

The Vital Force



Journal of the T'ai Chi Chih® Community

Volume 18, No. 4

December 2001



"Sinking into the soles of the feet..."



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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
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Information/Outreach: Kathy Albers

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:



This issue's cover is again the work of photographer and TCC student Alice Maisel who donated her time and talents photographing the 2001 TCC Teachers' Conference in Moraga, CA.

In deciding last quarter's cover, it was a tough call between the one I did use or this one. In the aftermath of the attacks on Sept. 11, I felt it was a concrete image we could all benefit from seeing—focusing in the soles of the feet!

The photo was taken at the "open practice" which included Bay Area TCC students, as well as the attending TCC teachers. Teachers Athene Mantle (center, in black) and Stephanie Bass (to Athene's left, in black), demonstrate perfect alignment, a theme of the movement sessions led by Head of TCC Ed Altman. Sr. Antonia Cooper (in full habit, in the right rear) allows her hands to rise as she begins the movement "Light at the Top of the Head."

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Letter from the Editor

General TCC News:

A hearty congratulations and THANK YOU IN ADVANCE to Pam Towne and Sandy McAlister, whom Ed has promoted to newly-developed roles as "Teacher Trainers." (See full article on page 4). Each of them has worked closely with Ed in recent years in preparing for the positions. In addition to leading TCC events such as TCC Student/Teacher Workshops and Retreats, they will also be leading Teacher Training courses (beginning in 2003). Also, they will be assisting Ed with some of the behind-the-scenes tasks which, heretofore, Ed has been handling. As TCC continues to expand, this help will be greatly appreciated!

Both of them move exceptionally well, as most of you know. Pam Towne was my teacher 14 years ago in Southern California, so I know first-hand how good she is. At that time in my life, her classes were an oasis of calm, and I absolutely looked forward to them every week! Many of the teaching techniques she used when I was her student are ones I have incorporated into my teaching. Pam was also Ed's second teacher (and the one who prepared him for Teacher Training). She has worked closely with Ed in the last five years hosting two Teacher Trainings in Southern California, and has long been a leader in her TCC Community.

Sandy McAlister has been a friend to Ed and I from the time we first entered the TCC teaching community, and that relationship grew to a new level from 1995-2000 when we lived in her neck of the woods, the Bay Area (Northern California). She worked closely with Ed in the last five years by hosting two Teacher Trainings and this year's Teachers' Conference. In March of this year, she worked closely with me on my Pulling Taffy, helping me take the waist turning to a new level! Like Pam, Sandy has also long been a leader in her TCC Community. Congratulations to both of them!

The Vital Force News:

Teachers: **Kathy Albers**, our Information/Outreach Coordinator, is beginning a new project — collecting information on what sorts of populations are being taught TCC — so that like-minded teachers can begin networking together, so that Kathy will have more detailed information when giving out teacher referrals to potential students, so that we, as a community, will begin documenting our combined experience (for future promotional efforts). A full letter from Kathy describing the project, and a questionnaire to fill out and return, will be included as inserts with the 2002 Teacher Directory, which will be mailed in December.

Doug Harned, our Membership Services Coordinator, is no longer sending out "acknowledgement postcards" when members sign up or renew their subscriptions. Because we print the "GOOD THRU _____" information on address labels, members can check their membership expiration date each time a new issue of The Vital Force arrives.

Our FAX machine has died, and because the number of submissions coming to us via this method is very few, we are discontinuing this option. All submissions will need to be sent by U.S. Mail or by e-mail from now on.

I recently sent an e-mail message to all of you who had e-mail addresses in our database reminding you of the separate e-mail addresses that Doug, Kathy and I now have (see page 39 for these). About 50 were returned as "undeliverable." Please be sure to update us when your e-mail address changes! Thank you!

Noel Altman, Editor



Readers Respond

As usual, when the last issue of the *Vital Force* came, I read it with great interest. The conference photos were wonderful.

Of particular interest to me was the back cover photo of Justin & Ed together. Some of us in the Edmonton area are wondering if copies of this photo could be purchased. Please send me the costs, sizes available, if we could order copies. . . . Thanks!

Bernice Piotrowski
Edmonton, AB
CANADA

This year's Conference Issue of VF was exquisitely presented. I especially like the picture of Justin & Ed on the back. Is there any way I could get a print of it?

Sr. Antonia Cooper
North Plainfield, NJ

[Editor's Note: I have contacted the photographer, Alice Maisel, about the possibility of ordering copies of that photo (pictured below). It has generated more written and verbal response than any single photo printed in the VFJ during my three years as editor. Alice has responded below.]



Many individuals from the T'ai Chi Chih community have expressed an interest in obtaining copies of some of the photos from the 16th International T'ai Chi Chih Teachers' Conference. In particular, there is a lot of interest in the photo of Justin and Ed featured on the back cover of the September

2001 issue of the *Vital Force*.

As the photographer, I will have available color copies of the photo of Justin and Ed at the following prices: \$18.00 for an 8x10; \$12.00 for a 5x7; and \$9.00 for a 4x6 photo. These prices include postage and handling. The color 8x12 group photo is still available for \$18.00. If you have questions about these or any other photos or optional photo mounts, contact me at (925) 631-7824 or write to:

Alice Maisel
1977 Ascot Dr. #3
Moraga, CA 94556

To order:
Please indicate photo and size desired. Send a check or money order in the above amount payable to Alice Maisel to the above address.

Alice Maisel
Moraga, CA

Doug, Thank you for the . . . June issue of the *Vital Force*. I'm so happy to get it. I have been waiting patiently to receive an issue, not knowing which months you actually published.

Enclosed is a U.S. Funds money order for \$35.00 for my subscription.

I practise T'ai Chi Chih every day and hope to become an accredited instructor, as I enjoy the benefits so much I want to be able to help others.

The information / updated news in the *Vital Force* will be most helpful to me. Thank you again. Sincerely,

Faye Mohr
Edmonton, AB
CANADA

[Editor's Note: The following message arrived to Ed in November from our only TCC teacher in Italy. She presented at the University of Verona and had a fantastic response!]

Dear Ed . . . The "Open Encounter" was a success. After talking for two hours (with a five minute interval in the middle where I got the people up to perform a couple of T'ai Chi Chih moves), the professor came up on the podium and said: "You really touched me. Please, as an old man, in front of all these people, I would like to hug your softness (my speech ended with a tribute to softness). I will do everything in my power (and believe me, he is a powerful one) to introduce T'ai Chi Chih in the University of Verona next year. We will start with Physical Education and we will take it from there."

So he did hug me. Everybody (about 300 people) applauded. My mother cried...What a moment! Well, after that we went out to lunch together . . . There he said that he plans to invite the Head of T'ai Chi Chih to the university in the year 2003 (meaning that the university would pay for the trip). What do you think?? And he went on and on about how I had convinced him of the need for a discipline like T'ai Chi Chih in our culture. Wow! I did not even hope for that. So I think that if anything like this materializes, you could give accreditation exams during the same occasion. Well, we'll see. I know you are happy with me about all this. Please tell Justin we are on a roll. I will keep you posted. . . .

Cristina Minelli
Buscoldo, Mantova
ITALY



Two promoted to “Teacher Trainer” will assist Head of TCC

By Ed Altman

The T'ai Chi Chih community continues to grow and mature, and as Justin Stone has said innumerable times, we have a “brilliant future” ahead of us. There are now accredited teachers in 40 U.S. states, five Canadian provinces and nine other countries including our most recent addition from Mexico. The Edmonton, Alberta teachers have begun planning for the 2003 Teachers' Conference, our first conference to be held outside the U.S., and as Justin's teaching materials are being translated into multiple languages, the likelihood of a T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Training course outside North America appears closer than ever.

This international expansion represents an exciting time in our growth, and we will see tremendous opportunities for our community as well as numerous challenges. During the last several years, I've thought a great deal about how to accommodate the future growth of the T'ai Chi Chih community, and it is clear that one person cannot do it alone. One of the great strengths about T'ai Chi



Pam Towne (second from right) poses with candidates and the course instructor during the Teacher Training course she hosted in Fullerton, CA in May, 2001. Pictured, (L-R): Course Instructor Ed Altman, Candidates Barbara Lippert and Linden Royce, Course Host Pam Towne, Candidate Marilyn DeVine. All three candidates had been Pam's students. Photo provided by Pam Towne

Chih is that we are a *community* of accredited teachers and students, and the value of our collective efforts is far greater than that of any individual.

It has always been my intention to serve the needs of T'ai Chi Chih while balancing those of my personal and professional life. I've had many discussions with Justin about this topic over the years, and we both feel that we must prepare for the future by bringing in additional experienced teachers to help with teacher accreditation and to assist me in shouldering the many responsibilities of leading the T'ai Chi Chih community.

It gives me great pleasure to announce that Sandy McAlister and Pam Towne have accepted my request to become T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Trainers. In my role as Head of T'ai Chi Chih, I will continue to conduct T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Training courses as well as teach related workshops, retreats and teacher renewals. However, these responsibilities will now be shared among the three of us to better serve the growing demands of our community.

In addition, Pam and Sandy will also assist me with many administration tasks such as dealing with those who are teaching without accreditation, addressing teacher candidate preparation, mentoring new teachers, and working with the accredited teaching community to deepen their practice and teaching. This change will also free up some of my time to pursue strategic relationships such as the Shepherd's Centers of America, The Arthritis Foundation, and similar opportunities that will have positive effects on the entire T'ai Chi Chih community.



Sandy McAlister addresses the attending teachers at the 2001 Teachers' Conference, which she hosted in August in Moraga, CA, with the support and help of the Bay Area TCC teachers. Photo: Alice Maisel

Pam was accredited in 1984, just a few months prior to when Sandy received her accreditation in early 1985, and both ladies have played important roles in the development of the T'ai Chi Chih teaching community. Sandy has sent numerous students through the teacher accreditation process, served as course host for many Teacher Training courses in the Bay Area, and also hosted four Teachers' Conferences, including the most recent conference held in Moraga, California in 2001. Noel and I were two of Pam's many students who became accredited to teach T'ai Chi Chih. She has also hosted numerous Teacher Training courses in Southern California and hosted the annual Teachers' Conference one year in Northern California. She

also taught her first T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Training course in 1997.

Although they were recently asked to "step up" to their new roles, these ladies have been working closely with me to prepare for this transition for the last two years. They were not asked to do this, but they chose to deepen their own practice and selflessly give something back to T'ai Chi Chih. Their commitment and sincere interest in improving their teaching have greatly impressed both Justin and me. During each of the last two years, Sandy and Pam have traveled across the country to audit one or more Teacher Training courses (for the entire week) and provide assistance to the many candidates who sought accreditation. At my urging, they've also taken on larger roles in their regions to foster a stronger sense of community, and we've shared many discussions about subjects affecting the health and future of the T'ai Chi Chih community. I've also had the benefit of their counsel and company during these times, and received their unyielding support and encouragement throughout the years.

Most important, in spite of their tremendous teaching experience, both Sandy and Pam have continued to improve their T'ai Chi Chih practice and assisted me in improving my own during the times we've spent together. We have had open discussions about principles and their application to the T'ai Chi Chih movements, and will continue to meet several times each year to refine our personal practice and ensure we are consistent in the way we teach the principles of T'ai Chi Chih.

During the recent T'ai Chi Chih

Teachers' Conference, I was approached by several groups of teachers about holding a teacher renewal or teacher/student retreat in their area. Pam and Sandy will begin leading some of those events in 2002. Donna McElhose is working to put together a Teacher Training course outside of Chicago, IL. To prepare for this event, I suggested — and Donna enthusiastically agreed — to bring Sandy out to lead a teacher / student workshop and to assist Donna in helping to prepare her teacher candidates. Similarly, Donnis Minx and Ann Daly have been working to put together a teacher / student workshop in Indianapolis, IN and Pam will be leading this event next year. In both cases, I would not have been able to lead these events, given the demands of my schedule and I'm grateful to Pam and Sandy. [See "Calendar of Events" on page 21 for details on both of these events].

Starting in 2003, Pam and Sandy will begin leading some of the T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Training courses, and my expectation is that their roles will expand further as the demand for such events continues to grow through the coming years.

Please join me in congratulating Sandy and Pam on their accomplishment, and in thanking them for their willingness to serve the T'ai Chi Chih community in this valuable way. I know we will all benefit from their contributions and tremendous teaching experience. I encourage you to regularly examine *The Vital Force* "Calendar of Events" for information about upcoming events, and invite you to join us in deepening our personal practice of T'ai Chi Chih, *Joy Thru Movement*.



No Extraneous Movements in T'ai Chi Chih

By Justin Stone

There are no cosmetic movements in T'ai Chi Chih, done for aesthetic reasons, as though in a dance. Each movement has a purpose, and, as one practises TCC regularly, he or she will gradually sink into the Essence of the form and come to understand the purpose and the meaning of each movement.

Very often in "Bird Flaps its Wings" and in "Pulling Taffy: Variation #2," we notice teachers or students just waving both hands aimlessly. Actually the circles should be just that, complete circles, imitating a windmill picking up the air, which is closely identified with the Chi. Keeping the palms of the hand facing the ground and just moving the hands sideways defeats the purpose. Similarly, in "Light at the Top of the Head," the hands face straight up, meaning the palms face each other so the polarity is felt. The hands are not flat on the head, moving idly. At one time or another I have seen every movement flawed by some useless move that looks as though it has been choreographed for a dance. This is especially so in movements like "Daughter in the Valley," where

hands wave aimlessly, far to the side, as they come up to meet at the top of the swing, thus completely negating the polarity of the two hands rising while facing each other.

I could mention many more examples of "cosmetic" moves, such as the shoulders moving in circles (actually the shoulders play a very small role in TCC, and are never dipped to one side or the other).

If you understand what I am saying, you will not mistake TCC for a dance and insert graceful, meaningless gestures. The purpose is to circulate and balance the Chi, and this can best be done by keeping the movements simple without meaningless flourishes.

