



## Cloud Hands Tai Chi Fall 2024 Newsletter

"Be as still as a mountain,  
Move like a great river"

### **Sept. - Dec. 2024 Schedule\***

**\*Please contact Michael Ward  
for registration information  
[CloudHandsTaiChi37@gmail.com](mailto:CloudHandsTaiChi37@gmail.com)**

**Date: Sunday, Sept. 22nd  
Location: CityDance at Strathmore  
North Bethesda, MD**

- Corrections & Sensing Hands

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- (37 postures) 9:00 - 10:30 am
- Sword form and Fencing  
10:30 - 11:30 am

**Date: Monday, Sept. 23rd**

**Location: Crossings in Downtown  
Silver Spring, MD**

- Corrections & Sensig Hands  
(37 postures) 7:00 - 8:30 pm

**Date: Thursday, Sept. 26th**

**Location: Zoom\***

- Corrections (all 37 postures)  
7:00 - 8:00 pm \* This class is  
recorded and a link is sent to all  
students each week.

## ***New Beginners Class in January 2025***

For the first time in two years, I will be offering a New Beginners class. If you, or someone you know, is interested, please contact me for details.  
[CloudHandsTaiChi37@gmail.com](mailto:CloudHandsTaiChi37@gmail.com)



## ***Finger Lakes Tai Chi Camp***

- The red barn at Keuka is no longer the site for the Finger Lakes Tai Chi camp. For the second year in a row Hobart and Smith college in Geneva, New York was the Tai Chi camp location. In July several of Maggie Newman's senior students co-led 45 participants through a week-long Tai Chi camp at the new location. The camp previously ran under Maggie's direction at Keuka College for almost 30 years. After Maggie retired, what began as a bit of an experiment in collaborative teaching, has become an annual event in her student's Tai Chi calendars. Students who directly studied with Maggie when she was teaching, along with students now studying under her senior students are continuing to follow the camp structure developed by Maggie, as well as adhering, as best we can, to her teaching methods and philosophy.

## ***The Seen and Unseen in Tai Chi***

***We cannot see the wind,*** yet we see the grasses sway.

We see the tree limbs bend, and feel its touch upon our skin.

We cannot see the wind, and yet, we recognize its presence.

T



***We cannot see the ch'i,***  
but by quieting the Mind,  
we can listen,  
and feel its presence.....

In the beginning Tai Chi practice, of necessity, focuses on the external, or ***what can be "seen"***....  
What is the position of the arms, the legs, the torso?... Which leg is holding the weight?...

***What does the posture "look like"***

Through repetition and daily practice, one develops a deeper awareness of what cannot be seen, but like the wind, can be felt. Over time, the external shape gradually becomes less and less the primary focus of a daily Tai Chi practice. By developing a quiet, meditative mind, we enhance our ability ***"to listen"*** and become aware of the internal, ***"the unseen"***...  
that is, ***what a posture "feels like"*** .

By softening of ***what is seen*** (the external) in our Tai Chi postures, and placing our attention on how the postures feel, we allow them to be ***shaped by the unseen***, the ***ch'i***. In doing so, our internal pursuit of balance, harmony, and ease, ***become one with the wind***, and our external, observable body becomes ***"the swaying grasses, and the bending tree limbs..."***

**The Taoists** were great observers of Nature. They developed a sophisticated philosophy (**Taoism**) from these observations that is the foundation not only of Tai Chi, but also much of Chinese medicine, art and culture.

Many, many years ago, my first Tai Chi teacher told our class that our Tai Chi practice will really begin to flower when we make our practice Tai Chi a part of everything we do. Over, and over, and over he would remind us, "Put your mind in your Tan Tien", In other words, "Pay attention. Be Mindful. Go about your daily life with the same focus and intention used in your Tai Chi practice".

Mindfulness can be present in the smallest details of our lives. Several years ago I was teaching an introduction to Tai Chi class through the Smithsonian Associates in Wasnington D.C. As a part of the class I asked the students to practice Mindfulness in their daily activities for one week, and then tell me what they learned. I still remember what two people in that class related, because their stories were so unique and unexpected.

One woman noticed that as she cut an orange, she felt the resistance to the knife's blade change as it passed from cutting through the rind and began cutting the flesh of the orange. The other said that she went on the same walk everyday, but that one day she noticed the scent of pine in the air. Following her nose, she looked around and spotted a previously unseen grove of pine trees in a valley below where she was walking. These are by no means earth-shaking moments of life changing awareness or insight. However, they do offer insight into a way of living, a way of being in the world. Taking a breath and being more Mindfully present in our daily lives offers the possibility of enriching them through a *greater awareness of that which had previously remained unseen* in them.

When this happens, we are "in the flow". Whether that flow is in our Tai Chi movements, or "in the flow" of our lives, when it happens we are no longer "separate". We are in harmony with the Natural world, and have become an integral part of the exchange of **Yin (earth) and Yang (heaven) in the Universe**. In our Tai Chi form, and in our lives, our relationship to the Tao can be like that of the grasses and trees in their relationship to the wind....

We can become the observable manifestation of the Tao in the world, **Teh**.

*Peace and all good things,  
Michael*

### Saturday Morning Practice:

Every Saturday morning people gather on the rooftop of the Ellsworth Drive Parking garage directly across Ellsworth Drive from Veterans Plaza in downtown Silver Spring to practice Tai Chi together from 8:30 -9:30am. We will continue to meet through the middle of December. Come and join us any Saturday. It is a wonderful way to start your day.... and there's a great farmers market directly across the street in the Plaza.



*\*This photo was taken in the "pre-Covid" days, when the practice was held in Veterans Plaza. Please note that we now meet on the roof of the parking garage across Ellsworth.*



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