

The *Vital Force*

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May 2007

Justin's Words

Inner Life BY JUSTIN STONE

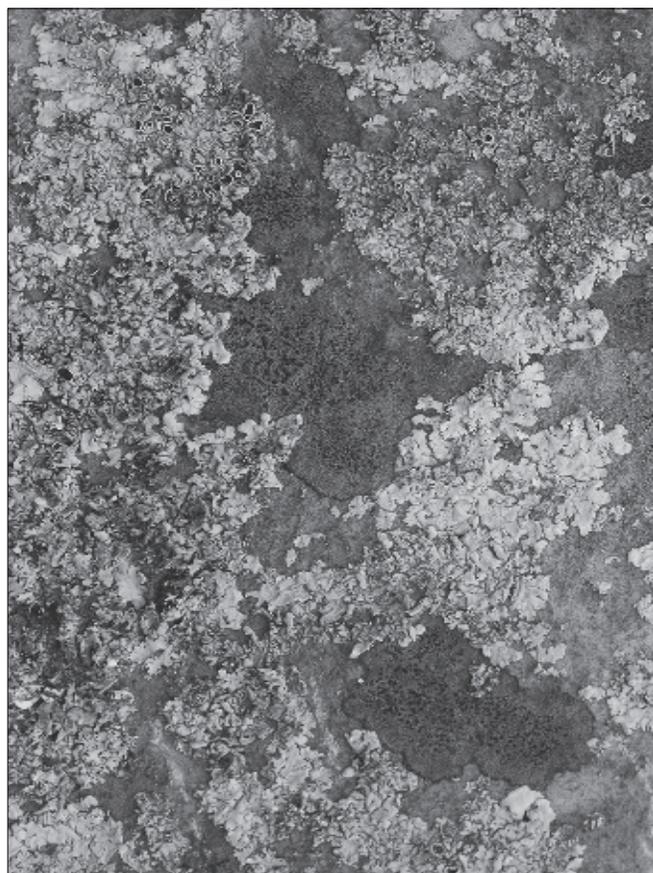
IF YOU CAN GRADUATE to an Inner Life, peace and joy will be yours. Gratifying the senses is not enough, even if it means harmony with Nature, the sights and smells as well as the sounds. They are great, but not enough, being all dependent on the senses.

In meditation practice we reach the inner state, which is called Turiya. Here we bridge the difference between the outer, governed by the senses, and the inner, connected to Eternity. Once we have gotten used to the Real, which brings Joy, we will not want to be without it as part of our lives.

Making room for an hour each day of True Meditation will transform our lives but, unfortunately, there is no room in our meaningless rush and striving to relax and aim for the Absolute. When we do, our inner self begins to realize the Absolute and our balance shifts to a continuous joyous flow. You will not believe me unless you build an Inner Life. There are very few teachers around who can take you to the Turiya state. Those who practice T'ai Chi Chih and find time for Meditation are fortunate. They condition the outer by encouraging the flow of the Chi from their TCC practice and encourage the Inner Life with Meditation.

A Chinese student at the University of New Mexico once stopped me on campus and, after saying "hello," said directly: "I have been trying for a year to understand the basis of American life, but I have failed to do so." Coming from a society that, until recently, was based on family life and Confucian morality, and being acquainted with the philosophies of such men as Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, he was at a loss to understand the basis of a society where words of television commentators and talk with smut guide us in our frenzied lives.

How many have read Lao Tzu? How many know of Confucius' morality teachings? Do our schools encourage such teachings? Is Inner Life part of our education system? Divorces and shifting employment emphasize impermanence. Turiya takes us to the permanent. Those who find their lives unsatisfactory – and this means most of us – might do well to concentrate on the above. Neither schools nor religion will do it for us.



Revitalizing *The Vital Force*

WHEN I FIRST LEARNED that Victor Berg had resigned as editor of *The Vital Force*, I thought that if no one wanted to step forward from the subscriber pool, perhaps the journal should fold. If the community then felt it had lost something, the newsletter would be resurrected. If not, it would remain dormant. But then I realized what a shame that would be. So here we are.

Over the last 20-plus years of professional life, I have developed some expertise that will be helpful as editor – not the least of which is that, in my role at Good Karma Publishing, I have the opportunity to speak to the most active and enthusiastic teachers and students each week. These folks speak volumes about the vitality of our community.

For the record, this is basically a volunteer position, although I am paid a small sum for each of the quarterly issues. My day jobs, from which I have picked up relevant skills, are numerous and

include being: an Acquisitions Editor for Countryman Press, a division of WW Norton; a public relations and marketing freelancer; a travel guide author for Lonely Planet and other publishers; a travel writer for numerous Web sites and new media companies; a professional photographer; and the one-woman ringleader of Good Karma Publishing.

Since the editorial change was announced in late April, there has been an outpouring of support for the VF. Justin is heartened.

I know you are out there and you have offered to share your experiences. So keep those cards and letters (and photos and artwork) coming.

We hope you like the look of the new *Vital Force*. Comments, ideas, and suggestions are always welcome.

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. Look at the page heading subjects and tailor your submission to one section. The newsletter will hang together better that way.

We are always in need of photos and artwork. Please, if you can, send as high resolution jpgs as your camera takes. I will crop and edit them. *The Vital Force* reserves the right to edit submissions for length and clarity.

Deadlines & Ideas

SUBMISSION DEADLINE	PUBLICATION DATE	THEME	MOVEMENT (TEACHING TIPS)
July 1	Late July	Balance	Bird Flaps its Wings
Oct 1	Late Oct	Harmony	Around the Platter / Variation
Jan 1	Late Jan	Openness	Bass Drum
April 1	Late April	Release	Daughter on the Mountaintop

Editor Kim Grant • Membership Jerry Bumbalough • Submissions: Send articles, poetry and photos to Kim Grant at tcc@kimgrant.com or to The Vital Force, P.O. Box 247, Greenfield CA 93927-0247 • Memberships: Send membership subscription requests, renewals, remittances and changes of address to The Vital Force, P.O. Box 247, Greenfield CA 93927-0247. 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. If you do not receive your issue, e-mail vfjmembership@yahoo.com. The Vital Force is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization serving T'ai Chi Chih practitioners worldwide. T'ai Chi Chih® is a federally registered trademark owned by Good Karma Publishing, Inc. Copyright 2007 The Vital Force Journal Inc. All rights reserved.

Table of Contents

Justin Stone	1
Service	3-5
Guiding Thoughts/Sr. Antonia	6
Pam Says/Sandy Says	7
Events	8-9
Justin Stone	10-11
Teaching Tips	12-15
In the News	14-15
Feature: <i>Science and the Spiritual Life</i>	16
Students	17
Conference 2007	18-19
Karmic Comments & Lighter Side	20
Calendar	22
Pyramid Poetry	23
Contacts/Subscribe	24

Service in Sitka

BY NANCY JO BLEIER / SITKA, AL

IT WAS A DARK AND DAMP DAY in Sitka. My journal notes reflect what had been going on. I'd been sitting doing T'ai Chi Chih while recovering from hip surgery on Jan. 16, 2007.

I faced the challenge of sitting back at an angle, needing to follow precautions of not moving more than 90 degrees forward. On this particular day, I stood to do my TCC practice and wrote about how joyful I felt to modify my movements. I had to hold on to a bookcase as I moved my left leg forward and came back to rest with weight on the right leg. Now I could stand.

As time went on, I recorded the first day I could move without holding on. I cried with joy. Another week went by and I did a Seijaku practice without holding on. I was still modifying Pulling Taffy - 1st Variation - Anchor due to more precautions. On March 27th I wrote, "While doing Pulling in the Energy, I felt my heart chakra open and the heart felt so strong after finishing the movement." This was joy thru movement. You see, this was my second hip surgery. After the first one in 1993, I did not have TCC with which to recover. The difference in feeling grounded and balanced has been healing.

I want to thank all the teachers I have encountered over the years. I live in Sitka, Alaska, where I learned TCC from a traveling teacher, Russ Brown. Going to TCC Teachers Conferences since 1997 has been my lifeline in learning. I want to thank everyone who has ever written an article, whether in *The Vital Force* or *The New Mexico T'ai Chi Chih News*. You are my teachers, too. Of course, Justin's thoughts are inspiring – my husband, Roger, likes to read Justin. In the last TCC News, Amy Tyksinski wrote a clear, thoughtful piece from which I learned so much. I found in moving my gaze up, as Amy suggested, my body alignment changed for the better. Thank you everyone for your words! Gunalcheesh! (Tlingit [indigenous Alaskan language] for thank you.)

Sitka is now not as dark; it is still damp. Every first Saturday of the month our regular TCC-by-the-Sea group meets outdoors on the waterfront to practice. On April 7th, 14 of us met for practice and afterward had our photo taken for a 2008 calendar sponsored by the local library. On April 21st, Martina Kurzer led a group during the Sitka Fun Fair, a day of events encouraging people to engage in healthy activities. Martina also held TCC classes this winter and spring. On May 5th, we Sitkans met again for TCC-by-the-Sea, a special practice for me as it was my 60th birthday.

I look forward to seeing all of you in New Jersey in August.

Service Anyone?

