

Wudang

Twin Cities T'ai Chi

10/18

A MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER



From Sifu Paul

Greetings, everyone,

The frost isn't exactly on the pumpkin, but it won't be long. A rather abrupt transition into autumn reminds me of all that is happening at the studio this season, from our Celebration 2-25, our fall matching grant fundraiser, and a new art installation to exciting new classes and more. Please take a moment to read about it all and enjoy the autumn color.

Imagination Becomes Reality

Our studio has been in its current location since 1993. Beginning that year, a demonstration of T'ai Chi was given annually on or around the time of Chinese New Year by members of the studio. In 2002, in the Year of the Horse, studio member Todd Nesser began designing a commemorative poster for the new year and the studio's celebration. Each new poster featured the animal of the Chinese zodiac for that year as well as images and symbols of T'ai Chi related to that animal. Each poster was unveiled at the celebration and became the centerpiece of the event and hung on the studio's north wall for the remainder of the year. For 16 years, Todd created a new poster for each coming year. Each poster was unique but united by a common style. It was eagerly awaited each year as a symbol of something new and the year ahead.

In 2017, Todd presented his design for the Year of the Rooster. It was a departure in look and feel that perfectly represented the new direction the studio had taken. In 2018, instead of continuing the familiar animal theme, I asked Todd if he would design a permanent set of posters that would represent the studio and its mission, as well as T'ai Chi and its underlying history and philosophy. He created the three posters that have just been installed in the studio and are reproduced in this newsletter. The following is a description of the rich symbolism contained in each poster and shows how the three posters together



represent Twin Cities T'ai Chi as a community, as a school that's part of a larger history, and as a creative source of energy and ideas that is helping to evolve the art of T'ai Chi for future generations.—Paul

The Story in the Posters

The mythical origin story of T'ai Chi began about 800 years ago with a Taoist sage by the name of Chang San Feng who lived in the northwest mountain range of China called Wudong. The legend has it that Chang San Feng had a dream of a snake and a crane engaged in a battle. The crane swooped down and tried to capture the snake; the snake circled out of the way, coiled, and lunged back at the crane. The crane took flight and mounted a counterattack. This exchange of attack and defense continued for several minutes until both the snake and the crane were too tired to continue. Neither animal was harmed in the fight.

From this dream, Chang San Feng then conceived of the primary techniques of T'ai Chi based on circularity, the continuous flow



of hard and soft, and other Taoist health and longevity practices. As a symbol, the snake represents yin energy: soft, circular, flexible, dark, close to the earth, with the ability to transform itself by shedding its skin. The crane represents yang energy—expanding, soaring, light, close to the heavens—and is a symbol of longevity. A balanced and continuous interplay of these attributes is the essence of T'ai Chi.

The Crane Poster

The central image of the crane is seen fully upright and expanding its wings in fa jing—the release of energy. The crane represents yang energy, which is upward and expansive and symbolizes the formless realm of heaven (Tian qi).

There are two stamps or seals placed in the upper and lower sections of the poster. Seals are traditionally applied to a piece of artwork to create balance. A yin seal (open with positive line work) balances a yang seal (closed with negative line work). The crane seal down below uses an egg shape, while the Yang family seals are circular and reflect our heritage and style of T'ai Chi. Our T'ai Chi form comes from Yang Cheng Fu, who is pictured performing the posture White Crane Spreads Its Wings, with the Yang family seal stamped over the image.

The movement of Chinese calligraphy is similar to T'ai Chi, especially push-hands. When starting a stroke, you often go toward the opposite direction that the stroke needs to go, resulting in a bone shape. The large calligraphy is in the grass style. Like T'ai Chi, its movement is continuous. Stephen Mao was the calligraphy adviser for the posters, and Todd Nesser was the calligrapher.

