

The Vital Force

Journal of T'ai Chi Chih

Volume 16 , No. 2

June 1999



D. LaMotte



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



The Vital Force

Editor: **Noel Altman**
Technical Advisor: **Ed Altman**
Webmaster: **Victor Berg**

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**, listing in and receipt of the annual Teachers' Directory (to teachers only), and outreach activities such as teacher referrals. The annual membership fee is \$30 for teachers, \$25 for interested persons / students. Addresses outside the U.S. require an additional \$10 per year. First Class delivery within the U.S. is an additional \$5 per year.

The purpose of **The Vital Force** is to provide a medium by which teachers and students of T'ai Chi Chih may share, educate, inform and inspire one another.

Cover:

"Behold the beauty around you" is the theme of TCC teacher Deanne Hodgson's photography, while "Beholding the beauty within you" is her approach to teaching T'ai Chi Chih. The water lilies on the cover fit with the meditative theme of many of the articles in this quarter's issue and was reproduced in black and white from one of Hodgson's notecards of her color photography.

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Letter from the Editor

I am pleased to announce that Victor Berg has joined The Vital Force staff as Webmaster. Victor, with more than 10 years of computer programming experience, has agreed to take on the maintenance and development of the T'ai Chi Chih community website (at www.taichichih.org). Victor is teaching himself the requisite programming languages involved and has already changed the look and organization of the website. We are grateful to Victor for taking on this important task — presenting T'ai Chi Chih to the outside world.

The website was originally designed, set up and paid for by Christina Tillotson in the summer of 1997. Thereafter, Guy Kent took over the management of the site — including the updating of the list of accredited instructors, collection of yearly fees of \$5 per teacher listed and payment of applicable web-related expenses. Ed and I are both grateful to the two of them for bringing it forward.

Ed Altman took over the website around December and has been responsible for updating the teacher list. He also made some improvements to the site. He added thumbnail pictures of the items described on the Good Karma Publishing page. He enabled The Vital Force link and designed the two pages for it with my input, so now interested people and students can learn about it and sign up for a membership by printing off the membership page and mailing it in. (Within a week of activating the page, The Vital Force did receive its first sign-up from the site.) Ed also has worked out an exchange with a colleague of his in the software industry: private TCC lessons in exchange for a programming "script" that will read The Vital Force database monthly and automatically update the teacher list. Of course, this is only possible because The Vital Force database now has the pertinent web information for every teacher, which Ed has entered and formatted.

VFJ Volunteer John Steinmetz has been working to secure permission from various sources to display some of the more outstanding or significant published articles on T'ai Chi Chih. Due to John's efforts, the website now displays the 1990 article which Corinn Cadye helped to get published in the Los Angeles Times. (That's the one that generated over 800 phone calls to the toll-free number of then-Satori Resources, resulting in scores of classes for area teachers). John has also secured permission to display the article from the October, 1996 issue of the Journal of Gerontological Nursing which was a write-up of a study conducted on elderly T'ai Chi Chih students as well as IDEA's October, 1998 article on T'ai Chi Chih teacher Dr. Tahir Bhatti's medical study on the effects of T'ai Chi Chih on lower back pain.

At The Vital Force mailing in March, VFJ Volunteer Wendy Helms generously offered to begin typing up hand-written letters and articles for The Vital Force. She did so for this issue and also for the website.

Accredited teachers who are interested in being included on the website teacher list now need to renew or sign up through The Vital Force. There is now a place on the membership form to fill in. The fee is \$5 per year.

Noel Altman, Editor

Readers Respond

. . . I just received the March '99 copy of the *Vital Force* and I must say that it is the best one I have ever seen. You and Ed did a wonderful job with the layout, editing, articles, etc. Thanks so much for including my articles also. Maybe they will inspire a few teachers to open a center in there area. . .

Dale Buchanan,
Great Falls, VA

Noel—
Your first issue of *VFJ* is terrific! I am enjoying the layout and use of grey space to highlight areas. I wish you much joy, satisfaction and success as Interim Editor. Warmly,

Roberta Taggart,
Cupertino, CA

Noel: I just received my latest issue of the *Vital Force*. The changes in layout were fantastic! Your creativity and commitment made the paper a pleasure to read. I hope my fellow readers will join me in hoping that the "interim" is dropped from your title. Thanks again for giving.

John Armitage,
Albuquerque, NM

Noel, *The Vital Force Journal* is alive and well in your nurturing hands. Congratulations on your open-hearted willingness to publish this journal. The format and content are excellent and reflect the highest qualities of our practice: mindfulness and simplicity and truth. Thank you for all your work. Blessings,

Linda Braga,
Castro Valley, CA

I would never ever want to miss an issue of *VF*.

Sr. M. Paulette Kane,
Henderson, KY

Thanks for sending me the *Vital Force Journal*. It came at a good time. I needed inspiration after a long winter without contact with a teacher or other T'ai Chi [Chih] students. You did a great job with this edition, Noel. I found it all interesting material pleasantly presented. I particularly liked hearing how T'ai Chi Chih had helped others especially the men in Folsom Prison. . .

Susan Francis,
Stoddard, NH
(Student of Eddy Martinez-Hazembank)

Thanks for your good work & service which continues to connect all of us whether near or far. My classes are flourishing. Am working w/ seniors, as well as general public, brain-injury recoveries & possibly prison personnel. So — *The Vital Force* continues to be a source of inspiration & information necessary to keep me informed & nourished. . .

Meara Joy Norice,
Burlington, VT

Noel, I am taking this opportunity, as I renew my *Vital Force* subscription, to let you know how much I enjoyed the March issue of *The Vital Force*. It truly does look like a journal: the format, the larger & easily readable typeface, the graphics & wise use of screening provides a beautiful & clear container to hold the words & images that serve to enliven & unite the growing network of TCC teachers & students. . .

Barbara Sommers,
Cumberland, WI

[Editor's Note: The font size of the bulk of the text is 12 pt., the same as the previous staff used. It just appears larger!]

continued on page 35



After Meditation...

By Justin Stone

Occasionally, after Meditation, I jot down a few notes of thoughts that have come to me. Here they are:

BLISS DOESN'T COME FROM ACTION: IT COMES WITH STILLNESS.

MANY THINGS ARE FELT TO BE TRUE WHEN THERE HAVE BEEN ONLY PARTIAL REVELATIONS OR REALIZATIONS. OTHER PARTIAL KNOWLEDGE MAY SEEM TO CONTRADICT THE FIRST, YET BOTH CAN BE RIGHT IN THEIR WAY.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO EXPERIENCE REAL EMPTINESS, WATCH YOUR STATE OF MIND AFTER YOU COME OUT OF THE TURIYA STATE IN MEDITATION.

RECOGNIZE THE ESSENCE, BUT FUNCTION FREELY. WHAT YOU REALIZE IS BEYOND THOUGHT.



Artwork by Virginia Shilson



Consciousness

By Justin Stone

At the Tuesday TCC practice for teachers, in the Albuquerque Center, one of the very good teachers, Debbie, remarked that she would be giving a presentation at a CONSCIOUSNESS FAIR, to be held in Albuquerque. This piqued my interest as this is one of the deepest topics I can imagine. I wondered whether the speakers know what they would talk about, or was this another case of simply choosing a box-office title without anything to back it up, as is often done.

I pointed out that there is no such thing as "higher consciousness", that there is only consciousness, just as the frequently used terms "good karma" and "bad karma" are incorrect—there is only karma, where each cause must have an equal effect (the words "good" and "bad" reflect subjective judgments).

I suggested she ask a speaker what the relationship is between karma and consciousness; also, the relationship between CHI (Prana) and consciousness. In truth, there is no consciousness without CHI (Prana) and the relationship between mind and CHI is a very intimate one. This should be understood by teachers of TCC.

In truth, there is nothing but consciousness (how could there be a world or an observer without it?), and consciousness is brought about by the CHI. Consciousness and CHI arise simultaneously, and departure of the CHI (Prana) from the body means death. Kundalini is a form of CHI (Prana), but this would be an esoteric subject to discuss, and not necessary.

A very well-known Zen writer once asked me (as we shared a hot bath at Big Sur on the California coast) to give him some ideas for the lecture he was about to give. I asked him for the title of the talk, and he replied that it was "Mysticism Inside Out". Obviously, it was a box-office title, but it was also obvious that he knew nothing of mysticism except what he had read; he knew a great deal more about alcohol and drugs.

It is not hard to fool a gullible public, and doing so may make money, but it is definitely wrong to do, and dangerous. My advice is, if you don't know the subject 'inside out', don't pretend and talk and write about it (it then becomes an ego trip).



Editorial

Why attend the annual conference?

By Noel Altman

Going to my first annual T'ai Chi Chih Teachers' Conference was not something I necessarily decided; Ed had been accredited six months before I had and attended his first conference a few months later (Summer, 1988). We were newly married and pretty much broke, but Ed insisted he had to go, so we paid for it somehow. He came home so lit up about it, there really wasn't a discussion about whether we'd go the next year. That year, as we co-taught classes, the money accumulated in a Tai Chi Chih bank account which we didn't use except for T'ai Chi Chih supplies and attending T'ai Chi Chih events (like our Seijaku Accreditation course, or auditing two T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Training courses.) By summer, we had enough to pay for both of us to fly from California and attend in Albuquerque (Summer, 1989).

Meeting all the different teachers was so interesting — the senior teachers who I had heard about, the teachers from little towns I'd never heard of, the teachers who teach out of the U.S., the teachers teaching in new and different settings — at corporations, in schools, at health spas and teaching to different groups of people, including those in wheelchairs, and children. I saw that the possibilities were endless of where to teach, and how to teach.

Decisions affecting the future of T'ai Chi Chih were made at the annual conference, but you had to attend to have your vote count!

I especially enjoyed working on refining the movements with Justin Stone and Steve Ridley, (then the Appointed Spiritual Head of T'ai Chi Chih), and hearing Justin's Saturday morning talk. People were so high (naturally)

because the amount of Chi flowing over that long weekend was incredible!

After that conference, we repeated the same pattern; our year's teaching income would pay for Ed and I to attend the annual conference, first and foremost, and then, if we earned more, it could be used to fund attendance at other T'ai Chi Chih events.

Of course excuses would arise — good reasons why we might want to spend that money on something else, but one or the other of us would talk the other one into going. Only one year did we actually not have the money to go because we had stopped teaching for about six months as we prepared for and executed an out-of-state move and a temporary downshifting from two salaries to one. The conference was in Minnesota that year and we lived in Washington State. We were in debt and it was just too expensive for us to go. (It would have been nice if the scholarship idea existed then).

Why would any teacher who wants to improve his or her practice and teaching of T'ai Chi Chih miss the annual teachers' conference? Of course, the list of excuses is endless. Too often I hear the excuse that it's "just too expensive". Really, though, the cost of the conference is generally nominal — it's not intended to be a money-making event. It's the airfare that can be expensive, depending on where you live, but even these costs can be greatly reduced if you shop airfares early and during off-seasons (mid-Fall, mid-Winter, early Spring).

The bottom line is: you will go if you intend to go. Give something special to yourself — commit to going to the Annual Teachers' Conference not only this year, but EVERY year!



The Root of Desire

By Ed Altman

The body is a prison of ceaseless desires that cannot be fulfilled or dealt with by rational thought. Ever onward the senses drag the Mind here and there leading to unending restlessness. The eye, of all the senses, seems to have the greatest ability to inflame desire. Yet even after the senses have gone dim, the restless Mind still desires to have the identity continue.

In *The Sword of No-Sword*, Master Tesshu states "Unconcerned with the small self, charge toward the opponent." He is not advocating recklessness! The weight of the attachment to life was a great burden in battle, and samurai warriors

such as Tesshu worked exhaustively to release the Ego and attain the state of "the sword of no-sword." In this state the Mind flows freely in any direction, as needed, and without restriction or attachment.

