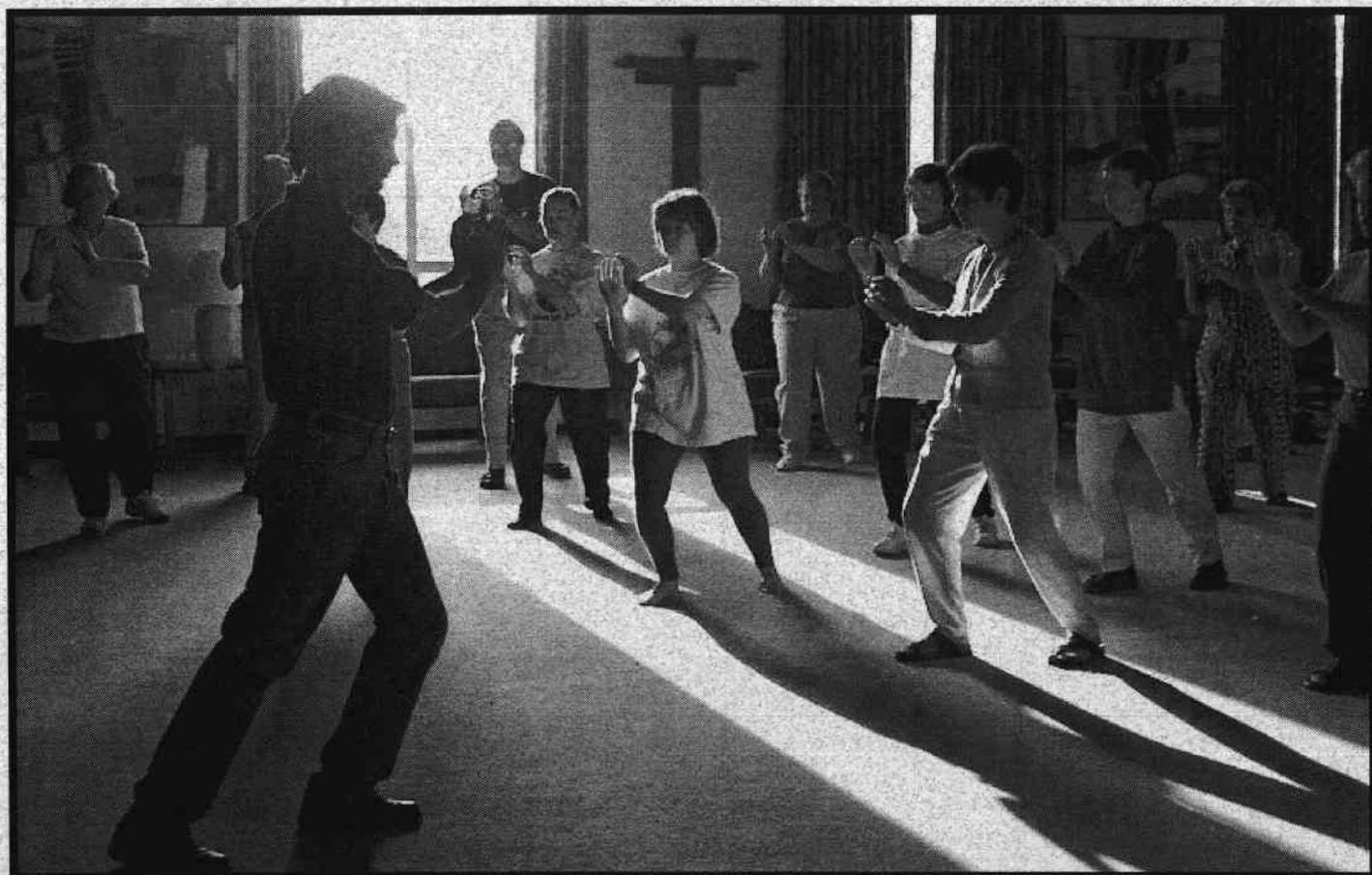


# The Vital Force

*Journal of the T'ai Chi Chih® Community*

Volume 19, No. 2

July 2002



## SEIJAKU! (the advanced form of T'ai Chi Chih practice)

Head of the T'ai Chi Chih Community Ed Altman (left foreground) leads 31 newly-accredited Seijaku teachers and 10 auditors through a practice at one of the largest Seijaku teacher trainings ever! Held in Eureka, MO in late May, the training was the first one held in the U.S. in more than three years. (See pg. 14 for coverage.)

One more Seijaku teacher training is scheduled for this year, in October, in Ringwood, NJ. (See "Calendar of Events" for details.)



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



## The Vital Force

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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 cover photo was taken by TCC teacher Gale Portman during the Seijaku teacher training course in

Eureka, MO in May. Gale is now a newly-accredited Seijaku teacher, along with 30 others who completed the training.

The photo, showing sun and shade in the practice room, seems to mirror the opposites of "hard" and "soft" in Seijaku practice. A great focus of concentration is shown on the faces and in the bodies of the teachers in the photo.

The Japanese word "Seijaku" translates as "stillness in the midst of activity" and is one of the seven principles of a Japanese Zen garden. Seijaku teacher training is open to any accredited TCC teacher.

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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

*Well, I do have news this quarter! So, let me begin...*

*First of all, Ed and I have moved to the island of Kauai in the state of Hawaii. By the time you all receive this issue, we'll be settling in. The opportunity to move there was a surprise to us when it first became apparent in mid-March, and it was a big decision to move halfway across the Pacific Ocean. What prompted the move? Many of you know that Ed has worked in the technology sector for the last 15 years, and that he earns our bread and butter there (not from our work for the T'ai Chi Chih community). Well, in the current economy, the technology sector has been hard hit since about January, 2001, with many layoffs. Ed has been out of work for 9 1/2 months of the last 18 months. He has decided to leave the field of technology at this time and move into something more solid—insurance. He's been presented with a wonderful opportunity to train in this new field with a seasoned pro (who also happens to be an old friend from the last 25 years). Since he'll be self-employed, he will be able to set his own schedule, which means he'll be able to continue to take a substantial amount of time off from that work to devote to his work for the TCC Community.*

**How will our move affect the TCC Community?** *For the remainder of this year, there won't be too much change. In addition to leading the teachers' conference in August, Ed will be conducting the advertised teacher training courses in Edmonton, AB, Canada (Sept.) and Ringwood, NJ (Oct.), as well as a previously-planned Seijaku course just prior to the NJ training. He will not be conducting the teacher training in Albuquerque, NM in November, and he also had to cancel the Seijaku workshop scheduled for mid-July in Albuquerque. Teacher Trainer Pam Towne will conduct the Albuquerque training, and the teacher renewal just before. (See "Calendar of Events" for all details on the events mentioned).*

*The real changes in Ed's event scheduling will begin next year. All future events with Ed will have to be coordinated so they can occur pretty much back-to-back once he reaches the U.S. Mainland. This will keep the travel costs down for all involved. Having just promoted Pam and Sandy McAlister to "Teacher Trainers" at the end of last year turns out to have been perfect timing. They will continue to share in the conducting of events, along with Ed. Both of them will conduct teacher trainings next year, and in the future.*

*In the next issue of The Vital Force, Ed will have a Kauai P.O. Box and phone number listed on the "Contacts" page. Between now and then, our mail will be forwarded. You can continue to use the addresses listed on the "Contacts" page. Teachers, Ed's e-mail address will not change, if you want*

*continued on page 27*



# Readers Respond

Hi Noel — Thanks for the many ways you and your staff are helping to keep the TCC community in touch with one another. The article on teaching middle grade students from the March 2002 issue has been very helpful to me because I have been asked to suggest ways TCC practice might be used with school-children, particularly in the elementary schools of the New York Archdiocese, who live near or have otherwise been affected by the World Trade Center disaster. . . .

**Sr. Mary Reynolds**  
Sparkill, NY

Dear Noel,  
I know you sent me a renewal notice for *The Vital Force*. Well, I carefully put it somewhere, and now I can't find it! So, would you please send me another one?

I took the course again with Sandy [McAlister] and learned a surprising amount. My practice is going well. I lost over 20 pounds last year and have noticed increased lung capacity. Since I have asthma, my doctor gave me one of those measuring devices. So I know the increase is real, not subjective. Numbers don't lie. . . .

**Mary Teetor Zablonty**  
San Francisco, CA  
(Student of Sandy McAlister)

**[Editor's Note: Mary, my old student from San Francisco, it's great to hear about your success! Twenty pounds is quite an achievement, and the increased lung capacity is fantastic!**

**I told you all you'd be in great hands with Sandy taking over the Kaiser classes. I'm very pleased to hear of you being willing to start again, with "beginner's mind" and see what you can learn this time. There are so many layers to T'ai Chi Chih practice.**

**I have put another renewal form in the mail to you. Thanks for your loyal membership!**

. . . By the way Noel, the last *VFJ* issue was smashing. Isn't spring a beautiful season!!! Later,

**Sandy McAlister**  
Hayward, CA

. . . As you probably know, we in the S.F. Bay Area are in the process of setting up our own website, and in preparing for this, I've looked at the TCC website. I keep seeing a typo that perhaps you could correct. In the first section, one of the benefits states: "Does not requires physical fitness," etc.

We're keeping our info. at a minimum, and having a direct link to the TCC.org site, so it will encourage people to look further into it.

Keep up the good work on the *VFJ*; I have a small inkling of how much work it is to get that thing out every quarter, and we do appreciate having it for inspiration. Love,

**Barbara Riley**  
Orinda, CA

**[Editor's Note: Thank you for bringing the typo to our attention. We have corrected it.]**

I would like a 2nd subscription, as a one year trial to see if students like to look at it in class.

Don't want to risk damage to [issues from] my main subscription!

**Carolyn Allenby**  
Annandale, NJ

**[Editor's Note: Carolyn, who is already a teacher member of the Vital Force Association, enclosed a check for \$25 for a second ("student") subscription. This is a great way to offer the *VFJ* for use in classes, either by leaving it out during breaks for perusal by students, or even creating a "lending library" whereby students can check out an issue for a week at a time before returning it for the next student. More and more teachers are doing this as a service to their classes. Then, interested students may wish to sign up themselves and begin receiving the *VFJ*.**

**Approximately 50-66% of teacher candidates entering their teacher training are already receiving *The Vital Force* (usually for the year or two prior to their training). Because their teacher training fee includes a one-year subscription to *The Vital Force*, we just convert the "student" membership to "teacher" and add an extra year to their existing *VFJ* expiration date.**

**It's a great tool to use in educating teacher prep students about the standards involved, how best to prepare, and to also begin to get ideas about where they might teach, and to what sorts of populations. Discussions can be targeted to ideas mentioned in articles, as well, beginning a dialogue between student and teacher about teaching.**

**Thank you, Carolyn, for offering *The Vital Force* to your students!**



# The Importance of Chi

By Justin Stone

**B**ecause I am anxious for T'ai Chi Chih teachers and students to understand the importance of Chi and of the TCC practice that enables us to know the CHI and use it to our advantage—nothing is more important—I am going to devote most of this article to quoting Swami Rama of India, who once held the prestigious position of Shankaracharya of Southern India. Swami says:

*Prana (Chi) means 'first unit of energy in man.' The Prana (Chi) which sustains life in the human body is the cause of the expansion of the universe. Anything you find in the phenomenal world is the manifestation of Chi. The breaths are the vehicles for Chi. The breath of the individual is a practical manifestation of Chi, the Cosmic Breath. The body and the functioning of its organs are dependant on Chi. Thought, speech, and sensation follow the Chi. It is Chi that maintains the life-link between the physical and the mental.*

*Chi is not only the life principal in the individual but it is also the Cosmic principle. Chi is the vital force in a living being which is incessantly active, whether one is awake or asleep.*

