

The Vital Force

JOURNAL OF THE T'AI CHI CHIH® COMMUNITY

Volume 26, No. 3

for teachers & students

August 2009

Justin's Words

Spreading Service BY JUSTIN STONE

Sister Antonia phoned to say “hello” recently, and I was glad to hear from her. She has been traveling a lot this past year and her trips have been very effective for T'ai Chi Chih. Mainly, she has staged retreats in various cities, introducing TCC to new students, planning teacher's training classes for experienced students, and spreading the feeling of service in many directions. I respect her highly for these efforts.

Sister has greatly improved her own performance since being appointed “Guide,” and her vocal efforts are very

effective. She has a great ability to resist fatigue as she moves from place to place. No doubt she is physically and mentally very strong. It's very evident she is not doing this for profit as she is living under a vow of poverty. She has traveled as far as Italy to encourage new teachers there.

I write this to spread the word that I am delighted with my appointment of Sister and her efforts. Naturally, New Jersey has become a hotbed of T'ai Chi Chih and its service.



*We do not
all see
the same
world,
which is
a reflection
of ourselves.*

- Justin Stone

From The Editor

- RENEW ON-LINE !! -

We're trying to make your lives easier: *The Vital Force* now offers secure, on-line renewals. Visit www.taichichih.org/vital_force.php. Subscribe for one, two, or three years (domestic and foreign) and hit the blue "BUY NOW" button. It's almost as easy as one-two-three. If you don't have a gmail account with a password (to use on the right side of the screen), you can use your regular email address and a made-up password (on the left side of the screen). Of course, you can still order via our post box and check.

- RENEWING (IN GENERAL) -

The mailing label for your *Vital Force* contains your subscription expiration date. A few weeks after you receive your last paid issue, we send you a "snail mail" renewal form – printed on colored paper to grab your attention. About sixty percent of subscribers renew immediately using this form. Then, a month before the next issue goes out, we send an email reminder to those who have still not renewed, and another twenty percent renew via snail mail or using the on-line link we provide. Because this process represents a great deal of time for a tiny volunteer operation, we ask that you renew on-line and renew early. Although we strive for a one hundred percent renewal rate, we gain and lose subscribers in unequal (and decreasing) number. Thanks for your help in spreading the word about *The Vital Force*.

- CREATIVE GIFT GIVING -

We're up to \$851 and counting – that's the amount given in one person's name to *The Vital Force*. One particularly devoted teacher, who

wishes to remain anonymous, recently celebrated a 60th birthday. Since she was not in need of anything material, she asked attendees to her celebration to consider making a donation to *The Vital Force*, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. (Donations are fully tax deductible.) Apparently her friends and family are well aware of her enthusiasm for T'ai Chi Chih and couldn't resist her request.

Perhaps this is something you might consider for an upcoming celebration or holiday. We can assure you that the funds are put to very good use in distributing *The Vital Force* and in upgrading the website, www.taichichih.org. We deeply thank this teacher and her generous circle for their gifts and this idea.

- PHOTOS AVAILABLE FOR USE -

Jim Eagle, who posted dozens of 2008 conference photos on Flickr, the photo sharing web site, has graciously offered use of his banner photos (featuring quotations by Justin Stone) that appeared in the November 2008 *Vital Force*. Sheila Leonard, who spearheaded this initiative with Jim, suggests using them on your web site or in promotional materials. They are available for download at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/jeagle/sets/72157606285837025/>. From there, click on the thumbnail photo you want; then click on the small magnifying glass directly above the photo labeled "all sizes;" then click on "original;" and then click on "download the original size." This downloads the largest (most detailed) photo.

KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

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Submission Guidelines

Please send articles as Word documents, electronically, to tcc@kimgrant.com. If possible, please tailor your submission to a particular section; the newsletter will hang together better that way. A 1/4 page in this newsletter runs about 200 words; a 1/2 page is 400 words.

We are always in need of photos and artwork. Please send high resolution jpgs, which the Editor will crop and edit. If you have 10-12 pieces of related artwork – calligraphy, drawings, photographs, or something that will reproduce well in B/W – please submit them for consideration in an entire issue. *The Vital Force* reserves the right to edit submission for length and clarity.

Web Site Updates

The on-line calendar and database (for www.taichichih.org) will be updated within a week of the following deadlines: January 15, March 1, April 15, June 1, July 15, September 1, October 15, & December 1.

Editor: Kim Grant • Membership: Mary Ruiz • Submissions: Send articles, poetry and photos to Kim Grant at 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 \$40/year, \$50/year for international. Members receive four issues of The Vital Force. The printed annual Teachers Directory costs an additional \$15/year. It is also available for free at www.taichichih.org. If, for some reason, you do not receive an issue, send an e-mail to: vfmembership@yahoo.com. • Design: Amy K. Brown

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Deadline: Oct 1

Publication Date: Early Nov
Musings on softness:

"Our attitudes change and we become more like the bamboo rather than the oak."

Pulling Taffy

Deadline: Jan 1

Publication Date: Early Feb
Musings on the importance

of practice: "You cannot appease the hunger by reading the menu."

Pulling Taffy, Variation #1, Anchor

Deadline: April 1

Publication Date: Early May

Musings on moving: "When the *Chi* flows freely and is balanced, the Cosmic Rhythm begins to move us."

Pulling Taffy,

Variation #2, Wrist Circles

Deadline: July 1

Publication Date: Early Aug

Musings on gratitude: Awareness (i.e. how has your TCC practice informed your experience of awareness)

Pulling in the Energy, Variation #3, Perpetual Motion

The Business Of No Business

BY LARRY BLOOM, SANDY SPRINGS, GA

I am writing this article with a sense of humility augmented by recognition that my experience with T'ai Chi Chih is limited to being an eager practicing student over the last 12 months.

Accordingly, much learning lies ahead. Nevertheless when my instructor, Sheryl Adair, first made it known she thought TCC would be helpful to people in business, it was like dangling bait in front of a hungry fish (i.e. me). As I further pondered the potential benefits, the hook was deeply set. As a former executive in a public company, I understand first-hand that the worry and attachment to short term results, fierce competition, and rigid internal structures all contribute to a business environment that can become quite toxic to the very individuals chartered to make them a success. And I have come to personally appreciate that TCC can make a difference.

*its growth
as a service
to humanity
could be termed
'the business
of no-business'*

People today are busier than they have ever been. Internet, email, blogs, social networks, blackberries, cell phones, and text messaging have created an environment where multi-tasking is the norm at home and at work. Accordingly, most companies are investing to improve individual productivity, adding processes to eliminate waste and error, and trying to accomplish more with fewer people. Paradoxically, employees are increasingly being paid for the thinking they do, and yet corporations are doing little to improve the quality of their employee's thinking. So, the very pace and demand placed on employees in the name of progress often creates the opposite effect – fostering stress, anxiety, and impatience.

This is possibly one reason that Justin advises us that “making TCC a commercial activity is a change that will kill it.” Those who would turn TCC into a “corporate profit structure” likely haven't thought this all the way through. TCC is called the “effort of no effort” and its growth as a service to humanity could be termed “the business of no-business.” So to be clear, any reflection in this area is done (on my part) purely within the spirit and philosophy of TCC.

Turning back to the problem of “corporate toxicity,” I sense that the gift of TCC is part of the solution to this problem. As the literature states, the graceful movements require no strain, no special apparatus or clothing, and are easy for anyone to learn. I believe that circulating and balancing *Chi* will have many positive effects for business people as it calms and relaxes, reduces stress, increases energy, clears the mind, and leads to gains in mental and physical

health. However, my business experience suggests these features are not easy to appreciate by multi-tasking corporate decision makers. It calls for a re-framing into more readily apparent benefits. I sense there is a significant possibility to achieve extraordinarily desirable results if TCC is practiced by employees together within a business.

Outcomes may include:

- Improved quality of thinking, reasoning, and decision-making;
- Fostering creativity and innovation;
- Improved communications and the ability to relate to others;
- Clearing the way for individuals to take correction easily;
- Increasing one's ability to enjoy every moment, both at work and at play.

As business leadership becomes more aware of the benefits of taking a holistic approach to their employees, there will likely be “early adopters” that embrace TCC as a gift to employees that gives back to the company. The *yin* and *yang* will then be more in balance and the toxic environment will improve.



The Poetry of TCC

BY HELEN HILL CROZIER, SNOHOMISH, WA

Slow down breathe relax, a moving meditation circulates the *Chi*
Feet and hands float up, soothing continuity, soft rocking motion
Separate *yin yang*, beautiful bird flaps its wings, integrate *yang yin*
Draw from *tan t'ien*, it's effort of no effort around the platters
Moving in a dream, circular center bass drum, one integral whole
Daughters together on mountaintop or valley circle hands to rest
Feel energy flow from polarity of hands, carry ball to side
Swim through heavy air, visualize distant star, push pull energy
Many taffies now, shifting weight pulls hands apart with wide turn of waist
Swim through heavy air, groovy-grounded soles of feet working the pulley
Light at top of head, planets circling the sun, light at the temple
Jagged joyous breath flowing like a deep river, passing clouds to right
Six sounds loud whisper, say *ho hu szu hsu hsi chui*, savor the stillness
Grateful for our gifts, cosmic consciousness pose is graceful conclusion

Awareness – Do We Want To Know Ourselves?

By CARMEN L. BROCKLEHURST, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

What are you feeling, this very minute, because of your body position? Simply by being asked the question, many people have a tendency to change the way they're sitting or standing. But that is not the issue. Without judgment, can you say how your body feels?

One student noticed that her feet hurt after she finished T'ai Chi Chih practice and asked why TCC had made her feet hurt. I said that TCC was not causing it; they had most likely been hurting for a long time but she had probably just become aware of the pain. She thought for a minute, smiled, and said, "You know, I noticed my feet

this morning but didn't give them a second thought." This tendency to be unaware doesn't end with the body.

