

# Interview with

## DAN DOCHERTY



**When did you start tai chi/qigong? What inspired you to start?**

1974. It made more sense than karate which I had trained for 3 years. Also I had decided to become a full time martial arts teacher and there were too many karate teachers.

**What does the art mean to you?**

Despite being diagnosed with Parkinson's in 2010, I still practice every day. I like writing about it and most of my latest book 'Wild Colonial Boy' is about my Tai Chi experiences.

**When did you become a member of the Tai Chi Union for Great Britain? When did you become a member of the executive board? Why did you become involved?**

The TCUGB was inaugurated in 1991. In 1990 Nigel Sutton approached Gary Wragg, Linda Broda, John Hine, Paul Crompton. Ian Cameron et al; we all had some input. I have a law degree and had drawn up the constitution of the Hong Kong Tai Chi Association. I had the executive committee experience from Hong Kong so I thought I could be useful.

**How have you seen tai chi/qigong change over the years? In your opinion, what has been the most significant change?**

People are lacking in time, energy and physicality so they switch to qigong.

**In your opinion, what has been the most significant change?**

The growth of the internet and a 'get it now, no real effort' mindset.

**What are your views on the current level of taichi/qigong?**

Mixed.

**Where would like to see tai chi go in the future?**

Care homes.

**Any other thoughts?**

The TCUGB has been a force for good. Let us keep it that way.



# Interview with

**MARK PETERS**



**When did you start tai chi/qigong? What inspired you to start?**

I dabbled a bit with tai chi and other martial arts in the 1980's when I attended a few Aikido classes at a local community centre. I really enjoyed them (who doesn't love Steven Segal) but wanted something my wife could also be involved with and due to her bad back, we had to rule this out. Next I tried 'Kung Fu' only to find the teacher wasn't actually that good and had combined a little Karate and Wing Chun.

Disheartened, I looked everywhere I could think, even night school classes. Never really fancied Karate and that seemed to be all that was on offer at the time.... It wasn't until I read Danny Conner's Tai Chi book that I started felt I'd found what I was looking for. As Yang Cheng Fu said "Not all Tai Chi is the real Tai Chi"; I was amazed at what was out there purporting to be this wondrous art I was looking for. Of all the schools I investigated, only a handful came close. I even gave a couple a go but they all fell short of the mark for me. I eventually found Nigel Sutton's Zhong Ding school and felt I had come home.

**What inspired you to start?**

Like many growing up in the 70's it was old dubbed kung fu movies, and David Carradine in the 'Kung Fu' series (1972). David was a stark

contrast to the hard fighting in the films, he seemed graceful, peaceful and inspiring. Reading Danny's book is what really inspired me into a serious search for a quality teacher. No more dabbling for me...

**What does the art mean to you?**

Initially it was a softer, more holistic, approach to martial arts and spiritual development. As a young engineer I could see that it was fundamentally 'human engineering'. In more recent years I see it as a muscular-skeletal rehabilitation system, but more than just the mechanics of it, integration of the mind too. I'm still true to its martial routes, form without function is no form at all.

**When did you become a member of the Tai Chi Union for Great Britain?**

As my then teacher, Nigel Sutton, was one of the founding members and proposed the original idea to Dan Docherty in Taiwan, I joined at the very beginning and was probably one of the first student-members in 1991.

**When did you become a member of the executive board? Why did you become involved?**

Around 2010 I think. I believed in the original aims and values of the TCUGB when it was formed. I wanted to become more involved so I could help it continue to develop.

**How have you seen tai chi/qigong change over the years?**

When I first started it was rare to find people teaching the whole art; it was mostly just a feel-good exercise and I remember even being told "your legs shouldn't ache, this is a gentle art".

Through the 90's I competed in the UK and internationally and met more students and teachers practicing different styles of tai chi, qigong and internal martial arts. I feel those were the best years.

In the 2000's more and more people were becoming YouTube masters and seemed to make little effort to train in depth. Qigong become more and more popular with many systems popping up giving instant mastery. As mindfulness became a trend in recent years, even more qigong weekend-masters have appeared. This seems to have had two main effects (1) an increased awareness

for the general public as its featured on so many TV shows and in movies (2) a drop in quality control on mass. Don't get me wrong, there are many excellent teachers out there, but how do the general public know? Where do they check?

