

Tina & Robert Sohn Interview: AMMA, The Ancient Art of Oriental Healing

Interview Conducted by Editor: Robert Calvert
Massage Magazine Issue # 32 July/August 1991

Introduction

During my travels within the massage and bodywork community a growing sense of it's tremendous diversity becomes more and more evident. I wonder how many practitioners in these disciplines realize the richness of the hands-on practices field and their deeply rooted history worldwide. It appears we are entering a new era of shared history as we take the learning of these cultural histories from the textbook experience into the realm of practical reality.

This interview was a fun and titillating experience for me as I sat during two days with Robert and Tina Sohn. Exploring perspectives of healing and personal experience transformed an interview setting into a dialogue of wide proportions. During those two days it became clear to me that I was sharing space on the planet, if only briefly, with two exceptionally unique human beings.

At one point during the interview I was compelled to test my strong sense of who these people before me were, what they were beyond the talking, animated persons I was sharing talk with. "Are you a samurai and Tina a geisha in the tradition of the orient?" I asked Robert Sohn. His response was immediate, "Absolutely, yes." His face brightened, his eyes shined even more intently and I noted that he was pleased that I had said what was on my mind and thick within our discussions.

He doesn't wear a kimono with a silver sword at his side, nor does Tina walk with her feet bound serving tea to her guests. No, they dress much like other people of their respective cultures. And, that traditional quality I recognized in them as we talked isn't evident unless you grope with them at their perspective toward healing and personal experience.

I believe, from my short experience with the Sohns that this oriental tradition sustaining this inner image of their relationship between themselves and their work is nothing less than remarkable and what brings a special and valuable quality to their teaching.

Perhaps from a westerner's point of view the samurai is a macho, male chauvinist, and the geisha as an enslaved high-tech servant. But this is not the tradition I saw operating in the Sohns. What I saw was a mutual respect, and a strong sense of destiny as the samurai, Robert Sohn, carried out his honorable duties toward the nurturing healer. She in turn accepted his duty as her complement instead of her nemesis and he accepted her gifts as his honor to sustain.

Tina has a strong Korean accent as she speaks, and in the early stages of this interview Robert spoke for her many times. In the editing of this text, which was originally over twelve hours in length, we have retained more of Tina Sohn but let remain the guiding and clarifying text of Robert's words. Readers won't learn all about AMMA massage in this Interview, but they will gain a look at the two people who have brought this tradition to America. This glimpse into their personas may, we hope, give a better understanding of that which lies at the foreground of the techniques of this ancient healing art called AMMA.

Q: Tell us about your special gifts.

Robert Sohn: She (Tina) is empathic and she tries to maintain control over it - closes it off - but there is nothing going on that she doesn't know if she's open and willing to know it. It was a real problem for her, and she cut off from everybody and never got involved in learning or hearing what other people were doing.

Tina Sohn: I purposely isolate myself. The clinic exists. I have to say, through my husband, Robert. I always run away from people. I felt that by experiencing the pain of the people, in some way I was causing that pain. We've been married 26 years...

For whoever wants to learn Amma, the first thing we have to do is learn ourselves physically. Even if I am a healer, I am a human being. I experience pain. At the same time, I experience a patient's pain.

Q: What do you mean by experience?

Tina: If my patient walks in with a migraine headache, I don't make myself limited in my own physical body. When I finished treating, I would have a little migraine headache. To this day, I can't deal with cortisone, radiation treatment, heavy tranquilizers. Literally I will have the symptoms of excess or overdose when I touch people who have had those treatments. A couple of months ago, this man had this voice problem and he got a shot, some kind of experimental...

Robert: I could tell you exactly. He had dystonia, in which the muscles of his throat were under contraction and they gave him an experimental botulism shot in the throat which was supposed to release the muscles and it did release some of the tension for him briefly. Now, someone brought him to her and she was to treat him. Since we didn't know about the shot, he told me about it the following week when I started treating him because she wouldn't go near him again.

Tina: I didn't treat him. I touched his face area and throat area and literally, my throat locked up, my eyes started tingling. I walked out of the room.

Q: Do you have a consciousness that you're apart from your body? Or at one with your mind/body?

