



THE PEACEFUL DRAGON

Newsletter

MARCH, 2005



SPECIAL ARTICLE BY MASTER SBARGE

IT'S A SMALL WORLD...OR IS IT BIG KARMA?

I'm a mostly conventional and pragmatic person. I don't assume lights in the sky are from alien spacecraft, and when people tell me about their fantastic journeys through past lives or their amazing astral projection travels I smile and nod but I mostly just think they have a more vivid imagination than I do.

As a meditator, however, I can't help but be sensitive to various connections that exist that seem to transcend logic and can't easily be explained away as mere coincidence. I conclude that there are forces at work that I don't fully understand but that are meant to send us in certain directions with apparent guidance.

Anyway, I wanted to make you aware of some of these chance connections as they relate to your lineage and training, and as they relate to the fact that you are learning kungfu and meditation from me here in Charlotte. I'll let you make up your own mind whether these connections mean anything.

In July of 1980 I was home for the summer having just finished college. I lived in the small, wooded town of Kent, NY, a good hour and a half north of New York City. I wanted to find a highly skilled teacher to continue my martial arts training, and assumed I would have to travel into the city which I was willing to do. I began researching schools in Manhattan and Queens, looking through scores of martial arts magazines comparing styles and teachers.

MEETING GRANDMASTER

During the week that I was researching schools I happened to start up a conversation with a drunken police officer at a local bar one night. He turned out to be the brother of a high school acquaintance of mine, and when I somehow mentioned that I was looking for a martial arts school he advised me that one of the best kungfu teachers in the country didn't have a school but lived in a small house in the woods in the town of Putnam Valley right next to Kent. He said he knew of the guy through his sister or something, and he

looked up the guy's phone number and gave it to me. I thanked him for his advice but had no intentions of calling that teacher: What could a drunken cop's sister in Kent, NY possibly know about who is or isn't a good kungfu teacher?



Master Sbarge, then and now

The next day a friend whom I had earlier trained with in karate called me and said he was going to check out a kungfu school, and asked if I wanted to come along. I joined him. It turned out we were going to see the same teacher that the cop had recommended. The teacher was now starting a kungfu class once a week at an old VFW hall. I wasn't enthused. When we got there we saw a few people doing slow-motion tai chi stuff which we knew little about and cared even less about because we wanted real martial arts. The teacher noticed us walk in but paid no attention so we sat in a couple of chairs and watched. Suddenly, out of no where, one of the people flew across the room and slammed into the wall and crumpled to the floor. At that moment the teacher who had flung the student across the room looked over, and I suddenly recognized him as the man on the cover of the newest edition of World Karate magazine that I had just finished reading. I instinctively knew he was to be my teacher, and thus began my relationship with my teacher and your Grandmaster, Frank DeMaria.

As the years went by I learned more about Grandmaster's history. Of course he was the adopted son of one of the most famous kungfu masters of the 20th century, Ch'ang Dung Sheng, but he also had trained with other highly skilled teachers in New York City including Franklin Kwang, the monk Tsung Tsai, the late kenpo master John McSweeney, and the now world-famous ch'an meditation master, Sheng Yen. He never said much about these teachers or what had happened to them, just that he had trained with them.

Among the many jobs I've had over the years, construction work was something I continually dabbled in. Since I was thirteen I had worked on and off for a neighbor and local contractor named Francis Heitman. One day in the early 80s Francis contacted me to tell me he was going to start doing work on the foundation for a building, and asked if I could help him. It turned out to be the foundation for the main hall of the Chuang Yen Monastery, to be the largest Buddhist center on the East Coast on a deeply wooded mountain in of all places Kent, NY, just five minutes from my house. I was busy with other things but helped him as I could. At the time I didn't realize that the temple was being funded by the same person who had funded much of Master Sheng Yen's studies, including his doctoral studies in Japan, and who had brought Master Sheng Yen to the Temple of Enlightenment in The Bronx, the place where Grandmaster had studied ch'an meditation under him years earlier as part of Sheng Yen's first group of American students. And at that time I couldn't foresee how many hours I would spend meditating at that monastery.

