

*The  
Vital Force*

*Journal of the  
Tai Chi Chih<sup>®</sup> Community*

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"Tai Chi Chih is a Service to Humanity. It is a Form of Love." — Justin Stone, Originator

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Cover: First morning of the New Jersey Intensive at Villa Maria on March 3, 2006. Photo by Dan Pienciak.



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By Justin Stone

## Approach to T'ai Chi Chih

By Justin Stone



As I have mentioned before, the attitude with which one approaches TCC lessons is all important. With faith in the results—and there have certainly been enough proofs of it—one only has to perfect his and her performance and to practice faithfully every day. A student does not learn to do it correctly in order to please the teacher. The yin and yang is all important for the effect it has. The softness is absolutely necessary, and correct performance requires the understanding that TCC is not an exercise but a form that is done primarily below the waist. The “effort of no effort” must be understood. As a student progresses in the lessons, he or she begins to sink into the essence of TCC, which is not like any exercise. Leave the muscles out of it.

It is not emphasized to beginning students, but TCC has a very strong spiritual influence. It is not a treatment for a specific illness. The circulation and balancing of the all-important Life Force, the Chi, influences the metabolism and helps the whole system. Overweight people who practice regularly tend to easily drop pounds. Many letters I receive speak of this weight loss. Eat moderately and practice regularly, a simple formula. When one teacher, who had had brain surgery, began practicing immediately after the operation, it resulted in her soon going back to work, a result that her doctors said they had never seen before. She certainly had the right attitude. TCC is definitely a different way of life. Most of those who write me say, “T'ai Chi Chih has changed my life.” When someone asks me if this is good for some ailment, I answer, “Why don't you try it and find out?”



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## Good Karma News

### You Asked For It: Seijaku on DVD

**G**ood Karma Publishing is pleased to announce the arrival of a Seijaku DVD on June 15th. Until recently, sales of the Seijaku video have not warranted the high expenses involved with transferring this instructional aid to DVD (especially to the excellent standards we have come to expect because of the TCC DVD). But because of a nice resurgence in interest in Seijaku (thanks to Pam and others), and because you've asked nicely, and because DVD players are a fixture in 86 percent of American households, we figured it was time. The price will remain the same as the video — \$59.95 (with no discount to teachers). If you have purchased a Seijaku video within the last year, GKP will gladly offer you the new DVD (made from the same filming as the video) for "cost." Just give us a jingle. — Kim Grant

### You Didn't Know to Ask for It ...

**B**ut it will be ready and waiting for you at the Conference. What is it? Gateways to Eastern Philosophy and Religion. Back in February 1990, Carmen

Brocklehurst had the foresight to convince Justin Stone to come to Albuquerque from California to give a series of four lectures on Oriental Philosophy. (Doug Shilson videotaped them.) These videos have long been available for rent, for a very nominal fee, from GKP. Over the last year or so, though, Albuquerque teachers Amy Tyksinski and Ann Rutherford have tirelessly transcribed, annotated, and edited Justin's lectures for print. In doing so, they have worked very closely with Justin.

GKP is pleased to announce that the book will be available for the first time at the Conference. — Kim Grant

## GATEWAY TO Eastern Philosophy Religion



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## Gateway to Eastern Philosophy and Religion

Reviewed by Ann Rutherford

### GATEWAY TO Eastern Philosophy Religion



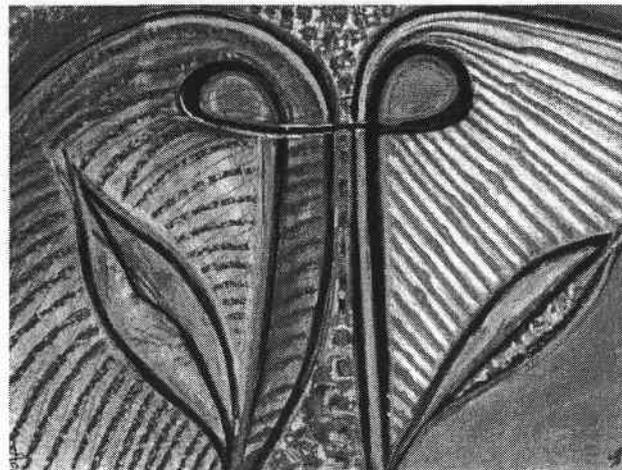
Justin often says, "I tell everyone that they should practice T'ai Chi Chih, but I don't recommend meditation for everyone." Whereas everyone benefits from the circulation and balancing of the Life Force, not everyone came into this life seeking Truth.

When Justin prepared and delivered the Oriental Philosophy Lecture Series to his audience in Albuquerque in 1990, he knew the material would only appeal to serious seekers. Many people would consider his insights, such as, "The world of matter is only another form of consciousness," as mere babble, or speculation on things that can never be proven. But for those who are discovering who and what they are through T'ai Chi Chih practice and/or meditation, his summary of Eastern Philosophy is a reflection of their own quest. When I rented

the video lecture series from Good Karma Publishing many years ago, I immediately became overwhelmed by the depth of the knowledge densely compacted into the lectures. I knew I could not possibly aurally digest the thousands of years of Eastern Philosophy which Justin had so painstakingly interpreted and summarized. He seemed to predict this difficulty at the time when he told his audience, "I hope some day someone transcribes this material." We are delighted to announce that finally the lectures have been transcribed. They retain the original flavor of Justin's informal talks, while providing the reader with the advantages of a text. Not only can the reader digest the material at her or his own pace, but s/he can also use it as a framework for deeper study into any of the particular subjects introduced: Indian, Chinese, Tibetan, and Japanese Buddhism; The Six Darshanas of India; Yogic Teachings; Shinto; New Japanese Religions; Poet Monks; and Kashmir Shaivism. Furthermore, the book contains an extensive bibliography, brought from Justin's own library.

Part of Justin's hesitancy in having his lecture series transcribed is his wish not to be remembered as a scholar. Whereas his other books are almost all experiential in nature, this book is an academic endeavor pulling together what he'd mostly studied in books and matching the material with his own experience. But his sharing of his personal experiences and insights on Eastern philosophy and religion is exactly why this book is so fascinating. Taking us on a whirlwind tour through Japan and India, we get a deeper sense of his life's passion: the quest for Truth. Since many of the words he uses are Sanskrit, the classical language of India, the book also includes a substantial glossary.

Justin acknowledges the time and effort it took to create his lecture series when he told his audience, "If someone steals my car or clothes, they can be replaced. If someone took these lecture papers, and the papers from which the came, there'd be no way for me to replace them." The book will be available for sale at the 2006 T'ai Chi Chih Teachers Conference in Minnesota.



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## Interview with Liz Humphrey

## Lessons in What It Means to Be Alive

*Liz Humphrey just had her 33rd 21st birthday. I had to pause to do the math. Even while Liz has survived the shock of a cancer diagnosis and being told she had only months to live, she still has plenty of good humor and high spirits. Liz combined all the treatments and then surprised everyone by going back to work. She's been a part of our T'ai Chi Chih and meditation groups for some years now, and we know she has been through some pretty horrific times and beatific times, too. Doing this interview is her way to share some of her experiences and insights with the rest of the TCC community.*

**Liz:** I'm from Mississippi. I have two sisters and two brothers. They live in the area where the hurricane hit. Here I was having internal storms going on in August when the external storm was happening. My sister so loyal to me. In the last year and a half, she calls me daily. She works hard, she's a single mother, and she has a child who is a single mother. If she's guilty of anything, it's doing too much for too many. She was the one who said I had the strength to get through this.

**VFJ:** I think I would have doubted.

**Liz:** You believe you have the strength, but then you also have to realize again the control or lack of control. And so my argument many times was, if I have this strength within me, and if I'm aware, then why didn't I know what was happening, and why couldn't I do something about it. So I

had to work through that.

**VFJ:** Was there an answer to that question or not?

**Liz:** Yes.

**VFJ:** What was it?

**Liz:** The answer is learning to be still. The answer is within us. The strength is given by a much greater power, whatever you want to call it. There are so many lessons.

**VFJ:** I'm hoping you will share some of these lessons with us.

**Liz:** I was telling my sister that I was really nervous about doing this, because the more I understand, the less there is to say. She said, you'll do fine. Remember that you have miracles to share. She's the one to say what I'm supposed to know about myself.

**VFJ:** It's a gift to have a sister like that—A person like that who knows, who can say things like that, so that you aren't alone feeling this way or that, wondering.

**Liz:** I feel so blessed. Everywhere I've turned, it's been a blessing. My sister, too, it just broke their hearts that this is happening to me. I was never sick, nothing ever wrong with me, I was the oldest sister. When it happened, it was like, they wondered, why you? I was able to understand quickly, that for some reason, it was my journey. That is what life is about—our journey. I didn't die, and the reason is that my work is not done.

**VFJ:** Are you supposed to know what that work is?

**Liz:** You know what? I love that one, too, because there may not be any answers to all of these questions, but

that doesn't mean we stop asking the questions.

**VFJ:** I think that's really accurate, that the questions are an end in themselves.

**Liz:** That even applied at work. After my surgery and treatment, I went back to work, only to find that they'd given my job away. What happened to my job? How come I'm not in my position? What's going on here? I got to the point where I said, I want answers. I deserve answers. And then the answer came. I can ask all the questions I want; it doesn't mean there's going to be any answers, but it doesn't mean don't ask the questions.

**VFJ:** Well, at work, they probably took your position away because they figured you were coming back.

**Liz:** Exactly. Not real complicated. They thought I was dying. And then when I didn't die, well then, I must be coming back disabled. Or I must not have all my senses. And I was working real hard at my senses. I was able to tell them a few things, such as, brain tumors aren't contagious.

**VFJ:** Were they avoiding you because of that?

**Liz:** Yes. I just made too many people nervous.

**VFJ:** That must have hurt.

**Liz:** It hurt, it was shocking. A lot of it had to do with ... there is someone I worked very close with to this day, and would say hello to me with a group of people, and said that she'll

come by to see me, and she hasn't. I realized that what she did, or what happened, or what went on when I wasn't there, and whatever part she had to play in it, she knows, and she has to deal with her heart. Now do I know? No. Does it matter? At this point in my life, no. But there are people fighting for my position perhaps, didn't think I did a good job, who knows? Probably all of the above. We're all human. People are people. That's what was great about going back to work also. Let it be. Then they had to find out that I really had all my brain cells... they were like, "Do you remember...?" I remembered more than they wished I'd remembered.... because I remembered the truth.

