

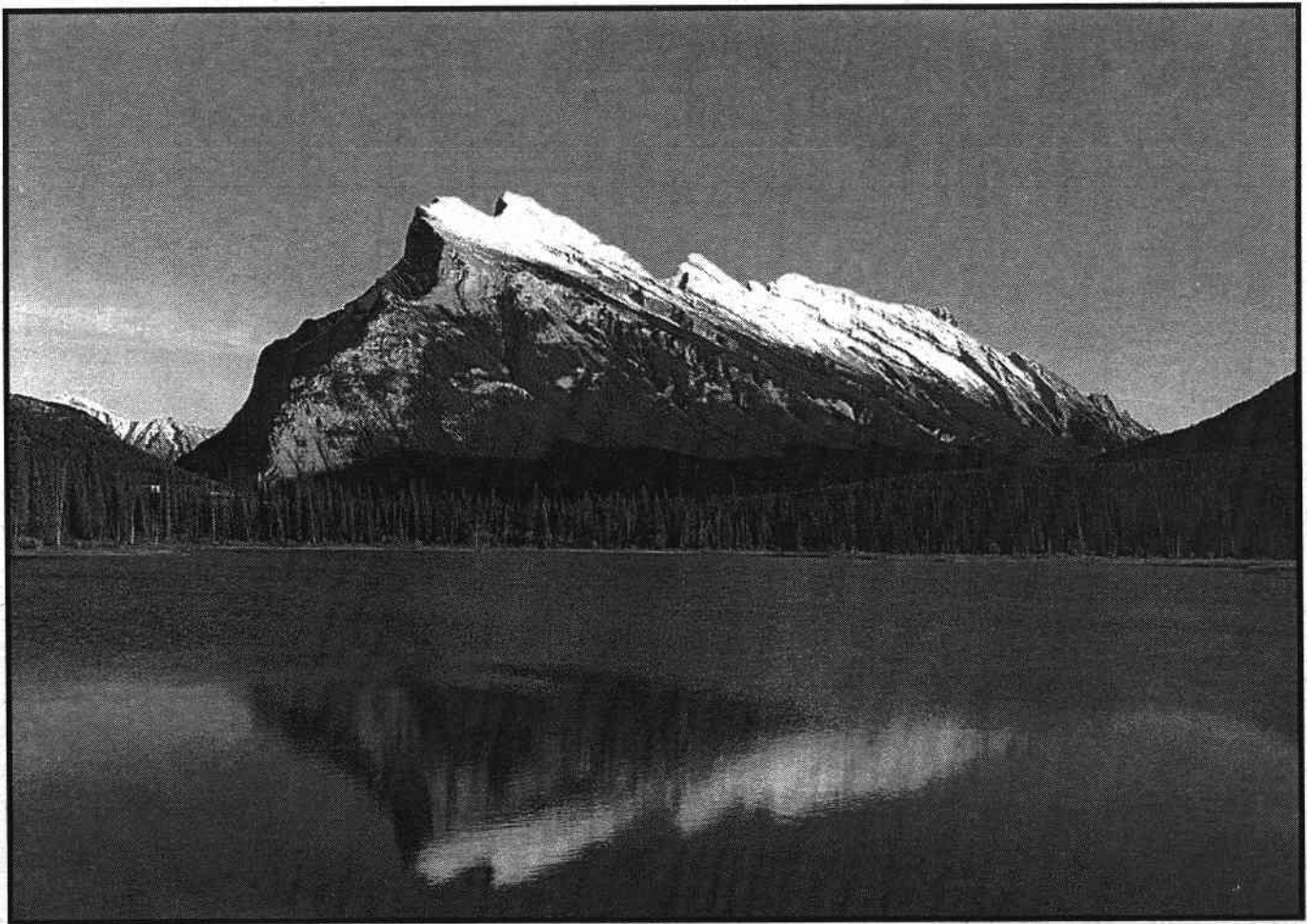
The Vital Force



Journal of the T'ai Chi Chih® Community

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Serene majestic beauty surrounded us in Banff, AB, CANADA

*at the
18th Annual T'ai Chi Chih Teachers' Conference*

Coverage begins on Page 9.



