



THE

VITAL FORCE

Journal of T'AI CHI CHIH Joy Through Movement

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FREEDOM

Justin Stone

There is great joy when a baby is born and great sorrow when that baby, having become full-grown and aging, dies. Yet every baby that is born will die, we're all dying from the moment we are born. This is not a gloomy statement, it is a statement of facts.

Realizing this, knowing our life and everything in it is impermanent, why do we grieve at what is inevitable? Can we call it 'bad luck' that someone dies?

One time the Buddha was approached by a young woman who had just lost her only son. Her grief was great, understandably. She was told that perhaps the Buddha could help her. He listened patiently, then, seemingly in a rather callous manner, said he would not see her that day but she should return the following day. The Buddha suggested that she go to each house in the village and get one grain of rice from each household that had not been touched by death. When she returned the following day, she held out her open hand-which was completely empty. What better lesson of impermanence could there be?

Without realizing (not thinking of) impermanence, we can never find out who and what we are-and without knowing the latter, ours cannot be a fulfilling life. Without knowledge of impermanence and some inkling of who and what we are, we are just on a treadmill. We have good times and bad times, enjoy good health and the opposite, and have a few pleasures and a few pains. All this seems to make no sense and resembles the aimless movements of the tumbleweed tossed around in the wind.

The *I Ching* says there is nothing constant but change. To invent myths that seem to give us eternal status hardly helps anything. The cells of our bodies and minds are constantly in a state of flux, this is a fact.

Once we acknowledge that, as we grow older, we will not look the way we formerly did and do not possess skills we previously had, we can let go, 'abandon hope,' and accept the inevitable, meantime enjoying the freedom from constant striving. Grateful for being alive, enjoying the beauty of each new day, we can be ready to let go when our time has come.

Justin Stone is the Originator of T'ai Chi Chih! Joy Thru Movement.

Steve Ridley is the Spiritual Head of T'ai Chi Chih.

This journal is dedicated to T'ai Chi Chih teachers and practitioners worldwide.

May it serve you in "Knowing the Real."

Reflections . . . Along the Way

"Each Teacher's Course is a chance to develop new jewels and a force for 'good' in the world," is Justin's affirming message. It resonates with his closing statement in our TCC text's introduction: "...Join us in this simple practice...If enough people do TCC we might even have peace and love in the world."

This sureness moves me - as simple truths do - with inspiration toward profound possibility! As we face each new horizon with TCC, the day is lightened..with surprise or certainty, we ARE guided further along The Way.

May the beauty of our elemental nature be known in full expression! How grateful this joy! How loving it's origin! Enriching all lives - giving peace to our world.

S

Elizabeth Salada for
The Vital Force Journal

Without questioning
the response
reflects before me

So simply
gesturing openness
through loving aim -

In the rhythmic pulse
of cosmic kindness
I am embraced
wholly
now



INNER WORKINGS CONTINUE...

Since September when ways were suggested to bring VFJ subscription numbers up (at least to meet our minimum for reduced mailing rates), a number of timely renewals and several new subscriptions for students have been received (along with several donations). We appreciate your supportive response and the direct opportunity it affords.

In this light, we are happy to announce a special project planned for completion by the August Teachers' Conference:

A very special VFJ Issue--**A Chronicle of TCC Over 20 Years**--will be compiled from our archives and your perceptions of TCC's growth since your involvement. Start contemplating and writing your thoughts for a journal that will broadly reflect (as best as words can) the TCC experience. We also welcome questions you have about the history/development of TCC, etc. which Justin, Steve and some of the earliest teachers may be prompted to reply to. We need your input so please utilize our deadline of February 1st for the Spring VFJ and the 1st draft of our special issue.

THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR DEDICATION TO TCC-THE JOYFUL MOVEMENT WE SHARE, TO ABIDING PEACE AND HARMONY FOR ALL!