**VFJ:** The truth being ...?

**Liz:** ... that the service was going to go under reorganization to begin with, and I was told what my job would evolve into. When this person told me that they had hired somebody else, I reminded her that was what my position would evolve into. She said, no I didn't.

**VFJ:** So rather than just saying, Hey Liz, welcome back, we didn't think you were coming back, but now that you're here, here's your job. They didn't say that.

**Liz:** They couldn't do that and I don't know why. I kept saying, I am an adult, things happen, and life goes on, whether I'm in it or not. You had to do what you needed to do. But no one could tell me that, because they went a little bit too far in assuming that I was going to die. The way I look at it, they accepted what Justin guided me in not accepting. Were you there at the hospital the day Justin was there? Justin was there when the doctor walked in, and the doctor said, we'll do this

and we'll do that. This was after the surgery. You'll need chemo, you'll need radiation, etc., but chances are this tumor will come back and you will not live. He said 18 months was as much as anybody could live. Justin told me that night not to accept it. He told me again about how the doctor said that he himself would live no more than five years with his heart condition.

**VFJ:** So that worked for you?

**Liz:** So much is all in our minds, what we want to accept, what we don't, and what we can accept. Justin had difficulty with me going back to work.

**VFJ:** He said you shouldn't?

**Liz:** He said to retire, and to retire now.

**VFJ:** Why was he so adamant?

**Liz:** Nurses work too hard and I don't need to be doing that. I tried to explain that I wasn't that kind of nurse, that I do different things. The next day when I came back, he started again. I said, Justin, but I'm going to be retiring. Oh, when? he asked. By June. That's not good enough. This was somewhere around mid-March.

**VFJ:** That's very curious.

**Liz:** I'll tell you what, it was so beautiful, April 1<sup>st</sup>, and we were having dinner. I had just gotten the last MRI results, and there was nothing there. Things looked very positive. I went down to end of the table where Justin was sitting and I told him. Justin, the MRI was clear. I'm doing really good. He looked at me, and it was amazing what he said. He said, we'll talk about this again... three years from now. I'm sure I didn't misunderstand him.

When he looked at me, clarity was there. That was the first of April and he hasn't brought it up since. He's talked about asthma ...

**VFJ:** Wow, asthma, because that was the first thing that was alleviated for you because of TCC.

**Liz:** Absolutely. And just Saturday night, I guess they had just taped him for the conference. He told me that he talked about me, but that he didn't mention my name, and asked me if that was okay. And he says to me, are you going to the conference? I said, no Justin, I'm not. Then I asked, Justin, are you going to the conference. No, he said, I'm not going. See, I said, I have what I need in Albuquerque—you and TCC. I figured I was in for a lecture, but he just took my hand. He's such a part of my life.

**VFJ:** Justin loves you.

**Liz:** He feels that I show T'ai Chi Chih. He also may be testing me.

**VFJ:** He's testing us all the time, but you've had already the ultimate test. I mean you've had to look death in the eye and we haven't done that yet.

**Liz:** It's just okay, that's the beauty of it.

**VFJ:** I guess I'm projecting now. I'd say if those people are not treating you as ... even as they treated you before.. they've written you off. Do you really want to spend time with people who misrepresented your existence when you were there, before and after.

**Liz:** Well, when you've been to the mountaintop —

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what's that saying?—where do you go from there? You come back down. [whispering] You come back down. If you're not dead, it means your life on earth is not done. I tell you what, that was a hard part about going to work, too, is for 10 solid months, everything in my life changed, and yet I was so protected. I had family love at home, family love away from home, family love from TCC people, and family love from some people from work. There was so much love. I remember one girl came up to me one day and she said, "I am so glad to meet you. I prayed, and here you are." And I'm thinking, oh, I don't remember her name. She said, you don't know me. I've never met you. I wasn't here when you first came. But you left love for so many people that I prayed that one day I'd get to meet you. I thought oh my God!

VFJ: Hello!

Liz: I'm proof to people that you don't have to buy the package deal if we don't want to. I got a card from Becky Busching that said, Never let the odds keep you from doing what you know in your heart you were meant to do. That has been so strong to me. I didn't buy those statistics. I was able to say, no thank you, I don't accept those. And as Justin would say, only One knows our numbers anyway. So, I've been on lots of journeys in the last year.

VFJ: It was one day to the next that everything changed.

Liz: Yes, everything. Just when you think you have control of everything. Do you remember Ram Dass, how he had a stroke?

VFJ: Yes, his book *Still Here*, after his stroke, and then there was the movie called "Fierce Grace." Did you identify with that?

Liz: Oh, yes, left and right. He said even though the words wouldn't come, the concepts were there. I could identify with that. It was another's soul's story. He said too that his job was not done, and that's why he is still here. And then you have to be careful defining "jobs." As my sister says, just being, and sharing with people, may be the job. I go to the cancer support group at the hospital, both as a nurse and as a participant. I talk with them.

VFJ: They must be very inspired then, that you are a nurse and part of the group.

Liz: I talk to some of the patients, who might say how discouraged they are, how sick they feel. Maybe that's why my hair hasn't grown in on that side, because I show it to everybody. I really have been there, and it's okay, whatever they feel they need to do.

VFJ: I remember way back, you were saying at dinner that you were having these memory lapses and you couldn't figure it out, and I said, well, that's just menopause, Liz, it's happening to me, too. But that wasn't it, it was something else.

Liz: And I went to the doctor, who agreed and wanted to give me hormone replacement therapy. But I also had headaches, and I never had headaches, and I had earaches. I was supposed to catch a plane and I knew that my ears would kill me if I didn't. That's the problem with us nurses—we self-diagnose all the time. I went in and told them I was having earaches

and that I needed some antibiotics. A week goes by, the antibiotics aren't working and it's time for me to take my trip, and I'm having pain like crazy. They decided they'd better do an MRI. That was on a Wednesday and I was supposed to fly out Thursday morning. And that's when they wouldn't let me leave the hospital. You know, Justin talks about the play within the play, but I knew they'd gotten the wrong person for this play. This wasn't my play. Wait a minute, you've got the wrong person here, I'm on my way to Mississippi. My best defense mechanism is denial, and I do it well.

VFJ: Denial is useful. Lord knows where we'd be...

Liz: ...if we had to accept it all at one time. Everybody said I was calm and making decisions. I don't remember. I came out of surgery and couldn't see. I had to wear a patch for so long. It was hard, not being able to read. I felt what was important to me had been taken from me. But I was doing I' ai Chi Chih. The surgery was Monday and I went to rehab on Friday and that's when I first did TCC. They didn't know what to do with me. My vital signs were fine, I wanted to boss them around in the ICU, and so they got me out of there real fast. [laughing]. Then the insurance wouldn't even let me stay in rehab. But it was hard to have an eye patch and be behind of walker and have your family come in and see you all beat up like that.

VFJ: But you didn't hide yourself at all as I recall

Liz: But at first I wanted to. Rick, my husband, said, "Look at the people out there who live daily this way. You

just have to have the patience. This is going to pass."

**VFJ:** All this happening to you really brought out the love in people. You've been doing T'ai Chi Chih, and also meditating for some years now, but also agreed to the mainstream treatments.

**Liz:** Absolutely. It is the whole circle. Some said don't do this, don't take that... but it was all of it—the chemotherapy, the radiation, to the timing of it, to the surgeon, the surgeon's hands, plus the love, the t'ai chi chih, the meditation, the compassion—it's all of it. It taught anyone who wanted to be a part of my life that our lives are connected. What impacts one also impacts others. To me that was one of the things to realize, again this oneness, you really can't separate anything out. If you're able to let go of that ego, we're just all in this together. I personally believe in a soul. I used to believe that we were all these bodies and we were at different levels with our souls. But we're all spirits and we have these bodies that carry these spirits while we're here on earth.

**VFJ:** Were you surprised by your openings of understanding? Was that a gradual thing? There's a certain knowledge about you. It's not about any book learning.

**Liz:** Absolutely, it's a feeling. The words are hard. There's a difference in knowing and experiencing. How it's opened, I don't know. I believe that goes back to my inner strength, the feeling of vulnerability became less.

**VFJ:** We also imagine that we have time, that we are going to live forever, always looking out to the future for things to happen, not really living for

today. So we're not really a person, but a projection of a person in a future that never comes. But you having to face it from one minute to the next might have just jolted you into that Reality that the rest of us find elusive.

**Liz:** Yes, but it's more about accepting, wherever in life. I believe there were times in my life when there were openings, but for whatever reasons—out of fear, maybe—like they say, if you're not ready. I remember a nurse one night after the surgery—I was in pain, and she decided that some of my pain might be anxiety, so instead of giving me more narcotics, they gave me something for anxiety. I remember the nurse coming and sitting and telling me the story of when she was skiing, and basically how she came close to death, and how that changed her life. She'd made an assumption that I was fearing death, and I realized, no, I wasn't fearing death, because there was no death there. I didn't believe I was going to die. I never did believe I was going to die. But everything was so open. There was no life and death; it was just open. The hardest part for me was not that there was death, but there was lack of control. This is supposed to be my play, and this was not the part I wanted to do. But, this is my part, whether I like it or not, and how I accept it. The sensitivity, the openness, I don't know why, but it was just there.

**VFJ:** I remember when the tsunami hit, before your diagnosis, you couldn't stop crying. It was like you had a tsunami of empathy.

**Liz:** Miracles are everywhere, like stars everywhere. Being able to be with Justin, his meditation, listening to him, understanding oneness. It's all the same. We don't have to make

choices. All of that thinking, we don't have to think. It's all within us. So much acknowledgment.

