



THE

VITAL FORCE

Journal of T'AI CHI CHIH Joy Through Movement

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Spring Equinox

March 1994

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE AND THE EVERYDAY LIFE ARE NOT SEPARATE

Justin Stone

Spiritually-minded people follow many paths toward the goal of a one-pointed mind resting in Emptiness (the Fullness of Emptiness). Their problem is that they divide life into two parts: five hours of mundane thought and financial struggle, five minutes of spiritual practice. In other words, they see life as a struggle to make a living, to raise the children, and to let the habit energies drag them around. Then a brief oasis is reached and there is time to briefly contemplate enlightenment (whatever that is).

Such division is not the way. Properly seen, every incident in life points to the unseen Essence. Right in the midst of the turmoil one must rest in the Essence, making the effortless effort while shouting, crying, and feeling bitter and joyous in alternate periods.

In our freedom there are rules we follow, and in our anguish we are still aware of the empty desireless state. To not know, and to know we don't know--that is the real knowing. As my Zen teacher said: "When you once have a day of laughter, then you are on your way." It does not come from sporadic effort.

* * * * *

An enlightened (freely conscious) **non-doer**, recognizes that useful actions can be performed effectively, harmoniously, thoroughly and on time without undo stress, when one has sufficient spiritual development.

* * * * *

T'ai Chi Chih is a concentrated way to develop individual Chi. Ultimately it can hasten one's conscious reunion with universal chi - being as the wave, as well as the ocean.

Steve Ridley

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



Our Central Calendar of T'ai Chi Chih events is brimming for 1994! Several teacher accreditation courses are scheduled in monthly succession from now through July, interspersed with a number of TCC workshop-retreats. With this wave of opportunities followed by the International Teachers Conference in August, it is evidently

A Time For Us...to gather...to share...to receive.

With Joy, **S**

*In the aftermath of immersion
How obvious the completeness of things*

Elizabeth Salada
for *The Vital Force*

INNER WORKINGS

As of the last (December 1993) issue, *The Vital Force* is being printed on recycled paper. We are happy cost and availability factors permit this much-awaited conservation means. Be sure to notice the **New Enclosures** in this issue's mailing which include:

- a flyer announcement with complete details on our 9th International Teachers Conference, August 12-14,
- a re-useable Good Karma Publishing catalog with information on all TCC and related materials they distribute (like the recently completed New Justin Stone TCC videotape, which is also announced on page 37), and
- a pre-paid postcard-to be returned to VFJ-in confirmation of your current listing in **The New TCC Teacher Directory**

Teacher referral and outreach are two important aspects of supporting the widespread growth of T'ai Chi Chih. The VFJ continues to publish an annual TCC Teacher Directory for the purpose of referral and communication among teachers, and it's that time again!

Please complete and return the enclosed addressed and stamped postcard as soon as possible (no later than May 1st). Your response will provide important information to be added to the new directory (scheduled for August completion). Checking the accuracy of your personal information and noting any changes now will help us compile the most up-to-date listings and minimize later correction updates. (Read more under NEW TEACHER DIRECTORY page 38).

Features For Our Next Issue-We encourage more of VFJ readers to send in their TCC inspired writings. Perhaps some ideas may be generated from noting examples of our regular features which are depicted in the newly categorized Table of Contents. One suggested theme for the next issue is "Conveying TCC Principles"...share your creativity in the art of teaching by writing VFJ!

In addition, we look forward to hearing from hosts and participants of TCC events, such as the recent Seijaku Accreditation and Review. We'd also like to continue featuring individual instructors in each issue by means of a photograph and one-page Teacher Bio. This can be a very useful item used to present yourself with new TCC class proposals too.

Important VFJ Deadlines - VFJ submittal deadlines and mailing dates have been projected through the end of the year. Please note MAY 1st is a multiple deadline: for the June VFJ issue, the return of your teacher directory postcard, and the final extension date for your submittals to our Special Issue: 20th Anniversary of TCC! PLEASE WRITE!

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READERS COMMENTARY

Loved the last issue. Thanks for good work.

Patty Campbell, Cincinnati, OH

I feel so pleased with myself for finally getting an article written for the VFJ. Thank you for your fine work, and all the energy, time and love you devote to making it such a fine publication. The articles Justin, Steve and other TCC-ers submit are very interesting and informative.

Marian Massman, La Crosse, WI

Thanks for all your hard work. I always enjoy reading the VFJ.

Suni McHenry, Albuquerque, NM

Classes are really building up here. Joy to share Joy!