*When the Chi departs the body, all other organs follow. The breathing system is the vehicle of Chi.*

*All animate and inanimate objects of this universe are results of the vibration of Chi. This vibration of Chi is the prime cause of all events happening in the universe. Chi is the Cosmic life principle. It is that which makes us living beings and produces vibrations.*

---

*"Chi is the Cosmic life principle. It is that which makes us living beings and produces vibrations. Without vibrations and movements this world would not exist. We are able to live because every part of the immeasurable realm of Chi is constantly vibrating. We are, in fact, nothing but a mass of vibrations—a unit of the energy of the infinite Cosmic Chi. . . . Everything is caused by the Chi, which has its own laws. CHI is the Universal Life. All of us have come into existence by the power of Chi. Every object in this Universe obeys the order of the same Mother Energy, the CHI."*

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*Without vibrations and movements this world would not exist. We are able to live because every part of the immeasurable realm of Chi is constantly vibrating. We are, in fact, nothing but a mass of vibrations—a unit of the energy of the infinite Cosmic Chi. This Cosmic Chi, the Cosmic energy that is sometimes called "Intrinsic Energy," in the Orient, exists from eternity to eternity. Everything is caused by the Chi, which has its own laws. CHI is the Universal Life. All of us have come into existence by the power of Chi. Every object in this Universe*

*obeys the order of the same Mother Energy, the CHI.*

This is pretty powerful stuff, I admit. I will soon be 86 years of age and have not noticed much deterioration mentally or physically, though I cannot speak for the future. Undoubtedly this is due to T'ai Chi Chih practice, and I am certainly grateful for the T'ai Chi Chih discipline making it possible to somewhat merge with this all-powerful force. If the T'ai Chi Chih movements are practiced consistently and correctly, one can get the eternal benefits. Is superficial activity a better way to expend your efforts? Think about it.



# The Path of Unity

By Ed Altman

At the recent *T'ai Chi Chih* retreat weekend in Sedona, AZ, I was giving detailed instructions on the movements when a student asked "How do you keep track of all these details during the movements? What are you thinking about during your *T'ai Chi Chih* practice?" In order to address these questions, we must first agree to distinguish between the limited, conceptual mind (small "m") and the unlimited, Universal Mind (capital "M"). The thinking mind is merely a function of the brain while the latter encompasses a much larger array of senses. Yet each has its place as we learn and practice the *T'ai Chi Chih* movements.

The important thing to understand about the conceptual mind is that it can only focus on one thought at a time. There may be many thoughts swirling around, but they are completely independent of each other and vying for a moment of attention. The mind cannot handle all of them at once. In fact, the more the conceptual mind is used during *T'ai Chi Chih* practice, the more scattered and distracted it becomes. This is why we focus on the soles of the feet or the T'an T'ien to develop concentration and ground the Chi. With continued focus, the distracted mind eventually settles down and we receive additional benefits from our personal practice.

When I practice the *T'ai Chi Chih* movements, I focus on the *sensations of the weight shift* in either the soles of the feet or the T'an T'ien. In the soles of the feet, I sense the subtle change in the center of balance as the weight shifts from one foot to the other. I am continually amazed at how much information is conveyed about my practice with this technique, yet few seem to understand its

importance. It is more like "listening" with the soles of the feet rather than just thinking about them. Similarly, when focusing on the T'an T'ien, I sense how the movement originates from this area and flows outward like a wave through every part of the body. Each part of the body is flooded with Chi and spontaneously aligns to it. Every part of the body instinctively understands how to serve the flow of the Chi. This may result in the waist turning slightly at the end of the weight shift, or in the arms extending or contracting with the flow of the Chi rather than moving on their own. The flow of the Chi is the unifying force in the *T'ai Chi Chih* movements and it is guided by Mind, not by thinking.

The challenge is that although we first learn the *T'ai Chi Chih* movements by thinking our way through them, we eventually discover that we can proceed no further with this method. Eventually we move beyond our well-practiced technique and transcend the limited, thinking mind. This transition to a reliance on Universal Mind occurs naturally as the concentration shifts from one point (such as the soles of the feet) to having no *exclusive* point of attention. The awareness of Universal Mind is now free to permeate every facet of the movement, and nothing is excluded. Awareness is present at every point, in every moment of our practice, and all the disparate pieces become unified. This is when *T'ai Chi Chih* practice has become a moving meditation. It is in such moments that great truths are revealed and we come to know our true place in the Universe. When we are finally willing to let go of our need for control and allow the Chi to take the lead, we have begun to explore the path of Unity.



March 16-17, 2002

# More than 40 students and teachers benefit from teacher trainer's visit to IL

By Donna McElhose  
Event host

**Come  
Students  
And Teachers  
Workshop Offered  
Awaking  
Insights  
New**

**Come:** they did—from many places.

**Students:** 33 in all, some from the local area and others from as far away as New York, Mississippi, and Wisconsin.

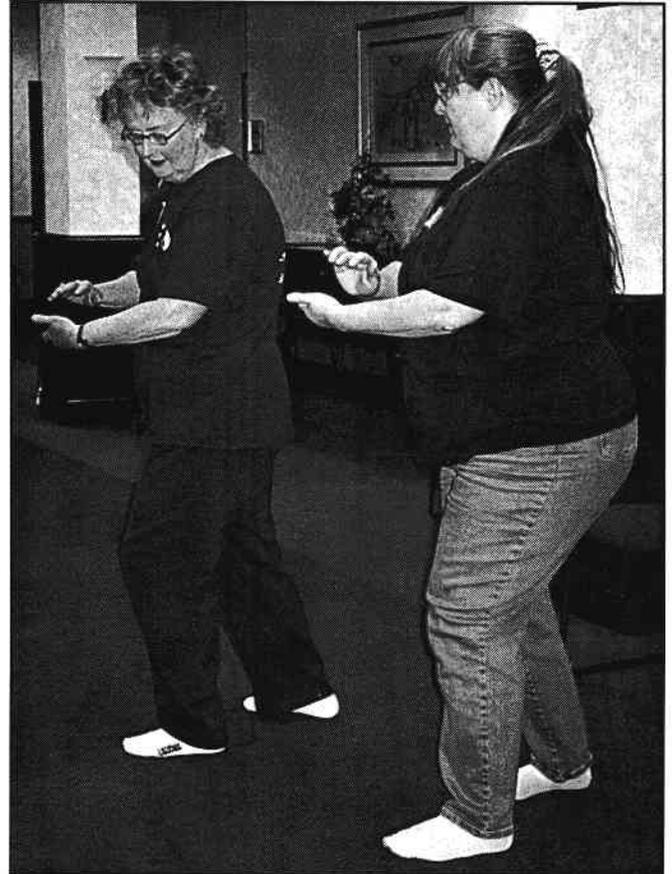
**And Teachers:** 10 from Chicagoland, St. Louis, MO, St. Paul, MN, Batesville, IN. Some of these instructors have been practicing the TCC movements for several years, while

Wendy Howard and Diana Durkin are newly accredited instructors. Both students and instructors came to deepen their understanding of their TCC practice.

**Workshop Offered:** the first opportunity in three-and-a-half years for area TCC students and teachers to have a teacher trainer come and lead a workshop. The weekend began on Friday night with an abundant potluck dinner put on by local students Bobbie Weichman, Nancy Lecraw, Barbara Neises, Diane McQueen, Clare and Gregg Bradley, Rudy Caday and Jan Kirsch.

The dinner allowed the workshop attendees to meet and get to know each other before the workshop itself. For students in the local area, it was great meeting TCC students and teachers from other places, expanding the TCC community.

**Awaking:** the joy of each movement is what Course Instructor Sandy McAlister, teacher trainer, provided in the day-long review and practice on Saturday. After a few minutes of signing in and getting settled, we formed a circle and began the day. She covered the 20 movements in



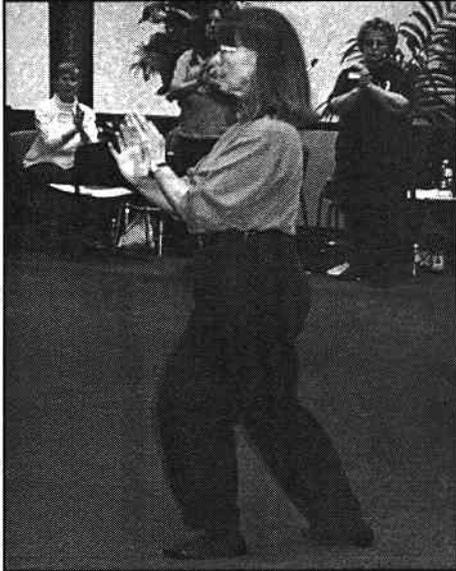
(L-R): Nancy Lecraw and Clare Bradley, students of Event Host Donna McElhose, work together on refining the forward pull of Anchor Taffy.  
Photo: Donna McElhose

turn, and there was a brief time for comments on most of the movements. Many of the attendees took notes as we went along. I believe everyone would say that there was an awakened spirit to their TCC practice that they could take home.

**Insights:** offered by Sandy into the softness, synchronicity, and circularity of the moves gave many of us much to think about. We appreciated her demonstration of flowing from the center, body alignment and weight shift. As we each followed Sandy's lead, we found that her grace of no effort took us some effort to



Teacher Wendy Howard works one-on-one with Ron Richardson, student of Kathy Albers.  
Photo: Donna McElhose



Course Instructor Sandy McAlister demonstrates a point about *Daughter on the Mountaintop* as students join her in practicing the movement. Photo: Donna McElhose

achieve, but insight brought each movement closer to becoming a part of the whole.

**New:** friends, new feelings, and a new practice. Each attendee received something special for him/herself, perhaps making their TCC practice new to them.

*Special Thank You* to the student volunteers who made this workshop flow so smoothly: Nancy Lecraw, Bobbie Weichman, Clare Bradley, Diana McQueen, Jan Kirch, Barbara Neises, Jeanné Lohfink and the husbands who showed up to help move those heavy tables. Thank you! This was a success because of your commitment.

*Donna was the most gracious host. The room provided was beautiful and warm, and working with Sandy again a joyous learning experience. Thank you all!*

**– Wendy Howard**  
Instructor

*The entire program sustained excellent focus throughout. Although the 40+ was a large group, individual attention was still given. The net results: everybody came away with ideas to help them take their practice to the next level. Sandy's direction was excellent and Donna's preparation and facilities couldn't be better. Follow this workshop as a model. You won't go wrong.*

**– Rudy Caday**  
Student of Donna McElhose

*What a marvelous day! Careful, lovingly going through each movement/eager questions thoughtfully answered/a joyous spirit throughout. Sandy could not have been more patiently helpful to all of us. And Donna and her helpers could not have been more welcoming. I know that I will be able to use some of her suggestions in my own practice and feel very grateful for that. Thank you!*

**– Anne Perkins**  
Instructor

*It is so wonderful to gather with others outside of a particular class setting. Sometimes I feel a little isolated when I practice. There's a marvelous energy when gathered with others. Thank you.*

**– Diana Welsh Durkin**  
Instructor

*Thank you Sandy, Donna and students. Thank you T'ai Chi Chih [practice]!*

**– Robin Kidd**  
Instructor

*A true feeling of Trust and Community was developed thru Sandy's soft, and clear teaching. Her ability to listen, with no judgmental attitude helped me to internalize the principles. My Thanks to you.*

**– Fran Spellman**  
Student of Paula Weiner



(L-R): Students Sharon Potts and Diane McQueen, along with Teacher Anne Perkins, enjoy listening to someone's story during the pre-event potluck dinner, hosted by the local students.

