

**Local Legend Dr. Miriam Lee:
A Pioneer in the Field of Traditional Chinese Medicine in America**

By Susan Johnson, L.Ac.

My relationship with Dr. Miriam Lee began in 1982, when I was privileged enough to begin an internship with her. Throughout my many years with Dr. Lee I 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 80’s and 90’s. To this day she remains my teacher and my friend, and a pioneer in the field of Chinese medicine in America.

Miriam is 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, generation to generation, for over 300 years. This system is renowned for the spontaneous and miraculous results obtained with 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 Lee 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 Regan. In 1976, Governor Jerry Brown signed the legislation that legalized acupuncture once and for all.

It is through the untiring efforts of people like Miriam Lee, founder of the Acupuncture Association of America, and lobbyist Mr. Art Krause, that we in California can boast: acupuncture licensure, primary care physician status, primary insurance, MediCal and worker’s compensation coverage. Though I feel personally and eternally indebted to Miriam, we should all remember the work that Miriam and Art did for our profession, for over thirty years.

For nearly a decade, AAA single-handedly supported lobbyist Mr. Art 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. Among the friends of AAA and acupuncture were Senator Art Torres and Senator Herschel Rosenthal, both instrumental

in getting many acupuncture bills made into law. It is through the efforts of all of these people, and a few others, that we can boast having the one of the most comprehensive scopes of practice for licensed acupuncturists in the country.

In 1989, The Council of Acupuncture Organizations was formed to unite the profession statewide in the legislative process, and to share the financial support of our lobbyist, Mr. Krause. 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 that I am aware of, 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 nineties, many new organizations were formed both statewide and nationwide. The Acupuncture Association of America, 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 to teach. These courses covered a variety of topics, such as Tung's Points, herbal formulation, scalp acupuncture, wrist and ankle points, TCM gynecology and oncology.

Having now retired, Dr. Miriam Lee resides in 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 Acupuncture Association of America. It is my hope that the future will find Tung's Points (fondly called "the magic 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 many doors for you and for generations to come.

Susan Johnson, Licensed Acupuncturist, has been practicing Tung's style of acupuncture since 1982 and has been 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 these points almost exclusively in her practice since that time. Susan maintains a private practice in Santa Cruz, California. She is a dynamic teacher who loves her work and is renowned for her clear presentation of this style of acupuncture.

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