The Snake Poster

The central image in this poster shows Yang Cheng Fu demonstrating the posture White Snake Spits Out Tongue, with the snake-like calligraphy overlaying the photo. There is an image of a coiled snake in the upper right that represents yin energy, which is centripetal, contracting, and magnetic. Snakes live close to the earth and symbolize the coiling, receptive energy of T'ai Chi and also its characteristic of adapting to changing circumstances.

Contact Us

For timely updates, follow Twin Cities T'ai Chi Ch'uan on **Facebook**.

Email: mail@tctaichi.org

Website: tctaichi.org

Phone: 651.767.0267

^
New Crane, logo, and Snake posters illustrate studio lineage and mission



A quote from the Yang family on how to apply the posture White Snake Puts Out Tongue sits beneath the image of the snake; the translations are from Jane Schorre.

The Central Poster

Our studio logo is an ancient symbol that represents three forces in the universe: negative, positive, and neutral—or yin, yang, and yuan to the Chinese. Yin and yang flow out of yuan and continuously revert into their original form before being repolarized. These energies are embodied in the practice of T'ai Chi.

The symbol overlays a soft feather that represents two aspects of T'ai Chi practice. The first comes from a line in the T'ai Chi Classics that says, "The weight of a feather cannot be added to the body without setting it in motion," indicating how the practice of T'ai Chi makes the body sensitive to external forces placed upon it. The second refers to the cultivation of the breath in T'ai Chi to be slow, deep, and subtle so that the soft down of a feather wouldn't be moved by the breath if it were placed under the nose.

Finally, the chop or seal of T.T. Liang sits in the lower left and the seal of Sifu Paul in the lower right, representing the oral transmission of the art of T'ai Chi from generation to generation.

A Meeting of Two Masters

The posters are the result of a collaboration between two masters of their crafts, long-time studio members Todd Nesser and Ruthann Godollei. Todd, a master graphic designer, and Ruthann, a master printmaker and teacher, came together to produce an archival

museum-quality print of each poster. Todd's wife Amy Sparks machine-sewed the top and bottom of each poster to hold the hanging rods for each piece.

Art is a language of symbols. The posters are a rich symbol of our studio's history and mission: Dedicated to teaching the art, science, and spirit of T'ai Chi and related practices to improve the quality of life for its members and community. With deepest gratitude to Todd and Ruthann.



Farewell to a Friend

On September 2, 2018, former studio member and Twin Cities T'ai Chi board member Loc Truong passed away at the age of 64. Loc was born in Vietnam, where he earned a degree in education and became a teacher. He was the 8th child in a family of 13 brothers and sisters. At the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, South Vietnam was invaded by the North. Loc and his four brothers built a boat and escaped the war-torn country, crossing the South China Sea to the Philippines, then to Guam, Camp Pendleton in California, and finally to Minneapolis, MN. Loc went to work at a South Minneapolis car wash, sending money home to his family in Vietnam concealed in tubes of toothpaste. From these humble beginnings, Loc established himself as one of the most

<<
Ruthann Godollei
prints the new Crane
poster designed by
Todd Nesser

<
Farewell to our friend
and classmate
Loc Truong
1954–2018

knowledgeable and accomplished information and technology specialists and systems engineers in the Twin Cities, forging a 30-year career working for Pillsbury, General Mills, Cargill, and Target.

Loc's love of the martial arts brought him to Twin Cities T'ai Chi in the early 2000s, where he was an active member for 10 years. Loc joined the studio's board of directors and helped the studio upgrade its computer system, and in 2004, he won the T.T. Liang Award, an annual award that used to be given to a member whose outstanding contribution in promoting T'ai Chi and the studio was recognized at our annual Chinese New Year celebration. Loc's friendly and generous nature, quick smile, and sense of humor made him many friends here at the studio. He will be remembered, appreciated, and missed.

