



THE PEACEFUL DRAGON

Newsletter

April, 2005



SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

All Tai Chi and Shaolin students: beginning Monday, April 24th, we will be starting a weapons form unit that will continue for several weeks. The sequence for learning tai chi weapons is three-quarter staff, broadsword, fan, jian, spear. Any tai chi student who hasn't started weapons training but has finished the solo form will start with the staff. Others who learned various weapons at workshops will review them. The sequence for learning shaolin weapons is staff, broadsword, jian, spear. Any shaolin student who has finished *Ju Jee Chuan* will start with full-length staff. Others who learned various weapons at workshops will review them.

To prepare for this extended training unit, *THE PEACEFUL DRAGON* will place a group order for weapons on Wednesday, April 13th to ensure that weapons are here by the 24th. Make sure to give your order to Debra by the 13th so that you will be able to participate in the training.

Sifu will present a talk on "Yoga Styles – Differences and Similarities" including what a practice in yoga does for you. Wednesday, April 6 following tai chi. See agenda for the rest of the year next month.

WORKSHOPS AND EVENTS

PA-KUA WITH MASTER PARK



On April 22 and 23, renowned Master Park Nam will conduct another special workshop at *THE PEACEFUL DRAGON*.

Master Park will introduce Pa-kua qigong and qin-na (joint locking) techniques not shown in earlier workshops, as well as advanced staff

applications. This workshop is open to all ages and levels of experience. Friday from 5 – 10pm will focus on self-defense applications using qin-na; Saturday 11am – 5pm will focus on staff but will include qi-gong and chi-na.

Cost to pre-register: public \$150 for one day, \$260 for both days. Peaceful Dragon students \$100 for

one day, \$180 for both. At the door add \$20. Cash or money order only please.

Special Note: *there will be a group dinner and birthday party for Master Park at 6pm following the Saturday workshop. Price is \$15 – make your reservations at the front counter.*

NATIONAL KUOSHU TOURNAMENT

Several students and Sifu will go to this well-known event held July 22 – 23. Grandmaster and Master Peck will be there as well. Many internal and external styles will be on display. Air fare is currently cheap. Sifu and some students are taking an Airtran flight – that particular fare is only \$165 round trip. If you want to go, make your plans quickly and reserve your hotel room while there is still space. If you're looking for a room mate, see our volunteer coordinator Shawn Hammond.

CACMA 2005 REGIONAL TOURNAMENT



May 7 at the Charlotte Convention Center, schools in our area will compete in empty hand forms, weapons forms,

continuous sparring, taijiquan hand and weapon forms, push hands and chi sao/luk sao. Special events include Lei Tai fighting and masters demos, a special guest to be announced and a CACMA judge certification seminar. **Registration is \$40 in advance, \$50 at the door, \$30 if you're a CACMA member.** You can register on line at www.mhkungfu.com/Events/events.html and consider becoming a CACMA member – lower tournament fees are just one of the benefits. The schedule is:

Judges seminar – 8am
Competitors meeting – 8:30am
Opening ceremonies – 9am
Masters demonstrations
Competition begins – 10am
Lei Tai follows

WHAT'S UP

TIBET WEEK AN UPLIFTING EXPERIENCE

There was a good turnout for the touring monks from the Drepung Loseling Monastery. A very scholarly lecturer explained the symbolism and tradition of Tibetan Buddhist chanting and hand movement (mudra) and their layered connection to the tenets and rituals of Buddhist belief. It was a pleasure then, when the monks began their chanting, to have a glimpse into the deep significance behind the deceptive simplicity, which only added to their combination of charm and spiritual weight.



Showing a completely different face of Buddhism, Geshe Dakpa Topgyal engaged us with his keen mind and his humor as he explained what is and what is not meditation, defined the real nature of compassion and laid a careful foundation for his workshop that

outlined the requirements for a practice based on developing compassion. Geshela explained that compassion requires bravery because other's suffering can be overwhelming; he noted that true compassion also requires patience. Step by step, he noted the necessary foundation of Ethics, Meditation and Wisdom that had to be developed first, warning that without these, one would not be able to see other's real needs, mental inclination and karmic disposition. Do no harm, he advised; refrain from helping if you don't know the outcome of your "goodness;" but with a good foundation, the discriminating mind gets stronger, and wisdom and compassion develop together. Geshela also made an important clarification about the nature of

detachment, saying that it was not separation or disengagement from the world, but from false ideas and perceptions, such as the expectation that others will make me happy. Following the break, Geshe Dakpa shared a special mantra to help the development of compassionate mind, and explained the basic steps and techniques of visualization and meditation that lead to the unbiased mind without which real compassion cannot develop. Several people bought signed copies of his new book, Diamond Key for Opening the Widsom Eye, described as "...a short and pithy book...clearly explains how to meditate."

