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Justin Stone is the Originator of T'ai Chi Chih! Joy Thru Movement
Ed Altman is the Head of T'ai Chi Chih! Joy Thru Movement



The Vital Force

Editor: Noel Altman
 Technical Advisor: Ed Altman
 Membership Svcs: Doug Harned
 Information/Outreach: Kathy Albers
 Webmaster: Ted Fleischman

The Vital Force, *Journal of the T'ai Chi Chih® Community*, 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 and outreach services such as teacher referrals. Teacher memberships also include listing in and receipt of the annual Teachers' Directory.

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

Cover:



The photo on the cover, entitled "Life," was taken by TCC teacher Deanne Hodgson, who regularly offers her photographic work for use in The Vital Force.

The words by Justin Stone, which go perfectly with the photograph, were said during a talk he gave to prisoners who were soon to be released from Folsom Prison in California, in May, 1998. Standing in the back of the room during that talk, Ed Altman, Doug Harned, and I can say with absolute assurance that Justin literally transformed the awareness of those men. The prison videotaped the event, and graciously made it available to Good Karma Publishing so that accredited teachers can borrow it and show it to their students. The talk preceded the historical TCC teacher training course which Ed conducted *inside* the prison walls for one person, inmate Jim Hecker.

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

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Letter from the Editor

I am very pleased to announce the newest addition to our growing staff: **Ted Fleischman!** Ted is our new Webmaster. Formerly what he termed a "superuser," Ted has spent the last seven months familiarizing himself with the software we use to build our website, researching various possibilities, and teaching himself the ins and outs of running our website — all the while being guided by Ed Altman, who is supervising his training.

He has already incorporated some changes to the website: adding prices to the Good Karma page, adding newer articles by Justin Stone and Ed, adding the new "Movement Review Checklist" (written by Ed, Sandy McAlister and Pam Towne — see page 6 for a full description of its purpose).

Future plans for the website include: updating the entire website to reflect the new trademark requirements (see page 5 for a full explanation of this topic), adding a counter so we can track the number of "hits" the website receives, adding a shipping chart for Good Karma, and looking into publishing our website with various search engines.

Ted is a very self-motivated individual, and a pleasure to work with. Even though he is based in Kansas City, MO, and we're here in Albuquerque, NM, he keeps Ed and I up-to-date very consistently with his progress. He's a wonderful addition to our staff, and we are grateful for his help!

The TCC community website continues to play a larger and larger role in our future, as it is THE place that the general public looks to to find out more information about this "thing" they've encountered in a presentation, a newspaper or magazine article or from the enthusiastic words of a friend, relative or co-worker — this "thing" called **T'ai Chi Chih!** Joy Thru Movement. The list of accredited teachers on the website continues to grow, as the vast majority of teacher VFJ members choose to pay the nominal yearly fee to have their name and contact information included on that list.

Teachers, a reminder: Please take the time to fill out the questionnaire which was mailed to each of you in mid-December along with your 2002 Teacher Directory. VFJ Information/Outreach Coordinator Kathy Albers would like them back by the end of March. We have only received 72 of these back thus far (from the over 400 that were sent out). We would like to gather the data about your teaching. Your participation in a networking group of like-minded teachers at a later point in time is, of course, optional. In the future, Kathy will be discussing more details about that. The first thing is to get this informational database set up and inputted. Thank you for assisting us in assisting you!

Noel Altman, Editor



Readers Respond

Dear TCC Friends:

I've felt abandoned from any support or care from any TCC teachers or organization — although I notified by writing & email that my husband, Brendan Curtin (also a certified TCC teacher) died June 13 — (& my son, July 1st, & grandson). I have just returned to AZ home from Calif. Home & memorial services & funerals, after a nasty fall injury myself while out there. No one has ever answered or ever acknowledged Brendan's death or loss as an excellent teacher — he was my student, later, for 10 years, a certified teacher with our often team teaching all over the country, & AZ, & Calif. Thank you. Vaya con Dios

Ruthmarie Arguello-Sheehan
Sun City, AZ

[Editor's Note: Ruthmarie, I remember meeting you at the 1989 *T'ai Chi Chih* Teachers' Conference in Albuquerque, NM, and I know you were in Ed's accreditation course in 1988.

I am very sorry to hear of your tremendous loss in the past year. It seems so many now are going through incredible periods of pain, loss, disintegration, etc. I do remember hearing about Brendan's death from Jean Katus at Good Karma Publishing. I do not remember hearing about the other losses you suffered, although perhaps you did notify me and I do not remember.

I do feel that I need to address your concerns in print so that others will also understand some of these issues.

We appreciate you letting us know of Brendan's death as we do list the names of those TCC teachers who have died

in the previous year on a page in the next Teachers' Directory. Brendan was listed in the 2002 Directory which was shipped in December.

My own policy regarding the publishing of this information has changed during my tenure as editor. In the third issue in which I was editor (Sept. '99), I did note two deaths on the "News Shorts" page, one a teacher, and the other Ou Mie Shu (who did the brushwork in the TCC text). Because there were many issues regarding Ou that also pertained to every TCC teacher, I also wrote a news brief about him. Perhaps you are remembering this.

Later, however, I began to think about this. I thought about how the TCC teacher population is mostly over 50 (maybe even 60) and how at some point in the future, there would be a huge list of names. And what if we weren't notified of some teachers' deaths? And what about when a teacher suffers an illness or loss in the family? What about when a teacher has a new baby? Should this sort of information be mentioned in *The Vital Force*? I imagined (when the TCC teaching community grows to 4000 active teachers, instead of 400) pages and pages devoted to covering every person's loss, tragedy, or new joy. It seemed overwhelming.

And beside the point.

We are all going through our personal stuff, but in this journal, the focus is on the *T'ai Chi Chih* practice.

Now, if a person writes about how a loss or joy or tragedy relates to their TCC practice or teaching, then that is a story that all *VFJ* readers could benefit from hearing.

In 1999, I thought all of this out carefully and expressed my concerns to Ed and Justin Stone. Justin said, "That is

not the point of *The Vital Force*."

I made a decision then to simply list the names of the dead in the next published Teacher Directory, and after that, to no longer list them.

I am sorry if no one responded to you personally. I do know that items do occasionally fall through the cracks. Now the TCC community does know of your losses, and perhaps some of your old friends will contact you.

Contrary to your letter, there is no TCC organization. There is a small team of teachers who work for either no pay, a token stipend, a little more than that or a poverty level wage. Most of these people have other jobs which are their primary means of support. So, time given to TCC work is limited. We do as much as we can, and still it's not enough. We are bursting at the seams!

We hope you understand, as we hope all teachers and students do, that it sometimes takes awhile to respond, that things sometimes fall through the cracks, and that we can't possibly do everything needed to promote and sustain the TCC practice and community on such a part-time basis.]

To Noel & the entire staff —

Keep up the great work on the *VF*.
— it's "the tie that binds!"

Ray Watson
Batavia, NY

And THANK YOU for your continued dedication to, and promotion of, the life-giving [TCC] practice . . . !

Diana Daffner
Siesta Key, FL



Spirituality

By Justin Stone

When I write about Spirituality, I am certainly not talking about Religion. The latter brings to mind an institution with dogma and doctrine, ceremonials, belief in a personal God, all sorts of assumptions, and a somewhat fabricated history. Finances often play a large and necessary role. Religion brings great comfort, sometimes with bigotry, to many people.

Spirituality has none of these, and authority plays little part. To me it means an inner search for the Real, the Lasting, and the effort to live and accord with that Reality. Sometimes philosophy is mistaken for spirituality, but the former is cerebral and deals with theory only, not actual experience.

T'ai Chi Chih practice has nothing to do with Religion. The believer who practises regularly—and correctly—will get the benefits of TCC practice, as will the non-believer who practises the discipline regularly and correctly. Swimming in circulating Chi, one could not better accord with Reality. The spiritual person is usually the happy person, but he or she may not be religious.

One can only be a truly guiding teacher of spirituality if he or she has the inner experience of Reality. This is usually accompanied by gratitude, the way to happiness. Where there is sincere gratitude one can experience a fulfilling life. Can money by itself bring this joy? A thousand times “no.”



Photo by Deanne Hadgson



Trademark Update: Implications for Teachers

By Jean Katus

The announcement in the previous issue of *The Vital Force* discussed general information about the **T'ai Chi Chih** name now carrying a federally registered mark that needs to be used in a particular way by Good Karma, the *VFJ*, accredited teachers, and vendors of products using the name. We are still working on criteria for granting permission to use the name and will continue to update the community as this process progresses.

In the meantime, some changes are already being put in place, and we ask accredited teachers to begin incorporating them as you reprint brochures, articles, business cards, advertising for classes, and any other printed matter that uses the phrase. It is fine to use up any printed material you presently have that does not include the changes.

Good Karma and *The Vital Force* are demonstrating ways that the term can be used in print. The Spanish translation of the photo-textbook (which is now available) is the first printed piece published by GKP in which the trademark is integrated. When the name is first used, it is followed by a small "R" in a circle. A statement that **T'ai Chi Chih** is a federally registered trademark appears on the publication page, just as it does on the publication (inside front cover) page of the *VFJ*. We want the trademark ® designation and subsequent references to **T'ai Chi Chih!** Joy thru Movement to stand out, yet without being overwhelming. Therefore, after the first few times, we bolded the words, instead of using the ®, and followed them with the subtitle so the whole phrase reads **T'ai Chi Chih!** Joy thru Movement.

NOTE: In this particular article, we have also bolded the term and followed it with a noun or nouns. The first mention of the name, because the article is part of the *VFJ*, does NOT include the ® designation: the mark is already on the front cover of the *VFJ*. If this article were a free-standing article (NOT part of the newsletter), the name would need the ® the first time it was mentioned.

Other options to replace bolding are italics or quotation marks, and the term itself is always used as an adjective. Examples of acceptable usage are:

* T'ai Chi Chih® Joy thru Movement (for first time and for subsequent times, if you want to continue showing the ®)

* **T'ai Chi Chih** movements

* *T'ai Chi Chih* discipline

* "T'ai Chi Chih" teachers

[Except for within this article], the *VFJ* has used the method of italicizing after the first mention of the **T'ai Chi Chih** discipline. Unlike the Spanish translation of the text, the *VFJ* uses other nouns than "Joy thru Movement" to follow the name. Such options are acceptable, especially when **T'ai Chi Chih** is used a number of times within a printed piece. In this issue (and in following issues) of the *VFJ*, you will notice several different noun choices.

As you begin to re-format your printed materials, you will want the design of your work to flow so that it incorporates the trademark information but does not overpower what you are presenting. In using the ®, you will want to be sure that the mark is small enough so it is not overly emphasized; in the same way, however you subsequently use the term and noun(s) following it, you will want the usage to be natural. You may want to look at the ways consumer products of various sorts use trademark designations.

At a point in the history of **T'ai Chi Chih!** Joy thru Movement, teachers were asked to always refer to this particular form of T'ai Chi by using "Chih" with it to let everyone know that this discipline has a uniqueness from other T'ai Chi forms. Now it is habitual to say—in classes and in printed material—**T'ai Chi Chih** and not just T'ai Chi. The trademark takes us one step beyond that: whether we refer to this discipline verbally or in writing, we need to make it a habit to use the entire name as an adjective and follow it with a noun. As we begin making the change verbally, it will become more natural to also make the change in writing, and vice-versa.

[Editor's Note: Articles submitted to the *VFJ* will now be modified to accord with the above requirements. If you can, please make these changes yourself, before submitting, so the choice of noun(s) is yours. Thank you!]

You can note in this issue of the *VFJ* that the use of "TCC" does NOT require different formatting from the text surrounding it—the trademark applies to "T'ai Chi Chih" only. However, we have used it as an adjective so there is a consistency in the usage between the two terms: "T'ai Chi Chih" and "TCC".

The above article is dense with information (and imperative for all TCC teachers to understand). You'll want to read it a couple of times through and keep it for later reference.]



