

The Vital Force

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for teachers & students

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Justin Stone: Teaching Tips

Teaching Tips For Teachers

(Also Valuable For Students) BY JUSTIN STONE

~ THE MOVEMENTS AND THEIR KEYS (OR, WHAT TO LOOK FOR) ~

“Working the Pulley” is a wonderful “exercise” for the waist. On the left side, the student starts by pushing forward the left hand as the body turns right from the waist; then, as the left hand pulls back and the right hand pushes forward, the torso (waist up) turns nearly 180 degrees to the left so it is facing the left side, not facing forward as careless students are apt to do. The turn is completely to the opposite side, not facing forward, but in the opposing direction. Also, it should be stressed that the hand that is pulled back, palm up, comes back in a horizontal line at the waist or slightly above it. Then the hand pulls back slightly *behind* the body and comes up and over the shoulder (not way out to the side) in a swimming motion. The ending will have to be taught by demonstration, so that the two hands come down together. The movement can be ended either by stepping forward or stepping back, but most teachers prefer to do it and teach it by stepping back.

~ ~ ~

“Light at the Top of the Head” is done softly. After the hands above the head swing out and back three times, the two hands are slowly twirled to the count of six (silent count), and then held stationary for a count of six, before swinging out again. On the descent to the “rest” position, be sure the right hand goes under the left.

~ ~ ~

“Joyous Breath” is the only movement done with pressure, creating tension. After pushing down into the ground on an out-breath, we pull up to the chest, rising on the toes, with a *deep* in-breath. Then, after a very short pause (do not keep the student standing on the balls of the feet!) we come down stopping at four levels, each time breathing out more of the breath. By the time we are flat on the feet, with turned-down hands along the legs, all the breath should have been exhaled. I have known students who like to do this movement at the beginning of practice, before “Rocking Motion,” and there is nothing wrong with that.



Justin Stone

From the booklet “Teaching Tips For Teachers”, excerpted and available for free download from Good Karma Publishing (www.gkpub.com) and in print form for a small fee from the New Mexico T'ai Chi Chih Center (taichichihassociation.org).

The key to “Passing Clouds” is to bring the hand sweeping low close to the opposing elbow. The elbows are held close to the side all through the movement; do not allow a wild, free-form waving of the hands. Naturally the sweeps are close to the face and the body, and the lower hand is almost fully extended toward the ground.

It may be easier for the teacher to work with one hand at a time, then putting them together in the opposing circular motion. Be sure the weight shifts from side to side. Do not allow the student to anchor the legs, then stand rigid and straight as the hands and arms do the work. The “yinping and yanging” of the legs is all important, with both feet flat on the ground.

~ ~ ~

It should be explained to the student that the sounds of “Six Healing Sounds” are from ancient China and certainly did not originate with this writer, though the movements to which the sounds are set did begin here. It is not important that the student know which sound belongs to which internal organ. Actually, there is some controversy over one or two of the sounds, almost inevitable when we consider how long these sounds have been passed down by word of mouth. They were kept for really sincere seekers.

We push out and breathe (not shout) the sounds vigorously, aspirating them rather than saying them with the vocal chords. When we turn the wrists and push to one side or the other, the hands are at waist level, not hanging all the way down. This means the wrists are cocked, and both hands are turned in the same direction.

~ ~ ~

The “Cosmic Consciousness” pose concludes practice, and it can be held for any length of time the teacher desires. Be sure to point out that the left heel is held against the little knob on the right leg (ankle bone) that separates the foot from the ankle. If a student has problems with balance, suggest that he or she practice the posture at home, and usually the difficulty will go away.

May The Vital Force Be With You

INTERVIEWS IN THIS ISSUE

The Vital Force posed the same series of questions to a number of T'ai Chi Chih teachers in the community, with the intention of sharing their light. We have published the first four interviews in this issue, and we hope and expect to share more throughout the year. Whether you are a student or teacher, we also hope they inspire you vis-a-vis their thoughtfulness, integrity, vibrancy and the sheer variety of voices within our community. Enjoy.

YOUR VF MEMBERSHIP & TEACHER WEBSITE LISTING

The Vital Force will not charge non-subscribing teachers for their listing on www.taichichih.org/tai-chi-chih-teachers, as outlined in the November issue. Although it costs \$39.52 for us to produce the four quarterly issues of *The Vital Force*, which carries a \$40 U.S. membership fee, thereby leaving nothing leftover to operate www.taichichih.org, we hope enough readers will donate to *The Vital Force* to cover these operating expenses.

ANDREA VARGAS STUDIO – FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

"As an artist I frequently create in response to ecological disasters and aspects of violence against the body. However, with T'ai Chi Chih I can hear and honor my spirit's desire to create with peace and love. What I have contributed to *The Vital Force* is a collection of paintings that utilize the energy and spirit of water.

To work with pigment and water is to balance control with surrender, rhythm and practice. For me, there is constant joy and learning available with a process that honors the cycle of life, the polarities of energy and the power of *balance*.

I now live and work in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Southern California. I give thanks that with the support and inspiration of Lisa Otero, T'ai Chi Chih has given me a language for the energy I hold in my hands, and a means to expand in joy and love with each breath."

WITH GRATITUDE. KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Karmic Comments

SPECIAL GOOD KARMA PUBLISHING ANNOUNCEMENT

It was an extraordinary honor and privilege to work closely with Justin; to build and broaden GKP's presence; to keep Justin's work alive and bring his materials and profound messages to new levels; and to interact with every single teacher and student who called on GKP.

Due to irreconcilable differences with the majority of the GKP Board of Directors, and rather than see the dissolution of GKP (as one member proposed), I resigned as CEO from GKP, Inc., effective 13 February 2015.

I have been grateful for the opportunity every day. I'm sorry this day has come, Justin. I did my best. I wish GKP every success.

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

Gifts to *The Vital Force* are fully tax deductible, always appreciated and used effectively to reach tens of thousands of practitioners around the globe.

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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Today Is A Beautiful Day

By LINDA JONES, BENNETTSVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA

The clock reads 3:16 a.m. on January 1st. I lie awake with so many thoughts running through my mind. Be present. Be present. Being present is the thought that keeps popping up the most. I have to remain in the present.

Last week, as 2014 was winding to a close, I was reflecting on the lives and deaths of my parents. Both of their bodies ceased to exist at the young ages of 68. My mother's life was changed forever at age 62 when she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Surgery, followed by aggressive chemotherapy, drove the cancer from her body but also destroyed her kidneys. Dialysis kept her alive for six more years. As dialysis drained her body of toxins, salts and excess fluids that her kidneys could no longer filter, she suffered greatly with such grace and courage. While dialysis was sustaining her life, it was also destroying the remaining organs in her body.

The healthy part of my mom's life ended when she was 62. Having reached this age myself this year, I wondered if I would have the same grace and courage that she exhibited if I were diagnosed with the same disease. We speak of balance so often when we cite the many benefits of T'ai Chi Chih. Those who have practiced TCC for a long time realize that the practice isn't just helping you keep your balance physically as you yin and yang. But that is the kind of balance that first comes to mind. That is the kind of balance we promise new recruits to TCC.

*I must be present
as much as possible
to experience and
enjoy every second
that I have left*

Recently I started wobbling and losing my balance as I practiced. I started falling down for no apparent reason. I would just suddenly be on the floor. My body was covered with bruises. Suddenly I was having difficulty talking. My mind knew exactly what I wanted to say, but the words just wouldn't come out. My mind would also instruct a body part to move, but the body would not follow through.

Due to chronic physical challenges, I am on a regimen of numerous medications. At times I would envision each drug as a little soldier inside my stomach battling the symptoms of my physical problems, but also battling one another. Convinced that the numerous medications were causing the problem, my doctor and I experimented with the timing and dosage of the medications.

Relief set in when the aphasia almost disappeared and I was no longer constantly falling down. So, during the last few days of 2014, I began making plans to start teaching TCC early in 2015.

Early in the morning on New Year's Eve, plans for classes were dancing through my mind as I was lying on a table in a hospital having a CT scan of my brain. The scan went quickly, and afterwards I went food shopping and out to lunch. I was so happy to be out walking without falling and talking a mile a minute clearly. I'd already forgotten the morning test. I was looking forward to teaching TCC, visiting New Jersey in February when I would take the Reiki II course, attending the Santa Barbara TCC retreats in March, auditing the TCC teacher training in Aston in April, leaving for Europe a few days later to travel for over a month, attending the TCC conference in early August and attending Antonia's Aston retreat in August where I would celebrate my 63rd birthday. Life was beautiful. 2015 was going to be a wonderful year.

Then the phone rang. Global cerebral atrophy.

More tests will be scheduled to determine the exact cause. The cause will best determine how much longer I will live and to estimate approximately when I will begin exhibiting substantial dementia. At that moment, the word and thought of impermanence popped into my head like a flashing neon sign.

Now, more than ever, I must be present as much as possible to experience and enjoy every second that I have left. To make new memories and friends that I will soon forget as dementia sets in.

Even as I write this, though, my mind strays to the future. Will I forget the form of TCC? How long will I continue to recognize the members of my TCC family? There are no answers to these questions, and I must put them to rest and bring myself back to the present. Be present. Be present.

Today, the first day of 2015, is going to be a beautiful day.



"Equilibrium 1" by Andrea Vargas

Growth & Friendships

By JUDY GEORGE, ROSEVILLE, MINNESOTA

T'ai Chi Chih has given me friendships from all walks of life and all over the world. These are people from all different backgrounds who come together to practice a moving meditation that unites us as one. What a gift, huh? The greatest gift is love. As Justin says in *Spiritual Odyssey*, "Love energy is the fruit." Don't you just love that?

I am celebrating 20 years of being an accredited TCC teacher and have loved every minute of it. In coaching students to become teachers, I am humbled and continue to grow in the practice that brings me peace, joy, forgiveness, lots of love, love, love, and an awareness that deepens with each new event in my life. Joys, sorrows and suffering – in my own personal family and in my TCC family. I am so grateful.

I am playing with my movements and continue to find things to refine, refresh, renew, release, rejuvenate. Find any "r" words that work for you. Like the all-fun-loving "resting pose." **It's great to be a long time student in this journey.** It's like working on my habit energies. I look, feel, move ... then refine, refresh, release and rejuvenate. It's definitely a work in progress. I love learning from other teachers and students.

Right now I am sharing with the students the abbreviated movements of TCC to get them to practice more and it's working. I have done this in the past, and they enjoy doing the full practice. This helps them learn the names of the movements, helps people who do not want to do the seated form (yet cannot stand for the full nine repetitions), and **it keeps them coming back to classes each week.**

They feel confident; they are growing in their practice with a flow that brings a sense of balance, accomplishment and peace. Isn't that what we want? I know we want circulation, too, but that's a surprise that their internal being is getting without them even realizing it. **We want our people to feel successful, confident and flowing with a grace that creates a ground that brings value to who and what they are.**

I love sharing this gift of TCC. Thank you to Justin, and to all the people who have shared generously their talents and love of TCC throughout the years. May we all continue to be blessed, grow in love of all things and be guided by light, and truth and integrity.

