

The Vital Force

Journal of T'ai Chi Chih

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*“Flowing
through
very heavy
air...”*

at the
15th
Annual T'ai
Chi Chih
Teachers'
Conference

Coverage begins
on Page 24.



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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

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The Vital Force, *Journal of T'ai Chi Chih*, is an unincorporated, non-profit association, serving T'ai Chi Chih practitioners worldwide. Membership in the Association includes four quarterly issues of *The Vital Force*, 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:

The beautiful photograph on the cover was taken by Melinda Rispoli, a New



Jersey photographer who volunteered her time and talents to the 2000 TCC Teachers' Conference weekend. She and her business partner, Penny

Schiefelbein, both of Star Shine Photography, spent the greater part of the weekend (along with another photographer, Jo-Anne Montanti), trying to capture a movement art in still photographs (not an easy task)! Our sincere thanks to all three of them! See their work beginning on Page 24.

The teachers pictured on the cover are: Judy Mirczak (left) and Deanne Hodgson (who has had her artistic photographs published inside and on the cover of *The Vital Force* in the past!)

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

My heartfelt thanks go out to the entire committee of New York/ New Jersey teachers who hosted one of the best, if not the absolute best Teachers' Conference ever! (See Page 24 for the beginning of coverage). They were graced with two leaders, **Sr. Antonia Cooper** and **Carolyn Perkins**, who so smoothly (and seemingly calmly!) dealt with every little detail both before and during the actual weekend. Even the weather was a minor miracle in my opinion — very comfortable temperatures in the low to mid-70 degree range with very little humidity! According to Committee member **Janet Oussaty**, whom I spoke to in advance, Sr. Antonia had been "praying" for cool weather in advance. "And she's a very powerful woman, so she just may pull it off!" Janet joked. Well, it came true! Thanks, Sr. Antonia — it made it so much more enjoyable for those of us not used to warm, humid weather!

We were very lucky to be able to enjoy the weekend in a retreat setting on beautiful grounds which were part of a small college. People could take walks outside and enjoy the fresh air and scenery.

The careful thought that went into the details was evident, and the whole weekend flowed seamlessly from one event into the next to the meals and back together again. Of course, there's never enough time in one short weekend to fit in everything we might like! This is the second year, however, in which an extra day was added. Registration began on Thursday afternoon, but the actual conference schedule began the next day. (We used to begin checking in on Friday afternoon and the conference would begin that evening. Because most people had been traveling all day to get there, there would be nodding heads as people tried to stay awake. Now, everyone gets a good night's sleep on Thursday before we actually begin on Friday morning with the first practice at 7:00am). Response to the extra day seems to be overwhelmingly positive, and my personal opinion (and Ed's) is that it would be nice in the future to add another day. We could fit in more time for movement, "down time" (for rest and/or socializing, as desired), and more time to hear detailed presentations from teachers with experience in particular areas. This year, we had a presentation from **Carmen Brocklehurst** on how to prepare candidates for Teacher Training, and a presentation from **Sandy McAlister** on how to modify T'ai Chi Chih for people who need to do it seated. In addition, we had a whole slew of topics covered during the Friday lunchtime "Roundtable" discussions. The only drawback was you couldn't be in more than one place at the same time!

I noticed on the list of attendees that 56 people from the East Coast (including Pennsylvania) of the U.S. and Canada attended this year! What a turnout! I met for the first time quite a few people from the East Coast who have not attended a conference before. I certainly hope we'll have another Teachers' Conference on the East Coast at sometime in the not-so-distant future!

The teachers who traveled the farthest were **Cristina Minelli** from Italy and **Nancy Jo Bleier** from Alaska, (who impressively attends every year — no matter where it's held).

Special thanks to **VFJ Volunteer David Schulberg** who set up a live connection to the TCC Community website on his laptop computer at The Vital Force desk and steered people (many who had never seen the website) through the screens and Teacher Listing.

Noel Altman, Editor

Teachers: Please remember to get any changes/updates of your name, address, phone number, e-mail address or teaching status to us by **DECEMBER 1, 2000** as the **2001 Teachers' Directory** will be finalized and shipped shortly afterwards. Thanks!



Readers Respond

I have somehow gotten out of the loop with the T'ai Chi Chih community. I am accredited and have been teaching for the last three years. Can you add my name to the list of teachers [on the website]?

