



THE

# VITAL FORCE

Journal of T'AI CHI CHIHI Joy Through Movement

Volume 11, No. 2

Summer Solstice

June 1994

Seeing is not seeing,  
lonely the road home!  
Off the treadmill,  
brilliant the spring flowers.

Innumerable worlds, strung like  
pearls along a path of daisies.  
Listen inwardly;  
Hear the wordless song.

## INTEGRATION

Justin Stone

To get stuck in the Vertical (the Absolute) is to avoid Integration; it is useless. To stay only in the Horizontal (mundane) is to let the Vashanas (habit energies) pull us around, like a tumbleweed blown by the wind. Integration is necessary; holding fast and letting go. Seijaku means "Stillness in the midst of activity." A true Saint is active in the world. After the Great Death comes true life as one returns to the Market Place, coming down from the top of the hundred foot pole.

Paul Reps, asked what he believed in, answered: "Nothing. If I believed in anything, there would be two." This is one side of the matter.

The Real within the apparent (Host within the Guest)--this is the Great Mystery.

## Spirituality

Steve Ridley

Intellectualizing about spirituality can never feed the true spiritual heart of us, nor can religious emotionalism. These are but surface motions that do not touch the inherent depth of wisdom-love that is the spiritual heart.

In relative, conditional consciousness, our life experience is based on what we identify with.

With spiritual awakening, an increasing freedom in consciousness is known, and our habitual tendency-drive to identify with something or someone, to acquire a measure of security and fulfillment weakens and fades. We grow more and more into our innate contentment-ease which is stable, enduring and complete.

## Reflections . . . Along the Way

Here are two quotes from the classic contemplations of Chuang Tsu which may be relative to our "practice" ...of living T'ai Chi Nature and Knowing the Real (from *Inner Chapters*, translated by Feng and English).

*"At the still-point in the center of the circle  
one can see the infinite in all things."*

♦♦♦♦

*"A path is formed by walking on it."*

### VFJ INNER WORKINGS

Our appreciation goes out to all the teachers and students who are sharing themselves and their T'ai Chi Chih experiences by writing to *The Vital Force*.

#### Thank you, Contributors!

**Current Issue Articles** - In the last (March 1994) issue, we suggested "Conveying TCC Principles" as a theme for "The Art of Teaching" articles, and encouraged one-page Teacher Bios (with a photo) as a means of getting to know our wonderful peers. We're happy to print responses to these requests along with many other creative contributions we've received! Just look through the contents to take in the diverse sampling of experiences and inspirations coming through TCC practitioners.

**Gather the Dreamers, Catch the Dream** - Be sure to read Sandra Tanner's "Update on the 9th International Teachers' Conference" (p. 20) to sense the program and ensure your involvement. Come celebrate the 20th Anniversary of T'ai Chi Chih!

**Reserve File for Future Use** - Please note VFJ has a reserve file of poetry, articles, etc. that we hold for future use. Most written contributions we receive are eventually printed; the discretion in choosing the timing of use is generally based on seasonal and topical appropriateness. We value your input, so if your item doesn't appear this time, know it is likely being saved for an upcoming issue.

#### Invitation to Write

Congratulations to the many newly or soon-to-be accredited instructors! We invite you all to share your aspirations and discoveries as you begin introducing TCC. VFJ's "Getting Started" column is formed by your input! Will you tell us the news of how your first classes start up...What prompted you to learn TCC and then decide to become an instructor...What has been most helpful to you as preparation for the accreditation course and useful in teaching? Share your revelations and weave a supportive teachers' interchange.

#### Next Issue Features

Also, in our next issue we would like to prompt some feedback from our seasoned teachers on the following Art of Teaching theme:

"How Do You Present TCC In Your Continuing Classes/What Is Your Approach and Intent?"

We encourage additional Teacher Bios (see sample formats on pages 33-35), and request you share more news and insights which spring from your experiences within this joyous movement, T'ai Chi Chih!

.....-September Issue Deadline: August 20th.....

