

# The Vital Force

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for teachers & students

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*Justin Stone: In His Words*

## Higher Consciousness

AUTUMN 1986, © THE VITAL FORCE



People often speak of “higher consciousness.” A man is coming from another state to videotape me in a research project to find those in “higher consciousness.” The truth is, there is no such thing. There is only Consciousness, and at the deepest level, it is not individual. Sometimes this consciousness is obscured, and then there seems to be “lower” consciousness. It is usually obscured by habit-energies and tendencies; ultimately, this all proceeded from thought and thought-patterns.

The sun remains the same, always, but we speak of “weak sunshine today” or talk of the strong sun in the autumn season. When clouds obscure the sun, we see it as “weak sunshine”, but the sun has not changed. Similarly, consciousness remains unchanged but, when obscured by what [Easterners] call “the dusts”, it appears “low”.

Just as the life essence remains unchanged as there is constant transmutation, so consciousness is not affected by the obscuring elements. One Zen Master

spoke of keeping the mirror clean, wiping away the dusts so that the basic nature of the mirror – which reflects unchangingly – will not be affected. Conscious-

ness is like the mirror. It is necessary to remember that consciousness can only exist where there is duality. The polarity of subject-object relationship makes consciousness possible.

When we enter deep meditation, where there is only subject and no subject-object relationship, the world disappears. With the reappearance of thought, consciousness and the subject-object relationship reappear, along with self, other and God.



# May The Vital Force Be With You

## ~ Written Content ~

*The Vital Force* would be an empty shell without your contributions. Thank you for always putting fingertips to the keyboard.

## ~ Visual Content ~

If you are a visual artist, *The Vital Force* welcomes a submission of 10-12 images of your creative work. (Of course we welcome single, stand-alone photos and specific photos to accompany articles, too.)

## ~ Regional Focus ~

Consider organizing three to six articles from your community for a higher-impact double-page spread which you can then use to promote TCC in your area.

## ~ August Teacher Conference in Seattle ~

For those attending (see [taichichih.org/conference-2016](http://taichichih.org/conference-2016) for forms), please take notes about presentations and your experiences – to share in articles with those unable to attend. Photos of practitioners moving are always welcome!

## ~ Social Media ~

Please share the *Chi* and amplify the message by posting images on social media, including on [Facebook.com/taichichih](https://www.facebook.com/taichichih), and on Twitter and Instagram using #taichichih. Whether you are attending the conference, teaching a class or practicing outside with a group of people, let your visuals be part of a broader conversation.

## As Justin wrote:

“

It is the absence of any pressure, moving slow motion in a dream, that allows softness to prevail.

“

You can chase your shadow all day and never catch it, but stand still at noon and it will merge with the body – with no effort.

~ WITH GRATITUDE. KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

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## ARTWORK & PHOTO CREDITS

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## The Vital Force

### ~ WEB SITE UPDATES ~

The on-line database (for [www.taichichih.org](http://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](http://taichichih.org) for everyone
- Keeps up 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](mailto: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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# Doing Less

By LISA STROYAN, FORT COLLINS, COLORADO

I'm one of a group of women in Northern Colorado on the path toward T'ai Chi Chih teacher accreditation in June. A few weeks after an intensive with Sandy McAlister, I was struggling with the balance between learning what I needed to know for accreditation, and sinking into practice for its own sake. A few of us were speaking with our teacher, Marie, after class.

She explained that as teacher candidates, we are on a different part of the journey than we were as students, because we are learning the movements as prospective teachers. When students first start out, she explained, they are naturally "in their heads" as they learn the movements and understand the principles. With practice, they learn to let go of thinking and doing. Now, as teacher candidates, we have to go back into our heads to understand TCC at a new level.

It is important to practice for ourselves, not always working on something, she explained. Marie encouraged us to focus on the joy of our practice at home, and practice with variety of DVDs to feel how other teachers move.

Privately, she suggested I make my movements smaller, with less effort and ground longer. This echoed a life lesson I'd been forgetting and relearning all year. My health was telling me that I needed to do less, and rest more, but I wasn't quite ready to listen. Life already seemed to be moving at a faster pace than I could keep up with.

I've noticed that my mind has a tendency to judge any terms that it doesn't understand. Statements like "flow from the center," "let the *tan t'ien* lead" and "let go of any effort" felt very "woo-woo" when I first heard them. Sometimes they felt like "shoulds." My mind began to tune them out, as it tunes out music or someone coughing in the room, while it struggled to get the arms just right, the weight shift perfect. These phrases became jargon, or generalized platitudes. I've learned since then (by repetition and seeing their effects) that it's the exact opposite: these are explicit instructions, keys to the power of TCC. They can have a profound influence not only in my practice, but in my life.

**I've always found it paradoxical that many TCC movement names involve active verbs, imply effort, or are in the imperative.** Push, Pull, Carry, Work. Yet one of our main principles says to let go of effort. When I first started practicing, I didn't fully believe that TCC could truly



be effortless. My mind rationalized. "Of course there should be no strain; perhaps that is what is meant."

Concepts are so closely interrelated and connected in TCC. It sometimes feels like a tangled thread, which tightens further when I pull on the ends to untangle them. Alignment affects softness, for example, because softness requires release of tension, and that can only happen when I'm balanced over my feet. To flow from the *tan t'ien*, without using any effort, requires a connection to the feet that disappears the moment I drift into my head. **The more I learn, the more there is to learn.**

I recently noticed another paradox when I'm working on corrections to my form. For each correction, my mind wants to make an active change, a fix. If my arms are too high or too low, I adjust them into the "proper" spot. If my foot has a tendency to turn out too much, I place it back in the correct alignment when I notice. When my eyes drift into following the movement, I chide them gently and offer them a point to focus on. Inevitably I add on more "doing" or "shoulding" to the movement with the corrections. How can I fix it all, still follow all the principles and still do less?

I started playing with the "why" of the corrections I was working on. Why does my foot end up in the wrong place? Why does it feel like effort to get my arms high enough? An odd pattern appeared in the answers. There was usually an area where I needed to soften, let go of tension, or do less, which then increased the connectedness and "fixed" the problem, or rather, **the problem faded away, at least until habit took over.** Relaxing hunched shoulders allowed my hands to come into place more effortlessly. Softening a hip placed the foot in alignment. Sinking into the feet brought my gaze inward and steadied it.

I'm slowly learning how to interpret my body's signals as instructions rather than judgments or problems to fix. **I look for solutions that involve letting go, rather than doing more.** I'm practicing letting go of thoughts when they are stressful, self-critical, or anxious. I'm not giving time to decisions that don't matter. If life feels overwhelming, I probably really need rest and a change in perspective. Stressing over something is not the same as doing or planning it.

It's going to take a lot of practice, and many practices. I will probably always find it difficult to get out of my head. But the journey will be a more joyful one if I see the hurdles not as problems that I should effort to fix, but as opportunities to let go, listen more closely and connect; to allow the *Chi* to do the work and problems to work themselves out.

## Teachers Supporting Teachers: Self-directed Continuing Education

By LISA M. OTERO, OXNARD, CALIFORNIA

At every teacher conference I have attended in the past five years, I have overheard at least one (and sometimes several) teachers say, “We should have a continuing education requirement” or “Why don’t we have a continuing education requirement?”

The fact is, we don’t have a formal requirement to continue our education. We don’t because Justin Stone was against any such requirement (and also against the bureaucracies that would be needed to mandate and enforce such requirements).

It is an honor and a privilege to be entrusted to teach T’ai Chi Chih. **Justin expected that all accredited TCC teachers would take their responsibilities seriously. Justin trusted in our *teh* (the power of our inner sincerity) as teachers and trusted that we would take initiative to continue to develop both our personal practice and our teaching skills.**



So, each of us might ask ourselves: What have I done, since I was accredited, to maintain my personal standards as a teacher of this dynamic, evolutionary practice? Do I take classes taught by other teachers? Do I maintain a consistent personal practice? Do I attend workshops or retreats offered by experienced teachers? Do I attend intensives or audit teacher accreditation courses? With sincerity and humility, do I seek feedback from other teachers? Do I regularly review the TCC photo textbook, Justin’s advice pamphlet, “Teaching Tips for Teachers,” and Justin’s books and printed lectures? Do I subscribe to *The Vital Force* journal (VFJ) and reflect on the experiences of other teachers and serious students? Do I share my own experiences with the larger community by writing for the VFJ and posting on social media forums, like Facebook? There are many, many ways and means of keeping our practice and teaching refreshed and thriving.

Here’s another. In my local community we are blessed with seven active, accredited teachers. We substitute for each other, lead special practices together and take each others’ classes. For the past year or so, we have gotten together once every three months for a social evening, where we have a silent practice, share a potluck meal, catch up on how our classes are going and support each other regarding teaching achievements and challenges. We think of this as our quarterly mini-retreat (which we very much enjoy since we are all very fine cooks). Recently, we decided that, in addition to our quarterly social evenings, we would meet once a month, for a two-hour session to have a silent practice followed by a one-hour presentation or facilitated discussion to enrich our continuing education.

**Each of us agreed to facilitate a session.** We have had three so far. The first was lead by a teacher who is also a retired acupuncturist, well-versed in Chinese medicine. She gave an intriguing presentation on the significance and power of healing sounds in Chinese medicine. At the next session, two teachers shared their experiences attending two separate retreats led by Sandy McAlister. At the next session, three teachers who attended Carmen Brocklehurst’s annual “Learn Seijaku” retreat in Albuquerque, shared their experiences of it. At our next session, we will continue our Seijaku studies, watching Justin’s Seijaku dvd together and doing a group practice.

**We will also share our experiences of the *Chi*:** what the circulation of the *Chi* feels like for each of us, and how we discuss it with students. For a future session I have volunteered to lead, I am asking everyone to review Justin’s collected short essays in *Spiritual Odyssey* and to be prepared to discuss whether and how we present TCC to beginners as a physical practice or a spiritual practice or both. I am hoping that our presentations and discussions will evolve into VFJ articles and perhaps become topics for forums at future conferences and workshops.

