

The Vital Force



Journal of the T'ai Chi Chih® Community

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Table of Contents

<u>Articles by Originator and Head</u>	<u>Creativity Expressed</u>
4 How to Move Stone 5 Building Good Will Altman 33 Hints for New Teachers Stone	Cover Artwork Fan 5 Photography Maisel 36 Reflection Adams 36 Poetry Dalton Back Page Poetry Bridge
<u>Events Coverage</u>	
14 TCC Teacher Training - Alberta 18 TCC Workshop - California 19 TCC Workshop - Georgia 24 Seijaku Teacher Training - New Jersey 26 TCC Teacher Training - New Jersey 30 TCC Workshop - Washington, DC 31 TCC Teacher Training - New Mexico 34 Day of "Joy Thru Movement"	<u>In Every Issue</u> 2, 42 Information on <i>The Vital Force</i> 2 Letter from the Editor 3 Readers Respond 21 News Shorts 22 Calendar of Events 41 Karmic Komments 41 Good Karma Publishing Distributors 43 Contacts Lists / Membership Form 44 The Lighter Side...
<u>Articles by Teachers</u>	
6 Teaching Children Taggart 8 TCC Community Hoffmeyer 10 East Coast Connects Young-Wick 12 Second St. Louis Retreat Albers 17 Auditing Was Awesome Mantle 20 The Power of Seijaku Weil 28 New Teacher Hutchinson 29 TCC Practice and Me Flynn 32 Let it Flow, by Letting Go Dogu 36 Chi Will Take You Farther Leffler 37 Gratitude for Practice Spangler 37 Practicing for First Time Arrott 38 On Fear and Trust Sirkis 40 VFJ Trademark News Altman 40 Trademark Update Katus	

Justin Stone is the Originator of *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement*
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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 Chinese brush painting on the cover is a "sketch" by my aunt's mother-in-law, Fan Tchunpi (Fan Djunbi), a "bridge painter" of both Eastern and Western styles during her more than 60 years as a professional painter. Born in China in 1898, she was educated in western-style painting at Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Bordeaux, France as a young woman. She returned to China in the 1930's, painting mostly in a western style. It wasn't until Japan's invasion of China in 1938-39 that canvases and oil paints from the west became impossible to get. That is when she turned to Chinese brush painting. The Fan family emigrated to France in 1948 "as refugees", according to my uncle, one year before communists took over China. Fan had a very successful career in Europe and was honored by the city of Paris in 1984, two years before her death, with a "one-man" show of her work at the Musée Cernuschi. We are honored to have her work grace our cover!

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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

*The last two issues of The Vital Force have been devoted to the hot topic of what to do about the deferred candidate process (which Head of the T'ai Chi Chih Community Ed Altman decided in print at the end of the last issue: NO MORE DEFERRALS). This new approach underlines the great responsibility each referring teacher has before sending a candidate for training, since an ill-prepared candidate will now fail the course, instead of receiving a "deferred accreditation." To assist referring teachers in making this judgement, both T'ai Chi Chih Originator Justin Stone, and Ed Altman have devoted their lead articles in this issue to the topic of **how to move well**. Of course, this topic is of the greatest value to every practitioner of the T'ai Chi Chih form!*

More opinions trickled in over the last quarter in response to the debate in the October issue. All are printed in "Readers Respond" (opposite page). In addition, Chery Ann Hoffmeyer, Co-Host of the upcoming Teachers' Conference 2003, puts forward a new challenge to the community in her article beginning on page 8: "T'ai Chi Chih Community: Inclusive or Exclusive?"

The great bulk of this issue, however, marks a return to the sorts of articles The Vital Force has been known for — event coverage and feedback, local community activity, personal growth stories, and areas and methods of teaching. We had a record eight different events since September led by Ed Altman, and Teacher Trainers Pam Towne and Sandy McAlister. After the last teacher training layout, you'll find Justin Stone's second article, a message to the new graduates (helpful to any teacher), on page 33.

Teacher Roberta Taggart wrote on her experience of donating her time to teaching "special needs" children in the elementary public school setting (see page 6). In past issues, we have seen articles about teaching this group in the high school setting, and the junior high school setting, all on a voluntary (unpaid) basis. Another area in which a great deal of teaching effort has been volunteered has been in a few of the prisons (mainly in California). Roberta asks the probing question at the end of her article, "As we make a correlation between special needs/abused kids and inmates, shouldn't we be asking why should they have to wait until they become a part of the prison system to learn tools that can change habits and be used as coping mechanisms?"

As editor, I am definitely interested in publishing articles about teaching children in any setting. But, whatever group you teach — children, teenagers, general public, seniors, or those with particular ailments or a common profession, I am interested in hearing about your experiences! Write them up so we may all benefit from hearing about your efforts. The content of The Vital Force would not exist if you all did not make the effort to contribute your stories. Thank you!

I wish all of you a healthy, vibrant, laughing, joyous New Year!

Noel Altman, Editor

P.S. In an effort to play "catch-up", once again, this issue is the largest size we publish — 44 pages. And, even so, I still have articles waiting in my files for publication in a future issue. Priority was given to the most timely topics or ones that fit a theme with other articles. If you don't see your article yet, don't despair!



Readers Respond

[Editor's Note: Responses continue to trickle in from readers following the publication of the October '02 issue of *The Vital Force* in which the entire issue was devoted to the topic of what to do about the deferred candidate problem. The issue ended with Ed Altman's stated changes for 2003. The topic continues to spawn new discussions for further change. Ed confirmed that he does not have any other changes planned at this point.]

My thought about the referral / reviewing by teachers who are asked to examine the video or whatever is that they should be honored to do the job, without financial reward. To be entrusted to pass the judgement on student candidates is an honor!

Vida Wackerling
Evanston, IL

T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Training Options

I have been reading the ideas as they appear in the *Vital Force* for changing TCC Teacher accreditation. They are all good ideas. I have thought about it a lot and below is what I feel would work..

Currently a student takes a beginner *T'ai Chi Chih* class, must practice at least two years and be sponsored by an accredited TCC Teacher to be accepted for the TCC Teacher training.

I would like to see the change go first to the training. I think after a student completes a beginner class and practices for one year, they should then be required to take, and pass, an intermediate class, practice another year and then work with a TCC Teacher to be sponsored for

teacher training. I know a lot of teachers offer intermediate classes. Many of their class teachings were published in one of the *Vital Force* publications, and it appeared to me they vary quite a bit.

In order for this idea to work, I think there should be another level of training for certified TCC teachers. Only those teachers who pass a class on how to teach an intermediate TCC class could conduct intermediate TCC classes for students. This puts the responsibility for time and expense on the accredited teachers, not the new students. It also ups the bar for teachers. Not everyone who is an accredited teacher takes advantage of the many workshops and training offered throughout the year. This way, they would be required to continue their TCC education and training and benefit from it as well.

Patricia Strand
Sumner, WA

[Editor's Note: Trisha Jewellen Hargaden submitted the following open letter to Ed Altman for publication in *The Vital Force*.]

Dear Ed,

I have been thinking about the issue of student preparedness for accreditation.

For me the solution is simple. No teacher can put a student forward for accreditation no matter how good they may be, unless that teacher attends yearly conferences or attends advanced trainings with you, Sandy or Pam. If such a teacher

is not actively upgrading their form, they forfeit the right to put students forward for accreditation. A serious student who wants to become accredited must therefore change teachers, find a teacher who is active — that is, attending yearly conferences and advanced trainings. Then it is the second teacher that puts the student forward for accreditation. The student must have taken weekly lessons for at least six months with the second teacher, (no matter how long she/he has been learning with the previous teacher) before being considered for accreditation.

This puts the onus on the teacher to be clear from the start what their intentions are in terms of the kind of practice they want, the student population they wish to attract and whether they are teaching with the intention of producing future teachers, and if so then they need to keep improving their form. This sends a clear message to their students. They know what is expected of them if they are interested in becoming a teacher.

In any other field of endeavor, if you want to succeed, strive for excellence, you find the best teacher and you find ways of improving your form through extra classes, workshops, etc. Why should the *T'ai Chi Chih* form be any different? Very sincerely yours,

Trisha Jewellen Hargaden
New York City, NY

CORRECTION

In the last issue, the photograph on page 10 was incorrectly attributed. The photographer was Dale Dollars.

How to Move in *T'ai Chi Chih* Joy Thru Movement

By Justin Stone

Tai Chi Chih teachers should emphasize the most important factor in TCC movement; "How to Move" correctly. Students come to classes expecting to use muscular effort and picture themselves standing up straight and waving their arms. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Pupils sent to Teachers' Training Courses must move correctly, and it is necessary that other students move well and freely if they want to get the benefits of TCC practice.

Flowing, not moving, from the Center, the *T'an T'ien*, must be emphasized with beginning students. It must be like floating, not hard muscular exercise. It can be explained that tension of the muscles will tend to close the meridian channels thru which the Chi flows. If the Chi does not flow freely, how can it be balanced? In judging the progress of a student (and, in certain cases, judging if the student is ready for Teachers' Training Courses), watch to see if (1) the student flows freely from the Center, and (2) watch closely to see if the student is correctly yinning and yanning.

In doing forward and backward movements it is necessary that the student sink down on the front leg and stay down as the weight shifts to the rear, where the back leg is bent as much as it was going forward (this does not mean leaning back to make it look as though he or she is sinking down). The picture the student may have of straightening up after bending the knee is incorrect, and many teachers make this mistake. Stay down and flow smoothly.

In performing sideways movements, such as "Carry the Ball to the Side," "Pulling Taffy," etc., the movement is made by swiveling the hips, with the waist turning to lead the hands. The waist and hands must be synchronized, otherwise the balance will be completely off. This swiveling of the hips and movement of the waist is ignored by many practitioners, thus reducing the movement to an arm exercise. Remember, look below the waist to check on the student's way of moving.

If the student (or teacher) executes the sideways movements and the forward and backward movements correctly, as described above, chances are the student is ready for teachers' training class. It's true that there are other movements that have different problems ("Bird Flaps its Wings" and "Light at the Top of the Head" for instance) but most movements have either the forward-and-backward movements or the sideways movements. Accordingly, make your first priority the correct teaching of the above. To get the benefits of TCC practice, one must correctly execute the yinning and the yanning and know how to do the sideways movements using the swiveling of the hips. These are good criteria by which the teacher can decide if a student is ready to become a teacher. Don't be "kind" and ignore these. Demand that students do them correctly. Try to attend workshops to make sure that you, the teacher, is not careless in performing these movements, and audit Teachers' Training Courses where possible.



Building Good Will

By Ed Altman

When you invite guests to come stay at your home you go through a lot of effort to make them feel comfortable. You might clean up the house, clear out the guest room, or at least set out fresh sheets and towels. Everything is done to help them feel welcome and relaxed. The same is true when inviting the Chi into our *T'ai Chi Chih* practice. We must get out of the way and make room for our "guest" by becoming very soft. Without this softness, our practice lacks a living touch and we are unable to sense the Chi and be responsive to accommodate it in our practice.

Unfortunately, some of us are not very good hosts. Rather than becoming soft and receptive, we allow tension to build and take up permanent residence in the legs and hips. This tension forces the body to rise up as the weight shifts onto a stiff leg, and the body ends up leaning in the direction of the weight shift. Everything is undermined by the accumulation of this unneeded tension.

If you want to move well during the *T'ai Chi Chih* movements, pay attention to see if the leg and hips are becoming softer in the direction of the weight shift. Otherwise, as the weight shifts in a

given direction, the Chi flows to *create the space* but the body is unable to fill it. The hips stop moving as the weight shifts but the shoulders do not. This is especially important on the side-to-side movements because tension is often present in the hips and waist.

In the *T'ai Chi Chih* movements, each part of the body must remain soft and flexible to provide stability and support for the portion above it. Softness in the legs builds "good will" in the hips, which make them more generous toward the shoulders. This seems to make sense, yet how many of us are working to build good will? This can only come from consistent attention to sense the building of tension, and a commitment to address the root cause.



Photo: Alice Maisel

When tension is absent from the legs and hips, the spine remains upright and in proper alignment without effort. Now the Chi can flow without hindrance while every part of the body moves with ease. Alignment is perhaps the most important prerequisite to flowing well throughout the *T'ai Chi Chih* movements. It is the first topic I address when working with students, and a subject I continue to work on in my personal *T'ai Chi Chih* practice.



Teaching Integrated Movement to Children with Special Needs

in a Public School as a Tool for Self-Management

By Roberta Taggart

In the fall of 1999 I was asked to teach *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement* to a class of 12 special needs children. Within this group, some children had been sexually abused and/or neglected. Most were cognitively delayed or language delayed with problems in communication and speech. Also within this group were one child with attentional deficit/hyper-activity and one high-functioning autistic child. There were no diagnosed physical disabilities in the class although balance was an issue for some.

Background

This project grew out of a conversation with a friend of mine, Ann Fairbanks, a Speech Pathologist and *T'ai Chi Chih* practitioner, who has been working on a regular basis for some years with the same students for whom this project was developed. Once my friend, Ann, learned the *T'ai Chi Chih* form and began to realize the benefits of practicing regularly, she spoke to me often about how useful she thought it might be for her students with special needs, many who also experience abuse and neglect in their daily lives, to learn integrated movement. A great amount of interest was generated at her school through discussion with her Principal and School Psychologist. My friend was able to interface with her colleagues at a Newark [CA] public school and set up a six-week pilot program. Late in the fall of 1999, working on a *pro bono* basis, I taught *T'ai Chi Chih* movements twice a week for 30 minutes as a P.E. activity to 12 special needs children.

Project Guidelines

The Guidelines used for building a TCC program for Special Needs Children were:

1. Movement — Include enough forms to provide diversity and challenge without over taxing the ability of the students.
2. Pace — Use natural breathing, movement, self-massage of the soles of the feet, and visualization of the bubbling springs at a pace conducive to learning and

at levels appropriate to cognitively delayed children.

3. Fun — Make the activities enjoyable.
4. Relaxing — Make the atmosphere for learning as calm and serene as possible. Use music to facilitate mood.
5. Visual — Engage students by demonstrating movements. Ask them to visualize themselves as bird, butterfly, moving like flowing water, etc.
6. Tactile — Provide some kinesthetic experiences to reinforce learning.
7. Routine — At all class sessions set a general routine and stick to it, so children know what to expect. This reduces anxiety and provides continuity.
8. Concentration — Build ability to focus by increasing repetitions gradually.
9. Feedback — Provide manual correction without words in a positive manner.

Scope of Project

The program was originally initiated as a P.E. activity. Walking through this door, with such wide support from school staff, provided me with a classroom setting in which teaching the *T'ai Chi Chih* movements was quickly augmented by other classroom activities. Soon children were doing art projects such as drawing pictures of themselves doing TCC movements, working on vocabulary development, and exploring feelings and emotions. Classroom assistance was provided for each bi-weekly teaching session. I was always supplied with an aide, and often the classroom teacher was on hand. Occasionally, the school psychologist observed. The Speech Pathologist attended teaching sessions regularly.

Reinforcement of Learning

Reinforcement of the class learning experience was provided by the Speech Pathologist in a therapeutic setting. As the speech pathologist's goal was to become an accredited TCC teacher herself one day, she became the



perfect person to provide the necessary reinforcement with the children. She had worked with most of the children for many years and was able to observe and document changes in behavior on a regular basis.

Debriefing

Knowledgeable about the program being taught, acquainted with the children, and capable of providing feedback on behavioral changes, the Speech Pathologist also provided another valuable service. She worked with me after each teaching session to debrief me and provide coaching about any situation that might arise as a result of working with special needs children.

Teaching Experiences

In the beginning, teaching the movements went slowly as the children built their abilities to move, concentrate, and breathe at the same time. They understood little about the balancing aspects of movement and stillness that are an integral part of the *T'ai Chi Chih* discipline. The soft, slow, circular movements were much different than other exercises, and the resting in between repetitions of sets took some adjustment. Gradually, they began to learn the forms with resting in between each set of movements.