CONTENTS:

VFJ WINTER ISSUE

DECEMBER 1993

Page	
1	Freedom (Justin Stone)
2	Reflections...Along the Way (Elizabeth Salada)
3	Contents
4	Readers Commentary, Thank Yous
5	A Message of Joy in This Time (Steve Ridley)
6	A Few Bit & Pieces (Stone); The Personalized & Impersonal Life (Steve Ridley)
7	Winter Rains-poem (Jennifer Biehn)
8	<i>Perspectives</i> quote; Useful Teaching Connection (Steve Ridley)
9	TCC With Unclouded Mind (Steve Ridley); Comment from Justin
10	Philosophy of Teaching (Lia Ridley)
11	Make A Commitment to Personal Practice (Ed Altman); Chi poem (Loretta Shiver)
12	Justin Says; You've really made a difference in my life (poem)
13	Classic Contemplations; Teacher-Student, Pursuing Spirituality (Steve Ridley)
14	Teaching Tips and Tidbits; CHIH Wisdom
15	Resource Exchange: TCC Massage? Liability Insurance; Self-Employed Benefits
16	Experiences: TCC and Birth (Carol Glinski); The Flow of Chi, poem (Ralph Garn)
17	The Prince and the Grasshopper; Awakening (Linda Braga)
18	More on the Summer '93 Conference-Going Deeper (Connie Hyde); Being Present with an Open Spirit (Ellen Tatge); Love is Action (Carmen Brocklehurst)
19	Seijaku Change Is Good (Carmen Brocklehurst); poem (Ralph Garn)
20	Calendar Notes To Notice: First Registrant for 1994 Conference (Sandra Tanner)
21	1994-95 T'ai Chi Chih Calendar
22	Some Mini Statements (Steve Ridley)
23	TC Movement Principles (Steve Ridley); poem (Susan Hudgens)
24	Journal Entries: Love Songs (Joan Sultar); "Beauty of the Moment" (Scott Shore)
25	Unlimited Possibilities (Barbara Peller)
26	New Mexico's Special Notice; poetry
27	International News: TCC in Equador and the Philippines
28	Rocky Mountain High; Oregon Teachers Meet
29	Teacher News: Canada, Kentucky, New Mexico, Nevada, Washington, Colorado
30	Making News: Illinois Community Colleges (Barbara Peller)
31	CA Retirement Community (Barbara Riley); MT Gentle Fitness (Lynne Blackford)
32	Karnic Komments from Good Karma Publishing
33	Black Elk Speaks
34	Events Feedback: TCC Connected Form Class (Elizabeth Salada)
35	Autumn Awakenings (Susan Hudgens)
36	Comments on Alameda, CA's Teacher Training
37	Justin Comments; San Diego Accreditation (Donna Pietrzak)
38	Contacts for TCC, Distributors, Teacher Directory, Area Teachers Groups
39	VFJ Operations; Order Form
40	December Mailings (Note your expiration date on the label); "Ring in the Holidays"

READERS COMMENTARY

In Response

How interesting it is to me what was written about Justin's remarks on teachers' "underestimating the power of the Chi." I thought at the time (but didn't want to say) and have thought many times since then, that it is not the power of the Chi that we underestimate but rather our own power and abilities that we doubt. Practicing T'ai Chi Chih is evolution and therefore life-transforming, there can be no doubt of that. But the changes that occur which affect us on a physical day-to-day level can be overwhelming. As I continue to trust and to pursue whatever is put in front of me, I find myself involved in many creative, worthwhile endeavors. I don't plan, I just do, and my life is very full. I find I need more time to sit quietly. So, I teach one class at a time, sometimes one student at a time. It may appear that I am moving very slowly but mostly I feel like I am flying! Underestimate the power of the chi? No, I only doubt the strength of the vessel holding it.

Loretta Shiver, Albuquerque, NM

The VF gets better every issue. Thanks for all the time and effort you put into it for all of us to benefit.

Viola Moriarty, Denver, CO

THANK YOU

In September a number of area teachers met at the home of Liz Salada in San Leandro, CA. The afternoon began with T'ai Chi Chih practice outside; then indoors for conversation during the mailing process for the September issue of *The Vital Force*.

Thanks go to the following teachers for their help and fellowship: Sandy McAlister, Linda Braga, Lois Mahaney, Barbara Riley, Adele Wenig, George Balliet and newly accredited area teachers Rosa Fallon, Fred Muckel, Steve Tang and Randy Gale.

TO OUR READERS AND WRITERS WHO CONTINUE TO CONTRIBUTE ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUBSTANCE TO VFJ CONTENT.