**In your opinion, what has been the most significant change?**

The growth of the internet and a 'get it now, no real effort' mindset.

The internet influence has not been all negative. In the past we were lucky if we got to see old, poor quality copies of videos of old masters and maybe read a few of the available books. Now, the original recordings have been made available on YouTube and other sites, more old texts have been translated and easier to obtain. We're in interesting times.

**What are your views on the current level of tai chi/qigong?**

Everyone is a master. How many tai chi masters does it take to change a light bulb? 10, 1 to change it slowly and 9 to say they would have

done it differently and are more qualified to do it.

**Where would like to see tai chi go in the future?**

The TCUGB was originally formed to bring quality practitioners together and to introduce the arts to the general public with greater quality control. We need to build a better profile and public awareness to get the quality level up again on mass. Projects such as the CIMSPA tai chi qigong national standard will focus on developing a quality standard in the sector of sports, well-being and rehabilitation.

**Any other thoughts?**

When I trained in Asia, my teachers often gave me a banner and they always said the same thing "martial arts are one family." As the TCUGB becomes more inclusive of genuine styles of tai chi, qigong and internal martial arts we can grow from strength to strength. We are now "the Tai Chi & Qigong Union for Great Britain" to better reflect our membership.



# Interview with

**GARY WRAGG**

**When did you start tai chi/qigong? What inspired you to start?**

I began Tai Chi training in 1973 with Gerda Geddes. On my first lesson with her, she talked about the circle and the square, in Taoism and Tai Chi, and of essential principles, that felt absolutely right, in a total way. It was all the more amazing in relation to a series of paintings that I had been currently working on. So then and there I knew something had clicked, and since then, I have never looked back. The parallels of Tai Chi and painting have been a united way of life for me.

**What does the art mean to you?**

A decade earlier, in a 60's self portrait, I am standing in the Beginning posture of the Tai Chi form, when I knew absolutely nothing about Tai Chi Chuan.

Tai Chi and the guiding principles, continuing in particular with my later involvement with Wu Family Tai Chi Chuan, all in all, opened a complete integrated way of life, it was a natural development for me.

**When did you become a member of the Tai Chi Union for Great Britain? When did you become a member of the executive board? Why did you become involved?**

Eighteen years on, from my first Tai Chi lesson, in 1991, I became a Founder member of the TCUGB, inspired to help improve the overall awareness and state of Tai Chi in the UK, by helping to more unite the UK Tai Chi community. This was possible in a number of various ways, that eventually did become a reality. Prior to 1991, the main half dozen schools of Tai Chi in the UK were insular and mostly rivals.

**How have you seen tai chi/qigong change over the years? In your opinion, what has been the most significant change?**

The most significant changes for Tai Chi in the UK have been a major unification, sharing and exchanges of stylistic methods, information and emphasis, particularly through workshops, competitions, demonstrations, national and international interaction. Gradually, practitioners would have the opportunity to acquire a better perspective and awareness of what they practiced and

also what others practiced, which when it comes to Judging in a Tai Chi competition, is essential. My Judging Seminar Workshops began in 2005.

**What are your views on the current level of tai chi/qigong?**

The current level of Tai Chi and Qi Gong players and schools is higher now than it ever was in the UK.

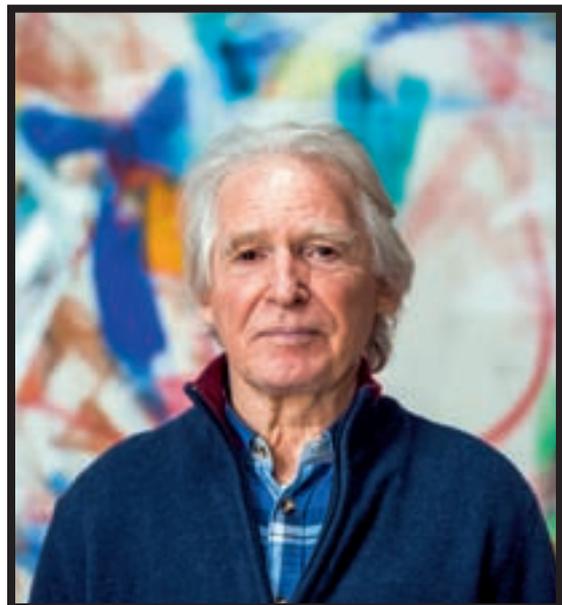
**Where would like to see tai chi go in the future?**

I would like to see Tai Chi and Qi Gong instructors pursue the best in humanitarian qualities, like kindness and goodwill, especially by those in powerful positions. Help bring out the best in instructors to improve students practice. World wide, to help improve physical, mental emotional and spiritual states of health and well-being. Many small steps to lead to leaps!!

