



THE

VITAL FORCE

For Teachers Worldwide of JOY THRU MOVEMENT

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Summer Solstice

June 1991

THE MYSTERY OF MYO

Justin Stone

These days one hears a lot about 'enlightenment'. Generally, I believe, it is thought that 'enlightenment' is a super-intellectual state where the brain has great knowledge and knows many answers (or concepts). Nothing could be farther from the truth; it has nothing to do with I.Q. rating or knowledge assimilated. When the individual energy (CHI) merges with the Universal Energy (CHI), something acts thru one, and that something is infallible. This is Prajna, the Inherent Wisdom. Give it Theological terms if you will. Just as my Zen teacher said "Love is Manifestation", so is 'enlightenment' known by this manifesting, not by words, phrases, logic, or dialectics.

In his fine book, "Zen and Japanese Culture", D. T. Suzuki speaks of MYO, which he says is a hard word to define. "It is a certain artistic quality perceivable not only in works of art but in anything in nature or in life. The sword in the hands of the master swordsman attains this quality when it is not a mere display of technical skill...for MYO is something original and creative growing out of one's 'unconscious' (I wish he wouldn't use Western psychological terms)." What he is referring to, of course, is the action propelled by Prajna, not one's discriminating consciousness.

The fencer, the swordsman whose life depends on instantaneous reaction far more rapid than mental response--intuitive sensing, if you will--and the jazz pianist, who has no time to think as he improvises, all cultivate something far beyond necessary technique. It is not enough to be a mere technician, no matter how skilled. When one goes beyond technique, it is MYO, the great mystery. It is the reason enlightened Zen men tend to be artists, poets, etc., all on a spontaneous basis, the manifestation of enlightenment. When I tell T'ai Chi Chih teachers to "Sink into the Essence", this is what I'm referring to--let T'ai Chi Chih do T'ai Chi Chih.

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Steve Ridley's response to the query, "What is Enlightenment?"

As I see it, enlightenment is the natural, authentic condition of each being. The degree that this essential nature is actualized through the mind-body represents the individual's level of enlightenment. So, I would say that enlightenment appears more and more completely as one allows seeming conflicts of the mind-body to dissolve. Nothing to achieve; a matter of allowing.

This journal is dedicated lovingly in honor of our dear teachers: Justin Stone, Originator of T'ai Chi Chih and Steve Ridley, Spiritual Head of T'ai Chi Chih.

Reflections . . . Along the Way

Since the birth of spring's new beginning for The Vital Force, the totality of our involvement in "journaling" T'ai Chi Chih has become more real. It has been a project bringing much breadth of scope to the service aspect of this work. Again, "knowing by doing" has been the way; thru discovery and discernment en-acting.

Many have acknowledged the energy directed toward focusing teachers/readers on the vitality and strength we share in T'ai Chi Chih! This is a means of noticing the many faces of joy in this movement--and graces revealed--hearing their resonance with each envelope opened. To: the vital force, a thankful toast, an opportunity for recognizing what is collectively embraced in potential for elevating us all.

Thanks to each of you who contribute to the content forming these issues. Every little note you pause to write and send is appreciated and most are excerpted herein. We will continue to enclose an addressed envelope to prompt your convenient, regular response. Along with subscription renewals which support continued operational workings, remember your individual voice contributes most meaning-fully!

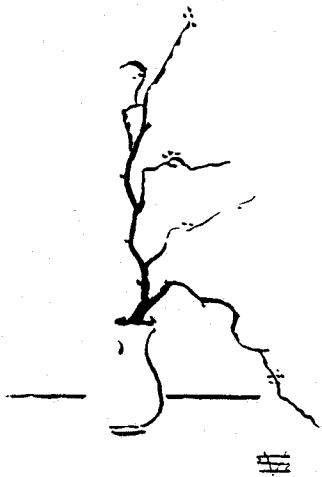
Please complete the enclosed Questionnaire to help update your information for the new Teacher Directory, and to input on how this journal may better assist and reflect your joy in practicing and conveying T'ai Chi Chih!