We wish to thank the following people for their recent kindness in donating to VFJ for teacher outreach, referral, and other special projects:

Marjorie W. Peltier, Jamie McDonald, Ralph Garn (we missed thanking him last issue) George White, Martha Immel, Cass Redmon, and Pam Towne (on behalf of the 1992 Conference fund).

Are There TCC Situations.....?

Are there situations in which you or your students have creatively applied TCC in circumstances other than practice for practice's sake? How has it been used in stressful moments, preparation for activities, specific instances of the 'up' times in your life or 'down' events? Perhaps VFJ readers would find this interesting as well as helpful.

Vickie Brodie, Burlingame, CA

A MESSAGE OF JOY IN THIS TIME

Dear Teachers and T'ai Chi Chih Friends,

I want to thank you for passing the gift of TCC on to others, in your personalized, individualized way. Class sizes are increasing due to a surge of interest in learning to harmonize chi for health maintenance, vitality and peace of mind. I know that it is a joy for you as it is for me to be in this time and space offering a life-enhancing way, through which spiritual remembering is so well fostered.

We experienced many useful programs this year in various cities, including Justin's meditation retreat, the Chicago Teachers' Conference, teacher training courses and workshops. I know you are aware of the deepening spirituality evident in your life and through our body of teachers, as each year we unfold Essence in the here and now, more and more completely. This is Integration in progress!

I am grateful to have been able to meet with many of you this year. Your presence at various programs enriches my life. Several programs are already scheduled for 1994 (including the Conference in beautiful northern California - please register early), see the VFJ Calendar.

Love,  Steve

--- I hope, un-abandon-ly that this holiday season brings a deep sense of LOVE, JOY & PEACE to us all.



Without a hope (to abandon) we are free. Yogi Pranananda

A FEW BITS AND PIECES . . .

Justin Stone

The Japanese Poet and artist, Nobutada, wrote:

"Quietness and Emptiness are enough to pass through life without error (or suffering, I might add)."

Note this, you who are always rushing and being emotionally stirred by every phenomenon.

* * * * *

The Buddha was asked: "Are you a God?"

"No" was his answer.

"Are you a superman?"

"No."

"Then what are you?"

"I am *awake!*" was the surprising answer.

Buddha meant this literally. Most of us dream our way through life, superficially responding to the Karma brought on by our Vashanas (habit energies). Compulsive behavior is a sign of these.

* * * * *

Ryoanji is a Kyoto temple that is world famous for its unusual garden of pebbles and large rocks. Inside its walls one can find a sign that says:

"We can protect you from your enemies, but who can protect you from yourself?"

* * * * *

The telephone answering service (press 3) and the computer seem to be the new gods, joining the automobile (vehicle of isolation).

* * * * *

The moment of Enlightenment, concluded Zen Master Takuan, is the understanding of unity with all Creation, in which there is no need for individual desires.

* * * * *

The Personalized Life

Many experience Life only through their immediate 'mental screens' of uniquely personalized conditionings (subconscious patterns), which color the appearance of Life. This common mode of relating in Life provides a partial, relative identification of various living-processes as they arise, along with the associated reactive responses that are stimulated.

The Impersonal Life

Upon closer examination and sensitive contemplation, Life is recognized most clearly as: a unified, organic process of perfect equality, unfolding within a permanently stable and limitless continuum of CONSCIOUSNESS.

Settled in true understanding of the personal and the impersonal, one is able to demonstrate Spirituality.

Steve Ridley

WINTER RAINS

Winter rains
turn dirt to mud
Earth becomes moist
Energy runs deep
beneath the surface
Roots of trees drink
from labyrinths
of underground streams
Autumn leaves decay
into spongy beds of compost
Earthworms inch along
The creek flows heavy
First time in years
salmon swim
upstream
to spawn
and die

I, too, retreat
beneath the surface
Earthworms of mindfulness
sift the mind
I clean out debris
making compost
for the year to come

Rains of silence
saturate my parched soul
I send my roots deep
to soak up forgotten truths
buried within

Live simply
Do more of less
It takes as long as it takes

The creek flows heavy
I swim upstream
and welcome
the new year

Jennifer Biehn, Berkeley, CA

New Year 1993 7 day silent meditation retreat
at Muir Beach, CA



We sometimes call T'ai Chi Chih "Joy Thru Movement" because the practice of it helps uncover the Joy which is without cause. Steve Ridley

Above desire-driven pathways,
Behind boisterous mind-storms

T'ai Chi directs hearts
Infallibly toward freedom

A manifesting wholeness
Fostered in dispassion

T'ai Chi revives
All will see anew.

