

The Vital Force

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for teachers & students

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Justin Stone: Teaching Tips

The Best Reason to Practice

DECEMBER 1992, © THE VITAL FORCE, BY JUSTIN STONE

KARMA is an important and frequently used word, so it is important to understand what it means. In the Sanskrit language, Karma means “action”, that and no more. So, when we glibly speak of “our Karma,” we really mean the fruit of our action, not the action itself. Even this is not totally correct. The motivation behind our action is what establishes our Karma, which is a result and not blind destiny.

Usually the motivation that causes us to act is the result of our established Habit Patterns (*Vashanas* in Sanskrit). This is Cause and Effect. We establish patterns of thought and reaction, and these, formed by ourselves, coerce us into acting in certain ways. So we have created the very force that molds us. Should we not be careful in our thoughts and the habits we create?

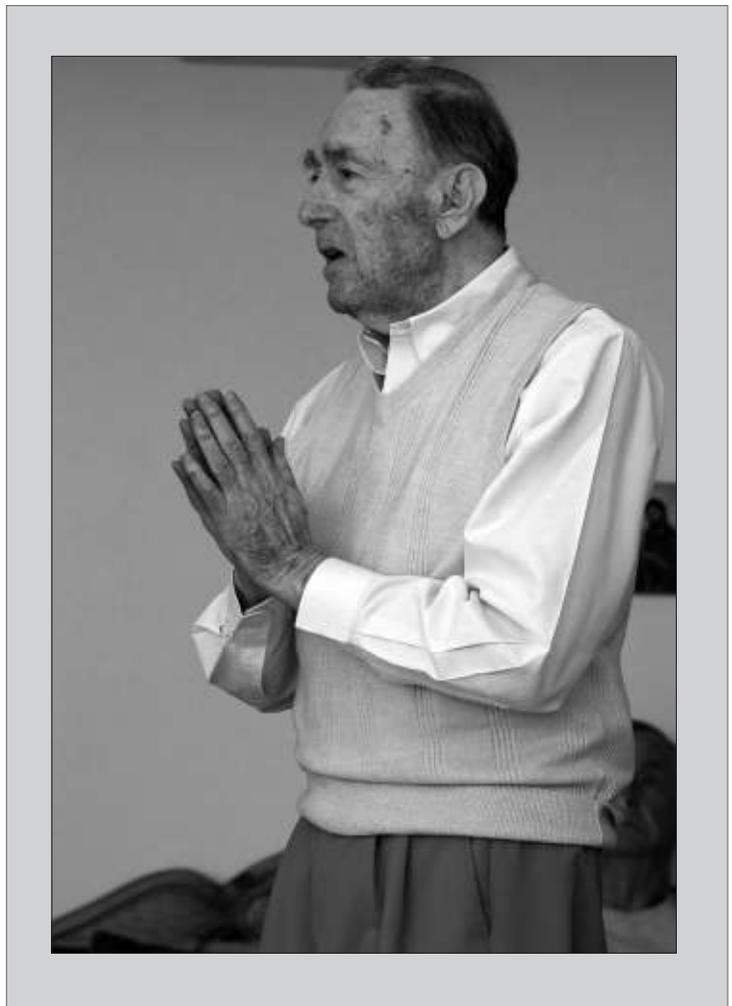
There is always a result, neither “good” nor “bad” (which can be seen as “favorable” or “unfavorable” from a personal viewpoint) that is appropriate to the action. When a gun is fired, there is a recoil commensurate with the force of the shot. This adequately explains Karma for us.

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People usually believe, not what is logical, but what they want to believe. Thus their actions are rationalized. This has no effect on the inexorable Karma, which is not concerned with sentiment or rationalization.

As one practices T'ai Chi Chih, the quality of the *Chi* definitely changes. So many say “I really can't remember what I was like before TCC.” As the *Chi* is circulated and balanced, habit energies tend to fade and one no longer feels compelled to follow dubious paths of action. One now feels more in control of (and responsible for) his or her actions.

This is “burning the Karmic seeds.” It is the best reason I know to practice TCC, aside from the joyful feeling such practice brings. The serenity and better health are the results of this balancing and circulation. And it is so easy to accomplish.





Justin wrote,
“The great secret in
T'ai Chi Chih
is what happens to
the Vital Force.
We should be grateful for it.”

Nothing more is needed in this moment. Justin's statement and joyous visage are enough. One “right” second in his presence (whether in person or through his work) always had a way of sweeping things clean.

WITH GRATITUDE. KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

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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.

Giving

The *Vital Force* maintains www.taichichih.org, which exists solely through the generosity of our practitioners.

Please consider a contribution to support the essential (and vast) outreach of the website. Donations can be made by credit card (via the green button on the homepage of www.taichichih.org) or by sending a check to The Vital Force, PO Box 92674, Albuquerque, NM 87199

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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.

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Just Because You Can Doesn't Mean You Should

By CARMEN L. BROCKLEHURST, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

At some time or another we decide to become healthy. We might set up a plan to include exercise, food and study. But since we are not physical therapists or doctors or nutritionists, chances are that our plan may not be the best plan for us. It's possible that our plan is based on misconceptions. Just because we feel fine from walking an hour the first day, we might find our legs stiff from lactic acid on the second day. This could change our minds about walking for several days. Just because we can go walking doesn't mean we should overdo it.

Everyone has to eat, and certain foods are uniformly suggested as healthy – fruits and vegetables, meat and potatoes. Sounds easy enough. We often prepare the same foods our parents prepared for us. If they were good for us in the past, they should be good today. Sometimes we make the same mistakes our parents made – overcooking vegetables, undercooking meat, choosing foods that raise our blood sugar and cholesterol levels. Sometimes trying to reach a middle ground we might eat a vegetarian diet, only to find that we have thrown our food intake out of balance. We might not become aware of it until our shoulders or joints hurt, until we get headaches or lose sleep. Just because we can eat anything doesn't mean we should.

*the gentleness
of TCC often
keeps people
away, and
yet...*

When we end up at the doctor's office trying to discover why we have certain symptoms, we comment that, "I thought that walking was good for us. Everyone stresses how we should eat more vegetables. I'm just trying to

be healthy." The key is balance, moderation and awareness. Sometimes the doctor will say, "It's good you are getting some exercise, especially since you sit so much at work." Or "You are so exhausted from work that you spend evenings on the couch. You need some gentle activity to achieve a more restful sleep. Perhaps you might consider some energizing, balancing activity like T'ai Chi Chih early in the evening." This is good advice, some wisdom.



The gentleness of TCC often keeps people away, and yet it is that moderation and awareness that brings us back into balance. Our own wisdom is brought out by TCC. It creates the pause needed so that we can listen to our bodies. Most doctors can't tell you why it works, but the beauty is that it does. Often when people talked to Justin about their ailments, he would gently say, "Have you tried T'ai Chi Chih? It might help." For those who have tried, the results have been wonderful. Sometimes it brings us all the way to learning how to love and share the *Chi*.

Pyramid Poems

know
being
spiritual
could it be love
in human
body
form
– J.A.

be
here now
the present's
a gift to cherish
without
regret
here
– ROBERT M.

be
aware
of the joy
and gratitude
from within
flowing
still
– M.W.

feet
grounded
attention
where no words live
where no thoughts
belong
still
– CARMELA

to
move in
awareness
feeling feet ground
clarity
comes - let
go
– M.R.

all
senses
feel the joy
experience
the present
moment
now
– NANCY F.

pop
and there
it was right
in front of me
I am very
happy
here
– BROCK

joy
comes
quickly
with openness
for all that
appears
here
– EVELYN D.

to
listen
to myself
is never as
rewarding
as the
chi
– JERRY G.

all
that I
see is not
all that there is
all that I
feel is
good
– JOYCE V.

‘Flowing From Center’ Newsletter Excerpts

By MARIE DOTTS, LOVELAND, COLORADO

[Editor's Note: Marie Dotts sends a newsletter to prospective students every two months or so, when a new set of classes is about to begin. What follows are her writings and thoughts from those newsletters on a principle of T'ai Chi Chih.]

~ April 2015 ~

This is the season when we witness the mystery of Life and the cyclical journey of death and rebirth. As I take my walks I am in awe with the new life bursting forth from nature. It is a true celebration of the Mystery that moves this world. It is this same Mystery that moved the leaves to die and fall in autumn. When we accord with this Mystery versus the impermanence of life we are transformed. We somehow come to know “All is Well” no matter what is moving in and out of our lives.

I was deeply touched by Cynthia Bourgeault's words in her book, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*. Although she is talking about Centering Prayer, practitioners of T'ai Chi Chih can very much relate. She shares, “For twenty minutes we have not been holding ourselves in life, and yet life remains. Something has held us and carried us. And this something, we gradually come to trust, will hold and carry us at the hour of our death. To know this – really know this – is the beginning of resurrection life.” To experience this loving Mystery that is holding and carrying us is one of the greatest gifts of TCC.

The Vital Force, a journal for the TCC community, shares story after story of students and **teachers finding comfort in according with this Universal Energy**. In the February 2010 issue a teacher shares, “One reason I could stand to live with cancer was TCC. Especially in those first weeks of almost overwhelming fear, my practice calmed and smoothed and balanced my energy.”

This Oneness that holds the world is being celebrated worldwide on April 25th. The last Saturday of April at 10 a.m. local time is designated World T'ai Chi and Qigong Day. Please join the Northern Colorado community in this celebration.

*the greatest gift
TCC has given
me is self-love*

~ February 2015 ~

Love to all of you in these last days of the month of February, the month we designate to share and express love. Justin Stone, the originator of T'ai Chi Chih has stated that “T'ai Chi Chih is a service to humanity. A form of love.” And that “...if we practice T'ai Chi Chih faithfully, Love Energy is the fruit.” I often share in my beginner classes that the greatest gift TCC has given me is self-love. How does a simple moving meditation open so many to the Love Energy within them? The first principle we learn in TCC is to focus in the soles of the feet. In the beginning of my journey with TCC I noticed anxiety would arise every time I turned my attention inward to the soles of my feet. My habit energy to survive was to keep my attention on others and on what I needed to do to avoid their rejection. What an impossible task and one that also created a lot of contracted energy within me. Through practicing TCC and many hours of bringing my attention to the soles of my feet an inner sense of support and strength began to accumulate. This inner sense of support and strength is allowing me to let go of the need for outer approval. It is also helping me to stand up to that inner critical and rejecting voice that we all have and to allow all that arises within me. Justin has shared, “To be too hard on



yourself is to deny the Divinity within.” Another name for TCC is Joy Thru Movement. This is because Joy is the result of being present to all that is arising within us and not rejecting any of it. That is true Love. Happy Valentine’s Day to all of you. May you all feel the Joy of true Love.

