



THE VITAL FORCE

Journal of T'AI CHI CHIH! Joy Through Movement

Volume 13, No. 1

Spring Equinox

March 1996

THREE LITTLE WORDS

Justin Stone

Vairagya, Ahimsa, Prajna. There! I've put the whole of Spiritual Practice into three Sanskrit words, meaning (respectively): Non-Attachment (or Detachment), Non-Violence (in all forms, not only physical) and Inherent Wisdom. Living from natural intuitive Inherent Wisdom is the reward for successful Practice.

And the aim of all true Spiritual Practice (having nothing to do with Religious Dogma and Mythology) is to eliminate the Habit Energies (Vashanas) that have accumulated through many lifetimes, purging the compulsions that have

formed us and guide our lives, making our Karma.

Ahimsa, non-violence, is comparatively easy; Vairagya, detachment, is terribly difficult in our modern life, being in the midst of it and yet detached from it. Not one in a million realizes Vairagya.

Live a straight-forward, non-scheming life and you will be on the way.

(Used with permission from Justin Stone)



Our permanent state of being

(currently identifying as an individualized perceiver
experiencing life from within a matrix
of specialized mental-emotional-sensory faculties)

represents the highest wisdom and deepest love available anywhere.

- 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

Light and uplifted
while deeply planted
Openly centered in the
vertical expanse/horizontal planes
Finely threaded axis
suspending one-pointed aim
Flowing consciousness Pervasive
Fully here and beyond Now



VFJ INNER WORKINGS

Subscription Drive Update

Our annual outreach mailing to TCC teachers was received with ardor with least 50% prompt and congenial responses from (some new and mostly renewing) *VFJ* subscribers. Thank you! for demonstrating your continuing support!

Next *VFJ* Issue Deadline: May 1

We need more news and articles for the upcoming pre-conference issue of *VFJ* (to be mailed in June). You can make a meaningful contribution by sharing: a note about your teaching/practice, poetry, photo, etc. Write: *VFJ*, 1477 - 155th Ave., San Leandro, CA 94578-1922.

1996 TCC Conference

Southern California teachers present an update on the TCC Conference scheduled to meet in San Diego this July. See details on enclosed flyer and Calendar Notes (page 20) for this TCC opportunity to energetically commune.

Gratitude to *VFJ* Staff

A number of bay area teachers have met for several years now to extend their time and energy in preparing *The Vital Force Journal* for mailing. We express ongoing appreciation to our caring and generous volunteers.

We acknowledge with special honor, Lois Mahaney, for exceptional dedication in manifesting the vital force as a Journal of Tai Chi Chih. Since its inception, over ten years ago, Lois has been central in seeing an evolving newsletter printed with loving continuity!

By her certainty in its purpose, Lois will remain the key resource correspondent and phone contact for *VFJ* and TCC teacher referral projects (managing mailings, directory database and *VFJ* related communications). If you have questions about your subscription or changes to your teacher directory listing, you may call Lois directly at 510/276-5718.

A grateful welcome to Roberta Taggart, area TCC teacher from Cupertino, CA, who has newly committed her service to producing *The Vital Force* hereon. After a long period of *VFJ* seeking additional staff support, Roberta came forward and happily joined right in: typesetting and organizing a refined Spring issue. Her new beginning is our Joy!

Sincere appreciation to all staff, subscribers and contributors who support *The Vital Force*. Your creative energy expands the content of each issue.

May spring blossom in our hearts -- deepened peace and a profusion of joy!

S

Elizabeth Salada
For *The Vital Force*

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READERS COMMENTARY

OPEN FORUM

A question for *VFJ* teachers, Justin, and Steve to respond to in an "OPEN FORUM" column:

How do you handle (what do you say to?) students in class who correct other students' movements or try to tell you (the teacher) how to teach?

Feedback, please: Open Forum c/o *VFJ*, 1477 - 155th Ave., San Leandro, CA 94578

Susan Hudgens, San Jose, CA

READERS REFLECT . . .