**Any other thoughts?**

Speaking personally, for all aspects of Wu Family Tai Chi Chuan, health meditation and self defense, I hope that the natural evolution of all respected traditional styles will continue to be vibrant and to keep on track, maintaining the nature of each art intact, and not get muddled.

Peace of mind, harmony good health and longevity, has always been the aim.



# Interview with

## SHELAGH GRANPIERRE



**When did you start tai chi/qigong? What inspired you to start?**

I started in London, 1973. The philosophy and physical artistry drew me in. Started with my first teacher during the Bruce Lee era.

**What does the art mean to you?**

It's a way of life, an anchor that underpins everything in my life.

**When did you become a member of the**

**Tai Chi Union for Great Britain? When did you become a member of the executive board? Why did you become involved?**

I first become a member in the late 90's and a member of the executive Board in early 2000 I felt that with my long experience in the art I could make a contribution and to the technical panel.

**How have you seen tai chi/qigong change over the years?**

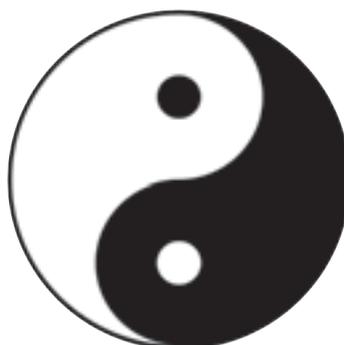
With the rise of the computer/smart phone centred lifestyle, people in general are less co-ordinated and less able to concentrate in the long term. The recent rise of QiGong in all it's varieties would seem to be more accessible and suitable for life in the 21st century

**What are your views on the current level of taichi/qigong?**

In the west, we have both high-level exponents and teachers of the arts and others with different standards and conduct. There is good in all, even at the basic level.

**Where would like to see tai chi go in the future?**

Schools and Colleges.



# Interview with

**CHRIS THOMAS**



**When did you start tai chi/qigong? What inspired you to start?**

While studying karate at university I attended the All-Style Karate Championships at Crystal Palace in, I think, 1972 and, in one of the intervals, I watched Danny Connor and Bruce Frantzis demonstrating Tai Chi. Whilst other karate enthusiasts in the audience started kicking their feet, rustling papers, coughing and talking, I was entranced and wondered how this slow and relaxed exercise could be a martial art. Later, I attended the British Universities Karate Federation Championships in Salford and saw Danny demonstrating again. I talked to him and discovered he was teaching at the Polytechnic in Manchester, just across the road from where I was studying. The rest is history.

**What does the art mean to you?**

In the early years, having started with judo at age 16 and then moving to karate when I got to university, I was more interested in the martial aspects than any health benefits. Now that I move into the autumn of my life and the vagaries of aging become apparent, I practice more for

health than martial – though the martial interest is obviously still there.

**When did you become a member of the Tai Chi Union for Great Britain? When did you become a member of the executive board? Why did you become involved?**

Through Danny Connor, I was introduced to Nigel Sutton and became friendly with him. He asked me to get involved when he and others were looking to start up a national all-styles taiji association. That first year I had other things taking my time but the following year I joined, having been encouraged by another friend, Bob Lowey.

Neither my brain nor my records go that far back, however, I suppose it was not that long after that I joined the executive. As to why I became involved – I did believe in having an oversight group to develop genuine taiji, in all its versions. At the time, the BCCMA, driven by Master Huang Ji-fu, was asserting that the BCCMA was the only governing body for all Chinese martial arts and was looking to control taiji in the UK. They were not too concerned about taiji for health, mainly driving it as a martial art, martial arts being the reason for their being. As I had other friends who taught mainly for health and well-being, I was concerned about the taiji world being split between “us” and “them.”

Some decade and more ago, I resigned from the committee – I won't go into the reasons. However, I see now that there are issues that need resolving and want to see the TCUGB moving forward into the 21st century and want to help with that.

