

The

# Vital Force

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JOURNAL OF THE T'AI CHI CHIH® COMMUNITY

August 2007

*Justin's Words*

## Questions & Comments BY JUSTIN STONE

*What is Truth?  
A five letter word.*

*What is falsehood?  
Not a thing.*

*What is rain?  
Beyond explanation.*

*What should we do  
when it rains?  
Let it rain.*

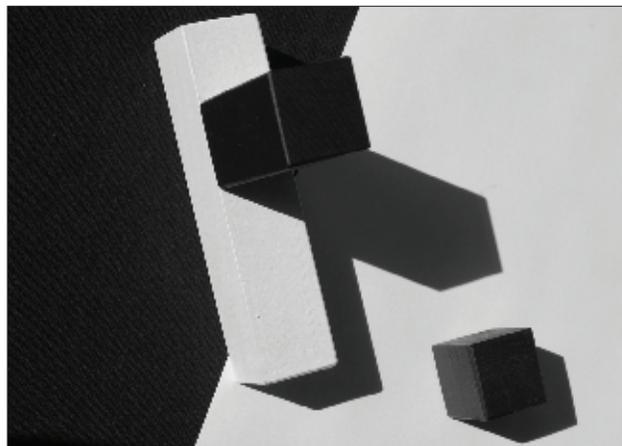
*Why do some say  
"The wisdom  
of old age?"  
There is nothing wise  
about old age.*

*Say one word  
of wisdom.  
Compassion.*

*Darkness is positive.  
It is uninterrupted.  
Light is alive  
and  
full of objects.*

*Adam and Eve  
never left  
the Garden of Eden.*

*The Host and Guest are  
states of mind.*



*The greatest  
foolishment is to think  
you can return home.*

*Keep going west  
and you will reach  
the Far East.*

*If you are not in a hurry,  
all lights are green.*

*What would happen  
if we took away  
automobiles,  
cell phones, and  
all technical gadgets?  
Mankind would be  
happier.*

*To try to win  
an argument  
is the acme  
of foolishness.*

*The greatest influence on our lives is the Chi  
(prana in Sanskrit.)*

## The Calendar, the Database & "For the Record"

### COMMUNITY CALENDAR

**M**ANY OF YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED that the Community Calendar was opened up to community members giving T'ai Chi Chih retreats, workshops, and intensives. As Justin said when he and I were discussing the fact that the Calendar had been limited in the past, "The only thing reserved for Teacher Trainers and Guides is teacher trainings." Imagine ... when our calendar listings grow to be three pages long! That will be a wonderful "problem" to have! In considering the issues, someone asked, "What will happen if a teacher publicizes an event that is not completely about TCC?" In considering a "bright line" test, the cleanest and clearest way to make it police itself is this: When you contact the Editor with your TCC event, she will ask you if it is 100 percent about TCC. If it is, it gets in the Community Calendar. If it turns out that it isn't (after the fact – since

we can only rely on the integrity of the teacher), that teacher will lose Community Calendar privileges. (Sorry if this sounds harsh.) Someone also asked, "What happens if the teacher giving an event doesn't do TCC properly? Will s/he still be allowed to list their event?" The Editor is not a policewoman. Hope this is fair and clear.

### THE DATABASE

It has come to my attention that the email list is being used improperly for purposes other than that for which it was originally intended: for important (border-line emergency) announcements directly related to The Vital Force. The Vital Force cannot control the email addresses being taken from [www.taichichih.org](http://www.taichichih.org), but we do have the responsibility to act responsibly in regards to what is sent from our email address. The policy is simple:

"The database is not for personal use or public distribution. If you have an announcement you consider extremely urgent and it is something that needs to

be brought to the attention of the entire community (between editions of The Vital Force), please contact the Editor, who will discuss it with the Guide. Because we respect your privacy and time, it will be a rare event when something is distributed to the entire list."

### FOR THE RECORD

The last edition was mistakenly mailed bulk rate by the printer, who called to apologize. Please accept our regrets. The printer also mistakenly used GKP as the return address for that issue. Please note, for practical and legal reasons, The Vital Force and Good Karma Publishing are completely separate entities. ... Photo and credits were omitted from the last edition. Stones were photographed by Kim Grant and designer Amy K. Brown; other photos were supplied by the article's author. We will always give credit where credit is due.

KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

## Submission Guidelines

When thinking about submissions, it's good to keep in mind that a 1/4 page in this newsletter is about 200 words and a 1/2 page is 400 words. Please send articles as Word documents, electronically, to [tcc@kimgrant.com](mailto:tcc@kimgrant.com). Look at the page headings and tailor your submission to a particular section. The newsletter will hang together better that way.

We are always in need of photos and artwork. Please send as high resolution jpgs as your camera takes. The Editor will crop and edit them. If you have 8-12 pieces of related artwork – calligraphy, drawings, photographs, or something that will reproduce well in black and white – please submit them. They might be featured in an entire issue.

The Vital Force reserves the right to edit submission for length and clarity.

## Deadlines & Ideas

SUBMISSION DEADLINE	PUBLICATION DATE	THEME	MOVEMENT (TEACHING TIPS)
Oct 1	Early Nov	Harmony	Around the Platter / Variation
Jan 1	Early Feb	Openness	Bass Drum
April 1	Early May	Release (Abandon Hope)	Daughter on the Mountaintop
July 1	Early Aug	Freedom	Daughter in the Valley

Editor: Kim Grant • Membership: Mary Ruiz • Submissions: Send articles, poetry and photos to Kim Grant at [tcc@kimgrant.com](mailto:tcc@kimgrant.com) or to The Vital Force, P.O. Box 92674, Albuquerque, NM 87199-2674 • Memberships: Send membership subscription requests, renewals, remittances and changes of address to The Vital Force, P.O. Box 92674, Albuquerque, NM 87199-2674. Memberships are \$30/year, \$40/year for international. Members receive four issues of The Vital Force. The printed annual Teachers Directory costs an additional \$5/year. It is also available for free at [www.taichichih.org](http://www.taichichih.org). If you do not receive an issue, send an e-mail to: [vjmemberships@yahoo.com](mailto:vjmemberships@yahoo.com). • Design: Amy K. Brown • The Vital Force is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization serving T'ai Chi Chih practitioners worldwide.

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# A Balanced Life or a Balanced Perspective?

By LISA M. OTERO, OXNARD, CA

OVER THE COURSE of the past few weeks, while I've been contemplating the subject of "balance," I have been literally bombarded with messages about "balance" from a number of sources. I continue to feel awe at how ideas and information will find you if you are open to them.

Balance is something that everyone says they want. I've always blithely assumed that a balanced life is primarily what I seek. But this week, it came to me that a "balanced" life, by definition, won't be an easy or happy life. It will have love and heartache, sweetness and bitterness, ease and disease, pleasure and pain, birth and death.... Honestly, I had to admit that I didn't really desire a "balanced life." I have actually spent quite a bit of energy trying to "tip the balance" of life in favor

of the good and happy stuff. So I stepped back and came to the conclusion that Life would balance itself, regardless of my efforts, and I would have to accept the outcome. Instead, I could seek to have a balanced reaction/non-reaction to life whatever it brought me (or appeared to bring me.) Accordingly, T'ai Chi Chih has not and will not "balance" my life. I do believe, however, that regular practice of TCC will help bring my *reactions* to my life experience into balance.

When TCC students ask me how the practice has helped me and how it will help them, I say, "Well ... it depends what kind of help you actually need at any given moment and how open you are to that help." In one class I have a student who says the practice energizes him; next to him is another student who says TCC relaxes her.

*It is best to have no specific requests of or desires for TCC, so that one is free to accept whatever the practice brings.*

How can we explain these different reactions except to say that TCC is balancing each person's internal energy in an individual manner? How can I explain that many students go home from class beaming with happiness, but that just recently, another student burst out crying while thanking me at the end of an introductory class? In my experience it is best to have no specific requests of or desires for TCC, so that one is free to accept whatever the practice brings.

## Merging Balance & Bird Flaps Its Wings

By HANNAH HEDRICK, MOUNTAIN VIEW, HI

AS AN ARIES who tends towards extremes, "balance" in all its ambiguities is a daily challenge. "Improved balance" is the T'ai Chi Chih benefit I cite most frequently from my practice. For me, using TCC to bring my body and mind toward balance creates a greater sense of spiritual balance.

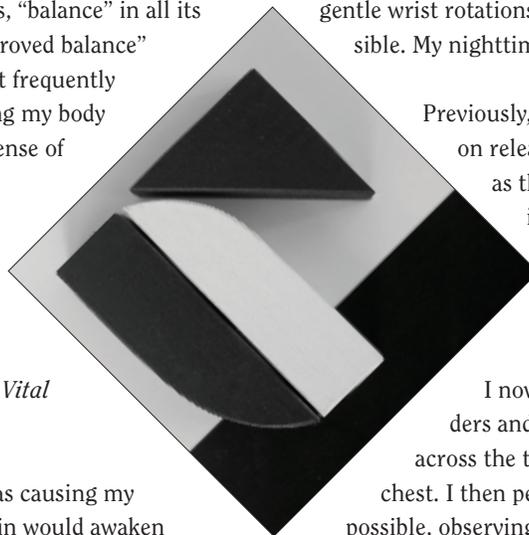
Bird Flaps Its Wings is frequently described primarily as a "warm-up movement," but I have experienced unexpected benefits from Bird Flaps Its Wings. I have thought several times about sharing via *The Vital Force*, so I appreciate this invitation.

Spending too much time at the computer was causing my forearms to go into spasm; hand and arm pain would awaken me several times at night. I noticed that my symptoms were relieved very early in my TCC practice, after Rocking Motion and Bird Flaps Its Wings. So for a couple of days, I did *only* Rocking Motion and Bird Flaps Its Wings for 15 minutes twice a day, observing the

gentle wrist rotations while doing them with as little effort as possible. My nighttime symptoms were notably reduced.

Previously, I focused my Bird Flaps Its Wings awareness on releasing the sitting bones down toward the heels as the heels peel effortlessly off the ground, keeping the weight relaxing down into the balls of the feet without feeling pressure in my knees. I consciously relaxed my pelvic girdle to reduce lower back tension.