~ January 2015 ~

I am sending you all blessings of peace and renewal at this special time of year. As nature is pulling inward and the days are much colder, I too am finding myself pulling inward. I feel the pull of my favorite blanket and a hot cup of tea and the desire to just rest in the stillness of the season. To take a breath and a pause before life once again calls me outward. T’ai Chi Chih has taught me to listen to nature and embrace its natural rhythms of growth and unfoldment. Nature has a cycle and stillness and rest are a very important part of that cycle. We do not always give ourselves permission for this rest. This time of quietude helps us assimilate and digest the past year of growth. It also opens us up to clarity and guidance for where life wants to take us next. The next place is always to greater love, expression and joy. Justin Stone, the originator of TCC calls this Entering the Cosmic Rhythm.

*TCC has taught me
to listen to nature
and embrace its
natural rhythms of
growth and unfoldment*

~ November 2104 ~

November is the month when we often contemplate our blessings and feel a sense of gratitude. Gratitude has been welling up in me. For one I have never experienced a more beautiful autumn in Colorado. It is as if nature herself is saying, “Stop. Slow down. Pay attention. You are surrounded in beauty.” This is exactly what T’ai Chi Chih teaches us. Through the gentle movements we are reminded to slow down and pay attention to what is arising in this moment. **It is only when we get out of our heads and truly are in the moment that we can open to the beauty, mystery and wonder that we are and that we live in.** The habit energy of living in our heads is very strong. I am deeply grateful for such a loving but powerful practice that helps me shift this habit energy.

~ August 2014 ~

Happy end of summer! August always brings with it a sense of change and transition. The kids are going back to school and the mornings and evenings have a cooler feel to them announcing the upcoming change of seasons. The principles of T’ai Chi arose out of the observations of nature. This time of year nature is reminding us of one of the key principles of energy and that is movement and change. Our Life Force is an ever-constant, ever-changing creative flow. We can go against this flow or we can connect and align with it. This flow is the flow of our own wellbeing, aliveness and joy. A key principle in connecting to our flow that we learn in T’ai Chi Chih is focusing and being in the soles of our feet or our *tan t’ien* (our belly). **We can only feel and connect to the flow when we are present in our bodies. Unfortunately, most of us do not live there very much.** Our conditioning or habit energies often keep us disconnected from our body and our Life Force. As we continually return to the soles of our feet/*tan t’ien* in our practice we begin to feel more and more present not just when we are doing our TCC but in our lives as well. It is the feeling of being very, very much here. For me it feels like coming home after being gone for a long time. This moment-to-moment presence is my true center, my ground and my stability. Knowing this presence is my ground, I am becoming more and



more allowing of all the movement, change and flow of life – whatever it brings, internally or externally. This is the key to opening to my own wellbeing, aliveness and joy. My capacity for presence and allowing is an unending journey. I am deeply grateful for TCC, for it has been and continues to be one of my greatest supports for this journey.

Exploring Ahimsa

BY SANDY McALISTER, HAYWARD, CALIFORNIA

At the 1993 teachers' conference Justin spoke about "two requisites for Enlightenment: Ahimsa and Vairagya in Sanskrit. Ahimsa is easy to understand: it means 'non-violence'. Envy, jealousy and cutthroat competition are forms of violence. If we do not have a reverence for all life and a regard for all people we can only spread ill will. There is no such thing as being prejudiced in one direction and open in others. If we love, we spread good will. That is Ahimsa."

If you have been reading my monthly newsletters for the past several months you have followed the various topics of discussion I have been presenting in my T'ai Chi Chih classes. Some topics elicit more discussion than others but there have always been some students who speak up with a thought or questions or points of view. When I read the above quote to my first class of the week, the stillness in the room was palpable. No one had a comment. When I read it to my second class there were several comments about politicians with regards to Justin's words that you can't be "prejudiced in one direction and open in others."

I found it interesting that not much discussion ensued throughout the week with this topic. Maybe students found it as unsettling as I did to think about a more encompassing concept of non-violence. On first examination of the word, what usually comes to mind is physical or verbal violence. But Justin gives just a few examples of other ways violence might manifest – envy, jealousy, cutthroat competition, being prejudiced. These four examples are enough to lubricate thoughts spinning in many directions of how violence may be expressed in our own thoughts or actions, ways we may never have considered before as acts of violence.

Students were quick to talk about politicians need for non-violence (in the area of prejudice specifically) but few had personal comments. Most of us do not like to uncover the darker part of ourselves we feel is imperfect, at least not to others. Closely examining our actions, words, thoughts and intent of ill will toward others can lead us down the rabbit hole to astonishing revelations.

Stuck in a long, slow, traffic-clogged drive home the other day my patience was running on empty. I growled and cursed other drivers in *my* way or not driving as *I* thought they should have been. More than likely everyone to whom I was directing my anger/violence was oblivious to it. So who was on the receiving end? Where did all that anger go? Mostly at me, unfortunately to my passengers and unfortunately out into the cosmos. That was my "rabbit hole astonishing revelation." The anger was inside me, and just because it was directed at someone else didn't make it go away. I didn't hand it off to someone and now it was theirs. Whether the anger sits inside of me and rumbles around or I express it outwardly, I am the one feeling it, I am the one receiving it. How interesting to think I am giving myself anger. I have heard the concept before that when you get angry you only hurt yourself. And I understood that on some level but hadn't really given it deep contemplation until discussing Justin's thoughts on Ahimsa with students.

Justin's words are mirrored by Mahatma Gandhi, a great model of non-violence: "Ahimsa means not to injure any creature by thought, word or deed. True Ahimsa should mean a complete freedom from ill will and anger and hate and an overflowing love for all. Ahimsa is the attribute of the soul and therefore to be practiced by everybody in all the affairs of life."

The first Yama, a principle of ethical conduct in Hinduism, is Ahimsa, which Patanjali wrote about in the Yoga Sutras 2.34, "Negative thoughts give rise to violence... they are caused by greed, anger, or delusion... Through introspection comes the end of pain and ignorance."



How do we, as imperfect human beings, live up to this code of conduct? There are many turns to take down in the rabbit hole and many doors to open but one of the keys for me is "through introspection comes the end of pain and ignorance."

It is similar to first learning T'ai Chi Chih – after a year or so we feel we have it. After two years we are rather confident that we know how to do the practice. But if we continue to study we are often surprised at what we didn't know. There are layers to our learning if we continue to apply ourselves. There are layers to understanding ourselves if we take time for introspection.

Doing the practice of T'ai Chi Chih provides the stillness of mind and emotions to deeply reflect on the wisdom of great teachers.

*as Justin wrote:
there is no such thing
as being prejudiced in
one direction and
open in others*

Words & The Long & Short Of TCC

By DANIEL PIENCIAK, HOWELL, NEW JERSEY

Some years ago at a health symposium, I was able to speak with a doctor following his talk on joint and bone health. At that time, I was intrigued by Justin Stone's words, "the waist turns and the hips swivel" in the side-to-side movements. So I asked this medical doctor whether a male and female would feel this differently. He replied that men and women's joints are constructed very differently in the pelvic area, so that men and women would not feel pelvic "turn and swivel" in the same way.

This behooved me to explore how different body types might also feel the movements in their own way. A short and stout person and a tall and lanky person must each adjust their size of step and depth of sinking down according to their body type and to what feels comfortable (hence allowing "the effort of no effort").

In the New Mexico T'ai Chi Chih News (January 2009), Justin emphasizes the importance of *yinning* and *yanging*. He describes the weight as being "completely shifted" only in the forward and backward movements. He stated that in side-to-side movements "weight is transferred, but not drastically. That is not possible."

How could this be? I had always strived to convey in my teaching the need to complete the weight shift in side-to-side movements. Since then, I have gradually learned that, as a very tall person, I need to be conscious of not over-extending my leg out to the side when I place the heel – to do so causes stiffness in the joints and restricts what I feel as the waist turns and hips swivel. In fact, a slightly more relaxed stance (feet not so wide apart) feels softer and more fluid, and avoids focusing so much on a one hundred percent weight shift. But significantly less tall teachers and students seem not to have this issue. The leg seems to indeed straighten more, while I feel some slack in the unweighted leg when my weight shift has finished to the side.

Justin also was a quite tall person. I was always impressed by how explicitly the forward and back weight shift was expressed as he moved, and also by how soft and fluid his pelvic area was while moving side-to-side. Perhaps these thoughts will open up some new explorations in your practice.



According With Impermanence

By PAM TOWNE, OCEANSIDE, CALIFORNIA

Over the years I've come to value Justin Stone's teachings more and more as I've found they are immensely practical and applicable to everyday life. Justin said that we are here to learn who and what we are... and to accord with impermanence.

Everything in this physical universe is in a constant state of flux. Autumn leaves fall, our bodies change, loved ones die. Pain comes from holding on to what was, not from letting go.

Justin gave us several useful practices to help us accord with impermanence. T'ai Chi Chih practice has so many benefits that we may not generally think of it as helping us to accord with impermanence. Yet it does, at a very visceral level.

The simple act of shifting the weight back and forth, *yinning* and *yanging*, conditions the body-mind to become more accepting of change. TCC has certainly helped me to flow with the changes in my life, especially the past couple years with Ted's illness and passing.

Awareness is the root of TCC. When we are stressed, just taking a moment to become aware of the breath can make an internal shift to serenity. I use this often myself and find that taking a slow deep breath is effectively calming to body, mind and spirit.

Seijaku, the advanced form of TCC, is especially beneficial for dealing with impermanence. We begin each movement with softness then encounter resistance. Once we have passed through that denser energy, we return to softness. Repetition of this practice makes it easier to move through challenging life situations and return to inner equanimity. It cultivates serenity in the midst of busy daily activity, improves our TCC practice and develops inner strength for meeting life's unexpected moments.

