

Esther Gardner, a Tai Chi Journey

My tai chi journey started in 2019 when I joined a beginning class taught by Lee Felton and Charlotte Booth in semi-rural Nelson County, Virginia. Our class coincided with the beginning of the pandemic, which included having classes outside under a pavilion while the weather was warm enough (nice!) and later, inside with masks. Eventually, though, we had to stay at home and ZOOM (ugh!). I have met students who started with Zoom and actually thrive. Those of us less acquainted with technology had a much harder time. We struggled with the Four Corners for what seemed like months, but we persevered, and it made us more committed than ever to our training.

I attended my first summer camp three years ago at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, and was blown away by the amount of instruction available and by the kindness of the instructors and fellow students. The week at camp coincided with my 80th birthday and stands out as the best birthday of my life. Every person I saw wished me happy birthday throughout the day and at every group gathering. The training was outstanding. I had two classes a day of Intermediate form with two wonderful teachers, additional qi gong and meditation sessions, and great meals three times a day. I came away energized, enthusiastic, and eager to ramp up my practice.

The benefits of a weekly tai chi class and almost daily practice of the form have accrued slowly and steadily over the years. By gaining more awareness of the qi in my body, I have gained internal calmness. I now have more confidence in my ability to maintain my mental and physical fitness by continually developing new skills.

I had always been curious about tai chi and jumped at the chance to take a class to see what was involved. Now, six years later, with three summer camps under my belt, I realize I am wedded to the practice for life. I have been taught a great deal, yet there is still so much more to be learned. The benefits of being a part of the tai chi community are immense and gratifying.

Esther Gardner