Tina: I have had such experiences many times from about 13 years old. Once I experience, once I accept that 'yes I understand, I am a healer' - I don't call myself a healer. I am at one with the patient.

Q: What happens to you?

Robert: You see, we have a very direct, very real experience of energy. When she is treating a patient, it's as tangible as water and other substances. When I met her, I had been studying martial arts for some time and other things like that. I weighed 185, and was weightlifting. She weighed 95 as she does today, and she'd come over and lean on me and say, 'Oh, I'm so tired I can't get my feet off the ground and you can't lift me up either.' And I would chuckle and try to lift her. And I was shocked. I had never experienced anything like that before. It took me 10 years of training before I could break her root and lift her off the ground. I felt what was going on in her energy as she did this, so we have a very direct experience of energy. Mine is childish compared to hers. I've seen her do things with mind reading which boggled my mind. She did it once or twice and refuses to do it, but she picks up just what's literally other people's experiences.

Q: I'm not sure whether that's a blessing or a curse. What do you do with that awareness?

Tina: I'm not just always a super-healer in the clinic. I'm a mother, I'm a female. I experience emotion. I do experience, and yes that experiencing is a blessing, but much of my life, I would have to say that I've truly felt it's a burden. Not knowing. I don't want it, but you don't have any choice.

Q: What are you doing in terms of the gifts that you have, in terms of your healing?

Tina: I don't know what I'm doing, really. In my book, it exists through the last 12 years, actual documented treatments on patients. I experience patients, not just muscle aches or simple headache or neck injury. Let's say heart attack to cancer, uterine cancer, prostate cancer, bone cancer, arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, you name it medically. I went through it. I cannot say I helped all of them, but I can proudly say I helped 95 percent.

Robert: To some degree, yeah. And cured more than 80 percent.

Tina: So this book exists through my students' learning, their compiling information. Even to this day, I go in the clinic and I'm not sure what I'm going to do. I cannot tell you what I'm going to do. Now I can begin to experience when my therapist asks me, for example, how do you treat the woman's rheumatoid arthritis in the ankle?

I treat that area so much that I begin to get some sense of a picture I experienced. That is the only way I can communicate it to you. That's why when I go into the clinic, a therapist follows me into every room, every therapist has assigned patients and they will take note of what I do. I am not sure what I'm doing except when I get patient or in my energies I want this patient.

Q: So you get a picture of each individual according to what you pick up, so it's highly attuned, almost psychic.

Tina: I don't want to call myself psychic.

Q: But you have clairvoyant capabilities that directly relate to your learning experience. It has to do with the channels, the energy, right?

Tina: Yes. Oh, I'm learning everyday when I'm working in the clinic. Besides the learning, I'm experiencing how to deal with the medical, too.

Robert: I'd like to clarify something about her experience. For a long time I tried to convince her that she was not causing it, that it was something she was experiencing and could help. The earliest experience that she had was when she was 14 - I guess we should tell this story.

Because of the death of her brother and the death of her father shortly thereafter, she passed out, was in a coma for 30 days. She came out of the coma and was transformed. I have photographs of her before and after the coma and it is not the same human being. I mean, first of all, she lost a lot of weight during that 30 days. But she transformed. She was a glowing being from a real dumb-looking kid, I have to say, before the coma. She went back to school. I don't know if this is in the

book, and she looked at her teacher and saw a skeleton. And he died several months later of some consumptive disease. That's when she picked up this idea that she was causing it. She kept feeling it. She walked by an uncle and felt a sharp pain in her kidney, and three weeks later, a month later, he'd be in the hospital with kidney stones. She decided that she caused the kidney stones. So I only recently convinced her that she had this ability.

What she did for many, many years, and she explained this to me at one point, was that she had no real technique. Her grandmother from the age of 4 treated her and had her treat her in return. But this was a little girl, a baby. She wasn't teaching her, 'Use your thumbs this way, use your hands this way.' It was very intuitive, like, 'you do me. I'll do you.'

Grandma, by the way, was also a very powerful being. You know the tradition that being or power skips a generation. It really did. It's amazing. And when I finally got Tina convinced, she became very focused for a long time. She would see 17 to 20 patients a day. She would work in the clinic 12-15 hours.

At one point, she was so sick she was going to die and I literally drugged her. She was in such pain. she was having convulsions both front and back from an injury to the leg which ticked off an old injury that she had as a child which ...