*making
a mental
decision
does not
necessarily
put motion
into action*

tion. Why? Because TCC helps us become clear and honest about our feelings, and then they are easy to change. One student said she'd recently become agitated with her daughter, whom she'd always found delightful. After practicing TCC, the real problem became clear: the daughter was getting ready to leave the nest and the mother resented being left behind. She recognized the truth of what was being revealed, but it would have been tough to suggest that her daughter's leaving was the source of the

It also happens with our emotions. Have you heard yourself say to someone, "You make me feel happy (or sad)." The truth is that if we become quiet for a few minutes we would find that the emotion had been building for a while. One beauty of TCC is that if we are sad, practicing TCC helps change the emo-



problem. Once she accepted this new awareness, the relationship moved to a new level and has remained good.

If five monkeys are sitting on a fence and one *decides* to jump off, how many monkeys remain on the fence? Although four seems a reasonable answer, it is not absolutely the right answer. Making a mental decision does not necessarily put motion into action. All five monkeys might remain sitting on the fence. It's important to be aware of how we fool ourselves mentally. As long as we're aware that we're not following through with our commitments to ourselves (like wanting to do a daily TCC practice but finding excuses not to), there is still hope. This is where deeper awareness becomes so important. That awareness is the tug within that invited us to try TCC in the first place. Are we aware that it was not a small self that started the unfolding process? A small opening to the inner heart of our being invited us to release the unfolding of the Knowledge of the Supreme Ultimate with us. It is truly our way of learning to love and share the *Chi*.

Pyramid Poems

when
the heart
is open
we allow the
Chi to flow
freely
through
– CF

peace
is the
wonderous
ability
to be with
what is
now
– JAN MAPLES

our
feelings
soar when we
play with our *Chi*
how grateful
can one
be
– BO WADDELL

oh
laughter!
that knowing
that we all know
smile on us
soften
me
– BARBARA KRISTOFF

New Awareness Through Closer Movement Examination

By CATHY DALTON, MAHTOMEDI, MN

My initial thought about Pulling In The Energy? It's not one of my favorite movements. It might be easier to write about a something else. But perhaps by more closely examining Pulling In The Energy, I'd discover more about my relationship with it. Perhaps I would sink into the movement in a new and different way. I geared up for the challenge.

I've heard Pulling In The Energy taught as an upside down version of Around The Platter. Yes, it looks like that and yet, it's an entirely different movement. When I begin Pulling In The Energy with palms turned upward, the position of my hands alone speaks volumes. During this movement, I am open to *Chi*, change, stars, new ideas. I am open to flow and balance in a way that differentiates this movement.

Maybe this has been the root of my resistance to Pulling In The Energy—a movement I've often done more with my thoughts. Maybe my resistance to sinking into the movement has actually been resistance to being open to change. What if the change my hands *say* I'm open to is not the change I want? What if these new ideas cause me to question strongly held beliefs? What if I am asked to change in ways that make me no longer be me?

Writing these questions make them seem like silly questions. Of course, by doing T'ai Chi Chih I will change. Certainly, strongly held beliefs will be questioned. Clearly, the changes that come will not take me *away* from myself – but will, instead, bring me *closer* to who I am. And yet, there is a resistance. Have you felt this yourself? Through thoughtful examination of Pulling In The Energy, I've discovered a blockage to the flow of *Chi*. I know that this new awareness will enhance my practice of TCC and I am grateful.

This is also the only movement for which Justin has told us we can use a visualization. Imagining energy coming from the most distant star into our fingertips is a powerful visualization. Yet, there is more to the movement.

Neither liking nor disliking a movement has anything to do with the flow of *Chi*. I don't believe *Chi* cares about such matters. The purpose of all the movements, despite the interference of thought, is to move and balance the *Chi*.



Pulling In Awareness & Connection

By RITA FOSTER, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

Pulling In The Energy is one of my favorite T'ai Chi Chih movements. Along with the Cosmic Consciousness Pose, it reminds me of my connection to everything in the universe through the *Chi*. It's very exciting and comforting to me (and I hope to my students, too).

Before finding TCC I was a high school and college science teacher. I taught many students about our wonderful universe, one that includes everything from the smallest nuclear particle to the farthest star and every animate and inanimate being in between. We are all part of one another, since we all come from stardust and exist with a common energy (which I now call *Chi*).

When I began to practice TCC I was much more in touch with my intellect than my body. In fact, it took several years before I felt the *Chi* at all. The first time was with Pulling In The Energy! Gradually, through daily practice, I've become more aware of my body and of the *Chi* that flows through me. I'm very grateful for that awareness, and I never do Pulling In The Energy without remembering that first time. Nor do I ever forget to use Justin's words when I teach: "As we circle the hands from left to right, we visualize the energy from the most distant star coming in through the fingertips. This visualization is important." (*T'ai Chi Chih Photo Text*, page 56)

Pulling In The Energy

By AMY TYKSINSKI, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Editor's Note: Amy attended a recent TCC retreat given by Carmen Brocklehurst and has written up what Carmen taught for each movement in the hope that others may benefit.

The energy comes into the tips of the fingers, up the arm, and into the chest. To close the movement, bring the foot back simultaneously with the hands. (Don't bring the hands back to the front center of chest and *then* bring in the front foot.) Just be open to the energy coming through the fingertips and be willing to let it come through. The energy wants to be part of us; it is what we are. If the head is tilted up, this closes the back of the neck. Learn to bring the chin down just a little bit. For advanced students, feel the five energies (five *pranas*, five aspects of *Chi*, or five colors) coming through the fingertips. Each fingertip draws in its own color, and each finger will reveal which color flows into it. It's important to learn about these energies and colors through the actual experience of it rather than being told which is which.

A Future Filled With Hope

By Sr. ANTONIA COOPER, OSF, NORTH PLAINFIELD, NJ

We have every reason to trust that *Chi* will continue to inspire, touch, transform, renew, and generate a T'ai Chi Chih future that is filled with promise and hope. This assurance is based upon the inspiration and guidance that resonated with Justin Stone when the TCC form was originally revealed to him by divine inspiration in 1973/74.

The account of this experience is include in the *T'ai Chi Chih Photo Text* (pages 12 and 13) and is well worth your reflective reading. Justin often recalls that he was merely the vehicle through which this form was to enter the world.

We each have a personal story of how TCC entered our life. Some of us sought TCC out, others experienced TCC as coming to them, and still others took a TCC class by chance – found out it was “Chih” and not “Ch’uan” – and discovered more than they could have imagined. All of us found its practice to be profoundly transformative.

The simple statement “T'ai Chi Chih changed my life!” can only happen through the evolutionary quality of the practice. Transformation is a product of *Chi* that fundamentally rearranges, aligns, and informs every aspect of our mind, body, and spirit right down to the very core of who we are. This process synchronizes with our individuality in its own way and time frame. It is totally beyond us, yet totally part of each pulsating cell and atom that makes us who we are and brings us beyond ourselves. This evolution is not dictated according to the ego, yet the ego too begins to be transformed back to the “uncarved block” of our fullest potential. *Chi* cannot be controlled; it can only be freed to circulate and balance.

Like *Chi*, the future of TCC can never be planned nor can it be controlled. TCC's future must be set free if it is to flow and bring balance – to whomever, whatever, wherever, and however it is destined. To try to commercialize or organize this free

flow would be impossible, given the universal nature of this energy. All we can do is allow it to flow, without any hype, and to follow its lead. After all, isn't this the way it originally inspired, touched, transformed, and renewed each one of you? We've allowed the *Chi* to shape us; let's trust the *Chi* to shape our future as well.

I realize, from communicating with many of you recently (by way of phone, email, or writing), that this is your hope too. Yes, TCC's future is full of hope and promise because so many of you play a key role in that future, and I am blest to be part of it all.

Wishing you peace and all good.

*we've allowed
the Chi
to shape us;
let's trust
the Chi
to shape
our future
as well*



Pyramid Poems

birds
fly low
close to earth
sunshine above
almost gone
birds cry
rain
– GARY SWANSON

Chi
flowing
balancing
circulating
life is now
forget
then
– GARY SWANSON

cold
winter
long dark days
I want to sleep
through the night
into
June
– KATHLEEN VANVICKLE

you
open
channels to
build energy
resulting
healing
you
– KATHLEEN ZUTZ

grace
mercy
forgiveness
practice these three
you will find
peace of
mind
– MATT FINLAYSON

Concepts Are Limiting

By SANDY McALISTER, HAYWARD, CA

Often when we teach we use images to get across an idea or shape. For Around The Platter we might say imagine the fingers tracing the edge of a plate; in Bass Drum we might say imagine the fingers going around the outside edges of a big bass drum – to get the idea of the hands circling while keeping the same distance apart. Images can be useful in the beginning to help a student see in their mind the shape we are trying to explain or the pathway their hands/arms should be following when executing a move. After a student has learned the shape of a movement then it is time to let the image go. It then becomes limiting. We must go beyond the concrete idea to feeling the movement. The mind must be free rather than locked in a concept. As we move we might say things like “push the bad energy away” or “pull the good energy in” or “as we open the hands we share the energy with the world” or “gather the *Chi* and bring it into the heart or *tan t'ien*.” When we do this we are adding our own interpretation to T'ai Chi Chih. These are nice thoughts but they are not TCC and they engage the mind.

TCC was meant to be done with a still and unthinking mind. Its purpose is to circulate and balance the *Chi*. We do not direct the *Chi*. We move and the *Chi* flows. If we tie up the mind with thoughts of each particular movement doing a specific thing with the energy, we are limiting the ability of the *Chi* to flow its natural pathway.

The only movement we engage the mind with is Pulling In The Energy – by visualizing “energy from the most distant star coming in through the fingertips.” It took many years for me to get comfortable with this movement while trying to find the right visualization. And then it hit me: there is no distant star. As our telescopes become more powerful we continue to find new stars farther and farther away. Brilliant. Any other visualization would be limiting.

If we continue to use a shape or visualization after the initial teaching of a movement, we are locked into that pathway and cannot *feel* our way through the movement. There are occasions when practitioners have felt TCC doing TCC, or the *Chi* moving us through the form. This can only be done if the mind is open in awareness and not tied to a concept.



