

The (In)visible Light In

TIMES SQUARE

BY MARK J. PETRACCA

For some of us the pursuit of health seems a daily part of our regime, that is, if you've been lucky enough to find a fitness regime that helps you maintain your health. For others finding a viable solution to a nagging backache or high blood pressure without utilizing typical Western medical solutions seems as practical as learning to fly a stealth bomber. Moreover, finding an affordable and effective treatment without intimidating instructors and impossible exercises seems just as remote. For others, like myself, it was all a matter of time before I discovered the benefits of T'ai Chi Ch'uan and its ancillary practices.

I'll never forget my chance encounter two years ago when walking down West 43rd street in Manhattan. I was hurrying to meet a friend for a concert at *The Town Hall* and as I approached the venue I looked up and saw this neon figure

stuck in a strange pose ("embrace tiger return to mountain") posted on the side of a five story building announcing the T'ai Chi Ch'uan Center of New York. I stopped. Memories of an ill-fated attempt with Kenpo karate back in Akron, Ohio flooded my brain and then another brief fling with it again in New York almost made me move past the tiny walk-up building. It didn't hurt that the school had a mailbox posted out front with copies of schedules and a brilliant article from the *Village Voice* ("Screwing the Body Electric," Vol. XXXIII No. 112, 22 March 1988) about the benefits of this particular school and it's master C.K. Chu's "secret" exercise system—*Nei Kung*.

I was intrigued. Intrigued enough to sign up for the three-hour workshop a week later and thus began my journey. Make no mistake, I am a Nei Kung junkie.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL A. SMITH

Nei Kung was a diamond lying before me, just out of reach. Or rather, I was a piece of coal waiting to be turned into a diamond by its energy-storing exercises. If you've ever studied yoga or Chi Kung (Qigong) you know what I'm talking about. The heat generated from the postures is from the bone marrow outward, truly spiraling from a cellular level. Ask any person who practices Qigong and they'll tell you that besides making them feel fantastic by strengthening the body, mind and spirit, it is believed to slow down the aging process and prolong life. Not bad for a system that can be done anywhere, anytime, without equipment. Even just one posture (Embracing Horse) done before the short or long form is like a shot of pure adrenal energy. It is time for more people to learn

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the wonderful benefits of this often kept secret exercise system. *Nei Kung is the real deal.*

Master C.K. Chu was born in Hong Kong in 1937. He began studying various styles of Chinese martial arts at the age of twelve, including Northern Shao Lin and Southern Shao Lin Kung Fu (Fa Style or Budda Style) and Wu and Yang in T'ai Chi Ch'uan. He moved to the United States and founded the T'ai Chi Ch'uan Center of New York in 1973 where he concentrates on teaching Yang style T'ai Chi, Nei Kung and Taoist Meditation. Master Chu holds a B.A. and M.A. in physics and has taught on the university level.

His scientific background allows him to teach his system with a more Western approach. He agreed to sit with me and answer questions about Nei

Kung (internal Chi Kung), a seldom taught system outside of China.

Question: There are all these variations of Chi Kung, each master employing his own specific system, didn't you learn this system as a very young man?

Answer: I first saw it demonstrated in grade school but I didn't begin training in Nei Kung until I was in my late teens, in high school. My friend and I would practice it a lot. We learned it from a master who was a friend of my father, a T'ai Chi teacher. We called him "uncle" even though he wasn't a blood relative. "Uncle" Chan taught us a series of exercises or postures. We would do the horse stance for hours and the various stretching postures, our bodies aching like crazy. Since we were young we could tolerate more pain. I also learned another eight exercises from "Uncle" Wu and while they were different there were also similarities.

How did you decide which exercises to use in the current system you teach?

I learned the different movements, analyzed them, and then made them into this unique synthesis. My purpose was to make Nei Kung simple enough so that anyone could learn the postures without hurting themselves. Some of the postures I learned when I was young were difficult to align correctly unless you had a teacher in front of you correcting you all the time. Otherwise you were bound to make mistakes. And that's a problem. As a matter of fact I hurt my knee, too. I spent hours and hours analyzing the exercises. Later on I was able to realize what was going on. I was able to understand it and fix it. Correctly done, the knee must be aligned over the toe. All styles of kung fu and chi kung have the horse stance. They each employ a different emphasis. The difficult part is getting the correct alignment and the body and mind relaxed. In my system, you're doing the horse

stance incorrectly if you arch your back, if your knees are bent inward and toes are pointed out. To do the horse stance correctly can be considered a "secret" unless your knees are out and toes pointed in and pelvis tucked in, etc. Otherwise, you will hurt your knee and not get much benefit.