Tina: ...I slammed the door on it.

Robert: Slammed the car door on her leg 20 years later after I'd finally gotten her over the cold stomach disease and I used to see her coming out of the room and her face was wracked with pain and she'd take a deep breath, calm herself and walk in to the next patient. I'd say, 'You've got to stop, you've got to stop,' but I see it as a discipline too. When I thought she was going to die, when I gave her herbs, I put codeine in the herbs and she was out for a day and a half. When she woke up we were in Washington on our way to Florida. That's how I got her to survive. I said, 'Why are you doing this? I mean, what's the point?' and she said, 'I'm not sure yet!'

She was trying to interpret what she was experiencing into words and pictures that would fit into the western world's view of the physical body and organs, and even energy systems and flow patterns of the Chinese medical model. After about 12 years, she looked at me and said. 'I think I got it now. I think I know how to teach it now.'

Q: And the book is one of the first steps?

Robert: The first step.

Tina: I really fear publicly exposing my practice - I do not want the exposure and involvement beyond treating and talking with patients, and I made this clear to my students. So, when Steven Schenkman asked my husband quietly, 'I'll be honest with you, he didn't even come over to me because he knew I would say 'No!' He went to my husband and inquired. My husband said, 'You gotta do this. He's really trying to push this Amma.' And I realized once I put it on paper and let it out, I cannot avoid exposure any more at this point, for whoever or how many I create Amma therapy, I want them to do well and see properly how it is done.

Q: Would you tell me about your grandmother, Tina?

Tina: I lost my mother when I was six years old. I had a stepmother, but my grandmother acted more as a mother besides a grandmother. When I became very close to her was when I had a physical injury. That's when I lived with her for four years and that's when she taught me how to manipulate and do treatments.

Q: Was this in Korea?

Tina: Yes. I was living in the city, in Pusan and she lived in the country. She never experienced cars, not even wagons pulled by horses, you know, only by oxen ...

Q: Did they have trains then?

Tina: Yes, but she was a farm lady. She's a very powerful lady I would say. Besides my grandmother I was very close to my grandfather. Actually, he used to play, he used to carry me up on his back and go up in the mountains and we'd swim in the streams and things like that. Every couple of months, Grandma'd say, 'Goodbye. I'm leaving' She'd go up in the mountains. She gathered up herbs. She never carried food to eat or drink, and only had one outfit. When she leaves we don't see her for two weeks at a time. She's the doctor of the whole town. I was just like any grandchild where we were at, you know, defiant. She never tried to discipline me or anything, but she did indicate to my brother that if he didn't teach me discipline, I would be an absolutely lost soul. So my brother pushed me to become a swimming champion and things like that. But with me, she was purely grandmotherly. In doing manipulations and teaching me how to do that kind of thing, I used to do a lot of crying. It's painful when a nerve is dead, you know.

Robert: I don't think he knows what you're talking about. Tina fell off a cliff and shattered the bones of her right leg into at least nine pieces. The medical doctors in the western style hospital were going to amputate, because gangrene had set in. Gangrene set in and she was screaming and crawling on the floor and they said, 'OK, they'll just lop off the leg.' Grandma heard about this...

Tina: That's when she saw a train for the first time.

Robert: She came in a train to the town ... and had her brother pick her up and carry her out. This was possible because she was not simply a town doctor. The medical people at that hospital would trek up to her place in the mountains for herbs or for guidance when they ran into problems ... So when she walked in the hospital and said, 'I'm taking the baby out'. They stood back and let them walk away. And then over four years they worked the nerves that were dead in the leg and the heel bone which had been eaten away by maggots...

Tina: I used crutches for two and a half years without feeling any sensation. It took me about three years to take my first step without crutches, but I went through a lot of pain and rejection and crying.

Robert: They worked on her leg up to 16 hours a day. And for her, that was her first formal teaching of manipulation. This is what you have to do when somebody else isn't doing it. Duk San, her brother and Qi kung teacher, translated a very old Chinese text about nerve pathways related to acupuncture channels and they set needles in the nerves, which had no pain whatever, and then in the channels to channel energy over to the nerves. After all the nerves were partly revitalized, and they were still sticking needles in nerves, they gave her herbs to keep her controlled enough to be able to set the needles. Grandma was powerful. Grandma was 80 when I was there?