Photo: Donna McElhose



April 18-21, 2002

# Sedona, AZ TCC retreat boasts another great turnout for second straight year

By Nancy Lecraw  
Student of Donna McElhose

A *T'ai Chi Chih* retreat in Sedona with Ed Altman! With anticipation, excitement, and a little apprehension, five of us, students of Donna McElhose, left Illinois in mid-April for Arizona. The excitement was, in part, the prospect of spending four days in the gentle, warm sunshine (quite unlike the cloudy, cold springs typical of the Midwest). Our anticipation was of learning and exploring new ways to deepen our practice with others who shared our enthusiasm.

When we arrived at the retreat center, Course Host Deanne Hodgson welcomed us and the 50 other students and teachers. Eighteen states and Canada were represented. "We were over 50 very diverse people, widely spread in age, geographic area, interests, experience, and tem-



Students and teachers practice the *T'ai Chi Chih* movements on the rocky bluff overlooking the rest of the group below in one of the pre-breakfast practice sessions. Photo: Andy Anderson

perament," said Clare Bradley, student of Donna McElhose. "The almost immediate atmosphere of

acceptance and mutual support was pretty amazing."



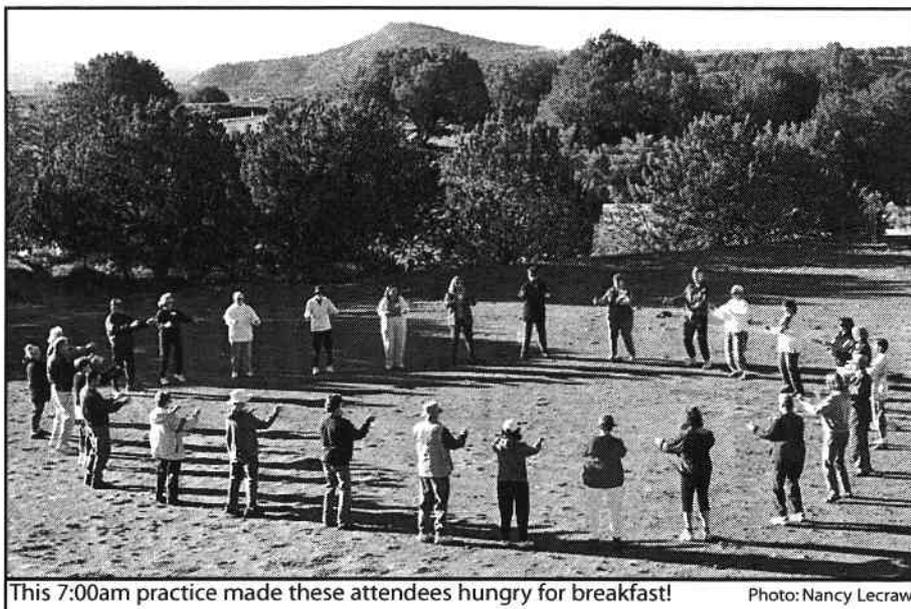
Course instructor Ed Altman demonstrates a point about the "winding up" in *Anchor Taffy* as attendees watch. Photo: Andy Anderson

Since this was not only a workshop but also a retreat, Deanne had planned that there would be a flow between *T'ai Chi Chih* instruction and practice, relaxation, ceremony, and celebration. In this lovely place, Sedona, Ed's hope was that everyone would feel the inner stillness and appreciate the beauty surrounding them. From the beginning of Thursday evening's candle lighting ceremony to the last practice Sunday morning, I felt an increasing sense of peace, focus, and gratitude to those teachers and students so ready to share their experiences and to offer their help in our *T'ai Chi Chih* practice.



We started each day with a *T'ai Chi Chih* set done in the early morning sun. The air was a little cool, but the energy we created seemed to warm me. Breakfast followed, and later, sessions with Ed. The presence of Teacher Trainer Pam Towne was a real bonus. In all, we had six sessions, all of us together with

times when experienced teachers helped students. Ed made general comments about *T'ai Chi Chih* practice, specific comments about the movements, and demonstrated the movements, followed by practice. Before coming to the retreat, I had learned some about proper alignment, shifting of the weight, the concept of letting go, the release of tension, and the importance of what Justin Stone calls "the interior landscape." The importance of sensing and feeling as one continues to do the movements, to feel the chi expand and contract, were little-known abstractions before, but became much more clear during the two-and-a-half days. Jeanné Lofink, student of Donna McElhose, commented, "(It was wonderful) to relax and learn from the chi. The concept of feeling my way along was a new one, because it



This 7:00am practice made these attendees hungry for breakfast!

Photo: Nancy Lecraw

implied respect of listening to my body and the chi." Bobbie Weichman, another of Donna's students, added, "I learned to look at my practice from a new point of view: to really put 'self' aside when practicing, to think less and just feel the moves and be aware of the chi."

Between sessions we climbed the red rocks to enjoy the panorama of colorful formations around us. We investigated the hiking paths, dis-

covered an unexpected waterfall, a golden statue of the spirit Dahn Gun, and several energy vortexes. Sometimes, we just sat quietly and absorbed the serenity. The retreat center also serves as a healing center, and whatever our different views, it did seem we were "standing on holy ground" — the theme of the retreat.

Evenings were times to gather in the conference center or around the bonfire, sharing experiences about *T'ai Chi Chih* practice, experiencing peacefulness, or celebrating with dancing, blowing bubbles, and playing musical instruments.

At home, we often begin our *T'ai Chi Chih* classes with a thought of gratitude. Today, I have many such

thoughts regarding the retreat: to the 80-year-old Florida ladies, brand new to *T'ai Chi Chih* practice, who inspired me with their spirit and sense of adventure, to Deanne for her graciousness, and to Ed, Pam, Noel, and all the other teachers and students who helped me feel a part of the *T'ai Chi Chih* community.

Would the five of us go again? In a heartbeat.



(L-R): Attendees Bobbie Weichman, Gregg Bradley, Jeanné Lohfink, Clare Bradley and Nancy Lecraw, all students of Illinois teacher Donna McElhose, made the trek to Arizona together.

Photo provided by: Bobbie Weichman



May 4, 2002

# Teacher trainer leads first *T'ai Chi Chih* workshop in CA in two years

By Athene Mantle  
Event Host

A bright light was shining from the Oakland hills on May 4th as 44 *T'ai Chi Chih* teachers and students gathered for an all-day workshop in Northern California. Participants arrived with open hearts and all smiles ready to sink into the theme "Going Deeper and Building Community". Our workshop instructor, new Teacher Trainer Pam Towne, skillfully led us with her gentle and flowing manner to a new level of awareness both with each other and in our practices. Pam had everyone ground, focus in the soles of the feet, soften the knees, and carefully get their balance each time before stepping out. For new teacher Bev Geiger, this lesson really sank in. New teacher Lois Arrigotti was grateful for a deeper sense of connectedness between hands and feet learned from Pam's lesson on synchronicity. Kendelyn Beck, one of the 25 students and one of five future teacher candidates, said, "Pam is an excellent teacher. I certainly came away with much to incorporate into my practice..." Everyone also felt fortunate to have new Teacher Trainer Sandy McAlister join us in the afternoon and assist us with her expertise.

An amazing energy accumulated in the room as the day progressed. "Intense, wonderful and full of wonder" was how student Maureen Murphy described the day. It is certain that teacher Judith Schwartz was not

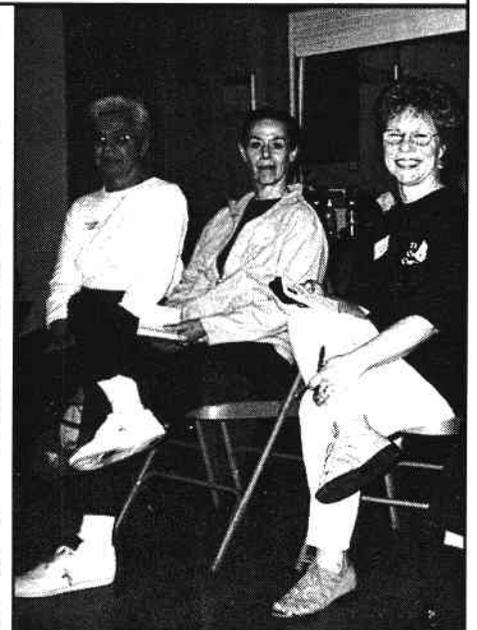


(L-R): Event Host Athene Mantle catches up with fellow teachers Judy Tretheway and Judith Schwartz.

Photo provided by Athene Mantle

alone in her "experiential knowing of JOY" as the day unfolded. It's no wonder that our closing practice was extraordinary as we silently came to a gentle conclusion — 44 people moving as one. Teacher Virginia Cepeda expressed it beautifully when she said that as the workshop concluded, "Many of us were filled with wonderful and varied feelings, but LOVE touched us all".

We are truly blessed and wish to give thanks to Justin for this beautiful gift to us all. For the *T'ai Chi Chih* Community a new era has begun as Ed Altman, along with Pam Towne, Sandy McAlister and the many dedicated *T'ai Chi Chih* teachers gently guide us into the new millenium.



(L-R): Virginia Carrillo, student of Virginia Lee Cepeda, and teachers Sally McLaughlin and Roberta Taggart smile during a break.

Photo: Athene Mantle



*Exploring old boundaries, discovering new ways to be, and expanding consciousness is what the workshop was all about.*

**– Roberta Taggart**  
Instructor

*Pam told us to begin each movement by sinking our weight into one foot and then waiting until we felt balanced before stepping out, to avoid having to rush to catch our balance.... I've surely read or heard this before, but this time, I was really ready to hear it. Sandy mentioned that people are only able to absorb a certain amount of information at one time, that learning is a process of adding small amounts of information to what's been learned before. Both concepts were expressed in the context of practicing and teaching the TCC form. Yet they apply to the inner practice which for me involves an ongoing struggle with patience and self-acceptance. Many thanks to you Athene, for making the workshop learning opportunity possible.*

**– Bev Geiger**  
Instructor

*I have a deep sense of gratefulness — to Pam for taking the time to lead this workshop; it was wonderful working with her to refine my movements, to Athene for all of her efforts to put together such a successful, enjoyable day, to my fellow attendees for coming together to learn and share how T'ai Chi Chih practice has benefited their lives, and to my instructor, Sandy McAlister, who has helped me refine my practice on a weekly basis. Their enthusiasm for this form of moving meditation is truly contagious!*

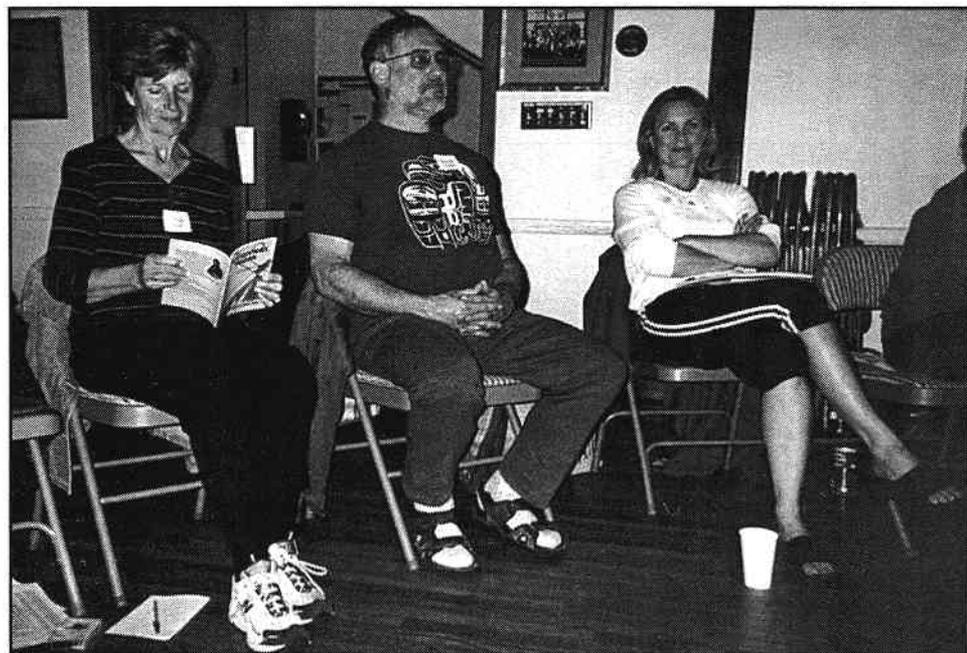
**– Lisa Thorburn**  
Future Teacher Candidate



