

**Mary Holshere in the Galapagos Islands**



In May, I went with a group of six seniors and seven young people to Santa Cruz, Floreana, and Isabella Islands in the Galapagos. We had flown there from Quito, Ecuador, to the airfield on Baltra Island that the U.S. built in WWII, to protect the Panama Canal waterways.

I had prepared myself by reading a book describing the hydrology, geology, flora and fauna, and environment and ecology of the Islands. The nearest one is 600 miles west of Ecuador.

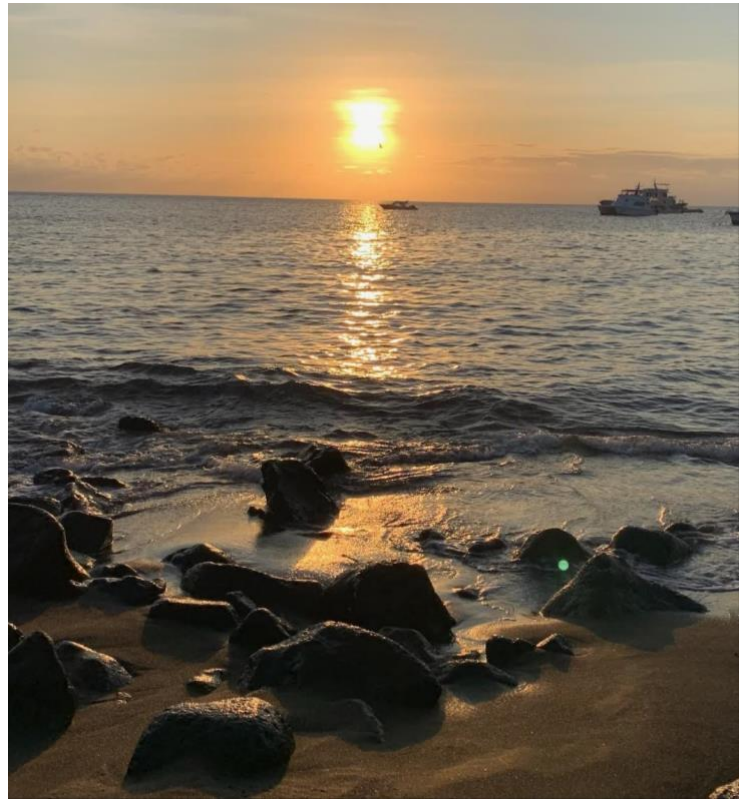
I had never snorkeled before, but one of my sons said, “If you can breathe, you can snorkel.” Well, I didn’t give up and it was worth it. I got to swim so close to marine iguanas, sea turtles, starfish, and many colorful fish, be it on sugary sand beaches or black lava sand beaches.

We climbed up the side of a volcano, (last erupted in 2018), to view an immense caldera. Then we biked down.

We viewed the hatcheries for various species of Galapagos Giant Tortoises. When the tortoises are 4-5 years old, they are taken back to the islands that they came from. I got to see them in the wild, and some are close to 275 pounds, and perhaps 100 years old. They have so many predators since the islands were peopled... i.e., goats, dogs, cats, rats, pigs, donkeys, and people. Their numbers are slowly rising again, like the bison here.

Farming is done on some of the islands too. The farmers had shot all the Galapagos Hawks from Santa Cruz Island. But on Isabella, I was lucky to see one flying in front of our bus. It finally let go of the large chick in its talons. No doubt after we left it was going to search it out.

We finished the trip by going back to Quito, where I had stood on the equator.



# Mental workout

## Tai chi is a workout for the brain and body

By Cindy Kuzma, New York Times

‘Parting the Wild Horse’s Mane.’ “Wave Hands Like Clouds.” “Embrace Tiger, Return to Mountain.” These are not song titles or poems. Rather, they’re the deceptively complex movements of tai chi.

With around 250 million practitioners, tai chi is often cited as one of the world’s most popular physical activities. It originated in China in the 17th century as a martial art. Unlike karate or taekwondo, tai chi focuses on quiet strength rather than combat, which makes it more accessible to older adults or those who have been injured.

Shirley Chock, 48, began practicing in her 20s, after she tore her anterior cruciate ligament. She had trained in wushu kung fu, a more acrobatic martial art that caused the tear, but tai chi offered a low-impact way to rehab. Chock, a former financial professional who was born in New York and spent her childhood in Taiwan, also found tai chi beneficial in managing stress. After about two years, she began teaching it, and eventually took over Aiping Tai Chi, the Connecticut school where she had trained.