**VFJ:** Well, you've certainly been an inspiration for us all. That's part of your journey, too, to teach us.

**Liz:** We all have our roles (laughing).

**Liz and I were belting out the old McCartney tune after meditation one night. We decided that "Let It Be" is a pretty good mantra for living life.**

*When I find myself in times of trouble  
Mother Mary comes to me  
Speaking words of wisdom  
Let it be.*

*And in my hour of darkness  
She is standing right in front of me  
Speaking words of wisdom  
Let it be.*

*And when the broken-hearted people  
Living in the world agree  
There will be an answer  
Let it be.*

*For though they may be parted  
there is still a chance that they will see  
There will be an answer  
Let it be.*

*And when the night is cloudy  
There is still a light that shines on me  
Shine until tomorrow  
Let it be.*

*I wake up to the sound of music  
Mother Mary comes to me  
Speaking words of wisdom  
Let it be.*

*There will be an  
answer*

*Let it be.*

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## Trainings, Intensives, Workshops, Retreats

# Four TCC Events in Three Months! An Active Year in New Jersey

By Daniel Piencink



*At the time of this writing, the year is not yet half over. Although there is more to come in the second half of 2006, we have already held four major events and we have 15 new TCC teachers. We also have our monthly Saturday gatherings, plus many local teachers have been busy with 2007 conference planning amid all these other activities.*

## The Intensive: March 3-6, 2006

It started at the beginning of January, when we suddenly realized that we needed to get an Intensive organized – and soon. Between Sr. Antonia's and Pam Towne's busy schedules, it became evident that there was only ONE 4-day period available if an Intensive was to precede a spring teacher training. I knew that I would have to cancel another planned program in order to host this event at that time. I was reluctant. But prajna told me to move forward and TRUST! So I said goodbye to the oceanfront location booking for this other event, which was not suitable for a full TCC Intensive, and cancelled it.

Thanks to the creative planning and resourcefulness of Alba Cordasco, and the willing-

ness of Sr. Antonia and her congregation to bend over backwards to accommodate



us, a big miracle happened and we had a great place at which to hold the Intensive.

This place would be the Villa Maria

– a convent and former nursing facility run by the Franciscan Congregation in which Sr. Antonia is a vital member. Our monthly Saturday TCC gatherings have taken place there for years. Sadly, the facility had to close down, was being sold, and would be replaced by luxury condominiums, so we felt extra grateful, and many of us a bit sentimental, about our final gathering there.

Arrival on Thursday evening happened in an ice storm. On arrival, I could barely manage to keep my balance the short distance from the car to the entrance of the Villa. "Stay grounded and trust your feet!" my inner voice kept repeating. Does this sound familiar?

I was relieved that Pam was already safely there. Somehow by about 9pm, everyone was present and accounted for – another miracle considering that several folks were arriving by air. But what a pretty sight lay before us outside our windows the next morning – a fairyland of glittering ice and sugary snow coating everything!



*Pam has a halo and Antonia has an aura. What gives?*

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Just as all who had arrived in those very slippery conditions had to let go and trust, so that same theme emerged in our work during the Intensive. We had a big turnout — 23 students and teachers in attendance (in addition to ourselves), so we were grateful to have both of Pam's great leadership and teaching as well as the wisdom and assistance of Sr. Antonia. Everyone worked to learn to give the feet the weight, trust the feet to hold us, let go, and FLOW from the center, carrying nothing in the upper body.

It was a great gathering of wonderful folks — many of whom came from states all over the US. In the circle of our final TCC practice, everyone shared their own personal journeys of letting go and trusting. It is often in discovering our weaknesses that we find our strengths. In the circle of this Intensive, we were able to hold one another in strength, and trust ourselves through our vulnerabilities.

A TCC Intensive is a beneficial event for everyone — students and teachers alike. Nine of the 13 students who attended this event would go on to the May Teacher Training Course. It was there that the benefits of the Intensive



*Who says there are no men in TCC? Host Dan Pienciak, Tom Viner (ME), Stan Corwin (FL), Bill Walton, and John Valentine (NE).*

really came through and supported them in their efforts and their success in accreditation.

From one Intensive Participant:  
 "When Tom Viner, Anita Vestal, and I were in Lubbock, TX in September 2005, we asked Sr. Antonia what were the steps to accreditation. She told us what books, videos, and audios to get,

but the big thing was to go to an Intensive. So early March found the three of us in New Jersey at the Intensive. And we all thank Antonia for her guidance. The Intensive was just the right preparation for the teacher training in May. We three are now accredited teachers. — Stan Corwin, FL



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## Teacher Renewal Day Ringwood State Park, NJ, May 20, 2006

The pastoral hills and lakes of northern NJ at Ringwood State Park were once again the setting of both the teacher renewal and the teacher training week in May. Mt St Francis Retreat Center was resplendent in the awakening of spring and the warmth and light of the sun.

In our circle of 11 teachers, Pam Towne began the day with some beautiful invitations:

Let the greater circulation and balancing of the chi heal you and make you whole - You can learn to soften more, but without losing the shape and form of the movements - Explore and self-discover in your TCC practice, and uncover the places where "you don't know that you don't know" - and reminding us of Justin's encouraging words: "You do more good than you know by practicing and teaching TCC."

It was a day of focusing on the principles of how to move, and helping teachers to renew and refresh their movements - some of whom are not often able to attend such events or yearly conferences. In addition, we were privileged to listen to a taped talk that Justin had given on "Evolution through Chi."

We were reminded of Justin's often quoted story:

*"Teach me, Master!"*

*"Are you READY to let me teach you how to learn?"*

All went away  
READY to become  
even better and  
more devoted teach-  
ers of TCC.

## Seaside Teacher Gathering April 20-23, 2006

Our annual seaside teacher gathering, hosted by Sky Young-Wick, brought 13 teachers together for a weekend of refinement and fun. Along with TCC group practices, refinements based on the principles of how to move, and some partner practice, Sr. Antonia and I invited the group to address some very good topics of discussion. Among these were seated TCC, teaching "intermediate" level TCC classes, and how to teach Working the Pulley.

I especially enjoyed the discussion around the suggested topic, "Does TCC develop compassion?" Sr. Antonia brought to our attention some thoughts from Justin Stone's "Spiritual Odyssey" [p.31 *The Essence of T'ai Chi Chih*], reminding us that T'ai Chi Chih is an inner discipline, and that the fruit of regular practice is Love Energy. Teachers shared the thoughts that TCC helps us with self-acceptance, which in turn can't help but spill over to others in compassion as our interior self becomes love-filled. Doesn't this sound like "what the world needs now" most of all?

On Saturday, the exterior day and night were filled with wind-driven rain and a raging sea, while our interiors were quiet and peaceful (and sometimes full of fun). Doing T'ai Chi Chih, our bodies gradually let go of tension and chaos, and became quiet and flowing.

We were very grateful this year to have an extra day (having arrived on Thursday evening instead of Friday), affording us more time to enjoy the good company, and to let what we were being filled with sink in. Let the body surrender to the softness, without the mind having always to understand. Surrender the need to control. Surrender to give ourselves the time to practice. Surrender to feeling the movements, and to awareness of the flow of chi. Surrender to "entering the cosmic rhythm."



## TCC Teacher Training May 21-26, 2006



*L to R: Back row: Tom Viner, Natalia Kuzyk, Vicki Schroeder, Stan Corwin. Middle Row: Ann Pia, Sokie Lee, Kim Follmer, Chris Epperly, Sandi Cannellos, John Valentine. First Row: Host Dan Pienciak, Stephen Thompson, Anita Vestal, Teacher Trainer Pam Towne, Barbara Hines, Joan Weaver, and TCC Guide Sr. Antonia Cooper.*

**F**or me personally, as host of this event, the training this year presented a difficult but welcome challenge – to strive to allow myself, “in all my host duties” of the week, to enter and REMAIN in the realm of BEING, not of doing.

On the first morning of the training, as Pam asked all of us present to take some time to focus on our intention for the week (and for the 15 candidates, not merely the intention of going home at the end of the week with a teaching certificate), this is what stood out as thought about the week ahead. All of the events and trainings that I have hosted had consumed me with “doing” tasks – so much so, that I had

rarely, if ever, been able to be really PRESENT to the group, the event, and the lessons.

Having realized this, I vowed that this week would be different for me. And so it was. It became a process of being attentive to and engaged in what I needed to do as a host, but not attached to those tasks. The struggle is part of the evolution – for me, the struggle to let go of everything having to be perfect – and entering into the scariness of letting go of the fear that I might not be “good enough.”

The result was such freedom, such serenity, and such enjoyment! (And so, no need for E-G-O!).

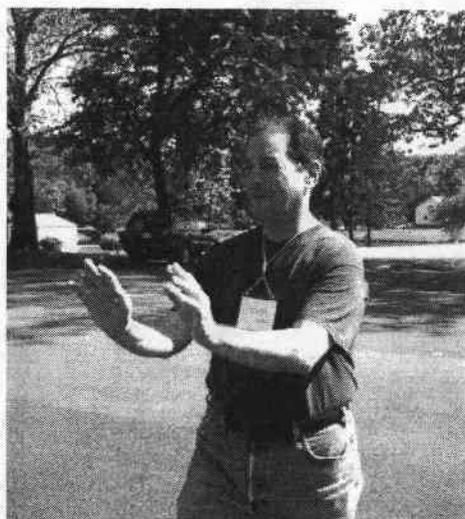
The candidates were truly an inspi-

ration. It was a privilege to witness and be a part of their learning process. And I was filled with gratitude for the great teaching skills and leadership of Pam Towne, the great wisdom and compassion of Sr. Antonia, and the great willingness of all of the auditing teachers to GIVE. Holly Sanders came from Florida and stayed the entire week.

But this is truly a Candidate’s Week, now new teachers. So it is best to provide THEIR comments for all to read.

