

The Vital Force

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for teachers & students

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Justin Stone: In His Words

Ultimate Truth

FALL 1988, ©THE VITAL FORCE

Teachers and students are constantly asking me to write a book on “Ultimate Truth.” If I did so, they would resent the very “truth” they asked for, as it would threaten the ground of their previous concepts. And “ultimate truth” is of no value in everyday life.

Take the following example:

“Nature has no interest in the individual. It oversees the evolution of the Species, and the somewhat illusionary individual just happens to be part of that Species. Churches promise all sorts of beautiful futures – or hateful rewards – to the individual to gratify his ego sense of importance, and, probably, in doing so, they contribute a bit to morality and ethical behavior. But there are trillions of forms of life in billions of Universes, and the human intellect is not capable of intuiting them. As heightened awareness leads to an unobstructed consciousness, they can be experienced, and it will then be realized that they are all here now – they are not geographical. When the vibratory rate is stepped up through meditation, *T'ai Chi*, or heightened awareness seminars, as well as other disciplines, there may well be glimpses of other forms of life undreamed of in the everyday world. It is easy for a higher rate of vibration to be aware of what is below it, but one cannot look up the scale. Greater awareness will bring us to the conclusion that “we” – and all life – consist of a constant flux of energies. The illusion of individuality (maybe this is painful to realize) is replaced by an identity much greater.”

“
we – and all life –
consist of a constant
flux of energies

Does this mean we now become insignificant dots in one of the innumerable Cosmic systems? No, quite the opposite. When we find out Who and What we are, it is as the Lotus Sutra says: “**Man’s voice is a voice filling the Universe, his life is a life without limit.**”



May The Vital Force Be With You

~ New Teacher Voices ~

This issue features a wealth of reflections by new teachers accredited in Pennsylvania and Colorado during the last quarter. It's apparent that they, individually and collectively, had an incredibly transformative week. Surprised? Many of the stories were the basis of their in-class presentations. Many are reflections of before, during and after the intensive process. All are heartfelt.

The impact of these pages might be threefold (as if anything more is needed than simply taking time to reflect and share):

- Inspire other serious students to take the leap and teach.
- Help current teachers reconnect with their own initial sparks of wonder.
- Gently challenge forthcoming teacher trainings to continue the outpouring.

To paraphrase Nancy Werner-Azarski elsewhere in this issue: we see the future of TCC. Enjoy.

~ WITH GRATITUDE. KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Request To All Teachers: Contact Information Update

FROM SANDY McDONALD, HAYWARD, CALIFORNIA

Many people become teachers because they find benefit in the practice and want to share it with others. But this is hard to do if perspective students can't find you. The www.taichichih.org website has a list of teachers. This list is woefully out of date. It is not unusual for me to receive calls from people looking for a teacher in their area as the ones on the list they have tried either don't teach any more or their contact information is not valid. Frankly, this is not a good reflection on the quality of TCC teachers.

Please take a few minutes and look at the website to see if your information is up to date. If it is not or you are not teaching at this time, please send that information to changes@taichichih.org. If you think you might teach in the future we can always add you back on the list.

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The Vital Force

~ 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.

~ SUBMISSION DEADLINES ~

January 1 for the February issue
April 1 for the May issue
July 1 for the August issue
October 1 for the November issue

WHAT DOES THE VITAL FORCE DO?

- Produces a quarterly journal by and for its members
- Creates and maintains taichichih.org for everyone
- Maintains the extensive teacher database
- Extends its reach through a blog and e-newsletter
- Outreach for teachers and students about TCC through social media

~ SUBMISSION GUIDELINES ~

Please send articles as Word documents, electronically, to tcc@kimgrant.com. 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.

~ GIVING ~

Please consider a tax-deductible contribution to support *The Vital Force's* essential and vast outreach. Membership fees cover the journal; our other activities continue through the discretion and generous support of our giving base. They allow us to effectively reach hundreds of thousands of practitioners around the globe. Thanks to our supporters who:

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Moving To The State Of Serenity

BY LINDA BRAGA, CASTRO VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

Congratulations to all new T'ai Chi Chih students. You have won a trip, a once in a lifetime adventure. You will meet many new friends along the way... but you must leave home with no excess baggage. See details below before you embark.

Travel Package Ticket

Congratulations. Your ticket has already been purchased for you by your Higher Self. It is a one-way ticket that is not refundable.

Transportation

The mode of transportation for this journey is provided by a vehicle called "Tai Chi Chih – Joy Thru Movement." This meditative practice is *guaranteed* to get you where you want to go.

Destination

Your destination is the state of Serenity, the County of Calmness, the City of Peace, the private luxury Residence called *contentment and bliss*.

Passport and ID

You will not need a passport for this trip, because as the trip continues, you will not be recognizable. These changes begin on the inside, and are difficult to reverse. Identification can be made only by friends and family. They will describe you as: "full of energy, happy and relaxed, good listener, someone who knows who they are."

Itinerary

You will have a direct flight, with an in-flight movie called "Finding Serenity in the Midst of Chaos." It won an Oscar in 1974 and was produced by Justin F. Stone.

Side Trips

Many side trips are available, *but they are not recommended if you want to arrive in the State of Serenity*. These side-trips include: illness, lack of commitment to the practice, exhaustion, family responsibilities, inertia and laziness, and worst of all, *a head trip* in which you blame others for your lack of progress.

Baggage

Pack light. Leave space in your suitcase, in your home, in your mind. **Things you will not need include:** To-do lists, agendas, business clothes, cell phones, tech appliances, running shoes. Nor will you need FastTrak passes or multi-tasking

apps. Pack only one thing: the intent to succeed in the practice of TCC.

Map

There is no map for this trip, digital or otherwise. You must rely on your inner GPS to direct and guide you, once you start this journey. This GPS is your intuition, which will assist you in all decisions along the way.

Payment Method

The only viable method of payment is *daily practice*. Weekly or monthly rates do not apply. No refunds are possible no matter when you might abandon the trip. The goal is to finish the journey in time to reap the health benefits in your *current lifetime*.

Arrival Time

Unknown at this time... It might be in one year, five or 10 years, or more. It all depends on you.

Photos of the Trip

Free photos and video clips will be downloaded automatically by your brain/body and available for scanning at any time. No start up fees will apply and you will be the sole owner of this inventory. These photos will not be found on Facebook, as they are private property.

Insurance

An insurance package is available for you and it covers the whole trip. It is composed of: TCC teachers, group classes, private lessons, meditative weekend retreats and an opportunity to become a TCC teacher. Additional materials include: TCC DVDs and videos, the TCC Photo Text Manual, books, tapes by Justin Stone and music CDs to enhance TCC practice. What a bargain.

Ticket Agent: Linda Braga, accredited teacher.

Bon Voyage and have a good journey.



TCC Accreditation In Pennsylvania, June 2016

COMPILED BY APRIL LEFFLER,
PROSPECT PARK, PENNSYLVANIA

As the recent teacher-training course came to a graceful conclusion, we celebrated nine newly accredited teachers. As the course host, it is an honor to experience the whole process – from answering questions prior to registration, to picking up travelers at the airport, to witnessing candidates' unfolding transformation. Many thanks also go to auditors who committed their time to be present. Below are musings from the new teachers.

~ ~ ~

My intention at the start of this accreditation week was to: be open to peace and joy; allow softness and continuity; be friends with my *Chi* and the *Chi* of each who is helping and hoping for growth; and be in balance of giving and receiving.

During the humbling first days, I let go of insecurity and expectation. All the countless hours of practice were represented in its raw reality. I let it be and accepted all that was offered in feedback. Then I discovered that my intention to make friends also applied to the *Chi* of each movement and I was finally able to make a fuller flowing connection with Carry the Ball to the Side. Making friends with this new favorite movement has softened all of my previous favorite movements. So I recommend learning to love the one movement that challenges you – to overcome the hidden blockage in your practice.

I am thankful for every minute of driving (including some great distances) to TCC classes; the extra months I gave myself to prepare for accreditation; the indoor and outdoor practices; the practices when I felt sick or healthy; the time studying Justin's videos; the time reading and listening to Justin's other sources; and (most of all) helpful clues from multiple teachers. All of it, it was all necessary beforehand.

Even so I arrived without a pre-set presentation. It percolated until the day it was done. The *Chi* flowed and I let it write itself in a succinct testimony of balance. This sounds idealistic but I am a scrappy-rewrite-it-again speechwriter so this seemed like a crazy miracle of spirit. I think my presentation ended up giving a glimpse of how TCC has brought balance to my life.

I completed accreditation full of joy and peace. I really can feel the bubbling springs beneath my feet, in my heart, head and soul. I am letting go of rigid control and allowing gentleness to flow in my knees and joints. I honor my core truth daily with more awareness than before I arrived.

Plus I met my tribe in the TCC community and you are absolutely wonderful. Looking forward to our next in person reunion.

– JANET STARR

~ ~ ~

It was surprising and enriching in ways I suspect will unfold little by little. When auditing teachers shared on the first day how much fun we would have, I was skeptical, my *vashannas* firmly in operation.

The breakdown came on the second day, with the first correction. The noise in my head began; I made a panicked call to my instructor for reassurance. Did I really belong here? Was I a worthy candidate?

Prajna comes (softly as it tends to), inviting me to trust and let go. And then suddenly it comes rushing in, surrounding me, connecting me, making me a part of it. I find warmth and laughter, joy and love, in everyone. – LAUREN LORMEL

~ ~ ~

Everyone at our teacher accreditation was well prepared, committed to making this a special experience. It brought many moments of going deeper, moving from the center, flowing, feeling, filled with softness and continuity. Each person brought special gifts and was open and caring. The result was a powerful experience filled with

energy and love. Thanks to Pam, April, the auditors and my fellow new teachers for making this time so special. – SARAH RILEY

~ ~ ~

The best word to describe the experience of being at the teacher accreditation course is "empowerment." The approach Pam demonstrated to bring people to teach T'ai Chi Chih was founded in love and the knowledge of one life, one wisdom. Again and again Pam invited us to look and discover what was alive, awake and complete – embodied in the soft, ever-present and relaxed movements of the *Chi*. Any mistakes made were lovingly witnessed, noted as being useful and let go. As the week progressed a transformation arose in the energy field we were generating. **Reactions of the mind began to fall away like rainwater running off a lotus flower.** On the final evening all that was left to do was enjoy laughter as a family. I will never forget the moments of work, play, confusion, clarity and sheer enjoyment. And I will take them, as an accredited teacher of this wonderful, magical *Chi* practice, to share and empower others.

