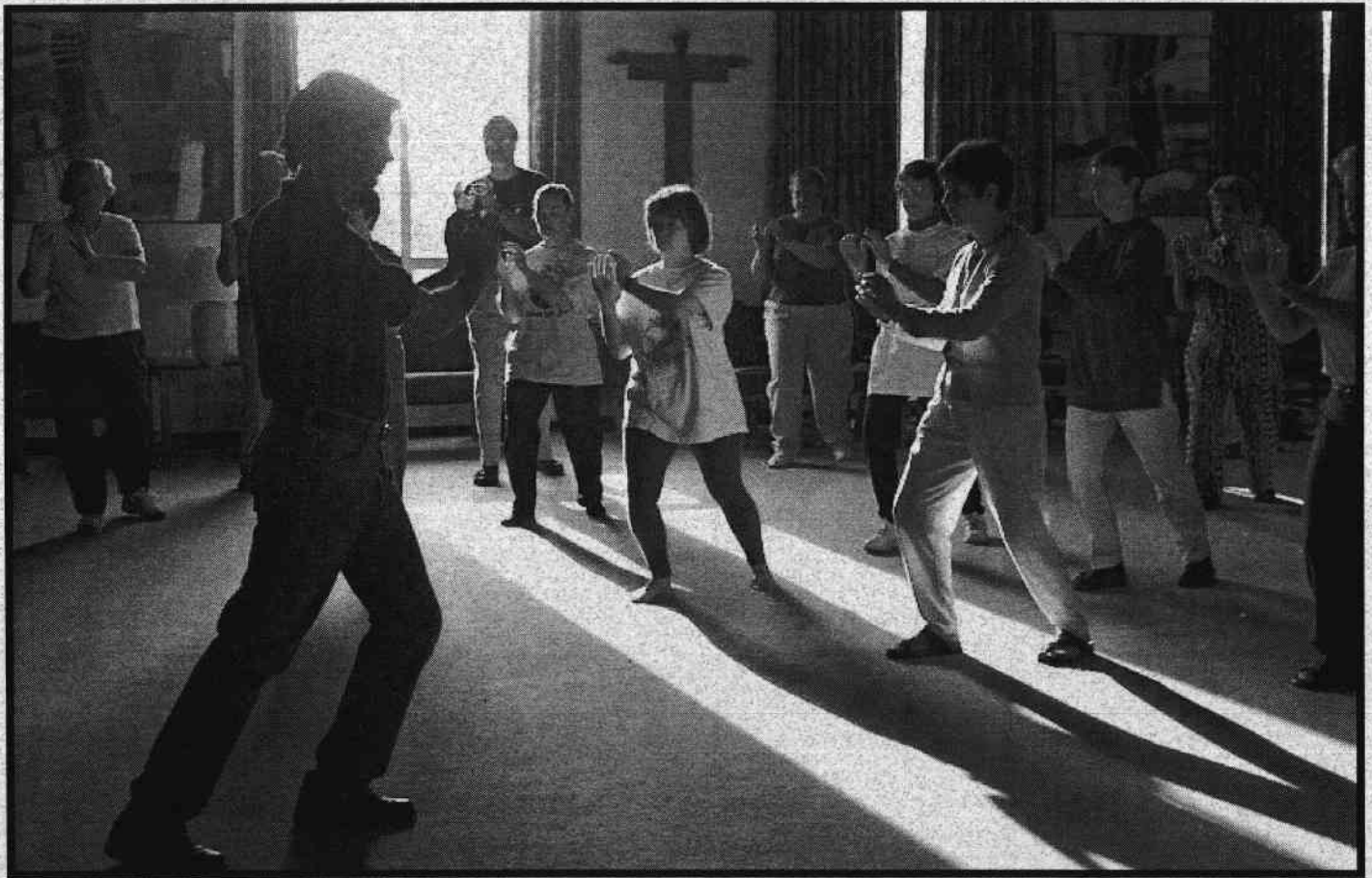


# The Vital Force

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

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## 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

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# 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 Zablotty**  
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.*

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*"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.