

# The Vital Force

JOURNAL OF THE T'AI CHI CHIH® COMMUNITY

Volume 30, No. 4

for teachers & students

November 2013

## Justin Gave Thanks

### An Issue Celebrating The Minnesota Conference (Beginning With Thanking Justin Through Pyramid Poems)

*chi*  
flowing  
circle-ing  
cultivating  
awareness  
within  
us  
– MARY STINE

stone  
master  
of healing  
form t'ai chi chih  
gift to all  
practice  
now  
– LISA OTERO

my  
life is  
better for  
justin's t'ai chi  
chih; i wish  
to thank  
him  
– SUE VAN GEMERT

thanks  
for the  
lessons shown  
up the mountain  
down valley  
lights breaths  
pose  
– ANN HAMPTON

our  
founder  
of the creed  
in t'ai chi chih  
continues  
to bless  
us  
– JUDE GALLAGHER

i  
give thanks  
for justin's  
gifts of joy, peace  
gentle moves  
stillness  
love  
– SHERYL ADAIR

if  
he had  
never thought  
to create the  
form we would  
still have  
*chi*  
– JERRY GRANOK

now  
happy  
we all are  
feeling the *chi*  
flowing through  
every  
thing  
– JUDY HENDRICKS

calm  
peace and  
quiet in  
my mind because  
of t'ai chi  
chih prac-  
tice  
– LINDA JONES

he  
gave us  
t'ai chi chih  
joy thru movement  
gratitude  
from us  
all  
– CAROLINE GUILLOTT

it  
helped me  
to become  
much more aware  
and to feel  
flowing  
*chi*  
– DIANNE MOODY

light  
without  
ending all  
encompassing  
gratitude  
thank you  
stone  
– DORA DERZON

*chi*  
flows through  
t'ai chi chih  
thank you justin  
for joyful  
gift of  
flow  
– MAGGIE SMITH

when  
justin  
emerged with  
t'ai chi chih moves  
we became  
aware  
folks  
– BONNIE CUNDIFF

joy  
fills me  
the reason  
is t'ai chi chih  
justin stone's  
blessed  
gift  
– GLORIA SMITH

thank  
you stone  
for your gift  
of t'ai chi chih  
movement of  
joyful  
*chi*  
– MAGGIE SMITH



# May The Vital Force Be With You

## Why An Issue Dedicated To Conference 2013

The Minnesota T'ai Chi Chih community created an incomparable conference that embodied both a gravitas and a lightness. The outpouring of material contained in this issue is a testimony to the spirit and execution of their event. May it serve to unite the teachers who could not attend. And spur more teachers to attend next year.

## Social Media Breakout Session

Taking responsibility for filling significant but unmet challenges, *The Vital Force* has been building out T'ai Chi Chih's ever-expanding social media presence. The conference committee allowed me 30 minutes to present overviews of T'ai Chi Chih's social media presence on various "platforms" – for which I was (and am) grateful. And to explain why social media is so important to spreading TCC, thus growing classes and building a market for Justin's works. And to explain how each of you are completely essential to the success of these ventures.

**Platforms** (called out below) are where we communicate, rather than sell. Through our message we earn trust, which is built slowly over time. It's about the same human qualities of connection that have existed for thousands of years. It's about offering something that others want in their lives. It's about attraction rather than promotion, as they say in Alcoholics Anonymous.

**Mostly: it's about empowering others (you!) to spread the message, influencing your friends and their friends.**

All URLs are on the last page of *The Vital Force*. Briefly, TCC has a presence on:

- **YouTube:** The world's second biggest search engine. Teacher demos are side-by-side with Justin's instructional videos.
- **Twitter:** Where journalists and reports hang out. So TCC must too.
- **Instagram:** Photo-sharing. TCC is a visual and particularly well suited to *good* photography. See page 18 of the August 2013 issue.
- **Flickr:** The world's largest photo repository. Sets of TCC images include groups, movements, "how to," Justin, Andrea Cole imagery, seated TCC, conference images, a teacher training, Where in the World.
- **Pinterest:** The TCC target demographic, i.e. women of a certain age. TCC homepage "boards" are grouped around: inspiration, health benefits, press clippings, movements, the app and much more. See page 19 of the August 2013 issue.
- **Facebook:** The granddaddy of social media. Our page has grown to almost 1500 followers under Lisa Otero's guidance. See page 23 of the August 2013 issue.

WITH GRATITUDE. KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

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## Submission Guidelines

Please send articles as Word documents, electronically, to [tcc@kimgrant.com](mailto:tcc@kimgrant.com). If possible, please tailor your submission to a particular section; the newsletter will hang together better that way. A 1/4 page in this newsletter runs about 200 words; a 1/2 page is 400 words.

We are always in need of photos and artwork. Please send high resolution jpgs, which the Editor will crop and edit. If you have 10-12 pieces of related artwork – calligraphy, drawings, photographs, or something that will reproduce well in B/W – please submit them for consideration in an entire issue. *The Vital Force* reserves the right to edit submission for length and clarity.

## Web Site Updates

The on-line database (for [www.taichichih.org](http://www.taichichih.org)) will be updated within a week of the following deadlines: January 15, March 1, April 15, June 1, July 15, September 1, October 15, & December 1.

Editor: Kim Grant • Membership: Mary Ruiz • Submissions: Send articles, poetry and photos to Kim Grant at [tcc@kimgrant.com](mailto:tcc@kimgrant.com) or to The Vital Force, P.O. Box 92674, Albuquerque, NM 87199-2674 • Memberships: Send membership subscription requests, renewals, remittances and changes of address to The Vital Force, P.O. Box 92674, Albuquerque, NM 87199-2674. Memberships are \$40/year, \$50/year for international. Members receive four issues of *The Vital Force*. The annual Teacher Directory is available for free at [www.taichichih.org](http://www.taichichih.org). If, for some reason, you do not receive an issue, send an e-mail to: [vfmembership@yahoo.com](mailto:vfmembership@yahoo.com).  
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### Deadline: Jan 1

**Publication Date: Mid-Feb**

*Climb The Joyous Mountain:*

What do you like about it?

How do you use it in your classes?

### Deadline: April 1

**Publication Date: Mid-May**

Social Media:

How do you use it in your classes?

### Deadline: July 1

**Publication Date: Mid-Aug**

To Be Decided.

### Deadline: Oct 1

**Publication Date: Mid-Nov**

To Be Decided.

Because of financial pressures, *The Vital Force* reserves the right to ship via Media Rate instead of First Class, which may result in a delay of one week or so, depending on where you live.

## The Popping, The Fluttering (& Lions & Tigers & Bears, Oh My)

By AMY TYKSINSKI, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

I have been thinking a lot lately about the “concepts” that we bring to T'ai Chi Chih practice. From a certain perspective, every single word we say not only passes through our own level of understanding and layers of conditioning in a given moment but can only be digested by another through a lens of *his/her current* level of understanding and layers of conditioning.



From another perspective, words are completely irrelevant in this mutual transmission give-and-take.

**Justin was a very mysterious teacher in some ways.** He rarely gave a direct answer about anything. He left it to each one of us to plumb the depths of TCC within our own framework of understanding in a given moment. And yet, he always pointed an arrow (“Follow the pointing arrow,” he would say, and then would add, “Most people miss it.”)

When observations arise like, “My fingers don’t flutter when I do the movements,” or “People from Albuquerque stand up after holding the ‘resting pose’ for a few seconds and I find that to be disruptive/distracting,” we are left with a curious challenge as a community. How can we meaningfully dialog about these questions without alienating one another? How can we participate fully together as we explore and share and allow and also recognize we are all at different places in our development in any given moment?

How can we love *ourselves* exactly where we are, regardless of what is going on around us, yet still remain open and receptive?

One approach would be not to address the questions at all, as any answer is bound to polarize and potentially distance us from one another. Justin frequently in his teaching would not only *not* answer questions, he would give different answers to different people in response to an identical question.

**Another approach might be to rest a little longer in the discomfort of the questions and see what happens to the questioner in the end...**

At our weekly Tuesday morning Teacher Practice in Albuquerque, Justin stood up in between the movements. And so I started doing this, too. At first it was quite odd and I resisted it. When I moved to Albuquerque, I had had about eight years by that point of holding the resting pose in between movements and had no muscular difficulty in doing so. It felt disjointed and irritating to me to stand up in between and be so seemingly “casual” about it. But gradually over time, I began to model myself after what I observed Justin doing. And gradually, I came to change my “mindset” (the stories I was telling myself as well

as what I “thought” my body should feel or was feeling). I put the old way down for just a few moments on that Tuesday practice to participate as fully as I could with Justin.

**I have found standing up in between movements now to be invaluable.** For me, there is a point in the graceful conclusion or resting pose where completion or consolidation occurs. This happens after holding it for about three to five seconds. After that moment, I no longer need to stay in the resting pose as I find in my body that “staying” becomes “extra.” This “extra” is not muscular tension or even mental tension. The best way to describe it is simply extra (almost dead, in fact, no longer alive). Standing up in between movements no longer disrupts me. In fact, it has simplified and allowed a deeper connection with the whole of the practice even more than before.

So, another question to ask might be, “Is it possible that standing up in between movements might enhance an experience of wholeness, though not from a place that I originally could have comprehended prior to being exposed to the possibility?” ***It doesn’t always look/feel like we think it is supposed to.***

## Blunt Words About The Finger Flutter

Let’s face it. **It is really uncomfortable when something that Justin has said** is a “confirming sign of the flow of the *Chi*” is happening to others around us and it isn’t happening to us. We think we’re doing something wrong. We think we’re failing. We beat ourselves up and then sometimes even try to make others wrong, too. We’re told to tell our students, “If you aren’t feeling warmth, tingling or trembling in your hands, don’t worry. The *Chi* is circulating anyway.” Why should they believe us?

How patient can we be with ourselves in moments like these? **How lovingly can we coax and invite the *Chi* to speak to us?** How heavy is the heavy air through which we are flowing? What substance do we notice is truly there between the palms or felt by the hands and entire body (inside and out) as it traverses slow motion in a dream? How rooted can we be in the soles of the feet through it all?

I personally have gone through multiple iterations of involuntary and extreme finger fluttering and hand flapping to a more gentle tumbling (at this point) these last 20 years of practicing TCC. I appreciate and remember when Justin admonished me firmly at one practice, as I looked pleadingly at him to make it stop: “Focus in the soles of the feet.”

I was not grounded when my hands were pulsing and my fingers were going wild. But now (though honestly I still work on staying grounded every day as it is a big challenge for me), with my fingers tumbling quietly and even not moving at all sometimes, there is a more spacious vastness inside. If I could venture to observe, the *Chi* is circulating and yet anchored downward, rather than circulating and flowing up and outward. But the wild hand flap-flutter was a phase I had to go through, too.

I share my experience and I share my questions. May these serve as an invitation.

