

SWELL LETTER
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SWELL Picnic

(Wednesday October 7th, 4:30 PM)



SWELL PICNIC

Wednesday October 7th, Rain Date Thursday October 8th

STARTS 4:15-4:30 PM

EAT AT 5:00 PM

16674 WITTMAN HAMM CT.

DUBUQUE, IA 52001

**BRING TABLE SETTING, DRINK, YOUR FAVORITE DISH TO
PASS, AND CHAIR**

SWELL WILL SUPPLY PULLED MEAT AND BUNS

RSVP SELF AND GUEST /

RSVP if you want a bun or not for the pork.

RETURN TO THIS EMAIL

garydonaldwittman@gmail.com

We could use a few volunteers to help with parking.



People practice Tai Chi at a park near the Temple of Heaven in Beijing
ANDY WONG • *The Associated Press*

Striving for balance

Tai chi practitioners seek well-being in fast-paced Beijing

BY MARÍA TERESA HERNÁNDEZ • *The Associated Press*

BEIJING — One arm raised and the other lowered, hundreds of people move every morning like birds spreading their wings at the heart of Beijing's Temple of Heaven. It's a movement in tai chi, a physical and philosophical practice developed more than 300 years ago that continues to resonate in China today.

"The environment is great and the air is good too," said Ye Guirong, 64. "You can see we're surrounded by trees."

Most practitioners are retirees in their 60s and beyond. Some exercise in groups while a speaker plays relaxing music in the background. Others move silently on their own.

Ye first encountered tai chi in 2010. Recently retired, she took walks across the city and one day spotted the group she now leads.

"I thought it looked good, so I started practicing," Ye said.

Once a new member joins a group, its leader teaches the basic moves. The apprentice's progress is reviewed and corrected periodically until a new level is achieved.

Among tai chi's basic movements are "White Crane Spreads its Wings," in which one arm is raised while the other is lowered; and "Part the Wild Horse's Mane," a broad, fluid sequence in which the body weight shifts forward while the arms open gently in front of the chest.

"The movements have been passed down from one instructor to another," Ye said.

NEWCOMERS KEEP JOINING

Ye's tai chi group, Cypress Grove, has around 30 people and recently welcomed its newest practitioner.

Zu Hong, 59, learned a 24-movement routine in about a month. Ye said she's ready to take on the second set.

"I thought tai chi looked very beautiful," Zu said. "I wanted to exercise, so I came here to the Temple of Heaven."

Founded in the 15th century by a Ming dynasty emperor, the site is a complex of religious buildings symbolizing the relationship between heaven and earth.

Its most iconic building is the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests. It served as the ceremonial site where emperors acted as intermediaries between humans and heaven, offering sacrifices and prayers for good harvests.

Today it serves primarily as a tourist attraction, and its surrounding gardens remain open to the public.

ANCIENT IDEAS ENDURE

Tai chi carries two meanings in China. It refers both to the martial art, or Taijiquan, and to the philosophical ideas behind it, or Taiji.

One of its key concepts is qi, or vital energy, which is understood as a life breath that flows through the body.

In traditional Chinese medicine, health depends on qi circulating through a network of pathways known as meridians, which are believed to connect the body's organs, limbs and other parts. Acupuncture and other traditional treatments aim to regulate that flow.

"Practices like tai chi and qigong are all about activating, regulating or improving the flow of qi in the body," said James Miller, a professor of Humanities at Duke Kunshan University in China's Jiangsu province. "That's something very key to Daoism (Taoism), but it's also part of the broader Chinese conception of the body and of the world."

Beyond the human body, qi is also believed to exist in nature.

BALANCE:

Embracing ancient ideas is key

Mountains and rivers are understood to be animated by its flow.

"This is also why it's traditional to establish temples on mountains," Miller said. "They're understood not just as beautiful or remote places, but because they're closer to nature."

AN ANCIENT PRACTICE LIVES ON

There are several styles of tai chi, each with its own forms.

Ye's group gathers every morning at 7:40 a.m. to practice Yang-style for about an hour and a half. The group rotates through different sets. Some consist of 24, 42 or 48 movements, while others incorporate swords or fans.

"Through exercising, everyone's health has improved," Ye said. "Our spirits are especially good."