– DAVID PARRISH

~ ~ ~

I
am a
lovely
butterfly,
colorful,
newly
free.

I
am a
creature
transformed,
released to
broadly
fly.

I am on a journey to find the *Chi*;
Its color is lavender-blue.
Its scent is frankincense
Its form is the universe
Its path is light
Its breath is life itself –
a gift.

– TERESA FRANKLIN



Front (L to R): Teresa Franklin, Pam Towne, April Leffler, Sarah Riley. Back (L to R): Annette McNeil, Janet Starr, Michele Dapelo, Bruce Lee, Mary Cerullo, Lauren Lormel,

Accreditation Doors

BY MICHELE DAPELO, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

At the outset, Pam encouraged us to name our intention for the week. Although I usually rely on words, my intention came as an image of an open door. As the unbidden has a knack of doing, the image stayed with me throughout the week.

Sometimes **the door was wide open** to let in whatever/whoever I seemed to need; sometimes it was **slightly ajar** so I could sneak a peek within myself. Sometimes it was open to the unknown or a **solid door** confident and sure. Sometimes it was a **sliding door** off the track (think learning to mirror side-to-side movements).

The open door image also gave me insight into the experience of the *Tao*, the living out of the aspects of *yin* and *yang*. **The door could swing me** from the contraction of “unlearning” to the expansiveness of relearning. **It moved between the dark of self-doubt to the light of encouragement;** between negative feelings of confusion and positive experiences of “aha moments.” All of these transitions were guided by the subtle intuition of the *yin* and the bold creativity of the *yang*, an experience of the complementary and interconnected.

One great gift that this open door gave to me was access to the presence and support of my fellow teacher-candidates as we companioned each other through this incredible and challenging portal. It was a privilege to journey with individuals of such authentic self-revelation, open to each other, kind of heart and sincere of spirit. Ever-present was the openness, caring and respect of the teacher trainer (Pam), host (April) and all auditing teachers who participated by **standing on either side of the door**, willing to help us in or out and making sure we did not become unhinged.

During the week I witnessed in each individual present how a commitment to the depths of T'ai Chi Chih can inform and deepen our lives. The practice of TCC encourages the stability of grounding and dynamism of creativity; the expected and unexpected; being at home in the same space within us. The accreditation process invited me to **keep the door open** and **seek the next threshold** to be crossed. With gratitude.

Ode To TCC Teacher Accreditation

— ANNETTE MCNEIL

Self-intentions were made from beginning to end,
19 movements (and one pose) whose nuances we sought to mend,
To envision a calm pool of water in a bubbling spring,
All the while with *prajna* heralding a melodious ring.

A bat would appear with a message of rebirth,
Periodic bouts of infectious group mirth,
Letting go of critical thoughts and ego,
Awareness is the root of TCC, echoed in my head from Justin, my amigo.

From the *tan t'ien* to the soles of the feet,
Only to find that longed for sweet spot, oh, what a treat,
Integrating the whole of all moving parts,
A continuous loop of rest positions and starts,
Yiming and *yanging* for days ad infinitum,
Sometimes wanting to rewind and press delete 'em.

Immersion and feeling the a, b, c's of the *Chi*,
Knowing it was not only me but the collective we,
The effort of no effort, a mysterious gift,
Asking my body's permission to move without getting miffed.

The angst self-created by upcoming pitches,
Often brought us to tears but also to stitches,
Rehearsing with auditor supports and a worry doll under my pillow,
Made me feel like a bamboo in a storm rather than a willow.

Polarity, circularity, two principles I avow,
Could these be rooted in Tao?
Making an investment in storing the *Chi* in my bones,
With softness and continuity, feeling those vibrational tones.

Mirror, mirror on the wall,
Just imagine how teaching TCC will make you feel tall,
The benefits and joy abound with one more,
Just remember this stuff is not available in any store.

With gratitude, love and renewed strength and vigor,
Realizing we cannot appease the hunger without the rigor,
To all our promising TCC teachers who now will be mentors,
May we all continue to flow from our centers.

Finding The Essence: Each Movement Has Key Points

By SANDY McDONALD, HAYWARD, CALIFORNIA

When students ask how long I have been doing T'ai Chi Chih and I answer, "33 years," some are perplexed that I could study and stay interested in such a simple practice for so long. I explain that in the beginning the practice is external, learning how to shift weight correctly, learning the shape of the hand/arm patterns and coordinating the two. We study how the principles apply to each movement. Then we move inward and begin to feel our way through the movements rather than think our way through. We explore, with feeling-awareness, how to move with the least amount of effort, how to ground more effectively, how to pare down excesses, understanding what is important and what is superficial.

In becoming a teacher trainer in 2002 I felt a great responsibility to pass on the form correctly. I would correct a teacher's shape of the hands: "more curve, less curve, the hands pass here, the hand turns this way, the upper arm only comes forward to a certain point, the shape is a perfectly round circle." And so on. Oh my, how tedious.

Several years ago we had a teacher conference focused on "The Essence of TCC." It is only just now, in the past year or so, that I feel I am truly exploring the essence of the practice. In reading what Justin has written about each movement, listening to what he says about them as he teaches on his DVDs and watching how he moves, there are occasionally some discrepancies. So how does one decide what is "correct"?

When someone would ask Justin about the correct placement of the hands in a particular movement, occasionally his answer was "two inches here, two inches there." In *Spiritual Odyssey* Justin wrote, "You cannot give the same teaching to two people. It must fit the Karma of each one and never be a teaching by rote. How do you know what teaching to give? You will be guided."

My exploration of the practice lately has been to decide what are the key points of each movement, trying to pare down the information of each movement to a couple of "musts" that I feel really defines that movement, and the rest of the information, play with and find my own truth. I am referring to the arm/hand pattern when talking about the key points.

In **Daughter in the Valley**, given that we are doing the weight shift correctly and following the principles of softness, continuity, circularity, etc., what I feel is the **number one key point** of the movement is that the hands rise with the forward weight shift. The **second key point** is that the palms come close together at the lowest point of the circle and hold that palm-to-palm polarity all the way to the top. When the hands separate after arriving at the top is not important as long as the motion is integrated into the flow and not an independent hand movement.

I am working on moving away from trying to define and box in each aspect of a movement, and adhere to what I feel are the core important key points of a movement while allowing exploration of the rest within the framework of the principles we use in TCC. It can actually be a fun and enlightening exercise to try to define for yourself what you consider to be the two or three key points of each movement's hand/arm pattern.

Justin gave us the outline or skeleton of the form, the shape of the form. It is for us to fill it in with our understanding and experience within the framework he gave us. I am not advocating changing the moves of TCC. I am encouraging each of us to explore and play with the form and feel for ourselves.

In Justin's article, "All Things are as They Have Always Been," found in *Spiritual Odyssey*, he is writing about meditation but I feel it also applies to the above.

"Those who do TCC regularly have not been taught how they should feel or what they should experience. Whatever happens is right and does not have to be adjusted to any doctrine or dogma. It is for this reason that I sometimes do not answer questions that would call for conceptual answers – they would spoil the experience."

Words have their place and are absolutely necessary for communication and the accumulation of knowledge, but they are not capable of taking the place of a valid experience. Words are, by their very nature, dualistic, and no realization of 'Oneness' (wholeness) can come from subject-object thinking. In short, do not be afraid to experience without labeling, or even remembering, the experience."



Where in the World: Pokhara, Nepal

April Leffler, Adrienne Phillips, Stacey Moore, Lorraine Lepine,
Sandy McAlister, Sky Young-Wick

What This Trainer Has Learned

By DANIEL PIENCIAK, HOWELL, NEW JERSEY

Having taught teacher accreditation courses and intensives for several years, some recurring teaching techniques have become standard for me. These tips have surfaced over and over again in helping folks to overcome weaknesses in posture and to experience how correct movement *feels*.

Justin often reminded us that, “We do T'ai Chi Chih mostly with the waist and the wrists.” The fact is, when the wrists (and whole upper body) are not soft, it is because the waist holds tension. Another way to say this is that when looseness of movement is not allowed in the waist, or the practitioner fails to let go in the waist, (as during Rocking Motion at the beginning of one's routine), the *Chi* will only flow weakly.

I have found that one useful antidote to this challenge is the notion of setting up both forward-backward and side-to-side movements by sliding down the wall. As the knees bend and the body sinks down, the lower back relaxes (becoming somewhat flatter), the buttocks tuck under and the tailbone drops, feeling as if pointing downward. Once a person *feels* this movement in the waist (it is also felt very much in seated TCC), he or she is more likely to *feel* waist flexibility/looseness while shifting the weight. For this reason, I often start new students with Rocking Motion *sitting down* (provided that appropriate, armless chairs are available). Folks tend to learn TCC by moving the upper body, and even seasoned practitioners are often not aware of stiffness in their waists. In *yingning* and *yanging*, getting folks to *feel* where to lead from can be very helpful.

Feedback, both from repeat students in everyday classes and serious learners in intensives and accreditations, has confirmed that *feeling* the weight shift as if leading from the knee (forward and side-to-side), and *as if* leading backward from a place between the tailbone and small of the back, *changed significantly the feeling of flowing from the center and encourages looseness in the waist*. The knees are then more likely to let go (soften) sooner and *more evenly*, allowing softness in the waist and a favorably aligned posture.

One must learn that when the weight arrives on either foot, it is the waist that lets go and the knee that softens (*as a result*), bringing one gracefully into upright elegant alignment, with the foot and leg as a firm *but relaxed* foundation.



