

The Vital Force

JOURNAL OF THE T'AI CHI CHIH® COMMUNITY

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for teachers & students

May 2013

Justin Gave Thanks, As Do We

Pyramid Poetry Remembering Justin

the
space is
set clear now
for the flowers
to grow free
they will
bloom
– CB

gone
a year
but not gone
it's spring again
t'ai chi chih
is still
here
– DORA DERZON

from
my home
we're closer
indiana
justin can
visit
here
– PG

can
we still
follow his
example now
that he has
left our
side
– JERRY GRANOK

Chi
connects
and deepens
awareness
as always
we are
one
– R. ALVAREZ-DIOSDADO

how
justin
showed the way
the eternal
flow of *Chi*
shows us
now
– CAROLINE GUILLOTT

why
hold on
to sadness
justin taught us
how to be
full of
joy
– SHERYL ADAIR

one
never
saw you but
one feels you in
your music
your moves
Chi
– DONOVAN

star
he is
brilliant still
touching many lives
opened heart
peace be
one
– HOLLY

stone
justin
gone from sight
but not from heart
t'ai chi chih
carries us
on
– J. VEERKAMP

yes
he lives
deep within
he's not gone far
body left
heart still
here
– D. MOODY

now
the call
discover
and acknowledge
the wisdom
within
me
– JENETH RUNDLE

Chi
a gift
for us all
forever eternal
all that
chi
– EMILY HUNNICUTT

feel
justin
while at
this retreat, he
is smiling
so am
i
– JUDY

is
justin
really gone
i see him all
around me
when i
move
– LM

say
goodbye
welcome back
circle of life
her and now
justin
stone
– PBQ

my
today
letting go,
justin stone lives
t'ai chi chih
forever
now
– NANCY FROST

now
one with
the origin
of t'ai chi chih
everywhere
formless
Chi
– M. RUIZ

still
in my
heart justin's
special gift flow
freely for
all to
know
– CORINE REEBER

love
remains
in the heart
nourishing life
letting go
freedom
now
– MARY W.

joy
love bless-
ings with the
milk of kindness
replenished
shared with
all
– R. MONTES DE OCA



From the new Good Karma Publishing CD: "Serene Nature: Music for T'ai Chi Chih"

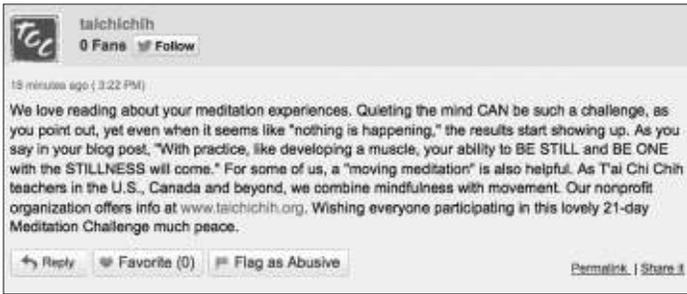


From the new Good Karma Publishing CD: "Music for T'ai Chi Chih Practice & Restful Listening"

May The Vital Force Be With You

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Have you ever read an online article about meditation, yoga or “T’ai Chi” and thought, “Hey, the same could be said about T’ai Chi Chih!” It’s ok, admit it; we all have. But have you followed through to join the online conversation? Have you piped up and mentioned TCC? It only takes a few minutes to influence the conversation, and help spread the word about T’ai Chi Chih. Practices flourish by word of mouth. You can talk to one person, and you can also talk to thousands with a simple comment online. Put your fingers to a keyboard and use your words, exert your soft but powerful voice. You don’t know who (or how many) you will spark.

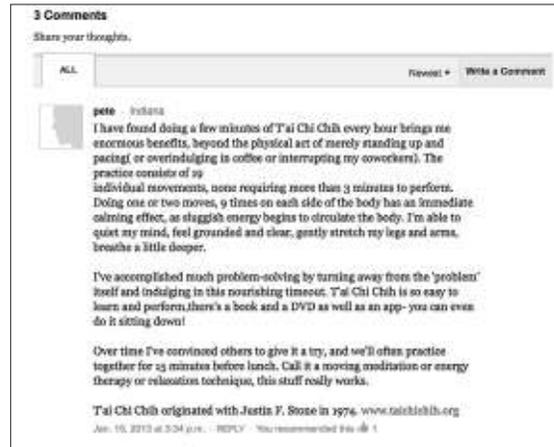


The **screen shot above** shows a comment made in response to a meditation article appearing on www.huffingtonpost.com and www.oprah.com.

CORRECTION: The article in the February issue, “Flowing Back to Rest” was by Sandy McAlister and not Pam Towne.

com. It’s always important to be relevant to the article at hand – before softly pitching T’ai Chi Chih – and referencing www.taichichih.org.

The **screen shot below** shows an excellent comment by Indiana teacher Pete Gregory. He posted in response to Tara Parker-Pope’s “Help for the Deskbound” on the well-read *New York Times* Wellness



Blog. In fact, Pete was the third in the nation to respond and his comment also appeared on the *New York Times* Blog, continuing the conversation.

WITH GRATITUDE,
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 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.

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Deadline: July 1
Publication Date: Mid-Aug
Spiritual Odyssey:
What do you like about it?
How do you use it in your classes?

Deadline: Oct 1
Publication Date: Mid-Nov
Overcoming Obstacles to Preparing
Teacher Candidates

Deadline: Jan 1
Publication Date: Mid-Feb
To Be Decided.

Deadline: April 1
Publication Date: Mid-May
To Be Decided.

Because of financial pressures, *The Vital Force* reserves the right to ship via Media Rate instead of First Class, which may result in a delay of one week or so, depending on where you live.

Your Voice Is A Vital Force Voice

By HANNAH HEDRICK, FERN FOREST, HAWAII

As someone who pretty much earned her living with her reading and writing skills, I still have a hard time feeling that “my” T'ai Chi Chih stories and issues are of interest and value to my fellow teachers and our students. Even if I have something I want to share, I find excuses not to sit down for a few minutes and put something together.

But once in awhile (such as now) I respond to a request from *The Vital Force* to submit material for our amazing journal. As my title states, your voice is a *Vital Force* voice.

As those of you who attend conferences know, I seldom miss one because of the value I place on our TCC community. **Part of that feeling of togetherness emanates from the stories we share at conference and via *The Vital Force*.**

In Hawaii we call this “talk story,” and it has the same salutary benefit of sharing stories in a self-help group. Whether our benefits from TCC relate to overcoming a life or health challenge or simply to wanting a higher quality of life, we benefit both from telling our story and from listening to the stories of others.

“Peer Support” Builds TCC Community

This sharing creates our TCC community, as much as our learning and teaching experiences. Many fellow teachers have commented in person or by email that group experiences over the past couple of years have been very beneficial to them personally and as a TCC/*Seijaku* teacher. Interactions with fellow TCC or *Seijaku* students and teachers are frequently cited as taking root in practice and teaching.

Time and time again I'm blown away and inspired by heartfelt “regular Joe” testimony on the impact of TCC and *Seijaku*. These stories strengthen me in my own practice. As I wrote in a recent *Vital Force*, it's fellow *Seijaku* teachers' confessions that caused me finally to incorporate *Seijaku* in my regular practice.

I believe other teachers are also inspired by the struggles and encouraging comments and examples of peers. I am humbled by the ordinariness of our teachers. No one I know claims to be a TCC Master – we all recognize that regardless of how many years we have been practicing or have been accredited, we benefit from keeping the beginner's mind.

So please share your story; even your stumbles and imperfections can make a difference to someone you don't even know. Beyond that, our peer communications, relationships and encouragement are part of the foundation of our TCC community and enable us to fulfill our mission.

Ballerina Maria Tallchief & Author Make Choices

By PAULA WEINER, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

“I made the right choice when I became an accredited T'ai Chi Chih teacher in April 1995.” This is the first sentence of an article published in the December 1995 *Vital Force*, and it still applies to my life in April 2013. I was 60 then and am now going on 78.

In May 2004 I began volunteer teaching TCC at Sunrise Assisted Living. Recently retired from Columbia College, I had the time and inclination to want to help others escape the feelings of inadequacy and physical, mental and emotional problems that had plagued me until I began practicing TCC with my beloved mentor, Hannah Hedrick. **Little did I know at the time that I would experience so many miraculous benefits and also witness them in others.**



Having been blessed with a loving grandmother, I had always sought out the aging population for love and wisdom. I found this love and wisdom again, when **Maria Tallchief, one of America's first great prima ballerinas,** became a resident at Sunrise. She soon became one of my most ardent and devoted students. Her favorite movement was “Six Healing Sounds,” which she practiced daily.

Through the years, Maria and I became more than teacher and student; we became close friends who admired one another's creative abilities.

(In no way am I saying that I was in the same league as her, but she made me feel that I was.) In a reference letter she wrote for me in 2006, she said: “I have enjoyed learning and receiving the energy of the *Chi* and other healthful benefits from the practice. Paula is a dedicated teacher who shows her knowledge of the subject and teaches with compassion, patience, and humor to her students (many of whom are physically challenged) and they have all shown progress and feel better from her understanding of their individual needs.”

In “When It Is Time,” published in *The Vital Force* in May 2009, Justin wrote, **“Death is not an unusual event; it will happen to every one alive today,** so it is not really something to grieve over. Actually, grief is something for the survivors; we will miss the one who is departed.” Maria passed away on April 11 at age 88, and her survivors miss her.

A Virtual Interview With Justin Stone

BY LARRY BLOOM, SANDY SPRINGS, GEORGIA

I never met Justin but he speaks to me each morning. Not in words uttered by an apparition, but instead when I step outside after morning T'ai Chi Chih practice and experience a fleeting wakefulness to the life that's flowing through the universe. I feel particularly enlivened by the beauty of the sky and trees and the chirping of birds nearby. And I'm often struck with a potent but quickly fading sensation of the relatedness of everything.

On occasion my thoughts turn to the whimsical prospect of talking to Justin about my experiences. Having just reread his book *Heightened Awareness*, I mused: Why not speak with him by way of a virtual interview about his book? My questions and his answers in the form of selected book excerpts are the result.

Larry: Justin, please help me understand why you believe "heightened awareness" is desirable.

Justin: "It is said that 'habit is the enemy of old age' and this is true at several levels. First, we perform the same actions at the same time in the same way and we're not fully alive in doing so. From brushing our teeth in the morning to driving a car, we run on automatic pilot. **This is the very opposite of 'heightened awareness.'**

"Second, these habits become deeply ingrained 'habit energies' (*vashanas* in Sanskrit), and they shape our lives. When they develop into 'tendencies' (*samskaras*), they may shape our lives to come and the person does not know why he or she does certain things or feels certain urges. This is a form of slavery we impose on ourselves.

"So, in moving towards 'heightened awareness,' we are countering these destructive trends. At one level we become more alive, more capable of real joy in everyday life; we become masters of ourselves. **At a deeper level we begin to undo the strands of karma we have woven for ourselves.**"

Larry: Is this what people mean when they use the term "Higher Consciousness?"