To try and fight desires is a waste of time. Great teachers have repeatedly stated that one must cut off the root and the leaves and branches will wither. What is this root? Certainly, it cannot be found through words. After all, if words had the power to cause profound or lasting change then this world would be a very different place. It seems that words, however meaningful, are easily forgotten, and if they are remembered, they are rarely accompanied by the direct experience. These are what Zen calls "dead words" and are utterly unreliable.

When one emerges from deep meditation, or experiences the simplicity of T'ai Chi Chih doing

T'ai Chi Chih, there is no need for words. In fact, the feeling of contentment and completeness defies all description. In that timeless moment nothing more is needed; the desires of the Mind have been (temporarily) quieted. With repeated exposure to this state, the Mind is gradually transformed, yet even this is not cutting off the root permanently.

T'ai Chi Chih is a spiritual study of the absolute

(Chi) found within the body. The Chi is a limitless source of intelligent energy, and as we align ourselves to move with it, we ourselves become limitless. Once we recognize our proper relation to the Chi we begin to understand the role of the

Mind in our T'ai Chi

Chih practice. When this happens, we find ourselves tending each thought and action as though our entire future depends on it. In fact, it does.

Is there a way to live one's life fully without leaving a stain upon this world? Not while consumed with serving and preserving the sense of an individual identity. It is only by releasing the self, and merging with the "Cosmic Rhythm" that it becomes possible to live in self-less harmony with the world. The essence of happiness is to see clearly into the way things are and wish for nothing to be different. To talk or write about these matters is one thing, but to live in this way is an entirely different matter.

Once we recognize our proper relation to the Chi we begin to understand the role of the Mind in our T'ai Chi Chih practice. When this happens, we find ourselves tending each thought and action as though our entire future depends on it. In fact, it does.



A bit of TCC history

Lois Mahaney created the VFJ database and Teacher Directory

By Carmen Brocklehurst

Justin and I had the privilege of attending a special dinner and retirement party for Lois Mahaney in San Francisco. Lois helped lay a wonderful foundation for T'ai Chi Chih in the Bay Area (through her T'ai Chi Chih classes) and worldwide (through her efforts on the *Vital Force*). Lois also brought the T'ai Chi Chih Teacher's Directory into manifestation with the help of her daughter Susan. This was done long after Lois was 70 years young — so much for sitting around eating bonbons and watching the soaps.

For anyone who has ever managed a sizeable database (we have over 1000 teachers worldwide), the idea of beginning a database is awesome enough without considering the perpetual daily changes. A person truly becomes aware of how mobile society is if she or he manages a database.

Since most of us learned about computers by trial and error, the words, "Oh no!" or "What did I do?" are heard more often than we would like to remember. During dinner Lois talked about some of the wild things that happened while learning how the computer worked. She recalled statements like "Oh my, what happened to all of the

addresses in this column? They are gone." Another was "Now that I have this information what can we do with it?" Lois created a map that pinpointed each city where we had a teacher and organized teacher lists by states and cities as well [as] alphabetically. Some might say, "Oh, that isn't too hard on the computer." However, you have to know how to do it, and that learning isn't always an easy process. It takes time and patience — two things that seem to be in short supply today. But for over 15 years Lois has shown that her cup runneth over.

It was wonderful to see the love and respect everyone has for Lois — respect that is well deserved. Helping T'ai Chi Chih grow is a full-time job. Thank you, Lois, for helping with that

task for so many years. We are all grateful.

[Editor's Note: See pages 16-17 for related coverage of Lois' retirement party in the Bay Area.]

[As this article was submitted to both *The Vital Force* and *The New Mexico T'ai Chi Chih News* at the same time, a similar version appears in the June, 1999 issue of the latter.]



Layers of Understanding

By Sr. Margaret O'Connor

It makes sense for the serious golfer to consult a "Pro" and the dedicated singer to have a "Coach". T'ai Chi Chih practitioners also have "Master Teachers", Justin and Ed, who make themselves available during conventions, teacher training courses and teacher renewals.

For those who avail themselves of these opportunities and build on them, layers of understanding evolve.

The Tai Chi Chih Journal, *Vital Force*, is also a trenchant vehicle for education and inspiration. An example in point is Amy Hackenberg's article in the December 1998 issue. Amy shares the wealth of ideas given by Ed for refining movements during the sessions in Evanston, Illinois. The points sum-

marized by Amy have great meaning for me as I strive to deepen my practice. The concept of "low heels" and "groundedness" in relation to "yinning and [yanging]" heightens my consciousness of weight shifting which I have been working at since auditing in Mahwah last summer. Further reinforcement of this is found in the images of Rocking Chair, Hourglass and Stack of Coins from Ed's "Imaging Tools" of September 1998.

It was gratifying to see the results of many layers of understanding when the San Diego Tai Chi Chih group appeared on CBS Television Saturday morning, January 16, 1998. The pleasure of watching the group can only be surpassed by the personal exhilaration of moving smoothly with softness and continuity.

New teacher enjoys visit to The TCC Studio

By Carolyn Allenby

This winter I had the joyful opportunity to visit Dale Buchanan's TCC studio in Great Falls, Virginia. Although 200 miles from my home in NJ, it's only a couple of miles from the Great Falls of the Potamac River, one of the most spectacular natural sites of greater Washington, D.C.

I was impressed by Dale's commitment to TCC when he helped last summer at my TCC Teachers' accreditation course in NJ. He encourages teachers to visit his studio, and I was eager to do so while visiting in the area.

I first entered the studio on a quiet Friday afternoon. Although convenient to a shopping center, a brief walk into a village style office park helps to separate from everyday traffic patterns. Removing shoes at the entrance, I felt serenity flowing like the peacefulness of a simple chapel. Natural light helps illuminate the room without glare. Shelves along one wall hold TCC and related materials for sale, attractively displayed, and intermingled with pictures and objects of art. A video corner enables students to watch videos of Justin talking and moving. Finally, a beautiful screen, a bubbling rock

fountain, and a Yin/Yang picture (see page 15 of the *Vital Force*, March 1999) provide a focus for the room during teaching time.

The next morning I participated in a class and experienced the studio in action. Dale is a superb teacher. His gentle good humor and very light banter helps to relax the students as he teaches the art of gentle movement with great focus. The students were intent on their learning, and they are fortunate to learn from a skilled and caring teacher in a such a peaceful environment dedicated to TCC.



One Person's Experience

By Amy Tyksinski

Every morning I battle with myself to practice T'ai Chi Chih. Some days, a quiet suggestion proves successful. I practice and I remember. Other days, though I wake consistently and naturally at 5:30 A.M., the down comforter on my bed envelops my mind. Standing up and moving, even the effortless motion of TCC, requires such a force of will that it would be a violent disruption of the cotty peace and precious silent moments to practice before the harried pace of the day absorbed me. On those days, I choose to sit and meditate because the action of TCC is too much. Or I choose nothing.

Later, of course, comes a degree of guilt. "Why can't I be an obedient, devotional type?" "Why must I experience this internal division, this rebellion so acutely?" Asking why is a necessary part of this process for me. But when I ask why with pointed dissatisfaction and anger, the internal wounding deepens and the ego-sense strengthens.

Last spring and summer I had such a tremendous resistance to TCC that I practiced only once or twice a week for a period of time. I did not teach and I examined the resistance closely during that time. At the conference, I mentioned my struggle to Ed Altman. He responded with the question, "What are you holding on to?" All along, I have been holding on to the notion of becoming as spiritually clear as one can become. I have been holding on to a notion of future perfection (with the implication of current imperfection.)

What is lacking in my personal relationship to TCC is a quality of gentle acceptance of self in the present moment. When a hope of future "gain"

and a sense of ego attachment as "someone-who-practices-everyday-and-is-on-her-way-to-enlightenment" are released, then I push through the toughness of my mind. I give up on the "battle" and therefore am softened. The practice becomes integrated within me. It ceases to be a force outside of me. Everyday, I must remember again.

So, while TCC brings me joy and peace, it has also revealed an intense struggle within the valleys of my soul. We don't hear much about the struggle. It is not easy, but it is never boring.



Artwork by Virginia Shilson



Motivational Tips for Practice

By Sharon Sirkis

As much as I love TCC, I have to admit that at times I don't "feel like" practicing. Since I don't want to allow my feelings to get in the way of my discipline, I've come up with some tips that have helped me push through my inertia. I hope some of these may be of help to you. When I don't feel like practicing, I will:

1. Read an article from the *Vital Force*
(This usually inspires me)
2. Tell myself I'll just do Rocking Motion, and then I can stop
(I always continue)
3. Remind myself I don't want to be a hypocrite
(The best way to lead is by example)
4. Tell myself how doing the moves each day helps me with discipline and patience
(two virtues that are missing from my DNA!)
5. Call or get together with other teachers
(Sharing ideas always gets my wheels turning)
6. Put on Justin or Carmen's videotape
(I can usually pick up something new)
7. Buy new music
(Even my favorite CD's get boring after repeated use)
8. Break down a move to get rid of my "glices"
(This helps me go deeper into my practice)
9. Not let anything or anyone distract me
(I used to stop and answer the phone right in the middle of my practice!)
10. Ask for help from my teacher
(When I felt I'd hit a plateau, Ed suggested I switch to practicing Seijaku for 5 or 6 days in a row)
11. Re-read my notes from previous teacher's trainings
(There are always new insights to be gained)
12. "JUST DO IT!"



Why Meditate in Prison? Why Do T'ai Chi Chih in Prison?

By James K. Hecker

These are the two questions I am asked most by other prisoners, Guards, Staff, and Visitors here at Old Folsom Prison who happen to notice our extensive meditation program.

Why meditate in prison? I know they are externally just trying to make conversation in a sometimes intimidating and uncomfortable situation. I also know that deep within, the question is very real. It is real because, so often beyond those who are deservedly incarcerated (a big word for being in prison), many in our times are incarcerated in prisons of their own making.

The simple answer to all is, "It works." Those who sincerely take part in a meditation program leave prison and do not return. Recidivism is a huge problem in the United States Prison System. Upwards of 80% return to prison for violations of their parole rules, or because new crimes were committed. Externally, "It works," is a satisfying answer to the problem.

... Beyond those who are deservedly incarcerated (a big word for being in prison), many in our times are incarcerated in prisons of their own making.

Most who would ask this question about meditation go about their lives. However, planted someplace deep in their hearts are the key words: "Prison and Release." Not only release, but no return to prison. This is the seed. For those in the prison system, this means to parole and succeed in

an often unforgiving society. Thousands of former inmates have proven this fact to be true. The one man I have met who returned after taking part in our meditation program, when interviewed, stated: "I was doing O.K. for eight months, then I said the heck with the meditation. In a month I was back in prison." Meditation is a proven program that works.

Those who sincerely take part in a meditation program leave prison and do not return. Recidivism is a huge problem in the United States Prison System. Upwards of 80% return to prison for violations of their parole rules, or because new crimes were committed.

For those who are not incarcerated in the prison system, the key words "Prison and Release" may come up when they take part in a form of meditation or it may come up in forgotten dreams. Later, feeling trapped in their lives, feeling imprisoned, they may say: "Think I'll take that meditation course my friend suggested." "Prison" and "Release" are very powerful words when used together.

Why do T'ai Chi Chih in Prison? The simple answer is, of course, "It works." T'ai Chi Chih is very effective meditation. Those who do T'ai Chi Chih, when released from prison, do not return. There are those two words again: "Prison and Release."

