

The Vital Force

Journal of T'ai Chi Chih

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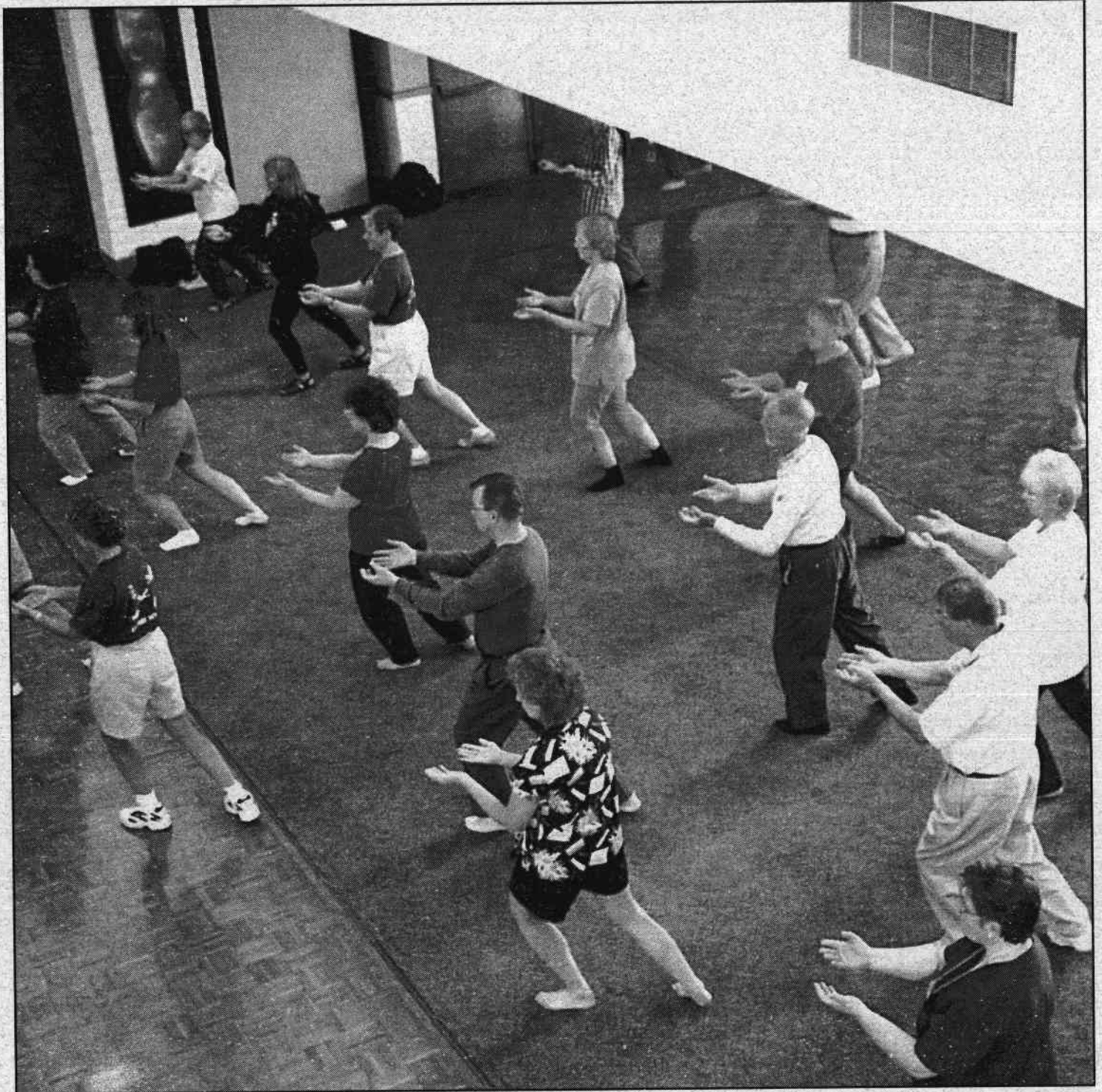




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**Justin Stone is the Originator of T'ai Chi Chih.
Ed Altman is the Head of T'ai Chi Chih.**



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.

Covers:



Front: Shown are some of the 176 attending teachers practicing during the 16th Annual T'ai Chi Chih Teachers' Conference in Moraga, CA.



Back: Justin Stone and Ed Altman confer during a break at the conference.

Both cover photos and all inside were captured by amateur photographer Alice Maisel, a student of T'ai Chi Chih teachers Barbara Riley and Wendy Helms. Alice, who has been studying photography for the last four years and is exploring the possibility of becoming a "part-time professional", has had her work displayed at the Bedford Gallery in Walnut Creek, CA.

Alice donated her time and talents over the long weekend to document our conference and we sincerely thank her for her efforts!