Deferred Accreditations

By Ed Altman

During the last five years, I've seen tremendous improvement in the way most candidates have been prepared to attend a *T'ai Chi Chih* Teacher Training course. I am grateful to the many teachers who have promoted a higher standard for candidate preparation, and this has made my job as course instructor much easier. Unfortunately, several candidates are still sent each year who are not properly prepared, and these students require tremendous additional attention during their Teacher Training course. This places an unfair burden on everyone in the course, and regardless of how hard they work, increases the likelihood they will receive a deferred accreditation rather than graduate with their class.

In 2001, 12% of the candidates sent to *T'ai Chi Chih* Teacher Training courses received deferrals! This troubling percentage has remained essentially unchanged since at least 1999. As Head of the *T'ai Chi Chih* community, I feel that teachers should be free to prepare their candidates in whatever way suits them best; as long as they are well-prepared when they attend a Teacher Training course. I encourage teachers to prepare candidates properly and speak with them about how to improve their practice and preparation process. When a candidate receives a deferred accreditation, I write to the referring instructor with a list of suggestions for future candidate preparation. Sadly, deferrals continue to be a common problem at *T'ai Chi Chih* Teacher Training courses, and this hands-off approach must now be reconsidered.

The recent Teacher Training course in Albuquerque resulted in four deferrals, and this led to a lively discussion among attending teachers and candidates on ways to reduce the number of deferrals at future courses. I directed the discussion toward ways to ensure that every future candidate would be well prepared before attending, because I see this as the

only way to eliminate the need to give out deferred accreditations. The most promising suggestion was to require all teacher candidates to send a homemade video of their practice for review prior to being accepted in a Teacher Training course. The tapes would be sent to the course instructor for thorough review, and a write-up of problem areas and suggestions would be sent back to the candidate along with the tape. The response would also include permission to attend the course, or an explanation of why such permission was withheld. Students who were not allowed to attend a Teacher Training course would have a list of specific recommendations for improving their practice and would be allowed to submit another tape for further consideration.

Deferrals are disruptive and difficult for everyone involved, but most important, they are not a necessary part of the Teacher Training process.

I found this idea very interesting, and I spoke with Justin Stone, my wife Noel, Sandy McAlister and Pam Towne about it at length. I also exchanged comments with several *T'ai Chi Chih* teachers throughout North America to discuss it in more depth. While everyone agreed that a mandatory review policy would reduce deferrals, concerns were raised about whether this policy would undermine the role of referring teachers in the preparation process. Another view was that such reviews would not go far enough to address the core of the problem: that some accredited teachers do not know how to tell if their students are really moving well. Many spoke about the fact that such reviews would be time consuming, and that a review fee of \$50-\$75 would be required to help compensate for the time spent watching the tape and writing up a response. It was also suggested that a movement



review checklist would be needed to help reviewers quickly and easily document their concerns about a student's movements.

*It is my feeling that we must find a balance between being welcoming and available to all who want to attend a Teacher Training course, and ensuring a high standard for those who receive an accreditation. My primary objective has always been to improve the standards for newly accredited teachers to strengthen our **T'ai Chi Chih** community.*

Deferrals are disruptive and difficult for everyone involved, but most important, they are not a necessary part of the Teacher Training process. Although I believe the suggested "video preview" of all candidates would make deferrals nearly obsolete, I also acknowledge that it would be a dramatic step toward greater bureaucracy. This is not something I would enter into unless absolutely necessary. However, as I shared with several teachers, more words are not going to solve this problem. A different approach is required if we are serious about reducing or eliminating the need to give deferred accreditations at *T'ai Chi Chih* Teacher Training courses.

As an intermediate step, I've worked with Pam and Sandy to create a *T'ai Chi Chih* Teacher Candidate Movement Review Checklist. This checklist is organized by each *T'ai Chi Chih* movement, and consists of general statements about how to move properly as well as specific concerns such as the correct position of the hands. It also includes space for written comments as well, and is to be used by teachers to assess their candidates before sending them to a Teacher Training course. Of course, teachers are welcome to use the checklist with any of their students, and I trust they will also find it helpful in improving their own *T'ai Chi Chih* practice.

The checklist has been published on our web site under the teacher candidate preparation section, and is also available from Teacher Training course hosts, or through Sandy McAlister or Pam Towne. I encourage all teachers to review the new checklist and put it to good use. It is my hope that use of the checklist will reduce deferrals at future Teacher Training courses, but this is by no means guaranteed. If a large number of deferrals continue to be needed due to poor candidate preparation, additional steps will be taken to address this issue. As a result, I invite teachers and students to send their comments or feedback on the idea of mandatory "video preview" to *The Vital Force* for future publication. I hope you will take this opportunity to make your voice heard.

The recent discussions have been very passionate on all sides, and I think this is a healthy part of the growth of our *T'ai Chi Chih* community. Some teachers have expressed concerns as to whether we are becoming too restrictive while others complain that our standards for new teachers are not high enough (and that there are no continuing requirements for existing teachers). It is my feeling that we must find a balance between being welcoming and available to all who want to attend a Teacher Training course, and ensuring a high standard for those who receive an accreditation. My primary objective has always been to improve the standards for newly accredited teachers to strengthen our *T'ai Chi Chih* community.

As one Canadian teacher shared with me, "The objective is to make it harder for those who want to get *into* a Teacher Training course so that those who attend will have an easier time completing the course and receiving their accreditation." The best way to do this is to help teachers accurately assess whether their candidates are ready to attend a Teacher Training course. When courses are filled with properly prepared candidates we will be able to focus on learning how to teach the *T'ai Chi Chih* movements to new students rather than catering to those who are struggling to learn how to do the movements properly. As always, I rely on my fellow *T'ai Chi Chih* teachers to help make this possible.



A Day in the Life of...

A T'ai Chi Chih Teacher

By Dale Buchanan

Many teachers have contacted me over the years and wanted to know how to become a "full-time" TCC teacher. At the teachers conference several teachers stop me at once with questions about my business, web site development, sales, marketing, class format, etc. I enjoy these conversations and want to expand on this topic with this article.

First, let me say that teaching the TCC discipline for a living is not as easy as it may appear. I still do some personal training a few hours per week because I like it and it helps pay my bills, but the majority (90%) of my income is from teaching TCC classes and selling TCC products. Here is a typical day for me:

- * 4:30am – Wake up – TCC practice – 40 minutes
- * 6:00am – Personal training client in their home
- * 8:00am – Back home to eat and reply to emails & phone calls
- * 10:00am – Take a walk
- * 11:00am – TCC Presentation
- * 12:00pm – Meeting about renting class space
- * 1:00pm – Meeting about TV show production
- * 3:00pm – Back home to eat, more emails, phone calls, fax press releases
- * 4:00pm – Meditation – 30 minutes
- * 4:30pm – Drive to class – 30 mile, one hour drive
- * 6:00pm – Toning, the Jing, a few TCC movements before students show up
- * 6:30pm – Teach beginner TCC class with 17 people – one hour
- * 8:30pm – arrive back home for more emails and eating
- * 10:30pm – sleeping...

Note: The night before I taught a two-hour

Seijaku class from 7-9pm, I went right to bed after a small meal and some TV.

As you can tell, most of my time is spent either practicing the TCC movements, communicating with potential students, writing and sending out my newsletters, producing my TV show, marketing, etc. and not actually teaching class. I teach 10-12 classes per week, however my workweek is between 60-70 hours to make that happen. When teaching full time, class size cannot be small or my bills won't get paid. Classes of three to four students won't do it. It takes regular FREE presentations, some advertising, handing out flyers, talking to people daily on the street, constant emails & phone calls, and much more to get full classes on a consistent basis.

If you're not willing to put in the time and do the work that goes along with teaching the TCC discipline full time, then don't even consider trying. Now that I live on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC everything is more expensive. Now I have to promote even more.

Students are not going to come knocking at my door just by me sitting there and wanting it to happen. I have to go out and get the students myself! People have busy lives (especially in DC) so they don't have time for something that is not going to benefit them right away. The message has to be introduced to people from the beginning: that TCC practice is not an exercise or martial art, rather a gentle system of movement designed to circulate and balance the chi and that you are a "certified" TCC instructor.

There are too many things out there that try and promise healing or results without being able to back it up. As a teacher, the result is YOU! You



have to be a walking testimonial for the benefits of TCC practice wherever you are, at any time or place. THAT, along with good marketing and promotions, is how you get 10-12 full classes month after month.

Also, you have to be a good and experienced teacher to handle 100-150 students each week. If you're not at that level in your own practice, with the experience to handle all of that teaching, then start out small and build up. A new teacher cannot handle the amount of chi that is generated by doing the TCC movements two to three hours per

day six days per week, it will be a shock to the system. Not to mention the emotional drain from working with so many students...it can be very exhausting at times. I remember days when I was so tired all I could do was sit, sleep, breath, and eat. The chi would be doing it's magic on me with such power that the message was clear, BE STILL!

In summary, if you want to be a full time TCC teacher you have to pay the price. It may not be easy, but it is worth it. I can't think of anything else in life that I would rather spend 60 hours per week doing other than running my TCC business.

Beginner's Mind

By Carmen Brocklehurst

After 18 years of practicing and teaching the *T'ai Chi Chih* discipline, I developed and hosted the *T'ai Chi Chih* PBS television series. The day after the first program aired, I received a call from KNME-TV saying what a success the program was. The 20 *T'ai Chi Chih* books the station had were already sold out and they wanted to order another 100. I was very happy things were going so well, and that my form must be okay because the results of the program were much better than the station had anticipated.

Later that same morning, I went to the Albuquerque *T'ai Chi Chih* Center with other teachers for our usual Tuesday morning practice. I stood across the room from Justin and watched him carefully as we practiced. I felt very strange and suddenly knew why. I realized that even though I was doing the movements, I didn't know anything about *T'ai Chi Chih* practice. As we continued our practice, the feeling became stronger. This was very disheartening. What would I do now? I felt like a fraud. It didn't matter that the TV program was a success and everyone thought I was great. I was very fortunate to have had the realization of not knowing anything so soon after the first program aired. Most people who came up to me in the months and years that followed didn't say, "I

want to thank *T'ai Chi Chih* [practice] or Justin for a great program." They said, "I want to thank you." Fortunately, I could put these statements in their proper place.

When we first start learning the *T'ai Chi Chih* movements, we know we don't know anything. Our bodies make that very clear. We have a tendency to lose our balance and be out of synch with our teacher. It is easy to have "Beginners Mind" when our minds are filled with awe and gratitude. Later, however, especially after becoming a teacher and particularly after we have several years under our belt, this feeling may change. After all, our students are very complimentary. This is a trap. We begin riding the fast track towards being out of harmony with our practice.

T'ai Chi Chih practice is a gift, and one that serves us very well. It is gratitude that helps us know the *T'ai Chi Chih* movements a little bit better. Through gratitude we come to appreciate what the *T'ai Chi Chih* discipline is really doing in and through us. Justin has always said that one of the ways to show our appreciation to the *T'ai Chi Chih* practice is by attending the *T'ai Chi Chih* Teachers Conference. This year would be a good year to start again.



T'ai Chi Chih discipline presented at University of Verona, Italy in Nov.'01

By Cristina Minelli

It took me a year and three meetings with Professor Larocca to finalize the date: November 3rd. Professor Larocca is in the field of Special Education Science ("Special" stands for "related to people with special needs"). No date could have been worse: that weekend 50% of Italian people are on vacation, and the University is open "on professor discretion". In other words, nobody except for Professor Larocca was active that day. It was too late when I realized that, and the date was no longer changeable. In spite of that, about 300 people showed up. I had prepared a dozen different pages on my computer, just to keep a punctual track of what I was saying. My computer was connected to a VGA projector, so that people could follow me, reading my notes on a huge wall.

I started talking about my story. For 10 years I had been affected by a severe form of interruptive insomnia. The "official" medicine couldn't do anything for me, so I started my own search for health. It was during such journey that I accidentally stumbled into TCC practice.