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



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 longtime TCC teacher Guadalupe Buchwald, of Victoria, BC, Canada. Pictured is Mount Rundle, reflected in the Vermilion Lakes. This scene was just outside the town center of Banff, site of the 18th International TCC Teachers' Conference in September.

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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 18th International T'ai Chi Chih Teachers' Conference actually went international this year, for the first time ever, in Banff, Alberta, Canada. What a stunning location we were in for those four days! So many attending teachers took full advantage of the opportunity and planned full vacations around the area before and/or after the conference, and many brought spouses along to enjoy it with them.

We owe a tremendous THANK YOU VERY MUCH to Conference Hosts **Chery Ann Hoffmeyer** and **Louise Bureau** and their conference committee, as well as Teacher Trainer **Sandy McAlister** who coordinates with every conference committee throughout what is often a two-years-or-more process. What a fabulous job! So many felt this was the best conference ever — but how many times have we heard that in recent years? It's wonderful how each group builds upon the efforts of the previous groups to refine this biggest-TCC-event-of-the-year and add their own special flavor to it. These folks have been at this task for YEARS now! I remember sitting at a restaurant table with Ed in California in the year 2000 as he slid a stunning photo of Banff across the table to me. "That's where the Canadians are thinking of hosting the conference," he said with a smile. I don't think they could have chosen a more stunning location, and what a power spot! Those gigantic, majestic mountains surrounding us on all sides emanated profound stillness.

The Banff Centre, where the conference was held, is a world-renowned retreat and conference center, and the accommodations were first class! This year's conference was run with grace and ease at thinking-on-the-spot, as numerous last-minute schedule changes occurred. Chery Ann was the "MC" throughout and she was consistently poised, gracious and focused. So many people commented on the content of this year's conference as being incredibly substantial, as many regional leaders were asked to share their knowledge on a wide range of aspects of teaching/practicing T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement. American attendees commented over and over at the graciousness of the Canadians. Many hoped aloud that this was the first Canadian conference of many to come!

Attending teachers numbered 116, with another 15 spouses along for the trip (who did other activities during the day, but joined us for meals). I counted up **26 U.S. states** represented by attending teachers, as well as **five Canadian provinces**. One other international country was represented, New Zealand, by longtime TCC teacher Theda Gillespie.

The T'ai Chi Chih Community is in flux at this time. At the conference, Ed and I and Jean Katus announced our retirements from our positions of leadership. This issue contains our conference announcements and others' reactions to these announcements. Justin announces new leadership in his article.

I've greatly enjoyed editing this journal each quarter for the last five years, and encourage all of you to continue contributing your focus, creativity, ideas and opinions by submitting articles, poems, artwork and photography for publication. Kathy Grassel of Albuquerque, NM will be the new editor, and you can find her contact information in the back of this issue.

My best wishes to all of you in your TCC practice and teaching! Take care,

Noel Altman, Editor



Readers Respond

The latest issue of *The Vital Force* just arrived and two things noticed all too quickly are still penetrating. I always read the poem on the back first. I was swimming along in the joy of it ... and then the fourth to the last word struck a chord and I am still not sure if it was meant to be a "k" or an "f". Either way works. Spell check does not help here.

Then delved randomly in and found the statement in which Ed Altman quotes Justin Stone saying at Folsom prison, "From the Eastern point of view we are all living the same life".

These will take time to percolate.

Leslie Keith
St. Paul, AB
CANADA

(So now I shall be here pondering awhile and waiting for another reading time. Except that I had understood the planned Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (the letters spell out as a tank chews) session was to be a Seijaku experience for those new to that discipline and can find no others on the list. When will there be a Seijaku opportunity?)