We have very satisfactory practices in Albuquerque on Tuesday mornings, and quite a few teachers come from out of town to join us. When I make a correction, it is not to make me happy or fulfill some academic requirements; it's to enable the teacher to get the most benefits from the practice, and to pass the form along to the students in the most helpful manner.

NOTE FROM JUSTIN

T'ai Chi Chih is constantly growing, and the number of people involved continues to expand. Consequently, it is not a surprise that some pettiness, back-biting, gossip, etc. occasionally creep into something that is meant for Love and Joy. It is a shame that reactions are not often lofty and spiritual, but the opposite is true. The important thing is T'ai Chi Chih itself, not personal squabbles.

Ed. Altman took office as the Head of T'ai Chi Chih under difficult circumstances. He has been successful in earning the confidence of all T'ai Chi Chih adherents, and his performance at Teachers' Training Courses, as well as workshops, has inspired enthusiasm and made me happy with my appointment. T'ai Chi Chih has a great future under Ed., and we all look forward to it with confidence, knowing how much good TCC is doing in the world. Thank you, Ed. and thank you, students and teachers. To all I say: remember, gossip can be harmful and is certainly not spiritual. Think before speaking.

– Justin Stone



A Time of Purification

By Sr. Patty Campbell, OSF

It's time to tell a story—a true story. Last June my left knee gave way (again) and surgery was planned to correct the problem. But before that could happen, I found myself in the hospital for a blood infection. I was told about the seriousness of it, and "it" could go either way. Needless to say, I was frightened; but also full of trust that all would be well. After three months of recovery and cleansing my body of the infection, I was scheduled for knee replacement surgery. Another three months of therapy and gaining my strength back.

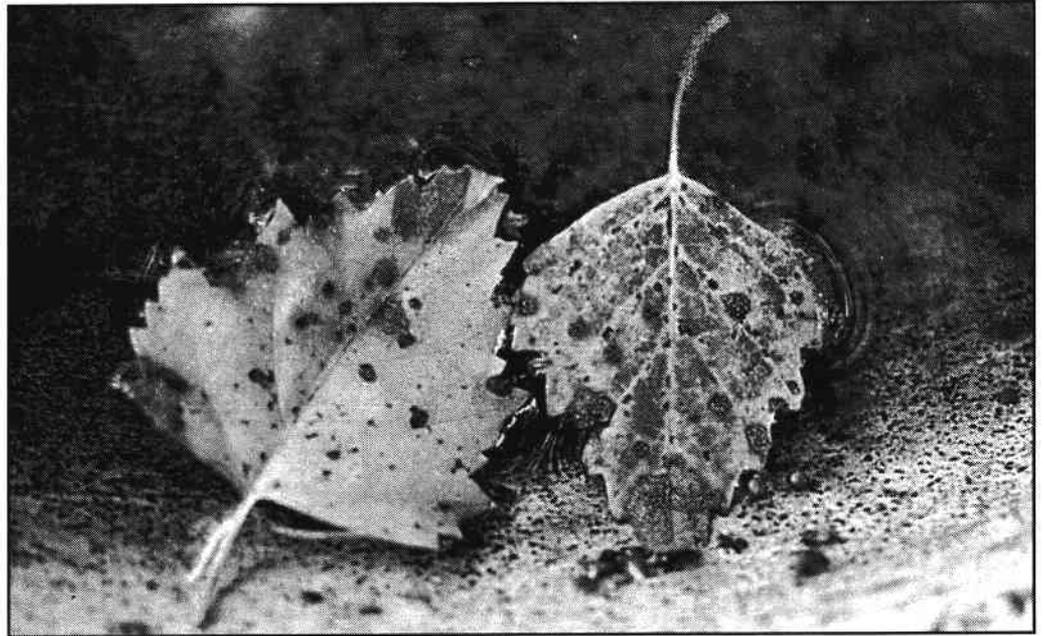


Photo by Deanne Hodgson

So what has this to do with T'ai Chi Chih? Everything! For as I lay in the hospital the first time, I became very aware of the flow of energy within and without. I was surrounded by only good energy, kind energy, compassionate energy, loving energy. As my awareness became grounded, I remembered that Justin teaches us that the Chi does itself when we are most relaxed and open to it. And so I focused my energy and imagined the movements since I was unable to do them. It does work. Both from the bed and when I was once more able to be up and about, I would mentally move through all 19 movements, and then do the Six Healing Sounds. And I knew the difference it was working in my whole being.

So, once more, I thank Justin for his teachings, and encourage us all to trust the process.

As autumn changed the sweet gum tree outside my room from green to red and orange and yellow, the following words came to me. Perhaps you will see the connection.

October 4 Reflection on a sweet gum tree

*Show forth brilliant colors.
Shine like a star—a light for others.
Respect each leaf's uniqueness as you
recall your seedness, your season of growth.
Bend with wind, dance gracefully.
Be flexible now and when it is time to let go.*

October 31

*Straight as an arrow
Reaching high though so small.
Beauty in near nakedness;
wind and will-to-let go.
Stripping branches bare of all but
few red beauties standing proud.
O tree-gift during these weeks of autumn grandeur,
Gratitude flows as the lessons continue
through near wintry days—nights—
Barrenness too is beauty.*



Hold on.....Lightly

Reflections on *Around the Platter Variation*

By Nancy Vermond

In June my sister's husband died and she was placed in a nursing home, as it appears she has Alzheimers and is unable to live alone. Her two grown children arrived from out of state and prepared to clear out her condo, a lifetime of accumulation, in just two days. I was there for part of that time and managed to "rescue" a few sentimental objects, but was fearful that many family "treasures" were

being thrown away. The time allowed for the task of sifting through was not adequate, but I went along with the plan. I was "sick" with grief over the loss of objects that I knew had been passed down for at least a few generations and that had meant something to my sister and to our parents and grandparents.

As I was doing my T'ai Chi Chih practice, however, and came to the *Around the Platter Variation*, I was gently and deeply reminded

to "hold on to objects—and people and ideas—lightly". And how do we honor our ancestors? Obviously we cannot hold on to all the objects they cherished. Is it by staying in the ever-present flow of life and being grateful for their part in bringing us here? Doing T'ai Chi Chih has helped me to let go, to relax and to hold on lightly, but these questions linger. I trust that more clarity will come with continued practice.

What You See is Not What is Really Happening

By Richard Detert

Since my teacher accreditation three years ago I have spent a lot of time watching others practice T'ai Chi Chih at teacher renewals and conferences. Their movements appear to be so graceful, effortless, and yes, even bigger than mine. Of course, I interpreted "bigness" in the same way athletes do, exert a little more muscle power and strength to get the movements to be larger. After all, that is what my eyes saw. Yet in making the movements bigger, I didn't seem to flow effortlessly like those I viewed. Then, at the accreditation in Minneapolis [in June, 2001], I had the following insight. I share this insight with others who might be having trouble with movements that are too big because that is what you think you see as you watch and imitate others. Hopefully, you will dis-

cover what I did, that "what you see is not what is really happening." The movements are an optical illusion.

There are a number of dictionary descriptions of illusion. Two are appropriate for discussion here that apply to the T'ai Chi Chih movements. The first description is that an illusion is a misleading image presented to the vision (as in optical illusion). I am reminded with this description of a picture of three boys walking down a sidewalk. The viewer sees the picture from a slight angle. At this angle, each of the three boys looks a different size. The one in front appears to be smallest while the one at the back appears to be the tallest. In actuality, all three boys are the same height. The image of the boys presented by the angle of the view is really an optical illusion.



The second description is that an illusion is the perception of something objectively existing in such a way as to cause misinterpretation of its actual nature. This description becomes clearer as it is applied to the T'ai Chi Chih movements.

T'ai Chi Chih movements might be considered an optical illusion because the eyes of the person watching "see" something different than what may actually be taking place, especially if viewed at an angle. For example, when one views the movements that are performed in a small and compact manner, they appear to the eye of an observer, and interpreted by the brain, as being larger than they really are. The tendency then is to imitate that largeness in one's own practice. Yet what one "feels" with these small, compact movements is more of the expansion portion of the movement — the time when the chi is freely expressing itself with very little "splash". The actual nature of the movement is hidden from the observer but "felt" by the doer. The small, compact movements feel larger but require less effort. And, it feels like this everywhere in the body. This is actually part of the true nature of T'ai Chi Chih but cannot be viewed by others.

On the other hand, when the movements are made larger using more muscle strength than is necessary, there is tension. Tension makes the body feel tighter, more constrained, everywhere in the body — mostly because it is. The mind seems to focus more on the contraction phase of the chi and since chi follows thought, everything about the movement feels tighter. The chi is unable to flow freely and to freely express itself. It is here that the ego starts its chattering about what "I" am doing wrong and what "I" need to change. Although the chatter makes things interesting for the rational, logical mind, it doesn't allow for much constructive change in the movements. As such, the true nature of the chi may never be known to the doer.

I have concluded then, that when I watch others my eyes deceive me about how the movements are actually performed and subsequently the hidden nature of what one "feels" relative to the chi. I have found this to be especially true with Bass Drum, Push Pull, Taffys, Working the Pulley, and Passing Clouds. As I focused on making my movements smaller during my practice, I have this incredible feeling of freedom, or largeness, as the chi has more of an opportunity to more fully

As I focused on making my movements smaller during my practice, I have this incredible feeling of freedom, or largeness, as the chi has more of an opportunity to more fully express itself. Perhaps this is what is meant by "letting go" or "T'ai Chi Chih doing T'ai Chi Chih."

express itself. Perhaps this is what is meant by "letting go" or "T'ai Chi Chih doing T'ai Chi Chih." For the first time I think I understand what Ed has been saying for the last three years, "T'ai Chi Chih is not about thinking, it is about feeling."

I believe there are two very good reasons for not getting caught up with the optical illusion these movements present. First, the illusion keeps our attention on the largeness of the movements rather than the "feeling" of the movements. The movements "feel" better when they are smaller and more effortless, the opposite of what many of us see. Second, I remember hearing Ed remark during my accreditation that one of the reasons for continually examining our own practice is to minimize aspects that our students will magnify as they "see" them. New students may not only magnify our mistakes but misinterpret what appears to be a largeness in the movements that actually isn't there. As they magnify that largeness, they create more tension in the body which can be seen in the movements. When teaching the movements to new students we might want to share with them the idea that the movements when done well, appear to the eyes as an optical illusion. We can then encourage them to focus more on how the movements "feel" rather than trying too hard to imitate what they think they "see." Your students may eventually be surprised to discover that "what you see is not really what is happening".



Forwarded Letter

Health problems relieved by practice

July 26, 2001

Justin Stone
Ed Altman
Hope Spangler

The summer of 2001 has been a true milestone in my life, thanks to T'ai Chi Chih. I am a 52-year-old wife, mother, grandmother, and full-time first grade teacher who has suffered with migraine headaches for 20 years. Ten years ago, I was also diagnosed with undifferentiated connective tissue disease, rheumatoid arthritis and fibromyalgia. I am including my various diagnoses only to substantiate the fact that I live with constant, and frequently severe, pain.

Needless to say, there were many years when the pain ruled my life. I was literally at the mercy of my body. I would be afraid to pick my granddaughter up for fear I would be in severe pain for days. Writing and computer work at school had to be spread out so I didn't irritate my hands too much at one time. The list of my fears and subsequent adaptations goes on and on. In addition, the amount of pain I was experiencing made me short-tempered, impatient, and irritable. I was tired all the time and overwhelmed by even the smallest stressors.

About two years ago, my rheumatologist at Johns Hopkins suggested I try acupuncture. I was fortunate to get into an excellent facility, Mind/Body Health, here in York, PA which is linked to our hospital system. I definitely found some relief from the more severe pain each week after I went to my appointment. I was feeling the healing life force in

various parts of my body. My acupuncturists were thrilled that I was so sensitive to the treatments. I felt that if I could stimulate this force during the week, I could lengthen the relief I got after my acupuncture appointment. When I saw a brochure at Mind/Body Health on T'ai Chi Chih, my husband and I decided to see if it would help.

I was immediately drawn to the low-key approach of T'ai Chi Chih. Our instructor, Hope Spangler, shared her own personal victory over pain and stress. She invited us to see if T'ai Chi Chih could help us. And help me it did. Each week as we learned one to three new movements, I could feel the life force increase its movement throughout my entire body. Not only did the movements diminish my pain for the entire day, but also my energy level has increased greatly. My mornings are now a time I look forward to. Instead of thinking about how sore and stiff I am and if I can get through the day, I get up and begin what has become a daily personal ritual for my husband and me. It is such a peaceful yet joyful way to celebrate the beginning of a brand new day and a brand new way of life for me.

I have experienced some very stressful things this summer includ-



Jane Piepmeier (left), student of T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Hope Spangler (center), has found great relief from pain with regular practice of TCC. She and her husband Pete (right) took classes at the Apple Hill Medical Facility through Wellspan's Center for Mind/Body Health in York, PA. Photo provided by Hope Spangler

ing having to help nurse my mother through a severe injury. I was able to handle the doctors, insurance people, my father and my own fears so well that I could hardly believe it was me. In addition, I am finding it easier to deal with the pain I still have. I find I have more patience and am definitely more cheerful and optimistic. I will always have pain. But Tai Chi Chih has given me a simple, fun way to control the severity of the pain. It has given me additional energy to enjoy my life, my family and my friends. And it has given me a joyful, peaceful way to begin each new day.

I am truly grateful for Tai Chi Chih and Hope Spangler!