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"We examined ourselves closely this week to discover our individual and collective essence. We found inner-oriented awareness of our strengths and personal resources. We became softness and continuity in our T'ai Chi Chih practice and with our community of teacher candidates as we nurtured and encouraged each other to move from the center. Truly the fruit of this week of May 2006 Teacher Training is LOVE ENERGY. — Anita Vestal, Texas



holding good thought for all of you in my practice. — Stephen Thompson, MS

As the saying goes, "All hindrances are self-liberating in the great space of awareness." The TCC teacher training course certainly provides the crucible of space and compassionate instruction for those who want to share TCC with the world by becoming teachers. The experience was wonder-full. — John Valentine, NE

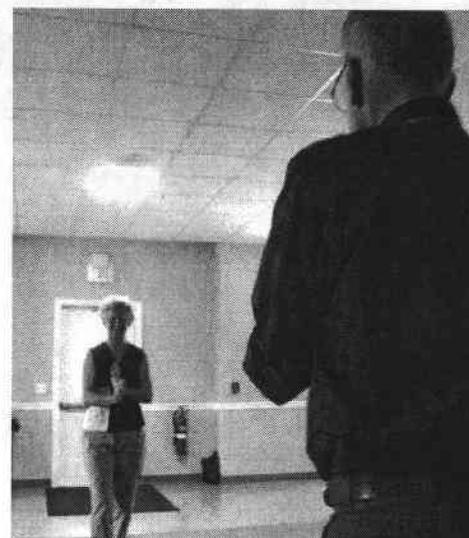


rounded by loving helpers to guide me along the path to accreditation. I am so grateful for the help, the guidance, and the love." — Stan Corwin, Florida

"Teacher training was life transforming for me. I will never be the same! I came out of Teacher Training a different person than I was going in. What a privilege teacher training has been for me." — Vicki Schroeder, MN/SC

"I broke my cup, and my family helped me put it back together with LOVE! Thank you." — Barb Hines, PA

The TCC Teacher's Training in Ringwood turned out to be the



"Thank you for the Chi... rather the knowledge of the Chi. I'll use it as a tool to transform myself and those I love-- in other words, the world. I'll be

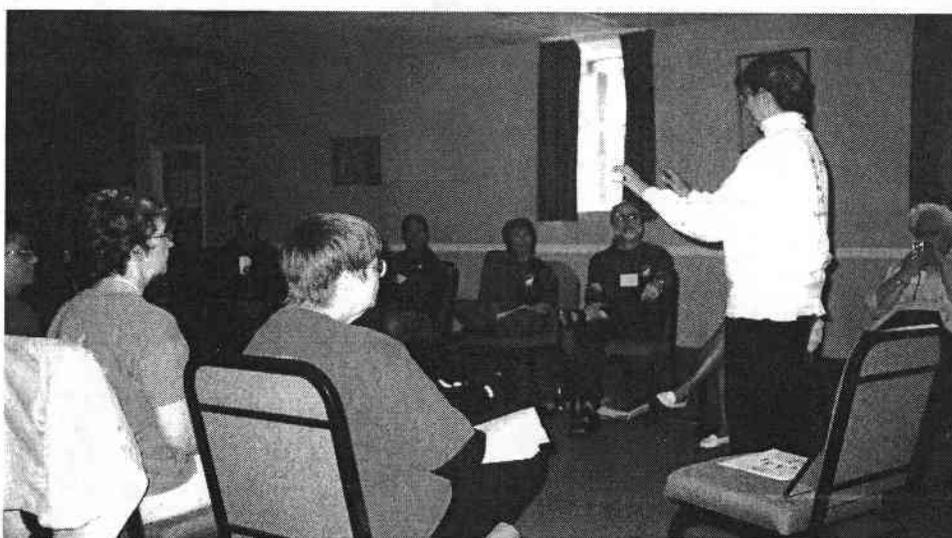
most profound personal journey. I have experienced the Yin and Yang of myself: from being Big to being Small to being Big again, joined by my new

"To flow from the center, grow from the center, realizing it may require painful pruning to let in the light..." "I couldn't move from the center. I looked inside to see what lesson I would learn - fear of failure? No, there was something else. Fear of success? To receive an accreditation that I was not worthy of, to be helped over a hurdle to find that I was in the wrong place at the wrong time? I faced my deeper fear and moved gently forward from the center - T'ai Chi Chih!" —

Darla Granberry, Texas



" All the pressure I felt was self-generated. I was sur-





circle of connections: my classmates, Pam, Dan, Sr. Antonia, the auditing teachers, and the community.

My deepest appreciation to Carolyn Perkins and Diana Bahn who got me started on this journey, and the generosity and wisdom of ALL who helped me through my progress. Thank you Justin for the gift of Tai Chi Chih and I am grateful to ALL for a New Beginning. —Sokie Lee, NYC

“To know that there is a web of T'ai Chi Chih in the world, and to know that I have been given the honor and

responsibility to teach and strengthen that web, makes my heart smile. Like Pooh Bear says, “Thanks from the bottom of my socks, cuz the bottom of my heart isn't deep enough!” —Kim Follmer, PA

When all had departed in the joy, satisfaction (and exhaustion?) of the week, and when I had cleaned and packed up all my things, I went through the dormitory one last time to check windows and lights and thermostats before locking up to leave. I found this note on an index card left in one of the rooms: “This vastness is not empty or a void or impersonal but filled with the incandescent nectar of selfless love, tender joy, and gratitude. What a true JOY it was to host this Accreditation Course. I am filled with gratitude! —Dan Pienciak

*Photos by Anita Vestal, new teacher, and Dan Pienciak, host*

## Observed

**N**ine of these new teachers had attended the Intensive in March. I know that all of them would agree that not only would there have been no better preparation for them, but I believe that they would go as far as to say that they would not have wanted to be in the accreditation process WITHOUT the experience of the Intensive.

For those who did NOT have the advantage of either never having attended an Intensive, or of not having attended one at least more recently, the struggle was more difficult and accreditation was unsure until very late in the week.

In the end, EVERYONE rose to the occasion and did the work that they needed to do to be accredited – for some, sweat and tears (if not blood) would not be an exaggeration. All deserved accreditation, and all are congratulated warmly.

We need you, and welcome you to the TCC teaching community!

However, in this host's opinion, I believe that it is our responsibility as a community of teachers to provide Intensive Courses, and to greatly encourage, and, if needed, help students who want to become teachers to go to an Intensive Course before going to teacher training. Thorough preparation and regular practice are not an option, obviously, but sweat and tears would hopefully not be necessary if every candidate would have the opportunity to discover in an Intensive their true readiness.

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## Not Too Little, Not Too Much

By Glenna Dockery and Suzanne Roudy-Ross



critiques, allowing breakthroughs and insights into the quality of their practice. Evenings allowed time for reflection, listening to the *Justin Stone Speaks* CD and watching the *Interviews with Justin Stone* video.



Nestled quietly in scenic Burlingame, California, amidst eucalyptus and ancient oaks, the stately Mercy Center was the site of the 2006 Northern California T'ai Chi Chih Intensive, May 5-8. Led by Teacher Trainer Pam Towne and hosted by Athene Mantle, nineteen serious students and teachers spent three-and-a-half days refining their movements and preparing for the fall Teacher Training.

The cohesiveness of the group grew



little, not too much." Soon she responded to similar questions by saying, "How much do you think you should do?" We would answer in unison: "Not too little, not too much." This delightful refrain became our theme and a gentle reminder of the ease and simplicity of the T'ai Chi Chih way.

Contrary to its name, the Intensive was not mercilessly intense; rather, it was delightfully sprinkled with good humor and camaraderie. The group hailed from areas as diverse as Arizona, Arkansas, northern and southern California. Joining the group the second day, Sandy McAlister imparted her valuable insights along with Pam, providing an unusual treat—both Teacher Trainers in the same workshop.

On the last day, we reflected on our experiences. This is some of what we had to say:

After a thorough review of basics, on the third day we divided into three groups led by Pam, Sandy, and Athene. The 16 women and three men gracefully received personal

daily, and we rejoiced in each other's growth. The group often wanted to "pull the wings off the butterfly" to better understand *chi* or the reasons for various aspects of the movements. But in keeping with Justin's commitment to *doing* T'ai Chi Chih rather than *analyzing* it, Pam kept us from "staying in our heads." When asked "How far?" or "How much?" about a movement, Pam would reply, "Not too

*I was smug in the beginning, but smugness gave way to "aha!" and tears of joy.*

*I feel it in my bones. I came for rejuvenation and I found it.*

*After my injury, I stopped practicing. And*



now I've begun anew.  
Being a member of a group is not usually comfortable for me, but this was wonderful.

Pam's eagle eyes are so amazing; you'd catch me at the right moment and tell me what I needed to correct.

I found that delicious little point at the end of the weight shift. I didn't know it was there and didn't know that I didn't know.

I was so happy to come to the Intensive, because I got all the 2006 TCC upgrades.

I came here thinking "It's easy. I already know it." I found that I had to relearn all the basics. It humbled and energized me.

There's always more; that's what keeps it interesting. Working with people and coordinating the event at the same time taught me a lot about myself.

I came in thinking I needed to work on the top, and I went out knowing I needed to work on the bottom. I had to get my stance in just the right place. The Just in right place!

There's a time to think and a time not to think: just focus on the T'an Tien.

I've left the place of pass/fail forever. Some used to say, Loose lips sink ships. But we can say, Loose hips, and the chi grips!

I felt so disjointed during the Intensive—it seemed I couldn't do anything right. Pam told me that I might be ready for a breakthrough. I was so happy on the third day when I felt "T'ai Chi Chih doing T'ai Chi Chih" for the first time!

With a fond farewell, we parted the last day - pleased and happy that we had known one another and learned so much. One teacher thought of a future when we might meet again - and with that hope in mind she wrote: "I'll see you all in my dreams, swimming through heavy air."

## T'ai Chi Chih and Tea

By Anita Vestal, student of Hope Spangler from York, Pennsylvania

It was a lazy, hazy summer evening in June when nearly two dozen T'ai Chi Chih practitioners and friends met at the Front Porch Tea Room and Garden in eastern York County, Pennsylvania for an evening of gratitude and feasting. Led by teachers Hope Spangler and Jean Markey, we did T'ai Chi Chih outside facing gardens blooming with colorful pansies, petunias, iris, and impatiens in splashes of purples, blues, pinks and yellows.

At the conclusion of practice, we formed a friendship circle to share how T'ai Chi Chih has touched our lives. Many gave thanks for the peaceful centeredness they've noticed since learning T'ai Chi Chih. Some noted health changes. Helena Thomas shared, "I am grateful for the health benefits; my blood pressure is down." "T'ai Chi Chih is growing in Europe now," offered Norma Cedrone referring to Dutch guides who are avid practitioners. Another student told about how she practices outdoors, weather permitting; it brings an appreciation of nature, time to smell the flowers and listen to the birds sing.

Hope Spangler passed out lovely cards (originally given to her she be-

lieves by Linda Braga) to each participant with encouragement to continue the practice. The affirmation reads:

*With a sincere heart,  
I make a commitment  
To myself to practice  
T'ai Chi Chih regularly  
So that the benefits  
I seek will manifest  
In my life*

We took the opportunity to leave the world behind and to participate in rituals of sharing with one another. We donned hats for the tea party and enjoyed the lovely china and décor reminiscent of unhurried times to enjoy conversation and laughter. We feasted on tea biscuits and scones with clotted cream and lemon curd, chilled strawberry soup and finger sandwiches on various breads. What a lovely gift to ourselves and one another in celebration of our association with T'ai Chi Chih.

