

On Opening the Shrine

Part 1



↑ Master Joseph Chen (left) presents the shrine master certificate to Mr. Bill Bunting. In the middle is Mrs. Bunting, Paije.

by Bill Bunting

On May 29, 2005, a group of masters and members of the I-Kuan Tao temple in El Monte, California, quietly thundered into Indianapolis, Indiana, and the sta-

tus quo there would never be the same. I picked the words I used above very carefully because it's important to convey the level of energy, enthusiasm, caring, compassion, generosity, and the nearly palpable force that eight real cultivators of the Great Tao bring with them. Their arrival and departure were silent and still, their presence was quiet, reserved, poised and imminently elegant. It was apparent from the outset that this was a group with tremendous power behind them, and well it should have seemed, because to a person, their ally was the Great, Immutable Tao, the eternal divine principle.

More than a year ago, I don't remember exactly when, Derek Lin and I began discussing the possibility of establishing an authentic Tao shrine in the Midwest. For more than a year we communicated frequently, spoke often, got to know each other well, and then in July of 2004 I was blessedly accepted to be initiated into I-Kuan Tao. It was at this point that the dream of bringing the Great Tao to the people of Indiana and beyond began to coalesce. During this time as well, Derek permitted me to send some of my thoughts and teachings on



←The Shrine Master Certificate.

my own path to him for inclusion in the True Tao web site, where like his wonderful and insightful teachings, these few simple words seemed to reach some people and speak to their hearts.

That's the history in a nutshell and it bears mentioning here that everything to this point and beyond unfolded without force, without contention, without furor, without fanfare – in fact without most of the trappings and rigors of coordinating an event of this magnitude. It simply became time for the next step to occur, and it did, quietly, peacefully, wonderfully, miraculously, and repeatedly.

Several people on the Tao Forum, as well as the people in and around the neighborhood, asked me quite frequently, “Why do you want a shrine?” or “Why do you need a temple?” or “If you're a Tao cultivator why do you need a church?” All I could do was smile. I do wish to answer these questions, now that I fully understand the impact of the shrine establishment, and that is what this teaching ultimately is all about.

There are many people who label themselves Tao cultivators. Many of these people say that they do not require a formal organization to assist them in cultivating the Tao or to gather together to support and aid one another. Okay, I myself walked the path alone for many years. I also sacrificed tremendous understanding and knowledge wading around in the swamp of disinformation.

As Tao cultivators, we are supposed to espouse the philosophy taught by Lao Tzu and the great masters and teachers: a path of wisdom, compassion, love and respect for all living things, boundless and limitless giving, service without expectation, the elimination of the ego self, and the nurturing and discovering of the true Buddha nature. I know of no one who calls him or herself a Tao cultivator who does not say this is the truth.

Among the group of “Tao cultivators” I know online, some personally

some not, I observe among them a spirit of contention, strife, academia, quarrelsome natures, as well as demeaning and belittling behavior towards people of different values and beliefs. I know this is not the way of the Great Tao, and to those who read this, and scream “NOT ME,” to you I say, read on, for we all possess those very qualities.

In eight people I saw for myself what the discipline of I-Kuan Tao means. I know now why Master Chen and Master William are masters, and why Senior Master Yang is Senior Master. I know why Derek is the Director of Tao Studies at the temple, and I praise and thank them all from the very depths of my heart. Why do I need / want a temple? So that one day I can hopefully emulate them fully, rightly, wholly, and teach my children and others to do the same. It would not be appropriate for me to speak specifically of individuals and their acts as it would violate their peace, so I will speak of the group, and please understand that what I say of one applies to all of the delegation who came here.

Where I see limits, boundaries, pettiness, squabbling, and self-centeredness in myself and others, in them I see giving and compassion with absolutely no limit whatsoever. I mean, NO LIMIT, there was nothing accomplished here where one or more of the eight persons from the temple could not find an opportunity to give of themselves and everything that they had. Not only did they give and give and give and GIVE, but they looked for opportunities to GIVE MORE. In their giving, they were truly, ecstatically thankful for the opportunities to give and serve. They cooked, they cleaned, they watched out over my two-year-old and my other children with the patience and forbearance of saints. They tolerated my positively horrible attempts to speak and master (yeah right!) Chinese, and actually found humor in my abuse of the divine rituals. I am convinced that the Maitreya Buddha has a great sense of humor. Every time I thought they were at the absolute end of the rope, they had more of everything, and they held back nothing. We initiated 13 people the day of the dedication. I saw what it meant to be a Tao Cultivator. I thought I had the ability to give, I believed that my family and I did an adequate job there. I had much

to learn. I still have much more to learn. At the end of the day, I could only gaze on in absolute amazement at the wonder that had unfolded before me.

These remarkable people flew in at 6:00 in the morning on Saturday, worked all day, visited my humble Tai Chi school, participated in the class, prepared lunch for my family, went shopping for the balance of our needs for the dedication, and did not stop until late in the afternoon. They were up and working again by 7:00 in the morning Sunday, where they did the whole thing over again, and added three initiation rituals and all of the dedication rituals plus a couple of private rituals, a tremendous teaching discussion AND a vegetarian feast for 20. They were all still smiling, and watching children. Their patience in instructing me was boundless.

As a final note but by no means a small note, everything was done out of their own personal funds. The temple fixtures are precious, expensive, and, had to be shipped cross country via truck. In American terms, it was a bunch of expense. Every penny was contributed by the temple masters and members.

Can anyone do this? Yes. With the proper intent, the right heart, a lot of time, a serious and reverent mind and heart, yes. Why would a person not want to do this? If one would wear the label “Tao cultivator” then why would that person not put down the ways and means of this existence, and put on Buddha nature? How can one who claims the Great Tao, not align himself or herself with the authentic tradition and discipline?

I now say to all who read this: ask not “Bill, why do you want to do this?” but rather ask, how is it that you do not? I have seen, with my own eyes, people who live by and demonstrate that which they teach. To claim the Tao without this knowledge and wisdom is to never know what the Great Tao truly is!

What is the true Buddha nature? What is the true self? How do we recognize this ethereal personage bound somewhere beyond our ego self? The

answer, practice.

Lao Tzu tells us that when a wise student hears Tao, he makes it a part of their life, they practice the principles and pay close attention to every word and the instruction of the masters.

When an average student hears Tao, maybe he practices, maybe not, and since little is invested, little is gained. When a fool hears Tao, he laughs at it heartily, and with no practice comes no benefit. This should not be a surprising interpretation to anyone who know the Tao Te Ching.

How is it we know what and how to practice? We should rightfully learn from the example of the sages, the Great Masters, our masters at the temple, and those whose understanding surpasses our own. We should study diligently and make our every thought about becoming fully unified with the Great Tao. Our every action, our every breath should convey to all who see us, hear us, or interact with us in any way, that our path is Tao and our way peace, tranquility, oneness and profound respect for every living thing.

I know with no doubt at all that the group of people who gathered in my home to dedicate a shrine in the tradition of the I-Kuan Tao were not always the people I met at that time. I'm very sure that like myself, each of them had walked a path that brought them to that day and time. Each of them had a life that at one time did not include the Great Tao, in some cases, perhaps a life that openly resisted this great truth. Some may have had many life problems, illness, abuse, poverty, death in the family, emotional strife, relationship problems, the list can go on literally without limit. Interestingly enough, all that proves is that each and every one, was and is human, just like the rest of us. Something changed them, something powerful changed them all, just like it changed me, and continues to change me.

to be continued.....



↑ Mrs. Bunting (third from left) and daughter Rebecca (fourth from left) going through the Tao Initiation Ceremony.