Tina: No, 82.

Robert: In Korea, probably in every Buddhist country, the temple has seven levels of inner sanctums. The outer gate anybody can go in. Past that, nobody but people who are worthy of the level entered. Apparently, her grandmother was welcome at every level of every temple. Because you went through how many levels?

Tina: Three.

Robert: And then freaked out, right? Got scared and Grandma went on.

Q: This is the ancient medicine woman tradition?

Robert: Yes, that's exactly what this is.

Tina: She's my mother's mother, but somewhere I know in my father's family there is more healing power.

Q: So you don't really know much of her background at all.

Tina: Her background is as a farmer, she would say.

Robert: We would assume that she was trained also in herbal medicine, in the Wicca, the tradition of the Witches of old in herbal medicine, healing arts, other mystical things and the woman was also an empath.

Q: It sounds like you may be a medicine woman.

Robert: Well, that's the closest thing in the west that we know of. That's what we've got.

Q: You sound like one. (Looking at Tina)

Tina: Do !?

Q: Yes, you do.

Tina: Thank you... If I didn't listen to my grandmother in massaging myself or treating myself, I can't. I don't think I could walk with my two legs except with a cane. Maybe I'd be in a wheelchair. What I'm saying is that they tried to discipline me, but I was an undisciplined child.

Robert: What she's saying is true, but what she's saying is basically a universal truth in all cultures. That children are rebelling. Now what she was doing was very much like I did or you did as a teenager or a young kid, we just didn't want to do it the way our parents did. But what our parents wanted us to do was eat in a reasonable way, come home at a reasonable hour at night, not watch so much television. What her parents wanted her to do was learn Qigong, spend her time in meditation, spend her time reading the scriptures, preparing herself learning all kinds of skills. So while she rebelled, she still got, 900 percent more discipline than we would have gotten if we'd followed the rules 100 percent. I think that is a really important issue.

Tina: If you want to heal yourself, my belief is that you need to find out first what your illness is. I had a heart attack in July 1987. Stroke. At that point. I realized if you don't heal yourself, heart attack in American people is a big wound ...

Robert: What she means is that they make such a big deal out of it, as if that were something different than any other injury.

Tina: Unfortunately, we were separated that night and he (Robert, her husband) was in Florida and I was in New York. I came home about 9 p.m. and I went to sleep and about 2:30 a.m. I woke up and when my arm went in a certain direction, I knew that I was struck. Up till then, two weeks I had been walking around with slight pain, discomfort in my arm and I thought I was just overworked and didn't pay much attention to it. Of course, that time we had an MD at the clinic, Dr. M., his purpose - to sign the insurance forms. But I would not let him near me. My husband's students had to go to the center at 7 a.m., call Florida, let him come up to New York and in the meantime, leave me alone, don't bother me. Of course every five minutes he was checking to make sure I was not dead. All I did, I'm being honest, was lie in bed, trying to treat myself. Treating myself is not the same as somebody else.

Robert: Then I treated her with acupuncture.

Tina: About two months. For a month he wouldn't let me go without getting a treatment in the morning and in the evening.

Q: So you're fully recovered?

Tina: I think so.

Robert: Then she went to Hawaii and spent three months alone on Maui and worked on herself. Three months alone. Now, on this trip, we started learning surfboarding, and we've been surfing in Kauai. My point is, she's better than she was because she learned that "physician heal thyself is the primary adage."

Q: Do you think doctors ought to be the primary care providers that they are?

Tina: I don't think so. We should always work together... I think we need each other...

Q: Should I go to a surgeon before I go to a holistic practitioner?

Tina: No. Go to an acupuncturist.

Robert: We believe acupuncture should be the first line of health care and something like Amma if the therapists are sufficiently trained, they could do what an acupuncturist can't.

Q: I was very pleased to see the late Dr. Mendelsohn wrote the foreword in your book. You must have loved him a great deal.

Robert: Ah, dear Dr. Mendelsohn.

Q: He was a wonderful man. He was an incredible man. It was a tremendous loss.

Tina: When a medical doctor went against the abuse of modern medicine, I was really excited.

