

# The Vital Force

JOURNAL OF THE T'AI CHI CHIH® COMMUNITY

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for teachers & students

August 2010

## Justin's Words

### Learning, Or Doubting

BY JUSTIN STONE

On Saturday nights after mediation and dinner, we quote words of the “Masters” and call the evening *Teisho* [a formal presentation of dharma] (from the Japanese), but who and what are called Masters?

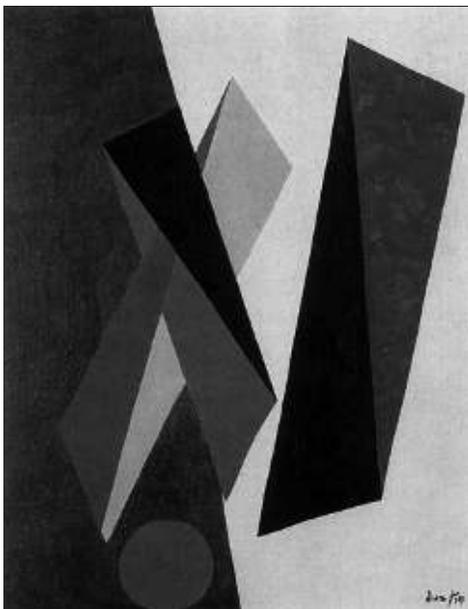
A lot depends on when they lived, what they said. But why? Some did not say anything. Some are trying to make a name for themselves. But why bother?

Did the silent ones enjoy sex or did they enjoy eating good, rich foods? The latter means the body is being catered to, which is normal.

We would not quote “good” words unless they meant something. No matter who was speaking, if he had a reputation, he would be listened to.

The point I'm making is that you were deemed “wise” because people believed you to be wise. If Yogi Vasistha claimed to be thousands of years old, it's because he had built a great reputation. This does not mean I read (and believe) sayings of famous great Zen Masters or do not.

Sales and sayings are great when I concentrate on them; I get something from them. But there is no way I can gain much of a way of living from them. So keep reading famous words and keep on learning, or doubting.



### Another Handful Of 20th Century Psalms

BY JUSTIN STONE

- Everyone wants something for nothing, but everything will be paid in full.
- The memory of things future.
- What do people mean when they say “all is one?” Do they act as though all is one?
- No two live in the same world.
- Without Compassion, there is no Wisdom. Accumulation of knowledge can be like over-eating. Let “what is” shine through in the silence. It's always there anyway.

*[Reprinted with permission from Good Karma Publishing. This title is currently out-of-print.]*

# May The Vital Force Be With You

## ~ A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ... ~

... on the way to this August issue taking shape. The slight imbalance of articles by one geographic region in the May issue got me thinking: Why not highlight the vitality of regions around the country? So I contacted every teacher in five states and one city with the idea of running a two- or three-page spread about what they're doing. (I also thought that copies of those layouts would make nice promo pieces for each community to spread the word to new students.) It was met with unequivocal enthusiasm – so much so that “Karmic Comments” and “The Lighter Side” took a hiatus to make room for Edmonton. And this issue was born. Articles about gratitude (this issue's theme) and teaching tips for Pulling Taffy, Variation #3, Perpetual Motion are sprinkled throughout.

## ~ FROM STUDENT/TEACHER-CANDIDATE LINDA WATSON ~

“In the last issue, you asked some questions. I really enjoy the articles on the different movements. As I've been called to teaching, I've begun to work more on form and realize what a difference the articles make. In fact, I intend to get the back issues to read them through from the beginning. Having a theme focuses our thinking and does help the journal hang together better. Usually, I can look at it through the lens of the theme and learn something new. So, it works for me.”

KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

## Where In The World?

Please send photos of yourself or other practitioners doing T'ai Chi Chih somewhere in the world to The Vital Force, and we'll start running them as a regular feature – a la Waldo.



Teacher Richard Daffner of Florida gets this spot. Where is he? Email your best guess to [tcc@kimgrant.com](mailto:tcc@kimgrant.com) before the next issue discloses the whereabouts of Richard. All winners will be entered into a drawing for a year's free subscription to *The Vital Force*, to be drawn at the annual conference. May 2010 issue: Petra, Jordan.

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### Submission Guidelines

Please send articles as Word documents, electronically, to [tcc@kimgrant.com](mailto: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](http://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.

#### Deadline: Oct 1

#### Publication Date: Mid-Nov

Musings on softness:

“It is the absence of any pressure, moving slow motion in a dream, that allows softness to prevail.”

*Working The Pulley*

#### Deadline: Jan 1

#### Publication Date: Mid-Feb

Musings on the importance of practice: TBD

*Light at the Top of the Head / Light at the Temple*

#### Deadline: April 1

#### Publication Date: Mid-May

Musings on moving: TBD

*Joyous Breath*

#### Deadline: July 1

#### Publication Date: Mid-Aug

Musings on gratitude: TBD

*Passing Clouds*

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# Bringing TCC To Kazakhstan

BY LAURIE JACOBI, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

In Fall 2009 I went to Kazakhstan at the invitation of the US Embassy in Almaty to serve as a cultural envoy. I am a wool textile artist and I was asked to share my work and exchange inspiration with wool artisans in two remote cities of this vast Central Asian country. The embassy said that these participants needed new ideas in order to create work that could be brought to market, thus making the women economically independent.



I was quite intimidated at the thought of teaching artists who lived in the land of the Great Silk Road where beautiful textiles had been created and traded for centuries. In the 1200's their ruler, Genghis Khan, called them "the people of the felted walls." I searched my heart for I could bring to them that would be of value. I decided to share with them all that has made me who I am as an artist: I decided to bring them T'ai Chi Chih.

Every morning for six days in the city of Shymkent, in the south of Kazakhstan, we gathered together outside of our workshop building in a noisy parking area, sheltered from the sun but not from curious onlookers. I was accompanied by Leila and Karligash from the embassy, who did the moves alongside me and translated my words into Russian and Kazakh, above the voices of loud workmen and honking horns.



I knew from the start that some were skeptical, wondering what TCC had to do with felting wool. I explained to them that this was a way I get centered and grounded so I can focus and be more creative in my work. The group was quite lively and talkative

and it was often difficult to get their attention. I was concerned that as Muslims they might be skeptical of TCC as some kind of religious practice. However, during each session, in which we learned a few more moves each day, they were quiet and attentive and asked me to repeat some of the phrases and words we use as teachers in our classes. They spoke of feeling tingling in their fingers and being very relaxed. Some were taking notes, and several came to me afterwards, asking if this would help them deal with the stress of difficult home situations or recovery from cancer.

One day the entire group took a bus trip to Otrar, the archeological site of an ancient city that Genghis Khan had destroyed in the 13th century. I was told the energy there was very powerful. It was hot and dusty and we had to cover our heads. While I did not want to be disrespectful of this sacred space, I felt a strong desire to do a few movements before leaving. I stopped to do Rocking Motion and could indeed feel the *Chi* as a strong, physical force in my hands. Before I knew it, a few women had joined me doing the moves! I only wish we could have stayed to do our entire practice there. It would have been beyond description.

When the six days were over I received many requests for more information about TCC. I wrote down all the moves with descriptions that Karligash translated and gave to the participants. She and Leila asked if I could send materials so they could meet in Almaty and do TCC together after I was gone. I did so and hope they have been able to continue to practice. I know that *Chi* opened the way for this all to happen. No matter where you are in the world, TCC is a gift. Isn't that amazing?



## Perpetual Motion & Gratitude

BY DEB BERTELSEN, MAPLEWOOD, MN

**P**ulling Taffy: Perpetual Motion is an opportunity to let the intrinsic energy circulate through my body like the continuous ebb and flow of the oceans waves. The rhythm of this movement pulls me deeper and deeper into my practice. In my mind's eye I envision the branches of a willow tree softly pulled to and fro. Since my body already knows the technical aspects of the movement, the effort of no effort in T'ai Chi Chih allows me to go to a special place where only I reside. I am safe. Here, the sun bathes me in warmth, a gentle breeze whispers in my ear, the earth beckons me to ground deeper with the soles of my feet. TCC wraps me in love and light. And so I am grateful.

With each continuous pull of taffy I honor those things that allow me to be who and what I really am. I am a student of life, and each person who crosses my life path leaves a gift – a life lesson to be learned. I am letting go of perfection, right and wrong, judgment. I am focusing on being centered, grounded, balanced and humble. I am quieting my mind, body and soul. Perpetual Motion becomes a rebirth – coming back with renewed energy and understanding . . . if only for today. For tomorrow I will not be the same person I am today. I will have learned more life lessons. I will have more to be grateful for. It is an honor and a privilege to know and teach this gift called TCC.

# How Do We Teach & Learn?

BY NANCY WERNER-AZARSKI, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

The “taffies” encompass the best and worst of my T'ai Chi Chih practice. In my current practice, I enjoy doing them and wonder, what was all the fuss about? When I first started learning TCC, both of my instructors emphasized that the Pulling Taffy movements were harder, that we needed to pay attention and not get discouraged. So I became intimidated; they became difficult to learn. And when I began teaching, the same “difficult” words came out of my mouth and guess what? My students thought these movements were difficult too. But the “taffies” have also taught me a lot about my TCC practice and how I approach my life. Many “ah-ha” TCC moments – ones that have impacted my life journey – have occurred while practicing the “taffies.”

Recently at a Minnesota meeting of teachers, I recalled being taught the “taffies” and then teaching them the same way. And that even though I don't feel that way anymore, these words still sometimes slip out of my mouth. A newer teacher said, “I think I'm doing that too when I teach, but I love the ‘taffies.’” So in thinking about the teacher-student-practice relationship, I came back to intention. Do we listen to what we say when we teach? Have you changed what you say when you teach? What teaching techniques have you incorporated to support your students as they learn? Antonia recently offered to Minnesota teachers an alternative to presenting the movements. Teach them according to how you move: forward and back, up and down, side-to-side. If you teach this way, is your verbiage different than when you teach the movements in sequence?

Are the “taffies” harder to do or harder to teach? For some people teaching and practicing them has always been easy; maybe another movement, though, is more difficult for you. What do you have trouble teaching? That very movement often becomes the hard one for us – and our students. Justin has always said don't talk about TCC, just do it. That's another lesson the “taffies” have taught me: as one goes deeper, questions are replaced with silence and gratitude. I can now better appreciate the struggles a student undergoes while learning TCC. Perhaps each of us finds the joy in our own way and time.