I now pay equal attention to relaxing my shoulders and shoulder blades, as well as the muscles across the tops of my shoulders and the top of the front chest. I then perform the wrist circles with as little effort as possible, observing how this simple movement reduces tension and enhances energy flow in the shoulders, spine, and hips. I feel grounded and "balanced" and prepared to do the rest of the TCC movements with *TEH!* Warm Aloha.



## Balancing Mind & Body Brings Steam

By JAN ARROTT, LAS VEGAS, NM

**I**N PRACTICING Light at the Top of the Head at a conference, Sr. Antonia suggested that, instead of rising on my toes prematurely, I let my knees (as they straighten) facilitate the rise of the body first. She observed that I was losing my balance as I rose on my toes too quickly and could not hold it there. I came home from the conference and started integrating that idea into my practice. The natural flow and balance of the movement returned.

Then this spring I attended a weekend retreat with Sr. Antonia only to hear her say to the group, "As you move forward in Rocking Motion let your knees straighten fully before the heels rise." I realized at that moment here it was again, that I needed to listen again because I was totally unaware of this sequence happening in my practice. I may have been aware of it as I moved back and allowed the toes to rise, but I was not aware as I moved forward. I spoke aloud about my lack of awareness.

This admission of imperfection seemed integral to the process of change. Now, at home, as I am mindful of my knees straightening before the heel rises, my sense of balance has improved, and I notice increased flow of the Chi.

To become aware of, and to give full value to, all the parts of a movement is a vital

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*Mind and body must both  
be fully present before  
balance and the flow of  
Chi can be achieved.*

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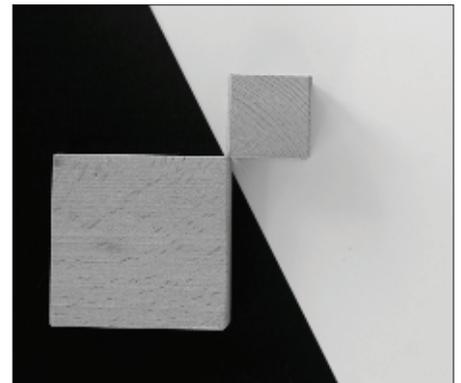
part of attaining balance. When equal attention is given to the entire sequence of a movement, there is a sense of completion in both directions. When I was diminishing the participation of my knees, I was limiting the expression of the yin and yang both mentally and physically. Sometimes

we know what we need to do but we don't quite know how to get there.

In some Chinese traditions the mind is thought of as water and the body as fire. When they work together, they produce steam. This reminds me that the mind and body must both be fully present in my movements before balance and the flow of Chi can be achieved.

I also have heard other teachers speak of the importance of softness in the knees. Since I have become open to learning this lesson from Sr. Antonia, I can experience this softness in a way I was not able to before.

When the body and mind are flowing fully as one, there is completion, there is balance, and there is steam.



chairs, to one and, bless their hearts, you should see the look on their faces when they announce that they do not need the chairs! So ... balance, then step; balance and then step. And do you know what? In our own personal lives, if we are balanced before we step, it is a solid move.

When seniors have learned to balance pretty well, we learn Rocking Motion. If we keep that "stack of quarters" (our spine) straight and do not spill the stack, we can move our torso straight up and down, toes and heels, without leaning. Balance helps us to stop leaning. Then, Rocking Motion is a sort of test of balance. And you can feel your arms and torso flowing together.

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## Seniors Balancing

By JERRY BUMBALOUGH, GREENFIELD, CA

**S**INCE I STARTED TEACHING T'ai Chi Chih in September 2005, the majority of my students have been seniors. It seems that seniors stay in contact with each other, and when a few discover something that they feel is good for them, or that they enjoy, they tell their friends. This is a good thing. TCC fills a gap in lives that might need some gaps filled.

My teaching begins with trying to reduce stress. Stress causes 70 percent of human illness and we must learn to relax. Tension blocks the flow of Chi and with that blockage, TCC may not be learned. I also emphasize balance. Without stress, balance can be learned. Before a step is taken forward or sideways, I insist that a student be balanced completely on one leg. [Editor's note: This can be difficult for seniors, so please be careful here.] If balance is not attained, a correct step in any direction

cannot be taken. We practice balancing and learn that skill as babies, and that skill must be relearned in some seniors. We hear of so many falls by seniors and I have found that the balancing skill learned in class by seniors has prevented many of their falls. So, as I begin, it is: "Starting position, balance, and then step. Imagine that you are placing your heel into a puddle of water and you cannot make a ripple. You cannot do this unless you are balanced and can place your heel down gently." I apply the same principle when returning the foot to the starting position. Balance, step. Balance, finish. If a senior has real balance problems, I have them place a chair on one side, and with this they learn to trust themselves to balance and eventually do not need the chair. Self-confidence is a key factor. Those using walkers use two chairs because they have used the walker for so long. However, they eventually go from two

## Balance & the Serenity Prayer

BY LOIS BROOME, CARROT CREEK, ALBERTA, CANADA

IS YOUR LIFE RUNNING SMOOTHLY and efficiently? Do you have control of your life? Or does it feel like it is spinning out of control? In today's world, I am finding more and more people who tell me that they seem

to have no time, no energy, and no freedom to do what they want to do. They appear to always be on an emotional roller coaster. Does this sound familiar? Or are you practicing your

T'ai Chi Chih and have some semblance of inner and outer balance? That is what happens when we practice what we learn and teach in class.

As I am writing this, I am striving for a balance ... but I need more TCC! There are too many things happening in my life at the moment. I am not artful or eloquent with words, but something tells me that this article is as important for me to write as it will be for someone else to read. I need to re-discover my path to my own personal balance. "Balance." We are always discussing it with someone, always talking about having "a balanced life style." What is balance? How do we describe it, attain it, maintain it? Few of us manage to attain and sustain it forever and always. It takes effort to realize and accept the fact that we need to make time to replenish our bodies, minds, and spirits and unite them as much as possible. It doesn't happen by osmosis.

Every living, breathing thing is kept alive by its Vital Force, also known as *prana*, Chi, or energy. While we regularly practice TCC to help attain balance of Chi, we start to glow and flow with energy – there by

*We start  
to glow  
and flow  
with  
energy.*

developing the skills necessary to bring more balance and understanding to our daily lives on the outside as well. We appear to be more capable of uniting body, mind, and spirit into a flowing, co-coordinated powerhouse of balanced energy.

By practicing TCC we expend very little energy to gain an enormous amount of coping power and strength. If our inner energy is balanced and quiet, it is much easier for us to make wiser decisions, to set and attain our chosen goals. It allows us to choose priorities in life that, in turn, allows us more control over ourselves. We learn we always have choices; we learn to let go. We learn to attain the "serenity to accept the things we cannot change; courage to change the things we can; and the wisdom to know the difference."

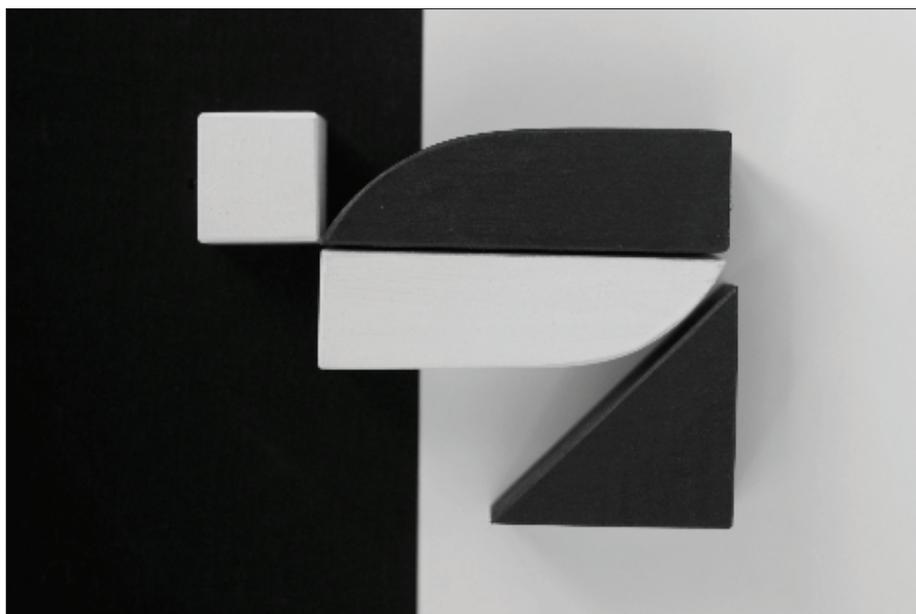
By practicing TCC faithfully to balance our inner selves, we have, in essence, put into practice the Serenity Prayer. I hope you all have the urge to practice more TCC daily so we are all balanced at the conference in New Jersey. Looking forward to seeing everyone there.

## Balancing & Blooming

BY GINNY MORGAN, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Several things have happened in my life recently that upset my balance. My husband's job is now in Kansas City, where our children and grandchildren live. But I want to remain in Albuquerque studying with Justin Stone. So my husband travels back and forth – so that I can be with Justin. It's a delicate balance. We also just lost a beloved golden retriever and there is an incredible void in our lives. But last week our new "golden" was born! Loss and joy are balanced.

Having T'ai Chi Chih and meditation to sink down into, and become one with my inner spirit and the Universe, have helped me to go with the flow of these daily experiences. My practice has allowed me to understand that my continued struggle is to just trust and to not try to have things in order all the time. It continues to amaze me how many layers there are to TCC. And it continues to amaze me about the continual "Blooming of the Flower" which unfolds with faithful practice. I recently related to Justin that I could not imagine being more grateful and joyful than I am right now, but these feelings continue to grow! What an incredible gift we have with TCC.



## Blessed with Balance in the Most Unlikely Places

By Sr. Antonia Cooper, OSF, North Plainfield, NJ



AS I WRITE THIS, the past eight days were spent in silence at Stella Maris Retreat Center, Elberon,

NJ. This track of land that meets the Atlantic Ocean once was the vacation home of President Ulysses

S. Grant in 1870. Stella Maris was also the site of the 1996 New Jersey T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Training. I have presented T'ai Chi Chih here to various groups in hour-, three-hour, and weekend segments.

What brought me here this time was my annual retreat – time that sisters take to renew their inner spirit. I treasure this opportunity to be in solitude and silence.

