



# THE VITAL FORCE

Journal of T'ai Chi Chih<sup>SM</sup>

Volume 15, No. 2

Summer Solstice

June 1998

**"The bamboo ... bends with the wind, and when the storm has passed, snaps back into place, unharmed.**

**Softness proves more durable than hardness.**

**Assertiveness takes a back seat to gentle firmness.**

**Overtly the Sage does nothing, and, thereby, all things are accomplished."**

**Justin Stone, Originally published in The Vital Force, June, 1985**



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## Features in This Issue

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Justin Stone Features: 'Non-attachment' and 'DEEP Study'

Ed Altman on: 'Collective Momentum'

Folsom Prison: Jim Hecker

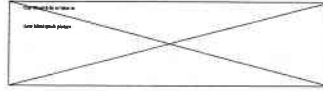
'Practice' by Carmen Brocklehurst

Kathy Grassel Reviews 'Spiritual Odyssey'

Students Write About: Hip Surgery, Emotional Balance, and Full Potential

Teachers' Articles: Teaching the Homeless, Seniors with Alzheimer's Disease, NASA Study

Teacher Profile: Tara Stiles



# **THE VITAL FORCE**

## **Journal of T'ai Chi Chih**

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*The Vital Force*, Journal of T'ai Chi Chih, is an unincorporated, non-profit association, serving T'ai Chi Chih practitioners worldwide. Membership in the Association includes four quarterly issues of *The Vital Force*, the annual Teacher's Directory, quarterly mailing parties and outreach activities, such as teacher referrals. The annual membership fee is \$30 for teachers (which includes listing in/and receipt of the Directory), \$25 for interested persons. Foreign addresses require an additional \$10 a year. First class delivery is an additional \$5.

The purpose of *The Vital Force* is to provide a voice for teachers and students who wish to contribute constructive articles, poems, photographs and drawings, make inquiries of other teachers, and announce future T'ai Chi Chih events, including T'ai Chi Chih and Seijaku teacher trainings.

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### **SUBMISSIONS**

Please send submissions (writings, photographs and drawings) to: Roberta Taggart, *The Vital Force*, 10145 Parkwood Drive #3, Cupertino, CA 95014-1562. Phone: 408-252-5405 FAX: 408-255-9547. E-mail: taggart1@earthlink.net. Manuscripts should be typed and double-spaced.

Submission deadlines:

Fall	July 31 <sup>st</sup>
Winter	October 25 <sup>th</sup>
Spring	January 25 <sup>th</sup>
Summer	April 25 <sup>th</sup>

### **MEMBERSHIPS**

Changes of address and back issue requests (\$5) should be sent to Lois Mahaney: *The Vital Force*, 1633 Via Amigos San Lorenzo, CA 95014-1562. Phone: 510-276-5718. *The Vital Force* is published quarterly and bulk mailed to association members during the second weeks of March, June, September and December. If you do not receive your issue by the 30<sup>th</sup> of these months, contact Lois Mahaney. When moving, please allow six weeks notice and provide complete old and new addresses. The Post Office now charges \$1.33 for the return of undelivered issues. Please help us avoid this expense.

### **TCC TEACHERS' DIRECTORY**

The *T'ai Chi Chih Teachers' Directory* is for referral and communication among accredited TCC teachers. It is not to be used or sold as a mailing list. Association members receive a copy of the Directory annually. Updates are published in each issue of *The Vital Force*. Send changes and additions to Lois Mahaney at the above address.



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**Justin Stone is the Originator of T'ai Chi Chih  
Ed Altman is the Designated Head of T'ai Chi Chih**



柳絮隨風

The  
willow  
fluff  
follows  
the  
wind  
without  
attachment



## NON-ATTACHMENT

by Justin Stone

There is a Life Force with a great urge to manifest – that we can easily discern. Whether we personalize it, give it names, or worship it or not, it is present in the humblest of creatures as in ourselves. My experience would say that it works thru PRAJNA (Inherent Wisdom) and PRANA (CHI, the Vital Force), and these we can know and use. If one lives his or her life thru PRAJNA, the answers will come out right, and quickly.

