Local Legend Dr. Miriam Lee: A pioneer in the field of Traditional Chinese medicine in America

By Susan Johnson, L.Ac.

My relationship with Miriam began in 1982, when I was privileged enough to begin an internship with her. Through my many years with Dr. Lee I was trained extensively in her unique style of acupuncture. In 1987 we traveled together to Hefei, China, to study bleeding techniques with Dr. Wang Su-Jen. We journeyed together through the “wild ride” of acupuncture politics in the 80’s and 90’s. To this day she remains my teacher, my friend, and a pioneer in the field of Chinese medicine in America.

Miriam is perhaps best known for her work with Master Tung’s “Magic Points”. Master Tung Ching Chang—widely viewed as the greatest acupuncture technician who ever lived—practiced a method of acupuncture that was passed down to him through his family from Shandong, China generation to generation for over 300 years. This system is renowned for the spontaneous and miraculous results obtained with using just a few needles. This method is unique in that points are located opposite the affected area and patients tend to notice effects immediately upon needle insertion. Master Tung broke convention after the Chinese Cultural Revolution and began teaching this amazing system of points out-side of his immediate family. Dr. Young Wei-Chieh and Dr. Miriam Lee, both students of Master Tung’s, are responsible for bringing this body of work to America.

In 1976, Miriam Lee was one of the very first to be licensed as an acupuncturist in the state of California. In 1974, she was arrested for practicing medicine without a license. At her trial, her patients (acupuncturists in the state of California. In 1974, she was arrested for practicing medicine without a license. At her trial, her patients testified as to their need for alternative medicine, and the jury agreed. This was the first time in history that patients had testified in court to support a medical practitioner’s license. Miriam’s trial immediately followed that of another acupuncturist and led to several others bringing their cases to court.

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As acupuncture politics evolved through the nineties, many organizations were formed both state and nationwide. The Acupuncture Association of America, having had a very significant role in the early formation of California acupuncture, was then able to focus primarily on its purpose of providing quality continuing education classes. Dr. Lee sponsored many well-known practitioners from China to come to her clinic in Palo Alto to teach. These courses covered a variety of topics such as Tung’s Points, herbal formulation, scalp acupuncture, wrist and ankle points, TCM gynecology and oncology.

Having now retired, Dr. Miriam Lee resides in Southern California with her family. As her student of many years I have stepped forward to carry on the work of teaching Dr. Tung’s Points and Miriam’s style of acupuncture, and to continue the work of The Acupuncture Association of America. It is my hope that the future will find Tung’s Points (fondly called “The Magic Points”) available and familiar to all those seeking more than “textbook” acupuncture techniques. They are unique not only because they are so extraordinary, immediately effective, but also because they are very simple to learn and apply. As Miriam always said, “The important thing is to learn which key opens which lock.” May Master Tung’s Points open as many doors for you as they have for me and for generations to come.

Susan will be teaching classes in Master Tung’s Magic Points in the Mayway Conference Space beginning in September 2005. See the front page of this newsletter for dates. For further information and to register please visit www.tungspoints.com or call 831.661.0556.

Susan Johnson, L.Ac. has been practicing Tung’s style of acupuncture since 1982 and has been licensed in California since 1985. She studied Master Tung’s Points with Dr. Young Wei-Chieh and Dr. Miriam Lee for more than 12 years and has been using them almost exclusively in her practice since that time. Susan maintains a private practice in Santa Cruz, California. She is a dynamic teacher who loves her work and is renowned for her clear presentation of this style of acupuncture.

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