ENTER DEBRA

Fast forward a decade or so to the early 90s. I felt ready for a temporary change of pace from my life of working every day and training at the kwoon every night, so I decided to move to Taiwan to teach English and just do my own training for a year or so. I needed a Chinese language tutor so I went to the library at the Chuang Yen Monastery to see if they could recommend someone. The person at the desk told me to see another woman who worked downstairs who might be able to help me. The woman downstairs agreed to become my tutor, and though she didn't do much for my Chinese she has been a pretty good wife and partner. And that's how Debra entered the picture.

At first Debra thought it was really strange that I practiced kungfu. In her mind kungfu practitioners were wicked, wild and weird. However, when browsing through Grandmaster DeMaria's book Ch'ang Shih Tai Chi Chu'an she looked at a photo and exclaimed, "Hey, I know that man well. He and my sister Mei's godfather (a Christian magazine publisher) were best friends." She was looking at a photo of the most skilled old pakua kungfu master in Taiwan, Wang Gwo Jen, who taught at the Taipei Police Academy. The police academy was run by our Great Grandmaster, Ch'ang Dung Sheng, and it just so happens that Wang Gwo Jen was one of Ch'ang's closest friends. In fact at Ch'ang's request he had evaluated Grandmaster DeMaria's pakua skills on one of Grandmaster's visits to Taiwan and given it the thumbs up. Debra concluded that our martial arts practice must be okay if our grandmaster was close friends of a close friend of her sister Mei's godfather.



Debra and Eric Sbarge at The Peaceful Dragon's first annual tai chi retreat, 1999

Debra was also put at ease when her friend, a Buddhist nun named Bao Lin who was on a winter-long retreat in the isolated hills of Delhi, NY, wrote a letter to Debra saying that whenever she thought of Debra during her meditation she saw an American man meditating, and asked if Debra had started dating an American. Debra wrote back that she had, and Bao Lin in turn replied that through her meditation she could see I was a peaceful and meditative person and everything would be fine. This reinforced the message that Shakyi Trizin, the Tibetan Buddhist leader second only to the Dalai Lama, had given Debra a couple of years earlier when she was worried about how she could get a green card and keep her kids in America. He had told her she would marry an American and not to worry, which she thought seemed absurd at the time. How would she meet an American with her poor English and while working in the library of a Chinese Buddhist monastery all day?



THREE MONKS



Guo Lin, Grandmaster, Sifu at grand opening of The Peaceful Dragon, 2002

Several months after we were married Debra came home one day and asked if I wanted to meet a Shaolin monk who had defected from China and was hiding out in Chinatown. I said no because I was skeptical, knowing that most Shaolin monks were charlatans and no longer really monks. She assured me that this monk had visited the Chuang Yen Monastery and the other monks there had proclaimed him legitimate. At last I agreed to drive down to Chinatown, and there I met Guolin Shrfu for the first time. I invited Guolin to get away from the city and visit my teacher's school, and he accepted. He and Grandmaster DeMaria got along well. Back in China Guolin had known of Ch'ang Dung Sheng's reputation as a

premier martial artist, so he immediately respected DeMaria's position as Ch'ang's adopted son. Shortly thereafter a ceremony was held where the ACCS became the official brother school of Guolin's Shaolin Overseas Temple.

A year or two later Grandmaster DeMaria invited his early Ch'an meditation teacher, Master Sheng Yen, to his school to give a talk on Ch'an meditation. Guolin was also invited. Upon seeing Master Sheng Yen Guolin bowed deeply. Guolin was well aware of Master Sheng Yen's growing reputation as perhaps the world's foremost expert on Ch'an meditation, considered among the highest ranking monks of the Ch'an order. It was a proud moment for Grandmaster to bring together one of the world's foremost Ch'an fighting monks with one of the world's elite Ch'an meditation monks.