"Life is like a precious jewel; always needing to be shined, appreciated, worn daily, and reflecting its reminder that every person in the world has a definite and irreplaceable role of our own uniqueness. At the same time, our beauty in the Total Oneness."

R. M. Arguello-Sheehan, Sun City, AZ

Center

**"At the center of
every human being
lies Bliss . . .**

**Clouds sometimes conceal
this simple fact,
as they sometimes conceal
the sun."**

"The consciousness can always find the place of the still lake . . . placid and yet pliable and ready for movement. The essence of this aspect of consciousness is that which can be found expressed in T'ai Chi . . . stillness in motion."

Mark W. Jones, Denver, CO

READERS WRITE

I thought some of the teachers of TCC might be interested in hearing about "Working With Stroke Victims" (see page 16 of this issue) ... maybe they've had similar results, maybe not. They may have also stayed away from the idea of working with stroke victims, because they thought TCC probably wouldn't work well for them. This may even surprise some.

Ray Watson, Batavia, NY

I enjoy the *Journal* and find the exchange of ideas, T'ai Chi info. and art of various mediums to be both fun and stimulating on many levels. Yours for greater chi awareness,

Mark W. Jones, Denver, CO

I always do enjoy my contact via *VFJ* with the TCC network.

Betty Comey, Provincetown, MA

I really enjoy *The Vital Force* and don't want to miss an issue.

Rita Foster, Minn., MN

Always fun to read the *VFJ* and find out what Justin and Steve are thinking and what some of the other teachers are up to. It's a tough job and you are all doing great at it!

Jean Katus, Ft. Yates, ND



THOUGHTS TO SHARE

-- from Steve Ridley, Denver, CO

I wanted to share this clearly stated reminder of Swami Chetanananda's with VFJ readers:

The World

The World is everything manifest. It is not an illusion, but it is not the substance of reality. It is like a play, and we are simply acting out parts. It has a certain magic and we should learn to play our parts very well, but we should never come under its spell.

Spiritual people use their experience in the world to learn discrimination, compassion, and freedom from judgment and fear. They are equally happy with austerity or opulence. They move through the world with great detachment, seeing it as nothing other than an opportunity for growth.

— Swami Chetanananda
Songs From the Center of the Well

-- from Kathy Grassel, Albuquerque, NM
Source: *New Mexico TCC News*, Jan. 96

One of my students, Karen Klett, came across this gem in a book she's reading on science and the Tao. Isn't it grand?

The wind was flapping a temple flag and two monks were having an argument about it.

One said the flag was moving, the other said the wind was moving.

They could come to no agreement on the matter.

They argued back and forth.

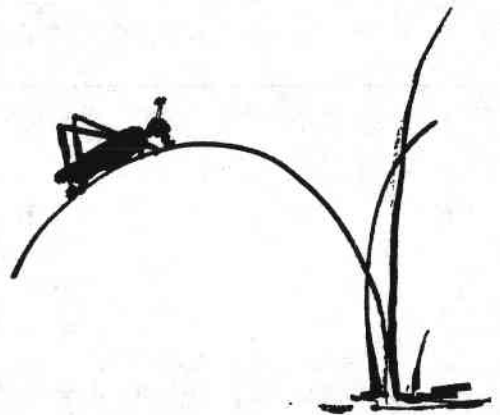
Eno the Patriarch said,

**"It is not that the flag or the wind is moving;
it is that your honorable minds
are moving."**

-- from Lee Campbell, Phoenix, AZ

The Superior Man prizes three things: the first is gentleness, the second is frugality, the third is humility. By being gentle he can be bold; by being frugal, he can be liberal; and by being humble he becomes a leader among men.

— Lao-tse



A Zen Master living as a hermit on a mountaintop was asked by a monk, "What is the Way?"

"What a fine mountain this is!" the master replied.

"I am not asking about the mountain. I am asking you about the Way."

"So long as you cannot go beyond the mountain, my son, you cannot reach the Way."