Since then, “the most common thing I have heard is older students saying, ‘If only I’d discovered this practice when I was younger.’” Chock said. Here’s what makes tai chi so useful, and how to get started with it when you’re ready.

### THE BENEFITS

Tai chi blends mental focus and physical effort to build strength, flexibility and mindfulness, said Peter Wayne, the director of the Osher Center for Integrative Medicine and the author of “The Harvard Medical School Guide to Tai Chi.”

The poses are upright and less demanding than many in, for example,



Sherry Zhang demonstrates tai chi in a traditional uniform in Manhattan on June 11. The mental and physical benefits span cultures and generations. (Isabelle Zhao/New York Times)

yoga. “Because tai chi evolved in terms of physical function and interaction, I think it translates better to everyday living activities, like lifting groceries, pushing doors open or catching things that fall,” Wayne said. Tai chi is also different from passive techniques like medita-

tion because it pairs deep breathing with movement, which experts say helps you calm your nervous system.

Research suggests tai chi also can improve balance and mobility, including in people with neurological conditions like Parkinson’s disease. It also

helps prevent falls in older adults. By strengthening surrounding muscles, tai chi also reduces strain on joints, said Dr. Amanda Sammut, the chief of rheumatology at Harlem Hospital and an assistant clinical professor of medicine at Columbia University.

For this reason, it’s rec-

ommended in guidelines for managing knee and hip osteoarthritis from the American College of Rheumatology. Studies suggest two or three sessions per week may lead to improvements in depression, anxiety, psychological well-being and cognitive flexibility.

Depending on your fitness level, tai chi can be as aerobically challenging as a brisk walk of the same duration. The practice has few risks, but it’s still wise to consult your doctor if you have chronic health problems.

### GETTING STARTED

The name tai chi refers to both the practice and the underlying philosophy of yin and yang — that there’s no good without bad, no dark without light, Chock said.

There are several styles — including Yang, Chen and Sun — named after prominent teachers or founders. “Although there are differences, there are many more commonalities,” Wayne said, and no scientific evidence that any one is superior. For beginners, Chock recommends the Yang style; it’s the most popular, so you’ll have many classes from which to choose.

No standardized certification exists for instructors, so Wayne suggests searching online for schools and classes.

Visit at least two classes to make sure you’re comfortable with the space, teaching style and your classmates. “Tai chi is experiential; you have to go and try it and feel it,” Chock said.

Some schools are pricey — \$25 and up per class — but others offer lower or sliding-scale fees, and you might find free classes through park districts or community organizations. You can also learn online, and some instructors who are also health care providers have virtual courses for people with arthritis and other health conditions, Sammut said.

This article was passed on to me by Paul and Sue Schramm. As you read through this article notice how important it is to move slowly and breathe deeply with the lowest part of your stomach. The benefits of repairing your body, developing balance, strength, and flexibility should encourage you to follow Gary's pace and do the moves the best you can.