We've heard many times that the teacher appears as the student needs one. Does that mean I got the teacher I needed for TCC, so that I could learn the lessons I needed to learn – about TCC and my life? If so, the next time I let slip the “harder” phrase as I am teaching the “taffies,” maybe it isn't a mistake or about me? Maybe that student needs to learn the lesson of no effort? Teaching with proper intention allows the *Chi* to flow and teach.

The “taffies” taught me that this is a journey. When I now have difficulty with a movement (it doesn't feel right, there's poor balance or no softness) or when I can't teach a movement if I tried (I get blank looks, students going the wrong way or big sighs), I know I have a gem and that this going to be a learning point or a possible release of tension. It's exciting stuff. We don't have to figure it all out. We just have to practice, practice, practice. Thank you Justin, my teachers and the taffies.



## Being Open, Standing In Gratitude

BY SUE BITNEY, RICHFIELD, MN

Unlike most Memorial Day weekends in Minnesota, the weather for our late May T'ai Chi Chih intensive was breathtaking - as was the intensive. It began with each participant receiving a pottery bowl, on which Sandy asked us to focus. The bowl sat empty, waiting to receive whatever we were ready to give. That was to be our posture for the next four days. Standing ready in emptiness to receive all that TCC was ready to give us. Sandy asked us to reflect on the obstacles in our lives that hold us back and keep us from opening to deeper experiences in life and in our practice. She asked us to keep the bowl in a prominent place so we would be fully conscious of receiving gifts and being grateful for all that we would be given.

Nancy Werner-Azarski made every participant a quilted bookmark with different thoughts to let us know that we were supported by the wider TCC community. By the end, all of the enthusiastic and hard-working students wanted to become teachers. Students and teachers worked together, sharing what they heard from Sandy and incorporating new understandings into their practice.

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centering  
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yang

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be alone  
when connecting  
the inner  
outer  
*Chi*

## Exhausting & Amazing Intensive

By MONICA CAMPBELL, MINNETONKA, MN

I just completed my first intensive. For decades I've been doing many kinds of yoga and meditation. One morning about six years ago I woke up and just couldn't hold another pose. I was a new employee at The Marsh – The Center for Fitness and Balance (known worldwide for its mind/body/spirit philosophy). We offered classes in Taiji so I took one and fell in love. That was the start of years of learning many forms. Three years ago, when I spent the winter in Florida, I looked up local Taiji classes and all that was available was something called T'ai Chi Chih. So I signed up to explore it. Little did I know where it would lead. My love for it was somehow deeper than the other forms I knew. At the time I couldn't decide if this was about the environment (doing TCC in a forest of 80-foot bamboo trees), my teacher (Deb Stump-Berger) or the practice.

I came home to Minnesota and got back into my Taiji world at The Marsh. After about a year I realized that I *really* missed TCC. I looked around and there it was, almost in my own backyard. When I began practicing, that love that I felt in Florida came back. With TCC I felt the *Chi* so much more quickly, and it stayed with me throughout the day. It provides a place I can go for peace, where I can revisit being centered. My emotional and spiritual being can go here to be renewed. I reflect differently. I play with beauty and joy differently. My senses are so sharpened that I hear, smell, see, taste and feel this world differently – all of it: joy, sadness, happiness, sorrow. I am more open to connecting with my whole being. With all this wonderment, my stress levels are more controlled.

Back to the intensive – yup, it was just that. It was completely exhausting and by the fourth day my shoulder had nothing left in it. But I loved every minute of it. Sandy was amazing and our two incredible hosts (Susan and Judy) guided our group with humor, integrity and many caring suggestions. I came away with needing to keep my movements smaller. I'd been extending my arms too far away from my body. Keep it smaller. I felt this immediately. I felt more connected to my center and so moved from my center more freely. What a fabulous feeling. So glad that TCC is in my life, that my being is filled with pure joy.

## On Gratitude

By ANDREA COLE, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

I've been reading healthy living magazines long enough to know that gratitude is an important part of, well ... a healthy life. Why, then, is it so hard for me to make it a daily practice? What could be more inspiring and satisfying than sitting down with a pen and notebook and slowly, thoughtfully writing down things that make me happy? Things that I was lucky to see that day, people I was blessed to connect with, food that tasted so good I still remembered the meal. The idea is that the more you pay attention

What  
are  
you  
grateful  
for?

to the things that inspire gratitude, the more positive your life becomes. Doesn't that sound wonderful? Going through the days on a cloud of good feelings? But it's not so easy – there's plenty to worry about: jobs, money, health, the environment. I believe the key – in everything, really – is balance. That doesn't mean I'm a model of balanced living, but I'm trying, and I think that counts.

And so, in the spirit of gratitude, here's a short, impromptu list. I've left out the

obvious things (health, housing, T'ai Chi Chih) to make room for the things I might take for granted. I am grateful for: ceiling fans, farmers' markets, classic rock, clean water, sunscreen, black tea with agave syrup, egg salad, annual family vacations to the Jersey shore, film cameras, crickets, thank-you cards, strong hugs.

This is just a beginning. What are YOU grateful for? Find a pen (a nicely sharpened pencil is also very satisfying), and a piece of paper – even the back of an envelope – and start your own list. Do it now, and see what happens.



## Being Grateful

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

There are many aspects about T'ai Chi Chih that have deeply impressed me over the years, especially in Justin's teachings. He seemed especially found of quoting his good friend Paul Reps: "How grateful I am with no thing to be grateful for." Note he didn't say, "nothing to be grateful for." This is only one quotation on gratitude that can be found in *Spiritual Odyssey*, and it can be found under the title of "The Idea of Impermanence." I'd invite you to read the entire page. Isn't it amazing how Justin brings in so many thoughts and images into this piece of "Impermanence." Among others, he writes about a talk he gave on "The Spiritual Life," choosing to be the big hermit even on 42nd Street and Broadway. Then to the real meat of the matter, "The Growth of Certainty," which flows into a sense of Essence at all times, whatever the situation. This leads to a feeling of profound gratitude.

There it is: Gratitude cannot be taught; it must be experienced. Gratitude is a profound feeling of wonder, amazement, fullness, of an experience with the total realization that it is beyond me. All I can do is open myself to it – heart, mind, soul. All I need to do is simply receive, and isn't that what we are invited to do as Justin invites us to sit quietly for 10 minutes and simply receive. I do believe this time will raise our awareness to realize just how much we have received. Take a moment to think about the gift to see – your ability to read this printed page, to comprehend letters, words, sentences.

Whenever do we realize our gift of sight and become grateful for it? Very often the only time we appreciate our ability to see is when we can't for whatever reason. If sight is taken from us for a while, such as for surgery of the eye, then we are deeply grateful for the ability to see when we once again gain our clear vision.

It seems to me that TCC practice enables us to be keenly aware of things, events, people, situations because we have taken 30 to 50 minutes to slow down, feel, experience, move, flow in the TCC form. As our awareness heightens in the movements, so will our experience be heightened in an ever new awareness of life, in each moment, and come to be grateful "with no thing to be grateful for," because we embrace all of life. Our TCC practice therefore opens the door to such experiences. As our awareness

is raised and fine tuned, our world of gratitude widens and we discover just how much is pure gift. Our five senses, ability to stand, move and walk, our health, family, friends, home... and the list goes on. It is literally endless. And it all began with 19 simple movements and one pose. How simple, yet how profound.

How interesting that gratitude is the theme for this issue, because it is also the theme of our upcoming conference. We will gather with grateful hearts on August 12 in very familiar surroundings at Lied Lodge, Nebraska City.

The central reason for our gratitude is simply knowing and practicing the TCC form – and this leads us to a profound gratitude

for Justin. I'm sure that more people than one have wondered: how could someone be so generous as to give this away to anyone who wants to lean it, without some type of on going payment. "What's the angle?" as someone once said to him about his so fully sharing this form. Very simply put by Justin: The purpose of the T'ai Chi Chih movements is to circulate and balance the Vital Force. Justin relates this in *Spiritual Odyssey* under the heading "Comments on Newspaper Articles" and ends this very interesting article with one sentence: "The great secret in T'ai Chi Chih is what happens to the Vital Force. We should be grateful for it."

We will not have Justin's presence with us forever. We will, however, have his words, his teachings, his legacy of generosity. May we be just as generous in our service to others through TCC teaching and practice. This is the best way in which we can be grateful to Justin for giving us the TCC form. Speaking of gratitude, be grateful to your TCC teacher for introducing TCC to you. If you are an accredited teacher, be grateful for the teachers who encouraged you onto and through your teacher training. If you have taught TCC classes, I don't have to invite you to be grateful for your students. Sharing TCC through teaching it and experiencing the look on your students' faces when they begin to get into the flow, allows your heart to swell with pure gratitude. What gifts we have, and we are grateful.



## A Moving Mantra

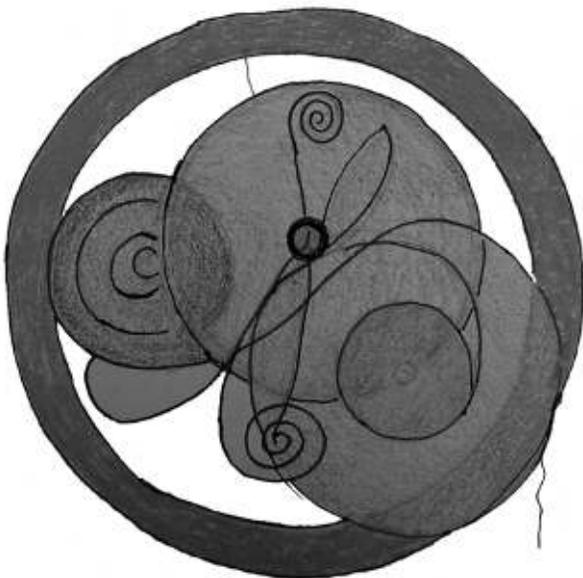
By SANDY McALISTER, HAYWARD, CA

A mantra can be a sacred verbal formula using words or vibration as a spiritual conduit. Continuously repeated, a mantra can instill a one-pointed concentration allowing the release of extraneous thoughts. Using a mantra can transform our awareness of the small self, the every day person we usually identify with, to the Self, that which is connected to All, the Divine that is in all of us, the universal life force, that essence of something greater than us. Name it what you will.

T'ai Chi Chih is a mantra using the body. We do not engage the mind with concepts, thoughts, or desires. We use no words, other than in the Six Healing Sounds. We move with awareness, a soft alertness, not spacing out and without mental engagement. We allow our attention to remain low, on the *tan t'ien* or the soles of the feet, giving the mind a one-pointed concentration.