BY CARMEN L. BROCKLEHURST / ALBUQUERQUE, NM

THE BASIC INTENTION in the T'ai Chi Chih community is always to be of service. To have any other idea is to miss the "Joy" in Joy Thru Movement. Besides the beauty and grace that most of us feel during our practice (and, for many, the healing), the prime reason that most teachers choose to share T'ai Chi Chih is so others can experience what we have. The list is long: bliss, joy, freedom, healing, peace, heightened awareness, longevity, creativity, health, weight loss, and more.

Justin simplifies the list, and also makes it more inclusive, when he says, "The purpose of T'ai Chi Chih is to balance the intrinsic energy, the Vital Force within, and to circulate this energy." He also says over and over again, "T'ai Chi Chih is not medicine. And yet it is the healthiest thing we can do for ourselves." Of what better service could we be to our fellow human beings than to help them acquire knowledge of the Supreme Ultimate, through the actual experience of it?

One teacher said (with tears in her eyes) during her Teacher's Training Class, "I feel as if I was cheated not to have been taught T'ai Chi Chih earlier in life." Many of us feel the same way. If we had been taught to do our T'ai Chi Chih practice as faithfully as we were taught to eat, bathe, sleep, and play, think of all the peace of mind, body, and spirit that would have been ours from early in life! Would we have followed the same paths of greed, anger and delusion? Or would our response to life have been a very different one: service to mankind. The world will be much different when that is our focus.

T'ai Chi Chih Teachers are very fortunate to have the discipline of daily T'ai Chi Chih practice, and the world benefits when we are of service, through loving and sharing the Chi.



Service is a Two-Way Street

BY EV HANSON-FLORIN / SIDLESHAM, WEST SUSSEX, ENGLAND

T'AI CHI CHIH IS ALIVE and well in the United Kingdom. After accreditation in January 2007 in San Francisco, I returned to West Sussex [a county in southern England along the English Channel] to launch T'ai Chi Chih classes.

Students in the village of Sidlesham are enthusiastically learning the movements and making visible progress. We started with three beginner classes (some twice a week, some weekly) and have completed the first two. It's fun and, as Justin says, "It's a service to humanity." Teaching T'ai Chi Chih is also a service to me.

When teaching, I am the beneficiary of students' insights. It deepens my practice and makes me think more about the movements when, as I sometimes stumble with explaining a movement, an enlightened student suddenly explains it so clearly in a way I'd never heard before. Consider the taffy movements, for example: the bottom hand moves in the direction one is moving.

The students' professions are varied: eye surgeon, geologist, church warden, gardener, IT professional, teacher, hairdresser, pastor, nurse, politician, and more. Most of them also are parents, grandparents, caregivers, and active in the community. All this in a village with just 1200 residents!

Service in a Rose Garden

BY JIM SHORR / WILSONVILLE, OR

SERVICE IS THE CORNERSTONE of my life.

In my job as a financial advisor I help folks with their retirement and related financial priorities. My commitment to church – where the majority of my T'ai Chi Chih classes take shape – work with T'ai Chi Chih students, and work with fellow TCC teachers complete the circle for me.



The Universe works in strange ways. We gather monthly as a community of T'ai Chi Chih practitioners at the Rose Gardens in Portland on the third Saturday of each month from March to November. It's a formal practice, followed by a brief reading and silent meditation. We then have a short community "feed" of tea and pastries, and conversation. Someone often offers a tip or reminder to help folks go deeper in their individual practice. The weather is often uplifting, the scenery conducive to serenity as we conclude the end of each person's week of activity. A longtime student reminds us, "It never rains on T'ai Chi Chih," and in truth, it does rain on our community practices

only one or two times a season (this in "rain country," the Pacific Northwest). Our "service" at these gatherings is to honor our home practice, in a communal spirit, remembering some of Justin's word of focus: "loose wrists, move from your center (core), the weight shift leads, the hands only follow."

In my client brochure, I indicate how important balance is: "Live the balanced life – time to work, time for family and friends, time for meditation, and time to pursue your dreams. Our stress is then minimized." (A photo in the brochure shows a T'ai Chi Chih class at practice in the Rose Gardens.)

Another part of service is building community. We TCC teachers in the Northwest are holding the 2nd Northwest Retreat with Sandy McAlister Oct. 12-14 at the Menucha Retreat Center. Menucha in Hebrew means "ever-changing stillness." The theme of our retreat will be "Sinking Into the Essence...Deepening Your Practice," with co-hosts John and Roberta Taggart and Jerry Jonnson.

Retreats, intensives, workshops, special events and demonstrations all are forms of service. A year and half ago, for example, a group of TCC practitioners participated in a Health Fair in suburban Lake Oswego, talking to a Farmers Market crowd about the benefits and joys of our practice. We did a demonstration and handed out flyers about our Moving Meditation in the Park monthly practices.

What are the rewards? The May 7, 2007 issue of Forbes magazine quoted George Eliot [the pen name of novelist Mary Ann Evans, 1819-1880], who said, "The reward of one service is the power to fulfill another."

What Are You Knitting With Your Life?

BY MARGO CARPENTER / EDMONTON, ALBERTA, CANADA

A FEW DAYS AGO I sat down to write a short contribution to *The Vital Force* on the topic of service. As I enjoyed the feeling of maneuvering the pen across the page, I was struck by how similar writing is to knitting. Writing, like knitting, is shaped one word/stitch at a time; words are knit into sentences, sentences join into paragraphs and paragraphs are sewn together at the seams to form a complete garment. With these thoughts flowing through my mind, the following “piece” emerged.

From a simple ball of yarn, no different from or outstanding than the one it sits beside in the basket at the wool shop – well, ok, maybe it’s a different color, thickness, and texture from some of its neighbors, but yarn is yarn after all – comes the unlimited potential for becoming a finished product. And without a doubt, under a steady hand and the guidance of the needles, a new and unique creation will emerge. Possibly a sweater, maybe a pair of socks or a scarf, or even a funky handbag. All will grow up out of that yarn. Similar, perhaps, but never identical to any other knitted piece.

Life knits us all in one form or another. We may have all started out very much identical when we were simple balls of yarn, but how different our transformation can become. In the hands of a skilled knitter we eventually morph into a beautiful and artful sweater, a whimsical toque and mitts, or a warm and appreciated pair of socks. This emergence may be quick and painless, or long, difficult and agonizing with many rip-backs, re-dos, and changes in shape and

style. Those that simply start as a ball of yarn and swiftly become a designer sweater could be looked upon as the lucky ones. Their destiny was clear and direct. Those of us who start off as one thing, change size and shape along the way and become something else entirely, may go through many painful and often seemingly hopeless transitions. And, sadly, there are those who never complete their metamorphosis and remain in their cocoon, half formed and still attached to the needles awaiting their creator’s hand to complete the job.

I sometimes think of myself as being the yarn and the knitter at the same time. We are all creators in our own lives. Like the hands of the knitter we can produce a work of beauty and joy, or we can set aside the project to gather dust in the crafts bin. Creating a finished product as complicated as a sweater is not always easy and usually requires plenty of time and dedication. Inevitably there are days when stitches are dropped and have to be picked up and corrected, and where just plain ripping out and beginning again becomes the most effective solution. But if we can see our lives as an act of creating something uniquely beautiful, delightful, warm, or utilitarian we will be able to ride out the trying times when things don’t go quite right. Times when we couldn’t make out the pattern of our work or we didn’t understand the instructions, or we gave up in frustration and simply started over.

We all begin with pretty much the same raw materials – yarns of various colors and textures. Where we ultimately finish is unique to us. Maybe it’s as a gorgeous Kaffe Fassett sweater, or a pair of warm and fuzzy thrum mitts, or a bright and sexy scarf. And if we set out down the path to becoming a vest and eventually

become a hat and scarf we can chuckle at our miraculous and unexpected transfiguration, knowing that despite ourselves we grew into what we were meant to be. So when you see someone quietly knitting while s/he waits for an appointment, or on the bus ride to and from work, or at home in front of the TV, think about your life, and what you’re knitting with it. Surely it’s something worthy of the priceless yarn you’ve been given. Don’t worry about finishing fast; take your time. Maybe even change the pattern and design if it doesn’t fit anymore. Just keep at it. You have no idea how incredible you’re becoming.

Service in a Business Suit

BY ANN RUTHERFORD / ALBUQUERQUE, NM

IN JUSTIN’S BOOK, *Gateway to Eastern Philosophy and Religion*, he tells of an experience he had in India while traveling with a holy man. One day, he and the holy man were driving along and they saw a man walking along a lonely road by himself with just a little string around his hips, ashes on his forehead, and various other markings on his body.

Justin asked, “What are all those markings?” The holy man answered, “He’s doing penance, tapas.” Justin responded, “Wouldn’t it be greater penance if he put on a business suit and no one could see these marks, and he did it without letting anyone know? That would be real penance.” Justin

concluded, “But, of course, there would be no fun to that. If you’re going to suffer and do penance, you want everyone to know about it.” True service, in my mind, is like the man wearing the business suit: Do the work without letting anyone know.



Student – Serious Student – Teacher Candidate – Teacher Accreditation A natural (or not so natural) progression

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

IN HIS ARTICLE in the November 2006 issue of *The New Mexico Tai Chi Chih News*, Justin mused about why only two or three teacher accreditation courses have been held in recent years. He and I spoke about this when I visited Albuquerque, NM for his 90th birthday.

