

The Vital Force

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for teachers & students

February 2017

Justin Stone: In His Words

The Best Reason To Practice

December 1992, ©The Vital Force

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

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

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

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

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

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

At right: Practicing T'ai Chi Chih on the 100th anniversary of Justin Stone's birthday.

Justin on Gratitude:

“Isn't it wonderful to know we can accumulate, circulate and balance this great force that literally makes us what we are.”



Annual Board Meeting Report

The *Vital Force* Board meets annually to monitor and provide direction for the fiscal health of *The Vital Force*, a non-profit 501c3. We also review the prior year's activities and set priorities and intentions for the forthcoming year.

We are pleased to report that membership levels remained consistent from issue-to-issue (and even increased by a few percentage points). Your current tax deductible membership fee *exactly* covers editing, designing, printing and mailing the journal. *All other activities that The Vital Force engages in are entirely supported by donations.*

What else does The Vital Force do? We:

- create and maintain the community's website (taichichih.org), which includes posting events and conference materials for the benefit of all;
- maintain the enormous database so students may find teachers;

- at the community's urging, updated the database by contacting (multiple times) each of the 2500+ teachers in the database.

- maintain the social media platforms of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, Flickr and a website blog – so that people around the world may find and connect with other practitioners.

Donations

Without them, we will be unable to continue the above endeavors. *The Vital Force* is committed to support these community outreach activities during 2017. But this is not sustainable if the current trend continues.

Membership Fee Increase

As a result, the Board voted to increase the annual fee to \$50. This will cover some of the above activities. We have begun a free monthly e-newsletter with *Vital Force* excerpts (to practitioners who've requested it) as a way to test

growing the community.

Big Thanks

Huge gratitude to benefactors who have allowed *The Vital Force* to maintain its outreach. If you wish to participate in the community-building outlined above, you may donate on www.taichichih.org, or by calling or writing using the contact information for *The Vital Force* on page 24. Mary and I agree that it is an honor and privilege to serve in this capacity.

**The board consists of Lisa Otero, Guy Kent and Dora Wiemann.*

~WITH GRATITUDE. KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

“ In any action the body should be light and alert, coordinated like strung pearls.

- Justin Stone

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The Vital Force

~ Web Site Updates ~

The on-line database (for www.taichichih.org) will be updated within a week of the following deadlines: January 15, March 1, April 15, June 1, July 15, September 1, October 15, & December 1.

~ Submission Deadlines ~

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

~ Submission Guidelines ~

Please send articles as Word documents, electronically, to tcc@kimgrant.com. A 1/4 page in this newsletter runs about 200 words; a 1/2 page is 400 words. We are always in need of photos and artwork. Please send high resolution jpgs, which the Editor will crop and edit. If you have 10-12 pieces of related artwork – calligraphy, drawings, photographs, or something that will reproduce well in B/W – please submit them for consideration in an entire issue. The Vital Force reserves the right to edit submission for length and clarity.

~ Giving ~

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

- Bequeath assets to The Vital Force in their estate planning
- Gift stocks to maximize their tax-efficient, year-end contributions
- Contribute monthly (aka our "sustaining members")
- Give through their employer's matching programs, thereby doubling their contributions
- Donate by credit card via www.taichichih.org
- Donate by check to: The Vital Force, PO Box 92674, Albuquerque, NM 87199
- Identify The Vital Force as their non-profit charity-of-choice when shopping at smile.amazon.com

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TCC For Meditators

By Linda Robinson, Seattle, Washington

For the last three years I have enjoyed doing T'ai Chi Chih with a Buddhist meditation community, have taught classes at a neighborhood church and then invited longer-term practitioners to my house for a group practice, followed by a 20-minute silent meditation. The results of which have been deep and rewarding.

Meditators bring a deep understanding that out of stillness and silence we can touch the spiritual. Even though I continue to offer some reminders and corrections during the practice, we basically move together following the energetic rhythm of the routine. We deepen our silence as we sink into each shift, "allowing the *Chi* to do the work."