Of course, you don’t need a group to continue your education, but this might inspire some of you to form informal TCC study groups, perhaps including serious students as well. If there are teachers in your area, reach out. Even if you are the lone teacher in your community, you can connect with others via the Internet or phone to provide each other support. The conference this summer in Seattle will be a great time to make connections that you can continue to grow throughout the year. We are all here to support one another – just as Justin encouraged and supported all of us.

# Seijaku, An Oral Tradition

By CARMEN L. BROCKLEHURST, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

**S**eijaku is a very special discipline. It goes beyond surface teaching, which is something that can be easily conveyed. And because it is an oral tradition (true because Justin chose not to write it down), it carries within it great gifts to share. I say “chose” because many of us who put Justin’s work into book and pamphlets asked him to write a book with specific instructions about the movements and the entire discipline. His answer was always the same, “*Seijaku* is to remain an oral tradition.”

Justin did make a video showing us the movements, but this honors oral tradition as he never wrote movements for us to follow. It is not for us to write the movements for others either. It was meant to be passed-on orally, from person to person. His instructions to us were very specific, “Of course, you will only teach *Seijaku* to your best students.”

Great Masters have always known how important oral tradition is – as it could be open to misinterpretation. Once that starts to happen, the power and the gift that the teaching carries begins to dissipate. For the sake of generations to come (and for the teaching itself), we who have received *Seijaku* should not tamper with it. This does not mean that we can’t share the benefits that we (and our students) have received. But it does mean that the form is to be kept in our hearts and only shared orally with our best students.

“  
purity and  
power in an  
oral tradition

There is a purity and power in an oral tradition. How did Justin share *Seijaku* with you? There are several parts to this wonderful discipline. Did we receive all of them? What has our experience been since we learned the discipline? Did it touch our hearts in such a way that we wish to keep it the way he shared it with us? Keep in mind that it was not given to us to change, but to share completely, from the deepest part of our being.

Several of us were at a teacher conference when Justin first offered a small experience of what we would look forward to with *Seijaku*. One teacher sat down after the introduction and went into a very deep state of meditation. Justin would not allow anyone to disturb her, even though he had clapped his hands to bring us out of meditation. When she finally came out, she was in a very simple and sincere state-of-mind. Her behavior demonstrated that her experience had been deep. This profound experience is not to be taken lightly.

Many of us are very fortunate to have learned *Seijaku* directly from Justin. Some of us will have to rely on the integrity of the teacher to share this wonderful discipline. If we are fortunate enough to begin this journey, let us remember that we are here to love and share the *Chi*.

## That Which We Seek

By SHERYL ADAIR, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

**W**aterfalls have always been a source of mystery and great delight. I have always chased after waterfalls. The book, *Waterfall Hikes*, sits on my table, full of checkmarks as I hike each.

One day a retired hiking buddy visits my mountain cabin and brings along her son and daughter-in-law. The son, an avid hiker, disappears (too much chit chat) and eventually returns with a big smile. “Did you know you have a waterfall?” The cabin, which we have had for more than 30 years, sits on a corner of the lot. Thick old rhododendrons and steep terrain made the rest of the lot seem unapproachable. An adventurous sort schooled in the hiking arts, he braved the conditions to see what was on the other side. Not only did he find a big waterfall, he offered to help cut a trail to reach it.

Fast-forward six months (we worked through the winter to avoid snakes and bugs): We have an incredible trail for which I am enormously grateful. **It’s a circular trail with a continuously flowing waterfall from which joy bubbles up to the soles of your feet.** The water starts off very *yang*, loudly spilling over the rock, and turns *yin* as it gently winds through the stream and softly flows into the lake. It’s a real T’ai Chi Chih experience. Lesson learned? Perhaps it’s “that which we seek is already there.” Hope you uncover your waterfall.



# Conference Survey Results: A 2017 Community Conference

BY SANDY McALISTER, HAYWARD, CALIFORNIA

Open and receptive are words often used in T'ai Chi Chih classes and which I particularly use as we practice *Pulling in the Energy* movement. Softening throughout the body is emphasized for a more complete flow of *Chi*. Our whole being reacts and is acted upon as we move through the practice. Even our thinking softens to the point that there is very little activity – no processing, no critiquing, no judgment.

That softening and openness was evident in the responses to the survey regarding the proposed changes to the annual teacher conference. Of the 120 teachers that responded 99 are in favor of alternating a teacher conference with a teacher/student conference. Fifty students participated in the survey.

The teacher/student conference will be called the **T'ai Chi Chih Community Conference**. The intent is not to have several local community conferences the same year but to have **one large conference open to teachers and all those who practice T'ai Chi Chih**. Each time it would be held where there is a substantial population of practitioners, and it would be open to everyone whether they lived near or far.

The majority would like the conference to be Friday through Sunday but many preferred Thursday through Sunday, each with students attending the whole time. July and August were the most desired months. Since this is a new endeavor we will start with a Friday through Sunday event the summer of 2017.

It was especially helpful to read comments about why people attend or no longer attend. The following topics each received several comments as to **why people attend conference:**

- Be Inspired – Recharge
- Social interaction with like minds
- Sharing ideas and teaching techniques
- Working on the form, exploring
- Rededication to the practice and teaching
- Feel energy of the group and the practicing together

Specific comments:

*"To contribute energy to, and breathe in energy from, the greater TCC community. As a newer teacher, also experiencing the longtime connections, stories and inspirations from those who have been practicing and teaching for many years and who knew Justin."*

*"I enjoy growing through my practice and being around individuals who share that. Serious students would fit well!"*

The number one reason **why people do not attend conference** is financial, but also the difficulty of travel, missing work and leaving family and animals. Some felt the conference did not meet their needs for growth in the practice, or present enough concrete material for expanding their teaching skills.

Specific comments:

*"Would rather spend the money on a retreat or intensive to work on my practice which I believe makes me a better teacher. I don't care for the 'ceremonies' and 'dancing' type activities at conference."*

*"There are many other opportunities for renewal and community that I would also like to attend. I generally choose TCC Conference every other year."*

There were several comments like the two above where teachers are opting to attend other events that may suit their needs more closely. Each event in the community serves a slightly different purpose. **Intensives** are 3½ days dedicated primarily to working on the form. **Workshops** generally are one-day events refining the form and sharing time together. **Retreats** are mainly inward focused events that have a lot of down-time for reflection. **Conferences** are a time for sharing our teaching experiences, relaxing and laughing with each other, refining our movements and replenishing our energy and boosting our enthusiasm for the practice

and teaching.

Three comments were similar to the following (from people who remember how Justin stressed the importance of teachers attending the conference every year):

*"Justin wanted the teacher conference to be a place for teachers to deepen their practice and for the Chi to reveal more of what T'ai Chi Chih has to offer in an atmosphere conducive to that outcome. Allowing students to attend would make the conference into something similar to a retreat. This is not Justin's vision. There are many retreats available for students and teachers to attend. A conference is not needed. Also there are now teacher-only retreats. Why are these being held when we already have the teacher's conference? Let's keep this a conference for teachers."*

Some teachers are concerned that with students attending they will not be able to be there for themselves but will have to put on their teacher hat and help the students. My response: We are inside most of the time – no hats necessary.

For those who had specific comments about what you would like to see happen or be presented at conference, I encourage you to take an active part in making that happen. The conference committee uses the evaluations from the year before to help plan the following year but rarely do people volunteer to be presenters or have concrete ideas for sessions.

The survey was a valuable tool to discern the needs and desires of the community and give folks an opportunity to express themselves. I look forward to the future as our community moves into this change with softness, openness and receptivity.

Wouldn't it be nice not to have to fly to conference? If you have a fair amount of teachers and students in your area (including the surrounding states), consider hosting the first T'ai Chi Chih Community Conference the summer of 2017.

I look forward to hearing from you.

# The Eiffel Tower Is Built On A Solid Base

By DANIEL PIENCIAK, HOWELL, NEW JERSEY

In T'ai Chi Chih the structure of our bodies must have an appropriate base in order to maintain upright posture and move smoothly and comfortably without being stiff.

I have found that attention given to “setting up” each movement initially (i.e. finding the proper stance/placement of the feet) is paramount to moving well. A seasoned practitioner might be able to adjust this without having to start the movement all over again, but *it is so much better* if our feet know where they need to be from the outset of each movement.

As one sinks, and the weight initially shifts onto one leg, the position is solid and confident, so that when the opposite foot picks up to step out, the body does not waver, the posture remains still (one hundred percent of our body weight is momentarily on that one leg), and we feel as though we are sitting upright on that leg. (The buttocks are as if tucked under in this position.)



But an error often happens in placing the opposite foot – if the body is allowed to move from its solid upright position of sitting still on one leg: Either the shoulders tilt back a bit or to the side, or the hips are allowed to move forward as the opposite heel is extended into the forward step position, creating a stance that is too large (i.e. the heel is placed too far forward). This results in an incomplete weight shift forward, or even a forward/backward lean.

When the foot steps out forward, the pelvic girdle must remain still and the back upright. Then, if we place the foot with a straight leg, the heel will most likely land on the ground exactly where it needs to be.

In placing the heel for a side to side movement, the body again remains still and upright, and the waist remains turned off-center (the waist is turned to the right when placing the left foot out and *visa versa*), and the body must not lean. While the foot extends to the side, the weight remains firm on the supporting leg, the shoulders relaxed and the torso still, but not stiff. (The longer one's leg, the more the leg tends to feel not absolutely straight when extended to the side.)

As above, so below: When the upper body does not move softly and smoothly, or the balance feels off, or the weight shift incomplete, check the foundation. Practice the set up of the movement over and over again.