Where in the World: Pokhara, Nepal
April Leffler, the Buddha and Stacey Moore

Teacher Re-Certification

By PAM TOWNE, OCEANSIDE, CALIFORNIA

Many forms of movement require instructors to be re-certified every three to five years, or at least to earn Continuing Education Units (CEUs) each year. Have you wondered why this is not the case with T'ai Chi Chih?

It comes from the originator of TCC. Justin Stone was strongly against requiring re-certification. That doesn't mean he thought continuing education was not important. He certainly encouraged teachers to attend the teacher conference and to audit accreditations.

Rather than mandating it, he relied on the *teh* (inner sincerity) of teachers to renew our practice and teaching skills regularly – of our own volition.

That puts the responsibility on each of us to design our own continuing education program. After being accredited in 1984, I decided to attend the annual teacher conference and audit one accreditation course annually. I did that until appointed as a teacher trainer in 2001.

Realizing that I hadn't attended an accreditation course since then, I audited one in Denver this June. I'm so glad I did. It was wonderful to be a student again and focus on refining my own movements, instead of my students'. This led to a deeper understanding of the hip swivel Justin talked about.

Auditing also provided me with new ways of getting things across to students and great teaching tips. It was a joy getting to know the candidates; their presentations were awesome. The nicest people are attracted to TCC and I made new friends as well as re-connected with others. Doing more TCC practice than usual brought increased health and strength. An added benefit was being away from home and day-to-day chores. It provided nurturing self-care time to renew body, mind and spirit.

Whether you are a new teacher or have been teaching for decades, I invite you to design your own re-certification program. In addition to conference and accreditations, there are intensives (focused on how to move), teacher symposiums (focused on how to teach) and regional retreats.

If your employer requires CEUs, trainers can provide a certificate of hours attended for an intensive or auditing an accreditation. Scholarships are available to help get to conference, an intensive or accreditation. **What will you do in the next year to renew your practice and teaching?**

A Community Of TCC Practitioners

By CARMEN L. BROCKLEHURST, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

While attending a wonderful T'ai Chi Chih teacher accreditation course in Denver (hosted by Marie Dotts, taught by Dan Pienciak and assisted by Pam Towne Duncan), I was again strongly reminded of the reason we call ourselves a community. It is our true sense of caring and service to others. These two important reasons are coupled with a sincere knowing that TCC is a healing discipline that takes us beyond being a simple exercise form.

I audited the course even though I was not sponsoring any of the candidates because Marie Dotts is growing a new and powerful community near me and I wanted to celebrate all the work and love that has gone into her endeavor.

It was great to watch the candidates come in truly prepared in the discipline of the TCC movements and philosophy – and ready to learn how to teach TCC to others. Marie had done a first-rate job preparing her students/candidates (as had the other teachers who sent their students). Many of the candidates, nonetheless, were humbly sure that they had much to learn and would probably be sent home. Who in their right mind would send home a student with such *teh*?

Dan taught and Pam assisted with love and depth. Auditing teachers were invited to help in creating a community event. We came from different parts of the country, but what we celebrated during this training was not the differences, but the beauty with which we flowed and harmonized as we did TCC. Because of this, slight corrections were easy to make, and both the candidates and auditing teachers were open to growing. Each person carried in his or her heart a desire to have a deeper TCC experience.

A community is built on trust, not only of an individual's own ability to do things well, but also on knowing that whatever seems different comes from a sincere belief that we are doing it correctly. *Chih* (Knowledge of) helps us find the path to the deeper way to do TCC. It seems there is no end to this depth.

All candidates received their accreditation, several teachers joined in the final practice led by the new teachers, and we were all tremendously happy. We were all learning to love and share the *Chi*.

Major TCC Principles

By MICHAEL S. ISAACS, BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

To move the Vital Force what are some major keys? Seven S's, three C's, and two P's!

- Soft** (effort of no effort) – don't strain body or brain
- Straight** (vertical alignment) – don't stoop or tilt
- Sink** (into the essence) – don't drop too low or stay too high
- Shift** (yin-yang balance) – don't move legs out too short or long
- Slow** (swim through heavy air) – don't go too fast
- Stillness** (quietude in rest position) – don't fidget or stir
- Smile** (joy thru movement) – don't try too hard
- Continuity** (smoothness) – don't stall or stop
- Center** (flow from the *tan t'ien*) – don't lead from hands
- Circularity** (energy and wholeness) – don't circle too wide or small
- Polarity** (between hands) – don't have hands too close or far
- Practice** (regularly) – don't make excuses



Untitled Poetry

Oh to be a
Fish
So free
No collision
You and me!
To be a fish,
The sea,
No boundary

The sky so
Wide

The sea so
Deep
Evolution

In a
Sink

My mask
My snorkel
My fins

Paraphernalia
Never ends

So simple to
Be a fish

Oh to be a
Chinese tea
Whose the
Healer, you
Or me?

Do the needles
Do the trick

Or is it
Already built

In *Chi*?
Whirl the spirals

Move the junk
Get it going

Steaming stuff
Whose the oper-

ator
Whose the body

Earth, Wind, Fire
Wood

Changes the broth
Inside

Outside
Purer stuff.

sky
so vast
stars beckon
calling my heart
like the sea
within
me

sky
unveiled
stars revealed
distant vistas
calling me
homeward
now

stars
beckon
call to me
every night
far away
yet near
me

me
awake
poetry
moving through
me
creative
awesome
joy

– DIANA DAFFNER,
SIESTA KEY, FLORIDA

– DIANA BAHN,
NEW YORK,
NEW YORK

Beach Vacation

By BECKY WATKINS, ALEXANDRIA, LOUISIANA

I teach others to take time for themselves and their soul's progress and growth through T'ai Chi Chih and Yoga. I try to hold space for a person to experience that. But I don't always take time for myself. My family beach vacation this month was soulful time in ways I never expected.

I went to the beach with a troubled heart. I was feeling burned out, angry and sorrowful. But something magical happened. Maybe it was the full moon or solstice, but each time I swam in the ocean, I came out feeling a little lighter, a little more at peace. One day I felt the anger fall away and drift out to sea. One day my grief and sorrow melted away in the sun and salt water. What a relief. I slept that night for 10 hours. Each day a concern that I was nurturing melted away; I was cleansed and healed over and over again. Now I understand those old-time, river baptisms and how transformative that can be.

I also think my daily practice of TCC renewed my spirit. Digging my toes into the sand and listening to the ocean made each practice seem like a dream. Nobody was doing anything. **I was just moving with the tides.** I have never felt such deep peace and flowing energy while practicing.

The ocean reassures me that all is well with the world. The waves strike a chord deep in my heart and remind me that Mother God is a living breathing entity as old as time. I love to watch the moods of the sea. Listening to waves break is the most exquisite concert I've heard. She sings in me and through me. There is something magical here even when it is crowded and noisy – and even though we humans show little respect for her presence. When I swim in the ocean, salt water heals and cradles me like a mother soothing a daughter.

I know it was Mother God's gift to me and after eight days, I was healed and whole; my heart has stayed light and joyful. I fasted from the world by not listening to world news or watching television. It seemed to help; now I have little desire to listen to news or read a newspaper. I use that time to practice instead. Every time I become still and close my eyes, I hear the ocean and taste her saltiness and remember being held, cradled, loved. Then my body begins to move in Rocking Motion.



Pause & Savor

By KATHY STARRICK, WOODLAND PARK, NEW JERSEY

I have always enjoyed classical music, symphonies and piano concertos. I was listening to a favorite the other day, and noticed that a pause allowed me a moment to savor and absorb what had come before. The short period of silence dramatically enhanced what followed. During my years as a technical writer and editor, I used white space to emphasize and enhance what I was describing. Leaving space around something allows it become the focal point of attention. I started thinking about how **space enhances my T'ai Chi Chih practice.**

I have always paused and grounded myself after each movement. But I never gave it much thought beyond that. I realize now that the space around the movements, provided by the pauses, enhances each one. Using this awareness, I now take time with each pause to allow my body and spirit to be soothed, to savor what I have just experienced, and to absorb the peace that comes with the movement. This helps me be more mindful in my practice, and it's then more enjoyable and rewarding. Pause and savor: I say it often to remind me to be here, now.

TCC Feet. Again.

By DONNA DEFFENBAUGH, PRESCOTT, ARIZONA

"She got diamonds on the soles of her shoes."

– PAUL SIMON; 1987

"...these boots are made for walking..."

– NANCY SINATRA, VOCALIST; LEE GREENWOOD, SONGWRITER; 1966

"No one regards what is before his feet; everyone gazes at the stars."

– QUINTUS ENNIUS, 239 - CIRCA 169 BC *IPHIGENIA* (FRAGMENT)

Caught up in the whirlwind of life. Walking with our heads in the clouds. How many steps we spend taking for granted that vital connection between earth and the soles of our feet.

Worse, perhaps, is not noticing the relationship at all: How our size six or eight or 11 ½ carry us – go without resistance – wherever our heads decide. Hold us high enough to see the parade. Keep us steadily upright through triumph and tragedy. Fulfill any important mission or dreamed of adventure. Soles of the feet.

Bound to earth by gravity, but able to free us from the chains of pain or habit or illness or isolation. Willing to complete our connection with this earth, community, best friend, self. Concentrate. Gazing at stars, yet knowing what keeps us stable, centered, at peace.

Justin Was A Yogi: Reflections On The Originator of TCC, Justin Stone

BY LISA M. OTERO, PORT HUENEME, CALIFORNIA

Ayogi? Justin? Really? Did I ever see Justin do “Downward Facing Dog” or “Tree Pose”? No, never. Actually, he was summarily dismissive of the physical practice that many Americans do for exercise/recreation and call “yoga.” (*Yoga* is a Sanskrit word meaning union.) Justin considered the performance of yoga’s physical poses mere gymnastics *when disconnected from the philosophical and spiritual context from which they sprang.*

The routine of physical postures that most people call yoga is more properly called Hatha yoga, and was developed in India in the early 20th century and popularized in Europe and America some 50 years later. While the physical practice is relatively young, the spiritual practice that is complete yoga is ancient wisdom.