Awareness Of Circularity

By PAM TOWNE, OCEANSIDE, CA

If you have heard Justin Stone speak about T'ai Chi Chih, or read his writings, you know that circularity is fundamental to how we move in TCC. Yet, have you really examined how circular your movements are? The next time you practice, I invite you to look in a mirror and see. If you are a teacher, watch for circularity in your students' movements as well.

- In Around The Platter and its variation, is your platter truly circular? If you are going straight out from your shoulder, or coming straight back to your shoulder, your platter will be more “D” shaped than “O” shaped.
- In Bass Drum, is your drum truly round? Are your fingertips tracing around a circle, or are they dropping straight down and then circling up in a “D” shape?
- In Daughter On The Mountaintop, are your fingertips tracing around the outside of intersecting circles? In Daughter In The Valley, are you tracing around the circumference of a circle as your hands circle down, then coming up the center of the circle as the weight shifts forward?
- In Carry The Ball To The Side, is the ball you are carrying truly round, and are you carrying it around in a circle?
- In Pulling In The Energy, are you circling the hands as in Around The Platter, only with the palms facing upward?
- In Pulling Taffy, Variation #2, Wrist Circles and Bird Flaps Its Wings, are you really circling your hands and fingers from the *wrists*, or are you circling from the elbows?
- In Working The Pulley, is the front hand circling from shoulder height down to waist height as the back hand is circling from waist height up to shoulder height?
- In Light At The Top Of The Head/Light At The Temple, are your hands *and wrists* circling over the crown of the head and at the temples?
- In Passing Clouds, are you tracing circles in the air with your fingertips?

In all the movements and even at rest, is there a sense of circularity in the hands? Are they open and softly rounded, with fingers spread loosely apart? Are your elbows and knees softly bent and never locked? Do your movements *feel* circular?

Circularity enhances the flow of *Chi*, so it is well worth your while to be aware of it and integrate it more into your movements. Then let go and just flow.

Medical Applications Of TCC

Helping Feet to Stay Flexible and Healthy

By LINDA BRAGA, CASTRO VALLEY, CA

A fancy brochure on foot problems from a podiatrist's office was an eye-opener for me. I had not considered that T'ai Chi Chih could help improve and even prevent certain foot problems. The brochure describes the condition called "Plantar Fasciitis," a painful condition of the feet when the fascia in the heel and sole of the foot wears thin and begins to tear. This can cause extreme pain. Many adults experience this condition, especially if they stand for long periods of time. Among the recommendations for therapy and prevention of this condition are a series of exercises that look strangely like TCC movements.

The following exercises describe how to strengthen the foot and fascia in the heels of the feet. These two exercises are similar to certain foot positions in TCC movements.

1. THE LUNGE POSITION EXERCISE

This position stretches the gastrocnemius muscle group in the calf of the back leg, benefiting the fascia in the foot. Hold the lunge stretch for 10–15 seconds, release the heel and repeat, 6-8 times. Now do the exercise with the other leg.

Application: **Six Healing Sounds** incorporates the lunge position, moving the weight to the forward foot on a soft knee while keeping the heel down on the back leg. When the movement is complete, both feet will have done a lunge several times.

Application: **Anchor Taffy** also incorporates the lunge movement with both feet. It involves keeping the back heel down while the weight shifts slowly to the front foot, while the hands perform "a taffy pull." This TCC movement could be performed using a fuller lunge, therefore

giving the heel in back a good stretch each time.

2. WALKING WITH WEIGHT IN THE HEELS

To relieve pain in the heels and improve range of motion in the feet, the brochure recommends that you walk across the room with the weight fully in the heels of the feet. Don't let the toes touch the ground. If this creates a balance problem, you can hold onto a chair and just step side to side on the heels.

Application: **Rocking Motion** also involves a gradual weight shift to the balls of the feet, then back to the heels of the feet, letting the toes become light. It is possible to extend this motion even further and allow the weight to be fully in the heels and then to move it slowly forward again to the balls of the feet. (Seniors might wobble or even lose their balance but, using the words "letting the toes become light," the benefit can be achieved because TCC uses multiple repetitions.) This repetitive movement can be done multiple times as a warm up.

Wearing athletic shoes with a rounded heel makes this movement easy to perform. Some shoes with rigid heels prevent this motion of rocking. Of course, you can always do the movement in stocking feet or bare feet, preferably on a padded surface or on the grass.

Both the lunge and weight in the heels are beneficial to the feet. Regular practice of these movements is recommended for everyone, whether there is a foot problem or not. The medical applications of TCC movements offer a simple and effective way to maintain healthy and happy feet.



Home, Present & Here

By FAITH ISAACS, SAN FRANCISCO, CA

I had a lovely experience recently with a class of seniors whom I have been teaching for a few years. The members range in age from seventy-eight to ninety-four. (Our one-hundred-year-old gal recently stopped coming due to fatigue.) The class began with me talking about softness and letting go and was followed by a guided relaxation in

I feel graceful ... in a spiritual way

order to see whether they could then better experience this softness in the practice. This conversation led me to spontaneously ask each what the essence of T'ai Chi Chih was for them. They had no problem eagerly and articulately sharing their feelings:

- It's truly a moving meditation.
- My head is quiet and I am fully present.
- My mind is here the entire time.
- It's a home I can go to – like when I experience music sometimes.
- I feel peace and I feel whole and complete when I'm here.
- It feels pure.
- It's a respite, a place to just stop and be. No other place but here exists.

Finally, the student who has the most trouble with coordination said, "I'm going to say something that may make you laugh: I feel graceful. It's an experience of grace but in a spiritual way."

We had the most peaceful and soft practice after this exercise, with all of us expressing gratitude for each other and for TCC. It's important to remember these seniors are not all doing the movements "correctly" and many now sit during class. None of this seems to matter. They get the essence of TCC anyway.

No Carbon Footprint

By SHERYL ADAIR, ATLANTA, GA

There has been much press about not leaving a negative footprint on the Earth. As T'ai Chi Chih teachers, we have the opportunity to leave our own special footprint. Each time we talk about, teach, or simply do our daily practice we are leaving a mark. This occurred to me when I changed a routine. Instead of holding regular classes this week, twelve of us tightly gathered in my home studio and did a TCC practice together. A late arriving student said that when she opened the door it felt like walking into a vacuum of energy. The *Chi* was palpable. After the practice, at the urging of a student, we stayed in our circle to reflect on the experience of TCC and what our learning together meant. They did the talking, and it was very special and, at times, emotional. (Each person had been doing TCC for well over a year.) Comments included: getting in touch with their spirituality, learning about generosity, noticing details, seeing the joy in things, being able to stick with something for the first time, staying more grounded and centered with family members, and gaining improved health and physical balance. It seemed that each was getting exactly what he or she needed. Much gratitude was expressed. All agreed that TCC had made a measurable difference in their lives. Even though some were meeting each other for the first time, no one was afraid to speak openly and step into their feelings. TCC had created a safe haven for authenticity, sharing, and personal growth. Not a bad footprint to leave behind.

*the Chi
was
palpable*



Contacting The Formless Essence

By ANN RUTHERFORD, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Justin commented recently that many T'ai Chi Chih teachers mistake the moving fundamentals of TCC as an end in themselves. The principles of TCC (weight shift, circularity, polarity) are *tools* for opening our awareness to Essence, the root source of all manifestation. Merely teaching students the three principles of TCC is leaving out the most important element of the practice: They must be taught how to concentrate their mind so that the thoughts/feelings/small mind do not impede their immersion in the intelligent *Chi* flow. In *Spiritual Odyssey*, Justin observes that thoughts impact *Chi* circulation, and so it is very important to discipline the mind to step out of the way.

The most common way we thwart our opening to Essence is by identifying with our thoughts and emotions, thereby closing up our meridian channels through which the *Chi* runs. In teaching TCC, it is essential to encourage the practicing student not to attach to rising thoughts and feelings (such as anger, sorrow, worry, or anxiety) but to instead emphasize the placement of mind concentration in the soles of the feet. Justin's *Heightened Awareness* is a valuable teacher's resource for just this purpose. In training the students in mind concentration, I remind them that just as they do not confuse the blowing wind with Essence, but instead realize that the wind is merely a manifestation of atmospheric pressure change, so too that the thoughts are merely passing energy. Why identify so tightly with our feelings of sorrow, anger, anxiety, and fear – which have the effect of blocking *Chi* flow and Realization? Training the student's mind to open to the awareness of the intelligent but formless *Chi*, the root of all manifestation, is the teacher's task. TCC practice is one of the easiest and most enjoyable tools we can use to reach the awareness of the potent non-manifested root of All. "Keep your mind in the soles of the feet" can never be repeated too often in the TCC classroom.

Pyramid Poems

I
open
my home; you
open my heart
together
we share
Chi
– SHERYL ADAIR

life
flowing
soft *Chi* waves
seeking balance
finding friends
on the
way
– SHERYL ADAIR

soft
softer
amazing
a turn of wrist
eternal
moment
now
– BARBARA KRISTOFF

a
moving
mandala
circles of love
wrapping all
into
one
– BARBARA KRISTOFF

Never Ever Too Old

By JUNE ENGLE, ATLANTA, GA

I first heard about T'ai Chi Chih when I was 84 years old. A good hiking buddy shared that she was teaching TCC and she felt great. Got my curiosity. At 85 years old I asked to learn and she gave me a lesson.... in a parking lot after a hike, since I lived 40 miles away from her. Then she offered me instructional DVDs. One of the best decisions I ever made. On the first session I felt my hands tingling and thought, it was my age? Or something. But my teacher assured me this was the energy coming through the movements, and she insisted I follow the directions and stay in my feet.

Sometimes when I am going through the movements it feels like my hands and arms are moving through soft Jello or something similar. Wonderful. My fingers and hands tingle and a new light flows through my body. Although my teacher said not to practice at night, one time (and that's all it took) I decided to do the exercises shortly before bed. Don't try it. I fitfully tossed and tossed. Got up, read a book, watched TV, and finally fell asleep at 4am. I had no idea that the movements had energized me so much.