The Gift That Keeps On Giving

By JIM SHORR, WILSONVILLE, OREGON

My December holiday gift came in the form of three new members of our exurban Joy with Movement group here in Wilsonville. One couple had moved from Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, and noticed our community bulletin board flyer featuring a photo of the Cosmic Consciousness pose and Around The Platter Variation. They were yoga students, felt the flow early in their T'ai Chi Chih movements, and stay after class to ask questions and refine the movements. The third new member, a college math teacher, singled out "the taffies" and Working the Pulley as "the way to synchronize my left brain mind with my right brain spirituality." It's no coincidence she is a Libra.

Life is abundant, if we allow it to be. In this season of gratitude to Justin and my Portland area co-teachers appreciation is at the top of the list. In gratitude.

Joy

By DIXIE ADENIRAN, VENTURA, CALIFORNIA

“At the center of our being is joy; all we have to do is allow it to shine through,” writes Justin Stone in *Meditation for Healing*.

I find myself with a wide smile and joyful heart, especially while doing Light at the Top of the Head/Light at the Temple. When the wrists let the hands open above the head and at the temple, I feel that I am letting the joy out. When the arms open into the great circles at the close of each part of the movement, I feel the joy filling me.

Then comes Joyous Breath. Breathing in deeply, the *Chi* and joy rise. Exhaling, they permeate the whole being.

Joy sits in us, sometimes unknown. Gratitude to T'ai Chi Chih for allowing it to shine through.

New Beginnings

By DIXIE ADENIRAN, VENTURA, CALIFORNIA

The new teacher:

- Deciding to take the T'ai Chi Chih teacher training course with my teacher Lisa Otero.
- Becoming an accredited teacher in October in Santa Barbara with Pam Towne.
- Putting myself forward to find students.
- Committing to teach my first classes in January 2015.

The practice:

- Feeling transition from a physical practice to an energy practice.
- Each movement inviting new understanding and a new way of seeing.
- Finding deeper joy and quieter meditation.

Every moment:

- The new year.
- The new dawn.
- The new me. Not the same as even a moment ago.

Musings About Teaching & Connecting

BY AMY TYKSINSKI, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Teaching TCC: Why do you do it?

I initially began teaching TCC because I was told, "It's best if you start teaching right away." I was an obedient student and I listened to that directive. Over the years, my focus has changed from a more mechanical approach (where do the hands and feet go?) to a more feeling-sensing approach (what does swimming through very heavy air feel like on the inside?) What compels me most recently is how to help students access the principle of "the effort of no effort" through their *tan t'ien*. In addition to doing lots of TCC, we play often in my classes through multi-sensory activities to get at the inner and outer sensation of the essence of "the effort of no effort" and the other principles as expressed through the TCC form. And, for the first time in 20 years, I'm taking a semester off from teaching TCC. This chosen break from teaching feels liberating and rejuvenating and a little scary.

What does it mean to you to teach TCC? What do you think you're giving to others and what do you get?

Teaching TCC gives me the privilege of sharing a tool that can facilitate human beings to connect to themselves and their own divinity. It gives me great joy to witness the development of this connection. Also, what I'm usually working on in my own TCC practice (and in life – they are not separate) becomes a field for experimentation with my students. These days I am very intrigued by the question (paraphrasing Pema Chodron's words), "Where am I too tight, where am I too loose?" or in other words, "Form is emptiness and emptiness is form." I remain convinced that the practice of TCC gives us a doorway into direct experiencing of this blissful unity.

What have you found to be the most effective ways (for you personally) to keep spreading the word, interesting new students, keeping current students engaged?

For me, the most effective way to keep current students engaged is to continue to refine my ability to meet them where they are and see where they want to go. This approach means getting my own agenda out of the way and really listening deeply to the movement of *Chi* in each individual student while still holding a container for the growth of the group as a whole. At the same time, I seek neither to abandon the wisdom that might want to express itself through me. Learning to accord with the timing of this dance is delicious and challenging.

The other most effective way to teach TCC for me is to keep going deeper into TCC myself. The more engaged I am with the practice, the more I am led and find this path to be imminently trustworthy.



Justin Stone with Amy Tyksinski

Training the next generations of TCC teachers

Do you think moving more qualified students toward becoming TCC teachers is an important part of building the future of TCC? Is this a focus of your teaching?

Ideally, I believe moving qualified students toward becoming TCC teachers is a worthy effort. However, I feel strongly about a student's readiness therefore I am not in a hurry to produce new teachers. I am enthusiastic about cultivating an environment where students feel excited to explore who and what they are through the practice of TCC. Because my current population is high school students, I am particularly mindful of their emotional development and ability to stay grounded in their bodies (which I observe to be less formulated than in many adults). These two factors contribute to my caution in pushing young people to become teachers too soon.

What are the best ways (that you've found, for you personally) to move qualified students toward teacher accreditation?

One of the most effective ways I've found to deepen all students' understanding of TCC is to have them practice verbally communicating the elements of a given movement to another student or in front of a larger group. Students quickly discover what gaps still remain in how they first understand the movement in themselves and second, can communicate it to others. What happens through this interesting approach is that certain students realize they enjoy communicating in front of a group and in fact, are good at it.

The other extremely effective way I've found to move qualified students towards teacher accreditation is through a journal-dialogue. I interact on a weekly basis through writing back and forth with my students. This form of communication helps me understand how to nurture their TCC experience.

When I have repeat students (taking the class for multiple semesters), by the second semester we are reading more of Justin's works and when appropriate delving into *Seijaku* (TCC, Seijaku, Fast Track mixture), but again with respect for where the student is within herself. I take them as deep as I can and trust that if they are meant to become teachers, this will emerge.

What are the barriers or stumbling blocks in trying to move qualified students toward teacher accreditation?

The current stumbling blocks I perceive in moving qualified students toward teacher accreditation are the age of my students (high school) and the current tiered system of intensives.

Connecting with other TCC teachers: Is it important to you?

CONTINUED ON P. 6

Let Our Practice Sing For Us

By SANDY McALISTER, HAYWARD, CALIFORNIA

On New Year's Eve day I asked my senior exercise classes what they hoped for in 2015. World peace was the second most popular answer after good health. This is such an overwhelming thought considering all the strife worldwide. A discussion ensued about how having the wish is not enough, that we should contribute or take an active part toward world peace. But how? A couple answers included "being loving" and "being peaceful in our own actions."

I mentioned that I was working on not using the word hate, as in "I hate how that looks" or "I hate it when that happens" or "I hate that feeling." The word can too easily pop out of my mouth, and so I am trying to be aware and turn the word hate into "dislike" or some other softer term. Saying hate puts an unsettling vibration into the ethers. The same goes with our actions. If they are violent I feel there is a release of energy that goes beyond

the immediate surrounding action.

Mahatma Gandhi said,
Your beliefs become your thoughts,
Your thoughts become your words,
Your words become your actions,
Your actions become your habits,
Your habits become your values,
Your values become your destiny.
The future depends on what you do today.

When we do our T'ai Chi Chih practice we are working with energy, the life force of the universe. **It is not something that is contained inside of us and stops at our skin.** With regards to energy, we are permeable beings. As we move, not only do we begin to stimulate, circulate and balance energy within us, but we are also affecting the energy around us. As the vibratory influences of our practice build we are affecting energy far beyond our immediate vicinity. The circular soft movements, combined with our intention and focus, have an effect far beyond our individual self. We are creating vibrations that ripple outward.

If you think of our world, our universe, as one big web of threads of energy connecting everything and everyone, it would make sense that our actions tug at these threads and send vibrations along them. If the vibrations are

fluid and harmonious a beautiful melody of love and joy and contentment can be felt.

I was in Jordan last month and part of the trip included a few days in the desert and staying in nomad-style camel hair tents. One night a couple of the men performed on handmade instruments and sang love songs. Then they asked if our group would like to reciprocate. My mind raced to find a song that would connect our worlds and I decided on Red River Valley. I explained through an interpreter (because they only spoke Arabic) about cowboys and how they live out in the countryside away from cities, as the Bedouin do, and that this was a love song. I said that the Red River Valley was different than their red cliffs and dessert but just as beautiful. They seem to appreciate the effort. The point is that love, beauty and kinship know no boundaries.

As a community of TCC practitioners, let us make 2015 a time more harmonious and beautiful by sending peaceful vibrations along the threads of life surrounding us. Let our practice sing for us. Share the song of peace and love through our actions. As Justin wrote in the *Photo Text*, "If enough people do T'ai Chi Chih we might even have peace and love in the world."

CONTINUED FROM P. 5

I feel we could make our TCC teaching community much more vibrant through specific discussions about teaching and learning TCC. Questions I would like to discuss with other seasoned teachers are: What do you notice about what you "see" (not necessarily with the eyes) when you observe blockages in your students? How do you then work with those observed blockages? What concrete and specific activities to you use to support students in going deeper in their TCC practice? What approach or focus in TCC is particularly inspiring to you as a person right now? How is that showing up in your life and in your TCC classes? What shadow work do you yourself need to do regarding your relationship to the assumptions and expectations you have around spirituality and TCC (both teaching and learning)?

What are the main ways you connect with other TCC teachers? Are these effective and enough? Do you wish there were other ways?

I prefer smaller retreat oriented gatherings. I would like to see more opportunities for gatherings where the participants show up with a willingness to move in silence, be together in silence. I feel strongly that our TCC community (and our Albuquerque community specifically) must continue to grow in its movement away from "There is

a right way and a wrong way to do TCC" towards a more inclusive, "This is how I perceive the essence of TCC and this is what works for me in accessing that essence. What works for you?" kind of approach. This holistic inclusion does not mean throwing the baby out with the bathwater. It means we are all individually responsible for going as deeply into TCC as we can, with the wonderful resources Justin left us, while at the same time acknowledging that each one of us is going to express TCC in ways that are unique. Rather than being afraid of this both/and proposition, we could be excited by it.

Is there anything else you'd like the readers to know?

We all have something to offer, whether we are at the beginning of our TCC teaching experience, still have an inconsistent personal practice, or are coming from a more seasoned place. Earlier I mentioned I used to focus on the mechanical aspects more – the truth is I still address mechanics but now I am more curious about how these mechanics emerge and express from the tan t'ien through a feeling awareness more than a purely physical or logistical one. I would like to encourage any certified teacher of TCC who isn't teaching to find a way to begin sharing this form with another in some capacity and not to worry about perceived inadequacies.

Release & Let The Chi Flow

BY DANIEL PIENCIAK, HOWELL, NEW JERSEY

After years of practicing T'ai Chi Chih, there is always room for improvement in softness in the joints. Justin Stone described softness as lack of tension. A year or two after being accredited, I was so surprised to be told that I needed more softness in my wrists. I had been unaware that my wrists, while relaxed, were remaining in one position throughout most movements.

A basic example is seen in Justin's teaching of Bass Drum – that the fingers point down at the bottom of the drum and up at the top of the drum (while the palms remain facing each other). This is best accomplished by allowing give and movement in the wrist joint itself.

Another example is Push Pull: when the hands push forward, the fingers remain up so that the palms face forward not downward. This requires movement (or give) in the wrists. The wrists are flexed back more (while not tight) at the finish of the forward movement than when the hands first start moving forward.