Q: Your approach to healing seems similar to that of Rudolph Steiner's from Europe as well as what Dr. Stone created in the original polarity work. You have a very broad spectrum approach with no real central healing modality, maybe tending toward acupuncture, it seems, but definitely paying attention to environment, diet and attitude, and you pay attention to the spiritual aspects of us as well. How do you do that in the classroom in terms of bringing in your spiritual beliefs?

Robert: She has a very much more direct experience of people's being and look that in a very straightforward way, felt the energy very directly, could manipulate the energy... So we don't feel that this work emanates from spiritual activities. This is a very real material world thing.

Q: So it's very distinct, then, from Dr. Stone's polarity.

Robert: Yeah. See you notice many schools will set up a triad of body, mind and spirit. Ours doesn't. It's body, mind and emotions... We say there is the physical form, the mental aspect and there's the emotional aspect. We see those as three distinct functions and the teaching is very straightforward. Until those functions are brought into a certain harmony, there is no spiritual being that is touched.

Q: In terms of seeing the body as a manifestation of energy, what is it that you see?

Tina: I see, I experience a blocking of energy or too much flowing energy, or not enough direction.

Q: And then what do you see, actually see?

Tina: See? I can't say I see. For example, if I have a female lying there and she's got a tumor of golf-ball size, it's beginning to form, it's not enough to show in the machine, I only feel that area has strange energies blocking. I can explain to a patient that there's a possibility a fibroid tumor is forming or polyps ... I do notice negative energy.

Q: What sort of personal development is incorporated into your training?

Robert: We have encounter groups in which they bring out problems. We start, even with conflicts between students, and deal with that. One of the things we made a big thing of, and this is something that no one else seems to do and a lot of people get upset, is confront your sexual reality relative to your patient's. And everybody gets, 'Well. I'm a practitioner.' You're a practitioner, well face reality, you're treating a young woman and you're a man. You're treating a man and you're a woman. You're treating a man and you're a homosexual male. You're treating a woman and you're a homosexual female. What are you doing there? You're taking your hands and you're putting them all over this person's body. Are you telling me that there are no sexual thoughts? Then face the reality of your sexuality. And you face the reality of your sexual thoughts and feelings with the person, you go into the room and you know that reality, then you take that reality and set it aside... We see physical development as one of the most basic and important things in massage therapists. We had, what magazine was that, Long Island Press or something, did an article on us and the first thing that she said was, 'Watching the Amma therapists was like watching a group of athletes at work.'

Q: Oh yes, it's very vigorous.

Robert: We require a great deal of physical strength, hand exercises of all kinds ... sometimes you have to do something hard, you have to press hard like in Rolfing, but there are two ways that you can produce force. One is through awkward strength and one is through the softer strength that comes from Qi and proper alignment of the body and flow of Qi.

Q: You're bringing in martial arts concepts into the use of the hands as a tool in body therapy.

Robert: That's quite true. One hundred percent.

Q: It seems like there's a vision that is driving some of this work. It has to do with bringing back the samurai and the geisha to the planet. To me, that's what it's like, like you're reviving an ancient past that you may have perceived. You've alluded to that in the book, in talking about, 'Maybe they were wiser, maybe they were more advanced than we were.' And to me, that's the samurai and the geisha image.

Robert: OK. If you understand as you and I do that image, but I don't think the average person does.

Q: Yeah, it's more what they see in their movies. We're talking about the renaissance man in everyday life. To me, that's what the samurai and the geisha symbolize.

Robert: Well, if that's what you're talking about, that's what we're trying to do. The broadly developed human being who has taken every aspect of himself and brought it to as close to perfection as he can, and incorporates it...

Q: What's happened?

Tina: I think as we're becoming more modern and as technology grows, the human mind is becoming more lazy. We depend on more technology more things. The more things we use, our abilities are going away...

Robert: You mentioned martial arts before. There is no real distinction traditionally. Anyone who was a doctor of acupuncture was also at least a swordsman and a Tai Chi practitioner...One of the saddest things about acupuncture or Oriental medicine is that not until maybe the last year or two have there been some decent Chinese texts translated; most of what has been taught in this country is very, very basic and very, very primitive.

Q: So the entire Amma session is cognizant of this multidimensional and multi-level pathways of channels.

Robert: Yes.