Attendees: Jacqui LeBeau, Paul Knaub, Betsy Knaub, Norma Cedrone, Ann Codrone, Cathy Henry, Bonni Kuner-Roth, Susan Clark, Halina Re, Julia Helf, Annie Wilson, Faye Nace, Lilian Barsovitz, Helena Thomas, Carol Stamcr, Joyce Knox, Janet McFadden,

Funice Watson, Barb Hines, Anita Vestal, Jean Markey and Hope Spangler.



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## Tai Chi Chih at the Sanctuary

By Gail Syverson, student of Sr. Viola Bens

The Franciscan Forest Sanctuary on the edge of the boreal forest in Saskatchewan, Canada was the setting for a very satisfying one-day workshop led by Sister Viola Bens on April 1, 2006. The stillness of this retreat offered the perfect ambiance for a full day of Tai Chi Chih practice, meditative readings and time to enjoy the warmth of the spring sun.



day existence. We all thoroughly enjoyed the bountiful lunch topped off with a scrumptious bumble berry crisp, created by Sister Viola herself. The opportunity to bask in the sunshine on the deck and observe the return of the first juncoes were unexpected bonuses. Eternity is in the moment and we live it now.

There was a very pleasing range of experience among the 12

the relaxing mood that Viola always manages to achieve. Participants agreed with Rita and Ann who enjoyed the "fact that we were all at different levels" and it was "a nice mix." Carole felt "inspired and committed to keep on going with (her) practice." "Enlightening," "informative," "grounding," "confirming," and "flowing" described some of our reactions to the learning that happened. As Loretta said, "Having the time to fine-tune our movements was great." Viola took great care to encourage even the most hesitant of the group as she gently corrected technique assuring everyone that she herself was open to be critiqued. We were reminded to focus on continuous flowing movements, smooth weight shifts and relaxed circularity.

Pauses to hear readings from Justin Stone's writings provided welcome food for the soul. The serenity and calmness of the tall room with its huge field stone fireplace made it easy for us to forget the cares of our every-

As the day progressed, we definitely came together as a group and sensed the energy flowing around us. In Viola's words, "To see a group of students and teachers move into softness and deep focus in a one-day retreat is such a joy. I continue to marvel at the power of the Chi in creating peace and joy." Having felt the power of moving together, we came away from the Sanctuary feeling as Bob did, that "it's always a privilege to learn from others."



participants. At the outset Viola reminded us that we were all teachers and all learners, although officially we had two teachers with a mix of beginning students and those more experienced in the art. Whether this was a first retreat or, as for some, the third, everyone appreciated



## Renewal in the Desert April 20-23, 2006

By Joan Weaver

To the desert we came – from all over the country, and with a wide range of T'ai Chi Chih experience – for three days, April 20-23, with Teacher Trainer Pam Towne and Host Robin Spencer.

Traveling by air, automobile, and with a trailer in tow . . . on our own or with family members (three couples, a mother and daughter, sisters-in-law) . . . and with other companions, including four dogs and a ferret . . . we ranged from a few who were completely new to TCC, through intermediate and serious students, to teachers (five in addition to Pam and Robin). Many were attending a retreat for the first time; others were renewing acquaintances from TCC classes, retreats, or accreditation. We came from Arizona (Glendale, Gold Canyon, Mesa, Phoenix, Prescott and Prescott Valley, Tucson) and farther away (Alaska, California, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, South Dakota).

The Spirit of the Desert Retreat Center, in the community of Carefree north of Phoenix, offered spacious and comfortable accommodations; desert-landscaped grounds with panoramic mountain views (paloverde, ocotillo, and cacti in bloom); a welcoming staff; and healthful, delicious meals.

Thursday afternoon we began with an open practice (giving Pam an idea of "where we were"), and after dinner we gathered to become acquainted and to share our intentions and hopes for the retreat. We also learned the happy news of Pam and Ted's engagement.

Early risers met for before-breakfast practices at the Center's outdoor labyrinth – beautifully laid out with

tumbled river rocks of all colors and sizes, in the eleven-circuit Chartres pattern – where one morning a wild boar (javelina) wandered by.

Friday and Saturday, morning and afternoon, we worked our way through the movements. As we sought to emulate Pam's example and follow the principles she emphasized, we were able to advance, whatever our starting point. We sometimes practiced in pairs, as mirrors to each other, or in groups of four. Throughout, Pam and the six other teachers offered individual guidance. Ever more relaxed – elbows, wrists, hands – smoothing out our movements, focusing in the soles of the feet, we flowed from the center – effortlessly – through very heavy air.

Reviewing what we had learned in each previous session, adding new movements, practicing up to the point we had covered – and skipping movements not yet taught, so as not to reinforce bad habits – we would finish with Cosmic Consciousness Pose and then sit quietly, savoring our open and aware state. Pam read to us from Justin's collected writings, *Spiritual Odyssey*. We listened to *Justin Speaks*, from his CD. We sang and danced "Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy" before heading off for a meal.

Friday night after dinner we watched several segments of the *Interviews with Justin Stone* video from the New Mexico Public television series, which reinforced the principles we were learning and showed Justin's gentle manner.

Our Saturday evening was devoted to sacred circle dancing. An intrepid majority of us learned from Pam and Ted three lovely Dances of Universal Peace.

After breakfast and photos on Sunday morning, and before our last practice together, we spoke of the retreat and its effects on us since Thursday evening. "Feelings of apprehension" from beginners gave way to "pleasure, satisfaction, a sense of accomplishment" and "greater respect for TCC practice." Students "learned more precise movements" and identified specific improvements – "I feel as if I've started to break through the Taffies," "Perpetual Motion is my new favorite because it flows." Especially appreciated were "the feeling of immersion" in TCC and the "acceptance," "friendliness," "warmth," and "openness" of this "great group of people." And we were motivated – "I will practice more regularly," "I definitely am going to go on," "I want to offer this to others." The retreat was "rewarding and peaceful," "nourishing," "an awakening of the spirit."

Acknowledgments and thanks were offered to Pam and Robin ("everything went so smoothly"), to teachers "who encouraged me to come," and to the three men "for their yang contributions." Pam and Robin both noted the improvements made since Thursday "as we moved more and more together." I believe Pam used the term "light-years."

We came to understand that this retreat is but one element of so much more that T'ai Chi Chih offers us. A student who had "overcome resistance" to attend said she would tell anyone considering . . . a T'ai Chi Chih retreat: "Go! You will learn so much! A retreat is an ideal way to learn."

## TCC Teacher Retreat in Canada May 19 to 22, 2006

By Chery Ann Hoffmeyer

The Providence Renewal Centre in Edmonton,

Alberta, Canada provided a tranquil setting for the May 19 to 22, 2006 T'ai Chi Chih Teachers' retreat facilitated by Sandy McAlister.

The focus of this retreat was on teaching T'ai Chi Chih, and in addition, the group had time to focus on deepening one's practice.

This is the first time that a retreat focused on teaching TCC has been offered in Canada and the group was

in for a wonderful treat. The group of 10 was small and intimate, providing an incredible opportunity to practice, refine, dialogue, and explore how to do TCC and how to effectively teach TCC.

Teachers from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and as far away as eastern Newfoundland came together to share the chi and their enthusiasm for practicing and teaching TCC. The following experiences and words reflect the quality and depth of the

participant's experiences:

"I found it very valuable to focus intensively on the art and mechanics of



**Front row: L to R - Louise Bureau, Gail Terriff, Tamara Zujewskyj, Sandy McAlister (facilitator), Sheila Leonard**  
**Back row: L to R - Maureen Purves, Rita Beth, Garret Henley, Chery Ann Hoffmeyer (sponsor), Leslie Keith**

teaching TCC and supporting students in their movements and practice. Picking up tips from Sandy about getting students started and 'over the hump' in learning a more challenging movement, as well as getting a variety of ideas from other teachers, makes me excited about teaching my next class in a new way. At the same time, I gained significant insights into the movements for my own practice." — Louise Bureau

"It's truly a LONG trip from Newfoundland to Edmonton, especially just for a four-day weekend, but I was irresistibly drawn, and it sure proved worth every kilometer, even holding the jet lag at bay. Given the blend of personal refinements, a deepening of

my personal practice, the sharing of teaching tips and tidbits, and simply the luxury of being with Sandy and more of our Canadian teachers, I can think of no other place I would rather have spent the Victoria Day Weekend.

My personal practice is already richer, as is my teaching even this first week home as I write this. My students, too, are already richer for my having gone, as is our world-

wide T'ai Chi Chih community and indeed our world as the effects ripple ever outward in blessing...my joy and gratitude profound!" —Sheila Leonard

"Through the process of the retreat I had intense learning experiences that fundamentally altered my form and practice. I felt embarrassed at the recognition of some needed changes and clumsiness in my first attempts to bring the adjustments into my body. But hey, these were small moments with no lasting concern. The chi pool is deep and swimming lessons help. Thanks to all present." —Garret B. Henley

"Sandy was a wonderful facilitator who made it fun and interesting. I've done TCC since 1986 and you taught

me so many important things that I'd missed before." —Maureen Purves

"Sandy, I loved your input as to how to move and how to teach our students in better ways. We all appreciated your calmness and clarity, and your openness to hear our thoughts." —Gail Terriff

Thanks to Sandy "who sets the bar high and models clarity, economy of language, insight, humility, tact, confidence, respect, sensitivity, levity and above all, joy in her practice and teaching of T'ai Chi Chih." —unknown

We all experienced insights and awarenesses that continue to shift and change our practice and teaching of TCC. Rita Beth's comments sum up this weekend experience "insightful, helpful and practical."

In addition to the teachers working with Sandy, the afternoon practice on Sunday was open to all TCC students. It was enjoyable to have them practice with our group and then to share their perceptions of the experience with our group. Their thoughts and ideas added another dimension to a well-rounded experience. The students appreciated the opportunity to be invited and included in a part of our weekend retreat.