Justin also taught the practice of gratitude. He often quoted his good friend Paul Reps saying, "How grateful I am, with no thing to be grateful for." An attitude of gratitude goes a long way toward being happy in the moment. When I have felt sad, I've heard Justin's voice in my head saying, "turn your thoughts to joy."

Justin said that TCC will take us as far as we want to go on the path of self unfoldment. He gave us the tools for a long, healthy, happy life. It's up to us to use them. Enjoy your practice.

Tuning In, Plugging In & Maintaining Connection

By LISA M. OTERO, OXNARD, CALIFORNIA

What is your role in sharing T'ai Chi Chih with the world? If you have a vision of a world where TCC instruction is available to everyone who wants it and opportunities for group practice abound, what are you doing to make that vision a reality?

Justin Stone entrusted the integrity, growth and future of TCC to every accredited teacher and serious student. Shared responsibility requires expansive visioning. Teachers and students might ask themselves: "Beyond teaching or taking classes, am I employing my skills and abilities in service of sharing TCC? Could I better support others' efforts to share TCC?"

Yes, TCC is an individual meditation practice for health, wellbeing and spiritual development. Justin Stone saw it as that and so much more. He often reminded us: "T'ai Chi Chih is a service to humanity." He loved connecting with other people through TCC. He created community wherever he went and encouraged us to stay connected.

~ Tuning in: paying attention ~

Are you aware of what others are doing to share TCC in the world? Do you know who is planning the teachers' conference; who edits *The Vital Force*; who is hosting upcoming accreditation courses; who oversees the production and distribution of Justin's books and music; who is offering upcoming workshops and retreats; who is blogging about TCC...?

Subscribing to *The Vital Force Journal* (VFJ) is a good indicator of your interest in what others are doing to bring TCC to their local communities and beyond. Writing for the VFJ demonstrates your interest in sharing TCC with the world. Are you helping others tune in? Do you encourage others to read and write for the VFJ? Have you shared information about the official TCC website (taichichih.org) and Facebook page ([facebook.com/taichichih](https://www.facebook.com/taichichih)), the many local TCC Facebook pages, and the online calendar of TCC workshops and retreats? Tune in. Pay attention. Keep current. Share information.

~ Plugging in: building community in small and large ways. ~

Do your students know each other's names? Do you provide opportunities for them to get to know each other? Have you met and practiced with the accredited teachers within driving distance? Have you expressed your appreciation and gratitude to the people who are making things happen in the TCC community? Have you attended a retreat, workshop, intensive or teacher conference, or audited a teacher accreditation course lately? Have you kept in touch with the people you have met during your TCC journey? Have



you ever contacted a contributor to the VFJ to let the writer know that you enjoyed her or his article? Have you thanked the teachers who have coached and mentored you? Plugging in means taking action and supporting the actions of others. Even small actions have a large impact.

~ Staying connected: Are we doing enough to stretch and grow, both for ourselves and for our community, and for the future of TCC? ~

If you are thinking, "But I am so busy" or "I don't really have any special skills beyond teaching/doing TCC," please consider the multiplier effect that is achieved when we work together to achieve a goal. If you are a person who gets things done, think about how you might enlist others to join you in sharing TCC more broadly. Even if you don't consider yourself a natural leader or visionary, please support someone else's initiative to make TCC available to more people. Perhaps you are doing all you are able to do at the moment. But who knows what opportunities the future may bring? Will you be ready to lead or to help? Are we supporting each other's efforts and celebrating accomplishments?

Let's get concrete with some ideas for plugging in and maintaining connection, whether you are a teacher or a serious student.

- If there is something that you think ought to be happening in the TCC community, contact a few teachers to discuss your ideas and enlist their input and support to bring it about.
- Come up with a plan to bring TCC to under-served communities in your area; enlist others (fellow teachers and/or students) to help you make the necessary contacts.
- Write an article for the VFJ, sharing news of the initiative you are taking or want to take. Enlist input and support.
- Write an article about TCC and submit it to mainstream health and fitness or spiritual publications (print or online).
- Reach out to offer coaching/mentoring to serious students seeking accreditation and to newly accredited teachers and to international teachers who are blazing a trail for TCC around the world.
- Commit to attending the next TCC teacher conference. Contact all the teachers you know to personally encourage them to attend. Don't wait until two weeks before the conference. Do it now.
- Volunteer to serve on the conference committee for the next teacher conference. (You don't have to live in physical proximity; a great deal of support can be provided from afar.)

These are just a few examples. I invite you to think of your own (and to post them on the TCC Facebook page.) Dare to dream of a future where everyone has the opportunity to learn TCC. Share your vision. Work with others. Stay connected.

Middle Palace: Opening The Lungs

By TISH JARAMILLO, PORT HUENEME, CALIFORNIA

Author's note: It is a custom in the Chinese Medicine community to capitalize the names of the meridians. (They are actually known as "Officials" when speaking about the meridians and organs together.) You may notice that I sometimes capitalize and sometimes don't. There is a method to my madness. I'm not just a lousy typist. When referring to just the organ, I don't capitalize but when referring to the Chinese Official, it's capitalized.

How many times have we heard from our teachers, "Relax the shoulders, back and down, lift the chest." Upright posture is an important part of effective T'ai Chi Chih practice but do we understand why?

As a practitioner of Chinese Medicine, I can't help noticing the connections to the acupuncture points that are so carefully integrated into the movements and the grace with which Justin accomplished it.

"Middle Palace" is the name of the first acupuncture point on the Lung meridian. The Lung is considered the "Treasury of the Qi." The point is located at the front shoulder crease about two inches above the armpit. We receive Qi from the sunlight, and from every breath we take. It is brought into the body via the breath and is then distributed throughout the body by the Lungs. That is the Lung meridian's main function – to descend the Qi. In the Five Element tradition of Chinese Medicine, the Lung is paired with the Large Intestine. (All the organs and meridians are paired – one yang with one yin.) The Lung is the Official that brings in the new; the Large

Intestine lets go of the old, in body, mind and spirit. The emotion associated with the Lung is grief. When we are unable to let go of grief or hold on to negative emotions, the lungs become disharmonized and our posture becomes curved or caved in at the chest. Grief in the Lungs may obscure the Heart's fire the way the clouds can obscure the sun.

In our practice, there is an opportunity with every movement to open the lungs. The significance of that small, simple awareness is huge.

Every time we relax the shoulders back and down we are opening the lungs and heart. The access to that opening is Middle Palace. **If we take notice of that moment** when the chest opens all the way to the axilla, we can actually feel the breath moving

freely into the lungs, unhampered by tension. We can feel a little moment of relief or peace, because the "heavenly Qi" has found its way in – because now we are open to be inspired with our destiny, and led to our purpose in life. The richness and joy of the palace should be felt every time we breathe in. Every time we pull the elbows back in Around the Platter, we can open the Middle Palace. Pulling Taffy, too, is a great opportunity to relax the shoulders back. But I think my favorite movement to open the lungs is Working the Pulley because it's as if we are standing between the past and the future, between the new and the old, releasing the past and beckoning to the future. We are standing tall and erect, opening our bodies to the left and the right, without grief or fear for what is to come. We are in the Middle Palace.

*standing between the
past and the future,
between the new and
the old, releasing the
past and beckoning
to the future*

Passing Clouds

By DONNA DEFFENBAUGH, PRESCOTT, ARIZONA

Reach back to childhood. You're only nine. Or maybe seven. In the space between chores and a voice calling you for mealtime, you lie on your back in the dewy grass or sun-warmed sand. The sky-blue background makes you blink at first. The energy of those puffy white clouds sends a little wave of dizziness to your head and then your belly.

After only a few moments, your eyes adjust and your mind syncs. In your Midwest breeze across the plain, or the wild Mariah shifting western skies from horizon to horizon, you relax into the earth and watch.

Somehow watching stops, and something new begins. You are one with the clouds, soon seeing beyond those clouds right into your young imagination. Sinking deeper into the energy of earth. Sailing past the bounds of sky. Swirling (though not dizzy) left and right, to and fro', you're breathing in and out among those clouds with peace and wonder. "Come in for supper, dear one."

Settling back to earth, to sand, to fields of grass. But one more thing: the light, the air, the energy go with you to the supper table.



Distance Learning: TCC, Caregiving & Love

BY PETE GREGORY, HIGHLAND, INDIANA

This month marks the beginning of my seventh year as a live-in caregiver for my parents. My 89-year-old mother is faring well, with a brief illness here and there, less walking, fewer projects, etc. I still consider her an energizer bunny, but I also know she isn't getting any younger.

My 91-year-old father is a different story. The first year he walked with a cane, drove to the grocery store, cooked half the meals, barely napped. Fast-forward to the present. The man is in loud, chronic pain, failing to thrive, often unable to walk, sleeping 16 to 20 hours a day, mostly dependent on Mom and me to accomplish the basics required for daily living.



In between, there have been two stints in nursing homes, 20-plus falls, 200-plus near falls, accidents, sleepwalking, other midnight mischief and more. For me, it's been 2000 days and nights of moving from vigilance to hyper-vigilance to vigils and back again. My own slow-motion rodeo.

Justin stressed the importance of practicing T'ai Chi Chih daily, especially when we don't feel like it. The first few years this reminder was a saving grace. It wasn't maybe the deepest practice, often interrupted, but I managed to move and derive benefit. Nowadays, less so. With a kaleidoscope of butterflies, a racing pulse, disrupted sleep and mini-crises de jour, **the sharpest tool in my box was beginning to lose its edge.** But I'm grateful for my few ongoing TCC classes and good weather days that serve as both a whetstone and a welcome re-immersion into the Flow.

The larger goal of steady practice is to embody TCC principles the other 23 hours of a day. What has evolved is a recognition of the

movements as descriptors for situations and mindsets I deal with in caring for Pop. The other 23 hours embody the practice. How do you spell bizarro? Allow me to enumerate.

The antithesis of a rodeo ride is **Rocking Motion**. Instead of being thrown up and over and down, and up and over and back, I sink and rise, come down and prepare to rise again. There's a need to spread my own **wings** – to step away from the tension and sadness, even if it's only to ride around and around in my car blasting some fun music, only to return home. There's the daily, weekly, yearly **orbit** of being on call. There's the redundant, lowlight monotony between red alerts – and more precious, knowing how and when to respond to an alert and when to put it down. There's the periodic beating my own **drum**, venting, whining and crying for help.