Certainly, students are coming to teacher trainings much better prepared since the double signature went into effect five years ago. Much has to be said for the three-and-a-half-day “intensive” experience that is essential for students to learn how they are moving and what they need to change and refine to get the most out of their training. Just ask anyone who has experienced an intensive.

I believe teachers in beginning and ongoing classes play a key role in identifying students who would make great teachers. Teachers naturally form a unique bond with some students and can invite individuals to think about the possibility of teaching TCC. Some students experience so many benefits from learning and practicing that they approach the teacher requesting information on how to become accredited. There are others who would make excellent teachers, but need some encouragement.

Teachers, what motivated you to want to become an accredited TCC teacher? Was it something you “knew” from your first class, or was it something that developed



I believe teachers in beginning and ongoing classes play a key role in identifying students who would make great teachers.

over time and perhaps over you? Were you approached by your teacher with an invitation to consider becoming a TCC teacher?

To move more students toward teacher accreditation, I invite teachers to consider the following steps.

IDENTIFY AND INVITE: Every teacher can identify and invite those special students who would make potential teacher candidates, and to consider:

1. Is the student open and receptive to ongoing learning and refining?
2. Is the student sincere, and does he or she practice, participate in discussions, and offer input, and ask questions?
3. Is the student joyous?

SUPPORT: We can support students who wish to begin the accreditation process by working with them in individual sessions to further deepen refinements based on the principles of how to move.

ORGANIZE: The next step is to organize other teachers in your area who have similar students. Plan a one-day workshop that includes a full practice, refinements, discussion, etc. Review the requirements for teacher candidates found on the Web site. As serious students continue to express their desire to teach, you may want to encourage them to visit classes of other local teachers to experience a variety of teaching styles.

ONGOING SUPPORT: This will evolve into community building. If you have a group of about 16 serious students, teacher candidates and teachers in your area, they may be interested in experiencing an intensive. Sandy and Pam are always willing to talk with you about hosting one. They are willing to work with you every step of the way. Who knows, several months later, there may be an area training - and it all began by starting small. That is the way all great things begin.

Advice to New Teachers

BY PAM TOWNE / OCEANSIDE, CA

WHETHER YOU WERE RECENTLY ACCREDITED to teach T'ai Chi Chih or have been teaching many years and want to take a fresh look at your teaching, here are some suggestions.

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Our personal TCC practice is the heart of our teaching. As we know, the purpose of TCC is to circulate and balance the Chi. It is from our own experience of the flow of the Chi that our best teaching comes. As we daily give ourselves the gift of TCC, we refill our body, mind and spirit so we can give to our students from our overflow.

Regular TCC practice gives us so many invaluable benefits. Isn't that why we became teachers? To share those benefits with others! Practice also enhances our ability to move well so that we model how to move the TCC way for our students.

TEACH, TEACH, TEACH

Start teaching NOW. Don't wait until you have it all figured out...or until you know more...or until you do "Pulling Taffy" perfectly. Students will be drawn to you for what you have to share with them NOW. So share what you know NOW, and continue to improve your form.

Teach anyone who wants to learn TCC. No matter how small the class, it will benefit them and give you teaching experience. Just as we get better at doing TCC with practice, so we get better at teaching with practice. When I began teaching in 1984, I taught more than one class for just one or two people. It benefited me as much as it did them.

Give as many presentations as you can. This is still the most effective way to form classes. That's why giving a sample presentation was part of your Teacher Training experience. After learning about what TCC is and how it can benefit them, plus getting an experiential taste of TCC, people naturally want to take a class. If you were to do an average of one presentation a week for two months, you would most likely have all the classes you cared to teach.

CONTINUED ON P. 21

Know Your Stuff

BY SANDY McALISTER / HAYWARD, CA

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A GOOD TEACHER? Humor? Intuitiveness? Patience? Fairness? Ability to assess quickly? There are more qualities that come to mind and you may feel that not all of these are necessary. What I do feel is necessary, and one of the most important factors of being a good teacher, is to know your material inside and out.

I remember a very satisfying moment in my teaching life. I had been teaching four or five years. One night after class a student asked a question and we had a small discussion. About an hour later it hit me: "Where did that come from?" I realized what I said to her came from me and my understanding, in my own words. Up to that point I had been regurgitating information learned from others, from their understanding and experience.

CONTINUED ON P. 21

Teaching Tips

by Sandy McAlister / Hayward, CA

WHEN TEACHING, be aware of the words we use. New students are trying to process a lot of information at once. They are following our movements and responding to our words. They often don't have time to think for themselves. So in forward and backward weight shift movements, for example, when we say "Do Bass Drum on the left side and then on the right side," the words indicate that we go to the side. It would be more correct to say "Bass Drum, left foot forward" and "Bass Drum, right foot forward."

Consider if we were teaching a blind person, how important it would be to use the most precise word to impart the idea.

For my continuing T'ai Chi Chih group (beyond beginners), we usually spend the first 15 minutes of class working on a movement or a principle and then reinforcing that lesson in our full practice together.

CONTINUED ON P. 21

Flowing from the Center with Joy

Santa Barbara, CA Retreats on Feb. 20-23 & Feb. 27-Mar. 2, 2007

BY PAM TOWNE / OCEANSIDE, CA

TWO GROUPS OF TCC STUDENTS AND TEACHERS retreated from their everyday activities and immersed themselves in T'ai Chi Chih for four days. The consensus was that it was a wonderful way to relax in a peaceful, beautiful setting overlooking Santa Barbara and the Pacific Ocean, refine our movements and deepen our TCC practice, and renew body, mind and spirit.

Sister Antonia Cooper led us in "Flowing from the Center with Joy," our theme for exploring the essentially spiritual moving meditation of TCC.

Participants shared their experiences at the gentle conclusion of each retreat.

"The retreat was more than I ever expected. I learned more, felt more, grew more than I ever have before. It was truly a deepening experience. Thank you."

CAROL ROESKE, TEACHER CANDIDATE, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

"This was a great retreat...a real chance to take some time out and discover how to improve my TCC practice. For me it was a lot about slowing down and feeling the movements originating at the Tan T'ien. This also allowed me to be much more in touch with the soles of my feet. We allowed ourselves to be empty of ego, so we could be open to experiencing our movements in a new way and let it flow. I think the Chi is helping me to flow through life more easily, without effort."

MARIE DORR, STUDENT, ENCINITAS, CA

"I'm leaving with a deeper understanding of how to move."

CAROL WONG, TEACHER, MARYSVILLE, CA

"I found the natural and spiritual energy environment at Mt. Calvary Retreat House to be the perfect mood setter for TCC. Practicing with the mixed group of students and teachers deeply satisfied my soul. I'm now understanding a much bigger picture of what TCC is."

JOANNE THOMAS, STUDENT, VISTA, CA

"This has been a rich experience of coming together in community where we can connect and practice and learn with each

other. I have been teaching TCC since 1999 and yet I am taking with me new insights about almost every movement. I am very grateful for this opportunity to deepen my own TCC practice as well as to become a more effective teacher, and to realize anew how precious our TCC Community is."

DIANA WRIGHT, TEACHER, FOUNTAIN VALLEY, CA

"I felt more grounded and flowing than ever before."

NIKKI VONDER, STUDENT, ENCINITAS, CA

"It always seems like a paradox to me: to be moving, yet I'm not moving. I'm not doing it. When my mind travels to my center, I have let go...only to have it all....The feeling of being at 'home' in one's self and in the world...with one's self, PRESENT!"

ROSALIND WALSH, STUDENT, ENCINITAS, CA

*Enjoying
fellowship
and reflection
at the Santa
Barbara,
California
retreat.*



Sea of Chi

Teachers Retreat - Silver Beach, NJ Apr. 18-22, 2007

BY SIOBHAN HUTCHINSON / NEW EGYPT, NJ

RENEWING ONESELF in the T'ai Chi Chih community after being away for a while is like coming home for a holiday. First there is the anticipation. For me it was a reward for getting settled in a new job, finishing a big paper for school, and just being plum ready to receive. Then, there was a tinge of guilt. Okay, maybe a bit more. My practice had taken a bit of a detour and I needed this weekend to get back on track. I missed being with the community, practicing with fellow teachers, and fine-tuning my practice with the gentle guidance of Sister Antonia and Dan Pienciak. It was definitely time to return home.

After all the recent rain in New Jersey, it was nice to see the sun come out in cloudless skies on an April weekend at the shore. The fresh air and the strength of the sea enveloped us all. How could one not get the importance of continuity and flow in T'ai Chi Chih while at the beach? Our group moved gently as one in a circle, physically demonstrating the connectedness we all share.

This connectedness was also apparent when we took breaks and realized many of us shared similar themes running through our lives. It also echoed a conversation I had with a woman I met through work, who shared her powerful story with me. She envisions life as a continual process of falling apart, with the pieces then coming back together in a different but stronger whole. Then going through this cycle over and over again. Does that remind you of your own T'ai Chi Chih practice? If you don't have those stumbling blocks, if you don't have those moments of "this doesn't feel right," then you may not be moving forward in your practice. Many

of us face moments or periods of time when we need to readjust the way we move to feel the Chi move more freely.

Sometimes our practice reflects what's going on in our life, and what's going on in our life can also affect our practice. I remember a time when I was feeling divided – facing a decision and not knowing what to do. When I moved, my arms and hands were not in sync with the motion below my waist. It was a time of challenge for me personally and in my practice.

