

# The Vital Force

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

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



## The Vital Force

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The Vital Force, Journal of the T'ai Chi Chih® Community, is an unincorporated, non-profit association, serving T'ai Chi Chih practitioners worldwide. Membership in the Association includes four quarterly issues of The Vital Force and outreach services such as teacher referrals. Teacher memberships also include listing in and receipt of the annual Teachers' Directory.

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

### Cover:



Our cover features the photographic work of TCC teacher Kim Grant. Kim, a professional photographer, has graced our publication's cover once before (VFJ, December, 2000).

In summertime, who doesn't think of going to the seashore for rest and relaxation? Kim's photo captures the tranquility of a day in the dunes.

Cover photo © 2000, by Kim Grant, Boston

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# Letter from the Editor

Earlier this year, a newly-accredited TCC teacher, **Lisa Thorburn**, ran into a problem that the TCC Community Website was experiencing (which we didn't know about). She contacted her former teacher, **Sandy McAlister**, with the information, requesting that it be forwarded to the appropriate person. Sandy sent it on to VFJ Webmaster **Ted Fleischman**. What Lisa had discovered is that when her company installed a new firewall for their internet server, they were able to "block" certain websites from being accessible by employees — ones that include "such things as sports, intolerance, partial or full nudity, violence, etc." Once this "block" was installed, Lisa found that the TCC Community Website was no longer accessible. She noted, "Research and the process of elimination revealed that the taichichih.org site was not accessible when 'Partial Nudity,' 'Full Nudity,' or 'Sexual Acts' was clicked as a grouping to block."

Ludicrous and hilarious (to some) as this might seem, it was having a very undesirable effect in terms of limiting access to those interested in T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement. Lisa included in her e-mail message the process to correct the situation, which Ted was then able to do. We are grateful to Lisa for taking the time to notify us of this obvious problem and include a solution, as well. Thank you, Lisa! Thanks, also, to Sandy, for her part, and to Ted for correcting it. If any of you, readers, come across situations regarding the TCC Community Website that don't seem right, we would certainly appreciate your taking the time to inform us with all that you know, as Lisa did, so we can remedy the problem.

Lisa's effort underlines the point that the guardianship of T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement is the responsibility of ALL of us — teachers and students alike. There is more to keep track of, more work to be done than can possibly be done by a few, but with hundreds, indeed, thousands of TCC practitioners worldwide, the tasks CAN get done if people care enough to make the effort. Remember, this is a community of individuals acting (or not) from Teh (the power of inner sincerity). We have no organization, although there is one corporation (Good Karma Publishing, Inc.) and a couple of associations that have very specific roles. One, the T'ai Chi Chih Association, runs the TCC Center in Albuquerque, NM, along with putting out The NM T'ai Chi Chih News. The second, The Vital Force Association, puts out The Vital Force, Journal of the T'ai Chi Chih Community and also serves as the first contact many in the public have with T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement — via the TCC Community Website. Serving the public in this way also includes offering a way to contact someone (VFJ Information/Outreach Coordinator Kathy Albers) for more information about teachers in their area or with general questions about the practice.

Other than that, there are no staffs, no funds, and no ruling body, although, unofficially, Justin Stone, as originator of this spiritual discipline, has largely been the guiding force behind every major decision made in leading the community — at least in the last nearly seven years that Ed Altman has been his chosen Head of the TCC Community.

We are a community. A community of individuals, each with our part to play in moving T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement forward. What is your part?

**Noel Altman**, Editor



# Readers Respond

Hello!

My name is Jean Michel Victoire. I'm trying to learn the *T'ai Chi Chih* form since 10 months. My teacher is Catherine Briussel (she is wonderful!) in France. I see your programme on the net so I just want to say you that *T'ai Chi Chih* practice change my life and that I hope that one day I'll can have my accreditation in France! Hope see you later! By by!