Kendelyn Beck, student of Barbara Riley and John Steinmetz, chats with Course Instructor Pam Towne during a break. Photo: Athene Mantle

*What I didn't know before this workshop: That the first two movements are considered warm-ups and there is no need for a physical warm-up before starting.*

**– Mary Jane Holmes**  
Student of Sandy McAlister



Dan Liberthson, student of Sandy McAlister, sits between teachers Linda Meyer (left), who assisted with registration for the event, and Linda Prosche, during a break. Photo: Athene Mantle

*It was nice to see everybody doing the same thing. I could concentrate on refinement because everyone knew the movements.*

**– Gail Thistle**  
Student of Ilse "Joy" Meyer

*Saturday was my first introduction to the TCC community, and it was marvelous. My gratitude to you for all that you did to make it all happen. I continue to feel the gentle, connecting, opening energy of the day.*

**– Susan Kenney**  
Future Teacher Candidate



May 10-12, 2002

# First TCC teachers' retreat held in MN

By Nancy Werner-Azarski  
Event Co-Host

The idea for a teacher's retreat came out of our regional meeting at the national conference in California 2001. We discussed it with Ed. He thought it was a good idea and so we started the planning process. What we hoped for in hosting the retreat, was to have a small number of teachers with the intention of working intensely on their personal practice. Our two main goals were to have lots of practice time and specific feedback from Ed about each individual's practice. After reading the evaluations, I think we were able to reach both of those goals.

We started on Friday at 3pm and concluded on Sunday after lunch. The schedule was flexible except for meals as we held the event at a Ben-



(L-R): Course Instructor Ed Altman, Event Co-Host Ron Barker, attending Teacher Trainer Sandy McAlister, and Event Co-Hosts Nancy Werner-Azarski and Sharon Sloper are all BIG smiles at the end of the successful retreat!

Photo: Rodney Anderson

edictine sister's center. Ed Altman led each session and we were excited to also have Teacher Trainer Sandy McAlister there to give assistance with the teaching. Thirty people attended but we believe 40 would be the

maximum number in order to achieve individual feedback. Some attendees commuted each day but most stayed at the center and felt that added to their experience. The daytime sessions included lecture and practice. Ed concentrated on stance, forward/backward shifting of the weight and side-to-side shifting of the weight. On Friday evening we discussed the movement checklist and teacher's training. The discussion officially ended at 8pm but most of the group stayed—we tell you this so you know when you

host your retreat, you need snacks! Saturday evening was centered on sharing an experience or a reading/quote/book that had assisted you on your *T'ai Chi Chih* journey. This session was mostly about the formless aspect of T.C.C. practice. And as one evaluation form said, it was a great time to build community.

Our first goal, lots of practice time, depends on your definition of practice. Is it only how many times you get in a complete practice of the form or how much moving we were able to do? From the evaluations, we did not have enough complete practices of the form but everyone liked the opportunities to make corrections in their stance and shifting of the weight. As more retreats are held, each community will need to solve that issue in their own way. And our second goal, individual feedback on one's form, had come out of our local community's discussion. We asked Ed and Sandy to give us specific feedback during one of our first sessions. Ed asked for



(L-R): Teachers Mary Wichmann and Donna McElhose work together on checking if the elbows are straightening, during one of the breakout sessions.

Photo: Rodney Anderson



(L-R): Teachers Ruth Anne Plourde and Paula Arnold share a hug during a break.  
Photo: Rodney Anderson

permission for them to do so and everyone agreed. It went extremely well as one heard Sandy and Ed say "You're moving better" or "Good" as often as they made corrections. Besides the content, this was the best gift that they gave us. Ed encouraged us to act as a mirror for our fellow teachers as a way to deepen each other's practice. For 28 teachers, giving and receiving corrections will be much easier as we follow their example. When you host your teach-

er's retreat, you may set other goals, but irregardless of your intended goals, the best unintentional result is building the community of T.C.C. teachers. It was like attending the national conference without the numbers and going to teacher's training without the pressure. However, this does not replace either one. There is nothing like being with 200+ T.C.C. teachers and it is always a learning experience to audit teacher's training and to commit to the new teachers. This retreat option does allow for intense, individual deepening of your T.C.C. practice. We hope that other communities offer this retreat option as an additional learning experience for teachers. Anyone interested in details about the schedule or planning, please contact us at [ronbarker@attbi.com](mailto:ronbarker@attbi.com).

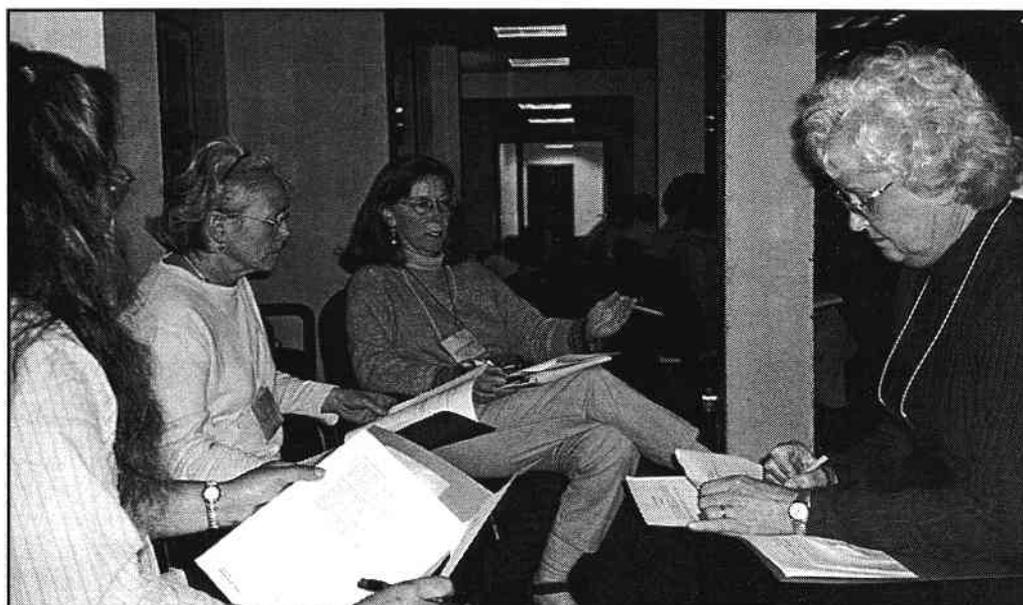
The content was unforgettable. As one participant said, "I can't wait to incorporate this way of thinking and feeling into my practice." Ed's lectures and moving, along with Sandy's input, were very helpful. The idea of softening the leg as you shift the weight to it was presented by Ed in

words and example. It was so helpful that we hope he will write and speak more about it.

On a personal note, I want to thank the teachers who attended. They made the event joy-filled. I want to thank Ron Barker and Sharon Sloper as they made the planning easy. And we all want to thank the sisters at the Benedictine center—the energy was so positive and supportive.

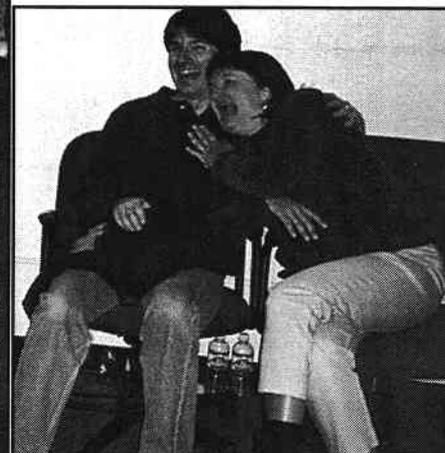
At the end of the retreat, I noticed for the first time in three days, this broken ceramic pot in a brightly lit display case. The edge or lip of the pot was jagged and incomplete in one spot. A similar complete pot was next to it. The incomplete pot caught my eye and it seemed so beautiful to me. It reminded me of my T.C.C. practice, not complete and yet so beautiful. Thank you to Ed and Sandy for their teaching and commitment. And thank you for honoring us where we are and helping us to see/feel where T.C.C. practice can lead us.

And one last thank you. Thank you Justin. We are so thankful for your life and your gift of the T.C.C. practice. Our hearts are filled with gratitude.



Attending Teacher Trainer Sandy McAlister (center) leads a small-group discussion with (L-R): Event Co-Host Nancy Werner-Azarski, and teachers Wendy Howard and Donna McElhose.

Photo: Rodney Anderson



Course Instructor Ed Altman and teacher Caroline Guilott share a hug and a howl during a break!  
Photo: Rodney Anderson



May 24-26, 2002

# New Seijaku teachers total 31 at one of largest trainings ever held

By Kathy Albers  
Course Host

I'm finding that writing an article about a Seijaku training that I've just hosted to be challenging as I continue to enjoy the results of the weekend's events. Part of me says, "Just the facts M'am." But the training has been so profound that the facts seem to understate what really occurred. I feel facts alone take away from the depth that I and many other attendees experienced.

What might one expect to encounter in a three day Seijaku accreditation training? Imagine a retreat setting 40 minutes from the city, with birds and frogs singing, a river, walking trails, swings and benches. Add a deeply heart felt spiritual growth opportunity. Mix in personal discovery while being in a community that feels safe and supportive and top it off with fun. That's what we had at the May 24-26, 2002 Seijaku Accreditation and teachers renewal, just outside St. Louis, in Eureka, MO.

Ed Altman led the 31 trainees along with 10 auditors, first with an optional three hours of *Tai Chi Chih* basics [during a Teachers' Renewal on Friday]. Fine tuning our *Tai Chi Chih* practice led the way to deeper understanding of the concepts of Seijaku. Holding fast and letting go, soft and hard, we learned and relearned Justin Stone's "maximum chi program". Within the depths of the Seijaku experience, "letting go" takes on different forms. There was letting go of inhibitions, preconcep-



And the new Seijaku teachers are...*(in alphabetical order)*: Nancy Adams, Steve Albers, Andy Anderson, Bobbie Anderson, Renza Baker, Mary Cameris, Deborah Cole, Sherry Corson, Deedie Cote, Margery Erickson, Lucy Ann Fleischman, Ted Fleischman, Constance Fraatz, Roseann Heinrich, Marty Henry, Stella Jaidar, Darlene Karasik, Robin Kidd, Susan Kissinger, Blair Laden, Cathy Lehman, Marian Massman, Catherine Millman, Bill Mishler, Gale Portman, Holly Sanders, Jim Shorr, Lucky Sikora, Vida Wackerling, Mickey White, Mary Wichmann. Also pictured: Course Host Kathy Albers and Course Instructor Ed Altman. Photo provided by Kathy Albers

tions of what Seijaku would be, of material possessions, of past experiences, and expectations. Some of the group shared their weekend's processing and noted shifts in consciousness as well as physicality as the energy moved through them.

Because of the large size of the group, Ed said this was the size of conferences years ago. In a way it kind of reminded me of a conference. People came from 16 different states. It was like a bunch of good friends getting together with a purpose. Saturday night some of us took an optional "field trip" to the big city (St. Louis) and got the best frozen custard on the planet, "Ted Drewes" on historical Route 66.