Some teachers have referred to the wrist positions as open or neutral (never closed or flexed inward). For ourselves and students, calling our awareness to the relaxed position when the hands are hanging loosely down at our sides (neutral), as feeling different from when the fingers move out to the sides in Bird Flaps Its Wings (open), can be very helpful.

The important point is to allow flexibility and give, or release, in the wrists as appropriate to a particular movement.

Just as with soft knees and a loose waist, allowing the wrists to give will increase the flow of *Chi* exponentially.

A good but subtle place to check this is in Rocking Motion. As the weight begins to shift forward, if the wrists lead the hands, there might be a slight back bend (or opening) of the wrists which gradually lets go as the hands come forward and rise. As the heels touch down and the backward shift begins, the wrists lead downward leaving the fingertips more upward (again, the wrists in a slight back bend) – again, perhaps feeling a slight bit of tension (but not tightness), which lets go and relaxes as the hands pass the legs and the backward shift completes.

There are so many aspects of awareness in all the TCC movements, which all spell letting go. The wrists are a place not to be ignored or taken for granted. Happy practicing.

Teacher Conference 2015 August 6-9, North Carolina

BY VICKI SHROEDER AND STEVE STEVENS, CONFERENCE CO-CHAIRS

Don't let warm summer breezes wafting through stands of balsam fir and rhododendrons influence your decision (in any way) to attend the annual teacher conference in the scenic mountains of Western North Carolina.

It's being held at the YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly (in Black Mountain, North Carolina), nestled in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains, about 20 minutes from Asheville. The full-service conference center is situated on 1200 acres of woodland beautified by streams, wildflowers, ridges, valleys and spectacular views. Plan on spending a few extra days exploring nearby art galleries and restaurants, or hiking, whitewater paddling, or cruising the Blue Ridge Parkway. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park is also only a few hours away. Greenville and Spartanburg (South Carolina) are a short 60-minute drive.

This awesome setting is the perfect place to experience peace and harmony, our conference theme emphasized through breakout sessions, discussion groups and reviews of Justin's writings. *Seijaku* sessions will allow attendees to explore this part of Justin's discoveries. The schedule will allow time for attendees to explore the grounds (the campus is filled with places for people to relax), to experience and expand their own inner peace and harmony.

To register, go to www.taichichih.org/conference-2015/ to read all the conference information and get registration forms. We look forward to seeing you soon.



"Snow on the Sandia Mountains" by Andrea Vargas



"Cielito Lindo" by Andrea Vargas

Some Benefits

By JEAN KATUS, RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA

Carol, one my faithful regulars at our monthly practice, has often shared with the other students and me some of the many benefits she receives from T'ai Chi Chih. Several of you readers will recognize a number of these benefits as similar to what you have experienced; for others, they may be new paybacks.

Carol reports that she feels calmer and sleeps better at night. Her normally high blood pressure seems to be benefitting from regular practice. She declares she has more energy on the days she practices. She likes that she can do it any time of the day or night, at almost any place, with no special equipment or clothing needed.

Carol has adapted her approach to one of the movements. She sometimes awakens in the middle of the night and is often able to gently get back to sleep by arising and doing a few movements by her bed. If she uses Pulling in the Energy, (or if she goes through the entire form close to bedtime), she eliminates the visualization. To avoid being counter-productive, she does *not* imagine bringing in all the energy in the universe from the most distant star through her fingertips.

Carol had some challenges after knee replacements; it took quite a while to redevelop the balance she had had prior to surgery. "After practicing T'ai Chi Chih," she says, "I have regained my balance to the point that I sometimes find it hard to believe these are not my original knees."

Justin pointed out that we are *not* to put any limits on what TCC can do for us. It's enough to practice regularly and be open to what results occur.

Thanks From Deana

I attended my first Mesa Spirit T'ai Chi Chih class in Arizona today. I am so thankful that my friends invited me to come along. I had never heard of TCC before but as you well know, when the student is ready the teacher will appear. I have fibromyalgia and have tried yoga a few times but could not make it work for me. You have done more for me than you could ever imagine. Thank you. I will attend as many of your classes as I can. Namaste.



Carrot cake compliments of Carmela Black at Justin's birthday party in November

Nothing To Lose

By M. C. BAUDER, RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA

Over four years ago I took my fear in hand and ventured out to for my first community education class. It was T'ai Chi Chih, taught by Jean Katus, who had more patience than any of us deserved. Never once did she become aggravated or show us anything but infinite kindness when we had trouble with the moves. I have since taken more classes, and while I would never say I am good at TCC, I do find it a rewarding endeavor.

Before the first class, I was afraid of my own shadow, rarely going anywhere and never going alone. After taking TCC, I feel like I can take on the world. I no longer fear failing or looking like a fool because I can always say, "At least I tried." The only thing I can think to credit these changes to is TCC. I believe it broke my stopped-up *Chi* loose. I know that might sound crazy, but my family is amazed at what a different person I have become. And I have to say: **I sure like this me better.**

As I have aged, my joints are much less flexible than they were. I find TCC to be very easy on them, and I think it helps keep me moving. For anyone hesitant to try TCC, I say, "Go for it. You have nothing to lose and so much to gain." Taking that first class is one of the best decisions I have ever made. Thanks Jean. TCC and your teaching changed my life for the better.

Appreciation from Students

"I attended my first Mesa Spirit T'ai Chi Chih class in Arizona today. I am so thankful that my friends invited me to come along. **I had never heard of TCC before but as you well know, when the student is ready the teacher will appear.** I have fibromyalgia and have tried yoga a few times but could not make it work for me. You have done more for me than you could ever imagine. Thank you. I will attend as many of your classes as I can. Namaste."

— Deana

"Hi, I am a student and future teacher of TCC. I wanted to let you know **how much I appreciated and enjoyed the May issue.** It was packed full of good information, offering a path to follow when I decide to become a TCC instructor. I loved the tips for teachers (and students). I really enjoy when someone focuses on one movement in detail. I appreciated the article on 'Building Community in the Digital Age' as it provided useful information that's immediately usable. I also like practical tips that I can use tomorrow. Thank you."

— TERESA LISUM, NEWTON FALLS, OHIO

Gifts

By BONNIE SCHOWALTER, LOVELAND, COLORADO

T'ai Chi Chih is giving me the gift of healing. In October I lost my sister unexpectedly. I dedicated my first practice to her since she had been so supportive of my career path change. In each movement I honor the grief in my heart. When we do Around the Platter and Pulling in the Energy, I visualize my heart in my hands receiving all God's healing love into my heart. When I have completed my practice I put my heart back into my chest and bless my practice. This has helped me be present in my soles of my feet dealing with grief. Thank you, Marie Dotts, for being our Northern Colorado instructor. I have not run back to southern California; I am still here in Colorado. May all of you have peace that surpasses all understanding this new year.

Confessions Of A Practicing Student

BY LINDA M. BARROWS, MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

T'ai Chi Chih has been a search for many elusive things, including *Chi* and joy. I'm now more aware of when *Chi* is blocked and unbalanced when it bubbles up from my feet. I don't think it's in my feet at all, though I try to walk softly on the earth and keep the entrance open. I feel connected to others in class, to the wider world, to my own sense of self in the moment. I can feel peace; I can feel calming as my motions slow me and ground me. Joy is harder to feel.

TCC looks easy to perform but it takes strength. On the days I practice in class, I need to arrive well rested. The practice requires upright posture and concentration, and often my legs tire long before we've reached Cosmic Consciousness Pose. But I've only been practicing a few years, and I don't practice with the consistency it might take. I like the end of class when Monica says, "*Sat, Chit, Ananda.*" I try to learn from and absorb the meaning of those words. I like when she intones, "Let us go through our day with loving thoughts, kind words, peaceful intentions." In my mind I change the loving to gentle, which Monica says is okay, and I often repeat them to myself, carrying them with me as I walk across the parking lot to my car.

Where in the World?

Please send your "Where in the World" photos for publication in *The Vital Force* and on www.taichichih.org via email to kim.grant@taichichih.org.



Caroline Guillot doing *Passing Clouds* at the Grand Canyon.



Nancy Frost at Quincy Market, Boston, Massachusetts

Monica told us the coolest thing one time: She said that even if you can't do the movements, you can imagine doing them, and it will work for you just as well. I like that, and I try it sometimes with Bird Flaps Its Wings and Push Pull. The up and down and forward and backward seeming easiest to visualize and thus experience. One time she said something different about Pulling in the Energy that gave me a new idea. She usually says, "Imagine pulling in energy from the most distant star," which to me meant securing strength from an outside source; I visualized the yellow planet Saturn with its rings and tried hard to pull from it. **But one time she said "healing energy," which sounded totally different to me, and helped me understand the pulling-in movement as accepting and repairing more than acquiring and building.** I liked that, as it felt less challenging and more in tune with the reasons I practice.

Sometimes, on nice days in the summer, we practice outdoors. Outdoor practice feels more true to the spirit of TCC and ancient Japanese monks out in the wilderness. But I don't like practicing in the wind or the full summer sun. I like to practice a few movements in the still morning air of September under the silent branches of a huge oak tree out my back door. The branches are light grey and black grooves texture the bark; the scalloped oak leaves hang cool and darkly green; the sun brightens the sky above the tree, but does not penetrate to where I stand. My favorite movements at that time are Daughter on the Mountaintop and Daughter in the Valley. I spend a lot of my energy being a daughter, and those moments, shrouded in morning shade and deep privacy, feel true to my life. I add Six Healing Sounds for good measure. The five "chuiies" rise through the oak tree, circling the trunk and running along the branches, then melt into the leaves.

I've learned how the practice separates and then reunites energy around the core, the *tan t'ien*. I feel that place just two inches below my middle most significantly when I go to sleep at night. I feel the warmth and calm spread from it through my body so that I can let go and sleep. Monica has read us more than one piece on letting go, which is almost as interesting a topic as *Chi* or softness. What I like about taking TCC is how the small things can still resonate within that larger, more elusive body of knowledge.

Musings About Teaching & Connecting

BY APRIL LEFFLER, PROSPECT PARK, PENNSYLVANIA

Teaching TCC: Why do you do it?

I teach T'ai Chi Chih because I love TCC. I find it to be an excellent tool to help others get out of their heads and into their feet (i.e. the Present Moment). I teach TCC because it is so user-friendly: stand or sit if you need to. Move what you can and *imagine* moving body parts that may be incapacitated (after all, energy does follow thought). How liberating this might sound to someone who is experiencing physical challenges. During a free TCC presentation at a high rise apartment complex, an elderly woman (who used a wheelchair and had one leg amputated) and her husband (who used a walker), sheepishly asked me if they might be able to attend class and do the moves. What joy it was to be able to tell them that yes, they could absolutely take part in the class. I can still recall the radiant face of this woman while she felt the *Chi* in her hands during class.

What do you think you're giving to others and what do you get?