**Cindy Kuzma, New York Times (June 2023). (Tai Chi Is a Workout for the Brain and Body)**

**Retrieved July 18, 2023.**

### **Tim and Claudette 50-year Celebration of Bahamas Independence**

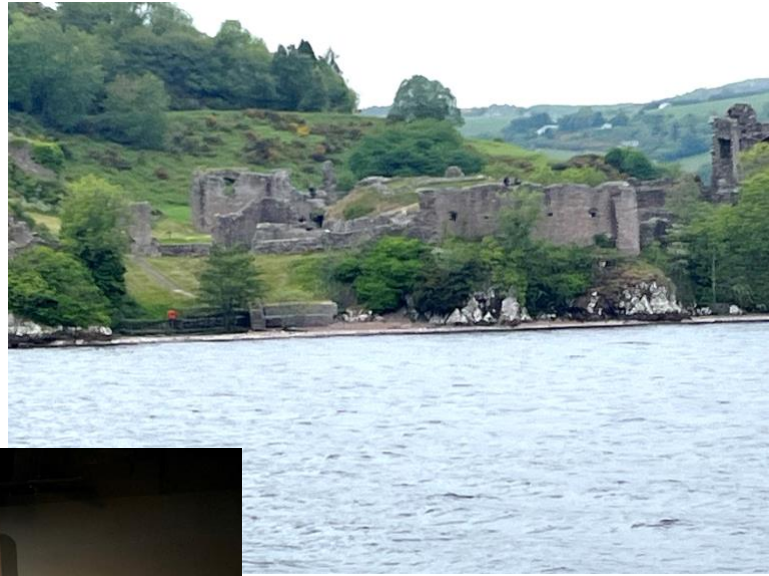
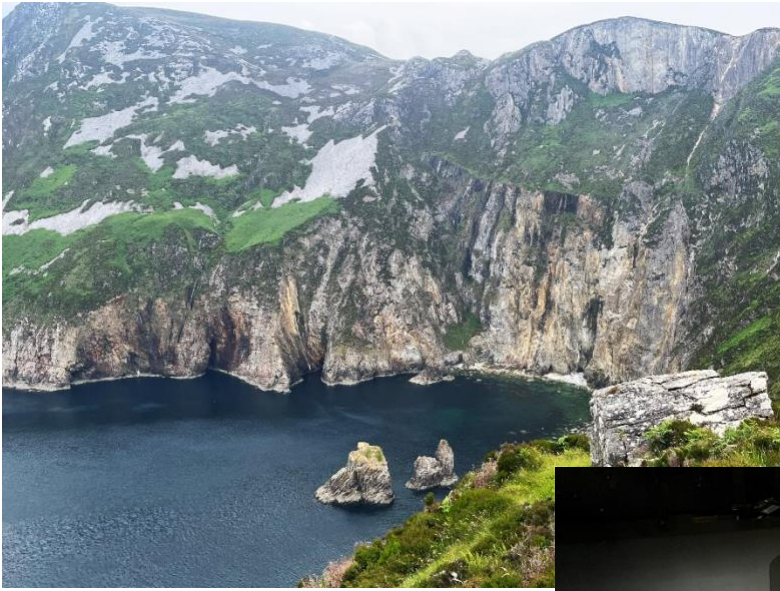


This July 14 the Bahamas celebrated 50 years of independence from Britain. Tim and Claudette had the privilege of being on the island of Grand Bahama to participate in some of the festivities. We were married on this island in the church where this picture was taken. Claudette's parents who are now both deceased were members of the church.

The beaches of the Bahamas and some of the best in the world. Tim and Claudette find them to be one of the best places to relax and enjoy God's grace and peace.



## Pat Swartz Travels to Scotland and Ireland



These are some of the favorite places 13th) to Scotland and Ireland. The Kris and John Richey and Ken and it was the Royal Mile, St. Andrew's, what was left of Urquhart Castle (no Then onto Ireland where we visited evolution of the Titanic. We visited of hexagonal columns formed by Slieve League Sea Cliffs. We were (Only time it rained the entire trip) plenty of pubs and the people are with a great group of people.



I saw on my trip last month (June 1- same trip fellow SWELL members, Kendra Kunkel made. In Edinburgh, and the Loch Ness Cruise over to see sighting of the Loch Ness Monster). Titanic Belfast to learn about the Giant's Causeway, an impressive area cooling lava. In Donegal it was the able to get golf in, in the pouring rain. The landscape is beautiful, there's great. An absolutely wonderful trip



**Times and dates that we will not be able to have SWELL 2023-2024  
The CRWC or indoor track is closed.**

No excuses, you can choose one of 4 at home workouts and do it wherever you are.

**2023 Dates**

Monday July 3, 2023, **No Class**  
Wednesday August 9, 2023, **Flora Park**  
Wednesday Aug 16, 2023, **Flora Park**  
Monday September 4, 2023, **Flora Park**  
Wednesday November 22, 2023, **No Class**  
Friday November 24, 2023, **No Class**  
Friday December 22, 2023, **No Class**

Monday December 25, 2023, **No Class**  
Friday December 29, 2023, **No Class**

**2024 Dates**

Monday January 1, 2024, **No Class**  
Monday February 19, 2024, **No Class**  
Friday March 29, 2024, **Flora Park**  
Monday May 27, 2024, **Flora Park**

**THE STAFF**

**Editor..... Gary Wittman**  
**Feature Writer..... Pat Swartz**  
**Feature Writer..... Mary Holshere**  
**Feature Writer..... Mary Holshere**  
**Feature Writer..... Tim and Claudette Bees**

**We are looking for feature writers each month, try your hand at it.**  
**Suggestions (Vacation or travels, sports, important milestones like anniversaries, and hobbies).**  
**Email articles to: [garydonaldwittman@gmail.com](mailto:garydonaldwittman@gmail.com)**