

Anniversary Time!

A little while ago it dawned on me that this Fall marks an anniversary. I've been in private practice in Portland for 20 years. And, it's been 25 years since I first began exploring bodywork and eventually other aspects of Oriental medicine. Hmmmm ... this kind of snuck up on me! It's initiated a pause (big surprise!) to reflect on this journey.

My very first exposure to Oriental medicine occurred while living and working at Brietenbush Hot Springs. After receiving an amazing healing acupressure treatment, I began learning with Katsu, a Japanese resident. We were both as green and novice as possible. We had a book that showed point locations and gave simple recipe treatment plants. We worked on each other. We worked on community members (this was before treatments were offered to guests).

In some ways, I look back on this as the most idyllic time of my career. I did sessions in a small cabin, surrounded by large trees. The windows overlooked a small cliff and down to a beautiful river. The river sounds were a strong presence in that room. The Sun, Moon or grey rain filtered light in that room was another strong, living presence.



Those sessions seemed magical, then and now, because I had no idea what I was doing. Without understanding, it was the ultimate example of 'beginner's mind.'

I did not know theory. I did not know anatomy. I did not know the incredible depth of Chinese medicine. I didn't even know that I didn't know these things.

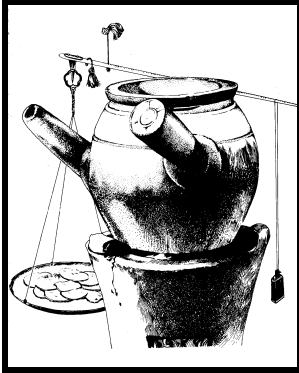
These sessions might have been my best work, precisely because my 'knowing' wasn't getting in the way of a very natural healing process: human touch, connecting with body/mind energy, embraced by the spaciousness and depth of nature.

As much as I wanted to stay in that idyllic environment, my path led back into 'the world.' A few years after leaving Brietenbush, I found myself traveling extensively, living in places like Taipei, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Portland. Big cities all, and not the idyllic nature I started in. But, I was learning. I was learning all those things I didn't know.

I had fantastic teachers, most of which I worked with as an apprentice. I studied with the founder of the acupressure system Katsu and I taught each other, Iona Teegarden. She opened my mind and heart to the magic of body/mind energetics and emotions.

I studied with Dr. Ting, at the time an 85 year old tui na master, from a family medical lineage that went back for generations. Dr. Ting was the epitome of the Chinese

grandfather/master who I adored. He supervised our training through his students, who were in their 60s! It was then that I realized how long it takes to get good at this work, I mean really good. Humbly, I began telling people (and still do): check back with me when I'm 60. Maybe I'll know something then.



Fortune allowed me to learn from chi kung and meditation teachers, like Mantak Chia, who patiently pointed to the amazing chi wellspring that underlies all the ideas and techniques of Chinese medicine. They literally opened doorways to levels of experience and chi that I had only dreamed about.

After extensive traveling, studying and absorbing I returned to Portland to practice. This was where the real learning and training happened. Each person, whether they sought help through bodywork, herbs, meditation, chi kung or tai chi helped deepen my understanding and knowledge. The seeds planted by gifted teachers were watered and nourished by the daily practice of whoever and whatever walked through the door.

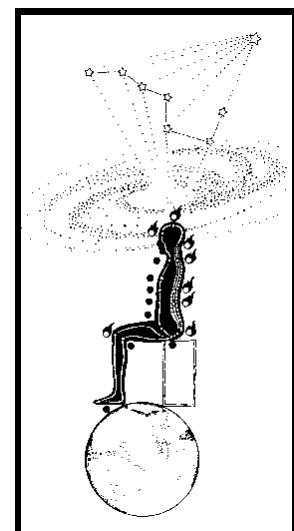
In the last few years I've recognized a subtle shift in my work practice. Not anything I've consciously tried to change, add or delete as in techniques. I sense a return of the original feelings and desires to do this work which started 25 years ago. It's taken this much time to come full circle. Starting with not knowing anything, growing through learning and knowing, and then practicing until a natural 'not knowing' surfaces again. It feels magical and it feels totally natural and spontaneous. I certainly didn't plan it this way at all!

This feeling is one of arriving, of doing/being what I first set out to do, to be in those idyllic Oregon mountains.

It seems like after 25 years, I can now begin.

And along with this feeling has come a very spontaneous interest to write. It feels like I have something worthwhile to say, to share from this journey. There are several books in process. One is about doing Taoist meditation and chi kung in a Western cultural context. Another is about bodywork, exploring beyond physical techniques into the amazing natural wisdom and processes our body/mind/spirit reveal when properly attended to. Like my practice, this feels different than anything I've written before. It feels very creative, inspiring and fun!

And so, I share this with you as a little snapshot of a resting point along the journey. I am filled with immense appreciation and gratitude for every person I've had the pleasure and honor to meet



along the way.

Interestingly, in this year of anniversary, I also turned 50 years old. Check back with me in 10 years or so. I may know something by then. I may have something worthwhile to say.

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