

Sun Do News

INTERNATIONAL SUN DO ASSOCIATION - NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION
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Dear Members,

Proceed
As the Way opens.

—BOUP SA BO WENDY LARMAN

Breath, Balance, and Meditation

by Barbara McCandless

After fourteen years of Sun Do practice I have reached the level of blue belt. In this essay I will focus on aspects of the practice that I have found important to my personal growth and experience: breath, balance, and meditation. I have found that Sun Do enhances the integration of body and mind to a balanced state from which spiritual awareness develops.

I was attracted to Sun Do initially for physical fitness, strength, and flexibility. The discipline was fine, but I knew there must be more to Sun Do, and then I met Boup Sa Nim, who was and is the embodiment of all that Sun Do

could be for a practitioner. He became a source of inspiration for me from the moment I met him. He is a devoted teacher, and we are so very fortunate that he still comes to Lillooet to lead a retreat every fall. I feel his presence often during a practice.

The Sun Do warm-up exercises stretch the larger muscle groups in the limbs, back, and neck, as well as the smaller muscles in the back, hands, and feet. Over time I became more limber and strong and was able to execute and hold most of the postures.

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International Sun Do Association

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Southern California Winter 2013 Retreat with Master Kim



January 17-20, 2013 (Thurs-Sun)
Glen Ivy Community, Corona, California

Please RSVP to Hank via e-mail at HB@LifegateInstitute.org
if you're planning to attend or have questions regarding the retreat.

Hope to see you next January!



Bill and Wendy Crosman, the Glen Ivy retreat hosts, with Master Kim.

Photo by Ginny LeRossignol

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The warm ups and postures also stimulate the subtle energy, ki, to flow through the meridians, which helps release energy blockages both in the meridians and in the mind. In addition, the organ exercises at the end of practice move ki through the meridians connecting five pairs of vital organs. The cool-down exercises circulate ki after it has built up in the tancheon during

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...tancheon breathing should be smooth, like silk.
The quality of silk is light, soft, and flowing, yet
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postures and focused breathing. Ki energy is subtle and its presence may be elusive. My first recognition of ki build up appeared as a sensation of heat in the lower abdomen, followed by heat radiating through my whole body similar to a hot flash.

Breath is the very essence of a Sun Do practice. In the beginning, one must learn to inhale into the lower belly with a slight expansion. In level four breathing I began to focus on refining the breath. I read in Boup Sa Nim's PhD dissertation that tancheon breathing should be smooth, like silk. The quality of silk is light, soft, and flowing, yet strong and enduring. This is a lovely image to hold while breathing during practice.

Wendy added several useful techniques to help us strengthen the in-breath while executing

postures. In standing postures we visualize pulling energy from the earth up the legs into the tancheon while pressing the toes into the floor; in non-standing postures we flex or extend the toes to bring more energy into the tancheon. These techniques engage the legs and pelvic area in the upward flow of energy. In addition, when the feet are parallel rather than pointing outward, the sacral area of the pelvis is more open to the flow of energy.

When I give an energy healing I often ask the client to breathe deeply in a relaxed manner into the lower belly. People under stress or in pain often have overactive adrenal glands, which may cause an increase in heart rate and a rise in blood pressure. Slow, deep breathing into the lower belly helps to calm the body through the autonomic nervous system.

While in a posture I examine the alignment of my body to see that my back is straight and my feet parallel, since proper alignment helps keep a balanced flow of energy throughout the body. I have found it useful to slightly contract the muscles that are not engaged in weight bearing or stretching, and in the organ exercises I use isometrics to keep all muscles engaged. When a posture is too difficult to execute

as drawn, or if I experience distracting shaking, I will modify the posture in a way that duplicates the intent suggested by the drawing. It is more important to keep my focus on the tancheon and maintain proper breathing, not push myself beyond my physical capabilities.

While inhaling with a spiral or holding the breath during orbits one must use visualization techniques. Visualizing the spiral helped me locate more precisely the tancheon, which initially appeared as a small yellow ball a bit larger than a pea. Over time the image of the tancheon has become larger and more radiant. At first the spiral and the orbits appeared as a laser-like yellow path of energy, but more recently the energy of the orbits has become a clear band. I do not see this but know it is there. In the Lillooet fall 2010 retreat Boup Sa Nim clarified the path of the orbits once we direct the energy over the head and into the third eye. By using the tip of the tongue on the roof of the mouth, the energy is directed from the pituitary in the brain to the roof of the mouth, then straight down through the heart center via the central channel to the tancheon.