Even though I hosted the event with help from Catherine Millman

and Gale Portman, I actually got to participate in the whole training. Everything seemed to flow easily. I'm sure the group had a lot to do with it. Everyone who was there had a mature and responsible attitude in their approach to the Seijaku experience. Ed led the course with humility and wit. I am grateful to the people who attended. They were an awesome group.

Although the Seijaku training is over, many people made commitments to deepen their practice. Now we all have a few more tools with which to do so. The Chi helps to mature our practice, and the consciousness of the *Tai Chi Chih* family continues to unify. We are grateful for the knowledge that Justin Stone has freely given us.



June 8, 2002

# First-ever TCC workshop in Indiana attracts 43 teachers and students

By Donnis Minx  
and Ann Daly  
Event Co-Hosts

The Indianapolis *T'ai Chi Chih* community relaxed into the soles of its feet and accepted the challenge to host the first-ever TCC workshop in this area during the weekend of June 8-9, 2002. The result was a day-and-a-half of learning, fellowship and deepened *T'ai Chi Chih* practice for teachers and students from across the Midwest.

On Saturday, Teacher Trainer Pam Towne led a group of 43 students

and teachers through a day of practice and renewal. Gathered at the Unitarian-Universalist Church of Indianapolis, we enjoyed the round-room sanctuary meeting space. Windows around the room surrounded us with the sights and sounds of a beautiful late spring day. Colorful kites already hung in the sanctuary made for a festive atmosphere and an ever-present reminder for each participant to "float on the breeze".

Although the participants were from six states (Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio), practicing together in one

large circle quickly brought us together in the spirit of the *T'ai Chi Chih* community. Pam's frequent, gentle coaxing to "relax into the soles of the feet" kept us grounded.

Sunday morning's program provided eight advanced students and six teachers



Course Instructor Pam Towne makes a point about *Push Pull*.  
Photo: Donnis Minx

the opportunity to delve deeper into their practice. In addition to leading us through the moves and principles of the *T'ai Chi Chih* discipline, Pam also discussed the requirements for successful teacher candidate preparation. During our four short hours together at one of the OASIS sites where many TCC classes have been taught, we refined moves, deepened our understanding, and recommitted ourselves to *T'ai Chi Chih* practice.



Attendees practice *Passing Clouds* in the beautiful meeting space.  
Photo: Donnis Minx



# Calendar of Events

<p><b>Aug. 1 thru 4, 2002</b></p> <p><b>17TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL T'AI CHI CHIH TEACHERS' CONFERENCE</b></p> <p><b>Location:</b> San Antonio, TX  <b>Contact:</b> Stella Jaidar c/o            The Center for Spirituality &amp; the Arts            4707 Broadway            San Antonio, TX 78209            Stella's Phone: (210) 349-7597            e-mail: Sjaidar@stic.net</p> <p>Registration by Aug. 1, 2002: \$360            Non-U.S. Teachers' fee: \$270</p>	<p><b>Oct. 18 thru 20, 2002</b></p> <p><b>SEIJAKU TEACHER TRAINING</b>  <i>w / ED ALTMAN</i></p> <p><b>Location:</b> Ringwood, NJ  <b>Contact:</b> Dan Pienciak            P.O. Box 122            Ocean Grove, NJ 07756            Phone: (732) 988-5865            e-mail: wakeupdaniel@aol.com</p> <p>Seijaku Teacher Training Fee: \$300            Auditing Seijaku Teachers: \$20</p>
<p><b>Sept. 9 thru 14, 2002</b></p> <p><b>TCC TEACHER TRAINING</b>  <i>w / ED ALTMAN</i></p> <p><b>Location:</b> Edmonton, AB CANADA  <b>Contact:</b> Margo Carpenter            12311 Aspen Dr. W            Edmonton, AB T6J2B6            CANADA            Phone: (780) 434-9433            e-mail: carpkids@telusplanet.net</p> <p>TCC Teacher Training Fee: \$450</p>	<p><b>Oct. 22 thru 27, 2002</b></p> <p><b>TCC TEACHER TRAINING</b>  <i>w / ED ALTMAN</i></p> <p><b>Location:</b> Ringwood, NJ  <b>Contact:</b> Dan Pienciak            P.O. Box 122            Ocean Grove, NJ 07756            Phone: (732) 988-5865            e-mail: wakeupdaniel@aol.com</p> <p>TCC Teacher Training Fee: \$450</p>
<p><b>Oct. 5, 2002</b></p> <p><b>TCC WORKSHOP</b>  <i>w / SANDY McALISTER</i></p> <p><b>Location:</b> Roswell, GA  <b>Contact:</b> Constance Fraatz            132 Junaluska Dr.            Woodstock, GA 30188</p> <p>-or- Sheryl Adair, (404) 497-0252            -or- Gwen White, (770) 594-1720</p> <p>TCC Workshop fee (students): \$70            TCC Workshop fee (teachers): \$55</p> <p><i>(Note: Teachers receive \$5 off their fee for each student they bring)</i></p>	<p><b>Nov. 9</b></p> <p><b>TCC WORKSHOP (9am - 5pm)</b>  <i>w / PAM TOWNE</i></p> <p><b>Nov. 10, 2002</b></p> <p><b>TCC TEACHER PREP WORKSHOP (9:30am - 3pm)</b>  <i>w / PAM TOWNE</i></p> <p><b>Location:</b> Bethesda, MD (Wash. DC Area)  <b>Contact:</b> Dale Buchanan            502-A 2nd st, SE            Washington, DC 20003            Phone: (202) 546-3131            e-mail: dalebuchanan@aol.com</p> <p>TCC Workshop fee: \$65            TCC Teacher Prep fee: \$45            Discounted rate for <b>both</b> days: \$100</p> <p><i>(Note: Both events are open to students and teachers. Teachers are encouraged to attend with their candidates. Space is limited to only 35 attendees)</i></p>



**Nov. 16, 2002**      **TCC TEACHER RENEWAL** (9am - 4pm)  
w / PAM TOWNE  
**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: \$40

**Nov. 18 thru 23, 2002**      **TCC TEACHER TRAINING**  
w / PAM TOWNE  
**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

TCC Teacher Training Fee: \$450

*(Note: Auditing teachers are highly encouraged to attend the one-day renewal on Nov. 16th to better be ready to assist teacher candidates during the weeklong training.)*

**Nov. 20, 2002**      **DAY OF "JOY THRU MOVEMENT"**  
**CELEBRATING T'AI CHI CHIH PRACTICE**  
**Location:** Worldwide

## POSSIBLE FUTURE EVENTS:

If interested in an event described below, contact the host. These events will only happen if there are enough people interested.

**Sept. 2002**      **TCC WORKSHOP**  
**Location:** Los Angeles, CA Area  
**Contact:** Roberta Taggart  
Phone: (310) 406-2169  
e-mail: taggart1@earthlink.net

**Oct. 6, 2002**      **TCC TEACHER PREP**  
**Location:** Roswell, GA  
**Contact:** Kathy Mimms (for Constance Fraatz)  
Phone: (770) 642-8939  
e-mail: TaichiGa@aol.com

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



## Community response to issue

# Teachers respond to request from Head of the TCC Community about problem with deferral rate of 12%

**[Editor's Note: In the last issue of *The Vital Force*, Ed Altman, Head of the T'al Chi Chih Community, updated us all on the troubling fact that, despite consistent efforts on his part, and on the part of so many conscientious teachers in the community, ill-prepared candidates continue to be referred to teacher training courses, and the deferral rate remains steady at about 12% per year.**

**In his article, he proposed the possibility of requiring candidates to produce a homemade videotape of themselves doing their practice to be submitted to a teacher trainer and evaluated for competency to attend a future teacher training. A separate charge of \$50-75 would have to be paid by the candidate to compensate the trainer for the time involved in watching and evaluating the tape.**

**He ended the article by opening the discussion to all teachers: How can we best address this problem?**

**Responses flowed in from all regions of this country and Canada. They were varied, and follow on this and the next nine pages, with a fresh response from Ed.**

**He notes that this discussion will be continued at this year's teachers' conference before he makes any definite decisions about the new direction he will go in to address this ongoing problem. Be sure to attend the conference in San Antonio, TX during the first weekend in August, teachers, so your input will be heard!**

**W**e certainly need to do something to get candidates better prepared for training. I, for one, am always surprised when I see candidates arrive without the basics. It seems so sad that more focus can't be spent on what would be such a wonderful experience in TCC practice and true teacher training, if everyone came prepared. I don't know how anyone can send someone to the Albuquerque training, especially, without the basics.

*Roberta Taggart  
Redondo Beach, CA*

**. . . Ed, you really have a situation to address that does not seem to go away. There have been many articles written by you and others concerning teacher preparation. The info on the web site concerning this topic is about as explicit as you can get..... Perhaps a self video of the candidate practicing TCC could be sent along with their application and could eliminate this sort of thing from happening in the future. Of course you are not looking for perfection or none of us would be teachers. The knowledge gained from the Teacher Training week cannot be measured..... Those candidates who do not know all of the movements or those who seem to be practicing some other discipline (other than TCC) would be evident from viewing their video.... Teachers need to realize the importance,**

actually the necessity, of auditing teacher trainings. It is so unfair to the candidate to be sent unprepared. They rely on their teacher's judgment and trust that they are prepared adequately. They know no difference.

There are apparently many TCC teachers out there who need drastic correction in their practice. It will just take more time. You have helped so many of us take our practice to a deeper level and I think that you might have to consider making audits mandatory in some way — at least requiring that an audit be attended by the referring teacher within a two year time frame prior to referring a candidate for Teacher Training.

Ed, I wish you well and know that you will find the best means to address this situation. . .

. . . A possibility that has come to mind concerning teachers auditing TCC Teacher Training..... The \$50 candidate referral fee could be retained in a fund designated to assist teachers who are in need of help in defraying costs (travel, etc.) in order to audit Teacher Training.

Also, I think it is fair to **at least** ask those teachers who have not been active within the TCC Community in the last \_\_\_\_ number of years to submit a video of their candidate practicing TCC. This is not a punish-



ment at all. This type of critique would be of considerable value for that teacher in preparing her/his candidate. Actually this would be a **gift** for both teacher and student. Because there are **already** mandates (the accreditation process itself) in place this seems a reasonable and practical means in raising the level of accreditation.

**Bitsy LeBlanc**  
*Lake Charles, LA*

. . . I have two very serious Candidates but am honestly a little reluctant to send them on. I so appreciate your wanting quality but perhaps you are raising that bar a little too high...may be the reason for the 12%. Candidates are told that the week long teacher training is for them to learn. I cannot believe that so many of them are so spastic that they are beyond belief. I think we should let them grow and stroke all that want to make a commitment. After all they shell out about \$500 and have to take a week of work and be away from families to become better and accredited. Asking them to make a video and pay up to \$75 for a review just appears as a business, moneymaking issue. How about having You, Pam and Sandy travel around to different cities and review. Come to Phoenix once a year. This would certainly create better "Community" and you would still be getting paid. It would keep more people involved also. I think a lot of people feel they are on the outside of this Movement. I have elected to just do my thing quietly without much ruckus.

Please take these comments in good stride. I love *T'ai Chi Chih* practice and get so much back from my students so the rewards are huge. I want to go on telling my

students they are doing great and work with them. I am not sure I will continue to encourage Students to become Accredited Teachers if we ask so much more of them than their sincere, honest, heartfelt desire...and move really quite well. Remember they are new. I have some students (especially older), whose movements are terrible... hardly resemble TCC movements. I never hound them or tell them they are not doing it right. I can only teach and show the proper movements over and over again. The great thing is these people come and hug me after classes for their wonderful experiences...show me their warm hands.