TCC is the formula and our bodies the tool. As we repeat the movements over and over again, the world we live in melts away and is replaced with gratitude, a sense of peace, joy, acceptance of all that is – without judgment, an openness, and a vast feeling of love. We are not aware of these feelings at the time because the mind is still and not engaged. Often it is after practice that we recognize how we feel.

Doing TCC our movement becomes a mantra of the body. Each repetition affords us an opportunity to be a bit softer, to let go of one more thought, to feel the flow of effortless movement. As the external melts away we open to the inner world of spirit. In the movement and stillness that is TCC, this body mantra has become a spiritual conduit for us.



## Continuing Education For Teachers

By PAM TOWNE, OCEANSIDE, CA

Frequently a question arises: Why isn't re-certification required for T'ai Chi Chih teachers? It is common for teachers in many fields to have to take a re-certification exam periodically or earn a certain number of Continuing Education Units (CEU's) by taking relevant classes every year to update their skills.

Over the years, Justin has been approached many times by teachers requesting a re-certification process. He has emphatically said, "No." So TCC teachers have never had such a formal requirement because Justin has always relied on our integrity to renew our own practice and teaching skills as part of being a sincere TCC teacher. He has often spoken of the *teh*, or inner sincerity, of TCC teachers, and he has expressed great faith in us to teach TCC well and to share this gift with the world.

There are many ways we can check our practice, expand our teaching skills and get input from other teachers. The most important way is to attend the annual teacher conference. Since the first conference in 1985, this has been a wonderful Chi-ful gathering of teachers. We do lots of TCC practice over four days, refining our movements, connecting with other teachers and learning what is happening in the larger TCC community. If you can't make it to Nebraska this August, plan ahead to come to Ohio next July.

Have you noticed how easy it is for interesting variations to creep into your movements when you don't practice with other teachers for a while? We can even pick up bad habits from our students. Auditing a teacher accreditation course provides not only a review of the movements and how to teach them, but it offers an opportunity to give back to TCC by working with the candidates.

An intensive focuses on the movements and "how to move the TCC way," while deepening one's understanding and appreciation of the practice. For teachers it also provides clarity on how to better prepare your students for accreditation. The new teacher symposium offers teachers a place to share teaching techniques and what they have found works (or doesn't) for setting up classes, getting across the principles of how to move, and anything else you want to know about teaching. As part of your ongoing professional education in teaching TCC, I invite every teacher to check the TCC Calendar, and plan now to attend one or more TCC event in the next year.

## Gratitude

BY JERRY JOHNSON, BEND, OR

*If you want a good life, be grateful. – Justin*

Justin's words ring in my ears as a most important truth in my life. As I look back, I have been grateful. However, in most cases, it was an empty gratefulness. I spent a great deal of time chasing after things, thinking this would create fulfillment. In reality, it only created a fleeting sense of fulfillment. As a top executive, businesses catered to me to get my company's business. This meant limousines and top-of-the-line suites, including a one-week stay at the Westin Hotel in Maui.

We all experience transformative moments that carry powerful messages. For me, one of these powerful moments was at the Westin Maui. Catered to daily as a VIP, I was set up in one of their most luxurious oceanfront suites. All this attention, the setting ... and I was miserable. I found myself waking at 4am, going to the lobby and talking to the parrots, wondering what I was doing. I felt empty, lost, unfulfilled. In hindsight, I was homeless, homesick for my truth. I

was like a ship lost at sea, sending out an SOS (Selling Out Self). I was doing all of this for material things.

Fast-forward 15 years. I look back at those days of empty luxury as a strange dream. I have learned that to be grateful I first needed to learn how to be humble, which opened me to being teachable. And *this* is what allowed me to understand. It became a healthy cycle: Being grateful I became more humble. Becoming more humble allowed me to be teachable. Being more teachable allowed me to grow. And growing is the opposite of dying. I had to leave home to come home. I had to die to live.

One of the greatest gifts I've been given – to teach me the truth of what lies within – has been T'ai Chi Chih. It has given me a sense of truth, wholeness and peace that has allowed me to lower the noise of society and up the volume of my inner voice where truth resides. As Herman Hesse wrote, "I have ceased to question stars and books. I have begun to listen to the teaching my blood whispers to me." Thank you Justin for the gratefulness TCC has instilled in me. It has changed my life and for that I will be eternally grateful. I do now have a good life.

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## Engaged Spirituality

BY JIM SHORR, WILSONVILLE, OR

Refinements can be the staff of life, a new way of breathing new energy into a movement. For me, it was re-visiting Pulling Taffy at Carmen Brocklehurst's spring retreat in Albuquerque. Three directions changed my flow: Beginning with the arms fully extended over each other (so the taffy is a "full pull") and sinking, Carmen beckoned us: As your weight shifts, let the shift bring the arms apart; the arms separate at waist level; the anchor hand slides down by the side of the leg, for stability and to fully complete the move. (The hips slightly swiveled to right at the end.) This simple refinement smoothed out my movement and kept my body lower when later executing Perpetual Motion. We end up better balanced after each sequence of pulling – to lay down the heel for the next move. And the shift comes onto a softened knee.



Refinements properly recorded and repeated are the heart of substantive improvement. At our Portland Rose Garden practices, surrounded by the beauty of the Shakespeare Garden, we experience softness all around us, and we experiment with one new refinement per practice. More than a few students have commented on the value of beginning each practice this way.

Practices are held on the first and third Saturdays in the Rose Garden; Steve Marsh leads a practice on the second Saturday morning in the Lan Su Chinese Gardens; and on the fourth Saturday, he facilitates a practice in the garden or basement of the Overlook House, a spiritual community center in North Portland. Steve, Marcella Box and I jointly urge students to come to these practices to add "learning stretch" and flow to their movements. A natural environment of trees, hedges and rocks allow the practitioner to focus on her (or his) moves without interruption.

Every other year we host a special event, lead by Antonia, Sandy or Pam, and facilitated by Roberta and John Taggart, two exceptionally gifted senior teachers. Folks often attend from western and eastern Washington (including Linda Robinson, Pat Moseley and Laurie Thomas). All three teachers are engaged in spreading the joy and developing new teachers, thus widening our circle.

## The End Is The Beginning

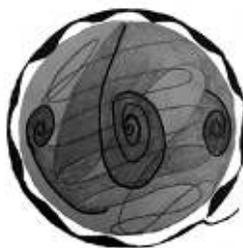
BY STAR STUDONIVIC, PORTLAND, OR

At the end of the Portland T'ai Chi Chih retreat, each of us received a message on our seats. I was tired but exhilarated, and I felt better than I had in a while because of battling cancer surgeries, chemo, Bells Palsy and emotional distress. The message on my seat read: "Like the mysterious snow leopard of the Himalayas, *Chi* hides itself inside the body manifesting its beauty as radiant health." Yes! That's what I'd been seeking – the *Chi* within me so I could feel it as a living, breathing thing. I had lost touch with that energy. I knew it was there; it just seemed elusive. Meditation allowed me to recognize it, but it felt deeply buried and dormant. I didn't know how to re-awaken it. What worked in the past was no longer effective. I was trying to force it. Meditation had become full of effort and stress.

Marcella had suggested TCC while treating me, and since she had done wonders with my health, I followed her suggestion. It was a breath of fresh air – literally. The *Chi* within my body slowly awakened and reintroduced itself to me and my surroundings. Slivers of happiness made me smile. There were short periods of time where I actually felt good. This, and being gentle with myself, had been missing from my life for a long time.

Feeling the energy moving within me grew slowly and then blossomed during the retreat. I just needed time away from life's distractions to let the incubation period follow its natural course of birth. The more I continue to practice, the more a sense of wellbeing embeds itself. My breath is calmer, my body more stable, my sense of being rooted-while-flying is more present. The marriage of different, effortless meditation and TCC is a tonic.

While doing my practice, I feel the roots of my soles buried within the ground, but my being feels like a very stable bird cruising above the earth. Both are joined within my *tan t'ien*. My hands hold a golden ball of light, with energy that's calming and stimulating. I am completely aware and present. In thinking about the snow leopard from the message, I can visualize this very powerful cat within me. The difference is that she is now purring.



## Retreating (Or Not, As The Case May Be)

BY MARCELLA BOX, BEAVERTON, OR

On the last Sunday in May, Roberta Taggart led an engaging T'ai Chi Chih retreat encounter for the Portland area. Our group of 30 included new and experienced students, as well as teachers. We spent a very full three hours reviewing, and releasing into, the movements and flowing from the center in a lovely setting. Our combined energy was grounding and delightful. Participants had glowing remarks to describe our time together.

## Gratitude & Pulling Taffy

BY NEAL ROY, PORTLAND, OR

I had the great opportunity to practice T'ai Chi Chih with Steve Marsh and Jim Shorr in the Chinese Garden in downtown Portland recently. Usually I'm working on Saturday mornings, but my schedule opened up and allowed me time to join them and 13 others. I'd been so used to practicing on my own, and I hadn't practiced with a group since the Albuquerque retreat last fall. I'd forgotten what a joy it is to share the *Chi* with a group of people with different experience levels. The movements let us know each other. The setting was beautiful – a wonderful balance of water, plants and people. Since we were surrounded by the bustle of a city on a Saturday, the feeling of *Seijaku* was so present – serenity in the midst of activity. I focused on the soles of my feet but also on the joy of moving together as a group.

While doing Push Pull, I was thinking about writing for *The Vital Force*. I was hoping the something would come to me through the *Chi*. Upon starting Pulling Taffy I observed the movements around me and then felt how I was doing the movement. I noticed how much up and down movement there was in the hips of many people. I thought, why are they pushing off with the insubstantial foot and rising up instead of staying on an even plane? Hips are supposed to stay at the same level as it turns and pulls your arms apart. (It's not the arms pulling and moving the body up and down.) During the rest of that movement I focused on my waist and feet, making sure I was a good example for those that weren't moving from their centers. I blessed that moment, and silently thanked that experience for deepening my understanding of Pulling Taffy, Variation #3, Perpetual Motion. The rest of the practice seemed to flow and grow. A few visitors joined the practice without, I believe, ever taking a class, and they did extremely well.

I hope I'm able to attend another group practice soon, and I can't wait to share the Chi and joy of this movement in Nebraska in August. At the end of all of my practices, I take a moment and repeat the words of Paul Reps: I am grateful; I give thanks. I repeat that three times and feel gratitude for every moment that I get to live and do TCC.

