

*Peggy Watson is a senior teacher at Tai Chi Nash. She was married to the founder of our school, Patrick Watson. She is an acupuncturist and teaches Five Elements Acupuncture.*

*Her story is told here by Senior TCF Teacher and Board Member, Michael G. Tillman.*

## **Peggy Watson**

Peggy Watson (b: October 7, 1955)

Peggy grew up in Connecticut. One of her first loves was horses. At age 12, she begged her parents for riding lessons, which they provided. From that moment, her mission was to have her own horse. Her parents flippantly said that if she could save up and buy a horse, she could keep it.

Peggy was determined. She mowed lawns, delivered newspapers, babysat, whatever she could do. She didn't spend a cent. It all went to her "horse fund." At the stables where she rode, there was one particularly difficult horse. It was not gentle for the young riders, wild, and would not settle down. Peggy loved the horse. It was a Buckskin quarter horse. She saved \$400.

She asked the stable owners if they would sell the horse to her, and they agreed. Peggy asked how much it would cost, and they replied, "How much do you have?" Not knowing better, Peggy responded, "I've saved \$400." They said that would be fine. At 15, she hadn't yet learned the art of negotiation.

However, upon arriving home, her parents seemingly forgot their promise. They didn't think she could come up with enough money to buy a horse. Peggy had only cried once before, when she was seven and ran into a hornet's nest. But she cried that evening at the dinner table with her four siblings and parents, reiterating what her parents told her. Her father had just built his pride and joy tool shed on their property.

However, he agreed to convert it into a stable for Peggy's horse.

In high school, Peggy enrolled in an exchange student program, not knowing where she would be sent. She and four others went to Malaysia in 1973. There, Peggy lived with a Chinese family for a year. She loved it! It became one of the defining experiences in her life.

After high school, Peggy attended Wesleyan College in Connecticut. At the time, it was one of the few schools in the country that taught Chinese. In 1976, during her junior year, she went to Taiwan to study Chinese and became fluent in Mandarin. While there, she met Ron Schutz, who was a good friend of Els Eijssens (one of TCF's Dutch senior tai chi apprentices).

Ron was Dutch-Indonesian and studied tai chi with Patrick Watson in Amsterdam. Ron had heard of a woman who had studied with Cheng Man-ch'ing. One day, Ron and Peggy walked up a hill to see her, and Peggy practiced tai chi for the first time, just following along, as there was no verbal instruction. Peggy felt fabulous! She had never felt that way before. It was as if she were floating down the mountain on her return.

Peggy and Ron moved to Indonesia in 1977 for a year and a half, during which Ron continued to teach Peggy what he had learned from Patrick. Then, in 1979, she decided to return home. She passed through Amsterdam on the way and ended up spending six weeks there with Els Eijssens, who became her lifelong best friend. Patrick Watson visited Amsterdam during that time. Peggy had never met him before.

She and Els walked up to an imposing building with large double doors. When the doors opened, they could see Patrick sitting next to his 16mm projector. Patrick took his 16mm film of Professor Cheng Man-ch'ing with him everywhere he went to share the gifts the Professor gave to all of us— Tai Chi Chuan, and to start new tai

chi schools.

Seeing Patrick for the first time, Peggy felt an incredible wave of energy come toward her— something she had never felt before. Later, Patrick watched her do the form, said she had good, strong legs, and accepted her as an apprentice at his tai chi school.

After six weeks in Amsterdam, Peggy returned to Wesleyan to finish her senior year. After graduating in 1980, she went to New York City with ten bucks in her pocket. She went to an employment agency, and they placed her in a restaurant. Peggy knew nothing about working in a restaurant and was quickly fired. Through some friends of Patrick's at Arica, she landed a job at The Bagel in the Village, where she worked for a year and a half. She taught and took tai chi classes at Patrick Watson's New York School of Tai Chi Chuan, at 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 8<sup>th</sup> Street above the Bigelow Pharmacy.