With this writing/compiling a second volume of The Vital Force, what 'it-al' may be that carries many to this avocation is contemplated. Those long-remaining-true in T'ai Chi Chih continue to lift us to aspire, and those newly-coming-through prompt vibrant encouragement to the many viewed as one.

Through these continuing connections, may we harmonize and uplift as a whole.

Sincerely, in mutual accord,

Liz Salada for The Vital Force



SUMMER SOLSTICE

Guiding brightness
shines powerfully
over head
into feet

See in' Summer
sun in' her
Self

Fully
a ray ed
In the Abundance of Life!

The outward joy
a gathered dis-play
of S O u L !

EXCERPTS FROM READERS' LETTERS:
Feedback on the new Vital Force

Christeen Sproehnle says: "The Vital Force is a vital focus." Three cheers for Lois and Liz. The NEW Vital Force is Beautiful! I am so grateful to you two for taking over the newsletter. It is the perfect evolution that is now in your hands; and even more professional....And Happy 7th Anniversary--Class of '84!

Virginia Shilson (Albuquerque, NM) says: "I never dreamed that The Vital Force could look so attractive, so vibrant. Please accept my congratulations"

From **Cheryl Hamblin** (San Leandro, CA).I love what you have done with The Vital Force--Really Wonderful! I'm very glad you are taking on such an integral part of this project. You have a vital energy that we all can benefit from and which I am personally grateful for.

Jean Katus (Fort Yates, ND)..I like the new VF format and substance. If this first issue is any indication of what you'll be doing, I'm impressed. Nice to get us all back to the core of T'ai Chi Chih a bit more.

Barbara Peller (Northfield, IL) writes: Thank you for serving/publishing The Vital Force. What an auspicious time to send out your first issue, in the new format, on the Spring Equinox! All the best! In peace & love.

Bente Sjoldal (Willow, AK) says "Thank you for the recent issue of Vital Force and for taking on the responsibility of publishing this important Journal. It is a wonderful way for us all to keep in touch."

From Albuquerque, NM--We are enjoying the fruits of your hard work immensely. Thank you very much for your work. With warmest greetings, **Suni McHenry**

Ralph Bowles (Alameda, CA) writes: Congratulations on a great job, and I look forward to seeing your hand, enthusiasm and love reflected in the publication.

Bernice Playle (Brooklyn Park, MN)--Thank you for Vital Force. I read it completely--every time I get it--I love hearing about other's stories and experiences. It is a great support.

Jeanne Jacobs (Stanwood, WA) Congratulations on the new Vital Force and your participation in it. I look forward to future issues and wish you joy and success. The layout is terrific and a marvelous springboard for future expansion and expression.

Corinn Codye (Santa Barbara)--Thanks for the advancement of the Vital Force - incorporating many improvements in format. Much substantive content...thank you. Looking more like a magazine, good!

Joan Torrence --Just super! Everyone supports and acknowledges your wonderful job.

Justin Stone -- I am grateful to Lois for what she does...and feel the Vital Force Journal carries a very positive note for everyone.

Vicki Brodie (Burlingame, CA)--This is a such a great way of communicating that I don't want to miss a single issue. Also, the new format is terrific.

Steve Ridley (Denver): I very much enjoyed the way you and Lois put the initial issue together--it shows a refinement. Continued success and enjoyment!

Linda McKenzie (Regina, SK) I look forward to receiving The Vital Force up here in the "boonies" and really feel a lot of gratitude for your effort, and the effort of all those who make it possible. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

CHI ASSISTS THE HEALING PROCESS

Steve Ridley

When chi circulates strongly through the body during T'ai Chi Chih practice, it sometimes highlights patterns of contraction - unresolved physiological trauma/tension and psychological conflict/resistance.

When this occurs a variety of sensations and spontaneous responses may be experienced. It is helpful to keep in mind that this is a useful process which indicates a movement toward needed transformation - a healing in progress.