There is something more though. However, I can only speak from my own experience. I have been in the system for more than 30 years. Fifteen years in the military as a Navy Medic, many of those years as a member of Special Forces Units. I found that the military was much like prison. The main



Why do T'ai Chi Chih in Prison? The simple answer is, of course, "It works." T'ai Chi Chih is very effective meditation.

difference being, you received a pass on the weekend to leave the base, when you were not at war in some other country. Then, 17 years in California's most violent prisons, Soledad, San Quentin and Old Folsom. During this life of violent surroundings, prayer, meditation and T'ai Chi Chih have been my respite of serenity in the midst of almost constant chaos. As I write this, Old Folsom Prison is on Lock-down status because the white and black inmates are at war, this accentuated by an inmate stabbed in the dining hall. It is more than real. This is not some T.V. drama. This is life always on the edge of chaos.

Yesterday in the prison, staff decided after four days to allow the inmates to take showers. This is a common experiment. If the white and black inmates are released at the same time and a riot does not ensue, tension is on the way to a degree of control. Always cautious, leaving my cell I quickly noticed the inmates segregating themselves. Blacks with blacks and whites with whites. This is not a good sign. Usually there is a mingling. In the past, I would have put my back against the wall and waited for the explosion of violence. However, someplace from deep in my spirit came a longing for peace in the midst of the chaos. I longed to do T'ai Chi Chih. Hanging my shower bag (containing soap and towel) on the outside cell bars, I slowly began the "Rocking Motion", then "Bird Flaps its Wings". I could feel the tension begin to release, not only in myself, but in the air. By the time I was doing "Daughter on the Mountaintop", I heard one of the inmates yelling down three tiers (floors) to another inmate: "Oh, that's just my friend doing some meditation." There was some soft laughter, and the tension in the air was completely broken. As I started the "Pulling Taffy" movement, it was time for my shower. Men were mingling, blacks and whites, the tension in our little part of the prison relieved, at least for now.

Did T'ai Chi Chih cause this little bit of serenity in the midst of chaos? I know it did in this teacher. In this corner of often-violent Folsom Prison which houses 60 of the total 4,000 inmates, there was peace. This is just one example of the real power of T'ai Chi Chih.

Always cautious, leaving my cell I quickly noticed the inmates segregating themselves. Blacks with blacks and whites with whites. This is not a good sign. Usually there is a mingling. In the past, I would have put my back against the wall and waited for the explosion of violence. However, someplace from deep in my spirit came a longing for peace in the midst of the chaos. I longed to do T'ai Chi Chih.

But how about real life? Not everyone lives in an episode from a "Cops" T.V. show. To paraphrase Justin Stone, "If everyone in the world did T'ai Chi Chih, there would be peace in the world." This is true. However, just suppose that T'ai Chi Chih is a prayer for peace in ourselves, and in the universe. It is said, "We all contain the universe within ourselves." Certainly, we feel the peace in ourselves after doing T'ai Chi Chih.

Why meditate? Why do T'ai Chi Chih in prison? Could it be that a prison is a place where peace can start? For this released prisoner still incarcerated it has been. Thank you Justin Stone for your life. Thank you to the T'ai Chi Chih Community for your life.



Teaching at Folsom Prison

Free Inside the Chi

By Judy Tretheway

At Folsom Prison the Tai Chi Chih (TCC) class is held inside a peaceful chapel on the edge of a crowded, noisy exercise yard. To get inside I must pass through innumerable clanging gates, past cramped tiny cells, and weave my way through inmates and guards, both surly and friendly. As female, alone and free, I stand out, but few pay much attention to my presence. Everything is different than my "normal" life. Everything, that is, except the vitally serene flow of the chi as we practice together.

The Tai Chi Chih students are all captive men, shunned and set aside from my world outside the high walls and watch towers. Men with pasts and futures I don't know about and would rather not speculate upon. The contrast between us is so great - Yin and Yang. I, a female and alone. They, male and so many. I, free to come and go. They, locked up for years and years. I can practice at the ocean, on a mountain top or in my garden. They practice in the shoulder wide space between their bunks, the toilet and the bars. I can wear any color except blue. They are all dressed alike. I can express myself and speak to any topic. They are reserved, cautious.

Yet the reason we are together is the same reason we all love and practice TCC. Together we find a sanctuary within the temple of our bodies. Together we rock and nurture our emerging selves. Together we seek a sense of harmony amid the chaos of our lives and our circumstances.

Their struggles and joy with the moves are no different than those of my students outside the bars. Although their bodies may be stiff and bat-

tered, their chi and teh (power of inner sincerity) is strong. They practice. They are appreciative and eager for coaching.

I am grateful to my captive audience. They have stimulated and nurtured my growth as a teacher. The experience has added greatly to my sense of self as a unique manifestation of the whole where we are all one.

Having no expectations or demands over me they stimulate my personal expansion. They teach me to carry limitations with dignity. They demonstrate how important it is to be able to develop inner resources and practice inner freedom within external restrictions. They are living, breathing examples of potential personal transformation within deeply challenging circumstances. They manifest the strength and potential healing power of the chi. They have taught me about

unconditional love, about serenity amidst the storm, about persistent patience, about forgiveness and being non-judgmental. I have learned about strength and softness, about vulnerability and will, about manifesting and letting go, from an entirely different perspective. While suffering may be inevitable in each of our lives, misery is optional. Each of us can realize our potential no matter what our outside circumstances.

When I am at Folsom Prison I am fully alive in the divine flow of the chi and I am grateful for the opportunity to grow and practice with these gentlemen. I am both pleased and proud to represent the TCC community of teachers. Thank you for the opportunity.



Softness and Continuity

By Ed Altman

Without softness and continuity the Chi does not flow freely, and the overall objective of T'ai Chi Chih practice cannot be accomplished. It is not just a matter of moving the arms slowly, and if T'ai Chi Chih practitioners do not pursue the depth of this principle, their movements will remain hollow and shallow. As the arm movements of T'ai Chi Chih are a reflection of what is happening in the lower half of the body, it is of the utmost importance that softness and continuity begin with the legs and be reflected in the upper body.

When focusing on softness and continuity, there are two aspects of the leg movements to be examined. The first is the shifting of the weight, and the second is the release of tension from the legs. The shifting of the weight induces the separation of the Chi into the Yin and Yang components, and students must be mindful that the weight is shifted slowly, evenly, and fully. If the leg movements are done in a hurried or "jerky" manner the Chi will not be circulated efficiently. There have been numerous articles written in previous issues of *The Vital Force* which address this matter.

Once the weight is shifting properly, it is time to examine where we are working against ourselves by holding tension in the ankles and knees. Tension is commonly created in the ankles by "pulling" up the toes on the front foot, or by "lifting" the back heel artificially. This also adversely affects the alignment and posture of the entire body. Just leave the feet flat on the ground and simply shift the weight forward or back from the T'an T'ien. As the weight shifts forward the back leg gradually straightens, and at some point, any further forward movement will cause the back heel to rise without effort. Similarly, allow the front foot to remain flat on the ground and shift the weight from the center of the body to the back leg. This will cause the toes

of the front foot to become lighter and rise.

It is the gradual and full weight shift combined with patience, alignment, and a lack of tension that brings results. If the heel or toe does not come off the ground as described, make sure the upper body is not bending forward or leaning backward. Otherwise, this will prevent the required full shift of the weight and lead to many other problems in T'ai Chi Chih practice.

The other problem area is holding tension in the knees. T'ai Chi Chih cannot be done on stiff legs, so it is necessary to bend the knees to do a "lower" T'ai Chi Chih practice. The knees hold almost all the weight of the body so it is very common for people to unwittingly add tension as they try to bend them. This is using effort and is not needed. Simply relax the knees by "softening the grip" and let gravity do the rest. It takes practice and focus, but when we allow the knees to bend, there is far less tension in the legs. It is subtle, but makes a significant difference.

When the heel and toe are allowed to rest until called for by the weight shift, and the knees are allowed to bend without effort, there will be much less tension in the lower part of the body. The legs (especially the knees) act like the flood-gates that control the flow of the Chi through the body. When they are soft and flexible, the Chi will cause the arms to float at just the right level without effort. When returning to graceful conclusion, the softness of the knees also allows the Chi to be grounded more efficiently. It is the softness and continuity of the legs that provides the foundation for the entire body to move with softness and continuity. When T'ai Chi Chih is done in this way, the deepest benefits may be realized with consistent practice.

The Vital Force Journal veteran Lois Mahaney honored in May

By Linda Meyer
An Event Host

Lois Mahaney's many contributions to T'ai Chi Chih were recognized in a celebration on May 16 at the home of Barbara and Cec Riley. Lois was active in the publication of the *Vital Force Journal* and Teacher Directory for over fourteen years. She was often assisted by her daughter, Susan,



Hostess Barbara Riley welcomes guests into her home.

Photo: Pat Huseby

who was also honored at the gathering. Lois was the mainstay as editors changed, and she graciously provided her home for the mailings where she managed the volunteer staff



The celebration cake for Lois says it all.

Photo: Cec Riley

with the true efficiency of a former teacher.

It's never easy to surprise Lois and this was no exception. Of course it didn't help that she was mistakenly sent an invitation! Later she called me and coyly asked the time of her "surprise" party—an example of her dry wit

and tendency not to mince words. Lois was also grateful to not be taken off guard since she generally avoids the limelight, happy to give credit to others.

About 30 teachers and students attended, with Justin Stone and Carmen Brocklehurst coming all the way from



Justin Stone and Lois Mahaney look through the "memory book" created from photos, poems, remembrances and cards sent in from TCC teachers all over the world.

Photo: Pat Huseby

Albuquerque! Many others sent well wishes in the form of letters, cards and collages. These were placed artfully in a lovely album by Denise Clark, assisted by Barbara Riley and Carrie Kinsey. Pat Huseby was the official photographer.



(L-R): Juditte Schwartz, Linda Meyer, Carrie Kinsey and Paul Ciske enjoy their lunch on Barbara and Cec Riley's lovely patio.

Photo: Cec Riley

After a great potluck and cake Lois was presented with gifts including a beautiful crystal vase to hold bouquets of roses from her garden. It was truly a pleasure to honor Lois—the love and warmth toward her from the T'ai Chi Chih community was abundant and well-deserved.

Lois Responds to celebration

It is most difficult to come down from the emotional high of this past weekend. The special dinner with Justin, Carmen, Ed and Noel Altman and my daughter Susan on Saturday evening was the first of events I find most memorable. Sunday afternoon, with Sandy McAlister and Linda Meyer doing the driving, Susan and I were taken to the home of Barbara and Cec Riley in Orinda. Their lovely home and beautifully designed deck and garden were the setting for a gathering of T'ai Chi Chih teachers from the greater S.F. Bay area.

How wonderful it was to greet, hug, converse and exchange reminiscences with so many delightful people. The pot luck was super (we have great creative cooks in TCC)—served at a table with Barbara's lovely Ikebana

arrangement as the centerpiece. People ate, drank and circulated to share the spirit of the day. On display was a photo album with letters, pictures, poetry, stories, and mementos of events that brought back many memories. This beautiful display album was put together by Denise Clark using submissions sent by teachers from S.F. Bay area, around the U.S. and from Africa and New Zealand.