At the end of the school year, they had learned 10 forms plus the closing posture, Cosmic Consciousness Pose. And they could do them beginning to end with someone leading them. Their practice session was followed by a brief visualization of the bubbling springs at the soles of the feet. The entire 30-minute session begins and ends with self-massage of the soles of the feet for grounding and focusing.

Feedback from the Students about *T'ai Chi Chih* practice

Feelings Elicited by *T'ai Chi Chih* Practice: Happy, Love, Fun, Soft, Peaceful, Relaxed, Powerful, Safe

Favorite Movements: Rocking Motion, Bird Flaps Its Wings, Around the Platter, Push Pull, Daughter on the Mountaintop

New Vocabulary: Bird Sounds, Bubbling Springs, Soles of the Feet, Belly Breathing, Beach Ball, Soft Eyes, Concentrate, Gong

Physiological Aspects

Massage of the soles of the feet soothes the sympathetic aspect of the autonomic nervous system, which controls the functions of the organs. Breathing patterns become naturally slower and deeper and the nervous system shifts toward a more relaxed state. As a result, the neurotrans-

mitter profile shifts dramatically as the blood vessels expand and the circulatory system steps up its natural processes of circulating oxygen and nutrients while at the same time facilitating cell metabolism and the release of metabolic wastes. The slower and deeper breathing propels the lymph fluid, boosting immune response.

Deep relaxation and meditation bring about a balancing effect of the parasympathetic and sympathetic aspects of the autonomic nervous system. When a state of homeostasis (balance) is produced, this is when the neurotransmitter profile shifts to a restorative mode. It is at this level that old patternings begin to fall away and new patterns can supplant them. Let me see if I can make the connection for you.

Abused/special needs children often exhibit patterns of thought or behavior that are difficult to change and interfere with the learning process. These thoughts or actions are repeated so often that they become mentally compelling forces in our lives — they become habitual coping mechanisms.

Feedback from the Speech Pathologist

*Speaking from the therapeutic setting, when *T'ai Chi Chih* practice was used as reinforcement during the project:*

Observation: "Students' behavior demonstrated self-containment and poise — not the frenetic energy usually exhibited."

Question: Could *T'ai Chi Chih* practice offer these children a significant start in self-management? More study is needed."

Comment: "For so long they have been in a row boat in the ocean with no oar. *T'ai Chi Chih* [practice] offers a safe tool to make themselves feel in control of themselves. It gave them a point of balance from which they can deal with and experience life around them."

*Speaking from the therapeutic setting, when *T'ai Chi Chih* practice was used as reinforcement during the project:*

Observations

1. Reduction in distractive behaviors
2. Significantly less time bringing them back to task.
3. Minimal corrective behaviors used.
4. Movement from class to class is calm, orderly.
5. Attending behaviors are: on task, on topic (content), turn-taking has improved significantly.

continued on page 35



T'ai Chi Chih Community: Inclusive or Exclusive?

By Chery Ann Hoffmeyer Ph.D., ATCC

There has been much talk in the *Vital Force* and at the August 2002 conference about the T'ai Chi Chih (TCC) community and what is best for the community. But what exactly do we mean by community? This article explores the meaning of the word community, what the characteristics of a community are and how a community forms. There is a comparison of the TCC community to these qualities and some suggestions about making the TCC community more inclusive.

Scott Peck (1978) in his book A World Waiting to be Born: Civility Rediscovered talks about community as a way of being together with "authenticity" and "interpersonal harmony" so that the members function with a collective energy that is "greater than the sum of one's individual energies." This same conceptualization of community is reflected in writings by Schaffer and Anundsen (1993) as they describe a community as a "dynamic whole." These perceptions portray a community as a group of individuals that experience a sense of oneness through being honest and working in a harmonious manner. Would this be an accurate description of our TCC community? I believe that our TCC community is greater than each of the individuals of which it is comprised.

According to Schaffer and Anundsen (1993) a community is formed when several characteristics are present. A community has individuals who participate in a "common practice"; these individuals depend upon each other for support, they "make decisions together"; the community members identify themselves with something that is "larger than themselves"; and the members also commit themselves to the well-being of themselves, each other and to the group. When we look at the TCC community, how does our community compare with these characteristics?

The TCC community certainly consists of individuals who participate in a common practice, the practice of the TCC form. The individuals in the TCC community depend on each other for support, this support is demonstrated during practice sessions where one teacher may

help another with refinement of movements. Support is expressed verbally and non-verbally when emotions are displayed about a specific topic and someone responds directly to this expression through words of concern, appreciation and through a touch or a smile. Our community makes decisions together as was reflected in the discussions held at the San Antonio conference regarding the increased number of deferrals, and, in discussions held at the teacher's retreat in Minneapolis. Commitment to the well-being of all is reflected in the sincere dialogue in both venues. The expressions of concern for other members and the accommodations made in the [August 2002] conference program that allowed input from interested members, also reflect this commitment.

In addition to the characteristics previously outlined, Schaffer and Anundsen (1993) suggested that there were eight specific qualities that must be present for a community to exist on an ongoing basis. These characteristics include the following: there must be an alignment of values; a member-based structure; teamwork; open communication; mutual support; respect for individuals; permeable boundaries; and, group renewal. I think that the TCC teachers would agree that we value the importance of well prepared TCC teachers and that we want to prepare the best teachers that can be prepared. The **member-based** structure is reflected in the organization of the TCC community which consists of accredited TCC teachers: Justin Stone, the originator of TCC Joy Thru Movement, Ed Altman, the head of the TCC community, and Sandy McAlister and Pam Towne, TCC teacher trainers. These members identify, discuss and deal with key issues that are important to the success of the TCC community. These TCC community teachers work as a **team** with the head of the TCC community making decisions that are in the best interest for the community.

At the TCC Conference 2002, all individuals present, who chose to, had the opportunity to express their thoughts and ideas, they had an opportunity to be heard by the community. The discussions at the TCC conference reflected **open communication, mutual support** and **respect** for the individual's whom expressed their opinions. This open discussion also demonstrated the **per-**



meable boundaries within the TCC community, input was requested on the TCC teacher accreditation process and that input was given.

The final characteristic of an ongoing community, **renewal**, is addressed in numerous ways throughout the TCC community. The annual conference is an opportunity for teachers to renew, the teacher's retreat is another opportunity for renewal, as is the opportunity to audit a teacher's training. In all, the TCC community demonstrates the qualities and characteristics of a community, as identified by Shafer and Anundsen (1993), however I believe that there is more that could be done to make the TCC community even stronger than it already is.

Presently the TCC community defines itself primarily in terms of its teachers. The annual conference focuses on the needs of the teachers. The teacher's retreats and teacher's renewal days focus on the needs of the teachers as well. There is however another group that I believe needs to be included in the definition of our TCC community, the students and ongoing practitioners of the TCC form.

Over the past few years I have observed a move to include students in some activities that are offered to the TCC community. Obviously the teacher's accreditation is focused on the students and the needs they have in becoming accredited TCC teachers. There are local groups within the TCC community that hold practice days where teachers and students, or what I would call TCC practitioners, come together to refine their skills. Also, I have seen skill refinement days where students/practitioners are invited to come and deepen their TCC practice. In addition, the teacher/student/practitioner TCC retreats have included all members of the TCC community. These activities, that include practitioners and students, are sporadic and are not reflected in the TCC community as a whole. Our TCC conferences are open to teacher's only, the only time where students and practitioners are allowed to attend the conference is when the open practice session is held on the second day of the conference. I believe that by not including all individuals who practice the TCC form in the activities of our TCC community that we have become an **exclusive** community.

I would like to challenge our community to reflect on the type of community that we want to have — inclusive or exclusive. I would like to see our community become a more **inclusive** community. A community that welcomes all individuals who practice the TCC form into many of the activities of the community.

Before I became an accredited TCC teacher I had practiced the TCC form for 11 years. I wanted to deepen my practice of the TCC form, to receive feedback on the movements, to learn more about the principles of the TCC discipline, but there was no opportunity to do that within my community. I subscribed to the *Vital Force* and looked longingly each year at the reports and pictures of the annual conference and wished that I could have attended. I wanted to meet Justin Stone and the head of the TCC community, I wanted to be able to practice the TCC form with a large group of other TCC practitioners, but I could not because I was not an accredited teacher. It wasn't that I was afraid of becoming a teacher, I had an education background and had taught adult learners for many years, I just wanted to practice TCC Joy Thru Movement at a deeper level of understanding and skill. Over those years I used what was available to me, Justin's TCC tape, books that I ordered from Good Karma Publishing, and the notes that I had from my introductory TCC class. Needless to say, these provided me with some support. But without the feedback from someone skilled in the practice of the TCC form I developed habits that I had to unlearn, I was even practicing some of the moves incorrectly. I just wanted to deepen my practice and yet the only way that I could do that was to become a TCC teacher. I wanted to be part of the activities held by the TCC community but the only way that I could do that was to become a TCC teacher. I wonder how many individuals who have learned the TCC form are in the position now, that I was in then? How many TCC students/practitioners want to deepen their practice but don't have the opportunity to do so?

I would like each of our TCC teachers, each of the members of our TCC community, to think of ways that TCC students and practitioners could be included in our local, regional, national and international community. Is there a way that we could include these individuals and yet still meet the needs of the TCC teachers? I think the answer to this is yes. Let's begin by welcoming TCC students and practitioners to our regular practice days, including them in our meetings where we talk about issues relevant to their TCC practice and the TCC community, and also invite them to our annual conference. We could have activities that are for teachers, activities that are for students and practitioners, and activities where the entire TCC community would come together as one group, as we already do in the open practice at the conference. I believe that we as teachers need to have time with other teachers where we can dialogue openly about teaching issues

continued on page 35

Building Community

East Coast TCC teachers connect

By Sondra "Sky" Young-Wick

As part of a growing commitment to connect with each other on a regular basis and commit to furthering our practice of *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement*, the East Coast TCC teachers have decided to meet in May each year for some sort of regional TCC event.

This year, we have a TCC Intensive scheduled, a new format (open to students and teachers, as discussed at the teachers' conference in August) with Pam Towne leading. That event will allow us to get intensive feedback and refinement of our form by a teacher trainer. In addition, we may also end up having a separate weekend retreat for just teachers, much like we did last year.

Last May, 26 TCC teachers from New Jersey, Pennsylvania, northern New York and southern Maryland met at the Jersey shore for a weekend retreat. We had overnight accommodations in three homes near the Jersey Shore; however, for most of our weekend we gathered at the home of Lonnie and Ron Miller. Their home is lovely and right on the beach overlooking the Atlantic Ocean — we couldn't have asked for a more inspired setting or for more perfect hosts for our retreat. We enjoyed wine and cheese for our first gathering and a great meal on Friday evening. A comfortable atmosphere was established the first evening and would continue throughout.

We came to the retreat to get away and relax, yet we also came to learn from each other with the goal of deepening and refining our TCC practice. Dan Piencikak and Sr. Antonia led an intensive 5-hour review session of TCC movements on Saturday using Ed Altman's



Ralph Garn (front, left) and the other teachers practice *Around the Platter* during the 5-hour review.

Photo: Janet Oussatay

Movement Review Checklist. We carefully reviewed and practiced each movement and learned from each other, both from the perspective of being a TCC student and a teacher. Many useful teaching tips were shared and each of us heard what we needed to hear. Some of the learning which has affected my practice included:

* Dan described a "rolling log" visualization for seated TCC movements which is also beneficial for students who tend to hold too much tension in the waist. Sit on the edge of a chair and visualize a log across your lap. Roll the log forward using your stomach muscles and buttocks/pelvic tilt, then roll the log backwards.

* Sr. Antonia pointed out that our hands can be positioned a little lower at the beginning of "Daughter in the Valley", as long as the hands remain above the height of the elbows (per Ed's checklist). I had always felt like I was waiting for my hands to catch up during the first forward weight shift of that movement.

* We discussed softness during yinning and yanging by allowing the knee to bend and allowing the toes/heel to rise during the full weight shift, rather than lifting the

toes/heel. Language can be so important as we teach increased softness and the "effort of no effort".

Our review session was thorough, and we discussed many other tips as we dedicated ourselves to improving our teaching methods and growing deeper in our practice. The review session was like a mini-conference, but without Justin and Ed! (Sigh...).

After our review session, we returned to our main home for an evening of relaxation and great fun. We balanced the intense learning of the day with laughter and entertainment that evening. We concluded the day with a special candlelight meditation and rededication ceremony led by Sr. Antonia. As you can imagine, the ceremony was very special in our beautiful surroundings, which included the gentle sound of the ocean in the background. It was a perfect way to end the full day of our retreat.

Several of our group attended local church services on Sunday morning, then we gathered for our final practice facing the Atlantic Ocean. We shared a wonderful Sunday brunch together with more laughter and fun, as we cherished our new and old friendships from the weekend. Our morning also included a period of silence and solitude, and the opportunity to reflect. We then gathered for the last time to discuss our "lessons learned", since this was our first attempt at a TCC weekend retreat. Some of those lessons included:

* Benefit was gained from periods of scheduled time as well as free time; this promoted the balance of learning and relaxation which were both important goals of our retreat.

* We'll likely vary the pace of our 5-hour Saturday review session next time to include a light lunch and possibly more discussion time.

* Early/late risers and admitted snorers should be considered when establishing the grouping of our accommodations.

* Encourage those with vans to bring them to the retreat for efficient shut-

tling if accommodations are separated (our three homes were within about two miles of each other).

- * After obtaining a list of confirmed attendees, share the list of names/addresses/phone numbers with all attendees for possible car-pooling to the retreat.
- * Begin with a full practice Friday before dinner to set the tone of the retreat, as is done at conference.
- * Schedule a time for pyramid poetry after a practice.
- * Our period of silence and solitude on Sunday morning was added when we realized we were ahead of schedule. We later agreed this time set aside for reflection was a valuable part of our retreat. . . .

It took the generous contributions of many people to make our TCC retreat such a success. Sr. Antonia was a major contributor in terms of organizing the arrangements and accommodations, and she conducted the special candlelight ceremony. She also led our review session with Dan Pienciak, and what wonderful teachers they are! Nancy Hall and Neal Giacomelli helped with arrangements (and entertainment!). Janet Oussaty served as our photographer, which means she often interrupted her practices and focused learning for the sake of our group. We also gratefully acknowledge our hosts Lonnie and Ron Miller for the use of their beautiful home, the incredible meals prepared for us, and their care and kindness towards us throughout the weekend.

continued on page 12



Most of the 26 attending East Coast teachers pose for a group picture of their weekend retreat. "Sky" is sitting in the front row, second from the left.

Photo: Lonnie Miller

Building Community

continued from page 11

I hope I've conveyed how special the weekend was for us. Sharing a weekend retreat with TCC teachers in a beautiful, inspired setting like the Atlantic Ocean is truly a blessing. I will close this article with a pyramid poem which Dan Pienciak wrote during the retreat. It captures our experience perfectly.

sky
ocean
sandy beach
wind whispering
T'ai Chi Chih
is my
home.



Two attending teachers enjoy a quiet practice at the shoreline during their regional TCC teachers' retreat

Photo: Janet Oussat

Building Community

St. Louis area teachers and students retreat for second year to refine their TCC practice

Compiled by Kathy Albers

The second *Tai Chi Chih Retreat* in Louisiana, Missouri [from Oct. 12-13, 2002] was a time of growth, reflection, rejuvenation and deepening the practice of *Tai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement*. This 24-hour journey into ourselves began and ended with our practice, although the appearance of this practice greatly changed. The sincerity and look into ourselves through the *Tai Chi Chih* form shined through from beginning to end. It was similar to an intensive workshop with lots of questions, answers, demonstrations and self-discovery. The Instructors were able to learn and view themselves in a new light thus allowing us to release some of the Vashana's (habit energies) we weren't aware that we had. We had lively discussions on movements, techniques, and the essence of the moves. I also believe the students received much from this format because they were able to explore the variety of techniques we teachers use to communicate our practice and they

received personal attention. I rode down with one of my students, Patty Dub. She loved the retreat and can hardly wait to go again. It reminded me of my Teacher's Accreditation! All of us worked together for our greatest good. Softness, continuity, flowing effortless and releasing control were addressed throughout this time.