Justin: "In truth, there is no such thing as 'Higher Consciousness. There is only Consciousness. But in individuals, the pure Consciousness is usually blocked in varying degrees, so we speak of 'higher' or 'lower' States of Consciousness. For example, the sun is always the same, but when we see it through heavy clouds we speak of 'weak' sunshine.

"In the same way, Pure Consciousness – which is everywhere,

in the sentient and insentient and in every inch of the sky and 'empty' space we see – is more latent than actual in most beings. When consciousness is dull and obscured, our awareness is extremely limited. As the clouds are brushed away, that is the habit energies and other obscuring factors are weakened, awareness grows from the inside. **It goes from the limited individual outlook to the far-reaching universal.** 'Higher' Consciousness and Heightened Awareness are not two separate things."

Larry: I know people who go to countless specialized retreats to gain enlightenment. What are your thoughts about this?

Justin: "There are sincere, seeking people who go away every weekend to a different retreat or seminar, hoping to acquire in a few days a wisdom they do not have. They expect to receive it from the outside, not from within. Unfortunately they are confusing wisdom with knowledge.

"Specialists may possess some information, some technical know-how they don't have, but **real wisdom is inherent in all of us. When we realize ourselves, our own true nature, we will find the answers there.**

"Experiencing enlightenment is merely uncovering our own treasure. In truth, no man is unenlightened; he simply does not realize his own wisdom."

Larry: As a TCC student, I'm interested in understanding how your book addresses "heightened awareness" in relationship to TCC.

Justin: "One should know the meaning of *Chi*. Many disciplines work directly with *Chi*, including ... T'ai Chi Ch'uan and T'ai Chi Chih. ... It goes without saying that such practice is good for health as well as having spiritual benefits. All life is purification. Often we fight the process through taking painkillers and other drugs and do not see disease (dis-ease) in its true light.

"As the nervous system is purified, as the *Chi* circulation is accelerated and balanced, **we should see things more clearly, have more energy, become less self-centered** and possibly live longer.

"Remember, blood is flowing through the arteries and veins, the heart is beating in and out and the *Chi* (Vital Force) is either coursing through the meridian channels or is blocked in doing so. T'ai Chi Ch'uan and T'ai Chi Chih are far more than exercise. As the *Chi* is circulated the old habit energies are weakened and new habits take their place. **To highly aware individuals, there is life coursing through every inch of the cosmos.**"

Larry: Thank you very much Justin. Any last comments for now?

Justin: "No matter how small the drop of water, it reflects the entire moon."



Graceful Conclusion

By CARMEN L. BROCKLEHURST, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

For those teachers and students who spent a great deal of time practicing with Justin or working with his T'ai Chi Chih DVD it became very natural to hear him say, at the end of a movement, "And come to a graceful conclusion." This simple phrase carries more than just the ending of a movement; it is an invitation to do what we must do, and when it is finished to end it gracefully. Even the sound of the words can remind us that we can live grace-filled lives.

After a particular teacher TCC practice I became aware of how appropriate this phrase is to most of our life. Teachers usually share a meal together after our Tuesday practice. As we were getting ready to leave the restaurant, I could feel that we were coming to a graceful conclusion of a lovely time together. I heard a story about two people who were having an argument over something simple, which was being blown out of proportion. It came to me that **if they just came to a graceful conclusion of the argument, it would be much easier for them to remain friends after the argument was over.**

Throughout the day we often start and end situations: phone calls, trips to the grocery store, helping our children with homework, washing clothes, going to work, making the



bed or cooking a meal. The list seems endless, yet each situation has a beginning and an end. At the end, by claiming a graceful conclusion, whatever doesn't feel finished lends itself to completion. It's a good feeling.

How do we finish what we're doing? Do we not think this ending that Justin used has an effect on us when we use it throughout the day? We do realize that TCC practice has an effect, and there are reasons why this happens.

It's quite amazing that this simple phrase can make such a difference. Throughout each day, Justin's words, "Come to a graceful conclusion," come to mind and as they do I usually find myself smiling. Perhaps it's a special way to learn to love and share the *Chi*.

Becoming Whole Again With TCC

By PAULINE B. QUIMSON, MD, AMERICAN CANYON, CALIFORNIA

As Justin says in *Spiritual Odyssey*, "**We do not heal symptoms (practicing T'ai Chi Chih); we become whole.**" When I saw this quotation on the TCC Facebook page, it gave me pause and inspired me to write again.

I believe we are pure love, light and joy and TCC helps us remember who and what we truly are. This leads us back to be whole, well and complete, which we were from the very beginning.

As a licensed medical doctor from the Philippines, with more than 21 years of education and experience in psychology, integrative and holistic medicine, in-depth studies of Western and Eastern traditions, I have enjoyed learning that ancient healing systems from the Philippines, China, Japan, Thailand, Fiji, India, Hawai'i and many others have so many similarities and basic principles that encompass the spirit-mind-emotions-physical body connections.

I'm fortunate that my curiosity and passion for self-help and empowerment has led me to study and given me the opportunity to embody TCC principles in my everyday life. With the guidance of Justin Stone and Carmen, and my personal conviction and discipline to practice, practice, practice, I've realized that the transformation continues. **(As Justin used to say, "Practice when you feel like it, and even more when you don't feel like it, as that's when you need it most.")**

Working as a wellness program director and educator is congruent with who I am and allows me to passionately do what I love: Assist others in their own transformations. This includes establishing recovery-nurturing-healing centers for at-risk teens and women in transition from abuse into empowerment. It also includes helping people heal from cancer, neurological and other diseases labeled "incurable" so they can again sense they are pure love, light and joy. They can know with certainty that they just need to learn how to let go of negative emotions and limiting decisions that have prevented them from remembering, seeing, hearing and feeling that they are whole, well and complete.

So, as I thought about what my greatest gift to Justin could be, in honor of his life and his precious gift of TCC, it became clear it would be to continue practicing and teaching TCC in its pure form, just the way he presented it. TCC can continue helping unfold deep layers yet to be discovered and allow them to blossom, not only in me, but in all the others yet to be touched by the real truth within.

One Size Fits All

By SR. ANTONIA COOPER, OSF, NORTH PLAINFIELD, NEW JERSEY

The universality of the T'ai Chi Chih practice is seen in various countries around the world. No matter what physical limitations, as in individuals who are wheelchair bound, or age, or individual size or shape, the one common element in the TCC form is the six principles of movement. When these are applied, the Chi will circulate and balance. These are ancient Chinese principles, applied with new understanding in the form Justin originated. This new understanding happens when they are embodied, and the evolution of the individual is stepped up. We begin to know who and what we are.

How good it is to have the introduction to Justin's DVD available on the web: T'ai Chi Chih Principles – YouTube. A good project would be to ask students to make a list of the points in Justin's teaching.

As one opens to this page, to the right of Justin's instructions are listed a variety of teachers, and names for the movements. A few weeks ago a teacher wrote with some concern for her students who have been checking out movements on the Internet. Her concern focused on the variations of form that are posted. One such person is Travis Enerix. He demonstrates "Princess of the Mountain" and "Princess in the Valley." What Travis is demonstrating is a very *Yang* form of what he calls T'ai Chi Chih, and he goes onto teach other movements.



I personally hope that teachers will challenge their students to watch these and bring their observations back to class for discussion. Or focus could be given to the principles outlined in Justin's Introduction, and what is or is not applied in this YouTube demonstration. Engaging your beyond beginner or advanced students to develop a critical eye in this way will help them focus in a deeper way in their own practice. Inner awareness, as Justin would say, is the root of TCC (*Spiritual Odyssey*, p. 29).

Beginning students searching for additional information may come across "T'ai Chi Chih Everywhere," by accredited teacher Chris Norkus. Chris has attended conference and local programs that have been offered by myself and the trainers. This site contains information that supports the teaching process. A teacher could assign students to watch a particular movement and then discuss it in class. What did they notice? What questions may they have about the presentation?

This too will help students to mature in their understanding of the

form based on the principles of movement. Of course this is a very different way to study TCC, but it will give a well-rounded view and have the student grounded in the essence of the form. Students will begin to point out discrepancies between principles and what they saw. In this way it can be used as a good teaching tool without going to the level of mere criticism, similar to partner practice. If we can see the form in another, both positive and negative aspects, we are more likely to self-correct.

Students will often give feedback, or ask questions about how TCC is presented by various teaching DVDs, or about how teachers are moving. They are developing their ability to see beyond the mechanics of the movement and to be able to see/feel when and how the principles are or are not being incorporated and applied to the form.

When given these opportunities throughout the various levels of their training, teacher candidates will come to intensives and teacher accreditation better prepared than those of us who went through training 10, 20, 30 years ago. Future teachers are going to teacher accreditation with a deeper understanding of the form and better at performing the movements.

It cannot be stated enough, that we are all at different levels of softness and embodying the effort of no effort in our practice but as we come to understand how to move in applying the principles our form will change and blossom and become even softer and flow without effort.

One word of caution in using any site or DVD is that with a more mature practitioner, the form is embedded in the presentation,

and doesn't grow with the person performing and evolving in the movements. We know that the TCC movement is a life-long practice that will continue to change as we change, and that is a good thing. Just be aware of the benefits and limitations of using these materials. Allow your practice and that of your students to mature and deepen focused on the principles of movement, which may be found in Justin's writings.

Ah, another project: List as many principles as possible, using the sources; maybe even have students demonstrate a movement based on what they discovered.

The idea that we are all at different points in our evolution with our TCC practice is important to understand and helps us be more accepting and less judgmental of each other, which translates into a spiritual benefit.

As Justin said, "Awareness is the root of TCC, which is essentially inner-oriented."

Even In Pauses

By SANDY McALISTER, HAYWARD, CALIFORNIA

My last article in *The Vital Force* was about awareness of weight in the feet during the rest pose that facilitates grounding. Continuing that topic, let's consider various brief pauses/rests in Carry The Ball To The Side (CTBTTS), Pulling Taffy, and Pulling Taffy, Variation 1, Anchor. Each time we come into the rest position, do we really ground, come into stillness, with both feet firmly planted and evenly weighted, with our awareness fully present in the soles of our feet?

Sometimes the rest is just a pause, as between the three sets of CTBTTS, but even then the pause should be long enough – just a heartbeat or two – for us to feel both feet evenly weighted. The same applies to Pulling Taffy and Pulling Taffy, Variation 1, Anchor. Each time as we come into a rest position, take an extra second to feel the weight flow evenly into both feet before moving on.

One thing that sets TCC apart from other forms of T'ai Chi is the balance of movement and stillness throughout the practice. Stillness, whether a second or five or fifteen seconds, should be honored and given our full attention/awareness.