# Musings On Perpetual Motion & My Years of TCC

By DIANA DAFNER, SIESTA KEY, FL

A great blue heron ruffled its feathers, briefly landing in our yard today, during morning T'ai Chi Chih practice. I felt grateful for its visit, and for the Gulf of Mexico water, still flowing unsullied, as I write this, in the canal behind our home. I felt gratitude, as always, to Justin for having gifted the planet with TCC (which I have now practiced for over 20 years).

One of my favorite memories from our teacher training in 1991 was watching my husband, Richard, warm himself up by doing Pulling Taffy, Variation #3, Perpetual Motion. We were way up north in Bemidji, Minnesota, almost in Canada, and the temperature outside was way below zero. (This January training took place within a week of our relocating from New York to Florida.) Most of the time we stayed inside, traversing the warm tunnels that connected our room with the meeting and dining rooms at the university where the training was being held.

Richard and I had left behind most of our winter clothing, but luckily the school rented outdoor snow gear, so we could safely brave the weather along the lake. We had heard about Tibetan monks concentrating on the circulation of *Qi* and various breath practices in order to produce enough *tummo*, or inner heat, to dry the wet sheets that were placed on their backs, or to make circles around themselves as they sat in the snow. Remembering that, Richard began doing Perpetual Motion. Experiencing it together (I couldn't help but join him) we became less aware of the biting cold, more deeply in tune with our own inner flow of warmth, and with each other.

I am always amazed at the power of shared practice. For over fifteen years, we have led a weekly, follow-along practice session on the beach near our home. Some of those who attend are new to TCC. Some have in the past, or are now, attending classes. Practicing TCC alone – or with the company of backyard herons – is powerfully rewarding. Yet as we all know, the awesome shift of energy during group practice supports and magnifies each individual's experience. The beach session begins fifteen minutes before sunset. Our beach faces west, so that's a natural gathering time. Nature supplies us here with amazing displays at sunset, and sometimes whole flocks of birds flap their wings all around us. Richard and I also spend time in Tulum, Mexico, facilitating couples' workshops at a resort on an east-facing beach. There, he leads TCC at sunrise. (I'm not a morning person, but sometimes even I can't resist such an auspicious moment.)

A black belt in Aikido, I came to TCC after many years of embodied spiritual arts training. I easily felt and appreciated its value immediately. At the time I was also holding meditation classes in our home. Richard liked attending – but would promptly fall asleep. I knew TCC was for us when, while doing Bass Drum in our NYC apartment long ago, Richard said to me, "Now I know why you want me to stay awake during meditation." His comment, and the writings of others in *The Vital Force* who spoke of their *Chi* experiences, convinced me that one didn't need a background like mine in order to benefit from TCC. We began sharing it with everyone we met.

*like a great  
blue heron  
ruffling its  
feathers*

And so the years have passed. We have enjoyed TCC in so many fabulous locations; I can no longer remember them all. I remember daily, however, the serenity such practice provides. Wherever I am, Perpetual Motion takes me deep into the earth, rooting me, like part of nature itself. Continual movement, shifting weight, yet staying in place, like a tree rippling with energized life. Or a great blue heron ruffling its feathers.



## Welcome 2010

By HOLLY SANDERS, LARGO, FL

*Here is a "small voice" about Pulling Taffy, Variation #3, Perpetual Motion and what I experience while doing this movement.*

Letting go of the need to control... is surrender.  
Letting go of the hurt... is forgiveness.  
Letting go of the resistance... is acceptance.  
Letting go of the possession... is love.  
To let go again requires Grace.  
Let us begin this New Year by seeking Grace to let go.

## Practice Senseless Moments Of Appreciation

By ANITA VESTAL, KISSIMMEE, FL

Florida is a special place with water on all sides except the north border. It's home to many species, including delicate water birds that look like the cranes in the brushwork painting by Ou Mie Shu that we recognize as a symbol of T'ai Chi Chih. The Gulf of Mexico is on Florida's west coast. I want to share a prayer of gratitude I am saying to protect the delicate ecosystems from leaking oil and to focus my thoughts on sending appreciation.

"I send the energy of love and gratitude to the water and all the living creatures in the Gulf of Mexico and its surroundings. To the whales, dolphins, pelicans, fish, shellfish, plankton's, corals, algae and all living creatures. I am sorry. Please forgive me. Thank you. I love you." I repeat this prayer because it puts my focus on sending love to the Gulf, its people and ecosystems. It has a regenerative focus rather than dismal or blaming one. Likewise TCC is a restorative, generative practice that shines light on my joy and appreciation of the gifts I have in my life.

One of the ways I practice appreciation while doing TCC is to set myself up in the midst of nine tall trees or nine flowering shrubs. Rather than count the nine repetitions, I shift my glance from one tree to the next, to the next until I have shared appreciation with each one and reached my nine repetitions. Then I shift to the other side and repeat the joyful glances to each of the nine trees again. This brings me an extra dose of joy because I have experienced the beauty of the natural setting, creating a smile in my heart. Thus TCC connects me to nature and offers me a chance to lovingly appreciate all the good in my life. TCC helps me practice senseless moments of appreciation.



## A Gentle "Doing" Practice

By SUSAN QUINN, POINCIANA, FL

Late Saturday night I returned from an intensive Zen meditation retreat called *sesshin*. It is always a profound and deepening experience, where we meditate for six to eight hours each day. I love to sit in stillness, but with the many hours of meditation, my poor body tends to get stiff, especially early in the schedule. I've found that T'ai Chi Chih is a very beneficial part of my overall practice for several reasons.

*the Chi  
flows,  
I breathe  
and  
all is  
still*

A *sesshin*, as you can imagine, is demanding. In the afternoons, I tend to get sleepy and fatigued, even with taking a nap. That's when I love to do TCC. At 3:00pm everyone does a body practice, and if I start a little early, I can do all the TCC movements. I have a favorite spot where I can look out on ancient oak trees and just breathe in my experience. I can feel the *Chi* begin to move, and it's often especially intense after hours of meditation. It is so complementary to a Zen practice, which teaches that there's nowhere to go, nowhere to be, except fully in the moment. Whether I'm doing Bass Drum, Pulling Taffy or Cosmic Consciousness Pose, the *Chi* flows, I breathe and all is still.

In my daily life I enjoy TCC because it provides a balance to my spiritual work. Where I enjoy Zen meditation (a "being" practice) each morning, TCC offers me a gentle "doing" practice. The repetitions allow me to pay attention to my balance, energy and presence. There's nowhere else to be, and I flow with "what is," and I ground myself (as my TCC teacher Anita Vestal reminds me) with the bubbling springs under my feet. Just like at *sesshin*, I usually do my TCC practice at home between 3:00 and 4:00pm most days, and it both revives and calms me. I also experience great gratitude, since retirement allows me to spend this time with the universal flow of energy that is always available to me.

## Sense & Essence

BY JUSTIN STONE [TRANSCRIBED FROM THE 1991 T'AI CHI CHIH TEACHER CONFERENCE IN MINNEAPOLIS, MN]

Vimalakirti was a great layman in Buddhism, one of the greatest of all Buddhists. He said, "It's like this. The high plateau does not produce lotus flowers. It is the mire of the lowest swamplands that produces these flowers." In other words, the lotus, which is so often thought of as a symbol of purity, grows in the midst of dirt, swamplands. The reason I am going into this is that so often I have heard about this issue from people. I have been guilty of this, too.

There was a very strong urge in me many times, particularly after times I spent in the Orient, to get away and live in solitude and devote myself to my own spiritual practice. But certain spiritual experiences told me that was not the way for me and so it went by the wayside. Many feel, "Oh, I have to get away from all this. I have to divide the day in two – my busy day, making a living, screaming at the children, doing the other. And then the time of purity when I get away from it and live the other life." But that isn't what is being said here. Right in the time of screaming at the children, you can be aware of the essence while being in the world of the senses. To be in the world of the essence.

*you can be aware of the essence while being in the world of the senses*

Hakuin Zenji, who was certainly an ascetic and one of the strictest of all Zen teachers, said, "Samadhi in actual life is a hundred times better than *samadhi* in quietude." He was saying positive *samadhi* rather than absolute *samadhi*. Absolute *samadhi* is like a trance state, a state in which you are away from everything. The senses don't operate. But Zen says that you must digress from that to positive *samadhi* that operates in every action that you take.

Zen teachers have always thought much more highly of living the everyday life honestly and being aware of the essence than trying to get away from everyday life. Engo, another Zen teacher, said, "In the busiest marketplace, one will be able to enjoy unhindered movement." Do you get the essence of that statement? "In the busiest marketplace one will be able to enjoy unhindered movement." Right in the midst of the transaction, you have the great freedom.

It's very different from *moksha*, getting off the wheel of life and death. I know of several people who practiced the Indian ways with the idea of attaining *moksha*, and one of them got ill and became very frantic about it. He thought he was going to die. And I said, "Well, this is your chance to get off the



wheel of life and death." I don't know people who want to get off the wheel of life and death. They do the ceremonies and pay homage to it while knowing that really isn't what they want. If it is your calling, however... For instance, Tom Fernandez [...] is one of the best T'ai Chi Chih teachers, a very influential one whom everybody likes. And yet Tom has retired to live a monastic life at the Self Realization Foundation; he has retired from the world. That was his calling. He had attained a growth of certainty and knew he wanted to do that. [I] wonder whether he will want to do it continually. But if you are going to live that kind of a life, there must be no doubt in your mind that is what you want to do.

*the lotus grows in the midst of dirt*

Vimalakirti, the great layman, said, "If you consider quietude right and commotion wrong, then this is seeking the real aspect by destroying the worldly aspect." Does everybody follow that? When you like the quiet and hate the hubbub, this is just the time to apply effort. He goes on, "Suddenly, when in the midst of the hubbub, you topple the scene of quietude, that power surpasses the meditation seat and cushion by a million times." By a million times. Although Vimalakirti was considered at the very top of Buddhism, the Buddha used to send some of his top disciples to see Vimalakirti, who chose to live as a layman. He had a family. He said, "When, in the midst of hubbub, you topple the scene of quietude, that power surpasses the meditation seat and cushion by a million times." He's not saying *not* to meditate or *not* to follow the contemplative life. He's saying don't give up the worldly aspect while seeking the quietude.