Richard Brier, Mill Valley, CA

Enclosed is my reponse to your invitation to write to *The Vital Force*. I so enjoy receiving each issue--it's about time I've given a contribution.

Sr. Antonia Cooper, No. Plainfield, NJ

We were away in cold Winnipeg, Manitoba for Christmas this year with one of our daughters and family (just north of Jean Katus in North Dakota). When we returned home my copy of *The Vital Force* was waiting for me. Reading Justin's article on "Freedom" certainly helped me. During our time away and on our way home we learned of four friends who had passed away. Justin's thoughtful words helped me out of a self-imposed depression I had sunk into.

Gordon Wade, Edson, AB, Canada

TEACHING & PRACTICE TIPS

New Mother's Realization

Keep a simple home in order to have a clear mind when baby comes--and to always have a free space to practice T'ai Chi Chih.

(Because I rarely get out of the house these days, it occurs to me we might offer the TCC video through *Parent* or *Mothering* magazines--to reach the homebound and healthy.)

Christine Sproehnle-Benson, Bend, OR

TCC at 3 vs. The Power Nap

Something that I have found out for myself and which I wish to pass on to you will be helpful to Seniors like myself. Every morning I do my T'ai Chi Chih then go to town where I am involved in several Volunteer organizations. I usually return home between 3 & 4 in the afternoon and often used to take a "power nap." Last week, I started doing my afternoon T'ai Chi Chih session when I came home instead of after my nap before supper. Guess what? After doing my session, I was so energized I didn't even feel like a nap and I actually slept better when I went to bed later on!

Gordon Wade, Edson, AB Canada

Align 'Em Up

Class stands in a line (like a conga line) one behind the other, fairly close, to do "Working the Pulley". This helps teach alignment of forward push from the shoulder and pulling back at the waist area. It's also fun and a nice "break".

Hope Ridley, San Mateo, CA

A CHOICE

Justin Stone

Anger usually comes from preoccupation with self. This other one has injured this self so precious to me, insulted or denigrated this ego that is separate from all others. Spiritually-minded people feel a common identity with others, so they do not give way easily to anger. Meditation-and T'ai Chi Chih-tranquilize the mind without dulling it.

To those quick to anger, I would suggest sleeping on it before countering in any way. Once anger-and sometimes violence-is vented on another, it is too late to recall it. *Ahimsa* means non-injury in thought, action and intent. To act differently is to dig the pit of Karma, we make our own future.

T'ai Chi Chih is softness in action, like the bamboo that bends gracefully before the wind but does not break. No-one is doing it; T'ai Chi Chih is doing T'ai Chi Chih. There is a timeless moment as we flow effortlessly through very heavy air.

At risk of sounding "preachy," let me say: Be honest with yourself. Don't rationalize. Do you find your actions accord with your words--honestly? If you find out who and what you are, they certainly will. But your motive and ambitions may get in your way. Don't judge them; just recognize them for what they are. That is enough. Ah, a world without anger!



THE JOY OF LIFE

Justin Stone

There are really two Buddhisms. Hinayana (also called "Theravada," or "Way of the Elders") is the old Buddhism that strictly follows the pessimistic teaching of Gautama Buddha, and Mahayana, which includes Zen, has a totally different outlook, though still believing in the three truths of Impermanence, Suffering and No-Soul or Permanent Identity. The last of these three explains the meaning of "Void" or "Emptiness," which plays such a big part in Buddhism; it means "Void of Self (or Independent) Nature," not lack of anything. The Great Void includes the rivers, mountains, animals, universes, etc. but all these are connected and mutually dependent.

The Buddha and his later disciples characterized this world as a "Forest Fire" and advised to get out of it. On the other hand, the great Zen Master, Yun-men, emphatically stated, "Every Day's a Good Day." The latter appeals to me more, I must say. If the reader could spend some time in a small, isolated Indian town he would see much reason for a hopeless outlook.

Seigan, a Japanese Zen Master, as he was dying, wrote, "The Joy of Life! Better than the Zen Doctrine!" AH!

MEDITATION PRACTICE

Steve Ridley

If spiritual awakening is our purpose/intent during meditation practice, whatever arises (sensations, emotions, light or sound perceptions), should be transcended. These phenomena can be used as opportunities for further opening in us, when perceived. Otherwise, we may become so fascinated with what is perceived that meditation practice is reduced to mental playtime. We are then caught up in self-distraction or avoidance of super-conscious realization.

