

The Vital Force

JOURNAL OF THE T'AI CHI CHIH® COMMUNITY

Volume 27, No. 2

for teachers & students

May 2010

Justin's Words

Do Your Best BY JUSTIN STONE

“The effort of no effort” well expresses T'ai Chi Chih. Describing the group of movements this way is very apt because the purpose of TCC is certainly not to turn one into a muscular showpiece.

Most people in the East understand the meaning of the word *Chi* as being illustrative of the great power that courses through living beings. It's really what makes us who and what we are.

The TCC movements, and what shapes them, can bring great joy and health; TCC teachers work hard to shape their students' practice. Teachers also encourage practice. New teachers and students quickly get to the point of anticipating practice, as they wish to emulate their teachers. And students improve rapidly if they make such an effort. Best of luck; do your best.



(More) 20th Century Psalms: Reflections On This Life

BY JUSTIN STONE

- We can only enjoy that which we can do without.
 - Why identify with the leaves? I asked. Why not identify with the tree?
- The wise man looks beyond the forms to detect the One Energy that is the Essence. This energy expresses itself in the activity that gives rise to forms. This is Karma.
 - Habit is the enemy of old age.
- When all 'coincidences' in our lives are summed up, they point to a necessary pattern.
 - The jazz musician, like the spiritual teacher, tries to express the inexpressible.
 - When there is no longer a need to rationalize, enlightenment isn't far away.

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"TAI CHI CHIH IS A SERVICE TO HUMANITY. IT IS A FORM OF LOVE." JUSTIN STONE, ORIGINATOR

• • •

May The Vital Force Be With You

- FACEBOOK FAN PAGE -

Please join the almost 450-person-strong group on www.facebook.com – where students from around the world can ask questions, make comments, and find support and inspiration from others who are also practicing T'ai Chi Chih. We get detailed reports showing anywhere from 372 to 534 people visiting the page each week. Teachers, add your voices of experience. And please tell your students about it. Join the fun.

- A GIFT HORSE ARRIVES IN THE IN-BOX (IN THE NICK OF TIME) -

Even though this issue lacks as much geographic diversity as one would hope for in an international journal, I'm grateful to the TCC practitioners who wrote at the last minute. One day prior to the deadline, only two unsolicited submissions had been received. Additionally, only two out of forty people emailed earlier in the month had promised to write by the deadline. Justin and Carmen always write. Sandy, Antonia, and Pam have been given columns, so they *have* to write; I have to write pieces for the VF and GKP. "Events" always come through with one article each. That would inch things up to 17 articles. But issues usually have 35 to 47 articles. There were some older submissions from the last few years to draw upon. But I fully expected to publish an edition half filled with Pyramid Poems. For this issue, there are no writings on the movement Pull-

ing Taffy, Variation #2, Wrist Circles – except the short piece that Amy Tyksinski always submits. Perhaps this section isn't that valuable to readers. Neither are there articles on the Justin's quotation: "When the *Chi* flows freely and is balanced, the Cosmic Rhythm begins to move us" – which is only suggested to help people organize their thoughts around *something* (because people said they wanted to write but just didn't know what to write about). Perhaps a theme is unnecessary to jumpstart inspiration. Whatever the case, there are less than a handful of unpublished articles waiting for a place in the next issue, so unless you are looking forward to 12 pages of Pyramid Poems, please do write. Fellow practitioners are eager to hear what each of you wants to share.

- TEACHER RESOURCE URL -

Teachers: the following resources are posted on a non-public section of www.taichichih.org web site for you to use freely: a press kit from Good Karma Publishing to help you promote classes; sample brochures; information on getting replacement teaching certificates; guidelines for teaching TCC to people with COPD and to seniors; and important lists of other teachers who are teaching to specialized populations. The latter provides great networking opportunities for those who can't attend conferences. *To be reminded about the hidden url, send an email to changes@taichichih.org.*

KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

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Submission Guidelines

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

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

Web Site Updates

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

Deadline: July 1

Publication Date: Mid-Aug
Musings on gratitude: "If you want a good life, be grateful."
Pulling Taffy, Variation #3, Perpetual Motion

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

Editor: Kim Grant • Membership: Mary Ruiz • Submissions: Send articles, poetry and photos to Kim Grant at tcc@kimgrant.com or to The Vital Force, P.O. Box 92674, Albuquerque, NM 87199-2674 • Memberships: Send membership subscription requests, renewals, remittances and changes of address to The Vital Force, P.O. Box 92674, Albuquerque, NM 87199-2674. Memberships are \$40/year, \$50/year for international. Members receive four issues of The Vital Force. The printed annual Teachers Directory costs an additional \$15/year. It is also available for free at www.taichichih.org. If, for some reason, you do not receive an issue, send an e-mail to: vfjmembership@yahoo.com. • Design: Amy K. Brown

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Flowing Freely & With Balance

By CARMEN BROCKLEHURST, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

It's always a joy when Justin joins us for a Tuesday morning T'ai Chi Chih teacher practice. He's usually helpful with his suggestions: last time he came he said, "I see softness in the wrists, but I don't see looseness." To achieve the latter he suggested we take the attitude of people whom had nothing left to lose – as if we had just lost our best friends, or we had just been fired from our jobs. With everything gone, we could finally let go of everything else – including tightness in our wrists, our backs, or some other of the many places we hide tension.

In the middle of doing our practice with the "Boss" (Justin) watching us, it was understandable that we might have a little tension and not be flowing freely. What he was pointing out was for us to take a different attitude. No matter what was going on, no matter how stressful, no matter how anxiety producing it was ... *that* was the moment to let go and feel ourselves flowing freely.

It's easy to be relaxed when everything is going the way we'd like it. But that's not usually the case for most of us. Not only are situations not going our way, but many times, it seems as if the whole universe has decided to gang up on us, making sure we don't get our way. This is precisely when Justin's advice is most necessary and helpful, because the alternative is to drive ourselves crazy or into a deadly challenging position. So the practice of looseness that comes while doing our TCC practice could save our lives. It's a rewarding reason to practice loosely.

But looseness is just the beginning because benefits build exponentially. With looseness comes receptivity, as in from Pulling in the Energy. Where the flow of life had been blocked before, we are now in the middle of it, and it is in the middle of us. Remember how you feel when you enter that same timelessness Justin experienced while doing Passing Clouds in a Japanese garden – that Cosmic Rhythm where he felt that no one was doing anything because TCC was doing itself. How freeing it is to feel that we are in balance with life, loving and sharing the *Chi*.

it's easy to be relaxed when everything is going the way we'd like it.



TCC Is Continuous

By CAROLINE GUILLOT, LAKE CHARLES, LA

Time spent with Justin always opens another dimension in my understanding of how to do T'ai Chi Chih. Coming through his giving a correction or statement, questioning or simply by watching, it never fails to bring another level of understanding. Justin joined us for a teacher practice at the TCC Center in Albuquerque after being away for some time. When we were ready to leave for "second breakfast," I asked if he would give some pointers or corrections – to which he simply said, "T'ai Chi Chih is all continuous." He repeated it twice. We got up and went to breakfast. On the plane heading home, I wrote, "There is no going, no stopping. The Vital Force permeates all. In that sense, it is all continuous."

A year or so earlier, while waiting for a new friend to meet me by the gate at the airport after another teacher practice, I started doing Rocking Motion and felt softness from the bottom of the feet to the top of the head and back. I felt energy pulsating and movement between the hands while being so firmly rooted. The *Chi* was soft and solid all at once – grounded, flowing, all the same. So real.

There were hundreds of people around, but it didn't matter. Rocking Motion had never felt so soft and so centered. No effort. Just Joy. An amazing silence fell over the crowd; my ears were buzzing

although muffled. For a split second, it seemed like time stood still. Nothing. No one moving. And all of a sudden the noise came back. My friend arrived and was able to make her stand-by connection. All was, and is, well.

It was so incredibly powerful ... because it is. Feeling the energy is powerful. Softness is powerful; it's not a floating feeling. Literally, I was opening the hands to it.

still
like a
galloping
horse. open to
the cosmic
rhythm.
joy

Karmic Seeds Sprout

By PETER GREGORY, HIGHLAND, IN

Last summer during a protracted, solo practice in the park, I abandoned rational thought and embraced the reality that my head, heart, and body were not in the right places. I was spending five days a week in a restaurant, one day a week trying to be of assistance to my aging parents, and one day a week teaching T'ai Chi Chih to pairs of people in my apartment. The restaurant work had lost its appeal (after 30 years), my parents weren't getting any younger, and my desire to become a busy and sought-after TCC instructor was undeniable.

*I began to sense
a Rhythm,
a tedious
ebb was
beginning
to flow*

Within a month, I quit my job, went to the conference for some moral support (and 100 copies of *Blooming the Flower*), got a stack of business cards and brochures, and moved into my parents' home. It felt like a win-win situation: my parents would benefit from my being around everyday, and my search for locations wouldn't be driven by money. Once an intention is compromised, the karmic wheel is set in motion. As Justin says, teachers are worthy of their hire. The bigger motivation remains that TCC is worthy of sharing, even volunteering, and those rewards show up on the same wheel.

I expected to hit the ground running. Since there's not much T'ai Chi of any kind in northwestern Indiana, I figured there would be a lot of low hanging fruit. I started driving around several towns, stopping at all types of facilities. I got a few cold shoulders, some puzzled looks, and a couple of "we already tried T'ai Chi here." Undeterred, I went out everyday, until my car needed some major repairs. Then my computer got infected. After costly service calls, it crashed and had to be replaced. The ace-in-the-hole doctor that said he wanted TCC for his hospital employees fell off the radar. Parks Departments and YMCAs told me they just printed their autumn brochures and couldn't offer anything until January.