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Wasn't Nei Kung a great secret?

Yes, if you asked anyone within the Chinese culture if they heard about Nei Kung the answer would be "yes." You could ask them if it was very good? "Yes." Have you ever learned it? The answer was "no, nobody teaches it." It was kept a secret, most people, if they were lucky to learn it, learned it from a private family teacher. You really couldn't know if you were learning it right or wrong. It depended on the teacher. Plus, not until you were really advanced or enlightened could you understand it. A teacher might put you in the horse stance and in a corner and leave you there to figure it out. You don't know what's going on. That's the most traditional Chinese way of teaching. The theory is that a teacher should only show you a corner of a table and it's up to you to deduce the other three.

Many people are unable to figure it out that way, it's too complex. Our lives are too short. Chi Kung may be a little simpler than Nei Kung, but still people have only heard about it in the last ten to fifteen years, even in China. Now, it's becoming more popular.

What is more important, the teacher or the system?

Most systems are actually good...however, it's the teacher that makes the difference. Some systems may be better than others; some internal, some external. What I mean by this is that some people are just not competent enough to properly teach certain systems. Maybe they haven't studied the system long enough to understand all the subtleties of the systems they're teaching. Sure, they may be enthusiastic, but they're ultimately not going to be as effective as they could

be. For instance, I had someone who never attended my workshop, just bought my book, and then advertised himself as a Nei Kung teacher. I think that's a problem we face in the West. People are more interested in teaching than learning the art.

So one should keep learning and adding to the experience before teaching?

One should keep practicing and analyzing. Just like a musician. You can learn to play a few chords in a few minutes, but to get to Carnegie Hall, you need to practice. What Kung Fu meant originally was "skill". That implied someone had good practice, good training. But some people may not have the good practice or good training. Maybe they just took a few classes from a master and then they claimed they learned his whole system, yet they never attained a high level of training. To find a qualified teacher is the first step to the correct kind of learning.

What's the main difference between Chi Kung and Nei Kung?

Nei Kung is internal Chi Kung. Chi Kung just works on one ingredient called the chi (*qi*). Qi, suffice to say, is the energy flowing in the body, and those exercises try to get it flowing properly. Nei Kung is not only working on the qi but also on certain muscles, tendons, internal organs, bones, joints; in short, from deep in the bone marrow to the outside skin cells. Because you work on all these elements, a high level Nei Kung practitioner can sustain big punishment like blows to the stomach or a bus running over the body. That's why high level Nei Kung is called the "iron vest" or "golden bell" system. You are so strong and well protected that you can't easily be injured. Also Nei Kung is a more natural kind of development. It's a higher level because the mind is relaxed, more natural, more empty, the Taoist way. When you put the body in certain alignments your body will work for you, instead of using the mind to tell your

body what to do. For example, in Chi Kung you might say "imagine or visualize the qi moving this way or that way." In Nei Kung you just put the body in a certain place and the body will react to it. It will demand a certain kind of breathing. And your body mechanism will "open and close." While this is difficult to explain it's like an involuntary accordion-type movement of the body. While in the horse stance, some people may rock gently, someone else may shake violently, while someone else may bounce up and down. It's just the qi surging all over the body naturally. The body may be aching and sweating while the qi is transforming inside of it. So while the body may be soft and young, like cotton, on the outside, on the inside the bones, muscles, and tendons will be like a strong and flexible steel.

What made you decide to write a book and introduce Nei Kung to more people?

