



# The Vital Force

Journal of the Tai Chi Chih® Community

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"Tai Chi Chih is a gateway to Humanity. It is a Form of Love." —Justin Stone, Originator

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## Contributors

**Sheryl Adair** is a newly accredited teacher from Atlanta, Ga and has been joyfully practicing T'ai Chi Chih since 1999.

**Nancy Beck** received her TCC accreditation in Albuquerque in November 2002. She originally felt that, on retirement, she would be involved in volunteer work, probably in a nursing home where her parents had been. However, she decided against that because of too many painful memories. In 2001, HealthPoint opened and she took a TCC class. With the help of Larry Sava, Wellness Director, she says she not only found a place to volunteer where she could help promote senior health, but also found in the TCC classes a very close-knit, caring, and supportive group. Now, as a volunteer/staff member she works with other classes, which she enjoys, but it is the TCC community that is like family.

**Linda Braga** teaches and teaches in California.

**Carmen Brocklehurst** was the first distributor for Satori (the previous publisher of Justin's books, tapes and videos) and she continues her role as a distributor for Good Karma Publishing, Inc. She feels it's a special gift to talk to so many teachers and students about the perceptive materials that Justin has created, materials she uses as an integral part of her teaching.

**Debbie Cole** is learning that one of the best ways to dissipate one's own animosity is not to make assumptions, but to ask questions and listen with an open mind and an open heart.

**Cary Fellman** was accredited in 1998. She is a poet, teaches poetry writing classes and presents workshops on self-publishing.

**Pat Flynn** became accredited to teach T'ai Chi Chih Joy Through Movement in October of 2002 and Seijaku in January of 2004. Along with her husband, Larry, she successfully started and

ran an engineering firm based in the Washington, DC area for more than 20 years until it was subsequently sold.

**Ellen Dee Foster** lives in Albuquerque but hails originally from Missouri. She stayed some days after the 2004 conference in St. Louis to spend time with her Missouri kin.

**Kathy Grassel** in her spare time is trying to save the endangered silvery minnow from extinction.

**Marilyn Irvin** was accredited in November in Albuquerque. See her comeback story in this issue.

**Michael Isaacs** recently moved from New Jersey to California to enjoy his family and the weather.

**Dorene Krause** is from Midland Park, New Jersey. She was accredited in November 2003.

**Ginny Morgan** lives in Albuquerque and was accredited in November 2002. Ann Rutherford introduced her to TCC and encouraged her to become a teacher. Ginny is an active teacher, does the class schedules twice a month for the TCC Center, and serves on the TCC Board.

**Marie Myszkier** is a newly accredited Tai Chi Chih instructor. She lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico and enjoys hiking, photography and journaling. Special moments for her are doing Tai Chi Chih at the base of the Sandia Mountains.

**Daniel Pienciak** has been practicing T'ai Chi Chih since 1995, and teaching since 1997. He has very much enjoyed hosting area trainings, retreats, and workshops in TCC and Seijaku since 1998. He teaches piano, and sees individual clients for other bodywork modalities such as IET and Thai Yoga Bodywork, sometimes simply known as Thai massage. Daniel also enjoys facilitating retreats/workshops in personal growth and spirituality, particularly as they relate to those in re-

covery, and as a ministry to the gay community. He especially appreciates (and feels challenged by) the slow, but large changes that T'ai Chi Chih and meditation have introduced into his life, and observing the same in his students and other teachers.

**Rhonda St. Martin** stumbled into her first TCC class, taught by Carmen Brocklehurst, in 1986. Enthusiastic, young, wounded and totally out of her body, she was quite challenged by the movements but TCC would not let go. She believes TCC is a gentle re-entry to the body, however still finds herself not really surrendering to the flow. She is most grateful to live in Albuquerque and everything that that means. Rhonda shares her life with her karmic appointment of 20+ years, Ed, and their two dogs Bella and Luna. Once not even friends, they now find joy in adventure and lessons around the healing power of love.

**Larry Sava**, while attending a demonstration of T'ai Chi Chih at the Southwest Yoga Conference was impressed with his flow of chi. He worked with a cancer survivors group using T'ai Chi Chuan and, feeling that was not the answer, began to search for other methods. He came back to T'ai Chi Chih and was certified in the first Texas teacher accreditation in San Antonio by Ed Altman (and by the prayers of Sr. Alice!). Larry later completed Seijaku training. He believes the chi has helped with recovery from thyroid cancer. He is currently director of the HealthPoint Wellness Center in Lubbock, a facility for seniors. Larry says, "I believe in, and have seen, the dramatic benefits of TCC in our senior membership."