Sincerely,

Jane Piepmeier
[Student of Hope Spangler]



What T'ai Chi Chih Has Done for Me

By Joseph Lomonico

When I attended the sample session of T'ai Chi Chih, I had no idea what it was really about as I hobbled into the class with my right ankle so painful and stiff that I walked with great difficulty with a very serious limp. It was a relief to find that it was a low impact activity. I remember doing the moves with great difficulty because of the pain and stiffness of my ankle. I enrolled for the beginners course because I was fascinated by the moves and that I was learning a series of movements related to a discipline that originated some 4,000 years ago, yet consisted of just 19 moves and one pose, instead of the 108 moves of the original T'ai Chi Ch'uan. I was also fascinated that Justin Stone, an American, had originated the T'ai Chi Chih course.

In about the fourth session it happened! While doing the Push Pull move as I wished that my ankle would improve, the excruciating pain stopped and I found my ankle moving with only slight pain! I could hardly wait until we ended the series of movements so that I could see if my walking had improved. AMAZING! I could walk practically without a limp! I was sold on T'ai Chi Chih! From that moment on, I took T'ai Chi Chih very seriously and began practicing it every morning.

Soon I noticed other benefits from T'ai Chi Chih. I found that not only did it relax me, but I found myself responding positively and staying calm when dealing with people who were arrogant or aggressive. I found myself able to respond in a manner which soothed and calmed them too, so that we could talk rather than argue, and I had

more patience in dealing with all kinds of difficult situations. I found myself hugging family members, and eventually friends when we met and when we parted. I found myself even feeling sorry for Timothy McVeigh instead of hating him because I came to understand his frustration with our government and that his ruthless act was caused by his inability to choose a positive and productive means to express it, rather than a destructive one which injured and killed innocent people, and failed to convey the message he sought to communicate. Had he based his actions on love rather than hate, whatever cause he meant to champion would have probably been served more effectively.



Joe Lomonico (left) works with Auditor Pam Greig on refining a movement during his teacher training in Mahwah, NJ in late August, 2001.

Photo: Dan Pieniac

Other benefits from my practice have been greater ease in controlling my diabetes and high blood pressure. This has happened more recently as I am in the third year of my T'ai Chi Chih practice. Hopefully sometime soon I will be able to reduce the medications currently used. The first symptom of success is that it is easier to control my ailments as indicated by no need for stronger doses that I see my peers being required to use who have the same ailments.

Needless to say, I realized that the only way I could get more and more positive benefits from T'ai Chi Chih was to become an accredited instructor which I did Sept. 1, 2001. It seems to be working. Thanks Ed Altman, Noel, Dan, Sr. Antonia, and Justin Stone.



Hosting a TCC Teacher Training

By Dan Pienciak

I recently planned and facilitated a seven month course for preparation of candidates, followed by hosting a teacher training course in New Jersey for 18 candidates. I have been asked to write up some ideas and suggestions for the *Vital Force* which might be helpful to referring teachers and hosts of training courses in the future. It is not my intention to prescribe a definite plan for anyone, but rather to tell about what I did that seemed to be helpful.

First, I think it is very important that as teachers, we do all that we can to impart the proper perception of the process of becoming a new teacher to the candidate. The referring teacher is perhaps the most important person in a candidate's preparation until the actual arrival of the course. If a referring teacher does not have the time to give to a student candidate, then it would be wise for that teacher to refer the student to another teacher who does have the time. As a course host, I have encouraged the student candidates to meet with their referring teachers as often as possible, and to enroll in any intermediate level courses or Seijaku if such is available.

I do not think it is sufficient or wise to simply observe the movements of the prospective candidate, and then sign the referral form. There is always more refinement to be done. The student will benefit more, I believe, if the referral form is signed later rather than earlier. The student also needs to know that there is no guarantee that attending the teacher training will result in accreditation. The teacher might also need to say to a candidate for future referral that he/she will be happy to work with the student, but cannot guarantee that the referral will be signed. Paying a registration deposit does not necessarily mean acceptance into the course. There is an important but delicate balance between the encouragement of the student candidate and the importance of them demonstrating their readiness and commitment.

If you are a teacher in an area convenient to a

If a referring teacher does not have the time to give to a student candidate, then it would be wise for that teacher to refer the student to another teacher who does have the time. As a course host, I have encouraged the student candidates to meet with their referring teachers as often as possible . . .

number of prospective candidates for teacher training, you can do a helpful service to TCC either as course host or together with the course host, by setting up a preparation course. Together with Sr. Antonia Cooper, and utilizing space at her place of residence and work, I set up six Saturday sessions, once a month for morning and afternoon. A minimum fee of \$20 was charged per day which was split for use of the space and as a stipend to myself as the course facilitator. There was no fee required of area teachers who were encouraged to attend, and many did regularly, which was of great benefit to the student candidates. The availability of ideas and suggestions from teachers other than those with whom students had previously worked proved very valuable to them. These sessions also served as regular opportunities for the local TCC community to come together as well. In addition, we opened these sessions to students who were thinking about becoming teachers sometime in the distant future but who felt they were not yet ready to commit to a specific teacher training course.

The mornings were spent moving. We usually started with a full practice. Following this, we began breaking down the movements, and then allowing the student candidates to work in small groups with the available teachers, preferably with whom they had never worked.



Following lunch, we spent time talking about the training course itself, the presentations, and sharing of questions, experiences and helpful suggestions. I also used this time to speak about the importance of the use of supplementary materials in their preparation, in particular, Justin Stone's instructional video, his phototext, and his audiocassette, "Justin Stone Speaks On TCC".

Finally, I offered optional instruction in Seijaku (2:30 to 4 pm) for the candidates who desired this, and I was assisted by other teachers accredited in Seijaku. (It was important to impress on other teachers who had never studied Seijaku that they could NOT take this course — once accredited, they can only LEARN Seijaku from Ed Altman or Justin Stone).

If you are a teacher in an area convenient to a number of prospective candidates for teacher training, you can do a helpful service to TCC either as course host or together with the course host, by setting up a preparation course.

In some cases, the referring teachers were not able to or chose not to attend these preparation sessions. It was important that the responsibility of discerning readiness and the signing of the referral form remained a matter between the referring teacher and the prospective candidate. I did not see it as my job to take over the individual preparation of the candidates in offering these sessions, as helpful as they did prove to be.

As I was also to be the training course host, a specific timeline for taking care of business matters also proved very helpful, and I would highly recommend this to course hosts. I do so strongly for the simple reason that the less business you have to attend to during the actual course, the better off you will be for focusing on important matters of your role during the training week itself.

To this end, I set three payment dates for the training course fee, as well as a deposit date on room and board and balance due date for the same. In this

way, all of the financial business was closed a month before the start of the course, and the commitment of each individual was firm. People do sometimes drop out for various reasons. For this reason, a non-refundable deposit might be in order to be sure that all bills are paid and such does not end up coming out of your own income for all of your hard work! (The course host agreement recommends that up to 50% of the training fee be retained in advance as a possibly non-refundable deposit).

I recommend getting the list of course host details from Ed Altman early on, and plan ahead as much as you can.

Finally, as there is no local distributor of Good Karma products, it was my responsibility as course host to provide those materials. I informed everyone in the preparation sessions, or by mail, of the one-time opportunity to obtain Good Karma products (to sell to their future students) at the 40% discount, plus the added bonus of having no postage or handling fee. I put together a list of the basic products and books available with their retail and teacher discount prices, and had each student candidate return it to me in advance with their order. (Payments would not be due until the items were picked up at the course, but orders were pre-organized and packaged for distribu-

. . . A specific timeline for taking care of business matters also proved very helpful . . . The less business you have to attend to during the actual course, the better off you will be for focusing on important matters of your role during the training week itself.

tion, and each buyer knew in advance the exact amount they would owe in payment). This was a great time saver during the actual course week. I still had ordered some additional products to be available for auditing teachers or candidates who decided they needed extra.

I hope some of this will be valuable to some of you in the future!



Aug. 26 - Sept. 1

NJ teacher training yields 18

By April Leffler
Auditing Teacher

What an honor and privilege it is to AUDIT a weeklong TCC teacher training course. It is a humbling experience to witness teacher candidates and fellow teachers delve further into their practice (and therefore further into themselves). Having recently been accredited in October 2000, I was inspired as I spent a week watching seasoned teachers flow effortlessly through the moves.

The energy of the week was tangible and moved metaphorically like a pendulum. It started high, filled with anticipation and nervous excitement, and slowly descended into

the break down of facades, comfort levels, vashanas and confidence. As the days progressed, the energy slowly began to ascend to a higher and stronger level that encompassed increased smoothness, heightened awareness and focus, deeper groundedness, gentleness and perhaps a newfound respect (for self, others, TCC, Life).

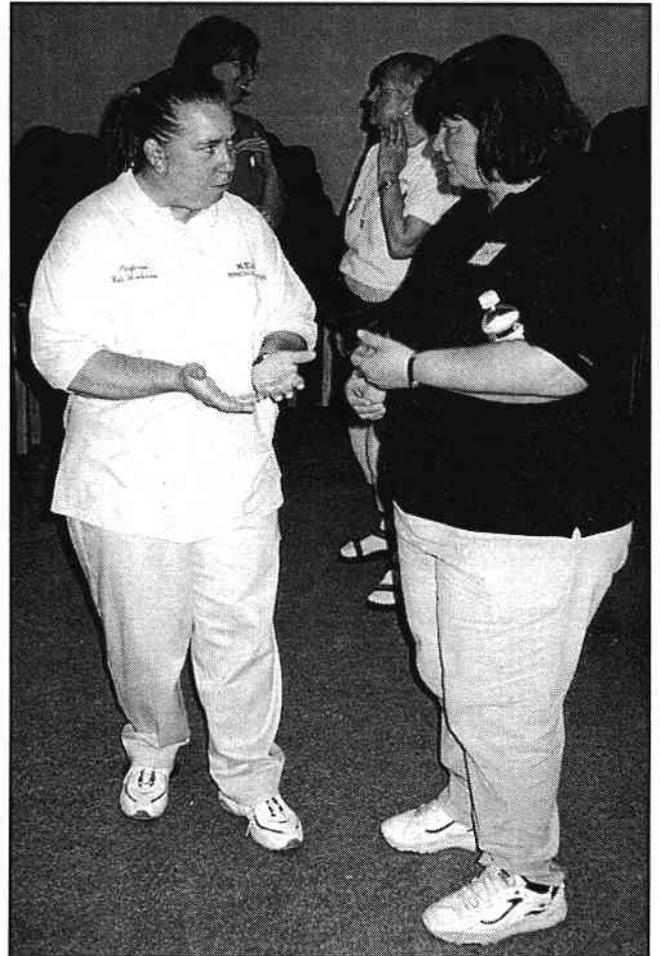
There were 18 teacher candidates and a total of 16 auditors. Eight of the auditors stayed the entire week with an additional eight who audited for periods ranging from at least an afternoon to up to two or three days.

It was a mini re-union of sorts for this auditor since four teachers who were accredited with me last October had all decided to audit for the first time. Some of us laughed and cried together as we remembered the tender and raw experiences that were felt as we had grown and transformed through our teacher training.

I felt compassion for those teacher candidates who experienced self-doubt and frustration as they observed their practice "fall-apart" while simultaneously feeling that I'd be "stripped of my teacher status" as pieces of MY practice fell

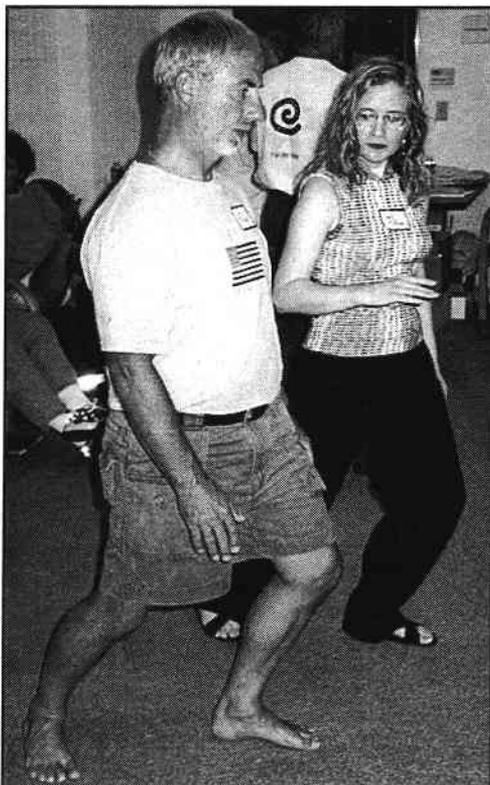
apart! I felt tremendous excitement and pride for the teacher candidates as I witnessed the pieces come together. The breakthroughs were readily apparent, not only in how people moved, but also on their faces and personalities. There was definitely an added softness and openness to our group.

I truly appreciated the depth of clarity and understanding that had occurred sans the nervousness of being a teacher candidate. Ed's talks as well as comments from fellow teachers went much deeper and



Candidate Kate Henderson (left) asks Auditor Janet Oussaty a question about *Pulling in the Energy*. Auditors Carolyn Allenby (left rear) and Nancy Hall chat in the corner of the room.

Photo: Dan Pieniac



Candidate Ron Heck (left) works with Auditor Noel Altman on shifting the weight fully with the bottom tucked under. Photo: Dan Pieniac

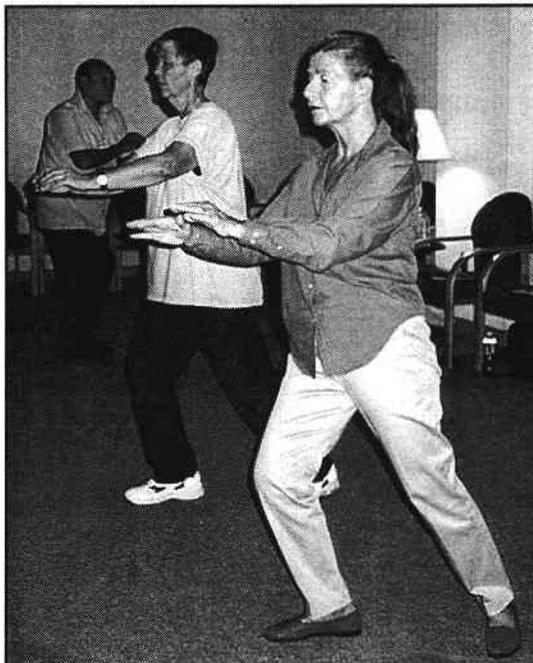


made more sense than they did when I went through my teacher training. When Ed had asked a few of the new auditors what we had thought about our auditing experience, I exclaimed, "I believe you this time!" (referring to Ed's reassurances about how much quicker your TCC practice comes together after it seemingly falls apart, about trusting that everything is inside of you, just don't try to rush it, about letting go, etc.).