Q: About the word Amma, how did that come about?

Robert: We needed a name for what she was doing and we couldn't call it massage. We weren't going to call it Shiatsu, because that was what was being used but that's not what it was. There was nothing going on that we knew of, so I said 'let's look for the oldest Chinese word we can find to describe massage.' because this is probably more like what was going on then, than anything else and I found I had remembered the word Amma and I looked in some books.

Tina: You read a lot on Chinese work.

Q: Have you ever seen the word *anma*?

Robert: I've seen that recently, and *anwa* from Japan. But the work that she is doing is really something that she developed. She was taught certain things from childhood and then she was taught very specific detailed things about healing her own way, which had to do with nerve regeneration, atrophied muscle regeneration, and then when we pushed her, she had this ability, this natural thing that she would touch a body, feel something was wrong, but there was, again, no cognitive function here. It was simply an event process and her hands just went and touched and turned and twisted. So when we pushed her to teach it to others, she didn't know how. She didn't know what to do. So for 12 years, she spent her time treating patients and trying to interpret it, she started looking in anatomy books with me, and learn the names of the muscles and organs. Because she just had this feeling of things and then knew what to do. Little by little over 12 years working with me, working with others, working with the books, she was able to interpret what she felt into a language that could be understood by others and formally suggest that this is what you do, not based upon having learned it, but based upon having experienced it. It's not her idea, just a name I picked. It sounded good and I knew it had old roots.

Q: Development of the therapists seems to be a major part of the work at the center.

Tina: Many people, they want a lot of things, and are grasping without understanding ... I want them to understand how hard it is to gain techniques. It's not just, you're going to learn something. OK you press here ... or you press here, your pain is going to go. I want them to have some kind of discipline for themselves to understand. In those areas, I can try to make them understand how it's different...discipline... like I say, we live in life. They have many problems. Many, many things pile into their head. When they decide a treatment, I try to tell them, 'You mustn't think about your baby at home with the babysitter. Or you mustn't think about your missing an appointment.' That is the hardest thing to try to make them understand. Focus.

Q: There's a tradition to be taught, not just a skill, but a tradition that to me, respects not only our own growth experience, but also respects and gives credibility to the fact that you can't go off and learn it in a three-day weekend.

Robert: It's a lot of hard work.

Tina: Yes.

Q: That's not too much to ask.

Tina: What I'm asking is not just for this technique. I'm asking this for themselves to be a better being. I experience often, for example, with female students who are married with one child... they bring problems into the class. When in class, it's not just the mother that's disturbed, but information passes on to the other students. Literally, I said, 'That's got to go.'

Q: You must get a lot of the failures at the center.

Robert: Let's put it this way. When we opened the center, for the first several years, we only got failures. Everybody who walked in the door for the first five years said. 'This is my last resort.'

Q: It's changed a lot, though.

Robert: We have people who have been bugging me, and I refuse to do it, that want her to do the birthing for them, but we don't have the facilities for that.

Q: They want you to become their primary care person.

Robert: Well we are. Other than that, the babies are brought from the hospital to her...

Tina: For the last 15 years, I've had patients whose children have grown up and they have babies they bring to me, so for more than half of the patients now I became a family doctor...

Robert: And my patients, the same way...

Q: So you don't have any plans to do the birthing then?

Robert: When we open the hospital. See, we're planning to build a larger facility. One day, I hope that facility will take families from educating parents about pregnancy, the whole process of bringing up the child, nutritional guidance for a healthy child, birth the child, take care of them all their lives and have a hospice so that when they're ready to die, we'll be waiting for them to take them through. I want to see that. In fact, my original plan was to have a self-contained community that would use alternative energy and so forth. I backed off a little. I'm not requiring that it be a self-contained community, but that the hospital exists...

Q: When I had the one hour session, I detected a pattern, not a conscious pattern, but it felt like Steven Schenkman was running with what we think of as meridians, but it seemed like there was so much jostling and a similar kind of movement everywhere, whether it was on the arm or the leg.

Robert: But it does because there is, from the very surface of the skin, all the way in, there are connections of those energies, and that's what's not understood...

Tina: I believe humans exist by not one muscle, tendon or ligament. There are seven different levels of the muscle. I'm just talking about muscle, not tendons or ligaments.