## A Marvel

BY JULIE HERVET, PLACERVILLE, CALIFORNIA

I don't know where to begin ... so incredible was my experience this year. I didn't think my first conference (Portland, 2012) could be topped, but Minnesota was amazing. For me, getting to connect with the T'ai Chi Chih community and do TCC with 100 others is about enough reason to become a teacher. To teach and not give yourself the gift of a conference ... well, all I can say is you are really cheating yourself. This year's conference was so spiritual, so unifying ... pulling us together in our common intention, strengthening our connection to each other and the bigger picture.

The presentations were awesome; I didn't even know I had tense feet, but now they are happier. The TEDx Talk was so moving and inspiring. And I have carried April Leffler like an angel on my shoulder ever since. She whispers, "Listen to that inner voice: There is that within you which knows." Her talk and group exercise (in which I got to be the "dreamer") **helped to crystallize what I've always known about my connection to TCC:** That I was led to it by listening to an inner voice connected to the greater voice of universal spirit (*prajna*), and it has made all the difference. My "dream" was to have the courage to get up on stage and share something of myself that might be useful to others – like how to teach T'ai Chi Chih in prisons, perhaps? Until April encouraged me, I never would have considered the idea. And that was just the first of several transformational experiences.

In addition to the pure joy of the presentations and the international dancing, there were heaps of opportunities to grow personally and as a teacher. I learned from Pam that *Seijaku* may simply become a deeper part of my TCC practice, that it doesn't duplicate or replace it. I learned from Bill Moore how to connect myself to the ground at a deeper level than ever.

I discovered that I could be videotaped and the sky wouldn't fall. The calm, gracious spirit of Catherine, our recording artist, really helped me overcome my shyness and anxiety. It was unbelievable that she was able to turn it into something I didn't just survive, but I actually enjoyed.

And all this was capped off by having the honor and privilege of being one of four to lead group practice on Sunday morning. The energy and bond I felt with Neal, Stacey and April as we led the group was so powerful. Again, I not only survived it – I enjoyed it. **I marvel at the person I've become through my TCC practice.** And it is because of the teachers I've met who carry Justin's message so faithfully and are so willing to help others along the way.

**Finally, a real bonus was** some feedback I received from Carmen about a few of my moves. In case this might be helpful to someone else, corrections were as follows: 1.) I was leaning back slightly. She suggested that rather than tuck my butt under so much on the backward weight shift, that I allow my rear to come back and sit on an imaginary stool behind me; 2.) To allow my forearms to have a little more involvement in Pulling Taffy, Variation #2, Wrist Circles when doing the circles. I was only using my wrists to the point of making it look tense; and 3.) During Light at the Top of the Head and Light at the Top of the Temple, she suggested that I come up to more of a standing position before opening and closing the hands, so there is more room to sink down during the sinking part. Finally, thank you to Justin, who set this beautiful ball in motion. (P.S. I just sent my students the link to my YouTube video. How cool is that.)



Linda Watson has graciously shared her hand-made book chronicling her journey during the conference.

Above: The front cover of the Minnesota journal, made from sewn pieces of painted and stamped paper and an old map. Below: The story begins at the T'ai Chi Chih conference in early August, "Encircled in Chi." Additional images of Linda's journal appear throughout this issue of *The Vital Force*.



## An Encounter With TEDx

BY MARY J CASE, DANVILLE, CALIFORNIA

This 28th conference was the third conference I have been privileged to attend. And it was possibly my favorite conference as far as learning through meaningful information ... not to mention the benefits of *Chi*. "Encircled in *Chi*" fulfilled its theme ten-fold. From the opening Japanese Tea Ceremony to the closing Sunday practice, the organizers did a stellar job.

But if I had to choose a favorite, it would be hearing Amy Tyksinski share her experience of giving a TEDx talk about T'ai Chi Chih and her connection with high school students. It gave us a glimpse of the roller coaster ride and journey she encountered. Amy is just as charming in person as she is on her TEDx video.

Bravo to all involved; this truly is the future of TCC and it is awesome.

## Sharing The Tea

By CARMEN BROCKLEHURST, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

So many comments about conference spoke to the organizing committee's *teh*. They desired to truly make it an event that would speak to our love of T'ai Chi Chih and to working together, in integrity, to go deeper with our practice. This very high goal was kept in the hearts and minds of committee members during the entire planning and execution. A marvelous sharing of tea (events) included resting, lingering, coming together, and an invitation to learn and friendship.

Of the many thoughtful elements, the Tea Ceremony (*chanoyu*), performed by Professor Emeritus and Tea Master Kimiko Gunji, was particularly inspiring. Kimiko is a small person, but her presence as she performed the tea ceremony was very large.

The simplicity with which she performed each exquisite move was the sign of a true master. It was a delight to watch. It was the same delight I experienced watching Justin do TCC. It was gentle on the eyes and fulfilling to the soul. Her movements were harmonious; each was necessary. The way she folded the cloth, in a very particular order, showed that she had done this ceremony many times with full awareness. And although the utensils she would use were already clean, out of respect to those who would drink the tea, she cleaned them again.

We were each given an especially-made-for-our-conference teacup – a lovely reminder of our host's thought-



fulness. The traditional green tea is known for its bitter taste, but true to form, a small sweet in the shape of a flower was offered to soften the bitter taste. It was a very welcoming experience and set a mood of serenity for the unfoldment of the rest of our practices.

The tradition of *Cha-no-yu* (Japanese tea ceremony) is very old, and as Justin says in "*Climb the Joyous Mountain*," the ceremony contains four essentials: harmony, respect, purity and serenity. We experienced all four, and with respect, we learned to love and share the tea (*Chi*). Many thanks to the Minnesota community.



## “Futuring”

By SR. ANTONIA COOPER, OSF, NORTH PLAINFIELD, NEW JERSEY

For the past several conferences it has been my pleasure to share with the community various projects that we present in an effort to fulfill Justin’s request that I “bring T’ai Chi Chih into the future.” This year our vision statement was presented. This is an important focus for us as teachers and students. You may recall that the mission statement was given birth on the 95th birthday of Justin, 2011.

You may be surprised to read that we have two vision statements. The first is how we see ourselves in five years: **“T’ai Chi Chih Community Vision:** We, the T’ai Chi Chih Community, are an ever-expanding, unified yet diverse group of teachers and practitioners who exemplify serenity, joy and vitality. There are active teaching communities throughout the US, Canada and around the world, with great variety in ethnicity, gender & age. We are dedicated to practicing, teaching and promoting T’ai Chi Chih as originated by Justin Stone, so that it contributes to holistically revolutionizing healthcare and is a positive influence on humanity.”

The second is how the world sees us in five years: **“T’ai Chi Chih Community Vision:** The T’ai Chi Chih Community is universally recognized and accepted as offering an effective, user-friendly, holistic practice for enhancing health of body, mind & spirit. We are seen as a thriving, welcoming Community that attracts people of diverse ages, gender and ethnicity. By embracing new technologies, we have accredited teachers and other resources readily available worldwide to meet the growing demand for information and instruction in the beneficial practice of T’ai Chi Chih.”

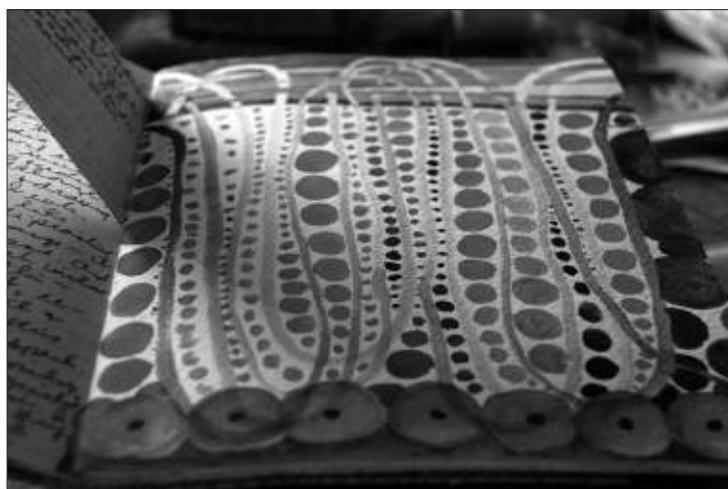
These were the end result of 20 TCC teachers working initially individually, then in pairs, then in quads, continually working toward a greater synthesis in capturing these visions for us all. Unlike the mission statement, the vision statements are more for in-house use,

as we further discuss ways in which to bring the vision into reality. That doesn’t mean that in five years all will be accomplished, but goals to begin to bring into reality. Frank Taylor, long time TCC Teacher of Couperville, Washington, led the group through this process, then Sandy, Pam, Dan and I finalized them prior to the Collegeville conference. I wish to express my deep appreciation for the time, insight and service to the community by all those who participated.

The other important announcement is that a T’ai Chi Chih International Foundation has been formed: 1.) To support conferences; 2.) For conference scholarships; 3.) For teacher accreditation scholarships; 3.) To support international travel when conducting intensives and teacher accreditations. We had the generous guidance of retired CPA Linda K. Jones, who had her practice in northern New Jersey and hopes to obtain her teacher accreditation. We have applied for a non-profit status in the state of New Jersey, although we were told that this may take up to 18 months. You will be kept informed once this has been approved. It is my hope that we will begin to apply for grants and hope teachers who are experienced will come forward to offer their service. Our treasurer is Dorene Kraus and donations may be sent to her at: T’ai Chi Chih International Foundation, PO Box 517, Midland Park, NJ 07432.

Sandy also presented two new programs that she will communicate through this issue of *The Vital Force*.

I continue to be grateful for teachers who attended an amazing conference. For the teachers who so fully participated by presenting topics of great interest and deep quality to further the teaching and spiritual experiences of all present. The Minnesota teachers were truly encircled in *Chi* as they exquisitely shaped the schedule by inviting a variety of individuals during our days and evenings together. My thanks to *The Vital Force* for creating this issue so that those unable to attend may catch some of the joy and *Chi* that all shared on the campus of St. John’s University.



Left: I traveled from home, by plane, to the Land of 10,000 Lakes and Lots and Lots of Trees. Right: First day of conference, the *Chi* began to flow and weave together in new patterns.

## Two New Programs Announced

By SANDY McALISTER, HAYWARD, CALIFORNIA

The purpose of the **Mentoring Program** is to provide an experienced teacher to work with newly accredited teachers. The mentor will guide them and share their experience, knowledge and resources. One mentor will have no more than eight new teachers, and the commitment will be for six months. They will assist new teachers in their transition from student to teacher and support their continued T'ai Chi Chih journey. How wonderful for new teachers to experience being part of a community of teachers who work together and support each other.

Our first two mentors, April Leffler and Stacey Moore, are working with teachers from the May accreditation. They feel the program has been helpful to the new teachers in setting up classes, answering questions about situations that have come up during their teaching, and encouraging them to continue their daily practice and stay connected with their fellow classmates. If you are an experienced teacher and would like to support new teachers as they take on this new role, consider becoming a mentor by contacting me.

The other new program is the **Continuing Education Program**. Over the years there have been many discussions about teachers being recertified periodically. Justin was against this mainly on the grounds of the added expense, and he also believed in the integrity or *teh* of the teachers, that they would take it upon themselves to come to TCC events and keep their form fresh and accurate.