At this point in the lecture, I pointed out the separation between mind and body in our society: how many times do we look at our knee and with surprise notice a bruise or a scratch and think: "When did it happen?" We could as well say, "I wasn't there".

How can we bring our mind closer to our body? From the Orient there is a whole spectrum of disciplines with that same goal, from Chi Kung to Yoga. They come from far away but there is nothing mysterious about them: all you need to approach them are a mind and a breath. Then I introduced the fourth state of consciousness, and talked about the fact that reaching a state of peace does not mean isolating oneself. From the *Tao Te Ching*, in the translation by Steven Mitchell: "Empty your mind... This doesn't mean to suppress your thoughts, but to step back from them... This has nothing to do with the intellect and its abstractions. The mind is originally empty, and only when it remains empty, without grasping or rejecting, can it respond to natural things, without prejudice. It should

be like a river gorge with a swan flying overhead; the river has no desire to retain the swan, yet the swan's passage is traced by its shadow, without any omission."

Another example: "A mirror will reflect all things perfectly, whether they are beautiful or ugly; it never refuses to show a thing, nor does it retain the thing after it is gone. The mind should be as open as this..."

Meditating is a way of relaxing without losing tone. Through meditation our perception of life changes: we come to know experientially that we are connected to the Universe and to the other beings by a common origin.

— Consciousness —

... Meditation can bring transforming experiences that can deeply change our participation in life.

According to the Indian tradition, there are five main obstacles to the total uncovering of our consciousness: desire, hatred, laziness, anxiety and skepticism. Our true self is compared to the bottom of a lake, and the obstacles to our view of it are respectively: colors (desire), boiling (hatred), algae (laziness), wind (anxiety) and soil (skepticism).

Buddha said: "Be the empty cup!". In other words, be receptive. This does not imply boredom for the deprivation of something. It does not mean lack of interest. On the contrary, if you can empty your cup you can choose to fill it in anyway you want. We live as though we were going grocery shopping carrying with ourselves the whole kitchen every time: it is terribly difficult buying something new, and carrying it home is a monumental chore. Emptying our cup can bring a healthy detachment from the thunderstorms of life, and from that will come the most precious strength, the strength of calmness.

There is an old Indian story: an old tigress, starving and pregnant, comes upon a little flock of goats and pounces on them with such energy that she brings about the birth of her little one and her own death. The goats scatter, and when they come back to their grazing



place, they find this just-born tiger and its dead mother. Having strong parental instincts, they adopt the tiger, and it grows up thinking it's a goat. It learns to bleat. It learns to eat grass. And since grass doesn't nourish it very well, it grows up to become a pretty miserable specimen of its species.

When the young tiger reaches adolescence, a large male tiger pounces on the flock, and the goats scatter. But this little fellow is a tiger, so he stands there. The big one looks at him in amazement and says, "Are you living here with these goats?" "Maaaaa," says the little tiger. Well, the old tiger is mortified, something like a father who comes home and finds his own son with piercing and tattoos. He swats him back and forth a couple of times, and the little thing just responds with these silly bleats and begins nibbling grass in embarrassment. So the big tiger brings him to a still pond.

This little fellow looks into the pond and sees his own face for the first time. The big tiger puts his face over and says, "You see, you've got a face like mine. You are not a goat. You are a tiger like me. Be like me."

So the little one is getting that message; he's picked up and taken to the tiger's den, where there are the remains of a recently slaughtered gazelle. Taking a chunk of this bloody stuff, the big tiger says, "Open your mouth."

The little one backs away, "I'm a vegetarian."

"None of that nonsense," says the big fellow, and he shoves a piece of meat down the little one's throat. He gags on it... but he's nevertheless getting it into his blood, into his nerves; it's his proper food. It touches his proper nature. Spontaneously, he gives a tiger stretch, the first one. A little roar comes out... The big one says, "There. Now you've got it. Now we go into the forest and eat tiger food."

Properly interpreted as metaphors, mythological sources can show us what we can see also through meditation: they can show us our tiger face. The tiger face stands for our true face, our true nature, our true self. We normally live a little slice of what we really are: in other words, we are so much more than what we settle for. It is here that we enter the realm of spirituality.

The Dalai Lama warns us to meditate with perseverance, as the mind moves slowly in this field, and Justin Stone comforts us by reminding us that in walk-

ing through the tall grass day after day a trail will form, making it easy one day to cross the meadow.

But how do we meditate? Through mind or through body? What is the difference?

Well, we can choose between one or the other, and IF WE PRACTICE REGULARLY, the results are the same. In my experience, the real difference is in the fact that meditating through the body (as with TCC practice) is much easier than through other methods, and I tried many.

— T'ai Chi and the Scientific Research —

[Editor's Note: Various studies on T'ai Chi Ch'uan and the T'ai Chi Chih discipline were cited.]

... Because of its simplicity and versatility, the *T'ai Chi Chih* discipline is today taught in the U.S. in many facilities: in juvenile and adult prisons, at HMOs, to Alzheimers patients, to Schizophrenics at the Cincinnati University Hospital, as a pain therapy (for 10 years now) in Minneapolis... In this last case, it is being financed by the insurance, a clear sign of the fact that concrete results have been found and its effectiveness has been proven. And just to give an example of the broadness of applications TCC practice can give us, a group of nuns who are TCC instructors practice the TCC movements as a prelude to contemplative prayer. . . .

At this point one hour had elapsed, and I got everybody up to perform "Push Pull" and "Around the Platter". I considered that, given the very little space people had in front of them, these movements were the most contained. First I gave a few technical indications, then we all did six repetitions of the two movements to the music "Silent Joy," by Anugama. . . I think that the first part of that music is just wonderful. Not a single person remained seated, and their eyes were attentive, their hands incredibly soft.

— Short History of TCC —

I'll save you the first part as everyone reading *The Vital Force* knows about it...

We learn the TCC practice from the outside in, but it will flow from inside out. It is not a philosophy because it is not something to understand or to believe,

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Teaching at a University

Journal entries reveal varied results

By Janet Oussaty

To assist beginning students in reflecting upon their *T'ai Chi Chih* experiences both inside and outside of classes, I introduced a weekly journal assignment in all TCC credit-bearing courses at Kean University. Students were encouraged to express their feelings, thoughts and insights (written and/or drawn) in entries that would qualify for 20% of their final course grades.

The students led very hectic, and by their own admission, stressful lives. All were employed; many worked full time in addition to going to school full time. They also had increasing family responsibilities with aging parents and young children. Living and commuting in the densely populated New Jersey/New York area also challenged their quests for peace and harmony. The *T'ai Chi Chih* students represented many racial and ethnic backgrounds— African American, Asian, Indian and Latino/ Latina and Middle Eastern, for example. Some recently immigrated to the United States and were just learning and using the English language. Ages spanned from 18 to 60, adding to the richness of the class groupings. Their journals represented their lives and dreams and how *T'ai Chi Chih* practice influenced what was a new-found existence.

In an attempt to capture their works for other students and teachers, I decided to draft an article. I first gathered approximately 100 journals beginning with the first course that was offered in Spring 2000. I selected salient quotes from the entries and then compiled those quotes filling over 15 single-spaced typed pages. Finally, I identified seven major themes that emerged from the students' voices: Initial Impressions, Benefits, Characteristics of Movements, Characteristics of the Chi, Teh, Impressions About Justin Stone, and Lasting Impressions. This article sounds their voices around these major themes.

Initial Impressions

The vast majority of students taking the course stated that they knew nothing about the *T'ai Chi Chih* discipline. Their reasons for enrolling were because they needed the credit to graduate, it fit into their schedules, and it seemed "different" from the other physical education offerings. Students spoke of a great need to relax,

to become calmer at work, at home and at school, to take time for themselves and to find an answer to the daily grind. As one student wrote,

I took the class for the one credit I need as a gym requirement, and now I am happy that I chose this class and not square dancing or volleyball. It is much more profitable to gain knowledge as to how I can calm myself down than how I can work myself up.

Some found the course to be more challenging than expected, not physically but mentally. "Concentration not to know how to react to defend yourself, but concentration to learn to relax. I have always found it very difficult to relax my mind and body; even in relaxing atmospheres...I am always tense." The slowing of mind and body was also difficult for individuals accustomed to fast-paced lives. As one student said,

I was able to clear my mind and therefore relax my body completely for like the first time ever...You see, I have a fairly hectic life, well once I make hectic in my mind. I take everything to heart and constantly am worrying about something. The littlest things tend to bother me in a big way. One of my goals through this class is not to worry about all those things.

Some reported a skepticism yet openness to the course and for what *T'ai Chi Chih* practice could bring to their lives. For example,

The quizzical looks that everyone shot my way (when told I was taking a TCC class) reflected the same skepticism I felt when I first started. I have found that if you allow yourself the time and permission to explore, this may be the greatest gift someone can give themselves for the holidays.

When beginning the course a student said she was open and hoped it would be worth "the pain. It is not the pain that scares me most, because I really did not think I would simply coast; no it is the thought, that maybe I could learn something new and exciting..." Toward the end of the course, this same student concluded,

It has given me satisfaction knowing I have brought out something within myself that I never gave much thought about. This class was also a breakthrough...knowing I will have the



knowledge...for the rest of my life.

Some others spoke about feeling awkward and out-of-place initially. For example, a student commented,

At first, I felt terribly out of sync. It wasn't going to be easy to let my arms flutter like butterflies when for so many years, I've been conditioned not to...Do I really need this class to graduate? Saying, I could either drop out now, or find out if this thing really works. All the while knowing deep-down, I needed something to relieve my stress.

This student later reversed her opinion, became much more comfortable,

For me, my skepticism has turned into acceptance. I truly believe that we all have a life force running within each of us, and it's up to us to develop it and realize its potential. It definitely allows you to become more at peace with yourself, as it's done for me. I find that afterwards my concentration is more focused and I'm a lot more calmer. But the most amazing thing is that it all came from these slow movements, and not the hard thumping aerobic exercises I'm so used to. I've derived a tremendous respect for this new art, and hope to continue by taking another course.

Benefits

Many benefits were reported as students were taking the course. Students found that in addition to being less stressed, they seemed to like themselves better and that their everyday activities or hobbies have taken a new light or have become easier to perform. Doors opened too as some students discovered that they were on a "spiritual path."

Less Stressed

A large number of students were surprised to find they were responding to challenges at home, school and work in different ways. For example, one student reported, "I am a little less angry at everything that goes wrong and that things seem to be 'just there' and not 'just there to bother me.'" Another student added,

I got home from class I felt more relaxed. Opening the front door at 10:30 p.m. and finding my children still up, any other night, would have sent me into a screaming fit. Instead, I remained calm and just helped them along to bed. By doing this they got to bed quicker and calmer than if I had come in screaming. I noticed too that I'm not as stressed about things as I normally would be. My 10 minute (T'ai Chi Chih) presentation is due in two days and I still have to put everything together.

Normally I would be up until all hours getting it done tonight...I guess I realize that I have all the information I need. I know it will get done and run smoothly.

Two other students responded by saying,

If you told me on May 15th how much I was going to learn or how much I was going to enjoy this class; I would not have believed you. However, I did. People at work ask me "What's up...why are you smiling so much?" My wife and children think that I am more relaxed. I really don't see the change myself but I have wondered, "Could it be the T'AI CHI CHIH classes?"

I think about the T'ai Chi Chih movements often especially during stressful moments. I work as a Senior Management Assistant...and during times of...entry deadlines, I wouldn't actually do the movements but I would close my eyes and envision myself going through the motions. Its works! It helps me to relax, slow down, and focus on what is going on around me.

