

PA KUA CHANG DIARY

Pierce Watters

"THE SUPERIOR MAN STAKES HIS LIFE ON FOLLOWING HIS WILL"

Kun 47 / I CHING



Pierce Watters, Editor

Many readers of IAM have asked if I am just an Editor hired to do a job or if I actually practice these arts. The answer is, I *am* an avid practitioner and supporter of the internal arts movement.

I had never been an exceptionally healthy person. From childhood, illness seems to have been my lot in life, ranging from common colds to chronic infections of the lymphatic system. You might say that adversity had been a constant companion of mine, that is until I discovered how to take responsibility for my health and well-being through the practice of Dr. John Painter's Nine Dragon Pa Kua Chang.

Introduced to the soft and gentle arts through an internal martial arts class offered by the senior instructors of Dr. Painter's first school, the Tao Ch'i Chuan Internal Health Center, I hoped the martial arts training would give me the confidence and stamina to overcome my lingering maladies.

During 1984 I studied meditation, yoga and self-defense at the Tao Ch'i Health Center but never truly delved deeply into the acquisition of true internal arts skills. I just could not seem to muster enough motivation for practicing as much as I knew I should. My teacher said that perhaps I just had not found the art that "had my name on it yet."

Then in July 1984 something happened that was to change the course of my personal history forever. My family physician diagnosed a severe lymph gland ailment that was rapidly spreading. Surgery, he said was the only remedy. I was despondent. Surgery was, as far as I was concerned, out of the question. What was I to do?

While drinking tea with fellow students one evening we were discussing

the move of the Tao Ch'i Internal Health Center to its new location. It was to be called the Wholistic Fitness Center and would begin to carry out Dr. Painter's plan for introducing the internal arts to the nation as a method of alternative exercise and healing arts. The conversation drifted to talk of the art of Pa Kua Chang. "It's really a strange style, I can feel energy flowing around and through my fingers when I walk the circle," one student commented. "Yes, and my tennis game has improved from the added flexibility and power," chimed in another. A third student added "Have you heard about the punk who attacked assistant instructor Alan Marshall at a convenience store? Mr. Marshall deflected the punch and pushed the guy in the chest with a Pa Kua palm, well John said it lifted this huge guy completely off the ground and threw him over the hood of a car. I mean the body force of Pa Kua is really incredible."

I looked out the open door as the conversation droned on in the background. The sun slowly set as a warm July breeze floated lazily through the building. Taking another sip of tea, I felt myself gearing up to sink into another round of self-induced anxiety over my imagined, impending doom. Then suddenly a word from the continuing conversation sparked in my ear like an electric shock. "Wait, wait, what was that you said just now about somebody's mother being healed?" I practically shouted at the senior instructor who had just finished speaking.

"I said that Tom Barrister's mother had swollen lymph nodes the doctors wanted to remove with surgery but Tom taught her Dr. Painter's Pa Kua Chang lymphatic cleansing exercises," he responded, looking at me somewhat puzzled. Due, I am sure to my sudden

outburst.

"Well...well, what happened to her, tell me about it," I implored him. "Nothing much," he said in a matter of fact tone. "She got better in a few weeks from walking the circle and the surgery wasn't needed. It happens all the time." He turned back to the others as I stood up and walked toward the open door. "Nothing much he says," I repeated to myself, "they talk about self-defense and feeling energy as if those things were really important, but when a woman is healed of a major illness, it's nothing much!"

My head reeling, I walked out into the warm air of the approaching evening. In the distance, Dr. Painter, who is affectionately called Shir Fu Painter, a Chinese term which roughly translated means father/teacher, was instructing a group of advanced students in the art of walking the Pa Kua Chang circle beneath a stand of tall oak trees in a lit-



The technique "Dragon Beneath the Waves" from Pa Kua Chang's Dragon Dancing form builds powerful leg and lower back muscles while improving cardiovascular fitness. He circled and turned, silhouet-

ted in the setting sun, his coiling form seemed more like a tall, powerfully built dragon dancing a graceful flowing dance than that of a 40 year old man.

The class stopped to take a break, I approached Shir Fu Painter, told him of the impending operation and my lymph gland problems, and asked if Pa Kua Chang could help me. He asked me a number of questions about my health history and told me that it was my decision to have, or not have, the surgery. I must make that choice. He said he would teach me the art, but that I should check with my doctor first to see if I could go for a couple of months without the surgery and I was not to avoid getting medical advice from my physician whenever it was warranted.