Lately several teachers have mentioned that their employers are requesting proof that they are keeping up their TCC teaching skills. Thus the Continuing Education Program was developed. Teachers who attend an intensive will receive a certificate with 27 hours of continuing education noted. The first three days of a TCC accreditation course is mainly working with TCC movements so a teacher who attends any or all of the first three days will receive continuing education hours. The *Seijaku* accreditation course will also be included in the program. At this time these are the only events that will be part of the program.

It is not mandatory for any teacher to attend any of the above courses or think they have to be recertified. The program was put in place to answer the needs of teachers who need to demonstrate their continued learning for their employment. These two new programs support teachers at the beginning of their journey and as they continue teaching. It makes me feel our TCC community is healthy and thriving. Thank you to those who worked on mentoring guidelines.



*Hexagons – the geometry of my weaving now in the church windows. Synchronicity.*

## Grounding In The Soles Of The Feet (TCC “Kindergarten”?)

By DANIEL PIENCIAK, HOWELL, NEW JERSEY

As I think back on my long journey with T'ai Chi Chih, I remember how I gradually discovered what it means, and how it feels, to “ground” in the soles of the feet during TCC. At this last conference, one of the two teachings that I chose for the break-out circles was grounding in the forward and backward weight shift – and in beginning and ending those movements.

For beginning, I use the words “Sink, Shift, Hands, Heel” (or “S,S,H,H”). To begin a forward movement, I first sink a bit letting both knees give, then shift the weight into the right leg/onto the right foot, then place hands in starting position, and lastly extend the foot forward with the heel touching down with very little weight on it.

For closing, I use, “Stand, Step in, Sink, Settle into the Soles of the feet” (or “S,S,S,S,S”). As I end a movement, the weight is fully on the back leg/foot. As the hands finish their last movement, I rise slightly straightening the weighted leg, let the front foot step in, bringing it back next to the other foot, and then sink, letting both knees give, having a feeling of sitting, or squatting slightly, and I mentally bring my awareness to the energy settling downward into the soles of the feet.

Granted, there is more flow rather than individual sequential steps to each beginning and ending, but the above steps used habitually can help develop muscle/movement memory, increasing one’s sense of balance and confidence. As a result, the feet remain flat during the greater part of each weight shift, with a mere release of the heel or toes respectively, without any feeling of muscularly lifting these at all. The foot stays utterly relaxed.

It can also be helpful to imagine three points of equal weight distribution under the feet: one centered under each heel and two at the front of the foot behind the toes. When the weight arrives forward, it is equally distributed among these three points and so also when the weight arrives on the back foot.

I believe this palpable grounding to be a key part of TCC, and of Justin Stone’s TCC principle to “focus on the soles of the feet.” For some readers, these words might seem like kindergarten basics. But having a specific way to feel and focus on the feet can change one’s practice in a big way for the better.

## One Perspective

By DEB BERTELSEN, MAPLEWOOD, MINNESOTA

As a co-chair I ponder how to best approach the task of planning an annual conference that brings our T'ai Chi Chih community together. I am in the presence of many whose years of experience in attending and planning conferences far exceed my own. There are a thousand details. What can I lend to the process? How can I best support my senior co-chair, my local community and that of the greater TCC community?

My inner search provides me with two answers. **The first answer**

**is on an individual level:** for me to operate from inner sincerity – *teh*. I do this because it is who I am, and it is critically important for me to give back. I received so much during my journey to become a teacher. I was welcomed into the local community by warm hearts, open arms and loving spirits. And I received invaluable guidance from many around the country as I participated in workshops, retreats, conferences, mission statements and more. **The second answer speaks to the partnership with my co-chair.** She is my teacher and friend, and we are on this journey together. In our discussions we agree to always work from the heart with integrity and to stay grounded. It becomes our mantra – before every phone conversation, during every meeting and in every communication sent to others.

We set an intention for attendees to experience both personal and professional growth. We want people to walk away feeling the time spent was worthwhile and the information gained helpful to them and their stu-



dents. Feedback from previous conferences was extremely helpful. We knew what was working, what wasn't so popular, whom people wanted to hear from and what people wanted more of. So along with our team members we began to plan.

“Serenity In the Midst of Activity” – the voice and intent of *Sei-jaku* – was one I was not intimately familiar with ... but learned quickly. We heard “keep it simple,” “don't get too fancy,” “we've done that before,” “that won't work because,” “we should do this because,” “who's decision is this,” “I'll help,” “I can't be there.” We had challenges – with people, agreements not kept, communications, venue changes and in planning committee members, speakers, scheduling. We had challenges on personal levels within our planning group – with health issues, family and work schedules, the death of loved ones. There were many unexpected bumps in the road. Hearts got bruised, egos wounded, tears spilled. But we continued to work from our hearts with integrity, and we stayed grounded.

**So where is the joy in all of this? The conference unfolded as it was meant to. It was joyful, energizing, professional, substantive, spiritual.**

**But the greater joy comes from** the unexpected gifts one sees with 20/20 hindsight. I experienced personal and professional growth on many levels by having been part of it. I learned from my co-chair, the planning team, speakers, our guide, trainers and attendees. My lessons are directly from those who truly practice:

- Setting aside ego, letting go of self.
- *Teh*: inner sincerity and working from the heart.
- Unconditional love and support.
- Staying grounded.
- Being present and living in the moment.
- *Prajna*: there is that within you which knows.
- Words of wisdom: trust, let go, all will unfold as it is meant to be, be well, remember who you are, remember the intentions, wishing you Peace and all Good.
- The TCC vision and mission statements.
- Being “Encircled in *Chi*.”

I found great wisdom, kindred spirits and enlightened souls among you. Some know who you are. For others, please know that our paths crossed so that I might learn from you. There is beauty, grace, laughter, joy, and love in our community. For those who attended, my heartfelt thanks and deepest gratitude for all that you gave simply by your presence.

## Always Grateful

By JUDY GEORGE, ROSEVILLE, MINNESOTA

No matter what is going on in our lives, there is always room for a grateful spirit. In planning this conference I have learned many things. I will share a few.

Setting an intention, then grounding and holding this intention – for a long period of time with love and integrity through out the ups and downs of life with two families (my own and my T'ai Chi Chih family) – I've learned to let go and trust at a much deeper level. I continue to learn to agree to disagree, to be open to all options no matter what ... always remembering to treat others the way I would like to be treated – with love and respect while listening with an open mind and heart. I have grown close to several people that will be life long friends. **And the best part? Trusting it would be all worth it, and it was.**

*I am grateful for all (and you know who you are) the people who helped put this conference together – especially Deb Bertelsen.*

A special thank you for the support to Kim Grant, Lisa Otero and Steve Thompson for getting the information about the conference out to the greater TCC communities via the Web for the first time. Thank you to our guide (Antonia) and our trainers (Pam, Sandy and Dan). Thank you to the entire Minnesota community. Thank you to all who attended.

# Close & Hold? Or Close & Relax?

By LISA M. OTERO, OXNARD, CALIFORNIA

I would like to continue a conversation started by trainer, Daniel Pienciak, at the conference, regarding how we stand and hold our bodies between movements. This issue has been on my mind for a few years now, and I haven't been sure how and when to raise it. **I have no wish to incite division in the community, but the division in practice already exists.** I believe we should have an honest and open discussion about it.

The complete T'ai Chi Chih practice consists of 19 movements and one pose. (In the TCC Textbook Introduction, Justin refers to the entire TCC practice as a "form" and also refers to the separate movements as "forms.") We conclude each form by bending the knees (really bending them, not just softening them). We hold our arms loosely next to the torso with elbows softly bent, and wrists gently flexed, and with hands next to our hips (palms facing the ground). I have always known this position as "the close." In the textbook, Justin alternately refers to it as the "closing position" or "closing posture" and the "rest position." It is not designated as a formal pose. There is only one "pose" in TCC: Cosmic Consciousness Pose.



*At the Seijaku class, my answer to this question was "Marks and Movement."*

**At the conference, it was apparent that** some teachers stay in this concluding position, with knees bent and wrists flexed, from the end of one form to the start of the next, while other teachers hold the close for a few breaths and then assume a relaxed stance with both feet on the ground and knees unlocked for a few breaths before starting the next movement.

### **Is this a difference that makes a difference?**

This is the question that Dan raised to conference attendees. He shared his experience that, while practicing with Justin over the years, Justin used to straighten his legs and stand with knees and wrists completely relaxed between movements. He stated that over the last several years he, like many other teachers, had started holding and staying in the "rest position"

between movements, but that when reminded that Justin had not done this, he took some time to reflect on the difference it might make in his practice. Dan shared with us that he found that standing in a relaxed position between the close of one movement and the start of the next had given him renewed energy and joy in his practice. He encouraged all of us to try it.

**My experience is, yes,** it makes an important difference. When I close each form I feel grounded. When I stand in a relaxed stance after each close, I retain that grounded feeling, and I feel the energy flowing through my entire body. It is during this break that I experience my body completely relaxed and at ease. For me, this peaceful energy flow is the gift of TCC. I do not feel this when I hold the close. Although I have very strong legs and relatively healthy knees, holding the close and this keeping the knees bent for the entire practice makes my knees sore. I have many students who are not as strong as I am; for some, it is a challenge to bend the knees at all. Holding a squat position for a full 45-minute practice is tiring and causes tension and anxiety.

In my experience practicing with Justin over the years, he would often say, "we come to a graceful conclusion," as he assumed the closing position for each form. He would remain in this position for a few breaths and then he would straighten his legs and stand in a relaxed manner for a few breaths before bending his knees and assuming the appropriate position to begin the next form. (And he fully relaxed, for an even longer period between the movements when practicing *Seijaku*.)

I will consider this article successful if everyone who reads it takes time to consult Justin's Photo Textbook and his YouTube videos and DVDs – and considers the question in his or her own practice and teaching. I also encourage those who practiced with Justin on a regular basis to share their experience on this matter.

## New Beginnings

By MARY WICHMANN, ROCHERT, MINNESOTA

I walk early this morning.

The strong southeast wind often holds me in motion.

And when it subsided I almost fall forward.

Thoughts go to T'ai Chi Chih and that heavy air analogy we repeat to students.

"Resistance followed by complete softness."

"Holding on instead of letting go."

After completing 2 miles I cross to the other side and begin home.

That breeze supports me, encourages me, almost blowing my arms into rocking motion.

I love new things, including new beginnings.

Don't wait for New Year's or next birthday.

New beginnings start with a new attitude, the start of the week, the first day of a month, or like today a new season. Fall into whatever you've been resisting.

## Breathing In The Spaces

By NANCY JO BLEIER, SITKA, ALASKA

At the T'ai Chi Chih conference there was a question in my mind, and it was asked out loud when I was not present: **“Why are the Albuquerque TCC members stopping completely between movements by coming up at the knees and dropping the arms?”** It looked disjointed with lots of fidgeting to me. Since the Portland conference, I had tried “coming up” from knees but kept the arms in a graceful conclusion pose. Sandy McAlister wrote clearly “Even in Pauses” (*The Vital Force*, (VF), May 2013, p. 7) about grounding and “coming into stillness ... with our awareness fully in the soles of our feet.” In the August *Vital Force*, Tina Wells (p. 17) writes more about “The Importance of Pausing Between Movements.”