I attended shortly after recovering from pneumonia (which included having over 104-degree temperature). During this time of illness, I practiced the *Tai Chi Chih* form mentally, knowing the benefits it can provide. The day before the retreat was my first semi-normal day of functioning. Throughout the first day of the retreat, I felt my energy increase beyond expectation. I actively participated throughout this time and the chi was flowing! I even stayed up for the campfire-drumming circle and got "smudged" along the way. Kathy Albers did a fantastic job going through the moves and all of the instructors had much to offer. We also couldn't have done it without Faith

Horton who reserved the location (only \$35 per person!), helped handle the mailings and much more.

I wish to thank all of you who were there and touched my heart. I cannot express the amount of growth we received by coming together, teachers and students alike. It was a time of reawakening and re-evaluating our Tai Chi Chih practice and of reaching yet another level. The power within our Tai Chi Chih practice never ceases to amaze me!

- Catherine Millman

This was the first time that I was attending a TCC retreat. This was a very rewarding experience on many levels. First, to have teachers and students mingle in an informal setting was great. It was obvious that all the students who attended were very serious about deepening their TCC practice. They were all listening carefully to the many different perspectives, of the many teachers available to them. The different style of teaching also helped them to get whatever improvement they needed.

It was quite an opportunity to help with a future teacher just about ready to attend a teacher training, to have further training with another teacher, or simply confirm their readiness or point out areas of improvement.

I was very impressed with the integrity of the TCC teachers willing to receive feed back from each other. This really demonstrated to the student how even as teachers we are continuous students, learning, open to feed back to better our TCC form. Our openness to learn really helped the openness of the students to receive further feed back.

The warmth and the relationship that developed among every one in such a short time was very comfortable and suiting. I believe that the natural environment where the TCC retreat was held was suiting for introspection.

After having done multiple TCC practices, the Chi was circulating profusely and so were the students and teachers open and talking easily.

What better way to bring the TCC community closer together than to offer a TCC retreat. I am very grateful of having been part of this retreat with some of the St. Louis TCC community. And of course the exchange of exquisite food that everyone shared was wonderful!

- Lorraine Lepine

Other comments:

I feel that I have a greater understanding of the form and I appreciate it. What I found helpful was the staggering circle, especially when the instructors were in the center circle. One could watch whomever was guiding the practice with one eye and the back of someone else with the other eye (and ones neighbor with the third eye. Heh.).

- Roberto Mueller
Student of Carole Ewald

Joy was there to be reflected and absorbed so easily. In the dining hall, the practice sessions, and the bonfire camaraderie.

- Don Bohrer
Former student of Kathy Albers,
now accredited TCC teacher

The facility was really beautiful and a great place for a TCC retreat. I felt the group jelled beautifully and all were very interested and sincere in improving their practice. It always amazes me how much you can learn from the questions and answers of others. Some things we take for granted until we hear questions and answers that we hadn't considered but are very relevant to our own growth in the TCC discipline. Thanks for the opportunity to participate in the retreat and we look forward to next year's retreat.

- Bobbie Anderson

Thanks for making the retreat possible and so enriching! It was truly a gift!

- Ann Marie Wyrscz
Student of Kathy Albers

Thank you and all the teachers, and especially Faith Horton for once again helping me "keep on track". I have been more religious about my practice and can hear all of you with your helpful comments and instruction talking to me as I work on improving my daily routine. I admire all of your dedication and willingness to share so completely.

- Pam Loucks
Student of Kathy Albers

Sept. 9-14, 2002

Edmonton teacher training graduates 16 with help from 16 auditing teachers

As one of the three organizers of the recent *T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Training* held at Camp Van-Es (outside Edmonton) I look back on our week together with a mixture of relief, gratitude, and appreciation. First and foremost is the great sense of relief in having gotten through the week with its challenges ranging from the physical comforts of the campers (cabins too hot or too cold, food problems, backed up shower drains, etc.) to the emotionally charged "backroom" meetings among ourselves to find solutions to unexpected obstacles. Yes, there were difficulties, but together we rode them out and resurfaced at the end of the week with an even greater appreciation for each other's

uniqueness and contribution to the success of the training. Tamara and Yvette I give you my greatest thanks for a job well done.

My gratitude to nature for providing beautiful sunny days and sparkling nights (with an assortment of porcupines, coyotes, moose, hawks, woodpeckers and shore birds) goes beyond words. I highly recommend a camp or retreat setting for hosting a teacher training and the opportunity it affords in letting nature help reconnect us to who we really are.

And finally, I'd like to express my enormous appreciation not only to Ed for his gentle guidance and wonderful

corrections, but to all the auditors (16 in all) who came from near and far and added so much to the training. Whether spending time giving the teacher candidates extra help or quietly working on their own movements, their presence was very much enjoyed and appreciated.

To all the candidates who worked so hard and went through so much together I congratulate you and celebrate your achievement. I look forward to seeing many of you throughout the year ahead, and all of you at the next conference!

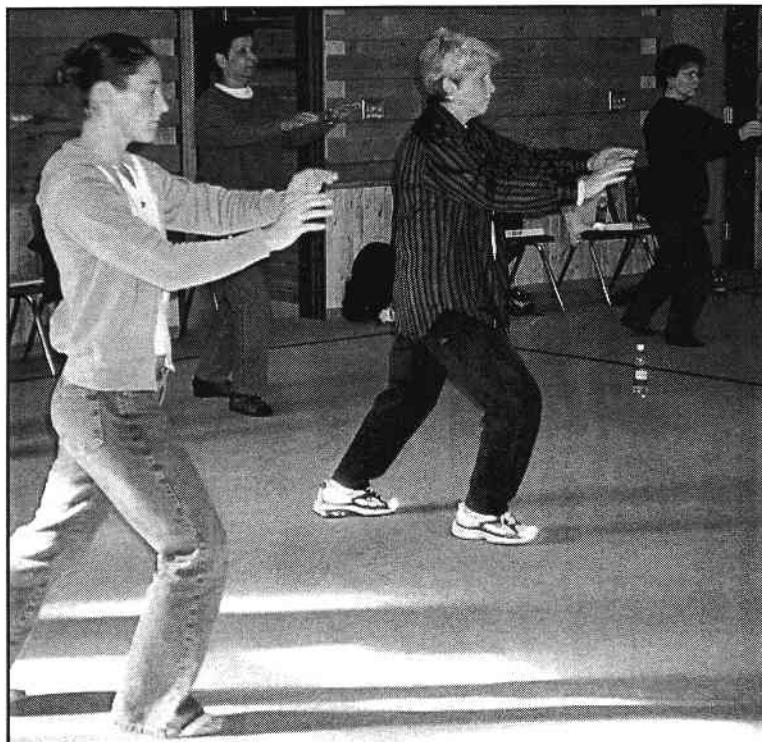
- Margo Carpenter
Course Co-Host

This week was significant to me not only as a first time auditor but also as a member of the hosting trio.

From my observation, the week began remarkably well for the 16 teacher candidates! From the outset, Ed was able to create an atmosphere that was most conducive to learning. The candidates appeared attentive yet relaxed and comfortable, freely asking questions of Ed and enjoying his humor. I had expected the candidates to be as subdued and tense as I was on the first day of my training but was pleasantly surprised! Perhaps there was also some comfort in the fact that almost as many auditors were present to assist, coach and share their expertise during the week.

As the week progressed, it was fascinating to observe the bonding that began to glue some "cabin-mates" into what appeared the beginning of lasting friendships. No doubt the intimacy of shared space, laughter, tears, triumphs and flowing Chi allowed it all to happen!

I am grateful to Margo for her lead-



(L-R): Shilo Crawford, Course Co-Host Yvette Bowman, Auditors J. Lynn Shaw-Ringham and Roberta Taggart.
Photo: Margo Carpenter



Candidates and auditors enjoy their final practice outdoors in nature. Photo: Margo Carpenter

ership in coordinating this event and to Tamara for sharing her skills. To the teacher candidates and auditors who braved the rustic camp setting, thank you for trusting in our hospitality. Many thanks Ed for the opportunity to enrich my practice, enhance my teaching skills and confirm the value of periodically auditing *T'ai Chi Chih* Teacher Training.

- **Yvette Bowman**
Course Co-Host

practice. I found myself comparing my reactions to my own training and the training which unfolded during this week. I felt somewhat envious because there were so many long time accredited teachers present from whom to learn including Roberta Taggart and Sandy McAlister and even Ed's approach to teaching appeared to be more mellow.

The candidates worked hard all week at refining their movements

and redefining for themselves the essence of *T'ai Chi Chih* practice. It was with amazement that I observed great transformations and growth and it was interesting to notice my own. The main message throughout the week was letting go of expected form and allowing the Chi to flow.

Working together with Margo Carpenter and Yvette Bowman in the process of organizing this event was another learning opportunity for me. I valued greatly Margo's experience in organizing such events in the past. The lovely fall weather at the camp with relatively mild temperatures certainly were factors to be greatly thankful for — we could have had snow which would have altered the experience somewhat. Throughout the challenges of the week I felt supported and uplifted by our common goal to share and pass on *T'ai Chi Chih* practice. With much gratitude to all who attended,

- **Tamara Zujewskyj**
Course Co-Host

This was the first time that I had the opportunity to audit a *T'ai Chi Chih* training. What an enriching experience! I could work at refining and deepening my own practice while working alongside teacher candidates and auditors. It was such a pleasure to watch Ed Altman lead the practices and learn from the softness which he models for us all. Ed's gentle but firm reminders during his teaching sessions served to reinforce and reconfirm for me the fundamental principles of *T'ai Chi Chih*.



Congratulations to the graduates of the course! **Back row, (L-R):** Byron Gill, Anna Moncey, Rhonda Gill, Leslie Keith, Course Instructor Ed Altman, Lisa Thorburn, Corina Whiting, Shilo Crawford; **Middle row, (L-R):** Sr. Margot Fish, Catherine Brochu, Faye Mohr; **Front row, (L-R):** Donna Aldous, Kathryn Snelling, Monique Beneteau, Suraya Faziluddin, Janine Pidruchney. Not pictured: Sarah Williams. Photo: Margo Carpenter



Candidates respond after training

The two things that struck me the most was how emotionally intense the week was. I expected the physical intensity but I guess I shouldn't have been surprised by the rest! The other thing was how many of us came together as strangers and within a few short days, we bonded and pulled for each other.

- Monique Beneteau

I was driving back to the city after the teachers training. With me were my two roomies from the training session. As we were talking I decided to change lanes to pass the car ahead of me. Without thinking I crouched lower in the car seat and turned from the t'an t'ien to shoulder check. I suddenly realized what I had just done and laughed out loud. My body had automatically drawn upon the familiarity of the Pulling Taffy movements to perform a different task. I discovered Joy Thru Movement while in the car!

- Janine Pidruchney

The week of accreditation was the most important event in my life, eclipsing giving birth, marriage and death of a close one. After having hovered at the edge so many times, finally breaking free, letting go of the baggage, was so empowering. Feeling one's power for the first time (thanks for the growl, Athene!!!) puts so many other things about one's life into a different perspective.

A month later, I have finally stumbled onto the technique of "pushing" the energy down from the T'an T'ien through the soles of the feet to ground. I finally know the feeling of truly grounding, not just the energy buzzing around the feet. Amazing!!! I am so much more open now to the insights received from my TCC practice.

At one of our practices by the lake, I stood behind and to the side of Ed. The sun, low in the sky, cast our shadows out in front. I found it very inspiring to follow the movement of his shadow. I use this technique alone at home when I practice with a dim lamp set at waist

height and behind me to one side. This casts the shadow on the wall in front and to the side. One can easily check stance of the shadow without the total distraction of using a mirror.

Given my rocky start at accreditation, (yes, I was initially terrified of Ed!) the support of the other candidates and the auditing teachers was warm and generous. It was truly a safe time and place to be so vulnerable and to have others encouraging and helping you to find that unique way of making your own "leap of faith." It was nothing at all like what I expected and so very much more. Thank you so much Ed, and all the teachers and candidates, especially those who saw my potential and insistently nudged me up and over. If you ever feel isolated as a teacher, I highly recommend auditing an accreditation to reconnect to the community.

I am so very grateful and still awed by the gift of the T'ai Chi Chih discipline.

- Cathy Bracha

Forwarded Letter

Greetings Ed. . . . Words can't express my gratitude for the spirit and learning at our famous "camp site". The study and reflection which I am doing re: the different aspects of this Practice really help me to set the tone for my day. I have been thirsty for this integrated approach to life for several years now. Isn't it wonderful that Justin has put it out there for us? . . . It was wonderful to be with eager and focused candidates for a whole week. It was a great balance of work and fun even though you thought we were quite serious. I am giving special attention to the backward/forward bounce that I was into. It already feels more grounded. Am I an eager learner or what? I came away realizing that I will always be on the learners' list which is quite consoling...I don't have to set a goal to know it all by such and such a date.

Thanks for your "non-guru" approach! When people turn facilitators into "gurus" it is so dangerous. I send you unifying energy and lots of warm gratitude,

Margot Fish, OSU



Auditing Was Awesome at Edmonton, Alberta CANADA Teacher Training

By Athene Mantle

What an incredible sunset! Four of us stood huddled on the Cooking Lake dock drinking in the changing Canadian sky. Precious moments to again be shared just as we four had that morning when we moved together in a silent *T'ai Chi Chih* practice to the spectacular rising sun. Look! It's a moose! How could it get more perfect?

We had only just arrived three days ago to the warm welcomes of our Canadian hosts. The rustic retreat center reflected the nurturing and joyful attitude of the Canadian teachers and candidates. For two days now my eyes and ears had been glued to Ed Altman as he led us through the movements. My notebook was full. My heart was full. I had learned so much. It was good to take a break.

Two of us ventured through the reeds around the lake toward the spot where the moose had disappeared. We moved in silence hoping to see some creatures of the lake as the light faded. We stopped in our tracks, breathless as we watched two great horned owls fly above us and perch on a tree just ahead.

What could top this moment but walking back discussing the two days of *T'ai Chi Chih* practice all the way? The path was dark but the way was clear. We decided that Ed's areas of focus for a better practice, that of #1 Alignment of Spine, #2 Stepping Out/Stance, and #3 Weight Shifting could be dubbed the 'Big Three' (although he did say they become ONE). He said that an adjustment is probably needed in one of those three areas if we find certain indicators in our practice. His list of some of those indicators — Tension, Awkwardness, Weakness, Fear, Pain, Ego, Strength (equals tension), and Anger proved to be very helpful. I liked his hint that leaving something out is often the answer. We were brought to new levels of awareness to the flow of qi as Ed guided us into softening into the weight shift and

finding the "sweet spot." And of course, what is a *Tai Chi Chih* practice without focusing on *Flowing Softly from the Center*, and *Grounding*. Ed gave us much to ponder when he told us that Justin Stone's number one thought about *Tai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement* is "*Letting Go*".

I'm out at sunrise Thursday morning for my solitary practice. I'm hidden among the reeds on a little beach where my footprints in the sand tell me much about my stance. As I step out, my front foot points out instead of straight ahead. I move the heel out instead of the toe in to bring the foot straight. Ed had said to adjust the foot alignment at the hips by moving the heel instead of the toe. My hips open and

suddenly I realize that for a lifetime I have been moving with my hips closed. All the pieces I had been working on for months suddenly fell into place. My feet were aligned. My over shifting and under shifting had fallen away. Everything was moving in sync and I felt a sense of oneness. This moment was very profound.

There was so much depth to this weeklong experience that it felt like there was a time warp. It was such a privilege to watch the enthusiastic teacher candidates evolve and unfold under Ed's pointed and skillful tutelage. It was a delight to watch the auditing teachers learning, assisting and sharing their knowledge. I became acutely aware of the immensity of the teacher training process and I was very grateful to be a part of this one. There was much hard work but lots of laughter. There were moments of great joy but still some tears. There were times of frustration and times of deep satisfaction. There were s'mores, sparklers, and bubbles (my favorite). We took long walks and wonderful canoe rides. New friends and special bonds were made. Old friendships and ties were strengthened. It was a chance to go deeper and a chance to give back to our very special community. New visions were formed and dreams were fulfilled. For me, auditing was awesome!