**How have you seen tai chi/qigong change over the years? In your opinion, what has been the most significant change?**

Has it changed? When I started, the Bruce Lee boom was at its zenith and many wanted to learn this “Grand Ultimate Fist” martial art. On the other hand, the “flower power” influence was still swinging/singing along, and many practised their version of taiji for those reasons. Danny Connor was one of the first teaching openly in the UK – certainly in the Northwest – and one of

the first westerners to bring the art back from the Far East. Things have changed in that there are now many westerners who have been learning for many years and can form a bridge between East and West. Taiji is now more widely known and every adult education and church hall seems to have its taiji class.

Qigong, I think is in much the same situation now as taiji was in the past - it is not so widely known. Most westerners have no idea how to pronounce it, regardless how it is spelled, qigong or ch'i kung! Taiji systems usually include some form of qigong, and teachers often include some form of qigong as an adjunct to their taiji. However, now there are a few people that have put in the time with respected qigong teachers and are able to teach qigong authentically.

The main thing that has helped to develop knowledge about the systems in the last 30 or so years is, I think, the internet. Just about anything and anybody can now be found on the internet. When I was a lad at school, I had heard about taiji – but only from the odd book I had found by Bruce Tegner! Also, only a very few years ago, it would not have been possible to hold online classes in the way the likes of Zoom have made available. That is a big change. Ten years ago the 2020 pandemic would have killed off taiji and qigong classes.

#### **What are your views on the current level of tai chi/qigong?**

Hmmm – a good question. Decades ago, there weren't so many good taiji practitioners around and, unless you lived in one of the larger cities, it was difficult to find a good teacher. As the decades have moved on those quality practitioners have developed students themselves to a good level and it is now easier to find a good teacher. In the last decade or so I have not ventured much outside my own circle, attending competitions and events, so it is difficult to make a judgement. However, in the early days, the TCUGB was

looking to include all teachers in membership, regardless of level, with the aim of developing the skills and knowledge of those at a lower level. Looking at the TCUGB website it is clear there are still people teaching at a basic level so, as taiji has spread, this aim is still relevant.

Qigong, as I say, is in the position, now, that taiji was in decades previously. There are a few good practitioners around who are looking to develop the skills in the general population and it is clear this is going to accelerate.

#### **Where would like to see tai chi go in the future?**

I would like to see information about the arts of taiji and qigong promoted so that schools, colleges, Adult Ed. Centres, the medical profession ,etc. know exactly what they are hiring. Most, I believe, seem to think they are some sort of soft exercise that is good for relaxation and health (or maybe just good for bringing punters into their centre) without knowing exactly what the benefits may be. Or maybe I am just being pessimistic.

As a martial artist, I do not want to see the martial root of taiji lost. However, I do believe that there is a lot of work to be done in promoting taiji and qigong generally within the medical profession so that the practices become more generally available, rather than being solely linked to the more enlightened practitioners in certain sectors.

#### **Any other thoughts?**

I remember, back in the dim and distant past, attending AGMs where the TCUGB took over half of a large Chinese restaurant in Chinatown in London. We had a good meeting, attended by many, followed by demonstrations and a Chinese banquet. The last AGM I attended, held in Telford, was attended by half the committee and maybe two or three other ordinary members! I would like to see the TCUGB connecting with its members again – maybe in a different way, but certainly reconnecting in some way.



# Interview with

## MARNIX WELLS

### **When did you start tai chi/qigong? What inspired you to start?**

After graduation in Chinese at Oxford, I applied for a visa to China and flew to Hong Kong in January 1968. There I stayed with a Chinese friend in Kowloon while awaiting an answer (which never came).

The 'Cultural Revolution' was raging, but Hong Kong had been spared any violence, though revolutionary posters and propaganda song and dance routines were everywhere in mainland department stores. Having done some judo, I was keen to learn a Chinese martial art, so my friend advised me to try the park around breakfast time. I never looked back.

### **What does the art mean to you?**

A daily or nightcap routine which increased my resistance to colds. A new way of looking at body movements, which is a never-ending exploration. A way to test and improve skills with fellow practitioners. A way of relaxation and meditation.