-- Unknown

IN MEMORIAM

*"For Life and Death are one,
Even as the river and the sea are one"*

--Kahlil Gibran
The Prophet



Died
John Joseph Barbour
Husband of
Joy Barbour



The T'ai Chi Chih community wishes to express their heartfelt sympathy to Joy Barbour on the loss her husband, John.

For those who wish to write, Joy can be reached at: HC4, Box 17-W, Payson, AZ 85541

Meditation in the Bosque de la Mente Jan Arrott, Albuquerque, NM

Experiencing the morning in my soul
the grey mystical diffusing dawn subtly
creeping into my awareness
that inner awakening to the fullness
of light which filters in, between the
trees of my mind, the calls of the birds
the flapping of wings taking flight.
Dew and mist and cool air currents
brush my cheeks with a light kiss
My eyes open up and I see the sky
all around me and my heart turns
to joy.

Source: *The New Mexico TCC News*

Christening

Rhonda St. Martin,
Albuquerque, NM

Rain
Blessed tears
River of Life
Carry me gently forward.
Moon Rising
Shrouded by the clouds
Cleansed
Tender
Ready

Source: *The New Mexico TCC News*



Attention

Ralph Garn, Syracuse, NY

Where's my attention?
Where am 'I' now?
Once below . . .
Then into the brow.
Upward the climb,
Never the end . . .
Floating alone,
One to transcend!

A friendship founded in love and refined through time is
one of our most precious life gifts.

This love meets the center
of love in you and beyond the two.



Art work by Loretta M. Shriver

True Love

The love which is infinite yet endeavors to express
freely through each of us is true.

NOTES TO TEACHERS

TEACHING TIPS FOR T'AI CHI CHIH TEACHERS (also useful for students)

Justin Stone

A good T'ai Chi Chih teacher must be able to detect the faults of the student -- and then be able to correct them. This means that, through his or her own practice, the teacher must have come to more than a shallow understanding of T'ai Chi Chih movements. Teaching is more than just showing where to place the hands and feet.

Once the teacher has shown the correct way to move (softly, with continuity), he or she might look for faults in balance. In a movement such as Pulling Taffy, the pupil may have shifted the weight to the left side while the hands are still on the right side. (The hands and weight must shift together to the Yang side.) This is awkward. As in all movements, the shift in body weight must be synchronized with the movement of the hands. Teachers must have an understanding of "substantial" and "insubstantial."

If the pupil does not have enough body coordination to do this, then he or she must be

allowed to do the best he or she can. However, a teacher must be able to do this gradual shift of weight correctly. The pupil will imitate what and how the movement is done by the teacher.

With most it is a lack of understanding, and the teacher must be able to spot the difficulty and correct it through example. Another common difficulty is moving forward to a stiff front knee, instead of a bent knee that takes the weight and becomes substantial. This can also happen in regard to the back knee. The back knee should bend the same amount as the front knee, not one bending and the other becoming stiff (and remaining insubstantial).

With almost every movement, there are things to look for that to be corrected, and the teacher must realize this. It is my hope to write a pamphlet that will point out these different possibilities and how to correct them.

Source: *New Mexico TCC News*, Feb. 1996

TEACHING TIPS PAMPHLET

Justin Stone has written a new pamphlet called "Teaching Tips" for T'ai Chi Chih Teachers". There is no charge; it is free. Teachers who turn up at Vic Berg's "Seijaku and Meditation" Retreat, at Steve Ridley's one day "Meditation Retreat", at the April Teachers' Training Course, or at the summer Conference, will be handed the pamphlet. Other teachers may receive their free copy by mail from Connie or Carmen, who helped finance this venture, by sending \$1. to

one of them to cover the cost of envelope and mailing. We feel teachers will find the pamphlet very useful, and that's why it is being offered as a gift.