The first step in dealing with an area that needs adjusting is to notice it. Observe it. Keep observing it and breathe and relax into that area. At some point you have to surrender to the fact that this may not fix itself according to your time schedule. Being patient and observing is key. We have all been there, lived through it, only to start the process all over again. Fortunately, Sr. Antonia and Dan Pienciak freely share their struggles in their practice, showing that we are all truly students of this wonderful, enlightening practice. Gently encouraging one another, we create a safe environment in which to make adjustments. Yes, I came back home to re-charge, re-connect, and put the pieces back together.

The sea keeps rolling in and out. The waves keep changing according to the wind, the currents, and the moon. Like the sea, we continue.



Truth and Consequences

Albuquerque, NM Retreat April 27 – 29, 2007

BY ANN RUTHERFORD / ALBUQUERQUE, NM

QUOTES FROM JUSTIN

Justin said to four participants from the town of Truth or Consequences, NM: "Now that you know the truth, there won't be any consequences."

"Let your arms fall off when doing T'ai Chi Chih."

"The sinking down is the essence of T'ai Chi Chih."

"It's not what, but how, you move that's important. Don't worry about the upper body."

"T'ai Chi Chih is not to be done mechanically."

QUOTES FROM SISTER ANTONIA

"The difficult times are more growthful than the easy times."

"What is my present reality and does T'ai Chi Chih make me more accepting of my present reality?"

"We think we should do T'ai Chi Chih perfectly, but it's T'ai Chi Chih practice."

"Discover the gift you are meant to be to yourself and to others."

QUOTES FROM OTHER PARTICIPANTS

"T'ai Chi Chih is one of the few things that brings me stillness."



"I'm here to find out what's going on inside."

"I know TCC is the form I need to do. I know this is my truth."

"The main thing that draws me here is the caring. Human beings are social creatures."

"One of the greatest gifts of T'ai Chi Chih is the 'graceful conclusion.' I use it to adjust my body before I go on to the next movement."

The Importance of “TEH”

BY JUSTIN STONE [REPRINTED FROM *THE VITAL FORCE*, APRIL 1990]

I HAVE STAYED WITH YOGIS in the Himalayan Foothills who are masters of Prana, the Sanskrit word for Chi. They seem to be impervious to cold and hunger. Since we ate only once a day, at about 10:30 in the morning (which was not enough for me), one would expect an eagerness to get to meals. However, such was not the case. One time I asked my friend, Maharaj, why he was not at the meal that morning. He replied that he had been meditating.

“When will you eat?” I asked.

“Oh, tomorrow morning, if I’m not in meditation then,” he casually replied.

Most of the Yogis bathed in the narrow section of the upper Ganges at about 4:30 a.m., when many other animals were also there. Things went smoothly unless the roar of a tiger was heard, at which the animals scattered and a few monkeys fainted. I have seen the Yogis leave the water, ice-cold at that hour, and not even bother to dry themselves, relying on their inner heat to keep them warm. One newly arrived Yogi, who had been a lawyer in Bombay before renouncing, tried to do this and became seriously ill; he wasn’t ready.

This mastery of Prana and the development of the Dumo Heat are the basis of Tibetan Yoga. Some Yogis, deep in Kundalini practice, meditate in water to stay cool while developing this terrific internal warmth. (There is a picture of such a Yogi in one of my books.) I spent two years in developing this internal heat, and the first success was just like turning on a faucet. The overwhelming energy made sleep impossible, but it did not seem to matter. Unfortunately, I was doing this without a

teacher and there were some bad side effects, such as internal bleeding. This is all described in my book *Meditation for Healing*, with instructions. I would not advise one to practice without instruction.

We have all read how an advanced Tibetan Yogi can melt the snow for many feet around him, just using this inner heat, and I know of a Zen Master in Japan who used to stand under an ice-cold waterfall at midnight, in the dead of winter, to test his discipline and practice keeping the concentration in the T’an Tien. Neophytes who have tried this have invariably fallen ill.

T’ai Chi Chih teachers are told that the important thing is TEH, the power of inner sincerity and integrity.

I mention all this because the circulation of the Chi, and the balancing of the yin and yang, are the primary goals of T’ai Chi Ch’uan and T’ai Chi Chih. To just think of these disciplines as exercise is to place them in the same category as aerobics, jazzercise, and so on. Wen Shan Huang spoke of Chi a Priori and Chi a Posteriori, that is, the Chi with which we came into this life and that we accumulated (and stored) during this lifetime. This is not “our” Chi; we are a product of this Chi. In Chinese Cosmology, from the ineffable Tao comes the yin chi and the yang chi (the beginning of dualism). This is before there is a Heaven, an Earth, or Man. They are products of the yin and yang chi. To unite with this Chi and to balance it is to return

to the “Uncarved Block,” and this is what is meant by “Centering.” In this sense, T’ai Chi Chih practice becomes meditation.

The ancients have stated that the technique of the form is the least important item, yet we continually hear emphasis only on the outer physical aspects. Contests in combat and tournaments only strengthen this emphasis. How can you look inside the practitioner and see his accordance with Reality? Just as there are Hatha Yogis in India who do incredible things with their bodies, without a shred of spiritual progress, so can emphasis only on the outer keep the student from real fulfillment. Real adepts well understand the relationship between the Mind and Chi. For each state of mind, there is a corresponding character of Chi, and, in turn, each aspect of Chi influences the state of mind. If one will study the Buddha’s great Sattipathana meditation, one will see how the Chi, the State of Mind, and Spiritual mastery are tied together.

It is my hope that T’ai Chi Chih instruction will not just be physical. T’ai Chi Chih teachers are told that the important thing is TEH, the power of inner sincerity and integrity.



Being-Consciousness-Bliss

WHAT IS LIFE COMPOSED OF? According to the Indian philosophers, life is composed of Sat-Chit-Ananda, "Being-Consciousness-Bliss." What are you really? There are many ways you can answer that question. Paul Reps would say, "You are light." Somebody else would say, "You are sound cognized as light." In India they are saying, "You are Being-Consciousness-Bliss," which is very hopeful, isn't it! It gives a wonderful feeling.

The Indians are essentially devotional. This is why I believe there is almost no Buddhism anymore in India where, ironically, the

Buddha is considered the greatest of its sons. India is devotional, and devotion does not play a part at all in Buddhism - what would you be devoted to? Karma, however, is accepted by everybody in India. Action brings reaction, cause brings effect, and therefore, you can make your future anything you want. Just plan it the way

you want, act that way and set the causes in motion. If you plant a rose seed, you're not going to get a banana tree. Plant sounds pretty simple, doesn't it? Just plant that which you want to grow. In Karma Yoga, you do the deed so you get the reward in the future. But the Indian feels that at the end of your life, your last thought is what will bring about your reincarnation or transmigration. Your next life depends on your last thought in this life. So you can say, "Well, I'm going to make my last thought a pretty good one." But of course, your last thought is going to be based on what you stood for in your lifetime.



Karma & Chi

INDIA IS ENTIRELY IMMERSSED IN THIS THOUGHT OF KARMA, which is not exactly as we see it. Your karma is based on the habit energies you have built, these vashanas mentioned earlier. What is it that helps build these vashanas, what is the means for building these vashanas? It is the Chi.

Those who have taken T'ai Chi Chih know what I'm talking about. The intrinsic energy, the vital force, is, if you want to put it into popularized terms, the means by which the absolute comes into the everyday world, comes into being. There has to be a force by which this comes into being and it is the Chi that

does it. We are a product of the Chi. But it is the Chi, the force, which causes these vrittis, these mental disturbances, which become habit energies.

The tie between the Chi and the habit energies is a very close one and this is the basis for karma. Most of the holy people in India feel that

what you see, whether it's the world or people, is karma, frozen karma. You are seeing karma. As I've said, I've been with many teachers who can read karma from your face. Sai Baba said to those who came to him, "Now there's no sense in asking for my sympathy and pleading. I know what you've done in the past and I know what you're going to be doing in the future."

FROM *GATEWAY TO EASTERN PHILOSOPHY & RELIGION*
BY JUSTIN STONE, PP. 22 - 23, ©2006.
AVAILABLE FROM GOOD KARMA PUBLISHING

How to Begin Teaching TCC Classes

GAIL TERRIFF / EDMONTON, ALBERTA, CANADA

BEGINNINGS ARE A HALLMARK when T'ai Chi Chih becomes a part of your life!

I still remember the peace that I felt in my very first class, doing the movements. How I wanted to copy my first teacher, Maxine Wan, whose movements were very smooth, wonderful to watch.

I had other beginnings with teachers Anthea Lee and Margo Carpenter. With Anthea, I realized I wanted to do the movements better and with Margo I realized I wanted to teach T'ai Chi Chih. Margo had a softness about her and her movements and I worked hard to get to that level. Carmen Brocklehurst and Pam Towne also helped. I attended retreats in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and the more information that was shared with me, the better my movements became.

After the Teacher Training in Edmonton in September 2005, I was again beginning – now beginning to teach T'ai Chi Chih. I felt so happy inside that I could finally share with others what I had felt. My hope was to assist others in helping themselves on a journey to good health, wellness, peace and joy.