Going to the **mountaintop** and praying for mercy, coupled with going within and digging up resilience. **Carrying** an issue round and round with doctors and insurance, often ending up where we started. **Pushing** out the remains of the day, being open and ready to accept tomorrow. Tuning it all out to energize my batteries.

I can feel when I am **moving through sticky** dilemmas, weighing pros and cons of new medications or possible treatments. Having the courage to step forward and present my diagnosis to a doctor, **anchored** in my intimate monitoring of his status. Making plans for myself, over and over, only to get pulled down into another sticky dilemma. Watching over him, one thing **perpetually** followed by another, and the Groundhog Day quality of it.

I watch helplessly as his pulley goes from a rope to threads, from to a thread to a strand. Going from thinking hard and coming up with creative solutions, to wanting to pull my hair out. Inhaling as I bend down so I can safely lift him off the floor with one heave-ho. Remembering to suffer the leaves to fall, that this too shall pass. Reconciling that while his organs remain vital, his *Chi* becomes more faint, barely audible.

I continue this role so that when he passes I can stand tall, calmly, and without too many regrets. I will slowly release my hold, **ground**, pay my respects to the whole experience. **And move on.**

Justin taught us that "Awareness is the root ... love energy is the fruit." I marvel at how much love radiates from the core of TCC. Be it the practice, the heartfelt support I get from long distance teachers, or the perspective it provides as I stumble through the day-to-day of helping my folks age in place.

Being a TCC student, instructor and member of a larger community is no silver bullet. It ain't foolproof; just ask this fool. But it is proof that *Chi* and Love and Loving *Chi* are everywhere. And that Joy is like the sun, sometimes obscured, yet omnipresent.

And as if that weren't enough, this spring delivered yet another marvel: a connection with a fellow TCC teacher and caregiver. It's 2091 miles from her house to mine, but every day another mile falls away.

Distance Learning: TCC, Caregiving & Love

BY DENISE EMANUEL CLEMEN, OXNARD, CALIFORNIA

After my mother came to live with me, the names of the T'ai Chi Chih movements took on new depth. Daughter on the Mountain Top, Daughter in the Valley: Some days I was one, some days the other. Push Pull: My mother is my mother, even as I mother her. You should carry a gun, she'd tell me when I'd take a walk alone after dinner. Why can't you just tell me to have a nice time? I'd mutter, stalking out the door. Joyous Breath: Every breath is joy. Wait. Maybe not. Maybe the final breath holds the most profound joy. Light at the Top of the Head, Light at the Temple: Please. I'll take some light wherever I can get it.

Two and a half years into caring for my mother, I also became my boyfriend's caregiver. By then the movements themselves felt ripe with significance. Bird Flaps Its Wings was me watching my boyfriend soar back to health, me on the cusp of my freedom from my mother so I could better care for him – or his full recovery so I could better care for her. The actions of picking up and letting go in Around the Platter Variation spoke volumes. Maybe Pulling in the Energy and Six Healing Sounds would work miracles. Maybe Rocking Motion would comfort me. Maybe if I held Cosmic Consciousness Pose long enough and cast my gaze infinitely skyward, I'd find the strength I needed.

My boyfriend died in June of 2014. My mother is now in hospice, not yet actively dying, but traveling to the end of her life in inches. I'm still me. Beginning the fourth year of my role as a caregiver, I'm constantly learning and re-learning how to do it – sometimes fumbling a bit, sometimes getting through a day gracefully, occasionally immobilized by frustration and grief, unable to get off the couch.

TCC is not a miracle cure or a magic spell, but since becoming a teacher in October 2014, I've felt my practice deepen. The best days are the days that I teach and the days that I'm in class as a student, keeping company with my teacher. But every day I marvel at the love that radiates out from the core of TCC. The love I feel for my teacher and our friendship, the love for my fellow students who've walked with me, talked with me, and held me when I've needed holding, the love I feel for my own students as they find their *tan t'iens*, or soften their wrists, or settle into the soles of their feet.

And as if that weren't enough, this spring TCC delivered yet another marvel: a connection with a fellow TCC teacher and caregiver. It's 2091 miles from his house to mine, but every day another mile falls away.



Pyramid Poems

life
ever
on the move
limitations
melt away
let go
now
– D.K.W.

the
truth is
now revealed
my life is now
expressing
its truth
here
– LEYA

let
inner
wisdom guide
all thru the flow
feeling strength
grateful
peace
– S. MARSH

be
in the
here and now
thank you thank you
overflow
joyful
me
– PAULINE Q.

to
be still
awareness
what do I feel
gratitude
answers
all
– JUDY

light
awake
feet grounded
calmly aware
joyful breath
happy
peace
– J.C.M.

tired
long day
off to bed
nei kung, my friend
sleep awaits
sweet dreams
rest
– ANON

so
quiet
could hear all
chose instead to
hear nothing
at all
free
– SHERYL A.

nothing
is ever
static and the
only thing certain is
that nothing is
ever really
certain
– JOHNNY

when
I walk
in mountain
forests I can
witness love's
ancient
truth
– DAVID M.

20th Century Psalms: The Personal

BY JUSTIN F. STONE

Here are two Zen anecdotes that both make the same point: Dogen Zenji, founder of Japanese Soto Zen, ended his days at Eihei-ji [Temple], deep in the mountains to the north of Tokyo and Kyoto. He frequently took a dipper of pure water from the river there, but before he drank, he poured half of it back into the river. It is probable that the symbolism of this strange gesture was lost on the monks of the time.

Another Zen Master discerned great spiritual potential in a young Chinese boy, so he arranged for the child and his parents to live in a small cabin on the temple grounds while waiting for the youth to grow up. In gratitude, the boy's mother baked some cookies every day for the Master, who received them graciously when the child brought them to him. Then, inexplicably, he would hand three cookies back to the puzzled youth.

Realizing there might be a meaning to this unusual action, one day the boy asked the Master why he always gave back the three cookies.

"What's wrong with returning to you that which was originally yours?" was the Master's explanation.

A prominent lawyer and a metaphysically inclined girl from Latvia, hearing that Zen Master Joshu Sasaki was in Los Angeles, asked me if I could arrange an interview with him. When this was done, they went with me to his Zen Center on a steaming hot day in late summer. The lawyer was wearing only a t-shirt on top as we entered.

Before I could make the introductions, Roshi said to the lawyer: "Take off your coat and hat." The lawyer looked bewildered. "Remove your gloves and scarf, too," continued the Master. Noticing the lawyer's lack of understanding, Roshi asked, "Unless we strip down naked, how are we going to meet?" Of course, he had observed that the lawyer arrived full of his own concepts and opinions and merely wanted them confirmed. One can only pour tea into an empty cup.

The idealistic Latvian woman asked Roshi a question. "Why are there French, Chinese, Russians and so forth? Why must there be war?"

Roshi held up one hand and spread the fingers wide. "I have five fingers; why do I have five fingers?" he asked. With that I ran over, counted his fingers one by one, and affirmed: "Yep. He has five fingers."

After the meeting was over, the Latvian girl asked me why Roshi

hadn't answered her question. "He gave you the only possible answer." I exclaimed.

The Master, Takusan, was walking through the meditation hall one night when he came upon his disciple, So-So, sitting Zazen. Stopping in front of the meditator, the Master raised one eyebrow in inquiry. "A dark night and no travelers," stated the disciple. Then, in a burst of emotion, he exclaimed: "Master, I am cold." Anyone who has ever gone through the Dark Night of the Soul can sympathize with that complaint.

Immediately the Master brought his right hand down and cracked So-So hard across the face. An unexpected blow, it really stung. As the Master then began another blow with his left hand, So-So got up and ran, with the Master in hot pursuit. Out of the meditation hall they ran, across the walk to the Buddha Hall, through the corridors and out the other side. Running down a walk in the Zen garden, they suddenly came to a dead end. Panting, with sweat pouring down his face, So-So turned to face his tormentor. "Are you warm now?" snarled the Master. I read this great lesson in a small pamphlet printed in England, brought to my attention by Paul Reps. This is true teaching.

One time, in Baroda, India, some graduate students at the local university asked me if I'd like to meet a great Yogi. Naturally I said yes. Accordingly, we came together in late afternoon and went in a great, old-fashioned, open touring car down a country road into the usual spectacular sunset. It was a long drive, but we finally came to a dilapidated house in which most of the roofing was missing. Entering, I saw goats and birds inside and one man was roasting something over a fire in what might have been a sitting room. The air was decidedly unreal.

We were told that the Yogi was in Samadhi (the super-conscious trance state) and had been since the previous morning. This was a disappointment, but we decided to wait; time seems unimportant in India.



From the out-of-print book, *20th Century Psalms*, excerpted and reprinted with permission from Good Karma Publishing.

After a while I looked up and saw the noted Saddhu, with only a loincloth around his middle, standing in the archway of the door, looking dazed. Though he had come out of Samadhi, sensing the presence of visitors, to all intents and purposes, he was still in it. When he seated himself cross-legged on the ground the students – who called themselves “The Young Turks” because of their skeptical attitude – rushed forward spontaneously, one by one, and, prostrating themselves, kissed his feet. He took no notice.

I then sat in cross-legged fashion in front of him, and neither of us said anything. He was completely still except for his hands, which he clasped and unclasped as though to keep from exploding. The vibration, the sheer “livingness,” was overwhelming. I have never felt such force, even while meditating under a redwood or banyan tree.

We sat that way for a long time. No thoughts entered my mind; it was just enough to be alive in that presence. Then I rose slowly and bowed. Only his eyes moved. They were focused on me, literally looking through me. Slowly I backed toward the front door.

Once outside, The Young Turks swarmed around me. “Why didn’t you ask him something?” they inquired, as though his spoken answer would open the gates to all wisdom.

I smiled. “Did you miss it all?” I asked.

“Miss what?” they replied, mystified, but I only shook my head silently. We then got in the car for the long trip back through the densely black night, and the trip was made in silence.



Each time I go to Kyoto I visit Honen-In [Temple] to pay my respects to old Honen, the teacher of Shinran. Honen-In is a small Buddhist temple with beautiful grounds, located on the *Tetsugakusha na Michi* (Philosophers’ Walk) in the eastern mountains (hills, really) of old Kyoto. If I am fortunate enough to arrive on a day the giant Buddha (Amida Buddha, the Buddha of Infinite Light) is being aired, I can go in and see it. Only a few devotees will be there; very few people and almost no tourists go to Honen-In, just down the road from the popular Silver Pavilion.