Sept. 21 & 22, 2002

First TCC workshop held in Los Angeles

By Roberta Taggart

Course Host

Twenty-eight teachers and students, some from as far away as NM and TX, gathered at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles on Saturday, September 21 for a *T'ai Chi Chih* One-Day Workshop. The studio space with natural light from many windows, the walls of mirrors and the suspended wooden floor created a wonderful atmosphere for the day. All around us was the youthful activity of a college campus.

Focusing on how to flow, Teacher Trainer Sandy McAlister facilitated the workshop, stressing *T'ai Chi Chih* basics of stance, posture, release of muscular tension, weight-shifting, and circularity. Reading from a letter received from Justin just before the workshop, she reminded participants to remember Justin's words as they moved:

"The most important single factor in learning [the] *T'ai Chi Chih* [form] is learning how to move the *T'ai Chi Chih* way. People come to *T'ai Chi Chih* lessons believing it is an exercise. Although it has all the benefits of exercise, and more, it must be done softly without muscular effort. We call it 'the effort of no effort.' Muscular tension closes the meridian channels thru which the CHI flows, so that we cannot circulate and balance the Life Force, the CHI, which is the primary purpose of *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement.*"

Attentive participants spent the morning sessions reviewing and refining movements through Pulling in The Energy. Later, students were asked to pair up and exchange an 'Aha! moment'—a moment in which they made a discovery or breakthrough regarding their TCC practice. This exchange of insights one with another provided the opportunity to clarify discoveries as well as share them. Students and teachers alike were emptied and filled in succession as they delved into letting go of old patterns interfering with the flow of the CHI. Teacher Larry Sava from Lubbock, TX said, "The energy in the room and the magnitude of experience is impressive..." while student Gloria Posada remarked, "The workshop was overwhelming in a beautiful way.... so many wonderful teachers.... I learned something invaluable about each and every movement."

During the afternoon sessions, at the request of participants, Sandy reviewed the waist-turning movements, including the Taffies, Working the Pulley, and Passing Clouds. The sounds for Six Healing Sounds were thoroughly discussed and practiced, as well as Light at the Top of the Head, Light at the Temple, and Joyous Breath. A full practice at the end of the day gave us the perfect opportunity to begin incorporating many movement refinements.

The presence of Teacher Trainer Pam Towne on both days enhanced the experience for attendees. As a Good Karma distributor, she displayed a wide array of TCC materials and discussed with attendees the Good Karma publications that would aid them in deepening their understanding of the TCC form and related spiritual matters.

Twenty-one of the 28 participants chose to participate in the Teacher Preparation Workshop on Sunday at the Inside Out Community Wellness Center in Redondo Beach. . . . Participants opened the morning by sharing with the whole group their 'Aha! moments' from Saturday. Students rediscovered the importance of releasing tension from the knees, shoulders, and so on, moving from the hips (*t'an t'ien*) — not the shoulders and focusing at the soles of the feet. As one participant reflected, "the position of the feet provides a good foundation." Student Shannon Westmyer remarked "... getting the flow is empowering to me." May Swanson, teacher candidate from Phoenix, AZ emailed after returning home to say, "Thanks for the help on my foot work (on Carry the Ball to the Side). I have been practicing the corrections I noted last weekend and it helped me when you pointed out about the feet remaining flat or rolling over to the side. AHA!" . . . The Sunday workshop focused more on circularity, weight-shifting and waist-turning, as Justin's letter was re-read, and we took note of these remarks: "Actually, *T'ai Chi Chih* [practice] is done below the waist, with the yinning and yanning of the legs being all important and with some circularity in practically every movement." . . . Teacher Trainer Pam Towne commented, "I saw remarkable shifts and changes in peoples' practice over the weekend. The question is, what will they do with those insights when they get home? Will they remember those 'Aha's!' and integrate them into their practice?" . . .

Oct. 5 & 6, 2002

First TCC workshop offered in Georgia

By Constance Fraatz

Course Host

On October 5th and 6th 2002 the first statewide *T'ai Chi Chih* workshop was held in Georgia. Sandy McAlister led the event that was considered a huge success by everyone in attendance. This was the first time I met Sandy and I was immediately impressed for instead of seeing the city sights of Atlanta, she headed out to the North Georgia mountains and our beautiful waterfalls and small rural craft towns! When I picked her up in Norcross after her excursion I was struck by how much she seemed to embody the principles of *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement*. She was quiet, soft-spoken, simple—not elaborate in dress or word, quietly confident and serene. Like the *T'ai Chi Chih* form, simple, effective, easy.

The morning of the workshop arrived and I for one was a little bit nervous, but I needn't have worried. The participants didn't come for the wonderful lunch we served or to view scenic Roswell. They came to be with a teacher trainer and to deepen their practice of the *T'ai Chi Chih* discipline. Teachers and students alike came with open hearts and open minds and were richly rewarded with Sandy's gentle guidance and practical wisdom regarding the movements of this astounding practice.

One thing I know for certain about the *T'ai Chi Chih* discipline is that there is always something I don't know, always a layer deeper than the one I'm on. This deeper layer is almost always revealed when I can let go of something extraneous and get simpler and cleaner in my practice.

When I spoke with teacher Amy Hackenberg of Athens, GA about her experience of Sandy, she said, "It was great to have Sandy's energy here. She's very calming and there are no frills, no ego." Indeed the beauty of the *T'ai Chi Chih* form's simplicity was evident throughout Sandy's teaching. I would marvel again and again at the depth of the teaching and yet the utter simplicity of it at the same time. There is such richness in Justin's gift of *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement* that is very humbling and very inspiring.

The teacher's prep workshop on Sunday was intense, rewarding, and very practical at the same time. My student, Sheryl Adair, said of her experience: "Sandy

McAlister was a wonderful instructor and suggested subtle (and not so subtle) changes that significantly improved my practice. Getting to know her, other teachers and students was an added bonus. There is something special about those who are drawn to the practice of *T'ai Chi Chih* [Joy Thru Movement]. After this experience, I feel more confident and committed to going forward with my teacher training."

Amy Hackenberg's student, Christian, also spoke of feeling at ease with the group and gaining confidence. Additionally he gained a "new appreciation for the connection between the arms and the hands."

As a teacher I know I gained much from this experience that will aid me in my classes. I don't think I ever really got the power behind "Working the Pulley" before the workshop. The way Sandy broke down that movement really opened up something for me in my own practice as well as being incredibly instructive for me as a teacher.

Amy said, "I appreciated Sandy's attention to the upper body as well as the stance. She was able to articulate the connectedness in a way that I know will be useful for me in my teaching".

And finally ending on a poetic note, teacher Linda Olney from Lilburn wrote: "There was a time during the class that I was standing in the back & I got the sense of a huge, ancient tree with thousands of branches extending from it, with ROOTS that ran for an eternity. I saw on both sides of me a few very special people that have been students of mine for several years, and are now branching out with intentions of becoming teachers themselves. This brought to mind some words of the French philosopher, Simone Weil — "To be ROOTED is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul". With many years of practice & five years teaching, my roots run very deep in the Tai Chi tree of life. It was uplifting to see that the same thing that had touched my soul and has given me a sense of belonging had inspired others. . . . Whether any of us go on to become teachers or not, being a part of a force of nature, like *T'ai Chi Chih* [Joy Thru Movement] & its workshops, is an intensified, vibrant & recharging experience. . . . The Atlanta workshop gave my students and me that opportunity."

Discovering the Power of Seijaku

By Beverly Weil

In depth and beauty, amidst the glorious colors of Autumn, the Seijaku Accreditation Course in Ringwood, New Jersey was a REVELATION.....a DEEP and POWERFUL AWAKENING.....an EXPANSION into the Realm of Ultimates, where time is suspended and the rhythmic flow of Cosmic Energy is the only Reality.

We had come from near and far, united in one purpose — to learn Seijaku — and the sincerity and dedication of each teacher could be tangibly felt, creating a bond of close community as we each, in our own way, at our own level of development, attuned to the flow of Cosmic Energy and surrendered to the flow of the Chi. It was a time of DISCOVERY.....a DEEPENING of MIND and SPIRIT, as we learned to move from softness to hardness — moving through very heavy resistance with great strength, and returning again to softness — HOLDING FAST and LETTING GO. With JOY and GRATITUDE we experienced the POWER of SEIJAKU, and came to more deeply know the meaning of "Serenity in the midst of activity." The deeper meaning of Seijaku began to reveal itself to us as a profound SPIRITUAL TEACHING for LIFE. Through Seijaku we reached a deeper level of attunement to the Intrinsic Energy of the Universe, and achieved a level of greater softness in our *T'ai Chi Chih* practice. With gratitude and a sense of renewal and rededication, we committed to the process of learning the wonderful gift of Seijaku for our own benefit and spiritual growth, and to also be able to teach it to others who are ready to receive its profound teachings.

Under the outstanding leadership of Ed Altman, we were guided with great sensitivity and intuitive perception each step of the way. It was clear that Ed's teaching came from a very high level of integrity, and his dedication and sincerity was a reflection of his own commitment to the practice. Ed's teaching was clear and inspiring, and devoted to keeping Seijaku pure, as Justin taught it. Ed's many references to Justin's words enabled us to feel Justin's presence. Ed's clarity and insightful attention to detail illuminated the richness of the Seijaku Accreditation Course, which included the full "Maximum Chi Program," with the fullest spiritual dimension, and took us deeper and deeper, opening doors for us to continue our own



(L-R): Sr. Margaret McGirl, Carolyn Allenby, Ann Gallagher, Nancy Bordley Hall, Vida Wackerling and Deb Cole let the arms float up during practice of the Jing at the Seijaku Teacher Training in NJ in October. Photo: Dan Piencik

life-long journey of exploration and discovery. As Ed reminded us — the true teacher is the Chi.

The remarkable teachings and experiences of the Seijaku Accreditation Course shall continue to grow within each of us — seeds planted in fertile soil — and will deepen over time. Already I have experienced many breakthroughs and insights.....some still difficult to put into words. The room seemed filled with light and love as we moved together during our last practice, and I experienced a powerful new dimension open up within me, which took me to a deeper level. As I felt the weight shift, I felt completely supported by the Chi as it seemed to move on its own within me and around me. From softness, came the hardness.....tangible.....real.....a "wall"....a mass of accumulated Energy through which I moved with GREAT INTERNAL STRENGTH.....and then once again, the SOFTNESS, out of which the hardness seemed to be "born", as again I moved through the wall, and back into softness.....a deep, circularity.....an eternal balance.....the Cosmic Rhythm.....SEIJAKUSERENITY IN THE MIDST OF ACTIVITY....JOY....GRATITUDE.

Thank you, Justin.
Thank you, Ed.



News Shorts

"Joy on the Mountaintop" - Teachers' Conference 2003

Come explore the beautiful Canadian Rockies and experience true Joy on the Mountaintop when you attend the next TCC teacher's conference. This year's conference will be held in Banff, Alberta at the world-renowned Banff Centre. Nestled in the mountains overlooking the town site of Banff, the Banff Centre offers a combination of first class facilities and an awe-inspiring setting that will reach down and touch your very core. Can you picture a better setting in which to hold our annual gathering?

The conference will focus on being a time for retreat and renewal amid the unique setting of Banff National Park, Canada's oldest and most visited wilderness park. The possibility of an optional evening excursion to the Sulpher Mountain Gondola and Upper Hot Springs mineral pool is being looked into. Also being discussed is a chartered bus tour through the Bow Valley parkway to visit the beautiful Chateau Lake Louise. With its lake of turquoise waters set against the backdrop of the glacier-topped Mt. Victoria, Lake Louise is the most beloved and probably most photographed scene in the Canadian Rockies. We would like to give all conference attendees the opportunity to experience this magical setting if they so wish. Please stay tuned for more information regarding these optional evening activities.

For many of you this may be your first adventure into Canada. You may even want to plan your family vacation around the conference and bring your spouse or family with you. There is much vacation planning information available to you that can be sent free of charge from Travel Alberta. Please call Travel Alberta at 1-800-661-8888 or visit www.travelalberta.com to request an official Vacation Guide, Accommodation Guide and/or Campground Guide. (Tunnel Mountain campground is located just up the road from the Banff Centre, a 5-minute drive or 15-20 minute walk). Another helpful site for accommodation and activities information is www.discountbanff.com.

Please note: spouses will be able to stay on site at the Banff Centre if they want to register with the conference. The costs will be the same as the resident early registration fee - \$500 CAN. Also, of particular note to all Canadian teachers: our conference committee has just been informed that the first 30 Canadian teachers to

register will receive a \$100 discount, so will be able to register for \$400 CAN. So start making your plans now and get your registration in as soon as possible.

The first conference to be held outside the U.S. is coming together very nicely. I know where I'm going to be spending my time next Aug. 29 - Sept. 1. Where will you be?

- Margo Carpenter

Hints to U.S. teachers in registering for the annual teachers conference

Are you facing some challenges in purchasing a money order or bank draft in Canadian funds? If you are unable to purchase a money order in Canadian funds you can do the following: Purchase a money order in U.S. dollars for the equivalent Canadian funds (your bank can tell you the amount), then ADD \$10 CAN to the amount — Why? Because the cost of purchasing a money order and the cost of selling a money order are not based on the same exchange rate, also the exchange rate is variable from day to day. This addition will avoid the hassle of you having to send a second money order to offset the deficit. Send your registration and payment in early to secure your accommodation at the Banff Centre. Check out the Banff Centre website, on the registration form [inserted into this issue], to see the fabulous sites and get a sense of the amenities available. See you in beautiful Banff in August 2003.

- Chery Ann Hoffmeyer

Redesigned GKP Catalog available to TCC teachers for their students

Great New Resource for Teachers & Students! A new Good Karma Publishing catalog and a flyer about it are included with this issue of the VFJ. Designed to be more student friendly, the GKP catalog makes it easy for teachers to expose students to Justin's books and all the wonderful products from Good Karma.