Enhanced Self Esteem

Some students said that they found themselves more outgoing, they gained a greater awareness of themselves and that they liked themselves better. The following journal entries represent some of this awareness. "My friends think I'm acting kind of strange because of my attitude. I think I am maturer now and still learning more about life." Another student said, "I have become aware of things around me. I have somehow become a little more spiritual and in tune with nature and what is in this world. I really love my new self." Additional responses from three students include:

I feel that thru this class I have become a much better person. I have found myself already having more patience dealing with my day-to-day activities. Also, I don't think I'm as stressed as I normally am. I'm beginning to like myself more. My children make it all seem real to me by saying, "Mom, you're so much more fun to be around." I'm truly going to miss this class.

I find myself usually lacking a sense of myself. I start to play a role that's become increasingly troublesome to me. But today something was different. I didn't feel that I had the need to pretend. I was completely at ease with who I am and how I feel. I had a true sense of myself. I feel wonderful and have come to realize what having a sense of balance really means. And it's GREAT. I've gotten something from this class that I never expected to get.

I feel like that there is some new kind of awareness in myself. I can understand myself better. I can interpret my behavior better. I also think that I have improved harmony between body and soul.

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Teaching at a University

The Name Game

By Sharon Sirkis

On the first day of *T'ai Chi Chih* class at the University of Maryland Baltimore County, (UMBC), about 25 students quietly enter the room. With anticipation, expectation, and even uneasiness, they slowly settle in. I know this silence will not last for long. We all sit in a circle on the floor while I go over the logistics of the class, i.e., only one absence allowed. I tell them I'm a different kettle of fish, unlike most of the instructors they've ever had.

After the logistics, we start a discussion on emptying your cup. At first it's like pulling teeth. I often forget how self-conscious students are and how most prefer to remain quiet on the first day. One brave student says emptying your cup means keeping an open mind.

Bingo! It's the perfect segue to the first exercise, the Name Game. At first glance, the Name Game is an ice breaker to help me learn the students' names. I always keep in mind the student who told me how much she appreciated how I took the time and effort to learn everyone's names, how she wasn't just another number. But as you'll see, it's really much more. Here's how it goes:

First you introduce yourself to the class by saying your first name. Then you take the first initial of your name and match it up with the first letter of an item that you will bring to an imaginary party. For example, I start off and say, "My name is Sharon and I'm bringing surprises." (Ideally, what you bring should tell us something about you; your interests, your hobbies, etc.). At this point, there are moans, groans, and rolled eyes from the class. So I decide to take it one step further! Now, each student has to go back to the beginning, and introduce the first person, in this case me, and say what they're bringing to the party, and do that for each person in order until it's their turn. So, for example, let's say Brian was sitting to my left, and Amanda was sitting to his left. I'd start and say, "My name is Sharon and I'm bringing surprises." Now it's Brian's turn: He says, "You're Sharon and you're bringing surprises. I'm Brian and I'm bringing

books." Now it's Amanda's turn. She starts at the beginning with me: "You're Sharon and you're bringing surprises. You're Brian and you're bringing books. I'm Amanda and I'm bringing art." And the next person after Amanda would do the same thing, always going back to the beginning and starting with me. It is at this point that practically all the students are looking at me with daggers in their eyes, and I feel waves of hate wash over me. (You're probably thinking right now: "... and no wonder!") I tell the class that there's always a method to

my madness, although they may not realize it at the time. I tell them that it's O.K. to help each other out, and to try to have fun. I remind them to empty their cup and do their best.

At first I notice the different reactions. Fear, dread, anxiety, and nervousness. Especially the student on my right, who realizes he has to introduce every single person

in the class. Eventually, he recognizes the value of hearing the information 24 times. I secretly smile, thinking how I'll connect the dot in regards to the value of repetition in their *T'ai Chi Chih* practice. The student to my left forgets my name. "It's pretty bad when you can't even remember your teacher's name," I say. The class laughs and the ice has been broken.

Creativity flows throughout this exercise. Students bring bundles of jasmine, sprockets, energy, kids, trees, and beer to the imaginary party. Some students easily rattle off names and items like an auctioneer. Others try to cheat, hiding behind fellow students while they scribble names down. My favorite is the student who's up next, muttering to himself, and bobbing his head up and down, like one of those dolls in the back of a car.

The Name Game finally comes to an end. All eyes fall upon me. Some have rather a smug look, like: "You made us do this, now you better do it too!" Usually there's one student who's bold enough to say, "O.K., now you do it!" So I laugh and take my turn. Sometimes I forget, just like they do, and sometimes I'm right on. Once, I

Having fun, letting go of stress and tension, listening, paying attention, repetition, patience, persistence, and discipline, are all lessons from the Name Game that we include in our TCC practice. Throughout the game, I pay attention and notice the similarities it has with TCC practice.



surprised them by saying last names as well.

After the game is over I ask: "How many people were afraid or nervous to play this game?" Most of the hands rise. Then I ask: "How many people let their perfectionism, fear of being wrong, or making a mistake, get in their way? Some hands rise. "Just for grins," I ask, "Is there anyone who thought this game might be fun?" Only two people raise their hands.

funny moments that have come out of this game. One student named Anders said he was bringing an aneurysm, because he said he got one trying to remember all the names! Another student suggested I do the exercise with my eyes closed. Yes, I felt the fear and did it, and I got about one third of the way. Yet another student who was forgetful with names, said to me, "I saw 'Guacamole' the other day!"

I often forget how self-conscious students are . . .

Having fun, letting go of stress and tension, listening, paying attention, repetition, patience, persistence, and discipline, are all lessons from the Name Game that we include in our TCC practice. Throughout the game, I pay attention and notice the similarities it has with TCC practice. Some students get it right off the bat, no problems at all. Some students get frustrated and angry and say, "I can't," without even trying. Their fear and/or perfectionism get in the way. Other students push through with a bit of a struggle. They understand the value of persistence and determination. For students who struggle with their TCC moves, sometimes I'll refer back to the item they're bringing to the party. For example, if Greg brings a guitar, I can mention that most likely he already knows the value of patience, persistence, and practice. If Tessa brings a tree, I can talk about letting go of tension by telling the story of the sturdy oak and the flexible bamboo.

As you might imagine, the Name Game can be time consuming. It takes roughly an hour to complete the game with 25 people. Since the winter classes are in three hour time blocks, this poses no problem. For the summer two hour time blocks, I may divide the exercise between the first two classes. I just ask the students to look at who they're sitting next to, and keep that same order for the next class. However, my preference is to do the whole thing at once, so the students don't have to sweat it for the next class.

The Name Game brings a group of individuals into a cohesive unit fairly quickly. It's also a way to expand the student's comfort zone. And it expands mine as well, since it's not a comfortable feeling having most everyone against me when I announce the game.

As you might imagine, there are some very

My favorite funny moment was once during the game, when a student got up and walked out. I assumed he went to the restroom, but then he didn't come back. Thinking he dropped the course, I was surprised to see him at the next class. He told me he thought the game was totally irrelevant, so he decided to take his one absence that day. Unbeknownst to him, we had stopped the game halfway through the class due to time. When I told him he had just wasted his absence for nothing and that he was still in the game, he suddenly looked like a deer in the headlights. I really wanted to burst out laughing, but I didn't. He needed the gym credit so he stayed in the class. I felt his anger was really fear, and he actually did fine with the names. He seemed to enjoy the rest of the class, although I sensed he was irritated with me since day one.

On the last day of class after Show and Tell, (see VFJ June 2000), I announce we're going to come full circle. We play the Name Game but in an easier way. I say everyone's name and ask the group to remember the item they were going to bring. Everyone shouts it out one by one as I go around the circle. There is laughing, excitement, and fun all around. They surprise themselves that they still remember weeks later into the course.

By this time, most of the students understand the purpose and merit of playing the game. But I must confess, that on occasion I'll question myself as to whether I should continue the game. So it was no accident that shortly thereafter, one student told me the best part of the course was that he felt comfortable enough with everyone in the class to do the *T'ai Chi Chih* moves without inhibition, because of the beginning exercise, and activities of sharing. He obviously got the point, and the games will go on!



Teaching at a junior high

TCC class offered to kids in public middle school in Raleigh, NC

By Lorraine Lepine

I moved to North Carolina about one year ago from Canada. Unable to work under the present immigration visa, I was searching for volunteering options.

I offered to work at the Guidance Office at my son's [public middle] school, first filing for about two months, (the time needed to develop some contacts and to assess the need for *T'ai Chi Chih* (TCC) practice). I then offered to teach the TCC movements to my son's counselor, Mrs. Lord. She, right away, more than welcomed the idea since she had always wanted to introduce *T'ai Chi* to the school to see how this would help the students, especially those presenting attention, concentration, and coordination difficulties.

We were both excited about this and organized a meeting to plan the classes. It was presented to the administration and to the teachers as an experiment to evaluate how it could help some students. Mrs. Lord chose the students. I provided her with some information about the TCC discipline to give to the parents with their written approval for their child to learn the TCC movements.

The first time I met the students was informal. I presented the TCC practice to them and we practiced some movements. They were all immediately interested in learning the TCC discipline.

The schedule was set up in such a way that we had a half hour during homeroom for me to teach. A classroom was available most of the time and a few times we needed to move to another classroom. Any distraction in the regular schedule resulted in time needed to adjust and refocus on our TCC practice.

I quickly realized that within the hectic school schedule, unexpected changes could come up regularly and I needed to be very flexible and flowing — not attached to what I had planned that day and how much I would be able to teach because by the time we gathered everyone and got settled, the 30 minute session became a 15 minute session (which we did twice a week for consistency and continuity). I learned not to be attached to how much they were actually learning dur-

ing the 10, 15, or 20 minutes that were left to teach and practice the movements. I decided to come with the attitude and intention that whatever they were getting that day was exactly what they needed to learn.

Their short attention span and constant distractibility was so high that, in a way, the time allowed was short, but the quality of the teaching and integration were 100%. I taught them one new movement per class and practiced the learned ones with three repetitions. The emphasis was on putting their attention in the soles of their feet and moving slowly through very thick air. Although some had difficulty integrating the movements due to coordination difficulties, they were able to move with fluidity through movements done reasonably well.

The kids I was teaching are the ones who are always criticized, put down, shown that they are wrong. I wanted them to live a positive experience so when they were showing fluidity, shifting their weight onto each leg, moving onto bent knees, they were congratulated tenfold for each time they were showing it. I also wanted us to have fun. Our relationship and feeling of acceptance helped the flow of the Chi on many levels. The kids were always looking forward to the TCC class and said, "Here we can have so much fun".

Here are a few spontaneous comments that were said during the sessions. After doing "Around the Platter" and starting to teach "Bass Drum", one said: "We've done enough dishes for now — we are ready to play music." During a very peaceful class, the shoes of one of the students were squeaking so much that they kept losing their focus to attend to the squeaking sound of the shoes so I told them that this was actually the TCC bird's sounds. We all laughed and they returned their attention to the soles of their feet, peacefully, and concentrated for the rest of the class on listening to the TCC bird. I utilized any comments or reactions to bring them back to the TCC practice and towards more understanding of the movement or the principle of the TCC discipline or the CHI itself.

Out of six students who started:
One boy stopped because it was obvious that the more



he was quieting the more he was fighting it. He was not able to tolerate what was inside of him. He needed his hyperactivity at this point in time. One girl learned individually the first nine movements. She had missed too many sessions from the beginning as she had been expelled for a while from school. She learned quickly and enjoyed her TCC practice. She told me that after practicing the first time after school, she brought her youngest sister to the park and did all the clean up of the house because she had so much positive energy in her. She felt great. The challenge, of course, is to practice the TCC movements consistently in order to have lasting results.

One boy quit after he had learned eight movements and came back after Christmas but has not been consistent. He was interested to know so he could quiet down kids that he babysat by moving very slowly or simply by quieting himself.