Contact:

Carmen Brocklehurst
9500 Prospect, NE
Albuquerque, NM
87112

Connie Hyde
P.O. Box 349
Cedar Crest, NM
87008-0349

SEIJAKU PRACTICE

HOLDING FAST, AND LETTING GO

Ed Altman, Fairfax, CA



Justin frequently teaches the T'ien T'ai form of meditation during his intensive workshops, and has discussed the fact that the movements of Seijaku are based on similar principles. T'ien T'ai is a meditation practice of, **"holding fast, and letting go"**. It requires the practitioner to "hold fast" to a single point of concentration. When thoughts come forward, the point of focus is "let go" as the origin of the thought is observed. Eventually, when the thought subsides, the attention returns to the single point of concentration. This practice allows one to encounter thoughts without fighting them, and often leads to profound meditation experiences.

In Seijaku, the practice of **"holding fast, and letting go"** is expressed by working through a resisting "force", and returning to softness. During the practice, one must pay specific attention to the transitions between the hard and soft aspects of the movements. It is a common mistake to anticipate the resistance and begin pushing hard too early, thereby avoiding the opportunity to reside in softness. After multiple repetitions, a residual resistance may build up and overpower the movements.

This leads to the question "What is being "held fast" and what is being "let go" during Seijaku? Most focus on resistance, and end up being controlled by it. Focus on softness instead! Make the movements "mostly soft" and just work through the resistance at the appropriate moment. This is how Seijaku is taught -- as mostly softness. This does not mean that there is not substantial resistance, but it need not become the consuming focus of the movements. When resistance is encountered, it is like a thought during T'ien T'ai meditation; it must be observed with detachment.

Remaining quiet in the still center of things, working through resistance as needed, being sensitive to the timing of it all, and returning to softness. This is the definition of Seijaku: **Serenity in the midst of activity.**

**to be impatient
is to doubt
the timing
and impeccability
of the universe**



**When the life-impulse flows through us in constructive, harmonious ways,
good T'ai Chi is enacted.**

TCC PRACTICE

Though many initially come to T'ai Chi Chih for stress management and health building, with regular practice they also undergo a quickening of the spiritual actualization process; a more rapid blossoming of capacities which represent their most complete identity. Similarly, those attracted to sitting meditation practice for the life enhancing side benefits widely reported,

eventually experience, if they will persist, the life transforming benefits of deepening spiritual remembrance.

The reason one is attracted to T'ai Chi Chih isn't important. Regular, correct practice yields the fullest results which can seldom be predicted.



Meditation

**Contentment in quiet stillness is the certain foundation
of meditation practice.**

**The awareness that remains when the body has become comfortably still,
and thoughts of I and mine no longer dominate,
is real, permanent, dependable, complete.**



TEACHER - STUDENT

I recently came across this passage from my personal journal of some years ago:

"It is good to enjoy the personal company and consciousness of my Teacher for inspiration and renewal. It is also deeply refreshing, rejuvenat-

ing and creatively inspiring to quiet down in the peacefulness of this moment, alone."

Spiritual teachers who insist their students become strong and responsibly independent (and the sooner the better!) are the finest preceptors we can hope to attract.

Spiritual teachers are quickening agents, sparking growth in receptive students.



Compatible Flow

Thoughts on Grace and Karma

Grace is evident in the passage of each breath through the body.

Karma is what we do with the gift of each breath.

Grace is our Original Face expressed in our karmic life.



Spiritual Path

Some argue that “householder dharma” is a superior spiritual path where one lives Reality affirming principles in the midst of the trials inherent to daily interaction in our world.

In any case it is important to realize, whatever our chosen path, that living a conscious life doesn't require any special environment or circumstance.