I'm hoping things might work so that I can go to one of the seminars. Learning TCC is one of the best decisions that I've ever made. Thank you, Justin Stone and Carmen, for projecting these classes and thank you, Sheryl, for sharing your experience with me.

Note from June's teacher: She will be 86 next year and is an inspiration; some days I can barely keep up with her on the trail. June says not to let anyone chide you about your age: "You can be 90 years old at age 21 if you allow your mind and culture and circumstances to control you. My theory has been to enjoy your life as long as you breathe. I try to encourage others to forget the calendar."



On Impatience

By CATHY WILLIAMS, GRAYSLAKE, IL

Impatience – not one of the seven deadly sins but definitely an honorable mention. As Justin points out, it can be dangerous, even deadly. I doubt most people would view it as an ego problem, although it most certainly is – feeling that your time is more important than any one else's. Sadly, the time spent on negative emotions is wasted time, gone forever. I have spent (and wasted) too many hours being impatient. After one terrible instance of road rage, I knew it was time to get myself under control. Hard rock music had always been my music of choice on the drive home from work. But one day I flipped on classical music and was shocked at the immediate difference it made – the road rage was gone.

Daily Tai Chi Chih has the same effect; with it I begin my day with peacefulness and balance. When I feel impatience rising, I start to breath slowly and focus on something pleasant. There is always something wondrous to notice – even if it's just a dandelion poking its way out of concrete. Nature always triumphs, just as our emotions triumph over our bodies. Impatience and stress will sicken and weaken us. Patience and calmness will strengthen and heal.

Pyramid Poems

By PETER GREGORY, CROWN POINT, IN

“the
key is
surrender
with gratitude”
– teaching from
justin
stone

ten
thousand
things follow
recognition.
recognize
without
things

says
cosmic
consciousness:
perpetual,
it's passing,
healing
pose

chop
some wood
tote water
enlightenment.
tote water
chop some
wood

e
=
mc 2
yinning yanning
mc 2
=
Chi

stoke
the Chi
radiant
illuminate
tan tien
release
rest

try
writing
sixteen sounds
in seven lines
still saying
something
real

Amazement & Awareness: Student Voices

COMPILED BY SHEILA LEONARD, ST. JOHN'S, NL, CANADA

DANIELLE, A FIRST YEAR RETURNING STUDENT, HAS PARTICIPATED IN TWO TRAINING WORKSHOPS. SHE WRITES: "Since starting TCC practice last September 2008, I didn't know at all what to expect.

I was recovering original energy from the origins of life on earth

In my mind, these activities would simply allow me to relax. After the first class, I knew right away that it was for me. It was only the second time in my whole life that I'd had this feeling. The practice brings a strange but natural feeling – like something I've experienced long ago. ... I didn't understand during the first classes why Sheila insisted on doing the movements a certain way. I thought that learning by doing was sufficient; I felt the practice itself would bring me to the "right movements." Then came a workshop. I thought Dan was talking too much. I still didn't see the necessity of executing the movements a certain way. I'd had a kind of serenity during the classes and that was enough for me. I was feeling the energy of the group. ... But now I've finished the second workshop and what a big change has occurred. Not only do I understand part of the philosophy of TCC through practicing, it's like opening a door onto an intuitive life. During the group share, I realized that I was going to talk about inner energy, but it also came to my mind that I was recovering original energy from the origins of life on earth. It was a kind of revelation. Our talks offered guidance toward feeling that inner energy. But I've also learned that doing the movements correctly is the medium for experiencing that original energy. ... For now, I'm not reading anything about meditation

or the philosophy of TCC, as I want my reflections to come from the awareness I have while doing the movements. I've felt similar feelings through contact with nature, religion, spiritism, but I never thought we could get it by doing particular movements."

CARMEL, A FIRST TIME STUDENT, WAS SO VERY PLEASED AND AMAZED AT HOW HER PRACTICE IS CHANGING AND DEEPENING. SHE WRITES: "The more I do TCC the more awareness I experience – such as the shifting of the weight, the separation of the feet, the softness, the feeling of lightness in my body. The lessons have been great, but practice must go hand-in-hand with the lessons. Doing TCC relaxes me, gives me a period of peace of mind each day. I feel I'm doing good things for my mind and body. I'm hooked on doing TCC daily."

I'm hooked on doing TCC daily

DORIS, A RETURNING STUDENT FROM TWO YEARS AGO, CAME BACK PRIOR TO UPCOMING SURGERY. IT WAS FOLLOWED BY WHAT SHE CALLS AN AMAZING RECOVERY EXPERIENCE: "I've been faithfully using the video daily, am happy to report that I no longer have Reynaud's Syndrome, and am no longer bothered with joint problems."

GERRI FIRST DID T'AI CHI CHIH OVER TWO YEARS AGO, AND WRITES: "Attending TCC classes and practicing has given me two great benefits: less stress and more peace. And I carry these feelings throughout the day. I also sense a spirituality with the practice of TCC."

ELIZABETH ADDS: "I haven't had a solid night's sleep in over two years. After three or four weeks of practicing TCC, I've had a good night's sleep every night."

AUDREY, A LONGTIME STUDENT, DROVE QUITE A DISTANCE TO CLASS FOR SEVERAL EIGHT-WEEK SESSIONS. SHE WRITES: "I had a perfect moment of absolute peace in class today during Pulling In The Energy. The whole room became still, quiet, and peaceful. I realized this was serenity. If these moments can be extended, it's certainly worthwhile driving to these T'ai Chi Chih classes. In fact, even if it's only one moment, it's been worth it! I feel more and more confident with each class. ... By the way, I was born with a crippled shoulder that limits my arm movements, and my hands became arthritic a few years back. But during my home practices I notice more elasticity in



them, which, of course, is very pleasing. ... I feel I'm making progress and would like to keep the momentum going. A couple of days ago during practice, I experienced an almost weightless feeling that lasted a few brief – but profound – moments during Daughter On The Mountaintop. I don't know what it is, but intuitively I know there is something to this practice. I look forward to experiencing more things spiritual in the future."

The Essence Of T'ai Chi Chih

By JUSTIN STONE [REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM *THE VITAL FORCE*, JUNE 1985]

Softness and continuity are the Essence of T'ai Chi Chih. It is the soft water that wears away the hard rock; the tongue outlasts the teeth. Hardness and confrontation are brittle and destructive; softness and a gentle manner of thinking are life enriching.

In the Orient, they speak of the contrast between the oak tree and the bamboo. When a storm comes, the sturdy oak stands solid against the wind until it is overcome and breaks and dies. The bamboo, however, bends with the wind, and when the storm has passed, snaps back into place, unharmed. Softness proves more durable than hardness. Assertiveness takes a back seat to gentle firmness. Overtly, the Sage does nothing, and, thereby, all things are accomplished.

TCC becomes a way of life. It is true that the gentle movements of TCC form a moving meditation and an exercise of great efficiency – exercising the inner organs and promoting healing – but eventually, it goes beyond these and permeates the lifestyle of the practitioner. We do not all see the same world, which is a reflection of ourselves. With the accumulation of *Chi* (Vital Force) through TCC practice, permanent changes in the metabolism and the thinking process take place, and the renewed energy conditions the whole way of life. Just as thought conditions the Vital Force, so does the flow of this *Chi* (this Intrinsic Energy) condition the way of thinking. As these changes occur, we get in touch with ourselves, and the world we see begins to change. Joy becomes our natural heritage.

“I gather chrysanthemums at the Eastern Hedgerow
And silently gaze at the Southern mountains.
The mountain air is beautiful in the sunset.
Overhead the birds, flocking together, return home.
In all this is a real meaning, but
When I try to express it, I get lost in no-words.”

This is a graphic picture of a mind at ease, spoken by a contented man. Notice that all allusions are to natural things; there is nothing of the artificial. Our way of life is being ruined by the artificiality that leads to a superficial outlook away from natural things. Our world glorifies the computer and airplane, the television and telephone. The latter has become our master, and there are few who will willingly turn it off.

These are all artificial objects, which can never lead to a contented frame of mind. And, in our culture (spreading so rapidly throughout the world), all advertising is aimed at creating discontent – “Don't

be satisfied with what you have; buy something new.” In other words, earn money so you can exchange it for objects. Unless you are discontented with what you have, you will not rush out to buy and consume. We are thought of only as potential consumers by advertisers. Geography is divided into “markets” and population into “demographics,” but man is not a statistic – within him lies Divinity.

With this urge toward discontentment, how can we achieve peace of mind and health and vigor of body? Without these, how much is life worth, no matter what we own? Actually, the Sufi master says we only own what we take with us when we dive, naked, over the side of a sinking ship! Without going into the deeper aspects of Karma, made by the habit energies of the mind (*vashanas* in Sanskrit), what do we really own? Do we possess the flowers, the evening sky, the soft snow that falls on rich and poor alike, or the seasons that come and go in orderly progression? Do we ever control them? Or is it better simply to enjoy them and accord with them? These are profound questions that should be studied, and the answers can change our attitudes.

How do we counter this urge toward discontentment? In the rush of busy lives, it is not easy. Probably we find it too difficult to sit quietly and do sitting meditation; the mind that has been racing all day is not going to suddenly turn off, though breathing exercises will help quiet the mind. Ah, but we can move, and find it pleasant to move softly and rhythmically. With the gentle movements of

TCC, even if we do only a few of them repetitively, comes a quieting of the emotions as the *Chi* (Vital Force) circulates and is then balanced. When the substantial and insubstantial – *yin Chi* and *yang Chi* – are brought into balance, we are in a relaxed and meditative state.

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Since this is cumulative, the practice of TCC in the morning upon arising, or in the afternoon before dinner (or both), can become a very pleasant habit that builds up the Vital Force that is stored in

*overtly, the Sage
does nothing,
and, thereby, all
things are
accomplished*

the bones and below the navel. With the accumulation, we begin to notice the rapid growth of intuition, of creativity and energy, and of strength far different from muscular strength. We may find ourselves moving to the phone before it rings, or opening a book to the exact sought-for page. In our work we find a growth of confidence,

a belief in ourselves and our center of being. In *Abandon Hope*, I call this “the growth of certainty.”

