



St. Louis
T'ai Chi Ch'uan
Association

New Student Information

About the St. Louis T'ai Chi Ch'uan Association

The St. Louis T'ai Chi Ch'uan Association (Pronounced: St. Louis "tie-jee chwan" Association) is a not for profit organization, incorporated in 1981 and dedicated to the teaching and practice of the Yang-style Short Form of T'ai Chi Ch'uan. Dues of \$50 per month pay for the rental of teaching space and help defray the cost of special workshops led by internationally known teachers. The local instructors and members of the board of directors are volunteers.

Learning the form

It takes about 8 months to learn the basic postures of the Short Form. Serious students continue to take classes to refine their practice. The \$50 fee covers one class per week for the month, exclusive of special workshops. There are discounts for couples and "families".

T'ai Chi Ch'uan (often shortened to T'ai Chi) requires no special equipment, facilities or clothing. It can be performed indoors and is accessible to almost anyone, regardless of age, sex or initial level of fitness. The only prerequisites are a sincere desire to learn and a willingness to work hard. T'ai Chi does not produce quick results; it allows the cultivation of patience and perseverance.

More about T'ai Chi

T'ai Chi Ch'uan means "supreme ultimate boxing". It is a system of exercise, a moving meditation, and a self-defense art. As an exercise, T'ai Chi is characterized by slow, continuous movement through a successive series of postures performed in a relaxed manner with a calm but concentrated mind. Traditionally, it was said, that whoever practices T'ai Chi correctly and regularly, will gain the pliability of a child, the health of a lumberjack, and the peace of mind of a sage (T'ai Chi by Cheng Man-ch'eng and Robert W. Smith, Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1967). While this may sound improbable, any long-term practitioner will attest to its very real benefits. Slow, relaxed movements and deepened respiration help to counteract

stress and disperse accumulated tension. Rhythmic movement and the relaxed but demanding postures provide a massage for the internal organs and promote digestion and blood circulation. Correct posturing in T'ai Chi increases flexibility, tunes and refines the kinesthetic sense, and aids in regaining the proper structural alignment of the body.

T'ai Chi is considered an "internal" system, meaning that it emphasizes the mind-body connection rather than concentrating solely on physical strength or speed. A calm, attentive mind directs intrinsic energy, known as chi, which in turn directs the movements of the body. This approach is a key factor in developing energy without tension and tranquillity without lethargy.

Our Association does not emphasize the martial aspect of T'ai Chi Ch'uan, however, references to martial applications are made. The martial applications become increasingly relevant to those students who continue their studies to include T'ui Shou or push hands, a two-person exercise. T'ai Chi as a defensive art relies on relaxation, suppleness, and subtlety.

The History of T'ai Chi and the Yang Style

The origins of T'ai Chi are obscured by legends and traditional secrecy, but it has certainly existed in some form for many hundreds of years. The style we practice began with Yang Lu-ch'an, who learned T'ai Chi from the Ch'en family in the early nineteenth century. Yang Lu-ch'an modified the form he learned to create the Yang style, probably the most widely practiced today.

Yang passed the art to his sons and they to theirs. His grandsons included Yang Cheng-fu, a formidable martial artist who was known throughout China in the early years of this century.

It was from Yang Cheng-fu that Cheng Man-ch'ing learned T'ai Chi during the 1920's. Cheng overcame serious illness and went on to become one of the most widely respected practitioners of T'ai Chi in modern times. A person of extraordinary accomplishment, Professor Cheng exemplifies the traditional Chinese gentleman in his mastery of the "Five Excellences": painting, poetry, calligraphy, Chinese medicine, and T'ai Chi.

Finding the existing Yang form was too long for many of his students to learn and practice properly, Cheng eliminated repetitions and other postures to create a 37-

posture form. This is the Yang style Short Form which we teach and practice today. Professor Cheng passed away in 1975.

Among Professor Cheng's foremost students is Benjamin Pang Jeng Lo. Mr. Lo began his study of T'ai Chi in 1947 and came to the United States in the early 1970's. Mr. Lo has devoted himself to preserving and spreading the authentic T'ai Chi he received from Professor Cheng and he is especially known for his mastery of push hands.

The St. Louis T'ai Chi Ch'uan Association is allied with Mr. Lo's Universal Tai Chi Ch'uan Association in San Francisco.

The Saint Louis Tái Chi Chúan Association Board

President: Mr. Michael David (mcdavid@artpho.com)

Vice President: Ms. Shelley Shray

Treasurer: Anne Gricevich

Secretary: Mr. Terry Staebel

Board Member: Ms. Dean Brake

Ex-Officio Board Member: Mr. Bill Grivna

Suggested Reading List

T'ai Chi Ch'uan: A Simplified Method of Calisthenics for Health & Self Defense (1981). By Cheng Man-ch'ing. North Atlantic Books. Berkeley CA.

The Essence of T'ai Chi Ch'uan: The Literary Tradition (1979). Translated and Edited by Benjamin Pang Jeng Lo, Martin Inn, Robert Amacker, & Susan Foe. North Atlantic Books. Berkeley CA.

T'ai Chi Ch'uan: The "Supreme Ultimate" Exercise for Health, Sport, & Self-defense. (1967) By Cheng Man-ch'ing and Robert W. Smith. Charles E. Tuttle Co, Rutland, Vermont.

T'ai Chi Ch'uan Ta Wen: Question and Answers on T'ai Chi Ch'uan (1929). By Chen Wei-Ming. Translated by Benjamin Pan Jeng Lo and Robert W. Smith. North Atlantic Books. Berkeley CA.

Davis, D. D. & Mann, L. L. (1996) **Conservator of the T'ai Chi Classics: An interview with Benjamin Pang Jeng Lo.** *Journal of Asian Martial Arts, Volume 5, Number 4*, 46-67. Via Media, 1-800-455-9517 (orders only)

Tricia Yu Video: www.taichihealth.com/ (go too the Books and Video section and and get the DVD or VHS Exercise for Lifelong Health – Chen Man-Ch'ing Lineage D-50 or V- 50)

Ben Lo Video: See Instructor

Discounts are given for students who pay for all 5 months at the beginning of a session. Discount is \$10 per month for a total savings of \$50 off the normal dues. With the discount, dues for 5 months would be \$200.

Family Discount \$50 for first person, \$40 for each additional family member.

Single class is \$15.

Because the association is charged for checks that do not clear, please do not stop payment on a check. Instead consult with the instructor about refunds.

Inclement weather may cause classes to be cancelled. To find out if classes are cancelled, call the Association's number 314.961.1355. Decision to cancel class will hopefully be made by 9AM.