#### Update on Teacher Directory-Referral Project

Due to the responsiveness of over 300 accredited teachers, the 1994-95 T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Directory will be the most up-to-date referral and communication source among active teachers. To date, 200 teachers have asked to reserve a copy of the new directory (which is still projected for August completion). If you have not requested your copy yet, please do so (no later than August 1). Please support the project (financially) by purchasing your own directory copy thereby contributing to the extensive-and expensive-outreach it represents; and show your support (intentionally) by using the directory for its purpose of promoting the widespread growth of TCC through communication and referral between teachers.

May All Know Joy...In Every Movement,

Elizabeth Salada for *The Vital Force*

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## READERS' COMMENTARY

Thanks for a great job. I wouldn't like to do without it.

**Marléne Brown**, Cincinnati, OH

I just returned from a Seijaku review in Albuquerque which was very fulfilling. It was just joyful to get around T'ai Chi Chih folks again.

**Judy Murphy**, Colorado Springs, CO

The New VFJ just arrived and it's a wonderful issue. More important than articles by Steve or myself are the very revealing letters from teachers. Congratulations!

**Justin Stone**, Albuquerque, NM

It was so right and nurturing for me to be at your house, Liz, with the other teachers for the VFJ mailing. And the VFJ is great, as usual.

**Linda Meyer**, Oakland, CA

Thanks for a great newsletter/magazine. I always look forward to getting mine, and it just keeps getting better!

**Helen Worrell**, Buena Park, CA

Without a reminder, the time for renewal is near. Also for up-dated directory when it's published. Namast e'

**Joe Apt**, Minnetonka, MN

Having a Table of Contents is very helpful...like one in the March issue. The format gets better and better. I like the drawings...they really add a lot. The Perspectives quotes sprinkled here and there are like gems to treasure.

**Vicki Brodie**, Burlingame, CA.

Great spring issue--the best issue yet, I feel. Good writing contributions by all. I like the new contents format--easy reference.

**Steve Ridley**, Denver, CO



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Belatedly, we are happy to announce the marriage of Christeen Rae Sproehnle and G. Brian Benson which took place in Boulder, CO; and now we are delighted to announce the arrival of Michael Sol (born on the Winter Solstice). They are all at home at 16678 Stage Stop Drive, Bend, OR 97707. Congratulations and best wishes!

\* \* \* \* \*

On March 12, fifteen teachers from the San Francisco Bay Area gathered at the home of Liz Salada to perform T'ai Chi Chih together and to help assemble *The Vital Force*. We try to do this each time *The Vital Force* is ready for distribution after Liz and Lois have already put in many hours of preparation.

This is a special time of fellowship, and all are invited to help. I mention this meeting because it was especially nice, and because teachers in other areas might enjoy trying this type of exchange.

We shared information about our classes, large or small. Those who are not teaching at this time still expressed the importance of T'ai Chi Chih in our lives. We discussed different approaches which have been successful in teaching the moves and making presentations.

I found these exchanges very valuable and stimulating. It was a most enjoyable experience.

**Hope Ridley**, San Mateo, CA

\* \* \* \* \*

*We are most grateful for the area teachers support of VFJ which is a vital and loving contribution!*

*Sincere thanks,*

Liz and Lois

## IMPERMANENCE

Steve Ridley

"You will live to be at least \_\_\_\_ years old," stated the Teacher matter of factly, adding, "That is your koan\*!"

My initial 'thought response' was, "Good. If this is so I have at least another \_\_\_\_ years in this body to clear myself of illusory, Reality-inhibiting tendencies, and to responsibly complete my work."

Actually, the Teacher's purposeful proclamation might have sent me into mild panic, feeling that my time was extremely short, had we not just emerged from a deep Reality-centered meditation!

Each of us has a limited time to play chosen roles in the grand process of living. Not many know at which moment their physical life will cease. This uncertainty can in itself be a useful, growth promoting koan for each of us.

\*koan: Japanese, meaning "a case," a special "problem" to be solved through introspective contemplation. In Zen, the resolution to a koan is marked or validated by an enlightenment breakthrough.