Chen-style is widely recognized as the oldest form of tai chi. It was developed in the 17th century by Chen Wangting, a military commander who later in life changed paths to embrace spirituality.

“He practiced Daoist (Taoist) methods of self-cultivation including meditation,” said Tai Chi master Chen Haitao. “Then one day he experienced a sudden awakening: The meridians throughout his body all opened, his mind became enlightened and wisdom suddenly emerged.”

Chen Wangting’s experience was life-changing, said Chen Haitao. Dreaming of sharing the sensation with others, he found in movement the means to do so.

Both the martial art and the philosophy behind tai chi are meant to work together, Chen said. The movements provide the method while the philosophy gives them meaning.

“One of the great benefits of Taijiquan is that it is suitable for everyone,” Chen said. “As long as you learn the basic principles correctly and maintain proper alignment, whoever practices it will benefit from it.”



An elderly couple practice Tai Chi with swords at a park near the Temple of Heaven in Beijing.



Chen Haitao (right) watches his student perform Tai Chi at a class in Beijing.

Dawn and Chuck Andracchio Colorado Vacation

We started with visiting Estes Park where we took advantage of their river walk. Chuck also trout fished at Estes Lake and its tributary Big Thompson River (no luck this time). From there we entered Rocky Mountain National Park. We almost collided with a doe and her fawn within 50 feet of the entry gate! We traveled the entire loop of the park and stopped at several locations with incredible views of the mountains as well as the valleys and meadows. We saw individual elk along the road as well as herds of elk grazing the valleys and mountain sides. The highest elevation we stopped at



was just over 12,000 feet and it was 47 degrees with a wind up to 40 mph; we had jackets with us. After Estes Park we drove to Denver where Dawn has 8 cousins. We had a small family reunion with 6 cousins/families, and we brought 2 dozen ears of sweet corn

and of course, Betty Jane candy for them to enjoy; they are all Midwest transplants. One of the highlights of our trip was attending a concert at Red Rocks Amphitheater. We saw Matt Nathanson, Bare Naked Ladies and Train and thoroughly enjoyed the music as well as the venue. If you haven't been to Red Rocks, put it on your bucket list



as the concerts there are high quality and the setting among the mountainside is magical! We had a great visit to the Denver Botanical Gardens, with exception of Chuck being swarmed by bees and stung 3 times!

We stopped in Omaha on the way home and enjoyed a visit with a close friend and former Dubuquer. We went to a sports bar and unfortunately saw the Fever lose their game. Colorado has so much to offer and we enjoy the scenery, great Mexican food, friends, family and dry air, but it's always great to get home.





--Photo by – Bob Knepper

You've heard me talk about the blue zones, discovered by physician demographer Gianni Pes and written about by Dan Buettner with National Geographic identifying global hotspots of longevity. Dan Buettner came up with the Power 9—the natural habits of:

1. Move naturally
2. Have a purpose
3. Downshift
4. 80% rule
5. Plant slant
6. Wine at 5
7. Belong
8. Loved ones first
9. Right tribe

Seven through nine intrigue me the most: 7. *Belong*—taking part in a faith-based or spiritual community regularly; 8. *Loved ones first*—keeping aging parents and grandparents nearby, committing to a life partner, and investing in children; and 9. *Right tribe*—building and choosing social circles that support and practice healthy behaviors. In fact, these final three habits have been said to be the most important factors of longevity in the blue zones.

What pleases me is how in our SWELL class we take part in faith, help support each other, and become partners in our class. We are the right tribe, building and choosing social circles that support each other. Our social connection is huge as far as how we live, how we want to live, and our motivation to live. This is evident in the longevity of many of our seniors who have lived into their 90s and still come to class with enthusiasm, making us all feel as though we can reach that level as we grow younger throughout the SWELL community.

Look at the photo above and the numbers of people that continue to return every year, overcoming hardships, health problems, and both mental and physical obstacles to continue with SWELL. We are approaching the 40th year of SWELL, and as we approach that milestone, I realize how important it is for us to continue to support each other. We need to make sure we continue to be young in mind, body, and spirit.

Be well, be SWELL.

--Gary

THE STAFF

Editor..... Gary
Feature Writer Gary
Feature Writer Dawn and Chuck Andracchio
Article submitted by..... Anonymous
Photo Submitted by..... Bob Kneper

Thanks to those who submitted wonderful articles to our SWELL newsletter