No such book existed before about Nei Kung. That's why I decided to write one and make it available. But there were other reasons why I did a book and offer the workshop once a month. In the 70s and early 80s I kept it a secret and only taught Nei Kung to advanced students so they could absorb more punishment in the fighting tournaments. As I said Nei Kung is known as the "iron vest" or "covered by the golden bell." It's very important in tournaments to be able sustain big punishment if you expect to win. Remember you only have two minutes and most tournaments are single elimination. Plus, don't forget, in T'ai Chi we emphasize yielding, "four ounces to deflect a thousand pounds." But in tournaments you can't yield all the time and expect to win. You have to aggressively attack your opponent. With Nei Kung training you have a big advantage because you've developed to a point that your opponent's knock out punch is reduced to a minor blow. You have more confidence, you're not afraid. You feel like your Super-

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man fighting a ten year old kid. As a matter of fact, in 1981, at an official open tournament (all Martial Arts styles), one of the largest ever held in New York City, at Madison Square Garden, we won both the heavyweight and middleweight divisions by knock out. Since then no tournaments had been fought in this area due to that sponsor being sued by one of the injured participants. However last year, for the first time since '81, two different sponsors organized two separate open tournaments in New York—the New York Chinese Martial Art Championship and Tri-State Kung Fu Full Contact tournament. One of my students, Hugh Marlowe, won the heavyweight division in each tournament, one by knock-out. And I had to revive the fellow he knocked out. They guy never knew what hit him.

Apart from that type of application of Nei Kung training I knew it was good for everyone. It was good for people's health. Unfortunately I had some of my advanced students teaching Nei Kung without my permission and they were instructing incorrectly. I realized it was better to explain the system to people in a correct way with visuals and clear explanations. The secret had been kept too long and it was time to put it in black and white. This would only add more positive energy to the world and avoid transmitting inaccuracies in the system for future generations.

How does Nei Kung work, how does it affect the human system? In your book you mention that "it deals specifically with the flow of energy in body." Can you elaborate?

Nei Kung works on the alignment of the body and postures. We position the body to facilitate the flow of qi through the meridians. Some people have back problems, knee problems. These exercises move qi from other meridian points to heal those areas. People may feel a tingling sensation or warm feeling in that area that they've been having problems with after they're in "Embracing Horse" for a period of time. The qi is flowing into that area. Some people are able to

feel that "heat" or qi in just their first workshop. I've even heard of Nei Kung and Chi Kung masters in China who were originally cancer patients. It is a tremendous healing system. But for any of the postures to be executed correctly some basic things must be done at all times. This will allow the qi to flow evenly and maximize the effectiveness of the exercises. The head should be sus-

suspended, the pelvis tucked in, toes in and knees out, the chest concave, the body rounded, shoulders and elbows lowered, waist loose, "qua" (the joint that connects the thigh bone and the pelvic bone) loose, and breathing should be deep. Also Nei Kung works on the muscles and tendons in a way the whole body is integrated in one unit. But as I state in my book some postures may take as long as five years to reach an 80% or 90% level of correctness.

Which postures or exercises would those be?

The Compass, the fourth posture, is done very, very slowly so that it stretches the waist, the back, the legs, arms, hamstrings, stomach, hips, buttocks, shoulders, etc. Even the very first posture, Embracing Horse, while it looks very simple and is the foundation of all Nei Kung and T'ai Chi, can take a long time to master. For example, what is "head suspended?" It doesn't mean you arch your back or you throw you head back, it means the top of the head to the bottom of your coccyx is in a straight line as if a string were pulling you up from above. The pelvis is tucked in. Letting the head drop forward or arching your back will only obstruct the flow of qi, just like bending a garden hose will obstruct the flow of water through it. You sink down, bending at the knees like your sitting on an invisible stool, but the back is straight. What does "toe in and knee out" mean? Your feet are at shoulder width or slightly wider. The knees are pushed slightly outward and the toes turned inward so the focus or stress is on the thigh, and the weight is on the heels and outer edges of the feet. The knees are aligned directly over the toes. The knees are only

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meant to bend one way, like your fingers. The knee was not designed to twist.

How do the exercises actually build the qi up? Some people many not understand this concept.