I have found that the element of balance is an integral part of the Sun Do practice. During the warm ups and cool downs, a stretch initially done to the left side is balanced by a stretch to the right side, and a forward bend is followed by a backward bend. Left/right and forward/back balance is also present in the posture sequences and the

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five sets of organ exercises. The subtle energy ki is made up of two balancing forces or energies known as yin and yang. By doing left/right and forward/back movements you are balancing the subtle forces of yin and yang. In addition, the in-breath has yang properties (expansion, light, active, warming) and the out-breath has yin qualities (contraction, dark, passive, cooling).

The balancing of yin and yang also occurs in the three energy centers we work with in Sun Do. In Boup Sa Nim's PhD dissertation he explains that the lower tancheon, also known as the ha-tancheon, is the grounding center of the body. While inhaling we focus on bringing earth's energy into the ha-tancheon. When we use visualization in Sun Do we are using the third eye tancheon, also known as the sang-tancheon.

During a practice the mind and body attain a state of balance with the ki energies of the two tancheon, resulting in a harmonious melding of body and mind and a sense of inner peace. Perhaps when these centers are in balance we are ready to experience the energy of the third tancheon, that of the heart, also known as the jung-tancheon. When we are connected and balanced on the physical/energy plane, our awareness expands to the heart center.

Executing postures during a Sun Do practice constitutes a structured form of meditation. With eyes closed our focus is on breathing, visualizing, and balancing the postures. Looking back, it is evident that the many levels of Sun Do practice have prepared me for more complex and concentrated effort. I have found that the sequence of postures may be a metaphor for a Taoist view of life. Each set of postures takes us through

difficult challenges and moments of ease and reflection. The images in the following quote are taken from the introduction of *A Path and a Practice*, by William Martin:

....life itself is actually an infinitely complex dance in which we participate, but of which we catch only limited glimpses. Therefore the path of awareness and awakening is filled with twists, turns, backtracking, rest stops, and steep grades, all appearing in no particular order. Just when we think we can't climb another step, the trail opens into a restful meadow. Just as we are enjoying walking along a babbling brook, a canyon opens up and the trail plunges into shadow and danger. It is an ever-changing path, and each moment of travel on it is new.

Sun Do is a Taoist meditation that takes us on a path on which we will encounter our true nature. As we navigate through the many levels of the practice we observe ego, self-identity, fantasies of the mind, frustration, and other aspects of ourselves. The *Tao te Ching* suggests that a piece of wood before being carved represents our true nature, the part of us that eludes social conditioning. What a comforting thought. A shift in the way we see ourselves in relation to the world will reveal to us our true nature and the nature of the Tao.

Barbara McCandless practices in Lilllooet.



Lunchtime at the 2012 summer retreat

Photo by Dave Delbrook

Sun Do Gifts

Dear Sun Do Members,

Great to see so many people at the Barnet, Vermont, Summer Retreat. Something always changes for the better in my life after a retreat. One gift of this retreat is that I've been on time or early for many of my important appointments. This is new for me, I must admit. I hope you, too, are feeling some benefits physically or spiritually or emotionally from the retreat.

The land and physical buildings of the Retreat Center need care and maintenance so that we can continue to have retreats for many years. Those of you who were at the

Summer Retreat heard my request for financial donations. We are hoping to raise \$4,000 this year to pay for simple and important projects. One such item is buying and placing gravel in the ruts in the driveway from Kitchel Hill Road to the parking area. Simple yes, but once it's done, I know everyone will say with relief, "Wow, the driveway is so much better now." There will be a complete list of these items on the Sun Do website soon.

If you got a pledge form at the retreat, please decide on your donation amount, fill it out (note on your check that it's for maintenance),

and mail it in. There will also be a form on the website that you can download and print. Or simply mail a check to: Sun Do, 45 South Main Street, Suite 090, West Hartford, CT 06107.

We've already raised \$720 since the retreat, about 20% of the total. \$100 would be a great gift to keep the energy growing. Any amount will be helpful, of course. Please be generous. Your gift will help us all deepen and strengthen our Sun Do practice.

Sincerely,

Rich Kramer



See some of the changes to the retreat center that you have made possible through your generous gifts of dollars, time and energy!