One girl (Renée) was absolutely consistent in attending every single class. She just loved TCC practice. At mid term she wrote: "Thank you so much for teaching me [the] *T'ai Chi Chih* [movements]. It has been a wonderful experience and I will remember it for life. One day, my sister ask me what *T'ai Chi Chih* [practice] was all about. I told her that it was the circulation of energy in the body, and that it was great way to tolerate stress. Now, she looks at me in a different light. She is also more caring then she has ever been to me. It was amazing!" At the end of the year she wrote: "Thanks so much for such a great year. I've really enjoyed learning to use my energy for good. *T'ai Chi Chih* [practice] has reduced sooooo much my stressful energy into energy that I can use. Thanks sooooo much!!!!!"

One girl (Karen), also consistent in her attendance, demonstrated at first an aggressive behavior with others. She has changed it toward softness during the course of the year. Her worry about it was that if she became soft it would mean that she is weak and others would take advantage of her. My challenge was to move her toward the paradoxical perception where being soft is powerful. I think that she was getting it towards the end of the classes. She needed to learn to tame her powerful aggressive energy. She wrote mid term: "Thank you for the lessons over the weeks. It has been a great experience and a lots of fun and I will most certainly be back for lessons in the New Year." At the end of the year she wrote: "I've had lots of fun this year. *T'ai Chi Chih* [practice] has really helped me and my school work. I'm going to Miss you and this class a bunch."

One boy (Andrew) demonstrated the poorest integration of the principle of TCC practice and the moves themselves, yet he had gained more than what I could ever have expected. Here is what he wrote mid term about his experience: "Thank you for teaching me how to control my anger. My parents also thank you. We do not fight as often any more and now we laugh a lot more. My parents think that I use my energy for good reasons other than running around my room like a retard and you made me realize that people don't always make fun of me and I just need to laugh at it. Thank you for everything." At the end of the year he wrote: "Your teaching has made me deal w/ my anger better and concentrate better."

The Counselor herself learned the movements, as she was part of most of the classes. She was there as a student. This also gave the students a good role model of how to learn.

This experience with 13-14 year old adolescents has taught me lots of good lessons that I wanted to share with the TCC community. I learned: to be more flexible, to let go of expectations of outcome, to accept the students as they were that day and focus on the positive and their success, to welcome them back anytime no matter what, that something happens inside even if I do not see it in the way they move, to trust that they are getting what they need at that moment, to let go of my Ego, to focus on the principles of TCC practice very early in the teaching.

During some very peaceful class they would say: "Wow, we did not know that there was so much silence and peace in quietness." Their discovery of the CHI was as much a fearful thing for some as it was a curious thing to experience that it felt very good.

I took every occasion to correct their perception or bring new understanding about how their emotions changed naturally with the circulating and the balancing of the CHI. I referred to the Folsom Prison story where prisoners had transformed their anger into joy, love, peace, letting them know that if TCC practice had that effect on the prisoners, then imagine what effect it will have on them. TCC practice is a tool for them to use for their benefit, to help them harmonize their Body, Mind and Spirit.

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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</p> <p>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), <u>both</u> days: \$70</p>	<p>May 10 thru 12, 2002 TCC TEACHERS' RETREAT w / ED ALTMAN</p> <p>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> <p>Commuter fee: \$175 Resident fee: \$250</p> <p><i>(Note: Space limited to 40 attendees)</i></p>
<p>April 19 thru 21, 2002 TCC RETREAT w / ED ALTMAN</p> <p>Location: Sedona, AZ Contact: Deanne Hodgson 233 E. Angela Drive Phoenix, AZ 85022-1812</p> <p>Phone: (602) 789-7415 e-mail: dmh3@att.net</p> <p><i>(Contact host for pricing information.)</i></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</p> <p>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>May 4, 2002 TCC WORKSHOP (9:30am - 4:30pm) w / PAM TOWNE</p> <p>Location: Oakland, CA Contact: Athene Mantle 1717 D St. Hayward, CA 94541 Phone: (510) 886-3829 e-mail: chigoddess@hotmail.com</p> <p>Attendance Fee: \$45</p> <p><i>(Note: Space limited to 44 attendees)</i></p>	<p>June 8, 2002 TCC WORKSHOP (9:30am - 4:00pm) w / PAM TOWNE</p> <p>Location: Indianapolis, IN Contact: Dennis Minx 3302 N. Washington Blvd. Indianapolis, IN 46205 Phone: (317) 924-3051 e-mail: ttg@iquest.net</p> <p>Attendance Fee: \$45</p>

Justin Stone is the Originator, and Ed Altman is the Head, of T'ai Chi Chih! Joy Thru Movement
Sandy McAlister and Pam Towne are T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Trainers



July 20 thru 21, 2002	SEIJAKU REVIEW WORKSHOP Location: Albuquerque, NM Contact: For the NM TCC Center: Ann Rutherford 1534 Wagon Train SE Albuquerque, NM 87123 Ann's Phone: (505) 292-5114 e-mail: ruthergary@aol.com Attendance Fee: \$60 <i>(Note: Open to teachers and students who have already taken a Seijaku class)</i>	Oct. 22 thru 27, 2002	TCC TEACHER TRAINING w / ED ALTMAN Location: Ringwood, NJ Contact: Dan Pienciak P.O. Box 122 Ocean Grove, NJ 07756 Phone: (732) 988-5865 e-mail: wakeupdaniel@aol.com TCC Teacher Training Fee: \$450
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 Registration by April 1, 2002: \$300 by June 1, 2002: \$330 by Aug. 1, 2002: \$360 Non-U.S. Teachers' fee: \$270	Nov. 20, 2002	DAY OF "JOY THRU MOVEMENT" CELEBRATING T'AI CHI CHIH PRACTICE Location: Worldwide
Sept. 9 thru 14, 2002	TCC TEACHER TRAINING w / ED ALTMAN Location: Edmonton, AB CANADA Contact: Margo Carpenter 12311 Aspen Dr.W Edmonton, AB T6J2B6 CANADA Phone: (780) 434-9433 e-mail: carpkids@telusplanet.net TCC Teacher Training Fee: \$450	POSSIBLE FUTURE EVENTS: If interested in an event described below, contact the host. These events will only happen if there are enough people interested. Nov., 2002 TCC WORKSHOP w / PAM TOWNE Location: Washington, DC Area Contact: Dale Buchanan Phone: (202) 546-3131 e-mail: dale@joythrumovement.com Nov., 2002 TCC TEACHER TRAINING Location: Albuquerque, NM Contact: For the NM TCC Center: Ann Rutherford Phone: (505) 292-5114 e-mail: ruthergary@aol.com	

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News Shorts

Study will measure effects of TCC practice on the immune system

According to an article published in the December '01 issue of the newsletter *Healthwise*, TCC Teacher Susan (Patterson) Haymaker is currently participating in a four-year study funded by the National Institute on Aging, and the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, (both agencies of the National Institute of Health) which will examine the immunological effects of *T'ai Chi Chih* practice, particularly in relation to the disease Shingles, in seniors over 60 years of age.

This study, which follows a pilot study (see *VFJ* December '99) will involve 200 seniors. The control group will not be learning and practicing the TCC movements — they will be educated on topics of health maintenance in discussion groups.

Haymaker taught the TCC classes for the pilot study, and will again for the current study. The same researcher, Dr. Michael Irwin, formerly with the UCSD School of Medicine, and now the director of the Cousins Center for Psychoneuroimmunological Research at UCLA, is overseeing this study. Irwin took TCC classes from Haymaker before the pilot study. He is quoted in the *Healthwise* article as saying, "I believe the findings from this study will have implications for the care and treatment of older adults. The people at the National Institute for Aging think so too. . . . That's why they're funding this study."

— Noel Altman

Kaiser Permanente includes TCC movements on instructional video

Last year Kaiser Permanente Complementary and Alternative Medicine Department produced a videoconference film on movement therapies. Featured on the video are four movement therapies, chosen from the many classes offered through their health education department. I was asked to present the *T'ai Chi Chih* segment.

A few minutes of a sample class were filmed, and a question and answer portion, which were then blended. The video is being used in Northern California Kaiser Hospitals. Shown to doctors and nurses, it will educate them

on various movement modalities, to help them suggest the appropriate one for their patients. Compared to the other three movement programs featured on the tape, Feldenkreis, a chi gong set, and yoga, the *T'ai Chi Chih* discipline came across as the most versatile and user-friendly. But then we (TCC teachers) knew that. It's getting exciting out there. Where will the *T'ai Chi Chih* discipline find its way to next?

— Sandy McAlister

Teacher Conference 2001 Results

Thank you to the 175 teachers who attended the 2001 Conference. You made it a very successful conference, in many ways, one being financially. It was heartwarming to receive your gifts of support for the scholarship fund. We were able to assist nine teachers and forward the remainder of the account to Texas to begin this year's fund.

After sending seed money to Texas (2002 conference) and Canada (2003 conference) to assist in their preparations, checks were also sent to *The Vital Force*, Good Karma Publishing, and The *T'ai Chi Chih* Center in Albuquerque, to support their various outreach projects.

At each conference one of the big headaches has been the equipment. With some of the funds left we are now able to purchase some of the equipment.

The teachers in the S.F. Bay Area selflessly gave many hours working toward a successful conference. In appreciation, some money was given to them for their own outreach project. They are preparing a website that will list all the *T'ai Chi Chih* classes taught in Northern California, practices in the park, workshops, and trainings.

Conferences are not priced to make money, only break even with a cushion. It was exciting to come out ahead on this conference and be able to share the excess in a variety of places.

Justin often talks about giving back to the *T'ai Chi Chih* discipline if it has been of benefit to you. Going to conference is one way to give back, as you can see. I'm looking forward to seeing you all in Texas this August.

— Sandy McAlister



October, 2001

St. Louis, MO teachers and students hold retreat to enrich their practice

By Ann Marie Wyrsh
Student of Kathy Albers

Six TCC Teachers and 19 TCC Students in the St. Louis, MO area accepted an invitation from teacher Kathy Albers, and Faith Horton, student of Gale Portman, to participate in a TCC Retreat in Louisiana, MO about an hour and a half drive north of St. Louis, MO on October 13th and 14th.

As an eager student I looked forward to the opportunity to enjoy the nature setting, experience TCC practice in a group and receive instruction from several teachers.

As an eager student I looked forward to the opportunity to enjoy the nature setting, experience TCC practice in a group and receive instruction from several teachers. My expectations were exceeded. Some of the highlights for me were:

- Enjoying a rural setting with 325 acres of natural beauty along with some unique sculptures and walking paths;
- Group practice sessions in an octagonal shaped room where rain could be heard falling and birds singing on Saturday
- A powerful sense of flowing chi during group practice
- The teachers who shared their wisdom and experience with vulnerability and generosity
- An opportunity for enriched practice of the TCC movements

- A sense of connecting with others with a sincere commitment to practicing the TCC movements as authentically as possible
- Rain clearing in time to enjoy a beautiful sunset, along with more walks and a bon fire later that evening.
- Being able to appreciate rustic accommodations with bath facilities separate from dormitory sleeping including bunk beds
- Sharing an abundance of excellent "potluck" food for each meal, (famous in a St. Louis based event.)

" . . . The goal was to get the St. Louis community together. . . . strengthen our own practice as well as help our students deepen the flow of the Chi in their lives. . . ."

Teachers included Gale Portman, Susan Kissinger, Deedie Grimstead Cote, Steve and Kathy Albers and Catherine Millman.

As Kathy Albers said, "the goal was to get the St. Louis community together. Every once and a while we are all going our own ways not knowing fully what each other is doing. This was a great way to all come together to strengthen our own practice as well as help our students deepen the flow of the Chi in their lives. Maybe people will make a commitment to practice more regularly after this. The teachers in the greater St. Louis area tend to work together without competition. I feel it's important that we send that signal to potential new teacher candidates. Hopefully, we will be making this an annual event."



November, 2001

Celebrating T'ai Chi Chih Practice!

