



CHINESE & ASIAN MEDICINE

## **In Memoriam: Dr. Miriam Lee (1926-2009)**

Susan Johnson, LAc

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 1980s and 1990s. She was my teacher and my friend, and a pioneer in the field of Chinese medicine in America.



Miriam was 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, for more than 300 years. This system is renowned for the spontaneous and miraculous results obtained 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 outside 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 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 filled the courtroom in protest of her arrest, claiming their right to the only medicine that had truly helped them. Within a few days, acupuncture was legally made an "experimental procedure" by Governor Ronald Reagan. In 1976, Governor Jerry Brown signed the legislation that once and for all, legalized acupuncture.

It is through the untiring efforts of people like Miriam Lee, founder of the Acupuncture Association of America (AAA), and lobbyist Art Krause, that we here in California can boast acupuncture licensure, primary care physician status and primary insurance coverage. Although I feel personally and eternally indebted to Miriam, we should all remember the work that Miriam and Art did together, for our profession, for more than 30 years.

For nearly a decade, the AAA single-handedly supported Krause. Dr. Lee would offer Master Tung's Points classes for her students and licensed practitioners, in order to raise the money needed to support this legislative work. Krause, well-respected in Sacramento, was able to negotiate agreements with influential politicians over a cup of coffee. Things were very different in those days. State senators Art Torres (D) and Herschel Rosenthal (D), both instrumental in getting many acupuncture bills made into law, were among the friends of AAA and acupuncture. It is directly through the efforts of all of the above people, and a few others, that we can boast having the one of the most comprehensive scopes of practice in the country.

In 1989, The Council of Acupuncture Organizations (CAO) was formed to unite the profession statewide in the legislative process and share Krause's financial support. This group was composed of nine different acupuncture organizations throughout California; three Chinese, two Japanese, two Korean and two Caucasian. This was the first and only real attempt to date of which I am aware, to bring these different acupuncture communities together. Unfortunately, the group only met for two years, but during that time, the CAO was able to procure acupuncture coverage through worker's compensation.

As acupuncture politics evolved through the 90's, many new organizations were formed, both state and nationwide. The AAA, 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 different well-known practitioners from China to come to her clinic in Palo Alto, Calif., to teach. These courses covered a variety of topics, such as Tung's Points, herbal formulations, scalp acupuncture, wrist and ankle points, TCM gynecology and oncology.

Upon retiring, Miriam moved to 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 AAA. It is my hope that the future will find Tung's Points available and familiar to all those seeking more than "textbook" acupuncture techniques. They are unique not only because they are so extraordinarily, 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 before us all.

---

Susan Johnson has been practicing Tung's style of acupuncture since 1982 and 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, Calif.

SEPTEMBER 2009