When the body is aligned in a certain way it creates what I call a qi "vacuum". The body then generates more qi to fill that vacuum. It allows the body to absorb more qi naturally. In Embracing Horse, with proper alignment, the qi will surge all around, from the tan t'ien (two inches below the navel, major qi reservoir). It's similar to the way that acupuncture works. When you have an injury the flow of qi is blocked. Acupuncture uses a needle to stimulate that area to allow more qi to flow to that point from other areas. By twisting the needle you "pinch" the meridian point, diminishing the qi (creating a partial qi vacuum), again like pinching a garden hose so that the water flow is reduced and the water pressure is building up, like qi is building up in the surrounding areas.

What you're trying to facilitate is a rush of qi from other meridian points to that point. Acupuncture creates only a temporary release because the needle is eventually removed. Nei Kung is a long term thing. You're properly aligning the body so that the body will stay aligned and stimulate the qi flow continuously. Many students who've complained about chronic back problems, or migraine headaches, have rid themselves of these problems by practicing Nei Kung. Nei Kung brings strength and healing on a permanent basis.

It seems to me that one needs a certain amount of emotional maturity to study not only Nei Kung but any advanced discipline. What are the emotional ramifications?

Nei Kung works on a person's emotional level in two ways. First, the individual needs to have the theoretical basis to appreciate what's going on. That's why I prefer students to take the workshop before they start the exercises. So I can explain the ramifications, the pitfalls, emphasize

the importance of alignment and the mental attitude to do the exercises, how long you should work on it each day and why, don't push yourself too much if you're hurting yourself or feeling too much pain. A beginner can not hold certain postures, like Embracing Horse, for hours and hours. On the contrary you could do more harm than good if you're not doing it correctly.

One needs to listen to the body. If it hurts your knee you should stop. That indicates you're aligned incorrectly. I say "no pain no gain" is only part of the equation. You need "correct pain for much gain." If you don't understand what's going on you won't enjoy the practice. I always emphasize that one should do Nei Kung correctly for 15 seconds than to do Nei Kung incorrectly for 15 minutes.

Secondly, after you've been doing the exercises for awhile they not only affect your physical state but also your emotional state. It's complicated but I'll try to make it simple. When you're first born

your body's like a clean sheet of paper, no marks, no crumples, etc. As you get older that paper gets a history of marks and wrinkles. What Nei Kung does is works on making the paper smoother, less cluttered. The more you do Nei Kung not only does your body get stronger but also it releases areas that are tense, muscles that hold emotional trauma, from years of holding the body a certain way. Some people have emotional traumas from a very early age that the body remembers. Nei Kung releases those tense areas, those constricted muscles.

A year ago when I was teaching a Nei Kung workshop one weekend at a Zen monastery in upstate New York a woman visitor in the workshop had only been doing the horse stance for about fifteen minutes when she went through an intense emotion release; including crying. By doing the posture, the qi made her shake, it allowed her to let "go" of certain muscle tension which was really deep rooted emotional tension being released.

The Nei Kung exercises heal you physically

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and emotionally, they can unlock forgotten or buried traumas, traumas which can hold you back. It's important for people who've never experienced Nei Kung to understand that after you held the horse stance for a while you may suddenly begin to shake or rock. One should not be alarmed. It's all part of the process. That's why people need a teacher to assist them in understanding these things. It may take one person one workshop to experience the qi on this level, for someone else it may take a few years. It depends on the emotional scars of that person, the amount of stress in their life. While doing Nei Kung the qi tries to heal you. It makes you strong on a physical level which in turn makes you strong on an emotional level; able to confront your emotional traumas and stress. When you're weak, you may be hiding from these things. But when you're stronger, you feel like fighting them. That's why when people finish an hour of Nei Kung some feel like they can walk through a wall. Others describe it as an exhilarating feeling, like being in love.

How many people are actually teaching Nei Kung in the world?

I don't think there are too many. Those that are are probably not teaching it the way I do.

At what point is a student qualified then to teach the system?

I've set up achievement tests for that very reason; a beginner, intermediate, advance and master level. You have to be able to hold certain postures correctly, like "Embracing Horse" or "P'i P'a," for a certain amount of time. Any student can show other people how to do Nei Kung but to be able to say they're a qualified or sanctioned teacher and advertise as such they need to be at least at the advanced or master level. I've only sanctioned two people so far in the last few years.

Isn't there a former student of yours who teaches this system in Los Angeles?