Finally, in mid-September, I got my first class at a Senior Center (of course). After I agreed to a big discount, they said I needed insurance. It ended up costing me \$10 to offer the class. In October and November, people started asking for free demonstrations, which yielded four to five small classes before the end of the year. January was looking good; my schedule was beginning to fall into place.



TCC Does TCC

By PATRICIA STRAND, EVERETT, WA

After reading the most recent edition of *The Vital Force*, I thought about Justin and what T'ai Chi Chih has brought to my life and the lives of many of my students. The following poem came as I was doing my morning practice while looking out over our lake; soft rain was falling. I had a wonderful experience. Justin often speaks of someday knowing that "TCC is doing TCC." I never really knew what that meant until this day.

I watch the raindrops falling
gently into the lake,
The stillness disturbed by
the chickadee's song.
Soft music playing in the background
In the silence, I realize
T'ai Chi Chih is doing
T'ai Chi Chih.

The first week of January, over half of my locations collapsed, all for different reasons. Even a volunteer project at a middle school was canceled the day it was to start. Before I could decide whether to laugh or cry, the phone started ringing again, and by the end of the month I had over 30 students in several locations. I did more demos, ranging from zero to 25 people. Places I visited in September were calling back to learn more. I began to sense a Rhythm, a tedious ebb was beginning to flow.

Also in the first week of January, I wrote an e-mail to the food writer in the local paper. He was selected for a Seattle Sutton weight loss contest, and I suggested TCC to supplement his efforts. He published my letter in his column, and the paper called a few days later,

asking to do an interview for the Sunday Health section. It ran on March 7th, and the response has been big: over 75 inquiries, with over 20 new students the first week. By the end of the month, I'll have over 60 students in nine classes and at six locations.

This summer I plan to go back to the same park and practice again, with a big circle of fellow practitioners. This too shall pass, but my intention stayed true, and became true: I am a busy and sought-after instructor. Nice work if [when] you can get it.

Gratification

By BENITA GOLDSTEIN, NEW YORK, NY

I began teaching a group of retired teachers recently in Brooklyn Heights, NY, and turned to my class after T'ai Chi Chih practice to ask what they'd been feeling. One woman, who'd said she wasn't going to come to class because of pains from sciatica, now spoke up to say, "I'm not feeling any pain at all!" Another woman also said, "I had a horrible day today [she teaches in an at-risk high school], but I feel so good right now." Their smiles told the best stories – it's the same look of contentment I experience after each of my practices. How gratifying to contribute to the well being and happiness of others.

Forming Community

By MARCELLA BOX, BEAVERTON, OR

What if the Vital Force in teenagers had been expressing itself enthusiastically all night long? Earlier in the week, a group of high school juniors and seniors had kept many of us awake with laughter and loud voices. We'd been sharing the St. Damiano Retreat Center. (They were there for a religious encounter retreat, and we were there for the March T'ai Chi Chih teacher training.) These vivacious teens were expending what they had plenty of: energy. The difficulty occurred when they expressed it late into the night – in the hallway and by jumping from room to room. The following morning, this story took a beautiful turn when we received an apology letter signed by all the teens. To unite our groups, we were invited to join them for an evening prayer, and Pam invited them to Push Pull.

Magic was afoot in the room with Us and Them. Many teens joined us in Push Pull. We became one as we encircled the teens in love. Any residual separation we felt from lost sleep slipped away into union. We were forming community. Us plus them equaled one joyous group. For the remainder of our time together, we had many happy exchanges when we met. They were true to their word; they contained any desires to go wild in the evening. A difficult situation provided an occasion to cultivate love. We all flourished as a direct result of our loving gestures.



Letting Go

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



Although we're sad about losing our dad, we have a lot of joy in our hearts. I'm not sure I would feel this way if it were not for T'ai Chi Chih. Dad was diagnosed with dementia after a stroke in 2004, and Mom died in 2007 after a 20-year chronic battle with

spinal muscular atrophy. They were the "M and M team." Mom was his Memory and Dad was her Muscle. My two sisters and I began our journey in May 2007 when Mom died and Dad needed 24/7 care. We aren't really sure what happened, but at 82 years old, Dad became an insatiable walker. He would walk at least five miles a day, and you could see how this helped his mind be still and freed him from the dementia. Our family, however, was quite exhausted from all the walks, and we would do what we could to keep him seated and get some rest.

I started taking TCC classes in February 2008 and was so excited about how I felt that I shared this with my sister, Barbara. We both liked TCC so much that we started practicing together (inside and outside) at Dad's house on Tuesdays. In order to give Dad some rest, we would give him a snack and have him sit on a bench to watch us; we asked him to let us know how we were doing.

One day while practicing I looked over and saw Dad watching us while eating his cookies. Tears started to flow as I thought of the day he wouldn't be sitting there on that bench. My sister noticed and we stopped to talk about it. Within minutes we were back to practicing, allowing ourselves to feel all the emotions that come with letting go. This special moment is something my sister and I will treasure, a true gift when you aren't looking for one.

Dad is still with me on Tuesday's when I practice, and I sometimes visualize him on the bench watching. This fills me up and brings tears of joy, remembering those moments when we all shared TCC together.

Reflections From Event Participants

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

One of the first questions that is posed to me in an email or voice mail is, “Where in the world are you?” Actually, that is a question the Sisters in my community often ask as well. Lately there have been several T'ai Chi Chih retreats since the New Year, beginning in Philadelphia; St. Paul; Santa Barbara – Bay Area; and Atlanta. The most recent was in Hendersonville, NC, with 35 participants; twelve were teachers, a few teacher candidates and students of varying degrees of experience. All these individuals arrived with “beginners mind” from nine states with all but a few driving to Kanuga Conference Center is located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina.

I am deeply grateful to all the hosting teachers for their invitations to present, then to find and create space, send the word out, communicate with and welcome participants. The hosting teachers are to be commended for their creativity, enthusiasm, and wanting TCC to abound in their areas.



The following are reflections from participants at the Kanuga TCC Retreat. In asking individuals to find a word that best expresses their experience of the first day of our gathering, they came up with the following: *peace x2 – joy x3 – shedding – remembrance – fellowship – energy x2 – inquisitive – convey – proud – love x2 – enlightenment and awesome – a touch of enlightenment – connection – reflection – happiness – safety – exhaustion – integration – plug-in (good access to energy source).*

The other question was: What insights did you gain during the retreat? Here is a sampling of their responses:

- Ease of movement, lack of effort, and simplicity of action works best in TCC. I love the contained, yet open, quality of TCC.
- It's not in the trying. I started feeling the “joy through movement” and letting go.
- I cleaned up my technique and justified my focus of energy with less trying; great reward. It was a blessing, especially practicing in a circle.
- Thanks for the reminder of the “open wrist” especially in Daughter on the Mountaintop and in Six Healing Sounds.
- I have changed my form by paying attention and yet letting go,

thereby bringing the form more together – like opening up my wrists more in many movements.

- I have a better understanding of being grounded with the feet and wrist action.
- There were so many “ah ha” moments I cannot remember them all, but I am sure when I go to the next practice, some will come through.
- I gained the insight that TCC practice connects me with my life force energy. My awareness of that gives me great joy and peace within. It helps me be ... now.
- Use less shoulders in most movements.
- I noticed the foot placement in Anchor Taffy.
- There was an ease of exploring the weight shift.
- I feel more the connection in the weight shifts, hand movements, and *tan t'ien*.
- I can really feel myself moving with my *tan t'ien*. I am now doing better having all the movements flow from the center; it's very profound.
- My form has changed by moving from the *tan t'ien*. It's the essence of TCC and a marvelous gift received from Justin. The moves are so much softer; more energy is gained by moving from the center.
- I regained a current exposure to teaching, so I can recommit to my practice with more assurance; I have a new book and DVD to explore and use; I want to have a daily practice. The details of the movements are clarified.
- I have a better understanding of the relationship between weight shifts and the range of wrist/hand/arm motion (or no motion).
- I have a better knowledge of the *tan t'ien* and moving as one with a connected body, with my suspension like a string of pearls.
- I don't worry so much now that I have it wrong. I feel my practice has been fine-tuned and I'm more correct in my form than ever. But I'm convinced that is not the most important aspect.
- I realize that when moving from the center, the other aspects of the movements can pretty much fall into place. I'm also keeping more grounded when doing the forward/backward movements.
- Pace has improved my flow and the flow of *Chi*. I now let my *tan t'ien* rule.

Well, this is where I've been. As Justin would say, “I've never met a person in TCC who I would not like.” What a blest community we are. Happy Spring.

Transformation

By SANDY McALISTER, HAYWARD, CA

The candidate moved extremely slowly, inching her way through the movement with head held downward as if listening to a voice from below instructing her on what to move next. She was trying hard to get everything right and to remember every detail of the movement. Nothing was connected; nothing flowed. The mind was trying hard to do the movement correctly. It was painful for me to watch.

Being the oldest of many siblings, a mother, and a caretaker of a parent, she has long been the role model, the example, the one the family members turned to. About the fourth day of her teacher training course a transformation took place. Not only did the head lift with a meet-you-in-the-eye gaze, but her whole countenance was beaming. Her smile was a constant. The last day of training she shared with everyone present that throughout her life she has been the one to take care of her family. Their needs came first. But in the last two days an awareness flowered in her of her own Being. As she spoke you could tell it was a joyous revelation.

Another candidate at the same training physically transformed. At the beginning her shoulders were so tense they appeared to rest under her ears. (This may be a slight exaggeration.) This seemed to be her perpetual state of being – and not just from the pressure of attending the course. During the last couple of days at the training a graceful neck appeared between her shoulders and head. Confidence and a smile seemed to perpetually shine from her.



