

THE VITAL FORCE

Journal of T'AI CHI CHIH! Joy Through Movement

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Winter Solstice

December 1995

DEFINING "SPIRITUAL"

Justin Stone

Most people often use the word Spiritual (as opposed to Physical) without having any idea of the meaning of the word--they just think of something ephemeral. Even if you explain that it means "identification with the Real", they still don't understand because they don't know what is meant by "Real". If it is explained that "Real" means "Lasting" or "Permanent", the mystery remains. Isn't it "Reality" that you have to earn a living and pay the rent? At one level, yes, this is true, but that is not on a permanent level.

India's Yogi Vasistha helped clear away this mystery by counseling: "Ignore the taster and the thing tasted and rest in the tasting only." The taster is subject and the thing tasted is the object; obviously, both will disappear in time. But the process, the tasting, was never born, so

it will never disappear. If this lesson can be digested it is of great help to serious seekers. The one who is just interested in daily activities, completely unaware of their meaning, will, of course, be totally disinterested.

Self-interest is being preoccupied with something temporary. When it is overly strong, it can bring great suffering. Yet psychologists and psycho-analysts deliberately try to strengthen this narcissistic quality.

Properly seen, all happenings are 'spiritual', arrows pointing at the Real. This is especially so with so-called 'illness', which many advanced teachers look on as purification. We are all spiritual beings.

Chi is a life perpetuating impulse which appears to perform a variety of functions, according to what it is acting upon.

- Steve Ridley

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

Subscription Drive

Once a year *The Vital Force* promotes new and renewed subscriptions in an outreach measure to connect teachers through the Journal of T'ai Chi Chih. The drive has again been timed with the announcement of conference and a new teacher directory--valuable information for TCC teachers. Thanks to past donations which form a teacher outreach fund, this issue of VFJ will be sent to over 100 new and continuing teachers who have indicated interest in VFJ yet have lapsed or not yet subscribed.

In Appreciation

Thanks to all who sustain subscriptions and all who have made donations during the past year. Your support of outreach to teachers helps this project happen! Thanks also to our resource correspondent for coordinating all data detail in the aim of contacting TCC teachers. (Please read Lois Mahaney's article, "Subscription Quiz" on page 40.)

1996 TCC Conference

Enclosed find a flyer invitation to the upcoming summer Teachers Conference hosted by Southern California teachers.

Teacher Directory Referrals

A copy of the 1995 TCC Teachers' Directory is available. The Directory is to be used for referral purposes and communication among accredited TCC instructors. It is not to be used for or sold as a mailing list. Teachers may request a copy of the directory by sending \$5.00 to: The Vital Force, 1477 - 155th Avenue, San Leandro, CA 94578.

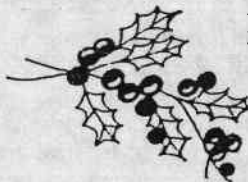
Consult VFJ for updates to information contained in the Directory. Each quarterly issue will include new listings of recently accredited teachers, changes of names, addresses, and phone numbers. Please keep us up to date on any changes to your listing by sending all new information to our address above. This is a wonderful referral tool to support the wide-spread teaching of "Joy Through Movement!"

Next VFJ Issue Deadline: February 1

Gratitude is far reaching to meet every VFJ contributor sharing insight, news, a photo, poetry, etc. with the continually growing TCC community.

May the upcoming year bring joy and peace and further express unification!

Elizabeth Salada
for *The Vital Force*



GRATITUDE

To give thanks only for that which we enjoy is shortsighted.

Each experience can contribute to our remembrance of being whole.

When whole, gratitude is our natural disposition.