Throughout this year I have been privileged to travel to many places to speak with T'ai Chi Chih teachers and students. But how good it has been to give myself over to this recent quiet. To sit and gaze at the ocean, at the depth and immensity of this vast body of water, while being reminded of the polarities of nature. Observing the ebb and flow of the waves onto the beach, the high and low tides, these eternal cycles that expresses nature's yinny and yanging. The last night of the retreat was resplendent with the rising of the full moon out of the horizon – magnificent!

My daily ritual had been to greet the rising sun with a full T'ai Chi Chih practice and to close each day, yinny and yanging, with the waves of the ocean as it breathes forth its own patterns of giving and receiving. It was my intention, in both morning and evening practices, to extend this *Chi* flow to Justin and all

teachers and students who would be entering into the Cosmic Rhythm of their own practice.

I am  
deeply  
grateful  
for this gift of  
silence  
and  
for the gift of  
T'ai Chi Chih  
practice,  
which brings into  
balance  
all the opposites  
that are part of  
this human struggle.

In these days of *no words*, my meditations have been still in the awareness of breathing patterns – as lungs gently expand and contract, yin and yang, in and out in a slow, steady pace. I feel at one with no-thing. My being is filled in the absence of words. This one life in this one moment births blessings in abundance. This time of “being apart” prepares the next time of “being together” when there will be words, but perhaps fewer because they are more carefully chosen.

In this no-word stance, I was more aware of my surroundings from that first evening at T'ai Chi Chih practice. As the ocean breeze gently caressed my skin, I noticed a slight scent of honeysuckle. After dismissing it on the grounds that it wouldn't grow at the beach, I was delightfully surprised in the light of the following morning to see an embankment filled with it. Honeysuckle is a symbol of the gift of the Divine Presence (and Presents) in my life. (See “A Love Story Renewed,” *The Vital Force*, 2003, Volume 20, No. 3, pg. 23.) The gift of this retreat for me clearly is the conviction of “Being enveloped in the fragrance of the wild passionate love of the Divine essence in an Eternal Embrace.”

I am deeply grateful for this gift of silence and for the gift of T'ai Chi Chih practice, which brings into balance all the opposites that are part of this human struggle. To bring balance within and into life. May we each discover and deepen that balance in our practice and in our lives.

## Changes in SEIJAKU Teacher Accreditation

By PAM TOWNE, OCEANSIDE, CA

**S**EIJAKU IS A JAPANESE WORD meaning “stillness in the midst of activity.” This describes the experience resulting from the practice of Seijaku, the advanced form of T'ai Chi Chih. One additional principle, simple yet quite powerful, is added internally to T'ai Chi Chih practice, which greatly strengthens the flow of Chi...and the resulting benefits!

Seijaku is a valuable practice that Justin has originated and given to T'ai Chi Chih (TCC) teachers for their own evolution and to share with their advanced TCC students. He has said, “For those who've experienced the power of TCC, Seijaku has many times the power of TCC.” Justin first taught Seijaku to a group of TCC teachers in Menlo Park, California in November 1986 and accredited them to teach Seijaku during a 3-day course. This has been the format ever since for accrediting Seijaku teachers.

At the Seijaku Renewal in Albuquerque in November 2006, only 2 of the 10 Seijaku teachers present were actually teaching Seijaku, and one was the trainer! Unfortunately this has become typical. After just three days exposure to Seijaku, teachers are not prepared, nor do they feel confident, to teach it.

Before TCC teacher candidates attend a Teacher Training, they are required to know TCC well and have practiced it for at least one year (and preferably two). It also makes sense for TCC teachers to know Seijaku and to have practiced it regularly for a period of time before attending a Seijaku Teacher Training.

To insure that Seijaku continues to be available for TCC teachers and advanced students, and that accredited Seijaku teachers are well prepared to teach, Justin Stone, the originator of T'ai Chi Chih and Seijaku, approved the following changes in the requirements for Seijaku accreditation:

A TCC teacher will be required to have learned and practiced Seijaku for at least six months before attending a Seijaku

Teacher Training and have worked with Justin's Seijaku DVD. Students can learn Seijaku from any accredited Seijaku teacher.

These changes will go into effect after the Seijaku Teacher Training in New Jersey (August 13-15, 2007). This will be the last Seijaku training that TCC teachers can attend without already knowing Seijaku.

To support Seijaku teachers in developing and updating their Seijaku skills, two kinds of Seijaku courses will be offered by the Seijaku Teacher Trainer in the future:

**Seijaku Teacher Training** – for TCC teachers, who have been practicing Seijaku at least six months and have worked with Justin's DVD and an accredited Seijaku teacher.

**Seijaku Renewal** – for both Seijaku teachers and students to deepen their practice and understanding.

If you are a Seijaku teacher and would like to host either of these courses in your area, please contact me, the Seijaku Teacher Trainer.

If you want to learn Seijaku, consult the Teachers' Directory or the “Seijaku” area of the website [www.taichichih.org](http://www.taichichih.org) for active accredited Seijaku teachers. If there none are listed in your area, contact me. Also, consider ordering Justin's Seijaku DVD from a local teacher or Good Karma Publishing, Inc.



## Checking Our Foundation

By SANDY MCALISTER, HAYWARD, CA

**E**VEN WITH A CONTINUING CLASS, it's good to go back to basics. The following exercise can be done at the beginning of class and then it can be reinforced by following it with a full practice. Work on the front and back weight shift by focusing on keeping the toes and heels down until they need to rise or release from the ground. Attention is focused on the time in between the release of the toes and heels. Notice how long you can continue to move, shifting the weight, while still keeping the feet flat on the ground. This is the key point of this exercise. It is more a gliding movement than a rocking movement. Then notice that it is the last bit of weight shift that brings the toes or heels up. We do not need to lift them. It is important that the toes and heels come off the ground *with* the end of the weight shift – and not after the weight shift is finished.

This exercise accomplishes many things:

1. Leaving the back heel down longer encourages the back knee to straighten.
2. The feet stay in contact with the floor longer, thereby assisting balance and gaining a deeper grounding.
3. It releases tension in front ankle for those students who tend to lift the front foot too high.
4. It brings greater awareness to the weight shift and to the evenness in timing.

### GENERAL TEACHING TIP

Let your words be one step ahead of your doing. Students need to hear the instruction and then have time to assimilate it in order to follow the instructions. If we are telling them what to do as we simultaneously do it, then they will be one step behind. They are still trying to process words into movement.

## Called by the Chi BY SUE BITNEY, RICHFIELD, MN

**I** KNOW HOW MY STUDENT FEELS. I, too, was called by T'ai Chi Chih five years ago.

Outside the Nokomis Community Center, where I teach T'ai Chi Chih in Minneapolis, a lighted sign advertises various events they offer. One staff member thought I needed more students, so he took it upon himself to light the sign: "Enrich yourself. Take a class. T'ai Chi Chih."

Since only one person enrolled for the 6:00pm beginner class, the park had to cancel it. But I still had plenty of intermediate students who were arriving for a 7:30pm class. When I arrived to teach the intermediate group later that evening, a staff person informed me that a woman, Carol, had been waiting to talk with me about the beginning class. Carol said she'd been driving by for days, seeing the sign and thinking that she should come and ask what T'ai

When  
T'ai Chi  
Chih  
called,  
she  
listened.

Chi Chih was. But she hadn't stopped. But on this particular night, Carol felt an overwhelming urge to come in. I told her about T'ai Chi Chih and invited her to see T'ai Chi Chih in action. Carol watched the intermediate students. We went through some movements and then had a full practice in a circle. Carol joined us, tried everything we did, and asked if she could come back the following week. The other students applauded Carol for her courage.

Carol still comes to this class every week. And I meet with her afterwards for individual instruction. Carol says she loves T'ai Chi Chih and really feels she was called to the practice. She *had* noticed T'ai Chi Chih in the parks booklet of classes being offered in the fall and winter. But when it was advertised on the sign, she accepted the notice as a "sign" that it was the right time for her. This time, when T'ai Chi Chih called, she listened. And she is so glad that she did.

## T'ai Chi Chih Teachers and Teh

BY SR. ANTONIA COOPER, OSF, NORTH PLAINFIELD, NJ

**T**HE REASON JUSTIN never initiated a recertification policy is because TCC is based solely on *teh* – the inner sincerity of the teacher.

A T'ai Chi Chih teacher who recently moved to Florida from the Northeast was asked by the local YMCA for her recertification paper when she applied to teach TCC there. Unlike yoga or Pilates instructors, though, TCC teachers are not required to recertify, she explained. The staff person at the Y then asked for the organization's contact information, and the teacher explained that TCC is not an organization.

In reflecting on this, I began to realize how much trust Justin has placed in each TCC teacher by not requiring recertification. Instead, ideally, *teh* leads us to find ways to continually improve our practice.

**Continual Education:** Although it's not required, a conscientious teacher will continue to refine his or her form by attending a conference, teacher training, intensive, renewal, retreat, or workshop. *Teh*, or inner sincerity, motivates teachers to remain in contact with the TCC community.

**Teach TCC Correctly:** TCC's 19 movements and one pose have been passed to us through Justin's teachings. We have both the DVD and Photo Text resources to study the principles, philosophy and, most

How much  
trust  
Justin  
has placed  
in each  
TCC teacher.

importantly, "how to move."

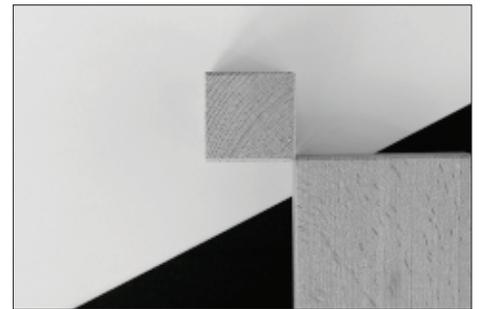
To teach the form well, teachers must demonstrate it well. Students, as we know, copy every move of the teacher – good, bad or indifferent, and that includes bad habits that may have developed over the years.

**Practice, Practice, Practice:** Be faithful to your own practice.

**Make Good Use of Resources:** I invite every teacher to attend at least one major event a year. Partial scholarships are offered for the annual Teachers Conference, if needed. It would be an honor to have every teacher attend. If it's not possible, try to attend an event in your area. If no event is offered, speak with Pam, Sandy or me about possibilities. Always begin small and watch it grow!