Bob Slone
New City, NY

[Editor's note: I audited for the week of your Teacher Training course in 1997 and remember you well, Bob.]

The website listing is offered by *The Vital Force* as a service to its members who are accredited teachers. For teachers, the basic membership is \$30/yr. which covers receipt of four quarterly issues and the Teachers' Directory. Website listing is available to teachers for an additional \$5/yr, for a total of \$35. First Class delivery is optional, for another \$5/yr. Since you live in an area without many teachers, it will take as long as four weeks or so for the issues to get to you by bulk mail, so you may want to consider paying for First Class delivery. If you e-mail me back your street address, I can send you out the form to fill in, which you can mail back with your check to get your membership started and your name onto the web. Thanks for your interest!]

Dear Ed and Noel,
Greetings from the most Southern Slide Tip of the Indian Ocean.....I will make sure that I send you some news by the 10 October as I have missed the 10 July [VFJ submission deadlines]. All is going well here in this State!!!! I am still teaching a group of women plus 62 children who are in Grade 3.

I am sending this E-mail prior to my Sub-scription fee which one of our Sisters will be posting to you when she comes over to the States by the end of the month. Hope this does not confuse your books but with the exchange rate at the moment it is very high and we get nothing for our Southern Rand.....So keep well and keep up the good work. May it be known to you that I really enjoy receiving the *Vital Force*. God Bless, Love, Prayers and Chi till I write again.

Sr. Marie-Ann Main
Brighton Beach Bluff
Durban, South Africa

Dear TCC Friends:
Journal looks & reads Great---appreciate the larger print size alot--- thanks!

Closed my studio & office this year to help my partner Brendan Curtis with his healing from his cancer & treatments. However, TCC has helped me so much to handle all the stress & concerns, etc.

Also, I discovered a great place to do most of my TCC movements---in the deep section of our neighborhood swimming pools---I'm very buoyant & just stand up in deep water & do them (do not touch bottom). (One could use a float belt to get the same buoyancy if not as lucky as I). Try it---you'll like it! Love to all--- appreciate your prayers. Vayo con Diaz,

RuthMarie Arguello-Sheehan
Sun City, AZ

Hi There
I have been looking in *The Vital Force* for anyone having the same experience I am having. During the movements where my hands are close I get a tingle or numbness or force. It is the strongest for Light at the Top of the Head/Temples where I can not only feel it in the hands but also on the top or the side of the head. Is this common?

Henry C. Smith
Sacramento, CA

[Editor's note: Yes, Henry, the tingling in the hands is very common with practitioners of T'ai Chi Chih. I know you subscribe to *The Vital Force*, but are you working with an accredited teacher (who can answer these types of questions for you)? Other resources for these types of questions are the text and videotape written by/featuring the Originator of the form, Justin Stone, and available through most accredited teachers or from Good Karma Publishing directly. Also, the audiotape, "Justin Stone Speaks on T'ai Chi Chih" is another valuable resource in addition to *The Vital Force*. The materials are complementary---they each have their advantages, and cover the material in a different way, so all together you get a pretty complete picture.]

Working with an accredited teacher is an eventual must for anyone wanting to progress, as that is the only way you will be able to receive feedback on the way you are moving and make any necessary corrections.

If you are not working with an accredited teacher, I can give you a list of names of teachers in your area...]



Knowledge and Wisdom

By Justin Stone

There is a great deal of difference between Knowledge and Wisdom. Knowledge connotes facts crammed into the memory, certainly necessary in this life. However, Wisdom means, in the spiritual sense, that which is intuitive and profits from the Universal Mind (if we can use that expression) and goes beyond what is the known. We all have touches of the latter, at times, unless we totally suppress it with drugs or some unnatural means.

When I came to Albuquerque, in 1993, to meet Carmen Brocklehurst and go to the Television station to make plans for the T'ai Chi Chih Program on PBS stations (which is still playing in its sixth year), I suddenly got the idea of buying a house and living in Albuquerque (I was then stationed on the Monterey Peninsula in California). When a Real Estate agent came to the house with a list of 40 available places, I said "I don't have time for all that." She

Recently there was a gathering, at my house, of meditators. Afterward we had the usual discussion and Kathy Grassel read from a book that contained Ramana Maharshi's

There is a great deal of difference between Knowledge and Wisdom. . . . Wisdom means, in the spiritual sense, that which is intuitive and profits from the Universal Mind . . .

answers to questions from seekers who had come to see the great Sage, who was certainly not a scholar.