The transformative power of the flow of *chi* is demonstrated over and over again at trainings, workshops, conferences, and in our own private practices. T'ai Chi Chih is the tool. As we flow on the path of this practice, letting go of expectations and trusting that we are connecting with an innate wisdom alive in every cell of our body, awareness blossoms and transformations unfold effortlessly.

Expectations & Outcomes

By PAM TOWNE, OCEANSIDE, CA

What can a teacher candidate expect when, after preparing for months, you finally arrive at your T'ai Chi Chih teacher training course? The terms teacher training and accreditation course are used interchangeably, and both are used to refer to the six-day course to receive accreditation to teach TCC. When you arrive at your accreditation course, you are likely to discover quickly that all the work you have done up to that point has just gotten you in the door, and that before you lies a whole new level of TCC experience.

Softness means letting go, and you will be asked to let go more than ever before ... to let go of tension, muscular effort, ego, of trying to do it perfectly, of what you know with your intellect, and of attachment to an outcome. Even those who think they are coming with an empty cup soon find that their cup is really quite full. When it is truly empty, then learning can begin, and the *Chi* can teach you.

No matter how well prepared you may be, there will still be changes to make in how you move. Being open and receptive to receiving feedback on how you are moving from the trainer and auditing teachers, who are there to support your transformation, will serve you well. Refining your TCC movements is a lifelong practice. Just as when you travel east, there is always farther east that you can go, so there is always more softness and flow to experience in your TCC practice. As you let go of old understandings and old ways of moving that actually inhibit the flow of the *Chi*, and experience the power of the *Chi* flowing thru you, both your movements and *you* are transformed.

Along the way, wonderful connections occur with your fellow aspiring teachers. Sharing this amazing experience brings you together in special ways, and you may make lifelong friends among the people there. A deeper feeling of community is developed. During this entire six-day process, you will be enfolded in loving support, not only by the TCC teachers (including the trainer) present, but also by Antonia and many other teachers around the world who are thinking of you. Over the course of the six days, any tension gives way to Joy thru Movement, and "love energy" is the sweet fruit to savor long after you depart.

Pyramid Poems

Chi
is now
my constant
life companion
together
we share
paths
– JUDY CHANCEY

in
circle
energy
flowing freely
unified
heartfelt
love
– SHERYL ADAIR

Chi
is now
moving with
my core centered
with softness
I move
Chi
– CHARLOTTE LIVINGSTON

jail
is closed
very tight
the power of
the *Chi* can
open its
locks
– BO

an
apple
or orange
whatever please
just to eat
enjoy
please
– TIM

Being Soft

By DORA DERZON, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Recently I attended a gathering at the New Mexico T'ai Chi Chih Center where we had a good-sized group of people practicing TCC together. As I looked around the room I could see many different interpretations of soft while doing the movements. I was disheartened to see that many people believe that soft is performing movements without any *Chi* flowing. They seemed to embrace soft as "no feeling." This couldn't be farther from the truth. As I told one student, "Soft isn't a bunch of nothing; it's a bunch of something!" That bunch of something is *Chi*, it's life, the Life Force!

*Soft isn't
a bunch of
nothing;
it's a
bunch of
something!*

Moving from the *tan t'ien* allows the bunch of something to flow through our entire being; misunderstanding soft does not. Misunderstanding soft does not allow *Chi* to flow through our entire

being because we don't feel it. Practically anyone watching Justin move can tell that there is something wonderful going on when he does TCC. Some feel great love, others are in awe, and most are just drawn to what is happening even though they can't put a finger on why. Justin participates with his whole being.

I encourage everyone to watch Justin's DVDs. He definitely has a bunch of something going on, even when he's not doing the movements. Move from the *tan t'ien* and let go. Softness happens when you let go. It's a by-product, not the goal. The goal is to circulate, balance, and strengthen the Life Force within, and we must participate in that consciously. To truly embrace the softness is to let go and embrace the circulation of the *Chi*.

I emphasized this to the same student, "Move from the *tan t'ien*." The student replied, "Oh yeah ... I don't do that." Moving from the *tan t'ien* does not mean that you are pushing the *tan t'ien* ahead of the rest of the body. It means that the *tan t'ien* is moving you. Allow yourself to participate fully in the movements and let the circulating energy move you on all levels. This is how you get the most out of practicing the movements. Why spend time practicing TCC to get any less?

Follow Your Bliss

By JUDY HENDRICKS, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

During T'ai Chi Chih practice, I've been feeling a large amount of joy. At Carmen Brocklehurst's retreat I learned how to move more correctly, so as not to block the flow of the *Chi*. I had been bending my elbows in Rocking Motion, but by straightening my arms, I could feel much more *Chi*. Since then, practice has become more joyous. I pay attention much more closely to the flow during all the movements.

Others have spoken of joy, even rapture and ecstasy in their spiritual practice. Sri Ramakrishna speaks of tremendous ecstasy as he describes his relationship with God. The amazing book, *Sri Ramakrishna, A Prophet For the New Age* by Richard Schiffman, sits on Justin's bookcase. Sri Ramakrishna has the wonder of a child and lives in bliss. We know TCC is joyous; now I'm beginning to experience more completely that joy. Sri Ramakrishna also speaks of the importance of a teacher who can point to the path. Reading about his bliss has helped me discover more bliss in my practice and throughout the day. The most important thing I do each day is my TCC practice and my sitting meditation. Realizing this I'm motivated to practice and experience the bliss.



Pyramid Poems

sigh
retreat
not a chance
in the moment
tan t'ien
in peace
sigh
- SUE BEE & MOLLIE THEEL

cold
quiet
what to do
anticipate
open mind
practice
joy
- SUE BEE & MOLLIE THEEL

ground
move soft
tan t'ien
polarity
awareness
circle
Chi
- SUE BEE & MOLLIE THEEL

Chi
gently
gathering
rocking motion
to and fro
ebb and
flow
- BILL MOORE

palms
closing
opening
bird flaps its wings
centering
balanced
Chi
- BILL MOORE

A Trio Of Thoughts

By MARY RUIZ, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Glimpsing The Essence Of The Universe

After practicing Pulling Taffy, Variation #2, Wrist Circles – feeling the *Chi* flowing around the *tan t'ien* in ever widening circles, feeling at the center of the universe and revolving around me – I'm part of it all and it goes on forever. All is well, perfect; nothing is wanted or needed; all is provided in the right time and space. There is no struggle, no anxiety, no fear. All is love. Joy and peace come through a deep gratitude for no-thing, for all things. No-thing is more; more is no-thing. Enveloped in the essence of life, feeling the circularity of the Cosmic Rhythm resting in the moment. Not fretting, no regretting the past or pushing, no worrying about the future. Only resting in the present, knowing that all possibilities are in the now; it is all we truly have. Are we ready to live in this moment? Are we ready to allow the now?

The Gift

The gift is always here; it is only waiting for you to unwrap it. It is only for you; no one else can open it. It is yours – only yours. Do you have the courage, the curiosity, the joy to venture into a new world? Opening the gift opens a new way, a new seeing, a new feeling. Are you ready to pull on the ribbon to begin to release it? It only takes a gentle tug and the willingness to open to your Divine self – the gift. It's been waiting patiently just under the surface. You've felt it: a soft whisper, a fleeting feeling, a gentle nudge. Tug on the ribbon; open the gift the universe gave you when you came into this world: you! T'ai Chi Chih helps you open gently to the gift of yourself. Justin opened himself to the gift and in the process gave us the sacred, perfect gift of TCC that he has selflessly shared with all of us. Thank you.

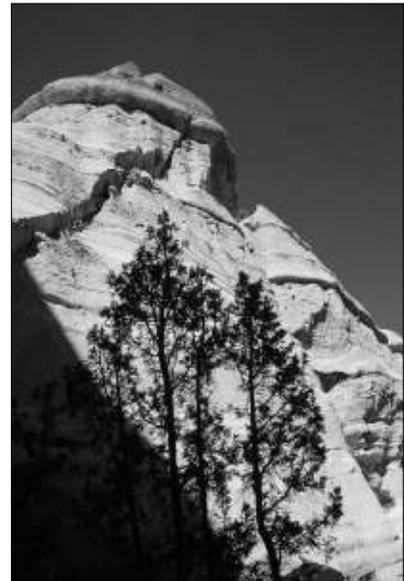
Deep Peace Comes After Deep Gratitude

To feel deep peace one must first feel the flow of deep gratitude. A joyful, warm, shimmering light washes over the outside of the body, but this feeling of gratitude also flows through the body into the feet and finally into the earth. Is each one of us like a cell in the earth body? If gratitude flows through each one of us (the cells) and into the earth body will the earth and each one of us (the cells) find deep abiding peace? Who knows, but why don't we all try it? Feel gratitude wash over and through you; be a beacon and show others the way, and at some point when a critical mass is reached, maybe peace will come to the earth.

Time To Reboot

By MARY WHITE, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

I was installing software on my computer recently and things weren't going well. The software kept requesting a reboot of my computer, so I would restart but the same thing would happen. It was like an old habit that keeps popping up. My life before T'ai Chi Chih was like my internal programming had an error; I was replaying the same habits over and over. Then I attended a TCC class and things began to change. As I continued practicing and taking additional classes, friends and family began to notice that I was behaving differently. Interactions with my three boys improved tremendously. I began allowing them to be adults. My thinking changed and with it my world changed. Joy began creeping into my being; fear was being pushed out. My internal programming began to change. It's like TCC is a gentle reboot clearing away the clutter and bringing clarity. As I continue practicing TCC and *Chi* begins flowing, my life becomes more balanced and joyful. Thank you Justin Stone for such a wonderful gift.