A T'ai Chi Chih teacher recently informed me that one of her students desires to become an accredited instructor because of the wonderful benefits he has received through T'ai Chi Chih. This teacher also mentioned that her student was "bothered" when sensations of increased energy circulation occurred and that he stopped practicing when his hands strongly vibrated. This surprised me and I wrote him a note of encouragement, advising that he continue practicing, sensations or not.

Chi is the intelligent, evolutionary energy that nourishes and sustains us. It is not to be feared, but trusted. By working consciously and cooperatively with chi in T'ai Chi Chih practice, we invite a quickening influence to occur within us. The natural process of self-integration through the resolution of restrictive mind-body patterns is stepped up. There can only be gratitude for such a life enhancing opportunity. Anything that enhances the process of mind-body unification is to be welcomed, and T'ai Chi Chih can contribute significantly to this process. Know that the increased circulation of chi not only highlights areas in need of resolution by producing sensations - a symptom of resistance - but that it is an indication of harmonization in progress! In other words, though you may experience a variety of sensations: vibrating, pressure, heat, pain, cold, and mild to intense emotional surges, you are receiving indications that progress toward self-unity is usefully proceeding.

Regular, daily practice of T'ai Chi Chih ensures that self-integration will continue to unfold. This requires a measure of discipline and motivation. Each of us knows that we are here to grow into the limitless potential of our essential identity. And we recognize that by doing so we bring an end to the root of suffering. T'ai Chi Chih is a potent involvement that can bring about the resolution of self-fragmentation and disharmonious living, while opening us to true health and joy.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Steve Ridley

Spiritual growth demands continual re-birth, otherwise we stagnate and retard the potential process of our unfolding spirituality.

Self-satisfaction curtails the ever present opportunity for growth, because such an attitude creates resistance to the progressive and useful change that can bring evolutionary transformation.

STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

Karen A. Greene (student of Valerie Smith, Oakland)--As a relatively new (2.5 months) T'ai Chi Chih student, I've made a truly amazing and joyous discovery. My painful menstrual cramps have subsided to the point where I no longer need expensive and ineffective prescription medication to treat them. I now find them subdued to the state where they need no extraordinary care. May this blessing continue.

Yun Yu Hu (student of Ben Levitan, Albany CA)

In the Autumn of 1989, inflammation of the shoulder--I could not lift my right hand to the crown of the head and could not stretch it to the back. I could not take things out of the pants pocket. Especially during the middle of the night, I could not sleep--even though I slept, the pain woke me up. After 2 or 3 months T'ai Chi Chih I can stretch it to the back of my waist. (Oct. 1990).(Translation of letter at right.)

89年秋季, 我得了肩周炎(又名五十肩)
右手舉不到頭頂, 也沒有向後伸的能力
褲子口袋的東西, 自己都取不出來, 尤
其是深夜半夜, 痛得不能入睡, 偶而睡
著了, 也會痛醒來。

經過二、三個月的太極氣運動, 我
的手能伸到頭頂上, 也能向後伸到
後腰向。

John Schneider student of Liz Salada--Fremont, CA) Within all the confusion of my life right now, I'm sensing a sort of peace and order; and I have no desire to "figure" things out. I'm starting to just flow with certain things.....(later) Thank you for your beautiful poem and for your acknowledgment of my progress. I don't really understand what's happening--yet I know it's specific and it is meant to be now. There is a paradox here--while my life really hasn't changed in form and substance, my experience of it has. For the first time in my life I'm beginning to feel 'rooted', like I have some place familiar to be--where the things that happen and go on in my life still do--yet I'm not at their full effect. It's hard to explain.....It's funny how when you start to let go and go with the flow--things start to fall into place. I've even noticed a difference in my relationship with others, even people I've just met. There's a real calm and openness that's being reflected back to me. ..Thanks for your support and friendship.



What arises
as we aspire
within levels and depths
of self: newly unknown?

Earthened roots
anchored in rocky terrain
Gnarled smooth
growth - moving upward!

Giving character
to all we see
and appreciate

Through this
Strengthened and sustained.