Justin differentiated the purely recreational physical practice from what he referred to as “*Raja Yoga*,” a comprehensive code of moral guidance, ethical conduct and physical and meditative spiritual practices from ancient India meant to inform every aspect of the way one lives. (*Raja* means royal or king or ultimate in Sanskrit). Justin thought very few Americans would be interested in such a rigorous, demanding and comprehensive spiritual practice.

Because of his dismissive statements about American-style yoga for fitness, many people believe that Justin was anti-yoga. I thought this myself for many years and felt conflicted about my appreciation for both Hatha yoga and T’ai Chi Chih. I never talked to him about my yoga practice or my decision to become a yoga instructor.

My conflict was erased a few years ago (after Justin’s death)

when I began in earnest to study the ancient, classic yoga spiritual texts, *the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali and the Bhagavad Gita*, both of which elucidate complete yoga, i.e., the practice beyond the postures. (There are many, many translations of *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*; the one I rely upon is by modern yoga master BKS Iyengar; my favorite translation of *The Bhagavad Gita* is by Eknath Easwaran.)

I was shocked that the philosophy and spiritual practice in these ancient texts was not new to me, but was, in fact, surprisingly familiar. I had heard many of the concepts and Sanskrit vocabulary over many years – from Justin, both in person and in his lectures and writings. When I was able to place Justin’s stories of his own spiritual journey in the context of these venerable yoga texts, many concepts that had seemed obscure to me began to make sense. Justin’s spiritual stories shed light on the yoga texts and the

yoga texts shed light on Justin’s teachings.

Justin’s spiritual writings have puzzled many, including me, with their mix of Japanese, Chinese and Sanskrit words and phrases and philosophical concepts. His personal path and message is a synthesis of Zen Buddhism, Chinese Taoism and the complete yoga practice set forth in Sanskrit in *The Yoga Sutras*, all informed by his clear-eyed, modern American practicality and commonsense.

Those unfamiliar with the cultural and philosophical underpinnings of Justin’s teachings will find some of his writings a challenge to decipher. But after reading a good translation of *The Yoga Sutras and The Bhagavad Gita*, in addition to the Zen and Taoist classics that Justin recommended to students who sought his spiritual guidance, **I feel like I have cracked the code.** Justin’s writings and the example of how he lived his life express an esteemed lineage of yogic wisdom.

Though many (including me) considered Justin a spiritual teacher, he never referred to himself as a master or guru or as an adherent of any particular religion or spiritual tradition. Although I have never heard anyone refer to Justin as a yogi before, I have heard some call him a Zen Master. Zen masters have a reputation for being stern, perhaps even severe, and unwavering in their discipline of and expectations for their students. Yes, Justin was at times stern and uncompromising – he had no patience for racism, spiritual arrogance or self-inflicted ignorance. He was also friendly, honest, sober, unsentimental, creative and passionately committed to pursuing his spiritual path and to helping others find their path. He treated friends and strangers with remarkable generosity and unflinching kindness.

Anyone who has seen the video of Justin’s visit to Folsom Prison can feel his compassion and sincere respect and love for the men there. He had a deep commitment to unflinching self-study and reflection. He did not just talk the talk; he walked the walk. It is clear to me now that Justin was a deep practitioner of complete yoga, and lived his life in pursuit of “knowledge of the supreme ultimate,” which is, of course, the definition of TCC.

What does this mean for us teachers and practitioners of TCC, which Justin always said was not affiliated with any religion or faith school? Justin often spoke of our duty to find out who and what we are. In *Climb the Joyous Mountain*, he said, **“We have a duty to find meaning in this very life, this present existential situation – this requires a disciplined mind.”**

Yoga is not a religion; it is a concise philosophy of personal responsibility and a practical methodology to achieve the union of body, mind and soul. I am inspired to revisit Justin’s writings and lectures, in light of my ongoing study of the *Sutras*. Studying both, in tandem, presents a lifelong learning opportunity. I expect that this self-study and ongoing reflection will enrich my TCC practice and teaching and will make me better able to share Justin’s teachings with my students. **Justin is no longer with us, but his teaching lives on.**

It's Just A *Phrase* I'm Going Through (Teaching)

By STU GOLDMAN, FT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA

For the bulk of my careers I used “random voices of the universe” as material for my cartoons and comedy material, but only if I could twist it into something original. In the publishing and entertainment world we had this thing called plagiarism.

As I advanced to become a T'ai Chi Chih instructor, I was often told “... **Justin would say...**” It was a molar-grinder for me to copy another person's words, especially when I was not there originally to hear him say it, how he paced it and the look on his face along with gestures, in order to fully understand and correctly channel his intent and intonation.

I began to get comfortable with the phraseology of Justin, Carmen, Pam and Sandy through their DVDs. The longer I listened and watched, the clearer their words morphed into my own images as the pieces fell into place and the vision became natural.

I say “vision” because I am a visual learner. I have to see the pictures, the type fonts, the graphics, the speaker, the “theater” in order to make anything a part of my being so that it will be there when I need the words.

As my experience began to expand, I found other terms that enhanced instruction emerging. Some of these needed work; they meant something to me but were too esoteric to be helpful to a class of beginners. Others were coined bright and shiny. Some, again, were borrowed wholly or in part, such as “Less is More” (architecture) or “Gentle is the New Strength” (fashion) or put another way, “Soft is the New Strong.” These take me back to Justin's brilliant “The Effort of No Effort” phrase, but gave me other ways of emphasizing the concept.

When my classes fill with students expecting different things from TCC, such as a standard *T'ai Chi* class or a meditation class, I use the phrase, “**I came for the movement; I stayed in the moment.**”

In the May 2016 *Vital Force*, I was forced to smack myself in the forehead when I read Michele Dapelo's words, “...TCC is actually self-centered, rather than self-centered.” Is that perfect, or what? I used her phrase that very day and have multiple times since in presentations.

Some of these utterances can be visualization plays on words: “Grounding is good for the Soles” and “Connect to the you-niverse with TCC.” These types of *koans* can be turned into small posters, handouts, printouts for your studio walls, or even t-shirts. (Computer-generated iron-on transfers are easy to use and craft stores sell nice, inexpensive shirts in multiple colors.)

But never forget that sometimes the most powerful utterances are silent. I received insightful instruction from Carmen Brocklehurst in the midst of a workshop and she never uttered a sound. Carmen locked eyes with me, twitched a finger, or lifted an arm or turned a hip... (or did she?)... and the adjustment was beamed into my thoughts.

This lesson was not lost on me and I have found that locking eyes with a student and smiling, or a quick wink and a nod can be quite effective... or is that stealing from Monty Python? It's not easy to be completely original.

To close, I will throw out another expression that looms large in my lexicon: “If you take something too seriously, you are not taking it seriously enough.”



20th Century Psalms

BY JUSTIN F. STONE

“

Nothing is so plentiful as un-asked for advice.

~ We believe what we want to believe and we doubt our own experience.

~ The one who always tells the truth is thought to be a humorist.

~ Truth and human sentiment do not mix. It's sad but a fact.

~ How quick we are to anger when others do not agree with us.

“

One time I opened a lecture by saying: 'You're all dying!' You'd think I had thrown a bomb in the room. Another time, to young people, I declared: 'You've all been conned since you were born – by your parents, your school, your church, and, finally, by advertisers.' The young people smiled and gladly accepted me, knowing I was not there to exploit them.

~ Vows of silence are useless if the person merely writes his message on paper or a slate. The groove in the brain (*vritti*) is the same; he has just changed the means of communication. True silence is a stilling of the brain waves.

~ Some societies speak of Divine Mother and others worship God the Father. Our society worships youth and money, often closely tied together – other societies venerate old age. It is very difficult to differ with the societal pull in which we have been indoctrinated, or brainwashed, if you will. When our instincts differ from the norm of our society, the subconscious

stress that is the result can greatly influence health.

~ A locked church door is a contradiction. If churches are more interested in hoarding possessions than being open to comfort distraught seekers – at any hour of the day or night – they become clubhouses for the few “in” people. How contrary to the teachings of the Founder of Christianity.

~ Some feel that the precise mathematical relationships of music can lead one to a glimpse of Reality. The Sufi Master, Inayat Khan, was once considered the greatest musician in India.

“

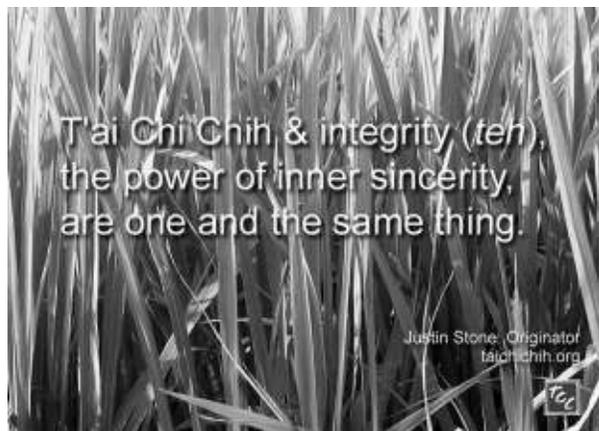
The scholar gets caught up in words, but he can't eat them and couldn't digest them if he did.

~ Strangely, the drive for the taste of food seems to be the last remaining desire for older people. “Man mostly loves his ease,” say the Chinese.

~ Is making unneeded fortunes more important than feeding the starving children of Bangladesh? Apparently so.

~ We honor the violent and the acquisitive. We do not know the gentle man. But animals seem to serve him.

~ Animals can sense who is violent — and poses a threat — and who is not. Perhaps plants can, too.



“

A familiar philosophic question is this: you can go back to age 18 and live your life again, but it must be exactly as you lived it before, no changes. Would you?

The usual answer is: “No way. I'm not going to go through that again.” As the Pennsylvania Dutch say: “We get too soon oldt and too late schmaradt.” But I have one friend, an elderly lady who has led a colorful life, who would love to do it all over again.

“

An inspiring teacher in our school years is worth a fortune in gold.

~ Teachers and leaders are servants, not masters, of their followers. They would do best to live simple, almost ascetic lives. Only then can *teh* – the power of inner sincerity – and *jen* – human-heartedness – reach the world.

~ Insensitivity does not mark the spiritual person, and the latter is often found to be aesthetic.