Pyramid Poems

joy
justin
t'ai chi chih
transforming us
to conscious
knowledge
now
– MARY RUIZ

in-
side us
a vast world
is waiting to
be found; we
glimpse it
now
– MARY RUIZ

pure
love flows
without thought
judgment or stuff;
Chi flows in
love light
me
– MARY WHITE

flow
softly
flow gently
see rivers flow
see the hands
flow soft
flow
– JOYCE VEERKAMP

change
through joy
effortless;
move into new
space; feel love
expand
life
– MARY RUIZ

Editor's Note: The most important resource for T'ai Chi Chih teaching tips comes straight from Justin Stone. The description below comes from the essential booklet, T'ai Chi Chih Teaching Tips, available through the New Mexico T'ai Chi Chih Association for a small fee (www.taichichihassociation.org and 505-299-2095) and available for free on <http://www.gkpub.com/talks.php>.

Pulling Taffy & Its Variations

By JUSTIN STONE, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Pulling Taffy (all four variations of it) may be the most difficult movement to teach, but that is often the teacher's fault. It must first be stressed that the movement of the upturned hand is horizontal. Some students want to make a graceful dance movement out of the pull, gradually raising the upturned underhand while bending both knees and turning sideways. This may be a graceful dance movement, but it certainly is not T'ai Chi Chih.

The upturned hand moves to the side, still upturned, after the two hands have crossed in the taffy pull. That move started with the upturned hand going to the opposite elbow *past* the top hand; from there the pull begins. Many start the movement with the two hands together, and this does not allow for the pull that ensues as the two hands cross each other.

As the hand pulls to the side, *both* feet remain flat on the ground. Many have the tendency to raise the back leg's heel in a graceful gesture, but the back foot actually remains as flat as does the front foot. Teachers must check on this. Also, be sure the student does not shift the weight too quickly; the weight should shift in direct coordination with the pulling hand, and no faster.

The hand that has the palm turned down pulls to the side and slightly down so that it finishes alongside the back leg, palm turned down. Actually, this is the substantial hand in order to balance the Yang leg, the one that supports the weight at the end of the movement.

Once the student understands how the basic Pulling Taffy movement is performed, the three variations should be easy to learn.



Pulling Taffy, Variation #2, Wrist Circles

By AMY TYKSINSKI, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

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

Coming up on the balls of the feet sends the energy from the soles of the feet up to the top of the head, over the top and tumbles back down, hence balancing all. (Carmen also notes the Microcosmic Orbit meditation found in the TCC textbook balances every single meridian in the body.) Start the circle where you're totally relaxed, at the bottom. If you notice the fingers tightening up when the hands pass one another, note you might be blocking a bit of energy.

A Key To Successful Teaching

By LINDA BRAGA, CASTRO VALLEY, CA

Teaching T'ai Chi Chih can be rewarding and challenging. Many adults come to TCC class with hidden problems, attitudes of failure, or a great deal of tension. If you survey your class, you might be surprised at the variety of "problems" your students are experiencing. TCC offers a golden opportunity to begin changing these conditions. Students generally fall into two categories: passive learners and active, engaged learners. Good teachers want all students to be active learners, but wishing and hoping aren't enough. Good teachers know *how students learn best* and provide many opportunities to experience that in class. After working with children and adult learners for many years, Dr William Glasser (author, educator, psychiatrist and researcher) arrived at this noteworthy conclusion:

We learn and remember 10% of what we read, 20% of what we hear, 30% of what we see, 50% of what we see and hear, 70% of what we discuss with others, 80% of what we experience personally, and 95% of what we teach someone else. So why not try to incorporate *students teaching students* into a weekly lesson plan.

Partner practice is one effective way to get students involved. TCC teachers ask students to pair up and explore a movement. The key is movement, not standing and talking. Noticing posture, alignment and foot position take on new meaning for students when working with a partner. Allowing knees to bend and weight to shift becomes a reality rather than a concept. Questions arise naturally from this process.

CONTINUED ON P. 11

Shared Thoughts

BY JAN BLOCK, SHAWNEE MISSION, KS

My belated kudos and gigantic thank you to Sandy and the other coordinators for my best training experience (last year at our delightful annual teacher conference in Nebraska) since my accreditation. I have been enjoying improvements in my own practice and sharing my explanatory notes of “why” along with “what to” and “how to” move, especially with my advanced class. I know that teaching requires us to find the most suitable approach to presenting a subject. Because I learn best when I understand some background “why,” I find it my best way to teach. The 2009 conference was most beneficial in that respect.

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After six years teaching T'ai Chi Chih at my suburban community center, I have recently added an intermediate class and now an advanced class. Occasionally, someone in the basic class comments that the previous (intermediate) students seem to float out. They ask what they've been on. It will be interesting to see if we attract and retain enough students for all three levels.

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I just returned from doing a TCC demo for my neighborhood library staff for their meeting on stress relief. Because of a recent break-in, they seemed very receptive and pleased to learn about and to do TCC. I shared a story that people urge me to tell newbies, one that Michael Isaacs wrote about in a *Vital Force* after I told him of some of the places I do TCC. When I set off alarms at airport security, guards ask me to go back through. I respond, “Don't bother, I have two ‘titanic’ hips.” So I'm sent to the corner and laboriously “wanded” head-to-toe. Then I'm patted all over, up one side of my leg, down the other. Just when I'm ready to explode, I'm released. I gather my belongings and immediately find a spot to do my whole TCC practice. Within two to three minutes, a blanket of calm covers me and I'm completely relaxed. (Of course, I'm quite animated and then laid back as I relate this story, which emphasizes the effect of TCC.)

Even when I don't set off alarms, I always plan to practice TCC at the airport. When people wonder if others stare at me, I'm fairly oblivious. I practice in many public places when I get agitated, bored, or just feel like it. Last week in a doctor's office someone watched and inquired about what I was doing. Ask me later if Pricilla joined my class.

.....

Jan	<i>tan</i>	I
Block and	<i>t'ien</i>	can't think
Justin Stone	how life moves	so go to
celebrate our	from and around	sleep; arise quite
birthdays with	you as t'ai	bright as new
joyous	chi chih	daylight
love	flows	breaks

My First Intensive

BY BENITA GOLDSTEIN, NEW YORK, NY

I just completed my first intensive and wanted share some thoughts based on an extraordinary experience of camaraderie, joy, and success. As a three-year practitioner, I couldn't really identify why I loved doing T'ai Chi Chih except that it offered a safe harbor to come home to, a forgiving place of calm and centering where I could be at peace. The baggage I brought to the intensive was heavy (and I don't mean the clothes) and weighed me down with fears and negative thoughts. After experiencing pains and illness on the second night, I was sure those feelings had triumphed and would result in an inability to complete my stay. Instead, I woke the next morning with a sense of joy – of appreciation for feeling my health returning and steeped in the knowledge of the power of the practice. Thank you TCC, Sandy (our tireless trainer), Daniel (the inimitable host), Antonia (for being herself), and all my dear friends who so willingly shared the experience and inspired me to stay on the journey.



CONTINUED FROM P. 10
Awareness emerges without embarrassment. Partners can encourage, compliment, and critique each other without feeling self-conscious. The result is that everyone becomes empowered to improve their own movement and not just “go through the motions.” This helps them go deeper into their own practice.

After Partner Practice, during group sharing, students will say, “*We were wondering about ____.*” “*Is this right?*” They feel confident enough to demonstrate in front of the class. This offers a great teachable moment when you can say, “*Yes, the question of ____ has come up for many students today and they have discovered that ____.*” “*Several people were able to let go of tension and they noticed that ____.*”

These comments help students take charge of their own learning and feel supported by their teacher and classmates. By allowing beginning students to work with other students from the start, we promote optimal opportunities for learning, at the 95% level of effectiveness. We create active, engaged learners motivated by their own discoveries and improvement. We insure that everyone can learn. Some active learners go on to become TCC teachers. They already have experience in working with others, exploring what they know and don't know. They are aware of the current limitations of their own form and how to improve it. They are confident and self-assured. They are ready to teach and share their passion.

The Importance Of Attending A Teacher Conference

[TRANSCRIBED FROM A VIDEO MESSAGE DELIVERED BY JUSTIN STONE TO THE 2006 TEACHER CONFERENCE]

Greetings to all the teachers who are now at this conference. I'm happy to see you here, and I know that you will gain a great deal from being here – particularly those of you who come from isolated communities where you don't get a chance to see other teachers doing T'ai Chi Chih. (Those of you who are isolated are apt to get into very strange habits.) Now you're here and you're going to be doing a lot of practice and you have a chance to check up on your TCC form and also to learn how to better teach TCC. For instance, you want to emphasize that TCC is done primarily below the waist – with the yinning and yanging, the moving of the hips and waist, and so forth.

This is not a pleasure jaunt. If it were a convention you'd wear funny hats, blow horns, and so forth. We're deadly serious at the conference and under Sr. Antonia, I know you'll get a lot of practice and see that what you're doing is right. But you'll also to learn more about TCC. Experienced teachers will tell you that the more they practice and teach, the more they learn and know about the individual movements and about the essence of TCC.

To those at this conference, I welcome you. But I would like to see a lot more people coming to the conference. Let's hope more people register for next year, and the following year, and so forth – until eventually we get to the day when all accredited teachers attend the conference. And not only because it gives teachers a chance to make new friends and to learn more about what is going on, but mainly so that you can find that what you are doing is correct and that what you are passing along to students is correct.

So let's hope that after you leave this conference you'll have in your mind that you want to be ready for the next conference and the following conference and so forth. I don't have to tell you about the bright future for TCC. Medicine is beginning to take it seriously and realize that it can use TCC. Many other things will become apparent as TCC gets to be more well known and people realize how it has helped them mentally, spiritually, physically, and so forth. So before I say goodbye to you, I want to say: Get as much as you can from the conference and look forward to the day when all accredited teachers will be at the conferences. Thank you.