[Editor's Note: Hi Leslie! The answer to your first question is that the poem was submitted to me the way you saw it printed on the back of the last issue. One of the edit checks I do each issue is a comparison, word for word, of the original submitted to me and what is appearing in my layout (in case I have introduced any errors during the layout process).

In answer to your second inquiry, the only Seijaku opportunity that I have been informed is a definite is the Seijaku Teacher Accreditation course scheduled for January in the Bay Area, CA. (See "Calendar of Events" for details).

The Seijaku accreditation courses are very different from the TCC teacher accreditation courses in that many attendees do not even know how to do Seijaku before they attend. That course is designed to teach it to them as well as accredit them, all in the same weekend. (Later, many decide to audit these courses for the nominal \$20 auditing fee, so they can deepen their understanding each time.)

These courses are only open to accredited TCC teachers, such as yourself.

Justin Stone decreed long ago that no TCC teacher can learn Seijaku from another teacher. Therefore, for someone like you, who did not learn it prior to becoming accredited to teach TCC Joy Thru Movement, the only place to learn it is at a Seijaku accreditation course.

For a long time Justin was the only one teaching Seijaku accreditation courses. In late 1992, he asked Ed Altman to begin apprenticing to teach those courses. After several years of doing so alongside Justin, Ed began teaching those courses, the only teacher ever asked to. With Ed's retirement from the position of Head of the *T'ai Chi Chih* Community, he is also retiring from teaching Seijaku courses. The course in January was scheduled before he decided to retire, and will be his last.

Other events offering Seijaku are generally open to those teachers who are already accredited to teach it, or who already learned it when they were students. They are often open to students who already know Seijaku, as well, but, for clarification, it would be best to contact the course hosts of such events.]

CLARIFICATION

Hi Noel.

Thanks for fitting in my article on seeking peace in this month's *Vital Force*. That was nice to see. I'm actually writing to you in response to the article written by Debbie Cole in which she mentions a yinning/yangling technique/idea that I use. Although it's a wonderful tool that I use to help students FEEL what it is like "flowing from the center", I cannot take credit for it as being my idea. I actually heard someone talk about this at last year's conference in San Antonio. I don't remember who the person was but I'd like to properly give credit where it's due. So if the person who uses this approach is reading this, I thank you for an excellent idea. I simply passed it on at the Philadelphia TCC weekend in Jan. 2003.

Thanks, Noel.

Peace,

April Leffler
Prospect Park, PA



June 28, 2003

First TCC event in Sitka, AK draws 21 eager students from all over the state

By Nancy Jo Bleier
Course Host

Course Instructor Sandy McAlister came to rainy Sitka from sunny Hayward, California. Her first words at the Sitka airport were, "It is so green!"

On Saturday, June 28, 2003, at 8:30 AM, 21 Sitkans gathered at the SEARHC Community Health Services building in Sitka to learn more about *T'ai*



Alaskan students and teachers follow Course Instructor Sandy McAlister's lead (far right) in *Carry the Ball to the Side*.

Photo: Nancy Jo Bleier



(L-R): Students Dotty Johnson and Jean Moulton of Sitka, AK speak with Student Ruth Sandvik of Petersburg, AK, who had traveled 14 hours by ferry to attend the workshop.