~ Only the fool second-guesses inexorable Nature. Do you really think that man can conquer Nature? Man can put causes into motion, but can he control the effects?

20th Century Psalms

BY JUSTIN F. STONE

~ Loud grief is not helpful to the dying person. Clinging to the dead is harmful to that one.

“

The Buddha explained: “All that you are, all that you ever have been, and all that you ever will be is the result of what you have thought.” He really laid it all on the line. Could anything be plainer and more to the point?

~ Those who attempt to look into former lives are just indulging in child's play. Why not explore the nature of Consciousness, of Sentience – the real mystery?

~ Properly understood, there is nothing but Religion. This has nothing to do with Religion as a business or an institution.

~ Those who believe in the New Age evidently do not read the papers.

“

We, in the West, think in words ([Easterners] in symbols), so the sorry state to which language has sunk gives us some idea of the chaos in modern-day thought. How many adults can write a theme on even an eighth-grade level?

~ The strangest thing is that people come to a teacher to learn and then try to tell him what and how to teach.

~ Sometimes when I am alone, I wish I was with friends, and sometimes, in company, I fervently wish I was alone. Why?

~ From the artificial to the natural, from diversity to Unity – that is the Way. Unfortunately, most follow the opposite path.

“

Some snakes and spiders are beautiful if you look at them without prejudice.

~ Without objects (projected) and without name and form (word-objects), where is the world? If you can free yourself from projecting objects and thinking words, you are liberated.

~ You cannot “sense” the Real. Human emotion and sentiment screen the Real.

~ People do not live what they profess to believe. Their beliefs come from the head, but their fears and hopes are from the heart.

~ Salvation is always an individual matter. If one doesn't want to evolve at the slow pace of the Strain or Species, he must go on alone.

~ *Yin-yang* can be thought of as acid and alkaline.

“

The Zen Master, Tokusan, was walking thru the hallway one night, accompanied by an attendant, when he came upon two monks quarreling. The Master stopped and crossed his arms, waiting for an explanation.

“Didn't you tell us that we should do so-and-so and follow such-and-such a path?” asked the first.

“You are right,” replied the Master.

The other Monk was astonished. “But I understood just the opposite,” he protested. “I thought we should do such-and-such.”

“You too are right,” agreed the Master.



At that the bewildered attendant, hearing that the two parties with opposing views were both right, exclaimed: “But they can't both be right!”

Tokusan smiled. “I perceive that you, too, are right” was all he said.

We eagerly dig the pit and then wail piteously when we fall into it.

“

The man who enters a bank or business establishment in old clothes gets different treatment from the one who is expensively dressed. The con man is usually well dressed and looks you right in the eye.

~ Yoga traces effect back to cause, and then erases cause. How few can do that.

~ Illness is purification. The worst illness is resentment.

~ There is enough for all. It is greed that brings wars. If there were no profits in armaments, would there still be wars?

~ What cannot be imagined is called Void by the Buddhists and God by other religions.

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

TCC Never Left Me

BY BRENDA FISHER, ARVADA, COLORADO

Accreditation was such a rewarding experience. Daniel is a stern but gentle teacher and I learned so much from him. I also learned a lot about myself and enjoyed bonding with my fellow teachers. It was awesome to have Pam Towne and Carmen there as well; we got to learn from the best.

Why I became a teacher... in the early 1990s I was living in Arizona and could not get through the pain from a major loss. So I sought out a grief counselor, Sharon Edwards, who was also a T'ai Chi Chih teacher. She had me doing TCC weekly with her for almost five years, which was a big help with the grief process. When I returned home to Colorado, I stopped doing TCC for about 15 years because I was busy as a single mom. **I may have left TCC but it never left me.** Once again I found myself with another major loss so I sought out TCC again. I realized then that I really want to help others by teaching because it has helped me so much. I want to help seniors with their health, and possibly grief, since as they get older they start losing so much.



Coming Home

BY HOLLY TRENARY, LOVELAND, COLORADO

It's accreditation week. The first night I was awake and fretting at 2:30 a.m. Very early, I knocked on my dear teacher's door. Marie said, "Love that part of you, the one that is afraid, just hold her."

Monday I woke up very early, around 5:30 a.m., worrying about my presentation (which went just fine). However, internally, my self was yelling, "You have not done enough. You are not ready. Who would take a class from you?" Yada, yada, yada. The biggest fear yelled, "When is he (Daniel) sending you home?" He would walk past me and the question internally asked, "Is it now?"

After doing TCC several times daily, and playing with the precious movements of Push Pull, I noticed the *Chi* in my heart area. Home. **Within the inner stillness arose a new question,** "When are you going to come home? Home within yourself, your heart fire, your *tan t'ien*? When are you coming to your special, radiant, individual home of you?" I'm Home.

Called Home

BY LISA STROYAN, FORT COLLINS, COLORADO

By the time I found TCC, my stress levels had been building for years. I was so in my head that I had no sensation of my feet. During classes, I felt a peaceful flow of energy; during the week, I noticed improved mental health. I didn't believe my teacher when she predicted I would become a teacher someday.

Then my mother-in-law passed away after a protracted stroke recovery. We left our home because of toxic mold hazards. My nervous system crashed; I couldn't walk, drive or handle daily tasks. My teacher started with the smallest hint of movements, sitting almost reclined. Aha, I could feel the *Chi* again; I had been working harder and harder to find what was there all along.

I listened to what my body was telling me. At my first group practice, lying back in my gravity chair, I mentally stepped back, not pushing to do it better or right. It was like stepping off a raft onto solid ground. I felt calm and centered, and my legs stayed stronger for days. Something magical happens when a group of us are in our

feet, moving at the same time. I fell in love with TCC. I was home.



I became a teacher partially because I didn't want to be left behind. I didn't feel ready. I thought being a teacher meant being an expert,

which was daunting. I wanted to stay a student. How would my health hold up under added activity? Indeed, life complicated itself further before accreditation. My nervous system showed signs of collapse. I pulled out my walking sticks and awkwardly but determinedly entered training... wondering how I would get through the week.

I never imagined that instead of trying to become an expert, I'd be shown the path home, that I'd find people waiting for me. In short, accreditation was transformative. I sank into the movements and did my best to stay present. I collected nuggets of insight from Daniel and other teachers and students. I survived my presentation. My legs stabilized more each day as I incorporated key changes and experienced staying truly grounded. By the end, I was walking normally, back on solid ground.

I discovered that the opposite of my fears is true: The best way for me to stay a student is to share; the best self-care is to immerse myself in TCC. I don't need to know where TCC is taking me; I need simply to follow. How can I *not* share this with others, especially when I am called home in the process?

A Deeper Journey

BY ELIZA FULTON, GLENWOOD SPRINGS

Last summer as I was teaching my yoga class I had a strong message that I also needed to be offering TCC on the labyrinth. Getting my TCC accreditation would be my 2016 goal. I had been introduced to the practice in 1998 and had been attracted to its benefits and its lovely practitioners. However, I had not been active for many years, and now, I felt I had been called to follow this path. Interesting.

Since I live on the Western Slope of Colorado this was no easy task. There were no active TCC teachers in the area. I wasn't sure how this would all turn out. But I figured if the *Chi* was flowing there would be a solution. So I contacted Daniel, the lead instructor of the Colorado teacher accreditation course, to see what could be done. The teacher training was set for June; it was now January. He referred me to Marie Dotts (about four hours away), who in turn, suggested Leya Cragin, a wonderful instructor just three hours away. So Leya and I began working together. A strict taskmaster, she mentored me each month for about three hours as I came to Denver to babysit my grandchildren. Leya would work with me, I would take copious notes about the needed corrections and then go home and practice, practice, practice.

Could I ever be adept enough to absorb it all? How does it become effortless? It seemed daunting and at times I felt discouraged, but then, the *Chi* began to flow and **my fear began to subside and self-confidence began to blossom**. I knew I had been called to teach and I began to believe in myself, and to believe that my sincere effort would allow me to be successful and to pass the teacher accreditation process. However, as with all of life, once this hurdle was passed, I would then be called to begin again – this time as a new teacher. Isn't life grand?

So what is this all about, really? I believe it is, hopefully, to **inspire those who might aspire** to teach TCC but who are tentative. Just listen to your heart and go for it. Believe in yourself; follow your inner guidance. It can happen for you. It is such an important practice to be able to share with others. What are you waiting for?

I passed muster and received my accreditation this June along with a stellar group of other inspired teachers. I am delighted that my next, deeper journey now begins as a teacher.

Why I Became A Teacher

BY SANDY ROERIG, FORT COLLINS, COLORADO

I made it. I am now an accredited TCC teacher. What a journey from my first class just over two years ago. I don't remember when I chose to become a teacher. But I do know that it came to me slowly – only after I started studying Justin Stone's *Spiritual Odyssey*. I initially rebelled, but when I finally started reading this book my heart was joyous. Justin's gleanings from his study of the old eastern religions are the same as my gleanings from the world's newest religion, the Baha'i Faith, my faith. *Spiritual Odyssey* spoke to me.



Let me be clear: TCC is not a religion. Yet Justin Stone's background is steeped in these religions, and that spirituality shines through in his writings. These basic beliefs are true today. **It is this inherent spirituality in TCC that calls me to teach.** I want to share this heartfelt Joy, this oneness of humanity, with others. That is why I became an accredited TCC teacher.



Simply Be Ourselves?

BY REBECCA PAULSON,
LOVELAND, COLORADO

Daniel asked most evenings that we read from either the *TCC Photo Text* or *Spiritual Odyssey* and be ready to discuss

them the next day. Or he posed questions for us to ponder as we settled in for the night. The last night of accreditation week he asked us to evaluate our own practice and share what we would be taking home to work on, or to share something from the week that we wanted to take with us. I reviewed my notes from the week, jotted a few things down, and went to bed. But not to sleep.

Words kept buzzing around in my head, words I wanted to share with the precious people with whom I had practiced and shared all week: "Where do you go from here? We have been told to 'Become your own teacher trainer.' What other organization appears to give no direction? What other group insists that you go off and simply be you?" Once again, the wisdom of the *Chi* revealed truth. I turned to each candidate gathered on that last morning and shared, "And each of YOU is unique. And each of YOU is worthy."

