

Genie Parker has trained and taught Wu style Tai Chi Chuan for over 18 years.

What do you most love about your work as a Tai Chi instructor, and/or what do you love most about doing Tai Chi?

I think it has something to do with watching other people begin to feel and experience the same things that I do when training Wu style. The sense of well-being, of having accomplished things I never thought I could do - physically, mentally, and emotionally - and the gratefulness for being able to improve my health while having so much fun. I'm a better person than I was before I started training - and I clearly love the way Wu style makes me feel. The martial aspects are almost like icing on the cake - in the sense that what you learn when trying to stay calm and centered when someone is attacking you takes you beyond what you could have ever imagined in terms of peace of mind.

What's the most meaningful book you've read in the last five years?

Certainly Rimpoche Nawang Gehlek's Good Life, Good Death - Tibetan Wisdom on Reincarnation - with a foreword by H.H. the Dalai Lama - is among them. And the fact that he lives and teaches the public here in Ann Arbor on a regular basis is extraordinary.

What was the most fun thing you did this past summer?

This might sound insincere or self-serving, but I truly had a blast when I went to Singapore and Hong Kong with some other Wu stylists. My Sifu, Grandmaster Eddie Wu Kwong Yu, plans wonderful trips to the Orient every couple of years - to visit and train at various Wu style schools around southeast Asia, as well as see the sights and enjoy ourselves. This year I also competed for the first time ever in a tournament in Singapore with over 100 other Wu stylists from around the world. I came home with lots of new friends, two silver medals, one bronze, and a trophy for 2nd runner-up for women. And I was the only American on the whole trip! I was terrified, but everyone was so nice to me, and so encouraging; I had a truly great time.

Closer to home, the most fun thing I did all summer long, and continue to do, is to spend as much time as I can sitting on the front porch of my tiny house, enjoying every moment I can, relaxing with my best friend and life partner. It's really a challenge to make time to sit still and think about things and just enjoy life - especially when there are so many crises in the world. I believe in playing hard to be able to work hard - and of course the other way around too. But finding the still points - that's something special.

Have you done Tai Chi in any places or locales that have been particularly memorable?

At the base of Wu Tang mountain in China. Wu Tang is to the internal martial arts as Shaolin is to the rest of Chinese martial arts. Now that was memorable. Again, closer to home - my school was invited this year to demonstrate at Penguicon, the huge Sci-Fi and Computer convention held annually in Troy. That was a lot of fun.

What was the best thing about your childhood?

My father was a colonel in the Air Force, so we traveled all over the world. I was exposed to so many different cultures (including New Jersey as a teenager) - and I loved it. It has given me a true appreciation for being born in the USA - and a true love for all other people and cultures.

Do you ever take a long holiday from doing Tai Chi?

No. I love Wu style way too much. I don't train fanatically - there are days I don't do as much, and days I do very little. But most of the time it just feels too good not to do it.



Photo by Lisa Leuthouser