When I suddenly decided to live in Albuquerque, and to find a house during a short visit, the right house was found in a few minutes. The same thing happened in India, Japan and Chinese cities, etc., and I assure you it was not because of my efforts. We are looked after if we rest in the PRAJNA – not if we scheme and try to use ordinary methods. These are not idle words; to ‘achieve’ the Prajna we must live with TEH and compassion. With proper circulation of the PRANA (CHI) these come naturally.

To lead a Spiritual Life, we must live with AHIMSA and VAIRAGYA. The first, Ahimsa (non-violence, including hatred, envy, greed, etc.) is easy to attain. Meditation (proper deep meditation that leads to the Turiya State) and T’ai Chi Chih, will help us, if we really want it.

VAIRAGYA, however, is very difficult in this material world. To read the great Indian Saint, Ramakrishna, we would be shocked that he tells us this also means non-attachment to family, friends, wealth, et., almost everything we adhere to in this rather selfish life style. Few have the urge to

follow VAIRAGYA and give up pleasures. There is no need to feel guilty if we are attached, but attachment will hinder us on the Spiritual Path. This is not my opinion. Non-attachment is almost impossible for a householder.

Nevertheless, we can easily live with AHIMSA, and it is strongly urged that we do so without allowing exceptions. To lie or spread rumours are two forbidden courses of action, as is physical violence.

Why do people leave their ‘cushy’ lives and go to India or some other Eastern country (I don’t mean for a few weeks of a guided tour)? It is because of great need for TRUTH, and the teaching that can enable us to follow TRUTH all the time, not just once in a while. It would appear that those who have done so have made great sacrifices, but, actually, they have enhanced this life and lives to come. Pleasures and rewards do not last; the real Bliss comes when we reach the level of Reality (Turiya State), and we must have instruction in how to do so.

The self-enlightened person is extremely rare, almost non-existent. Such a one dwells in Concept, not in Holy (there’s that word!) Experience. She, or He, may convince others, but inside, this person knows. One cannot fool the Self. Karma will not allow it.

*So, Homage to this Life Force.*

*Don’t try to define it;*

*just be grateful to it.*



## EDITOR'S NOTES

Summer approaches, enveloping us with its warmth and abundance as the earth yields crops of fruits and vegetables to strengthen and nourish our bodies. As conference time nears, we are presented with a special opportunity to come together and nurture one another: sharing T'ai Chi Chih, talking about the work that we do, and building community. Each of us, at different stages in our growth and evolution, can embrace each other in the spirit of fellowship, providing the connectivity to keep our community strong, growing and vital.

If you have not yet made your reservation for the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual TCC Teachers' Conference, it's not too late to join us. Don't miss this opportunity to celebrate and spend time with Justin, Ed and Noel, Carmen and the Conference staff – but most of all with each other – *teachers are the heartbeat of T'ai Chi Chih*. Our *VFJ* staff looks forward to seeing you, hearing your stories, sharing in your laughter and tears, reveling in your work inspired by service and commitment

and watching your hearts reunite once again in the spirit of love and compassion.

This pre-conference issue of *VFJ* was a delight to put together. I hope you find something within these pages to inspire your teaching endeavors and lift your spirits. Outreach is a special focus of this issue: Aida Wilks has introduced TCC to the Philippines; Jim Hecker, an inmate at Folsom Prison in California was accredited to teach TCC in May. Barbara Sommers has shared her teaching experiences with seniors who have Alzheimer's Disease and Wendy Helms has written about volunteer teaching to homeless people in transition. Students have written about regaining agility, the potential of practice, recovering from hip surgery, and balancing of emotions. There are several teachers' articles on practice and other topics – each with its own flavor, and there is an article or two about Justin, along with teacher news and other interesting readings. Enjoy!

In the spirit of community,

## VFJ - IT'S A GOOD THING!

By Ed Altman

T'ai Chi Chih teachers continually comment on how much they look forward to receiving each issue of *The Vital Force*. It's the best way to stay informed and connected with the T'ai Chi Chih community. It is so valuable that all newly accredited instructors now receive a 1-year subscription (or extension) as part of the teacher training course fee. Why not bring a copy of *VFJ* to your classes and share it with students? Many of the articles and topics will be of interest to

them. You can take a few minutes of class time to discuss the value you get from your subscription and read an excerpt from an article they might find helpful.