In closing, the *T'ai Chi Chih* practice is wonderful and I want to see many people out there sharing the experience. I want to see a strong Community of teachers that all feel good about what they are doing. Hope this makes sense. Again Thanks for ALL you do. Respectively yours,

**Wayne Kipple**  
*Phoenix, AZ*

I wanted to send a separate email to give you my thoughts about your considerations regarding enrollment in teacher training courses.

I'm not sure I like the idea of requiring a video of each prospective candidate. I somehow think that it puts all the responsibility on you, and takes it off the teacher sponsors. I think that when a teacher mentors a prospective candidate and signs a referral, it is a great learning experience.

The video seems to me like it would be a crutch. The teacher would simply help the student make the video and then send it in. if its purpose was to help the teacher and student know what to work on (which is the

purpose of preparation courses like we have here in New Jersey), that might be helpful.

Perhaps it would be required only of students who do not choose to, or cannot attend a formal preparatory course??? (That would really encourage students to prioritize attending such programs when they are available).

While I do see the possible advantages of your idea, based on discussions that you and I had about these issues this last NJ training, it would seem to defeat the purpose of teachers learning to take the responsibility for their students, and to know TCC better and more deeply themselves!

Antonia and I can certainly play a more discriminating role in the future for the trainings here, if that is what is needed.

As usual, I am giving you my honest input in the hope that it will be helpful. I know that as Head of the TCC Community, you will hear that and then do what you believe is the best thing regardless of how I or others feel about it.

In any event, teacher candidate preparation definitely needs more attention.

Are you still considering lowering the max number of candidates in a course?

Thanks for all you do!

**Dan Pienciak**  
*Ocean Grove, NJ*

**[Editor's Note: Yes, Ed has lowered the maximum number of candidates allowed at a teacher training week to 16 (from 18). This new maximum began with this calendar year.]**



## Community response to issue

On the topic of deferred accreditations, discussed by you in the latest *Vital Force*, I have a thought or two, having been through the process. The first is this. In order to cut down on under qualified people showing up at teacher accreditations, why not institute a process whereby every candidate would be recommended not only by a primary instructor, but also by a consulting instructor? This second instructor, not being connected to the student in the same way as the primary teacher, is in a good position, both emotionally and technically, to pick up on areas in need of improvement. This second scrutiny should not pose much of a problem for anyone's ego if the process were routine and across the board. Teachers themselves are usually aware of their own need for improvement and would want to encourage students to benefit from this second point of view. It seems to me that this process would be an effective screening-teaching-learning mechanism.

If, nevertheless, an under qualified student did show up, my suggestion would be to give the candidate the negative decision early in the week, in fact right away, along with the invitation either to leave, or to stay and benefit from the training (if the student was close enough to proficient not to create an obstacle for others.) Afterward, rather than go through the soulless process of taping oneself (soulless both for the student and the accreditor), I would suggest that the candidate work with another designated instructor who would be part of a small, specially designated group of teachers who would finally get the student up to speed. These sessions of private instruction could be fixed at a price that would adequately compensate the instructor on the one hand, and give an indication of the

student's resolve on the other.

As mentioned, I see several clear advantages from this arrangement. The student benefits from the double scrutiny, the accreditor benefits from seeing fewer under qualified students showing up at accreditations, and the special teachers and the few deferred students benefit from the final refining process. Finally, it draws on the resources of the *Tai Chi Chih* community in a way that I would imagine you, Ed, would appreciate.

**Bill Mishler**  
St. Paul, MN

I know we've heard from Ed and others about proper preparation for teacher training, but I thought I'd offer another perspective, from that of a well-prepared candidate. Because I had the opportunity to work with a very conscientious mentor (Sharon Sirkis), when I went to teacher training I was ready. I was able to not only benefit from, but also enjoy my teacher-training week, without all the stress and turmoil that I know is common among some teacher candidates. It was an opportunity for me to truly deepen my practice, not relearn the basics. This is not to say I didn't have concerns (or emotional upheaval), but I never felt my getting my accreditation was in question.

I was a bit surprised by some of the teacher candidates' lack of preparation. I was aware of candidates who were struggling with some of the basic movements. How unfortunate that they were not able to really enjoy the wonders and depths of teacher training week without the incredible stress of "hoping" for accreditation. I certainly don't think attending teacher training unprepared was doing them any favors. Sadly

enough I was also surprised by some of the teachers who got their accreditation. The entire *T'ai Chi Chih* community only benefits when the level of teacher proficiency is kept high. I believe the teacher accreditation certificate is not a prize to be won, but an honor to be earned.

I felt for Ed being put in the position of having to enforce a high standard when many of the candidates are not prepared. I'm sure no one wants to be hard nosed about it. It should never even come to that. The mentoring teachers are supposed to be the first line of the screening process, approving only those who can move proficiently (among other things). I felt bad for Ed being put in the position to rectify what some mentoring instructors let pass by. It didn't seem fair to leave him with the "dirty" work. I'm sure it was a very difficult position to be in. I certainly would not enjoy that position, but if I were mentoring a teacher candidate, I would feel it was my duty to the entire TCC community.

As teachers, we must have the strength of our own inner sincerity to keep TCC pure, to have a real respect for this discipline and those who will be approved to teach it. I would hope that it would become much more common for teacher training to be more of an opportunity to focus on really improving our practices while learning and experiencing new ways to share that knowledge with others; an opportunity for the crystal clear waters to settle and for us to truly see what lies deep within each one of us. What a gift that focusing can be and an opportunity for our personal growth as well as that of the entire TCC community.

**Debbie Cole**  
Severn, MD



I'm writing in response to your request in the *VFJ* about our comments and ideas on deferred accreditations. Besides, if anyone asks me to make my voice heard, do you think I'm going to pass on that opportunity? No way!!

Here's an idea that was inspired by reading about the *T'ai Chi Chih* Teacher Candidate Movement Review Checklist. How about a Teacher Checklist?

For example, if you are a referring teacher, ask yourself:

1. Have I gone over the TCC Teacher Candidate Movement Review Checklist as outlined on the TCC website?

2. Do I have the most recently revised edition of the teachers' manual? (2001) If not, how do I get one?

a. Have I read the section on Teachers' Preparation as outlined in the manual? (pages 33-35) Have I put these principles into practice?

b. Have I instructed my student in the important points that should be included in their presentation as outlined by the manual? (pages 6-12) For example, picking a specific group and targeting the benefits to that group. Also, have I listened to my student's presentation? Have I timed my student's presentation?

3. Have I reviewed my notes from my own teachers' training and/or subsequent trainings? (i.e. conferences, workshops, renewals, audits)

4. Have I reviewed past *VFJ* articles with tips on sending qualified students to a teachers' training? (i.e. articles by Noel Altman and Sharon Sirkis, Dec. 2000 *VFJ*)

Sorry, I realize this is a shameless plug, but I just couldn't resist! Hmm... another idea here, all the articles could be listed on the website or in a packet for purchase.

This packet could include helpful articles by you, such as "Softness and Continuity," and "Patience," (*VFJ* June 1999 & Sept. 1999). And other teachers as well.

5. Does my student have a copy of Justin's book and video?

6. Have I listened to my student recite the names of the TCC moves in order, as written in Justin's book?

7. Have I examined my students' moves outside of class if needed? (Personally, I have worked on moves with a student before class, after class, at their house, basically whatever it took! I also like to walk around all four sides of the student on occasion to see the weight shift and other principles from all these perspectives. I guess my motto is: Leave no stone unturned!)

**Sharon Sirkis**  
*Columbia, MD*

## **R**ecommendations

\* Put together a training video for teacher prep. (Charge teachers for it)

Include your talk on importance of being prepared for training & the consequences of not being prepared.

\* With each of your points show examples, e.g. connecting arms to T'an T'ien

- Student with no connection
- Student with beginnings of

connection

- Teacher candidate level correction
- Seasoned teacher level correction

\* State clearly on video what happens at teacher training.

### At the Teacher Training:

If the candidate has less than teacher candidate skills, give them a written assessment and send them to work with one of the auditors.

If after three days they still are not at candidate level they understand that they get deferred teacher status but can still stay for rest of Training

\* No teacher training time is spent discussing how bad people's skills are. Focus is on expanding the potential of what is already present in students: demonstration of next level growth (from here...to here)

\* Embody & sunshine: joyful, gentle, serene and warm.

Provide all the opportunities you do presently without the stated time pressure on the students. Invite them to attend [optional] morning & evening sessions because they're joyous and an opportunity to spend time with a variety of experienced teachers and pick up teaching tips.

Please forgive me if I've overstepped my bounds. The teacher's training is so important and you put so much effort into it. These suggestions are given to polish what is already a great jewel.

**Darlene Karasik**  
*Saratoga, CA*



## Community response to issue

. . . **As a teacher I like the idea of** having the potential candidate send a video to you for feedback. It would be helpful information for me, as well as the student. I am sure it would also eliminate the number of deferrals you have to give which would make it easier on everyone concerned. I don't know how it would be for the student. It might be a bit intimidating, but at the same time I think they would probably do it if they were serious about becoming a teacher. It certainly is worth a try.

**Sr. Wanda Wetli**  
*Tipton, IN*

. . . **I was thinking about the** accreditation process and have some thoughts to share with you. I'm certain you have considered most of them, if not all of them, but wanted to weigh in at this point.

I believe we are facing a crossroads here of a group (I was tempted to say organization) beginning to grow to the point where we will (1) have to implement some organizational structure that we have been reluctant to do in the past, or (2) be resigned to the fact that we are not functioning at the most efficient level. The accreditation process is evidence of that dilemma.

By requiring a tape of candidates, you will step up the requirements. There is no doubt that the training process will run much more efficiently and all of the candidates will gain the maximum from it. I think back to mine and realize what we missed as you were having to work with [one of the candidates]. What we did not discuss was what we gained from that process as future teachers. I saw you being compas-

sionate, the consummate teacher, and exhibiting the strength and commitment to the form that said we wouldn't take less than enough.

I have thought of that attitude as I almost gave up on students who were not quite where I knew they could be. It would be easy to say it didn't matter. These are just students and I'm not getting paid that much to put forth a lot of individual effort with them in a large class. However if we are loyal to our students and committed to their progress and achievement, we will put that extra effort forth. Those of us in the Edmonton training saw and felt that in action. No, we didn't get to do some of the things that we would have liked. All trainings are not perfect....or aren't they? Were there other lessons we learned that those in classes that "run more smoothly" didn't?

I would suggest that we could ratchet up the requirements by requiring two teachers recommend each student. One teacher must be one who has sent successful students within the past five years (or three or whatever you want). The other could be any teacher. What this allows is the other teacher to have a check in place for her or his teacher preparation process. It also requires that the successful teacher continue to work to place teachers for accreditation and, thus, the check on these teachers occurs also.

This might place a burden on candidates who live in remote places, but they are traveling to an accreditation site anyway, and could easily spend a weekend with a teacher in another town if they need to. I know those of us in the St. Louis community would house those needing financial assistance for a

situation such as this.

If you have to commit more hours to examining videos you are going to have fewer hours to devote elsewhere. If you decide to go the video route, you will be taking a step toward the institutionalizing or formal organization of the group. This may well be where Justin/you/we want to go or need to go, but let's take that step with the vision of exactly where it will lead us and the ramifications it will mean for the other parts of the organization. Thanks for listening. I look forward to seeing you in May.

**Marty Henry, Ed. D.**  
*St. Louis, MO*

**E**d. . . I have been giving some thought to your questions and know that you are willing to listen to my open, honest and direct feedback. I have reflected, meditated and generally contemplated the situation since reading your email and also since hearing about the deferrals from Margo. Here are my thoughts and questions:

It seems that having applicants send in videos is addressing the symptom rather than the real problem...The real problem being teachers who are not knowledgeable about the meaning of the criteria for preparation of candidates, teachers who do not realize/recognize the implications of recommending a candidate who is not adequately prepared, and/or teachers who are knowledgeable about the criteria but have difficulty applying the criteria, that is, saying **NO YOU ARE NOT YET READY FOR TEACHER TRAINING.**

Do you personally want to take



on the responsibility of reviewing all the videos of candidates prior to a training? It seems like a monumental task! In addition, where does that leave the role of the teachers? Why would a teacher need to bother putting much effort into the preparation of an applicant when he/she knows that there is another level of screening that takes place and that will be the final decision. I think this would create a 'bottleneck' effect.