Yes, that's right. His name is Jim Borrelli. He

helped me write the book (*The Book of Nei Kung*, ©1986, Sunflower Press). When he came to me, he had chronic back problems. He was so excited about Nei Kung that he wanted to understand it more, so he helped me write the book. He's a very good writer. The book was edited down from 400 pages of manuscript to 75 pages. He made it simple with just the essentials. I've also authorized another student, Eka Marqus, who lives in Venezuela. She's been coming to me every year for over 20 years to learn more about T'ai Chi, Nei Kung, and meditation.

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When one looks at Nei Kung as a component to a complete system that includes Taoist meditation, Nei Kung, and T'ai Chi, would you say Nei Kung is more important than the other two steps or is it important to complete the whole circle?

I think all of it is necessary. Each discipline compliments the other. Anybody can learn one of these "treasures" by itself. But there's an old saying in China, "If you learn Ch'uan (fighting art) without learning Kung (as in Nei Kung or Chi Kung), you become empty. You have nothing to show for it

when you get older." You will not have learned all that there is to learn. Let me put it this way—Nei Kung or Kung is the foundation of T'ai Chi, the essential building block. If you don't have that, you won't have an understanding of T'ai Chi. Nei Kung is all about alignment and strengthening the body which in turn builds up the qi in a much shorter time than just doing T'ai Chi.

Nei Kung also makes you more coordinated, the postures you learn are integrated into the movements of T'ai Chi. For example, in the horse stance you hold the posture to build up muscles, tendons, etc., the hip must be aligned correctly, but most people don't have those muscles developed properly to hold the alignment correctly. Just trying to align the knee over the toe is difficult because the hip muscle is pulling the knee in when it should go out. You want to avoid hurting the knee at all costs.

Those muscles have to be exercised and strengthened to hold the positions correctly.

Exactly. And sometimes the bones are not aligned correctly because of this, too. Joints need to be flexible and loose. As you practice Nei Kung more and more you may hear the joints “crack,” as if you were in a chiropractor’s hands. The body is working its way into proper alignment. Once you’ve built a good foundation your T’ai Chi will be even more coordinated, integrated. How do animals develop their muscles so they can jump or move quickly? They stretch. Nei Kung stretches you and builds you up. T’ai Chi is movement with everything rooted, rooted like a blade of grass. The blade of grass may bend or bow in the wind but it will not be uprooted. It’s base is strong. A dancer may be flexible enough to raise a leg high enough to touch her nose, but can she kick with the same as a martial artist? Merely lifting your foot up like that is not a kick. You need balance, coordination, power from the center (*tan t’ien*), root or *jing* (the body as a whole rooted to the ground, the more qi the body has the more jing is possible). All these elements need to be linked together. Flexibility, or *ling*, moving without friction, is only part of it.

How does meditation fit into the equation?

Through meditation you learn to be calm, relaxed, more yourself. When you practice T’ai Chi your body is dynamic, but your mind is calm, quiet, and still (static). In the old days doing T’ai Chi was called “guiding the qi,” moving the qi around. Nei Kung generates qi through correct alignment. When you do meditation, it’s almost the other way around. You sit still and the outside of your body is calm, quiet, and still (static), but inside the body the qi will be dynamic, charging and conserving qi. Meditation helps you integrate your mind and body so that you will get to a subconscious intuitive level, a more instinctual level. Many people ignore their instincts, animals don’t. Not until you are calm and relaxed and your body functions well and you’re generating a lot of qi can

you get down to that instinctual level. We call that the *shen* (spirit) level.

A person with strong *shen* is full of spirit, full of life. Also they are strong, sharp, alert and seem to make all the right moves and decisions. Their actions are unpredictable and can not be categorized in any kind of formula. That’s why *shen* is god-like. And for that reason *shen* literally means god. In the end, all three components—Nei Kung, T’ai Chi, Taoist Meditation—are integrated very, very closely.

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If someone only has the time to learn only one system which would be most beneficial?

Nei Kung would be the most beneficial. It is easier to learn and the benefits are almost immediate. However, an individual will chose to study first what they need most, and ideally they will pursue each of the disciplines in due time. It doesn’t matter which discipline they study first. Meditation may sound easy to do, but it can be very complicated. It is an internal development. If you don’t do it correctly nobody can see your mistakes and align you like in Nei Kung and T’ai Chi.