In the near future we will undoubtedly receive calls from institutions and groups requesting qualified teachers. My great concern is that some teachers have not attended programs or kept up with practice refinements over the years. I request that teachers keep a record of their own attendance at conferences, accreditations, intensives, retreats, workshops, and renewals to better track their connection to the TCC community and the practice.

**Remember:** There is no TCC re-certification. There is only *teh* – inner sincerity.



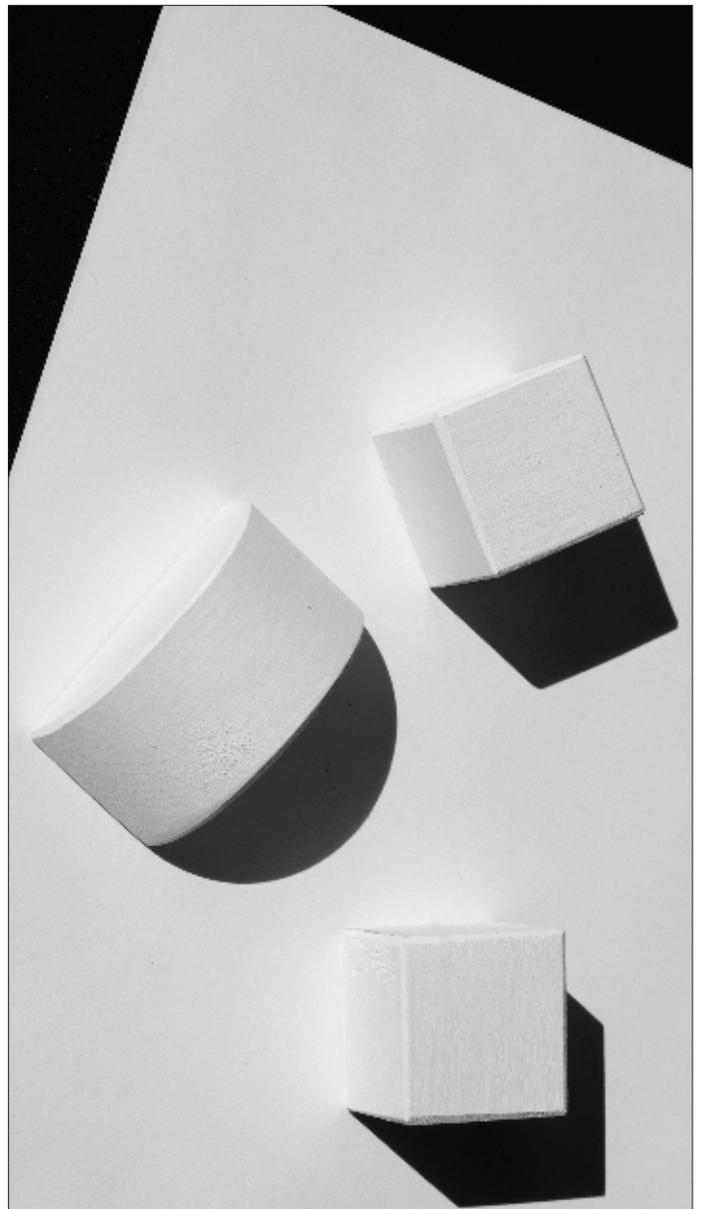
## What You Plant Grows BY CARMEN BROCKLEHURST, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

**J**USTIN HAS OFTEN SAID that these are the beginning days of T'ai Chi Chih. Without preaching, he has given us some very important guidelines: Keep the movements pure. (The way he does the movements on his DVD is the gold standard. Is that something he needs to say?) We are not a subset of T'ai Chi Ch'uan for the simple reasons that we are not a martial art and our movements reflect an inner direction rather than outer. T'ai Chi Chih is not an exercise and yet it is the best exercise we can do. T'ai Chi Chih is not medicine, but if we come into balance through the movements, which will happen, we will have good health. T'ai Chi Chih allows us to share a way to balance and circulate the *Chi*, the Vital Force, but it is not for us to become wealthy, famous, or powerful. These things may come but this is not the purpose of T'ai Chi Chih.

It is on these simple but powerful thoughts that a new dynamic form (a form that has helped thousands) has been built. If Justin had only thought about what was good for himself, T'ai Chi Chih would never have grown the way it has. There were many times that it would have helped Justin to have a little more money, and as if to test him, money was offered, but he didn't accept it. T'ai Chi Chih has grown because Justin was (and is) willing to think beyond what was (and is) immediately good for himself. Going beyond himself opened his Self and the whole movement to a growth that is exponential. The work is now ours to continue. Can and will we think globally rather than provincially? We must because it is our destiny. Short term and short sighted are not words for T'ai Chi Chih teachers or practitioners. Longevity and selflessness are our words.

To that end or beginning (depending on your point of view), we move forward. Keep in mind the purpose of T'ai Chi Chih and what we are trying to accomplish. I remember when I was very inspired by one of Justin's talks at a T'ai Chi Chih conference and I asked for a copy of the talk. Justin asked me what I would do with it. I thought this was a strange question. Listen to it and learn, I thought. But Justin followed it up with, "Do you think this is just for you?" In that moment I was given an incredible gift, a cosmic jolt up the side of the head that opened my mind and my heart to the bigger picture. First, I made audio copies for others to share the gift. Then it became a booklet (*Evolution Through Chi*) with the help of Connie Hyde, Carolyn Shaw, and Doug Shilson. And later, because it was of value, others helped finance the project. This is what I mean by things growing exponentially. What starts in a seemingly a small way grows from a seed into a beautiful tree with strong and far-reaching branches. This is how we learn to love and share the *Chi*.

*If Justin had only thought about what was good for himself, T'ai Chi Chih would never have grown the way it has.*



## Bird Flaps Its Wings & Six Points

BY LINDA BRAGA, CASTRO VALLEY, CA

**T**'AI CHI CHIH uses bird-like gestures in Bird Flaps Its Wings, with an emphasis on soft, flowing movements that are centered and convey a sense of stillness.

The most basic and universal form of communication is gesture. The foundation of dance, pantomime, sign language, and ritual all depend on the meaning of movements of the body.

“The delicate yet strong gestures of birds conveys more nuances of meaning than 1,000 well-chosen words.”

Key principles when teaching the movement include:

1. **SHOW BEFORE TELLING.**

Demonstrate first, only with movement so that the student's visual, kinesthetic, and emotional sensory channels can pick up all the subtleties of the movement.

2. **TEACH (OR VERBALIZE) WHILE STUDENTS ARE MOVING.**

Encourage students to move with feeling awareness, rather than thinking about a movement. Watch what students are doing so you know what points to emphasize in your teaching. Give positive feedback to the whole group.

3. **MAINTAIN GOOD VERTICAL POSTURE, ALIGNMENT, CORRECT FOOT POSITION, AND BALANCE.**

4. **EMPHASIZE SOFT WRISTS AND SOFT KNEES.**

The flow of hands (out and back) mirror the movement of the legs bending and straightening.

5. **ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO EXPLORE THIS MOVE.**

Imagine sitting on a nest, like a bird. Lower yourself carefully. Feel it. Fan your feathers, making one slow circle with the wrist. Open and center yourself. Now rise slowly.

6. **LOCATE THE T'AN T'IEN REGION.**

Have students place their palms on their lower belly, putting their thumbs in the navel, letting the fingers hang down. The diamond shape space made by the hands is the general location of the T'an T'ien, where Chi accumulates.

## Bird Flaps Its Wings & Jumping Rope

BY ANITA VESTAL, DUNDEE, FL

**I** RECENTLY INTRODUCED Bird Flaps Its Wings to a new group. After practicing a week on her own, one student asked how to remember which way to orient her hands when starting the wrist

circles. She liked this suggestion: imagine starting to jump rope with the open palms facing forward to cup around the end of the rope and circling the rope with forward movement. We'll see if that image works for her, but she nodded as if it would.



### *Editor's Note:*

Sr. Antonia reviewed these tips from teachers and hopes they will be of help.

## Bird Flaps Its Wings & Knees

BY DANIEL PIENCIAK, BRADLEY BEACH, NJ

**I**N TEACHING BIRD FLAPS ITS WINGS, I ask the students to open the angle of their feet a bit wider than their usual stance for the rest position. I find that this allows the knees to open out to the sides easier and there is a sinking into the knees so that the heels lift.

I tell them that the knees move apart as they bend, and as the knees separate out to the sides, the wrists/hands separate out to the sides as well. But the wrists stay low, and then open softly. As the knees come back together, the wrists/hands come back together with fingers pointed downward, and palms come back close together so that you can feel the polarity.

When the knees bend, the torso sinks, and the weight rolls forward into the balls of the feet, with the heels lightening. When the knees straighten, the torso rises and we rest upon flat feet once again.

I ask them to imagine balancing a small paper cup of water on top of their heads, so that they do not lean forward into the movement when the knees bend. I find that older people, especially, tend to do this.

## Beginning Bird Flaps Its Wings

By DORA DERZON, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

**W**HEN I TEACH Bird Flaps Its Wings to beginning students, it's always the second movement that they learn. Therefore, this movement becomes the real transition, the deep dive, into working with the Cosmic Rhythm.

After learning and practicing Rocking Motion, the students have stirred the Chi, perhaps for the first time, and feel "different" and feel "something." Some are slightly alarmed; some are feeling great. Almost all are relieved to finish. The first, awkward-feeling movement is over; and, surely, the next one will be easier now that the first one has been practiced.

When I say, "The next movement is Bird Flaps Its Wings, and it is done very differently than the one we just learned..." I can see their eyes widen just slightly. I know that they are thinking, "I'll *never* get this stuff!"

Ahhh, but I know that they can!

Without any words and in an instant I show them the way and invite them to "play with the Sages."

From here, we move on to "start with your feet in a 'V' and your body upright and relaxed."



## General Teaching Tips

COMPILED BY DORENE KRAUSE, MIDLAND PARK, NJ From the New Jersey Teachers Retreat in April 2007

### PREPARE TO MOVE.

S (sink, sit on one leg), H (hands move),  
H (heel is placed on the floor)

### FLOWING FROM THE CENTER MUST BEGIN WITH GOOD POSTURE.

### VISUALS.

The pelvic area is a basin. As you sink and prepare to move, it fills with water. Move forward and back without spilling the water. Feel the heaviness in the lower body. Move forward as if someone were gently tugging a rope attached to your belt buckle.