It was amazing all the buzz going on at Saturday lunch about the “Albuquerque resting position”; why should we, who says it is right, etc. It was hard to digest my lunch and still “digest” or listen to all that others were saying. **What convinced me to try what I am calling “breathing in the spaces” was when Caroline Guillot stood up and showed how she did it.** She was so graceful and visual. I just tuned out the audio. When we came to the last Saturday community practice, I was standing next to my buddy, Linda Williams. With every movement I tried the “new” resting or breathing in the spaces. My lower back felt calmness. My arms felt lighter. I fidgeted once realizing my left shoulder needed to unlock. I did feel I was breathing, relaxing and grounding in a way I never had in my TCC practice. When we finished I turned to Linda. We both had the same reaction – laughing in joy and amazement.

Now that I am back home I am finding renewed energy, joyfulness and commitment to my TCC practice. I find I need to sink deeper with my knees before letting go or coming up. I am finding that softly dropping my arms or allowing them to drop with ease helps me breathe more and focus on the soles of my feet. Sometimes I forget as I'm not focused/in the present.

**For me going to the conference is really a renewal time and of changing habit energies.** All I can say is: Try “breathing in the spaces” and you may be “encircled in *Chi*”.

## Preference Or Principle?

By HANNAH HEDRICK, MOUNTAIN VIEW, HAWAII

What moved me most strongly from the conference is related to two *Vital Force* articles I wrote (in 2009 and 2013), as well as frequent articles since 2007 by teacher accreditors and teachers, which emphasized **the importance of being grounded and/or remaining in a gentle, stress-free pause/rest position.**

*In reviewing more than a decade of issues for comments about the “pause” or “rest” position, I found no references to the pronounced sinking and pressing down and then standing and adjusting the body that I observed at the 2012 conference and that became a topic of discussion at the 2013 conference.*

I found only two references (none from Justin) that refer to what appears to be coming out of rest position and assuming a relaxed upright or “adjusting” stance before beginning the other side or the next movement:

1.) “Truth and Consequences, Quotes from other Participants” (*Vital Force*, May 2007, page 9, no name): “One of the greatest gifts of T'ai Chi Chih is the “graceful conclusion.” I use it to adjust my body before I go on to the next movement.”

2.) Amy Tysinski, *Vital Force*, February 2010, page 8, a write up of what Carmen Brocklehurst taught at a TCC retreat and a comment on the Tuesday morning teachers' practice with Justin, “Pulling Taffy Variation #1, Anchor”: “Some people think by holding the resting pose for a long time, it grounds more. *This is not true* [emphasis in original]... In the Tuesday morning teachers' practice with Justin, in between each movement and in between each side, the resting pose is held for roughly a count of five. Then practitioners stand up momentarily, then sink down for the other side or next movement. Try it; it's liberating.”



*After six days, I left the Land of 10,000 Lakes and Lots and Lots of Trees and returned home to citrus, bright flowers and the ocean.*

I could not find any text from Justin that presents this “standing up” as a principle related to grounding in TCC. The May 2007 *Vital Force* includes a familiar quote from Justin: “The sinking down is the essence of T’ai Chi Chih.” I did not find any reference to “rising up” as a principle.

However, as mentioned above, numerous articles from teachers and teacher accreditors reflect the principles of being grounded that I have learned in other energy balancing practices and in my work on my own postural alignment (which begins and ends with being grounded, whether standing, sitting or lying down). In fact, I teach the importance of being grounded and aligned in workshops across the country.

Stephen Thompson is among the teachers who emphasized holding the stillness of the rest position: “The foundation of all TCC moves is this posture of stillness. For the body to move in the TCC way it must begin each move from a state of profound stillness and it must end every movement with a return to that stillness... Hold the posture.” (*Vital Force*, May 2008, page 9).

The August 2012 *Vital Force* contains the most recent article related to “staying longer in the rest position” in “The Importance of Pausing Between Movements,” by Tina Wells, in response to Sandy McCalister’s request for comments on her “Even in Pause” article (*Vital Force*, May 2013). Tina’s class concluded that remaining in the pause position facilitates feeling grounded and remaining in the present moment.

**I ask our TCC leadership to address this issue** before new TCC educational materials are being prepared. I have no problem with emphatically pressing down, rising up and adjusting being presented as an option. But regardless of the experiences of the relatively few teachers who practiced with Justin toward the end of his active years, I would find it challenging to present TCC as a *universal* energy-balancing practice if we add anything that is not conclusively supported in his educational materials.

*Editor’s Note: Hannah hopes that practitioners read this as it was intended: to promote peace. She recognizes that Justin rose between movements but assumes that in his own practice, he remained relaxed and grounded.*



*A different understanding of Chi came home with me.*

## Shifting Sands

By RON RICHARDSON, TUPELO, MISSISSIPPI

While on a Florida beach this past summer, I had an opportunity to do a T’ai Chi Chih practice. Of course, it was not easy with the sand shifting under my feet. It was late in the evening and not many people were on the beach. I soon found my balance in the shifting sand and enjoyed the sunset practice.

During the TCC conference in August, I was reminded of my experience on the beach. Daniel Pienciak was one of the leaders of small groups helping attendees with particular movements. **Daniel’s task was to lead us in looking at and experiencing a different way of being at rest.** Several people had mentioned to me earlier that this way of coming to a rest was not comfortable for them. Instead of keeping the hands in the usual restful position, they were hung to the side. In some cases, the feet shifted as if to help the body to be even more relaxed.

Someone spoke up, “So, we are changing the way Justin Stone did the restful position.” Those who had adapted to this different way of coming to the restful position came forward with their defenses. The challenge was to see the refinement as not being significant. Those rebelling countered, “Oh, yes it is.”

During this same session, I found myself moving closer to Daniel so I could hear him better since I have a hearing deficit. A much younger person came in front of me and, without saying a word, pushed me back into the circle. I was interfering with this person’s vision and hearing.

Changes occur. We live in a world of shifting sands. We can either adapt or live in denial. **Accept limitations; stay in the circle.** Try something different as long as it does not change basic principles. Be open to diversity. Be flexible. Focus on the soles of the feet even in shifting sands.

## GKP Wrap-Up: The 30-Minute Conference Presentation

BY KIM GRANT, CEO,  
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

In case you hadn't noticed, Good Karma Publishing has been plowing full steam ahead over the last 12 months:

**Serene Nature: Music for T'ai Chi Chih** and **Music for T'ai Chi Chih Practice & Restful Listening** are now available on CD for \$11.95 (each) *retail*. Of course teachers always get their multi-product discounts.

Due to the increased demand of Justin's **Solo instructional DVD**, GKP invested in creating "chapter breaks," for ease of moving through his instruction in a non-sequential way.

**A special conference deal – bundling all of Justin's in-print instructional materials** – was announced for new teachers and first-time conference participants. The premise is to help ensure that all incoming teachers have the opportunity to be introduced to the full spectrum of Justin's teachings. This generous package will continue to be offered at conference, as a good will gesture and incentive to attend. **For \$100 (i.e. a 56% discount on retail)** the package included one each of his DVDs (definitive, solo, KNME); one each of his *Photo Text, Spiritual Odyssey, Gateway to Eastern Philosophy & Religion, Climb The Joyous Mountain, Abandon Hope, Zen Meditation*; and one each of his CDs (Justin Stone Speaks, Spiritual Stories of the East, Serene Nature, Music for T'ai Chi Chih).

Digital product launches continue apace. **These e-books are available on all platforms:** *Climb The Joyous Mountain, Gateway to Eastern Philosophy & Religion*, and *Spiritual Odyssey*.

**Drum roll please:** At the time of this writing, after many calls for action, GKP has created e-books for *Heightened Awareness* and *Meditation for Healing*.

**And another drum roll please:** *Heightened Awareness* (second edition; \$17.95) and *Meditation for Healing* (second edition; \$21.95) will be available as a print-on-demand books within a week of this publication reaching your doorstep.

By popular demand, **video clips** of Justin demonstrating all movements are now embedded in the **T'ai Chi Chih app** (downloadable on iTunes and GooglePlay for \$9.99) and have been posted on Good Karma's YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/tccabq](http://www.youtube.com/tccabq) – under the heading "historical footage."

**Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, how can GKP make itself more relevant to your lives and your teaching lives?**

We did a bit of brainstorming, and I look forward to hearing from any and all of you out there – teachers and students alike. Maybe Justin Stone's GKP materials are not relevant and that just has to be ok ... I remember a repeated conversation that Justin and I used to have. I would say, "I'm only one person; there's only so much I can do." And he would quickly smile and respond, "That's right." So I continue *trying* to do the work without attachment to outcome.

And I thankfully stumble upon perfectly-timed, prescient messages. In recently reading *20th Century Psalms*, Justin jumped off the page as I sat in self-judgement of the effects of my work at GKP and the continued downturn in sales: "Don't be unkind to yourself ... being hard on oneself, in a sense, is ego-aggrandizement." Okay, Justin, thank you for the reminder. *His words, through GKP's publications,*



*do not get more relevant than helping to unfold one moment at a time.*

And with that, might I suggest you pick up one of his books and open to any page and see what lessons his words might impart.

### GKP Partners With The Vital Force On Cards

The Justin Stone **Quotation Cards**, which almost 1,500 worldwide Facebook "friends" have been seeing (and sharing) for a few months, are inspirational and spreading electronically. If there is any interest in printing these as postcards, please let me know.

GKP/VF acted out of faith that they would be of interest and paid for them to be produced. If anyone would like to sponsor a part of this project, please

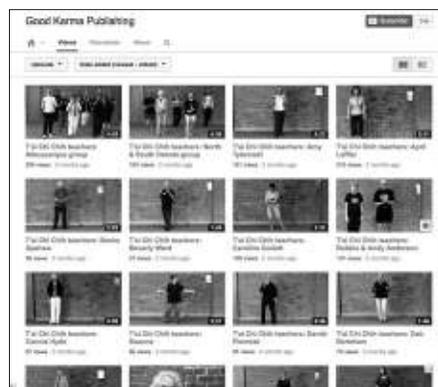
know that each costs \$17 to create and reaches an average of 2000 people. That's less than a penny per impression! **Please help us continue sharing one per week – with a tax deductible donation to The Vital Force** for \$17, \$34 (2 cards), \$85 (5 cards), \$117 (10 cards), \$442 (for 6 months of cards) or whatever seems reasonable to you.

At the conference we **videotaped 40% of attendees demonstrating and sharing the impact of T'ai Chi Chih on their lives.**

### GKP Partners With The Vital Force On Videos

Both the Good Karma Publishing and *The Vital Force* Boards of Directors voted to direct funds towards producing short videos

at the conference for T'ai Chi Chih teachers who wanted to participate. Neither entity had/has the funds, but it was done in the spirit of "build it and they will come" – meaning, **let's try everything we can to grow TCC.** (There was no cost to teachers... although if anyone would like to donate, *The Vital*



Force gratefully accepts tax-deductible contributions to offset those expenses.)