My TCC Journey

BY NIKOL PRICE, SURPRISE, ARIZONA

My TCC journey began more than 20 years ago. As a teenager attending Mohave Community College in Bullhead City, Arizona, I saw a *T'ai Chi* class listed. It sounded cool, far eastern and maybe a little mystical, so I signed up. I'm glad I did. The wonderful class turned out to be T'ai Chi Chih with Della Alberson. I even wrote a poem about it for *The Vital Force* (December 1994). And I enjoyed class so much that I enrolled in Seijaku the next semester to deepen my practice. After completing my degree and moving to Las Vegas to attend UNLV, I couldn't find a Tai Chi Chih teacher so I practiced on and off for years – sometimes more, sometimes less.

Fast forward to 2015. I decided to reconnect deeply with my practice and was delighted to find a retreat in Prescott, just over 100 miles from my home in Surprise. The retreat was led by Pam Towne and the softness and beauty of her practice made me fall in love again. I was determined to connect with a community to practice and share the *Chi*. Unfortunately, there were no instructors teaching near my home. **I was going to need to build the community I wanted to be a part of, so I would have to become an accredited teacher myself.**

The accreditation path has been an adventure. Dana Diller and Holly Ueda in Prescott agreed to work with me on Saturdays. They taught me to simplify the “Taffies” and soften my wrists. They reminded me to relax the tension in my back knee. They encouraged me to breathe, practice and remember the joy in “joy through movement.” I took a class in Phoenix with Robin Spencer and attended retreats with Sandy and Pam.

After a lot of practice and sincere refinement of my movements, my teachers agreed that I was prepared to attend the accreditation, which was intense. I feel honored to have experienced it with the other full-hearted teacher candidates. We helped each other and laughed and learned together. We were also blessed with the wisdom of our hostess and three auditing teachers.

If you're thinking about becoming a teacher, please do it. You'll enjoy amazing energy and fellowship with a special community. Be sure to pack layers because chilly rooms quickly become warm with flowing *Chi*. Pack tissue too because you'll cry tears of joy at graduation.

I honor all my teachers and all members of the TCC community who spread knowledge of this beautiful practice. Love and gratitude to everyone who helped me on my own journey.



Why I Became A Teacher

BY JULIE ANONGOS, CARMEL, CALIFORNIA

For the 12-minute presentation required for teacher training, I started with a silent demonstration of Passing Clouds and then Bass Drum. And then I said, “I love T'ai Chi Chih. That's why I became a teacher.”

The integration of body, mind and spirit is a huge part of my love for TCC. My body loves the gentle movements, especially after training in a martial art for years. The meditative movements allow my mind and spirit to open up, to soar. With body, mind and spirit integrated and in harmony with each other, it is supreme joy.

We had a great time at the training despite some anxiety-provoking moments. As teacher candidates, we had a feast, and we were hungry. Daniel was our teacher trainer. We were also blessed to have Pam and Carmen present, and Marie, taking care of logistics. How cool is that? **I felt like a kid in an amusement park** with so many yummy things from which to choose.

Most of us had attended Sandy's February intensive so the bonding had begun. The newbies were welcomed into the fold quickly. As the week unfolded, we grew closer. For me, one of the highlights was the 12-minute presentations. Through those stories, I got to know each person more intimately. You don't forget those presentations. Each woman presented and showed her unique and powerful self.

We knew our paths would cross again so it made saying goodbye easier. Lifetime friendships were forged. How could they not? I left feeling full and inspired to teach and share TCC. And Daniel, we will remember to “hear the music first.”

Personal Journey

By JoETTA HECK, WINDSOR, COLORADO

"No one ever reaches perfection in T'ai Chi Chih – indeed no two will ever perform it in exactly the same way, as it is a living evolving practice – and the Joy lies in the journey itself"

– JUSTIN STONE

In January 2014, my mother met her impermanence. My brother and I were named co-executors of her estate. Our duties were performed efficiently and effectively in the middle a lot of stress. Prior to this, I was a registered dietitian employed as a third party auditor in the restaurant and hospitality industry. This too, was stressful and required a lot of tense driving. I spent a lot of time on my phone: left elbow bent holding phone to ear – a fixed and tense position. Late in the summer of 2014, I realized that my body was stressed, weak and in constant pain radiating from my left shoulder up into my left neck. Simply put, I was not in tune with my body; therefore, not aware of the tension I held for many years.

Most days, holding my head above my shoulders was all I could manage. The forward movement of cooking and cleaning was exhausting. My favorite pain-free position was lying flat on my back on the floor. I knew I had to do something differently. I searched for a class at the local recreation center that would gently guide me out of this pain, improve my flexibility and reduce my stress.

At last, I found TCC or better yet, TCC found me. Marie Dotts was the instructor. There were many other options for exercise and change, but the description of the TCC class called to me. It read like this: "19 gentle movements and one pose to a healthier mind, body and spirit through an inner discipline that focuses on circulating and balancing your body's natural energy. Slow moving meditation that is fun, easy and enjoyable to do. Reported benefits include reduced stress, strengthened immune system, weight and blood pressure control, and better balance and flexibility. Equipment: comfortable clothing."

All this in eight weeks with clothing I already own. Wow.

I signed up immediately. Little did I know that day would lead me to this day, to me pitching the benefits of TCC as a daily moving meditation and part of one's journey to balanced health.

My consistent practice of TCC has taught me to let go of my tension and soften with regard to everyday living and daily movement. TCC, as an inner discipline, has enhanced my ability to live in the present moment as it trains me to be present as I shift my weight, let go of other thoughts, and enjoy the calmness of the movements – thus reinforcing the present moment as life's best gift.

My intent is to share this self-care practice with my dietetic peers as a tool for their clients to help them reach their health goals. Hopefully, I can collaborate with them by teaching classes in their practice settings.

Presently, I am using the refined knowledge of the practice from this intense accreditation journey to maintain my own calmness in the midst of chaos, help my sister find her feet and improve her balance, and give my 26-year-old daughter, recently diagnosed with bone cancer, a relaxation tool of her own.

How Could I Not Teach?

By REBECCA PAULSON,
LOVELAND, COLORADO

Teacher accreditation includes plenty of conversations with fellow teacher candidates: during meals, while taking breaks, when staying up late into the evening. Each also gives a presentation, as if we were speaking in a community or business setting. There's lots of sharing there too. When asked why I wanted to become a teacher, I was not able to pinpoint an exact moment or memory. The overwhelming answer was, "How could I not?" It was the serendipity of hearing another student gasp as she experiences the release of tension in her shoulder for the first time; the gently murmured 'ahh' as someone sinks into a deeper place of peace and calm; the question posed during a lesson, "My neck isn't hurting now like it was when I came in. Is that Tai Chi Chih?"

How can I not want to share those moments? How can I not share a simple, gentle practice that brings peace and calm and easing of pain and freedom from bottled up negative emotions? I literally move through my days more relaxed and aware of living with less stress tied up in my body. And I like who I am when I'm saturated in the goodness of the accumulated *Chi*. How could I not teach?



Thinking About Teaching At A Correctional Facility?

By JULIE HERVET, PLACERVILLE, CALIFORNIA

At this year's T'ai Chi Chih conference, I'm looking forward to sharing about the class I teach at Folsom State Prison. Justin Stone wrote that it was no accident that we'd been called to become TCC teachers, that there was a great mission to be fulfilled. My mission is to spark some interest about teaching TCC at correctional facilities. In case you don't make it to the conference, here is some of my presentation.

TCC and other meditation programs are so valuable in prison because it is such a stressful place to live. Prisons are overcrowded and noisy. In *Heightened Awareness*, Justin talks about the detrimental effects of noise on people living in cities. Folsom, a prison that dates to the 1880s, still has bars on cell doors. One building is five tiers high and holds 1,000 men. You can imagine the noise. I have one student who stays up until 2 a.m. to meditate. Inmates suffer from stress-related diseases, depression, loss and grief. TCC students in prison also have other special challenges, like getting permission to attend class and trying to practice in 5' x 8' cells.

Folsom students say TCC class is like an oasis. They look forward to it all week, and credit it with helping them maintain their sanity. They feel better physically, more grounded and spiritually centered. It helps them let go of past and future, and rest in the now with acceptance and compassion. They find freedom from old, reactive habit energies, which kept them victims of their past – and are able to connect within the community that has developed among their classmates. Class is a safe-haven and support group.

There are many reasons why I recommend you consider teaching TCC inside of a correctional facility: 1) to stand up against racism, as one in three African American males will be incarcerated during his lifetime; 2) to be of service to veterans, who make up 10% of prison population, and are twice as likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorders; 3) to have an opportunity for personal transformation as a teacher, because when you witness an inmate-student (to whom society has shown little in the way of love, tolerance, acceptance and compassion) embody these qualities in himself, it speeds your spiritual evolution; 4) because, when an inmate participates in a meditation program while incarcerated, his or her chances of recidivism are reduced by 40%.

If this interests you, you can volunteer in a jail, prison or juvenile detention facility. The latter might be a good choice because of the potential for prevention. Jails see higher levels of stress than prisons (there is a great deal of uncertainty because some people have never been there before and the population is less stable; most are awaiting hearings and sentencing). Prisons usually offer more programs, so you might have an easier time getting in. Women generally do "harder time" and suffer more isolation than men do.

Once you've decided on a facility, you'll contact the person in charge of programs. I wouldn't initially say you want to teach *T'ai Chi Chih* because the words *T'ai Chi* might scare them. I'd call it a "moving meditation" class. Once your foot is in the door, you can explain the specifics of this form of moving meditation. Once you have an appointment, get in touch with me. I will email you information, sample questions you might ask and a list of materials you might bring to your interview. I also have some research to support your proposal to offer a class inside.

Teaching in a correctional facility is not for everyone. If you feel unsure, find someone already teaching inside to accompany you. Or, while it isn't TCC, get in touch with another group teaching meditation on the inside, like a Buddhist meditation group leader, or a centering prayer instructor. Once familiar with the challenges of offering services in a correctional institution, you might have more success starting a class later. You may always participate in the annual Circles of Light Folsom event.