**Jean Michel Victoire**  
Le Chambon sur Lignon  
FRANCE  
Student of Catherine Briussel

I am a stained glass artist. I have been doing *T'ai Chi Chih* practice for two years and have found it has helped me to have an infinite flow of creativity. My hands cannot keep up with the creative designs that come to my mind. It might encourage other struggling artists to know this. I am grateful to the *T'ai Chi Chih* community, my teacher, Debbie Cole, and Justin Stone for making this available in my life. . . .

**Carol Boyette**  
Odenton, MD  
Student of Debbie Cole

Aloha Doug, I am not teaching any Chih classes right now, and I don't like to waste paper. What is the cost of membership if you exclude the teachers directory? I won't want a directory until I start teaching again.

**Terry Jennings**  
Honolulu, HI

[VFJ Membership Coordinator Doug Harned replied to Terry:

*You and I are on the same page as far as the teachers directory goes. I wish we could make it optional for all teachers (even if there is no discount as it takes extra work to make things optional.) This way if a teacher did not expect to need the directory they could not receive it and save the paper. Maybe you could write Noel and express your views. (I already have).*

**VFJ Editor's reply:** Hi again, Terry! I appreciate your view. I believe that there are teachers out there who do not value receiving the Directory, and it's very costly for us to produce. It is not known how many teachers do not value it. This is an item I have considered polling the VFJ teacher membership about, but haven't gotten to... There are other membership topics I want to include in such a poll...

**At this time, I do not want to change the policy (without input from the community). Long ago, an old VFJ staff had it as an optional (\$5) item to add on to a teacher membership (\$25), but the problem with that is that it drives up the per unit price if we produce fewer, so I'm not sure it would be worth it to do it at all if it's not for every teacher member. In 1996, then-VFJ Editors Lois Mahaney and Liz Salada must have reached a similar conclusion; they eliminated the option and instead made the teacher membership cost \$30, which included the Directory.**

**My feeling is maybe we'll discontinue it entirely, since the great majority of active teachers elect (along with their VFJ membership) to be listed on the TCC Community Website, and most folks can get online these days (if not on their own computer, then on one at the library or a friend or family member's computer). There is information in the Directory that we do**

**not put out on the web (and won't), so we would have to figure out how to get that out to the teachers...perhaps with a much-smaller listing of that information put out less frequently than every single year.**

**Again, no change for now — just ruminating. Would want input from the entire community via some sort of poll before making any changes.]**

I sent in \$35. to renew my VFJ subscription at the end of November, 2002.

To date ... I received a copy of the October, 2002 VFJ (past tense, wanting the next coming (Jan) but never received January or the 2003 Teacher's Directory.

I DID receive the April, 2003 issue yesterday.

I'd like the January issue + the Teacher's Directory (if one was printed) ... and don't feel the October, 2002 issue should have been sent (as part of my year's subscription).

Thank you and would appreciate a response ...

Note I did e-mail VFJmembership@yahoo a few days ago without response. A possible change?

**Ralph Garn**  
Syracuse, NY

**[Editor's Note: Hi Ralph! You did send your information to the right place — VFJMembership@yahoo.com. That reaches Doug Harned, who**

*continued on page 30*



# Understanding the *T'ai Chi Chih* form

By Justin Stone

To be a good teacher, one must understand the movements—all of them. Just to tell the students to place their hands here or there is certainly not enough. In certain movements the hips swivel and the waist turns, which I will emphasize in my video to the Conference. There are reasons why we finish movements by placing the hands

parallel to the floor—when we start moving, the Yin and Yang aspects of the CHI separate, and coming to rest in the described manner allows the YIN and Yang to flow back together and we are not fragmented. The Cosmic Consciousness pose at the end of our practice allows the YIN and Yang to completely come together, and we again are whole. All these small bits of information must be conveyed to the student. The correct shifting of the weight is all-important. The circularity and polarity of each movement must be pointed out. We do not just push out in “Push Pull”; there is a slight circular motion, and we emphasize one side or the other as we push, to balance the Yang leg on the other side. The visualization in “Pulling in the Energy” is all-important if one wants to receive the total benefit of the movement.