### **When did you become a member of the Tai Chi Union for Great Britain? When did you become a member of the executive board? Why did you become involved?**

After my return from working in the Far East in 1993, I was invited by my friend Danny Connor to join the Union to get to know other practitioners of the art. Our AGMs in a Chinatown restaurant arranged by Katherine Allen were a great social event featuring individual demonstrations. Some years later Dan Docherty invited me to join the board which seemed a good way to help promote the art.

### **How have you seen tai chi/qigong change over the years? In your opinion, what has been the most significant change?**

Qigong is an integral part of taiji and internal

martial arts (bagua, xingyi). Recently Master Yaz introduced a new style (Zhaobao) over here. Dan Docherty and Gary Wragg's open taiji tournaments of pushing-hands and demonstrations of different styles have been epic developments. Barry Mcginlay's weekend pushing-hands forums in Regent's Park, recalling those I once attended in Taipei, was also a major step forward.

### **What are your views on the current level of tai chi/qigong?**

The internet is a great resource for sharing information but no substitute for forums of physical interaction.

### **Where would like to see tai chi go in the future?**

I hope the Union will continue to develop along the non-partisan lines initiated above and take the lead in promoting teaching at all levels.

### **Any other thoughts?**

Taiji and internal martial arts have now reached a global level and offer opportunities for international cooperation on a level playing field. Different schools should be invited to advertise themselves through our magazine, AGM and all events, subject to mutual respect.



# Interview with

## TINA FAULKNER ELDERS



**When did you start tai chi/qigong? What inspired you to start?**

I started as a child in 1982 with Kungfu. My dad used to practice constantly and I just loved the movements. I was maybe around 12 when I started with taiji and qigong. I had already been involved with what I now know to be Neidan practices. The feeling of listening and guiding and putting this into movement really struck a chord with me.

**What does the art mean to you?**

The art is a way of bringing myself back home to myself. It is self-cultivation to nurture and develop. It puts everything into perspective and reminds me that I am part of the nature of all things. It is my happy place!

**When did you become a member of the Tai Chi Union for Great Britain? When did you become a member of the executive board? Why did you become involved?**

I became a member of TCUGB 23/03/15.

I became a member of the executive board 27/11/20.

I wanted to become involved because I want to help raise the awareness of taiji and qigong. For the mass population there still seems to be this mystery about taiji and so a great many people still shy away from it. The reality is that it does cover a great range from martial to health to spiritual and philosophical depending on your perspective. Whatever angle you approach it from, taiji is hugely beneficial to anyone who takes up the art.

**How have you seen tai chi/qigong change over the years? In your opinion, what has been the most significant change?**

Taiji and Qigong have become more popular. This on one hand has led to easier access to real knowledge of the art, on the other hand it has also led to massively watered down versions.

**What are your views on the current level of tai chi/qigong?**

You can refer to my answer above for this.

**Where would like to see tai chi go in the future?**

I would like to see it used far more for rehabilitation, health and prevention of ailments. This, of course, requires it to come from a place of knowledge and expertise.

**Any other thoughts?**

Just to say that I am optimistic for a bright and supportive future for the practitioners of taiji and qigong.



# Interview with

**WES MOLLISON**



**When did you start tai chi/qigong? What inspired you to start?**

I began training tai chi and associated disciplines 22 years ago. At that time, I was studying and practicing meditation quite seriously, and I was exploring various traditions to try and find a practice that really resonated with me. I was also, though somewhat less seriously, enjoying some martial arts - mainly western boxing and some Japanese arts - but with both of those pursuits (which I am still fond of today), I felt there was a small but important piece of the puzzle missing.

I'd had the thought of tai chi at the back of my mind for a while, but good tuition was hard to find in the area I lived in at the time. But then, a chance encounter led me to my first teacher, and, I'd say from an hour into that first session, I was convinced I'd found the practice that I could finally fully connect with.

I trained on a one to one basis with my first teacher two times a week for three years. It was always outdoors, under the same magnificent Japanese maple tree at the local park. And as I observed the seasons come, go, then reappear

the following year, as I continued to deepen my practice, I realised that tai chi had become an inseparable part of me.

**What does the art mean to you?**

I enjoy all aspects of the art, so I view it as simultaneously a method of holistic health improvement, of self-cultivation and a method of self-defence. But ultimately, for me, tai chi is the pursuit of harmony. To gradually cultivate harmony between one's body, mind and breath. Harmony between our thoughts and our actions. Harmony between ourselves and others. Tai chi can be a deeply rewarding journey, and I believe harmony is one of the jewels of its many great treasures.