To learn T’ai Chi you need more time and it’s more complicated. There are many components necessary to reach a high level of T’ai Chi. T’ai Chi is a fighting art. T’ai Qi can be done very slowly or it can be executed very fast. T’ai Chi study involves push hands, walking push hands, *ta lu* (four corners push hands), sparring, many drills—kicks, punches, flexibility, yielding. As a matter of fact, if people do T’ai Chi without knowing the meaning of the movements, their T’ai Chi won’t be that good. The hands and feet will be in the wrong place; they won’t feel their qi.

Wouldn’t that be true with the postures in Nei Kung?

That’s right. You have to be aware of your body alignment when you are doing Nei Kung. You need to align and integrate your body in one unit. And then integrate the mind with the body. So you need an inner discipline. And although you will benefit right away (building up qi, strengthening

the body) still if you don't understand the beauty of the concept behind Nei Kung the exercises will be boring. Also one needs to understand that you are not competing with anyone else, you're doing the exercises for yourself.

Why do you think most Western doctors are so reluctant to recommend systems like this to treat chronic back and leg problems, high blood pressure, circulation problems, etc.?

Most Western doctors aren't aware that Nei Kung exists. Fortunately more and more doctors are starting to recognize that these systems do work. Traditionally, we assume doctors are educated, that they are able to reason and what not. But the way the medical system works doctors have so much material to remember and no time for scientific analysis. Medical students are trained to memorize a lot of things. What they are taught they believe is their utmost authority. But medical students have so much material to learn they never have enough time to analyze it all so they have to believe what the medical establishment tells them. Their minds are so filled with material they have no room to question anymore.

Many doctors then become specialists, thinking only about one aspect of medicine, so much so that they might ridicule some other kind of system.

Recently I read an article in the *New York Times* about some doctors ridiculing alternative medicines. They tried to discredit the laying on of hands as a way of healing. To be certain, many are charlatans, but there may be some legitimate healers as well. The article questioned how anyone could heal someone without even touching them. I just had to laugh. Any educated person should know that all natural forces, and most of the energy we talk about, act at a distance. Electrical force, nuclear force; take gravitational force, the sun is very far away yet it holds the earth in orbit and affects tides, etc. The same with radiation or electricity. Why should a healing energy be different if it's radiated from some other source. If someone knows how to radiate qi, they don't have to actually touch someone to affect them.

So that person is able to channel that energy. Would you say qi is a natural force, like a light wave?

In my opinion qi is an electromagnetic wave. Electromagnetic waves consist of a huge spectrum of waves. On that spectrum you have first the short wavelengths like cosmic ray photons, then gamma rays, x-rays, ultra violet rays, then there are the visible rays (the spectrum humans see), then infrared or heat waves. Then radar (micro wave) and radio waves, which are the longer waves. As a matter of fact I think our body wave, or qi wave, is slightly above the infrared spectrum, and just below radar waves. As you know microwaves, like radar, generate heat. Qi also generates heat but not as intense as a microwave oven for example. That's why I think qi waves lie between infrared waves and radar/micro waves. The qi wavelength is probably from a fraction of a millimeter to several millimeters long.

Maybe after some formal scientific research, scientists will label this the qi spectrum. Needless to say, qi is an *invisible light*, but just because you can't see it doesn't mean it's not there. The human eye can only see from red to violet, a very tiny part of the electromagnetic spectrum. Although we do have devices that let us view the infrared spectrum. Some insects are able to see ultraviolet waves.

Would that be the same as someone being able to read an aura?

That's right. Qi is an aura. Some people do have the sensitivity to see auras. Their eye cells are more sensitive to the qi aura. The aura itself is a wave. Just like some people can hear a very high pitch or someone else can hear a very low pitch. Some people can see part of the infrared spectrum. Sometimes during Nei Kung class I've been able to read different people. It's easier during a standing meditation because the person is more calm and the aura is stronger. We now recognize and acknowledge that human beings have waves shooting out of them. It's the same thing as qi. We've been able to detect brain waves for a long time, right?