## Pyramid Poems

life  
begins  
and shines the  
light all around  
creating  
joy and  
love  
– M.W.

peace  
calm quiet  
mindfulness  
serenity  
is the key  
to the  
truth  
– MARLENE B.

sun  
provides  
energy  
gives benefits  
to all those  
facing  
up  
– L. LAWSON

it  
happens  
when I walk  
and am quiet  
thinking of  
you and  
me  
– MAY BRITT EAGLE

rock  
high on  
the mountain  
low in the stream  
each becomes  
other  
soon  
– JGJ

no  
dinner  
and no sun  
setting in the  
western sky  
for me  
now  
– JUDY

I  
don't know  
what to do  
but it's okay  
time for no  
thing just  
be  
– P.Q.

bird  
singing  
mountain ridge  
for you and me  
sunshine song  
on time  
peace  
– TED

soft  
stillness  
breathe life in  
sharing beauty  
with the world  
joy with  
all  
– MARY W.

rocks  
sunshine  
juniper  
incense fragrance  
cottontail  
jasper  
peace  
– S. HOLMES

breathe  
it in  
all in sight  
surrounded by  
beauty day  
and night  
now  
– P.B.Q.

sun  
blue sky  
beautiful  
sounds all around  
full of life  
welcome  
warm  
– KENDRA LAWSON

bush  
budding  
by the wall  
moves with the breeze  
not bothered  
by us  
here  
– DEBRA WINLAND

rock  
rhymes with  
brock indeed?  
coincidence?  
perhaps but  
I think  
not  
– JIM EAGLE

light  
shining  
through feel the  
warmth and beauty  
know the truth  
in your  
heart  
– JUDY

## Join Us In Seattle In August

By ROSEANN HEINRICH, PARMA, OHIO

Lucinda Kutsko and I are co-hosting the 2016 Teacher Conference in Seattle, Washington. We hope you are planning your time to be there too.

My first conference was 2001 in California. I was awed by the amount of people moving together and the amazing sound of everyone doing Six Healing Sounds.

I remember meeting Justin and being amazed at the way he carried his tray of food with ease at his advanced age. Although we cannot look forward to having Justin with us in the physical realm, I know without a doubt he attends every conference. We just can't see his spirit. He is tapping us on the shoulder and making corrections as we move.

I hope this year brings so many teachers that I experience a whole new meaning to the sounds created by so many with Six Healing Sounds.

We will be in a university setting, which keeps conference expenses lower so you can plan time to enjoy Seattle.

I have never been to Seattle except through "Grey's Anatomy" and "Sleepless In...". My daughter who lives in Texas will meet me there, and we hope to travel to Pierce County to see Mount Rainier. I am looking forward to seeing the Pike Place Market and the Space Needle – and perhaps the Olympic Sculpture Park and Alki Beach. If we need more culture, there's the Seattle Art Museum. Someone mentioned an amazing Asian grocery and gift shop called Uwajimaya; now that might be an interesting. Sounds like an outstanding area with a lot to do. I hear there are neighborhoods worth visiting and trolleys to see it all.

We hope you will consider Seattle this year. Lucinda and I are looking forward to seeing you.

## Physical Therapist Recognizes Value Of TCC

By HANNAH HEDRICK, MOUNTAIN VIEW, HAWAII

Due to "prosthesis degeneration" and "slippage" in my 20-year old artificial hip, I was experiencing multiple challenges, including the inability to walk without fear that my hip would "go out." As usual, I was probably overdoing it. Ten years of excessive jogging created joint arthritis that led to my first and second hip replacements (seven years apart). Lifting and carrying heavy rocks and logs probably created the slippage that recently led to an unstable joint, thankfully while my sisters were visiting. After reading the report on my first X-ray, I began to focus on movements that would strengthen my outer upper leg area and my core. At my twice-weekly physical therapy sessions, the therapist evaluated my movements and instructed me on working with rubber bands and a stick.

On April 6 (my fifth session), I asked the physical therapist to evaluate T'ai Chi Chih specifically as it relates to the areas I am trying to protect. **She not only gave full approval of the benefits of both weight-shifting directions, she also asked me when I teach classes so she can refer patients, friends and relatives.**

Unlike my inability to do full weight shifts prior to both of my surgeries, I am able to do full shifting and rotating, while aligned directly over the grounded leg. The therapist cautioned me against letting my hip fall out to the side.

Maybe we could have a discussion about TCC and joint issues/replacements at the annual conference. I learn again at every class that **everyone, regardless of impairments, can adapt their movements to receive 100% of the benefits of TCC.** Last week at the Life Care Center nursing home, the body movements of a new student in a wheelchair (who could move only one arm) visibly improved. And the caregiver commented on how much he enjoyed this class, as opposed to the other movement classes in which residents do not feel particularly successful.



## The Flow

By JIM SHORR, WILSONVILLE, OREGON

Sandy McAllister's recent newsletter to teachers referred to "the flow." So what is it? Howard Cutler, a noted psychologist who probes the Dalai Lama in *The Art of Happiness: A Handbook for Living*, writes that His Holiness observed that, "Flow describes a mental state that most of us have experienced at one time or another. To be 'in flow' means to be totally absorbed in whatever one is doing, in the moment. It occurs when one is fully present and completely focused on the movement at hand."

Flow arises when we are engaged in an activity like TCC. What we feel is important and meaningful, and worth experiencing. It took me several years as a TCC student and teacher to experience it. The realization comes mostly after "Passing Clouds." I've not felt the effortlessness that Justin, Sandy, Pam or Daniel experience, but I do become totally at peace. The future belongs to those who practice.

## Exposing The Lie

BY STU GOLDMAN, FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA

There is an old adage that goes, “*Those who cannot do teach.*” This was penned by someone who apparently had a bad experience in junior high school, or was attempting to justify poor grades or, as I suspect, not working up to his or her potential.

Teaching requires a myriad of skills. One must not only master the subject of the lessons, but be able to multitask. One must be able to communicate a set of skills organized within a given time frame, observe students as a group while adapting the information and presenting the sequence of movements for each individual. **The right teacher for a particular student must bring something to the mix that resonates.**

My initial instructor accomplished her connection with me through her voice, a timbre and pacing that spoke to me from the first instant, allowing me to relax and trust the directions, to see what she was saying and thus making the link between us. I employ humor, props and lead by mirroring, in addition to demonstrating from multiple angles.

In any case, a good teacher must find something within their personality or personal style that remains consistent so the students can settle into the mindset and informational rhythm of the instructor.

If you are wondering what your style might be, take stock of what has been working for you. Make notations after a class and isolate things that worked well, gave you a sense of reaching the core of the day’s instruction. Watch for a telltale look of satisfaction on a student’s face and analyze what was happening (verbally or physically) during that time, and make it a part of your teaching approach.

If you have been teaching for awhile you are most likely doing these things already, but if it is not being done intentionally, take time to scrutinize your method and work to solidify and improve it even further. Once you see certain visualizations or descriptive phrases getting positive reactions, keep them in your mix. Watch other instructors in person or through social media and turn their motivational material into something that befits you. Remembering all the while: **if you are comfortable, your students will be comfortable.**

Not every student is a perfect match for every instructor. However, every instructor needs to put forth the effort to communicate effectively, clearly and, dare I say it, effortlessly so that your instruction becomes a conversation between your experience and the students’ desire to learn.

What a good teacher does requires effort and talent. It takes training, and it takes experience. It takes patience, and it takes repeated doing. Those who think that teaching is easy, or a shelter for the uninspired or uninformed, are wrong. The truth is **those who teach can do.**

## Musings About The Practice & The Vital Force

BY DONNA ALDOUS, MEADOW LAKE, SASKATCHEWAN, CANADA

It was the last class in Mesa, Arizona, before we trekked home to Saskatchewan. And I asked the class to share some things about T’ai Chi Chih, their lives, anything they wanted. Here are some musings:

“Balance and alignment automatically come to mind. How it affects me, my body and my well-being. Light at the Top of the Head and Light at the Temple always bring a sense of lightness, openness and joy.” – KAREN McLEOD

“My internal organs love TCC. I feel in the moment, grounded with a feeling of wellbeing. It keeps me positive and energized. It is something I like to tell other people about.” – CAROL SMITH

“After doing a round of TCC I always feel more calm and grounded. If I don’t practice I seem to have more emotional upheaval in my life. Doing TCC makes me feel I am doing something to improve myself, something for me. I become connected to my source.” – EVA SMITH

“It’s been necessary to slow down and make my movements smaller, as I have bursitis in my shoulders. It’s been a gift and I find myself with a little smile when I practice. In the last five months I have lost 30 pounds. I am learning to relax.” – LENNY SPICER

In reading a recent *The Vital Force* about Cosmic Consciousness Pose, I realized I had not thought much about the pose. Now it is much more than the end of the 19 movements. **It is the pause that puts everything into perspective.** All is well. I am exactly where I am suppose to be, doing exactly what I am suppose to be doing. TCC has accomplished all that I need today. And that is enough.

The world can be heaven on earth; I just need reminders that it’s my perspective that makes it so.

As a teacher I wonder how many of us read from past issues of *The Vital Force*? Every time I do, it creates interest and many students take the information to get a subscription. **I’d like to suggest that we do our students a favour and introduce them to the wisdom of TCC through *The Vital Force*.**



## Building Resilience

By KATHY STARRICK, WOODLAND PARK, NEW JERSEY

Recently, I was asked to speak at a holistic nursing conference. My topic was “Building Resilience with T'ai Chi Chih.” Resilience is one of those things I never realized I had until I needed it to deal with medical, family and personal issues. In every situation, my TCC practice helped, but I had never really thought about how it did so.

After considerable introspection and gathering of information, I focused on three aspects: managing stress in healthy ways, easing anxiety and depression, and maintaining balance. In my talk to the nurses, I described TCC, demonstrated some movements, had them join me for a few, and explained the benefits using terms that related to the traditional medicine with which the nurses were familiar.

### **It's difficult to be resilient when we're constantly stressed.**

Chronic stress can do tremendous damage, causing physical, mental and emotional imbalances that manifest as illness. When the body is in a stress response, its natural healing ability is disabled.

Since it's not the stress events themselves that are the problem, but rather how we perceive and then react to them, I showed the nurses how to take a “time-out” with TCC, and let the gentle TCC movements relax the body and mind, triggering the relaxation response and diminishing stress hormones. Thus, TCC helps to rebalance the body's systems and return the immune system to its innate repair and maintenance functions so it can handle whatever it encounters. As the mind quiets, we're better able to let go of the things that cause us stress, and we begin to feel an inner serenity.

