Freedom from Form
By Jason Moskovitz, 2025 Harmony Tai Chi Retreat, Oregon

Studying the physical movement of tai chi is what initially inspired me to memorize all 108 steps of Harmony Style Tai Chi. After several years of study and also several visits to the Medford, Oregon College of Tao retreat center I am now certified in the first 58 movements. After this very recent accomplishment, I am seeing my focus change. Beyond the promises of teaching tai chi or further refining movements, I can feel my study expanding beyond just the physical and practical.

With each visit to Oregon I am both amazed and humbled at what happens the further I move down this path of study. As I investigate this beautiful form I face new levels of both personal challenge and personal peace, with a feeling as though I am getting closer to my most true self. Spending several days in a silent valley, among peers, eating mindfully prepared meals, I find it difficult not to progress. Five days of focus may not seem like much in the span of a year but calling it a "retreat center" does feel appropriate. I was able to retreat from my mind, and from my other roles as a father, husband and professional; and allow my student self to take the lead. While the daily schedule of hours of tai chi movement, integral way studies, work study projects on the property, and setting up and taking down meals; the days felt filled, yet focused.

When I return home my practice feels as though it starts over. An “exploded” sense overtakes what I thought I was certain about prior to the revisions made during the retreat. This process serves as a wrench-in-the-machine of my old habits. Improved physical changes and more settled mental capabilities need to be incorporated while continuing my practice in more familiar surroundings.

This practice has brought me much contentment in my mind and body. I also recognize a growing drive to learn more about these forms and, not only what they will give me in terms of peace and a deepening spiritual connection; but in what I can give back to my community and surroundings. Each year I approach these tai chi retreats as though I'm simply going to move my feet and hands a little differently. While that literally does happen, I am also being shown an entire universe providing me freedom from just studying the form of tai chi. I am experiencing the truth of tai chi as a way to live my whole life. And through this work I am so much better able to recognize and conjoin with that natural way.