Honen’s student, Shinran, is certainly one of the two dominant figures in Japan’s religious history, and Shin Buddhism (remembrance of Amida Buddha through repetition of the Nembutsu, *Namu Amida Butsu*) is by far the largest Buddhist sect (in fact, the largest religion if we exclude Shintoism from consideration as religion) in Japan. Zen is called a religion of Self Power and has always attracted small numbers while having great cultural influence. Shin (and each branch of it) is a religion of Other Power, with complete dependence on the vows made by Amida Buddha eons ago, before he became the Buddha of Infinite Light.

Shinran came to Honen after many troubled years as a monk, searching for, and not finding, peace in a different Buddhist sect, Tendai (from the Chinese *t’ien t’ai*). With Honen he quickly succeeded in his search and found much more.

Honen was born a Samurai, a noble of the Warrior Caste. His father was killed in a duel and, as he was dying, he said to his son: “According to the code of the Samurai, you must avenge my death. I do not want you to do this. I want you to shave your head, become a Buddhist monk, and work for the salvation of the man who killed me!” This is, I imagine, one of the most remarkable pronouncements in history.

A Samurai did not question his father’s judgment. Honen became a monk, later taught Shinran, and because of that, Jodo Shinshu and its devotees are found throughout the world. Is it any wonder I go there to pay respects to old Honen?



My Journey

BY OREANN KEMPADOO, SPRING VALLEY, NEW YORK

My journey began in July 2012. I was researching retirement activities that would fulfill my desire to continue to evolve and positively impact others. During my search, I read a hospital magazine listing various courses and activities. T'ai Chi Chih (TCC) immediately peaked my interest. I remembered that during many California visits with my daughter I'd observed peaceful people in the park calmly and effortlessly moving slowly but deliberately through various movements. At the time, I did not know that TCC was different from what I observed. I was eager to learn more about TCC and registered for the course. I felt an immediate connection in the first class.

Each class energized me, made me feel happy; I always looked forward to the next session. After several months of taking the class, instructor Bill Moore asked if anyone was interested in teaching TCC. At first I did not give this opportunity much thought. However the more I practiced TCC, the more I realized my growing interest. This was not an overnight realization; it took nearly two years to discover that becoming an instructor was my destiny. Dorene Krause, my other instructor, encouraged me to remove the barriers I was placing in my way.

After making the decision to prepare for the journey, I had doubts. During the countless hours of practice with instructors, workshops, commitment and focus, I questioned my decision. In November 2014 I attended a TCC intensive with facilitator, Dan Pienticak and host, Stacey Moore. This experience awakened the confidence to trust in myself and to be receptive to what TCC offers. A retreat with Antonia in January 2015 allowed me to refine my movements and open up verbally.

The teacher accreditation week in April 2015 was my most transformational experience. I looked forward to the practice sessions, but I dreaded the lectures and discussions. One might ask, "Why?" I shed many tears during the intensive and retreat, but neither had been more cleansing and rewarding than during the teacher accreditation.

The floodgates opened on the morning of my presentation. I was more tearful than usual. My shyness was consuming my being and restricted me from experiencing all that TCC was offering me. I was the first afternoon presenter and was overcome with fear. As I stood at the podium and looked into the audience to greet everyone, what I saw and experienced was unbelievable. Everyone knew I was shy, but what I saw were caring, supportive and loving faces. I felt a sense of community and well wishes, which I have never experienced from anyone other than family. I felt safe and comfortable enough to freely share my past experiences. I realized my shyness was suffocating and a heavy burden. It was liberating, letting go. Pam Towne commented that she too witnessed a change in me, especially in my posture. This transformation has been a rebirth of sorts.



*Front row: Jessica Lewis, Charlie Williams, Sr. Christa Thompson.
Back row: Stacey Moore, Host; Wendy Statuto, Julie Barrier, Teresa Lisum, Oreann Kempadoo; Pam Towne, Teacher Trainer*

On April 25th, 2015, I earned my accreditation to become a TCC instructor. I am now proud to be affectionately called "Lotus Flower" by my daughters and renamed "Blossom" by Tony Risos, a teacher-auditor. The power of TCC is endless and I am excited to continue my journey.

Seeing With TCC Eyes

BY WENDY C. STATUTO, HO-HO-KUS, NEW JERSEY

As I look back over my week of accreditation, it reminds me of my cataract surgery. Before surgery, I didn't know what I was missing. I thought a new prescription would clear things up. After surgery, I received an unexpected surprise: it was as if I could see for the first time. Colors were brilliant; everything was so clear and crisp. I had been looking through a layer of fog that was now lifted.

Such was the week of Tai Chi Chih accreditation, a week of change, a week the fog lifted. Each day I let go a little more; each day I grounded more; each day I felt the *Chi* getting stronger; each day I felt softer. And then the day came when I felt completely different: the fog had lifted. I now see through TCC eyes with a clarity and understanding that was unknown before this week.

Today, my graduation day, I am deeply grateful for all the teachers who gave their time to help me through this transformation and for my friends who journeyed with me. Our combined Chi is like no other; the TCC community is like no other I've known. We have been given the gift of TCC; it is a gift I will cherish for life, a gift I can share with others. Thank you.

A Reflection

By JESSICA LEWIS, CLAYMONT, DELAWARE

My primary intention on arrival was to be an empty vessel, and I feel as if I met that intention most of the time. (And given my past, being fully present to whatever is offered by whoever is offering it – even some of the time – is a paradigm shift.) The week was both exhilarating and exhausting. During times of exhaustion I felt old habit energies creeping in and I wasn't always capable of crowding them back out – at least that I was aware. I was also reminded of how fragile my sense of “what's so” can be, and of how precious the time spent in fully awake moments with fully awake people.

I am humbled by what I have learned about myself and by the certainty of all present this week (for you are all my teachers). I am now capable of bringing T'ai Chi Chih to a little corner of the universe and making a small impact on the quality of life. More than anything I am deeply honored to have had the opportunity to participate in what will undoubtedly be a supernova-moment in my memory. My gratitude is more than words can express.

Reflection

By TERESA LISUM, NEWTON FALLS, OHIO

I came to this teacher training with an open mind, thinking I was ready and prepared. I quickly found that I was – and yet was not. The days were full, sometimes long and intense, yet pleasant. My fellow candidates and auditing teachers helped make the experience pleasant. Pam and all of the T'ai Chi Chih community who filtered in and out created a supportive, caring atmosphere that allowed me to feel successful even when I was embarrassing myself. I was tense but relaxed; I was serious but had fun. The beautiful venue was filled with beautiful people. It was worth every minute. I am a better person because of it.

One More Reflection

By OREANN KEMPADOO, SPRING VALLEY, NEW YORK

April 19, 2015 was the beginning of a new chapter in my life. It has been a rewarding emotional roller coaster ride – like a rebirth or renewing of faith, trust and innocence. I have allowed myself to get rid of negatives, and I have replaced them with a new family of friendships, support, encouragement, love and acceptance. I am part of something great: I am part of the T'ai Chi Chih family.

What's in a name? I would like to introduce you to Blossom, the rebirth name given to me by Tony. I feel like a new person, and I attribute the change to all of you and the power of TCC. Blossom will continue to bloom. The transformation is quite visible.

How Have I Changed As A Result Of This Week?

By JULIE BARRIER, OAKLAND, NEW JERSEY

I began the week with the intention of deepening my practice to better prepare for teaching T'ai Chi Chih. On the second day, my intention was to be open and receptive to the teachings from students and teachers, to allow my body to feel each movement and to let go.

The community of learners was welcoming, supportive and full of loving Chi. It felt special to be part of this evolving process. I loved bonding with other students – we quickly became a united team interested in helping each other learn the movements. We felt safe enough to reveal our weaknesses and concerns about “not getting it – in awe of the patience and care we took with and for each other.

I began to appreciate that how to move is more important than what you move. Do I have the heart to teach? Be aware: Take TCC seriously rather than self. We students began to create our own laughing therapy – howling at each other's jokes and wit. What a hoot. We needed this outlet because the day's activities were challenging and sessions were intense. But the growing, changing, moving, loving *Chi* was always there in our community to inspire us to going deeper.

On the third and fourth days, my intention was to create the space to receive the lessons and to focus positively on how to present TCC. What would be the essence of my presentation and how would I connect with my audience? I wanted to express my joy of discovering TCC through softness, gratitude and sharing it for the gift that it is.

I was impressed by each student's presentation and how each personality flowed with sincerity and engagement. What a joyous relief to have the presentation part completed. Our student team rejoiced and celebrated with such laughter and happiness for each other.

After my presentation I felt the relationship between activating, balancing and circulating the *Chi* with my own sense of achieve, balance and commit. Now at the end of week, I feel confident enough in who I am in the moment to do my best in opening to deeper insights in the TCC journey. It's okay that I not know everything I think I need to know to begin to teach. As long as I stay grounded in my foundation, be gentle with self and others, and express my love of TCC, it's going to be an enriching experience. Each of us has transformed into a lotus flower each time we come into TCC practice. Thank you Justin Stone and the Cosmic Rhythm.

My Best Was Good Enough

BY CHARLIE WILLIAMS, TUPELO, MISSISSIPPI

During the tense week leading up to the T'ai Chi Chih teacher training, I bravely said to one of my teachers, "I'm going to simply do the best I can and if that's not good enough, I can live with it." During the training, however, I found it difficult to hold that mindset amidst long, busy and stressful days. The level of my sincerity was tested; I often conducted an inner search of my true values.

On the first day of teacher training I wrote down my primary objectives: to remain calm, stay open to new ideas, accept and learn from criticism, and give to those around me. As the week unfolded, I met most of these objectives, most of the time. However, giving to others seemed out of balance by the end of the week, since I received far more from the teacher trainer, auditors and peer candidates than I was able to give. Upon attaining accreditation, this imbalance calls upon me to give more to others as I return to daily life and begin teaching.

The brave mindset of simply doing my best was tested, but it helped me to better understand my commitment to teaching TCC. My best was good enough. I am grateful for this training experience and especially thankful for the support and encouragement of my teachers.