Most students will want to browse through *VFJ* before or after class, and some may want to subscribe for themselves. You can make that even easier by providing copies of the *VFJ* membership form on the inside back page.



## READERS COMMENTARY

### IN MEMORIAM

Rev. **Helen Bungardt Pope**, who was in Justin's second Teacher's Training and was Carolyn Shaw's, Marian Sears', Virginia Shilson's, Lynn Altman's, and Carmen Brocklehurst's first T'ai Chi Chih Teacher, passed away on Thursday, May 14, in her home in **Sedona, AZ** of a heart attack.



Our sympathy goes out to her husband and family. She lived a beautiful life -- one of service.

### LIFE'S LESSON . . .

Dear Readers,

A year ago the San Francisco Bay Area T'ai Chi Chih teachers gave me a wonderful gift. They had a red Japanese Maple tree planted in San Mateo's Central Park to honor the passing of y husband, Ken. Many of the instructors knew Ken and appreciated his support of Steve's, Lia's, Tamara's and my teaching of T'ai Chi Chih.

First the squirrels attacked the tree and feasted on the tender branches and roots. The leaves drooped as winter began, then the heavy rains came, and I was afraid we'd lose it, though the gardener told me it was OK. I check every week and today, to my delight, I discovered very small new buds on the branches. Now I think the tree will make it and be enjoyed by many visitors.

Thanks again. I think there is a life lesson here.

**Hope Ridley, San Mateo, CA**

### VN SPEECH POSTPHONED

Justin Stone's scheduled appearance on May the 11<sup>th</sup> was post-phoned. When another date is set -- we'll announce it!

### ABOUT THE NEW VFJ FORMAT

Congratulations on a very good issue of the *VFJ*! . . . enjoyed the new format.

**Ed Altman**

Enclosed please find an application for *VFJ* for one of my excellent students . . . Thanks for all your hard work in keeping *The Vital Force* alive. With loving Chi,

**Ursula Bridge, Victoria, BC**

Bravo! The Spring '98 *VFJ* is magnificent! . . . glad you stepped forward and created an uplifting issue. Thank You!

**Guy Kent, Albuquerque, NM**

Please renew my membership. It's so important to me to keep in touch through *VFJ*. It's both supporting and inspiring. My thanks to those whomanage the distribution and those who contribute their stories.

**Anthea Lee, Edmonton, AB Canada**

I've enjoyed many aspects of the new issue of *VFJ* . . . It looks really great!

**Noel Altman, San Rafael, CA**

Your *VFJ* of March '98 is just beautiful. Congratulations to the staff for bringing together an inspirational and timely TCC publication in the enlarged style. Nice going.

**Gene Box, Seal Beach, CA**

The new *VFJ* [format] . . . looks good. . . . It seems more expansive . . .give[s] more space to artwork, etc.

**Jean Katus, Fort Yates, ND**

I love the new *VFJ* format. Well done!

**Kathy Grassel, Albuquerque, NM**



## ***SPIRITUAL ODYSSEY: A BOOK REVIEW***

Kathy Grassel, Albuquerque, NM

Like iron filings to a magnet, it is no surprise that Justin Stone's essays should come together in a book. This collection is called *Spiritual Odyssey* and comprises Justin's writings from 1985 to 1997, the settled years in New Mexico after a lifetime of work and travel, artistic and spiritual pursuit.

These are works previously published in *The Vital Force* and the *New Mexico T'ai Chi Chih News*, taken from among Justin's many talks, or even retrieved as snippets from the backs of envelopes or paper napkins. The writings are not in chronological order for those who might be tempted to look for any kind of traceable linear spiritual evolution in the author. That you might know Justin as a band leader, artist, Wall Street trader, jazz pianist, tennis player, author will not help you here. This compilation transcends all of these labels and tells us ultimately that it is the realm of the spiritual that is Justin's legacy, that the purpose of life is spiritual development and that its unfolding will not be linear, logical or orderly.

