

About the author

Please also visit: www.tanyaswriting.com

There is a free one-hour Qigong video with Tanya posted at this site.

Tanya Elizabeth Egeness was born in northern Wisconsin in 1963. She grew up in Delafield in southern Wisconsin. In 1984 she married Adrian Epp, who she met during her student exchange year to Switzerland in 1981. Adrian died in 1995 and Tanya remarried in 2005. She currently lives with her husband, Hansjakob Schmid, in Gündlischwand, Switzerland, where they run a small permaculture farm in the Bernese Alps.

When Tanya was nine she practiced yoga with her parents who were taking classes. She got her transcendental meditation mantra at age 13, which is when she began meditating on a regular basis. At age 17, she discovered Qigong (healing, meditative movements similar to Tai Chi, but not a martial art), and practiced the Eight Brocade Exercises daily. Her mother was learning massage at this time, so Tanya was surrounded by alternative medicine practices and Indian and Asian philosophy. During her exchange year to Switzerland after high school, she studied Goshin-Ryu karate. When she returned home to Wisconsin, she took classes in Shorin-Ryu karate, but with time realized that karate was too confrontational for her persona.

Tanya's parents began Tai Chi in the mid 1980's while Tanya was attending Ripon College and she took a few classes then, but didn't have the time to pursue it diligently. This was when her Swiss boyfriend, Adrian, had a motorcycle accident and was paralyzed from the chest down, bound to a wheelchair for life. She suspended her studies to care for him and they were married at age 21. Tanya continued with Qigong, studying aspects of Chinese medicine, such as meridian theory, on her own in the hopes of helping her husband.

In 1991, after finishing her bachelor's degree in Anthropology in Boulder, Colorado, Tanya began studying Yang Style Short Form Tai Chi Chuan with Jane and Bataan Faigao. She also began Kyudo, better known as Zen archery, at Kanjuro Shibata XX, Sendai's main dojo in Boulder. She worked odd jobs to support them while Adrian was finishing his Master's degree in Aerospace Engineering.

In 1992, Tanya and Adrian moved back to Switzerland to find a job for Adrian and Tanya pursued Kyudo with an affiliated dojo there. In 1993, she began teaching Tai Chi to a local women's group, while still attending workshops both in the USA and in other countries in Europe, to improve her Tai Chi knowledge. She travelled to Malaysia in 1994, where she learned a Malaysian Tai Chi sword form and Malaysian fan form. She also received her first, second and third-degree Reiki training in Switzerland at this time.

When Tanya and Adrian moved back to the USA in 1995 so that Tanya could study Chinese Medicine in graduate school, Kanjuro Shibata, XX, Sendai, asked Tanya to open her own dojo in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Tanya began White Crane Studios, where she taught Tai Chi Chuan, 5 Qigong styles, Kyudo, Feng Shui, and after receiving her Master of Reiki degree, also Reiki. Unfortunately, Adrian's health and depression cycles worsened after returning to the USA, and he took his own life at age 32, after 14 difficult years in a wheelchair.

Following Adrian's death, 1996-1999, Tanya studied Chinese Medicine at the International Institute for Chinese Medicine in Santa Fe while continuing her teaching at White Crane Studios. She passed her state and national exams and received her title as Doctor of Oriental Medicine in 1999. She moved back to Switzerland in 2000 to practice TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine, including acupuncture) because it was fairly new to Switzerland then.

After leaving Santa Fe, Jinko Kyudojo was continued by Tanya's students, some of whom received instructor recognition from Shibata, Sendai. Each time Tanya moved within Switzerland, she opened "Zen archery" dojos in Basel (2000-closed), St. Gallen (2003), Mastrils (2008) and Interlaken (2015), leaving trained instructors to continue the Kyudo practice, and Tanya taught Tai Chi Chuan Short Form and various Qigong styles as well during this time. She married Hansjakob (Hans) Schmid in 2004.

After 15 years of practicing TCM in Santa Fe, Basel, St. Gallen (Weisser Kranich Akupunktur, Gossau), and Schiers (Salgina Akupunktur), she gave up her practice to become a farmer in order to demonstrate a different kind of lifestyle in harmony with nature to combat climate change.