### PROPER YINNING/YANGING.

Experience the expansion (yang) and contraction (yin) with each weight shift.

### TRY THIS.

Place your hands above and below the waist, with your palms facing the body and your hands touching. Move forward

from the T'an T'ien. There is an expansion (yang) with a pelvic tilt and a slight separation between the hands. Move back from the T'an T'ien. The hands come back together. There is contraction (yin).

### FOCUS ON THE SOLES OF THE FEET.

For awareness, massage the bottoms of the feet before moving. Envision energy traveling from the top of the head down to the soles of the feet. Feel yourself grounded. Feel four coins on the soles of the feet, with weight evenly distributed.

### CIRCULARITY.

Energy is circular in our bodies and in the universe.

### POLARITY.

You can *feel* polarity in many movements. There is a strong polarity in Daughter on the Mountaintop and Daughter in the Valley – at the top of the mountain and down in the valley [and continually through the course of the movement]. Feel the polarity as the palms pass each other in the "taffy movements," when the hands form a ball. Bird Flaps its Wings begins with the palms facing each other; they slowly return to this polarity.

### SOFTNESS & CONTINUITY.

Within the softness there is strength in the form. If there's too much softness, the form disappears and the movement is empty. Move as if you're in Italy cooking pasta – *al dente* – firm yet tender. Soft wrists do most of the movement. Movements should flow – make a patient transition.

**Editor's Note:** The most important resource for T'ai Chi Chih teaching tips comes straight from Justin Stone. Period.

Watch and listen to him on his instructional DVD. And read about and inspect his movements in the Photo Textbook.

Both are available from Good Karma Publishing. His words are also available in the essential booklet, *T'ai Chi Chih Teaching Tips*, available through the New Mexico T'ai Chi Chih Association for a small fee ([www.taichichihassociation.org](http://www.taichichihassociation.org) and 505-299-2095.)

# Justin Stone Speaks on T'ai Chi Chih! Joy Thru Movement

COMPILED BY PAULINE QUIMSON-TONG, CHAMA, NM

What is this *Chi* – which seems to be the most important and best kept secret of life?  
Nobody has described it better than the Chinese sage Lao Tzu, who 2500 years ago said,  
“There is a thing, confusedly formed, born before heaven and earth.  
Silent and void, it stands alone and does not change. It goes round and round and does not weary.  
It is capable of being the mother of the world. I know not its name, so I call it The Way.”  
Could there be a better description of this cosmic force?

The quality of the *Prana*, which the Chinese call *Chi*, must be changed. The vital force that flows through you, sometimes called the intrinsic energy, must be helped to flow freely and to be balanced. It is this energy that makes you what you are. And when it circulates without hindrance, there is a feeling of well-being.

Words will not do it, no matter how reassuring or how clever. Passive listening, as in hearing well-meaning sermons, is a waste of time, no matter how good the speaker makes you feel and how clever his theories. It takes actual practice. You must do it yourself.

The heart-mind is influenced by the *Chi*, and the *Chi* is influenced by what we think and feel.  
That is, the workings of the mind.  
Reciprocal character of mind and *Chi* means that a certain type of mind or mental activity is invariably accompanied by *Chi* of corresponding character.

If you can understand that everything physical  
is crystallization of the spiritual state,  
then it will be easy to comprehend  
the beautiful passage from the Lotus Sutra that says,  
“From the state of emptiness,  
each man’s body is a body pervading the universe.  
His voice is a voice filling the universe.  
His life is a life which is without limit.”

Who is capable of embracing this?  
The four seasons follow each other in succession.  
The sun and the moon shine constantly.  
Truth suffers no fundamental alteration and the great T'ai Chi is not confined to a single place.  
Therefore, free yourself to yield to whatever happens to you.  
Rise and fall with it, and you may be simultaneously a common man and a sage.

T'ai Chi Chih is inner oriented. It is not a performance or a dance.

From *Justin Stone Speaks on T'ai Chi Chih*, ©2006  
Available on CD from Good Karma Publishing

# T'ai Chi Chih & its Teachers

By JUSTIN STONE

[REPRINTED FROM *THE VITAL FORCE*, MARCH 1999]

...It is important for teachers to teach TCC correctly, for it must be done properly to get the maximum benefits. The softness, circularity, and polarity are all-important. If a teacher does not have an understanding of this, then it would be good for that teacher to audit several classes and to ask questions. Do not let yourself be a poor teacher, just scraping along in order to earn a little money. This certainly is not in accord with *TEH* (power of inner sincerity). Too, when a teacher sends a candidate to a teacher's training course, it is expected that the candidate perform and understand what TCC stands for.

At 82\* years of age I find that each new period in my life is better than the previous one. Naturally, I am grateful, and much of the gratitude is to TCC.

The great treasure of TCC lies in the sincere and capable teachers. TCC's brilliant future depends upon them. This is why I have never taken a cent from a teacher; what I want from them is not money. When I see hospitals, prisons, senior citizen clubs, etc. latching onto TCC, that is a great reward. It is nice to see people entering the Cosmic Rhythm by learning and doing TCC.

*\*Justin turned 90 in 2006. Justin will celebrate his 91st birthday this November. See the Community Calendar section for more information.*



### *Editor's Note:*

Many of you have said you want "more Justin" in the newsletter.

In recognition of the fact that many subscribers are new(ish), and that Justin has written compelling articles for *The Vital Force* since its inception, *The Vital Force* will be reprinting an older article for each of our newer editions.

Besides, some things are timeless.

# Musicians Making Better Music with TCC

By ELAINE PETERSON, STARKVILLE, MS

**M**USIC PERFORMANCE driven from low and deep within the body tends to be more expressive, beautiful, and powerful. Wind players strive to breathe and support their air from the lower abdominals. The higher singers go in their range, the more centered their grounding needs to be if they want to have a full, rich, supported sound. Pianists sink into the keys not with the arms and hands alone, but with their whole weight behind what they do. Great music doesn't come from simply twiddling fingers, buzzing lips, or tightening vocal chords (though we tend to focus on these when learning technique.) Great music comes from deep within us. It is a whole-body experience. T'ai Chi Chih trains us to move from that center and put our mental focus there. When I see students find that depth, physically, they are able to put more grace, technical control, and ownership into their music.

Thanks to a small grant from Sigma Alpha Iota (a national music fraternity for women), I was able to travel to California in January for a T'ai Chi Chih Teacher's Training. Since then, I have given a workshop for the SAI chapter and our music majors at Mississippi State University (where I am a music professor); have presented a clinic at the Music Teacher's National Association Collaborative Conference in Toronto, Ontario in March; and have begun teaching a course and leading weekly practice sessions for music students. T'ai Chi Chih has been very well received by these groups. The clinic in Toronto was to a packed room; people outside the door were trying to get in. It was very exciting to see music teachers from all over North America so interested in T'ai Chi Chih!

*Music and T'ai Chi Chih are both moving meditations.*

The immediate physical benefits of T'ai Chi Chih are fairly clear. Many musicians suffer from neck, shoulder, back, and hand problems that arise with the hours of practice they must devote to their craft. Good posture and alignment can so easily be forgotten when we try to accommodate a musical instrument or unnatural singing stance. Not only is good alignment necessary for our general

health, but also for our music-making. If we can alleviate unnecessary tension and poor body carriage, our tonal quality and musicality improve. We have more endurance because we are more efficient.

We have better stage presence because of the way we carry ourselves and perform. Technical passages become easier as our moves become more fluid.

Now we get to the really important benefit of T'ai Chi Chih for musicians: the mental focus that is needed to perform at our best. The simple, repetitive moves of T'ai Chi Chih work really well to bring mental attention to the activity at hand. Music and T'ai Chi Chih are both moving meditations. Musicians have all had those fleeting moments, during a performance, when they suddenly realize that – just now – only the music existed, and no other thoughts were in the way. When this happens, we aren't zoned out or on autopilot. We aren't worrying about a difficult passage coming up, or a missed note, or the laundry, or any of those other things that invade our minds when we are trying to focus. The Self slips away

and we are completely, singularly aware of the music we were making. Meditation is like a good performance – when we are completely present at that given moment, not thinking of the future or past. Remaining focused when performing is difficult, but it makes for very satisfying music.

We don't make mistakes when we are fully present. We are calm and draw in the audience. We no longer have stage fright because the only thing that exists is *now*. (It's only when we worry about the mistakes that we *might* make that we become nervous.) T'ai Chi Chih calms down distracting thoughts and can bring one to a place of mental focus easily and quickly. The more we experience that type

of mental focus, the easier it becomes to access when it really counts. I like using T'ai Chi Chih with musicians because it is active. The mental awareness of self and one's surroundings is achievable in the midst of coordinated movement, which is so close to what we do in music. Be in the moment. Move from the

center. Let go of tension. These are some of the things that T'ai Chi Chih brings to my teaching tool bag.

*Musicians suddenly realize that – just now – only the music existed.*



# Bird Flaps Its Wings Teaches *Me* About Being – Part 2

By MARIE A. MYSZKIER, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

**H**OW PRECIOUS this movement is to me. Bird Flaps its Wings set me free, opened me up to the beauty of myself, grounded me, and led me into a life journey of spiritual development.

How can one movement do so much? The name itself leads one to the mental vision of a bird – no matter what size – flapping its wings. The polished movement has a similar substance and form. The bird's beauty and strength flows gracefully out through the wings and down through the body, as is done in the movement.

I fell in love with this movement the first time it was taught to me. The graceful

movement of the arms and hands floating slightly upward were freeing. I felt like a elegant heron lifting off from the ground. Strong yet soft – polished yet clown-like. And those wrist circles – loved those wrist circles. I could never figure out why people had difficulty with wrist circles – it just seemed to catch right on with that part of the movement. When I over analyze it, that's when I run into problems. Bird Flaps its Wings is one of those movements you don't want to overanalyze. Just do it! (Does that sound familiar?) Focus on the flow and the energy circulating through the body. That's when you begin to realize the joy and awesomeness of Bird Flaps its Wings.

To change course, my plant friend, "Bird" (see Part 1 which follows and introduces our relationship), has sprouted its 19th leaf this year. He is doing well and has been transplanted into the largest pot I could find. He has had several additional grounding roots take hold and, as of this writing, is working on sprouting another leaf and grounding root. So that would take him to 19 movements and close to completing his pose. The plant continues to amaze me. We both continue to grow and realize that sometimes it's just best to be firmly planted. And just be.