**Meg Scinto** is a resident of Ringwood New Jersey, current host-home of many Tai Chi Chih events, including Intensives, Teacher Trainings and weekend workshops. She became

accredited in November ('04) at the Albuquerque Teacher Training session. Meg feels very fortunate to be part of the New Jersey Tai Chi Chih community and attributes the many opportunities to practice and study together along with the giving attitude of the teachers a major part of her progress on this journey. A special nod to Sr. Antonia for her guidance. Always grateful and amazed at how the Chi moves and evolves in one's life, she is looking forward to extending this gift to others through teaching.

**Sharon Sirkis** was accredited in 1997 by Ed Altman. Due to a vision she saw in the sweat lodge fire a few years back, she continues to combine TCC, Reiki / Chakra Energy healing, and Native American healing, in her work with helping the people. She is currently reading *Journey to Ixtlan*, the lessons of Don Juan, by Carlos Castaneda.

**Ellen Tatge** lives in Albuquerque with her husband and cat, keeping her sanity in her workplace by offering to teach everyone T'ai Chi Chih. She has been holding together a Tuesday night ongoing TCC class for regulars for the last twelve years.

**Judy Tretheway** has volunteered for seven years as the facilitator and teacher for the Folsom Prison program. She is also a chaplain and spiritual director.

**Justin Stone** still likes to drive fast cars.

## Justin Stone

### Understanding oneself

By Justin Stone

**I** find an indication of maturity occurs when an individual admits to him or herself the real reason for the action or judgment he or she has made. This means understanding the true motivation. First, there is usually the false view of what has been done, and then the need to invent reasons in order to save face with oneself. Pretty soon the subject begins to believe what has been invented and it becomes solidified in the subject's mind. The "alaya vijnana" (the Buddhist "receptacle of consciousness") is stuffed with such junk, along with the habit energies one has developed over a lifetime.

The vashanas (habit energies) go back to the indoctrination given to us from childhood, and we assume that cloak even though the parents and teachers we knew may not have been well-balanced.

Racial prejudice and strange sexual judgments color our views and, unless we can discard them (almost impossible for some), they put us in a twisted bondage for the rest of our lives.

I once knew a professional tennis player who usually told the unvarnished truth, no matter how bad a light it cast on him. People thought he was a wit and just being funny when he said things like, "I'm going to steal that ashtray," or,

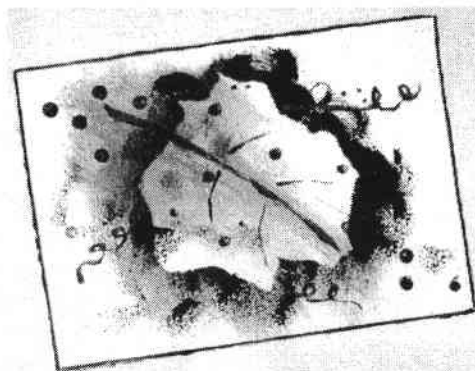
during the second world war, "What you read in the papers is all propaganda." He saw no reason to lie or manufacture half truths, so he became known as a wit. Sometimes, of course, he caused bad reactions. But he told the truth.

There are incidents where a father or a teacher has schooled a child to "always tell the truth"; then, when the telephone rings, say to the child, "Answer it and say I'm not here."

An interesting question, which only a psychologist or psychoanalyst can answer, arises when we ask: Does a person lose stature with him or herself when that person deliberately lies? Or can the falsehood be rationalized so that it does not hurt the image one has of him or herself? Each one of us has an image of him or herself, and in some cases that image is not very flattering.

There are instances when one tells "a little white lie" in order to save another's feelings. If a woman tells another woman, "That dress is very flattering on you," knowing full well that it isn't, can we fault her for not telling the truth? "Be true to yourself" is a saying we have all heard, but it's often hard to apply. We certainly do not

want to hurt others, so we must judge what is best to say at all times. Nevertheless, the above poses some interesting questions which we might do well to consider.