*PERSPECTIVES
In Motion and Stillness*

USEFUL TEACHING CONNECTION

Steve Ridley

How do we determine whether a spiritual teaching is truly useful, valid?

Are we more conscious, creatively functional, happier, emotionally content, prosperous (prosperity does not negate spirituality!), physically vital and mentally freer, as a result of our association and involvement? And, how well do we 'live the teaching'?

Beware of teachers who do not seem to have the capacity to manifest genuine, spontaneous humor (not sarcastic or intellectually generated "humor"). An intellectual with basic metaphysical understanding can pose as a knower of Truth, while being compulsively driven to acquire adulation and status.

A useful connection with a teaching or teacher will always be confirmed by a wholesome feeling in the heart center. Otherwise, one might feel a sense of contraction in the same area - which should not be mistaken with the initial apprehension and nervousness one might feel upon meeting a teacher for the first time. The teacher and teaching will feel 'right' for the individual at her/his current stage of spiritual awakening and the relationship will bear good fruit.

Though Reality gives faultless direction
to all beings,
It expects no followers.

All live under the dominion of Reality
consciously or not.

- Steve Ridley

T'AI CHI CHIH WITH UNCLOUDED MIND

Steve Ridley

By analyzing a thing we can get a sense of it, but only by utilizing a thing can we know its value for us.

Though T'ai Chi Chih is not specific (or restrictive) about which energy vessels or meridians are more prominently influenced when this or that movement pattern is practiced, we feel that a comprehensive balancing can be achieved by one who practices a variety of the 20 individual movements of TCC, correctly, on a consistent schedule.

Some TCC teachers have theories about energy flows prompted by specific movement patterns, based on personal practice. I feel that personal theories are not necessarily useful if shared with students. These speculations might detour a student from validating his experience because it may seem contrary to his teacher's reported experience.

A favorite T'ai Chi principle: Move With Unclothed Mind, is the best way to 'do' T'ai Chi Chih. Allow students to have their own experiences. The movements presented themselves to Justin intuitively, which should be trusted if one is utilizing TCC. Analysis does not bestow added benefits really. Regular practice brings results. Practicing TCC attentively, freshly, is all the 'analysis' we need.

**Regular and correct practice of
T'ai Chi Chih will enlighten and
liberate the sincere practitioner.**

Steve Ridley

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COMMENT FROM JUSTIN

Some teachers are willing to debate with students while knowing full well that the benefits come from the practice of TCC, not the words about it. "Why is the right hand in front of the left hand?" and "Why is this movement named so-and-so?"--useless questions that merely waste time. Do it and know that it works.

Justin Stone

This desire world
has a Spiritual foundation
which is individually realizable
as evolving clarity of perception unfolds.

-Steve Ridley

Philosophy of Teaching

Lia Ridley

Teaching has always been a vehicle for me to assist students' continued growth as individual people. Whether I was teaching 4th graders at age 21, a variety of dances to women at community and recreation centers, teaching English as a Second Language to students from around the world (of various ages and levels), providing workshops for teachers at conferences (on a variety of topics), all teaching opportunities have provided an avenue for exchanging love.

Regardless of what I happen to be 'teaching', the essential intent remains: sharing consciousness-love. The medium of teaching is not necessarily significant to the expression of this essential intent. I continue to derive a great deal of fulfillment from the variety of teaching opportunities.

Teaching has always been much more than being 'a director of learning', standing at the front of the class and so forth. I prefer to facilitate learning and to individualize learning needs. I always encourage, prod, question and listen, while circulating among the students and deciding how best to help guide arising situations.

An ongoing, important result of my teaching involvement is the gift of being a perpetual learner/student. Teaching can certainly accelerate growth when we do it in the fullest consciousness, as explorers and discoverers of the true human potential.



