



Strange Horse

Sam Masich News

Spring 2003

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The Horse That Galloped 18,000 Miles



Its been a long time between issues of Strange Horse and some of you may be wondering if I fell off the map. Nope. But I have travelled around a fair bit of it this past year or so teaching, filming and performing. Heres a synopsis of Maxiqi's adventures during the Year of the Horse and a bit of a 'what's up'.

The Yang Taiji 3 Month Intensive

February 2002 saw the completion of the Yang Style Taijiquan Full Curriculum Intensive. I'm incredibly proud of the eleven hard working individuals that completed the three month, 35 hour a week course. They not only completed a vast curriculum of material, they went on to present the best Taijiquan demonstration I have ever seen. Accompanied by three wonderful musicians (cello, sax and percussion), the class dazzled a Bowen Island audience of 50 during the heaviest blizzard of the year! Congratulations to these fine Tai Chi players. You're my heroes!

Art Baner
 Peter Branson
 Cage Campbell
 Leslie Farrella
 Lois Harle
 Jayeson Hendyrson
 Mary Lynn Lewis
 Jim Madras
 Anna Michael
 Paul Nicollazo
 Jan Parker

A film of the Bowen demonstration is now available!
More on page 5!

The 4 Month Tour and 'Tai Chi People'

In the beginning of March 2002 I embarked on 18,000 mile road trip that started in Vancouver, went down the West coast as far as Los Angeles, across to Texas and down to Mexico City. I continued east as far as New York, went north into Canada and back across the continent home. The purpose of the trip was to visit and film Taijiquan practitioners of all types for a documentary tentatively entitled 'Tai Chi People'. My travelling companions, Jan Parker and Ali Bacon, helped with filming, driving and managing the sometimes complex scheduling. In total we shot 120 hours worth of interviews, demos, event and road footage.



Some of the interviewees included Dr. Yang Jwing Ming, William C.C. Chen, Benjamin Lo, Pat Rice, Dr. John Painter, Bruce Kumar Frantzis, Professor Dan Lee, Elaine Waters, Doria Cook-Nelson and Craig T: Nelson, Nick Gracenin, Michael Gilman, Dave Harris, Andy Dale, Mario Napoli, Wen Mei Yu, Dr. Jay Dunbar and many, many others.

Interviewing on everything from technical, historical, philosophical, health and social issues related to Tai Chi, I gained some amazing insights into our little community. Ideally, this film will attract audiences beyond the Tai Chi world, and treat independent film lovers to a glimpse of a subculture that is rich, diverse, dynamic and life affirming. My hope is that people will be able to see down, deep below the tip of the iceberg and look into the magic of our art.

Compiling and editing a project like this is a massive undertaking and will require time and resources. Calling all Tai Chi angels!

And then what happened?...

July and August saw most of the usual summer workshops. The Bowen Island Push Hands Camp saw its twelveth and final year on the island. 2003 brings the event into a new cycle as the Push Hands Camp moves into Vancouver. We will continue studying the classical energies of Push Hands, a theme that has been sustaining our summer work for several years now. (see page 3) The always excellent Prince George Annual Summer Tai Chi Workshop focused on applications of traditional Yang Style Taijiquan. Alas, the Rock Lake Tai Chi Camp is no more. Never fear, as plans to have another summer event in the B.C. Rockies, are in the works, though not for this year.

FFM in Germany

Autumn 2002 saw more intense and interesting travel, the first leg being a music tour of Germany with FFM, an acoustic trio I write and play music with. My bandmates, Michael Friedman and Mark James Fortin, and I, travelled around the country playing ten concerts for really enthusiastic audiences. We also filmed during our tour. So Spinal Tap beware! Note also that



Michael, Sam and Mark toured Germany as 'FFM'.

Michael Friedman has released a beautiful album of songs he and I co-wrote over the past 3 years. The CD, Diamond Space, is an independent release, and has been garnering wonderful reviews.

FFM also released a new disc called FFM Live Plus! Both are available through Little Productions.

Autumn 2002 also included a one month stop in Ontario/Quebec, where I taught Tai Chi/Qigong workshops. Music and martial arts, what a perfect tour!

Lights, camera, Bagua! Black Sash

Prior to leaving for the Germany/Ontario tour I received a phone call from Robert Mark Kamen, the creator, and director of the movies Karate Kid, Fifth Element and The One. He asked if I'd be interested in working as a technical consultant and movement coach on a seven episode pilot TV series entitled Black Sash he'd written for Warner Brothers. Well, if there was ever a perfect day job for Sam Masich, this has to be it.

