

MAY THE CHI BE WITH YOU!

By Sue Carless

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A 71 year old with a dodgy back entered the individual Qigong section at the London Tai Chi and Qigong competition! What was she thinking? She must have been mad! Well that person was me and, although I still think I was slightly mad, it was a good experience and I'd like to encourage others to do something similar.

I've been to a Tai Chi and Qigong class once a week for the last ten years and have very much enjoyed learning new skills and sharing the experience with others. People often think of tai chi as a series of slow, gentle movements suitable for those of advancing years! It certainly is at some levels but for me there's much more to it. The phrase 'moving meditation' sums it up well for me. I enjoy the physical side of it too, particularly as we learn a variety of styles from the beautiful, slow Daoyin 12 Step to the much more energetic Tai Chi Kung Fu Fan.

So how come I went in for a competition? Well, last year 6 of us, led by our teacher Vicky from The Chi Clinic, entered the group Health Qigong section at the London Competition of Traditional Taijiquan performing the Daoyin 12 Step. Although it was a bit daunting being watched and judged, it was great fun practising together to increase our skills and synchronise the movements. We did quite well, so

four of us entered again this year and were delighted to receive the gold medal in our category.

On impulse, I also entered the individual competition, again with the Daoyin 12 Step. I was surprised how much I enjoyed practising for it - a mixture of fear and pride spurred me on to know the form well enough not to forget it on the day. I must admit I had a few wobbles when I realised that some of my fellow competitors were half my age and others were tai chi teachers. However, nothing ventured, nothing gained.

Although I was nervous, I managed to complete the form without any dreadful errors, which was my main aim. I was never going to get near to winning but I got a reasonable score. The extra practice definitely increased my flexibility and feeling of well being. Now I just need a competition every few months to help me keep it up!

So, how about some other ordinary tai chi learners joining me next year? It's a very interesting day as you are able to watch all sorts of styles that you might not know. Entering as a group is perhaps the best way to get started & then ... If I can do it, anyone can!