BEGINNING AT THE BEGINNING

How does one begin such important work? I talked with my husband and family. I asked questions of everyone involved in T'ai Chi Chih, my Teacher Training classmates and more experienced teachers. Everyone was open and honest about his or her experiences. Thanks to all of you – Sandy, Jerry, Rita, Margo, Tamara, Yvette, Maureen and so many others.

I started slowly but with determination and love. New teachers may make mistakes, but that's all right. It's a learning experience.

The beauty of T'ai Chi Chih is that it really sells itself. When we share personal experi-

ences, other people ask us to teach them the movements. We can also offer free demonstrations in offices and at shopping malls, in our homes and friends' homes. It just seems to catch on.

Other teachers are a wonderful source of referral as well. If they aren't offering a class at a certain time, they still try to make it happen and pass along another teacher's name or the T'ai Chi Chih Web site address. The most important advice I can give is to value yourself and your expertise but remain flexible (like the bamboo) in making it work for yourself and people who want to learn.

DETERMINING THE DETAILS

It's important to listen to your potential students' needs. Do they want an eight-week class? Ten-week or twelve-week? A weekend workshop? 'Part A' and 'Part B' workshops to divide up the 20 movements? Private or semi-private lessons? Classes once or twice a week? Daytime or evening? Is it a mixed-age group? Do students have special needs? Will they provide a space or must you find one?

Once you've identified the group's needs, consider whether you're able to satisfy them. Be sure a class fits you comfortably and, if necessary, negotiate with the group or the person, or you may not be a happy teacher.

Costs are important to consider as well. I believe we should value our service and our time. Consider our training and the costs we incur to gather information, books, videos, etc. Take into account the costs of putting on the class – not just our time, but gas, parking, space rental fees, photocopying, advertising, business cards and brochures, music, possibly including a book or DVD with each person's registration, a boom box, a bag to carry items, shoes, and

clothing with the T'ai Chi Chih logo. It's important to be flexible. We might charge special-needs groups less but larger groups or companies more. We might volunteer for some groups, or hold a couples class or parent and child class where people can register 2-for-1. We also have to consider whether enough people will enroll to cover costs. Sometimes we may want to gather for a monthly practice and just request just a donation, for the teacher or for a charity.

SETTLING THE SPECIFICS

I generally charge \$90 for an eight-week class (no book or video included). If I paid no space rental fee, I would receive most of that \$90 per student. If that were the case, I might offer a class for a smaller group, since my costs wouldn't be so high, or I might reduce my fee. If I were paying high rent for the space, I might offer a class only when I had enough people to cover my costs.

When I'm hired by a hospital or organization that wants to pay a flat fee for an eight- or ten-week class, I judge the time involved and require a minimum or maximum number of students, considering the space. I have received anywhere from \$240 to \$360 for an eight-week class.

REAPING THE REWARDS

I wish all new teachers a good experience in beginning their classes. You will learn a lot about yourself and other people. You can ask other teachers for advice; please feel free to contact me.

The love T'ai Chi Chih puts in my heart allows me to teach classes to everyone, young and old, able and not, rich and poor. I see the peace and joy that come over each and every person, and that is the ultimate reward.

Teaching Rocking Motion BY AMY TYKSINSKI /ALBUQUERQUE, NM

FOR BEGINNING STUDENTS who have never been exposed to T'ai Chi Chih before, Rocking Motion is one of the most difficult movements in the series for them in which to experience "softness and continuity" early on. Instead, they frequently experience balance problems, momentum challenges and locked knees. So, to address these issues, before moving I have taken to starting the first class out with a multi-sensory tactile exploration of softness. Amy Hackenberg, my teacher, first exposed me to this idea and it has proven to be quite helpful. Students experience holding, touching and feeling a very soft cloth (called Suede Rayon at the fabric store) as their first concrete connection to "softness."

Then, after demonstrating the movement in its whole to give them a visual

imprint, I first address the feet and the weight shift. The T'an T'ien is key in this explanation, as it is the guiding element (not hinging at the hips, bending forward, and sticking out their behinds to shift backwards or locking their knees and catapulting up on their toes to come forwards). I ask students to place a hand on the T'an T'ien as they very slowly (very very slowly!) begin to shift their weight forward (not up!) Finally, as the weight comes forward enough, the heels may rise, as a response to the weight shift (and the Chi) rather than a self-propelled pushing with the toes. There is a big difference! Softly, evenly, the heels return to the floor and the essential, subtle but important release occurs: that of the knees. The instant the heels touch down, the backs of the knees must soften to absorb the weight shift backwards, to allow the balance

to remain centered, to ground the movement. This is their first exposure to one of the key elements in T'ai Chi Chih: allowing the weight to shift onto a softened knee. Slowly, still with hand on the T'an T'ien, students are encouraged to feel their way through flowing backwards until the toes are motivated to rise, but only the toes. The ball mound of the big toe stays on the ground. If students are wearing shoes, I instruct them to allow the toes to rise inside their shoes, but that the shoe will not come off the ground at all (balance is too adversely affected in shoes otherwise). As soon as the weight begins to shift forward again, the knees soften to allow the centering and flowing of the movement to occur.

CONTINUED ON P. 23

Teaching Rocking Motion BY JUDY GEORGE / ROSEVILLE, MN

I START ALL MY MOVEMENTS from the ground up / with the intention of choosing to flow with softness and proper body.

Grounding. Sinking into soles of feet.

Aligning body with softness.

Stacking ankles, knees, hips & shoulders.

Soften your knees one to three inches.

Rock on soles of feet like a rocking chair.

It's a forward/ back movement, with a slight up and down motion as well.

Open and close the knee joint.

Allow the arms to rise with the weight shift onto balls of feet as arms float up with palms up.

Palms turn gracefully down as arms float down connecting the flat feet to floor then raising toes slightly.

Focus on soles as the weight shifts front and back.

We are massaging thousands of nerves in the soles of our feet.

In several cultures, the foot is considered to be a conduit to spirituality and general wellness.

Move slowly as you would slow motion in a dream.

Wrists soft and pliable.

Elbows close to side of body.

Knees need to bend.



Justin Speaks at New Mexico Bookstore

MEMBERS OF the general public had a rare opportunity to learn about T'ai Chi Chih and Eastern philosophy directly from Justin in person when he spoke at Bookworks in Albuquerque on April 17.

About 50 people crowded into the beloved, independent bookstore to learn more about TCC and about Justin's travels and studies throughout India and Japan, as recorded in his new book, *Gateway to Eastern Philosophy & Religion*.

"Learning this practice just might change your life," said the Bookworks event coordinator.

True to form, Justin was humorous, engaging, and converted quite a few of the uninitiated. He certainly didn't act his age!

Good Karma Publishing works to keep T'ai Chi Chih books, DVDs and videos stocked in bookstores across the country so that all who wish to can find out about this priceless practice. Bookworks staff took things a step further by asking the originator to personally come and talk.

From the message "Justin Stone Speaks on T'ai Chi Chih" displayed on the shopping center's marquee to the smiling faces among the gathered crowd, it was clear that TCC was reaching a whole new group of people that night.

Retreat with Carmen Brocklehurst SEPT. 27-30, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

FEEL THE JOY OF T'AI CHI CHIH and go deeper in your practice. Carmen Brocklehurst, a TCC teacher for 27 years, will lead this retreat, designed for those who have already learned the movements.

The retreat will take place from 8pm Thursday through lunch on Sunday at the Spiritual Renewal Center, nestled in the gorgeous bosque (woods) along the Rio Grande River.

The \$225 cost includes lodging (private bedroom with communal bath), all meals and snacks. The center is a new, modern facility with beautiful grounds including a pond, walking paths, and a labyrinth.

For more information, contact Judy Hendricks at 505/284-3345 (work), 505/897-3810, or judyhendricks@comcast.net.

Justin speaks at Bookworks.



TCC Finance 101

DOUG HARNED / ALBUQUERQUE, NM

WHEN JUSTIN SUGGESTED I write an article for *The Vital Force* about the Albuquerque T'ai Chi Chih Association finances, my initial reaction was, "You've got to be kidding – talk about boring." After a little consideration, however, it is anything but boring.

The T'ai Chi Chih Association receives 30% to 35% of its income from donations. Without these donations there is no way the Albuquerque T'ai Chi Chih Center would be financially viable. It has been suggested that this is a terrible business model. This is true, and it is exactly the point. T'ai Chi Chih is not a business.

Whenever I think about this I'm reminded of two things Justin has talked about. The first is that the sincerity of T'ai Chi Chih teachers is the foundation of the practice. The second is a story of the first T'ai Chi Chih teachers. A group of these teachers had successfully taught their first classes. Afterward they approached Justin and handed him checks for a portion of the profit they had made (a very well intentioned show of appreciation).

Justin tore up the checks and to this day has not accepted any money from any teachers for their efforts. Are these issues all related? I say YES! And not in any way that can be considered boring.

Thank you to Justin for this teaching. And many thanks to all who have donated to the Albuquerque T'ai Chi Chih Association throughout the years.

Greetings from Newfoundland and Labrador

BY SHEILA LEONARD / NEWFOUNDLAND, CANADA

T'AI CHI CHIH IS ALIVE AND WELL in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada's most easterly province. It continues to be both pleasure and privilege to share T'ai Chi Chih and to see it en-JOYed here by so many from coast to coast.

