

## Tai Chi Caledonia 1999 Stirling - Scotland

### Lesley Rodgers

Upon our arrival on Friday evening, our facilitators Bob & Ronnie welcomed us with a buffet at the Gannochy Bar. It seemed like an appropriate place to start, as I'm sure most of us "veteran '98" ended up there. By the end of the night, old friendships were rekindled and new ones struck.

There wasn't the usual rude awakening on Saturday morning as Ronnie made his first & only silent announcement using his newly presented "I have an announcement to make" T-Shirt, soon handing the lead over to our traditional bagpipe player for the official opening. Then, in turn each Instructor introduced themselves, and talked a little about the content of the weekend tasters and workshops for the week to about 130 eager Tai Chi players from around the globe.

Later I was certainly inspired by the wonderful demonstrations performed individually by the Instructors. There was Liming Yue's powerful Chen Style; Aarvo Tucker and Luigi Zannini's differing Styles of Bagua; Anya Meot's dynamic Sabre Form; Anna Zwettler's beautiful Fan Form; some excellent open Hand Wudang Form by Dan Docherty and Ronnie's Chen Man Ch'ing Open Hand Form. Simon Watson set the standards for Competition Form, Bob gave us a show of Cane Form and we were delighted by an exhibition of Praying Mantis Kung Fu from Steve, a visiting guest of Ronnie's from mainland China.

As I watched, I realised how multifaceted the Internal Arts actually are, and as a mere beginner with only three years learning, I was overwhelmed by the high standards achieved through practice, years of dedication and experience on observing teachers such as Peter Ralston and Shelagh Grandpierre.

My choice of workshops were Liming's Chen Short Form and Aarvo's Hsing I. Both were hard work, great fun and extremely inspirational. Thanks to both for their patience and sense of humour in correcting us. I am most grateful to Liming for the warm up set and the new dance routine!

The weekend tasters were brilliant. I managed to participate in Bagua with Aarvo and Shelagh's relaxation class; Ronnie's soft pushing Hands, Liming's Silk Reeling exercises and a return trip to Shelagh's for more on relaxation.

Dan's video footage of his trip to China was a delight with sights many of us hope to see first hand. Also thanks to Rob for sharing his film footage and knowledge, and Simon Cartwright for his enthusiasm and energy throughout the week.

Sunday's gathering had us foot tapping and clapping to the sounds of Scotland from Keith and Pat's Folk ensemble. The 7 Stars Band members outshone themselves with excellent impromptu performances from Audrey, Tommy, Lesley, Robbie, and Davie, with Rena and Brian supporting the mellow tones, and more blues for guitar virtuoso Simon Watson, Bob, and amazing Blues Harp accompaniment from Dougie.

Monday and Tuesday's informal Push hands proved hilarious with our Wudang friends contributing their sense of humour as well as knowledge and strength with Nick interspersing with something utterly ridiculous at every opportunity (I'm sure) to gain points.

Once again our midweek Ceilidh was a huge success. It lent some insight into "Auld Scots Life" and surely put a new slant on Sword Form! The singers sang, the dancers danced but I think the entertainers awards go to our visitors: Luigi for having to exercise his vocal chords and Liming for his amazing Chen style based Highland Fling!

Thursday was a scorcher and we all took advantage of it working outdoors (*sometimes in the shade*), with an "Open Forum" that provided the opportunity to let us air our views and reflect on the past weeks events. I'm glad to say criticism voiced was positive and constructive finding fault only in areas neither that Bob nor Ronnie had control over. Namely the weather and loo rolls (not the singer).

Those who attended Bob's relaxation class I'm sure would have to agree that it "wound" up the week beautifully. A great total body work-out using laughter as an exercise!

The highlight of our last evening was the celebration of Anna Zwettler's birthday at "Obi Wan's Galactic Gig (disco) in the Gannochy Bar. I hope she enjoyed it as much as we all did. Once again the philosophising went into the wee sma' hours debating the origins of Tai Chi, its styles, is it a con.....

I'd like to thank Bob and Ronnie for their massive input of energy in organising Tai Chi Caledonia for us, the participants, whilst ensuring the highest standards are taught from the most reputed of instructors world-wide. Also to those Instructors for their patience, sharing of knowledge, particularly our "Girl Power" Instructors (Anna, Anya and Shelagh), and lastly my fellow players who contributed great camaraderie to a most enjoyable week of Tai Chi Chuan.

Here's looking to Caledonia 2000.



*PHOTOS* Clockwise - Anya Mect, Sabre Form, Steve's Praying Mantis, Liming enjoys the ceilidh, Shelagh teaching Yang Style Sword, Aarvo + Luigi's best 'pose', Simon Cartwright's applications, Anna's Fan group and the Highland Fling  
*MAIN PHOTO* Páir Ralston demonstrating applications.