**When did you become a member of the Tai Chi Union for Great Britain? When did you become a member of the executive board? Why did you become involved?**

I joined the TCUGB 14 years ago in 2006 and became an advanced level instructor member two years later in 2008.

At the time of answering this question, I became a member of the executive board just three days ago! I wanted to become involved at this level because I believe passionately that tai chi and the Chinese internal arts in general can be a great force for good, and I feel the TCUGB is in a unique position to contribute significantly to the health and wellbeing of our society, as well as ensuring that the integrity of these arts are upheld and maintained.

The tai chi community is a vastly broad church which I believe should be both respected and celebrated, and all aspects of which I believe have a lot to offer our society. I would like to play my part in ensuring that the TCUGB leads the way in enabling as many people as possible can benefit from what these wonderful arts have to offer. The world is changing quickly - as are people's approach to health and wellbeing, and I would view it as a shame if the TCUGB didn't maximise its potential in its contribution towards this endeavour.

**How have you seen tai chi/qigong change over the years? In your opinion, what has been the most significant change?**

I think the most significant change to the internal arts over the last few years has been the impact of social media. On the one hand it has benefited us greatly - connected a worldwide community together and really opened up the bandwidth of information and knowledge one can access regarding these arts (I wouldn't have met my Sifu eight years ago if it wasn't for Facebook!). But on the other hand, it has also had the ability to reinforce cliques, echo-chambers and tribalism. It is these latter aspects of the internal arts community that I have always been committed to opening up and reducing.

**What are your views on the current level of tai chi/qigong?**

My personal view is that the level of tai chi & qigong is both increasing and decreasing in almost equal measure. I can sincerely attest that the UK has some truly brilliant practitioners and teachers that are taking the art to very high levels. Dedicated practitioners that are genuinely developing the art through their study and teaching. The UK is not alone in this, but we are still very fortunate.

At the same time, I see some practitioners picking up superficial skill and then marketing it

disproportionately, and then soon going on to teach the general public. I would like to see more transparency and clarification on the depth of instructors' abilities; but more than that, I would like to see an environment that really supports further training and development for all. Ultimately, we are in the business of helping others, so let's do it together to the best of our ability.

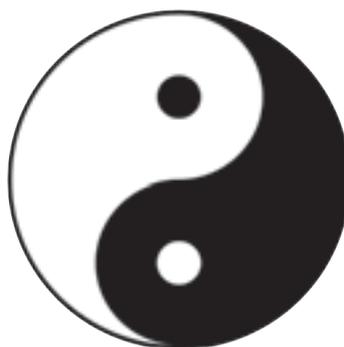
**Where would like to see tai chi go in the future?**

Well firstly, I would like to see the internal arts community emerge safely out of this pandemic so that we can train, teach, compete and enjoy the events and get together's in a way that resembles something close to how we did these things before Covid 19 arrived.

Other than that, I would like to see tai chi and the internal arts expand and improve so that more of society can benefit from what we have to offer.

**Any other thoughts?**

I think at this stage I would just like to wish good health to everyone reading this magazine, and to say that I am looking forward to making my contribution towards the TCUGB progressing positively going forwards.



# Interview with

**MARK CORCORAN**



**When did you become a member of the Tai Chi Union for Great Britain? When did you become a member of the executive board? Why did you become involved?**

I became a member of the TCUGB 10 years ago. I am a new member of the executive board being voted on in 2020. I became involved as I felt it was time to give something back to the sport that has given me so much, I have competed, gained many great friends, done workshops and learned a lot from the vast knowledge that senior members of the tai chi community hold.

**How have you seen tai chi/qigong change over the years? In your opinion, what has been the most significant change?**

I have seen tai chi become less mysterious... this has, I guess, been instrumental in it becoming a major player in the exercise industry, becoming a favourite in gyms and studios around the UK.

**What are your views on the current level of tai chi/qigong?**

I see many very good practitioners of tai chi and qigong in the UK, the flow of outstanding teachers that come over from China is keeping the standards high and their dedicated teams of teachers and students are keeping on improving themselves and passing those improvements along.