Some days I think, "If only there were more of me here (more teachers, that is)," as interest expands and deepens and students experience its wonder for themselves. That, too, will come with time and when the time is right. A handful of students – east, central and west – have expressed an interest in pursuing teacher training. I still dream of hosting an intensive here and maybe eventually a teacher accreditation! But travel abroad we shall, if we need to.

Meanwhile, last fall all of our T'ai Chi Chih community members here in Newfoundland were personally invited to celebrate Justin's 90th birthday in some way in November, wherever we found ourselves. Some of us gathered to celebrate Justin at The Lantern, where I teach. After some decorating to catch the festive spirit, we

began our full practice, followed by snacks and conversation and even a few prizes. We were so happy so many were able to be there. Joy indeed did abound!

Next year we hope to celebrate #91 and we hope even more can join us. So glad to hear Justin is going strong and looking forward to several more good years of T'ai Chi Chih.

It also continues to be both pleasure and privilege to be part of the worldwide T'ai Chi Chih community. My students (well over 500 by now) and I send renewed love and gratitude to Justin for the gift of T'ai Chi Chih, and also to students and teachers everywhere for helping it keep on going and growing, for it truly is a gift.

As Justin says, "T'ai Chi Chih is a service to humanity. It is a form of love." And, I might suggest, a way of actively contributing to the even wider community of all creation, spreading joy, peace and love and so much more wherever we are and beyond.



Currently, a special weekend is being planned here for mid July to which I have invited teacher Dan Pienciak, who hosts many of the New Jersey area events. It is another way of supporting students in their practice as well as encouraging more serious students as would-be teachers. It is a golden opportunity for students here to experience another teacher besides me and to benefit from Dan's giftedness and his love for T'ai Chi Chih. Do send us wonderful energy as plans unfold. We're open to guests who have their CFA ("Come From Away")!

I'm looking forward to joining many of you at the New Jersey conference in August.

New TCC Student Questionnaire

BY ANITA VESTAL / POINCIANA FL

NEW STUDENTS often remark with surprise and delight about something that has changed or improved for them since starting their T'ai Chi Chih classes. "Could this be due to T'ai Chi Chih?" they wonder. As teachers we are privileged to hear many stories of transformation from students.

How do we capture these stories and remarkable changes students note early in their practice? Some stories make it into an issue of *Blooming the Flower*. It's great to be able to tell stories to new prospects,

and how much better to be able to tell new prospects with some authority about the changes your own students have observed.

This is the idea behind the Student Reaction Questionnaire being piloted by a handful of TCC teachers. It includes 12 questions relating to physical, mental, emotional and spiritual areas. The questionnaire is designed to be a quick survey done before the first class starts and during the last class in a series of six, eight or more classes. It takes a couple of minutes to complete and students do not put their

name on it, so we can offer confidentiality.

If any teacher is interested in using this survey while we are in the pilot testing phase, we welcome more trials. We want to find out whether the survey is easy to understand and easy to administer. Please let us know if you'd like to use it with a newly starting group. We'll be happy to send it to anyone who would like to see it. Feedback is welcome and appreciated. Please contact: Anita Vestal, 184 Verona Drive, Poinciana FL 34759, av@anitavestal.net, 863/206-8619.

Science and the Spiritual Life: T'ai Chi Chih and a Gamma Knife®

BY LIZ HUMPHREY / ALBUQUERQUE, NM

TOGETHER, T'ai Chi Chih and a Gamma Knife have brought the power of healing into my life.

Gamma Knife: A state-of-the-art instrument that uses gamma rays (radiation) to target and destroy brain tumors within the brain non-invasively;

T'ai Chi Chih: Knowledge of the Supreme Ultimate.



The blessing of having both Dr. Marcus Keep, MD, Gamma Knife neurosurgeon, and Justin Stone, T'ai Chi Chih originator, impact my spiritual journey is a beautiful balance of science and spirituality.

T'ai Chi Chih, part of my life since 1995, has led me to daily practice, meditation and prayer.

Recently, two years after brain surgery, physicians believed a tumor had returned. I continued daily T'ai Chi Chih practice. During the time of waiting – waiting to hear from physicians, waiting to see physicians, waiting for neurological exams, waiting for physicians to meet – I continued to do T'ai Chi Chih. During this time at the Tuesday morning teacher practices in Albuquerque, Justin often asked me how I was feeling and reminded me that I could do T'ai Chi Chih as

many times a day as I needed.

The morning of the Gamma Knife treatment, I did T'ai Chi Chih. I shared with the nurses and Dr. Keep that I did T'ai Chi Chih daily. I said that because of the T'ai Chi Chih movements/stillness, I had neurological balance, strength and calmness prior to the process. Their examinations confirmed my comments. I continued talking to the nurses: "I have no pain, no physical or mental symptoms, and I am not on medications."

Dr. Keep said, "I hear you are the miracle one." I had shared my story with many about the power of the soft movements of T'ai Chi Chih during the past two years, a time period for which medical data showed poor results for life expectancy.

Justin was always there reminding me that "only a higher power can make that decision – doctors are not capable of it."

Before going into the treatment room, Dr. Keep asked me if I had any concerns. I said he should not be surprised if he saw white light and angels. He looked at me, smiling, and then said, "You don't see them yet?" The T'ai Chi Chih movements at my bedside had created a very spiritual environment. I then bowed to Dr. Keep and his blessed hands. He had shared his concerns of possibly permanently impairing my vision with the impact of the radiation and location site.

The Gamma Knife treatment began with the insertion of a frame into my head at four sites, to stabilize the frame to my brain. At this time, while experiencing pain, I practiced the "stillness" of T'ai Chi Chih and deep breathing – to the soles of my feet. I was to be without physical movement for

three 45-minute sessions. During those sessions Justin's teaching of the Gayatri Mantra began to flow through my mind. "Om Bhuh Bhuvah Svah...." Again, Justin was so near.

The true beauty was that between the three 45-minute sessions the nurses allowed me to do T'ai Chi Chih while I was still attached to a head frame and IV site. Experiencing the technology for surgical advancement and the power and spirituality of T'ai Chi Chih at the same time – again, all was in complete balance.

After the treatment I was given a list of conditions to anticipate, things that commonly occur, including eye and face swelling, infection at the frame entry site, and/or headaches. I continued to do T'ai Chi Chih. Two days later I met with Dr. Keep; he asked about my symptoms. I was able to say that I had no swelling, infection or headaches. I was without any weakened neurological signs, including vision impact or other after-effects of the Gamma Knife treatment.

I demonstrated balance by doing T'ai Chi Chih. Dr. Keep called the nurses in and said, "She really is a miracle."

My husband took me home to continue to rest. He understood that "rest" also meant T'ai Chi Chih. Justin calls to inquire, even though he knows I am ok. His thoughtfulness is always there. I am grateful. Indeed, angels are everywhere, and I continue my journey blessed with T'ai Chi Chih.

Thank you, Justin.

Merging into Wholeness

JUDY TRETHERWAY / SACRAMENTO, CA

I'M BACK TEACHING T'ai Chi Chih inside the various yards of New and Old Folsom prisons three days a week and starting spiritual support and study groups to complement the movement classes.

Here are a few student quotes from a recent class:

"I'm going to say it even if you all think I'm crazy, but I felt us all move as one."

"I feel the whole space of the chapel participating."

"It was as if we all were one heartbeat."

"I felt it more when we slowed. I could be more mindful."

"When I am aware of tension escalating on the yard, or in our cells, I release this feeling we cultivate here in T'ai Chi Chih class, this energy of harmony. It's not that I send it to those fighting. It is more of a simple release. Usually things calm down."

My poem from after that same class:

Currents of Consciousness

*Drop in together –
You, me and the universe*

*Listening, feeling, finding
A movement
A stillness
Pulsing
Pulsing off the ceiling
Pulsing off the stars*

*Rising from the ground of being
Orchestrated by sinew and bone
Alive in the transfiguration of the moment*

*Perceptions peering
inside out
outside in*

*Finding no difference
Finding only flow*

I Didn't Know What You Were Giving Us

BY MARILYN BIRCHFIELD, AGE 74, STUDENT OF DONNA McELHOSE / WILDWOOD, IL

In the summer of 2004 I found the Cancer Wellness Center of Northbrook, Illinois – a place I needed after a diagnosis of breast cancer. I met with a counselor to talk about myself and my feelings, and realized that here I might find care that I needed as much as my surgery and radiation.

T'ai Chi Chih was offered as a class at the center. I have always enjoyed watching people doing T'ai Chi Chih in the park and thought it must be something special. I decided to try it.

I arrived at class one morning in a large sunny room with lovely windows overlooking a small lake. Swans were swimming in the lake and trees and bushes framed the windows. It was the kind of place I loved and the teacher talking with students in the advanced class looked very pleasant – and not at all scary!

As soon as our teacher started the class, I liked her and knew I could learn from her. She obviously cared deeply about each student and what she was teaching. I attended class as often as I could. About a year later at the end of August 2005, I arrived at the Wellness Center not feeling well and hopeful that I would find some relief. But I had to leave the class early and later that afternoon I was admitted to the emergency room with severe vomiting, the result of an inner ear virus.

Illness affects the mind as well as the body. On my discharge from the hospital, I was feeling quite sad, depressed and lonely. Nothing seemed right and I felt quite weak.

I had missed my T'ai Chi Chih class but

had purchased a T'ai Chi Chih DVD from Donna several weeks before my illness. I sat quietly watching it and noted a new feeling of peacefulness.