One monk said, "Don't be fond of purity. Purity makes people weary. Don't be fond of joyful liveliness. Joyful liveliness makes people crazy. As water conforms to the vessel, it accordingly becomes square or round, short or long. Water follows the course of circumstances." Doesn't it? If you have a square box, the water is square; if you have a round vessel, the water is round. So when people ask questions like I have been asked so many times, "What do I do about diet?" ... "What do I do about sex if I'm meditating?" ... "What do I do about this and that?" I answer, be like water; conform to the circumstances, to what is called for.

*be like water; conform to the circumstances, to what is called for*

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## Transformation & Gratitude

By CARMEN BROCKLEHURST, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

We were gifted with a pupa (a butterfly cocoon) and told that it would open within a couple of days. It was so exciting to witness the transformation and birth of a beautiful black swallowtail butterfly. We put it in a place of honor – on the dining room table so that we would see it every time we walked by. Soon I heard Brock say, “Look we have a butterfly.” Its wings were completely spread and dry so we knew it had only been about 30 minutes since coming out of its cocoon. However, it hadn’t yet tried to fly; it was upside down on the table. We’d been told not to touch it, as that would harm the birthing. This is very much like not touching a person in meditation or while doing T’ai Chi Chih (without their permission), as the shock would be very disorienting.

We got the butterfly outdoors without touching it. But our friend (a TCC teacher) told us that butterflies sometimes climb on her hand, and she can easily move them outside. They must recognize her as a peaceful friend because of her TCC practice. The butterfly finally turned itself over; its first attempt to fly landed it on its back, showing us its beautiful wings. After several more tries the butterfly gently lifted and flew off easily. This is like a new student coming to a TCC class and feeling ungrounded and wobbly. By the middle or end of class they usually feel that TCC is for them. They sometimes feel that they have done TCC before, even though they have never taken a class.

There are many similarities between the birthing of a butterfly and learning and practicing TCC – especially the transformation that takes place within us. The interesting part is that this transformation happens daily in big and little ways. So often a big sense of gratitude manifests for Justin, for having originated this wonderful discipline. What if he had not listened to his inner self and followed a spiritual life? Some may say, “There are other spiritual disciplines I could follow.” This is true, but the beauty is that we were gifted with this discipline. The more I do TCC the more I realized that without it, my being (inside and out) could not possibly be able to continue on a true spiritual path. By true, I mean a path that can open the door to complete freedom.

Justin has wonderful company that supplies special daily help to him. These people have not taken a TCC class and yet their comments to me (and others) include that “Justin is a very special person ... I feel honored to be here to help him ... I’m glad the care giving company sent me here.” Justin’s way is to help us all, learn to love and share the *Chi*. Thank you, Justin.

## Gratitude: The Uncarved Emotion

By PETE GREGORY, HIGHLAND, IN

*...in the practice of the Tao, every day something is dropped.  
Less and less do you need to force things, until you finally arrive  
at non-action.*

*When nothing is done, nothing is left undone...  
Tao Te Ching, Verse 48*

Growing up, my concept of gratitude was superficial, at best. It wasn’t “authentic” without the utterance. The rote etiquette of saying please and thank you, of prefacing a meal with a blessing, the Thanksgiving litany of acknowledgments ... all were proof positive of my benevolent appreciation for being alive and bearing witness to the bounty of existence. Be polite, and I was good to go.

Later on, ensconced in a career of self-destruction, a deeper sense of gratitude took root, in the form of the foxhole prayer.

Thankful to survive an onslaught, I would experience a fleeting sense of the soothing power of being grateful. It was a relief to sublimate the misguided ego, and simply wallow in raw acceptance. However sporadic, I knew it when I felt it.

And then I learned T’ai Chi Chih. I began to heal. Moreover, I began reading Justin’s lectures and books. I discovered that gratitude is

*gratitude is not  
about where to  
find emotional  
refuge from  
inexorable  
Karma*

not about what to say, or where to find emotional refuge from inexorable Karma, or the prescribed antidote for the “greed, anger, and delusion” that eclipse our desire to lead a happy life. Like Justin says about softness – it’s not something to try to be; it’s the absence of tension that allows softness to prevail. Or as Paul Reps said, “How grateful I am with no thing to be grateful for.”



## Moving Through Grief (Or According With Impermanence)

By ROSELEE BLOOSTON, MONTCLAIR, NJ

Long before my teacher accreditation, I had planned to give the required presentation to a hypothetical audience of writers. T'ai Chi Chih does wonders for creativity, and I am, after all, a writer. But the night before, I couldn't shake the sense that there were others I needed to address. I lay in bed, mentally revising what I would tell this audience, a group I had been a member of for almost two years: the bereaved.

*a bolt of energy  
- benign  
lightening,  
if you will -  
shot through me*

Three years earlier, I had walked into a TCC class assuming it was the martial art form. The distinctly non-martial movements soothed me, and it felt right. I incorporated the practice into my life, thinking, "I'm preparing for something." A year later (as my husband lay dying in a Dubai hospital), I made my plane reservations, waited for my son to come home for that dreaded trip, packed my bags and did my practice. After facing the stark reality of the foreign I.C.U., and the doctors' insistence that I pray, I stood in my husband's apartment, terrified, and did my practice.

By the time I got to Light at the Top of the Head, Light at the Temple, a remarkable thing happened. I opened my hands above my head and a bolt of energy - benign lightening, if you will - shot through me. I was shocked and quite literally grounded. I have never experienced anything like it before or since. In fact, I'd never "gotten" this movement, but the moment was profoundly powerful and has stayed with me. I needed energy; I did my practice, and I received what I needed.

During the next months, crushed by sadness, I did my practice. Through overwhelming anxiety, I did my practice. I focused on the *tan tien* and regained my equilibrium. When the world turned cold, I moved with softness and found connection. The daily practice of TCC gave me back my strength, allowed me to let pain ebb and flow, to move through my grief. Though the death of my husband was a personal tragedy, my life would continue. I had learned to accord with impermanence.

And so I told my presentation audience, "When you don't know how to go on, let go. When loss robs you of your identity, put your attention on the soles of your feet, shift your weight and flow from the center. *Chi* will carry you forward, and you will remember who and what you are: a human being, able to experience sorrow and joy, and above all, a still Vital Force."

## Pretending No More

By CLEO ROEMELE, YORK, PA

Prior to attending teacher accreditation last fall I used to believe that, when doing T'ai Chi Chih, I was pretending to know what I was doing. Some might even say I was conducting a careless practice where my intention was more focused on moving perfectly rather than allowing the *Chi* to flow on its own. Through my many teachers over the years at intensives and private instruction (you all know who you are and I thank you from the bottom of my heart), I've since come to appreciate Justin's words: "It's not called TCC perfect, but TCC practice."

Even with that deeper understanding, I struggled with whether or not attend this year's teacher conference because there wasn't much opportunity for me to instruct this year. The guidance of a close friend and fellow instructor helped me to see that it's not how many students we have but the fact we're continuing our commitment to the TCC community at large.

I've often wondered whether or not I was worthy of certain things - perhaps that's the reason why I continue to put other duties in front of ones more important to my well-being. You know, the never-ending tasks like dishes, laundry, work assignments, email. Instead of spending quality time rejuvenating the soul. Why is it that we so willingly give into our *vashanas* and continually reunite with those habitual pathways that impede our growth and/or temporary peace? The answer is probably unique to each of us, but my goal is to strive toward acceptance and simply allow a moment

without judgment or fear.

I am indeed looking forward to spending time with fellow TCC enthusiasts in the serene landscape of Nebraska. Whenever more than two of us congregate, magical happenings occur and I, for one, don't want to miss a thing. Look me up. I'll be somewhere close to the front asking lots of questions in order to learn and grow in the awe-inspiring *Chi*.



## Teacher Symposium Comments

By FURMAN RILEY, RESTON, VA

**H**ow fortunate that I chose to attend the second annual T'ai Chi Chih teacher symposium. It offered engaged discussion, sharing of community wisdom and experience (both in teaching and personal practice), support for new teachers (of which I am one), problem solving of student issues, concrete teacher aids shared in a show-and-tell format, great food, beautiful surroundings and comfortable sleeping accommodations. What more could one dream of? And to cap all that, Sandy McAlister brought along not only her great leadership, but her impeccable style of deepening our understanding and execution of the TCC movements. Thanks to all who were present. I am a much richer individual and proponent of TCC as a result.

## Flowing From "Never" To Gratitude

By LINDA WATSON, WESTMINSTER, CA

**A**t a Santa Barbara retreat with Antonia, Pam Towne announced that she would meet with those interested in becoming T'ai Chi Chih teachers. "Who thinks they might be coming to that," she queried. "Just so I have an idea; it's not a commitment." I quickly shoved my hand under my leg to keep it from fluttering upwards. Pam smiled, "If you're not sure, that's fine. You can just come and see what it's about."

At the meeting, Pam asked each of us why we were there. I explained that I'd retired early from teaching because it had completely drained me. I promised myself that I would never, ever let that happen again. It was quiet and then someone said, "Never say never." In the silence I heard, "You teach what you need to learn." Gratitude for my years of teaching filled me, and Never shifted to Yes. I've discovered through TCC that simple shifts make a big difference. And some shifts that seemed would never happen, can happen easily – when I relax into the flow and am grateful.



## Birth Of A New TCC Program

By DENNIS McCANN, GUILFORD, CT

**S**hortly after getting certified with 16 others by Pam Towne and Antonia, I started a T'ai Chi Chih class in late 2009 at the Middlesex Hospital in Middletown, CT. The accreditation was a wonderful experience, deepened my practice and taught me how to impart this practice to others. Since starting the Middlesex class, 19 students have taken the course, which has been enhanced by the opening of the Wellness Room. This ideal setting has a music player with speakers wired into the ceiling, one wall made of a long mirror and lights that make the ceiling look like a blue sky with clouds.

At Dan's suggestion I arranged the program so that each class is one hour long, but that students who have previously completed the class can join us half way through. At the end of the first hour the new students leave, and I stay for another half hour with the former students. It works out very well.

My dream is to build a community of TCC practitioners and hopefully produce more teachers from this pool. Currently I am the only teacher in Connecticut. As a new teacher, I am learning a great deal from my students. For some students even the simplest of movements is challenging. Most of the students are cancer patients or cancer survivors. One thing I have learned from them is that there is no hurry. The goals are simply the feel, softness and diminishing of tightness and old anxiety. If a student lowers his or her anxiety

and tension through the practice of only one movement, I feel the program has been a success.