I believe that I am somewhat of a tour guide pointing the way for others to look within themselves and to re-discover that, underneath the noise, distractions and thoughts lay a quietude, depth and wisdom that are found deep inside. In return, I witness people relaxing physically and perhaps even leaving class standing a bit taller and more confidently. I see people letting go of stress and tension as they become more adept at *feeling* the moves. And I am gifted with and humbled by the awareness of my own inner wisdom.

What have you found to be the most effective ways (for you personally) to keep spreading the word, interesting new students, keeping current students engaged?

TCC is Joy Thru Movement, not drudgery thru movement. I think Joy is infectious and contagious. While my eyes are always scanning the class for corrections that may be needed, I am very mindful of the importance of allowing the class to be fun for folks. Also praise goes a long way in helping students relax, which enhances their ability to learn as well as enables them to feel the *Chi* more readily. Word of mouth tends to spread about the class because



April Leffler

people are reaping the benefits while also enjoying the practice.

Training the next generations of TCC teachers

Do you think moving more qualified students toward becoming TCC teachers is an important part of building the future of TCC? Is this a focus of your teaching?

TCC seems to be a program of attraction. Most of my students who have gone on to become teachers had approached me and expressed an interest in becoming accredited. On occasion, I have approached a student who is moving well and suggested that perhaps he or she might consider going on to become an accredited teacher. I encourage but generally

don't recruit and like to allow things to develop organically.

Connecting with other TCC teachers: Is it important to you?

It's extremely important to me. In fact, some of my best friends are like-minded people I've met through TCC. Friendships and spiritual kinship aside, it's also a wonderful learning opportunity to be exposed to a variety of teaching styles, to practice with other teachers and to fine tune my own practice.

What are the main ways you connect with them? Are these effective and enough?

Attending TCC events is the main way I connect with other teachers. Getting together with local teachers is another way. I attend the teacher's conference annually. I attend and host various TCC retreats, intensives and teacher accreditations. I find this to be very effective in staying connected with others and to keep my practice clean. I also enjoy maintaining contact with the TCC community through my subscription to *The Vital Force* as well as through social media avenues like Facebook.

Is there anything else you'd like the readers to know?

For me, TCC has always been a metaphor for life. And, as such, it is an inner discipline and a sacred journey. Being grounded, flowing from the *tan t'ien* and remaining relaxed and present are as applicable to moving through life as they are to moving in TCC. In time, if we allow it, the *Chi* will guide us impeccably – in class and through life, moment to moment to moment.

Gift From TCC

BY CARMEN L. BROCKLEHURST, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

The greatest gift is T'ai Chi Chih itself because on a daily basis it offers grace, help (without having to ask for it) and gentleness. Without TCC, these gifts fade away, and life can become mundane instead of marvelous. Without TCC, we have a tendency to believe that our lives are static and situations seemingly impossible.

All may seem *yin* and *yang*, but there is another level beyond those confines. With each practice a wondrous part of life unfolds and reveals itself as intuition, grace, flow and compassion (especially towards ourselves). Because intuition has opened and flowered within us, **the possibilities of a harmonious, amazing life are endless.**

My sister, Corine, had been going through a particularly rough stretch with her husband, hospitalized with shingles. (He passed away a few months later.) I mentioned that I was so sorry she was going through this, working all day and being with him at the hospital each evening. A gentle voice came through the phone as she said clearly, "I am so grateful for having T'ai Chi Chih to help me through this. I wonder what other people do? How do they get through this without going crazy, feeling frantic and despairing?" I answered, "You're right; they often feel helpless and alone."

TCC helps our bodies, minds and feelings come into harmony with each other, working together instead of fueling discord and anxiety about a future difficult to bear at such a precarious time. To call on the power of vision, one that we experience during our TCC practice, is a real gift. I don't mean that we manipulate the situation to experience vision. I mean that we harmonize with the flow of life. One great master said it this way, when asked if he prayed for a different outcome

in a hard situation: **"To be in tune with life is a great gift.** It is all about accord-

ing with life." What is the vision that allows us to harmonize with life? It is our ability to see the good. TCC opens the pathways within us so that we can know Truth. In seeing this we are able to love and share the *Chi*.



Justin Stone with Carmen Brocklehurst

Keeping TCC True

BY JUDY HENDRICKS, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

I recently read "Volume 1, Number 1" of *The Vital Force*, dated "Summer Solstice 1984," as I was wanted to know what Justin shared with the community in that inaugural issue. He wrote that the journal was an important way to connect with teachers and about how T'ai Chi Chih can harmonize the Outer and Inner, the mind-body continuum. He continued: "I have tried to keep TCC as pure as possible, even at the expense of my earning a living. It is important that we prevent deviations in the Teaching and the Practicing."

It sounds like Justin would have had the opportunity to make more money if he had compromised the movements. I surmise that he chose not to deviate, to keep the form pure. I have heard some teachers say there are two ways to do the movements, and that there are regional differences. In essence, this sounds like giving permission to make deviations.

When Justin saw people doing TCC, he would often say, "Bend your knees, turn your waist, remember the hip swivel" – in his loud, wake-you-up voice. He said the *Chi* will flow and you will receive the benefits when you do the movements correctly. When he saw us deviating from the form, he gave us corrections.

We need to be aware of how to properly do the movements. I'm grateful we have the textbook and Justin's DVDs. I don't want to make or teach deviations. When we hold the intention to do the movements the way he taught us, we can be aware of deviations and correct them. Practicing with a group open to corrections is a great way to heighten awareness of how one is moving.

Some people may say it's not a big deal if some minor deviations seep in. I respectfully disagree. Many believe the centuries-old T'ai Chi Ch'uan initially consisted of 36 movements, then people started to deviate and add movements, and now there are 108. Would the originator of that form even be able to recognize it?

Justin said he tried to keep the movements as pure as possible. If someone is physically capable of doing the movements the way Justin taught them, but they choose to deviate, what is causing that? I think deviations hold us back since we are not receiving the complete benefits. We all deserve all the benefits. It's about intention, integrity and *teh*.

Keeping TCC movements pure is the way towards world peace. Justin has said that if everyone were doing TCC, there would be peace. Let's share the pure and powerful movements with the world; everyone deserves it.

Gateway To Eastern Philosophy & Religion

BY JUSTIN F. STONE

~ VITALITY ~

The prime force of the universe is vitality. What do we know vitality is? Chi! The prime force of the universe is vitality, divinity. Those of you who study *T'ai Chi Chih* and *Seijaku*, please remember that. The universe is the manifestation of vitality, or the fragments of divinity.

~ ~ ~

~ THE SIX DARSHANAS ~

The six philosophies of India go back thousands of years and are the same now as they were then. These philosophies express eternal truths, whereas Western philosophies regularly supercede themselves. In the West, a new scientific discovery brings the demise of a philosophy or someone comes along and refutes a former philosophy. If Western philosophy deals with Truth, why do the philosophies change so often? In contrast, all of the Indian philosophies accept Yogic practice and, in fact, say that Yogic practice is necessary. These Indian philosophies are not counter to each other. They all complement one another, and each one serves a purpose.

In *Mimamsa* [the *Fifth Darshana*] they talk a good deal about the word. In the Bible it says, "In the beginning was the word and the word...." The Sanskrit word *shabda*, or "the sound," exists before pronunciation. Pronunciation of the word dies away, so it's not eternal. However, the meaning of the word is eternal. An example of this is found in *Seijaku*, the advanced form of *T'ai Chi Chih*. When we do the toning with movement, we continue to hear the sound after we've stopped producing it in our throats. We're really trying to recapture something, which is always there. This concept is something I've never heard outside of India. The vibration of sound is eternal, the spoken word disappears.

In Hindu philosophy, there are two important points:

1) The *Bindu*: If everything were contracted it would come to one point that has no extension. It would have location but no extension. You'd almost have to be a philosophy student to know what I meant by extension. But it's a point without any dimensions at all. This is what everything can be reduced to;

2) *The sound from which comes creation*: The sound, which is the vibration before the sound.

~ ~ ~

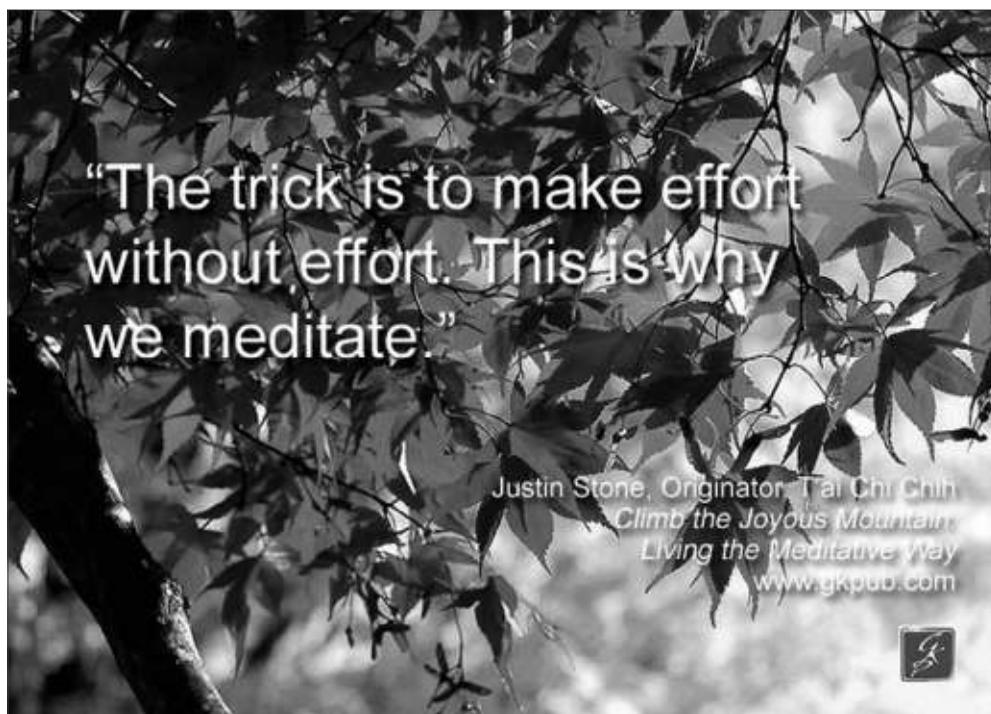
~ CAUSAL SOUND ~

By the use of causal sound, we remake ourselves. And what do we remake ourselves into? We remake ourselves into potential joy. Some say that the transcendental sound of *Om* is heard only by real yogis. But some of you who meditate a lot, I am sure, have heard it.

Seed mantras are called *bija*. These seed mantras are aspects of the supreme Mantra, "*Om*." *Bija* mantras are seed letters directly derived from the fifty primeval sounds and are very powerful. Each has an important inner spiritual meaning. Also, each Devi, god, or goddess has his or her own *bija*, dedicated to him or her.

The following sounds are some of the eleven seed mantras and their meanings. The first seed letter is "*Haum*." *Ha*, the first part, is *Shiva*, and *au* is *Sadashiva*. Included in *Haum*, *nada* is sound, and *bindu* means the point from which everything comes, a dot with location but without extension. *Nada* and *bindu* together in *Haum* mean that which dispels sorrow. With the Mantra "*Haum*," Lord Shiva is worshipped.