The cutting and serving of the commemorative cake with tea, coffee and soft drinks was followed by



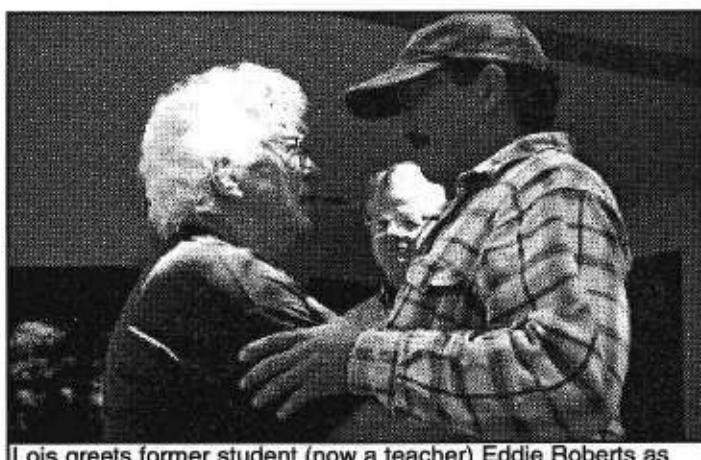
Denise Clark (right) smiles with Carmen Brocklehurst after putting finishing touches on Lois' "memory book". Photo: Pat Huseby

the opening of gifts brought by the participants. Among the gifts was a gorgeous Lenox

crystal vase given on behalf of all TCC teachers by the *Vital Force Journal*. Other items will be a visible memento in my home of a wonderful gathering of not only dedicated T'ai Chi Chih teachers but of a wonderful, sharing, caring group of people. I was honored to be part of such a gathering.

Special thanks to Barbara Riley, Carrie Kinsey, and Linda Meyer for their initial efforts [in] making the day a joyous memory.

— Lois Mahaney



Lois greets former student (now a teacher) Eddie Roberts as VFJ Volunteer John Steinmetz looks on. Photo: Pat Huseby



Lois Mahaney (fourth from left, center row) and daughter Susan (to Lois' left) stand surrounded by T'ai Chi Chih teachers, former and current VFJ staff members, VFJ volunteers and the Originator of T'ai Chi Chih, Justin Stone (center). Photo provided by Denise Clark



News Shorts

Ed Altman to be interviewed on the "David Essel — Alive!" show

On July 10 at 1:00pm (Pacific Standard Time), David Essel will conduct a nationwide live interview with Ed Altman, Head of T'ai Chi Chih, on his radio show "David Essel — Alive!" about the happenings in the T'ai Chi Chih community and the potential benefits of regular practice.

Essel's show, subtitled "America's Positive Radio Talk Show," features topics ranging from personal motivation to alternative medicine, fitness, stress management. His belief is that "fitness is not just from the neck down."

Many thanks are due to Marjie Bassler, teacher candidate, and Carmen Brocklehurst, her referring instructor. Bassler wrote a letter to Essel suggesting that he may like to do a show on T'ai Chi Chih and its originator, Justin Stone, and Brocklehurst assisted in the effort.

"David Essel Alive!" is syndicated through Westwood One and carried mostly on "am" stations. Call your local radio stations to find out which one carries the show or try Westwood One Affiliate Relations at (310) 204-5000.

— Noel Altman

NM Board Elects New Members

Congratulations go out to the new and continuing board members of The New Mexico T'ai Chi Chih Association (which runs the TCC Center in Albuquerque). The Board elections occurred on May 1. The Board is now comprised of the following members:

Robert Montes de Oca - President
Uly Messier - Vice President
Dora Derzon - Secretary
John Armitage - Treasurer
Ann Rutherford - Recording Secretary

Board members serve two-year terms. The New Mexico T'ai Chi Chih Association, an incorporated non-profit association, invites all TCC teachers and students, when in Albuquerque, to visit the Center. Open TCC practices

for teachers are held at 9:30am every Tuesday morning at the Center, while open practices for students and teachers occur the first Saturday of the month at 11:30am and every Thursday at noon.

— Noel Altman

Shepherd's Centers Offer TCC

T'ai Chi Chih was featured in the Winter 1999 issue of *The Good Life*, newsletter of The Shepherd's Centers of America (SCA) in an article entitled "Balance Intrinsic Energy With T'ai Chi Chih."

The article states, "The SCA Board of Trustees unanimously voted to make this option [TCC] available to our centers. During the meeting, board member Park Gerdine, MD supported the program based on personal experience. . . . He and his wife have been practicing the movements at home for about two months. He said it was definitely helping them."

The article states that some 40 TCC teachers are located near SCA centers and could be available to help get classes started. (This list of 40 teachers' names was given to SCA by Ed Altman last year.) SCA eventually would like to have its own staff members become accredited instructors. Last year, Jean Smith, former SCA secretary, was sponsored by SCA to become accredited to teach TCC and now does so in Kansas City. Lucy Ann Fleischman, nurse and health director at the Kansas City Central SCA, is the second person to be sponsored by SCA for teacher accreditation. She successfully completed her accreditation course at the end of May in St. Louis.

Elbert Cole, Executive Director/Founder of SCA, reported to *The Vital Force* that after the article appeared, dozens of SCA centers nationwide ordered Justin Stone's T'ai Chi Chih text and videotape with the intention of beginning T'ai Chi Chih programs for their members.

— Noel Altman

continued on page 35



Calendar of Events

June 21 thru 26, 1999 <p>TCC TEACHER TRAINING</p> <p>Location: Albuquerque, NM Contact: For the NM TCC Center: Robert Montes de Oca 5401 Marble Ave., NE Albuquerque, NM 87110-6415 Robert's Phone: (505) 266-3201</p> <p>TCC Teacher Training Fee: \$450</p>	Oct. 4 thru 9, 1999 <p>TCC TEACHER TRAINING</p> <p>Location: Chicago, IL Contact: Hannah Hedrick 720 Gordon Terr, 22G Chicago, IL 60613 Phone: (773) 472-0530</p> <p>TCC Teacher Training Fee: \$450</p>						
July 19 thru 24, 1999 <p>TCC TEACHER TRAINING</p> <p>Location: Fullerton, CA (Orange County) Contact: Pam Towne 107 Calle Vista Camarillo, CA 93010-1711 Phone: (805) 987-3607 e-mail: ptowne@inreach.com</p> <p>TCC Teacher Training Fee: \$450 Deadline: June 19, 1999</p>	Oct. 25 thru 29, 1999 <p>TCC TEACHER TRAINING</p> <p>Location: Fargo area, ND Contact: Christeen McLain 2109 3rd St. North Fargo, ND 58102-1907 Phone: (701) 232-5579</p> <p>TCC Teacher Training Fee: \$450</p>						
Aug. 5-8, 1999 <p>14TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL T'AI CHI CHIH TEACHERS' CONFERENCE</p> <p>Location: St. Paul, MN (See Pg. 20 for details)</p>	Nov. 14, 1999 <p>TCC WORKSHOP (10:00am - 5:00pm)</p> <p>Location: San Antonio, TX Contact: Sr. Alice Holden 4707 Broadway San Antonio, TX 78209-6200 Phone: (210) 829-5980</p> <p>Teacher Fee: \$25 Student Fee: \$35</p>						
Aug. 30 thru Sept. 4, 1999 <p>TCC TEACHER TRAINING</p> <p>Location: Mahwah, NJ Contact: Sr. Antonia Cooper 641 Somerset Street No. Plainfield, NJ 07060-4909 Phone: (908) 757-3050</p> <p>TCC Teacher Training Fee: \$450 <i>(Waiting list in place)</i></p>	<p>POSSIBLE FUTURE EVENTS:</p> <p>If interested in an event described below, contact the host. These events will only happen if there are enough people interested.</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td data-bbox="844 1476 941 1581"> Nov. 19 thru Nov. 21, 1999 </td> <td data-bbox="1005 1476 1279 1581"> SEIYAKU TEACHER TRAINING Location: Albuquerque, NM Contact: For NM TCC Center - Robert Montes de Oca Robert's Phone: (505) 266-3201 </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="844 1602 941 1708"> Mar. 31 thru Apr. 2, 2000 </td> <td data-bbox="1005 1602 1279 1708"> SEIYAKU TEACHER TRAINING Location: Orlando, FL Area Contact: Sr. Jackie Kingsbury Phone: (813) 986-4255 </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="844 1729 941 1834"> July, 2000 </td> <td data-bbox="1005 1729 1279 1834"> TCC TEACHER TRAINING Location: San Francisco Bay Area, CA Contact: Sandy McAlister Phone: (510) 582-2238 </td> </tr> </table>	Nov. 19 thru Nov. 21, 1999	SEIYAKU TEACHER TRAINING Location: Albuquerque, NM Contact: For NM TCC Center - Robert Montes de Oca Robert's Phone: (505) 266-3201	Mar. 31 thru Apr. 2, 2000	SEIYAKU TEACHER TRAINING Location: Orlando, FL Area Contact: Sr. Jackie Kingsbury Phone: (813) 986-4255	July, 2000	TCC TEACHER TRAINING Location: San Francisco Bay Area, CA Contact: Sandy McAlister Phone: (510) 582-2238
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July, 2000	TCC TEACHER TRAINING Location: San Francisco Bay Area, CA Contact: Sandy McAlister Phone: (510) 582-2238						
Sept. 23 thru 26, 1999 <p>MEDITATION RETREAT W/ JUSTIN STONE</p> <p>Location: Albuquerque, NM Contact: For the NM TCC Center: Maggie Berg 13224 Agnes Ct. NE Albuquerque, NM 87112 Maggie's Phone: (505) 237-0243 <i>(Waiting list only)</i></p>							

Justin Stone is the Originator of T'ai Chi Chih.

Ed Altman is the Head of T'ai Chi Chih.

All events led by Ed Altman unless otherwise indicated.



STANDING LIKE A TREE!

...rooted in the TAO.

14th ANNUAL TEACHER'S CONFERENCE and
25th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
AUGUST 5 - 8, 1999
CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

The Minnesota T'AI CHI CHIH teachers are happy - indeed - that you have responded so graciously to our invitation to attend the T'AI CHI CHIH International Teachers' Conference and 25th Anniversary Celebration here in the land of the evergreen tree and fresh blue sky. Concordia University is ready to welcome us. As of April 15th, there were 125 teachers registered - and that is a record for this point in the registration process. HURRAH! for T'AI CHI CHIH.

We are ready to celebrate the past 25 years of development of a t'ai chi system that has evolved into a profound way of health and well-being for hundreds of people. Every teacher was once a student, often with a special need, and now that student has evolved into the greater circle of CHI - yin and yang - ever changing human lives - body and spirit. Thank you Justin!

Come prepared to extend your gratitude to Justin. He will offer his words of wisdom. And the kinship will strengthen. We can leave as strong and sturdy as a tree, with our roots deep into the philosophy of T'AI CHI CHIH and a strong community of T'ai Chi Chih teachers. Like a tree, we can best sustain harmony and balance in our relationship with the world, if we stick to our rooted connections about what is true and valuable.

When you complete your registration for the conference, you will receive your Confirmation letter. Please contact us if you have any questions. Use the address and phone number given below.

"I believe the very purpose in life is to seek happiness." . . . "The very motion of our life is toward happiness..."

— THE ART OF HAPPINESS, His Holiness the Dalai Lama

See you in August!

The Conference Staff,
Vivian, Paula, Ron, Karen and Judy

MAIL: Vivian Hoff
P.O. Box 22266
Eagan, MN 55122-0266

PHONE: 651-681-9018





The Dream

By Dale Buchanan

This is an actual dream I had one night while auditing the New Jersey Teachers Training on July 26, 1998. It takes place in the library of the Carmel Retreat House where the training was held. Justin and Victor Berg were there with me. Justin told me to fall back into his arms with all my weight and keep my heels on the ground ... like I was falling back into a pool of water. He caught me as I fell back, but he stumbled several steps back before he stabilized by planting one foot behind him. Then he pushed me forward, from the lower part of my back, so I was flat-footed again and [standing] up straight.

He did all the work, I was completely soft (like never before) and in the guidance of his hands. There was no effort on my part at all. He did this about 10 times and each time we almost fell into the wall knocking down the books on the shelves,

I was completely effortless and I could still feel Justin helping me shift my weight forward and let me fall backward.

but we didn't. Victor was laughing each time this happened. Justin then told me to do T'ai Chi Chih and left the room. Victor kept laughing as I did "Daughter on the Mountaintop". I was completely effortless and I could still feel Justin helping me shift my weight forward and let me fall backward. Victor then congratulated me on my enlightenment and for being one of Justin's chosen few on how to effortlessly do T'ai Chi Chih.