Of all the things I do as a hospital's only chaplain, I most look forward to the weekly TCC class. My hope is that it continues to grow and provide students with increased physical, emotional and spiritual freedom that letting go through TCC teaches us.

## Why? Why Not?

By KARIN YACULLO, MUNDELEIN, IL

**W**hy T'ai Chi Chih? Why not? I have done different exercise programs but never anything that included relaxation or flowing positions. I wasn't sure what TCC was when I started class. Okay, I thought it would be relaxing, help with balance and maybe reduce stress, or bring some peace of mind. It's done that, and now I believe it's done so much more.

I am beginning to understand that TCC is a moving meditation. There are only a few words spoken and no words to memorize. It puts me in the right frame of mind. The 19 movements (and one pose) just flow – and so does my mind. This is not what I expected. Actually, again, I don't know what I expected. But I (now) know that I want to do TCC without thinking. I practice the movements. I really want to learn and benefit from them.

Right now I'm attending a second class, repeating what I learned in the beginning class. Only now am I starting to see the value of TCC. The movements look so easy, but I have to work at them if I want to do them correctly and receive their benefits. Yes, there is work but I find peace of mind when I am corrected, and I find practicing easier and more relaxing. When I started I didn't know *yinning* from *yanging* or anything about the *tan t'ien*, but I am slowly learning.

I took the class originally because it was something new. I'm *still* taking it because I'm enjoying the results of my work. I'm not rushing to complete a position; I want to do it correctly and feel the benefits. I believe the people around me reap the benefits also. I hope to be doing TCC for many years. I can see why it's something people of all ages can do and benefit from.

## Why I Continue With Classes

By MAY YOUNG CHIN, CHICAGO, IL

**W**hat started off as a means to help improve my balance and coordination (plus something to do in my early retirement life) has evolved over the past 2 ½ years to a way of life. Besides, it's fun to do. Practicing T'ai Chi Chih has given me a better sense of the energy around me. Being of Chinese descent, I have always believed in the *Chi* or energy force around all of us. My Chinese roots have also made me acutely aware of the nature or force of Feng Shui or Wind Water. Wind and water are the two elements on earth that are constantly moving.

Like the wind, which one cannot see but one knows is there, so is there *Chi*. Water may possibly be the strongest natural element on earth because over time, it can erode mountains. So is *Chi*. By practicing TCC regularly, there's a stronger sense of that *Chi* thus causing a less stressful way of life. Like flowing water, when the

*Chi* is flowing freely, there is a sense of balance. When the *Chi* is flowing freely, there is a feeling of renewed energy. Regularly practicing TCC keeps that sense of balance and renewed energy. Regularly practicing with a group continues to strengthen that energy by building on each other's *Chi*. That is why I continue to take classes.



## Pulling Taffy

By TERRY SLANEY, SUGAR GROVE, IL

**P**ulling Taffy is very dear to my heart. I was so lucky to have Justin say to me, "Don't worry, you are doing fine." It gave me the confidence to keep working on it; it helped me relax and remember it's okay, the perfection of imperfection, striving in a relaxed manner to improve. The *ebb and flow* of the four Pulling Taffy movements is a miraculous development as one movement segues into the next in a special way.

Beginning with Basic Pulling Taffy the *tan t'ien* leads. The upper body is followed by the arms and that wonderful feeling of the palms as they move over and under, the *Chi* resonating as the hands experience polarity, swathing gently through space. The addition of forward movement in Pulling Taffy, Variation #1, The Anchor swells the movement to a new forward and then centered dimension – before it rises vertically and centers in Pulling Taffy, Variation #2, Wrist Circles. Finally, Pulling Taffy, Variation #3, Perpetual Motion brings this movement to a continuous stream, like the infinity symbol.

Perhaps I should have written the *flow and flow* earlier. That is what the practice of T'ai Chi Chih feels like when I let TCC do TCC. It's a continuous, universal oneness, and at the same time, it's a centeredness without end. It's a wonderful journey.



## How Has TCC Affected My Life?

By NANCY LAWRENCE, ROUND LAKE BEACH, IL

A year ago I'd never heard of Tai Chi Chih. Can you imagine that? I became interested for two reasons. I'd suffered some great personal tragedies and needed something to focus on besides grief. The second reason was because it was so inexpensive (and that's been a great plus during these times).

I practice daily and look forward to each practice because I never know what the *Chi* has in store. Very recently, while doing Daughter on the Mountain Top, the *Chi* felt as large as a basketball. I was amazed. It had never felt that big before. So I thought that I *must* be doing the movement pretty well to get the energy so built up. TCC has also provided me with much more energy internally and externally, and I really think that this helped a surgical incision heal much more quickly. I've also gotten more mundane things accomplished in everyday life. Of course, having a kind and interesting instructor has kept me focused and inspired, and I'm looking forward to the intermediate class in the autumn and the future – to see what other benefits and surprises “the effort of no effort” will bring.

## Why TCC?

By RICHARD DYE, INDIAN CREEK, IL

Because it gets me out of my head and into my body. I spend most of my time in my head: trying to make sense of things, thinking critically, abstracting, analyzing, teaching – a rationalist rationalizing. Responding to the vague sense that some sort of body movement would add needed balance to my life, I looked for a T'ai Chi Ch'uan class at my local community college. The time slot didn't work for me, so I blundered into T'ai Chi Chih. I blundered in but soon realized the rightness of it for me.

Doing TCC felt right, but I did have a concern that it would come with the expectation that I buy into (or pretend to buy into) a belief structure. So when I first read Justin Stone's statement in the *Photo Textbook* that, “no beliefs are needed and words play no part in successful practice (1996, p. 13),” it spoke powerfully to me. I am grateful that I've been given permission to make a deep commitment to doing TCC without engaging or challenging the thinking and questioning part of me.

I relish the emphasis on doing TCC rather than thinking about it. Sure, I have to think about the body mechanics – the “what?” and the “how to.” But I am not burdened with the “why do it this way?” or “why does it work?” types of questions. There is, however, one “why?” question I can answer: Why is TCC for me? Because it gets me out of my head and into my body. And, because I welcome the stillness it brings to my life.

## Why TCC & What It's Doing For Me

By NELSON WEAVER, LAKE VILLA & GALENA, IL

I turned 62 recently and as many people do when facing a birthday, I took an inventory of my life – where I have been, where I am and where I want to be. Before retiring some years ago, I had held positions of high responsibility in corporate America, and I'd been in flight and command positions in the US Air Force. All of these high stress jobs seemed easy with my Type A personality. While I always met my goals I was often empty and drained. In looking to my birthday milestone, I came to a realization it was time to look for a calming influence.

I came across a community college catalog offering Beginning T'ai Chi Chih with Donna McElhose. I recalled trying a martial arts form of T'ai Chi earlier in my life, but I never followed through because it was never calming. Not sure what this new TCC was, I contacted Donna who explained how TCC had personally changed her life. She told me that I could only expect to get as much from

TCC as I was willing to give, and she challenged me to sign up and start doing TCC to find out for myself what it could do.



Sure, doing TCC has helped ease arthritis in my aging joints. It's helped with balance and painful

muscles, and it's even lowered my blood pressure. But TCC has also calmed me and allowed me to view each day with joy and gratitude. My wife of 40 years routinely comments on how different I have become with TCC. My daughters often tell me they wish I had found TCC years ago. I believe TCC is releasing me from the mundane and awakening me for my future. As Donna reminds me, I am still becoming, but I now know my life is more complete because I joyfully begin every new day softly doing TCC.

Today I celebrated my 149 Day Gong – 149 days of doing TCC since my first class with Donna McElhose on January 19, 2010. Donna's challenge on the first day was to complete a 100 Day Gong. Her ongoing encouragement has been the key factor in helping TCC become part of my daily routine and my life.

## Growth Of Community In Texas

By ALICE HOLDEN, SAN ANTONIO, TX

Amazing, the spread of T'ai Chi Chih in San Antonio and Austin. There was only one teacher in 1992, when I arrived from St. Louis, Missouri. That teacher inspired a group of TCC practitioners to meet at the Leon Valley Library on a weekly basis. And the group is still meeting every Saturday morning. In 2000 we had a TCC teacher training for 15 people. Some of those certified left town and are spreading TCC elsewhere. Four remained and in 2002 assisted me to direct the first TCC conference in San Antonio. It was a marvelous experience. This three-fold pyramid poem sums it up:

our	our	he
hosting	founder	inspires
conference	Justin Stone	by absence
2-oh-oh-2	was with us there	or by presence
deepened our	in spirit	t'ai chi chih
inner	and in	letting
growth	word	go

Renza Baker, one of the first to be certified, started an on-going TCC class, which still continues. She and I directed the Asian Festival at the University of the Incarnate Word (UIW), in which several TCC teachers and students did a complete practice. A local artist, Terry Gay Puckett, was certified in Albuquerque. Terry used her gift of art to make the logo. She often teaches TCC as a complement to her art classes in Guatemala. This year, one of her students, Olive Gaskins, 91, helped demonstrate many of the movements. They particularly enjoyed practicing TCC while overlooking the volcanoes at Lake Atitlan.



Our second TCC teacher training took place in 2009 with four local students, alongside others from around the country. All four local teachers have remained in the area and are busy teaching and promoting this practice. We meet monthly to review, support and encourage each other. Linda Holder discovered TCC after cancer surgery and treatments. Her daily practice enables her to sustain mobility. During some of her therapy, Linda discovered that a simple rocking movement was recommended the same as she was learning in TCC. Linda shares TCC with teachers and teenagers at the school in which she works. Students appreciate the quiet movements that prepare them to be attentive in the classroom. One of the comments she recently received was that TCC helped a student calm down and be less quick to get angry.

Carol Payne has set up her own business, Alamo TCC. She is a frequent participant in trainings given by our teacher trainers. Before Carol and her TCC-student-husband travel, they look in the *TCC Teacher Directory* to determine what TCC groups they might attend along the way. They've had some interesting practices with teachers in Hawaii, Libertyville, IL, Lake Charles, LA, and even with the three TCC teachers in France.

Cecilia Perez was asked to teach TCC at her workplace, where she is a

translator. She is also teaching a group of Spanish-speaking workers at UIW. I hold classes at the SPARKS/CHISPAS' new center, which is located at the UIW Retreat and Conference Center, and Cecilia Perez assists me. In April, we invited Antonia Cooper to San Antonio to meet and practice with TCC teachers and students.