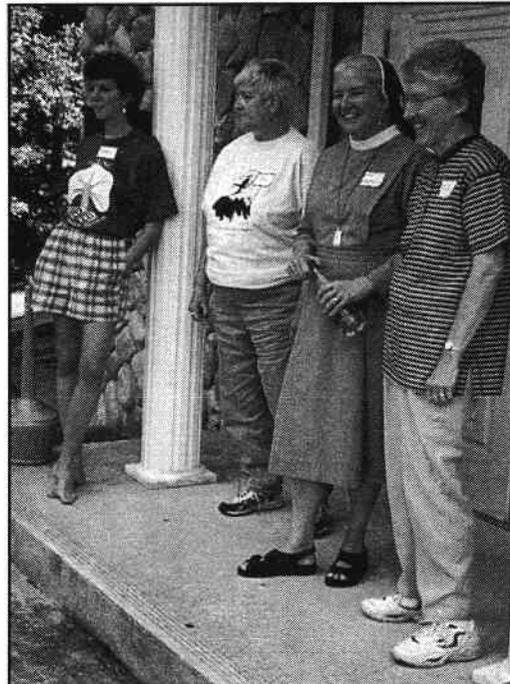
Auditing a teacher training is a privilege and a wonderful way to give back to the TCC community. It is a fine microcosm, revealing to me that we are always students of TCC and of Life, and that

each of us impacts and is impacted by one another. Perhaps this is why Justin refers to teachers as "the jewel of TCC." I highly recommend

auditing to teachers who have yet to experience this humbling and expansive opportunity.



Candidates Mary Lou Broderick (center) and Valerie Drucker (right) practice *Around the Platter* while Candidate Joe Lomonico (rear) works on *Pulling Taffy*.
Photo: Dan Pienciak



(L-R): Auditors April Leffler, Pam Grieg, and Sr. Antonia Cooper take a break outside with Candidate Sr. Rita Jean DuBrey.
Photo: Dan Pienciak



Course Instructor Ed Altman (far right) confers with auditors Marion Massman (left) and Nancy Adams.
Photo: Dan Pienciak



Congratulations to the happy graduates! **Back row (L-R):** Joe Truland, Neal Giacomelli, Mary Lou Broderick, Bill Walton, Kathy Starrick; **Middle row (L-R):** Course Instructor Ed Altman, Mary Schapker, Cheryl Wild, Lori Derry, Patricia DeGeorges, Sr. Geraldine Contento, Sr. Rita Jean DuBrey, Carol Murphy, Joe Lomonico; **Front row (L-R):** Course Host Dan Pienciak, Fred Solomon, Kate Henderson, Ron Heck, Valerie Drucker, Blair Laden.
Photo: Noel Altman



How Could I Have Known?

By Kathy Starrick

It's the end of an incredible day at the end of an incredible week of teacher training. I'm exhausted, but I can't rest yet. Pictures, thoughts, emotions keep swirling around in me, and I feel compelled to try to capture them and commit them to print. Will they lose something in the translation? Probably, but I need to try nonetheless.

I see motion so soft and fluid it's almost mesmerizing, and I wonder if I'll ever be able to do that. I feel pain in my leg, and amazement at how it disappears when I make a slight adjustment to how I move. I feel tension in my body, and relief when I see that I am able to let it go. I see a room full of earnest, struggling candidates, and I watch as it all comes together to provide a sense of unity. The closing ceremony keeps playing over and over in my mind, like one of those closed-loop filmstrips. It was one of the most beautiful and moving ceremonies I have ever had the privilege to participate in. *[See page 32 for a full description of the sort of ceremony that Sr. Antonia Cooper led after graduation at this training.]*

So what did I learn during teacher accreditation this past week? I learned about T'ai Chi Chih, and I learned about myself! One of the first things I wrestled with was my ego — it was in the way! I had thought I knew T'ai Chi Chih, and it was painful to discover that I didn't know as much as I had thought, that I had allowed problems I had corrected to creep back into my practice. I had to let go of my ego, and drop it by the wayside, so I could move forward again and take advantage of the wonderful opportunity in front of me.

I learned that Chi follows thought. As I had prepared my presentation over a period of weeks prior to the teacher accreditation, I had made sure it had all the points I would be expected to cover. The words came from things I had read, things I had heard, things that had happened to me and things I had felt, all of which had become part of my belief system. I thought a great deal about the many benefits I had received from T'ai Chi Chih, and I focused on putting all the pieces together in a logical fashion so it made sense and I could remember it. What I didn't realize was that I had written my presentation and practiced it from an objective,

intellectual viewpoint. When I delivered it, however, many people told me they were really moved by what I said and how I said it, and I thanked them for their kind words. It was a great boost to my self-confidence. But it also opened the door for that old ego to try to slip in again, so I had to be on the lookout to make sure it didn't cause more trouble. More importantly, now that I've had time to reflect on my presentation, I believe that it was not I who moved the audience, it was the Chi, because it moved me too.

Some of the most important tools that I took with me from the training are techniques for grounding the Chi and relaxing the body. I learned how to allow the tension to leave my body (and there was plenty to allow) and to bring my attention to the soles of my feet so the Chi would get stored and not rise too high. The grounding techniques became more and more important with each practice session as the flow of Chi increased, and I realized that I would need to be able to ground not only myself, but my students as well. I especially found it very helpful to sit and focus on the soles of the feet, on the bubbling springs, for a few minutes. Perhaps even writing these thoughts at this time is helping to ground me.

As I headed out this morning, I was both elated and subdued, if that's possible. I was elated that I could now teach T'ai Chi Chih, but I was subdued by a feeling of awe for what I was about to become a part of. I heard the announcer on my car radio say that, as a result of the New Jersey Lottery, there were two more rich people in New Jersey today, and I heard myself say "Not as rich as I am"!

I once heard someone say "The Universe loves a grateful person — the more you say thanks, the more it gives you to be thankful for," and I've seen it work in my life. So I'm sending out a big thanks for T'ai Chi Chih. Thank you Justin for being the channel that brought T'ai Chi Chih into our world. Thank you Ed for your hard work and your dedication to the integrity of T'ai Chi Chih. Thank you Dan and Sister Antonia for getting us

continued on page 36



Sept. 20 - 23

Meditation retreat inspires discussion

By Ann Rutherford

Can you live a spiritual life as a householder?

This is the question that Justin asked us at "open forum night" at the Meditation Retreat. The question set off a cyclone of discussion both before, during and after the evening gathering. What is meant by "spiritual life"? Justin defines it as the ability to live in the world of the senses while maintaining awareness of the essence. We experience this essence during Turiya meditation and T'ai Chi Chih practice. Is it possible to stay in accord with Reality while we immerse ourselves in the every day world?

The unanimous answer among the participants was a qualified "yes." However, it is not easy. Not only must a conscious effort be made to discipline ourselves to meditate and practice T'ai Chi Chih, but also this meditative view must be integrated into our daily lives if we are truly to feel that we are living a spiritual life. Otherwise we are living a life of duality, when in actuality, there is only one thing, (no thing), going on.

Are there habits we can develop that will increase our chances of living a spiritual life as householders? Most certainly, said Justin. Don't over sleep or over eat. Moreover, heavily spiced food interferes with reaching the turiya state, the unchanging consciousness that underlies waking, sleeping, and dreaming. Eat plain food. Donate your ego to charity and serve others. Are you grateful for your life? Are you living with your bags packed? That is, are you in accord with the imperma-



(L - R:) Attendee Ann Rutherford, Course Instructor Justin Stone, Attendees Jim Houle, Connie Hyde, Dora Derzon, Caroline Chavez, and Course Hosts Marjie Bassler and Toni Mora listen to Justin's instruction during the Meditation Retreat in Albuquerque, NM. Photo: Caroline Guillott

nence of all things and the wisdom that underlies the essence? If not, you are probably beset with hopes, fears, and unhappiness.

Several retreatants shared their views of how parenthood both challenges and deepens their spiritual practice. "I have an obligation to be a good parent, but I am aware that my child does not 'belong' to me," said one man. Another agreed, adding that responsible and loving behavior toward his child did not have to be the same thing as ego clinging to the child, (or spouse, parents, etc.). This maintenance of the nonattached mind, (recognizing and being in accord with impermanence), seems to be the fundamental challenge to the authentic spiritual practitioner be he householder or monk.

Another retreatant said he accords with impermanence by just letting things "go as they go" and not trying to control or manipulate events or people. Two others responded to this by saying that the fundamental wisdom found in the essence dic-

tates certain behaviors. For example, was Gandhi's passive resistance to the English in accord with the essence, or should he have lived an entirely introverted spiritual life?

A novice meditator asked if the householder needed a meditation teacher. Justin's answer was that it was very important to have a teacher in order to avoid the dangers of ego clinging and delusions that sometimes occur in unguided meditations. At the end of the Meditation Retreat, we all thanked Justin for his loving guidance during the three wonderful days of Retreat.

[Editor's Note: Having attended the same event, I also heard Justin answer the question about whether a teacher is needed to continue meditating.

"No," he answered, adding that all that was needed to begin practice at home had been taught during the weekend. When pressed by Ann, who was moderating the evening's discussion, he added, "I didn't say it wasn't HELPFUL to have a teacher" and went on to explain why (for the reasons Ann illustrates above).]



Nov. 3, 5 - 10

NM Teacher Training follows Renewal

By Noel Altman
Course Co-Host

On Saturday, Nov. 3, the New Mexico TCC Center sponsored a day-long Teacher Renewal for 22 attendees, both local teachers and those from as far away as Alaska, Washington state, Arizona, California and Missouri. This was a day to focus on our practice of the form as Ed (with help from Justin) led us through the finer aspects of how to move.

For myself, the combination of what Ed said about moving softly and then what Justin said about the same concept caused a shift in me that had a real effect on how softly I was moving. Actually, it was quite amazing! I don't think I have ever moved as softly! I hesitate to put it into words because it took in my body in a way that wasn't verbal and I am working in each practice now to regain that state of mind and hence, bodily expression.

This is the first TCC Teacher Training I have attended where we first had a Teacher Renewal and boy was it helpful to take that time to focus on our own practice **first** before turning our attention on Monday to 15 teacher candidates!

After a long week of applied effort (and letting go), 15 candidates graduated from the Teacher Training course. Four certificates were withheld as those candidates were asked to work longer with a teacher before beginning to teach.

The group was a sincere bunch and they bonded with each other quickly as the majority of them showed up

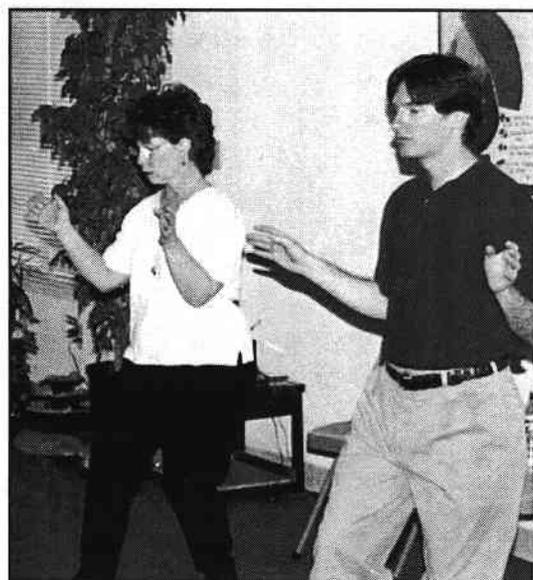
for the optional morning practice before the course and the optional evening sessions where they were able to receive one-on-one help from auditing teachers. I want to especially thank Ray Payne (from Washington state), Pam Towne and Roberta Taggart (from California), local teacher Amy Tyksinski, Gale Portman (from Missouri), and Nancy Jo Bleier (from Alaska) for helping during the evening sessions.

Auditors who helped during the entire week were: local teacher Carmen Brocklehurst and Toni Corrigan (from Arizona). Also there much of the time were local teachers Beverly McFarland and Ann Rutherford and Canadian teacher Margo Carpenter, down from Edmonton, AB to visit Albuquerque for a TCC event for the third time this year! What dedication!

Nine other local teachers showed up for some part of the training and we were glad to have them.

Justin came almost every day and offered his viewpoint and suggestions for how to move. He stressed the fact that one must move well to be able to teach — it is not enough to be sincere. To focus on the needs of the students, a teacher must be confident in the way he/she moves when in front of a class of students (instead of paying too much attention to doing his/her own movements).

Justin has a very strict way of teaching, but I have seen him get results over and over with his methods. On the morning of graduation, in front of the whole group and speaking to



Course Instructor Ed Altman leads Teacher Roberta Taggart in *Daughter in the Valley* during the Teacher Renewal. Photo: Richard Tye

Justin himself, one of the candidates and one of the auditors movingly expressed their frustrations with his remarks earlier in the week (when he explicitly corrected them in stern tones) and then their total shift in state of mind as they processed the input. The auditor said she had finally felt her T'an T'ien "open up" for the first time ever as a direct result of his remarks. "Thank you, Justin," she said, with tears in her eyes.

Ed and Justin have very different teaching styles, but they both have the same aim. The two together made this a unique training.

Throughout the week, I heard comments over and over from the candidates about how the training had exceeded their expectations — that they couldn't believe how much they were learning!