**Taken as a whole**, they paint a remarkable portrait of what TCC is, how it has benefited many individuals, and shows the diverse range of our community. No one was scripted; we just suggested speaking from the heart for a few minutes (and practicing at home if so desired). Like snowflakes and fingerprints, each is different and yet unified. Not surprising...

**The idea was to build and unify our community, to increase the impact of accredited instructors talking about and demonstrating T'ai Chi Chih** on YouTube, the world's second largest search engine. This was partly done as a counterbalance to non-accredited people having videos up. But more affirmatively, it was done to show the world Justin's TCC, our TCC. And it was done to give teachers a place to send prospective clients when they are pitching a class.

Catherine, our video woman who has more than a passing awareness of TCC and had also spent some time with Justin, was a fountain of encouragement and calm to those being filmed (if the unanimous reports are to be believed). She mentioned being in awe of the inner sincerity that shone through when teachers began moving. Not surprising...

Not knowing whether there would be two or ten interested teachers, the demand ended up being overwhelming – but we were able to accommodate everyone. Was everything perfect? No. Was it a great start? Yes. Did we learn a lot? Yes. Was it worth it? We believe so. Did it build community? Yes. Does it provide lots of teachable moments, if we so desire? Yes.

**Within the first two months of the videos having been posted, there have been over 2700 views.** Not surprising... In total there were 37 videos made; a total of 46 teachers participated.

*Justin shared this refrain often during our many years together, but I believe it is a worthy metaphorical and metaphysical message for all:*

**Good Karma will support you if you devote yourself full time to it.**

## Vital Force Wrap-Up: The 30-Minute Conference Presentation

By Kim Grant, Editor,  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

**T**he *Vital Force* has also pushed forward in the last 12 months:

### Practical Stuff

- **The Vital Force** now accepts credit cards over the phone; call 505-797-7300.
- You are now able to renew for **two years** (@ \$75US, \$95CA) and **three years** (\$110US, \$140CA).
- Financials were posted; *The Vital Force* balance sheet is \$1300 in the black, thanks to generous donations that fill the gap.
- Subscriptions continue to decline, but we are looking at more effective renewal methods.
- There is no printed directory; please visit [www.taichichih.org/the-teachers](http://www.taichichih.org/the-teachers) for an up-to-date list.
- The Justin Stone Mary 2012 “memoirial issue” is available online for \$12 per copy.
- All back issues are available online (free or paid) @ [www.taichichih.org/vital-force](http://www.taichichih.org/vital-force).

### [www.taichichih.org](http://www.taichichih.org)

This website – a fountain of TCC information for the world to see – was put under the umbrella of *The Vital Force* before my time. It is completely supported by donations. Thank you.

Please visit the blog and add your voice @ [www.taichichih.org/category/blog](http://www.taichichih.org/category/blog). Please visit the teacher resource page @ [www.taichichih.org/teacher-resources](http://www.taichichih.org/teacher-resources) and send ideas for additions.

### Vital Force Improvements

We did a bit of brainstorming about how *The Vital Force* can better serve

the community. Don't be shy about letting me know what you like, and don't.

### Scholarships

When I began in 2007, there were funds earmarked for scholarships to attend various events. The earmarked scholarship funds have now all been used. In fact *The Vital Force* distributed \$650 more than it had collected. That said, accepting funds for dispersal to individuals requires a lot of IRS paperwork, and strict adherence to rules and regulations. Which is beyond the capacity of this volunteer “organization.” That is why *The Vital Force* pulled out of that business.

### New Teachers

After some discussion *The Vital Force* was happy to learn that a one-year subscription would continue to be included for every newly accredited teacher. We think this is an easy way to unite the teachers, and we were happy for the support of the community.

### Charitable Giving Over The Last 12 Months

Your donations have been put to effective use and continue to make an impact:

- We printed 10,000 TCC postcards (free to all teaches) – thanks to one gift.
- We created a dedicated webpage for each conference – thanks to one gift.
- We archived past issues thanks to two major gifts and *many* smaller others.
- We increased our social media presence thanks to one major gift.

### Year-End Giving Opportunities

- Consider doubling the reach of your gift if your company offers matching funds.
- Consider a donation of \$500, which covers 6 months of maintenance for the website which reaches 50,000 people.

## Overflowing Gratitude

BY LAURIE JACOBI, MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

“There is within you that which knows.” Those words by Justin keep coming back to me since hearing April Leffler’s marvelous talk on *prajna* at the conference.

That was a message I so needed to hear, and I have been embracing, examining, allowing and testing ever since. It is going to be how I open my classes this term. April’s exercise was not only fun, it was uncomfortably revealing. It magnified some of my habit energies and was a great teaching tool. Thankfully, Marie Dotts’ wonderful presentation on “Working With Your Habit Energies” was a welcome comfort as it gave me some tools to recognize, allow, soften into and (hopefully) dissolve some of those *vashanas*.

Amy Tyksinski’s remarkable TEDx video – and even more remarkable behind the scenes story of how it all unfolded – was a riveting example of the power of the *Chi*. It was so impressive and inspiring. Great job, Amy.

Professor Kimiko Gunji’s tea ceremony reminded me of so many of the principles of T’ai Chi Chih. It demonstrated so beautifully the importance of spare, circular, slow movements that are carried out with great focus and intention. It taught me again about the deep respect and sincerity of the practice and of all those who participate in it. I am so grateful for the gift of her presence at the conference.

My feet will never feel the same after Judy George’s “Happy Feet” presentation. It makes me want to further explore how the soles of the feet affect my body and my TCC practice.

An enormous thank you to Judy George and Deb Bertelsen for their leadership of our conference committee. Their spirits, integrity, generosity and unflagging energy kept our small planning group motivated and productive over those many, many months. They did a beautiful job. And thank you to so many others who did presentations, worked behind the scenes, hosted us, fed us and traveled from far and wide to attend. I am also very grateful to those who were a great

comfort to me during a very difficult personal time.

Thank you, Kim, for your untiring dedication to TCC and the very professional job you do keeping *The Vital Force* and social media going. You are awesome.

**I feel renewed in my intentions to teach and spread this gift of TCC.**

## Gratitude

BY ROBERT MONTES DE OCA, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

Gratitude for the presentation of the conference at St. John’s University in Collegeville, Minnesota. The local T’ai Chi Chih community came together in grand form. **The unity and the effort** resulted in a conference with much gratitude for the:

- Efforts and accomplishments of the Minnesota TCC teachers;
- Tea ceremony and beautiful teacups given to each teacher;
- Recording of TCC movements by individual teachers and groups for uploading to YouTube;
- TedX presentation by Amy Tyksinski and her high school students on “The Growth of Certainty”;
- *Prajna* (inner wisdom) presentation by April Leffler;
- Current trends in social media offered by Kim Grant on Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, Facebook and Flickr;
- Quotations and excerpts from the works of Justin Stone, Originator of TCC.



Left: When the individual changes, the web also changes. Center: Things move apart, seemingly, as they rearrange themselves. Right: New patterns lead to new maps.



# Encircled In Chi

By DONNA McELHOSE, WILDWOOD, ILLINOIS

Arriving at St. John's University, the quiet peacefulness welcomed us with rolling green hills, lake and forests, away from the bustling crowds of towns and cities. Ah, a place for contemplation, focus, inner growth. And then the joy of friends, hugs, pictures taken and rooms-assigned, unpacking and a first practice.

A huge gymnasium awaited for new teachers, experienced ones, teachers with no conference experience, those in attendance since the beginning of time. We gathered for the first practice, which took us to the quiet within, sinking into joy and essence.

There was a wonderful feeling of flowing together; **it was the best first practice I have ever experienced.** Some may wonder why I would comment on this. Generally when we come together for workshops or intensives, the first practice is a bit off in its flow. We all have our favorite pace, a bit slower or faster than others we do not practice with often. This year teachers flowed beautifully together.

The Thursday night tea ceremony led by Professor Emeritus Kimiko Gunji began the very spiritual weekend. **Chado, the Way of Tea, has the four principles:** harmony, respect, purity and tranquility. These principles also are inner principles of TCC. Thus the stage was set.

When I first started attending conferences, Justin Stone would have an after-lunch spiritual presentation on wonderful topics. When he became unable to attend conferences, the in-depth spiritual presentations seemed to fall away. This year we had several great teacher presentations: "Joyful Feet" by Judy George was a delightful way to get us grounded. The many Enso time sessions were filled with wonderful ideas and helpful hints – from an "Accreditation Framework" and "Practical Tools for Teaching" to "Props in Teaching" and "Seated TCC." And all of this during the day on Friday.

By Friday evening, I couldn't imagine what could top the previous night's tea ceremony, so I almost didn't go to the evening program. But I had promised to meet someone afterwards, so what a wonderful surprise it was to experience the **Dances of Universal Peace**, led by two gentlemen. The sense of belonging to the whole

of creation through the songs and dances was yet another spiritual ending to the first full day.

Saturday continued with great practices and offerings: Amy Tyksinski gave us insight to the filming of her TEDx presentation. If you did not attend the teacher conference, you can at least visit <http://tinyurl.com/tcctedx>. (Also, please "like" this video to help boost the number of hits so that it reaches the national TEDx website, allowing it to exponentially reach more people). What a great way to support TCC.

Saturday's Enso time offered more great topics – from "Working with our Habit Energies" and "TCC and Social Media" to "Experience Disability and TCC."

Another special aspect was that Kim Grant gave several talks on the work she does for us: as the editor of *The Vital Force*, the publisher at Good Karma Publishing, and the maven of social media (so we may connect TCC to web users around the globe). But one very special thing she did was to arrange for 20 teachers to make a short TCC video to be put on the Web. **The 20 slots quickly turned into 45 slots.** Forty-five teachers ended up participating in videos. Forty-five. She opened up more than twice time planned for us to do that. How do we give thanks for this opportunity? Maybe by writing articles for *The Vital Force*, offering GKP materials to our students and sharing TCC on the Web?

Walking outside between meeting sites opened up something missing for sometime at past conferences. Strolling from the sleeping rooms to the dining and meeting halls offered the opportunity to talk to teachers we may never have met and gotten to know. There were some great surprises, and these encounters were some of the most touching.

One morning we were to meet outside for practice. There was some confusion, but I think **the confusion offered a new opportunity** – one of smaller groups practicing together. One was inside, one around a fountain and one by the housing area. Everyone had a nice practice. It

was different, but maybe we could continue to do smaller practices on one morning of the conference. With fewer teachers in the circle, it's a more intimate time.

The rededication ceremony brought us back to the joy of teaching "Joy Thru Movement." The raffle and silent auction was wild. You'll have to come next year for the follow-up...



## Thought Poem

By MARY WICHMANN, ROCHERT, MINNESOTA

Conference for me was about renewal.  
 I was among old friends, some of whom I hadn't seen in a while.  
 Teachers I was accredited with in 2001.  
 Teachers I share heart hugs with from Albuquerque.  
 I enjoyed moving with my teacher, Christeen McLain,  
 and her teacher, Jean Katus.  
 I felt encouraged and refreshed by words from Antonia, Sandy, Pam and Dan.  
 And honestly, the workshops (*Joyful Feet*, *TEDx* and *Prajna*) were each worth  
 the price of admission.