- Steve Ridley

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Vital Force
Journal of T'ai Chi Chih

December 1995
Winter Solstice Issue

Features by Justin Stone

- 1 - Defining "Spiritual"
- 8 - When the Chi Flows Freely...
Vairagya : Non-Attachment
- 22 - The Growth of T'ai Chi Chih

Steve Ridley

- 7 - Practice: Thoughts on
Cosmic Consciousness Pose
- 9 - Reflections: Spiritual Growth
- 10 - Art of Teaching: Give 'Em a Break
- 11 - Meditative Pause
- 17 - TCC Commentary: Movement Principles,
TCC Practice, Joy
- 18 - Practice Notes: A Gift to Life,
Harmonization

Notes to Teachers

- 2 - Reflections...Along the Way (Salada)
- 4 - Reader's Commentary
- 5 - Congratulations
- 20 - Calendar Notes
- 21 - 1996 TCC Events Calendar
- 38 - Contacts for TCC
 - Main Material Distributors
 - Area TCC Teacher Groups
- 39 - VFJ Operations
 - Subscription Form
- 40 - VFJ Inner Workings; Subscription Quiz

Poetry and Perceptions

- 5 - Special Friend (Brocklehurst)
- 6 - Birthday Contemplation (Ridley)
- 7 - Amidst diversity and transformation (SR)
- 19 - Pyramid Poetry
- 25 - A Secret (Jones); Diamonds bright (clb)
- 30 - Eucalyptus trees and glaciers..(Covell)
- 37 - In the ringing silence...(McFarland)
 - Nature Meditation (Ridley)
 - Seijaku in Denver (Hyde)
 - From Here to Where (AOM)

TCC Experiences

- 12 - It's Your Chi (Glinski)
- 13 - Moving Together (Sultar)
 - Dramatic Results from Student (Katus)
- 14 - Learning the Way (Brocklehurst)

Teacher Articles

- 15 - Biography: Age Is Opportunity (Hoff)
- 16 - Letting the Tao Play Us (St. Martin)
 - We Are the Future (Brocklehurst)
- 26 - Sharing: Teacher Tip (Moore)
Hi-Tech Chi (Brodie)

Travel

- 23 - Moved by Chi (Martindale)
- 24 - Wherever We Go, There We Are
(Brocklehurst)
- 25 - TCC In Europe (Campbell)

Getting Started

- 27 - Networking and Classes (Garn)
- 28 - Making Right Choices (Weiner)
 - TV TCC Referrals
- 29 - TCC, Time for Oneself (Box)

Events Feedback

- 30 - Exploring Meditative Ways (Shiver)
- 31 - New Teacher News
- 32 - San Diego Training Comments
- 33 - Accreditation Reflections

TCC in Print

- 34 - Evanston, IL School Paper
- 35 - Albuquerque Journal

Inspirational Materials

- 36 - Karmic Komments, GKP (Katus)
- 37 - Music Soft and Gentle

READERS COMMENTARY



The *Vital Force Journal* issues just get better and better. Since I haven't been too involved lately, the VFJ helps me keep in touch. It's always interesting and informative too.

Vicki Brodie, Burlingame, CA

Great job on the current *VF Journal*. Thank you so much for your hard, dedicated work.

Steve Ridley, Denver, CO

Thanks for the fine new edition of *The Vital Force*. The spontaneous outpourings of teachers, expressing their joy in the very successful Denver Conference, were wonderful. Keep up the good work!

Justin Stone, Albuquerque, NM

The special conference issue is superb...it has brought back many fine memories of the time spent in Denver, my first conference experience. This has deepened and broadened my view/experience of the TCC family. Was good to relive it in the pages and words of this issue... Many thanks!

Life has been very full for me right now, and TCC has kept me very centered through the many activities that seem to come together at the same time, much beyond my control...presently conducting 6 classes and 2 practice sessions and traveling from south New Jersey while "house sitting" one of our convents in the absence of the 8 sisters who spent this week on retreat. I'm sure their prayers helped as well!

Sr. Antonia Cooper, No. Plainfield, NJ

The San Diego Teacher Training class made a commitment to each other to make a contribution to the *Vital Force*. (See *Events Feedback* pages 32, 33.) Here is mine. Thank you for all your wonderful work.

Elana Cohen, Long Beach, CA

This Fall I'm teaching: 2 classes at North Syracuse Adult Education; Seven Rays Bookstore-evening class; Hospice of Central NY-caregivers class; Lemoyne College-faculty and students; Manlius Senior Center-2-am classes; Scheduled: T'ai Chi Chih demonstrations at the Syracuse YMCA downtown and in Liverpool, a suburb of the city--part of an October program showing new offerings at the facilities. One demo for kids 11-17, 2 for general public (lunch time) and one for seniors.