**Anxiety and depression also affect how we respond to various situations.** I told the nurses about two studies that compared the effectiveness of TCC to health education – in one study as an augment to traditional treatments for depression, and in the other study to alleviate sleep problems which often accompany depression. The first study noted that it would be very beneficial for a psychiatrist to add TCC practice to a patient's treatment plan, instead of adding another drug.<sup>1</sup> The second study concluded that TCC can be considered a useful nonpharmacological approach to sleep quality in older adults with moderate complaints.<sup>2</sup>



### **I further explained how the gentle moving meditation of TCC calms us and helps us let go of the past and fears of the future.**

As our spirits lift, we begin to feel more energized and less fatigued. Taking an active part in our own healing is empowering, helping us to feel more in control. Regular practice of the meditative movements brings increased self-awareness and self-acceptance, building an inner strength and self-confidence that helps us to act in accord with our own instincts and intuition, our voice of inner knowing. TCC's practice of mindfulness helps us learn to live in the present with understanding, gratitude and optimism.

### **Overall resilience is helped by feeling grounded and centered.**

It's difficult to be resilient if we feel off-balance or unsteady on our feet. Structural resilience, such as automatically making subtle adjustments to our posture, helps us to stay upright and maintain balance. The slow TCC movements improve muscle strength, posture, balance, flexibility, stability and coordination. A relaxed, aligned spine brings a sense of confidence. Softening the knees allows us to sink into our center, into a place of balance and deeper awareness of who we are. Pressure sensors in the soles of the feet tell the hips, knees and ankles how to move in order to maintain or recover balance. Concentration on the soles of the feet brings increased awareness of our feet on the ground. Thus, TCC helps our roots grow stronger, keeping us grounded and confident that we can stand up to whatever comes our way.

I concluded my talk by telling the nurses a little of my own story, giving them concrete examples of some of the many ways that TCC has helped me to be more resilient in difficult times. I believe my TCC practice has helped me to be more in sync with the universe, more open to its possibilities, better able to make decisions, better able to relax and let things unfold as they are meant to. It has taught me to find my center, rest in the stillness and trust in the wisdom of the universe. I have learned to listen to my body, trust my instincts and take charge of my own healing.

My goal in speaking at this conference was to spread awareness in the medical community about the many benefits of TCC to medical professionals, to their patients and to other caregivers. The nurses all expressed their enjoyment of the talk and doing the movements, and I have already received other positive feedback. I trust that my efforts will continue to bear fruit, even though I may never know what forms that might take.

1. “*Complementary Use of Tai Chi Chih Augments Escitalopram Treatment of Geriatric Depression: A Randomized Controlled Trial*”; Helen Lavretsky, M.D., et al; *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 2011 October; 19(10): 839-850.
2. “*Improving Sleep Quality in Older Adults with Moderate Sleep Complaints: A Randomized Controlled Trial of Tai Chi Chih*”; Michael R. Irwin, MD, et al, UCLA Cousins Center for Psychoneuroimmunology; *SLEEP*, Vol 31, No. 7, 2008.

## Experiencing Life

By ROSEANN HEINRICH, PARMA, OHIO

Every person who gives time to writing is experiencing life in some form, but so are the animals, trees and rocks. I wonder if I have ever been a rock remaining still as I experienced tumultuous weather or was thrown into a pond. What an odd concept. But I think it might be easier to be a rock experiencing the moment than a human with a racing mind carrying me around the planet at 0mph to 60mph.

This is why I study and teach T'ai Chi Chih, a moving meditation. During my practice, I learn to be mindful of my body's movements and the feelings I experience. I learn to let go of extenuating activities and worries that invade my life.

I recently began taking yoga classes, which offers another opportunity to be in the moment, to be mindful of movement and the lack of it. To be still and focus in another practice helps me release the hubbub of what is happening around me.

Life has been a whirlwind of activities, most of which were not planned very far in advance. Opportunities brought with them a price and a concern for expenses. There was a lovely wedding to attend 800 miles away, a wonderful conference 500 miles in another direction, an anniversary weekend away, and then an opportunity to repair our rapidly deteriorating deck. Yes, that too was accomplished as I took note of our decreasing bank account.

As a retiree, raises and bonuses are bestowed by the universe, exactly when needed – rather than as an assurance. We must trust it will come.

The only way to move through it all is to find peace within my TCC practice, to find joy in holding a yoga pose. The angels also urged me to continue to do things I love. Zumba is one. Yes, it is exercise, but more importantly it is fun. So I did lots of Zumba and, at 68 years old, I find gratitude for completing the hour.

While feeling joy, I forget my concerns and relax my body. The energy flows more easily through my body; healing of all sorts continues.

As the year rolls forward, facing new concerns for our accounts, I spend some days feeling angst. I then return to my TCC practice, mindful that today all is well. I continue my daily TCC practice and yoga lessons, as I like being in the moment and forgetting worldly concerns. In those moments the universe shows me there is nothing to be concerned about. I have peace in my heart and angels all around – as long as I remain mindful that they are there for me always. Namaste.

## Student Empowerment

By DIXIE ADENIRAN, VENTURA, CALIFORNIA

Wonderful surprises can come from upsetting circumstances.

I am a newish TCC teacher, teaching a little over a year at the local senior center. Most students have been attending classes a few months; some have come since the beginning; new people come frequently. The Friday class with 20 or more fills the room.

I use the circle-within-a-circle formation for some sessions. The more practiced students stand in the small inner circle with me; the less practiced ones are in the larger outer circle.

I arranged for a substitute TCC teacher in order to attend Sandy McAlister's retreat. At the last minute, the teacher was unable to cover for me. Twenty-four students showed up to class though. After learning what had happened, I emailed the students apologizing that they had taken the trouble to show up without a teacher present.

Chills ran up and down my spine as responses came into my inbox. Emails describing what happened showed pride and delight in accomplishment. While waiting for the teacher, then realizing no one was coming, without any advice from me, **they spontaneously decided to do a group practice.** Two of the most practiced students suggested they form the circle-within-a-circle formation. Others usually in the inner circle joined, and off they went. Joy filled my heart. I was thrilled. **They had made TCC their own.** They are getting it. They know and like the practice. They are entering the Cosmic Rhythm.

What a privilege to see this empowering transformation.



## 20th Century Psalms: The Impersonal

BY JUSTIN F. STONE

“

The Great Mystery is in the Breath. What is the relationship between thought and breath, and also between light and sound?

~ Why is it that, when we hear a sudden sound while the eyes are closed, we see jagged light across our inner gaze? This phenomenon poses the question: what is this relationship between the senses?

~ With eyes closed, a sudden sound brings a bright visual image, so we can assume there is relationship between hearing and seeing – indeed, among all the senses.

~ Understanding of the vibration before sound is very useful. Constant mental repetition of a Mantra (*Manasika Japa*) sets up a vibration throughout the nervous system. I wonder if such a vibration can be set up in each cell of the body. Tantra (not “Tantric Buddhism”) implies that it can.

“

If an artist merely follows trends and does not express himself, he is not an artist. There is an art to living, too.

~ The jazz musician, like the spiritual teacher, tries to express the inexpressible.

~ An artist must see things in his own way. If he reproduces exactly what he sees, he's an illustrator.

~ Need for frequent diversion means we're bored with ourselves. How few sit quietly, doing nothing!



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



“

Many recognize the “good.” Few intuit the “wise.” The wise man accords with spiritual evolution.

~ Asking a wise man from India why those who meditate seem to develop a constant vibration in the right ear, I received the reply: “It means you have been chosen for introspection.”

~ Those who pretend to be channels for wise spirits, or to have and teach occult powers, are dealing with stronger forces than they know and are asking for big trouble.

~ “Joy” is usually in inverse ratio to the appetite for pleasure. “Joy” is in unity, pleasure needs diversity.

“

Only in the “thoughtless state” is your inherited nature negated.

~ He who learns the secret of breath can come close to immortality. He who knows light and sound can live in solitude and never miss a thing.

~ If you could understand “sleep” and “breath,” all secrets would be revealed.

~ To name something is not to understand it.

“

What we are dealing with is the Transformation of Energy. The Chinese speak of *Ching Chi Shen* — the Essence (Sperm), Energy, Spirit.

~ The Zen man identifies with all things and is not possessed by any.

~ If one can hear the sound from the hills, he will hear the echo on the wind. One moon shines on all waters; one silence pervades every sound.

~ The Indians speak of Vibration before Sound – this is the stuff of Creation. The great Ramana Maharshi spoke of Om Bhuh Bhuvah Svah as the sounds of creation. I don't know.

## 20th Century Psalms: The Personal

BY JUSTIN F. STONE

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A wandering Holy Man [in India] who always chanted “RAM” (his name for God) stopped at the back of a temple to relieve himself, still chanting God’s name. The resident priest ran out to tell him to stop speaking God’s name while carrying on such an activity. “Oh, I’m sorry,” apologized the mendicant and stopped moving his lips. But immediately, every cell in his body chanted aloud: “RAM! RAM!” The awed priest then said: “Such rules are not for a man like you!”

“

“I tell you, they are as good as men!” said my young host, Kaushik, when the monkeys tried to steal my hat and umbrella to imitate what they had seen me do with them. “Once there was a traveling salesman,” continued Kaushik, “who went from village to village selling hats. One very hot day he decided to have a nap under a tree. When he awoke he was horrified to see monkeys on the branches of nearby trees wearing his entire stock of hats. “I’m ruined!” he exclaimed, but then an idea came to him. Taking his own hat from his head, he threw it to the ground. Immediately the imitative monkeys did the same thing, and he was able to collect all his hats and march on to the next town.”

“

Swami Krishnanand is one of the great Saints of modern India, a true Karma Yogi who realizes through deeds – the Yoga of Action. Swamiji was a well-known judge, I am told, until he gave up the law to join Gandhi and became a *Sanyasi* (complete renunciate). Swamiji, like all true *Sanyasi*, does not touch money.