Many meditate for the stress reduction benefits, in our culture and a few meditate regularly for the purpose of awakening and actualizing innate spirituality.

If we are meditating, studying and engaging in other spiritual systems of practice, it is well to remember our real status. One contemporary spiritual teacher often states: "We are not human beings aspiring to spiritual status. We are spiritual beings temporarily identified and involved with the human condition."

Meditation practice is intended to serve as a way by which the individual can awaken to her/his real status and to live this fullness of being, here-now in this and all worlds. Be single minded and vitally alert in meditation practice, being willing to open beyond whatever arises, to rest content as spirit. Following practice, rest content as spirit, functioning and experiencing through mind and matter.

Body motions stir
Transforming meditations

Penetrating power
Enlivens the marrow

A linking with joy...
River of abundance!

Steve Ridley
Perspectives...in Motion and Stillness



*The clarity of the meditative mind is able to meet the moment
soberly, in the quiet gratitude of spirit-fullness.*

Steve Ridley

The Spiritual Path
Yogi Pranananda

While engaged in the pursuit of 'consciousness awakening', one experiences continual conflict between what he presently is (as consciousness individualized) and what he presently aspires to be. This conflict is a necessary psychological condition of the Search, and a catalyst for its ultimate resolution.

Meditation presentness

Arising in your Self
to greet, fresh-minded,
the new.

- Steve Ridley



LIVING AS LIGHT

Steve Ridley

Spiritually oriented meditation practice emphasizes the use of various methodologies in order to create a favorable mind-body condition whereby Light (Reality) can be more completely realized and accommodated by the practitioner. One might assert: "I am engaging in this technique, this spiritual exercise in order to open to Light, to the experience of Reality." From the mind-body perspective, the common, conditional viewpoint or stance, we seek to acquire Reality.

When this common perspective is spontaneously transcended and Meditation alone is, we recognize: "The Light is what I am." We clearly see that the creative medium of the mind-body is included within Us as Our means of expressing and experiencing in space-time. We lovingly nourish and sustain this mind-body vehicle as a temporary modification of Our very Light, our authentic Condition.

Until we know "the Light is what I am," the seeming paradox of seeking That which we always already are, must apparently persist.

Meditation practice and other spiritual systems of Reality pursuit are useful, because they assist us in the willing activity of breaking through restrictive, Light inhibiting patterns of conceptual limitation. All sincere efforts contribute to the recovery and restoration of 'living as Light'.

BALANCING THE SOIL

Justin Stone

Tantra says that every cell of the body can be brought to a point of Bliss. If one will do T'ai Chi Chih and then remain quiet for a period of time--not thinking, not planning, not conceptualizing--he or she can experience the same thing. With absolute quiet of the mind, a pulsation will be noticed throughout the body. The movement of the Chi can plainly be felt, and that feeling is one of Bliss.

We tend to cloud the mind with worry, creating problems where none exist. Then we agonize over the problem, completely ignoring the ground from which the problem has sprung. This is "beating the cart instead of the horse" in Zen terms. (Zen is not advocating beating animals!) If the problem goes away, another will arise in its place as long as the ground from which it arose is unchanged.

In T'ai Chi Chih practice, the character of the Chi gradually changes (sometimes instantly), and then the ground where the seed sprouts has undergone a "revulsion," in D. T. Suzuki's terms. We do not fight the problem, be it a lack of something, an addiction, or whatever, but the problem cannot grow in the new, balanced soil. This is the aim of all true spiritual practice, and it happens so easily with T'ai Chi Chih practice, if that practice is regular and sincere. Some people practice sporadically, breaking off practice whenever there is something to worry over or resent, thus taking away the very tool which could be a help!

Constant resentment should be a warning to a person that something is wrong; the soil is ripe for new planting. Resentment comes from self-clinging. "Who are you to tell me what to do?" we say, creating a problem where none existed. Take a good look at the ground from which the resentment or the problem arose. Have the habit energies, the attachments, created that ground?



JOY-BLISS

Steve Ridley

The Center, Heart or Essence of us is (already, always) pure bliss.

Bliss cannot be 'created' through any method or discipline. When we engage in "spiritual practices," we are endeavoring to resolve and clear restricting tendencies from the ever transitioning field of mind-and-body. Such efforts may result in an improved mind-body condition and capacity for accommodating and reflecting our innate bliss, to whatever degree.