The next *bija* is *Dum*: *da* is *Durga* and *u* means to protect. Here, *nada* means mother of the universe and *bindu* means the action of



worship or prayer. After *Dum* comes *Kreem*: *Ka* is *Kali*, *ra* is *Brahman* and *ee* is *Mahamaya* and so on with the rest of the remaining eight *bija*.

Sri Vidya says one must only do the mantras with initiation. Those uninitiated should not do the mantras. The mantras could harm one if not properly repeated. The last thing *Sri Vidya* discusses is Mantra meditation. Is the greatest Mantra meditation *Om* or *pranava*? *Om* contains all other sounds in it. Do not, if you live in the world, meditate on *Om* or use *Om* because *Om* is the mantra of the renunciate. If you begin chanting *Om*, (and there are groups who do), pretty soon you'll be a renunciate though you don't set out to be one. Your friends will fall away, you'll lose your money. Chanting *Om* is like a sign on a store that says "We're a non-profit organization." We didn't set out to be one.

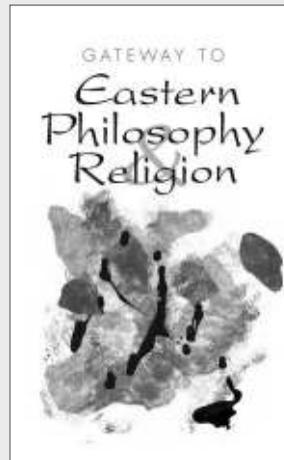
It has been very tempting to me, many times, to use *Om*. Recently when I left California, I went to the desert for ten days and had a retreat. I was a hermit for ten days. I'd love to repeat *Om*, but I want to be active in the world. So I didn't use *Om* at all. Instead, I did a lot of T'ai Chi Chih and meditation.

~ ~ ~

~ JOHREI* ~

One of the first times I ever used parts of T'ai Chi Chih mentally was the time I was still giving *Johrei*. I mentally did T'ai Chi Chih while giving *Johrei*, and the effect was startling. A woman seeking *Johrei* had come to the Church for the first time, and she was a rather strange

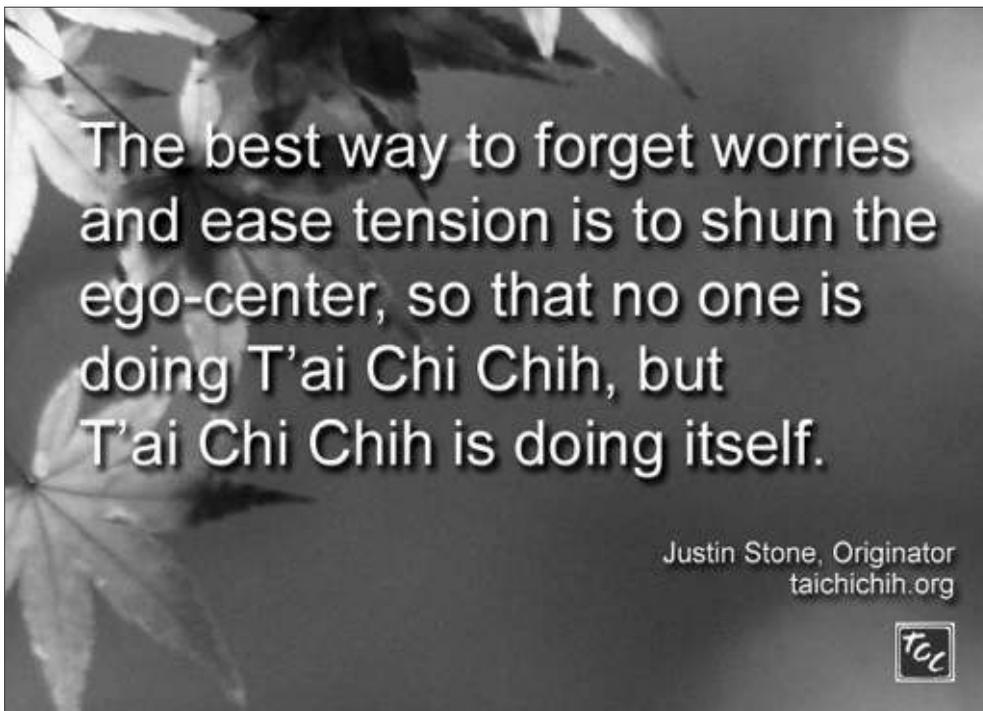
young woman. She sat down in front of me (you can sit down in front of anyone; trained volunteers give *Johrei*.) She'd never been there before. The woman turned her back to me (first you turn the back, then you face.) I put up my hand, and I began to do Around the Platter mentally. (Around the Platter is the third movement in T'ai Chi Chih.) The woman let out a scream. I said, "What's the matter?" She said, "The heat! I can't take it! The heat!"



From the book Gateway to Eastern Philosophy & Religion, excerpted and reprinted with permission from Good Karma Publishing, and available on www.gkpub.com.

When you give *Johrei* you feel certain heat in your the hand. I was wearing, at that time, the talisman of the Healing Church. At any rate, I gave her a little *Johrei* and finally she just left. She didn't do the prayer or the bowing that is traditional at the end of treatment. She just left. A week later, I gave a talk at the East/West Culture Society, down near Vermont Street, and she was in the audience. She came to see me. She looked bewildered. I said, "What's the matter?" (I'd never met her before the other day.) She said she'd been wandering around for a week feeling that she was in a great cathedral with shafts of light coming down through it. She'd been unable to go to work. It was almost unhinging her mind. I never gave *Johrei* again. The Church who trained me had talked a little about the karmic factors involved. I didn't realize the power of what I was doing. Why my power was so great, I don't know. Doing T'ai Chi Chih mentally really stepped it up.

***JOHREI**: The act of focusing the hand on parts of the physical body by one trained to do so in the Japanese "Healing Church" know as Sekai Kyu Seikyo. A piece of paper worn in a locket around the neck, with the word "hikari", written on it by the religion's founder (Meishu Sama) or his descendant, is the "Sacred Focal Point" that gives power to the practice of *Johrei*. The word "hikari" means "light" in Japanese. Those receiving this *Johrei* often feel a strong heat, and the church reports many wonderful "cures," though it emphasizes it is raising the spiritual vibration with *Johrei* and not attempting to heal. This is an extremely interesting and, the author believes, efficacious way to use the *Chi* (*Prana*) to raise the body heat and bring about "purification".



Ravens: A Metaphor For TCC

By CAROLYN SHELLEY, PRESCOTT, ARIZONA

While doing my practice outdoors on a recent beautiful autumn day, a flock of ravens soaring above me captured my attention. Yes, I lost the concentration in my “bubbling springs” but observing these majestic birds brought many words and phrases to mind. Upon reflection after my practice, I realized that what I’d seen was applicable to T’ai Chi Chih, leading to this metaphor.

Softness and continuity

Effort of no effort

Circularity

These important principles of TCC were evident as the birds rode, circulated and played in the airstream, flapping their wings only occasionally.

Graceful

Powerful

Joyful

I watched with awe as these intelligent and beautiful birds exuded applicable characteristics that describe our TCC practice.

Strength

Harmony

Energy

The birds modeled, both individually and in their interactions as a group, things that TCC offers us in our lives.

Curiosity led me to research what a flock of ravens is called. Three different names were referenced, depending on the group’s activity: a constable, an unkindness, or a conspiracy.

- A constable of ravens refers, historically, to the group of birds that congregated around the Tower of London, and thus was thought to be keeping watch over or guarding the monarchy. If practiced regularly, TCC can guard our health and happiness.
- A group of ravens can also be called an unkindness. If a flock is driving off predators or competitors, they are unkind in their actions. They may work together to eliminate threats to their territory or to secure food. We face many unkindnesses (i.e. sickness, loss, anger, stress, fear, indecisiveness, exhaustion) in our lives. TCC helps drive these threats away, victoriously conquering them and resulting in wellness, peace and security.
- A conspiracy of ravens refers to their low muttering range of vocalizations that sound like undecipherable talk. This made me think of Six Healing Sounds. An outsider observing our practice would have no idea what the sounds were or what they represented. And while we think TCC is wonderful, we certainly do not want it to remain a secret. We’d like everyone to join our little “conspiracy” and reap its many benefits.

The result of my raven encounter? A greater Cosmic Consciousness.

“The Taffies”

By MAGGIE BREIMHURST, VADNAIS HEIGHTS, MINNESOTA

Ever since learning the four Pulling Taffy movements I felt a puzzling resistance to them. I felt rather rebellious and was reluctant to do them. For a period of time I avoided these movements with the excuse of not having enough time to complete the 19 movements. I then became acutely aware of my avoidance and sought to make friends with them.

I remembered from Justin’s book, *Spiritual Odyssey*, that a possible benefit of practicing T’ai Chi Chih included removing *vashanas* (habit energies developed during our lifetimes). I wondered which movements might remove *vashanas*. Could it be that Pulling Taffy pulls apart our *vashanas* and lets them go? When they keep accumulating, they can become *samskaras*, which can block truth and growth from our lives, according to Justin in *Heightened Awareness*. It has been a process to allow myself to become aware of this possibility. How can I learn to accept and practice these moves?

I shortened two of the “taffies” from nine to six repetitions to become friends with them and more consistently practice them. It is a gradual process to build to nine repetitions. I am learning to persist and become more aware in the moment of my procrastination habits.



Musings About Teaching & Connecting

BY ANITA VESTAL, SAN FRANCISCO DE RIVAS, PEREZ ZELEDON, COSTA RICA

Teaching TCC: Why do you do it?

Just today I reflected on what I want more of in 2015, and more T'ai Chi Chih topped the list. That is more practice, more students, more classes. I teach this beautiful moving meditation because it is a gift to the world, as Justin said, and it must be shared. The potential to help people heal themselves physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually is seeded in TCC. At the present time, I am the only accredited teacher in Costa Rica, and I feel compelled to share this gift in a country where the people are all about wellness, sustainability and longevity.

What does it mean to you to teach TCC? What do you think you're giving to others and what do you get?

It is so very rewarding to look into the faces of new students and see how much they want to learn the movements. It is my greatest pleasure to come together with others to practice the movements, feeling the energy that is generated, realizing I have brought the knowledge of T'ai Chi Chih to them.

I am giving them something of tremendous value. New students who are receptive to changes may find themselves at a crossroad where life can change for the better in some way.

What have you found to be the most effective ways to keep spreading the word, interesting new students, keeping current students engaged?

I must keep the fee as low as possible, offering classes gratis to community groups in Costa Rica where the rural villagers live very modestly and have no money for classes. Schedules and locations need to be convenient.

Training the next generations of TCC teachers

Do you think moving more qualified students toward becoming TCC teachers is an important part of building the future of TCC? Is this a focus of your teaching?

I am always on the lookout for students who would be good teachers. I believe we can best spread TCC through a network of qualified and dedicated teach-



Anita Vesta teaching in Costa Rica

ers. I cannot say this is a particular focus for me at this point. My current focus is to get more Costa Ricans (Ticos) doing TCC. I hope to mentor a Costa Rican to be the first accredited teacher from this country. That may be in 2016 or beyond.