Sheng Yen

Not long after that Debra and I were in Woodstock, NY visiting friends of hers at a small Tibetan Buddhist temple. When we left Debra asked if I wanted to stop and visit a Chinese monk she knew who had become a recluse and built a small house in the mountains outside of Woodstock. I said no, I just wanted to go home. A few minutes later we were driving up a winding dirt road and at last found the old monk's home. He seemed delighted to see Debra, and invited us in for tea. We talked for several hours. It turns out that a couple of years before I had met Debra, Debra's mom had been very ill. Though there were numerous Chinese doctors in Chinatown and elsewhere, her friends at the monastery had referred her to this particular monk due to his unusual expertise in acupuncture and Chinese medicine. He took a liking to Debra and her kids and agreed to treat Debra's mom. Many times Debra took the hour and a half drive to pick up the monk, bring him to her house, then drive him home. He never charged for his services. We said our good byes and left the old monk's small home, and I didn't think much more about it in the years to follow.

Then just a couple of years ago one of our students here at The Peaceful Dragon, Brett, had the opportunity to join a two week retreat with Grandmaster's meditation teacher, Master Sheng Yen. He came back and said he had enjoyed it. Brett then asked if I had read the recently-published book Bones of the Master by George Crane, which I hadn't. He said it was about a Ch'an master and he thought I might enjoy it. The book is the harrowing story of an idiosyncratic old Ch'an master returning to Mongolia to honor his deceased teacher. This hardcover Bantam book was well-received by the critics. Jack Kornfield called it the "Best Zen story I've read in years" and Robert Bly wrote that the story was "Beautifully recounted... It's hard to overestimate the astonishment of this book." I read the book and did enjoy it, but what I found astonishing was that the monk was the same hermit Debra had taken me to visit outside of Woodstock. The book is replete with photos of him and his home which I remember well. But that's not the most astonishing part. The most astonishing part is that this monk is the same one who had taught Pakua and Hsing-I to Grandmaster DeMaria some thirty years earlier in New York's Chinatown -- the monk Tsung Tsai -- whom Grandmaster had occasionally mentioned but long since lost track of. Also of interest, at Guolin's workshop that we just completed Guolin told us that he too knows Tsung Tsai, and in fact had helped Tsung Tsai with some chi sinking exercises. Tsung Tsai had offered to teach Guolin his medical knowledge in return, but Guolin had to refuse because he is too busy running his temple. And as one more aside, it turns out that like Guolin, Tsung Tsai had spend time training at the Shaolin Temple in his younger years.



MORE CONNECTIONS

Many of you know that a few years back I started training in Pakua with Master Park Bok Nam. Apparently my martial arts skills were okay because he quickly took me under his wing and trained me intensively



Master Park (seated) and Master Sarge along with Peaceful Dragon students in 2001 workshop

and spent a good deal of time talking with me. In our discussions he learned who our great grandmaster was, and when I showed him pictures he instantly recognized him as the chief judge at one of the tournaments he had brought his Korean students to in Taiwan. Ch'ang Dung Sheng was often the chief judge at Taiwan's tournaments, and in fact Ch'ang first met Grandmaster DeMaria when he judged one of his fights. At one of Master Park's summer Pakua camps in Baltimore an older Chinese student of his came up and introduced himself as Alex Chu from Athens, GA. He complimented me on my movement and said it was clear I had been training for a while. I told him that I had been training for some time but that if I had any skill at all it was because of my main teacher, Frank DeMaria. When I mentioned that name he replied, "Do you mean the same Frank DeMaria who learned tai chi from Master Franklin Kwang? I learned that Alex had studied tai chi from Master Kwang at the same time as Grandmaster, in the early 70's. He

didn't actually know Grandmaster because Grandmaster was a private student and Alex only attended the group classes, but he knew of him. We compared our Yang Style San Shou form which I knew Grandmaster had learned from Kwang, and it was identical. Alex has since come to visit me at The Peaceful Dragon a couple of times. On one of these visits I asked him where Master Kwang was now, since Grandmaster didn't speak of him much and hadn't seemed to stay in touch with him. Alex replied that Kwang had died a few years earlier, and that he periodically went to pay his respects at his burial spot. When I asked where that might be, he replied, "The Chuang Yen Monastery in Kent, NY."