I'm also exploring the fullness of receiving weight at the end of each weight shift. In class as we are moving I sometimes say, "Glide, arrive, glide, arrive," stretching out the word glide twice as long (two beats) as the word arrive (one beat). The goal is to feel the weight evenly fill the bottom of the foot when "arriving" at the end of each weight shift. This may be helpful if there's a tendency to shift the weight too far forward, creating lightness in the heel of the front foot. This may also help with awareness in bringing the weight completely to the back leg and foot, if there's a tendency to not fully shift the weight all the way coming back.

In our longer rest poses, such as between the left and right of a movement or at the end of a movement, I feel as if a plug is removed from the bottom of my feet and there is a draining downward which is immediately being replaced with a calm, vibrant stillness. Sometimes this process takes three or four seconds, sometimes five, six or seven. **When it's done there's a feeling of completeness.**

Each of us will experience the ground/rest pose in our own way. It's important to make it our own, to become aware of how we are feeling. Also, it might be helpful for other teachers to share in *The Vital Force* how they feel the grounding pose and what feelings or visualizations they use to ground the energy.



Demystifying Seijaku

By PAM TOWNE, OCEANSIDE, CALIFORNIA

Justin Stone aptly used the word *Seijaku* to describe that inner serenity in the midst of busy daily life that is cultivated by our practice of T'ai Chi Chih. It is also the name he gave to the advanced form of TCC when he first taught Seijaku in 1986. For many years it was regarded as a secret oral discipline. This changed in 1998 when Justin recorded Seijaku instruction on video. So why, 15 years later, is Seijaku still the best kept secret of TCC?

Have you put off learning Seijaku because you've thought you aren't advanced enough for the advanced form of TCC? Have you learned Seijaku, but stopped practicing over time? Have you decided that you prefer the softness of the TCC form over what you've perceived as hardness in the Seijaku form?

I invite you to learn, or re-learn, this evolutionary practice. Seijaku is a part of TCC, and a natural progression after learning all the movements and practicing for a year or more. You do not have to do TCC perfectly to learn Seijaku. One of the valuable benefits of Seijaku is that it improves our TCC practice.

We know that the benefits of practicing TCC come from circulating and balancing the *Chi*. Since Seijaku greatly increases the flow of *Chi*, it naturally accelerates all the resulting health, creativity and spiritual benefits we receive from TCC. It delivers those benefits even with a shorter practice time. After 20 minutes of Seijaku I feel as though I've done 40 minutes of TCC.

If you want to continue on your TCC path, Seijaku is a natural next step. You can begin learning from Justin's Seijaku DVD. You'll also want to work with an accredited Seijaku teacher so you can ask questions and receive feedback. You can find teachers in the online Teachers Directory at www.taichichih.org or attend the Intro to Seijaku course in August.

For the first time, we have two Seijaku courses after the conference: a Seijaku accreditation for TCC teachers (or audit to review) and an introduction to Seijaku for students and teachers. You may be surprised at how easily Seijaku can be inter-woven into your daily TCC practice to give you an accelerated flow of *Chi*, and more Joy thru Movement. Enjoy.

Putting Down Our Pekele

By SHERYL ADAIR, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

I recently attended a women's retreat where I shared T'ai Chi Chih with almost 50 women. That in itself was a real thrill and made the retreat valuable to me.

As a parting gift, our young female rabbi gave us each a copy of a book, *Found in Translation, Common Words of Uncommon Wisdom*, by Rabbi Pamela Jay Gottfried. In one essay, Rabbi Gottfried wrote about a Yiddish word I'd heard my parents and immigrant grandparents use but hadn't quite understood.

The word is pekele, pronounced "peck-eh-le," means package, parcel or bundle. After reflecting on this word, I understood its relevance to TCC practice. In a metaphoric sense, a pekele is a bag of troubles, baggage we carry around. Everyone's bundle is unique. We shove all kinds of things in our pekele – difficulties of all descriptions, disappointments, frustrations, personal issues we do not want to deal with – and we carry them around.

The longer and tighter we hold on our baggage, the heavier it gets. I've come to appreciate that when **we practice TCC we're able to put down our pekele**, if only for a few minutes. So can our students. When we quiet our minds, stay in our feet, flow softly and continuously, we easily and effortlessly put down our pekele. Over time, our bag of troubles seems lighter, and some of those them have simply gone away.

Peace & Calmness

By MARGERY ERICKSON, HANOVER, PENNSYLVANIA

At this particular moment in time, **the peace and calmness in my world are extremely grounding**. The world around spins, coughs, spits out debris and balance is what is felt within. Days are spent with teens – sparks of energy, moods constantly changing, emotions flowing and contracting. Evenings alone back to the center, quiet, renewing energy, at home. What brought me to this place? Maturity, experience, T'ai Chi Chih, redirecting habit energies: all of these have changed my life.

Connecting Across The Miles

By SR. AGNES FLEMING RSHM, TARRYTOWN, NEW YORK

When the invitation to make a contribution to *The Vital Force* combined so closely with Justin Stone's first anniversary, I knew I had to write. I've really missed our spring get-together because of the hurricane on the Jersey Shore. I've hardly ever missed my own morning T'ai Chi Chih practice in the last years. I feel deeply its effect on my energy and inner spirit.

I have the sense of the unfathomable power of the yin-yang operating in the presence of spiritual power for me, as I tend to get too anxious about matters.

Twice a week I work with a small group of elderly sisters with modified movements to meet their infirmities. Once a year we have an extended family retreat weekend and a group of the participants love to do TCC with me early in the mornings. (Too bad the weather is too cold to do it outside – it's on the bay off Long Island.) I don't drive anymore, which prevents me from holding the regular classes I previously did.

Hopefully one of next year's meetings will be closer to the East Coast; the cost of travel and conference are hard on my budget. I have to visit my family members in Ireland, as they're finding travel too hard and my brother is in a nursing home.

Thanks to *The Vital Force* for keeping the spirit of TCC so alive for so many.



Where in the World? Deborah Massey does Push Pull at Armageddon, Israel.

Patience, Patience, Patience

By JIM SHORR, PORTLAND, OREGON

Let's call him Don. He entered the retirement center activity room silently. He nodded to show he understood, shook his head only once and softly said his name and room number in the circle. He is a senior with a twinkle in his eye.

In a group of six to ten T'ai Chi Chih practitioners, he's our fastest learner despite having suffered a concussion years ago. Don stares intently at my every move. Except when he's in pain, he never misses a TCC session, shedding his walker and concentrating intently on his balance. He speaks phrases now and goes to coffee hour with us after TCC sessions.

Last week Don invited another student and me into his three-room apartment. He has four certificates for a hole-in-one in golf. He quarterbacked the 1966 Stanford Cardinals into a Western Conference championship and is shown in a photo holding the trophy. Another photo shows his dad winning the national polo championship in England. Modesty is Don's trademark.

Never a boastful word. Don wrote on his napkin last week, "**Patience... patience... patience. Practice... practice... practice. Sincerity in the practice.**"

That says it all from Don of the Edgewood Downs Retirement Center. We're all proud of him and TCC is his current guide.

Learning From The Elders

By DIANA BAHN, NEW YORK, NEW YORK

“I’m looking for something to help me with my balance,” the older woman told the T’ai Chi Chih instructor before class began. The teacher, a woman about 25 years younger, in her early 50’s, started thinking fast about all the things she could say to motivate this potential new student.

She couldn’t find her voice, though, because she didn’t practice TCC to improve her balance but did it because she wanted to have more *Chi* flow. Instead of saying anything else, she welcomed the new student and told her that if she became tired or if something in her body started to hurt, she should take a seat and watch the class. No reason to do too much the first time.

The new student heard some of what the teacher told her but also was excited by the prospect of trying something new, so she wasn’t taking in everything she heard. More older folks walked into the center and soon there were about 10 participants for the hour-long class. A woman walked in with a cane and clearly wasn’t able to navigate her lower body very well. She took her place near the upright piano so she could hold on. The teacher brought her a chair to keep nearby, just in case.

A gentleman with white hair was bent a bit at the waist and took command of the sign-in sheet so the teacher didn’t have to hand it around. An Asian-American woman walked in with her buddy, a Cuban-American woman, who was favoring her right shoulder and arm. Another Asian-American woman, with a willow-like body but little grounding, joined the circle the class was forming.

This circle enabled everyone to feel equal and welcome and also part of something outside of themselves.

There was no music so occasionally one heard the sound of a machine of some type in the hallway next to the huge senior cafeteria where the class was held. The sound was bad enough that at times the teacher felt it took her breath away. She never complained because she was too eager to please staff at the assisted living facility that hosted the class for free for residents and the outside community.

This TCC class had been going

on for many years and the teacher had mellowed during that time. Initially she hoped that every resident would want to reap the benefits of this wonderful, simple, profound practice. Instead, it felt like pulling teeth to get residents to join. There was a lot of resistance, even among the few people who showed up for class and claimed they were interested.

It was hard for the teacher not to feel depressed. Some students just were not that interested because they had other activities. A Jamaican-American woman, for example, went to Brooklyn every week to her old neighborhood to shop, attend church and dance. She had a glint in her eye when talking about dancing but never once had a similar glint when doing TCC; it just seemed to remind her that her knee hurt.

Another woman couldn’t remember, week-to-week, when the class met. Another had old injuries and perhaps had endured a stroke; it was very challenging for her to do *yiming* and *yanging*, especially on one side.

Sometimes a student who’d easily been able to do TCC may have fallen on the sidewalk one day, hit her head and been injured. The teacher felt bad when she heard that the lady with the red hair and great posture, who seemed to follow TCC movements best, wasn’t able to come to class any more. Events like these revealed difficult truths about the aging process.

It took all of the teacher’s self-determination, stamina, intellectual understanding and belief in herself to keep the ball rolling and return week after week. Partly she felt as though she’d been thrown in deep water and didn’t know whom exactly she was supposed to save. Was it herself, her best students, the worst students, the most ill students? She wasn’t sure. **She relied on the movement to do the saving.**



Now that the teacher had seen much younger loved ones and friends outside the protected circle of the TCC class face cancer and other health maladies and hit major lows that they had never anticipated, she felt great gratitude for her practice. She herself wasn’t immune to health challenges but saw them in a different light than many of her friends who didn’t practice TCC.

Over time, she no longer saw such a huge difference between herself and the older folks she taught but instead **experienced more of a commonality among all people.** This felt like a huge safety net and made her feel as though she literally was guided at times, even outside of TCC practice.

Perhaps the sacred circle had expanded.

Bones, Balance & Well-Being

By KATHY STARRICK, WOODLAND PARK, NEW JERSEY

When asked recently to present T'ai Chi Chih to an osteoporosis support group, I was pleased to share my experience. Since I too deal with the challenge of keeping my bones strong and healthy, I understand how osteoporosis can affect us physically and emotionally. I also know that **TCC practice has significantly helped my bones, balance and well-being.**

After providing a general introduction to TCC, what it is and how it works, I focused on the benefits that would most interest my audience – those that reduce the risk of, or minimize the effects of, developing osteoporosis.