As we held our closing circle just prior to noon on Monday each person revisited the goals that were expressed at the beginning of the weekend. Each of us had our expectations addressed and much more beyond these expectations. The entire weekend had a beautiful flow, like a TCC practice session, how wonderful to experience the flow of chi on so many levels of one's being. As closure was nearing, I looked at the beaming faces, and could see and feel the chi flowing all around and through us.

What a fantastic weekend. As my some of my First Nations friends say, "It makes my heart happy." Thanks to



*L to R - Louise Burea, Maureen Purves, Sheila Leonard, Tamara Zujewskyj, Garret Henley. Group is using a 'string' to identify the evenness of their stance.*



*Sandy McAlister enjoying the beautiful outdoors. Rabbits and mallard ducks shared the great outdoors with us.*

all for showing up, for being present, and being involved with all of your being; your commitment and dedication to your practice and to your teaching shines brightly over our TCC community. Thanks to Justin Stone and to Sandy McAlister for supporting us in keeping this wonderful practice pure and true. What a gift we all have to share with the world!

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## TCC Community Outreach

## Results of the 2005 Teachers Survey

By Dorene Krause



Special thanks to Lorraine Lepine, TCC Community Outreach Coordinator, for accepting the task of compiling the data and organizing the results of the 2005

Teacher Survey. Our heartfelt gratitude goes to Lorraine for the hundreds of hours she has contributed to the community. Thank you also to the 90 teachers who participated.

Survey results are progressively being posted to a hidden page on the TCC Community web site. Teachers will be e-mailed the exact web page address to access this information. If you don't have e-mail or access to the internet, please contact a teacher who does and ask them to print out a hard

copy for you. The first category to be viewed on the web is "Teaching People with Physical Challenges." If you are going to be teaching TCC to people with arthritis, cancer, cerebral palsy, chronic fatigue, COPD, diabetes, fibromyalgia, heart conditions and stroke, hip or knee replacement, lupus, MS or Parkinson's, you can contact other teachers who have taught these specialized populations.

The original creation of the TCC Community Outreach Coordinator was motivated by the need to answer questions related to specific populations of TCC students. The vision is to provide the TCC Community with team leaders who would assume the following roles:

- To develop guidelines for working with specific populations
- To provide resource materials

If you would like to participate in this development, contact Antonia, Pam or Sandy.

T'ai Chi Chih classes are being taught in a wide range of settings with Holistic Centers, Health Clubs and Senior settings at the top of the list. Classes are also being taught in Educational and Spiritual settings as well as in homes, hospital/rehabilitation centers, general and judicial settings.

Respondents shared some of their Teaching Tips for different student populations. Some of these tips are outlined below:

**General Population:**

- Encourage students and help them understand that the benefits of TCC

will be realized through practice, even a short time every day.

- Let the chi do the work. Help students feel comfortable in the class, relax and enjoy the TCC movements.
- It is important for students to move out of their heads and into experiencing the chi.

**Teaching Seniors:**

- Many seniors cannot physically do some of the moves nor remember them, but it is important to always teach and demonstrate correct form.
- It is more important to emphasize smoothness, circularity and groundedness - the spirit of TCC being more important than the form.

**Teaching Teens and Children:**

- The experience of teaching in atypical schools can have great rewards.
- Rather than tell the students the benefits of TCC practice, allow them to feel the chi and be guided as to how it can be used.

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## Our Students, Our Selves

# Chaos In The Midst Of Serenity

## First TCC Class at an Assisted Living Residence

By Linda Braga

I left the house for my new T'ai Chi Chih class 30 minutes early, to set up the room and be ready to greet my new students. When I arrived, there wasn't a soul around in the activity room. So I went ahead and pushed tables out of the way, set up chairs in a circle, got the display table and folders of TCC materials ready, and put on some soothing music. Then I decided to do some T'ai Chi Chih.

A few minutes before 10 a.m., a woman rushed in and was surprised I had already arranged the room for class. She informed me she would go "rustle up some students" in the living room of the Assisted Living Residence. In she came minutes later with a troop of people in walkers and wheel chairs.

It was an unlikely crew of beginners. Some of them informed me that they could only stay for 15 minutes. One fell asleep in her chair almost immediately. Others sat down and waited quietly. After introducing myself, I explained what T'ai Chi Chih was all about and did some soft movements for them. They watched intently. I talked about the benefits of regular practice and encouraged them to try out some of the movements

while seated. None of them wanted to stand and try it at first... but I was not deterred.

Then things got a little chaotic. A resident came in and ran right over my foot with her walker while I was demonstrating. She made a beeline to the scales to weigh herself, not to join the class. Several other residents came and went, talking in loud voices. Then I noticed a large puddle on the floor nearby, and stopped to see if we could get some towels so that no one would slip and fall.

It turned out to be a significant leak from the upper floors... and the next thing I knew, the HAZ-MAT team in protective suits and boots came in, bringing the large noisy machine used to suck up fluids. It was turned on, making so much of a racket that I could no longer talk to my students. In fact, we couldn't even hear the music! So I did what was my only option...more TCC movements for them to view, as the team mopped up the whole area.

After the team left, I continued to move, encouraging the residents' participation while seated. Then a man came in with his wife in a wheel chair. He announced that he and his wife had done some Tai Chi in the

past..."you know...the one created by Justin Stone." I was pleasantly surprised and asked who his teacher had been. The name he gave was someone who was not ever accredited. I smiled and said how pleased I was that he knew TCC. He informed me that the reason he was late was that he plays pinochle with his friends...and that he would be late for class in the future as well.

We ended with a few more seated TCC moves, then closed with a bow of gratitude for our life. Within the hour, ten people had come to class and stayed. They were drawn in by the soft flowing movements of T'ai Chi Chih ... and captivated by the knowledge that Justin is about the same age as they are, and he is still doing this form of movement every day. One never knows when chaos will erupt in a serene setting and bring joy through movement!

PS. The following week, the man who plays pinochle was on time! Another participant told the Director after class that he *adores* this class in T'ai Chi Chih! The Director said: "Who would ever believe that W\_\_\_ would be attracted to T'ai Chi Chih! One never knows."

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## Making Connections

By Carmen L. Brocklehurst, Albuquerque, NM

**S**o often, students who attended a T'ai Chi Chih demonstration years before show up in my classes years later. It might not even have been I who gave the demonstration. However, T'ai Chi Chih definitely touched them during some short demonstration. They felt peace or love or the disappearance of pain when they started moving. And they longed to remember that experience again. The wonderful thing about teaching is that the experience can be repeated. We don't have to cross our fingers and hope that it will happen again. It isn't magic, but it is magical. Justin Stone, the originator of T'ai Chi Chih, says it so simply: "If you want to know what T'ai Chi Chih can do for you, do it."

One of my students was surprised to hear that I had been doing T'ai Chi Chih for about 30 years. They seemed impressed and commented, "That is a long time." I smiled, knowing that our T'ai Chi Chih practice is not evaluated

in terms of time but rather according to what we get from practice, every day. If I received nothing more than the ever present peace washing over my body, mind and emotions, that helps me experience my breath, it would certainly be worth the 40 minutes. However, so much more is revealed daily. T'ai Chi Chih gives us the strength and opening to sink deeply into the well of Life. The question is how do we approach our practice?

I remember practice beginning as a race. It wasn't until the eighteenth Rocking Motion that I became aware of moving too fast. And then it would take until the twenty-seventh movement to slow to a gentle flow, which connected me to myself. I ended up sinking deeply for only the last nine movements. It finally dawned on me that I was a slow learner. I then decided to have a full, mindful, practice — not something hit or miss. From that time on, my T'ai Chi Chih practice became very different.

Recently I taught a week-long morning session for the Science and Consciousness International Conference, with about 700 scientists, engineers, and medical professionals from around the world. One heart attack sufferer, who needed to slow down, came to the T'ai Chi Chih presentation. After one session, he asked, "Would it be okay if I did my practice faster in this class?" I smiled and said, "No; it sounds as if you need to connect with your body. It seems to be telling you to slow down. You really need T'ai Chi Chih." He stopped frowning for the first time and said gently, "I think you're right." We then had a lovely chat and he purchased a video so he could continue connecting with and listening to his body. He also attended the daily morning T'ai Chi Chih session.

How wonderful to share a discipline that helps people connect with themselves so that they can love (themselves) and share the chi.

### Staying Connected

## Come to Lubbock for 4th Annual Workshop

By Nancy Beck

**T**he Fourth Annual TCC Workshop will be held at the SAS Wellness Center, 4004 82nd St., Lubbock, TX on September 23 and 24, 2006, announced Larry Sava, Wellness Director.

There is a great excitement and anticipation having Carmen

Brocklehurst from Albuquerque to be the facilitator since she brings much experience, is an outstanding resource and brings the tradition of TCC to West Texas. "Return to Basics" and "Introduction to Advanced TCC," and "Meditation" will be topics for the two days.

Sava says that the previous workshops have been well attended and last year's workshop drew people

from across the country. Four of the participants recently were accredited as teachers.

Cost of the Workshop will be \$40 for Saturday or Sunday or \$65 for both days.

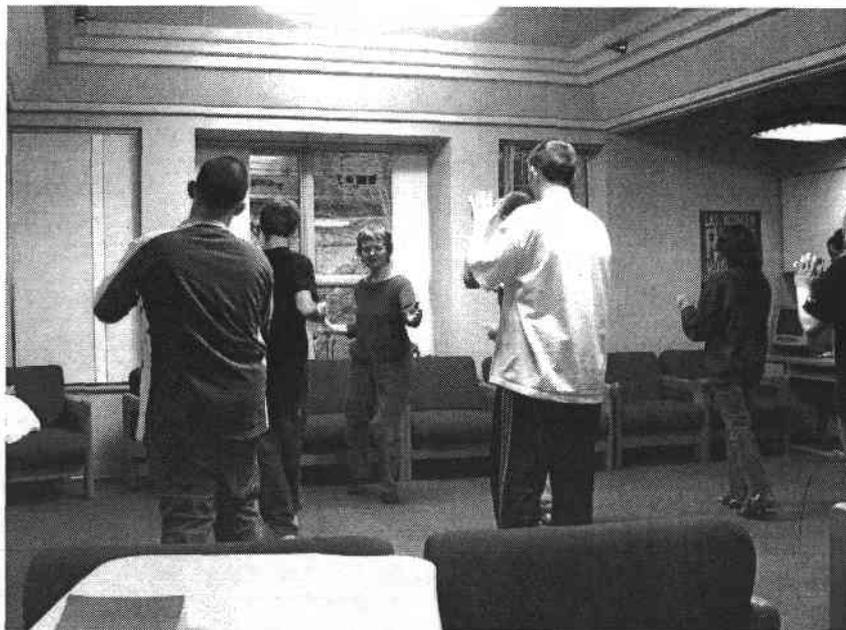
Contact Nancy Beck at [warpweav@nts-online.net](mailto:warpweav@nts-online.net) or 806-799-6603 or Larry Sava at 806-722-3162, during the day.