Now it might seem like a long time had gone by from when Grandmaster trained with Tsung Tsai or Franklin Kwang, but an even longer time had gone by from when he trained with his kenpo teacher, Master John McSweeney. Master McSweeney had moved away from New York in the early 60s and they had lost contact thereafter. Then, just a few years ago, a chance contact was made through the internet when one of Master McSweeney's students contacted Grandmaster. Master McSweeney and Grandmaster were at last reunited when Master McSweeney came to do a seminar at Grandmaster's school. Master McSweeney had become a 10th degree black belt and one of the highest ranking kenpo masters alive. At that time with Grandmaster's support I

invited Master McSweeney to come to Charlotte to lead a seminar which he agreed to do. He came, led an exciting and dynamic seminar, and we felt fortunate to have one of Grandmaster's first teachers here at our school. Master McSweeney died of a heart attack a month later. His seminar right here at The Peaceful Dragon was the last one he ever gave.



Master McSweeney (dark jacket) and Master Sarge along with Peaceful Dragon students during Master McSweeney's last seminar

COMING TO CHARLOTTE

Now just why is The Peaceful Dragon right here in Charlotte? After Debra and I had been married for a year or two we decided to move south. Debra had never seen snow before moving to New York, and the New York winters were rough on her. We took a two-week tour visiting dozens of cities from Wilmington to Savannah to Atlanta to Asheville. I had recently earned my certification as a school teacher, so I turned in applications at each of these city's school districts. When I got back home my Dad asked me what I thought of Charlotte. I replied, "Where's Charlotte?" I honestly had never heard of it. My Dad gave me an article from The Wall Street Journal saying it was the biggest city in the Carolinas, and it was a generally favorable article. I forwarded an application to Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, and they were the first to offer me a job.

I think it's interesting why I was offered the job in Charlotte. I had sent a personalized cover letter and resume to every high school and middle school principal in Charlotte in addition to filling out the application form for the education center downtown. It turns out that up until two years earlier the principal at South Charlotte



The Peaceful Dragon

Middle School, Dr. Maureen Cockerline, had been the principal at a high school in Newburgh, NY which was located about a half hour from my home in Kent. Next door was Newburgh Junior High School, the school that I randomly got assigned to for my student teaching during the same time period. When she got my personal letter asking her for a job she immediately invited me down for an interview, thinking I wanted to relocate here to work for her because of all the good things I must have heard about her in Newburgh. Of course I had never heard of her in Newburgh and she laughed graciously when I told her this. She offered me the job anyway. Debra came down to see the city, we both decided it seemed like a nice place to live, and we moved here. Now this story keeps unfolding, but since each of you are now characters in it lets together observe the connections as they appear... and enjoy our chance to train together at this moment and place in time.

Sifu Eric Sbarge

WORKSHOPS AND EVENTS

PA-KUA WITH MASTER PARK



On April 22 and 23, renowned Master Park Bok Nam will conduct another special workshop at *THE PEACEFUL DRAGON*. Master Park generously shares his encyclopedic knowledge of Pa-kua as he continues to address principles of energy

development, movement and mental focus common in all martial arts. This workshop is open to all ages and levels of experience. Friday from 5 – 10pm will focus on self-defense applications; Saturday 11am – 5pm will include qi-gong and principle techniques unique to Pa-kua, details to follow.

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.

TIBET WEEK AT PEACEFUL DRAGON!

Several events are taking place that will bring a special focus to Tibetan culture and beliefs. Don't miss this rare opportunity to experience the emotional and spiritual beauty and power of the touring Mystical Arts monks and to participate in special talks and workshops by Geshe Dakpa Topgyal.