I would suggest that the place to start is with the teachers, ensuring that teachers know the criteria for recommendation, how to apply them and develop skills in being assertive (not aggressive) in applying these criteria. How does one ensure this? I would suggest a continuing education requirement for all teachers. This takes me back to the grid that I shared with you two years ago, a grid that identifies levels from practitioner, teacher, advanced teacher. This grid was in its mere infancy stages when I showed it to you, but I think that it could be resurrected and worked on to address the needs that have arisen.

If teachers were required to attend a teacher's conference and/or assist at a training at least once every three years (this would be a minimum), this would be a way to ensure that teachers are kept up to date regarding the requirements for recommendation. This topic could be an annual session at the teacher's conference with a focus on educating teachers about the criteria and how they are applied. Telling teachers that the standards have been raised does not let them know specifically what this means. There could be some fun and interesting ways to conduct such a session that would include actual sce-

narios that teachers have encountered when recommending a student and how they did/could handle this (effective communication and observation skills), discussion of the criteria and what they mean (you do a wonderful job of clarifying this at the teacher's training when you review the movements), sharing of scenarios that have occurred when a student arrives at teacher training and is not prepared— maybe even have some students write about their experience of receiving a deferral so teachers can feel the impact that their decision has on the candidate.

Additional ways that the teacher could receive feedback include:

1. give specific written feedback to the student regarding the areas he/she needs to improve with a copy to the recommending teacher who then would work with the student
2. have the deferred student go back to the recommending teacher for further assistance.
3. ask the teacher to send in a video of her/his own practice and use this as an opportunity to teach the teacher through the eyes of the criteria — when the teacher has referred a deferred student.
4. have the deferred student videotape self and have recommending teacher critique student according to the recommending criteria; Ed review the tape and critique and give feedback to student; have the teacher review her/his feedback, based on the feedback given re: the tape; then review the teacher's critique and comparison — provide written and verbal (teacher pay for the phone call) feedback to the teacher re: her/his critique and

what could be done to improve the teacher's application of the criteria. This places the main responsibility on the teacher and student, which is where I think the responsibility needs to be, and places you (OR some designated teacher tutors) the role of mentors.

I think that focusing on improving the education, understanding and experience of the teachers would place the responsibility where I believe it was originally intended to be and would allow your position as Head of the TCC Community and teacher trainer to stay focused on its primary role — preparing qualified teachers.

I think that having videotapes sent to you prior to teaching training is taking the responsibility of preparing candidates adequately for the training and moving it from a broad base to a narrow, top heavy position — you know what happens in industry when one person has all the responsibility pushed up to her/him...I don't think it would be a healthy approach for the TCC community or for you.

You might consider this approach (using the videotape), as an interim approach, if there seems to be a teacher with whom referral of an unprepared student is a repeated concern — then maybe the "tutoring the teacher" approach could be used as a specific response.

I will stop now & if you would like to discuss this further, I would be happy to do so. I don't want to be overwhelming. So here are some of my thoughts and ideas.

**Chery Ann Hoffmeyer**  
Sherwood Park, AB  
CANADA



## Community response to issue

# Teacher recalls previous standards, suggests two-step process is needed

By Noel Altman

Having audited (and assisted at) 17 TCC teacher training courses in the last five-and-a-half years (most of them for the entire week), and co-hosted an 18th one, I am drawing from a good deal of first-hand experience when I make the following comments.

When folks come to their teacher training ill-equipped, it is very hard on them; their confidence gets shaken to the core. Emotionally, they become wrecks, (at least temporarily). Some get quite angry — at their recommending teacher, at Ed, or at the course host and auditing teachers. It's overwhelming for them. Some come in with the idea that it's a shoe-in, that they WILL pass, if they just show up and try.

In the old days, this was true. At my training, in October, 1988, a woman was awarded accreditation who was emotionally fragile at best and did not know how to perform the second half of the form. She also didn't know any of the names of the movements. This woman was accredited by Ed's predecessor, not by Justin Stone.

I did audit a couple of trainings that Justin performed before he retired from doing them. He was strict, let me tell you, but with a heart. When he was strict, it was helpful to all the other candidates and the auditing teachers, as well as the one receiving the comments. I still remember the lessons he imparted at those times. I do remember one training where he did defer someone (although he didn't use that term). She was a student who had been coming to him for private lessons prior to the training. She was a shy lady, I remember that. He announced on the last day that she would be working a little longer with him before she would begin to teach, but that he knew she would make a fine teacher when she was finally ready.

The point I want to make is that these trainings were strict in the beginning. There were deferrals. Then the criteria seemed to vanish and everyone got accredited. Ed has spent the last five-and-a-half years working to restore the standard Justin set.

The other point I'd like to make is that having candidates struggling at a course affects the entire course. It affects the other candidates, the auditors, the course host and the course instructor. Everyone feels the anguish of the one(s) struggling, (and struggling unnecessarily, in my opinion). I'm not talking about the good kind of breaking down of a person's form, where they have a breakthrough and get to a deeper level. These folks are, in some cases, years away from being able to get to that level of breakthrough. Everyone loses, is what I'm trying to say. **These courses should be about the transition from good student to good teacher.** That's a time of changing a person's view of themselves, going from the internal knowledge to external transmission. I've seen courses with enough folks struggling that entire topics get eliminated from the course so more time can be spent on how to move correctly.

I firmly believe that we need to come up with a way to eliminate the possibility of having candidates show up who are not yet at the level they need to be. There needs to be a certain criteria met by candidates before they show up, and it needs to be a uniform criteria. We need a two-step process of some sort.

I do like what so many teachers have mentioned here in their response — about putting the responsibility back where it belongs, on the referring teachers, not on Ed (or Pam or Sandy) who are trying to achieve a miracle in the 11th hour. This is crazy! Really! It is. And, having roomed with Ed at every training I've attended, I can tell you how much heartache it is for him to have to tell these folks



what their own teachers should have told them. It's completely unfair to Ed, if you want to know the truth. **We have to come up with a new way.**

While I like the idea of putting responsibility back onto the referring teachers, I also feel that that will not be enough. That's the approach Ed has tried through his educating efforts (in articles for *The Vital Force*, as well as making himself available to communities for one-day and weekend workshops).

After a referring teacher has done his or her best to prepare a candidate, it is time to then send the candidate on to the next level, where they can be evaluated impartially by a few who all share the same understanding of the criteria involved.

This "first level" could be an evaluation of their videotaped form (the least costly version to the candidate because it involves no travel expenses for him/her. This is also the most time-consuming for the few number of people doing the evaluations).

Or, the "first level" could be going to meet with a designated "lead teacher" (for lack of a better term, at this point) in their state or in a nearby state, and having their form evaluated in person by the "lead teacher" using a consistent set of criteria.

I would imagine this might be a two or three hour consultation, and might involve more than just looking at how they move. The "lead teacher" would have to be paid for his/her time, and the candidate might have travel expenses involved. The "lead teacher" might say, "Okay, you're ready to go to a training." Then again, he/she might say, "You're not ready, and it's going to take \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ before I would like to evaluate you again." The work might be with the "lead teacher" at this point, the original referring teacher, or it might be for the candidate to do alone, or some combination of these options. Then the candidate comes back again for another evaluation. You can see how much more effort and expense this would involve for the candidate. But it also might be much more valuable to the candidate, as well, to get so much one-on-one help, in person. These are just two ideas for a "first level" in a two-step process.

The "second level" would be, of course, be attending a teacher training course.

I think we, as a community, need to change our *expectation* of what this training process is all about. Is it so important that we keep everything as cheap as possible (a view I sometimes hear)? Or is it really a privilege to be a TCC teacher, and perfectly fine to have more steps (and expense) in the process, so that we can assure that all folks will come out of their training feeling GREAT about their accomplishment, and feeling truly equipped to begin teaching this life-altering discipline?

*It all boils down to expectation.* The expectations we, as teachers, impart to our students.

I make a great effort when I teach to convey to students that it's a lengthy process, with many levels, before they might be ready to go to a teacher training. And I tell them outright that it would be a disservice to them if I sent them before they were ready. I tell them why. I tell them about some of the candidates I've seen struggle, and how hard it was for them. In the end, I say, "I won't send you before you're ready. So you'll know when you go, that you are ready, and you can just enjoy it. It'll still be work, but you'll be ready for it."

Once they hear all this, it changes their *expectation* of the process. They don't necessarily like hearing that it'll be years (not months) before they'll be sent, but I think they come to respect it. As time goes on for them, and they progress in their practice, they begin to see for themselves the layers involved. Then they start to understand in their core what I was talking about.

There are multiple ways in which we can create a two-step process, but I believe a two-step process is what we need. Ed will be leading the attending teachers at this year's teachers' conference in a discussion on this topic, and I hope a new methodology will come out of it. The final decision will be Ed's, but your input is wanted. Please come offer your vision.



# Head of TCC Community responds

By Ed Altman

I want to thank the *T'ai Chi Chih* teachers who responded to my call for feedback on the candidate preparation process. These comments have led to a very interesting discussion and I appreciate the diversity of viewpoints that were expressed.

I believe we need to continue to hold a high standard for newly accredited *T'ai Chi Chih* teachers because they represent the future strength of our community. At this time, I have no intention of raising the standard higher, but I would like to see all candidates properly prepared to meet it. This is why the new "Movement Review Checklist" was developed to help teachers communicate this standard with their students. It is available on our web site, and I encourage all teachers to begin using it.

Numerous hours were also spent on the subject of candidate preparation during the recent Teacher Retreat held in Minnesota. As a result of the discussion, it is clear that any proposed solution would need to incorporate the following elements:

- \* Referring teachers must continue to be responsible for candidate preparation
- \* Candidates need to have their movements thoroughly reviewed before being allowed to attend a teacher training course
- \* The creation of additional bureaucracy should be minimized
- \* The Teacher Training course doesn't devote enough time to future candidate preparation
- \* Deferrals are time consuming and should be eliminated completely, if at all possible

It was suggested that the Teacher Training course be split into two separate courses to focus on the specific needs of teacher candidates. The first course, tentatively called a "*T'ai Chi Chih* Intensive", would give candidates and serious students an opportunity to improve their practice while deepening their understanding of the principles of the *T'ai Chi Chih* movements. This course would be mandatory for all teacher candidates before proceeding on for accreditation. The second course, "*T'ai Chi Chih* Teacher Training," would focus on providing further movement instruction as well as in-depth training in how to teach the *T'ai Chi Chih* movements. This course would

include presentations, detailed instruction on teaching, and devote much more time to the subject of future candidate preparation.

As stated earlier, the *T'ai Chi Chih* Intensive would be required before enrolling in a Teacher Training course. The Intensive course would also be open to students who are serious about their practice, but who may not want to become accredited to teach. Students would still need to be properly prepared and formally referred by an accredited teacher before being allowed to enroll in this course. When students successfully complete the Intensive course they would receive a recommendation from the Teacher Trainer, which would be valid for nine months. During that time, these candidates would be eligible to attend a *T'ai Chi Chih* Teacher Training course to complete the accreditation process. Students who want to become accredited but do not move properly would need to repeat the Intensive course as many times as necessary until they receive their recommendation. There would be no "deferral" process for the Intensive course, and there would be no limit to the number of times it could be repeated.