Ralph Garn, Syracuse, NY

Ed. Note: See *Networking and Classes* article on p. 27 for information on getting classes started.

Heading out to British Columbia for six months for the winter. I hope to teach T'ai Chi Chih out there with Seniors. Sure hope to make the Teachers Conference in '96. (From Oliver, BC: I'll be teaching TCC to children in the Elementary School.)

Gordon Wade, Oliver, BC
(moved from Edson, AB for the winter)

During the conference and Sejjaku training I read the book Ishmael, by Daniel Quinn.

If anyone has read Ishmael, or does read it, I'd be very interested in your response. Please write:

Amy Hackenberg

1003 Greenleaf #3E

Evanston, IL 60202

or call: 708/869-2187

CONGRATULATIONS

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, JUSTIN

To Justin,

A very, very, Happy, Happy, Happy Birthday, filled with love and gratitude. The power and peace of T'ai Chi Chih, this marvelous treasure you've given to the world, amazes me more and more each day. As I move, my mind stops and I experience myself and all of life as pure awareness. Beautiful blue pearls and flashing streaks of light dance before my eyes. My body tingles with waves of energy. I dissolve into

pure light in the cosmic consciousness pose, and these experiences are there before and after T'ai Chi Chih, growing in strength and continuity every day. And SEIJAKU! Wow! It's even more profound! What an incredible blessing to be able to share these movements with others! In love, light, and life,

Timothy Stuetz, Anaheim, CA

* * * * *

Special Friend

You cause
my heart
to twinkle
me and all the rest
Because we always
feel from
you
we are
the very best

Gumble,
mumble
sometimes,
we haven't a clue

But with your art
you make us start

Begin

begin

A New

- Carmen Brocklehurst

FIRST TCC CENTER ONE YEAR OLD

On Saturday, September 9, the NM T'ai Chi Chih Center celebrated its first birthday. There was TCC practice, followed by cake and goodies. Congratulations to the New Mexico teachers for work well done in establishing and maintaining the Center.

(From Albuquerque T'ai Chi Chih News)



Justin Stone wants to thank all those who sent him birthday greetings. There were just too many to answer individually.

POETRY

BIRTHDAY CONTEMPLATION

Light spirals down
to enliven matter

Contracted in form
to develop uniqueness.
to become an other

Separation vanity
serves space-time's
integral game

Oceans of self-bubbles
journeying - acquiring
until the impulse
to return, reconstitute

Reflecting on
Light descending
to grace matter

Working its way free,
alertly unfolding
withdrawing
Remaining



- Steve Ridley

We want to wish Steve a very "Happy Birthday "
on his special day, December 10.
May Joy and continued Spiritual Growth be his.

TCC PRACTICE

THOUGHTS ON COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS POSE

Steve Ridley

The Cosmic Consciousness Pose contributes to aligning chi at the conclusion of practice and also invites energy to flow more prominently upward through the central spine into the brain, to help open awareness. To assist this process some choose to focus attention at the upper tan t'ien (3rd eye) while maintaining rootedness, of course. Following the posture, usually held for one minute, attention is returned to lower tan t'ien and bubbling springs.

Relaxing Into The Posture:

To easily endure in the Cosmic Consciousness Pose and to assist its fullest functioning, **breathe in comfortably absorbing energy through your entire body, spongelike, then exhale and relax into the posture. Repeat this continually, slowly, rhythmically for the duration of the posture.** Using breath in this way, practice time can be increased to several minutes for more complete benefits. It is not unusual for practitioners of similar still poses called Zhan Zhuang, "standing like a tree", to quietly endure for 20 minutes in one posture, sometimes balanced on one foot.



*Admidst diversity and transformation
can you abide in persistent patience
Like a magnificent tree
enduring vibrantly,
rooted peacefully
in a forest community?*

WHEN THE CHI FLOWS FREELY...

In the Prajna Paramita Sutra, the Buddha speaks of the "Perfection of Wisdom" and the admirable traits of the Bodhisattva.