The Joyous Gift Of Conference

By SKY YOUNG-WICK & THE 2010 CONFERENCE TEAM

Our theme for this year's conference is gratitude. Your presence at conference allows us to grow and deepen our practice together. So it is in the spirit of gratitude that we invite all T'ai Chi Chih teachers who have not registered already to join us at our annual teacher conference on August 12-15, 2010, at the Arbor Day Farm in Nebraska City, Nebraska. The time is drawing near, and we do hope you can attend. We request your deposit and registration as soon as possible and no later than July 12, 2010. (After that date we are not guaranteed rooms at the hotel.)

Have you enjoyed the special experience of our annual conference? The gathering is a wonderful gift of learning and fun, as well as an opportunity to be surrounded and nurtured by so many other teachers. Imagine practicing and feeling the chi flowing from 100-plus teachers. Now *that's* Joy thru Movement.

The eco-friendly conference is located in a beautiful natural setting with an abundance of trees (as you may have guessed). The food is spectacular; many of the fruits and vegetables they serve are grown on the farm. We were so impressed last year that we decided to return to this special place in the heartland for this year's conference.

Registration information and other particulars about vendors, roommates, and more can be found on taichichih.org/conference.php. (If you have already registered but did *not* receive a confirmation letter from Jean Katus, please contact her immediately at jean44ka@gmail.com.) Those needing and receiving a scholarship will see their registration fee reduced greatly. The sooner you request a scholarship, the greater likelihood that funds will be available. Jean Katus is also the contact point for scholarships.

Lastly, please consider donating something that another TCC teacher would enjoy to our raffle. It's been a big hit for the last few years, and we'll continue it this year. Funds raised during the raffle are used for future conference scholarships.



Carolyn Perkins visits Cristina Minelli and her students in Italy



Climb The Joyous Mountain: Living the Meditative Way (2nd edition)

BY JUSTIN STONE

Editor's Note: The T'ai Chi Chih Facebook group, which numbers almost 450 people from around the world, is discussing this book during May and June. To join the conversation, find us at facebook.com and then search for "tai chi chih" – yes, without the apostrophe for this particular forum. Remember, though, as Justin says, talking about TCC is no substitution for doing it.

Hold out the bliss of the thoughtless state to the mind and, as it becomes used to it, the mind will go there with no effort, making it possible to once again be your self. The stillness is always there, and the Universe is always ready to surrender. (Chapter 1, page 5)

Once one has admitted and accepted the cold, there is nothing more to say about it. When one walks out of the front gate of the main temple building in the frozen moonlight, there is an unearthly halo around the trees. An air of vibrant stillness penetrates deep down inside. A walk along the graveled path is an adventure, and one forgets the poor frozen ego in favor of something greater. (Chapter 2, page 14)

It is the willingness to accept and affirm life more purely, with naturalness and directness and in each movement as it is found, without conditioned intellect and response. This represents the *wabi* or *sabi* life – and Zen. (Chapter 3, page 24)

To live each day with some contemplation, and to try to feel gratitude for the really countless blessings we take for granted, will lead us to treat others as we wish to be treated. Simple though these two activities may sound, their effects are profound. (Chapter 5, page 32)

Sitting so close to the man who had just emerged from the deepest of immersions, I was fascinated by the tremendous vibration of livingness about him. Outwardly, he did not move at all, but inwardly he must have been seething with a tremendous force flowing through him. The tight clasp of the hands, with only the fingers moving, gave some clue to the dynamic surge inside. (Chapter 6, page 39)



Turn off the television and come to life, offering a little creativity ... Let some experience come to the surface and try to express it in this one, two, three, four, three, two, one syllable form [i.e. pyramid poetry]. You may surprise yourself. (Chapter 7, page 45)

When I depart somewhere with nothing certain about the future, I know the coming events are already formed but not yet visible, just as a future sculpture lies within an untouched marble cube. Secure in faith, one can wait patiently and the inevitable will arrive. (Chapter 8, page 47)

May I be properly grateful for this food, which is the result of the work of others, and the suffering of other forms of life. (Chapter 9, page 57)

When we hate someone, we cannot love at all. If we place ourselves above others, we cannot see the absolute value of all. If we do not realize that we exist in total relationship, we are separated from others. And so we grasp only what appears favorable, hoping everything else will disappear. (Chapter 11, page 75)

The Life Force itself is joyous. All we have to do is get ourselves out of the way and enjoy it. This is not difficult for animals and plants, but few humans achieve the natural and the spontaneous. (Chapter 11, page 78)

Meditation enables one to know the mind and knowing it, to shape the mind, which in turn leads to a freeing of the mind. When habit patterns are broken and tendencies burned to ashes, there is freedom and stillness. (Chapter 12, page 85)

To the life – force
That flows through us all.
Sing a song of wonderment.
And give thanks, give thanks, give thanks.
(Chapter 13, page 91)

At our *ashram* there was only one meal a day at about noon. I had noticed that Maharaj was absent at some meals. When I asked him about it, he shrugged. "If I am deep in meditation at the time, I just wait for another day," he explained, as though a day without food was an ordinary occurrence. (Chapter 14, page 97)

Actually, each one of us is part of a minority; everyone is outnumbered. No one ever thinks the other fellow is the good guy; it's taken for granted that *we're* the good guys. (Chapter 15, page 100)

The world is a reflection of ourselves. What we see without is an accurate measure of what we are within. If there is serenity inside, the outside world seems friendly. (Epilogue, page 109)

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Thinking About Being Grounded

By Brock Brocklehurst, Albuquerque, NM

Grounded: It's a common and simple word. Or is it? Children are grounded – a time to reconsider actions and attitudes. Airplanes are grounded – a time for needed repairs to enable safe flight. Pilots are grounded – a time for retraining, reflection, and attitude change. Ship run aground – time to get unstuck and float freely again. Electrical outlets are grounded – a time of completing the connection.

*I am in
my feet –
they are
attached –
and my feet
are on
the ground*

As a student of T'ai Chi Chih, I have often heard that while practicing we need to stay in our feet and stay grounded. Those words started me thinking about what this means and how I could do it in my practice. Well, I am in my feet – they are attached – and my feet are on the ground, therefore, it must mean something else. Obviously, it's not meant literally. When one is told to "break a leg" before acting, no one is wishing a broken leg on someone. So it's not meant literally. Or is it?

Why does it matter and what are the benefits? Is there a common thread with our many uses of the word "grounded"? Let's start with the *children* and then see if we can find a thread that connects groundings and has meaning for us as we do TCC. It seems to me that the *electrical ground* points to a common relationship. If we are "out of our bodies" or "somewhere else," it's because we have lost our ground connection and the energy (*Chi*) cannot complete the circuit that enables energy flow and the resultant outcomes from making good decisions. It shows us the necessity and importance of having our own personal ground connection whatever we are doing – and especially to receive more benefit from our TCC practice. Athletes call it being "in the zone." Eckhart Tolle (and others) call it being in the NOW. Justin calls it "the effort of no effort" – no thinking – just doing – the way Justin experienced TCC in a Japanese garden.

Return To Joy

By Tudor Oprea, Albuquerque, NM & France

I always regarded T'ai Chi Chih as a journey home, a movement within. Its practice, as well as I can, is an expression of gratitude: Praise to Hakuin Zenji and Justin Stone, for it is the quiet lotus that blossoms inside. "As well as I can" is, in no small way, a confession. Justin always says, "Practice TCC when you want to, and practice TCC when you don't want to, but practice every day."

This, I am afraid, is not my case. The ebb and flow of life – and as the Universe knows, mine is a restless one – has often deprived me of the time, focus, or indeed the will, to practice TCC. While it's nothing to be proud of, this is not a confession in search of absolution. Rather, it acknowledges that turmoil (mostly of the inner kind) can interfere with the daily quest for well-flowing *Chi*. Perhaps stemming from self-denial, chronic fatigue, or just pure laziness, the resolution to practice TCC is not always within me.

*this is not
a confession
in search of
absolution*

Yet I revel in the knowledge (and in the certainty) that its benefits are always there, just as the sun shines, obscured by clouds or not. This certainty lets me rejoin the movement whenever my body, mind, and spirit are in times of need. And unlike gradually restarting one's physical training after a long pause, unlike searching for words in a language for long unspoken, TCC is always there, welcoming and non-judgmental in its embrace: It's a return to joy, a re-connection to the stream. If we know this or if we don't, TCC always is. Waiting for our return.



Relaxing The Stiffness In My Mind

BY LARRY BLOOM, SANDY SPRINGS, GA

Since practicing T'ai Chi Chih, I am better able to realize and accept that there are times my mind and its thinking is rigid and stiff – like the hard oak tree versus flexible bamboo. And, I have come to appreciate my mind is no different than any other stiff muscle. If I perform some sort of physical activity when I am not prepared and warmed up, my muscles will sooner or later protest. That's why professional athletes spend time warming up and staying limber – so their muscles won't get stiff and injured.

Likewise, I sense a mind that is not warmed up can also be stiff. It can be resistant to new ideas, impatient with difficult people and situations, and in denial that it is creating its own burdens, pain, and suffering. The result can be tension, anxiety, impatience, difficulty sleeping, ill health, and readiness to blame anything but itself for its problems. For me, TCC is like a warm-up exercise for my mind that gets me prepared for the day – similar to stretching before physical exercise. It helps my thinking become more flexible like bamboo, and I avoid becoming an unwitting accomplice in creating my own trials and tribulations.

Somehow in today's culture we have acquired the idea that the mind works best when it runs at top speed. Yet just like with automobiles, operating all out at maximum speed is not healthy. A mind that is always racing lacks time even to complete a thought, let alone to check on the quality of its own thinking. It just coughs up whatever thoughts it can – the more the better. And the faster it cranks, the more likely it is to overheat, misfire, jam, and even shut down.