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

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU to the Bay Area Teachers who hosted this year's fantastic (and largest ever) T'ai Chi Chih Teachers' Conference. (*Full coverage begins on page 18*). The total attendance count came out to 176! Conference Host **Sandy McAlister** kept saying all year long that she held the number "175" in her mind, and planned for it accordingly! It appears that after hovering between the low 140's to the low 150's for the last five years, our Teacher Conference attendance has made the next leap. Our hosts next year, the San Antonio, TX teachers, are planning for 175 - 200.

*This increase in attendance by teachers, some of whom had not attended a conference in years, is wonderful! In addition, there was a very good showing of the newest teachers (those accredited in the last year). One of those trainings, the May, 2001 training in Fullerton, CA had a 100% showing — in addition to the host teacher, **Pam Towne**, every candidate who attended that training (**Lois Arrigotti, Marilyn DeVine, Pat Fisher, Bev Geiger, Sr. Corita Keane, Barbara Lippert, Linden Royce, and Sandra Smail**) chose to also attend the Teachers' Conference just three months after finishing their accreditation course. What inspiring commitment!*

I overheard many of the newest teachers comment that they were "so glad" they had decided to come because the wealth of ideas shared in how to teach more effectively was absolutely invaluable to them as they begin to set up their first classes. In addition, they met seasoned teachers and made connections with them which they planned to follow up with as they run into challenges and need advice in the future.

*Many, many teachers commented that a highlight for them was to reconnect with their fellow candidates-now-teachers from their teacher training course, however long ago that was! They always seem surprised, too, when they first discover that the larger T'ai Chi Chih community is composed of people just as wonderful as the ones from their training. In fact, the overall character of this group of people, the T'ai Chi Chih Teaching Community, was something that brand new teachers commented about over and over. How grateful they felt to realize they were joining a community like this one. Over the years, I have heard more than one new teacher comment that this was something they had searched for all their lives! Justin Stone, the Originator of T'ai Chi Chih, has always commented that "**The jewel of T'ai Chi Chih is in its teachers.**"*

Over the years, as I've met more and more teachers from more and more places all over the world when I either audit at their teacher training or meet them at the annual Teachers' Conference for the first time, and as I read what they've written from their hearts (in their submissions to The Vital Force), I realize the absolute truth in Justin's statement.

Teachers: I encourage you to take the opportunity to find this out for yourself. Connect with teachers from your area of the world, certainly, to build your local community, but also consider traveling to another part of the world to audit a teacher training or attend another TCC event. Or, easiest of all, plan to attend the annual Teachers' Conference every year. It's a wonderful experience to see that no matter which part of the world a T'ai Chi Chih teacher is from, there is a commonality in those who are drawn to teach T'ai Chi Chih. Justin calls it teh, "the power of inner sincerity."

Noel Altman, Editor



Readers Respond

Hello, dear fellow T'ai Chi Chiers! . . . Just received the most recent & as always, the best issue yet of *The Vital Force*! I devour every word as soon as it arrives.

Thank you for using my contribution to "The Lighter Side..." However, there was one minor typo that I feel causes the readers to miss the main crux of the story. The last line should have read:

Finally, on the last morning, she joined our circle, but as we finished the Rocking Motion, Don, her seven-year-old cousin, said, "Grandma, Lea did not come to a graceful confusion!"

The story in *TVF* reads 'conclusion,' instead of 'confusion,' which kinda changes things a little!

Sher Dano
Surprise, AZ

[Thank you for the correction and clarification, Sher! I apologize for the error on my part!]

. . . Great work on the latest *VF* issue. I have sent excerpts of some helpful things to the candidates [for the Mahwah, NJ training in late August]. . . .

Dan Pienciak
Ocean Grove, NJ

Noel: Thank you for all the work you put into making the *Vital Force* so wonderful. We have Justin's thoughts, international news, Ed's thoughts, funny stories, healing stories, students' stories, poetry, person-

al stories. We have so much from so many teachers far and wide. Realizing *TCC* is so far-reaching is amazing, considering its "small" beginning in Albuquerque, NM. But its rate of growth has not been small and from the articles in the *Vital Force*, we can see that it has been very meaningful. Thank you for pulling the *Vital Force* together quarterly, year in and year out. It is much appreciated and valued. While I'm sure it gives your life meaning, it also gives the community an incredible gift. Thank you,

Carmen Brocklehurst
Albuquerque, NM

This is a gift for one of my students. [Student membership form and check enclosed.]

Margery Erickson
Hanover, PA

Hello Noel . . . Last week (on Thursday June 7th to be exact), I received the new issue of *The Vital Force*. WOW!! It is always with great expectation that I open the envelope. And little by little I devour every word, every article. We are so proud to be a part of it.

One of our students (from North Louisiana) sent us an e-mail right away saying that she "squealed" when she saw the article about the "green house" and that her husband really enjoyed the pictures, making it more real for him to envision where his wife is going for days at a time. She is a very dedicated stu-

dent. One day you will meet her — there is no doubt in my mind. Tomorrow morning, Bitsy [LeBlanc] is having knee surgery. Keep her in mind during your practice. Yesterday, we had our last class with Mickey [White] before he goes on to his training in Minneapolis. It was quite nice, emotional but nice. The practice just a rhythm — no words. . . .