My students all know about Justin's video and the TCC

continued on page 35



Calendar of Events

<p>Feb. 21 thru 23, 2003</p> <p>TCC RETREAT <i>w/ ED ALTMAN</i></p> <p>Location: Victoria, BC CANADA Contact: Guadalupe Buchwald #202 - 525 Rithet St. Victoria, BC CANADA V8V 1E4 Phone: (250) 385-6748 e-mail: gbuchwald@telus.net</p> <p>-or-</p> <p>Lynn Shaw-Ringham, (250) 592-9058 e-mail: lynnshawringham@hotmail.com</p> <p>Student/Teacher Registration and Payment: Cost \$90 U.S. / \$135 CAN, Commuters only — no space left at the Retreat Centre.</p>	<p>April 3 thru 6, 2003</p> <p>TCC RETREAT <i>w/ PAM TOWNE</i></p> <p>Location: Sedona, AZ Contact: Robin Spencer 88 Ocotillo Rd. Phoenix, AZ 85012 Phone: (602) 263-5013, ext. 107 e-mail: robin@fumcphx.org</p> <p>(Contact host for pricing information.)</p>
<p>Feb. 28 thru March 2, 2003</p> <p>TCC TEACHERS' RETREAT <i>w/ ED ALTMAN</i></p> <p>Location: Ben Lomand (SF Bay Area), CA Contact: Athene Mantle 1717 "D" St. Hayward, CA 94541 Phone: (510) 886-3829 e-mail: chigoddess@hotmail.com</p> <p>Attendance Fee: \$250</p>	<p>May 2 thru 6, 2003</p> <p>TCC INTENSIVE <i>w/ PAM TOWNE</i></p> <p>Location: Ringwood, NJ Contact: Dan Pienciak P.O. Box 122 Ocean Grove, NJ 07756 Phone: (732) 988-5865 e-mail: wakeupdaniel@aol.com</p> <p>Student/Teacher Attendance Fee: \$200</p> <p>(Arrive on Friday evening, May 2. Course starts Saturday morning, May 3.)</p>
<p>Mar. 20 thru 23, 2003</p> <p>TCC TEACHERS' RETREAT <i>w/ SANDY McALISTER</i></p> <p>Location: St. Paul, MN Contact: Ron Barker 4512 Jefferson St. NE Columbia Heights, MN 55421-2355 Phone: (763) 572-1115 e-mail: RONBARKER@ATTBI.COM</p> <p>(Contact host for pricing information. Note: Space limited to 40 attendees)</p>	<p>May 28 thru 31, 2003</p> <p>TCC INTENSIVE <i>w/ PAM TOWNE</i></p> <p>Location: Gurnee, IL (Chicago Area) Contact: Donna McElhose 18160 Twin Lakes Blvd. Wildwood, IL 60030 Phone: (847) 223-6065 e-mail: Dmcelhosechi@aol.com</p> <p>Student/Teacher Attendance Fee: \$200</p>



<p>June 12 thru 15, 2003</p> <p>TCC RETREAT w/ ED ALTMAN</p> <p>Location: Kauai, HI Contact: Noel Altman P.O. Box 1420 Kapaa, HI 96746 Phone: (808) 822-9288 e-mail: joythrumovementkauai@earthlink.net</p> <p>Student/Teacher Registration and Payment:</p> <table><tr><td>By 1/31/03:</td><td>\$250</td></tr><tr><td>Between 2/1/03 - 3/15/03:</td><td>\$275</td></tr><tr><td>After 3/15/03:</td><td>\$300</td></tr></table> <p>Non-U.S. Student/Teacher fee: \$250</p>	By 1/31/03:	\$250	Between 2/1/03 - 3/15/03:	\$275	After 3/15/03:	\$300	<p>Sept. 8 thru 13, 2003</p> <p>TCC TEACHER TRAINING w/ ED ALTMAN</p> <p>Location: Gurnee, IL (Chicago Area) Contact: Donna McElhose 18160 Twin Lakes Blvd. Wildwood, IL 60030 Phone: (847) 223-6065 e-mail: Dmcelhosechi@aol.com</p> <p>TCC Teacher Training Fee: \$450</p> <p><i>(Registration and payment need to be completed by July 31, 2003)</i></p>
By 1/31/03:	\$250						
Between 2/1/03 - 3/15/03:	\$275						
After 3/15/03:	\$300						
<p>June 28, 2003</p> <p>TCC WORKSHOP (8:30am - 5pm) w/ SANDY McALISTER</p> <p>Location: Sitka, AK Contact: Nancy Jo Bleier 702 Biorka St. Sitka, AK 99835 Phone: (907) 747-5039 e-mail: tfnjb@hotmail.com</p> <p>Attendance Fee: \$45</p>	<p>Nov. 18 thru 23, 2003</p> <p>TCC TEACHER TRAINING w/ SANDY McALISTER</p> <p>Location: Ringwood, NJ Contact: 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>Aug. 29 thru Sept. 1, 2003</p> <p>18TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL T'AI CHI CHIH TEACHERS' CONFERENCE</p> <p>Location: Banff, Alberta, CANADA Contact: Chery Ann Hoffmeyer P.O. Box 57032 2020 Sherwood Drive Sherwood Park, Alberta CANADA, T8A5L7 Phone: (780) 467-8701 e-mail: chaiholistichealth@shaw.ca</p> <p>Before 5/31/03 After 5/31/03</p> <table><tr><td>Resident fee: \$535 CAN.</td><td>\$560 CAN.</td></tr><tr><td>Commuter fee: \$335 CAN.</td><td>\$360 CAN.</td></tr></table>	Resident fee: \$535 CAN.	\$560 CAN.	Commuter fee: \$335 CAN.	\$360 CAN.	<p>Nov. 20, 2003</p> <p>DAY OF "JOY THRU MOVEMENT" CELEBRATING T'AI CHI CHIH PRACTICE</p> <p>Location: Worldwide</p> <p><i>(Teacher Aida Wilks Initiated this annual celebration which falls on Justin Stone's birthday, Nov. 20)</i></p> <p>POSSIBLE FUTURE EVENTS:</p> <p>If interested in a potential event described below, contact the host.</p> <p>Nov. 2003</p> <p>SEIJAKU TEACHER TRAINING</p> <p>Location: Bay Area, CA Contact: Athene Mantle: (510) 886-3829 e-mail: chigoddess@hotmail.com</p>		
Resident fee: \$535 CAN.	\$560 CAN.						
Commuter fee: \$335 CAN.	\$360 CAN.						

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 McAllster and Pam Towne are T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Trainers

Oct. 18-20, 2002

Hold Fast, Then Let go — Seijaku Teacher Training in NJ in October

By Stephanie Bass

Imagine how this felt.

Think of tearing your beloved *T'ai Chi Chih* practice apart—feet one way, hands another, head and shoulders somewhere else.

Look at the pieces under a brilliant light, using a magnifying glass.

Imagine the frustration, sweat, annoyance, maybe even anger, as your "knowledge" falls away. Nothing goes together the way it used to! And you're supposed to be a teacher!

Then, using softness for glue, put the pieces back together.

Feel the incredible lightness.

Notice how time stands still as you sense every millimeter of change in your weight shift.

Feel the power surge through you—and ground it well.

Laugh at everything—especially at the paradoxical workings of this challenging practice, the "graduate degree" of *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement*.

Those feelings were common during the three-day Seijaku training in October, as 33 TCC teachers learned and practiced Seijaku together at the Mount St. Francis Retreat Center in Ringwood, NJ.

The Seijaku accreditation course was organized by Dan Pienciak and



Congratulations to the newly-accredited Seijaku teachers! Back row, (L-R): Grady Anderson Jr., Course Instructor Ed Altman, April Lefler, Sr. Margaret O'Connor, Nancy Bordley Hall, Sr. Margaret McGirl, Athene Mantle, Larry Sava; Middle row, (L-R): Beverly Weil, Paula Favorito, Kate Henderson, Trisha Jewellen Hargaden, Sr. Juanita Morales, Ann Gallagher, Ron Heck, Janet Oussaty; Front row, (L-R): Course Host Dan Pienciak, Sue Reed, Neena Mitchell, Cheryl Wild, Stephanie Bass, Judy Mirczak, Carol Zaccagnini.

Photo: Noel Altman

taught by Ed Altman—who both responded with flexibility and good humor to the challenges of dealing with so many sincere, sometimes demanding, often irreverent TCC teachers. In addition to the Seijaku movements and principles, Ed taught the other components of the Maximum Chi Program—toning, the massages, chi circulation techniques, the Jing, and the "healing through joy" song.

If *T'ai Chi Chih* practice is like a 75-watt light bulb, Seijaku is a 1,000-watt bulb—that is what Justin Stone says. The "light" of Seijaku taught each of us something we needed to know.

"In the beginning of Seijaku, I moved with the upper body mus-

cles," said Ron Heck. "When I realized the movement started from the t'an t'ien and then the whole body, the feeling was very intense and fulfilling." Sue Reed's insight was about the transitions between movements. "Seijaku has shown me the importance of graceful transitions from hard to soft, all made possible when focusing on the t'an t'ien and using a solid stance."

"My Seijaku accreditation weekend was serenity in the midst of my *T'ai Chi Chih* family," said Grady Anderson, Jr. "Seijaku helped me to see the flaws in my *T'ai Chi Chih* practice—thank you Ed Altman for taking me to the next level."

Athene Mantle echoed that feeling. "I'm excited about the new lev-



(L-R): Teachers Paula Favorito, Janet Oussaty and Sr. Margaret O'Connor, who were receiving their Seijaku accreditation over the weekend, share a hug after dinner with Course Host Dan Pienciak. Photo: Athene Mantle

els of awareness that Seijaku is bringing to my practice," she said. "The timing of the expansion through the knees and the release of the heels has been enlightening in regard to grounding. I'm looking forward to many more insights."

Sister Juanita Morales said "The chi moved strongly and made me aware of my faults and also my improvements. As I leave today I am filled with confidence and enthusiasm to continue with these practices in my daily life, and also to keep my attention and focus on the soles of my feet!"

Several attendees, such as Debbie Cole, had returned as auditors.

"It was incredibly helpful to audit so soon after my initial Seijaku training (St. Louis in May). I had time to process some of the initial information and then I was more open and ready to go deeper this time. I really enjoyed the intimacy of a smaller

group with the intensity of this focused practice."

Vida Wackerling was also a returning auditor—"Please come back and back and back again," she said. "It is a wonderful experience."

Carolyn Perkins said that, on the second time, "everything fell into place. You have to persevere with Seijaku, as you don't necessarily get it the first time. Now I can't wait to go back and teach it to my advanced TCC

students."

Debbie Cole noted that, as with TCC practice, Seijaku also teaches us about life. "I look forward to applying these principles to my life as well as my practice. Pushing through the resistance (not around it) and acknowledging that it is there seems to apply directly to my life."

Even though the long, intense days sometimes were a little tiring, Paula Favorito found more strength during the course. "I was unsure if I could do it because of a very weak knee. After wearing a knee brace

Friday I found Saturday and Sunday I did not need it and was very pleasantly surprised that I could walk and stand as much as I did. A great experience, indeed!"



(L-R): Teachers Judy Mirczak and Athene Mantle (taking the course for the first time) and Auditor Deb Cole enjoy the beautiful fall weather on the retreat center's grounds during a break.

Photo provided by Athene Mantle

Oct. 22-27, 2002

TCC Teacher Training: NJ in October *Like Falling Leaves, Letting Go Softly*

By Dan Pienciak

Course Host

In the scenic hills of northern New Jersey, very close to the New York State line, lies a beautiful private tract of land, surrounded by Ringwood State Park. That particular haven of pastoral serenity of which I write, is called Mount Saint Francis Retreat Center, the site chosen by Sr. Antonia and myself one beautiful Autumn day one year earlier. It is an area where each late October, the foliage slowly brightens into a vivid riot of color, and sunlit leaves float down in cool, soft breezes.

Despite my looking forward to enjoying such a setting for this course, the weeks before were haunted by doubts and inner turmoil. I had never hosted a *T'ai Chi Chih* event at this



(L-R): Candidate Pat Weber-Wilcomb, Auditor Nancy Adams, Candidate Phillip Frost, Auditor Sharon Sirkis and Candidates Dennis Landes and Michael Isaacs practice *Passing Clouds* as another candidate (not pictured) leads them through.

Photo: Dan Pienciak

particular site previously. There seemed to be a million details and unknown factors to worry about. And then, just a month before the course, I received a phone call from the Center director, informing me that the building containing the space which we were to use for movement, was undergoing renovation and would definitely NOT be ready on time for our course. I quickly made an emergency visit to check out the only other room available, a bit small and with two pillars in the center. I was also concerned about the comfort of the accommodations in somewhat cramped quarters.

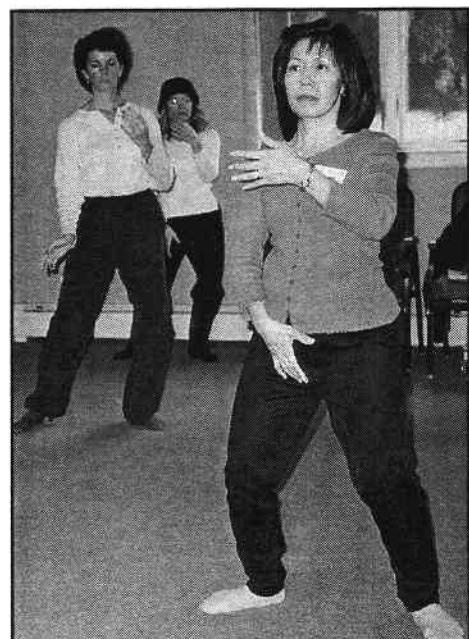
But when I emailed Ed Altman about the delayed renovations and a few other misgivings that I had, a reassuring reply came back: "All will be well. We will work with what we

are given. No worries."

No worries!!! "Easy for YOU to say," I thought. On the first day of the course, I found myself trying to deny that I was coming down with a rather bad bug. "No! Not now!!"

I was not grounded. Awake that first night, tossing and turning, I was anything but soft. I was forgetting the depth and great purpose of the work that lay ahead....for all of us, not just for me. As they had so many times in the past, familiar but temporarily forgotten words once again echoed deep within me: "Let go!"

And so became the great challenge of the *T'ai Chi Chih* movements for the 11 candidates, and for all of us attending the course for five and a half days. Letting go of what we



(L-R): Auditors April Leffler and Noel Altman, and Candidate Thuha Bui practice *Passing Clouds*.

Photo: Dan Pienciak



thought we knew. Letting go of tension. Letting go of emotions. Letting go of anxiety. Letting go of EGO! How tightly we tried to hold on, while through the windows we could see outside the softly drifting clouds and leaves floating down, giving us another message.

"Which way do the fingers point?" "How much does the waist turn?" "How should this movement look?"

Paging through my notes from the previous year's NJ course, I found words of Justin Stone as I had written them quoted by Ed Altman at that course: "The interior landscape is far more vast than anything in the material world."

As the week went on, many of us became more chaotic inside. Everyone tried harder, and the harder they tried, the more things seemed to fall apart on the outside. The inner silence invited us with every weight shift. "Return the attention to the soles of the feet!"

Walking back and forth for meals between the modern dormitory and the stately stone mansion, which housed the dining hall, the beauty and tranquility of nature's autumn splendor reminded me of a favorite quote from John Muir:

Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees.

The winds will blow their own freshness into you and the storms their energy,

While cares will drop off like autumn leaves

In the final hours of our time together, the leaves of tension, and of grief, and of fear, and of ego, at

last had begun to fall away. And so fell the tears, as well. Silence. Softness. Emptiness.

On the last morning, our final practice renewed us with inspiration. Letting go is difficult, but it can be done. And there is so much more to do!

We were then, and will continue to be, grateful to Justin Stone and the *T'ai Chi Chih* movements for the breeze that moves the clouds, and that allows the autumn leaves to fall away softly.

Candidates react

The T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Training just completed was a very powerful, and empowering, experience. The challenges were much more difficult than any other training program I've ever experienced. It felt like a combination of boot camp and spiritual retreat — which is probably exactly on target as a statement of impact on the participants. I can't say I'm exactly riding a high now that I've returned to "civilian" life. Rather, I am aware of being "recali-

brated," and therefore relating to the world around me with a more heightened awareness of the subtleties of energetic relationships in everything and everyone. I do admit to feeling as if I were floating down the road, rather than clunking along the rutted pavement. I expect that it will take a great deal of what I call "percolating time" for all of the information to really take hold. The good news is that this is all positive growth that will undoubtedly deepen not only my T'ai Chi Chih practice, but also enrich the rest of my life. The renewed perspective is most welcome!

— Pat Weber-Wilcomb

Accreditation exceeded my expectations. Ed's knowledge, inspiration, teaching, and empathy powerful. Dan's support and loving softness, and administration superb. . . .

— Michael Isaacs

Dan, thank you for all your preparation weekends. I have a wonderful experience. Love,

— Thuha Bui



Congratulations to the graduates of the course! Back row, (L-R): Course Host Dan Pieniak, Michael Isaacs, Sharon Matesi, Phillip Frost, Patricia Flynn, Dennis Landes, Diana Bahn, Course Instructor Ed Altman; Front row, (L-R): Patricia Weber-Wilcomb, Thuha Bui, Marise Burger, Sharon Potts, Siobhan Hutchinson.

Photo provided by Dan Pieniak



New teacher sees immediate change

By Siobhan "Zippy" Hutchinson

Newly-Accredited Teacher

"Just remember the universe will make the adjustments. You don't have to do a thing." These words from Ed Altman echoed in my ears upon leaving *T'ai Chi Chih* Teachers Accreditation. I did not fully understand what he meant. Having traveled only two miles from the retreat, I realized I did not have the directions to go back home. Stopping the car, I searched in the folder, on the passenger car seat, back in the folder again. Nowhere to be found, I just sat there. Should I go back to the retreat [center] and trouble Dan Pienciak, who had so much more to do before leaving? Do I proceed forward and ask at a gas station? Should I continue in my search? The old me would have torn the car apart. The old me would have bothered Dan. I continued to just sit. Well, perhaps the road just leads straight to Route 287. Perhaps there are no turns. Perhaps I could just wing it. So, I did. Passing under beautiful fall colored trees, I slowly remembered landmarks. When in the small towns, I recognized little shops, signs, schools. Everything seemed so familiar. How could I have captured all these landmarks days earlier when I was rushing from work to make it to the retreat [center] on time? And, then there was the entrance to Route 287 right before me.