I was scheduled to be on tour for the the first couple of episodes, so I requested Haim Behar as a substitute. Haim did an excellent job and the position was held until my return. Two days back from Germany/Ontario I began to work on the show. The position evolved into a fight choreography job as well and I really don't remember having had quite so much fun!

The show, which stars Russell Wong (The Joy Luck Club, Romeo Must Die), tells the story of Tom Chang, a former San Francisco police officer who now runs a Baguazhang school where he guides his young students through the conflicts of life. Its a cool show with good values. If the pilot ratings are good and the program is picked up for a season, it might turn into a steady gig!



Black Sash
starring
Russell Wong
Premieres
Sun. Mar. 30
on The WB
in the U.S.
and on FOX44
in Canada

Black Sash first aired Mar. 30 and will continue Sunday nights at 9/8c pm on Warner Brothers (WB) Network in the U.S. and at 11/10c pm on Fox44 in Canada. Check out Black Sash at: www.blacksashonline.com/

A little Baguazhang lesson.

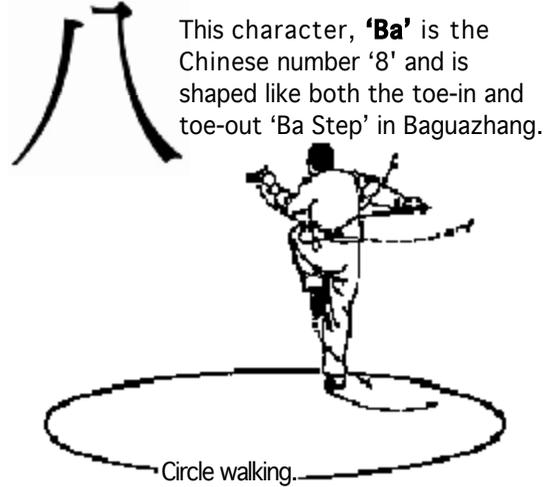
Sam Masich

Along with Taijiquan and Xingyiquan, Baguazhang is one of the three main internal styles of Chinese martial arts. The figure below is the 'Bagua' arranged around a 'Taiji' (yin-yang) diagram. The eight symbols are ancient representations of basic powers within the natural universe. 'Ba Gua' is a term which literally means 'Eight Trigrams', referring to the eight three-line symbols for Heaven, Earth, Fire, Water, Mountain, Lake, Wind and Thunder. The diagrams are positioned as if you were standing in the centre of the circle looking out. For example the solid yang and broken yin lines for Thunder would be seen from the bottom up as yang/yin/yin ☳ while Lake would be seen as yang/yang/yin ☱.



The Bagua concept is used in many ways in Chinese culture. It serves as a template and talisman for studies ranging through medicine, fortune telling, architecture and of course... martial arts! Baguazhang, which is the main style taught in Black Sash, is based on powerful footwork and dazzling 'palm changes'.

The word 'zhang' in Baguazhang literally means 'palm'. Footwork in Baguazhang is based on the 'Ba' (8) shaped step, and also the Tangnibu or 'Walking on Mud' Step. These are very important concepts.



While there are many 'styles' and forms in the art, basic Baguazhang is based on the 'Eight Mother Palms', Yang, Fu, Shu, Bao, Pi, Liao, Tiao and Lo Xuan Zhang.

Baguazhang practices tend to look a little more exotic than those in other martial arts styles. The emphasis on coiling, twisting, circling and spiraling makes Bagua seem a little mysterious. Often people wonder how it can work effectively in self defense. Here's the secret. While most approaches to martial arts look to control the opponent directly, Bagua experts seek the empty spaces around the adversary. A kind of control with out control. This approach leads to a different way of looking at things assisting the inward journey by daring to see what is invisible, formless and real.

The Vitality Project and the Vancouver Peace Camp

One night during the Yang Taiji Intensive Art Baner and I were sitting up into the wee hours discussing the problems of the world, in particular the vast escalation of militaristic adventurism and its relationship to almost globally endemic policy of economic cuts to the kind of services that human beings depend on for survival. Our discussion eventually moved beyond the various human rights and environmental atrocities being perpetrated in the name of 'Freedom', and onto more practical matters such as what one can do to make a difference in the face of such overwhelming obstacle and opposition. Especially, what can bodywork people such as Tai Chi players, massage therapists or Qigong teachers contribute in the struggle to counter-affect the globalizing gluttons that seem driven to extinguish cultural and ecological diversity at every turn.