For those who want to explore and study in the realms of their mind and spirit, the books of our Grandmaster's Ch'an meditation master Sheng Yen, are also exceptionally lucid and readily available.



SUMMER CAMP AT PEACEFUL DRAGON

Summer camps are coming soon for all children between 5 and 12 years old. Featuring martial arts, Chinese culture and language, lion dancing and crafts, there are four one-week camps each with a different theme. **The tuition for each camp is \$299 and includes lunch each day.** Hours are from 10am – 3pm daily. Join all four and save 15%; two from the same family save 30%. The camps are:

June 27 – 31: Striving for Excellence
July 4 – 8: Ultimate Fitness
July 11 – 15: Confidence and Leadership
July 18 0 22: Superior Safety

At the end of each camp (Fridays, 2pm) a martial arts demonstration and lion dance will be presented to parents and guests. See the flier on our web page, www.thepeacefuldragon.com.

A \$100 non-refundable deposit will reserve your child's place. Each camp requires a minimum of eight children and will be full at 25 so reserve early. Non-Peaceful Dragon students will be required to buy a uniform for \$39.

AFTER SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION AND CHILD CARE COMING THIS FALL

Working parents know how difficult it is to find quality after-school care. Now you can enjoy safe, structured after-school care with the added benefits

of a top-notch martial arts program. If your child's school is one of our member schools, we'll even provide professional transportation from the school to *THE PEACEFUL DRAGON* at no extra cost. The After-School Program includes daily martial arts classes as well as structured study and homework time, snacks, rest and play time. Hours are from 2:30 – 6:00pm. More detail to follow regarding sign-up, fees, etc. Tell your friends.

VOLUNTEERING

Thanks to Mike Fomil for the basketball hoop and to the volunteers who helped install it. Students will enjoy it, especially during summer camp.

Thank you, adult students and parents who filled out the Student Questionnaire. Many of the improvements we've made over the years have come about as a result of your input. If you didn't get one, please see George or Sifu to fill one out.

Like Spring, Landscape Day is just around the corner, and you are invited, wanted and needed to help make it successful. Here's a great opportunity to get outdoors, meditate on the never-ending beauty of nature, and help maintain the grounds of your school! **Saturday, April 30, 8:30am and there's plenty to do all day so come early and stay as long as you choose!**

Quarterly Cleanup time is also here again, open invitation for this as well. Believe it or not, in a school this big there are NEVER enough people showing up for these necessary upkeeping jobs. Think about this: you can improve your *wu-de* and your gong-fu at the same time; how? Engage these chores as a meditation; use your taiji movement to rake or wash windows – bring those principles to bear in these simple tasks. Come and spend an hour or stay for the day, **Sunday, April 10. First shift starts at 9am; second shift 3pm – we always need help then, for carpets, etc.**

DRAGON CLASSIFIEDS

Your ad could be here; text and graphics, a scan of your business card, or artwork you submit. The cost is \$5 for students, \$10 for the public. Give your copy to George, or email maibu@carolina.rr.com. Pay at the front counter.

NOW brand Supplements a BARGAIN!

Save 20% off retail for these top quality vitamins, minerals and food supplements. Carefully researched and chosen by Debra and Sifu, NOW products are an exceptional benefit for students and invaluable to combat stress and enhance overall health. Orders are placed the first of each month and ready for pickup in a week or so.

SAVE on Quality Martial Arts Supplies and Weapons

Get 10% off retail for high quality martial arts supplies direct from Martial Arts Mart and waive the shipping and handling fees. Many items are on display for you to try sizes and styles, and any item can be ordered from their extensive catalog.

Fill out one of the Order Forms at the display area near the restroom and give it to our staff along with a 50% deposit at our front service counter. Orders will be placed the first of each month and merchandise will usually arrive within one week and be ready for you to pick up.