(I think it is important for people to continue to be reminded that cause-effect thinking is not bliss producing. Sometimes folks get this idea. Internal conditions allow bliss. Bliss can 'arise' while doing or not doing anything when the individual constitution-environment-condition favor it's arising.)

Balance in Growth

If the demands of your physical-material life increase, it is essential to increase your devotion to 'inner work', if balance and truly useful results are desired. As a tree grows in mass above ground, it simultaneously works to enlarge and strengthen its root system.

- Yogi Pranananda



From SPIRITUAL NOTES for Light Listening - Steve Ridley

Potential

If you didn't already know about it, would you ever suspect by examining it in isolation, that an acorn could become so much?

Comparatively as humans, many of us have yet to grow beyond the seed form of egoic consciousness. If we only knew what tremendous potentialities we could actualize! A seed must break open to truly live and communicate its potentials.

Spiritual Path

It is not that we are intentionally arrogant during the times we find ourselves opposing the 'Natural Way'. We are only continuing to progress toward our most easeful Resolution as spiritual beings. And, it is important that we progress in our own way, in our uniquely destined manner. What seems like progressing on the path of spirituality must eventually give way to comprehensive Wake-Fullness!

Yin-Yang

Cause and effect are inseparable actions, equally responsible for each other. This simple characteristic and relationship is the operational basis by which all life cycles are maintained and shaped.

Toward Balance

*Meditating and patiently waiting are far superior to "killing time" and the mental restlessness it sustains.

Pausing for a few minutes of quiet centering and renewal is always a life-enhancing thing to do when we are given space and time unexpectedly during our otherwise planned daily schedule.

(* "Meditating" also refers to T'ai Chi Chih, of course. 3-5 minutes of Rocking Motion can do wonders.)

THE ART OF TEACHING: LEARNING

"Mirror, Mirror: See What You Say"

Carmen Brocklehurst, Albuquerque

Unaware that she is being observed, the teacher does her T'ai Chi Chih. "Oh, I see that I have not been doing that movement right," the student says, in a caring voice. The teacher, interested, turns and faces the student. The student, having the teacher's attention, then goes on to show the teacher his concept of the movement (which is correct), and then shows her what she had been doing (which is not right).

Often I have heard teachers say, "I always learn a lot from my students." When teaching T'ai Chi Chih it becomes very obvious when we as teachers are not following the form we are talking about. Are we leading with the shoulders, instead of the tan t'ien while yinning and yanging? Is our knee turning in, and crossing over the opposite knee just before we snake the foot out for the side movement? Are our hands synchronized with our leg movements? Are we holding our elbows up too high and turned out so that there is tension in our upper arms?

Watch your students. Does it seem as if the whole class is doing the movement incorrectly? Is it their fault or are they being very careful in following exactly what the teacher is doing? Often we hear ourselves say the correct words, but if someone were videotaping us, what would we see?

Many times after practicing with Justin, I have noted the suggestions that he has made to everyone in general, and then later, at home, have taken the time to observe myself in a full length mirror. Sometimes I have heard myself say, "Oh, is that why I was feeling that tension," or, "No wonder that didn't feel round."

As teachers, we always have plenty to say to our students. Take time to teach the person you see in the mirror. It may give you some insight into the strange movements your students are doing, or from whom they get their extra fancy curves.

"The Fairest in the Land is T'ai Chi Chih!"