Promotions

Keon Kon Dan Boup
(Yellow belt)

Linda Ingram, Omaha
Deborah Warren, W. Hartford
Nicole Galipeau, Montpelier
Hans Schwartz, Boston

Won Ki Dan Boup I
(Red belt)

Ron Walesch, Montpelier

Instructor

Lucy Young, Northampton
Theresa Dunning, Omaha

Instructor Trainee

Ahmed Gaballa Al-Sayed, Florida

Summer Retreat 2012



The bald guys' skit at summer retreat.

Photo courtesy of Dave Delbrook



Eunmi Han presents a fascinating workshop---Science of Breath: The Respiratory System.

Photo courtesy of Heidi Meyer-Bothling



Summer retreat 2012 group.

Photo courtesy of Dave Delbrook



Sharon Meigs, who grows beautiful veggies, mows, and cuts fallen tree limbs into firewood at the Barnet retreat center. We thank you Sharon!!

Retreat Schedule

Fall Lillooet Retreat

September 27-30 (Thursday-Sunday)
Lillooet, British Columbia

October Retreat

Columbus Day weekend
October 5-8 (Friday-Monday)
Sun Do Meditation Center
Barnet, VT

January Retreat

January 3-6 (Thursday to Sunday)
[White Memorial Conservation Center](#), Litchfield, CT
Early registration deadline is December 20th

California Retreat

January 17-20 (Thursday-Sunday)
[Glen Ivy Community](#)
Corona, CA
See announcement on page 2.

February Mountain Retreat

February 7-10 (tentative)
Sun Do Meditation Center
Barnet, VT

Spring Retreat

Memorial Day weekend
May 24-27 (Friday-Monday)
Sun Do Meditation Center
Barnet, VT

Registration:

Regular Retreats: \$95/day
\$80/day for 3- or 5-day packages
paid 2 weeks in advance.

For more information about retreat fees and registration, please go to <http://sundo.org/retreat-calendar.htm>.

All retreats begin at 4:00 PM on the first day and end at noon on the last day.



The Sun Do News welcomes stories, articles poems, photos and announcements. Please send your contribution to Betsy Forrest as an email attachment, if possible, at betsyforrest@myfairpoint.net. You can snail mail contributions to her address below:

Betsy Forrest
205 Forest Drive #2
Montpelier, VT 05602

Website

www.sundo.org

Visit the Sun Do website for information on Sun Do history, retreat dates and registration form, and much more.

You may also e-mail questions to us through the website.



Editor

Betsy Forrest

Newsletter Production

Heidi Meyer-Bothling



Sun Do Centers

Center West Hartford, CT...45 South Main Street, Suite 90,
West Hartford, CT 06107-2402 (860) 523-5260 Coordinator: Anne Lee

ation Center Located in the town of Barnet, VT...Mailing Address: 1347 Kitchel Hill Road,
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819 Phone: (802) 748-3667 (during summer)
(802) 748-3371 (during winter) Coordinator: Virginia Platt

California	Greater LA, CA...(310) 586-1594, Hank Babcock San Francisco, CA...(510) 530-6938, Tae Won Kim
Florida	Tampa / St. Petersburg, FL...(727) 478-4211, Associate Master Tora Strawderman
Massachusetts	Northampton, MA...(860) 745-4154, Lucy Young Swansea, MA...(774)327-0399, Ron Catabia, email: rgcatabia@hotmail.com Worcester, MA...(978) 838-2439, Rich Kramer
Minnesota	Duluth, MN...(218) 355-1401, Kim Hedegaard
Nebraska	Omaha, NE...(402) 650-7715, Joel Dunning
Ohio	Cincinnati, OH...(513) 884-1489, Roy Bushman
Vermont	Burlington, VT...(802) 865-9682, Ginger Hobbs Montpelier, VT...(802) 229-4262, Betsy Forrest St. Johnsbury, VT...(802) 748-3371, Virginia Platt
British Columbia	Lillooet, BC...(250) 256-0404, Associate Master Wendy Larman Vancouver, BC...(604) 732-9389, Lucie Lambert
France	Paris, France...33-130-79-0489, Associate Master Philippe Lewkowicz Sun Do France Online... http://www.sundofrance.com
Denmark	Denmark...45-3068-3848, Sanne Briggs, e-mail: essensen@gmail.com
Germany	Auerbach, Germany...49-6251-79836, Bettina Haentjens
Korea	Tang-jin, Korea...041-356-3662, Master Hyunmoon Kim Cheonan, Korea...011-19-470-5316, Brian Quirk
Malaysia	Melaka, Malaysia...0-6-232-3597, Charles Chiam

Sun Do Main Center

45 S. Main Street, Suite 090
West Hartford, CT 06107-2402