*Students of the Way  
curiously come and go*

*Disciples of the Way  
remain and grow  
studying and living in accordance  
with the Way*

*Masters of the Way  
assist the Way continually  
without differentiation or distinction.*

*Such individuals have no need  
to toil with thought.*

- Guess Who Tzu

### Spirituality

Steve Ridley

When mind and body are in serene, unified alignment,  
spirituality is evident.

Practitioners of TCC commonly have this experience.

## WHAT IS SELF-CULTIVATION REALLY ABOUT?

Richard Brier, Mill Valley, CA

*After-thoughts about my conversation the other day on the phone with Justin Stone:*

Justin kept emphasizing, rightly, that T'ai Chi Chih is concerned solely with the circulation and balance of the vital force (chi). That is its main purpose. I agree. I feel that it is important to amplify that statement however, for a fuller comprehension of its implications. What is this chi, this vital force and mainly what are its primary manifestations related to T'ai Chi Chih and other Chi Kung practices. Beginning with its purposes related to Justin Stone's creation of T'ai Chi Chih. The two primary purposes of chi development in T'ai Chi Chih are the evolution of prana and prajna. Balanced prana creates improved health and clarity of thinking, lower blood pressure and heightens vitality. The development of prajna is the development of spontaneous wisdom.

So the daily practice of T'ai Chi Chih, Joy thru Movement, leads to the awakening of this extraordinary thing called wisdom. Our decision-making ability improves dramatically, we no longer cling to our sense of personal identity, we become channels for higher information far beyond the limitations of ordinary thinking.

This simple practice can transform our health and well-being, for sure, but it can also transform our attitude to the life and death process. We learn how to live and how to die, with gracious hearts and a thankful letting go. In this way we align ourselves with the truly great teachings of the ages. For all that any teaching can do is show us how to let go and trust the process called Life. Only Life Itself is omniscient, the rest of us know only bits and pieces of the infinitudes of meanings and possibilities.

As we surrender to this joyful practice, we have many glimpses of the ever-present Reality, just on the other side of thought. We smile for we know that we have touched the hem of the garment of our Divinity; in such moments we are free. This form of self-cultivation is all about realizing the bliss of being and the beauty of a still mind.

May we all aspire to such transparency and open ourselves to this inherent transcendence, which appears as form. And may all of our cells smile, knowing the wisdom of non-abiding.

*The greatest miracle  
is the emergence of free LOVE  
through the spiritual transformation  
of the human heart*

Steve Ridley

## TCC Experiences

While doing TCC,  
arms, legs, feet, head disappeared  
just the rocking flow of chi I became-  
Pulled, Stretched, Smoothly I flowed  
Turns, Circles, Spirals, Ovals I became  
Bones, Skin, Nails, hair ceased to be solid mass-devoid of thoughts  
Currents of energy I could see  
flowing and moving like a stream from my Tan T'ien.  
Jarring pains in my left ankle moved  
as I saw the flow of chi moving through me-  
like broken rock pushed aside once the flood of water flashes by.  
Love, light, and life

**Jamie McDonald, Chicago, Il.**

## TCC Student Comments:

"You have given me an extraordinary gift and I am delighted with my T'ai Chi Chih practice. The benefits were immediate and dramatic, more than any other form of meditation or yoga that I've done."--*Catherine Clark, Lake Oswego, OR*  
Student of Elizabeth Tyler

For Justin  
T'ai Chi Chih  
gives us re-lease  
sim-ple moves  
filled with  
joy

For  
Teacher  
T'ai Chi means  
climb-ing moun-tains  
joy-ous-ly  
led by  
you

- Anne Doering  
T'ai Chi Chih student

## T'AI CHI GARDENING

Rosalind Braga, Castro Valley, CA

T'ai Chi practice is like tending a garden. How does your garden grow?  
We experience vibrant health through these methods:

**Cultivating the soil**  
as a beginning student of  
T'ai Chi Chih.

**Sowing the seeds of success**  
by regular, daily practice  
when you feel like it and when  
you don't feel like it.

**Providing fresh air and sunlight**  
by practicing T'ai Chi Chih  
outside and inhaling Universal Chi.

**Nourishing with water**  
by keeping a balanced diet with  
plenty of fluids, especially water.

**Staking your plant**  
by always being aware of  
"lifting in the head top" and  
"being rooted in the soles of the feet."