For several weeks the disorientation and unpleasantness from my illness continued to affect me. I tried to do the things I needed to do, but felt frustrated and upset.

One morning I drove the short distance to Lake Michigan, where I often like to go, and climbed over the barrier rocks and down on the other side to be as close as possible to the clear blue water.

As I sat there, looking off to the lake's horizon, a change occurred. I felt my body doing the gentle movements of T'ai Chi Chih. I breathed deeply – and realized that my body was moving back and forth, doing "Rocking Motion," gently, persistently. I felt my mind and body change from depression and sadness to peace and elation. Then, exhilaration and joy.

I am beginning to learn what T'ai Chi Chih can do for me as well as others. I am awed and grateful to all who have studied and shared this gift. Thank you, dear Donna McElhose, for your dedication and commitment to us in the beginner class. Every week you come and share your gifts with us, so patiently, so beautifully. I really didn't know what you were giving us!

I also express my gratitude to the Northbrook Cancer Wellness Center for making T'ai Chi Chih available to all of us, and to Justin Stone.

(You *can* teach an old dog new tricks!)

Serenity: 2007 International T'ai Chi Chih Teacher's Conference in New Jersey

BY DORENE KRAUSE / MIDLAND PARK, NJ

At the August 9-12, 2007 International T'ai Chi Chih Teachers' Conference in Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey, teachers have the opportunity to come together to experience the total immersion of body, mind and spirit. Justin stresses the importance of attending the conference – for the community of teachers to share and grow while refining their practice and at the same time becoming better teachers.

We have often heard how important it is to fully immerse oneself in the practice of T'ai Chi Chih –
The effort of no effort

Allow the Chi to do the work.

The interconnectedness of mind and body

No one is doing T'ai Chi Chih; T'ai Chi Chih is doing itself.

All of these explanations seem to make sense to teachers of T'ai Chi Chih, but what does this total immersion FEEL like? And how can we bring this feeling to our students?

When the Chi begins to flow, and the mind and body are fully connected, movement flows from the center without thought. It means letting go of outside distractions and listening only to the inner voice, which speaks quietly and softly. It means focusing within while being guided by and travelling with the energy.

What we tell our students:

Let go of the ego, the mechanics and the intellectualization of each movement.

Allow the body to move as an integrated whole.

Don't think too much.

The body knows what to do.

Students tell me that T'ai Chi Chih practice has a meditative quality, can indeed be spiritual and almost hypnotic. The gentle, graceful movements enable us to disappear for a time and become part of the cosmic rhythm, either alone or within the energy of a group practicing together. This is immersing oneself in the practice of T'ai Chi Chih.

Come to the 2007 Conference at the Hilton Woodcliff Lake for a unique experience. Imagine – 4 days of being able to totally immerse yourself in T'ai Chi Chih movements. We know this feeling when we do our personal practice or when we practice within a small group. Magnify that feeling by 100++ teachers and become part of the strong current of flowing Chi. Feel the serenity...the unity...the essence.

The 2007 Conference Committee encourages and invites each of you to attend the conference. Join us as we sink into the essence of T'ai Chi Chih practice to nurture the growth of serenity in us, our students and our world. For more information, visit the conference website: www.kean.edu/~tcc2007

“LISTEN TO THE STILLNESS; THERE IS MUSIC IN THE SILENCE.”

(I scribbled these words on a piece of paper at my very first TCC conference in St. Louis in 2004. For me they speak volumes about immersing oneself in the essence of T'ai Chi Chih practice.)

Connecting with Others on the Spiritual Path

The T'ai Chi Chih life is a spiritual life. Attending the annual teachers conference is one of the best opportunities we have to come together with others on that path. Together, we can refine our TCC practice, reaffirm our commitment, and start the next year with renewed energy and Joy.

Here are some of Justin's reflections on a spiritual life, from the book *Heightened Awareness*:

Those of us who are led to spiritual pursuits cannot usually explain why they interest us. If we did try, we might say that we are tired of the superficial in life and looking for something of more lasting value....The spiritual path can be a lonely one because it brings us into more rarified stratas where fewer and fewer venture.

But the rewards are great! We begin to find out Who and What we are, and with this knowledge, anxieties start to fall away.

Instead of seeming to be a creature who pursues business success for a few years, then gradually deteriorates and disappears, we begin to realize that we are a creature who fills the Universe, and whose voice is a voice without limit.

It goes without saying that, as we "ascend the ladder," we approach more closely to our natural heritage, Joy.

...gratitude and divine energy will come along with our ascent, and compassion will naturally have a prominent place in our lives.

Compassion and Wisdom (not knowledge) tend to go together, and the wise man will tend to be compassionate as a matter of course; he will be "good" without any self-conscious thought of being so (and he is not to be judged by those not at his level). Kindness takes many forms....

Awareness is the mark by which we can judge the degree of progress one has made. Heightened awareness gradually becomes Universal Consciousness, and we begin to get away from the self-centered concentration we had known.

FROM *HEIGHTENED AWARENESS* BY JUSTIN STONE, PP. 75-76, ©1988. AVAILABLE FROM GOOD KARMA PUBLISHING

Why Attend the Annual Conference?

BY PAM TOWNE / OCEANSIDE, CA

I WAS FORTUNATE to be accredited to teach T'ai Chi Chih in 1984, before the first Teachers Conference was held in 1985 at Asilomar, CA. I've attended every annual conference (this year is the 22nd) because I come home feeling renewed in the essence of TCC, rededicated to my practice and teaching, and filled with loving Chi from heart connections with so many teachers.

Going to the conference has been a highlight of the year for me. Even when I was on a stringent budget it was a priority. Looking back I recall special memories...feeling the power of so many years of cumulative Chi in our group practice with over 100 teachers

moving together as one...discovering new depth to TCC...learning how to move more effortlessly...experiencing a tremendous flow of Chi...reconnecting with old friends and making new ones...gracefully concluding with a silent TCC practice on Sunday before heading home with a full heart.

Wonderful experiences await us in Woodcliff Lake. So if you are a TCC teacher who is thinking it's not worth going to the conference this year, I invite you to think again, and join me in New Jersey. You'll be glad you did!

From Good Karma Publishing

Circularity: Subject and Object Cease to be Separated

AMONG OTHER THINGS, I'm a freelance Acquisitions Editor for The Countryman Press. I was recently in New York meeting with dozens of authors who were pitching me ideas they had for new travel guides. In the course of talking to them, I learned some were well established health writers. So I pitched T'ai Chi Chih to them and they were eager to take classes so that they could write articles for magazines.

I was then pitching my stable of authors to magazine editors so that these authors could get high paying magazine work, since we can't pay them what they're worth. During the course of those exchanges, a few editors hired me to write for them.

Then, I was at a meeting with the Sales & Marketing Department and the Editorial Department at WW Norton, in my capacity as Acquisitions Editor, and I pitched Justin's DVD and photo text to them (so that we could have a bigger distribution channel). The Editorial Director suggested I contact his friend who produces and sells swimming DVDs on her Web site and gets hundreds of thousands of hits a month.

The synergy was beautiful. And the longer I stayed working, the more the circularity went round and round.



High and Low Cease to be Differentiated

I WAS IN MANHATTAN RECENTLY and had just come out of a meeting with the managing editor of *Trump* magazine on Park Avenue South. And my cell phone rang. It was a Good Karma call that had been forwarded. The teacher, who had no idea where I was, placed an order and asked me to calculate the postage for sending her package media versus priority. So I got the GKP catalog out of my briefcase and calculated her order while standing on the sidewalk.

It reminded me of the story about the Zen master who sweeps the garden, makes the tea, and cooks in the kitchen. It's all the same. What could have been a high falutin' meeting was brought down to earth by the postage calculation. The stark difference was humorous. (I felt even more grateful, though, that the *Trump* meeting never even reached that level of headiness.)

KIM GRANT / ALBUQUERQUE, NM

The Lighter Side

BY SHARON SIRKIS / COLUMBIA, MD

ONE DAY AFTER T'AI CHI CHIH CLASS at the adult daycare center, I asked Pauline, "How do you feel?" She smiled and said, "Fine as wine in the summer time." I then asked her, "What's the difference compared with the winter time?" She boldly declared, "I don't know, I don't drink!"

After discussing thinking outside of the box, and letting go, one college (University of Maryland, Baltimore County) student was very excited to tell me she could do Around the Platter with her feet. I had no clue what she was talking about, so I asked her to show me. She got down on the floor, face up, drew her knees up to her chest, and began to circle her legs around an imaginary platter! Both sides of course.

I sat down on a bench outside a store recently and struck up a conversation with a 70-year-old man. He told me he had a lot of pain in his back, and I became animated and started talking about energy healing and TCC. He crossed his hands (as if we placed our palms down when crossing in Daughter on the Mountaintop) and slowly ascended as he was making fun of me, uttering some word I believe he just made up. He said he was sorry, and that was probably rude. I just laughed and chose that as an opportunity to plant a teaching seed about TCC.

He was very set in his belief system, telling me he did believe in acupuncture but nothing else. He told me there is no scientific proof of what I was talking about. We continued a friendly banter but he refused

to budge in his thinking, although he did admit to being open minded. I laughed and said maybe one reason he refuses to believe in the energy practices is because if he found out they work, it would topple his whole belief system. He laughed and said, "Yes, I have my pride and my ego."