Not everyone can be an activist on the front lines. Given the pressures of daily life it is difficult for many concerned individuals even to muster up the time and energy to compose a letter to a local representative regarding an issue that directly affects their own community. Often teachers and therapists find themselves depleted from their work with little energy left over to shift gears enough to participate in effective activism. Pro-active political involvement takes an enormous amount of energy, time and commitment and is often a thankless and exasperating task. Thus, the need on the part of dedicated activists for rejuvenation, psychological support and rebalancing. This is the essence of the Vitality Project.

When concerned with a social, environmental or political issue try offering support directly to individuals who have committed themselves to making the world a better place. Donate a Tai Chi class membership to someone focusing the recall campaign of a corrupt politician. Give a private Qigong lesson to a person dedicated to preventing the obliteration of another natural wildlife habitat. Offer a massage certificate to someone who has organized a peace protest.

Recently I've been providing some direct support to an individual involved in a Peace Camp here in Vancouver. The Camp sits directly across from the U.S. Consulate and is dedicated to protesting the U.S. led attack on Iraq and its ongoing policy of invasions, economic sanctions and orchestrated regime changes in resource laden nations. The Peace Camp is is currently the longest running publicly staged war protest in Canada and reflects the feelings of a great many people, including the Vancouver city council, which has joined thousands of other municipalities (including New York), in officially opposing the Middle East invasion.

Your opinions about Iraq may differ but I'm certain we all see ways in which to contribute to the betterment of our world. The point is to get involved. Share your ideas and experiences with other bodyworkers, teachers and therapists. Network, connect and choose to make a difference.



Now to catch up on everything else...

As you can imagine, being on the road almost nonstop has left me unable to stay on top of everything else in life. I know many of you have been wanting videos, T-Shirts and just some plain old returns to your phone calls. At this writing I am trying my best (before hitting the road again), to catch up on correspondence, unfinished projects and life details which have slipped through the cracks. I appreciate your patience with this old Strange Horse, I am galloping as fast as I can... at least for a Tai Chi guy!



Random Notes:

•Jan Parker is teaching classes at the Maxiqi Neijia Studio (3357R W.4th Ave.) I highly recommend Jan's teaching and would encourage anyone to study with her if they have the opportunity. Jan can be reached at 604-947-0888.

•Vancouver Hot Spots for Tai Chi Players
Dragon Martial Arts (martial arts supplies)
C.C. Arts (authentic Chinese art)
Dr. Sun Yat Sen Classical Chinese Gardens
VanChina Trade (Products from Mainland China)
The Acupuncture Store (Chinese health supplies)
Queen Elizabeth Gardens (Tai Chi players practice daily)

•Help us save some trees, ink and stamps! Please send us your email address and receive this newsletter electronically. littleproductions@canada.com

Special thanks to: Jan Parker, Alison Bacon, Jean Kirk, Master Shouyu Liang, Dr. Yang Jwing Ming, Brien Gallagher, Ed Cooper, Pat Rice, Kim Ivy, Jill Bader, Gerald Hui, André Couture, B & Lil Cacaci, Erik Baez Morosini, Jeff Bolt, Susanna DeRosa, Nick Gracenin, The Yang Taiji Intensive class, Doria Cook-Nelson, Davida, Gerhard Fuchs-Kittowski, Mark & Michael, Mom & Dad and many, many others!

2003 Workshops with Sam Masich

May 2-4 Brookville, ON
Traditional Yang Style Taijiquan 108: Part 2
\$225 (Seniors \$175)
contact: Ed Cooper 905-878-8647 ed@oyaproductions.com

May 9-11 Hull, Que.
Fri. eve. *Tai Chi Core Principles*
Sat./Sun. *Simplified 24 Movement Taijiquan*
\$200 (or \$50 Fri., \$90 Single day Sat. or Sun.)
contact: André Couture 819-777-1527 acdcg@hotmail.com

May 15-19 Peterboro, ON
1. Thurs. eve. *Simplified 24 Taijiquan review*
2. Fri. eve. *'Peterborough Lifflock' Two Person Tai Chi Form*
3. Fri.- Mon. *2nd Annual Peterborough Push Hands Camp*
\$275 (\$30 for Fri. Sat. eves)
contact: Jean Kirk 705-750-1756 jkirk@trentu.ca

Jun 20-22 Golden, BC
1. Fri. eve. *The Thirteen Powers*
2. Sat./Sun. *'37+13+25=1'*
How Essential Taijiquan Concepts Create the 'One Feel'
\$200 for full weekend
contact: B & Lil Cacaci 250-348-2363 chinadoll@redshift.bc.ca

July 2-6 *A Taste of China* Winchester, VA
contact: Pat Rice 540-667-7595
ATOCRice@mnsinc.com • atoctaijiquan@com



Yang Style Taijiquan: Part One in Milton Ontario Nov. 2002

The 13th Annual Sam Masich Summer Push Hands Camps in Vancouver B.C.

