

The Vital Force



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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
Membership Svcs: Doug Harned

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:

For the first time our cover features the artwork of a T'ai Chi Chih student—Janet Edwards—whose T'ai Chi Chih lettering and drawing of the crane



(above) were created as part of a required project in the intermediate (.5 unit) TCC college course she took from Teacher Donna McElhose. Janet, who did major in art and loves to work in pen and ink, was inspired by a t-shirt bearing cranes that Donna wore to class. The graphics surrounding her artwork were done by *The Vital Force*.

The three cranes on the cover and on every inside page are the artwork of Ou Mie Shu.

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Letter from the Editor

When **Justin Stone** completes a new project, it is big news. Over the years, I have seen three different productions of his teaching on videotape. Each one has been and continues to be valuable to any serious student or teacher. But the latest, completed in April, definitely stands out as **his finest overall production to date!** (See pg. 8 for Amy Hackenberg's review and pg. 32 for early reactions to the videotape at Good Karma Publishing.) Not only is his teaching wonderful and thorough ("vintage Justin"), but the quality of the production is superior and the practice session finally includes nine (instead of the former six) repetitions! Practicing with the four teachers (Vic Berg, Connie Hyde, Suni McHenry, Rhonda St. Martin) who lead the session is like joining an ongoing practice class! Boy do they flow! Just the expression on Suni's face as she performs the movements relaxes me. There is no speaking or verbal instruction in this part; the teachers are silent as they go straight through the 19 movements and one pose. However, Justin's newly-created music for the practice of T'ai Chi Chih does play softly in the background, setting the mood and adding to the relaxation. From the starting titles all the way through to Justin joining the four teachers at the end, this is one beautifully cohesive production! It's seamlessly woven. I've enjoyed putting the tape into the VCR and practicing along with them. I would say that **for beginning students, this videotape is the best choice** because of its overall higher quality of PRESENTATION and the fact that the student can practice with a mini-class of four teachers and enjoy nine repetitions.

For the more serious student and certainly every teacher, the old videotape is a necessity AS WELL. Nowhere else is Justin recorded on videotape offering complete instruction AND leading a practice session. Not everyone is fortunate enough to live in the same town as Justin! In Albuquerque, Justin regularly attends the Tuesday morning teachers' practice at the T'ai Chi Chih Center. Even there, in my experience, Justin declines to lead, instead allowing the local teachers to do so. Sometimes he'll offer comments or corrections at the end of the practice. On the old videotape, however, although most of the repetitions are performed in silence, Justin does offer reminders and tips throughout the practice session. Also, there is something to be gained by watching him perform a movement six times, something that cannot necessarily be seen in the fewer repetitions demonstrated in the instruction sections. Do we all realize how fortunate we are to be practicing a form in which the Originator is not only still living, but has been recorded for the future? Thankfully, Good Karma Publishing is going to continue to offer the old video.

Lastly, **Vic Berg** has decided to step away from his duties as Webmaster to focus on other priorities, including the raising of his little daughter Chelsea. We all greatly appreciate the total revamping and enhancing that he did of the T'ai Chi Chih community website last year. Many of you readers have written in to compliment his work. At this point, Ed Altman will again take over the maintenance of the site, including the updating of the teacher listing. However, all other enhancements will be put on hold for now. **If you are qualified and interested in taking on this volunteer role for The Vital Force and the community of T'ai Chi Chih, please contact me.**

Noel Altman, Editor



Readers Respond

I thought that the March 2000 *Vital Force* was the best issue I've ever read. It was packed full of meaty articles and letters, and the poems were great. I'm really amazed at how organized the editor, Noel, is, and it shows in the order and thought that go into such an issue. I can't imagine anyone who won't get a great deal out of it. Thank you!

Justin Stone
Albuquerque, NM

I always enjoy the Folsom prison articles you provide in the *VFJ*. They are a status report for us - and always encouraging. I know great things will come from Jim Hecker's work there with Ed [Altman] and Tara [Stiles]' support and guidance. (I have thought, perversely, that if I was in prison I would have the time to focus on TCC and meditation... boy is that weird?!?) I always return to Justin's comment about practicing at 42nd and Broadway versus the Himalayas - and realization achieved in active life being far more powerful - and Seijaku - serenity in the midst of activity... The answer is there! Fun stuff! . . .

Guy Kent
Albuquerque, NM

When visiting New York in late March, I joined one of Carolyn Perkins' TCC groups that meets Monday and Friday. On my way to the second session I realized that I had left home without the address. But I thought "Hey I can remember the street." I knew I was in the right

area, but all those concrete canyons began to look alike. As 10 a.m. approached I said aloud, "I need Carolyn or a phone book." I was halfway across a major intersection when I saw Carolyn walking toward me. I did an abrupt about-face, saying, "Hi Carolyn, am I glad to see you!" As we chatted on the way to the session, Carolyn told me that she rarely came the direction and street where we met. Hail to the Chi.