I woke up from the dream and immediately started doing the movement ... my T'ai Chi Chih has not been the same ever since. Now I know what softness means.

[Editor's Note: As this article was submitted to both *The Vital Force* and *The New Mexico T'ai Chi Chih News* at the same time, a similar version appears in the October, 1998 issue of the latter.]

Teaching Tips

By Tara Stiles

I like to help my students applying Tai Chi principles and having T'ai Chi consciousness in the midst of a busy active life. One teaching tool I use is giving out strips of little color dots (usually blue) that can be purchased in the stationary or office supplies section of major stores. I suggest places that they can put these, i.e. car steering wheel, computer, bathroom mirror, checkbook, kitchen cup-

board door, etc. The blue dot then can remind them to check that they are not holding the breath, or to be aware of their T'an T'ien or whatever principle we've discussed in class.

Students report this as very helpful, and they sometimes come back to class with some fun stories to share.



First T'ai Chi Chih Training held in Florida in February

By Elissa Maguire,
Course Host

The first ever TCC Training in Florida successfully accredited 10 new teachers. Beneficial to Florida, five of those teachers will remain in Florida to share the load and spread the teaching ever wider.

Generally, the Trainees were well-prepared and shared a dedication to the execution of the form. They held in common a deep desire to teach TCC and to do it well.

Ed Altman shared their dedication & gave freely of his expertise and time.

Additionally, several teachers attended to brush up their skills, most notably, Roberta Taggart, who flew from California to spend several days.

Auditors and candidates share reactions to week

TAI CHI CHIH TEACHER ACCREDITATION! A monumental string of words. Something I felt extremely confident attending and walked away from with a great sense of egoless self.



Teacher Candidate Barbara Hamilton (right) practices "Bass Drum" outside with Course Instructor Ed Altman during her accreditation week.

Photo: Elissa Maguire

There are four words I leave the accreditation repeating and taking to a new level of WOW!

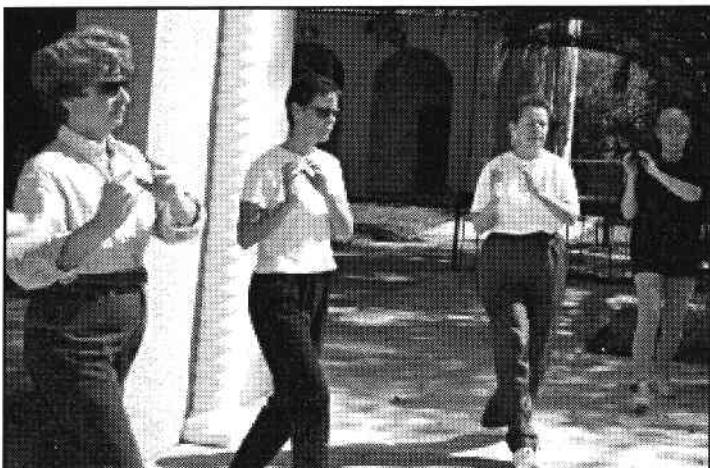
The first being HUMILITY. This was reflected to me over and over again throughout the week by Ed Altman, Roberta Taggart, Elissa Maguire, Diana Daffner & Jackie Kingsbury.

The second being TRUST. This was reflected to me not only by our teachers (my new T'ai Chi Chih family) who attended this course but by all those who have gone before me.

The third being ALLOWANCE. Again reflected to me by all those who attended our course — the first T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Accreditation Course of 1999 & the first in the state of Florida.

The last being RESPECT. Over and over again this space was shown to me by Ed Altman. In my place of knowing I feel Justin has made a wise choice in appointing Ed as the Head of T'ai Chi Chih. I reflect to Justin, Ed and T'ai Chi Chih my TRUST, the ALLOWANCE to be, the RESPECT of self, and the support in remaining HUMBLE!

— Barbara B. Hamilton



Teacher Candidates (L-R): Lila Margolis, Sally McLaughlin, Lyn Welch, Malinda Lubore perform "Around the Platter Variation" outside during their accreditation week.

Photo: Elissa Maguire

What a delight — enthusiastic teacher candidates preparing for a lifetime of joyous dedication to TCC! Well, actually, they were more seriously involved with preparing for their required presentation!!

This was my first TCC gathering since my own accreditation in 1991. It was great to meet Ed Altman, and Roberta Taggart, former editor of *The Vital Force*, which has been a lifeline for those of us living far from the nerve center of TCC.

I learned a lot in my day and a half at the training. Some minor moving corrections; some great teaching ideas. But most of all, it was inspiring, it filled me with renewed appreciation of the power and wonder of TCC.

I highly recommend auditing Teacher Training, and next time I will arrive earlier in the week to be present for more teaching of the movements!

— Diana Daffner

This was a most incredible, emotional & spiritual week. This week I have learned AWARENESS and PATIENCE at a new level. The awareness T'ai Chi Chih has given me now lets my life flow. I go through each day consciously now and it lets me recognize, understand, work through, release and

move on more quickly. Even though I feel I am moving so fast through each day and week I have more patience with myself, others and most of all T'ai Chi Chih. . . . I am looking forward to auditing as often as I can and attending the yearly teacher conferences to keep myself sharp. . . .

— Priscilla M. Brands

Being an auditing instructor at a Teacher Accreditation is an awesome, inspiring experience. Working with teacher-candidates over the period of several days to move with them as they complete their final preparations to become TCC teachers reminded me not only of my own teacher training, but why I became a teacher — to share the gift that changed my life — T'ai Chi Chih.

Listening to presentations, interacting with candidates and sharing some very personal moments has created a strong bond with each of them.

I was humbled as candidate after candidate looked to me for movement refinement — knowing well that, as a teacher, I still have more of my journey to complete and refinement of my own moves. I encourage other teachers to audit as often as they can.

— Roberta Taggart



Congratulations to these newly-accredited TCC teachers! **Back row**, (L-R): Priscilla Brand, Malinda Lubore, Lila Margolis, Sally McLaughlin, Joanna Woodrow, Course Instructor Ed Altman; **Middle row**, (L-R): Barbara Hamilton, Ernest Murphy, Rose-Marie Scott, Lyn Welch; **Front**, Sr. Kathy Salewski.

Photo: Elissa Maguire



Twenty-five new Seijaku teachers accredited in Minnesota in April

By Louis & Joyce DeGidio
Course Hosts

The class presented by Ed Altman included teachers from North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and yes Minnesota.

Thanks to Ed Altman's commitment and the teachers' dedication we were able to experience the softness and true feeling of T'ai Chi Chih.

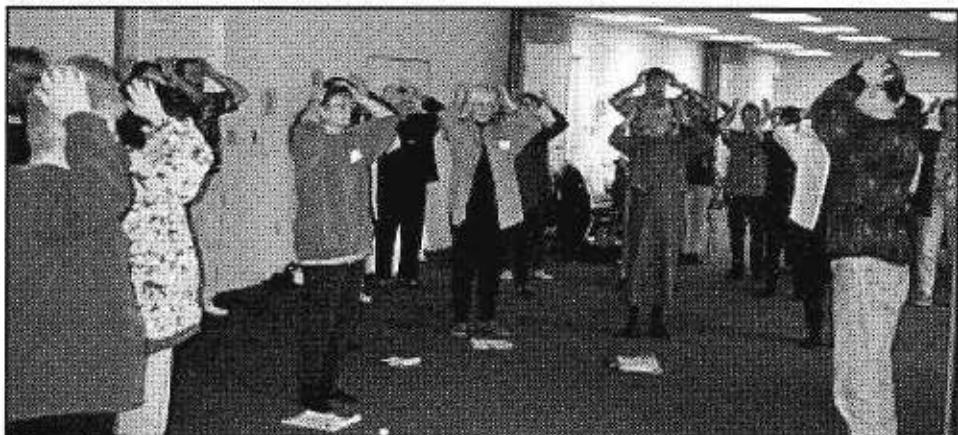
Our gratitude to Ed Altman's patience and time as each of us came closer to the true feeling of T'ai Chi Chih.

Yes, the emptiness came once the mind comprehended that the T'ai Chi Chih family had gone home.

Thank you Justin.

A personal account

I enjoyed a "new beginning!" Learning Seijaku is an added gift to the gift of T'ai Chi Chih. There is always much to learn, room to grow...expanding, contracting, soft and hard, bend your knees, return your attention to the soles of the feet. Ahh, I got it!!! OR do



(Above) Seijaku course participants practice one of the beginning "massages" of the form as Ed Altman (far right) instructs.

Photo: Louis DeGidio



Newly-accredited Seijaku teachers pose at the end of the course. **Back row, standing, (L-R):** Linda Michaud, Joe Michaud, Steph Winter, Sr. Renata Liegey, Sr. Eleanor Stockert, Della Edstrom, Nancy Werner-Azarski, Ron Barker, Carol Houtkooper, Vivian Hoff, Dick Detert, Thomas Davison, Connie Mack. **Seated, middle row (L-R):** Lenore Listiak, Janice Johnson, Sr. Rita Foster, Course Instructor Ed Altman, Paula Wiener, Mary-Louise Hunt Smith Bodinski, Mary Taylor. **Front row, seated, (L-R):** Joyce Coohey, Marie Dotts, Cathy Dalton, Judy George, Sharon Sloper. **Not pictured:** Jean Waddington.

Photo: Louis DeGidio

I? PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE. Thank you Ed for your sincere teaching! Thank you Louie & Joyce for all your time and effort in allowing this experience to take place. Thank you Justin

for sharing all with us. Blessings & Peace,

—Judy George



Mother and daughter teach T'ai Chi Chih together in Oregon

By Cheryl Hall

We first learned about T'ai Chi Chih by attending a retreat at Cannon Beach, OR given by Elizabeth Tyler. Elizabeth soon became our instructor and friend. Through her classes, private lessons and retreats, we were both able to become accredited T'ai Chi Chih instructors. We both have been teaching continuously for the past two years. Shirley teaches through a community college in Astoria and Seaside, OR, and I teach seniors in Portland, OR. When I am in Seaside or Astoria, I co-teach.

TCC taught in Appalachians



Charter T'ai Chi Chih class of the state of West Virginia. Convenor of the group [was] Dee Howell, R.N., C.M.T., second from the right. Neena Mitchell, Syracuse, New York, was the itinerant T.C.C. instructor [not pictured]. The group met in a mountain-top home in the central Appalachians.

Photo and text by Neena Mitchell



Cheryl Hall (fifth from the left in black shirt) poses with her T'ai Chi Chih class for seniors in Portland, OR.
Photo provided by Cheryl Hall

It gives the students a good understanding of how people from different age groups move, and

they enjoy having two instructors to follow. Some students enroll for our classes **every** term.



Shirley Hall (center, holding sign) poses with her T'ai Chi Chih class in Seaside, OR.
Photo: Cheryl Hall



Student / teacher intensive first TCC event in Canada since 1991

By Guadalupe Buchwald
Course Host

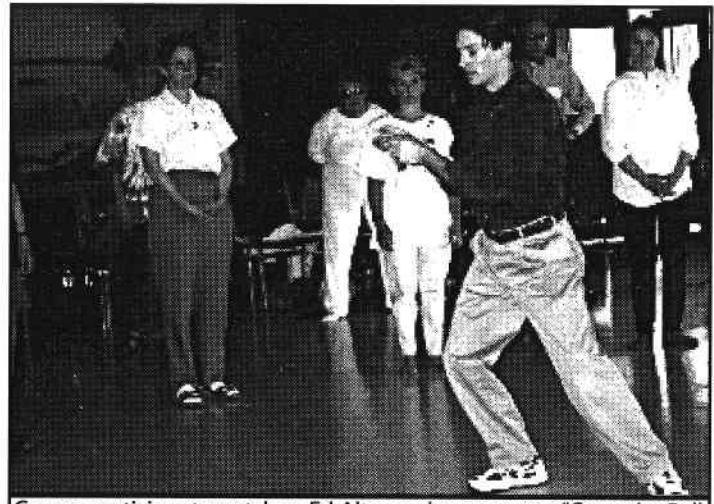
The Canadian side of the Family wants to express their gratitude to Ed Altman.

