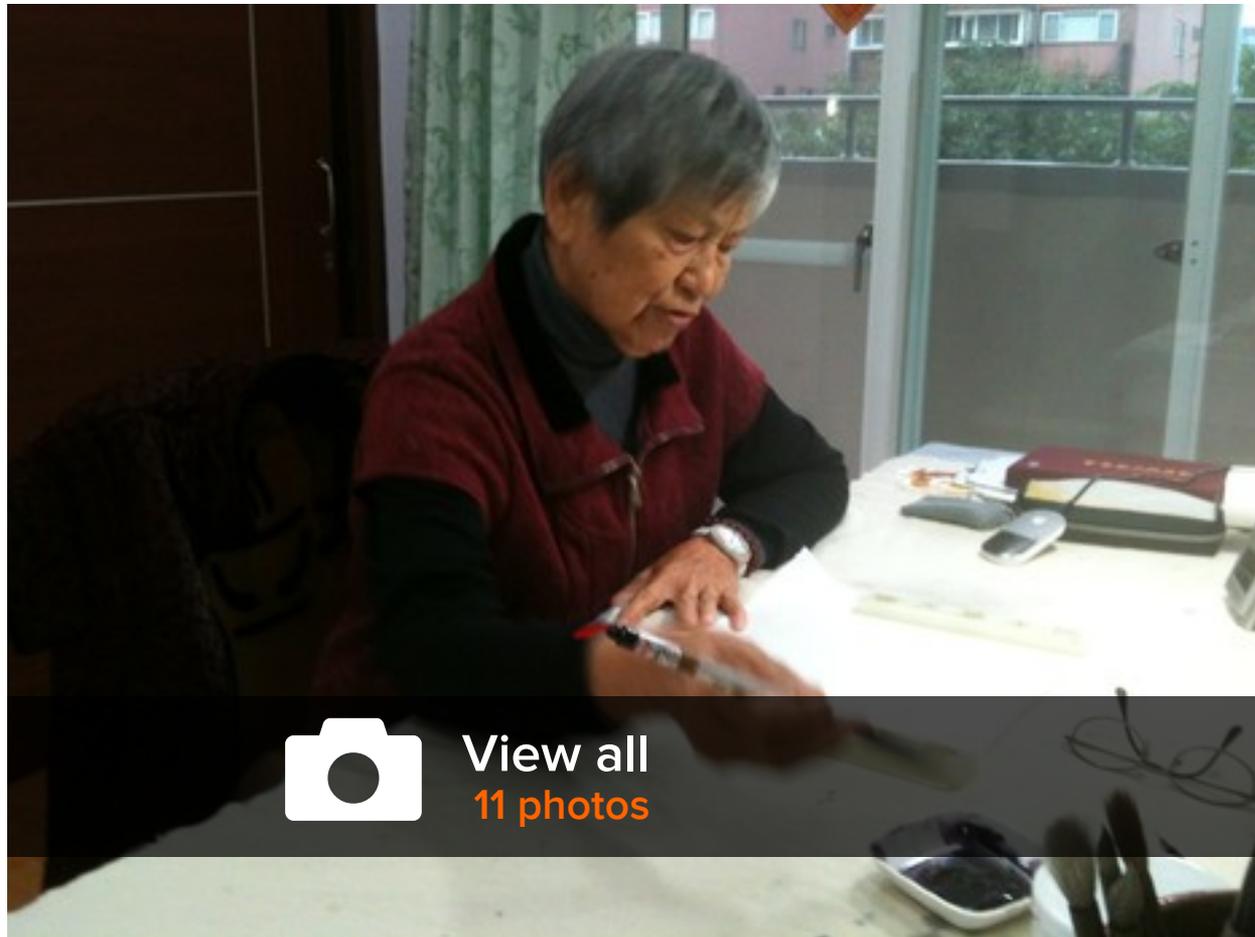


SPORTS / RECREATION / COMBAT SPORTS

Sifu Chang Wuan-Wen has no time for aging

February 12, 2012

3:59 PM MST



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Sifu Chang Wuan-Wen dipped her brush in the ink and ready to paint.