Caroline Guillott
Lake Charles, LA

Type too large, please fit more stories in and less accolades — articles re: philosophy, the art, meaning, application to life issues.

Judy Tretheway
Sacramento, CA

What a WONDERFUL source of communication.....sharing.....inspirationelevation.....And more! Thank you!

Beverly Weil
North Salem, NY

The Vital Force continues to be a "must read right away" journal when it arrives in the mail. The *VFJ* contains so much essence that is nurturing for the body, mind and spirit. Many thanks to all the persons who have labored generously over the years to create and publish the *VFJ* and directory, and to the new staff who continue to do this immense service for us.

Sr. Marian Massman, FSPA
La Crosse, WI

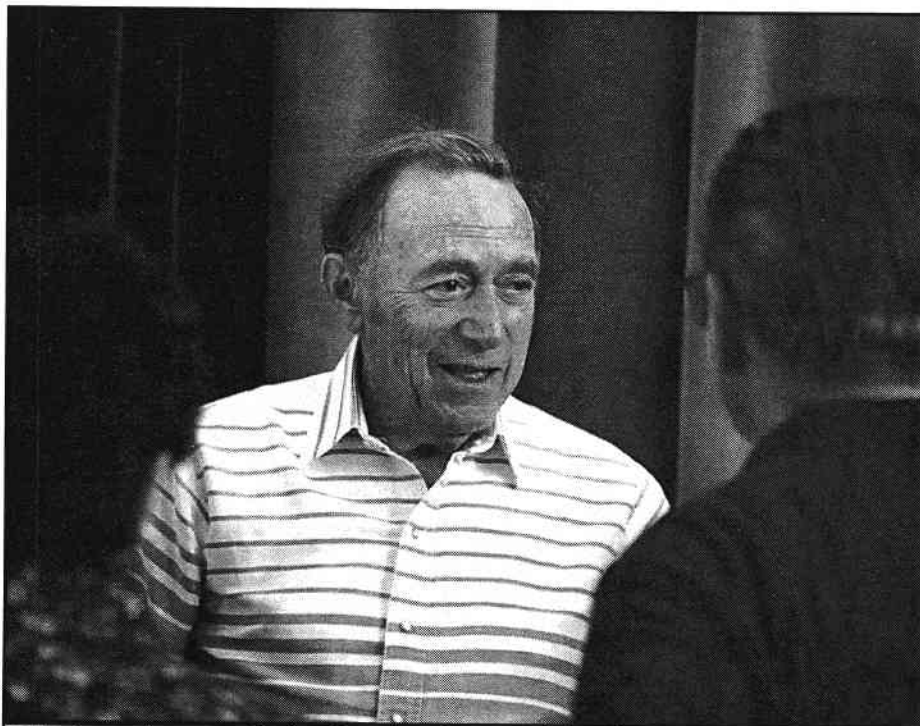


Do TCC Properly for Maximum Benefits

By Justin Stone

How you do the movements of T'ai Chi Chih is all important. Not for academic reasons or to please the teacher, but because the amount of benefit you get from practice depends on the way you move. If you are using muscles to move your arms, while, at the same time, shuffling your legs, you will not get full benefit. All important is having you move from the center, the T'an T'ien, with no effort from the shoulders or the arms. It is easy for the teacher to tell if the student is moving to the maximum of his or her capacity. If the feeling is floating and flowing, the movements are being done correctly. Flowing effortlessly from the center, while effortlessly pushing the arms thru very heavy air, is the desired method and the one that brings results.

Watching a student is not like putting him thru an exam, to be graded by what he or she has written on paper. The great results felt from proper practice cannot be put into words. Sages of India equate the Chi with Consciousness itself, and, when the Chi (prana) leaves the body, you are dead. Therefore, causing the Chi to flow, while balancing the Yin Chi and the Yang Chi, will, in the minds of the Chinese wise men, bring longer life and better health. T'ai Chi Chih students also write that it changes their lives. We have seen how favorably it affects hardened criminals in prisons, and we have had reports of great benefits for those suffering from Osteoporosis and Migraine Headaches, for which medicine has no relief. All this depends on



Following an "open practice" on Saturday afternoon during the 2001 TCC Teachers' Conference in Moraga, CA in August, Justin Stone meets students of Bay Area teachers and answers their questions about practice.

Photo: Alice Maisel

the student doing the movements well. It is hard to get the idea of effort out of students' minds, and it is only natural, in the beginning, for the student to feel the harder he or she tries, the better will be the results. But that's all wrong! Softly and effortlessly is the correct way. And, of course, the student must do correct yinning and yanging, as well as accenting one side or the other when called for.

On my latest Video-tape, the practice session is being led by Suni McHenry, followed by the other three teachers, in a stifling studio with no air coming into the room; yet it all appears effortless and joyous. Following the teachers on this practice session, strive for the feeling of serenity that comes from doing the form properly. Don't do it well to please me but to please you.