Connecting with other TCC teachers: Is it important to you?

I always love to connect with other teachers. If only there were teachers here in Costa Rica to connect with. This is why I love going to conference. While spending the summer of 2013 in Asheville, North Carolina, I connected with teachers there who had been mentored by colleagues in my accreditation class. We had a weekly practice session organized by Steve Stevens and other teachers. In 2015, I will be in York, Pennsylvania, where I was first introduced to TCC by Hope Spangler. There are numerous teachers and community classes in York County and I love connecting with them to practice TCC. The energy we generate in group practice radiates and uplifts. Thanks to Margery Erikson, Jean Markey, Jack Weaver and all the teachers in York for including me.

Is there anything else you'd like the readers to know?

I am on new ground introducing TCC to rural villagers in Costa Rica. Affectionately called "ticos," the Costa Rican people have a huge respect for healthy practices and they intuitively know that the movements they see me doing by the riverbank are healthy. I have had three community groups approach me to request that I teach my "yoga" to them. (Yoga is something they are more familiar with than *t'ai chi*.) All three groups are from neighboring villages in the Talamanca mountains. I teach them in Spanish and use the Spanish translation of Justin's textbook, which I pass around for them to see and read descriptions of each movement. I find that the community groups consider it "exercise" and tighten their muscles way too much. The first several weeks are spent having them shake out their arms and hands, often with me standing behind them massaging their arms.

With the small construction and renovation projects at my property in Costa Rica, I decided to invite my workers to join me for 15 minutes of moving meditation each morning before the workday starts. My motivation is to instill a healthy habit that can reduce accidents and improve focus. (And those 15 minutes are on my dime after all.) I recall a comment from one worker after his first short TCC session. He said, "It looks simple, but it is not. We have to use muscles we usually don't hold in that position." I thought that comment was refreshing in its honesty and also revealing. I need to continue to try to get across that this is not exercise that requires tight muscles. Quite the opposite.

Bubbling Spring

BY TISH JARAMILLO, PORT HUENEME, CALIFORNIA

After seven years of practicing Chinese Medicine, I had the privilege of being introduced to T'ai Chi Chih. I recently became accredited as a TCC instructor after three and a half years of practice. Though still a beginner, my background in Asian medicine gave me a perspective to immediately appreciate the value of this simple, sacred practice that Justin Stone has given us. It is my hope to share some details (with which Justin was undoubtedly familiar) that may enhance others in the TCC community's appreciation of the Bubbling Spring.

In the Five Element tradition of Chinese medicine, the kidneys belong to water and the heart to the fire element. They are considered to be mutually supportive because the yin of the kidney moisturizes and nourishes the heart, restraining its fire, and the yang of the heart descends to warm the kidneys. Harmony and communication between the heart and kidneys are considered essential for a healthy, calm and stable spirit.

Bubbling Spring, of which Justin spoke often, referring to it as "the soles of the feet," is actually a specific acupuncture point just below the ball of the foot, about the size of a nail head. It is also the first point on the kidney meridian, the energy channel that runs up the inner leg medially, intersecting with the spleen channel and then ascending through the liver, the lung, the heart and pericardium. In other words, it brings *yin* moisture from the earth to all five of the *yin* organs.

Yongquan Kidney-1, as it is referred to in Chinese medicine, connects us to *yin* as it is expressed on earth in the element of water. It is the source of water as it percolates up from the ground. It is like the roots of a tree that taps into the earth for its nourishment and growth. It is a pure, effervescent spring and reservoir of vital force and power.

Bubbling Spring is a monumentally significant point in Chinese medicine, which is why it has been a strong focus of the martial arts for thousands of years. Because of its location at the lowest point on the body, Bubbling Spring has the distinction of being the most effective point for the treatment of pathologically rising qi and excesses of the upper body. Its function is to raise the *yin* up to the *yin* organs, and root the *yang* down to keep us calm. It is indicated in the treatment of anxiety, insomnia, poor memory, fear, unconsciousness, high blood pressure, dizziness, headaches, heat in the upper body, stroke and even "rage with a desire to kill." It is the most grounding point on the body.

Never underestimate the value of "putting your attention in the soles of the feet."

My TCC Shadow & Me

BY SHERYL ADAIR, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

A few movements into my morning practice I realized I was not alone. The sun was coming through the window just right. My shadow appeared as a partner in front of me, a student if you will. I could observe her movements without getting ego into it ... and offer corrections. She did not appear to be "me." (It was very different from watching one's self in a mirror.)

The first thing I noticed was her complete weight shift: slow and even movements with no rushing. That was good. Fingers were softly fluttering as she moved. Knees were deeply bent in the close, but my "student" seemed to be rushing the close. Calling that to her attention: hold 3, 4, 5 seconds, now release. As she completed graceful conclusion, there was a gentle fluttering of the fingers as she let go. Standing upright and relaxed for a couple breaths, I watched her prepare for the next movement.

As we began Perpetual Motion, the area rug made a straight line with the hard wood floor allowing my student to line herself up. I could clearly see her head stay at the same level as she moved from side to side. There was no bobbing from the shadow.

Working the Pulley easily showed the hand going *back, up and over* (Justin's favorite refrain when he always demonstrated that movement at Carmen's retreats). I reminded "Shadow" to keep her head facing forward as the front and back foot swiveled, thus facilitating the hip swivel and effortless fluid movement.

Although my shadow did need a few gentle corrections throughout our practice, I was so pleased to have had a perfect view of each movement. It was a total joy to share my morning practice and the *Chi* with her. I think we both learned a lot.



"Closer" by Andrea Vargas

Aliveness In Intention Of Opposites

BY MONICA CAMPBELL, MINNETONKA, MINNESOTA

For 13 years I have participated in a *T'ai Ji* practice group at The Marsh: The Center for Fitness and Balance, founded 29 years ago on the principles of *T'ai Ji* and where I teach. We never know who is going to show up; we just meet and see what happens. The amazing knowledge base continues to grow with the many forms being represented.

This week we decided to work on Chungliang Al Huang's Five Elements and Circles, since everyone had done years of practice with him, and we enjoyed the company of a teacher we don't see much anymore. Part of a movement metaphor is flying, and we discussed that to be able to "fly" we must be grounded. In this and other *T'ai Ji* forms the grounding hand is important; this is what allows us to expand and grow. When our colleague said, "The aliveness is in the intention of the opposites," so many feelings jumped out of my being.

Later that day as I moved through the beauty of our T'ai Chi Chih movements, her statement continued to resonate. As long as I am truly moving from my center, it allows me to ground and fly at the same time. Being still allows us to fly; the aliveness is in the intention of the opposites.

During that practice, the concept was most obvious in Light at the Top of the Head/Temple. With the soft, smooth, continual up and down movement (coming from our center), we are grounding to this earth and receiving from above. This is feeling the balance distributed evenly on both sides of the body/foot – and balanced between the front and back of each foot. So when the palms are facing each other and feet are flat, I am grounded. And when heels release and wrists open with palms open to receive, I am connecting to the above and continuing my acceptance of connecting to the earth below and the heavens above.

In this moment, I didn't want to be or go anywhere else. I was alive with what moving from our center can teach us about ourselves. I have a tendency to be "out there," and healers have said that I come across as very grounded. But it is not where my natural energies are. As a result, I always thought I should work on grounding but TCC has taught me that this is not the complete picture. I worked daily on being more grounded because I am so out there. This movement now brought a new feeling of balance between opposites, and that they both need daily attention. The aliveness is in the intention of the opposites.

Seijaku also helped me with this same concept. By being more grounded I can do all the flying I want and still feel connected to this great earth. What a gift. To me TCC is the gift that keeps on giving – to ourselves and to our friends, family, students and all those we touch as we walk through our days. Every practice is a new gift that through movement is unwrapping the mysteries of life just a little more.



"Light at the Temple" by Andrea Vargas

Woe-Is-Me? Not.

BY NANCY JO BLEIER, SITKA, ALASKA

T'ai Chi Chih has been a blessing and curse lately. In late June 2014 I stepped off a house step and jammed my whole right leg. Luckily I still had a walker and crutches to use. I could not do any TCC since putting weight on my right leg was painful for several months. Finally, through physical therapy, acupuncture and occasional seated TCC, I started using my leg.

The next big bummer: I could not attend the TCC conference in 2014. It was the first one I had missed since 1997. I was going on a glorious weeklong motorcycle/sidecar ride with my husband from Sitka to Prince Rupert to British Columbia.

Yet another bummer: I signed up for the New Mexico Pecos Retreat in late September, but there was no way I could stand on leg for two-plus days, so I had to cancel.

More bummers: Canceling *Seijaku* practice with others and not getting to a first Saturday of month TCC practice in Sitka.

Good news: Finally, through TCC practice and the passage of time, I can stand longer and at least do a full *Seijaku* practice and Saturday TCC with all the others. And after more time, I've been able to do full TCC practice most days.

A-ha moment: this is not a woe-is-me story. I take responsibility for all of my actions and reactions. This is being mindful of each moment and being grateful for all that is happening.

Distracted By Counting

BY JUDY RESELE, DES PLAINES, ILLINOIS

Something wonderful just happened. A few weeks ago I discovered my cable TV had a soundscapes station with excellent music to accompany my T'ai Chi Chih practice. I now listen to music, face a window overlooking trees, start to move and count. It was the counting that used to bother my practice. My meditation classes are geared to stilling the mind, and I wanted that when I practiced the movements.

This morning as I was listening to the music, facing the window and counting, I suddenly realized I was looking out a window with eight panes. If I moved my eyes from pane to pane and added one more I could listen to the music, do the movements, and still my mind ... which freed it to focus on grounding and gently moving. I remember my teacher using trees as a guide for us being rooted. It might have been my imagination but as I took the Cosmic Consciousness Pose (unhampered by counting) I was more fully aware of the tree and its stability. Concentrating on that, I held the pose longer than my usual nine seconds. But then again, I wasn't counting. But it felt longer.



Lost & Found

BY LINDA SERCARZ,
ESSEX FALLS, NEW JERSEY

When I first came to T'ai Chi Chih I did not have expectations. My friend and teacher, Edie Budney, recommended it to me for severe PMS. With a dancer's background, I was immediately attracted to the grace and flow of the movements. I earned my accreditation in 1998 and started teaching.

I have always been a spiritual seeker and started meditating in the 1970s. TCC helped move me along on a journey, healing from childhood wounds and gaining a greater understanding of our purpose here. TCC was there for me when I was diagnosed with lupus in 1999 and opened up my awareness of inner energy and its power. I was more focused and felt my creativity coming forth; life just seemed to flow a little easier when I practiced regularly.

I can't explain why, but after practicing faithfully for many years, I started to practice less. Maybe I started taking TCC a bit for granted. Perhaps I got bored or lazy. Although I never really stopped practicing altogether, I lost my enthusiasm. It does not make me happy to admit this, but it seemed I was taking the benefits for granted and devaluing the practice.

I was still on my spiritual journey but TCC was on the back burner. **When I began coming back to regular practice, I wondered why I had ever moved away from it.** Maybe I needed to more fully appreciate all the wonderfully profound and subtle benefits.