**Using a hoe**  
by creating "motor pathways  
in the brain" through regular  
practice so that movement is  
effortless.

**Weeding the garden**  
by discarding what is not  
needed and simplifying the  
movement patterns.

**Getting rid of pests**  
such as agitated thoughts and feelings  
by emptying the mind and  
focusing with "feeling awareness."

**Using Clippers**  
to snip off all extraneous movements  
and tension so the chi flows  
unencumbered.

**Mulching and Fertilizing**  
with varied readings from the  
T'ai Chi Classics and books by  
Justin and Steve.

**Crop Rotation**  
by practicing in different  
locations so that your practice  
does not stagnate and wither.

**Calling in the experts**  
by participating in Teacher  
Renewals and attending workshops  
and the Annual Conference.

**Letting the soil lie fallow**  
by allowing plenty of time  
between movements for complete  
stillness and integration.

**Harvesting the Crop**  
of Unlimited Chi through a  
vibrant life that manifests  
creativity, serenity, and joy.



## T'AI CHI CHIH AND HAND THERAPY

Sandy McAlister, Hayward, CA

After eight years of teaching T'ai Chi Chih I continue to be amazed by the multitude of avenues available for teaching and the variety of applications. One of my students, Eva Ching, is an occupational therapist specializing in hand therapy. She learned TCC about 10 years ago and recently took my class as a refresher course. In the past few years she has been using some of the moves with her clients. She found the movements helpful for several of her clients which weren't responding to traditional treatment. Eva felt other therapists could benefit from knowing about T'ai Chi Chih and its clinical applications which she has experimented with.

We put together a six hour workshop titled *Clinical Use of T'ai Chi Chih*, sponsored by the Northern California Hand Study Interest Group. Physical and occupational therapists attended. Eva presented her theory on why TCC has been a successful tool in her practice for treating people with chronic pain, and rehab of the hand. Her case studies were inspiring.

I presented breathing exercises for relaxation, a history of T'ai Chi Chih, and 16 movements. (The group picked up the movements quickly because of their familiarity with body mechanics.) It was emphasized that this was just an introduction, to give them a feel for this form of movement. They received a list of teachers in the area and were encouraged to take a complete class so should they decide to use a few moves in their practice they could pass them on correctly, allowing for the full benefit.

Participants received a certificate stating that they Completed Six Hours in Clinical Use of T'ai Chi Chih. I received a great deal of positive feedback on the workshop and it was a lot of fun to do.

I have often asked my students to think of T'ai Chi Chih as 20 tools they'll always have at hand to use for big or small jobs. Use a couple of moves for a few minutes for small adjustments such as a change in attitude, or to change one's energy level. Use all 20 moves to bring about deeper more profound effects. The variety of ways to use T'ai Chi Chih in our every day lives is endless.

### THE "P" WORD--Practice--Practice--Practice

Vicki Brodie, Burlingame, CA

It's hard to be clever when thinking of T'ai Chi Chih. It works. Why? Does it matter? I miss no more than 2-3 days of practice each month. I know TCC works because when things are hectic or difficult or out of control, I can cope. I live a very busy, demanding life. I enjoy it most of the time. When things are not as planned or expected, a little T'ai Chi Chih goes a long way. It helps me put up with what I must and cannot change or improve--even things I dislike doing.

I know if someone else had told me about the value of T'ai Chi Chih before I took classes, or even when I was just learning the movement, I would probably have thought they were kooky and/or disbelieved them.

I now know after practicing and continuing to study TCC for almost six years that it is real. It does work as Justin always says. "Do it and know that it works." Thank you Justin for sharing T'ai Chi Chih with all who are open to learning.