My Transformation

BY SISTER CHRISTA THOMPSON, ASTON, PENNSYLVANIA

When I came to the accreditation in April, I had one goal: to receive my accreditation. To me it was the key to teaching T'ai Chi Chih to the elderly in our retirement home, to poor students in our Chester school, to faculty members at our center, to women at Anna's Place (a Franciscan Place of Hospitality) in Chester, to women in prison. I was inspired by Justin Stone's words, "If enough people practiced T'ai Chi Chih, there would be peace in the world." The more I contemplated it, the longer the to-do list became. Although I was sick when I arrived at accreditation, I was determined to go through with it: the key to a future of creating Peace.

To my surprise, during those first days of practice my goal transformed. The key to being a teacher was not the actual accreditation. As the practices with other candidates, auditing teachers and the trainer moved forward, I was not just doing TCC, I was feeling an energy within – a letting go, a feeling and living of oneness, a letting the *Chi* be. As we candidates shared our stories and hopes (and as our auditing teachers and our teacher trainer affirmed and fine-tuned our moves), I was humbled and grateful to be connected universally to a community of peace. In May, I begin my journey as an accredited TCC teacher. I will introduce the movements to students, but more importantly I will share the essence of TCC: the path of softness and continuity.



Retreats Revisited

BY STU GOLDMAN, FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA

I attend retreats.

I was the only student of my instructor, a part time Florida resident. At the moment I am the only year-round teacher south of Orlando on the Eastern coast of Florida. In order to maintain touch with the T'ai Chi Chih community in person, I must attend retreats.

Retreats allow me to find companionship, communicate, commiserate and recommit. I have never questioned the purpose or the semantics. I have never sensed a retreat in anything other than a positive way, except, perhaps, the unreasonable fear that someday Pam Towne will think I am stalking her and hit me with a restraining order.

The other day, while reading Barry Boyce's editorial in the August issue *Mindful*, I was forced to question the very term retreat, which forced a new insight into both the form and function of the occasion.

Barry was writing about meditation as a retreat into one's self, as well as personal and group retreats where the participants enter into a number of avenues for self-enhancement. It was insightful and extremely worth reading in context. However, his last two sentences struck me, much in the way you slap your forehead in wonderment and jealousy when you come across a concept that is brilliant as well as obvious.

Barry wrote, "...And that is not a retreat. That is an advance." Wow. Go on, slap your forehead here. Makes you think, eh?

Have you ever left a TCC retreat in fear? Anxious? Have you ever hesitated at the exit, looking carefully left and right before sprinting in a squat run to the car? Have you ever just nonchalantly piled into the car, turned on the radio and not thought about anything? No, I think not.

I may not be able to change the label for these gatherings, but I am going to suggest an idea for the next time you attend an assembly of TCC practitioners: **Was it a Retreat or a Recharge?**

Honoring Justin's Wishes For TCC Teacher Candidate Preparation

By ANN RUTHERFORD, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

Before I left for the 2002 T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Conference in San Antonio, Texas, Justin gave me a typed letter he had written, asking me to read it aloud to the assembled teachers. It concerned his reflections on how to best solve the on-going problem of TCC teacher candidates arriving at trainings poorly prepared. Forum discussions centered around whether we should initiate a system whereby teacher prep students would be encouraged to attend an "intensive," a class wherein their movements would be assessed by one of the TCC teacher accreditors. After lengthy debate, the intensive was born and with it, a requirement that a second impartial TCC teacher evaluate the teacher prep student before she was admitted into the training. The second signature teacher was to be someone who could evaluate the student without the encumbrance of emotional attachment to the student.

Justin's words on the second teacher signature were as follows: "In the last issue of *The Vital Force*, someone suggested a teacher's training candidate being recommended by two teachers, his or her original teacher and one who is a relative stranger to the candidate, but the second one would be completely impartial. This might be the best way to check on a candidate to see if he or she is good enough to be accepted for the course. This method is used in Japan to approve the enlightenment of a monk preparatory to his becoming a Zen Master."

I have frequently sent my teacher prep students to Amy Tyksinski, a longtime teacher who is very gifted at spotting movement irregularities. In all cases, Amy did not know these students. All who worked with her have said how these sessions helped prepare them for the training. The choice of the second teacher has nothing to do with sentimentality. Recently, a teacher told me that she thinks the second signature teacher should be "the first teacher with whom the student took a class." I was very puzzled by this qualifier given Justin's specific admonition to choose an impartial teacher as the second signature. After the initiation of the intensive/second signature system, Justin quickly saw the beneficial results on the TCC students' preparedness for training. Although that 2002 conference was marked by spirited debate, it was well worth the time the community spent resolving the teacher prep problem.



Freedom

By DIANA BAHN, NEW YORK, NEW YORK

We have so much freedom these days that it is hard to conceive what it means to be *not* free until we fall from grace and lose our freedom. I know someone who took some freedoms and lost his job and reputation in the investigation. Where were his helpers, those other folks or his inner radar to cue him in that maybe he was getting too far from center?

When we practice T'ai Chi Chih regularly we become profoundly aware of the ground. At the same time, we move through the air and get to explore its place in our lives. **Many of us, through our movements, begin to realize that the things that have been binding us, restricting us, aren't coming from the outside.** I can only speak for myself when I recall the pain, lack of grace, embarrassment and critical approach I so often experienced doing Carry the Ball to the Side let alone Passing Clouds. I had no clue that the waist directed the movement, though I had received this instruction a thousand times. My arms, wrists and hands would do their own crazy dance, and I would inevitably be in prison yet again in my somatic self. This was a place I was quite familiar with after years of doing massage therapy for a living. I was yearning for a way to hack out of prison. So even my intention was imprisoning me. How did I finally spring from my cell?

I was recently in New Jersey spending the afternoon with Dan Pienciak and doing *Seijaku*. I had a *deja vu* moment; I think Dan and everyone else there did too. All of a sudden, I was in the soles of my feet without telling myself to be there. No words. It was even more than that, though. I forgot where I was. I forgot what the next movement was. And it didn't matter in the least. I had found the way. The interesting thing is that it was Dan reporting this. He was speaking of my exact experience and everyone else's, too.

It was so amazing and substantial. I had had one of the toughest years yet and suddenly, miraculously, I was transported to the now and I was free.

I think freedom is shared though we have to stand on our own two feet to find it. The more we practice TCC and experience this, the more we are transported to freedom. Perhaps my young friend some day will practice TCC and realize there is freedom in restraint.

Pacing With Hips

By RON RICHARDSON, TUPELO, MISSISSIPPI

As we gathered for the first T'ai Chi Chih practice at a teacher conference several years ago, a few people had already begun moving. One individual had her back to me and was moving so gracefully. Because I was not facing her I was not concerned about whom I was watching. Her waist and hips moved so slowly and lead her in a forward movement. It crossed my mind that if this was a new teacher I was impressed.

When this person turned around, it was Sandy McAlister. I felt a little embarrassed because she had been my teacher trainer and had led a Tupelo workshop. I mustered up the courage to tell her about my experience watching her. I kidded that I was a little disappointed to discover it was she I was watching.

This experience brought me in touch with the importance of letting the waist and hips lead a movement. By doing so, the pace of the movement is better established. I became more aware of my tendency to move too fast. Watching Sandy from the back drew my attention to her waist and hips – helping me to focus on her slow pace.

The pace of the waist and hips determine the pace at which the hands and other body parts move. I keep this pace in mind during all TCC movements. This is especially helpful during Pulling Taffy and Passing Clouds.

What a strange, teachable moment it was with Sandy. I am not sure I took anything else away from the conference as important. This one moment was well worth the trip.

Slow Down

By TERRY SLANEY, SUGAR GROVE, ILLINOIS

When I find my students speeding up while practicing, I remind them to slow down. I remind them that we are giving over this time and these moments to ourselves and the practice of T'ai Chi Chih. We bring our thoughts to the present moment. Then it's mindfulness. We flow as if each movement is the first; each part of every movement is a beginning. Flowing outward and inward are of equal importance; it's all one movement; our breathing is relaxed and regular.

Whether it's Rocking Motion, variations on Pulling Taffy, the Light(s) at the Top of the Head or Temples, or Passing Clouds, we consider each a beginning, always constant and mindful. No hurry, all joy, all TCC. Hope it makes sense. It seems to work in class to settle and calm us.

Nine-Word Meditations

By SONJA WALKER, MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

Rocking Motion

I Can Count To Nine
Clear it out. Blow it off. Let it go.

Bird Flaps its Wings

Lift Off
Soar and Sing while staying connected to the ground.

Around the Platter

Clean Your Plate
Smooth out the bumps. Or spit and make music.

Variation on Around the Platter

The Tenth Step*
Here it comes again. Practice makes progress. Just do it.

Bass Drum

Soup's Drum†
Underwear and humor go a long way toward balance.

Daughter on the Mountain

Up High
Left hand close to the heart: I am that daughter.

Daughter in the Valley

Down Low
We all hit bottom. Rising hands carry positive energy.

Carry the Ball to the Side

Circles
First left, then right, then soon to be complete.

Push Pull

New View On The Horizon
Pull in tomorrow, a brand new moment, sunrise – sunset.

Pulling in the Energy

It Will Come To Me
The universe always answers yes. Honor gifts with gratitude.

Pulling Taffy

Keep It Up
At times only hard work gets the job done.

Pulling Taffy, Variation #1, Anchor

A Different Take
For fresh perspective, try a new stance and angle.

Pulling Taffy, Variation #2, Wrist Circles

Smalls
Don't forget wrists, ankles. Beauty is in the details.

Pulling Taffy, Variation #3, Perpetual Motion

Cook Until Done
Kneading, stretching, smoothing. Continue until ready. Do your best.

Working the Pulley

Caveman
Honor our ancestors: inventors of what has come before.

Light at the Top of the Head

Turn it Over
I accept the things I cannot change or control.

Light at the Temple

Get Your Head On Straight
Today is what we have. Live it wisely, consciously.

Joyous Breath

Just Do It
Inhale. Exhale boldly. Release it. Emit air. Give forth.

Passing Clouds

Universal Smooth
Lose yourself in nature and the rhythms of earth.

Six Healing Sounds

Harmony
Trust. Smile. Love. Peace. Humility. Health. Spirit. Grace. Joy.