Because there were so many struggling to pass during this week, Ed opened up a discussion between the candidates, the auditors and



(L-R): Auditors Toni Corrigan, Carmen Brocklehurst, Candidates Sr. Mary Smith, Diana Durkin, Chris Norkus, Mary Jane Bensick, Marcia Browning, Mary Mitchell and (far right, close) Joanna Spinoza follow Mary Mitchell's lead as the group practices *Pulling in the Energy*. Photo: Richard Tye

night (so local teachers could walk in to teach their evening classes and not find the room any different than usual). He cleaned up the facilities in the Center each day (even vacuuming)! He also hosted the Thursday night video showing of Justin's 1998 talk at Folsom State Prison in CA and assisted on Wednesday night with Ed and myself in meeting with every candidate to assess their progress. Lastly, Richard took photos during the training week for *The Vital Force*.

Thank you to all the candidates, some of whom worked harder than I've ever seen a candidate work, but who simply have farther to go before they'll be fully ready to teach. To all of you: you know what it is you're working on — keep going! Come audit Teacher Training courses and attend other TCC events so that your progress doesn't stop! As Ed said, completing your Teacher Training is just the beginning. *A good teacher is one who remains an earnest student!*

himself on Friday afternoon, and suggestions were made on how to improve the process by which candidates are admitted into the course, and how to better prepare them to attend in the future. It appears that some changes may ensue.

The Teacher Renewal was hosted by Ann Rutherford. The Teacher Training course hosting duties were split between Richard Tye, a board member of the TCC Center, Uly and Caroline Messier, former board members of the TCC Center, and myself. The events were a fundraiser for the TCC Center and all hosting work was done on a volunteer basis.

Uly and Caroline handled the scheduling of the events and the meeting rooms, as well as the hotel rooms for those coming from out of town. They also handled all aspects of registration and helped compile the welcome packets from the TCC Center.

Richard and I co-hosted during the week of the training. While I focused on the movements of the candidates and making sure they got the

extra help they desired during the hours before and after the course, Richard focused on the comfort of the candidates — making sure they had welcome packets at the hotel when they arrived, transportation to and from the hotel and the Center, that the Center was always open early (and late), and that they knew where they could eat at nearby restaurants. He made sure the meeting room stayed comfortable during the training, and even set up the room and broke it down each



Graduates of the course! **Back row, (L-R):** Sr. Cecile St. Remy, Chris Norkus, Mary Jane Bensick, Joanna Spinoza, Diana Durkin, Course Co-Host Richard Tye; **Middle row (L-R):** Georgine Lanyi, Marcia Browning, Eleanor Stevens, Adrienne Phillips, Liz Humphrey, Mary Mitchell, Judy Pritchett; **Front row, (L-R):** Course Instructor Ed Altman, Linda Brause, Darlene Karasik, Sr. Mary Smith, Course Co-Host Noel Altman. Photo: Dennis Zallen



News Shorts

Teachers Invited: Conference 2002

COME to the 17th International T'ai Chi Chih Teachers' Conference to be held August 1-4, 2002 at the University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio, Texas.

The UIW setting, at the head of the San Antonio River, is a beautiful, peaceful space. Its unique facilities will enable us to experience a relaxed, enjoyable conference.

San Antonio is a wonderful city to visit and there will be some free time to tour during the conference. You may wish to spend extra days in the city before or after the Conference. There is the famous river walk with its restaurants and shops, many wonderful art museums and galleries, the Institute of Texan Cultures, and much more. Motel rates are reasonable.

The theme this year is "Return to the Source of the Bubbling Spring." Besides the fact that the UIW is situated at the source of the San Antonio River, the theme directs our attention to the Source within us, that common power that rises from beneath our feet and surges through the body as we glide effortlessly through the movements.

This Source, common to all humans, is understood and honored in different ways. Let us continue to connect with this Source in our own daily practice until we meet together at the conference.

For questions regarding the conference, contact Alice Holden at Holden@universe.uiwtx.edu or 210-829-0370.

- Sr. Alice Holden

TCC featured in newsletter with an international female audience

Carolyn Hales Perkins, a T'ai Chi Chih teacher in New York City was interviewed by *Food & Fitness Advisor*, a monthly newsletter put out by The Center for Women's Healthcare / Weill Medical College of Cornell University. *Food & Fitness Advisor* has an international subscriber base of approximately 55,000, mostly women in their forties and fifties, according to Andrew Thorne of The Center for Women's Healthcare.

The article, written by Stephanie Golden, gives a brief overview of TCC, including mention of Originator Justin

Stone. It also states, "Perkins has found that T'ai Chi Chih's weight-bearing impact on the heels helps increase bone density. She says many of her students find that the practice improves or stabilizes their bone density, which can be seen on their own bone density scans."

Since low bone density is a topic of concern to most women, this was a particularly salient point! Carolyn knows firsthand about how TCC can improve bone density, having witnessed that result in her own body years ago.

To find an accredited teacher, the article refers *Food & Fitness Advisor* readers to the website listing of teachers on the TCC Community website at www.taichichih.org.

- Noel Altman

TCC movements presented at Shepherd's Centers conference

Two teachers from Kansas City, MO, Lucy Ann and Ted Fleischman, presented TCC at the national conference of Shepherd's Center of America (SCA) in Lake Junaluska, NC in late October after being asked to by SCA founder Elbert Cole "because of the success we have had with TCC in Kansas City area Centers," according to Lucy Ann.

Each morning the Fleischmans taught about 20 directors for 30 minutes and were available during the day to answer questions. The participants decided they wanted to practice each evening as well. Those from the Minneapolis area and throughout the Midwest, South and East copied down names and phone numbers from the TCC Teacher Directory so they can follow up with teachers in their home towns.

Teachers may check for a Shepherd's Center near them on their national website: www.shepherdcenters.org. SCA plans to hyper-link their website to the official TCC website so that Shepherd's Centers around the nation can more easily locate accredited teachers, said Lucy Ann. Lucy Ann and Ted are happy to share their experience with any teacher wanting to begin teaching at a Shepherd's Center (or even those who have already begun). Their e-mail address is: taichichih@kansascity.usa.com.

- Lucy Ann Fleischman and Noel Altman

"News Shorts" continued on page 36



Calendar of Events

| <p>March 16 TCC WORKSHOP (9am - 5pm) w / SANDY McALISTER</p> <p>March 17, 2002 TCC TEACHER PREP WORKSHOP (9am - 3pm) w / SANDY McALISTER Location: Grayslake, IL (Chicago Area) Contact: Donna McElhose 18160 Twin Lakes Blvd. Wildwood, IL 60030-2045 Phone: (847) 223-6065 e-mail: dmcelhosechi@aol.com</p> <p>TCC Workshop <u>or</u> Prep Fee (Teachers): \$35</p> <p>TCC Workshop <u>or</u> Prep Fee (Students): \$45 Discounted rate (Students), both days: \$70</p> | <p>May 24 TCC TEACHER RENEWAL (9am -12:30pm) w / ED ALTMAN</p> <p>May 24 thru 26, 2002 SEIJAKU TEACHER TRAINING w / ED ALTMAN Location: St. Louis, MO Contact: Kathy Albers 6046 Hartford St. St. Louis, MO 63139 Phone: (314) 727-1983 e-mail: Kayessence@earthling.net</p> <p>TCC Teacher Renewal Fee: \$20 Seijaku Teacher Training Fee: \$300 Auditing Seijaku Teachers: \$20</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---------------|--------------|---------------|-------|-------|---------------|-------|-------|---|--------------------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|------------------|-------|------------------|-------|-------------------------|-------|
| <p>April 19 thru 21, 2002 TCC RETREAT w / ED ALTMAN Location: Sedona, AZ Contact: Deanne Hodgson 233 E. Angela Drive Phoenix, AZ 85022-1812 Phone: (602) 789-7415 e-mail: deanne@blueribbon.com</p> <p>(Contact host for pricing information.)</p> | <p>June 8, 2002 TCC WORKSHOP (9:30am - 4:00pm) w / PAM TOWNE Location: Indianapolis, IN Contact: Donnis Minx 3302 N. Washington Blvd. Indianapolis, IN 46205 Phone: (317) 924-3051 e-mail: ttg@iquest.net</p> <p>Attendance Fee: TBA</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>May 10 thru 12, 2002 TCC TEACHERS' RETREAT w / ED ALTMAN Location: St. Paul, MN Contact: Ron Barker 4512 Jefferson St. NE Columbia Heights, MN 55421-2355 Phone: (763) 572-1115 e-mail: RONBARKER@MEDIAONE.NET</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Before 2/1/02</th> <th>After 2/1/02</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Commuter fee:</td> <td>\$155</td> <td>\$175</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Resident fee:</td> <td>\$230</td> <td>\$250</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>(Note: Space limited to 40 attendees)</p> | | Before 2/1/02 | After 2/1/02 | Commuter fee: | \$155 | \$175 | Resident fee: | \$230 | \$250 | <p>Aug. 1 thru 4, 2002 17TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL T'AI CHI CHIH TEACHERS' CONFERENCE Location: San Antonio, TX Contact: Stella Jaidar c/o The Center for Spirituality & the Arts 4707 Broadway San Antonio, TX 78209 Stella's Phone: (210) 349-7597 e-mail: Sjaidar@stic.net</p> <table border="0"> <tbody> <tr> <td>Registration by Jan. 10, 2002:</td> <td>\$270</td> </tr> <tr> <td>by April 1, 2002:</td> <td>\$300</td> </tr> <tr> <td>by June 1, 2002:</td> <td>\$330</td> </tr> <tr> <td>by Aug. 1, 2002:</td> <td>\$360</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Non-U.S. Teachers' fee:</td> <td>\$270</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Registration by Jan. 10, 2002: | \$270 | by April 1, 2002: | \$300 | by June 1, 2002: | \$330 | by Aug. 1, 2002: | \$360 | Non-U.S. Teachers' fee: | \$270 |
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| Commuter fee: | \$155 | \$175 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| by Aug. 1, 2002: | \$360 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Non-U.S. Teachers' fee: | \$270 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>POSSIBLE FUTURE EVENTS: This event will only happen if enough people are interested — contact host for details.</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>Fall, 2002 TCC TEACHER TRAINING in Edmonton, AB CANADA Contact: Margo Carpenter Phone: (780) 434-9433 e-mail: carpkids@telusplanet.net</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Justin Stone is the Originator of T'ai Chi Chih. Ed Altman is the Head of T'ai Chi Chih.
Sandy McAllister and Pam Towne are T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Trainers.



“T'ai Chi Chih” is now trademarked

By Jean Katus

Exciting news! The name T'ai Chi Chih is now a federally registered trademark issued by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. That status identifies the origin of the form, specifies its uniqueness from other T'ai Chi forms, and protects it from unauthorized usage. It also establishes its use in commerce. Just as copyright registration serves notice that such material cannot be used without permission or be copied, trademark registration similarly lets the public know that the mark cannot be used without permission. You will notice the symbol ® following T'ai Chi Chih on the front cover of this issue of *The Vital Force*.

A trademark or service mark is akin to a brand name. As such, particularly in writing, it cannot be used as a noun but as a descriptor (adjective) for a noun. For example, when we use the term T'ai Chi Chih in brochures, articles, business cards, advertising for classes, and any other ways we might use the phrase, we need to begin incorporating the ® symbol after T'ai Chi Chih and follow that with a noun. The most logical choice is the subtitle, *Joy thru Movement*, a phrase many of us have used for years. It is, in fact, the wording Justin Stone prefers. Some other suggestions are: community, discipline, form, movements, practice, or other appropriate designation. To illustrate: T'ai Chi Chih® Joy thru Movement.

Good Karma Publishing owns the trademark and has granted *The Vital Force* permission to use it. GKP will also grant similar written permission to accredited teachers and other vendors of products utilizing the name, as long as certain criteria are met. Look for further information in the March issue of *VFJ*. We received notification from the trademark office just before this issue went to press and are still working out details. Therefore, we ask that teachers NOT contact Good Karma or The Vital Force about the trademark at this time.

The books and tapes GKP produces will begin incorporating the trademark registration symbol when referring to T'ai Chi Chih movements. As we reprint our materials, we will more permanently display the symbol. In the same way, accredited teachers will be asked to begin using it as they can once the criteria, referred to in the previous paragraph, are in place. It is important that once the mark starts being used—by Good Karma, *The Vital Force*, individual teachers—its use is continuous and ongoing. Such action establishes the trademark's validity as a constant notice to the public that the term T'ai Chi Chih is protected by federal law.

[Editor's Note: Beginning with the next issue of *The Vital Force*, these changes will appear throughout the issue.]



Teacher Diane See (front, center) leads a class of seniors in TCC. She teaches through San Francisco, (CA) City College. Photo provided by Diane See



TCC students benefiting in South Africa

By Sr. Marie-Ann Main

... [Here are] some of the letters from one of the Groups that I started teaching. It has been wonderful to see how dedicated this group have been and the interest they have shown. I derive such a great uplift and flow of energy when I travel up to assist them in the next few moves and leave them to master them in the month.

Having been recommended to practise T'ai Chi Chih for health reasons we were blessed with finding Sr. Marie-Ann to instruct us in T'ai Chi Chih. She has travelled more than 70 miles from Durban to St Pietermaritzburg at least once a month to guide us to reap the real benefits of T'ai Chi Chih, balance yet shared energy and spiritual peace. Our group of 8-12 meet twice a week and are all feeling so blessed we only wish we could influence more people to benefit from Sr. Marie-Ann's skillful and dedicated instruction. Thank you Sister! My stiff joints are definitely loosening up!

- Feagh Graaf

A dedicated improvement in both my physical and mental well being has been experienced since I started T'ai Chi Chih +/- two months ago. Thanks.