## Self Disappears, Love Appears

BY JUDY HENDRICKS, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

The T'ai Chi Chih conference was wonderful, and I always seem to learn things in surprising ways. The group practices flowed so well, and there was also powerful grounding during those practices. I enjoyed knowing the love and caring coming from this wonderful practice. It also came to me that this practice is so immense, far-reaching and all encompassing that it goes way beyond the individuals practicing it. It is a divine gift that encompasses all things. **No one person owns it; it is for all.** Swami Prajnanpad said, "Unity only exists in the heart. It is a feeling: Love. And in love the notion of self disappears; only the other remains."

## It's The People

BY MONICA CAMPBELL, MINNETONKA, MINNESOTA

I was not in a good place before the conference and almost didn't go, but that little voice I love to listen to said, "Just go." So I did. Everyone let me be and didn't ask too many questions, and I am grateful for that.

This was my first conference, and I really didn't know what to expect. I knew the local community was working extremely hard to make this conference the best ever. **One thing I knew for sure:** I would be surrounded by great people. Sure enough, each and every person I encountered was a blessing.

There were so many spectacular breakout sessions, with great people sharing their passions. The highlight for me was a complete turnaround towards *Seijaku*. Past experiences left me feeling crazed and not good in my body. *Seijaku* had been doing the opposite of what attracted me to practicing T'ai Chi Chih and becoming a teacher: I needed a place to feel re-centered, to access calm energy. With Bill's help I completely turned that around in a few moments. How did it feel? Like my feet were 20 feet deep into this beautiful earth and that I was 20 feet taller. Magnificent. The grounding aspect awakened me to additional senses; calming went to a deeper level. Since I can't get enough, I'm going to Tupelo for an upcoming workshop. This sharing of a new way of thinking about *Seijaku* was a gift because of the great people involved.

It was incredible to meet the larger TCC community. TCC is truly gift to humankind.



## The Right Place

BY DIANA BAHN, NEW YORK, NEW YORK

When I arrived at the conference I was in one of those "dream like" states Justin conjures to help us get into the right place to do our practice. I was so glad to literally be on the road again taking time for me to leave my home, family, students and friends and re-establish my relationship with TCC and the greater TCC community. It had been a while since I had done that – mostly because my ego had surreptitiously asserted itself once again and I felt "needed" back at home where I had a lot of "problems" (many of them not really my own). So I left my husband and friend who is fighting ovarian cancer, my lonely cat Cyrus (who had lost his brother the year before), my sisters and their families who seem to need me especially when I am in a high functioning state. And I got on the plane.

**The first night** we had a formal Japanese tea ceremony with a beautiful, serene Japanese woman who went through her practiced ritual to serve over 100 participants the most amazing green tea. It put my TCC practice to shame. I was bowled over by her timeless and a purposeless flow that seemed to create bountiful tea from the empty air and empty cups. Clearly she was a magician. What struck me on a personal level was that I am a practiced coffee drinker, and none of my early morning antics has anything special to show the world. Then, I realized that my husband, who had had three very challenging years, had recently begun to brew his own green tea each morning. His co-worker brings him the good stuff from China, and Peter boils his own water and then prepares the tea in a beautiful, white and green tea set my uncle had given us. Peter then sits on the sofa and goes into what could only be described by me as his meditation time (a rare thing in his world of midtown Manhattan finance).

**The next pearl** came when we looked at the amazing labyrinth one of our TCC teachers had created for us. A huge sea turtle beckoned us to enter and walk within its mysterious *tan t'ien* that floated a beautiful *yin yang* symbol. Now, I don't like to feel that the universe is playing jokes on me, but I couldn't help but reflect that my husband's only real exercise since he has been ill is to go to his health club pool when empty and "play sea turtle." For him, this means just being in the pool and feeling the joy of moving in the water like the wondrous sea turtle.

I thought, "This conference is for Peter," and I decided to give him the handmade teacup each of us were gifted that night. Incidents like those happened throughout the conference and **led me to understand yet again that everything is continuous** and all my "problems" (and other people's "problems") are just [WHAT] so when we hold onto them and bundle them as "problems." Mindfully making and drinking tea can help. Practicing TCC daily at home, at the conference, wherever, whenever, can certainly help. We are always in the right place if we can just let go a little bit more and stay in the right place.

## Minnesota Magic

BY LINDA BRAGA, CASTRO VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

**D**ear Judy, Deb and the entire Minnesota team: You all are to be commended for a superb presentation of the 28th annual conference. It exceeded all expectations.

First, I want to say that no plans would have materialized like they did without the underpinnings of each teacher's personal TCC practice. Thank you to each team member for going deeper into the form individually so that all of us could watch the conference manifest in real time with a banquet of lovingly-planned events.

### Some highlights included:

- Antonia's address and effortless leadership and support to all;
- Teacher trainers who give so unselfishly all year;
- Hospitality and friendship that was extended to each person;
- An intimate and beautiful tea ceremony to welcome and unify us;
- Judy George's soft voice at the beginning of each day, reminding us of why we are there, setting the intention with whisperings to let go, ground, be at peace and oneness;
- The flow of the schedule from early morning practice through meals and the evening program;
- The simplicity of the program booklet and listings;
- Excellent breakout sessions and attention to personal growth;
- The focus on *Seijaku* for everyone and receiving the gift from Justin once again;
- The TEDx and *Prajna* presentations by Amy Tyksinski and April Leffler, respectively;
- Social media presentation by Kim Grant, who explained every nuance with patience and support.

There was so much more: the labyrinth, vendor products, universal dances, other presentations and spontaneous sharing. I met many wonderful new teachers and renewed acquaintances with former colleagues, creating a sense of continuity and deepening of TCC.

In so many indescribable ways, **we all have changed over the years, become softer, become more inner-directed, more patient, more joyful, more whole.** The work of the *vital force* is beautiful to witness.

Attending the conference is not just about learning teaching techniques or seeing old friends. It is about connecting back to your original intent in learning TCC, of connecting energetically with Justin and with being in community with all who come. No matter how much planning is done, the final success of the conference happens in some magical way by those who show up, open up and feel the "joy thru movement."

My TCC classes have begun again. The students want to know what happened at the conference. I tell them that, "TCC is alive and well. In every place it is being taught and practiced. You are part of this success when you practice each day."

## Joy & Gratitude

BY BRUCE EISENMENGER, ARDEN HILLS, MINNESOTA

**I**n "Untitled Thought" in *Spiritual Odyssey*, Justin said, "A day of profound gratitude. When we are grateful we are joyous. Gratitude does not mean rejoicing because some desire has been satisfied." For me gratitude is a state of being, an awakening. **This first T'ai Chi Chih conference** was a time of immense joy, gratitude and awakening. To have it occur almost in my backyard – and to have it hosted by the Minnesota and Twin Cities community (my new TCC family) – brought great joy. And for it to occur in Collegeville, a symbolic place from my past, gave it a deeper meaning. And to see friends I met at my accreditation in May, 2013, as well as new teachers like myself, made it feel like a reunion.

To experience being a part of the larger TCC international community, and **to meet people whom I had met through their writings and teaching, was a confirmation of this spiritual practice that we all share.** And to share my wonderful teachers, Judy and Ron, with all of the conference attendees brought me great joy and pride. Each day when I practice and teach I now see all of you. I feel your presence through our shared *Chi*. I feel profound joy and gratitude in being a member of the TCC teacher community.

## Prajna, Seijaku & Connection

BY JULIE SCHUSTER, MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

**T**his was my first experience of being on a planning committee with my fellow Minnesota teachers – and **my first conference.** I knew from those meetings that it was going to be a *dynamite* experience. Still, it exceeded my hopes. What I gained most was a deeper understanding of *prajna*, a new experience of *Seijaku* and a greater connection to the dynamic individuals that comprise our community.

One of the most valuable skills was learning to ground more in *Seijaku*. I had always had difficulty with headaches and too much energy, but I very much wanted to share this with my students. In the process of gaining my certification, I was finally able to ground effectively. It has been a joy now to share this with my students. Because they are older adults in their eighties and nineties, they often deal with low energy. Many of them are now experiencing the flow of energy for the first time in their lives.

A special thanks, too, to Pam Towne, for helping me gain **continuing education units through ACE** (American Council on Exercise). In the past, ACE would approve the course only if an accredited Yoga teacher taught it. This is definitely a step forward for ACE-certified Personal Trainers and Group Fitness Instructors. T'ai Chi Chih continues to gain recognition as a very accessible and beneficial mind-body practice. Hurray.

## Let Go Of What You Cling To; Embrace What You Resist

BY APRIL LEFFLER, PROSPECT PARK, PENNSYLVANIA

I received this message (the article's title) two years ago while facing a difficult time. After years of incessant ringing and significant hearing loss in one ear, I suddenly was experiencing hearing loss in the other ear. The doctor's prognosis was not promising, and I went into fear, sadness and despair.

"Let go of what you cling to", I heard from within. "Embrace what you resist." While I didn't particularly like this directive, it certainly got my attention and subdued my pity party. The first part of this message was easy to identify. Of course, I clung to my hearing. So, that night, I prayed, cried and ultimately surrendered to "what is." (Miraculously the following morning, I woke up to returned hearing in the second ear.)

"Embrace what you resist." Believe it or not, what popped into my head was Facebook. Facebook? I had to admit that I had vehemently been resisting Facebook and all other forms of social media – mostly because I was totally intimidated by it.

Previously, my brother had eagerly showed me Twitter and even typed in T'ai Chi Chih. My response? "Yeah, yeah, that's sweet." A friend had excitedly showed me Pinterest. My response? "Pinterest schminterest." When invited, I certainly had no interest in joining In-Your-Face-Book. Needless to say, I harbored a major social media attitude.

**"Embrace what you resist."** The day after receiving this message, I joined Facebook – and I now thoroughly enjoy it.

At this year's conference, I sat in on Kim Grant's presentation of TCC and social media, and heard, **"Even if you don't access these platforms, your students do. So it is useful for every teacher to be aware of them."**

Suddenly (or not so suddenly), the light bulbs went on and I *felt* and saw the value and potential of spreading TCC exponentially via social media. Now I finally understood why Kim had been asking for years to send photos of people doing TCC. (Oh, you want softness and continuity? Why didn't you say so?)

The social media presentation really got me thinking. What can I do to spread the word? For starters, I've been sending photos to Kim for publication. I continue sharing *Vital Force* copies with my students and encourage them to subscribe. I remind students that there is an app for the TCC photo text to help them remember the movements. And, now that my thinking has been expanded, however, I'm asking the students to choose from the website and a buffet of social media options to write a paper on anything they've learned about TCC. How cool is that?



*Is it the edge, or is it the path?  
Where's the center?*

## Dancing With The Chi

BY CAROL MOCKOVAK, MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

In planning the conference, we realized that the **Dances of Universal Peace** would be a wonderful addition. The dances, and walking meditations that precede them, are spiritual practice in motion. Drawing on sacred phrases, scripture and poetry of many spiritual traditions, the dances blend chant, live music and movement into a living experience of unity, peace and integration. No experience is required; participation rather than presentation is the focus.