ON THE DRAGON PATH

Yoga and the Individual

By Shawn Hammond

Disciple-level Peaceful Dragon student

While I am far from being a yogi and still have much to learn about anatomy, I have begun a journey into awareness of my body. My training as a massage therapist, my research into ways to stretch the body, and my experimentation with yoga have increased my awareness of how injuries occur and are sustained. It is my hope that my observations will help others get more out of their yoga practice.

Our yoga practice at The Peaceful Dragon is meant to be a meditative session, free from the interruptions of instructor corrections and instructions. We are free to explore our poses and look internally to find the core of our practice; we are encouraged to use our breath and to push ourselves



to be our very best. This is a wonderful way to practice as long as each individual is aware that some poses, while beneficial to others, may be detrimental to themselves. Many of us place too much emphasis

on competition. Our egos want us to be better than the next person, to get fully into the posture or to look just like the instructor. Much of yogic practice is harmless, but if you read any yoga publication you will find that almost all of the poses have at least one or two contraindications. The following examples are paraphrased from an article in the February issue of Yoga Journal:

1. For those of us who are sitting in a chair all day long, any pose that turns the knees to either side will stress the ligaments of the knee as well as those located in the hips and ankles. Our bodies are in a static posture all day that decreases the flexibility of our hips, knees and ankles. Obviously, we will want to regain that flexibility. Prior to moving into this kind of pose we will need to stretch the larger muscles of the leg, such as the gluteus, hamstrings and quads. When these muscles are flexible they won't place as much strain on the ligaments allowing us to gently begin to rotate our knees to either side.

2. Even a simple seated forward bend to touch your toes can bring undo strain to the lower back. Whether you have one foot forward or both make sure you bend from the hips and keep the low back straight. Think about bending at the "fold" in the hips and bringing the chest forward first. You can prepare for these stretches by placing your foot on a bar or a chair to lengthen the hamstrings. Standing forward bends are less stressful on the back and are a good substitute. Remember to use the same principles here – fold at the hips, not the waist.

3. Seated twists are contraindicated for those with sacroiliac pain (pain along the joint between the sacrum and hip bones), who are pregnant, or menstruating. These twists tend to over stretch the sacroiliac joint unless you can move the pelvis with the lower spine. Standing twists are better for that reason. Increase the flexibility of your hip joints and your seated twists will be more successful. The standing "triangle" type poses where you are reaching for one foot are great hip openers. Most of our seated warm-up exercises are also hip and groin openers, when done correctly.

What I have realized in my own practice, and have illustrated above, is that some postures take time to

achieve and that there may even be setbacks on any given day. I've recognized the need to listen to what my body tells me and modify challenging poses. I think it is important for all of us throughout our practice to make minor adjustments and see how they affect the posture. Of course we each need to do our own research as well. Is this pose hard or painful because of some issue in my body, or is it because I'm not strong enough yet, or is my mind deceiving me and encouraging me to back off because it's lazy? Herein lies the difficulty we all face on the road to bettering ourselves; why we have to be vigilant in our quest to find our true nature. There are many times when I feel that I have to quit in the middle of a difficult pose and these are the times when I have to look inward to see if there is a real (true) reason or if I am merely making excuses. This is one of the reasons why I have grown to love my yoga practice; I have to focus on the present and be intent on what is going on within. I hope that all of us will realize the potential within our own yoga practice.

PATHWAYS

Grandmaster Frank DeMaria has begun sharing the wisdom of his many years of training with tips, insights, and philosophy sent to those on his new email list.



If you'd like to sign up, just go to <http://kungfu.org/requestform.shtml>. Grandmaster also has a new essay online, called "**Life's Sadness is an Illusion.**" You can find it at

<http://kungfu.org/message.shtml>.

Debra and Tony Iannone have been working to put together a Buddhist discussion group. One



challenge has been finding, and coordinating time with, a highly qualified teacher. A meeting with interested persons is scheduled for **Sunday, April 10 at 3pm.** The text to be used by the group is the Lam Rim Chen Mo

by Tsong-Kha-Pa. Ghehe Dakpa mentioned it in his workshop as well. This Great Treatise is world-renowned among scholars and laity alike. Many of us look forward to the guidance of a knowledgeable person and the rewards of group discussion. You are welcome to join.