## TCC in the Media

*Kathy, I have been teaching TCC at an adolescent recovery program for about a year now and this pic is from an article in their newsletter. I'll try to attach the text of the article and the picture. The discussion you led at conference last year was very valuable for me in starting this class at Journeys (the recovery center). Thank you for your sharing.*

Rita Otis

### Tai Chi Chih helps recovering teens kick drug and alcohol addictions



Teens in the JOURNEYS program take a mental break from recovery through moving meditation called Tai Chi Chih, which helps teens reduce stress, heal and focus on getting sober.

"Tai Chi Chih taught me how to relax," said an 18-year-old client recovering from drug addiction. "I use the skills I've learned in the class a lot when I get upset. I try to go to a peaceful place and remember to control my emotions, breath, and think positively."

Offered every Thursday for an hour, Tai Chi Chih is a set of movements that focus on the development of energy. It's a non-violent form of meditation and physical motion. "Tai Chi Chih is a way for these kids to connect with their divine energy," said instructor Rita Otis. "The movements first allow the kids to relax. Once they're relaxed, it begins to heal their mind, body and spirit."

JOURNEYS combines drug and alcohol education, residential treatment and outpatient services to help adolescents beat their addictions. "When kids first get to JOURNEYS, they are tense and have difficulty concentrating," said Otis. "The class helps them focus mentally and slows down the mind. I definitely see a lot of changes in their day-to-day behavior after a few weeks."

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**T**his article on TCC was recently published in the international journal *The Bulletin*, a publication of Delta Kappa Gamma Society International... a society of key women educators. I am thrilled the article got accepted because it has been published internationally, giving TCC more exposure worldwide.

In addition, I just got a letter of acceptance for me to present TCC at the DKG International Convention 2006 in San Diego in mid-July. It is a huge convention with 5,000 expected to attend. Another golden opportunity... for sure! In the flow, Linda Braga

## A Golden Opportunity: T'ai Chi Chih® for Health and Wellbeing

by Rosalind Braga

**T**he curiosity to learn a new skill and connect with the larger world is a lifetime journey. Seniors are no exception. They have the time and inquisitiveness to pursue new interests. This article is about some older adults who are enjoying a new path to wellness through a form of meditation called T'ai Chi Chih. It is a practice for all ages. Its simplicity and beauty attract beginners, offering a way to experience relaxation and rejuvenation.

### A Desire for "the Good Life"

Everyone wants the good life, one filled with health and vitality. The advertising world knows this, and capitalizes on our desire to stay young forever. Products for good nutrition, relaxation and rejuvenation entice us to stay youthful. Magazines are loaded with beauty products and methods to help us learn how to relax. With the current demands of our modern times, the challenge is *how to maintain* a life style that promotes wellness on a physical, emotional and spiritual level.

Most people in the

working world today are stressed out. They keep on living at a frantic pace, juggling career and family life, often at the cost of their own health. Most feel they have no choice.

Often, people don't make a change in their life until a crisis hits. In China, the word *crisis* has two different meanings: danger and opportunity! Most crises come at the most inconvenient times. But they do get our attention and help us to set new priorities. Surprisingly, a personal crisis can be a *golden opportunity* for positive change. It certainly was for me.

### A Crisis Brings Change

In the 1980's, a demanding job as Resource Specialist, parental health problems, and rough times in my own family brought me to a point of crisis. One day, a flyer landed on my doorstep, advertising a class for stress reduction. Despite my busy schedule, I decided to take the class. It changed my life.

The class was T'ai Chi Chih® Joy Through Movement. With 20 easy circular patterns and alternating rest poses, it is the perfect anecdote for stress. The soft, flowing movements circulate and balance the intrinsic en-

ergy of the body. This gentle form of meditation brings the body-mind-spirit into a state of harmony and balance. For me, it was the perfect answer.

After becoming accredited to teach T'ai Chi Chih (TCC), I began offering workshops and evening classes for various groups. This provided a nourishing balance of "doing" and "being" in my life. It also encouraged me to *embody* all that I knew about relaxation and wellness.

### Moving Meditation for Older Adults

Two years ago, I retired as Resource Specialist to pursue my new career: offering daytime T'ai Chi Chih classes for seniors. Today, there are many classes offered at local Community Centers that provide enrichment and new skills to a growing population of older adults.

What I discovered did not surprise me. Though older adults have more time and no career demands to worry about, life is still stressful. With personal health issues, family changes, and loss of spouse, they too need to learn how to decrease the stress in their life, and relax.

Many seniors (ages 60 - 90) come to

TCC class, curious about whether they can actually do the movements. By the end of the first lesson, they have smiles and positive comments that this form of movement is relaxing and very easy to do. The simple circular patterns, usually performed standing, can be modified to a seated pose. Students develop a new sense of softness and relaxation in their movements that carry over to their thoughts and actions *after* class. Soon they are hooked on *feeling good, feeling relaxed.*

#### Health and Wellness Benefits for Everyone

T'ai Chi Chih offers many health benefits to those who practice regularly. In a five-year study done at UCLA, it was shown that T'ai Chi Chih boosts the immune response of the body by 50%. This is significant. Other studies and reports by students confirm other health benefits, including lowering of blood pressure, improved balance and strength, mental clarity and calmness, improved digestion and elimination, and better sleep.

One student, an 85-year-old woman, came to class and participated the full hour without sitting down. When the class was over, she said that she felt so calm she thought she was dreaming...and had to pinch herself to see if she was really awake!

Her family tells her she is much more patient now. She feels good, enjoys new friends, and has a positive outlook on life.

Another student, a woman in her late 70's with diabetes and other health problems, left T'ai Chi Chih class and walked halfway home before she realized that she had left her cane in class!

A TCC student with breast cancer and respiratory problems began a regular practice of T'ai Chi Chih. Her health improved so much that last year that she passed the training to become accredited to teach TCC herself.

A student with physical limits has been a long-time student who does much of her practice seated in a chair. She is an inspiration to others who can see that she is a calm, centered person. They all want to be like her! She says that T'ai Chi Chih has been a life-saver for her.

Many of these seniors remark that this class is a refuge from their busy schedule that includes caring for grandchildren and family members as well as themselves. They enjoy the class and make it a priority in their schedule. Those who attend two days a week and practice at home are making very good progress, and are experiencing even greater benefits.

#### A Golden Opportunity for You

For those of you still in the world of work, and those of you now retired, consider what you can do to nourish yourself daily through relaxation and renewal. T'ai Chi Chih classes are offered in many cities throughout the USA and other countries. If your schedule prohibits you from taking a scheduled class, consider private lessons. Experience a new sense of peacefulness and vitality. Through the quiet meditative practice of T'ai Chi Chih, you will find that you are calm, centered and joyful. You become "strong like a mountain, flowing like a river."

For more information on the practice of T'ai Chi Chih and teachers in your area, visit the web site at: [www.taichichih.com](http://www.taichichih.com). The UCLA study can also be accessed at this web site.

*Rosalind Braga, current Co-President of Zeta Phi Chapter in California, is a retired Special Education teacher. She currently offers T'ai Chi Chih classes through the San Leandro Adult School, and has been a presenter of T'ai Chi Chih at many Delta Kappa Gamma Chi State Conventions.*

*Submitted by Rosalind Braga, 22120 Earl Drive, Castro Valley, CA 94546  
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## Major T'ai Chi Chih Principles

To move the Vital Force what are some major keys?  
Seven S's, three C's, and two P's!

Soft (effort of no effort) – don't strain body or brain

Straight (vertical alignment) - don't stoop or tilt

Sink (into the essence) - don't drop too low or stay too high

Shift (yin-yang balance) - don't move legs out too short or too long

Slow (swim through thick air) – don't go too fast

Stillness (quietude in rest position) – don't fidget or stir

Smile (joy thru movement) – don't try too hard

Continuity (smoothness) – don't bump or stop

Center (flow from the Tan T'ien) – don't lead from the hands

Circularity (energy, wholeness, unity) – don't circle too wide or too small

Polarity (between the hands) – don't have hands too close or too far away

Practice (regularly) – don't make excuses

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## Taking Apart My T'ai Chi Chih

By Jantie Dick, Sedona, AZ

I must start with SOFTNESS  
It permeates everything  
T'ai Chi Chih is soft, soft, soft  
always  
Just when I think I am soft  
softer softness comes  
There is no end...  
ever

My FORM is my shell  
the vehicle that carries me  
My back is straight  
softly straight  
My shoulders round and soft  
My knees slightly flexed yet -  
not overextended -  
all to encourage and allow  
the Vital Force  
    Intrinsic Energy  
    Chi  
    (one and the same)  
to pass through  
My feet are planted firmly  
on the ground  
rooted like a tree  
An imaginary string comes from the heavens  
and attaches to my crown  
I know that I am  
rooted like a tree and  
flowing like a river

The MOVEMENT is now automatic  
I know that the way I move  
is more important  
than the way I execute the moves  
There is circularity and continuity  
circularity and continuity  
on and on and on

My BREATHING is soft  
I concentrate on the Bubbling Spring -  
in the soles of my feet - or -  
the Tiantien -  
two inches below my navel -  
where the Chi is stored.

The movements were studied and  
learned  
long ago, so  
much of the time  
there is no MIND  
I am uniting the inner Divine Energy  
with the Universal Energy and  
I am one with all that is  
My mindless mind is free...  
Free...

I am FEELING adrift  
floating on a cloud  
moving through heavy air -  
both of these - and yet  
I am strong - and yet  
nothing  
My fingers flutter slightly  
They tingle  
The palms of my hands tingle  
The rest of my body follows  
The feeling of total well-being  
comes once again  
and this time...  
stays longer...