As I tell students whether they be studying T'ai Chi Chih or something else, don't forget the "P" word"-- Practice, Practice, Practice.

## ART OF TEACHING

### TCC AND HORSEBACK RIDING: A Practical Application of Principles Shari Growden, Winchester, VA



While learning the spiritual discipline of T'ai Chi Chih, TCC students are exposed to the concept that whatever the individual needs for balance in life is usually among the rewards for committed practice in the development of this art. I've found this to be true in many areas of my life since becoming a TCC practitioner. One of the most gratifying experiences was the connection between some TCC principles and some principles of horseback riding. I've been able to utilize this understanding to improve my riding skills which continues to give me pleasure in life.

Riding a horse seems to be one of the few arts many people think they can get up and do without instruction. Often we operate on the principle when all else fails read the directions. I've lived much of my life this way and initially approached riding a horse this way. I bought my mare several years ago and steered her around the county in a state of rather ignorant bliss. I rode frequently and for long periods of time with a lot of pleasure and a minimum of spills. With the birth of my daughter and a new business, my riding time began to decrease along with my confidence. My mare endured a couple of injuries, which gave her long periods of pampering without working. When I began to ride again my decreased confidence produced a high anxiety level, which was readily communicated to the horse, who began to act on it. I began to be afraid to ride and began to look at myself as someone who lacked authenticity. I was practicing TCC regularly and teaching yet I felt I wasn't producing the results in my own life that I was professing to others. I decided it was time to look at things on a very core level and figure out what kind of changes I needed to make.

I felt the need of some experts in my life at that point; obviously in riding and also in TCC. I began to search through the classics and review the TCC writings of Justin and Steve. I stopped riding and learned to do some ground work with the horse and spent most of my time in an enclosed area when I began to ride again. I enlisted the help of an expert horseman and long time friend and began to ride under the supervision of another excellent horseman in the area, in an effort to find a new perspective and some added support. I also began reading some riding books and made the connection of interchanging these principles.

One of the most important TCC principles is keeping the back straight during practice. This had new meaning when applied to keeping my balance in the saddle. Leaning forward or slumping in the saddle creates an unbalanced seat and decreases the chances of staying in the saddle if a horse jumps or bucks or even stops quickly.

One of the things I've noted over the years in watching skilled horsemen ride, is the sense of lower body weightiness with a loose relaxed upper torso. The T'ai Chi Classics state: "Strengthen the thighs, loosen the shoulders and let the chi sink down." The application of this principle and the concentration in the feet ("imagine the feet being rooted in the ground") gives a new perspective and sense of confidence in the saddle.

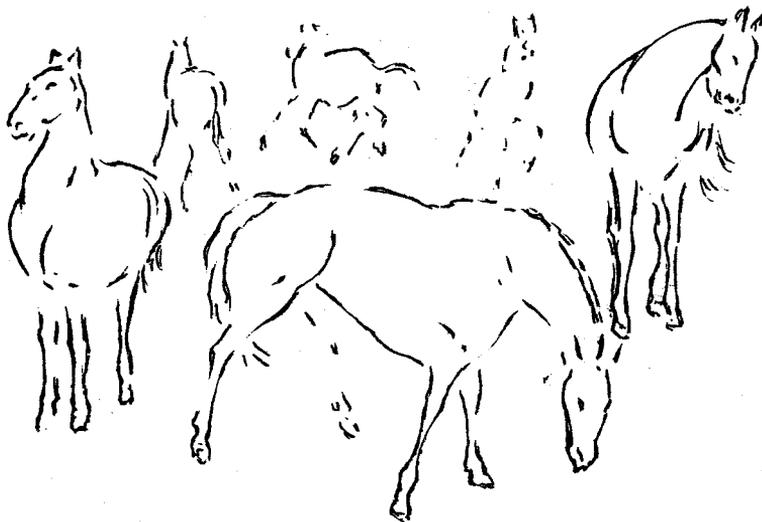
Relax and sink is spoken over and over in the classics. Relax and sit down in the saddle is the frequent urging of a riding instructor. The type of relaxation needed in both arts is an attitude, an attitude of awareness and presence in one's body, projecting confidence and alertness in your ability to do the task at hand. This is expressed in a soft facial appearance and also by one's breathing. Breathing conveys much about a person's emotional state to other people and animals. Holding breath or rapid breathing projects a sense of danger to an animal and a horse's response to danger is flight. To a human opponent this is conveyed as a one down position of another and an opportunity to achieve an edge. ☺