Albuquerque, NM



Top photo: (Left, rear): Justin Stone enjoys a potluck dinner celebrating his 85th birthday. Teachers and students from Albuquerque, NM as well as visiting teachers like Margo Carpenter (to his left) from Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, and the teacher candidates going through their accreditation that week at the New Mexico TCC Center, joined in the festivities, held at the Center. **Bottom photo:** Justin speaks to Albuquerque teacher Suni McHenry. **(At far right):** Candidate Sr. Mary Smith from Oregon chats with Albuquerque teacher Robert Montes de Oca. Photos: Richard Tye



Photo at right: (L-R): Candidates Judy Pritchett from Indiana and Sr. Cecile St. Remy from Texas share dinner and a conversation with Albuquerque teachers Caroline and Uly Messier. Photo: Richard Tye



Rapid City, SD

Day of Joy thru Movement
Celebrating the T'ai Chi Chih® Discipline

Tuesday, November 20
at
Black Hills Retreat Center - north of Rapid City
7:00 p.m.

Free presentation / practice - open to public
Donations accepted for facility usage

TAI CHI CHIH'S JOY THRU MOVEMENT IS A GENTLE NON-MARTIAL PHYSICAL MOVEMENT FORM THAT CIRCULATES & BALANCES INTERNAL ENERGY. MANY BENEFITS CAN RESULT FROM REGULAR PRACTICE OF THIS HOLISTIC DISCIPLINE.

Whether this practice is new to you or you have experienced it before, please come and join in the second annual celebration of Tai Chi Chih's Joy thru Movement!

Phone Jean Katus, accredited teacher, at 718-0545
for further information & directions to
Black Hills Retreat Center

Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN



A birthday cake celebrating Justin Stone's 85th birthday was shared by attendees at the Minneapolis/St. Paul gathering on Nov. 16. Photo: Nancy Werner-Azarski

On November 16th, the Minnesota teachers and students in the metropolitan area celebrated Justin Stone's Birthday and the T'ai Chi Chih discipline. Judy George hosted the event at the YMCA where she teaches. About 30 people attended the celebration. We started by gathering in a circle and practicing the T.C.C. movements. After the practice, we sang "Happy Birthday" to Justin and then we ate birthday cake! As we sat

around in a circle, Judy asked the group to share stories or a saying that Justin has used that was meaningful to us. We shared together with a lot of laughter, joy and affection for Justin.

I just want to share two stories from the evening. One of

the teachers said to me that it was such a great practice and how it is so hard to share with people how great the T.C.C. discipline is, that the words don't exist to describe one's feelings after such a great practice together. And then to try and describe the effect it has on one's life is even more difficult. And then as I was leaving I told the young person at the entrance desk, thank-you. She stopped me and asked what

group I was with because everyone seemed so nice and happy as we left. I told her and let her know that we had a teacher there! So, Justin, it is hard to find the words to describe how grateful we are for you and the T'ai Chi Chih discipline but, we hope you notice that your life and your teachings have made a great difference in our lives. Thank-you and Happy Birthday!

— Nancy Werner-Azarski



Some of the teachers and students from the greater Minneapolis/St. Paul area who gathered to practice the T'ai Chi Chih movements and honor the originator of the form, Justin Stone are pictured above. From the smiles, it looks like they had a great practice!

Photo: Nancy Werner-Azarski



(Front, L-R): Minneapolis area teachers Sr. Renata Liegey and Karen Carrier enjoy a conversation. (Rear, center): Sr. Rita Foster chats with another attendee.

Photo: Nancy Werner-Azarski



(L-R): Glowing Minneapolis area teacher Joe Apt gives his wife (and student), Barb, a little hug.

Photo: Nancy Werner-Azarski



TCC student uses physical and mental practice during pregnancy with dramatically positive results

Dear Vital Force,

I'm writing at the request of Margo [Carpenter], the TCC teacher from Canada. I was telling her about my wonderful experience with TCC practice at Justin's birthday party and she asked that I write to you.

I began to realize just how wonderful and powerful the practice of the TCC discipline is when I became pregnant almost three years ago. I practiced daily and found the first six months of my pregnancy to be a breeze. I felt great and never experienced morning sickness. But when I was only 6½ months pregnant tragedy struck. My water broke early. I was not in labor but the doctors said it was very likely that I would have a premature delivery. The survival rate for babies born this early is only 60%. The vast majority of women in my situation deliver their babies within 48 hours. Needless to say my husband and I were very distraught by these odds.

My goal was not to go into labor any time soon. Even though I had ruptured, my baby was safe in my womb as long as I did not develop an infection. In the hospital I was monitored constantly. This was the most stressful time of my life. I called Carmen Brocklehurst, my TCC teacher and asked her about doing mental TCC practice. Being on strict bed rest, I was only allowed to get up to go to the restroom. I did my TCC practice mentally and began to feel more positive about my situation. The doctors and nurses commented on my positive attitude. Days passed and I did not go into labor.

I developed a very uncomfortable pregnancy rash that covered 90% of my body; the nurses said it was the worst they had ever seen. The doctors said the rash would continue until I delivered my

baby. I continued with my mental TCC practice. A few days later, the rash disappeared as quickly as it had appeared.

The days turned into weeks with no signs of premature labor. I asked the doctors if it was possible for my rupture to reseal. The doctor said it was not impossible but likened it to the probability of winning the lottery. I continued with my daily mental TCC practices. My spirits were high and I felt good. After three weeks of hospital bed rest, I overcame the very tremendous odds and surprised the whole hospital staff. My rupture had resealed! They ran tests for a couple of days, not sure whether to believe it or not. The tests confirmed that it had resealed. I was released from the hospital and told to continue bed rest at home. For the next two months, I continued my mental TCC practices. I am very happy to report that I delivered a full term healthy baby girl named Anastasia. My doctor refers to my baby as a miracle baby. Carmen calls her my *T'ai Chi Chih* baby.

I believe that through *T'ai Chi Chih* practice, the Chi does become balanced. I have experienced great joy, peace, and amazing physical healing. The more I do my *T'ai Chi Chih* practice, the more important it becomes to me. The practice of the *T'ai Chi Chih* discipline will change your life. I am fortunate to have Carmen as my teacher and to have had the opportunities to meet Justin Stone. The *T'ai Chi Chih* discipline is a wonderful gift. Thank you, Justin.

P.S. We just celebrated Anastasia's second birthday. She is a loving and gentle toddler, I am so grateful to be her mother.

– **Judy Hendricks**
Student of Carmen Brocklehurst



TCC Practice Saved my Sanity on a Long Trip

By Jan Law

Student of Georgann (G'an) Wright

My husband & I recently took a 7000-mile road trip. Some was business and some was visiting relatives who lived in the general areas where we were traveling. We covered 12 states and were on the road or in meetings for the entire two weeks. I felt lousy about missing my twice a week *T'ai Chi Chih* class & was determined to continue to practice on my own each day of the trip. Unlike some of my resolutions of the past, I not only accomplished this, but found myself eagerly looking forward to those precious moments. Each evening I took the time to go through as much as I could remember (which grew as the days went on — "Oh, I remember now...it goes like this...") *T'ai Chi Chih* practice allowed me to unwind, forget the day's frantic pace & even manage to forget the next day's anticipated regime that was truly an endurance contest! Added bonus: I slept better every night in all those strange beds than I usually do at home!

I also used any rest stops, no matter how brief sometimes, to do at least a little *T'ai Chi Chih* practice. And in the car, when my husband drove, I intermittently found myself doing the arm & hand movements & deep breathing. I've done yoga for years & haven't cared if people notice I'm doing some "strange" things in public, so I certainly wasn't self-conscious. Taking care of myself is a lot more important than wondering what some people I will never see again think about me!

I had been taking *T'ai Chi Chih* classes for about four months & heard my teacher and others in the class speak of "tingling" in the fingers & the lightness of being totally absorbed. Well, that sure hadn't happened yet for me & I sort of wondered if maybe that was either an imagined state or if I was just incapable of attaining it. So when I found these things happening to me consistently on this trip, I was peacefully thrilled. I sure hadn't tried & I

I sensed a "floaty" sensation, a lightness...so incredibly delightful I cannot explain the release of tension & relief of those seemingly endless ruminations that tend to take over my mind after a day of overwhelming details.

remember looking around me to see if I was still really in this world! I sensed a "floaty" sensation, a lightness...so incredibly delightful I cannot explain the release of tension & relief of those seemingly endless ruminations that tend to take over my mind after a day of overwhelming details.

I was so happy to get home & return to my *T'ai Chi Chih* classes — wanted to tell my teacher all about my *T'ai Chi Chih* "trip." It was also great to be back in class as a part of a beautiful whole that was missing on my own. Being a part with others in such a mindful way brings a beauty that is truly art.

My thanks to all the friends in my class, to Priscilla who suggested last summer in the locker room that I come to the class (I didn't know her at all...she just began talking to me about how wonderful *T'ai Chi Chih* practice was for her!), and my heartfelt gratitude to my teacher G'an.

With all that has been happening in our world since September 11, finding the *T'ai Chi Chih* discipline has brought some much needed calming into my life. I have two sons in the military — *T'ai Chi Chih* practice continues to give me chance to find some tranquillity in the chaos.



University student finds her mental focus and bodily awareness increase during “gym credit” TCC class

Dear Sharon,

Though I have stayed after class several times to thank you for the help in focus and grounding that your *T'ai Chi Chih* class has been to me, I wanted to take some time to mention the rest of the story. I have been a highly disassociative person for as long as I can remember. My childhood, while never *physically* abusive, was still worth trying to ignore. Explaining in detail, to me, feels like I'm playing a blame game, so I'll leave it at that. Considering the atmosphere I grew up in, disassociating was basically a very good defense mechanism to separate my consciousness from all that was going on around me. It eventually became my usual state of being as I continued to remove myself from situations internally to escape smaller and smaller issues in my life. While it helped me deal with things on a surface level, internally I have been a bit of a mess. I simply accepted my usual state of completely scatterbrained, inattentive, disconnected and flighty and thought little more about it. As a matter of fact, I didn't even realize how much of a problem it was until I began talking with my boyfriend about a year ago regarding how I must make lists of everything and actively try to pay attention to anything in the world around me or become totally lost and forget the simplest tasks. I had been trying to work with these issues on my own, and was achieving at least some small success. And then I fell into your class.

I was looking for a gym class to take over the summer semester, and many of the ones that I wished to take were full. Being interested in Reiki and martial arts, I decided that a *T'ai Chi Chih* class would be at the very least a physically non-strenu-

ous class, and at the most, very interesting. In no way was I expecting my outlook on the world to change so much in six weeks as it has, and especially not because of a gym class.

I have found it much easier to concentrate since I began in your *T'ai Chi Chih* class in the middle of the summer. I still have to make lists for myself, but the sheer act of writing them keeps them in my memory, and I do not race around trying to get everything on my lists done... somehow things just get themselves done when they need to. While I often get lost in the movements while practicing the *T'ai Chi Chih* discipline and “space out” like I used to, I am spacing out in a different way; I am now feeling the flow of movements of my body rather than my own internal landscape. This means, in turn, that I am actually feeling my body in any way other than the detached manner I am used to. And when I walk home from class, I can feel my feet. Broken toe or not, I can feel the weight shift in each step as I walk back to my apartment from *T'ai Chi Chih* class. The more I practice, the more in my body I actually am, even when I am dealing with the situations at home that I used to drift off to escape. They're not pleasant, but I'm actually dealing with them internally for once. And it may seem like a silly small thing, but it's really the first time in my life that I've been able to pay attention to something so fundamental as the feel of the grass beneath my feet. Thank you.

– Tessa Bogar

Student of Sharon Sirkis



T'ai Chi Chih practice and Incarnational Spirituality

By Rev. Deanne M. Hodgson, RN

The *Tai Chi Chih* discipline coincides with the Benedictine philosophy of a balanced life. It promotes the philosophy of walking in the middle without excesses. It helps us find our center where the connection with God is. It creates within us a deeper understanding of the meaning of "enough."