- Veronica Lundy

... I joined T.C.C. classes hoping it would help me with my back pain I have been suffering with for 21 years even though I had an operation to improve my situation caused by three motor car accidents. Well after three months of exercising I must admit, God works in mysterious ways. Being very depressed for quite some time I have discovered just what "Joy Thru Movement" really is and means. I have got my zest for life back, once again, and have met wonderful and made wonderful friends. I am a very tense person by nature and can now truthfully say that the relaxation T'ai Chi Chih has brought me with such inner peace has made me a different person. With time to come and perseverance, I am sure that the other things that ail me will surely disappear. Thank you Sister Marie-Ann for your help, support and guidance. It is

an honour to have you as our teacher.

- Constance De'eb

Learning T'ai Chi Chih with the guidance of Sr. Marie-Ann has shown me a new way of finding relaxation and serenity in life. The gentle movements are the best form of non-strenuous exercise that I know of, and really help me to unwind. I only wish more people in our highly-stressed society could discover T'ai Chi Chih for themselves — I'm sure it has the potential to benefit anyone who learns it.

- Trish Graaf

These are some of the feelings that have been given to me and I thought I would like to share with the T.C.C. Family who gave me so much. Greetings and thanks once again for trusting that it would eventually take some small root in South Africa. Our prayers are with you all over the recent Disaster.

My growing love for T'ai Chi Chih

I can't tell you all what a wonderful time I have had teaching and learning as a new TCC teacher. When I passed out certificates for diligent attendance to my first two beginning classes it was a joyous occasion.

As we continue to practice and teach each other through individual experiences, I am delighted and grateful for the groups that have formed. After practice one of my continuing groups does more talking than I do. A wonderful treat for me as a teacher! I love to listen to their thoughts about what they're feeling during

practice, how their practices are going during the week and how TCC has made a difference in their lives.

With all that is going on in the world my students and I (beginning and continuing) have grown to love our practice and peaceful moments together more and more. We often speak about making a difference in the world through our love of T'ai Chi Chih. And know that if we are joyous and peaceful so will be the people around us. . . .

- Wendy Howard



Creating a Curriculum

By Carmen Brocklehurst

During the introduction of my beginning T'ai Chi Chih class, I always make sure that I tell the students about the sequence of classes available to them: Beginning, Intermediate, and Seijaku. This way, they know that it isn't enough for them to just learn the mechanics of T'ai Chi Chih, that is, where to put hands and feet; but that T'ai Chi Chih is so much more, being as it affects the whole person: body, mind, and spirit. It is always good to keep in mind what Justin says, "The chi is affecting you, but you are also affecting the chi." Therefore, the more we know about 'chi' the better. Our very being is being impacted, so is our future.

In the Beginning class, students learn that there is such a thing called 'chi' and that the movements of T'ai Chi Chih, 19 movements and one pose, help us to learn more about it. To that end, not only do we teach them a little bit about the history, being clear to mention the originator, Justin Stone, but also mention that this is not an ancient discipline, since it was created in 1974. Usually when I say this several people in the class are surprised as they have heard about T'ai Chi Ch'uan, and know that it is over 900 years old. However, since they have not studied T'ai Chi Chih they do not know that there is a difference. It is important that the student knows the basis of T'ai Chi Chih which is the use of the ancient principles yin and yang. It is also important that we stress, as it says on the front cover of our text, that this is not a martial art. This sets the tone of the class. Our intention is not to teach them to fight and defend themselves, but rather to learn about themselves, the flow of the chi, and how it affects us. It follows then that how to move, from the t'an t'ien, flowing, soft, and continuous is all important.

The Intermediate class can be a repeat of the Beginning T'ai Chi Chih class; however, many

students will find this to be boring, as if the teacher believes that they didn't learn anything in the first class. We remember to keep stressing that in the first class, it was important to learn where to put hands and feet and to flow from the t'an t'ien. However, in this class what Justin says, "practice, practice, practice is all important." To this end practice is approached from the nine principles that Ed talks about at Teachers' Training.

Here then is a breakdown of what I do in each Intermediate class.

The first class is a full practice. This gives the teacher the opportunity to assess where the students are and to make general points that will be emphasized over and over.

The second class works with the movements Rocking Motion to Basic Pulling Taffy, stressing circularity, continuity, and yinning/yanging. I also encourage the students to begin learning to count the movements using their fingers. This helps in several ways, two of them are: it allows the student not to have to engage the mind to concentrate on the number of repetitions done, but rather to allow the experience of the chi to be felt, and it also acts as a double check that the chi is flowing all the way to the ends of the finger tips, rather than being caught in tense wrists and hands.

The third class works on the movements Variation 1 of Pulling Taffy (Anchor) to Cosmic Consciousness, emphasizing movement in the waist, looseness of the upper body, and continuity. Part of the discussion focuses on yin and yang. The meaning of it philosophically and how we actually see it in our movements. Note that one of the key reasons why T'ai Chi Chih is so powerful is because of the yin time spent at the close of each move-

continued on page 36



What better place to do T'ai Chi Chih than here at St. Francis Center in Scottsdale, AZ!

We were so happy to see Justin Stone's book on T'ai Chi Chih here in the book shop!

(L-R): Teacher Sr. Grazyna Michniewicz, student Catherine Zimmer, Teacher Sr. Maureen Skelly, student Mary Hoagland.

Photo and text provided by Sr. Grazyna Michniewicz.

Teacher reaches out

T'ai Chi Chih is always reaching out and touching someone. After a month of separation due to vacation, conference and business travels my husband and I decided to go to the movies Saturday afternoon. I had spent the morning doing TCC outside with Sally [McLaughlin] and our students, going to the college to see if the three classes for T'ai Chi Chih were a go. Thinking about the classes still while waiting for the movie to begin a lady sat down beside me and began to talk about the book I had brought (we had a long 15 minutes to wait) and what I did. Well, to shorten the story, the lady next to her heard us talking and started asking questions about T'ai Chi Chih too. So I happened to have my business card, gave them each one and said check out the web site and if they were interested, classes started Tuesday at the college. On Sunday, about noon, a call came from the second woman. Her psych class was at the same time as TCC but she decided to drop that class and take T'ai Chi Chih instead! She said she was looking for a class she could do for her body and mind! Also, she felt it was a gift that she overheard us talk about T'ai Chi Chih and was surprised at herself for joining in our conversation!

A T'ai Chi Chih teacher is always an ambassador for T'ai Chi Chih.

- Donna McElhose

PS. Classes did go at the college and she was there — smiling — and told her story to her new classmates.

Forwarded letter

Dear Ed,

Hannah Hedrick just prompted me to send you a note. I just started teaching a T'ai Chi Chih class in our backyard on September 8. Keith is assisting in the teaching process. Our only advertisement was through flyers and an introduction by my friend, a yoga teacher, in her class. We started with six people. The class has now grown to 10 people with more people interested every day. I had no idea that Ojai, CA would give T'ai Chi Chih such a warm welcome as you predicted.

I will be doing a T'ai Chi Chih demo on October 20 for Ojai Day; organized by a group of healers in town. I am sure this will help get the word out that a teacher has arrived. Soon, I plan on starting another class. It seems there is a demand for it.

It is wonderful to watch a class grow so quickly. In Chicago, I had to really work to put a class together. And, people would not continue to practice. My guess is that in Ojai I will have a larger group of people who continue to practice regularly.

I am blessed to be able to teach here and particularly at this time in the world. Thank you for your words of encouragement.

Love,

Elaine Unzicker



The Growth and Expansion of TCC at Kean University and beyond: A Vital Force

By Janet M. Oussaty

The following is more than a summary of T'ai Chi Chih programs, presentations and classes I had the privilege of facilitating this past year. It is a representation of how "one thing leads to another" or a momentum is created by this vital force.

FALL 2000

A **T'ai Chi Chih Practice Group** was started by a former student, Alice Kelly, Kean University's Graduate School Director. Alice completed the first T'ai Chi Chih course I taught for Continuing Education during the Spring 2000 semester. The group tries to meet weekly at Kean and is open to anyone who has "graduated" from a beginner's course.

Kean University's Senior (Citizens) Health and Wellness Program weekend T'ai Chi Chih demonstration extended from one session during Spring 2000 to four weekends during the Fall 2000 semester. The seniors loved TCC and some insisted that I teach them *Pulling Taffy* during Spring 2001.

I was invited to present a one and one half hour program on T'ai Chi Chih at the **Therapeutic Recreation Statewide Conference** on December 1. Over 35 enthusiastic profession-

als who were already convinced of the benefits of "t'ai chi" (and unfamiliar with T'ai Chi Chih) attended the session. I was impressed with the large variety of physically-, emotionally- and psychologically-challenged individuals they work with on a daily basis. Some conditions are quite severe. We practiced a lot of chair T'ai Chi Chih and some performed the movements as a client would, e.g., with the use of one arm.

SPRING 2001

Kean University's T'ai Chi Chih Classes for Academic Credit increased from two sections per semester to three beginning with the Spring 2001 semester. The "closing" of the classes during the pre-registration periods due to its popularity prompted the increase. The first class had been offered only one year prior, in Spring 2000. An adjunct faculty member, Kathleen (Kate) Henderson will be teaching the additional section now that she has become accredited (at the NJ August training). Kate participated in some of my classes and was instructed and mentored by Sr. Antonia Cooper. Approval for an intermediate level class for the Spring 2002 semester was given.

My proposal for a one hour T'ai Chi Chih presentation at the **New Jersey Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and**

Dance (NJAPERD) Annual Convention on February 5 was again accepted. (I presented at the 2000 convention). About 25 individuals attended during a snowstorm, some returning from last year's program. They said that they would like to offer something new and different for their health and physical education students, particularly something that reduces stress. I became concerned when one expected to be able to "teach" the movements to students the next day. Another wanted to be able to practice all 20 movements during the one hour session!

On February 21, I was invited to present T'ai Chi Chih at the **American Council on Education National Network-Women Leadership in Higher Education (ACE-NET) Luncheon on "Stress Reduction,"** at Kean. I was one of three speakers and was given a seven minute segment (yes, seven minutes!). A number of participants were really "taken" by the presentation as they felt the energy; a number of women had attended or were currently attending my courses. Comments were made that this was the first luncheon program where most people stayed for its duration.

My proposal for a T'ai Chi Chih presentation at the **American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD) National Convention, Cincinnati**



Convention Center on March 28 was accepted. AAHPERD is a professional organization consisting of 20,000 members. I was given a 75-minute time slot in a ballroom and over 100 people participated!

Participants were quite serious during the program and many stayed following the program to purchase (all of my) textbooks and instructional videotapes. As I walked to other sessions, restaurants and hotels with thousands of other people, individuals continually stopped me telling me how much they enjoyed the T'ai Chi Chih session. The president of the Eastern District Association of AAHPERD asked me to present a T'ai Chi Chih Demonstration during their joint convention (with the Southern District Association) next winter in Baltimore, Maryland.

On April 6, I was invited to be interviewed on the **Kean University**



Over 100 attendees at the national convention of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD) in Cincinnati, OH follow Teacher Janet Oussaty during a 75-minute presentation/demonstration on T'ai Chi Chih in March, 2001. Photo provided by Janet Oussaty

Cablevision Show, "Cover to Cover" that is hosted by our president and his spouse. Mrs. Applbaum interviewed me for a 15-minute segment on "T'ai Chi Chih." I was also asked to perform a demonstration of some movements as we talked. She was very supportive of T'ai Chi Chih and expressed interest in taking a class. She also thought her mother could benefit. When I initially emailed Mrs. Applbaum with interview questions, she responded by saying she had heard a lot about my classes at Kean.

I was invited to present a sole program for the **American Council on Education National Network-Women Leadership in Higher Education (ACE-NET) Luncheon on "T'ai Chi Chih"** on July 11. This was the inaugural summer luncheon for the Kean chapter. About 30 people attended and participated in a very relaxed atmosphere. Some remained after the program asking if I could offer a class this summer as they did not want to wait until the fall semester. (I offered four introductory sessions).



Teacher Janet Oussaty (second from left, rear) leads seniors in T'ai Chi Chih movements during a demonstration at the Kean University Senior (Citizens) Health and Wellness Program in April, 2001. Photo provided by Janet Oussaty

[Editor's Note: Janet recently updated *The Vital Force: The Eastern District/Southern District Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance* organization has accepted her T'ai Chi Chih proposal and has given her two "Early Morning Wake-Up" time slots as well as time for a formal presentation at their convention in Baltimore, MD in February, 2002. She said, "They hope to have 4000 people attend the convention."



Conference 2001

Like a Bamboo in the Wind

By RoSanna Braccioforte
Student of Sandy McAlister

Recently, I was honored with the opportunity to meet Justin Stone. The T'ai Chi Chih Teachers Conference this past August was held in Moraga, CA which is only a 45 minute drive from my home in San Francisco. Months before the conference, I had been told by my instructor (Sandy McAlister — who was also the host of this particular event) that there was going to be an open practice for Instructors and Students and that Justin would be there. I marked my calendar and waited patiently for the day to arrive.

When I got to the conference, it was like a family reunion. I was able to revisit with friends that I had made over the past year by attending other workshops and events. It was great to see Ed and Noel too (Noel was my first instructor before she moved to Albuquerque). And then there was Justin.

When the open practice began, I found a spot right up front to have the best view possible of Justin and Ed. However, something strange happened. Instead of watching and trying to mimic what they were doing, I found myself completely lost in MYSELF. Was that a good thing? With over 200 people in the room, I felt as if I were alone. It wasn't until I made a conscious effort to look up at Ed or Justin that I realized I wasn't. That's when I started to doubt myself.

Instead of putting the attention in the soles of my feet, I was questioning myself... *"Am I not here to learn from the Master? I will never have this opportunity again! After all, this isn't the video — this is Justin LIVE and IN PERSON! I should be watching him!"*

With all this self doubt, it wasn't until after the practice was over that validation of my abilities came. Ed told me he noticed a difference since he saw me last. Two teachers I had practiced with at the Sedona retreat told me the same. Even a Teacher who I had never met before told me that I move well. All the positive comments were reassuring, but just when I was feeling "confident", a new life lesson presented itself.