Any educated person should know that all natural forces, and most of the energy we talk about, act at a distance.

I noticed that Nei Kung, like T'ai Chi, really integrates movement in 360 degrees.

When you ask a Westerner about exercise, what first springs to mind is calisthenics—push ups, sits up, jumping jacks, etc. These are all linear. But you know animals don't move like that. They move in all directions. They climb, they hang, they jump, they run. They're very agile and flexible. Nei Kung and T'ai Chi come from the observation of these animal movements. And most of the postures still have animal names, like "Snake Creeps Down," "White Crane Spreads Wings," "Repulse Monkey," "Rhino Gazes at Moon," etc. T'ai Chi and Nei Kung integrate the whole body. Nei Kung is different than yoga which just stretches one muscle group at a time. In Nei Kung every posture involves the body as a unit. In yoga you work on the neck, the waist, one section at a time.

Western exercise is the same thing. Because we involve the whole body in each movement that makes the body strong and integrated. That's why Nei Kung and T'ai Chi are very sophisticated exercise systems. Even for a dancer or choreographer. As a matter of fact Twyla Tharp, the dance choreographer, studied push hands with me before she worked on the play and the movie *Hair*. She and some of her top dancers wanted to utilize T'ai Chi concepts for some scenes in both.

Are people more accepting of the internal arts nowadays? Have we entered a period of enlightenment?

Actually it's like a pendulum. For the last fifty years we've been destroying the world. Dumping toxic wastes in the rivers and oceans. Scientists know we're not suppose to do that. Chemical, nuclear, biological problems. It's time for the pendulum to swing back the other way. Environment and health are not luxuries, they are necessities. Unfortunately, many people in power are shortsighted. They're only looking for a certain immediate gain for themselves. Our corporate world is based on short term profits at the expense of our environment and our health. There are a lot of negative forces working against enlightened people. Not many people in charge are Taoists. You must remember only a hundred years ago people thought the industrial revolution and science were the salvation of the world. Little did we know that as a result we'd help ruin the world and threaten ourselves with nuclear weapons, toxic waste, pol-

lution, etc. all because of it. That's why Nei Kung, T'ai Chi and Taoist philosophy is very important. You have to be healthy in body and mind so that you can view the world with more positive energy. See the essence of life. Don't fight the wrong battle all the time.

The Tao, like in T'ai Chi, is about yielding; about using "four ounces to deflect a thousand pounds." We know that in push hands we try to yield to our opponent. To do this correctly you have to find the stillness within. You have to look inward to know your strengths and limitations. You'll be more realistic, less prone to daydreaming. If you take things slow, with patience, you will have a better understanding of things. Try to enjoy life as it is. That's why a high level Taoist is called, *Jen Ren*, a "real" person. When someone is a phony, pretending to be something they are not, then they are not true to themselves. There's a Chinese saying that you can not gallop the horse and enjoy the flowers. Stop and smell the flowers. Hopefully more and more people will hear about Taoism and practice it. Learn how to cope with nature, rather than fighting against nature. The book I'm presently working on deals with Taoism and meditation.

I thanked Master Chu for the interview.

The T'ai Chi Ch'uan Center where I study with him thrives in the heart of Times Square district, the fable crossroads of the world. And here, a stone's throw from the crowds, the drama and excitement of the streets, the famous flashing neon lights, who would have expected I would find a door to the secrets of Wu-tang Mountain? Open that door, and one can begin to investigate and tap into the source of Qi—that is the real light, the amazing light, the (in)visible light in Times Square.



©1996. Mark J. Petracca has been practicing Yang style T'ai Chi, Nei Kung, and Taoist Meditation for over three years now with Master C.K. Chu in NYC. When he's not practicing you can find his alter-ego, the singer-songwriter Dusty Wright, performing original roots-rock music in New York, Nashville and other major cities. His self-titled debut CD was just released on PetRock Music. He's also a journalist and the former editor-in-chief of the rock magazine Creem and his pieces of have been seen in the NY Times, People, Entertainment Weekly, Women's Health & Fitness, Your Health Care and numerous other periodicals. He is recently married and lives in New York on the Upper West Side of Manhattan with his wife Bobbie and dog Chester.