Violet Li

Taipei, Taiwan, is a city that never sleeps. You can do just about anything at any time of a day, including getting a haircut at 3 a.m. This 6.9-million people city is full of energy. Interestingly, tucked away in the heart of this hustling and bustling metropolis is Chung Shang Senior Center on a quiet street.



Violet Li

Unlike most government-sponsored senior centers around the world, Chung Shang Senior Center is a multi-functional organization, which provides housing to 120 senior citizens with great facilities to support a healthy and culturally enriched lifestyle along with quality service at reasonable pricing. The average residents are in their late 70's. One day, a slender, fit lady walked, passing by me agilely. First I thought that she was a forty some years old woman visiting a relative at the Senior Center. An employee at the Center later introduced her to me as Sifu Chang Wuan-Wen.

Sifu Chang Wuan-Wen was not always as healthy and energetic as now. Before she turned 50, she was constantly stricken by cold or flu. Sick of being unhealthy, she started to learn **Cheng Man-Ch'ing Tai Chi** with Grandmaster Hsu Yee Chung. For 6 straight years, she went to Grandmaster Hsu's class everyday rain or shine. Later, she took a 2-year training program for advanced practitioners and instructors at Shr-Chung School. She humbly said that she is not a bright person and she has to work hard to reach her goal.

She approaches Chinese painting with the same attitude and persistency. She started her painting journey in her 40's. In spite of her teaching job at a junior college and caring for her family, she spent hours painting daily. Her specialty is painting flowers and she has been considered Queen of peony. She has hosted six painting exhibits in the past decade with more than one hundred paintings. It was quite fascinating for me to watch Sifu Chang paint. In five minutes, a marvelous looking peony vividly appears on paper full of energy. You can see Sifu Chang in action in the slide show at the left-hand-side.

Sifu Chang retired from teaching nursing at 60. Two years later, she moved to Toronto, Canada to live

with her daughter. At the urge of family and friends, she started to teach Tai Chi and Chinese painting. She normally taught three painting classes each week and twice on Tai Chi. Most of her students are much junior to her age-wise. At the beginning, she charged people but starting in 2002, she taught for free. She also drove herself to painting lessons once a week to learn fine drawing, which a 5"x8" painting of a lady could take a few months to complete. Additionally, she spent much time practicing Tai Chi or painted 6 hours everyday. Her life was busy and fulfilled. She was beloved and respected in the community. The local TV station and Chinese newspaper interviewed her.

Besides Tai Chi and painting, Sifu Chang enjoys cooking, acupuncture, Chinese opera, travelling and hiking. She performed Chinese opera in Canada at age 80. Five years ago, she went climbing Celestial Mountains or the **Tian Shan**, China with four other friends who are much younger than her. Three of them were not able to climb to Victory Peak (Jengish Chokusu). Nevertheless, then the 82-year-old Chang and her friend climbed to the 24,000 feet peak.

Last year, Sifu Chang Wuan-Wen came back to Taipei. She moved to Chung Shang Senior Center. In her tiny apartment, there sits a large table where she paints and reads. She is now teaching Tai Chi at three different venues and studying Tibetan Buddhism three days every week. Sometimes, she applies acupuncture to treat ailments for friends. She has given up meats and eats organic vegetables.

She has about a dozen of students at the Senior Center. To make the lesson interesting and easy to follow, her class is a mixture of folk dance, Tai Chi movements, relaxation techniques, self-massage, and stepping forwards and backwards. Mrs. Chi Shiang Shih, who is also a resident of the Center, assists with the folk dance teaching.

When asked whether her Tai Chi and painting improve or regress as she ages, Sifu Chang replied without any hesitation that they are getting better. Why? According to her, her skills improve due to continuous learning and diligent practice and most importantly because her mind is much calmer.

While most seniors tend to complain that life is boring and do not have much to do, Sifu Chang Wuan-Wen is busy as usual. In two weeks, this 87-year-young lady is going to **Nepal** regardless of cold weather and treacherous terrain.

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