Matching Grant Update: We're Halfway Home

Our matching-grant fundraiser is off to a great start, with the studio receiving half the donations needed to reach our goal of \$5,000. Thanks to all of you who have donated so far. When we reach the 5k figure, it will be matched, bringing the total to \$10,000 to be used for the studio's operations, education fund, studio upgrades, and more.

This will be our major fundraiser for the year and will replace the studio's annual Autumn Ask Letter. The matching-grant opportunity will run through November 15. Help us celebrate 25 years of offering authentic Yang-style T'ai Chi and other movement and meditation arts by making a donation.

To donate, simply leave a donation in the pay box in the office or swipe a card there, mail a donation to the studio, or add it to your upcoming dues. Please write "matching grant" in the memo of a check made out to Twin Cities T'ai Chi.

Let's strive to meet and even exceed our financial goal. Thank you for your generosity and support.

Celebration 2-25

On Saturday, October 27, there will be a celebration at the studio featuring a short demonstration of T'ai Chi and other styles, a slide show of Sifu Paul's 2016 trip to China, food and beverages, and social time. The festivities begin at 5:00 and end at 8:00.

There are sign-up sheets at the studio to let us know that you and your guests are coming. This helps us plan for food, tables, and chairs. There is also a sign-up sheet if you are able to bring a food item to share or help with setup and cleanup. Let us know as soon as possible so we can order food, tables, and chairs for the event. Please join us and help us celebrate our milestone of time and our wonderful studio and community.



Calling All Photographers

If you enjoy taking photos with your cell phone or something more sophisticated, please feel free to click away at our upcoming celebration on October 27. We would love to have some photographs from the event. Videos are welcome too.

Graduation News

Congratulations to Rosemary Kapsch and Bob Davis for completing the T'ai Chi Solo Form. Now the fun begins.

<<
Matching grant
progress:
50% of the way
to our goal

<
Congratulations,
Rosemary and Bob!

Simplified Payment Survey

The board is exploring payment options that could simplify both your tuition payments and our processing. We have a short two-question survey that will help us to know your payment preferences.

Thanks to those of you who have filled the survey out already. We would love to have a larger sample from which to make our decision. If you haven't filled out a survey, please take a moment to do so in the next week or so. Thanks.



A Grand Birthday

On September 12, Grandmaster Gin Foon Mark turned 91. Master Mark, an acupuncturist, herbalist, artist, chef, and kung fu grandmaster, has been a national treasure in Minnesota since 1971. Happy birthday, Master Mark!

Upcoming Classes and Schedule Changes

Beginning in October

The **weapons class** on Monday night at 7:30–8:30 will begin learning the sword on October 1. If you have finished the Solo Form, you may begin learning the sword. The T'ai Chi sword is a beautiful and elegant form that is close to the feeling and energy of the Solo Form. The sword's 13 techniques/energies will be taught in the class as well as some basic partner work.

Pushing Hands on Tuesday evening at 7:30–8:30 will begin learning T'ai Chi posture drills and how to link them together. This class is a natural extension of the 43 Postures class and will develop sensitivity and timing and is also a lot of fun. Join the class if you have finished the Solo Form.

Eclectis Boxing Fundamentals on Saturday at 9:30–10:30 is open to new members. This class is an energizing, safe, and fun introduction to the principles and practice of effective striking (punching).

The **12 Animals class** on Saturday at 10:30–11:30 a.m. will begin learning the Tiger on October 6. Come and join the class if you are interested in this dynamic internal style.

The **43 Postures Form** on Saturday at 11:30–12:30 will begin a new cycle of the first symmetry in October. If you have finished the Solo Form and want to deepen your understanding of it and get an introduction to partner work, come and join the class.

Those who have already learned the first symmetry will work on right- and left-side first symmetry and also begin learning the second symmetry.

The Tuesday night **43 Postures class** at 6:00–7:30 will continue with the first three symmetries and deeper drill work.

<<
Happy 91st birthday,
Grandmaster
Gin Foon Mark!

Photo by Mike Cain