All TCC teachers and students in the San Antonio area express sincere gratitude to Justin Stone for originating this unique form of TCC and appreciate those who, over the years, have supported its growth. We are also grateful to Antonia Cooper for her leadership in bringing the TCC community forward.



## Beachhead In Austin

By RICHARD CUTLER, AUSTIN, TX

Certified in May 2009, Dr. Richard Cutler has established a T'ai Chi Chih foothold in Austin, as its sole TCC instructor. Thanks go to Sr. Alice Holden, Terry Gay Puckett and Renza Baker, who were instrumental in Richard's teacher training preparation. Between 50 and 60 staff at Austin Community College have used their free tuition benefit to take semester-long, 1-hour TCC sessions at noon through Continuing Education. Through ACC, where Richard also teaches Radio-TV-Film classes part time, he has given several demonstrations to students and other faculty during wellness day, faculty professional development workshops and retreats, and at humanities fair celebrations.

Richard has added TCC out-of-doors on Saturdays to the adult movement offerings at the City of Austin's Dougherty Arts Center where he also teaches adult evening art classes. Approximately 25 students have taken 6-to 8-week classes over the past two years. Word-of-mouth brought an opportunity to teach TCC at Sundara Yoga Therapy midweek and early evenings. The highpoint the last 12 months was a brief visit by Antonia, who took an afternoon off from her San Antonio training schedule in late April to present a free demonstration and practice at Sundara Yoga Therapy's serene and spacious facility. In an act of gracious collegiality, a group of T'ai Chi "masters," led by Chinese acupuncture doctors, relinquished their regularly scheduled practice time at Sundara Yoga Therapy to accommodate Antonia's limited available time in Austin. Representatives of each of Richard's current teaching venues plus a few newcomers attended.

A handful of regular practitioners, all doctors of medicine, justice or philosophy, also meet at 9 a.m. in a city park every Saturday morning, rain or shine. Locating teaching space, doing the marketing and scheduling class times in a packed, self-employment teaching schedule keep Richard's plate full. Like bamboo, TCC spreads quietly but surely from person to person and place to place in Austin, Texas.

## Growing & Feeling

By GAIL TERRIFF, EDMONTON, AB, CANADA

We have formed a solid group of T'ai Chi Chih teachers and students here in the Edmonton area, where friendships have been established and our monthly practices continue to be a place of connection and sharing. If you are able to visit, we invite you to join our monthly Saturday morning practice. In fact, I'm sure we could arrange a practice and visit at *anytime*.

Last year, we invited Carmen Brocklehurst to lead a spring weekend retreat for 25 people. Most of the attendees lived in Edmonton, but a few came from Saskatchewan and Ontario. It was just a wonderful time – a time to learn, question, share. And it was a beautiful place to give ourselves the time ... to be. Carmen led us through the moves in a gentle way and touched our hearts more than she knows. The students wanted more and more, and Carmen kept on giving. Her gift of her knowledge and feeling of TCC helped move us to a higher level within our own practices. And personally, I have so much more to share with my students now. Thank you.

And so we move forward: Antonia is coming to Edmonton to facilitate a TCC weekend in 2011. I know it will be fabulous. We are already looking forward to knowing more about the spiritual depths of the movements as a whole. And we look forward to sinking into each movement and feeling what each has to offer.

## My TCC Spiritual Code

By MAX WAN, EDMONTON, AB, CANADA

T'ai Chi Chih reconnects Mind and Body. But what does that really mean? "Constant awareness in the soles of the feet will cure a thousand illnesses." – Buddha. How can that be? The answer for me is found in something I call my Spiritual Code of TCC, a framework, an extended metaphor for my spiritual journey.

**Rocking Motion:** Palms go up as if pulled by strings. Surrender to a "higher" force. Awaken to our spiritual connection or heritage. Hands float gently down. There is patience, letting things unfold at the proper time, *wu-wei* – the action of no-action, spontaneous, not forced, going with the flow. Rocking on heels. Utilizing a conscious mind to stay in balance as we interact with the flow of "higher" forces (*of Chi*).

**Around the Platter:** Hands go around and around. The seasons come and go, over and over again, and we acknowledge this, we accept it and we go along effortlessly with this flow.

**Around the Platter Variation:** We pick up a ball, carry it around to the front, drop it and merge with the flow. We take up our rightful responsibility/duty and carry it for the appropriate time (i.e. to the front where we can see it clearly, consciously, and we know we have learned lessons from doing so). Once we have fulfilled that particular duty, we drop it, and we return or merge back with the flow of things.

**Carry the Ball to the Side:** Fingers point straight down on the downward portion of the movement. We let go completely of all tension in the wrists. As we fulfill our life's responsibilities, we let go of all attempts to hold things in check or to control the shape of events. We trust completely in the safeness of the Universe – even when doing seemingly complicated maneuvers (such as Passing Clouds).

**Push-Pull:** As you sow, so shall you reap, cause and effect. Everything that you are... Send out love/peace vibrations into the world. They come back to you.

**Pulling in the Energy:** Palms are upward while going around; light

comes through each fingertip. We are open at all times to receive guidance or assistance from the higher realms as we flow with the rest of the world.

**Pulling Taffy:** Hands go in different directions – one with a palm up and the other with a palm down. Recognize the unity behind seemingly opposite tendencies within us. Open to receive (palm up). Detachment from things (palm down). "*Be still as a mountain and flow like a river.*" See unity through the illusion of duality.

**Working the Pulley:** When one hand goes forward, the other is going backward (duality). Yet both hands describe the same pattern (unity that is above/beyond the duality). But opposites or polarities only seem to be in opposition. They are part of a greater, unified whole when viewed from a higher perspective. Beware of a "Pedestal Syndrome." You may seem to be progressing (going forward) while others seem to be regressing (going backward) or vice-versa. Yet from a higher perspective, you are both going through the same pattern (evolution); i.e. when others seem to be progressing differently from you, they're simply at a different point in the evolutionary cycle/path. The ebb and flow of life.

**Light at the Top of the Head:** We connect Heaven and Earth, yang and yin, Mind and Body. We expand (increase) our ability to take in that combined energy; we fill up with the joy of life. We individualize the higher energies brought in by mixing them with our unique energy patterns. We let the resulting energy combination settle, i.e. we claim ownership of it. Metaphorically, this new, higher energy form is a tiger. We embrace it and bring it down to the stillness (mountain) of our inner self.

**Cosmic Consciousness Pose:** A pattern is made by space between the fingers and thumbs. It is

reminiscent of the entire, complete, whole, that which contains all parts. It is made up of entering, or potential form, unchanging reality.



## Who Moved My *Chi*?

Workshop with Carmen Brocklehurst  
in Atlanta, GA; April 19-21, 2010

By LARRY BLOOM, SANDY SPRINGS, GA

It was a joyful learning experience when Carmen stopped after her Tupelo workshop. We all appreciated that she couldn't just pass through the Atlanta airport without pausing to share her passion for TCC with a growing number of area advocates. During our time together and along the way, I think someone moved my *Chi*. Practicing our "effort of no effort" we received Carmen's corrections, explored her questions and let her reflections sink in. These are just a few of her comments that resonated with me:

- Feel the hum inside; could I ever be more loved?
- Life is like a river flowing in one direction; am I sometimes paddling in the wrong direction?
- Whatever I am hearing, am I quiet enough inside to understand?
- Can I arrive at that quiet place between my hands?
- The Chinese symbol for hope also means anchor.
- How do I see things as they really are?
- Do I offer from my wisdom center?
- Have I ever made a decision from a place where I am not ready?
- When do I pretend I know more than I know, but don't know this?
- Corrections are a gift; it means I am ready to go deeper.

I had the strange sensation that I was scrubbing my soul as I observed these gems of energy flow in and out of my mind. A few mornings later I was engaged in the habit of planning my day, parsing out the time for each thing I wanted to accomplish and figuring out the priority. Suddenly I experienced a flash of awareness that I was totally in my head. My thoughts, feelings and desires were automatically controlling my decisions without any conscious intervention by me. My mind was chattering away. I stopped and practiced TCC before I went any further.

For the next 15 minutes I practiced while adding what I had learned. I was not in my thinking mind; I was just letting the *Chi* flow at a level I had not previously experienced. A few minutes after Cosmic Consciousness Pose, I was surprisingly gifted with a vast wave of gratitude that was extremely joyful. It was not the thought of gratitude, but rather a sense of gratitude. It was not directed at anyone or anything in particular, but rather towards everything. I stopped and wrote a pyramid poem while sporting a huge grin.

I shared this with my instructor Sheryl Adair who commented: "Interesting that Carmen mentioned to me that she thought you would feel a shift out of your thinking mind. It sounds like she was on target. Thanks for sharing the experience and the smile. I get that sometimes: Joy and Gratitude just bubbling up. Grateful for no thing in particular."

Following an urge to look up the Chinese symbol for gratitude, I found that within the characters for thanks and feelings are embedded the symbols for heart and speech. From the heart, with feeling, I express my gratitude. It doesn't matter who moved my *Chi* – just that it moved me to a place of gratitude.



## Saving The Best For Last

Workshop with Carmen Brocklehurst  
in Tupelo, MS; April 16-18, 2010

By RON RICHARDSON & STEPHEN THOMPSON, TUPELO, MS

Here's the back-story to Tupelo's success of advancing T'ai Chi Chih in our community. Over the past five years we've hosted Pam Towne (twice) and Sandy McAlister and Antonia (once each) to lead workshops and retreats. And each has made significant contributions toward expanding TCC in our area. All of the three highly acclaimed instructors received many compliments from our community.

So we thought to ourselves, "Whom should we get to come to Mississippi next?" and we decided to ask 30-year veteran teacher Carmen Brocklehurst. Thankfully Carmen was willing to fly the 1,100 miles from Albuquerque to Tupelo to lead this year's weekend workshop. And the accolades for Carmen have been no less than for those that were given to Pam, Sandy and Antonia.

The following comments were unique to Carmen's visit – "Carmen brought TCC to me" ... "Carmen explained the *whys* of TCC in words that were easy to understand" ... "Community was built with total strangers in a matter of two days" ... "Her insight helped me to more fully experience the flow of *Chi* and her refinements of my movements were spot on." Her energy is contagious. Carmen is a consummate and committed teacher. One participant left during the day and when she didn't return, Carmen took the time to call her that night to make sure she'd come the next day – and she did!