On Wednesday, March 16 from 7 – 9pm, Tibetan monks from the Drepung Loseling Monastery in India are offering a very rare workshop at The Peaceful Dragon.



The troupe is showing "The Mystical Arts of Tibet" at the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center where the program features the use of creative imagination, or mental imagery, together with the sacred sounds of mantra and gestures or mudra, which have been indispensable tools in Tibetan Buddhism for many centuries. In that culture, visualization and sacred

sounds play an important role in personal, physical, emotional and social well-being. Modern science now understands mental imagery as a major component of the mind/body connection; it is used by athletes and even in medical treatment.

The workshop at *THE PEACEFUL DRAGON* will cover the theory and principles of visualization and sacred sounds. The workshop leader will then introduce participants to basic visualization meditation with mantra recitation and mudra, or hand movements, activating one's mystic energies.

Special thanks to the Education Institute of the North Carolina Blumenthal Performing Arts Center for making this program possible. The workshop is free.

On Saturday, March 19 at 7pm, Geshe Dakpa Topgyal will give a free talk on the benefits of meditation. "Relieving Stress and Other Benefits of Meditation" is a favorite subject of Geshe-la and one that he has shared with numerous audiences in the US and in Europe. Born in Western Tibet near Mount Kailash, he entered Drepung Loseling Monastery in India when he was ten. With a Ph. D. in Buddhist philosophy and meditation, Geshe-la is famous for his skillful presentations of Tibetan spiritual thought to Western audiences. In addition to talking about meditation, Venerable Geshe Dakpa Topgyal will show some techniques for people to try.



Following the talk, there will be a workshop on Sunday, March 20 from 12 – 3pm where the subject will be "Meditation Techniques for Developing Compassion." At the highest level, compassion is seen as an awareness of universal responsibility for the benefit of all sentient beings. This workshop will focus on methods for cultivating compassion through a meditative practice. Because compassion is the source of happiness and courage, and the most important element of Buddhist teaching, this will be a very valuable workshop for all students. The cost of the workshop is \$49 for the public, \$29 for Peaceful Dragon students.



Cooking to Go!



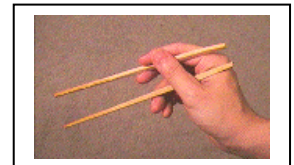
With Spring around the corner, people eagerly turn to thoughts of that first picnic. Healthy vegetarian eating can be a challenge outside the kitchen, but Chef Geoff has the answer in this exciting **Vegan Springtime Picnic workshop, Sunday, March 6 from 1 – 4pm.** The

focus will be on finger food but will include sandwiches, salads and even dessert. Reservations by March 4, please; \$30 per person.

INTERNATIONAL DINNER SERIES BEGINS

Another exciting year of exploration into the tastes and creative cultures of the world begins with a trip to the **Mediterranean on Tuesday, March 15 at 7pm.**

The cost is \$40 per person excluding tax, gratuity and beverages. The public can subscribe to all four dinners in the series and save \$5 per person on each dinner. Peaceful Dragon students pay only \$35 per person with no price break for full subscription. The menu for our visit to this "middle earth" is:



- First – Red lentils with artichoke bottoms
- Second – Asparagus potage with garlic cream
- Third – Fennel salad with mint vinaigrette
- Fourth – Eggplant and ratatouille stacks with white bean and sage sauce
- Fifth – Sweet apples with lavender wrapped in phyllo

Future explorations are May 17 – Cuban/Caribbean; September 13 – Vietnam; and November 15 – India.

WHAT'S UP

Sifu's LECTURE

Make sure to attend this interesting discussion, following tai chi, **Wednesday, March 2. The topic is Non-attachment as a Method for Personal Development.** Be thinking of topics you'd like to know more about.