Of all the ideas I've heard on the subject, separating the Teacher Training course into two courses is the most favorable. It also creates the fewest problems of any proposed solution while addressing many of the problems that face our community. This change would increase the costs of becoming accredited, and candidates would need to devote more time to the process. However, I believe this proposal would reduce the pressure many candidates feel by ensuring their level of preparation prior to going through the formal Teacher Training course. This would allow the community to continue to hold a high standard for new teachers while allowing everyone a chance to become a teacher who feels called in this direction.

I am grateful to *The Vital Force* for publishing our discussion and for serving as a forum for new ideas that are critical to the growth and integrity of the *T'ai Chi Chih* community. Obviously, there is much more to this idea than can be discussed in a single article, and I look forward to exploring this in more depth in a panel discussion at the *T'ai Chi Chih* Teachers' Conference in San Antonio. I hope all teachers will plan to participate.



# Letter from the Editor

continued from page 2

to get ahold of him more quickly.

I have one more thing to at least place in the back of your mind for future consideration. As the resident TCC teacher on the island of Kauai (aside from Ed), I am going to plan on hosting Ed for a student/teacher retreat on Kauai (or a neighboring island), hopefully in May or June of next year. Once our relocation is complete, I will begin work in scouting places. Watch The Vital Force for details!

**How will Vital Force Association members be affected by our move?** Hardly at all, I am glad to report. Although I will continue to lay out, edit and produce each issue from Kauai, we will continue to print the issues in Albuquerque, NM. Local TCC teacher **Marjie Bassler** has agreed to become the newest VFJ staff member, and this will mean that the VFJ mailings and the printing and shipping of the issues can continue from Albuquerque. Marjie will deposit member subscription fees into our bank account throughout the quarter, as well as be my "eyes" in the detailed work of verifying quality in the printing production of our issues. She will work intensively the week prior to each mailing, (and the Monday after) and will run the actual "mailings". Continuing to have the issues shipped from this fairly central location in the U.S. (versus an island in the Pacific Ocean) will keep our delivery times in the reasonable range for most members. Marjie's training began in May and continued through the shipping of this issue. The next mailing will be her first in charge. Please join me in thanking Marjie and the Albuquerque VFJ volunteers who will continue to get these issues out each quarter! Also, I would like to acknowledge and thank the Albuquerque TCC Center for agreeing to let us use their facility for these mailings.

The only change (caused by our move) that you will see as Vital Force Association members will be when you submit a hard-copy submission for publication (either an article or poem or photographs). I will establish a P.O. Box in Kauai for these sorts of submissions, and will announce it in the next issue. E-mailed submissions will continue to go to the same address listed on the "Contacts" page of every issue. My contact phone number will also change and will be listed in the next issue.

**I have another big change to announce which will affect all members:** I am pushing the issue months of publication out by one month in every case. Beginning with this issue, they will become: July, October, January and April. With all of the details of our out-of-continent move, I was unable to begin work on this issue until too late in the quarter to make the June shipping date. So, I decided to take advantage of this timing to make the switch. It is something I have considered in prior years. It will remedy a couple of ongoing problems I have observed in the last three-and-a-half years as editor. 1) I will now be able to fully cover the teachers' conference in one issue, the October one, instead of having to spread the coverage over two issues, as I did previously (Sept. and Dec.), due to the tight time frame following each year's conference to make my press deadline. Also, this will reduce the amount of stress involved. 2) By shipping an issue and the annual Teachers' Directory in January, instead of December, we will avoid the delays in delivery caused by the huge influx of holiday mail in November and December. Steps have been taken to extend each member's VFJ expiration date by one month, so that no one will lose out on receiving any paid-for issues. In addition, WEB expiration dates have also been extended for teacher members whose WEB expiration dates equal their VFJ expiration dates. We don't want anyone to roll off the website listing before they've paid their renewal, and this will avoid that potential problem. Those teachers with WEB expiration dates greater than their VFJ expiration dates did not need any change, and none was made. Thanks to VFJ Staff Member Ed Altman who made these changes to our VFJ database.

**Noel Altman**, Editor



# News Shorts

## Publication months change for *The Vital Force* quarterly journal

This issue begins a change in the publishing schedule for *The Vital Force*, Journal of the *T'ai Chi Chih* Community. The months of publication have been changed by one month — from March, June, September and December to April, July, October and January.

This decision was made to better accommodate the enormous amount of feedback that has been generated after each teachers' conference for the last three years. Due to crunching press deadlines and longer articles trickling in over several weeks, I have had to extend the coverage into the December issue on an event that took place in August. Because the articles are valuable and thoughtful, I want to publish them, but, as editor, I would much rather cover the conference entirely in the issue following the actual conference. Going to October as the month of shipping for that coverage will allow me the time following each conference to complete the issue in a thorough manner, and not be under extreme stress to do it. We also anticipate January being a better shipping month for an issue than December (which is flooded every year with holiday mail). The Teachers' Directory will be shipped in January from now on, not in December, for the same reason.

To ensure that no member loses any paid-for issues of their membership, we have converted the *VFJ* expiration dates for every active *Vital Force* Association member in the database. We have extended them by one month. In addition, any teachers with a website expiration date equal to their *VFJ* expiration date (before the change-over) have also had that date extended by one month, thereby receiving an extra month of service for free. Teachers whose website expiration date is already greater than their *VFJ* expiration date did not need any change to their website expiration date.

Please note the changes to submission deadlines on page 30. Note that they are not uniform! The January issue will have a much earlier deadline than the other quarters to allow for scheduled time off for myself around the Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's holidays. In other words, I will have to begin much earlier that quarter to get the issue far enough along to be able to enjoy the holidays later in the quarter. Always know that with a simple phone call or e-mail to me, I can often

plan for an article to come in later in the quarter (which is sometimes necessary due to the timing of an event, for instance). But contact me by the submission deadline, so I can consider it in advance. Thanks much!

– Noel Altman

## San Antonio, TX teachers ready for teachers' conference in August

Greetings! We are excited about the upcoming Teachers' Conference, August 1-4, 2002, here in San Antonio. This will be a first for our city and we want it to be very enjoyable for each participant. Over 100 teachers have registered thus far and some have volunteered to assist the process. We are grateful. There is room for more. There is room for YOU!

The full-bodied schedule will allow time to experience the Latin flavor of our multi-cultural old city. The campus of the University of the Incarnate Word is located at the headwaters of the San Antonio River, not far from the center of town. Evening weather is usually very pleasant, a good time to explore colorful San Antonio.

The schedule will also include opportunities to improve our own practice, to sharpen our teaching skills, and to talk about how we can best prepare students for teacher accreditation. Also, a highlight will be sharing how to develop local *T'ai Chi Chih* communities in each area. There will be time for sharing stories, hopes and dreams. So, jot down some ideas worth repeating and bring them with you. We look forward to counting YOU among the registrants.

– Sr. Alice Holden, CCVI

## Albuquerque training unique

*T'ai Chi Chih* Teachers Training in Albuquerque is a unique experience: Candidates will not only meet and receive movement tips from the originator of the *T'ai Chi Chih* discipline, Justin Stone, but will also celebrate his birthday on Friday Nov. 22nd. The training will take place at our *T'ai Chi Chih* Center which has the perfect ambiance for sinking into the essence of TCC practice! We look forward to graduating a new crop of teachers!

– Ann Rutherford



**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:**

January Issue: **October 10th of prior year**

July Issue: **May 10th**

April Issue: **February 10th**

October Issue: **August 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.

With the exception of converting *T'ai Chi Chih* from a noun to an adjective (required by U.S. Trademark law), when an addition or substitution for a word or words in the original text has been made, brackets [ ] will be used to enclose the change, rather than parentheses, which some writers like using. If an omission is made of more than a word or two due to unrelated content (in a letter, for instance) or space limitations, it will be shown by the following version of ellipsis: . . . This is so as not to be confused when the following: ..... is used by a writer to show a lapse in time, a long pause or change in topic.

**MEMBERSHIPS:**

**The Vital Force** is published quarterly and bulk-mailed to Association members in the U.S. during the first or second weeks of January, April, July and October. Generally, the mailing time is 2 - 4 weeks. U.S. First Class and international delivery can be ordered for an extra fee and post on the same schedule noted above. (See Page 2 for details).

**TCC TEACHERS' DIRECTORY:**

The *T'ai Chi Chih* Teachers' Directory is for referral and communication purposes among accredited *T'ai Chi Chih* teachers. **It is not to be used or sold as a mailing list.** Updates are published on insert pages in each issue of **The Vital Force**. Send your changes to the address on the opposite page.

**WHEN MOVING:**

Please allow 8 weeks notice and provide complete old and new addresses. Because **The Vital Force** has "return service requested" with the U.S. Post Office, an undeliverable issue or Teachers' Directory is returned to us with a charge for the First Class cost to return it (approximately \$1.25 - \$2.50, depending on the weight). Then, if we mail out a new one, it goes First Class (because a bulk mailing requires 200 pieces), resulting in further expense of \$1.25 - \$2.50. Please help us avoid this unnecessary and wasteful expense—send in your change of address information early!



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questions about *T'ai Chi Chih!*  
Joy Thru Movement, or events:

**Kathy Albers**  
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**THE VITAL FORCE** *Journal of the T'ai Chi Chih® Community*

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# The Lighter Side...

1. At the hospital where I work and now teach a *T'ai Chi Chih* class, an interesting group formed one afternoon. An elder woman in a wheelchair was wheeled into the circle and she proceeded to talk and pull her purse apart. I started leading everyone through Rocking Motion and she stopped working on her purse. Later she picked up on the words — if I said “Your palms are facing each other” she would say “Oh, that looks like palm trees swaying in Hawaii.” When we were doing Pulling in the Energy she said that looked like “rock-a-bye-baby in the tree top” and proceeded to sing rock-a-bye-baby to us as we did the movement. One of the other persons in the circle with a serious mental health diagnosis was having trouble following how to move so the elder told her, “Focus, dear.”

– Nancy Jo Bleier

2. During our time of sharing at the end of a class, one of the students was having a hard time remembering the name of the pose that we did at the end and wasn't sure about the weight distribution. Before I could answer her concerns, another student piped up with a good explanation for what she called “Cosmic Kick-stand.”

– Debbie Cole

3. One morning while teaching seated TCC class at the retirement community, one of the ladies stood up and walked out before the class was even over.

“I'm sorry to leave early,” she said, “but both of my hearing aid batteries have just gone dead.”

“That's OK,” I said, laughing, “Sometimes people try to shut me up or tune me out, but this is a new way to do it!”

– Sharon Sirkis

4. At the end of last year's teachers' conference, Justin asked me, “So where do you go from here?”

Somewhat surprised to be asked such a deep question, I said, “You mean in my practice?”

“No,” he replied, “which airport are you flying home to?”

– Sharon Sirkis

5. I had some very enthusiastic students who wanted to learn everything “yesterday.” After the free demo class, both of these women, each named Carol, wanted me to show them the moves I had demonstrated, yet again. One of them piped up to her friend after some debate about being able to remember what they had been shown and said, “By next week you will probably be doing *T'ai Chi Carol* instead of *T'ai Chi Chih* [practice].”

– Debbie Cole

6. When I taught Pulling in the Energy to the college class, I reminded them how important it was to ground the chi because of Justin's experience with a shock to his heart.

The following week I reviewed the move and asked, “Pulling in the Energy is the only move that...?”

Expecting a response having to do with visualization of the energy, I was taken aback when a student answered, “That...gives you a heart attack!”

– 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...”]**

## Anchoring thoughts after practice:

*I am the rock, the ocean,  
the mountain, the tree.  
I am the wind,  
the silence.  
I am nothing, and  
I am me.  
I am nothing, and  
I belong with everything.  
I am free.*

- Vinca Renner  
Student of Ron Barker