I knew this monk in China! OK, you stand in the back and try and follow along."

I spent the next almost seven years learning Master Liang's T'ai Chi system, and I knew him for 20 years until he died at the age of 102. From this association, I have taught hundreds of people T'ai Chi over the years. It was Doug who had posed for me as the monk.

In the End

Various groups of students have been trained by Doug over the years, each learning the

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Detail from the Shaolin
monk illustration that
earned Sifu Paul his
first lesson with Master
Liang. Sifu Doug
Anderson posed for
the drawing.



current version of Eclectsis and receiving their own expected and unexpected benefits. They would have their own stories to tell. As I read through my red journal for the first time in years, I came across an entry from my first year dated 9-11-77: “I never fully realized (and I still don’t) what I was getting into when I started taking kung fu. It’s far more than just fighting and self-defense. I’ll have to resign myself to the fact that I’ll never learn it all, never finish kung fu. That’s against my nature but it’s an undertaking of immense proportions. I’m just now beginning to see below the tip of the iceberg but the water is still very murky.”

I was 21 then; I’m now 61. The water isn’t murky anymore. Yes, any discipline worth pursuing keeps revealing layers of subtlety to be mastered, but the source and the journey are more important than the activity and the outcome.

Doug shared with me what he knew with intensity and an open heart. His creative ideas would sometimes burst open before hitting their intended target, scattering seeds that would take root in unexpected places. For me, they grew into an art career, a teaching and martial arts career, and a marriage—all of them came directly and unintentionally from Doug.

Never hesitate to tell someone how much he or she means to you while you have the chance, and if they disappear before you can, then tell somebody else. There were many stories like mine at Doug’s memorial from people who started out wanting to learn martial arts from him and ended up receiving something greater. I had intended to write a tribute such as this for Doug while he was here, just to let him know the depth of his influence on me and to express my gratitude for everything. I never did. I’m doing it now.

Farewell, my friend.

Holiday Closing

The studio will be closed for the holidays Dec. 24 to Jan. 1. Classes will resume on Jan. 2.

Graduation News

Congratulations to Amanda Dillman, Keith Johnsen, and Lucia Pierson, who finished learning the entire Yang-style Solo Form. Now the fun begins. Well done!

Studio Shirt Sale Begins

There is a sign up for studio shirts in the practice hall. Short-sleeve and long-sleeve shirts are available. Get some of each—they make great gifts.

Seeking Submissions

If you have an idea for an article you would like to submit for the *Wudang*, please contact Paul at the studio or send us an email with your proposal. We’d love to hear from you.

All’s Well That Ends Well

We are heading into the final weeks of the calendar year as well as the fiscal year. Please take a moment and get caught up with your dues and help us end the year well financially. Thanks for your payment and your membership. It’s been a great year.

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Two friends:
Paul Abdella and
his teacher,
Doug Anderson

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The studio will be
closed Dec. 24–Jan. 2.