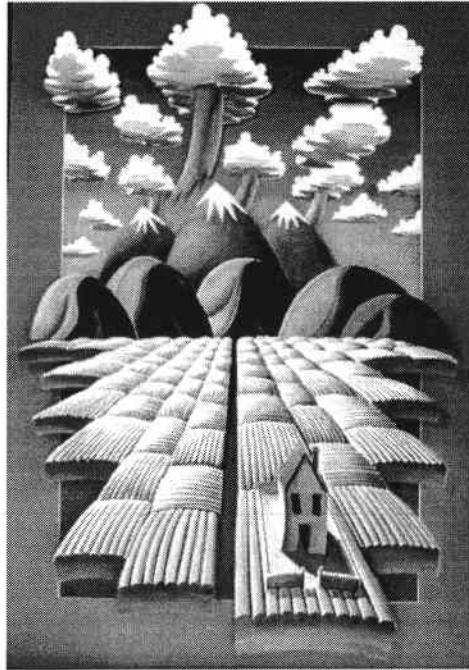
## Getting Stoned

By Rhonda St. Martin

The timing seemed right. Justin had fairly recently moved from California to Albuquerque. I had seen him at the Tuesday morning teacher practices at the TCC Center and we had had a few conversations. It was time to go to lunch. We agreed to meet at his then-favorite Indian restaurant, Shalimar (the building has since been demolished and in its place is a high-end drive-thru coffee bar).

Feeling quite nervous about being with the great Master, I arrived. Justin was, of course, already at the restaurant. He knew the owners and they were visiting. Justin, always and still the quintessential gentleman pulled my chair out for me. He wore a snappy tan blazer. We sat for a moment and then proceeded to the small lunch buffet. What happened next was one of the most profound teachings Justin would ever offer me. It was wrought with genius and simplicity. In fact it was so absolutely powerful, so Zen, that I was left stunned and speechless.

While at the buffet I handed Justin a small salad plate (there was soup and salad nearby). He took the salad plate, got a ladle of soup and poured it onto the plate. The soup went splashing everywhere! It dripped, it ran off the plate, some of it on the floor, some on me. He looked at me. I was totally dumbfounded and had no idea how to react. Obviously it was very funny—the sort of razor-sharp humor I would later come to learn as that for which Justin



is famous. It was as though time stood still. I didn't know what to do. I didn't dare laugh. But it was so funny! For anyone who has ever enjoyed the Pink Panther movie series, it was like a stellar performance by Inspector Clouseau. We got a bowl for the second course of soup and I remember little else about the rest of the lunch that day.



Years later as I recall this most unexpected encounter, I see that it was only one of many times when Justin pulls the rug out from under one's feet. In Native American terms, he has Coyote Medicine (Trickster always teaching). Humor is only one of the ways he tries to wake us up. It is also one of the more gentle.

Recently I arrived at Justin's home for a Sunday evening meditation. I had just spent some time prior to that Christmas shopping and remarked "It's a jungle out there." He quickly fired back, "It's a jungle in here." Indeed. He was, of course, referring to the inner world, meditation and the trappings of Mind.

So what have I learned from Justin all these years? Well much, I would hope, but what immediately comes to mind is this: Take this life and the lessons presented by it seriously but not too seriously. Get to know this Chi which makes us who and what we are. Do not fall into the trap of putting Justin on a pedestal. Extraordinary human? Absolutely! God? No more than you or me. Justin does not want to be deified or reified, and to do so misses the point of his teachings. He is

always pointing to our dualistic thinking. Practice T'ai Chi Chih and meditation with Teh (power of inner sincerity). And when it's funny, by all means laugh!!

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## Interview

## Good Karma in good hands with Kim Grant

*Kim Grant, while based in Boston, is on the road a lot. She's not just a writer; she's a travel writer, writing for Lonely Planet for the last two decades. She happened to be on the West Coast for this interview, finishing up three books. A lot is happening in Kim's world right now, not the least of which is heading up Good Karma Publishing. More is about to happen, as she has decided to move to Albuquerque, New Mexico, in the very near future.*

**VFJ:** So how does it happen that you are moving to Albuquerque?

**Kim:** Here's how it happened. I was writing a book in Provincetown on the Cape. I was driving around one night—it was really cold and rainy. Things hadn't been going well. I was in the dunes, and this little frog hopped across my path while I was driving. I had to come to a screeching halt. There was something in that particular moment with the simplicity of this frog—hopping across the road to get to the other side for no other reason. That's what frogs do, they hop. In that blink of a moment, I had this epiphany that I want to be as simple and as purposeful as that frog hopping across the road. I have to go to New Mexico! It was the strangest, clearest thing beyond logic—it doesn't make any sense, but it was one of those moments that when we do TCC we trust those moments.