Teaching in prison has taught me many valuable lessons. One of the most important is that my class plans, handouts and music are not nearly as important as showing up, showing up fully, looking each student in the eye to say, "I see you. You matter. I care. I witness your existence."

I've brought together a group of teachers, many who have much more experience than I, to mentor anyone interested in teaching in a correctional facility. Please contact me (see email on taichichih.orgtai-chi-chih-teachers) for their information. I am happy to help.



Seijaku Teacher Training In New Jersey, May 2016

COMPILED BY HOST BILL MOORE, CLIFTON, NEW JERSEY

Six T'ai Chi Chih teachers and five auditors gathered to share a *Seijaku* accreditation adventure. Pam Towne, our trainer, invited us to consider how *Seijaku* (the advanced form of TCC) might better, as Justin Stone stated, "help us make friends with the *Chi*." From this perspective, we shared a rewarding and pleasant experiential instructional course in how to apply *Seijaku* principle most effectively and appropriately, and how to teach *Seijaku*. Comments and perspectives from our newly accredited instructors include:

Julie Barrier: I am happy I could participate – because last week I could not stand up to do the movements. I did not think seated *Seijaku* was possible. A lot of practice. Put myself in students' shoes. How to ground and move the center while seated. Seeing the process. Looking forward to practicing to deepen it and my teaching.

Lee Bergman: Realized I already knew everyone coming so it felt very warm. Still not sure how I am going to incorporate *Seijaku* into my practice. Will be doing it at home. Not sure if I am feeling anything powerfully different except softer in my TCC practice. Weekend just got better and better.

Kasha Breau: I felt more *Chi* moving than ever and became friends with it. Now I feel *Seijaku's* soft embrace, and am getting to know more about it. More intuition has opened up; I'm listening to the world around me and within myself. I hope to teach *Seijaku* when I have students who are ready.

Jessica Lewis: I came wanting to deepen my understanding. I also thought I would learn how to teach it, but now I am

not sure. What I did not expect was deepening relationships with everybody.

Oreann Kempadoo: This month has been amazing. I spent two weeks with Janet and *Qi Gong* healing. The internal growth has almost been like bringing it full circle. With *Seijaku* there is a difference. I can now connect to three (TCC, *Seijaku*, *Qi Gong* healing). There is a healing aspect, and I did not realize I had that gift. People seem attracted to me, telling me their medical history. One person had so many issues and expressed some things she would like to take care of (migraine headaches). She is willing to allow me to help her. The weekend opened up so many avenues. I've been very emotional about my desire and ability to help others. I'm in my 60s experiencing a high, not with drugs.

Alma Oliva: I did not intend to teach *Seijaku* but I am now thinking about it. I enjoy it so much, and it came to me as a friend; it's slowly become a best friend.

And from the auditors:

Barbara Flynn: After a hiatus in doing much of TCC or *Seijaku*, I needed grounding and getting into community again, and I found it here. I came with "How is this going to work?" My room is like a cocoon, and I feel I have what I need. I have enjoyed being with some people I did not really know. The *Chi* keeps moving.

Linda Jones: Very excited that I was going to know everyone here. Feeling stronger health-wise and thought I could socialize more. I got what I needed – rest but to push myself. Still feel like a beginner and opened my eyes to "fast track."

Dorene Krause: I believe I have been friends with the *Chi* for a while, but doing *Seijaku*? It's always a struggle because I felt myself trying to make it happen, almost artificial or forced and putting a lot of tension/effort into it. Now, with some suggestions from Bill and with Pam's guidance, I feel much more comfortable with it. It is happening on its own, felt from within. After so many trainings, I believe I may now be ready to teach *Seijaku* in September to one of my classes.

Janet Oussaty: I always loved *Seijaku*, from the first time I saw it at my TCC teacher accreditation, awaiting the time there would be a *Seijaku* teacher accreditation. I still feel the same: I want to learn that. Feeling more and more at home with it. This weekend I am aware of my "doing" – temporarily lost – meandering along the journey of my practice – the ebb and flow. As we increase our *Seijaku* practice, students will be willing.

Pam Towne: You do not need have all the answers when you start to teach. We need to teach what we most need to learn. It is the best way to learn *Seijaku*.

Seijaku

Seeking the stillness
Encountering resistance
Learning to let go
Push through the hardness
Steadfastly grounded
From the center flow
Breathe
Release
Let go

– DORENE KRAUSE,
MIDLAND PARK, NEW JERSEY



TCC Retreat In Minnesota, May 2016

By NANCY WERNER-AZARSKI, MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

The Minnesota T'ai Chi Chih teachers have had an annual retreat for several years. This year we hosted Pam Towne, and the theme was "Making Friends with the *Chi*." We had teacher time with Pam first, and 27 students joined us on Saturday. Most of our time was spent moving, except for discussions after meals. Evening sessions were spent on the day's discoveries, pyramid poems and regional planning.

Our discussion about making friends with the *Chi* was hesitant at first, but as the weekend went on, we had more insights. Pam incorporated quotations and readings from Justin about the *Chi*: "Make friends with the *Chi* and you will have a happy life and death" ... "*Chi* is an evolutionary force." We also read from the *TCC Photo Text* and *Spiritual Odyssey*. Pam encouraged us to revisit Justin's writings. She said that we change as we stay with our TCC practice, and **re-reading Justin's writings will have something different to tell us.**

Judy G. said, "*Chi* is very spiritual for me. I refer to it as the Holy Spirit that flows through me. It is a breath of rebirth when we come together in friendship and share the gift of practicing our TCC. Joy resonates." Monica C. shared that, "Any friendship needs to be nurtured and I feel that I have nurtured my *Chi* so this friendship has grown even deeper than I knew possible. I feel my soul coming back into me. I can feel it re-entering my being. I feel gratitude." Another participant said, "We are awake now. Now don't go back to sleep."

It was great to be with Pam since it had been several years since her last visit. And of course, we spent a lot of time reviewing the form and she answered questions about the movements. Pam also reviewed some changes that had been presented at conference. We had a great time moving together and incorporating our own "ah-hah" moments into our practice.

Having students come from three states was also energizing. Some had no teacher, had heard about TCC, got a video and started practicing on their own. Bonnie Sokolov, our hostess, has been a supportive long distance teacher for some. During lunch, Pam sat with students interested in becoming teachers – about half. It's difficult to fully express how wonderful it was to have the students there. They were sincere, sought corrections and met the community. We saw the future of TCC.

Personally, it was a time to reflect upon my practice. Many years ago I was struggling with a movement and a teacher trainer said, "Let it go." I had the immediate desire to strangle that teacher but somehow realized that would not help me or my form.

During this retreat, when Pam discussed updates, there was nary a ripple on the water except for some soft resistance and some return to old habits. But mostly it was joy integrating them into my practice. There was no urge to do harm, but rather enjoy my practice, my life. It only took twenty years. **Maybe Justin was right: there might be something to this TCC. Living with an open heart is certainly worth forty-minutes a day.**

In doing TCC, we are caring for ourselves and for our world. Once again, one could see the great courage it takes to reflect on and become friends with the *Chi* and to continue with the TCC discipline. We are opening ourselves to vulnerability but we know the *Chi* will hold us. We are learning to be present. We shed some tears and experienced great practices, laughter and friendship – and sacred space – during our time together. They can all coexist nicely in a TCC retreat.

Making Friends With The Chi

By MARY WICHMANN, ROCHERT, MINNESOTA

Each T'ai Chi Chih gathering – whether a practice, conference, accreditation, intensive, workshop or retreat – is sacred time spent with special people. As I write this, it's the last evening of the Southeastern Minnesota Teacher TCC Retreat.

Pam's opening question to us was, "What do you want to take away from this time together?" For me, it's increased Chi awareness and flow. Her closing question this Saturday night, to be shared tomorrow is, "What three changes will you make to improve your practice?" For me, it's a slowed and more complete yin and yang, a stilled upper body and a straightened back leg.

We teachers spent a lot of time improving and refining our own practice, and then shared Saturday assisting and moving with students. We had full days of much practice, love and laughter. I told everyone that I have six sisters, four brothers, and after this retreat, 12 BFFs – Best Friends Forever.

So, I'm prompted, "What are those three changes you could make to improve your practice so you can improve your teaching?" Just asking.



The rain left just in time to practice at the Lake Harriet Rose Garden in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The turtle fountain provided the perfect audible accompaniment.

Teacher Accreditation In Littleton, Colorado, June 2016

By MARIE DOTTS, LOVELAND, COLORADO

As I write about the teacher accreditation only one word comes to my mind: gratitude. I first want to thank the *Chi*, which is so loving and caring. It knows the needs of future students asking for this healing practice, some of whom are asking without even knowing what T'ai Chi Chih is. They just know they want healing and joy in their lives.

In response to this call for healing, the *Chi* inspires students to become teachers. I want to thank each of these new teachers for answering the call to become an accredited teacher. It is not always an easy journey. Their lives include many commitments. It takes dedication to prepare and to spend a week away from family and work. I want to thank them for their open and dedicated hearts. I know the *Chi* will touch many lives because of them.

I want to thank Daniel Pienciak, the teacher trainer for guiding and holding the ground for such a transformational week. I am grateful for all the teacher trainers and their work in preparing new teachers and keeping TCC pure. I want to thank Carmen Brocklehurst, Pam Towne and Leya Cragin. They cared enough to break from their lives to support the new teachers. Their presence at the training had a very powerful impact.

Lastly, I want to thank the whole TCC community. I believe this loving and healing practice is needed now more than ever. I am grateful for all of you and for all the work you do to spread love energy out into this world. I will end with the words of Justin Stone, "TCC is a service to humanity. It is a form of Love." Thank you.



Front (L to R): Sara Trotchie, Eliza Fulton, Bonnie Schowalter, Doriane Tippet. Middle (L to R): Julie Anongos, Daniel Pienciak, Marie Dotts, Holly Trenary. Back (L to R): Rebecca Paulson, Lisa Vander Vliet, Brenda Fisher, Janet Lauersen, JoEtta Heck, Sandy Roerig, Nikol Price, Lisa Stroyan, Denise Bussman.