Until then, Hans (Swiss) was an electrician, working 21 years for the same company. Around 2009, Tanya and Hans heard about climate change and decided to make a lifestyle change. After some planning, at the age of 50, they quit their jobs to buy 7 acres on a southern slope just above the small town of Gündlischwand (750m), between Interlaken and Grindelwald in Berner Oberland, Switzerland.

Schmids' Permaculture Farm (started in March, 2014) was owned and operated by Tanya and Hans Schmid (also born 1963) for 6 years. Their goal was to create an exemplary, single family, subsistence farm according to permaculture ideals within 15 years (2014 to 2029). They wanted to preserve traditional animals, plants and ways of living that protect and support the environment as well as provide for their needs.

They produced all their own electricity with photovoltaic and heated and cooked with wood. The Schmids lived a simple life without a vacuum cleaner, iron or hair dryer. They had a fridge, laptops and a television, but could only use the washing machine when the sun was shining! They had a tiny shower, a compost toilet outdoors and their very pure water came from a natural spring 200m above their home. The house was small, but it

had a guest room upstairs in the attic where, from March through October, one Workawayer stayed. Workawayers (online platform) or W.O.O.F.ers are Workers On Organic Farms who help with farm work in exchange for room and board. Schmidts also had a small trailer where a second Workawayer stayed, and room for a tent in their little woods, for visitors.

They became vegetarians when they moved to the little farm because they didn't want to slaughter animals. In 2017, after learning about the negative effect of animal agriculture on climate change, they began working towards a totally vegan diet. They still ate eggs from their own chickens, and learned how to feed the chickens on site to reduce the purchase of fodder.

Tanya and Hans had an herb garden, various extensive vegetable gardens, and many fruit and nut trees. In the summer and fall Hans mowed the fields by hand with a scythe. In the winter, he chopped and stockpiled wood for the stoves. Tanya made lots of jams and jellies and stored the vegetable harvest in their root cellar. There was always lots of work to do, from weeding to picking fruit or nuts and collecting berries. Each year they took on new projects to improve the farm, such as building the root cellar or a second compost toilet. In order to finance these projects and pay the bills in general, Hans provided tandem paragliding flights to tourists on the weekends and Tanya wrote the Zen story books in the winter.

In addition to Pete, the mouse-catching cat, and Kay the border-collie, the Schmidts had three pot-bellied pigs (Zoe, Heidi and Urs), nine chickens and a rooster. Each of them was treated as a beloved and respected family-member and each had a job to perform.

(warning: the following involves a suicide)

The Schmidts hoped in 2030 to pass the farm on to a young couple dedicated to furthering their permaculture dreams. Ideally, Tanya and Hans would live nearby and continue to help work the farm and provide their knowledge as needed. But in 2018 Hans had problems with his colon and a 10 inch rectal tumor was discovered. It was so large and the chances of surviving more than a few years so slim, that Hans turned down chemo and radiation treatment.

For about 6 months, Tanya and Hans switched to a vegetarian keytone diet and tried everything possible with herbs and natural medicine, but the cancer was too advanced. In April of 2019, Hans called it, and set a date with the EXIT program. He made a bucket list, went back to eating normally, and invited all his friends over individually to spend some quality time and say good-bye. By the end of June he was very thin, taking lots of morphine, and couldn't leave his bed. Only July 4th, 2019, with the assistance of the very professional EXIT program in Switzerland, Hans swallowed a small cup of liquid poison, fell asleep within 30 seconds and died a few minutes later.

Tanya sold the farm to a woman her same age in April of 2020. With grown children who had degrees in biology, geology and forestry, this was the ideal extended family to take over the project. Since then, Family Grütter has done a phenomenal job of continuing Family Schmid's work. They now have goats as well as chickens. Cat Pete stayed with the farm.

Tanya moved to Ascona in southern Switzerland for a change of scene. She took her border collie, Kay, with her and currently writes full-time and is learning Italian. For more details about Tanya's current life and photographs of the Schmid's permaculture farm from 2014-2019, please see:

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