Osteoporosis is the condition of weak and brittle bones that can lead to bone fractures and other serious health concerns. To avoid this, I use an integrative, natural healing approach and believe TCC practice has made this more effective. Most importantly, it provides me with low-impact, weight-bearing movement that encourages building bone and connective tissue and/or slowing bone loss.

Reducing stress and anxiety also reduces the production of stress hormones that cause bone loss. In addition, I believe the relaxing effects of the movements help me better utilize the herbs and supplements I take and the food I eat. **TCC practice puts me in touch with my body and emotions, and helps me visualize bone growth and direct the *Chi* to where it's needed.**

Falls are a major concern for individuals with osteoporosis because of the increased risk of fractures. So we talked about how the slow, gentle TCC movements help develop stronger muscles, more awareness of the feet, improved posture, better concentration and balance control.

I showed them how TCC skills can be applied to everyday activities like vacuuming, sweeping and cleaning snow off a car. I demonstrated Around the Platter, Carry The Ball To The Side and Push Pull, which provide the appropriate motions for such activities. I emphasized the importance of staying relaxed, maintaining proper alignment, softening my knees, and using my weight shift rather than my back, arms and shoulders to do the work, thus putting less strain on my bones and joints and making my tasks easier.

Though we focused mostly on our bones, I also pointed out that it's important to heal our whole selves – body, mind, and spirit – and not just fix a particular medical condition. TCC, Joy Thru Movement, can help us do that.



Seated TCC For People With Special Needs

By CHARLES HANKS, CAMPBELL, CALIFORNIA

Editor's Note: Charles has been a student in Darlene Karasik's seated T'ai Chi Chih class at the Santa Clara Valley Medical Center in San Jose, California since its inception.

I believe that no one really wants to learn T'ai Chi Chih seated. People remain seated only because they have to. For more than eight years, I've attended a class devoted to people who are paraplegic, quadriplegic, have suffered a stroke or been diagnosed with cerebral palsy. It seems to me that all of them would rather stand when doing TCC. Something important they share in common is a strong desire not to be treated as second-class citizens just because they're seated.

Because of these students' special individual needs, **this is not a typical seated TCC class.** TCC's current approach seems to me aimed more at students expected to return to standing TCC classes in the near future; it doesn't seem designed for disabled individuals who will remain seated students. **It's important that we as teachers teach all students – seated and standing – equally well.**

Attending the last four or five workshops Antonia has conducted in late winter in Northern California, I've seen only a few young students or teachers. I see the same thing in classes held by other teachers, except the few who teach in schools. This has implications for the future of TCC.

As our society ages, we will see even more older people in our classes. As an increasing number of people with disabilities understand their rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), we also will see more disabled students in our classes. This law, passed in 1990 and updated in 2009, requires that people with disabilities have the same access to employment, transportation, buildings, events and other opportunities as those without disabilities.

People covered by the ADA law include those with sight and hearing impairments, autism and some of the complications of aging. TCC teachers need to consider how they can effectively work with special needs that students with disabilities may present.

As Suzanne Kates, LMT says in her article "Elders Benefit from a Healing Touch," adapted here, "The disabled are persons who are still growing, still learners, still filled with potential, and whose lives continue to have within them promise for and connection to the future. The disabled are still in pursuit of happiness, joy and pleasure, and their birthright to these remains intact."

TCC As A Metaphor For Living

By JUDY CHANCEY, ROSWELL, GEORGIA

Thanks to Justin, each of our lives is endlessly blessed through individual and collective T'ai Chi Chih practices. We could also say the blessings of TCC can be experienced at deep, deeper and deepest levels. It's most humbling to realize that the blessings of TCC are infinite, not just as we practice the form, but also as we integrate its principles into our hearts and minds as metaphors for living.

Circularity, continuity, softness, synchronicity, polarity, *yinning* and *yanging*, focusing on the soles of the feet and the effort of no effort are more than just principles for how to move in TCC practice. **They also are vehicles of great wisdom** and excellent life-management tools to draw upon for guidance in everyday life. I'm learning that TCC principles often simplify what might appear to be complicated events.

Circularity

When recently experiencing an extremely challenging time in my life, it seemed as if everything I'd relied on for a sense of security was seismically shifting. The speed of external changes correlated internally with a sensation that my knees might buckle with every step. Feeling unsteady, I reached into my TCC toolbox and found a strong urge to practice Around The Platter, with a clear intention to hear what message the *Chi* wanted to deliver.

The home I lived in then had several large windows that offered views of a lush forest. The circular pattern our hands follow in Around the Platter reminded me of the diagrams in elementary school science books depicting seasonal cycles as circles. I was reminded that even when it appears the trees' green leaves aren't changing color, subtle changes are happening every moment.

While change may not be immediately perceptible, things are happening beneath the surface (just as beneath the waist in TCC weight shifts). They continually move us toward the next season/cycle/adventure. I was blessed with a better understanding that **life's seasons of joy flow into seasons of challenge that then flow into seasons of rebuilding, rebirth and renewal.**

I may as well relax and embrace the mystery and blessings of each moment. Full transition happens as one waits patiently for that last quarter-inch of a weight shift.

Continuity

TCC movements are practiced in continuous motion without any



stops and starts. The most important part happens below the waist in the long, slow weight shifts, the *yinning* and *yanging*. One of the best instructions I've received is to be patient with my weight shifts. "Feel the long, slow weight shift. *Luxuriate* in it."

At times in life, movement feels thwarted or stopped. There have been times (even in the past 18 months) when I've felt nearly paralyzed by fear when solutions to uncomfortable circumstances didn't match the pace of my timing or expectations. I heard Justin say, "Abandon hope," and I understood the importance of accepting what is in the present moment.

I'm learning that when a sense of forward movement lags behind my illusion of what progress must look like, the message to luxuriate in long, slow weight shifts reminds me to embrace and allow, with gratitude, whatever changes are taking place in my habit energies within the Life Force.

Allowing with gratitude facilitates a sense of blessing as the *Chi* flows, restoring balance while eliminating fear and worry.

Softness

The beginning of every practice brings awareness to places where the body holds tension. I find it interesting to experience how my body comes into Rocking Motion and makes its way to a point in the weight shifts where all parts begin to yield to the *tan t'ien's* lead, relaxing into softness.

With an often audible sigh, the rhythm of breathing slows down, signaling alignment of the mind, body and soul with the single intention of allowing something greater than my understanding, the *Chi*, to lead my experience of the practice.

Some days, however, the intention to allow meets the mind's determination to be heard. This is where allowing with grace trumps ego and the illusion of control. Grace, a blossom of gratitude, makes it possible to set ego aside and receive the great gifts and blessings of TCC practice – and life.

Gratitude was the 2010 TCC teacher conference theme in Nebraska and, after each practice, Antonia invited us to silently sit in gratitude. My initial understanding of how to do this was to mentally give thanks for as many blessings as I could think of. With each naming, I noticed how my body softened even more. By the fourth practice, I ran out of thoughts and wondered, "Now what?" **The answer: sit in the feeling of gratitude.** Humility poured over me as I marveled at the blessings received, even within life's challenges. I learned that stress and strain cannot co-exist with gratitude and joy.

Words cannot express the depth of my gratitude for Justin Stone's life and the immeasurable gifts and influence of his life upon mine.

Memories Of Justin Stone

BY MAXIME WAN, EDMONTON, ALBERTA

I met Justin Stone for the first time in August 1989 when he came to Edmonton to conduct a seminar on Heightened Awareness and teach *Seijaku*.

At the initial welcoming gathering with teachers and students, Justin led a group T'ai Chi Chih session and asked some of us newly accredited teachers to take turns leading particular movements. He didn't hesitate to point out loudly if the leader needed correction: "Your wrists are too stiff, your waist is too tense," and so on. When my turn came, I was nervous and relieved when he remained quiet throughout the movement.

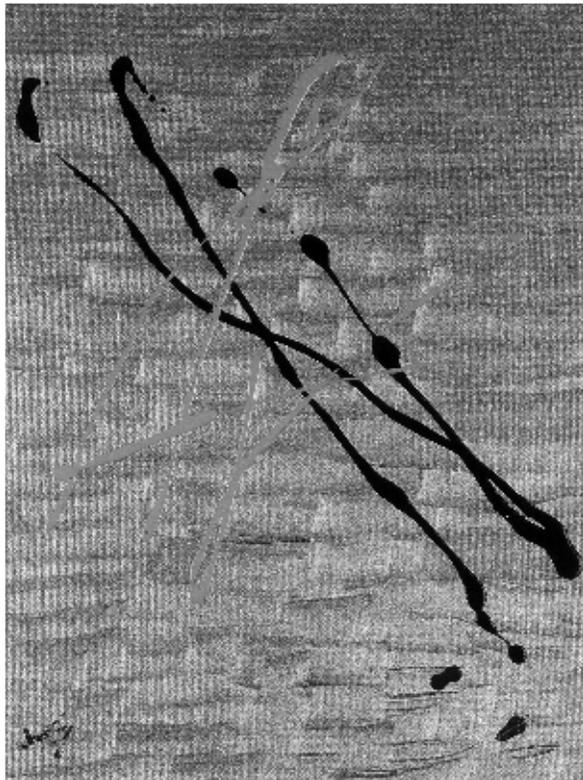
He used the same method during the *Seijaku* intensive training session. There too, I was relieved when I received no admonishment. Of course, **any correction by Justin, public or not, was beneficial.** But at that stage I was probably not strong enough to take it and Justin must have sensed that. In 2006, however, when my TCC form was not solid anymore, he didn't spare me, as I'll relate later.

During Justin's time in Edmonton, we had the opportunity to exchange views on TCC, Zen and spirituality. Both he and I shared an affinity for Zen philosophy. He'd undergone rigorous training in Zen and could well have obtained formal recognition as a Zen master himself. He chose otherwise, and gave mankind TCC instead.

We seemed to click well and developed an easy teacher-student rapport and later an affectionate friendship. We corresponded irregularly, primarily because Justin didn't like to be tied down to the expectations of regular correspondence. I usually wrote and sent him a Zen-style poem around his birthday. He seemed to like them and sometimes even suggested that I send them to *The Vital Force* or the *New Mexico Tai Chi Chih News*.

I stayed with Justin twice, first in Pacific Grove and again in Albuquerque. He was a gracious host and took me with him as he went about his daily activities as if I were a natural part of his regular life.

In 2006, I flew to Albuquerque to attend Justin's 90th birthday. Victor Berg kindly hosted me and drove me to Justin's house for private time together. **It was on one of those occasions that I got my comeuppance from Justin.** Three years prior, I'd stopped prac-



ting TCC because I was practicing a special form of *Qigong*, called *Falun Gong*. This discipline required that all other forms of T'ai Chi be dropped to avoid the undesirable mixing of T'ai Chi practices.