Ed came to Victoria like the Spring that we are experiencing full of new life and invigorating.



Course Instructor Ed Altman leads the group of teachers and students through "Passing Clouds."
Photo: Guadalupe Buchwald

The T'ai Chi Chih Intensive was one of rebirth, renewal, rekindling, and definitely new growth in our practice of the form and our commitment to T'ai Chi Chih and Community. He came not to tell us what to do, but as a teacher and leader, to walk his talk, show us the commitment, dedication, love and respect he has for T'ai Chi Chih, to lead by example. He demonstrated how he does his practice, with an invitation to consider it, check it, try it, and implement the refinements in our daily practice and in our teachings.



Course participants watch as Ed Altman demonstrates "Carry the Ball to the Side."
Photo: Guadalupe Buchwald

And teaching he did! The first thing was the deep respect and love he has for Justin. In listening to him I heard what Justin told us so many times before, "[With] honesty and integrity in your practice and in your life, softness and continuity in the form, no curlicues or added movements — it is



Enjoying the sunny day, course participants relax on the lawn outside after finishing lunch. (Foreground, L-R): Future teacher candidates Jim Shorr and Jerry Jansson of Oregon talk with Ed Altman.
Photo: Guadalupe Buchwald



complete as it is. Keep it pure and simple as it was taught to you," and this Ed taught and exemplified in every way. He went on to review and refine one by one the TCC movements, going back to the basics:

- * Bend your knees, check your stance
- * Check your alignment of the spine; remember it is like a stack of coins
- * Make sure you do not lean
- * Move from your center (T'an T'ien)
- * Relax the waist, shoulders, arms, wrists, hands
- * Allow the Chi to raise or move your arms; be patient in the movement — do not rush the arms or the body
- * Flow with the flow in softness and continuity

But above all remember this is "JOY THRU MOVEMENT!".....And JOY it was!!!

For me personally it was a getting reacquainted with an old friend, discovering the teacher and leader. I was reminded that on accepting accreditation I promised myself to keep myself in honesty and integrity, to be a steward of the precious gift with which I was entrusted, to preserve it in its pure form, and to pass it on to future generations in the way it was given to me.



Teacher Margo Carpenter (third from left) speaks with students and future teacher candidates during the lunch break.

Photo: Guadalupe Buchwald

After we did the Jing to store all that joyous Chi, no one wanted to go home and leave this room so filled up with joy and chi. Ed's first visit to Victoria left us hungry for more. He just whet our appetite for more gatherings like this one, in which we practice together, establish or reaffirm community, remember that we are one family, or rather, that we are One.



Course Host Guadalupe Buchwald (left of Ed Altman, front row, center) smiles amid the group of nearly 40 T'ai Chi Chih teachers and students assembled for the one-day intensive in Victoria, BC in mid-April.

Photo: Ursula Bridge



Retreat setting beneficial for candidates at St. Louis TCC Training

By Kathy Vieth
Course Host

The T'ai Chi Chih teachers accreditation in St. Louis, MO. provided depth and growth for its participants. As we went over and over the simple 19 movements and final pose the chi flowed. We realized these easy movements provided many of us with frustrations as well as healing on all levels. The longer daytime format allowed more time for development and detailed correction.

The Mercy Center is a Catholic retreat in the middle of St. Louis

County. Its sprawling grounds are nestled in between homes with large lots of land. It's the perfect place to host a T'ai Chi Chih teachers accreditation and became home for the 12 teacher candidates. Inside the Center we had a large auditorium with plenty



(L-R): Candidates Sr. Cait Mulligan, Deedie Grimstead, Senora Avery are all smiles on graduation day.
Photo: Steve Albers



Candidate Sr. Cait Mulligan leads her "class" of fellow candidates and auditing teachers in "Around the Platter Variation".
Photo: Kathy Vieth



(L-R): Course Instructor Ed Altman, Auditor Noel Altman, Course Host Kathy Vieth and Candidate (and Kathy's fiance) Steve Albers relax at the end of the course.
Photo: Rich Race

of moving space. Lunch was provided at the Center for all participating making it easy to spend the extra lunch time to "retreat" to the Mercy Center's grounds. Many participants walked the outside labyrinth during the one hour and 45

minute lunch break as a walking meditation. The weather was in our favor the whole week. Temperatures in the 70's and low humidity. There were many places to walk and "get away" during the breaks.

The retreat setting

helped the candidates bond and work together. Many people had breakfast, lunch and dinner together. There were numerous social events in the evenings, including a visit to the art museum, and dinners out. One of the more unusual things about this training was that we had three people from out of the country. Two were from Canada and one from Ireland.

Eight current St. Louis T'ai Chi Chih teachers lended a helping hand to the course. Several teachers did airport pickups and even a semiprofessional "tour" of the St. Louis City for our out-of-the-country guests. We provided a potluck dinner on Wednesday evening at Anne Perkins' home. Thursday evening after dinner we watched the video of the talk that Justin Stone gave to Folsom Prison. Six of these teachers served as auditors, helping the candidates with form correction and sometimes being called up front by Ed to demonstrate moves.

In the end 10 of the



Candidate Jeff Patterson faces a full room of fellow candidates and auditing teachers while leading them in "Bass Drum".

Photo: Kathy Vieth

12 candidates were accredited. Two of the candidates' certificates were deferred until a later date to allow them to bring their skills up.* Maturity of practice had a significant impact on

who was ready for accreditation. All participants gained deeper knowledge and respect for the accreditation process and for the movements of T'ai Chi Chih.



Graduates of the course! **Back row, (L-R):** Lucy Ann Fleischman, Jeff Patterson, Susan Kissinger, Course Instructor Ed Altman, Elizabeth "Deedie" Grimstead, Mary Ann Wamhoff. **Middle row (L-R):** Deborah Flaugher, Steve Albers, Senora Avery, Sr. Cait Mulligan (from Ireland). **Front (L-R):** Lorraine Lepine, Jackie Williamson (both from Canada). **Not pictured:** Joyce Joseph.

Photo: Kathy Vieth

**A note about referring candidates for the teachers accreditation process. I learned that students can't be "too" prepared. It is unfair to the candidate, the other candidates, and to the trainers to send someone to the training who is not fully ready. Luckily the student I sent to the training who was not fully prepared did understand and could sense the level she needed to be at but hadn't matured to yet. I am and felt totally responsible for this and will be working with this candidate until she is ready. Ed Altman has a set of guidelines to prepare candidates for the training. I will be going over these guidelines one by one learning to "see" better. In the meantime I hope others can learn from my mistake and be more mindful in the preparations of students for the accreditation process.*



Teacher in Documentary

"On the Road Home"

By Sr. Antonia Cooper, OSF

About four years ago I met Christina Lundberg, a young woman from New Jersey who said she was planning to do a Documentary and was interested in interviewing me for it. She was intrigued with myself as being a Franciscan Sister and also one who practices and teaches a movement based on oriental philosophy called T'ai Chi Chih (TCC). In the film I describe how TCC has helped me to slow down and quiet down - prerequisites for a life of prayer and connection with God, dwelling within. She addresses the question for her self: "Who is God," and the film unfolds answers in which she is able to apply to her own interior search. December, 1998 the completed Documentary was viewed in New York City. I was very impressed with Christina from the moment we met, impressed with her talent for film making, and also for her desire to search for God within herself. This search began when she went to Tibet several years ago as part of an American Film crew to film his holiness, the Dalai Lama.

She was immediately struck by his teachings and this encounter started her search for the feminine face of God, and the journey-pilgrimage that changed her life. In her description of the film she writes: "Twelve holy and wise women from diverse religious traditions lead her to discover a unifying thread of wisdom and compassion. It is an adventure story of the spirit that takes place in the inner and outer landscape of Tibet, Nepal, India and the United States. Embracing Tibetan Buddhism as her heart path, she seeks to integrate this ancient wisdom with her Christian upbringing and the ways of the Native Americans."

God is the goal of a spiritual life - no matter how we name God for ourselves. Yet it is God who initiates the invitation into that Journey and is its goal, walking every step of the way with the individual toward its completion.

New teacher feels stillness in class

By Jo Trautmann

Wednesday, February 3, 1999, I held my first two classes at Sun City, Georgetown, Texas. Each class had at least 20 students. Some had had some T'ai Chi [Ch'uan] experience and were looking forward to learning T'ai Chi Chih. Others had attended the free demonstration and, since they liked what they had seen, decided to try it. The class included those with arthritis, knee replacements and one person who had suffered a stroke recently. In a survey of questionnaires I had had them fill out the week before, it became evident that most of the students were there to regain and/or maintain their sense of balance. Also, many are working towards flexibility and serenity.

As the lesson progressed, I was in awe of their concentration and of the quiet and stillness that came over the entire room. I remarked on this and they agreed that the room had become wonderfully still. After the classes, I received many enthusiastic comments. Those who had previously taken some T'ai Chi [Ch'uan] liked this form very much. Thanks from all my students to Justin Stone for originating the easy-to-learn, easy-to-do in a small space, and immediately beneficial form of T'ai Chi, T'ai Chi Chih.



What T'ai Chi Chih Did For Me

By Dan Carpenter
Student of Sharon Sirkis

The most basic element that I have learned from Tai Chi Chih is simple enjoyment of the movements that are involved. The repetition of the moves and their relative simplicity provides me with a relaxed feeling. After learning the movements it is very easy to get into the flow of the movements and to almost let them perform themselves. It gives me a real feeling of what is called the "flow experience". This is something that I really enjoy in other aspects of my life.

One of my most favorite hobbies is to go snowboarding. While snowboarding I achieve a similar "flow experience" while I am carving down the mountain; the shifting of my body weight from side to side and feeling how in balance my body is. These are my favorite aspects of riding. I also feel this same "flow experience" when I am performing Tai Chi Chih. Feeling my body shifting forwards, backwards, and side to side, so smoothly and effortlessly gives me the feeling of balance and joy.

"Perpetual Motion" move is probably my favorite. While performing this move I can get "lost" in the repetition of the movement. "Rocking Motion" is another move that I like, though sometimes I am uncertain of whether I am doing the weight shift properly. I have to remind myself to just let the movement flow and not force it. When I am moving my hands back and forth I can sometimes feel the air flow through them almost like a heavy liquid and it gives me the feeling of almost swimming.

The sensation of focus that Tai Chi Chih gives me is another aspect that I enjoy. Generally when I do Tai Chi Chih on my own I feel more alert and settled about myself. After class however the feeling is much more intense. I think that the meditation period afterwards definitely contributes to

this. When I first open my eyes after meditation it is almost like a shock to see the world again. A feeling of total calm and serenity completely engulfs me. When I walk outside I have this almost indescribable feeling, like I have woken up from the best nights sleep ever and am so filled with excitement for the rest of the day, but calm and at rest, ready for whatever happens next. This feeling after class is one of the best parts of the week for me.