It always makes this writer smile when a student – or a TCC teacher – writes that he is now much more confident and aggressive in his or her work, or that she does not kick the cat and yell at the children from fatigue. Always, they ask, “This doesn’t have anything to do with TCC, does it?” To which I reply, “What’s the difference as long as it is happening?” Our attitudes change and we become soft like the bamboo, rather than the oak. Then the outer world reflects this inner serenity.

The resentful mind helps create illness. The greedy mind brings war and great discontent. For each frame of mind there is a corresponding *Chi*. Our thinking cultures our Vital Force. Thus we can influence what we are and what we become by what we think. But, similarly, what we think is greatly conditioned by the *Chi*, the Vital Force, so our pattern of thinking is not, as we might presume, an absolutely free process.

When I was teaching Comparative Meditation at a southwestern university, a week before practicing the Buddha’s great Meditation of the Four Awarenesses (the “Sathipatthana”), I asked students to do two things during the week:

- (1) Watch their posture. (At this suggestion students would immediately straighten up, though they had not been asked to correct their postures.)
- (2) To watch and ascertain their state of mind frequently during the day. This is not easy to do. At any given moment it is hard to define the state of mind. However, when a noisy plane flies low overhead while we are talking, we look up in annoyance; this is mind with annoyance. We worry about a bill we will have to pay; this is anxious mind. And so forth.

When students came to the next class, I asked them if they had practiced as requested. “Yes,” one would answer, “and I noticed something funny. My state of mind seemed to have a lot to do with my posture, while the posture seemed to affect the state of mind.” He had been successful in real-

izing the purpose of the assignment. Thinking influences the *Chi*, and the *Chi* influences our thought.

One man I know, a manager of a brokerage house, always walks bent over from the waist. Imagine the inner tensions that must be present. With such a state of mind, it is hard to see how calm and correct decisions can be made. In India the hand and finger positions, as well as the general posture, are known as *mudras*. The way we hold our hands can tell a Master much about our state of being. This writer looks at new students’ wrists, as well as the pliability of their waists, to determine the amount of inner tension they are bringing to class. As surely as handwriting (which cannot be faked) will tell a graphologist (a handwriting expert) much about the character of the writer, so will body postures paint a clear picture of the inner life of a TCC student.

When we forget something, we cannot force the mind to remember. The more we try, the less we accomplish. Then, at another moment when we are thinking of something else, a casual association of ideas brings the forgotten something to mind, quickly and effortlessly. This is how the T’ai Chi principle works. When there is effort, there is tension and the meridian channels of the body (through which the Vital Force of *Chi* flows) close, and the flow is cut off. This is why softness and continuity are emphasized in TCC practice. The effortless effort, which we compare to moving like slow motion in a dream, brings results and the energy-giving flow of the *Chi* proceeds without pause.

How important is this softness? There is a famous story of a student and a T’ai Chi master that provides the answer. Every day the student came to study with the master, and every day, no matter how hard he tried, the master tersely remarked, “Not soft enough!” After one disappointing class, the student went home and dreamed that both his arms fell off. The next day, when he did T’ai Chi at his lesson, the Master finally nodded and remarked, “Now that’s soft!”

In practice, when the effortless flow goes on, and is first felt in the fingers and fingertips, we become thirsty. The aqueous excess is drying up. This provides efficient weight control (70% of the body weight being composed of fluid) and the ability to lose large amounts of weight (where needed) without any starvation. We are surprised to find that perspiration and fatigue do not have to accompany a weight losing effort. And, at the same time, the inner organs are exercised. Constipation is certainly not characteristic of the T’ai Chi way. Many women have been helped with the flow of blood, and one TCC teacher has given birth twice using the “Around The Platter” rhythmic movement in her home delivery.

We have been concentrating in the soles of the feet to bring the “Heart Fire” down, and, as the *Chi* flows through the body in a

downward arc, healing heat flashes may occur in parts of the body with a blockage. However, these heat



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flashes are more apt to occur hours after we have brought our hands to our sides in rest. In movement (and circular movement), the *yin Chi* and *yang Chi* separate; then, when we come to a position of rest, the *yin* and *yang* flow together and we become whole. At such time, the feeling is that of having had an internal bath. All this is accomplished softly and without effort.

What are the meridian channels, through which the *Chi* flows and which are used so admirably by Chinese acupuncture? (We have probably all seen on television a Chinese operation being performed painlessly without anesthesia because of control over the meridian channels and the flow through them.) Belonging to the ancient *yin-yang* science, going back at least 3000 years, there are many versions and descriptions. This is not surprising when we consider that after only hundreds of years, the Latin language has become Spanish, French, and Italian, as well as contributing to English and Portuguese. However, some Chinese authorities claim there are eight main meridians, with the *jen mo* and the *tummo* as the most important. These eight channels connect with innumerable minor meridians.

There is a meditation where one takes the *Chi* – purely through the power of thought – through many of these meridians in the legs, torso, and arms. It is too complicated to detail here, but it is efficient in circulating the *Chi*, as is the *Nei Kung* discipline (performed lying flat on the back) that the author has taught in *Meditation for Healing*. It is through these meridians that the *Chi* (really the Life Force) flows, and many of the meridians have outer openings that lead to the inner organs of the body. This makes possible acupuncture, moxery (conveying heat to selected inner organs), and Chinese self-massage. It is interesting that these inner organs, reached through the meridian channels, correspond to heavenly bodies and to the elements in our world. Thus the Heart is the Great Yang, corresponding to Heaven and the Sun, while the Kidneys are the Great Yin, in correspondence to the Moon and the Earth. This correspondence goes further, into the elements such as iron, wood, fire, etc., with water obviously standing for the *yin* and fire representing the *yang*. The ancient Chinese Sage knew where the *Chi* was strongest at certain seasons of the year (Western doctors seem to ignore seasons completely, although our grandmothers and folk doctors certainly didn't) and a great T'ai Chi system of defense, called by some *T'ai Chi Gik*, was devised through use of this knowledge. In one way this flow of *Chi* through the channels is our connection to the Cosmos, just as our breath makes us conscious that there is a power behind and beyond our own will. Incidentally, the spleen, affected by the aspirated sound *hu* in the practice of "Six Healing Sounds" in TCC, is thought to be very important by Eastern doctors, though their Western counterparts feel it is useless and remove it at the slightest provocation. It is very hard for the patient to recover strength after its removal.



Those who practice TCC do not have to imagine the flow of the *Chi* through these channels. It is very real and pretty soon the fingers begin to tremble or other confirmatory signs appear. Since we concentrate on the soles of the feet (the *hsueh* or Bubbling Springs) while practicing, the heat travels down and the fingers may actually become quite cold while still trembling from the flow of the Vital Force. The inner organs become warm, however, and cold drinks must never be consumed immediately after practice.

Spiritual teachers have always told us that, when we find fault with the world, the fault is with ourselves. Zen Master Yunmen, in answer to a question, brushed it aside and said, "Every day is a good day!" Such a joyous outlook is only possible where the opposing forces, *yin* and *yang*, are in balance and flowing freely. Ignore the physical functions and it is hard to achieve contentment. The Buddha reminded us that this mind-body continuum is what we must work with. Modern psychology has recognized how much our thought process influences the physical – hence the term psychosomatic – though it does not realize how much the physical, the state of the Life Force, influences our pattern of thought.

Since thought and the physical are mutually conditioning, there are two ways we can practice our self-culture. We can begin to control the mind and influence the habit patterns, as in Zen and Yogic meditation. Or we can work through the physical, as in T'ai Chi Ch'uan, T'ai Chi Chih, and Hatha Yoga. The latter, however, is a preliminary Yoga and not an end in itself.

Zen practice, the control of the mind, is too difficult for most Westerners. Even in Japan, Zen practitioners were always few in number, though their influence was great. It seems much easier to work from the physical side, to circulate and balance the *Chi*, with its attendant effect on the thinking process. To start with the mind is difficult – and often leads to ill health, which the writer has observed in many Zen monks. Working through the physical, the Vital Force, is much easier – and joyous to boot. Who says that Spirituality must be gloomy and grim? The closer we are to Joy (not pleasure), the nearer we are to Reality, God, or whatever we want to call it. A gloomy, unhealthy Sage would be a contradiction.

If we examine it closely, we find that awareness is the root of TCC, which is essentially inner-oriented. Circularity is fundamental. And we already know that softness and continuity are the essence. When we practice TCC faithfully, we will find that Love Energy is the fruit.

*the closer
we are to Joy
(not pleasure),
the nearer we are
to Reality, God,
or whatever we
want to call it*

Beginning Each Day With Joy

By GAELY PRIOR, HARARE, ZIMBABWE, SO. AFRICA

Sent to Sr. Francis, Gaey's teacher: I wanted to tell you how much T'ai Chi Chih (you taught me three years ago) has changed my life and to thank you for the gift you have given. Even if you do not remember me (which is alright – I am sure you have taught many, many people), I remember you with gratitude in my prayers often.

I remember not knowing what I was doing in your class, and I remember very nearly leaving after the first lesson – after the group hug at the end. At that time I was still struggling to deal with childhood abuse and could not bear being touched. I did not know how important your flexibility would be, in that it allowed me to continue the classes. Three years later I now wake with a longing to go out into the morning and practice TCC. It brings such great joy to my days after years of darkness. It is something I savor.

In the beginning I did not understand what you meant by Joy through Movement, but I get that now. I am able to run and stand up straight, and I am healthier than I have been in fifteen years.

And my practice of TCC is a big part of that. This daily meditation has brought me to a place of healing and revealed me to myself in a way that I had never experienced. Perhaps most importantly it put me in a place to hear the voice of the living God. Each day as I go out to practice, the flow of the practice tells me a great deal about myself. For instance I recently realized I often overbalance because I stand leaning forward. Now I stand up straight and find myself less stressed and more calm.