An hour later, I really had to pee. I hadn't even turned on the radio and I didn't want to stop at a fast food restaurant to be shocked back into the "main stream." A hotel that was my rest spot, for when I was working in this area, was ahead. I would wait until then and enter in the back way to avoid people. To my dismay there was a weekend event occurring. I quickly went into the ladies room. Unfortunately, no sooner had I entered, a mother and teenage daughter entered talking loudly. They wouldn't leave soon enough. I went to wash my hands and I could feel the assessment. Here I was in my funny scrunched red hat, my hair stretching out at all angles, wearing a black Halloween T-shirt over a bright, red long-sleeved shirt, grey tights, orange and black socks, and black canvas shoes. Certainly I was a sight to this beautifully coiffured blonde mother, just admiring herself in the mirror. She was adjusting her hair some more and I could feel the assessment continue. The old me would have made a joke or would have told her where I had come from, feeling a need to explain

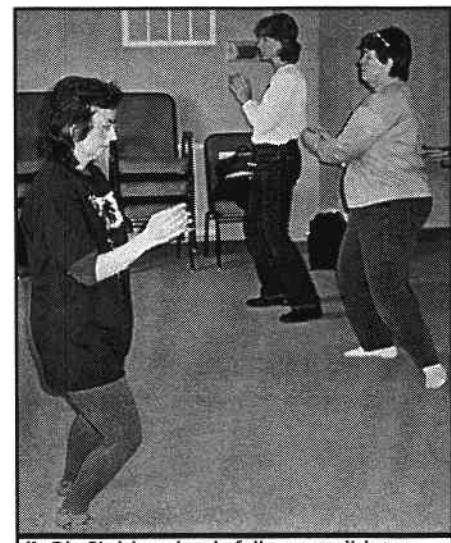
myself. This time I just left the room.

At home I just had to talk to someone. My husband was still working and he couldn't stop to talk on the phone. I called my parents. As customary, Mom answered and, again, Dad was in the shower. He is always in the shower when I call. It is like every time you wash your car, it rains. I spoke

with my Mom and told her how the week went. We said goodbye and I still felt incomplete. After a few minutes I called back. Dad answered. For years I tried to explain the *T'ai Chi Chih* discipline. Well, I mentioned it a few times. Now came the questions and the comment about leaving my husband for a week. I just said our marriages are different and my husband likes the quiet. Then, I went a little deeper.

"Dad, it was so unique. In our group of candidates there was no leader, no outcast. We all recognized each other's strengths and weaknesses and accepted each other completely. No other personal or professional group worked like this. And, then at the last practice, all the candidates stopped at the same time with one of the movements. Our teachers in the back, encircling us, kept going and then paused saying that there was one more set. As a group, the candidates stood firm as if to say, 'Then you complete it.' We then all pressed ahead, noting the teachers but continuing nevertheless. It was if we were an independent organism."

He didn't hesitate. Dad announced, "Then it is the truth. It is pure." What??? What??? Was this MY Dad speaking? What did he say!



(L-R): Siobhan leads fellow candidates Diana Bahn and Sharon Matesi in *Carry the Ball to the Side* at her teacher training in October in New Jersey. Photo: Dan Pienciak

"Dad, have you been holding back? Have you been doing *T'ai Chi Chih* practice all along? You sound

like one of us."

"No, I just have been around awhile. It must be REAL, then."

This from the man who once told me, "Don't waste your time with it." But, then quickly added, "Maybe I shouldn't say that. I don't know." My 88-year-old Dad got it? How could that be? And, now again one of his clichés that he used to say over and over to me growing up, rang in my ear, "The older I get, the smarter my father gets." Ugh!

"Dad, I am going to the Teachers Conference

next year. It is in a place called Banff."

"Banff? You're kidding. I always wanted to go there. It is beautiful. It is on my list of places to go."

"Really? Then, do you think Mom and you could meet up with me there."

Then, Mom got excited. "When is it again?"

So, you just might see me with my proud parents. I am the statuesque 5'2" one in the group with a wild T-shirt!

T'ai Chi Chih Practice and Me

By Pat Flynn
Newly-Accredited Teacher

I started *T'ai Chi Chih* practice on a whim. I saw a sign announcing TCC classes and said to myself, "Let's give it a try." Little did I know that I would continue to work toward accreditation.

After a few classes, I blurted out to my instructor, Marge Erickson, that I wanted to teach the TCC form. I surprised myself. I hadn't thought of teaching until that moment. I hadn't even learned all of the movements. I listened to that inner voice and have continued practicing for close to two years.

In the beginning, I let go and felt the chi. I had trouble with several movements due to severely damaged rotator cups. Initially, the pain was excruciating when I attempted Working the Pulley. I gave up trying to do it properly. That was when the healing began. Today, I have recovered about 90% of my shoulder movement and am almost totally pain free.

I contracted Lymes long before modern medicine discovered the disease. Having a degree in animal medicine, I gave my faith and trust to modern medicine. After innumerable misdiagnoses and treatments, I became nearly blind and crippled. I changed my perspective on Lymes disease and the available treatments. I studied alternative methods with a passion and ever so slowly brought myself back to a reasonable facsimile of relative normalcy.

TCC practice has brought me even further. I no longer wake up throughout the night with pain. My joints are more supple and flexible. My husband complains of the cold and I am dumbfounded. I have always been the cold one in the family. My energy level is amazing. Prior to TCC practice, I would push myself to be a normal active human being. Now, I am a normal active person. The many symptoms of Lymes disease seem to be fading away. I am looking forward to the time when *all* my symptoms disappear.

The past three years have been stressful to say the very least. A nor-

mal sane person would have had great difficulty getting through the times. Before TCC practice, I was barely treading water and wondering if the delicate balance between Lymes and normalcy would disintegrate. Since beginning TCC practice, life is much better. It's not because the stress has disappeared. I simply have a different perspective and attitude. I am more centered and balanced. I feel I can sail through most any raging storm.

The impact *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement* has had on my life is more encompassing than I could ever imagine. When I have faltered in my practice, I have felt the difference. My faltering is teaching me consistency of practice. I am looking forward to the many more benefits TCC practice has to offer. What will happen next? Only the *chi* knows!

[Editor's Note: Pat wrote this article when she was a student. She successfully completed her teacher training in October, 2002. Congratulations, Pat!]

Nov. 9-10, 2002



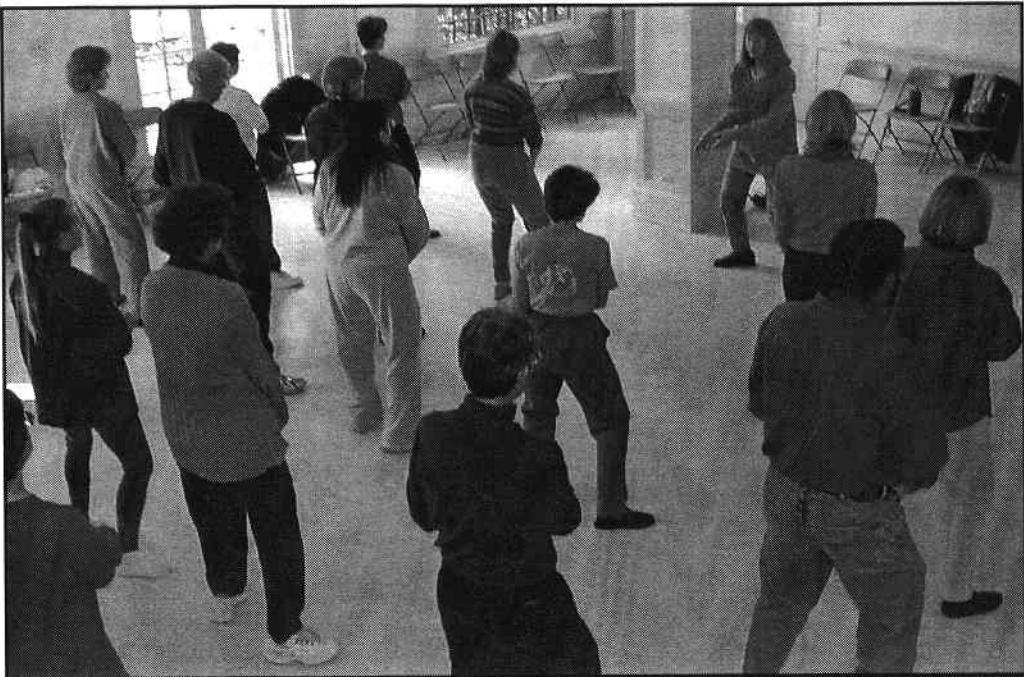
Pam Towne Enlightens DC!

By Dale Buchanan
Course Host

WOW! What a wonderful day it was on November 9 as Pam Towne teaches her first Washington, DC T'ai Chi Chih Workshop and was greeted with 30 eager and sincere students who were ready to learn and grow. After reviewing the basic TCC principles and getting everyone focused, she began her instruction of all 19 TCC Movements. She flowed through all of them in detail as everyone watched, listened, and moved.

The nice thing about this workshop was that there were many TCC teachers who came from PA, MD, and even NJ. The support that we got from the entire TCC Community was tremendous. Everyone helped make the event great, especially the other teachers who came from out of town. I highly recommend that other teachers hold events like this in their community to bring everyone closer together.

At the end of the day, we concluded with a wonderful silent practice of all 19 movements and one pose out-



Course Instructor Pam Towne (right rear, facing) leads the group through *Carry the Ball to the Side*.

Photo: Dale Buchanan

side on the fallen autumn leaves. What a beautiful experience this was to be doing a TCC practice in a circle together as the sun was setting behind the trees and the cool breeze melting away all tensions in the body.

On the Sunday, November 10 Teacher Prep class there were five teachers and seven students/candidates who got more specific instruction on each movement and tons of wonderful information about how

to prepare for TCC Teacher Training. Everyone left with much gratitude and an open heart.

I would say that the students and teachers who attended were enlightened, enriched, renewed, grounded, and were able to go much deeper with their TCC Practice. This type of event is the first of its kind in the Washington, DC area and hopefully won't be the last.



The workshop concluded with a practice outdoors.

Photo provided by Dale Buchanan

For me, it was great spending the weekend with Pam and learning from her. The chi was freely flowing inside of me as I got the chance to lead the final practice on Sunday, which brought great clarity and vision into my life, enabling me to make some life changes. Another article will reflect this in detail.



Nov. 18-23, 2002

Reflections: Teacher Training

Albuquerque, NM

By Susan Kenney
Newly-Accredited
Teacher

Honor the Journey:

Each of us — student, candidate, teacher — embarks on a transformative journey through *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement*. May I acknowledge and respect each person's unique journey without assumption or intrusion. May I be with a person in that person's journey if invited so I may allow, validate, learn from and be touched by the experience.

Honor the form: *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement*, as given to us, carries a power and a gift that is not ours to modify, interpret, impose or analyze. May I deepen my own inner self-knowledge with dedicated practice and ongoing renewal. May I teach the form and its essentials, allowing each student to enter the form and receive the benefits that will be uniquely theirs. May I trust that the inner wisdom discovered through my own practice will guide me in my teaching.

Honor the Disturbances: Each of us — student, candidate, teacher — experiences periods of doubt, discomfort, darkness and devastation, in our practice and in our lives. It is not ours to predict when these periods will occur or to know when they might end. May I have the trust to accept these periods, to be open to their message, to



Congratulations to the graduates! Back row, (L-R): Steve Tumolo, Suzanne Herbers, Robin Spencer, Nancy Beck, Susan Kenney, Gretchen McBroom, Rebecca Busching, Auditor Judy Pritchett, Terry Gay Puckett, Don Bohrer, May Swanson, Originator Justin Stone; Front row, (L-R): Course Instructor Pam Towne, Auditor Sr. Grace Cecile St. Remy, Fusun Dogu, Malinda Menke, Ginny Morgan, Judy Hendricks, David Turecek, Ruth Mandel, Course Host Vic Berg.

Photo: Kim Grant

receive their gifts. May I realize that — by breaking apart — I become open to accept more grace, more love and more of the universal life force. May I know that the duality of deterioration/renewal, darkness/light, letting go/holding on will come back to one-ness, the one-ness of the spirit in me, in each living being and in the universe.



Candidates and auditors practice a soft and flowing *Bird Flaps Its Wings*.

Photo: Athene Mantle



Let it Flow, by Letting Go

By Fusun Dogu

"Set your intention for the week," Pam's soothing, mellifluous voice, gently urged us to think about the kind of experience we wanted to walk away with at the end of the Teacher Training Course 16 of us [candidates] had arrived at the *T'ai Chi Chih* center in Albuquerque for in mid-November.

Indeed, what was my intention, or anyone else's intention for that matter, but to perfect our practice and walk away with the teacher certificate toward which we had all been working? Then, she added the words; "let go of the outcome, your expectations of the outcome and enjoy the process." And so it was to be. I was to let go of more than expectations, of anticipating the outcome, and I was to walk away with much more than a certificate to teach *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement*.

I had initially written my intention as: "to experience TCC [practice] in a deep way, transforming my mental awareness and appreciation of [the] TCC [form] to my heart and spirit." It was a genuine statement. It sounded good.

As that first, momentous, tense, intense, eye-opening, gut-splitting, spirit-crushing day came to a close and we were asked to re-visit our intentions, I thought to myself, "what do I really want to get out of this week — if I don't focus on the certificate?"

I was sure that none of Justin Stone's austere corrections were directed at me, so when we were told that it was directed at all of us, and not just the person he was picking on, I had to do a 180 degree turn around. I was sure I was shifting my weight, flowing from the center, from my t'an t'ien, and yinging and yanging completely and correctly. I felt the chi flow...or so I thought.

Revisiting my intention as Pam had suggested, I realized if I truly wanted to have a deep, transforming experience I had to authentically let go. Let go of my ego, my expectations, and my life back in Virginia. The teacher's constant drone of "concentrate on the soles of your feet" is repeated for that same purpose. To get us to flow. When you concentrate on the soles of your feet,

all the mental chatter crowding your mind seems to dissipate into thin air. Whatever is holding you back, whatever is blocking you seems to step out of your way and clear the path for...your journey. Just like with writing. Whenever I am blocked I have to do certain exercises that involves letting go and letting it flow. I held on to that connection, as well as to the connection I made with making it flow from the center. Your waist has to be flexible, expanding and contracting—like a dancer's.

Yes, I wanted to flow like Pam, like Dale, my instructor, like Carmen and all of the other seasoned teachers. It finally clicked, probably midweek, when I caught myself mulling over the latest traumatic event — (they seemed to be waiting in line) — that had shaken my life. If I truly wanted the chi to flow freely, to deepen and refine my practice, I had to REALLY let go. And that meant letting go of the past and the feelings of guilt, anger, sorrow, that seemed to be spreading through my spirit like hot lava, scorching and destroying everything in its path. I couldn't just give lip service to "being in the moment." I had to live it. And when I did, I not only noticed, I *felt* a shift in my movements. No, I wasn't flowing like Pam — yet, but I was on my way. As were all of my dear, fellow *T'ai Chi Chih* teacher candidates, each of whom will remain dear to my heart, regardless of the amount of time I spent with them.

At the end of the week, as we did our final practice session, indelibly printed in each of our hearts and souls, I couldn't help but notice the collective, unified, harmonious flow and the tremendous energy that emanated from that flow. I thought of us, new and seasoned teachers, as one mighty river flowing majestically yet gently to the ocean to become one with it. Like Becky said, it was a soul-expanding-deepening-heightening experience, undoubtedly one of the most profound most of us will ever experience.