Probably the best thing that Tai Chi Chih has done for me is the enthusiasm that I now have to continue with it. I always think of things I could do to better myself, exercising more and other things similar, but I never seem to be able [to] get myself motivated to do them. However Tai Chi Chih is something that I know I am going to continue to do. I have been doing it on Friday and Sunday mornings during the semester and will continue to do it after the class is over. The main reason is for the benefits it provides me right after doing the exercises, the wakefulness, the alertness, and how ready I am for the day. I am not a morning person, as you may have noticed, but after these exercises I am ready to go out and do things and do not need to rely on massive amounts of coffee to get me ready.

The best example of my commitment to continue is [the] weekend of January 15. This was the morning of the big ice storm. Our power went out and I had to drive my parents to the airport at five o'clock in the morning. Waking up for this was a bit of a challenge. I think I did the whole trip on auto-pilot and when I returned home at six my thoughts were of going back to sleep. I knew though that later that morning I would have to struggle to get back up at seven because I was going snowboarding with a friend. So instead of going back to sleep I did some Tai Chi Chih exercises. I performed the "Rocking Motion", "Push Pull",

continued on page 35



Poetry Page

Meditation on a Plane THE PLACE BENEATH

IN THIS QUIET PLACE, COCOONED,
THE CONVERSATION JUST ABOVE
DISCONNECTED FROM ME, BUT
COMFORTABLE, CADENCING SOUND
WORDS FLOATING AT RANDOM
PATCHES OF PULSING
DANCING AND DARTING
STRETCHING AND SHRINKING
QUILTING AROUND ME
STITCHED WITH DIRECTION
NOT AIMED AT ME

IN THIS SPACE BENEATH SOUND.

— *Eileen Hastings*
(Student of George Balliet)
October, 1996

Planting Seeds

I scattered seeds upon the ground
and watched them grow
some quickly, some slowly,
some not at all.

I scattered seeds upon the ground
and found some sprouted
then withered.

They remind us that even Mother Nature
cannot win them all.

— *Jo Trautmann*

"Almost" Pyramid Poems

God
speaks to
the whole world
which listens
with love
speaks back
to God
with love

— *Stephanie Wing*
(Student of Virginia
Lee Cepeda)

Come
in time
and like this life
prepare for
sudden event
Certainly
Gift of
Glory

— *Soussan Farsi*
(Student of Virginia
Lee Cepeda)

Sun or Shadow
Makes no difference to the mountain,
Throbbing with life.
The hills alive,
What can be the Source?
Indifferent trees,
Not part of man's world —
Witnessing all but non-attached,
Are these the wise ones?

— *Justin Stone*

Healing stories

Metabolism changed in practitioner

By Judy Mirczak

I was always hyperactive as a child and took medication (Ritalin) for many years to "control" this condition. Unfortunately, the medication left me with serious problems with my digestion and metabolism and I was unable to keep weight on, even when eating five meals a day. When I began to practice T'ai Chi Chih regularly I noticed many significant changes in my metabolism. I am much calmer now, and although I eat a normal amount of food I have gained at least 15 pounds as my metabolism and weight have both been brought into balance.

Ed, CA

Many times at teacher training when a student is giving their presentation, he/she will relate a healing or health benefit from regular practice of T'ai Chi Chih. In fact, the benefit is the **very reason** they have become T'ai Chi Chih instructors.

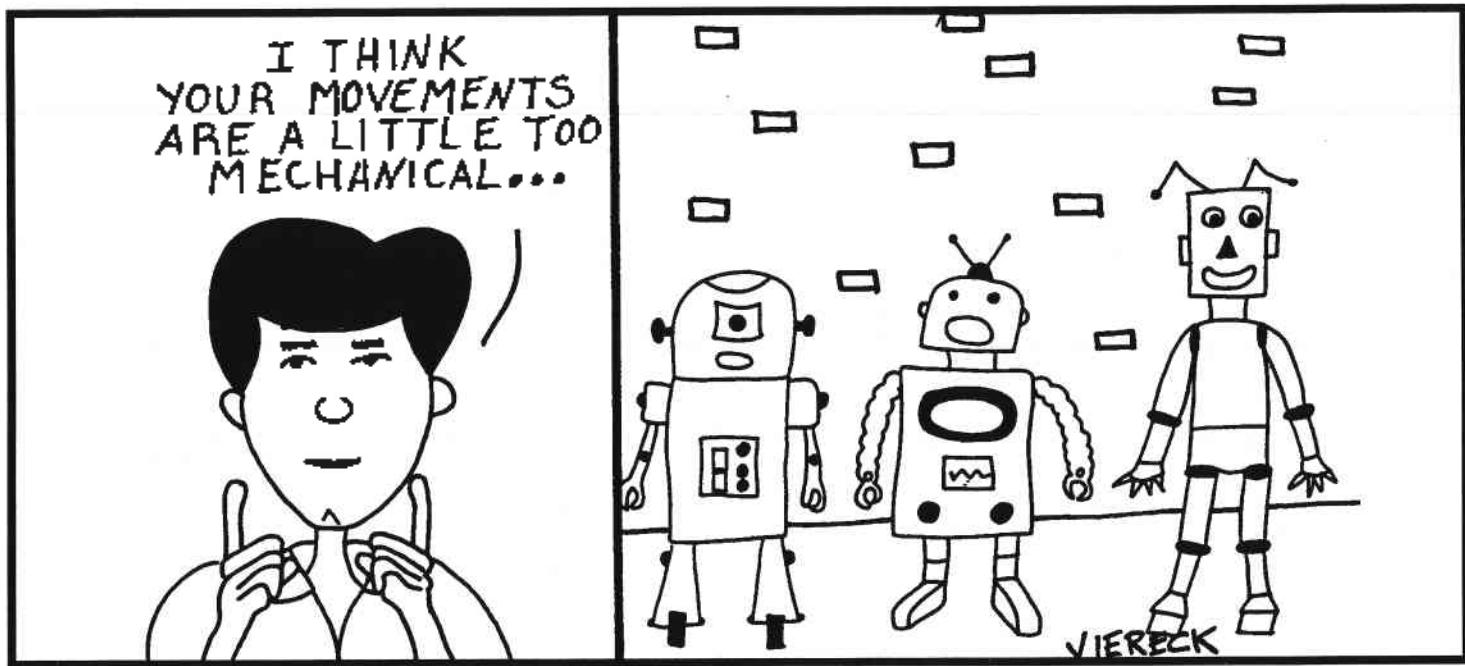
What is your story? It doesn't have to be dramatic. It can be long or short. We just want to

hear it and share it with other instructors so they may tell others what T'ai Chi Chih is doing in peoples lives. We are looking for diverse stories which will create an interest in others to try T'ai Chi Chih. What balancing your chi did for you could help someone else having the same situation. Help us to help you learn how T'ai Chi Chih is working in all our lives.

Send your article to:

**Judy Mirczak
229 Creek Rd.
Wynantskill, NY 12198**

We want to share not only our enthusiasm and joy of T'ai Chi Chih with people, but also its health benefits too.



© 1999 Victor Viereck



THE SINGING BOWL

*Ring Loud
the sound of round and round
the singing of the bowl.*

*Ring soft
the sound of round and round
the singing of my soul.*

*Sing loud, so loud,
and louder still
with great vibration
Come!
Sing out the joy
that is my life
and let the chaos come.*

*Within the Bowl of Life, I'm held
The Center keeps me there
and with the joy
and silence too,
I fill my day with prayer.*

*Ring loud
the sound of round and round
the living of our days.*

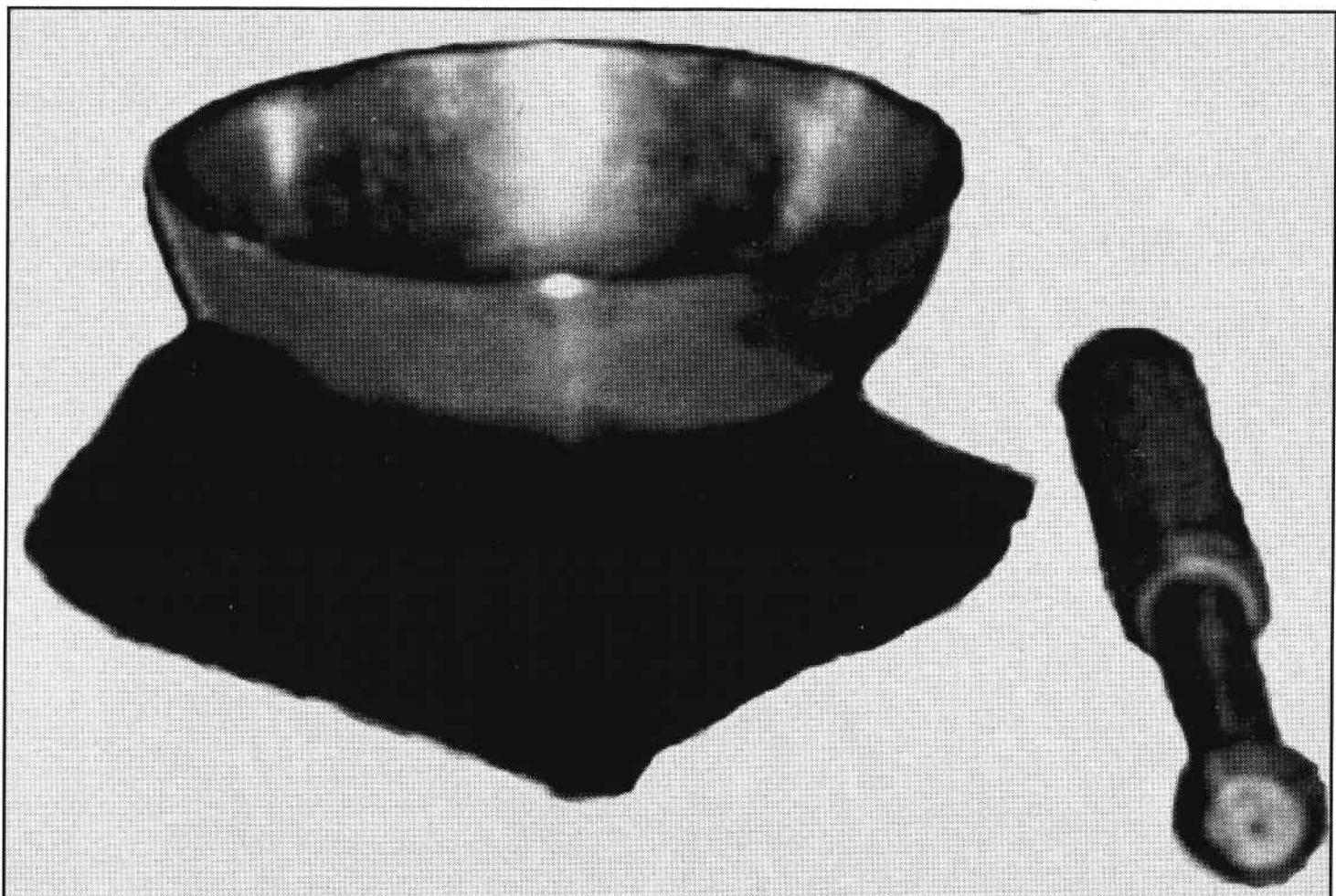
*Ring soft
the sound of round and round
and let the music play.*

*The melody of round and round
that carries through the years
is God's own voice
the Voice of Love
that calms my greatest fears.*

*Ring loud
the sound of round and round
the singing of the bowl.*

*Ring soft
the sound of round and round
the singing of my soul.*

- Linda Braga
Valentine's Day, 1999



A Tibetan "singing bowl" is a brass bowl used in prayer and meditation. . . . It is struck like a gong on four sides and allowed to ring. Or the wooden striker is placed on the outer lip of the bowl and run around it slowly. It makes the bowl "sing" with an increasing vibration. . . .