May 4, 1991

THE FEMININE POWER OF T'AI CHI CHIH

Richard Brier

An interesting and overlooked aspect of the healing power of T'ai Chi Chih is the continual rocking, flowing and shifting of weight. I am not now referring to the physical healing aspect i.e. the aid to circulation of blood and chi, but to the psychological and spiritual soothing that occurs, the gentle bliss, which I liken to being caressed, held and loved by your mother (in her best moments!!)

This feeling of being accepted and loved, by Life itself and Mother Earth, is a major part of the experience of T'ai Chi Chih. To know you are loved, by Tao, God, the Universe, another person, or yourself is the key to genuine self-knowledge and the necessary purification such knowing entails. When I know I am loved (felt, not thought!) the very best shines forth from within. All of the cells are redeemed by the Grace, the negative thoughts of self-doubt, world-doubt and people-doubt are cleansed. Resurrection occurs from within when this experience unveils. And it is truly joyous, thusly, Joy Thru Movement.

As I flow through the form of T'ai Chi Chih and witness the flow flowing me, rather than I it, this luxurious feeling of cosmic soothing spreads throughout the body-mind and this benevolence continues out into the world. It is subtle, mysterious, and yet obvious as we witness the practice session.

Allow yourself to be embraced by the chi of T'ai Chi Chih and the balancing and healing on all levels will be quickened. The softness, continuity and receptivity inherent in T'ai Chi Chih has a remarkable ability to quickly move us beyond conceptual non-living to truly unified experiencing of our life.

That's because the body and mind and breath are all working together to create a space of openness to larger realities. May the healing rhythm of T'ai Chi Chih be with us always, in this incredible journey we all wonder and wander through.



SHEN

Shin (or Shen in Chinese) means Spirit. It also carries the meaning of extending or "creating". Shin dwells in the human heart and is the master or creator of the physical and emotional natures ruling all the activities of ki (chi) in both body and mind. Shin is in fact Tao within us, or God within us. It is the divinely inspired part of man...our spirit in tune with nature, seeing the oneness of all things, accepting the universal flow of change and reveling in the cosmic play.

(from Jin Shin Do--Acupressure Way of Health)

SAIGO AND DAIGO-- THE VERTICAL AND THE HORIZONTAL

Justin Stone

Some people have a small taste of the Vertical (the unrelieved Absolute) and they then begin to go to lectures, read metaphysical books, and argue with those who don't share their opinions. They have naturally translated their small experience into terms that are familiar with them religiously, philosophically, and psychologically. So they hear the Voice of Jesus, or they see Krishna playing the flute, or get a glimpse of the Buddha with two attendants. This disturbs their lives, because they now realize there is something more than their daily experience.

Others may have a complete 'vertical' experience, an overwhelming sensation of 'oneness' that takes them completely into the Absolute and makes it impossible to get back to their habitual daily lives. They now think transcendently and find everything in this world tasteless and meaningless. It is very difficult to live on in this fashion, even though the experience itself may have been joyous and almost ecstatic. Many who have this experience of the Absolute are sure they have achieved the final rung on the ladder and make no attempt to understand or integrate their experience. They may become renunciates and shun all worldly life. It is not a happy or fulfilling way to live, however. If they have a good teacher, he will see the dangers and lead them along the way to complete integration, back to the Marketplace with all humanity and, indeed, all life. Without a teacher, they may persist in this condition, understanding much of Eternity but little of Today. They may long for release from this world into a state that they conceive, without realizing that that state represents the state of their own minds. Having escaped Samsara, and had a real glimpse of Nirvana, they have not reached the point where they perceive that Samsara is Nirvana, that there is no need of escape, only integration. They are living in the Vertical, which is steep and slippery and untenable in this world.