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## Bird Flaps Its Wings – Part 1

ORIGINALLY WRITTEN IN SEPTEMBER 2005

**D**URING THE T'AI CHI CHIH TEACHER'S CONFERENCE in Albuquerque [in 2005], it became apparent that not everyone was aware of the New Mexico Center's "Bird Flaps His Wings." Yes, people knew it was a movement, but people most did not know the plant I so fondly call "Bird." So I thought I would write about Bird and our escapades.

I first met Bird at my first class at the New Mexico T'ai Chi Chih Center in January 2000. Bird had only three leaves and was in a small pot. "The plant looks somewhat forlorn," I thought. He needs a friend. Over the course of time when I came to class, I would say a mental "hello" to Bird Flaps His Wings. It wasn't until my intermediate class that I named the plant. The leaves flowed out like the palms of my hands during the Bird Flaps His Wings movement I thought – hmmm – I'll call my plant friend "Bird."

Somewhere during my T'ai Chi Chih courses I took Bird home to re-pot him because he seemed to be getting too big for his pot. As he grew up a size, I went through an intermediate class and Seijaku. I continued my practice and classes. And Bird needed to be repotted again. Somewhere along the way – while taking teacher prep classes – Bird started to sprout leaves and grounding roots.

It wasn't until my teacher training that enlightenment came. My plant friend, Bird, had sprouted a leaf each year of my T'ai Chi Chih training. By 2004, four years after first walking into the T'ai Chi

Chih Center, Bird blossomed four leaves and was grounding himself with air roots. "What an awesome thing," I thought, "as Bird has grown and grounded, so have I." Bird, then with seven new leaves, was a presenter during my T'ai Chi Chih Teacher presentation. And after becoming a teacher I have taken him "on the road" for T'ai Chi Chih demonstrations. During our road time together, Bird blossomed his eight leaf.

My first T'ai Chi Chih Teacher's Conference was an awesome experience. Meeting new people, reuniting with classmates and fine-tuning movements was energizing and calming. During the conference Bird blossoms his ninth leaf. Oh, I thought, the significance of nine.

Since the conference I have been busy with life. T'ai Chi Chih practices continue and Bird is blossoming his tenth leaf. I'm looking for a new pot for my friend as he's starting to outgrow his pot. Our life continues to grow and expand. T'ai Chi Chih has allowed us both to blossom and, as we continue our journey together, I enjoy watching and experiencing the plant and the human linked together by T'ai Chi Chih!

Bird  
Blossoms  
Life's Journeys  
Takes Us  
Home

## T'ai Chi Chih Airport Practice

BY MICHAEL S. ISAACS, SAN FRANCISCO, CA

**W**AITING IN THE AIRPORT and flying can be a good time to do T'ai Chi Chih practice. Like me, perhaps you don't have time to do your daily practice the day of the flight. You're too busy packing and preparing for the trip. Then there's the jet lag. And do you have moments of anxiety and boredom waiting for the plane to board and take off? Wouldn't this be a splendid time to experience serenity and joy thru movement?

When I first started doing selected movements, I was a bit shy and self-conscious. So I searched out the most inconspicuous places in the waiting area. But it seemed like no one really looked or cared about what I was doing anyway. I guess they were as preoccupied, restless, and anxious as I! So I became bolder and started to expand my turf to more populated areas. In these denser spots, I eliminated from my repertoire Six Healing Sounds, Joyous Breath, and Light at the Top of the Head / Light at the Temple to lower the risk of someone questioning my sanity.

If you feel vulnerable doing standing movements in a busy public place, consider doing them sitting. Lastly, you can always visualize T'ai Chi Chih. This can be particularly auspicious while sitting in a cramped airplane seat. Visualizing the movements being done outdoors in Nature can be a wonderful antidote to the limiting space of the plane.

So give it a try. Remember: whether you are sitting, standing, or up in the air, the *Chi* remains grounded in the soles of your feet!



## Doing TCC in the "Strangest" Places

BY PETE GREGORY, CROWN POINT, IN

*The wise student hears of the Tao and practices it diligently.  
The average student hears of the Tao and gives it thought now and again.  
The foolish student hears of the Tao and laughs aloud.  
If there were no laughter, the Tao would not be what it is.*

— TAO TE CHING, BY LAO TSU, VERSE 41,  
AS TRANSLATED BY GIA-FU FENG AND JANE ENGLISH.

### THE DAUGHTERS WITHIN THE PLAY

**I**WORK AS A WAITER and live in a small Indiana town near Chicago. Two years ago I thought it would be fun to practice outside the old courthouse in the town square. Towards the end of my practice, three squad cars pulled up quickly from different angles, and three officers approached me with a firm cadence in their step. They'd received a complaint that I was disrupting the flow of traffic with my ... "We're not sure what it is you're doin', but ya can't do it here... We'll clear your name with headquarters and you can go home. O.K."

That night at work, a familiar customer asked me what was new and exciting, so I shared my little ordeal from my morning practice. His eyes lit up. "You're an instructor?" "It turns out the man is the head of a program called Forensic Diversion Residential Treatment. It puts chronic offenders with chronic addictions into 90-day intensives to try and break both cycles of behavior. Since then, I have volunteered my services once a week for nearly two years.

Cut to present day: I thought I'd try again with a public display of TCC. I went out at sunrise to an empty lot near a Catholic

church/school. I was resting between the "Daughter" movements, when yep... you guessed it, squad cars appeared again. One of the parents dropping off a child at the school was just being vigilant in light of a recent massacre. "Would you please go home. People don't want anything unfortunate to happen to their daughters." I told them I understood, came home, and started my practice again.

I'm waiting for the priest of the nearby church to come in for dinner and ask me what's new.

## As We Ebb & Flow

BY STEPHEN THOMPSON, TUPELO, MS

**A**S WE MOVE THROUGH our daily practice, we shift our weight, we yin and yang, we ebb and flow, we activate the Vital Force. But deep down *Chi* remains constant. There is tranquility in the midst of movement. As we shift and change throughout our practice, there is motion and there is stillness. But when we anchor ourselves in the truth of our being, that core of *Chi* within us, we embrace every new day as it comes, knowing that we are calmly rooted in the moment and free of unnecessary expectations.

Like actors on the world stage, our 20 movements are like costumes we inhabit and then shed. Each movement rolls into the next, into the next, into the next...giving us seemingly infinite perspectives through which to understand ourselves and our universe. We might move through resistance as we shift from side to side; move through joy as we flow in and out; move ever deeper into the *Chi* as we weave through the patterns of our practice.

In those moments when we immerse fully into our practice, we merge *Chi* with *Chi*. From that perspective each subtle modification can be an adventure, a celebration, and a chance to find new balance.

## Progress Report: The UCLA Study

BY DIANA WRIGHT, FOUNTAIN VALLEY, CA

**D**R. JENNIFER PIKE is the principle investigator on this ongoing University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) study. Dr. Pike was kind enough to be interviewed about the study we just completed so that the TCC community could stay current with the UCLA studies. T'ai Chi Chih instructor Roberta Taggart started this study with Dr. Pike and I joined when Roberta moved to Oregon.

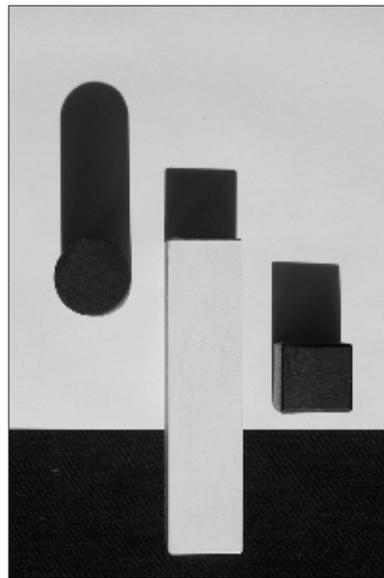
The study entitled, "CAM Interventions in Rheumatoid Arthritis," was supported by grants from the National Centers for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (a division of the National Institutes of Health) and the Cousins Center for Psychoneuroimmunology.

CONTINUED ON P. 21

## Celebration Of Justin's Life & Work

BY GINNY MORGAN, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Summer is passing, and it's registration time for the "Celebration of Life" on November 17, 2007 in Albuquerque. Justin's 91st birthday celebration – for teachers and students – begins at 8:00am with a full practice and includes a talk by Justin, movement input and refinement, and some very special surprises highlighting the life and work of TCC's originator. (Remember, Justin is also a painter, musician, poet, and more.) This is a once-in-a-lifetime event you won't want to miss! Lunch will be on your own, and we will close with a full practice. Send a \$50 registration fee (made payable to the TCC Association) to the TCC Center, 3107 Eubank NE, Suite #19, Albuquerque, NM 87111 On the check, state, "For the Nov. 17th Celebration". Space is limited, so don't wait. For questions, contact Ann at ruthergary@aol.com. After this special event, we will gather at the Center at 6:30pm for the traditional Justin Stone birthday potluck. Families and friends are most certainly welcome.



## Don't Miss an Opportunity to Find Your Students

BY JUDY HENDRICKS, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

**I**T WAS THE FIRST DAY of my child-parent T'ai Chi Chih class and I was sitting in an empty room. Rather than be discouraged and depressed about the possibility of canceling the class, I was determined to find students. I felt very positive knowing that everyone seemed to be seeking what I had to offer. I just had to find them. The next day at work I began inviting all my co-workers to my class. They had all heard me mention TCC and the great benefits I had received. I was surprised that *all* five co-workers said they were planning to attend my class. I was grateful I didn't give up too easily.

CONTINUED ON P. 21

## My First Class as a Teacher

BY TONY JOHANSEN, SANTA BARBARA, CA

**I**TAUGHT MY FIRST T'AI CHI CHIH CLASS on April 19th. And all morning I was filled with that "first time" feeling – that sense of not knowing what was coming. It didn't take the form of nervousness, but more I was resting in the fact that I had worked so hard and been given so much in preparation for this that I truly had a sense of being *done* rather than *doing*. I felt ready.

*I  
felt  
ready.*

My class consisted of seven people living with mental illness and four counselors. I had given five mini-presentations for different groups within the mental health agency and, while I didn't say much during the demos, I did have them try the moves with me. Each time, we all experienced the energy and stillness that is possible.