Q: Physiological levels?

Robert: Physiological levels.

Tina: Sometimes when I treat a patient with a lot of rheumaty or some scoliosis, I don't pay attention to their muscle until I relax their actual fascia. It holds the bone structure. You can't relax the muscle if the fascia is locked to a spasm. It just doesn't work that way.

Robert: So I taught her therapists some myofascial release, which I learned from Dr. John Upledger's classes. What it is is a totally non-invasive manipulation. It requires unbelievable strength and the patient feels nothing, absolutely nothing. I mean, I had a patient that said, 'Are you really doing anything?' As they look down in shock. It's as if my arm has sunk into their organs and they don't feel it. What we do is feel the craniosacral rhythm. Once we find the craniosacral rhythm, we then make a minuscule challenge and feel the direction that the muscle wants to turn and follow it and unwind the fascia.

Q: It's like you have a conscious connection. You're actually communicating with the consciousness of those cell bodies.

Robert: I look at it as almost all contact by one human being with another will produce a challenge to the muscle. In other words, as soon as you touch somebody, there's a challenge response and it resists. Through T'ai Chi, I learned to become sensitive enough to feel without letting the muscles I'm touching attend to that fact. And then I can apply such a light force that the muscle simply doesn't respond by resisting, it turns away and I follow it and follow it and follow it. Eventually it will release.

Q: I understand exactly what you're saying. When the book talks about using your hands to hear and to see with, what does that mean?

Tina: When I treat the patient, sometimes I don't look at the patient. Even my eyes are closed. Besides touching and feeling, my hand almost describes a visual kind of experience.

Robert: There's a form of pulse diagnosis which isn't commonly known. It's called diagnosis of the birth condition. There's one or another organ which is weak, and there's the weakest organ. She tried to teach me this, and I've not yet been able to learn it. She says, 'If you do A and you do B then you feel the shape of the organ which is messed up.' I can't do it yet. I can't feel it, but she... In Tai Chi we talk about five different kinds of energy. One is called listening energy. You listen to your opponent through your fingers because the fingers are used for listening. The palm is used for ejecting the force. But you put your whole hand on your partner and you hear his energy, and I - well, it's not feel...

Tina: Think about how blind people function. They can't see, but they have more sensitivity. They hear, they feel the air, they are more aware of what is going on in the world.

Robert: When they touch something their relationship to what they've touched is radically different than ours. We feel the surface, they feel the structure, so they don't have eyes to see and yet they touch and use a structure, and that's what we're trying to get to...

Q: Do you think that massage therapists are more sensitive in this regard?

Robert: You find some.

Tina: Some. This may sound prejudiced, but I can only say through my own training and my own students, and they're beginning, in the last three years to manifest some changes. When I observe them with the patients, they're beginning to be sensitive. They're even beginning to feel the patient's pain...

Q: When did you come to America?

Tina: 1964.

Q: Really? That's the year I went in the Army. How did you happen to come to America?

Tina: (Pointing to her husband) I came with him.

Robert: I was in Korea.

Q: So was I, in the Army, 1965-66. What were you doing there?

Robert: I was playing soldier.

Tina: That's where he learned the acupuncture, from my grandmother.

Q: Oh, you were stationed there.

Robert: Yes ... and I was in my early 20s ... I joined to go into airborne special forces but they wouldn't let me go to army language school as they had promised until I had to reenlist to go, so I finally said, "the hell with it, I quit." And they punished me. They sent me to Korea, which was what I wanted to do in the first place... And I started getting friendly with a number of Korean officers and I got right into the martial arts very deeply and I was studying the Japanese language and I was reading philosophy. And I saw her, and I fell in love with her instantly. I said, 'I'll marry her.' I knew I was going to marry an Oriental from the time I was a child.

Tina: He was playing chess with my uncle.

Robert: I used to play chess with her uncle. I was better than him, but once I saw her, I started losing so I could keep coming back. And that's when I met her. Little by little I got friendly with her brother and they let me talk to her. That's when I found out the fact that she believed she was a demon that used to cause all kinds of diseases in everybody. And I said, 'You're missing the boat, sweetheart. You are not causing anything. Your seeing and feeling could help these people.'