“That’s all very well, Swamiji,” I remonstrated, “but suppose someone sends you a ticket to South America and you take it as the will of God. When you get there and no one meets the plane, what do you do?”

“I sit on the ground and chant thanks to God!” was the decisive answer.

“Suppose three days pass and you haven’t eaten, what then?” I persisted.

“I sit on the ground and chant thanks to God!” was the prompt reply.

I arrived in Baroda after a long, slow journey (including an extended stay in Japan) only to hear at Swami’s Vishva Jyoti (Universal Light) Ashram that I had missed Swami by a day. Reading in the paper that thousands of people in Kenya were starving, he took it as a command from God to go there and feed them, though he does not touch money. He did go there and fed thousands every day (he has a way of bullying rich Indians into donations). This is a man of steel with no doubts. How fortunate to meet such a one! In Africa Swamiji fed people and only offered scripture or Yoga when they requested them of him. His stories to me of the cruelties practised by the Belgians were bloodchilling.

“

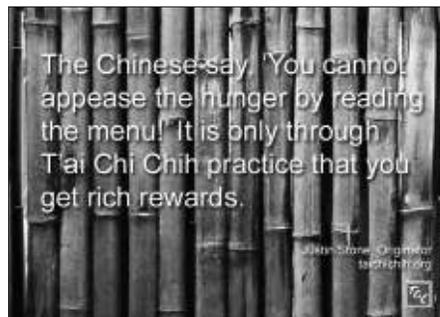
Years ago, on a visit to Los Angeles, I stayed at the Kipling Residence for the elderly because it was inexpensive and would furnish me my meals. I am an early riser, and on my first morning there, I was the first to enter the large dining room that seated about 150. As I sat at a table, looking at the menu, an elderly woman entered and stood beside me. “Won’t you join me for breakfast?” I asked pleasantly, pointing at the seat across from me.

“You’re sitting in my chair!” she replied.

Startled, I looked at the back of the chair to see if it had anyone’s name on it; it didn’t.

“Be my guest,” I replied, standing and walking to another table.

It was ironic that she was so bound that she could not eat anywhere else, particularly in light of the sign behind the desk in the lobby, which said: “Habit is the enemy of old age.”



# TCC Teacher Symposium in Pennsylvania, April 2016

~ ~ ~

**By April Leffler, Host, Prospect Park, Pennsylvania**

I was excited to host the symposium because it was only the third one offered in 16 years, and I knew it would offer something unlike any other T'ai Chi Chih event. The excitement was tangible; 19 teachers gathered to discuss many aspects of the art and science of teaching TCC, not just during the actual symposium, but also spilling into the breaks and at meals. We just couldn't contain our excitement as we shared and compared experiences, questions and comments about the many aspects of teaching. One particular area of interest was getting TCC into the research and medical community even more. With the increased awareness and interest in contemplative practices and mindfulness practically being sanctioned, TCC rests in a wonderful position of being discovered for its many and diverse benefits. Below are more thoughts from the participants.

~ ~ ~

**By Stephan Koblick, North Haledon, New Jersey**

Learning to teach TCC begins after accreditation when we are standing alone with our first class. Like learning TCC, teaching it is a life long journey. We all need to share the knowledge, insight and creativity that each of us can develop and discover with our own teaching experience. The symposium beautifully provided all of this while reinforcing the sense of community. Although I have been teaching for five-plus years, I now feel better equipped to share some of these new techniques and ideas with my students. I will be a more effective teacher because of this experience. Like most professions, our teaching skills grow with continuing education based on sharing our gifts with each other. We need more of these events to continue growing as teachers.

**By Jessica Lewis, Claymont, Delaware**

My symposium experience was profound on many levels. I will always be more grateful than I can express for being part of the TCC community; that feeling grows every time I attend an event or meet a new TCC person. Not only did I learn many priceless new teaching tips, I also deepened my understanding of the entire practice. Gratitude to April for facilitating and to Sandy for coming such a long distance to guide us.

~ ~ ~

**By Nancy Daniel, Wallingford, Pennsylvania**

As we shared our individual teaching experiences, formulated questions, explored ideas and practiced together, the principles of TCC were deep at work. Each of us and each of our students inhabit a unique body equipped to maximize the flow of *Chi*. How thoroughly delightful and informative to gather and learn with unified purpose from the unending variety of paths to this goal. There could never be a dull moment for a teaching community focusing intently on refining our approaches. Huge thanks to Sandy for keeping us grounded and moving forward.

~ ~ ~

**By Anita Vestal, San Isidro, Costa Rica**

Kernels of wisdom shared generously send me home with personal and practical techniques to cherish and spread. Thanks for:

- the "wrist flick" on the back hand in Working the Pulley;
- new friends and research associates;
- labyrinth walks in a garden with a huge beech tree;
- miso soup and avocado keeper;
- the warmth and grace of the Franciscan Spiritual Center.

~ ~ ~

**By Julie Barrier, Oakland, New Jersey**

The symposium was beyond my visions of what could be created when *Chi* flows among, through and around teachers who yearn to share teaching experiences. It was a *Chi*-filled continuing education about the joy of TCC by those who value and want to share the practice with local communities.

One ah-ha moment occurred at the opening session when asking the question: "How do we teach the importance of

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Front row: Christa Thompson, Deborah Massey, Dorene Krause, Fran Kaib, Stephan Koblick. Second row: Nancy Daniel, Wendy Statuto, Joan Schaufhausser, Julie Barrier, Anita Vestal. Third row: Jessica Lewis, Sandy McAlister, Jack Weaver, Eileen Butler, Karen Kaelin, Jim Kaib, Tony Risos, April Leffler

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grounding? What does it mean and why is it important?" Some responses included, "Be in your body and out of your mind" ... "TCC accords with nature: healthy energy always flows in circles" ... a visualization of "Be Here, Be Now" ... teaching the importance of softening the knees, ankles, wrists and shoulders in the resting pose ... and the importance of storing *Chi* in the *tan t'ien*.

The other ah-ha moment was in response to: "How do you describe the *tan t'ien* to beginners? Answers included: "It's located two inches below the navel where our *Chi* is stored" ... "a place of honor, a place of internal power, intuition, our second brain" ... "unencumbered by the thought process" ... "your center of gravity that balances physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health."

The joy of coming together to share ideas, resources and teaching techniques was inspiring and it invigorated us to deepen our own practice. And we sure had fun in the process – sharing our creative selves in a safe and loving circle with *Chi* flowing around us and out into the universe.

~ ~ ~

**By Deborah Massey, Malvern, Pennsylvania**

The first night we spoke of the importance of grounding. The rich discussion took us deeper into our practices. I learned that our two arms, two legs and tailbone provide five points of grounding which then allows us to be fully engaged in life and connected to the divine. My takeaways were to relax more in my teaching and to guide students to have fun and joy in moving.

~ ~ ~

**By Dorene Krause, Midland Park, New Jersey**

I was excited to attend my first symposium, an opportunity to connect, share and practice with other teachers. I have attended many events over the past 13 years but none so focused on how to teach movements, how to adapt them for different populations and the importance of inner peace and grounding (in our students and ourselves).

We listened respectfully and asked many questions as teachers shared personal stories and teaching experiences. We learned new words so we could return to our students with



new voices. I relearned the importance of applying the principles to each movement, bringing new light and awareness to how to move and to notice how we feel when moving and in stillness.

The symposium gifted us with new vision to examine our own practice as well as our students' practice, to increase understanding of the flow of energy, how to make gentle corrections and how to become better teachers. The experience will be invaluable as I teach and share the gift of TCC. Grateful to Sandy and April for their guidance and encouragement throughout.

~ ~ ~

Teacher Symposium in Spring – how perfect!

For as nature comes alive, renewed after the long, cold, stillness of winter, so did we.

Trees and flowers await their budding forth with new life.

The soil, the sun and the rain work together to nourish new growth.

The Teacher Symposium – a teacher's gardener to help cultivate, deepen understanding and enhance the flow of *Chi*.

Teachers, perhaps dormant or stuck with old ways, experienced a springtime renewal as well budding forth with new ideas, heightened energy flow, a re-emergence of self and moving as beautiful, free-spirited butterflies.

– DORENE KRAUS

~ ~ ~

**By Wendy Statuto, Ho-Ho-Kus, New Jersey**

I was asked the question "What *do* you want?" at the symposium. I knew what I did not want: a class with no students showing up.

The question was asked again, "What do you want?" What was truly being asked? My answer was simple: I want a class full of students. This was the reason I became a TCC teacher, to pass the TCC experience on to many. How do I get this to happen? Advertise. But I'm not good at that. With the help of the questioner, I removed the 'buts' and 'nots' from my thinking. I needed to change my thought pattern. The symposium gave me the tools to do that.

Sandy started a discussion on advertising classes. Then we divided into six groups, selected a target audience and wrote a three-line advertisement addressed to that audience. As our group brainstormed, there was no room for 'buts' and 'nots.' The *Chi* flowed with terrific suggestions and ideas from all. As a result, we now have six excellent, well-written advertisements to use for our own classes. That was easy. Now my question to all of you is, what do you want?

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**By Jack Weaver, Dallastown, Pennsylvania**

The symposium has a more personalized atmosphere than a conference. Even though there was structure, teacher voices were paramount. Questions sparked discussions into related areas – whether it was marketing, advertising, research or movement (the main event). A multitude of suggestions were brought back home. In addition to great discussions, we had some darn good laughs. A word of warning though: be aware when a slip of paper is handed to you. You'll have to attend an event to find out why.