For me, regularly slowing down my mind means better quality thinking, improved health, sweeter relationships, and actually getting more done. Just as there are certain exercises for improving a particular set of muscles, TCC has become an exercise that improves my thinking. My mind totally clears when practicing TCC, and I seem to emerge with greater love and wisdom. I can better see the problems with some of my old behaviors and gain the strength and humility to rise above my poor thinking habits. Even tasks previously considered tedious and unlikable become pleasant.

I am beginning to appreciate what is meant when TCC is defined as “joy through movement”... and it is sweet!



Pyramid Poems

flow
let go
openness
becoming one
on the path
of our
life
– NEAL ROY

we
all die
we are all
reborn to new
life, essence
renewed
bloom
– BETH STIBORA

wise
teacher
showing us
by example
guiding us
with love
Chi
– SHERYL ADAIR

wise
beyond
what most men
can understand
he came only
but to
share
– JERRY GRANOK

can
any
who does not
listen with the
heart hope to
ever get
him
– JERRY GRANOK

feel
spirit
uplifting
touches others
harmony
circle
love
– LEE BROWNELL

one
foot in
one foot out
I'm glad you stayed
your mission
is still
here
– DIANNE MOODY

he
looked at
me and the
movement changed from
moving to
flowing
ease
– KIM GRANT

one
man who
listened to
the universal
energy
gave us
Chi
– JERRY GRANOK

stern
hawk-eyed
watches all
aware in tune
seeing deep
teaching
me
– CYNTHIA WINLAND

Revolutionary

By MARILYN MORRISON, GA

T'ai Chi Chih is revolutionary. Does this seem like a strong word to describe such an effortless and soft practice?

Roget's Thesaurus says revolutionary implies change or reversal. That's an apt description for TCC. Change is eminent if you continue the practice, and isn't it a reversal of thinking to become aware of our physical strength and spiritual nature by practicing these soft movements?

Change is eminent if you continue the practice

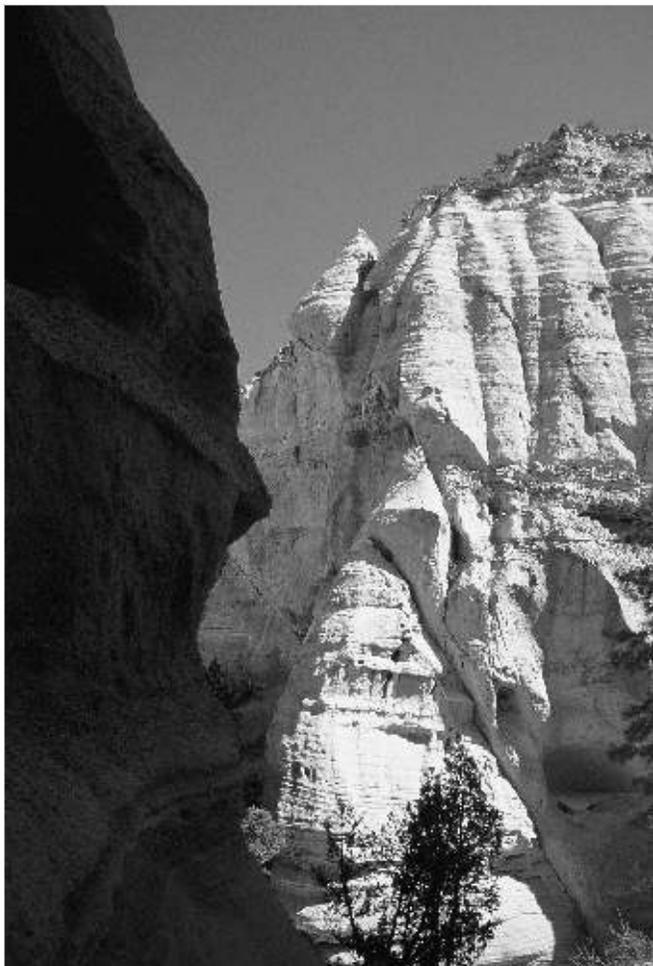
I began practicing about a year ago without expectation. A body worker by trade, and an explorer of life by commitment, I have traveled many roads to find what

is already inside of me. I have taught yoga, travelled to India to learn to approach life from a more spiritual and meditative place, practiced T'ai Chi (the martial art) and been certified to teach Qigong. All of these practices lead me to the acute awareness that the body holds the key to understanding our connection to the

Divine nature of our being.

As life would have it, the culmination of these different ways to become aware was a wonderful precursor to understanding TCC. After studying T'ai Chi and Qigong and enjoying both for their individual gifts, I found TCC to be a beautiful balance of both. I believe Rocking Motion is the difference that speaks uniquely to balancing the awareness of both the energetic and physical aspects of the body. This awareness came after a year of practice. The movement from the toes to the heels – with a moment of being grounded in the entire foot – speaks to our energetic and physical self. With the weight in the ball of the foot, we experience our energy and as the weight shifts more toward the heel, we feel more of our physical body. Each plays an important role in grounding our experience here on earth.

No matter what we choose to do in life, the body and mind must connect the physical and energetic to understand our humanness. It is not an either/or situation but rather a combination of both balanced that creates the space to experience the beauty of our entire being – both our physical presence on earth and the connection to what brought us here. With a sincere practice of TCC, perhaps we can also find our purpose – to follow the Divine path to our “higher Self.”



TCC To The Rescue

By A. NONY MUSS, OAKLAND, CA

I had to take a test that many adults face eventually, you know, a colonoscopy. I'd put it off for months and finally my doctor told me I *must* do it. So I got that nasty bottle of stuff you drink and, it seems I drank that stuff for hours. I thought of it as a purification process, a rite of passage. Anyway, the next morning as I got ready for my daughter to pick me up, I started feeling really awful – so dizzy and “blah.” I could hardly move. I felt so tired I just wanted to put my head on the kitchen counter. I started thinking I should call 911.

Of course I couldn't have anything to eat ... Then suddenly, a thought popped into my mind: “Why not do some TCC?” So I started my practice and got half way through. I stopped to finish getting ready and then completed my practice. And wow. I felt just wonderful, clear and alert. The tiredness and weakness just disappeared. I couldn't believe it. Well, I knew that TCC *could* do that, but I didn't expect it to work so fast *for me*. TCC came to the rescue, helped me cope with this experience, handle it. I recommend anyone facing a procedure or test to use TCC to help him or her get calm, clear, and energized.

First TCC In The Carolinas

Retreat with Antonia Cooper near Asheville, NC;
March 20-21, 2010

BY VICKI SCHROEDER, TRAVELERS REST, NC

I had no idea what to expect as I prepared to co-host, along with Stan Corwin, a two-day T'ai Chi Chih retreat with 13 teachers and 20 students. So I kept my expectations within reason. What I received was life changing. Some of the experience came from the beautiful setting at the Kanuga Conference Center. But the rest came from the people who attended. I have been to several TCC retreats over the past five years, and they all vary depending on who attends. Participants came from 10 states; many came because Antonia was going to be there. My students didn't know what to expect, but Antonia wowed them. So many attendees commented on how much they felt their TCC practice had deepened in 48 hours. They also said they felt renewed and recommitted to their practice. Upon hearing these comments, I knew something had changed in each person who'd attended.

What I found most fun and amazing is that I spent more time watching everyone to make sure all the needs were met (which allowed me to see things that I never would have noticed if I had just been a participant). As the group melded and people got to know one another, it was amazing to watch what happened. I could feel the group become more grounded. I could see people's practice become softer, their tan t'iens leading more. I could feel people soaking in Antonia's words and see participants begin to incorporate those comments into their bodies and practice. I could hear questions to Antonia become deeper – and not just about how to do a movement. I could see non-teachers look with appreciation and admiration to the teachers. I could feel the teacher's appreciation of the non-teachers (for their questions and beginner's insight). I could see people thinking about what more TCC could do for them. That people were from all different walks of life but those differences melted away as the retreat progressed. That people looked at other people with amazement as they got to know other life stories and experiences. I could see and feel how much appreciation everyone had for each other by the end of the two days. That people began to understand that TCC is not about trying so hard or having to get it perfect ... now.

People's wrists and waists began to soften. People's weight shift got a little more complete as the retreat progressed. Egos receded to the background just a bit. People stopped worrying about being wrong and focused on how much they liked this newfound freedom. I could see in people's eyes and posture when they'd had an "ah ha" moment. Movements slowed down. Assurance and confidence crept into bodies and eyes. Watching the group during those two days was a fascinating and wonderful experience.

I felt so proud to be a part of the TCC community. As I watched and talked to everyone, I found myself thinking how lucky I am to know all of these people, whom I wouldn't have known without TCC. That is a very humbling truth. Every person is so remarkable in his or her own way. TCC has really opened my eyes to more easily see how extraordinary each and every person is. How truly remarkable TCC is to bring me the gifts of awesome people and friends.



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 in this regular space – a la Waldo. Teacher Caroline Perkins of New York City gets this first spot. Where is she? Email your best guess to tcc@kimgrant.com before the next issue discloses the whereabouts of Caroline. 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.



Put A Little Yin In Your Yang

Retreat with Antonia Cooper in Santa Barbara, CA; February 16-19, 2010

By SUZANNE ROADY-ROSS, SEAL BEACH, CA

Why go to a T'ai Chi Chih retreat? Obvious reasons include quiet time in a beautiful place and frequent practice with like-minded souls that feel so restorative and uplifting. What may be less obvious is the way a retreat can present a familiar idea in such a new way that it instantly pulls understanding into a sharper focus than ever.