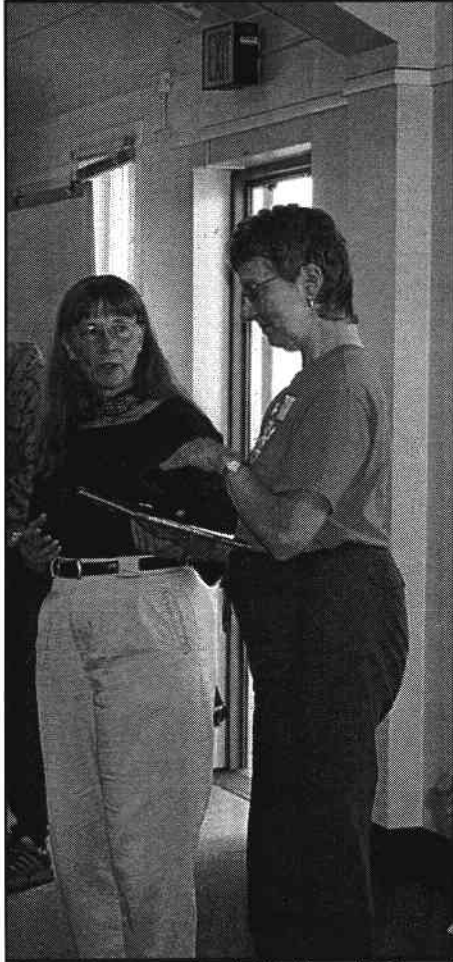
Photo: Nancy Jo Bleier

Chi Chih practice. They were joined by five more people from Petersburg, Alaska who traveled 14 hours by ferry boat. Besides Sandy, we had three teachers and one teacher candidate.

At the end of the day, most participants said they received plenty of information and "tools" that they could absorb at their own level. They mentioned coming away with new ways of understanding how to move. Comments reflected the diversity of experience in the group. Student Lois Chambers said it was "her first" TCC workshop. Teacher Martina Kurzer wrote: "Sandy gave insight and advice to further deepen my practice. I learned and even had to reevalu-

ate an entire movement." Student Joann Torgeson "liked the theme of introducing tools that we could use at home to encourage flow in our *T'ai Chi Chih* practice." Student Laura Ramp said, "It's great to practice with a large group. Even though the information is basically the same, it's nice to hear it a different way."

When asked if there was enough or not enough time spent on TCC practice, Student Kathy Ingallinera felt, "It is nice to start the day with a brief practice to loosen us up and so Sandy could see what she was up against. I liked breaking down each move and working the individual parts before 'perfecting'



Course Instructor Sandy McAlister (left) consults with Course Host Nancy Jo Bleier during the workshop.

Photo provided by Nancy Jo Bleier



Course Instructor Sandy McAlister (center, facing group) scans the group for suggestions to make as she leads them in *Daughter on the Mountaintop*. Photo: Nancy Jo Bleier

the move." Teacher Steve Morse experienced "a day full of valuable instruction and several surprises." He went on to reflect, "What a great *T'ai Chi Chih* community (we have) in Southeast Alaska." Student Polly Lee "especially appreciated the time and demos on correct posture while doing the *T'ai Chi (Chih)* leg movements." Student Doris Smith wrote, "Actually I learned meaningful things that hadn't gotten thru to me in 10 years."

For myself, I made more progress toward "flowing from the center." I took home a

greater appreciation of the importance of going back to the base — the stance — with the knees being bent or soft, but always moving.

Comments on Sandy's teaching style were very positive. Frequent remarks were: "Very respectful", "She listened" and "She used gentle guidance." Student Anne Lewis felt Sandy was "very easy to understand."

Lunch was catered with soup and bread with wonderful salads brought by a few participants. It was nice to not break up the group at mid-day.

At the end of the afternoon, the sun came out (first time in several days). We had a full, wonderful practice.

A Teacher's Prep class was held Saturday evening and early Sunday morning for four people. Each told me later that the individual attention Sandy gave them was very valuable. They also said that it was invaluable to learn in greater detail about the process of becoming a teacher. We talked about how "going out" (of Alaska) for intensive training and/or a retreat is very important for those of us in remote areas.

I believe that workshops and retreats, plus going to Teacher's Conference, are necessary to my going deeper in my understanding or feeling of TCC movements. As Student Joyce Krohn said at the Teacher's Prep class, "Why do any other form when this has all the necessary elements to move (circulate) the energy?"