In each day I am free to dance the routine. Beginning each day with joy, my life is filled with light and joy. Even in the face of pain and hurt, there remains light and joy. So I thank you for your teaching and the joyous gift you have given.



you
shine bright
morning dew
on blades of grass
earth creatures
watches
on
– VINTON MORRIS

be
in the
present time
meditation
frees the mind
joyful
place
– LOIS NOVICKI

soft
pulling
energy
rocking motion
following
flowing
still
– NEWFOUNDLAND STUDENT

feel
tapping
into the
energy source
keep flowing
teacher
smiles
– NEWFOUNDLAND STUDENT

Plenty Of Reasons

By JANET FORLOW

Because I'm a ballet dancer and teach yoga and ballet to senior citizens, I find that T'ai Chi Chih is quite helpful to me in body, mind, and spirit. It relieves my stress and helps keep my body healthy. I see it as a body meditation. The Force helps me focus better in everyday life, and it makes me more positive and loving. Sometimes, just a few seconds of movement helps. The repetition of the movements is key for students and teachers. And one can always find something new about a movement or feel a new muscle. It also takes our mind out of this world for a few seconds before facing life again. My husband is familiar with yoga and also has recently taken TCC classes (for pain management) with Sister Mary. I use the weight shift in exercises I teach to young adults with disabilities, where it makes such a difference to their posture and walking. These TCC movements keep us in the present – which is so important in the world we live in now.

Mental Practice & More

By BEVERLY WROBEL, BAYPORT, MN

Sent to Theresa May: I finally got the cast off my leg. And I practiced T'ai Chi Chih mentally like you suggested. It actually took much of the pain away and time seemed to pass quickly. It was great – as I knew it would be. So I'm

recovering quite speedily. The benefits of TCC have been astounding: it's lowered my blood pressure, improved my balance, and reduced my eye prescription strength by half. Also, this winter I only had one sinus attack. I've been a registered nurse for 30-plus years, and TCC practice is rewarding, energizing, relaxing, and physically and mentally stimulating.

Pyramid Poems

In The Echo Of A Song

By FRANCES ALEXANDER, MANAHAWKIN, NJ.

During a break at a T'ai Chi Chih intensive with my teacher, Dan Pienciak, I had an experience that gave me insight into what "honoring the stillness" really means. I was playing my flute in a lovely grotto on top of a hill at the retreat center. On a heap of earth, amidst a pile of huge stones, a statue of an angel held out a cup to a stone Jesus, who knelt and prayed, knowing that it was in his own intrinsic nature to drink of the cup of his fate, in faith. The wind blew hard upon the rocks and I heard a faint whistle. I was reminded that, "When the rocks are beaten by the wind, they sing." I was pondering my own fate, so I picked up my flute and began to play out my spontaneous song as the wind swept over me and over the stones on which I perched. The wind and I played together for a while and when I stopped to breathe, it seemed that the wind stopped too. It was then that I heard the echo of my notes ringing through the forest, and I realized that the real music was in the echo.

I then began to play my flute as if it were a TCC practice – a musical phrase taking shape and moving, punctuated by a pause in which I was absorbed into a "space between thoughts." I heard my notes ring out again, and it seemed as if the birds responded. The dragonflies danced round my head in celebration. The sun congratulated me with a warm and cordial embrace, and I applauded the coolness of the wind for playing so sweetly with me in the quiet of an afternoon.

How TCC Found Me

By STEPHAN KOBLOCK, NORTH HALEDON, NJ

I've been interested in Eastern thought and religion for many years, and I've done much reading in the ways of the East and have studied and practiced karate and yoga. (I'm a physical person who has always enjoyed sports and athletic activities.) I've been searching for a way to combine activity with meditation and searching for peace and self/selflessness.

After being diagnosed with a serious illness last year, I found a T'ai Chi Chih class offered by the complementary medicine department at a local hospital. It was described as "moving meditation." I remember seeing scores of people participating in this activity in a San Francisco park a few years ago, and I knew that I'd found what I was looking for.

I've been attending classes by Dorene Krause (a wonderful and inspiring teacher) for more than a year, and I practice regularly. Practicing and learning TCC is bringing together all that I've read and searched for in my attempt to bring the East into my life and learn to face the world in a different manner. I continue to learn how to be here now, and I continue to search. TCC is now part of my pathway.



Gratitude

By VIRGINIA LEE CEPEDA, DUBLIN, CA

Carmen Brocklehurst wrote an article some time ago concerning gratitude [see *The Vital Force*, February 2008]. Although I read it more than once, the true meaning really didn't seem to sink in. But one night as I was about to drift off to sleep, her words became crystal clear, and I realized how very grateful I was for all the many gifts I have received since being associated with my T'ai Chi Chih family.

First, Justin Stone: How can anyone not have gratitude for this remarkably gifted, intelligent, gentle man. He has given us everything necessary for a fulfilled life, teaching us how to let go and find our real selves. Teaching us that "abandon hope" is the true path to fulfillment. The gratitude in my heart will ever be yours, dear one.

Next, Carmen: Our sister is always there when we need guidance, information, and wonderful teacher instruction. To know her is to feel the radiance of her caring. Carmen and her husband, Brock, have dedicated their lives to making our lives more peaceful by showing us the way. Our cup of gratitude overflows.

Then, Pat Huseby: My teacher, mentor, and friend gave me the basics of what I had been searching for, for many years. Step by step she taught me that through practice of TCC we come to know our true selves, and that since TCC can never be perfected, it brings a process of continual discovery. My gratitude is everlasting.

And of course, my students: Being a TCC teacher has brought much learning into my life. I have come into contact with such a joyous mix of souls. The fulfillment they have given me is way beyond written words. I am grateful for their help in understanding how the body and mind work together.

Cooking With Chef Sandy

Intensive with Sandy McAlister
in Santa Barbara, CA; June 21-25, 2009

By TONY JOHANSEN, SANTA BARBARA, CA

This year's event was born out of the ashes of last November's Tea Fire at Mount Calvary Retreat Center. Using the miracle that we were able to gather at all – and the ingredients of hard working teachers, teacher candidates, and serious students – Chef Sandy McAlister took her own recipe and produced a fine meal of refined T'ai Chi Chih practice and renewed enthusiasm. This mix, seasoned with attention, focus, caring for others, and an outrageous sense of humor produced incredible growth and too much fun. Chef Sandy's ability to chop and dice the moves enabled us to focus on what is important and allowed us to deepen our practice and flavor it with a new sense of dedication. Teachers carried back a better understanding of what it takes to develop their own recipe for moving students to the next level. The beautiful retreat center, filled with the staff's dedication to serving and offering a place for stillness and reflection, provided the spiritual kitchen in which this could take place. Best of all, we did not gain weight from this feast (the incredible food at La Casa is another story). We actually returned home with lightness in our step and enthusiasm to face the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Thank you, Pam Towne, for joining us for the last day and being part of the dessert.



Poetry Among Us

Retreat with Antonia Cooper
near St. Louis, MO; April 20-21, 2009

By SUSAN KISSINGER, HOST, ST. LOUIS, MO

Nine teachers and fourteen students left busy lives in April and immediately encountered *yin* and *yang* – an experience of retreat serenity within the chaos of modern times. Antonia's voice was quiet, and yet no amplification was needed for us to understand the clarity of her words. It was such a contrast to the loud speakers in our daily lives.



We explored the details of up-and-down movements, side-to-side movements, and forward-and-back movements, effortlessly reviewing all nineteen movements and one pose. Most importantly, we were invited to feel the principles of movement, and we rested in stillness.

Resting, grounded through the soles of our feet, palms and tailbone.

Flowing from the center, the *tan t'ien*.

Weight shifting from the sole of one foot to the other and back again, and again.

Cycling with softness and continuity, circularity, polarity.

Form arising, abiding, changing, and disappearing.

Moving within stillness.

Still within movement.

Magic At Ghost Ranch

By JUDY HENDRICKS, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Ghost Ranch, which Georgia O'Keeffe called home and where she painted magnificent landscapes, is a magical place nestled beneath orange colored sandstone cliffs in northern New Mexico. So when the opportunity arose to give one-hour T'ai Chi Chih demonstrations for the Presbyterian Hospital leadership personnel there, I jumped at the chance.

Justin had been giving pointers about how to give good demonstrations: Tell them what TCC is and tell them what the actual words mean (i.e., knowledge of the supreme ultimate or knowledge of the great energy). Then he suggested demonstrating Around the Platter, Around The Platter Variation, and one of the "Daughters." So this is what Dora Derzon and I did.

I was amazed at how quiet the room became and how well the 20-

plus participants moved. We brought class schedules, Good Karma Publishing catalogs, brochures, and the two postcards announcing the GKP and TCC websites. I also gave each person a bookmark (with my name, contact information, and the TCC websites) with one of my favorite Justin quotations printed on it: "*Joy is always there; it only has to be uncovered.*"

We taught three movements and Cosmic Consciousness Pose. One woman in the back row was beaming and seemed to be nodding in agreement with everything we said. At the end of class I asked her if she was a TCC student. She said that yes, many years ago, she had taken classes with Carmen and Justin. She said her life was much smoother and easier when she had been doing TCC on a regular basis. She eagerly picked up the class schedule. She was so happy to have re-discovered TCC. I was very moved by the participants who kept thanking us for the demonstrations. We had shared a great gift, and there was so much genuine gratitude, it touched my heart deeply. TCC can positively affect everyone, so let's share what we know with the world.

A Twenty-Year Perspective

Teacher Training with Pam Towne in San Antonio, TX; May 4-9, 2009

By ALICE HOLDEN, CCVI, HOST, SAN ANTONIO, TX

It's been almost 20 years since I received certification as a T'ai Chi Chih teacher and nine years since I hosted a training here in San Antonio, so I have a long perspective on the process. In 1991, by the time most teacher candidates came to training, they'd only just completed a basic TCC course within that year. The teacher trainer spent most of all week making sure we had the form correct. There was little time to teach us how to teach. We did, however, go through a mock TCC demonstration – *that* we all remember. But teaching tips were few and far between and not particularly memorable.