MAKE A COMMITMENT TO PERSONAL PRACTICE

Ed Altman, Redmond, WA

The importance of personal practice cannot be overstated. It is the opportunity to connect with our still-center; allowing the wisdom and peace of that place to emerge and touch others. As teachers there is no more important task than to tap into that stillness during our practice. Only then will it be consistently present during our teaching. Without personal practice it is difficult to teach in a clear, and balanced way. If you seek to expand your teaching, focus first on your own learning. Daily practice with a receptive (empty) state of mind is the key to success.

Personal practice should be discussed frequently during classes. Remember Justin's quote "You can't appease the hunger by reading the menu!" Nervous laughter! Let students know about your commitment, and encourage them to make one of their own. Check in with them each week and ask how they are doing with their practice, and discuss tips for keeping the commitment. Have students begin with something small which builds week by week, and teach them to be patient with themselves.

One curious point is that students often do not practice on the day of their T'ai Chi Chih lesson. This is the most important day to practice! It enables them to be more focused, get into the flow of the movements easier, and receive new teachings with grace. Always encourage students to do their practice before the lesson.

Furthermore the teaching will not be served without a sincere commitment to personal practice by both the teacher and student.

POETRY

How easily
Still
Centered
Beings
Forget Their
Inner Nature

No Self Excluded

Ed Altman



Chi

Peace in the heart
Clarity in the mind
Certainty of purpose
Unconditional love
This is why we practice

Loretta Shiver

JUSTIN SAYS

Here are some casual notes, make what you will of them:

Within this emptiness is a circle, and within the circle are the mountains and the lakes. There is nothing empty about emptiness!

The preaching of no words, the brilliance of no color.

Too few can be too many.

The ocean waves: the essence is water.

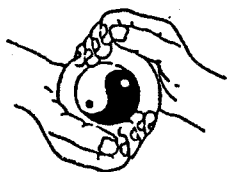
A day of profound gratitude. When we are grateful we are joyous. Gratitude does not mean rejoicing because some desire has been satisfied.

The hand of Satori is held out.

Confucius stressed 'human-heartedness' and 'Teh'. I find them preferable to the attitude of the Zen Master who turned his back on all callers.

The important thing about a problem is to understand the ground from which it arose.

You cannot give the same teaching to two people. It must fit the Karma of each one and never be a teaching by rote. How do you know what teaching to give? You will be guided.



JUSTIN

Many thanks for being (a) present in our lives! May each TCC practice and class be extended and received as actions of love, deepening the reflection of your innermost smile.

In honor of your influence:

How the wheel turns fully as these words (to the right) could be passed from one to another many times over in our TCC associations.

Remembering origins,
our message rightly returns to you now.

In remembrance of your birth:

Great Love
on behalf of the whole body
of TCC teachers-friends.

You've
really
made a
difference
in my life.

We probably cross paths
with thousands of people
in a lifetime,
And hardly even notice
a lot of them.

But there are a few,
like you,

Who affect our outlook
in an
important way...

You have been
a real inspiration to me...

I'm grateful
for that,
and grateful

That our paths crossed
the way they did.

You're someone
I'll never forget.

CLASSIC CONTEMPLATIONS

*The sage does not accumulate for himself.
The more he uses for others, the more he has himself.
The more he gives to others, the more he
possess of his own.
The Way of Heaven is to benefit others
and not to injure.
The way of the sage is to act but not compete.*

Lao Tzu

TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

Steve Ridley

When the love between teacher and student remains free, the relationship can continue to be an inexhaustible resource of spiritual nourishment.

The effectiveness of the teacher-student relationship becomes diluted when emotional possessiveness, personal expectations and intention to manipulate, cloud love with conditional boundaries. This kind of controlling relationship can promise only bondage. It is not freeing unless one or both in the relationship open to loving freely. Without unconditional love at the heart of the relationship, nourishment will be minimal (intellectual and physical only) and will have nothing to do with spirituality.

Teachers and students grow in consciousness continually if the relationship is founded in Love. Attachment inhibits the potentially creative evolution of the teacher-student relationship and its ultimate resolution.

PURSUING SPIRITUALITY

Steve Ridley

Surrendering is much easier than maintaining the 'seeker' role, undergoing years and decades (and whole life-cycles) of very difficult pursuit work.

Our essential Being Nature is ever Joyous, Fulfilled, Loving, Bright, . . .