Noel asked me what I thought of the practice. I expressed to her that I felt the pace was really slow, but

it felt great! Her response was somewhat of a surprise. She thought the pace was rather fast, which was pretty unusual for Ed.

That led to our discussion about how long it takes me to do my daily practice. I told her it usually takes me 30-35 minutes. Her question was, *"Doing six or nine?"* My answer was nine. Her response was, *"...That's really fast... It should take you more like 45 minutes if you're doing nine..."* GEEZ! Just when I thought I was "all that" (urban slang for "hot stuff")!

I then began to tell her about where I do my daily practice. Living in San Francisco, there are some pretty amazing places to be "with nature" and one of my favorite spots is down by the Bay where you have breathtaking views of the Golden Gate Bridge, the Marin Headlands, Alcatraz Island, the fog majestically sweeping down the mountain sides and along the water, seals swimming by and birds flying overhead in perfect formation.

Very often a poem by a Chinese Monk that starts *"I gather chrysanthemums at the eastern hedgerow..."* (which I was told is one of Justin's favorites and he later confirmed that it is) comes to mind. I went on to tell Noel how much I particularly love the fog and the wind at this spot.

She explained to me that doing my practice in the wind was not such a good idea and that it affected the Chi. She went on to mention that doing your practice in temperatures too hot or too cold were counter productive as well. Perhaps I should re-think where I was doing my practice.

This new perspective she gave me was bothersome. I loved that spot. That was "MY" spot. I particularly loved the wind. When the wind blows against me, each movement truly feels as if I were "moving through very heavy air". And with the sound of the wind, combined with the sound of the waves methodically crashing onto the shore, I feel hypnotized by, and one with, the nature that surrounds me. I imagine myself as the "bamboo in the wind" we have all heard Ed (and Justin) refer to.



So, let's review this. I now had to look at two very important things. First, I was moving way too fast. As good as my practice feels, it needs to be SLOWER. And second, could where I am doing my practice have a negative influence? Who better to ask than Justin. So I did.

In a nutshell, Justin explained to me that if I choose to practice in an environment with many distractions, it will make it all that more difficult to focus. As for the wind, he told me that the Chinese believe that too much wind can cause illness. He said that he can take the cold, and even the rain, but not the wind. Justin's last words of advice for me were to listen to my teacher, for my teacher knows. If my teacher said it, it must be so.

Those are pretty powerful words. For anyone like myself who is considering becoming a teacher, that advice is invaluable. To be an ambassador of T'ai Chi Chih is not something to be taken lightly. If Justin has that much faith in his ambassadors, we must have even more faith in TCC.

Will I still practice on the cold, windy coast of the San Francisco Bay? Will I ever learn how to slow down? Will I ever be worthy of being an ambassador of TCC? These are not difficult questions, for if I am like the bamboo in the wind, I can bend and sway with every challenge presented to me on this journey and know that my feet are firmly planted in the ground.

[Editor's Note: More reflections on the T'ai Chi Chih Teachers' Conference 2001 (held in August) follow on this and the next seven pages! For the second year in a row, attendees' responses flooded in to *The Vital Force* both during and after the conference, but, of course, we only have room to print so many. Thank you to all who took the time to write!]

Conference 2001

More attendees respond...

T'ai Chi Chih Conference: A Reflection

The TCC Conference was excellent. What struck me was the congruity between Justin's talk and Ed's practice. Ed emphasized alignment of our physical being during our daily practice. Justin spoke of alignment of our life choices with our life purpose, purification. We are here to purify habit energies, often the result of our conditioning. Many of these have become tendencies that seem to control our lives. How do we purify them? Purification can come about by allowing our vital force, CHI, to flow, to balance and thus to cleanse. That's where the alignment during daily practice comes in. We must, with soft alignment, get all tension out of the way so that the CHI can flow, balance and do its work of cleansing us of undesirable habit energies. It was

wonderful to be with friends who are staying with the practice and growing in so many ways. Thanks to all who planned and who participated in Conference 2001.

– *Sr. Alice Holden*
San Antonio, TX

Thank you! Thank you ALL for a most wonderful experience. This was my first TCC Conference and I enjoyed it all. From being asked to speak in front of more people than I'd ever spoken in front of before for our group's teaching topic, to the candle rededication ceremony that was so moving. I felt the movement sessions where we broke into groups to help each other with alignment were fantastic. It was so helpful to have other teachers observe and offer suggestions. This is really important feedback and I

thought a great technique. I especially enjoyed Ed's talk about how the miracle unfolded to bring him & Noel to Albuquerque — and then being presented with the perfect means of support. Inspiring! Our Saturday afternoon TCC practice when the local students joined us was great. This was the largest group I'd ever practiced with and it felt good! Even though by then I was really feeling tired from our long days. That evening when we had story time I was energized again. I enjoyed each speaker and I was moved to tears both with laughter & beauty. The food & facility were wonderful as well — And again I want to thank you, thank you all for sharing this experience with me.

– *Laurie Thomas*
Marblemount, WA
(First-time Attendee)

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Conference 2001

This year's TCC Conference was an amazing experience for me! I am a newly accredited instructor who was fortunate enough to have Gale Portman as my friend, mentor, and instructor. She has been my inspiration. I am a person with a strong drive and commitment, and this conference was invaluable! Ed Altman's ability to share his knowledge and principles of TCC encourages me to look within for the answers. At times it feels as though I am just one drop of water in the vast ocean of knowledge of TCC.

The people who put on the conference did an incredible job and St. Mary's campus is a beautiful and peaceful setting. Among the storytelling, Tibetan bowl demonstration, rededication ceremony, community openness and love, was the humbling presence of Justin Stone. Justin has the ability to express himself with such depth that my words cannot give him justice. Justin's presence was also comforting, and his sharp eyes were there to guide you and your awareness of the chi. His discussion regarding the deeper meaning of TCC was exceptionally invaluable to me. Finally, for all of you who were at the Conference, thank you for touching my heart and welcoming me with open arms!

– **Catherine Millman**
Chesterfield, MO
(First-time Attendee)

The group feels together as a cohesive whole. There seemed to be more mingling between new teachers and the more veteran teachers. I wanted to take everyone home with me.

– **Kathy Albers**
St. Louis, MO

Hearing and reading about the TCC Teachers' Conference is one thing, being there is another. Meeting Justin and refining my practice is why I came. My personal highlights, however, were the TCC practices in the morning. It was a new experience not only to see, but to hear the movements being done [due to the sheer number of people].

I felt quite restricted during the practice with local students and appreciated the fact that we had much more space during the regular sessions. For the first time I felt really disturbed by the awkward movements of a student in front of me and suddenly understood Ed's comments of "splashes" much better. I also got a taste of a certain level of suffering during practice. Don't misunderstand me: I think this was very worthwhile for students and teachers, just a different sort of experience.

The organizing committee did an awesome job. Everything seemed to flow softly and effortlessly. My greatest compliments to Sandy McAlister and the Bay Area teachers.

– **Martina Kurzer**
Sitka, AK
(First-time Attendee)

I really enjoyed this, my first conference. Now, when I look in *The Vital Force*, I will know many of the faces that I see. It was also very special to meet Justin in person.

Thanks to all those who worked hard to make this happen. Hope to see you next year.

– **J. Lynn Shaw-Ringham**
Victoria, BC
CANADA
(First-time Attendee)

Seven years ago I moved to a different state about six hours from where I'd lived most of my life. Six hours from friends I had known and loved. I spent several of these past several years looking for friends and wondering why creating friendships was so difficult at this time in my life.

I guess it was a journey through the Desert of Friendship because after these past few days I know I have developed some friendships through T'ai Chi Chih that are lifelong friendships. In this Oasis of Love I have felt at the Conference I also know I have shared this love many lifetimes before and through T'ai Chi Chih I can reach even more floundering spirits just waiting to be rescued.

– **Roseann Heinrich**
York, PA
(First-time Attendee)

I found the conference to be such an uplifting experience. I especially enjoyed the feeling of being with family. I got so many teaching tips and ideas for working with my students on their movements. I can't wait to get back home and start using them in my classes. Best of all, I think my practice is entering a much deeper level. It started with Ed's work with us on the movements and I am looking forward to internalizing this once I get home. I feel that once I achieve this, I will be 200% better than when I arrived at the conference. Thanks everyone for everything, especially the love & support!

– **Linden Royce**
Oxnard, CA
(First-time Attendee)

Conference 2001



Some of the attending teachers are shown practicing *Around the Platter* during the 2001 Teachers' Conference.

Photo: Alice Maisel

Almost all of the Teachers' Conferences that I've attended since 1985 have been excellent; however, this year's seemed to flow without "wrinkles." If there were difficulties, they didn't interfere with the overall functioning. The planners did an outstanding job of organizing everything down to the smallest details. A special touch was the beautiful flower arrangements, (Thanks Barbara Riley!) also the decorations — Hubbel pictures. Everything contributed — the practices, the discussion groups, etc. As usual, there wasn't quite enough time for everything. Arrangements are planned to get some of this in writing via *Vital Force* — good thinking.

Superb! Of course, wonderful people attended.

— Adele Wenig
Oakland, CA

At the Conference, Justin asked us: Do we really want to change? We say we do, so why are

we holding onto all that tension in our minds and bodies when we practice TCC? You can have only one Master: Who is yours? To have a body, Justin reminded us, is an opportunity to purify and evolve. Are we conscious of our vashanas? If not, then we will not be able to control them — rather, they will control us — and actively interfere with the chi playing an active role in our life. Ed said that TCC can take us deeper than we want to go. When we reach this critical point, a leap of faith in the wisdom of the conscious Chi is necessary to continue our evolution. Or would we be happier to stay in our jail cell?

— Ann Rutherford
Albuquerque, NM

PROFOUNDLY TRUE — TRULY PROFOUND

Ed's major presentation "resonated" strongly with many conference participants who identified strongly with his "leap of faith"

process. Our lives have shifted in significant ways — relationships, locations, vocations — and these shifts have been supported by our TCC practice and by the TCC community. Ed's heartfelt sharing helped us put our changes and challenges in perspective, to trust the process and the chi. To me, his words and the state of being they reflect are profoundly true and truly profound.

— Hannah Hedrick
Mountain View, HI

This year's annual T'ai Chi Chih Teachers' Conference was the culmination of 15 years of practicing conferences. What a remarkable job Sandy and her fellow teachers did. How about that food, Barbara? WOW! A taste selection for even the most discerning palate. I also feel it was a new height for deeper, more focused, relaxed practices by all the teachers. This could only be achieved by Ed's guidance over the past five years. His enthusiasm & love for the chi that flows so freely in him is contagious. This was the softest & most gentle conference I have attended. The chi & T'ai Chi Chih are evolving through us all. Much gratitude to Justin, Ed, the Bay Area teachers & to everyone who came & shared themselves.

— Holly Davis
Rancho Mirage, CA



Conference 2001

Rededication Candle Ceremony

By Sr. Antonia Cooper, OSF

It is always a delight to present the Rededication Ceremony during the Conferences. The movement and music was originally brought to my community in New Jersey by one of our sisters in Leadership, who resides at our Motherhouse in Germany. The movement went so well with the philosophy of TCC, that I began using it as a ritual to end my classes, as well as for our first New Jersey Accreditation in 1994. Meara Joy Norice, who was auditing during this training, suggested that together we could create a "Rededication Ceremony" for the Denver, CO Conference — the first I had ever attended. It is from that time that the ritual has become a tradition.

I would like to offer some information so that teachers could use the ritual as well for their students when bringing their classes to a "graceful conclusion." You are encouraged to be creative with the following information, honoring your own personalities and gifts.

Equipment:

1) Chant Tape Used: *O GREAT SPIRIT* by Robert Gass & On Wings of Song, available on cassette only from: Spring Hill Music, P.O. Box 800 Boulder, Co 80306 (no phone #).

2) 6" Tapers with Bobeches (round cardboard pieces that protect wax from dripping onto hand or floor) can be ordered from Autom Candle Supplies, 800-521-2914, \$44.95 for a case of 250 (other lengths and quantities are also available).

OR using Tea Lights inside glass bowls work well, holding the bowl inside the left palm.

3) 3" stack bowl (CAR-8015026) at \$.90 each may be purchased from any Restaurant Supply Company.

4) Optional: Large candle in the center (with or without table) from which to light candles OR one person simply begins with a lit candle and passes it to the next.

Group Formation:

Works well with 10 or more persons in a circle. A Spiral

is suggested for 24 or more. A spiral is formed to the left, the direction of movement. Soft music may be played during the lighting of candles. They may be lit one at a time, beginning at one end; may also be lit from both sides of circle or spiral. At the California Conference, the inner circle of the spiral was lit, then participants were invited to turn around to light the candle/s behind them, and the light then radiates to the outer circle. This format worked well with 176 participants.

Reflection Questions may be used/changed/added regarding Tai Chi Chih

Example: A reflection prior to the *Lichter Tanz* during Accreditation Week:

As everyone is lighting their candles, or as they are standing with their lit candles, ask the following questions to help facilitate a reflective mood, as well as remembering.

1. As you hold your lit candle, what does the light represent?
2. Recall your first experience of T'ai Chi Chih — what was that like for you?
3. What was the attraction?
4. What was your practice like?
5. Who was your initial teacher?
6. When did you first desire to teach T'ai Chi Chih, and who was your mentor?
7. What gifts did T'ai Chi Chih bring into your life?
8. What is your greatest hope as a T'ai Chi Chih Teacher?
9. What gifts did you receive from your Accreditation Experience?

Let us enter into the movement..... MUSIC

Beginning the Movement

It is better to Practice movement prior to entering the space where it will be done.

After lighting candles, all are invited to hold it in the Left Hand.