CONTINUED ON P. 21

## Changes After the Third Class

By Patty Friddle, Lake Charles, LA

**M**Y EXPERIENCE with T'ai Chi Chih has been awesome. When I first started the classes, my instructor, Caroline Guillott, told me that most people experience some type of change in their lives, whether emotional or physical. I did not believe her until the third class. For most of my life, I have been somewhat of a counselor to everyone around me, never talking much about how I felt, but willingly helping others. I began to carry the burdens of my family, friends, and co-workers until I started T'ai Chi Chih classes. After practicing for four weeks, my attitude began to change. I still would listen to people's problems, but I wouldn't carry them home with me. My best friend said that I was becoming mean and I seemed like I didn't care – which, of course, wasn't the truth. But I was becoming more aware that I should keep a little energy for myself and not be so ready to give it *all* away. T'ai Chi Chih has certainly done me a world of good. My instructor is very patient and she makes learning very simple and enjoyable. I feel that the T'ai Chi Chih movements are life-long.



## A Life Altering Experience

By Connie Stevens, Millersville, MD

**I** NEEDED TO FULFILL my Physical Education credit, so I thumbed through the UMBC [University of Maryland Baltimore County] catalog. The first class that caught my eye was a T'ai Chi Chih course. The description entailed promoting awareness and physical fitness of the mind-body-spirit connection. As a Visual and Performing Arts major, I am accustomed and encouraged to experience new endeavors in my educational journey. However, what I was about to experience would be more than I had ever imagined.

A few days prior to the class beginning, I underwent laser eye surgery because I was legally blind. I knew the recovery time would be prolonged and extensive due to the severity of my case. The first day of class I arrived early to introduce myself to the instructor, Ms. Sirkis, and inform her of my condition. When she spoke, I immediately became calm, relaxed, and comfortable. I knew this would be a wonderful experience. As class began the energy that Ms. Sirkis exuded was very apparent. My classmates seemed receptive to her engaging teaching style and to the continuity of the T'ai Chi Chih movements. As I left class that evening I felt noticeably different. It was a good feeling, but somewhat out of the ordinary.

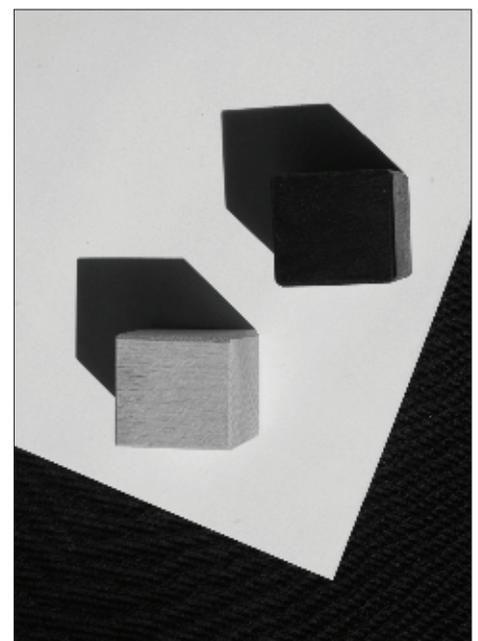
Known side effects of laser surgery include severely dry eyes and a chance to reach 20/20 eyesight over a six-week period. I arrived for my weekly post-op appointment with my ophthalmologist. And as I went through a sequence of tests, my doctor had a confused yet astonished look upon her face. She informed me that my sight in each eye was better than 20/20. The dry patches were completely gone. In her 30 years of practice and conducted research studies, she had never seen a patient recover at such a rapid rate. I informed her

of my recent enrollment in the T'ai Chi Chih course. She appeared skeptical, however, the prognosis was great and I was happy.

I continually made great strides in recovery after surgery. My ophthalmologist is still puzzled by the quick mending of my eyes. I am sad the class ended, but I am forever grateful for the lasting impression T'ai Chi Chih has had on me. This course has not only proven beneficial, but actually life altering.

As Justin Stone says, "Students who realize that practice is absolutely necessary often experience profound changes during the eight week beginning course." I have experienced the vital force and feel that T'ai Chi Chih movements are necessary to lead a healthy and balanced life. I am hopeful that this will provoke at least one person to branch out and experience the wonderful healing powers of T'ai Chi Chih.

*As I left class that evening  
I felt noticeably different.  
It was a good feeling,  
but somewhat out of  
the ordinary.*



# A Deeper Experience of T'ai Chi Chih

Workshop in Warrenville, IL June 1-3

By ANN MARIE WYRSCH, ST. CHARLES, MO

**T**O SET THE STAGE: I have been blessed with very good teachers, sporadically used the instructional DVD, and I had been practicing alone for some time. I was aware of the need for renewal and reconnection with the community. From beginning to end, I experienced the "effort of no effort!" Everything fell into place.

*If we examine it closely, we find awareness is the root of T'ai Chi Chih, which is essentially inner-oriented.*

Sr. Antonia began her brief teachings with short quotations from Justin Stone's *Spiritual Odyssey*. From her sharing, my understanding of the principles and teachings deepened. The first evening she read from Justin's book: "If we examine it closely, we find awareness is the root of T'ai Chi Chih, which is essentially inner-oriented."

We started the next morning with a full practice outdoors. WOW – "with out words." Sr. Antonia not only taught with words, but she

embodied the essence of T'ai Chi Chih. For me, "aha" moments happened at the first practice and continued throughout the weekend. I learned as much by seeing as I did by listening.

At one point, while Sr. Antonia was teaching Anchor Taffy, First Variation, I got completely discombobulated. What a blessing! I learned again with "beginner's mind." Practicing at home, I became aware that I learned at least one correction for each movement. It will take a while to integrate these refinements.

I experienced an embodied sense of the essence of T'ai Chi Chih. And Sr. Antonia's gentle reminders, about moving from the T'an T'ien and focusing on the soles of the feet at the gentle conclusion, were gradually etched in my heart. I now repeat them when I practice.

Each of the participating students and teachers contributed significantly. By the end of the first full practice, we experienced a sense of unity, and it was enriched with each practice. I came home filled with rekindled gratitude!



# Health Hurdles Clearing

By PAM KAMHOLZ, LAKE VILLA, IL

**O**N MARCH 31, 1990, I suffered a severe closed head injury. I lost cognitive functions and balance, and I suffered from severe headaches, memory loss, and intense mood swings. These injuries also threw my chemicals off balance and have caused bones to disintegrate.

*I feel energized, light, and ready to take on life.*

After 12 knee surgeries, one shoulder operation, and two back surgeries, I needed to do something to help me heal my body, mind, and spirit. My neuropsychiatrist, Dr. T'so, is from China and believes in the benefits of T'ai Chi. When he suggested I take a T'ai Chi class, I looked around and found T'ai Chi Chih.

When I first started to learn T'ai Chi Chih, I tipped over a lot and my feet couldn't get in the proper place for the resting pose. I wasn't even able to turn my hips, as my back is fused and I was told I would never bend over again.

Now that the 16-week course is finished, I can move my hips and touch the floor with the palms of my hands. My feet cannot get into the proper position for resting pose, and I still tip over once in a while, but I can right myself.

I don't seem to get mod swings or headaches as badly as I did before. I feel better about myself. Instead of thinking about all the damage done, I look for the positive things in life.

I'm taking T'ai Chi Chih again with the same instructor and some of the same students. Even when my mind can't think right and the moves are not as smooth as other times, it seems as if the Chi is still flowing. When I leave, I feel energized, light, and ready to take on life.

My overall health has improved. My cholesterol and blood pressure are now in the normal range. My panic attacks are happening less frequently and I haven't had any seizures in quite a while.

Thank you Justin Stone and my teacher (and friend), Donna McElhose.

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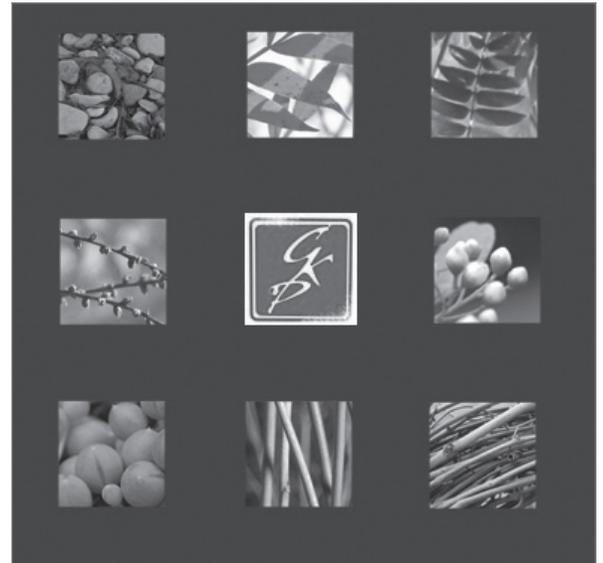
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## The Lighter Side

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### The Lighter Side BY SHARON SIRKIS, COLUMBIA, MD

*Do you believe in coincidences?*

One morning while getting dressed for TCC class, I found myself in a dilemma over which necklace to wear. This is pretty funny in itself, since I rarely wear jewelry. I tried on a few necklaces, but I still wasn't satisfied with the same old look. I was in a playful mood and I wanted my necklace to reflect that state of mind. I came across one that I haven't worn in years – five small blue wooden parakeets dangling side by side. Perfect, I thought, as I headed out to teach.

When I arrived at the retirement community where I teach, I was informed I would be teaching in the ceramics room instead of the auditorium because of a prescheduled event. When I walked in, I heard the sound of a bird and I walked around the corner so I could see. Lo and behold, there sat a live parakeet twittering away!

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One evening I gave my UMBC college students an assignment: before the next class they were to go out and have some fun, to laugh and let go. When I came home from class that same night, I received a complimentary magazine in the mail, one I had never even heard of. It was called Family Fun.

---

I volunteer teach for the MS Day Group at Kernan Hospital in Baltimore. When I arrived at the hospital around 10:25am, I signed in and walked towards the elevator. A young man with a cart was waiting to enter the elevator as well. I didn't leave directly after class at 11:30am, which was my normal routine. I stayed an extra 15 minutes, and then headed to the elevator. When the elevator door opened, the same guy from earlier in the morning walked off! We both had a good laugh.