Thank you Justin Stone for the gift of *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement* and thank you Pam, Victor, Carmen and all the teachers who descended to the TCC center to give us such tremendous, loving support.



Hints for New Teachers

By Justin Stone

Reprinted with permission from *The New Mexico T'ai Chi Chih News*, November, 2002.

You have just completed your Teacher's Training Course, have polished your own practice, and have learned how to teach others. Having just received your accreditation, you now face the problem of how to form classes. Here are a few suggestions:

You have been prepared, in the Course just completed, to give presentations to large general groups or, perhaps, to small special audiences. Your presentation must be good, and you must look good while moving, so that members of the audience will say, "Oh, I'd like to move like that!" Be sure to refer to your own experiences in learning T'ai Chi Chih, and to tell the listeners of the benefits you have received from your practice. Personal experience goes over much better than abstract philosophy. If you refer to how the CHI flows through the meridian channels, be sure you know what you're talking about. Also, tell them that if the practice is not soft, and does not flow effortlessly through heavy air, the meridian channels will close up and make it difficult for the CHI to flow through them. You might add that this flow of CHI connects with the ears, and it is because of this flow that Chinese doctors are now able to perform serious operations *without anesthesia*. This CHI, called PRANA in Sanskrit, is the modus operandi for creation and sustainer of life. Nothing can be more beneficial than the circulation and balancing of the CHI, the purpose of T'ai Chi Chih practice.

If your sincerity comes through to the audience, you will sign up people for classes. Don't ask what dates they prefer; just offer them a choice of several scheduled classes, and tell them the price of the eight meetings that make up a class. At present, the charge for courses probably ranges from \$60 to \$100. If you give private classes for one or two, charge them the amount you would receive for an average course of seven or eight students. You are offering something valuable; do not underrate yourself.

In every town there are radio talk shows, and

they want an interesting guest as much as you want to be that guest. Early in T'ai Chi Chih's history I was scheduled for a short appearance on a radio show in Los Angeles that reached the entire state of California. The hostess was very interested, and, instead of conversing for fifteen minutes, we took up the whole hour and one half. Later in the day, when I visited the Sai Baba Center (where I was teaching classes), I found my two friends busy on the phone, talking to people from all over the state, with many more sitting in chairs in my friend's office. From that 8 a.m. broadcast on a Saturday morning came FIFTEEN weekly classes, which furnished most of the candidates for the first Teachers' Training class. It was a turning point at the beginning of T'ai Chi Chih. Everybody is interested in what T'ai Chi Chih has to offer—just do a good job in presenting it. After your first few classes you will find that students have recommended new students. Don't underestimate what you are presenting!

In the beginning I had success with short ads placed in classified sections of newspapers. Just one provocative statement, very inexpensive, together with a phone number can get a reaction. When someone calls, be sure to sound convincing. A typical ad might read: "Enter the Cosmic Energy with T'ai Chi Chih. Simple movements align you with Universal Energy for longer life, better health, and JOY THRU MOVEMENT." (Add the telephone number and time to call.)

There are many other ways of presentation to groups such as Parent-Teacher, Senior Citizens, Groups from some company, etc. Get off your butt and get out there and sell yourself! You will be benefitting others!

[Editor's Note: Justin's message is as valuable to our newest teachers as it is to the one who has been teaching the longest. No one can give a pep talk like Justin Stone! Do note, however, that this article is not trademark-compliant. It is reprinted as it was originally published. See the letter from a teacher and my response (from our attorney) on page 40 of this issue to learn about using already-published articles that are NOT trademark-compliant.]



November, 2002

Joy Thru Movement and eat your cake too!

By Nancy Werner-Azarski

Friday, November 22nd, the Minnesota teachers and students of *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement* gathered to celebrate Justin's birthday [which is on November 20th]. The event was hosted by Ron Barker and about 30 people attended.

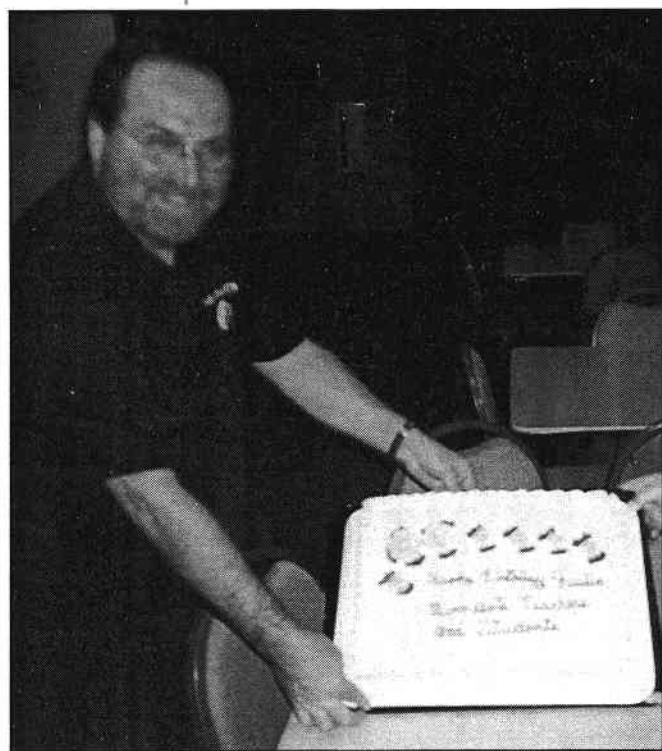
First we did a practice of the T.C.C. movements which was led by Joe Apt. Then Judy George led a rededication ceremony for the group. It was a great practice and the ceremony was a time for us all

to think about what Justin has given us in the T.C.C. discipline. Then we sang Happy Birthday to Justin! The evening was concluded by birthday cake and tea. We made a few announcements and highlighted the available T.C.C. programs/retreats in the upcoming months.

It was great to overhear the conversations at each table—folks catching up on personal news, discussions about teaching and practicing the T.C.C. movements

and discussions about the strengths and weaknesses of our local community (to develop a website or should we host more retreats?). This gathering is special because we include students and it is great to hear about their ideas.

Thank you Justin for all and Happy Birthday from Minnesota!



(Top left): Teacher Judy George smiles before leading the group in a rededication ceremony. (Top right): Teacher Ron Barker holds Justin Stone's birthday cake. The lettering reads: "Happy Birthday Justin / Minnesota Teachers and Students." Each year, the Minnesota teachers and students celebrate Justin Stone's birthday from afar — the birthday cake for Justin is just one thoughtful touch during their celebration of *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement* and the birthday of its originator. (Bottom right): The Minnesota teachers and students in attendance sit for a group picture.



Photos provided by Nancy Werner-Azarski



Teaching special children

continued from page 7

Speaking from the therapeutic setting, when T'ai Chi Chih practice was used as reinforcement during the project:

Some Individual Examples of Change

Example 1. Student formerly unable to express himself in a simple sentence is now better able to use syntax.

Example 2. Student who used to resort to gestures and sounds now expresses his thoughts and feelings.

Example 3. Student has developed language skills, oral skills and the ability to make correlations.

Conclusion

We know from numerous studies and statistics that children with special needs, especially those who are abused and/or neglected often end up in the prison system because of their inability to cope with life situations, express themselves verbally, properly vent frustrations, communicate effectively, manage their emotions, and focus clearly.

We have discovered through careful observation of inmates at Folsom Prison in California for several years now that the *T'ai Chi Chih* discipline has been a powerful coping mechanism and agent for change for inmates who are members of the Contemplative Fellowship. These inmates are readying themselves for parole. Of those already released, the rate of recidivism is unusually low when compared to those inmates who have not received instruction in integrated movement such as the *T'ai Chi Chih* form.

As we make a correlation between special needs/abused kids and inmates, shouldn't we be asking why should they have to wait until they become a part of the prison system to learn tools that can change habits and be used as coping mechanisms? There needs to be a more in depth study of the role of integrated movement and meditation-visualization for special needs/abused children.

Inclusive or Exclusive?

continued from page 9

and concerns. I also believe that our conference would be enriched by including the participation of all individuals who practice the TCC form.

I encourage each member of our community to meditate, reflect, consider and come from a place of compassion (a place that Justin challenged us to come from at [the August] conference), to identify and implement ways to expand our community and to become more **inclusive** rather than **exclusive**. I believe the time is right for us to move in this direction, to become an **Inclusive community**.

References

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Schaffer, C.R., & Anundsen, K. (1993). *Creating Community Anywhere: Finding Support and Connection in a Fragmented World*. New York: Tarcher/Perigree Books.

News Shorts

continued from page 23

photo-textbook, but despite my best intentions, I rarely get all my GKP books to class for them to see. Now with this new catalog it's so simple—and the catalogs are free, including the shipping!

So give Jean Katus a jingle (you can even call toll-free: 888/540-7459) and order a supply to share with your students!

— Dennis Minx

Retreat under the redwoods!

Nourish your spirit, renew your enthusiasm, jazz up your teaching techniques. Majestic redwood trees, fresh mountain air, and a retreat setting that supports the inward journey. Teachers, come join us Feb. 28 - March 2 in the San Francisco Bay Area for a *T'ai Chi Chih* Teachers' Retreat! [See "Calendar of Events" for details.]

Under Ed Altman's guidance, we will delve into the heart of our *T'ai Chi Chih* practice. As teachers, we share one of the most valuable gifts we have, our teaching experiences. Actively teaching or not, this is a *T'ai Chi Chih* weekend not to be missed. Reward yourself! Enrich your students!

— Athene Mantle



The Chi Will Take You Farther Than You Want to Go

By April Leffler

(Editor's Note: April wrote this article a year ago, when she had been accredited for a little more than one year.)

THE CHI WILL TAKE YOU FARTHER THAN YOU WANT TO GO. Thankfully, I don't remember hearing this statement until the Chi had already taken me farther than I wanted to go!! At least, farther than my ego wanted to go. You see, up until about nine months ago, my head or ego "called the shots" (and, come to think of it, I was very stressed out much of the time!). The ego had been entertaining the idea that It-Is-In-Full-Control and that It-Knows-Best and my body had willingly and sometimes unwillingly gone along.

Little did I realize, though, that consistently practicing the TCC form would activate and enable a tremendous shift to take place. My consciousness has dropped from my very logical, controlling, fear based mind to my gut (or t'an t'ien) and to the soles of my feet (or the present moment).

Sometimes this incredible shift causes my heart and soul to CELEBRATE at the idea that I am in fact, lightening up! Other times, however, this incredible, Chi based shift causes my head to wonder, "AM I GOING CRAZY?!"

Meanwhile, I am somewhere in the middle, trying to reconcile this newfound reality. I feel like I have leapt from the familiar shores of perceived safety (i.e. letting go of my full time job) into the unknown flow of the Chi River. It gives the saying, "Go with the flow" a whole new meaning!

Now that I am in this River, my daily TCC practice has become as indispensable as a life jacket. After all, I believe that the TCC form / the Chi has nudged me into the River (with my consent) and I plan on using my TCC practice to keep me afloat.

Sometimes I am in awe of how simple yet comprehensive the process can be when I just LET GO and

allow the Chi to take me forward. Sometimes I feel so at ease and so comforted by the full support of the River when I apply the effort of NO effort.

Other times, however, I imagine that this River is taking me toward Niagara Falls or toward huge boulders that could crush me in an instant. At these imaginings, I usually become tense, apply frantic effort and thrash about—at least mentally.

Then I remember to breathe and return my attention to the soles of my feet because intuitively I know that there is no turning back.

This River is teaching me much about myself and about Life and how I choose to move through it. So, come on in....the water is.....wet!!

This morning my walk was thru very heavy fog. Not long into my walk I realized that my *T'ai Chi Chih* practice is like walking thru fog. Everything in front of us is completely obliterated, but with each step forward as with each repetition of each movement a bit more of the landscape is revealed to us. And just as something becomes very clear, we reach the top of a small rise in the terrain and everything before us is fog again.

— Nancy Adams

*Time
Clearing spaces within our lives
to live a life
Stretching time
bending around the corners of the days
Pushing apart the seconds
to gaze in amazement
At the stars
where life began
Reminding us of our oneness
with all that is.*

— Cathy Dalton



With Gratitude for Where T'ai Chi Chih Practice Has Brought Me

By Hope Spangler

I am so grateful for the gift of *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement* and the many ways it has helped me and enriched my life. First of all, *T'ai Chi Chih* practice has helped me on an emotional & spiritual level. [Five] years ago when I started taking classes, I was going through one of the darkest times in my life. I made it through, in part, thanks to *T'ai Chi Chih* practice because of the wonderful comfort I found in the movements, and also because through [them] I learned to surrender the circumstances of my life more fully to God. During that period, *T'ai Chi Chih* practice also helped me on a physical level because I had been in much discomfort with fibromyalgia. Stress always greatly increased my discomfort, and my *T'ai Chi Chih* practice greatly reduced the stress so that the healing energy of the chi could flow.

Today as an accredited teacher, I have the privilege and honor to teach *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement*, knowing that I have something very valuable to share with each student who comes to my class. It is a great feeling to know that I am doing something so worthwhile with my life and that can make such a difference in the lives of others.

Thank you, Justin Stone, for the gift of *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement*. Thanks to Jean Markey, my teacher and my friend. Thank you, Ed Altman, for helping me reach a deeper level in my own practice and who helped me learn the very valuable lesson of LETTING GO (a continuing lesson, I might add!). And thanks, Ed, for the article you wrote published in the June, 2001 issue of *The Vital Force* (pg. 6) "The Best is Yet to Come". I cried as I read it; it is so profound and so true. Thank you, God, for taking me to this place in my life and for all the dear friendships I have made through *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement*.

[Editor's note: Both Hope and Jan wrote these articles in the past year. They have been updated slightly to be accurate in current time.]

Practicing the TCC Form Again for the First Time

By Jan Arrott

Thanks to the editor of the *Vital Force*, Noel Altman, for putting me in touch with some of the TCC teachers who have had total knee replacements. It was particularly helpful to communicate with Bitsy LeBlanc, who was at that time in rehabilitation following bilateral knee replacements. She was already resuming her TCC practice and even close to teaching classes again.

In my case I chose to have them both replaced at the same time. My physician and I both preferred it that way, although it may not be appropriate for everyone considering this operation.

My questions to Bitsy were endless. Among other things, I was concerned about whether the chi could still find its pathway to flow freely following surgical trauma or is it secondarily blocked? Bitsy assured me, "no problem." The flow of the chi was unchanged for her.

Now I must tell you . . . six months after surgery, it is like I [was] practicing the TCC form again for the first time. I [was] just beginning to experience what it means to have "soft" knees. I could never trust my knees to steady me pre-operatively, even with my un-loading braces. Also, I never knew when it was really going to hurt, so I was tentatively surrendered to softness as I moved.

Justin asks, "does the body flow from the T'an T'ien, not from movement of the shoulders, nor from the body leaning backward to disguise the fact that the knees do not bend and sink down on the backward movement?" Ed speaks about alignment of the whole body over the "sweet" spot in the soles of the feet, taking the knee-bend even just a half inch further as you move forward and back. I was only starting to experience that at [the] Sedona [retreat] in April [2002] and, I can tell you it . . . made a world of difference in my practice to start "working" on that.

So, I am very grateful for the advances in modern surgery for giving me back the strength in my knees. I am also grateful for the opportunity to keep learning the TCC discipline "again for the first time." Isn't that what it is all about, anyway?



On Fear and Trust

By Sharon Sirkis

Recently, when I decided to take a hard look at some of the choices I've made and how the consequences of these choices have affected my life, the issue of money came right up to greet me.

Money. One simple word that stirs up an emotional tidal wave of fear. Probably because it stirs up all the childhood memories of Mom and Dad. Rarely a day went by without an argument over money. It was always a battle: my father yelling and withholding, and my mother begging and pleading for every little cent. And it's not that we didn't have any money, we did. We weren't rich, but we weren't poor. That had nothing to do with it. Money in my family was a means to control, to punish, to deprive.