Relaxed breathing has to do with an open relaxed abdomen and being in our center, our point of balance and will, just below the navel. Experiencing this point of balance is necessary to achieve proper execution of TCC movements and to feel a sense of coordination and balance with a horse. Another quote from the classics states "being able to breathe properly leads to agility." Anyone who has experience the feeling of a relaxed open abdomen and a concrete sense of simultaneous pleasure and empowerment, I believe would agree that the discipline of daily practice for either of these fine arts is worth the effort.

A final comparison is that of quiet hands in riding and soft wrists in TCC. By keeping the wrists soft and relaxed in TCC practice the meridians are kept open allowing the chi to be expressed through the hands. The hands do not move independently of the waist and legs. In riding, the horse is guided and moved by the legs. Hand cues are in conjunction with leg movement and for reinforcement of leg cues. Uncoordinated and unnecessary hand movements are not only irritating to a horse, but confusing, especially to a young horse.

In conclusion, I have worked hard with TCC practice and spent a lot of very focused time in the saddle. My TCC movements have increased in potency and continuity. My mare and I are enjoying each other with increased confidence and unity. There are no substitutes for disciplined practice and quality instruction. It is my hope that by sharing this experience of a practical application of TCC principles will encourage others and open new doors of self revelation.

*"As you grow more relaxed you become less afraid. As you become less afraid you grow more relaxed." - Professor Cheng Man-Ching*



## THE ART OF TEACHING

### A PRINCIPLE IN MIND

Ed Altman, Redmond, WA

Have you ever examined a situation in which a child or pet is misbehaving? No matter how much you try to control them they will not respond. A wonderful thing happens when you place your full attention on them, and stop trying to change their behavior. Their breathing grows quiet, and they become still.

The same principle works with your mind. The mind does not respond by being ordered to "be still!" This usually has the opposite effect. However, when the mind is observed very closely, without any attempt to control it, the breath becomes quiet, and the mind is led to stillness.

Many of us spend our "personal work" trying to improve ourselves. This often involves trying to change the way we think, and act toward others. We struggle to be free of petty thoughts, act as we think we should, and often negate our own feelings. Many attempts to change our behavior have little effect because stubborn habit energies are involved. We are trying to become something we're not, and this can lead to difficulty.

In Zen we work to discover our true nature, or in Justin's words "who and what we are". This does not involve changing anything. It is observing the mind in action, and accepting what is seen without attempting to modify it. When the mind is engaged in this practice it is easily brought to stillness. The immersion of the mind in stillness, especially during T'ai Chi Chih, will help the sincere student experience deeper benefits from their practice.

Forsaking the world within,  
We create another  
Around ourselves.

Ed Altman

Practice deepens  
Teaching enlivens  
Both expand.

Ellen Tatge

### TCC PRESENTATION: LOOK WHO'S TALKING

Ellen Tatge, Albuquerque, NM

I was asked to talk to the employee "wellness" program delegates in the Presbyterian Hospital System at their monthly meeting. When I got up, I asked how much time I had and was told "five minutes." It was clear to me that the only way to convey the power of T'ai Chi Chih in such a short time frame was to simply do the movements, so after a couple of introductory sentences, I did two movements. Midway through, there was the feeling that the room and its habitants took a sigh of relief as people relaxed in reponse to the movements. In a conversation later with the program director, she said, "Ellen, that was a very impressive presentation! Everyone was very excited about it." I have received numerous calls as a result of this brief presentaion. I would counsel anyone doing presentaions to remember to "let T'ai Chi Chih do the talking."