

STUDENT PROFILE: GLENN WHEATLEY

By WTS Staff

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Glenn Wheatley's journey to T'ai Chi and Water Tiger began long before he recognized it was a journey he would take. He tells us he remembers many a Saturday morning growing up enjoying what in some viewing markets has been called "Kung Fu Cinema". He was fascinated by the likes of Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan without knowing who they were in the world of the martial arts. He admits, "I don't know why I never decided to study before now."

Glenn did actively participate in sports when he was in high school. He played soccer, baseball, and ran cross country. One of his track coaches even incorporated Yoga stretches into the team's training. This athletic background was the foundation for Glenn's physical fitness for years after graduation. However, it was also the source of injuries that began to haunt him later in life as his personal training became more infrequent.

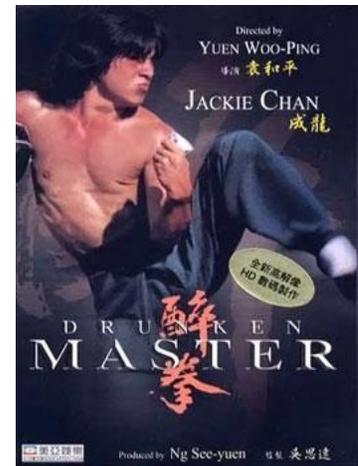
It was 14 years ago that the ghosts of the high school injuries really came into prominence and began affecting his daily life. "When I first felt sciatic nerve pain," he relates, "it was unlike anything I had ever experienced." He found himself incapacitated and in need of "an abundance of medication." He took the hint and became more active again. In his words: "I became a gym rat."

Glenn would go to the gym for one to two hours a minimum of four days a week. He also spent every other Saturday riding the local mountain bike trails. Unfortunately, the new routine didn't hold. His work and personal life pushed exercise out of the way and the muscle stiffness and dull pain in his lower back began to return.

When the discomfort rose to the level of constant companion, Glenn turned to his doctor, who prescribed a combination of an anti-inflammatory with a muscle relaxant. He admits he found himself in a fog at work. A colleague noticed and recommended her chiropractor. Glenn ran the idea by his primary care physician, who thought if it could relieve the pain and help him off the meds, it was worth exploring. He made the appointment.

An x-ray after his initial consult with the chiropractor revealed issues in Glenn's lower spine. Lifestyle changes were in order. His diet would have to change to assist in weight loss and he'd need to up his activity again to regain strength and stamina.

A year passed and Glenn noted improvement, but, he admits, he was not consistent in the things he needed to do. Life, again, got in the way.



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It was during this time that he found himself face-to-face with T'ai Chi. "I was attending the Asian Festival at Stony Brook University and met someone promoting T'ai Chi and its benefits," says Glenn. He admits not getting the gentleman's name, but does remember that the name of Tyrone "Wei" Wicksman came up in the conversation. Sifu Wei, of Zhang Style Tai Ji, and his senior student, Elan Abneri have both facilitated many times at our annual *World T'ai Chi & Qigong Day – Patchogue* since 2005. Unfortunately, the meeting did not light a big enough fire and another year passed.

There was a fresh spark while Glenn was sitting in his chiropractor's office. He happened to take special notice of the photos and awards relating to his doctor's martial arts activities. "I've always looked at them," Glenn admits, "but I never asked about them until that day." He rode his curiosity into asking his doctor if there was a martial art he could study and shared the fascination that he'd had since he was a kid watching movies on Saturday mornings. His doctor recommended T'ai Chi, but didn't have a referral for him.

Google filled in the blank. Glenn tells us he found and researched several schools. He considered them to be likeminded and was attracted to how each seemed to be presenting membership as being a part of a community. It appears what actually brought him to Water Tiger was little more than location. Our original space in Patchogue and our new home in Medford are not really close to either Glenn's job or his home, but he tells us he has found both convenient.

It wasn't long after his initial inquiry call that Glenn stepped on the mat for the first time in February 2013. He tells us that his mind on that early Saturday morning turned to a phrase he'd heard many times in his life: "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." He says, "When I entered Water Tiger for the first time, I thought, 'this is my first step.'"

Glenn shares another quote that he admits he has to tell himself often: "The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing." He shares that he sometimes finds himself too full of expectations to relate as well as he could with colleagues and family members. His solution: "I reduce stress by relaxing and reducing the friction that can be caused by resisting the ideas or requests of others." He adds that he is learning that by making himself healthier — mentally and physically — he can also affect those around him. In other words, his reduction of friction removes friction from their lives as well.

We like the oil Glenn adds to the mat at Water Tiger.



Glenn playing a weighted version of Rails with Rotation.