**Where would like to see tai chi go in the future?**

I guess, in my humble opinion, I would like to see tai chi and qigong take their place as some of the best stress busting, mindfulness exercises there are. We hear of breathing mentors, breathing is a mainstay of our arts, we read of how good mindfulness is, the movements of our arts are pure mindfulness, we hear that appropriate exercise helps to build our immune systems and... guess what I am going to say? Yup you can't get a much more appropriate exercise.

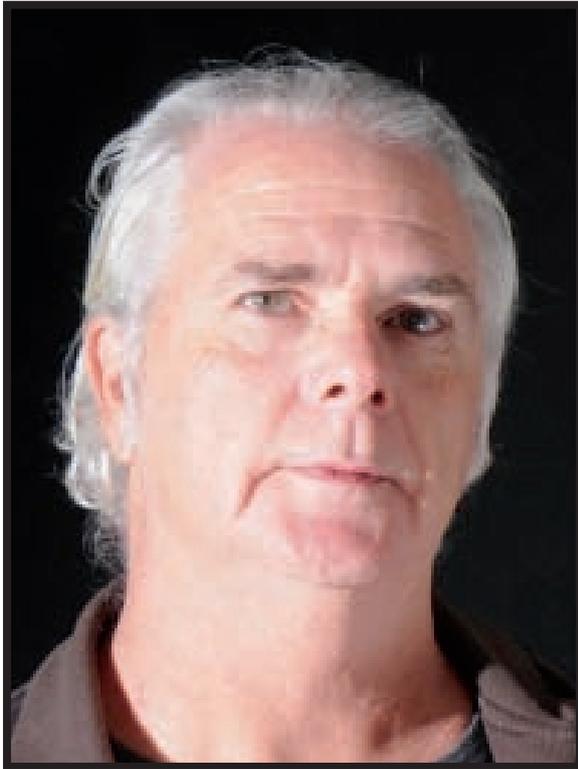
**Any other thoughts?**

Too many thoughts not enough paper, lol. I look forward to rolling my sleeves up and helping promote our arts, they are considered a national treasure in China. My hope is one day that same love of our arts will be embedded in the British psyche too.



# Interview with

**BOB LOWEY**



**When did you start tai chi/qigong? What inspired you to start?**

Qigong was an integral part of our training when I studied Chinese Martial Arts within the School of Wang Kung Shou Tao in the early 70's where I received Instructorship in 1979.

Having tried Judo and Karate, which was the mainstream Oriental arts around at that time; Chinese martial arts were frowned upon and thought of as bogus. For me, this school provided everything I sought, inclusive of demonstrating to others of the mainstream schools how effective it was – usually within closed doors!

Regarding our tuition in those days, one had to be extremely secretive of the training as not only the Qigong Animal Forms taught, but the ideology and internal practice was thought to be akin to Satanic rituals and could not be spoken of outside the class.

While dating a girl in Oxford in '73, I came across a book in the university book shop titled "Fundamentals of Tai Chi Ch'uan" by Wen-Shen Huang and printed the South Sky Book Compa-

ny. I don't know what attracted me to this book. Possibly because it was about Chinese martial arts or possibly because it was dedicated to Sri Aurobindo as I was extremely interested in all things related to Eastern mysticism at the time. I bought the book – which left a large hole in my budget and tried to learn the movements of Tai Chi from the descriptions and illustrations without much success. I pleaded with my teacher to teach me this art and after around 18 months was shown very basic silk reeling exercises from the form. I continued to practice these movements, and it was not until I returned from working abroad that I began serious tuition of the art with another teacher in 1981.

**What does the art mean to you?**

For me, Taijiquan and Qigong are the study and practice of the inner self and the mechanics of the body that in turn installs confidence and discipline and, the psychology of life in its many complex varied forms with a fundamental comprehension of that experiential learning.

**When did you become a member of the Tai Chi Union for Great Britain? When did you become a member of the executive board? Why did you become involved?**

Taijiquan was gaining immense interest around the mid 80's and there was a generalised awareness throughout the country of schools of Tai Chi and workshops popping up here and there.

As popularity grew nationwide and throughout Europe, communications and networks grew between schools. Having successfully established one of the largest schools in Scotland in the late 80's, Seven Stars School of Taijiquan, I was dedicated to enhancing my student's experience of the art through public demonstrations, organising festivals of mixed martial arts and generally trying to draw all local martial arts schools together.