Cosmic

Consciousness Pose

Let Go And Let God
The wide horizon holds vast promise. Be grateful. Breathe.

*Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

†Children's book by Robert Newton Peck

Being TCC

By DONNA J. MOORE, BAINBRIDGE ISLAND, WASHINGTON

Paradoxically, the purpose of T'ai Chi Chih and other forms of meditation is to learn to be, without purpose. Nearly everything else we do is done for some purpose. Most of our actions are a means to an end and aim us at the future that does not exist.

Teachers frequently use the phrase "Let T'ai Chi Chih do t'ai chi." What does that mean? When no goal disturbs it, TCC (like all forms of meditation) allows us to discover the richness of the present moment. We glimpse the miraculous power of our own lives – not as they once were or how they might become but as they actually are now.

Practicing TCC is one of the few things in life that is about being, not doing. It is the art of being completely in the here and now. Alan Watts is quoted in *Chop Wood, Carry Water: A Guide to Finding Spiritual Fulfillment in Everyday Life*, where he gives these basic instructions originally written in an essay entitled "The Practice of Meditation:"

Simply sit down, close your eyes and listen to all sounds that may be going on – without trying to name or identify them. Listen as you would listen to music. If you find that verbal thinking will not drop away, don't attempt to stop it by force or willpower. Just keep your tongue relaxed, floating easily in the lower jaw, and listen to your thoughts as if they were birds chattering outside – mere noise in the skull – and they will eventually subside of themselves, as a turbulent and muddy pool will become calm and clear if left alone.

Also, become aware of breathing and allow your lungs to work in whatever rhythm seems congenial to them. And for awhile just sit listening and feeling breath. But, if possible, don't call it that. Simply experience the nonverbal happening. You may object that this is not "spiritual" meditation but mere attention to the "physical" world, but it should be understood that the spiritual and the physical are only ideas, philosophical conceptions, and that the reality of which you are now aware is not an idea. Furthermore, there is no "you" aware of it. That was also just an idea. Can you hear yourself listening?

A summer TCC practice led by Vanjie and Carol draws many moving meditators to the Mississippi River at Hidden Falls Regional Park in St. Paul.



The Power Of The Chi & Practice

By JIM SHORR, WILSONVILLE, OREGON

I asked a group of students this month: "What draws us inside ourselves to attain better balance and serenity?" The answer was clear. "It is a combination of the classes we do at the gym and feeling the energy affecting us in our home practice," Diane said. "When performing Six Healing Sounds this all comes together for me. I feel the Chi right after I do my swimming pool T'ai Chi and in our weekly practices," stated Laurie.

Musing about these statements I've come to realize that Justin's urging, "Practice, practice, practice is at the core of our realization when assessing progress."

"Community seems to draw folks from many locales to meet each other at a different level and to experience the Chi in a new or familiar setting. So, we hold practices in a few different Oregon communities: a downtown Portland church, a gym in Wilsonville, the Villebois community center, and promoted home practice. And we suggest folks attend Saturday practices in the Rose Gardens, where instructors rotate facilitating.

My fellow instructor, Neal Roy, constantly deepens his practice, leading new and accomplished students at Portland's Chinese Gardens. When we held a Daniel Pienciak-facilitated retreat a few years ago, Neal said, "It's open conversation for teachers to say to students: let's try this to see if it works for each of us. And then practice, practice." As it's said, "The future belongs to those who prepare for it."

A Poem

By MARY TAFOYA

Chi Moving
Energy Flowing
Stillness In The Moment

Flowing Strength
Peace Within
At-One-Ment Here Now

Attunement With Life!
Chi
Energy
Gentle Strength

Flowing In
Stillness And
Peace
Ahhhh
Attunement

TCC Versus Martial Arts

BY JAN PONCAR, OHIO

From teacher Lucinda Kutsko: Occasionally a student comes to my T'ai Chi Chih class who has previously been a student of one of the martial arts. I notice that for the first few classes he or she often struggles with softness and a defensive posture. It is rewarding when I see such a student soften in his or her movements and embody the essence of peace in TCC rather than martial arts aggression. Jan Poncar was one of these students who recently shared his TCC "conversion".

During my days in graduate school studying to become a counselor, I was exposed to mind/body connections and the benefits of mindfulness or meditation. Doing meditation techniques with like-minded people in small groups was comfortable and enjoyable, but I found it difficult to establish a routine by myself. I found a routine of daily running helped gain mindfulness and maintain physical health.

When T'ai Chi became prominent in the news and was touted as a way to develop mindfulness and maintain physical health, I became interested. I had a chance meeting with a former student who had earned a Black Belt in Kempo Karate, a style developed by Chinese Shaolin monks. He was starting his own school and would be teaching martial arts and T'ai Chi. I took his T'ai Chi classes for several years until his school closed.

I continued to practice T'ai Chi at home but was not making the progress I desired. I decided about a year ago to enroll in T'ai Chi Chih classes. **I soon found TCC was different than what I had been exposed to previously.** My former instructor taught movements based on martial arts. I learned several sets of forms. I was taught that one must always

imagine facing an opponent when performing the movements. Therefore, I always felt I was in a defensive mode, which was not conducive to gaining mindfulness and relaxation (which is what I hoped to achieve).

Learning TCC brought a new perspective in my quest for combining mindfulness, balance, exercise and relaxation. The emphasis on being grounded, moving with ease and developing the flow of *Chi* is relaxing yet exhilarating. Through gentle instruction, each session brings some new enlightenment in mind, body or spirit. **The opponent facing me has disappeared.**



Retirement: Dear Diary

BY MARJORIE ERICKSON,
HANOVER, PENNSYLVANIA

Retirement Day 6, T'ai Chi Chih Day 6

During the past week I watched my last high school graduation, enjoyed a twelve-hour celebration with friends, spent some time with family, enjoyed a day out with Chris, promoted T'ai Chi Chih in the park on Tuesdays during the summer, looked at a location to teach, held week-four of class in my home studio, began organizing monthly ladies' day out workshops, and ...

Retirement Day 10, T'ai Chi Chih Day 6

Poor communication turned a fun morning bicycling ride into more of a chore. The central air-conditioner stopped working, and the part needed won't arrive for several days. A customer was unhappy because I sent her the wrong item, and it was damaged in transit.

Retirement Day 15, T'ai Chi Chih Day 11

Learned the proper way to change gears when riding uphill. Started riding several joyful mornings in a row. Weather cooled down to the 70's, so no need for air conditioning. Customer shipped the item back, was refunded, posted a five-star rating with the comment, "Great seller – sets thing right when a mistake is made."

What a lesson. I'm back in the flow.

Half way through my public education career I became an accredited TCC teacher. I remained motivated by teaching classes once a week in various locations, and attending the annual conference, intensives and retreats. I truly believe in the way *Chi* balances and helps keep a body mentally and physically healthy. It also keeps positive energy flowing.

As a new chapter opens in my life I am seeking more opportunities to share TCC with others. It appears TCC will be sharing opportunities with me, too.

All The Kids Are The Best Kids

By JUDY HENDRICKS, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

I recently returned to a school where I'd taught for years. The elementary kids had been my favorite kids to teach, although I was a bit worried the first day when 38 kids came into the gym when I'd requested a class of 20 to 25. Madeline, the director, assured me that they all wanted to do T'ai Chi Chih. The kindergartners, first- and second-graders entered the gym and lined up in silence.

I stood on the stage so the kids could easily see me move. (When there is no stage, I often have the kids sit down while I demonstrate the movement so they can all see what I'm doing.) I had 30-minute classes. I really enjoyed teaching these kids and found it easy since they were so quiet and respectful. They began to flow quickly. Kids can't really do TCC if they are talking to the kids next to them. When I asked what they noticed about their TCC practice, many shared their experiences: "My nightmares have gone away. I feel calm. I'm happy. My brother is nicer to me." And after the summer break was over, most kids reported that they had practiced during the summer. I thought these kids were different than other kids at other schools.

The next year there was a new director, but I didn't think that would change anything. Imagine my surprise when I invited another TCC teacher to observe these great kids who now spent most of the class talking and not doing much TCC. I was in shock.

I realized many things after that class: those kids weren't unique; they were following the expectations of their new director and those teaching them. All kids in all schools could be well behaved and participate in a TCC class. Knowing that quiet kids move better and get the benefits of TCC, having them be quiet was really important. I discussed my new expectations with the new director. The kids were much better the next time.

I was now going to a school I'd not been to recently. I remem-

bered that these kids had been challenging to teach and had not been practicing. So I emailed the director to ask that the kids enter the gym in silence and to make sure they'd used the restroom beforehand. Some came in talking. After they sat down, I looked each child in the eyes while they told me their names. Two assistants and the director were with me. I explained that TCC doesn't work when they are talking.

These kids listened well, followed my directions and moved well. After class, both students and assistants wanted to talk about TCC. Some kids were among those who hadn't wanted to participate last year. Now they were really interested. The only thing that changed was my and their teacher's expectations.

Now I know that all kids in all schools are the best kids. I share my expectations, knowing that if they are not quiet I can't teach them TCC. And knowing all the great benefits of TCC, I don't want any of them to miss out.

I remember a story from *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*. When a monk heard a butcher respond to a customer who had asked for the best piece of meat, and the butcher said that all his meat is the best meat, the monk became enlightened.

I recently went to two new schools and, knowing all kids are the best kids, they all behaved and moved so well. At one school there are 40 kids in my classes, and it is amazing to see them flowing during the very first class.

When they get a little restless, it's time for Six Healing Sounds, which I always teach during the second class. It is impossible to talk to the kid next to you while doing Six Healing Sounds. And when the kids are quiet and start moving, I can hear Justin asking me, "Are you teaching the kids T'ai Chi Chih?" He would always ask this when I happened *not* to be teaching any classes. And now I feel him in the gym with us. I smile knowing that all kids are the best kids.



College Students Reflect Maximum Chi

By DONNA McELHOSE, WILDWOOD, ILLINOIS

Last semester, my intermediate college class (all of whom have been together for three years – and some as long as 10) worked with Justin’s books. Everyone read and practiced many of the meditations in Justin’s *Meditations for Healing*. They started with the *Nei Kung*, and each week another meditation was added. They were to practice each until the last two weeks; then they would do the ones they felt most comfortable with.