At that time, Communist China had not yet conducted any business in the United States. In New York City, the first Chinese company to open in America was the China National Textiles Import Export Company. Speaking Mandarin and being an American, Peggy landed a job as a secretary. In 1982, she left the China National Textiles Company and went to work for an American company doing business in China. Her Chinese employer was dismayed and did not understand how she could leave her job, because in Communist China, people didn't do that. She took all the knowledge she had gained about the industry to an American competitor.

All the while, she taught three nights a week, and one night a week, she went with Margaret "Matsu" Matsumoto and Roger Bason to teach at Princeton. They all had so much energy at that age! Peggy also attended trainings in London, Amsterdam, Hampshire College, and Bennington College.

Peggy and Patrick started dating in 1980 and were married in 1988. After Peggy started working for the textile company, she could afford an apartment in the city.

Patrick always kept his apartment, which was very small and was filled with stuff, — some valuable and much not so valuable.

Patrick was not like a regular person. He had a huge heart, and he really loved everyone. Years after she had felt that wave of energy and love in Amsterdam, she felt it all through her relationship and marriage and still feels it today.

Peggy and Patrick had a common interest in swimming. She swam competitively for the AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) until she was 13 and still swims today. Patrick taught swimming and was a lifeguard for the city of San Francisco before he moved to NYC to study with Professor Cheng Man-ch'ing.

Patrick had this old Volvo. One weekend, he drove them to Massachusetts for a weekend Kensho Training with Oscar Ichazo. They had a flat tire on the way. Patrick changed the tire, and then they had another flat tire! They finally made it to the Kensho Training. After that training, Peggy felt the same energy she had felt after doing tai chi in Taiwan on the mountain. She continued to do all of the Arica trainings. She did the 40-day Arica training in Gainesville, Florida, shortly thereafter.

They each traveled most of the time — she to China and he to all of the tai chi schools he founded. Patrick never attempted to change her. She had total freedom to be her and he to be him.

Patrick liked to go out late to dinner. Peggy was a morning person and had to get up to work in the morning, so Patrick would get Greg Woodson or another teacher to go to dinner with him, except on Fridays. Most Friday evenings, Patrick and Peggy would go together to Elephant and Castle in Greenwich Village. They always had the same waiter. Patrick never ordered off the menu. With some people, that would be annoying, but never with Patrick. The waiter loved Patrick.

Patrick could become invisible. They would go to movies, and there were always

lines in the City to get in. Without anyone noticing (and believe me, New Yorkers always notice), Patrick would be at the front of the line, waving for Peggy to come up and go in with him.

The most outstanding thing about Patrick Watson: His deep love and respect for Cheng Man-ch'ing, his school, and all of us.

Patrick became ill in January of 1991 and died on September 1, 1992. It was a difficult time for Peggy, working and caring for Patrick. Near the end, Yeshe Dhonden, the Dalai Lama's physician, came to the apartment, intending to treat Patrick. Patrick told him he knew he was dying and didn't need treatment; he just wanted to visit as friends. The doctor immediately dropped his physician demeanor, and they discussed death as old friends. He told Patrick he had nothing to worry about since his whole life had been service to others and that he would be just fine in the Bardo. Patrick always said he built the tai chi school so one day he could come back reincarnated and find his school.

Peggy graduated as an Acupuncturist from the Worsley Institute of Five Element Acupuncture in 1994. She began her acupuncture career that same year, starting in a small office in NYC, where Pat Gorman was her acupuncture mentor.

In April 1995, she married Larry Gottlieb, a songwriter in NYC. Larry was an acupuncturist client of Pat Gorman. Peggy and Larry had two children that they adopted from China, Sophie (b: 1996) and Rosie (b: 2003) Gottlieb. In September 1995, they moved to Nashville, Tennessee, where Peggy lives today and has a thriving acupuncture practice.

Peggy also teaches acupuncture for the Academy for Five Element Acupuncture in Gainesville, Florida. She travels to Gainesville to teach about four times a year.

Fourteen years ago, Peggy joined the Thich Nhat Hanh Zen Buddhist order, where she is ordained. She practices regularly with a sangha in Nashville. The monastic order is the largest Buddhist monastic community in the West. She teaches tai chi Saturday mornings with other Tai Chi Foundation apprentices in Nashville and still loves her tai chi practice!