In 1991, my great friend Linda Chase Broda and I attended a meeting in London's Soho district regarding a collaboration of the heads of different Taijiquan schools in the UK. This was hosted by Nigel Sutton and Dan Docherty with a view on bringing all Taijiquan schools in the nation under one banner, which was the beginning

of the TCUGB.

This idea greatly appealed to me in the promotion and study of Taijiquan and Qigong.

Unfortunately, I knew quite a number of the attendee's and having socialised the night prior the meeting, fell asleep when the nominations for the executive committee were carried forward and missed this opportunity. Linda gave me hell! However, I was voted onto the executive panel I believe in 1993 and was Chairman from 1995 – 1998.

**How have you seen tai chi/qigong change over the years? In your opinion, what has been the most significant change?**

Access into China, and Chinese citizen's admission to the UK became much easier in the late 80's and early 90's which initiated a closer cultural exchange. That is, more Chinese "Masters" were hosted to provide workshops in the UK and a great many students, me included, became "Toady's" or disciples of Grandmasters in China with frequent trips to that huge country for training.

The past 25 years consequently, has seen a plethora of Taijiquan and Qigong development throughout Europe providing reputable lineages of teachers and variable styles.

**What are your views on the current level of tai chi/qigong?**

The current standards of Taijiquan and Qigong in the UK are quite staggering in comparison to thirty years ago. Background information has become more academic making information easier to trace. I have since witnessed teachers in-

struct their students diligently through all aspects of practice and theory providing them with a solid foundation in the study of these ancient arts.

Unfortunately, there are those who wish to contain, regulate and dictate in a potentially political mode of approach which is not befitting "a way of life", which is the cornerstone of Taijiquan and Qigong.

**Where would like to see tai chi go in the future?**

I believe the TCUGB are fulfilling their role in the promotion of Taijiquan and Qigong but more could be done.

In my own opinion, it would be conducive to reinstate regional offices in the maintenance of close contact of local Taijiquan schools. This is in the interests of providing members with a TCUGB representative in a quarterly or bi-monthly visit whereby closer communications / planning of events can be disclosed and collated in their region to be fed back to the executive panel.

**Any other thoughts?**

Today, everyone is contactable electronically. However, the TCUGB is still publishing a hard copy of the magazine. A great deal of expenditure can be saved by having this in a downloadable format for members, and paid subscription for the public that would generate more funds.

It would also be advantageous for TCUGB annual / bi-annual meetings open to members at different localities throughout the country which would undoubtedly aid in TCUGB promotion and closer ties with members.



# Interview with

**BARRY MCGINLAY**



**When did you start tai chi/qigong? What inspired you to start?**

I started tai chi over 20 something years ago. I had already been studying another style of martial art, Hapkido, Wing Chun and kickboxing

I wanted to understand more of the internal aspects of martial arts culture philosophy.

**What does the art mean to you?**

Tai chi is a big part of my life.

**When did you become a member of the Tai Chi Union for Great Britain? When did you become a member of the executive board? Why did you become involved?**

I became a member of the TCUGB about 12 years ago. I joined the board of directors about a year and a half ago. I was invited by Faye, Mar-nix, and Ronnie Robinson. All asked me to join the directors panel as they believed I would be a

positive person to be involved in the tai chi union for Great Britain.

**How have you seen tai chi/qigong change over the years? In your opinion, what has been the most significant change?**

I believe the most significant change in tai chi and qigong is seeing it get more publicity especially in the social media.

**What are your views on the current level of tai chi/qigong?**

The current level of tai chi and qigong, I would say, could be much better. There are some great coaches and teachers and masters in this country which aren't recognised. Unfortunately, there are a lot of weekend courses where you can become qualified as a tai chi teacher, which I believe demotes the status.

**Where would like to see tai chi go in the future?**

I would like to see tai chi grow and, with that, I mean grow outside of China, as we always seem to be looking towards China which is only natural. Tai chi to grow needs leave China to a certain degree. We understand where the roots are! Now we have some very high-level coaches. Just like we have Brazilian jujitsu which has grown since leaving Brazil. Or a bit like yoga. We no longer think of an Indian man in a loincloth, we think of usually a white middle-class, woman teaching yoga. This is because yoga has grown up and has outgrown India and become something much bigger.