~ ~ ~

**By Tony Risos, Toms River, New Jersey**

Sandy was candid and honest, gently guiding and honoring teachers in a powerful yet tender and kind manner. Our host, April, shared creative ideas like having her college students keep a journal. Now they can mindfully explore TCC to help them learn about and cope with life. Dorene methodically put TCC principles to good use in her classes and shared her techniques openly and freely. Anita did a TCC pilot study looking for statistically significant research on its benefits. Old friends, Jim and Fran, laughed about how and what we did years ago at accreditation. New teachers felt their way into TCC; one is teaching second graders. (Imagine you're on a swing going back and forth, which way is your *tan t'ien* going?) Experienced teachers were grateful to be part of this process. The *teh* was there alongside tears from laughter.

~ ~ ~

**By Jim Kaib, Norwood, Pennsylvania**

This was my second symposium, and I highly recommend it to any teacher who wants to grow. It was great to refine my practice, exchange ideas about teaching the movements, delve into language and explore ways to spread TCC. Students sometimes ask if teachers have to take continuing education credits. No, but a good teacher goes back to the well to continually learn, deepen and refine his or her practice. I left energized from the small groups and having learned so much of value.

~ ~ ~

**From Karen Kaelin, Brentwood, New York**

Each of the presentations, sharings and practices were flowing from the center of our lived experience; grounded in the reality and diversity of the classes we teach; and filled with clarity and insights.

Some of my favorite takeaways involved props (shower puff balls, a model of a pelvis) and images (a piano stool to unlock your waist/hip; a piano bench which is long and smooth; a toothbrush for motivation). The most important was that listening to my inner wisdom while observing my students is the most important element in teaching.

## Research & Practice & You

BY ANITA VESTAL, SAN ISIDRO, COSTA RICA

As a TCC practitioner you may know that regular practice has a positive effect on many aspects of our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual selves. Are you aware of a study done from 2007 to 2009 where TCC students reported improvement in energy levels, back/joint pain, balance and coordination, quality of sleep, mental clarity and focus? The 610 student questionnaires collected by 11 accredited TCC teachers across North America also showed significant improvement in how well they react to stress, their feelings of well being and satisfaction with life, their level of accomplishment and the level of spirituality in their lives.

You may accept this as something you already know, but the world at large is still in the dark. Our community is seeing an ever-increasing number of studies that examine the effects of TCC on various health conditions particularly in the aging population. These empirical studies are typically authored by researchers from academic or medical institutions. The study design uses classes taught by accredited TCC teachers, but how many of those published studies include a TCC teacher as a co-author of the study?

Have you ever considered yourself as a potential researcher? Do you want to document the changes students report about TCC practice improving their lives? Let me encourage you to consider yourself a practitioner and a researcher. *We can document the changes ourselves and tell our story in our own way to the research world.* I, for one, want to be part of a published research project and several teachers also want to participate in our own empirical study.

Consider this your invitation to join in the 2016-2017 version of the **Student Reaction Questionnaire Project**. Take a look at the bar graph that shows significant changes in 12 dimensions reported by students during their first class of TCC and at their last class. For those interested in statistics, these data were analyzed in 2009 using ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) with a statistical program called SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Services.) We'd like to use the same questionnaire and see what results we can get with 1000 new student surveys.

Any teacher who offers classes for beginning students may participate. You simply distribute the questionnaires at the first class *before* they learn movements, and again the same questionnaire at the *last* class. The study is designed for students new to TCC, so intermediate/advanced/continuing students should not complete questionnaires. If you'd like to be a participating teacher or if you'd like talk to one of the teachers who participated in the past, please get in touch. If we get amazing results like we did seven years ago and publish those results, the research world will notice. Funding follows research. Be a practitioner and a researcher.

## A Moment Of Grace

By LINDA BRAGA, CASTRO VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

Mini became a T'ai Chi Chih student a few years ago, after retiring from her job at the library. She did not know anything about this form and wondered if it would be too hard. We welcomed her, told her it was okay to be a beginner, and that this group could be her new family. After that first class, she came to me with a hand touching her heart and tearfully whispered, "This class is for me. This is so beautiful."

**She wanted to be like us – serene and calm.** I said the fastest way to learn is to stand near the teacher, to absorb all the unspoken aspects of this form. She did just that. As the months rolled by, students commented on how quickly Mini learned to do TCC. She was friendly, enthusiastic and invited friends to enroll in class.

When Mini's health took a turn for the worse she still came to class when she could. The treatments for her rare form of blood cancer "took the starch out of her," but she kept going. Many were so impressed with her desire to not give up, despite chemotherapy and more invasive procedures.

In January 2016, classes resumed, but Mini did not return to class. Two weeks later came the news: Mini had passed away. We were shocked and felt a keen loss of a special friend. The following week we dedicated our practice to Mini. A table was set with brocade cloth, flowers and large candles. A copy of the condolence note to the Whitney family was displayed alongside her photograph.

During the class, something unusual happened. During the first two TCC movements, as we stood in a large circle, I had the distinct feeling that spirits were coming into the room, and it felt crowded. I mentioned this to the class.

Another student, a Hindu swami and close friend, assured us that yes, indeed, there were many spirits in the room and that Mini was right in the middle of the room. She described that many of these spirits were angels with big white wings. We felt amazingly happy. It was truly a moment of Grace.



## Just A Thought

By MICHAEL DAPELO

As I was driving home from a recent *Heightened Awareness-T'ai Chi Chih* event, I was thinking about how fortunate I am to have the time, money, support and inclination to participate so fully in TCC. I have experienced individual and group sessions with teachers, TCC weekends and retreats, and daylong events – as well as taking time to practice on my own.

I began to wonder if it was all a bit too self-centered, too focused on me. When I thought about the wealth of experience and growth that the practice of TCC has offered, I realized that TCC is actually *self-centered*, rather than *self-centered*. It invites me, draws me, impels me to be more *other-centered*. So I am indeed fortunate that TCC is part of my life journey.

## Students Honored At Senior Community Center

By LINDA BRAGA, CASTRO VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

Fourteen T'ai Chi Chih students were honored in November in San Leandro, California. They were selected because they are now in their 80s and 90s, maintain consistent attendance after many years, and are good role models in the class and TCC community.

As students arrived to the health and fitness room, they noticed a table set with green satin cloth, white candles and gold and orange chrysanthemums. A photo of Justin Stone was displayed alongside the names of the honorees.

After a TCC practice, the group gathered and the teacher read a quotation from Justin. Each student was called forth and presented a certificate of achievement with a gold seal on it. Some honorees had attended TCC class for 15 years; some had met Justin during the open practice at past conferences. Photos were taken and the event featured in the local newspaper, celebrating seniors as life-long learners.

What pride and happiness each recipient felt upon being recognized. As Justin used to say, "**They are ones who take TCC seriously.**" Their pleased classmates agreed that this group was the wisdom keepers.

Note to TCC teachers: I am happy to email you the digital copy of this certificate, which can be personalized to fit your honorees. Gold seals, which add special importance to the certificate, are available at many office supply stores.

## Student Presentation About Circulating, Balancing & Accumulating Chi

By Dotty, a student of Donna McElhose, Illinois;  
with quotations from *Spiritual Odyssey*

Justin said, “One does not have to outguess T’ai Chi Chih, nor to understand it intellectually” for the benefits to be realized. Even though Justin didn’t think that TCC needed analyzing to be enjoyed (and benefited from), he did offer hints on the process and its effects. This talk will be about the process of circulating, balancing and accumulating Chi through TCC. Others in the group will talk about the effects of these processes.

What is *Chi*? Justin defines it as Vital Force or Intrinsic Energy, and he says that we do not possess the *Chi* but rather, “We are a product of the *Chi*.” Very interesting thought. “Chinese cosmology says the first manifestation of life was brought about by the *yin Chi* separating from *yang Chi*.”

About the process, Justin says that, “With the gentle movements of TCC ... the *Chi* circulates and is then balanced. TCC ... builds up the Vital Force, stored in the bones and in the navel.”

As you start to move in TCC, the *Chi* starts to **circulate** and the *yin* and *yang* energies separate. As they separate and continue to move through the body they can be brought into balance.

In order for this to happen, Justin says, “TCC must be done softly and with the ‘effort of no effort.’” He also says, “Movement must be from the center of the body, not from the shoulders or arms.”

He’s now introducing the principles of TCC. Circularity, polarity, and yin-ning and yanging are built into the structure of the movements. If you’re doing the movements correctly these qualities are present. Then there’s softness and continuity, grounding while moving and flowing from the center: these principles must be consciously applied to each of the movements in order for the *Chi* to flow smoothly and become **balanced**.

Now we come to **accumulating** *Chi*. Justin says, “TCC results are cumulative ... regular practice leads to *Chi* firming the bones, and the *Chi* is progressively stored in the tan t’ien.” He also says, “This *Chi* will be molded and accumulated” and in TCC the character of *Chi* gradually changes.

So here’s a question for you: How do we know all this is happening? Do we just take it on faith, or are there signs that these things are happening inside?

## Releasing Childhood Trauma Through TCC Practice

By Christine Weber, Oxnard, California

“Chris, you aren’t transferring your weight completely when you move forward in Around The Platter,” instructor Lisa Otero told me this morning. As I continued the movement, I made a conscious effort to bend my forward knee and get the weight where it should be. The result shocked me. I felt a wash of a distant memory combined with fear. When I was about eight years old, I climbed up an earthen dam. When I reached the top I slipped and tumbled head over heels about 30 feet to the bottom. I escaped with only a few bruises but I was terribly frightened by the experience.

As these feelings came to the surface, I realized that I was actually afraid of falling if I bent my forward knee to the proper position for many T’ai Chi Chih movements. I immediately shared this with the class and Lisa, who told me to continue to transfer my weight completely and that the fearful feelings would dissipate. She also said to **keep my attention in the soles of my feet and trust my strength**.

As I continued the practice session with the full weight shift, my confidence strengthened. When I have a breakthrough like this I feel encouraged that at 66 years of age, I am growing emotionally and trusting my body’s ability to balance through TCC. Thanks to my teacher for being so perceptive.



# Way to Go – Ode to April

By MARY DONALDSON-EVANS, MEDIA, PENNSYLVANIA

**M**y husband and I have our exercise routine, as predictable as the sunrise. On Mondays and Wednesdays, we rise at 5:30 and head for the Y, where we walk, bike, lift and swim, in that order. Then home to breakfast, feeling smug as we pass sleepy drivers heading to work. On other days, we take long walks in a nearby state park.