Householder dharma
dancing our karma
knowing One
in all these things

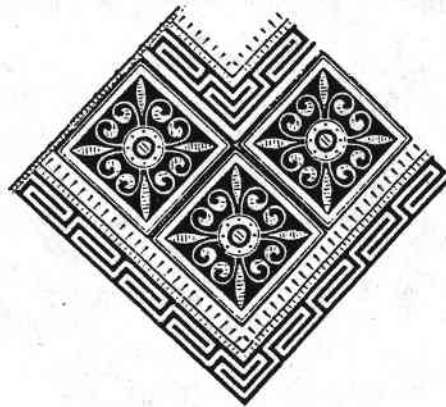
SINKING INTO THE ESSENCE

It is hard for students and even teachers, to understand that T'ai Chi Chih is not just a beneficial exercise. It is so obvious that [it] has great physical benefits, that it helps control weight, and that, without effort or perspiration, it greatly enhances the energy level that the tendency is to feel that these are the major benefits of T'ai Chi Chih practice. If the one practicing persists, however, the deeper levels -- the Essence of T'ai Chi Chih, if you will -- begin to dawn on the practitioner and it is realized that T'ai Chi Chih is unique in design and that one begins to sense, and flow with, the great Cosmic Rhythm. T'ai Chi Chih is not designed for self-defense or any form of violence; rather it is an

inner discipline ("Naikan" in Japanese and "Nei Kung" in Chinese) that brings to life the dormant Vital Force (Intrinsic Energy) and balances it as it circulates it, breaking down blockages that may have existed for a long time, in a sense offering a rebirth if the student is sincere enough.

Words play no part, nor do concepts. The Prana (Chi) knows well enough what to do without an intellectual roadmap. All the practitioner has to do is enjoy it and reap the benefits of renewed Life Force.

Source: New Mexico TCC News, Nov. '95.



Spiritual Practice

Form and format don't matter. The result is what counts.

Are we experiencing progressive growth?

- Steve Ridley



Contentment

Unraveling the mystery of your own existence
results in ultimate contentment.

This is the most difficult,
most fulfilling
work we have to do.



We Dreamers

This is a desire world and a symbolic world;
a dream universe in which we are invited
to awaken and know freedom.

Acknowledging the infinite spiritual foundation
of our transitioning universe
is a step toward freedom.



FEATURES

TASTING THE FOOD ON THE TCC MENU

Justin Stone

Two letters I received this week, typical of many that come my way, give an idea of the constructive influence that T'ai Chi Chih teachers are having in relieving suffering and bringing a sense of peace and joy to people. A young lady, a new teacher, writes, "Having had juvenile rheumatoid arthritis since the age of 4, I am grateful and have never felt so flexible and symptom-free. I feel like I've been uncorked and the joy is just fizzing out all over!"

No publicity person could write statements like these. Only personal experience brings these feelings. They should be inspirational to all TCC teachers, showing what good they are bringing to people in their own teaching.

For those who stick to their regular practice, they will plumb the depths of T'ai Chi Chih, the Essence of it, and know these feelings for themselves. For those who begin to feel the joy of TCC practice and then inexplicably, back away from it, it is a shame that they do so. Perhaps they do not like the feeling of Joy, having enjoyed sadness since childhood.

I hope the teachers who read this will push on with their own practice and become active members of the TCC family. Steve Ridley and I wish all teachers this Joy.

Source: *New Mexico TCC News*, December '95

TCC Practice

Practicing T'ai Chi Chih enables us to work constructively with the "evolutionary energy", quickening the emergence of our innately limitless capacity to give life to others while usefully and significantly nourishing ourselves.

- Steve Ridley

TCC TEACHING

Steve Ridley

As T'ai Chi Chih teachers we give without reservation to those attracted, and ideally remain available as a support person. Doing this, our task is complete. This is the constructive way to serve. It would be contrary to the spirit of T'ai Chi Chih to in any way encourage a dependency relationship with students.

One of Justin's early students upon successful completion of his teacher training course exclaimed, "Well, I don't need you anymore!"

Justin then confirmed, "His is the right attitude." He was willing to be self-disciplined and conscientious in his continuing involvement with T'ai Chi Chih.

The freer we are in ourselves, the more we can help free others. Well integrated, sensitive teachers are agents assisting students in the realization and unfoldment of their fullest potentials. There is nothing of self-interest in their sharing.