This Wisdom is, of course, the Prajna, the inherent wisdom that is within all of us. When we let this Wisdom act through us, we are flowing with the Tao, going with the Cosmic Rhythm. The best way I know for doing this is through T'ai Chi Chih, not through words, doctrine, rituals, etc. When the Chi flows freely and is balanced, the Cosmic Rhythm begins to move us. The metabolism tends to change and we become reborn, with great effects on longevity of life.

As to the admirable traits of the Bodhisattva, it is almost impossible to fully express them in modern life. It would mean giving up the "I and Mine," moving away from the "Pleasure-Pain" continuum and ceasing to be selfish individuals, no matter how right that selfishness seems to be. There are few Bodhisattvas in the modern world.

Are we willing to put aside the unimportant to reach this Wisdom, or are we simply interested in entertaining ourselves and being lived by our Vashanas, the habit energies we are unwilling to change or give up?

VAIRAGYA NON-ATTACHMENT

To live a family life and be non-attached is very difficult and, at first glance, would seem to be unnatural. What father or mother would not be grief-stricken at the serious illness of a child? When one is supporting a family, how could one not be concerned about the financial future?

Yet, I have known a few who led successful family and financial lives while fully understanding the impermanence of everything. To feel one's present health and financial status is invulnerable is childish; any thinking person knows these can change in the blink of an eye -- or the crash of a car.

The Chinese say, "Make peace with heaven and not with men." This requires an understanding

that there is more than what we see, and that all things and beings are interrelated. The English poet, John Donne, referred to this when he said, "Ask not for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee." Yet most people are really interested only in the welfare of themselves and their families, the opposite of Compassion -- not realizing that the welfare of all others is closely integrated with your own welfare. To realize this is the beginning of spirituality. Until all have some idea of this interrelatedness, there will be wars, suffering, and injustice.

When you understand how temporary everything is, racial and religious provincialism will die. Then there will be a better, happier world.

(Permission to use above articles granted by *New Mexico TCC News*)

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

In spiritual growth, our perceived way of relating is continuously evolved through an unfolding comprehensiveness in Consciousness.

Our authentic identity or essence becomes more expressive and evident in the process of spiritual growth. We progressively function from the center of Being while enjoying the exploration of relating variously in this life.

Our essence being ever what it is, is the abundant heart of Joy-Wisdom-Love-Peace-Power or the incomparable Fullness which has become partially individuated and diversely oriented to endure relationships in worlds of concept and form.

* * * * *

Mind and emotions seem to obscure our Reality knowing.

No need to doubt the sun when passing clouds appear to mute its light.

* * * * *

Knowing our relatedness

Cultivate the preciousness
of each relationship.

* * * * *

Every moment a sacred event

Every space a sacred field.

* * * * *

Shaping chi
we shape our lives.

ART OF TEACHING

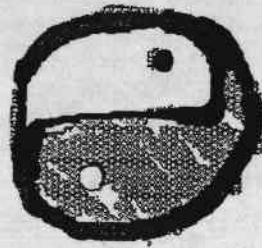
GIVE 'EM A BREAK

Steve Ridley

Allow a few minutes during class to sit with your students and invite TCC related discussion. This can provide balance to the 'work periods' of moving through forms together.

Your students will value the opportunity to sit and talk with you as a person, who happens to be

a teacher. TCC in the broad sense, is not restricted to the practice of 19 movement patterns, but is an ongoing way of living, which includes relating naturally with others. No need to be "all business" when sharing the joy revealing practice of TCC.



The most effective teachers are able to help awaken a student's inherent knowledge and encourage its blossoming.

* * * * *

The freer we are
in ourselves

The more we can help
free others.

* * * * *

Extraordinary teachers have worked extra hard
to allow something above the ordinary to manifest through them.

MEDITATIVE PAUSE

Take a few minutes now and then to quietly sit--
breathing gently through the heart chakra--
reflecting on the affirmation.

I am a vessel of peace,
mind and body,
an expanding fountain of love.

- Steve Ridley



Ultimate Love is the essence of the 10,000 things.

- Steve Ridley

* * * * *

Continue to have the courage to open in Life freshly
each new day, and you will be freer.

- M. T. Kupper

* * * * *

Continuity of surrender; continuity of opening is the way of meditation.

- Ho Hu Tzu