Some of the 176 attending teachers are shown performing the Rededication Candle Ceremony in a spiral formation at the 2001 Teachers' Conference. Sr. Antonia Cooper led the ceremony, as she has at every conference since 1995 (except the one she missed due to illness). Photo: Alice Maisel

ing a blessing, a handshake. Social Side — extroverted side.

During our class of TCC we have been on a journey. It has been said that the longest journey is the journey inward. TCC is an invitation to such a journey. But nothing must be taken, or can be taken... all must be let go of. In this journey of movement with the candles, we journeyed together, supporting another in the steps by being supported by the person next to us by holding onto the shoulder.

Right Hand is placed on the shoulder of the person standing to their right.

**** Take 1 step to the Left, bring right foot to left.** Repeat. (count of 4)

Left toe points forward, side ward, backward, and in place. (count of 4)

Right toe points forward, side ward, backward, and in place. (count of 4)

Continue to repeat from the beginning **

Optional: Before moving, direct the group to hold the candle in both hands, asking:

What does the light symbolize for you?

Begin the MUSIC and enter into the movement for about 3-7 minutes.

After, invite all to hold the candle with both hands.

Ritual meanings:

Candle held in the LEFT hand. Yin side. Receiving. Heart side of the body — personal side — introverted side. The Light leading us on the journey.

RIGHT hand is placed on the shoulder of the person next to you.... We become connected. Yang side. Giving, as in giv-

Moving to the left,

I am creating space for another, for that person's uniqueness. Pointing the toe in different directions can symbolize the four corners of the earth, the four seasons, or even the four Taffys! The steps invite me to leave a blessing wherever I go, and among those with whom I travel. The poet Rumi once wrote: "Wherever you place your foot, there rests a blessing". Allowing space for another, I desire to accept others as they are, not as I expect them to be.

You have learned the movements of TCC. May the CHI teach and move you during your daily practice. It is only through daily practice that we will be able to circulate and balance the CHI... that we will discover its gifts in our lives... its essence in uniting mind, body, spirit. You will then discover its Essence.

As we extinguish our candle, may that which the light symbolized for each of us, burn brightly in our hearts, bringing light and its meaning to all with whom we come in contact.

N.B. Prior to blowing out candle, group can be invited to turn, facing outward to extend the Light/Chi energy over the world...

Enjoy!



Conference 2001

A New Level of Maturity:

MY IMPRESSION

By Hannah Hedrick

TCC Teacher Conferences during the 14 years I have been a Teacher have revealed the maturation of our still very young community. During the past 18 months, that maturation process has been accelerated to the point that our new maturity was the central topic of many conversations at the 2001 Conference.

I have been with TCC through many of our growing pains; I have felt us struggle with personality and ego issues. What has caused the shift? Could the chi be working its magic, enabling us to move beyond habit energies and patterns . . . ?

This maturity manifested in many ways and contexts, from the way we moved to the ways we related to one another. Newer teachers, or teachers attending for the first time after a long absence, responded gratefully to this shift. Corrections were received and given with greater sensitivity and comfort. The openness in sharing was obvious, from Justin and Ed to the most-recently accredited teachers.

I have been with TCC through many of our growing pains; I have felt us struggle with personality and ego issues. What has caused the shift? Could the chi be working its magic, enabling us to move beyond habit energies and patterns (the topic of one of Justin's inspirational presentations)?

I encourage everyone reading my impression to check it out by: (1) attending a teacher intensive, (2) auditing a teacher accreditation course, and, above all, (3) attending the 2002 Conference. You can also sponsor a teacher accred-

itation course and even the international conference!

I am personally committed to contacting accredited teachers who are NOT subscribing to the VFJ or participating in gatherings about reconnecting with the incredibly supportive TCC family. "Re-entry" can be daunting, whether it's a spaceship returning from outer space or a TCC Teacher returning after a period of separation.

I invite each of you to join me in this quest. Call one former teacher with whom you have lost contact, one student who became a teacher but has not been teaching. Invite them to a local or national TCC gathering. As more and more people are

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practicing and teaching TCC and contributing to the maturation process, the benefits we receive will be extended at an exponential rate. What greater gift could we offer to ourselves, to others, and to the universe?



Poetry Page

Cosmic Consciousness Pose

Here I stand.
Balanced, poised between heaven and earth.
Aligned, held strong, open wide.
Absorbing, deep into the bones that bless me.
Allowing me to stand,
To move, to flow.
In the sturdiness of the bones
rests the gifts of softness.
the gifts of the flow.

Here I stand, balanced.
Poised between now and then.
Poised between practice and beyond.
Poised between movement and stillness.
Poised.
Tiny, triangle of my feet a tripod.
To balance here I must remain true.
True to my alignment.
True to my core.
True to who I am becoming.

Here I stand perched
between instability and stability.
Finding my true nature,
finding my center.
Standing strong on the edge,
coming home to who I am.

- Judy Tretheway

Pyramid Poetry

This form of poetry was originated by Justin Stone and is described in detail in his book, Climb the Joyous Mountain.

*the
practice
together
filled me with chi
still glowing
after
days*

- Jan Linthorst

Enlightenment

When we can finally separate truth from false
When we recognize the true meaning that calls
When we believe that we should remove walls
Created by race, religion, nationality and all
And know that we are all related after all,
Then recognize that we should encourage right
By loving interaction and not by might,
When we can live and let live to be content,
It is then we will achieve true enlightenment

- Joe Lomonico

Be thoroughly grounded in thought, action, deed.
Let the river of life take the lead.

I look to the heavens for something divine.
I see a reflection — it is all mine.

The power of all is right here, within.
One need not struggle for it to begin.

Life's many gifts come in all shapes and sizes,
Sometimes very different from what one realizes.

Though for many of these "gifts" we might not yearn,
It is these gifts that help us most learn.

- Deborah Cole

*Big
Teachers
Conference
T'ai Chi Chih fest
All thanks to
Justin
Stone*

- Jan Linthorst



How could I have known?

continued from page 16

ready and making it all come together. Thank you Noel and all you auditing teachers for offering the wisdom of your experiences and working tirelessly to “fix” our moves until we finally “got it”. And last, but certainly not least, my thanks to the rest of you newly accredited teachers for your support, for giving me so many great ideas, and for sharing your stories. Best of luck as you travel on your journeys, and may our paths cross again.

News Shorts

continued from page 20

Teaching opportunity available in the high desert of Southern CA

Teacher Athene Mantle of Hayward, CA has arranged an ongoing teaching opportunity with a private Christian resort in the mountain resort town of Idyllwild, CA (about an hour from Palm Springs). She is looking for accredited TCC teachers “with great enthusiasm for T’ai Chi Chih” to present TCC over a weekend in approximately five hours of instruction during the resort’s monthly “Wellness Christian Retreat.”

“Rotating teachers was what I had in mind in exchange for a nice respite at a mountain resort,” Athene explained. Meals and lodging would be covered by the resort for the participating teacher. The teacher would not be paid, but would be able to sell TCC teaching materials.

Athene will be handling the monthly scheduling for the TCC community. Contact her for more details and to find out available upcoming dates — phone: (510) 886-3829, e-mail: chigoddess@hotmail.com.

– Athene Mantle and Noel Altman

Creating a Curriculum

continued from page 22

ment, the time when we allow the yin and yang energies to flow back together.

The fourth class works on the movements Rocking Motion to Daughter in the Valley. Now, even more so, the student is encouraged to feel the chi as it moves from the bottoms of the feet through the body and then is formed as the arms and hands make the shape of the movement. This is done for the next two classes also. The students are also encouraged to look around and see where they see the movements of T’ai Chi Chih happening in their daily lives. Examples of this are: seeing someone at the grocery store holding on to the shopping cart and unconsciously doing a forward yinning and yanging, or a mother rocking her baby and doing a sideways yinning and yanging.

The fifth class works on the movements Carry the Ball to the Side to Third Variation of Pulling Taffy (Perpetual Motion). Besides feeling the flow of the chi, more work is done on learning the Taffies. Stop action is done on all the Taffies so that the students become very clear on where the movement starts and where it finishes. Helping the students become very comfortable with the Taffies is one of the biggest parts of the Intermediate Class. The students are now beginning to recognize that T’ai Chi Chih is happening not only during their practice but is, and always has been, an integral part of their day. Which is why I say, T’ai Chi Chih is so natural to us.

The sixth class works on the movements Working the Pulley to Cosmic Consciousness Pose. We continue working on feeling the flow of the chi in each movement. Again we continue using the principles taught to us at Teachers Training by Ed.

The seventh class is a review of all the movements. The students are encouraged to note what benefits they are experiencing from the movements.

The eighth class is a full review of the movements again. During the discussion portion, the students are encouraged to talk about the benefits they have noted. Later they are told about Seijaku and encouraged to go on, if they are ready, stressing that doing T’ai Chi Chih well is very important to learning Seijaku. Seijaku is by invitation only. Most of the students will be ready.

This is a skeleton model of how I do my Intermediate class. Noel has asked all of us to share our ideas in the *Vital Force*. I look forward to reading about things you do in your Intermediate class.

**SUBMISSIONS:**

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

The **Vital Force** 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.

Issue Submission deadlines:

| | | | |
|---------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|
| Spring: | January 10th | Fall: | July 10th |
| Summer: | April 10th | Winter: | October 10th |

Note: It may be possible to submit timely news for publication later than the deadline, and it is usually possible to submit items for listing in the "Calendar of Events" up until press time — contact The **Vital Force**.

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 post on the same schedule noted above. (See Page 2 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 on insert pages in each issue of **The Vital Force**. Send your changes to the address on the 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 for the First Class cost to return it (approximately \$1.25 - \$2.50, depending on the weight). Then, if we mail out a new one, it goes First Class (because a bulk mailing requires 200 pieces), resulting in further expense of \$1.25 - \$2.50. Please help us avoid this unnecessary and wasteful expense—send in your change of address information early!



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THE VITAL FORCE Journal of T'ai Chi Chih

Please print clearly.

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

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Members from outside the U.S.: Please don't handprint the words "U.S. Dollars" or "U.S. Funds" on a personal check as our bank won't honor the requested conversion.



The Lighter Side...

1. [At the Teachers' Conference in August] Justin commented to me about too many people who say "Ummmm...." when they come up front and address the group.

"Justin," I said, "They're not saying 'Ummmm....'; they're saying 'OM!'"

Chuckling, he gently touched my shoulder and said, "That's pretty good."

– Sharon Sirkis

2. It was late Sunday afternoon, and dinner was ready to be served. We do not have an eat-in kitchen, so I had asked my husband twice to clear the newspapers from the dining room table. He continued to labor over the crossword puzzle. My third request was "Please bring your mental exercise to a graceful conclusion."

I then began to laugh. Without realizing it, my T'ai Chi Chih lessons had become a routine part of my thinking. Go T'ai Chi Chih!!!!

– Esther Milstein
Student of April Leffler

3. One morning one of the seniors started coughing during TCC class. The force of the cough pushed her false teeth right out of her mouth. (Luckily not completely out). Hmmm.....that was a letting go I wasn't ready to see!

– Sharon Sirkis

4. It's Lesson #2, and I begin by asking, "How is everyone's practice going?"

A very dear lady ventured a comment, "I couldn't remember how to start, so I never got started."

– Ann Sollars

5. I was so happy to get my first TCC class set up and knew that it would be announced in the weekly program of a local church. I excitedly opened the program and searched through to see:

9:00 am - 10:00 am T'ai Chi Chih, Moving "Medication"

(Hmmm... maybe they know more about this than I thought!!)

– Debbie Cole

6. One morning during TCC class, I reminded the seniors to place their attention in the soles of their feet. I really wanted to get this point across, so I carried it a little further.

"When you walk outside, really pay attention to your feet connecting with the earth," I said.

A few minutes later, on my way out of the building, I tripped up the stairs!

– Sharon Sirkis

7. While teaching 'Around the Platter' on the first night of class, I discovered a wonderful quality of the new carpet (the whole classroom had just been re-done). As everyone was coming back to a graceful conclusion, I heard a loud rasping noise. I immediately assessed the situation and announced that we had just heard the roar of the "Chi Dragon" and demonstrated, again, the proper way to pick up the heel and place it next to the other so that we heard no more *draggin'*!

– Debbie Cole

[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..."]

September 11, 2001

How many times have I stood in my living room and looked out at the beautiful New York skyline, with its magnificent Twin Towers? How easy it is to take things for granted. Today, all I saw were billowing plumes of smoke, and I knew life would never be the same. In rapid succession I felt loss, gratefulness, anger, fear, and a stunned helplessness. How could anyone hate so much?!? I thought about Ed's words and Dan's e-mail — "What happens deep inside each of us has an effect on everything outside of us" — and I thought of all of you. I needed to do something, so I put on my most soothing music, faced the billowing smoke, said a prayer for all those I could not see but knew were there, and offered up my T'ai Chi Chih practice for all who were in need. As the Chi flowed stronger and stronger, I asked it to cross the river to those struggling to survive and to those struggling to help them. Passing Clouds opened the floodgates, as a mixture of grief and relief poured out. When I reached the Cosmic Consciousness Pose, I could feel the Chi respond. It was the most satisfying practice I have ever experienced.

I pray all of you and your loved ones are safe and well.

Peace and Love,

Kathy Starrick
West Paterson, NJ

On Terrible Tuesday I opened my fall T'ai Chi Chih class in San Leandro[,CA] hoping that one or two would show up. Twenty-five people showed up and I was grateful that we could be a light to the world in setting aside 1½ hours to do something peaceful. Our hearts and minds were broken by horror and fear and anxiety but we came anyway and met one another in acts of peaceful determination. Midway through the class we lighted a candle and had silence to honor the dead and pray for peace.

We will continue to let the Light grow in the days ahead and to pray for peace ceaselessly in our hearts and by our actions.

We all together shall overcome.

Love to all,

Linda Braga
Castro Valley, CA