For those who know Justin as the originator of T'ai Chi Chih, the book contains many essays about its practice and purity. These are 19 movements and a pose that Justin conceived and perfected, that people since 1974 have been practicing with results ranging from relief of migraine headaches to overall greater clarity and peace, to better performance in sports and music, to better balance and stronger bones to remission of tumors. Still, we know from Justin and from our practice that T'ai Chi Chih is above all a spiritual discipline, circulating and balancing

the chi within us, connecting us with cosmic rhythm. "Like Zen, T'ai Chi Chih points out the way to serenity and fulfillment while living in the midst of busy worldly conditions."

Justin's writings contain no trace of the trendiness now so prevalent in this New Age of the pseudo-spiritual in which seekers pick and choose--as from the shelves of supermarkets---channelers, crystal healers, faux-shamans and razzle-dazzle blissful riders of the Cosmic Wave, all promising enlightenment in a weekend workshop. Readers will be keenly aware, whether they devour the book whole or savor it in morsels, that the items in this compendium are as solid as they are inspired, quiet, almost austere in their simplicity and clarity. While never repetitious, certain themes run through the essays: the importance of practice over theory, the necessity of practice to achieve results, the triumvirate of greed, anger and delusion as the obstacles to spiritual progress, the sincere heart as tantamount to technical or intellectual prowess; acceptance of impermanence, the growth of certainty that comes with spiritual practice, and what has been most enlightening and meaningful for me, Vairagya, or non-attachment. "The Chinese say, 'Make peace with heaven and not with men,'" Justin writes. "This requires an understanding that there is more than what we see, and that all things and beings are interrelated.... 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

(continued next page)





### **BOOK REVIEW (continued)**

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."

Each essay, poem, and snippet is soft-spoken, spare and consummate, born of the truth of experience and a lifetime of testing, study, observation; a lifetime of being the student absorbing the greater knowledge and experience of his teachers until he himself is the teacher.

It's so simple--performing 19 movements and a pose, attention in the soles of the feet; meditation watching the breath, catching the space between thoughts. One might think it's too simple, that there must be more to it than

that. Well, yes, there is, but as the great Heart Sutra condenses into 264 words the immense Great Prajna Paramita Sutra with its 600 sections, Justin distills the pantheon of spiritual possibilities into these two disciplines. Justin's essays supply the underpinning to these two seemingly simple practices.

So then, ultimately, how should we act? "To live in a straightforward manner, to speak in a truthful manner (not as easy as it sounds), is enough," Justin writes. "The Prajna, the inherent wisdom that is in all of us, will take care of the rest."

**Ed. Note:** *The Vital Force gratefully acknowledges Kathy Grassel for writing a review of Justin's latest publication.*

## **OUTREACH AT FOLSOM PRISON**

by Ed Altman

Justin flew out to Sacramento, CA in May to give a T'ai Chi Chih Lecture/ Demonstration to a group of inmates at Folsom State Prison. This talk (which was videotaped) was also attended by Tara Stiles, Doug Harned and Noel and Ed Altman. The inmates were excited to hear Justin's message of hope, strength, acceptance and renewal through the practice of T'ai Chi Chih. They eagerly clustered around Justin and the other teachers to ask questions, share stories, and find out how to learn T'ai Chi Chih. Doug [Harned] stayed on to help with a teacher training course for our newest instructor, James Hecker, who is currently an inmate at Folsom. He will be establishing T'ai Chi Chih courses there from now on. I'd like to thank Tara Stiles for teaching T'ai Chi Chih

at Folsom Prison, and for assisting James with his preparation.

The visit had a profound affect on the inmates, instructors, and even the Folsom staff who heard Justin talk. Most of the attendees were inmates who will soon be released on parole and are looking for ways to turn their lives around. They immediately recognized T'ai Chi Chih as a valuable tool to help them break the cycles of violence and addiction they struggle with on a daily basis. Those were their words! The inmates at Folsom Prison appreciate the gift of T'ai Chi Chih and know the value of community. (See related article on pages 30-31.)

**Ed. Note:** *More on this topic in upcoming issues*