## Acceptance - of Ourselves and Others

Submitted by Sanli Carmellos

A Water Bearer in India had two large pots: each hung on each end of a pole, which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, and the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house; the cracked pot arrived only half full. For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water to his master's house. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect to the end for which it was made. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the Water Bearer one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself and I want to apologize to you." "Why?" asked the bearer. "What are you ashamed of?" "I have been able, for these past two years, to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house. Because of my flaws, you have to do all of this work and you don't get full value from your efforts," the pot said. The Water Bearer felt sorry for the old cracked pot, and in his compassion he said, "As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along

the path." Indeed, as they went up the hill, the old cracked pot took notice of the sun warming the beautiful wild flowers on the side of the

path, and this cheered it some. But at the end of the trail, it still felt bad because it leaked out half its load, and so again it apologized to the bearer for its failure.

The Water Bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of your path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of

the path and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."

Each of us has our own unique flaws. We're all cracked pots. In God's great economy, nothing goes to waste.

You may  
not see it

now, but whatever  
you do affects every-  
thing and everyone else,  
if even in the tiniest way.

Why, when a housefly flaps its wings, a breeze goes round the world; when a speck of dust falls to the ground, the entire planet weighs a little bit more; and when you stamp your foot, the earth moves slightly off its course. Whenever you laugh, gladness spreads like the ripples in a pond; and whenever you're sad, no one anywhere can be really happy. And it's much the same thing with knowledge, for whenever you learn something new, the whole world becomes that much richer.

Norton Juster  
The Phantom Tollbooth

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# The Lighter Side

**W**arm greetings from my home in snowy Newfoundland to yours!  
 Just wanted you to know that I practice three new Tai Chi Chih moves these days! Even have photos to prove it. As Justin says, "I need to practice when I feel like it and practice when I don't feel like it..." or else, for me, I can't get out of my driveway!!!!!!



Passing Snowflakes

I've named the new moves:

- \* Passing Snowflakes
- \* Carry the Shovel to the Side
- \* Push Pull

Not sure my yinping and yanging, my weight shifts are always right on, but they DO get me moving ... with SOFTNESS, I hope, and definitely with CONTINUITY... Mother Nature has seen to the latter the past few weeks.

Meanwhile, I am eagerly looking forward to the SUMMER and Conference 2006! See you there!

—Sheila Leonard



Carry the Shovel to the Side



Push Pull

**I**n my senior's TCC class I like to approach the taffy movements with lightness and humor. Years ago in one of my classes I once described the hand position by saying: "Your hands will be in the position at the hip so that the lower hand "holds the cat" and the upper hand "pets the cat," letting the hands separate as the weight is shifted. Someone in class who had struggled with the hand position for weeks blurted out, "Well why didn't you say so before!"

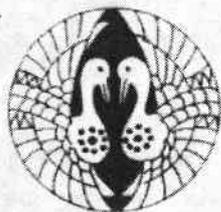
So, last week I brought a soft, stuffed cat to class and that got everyone's attention. Again I introduced the taffies...and after demonstrating it several times, I picked up the cat and showed them how to "hold the cat, pet the cat." They liked it and got the image of which direction the palms face.

This week Betty came to class and said she needed to speak to me about the taffies. She said, "I went home and tried to do the taffies and...well, I got confused...I don't know how to get the cat to jump into the other hand!" We all had a good laugh over that one. --Linda Braga

**W**hen they form the ball in Around the Platter Variation, I suggest to my students at the Juvenile Detention Center to put their problems and troubles in that ball and then release them. One boy's ball immediately took the shape of a giant beach ball and he kept it up through the entire set. I didn't correct him. Afterward he seemed quite joyful. So was I. —Kathy Grassel



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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: \_\_\_\_\_

### Vital Force Subscription Information

( ) I DO NOT want to be listed in the Teachers Directory or the Website.

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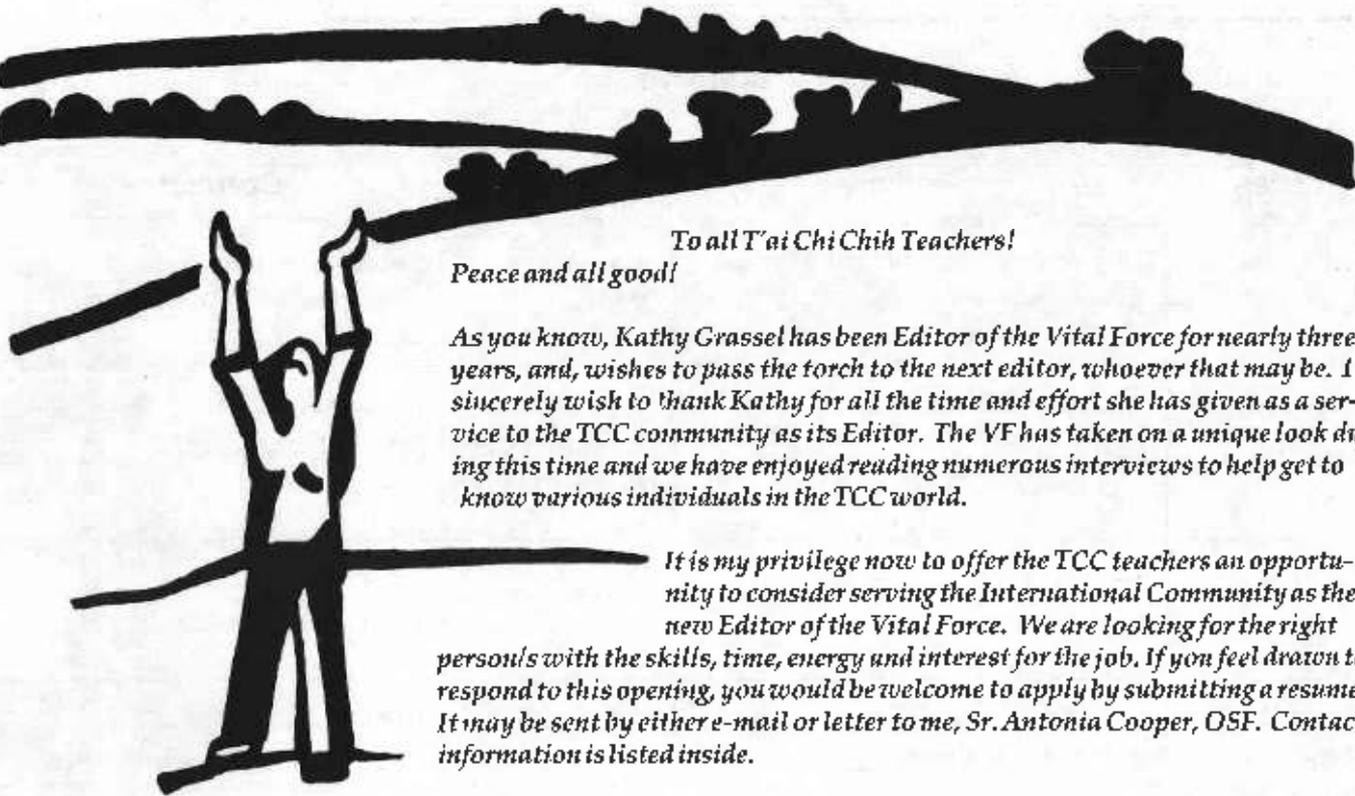
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## Calendar

Dates	Activity	Location	Contact
July 27-30, 2006	21st Annual International Teachers Conference See announcement in this issue.	Bloomington, MN	Ron Barker ronbarker@comcast.net 763-572-115
July 31-Aug 2, 2006	Seijaku Training w/Pam Towne \$300 (\$40 for auditors) limit 30	St. Paul MN Carondolet Center, \$30 / \$35	Joanne Ellison joannee@mn.rr.com 952-473-6271
July 31, 2006	Workshop w/Sandy McAlister \$35	Minneapolis, MN	Joanne Ellison joannee@mn.rr.com 952-473-6271
August 21- 26, 2006	First ever Europe Teacher Training w/ Sandy McAlister	Mantova, Italy	Cristina Minelli
September 14-17, 2006	TCC Teacher/Student Retreat	Watrous, Saskatchewan	Lidia Paice harmonyhouse@sasktel.net
September 15-17, 2006	TCC Teacher/Student Retreat	Seattle area	Linda Robinson robinson.l@earthlink.net 206-634-0474
October 5, 2006	Teacher Renewal \$50	Lincolnshire, IL Hampton Inn	Donna McElhose 847-223-6065 dmcelhosechi@aol.com
October 6-9, 2006	TCC Intensive \$200	Lincolnshire, IL Hampton Inn	Donna McElhose 847-223-6065 dmcelhosechi@aol.com
October 2006	TCC Teacher Training Sandy McAlister	Bay Area	Athene Mantle chigoddess@hotmail.com 408-295-2994
Nov. 17-19, 2006	Seijaku Review w/ Pam Towne and celebration of Justin's 90th birthday.	Albuquerque	Ann Rutherford ruthergary@aol.com
Feb. 20-27, 2007	TCC Teacher/Student Retreat	Mt. Calvary, Santa Barbara	Pam Towne (760) 944-9544
Feb. 27-Mar. 2, 2007	TCC Teacher/Student Retreat	Mt. Calvary, Santa Barbara	Pam Towne (760) 944-9544

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*To all T'ai Chi Chih Teachers!*

*Peace and all good!*

*As you know, Kathy Grassel has been Editor of the Vital Force for nearly three years, and, wishes to pass the torch to the next editor, whoever that may be. I sincerely wish to thank Kathy for all the time and effort she has given as a service to the TCC community as its Editor. The VF has taken on a unique look during this time and we have enjoyed reading numerous interviews to help get to know various individuals in the TCC world.*

*It is my privilege now to offer the TCC teachers an opportunity to consider serving the International Community as the new Editor of the Vital Force. We are looking for the right person/s with the skills, time, energy and interest for the job. If you feel drawn to respond to this opening, you would be welcome to apply by submitting a resume. It may be sent by either e-mail or letter to me, Sr. Antonia Cooper, OSF. Contact information is listed inside.*

*Until the Editor is announced, Vic Berg will be taking submissions, and all future articles may be e-mailed to him.*

*Thanking you in advance for considering this and looking forward to working with you in the future.*

*Blessings in abundance,  
Sr. Antonia Cooper, OSF  
Guide of the TCC community.*

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