Tonight it rained
round, soft
joyous movement
no movement

Time
dissolves
in mist

Carmen

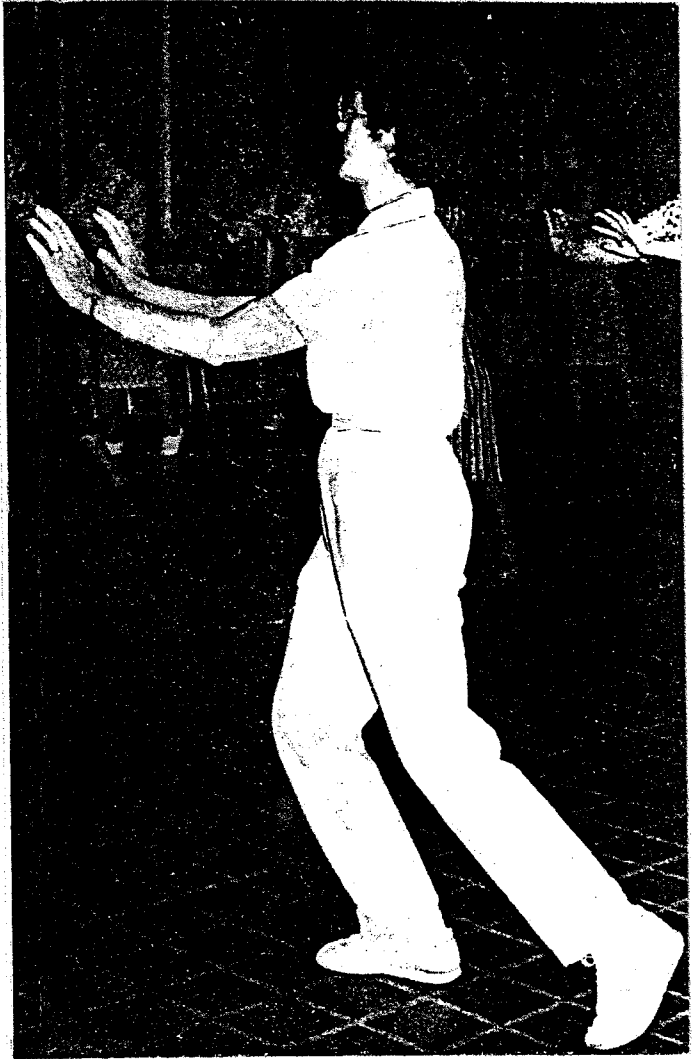
Thanks to all of you who have shared your TCC experiences, and to Liz and Lois for your excellent work in publishing and editing THE VITAL FORCE Journal.

United with all of you in the circle of TCC Joy, Light, Peace and Love.

MAKING THE NEWS

The *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, WI, of August 2, 1993 featured a TCC article (with this picture) of Sister Marian Massman. Quoting excerpts: Massman, a Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration, is a T'ai Chi Chih devotee and an accredited instructor who teaches the movements at the Franciscan Spirituality Center in LaCrosse. The words "gentle" and "exercise" may seem contradictory, but that is the premise behind TCC, a series of 20 movements that proponents say will energize and renew the body. "The more you practice and use the movements, the more benefits you get from them" says Sister Massman.

The movements, which employ various circular hand and arm movements and the shifting of weight and balance from one leg to another, can be learned by nearly everyone, including elderly and disabled people. Even people who can't use their legs can adapt the movements for use in some form. Massman, who has been practicing T'ai Chi Chih daily for more than a year, said she experiences a sense of relaxation, deeper breathing and more harmonious well-being. She has also noticed that her body is more supple and that occasional pains in her knees have disappeared. Now that she's teaching T'ai Chi Chih, she said her students report similar benefits.



Marian Massman, La Crosse, WI

T'AI CHI STATE OF MIND Joy In Print in Florida

Diana Daffner of Siesta Key, FL periodically offers classes at Shanti Center. Here are excerpts from her article featured in their newsletter, *The Shanti Connection*.

"Our thought process is not separate from the world that we view. And so, applying this principle to the energy that moves within us, when we *attend* to that energy, when we experience it directly, we influence its presence in our life. T'ai Chi Chih is an easily learned system for recognizing and experiencing this vital energy. It is a tool that enables us to actually enter into the realm of the energy. The movements direct our attention, and as our attention becomes rooted in the movement, we perceive a shift of consciousness from an outer-involved state of mind into a more internal and ultimately expansive state.

"In this 'T'ai Chi state of mind', we let go of past and future, and in this letting go of past and future we let go of fear and pain. The T'ai Chi state of mind existing only in the present moment, allows the natural joy of life to surge through us, unhampered by our thoughts of limitation. Our hearts open with a smile. We are no longer lonely or afraid. We experience an unconditional happiness.

"Through T'ai Chi Chih, we sense our connection to a larger universe....T'ai Chi Chih trains us to recognize and make that joyous connection easily. And it is a powerful training that goes beyond the movements themselves, encouraging us to be mindfully and physically present in all our activities. It allows us to attain the inner happiness that we seek."

Diana recently attended a T'ai Ji workshop in Big Sur, CA with Chungliang Al Huang. In a letter to VFJ she states: "...Although I have always allowed the TCC moves to transport me into a state of awareness that includes everything around me, I was reminded by Chungliang to actively bring the various energies of my surroundings into the moves themselves. His playful approach, how he dances with the Chi, and more importantly, how he allows the Chi to dance through him, has inspired my own practice. It has validated and confirmed my continued dedication to teaching TCC as an expression of energy presence...*Life, like Chi, moves in cycles and circles.*"

Joy Thru Movement



Tai Chi Chih