Those who have followed a true teacher, or who spontaneously have an experience where they perceive their own enlightenment, are able to make the complete circle and come back to 'ordinary' life, which will now appear anything but ordinary. What need for argument when each thing is perceived in itself and seen as being 'true'? Such a person has little desire for metaphysical discussion, and no desire to foist his views on anyone else. He no longer perceives his experience as "Christian" or "Buddhist", and will get to the point where he forgets his own enlightenment. Not wishing to be a teacher, he is a true teacher by example. There is no chance of his being hung up on words or written characters. The Scriptures no longer serve a purpose as everything in life has become a Scripture. Truly, the moon shines clearly in a cloudless sky--yet there is turmoil, joy and suffering, below, and he does not avoid these. The Vertical and the Horizontal have been completely integrated. For how many does this happen?

A SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

Sr. Francis A. Kay

Little Falls, Mn

My ministry at Wholistic Growth Resources as a Body Therapist and T'ai Chi Chih teacher, affords me the opportunity to bring to the residential participants of our program, much joy and peace.

The sessions in T'ai Chi Chih are always gift, for each period brings new insights. No matter if the group is learning, reviewing, or refreshing themselves with the movements, I always bring the session to closure with some time of quiet. I read a short portion from some reflection of Justin Stone, or an excerpt from Steve Ridley's "Perspectives...", and then tap our beautiful sounding Tibetan bell. We remain in silence in the awarenesses received, as we sense the wonder of our body, the peace, the relaxation, the mental stillness, and the openness to receive from the Changeless Other. After a few minutes, I again ring the bell; each one leaves at her/his own timing and this atmosphere of joyous contentment pervades the day. We experience gratitude and universal harmony. Truly--gift!

TEARS OF JOY AND A HEART THAT SINGS

I work and play a lot with women and children who have been abused. One of my students, who was sexually abused as a child, said that through the experience of T'ai Chi Chih she was and is able for the first time in her life, since a small child, to be in touch with her body in a positive and loving way, and to experience a joy in living that she had all but forgotten was possible. My response to this: Tears of Joy and a heart that sings (with gratitude). Such are the rewards of participating in this wonderful experience.

Linda F. McKenzie
Regina, SK, Canada

ATTITUDE

Steve Ridley

Are we willing to open mind and body to a new depth each time we practice T'ai Chi Chih? Some reach a certain level of experience and understanding, concluding that they have gone as far as they can with T'ai Chi Chih. The reality is that they have only reached a point of resistance or limitation in themselves. The limit is not in T'ai Chi Chih.

The possibilities for integrated spiritual growth through the practice of T'ai Chi Chih are truly limitless. All limits originate in the medium of the mind; the self-created conceptual constructs we perpetuate for one reason or another. This condition is changeable.

Each time we practice T'ai Chi Chih ("knowing the Supreme Reality"), there is the potential for an original experience, a meaningful revelation. Can we open to receive it?

THE UNLEARNING PROCESS
(Shared by **Sandy McAlister** with permission
of her professor/the author.

In learning (the desire to know) increases day by day;
In practicing Tao, (it) decreases day by day,
Decreasing and decreasing until one reaches non-action.
Non-acting and yet nothing is undone.
The world should be ruled by non-interference.
If he rules by interference,
He is not worthy to rule the world.

The question which arises is how-How does one practice this reversal, this "return to the state of infancy"?

The rishis of India and the Taoist mystics of China after Lao Tzu agreed that there exists, within the human body, an invisible network of energy centers, sometimes called chakras, a psychophysiological power related to breath, blood, and the circulatory systems, but not limited to them, centers which are activated through mediation and motion.

***To stimulate the unlearning process, Taoist spiritual practices began by activating **ch'i** (life-breath or vital energy stored in the solar plexus) through breath-control, visualizations, and patterned, slow-motion movements. Called **Ch'i Kung** and **T'ai Ch'i**,

these movements are repeated to attune the practitioner to the rhythm of his or her own nature. To subtract day by day, to let go, to forget the self, to surrender one's own desires until one has reached true inactivity is to practice the Tao---for where there is stillness in movement the Tao appears.***

excerpt from
Chapter 6 The Taoist Way, World Scriptures, An introduction to Comparative Religions by
Kenneth Kramer, Paulist Press, 1986

THREE OF STONE'S INFALLIBLE LAWS:

1. At an airport, you always leave from the most distant gate (79 or 92). The less time, the farther away. Nobody ever left from 7 or 12.
2. When looking for a parking spot, it's always on the other side of the street. Even if you go around the block and reverse your field, it's still on the other side of the street.
3. Illnesses occur at night when no drugstores are open, and auto accidents on weekends when no repair shops are open. Usually it will be a 3-day holiday.