Then he sat me down under the shade of one of the giant oaks and had me write down a list of healing herbs, including garlic and Ginseng and gave me a strict schedule of daily meditation. Then, motioning me to follow, he led me to a cool grassy knoll beneath a Live Oak tree, and there in the twilight began to teach me to walk the circle of Nine Dragon Pa Kua Chang.

THE PA KUA DIARY

Being a literary oriented person, it is my nature to record things for future reference. I began to chronicle my learning experiences with Pa Kua Chang and have included herein a portion of my notes in diary form to demonstrate the remarkable changes experienced on my road to recovery.

8-2-84

For a month I walked the circle every four hours for ten minutes every day. I didn't exercise to the point of fatigue, and I stopped often during my practice to rest, arms and legs spread wide to allow the lymph fluid to flow and be cleansed. These rest periods also gave me additional time for meditation, during which I practiced visualizing my lymph glands being cleansed and healed. Returning to my doctor for another examination, I was pronounced, by an amazed physician, to be well and no longer in need of surgery. My study of Pa Kua Chang continued.

9-7-84

I thought I had good balance. I had always had a good sense of balance. Pa Kua Chang is teaching me otherwise. Walking the circle, facing toward the center of the circle, practicing rapid

changes of direction, soon taught me that my concept of good balance was like a thief's concept of honor, it was great...as far as it went.

"Relax. Breathe. Lower your stance. Relax!"

"You mean I'm not supposed to wear my shoulders around my ears?" I'm like a baby, learning to walk, stand, sit and breathe all over again. "Be expansive. You're too tight. Be like a dragon, like a cloud, flow, don't fight it!"

I'm sure Shir Fu Painter must have felt that teaching me was like teaching a pig to recite the Gettysburg Address.



The author walking the circle of Pa Kua Chang. This technique is the dragon rising from the lake posture used to flush the lymph ducts in the under arms and thighs.

10-20-84

I am beginning to feel more like a cloud, and less like a lump of clay. Once, in the middle of the night, a sudden noise awoke me. Before I was even awake, I found myself sitting upright in bed with my hands in the Wandering Dragon position. I am beginning to react rather than think. By gosh, I must be learning!

10-22-84

At the DFW airport today, deep in conversation with an author who had just arrived from New York, I passed an automatic door, triggering its electric sensor. Again, without thought, my hands moved into the Pa Kua Chang Fire position, *Li*. Effortlessly I deflected the heavy door and continued on. The conversation was not interrupted. My friend, the author, just stared at me with a quizzical expression.

10-25-84

All of my family suffers from blood

pressure and heart problems. My father died of a heart attack. Even with regular exercise, my blood pressure tends toward high normal. Though Pa Kua Chang had lowered my resting heart rate 15 points, it was still in the mid seventies. Today Shir Fu Painter introduced me to Dragon Dancing. Dragon Dancing is a soft aerobic exercise based on the movements used in Pa Kua Chang. It has eight basic positions, one for each of eight trigrams in the *I Ching*. These can then be combined to form a seemingly infinite number of other postures.

Dragon Dancing was developed by Shir Fu Painter as an alternative to traditional aerobics. Having suffered from bad knees since High School, I am delighted to find an aerobic form that does not hurt. It is fun!

1-3-85

In three months, my resting heart rate has dropped to 56. I am so amazed and delighted with Dragon Dancing, I take every opportunity to tell people about it. I am working on several editorial projects in conjunction with the Dallas Cowboys' Football Team. The Cowboys are always open to new ideas, and are willing to try anything that might improve their players performance. I introduced them to Dr. Painter. He worked with a number of players with amazing results. Along with Dragon Dancing, he also taught Pa Kua Chang movements, Chinese massage, and acupressure to the players.

The other day several Cowboy rookies were jumping up on and down from large cubes of varying height. One player in particular was having trouble leaping to the top of the highest cube. Shir Fu Painter spent a few minutes working acupressure points on the rookie's thighs. The player jumped again and soared to the top of the cube with ease. Shir Fu Painter walked calmly away. The rookie stood atop the cube, a look of amazement on his face.