DON'T MISS AN OPPORTUNITY TO FIND YOUR STUDENTS  
/ CONTINUED FROM P. 17

One six-year-old boy, Nick, always shows up with a big smile on his face and announces, "I like T'ai Chi Chih. I know how to do T'ai Chi Chih!" Whenever I ask for comments his hand immediately goes up, and he says, "How old are you?" ... "I showed all the movements to my dad" ... "T'ai Chi Chih makes me feel good." Anastasia, my 7-year-old daughter, told the class that she noticed that if you do Pulling Taffy slowly, you can feel something thick between your hands, but that if you do it fast, you can't feel it.

Nick's mother said she feels calm after practice but didn't notice an increase in energy. Other students chimed in that *they* felt more energy. Next week, Nick very proudly announced, "My mom feels more energy now!"

Nick arrives early and likes to do Rocking Motion before everyone else arrives. It was his mother's idea to bring him to class and she is amazed at how much he loves it. I am so grateful that I didn't miss the opportunity to teach this wonderful class.

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MY FIRST CLASS AS A TEACHER / CONTINUED FROM P. 17

I have had some experience with this agency, both as a volunteer and a fill-in counselor, and so I knew several students. I also knew not to spend a lot of time talking – that, and a sense that 30 minutes would be about all they could handle. Well, the class lasted 45 minutes and everyone hung in until the end. I covered more moves than you might expect, making it through Daughter in the Valley. Because I couldn't expect folks to sit still for a lot of discussion, I fed them bits of information throughout the movements, always returning to the basics of moving from below the waist with softness and continuity and concentrating on the soles of the feet. Deep breathing and resting between movements were also important.

The ease and the sense of goodwill and appreciation I felt afterwards made me feel it had truly gone well. One resident, who had been in the program for years and had never participated in anything, came and sat on a bench just outside the circle of chairs. I said he was certainly welcome to sit on one of the chairs. He stayed on the bench, but when he got up to do Rocking Motion, he stood up and participated in the whole class. Miracles abound everywhere, everyday. But they are never more in evidence than when working with courageous people living with mental illness.

As for the sycamores that surrounded us, their roots run deeper than they are tall and each time our feet touch the ground, we are as grounded as they. It is only for us to be present enough to experience it, moment after moment, step after step. A wonderful way to experience that grounding is through the practice of T'ai Chi Chih.

PROGRESS REPORT: THE UCLA STUDY / CONTINUED FROM P. 17

Dr. Pike reports that this investigation is the first study of its kind to compare the effects of T'ai Chi Chih to another active treatment, relaxation therapy, assessing the relative effectiveness of TCC on disease-related outcomes in a medically ill population. This research addresses not only whether TCC can alter disease activity in a group of patients with rheumatoid arthritis, but also whether TCC is more effective than other mind-body interventions in improving health outcomes.

Previous studies have compared TCC to either educational interventions or no-treatment control conditions and assess whether TCC is more effective than either the attention of the investigative staff or no treatment at all. As expected, these studies have found that TCC is more effective than no treatment or attention alone.

However, as Dr. Pike explained, "The question remains as to whether TCC is more effective than other similar mind-body interventions and, if so, what are the relevant pathways through which it exerts its unique effects. Thus, this study compares TCC to relaxation-also an important component of TCC – and evaluates both the physiological and psychological pathways through which TCC may promote improvements in health. This comprehensive approach will help determine the relative effectiveness of TCC as well as the mechanisms through which TCC exerts its effects, such as by altering immune factors known to be important to disease progression in rheumatoid arthritis or by altering psychological adaptation – both of which may be important in determining long-term health outcomes in persons with rheumatoid arthritis."

Pike continues, "Whatever the data reveal about TCC will be an important step in understanding the effectiveness of this mind-body intervention and the role it plays in promoting health."

Having TCC included in these UCLA studies raises awareness of our practice to the general population and I am very grateful. I look forward to published results in about a year.



## T'AI CHI CHIH COMMUNITY CALENDAR

DATE	WHAT & WITH WHOM	WHERE	CONTACT
Aug. 9-12	TEACHER CONFERENCE	Woodcliff Lake, NJ Hilton Hotel	Dorene Krause dorenekr@optonline.net
Aug. 13-15	Seijaku Teacher Training w/ Pam	Convent Station, NJ Xavier Center	Judy Mirczak jmirczak@adelphia.net 518-696-7022
Sept. 7-9	TCC Retreat w/ Pam	Manitou Beach, SK Canada	Lidia Paice harmonyhouse@sasktel.net
Sept. 27-30	TCC Retreat w/Carmen Brocklehurst	Albuquerque, NM Spiritual Renewal Center	Judy Hendricks judyhendricks@comcast.net 505-897-3810
Oct. 5-7	TCC Retreat w/ Sandy	Columbus, MS Plymouth Bluff Center	Valerie Angeloro angeloro@comcast.net 662-491-1228
Oct. 5-8	TCC Intensive w/ Pam	Ringwood, NJ Franciscan Center	Dan Pienciak wakeupdaniel@aol.com 732-988-5573
Oct. 12-14	TCC Retreat w/ Sandy	Portland, OR Area Menucha Retreat Center	Jim Shorr jshorr@wealtheducation.com
Nov. 1-4	TCC Intensive w/ Sandy	St. Paul, MN Benedictine Center	Sue Bitney smbitney@comcast.net 612-866-0040
Nov. 11-16	Teacher Training w/ Pam	Albuquerque, NM TCC Center	Ann Rutherford ruthergary@aol.com
Nov. 17 8:30-3:00	Celebration of Justin Stone's Life	Albuquerque, NM Asbury Methodist Church	Ann Rutherford ruthergary@aol.com
Nov. 29-Dec. 2	TCC Intensive w/ Sandy	San Antonio, TX	Sr. Alice Holden sparks-l@sbcglobal.net
2008			
Feb. 12-15	Student Retreat w/ Sr. Antonia	Santa Barbara, CA Mt. Calvary Retreat	Pam Towne pamtowne@sbcglobal.net 877-982-4244
Feb. 19-22	Teacher Retreat w/ Sr. Antonia	Santa Barbara, CA Mt. Calvary Retreat	Pam Towne pamtowne@sbcglobal.net 877-982-4244
Mar. 1	Teacher Renewal w/ Sandy	Ringwood, NJ Franciscan Center	Dan Pienciak wakeupdaniel@aol.com 732-988-5573
Mar. 2-7	Teacher Training w/ Sandy	Ringwood, NJ Franciscan Center	Dan Pienciak wakeupdaniel@aol.com 732-988-5573
Apr. 3-12	TCC Retreat w/ Sr. Antonia	Albuquerque, NM Madonna Center	Ann Rutherford ruthergary@aol.com
Apr. 7-12	Teacher Training w/ Pam	St. Paul, MN Carondelet Center	Sue Bitney smbitney@comcast.net
Summer 2008	TEACHER CONFERENCE	Northern California	www.taichichih.org

my silence is all that you must know to understand what I say	speak for me my soul for your wisdom has no words that my lips know	flow through me universe release me from here and take me back home	in the sea of Self there exists no time possession what or mind	talk to me my heart, and listen to what I don't say back to you	I dreamt that everyone left me so I went swimming in the sea
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– BRYAN FINE, STUDENT OF DONNA McELHOSE

## Noteworthy

# Why Tai Chi Chih® Joy Thru Movement?

BY PAT FLYNN, GLENVILLE, PA

*Editor's Note: This article, reprinted with permission from the January 2005 issue of the South Central Senior Community Center Newsletter, tripled enrollment in Pat's classes.*

I COULD TELL YOU that T'ai Chi Chih reduces stress, increases flexibility, reduces high blood pressure, and develops coordination and balance; that Tai Chi Chih can be considered the "great granddaddy of Low Impact Aerobics." I could also tell you that T'ai Chi Chih can be a great cardio and respiratory workout without causing a speck of sweat and without stress or strain on the joints, muscles, tendons, and ligaments. I could also tell you that *anyone* can do T'ai Chi Chih; it's easy and it requires no special equipment and very little space to practice.

I could also tell you about the Boston Celtic's player, Robert Parish, who is a T'ai Chi\* practitioner, or for that matter, Tiger Woods and his practice. Many sports professionals practice T'ai Chi\*. They say it enhances their performance. Then again, many companies are offering T'ai Chi\* because it can increase productivity, innovation, motivation, flexibility, endurance, and creativity while helping to decrease sick time. Why read about such dry statistics when I can tell you what has happened to me – with T'ai Chi Chih.

I contracted Lyme disease long before modern medicine recognized it. I gave my faith and trust to modern medicine. With innumerable misdiagnoses and treatments, I was nearly blind and crippled. So I changed my perspective. I studied alternative methods with a passion, and through diet and lifestyle changes slowly brought myself back to a reasonable facsimile of normalcy.

T'ai Chi Chih has brought me even further. I no longer wake 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 T'ai Chi Chih, I pushed myself to be a normal, active human being. Now, I *am* a normal active person. The many symptoms of Lyme disease seem to be fading away. I am looking forward

to the time when *all* my symptoms disappear.

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

The impact T'ai Chi Chih 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 many more benefits from T'ai Chi Chih.

Students can often see some immediate benefits and cherish the sensations, called *chi*, from the movements of T'ai Chi Chih. We learn to move like children again. When watching young children, their arm and leg movements tend to originate from the torso in a relaxed, flexible, tensionless manner. As we grow older, tension and stiffness tends to creep into our movements because we tend to concentrate more on our arms, shoulders and legs. Gradually, we lose touch with our torso. Eventually, as we grow old we begin to use a shuffling gait with no movement in the torso. It is easy to understand – that with all the major organs and circulatory system in the torso stagnating from lack of motion – that health problems can abound. T'ai Chi Chih can help us to once again move as we did when we were young children – from the torso – and stimulate all those internal organs and circulatory systems. T'ai Chi Chih is not only for longevity but for robustness – even into old age.

Classes are held throughout the York county area and I invite you to come *swim through heavy air* with me. After all, that is the best way to describe the slow, gentle, rounded, graceful movements of T'ai Chi Chih. They call it T'ai Chi Chih, Joy Thru Movement with good reason!

*\*Editor's Note: The author uses T'ai Chi intentionally because, for the time being, it is more widely known. That will not be true much longer! Justin Stone looks forward to the day when professional athletes like Tiger Woods (and perhaps the Boston Red Sox and New England Patriots) practice T'ai Chi Chih daily.*

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