**VFJ:** You must have been thinking about it before to some extent, no?

**Kim:** It's true, I've been thinking about it for a year and a half. I have a great life in Boston; the choice to leave is my own, except it doesn't feel like the choice is mine, like what Justin talks about—the choiceless choice. I just

think it's time. And what I've learned over the last year and a half is that everything changes—huge lesson—and so nothing has to be

forever. And that makes my decision a lot lighter. I can go to New Mexico thinking, okay, if it works, great I'll stay; if it doesn't, I won't stay. And, my God, I'm going to New Mexico because Justin is still alive. He is gracious and generous enough to give me his time and his wisdom, and I just can't ignore that any longer. There's not a single thing in my life that I regret, but I also came to the conclusion with this frog that I would regret not having spent more with Justin if he died. And I don't want to regret that. So that's why. You know, I'm incredibly attached to my house. I'm attached to my friends, so I kind of want to test that attachment—see how real it is. It may only be real in my mind.

**VFJ:** Will you sell your house?

**Kim:** No, I'm going to rent it because...

**VFJ:** Yeah, because.

**Kim:** I'm probably not going to give up my life as a travel writer; I'm just not going to write as many books as I usually do. I mean, I wrote five books this year. So I'll write one or two books a year, be reasonable about it, and try to live a more simple life, and really devote—and here's the key—a heck of a lot more time and attention to Good Karma Publishing. As Carmen always says, and I've putting it into practice for the last few months, energy follows attention. I keep repeating that over and over, and sure enough, it's true. As soon as I put my attention on something, some kind of other energy kicks in and something happens, so I really want to. Good Karma deserves it; Justin deserves it; Tai Chi Chih deserves it; and more people deserve to know about TCC in what he's written. I can't afford to live in Boston and devote as much time as I would like to to Good Karma because it's too expensive. Just a practical concern.

**VFJ:** Could you go in some detail about what Good Karma is?

**Kim:** Here's what I always say. Good

Karma exists to produce, disseminate, and promote the work of Justin Stone and T'ai Chi Chih in two ways: one, to the community, to our teachers and students, and two, to the outside world. That's the part that I really love and intend to focus on next year. For example, I open up a New Age catalog and see all the yoga tapes and Tai Chi Chuan tapes and I think, man ya know, our tapes should be in there. I'm booked a year in advance with book contracts. They are ending now and I've only taken on one for next year. So I've kind of cleaned my plate and I'm ready to heap some Good Karma onto it for next year. I want to really grow it outward to the bigger community. It's poised to take off. Maybe it's reached a saturation point within the TCC community; the only thing to do is to go outside the community and grow it that way. The other thing I think is important for me to do, although it's not a specific charge that I've been given, is to start doing my own publicity campaign in a way for T'ai Chi Chih. I write books and articles all the time. I have great contacts and I understand the publishing world because I've been writing these books for 20 years. I think one of the things I am in a somewhat unique position to do is start submitting articles to big magazines. That takes time, but again, if I lead a simpler life with fewer financial demands, I can afford to plant those seeds and wait for them to sprout. The story needs to be told on a bigger level. We all take it for granted; we know what T'ai Chi Chih does, but other people don't. I think I can do that.

**VFJ:** That's a big hat to wear.

**Kim:** I think my faith in T'ai Chi Chih has grown over the years, so I really do believe now, in a way that defines faith, that if we do the right work, something will kick in and the universe will support it. I hate that kind of language—it all sounds to airy-

fairy—but I think it's really true, so I want to give it some discrete amount of time, because I think something really will happen. Whenever I've decided to do something, it's really been phenomenal, when I've decided wholeheartedly to jump into something, it works. Two summers ago, I was in a somewhat dark period, I remember pounding my fist on the kitchen table, saying out loud, "I just want to go to Hawaii. Or New Mexico." The next day I got a call from my publisher and he said, "I know you're in this tough stage now, Kim, but... is there any way that we can convince you to do books on Hawaii and New Mexico." No kidding. I said with full conviction I really want to go to these two places, and then it happened. So, I think that if I really put my attention into doing this for a year, somehow it will be supported.