Occasionally, someone would ask me to comment on or explain the subject that was being dealt with. It gradually became clear to everyone, including me, that my comments were such that they preceded what was written in the book. I would say something and Kathy would laugh. She would then read the next paragraph, or the one following that, which would echo, in the same words, what I had just said. It was laughable, and it was not because of effort on my part. Also, I am not Clairvoyant. Whatever I said would then be repeated as Kathy read from the book.

This is Prajna, the inherent wisdom that was not learned. We all have it, but we cover it up with our mental processes. No amount of learning will cause it.

answered that it usually took months to suit a client, and she asked how I expected to do it. I replied: "Let's just get in your car and let it take us there." Looking at me as though I was slightly off my rocker, she agreed. Doug Shilson and Carmen got in the car with us, and within five minutes we were in front of a house-for-sale, just several blocks away (and not on her list). You know the rest: by 10 o'clock that night I had bought just the right house for me. One spiritually advanced friend said: "It had your name on it. Nobody else could have bought it."

Over the last 40 years, since my time in India, Japan, Chinese cities, etc., my life has pretty much progressed in that manner. My studies and practices in the Far East had opened me to such things.

I am not patting myself on the back. Many others have the same experiences. What can we do to encourage such 'intuitive' living? Practice T'ai Chi Chih and, possibly, do the type of Meditation that takes us to the Turiya State (the fourth state of consciousness). These methods do not usually fail.



Violence

By Ed Altman

Violence seems to play a big role in our world, and this is due to the fact that many people desire to wield power over others. There's no escaping this, and my first spiritual teacher told me that this world was all about "power" and learning to use it wisely. This had a big impact on me.

I often hear that violence leads nowhere, but this is untrue. Violence always leads somewhere; usually to more of the same. The father who had a bad day yells at the child who turns around and kicks the dog that runs out and bites someone else. It never stops. Or does it?

I remember watching a group of inner-city kids taunting a dog that was tied up while the owner was shopping in a store. Noel and I were very upset by the violence of that moment, but what could be done? I was older and bigger, so I could have gone up and yelled at them. I was also seriously outnumbered, and what would that have accomplished? They were obviously already upset in the first place, and I had no interest in addressing violence in a way that might lead to even more in the future. In the end, I simply got up and walked over to pet the dog and knelt by its side. This action broke the chain of events, and the youth were unwilling to continue to abuse the animal while I was next to it. Without uttering a word, and with no violence in my thoughts or actions, the situation was resolved. It just dissipated, and the action left no trace.

The lessons I've learned through T'ai Chi Chih have caused countless shifts in my life. I've come to discover a deep reservoir of feeling and "inner strength." Unlike physical strength or vio-

lence, these will never fail, and this inner strength has led to stillness. Not inactivity, but deep stillness that is working to permeate my thoughts and actions. It is not a matter of trying to avoid acting on violent thoughts or tendencies. The karma is still created! Of course, there *are* situations that require action, but I simply rest in the still center, and recognize the proper time and place to make the appropriate statement (or action). The anger and violence are an unnecessary liability; they're no longer needed.

The way to cultivate inner strength is by learning to "let go" in T'ai Chi Chih practice. It begins by releasing this tension in the knees, waist, wrists, and so forth. This doesn't happen by accident, but rather, by a choice. I tell new teachers that softness is a decision we make over and over and over in our practice, and it brings great inner strength to our lives. As one friend stated recently, "Softness holds great strength...more than I ever realized."

It is only through the stillness discovered within that we feel our connection with the Chi, and through it, to everyone and everything around us. When we lack a connection with life, we are filled with doubt and concern, and feel the need to control situations. Through T'ai Chi Chih, we *realize* our connection with all of life, and allow it to unfold and make itself known to us. This leads to Prajna, the inherent wisdom of the Chi that can only be found within. Without trying to control it, we find that life seems to teach us and respond to subtle suggestion. We discover a way to thrive without struggle, and our needs are easily met. This is what Justin Stone calls "Entering the Cosmic Rhythm" and it is the essence of his teaching.