Chi!
Derek Hirsch, Santa Cruz
(Student of Liz Salada)

Let Go!
Let Go!
Let your river be.
It will do itself.
As all rivers
it is grooving,
being it's own way.

Into blue.
Into light blue.
It is the morning sky's hue.

And all our roots drink;
like clouds
or fire
or wind
or rain
or snow
or sun.

Just names,
We are one.

* * * * *

FREEDOM
Steve Ridley

Expansion of Consciousness or Spirituality is realized not through forcing or attempting to reach, acquire and attain idealized conceptual goals of increased awareness and fulfillment.

Consciousness is able to unfold through the willing action of continual opening, surrendering, releasing and letting go of the illusory parameters of any self-definition.

This process of expansion requires an ongoing, sincere effort of renouncing the sometimes alluring sense of comfort we may have found in an established identity, so that progressive unfolding of the innate potential can continue. This willingness to remain open allows for unlimited growth or expansion of Consciousness and eventual freedom.

It is equally important that we recognize the potential for continual growth in others, being sure to release any fixed concepts we might harbor about them - never projecting limitation onto them, but remaining open to and supportive of their ultimate resolution as whole beings.

PERPETUAL STUDENT

T'ai Chi Chih is such a Joy in my Life and such a Joy and pleasure to share with others. Sometimes in a small group, we practice in a circle and in that experience, teacher and student disappear: there is only T'ai Chi Chih and pure Joy. The gratitude I feel for Justin and this wonderful gift and to Steve for teaching me cannot be expressed in words. I am perpetually the student. May I never lose this perspective.

Linda F. McKenzie
Regina, SK, Canada



TEACHER ABILITY AND INTEGRITY

Justin Stone

The strength of T'ai Chi Chih lies in the ability and integrity of its teachers. I have never taken any payment from accredited teachers (it has been offered), but concentrated on developing good training for teachers' candidates so they would realize the ideals with which T'ai Chi Chih was developed. The results have been gratifying. However, recently one candidate entered a course without being properly prepared, physically or psychologically, and it created problems. I ask Teachers: Please do not be a 'good guy' and recommend anyone who does not do the T'ai Chi Chih movements well before the Course and who does not seem centered enough to be a teacher.

In the recent Albuquerque Course there was tremendous improvement by the candidates, and a joyous, loving attitude which made it a pleasure to teach. I look forward to seeing these new teachers--and most other teachers--at the August Teachers Conference in Minneapolis, followed by the Seijaku Course at which I intend to introduce a "maximum Chi program."

TEACHER CANDIDATES MUST PRE-QUALIFY!

Please be certain that each person you send to a T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Accreditation Course is well qualified. She/he must perform each movement excellently and should have a minimum of 6 months practice prior to the course.

Please be sure that your student(s) exhibits the appropriate characteristics of one who will conscientiously share T'ai Chi Chih in the manner Justin expects. This person must be mature and well integrated. This is very important.

Each candidate is expected to have an attitude of respect and cooperation, and willingness to harmoniously accord with the training process.

Stated briefly: contribute only those who measure up to Justin's and my standards. Be thorough in your preparation of teacher candidates and check them out closely.

Thank you - in Gratitude and Joy,

Steve Ridley

FOR SEIJAKU

- tension ----- chi sion
- release ----- chi lease

Tom Bleckov, Feb. 2, 1991

(A thought describing the process of Seijaku; Tom will be going to Victoria Teacher Training. He recently completed a Seijaku Course.....Jeanne Jacobs)