This semester, the class was instructed to arrive five minutes early, get settled and at the start of class, I set a timer for five minutes. We’d be quiet. When the chimes went off, students moved to the practice area without speaking and, with a one-word suggestion from me (perhaps serenity), we would do a 40- to 45-minute practice mostly in silence. Students spent about two-thirds of their 110-minute class in silence.

The class has done the “Maximum Chi Program,” so we practiced the massages and the *jing* but no toning. They used one or both types of visualizations during the next part. Most are very comfortable with their choice of meditation(s) from last semester. The breathing and breath counting was the most popular. After practice they silently returned their places. Since some students had never meditated, we started at seven minutes and finished the semester at twenty minutes. They were all up to the challenge and were very excited about their results.

Near the end of the semester, I asked the students to write about how they felt about classes this semester, which ended in May. The following comments are from the class:

“I don’t know what caused the wonderful **quietude** that possessed me during our class practice today: thinking in my feet; following the teacher’s movements as closely as possible; watching my breath in the meditation before the practice and the one after the prac-

tice; listening to the tranquility CD (although I don’t remember a single sound of it); doing the massages and jing. Maybe the “cause” was simply being in a group of T’ai Chi Chih practitioners.” – BY JEFF HOEPNER, ROUND LAKE BEACH, ILLINOIS

“At today’s T’ai Chi Chih practice, we were asked to think about “serenity” during our practice. **After a few movements I began to feel so very safe and secure.** I am grateful that the people I practice with help me feel comfortable enough to let go and allow this serenity to wash over me. My group practice is one of the few places I instantaneously feel welcomed, loved and accepted, immediately upon arrival. This is consistent with every practice I attend. Even if I feel out of place elsewhere, there’s always a feeling of serene peace within me knowing that I belong in my TCC group.” – BY MONICA MOTYKA, LAKE ZURICH, ILLINOIS

“In our intermediate class this term we have a new structure. We start with five minutes of sitting silently. Then we have a full practice with no notes or instruction. Then we return to our seats quietly and meditate for ten- to 20-minutes. Wow. All of these steps quiet my mind and allow me to get deeper into the T’ai Chi Chih experience. Together they are extraordinarily beneficial in softening my body and stilling my mind. To me, this is the culmination (the high point) of the classroom part of my TCC experience. The time left in the class for technical instruction or for discussion is much deeper and more focused because of the three-part quiet introduction.” – BY RICHARD DYE, BUFFALO GROVE, ILLINOIS

“Before our T’ai Chi Chih class began this semester, one of our classmates suggested we begin each session with a few minutes of quiet sitting and meditation. Though we don’t have rush hour traffic to contend with to get to class, each of us probably comes with the **usual distractions of daily living.** So this few minutes of meditation served to calm and focus me before beginning the practice. The calmness and focus carried

on into doing the movements. I felt the flow of energy and by the end of practice a deep relaxation. As a class, we seemed to move well and in sync together.” – BY NANCY LECRAW, LIBERTYVILLE, ILLINOIS

“I have really come to benefit more from this class, since we have moved to the more structured practice. I feel very centered after our five-minute beginning meditation. Moving into a silent practice, we practice roughly 45 minutes, then silent movement again and back to our seats for a 15-minute meditation. I am experiencing a deeper quality of meditation than before. I am more at peace and centered, and I credit that to our instructor including more structure to our class.” – BY GERRI SLAPPY, GURNEE, ILLINOIS

“Having a quiet meditation before and after practice anchors me in the peace and serenity that is the fruit of the flowing *Chi*. Doing this as a group **exponentially expands this vibrant peace** and helps me feel connected to the group and the world beyond. I come out of class a very happy human being.” – BY DOTTY HOEPNER, ROUND LAKE BEACH, ILLINOIS

“By starting with meditation before engaging in our class practice I am able to begin my practice in a more peaceful, relaxed manner. **The *Chi* begins flowing right away** as my mind has all ready been stilled. Following up with a longer meditation after our class practice allows the serenity that has come during practice to deepen. The peaceful state of mind then stays with me for the remainder of the day.” – BY TRACY IMMORDINO, TREVOR, WISCONSIN



CONTINUED ON P. 23

CONTINUED FROM P. 22

Peaceful/At Peace
Invigorated
Free
Open
Calm/Tranquil
Loved/Loving
Happy
Stress free/No Cares
Floating on Air
Joyous
– BY JEANNE FITZGERALD,
LAKE VILLA, ILLINOIS



“Breathing before group practice slows down as I slow down.

My mind focuses only on breathing in and out – and how it feels as I do this. The practice starts more relaxed; I’m more in tune with my inner self. The more I get into T’ai Chi Chih, the slower I go. I’m always thinking/returning to the soles of my feet. I feel as if in a trance of tranquility, not paying attention to my surroundings. My body feels as if swimming through heavy air with the moves. My heart and breath slow down. After practice, I sit with the others in quiet meditation. My body slowly lets go as I focus on my breath. **Time doesn’t exist for fifteen minutes.** I feel peace, free and focused on my breathing. My heavy legs and shoulders let me go deeper.” – BY KATHY LENZEN, MUNDELEIN, ILLINOIS

Virtues of Virtual TCC

BY JAN KIRCH, LIBERTYVILLE, ILLINOIS

I have been a student practitioner of T’ai Chi Chih for the past 12 years under the guidance of Donna McElhose. Unpredictable personal events recently prevented me from attending regular TCC classes. But being able to capture a few moments when they presented themselves was an immense salvation. Doing my personal practice allowed me to focus internally.

While practicing one day at the same time as my class, I had some key observations. While I always feel the energy, I was surprised to have an extreme sensation of energy flowing – especially in my arms and fingers. It wasn’t until a week later that I learned that the class had been instructed to focus on their upper bodies throughout their practices. I can only assume the sensations I experienced confirmed the theory that energy travels in mysterious, unseen ways. Was I the recipient of the group’s energy?

The collective energy that a group generates was powerful and realized. The potential for global and universal intention seems apparent. By exploring the virtues of virtual TCC we may be amazed.

After Teaching My First Series Of Classes

BY DIXIE ADENIRAN, VENTURA, CALIFORNIA

I am a new T’ai Chi Chih teacher, accredited in October 2014. At the senior center where I teach two classes a week, we have finished the first series of classes. My beginner students know the rudiments of the practice. We learned their choreography, names and order. Awareness of the *Chi*, and how to move, has grown in all of us. The benefits of the practice are revealing themselves. Our last class was special. It was our first silent circle practice with music. The *Chi* flowed and we all felt a deepening of our practice with enjoyment and satisfaction.

They say that teaching is the best way to learn. I am learning a lot. The practical stuff includes getting a city business license, liability insurance, state seller’s permit, business cards, a flyer; deciding how to arrange the room and what music to use.

The teacher stuff includes:

- Bringing the Teacher’s Mind to class;

- Asking the *Chi* to help me see what needs to be seen and to say and do what is most helpful;
- Taking charge of the class;
- Knowing when to be silent;
- Learning what formation to put the students in for best learning and practice;
- Using “effortless effort” in teaching and practicing;
- Helping open the awareness of students to the *Chi*;
- Making it fun and mindful.

The teacher training manual received during the accreditation week was a great help.

Thank you to the *Chi*, Justin, all my teachers and especially my students. The second set of classes starts soon. There will be an ongoing class and a class for beginners, but all will be welcome in both classes.

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Community Calendar

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

DATE / WHAT & WHERE / CONTACT

Aug 6-9 | Teacher Conference | Black Mountain, NC | Vicki Schroeder | vickitcc@gmail.com
Aug 9-11 | Seijaku Accreditation w/ Pam | Black Mountain, NC | Dan Pienciak | 732-988-5573
Aug 9-11 | Seijaku Introduction w/ Dan | Black Mountain, NC | Dan Pienciak | 732-988-5573
Sep 9-13 | TCC Intensive w/Pam | San Antonio, TX | Alice Holden | 210-525-1232
Oct 16-18 | TCC Workshop w/Sandy | Tupelo, MS | Ron Richardson | 662-844-6473
Oct 23-24 | TCC Workshop w/Sandy | Kansas City, MO | Lorraine Lepine | 913-901-8818
Oct 25-29 | TCC Intensive w/Sandy | Philadelphia, PA | April Leffler | 610-532-6753
Oct 27-30 | TCC Retreat w/Pam | Santa Barbara, CA | Pam Towne | 760-421-7589
Oct 29-Nov 1 | Prajna Retreat w/Sandy | Philadelphia, PA | April Leffler | 610-532-6753
Nov 16-21 | Accreditation w/ Dan | Albuquerque, NM | Mary White | 505-980-7329
 ~ 2016 ~
Feb 24-28, 2016 | TCC Intensive w/Sandy | Littleton, CO | Marie Dotts | 970-412-9955
Apr 10-13 | TCC Teacher Symposium w/Sandy | Aston, PA | April Leffler | 610-532-6753
May 29-Jun 3 | TCC Accreditation w/TBA | Aston, PA | April Leffler | 610-532-6753
June 19-25 | TCC Accreditation w/ Dan | Littleton, CO | Marie Dotts | 970-412-9955

- MORE WORKSHOPS & RETREATS -

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

Aug 22 | TCC Workshop w/ Sharon Sirkis | Marriottsville, MD | Sharon Sirkis | 410-730-1986
Aug 23 | Seijaku Workshop w/ Ann Rutherford | Saratoga, CA | Darlene Karasik | 408-867-3567
Sep 19 | TCC Workshop w/ Sharon Sirkis | Marriottsville, MD | Sharon Sirkis | 410-730-1986
Sep 24-27 | Learn Seijaku Retreat w/ Carmen Brocklehurst | Albuquerque, NM | Judy Hendricks
 | 505-897-3810
Oct 9-11 | TCC Workshop w/ Amy Tyksinski | Loveland, CO | Marie Dotts | 970-412-9955
Oct 24 | TCC Workshop w/ Sharon Sirkis | Marriottsville, MD | Sharon Sirkis | 410-730-1986
Nov 21 | TCC Workshop w/ Sharon Sirkis | Marriottsville, MD | Sharon Sirkis | 410-730-1986
Dec 19 | TCC Workshop w/ Sharon Sirkis | Marriottsville, MD | Sharon Sirkis | 410-730-1986

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