Neena Mitchell
Syracuse, NY

Hi Noel, Are you aware that the Cincinnati crowd have not received their [March] *Vital Force* yet [as of March 30]? I'm told that other areas have had theirs for weeks. If you know about it or it's only recently 'in the mail' it's OK. You don't need to reply unless you think there's a problem. We're all looking forward to seeing Ed in a couple of weeks [for the TCC Workshop April 15]. Thanks.

Susan Evans
Cincinnati, OH

[Editor's note: All issues (bulk and First Class) are shipped by the Monday following the first week-end of the issue month—in this case, March 6. If you've heard of people having it for weeks, it could only be people who got it First Class! Even in Albuquerque, where there are umpteen teachers, it takes about 2 weeks for bulk mailing.

I've got a more complete explana-

tion in the back of the Teachers' Directory in the "Commonly-Asked Questions" section, which I suggest all teachers take the time to read.

Unfortunately, once the issues are shipped, we don't have any control over how long it will take the U.S. Mail to get them to you, and it can vary from quarter to quarter. For the March issue, tax return mail may have clogged the system. In December, holiday mail does. In every case where someone has notified us of the issue being late, it always shows up in the next week or so. So, when it seems later than usual, hang in there! It shouldn't be too much longer!

To the T'ai Chi Chih Community, I would like to thank Ed Altman and Dan Pienciak our host for one of the most profound weeks of my life. April 24-28th was the first T'ai Chi Chih Teachers Training of the millennium. I, along with nine ladies are now accredited TCC instructors. I would like to thank Justin (as he is affectionately called) for his gift. It has made a difference in my life. I hope to meet all the family at the Conference in July. Until then. Patience.

Grady F. Anderson
Nanuet, NY

A T'ai Chi Chih student of mine recently had an MRI as a followup to

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A companion went with me to the animal farm. He was a rather gruff man and one, I was to find, that the animals didn't trust or readily take to. Perhaps he had hidden violence in his makeup. As we entered the grounds we passed a fence with chicken wire over it, making an enlarged cage within. There rested a pet puma (mountain lion) that the trainer had raised almost from birth (the mother had eaten its twin, and the trainer had sneaked the day-old baby out of the cage before it had a similar fate). He had seen the man I was with before and evidently had a violent aversion to him. As we walked by, he sprang at the chicken wire, coming directly at us. The experience was exactly like that of a large wild animal pouncing on us in the wilderness, and it all seemed to happen in slow motion. I was amazed at the beauty and grace of the pouncing animal, and also noticed my own reaction in detail; my breath remained calm and natural and there was no fear (obviously we were safe), only admiration for the magnificent spectacle, though I was totally unprepared for such a happening.

Later the trainer brought the mountain lion inside, without any restraint, and sat him down in the kitchen with his dinner, two dead chickens. I was sitting on a couch in the living room and, before eating, the animal looked squarely at me for about half a minute. Then, having determined that I was no threat to him, he looked down and began to eat. He never paid any attention to me again.

After he had finished eating, the trainer, whom he loved as a mother, directed him into the bedroom. As he walked thru the living room, this 190 pound lion, who could kill a horse, brushed against my leg but never looked up. After many years of spiritual practice I watched my own reactions with interest, my breath and state of mind particularly. Physically and mentally the animal did not inspire fear in me; it was obvious he was sensitive to vibration and mine gave him no trouble. This was a mini-Satipatthana exercise.

– Heightened Awareness / Toward a Higher Consciousness,
by Justin F. Stone



What Did the World Do?

By Justin Stone

What did the world do before Velcro, Kleenex, the salad bar, and the flush toilet? Convenience, next to entertainment, is the watchword now, the computer more important than the human, not to mention fax, e-mail, the telephone answering service, etc.

Yet, when people go on vacation they like to go to the public market place in Peru, where humans gather to intermingle and relate to each other. The one-person-per-car syndrome has created islands of loneliness. I wish I had a companionship pill to give to those who are empty inside.

When old people look back they find little that was satisfying or meaningful—only the fear of inevitable death and digital noise to drown it out. What has it all meant, if anything?

Those who have given service to others know some satisfaction. Others, who cling to what is 'mine', have only fear of losing it before death takes it away. Rather humorous when looked at

objectively. Is the Cosmos playing a big joke on us—or is there something behind it all besides five cents worth of pleasure?

Would we be willing to change to bring some 'meaning' to it all? Probably not. The one constant value is the quest for money. A little more will insure a meaningful life! Jam tomorrow, never jam today. Probably—possibly. The unspoken will remain unspoken. Celebrate the new

year? One day in three sixty five? Donate to the Church? Increase the growth—and power—of institutions?

Those who practice TCC correctly and sincerely begin to know an inner Joy that changes life, inexplicably. To sink into the depths of Reality in Turiya meditation is a

great relief. To feel—and help express, by helping others—our gratitude is to know Joy. If you have destructive thoughts about others you have missed the boat. Love is more than mutually exchanged pleasure, but it is a word that is greatly misused. Manifestation of Life—not a life—is Joy.

Artwork by Virginia Shilson