So it is with gratitude I recognize that TCC is like an old friend that has always been there for me. I anticipate that I will keep this friend for the rest of my life and give it the nurturing it deserves.

Circle moving
front to back
side to side
hands and bodies
moving in unison
energy moving
Chi flowing
breathing deeply
a disparate group
of people
moving
as ONE.

Slowly breathing
in and out
softly moving
front-to-back
side-to-side
consistently
leading from
the *tan t'ien*
bending the knees
and elbows
moving gently and softly
energy moving
Chi flowing.

Chi
Energy
Gentle strength
flowing in
stillness and
Peace.

- BY MARY TAFOYA,
WESTMINSTER, COLORADO

Growing Your Local Community Through Facebook

By LISA OTERO, OXNARD, CALIFORNIA

When *The Vital Force* created the official T'ai Chi Chih Facebook (fb) page (www.facebook.com/taichichih) a few years ago, the intention was to foster community by providing a place where practitioners could learn more about TCC and discuss their experiences. We also wanted it to be a worldwide springboard for connection with TCC's awesome website (www.taichichih.org), where students could learn about Justin Stone and locate an accredited teacher.

I have been gratified at the response: We have almost 2,000 followers interacting with our daily posts. Through fb, I have gotten to know practitioners around the world, and I've practiced with students while vacationing in the Netherlands and England. Now, at conference, I look forward to seeing "old" fb friends I've never met in person.

People wrote to Justin to express their gratitude for TCC and to ask him practice questions; now they post their appreciation and questions on fb to the entire community. TCC teachers answer questions from students in remote places who are learning TCC via Justin's dvd, textbook and the app, and thus have no teacher to consult. I have been touched and inspired by the impact TCC has.

I recently created a fb page for my local community (www.facebook.com/taichichiventuracountyca), adapting what worked well on other general fb group pages. A number of other TCC teachers have since started local TCC pages; some follow a similar template, others don't.

Here are some things to consider when establishing a local TCC fb page:

Apostrophe or Not? Although we *always* use an apostrophe and the trademark symbol when referring to "T'ai Chi Chih®" in print, we do not use these symbols in website names or fb page names, in accordance with the generally accepted Internet naming conventions. This is important: we want people to find both the official page and all of our local pages when they search on the web for "tai chi chih" or "taichichih." Start your page name with "Tai Chi Chih" (rather than your geographic area) to ensure it shows up with the other TCC fb pages.

Include your Community Location: I suggest naming (or renaming) your fb page to identify it specifically with your geographic location: city or town (or even a neighborhood within a metropolis), county, region, state... For example, I teach in two contiguous cities with active TCC teachers in two adjoining cities, so I named my page broadly: "Tai Chi Chih Ventura County CA." Please include the state postal abbreviation in the name (i.e., Houston TX; Lake Charles LA).

Think Future, Think Big: Decide whether your page is just for *your* classes or if it's for classes and events in your *area*. Envision lots of accredited TCC teachers *everywhere*. Laying the groundwork for growth means being as inclusive as possible. I wouldn't stake a general claim on a large region unless you are willing to share the page with other area teachers. Since my page is for my entire county, I invite local teachers to administer the page with me (i.e., it is not just to advertise my classes). Another fb TCC pioneer, Deanna Rasch, is the only teacher in Richmond, Virginia; her fb page is named "T'ai Chi Chih RVA." She administers it but allows anyone interested in TCC to post. You can always designate your page just for your classes: "Tai Chi Chih with [your name]."

Stick to TCC: Following Justin's directive, please don't mix information about other practices with TCC, even if you teach/do other wonderful practices. Although I teach yoga, I do not discuss yoga or advertise my yoga classes on my TCC community's fb page.

Designating your Page, Defining your Audience: Deanna set up the Richmond, Virginia, page as a "public group" where students can chat with each other without an administrative intermediary. This allows them to use the page to set up informal practice sessions and get together outside of class. I set up mine as a "community" page administered jointly by me, and any local TCC teacher who wants to help. I invite all local teachers to post their own class information.

Post Daily: It's important. You can post original content (class announcements, local teacher bios, photos, practice tips), and you can share content from other TCC pages. It takes about five minutes to keep my page current, fresh and interesting. Photographic posts attract more eyeballs; inviting questions encourages engagement.

Clarity in Speaking: FB allows the page administrator to post and/or comment as him or herself or as the administrator of the page. When you are expressing an opinion or a personal experience, post as yourself. Post as the administrator when you are posting info of general interest to all.

Please check out all the local TCC fb pages and provide feedback to their administrators; they appreciate it. It is my hope that every local community will have an fb page. Adopt and adapt content from the pages you enjoy. If you would like further guidance, please contact me via fb messenger. Help create another lively, meaningful place for people to gather online to share the *Chi*. If we build it, they will come. Have fun!



Plan It & They Will Come TCC Retreat in Estes Park, Colorado, October 2014

By MARIE DOTTS, LOVELAND, COLORADO

In the movie, *Field of Dreams*, Kevin Costner hears a voice that whispers, "If you build it, he will come." This voice inspired him to build a baseball diamond in the middle of his cornfield. It is a great movie. If you have not seen it, I recommend it. We know as T'ai Chi Chih practitioners that the voice is *prajna*, the wisdom of the *Chi*. It is that voice that kept telling me after only teaching six months in Northern Colorado to plan a TCC Retreat. The voice kept saying, "If you plan it, they will come." And they did. Seventeen students and three Denver-area teachers attended. It was truly gratifying to see my students from surrounding communities come together for the first time united by their love of TCC and their desire to deepen their practice. I felt like I was witnessing a birth, a birth of a new TCC community. Pam Towne's grounding presence from 30 years of practice held the perfect space for the birth. I am deeply grateful for the field Pam created.

What did students share most from the experience? They did not expect to find family and community. They felt a gentleness and a sense of safety that allowed them to be themselves. For some it was the first time they experienced this in a group. I am reminded of Sandy McAlister's words from her December 2014 newsletter:

"When we come together titles, personalities, life experiences, accomplishments, and social and economic status fall away and we accept each other where we are, right then and there. We are interacting with each other in the present moment. Doing T'ai Chi Chih helps protective barriers and cultural imprinting dissolve and a more real, unencumbered person emerges. ... Could it be that when we do T'ai Chi Chih, to varying

degrees, our worldly persona, defenses, and ego melt away and our true nature shines through and this is what attracts us to each other? We are not ignorant of each others faults, but we see the beauty of each other and it seems we become less judgmental from practicing T'ai Chi Chih."

A strong desire to nurture and support the growing community arose. We spent an evening sharing ideas about how best to do this, including:

1.) 100 days of Love Energy – Nov 7th to Feb 14th A Community Commitment to 100 days of TCC

Starting and maintaining a daily practice is still difficult for many – even with a love of TCC. The gift of community is that we can support one another in this journey. One participant shared that the key to making a commitment was making it doable, kind and inspiring. Her minimum commitment was to do Rocking Motion. That minimum commitment will be different for everyone.

2.) Community On-going Connection

It was clear that the students wanted to stay connected. Some people use Facebook and some only use email. To be flexible and inclusive we decided to create both a Yahoo group for practitioners of TCC in Northern Colorado and a Facebook page. In the Yahoo group students can share their joys, inspirations, successes, frustrations or difficulties with their practice.

3.) Social Gatherings

No one wanted to wait until the next retreat or event to see each other. It was clear that group practices needed to be planned on a regular basis where we come together to practice TCC and have a chance to socially connect and celebrate. Location and responsibility for these gatherings could alternate between the neighboring communities.

As a teacher, I find there is no greater joy than seeing a student's heart light up with their love of TCC. I know that as they light up with love for TCC they are lighting up with love of their own essence or the truth of who and what they are. They are one in the same. It is why I teach. To see a community ablaze with this love is a joy my heart is still stretching to receive. Thank you, Justin.

"I found a sense of serenity that I'd been grasping for. It can't be created through physical or mental effort. Instead I need to allow the space for becoming still enough to find it. I wasn't expecting to find community, but that showed up in exactly the same way."

– LISA STROYAN

"I was overwhelmed at the very first session; I felt I had come home – in spirit and with a new family. A year ago I didn't believe I could ever genuinely feel my own joy again. Thank you for the joy in motion."

– REBECCA PAULSON



Retreat in Estes Park, Colorado

Minnesota Teacher Accreditation, October 2014

By DEB BERTELSEN, MAPLEWOOD, MINNESOTA

Seven Minnesota candidates converged at Kings House Retreat Center for their weeklong journey toward accreditation, led by Teacher Trainer and Guide, Sandy McAlister. Unlike many who attend these courses, they knew one another from previous retreats, workshops and/or intensives.

They came well prepared. They had worked with their primary and secondary teachers, and even had the opportunity to work with a third teacher to specifically fine tune their movements and ponder their presentations. As always, the week was filled with emotional ups and downs, circuitous paths and unexpected side trips. And yet, they still experienced learning and growth throughout the week – signs of being true students of T'ai Chi Chih. They emerged unified and cohesive, connected on a deep and personal level they probably didn't expect. They formed a sisterhood. And here's what they said:

"My teacher told me to focus on why I was doing this. When I gave my presentation I spoke from the heart: TCC is an inner healing experience and teaching it will deepen my practice as I share the Joy. This reminded me what Justin Stone said, 'It is my feeling that the circulation of the Chi is one of life's great secrets.'"

– IVONNE BEGUE DE BENZO

"Today my six TCC sisters and I were chatting by the lake and enjoying the sunshine when we spontaneously slipped into silence. We just stopped talking – maybe because we were tired or maybe because we could just be. Maybe because the intensity of experience brought us closer to the truth of who we are and we could just be in that truth together, in silence. Moments of grace and gratitude." – MARY WEDDLE

"This has been a time of being encapsulated in, and along, a spectrum of vibrancy. With each new day, new practice, new connection to ourselves and to others, that vibrancy grew until it became wisdom. **The kind of wisdom that can only be held in the heart because it can no longer be expressed in words.**" – NAN NELSON

"Kindness, support, patience and caring permeated this accreditation, a week of receiving generosity."

– MAGGIE BREIMHURST

"The first night everyone shared a story about how TCC had affected their life: Rocking Motion on a New York subway platform while moving a family member; standing alone amidst dangerous debris at a construction site without power while doing Bird Flap Its Wings; visiting a dying mother and doing Daughter on the Mountaintop by her bedside."

– SUSAN SOBELSON

"An intense learning, exploring journey. A wonderful experience in getting to know better, and bonding with, the other teacher candidates."