Everyone, both new and old to TCC, felt at ease and comfortable with Carmen and all of our participants, but especially our out-of-town participants, felt Mississippi hospitality flowing in abundance. We wanted to have an even larger number of people participate – but the 25 beautiful people who did make it made it feel like 100 were there. One of the purposes of holding this year's weekend workshop was to further market TCC to our local community. We have since received numerous calls from people interested in learning TCC, and we've been invited to participate in a conference with physical therapists later this Fall. So for us here in Tupelo, it's *mission accomplished!*

## Does The Earth Stop Blooming?

Intensive with Pam Towne in Ringwood, NJ; April 15-18, 2010

By DAN PIENCIAK, HOWELL, NJ

In recalling the April intensive, I am reminded of several “Blooming the Flower” publications, which tell of the beneficial and wonderful experiences of T'ai Chi Chih practitioners. “Blooming” is an appropriate expression of what was happening for each of the participants here. Each day the world outside exhibited more of the fullness of life within that had been asleep but not inactive all winter. Likewise for the students and teachers attending, the flow and ease and softness of the movements became more evident as the days progressed.

But as dedicated practitioners know, the evolution experienced externally in the movements does not come from copying what one sees or practicing by rote over and over again until one has it. The maturing of the practice comes only from the deep development of inner strength, understanding and surrender from *within* one's self.

As I tended to my garden following this intensive, I was reminded of the growth process in my practice. When I plant a perennial, it will take time to root and become established. Only when well rooted does it suddenly grow and bloom and reach the beauty that one envisions when it was first planted. Watering, pruning, protecting and feeding are often necessary to manifest that fullness.

One of our local teachers often uses the clever and wise expression, “In-TEH-nsive.” Justin has often spoken and written about this quality of inner sincerity (*teh*), which draws one to TCC in the first place, and then continues to ground, support and motivate us to deepen our practice. All of this was quite evident at this event. Participants brought humility, openness

and sincerity, along with quiet determination that slowly gave way from needing to get it right to allowing and surrendering to a process. Trying to force progress is not the way. Self-criticism is not the way. Rather, giving ourselves every opportunity to grow in our practice is a big part of the way. We were very grateful to Justin Stone for giving us this practice, to Pam Towne for her most sincere and well-planned instruction, and to one another for all that we are.

I remember reading as newly accredited teacher that the depths of TCC can never be entirely plumbed.

That has stuck with me through thirteen years of teaching. Does the earth ever stop blooming?

**Another participant offers this:** “Flow from the center” ... “the effort of no effort” ... “let T'ai Chi Chih teach you T'ai Chi Chih” ... I've been chasing these concepts and trying to incorporate them into my practice for so long. Then, on the last day of this intensive, I experienced a great “ah hah” moment. Each of these concepts is about trust. Trust means knowing that my mind, body and spirit are part of something vast, an immensity of order moving by itself in accordance with cosmic laws. All celestial phenomena are moving around centers in circular formations, continuously and smoothly, with ease and grace. Through conditioning I have become out of sync with the nature of my own being. Society, education and family have taught me to distrust outcomes that I'm not controlling. I use my thinking to initiate activities and for guidance. Suddenly, I have awakened from a hypnotic trance. I am speeding through my days; TCC slows me down. I remember lying in bed watch-

ing clouds move past a skylight. I lifted my arms to imitate the clouds, as I rolled from side-to-side. I trusted the clouds to teach me how to move. Why not find my way home to a bed of comfort in harmony with a heavenly flow, in which I too roll effortlessly through my own space and time.”



## Shore To Please At Lonnie's

By BARBARA CLARK, RUMSON, NJ & KATHLEEN BENTE, WESTWOOD, NJ

How we wish this T'ai Chi Chih teachers' weekend at Lonnie's was more than an annual event. It's such a great gathering of energy and joy, meeting new friends and connecting with old ones. TCC is at its best at the shore – the energy of the ocean *yiming* and *yanging*, refreshing and evolving the powerful movements of TCC. The relaxed setting ignites our strength through group softness. This was our second event at Lonnie's and our first as teachers. Lonnie takes such good care of our daily needs so that we can focus on the flow of *Chi*. Antonia and Dan always have new insights that deepen our TCC practice, and the atmosphere is open and free for sharing thoughts, ideas and helpful teaching tips. It allows for an enjoyable time in which we appreciated and enjoyed. And our TCC practices were enhanced. Shore looking forward to next year.

## Fun & Informative Teacher Symposium with Sandy McAlister in Aston, PA; May 13-16, 2010

By DIANA BAHN, NEW YORK, NY

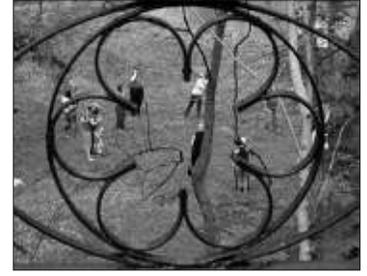
Sandy McAlister, together with Alba Cordasco's foresight and rugged determination, launched the second ever T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Symposium. The symposium format is a relatively new model offered to TCC teachers to deepen their skills in teaching our nineteen movements and one pose. Sandy, the trailblazer that she is, conducted the first symposium in 2008, with Alba in attendance. The seed was firmly planted. Alba "saw and felt the need for the community to come together" again in this way.

I was one of 22 teachers who participated in this never-miss-a-beat 2 ½ days of "intellectual discussions, freely exchanged ideas, shared opinions all while enjoying drinking with music (water that is, or whatever). Sounds like heaven." – Sandy's own words.

The atmosphere could not have been better, at a contemplative site where we were blessed with gorgeous spring weather. Weeks prior to the event, Sandy and Alba set the stage for dynamic involvement by suggesting that we bring 22 copies each of "flyers, business cards, handouts and other materials you use in class to share with everyone."

Sandy asked us to give "pre-thought" to teaching topics so we would be prepared to discuss them. We had brand-new teachers in attendance; teachers who had not taught for the last six years; a veteran of TCC, who "hasn't been teaching for a while but always maintains an interest in the TCC community;" teachers sharing tips about how they use Justin's DVD in class; teachers who work with children. (For Basic Pulling Taffy she tells her kids to do it like you are "throwing a Frisbee quietly," so the teacher won't see. It was probably the best teaching of Pulling Taffy I'd ever seen.)

The participants' abundant *te'h* was omnipresent. Teachers walked away with huge amounts of handouts to share with our students, but also with more insight into how our fellow teachers teach this wonderful "simple" moving meditation. Each teacher had his/her own unique style, format, study aides, images, words ... you name it. All I had to do was sit down at a meal to have an informative, heartfelt conversation (without having to make any effort at all). Sandy made it clear that there's a lot of leeway in how to teach. The symposium gave teachers a chance to see our reflections in the mirror, while having a seasoned trainer witness our movements and sometimes even critique our personal teaching styles. If you want to bring your teaching to a higher level (and have fun eating, drinking and listening to music while using a foot massage machine), you'll want to think about participating in the next symposium. Alba, are you out there?



## Meeting & Showing Us Intensive with Sandy McAlister in St Louis, MO; April 8-11, 2010

By SUSAN KISSINGER, ST LOUIS, MO

A little magic ... a lot of love.  
Sacred space ... special people.  
Open, receptive to the lessons.  
of T'ai Chi Chih, Joy thru Movement.

**W**e came from many places within and without; 13 students, eight teachers and Sandy traveled from seven states. As I attended to details, observed and participated, I experienced a deep appreciation for the capacity of T'ai Chi Chih and Sandy to meet and support everyone on their individual journeys. Since taking my first class in 1996, I have certainly changed, softened and strengthened with the ebb and flow of the *Chi*. TCC meets us where we arrive and shows us the way to much more.

There is more to uncover.  
It draws me in and sets me free.

In gratitude to Justin for the gift of TCC; to Sandy for guiding us with wisdom and clarity; to the community of students and teachers who arrived with open hearts and receptive minds. Happiness is wanting what you get.

## T'ai Chi Chih Community Calendar

DATE	WHAT & WHO	WHERE	CONTACT
August 12-15	TCC Teacher Conference	Nebraska City, NE	Jean Katus / 605-718-0543 jean44ka@gmail.com
August 15-17	Seijaku Teacher Accreditation w/ Pam	Nebraska City, NE	Daniel Pienciak / 732-988-5573 wakeupdaniel@aol.com
August 26-29	TCC Weekend w/ Antonia	Ringwood, NJ	Daniel Pienciak / 732-988-5573 wakeupdaniel@aol.com
October 1-3	TCC-Pranja Teacher Weekend w/ Sandy	Aston, PA	April Leffler / 610-532-6753 lirpaleff@rcn.com
October 4-9	TCC Teacher Accreditation w/ Sandy	Ringwood, NJ	Daniel Pienciak / 732-988-5573 wakeupdaniel@aol.com
October 14-17	TCC Intensive w/ Pam	Mettawa, IL	Donna McElhose / 847-223-6065 dmcelhosechi@aol.com
November 18-21	TCC Intensive w/ Pam	Albuquerque, NM	Ann Rutherford / 505-292-5114 ruthergary@aol.com
<b>2011</b>			
February 15-18	TCC Retreat w/ Antonia	Santa Barbara, CA	Pam Towne / 760-722-9544 pamtowne@gmail.com
February 22-25	TCC Teacher Retreat w/ Antonia	Santa Barbara, CA	Pam Towne / 877-982-4244 pamtowne@gmail.com
March 24-27	TCC Intensive w/ Sandy	Ringwood, NJ	Daniel Pienciak / 732-988-5573 wakeupdaniel@aol.com
Spring TBA	TCC Teacher Accreditation w/ Sandy	Northern CA	Athene Mantle / 510-828-8896 chigoddess@hotmail.com
Spring TBA	TCC Teacher Accreditation w/ Pam	Twin Cities Area, MN	Judy George / 651-482-9263 judygeorgemn@gmail.com
April 8-11	TCC Retreat w/ Antonia	Houston, TX	Carletta LaCour / 713-440-3713 carlettaop@yahoo.com
April 29 – May 1	TCC Retreat w/ Antonia	Edmonton, AB	Gail Terriff / 780-430-6594 tai_chi_chih_edmonton@hotmail.com

**MORE WORKSHOPS & RETREATS (Postings here are open to all teachers offering events wholly devoted to TCC.)**

October 21-24	TCC Retreat w/ Carmen Brocklehurst	Albuquerque, NM	Judy Hendricks / 505-897-3810 judyhendricks@me.com
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### TEACHER RESOURCES

Contact [changes@taichichih.org](mailto:changes@taichichih.org) to receive the hidden url with information specific to teachers.

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

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