He continued to tell me his way of thinking was rational, and mine was not. I didn't want to argue with him, but I did want to plant a seed. I guess Prajna spoke, because I found myself leaning in with a twinkle in my eye and said, "Well, the bottom line is you're in pain, and I'm not!"

He started laughing, shook his head and index finger at me, and said, "You have a point!" I walked away laughing out loud, thoroughly satisfied and amused.

ADVICE TO NEW TEACHERS / CONTINUED FROM P. 7

Let Prajna, the Inherent Wisdom aspect of the Chi, guide you to the places to give presentations and to teach TCC. Look for the open doors and walk through them. You might ask your Self the question, "How does TCC want to express through me?" If you've been teaching a while ask, "How does TCC want to express through me newly?"

Re-read and refer often to your Teachers Manual and notes from Teacher Training Practice, teaching them as you watch yourself in a mirror. At the same time practice. Before each class, review teaching tips for the movements you will teach that day. Think about what to say to convey your instructions simply, clearly and concisely with as few words as possible. Excess verbiage keeps students in their heads instead of the soles of their feet, so keep it simple!

CONNECT, CONNECT, CONNECT

Connect with other TCC teachers in your area. It is especially sweet to practice TCC with other teachers. If your area doesn't have a TCC teacher meeting and/or practice, start one. Connect by e-mail, by phone, in person, whatever works, but do connect and support each other so you know that you are not alone out there.

Stay in contact with teachers from your Teacher Training. You share a special bond and understanding with them. It is well worth staying connected and encouraging each other as you begin teaching. Lifelong friendships may develop.

Connect with our international TCC community. Plan ahead to attend the annual Teachers Conference. It is empowering and inspiring to do TCC with 150 teachers! Consider it part of your continuing education and growth as a TCC teacher. You can find out about this year's conference, planned for August 9-12 in New Jersey, on page 18, on the registration form inside this newsletter, and at www.taichichih.org.

Audit a Teacher Training within a year of being accredited. It will be a very different experience from your accreditation course, and you will learn so much. Continue to audit a Teacher Training at least every three years. Once you are accredited, the only charge to audit is a minimal facility use fee (usually \$10-15 per day) plus room and board. What a bargain!

Attend whatever TCC workshops, retreats and intensives you can. These are ideal opportunities to refine and deepen your TCC practice while connecting with others in our community.

As you Practice, Teach and Connect, the Chi will evolve you, teach you, and connect you with the Universal Chi and the Cosmic Rhythm of Life. Enjoy teaching T'ai Chi Chih!

KNOW YOUR STUFF / CONTINUED FROM P. 7

Often a deeper understanding of T'ai Chi Chih does not come from changing our movements but noticing what we are doing from a different view. Practicing with feeling, practicing with awareness, not emotional or intellectual awareness but feeling awareness. Being aware of all parts of a movement and how movements blend together to create the pattern as we move. And, while the focus should remain on the soles of the feet or the T'an T'ien, there should be an alertness to the whole.

T'ai Chi Chih is almost like a living, breathing practice. Not that it changes and grows and evolves, but those who practice it find their practice changes and evolves and grows with renewed understanding. It is alive in us. It is a practice that can continue to challenge us to go deeper, to find those subtle nuances that open up a whole new view of our practice. After 24 years of doing T'ai Chi Chih, I am still learning about T'ai Chi Chih and me. I relish those continuing moments of discovery. But it is not done by going on automatic each time I do my practice and it is not done by dissecting my practice each time. There are times for learning, questioning and working on our practice and there are times to let go and flow effortlessly. Balance in all things.

TEACHING TIPS / CONTINUED FROM P. 7

One lesson we worked on was paying attention to the top arm/hand in the Taffy movements. The students did Pulling Taffy several times. I then asked them which arm they were most aware of when doing the movement. One hundred percent said the underneath arm. We talked about the top arm and what direction it moved, how much, the angle, etc. We then did the movement with the attention focused on the top arm as it moved past the other arm, traveling downward, making sure to be aware of the palms passing.

I pointed out how the majority of the movement was going in one direction: stepping to the left, weight shift going left, hips turning to the left, left arm going left. It became obvious how important it was for the right arm/hand to move in a downward direction and ground the movement, balancing the majority of motion going the other direction. Often the downward moving arm floats out to the side too soft and empty. Be aware of that arm/hand and use it to balance the move. Let the arm/hand move downward as if the palm were drawing down to meet the earth.

T'AI CHI CHIH COMMUNITY CALENDAR

DATE	WHAT & WITH WHOM	WHERE	CONTACT
May 31- June 3	TCC Intensive w/ Sandy	Albuquerque, NM TCC Center	Ann Rutherford ruthergary@aol.com
June 1-3	TCC Workshop w/ Sr. Antonia	Warrenville, IL Cenacle Center	Cenacle Center 630-393-1231
July 13 July 14	Teachers Workshop Serious Student Workshop w/ Sr. Antonia	St. Paul Carondelet Center	Sue Bitney smbitney@comcast.net 612-866-0040
July 14	Teacher Renewal w/ Pam	Chicago Area	Donna McElhose dmcelhosechi@aol.com 847-223-6065
July 16-21	Teacher Training w/ Pam	Chicago Area Warrenville, IL Cenacle Center	Donna McElhose dmcelhosechi@aol.com 847-223-6065
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. 5-8	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
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
March 1	Teacher Renewal w/ Sandy	Ringwood, NJ Franciscan Center	Dan Pienciak wakeupdaniel@aol.com 732-988-5573
March 2-7	Teacher Training w/ Sandy	Ringwood, NJ Franciscan Center	Dan Pienciak wakeupdaniel@aol.com 732-988-5573
April 7-12	Teacher Training w/ Pam	St. Paul, MN Carondelet Center	Sue Bitney smbitney@comcast.net
April 2008	TCC Retreat w/ Sr. Antonia	Albuquerque, NM Place TBD	Ann Rutherford ruthergary@aol.com
Summer 2008	TEACHER CONFERENCE	Northern California	www.taichichih.org

Passing Clouds

White
Puffy
Flexibly
Sailing across
The vast sky
Passing
Clouds

JAN KIRCH,
STUDENT OF DONNA McELHOSE, IL

Dandelions

Blooms
Explode
Amidst Green
Impressionists
Golden glow
Sunshine
Joy

JAN KIRCH

A
Spirit
Enlightened
Like a bird seeks
Nourishment
Shelter
GOD

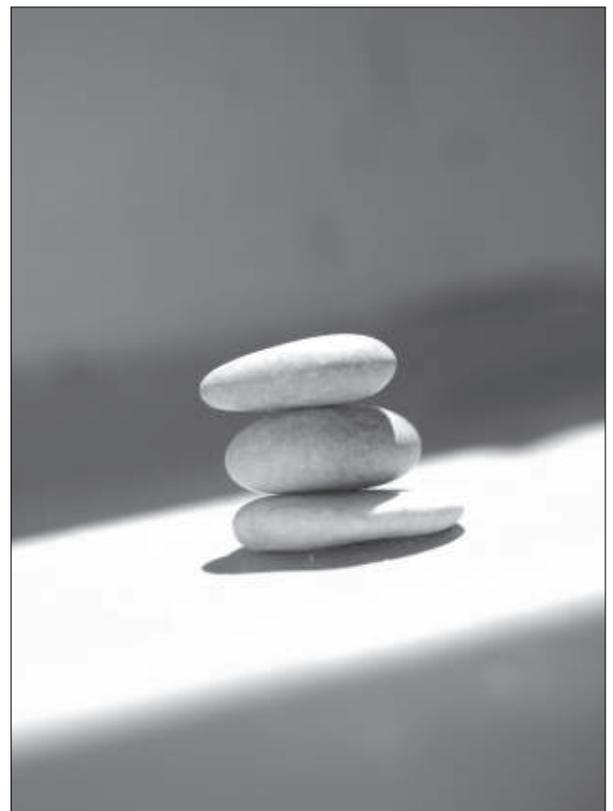
RAMONA ZALAPI,
STUDENT OF DONNA McELHOSE, IL

TEACHING ROCKING MOTION / CONTINUED FROM P. 13

Key elements in the arms: the weight shift forward and backward of the legs must guide the arms. This introduces another key concept for the rest of the series, so I make a big deal of it: the arms are simply responders to the weight shift, not initiators or leaders of the movement. Arms come only to chest level at the “high” point, hands softly turn over as the student “sinks down into sand,” softening the knees to allow the weight to flow back. As the hands pass the hips, make sure there is a complete release of the wrists. At the “low point” hands go past the hips just a bit before they gently turn palm up to repeat the cycle. The synchronization of the arms and legs in Rocking Motion is challenging mostly due to locked knees (which affect balance), moving too quickly or “over-efforting” (being at the mercy of momentum rather than a receptivity or responsiveness to the weight shift) or overzealous “alpha” arms. These are three places I ask students to examine in themselves when they are having trouble with balance.

Another image I call on to describe the movement of Rocking Motion is that of a rocking chair. How effortlessly can students embody the motion of a rocking chair, with the movement emerging from the ground up?

We end class with another contact with the cloth to reinforce the softness that is theirs and will develop as their bodies learn to allow the Chi to move them, and not the other way around.



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