About a year ago, we decided to add a group activity. We tried Movin' to Motown, Chair Yoga, Total Body Workout. Nothing “took.” Then we happened into April Leffler’s T’ai Chi Chih class. After one session, we were hooked. We’ve been regulars ever since. **We tried to analyze what about TCC drew us in from day one.**

We are not young. The idea of a moving meditation emphasizing “the effort of no effort” is obviously appealing to people of a certain age. I’m convinced, too, that the

**evocative language of the movements** is designed to put students at ease and to make them dream. All those references to nature: passing clouds, distant stars, bubbling springs, mountains and valleys, earth and sky.

Even Pulling Taffy is associated with the ocean, since salt water taffy is a specialty of the New Jersey coastal towns where we often vacation. April compares the arm movement of Pulling Taffy to tossing a frisbee, a favorite beach activity. For us, the name Anchor Taffy evokes pleasure-crafts moored offshore, dancing on the waves. As for Working the Pulley (the only time work is referred to in our routine), we are asked to imag-

## As Above, So Below

walk  
dogs bark,  
highway noise.  
soft vibrations,  
sun shines  
ommm  
breathe in.  
black panels  
shine in shine out.  
energy  
revealed.  
breathe

- RORIE MEASURE

ine swimming through very heavy air – swimming at the humid, salt-infused air of the seashore. Bird Flaps its Wings brings to mind seagulls beating their wings as they jockey for position to sweep up our funnel cake crumbs. And all those balls we carry from side-to-side, dropping and picking up ... where but the beach do you see so many balls?

Even the movements that do not evoke nature have pleasant connotations for us. Platters suggest elegant dinner parties with butlered hors d’œuvres; bass drums evoke marching bands and Fourth of July parades.

At the beginning of each session, April encourages us to bring our attention into the room, to be here now. Are we in conformity with this injunction when we let our minds travel to mountains and seashores, to parties and parades? We think so.

Because we’re usually successful at obeying the command to leave our to-do list at the door, and because we’re getting better at dropping our attention to the soles of our feet, we allow our minds to be occupied with pleasant images as our bodies are relaxing, gliding, shifting, softening, feeling, moving as rhythmically as the ocean, with its endless ebb and flow.

We may not yet have absorbed the philosophical concepts behind the practice. Nor is our meditation on the connection between TCC and the evolving universe as profound as that of others. What we do know is that TCC induces in us a feeling of well-being that we usually associate with vacation getaways. And for that we are grateful not only to Justin Stone, who originated the practice, but to our skilled teacher, April Leffler.

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TCC induces in us a feeling of well-being that we usually associate with vacation getaways

That gentle giant who lifts us up by the waist in several of the moves, where we’re expected to raise our heels from the ground, not always easy for the somewhat unsteady seniors that we’ve become? It’s April, a giant in our eyes, endlessly creative, evoca-

tive, soothing and encouraging. She punctuates her class with compliments (excellent ... wunderbar ... fantastique ... you guys are great), corrects students kindly and without singling them out, and has so many variations on the routine that we never become bored.

How do you do it, I asked April after a recent class. Always unassuming, she took no personal credit for her stellar teaching. “It’s the *Chi*,” she replied.



## Seijaku Accreditation in North Carolina, August 2015

**From Jim Eagle:** T'ai Chi Chih has always been primarily a *yin* practice for me, and I work each day on softness, flow and continuity. *Seijaku* has a little more of a *yang* feel for me, and I have appreciated the addition of some male energy to my practice. But as Pam responded, "A little [male energy] goes a long way in *Seijaku*." I'll keep that in mind.

**From Stephen M. Steffan:** I get a more real feeling when grounding during *Seijaku* verses TCC. *Seijaku* feels faster paced than TCC even though in reality it is probably slightly slower. This is most likely because of an increased intensity of the flowing *Chi*. That said, it is all the more important to make sure one gets and stays grounded during this practice. Hearing Pam's slow, spiritual and commanding voice about "the soles of the feet" brings me to ground in a quick, profound and knowing way. I feel fortunate and blessed to study with our dedicated Pam Towne. Her kind and knowing spirit is always with me when I practice and teach TCC; it will now continue with *Seijaku*. It is special to have our gifted leading teachers – Sandy, Pam and Daniel – doing a terrific job keeping TCC and *Seijaku* pure and simple.

**From Harry Dieckman:** This *Seijaku* session was probably the best ever. I have audited several since my initial training in 2010. The refrain "holding fast and letting go" is still a difficult concept to practice or live with consistency. I realized that these two opposite concepts must be in perfect harmony and balance for the consciousness to follow its natural path of expansion. I will continue to work on the letting go – remembering that the resistance should leave no trace, as if it had never been there. The resulting detachment will allow the impeccable timing of the universe. As Max Ehrmann says in *Desiderata*: "No doubt that the universe is unfolding as it should."

**From Judy Hubbell:** Perhaps Harry said it best of all: "Holding fast and letting go is like a song you get in your head." We just need to keep practicing that song. Each day together felt like banquet, going deeper into the physical practice by also going deeper within, accessing more *yin*. As Justin wrote in *Spiritual Odyssey*, "The closer we are to Joy (not pleasure), the nearer to Reality, God, or whatever we want to call it." There is that wonderful edge to his words. In a meditation with a lavender waterfall, we learned to not focus on a loud fan overhead, but instead focus our minds on a waterfall lit by a lavender light. Serenity in the midst of activity (or loudness in this case). What a glorious concept. As Susan Quinn taught us in her conference meditation talk, we were learning to just be. And here it was in *Seijaku* too – that soft element felt more fully, first holding fast and then letting go.

**From Charlotte Livingston:** What a wonderful opportunity to attend this accreditation as an auditor. In thinking over our time together, "holding fast and letting go" has continued upon my reentry at home. The concept of not anticipating the hard energy (but "whoops there it is and it's gone without a trace") comes to mind during many daily activities. *Seijaku* is the gift that just keeps on giving. Each year my TCC and *Seijaku* practices have deepened. My personal health (I'm off blood pressure medicine) and life in general have been enriched. There is no doubt that *Seijaku* has played a part in these changes. *Seijaku* is a wonderful gift; thank you Justin Stone.

**From Linda Jones:** One of the most important things I learned from Pam was that *Seijaku* isn't as hard as I thought. The practice is softer a larger percentage of the time than it is hard. *Seijaku* is very much like life: We need hard (or bad) times some of the time in order to recognize and appreciate the soft (or good) times.



**From Bruce Eisenmenger:** As Linda said, "*Seijaku* is very much like life." I returned home filled with the fullness of life. Then wham, two days later I learned that my spouse and partner of more than 37 years has been diagnosed with a very aggressive form of endometrial cancer. Shock, anger, fear. The possibility of losing my love saddens me, fills me with fear beyond description. But then I move through softness into hard resistance that then melts into beautiful love energy. And I am filled with gratitude for what I have been given. I don't begin to understand it but use *Seijaku* and TCC to accept and work with it. And I think of you all, my special *Seijaku* friends, and feel your love energy. Thank you.

## Reflections On The Retreat

BY DOTTY HOEPNER, ROUND LAKE BEACH, ILLINOIS

After a few years of struggling (the antithesis of T'ai Chi Chih) with pushing through the wall, I found Bill's way of experiencing "holding fast and letting go" new and refreshing. He suggested that the feeling of moving through very heavy air is primarily expressed as a downward pressure from the *tan t'ien* through the legs and into the feet, and that it is reflected in the upper body and through the wrists.

When I first felt what he was getting at, my feet felt rooted to the floor and very stable while yinning and yanging. At the same time, my torso and arms moved more effortlessly than ever before, even during the holding fast segment of the movement. I suddenly thought, "So this is what T'ai Chi Chih doing T'ai Chi Chih is all about!"

As we gathered for an informal chat that evening, I shared my experience. Bill had been talking about trust, and I shared that with this incredible sense of grounding and connection with *Chi* came a **trust in the earth's perpetual support and sustenance**.

After coming back home, my experience with holding fast has been somewhat elusive. But the trust that (as Bill says), "*Seijaku* will teach me *Seijaku*" reverberates in my mind.

## Musings On The Retreat

BY JEFF HOEPNER, ROUND LAKE BEACH, ILLINOIS

Bill Moore was so welcoming. Even before the retreat started, he answered several questions by email. A few of us also showed up early to the retreat with Bill's permission. On a covered veranda in a gusty rainstorm, we did T'ai Chi Chih and had a get-acquainted meal at an Italian restaurant. The retreat setting, with a labyrinth, was beautiful; meals were yummy; guest rooms even had wi-fi.

Crazy, mind-blowing ideas came all weekend:

- *Seijaku* is comfortable. (But wasn't it supposed to be difficult, painful and too subtle to understand?)
- There are multiple levels of air density. (What happened to the simple brick wall we're supposed to bust through?)
- Don't try to get it right. (But isn't that my goal? What's my head for?)
- Just give up for real success. (If I give up, how can I go on?)
- Grounding is within the movements. (Not just afterwards?)
- There is no reaching, no gripping. (That hit home; I had forever been gripping with my toes and reaching with my fingers.)

Coming home, I was eager to dive into my new friend, *Seijaku*. I play with it, exploring it as an adventure, an experience that can teach me how to move, how to flow from my center, down through my legs, into the earth.

## Seijaku Retreat in New Jersey, April 2016

BY BILL MOORE, CLIFTON, NEW JERSEY

In the hills of New Jersey, ten folks from different locales and with varying levels of experience with *Seijaku* gathered to share an adventure. We were in pursuit of a comfortable and practical way to incorporate the *Seijaku* principle of "holding fast, and letting go" (Justin Stone) into our daily T'ai Chi Chih practice.

We played with the application of this principle in our weight shifts, exploring how this perspective might better inform our movements – by keenly focusing in the soles of the feet, by properly yinning and yanging (where the weight is shifting smoothly and evenly from one leg to the other), and by sinking and rising in the movements, where knees move in concert, thereby facilitating flowing from the center with softness and continuity.