Tina: Well, actually, coming out of the coma, my whole family, uncles, and what you call it, black sheep, that's what I was. Nobody had a hope for me. Anything I did they thought I would fail. Nobody had any hope except my grandmother. She always had hope and she always said, 'Someday, you will make it.' That's one thing I remember. The whole family was against me except her. She always encouraged me and I met him.

Q: She passed it on to you.

Robert: She may have. Her older brother was her teacher for a long time, under grandmother's guidance, of physical arts, and he was the one who disciplined her and took care of her. When she climbed out the back window to go dancing, instead of grabbing her, he'd follow her and make sure she didn't get into trouble, and then train her the next day. He was shot toward the end of the war and...

Tina: And I lost my father a few months later.

Robert: That's when she went into the coma, when her father died. During the Korean conflict when she was only a child. That's when she went into the coma. When she came out of the coma, she had been transformed, but she still was completely undisciplined...

After we got married, she went to another marriage ceremony in Puson, because her dead brother's betrothed had died. A 69-year-old Buddhist master, who had not been out of the mountains for nearly 60 years was there...

Now during the ceremony he made things happen, he made the dolls move together, and at one point he called her over and he said, 'Sit here,' and she said, 'I don't want to have anything to do with you because you're just a magician like the rest of them. You're just like the fat monks in the mountain.' He said, 'Don't sell them short. They have the same being that I have, only they haven't built themselves a useful vehicle, so they carry a burden until they die. But you will listen to me.'

And for 30 minutes she couldn't lift herself up. He said to her, 'When your brother died, it was not supposed to happen and he did not complete your education. They had been waiting for the appropriate man to come to continue that. 'Therefore, you will give your will to your husband, and he will take over the discipline of you. So go home now. Don't stay for the rest of the ceremonies. At 35, however, you will take the long journey and return to yourself.'

And he told her many things, none of which she could remember. But every once in a while over the years as we were sitting and discussing problems or things, she would say, 'Oh, Buddha said'...and she'd tell me a sentence or two, and it would open up as a message, telling me which way to go, which way to turn. At 35 she began to accept that she had this ability and that's when her journey began into this deeper reality.

Tina: Through our marriage, until I was 35, I have to say my husband had a difficult wife.

Robert: I agree, but understood that there was a being here who had something which was different than anyone else and could come out. I knew that the moment I saw her because I was not into going out a lot or anything. I was really very reclusive.

Q: You were young, too.

Robert: She's 48. I'm 50.

Q: No, no. I mean then ...

Robert: She was 21, and I was 23.

Tina: Even 23, when I was reaching to 30, my functioning in the world was like 16, very rebellious against everything.

Robert: If I did not literally control her will, I mean literally, will against will, nothing would have come of it. But that was a chore, it was literally a task. They chose me for that. You see, I had no intention of staying. I had no intention of ever marrying. I found the path one day...

As I was walking I saw a path up the edge of the mountain. So I started following the path up the mountain. I came to the outer gate of a monastery... and as I started to move toward it, it was like two forces were acting on me. Something was pushing me away and something within me was drawn. I wanted to go there. I looked up further and I could see another phase, similar to the Japanese Zen temple, and I started to move toward that and it was like somebody was calling me to go there. And yet I felt literally, like something grabbed me, turned me, and I found myself physically running down this path, hating the fact that I was running down the path, wishing I was going back, and when I got down, it seemed to me I'd been

gone for 15-20 minutes. I'd been gone three and a half hours. There was no path. That's the point where I realized that when I got the message from the Buddha, which was that you have been chosen to take over her training. The will is given to you. You control her will until she's 35.

Q: So what you experienced was this struggle of wills.

Tina: I have to say his struggle, even after I was 30, he was still struggling. I was willing to accept more, but still not willing to let go.

Robert: But at 35, she began to let go.

Tina: I'm being very honest with you. I love him very much, but things in the first 15 years - I think about what my behavior, force or reactions were, and if he were an ordinary man, I don't think he could've stayed with me.

Q: I don't think he's an ordinary man.

Tina: No.

Robert: I had a job. I always do my job. I've had great rewards too. I mean, don't think it's a thankless task. This is a wonderful woman. We've lived a very happy life as a couple.

Tina: He's my husband, and sometimes he's my friend, and my teacher too...