As a matter of integrity, I stopped practicing TCC. Two weeks before arriving for my visit with Justin, however, I started practicing again because I knew that he likely would ask that I join him in TCC. This is precisely what happened after Victor dropped me off at the house. We started the movements and I felt rather pleased about the smoothness of my practice. After only a few movements, however, Justin exclaimed, "What is this?! What kind of Daughter in the Valley are you doing?" We moved in silence after that. At the end, he said firmly that my lack of TCC practice was evident. He had seen through me right away.

Later that day, we joined a small group of regular practitioners at the Albuquerque TCC Center. Justin quietly skipped me when it was my turn to lead the group in a movement. I knew this wasn't punishment; instead, **Justin was merely letting me experience the consequence of my decision** with Falun Gong. The choice was still very much mine, he was telling me.

The next morning, I walked up the hills near Victor's house. Alone on a ridge overlooking the city, I did a session of TCC followed by *Seijaku*. The feeling of joy and serenity engendered from these sessions stayed with me throughout that day. After returning to Edmonton, I dropped Falun Gong and re-committed myself to TCC. All this was thanks to Justin – without a single word of reproach from him.

One last, parting memory: At his expressed wishes, I had stopped communicating directly with Justin during the past few years. Then, in late March 2012, I had a vivid dream in which I visited him at his house. "Maxime! Justin!" we exclaimed to each other. Were there more exchanges after that initial greeting of love? I no longer remember.

The next day I called Carmen Brocklehurst. She expressed her conviction that, although he stayed mostly in bed, Justin was helping many individuals in the inner spiritual realms. I told her about my dream and asked her to convey my greetings and love to him. I don't know if she was able to give Justin my message for, two days later, he passed away peacefully. In a way, it doesn't matter because **"in the space of no-space and time of no-time," my dream of meeting Justin one more time was a good enough farewell.**

Justin Encounters

By SKY YOUNG-WICK, PARKVILLE, MISSOURI

My personal encounters with Justin Stone were purposefully limited to T'ai Chi Chih conferences we both attended in 2000, 2001 and 2005. Thanks to my friend Nancy, I did speak with Justin briefly at the 2000 New Jersey conference, but felt awkward. **To be honest, I feared Justin's wrath, so I avoided him.** I'd witnessed his direct, firm style at conferences and lacked the courage to receive that kind of feedback.

Because of my fear, I also avoided going to the Albuquerque TCC Center or attending TCC events. I also knew that excess weight irritated Justin and I've had a fat stomach most of my life and didn't want him to nail me for it. So, as I imagined myself being the target of his wrath at a Tuesday morning practice, my instinctive reaction was, "No way!"

As the years passed, I regretted my lack of courage and thought about attending Justin's birthday party in 2010. I'd assisted with the conference that year and knew he'd like that. Then I realized I'd be attending for my own ego, and thought that was a wrong reason. Also, Justin's health was beginning to fail and I knew in my heart it was just too late to ever visit him. **I'd always been grateful for his gift of TCC, but also very disappointed in myself for not having the courage to learn from him in person.**

As I write this article in the early afternoon on March 28, 2013, it's almost the exact time that Justin died one year ago. I've been surprisingly blessed this past year to experience what I call "encounters" with him. Real or imagined, I've felt his presence several times while doing TCC. His presence hovered above me and usually ahead of me to my right.

He often seemed pleased and was smiling, but not always. Sometimes I got that direct, firm feedback I'd avoided all those years. My favorite wrathful feedback occurred recently when I felt especially spacey while leading a practice with Kansas City teachers and students. In my mind, Justin yelled at me during that practice, something like, **"Get in the soles of your feet, Sky."** A few seconds later, unsatisfied, he yelled, "Soles of your feet, NOW." I smiled with gratitude. Message received, Justin.

I often practice TCC early on Sunday mornings at the Rime Buddhist Center in Kansas City with one of my students, Jack. We practice in the main shrine room before anyone else arrives, and it's joyous in that stately brick building more than 100 years old. One Sunday, not long after Justin died, Jack and I were just finishing our practice and came to rest.

After a few moments, Jack turned to me and exclaimed, **"Did you feel that?"** Yes, I had felt it. We had both just experienced a Justin encounter. That time I sensed his presence just above a picture of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and Justin seemed pleased.

How cool is that?



Oneness

By JUDY HENDRICKS,
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

It's noon on March 28, 2013 and we've just finished a very joyful practice with teachers and students at the Albuquerque T'ai Chi Chih Center. Teachers took turns leading the movements and giving reminders. **I could hear Justin saying, "Bend your knees. Turn your waist," in his booming voice.**

Some of us remember exactly where we were on this day a year ago.

Everyone at the practice is invited to have lunch together at India Palace, one of Justin's favorite restaurants, where I remember celebrating several of his birthdays.

I was reminded of the TCC student-teacher relationship last night at the center where we watched "Departures," a great movie on so many levels. The film reminded me so much of TCC because it showed that personal connections are what matter.

So much has taken place this past year, as **we share the Chi in numerous ways throughout the TCC community** after Justin's death. TCC practices, classes, retreats, workshops and teacher training all have continued.

We also share memories of Justin's teachings. On the March 28 page of my calendar is a quote from Ruth Fuller Sasaki, whom Justin talks about on his CD, *Stories from the East*. She says, "That is what you are, that is what I am, that is what everything in the universe is – beginningless, endless life, infinite, boundless, eternal Life. This is what we must realize."

I remember Justin talking about the last time he saw Paul Reps. He said he knew it would be the last time he saw him and said to Reps simply, "See you later." I also recall Justin saying to me in a dream, "Come join me in the oneness." I believe that's what we do when we practice TCC or meditate: we are all together in the oneness.

Snippets Of Joy

By Bo WADDELL, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Traveling the T'ai Chi Chih pathway, I'll cherish many wonderful moments for years to come. These are snippets from some of those experiences.

On a beautiful afternoon, I was practicing in a park in downtown Atlanta. I prefer practicing in nature when possible, but felt uncomfortable with distant viewers nearby. I tried to zone them out and focus on my movements, and of course on soaking up the energy of "God's Green Acre."

Upon closing with Cosmic Consciousness Pose, and bowing in gratitude, I sensed someone's presence. When I turned around to see who was nearby, a homeless man was smiling at me with a very tender expression. When I acknowledged him with a warm Southern hello, he spoke. He simply said, "Thank you for dancing for me."

We never know when we'll enhance the world around us with our thoughts, words and actions. I think of him from time to time and remember how touched he was by my practice. TCC students are spiritual dancers.

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While on vacation in the beautiful desert of New Mexico, I was thrilled to rise before the sun and go out into nature for a morning practice. It was very dark when I started Rocking Motion, and remained dark through Pulling Taffy, Variation 2, Wrist Circles.

Then the darkness gave way to the sun popping up, causing the red sand to glow. The warm sun not only brought life to the sand all around me, but also shed light on the three deer and two rabbits. They'd been watching my practice a few feet away in the dark and seemed very much intrigued. They were in no hurry to dart away. As we learn from our TCC readings, "We are all one." That morning, I knew it to be true.

TCC To The Rescue

By MARY LOU KILGORE, ASTON, PENNSYLVANIA

Recently I found myself needing a quick response to a situation completely of my own making. Because it was winter when I used a new staining product to finish a small piece of furniture, I started the project in my living area. That's where the emergency occurred. In a split second, the contents of the tube of stain shot out of control, landing in the center of my living room carpet, entirely missing the too-small drop cloth. What to do?

In the past I would have panicked, but this time in the back of my head I heard the voice of April, my T'ai Chi Chih teacher. I heard, "Be in the here and now. Don't worry about what happened in the past or what you're going to do in the future. **Just focus on the present.**"

I quickly got control of the situation. Remembering carefully reading the instructions that said to clean up with soap and water, I grabbed the kitchen dishwashing liquid and poured a generous amount on the stain. Next I got a bucket of cold water and some old towels and began working on my seemingly impossible task.

What do you know? It worked – all because I stayed focused. It wasn't a life saving event, but it did save my carpet and who knows how much money. I also felt really happy about my new calm attitude and action.



Imagery & TCC

By EVELYN VAN NUYS, RINGOES, NEW JERSEY

During my first encounter with T'ai Chi Chih, I felt at home with circular movements in Around The Platter, Bass Drum, Pulling in the Energy and Pulling Taffy, Variation 2, Wrist Circles. As an artist, I've often worked on a potter's wheel. First the potter rhythmically kicks the wheel while leaning onto a mound of mud with both hands. When the clay centers, he or she then inserts fingertips on the inside and outside and guides the swirling mass into a pot. The outside of the vessel represents positive space or physical reality. The inside is the negative space or spirit. *Yin* and *yang* converge into wholeness.

Each week, Janet Oussaty in Branchburg honed our skills by concentrating on different components of TCC. During one session, when she talked about the importance of being grounded, I felt a kinship with trees and their root systems. The winds blew, the limbs swayed, and I remained firm and steady as the life force traveled through my body.

My favorite TCC movement is Pulling In The Energy: a sparkling star rested in my hands as I circled it around a platter. Working The Pulley, Passing Clouds and Perpetual Motion mimicked the movements of the ocean. Waves unfurled, broke on shore, pulled back and receded. When the movements changed, I felt a lull or undertow. Within this sacred space, *Chi* balanced, flow happened and healing took place.

As the group performed the 19 TCC movements, our circle gathered strength and unfolded into a communal, collective mandala. We climbed to the top of the mountain, walked in the valley and cleansed ourselves in flowing water. TCC provided serenity in the midst of chaos, inner strength and peace.

Building Confidence

BY BETTY DOBBERSTEIN,
RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA

... It was so nice to have you [Jean Katus] review the movements. Today I'm ordering *T'ai Chi Chih! Joy Thru Movement (Photo Text)*. I'll need the pictures to remind me. I wish I could have achieved more, but four stitches in my right kneecap when I was 12, a left groin hernia operation a year ago and spinal curvature hamper my movements. I feel I've gained more flexibility, however, and have confidence it will increase as I faithfully do the movements.

The *Chi* Flows Through Georgia

BY MERLE SMITH, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Springtime in Georgia can be magical. This weekend brought the new season in with sunny skies, warm weather and a sense of renewal. Sheryl Adair and I attended a women's retreat in the foothills of the North Georgia Mountains and were part of a wonderful group of 50 women connecting and sharing their spirits.

A number of activities helped deepen our relationship with one another and within ourselves, and the Tai Chi Chih class Sheryl led enhanced our spiritual awareness.

The setting was serene and participants seemed to be transformed. Everyone but Sheryl and me were experiencing TCC for the first time. The peaceful feeling of the practice touched each individual and several of the women seemed to be able to feel the flow of the *Chi*. I felt joyful witnessing the enthusiasm and interest of so many and knowing that TCC can inspire people in such a delightful way.

Picture This

BY DIANE CURLEY, NEPTUNE, NEW JERSEY

Picture this: A warm November morning in Italy. A big tour bus rollicking down a major highway linking Florence to Siena. I'm having a wonderful, exciting holiday adventure. But suddenly, without warning, I'm seized with a virulent attack of motion sickness, powerful and intense.