NEW SASHES MARK TIME IN TRAINING

In a traditional Chinese *kwoon* (guan), there is no belt system with emphasis on rank. The student is unconcerned with this recognition, which is viewed as an egoist impediment to the development of true martial art with its basis in *wu-de*. How long a student has trained does not necessarily indicate a level of skill, but rather a commitment to the training

with its focus on personal development. Our new sashes approved by Grandmaster DeMaria mark time in training as follows:

Beginner – red

ACCS student, 1 year or more – red w/white fringe

Disciple, 5 years or more – red w/black fringe

Gao Shou, 10 years or more – black w/white fringe

Lau Shr (instructor) – black w/gold fringe

Master 20 years or more – black & red w/gold fringe

Grandmaster – any sash you like

Do You Stink?

It's come to the attention of, well, lots of folks, that some students are stinking up the place. No one is going to smell like a rose after a vigorous class, but if you start with a clean shirt on a clean body, things won't get too



odoriferous. However, if you hang around for a while, even if the shirt dries, you'll be good and stinky (and maybe the last to know). You might just want to keep an extra shirt in your bag. And of course, never go through the tea house in a drenched condition. Think of it as environmental protection.

RESTAURANT GOES UPSCALE

Folks have taken notice of talented Chef Geoff's creative international dinner menus, and the daily menus for lunch, dinner and Sunday brunch have won several Charlotte's Best awards from Creative Loafing. Following the recent recognition from AOL Digital Cities for 2005 **Best All Around**

Restaurant and **Best Healthy Dining**, *THE*

PEACEFUL DRAGON will offer an upscale menu and a new look in the main dining room including sophisticated Asian style place settings.

The Tea Room and Patio Service will continue with their familiar setting where it will be possible to order from either menu. Families with children under six are asked to use the Tea Room. Fine Dining will begin on March 29.



CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

PARENTS CLASS –

YOU KNOW YOU WANT TO!

On **Wednesday, March 2**, parents will have a chance to find out up close why they knew classes at *THE PEACEFUL DRAGON* would be good for their

kids. **Class will be open to all parents with their children and we encourage as many parents as possible to get into the studio for this wonderful chance to learn along with.** Wear loose clothing and sneakers. Also, everyone please no food or drinks in the studios – bottled water only, and keep belongings against the observation window wall.

CHILD SAFETY, FOCUS OF TALK, SEMINAR

Children 5 – 12 and their parents are invited to a **free** talk on Saturday, March 19 at 3pm. Sifu will discuss the dangers of encounters with strangers, dealing with bullies and unique dangers you may find around the house. As a follow up to the talk, plan to attend the two hour seminar Saturday, March 26 from 3 – 5pm. Public, \$39; Peaceful Dragon students, \$29. Prices are for parents with their children.

PARENTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Mark your calendar for this important meeting, **March 17 at 5:30pm in Studio B.** This group works with Peaceful Dragon staff to help determine the direction of programs for children and to offer their time and other support to the success of those programs. Please join in as we move into another exciting year!

REMINDER – curricula and other information for children's programs are all available on the web site so remember to check www.thepeacefuldragon.com regularly. Just click on the Members link on the home page.

VOLUNTEERING

SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE

Following the passing of long-time student Bob Duzy, and at the request of his wife Edythe also a long-time student and friend of *THE PEACEFUL DRAGON*, donations were made in lieu of flowers and the **Edythe and Robert Duzy Scholarship Fund** was established. Along with such a fund comes the responsibility to manage it well. *THE PEACEFUL DRAGON* needs a small group of committed individuals to help decide how to grow and use the fund now and in the future. If you are interested, please talk with Sifu.

PD NEEDS GARDEN GOODIES, SUPPLIES

Spring brings it out in all of us – that little bit of anticipatory giddiness that starts with the blooming of the first flower. As you dig and mulch

and fertilize at home, and perhaps need to thin bulbs and plants or have extra supplies, consider bringing them to *THE PEACEFUL DRAGON*. And if you just like puttering in the garden but maybe don't have the space for your own, come and help with ours. It's time to prepare the beds and plant!