Such was the touchstone of Antonia's instruction at Casa de Maria, a place with a rain-fed bubbling spring and ancient oaks. As we began looking at the principles of TCC and how they inform the movements, we examined how far an arm should lift or straighten. Antonia reminded us to "keep a little yin in your yang," which was a new way of expressing a fundamental TCC concept. What she meant is illustrated by the yin/yang symbol itself. We know that on each side of the black and white swirl there is a tiny spot of the opposite color. Antonia explained that in the expansion (or moving away) part of any arm movement is yang, or masculine, in nature. The transferring of weight to the substantial leg is yang, too. Similarly, the contraction or drawing in of the arms or shifting the weight off of a leg is yin, or feminine. This yinning and yanging is what allows our movements to create a continual flow of energy.

So, just like the yin/yang symbol with the dot of masculine in the feminine, and the dot of feminine in the masculine, an arm reaching away from the body should not be totally straight or yang because it will block the flow of *Chi*. The little dot should be mirrored in our movement by letting the arm have a gentle bend of yin to soften it, allowing the *Chi* to flow through. Applied to the legs, the weight-bearing yang leg is complemented by the toe or heel of the yin leg that helps us keep our balance and enhances the flow of *Chi*. The raised toe or heel is the dot of yin for the lower body.

Since yinning and yanging is one of the most important principles in TCC, it's poetic that the yin/yang symbol can be a visual reminder of how to move. The black and white halves swirl into each other continuously, and the circling softness of their movement allows the *chi* to flow smoothly.



More Santa Barbara

Retreat with Antonia Cooper in
Santa Barbara, CA; Feb. 16-19, 2010

By PAM TOWNE, OCEANSIDE, CA

A diverse group of 36 people came together in the green foothills of Santa Barbara. Many came from California; others came from Oregon, Illinois, Iowa, Texas, Michigan, Mississippi, and New Jersey. United by our common interest in experiencing the deeper, spiritual aspects of T'ai Chi Chih practice, the group flowed harmoniously together from beginning

to end. La Casa de Maria Retreat Center provided a serene natural setting for relaxing and retreating from everyday activities. In between TCC sessions, we enjoyed quiet times on peaceful wooded pathways beneath majestic oaks, walking the labyrinth, resting in the Peace Garden, or sitting in the meditation chapel. Much of the delicious food was grown on site in organic gardens and orchards, nourishing our bodies as we fed our souls.

Antonia led us in exploring and refining our TCC movements, deepening our practice, and experiencing a greater flow of *Chi*. The result was a renewal of body, mind, spirit, and more joy through movement. Three teacher candidates found it to be an excellent tune-up before going to teacher training the following month. Others were inspired to begin their preparation for teacher accreditation. Everyone left feeling glad that

Sowing The Seeds

Retreat with Antonia Cooper in St Paul, MN; January 28-31, 2010

By NANCY WERNER-AZARSKI, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

Twelve students and 16 teachers attended “Sowing the Seeds of T'ai Chi Chih,” while Antonia led us through all the TCC movements, reviewed the principles of TCC practice, and read from many of Justin Stone’s books. This retreat was slightly different as we scheduled free time, and we included students in the retreat. Participants, especially students going to intensives and accreditation this year, purchased a lot of Good Karma Publishing materials. And the teachers really enjoyed the energy of the committed students.

Jeanine, a student, really appreciated the community support and that Antonia covered the basics of each move. Ginger, a teacher from northern Minnesota, also appreciated being with the community, but she *really* enjoyed the feedback about her practice. And Bev, a student, appreciated the chance to deepen her practice even though she doesn’t plan to be a teacher (although she will attend an intensive). Vanji, a teacher, described this retreat and her practices as the deepest she had ever felt or done. Even the ink brush painting we did in the evening with Antonia led us back to our TCC practice. Sister Rita, a teacher, was painting and not too satisfied with her results when she said, “It doesn’t look very good.” And Antonia replied, “You need to practice some more.” She then paused slightly and continued, “Not unlike our TCC. We need to practice.”

We all had a chance to exam our practice, think about how we could sow those seeds of TCC, and take time to appreciate our practice and community. During our last beautiful practice on Sunday morning, we moved as one. Truly, as Justin says, “When we practise TCC faithfully, we will find that Love Energy is the fruit.”

A Spring Awakening

Workshop with Antonia Cooper
in Atlanta, GA; March 6, 2010

By JUDY CHANCEY, ATLANTA, GA

Some very exciting things are happening with T'ai Chi Chih in Atlanta and the Southeast as a result of what might be called a Spring Awakening.

In the spirit of renewal that the season ushers in, the southeastern TCC community blossomed with multiple events (some of which are yet to happen, as of this writing). Spring TCC opportunities and joy filled the room at this first-ever-in-Atlanta-event, as 20 area students and teachers (along with Alba Cordasco from New York City) gathered to explore the theme of moving with and from the center.

Antonia led us in a day of unification of mind, body, and spirit by bringing us into greater awareness of Justin’s teachings through excerpts from *Spiritual Odyssey*. Through his writings, we felt Justin’s presence and were profoundly touched by the depths of his influence on each of our lives through our TCC practices. Moments of quiet reflection prepared us to receive anew as Antonia guided us towards feeling our center with greater focus. The softness and sense of flow in the room were palpable as we connected with, and felt, the *tan t’ien* lead our weight shifts in the three directions. At the end of the day, we shared in and were blessed by a group practice formed as a circle within a circle. We are so grateful to Antonia for creating space on her calendar to share her TCC knowledge and wisdom. Her joy is infectious, and students enthusiastically expressed their appreciation of her love, compassion, and inner sincerity – the essence of TCC.

And there is more great news: classes and events are growing and thriving in the Southeast. Read about the North Carolina retreat with Antonia in this issue, plus another Atlanta workshop with Carmen in the next issue, and TCC in the park in June in Athens, GA. *Chi* is blossoming all over the south; it’s an awakening of the best kind.



Teacher Formation

Teacher Accreditation with Pam Towne
in Danville, CA; March 21-27, 2010

By ATHENE MANTLE, SAN JOSE, CA

Twelve newly accredited teachers moved softly together as they did their final T'ai Chi Chih practice on graduation day. This was the culmination of a week of exploration while safely

nestled in the beautiful San Damiano Retreat Center. Many candidates experienced moving through resistance and into softness. Keith Senechal of Redondo Beach, CA, said, "Leading up to teacher training, I focused on doing TCC as well as I could. Therefore I went to training with a full cup. The training process allowed me to throw that out, to release the attachment to those old habits."

Bill Gervais of Ontario, Canada, offered: "The training program should be renamed Teacher Formation because it was a process that helped me to become grounded and ready to receive. This was possible because of the format and leadership by Pam and the auditors. Their time and patience helped me make the breakthroughs necessary to become an ambassador for TCC."

Candidates came from the West Coast and Canada, while Liz Vickerstaff came all the way from New Zealand. They experienced their own unique lessons and shared much common awareness. Maria Kerosky of Berkeley, CA, expressed, "The week with all of you reminded me again how important trust, letting go, and patience are. If I were more process-oriented and less goal-oriented, as I tend to be, I would have enjoyed the training even more. But the seeds of joy were planted during the time with you. They transformed into beautiful flowers of inner peace. Now, back at home, the joy I asked for is here to stay within me and to guide me as I begin sharing the gift of TCC."

It's safe to say that Pam Towne, the dedicated auditors (Nancy Adams and Tony Johansen), and I would join all of the newly accredited teachers as they say "here here" to Nina Gibson's parting thoughts. She concludes, "I learned the *Chi* is more powerful than I ever imagined, and the energy and growth we experienced this week will bind us together as we expand our practice and begin our teaching. Thank you for this unforgettable week."



Two Fruitful Workshops

Workshops with Antonia Cooper
in the Bay Area; February 20 & 21, 2010

By JUDY HUBBLE, SAN FRANCISCO, CA

What a sight: 65 participants moving softly together while doing seated T'ai Chi Chih movements. Under Antonia's gentle directions, the 50 students and 15 teachers were

feeling very grateful for her presence. Looking at our theme, "Applying the Principles with Compassion," Antonia suggested that developing an awareness of how we move and of being inner-oriented was basic to our practice. Since circularity is fundamental to TCC, she encouraged us to examine that in our movements. Just as the seasons cycle through beginnings and endings, she offered that through circularity we are able to let go of life's anxieties and gain peace and joy within.

As Justin Stone says the fruit of our TCC practice is "Love Energy," Antonia said so is compassion "the love in action." Many students found great relief with the new thought of applying compassion to their own practice.

Antonia asked us to be more patient with ourselves and with each other so that we might experience greater freedom in this state of acceptance.



At the teacher-only workshop, Antonia continued to explore the principles of TCC with 12 teachers. She read from Justin Stone's *Spiritual Odyssey*: "If we examine it closely, we find that awareness is the root of TCC, which is essentially inner-oriented. Circularity is the fundamental. And we already know

that 'softness and continuity' are the Essence. When we practice TCC faithfully, we will find that Love Energy is the fruit." As we apply our new understanding of compassion being the "love in action," we can more easily follow Antonia's advice to enjoy what we do and be more compassionate with our selves and others. Then we might readily agree: "every day is a good day."

Comments (With A Few Responses)

Retreat with Carmen Brocklehurst in Albuquerque, NM; March 11-14, 2010

COMPILED BY AMY TYKSINSKI, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

"I came to play with *Chi* and enjoy myself. I've done enough T'ai Chi Chih today that I can't even think about thinking about it. At the labyrinth you can actually jump over barriers; these self-imposed barriers we put up aren't necessary." – DORA

"I came to meet lots of friends and jumpstart my practice. Change? It's been drastic." – TUDOR

"I came with no expectations, an open heart and mind. I've softened and deepened my TCC." – ROBERT ("We never go as deep as we can go.