Throwing up would be inconvenient and embarrassing but seems inevitable. I can't reach the bus driver to ask him to pull over and let me out: he's hurtling down the road at 80 miles an hour. I can't make it to the tiny emergency lavatory. I feel a sickening surge in my gut and my throat ... uh-oh.

I say a quick prayer to St. Anthony and then in a flash I remember "Joyous Breath" from my T'ai Chi Chih class and remember my teacher saying it can help calm you. Sitting up straight in my seat with my feet planted firmly on the floor, I begin Joyous Breath, exhaling forcefully four times. I am still nauseous and my apprehension doubles.

The bus is filled with jolly travelers on vacation, and I am about to be sick all over the bus. Desperate, I jump to my feet and anchor my hip against the seat post behind me. I wonder if I'm going to fall over and break my neck and be sick at the same time.

Clearing my mind, I begin the practice of Joyous Breath for one minute, then two, then three full minutes. When I stop, the motion sickness is gone. I am totally fine. For the rest of my journey throughout Italy, I am never sick again.



Thoughts On *Climb The Joyous Mountain*

BY DOTTY HOEPNER,
ROUND LAKE BEACH, ILLINOIS

In Donna McElhose's intermediate T'ai Chi Chih class last semester, we studied this book of Justin's by reading a chapter before each class and discussing it.

I enjoyed the experiential nature of this book, in which Justin writes about many of his travels to the East. What stood out for me were his adventurous spirit and respect for other cultures. He seemed to fit in and make friends wherever he went because he had an open mind and warm heart.

I especially liked the chapter titled "Provincialism." Justin never idealized a culture, and could see that all people have similar tendencies to put blinders on when encountering customs different from their own. Justin was a deep thinker who learned from his experiences and synthesized them in a way that benefits everyone who reads his books.

TCC "AHA" Moment

BY MARJORIE CONN, OCEAN GROVE, NEW JERSEY

I recently had a private session with a T'ai Chi Chih teacher in preparation for possible teacher accreditation in May. In some of the movements, I was told I was "anticipating." I knew where I wanted my arms to go and I was going there, thus becoming out of synch with my *tan t'ien*. As an actor, it's important that I avoid anticipating what my fellow actor is going to say because that would indicate that I'm not listening and am not in the moment. I just love inter-connectedness.

Working The Tan T'ien

By TONY JOHANSEN, SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA

The full significance of Antonia's recent Santa Barbara T'ai Chi Chih retreat only revealed itself when I taught my own class the following week. During the retreat, she invited us repeatedly to drop right into our *tan t'ien*. Every answer to every question she posed was *tan t'ien*.

Before that my teaching emphasized form and weight shift, allowing the heel to raise, turning the waist, straightening the back leg, keeping hands at heart level, suspending the head from a string of pearls and myriad other details. All important, but they never allowed my students or me to get to the core of the matter, that wellspring of all movement, the *tan t'ien*.

It was like tackling a large block of stone with a tiny hammer and chisel. Yes, small pieces came loose, but we didn't get to the deep, unfathomable core. Antonia had us moving the whole block, starting from the *tan t'ien* and sinking down, allowing all the rest to follow.

We were invited to bring our awareness to the area two inches below the navel, allowing it to sink down, lower, settle, release, relax, move with a softening of the knees. Thinking originates in the mind and immediately sets up a duality, opposites, the mind at one end and the *tan t'ien* at the other. **Awareness places us in the *tan t'ien* and allows us to experience the whole.**

First and foremost, we need to become aware of the *tan t'ien*. Become the *tan t'ien* itself and allow it to move, sink down. When we are the *tan t'ien* and allow awareness to lead, everything moves.

At the end of my first class back, after an hour of starting each move with reminders to be aware of the *tan t'ien*, a student asked, "Why the *tan t'ien*? Why not place our attention in our head?"

That's exactly what we do all day long. It's not wrong; our very survival depends upon it. We wait for a traffic light to change because our head tells us to. If we don't, our head reminds us, we could die or be injured. The mind also is the source of all that triggers our joy and suffering. Because of our suffering, our yearning, our sense of being unfulfilled, however, we seek out practices such as TCC.

This practice starts with the conscious effort to become more aware. When we allow that awareness to flower, and let the *tan t'ien* lead, we begin to experience what's beyond the computerized, compartmentalized mind that fills so much of our day and life.

Justin's Two Lessons

By ANN RUTHERFORD, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

For years, Justin led *Turiya* meditation retreats in the rustic South Valley in Albuquerque. He frequently reminded us that there were only two lessons to be learned in life: Find out who and what we are, and understand and accord with the Law of Impermanence. He said that only when the first lesson is apprehended is it possible to accord with the Law of Impermanence.

His book, *Heightened Awareness*, is a practical tool kit we can use to do both. Justin asks us to discover whether what we see, feel, smell, touch, taste, think and feel are lasting, permanent, and thus "real" states. Once when a friend and I were leaving a building, we both commented on a strong smell. I said, "Yum, someone's cooking breakfast." She said, "No, that smell is sewage!"

Justin says there are four states of consciousness: waking, sleeping, dreaming and *Turiya*. The latter brings the growth of certainty (knowledge of who and what we are). In leading us in *Turiya* meditation, Justin says the *Turiya* consciousness exists as a constant vibration but we usually only become aware of it when we meditate. He also reminds us that we can't stay in *Turiya* because we have our karma to work out.

When we practice *Seijkau* using Justin's *Heightened Awareness* tools, we can choose to experience the resistance section as containing elements of our karma, that which impedes us from maintaining Cosmic Consciousness, the unchanging Reality. Any of the sensory states (anger, depression, resentment, impatience, grief, thoughts, emotions, etc.), which rip us away from maintaining Cosmic Consciousness, can be placed in the resistance section. It sounds easy, but it's not. We do not easily surrender our clinging to sensory-based reactivity.

But *Seijkau*, practiced as a mindfulness practice, makes surrendering much easier because we pass through the impermanent resistant state with the weight shift. There's no choice but to abandon the attachment to resistance as we feel our back heel releasing. Surrendering to the *Chi* is not a concept: it can be immersion in Reality for anyone willing to practice the often painful discipline. Thanks, Justin, for giving us such a remarkably effective method for achieving alignment with Cosmic Consciousness.



Where in the World? Deborah Massey does Daughter in the Valley at the Dead Sea (Israel), the lowest point on earth.

Reflections On A Five-Year Plan

By LISA M. OTERO, OXNARD, CALIFORNIA

Standing at the mid-point of a grand expedition, it's best to take in the view, assess the journey, and make adjustments before proceeding. Three years ago, I decided to make teaching T'ai Chi Chih my life's work.

Some background: I never took a formal TCC class. In the 1980's, there were no teachers in Boston. I learned from instructional videotapes by Justin Stone and my aunt, Carmen Brocklehurst. For 15 years, I practiced at home, in fits and starts, and made trips to New Mexico for corrections. While in Albuquerque, I also participated with those who gathered to practice with Justin in his home, at the TCC Center, and at meditation retreats.

I underwent accreditation in 2000 to deepen my personal practice and out of respect for Justin and Carmen. I was a busy lawyer, and thought this would continue for decades. At most, I thought, maybe I'd teach a class here and there – at a legal conference or when I retired from the law.

Fast-forward ten years: Now living in California and no longer practicing law, my life had changed completely, but with one constant: TCC. Approaching age 50, I was a blank slate, personally and professionally, and at a crossroads. **TCC had been a harbor during several stormy years and I was profoundly grateful.** After much soul-searching, I decided to devote myself to teaching TCC. Could I actually make a living sharing what I loved? I had doubts, but decided to give it my all.

What would it take to grow a community? I was inspired to rekindle the energy felt at those long-ago group practices in New Mexico. It was lovely to walk into a room full of people I barely knew and silently groove together through TCC. I wanted that again and to offer that opportunity to others.

My mother, Corine Reeber, was the only teacher offering a class in Oxnard or Ventura. When she asked me to take over her

beginner class at the city parks and recreation program, I soon realized I needed to do more than teach a weekly class to a few people.

So I set two goals: **to lay a foundation for the organic, self-sustainable growth of a thriving, local TCC community; and to make a stable, modest living.** I would teach two classes a day, six days a week, in various locations to attract diverse groups. At the end of three years, I hoped to have several serious students ready for *Seijaku* and hoped they would want to become accredited to teach TCC. If even a handful of serious students became teachers by year five, and started teaching immediately, we'd have a self-sustaining community.

Friends questioned why I would work to put myself "out of business" by training others. Why let go of a monopoly? But I knew I couldn't do this alone. I yearned for colleagues who shared my commitment to sharing

TCC. I needed help as soon as possible.

Years One and Two: Since I did not learn TCC in a class, I had no curriculum upon which to draw. So I drew inspiration in how I'd been taught yoga – in mixed-level, ongoing, weekly classes, held in fitness centers.

I approached the fitness facility where I was a member. The management questioned whether TCC could be taught to mixed-level groups on an ongoing basis. I wasn't sure, but had a feeling it could be and wanted to try. **There would be challenges.** Initially, everyone would be a beginner, but if they continued to attend classes, they wouldn't be beginners for long. Participants would expect to learn the full practice fairly quickly and would want to do a full practice (without a lot of talking) each time the class met. New people, with varying fitness levels, would join the class on any given day. I wasn't sure how that would work.

To my relief and delight, classes were well attended and folks learned the movements more quickly than I had imagined possible. Newcomers went with the flow and seemed inspired to jump into the practice alongside others who made it look easy.

Encouraged, I started a weekly, ongoing class at a community arts center located in a low-income neighborhood, where people paid whatever they could. Many who took these classes followed me to other locations as classes expanded.

I made contact with the head of adult programs at the local



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Oh! Joyous Breath!!

By JENETH RUNDLE, OXNARD, CALIFORNIA
(WRITTEN ON EASTER SUNDAY 2013)

Here I am
Now
Breathing
Inhaling the scent of light rain
Clean shimmering drops
Can I see my reflection?
Am I small enough yet?
I must become very small ...
Am I small enough yet?
I must not be if I have to ask. Hmmm ...

Here I am
Now
Breathing
Exhaling the sweet fragrance of ...
Me? Or ...
Stop
Wait watch
(((+)))
Go on
Exhale a little more
Stop
Wait watch
(((=)))
And again
(((-)))
Saturated aerated
Once more then
Exhale
Full stop
Empty ...
((()))
Empty?
Of all but the joy!
Empty!
Of all but the new day!

In this new day I come alive as I breathe in
Fresh and new I am
Aware of the *Chi/Prana/Vital Force*
Expanding within me
On the delicate wings of gratitude
I am born again.
Born to the devotion of
The journey of the exhalation
The journey of Joyous Breath.