On Friday night, we had two dance leaders with 38 years of experience between them. Francis Gurtz began by teaching a dance based on a Rumi poem. Everyone formed concentric circles, opened their hearts, and learned the chant and simple movements. *"No more turning back; be reckless. Show your love to everyone."* As we chanted the last line, we turned in place with our arms raised, sending love to all.

People immediately understood what the dances are about and joined in sharing the *Chi*. And what could better fit people who teach T'ai Chi Chih; it's all about connecting on a deep level. For 90 minutes the music, chanting and movement created deep resonance in our bodies, minds, hearts. At the end, some teachers were reluctant to stop.

## My First Year

BY BEVERLY A. WARD, HENDERSONVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

What a memorable year this has been, highlighted by accreditation and conference. Four years ago Stan Corwin got me started with T'ai Chi Chih. After repeat classes with Stan and Vicki Schroeder, I was hooked and began a daily practice. I attended a retreat and intensive, both uplifting and rewarding. After the intensive, there was no question about pursuing accreditation.

The training and accreditation clarified my practice, and the conference gave me a sense of depth and confidence in my teaching. I came home rejuvenated and empowered. It was exciting to make new friendships among this gifted group so dedicated to maintaining and spreading our joyful practice.

Group practices were filled with energy and joy. The dedication was especially memorable and moving. It was all well worth driving 2050 miles, and I'm looking forward to next year already.

## Opening Remarks Open Windows

By LINDA WATSON, WESTMINSTER, CALIFORNIA

A meaningful, beautiful package was woven through two events: Antonia's opening conference remarks and Pam's opening *Seijaku* accreditation remarks.

Antonia spoke about **Impermanence – that it is a part of the evolution of life as we discover who and what we are.** She likened it to the *yin-yang* process that occurs as we practice T'ai Chi Chih. She asked us recall when we first began to practice. A picture came: a soft green room at a church where I had attended Sunday service for the first time the previous day. I was 52 years old, back in school, in a rocky marriage and my artwork had dried up. Antonia said she knew that wherever we were then, and wherever we are now, TCC had made it possible. Yes, such strides made in those years.

And what was also clear? **Evolution picked up when I began *Seijaku* a year ago.** Just a few weeks into *Seijaku*, I began to say no to lifelong activities. Just because I am good at something doesn't mean I have to do it forever. I said yes to moving through resistance and found my way back to writing, studio work and taking my two practices deeper.

Pam asked us to dream big with the question, "How does *Seijaku* want to newly express through me?" I woke up the next morning with the words "Marks and Movement." While I don't know the specifics, it seems that "marks" refers to my writing and artwork, while "movement" is my TCC/*Seijaku* practice.

**CONFERENCE 2014  
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It's impossible to know where TCC is moving us, or how our evolutionary process will unfold. But Justin writes in *Spiritual Odyssey* that "once we accept the idea of Impermanence, it is not too difficult to experience Who and What we are." (page 52)

## Healing With Seijaku

By SHERRY CORSON, BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA

On the mend from a shattered hip, I made my conference reservation while still using a walker. I was determined to go and was able to attend using a cane. I even dared to pre-register for the introductory *Seijaku* class, not realizing it would be the conference highlight. I was accredited in *Seijaku* in 2002 and thought a different perspective was in order since I hadn't been using it much. Bill Moore's class was awesome. I now feel like something is missing if I don't add some *Seijaku* to my TCC practice. Bill taught from the heart and brought to me the realization that *Seijaku* does not have to be something separate but can be at the core of our daily practice.

After returning home and resting, I realized how much stronger my leg had become and how much stronger a connection with everything in my life. Could the evolutionary impulse of the life force be urging teachers to teach *Seijaku*? Justin wrote, "... **emptiness is overflowing with a life that has an insane urge to manifest. And Manifestation is Love.**" Wow, we could all use some more love.

## Seijaku & You: A Long Time Ago

By JUDY GEORGE, ROSEVILLE, MINNESOTA

When I was accredited in *Seijaku* in 1999, we were told we could only teach it to advanced students. So I kind of let it go, practicing a little while trying to understand this holding fast and letting go stuff. I understood it to be more pushing with the upper body.

I was blessed to attend the post-conference intro class with Bill Moore, since it is challenging to learn from the notes of another. We need to practice it, share it, teach it with other teachers to learn our own verbiage, and experience the feeling of "holding fast" (keeping our feet flat on the floor longer) and "letting go" (having some tension in the upper body), moving through the *tan t'ien* moving downward in the legs and feet.

Bill invited us to start out with a primary intention. Just notice, he'd say. The best teacher is the practice, allowing whatever flows from the scared place in you. It can be customized, reflective and carefree. Reflect on not bad or good, just better. I love that.

We've heard this before: *Seijaku* informs our T'ai Chi Chih practice. I have been teaching *Seijaku* since I returned home (to longtime students), and I can see their TCC practice improve. The purpose of *Seijaku* is to further deepen and enhance the flow of the *Chi*. I am experiencing *Seijaku* differently this time and I am just going to go with the flow, trusting the *Chi*. Let go and flow. Our approach – whether in softness or using the holding fast-letting go principle – is simply to be aware, very present and feel in the moment. There is no judgment or expectation. We are met with whatever we need in the moment of life. We trust and are guided accordingly.

Release and return to *Seijaku*. Thank you, Bill, for continuing to share the gift Justin left behind. As for me, when the student is ready they will hear what you are saying. As Justin said, "The ocean is waves, the essence is water."

## Practical Trade Tools

“If you charge a fee for T'ai Chi Chih instruction, you are running a small business,” says Lisa Otero, an accredited teacher from Oxnard, California. In her presentation, entitled, “Practice Trade Tools for Teachers,” Lisa gave an overview of legal and professional issues of which small business owners should be aware of, including:

- Obtaining insurance coverage;
- Drafting and using liability waivers;
- Tax and financial record-keeping, whether you are self-employed, an employee of a facility, and/or an independent contractor; and
- Ensuring that the T'ai Chi Chih trademark and copyright are properly utilized and respected. Respecting other people's original work; and
- Publicity and advertising; respecting your students' privacy.

In conclusion, Lisa suggested that, in all things, TCC teachers should be guided by *teh* (inner sincerely). “Assume the best; prepare for the worst. Act with *teh*. Be upfront; don't cut corners; take responsibility; give people the info they need so that they can take appropriate responsibility.”

A copy of the handout Lisa prepared is found at [http://www.taichichih.org/conference\\_2013](http://www.taichichih.org/conference_2013).



Top: It all starts to weave together.  
HOME. Bottom: Journal complete.  
Next one waiting in the wings.

## Joyful Feet: A Follow Up

By JUDY GEORGE, ROSEVILLE, MINNESOTA

Questions:

- Are you “rolling with the sole” of your foot with a ball?
- Do you feel more grounded before your TCC practice?
- Have you shared this with your students?
- What are your experience/feeling?
- Has it affected your weight shift or alignment?

**Editor's Note:** In an effort to unite the teachers who could not attend the conference with those who did, *The Vital Force* is pleased to present the following: whole cloth presentations (or excerpts, summaries or riffs) of many talks given at the 2013 T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Conference at St. John's College in Minnesota. All are available @ [http://www.taichichih.org/conference\\_2013](http://www.taichichih.org/conference_2013).

For those of you with the handout (available on [http://www.taichichih.org/conference\\_2013](http://www.taichichih.org/conference_2013)), there is so much more to share in caring for your feet. If you have questions please feel free to email me through [www.taichichih.org/the-teachers](http://www.taichichih.org/the-teachers).

Remember the conference theme on Friday? I am grounded. Peace and blessings to your soles.

## Prajna

By APRIL LEFFLER, PROSPECT PARK, PENNSYLVANIA

As Justin said, “There is within you **That Which Knows** and that is your teacher. That is the true teacher.”

What more can be added to this very profound statement? When one thinks about it ... and truly, truly feels it, there's not much else to say. So, when preparing to talk about *Prajna* at this year's teachers conference, I briefly toyed with the idea of simply quoting Justin and spending the remainder of the time looking at the audience, or filing my nails or whistling. I decided against that when the conference planning committee asked for a general outline from me.

I essentially asked *Prajna* to let me know what I'd be saying at the conference and wrote something down for the committee (while silently praying that they wouldn't hold me to it.)

When standing before the audience, I was very clear that I wanted to state a disclaimer. I explained that I was simply sharing my ideas, beliefs and understanding from my experiences. Period. I had nothing to prove or disprove and had no interest in convincing anybody of anything. Most importantly, I asked the audience to throw out anything I might say that does not resonant as truth for themselves.

I shared a story that ...

To read the rest of this invigorating and heartfelt presentation, go to [http://www.taichichih.org/conference\\_2013](http://www.taichichih.org/conference_2013).

## TCC Accreditation Journey Framework

BY DEB BERTELSEN, MAPLEWOOD, MINNESOTA

We believe the experiences that a candidate has when exposed to a variety of learning opportunities and instructors are invaluable. And therefore ensure greater success for the candidate and the Tai Chi Chih community as a whole. In an effort to ensure continued support to potential teacher candidates, we want to provide clarity on a recommended journey or path toward accreditation.

The first step is to go [www.taichichih.org](http://www.taichichih.org), click on “teacher” and go to the “accreditation” tab. Read the information provided under “Overview” for a sense of the teacher training course, costs and registration. Also, under the “Guidelines” section, great care has been taken to specifically outline the expectations of teacher candidates. It is critical that candidates read and fully understand the importance of the information contained in both of these sections.

The ideal framework and foundation of experiences for each candidate consists of opportunities that include, but may not be limited to:

- Attendance at various workshops or retreats lead by the TCC Guide and teacher trainers.
- Attendance at a TCC intensive. (Although attendance at an intensive is not required, it is strongly recommended and encouraged as a precursor to the teacher training experience. A great deal of information, preparation and personal growth are benefits received as a result of participation.)
- Familiarity with Justin Stone’s writings and recordings...

To learn all the suggested salient points, go to [http://www.taichichih.org/conference\\_2013](http://www.taichichih.org/conference_2013).

## Working With Our Habit Energies

BY MARIE DOTTS, LOVELAND, COLORADO

I am sharing this topic with you because as long as I can remember it has been a call in my heart. This call is what led me to the practice of T'ai Chi Chih. It has also led me to the Diamond Approach which is an inner work path grounded in psychology and self-awareness and dedicated to the discovery and development of Essence. Its originator is A. H. Almaas. I am deeply grateful for both of these practices in my life and grateful to share with you some of what I have learned so far on this journey.

I would like to begin by sharing what Justin has to say about habit energies. From *Spiritual Odyssey*, “Out of Bondage,” Justin writes:

### TEDx: The Growth of Certainty

BY AMY TYKSINSKI, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,  
there is a field. I'll meet you there.