There is also a great similarity between *T'ai Chi Chih* practice and Centering Prayer. Both take us to contemplation, to resting in God, to living in the Presence. The *T'ai Chi Chih* discipline, when taught along with Centering Prayer, can be described as Incarnational Spirituality, for we are using our bodies to experience our spiritual nature...or perhaps, we could state it this way... we are using our spiritual nature, or vital force, to generate the movement of our bodies.

The *T'ai Chi Chih* discipline is not a religion and is not directly associated with any religious tradition. It does however, enable the practitioner to get in touch

with his or her spiritual nature, thereby affirming one's religious belief system.

T'ai Chi Chih practice is a joyful way to integrate body, mind and spirit for personal wellness. With the increase in self-awareness which comes with regular practice, we find ourselves living our lives with more focused sense of purpose, greater creativity and a gentle yet powerful energy which radiates love from the very core of our being. This is the gift we each need to cultivate and present to the world.

There is a saying:

*First cultivate yourself,
Second, harmonize your family, and
Third, be unified with your country,
And then, the universe will be at peace.*

You drop a pebble in the pond, and the ripple goes out.....

Hocus-Pocus — FOCUS

By Karen Silva

I recently had a dental appointment and I had not yet had time to sit down and thoroughly read through the latest edition of the *Vital Force*. So, I grabbed it on my way out knowing that I would be doing some waiting before my appointment.

I enjoyed reading the intros and a few of the articles when I was called into the torture, I mean dental room. I was having what they referred to as a DEEP root cleaning where they load you up with novacaine and dig

at your gums to clean out any pockets that might have formed — anyway the whole process takes about 1½ hours. While I was waiting for the novacaine to take effect I continued to read the *Vital Force*; then the hygenist said ok, it's time to put the book down and open up.

Now going to the dentist is very near the top of my "Don't like to do list" and I was trying not to think about all these sharp pointed instruments that she was digging around with in my mouth. Then it suddenly hit me — why not do my *T'ai Chi Chih* practice while I was here in the chair. Okay — Rocking Motion —

Bird — hey this really works. I did have some problem with counting so I let go of that idea and just went with each thought movement until I was done (I should clarify that these were all mental movements). In fact I became so relaxed at one point that as I became aware that the hygenist was asking me a question, I had to consciously bring myself to the surface and ask her what she had been saying to me.

What kind of magic was this — it was the best way I have found for spending an hour+ in the torture, I mean dental office.



Presentation in Italy...

continued from page 11

but just to experience. For the same reason it is difficult to talk about it: Justin Stone compares it to chocolate. Imagine describing it to somebody who does not know what it is, you'll see it is impossible. "Here, try it" is the only feasible approach. About the difficulty of talking about spirituality, the *Tao Te Ching* is even more drastic: "He who speaks, does not know, he who knows does not speak." This is the problem for spiritual teachers: they have to be blabber-mouths, but, according to the Buddhist tradition, their words are like fingers pointing to the moon. If you look at the finger, you do not see the moon.

Many of you probably have heard about Yoga. Well, with Yoga we share the same goal of connecting mind and body, of reaching psycho-physical health through circulating the Vital Force inside of us. The difference is in the way we do that: in TCC practice we are standing and we keep moving gracefully and slowly. In Yoga the postures are still and maintained in time — the longer, the better. In TCC practice, the softest we can become, the better. Again, the *Tao Te Ching* underlines the importance of softness:

*Men are born soft and supple;
Dead, they are stiff and hard.
Plants are born tender and pliant;
Dead, they are brittle and dry.*

*Thus whoever is stiff and inflexible
Is a disciple of death.
Whoever is soft and yielding
Is a disciple of life.*

*The hard and stiff will be broken.
The soft and supple will prevail.*

. . . [Showing the yin/yang symbol]: This is the symbol of Chi. The two colors, black and white, the Yin and the Yang, stand for the two opposites that compose everything in the Universe: day and night, high and low, hot and cold, the sweet side and the bitter side of a man, attack and defense in a game In each side there is a dot of the opposite color, indicating that nothing is completely Yin or completely Yang, as in the most negative situations there is always something to be learned. Also, the dots indicate a seed of possible change. If you run through the external circle with your finger, you will see how you will go from the thin beginning of one of the entities into its fullest development, to turn into its opposite, like life becomes death and pleasure indefinitely sustained can turn into pain. The cyclical rhythm of Yin and Yang is a sort of "celestial breathing" involving the whole Universe. The duality of this symbol is not

suggestive of conflict, but rather representative of reality as it is: male and female, day and night, etc. The night doesn't fight the day to be next to it, and the same is true for the day.

So, the moral lesson behind this symbol is: man, with his behavior, must synchronize with the cycles of his nature, and harmonize with them. REFLECTING ALL THIS INTO PHYSICAL MOVEMENT, WE PRACTICE THE TCC MOVEMENTS. IT IS THROUGH TCC PRACTICE THAT WE ENTER AND PARTICIPATE IN THE ACTIVE PLAY OF THE OPPOSITES. TCC practice so becomes the archetypal search of the self, the dream of the many tales, the sacred Grail, the epical adventure of the hero, the battle for the comprehension of our humanity.

There is nothing to be taken for granted in TCC practice, and in my classes I always welcome a healthy level of initial skepticism: only when the results will corroborate what you heard will it be logical to believe it.

— Interdisciplinarity —

The TCC discipline is apt to be taught in many different educational fields, as its results are applicable to practically every subject. Thinking of myself as a teenager or a young adult, I listed some of the benefits TCC practice would have given me in those school years. Here is a highlight of the points I developed in my speech:

- * Consciousness of what you do, of how you do it and of its effects on you and on others around you. This can bring a clearer vision of your limits and possibilities.
- * Knowledge of the self brings internal growth, a better relationship with the environment, together with an increased level of individual and social responsibility.
- * Health and wellness values.
- * Concentration skills, higher level of lucidity, a more serene mind, internal balance.
- * Prevention of juvenile problems
- * Easy integration of situations of handicap

— Articles and evidence —

I scanned directly from the *Vital Force*, the *NY times*, American health magazines and various Italian magazines for articles on TCC practice and: Alzheimers, multiple sclerosis, pain therapy, physical therapy, elderly, research, arthritis, juvenile and adult prisons, HMOs.

Of course, all these pages (about 30) clearly



appeared on the wall so the audience could see the actual articles, and follow a few highlights I had previously underlined on each page.

— Exercise Science: the missing link —

I remember very vividly the concept of body and mind I inherited from my school years, as a young adult: body and mind were two separate parts, the mind was by far the most noble of the two and the body was made up of different separate parts. The more you would separate arms, legs, trunk etc., the more promising the results of your exercise would be. Furthermore, physical education meant vigorous and fast activity only.

I know that today things have changed, that exercise is taught as a means to experience body and mind during different activities. But again, the activities taken into consideration are only of the vigorous kind. Actually, the more vigorous, the better. Inside and outside of the gym, at school and outdoors, if anybody says: "I am in shape", in our western culture everybody would think: "You must be an athlete, probably running five miles every morning, playing tennis or swimming during your weekends, rock climbing every time you see a mountain, etc." Almost nobody would associate the fact of being in shape with a broader view, with a healthy mind in a healthy body, in harmony with each other.

The official definition of "in shape" depends on the individual goals, but this is another subject. What I want to underline here is that body knowledge and body consciousness (the most noble goals I would expect from a Physical Education department) do not come from vigorous activity only. Muscles specialize in the activities they perform. The more various the kinds of movements we execute, the more skills we add to our repertoire, the broader our body knowledge will be. Furthermore, deep mind-body connection can be established only through conscious and slow, sometimes still, movements.

When I was studying to become a fitness instructor, I was pleased to notice a new perception of a human being. Health and wellness aimed to a psycho-physical state, not to a combination of muscles and bones as it was during my adolescence. The definition of health is now (from my fitness instruction handouts):

- * Physical and mental well-being
- * Freedom from disease

- * Personal responsibility
- * Lifetime commitment

The concept is taken even further in the wellness definition:

- * Good physical self-care
- * Using one's mind constructively
- * Expressing one's emotions effectively
- * Interacting creatively with others
- * Being concerned about one's physical and psychological environment.

Finally, a human being is a little more human!

It is time for Physical Education Science to fill this gap, to add the missing link in the string of subjects being taught in its departments. TCC practice, a discipline so young, already entered some universities in the U.S. I will tell you about the few whose teachers I know directly, but there are more:

- * From 1999 at Kean University, NJ, Physical Education Department
- * From 1997 at the University of Southeast Alaska, in Sitka, Physical Education Department
- * At the College of Lake County, IL, Physical Education Department
- * In China, T'ai Chi Ch'uan is not taught through the Physical Education Dept., but by the Faculty of Medical Science's "Internal Dynamics" department. It is interesting that T'ai Chi Ch'uan, in the Eastern culture where it was born, is perceived as a discipline belonging to Medicine and not to Physical Education. It is an indication of it being seen as a broader, more "proven" practice. Well, I can only assume that they probably know it better than us.

Western and Eastern medicine do not exclude each other. Our official medicine usually waits for people to get sick, and then takes care of them. We have the scientific method, but the Orient, after millenniums of careful observation of human nature, could really give us a hand and finally bring a concrete meaning to the word "prevention".

— Why T'ai Chi Chih practice? —

- * Simplicity: it can be learned in about 10 lessons.
- * Modularity: while the order followed for the movements is important, it is not necessary to perform them

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Teaching at a University

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Everyday Activities Became Easier or Improved Performance

Everyday activities and hobbies such as running, using the treadmill, dancing, music, computer and acting unexpectedly became easier and the results were much improved. For example, a runner commented,

I have noticed a difference in my running...I am not sure if it is a coincidence, but ever since I have been practicing [the] T'ai Chi Chih [movements] in the morning, I have had much better runs. I did notice that instead of focusing on my breath, I have been focusing on my alignment and my lower abdomen. I have more graceful strides and breathing is no longer an issue. I am now going to try T'ai Chi Chih [practice] right before my runs and see if it makes a difference. I am very excited to see where this new practice take me!!!!

One student utilized the principles of the TCC discipline while painting a ceiling with a roller and found that the task was less stressful and less tiring.

I found myself shifting weight from the back leg to my fore leg. As I gained this consciousness I began to concentrate on this movement while combining free flowing arm movements. Conceptually, I believe that I developed a new movement which I will call "Painting the Sky."

Another student attributed the avoidance of a car accident to his T'ai Chi Chih practice. The awareness he describes appears to reflect pranja at work.

It [TCC practice] also did improve my awareness around me because I almost got into an accident but I stopped before I step[ped] on the gas pedal. Its like a sense I picked up, I didn't know the car was coming but for some reason I sensed it coming. Well I hope T'ai Chi [Chih practice] can help others like it did for me.

Spiritual Path

Students talked about searches for simpler, more meaningful lives. They also explored changes that they needed to make in their lives. The following two students identify "paths" and the forces that brought them to this particular class.

I saw a whole new path opened in front of me for self achievement and self actualization. I was not the same person anymore, I had a better understanding of this life and myself. I had this smile on my face which was representing the peacefulness in my soul...I am thankful to that unknown energy to which most of us call God that my swimming class was cancelled and I took T'AI CHI CHIH [class] as an alternate.

Tonight's presentations were interesting. I listened and sat there thinking how was my presentation going to be? Then I realized as my classmates talked about relaxing and taking time, that I was here because of TAO. I had to be part of the path, the way. This was my path. I was here because the forces of TAO had brought me here.

Characteristics of Movements

While practicing, some movements stood out as "favorites" or offered special qualities or insights for students. There appears to be no "bias" toward the "easier" movements as descriptions of Pulling Taffy and its variations appeared too. One student described her experience of Daughter on the Mountaintop.

The movement I like best...is Daughter on the Mountaintop...I feel like when both hands are about to come together but don't that's like cutting away everything that's a bother and lifting myself up.

Other students spoke about their experiences of Rocking Motion, Pulling Taffy and Six Healing Sounds, respectively.