**VFJ:** So, you're the right person for this job, I can tell.

**Kim:** I feel completely grateful to have been given this. I feel like it's a huge responsibility. I take it pretty seriously. And every day when I talk to a teacher on the phone, and I may be in a cranky mood before I pick up the phone, inevitably when I hang up, I'm in a really good mood because they're all really great people. I don't know how that happens; it surprises me every time, but I'm smiling when I hang up. That feels like a gift that I'm given, to have the opportunity to step outside myself to do something for someone else and for bigger reasons. It feels like to be of service. It feels like I'm giving back to Justin. That's truly from the heart, that sentiment. It feels very pure and so I know it's right.

And then there's the pretty obvious stuff to do. I want to put out his video as a DVD. That should be done by the end of January. People are clamoring for it. I think that will reinvigorate people's interest and the outside world's, too, in Good Karma. Around the same time, "Justin Stone Speaks" will be on CD. I just reprinted the textbook. Those are the three things

that really sell the best. I want to get a unified look for all the books. I have to wait until we reprint them, but I want like a brand identity. I hate to sound so corporate, but you go to the bookstore and you can recognize the Shambala books four feet away, and that's what I want to start happening to Good Karma. I've been a photographer for 20 years, and I do think that image matters. I think the way that we present ourselves as a community, as a company of Good Karma, as a practice called T'ai Chi Chih, I think it matters. Should it make a difference? You know, when someone goes to the bookstore, if they pick up a shiny book versus a not-shiny book, no, they should pick up the best book that's out there. But the fact of the matter is, that is the world we live in. I photograph book covers; I help design books; I did Justin's art book, which came out really well. I have high hopes for Good Karma. I said to the new teacher candidates at the training that I feel like I'm sitting on a diamond mine with Good Karma. It's like diamonds in the rough, ready to be polished.

**VFJ:** You have your own corporation called Bindu Press. Is it still going strong?

**Kim:** Yes, I have this line of cards—black and white abstract cards. I'm not sure what I'm going to do with it. It is still around. It's funny, because bindu means "point without extension," or "point containing infinite possibility." So, I did the card thing with it, and now I'm waiting and I'm not sure what it is going to be for the next thing to do with it. It could go anywhere because of the name. I was out at an informal meditation retreat with Justin, and I had been thinking, thinking, thinking for a couple months, what can I name this company. All of a sudden Justin used this word, Bindu. And it just sang. I have this notion to write—I hate this term, but kind of more spiritually-based travel. I'm a reluctant travel writer now. I don't like to go anywhere. I like to sit still, and so I have this notion about doing a series

called, "Slow Down, See More," which totally fits in with all our meditation and TCC... like go somewhere nice, like Banff or Lake Louise, do TCC on the edge of some fantastic lake and do one thing that day and do it really well, and then just sit still.

**VFJ:** That's great. What a great idea!

**Kim:** It doesn't make for a thick book, but it makes for some good web essays.

**VFJ:** There are some books out there. "Hard Travel to Sacred Places," "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance," "Bones of the Master." Lots of pilgrimage books to take inspiration from.

**Kim:** Yes, I want to find a little bit more spaciousness in my life. I can think that the New Mexico sky and all the space there is the perfect sort of grounded reality check for what I'm feeling.

**VFJ:** So how many books have you written?

**Kim:** Probably .... [counting, thinking]... either authored or co-authored, probably 15 different books, but some of them five or six editions of them. From scratch, I've probably written 10 books. I continue to update a lot of them—they change fairly significantly. If you check into [kimgrant.com](http://kimgrant.com), you'll see. There's a T'ai Chi Chih section, too. There's a photography section, travel writing, Cape Cod, and T'ai Chi Chih. It has a little film clip of quick-time video of Carmen doing T'ai Chi Chih.

**VFJ:** So who is the biggest pain in the neck you have to work with?

**Kim:** You know who it is, it's me. Nobody is harder on me than myself. I think most people who are self-employed say that. I think it was Ann Rutherford who said to me about a year ago now, "Are you afraid to move to New Mexico because you're afraid Justin is going to be really hard on you?" I really laughed out loud, not at her, but