– BEV BROGIE



we
seven
sisters are
going forth to
brightly shine
all our
joy

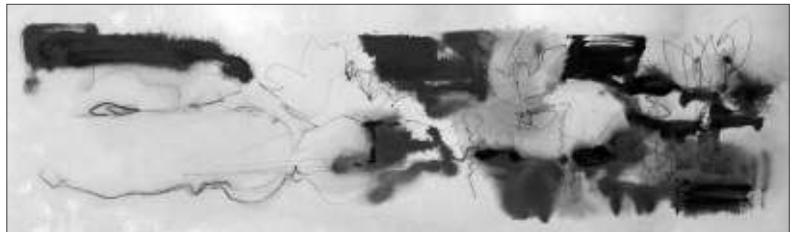
– BEV, IVONNE, MAGGIE,
MARY, NAN, SUSAN, SUSANNE

Balance
exhaustion, energy
nervous, calm
outside, inside
cool, warm
sisterhood
support
gratitude
joy

– SUSANNE CARPENTER

oh
seven
sisters, so
precious to us,
forever
in our
hearts

– SANDY, DEB, JUDY, SUE



"Light at the Temple" by Andrea Vargas

LOSS

By ALICE HOLDEN, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

This has been a difficult time for our Texas community, losing Renza Moscatelli Baker and Richard Cutler. About 20 years ago, Renza came to T'ai Chi Chih after cancer left her legs weak. The practice was so helpful that she became accredited, taught many students, attended conferences, and sent two teachers to conference in her place when she could not attend. Richard taught at Austin Community College, and at a wake, all attendees participated in nine rounds of Rocking Motion in Richard's honor. After another service, attendees joined in a TCC practice. **Both teachers understood Justin Stone's advice not to cling in *Spiritual Odyssey*: "Dwelling on the past, easy to do, is self-clinging. Living in the present, with gratitude, is rare. When we know Who and What we are, it is not difficult."** May we, like our TCC friends who have preceded us, understand and be consoled by this.

Seijaku Accreditation in Union, New Jersey, July 2014

WRITTEN AND COMPILED BY CAROL SPICER, FAIR LAWN, NEW JERSEY

Pam spoke of *prajna*, the inherent wisdom aspect of the *Chi*. There's that within us that knows; that is the true teacher. Her words rang true that "the softness is always there. Dwell in the softness," and we shared a deeply felt sense of appreciation and exuberance. Pam continued, "Letting go is the essence of *Seijaku*." And that Justin often said, "Softness means letting go." Below are comments from participants:

"To know Seijaku is to know a deeper and softer T'ai Chi Chih. Without the hardness in life, it would be difficult to appreciate the joys life has to offer. What a gift Justin gave everyone, to expand our lives farther than we could conceive." – JACK WEAVER

"I was ready for my next level of understanding and inner experience, and wanted to see if auditing would help me jump start my journey. And it did." – VICKI SCHROEDER

"Through Justin's teaching that "Seijaku helps us make progress in knowing who and what we are in accordance with Reality," it is possible to slow down, let go and dwell in softness, in Seijaku, in life." – MARILYN POWELL

"Seijaku brings me into alignment with the world of opposites." – PHYLLIS SEGAL

"Resistance can be welcomed when followed by total softness." – ALICE M. HOLDEN

"Slowly but surely the Seijaku onion lost a few more layers of getting it perfect. Letting go became the path to follow." – BARBARA FLYNN

"Seijaku is not a practice where my mind can wander; each movement takes being in the present. While Seijaku focuses on resistance, it's the letting go that has deepened and softened my practice. There's still so much to learn. Thank you Justin." – CHARLOTTE LIVINGSTON

"Practicing Seijaku has helped me be less judgmental of myself and others. I am more aware of tension within as I move through my day; I can let go more easily."

– ADABELLE P. RYCHTARIK



Southern California (Santa Barbara) accreditation in October 2014: L to R: Florette Delaby-Krugman, Denise Emmanuel Clemen, Tish Jaramilo, Lisa Stumm, [Pam Towne, trainer], Bill Nakao, Dixie Adeniran, Susan Quinn. Not pictured: Host Lisa Otero.

TCC Intensive in Aston, Pennsylvania, November 2014

COMPILED BY STACY MOORE, DOVER, PENNSYLVANIA

This was my first T'ai Chi Chih hosting experience, and I'm grateful and fortunate to have had such a great group. The important lesson of letting go was omnipresent: letting go of not knowing exactly what I was doing, not knowing what to expect with registration; letting go of being unsure of the host's role; letting go of worries, expectation, anticipation; letting go of the unknown in general, of interactions not expected, of emotions that did not serve.

On the other hand, I learned to accept help and assistance from others, and this lesson was also reinforced. It was wonderful to feel comfortable asking for guidance and support without getting in the way. I also appreciated the opportunity to set an example to others, to offer some new knowledge, and learning, perhaps, to show another way leading to self-growth. Gratitude to all present.

~ ~ ~

"I was sort of in the abstract for two days upon returning home. Then I was reviewing my notes and came upon this: "Growth entails casting

off false beliefs rather than gaining any significant wisdom." I am integrating this concept into my daily life. It applies to so much more than T'ai Chi Chih practice. I've also been chanting, "Nurture the nowness," from Justin Stone's *Abandon Hope*. To abandon hope of being what I am not." – JULIE BARRIER, OAKLAND, NJ

~ ~ ~

"The Intensive rocked my world. I went knowing the movements and learned I didn't really *know* the movements. I went thinking I would refine my practice and learned I had to *define* my practice. I went feeling apprehensive and learned *support* and *openness*. I went confident in my *yining* and *yanging* and learned I had to

feel expansion and contraction. For me it was an opportunity to learn, unlearn and relearn much of what T'ai Chi Chih is as a practice and an inner discipline.

Daniel Pieniac and Stacey provided the tools and atmosphere to immerse myself in this experience and not feel so "rocky" after all. Attendees made it richer with their willingness to learn, share and be supportive of one another. The whole experience was a reflection of the spirit of TCC: ever-changing with the invitation to learn more and more of the form and allow the form to inform life itself; ever-the-same in its faithfulness to the essence, the roots, the fundamentals of TCC. Thanks to everyone for sharing this path on the TCC journey.

– MICHELE DAPELO, BALTIMORE, MD

Musings About Teaching & Connecting

By DEB BERTELSEN, MAPLEWOOD, MINNESOTA

Teaching TCC: Why do you do it?

Family, friends, religious beliefs, education and work experiences shape us. We are impacted by the life lessons, sage advice and wisdom of others. Our T'ai Chi Chih community is not about our job titles, salaries, or whom we know. Rather, it is about who we are as individuals and what we leave as footprints – whether in the present moment, or at some undefined future point in time. The people I have met along my path as a student and teacher have had a significant impact on me personally and professionally. If I can impact someone's life in any way through teaching TCC, then I am a better person for it. It is important for teaching to be a part of my legacy.

What does it mean to you to teach TCC? What do you think you're giving to others and what do you get?

Whether we are conscious of it or not, TCC has allowed us to learn from and teach one another lessons about letting go, ego, humility, compassion, mindfulness, support, love and inner sincerity. When in the presence of others, we never truly know the full impact we might have; neither are we aware of the unexpected gifts we might receive. Each of us has talents, skills and abilities, some of which are hidden and untapped, just waiting for the right opportunity. Each of these moments is a gift to give; someone unknowingly is waiting to receive. Oftentimes, hindsight provides us with insight on gifts given. Occasionally, we have the foresight to know what we might give. Teaching TCC allows foresight. Individually, we have each gained so much from Justin's teachings and the practice itself.

What have you found to be the most effective ways to keep spreading the word, interesting new students, keeping current students engaged?

Personally, I stay active in my local, as well as in the greater, TCC community. I am committed to continuing to teach, guide and give back any way possible through the skills, talents and abilities I have to offer. It is part of paying it forward. Being passionate, genuine and coming from a place of sincerity and integrity is important to me. I believe my students, teachers and friends in the community know this is a part of who I am. As a result, I make the classes and practice sessions a calm, non-judgmental learning experience.

Training the next generations of TCC teachers

Do you think moving more qualified students toward becoming TCC teachers is an important part of building the future of TCC? Is this a focus of your teaching?

I absolutely think this is critical to the future of TCC. However, first and foremost, I am committed to making certain the journey toward accreditation is one of authenticity and integrity. Oftentimes we see the teacher in the student long before he or she is aware. We want to nurture and guide them in the right way. In conversations with other teachers around the country, we share a common desire to develop the teaching community from the foundation up. We want to assist in establishing protocols or guidelines that will help primary and secondary teachers be the right type of support for these potential candidates – and for candidates to receive the right type of learning experience.

What are the best ways (that you've found, for you personally) to move qualified students toward teacher accreditation?

In Minnesota we developed the "Accreditation Journey Framework" that has been a wonderful guideline to follow. It allows candidates an established path to follow toward an end result. It has been very successful. For the candidates, working with both primary and secondary teachers, being in the classroom, in groups and one-on-one instruction has been invaluable.

Connecting with other TCC teachers: Is it important to you?

Staying connected is like having a second family. We have been brought together for a purpose – one greater than each of us as individuals can accomplish. There is great wisdom and knowledge from all those who have walked this path before me. I view myself as a student of and for life, and I therefore want to learn from others.

What are the main ways you connect with them? Are these effective and enough? Do you wish there were other ways?

My main connections are through emails and telephone. I've been on a few conference calls, and those are great. I would love to see something like the Good Karma Publishing marketing conference session on other topics. Maybe video conferencing?

Is there anything else you'd like the readers to know?

Divorce and rheumatoid arthritis brought me to TCC. What this non-medical moving mediation has done for me physically, emotionally and spiritually is amazing. I am so grateful to those who taught me, continue to teach me and to those whose path has crossed with mine.



"Together" by Andrea Vargas

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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

- Mar 19-22 | TCC Teachers Retreat w/Sandy** | Santa Barbara, CA | Pam Towne | 760-421-7589
Mar 24-27 | TCC Retreat w/Sandy | Santa Barbara, CA | Pam Towne | 760-421-7589
April 19-25 | Accreditation w/Pam | Aston, PA | Stacey Moore | 717-465-6890
May 7-10 | TCC Retreat w/ Pam | Prescott, AZ | Dana Diller | 928-848-0824
Aug 6-9 | Teacher Conference | Black Mountain, NC | Vicki Schroeder | vickitcc@gmail.com
Aug 9-11 | Seijaku Accreditation with Pam | Black Mountain, NC | Dan Pienciak | 732-988-5573
Aug 9-11 | Seijaku Introduction with / Dan | Black Mountain, NC | Dan Pienciak | 732-988-5573
Oct 16-18 | TCC Workshop w/Sandy | Tupelo, MS | Ron Richardson | 662-844-6473
Oct 25-29 | TCC Intensive w/Sandy | Philadelphia, PA | April Leffler | 610-532-6753
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

~ MORE WORKSHOPS & RETREATS ~

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

- Apr 9-12 | TCC Retreat w/ Carmen Brocklehurst** |
Albuquerque, NM | Judy Hendricks | 505-897-3810
Apr 11 | TCC Workshop w/ Sharon Sirkis | Marriotts
ville, MD | Sharon Sirkis | 410-730-1986
May 16 | Seijaku Workshop w/ Carmen Brocklehurst |
Albuquerque, NM | Judy Hendricks | 505-897-3810
**Sep 24-27 | Learn Seijaku Retreat w/ Carmen
Brocklehurst** | Albuquerque, NM | Judy Hendricks |
505-897-3810



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Name _____

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Phone / Email _____

TEACHER ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

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

Date you were accredited as a Seijaku teacher _____

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

Name of "second signature" _____

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Thank you!