In 2000, when twelve teachers were accredited in San Antonio and had benefited from the teacher trainer coming to town a year earlier for a TCC review, the trainer spent a great deal of time re-teaching the movements. Although it was a good experience, there was little time to discuss and practice various teaching methods.

This year's experience was different. From the first practice session on Monday morning, it was evident that students were well prepared. No one was leaning and everyone was turning from the center on the side-to-side movements. Every candidate had attended an intensive, which had paid off. This time it was possible for the trainer to shift the emphasis, after two days of movement review, to how to teach TCC. Each day and most evenings were full. Do you wonder what teacher training consists of at this point in our history as a community of TCC teachers and students? This is how it happened.

Days 1 & 2: With the use "Teaching Tips" and a teacher training manual, candidates concentrated on how the movements are executed. Auditors and accredited teachers assisted in the process. On Monday evening the group listened to *Justin Stone Speaks on T'ai Chi Chih*, and everyone was encouraged to make corrections in their practice. On Tuesday evening most of the group went to a local Mexican restaurant to celebrate Cinco de Mayo and my feast day. It was great fun.

Days 3, 4, & 5: The candidates divided into groups of three and took turns in leading, and then teaching, all the movements with increasing challenges at each step. They also had the opportunity to demonstrate their first real or imagined TCC presentation, after which there

was loving critique by peers, auditors, and the trainer. The group was introduced to materials from Good Karma Publishing and the TCC Association in Albuquerque. An issue of *The Vital Force* was

in everyone's folder, and subscription forms were filled out. Participants watched Justin Stone's visit to Folsom Prison on DVD and had a lengthy discussion about the principles of TCC. To celebrate everyone being accredited, on Friday evening the entire group visited the San Antonio Riverwalk, ate at a German restaurant, walked along the river, and attended an open-air concert at Mission San Jose.

Saturday morning began with a check-in, and the remarks were quite affirming:

- Teacher Training was an amazing experience and fun.
- I met many interesting people and we all became fast friends.
- My teachers being here, supporting me, was marvelous.
- I feel I'm entering a real community of learners and teachers.
- This is a milestone on a loving path.
- This has taken me to life's biggest mystery.
- I learned how to let the light flow without judgment or criticism.

The greatest compliment I've ever received came that morning when a student said of me, "She walked among us but never above us." How else could it be? I was learning as much as the candidates, and it was an amazing opportunity to energize my own practice.

A group photo was taken before friends and other TCC students arrived. Pam presented each student with a T'ai Chi Chih teacher certificate. As host, I presented to each the gift of an original TCC logo, created by local artist and teacher, Terry Gay Puckett. All then joined in the final group practice. Thus ended a delightful week of learning for which we are all most grateful, first to the *Chi*, then to Justin, Pam, Antonia, Sandy, and the entire TCC community for their invisible support. Of course we thank each candidate and auditor for having traveled together in deepening of our commitment to the *Chi* and to this practice.

do you wonder what teacher training consists of at this point in our history as a community of TCC teachers and students?



Y'all Come & See Us, You Hear

By RICHARD CUTLER, AUSTIN, TX

Streaming south from Austin, Texas, through the velvety darkness, my eyes swimming with the after-images of a thousand red tail lights and my nostrils inflamed by the allergens released by rain on drought-parched fields of Central Texas, I focus instead on converting my anxiety to energy – in anticipation of the week of teacher training ahead in San Antonio. Knowing that I faced mental letting go and physical challenges, I struggled to offset my attachment at becoming an accredited T'ai Chi Chih instructor with the knowledge that I would be among loving instructors like Alice Holden, Terry Gay Puckett, and Renza Baker (all of whom had already exchanged so much patience for my ego-fueled impatience and tolerance for my insecure obsession on “correct” movements). Now, as the week comes to a welcome close, I am deeply grateful to Pam Towne’s sensitivity for who I was and her few (but well-chosen) words for who I might become. In equal measure, auditor Stephen Thompson shares my heartfelt thanks for his penetrating insight and ability to communicate needed refinements that left me eager to embrace them. I hope to know Lucky Elliott better as I really enjoyed the teaching exercise she participated in and her way of explaining movements.

I hadn't anticipated how much I would appreciate reading Justin's words and hearing them on CD and seeing him on video

In preparation for the teacher training, I focused on the movements. At the training, I hadn't anticipated how much I would appreciate reading Justin's words and hearing them on CD and see-

ing him on video. Their substance became much more real. As the practice continues to reveal itself, I am confident that when TCC is doing TCC, the wisdom in Justin's words will have even greater significance. What was my overall lasting impression? Love.

News Flash: T'ai Chi Chih gains toehold in Austin, Texas. Certified by Pam Towne in San Antonio at the Teacher Training there in May, Richard Cutler, PhD, is the first accredited teacher in Central Texas where, putting his left foot forward, he has already lined up classes for the fall through Austin's Parks and Recreation Division and Austin Community College's Continuing Education. An informal group meets with Richard for practice and instruction every Saturday morning at 9am in Eastwoods Park, near the University of Texas. Y'all come and see us.

Impressions & Insights On Becoming A TCC Teacher

By JUDY HUBBELL, SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Meandering by old historic villa walls on the San Antonio River in warm weather with the breeze in your face, colorful river craft sailing by, and meeting new and old friends during a week of intense and joyous training... The University of the Incarnate Word and Alice Holden, our cheerful and ready host, always with us on our journey... Pam Towne slowly moving and present in every teaching moment... Stephen Thompson from Mississippi and our experienced San Antonio teachers correcting our form and helping with our practice teaching... Learning from my fellow (soon-to-become) teachers in their varied presentations... A campus full of meandering paths with a secret gate to the grocery store and a glass elevator that takes you down what seems like hundreds of feet to a cliff where hawks roost... A grotto and fountain, angels above the chapel, and a bench by a cemetery... A live oak spreading and enveloping all the gravestones... The mystery of the *Chi* within and the world outside coming together in the newly restored chapel where we hear the story of Italian marble and inset wood carvings... History told through art of the sisters' work with the poor and sick... And always more T'ai Chi Chih... Justin's informative videos and talks to discuss nightly... The DVD from Folsom Prison where Justin's radiant centeredness and openness shines through a stark place where men cannot leave yet... Rich discussions and sharing, moments of laughter and joy, each moved by what someone says about their reasons and experience... A visit to the Mission San Jose and listening to a jazz band while the full moon rises over the ancient walls of the mission... TCC in my room at midnight, alone and quiet... Arising each morning at 5am to reconnect to the work, sharing breakfast at 7:30am, helping out... Life and TCC, all in one... Noticing that I was peeling a banana ever so slowly this morning, in the same way we had moved all week, while smelling its ripeness, just noticing more... Thank you, Pam Towne and Alice

*life
and
T'ai
Chi
Chih,
all in one*

Holden, experienced auditing teachers, and my fellow learners. And most of all, thank you, Justin Stone, for the gift of TCC.



Remembering *Seijaku*

Seijaku Workshop with Carmen Brocklehurst
in Albuquerque, NM; May 16, 2009

By JUDY HENDRICKS, HOST, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

I've renewed my interest in my *Seijaku* practice, and I've noticed that after doing it for a while, I have a strong urge to clean out my closet. So, thanks to this daylong workshop, I have a couple of bags of clothes to give away. No one would ever mistake me for clean freak, but after doing *Seijaku*, I often clean out my closet. It seems quite easy to get rid of all those clothes I don't need. Letting go. *Seijaku* practice can be intense but it also takes me deeper, and I learn so much more about myself after doing it. When I practice I feel more joyful and positive about life; and I know I will then likely have a positive effect on all the people I encounter that day.

These workshops are always great because I often forget some of the details of *Seijaku* practice. For instance, in Carry The Ball To The

*it's only then
that I feel
that I'm
really
letting
go*



Side, there is just one set of three to each side, done in place, and then you remain there for the next set (whether it be for the *Seijaku* or T'ai Chi Chih portion of the practice). Because the set is so self-contained (i.e. we're staying in place), there isn't as much movement to the side, and this brings a strong focus to the hip swivel and the *tan t'ien* because it directs the flow of energy inward rather than outward.

The *Seijaku* version of Bird Flaps Its Wings is also quite different from the TCC form. *Seijaku* Bird Flaps Its Wings begins like Rocking Motion for the first three movements – except your palms are facing down. The strong, soft emphasis on each movement creates an even greater feeling of lightness in the whole body, so that when the opening to the side of the body is done TCC-style, it's softer than I've ever done in regular TCC practice. It's only then that I feel that I'm really letting go.

How did I get out of the routine of practicing *Seijaku* – when I realize that the strong part of *Seijaku* teaches me so much about the soft part of Tai Chi Chih, and when I feel softer and gentler. There is so much to learn about letting go. Insights are much easier to reach after *Seijaku*, especially when I combine TCC and *Seijaku* into the same practice. I've been given the tools for letting the *Chi* flow. The decrease of clutter in my house is an added bonus.

Letting Go & Letting Chi Flow

Retreat with Antonia Cooper
in Albuquerque, NM; April 2-5, 2009

By BETH CAMERON, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Imagine 28 students and teachers moving softly as a single unit, and you'll experience a taste of this event. Add laughter bubbling from deep within, a sense of oneness as we moved from the center, and a sense of accomplishment stemming from knowing we were in the flow, allowing our bodies to be moved as we fine tuned each movement. The true gift came from Antonia's warm and loving acceptance that enveloped all of us in its safety, showing that it's impossible to be tense when we're free to be ourselves. It took our T'ai Chi Chih practice to the deep level it deserves. Antonia radiates joy through movement and luckily for us, it's contagious.

Teacher Training & A 93rd Birthday

By ANN RUTHERFORD, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

How much longer will teacher candidates have the opportunity to be inspired by T'ai Chi Chih's originator, Justin Stone? He plans to attend this training, led by Sandy McAlister, regularly. Justin turns 93 years old on Friday, November 20th, 2009, which coincides with graduation day for the November teacher training class. On graduation night, we will host a birthday potluck dinner at the Albuquerque T'ai Chi Chih Center and everyone is welcome. To register for the training or participate as an auditing teacher, see the calendar section.