Photo and text: Linda Braga



Readers Respond

continued from page 3

I particularly enjoyed reading about and seeing the photos of children in South Africa doing TCC. I sincerely believe if we can target and focus on teaching TCC to the children in grammar schools and high schools, starting from the ground floor up, we would have far less crowded jails and far less incidences as in Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, and many other eruptions of violence. Hats off to you! - Way to go! - Good job! This is certainly a glimmer of hope and peace for our future families, communities, and world. Thank you Sister Marie-Ann Main. (As you can see I am extremely excited about this.)

Paula Favorito
New Milford, NJ

Noel . . . By the way *The Vital Force* looks and reads very well. You & Ed did a terrific job. You should stay on as the Editor.

Don Fiore
Phoenix, AZ

What TCC Did

continued from page 31

"Pulling in the Energy" and "Perpetual Motion". These moves are probably my favorites and I really enjoy them, even though I am still somewhat uncertain of how correctly I am doing the Rocking Motion. When I was done [with] them however I felt fully alert and ready to go. I was even ready early and waiting on my friend to arrive. If I hadn't done these exercises I am sure I would have fallen back asleep and been woken up by a slightly annoyed friend banging on my door. The lift tickets were free that day if you got there before ten.

These are the things that I have connected

most with in Tai Chi Chih. I took the class to learn something that could change my lifestyle and I believe it has.

News Shorts

continued from page 18

"T'ai Chi" appeared on "Good Morning America" broadcast, resulted in TCC class enrollments

Don Walker of Huntington Beach, CA reported that his T'ai Chi Chih class enrollment soared after "Good Morning America" aired a segment on "T'ai Chi" on January 7 in which it was announced by Dr. Nancy Snyderman, "**T'ai Chi has been officially endorsed by The Arthritis Foundation as a beneficial treatment option.**"

Walker asked his students what had prompted them to enroll and a large percentage told him of the program they had seen aired.

According to the transcript of the program, Snyderman went on to describe the benefits she had found and was quite enthusiastic. "If you don't have a doctor who knows anything about this, I can tell you there's not a city in the country right now that doesn't have some place where you can learn and incorporate it. If your pills and shots aren't working, remember the basic exercise and keeping those joints moving is an important first step."

The Vital Force confirmed the endorsement with the Northern California Chapter of The Arthritis Foundation.

— Noel Altman

[Editor's Note: Although requested in February, ABC News did not release the transcript of the segment until May due to fact-checking on the presidential impeachment trial segment, which was also reported in that program.]



Karmic Komments

from Good Karma Publishing, Inc.
P.O. Box 511, Ft. Yates, ND 58538
Jean Katus, Publisher

T'ai Chi Chih Promotion

More and more teachers seem to be using the media to promote T'ai Chi Chih. Even if your newspaper article or TV or radio spot is a local-area or regional one and lists your name and phone number as the contact, it's also a good idea to give the Good Karma toll-free phone number (888/540-7459) for those getting the information to be able to order materials and/or receive teacher lists for specific areas. (The web site address should also be included in your promotion: www.taichichih.org.) Recent publicity that was televised nationally flashed the sponsoring agency's phone number on the TV screen. That organization was inundated with calls and because they did not have Good Karma's phone number, they had to mail names and addresses to us so we could send catalogs.

Tape Distribution

We have entered into an agreement with a company that distributes audio materials to public, college/university, and military libraries. They have accepted both volumes of "Spiritual Stories of the East" and "Justin Stone Speaks on T'ai Chi Chih," as well as the T'ai Chi Chih videotape. You may want to let your local libraries know that they can order these materials from Professional Media Service Corp.

Folsom Video

Because of price changes within the postal system, we have slightly altered the amount teachers need to send in stamps to "borrow" the Folsom video of Justin speaking to inmates. If you want to use the video for a two-week period (or longer if no other teacher has requested it), all you need to pay is the postage both ways. If you want it sent book rate, include \$1.13 in stamps; for priority, send \$3.20 in stamps.

Order Form

To avoid confusion in using the order form that is generally sent with the *Vital Force Journal*, we have a suggestion for teachers who may want to give it to students. The form includes the teacher discounted price in parentheses and before photocopying it for students, the discounted price needs to be blocked or whited out. Any teacher can also request that Good Karma send a student form to use for photocopying.

The GKP insert in this issue of the *Vital Force Journal* contains information on our video library. Look for the regular order form in the fall issue. If you need one before that time, simply request it and we will send it.



Telephone Answering Service

Occasionally, Good Karma has begun using a telephone answering service. Don't be alarmed if the "real person" at the other end of the line is not Jean Katus. You can leave the same information with the professional answering the phone as you would otherwise. We only request that you be as brief and concise as possible; if you need a return call, we can accommodate you. Besides the service, we still continue to use the answering machine when unavailable.

More Telephone Information

As noted in last quarter's telephone and address updates, the Good Karma number, listed behind Jean Katus' name in the new directory, is incorrect. That number (701/854-2004) is the fax only number. It is not to be used for phone messages. Good Karma's phone numbers are 701/854-7459 or toll-free 888/540-7459.

Conference

We look forward to seeing new faces at the conference, in addition to the familiar ones who always attend. Please stop by the Good Karma table and help us wish T'ai Chi Chih a happy 25th anniversary!



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Fort Yates, ND 58538

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**SUBMISSIONS:**

The Vital Force invites letters, articles, news briefs, poetry, original artwork and photography. Written submissions should be typed and double-spaced. All submissions must indicate the full name and complete address of the person submitting them to be considered for publication.

The Vital Force now has a text scanner which allows us to process typed submissions much more efficiently. Unfortunately, hand-written submissions must still be typed in manually and are prone to human error. Mail, fax, or e-mail your submissions. (See "Contact Information" on opposite page.) Students, please indicate who your T'ai Chi Chih teacher is with your submission.

Submission deadlines:

Spring:	January 25th	Fall:	July 25th
Summer:	April 25th	Winter:	October 25th

EDITING POLICY:

"But if you turn your eyes within yourselves
And testify to the truth of Self-nature—
The Self-nature that is no-nature,
You will have gone beyond the ken of
sophistry."

-- "ZAZEN WASAN / The Song of Zazen" by Hakuin,
A Flower Does Not Talk by Abbot Zenkei Shibayama

The editing policy of **The Vital Force** is to leave written submissions as intact as possible in order to preserve the original voice of the writer. Therefore, **editing will be minimal, unless explicitly requested otherwise by the writer, or unless the meaning is unclear.** The editing term "sic" will NOT be used to point out errors. Due to space limitations, submissions may have to be shortened, although it is hoped this will be rare.

When an addition or substitution for a word or words in the original text has been made, these brackets: [] will be used to enclose the change, rather than parentheses, which some writers like using. If an omission is made of more than a word or two due to unrelated content (in a letter, for instance) or space limitations, it will be shown by the following version of ellipsis: . . . This is so as not to be confused when the following: is used by a writer to show a lapse in time, a long pause or change in topic.

MEMBERSHIPS:

The Vital Force is published quarterly and bulk-mailed to Association members in the U.S. during the second weeks of March, June, September and December. Generally, the mailing time is 2 - 4 weeks. U.S. First Class and international delivery can be ordered for an extra fee and posts on the same schedule noted above. (See Page 4 for details).

TCC TEACHERS' DIRECTORY:

The T'ai Chi Chih Teachers' Directory is for referral and communication purposes among accredited T'ai Chi Chih teachers. **It is not to be used or sold as a mailing list.** Updates are published in each issue of **The Vital Force**. Send your changes to the San Rafael address (on opposite page).

WHEN MOVING:

Please allow 8 weeks notice and provide complete old and new addresses. Because **The Vital Force** has "return service requested" with the U.S. Post Office, an undeliverable issue or Teachers' Directory is returned to us with a charge of \$1.47. Then, if we mail out a new one, it goes First Class (because a bulk mailing requires 200 pieces), resulting in further expense of \$1.22 - \$1.75, depending on the weight. Please help us avoid this unnecessary and wasteful expense—send in your change of address information early!



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www.taichichih.org

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THE VITAL FORCE Journal of T'ai Chi Chih

MEMBERSHIP FORM

1. Renewal New

2. Name _____ Phone () _____ - _____

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_____ Zip _____ - _____

3. Accredited TCC Teacher - Are you: Active Inactive Willing to travel

Membership includes Teachers' Directory _____ year(s) @ \$30.00 / yr = \$_____

Do you want your name, phone number and e-mail address (if applicable) added to the
T'ai Chi Chih community website (www.taichichih.org) _____ year(s) @ \$5 / yr = \$_____

Student / Interested person _____ year(s) @ \$25.00 / yr = \$_____

4. First Class Delivery in U.S. additional \$5.00 / yr = \$_____

Out of U.S. Delivery additional \$10.00 / yr = \$_____

5. Donation for funding VFJ projects: outreach and referral activities = \$_____

Make check or money order in U.S. dollars payable to: **TOTAL = \$_____**

The Vital Force

P.O. Box 6460

San Rafael, CA 94903-0460



The Lighter Side...

1. When I announced the next move, Daughter in the Valley, one of the ladies at the Senior Center started singing "Down in the Valley." This resulted in the whole group singing along! (Except for me, I didn't know the words).

— Sharon Sirkis

2. After a discussion of how habit is the enemy of old age, I encouraged the members of Aspenwood Senior Living Community to try something new. "I'm going to keep poking at some of you to try new things," I said.

One spry lady lit up and said, "I'm reading a book about how they're poking an elephant and making it bleed."

"Does that mean I need to stop poking at you?" I asked.

"No," she said, "You need to bleed us some more!" (She still retains her sense of humor from her days as a police officer).

— Sharon Sirkis

3. Having set up a new TCC course for seniors at the local recreation center, I showed up for the first class only to watch a steady stream of seniors march past my classroom. They were on their way to bingo next door. Final result - Bingo: 200, TCC: 0.

— Noel Altman

4. During a TCC practice session one of my 6-months pregnant students said, "When I don't do the movements correctly my baby kicks me!"

— Joyce DeGidio

5. A student called me and said she couldn't attend tonight's class. She confessed that she hadn't done her practice today, (she practices regularly), and she could really feel the difference it made. As she went on to tell me how edgy she felt, she suddenly broke into laughter. "I just felt my neck," she said, "And I just noticed I've put my shirt on backwards!"

— Sharon Sirkis

[Editor's Note: If you have a funny story to tell regarding your T'ai Chi Chih practice or teaching, write it up and send it in for "The Lighter Side..."]



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Pyramid Poetry

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I am glad to see Pyramid Poetry spreading so rapidly. We were recently told of group Pyramid Poetry sessions in New England! I don't know if this is because of the instruction in my book, *Climb the Joyous Mountain*, or because teachers have read Pyramid Poems in the *Vital Force* and the *T'ai Chi Chih News*. Whatever, maybe it's a joyous force spreading rapidly. Making Pyramid Poems is like eating peanuts; you always feel like doing one more,

hoping and believing it will be better than the last. And it usually will!

I speak Japanese and know how much easier it is to write Haiku in that language than to do so in English. That is what started me, years ago, writing poems in my own form — one syllable, two, three, four, three, two, one, with the punch in the last syllable, where possible.

I have noticed that people get quite philosophical when writing Pyramid poems, maybe because

T'ai Chi Chih people seem to go beneath the surface a little more than most people. A good time to write the poems is after doing T'ai Chi Chih or Seijaku. Creativity and Intuition seem greatly heightened at such time.

It is my hope that, one day, Good Karma may decide to publish a pamphlet with some of the poems in it. Don't forget, you can always write one more.

— Justin

*Minds,
be like
tethered kites
able both to soar
through the air
and come
down*

— Mark Maloney

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*Sun
filters
through cherry
blossoms, lighting
the way home
to the
Heart*

— Ed Altman

*I
find it
amusing
that I teach best
what I need
to learn
most*

— Sharon Sirkis