(formerly the Bowen Is. Push Hands Training Camp)

July 18-21: Camp 1
Theory and Function of the Eight Energies

July 25-28: Camp 2
Eight Energies Traditional Drills

For the past several years we have studied the progression of the 25 basic energies (Chinese: *jin*) of Push Hands. Tai Chi's famous 8 energies, *Peng, Lü, Ji, An, Cai, Lie, Zhou, Kao*, comprise the 13th-20th energies of this larger study.

In our first camp we will study the energies individually and collectively through drills designed to isolate and integrate each *jin*, as well as place it in the context of the 25 energies. In camp 2 we will study in detail the traditional drills, *Four Hands* and *Da Lu*, which are designed to practically integrate the 8 energies. The two camps are designed to work together as a continuation of previous years' work although the camps may be attended without prerequisite attendance.

\$600 (\$550 if registered by July 1)
(Both camps \$1100/\$1000 if registered by July 1)
\$150 non-refundable deposit* by July 1 (\$300 both camps)

In the past this camp was held on Bowen Island and included meals and 'rustic lodging'. This year's camps will not include meals (though there are excellent restaurants in the area) but participants who wish to, will be able to 'camp out' in the studio. As well the Jericho Youth Hostel is nearby and there are hotels in the area.
contact: 604-682-1263 littleproductions@canada.com

*Send deposits to: *Little Productions*
969 Richards St. #2401 Vancouver B.C.
Canada, V6B 1A8

Aug. 1-4 Prince George, B.C.
10th Prince George Annual Summer Tai Chi Week
Moving Step Push Hands

This week we will study footwork in Push Hands. An ideal continuation of the Vancouver workshops.

\$525 (\$450 if registered by July 1)
\$150 non-refundable deposit
contact: Leslie Farella 250-564-4684 nessa@pgonline.com

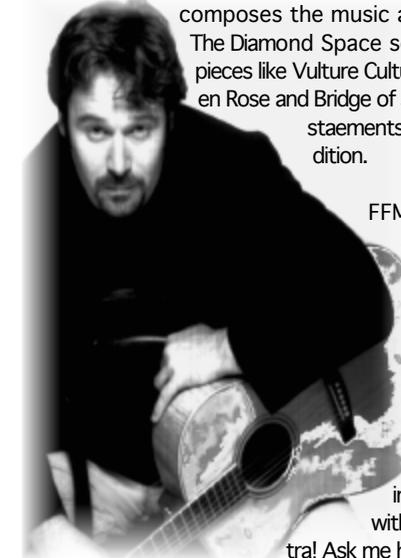
Sept. 19-21 Kimberley, BC
Sensing Hands for Qi Cultivation
contact: Greg Miller 250-489-2689 greg.miller@tembec.com
or Will Van Delft 250-427-3063

About Sam's Videos and CD's

The latest video offering from Little Productions is 'In Performance: The 2002 Yang Taiji Intensive Demo on Bowen Island'. This was definitely one of the most exciting demonstrations of the art I've ever seen and my hope is that it will help stimulate a new standard of excellence for Tai Chi players everywhere. Anyone who has seen this tape has been inspired and challenged in their practice.

In 1986 I was one of the first Tai Chi instructors to make an instructional video available. Since then the Push Hands Video Manual has been studied by thousands of students world wide. During the late eighties and early nineties I continued shooting independent instructional films, 17 in total, using 'prosumer' video equipment. While the tapes have been well received and well rated from an instructional standpoint, they fall far below the technical quality standard possible with today's digital video technology. Since the eighties many of my master tapes have degraded greatly in quality. Currently I am digitally re-mastering the early films and intend to edit some of the projects that have been in the 'Coming Soon' bin for about a decade! As well I have an archival 'Best of...' tape in the works and plans for some new full scale instructional projects which will hopefully revolutionize the genre. The 'young Sam' tapes, as they have come to be known, will be re-packaged, re-mastered and made available on DVD as well as VHS.

As far as music projects are concerned I've been privileged to collaborate with Michael Friedman and Mark James Fortin. Diamond Space was a true labour of love. When Michael and I create new music he generally composes the music and I write the lyrics. The Diamond Space song cycle includes pieces like *Vulture Culture*, *Young Soldier*, *Golden Rose* and *Bridge of Jessica*, strong statements about the human condition.



FFM Live Plus! is a live album featuring titles such as *Martha Stewart*, *St. Catherine*, *Fall Down*, *Digging a Hole* and *New York City*. This May FFM will return to Germany where part of our tour will involve a performance with a sixty piece orchestra! Ask me how it went!