Novice Attends Albuquerque Retreat

By DONOVAN RUNDLE, OXNARD, CALIFORNIA

The word was spoken ... Flame.
... written down, ashen forms
Remain.

Love's
Simple
Expression
Of gratitude –
That blessed
perfume:
Joy



Where in the World? Deborah Massey does Daughter on the Mountaintop at the heights of Masada (Israel).

I am new to T'ai Chi Chih. By the good graces of Lisa Otero, who has observed and corrected my fledgling practice on several occasions, my wife Jeneth and I attended the recent retreat with Carmen Brockhurst at the Canossian Spirituality Center in Albuquerque.

I'd been practicing for about four or five months, mostly with Justin Stone's and Carmen's DVDs. **Justin's DVD also features a wonderful practice session with four teachers.** A few movements have been clarified since these sessions were recorded, but the DVDs are still excellent. I found my magnetic center pointing to Carmen as my teacher, and so it was that I found myself in Albuquerque.

My first "experience" at the retreat was having a sense that someone was standing to my left. I have a visual impairment that prevents me from seeing the details of a face peripherally, so I turned and immediately said, "I recognize you – you're my teacher." There was not so much as a thought involved in my "seeing" her face next to me; it was more intuition. It felt like an original face seeing itself in a mirror and remembering without having ever seen before.

How one may know anything, let alone by intuitive certainty, has been a topic of active inquiry ever since I realized I felt in harmony with the notion that "the usual surroundings of social life are vain and futile," as philosopher Baruch Spinoza said. This is also a major theme of the Book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament of the Bible.

Realizing the magnitude of my enslavement to vain and futile pursuits, which could never fulfill my yearning for the simplest and greatest of joys, is a great place to be as it may give birth to a movement that is ever new. Indeed, such are the movements of TCC. The *Chi* is ever new, ever creative and so the discovery of that which is eternal seems to have a new beginning each time I realize it moves me.

TCC is good for me because of the health benefits I desperately need, and I also find much more in this practice. Why am I so fortunate to find myself in such high-minded and courageous company? Someone once told me, "It's true that the enlightened are as if chosen from above. Your job is to see to it that you are among them."

The Gift Of Teaching & Sharing TCC

BY JUDY GEORGE, ROSEVILLE, MINNESOTA

I am amazed by the many gifts T'ai Chi Chih brings with each class and every student. I'm also blessed to guide serious students dedicated to becoming TCC teachers through the accreditation process.

Since becoming an accredited teacher myself in 1994, my TCC journey has grown for the better. Yes, there have been ups and downs, but that's life. TCC hasn't changed; we have.

I embrace it all with love and compassion, even though I may not understand it all. I don't have to.

I just keep doing what I know best: practicing TCC and teaching it to the best of my ability. Every time I teach and share what I know that day, I'm excited because I never teach the same class exactly the same way. My cues and verbiage change, my movement deepens, and I'm present with my class/student. **I hope that they receive even more from doing TCC than I have.**

Each person comes to TCC with different needs, limitations and wants. We all desire balance and that comes with practice. We also receive what I call "bonus blessings." I'm calm, relaxed, and at peace with myself and others, for example. I embrace life no matter what comes my way, can accept people just where they are, can



forgive and love more deeply. My blood pressure is lower and my headaches are gone.

My teachers and all the wonderful people I've met through TCC have taught me many lessons. Linda Braga helped me establish classes when I first started teaching, for example. The TCC teachers' manual also was helpful, as were all of the products Linda has shared over the years. I've used them with students and also as tools to help me grow, learn and deepen my understanding of TCC and who I am in it all.

The practice of using transformational language is a tool and a gift I'd like to share with other teachers. How we speak shapes how we cue and relate to our students/teacher.

By using transformational language, we can offer support and nurturing to others. This way of speaking is based on five principles. The language is:

1. Inclusive: Using words like "we're," "let's," and "our."
2. Action-oriented ("ing"): As in "noticing" how we're feeling. (A teacher could invite students to come up with "ing" words that relate to TCC principles.)
3. Positive/Affirmative: Letting go of judgment. Allowing ourselves to be present in body, mind and spirit.
4. Process-oriented: Telling students that "You're moving just like you're supposed to be moving today. Remember: it's TCC practice, not TCC perfect."
5. Awareness-oriented: We can remind students to check in with their bodies – relax their wrists, settle into the soles of their feet, rest, take a breath, be exactly where they are.

I encourage both new and seasoned teachers to try using transformational language in your classes. I hope it brings freshness to your teaching experience as you grow and deepen on your TCC journey. Here's to joyful movement.

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Unitarian
Universalist
Church. **In**

a happy "coincidence," I learned that the minister had taken my classes at the arts center and that the President of the Board was a charter member of my fitness center class. Also, one of the beloved church members, Phyllis Luyken, had taught several of the congregants years earlier. Thanks to Phyllis, there was a general awareness of and respect for TCC, and my proposal for demonstration classes was warmly received.

The demos garnered enough interest for three weekly classes at the church, which would also be open to the general

public. This differed from usual church practice, which limited classes to congregants and their guests for free. The administrator allowed me to charge and the church charged me a nominal fee to rent the Sanctuary.

Although things were going well and I was teaching as much as I possibly could, I wasn't covering my basic living expenses, which was discouraging. It remains a question (which I would love to discuss with others): **Is it possible for an energetic, committed teacher to make even a subsistence living with TCC as their sole source of income?**

A series of events then made it possible

to obtain my credential to teach yoga, which had been a long-time, dearly beloved practice. Not only did it supplement my income, it expanded my TCC outreach to many people open to both practices.

I was invited to teach yoga at the two local naval bases and added, "How about adding TCC to the schedule as well?" The administrator had never heard of TCC, but when I described the practice and its benefits, and spoke confidently about my ability to teach ongoing, mixed-level classes, she invited me to do a demo class. As a result, I began teaching three weekly TCC classes (and two yoga classes).

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First Annual Retreat Inside Folsom Prison

BY JULIE HERVET, PLACERVILLE, CALIFORNIA

In the spring of 2011 I took over Judy Tretheway's T'ai Chi Chih class inside Folsom State Prison in Northern California. Folsom is a maximum security men's facility where Judy had been teaching a weekly, 2½ hour class since 1998. Over the years, it became a tradition that while Antonia was in California conducting events, she would stay with Judy in Sacramento and come in to visit the class. It's held in the old Greystone Chapel, built in 1903; the prison opened in 1880.

This year I planned our very first all-day retreat and banquet, centered around Antonia's visit. The men always look forward to seeing her and are so appreciative that she takes the time to be with them. She helps create a connection between their class and the larger TCC community.

Judy, Antonia and I arrived at 8 a.m. and stayed with the class until 3 that afternoon. We always begin the class seated in a circle for a check-in period. The men share how the form is working in their lives, we review goals, and I answer questions. This year Antonia walked around the circle, stopping in front of each student to ask his name and shake his hand. Twelve inmates attended, several of whom had not met her before, though many had read some of her articles in *The Vital Force*. This part of class is always a very special time, especially when you consider that **in an environment where different races, gang members and religions rarely mix, we are a melting pot of diversity.** Two men shared during the check-in that this class had become like family – a demonstration of the great degree of trust and connection that has developed among them.

The highlight of the day was the banquet. The men's plates were piled high with fresh fruit, bread spread with hummus, pesto, cheese, tomato and cucumber slices, and bowls of soup. We finished with berry and apple pie, dribbled with melted ice cream. As we all sat down together to share our meal, several of the men said again that this was their family, this event was something they would do with their families, and how special it was to share this day with Antonia, Judy and I.

After the meal, I passed out paper and pencils and we all wrote pyramid poems, another activity I'd not done before with this class. Here are a few of their poems:

our	see
spirit	all those
journey is	prisoners
never ending	needing love and
so never	family
stop it	values
go	too
they	<i>yin</i>
said we	and <i>yang</i>
could never	opposites
really make it	yet they attract
but I say	vital force
almost	giving
there	life

For the rest of my life, I will never forget the looks on the faces of these men as we sat together, sharing a meal, our practice and moments in our lives. The opportunity to teach TCC at Folsom Prison is one of the great privileges of my life, and **I highly recommend it to any teacher who might be so inclined.** I'm grateful to Judy Tretheway for keeping this class going for so many years and to Antonia for bringing her light to those who so desperately need it.

Thank you Justin for your vision and light.

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By the end of year two, I was teaching twelve weekly TCC classes and had introduced TCC to several hundred people – about one third of whom had learned TCC well enough to practice with ease on their own. About sixty were clearly devoted to TCC and kept coming to weekly classes to enjoy group practice.

By the middle of year three, I identified thirty students who would appreciate learning more about Justin Stone and his many gifts to us beyond TCC. Last fall, I started offering *Seijaku* instruction to six students. In the ten-week session, I taught *Seijaku*, the *Nei Kung*, Pyramid Poetry, and introduced Justin's writings, art and music. The response to this class has been very enthusiastic. I just started my third session.

Year Four: After completing the *Seijaku* course, several students have expressed their desire for TCC accreditation. I am developing a Teacher Prep curriculum and have held an informational meeting about the accreditation process. I will offer small-group instruction and discussion on various topics of interest to aspiring TCC teachers, and many opportunities for practice teaching under my supervision. If several candidates are ready simultaneously, I will host an accreditation course.

Year Five and Beyond? My vision is to have several accredited teachers providing quality TCC instruction in after-school programs, community centers, assisted living facilities, parks, churches, hospitals, corporate wellness programs, etc. During my lifetime, I yearn to see people practicing TCC, solo and in groups, in parks and open spaces. Perhaps a local TCC Center is in our future. I plan to continue to teach and mentor teachers and future teachers, but I won't have to hold up the tent all by myself. Stay tuned. In the meantime, come practice with us in Oxnard/Ventura, California!

TCC Retreat

With Antonia Cooper, Early March 2013,
Santa Barbara, California

By LINDA WATSON, WESTMINSTER, CALIFORNIA

The first week of March welcomed gentle rain and a group of T'ai Chi Chih students and teachers to Saint Mary's Seminary, a retreat center. The four-day retreat, led by Antonia and hosted by Pam Towne, was a reunion for some, but new acquaintances were the norm as everyone gathered in our first practice. By the time we did Pulling Taffy and its three variations, we all knew one another; by Cosmic Consciousness Pose there were no strangers.

During the first evening we shared about things the practice brings us. "Slowing down," many people said. "Speeding up," Pam said. "I have more energy than I did twenty years ago." "Evenness," another participant shared, explaining that depression haunts her family and TCC smoothes her mood swings. Balance, connection, harmony and awareness were also mentioned. One student said she had been learning TCC on her own with Justin's DVD. This was her first retreat, her first time to practice with a teacher in person, and she said it was wonderful to connect with others here.

Early morning practice was in silence, as was breakfast, in alignment with the practice of the Benedictine brothers who run the retreat center. This quiet time allowed a gentle easing into days of careful attention to form, gentle corrections and working in small groups with teachers. In the midst of form came the breakthroughs. "Continuity and softness came when the effort I didn't even know was there was released," a student said.