It is taken for granted that teachers practise each day and try to improve their own movements, until, eventually, they will sink into the Essence of the *T'ai Chi Chih* form (which many never reach)



Photo: Alice Maisel

and finally realize that no-one is doing anything; *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement* is doing *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement*.

We are dealing with the Great Cosmic Force (actually, far beyond the cosmos) in TCC practice and can think of the CHI as the modus operandi of Divinity if we are so-minded. In India this great force is thought of as Shakti, and CHI is one with this substance, without which there would be no life or any manifestation at all. Think about this. It's not only the present that depends on this force; your entire future is tied up with it, all the way to Infinity.

To be a shallow teacher and just point out where the hands go is disappointing. Practise and learn to understand the movements and the overall meaning of *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement*.



# The Spirit of Kauai

By Ed Altman

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I've done a lot of personal reflection since moving to Kauai last year. Living in this island paradise has had a strong influence on my life and my *T'ai Chi Chih* practice. Many teachers have asked what it is like to live here and I am happy to respond briefly in print.

First and foremost, Kauai is a place of spiritual power. Many are drawn here to live their life's work, and it is no accident Noel and I ended up here. It is a place of tremendous personal growth and the island is alive with the universal life force. Once, years ago, while visiting Folsom prison with Justin Stone, he spoke to a group of inmates. During his talk he said: "From the Eastern point of view we are all living the same life." He was speaking about our connection and unity through the life force, and those words changed my way of thinking. They brought me closer to an understanding of Universal consciousness. In the same way, living here on Kauai has allowed me to expand that moment of awakening and live it more fully on a daily basis. I am constantly reminded of it and called to live from that place of truth in my thoughts, words and actions.

I have also been profoundly affected by my experience of the "Spirit of Aloha". Far more than a travel slogan, the Aloha spirit is a living art — a path of the heart. The word itself has many meanings: hello, goodbye, welcome, love, peace, compassion, generosity, grace, etc. Like the essence of one's *T'ai Chi Chih* practice, the spirit of Aloha is something each person must come to understand and embody on his or her own terms. For me, when I hear the word "Aloha" my heart translates it as "let there be love between us". This feeling resonates very strongly with the joy that comes from my personal *T'ai Chi Chih* practice. It must be shared.

On Kauai, growth is all around and cannot be held back. Plants continue to grow throughout the year and eventually overtake everything in their path. Birds and wild chickens seem to call from every tree and bush, and geckos and other insects are commonplace within our home. Some are more welcome than others. It may be some time before I greet a flying cockroach with the Aloha spirit, but I know it is there for me to grow into. I have a much easier time dealing with the geckos who are our most prevalent visitors. Their chirping calls sound a lot like laughter and ring through the house encouraging us to join in.

With all this growth there is also a strong sense of impermanence. Everything that has been created will inevitably be destroyed. Even the island itself is being worn away to return to the sea from which it arose so many years ago. All life has sprung from the ocean, and spending time playing in or walking along it is very rejuvenating. It fills me with a sense of strength, clarity, and simplicity. The motion of the waves somehow brings stillness to the mind. Especially when the full moon shines serenely over the evening waters. It speaks directly to the heart.

On Kauai, as in our *T'ai Chi Chih* practice, we each must discover and explore the great strength in softness. The opportunity to learn about and live in accord with the life force is invaluable and there is much to be grateful for. Those who are accredited have something of great value to pass along to students seeking depth and meaning in their lives. May we continue to offer it with a sense of gratitude and clarity of heart. May all sincere students experience joy in their *T'ai Chi Chih* practice, and may the sincerity of our wonderful community support each of us in living a life of balance, integrity and fulfillment.