Intensive Experience At Workshop

Workshop with Dan Pienciak
in Ringwood, NJ; June 4-7, 2009

By DAN PIENCIAK, HOWELL, NJ

I had the opportunity to work with a small group of students and one teacher because there has been such strong interest among local students wanting to prepare for teacher accreditation that not everyone could be accommodated at a recent intensive. Although not officially an “intensive,” we did have a rather intense experience while refining movements and deepening our understanding of the T'ai Chi Chih form and how to move.

*the discipline of
TCC is a serious one;
the experience of
TCC is a blissful one*

Getting participants to *feel* the movements from the center, with a loose waist, was a large part of our work. Also helpful: feeling the weight fully on the feet and experiencing the weight shifts almost as sand

or water – first filling up one leg and then emptying into the other. Justin Stone frequently reminds us that we do TCC primarily with the waist and wrists (not with the shoulders, arms, and hands). Focusing on this important connection of the wrists flowing *with* the waist also helped us feel the unison of movement and continuity of flow. But the students also had their own thoughts:

“Learning to make a complete shift to allow the hands to move in a circle with no glitches was helpful.” ... “We were guided in a safe, warm, and caring environment which encouraged our *Chi* to flow naturally and intuitively.” ... “Initially, I enjoyed TCC because it felt good. As I learn more and allow TCC to become part of my life, it’s evident that this is a spiritual journey.” ... “I knew that the new way of moving was working when I seemed to be walking with more freedom. My upper body felt lighter while my feet felt grounded.” ... “The subtle nature of learning the art of TCC is so absorbing that the I dissolves in stillness for brief periods of time, and in the movements, one experiences one’s essential nature. These joyous instances offer the promise of more bliss and carry me forward in the practice.” ... “I focused on the pelvis in the forward-and-backward movements and swiveling the hips in the side-to-side movements. I can feel a release in my lower spine. This is great stuff.” ... “Highlights included watching the KNME-TV interviews with Justin Stone, receiving corrections, and perhaps the greatest of all: hearing the words, “Trust that your feet and legs will hold you up.”

At the conclusion of one practice, I had a new awareness of teaching and practicing: The discipline of TCC is a serious one; the experience of TCC is a blissful one.

Keep Coming Back

Workshop with Dan Pienciak
in St. John’s, NL, Canada; April 17-19, 2009

By SHEILA LEONARD, HOST, ST. JOHN’S, NL, CANADA

Dan has become special teacher, mentor, and friend to our growing T'ai Chi Chih community. The event was even more significant this time because several returning participants received referral signatures for the upcoming July training. No one was surprised to find eye-opening ‘Aha’ moments when small refinements made big impacts on how students moved and flowed. Gratitude and amazement from first timers and those returning abounded. One participant described the workshop opportunity as irresistible. Others would surely agree, though it is often hard to put into words how much one has learned. It’s part of what keeps us coming back.

*these weekends
are all about
learning,
relearning,
and
un-learning*

One student said she’d stopped using the instructional DVD partly because she felt that the long pauses were slowing her down. Ironically, she took home the idea of stillness and noted its importance in creating a balance between pausing and moving. These weekends are all about learning, relearning, and un-learning – but always in a positive and non-judgmental atmosphere. While guidance from Dan and me was critical, students have much to learn from each other and they clearly did. The power of a group is remarkable and cannot be overestimated for its ability to affirm, invite, challenge, inspire, and renew. Students left with a deeper awareness of their practice, savoring what they’d learned and eager to integrate it over the months to follow.

While workshops are about enhancing one’s own practice, sometimes, as one participant expressed it, the experience yields an enhanced awareness of the sacredness of TCC and the promise it holds for our world. After one student commented on her own ‘Aha’ experiences after adjusting and refining her movements, another participant added, “And then there are life’s ‘Aha’ moments

which come unexpectedly and are welcomed. After all, TCC is about life itself.”



~ NEWLY RELEASED CLIPS OF JUSTIN STONE DEMONSTRATING MOVEMENTS ~

There is a newfound cache of Justin Stone demonstrating how to teach and how to move in the Good Karma Publishing archives. Justin has been captured on video at teacher conferences (thanks to hosting teachers) and through greetings he has sent to conferences when he was unable to attend in person (thanks to Brock Brocklehurst). Previously, if you didn't attend a particular conference, you wouldn't have been privy to these offerings. Now, if you join the T'ai Chi Chih Facebook group (it's free and easy to sign up; see *The Vital Force*, February 2009) or scour YouTube, you will be able to benefit from them. They're priceless little gems, and through them, you'll see that the principles haven't changed one iota over time.

Twice monthly, we are releasing short clips of these Justin Stone teachings. If you're a member of the Facebook group, you'll be the first to get the announcement. (We don't send general email notifications because *The Vital Force* has a policy about not using your contact information for purposes other than emergencies.) If you're not a Facebook member, you can, of course, still find the videos on YouTube. On the group T'ai Chi Chih Facebook page, scroll down to the video section to see links for the clips all in one place.

The first day the first clip went live, Chris Norkus, a Facebook T'ai Chi Chih member and teacher, wrote to say what perfect timing it was. Chris had been working with Working The Pulley just that morning, and Justin's comments directly spoke to an element around which he'd been trying to get clarity.

~ GROWTH OF CERTAINTY & COMMITMENT ~

I moved to Albuquerque four years ago to be in Justin's presence more. And when I'm not traveling, I see him at the Tuesday morning teacher practice, at his house for meditation three days a week, and I take him to lunch on Saturday (since he relinquished his car). Of course he's constantly testing students, and he needles me at times about why Good Karma isn't selling as much material as it did seven or eight years ago. I have many responses, but these days I usually simply say, "I'm only one person." To which he says, "That's right."

By spending time with Justin, my faith has increased and my impatience (though still present) has decreased. I have a growth of certainty in the growth of T'ai Chi Chih and a faith in it remaining free of other attachments. Sales are down about five percent from last year, but I remain committed to doing my part. A Goethe poem was given to me recently that addresses this subject head on: "Until one is committed there is always hesitancy / The chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness / ... / The moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too. / All sorts of things occur to help that which would never otherwise have occurred. / A whole stream of events issues from the decision, / Raising to one's favor all manner of unforeseen accidents and meetings / And material assistance which no man could have dreamed would come his way, / Whatever you can do or dream you can begin it. / Boldness has genius, power and magic in it."

I am grateful for to the opportunity to do one person's part. I know each of you is also – whether it's through a sincere daily practice, offering Justin's teaching materials in your classes, spreading the word about TCC, and/or keeping TCC free of commercialization and other affiliations.

KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

The Lighter Side

While doing Cosmic Consciousness Pose, John (a participant in the MS day group), said, "Hey, this is like a group hug!"

One day at the retirement community, I stepped out of the elevator with a hearty laugh. The elevator walls were lined with flyers for the day's upcoming events (like T'ai Chi Chih), but on this particular day a flyer other than TCC caught my eye. As I walked into the auditorium to teach, one of the ladies was laughing about the exact same thing, and she was so excited that we both found it funny. The flyer in question? "Life's Journey Class cancelled today."

During the Name Game, an icebreaker on the first day of TCC class, (see *The Vital Force*, March 2002), my college students usually introduce me by saying, "You're bringing stones" or "Sharon's bringing stones." This time one student pointed at me and said, "You're Sharon Stone." ... Uh, not quite.

– SHARON SIRKIS, COLUMBIA, MD

And now for the darker side (for balance):

A student in the MS day group asked, "What did the pink panther say when it stepped on the ant?"

"Dead ant, dead ant, dead ant, dead ant, dead ant."

(Say this out loud if you don't get it.)

– SHARON SIRKIS, COLUMBIA, MD

A student recently shared an example of how T'ai Chi Chih is really changing something inside her. She spoke of getting into an argument with her husband, as often happens. What amazed her this time, though, was that she actually paused, turned to him, and said, "You know, you might be right." At first, she said, it felt so good and so freeing.

– SHEILA LEONARD, ST. JOHN'S, NL, CANADA

T'ai Chi Chih Community Calendar

DATE	WHAT & WHO	WHERE	CONTACT
August 20-23	TCC Retreat w/ Antonia	Ringwood, NJ	Dan Pienciak wakeupdaniel@aol.com 732 988 5573
October 25	TCC Teacher Renewal w/ Pam	Ringwood, NJ	Daniel Pienciak wakeupdaniel@aol.com 732-988-5573
October 26-31	TCC Teacher Accreditation w/ Pam	Ringwood, NJ	Daniel Pienciak wakeupdaniel@aol.com 732-988-5573
November 15-20	TCC Teacher Accreditation w/ Sandy	Albuquerque, NM	Ann Rutherford 505-292-5114 ruthergary@aol.com
2010			
February 16-19	TCC Retreat w/ Antonia	Santa Barbara, CA	Pam Towne 760-722-9544 pamtowne@gmail.com
Spring 2010	TCC Teacher Accreditation w/ Pam	California Details TBD	Athene Mantle 510-828-8896 chigoddess@hotmail.com
April 22-25	TCC Retreat w/ Antonia	Houston, TX	Carletta LaCour 713-440-3713 carlettaop@yahoo.com

MORE WORKSHOPS & RETREATS

(Postings here are open to all teachers offering events wholly devoted to TCC.)

August 20-23	Sejjaku Retreat w/ Dan Pienciak	Ringwood, NJ	Dan Pienciak wakeupdaniel@aol.com 732 988 5573
September 17-20	TCC Workshop w/ Carmen Brocklehurst	Albuquerque, NM	Judy Hendricks judyhendricks@comcast.net 505-897-3810 (after 5pm)
November 20	Justin's Birthday	Albuquerque, NM	
November 20	Potluck Dinner	Albuquerque, NM	

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ARTWORK & PHOTO CREDITS:
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Date you were accredited as a T'ai Chi Chih teacher _____

Date you were accredited as a Seijaku teacher _____

Name of the teacher who taught you T'ai Chi Chih _____

Name of "second signature" _____

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