The small group teaching time brought one of my own greatest realizations. At first I was a bit irritated at being called on to teach. I wanted to just blend in, sit back and have a break from teaching. But on the final day, Antonia asked what we were taking away with us, or what it was that we had realized, and the first thing that popped into my head was how much I love to teach. Thank you to my students over those retreat days for this realization.

On the last morning, Pam and Antonia spoke with us about re-entry to our daily lives. Be gentle with yourself, they cautioned. "Sometimes all we can do is relax in the dysfunction," one teacher said. Indeed, TCC is about living in this world. "Bring the awareness we have experienced back with you," Pam and Antonia encouraged. "Let go, the softness is there. Watch the transformation."



Another TCC Retreat

With Antonia Cooper, Late March 2013,
Santa Barbara, California

By GAIL NIETO, WRIGHTWOOD, CALIFORNIA

Driving into sunny, warm Santa Barbara on March 26, 2013 from the mountains where snow was still on the ground at my house was the first hint that what lay ahead might be wonderful. It soon became clear that I had more to let go of than my winter clothes. I've been doing T'ai Chi Chih for about five years. After practicing with my teacher and others in Wrightwood for two years, she moved away, others drifted away and I was left to practice on my own. I purchased the T'ai Chi Chih! Joy Thru Movement DVD and followed along with Justin Stone and other teachers fairly inconsistently over the past three years. Sometimes I did just my favorite moves while hurrying through my busy life.

At the first group practice at the retreat, I realized how long it had been since I'd practiced with others and also how long it had been since I'd done a complete practice of all the movements. At the first workshop that evening, I realized how sloppy and undisciplined my practice had become. I needed to let go of past mistakes and increase awareness of each movement.

Letting go became my theme. As I let go of bad habits, I let go of stress from the outside world. As my form softened and flowed, I let go of tension in my body or noticed it more. I also let go of fear that others would judge me.

Julie Heryet, a TCC teacher from Placerville, California, said her retreat experience was one of rediscoveries. She learned that she'd been a little too creative by adding little "Julie-isms" to her practice. The lesson, she said, is that it's always a good idea to refer to T'ai Chi Chih! Joy Thru Movement (Photo Text) and practice regularly with the DVD.

George Anderson-Wood, a student from Houston, Texas, realized how slouchy she had become and appreciated Antonia working with her one-on-one. Student Marie Stephens from Oakland, California said she found the retreat center a wonderful place to refine and deepen our practice. She thanked everyone for bringing us all to another level of awareness and spirituality.

TCC Retreat

With Carmen Brocklehurst,
April 2013, Albuquerque,
New Mexico

HOSTED BY JUDY HENDRICKS

Attendees expressed many benefits of practicing T'ai Chi Chih together as a group this weekend – including the following reflections:

- Experiencing the energy sea (*tan t'ien*) is to know love everywhere.

- TCC has helped me soften, let go of judgment, feel more non-attachment, and get more rest.

- The TCC community supports me as I care for my elderly parents. Many others have gone (or are going) through the same thing and offer much compassion for my situation.

- I recently lost several people who died, but the gift of TCC lives on.

- I've deepened my practice with the help of experienced teachers, found renewed energy and am ready to start new TCC classes.

- I may well have the opportunity to teach TCC full-time. It all started with a smile and the truthful statement, "TCC would be perfect for your patients and staff."

- I want to become a TCC teacher.

- Worry has always been part of my life but when I find the soles of my feet, everything melts, everything feels great.

- The *Chi* has invited me to see the need to clean stuff out – physically, mentally and emotionally. TCC is my true home.



- I've found it profound to practice with people who feel reverence for the TCC movements.

- I came to get a TCC tune-up and learn more about seated TCC. I was impressed with the experiences of practicing in a group.

- Through TCC, I can express the deepest part of myself. I'm amazed at how much freer I feel and how much easier it is to help my husband.

- What a joy to be with two sisters from accreditation! In *Climb the Joyous Mountain* Justin says, "Joy is our natural heritage." TCC keeps us in joy.

- I found a new way of looking at things: "Is this mine to do?" The

retreat helped me let go and get rid of old beliefs. I've found so much strength and softness, and softness has so much strength in it.

- I honor the practice and appreciate everyone here.

- This retreat was a safe place with much love and concern. TCC people don't wear masks.

- I felt nourished and my entire being was touched. This retreat has helped me not feel alone.

- I learned more about the effort of no effort.

- I'd like to make changes and now feel willing.

- My *Chi* sisters are here, the universe feels welcoming and there is love in this room.

- I feel lighter on the inside.

- I feel a calm confidence, like it's all only going to get better.

Our Community's Gifts

BY JIM SHORR, WILSONVILLE, OREGON

We all experience transitions and, more importantly, life changes. Having a vibrant, active T'ai Chi Chih community in the Portland-Vancouver area has given me fellowship, serenity, infinite practice opportunities and chances to improve. This is what has changed my life. I'd like to introduce you to our community and our skills:

Neal Roy: A natural leader and the most flowing teacher I've seen in our metro area.

Banks Upshaw: A consummate practitioner, faithful to all of Justin's precepts and the principles of successful movement (circularity, continuity).

Steve Marsh: Our enthusiast and a pioneer in reaching out to potential students.

Dr. Marcella Box: A multi-generational teacher; her TCC form complements her competency and reputation as a leading chiropractic physician.

Roberta & John Taggart: Our revered and most senior teachers, who give us all quiet guidance.

JoAnn Brinkman: Our graphics arts/computer expert and connector to young and senior students.

Elizabeth Tyler: My teacher and inspiration, who operates the Garden Sanctuary, a haven for the healing arts and its practitioners.

Scores of TCC learners attend Neal's monthly practice at The Chinese Garden in Portland; Steve's practice in Orenco Station in Hillsboro; Banks' and my group on the first and third Saturdays; and in April, nearly 30 folks attended Dan Pienciak's first retreat as our facilitator and teacher trainer.

THREE-MINUTE VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE @ WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/TCCABQ

Do you need one more reason to attend the Minnesota conference on August 1st through 4th? Here's a great one: Good Karma Publishing will have a video camera set up to photograph any teacher who wants to make a presentation about the benefits of T'ai Chi Chih while they are demonstrating their favorite movement.

Remember teacher accreditation when you *had* to do this (but were probably scared out of your wits)? Now that you have all your experience it will be a breeze and fun.

Practice at home in front of a mirror and come prepared. Or let the *Chi* move you at the conference and be prepared to seize the moment.

For inspiration watch **Justin's videos** on www.youtube.com/tccabq and watch **Amy Tyksinski's TEDx ABQED video** on tedxtalks.ted.com/video/The-Effects-of-Tai-Chi-Chih-on.

Why is GKP filming teachers and uploading the videos onto its YouTube channel?

- 1.) Because [] has the technical wherewithal, and an awareness about how this vital social media channel can be leveraged;
- 1.) To offer a ready-made platform where you can send prospective clients when you pitch classes;
- 2.) To showcase a gathering place with gravitas (i.e. T'ai Chi Chih is a bona fide movement with lots of great teachers collected in one place);
- 3.) To demonstrate that the YouTube channel is a resource for the whole community.

We hope everyone attending the conference will take advantage of this offer.



Lighter Side

We were working on the side-to-side weight shift at my senior center class. I kept trying different phrases to get them to move slowly – “move as if in slow motion” ... “move as if moving through heavy air” ... “make a long lateral glide to the side” ... “creep across from one side to the other.” One of the students said, “I think we are all creaking across!”

Jessica, a long time student of T'ai Chi Chih, decided to stop and do some TCC at a scenic spot while walking around our local lake. There was a fellow fishing just below her. After a while he packed up his gear and left, walking past her. As she continued to practice, she asked him if he had caught any fish. He looked at her and sternly said, “T'ai Chi Focus!” and continued walking on.

While doing Pulling in the Energy I reminded the class to “imagine energy from the universe flowing into their fingertips” and to “feel a connection with the life force.” Later one of the students said she almost laughed out loud – as what immediately come to mind was Frankenstein and the bolt of lightning (energy from the universe) that gave him his life force.

One time teaching Pulling in the Energy I asked the class if they had taken their vitamins that morning – for their physical health. Now we are taking our cosmic vitamin for health of the rest of our being. – SANDY McALISTER, HAYWARD, CALIFORNIA

Pyramid Poems

tao
brings joy
thru movement
and centeredness
expressing
thru the
Chi

joy
is like
a feeling
that is so cool
that it is
even
fun

yin
female
instinctive
intuitive
creative
it brings
joy

yang
stronger
purposeful
like a tiger
pursuing
its prey
now
– C.G.

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TEACHER RESOURCES:
See www.taichichih.org/teacher-resources/

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Community Calendar

For the most up-to-date info and event PDFs, visit www.taichichih.org

DATE	WHAT & WHO	WHERE	CONTACT
May 7-12	Teacher Accred w/ Sandy	Aston, PA	Daniel Pienciak / 732-988-5573
May 8-12	TCC Intensive w/ Pam	Prescott, AZ	Hope Spangler / 928-775-5503
June 1 -5	TCC Intensive w/ Sandy	St. Louis, MO	Gale Portman / 314-805-2021
June 8	TCC Workshop w/ Sandy	Kansas City, MO	Lorraine Lepine / 913-901-8818
Aug 1-4	TCC Teacher Conf	near Minneapolis, MN	www.taichichih.org
Aug 4-6	Seijaku Teacher Accred	near Minneapolis, MN	twww.aichichih.org
Sep 26-29	TCC Retreat w/ Antonia	Pecos, NM	Ann Rutherford / 505-292-5114
Oct 17-20	Prajna Retreat w/ Sandy	Aston, PA	April Lefler / 610-532-6753
Oct 20-26	Teacher Accred w/ Pam	St. Louis, MO	Gale Portman / 314-805-2021
Nov 6-8	Seijaku Workshop w/ Dan	Tupelo, MS	Ron Richardson / 662-844-6473
Nov 8-10	TCC Workshop w/ Dan	Tupelo, MS	Ron Richardson / 662-844-6473
Nov 11-16	Teacher Accred w/ Pam	Albuquerque, NM	Judy Hendricks / 505-897-3810

- **MORE WORKSHOPS & RETREATS** -

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

June 8 / **Seijaku Workshop w/ Carmen Brocklehurst** /
Albuquerque, NM / Judy Hendricks / 505-897-3810

Aug 4-6 / **Seijaku Intro Workshop** / near Minneapolis, MN
www.taichichih.org/calendar-of-events/

Sept 19-22 / **TCC Retreat with Carmen Brocklehurst** /
Albuquerque, NM / Judy Hendricks / 505-897-3810

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Date you were accredited as a T'ai Chi Chih teacher _____

Date you were accredited as a Seijaku teacher _____

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

Name of "second signature" _____

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