Exploring adjunct practices that Justin Stone shared as appropriate and complementary to *Seijaku*, we deepened our awareness and appreciation of how they relate to each other as a holistic enterprise. Shared observations include:

*Where there is sinking in TCC movements, ideally there is no collapsing.*

*Where there is rising, ideally there is no lifting.*

*Where there is expanding, ideally there is no reaching.*

*Where there is contracting, ideally there is no limiting.*

We had great fun and are so very grateful to Justin for this wondrous gift, as *Seijaku* continues to relate to and inform our TCC practice, while providing a practicable tool for more effective and comfortable living, in better health and more balanced harmony of body, mind and spirit.



# TCC Intensive in Littleton, Colorado, February 2016

BY MARIE DOTTS, LOVELAND, COLORADO

I heard two quotations when I began my journey with T'ai Chi Chih: "TCC will meet you wherever you are in life" and "Each person receives what s/he needs." Both describe perfectly the unending, unfolding, joyous TCC journey. What a gift to observe myself and other participants called to an area of their practice. TCC is so gentle. It effortlessly guides us to the next layer of the onion that needs to be peeled so that more of our true essence can flow through. **Our only job is to listen and be awake to its guidance.**

Guidance speaks in so many ways. Sometimes the way a teacher shares something makes a light bulb go off and opens your practice in a whole new way. This happened to me at the Intensive. The way Sandy described softness helped me feel places where I was holding tension that I was not aware of. She helped me play with the positions of my arms and wrists. In Carry the Ball to the Side, I'd been forcing my arms and wrists to bend more than they needed to (in the lower part of the circle). I now delight in my greater awareness of what tension and softness feels like in all my movements. Another layer of the onion peeled!

## Comments from Participants:

"I return home with a new word: connection. During our five days with



Sandy, as she conscientiously took us through every movement and the pose, I heard it again and again. During Light at the Top of the Head, keep the connection of the hands to the *tan t'ien*. On the side-to-side movements, keep the connection of the hands to the *tan t'ien* when you bring them in. During Passing Clouds, feel the connection between the hands and the *tan t'ien* when you bring your hands across. In Working the Pulley, connect each hand mentally to the corresponding hipbone and feel the connection with the *tan t'ien*. I'm sure she said connection more times than I wrote down. I am grateful for this focus as I continue to learn to move from the *tan t'ien*." ~ REBECCA P.

"My awareness of turning too much to the side as I setup for "the Taffies" had been heightened before this Intensive. But during the Intensive, Sandy explained that the lower arm softly moves into position with the waist turn and weight shift, and the turn is complete with the weight shift. Practicing and connecting this information to the movement has allowed me to correct my body's exaggerated side turn as I set up for the side-to-side part of the movement. Additionally, it has relieved some knee strain because of my over-extension to the side." ~ JOETTA H.

"I learned how to softly pick up my *yin* foot when doing Pulling Taffy, Variation 3, Perpetual Motion, and more. And I learned that when doing Pulling Taffy, Variation 1, Anchor, you actually do a taffy pull when the foot goes out pigeon-toed. (I should have known that.) And I learned what a great time a group of loving TCC-ers could have. (Of course, I already knew that.)" ~ SANDY R.

"There is more than one way to do a movement. There is a range of acceptable form. Of course, the weight shift is all-important and intent to do it right is necessary. This was super freeing. Once your free up

your mind about form it just happens and the *Chi* does its work." ~ LISA V.

"The most important thing that stands out? Focusing on the palms and heels of the hands during movements involving polarity." ~ DENISE B.

"In moving from the center and opening the *tan t'ien*, I feel I have more material to practice and work with. Thank you for expanding my curiosity of and passion for TCC." ~ SARA T.

"In Anchor Taffy I never paid attention to the placement of my feet in the forward part of the movement. I thought I'd stayed in the soles of my feet but had never given a second thought to my forward foot." ~ BONNIE S.

"Having worked in Salida, Colorado, without a teacher for three years before finding an awesome teacher in Loveland (Marie Dotts), I welcomed the opportunity to attend this Intensive. What an amazing experience. Learning how to embody Justin's principles (especially flowing from center) so enhanced and softened my practice. It took me out of my head and moved me into my body. This would not have been possible without personal instruction. With much gratitude." ~ JOANIE M.

"I am leaving feeling very full, with lots of information and new insights into each movement which I hope to incorporate before the June accreditation. I now have more tools to better prepare for it. I'm grateful for Sandy and Marie for making it happen." ~ JULIE A.

"I now feel more confident about the June accreditation. The Intensive helped me focus on areas where I needed work. It has been a joy getting to know other trainees." ~ DORIANE T.

"Be patient. Allow the leg to stiffen. Knees go forward, not just bending. Fingertips lift. Glide, glide, glide, arrive. Let the *tan t'ien* draw the hands. Complete the circle. Break the connection. Brief tension of wrists and release. Scoop the energy. Elixir field." ~ HOLLY T.

"I learned how to improve my movements and found better ways to improve the movements. Bonding with others here has been a moving experience." ~ BRENDA F.

## TCC Teacher Training in Albuquerque, November 2015

By JOYCE VEERKAMP AND MARY WHITE, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

**T**welve T'ai Chi Chih practitioners came together to undergo the transformation of becoming teachers. Led by Daniel Pienciak the weeklong process was challenging and rewarding. Monday started with high hopes, some anticipation and a little nervousness. As the week progressed candidates activated, circulated and balanced the Chi. By Saturday all were certified TCC teachers. Look at those smiles in the photo. We congratulate these individuals, who now can teach others the joy of TCC. Share the Chi.



Front row: John Daugherty, Holly Ueda, Michael Marx, Winter Flack. Second row: Winston Deane, Marc Kwaman, Leya Cragin, David McMurray. Third row: Mario di Gesu, Christine Moore, Elaine Wagner, Sharon Clark. Back row: trainer Daniel Pienciak and co-hosts Mary White and Joyce Veerkamp

## TCC Intensive in Philadelphia, October 2015

COMPILED BY APRIL LEFFLER, PROSPECT PARK, PENNSYLVANIA

### **"Grey Ghost" by Fran Alexander**

On this day, I lay in my hammock, watching the sky shape-shifting.  
Solid grey transforms. Charcoal ghosts wisp over blue reflection.  
Some sunglow breaks through...  
Borrowed light, adhering to round white clusters  
Which break apart and disappear.  
I seem to be moving with each moment,  
Drifting, changing shape like this sky,  
New form, new light, becoming something else.  
I too, a grey ghost,  
Arising, passing away.

~ ~ ~

### **From Bruce Lee**

When I was first asked about the Intensive, the only phrase that

came to mind was magical experience. The experience began as soon as we gathered in the meeting/practice room and introduced ourselves. We all instantly bonded and the group Chi was palpable.

This soon blossomed into what I can only describe as a magical experience, provided by Sandy McAlister (guide and amazing teacher trainer) and April Leffler (host and awesome teacher). What was my most valuable take-away? Movements were explained and practiced analytically, but also synergistically, furthering the cultivation of a sense of correctness.

**It was as though the curtain was pulled back**, revealing a peek into the nature, purpose and essence of each move and movement – within the context of fundamental principles (polarity, continuity and softness). I am now much more aware of the elements and their connectedness. And as a result my practice has a better flow and smoothness – greater joy!

It's been a week since the Intensive felt like a Wizard of Oz experience. And I am sticking with my one-word, effusive synopsis: magical. Thanks to everyone at the Intensive and to my wonderful teacher, Nancy Daniels, for recommending it to me.

## The Lighter Side

COMPILED BY SHARON SIRKIS, COLUMBIA, MARYLAND

**I** always arrive early before conducting a T'ai Chi Chih workshop to make sure "I'm good to go." I was especially glad in March since the room was set up incorrectly. I also noticed the sign outside the door read (in big letters): "Welcome, T'ai Chi Chai." I laughed out loud – and then changed it.

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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](http://www.taichichih.org/events)

### DATE / WHAT & WHERE / CONTACT

**May 4-7 | TCC Retreat w/Pam** | Prescott, AZ | Dana Diller | 928-848-0824  
**May 7-9 | Introduction to Seijaku Retreat w/Pam** | Prescott, AZ | Dana Diller | 928-848-0824  
**May 13-15 | TCC Teachers Retreat w/ Dan** | Jersey Shore, NJ | Sioban Hutchinson | 609-752-1048  
**May 27-29 | Seijaku Accreditation w/Pam** | Mendham, NJ | Bill Moore | 862-668-5753  
**May 29-Jun 4 | TCC Accreditation w/TBA** | Aston, PA | April Leffler | 610-532-6753  
**June 19-25 | TCC Accreditation w/ Dan** | Littleton, CO | Marie Dotts | 970-412-9955  
**Aug 11-14 | Teacher Conference** | Seattle, WA | Charlotte Livingston | 770-633-1927  
**Aug 14-16 | Seijaku Basic Course** | Seattle, WA | Daniel Pienciak | 732-988-5573  
**Aug 14-16 | Seijaku Accreditation** | Seattle, WA | Daniel Pienciak | 732-988-5573  
**Sep 16-18 | Seijaku/Meditation Retreat w/ Dan** | Jersey Shore, NJ | Sioban Hutchinson | 609-752-1048  
**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

### - MORE WORKSHOPS & RETREATS -

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

**May 14 | TCC Workshop w/ Sharon Sirkis** | Marriottsville, MD | Sharon Sirkis | 410-730-1986  
**May 22 | Seijaku Workshop w/ Ann Rutherford** | Saratoga, CA | Darlene Karasik | 408-867-3567  
**Jun 11 | TCC Workshop w/ Sharon Sirkis** | Marriottsville, MD | Sharon Sirkis | 410-730-1986  
**Aug 6 | 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

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### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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### TEACHER ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

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

Date you were accredited as a Seijaku teacher \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name of "second signature" \_\_\_\_\_

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