Even Justin gets a twinkle when he discovers something in the movement or goes deeper." – CB)

"I came because I was out of sync. Most of it's back in

shape, but I still need adjustments. Since I frequently think I'm the only one doing the movements wrong, I put myself in the front row – so I wouldn't see anyone else. I found peace that Carmen corrected others and I wasn't the only one learning." – BETH ("There is something new to learn everyday. It's the *Chi*, the Vital Force. How could it not be so?" – CB)

"I came with Beginner's Mind and wanted a renewal of all the movements and to learn more about grounding." – CHARLOTTE

"I realize I was coming to rest. What I didn't realize is that I had lost my smile and now I've got it back. Some of the movements I felt most secure with kind of fell apart. So I guess it's going to another level." – SHERYL

"I'd been pet-sitting a cat with feline leukemia so I needed to chill out. I've gotten exactly what I needed." – DEBRA

"I came to re-energize and renew and while walking the labyrinth, I got the message to "be in moment." – JOYCE ("This is *already true* about you but until each one of us believes it, we think we are where we aren't. Or that we're ready. Or that we should be ready. Ramakrishna said that after he tore up the movie screen, he began a relationship with mother-God again. A student asked him, 'Why are you doing that, you know it doesn't exist?' Ramakrishna countered, 'Because it pleases me.'" – CB)

"Without thinking about it: There is a feeling of cosmic rhythm with

the group during practice. It's a reminder of something much bigger, an experience of what is indecipherable, and I also get a nicer relationship with that aspect of myself." – AMY

"I wanted to see old friends, make new ones, get my practice going again. What really happened was it all fell apart, and now it's my job to reintegrate it." – JERRY

"I came for support, healing. I thought people would be loving and kind, and you've met my expectations. I came to get back in my body again. When I was ill I wasn't in my body, and you have no idea how disturbing it is not to be in your body." – JOANNE

"I came to get a concentrated dose of TCC and enjoy it. I look and feel better after a day of TCC than I do in the morning." – DIANE

"I missed the fall retreat so I just had to come back. When walking the labyrinth, I got an image of my boss who likes to puff himself, and then I saw a bird that puffed himself up, and I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. I thought 'Oh, he's just a

little bird trying to keep himself warm,' and everything has been really flowing ever since." – CINDY

"I really needed to get away, see Justin, be a student. How did my TCC change? I don't know yet; it's still happening, in process." – LISA ("TCC is growing, dynamic, *alive*; it's alive and well; let your voice be heard." – CB)

"I came here with 'computer shoulders' seeking refinement and rejuvenation. I remember Robert saying 10 years ago: "Jim, it's all about joy, joy, joy. My gift/intention from the weekend is to soften." – JIM

"I tend to breathe shallowly, especially at end of the 'Taffies' and all this talk of hip swivels. It's better now; I'm consciously breathing." – BROCK

"I came to get rejuvenated. The word strength keeps coming to me. My practice was wobbly; there wasn't that solidness; there is now." – MARY

"I'm more joyful; I learned to pay attention (in the labyrinth) rather than be aware. Sometimes you don't realize what you need to pay attention to – until afterwards." – JUDY

"I came to rest, do my practice, be with Justin, be with Carmen." – CAROLINE ("Very early in life I was taught that it doesn't matter how much you're doing every day but at retreat, the sole purpose is to listen more intently, connect more deeply, become more simple (even though 1000 corrections doesn't seem simple). Once you know that, you know that every retreat you get to go more deeply. I know each one of you more fully than I did before. I am not up there and you down here. What you are doing, I am doing. How do I know how to meet you where you are? Only by being in the same space do I know anything (but there is no space). And I feel blessed because my TCC grows, so I thank each one of you for following your *Chi*." – CB)

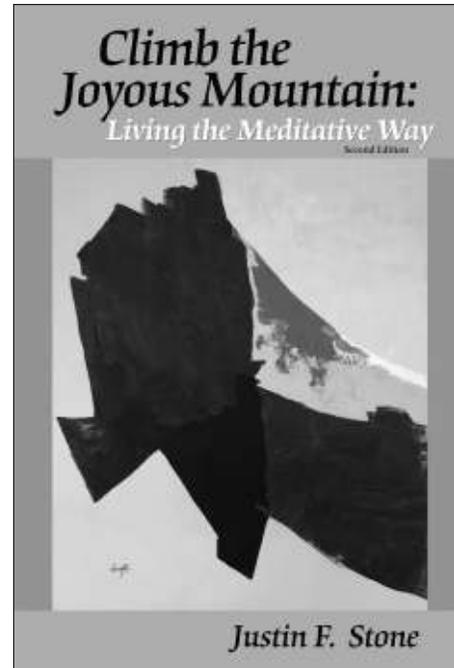
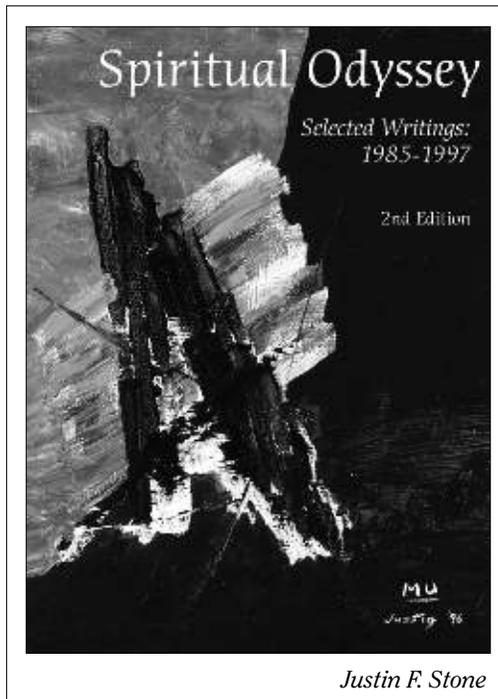


Karmic Comments

SPIRITUAL ODYSSEY: SELECTED WRITINGS 1985-1997 (2ND EDITION)

Justin Stone's best selling book (okay, well, after the instructional photo text) has been reprinted, redesigned, and features one of his favorite paintings, *Mu*, on the front cover. *Mu*, by the way, roughly translates as the key to a Zen koan. When the master was asked if a dog had Buddha nature, the master answered "Mu." Did the student understand?

In working closely with the text to bring this edition to fruition, it's abundantly clear for the umpteenth time that this book is loaded with ripe fruit ready to be picked by eager students. If you haven't picked it up lately (or, gasp, if you don't know it), it's time to go out on a date and get reacquainted.



CLIMB THE JOYOUS MOUNTAIN: LIVING THE MEDITATIVE WAY (2ND EDITION)

A virtual reading group has formed on the T'ai Chi Chih Facebook page where quotations from this inspirational and illuminating book are being shared and commented upon. Join us for a daily dip into Justin Stone's journey toward becoming the vessel through which T'ai Chi Chih was born. Quite simply, to fully understand TCC, you need to have read this book. Get the new second edition to best follow along. It's the one with Justin's painting *From The Mountains to the Ocean* on the front – the painting of a profile of Justin looking down from the snow-covered Himalayas (to the unseen ocean).

KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

The Lighter Side

Here's a conversation overheard between "old" friends:
"Isn't Jean an inspiration? She's 81 and still does T'ai Chi Chih!"
"Huh? So Jean likes chai tea?"
"Who wears tight jeans?"
"What? Someone figured out how to fly cheap?"

– FROM DORENE KRAUSE, MIDLAND PARK, NJ

After being interviewed for a "Meet Your Instructors" article in the newsletter of a senior center where I teach, I read with great interest the following quotation: "T'ai Chi Chih practice consists of 19 gentle and flowing movements *in* one posture."

– FROM BILL MOORE (MISTAKENLY AKA KIP KOURIER), CLIFTON, NJ

Editor's note: When Bill sent in this snippet to The Vital Force, something in his email was unclear. I wrote back asking for clarification: Where does this Kip Kourier student of yours live, so I could properly credit in The Vital Force. After a good laugh, it turns out that Bill teaches at the Kip55 senior Center, that Bill was interviewed by the "Kip," and that the quotation came from their newsletter, the "... Kourier."

1. A few months ago, I called fellow TCC teacher, Barbara Clark. She was so surprised at the timing of the call. Not only was she reading *The Vital Force* at the time, but on top of that, she was reading a *Lighter Side* snippet written by me.

2. John arrived 15 minutes late for seated TCC at the MS day group. He tentatively opened the door, peeked his head inside, and tried not to disturb the class. Although we were in the middle of a movement, everyone turned toward the door, and I couldn't resist saying, "Heeeere's Johnny." The whole class cracked up, including John.

– FROM SHARON SIRKIS, COLUMBIA, MD

Editor's Note: Sharon wonders if there are any constructive, illustrative, or transformative "Darker Side" comments lurking out there. Let us know if you have something to share along these lines.

T'ai Chi Chih Community Calendar

DATE	WHAT & WHO	WHERE	CONTACT
May 13-16	TCC Teacher Symposium	Aston, PA	Alba Cordasco / 201-424-4385 alba4444@aol.com
May 27-30	TCC Intensive w/ Sandy	St. Paul, MN	Judy George / 651-482-9263 Judygeorgemn@gmail.com
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
September 6-11	TCC Teacher Accreditation w/ Sandy	Lincolnshire, IL	Donna McElhose / 847-223-6065 dmcelhosechi@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
November 18-21	TCC Intensive w/ Pam	Albuquerque, NM	Ann Rutherford / 505-292-5114 ruthergary@aol.com
2011			
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

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

June 12	Seijaku Workshop w/ Carmen Brocklehurst	Albuquerque, NM	Judy Hendricks / 505-897-3810 judyhendricks@me.com
October 21-24	TCC Retreat w/ Carmen Brocklehurst	Albuquerque, NM	Judy Hendricks / 505-897-3810 judyhendricks@me.com

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GOOD KARMA PUBLISHING, INC.

P.O. Box 92426
Albuquerque, NM 87199-2674
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WEB SITE CHANGES

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ARTWORK & PHOTO CREDITS:

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