As we did our first rocking motion my mind was wondering a lot, criticizing every move I made...am I doing this right? And then it happened I felt it...I couldn't describe the feeling it was very strong holding, almost hugging me in a circle. I believed I felt levitated but knew that was not possible and in analyzing that feeling I realize it must be what Justin Stone describes as floating through very thick air.

While learning the Taffy movements, I could finally concentrate and focus on one thing. I think its because I could now let my feet balance while doing the movements and that my hands actually moved without me making them. I am so impressed that my body can work in ways that I didn't know it could.

We ended the evening by learning another movement called Six Healing Sounds together with a review of Joyous Breath. I found this very interesting because it seemed to me that we were bringing our insides out. By this, I mean our breath, our spirit. Our breath imitated nature the wind...

Additionally, some observations about the movements, both individually and in a group were given such as "I looked down at my hands and the fingers seemed as though they were longer." Descriptions of three more observations follow.

We were videotaped...it was amazing how slow we were moving. This is one of the things in the beginning of the class



that frustrated me was the movements were so slow. Now as we watched I realized how much we have grown individually and as a group together.

Today we practiced all of the movements that we have learned and we practiced them **outdoors**...It was quite a difference being outdoors. We were one with nature...the birds, the wind, the sun. In the previous classes, we could hear the squeaking of our shoes on the floor...today we were part of nature.

After the presentations we formed a circle (instead of the usual rows), a candle was lit in the center of the circle and the lights were shut off. The blinds only let a small amount of moonlight into the room and we practiced all of the **T'AI CHI CHIH** movements for the final time. It was impressive. I could feel an energy in the class. We were that energy.

Characteristics of the Chi

Specific references to "chi" were described by many. "I feel slightly the heavy air around me and lots of needles in the tips of my fingers, my fingers get very cold and I feel a sensation of almost electric shocks..." and "I never felt 'my own' energy like that before...It is a feeling of calmness, yet awareness at the same time."

Three additional students elaborated on their experiences of chi energy.

I find it is easier when I don't concentrate on the movements. If I just let them flow I feel I perform the motions better...I feel the chi better. I'm starting to really understand what you mean when you tell us you don't want us working harder...

This was a breakthrough week for me. I came out of class with a renewed sense of "Chi." I feel so rejuvenated and so alive. It's too bad it's not earlier [in the day] because I don't want to go home."

I noticed my movements flowed much smoother. They just sort of flowed from somewhere within. My skepticism seemed to be turning into a curiosity. I started to think that perhaps with some continual commitment I'd be able to feel like this all the time???

Teh

The instructor's inner sincerity or "Teh" was reflected in some student comments.

It seems to me that our professor is not just doing a job, she is sharing and teaching a passion of hers. When the class first started...it was hard to understand why she was so happy to teach this class. But as the time went on it was easy to see that she really

loves [her] T'ai Chi Chih [practice] and that she wanted to share the pleasures and benefits of [the] T'ai Chi Chih [discipline]. I really never had a class where the teacher actually loved the subject so much that it effected the whole class. T'ai Chi Chih [class] has actually become one of my favorite classes this semester and each week this class seems to get more enjoyable.

In a room with very poor acoustics, one student said,

I can't mention enough that I really like the tone of the instructor's voice. She has a calm and relaxed spirit around her all the time; she doesn't have to raise her voice above a certain level to be heard...In a lot of my other classes, the instructor has to shout in order to get their point across.

Impressions About Justin Stone

Some students formulated their own impressions about Justin as a result of watching and listening to the PBS videotape where Justin was being interviewed by Carmen Brocklehurst.

I was impressed to see the interview with Justin Stone, in two ways: the first being he looked so young and preserved for his age, and the fact that he himself was being interviewed in a very modest form without all the glitz and glamour. It amazes me that thirty years ago this gentleman created something so wholesome and health such as [the] T'ai Chi Chih [discipline], and to this day, no one has exploited it to my knowledge.

I was amazed to see he was an older man. I thought for sure the creator would be this buff muscular man.

Lasting Impressions

In closing their journals, all but one student reported positive growth. Here are some of the concluding comments given. "Thank you for introducing me to the beauty of T'ai Chi Chih [practice]. It took me on ways I never expected to exist." "I am saddened to see the class end because it was my sanctuary." Other students concluded,

I am extremely happy that I had the opportunity to experience T'ai Chi Chih [practice] and can see the benefits it can have on an individual if it is taken seriously and practiced daily. Not only physically but also emotionally your mind and body can achieve the Yin Yang of life.

I became curious that how just combinations of few movements can have such phenomenal effects on human body and mind... [The] T'AI CHI CHIH [discipline] is not a very compli-

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Teaching at middle school

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I discovered that some students had a preconceived idea about the concept of the Yin-Yang. I needed to reframe this in an acceptable manner in order for them to feel OK with the concept of the yin-yang chi.

Here are some suggestions to be successful with teaching young adolescents: To have consistency in the method of teaching, being very focused, and leading them gently and firmly back to TCC practice in every possible way that you can imagine. Be creative. Have fun. Be very flexible. To have the counselor present for the first semester was very helpful until I got to know the students. As my comfort level grew and her confidence in my capacity to handle the class (remember those are kids presenting with behavioral difficulties), she was able to attend to other urgencies that came up during that time.

Many others students showed interest in learning the TCC discipline as they were learning what it did to this group of students but, unfortunately, even though we had planned to start a new group in January, it did not materialize due to the increased load that the counselors had to handle (many new students). We both agreed that I would continue to teach to the original group only as they were asking for it.

This was a great experience for everyone involved. All the students who continued with the TCC class throughout the year passed their State exams, showed increased confidence and softness. They showed more focus, improved attention during the class. My sense was that as they experienced the inner peace and joy that TCC practice brings, their attention was in seeking it and reexperiencing it again during and outside the classes.

TCC presentation in Italy

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all every time we practice. Humbleness and perseverance are more important than that.

* Effectiveness: we have seen the evidence through actual stories (including mine). We have seen the justified curiosity of the press toward TCC practice.

* Versatility: in the U.S. and in Italy I have been teaching

TCC classes to a broad spectrum of different disabled persons. My background is not as a specialist in the handicapped field: my master's degree is in Electrical Engineering. And yet, it was easy to be successful: in Italy, when I start teaching at a facility, after a couple of weeks, TCC classes become permanently offered to the patients).

I have told you how important it is to perform the TCC movements softly: the more advanced, the more a student will be soft. So I will conclude my speech with a tribute to softness, coming again from the *Tao Te Ching*:

There is no self-consciousness in the newborn child. Later on, the mind wanders into self-images, starts to think: "Should I do this? Is this movement right?" and loses the immediacy of the moment. As self-consciousness develops, the muscles become less supple, less like the world. But the young child is pure fluidity. It isn't aware of any separation, so all its movements are spontaneous and alive and whole and perfect.

If an adult body becomes truly supple, though, there's a quality to its movement that the child doesn't have, a texture of experience, a fourth dimension of time. When we watch a 70-year-old hand move, we feel, "Yes, that hand has lived." All the bodies it has touched, all the weights it has lifted, all the heads it has cradled are present in its movement. It is resonant with experience; the fingers curve with a sense of having been there. Whereas in a child's hand there is a sense of just arriving. The child's movement is pristine and innocent, and delightful, but a truly supple adult movement is awesome, because all life is included in it."

Teaching at a university

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cated philosophy as it may seem. It's very simple and attainable.

*[The] T'ai Chi Chih [discipline] is actually what it's said to be **JOY THROUGH MOVEMENT**. I have gained so much out of this and I am so glad that I took this class for I am less stressed, can now wake up in the morning and be ready to face my hectic life as a full time worker and a student. **THANK YOU JUSTIN STONE ... THANK YOU DR. OUSSATY.***

It's a shame that this class is not taught in all universities. I know I am thinking big here but I believe that if this class could be a core course in college this would help students with coping with the stresses that college life can give you...It has changed my life.



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 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.

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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!



T'AI CHI CHIH (TCC) CONTACTS:

Justin Stone
Originator of TCC

P.O. Box 23212
Albuquerque, NM 87192-1212

Ed Altman
Head of TCC

P.O. Box 23071
Albuquerque, NM 87192-1071
(505) 294-9065

Pam Towne
TCC Teacher Trainer

107 Calle Vista
Camarillo, CA 93010-1711
(805) 987-3607

Sandy McAlister
TCC Teacher Trainer

24835 Second St.
Hayward, CA 94541
(510) 582-2238

T'AI CHI CHIH COMMUNITY WEBSITE:

www.taichichih.org

VITAL FORCE JOURNAL CONTACTS:

Send submissions for publication by standard mail or e-mail to:

The Vital Force
Attn: Editor
P.O. Box 23068
Albuquerque, NM
87192-1068

VFJSubmissions@earthlink.net

Noel Altman
Editor
(505) 294-9065

For all Membership Services questions, including: new memberships, renewals, updates or sign-ups for Website Teacher Referral List, updates for Teacher's Directory, back issues:

Doug Harned
Membership Services
(505) 797-8442

VFJmembership@yahoo.com

For teacher referrals, general questions about T'ai Chi Chih! Joy Thru Movement, or events:

Kathy Albers
Information/Outreach
(314) 727-1983
thevitalforce@yahoo.com

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The Lighter Side...

1. At my visit to the senior center just before Christmas, I brought an assortment of small gifts that I placed on a table in front of the room. The items were unwrapped so the seniors could pick out whatever they wanted. One by one they would come up with a smile on their face, pick an item, and then go sit down. All of the seniors were happy with the assortment of gifts, all except one.

This particular lady walked up to the table with a pained look on her face and said, "Do you have any knees up there? What I really need is a new pair of knees!"

– Sharon Sirkis

2. One morning at the retirement center before TCC class, I noticed a gentleman hanging out by the doorway.

"Would you like to join us for *T'ai Chi Chih* [practice]?" I asked.

"I don't know," he said, "It just looks like a bunch of old ladies in there."

Upon hearing that, spry, 96-year-old Dell got up and walked over to him and said, "I'm not old, I've just been around a long time!"

– Sharon Sirkis

3. As a newly-accredited TCC instructor I enjoy sharing my enthusiasm with others. When I was "blessed" by a visit from the local Mormon Church, I took the opportunity to tell them what I was so excited about. I ended up doing a mini presentation complete with demonstration . . . To think I used to dread such visits!

– Debbie Cole

4. The other day as I was getting ready to go to my *T'ai Chi Chih* class, my husband said to be sure and tell my instructor that when I didn't practice, I was CHI-ting."

– Bobbie Weichman
Student of Donna McElhose

5. One of the college students told me that when she was practicing Rocking Motion at home, her dog stood up on its hind legs and started waving its paws to imitate the move.

– Sharon Sirkis

6. Every time we do Daughter on the Mountaintop and Daughter in the Valley, one of the seniors, Bob, jokingly tells me how sexist it is.

"Why aren't there any sons?" he asks.

During the last class, he added something new. "See," he said, "It's the sexism again. Daughter on the Mountaintop, Daughter in the Valley, and now it's the Lazy Man's Exercise!"

– Sharon Sirkis

7. One evening at the end of TCC class, one student said she felt so wonderful that she wanted to have sex with everyone. Without missing a beat, a guy on the opposite side of the room nervously said, "Well, you just stay right over there!"

– Sharon Sirkis

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

Pyramid Poetry

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

*How
Perfect
The sunny
Daffodil is
Trumpeting
All to
Bloom!*

- Jan Kirch
(Student of
Donna McElhose)

*Trees
sharing
energy
rich, full spirit,
projecting,
singing
out.*

- Jackie Lebow
(Student of
Jean Markey)

*Cool
Crisp breeze
Early spring
Smells wonderful
Sheets hanging
Outdoors
Ah!*

- Jackie Lebow
(Student of
Jean Markey)

*Hard
rain is
falling down
as the chi is
rising up
to my
heart!*

- Dale Buchanan

*Spring
beckons
"come outside"
dirty windows
cannot hide
April
is*

- April Leffler