So consequently, I lived in fear and anxiety almost every day. Think about it. Not a day goes by without having to deal with money. Food, clothing, gas, items for school, birthdays, household expenses, and so forth. There's just no getting around it. And even with the income my mother earned, combined with the amount of money my father doled out, it just wasn't enough. As a result, my mother turned to credit cards to help her out. Not a good plan, especially when my father found out. Another heated argument, another bad scene.

Unfortunately, the apple didn't fall far from the tree. Currently, I barely make enough money to survive. I've charged too much on my credit cards, I have no savings, and I can't afford health insurance. While this was no big deal in my 20's or 30's, now in my 40's, it is a very big deal.

What was I thinking? I wasn't thinking at all, that's the whole point. Sometimes my fear of not having enough money is so overwhelming, that I just shut down. I end up feeling helpless and hopeless. But then I remember what I've told my karate students about fear: you can face it, or you can run away from it. I had always been running away from fear. And when it came to fear of money, I was running as fast and hard as I could. It was just too much of an emotionally charged issue for me to take a look at. But as we know in our *T'ai Chi Chih* practice, the more we resist, the more it persists. So I finally made the decision to stop running away from money and

my fears surrounding it. When I made the conscious decision to work on this, the universe responded in kind to help me out.

I ordered new checks. They were lost in the mail. I needed a root canal, which cost an arm and a leg. My paycheck, which I desperately needed from the college, wasn't ready on time. My tax information from the retirement community was wrong. Not to mention I had a car with 242,000 miles that was falling apart. Of course I was totally stressed out, but part of me could see the bigger picture and was laughing inside. "Be careful what you ask for, you may just get it," I thought. Ah yes, that chi sure is intelligent; and in the future I would be sure to ask for help in fun and benevolent ways.

Eventually the inevitable happened. My car finally died four days before the 2001 Sedona TCC retreat. Luckily the retreat was already paid for, or else I probably wouldn't have gone. I felt a mixture of panic and relief; relief that I could stop worrying about how much longer the car would last, and panic, in how in the world was I ever going to buy another one? All I could focus on were my past negative experiences. I wasn't trusting at all.

The next day when I finally got quiet and did my TCC practice, I had the thought, "Know that you don't know, and that you will be guided." Part of me felt comforted by that insight, and part of me still wasn't able to trust it. Later I thought about my limiting beliefs. Just because it took me six months to find my last car, didn't mean that it would take six months to find my next one. Sounded good in theory, but I wasn't entirely convinced.

But then two coincidences happened that opened me to trust. First, the day before the retreat, I had lunch at a local Chinese restaurant. I was running a mental check list of last minute things, one of them being an alternate ride from the airport to home. I was thinking of a friend who lives about $\frac{1}{2}$ hour away, when out of the blue, in walked his daughter! Later that same day I received a picture of a dear friend who had died a few years back. I had given up on getting this picture at all, because I requested it from her son about a year before, with no response. So I took its unexpected arrival as a sign that I could trust that things would be ok.

So I made the decision to have fun in Sedona. I

decided I'd worry about the car when I got back. Easter said than done, because I started to worry on the plane ride over. So much for trust. Hello fear.

I arrived at the retreat center. The place was magical. A change of scenery helped me take my mind off my worries. Saturday after lunch, I bolted out early to climb one of the hills. Although I loved being with the group, right then I needed some solitude. When I got to the top, I was rewarded with an amazing view. I lay face down on a big rock at the top of the hill, to pray and ask for help. I finally stopped running and came face to face with my fears. It felt good to release the tears.

Later that night the group sat around a bon fire. Ed usually tells me exactly what I need to hear, and this night was no different. "Sharon, when are you going to stop suffering?" he asks. As if it's a choice. I guess it is.

Sunday evening it was time to go home. Before I left, I bought a stone with the word "trust" printed on it and kept it in my pocket. I didn't want to leave this fantasy place and come home to the real world. So much for my trust stone, I wasn't trusting at all.

Monday morning I woke up afraid. What was I going to do? I tried to quiet my inner chatter and meditated for a while. I got that a friend was going to offer me a car. Huh? It didn't make sense. So I spent the rest of the day in a pity party for one.

At 4:00 PM I turned on the Oprah show. The show was about her angel network. In desperation I belted out loud, "I need an angel!" Then I started laughing, as if that would really help. The show was over at 5:00 PM. At 5:15 PM, my friend Merry called me to welcome me back. I told her the saga of my car. "I wish I would have known sooner," she said. "I just offered to give my car to my nephew about two weeks ago." My heart sank. Visions of checking the paper for auto ads raced through my mind. I dreaded making calls and setting up appointments to see used cars. My old way would have been to try to force the issue, to try to talk her into selling me her car. But just as in our TCC practice where we allow a move to happen instead of making it happen, I decided to trust and let things happen.

It was a long story with twists and turns, and it eventually turned out in my favor. The car is practically brand new, has low mileage, and the payments/month are very reasonable.

Once I let go and surrendered, everything else fell

into place: Another friend offered to let me use her spare car until I got my new car titled. Two people that I did healing work on, gave me very generous tips. One of my TCC students called and wanted to take me to lunch. Two of my teachers offered payment plans so that I could take their classes. And my neighborhood TCC class had the biggest turnout ever.

It's embarrassing to admit these insights to myself, much less broadcast them to others. However, I believe our secrets keep us sick, and that facing the truth can set us free.

I know that I'm not irresponsible, I do pay my bills. I don't blame my parents or anyone else for my problems with money. But obviously I was affected by the way they handled their money. Now that I'm older, I am grateful I attended college and nursing school due to my father putting in many hours of hard work, to bring in the money. But unfortunately, he was not a happy man, and from his example, I made the choice that my happiness was more important than money. It has been my choice not to practice nursing anymore. It has been my choice to open a small part-time karate studio, teach the TCC discipline, and develop my healing abilities. I have always been willing to sacrifice more money for my happiness. It was always more important for me to have freedom and flexibility and be my own boss, than to have a nine to five job working for someone else. But the consequence of these decisions are that I live with constant uncertainty. However, on the flip side, I now understand that it's not an either/or situation. I can now be happy and have enough money.

I have always marched to the beat of a different drummer. When friends and family suggest I go back to nursing where I'd have a regular paycheck, I cringe. Every cell in my body screams NO! People call it stupidity, I call it the growth of certainty. Even through the dark periods, what I know for sure is that I am a good teacher and healer, and that I have the courage to pursue both teaching and healing as my life's work. And I trust that if I just stop running so that I can listen, my intuitive wisdom will emerge and that I'll be ok.

Just like in our TCC practice, I'm now ready to shave off the excess tension and worry. I have demonstrated beyond my wildest dreams that I can manifest a car in a short amount of time. It proves to me that learning my life's lessons can be easy and effortless. So the next time the money issue comes up to greet me, instead of running away in fear, I think I'll shake hands.



VFJ Trademark News

Noel . . . I'm doing a TCC Boston web site and would like permission to reprint some of Justin's articles. Of course, I'll be crediting the VFJ (issue and date) and telling folks how to subscribe. Is that AOK? . . . Thanks,

- K[im] G[rant]

I had to check with our lawyer to verify how the trademark might affect this request and I had questions myself around the same topic, since The Vital Force Association maintains the TCC community website and contains many previously-published articles by Justin Stone and Ed Altman. Did we need to do anything to them to make the site trademark-compliant? What about teachers wanting to distribute xeroxed copies of VFJ articles from prior to March 2002 (which are not trademark-compliant)?

I received a legal opinion back from our lawyer answering the questions, and quote him verbatim below:

"...In my opinion you do not have to change the articles at all. In your net site you identify the trademark as registered in the home page. That, in my opinion is good enough. Also, if the articles are distributed by themselves [by teachers in classes, for instance], you could provide a cover page with the correct usage of the trademark and attach it to the article (without any changes)."

So, to summarize, if you follow the procedure of properly noting that "T'ai Chi Chih" is trademarked (see write-ups by Jean Katus in this and previous issues of *The Vital Force*) on your website, then you can go ahead and include on your website any articles from *The Vital Force*. We would like to see the full name of the author, the full publication name: *The Vital Force, Journal of the T'ai Chi Chih Community*, and the issue month and year noted with any articles you choose to use. And we do use the little R after the word "Chih" in our publication title (see a recent issue). Of course, any fresh language on your website should be written as trademark-compliant. The above exception applies only to articles published prior to March 2002.

Xeroxed VFJ articles (published prior to March 2002) distributed in classes should include a descriptive cover page as delineated above by our lawyer.

- Noel Altman

Trademark Update

By Jean Katus

We have received a number of sample brochures and flyers from teachers who want to be sure they're using the *T'ai Chi Chih* trademark appropriately. Teachers can continue submitting this information as they revise older written materials or create new pieces. Nearly everyone has done very well incorporating the circled R after the *T'ai Chi Chih®* phrase the first time it is mentioned. The notice **T'ai Chi Chih is a federally registered trademark** has also been used well. However, many need to be reminded that a noun or nouns must follow the *T'ai Chi Chih* phrase **every time it is used**; for example: *T'ai Chi Chih / Joy thru Movement; T'ai Chi Chih discipline; T'ai Chi Chih practice; T'ai Chi Chih movements; T'ai Chi Chih community, etc.*

As explained in previous VFJ issues, incorporation of the trademark is a gradual process but must be done in an on-going way once written materials have begun using it. Good Karma is making the changes as we reprint. So far, the following materials are trademark-compliant: the video, the text translation inserts in Spanish and Italian, the Seijaku video cover (and perhaps the Seijaku video itself by the time this issue prints). Because we have a number of photo-textbooks, video covers, other books and tapes in inventory, the changes in those items will take longer.

To address questions that have come up about the trademark:

* Some teachers use transparencies and power point presentations. As with all other written materials, the changes should be made as soon as it's feasible to do so.

* Newspaper ads should use the trademark symbol. You may need to specifically ask the editor to insert the circled R symbol. (And, of course, the term needs to be followed by a noun or nouns.)

* It is fine to wear T-shirts that were produced prior to the *T'ai Chi Chih* name having been granted a trademark. In fact, this could be an opportunity for letting people know that the name's uniqueness has been recognized by being trademarked.

* To find the circled R on your computer, use your word processing program and access "Insert" and click on "Symbols," or go to a character map.



Karmic Komments



from Good Karma Publishing, Inc.
P.O. Box 511, Ft. Yates, ND 58538
Jean Katus, Publisher

New Projects

Many of the projects we would like to complete are being placed on the back burner for a time because we had several months of low sales and cannot afford, right now, to pursue these projects. We will, of course, continue to serve the *T'ai Chi Chih* community with the materials we presently have available. As teachers know, these items are a positive enhancement to have on hand at classes and workshops. As emphasized previously, if you prefer to have students order directly from Good Karma, we would appreciate your making the catalog available to them. We provide multiple copies of it at no charge to teachers. Just let us know how many catalogs you would like.

Address and Credit Card Change Reminder

Please be sure you contact Good Karma about any address, phone or email changes you make, in addition to letting the VFJ know. We also request that you keep us current on credit card changes (new expiration date, new numbers) for those card numbers we keep on file. Remember, we now take Discover as well as Visa and Master Card.

Trademark

See opposite page for an update on trademark information. An amusing sidelight: a teacher who has been teaching for a number of years commented, "Oh, I've told my students all along that the *T'ai Chi Chih* name is trademarked!" Perhaps she was putting the process in motion even before Justin requested it be done.

Regional Distributors of Good Karma Publishing Materials

Canada

BC, Victoria	Guadalupe Buchwald	(250) 385-6748
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CA, Hayward	Sandra McAlister	(510) 582-2238
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DIRECT ORDERS: To order books and tapes from Good Karma Publishing, please type or print your name and address <i>legibly</i> on an order form. Phone toll-free (1-888-540-7459), FAX (701-854-2004), or write if you need a catalog or order form. Please allow <u>at least</u> two weeks from order date for delivery.
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**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**
April Issue: **February 10th**

July Issue: **May 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:

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.

Submissions using "T'ai Chi Chih" and "TCC" as nouns are converted to adjectives before publication. This is required by U.S. Trademark law for the former, and done for consistency in usage to the latter (since "TCC" = "T'ai Chi Chih" in meaning). Other than those changes, 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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T'AI CHI CHIH COMMUNITY WEBSITE:

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Kapaa, HI 96746

VFJSubmissions@earthlink.net

Noel Altman

Editor

(808) 822-9288

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

Kathy Albers

Information/Outreach

(314) 727-1983

thevitalforce@yahoo.com

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

The Vital Force

P.O. Box 23068

Albuquerque, NM

87192-1068

Doug Harned

Membership Services

(505) 797-8442

VFJmembership@yahoo.com

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

Please print clearly.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

1. Renewal New

2. Name _____ Phone () _____ - _____

Address _____

E-mail _____

Zip _____ - _____

3. Accredited TCC Teacher - Are you: Active Inactive Willing to travel

Membership includes Teachers' Directory _____ year(s) @ \$30.00 / yr = \$ _____

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

Student / Interested person _____ year(s) @ \$25.00 / yr = \$ _____

4. First Class Delivery in U.S. additional \$5.00 / yr = \$ _____

Out of U.S. Delivery additional \$10.00 / yr = \$ _____

5. Donation for funding VFJ projects: outreach and referral activities = \$ _____

Make check or money order in U.S. dollars payable to: TOTAL = \$ _____

The Vital Force

P.O. Box 23068

Albuquerque, NM 87192-1068

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



The Lighter Side...

1. When I said in class that we were going to do JJJJHTJ ["Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy, Healing Thru Joy," included at the back of Meditation for Healing], and demonstrated the movements along with the song, the males in the class were stunned.

"You mean just the girls will do this, right?" one asked. "The men will not do this!" another one exclaimed.

I responded, "If an 86-year-old man [Justin Stone] can do this, then all of us can do this, men and women."

The men were in disbelief.

"That is girl stuff!" exclaimed one.

After a couple of classes, the men were the most eager to do JJJJHTJ, and would even request it!

— Vida Wackerling

2. I took T.C.C. class once a week on Tuesday afternoons from 3:30 - 4:30pm in New York City at a hospital for special surgery.

The week before I left for my *T'ai Chi Chih* teacher training course in New Jersey [in October, 2002], my teacher, Carolyn Perkins, had said to me that next week at that same time the whole class would send the *chi* to me.

On Tuesday afternoon of the training week, when my fellow candidates and I were practicing, I did everything wrong. Without thinking, I looked at my watch. It was 4:20pm — what was that? It had to be too much *chi* for me to handle!

— Thuy Ho Buf

3. Overheard at dinner at the Seijaku training in New Jersey in October, 2002:

"You know that clicking of the teeth? I kept wondering how George Washington would've sounded doing that with his wooden teeth!"

— Noel Altman

4. It was the second class. Students were sharing their *T'ai Chi Chih* experiences of the week. Arthur, with a very straight face, volunteered:

"My wife, Joanne, and I argued all week..."
(Extended pause as we wait expectantly.)

"...about the correct way to do the moves."

(As the laughter fades he adds) "And we came in separate cars tonight."

— Neena Mitchell

5. During one of my ongoing TCC classes, we were doing Pulling in the Energy and I, as usual, reminded everyone to "visualize energy from the most distant star streaming into the fingertips" as we moved. After we completed, one of the women in class sheepishly said that she was still having difficulty visualizing "energy from the most distant star." She added, "I've only gotten as far as Pluto!"

— April Leffler

[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..."]

Awakening

*I am called by a Voice on the wind.
I ground my feet to the earth
Welcomed by a Force that draws me in.
I root myself deeply
Nourished by its life giving Energy.
Embraced by the Love that surrounds me.
I breathe in...and out.
Rocking back...and forth.
With the rhythm...of the Universe.
My body is warmed.
My Being awakened.
I am open.
I give away...and let go.
Moving like the tide
To and fro.
I am empty...I am filled.
I rest in flowing stillness.
Deep calm and Peace abide.
Lifting gently
I smile softly
Absorbing Light
Knowing Truth
Beyond understanding
Floating
Expanding
Harmony
Tranquility
Contentment
Peace
Circles of Breath pass through me.*

*- Chris Bridge
Student of Judy George*