2-11-85

The previous weekend, while attending a cook-out at a nearby lake, I was standing on a large willow branch, trying to break it in half for the camp fire. My foot slipped, my knee twisted, and I felt something go POP! I fell to the ground in pain. Something was seriously wrong. I went to my doctor the following Monday. Cartilage had been torn, and surgery was recommended. Having



Members of the research staff at the Life Sciences Institute record subject's vital signs during Pa Kua Chang fitness potential tests. Heart, respiration, body temperature, oxygen consumption, brain waves are all analyzed to help design the ultimate new age exercise forms.

no fondness for knives stuck in my body, I decided to wait. Shir Fu Painter showed me a simple exercise for strengthening the knee, and I continued on with my Pa Kua Chang practice, albeit at a much slower pace, and wearing an elastic knee brace. Progress was less than gradual. Many evenings, I sat and watched as my classmates practiced. My knee hurt constantly. Every time I meditated I concentrated on healing the injured joint. Months passed and the knee responded.

5-19-85

Pa Kua Chang exercise has slowly helped my knee recover. The pain ebbed. I am thrilled to be able to sit once more in the kneeling Warrior's position of Pa Kua Chang. The pain is gone and my knee is stronger than ever.

8-5-85

I have just finished a grueling 12 hour editorial meeting with a Dallas publishing firm, looking at countless slides in a hot, smoke-filled room. My eyes are red, my head aches, my body feels drained of energy. There is more work to be done before I can leave.

An editorial deadline is fast approaching. I close my office door, sit on the floor in the Warrior's Position, slow my breathing and meditate for 15 minutes. Then, and here is one of the many beauties of Pa Kua Chang, in the small floor space of my office I am able to walk the circle. As I walk I feel the

tension and fatigue drain from my body. While performing the constant directional changes inherent in Pa Kua Chang, my hands and arms move in a type of aura stroking called the Yang Change. Energy flowed and within a short time I feel as fresh as I had at the beginning of the day. Work can now continue and the deadline will be met.

4-7-86

It is night at the Wholistic Fitness Center. Shir Fu Painter has blindfolded me and I am walking the circle, performing the eight shapes, Kuas, of Pa Kua Chang, and then the ninth, the shape that has no shape, the shape of Nine Dragon Pa Kua Chang. My breathing is easy, I feel strong yet light. I feel at one with the Universe, with Pa Kua Chang and *I Ching* and with the Tao. This is the closest I've ever been to the cloud, to the Cloud Dragon that is Pa Kua Chang. This is what it's all about.

Editors Note:

The Nine Dragon Pa Kua Chang and Spring Rain Pa Kua Chang are copyrighted psycho-physical therapy exercise forms and internal martial arts developed by Dr. John Painter and the Research staff at the Life Sciences Institute. The techniques are derived from a classical traditional Chinese Pa Kua Chang system taught by Taoist Master Li Ch'ing Yuen in Peking, China during the late eighteen hundreds. The Pa Kua Chang art of Master Li was thought to be almost extinct until a rare manuscript, purportedly written by Master Li, came into the possession of Dr. Painter's internal arts teacher who passed it on to Dr. Painter during the early 1960's. Using the Pa Kua Chang

art of Li Ch'ing Yuen and Chinese physical therapeutic Ch'i Kung arts and the *I Ching* as a base, Dr. Painter resurrected and reconstructed the original art of Master Li. The Life Sciences Institute then undertook the lengthy process of adapting the style to conform to the current modern knowledge of psychophysical sciences. Kinetic and ergonomic studies were performed by computer and precise video analysis in order to adjust each body posture and technique in the new Pa Kua Chang art for maximum benefit to muscle structures, joints, tendons, ligaments and internal organs without increasing stress or friction to delicate joint structures.

The next step involved the blending of physical static postures into movements designed to release emotional tension and increase internal energy flow (Ch'i). Psychologists, physical therapists and neurosurgeons contributed to this phase of the Nine Dragon Pa Kua Chang art.

Today the new simplified improved art is being taught in seminars and classes around the nation as a method of developing health, strength, fitness and freedom from emotional stress, as well as an effective self-protection method. Instructional video tapes and a series of books on Pa Kua Chang and Dragon Dancing, along with a new learning concept developed by Dr. Painter called "AUDIO MASTER", will soon be available from Paper Lantern Publishing Company.

Many major corporations, small businesses and national sports figures are taking up the practice of "Dragon Dancing", as the art is referred to, when taught in the non-martial arts setting. These leaders of industry and sports are finding Pa Kua Chang is an effective alternative to jogging, pumping iron or pushing pills and it is an all in one art which only takes fifteen minutes a day. Small price to pay for radiant health and freedom from stress, isn't it!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pierce Watters is Editor of Internal Arts Magazine and also works as a publishing consultant. He has worked for several national publishers in marketing, as a writer and an editor. He is also currently an advanced Pa Kua Chang student at the Wholistic Fitness Center.

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