Good News! Our recent Chinese New Year Festival raised \$575.00 for the Red Cross tsunami relief effort. Great job, everyone!

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. Pav at the front counter.

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.

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.

ON THE DRAGON PATH

IMAGINATION AND FANTASY

By Stuart Edmondson

Disciple-level Peaceful Dragon student

Have you heard of the phrase, "lost in thought"? Usually this means that we are not engaged in what we are doing. Some refer to this as day dreaming. However, imagination is a powerful function of the mind that we can use to learn new things and even to expand our awareness in terms of both our martial arts training and our work for personal "inner" growth. To be lost in thought is part and parcel of what is routine for most of us as we go through our day. A better term to describe this "lost mental space" is Fantasy. Let's compare the processes of Fantasy and Imagination in terms of what is useful or not. We may find it interesting to examine how we spend our mental time.

First, think of Imagination as a creative process that has an intended outcome. Any creative process is not just a matter of chance. The first required component of Imagination is the involvement of the intellect. Intellect initially provides the very important component of intent. Intent is often omitted from many of our activities, but it is extremely important. Intent offers a direction and even a framework for the thoughts that are applied to the imaging process or the task at hand. Intent is not possible without the active use of the intellect.

Let's describe the working domain of the intellect. Intellect or the intellectual process proceeds from the simple classification of words, initially nouns and verbs, to the recognition and filing of facts, to the construction of complex ideas. It then assembles ideas into structures such as essays or theses that can convey meaning. Finally, complex concepts of meaning that have relationships with other concepts, are combined into what we commonly refer to as philosophy. Perhaps the highest use of the Intellect is philosophical. The most powerful function and maybe the limit of the intellect is to hold various complex philosophical constructs, or systems of thoughts and beliefs, in multiple relationships. The imaging process, which is mental work, happens as the intellect first selects relevant thoughts or concepts, holds them in a particular relationship and then rearranges them into different models of possible "truth". Each relationship of components represents a model to be mentally tested. Does it work? Is it reasonable? What is the truth of the matter? Each model offers a solution or an

opportunity to understand or learn something about the components, or even better, to learn something of ourselves.

We can use the intellect to pick components that we want to work with, hold these components in various associations, and determine which association best solves or meets the desires of our intentions. For example, in Taichi practice, consider how we may work with slant flight. How many ways can we use it where the intention is a successful self defense technique? To do so, we would hold different images in mind such as various attacks, at different angles, while we are in different stances. We create a model, and then we create other models such that the variations allow learning. This process doesn't happen by chance. It is constructed intentionally. It is rewarding and often "feeds" one in a way that it is satisfying.

Now, how is the thinking process of Fantasy different? We have all drifted off into Fantasy. It can feel like a pleasant musing where we are left with a smile on our face or it can feel deeply emotional where we experience hurt, anger, or any range of emotions. Thus, the first characteristic of Fantasy is that it involves emotion. Often, Fantasy is a playful stream of thoughts that makes us feel important. It seems to rationalize or justify what we are feeling about ourselves or to compensate for what we don't wish to feel. Significantly, feeling important could mean feeling in some way superior or inferior to others. Recall the phrase "lost in thought". The lost sense is a second characteristic of Fantasy. In other words, there is little or no intellect or awareness involved in the Fantasy experience. The most innocent Fantasy is most likely harmless and in such cases, we succeed in feeling good, and at worst we may waste a little time. However, the Fantasies that are simply reactions to negative experiences in life can be quite unhealthy. We have all had experiences of events or of relationships that result in some condition of unresolved stress. In such cases, a pattern of thought develops around this type of event that plays out over and over like a broken record. The same thoughts and feelings arise in a familiar way as the mental scene or event is repeated. At each play, our personal reservoir of energy in the form of physical chi and emotions are pulled into this repetitive cycle of fantasy, and serve as fuel for the process. The process remains unresolved without the direction of intent and awareness that we see as a part of imagination. At worst, this drains our vitality and can make us physically sick; it certainly makes us emotionally and spiritually toxic. What is noted here is that this process is automatic, without scrutiny of examination or intent and often drains our vitality.