Learn Seijaku Retreat In Albuquerque, April 2016

PYRAMID POETRY ABOUT FREEDOM, WITH CARMEN BROCKLEHURST

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| life springs forth quietly nurturing me loving all gently free – PAULINE QUIMSON | is freedom communion with the loving eternal within us? – DORA WIEMANN | not so much the lesson as the sunsets but the way stillness frees – JENETH RUNDLE |
| hold release let go now <i>seijaku</i> day afternoon thunder sun – NANCY FROST | free to be strong and soft present here and now as who I am now – LEYA | light moving flowing free strong soft release unfolding open bloom – MR |
| here did my resistance go for learning <i>seijaku</i> ? it let go – SHERYL ADAIR | joy within bubbling to the surface from my soul freedom now – PAM TOWNE | breathe release letting go going beyond connecting within all – MW |
| free to be completely soft and growing letting go shows the way – CAROLINE C. GUILLOTT | ease release letting go feel the softness attention grounding me – CARMELA | free from what? I ask this big hard question <i>seijaku</i> might show me – DENISE EMANUEL CLEMEN |



Seijaku Retreat In Prescott, Arizona, May 2016

BY NIKOL PRICE, SURPRISE, ARIZONA

I had the pleasure of attending the *Seijaku* retreat in Prescott this year. It was three days of exploring and building *Chi* in a safe place among friends. A bit about the location: Prescott is a small town in the Bradshaw Mountains. The highs tend to be in the low 70's in May and it is a joy to walk out of a cozy room and breathe crisp pine scents. The retreat center offers comfortable rooms with private bathrooms adjacent to the large room where we practice. They feed us very well with innovative entrees, great vegetarian options and decadent desserts.

The presence of the acorn woodpeckers (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) here is a curious thing. It's fun to see these black birds, topped with flashes of brilliant scarlet, flying and nesting in the pines and creating "granary" trees. The birds peck holes in trees and stuff them with acorns to be eaten later. This unique habit reminded me of T'ai Chi Chih practitioners: We have found the tree of TCC and each time we practice we make deposits of *Chi* to be used as needed.

Pam Towne led us gracefully through the movements and mental emphasis to correctly practice *Seijaku*. When we practiced I could feel the *Chi* flowing and being shared throughout the room. Students and teachers offered personal insights into their experience of *Chi* and how practice has benefited them. Pam will offer a four-day TCC retreat here in May 2017. I hope to see you here, working on your own acorn tree.



Seijaku Workshop Survey #1

In Saratoga, California, May 2016

COMPILED BY ANN RUTHERFORD, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

Did you experience softness even within the resistance through which you were passing?

"Yes, that was when 'reality' became a reminder for me."

– URSULA SMITH

"Not last year, but this year I did through increased understanding of grounding." – JUDY HUBBELL

Do you experience resistance as a positive element in Seijaku practice?

"Yes, the resistance gives a better heightened feeling of the softness. It makes me feel more grounded." – TOM ROTHENBERGER

"I hadn't thought of it as 'positive' so I want to use that in practice for awhile to see where it takes me." – LINDA BRAGA

Do you experience "the tonings" as a useful tool in the resistance section?

"Yes, I like this very much. If we are 'vibrating pinpoints of light,' then we should engage in lots of toning." – LINDA BRAGA

What is your understanding of the "spiritual aspects" of Seijaku?

"The connecting to the Earth and aligning with the Heavens."

– URSULA SMITH

"These practices awaken and deepen my sense of Essence as a spiritual being." – LINDA BRAGA

Why do you think the "hold fast/let go" of Seijaku brings enhanced healing experiences to practitioners?

"Learning how to let go of fear and experience life at the fullest--seeing beyond the wall." – JUDY HUBBELL

"It makes me feel more alive. I've seen great healing and physical improvement in my students." – DARLENE KARASIK

In Buddhism, it is said that resisting resistance causes suffering. Why then do we resist resistance?

"I think if you replaced 'resist' with 'fear,' you have your answer. We fear change or 'push back.'" – JANELLE TAGGART

Wave Of Healing Around The World

BY SUSAN SOBELSON, MINNETONKA, MINNESOTA

On April 30th, to celebrate the seventh annual World T'ai Chi and Qigong Day, we gathered on tiny Raspberry Island in the middle of the Mississippi River in St. Paul, Minnesota, to join a wave of people around the world dedicating our 10 a.m. T'ai Chi Chih practice to healing the planet.



Organized by Theresa May with assistance from Marlena Vernon and Susanne Carpenter, the event was co-sponsored by the City of St. Paul and "Fitness in the Parks." Thirty-two accredited teachers, students and curious community members formed a circle on the grass and began by holding a personal vision of world peace. As the singing bowl signaled the beginning and end of each movement, the sun shone brightly, a barge churned down river alongside us, and a train made its way along the riverbank.

We found our rhythm together as the *Chi* flowed. At the end of the practice, we faced westward upriver to hold the appreciation and a positive anticipation for the unfolding of our visions and to pass along the *Chi* wave to participants west of us.



A Daughter On The Mountaintop Experience

BY TOM AND JULIE SCHUSTER, MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

As a person who does not like heights, I was facing the possibility of an extremely frightening experience – as well as one of profound beauty. Both opposites are often found in life experiences: birth, death and even marriage can seem frightening.

My husband wanted to climb Half Dome during our trip to Yosemite. Because I love him, I wanted to give him this experience. While we trained our bodies, I trained my mind and spirit to tame the fear and be open to the beauty. I visualized staying grounded in earth energy and opening to heavenly beauty. This is exactly what I experience in Cosmic Consciousness pose.

When the day arrived, we huffed and puffed for eight hours until we reached the start of the climb. Waterfalls along the way were spectacular and some of the ascents treacherous, but at every pause, I remained calm and took in the beauty. I only swore once, which was in itself amazing considering the magnitude of the feat.

The base of Half Dome presented the hardest aspect of the climb, with frequent close encounters with sheer drops. Then came the final, cable-assisted ascent. This was harder than expected, but I stayed calm and rested when needed. The calm, grace-filled voice of a park ranger behind me offered encouraging words to climbers.

When we reached the summit, it felt very much like the top of the world. Panoramas were breathtakingly beautiful. Every mountain exuded power while reaching heavenward. Moving with "Daughter on the Mountaintop" I was one with the mountain.

The Lighter Side

COMPILED BY SHARON SIRKIS, COLUMBIA, MARYLAND

I handed Martin, a new student at the retirement home, the next set of T'ai Chi Chih dates. He quoted out loud what he read at the top of the page: "It's like acupuncture without the needles." To which he promptly responded, "I had acupuncture and it didn't do a thing for me." I laughed out loud, since I'm used to the usual response – most are interested and excited to see or hear this quotation.

Martin mentioned he had a headache that day. So I said in an upbeat way, "Maybe this class will help; I'll set that intention." And he immediately said, "Or maybe it will make it worse." I laughed even harder, remembering Ed Altman's (former guide of TCC) teaching that when you argue for limitations, you get those limitations. Then Martin started laughing because he found it funny that I was so amused.

After we finished the movements, he reported that his headache was the same, but that he did feel better. He said with a boyish grin that he felt more relaxed. – SHARON SIRKIS COLUMBIA, MARYLAND

During my college TCC class, I noticed a student come to a standing position a bit earlier than usual, instead of holding the resting pose. He was looking at his hands. He kept turning them over and curling his fingers toward him. I asked him if he was feeling the *Chi*, and he said, "No, I was looking at how dirty my fingernails are." – NICHOLAS BELLAMY, STUDENT OF SHARON SIRKIS

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 [youtube.com/tccabq](https://www.youtube.com/tccabq)

Community Calendar

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

DATE / WHAT & WHERE / CONTACT

Aug 11-14 | Teacher Conference | Seattle, WA | Charlotte Livingston | 770-633-1927
Aug 14-16 | Seijaku Basic Course w/ Dan | Seattle, WA | Daniel Pienciak | 732-988-5573
Aug 14-16 | Seijaku Accreditation w/Pam | Seattle, WA | Daniel Pienciak | 732-988-5573
Sep 16-18 | Seijaku/Meditation Retreat w/ Dan | Jersey Shore, NJ | Sioban Hutchinson | 609-752-1048
Oct 8 | TCC Workshop w/Sandy | Wheatley, UK | Tina Wells | tinawells1@ntlworld.com
Oct 9 | TCC Teacher Prep Workshop w/Sandy | Wheatley, UK | Tina Wells | tinawells1@ntlworld.com
Oct 9-13 | TCC Intensive w/Dan | Aston, PA | April Leffer | 610-532-6753
Oct 16-19 | TCC Prajna Retreat w/Sandy | Aston, PA | April Leffer | 610-532-6753
Oct 21-24 | TCC Silent Retreat w/Pam | Winter Park, FL | Susan Quinn | 863-393-8197
Nov 4-6 | TCC Retreat w/ Dan | Jersey Shore, NJ | Sioban Hutchinson | 609-752-1048
Nov 17-19 | Seijaku Accreditation w/Pam | Albuquerque, NM | Robert Montes de Oca | 505-999-1247

2017

Feb 17-23 | TCC Accreditation w/ TBA | Aston PA | TBA

- MORE WORKSHOPS & RETREATS -

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

Aug 6 | TCC Workshop w/ Sharon Sirkis | Marriottsville, MD | Sharon Sirkis | 410-730-1986
Sep 10 | TCC Workshop w/ Sharon Sirkis | Marriottsville, MD | Sharon Sirkis | 410-730-1986
Sep 22-25 | TCC Retreat w/ Carmen Brocklehurst | Albuquerque, NM | Judy Hendricks | 505-573-0820
Oct 8 | TCC Workshop w/ Sharon Sirkis | Marriottsville, MD | Sharon Sirkis | 410-730-1986
Nov 5 | TCC Workshop w/ Sharon Sirkis | Marriottsville, MD | Sharon Sirkis | 410-730-1986
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