When the soul lies down in that grass,  
the world is too full to talk about.  
Ideas, language, even the phrase “each other” doesn't make any sense.  
— RUMI

An innocuous email from a technology colleague at my school arrived in my inbox last October. The email informed us of the upcoming TEDxABQ Symposium on “Innovations in Education” and that they were accepting proposals. For those of you who don't know, TED stands for Technology, Entertainment and Design, and their motto is “Ideas Worth Spreading” These ideas are presented through talks that are typically 9-18 minutes long.

For some reason, I dashed off a proposal and didn't think anything of it. A month or so later, I received a “We're sorry, but your proposal is rejected” email. Five minutes later I received a second email from a different person saying “Yes. We would like you to be a part of our symposium.” So commenced the wild ride that would unfold over the next seven weeks.

Our first TEDx meeting found 17 speakers gathered around a long table. Immediately cutting to the heart of the matter, the main TEDxABQ organizer said: “Tell us what your talk is about in one sentence.”

Without further warning, they proceeded to ...

To read the rest of this inspiring presentation, go to [http://www.taichichih.org/conference\\_2013](http://www.taichichih.org/conference_2013).

“We develop habit energies during our lifetime (*Vashanas* in Sanskrit), and these not only motivate us in our lives but also make Karma for the future. We believe we are perfectly free in our decisions and our movements, but, if we study ourselves closely and impartially we will find that we follow certain patterns, sometimes even asking ourselves why we made a particular mistake all over again...”

Justin says the aim is to go back the way we came. This is because when we are born we ARE our True Nature, our Essence but without awareness. Essence is that within us that is unconditioned. We can only know Essence by being Essence. It is not our thoughts, our emotions, or our body. It is the very substance of our existence. It is the flow of our aliveness. This flow can manifest in our lives as aspects or qualities like the green of compassion, the white of will, the black of peace, the red of strength, and the yellow of joy. The amazing richness of Essence is ...

To read the rest of this sincere and insightful presentation, go to [http://www.taichichih.org/conference\\_2013](http://www.taichichih.org/conference_2013).

## Seijaku Intro Course

With Bill Moore, August 2013,  
after the Minnesota Conference

HOSTED AND WRITTEN BY LORRAINE LEPINE, PRAIRIE VILLAGE, KANSAS

This was the first year an introductory *Seijaku* course was offered after the conference, and it was a huge success with 18 participants. Everyone came with a beginner's mind to explore *Seijaku* principles and practices – part of Justin's "Maximum Chi Program." Some came to learn *Seijaku*, others came to deepen it, to better prepare for the *Seijaku* teacher accreditation and/or to acquire or refine their teaching skills by experiencing an intro course.

Bill Moore emphasized incorporating *Seijaku* principles into our regular T'ai Chi Chih practice, allowing us to discover the profound benefits and potential that *Seijaku* can have on our TCC practice. He constantly referenced how **the *Seijaku* principle is reflected in, and informs, TCC** – so that the two feel like a unity.

He emphasized grounding and suggested it can be helpful to focus the awareness primarily down from the center through the legs and feet, and allow that focus to be reflected in the upper body, especially in the wrists, looking for the *Seijaku* principle to be applied with attention and thoroughness, and to realize and appreciate the general and specific effects.

He taught how practical and enjoyable applying the *Seijaku* principle is: sensing, feeling the *Chi* flowing down, noticing what is happening in the now, and listening from the heart and trusting *prajna* so that each can customize the resistance so it feels just right.

Bill did an excellent job at demystifying *Seijaku*, which he sees as a part of TCC. He wants it to be an integral part

of teaching in the TCC Community. I think that Bill successfully conveyed the idea that *Seijaku* can be playful and effortless, just as TCC is. Through the regular application of the *Seijaku* principle, we gained a deeper appreciation of the grounding and balance that can be realized in body, mind and spirit. After participating in Bill's class I finally feel the joy of *Seijaku* and can easily ground deeply. I am ready to incorporate *Seijaku* in my TCC practice and teaching.

**Below are some excerpts from participants:**

"Wanted to let you know what a wonderful time I had. Bill is a phenomenal teacher. His humor and profound insights as well as his wealth of personal experience with *Seijaku* made the class both fun and deep." – DOTTY HOEPNER, IL



SEIJAKU INTRO COURSE



SEIJAKU TEACHER ACCREDITATION

Top: Daniel Pienciak, Colleen Flanagan, Ray Sharp, Pam Towne  
Bottom: Charlotte Livingston, Judy Chancey, Julie Schuster, Linda Watson

"The class has enhanced my TCC practice, and I enjoy doing both *Seijaku* and TCC. At the Sunday evening get-together, I was blown away by the dedication and sincerity all the participants have about their practice. **Two delightful surprises were learning 'Fast Track' and the 'Joy-Joy' dance.** One of the most valuable things I got from the class was to focus my attention on my feet instead of on my mistakes." – JEFF HOEPNER, IL

"Hearing that *Seijaku* is an internal and external modality allowed me to let go of thinking, and to trust the feeling. The *Seijaku* principle comes from deep inside. The time went quickly, much faster than I had anticipated it would. My next step will be to incorporate *Seijaku* into my TCC practice and see and feel what unfolds. This was totally worthwhile." – DEB BERTELSEN, MN

"It was great to experience Bill's class with other accredited *Seijaku* teachers, non-accredited teachers and advanced students. Kudos for arranging this introductory class alongside the post-conference accreditation class. It finally looks like Justin's gift of *Seijaku* is being accepted by our teaching community. One third of conference participants remained for the two *Seijaku* courses. **A tipping point?** Time will tell." – STEPHEN THOMPSON, MS

## Spreading The Word, Post-Conference

BY DONNA McELHOSE, WILDWOOD, ILLINOIS

After a suggestion by Sandy McAlister, I offered an “After Conference Workshop” for area teachers not able to attend the conference for one reason or another. For me, it was an opportunity to get my notes in order – to be able to present them coherently to other teachers. Through this process, I have gained a deeper appreciation for attending the conference. Reviewing everything in order to share was a wonderful way of anchoring the conference events.

Copying handouts, retyping notes from the Enso time, notes from presentations, comments about movements from the breakout sessions lead by the teacher trainers, and writing as much as I could on all information Kim Grant offered.

This workshop was broken into sections corresponding to the flow of the conference. We covered Amy Tyksinski’s lectures and then viewed her TEDx presentation on YouTube. One teacher brought sets of balls so we could work with Judy George’s “Joyful Feet,” which brought lots of comments. We discussed the accreditation journey framework that Deb Bertelsen presented. We added our thoughts to the importance of intensives in preparing candidates for training. This is something our small community of teachers felt in unison on. We worked with the *prajna* talk that April Leffler offered.

We shared the teacher trainer’s comments: Sandy’s on seated T’ai Chi Chih, Dan’s on the props (which lead to more discussion and ideas) and Pam’s on Pulling Taffy, Variation #1, Anchor. Also, we practiced individual movements that the attending teachers had wanted everyone to review. We discussed the various subjects Kim Grant covered: *The Vital Force*, Enso time on all the myriad social media channels and Good Karma Publishing. And of course we talked about how 45 teachers made TCC presentation videos that are now posted on YouTube.

The teachers certainly enjoyed catching up on conference news and were inspired to attend future conferences. And I enjoyed reviewing something where I had experienced a deep spiritual feeling.

## Establishing TCC Connections Around The World

BY HANNAH HEDRICK, MOUNTAIN VIEW, HAWAII

In her 2010 “Conference Reflections” (*The Vital Force*, November 2010, page 6), Antonia reported on dreams presented by conference attendees responding to her Sunday discussion about the future of T’ai Chi Chih. The first in the list of nine was “To establish T’ai Chi Chih centers in various parts of the country.”

Three years later, moved by similar comments during the discussion session hosted by Antonia, Sandy, Pam and Dan, I have taken the first steps in organizing “T’ai Chi Chih Connections” in locations where I teach taught classes or workshops.

During the next three months, I will be offering organizational workshops or coordinating communications with potential “T’ai Chi Chi Connection” members in the Chicago area, Vigo County (Indiana), Matsu Valley (Alaska) and Big Island/Upper Puna (Hawaii). I am asking teachers and students in those areas to identify a contact person and a “center,” even if it is just in someone’s home homes.

If you live in any of these areas and are interested in building community as part of the future of TCC, please contact me through [www.taichichih.org/the-teachers](http://www.taichichih.org/the-teachers).



## The Lighter Side

I love Push Pull to put me back to sleep since my husband’s snoring wakes me up. If pushing doesn’t work, I pull him out of bed. – SHARON WOOD

As my student ended a telephone conversation with a friend, she said, “And with a Joyous Breath, I turn out the Light at the Top of the Head, the Light at the Temple, and the light on my night stand.” – MICHELE DAPELO

When asked what her favorite T’ai Chi Chih move was, one of my college students said, “Daughter Comes Down the Mountain.” – SHARON SIRKIS

Overheard during a break at the recent teacher accreditation in Aston, Pennsylvania: “It’s time for around the bladder.” – APRIL LEFFLER

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pg. 19: April Leffler; pg. 22: Lorraine  
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## Community Calendar

For the most up-to-date info and event PDFs, visit [www.taichichih.org](http://www.taichichih.org)

**DATE / WHAT & WHO / WHERE / CONTACT**

**Nov 6-8/ Seijaku Workshop w/ Dan** / Tupelo, MS / Ron Richardson / 662-844-6473

**Nov 8-10 / TCC Workshop w/ Dan** / Tupelo, MS / Ron Richardson / 662-844-6473

**Nov 11-16 / Teacher Accred w/ Pam** / Albuquerque, NM / Judy Hendricks / 505-897-3810

**2014**

**Jan 14-19 / TCC Intensive w/ Pam** / Mantoloking, NJ / Siobhan Hutchinson / 609-752-1048

**Feb 25-28 / TCC Retreat w/ Antonia** / Santa Barbara, CA / Pam Towne / 442-222-8332

**Mar 4-7 / TCC Retreat w/ Antonia** / Santa Barbara, CA / Pam Towne / 442-222-8332

**May 18-24 / Teacher Accred w/ Dan** / Philadelphia, PA / April Leffler / 610-565-4947

**Jul 24-27 / TCC Teacher Conference** / near Newark, NJ / [www.taichichih.org](http://www.taichichih.org)

**- MORE WORKSHOPS & RETREATS -**

*Postings here are open to all teachers offering events wholly devoted to TCC.*

**April 3-6 / TCC Retreat w/ Carmen Brocklehurst**  
Albuquerque, NM / Judy Hendricks / 505-897-3810

**May 17 / Seijaku Workshop w/ Carmen Brocklehurst**  
Albuquerque, NM / Judy Hendricks / 505-897-3810

**Sept 11-14 / TCC Retreat w/ Carmen Brocklehurst**  
Albuquerque, NM / Judy Hendricks / 505-897-3810

**Nov 16 / TCC Workshop w/ Sharon Sirkis**  
Marriottsville, MD / Sharon Sirkis / 410-730-1986



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**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone / Email \_\_\_\_\_

**TEACHER ACCREDITATION INFORMATION**

Date you were accredited as a T'ai Chi Chih teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Date you were accredited as a Seijaku teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the teacher who taught you T'ai Chi Chih \_\_\_\_\_

Name of "second signature" \_\_\_\_\_

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