The purpose of this article is to differentiate between the two processes of Imagination and Fantasy. By doing so, we have an opportunity to increase our skillful use of imagination and also reduce the negative results of wayward thinking characterized by Fantasy. In summary, we can observe what we are thinking while we are thinking. Constructive imagination involves the use of the intellect. The intellect not only holds possible thoughts or images to compare and consider, but it also defines the intent of the process. Fantasy is absent of intellect and the mind is unguided. Imagination admits awareness while most of the time Fantasy does not. When we notice a reoccurring pattern that seems to just pop up, seems unavoidable and is persistent in gaining our attention, we may be in Fantasy. If the pattern of thinking has a consistent emotional content and outcome, we may be in Fantasy. If over time we feel drained within the pattern of thinking, we may be in Fantasy. Imagination is intentionally engaging and most often is a rewarding experience. Imagination is also a process that can be shared with others in a very fruitful manner, while Fantasy is limited to one person's experience.

Imagination should be embraced as a natural and valuable mental process. Fantasy that is negative in content or is a persistent presence is a detriment to our peace of mind. It should be cut down at every opportunity. We need to pick up the broad sword of intellectual examination to cut it down as soon as we catch it arising. The broad sword could also be our favorite poem or inspirational reading, a vigorous workout, prayer, or some time spent on the meditation cushion – any activity that involves intent and intellectual examination. As you may now imagine, intellectual examination produces awareness. Like shedding light on darkness, awareness disposes of Fantasy.

As we examine our own thoughts, thought processes, intention and level of awareness, we learn to employ Imagination and be cautious of Fantasy. There is another very good question to ask! Who is thinking?

LAMA SURYA DAS To give Workshop

Presenting a powerful, popular and eclectic approach to understanding and integrating spiritual wisdom, Surya Das is one of the best known Western scholars and teachers of Buddhism, and lectures all over the world. He will be in Charlotte on Saturday, April 23 to give a workshop from 1:30 – 5:30pm on the subject of "Awakening to the Sacred." The location has not been announced yet. For details, see www.thebodhitree.com. This site has a wealth of things to offer.

PATHWAYS

GATHER YE ROSEBUDS...

By Kathy Crowe

Disciple-level Peaceful Dragon student



Over the last year, a good friend died, and so did my dog. We bought our first house and moved closer to The Peaceful Dragon. I got my freelance design business up and going. People came into our lives

and people left. It was a year of change, like every year is.

Right now, for me it's a golden time to be at The Peaceful Dragon, and as I'm so mindful these days of how things constantly change, I'm particularly grateful to be right here, right now.

Whether you've been with Sifu for 10 years or 10 days, you know what an extraordinary opportunity we have to study with someone who has so much to teach us, and on so many levels; how lucky we are to have this beautiful building; and how lovely it is to be part of this special (if occasionally dysfunctional) family.

Of course, this will change. People move, they go off to college, they lose interest. And new students come, with their own enthusiasm and talents. Our bodies change (for better and for worse). We know there are horizons we can't even dream about. New challenges, disappoints, and joys lie ahead. Heck, even the menu changes.

For now, I'm grateful that my karma brought me here, that I'm healthy enough to take class, that I have the opportunity to do some work with Sifu. Maybe because I'm getting older, I value every class as a gift, as an opportunity to learn something, to deepen an insight, to get a little stronger.

We sure are lucky.



Continue to check the website for events postings for 2005; here's the link:

<http://www.thepeacefuldragon.com/studentspecialevents.shtml>

And please note that the **Stress Reduction Workshop** previously scheduled for March 12 has been cancelled.

If you were interested in this, check out the offerings during Tibet Week.