After TCC, we slide onto chairs or the couch, feet on the floor, allowing the energy to continue to settle into our bones, our *tan t'ien*, and to root into the soles of our feet. **Although seated and still, the rhythm from shifting my weight during TCC continues to inform my breath, which gets slower and more relaxed.** My mind no longer seeks distractive thoughts. It seems as though TCC allows more direct access to the present and spiritual connection we seek in sitting meditation. When the bell rings, our eyes open to a brighter world, a more centered way of being and an intimate connection to ourselves and each other.

Below are comments by fellow participants:

"The weekly group sessions at Linda's home and my daily practice work together as a mainstay, a calm point of my day." – KAREN DERESZYNSKI

"I experience TCC as meditation. Its flowing, rhythmic movements cultivate a centered, peaceful and calm mind." – LLOYD McREYNOLDS

"The TCC sessions are a wonderful source of community and spiritual practice." – SHELLEY MINDEN



"There is no better way to prepare for the week ahead than our Monday morning meetings. Our *Chi* flows, increased by the presence of each other. Our minds are peaceful and full of gratitude after completing the meditation. We are revitalized and energized to better face the world."

– ALI BAKER

"I joined a *Kalyana Mitta* group that did TCC in order to deepen my practice. (*Kalyana mitta* means 'spiritual friend' in Pali.) TCC movements are a meditation in and of themselves and as we move together, I become focused and connected in spirit to those with whom I move. When we settle into meditation, my "monkey mind" is

already quieted; the *Chi* we have moved is grounding and unmistakable. These past few years of TCC practice have carried me through some of the most difficult periods of my life, moving my 'stuck' places in the wordless communion of intention and movement." – BARBARA PETERSON

"My meditation and TCC practice complement each other. In both, I maintain a relaxed and focused awareness. In meditation the focus is on my breath; in TCC it's on my feet or *tan t'ien*. When I lose focus due to wandering thoughts, I gently bring my awareness back to the present moment. In both practices, gratitude naturally arises and a deep bow ends each session, a bow to my teachers, *sangha* and TCC practice group."

– JEAN KASOTA

Why Stillness?

By Susan Kenney, Carmichael, California

T'ai Chi Chih is a meditative practice that alternates between movement and stillness. When learning the practice, one is usually focused on moving. We direct our attention to becoming familiar with each of the 19 movements and one pose. At first, the periods of stillness are filled with efforts to remember the movement's order and details.

As we become more familiar with the practice, the time spent in stillness serves to help us feel the presence of *Chi* within the body and to integrate that *Chi* more fully. For me, stillness requires more focused discipline because I am more comfortable with movement than with stillness. The active person inside me has dismissed stillness as a waste of time.

As I intentionally increase the time spent in stillness, I recognize its necessity and learn that it is just as essential as the movements. Stillness invites me to connect with my body and its energy. **Often, my sense of connection widens and deepens** to include all of creation: past, present and future.

In a circle practice, the periods of stillness invite me to let in the *Chi* of the others in the circle. I sense each of us is more exposed and more vulnerable during the stillness. This exposure creates deep bonds among us. With each practice, I slowly increase my willingness to integrate periods of stillness into my daily activities. I then naturally and intuitively fall into stillness each day.

10 Reasons To Attend Our Annual Teacher Conference June 15 - 18, in Boulder, Colorado

#1: The conference is one of **Justin Stone's legacies** to us. Justin always said that people who practiced T'ai Chi Chih were the nicest people he knew. Come experience and contribute to the regeneration and reverberation of that energy.

#2: By attending, we honor Justin's vision of a **dynamic, expansive and inclusive worldwide community of teachers**. It's an opportunity to meet and practice with your teacher Facebook friends, face to face.

#3: This year's theme is "**Feel the Chi - Share the Chi.**" The *Feel the Chi* portion of the program provides a lot of opportunities to refine your practice. How we move affects how we *Share the Chi* (i.e. teach the movements). This will be a unique opportunity to go deeply into your own practice.

#4: The conference was originally created so that as TCC grew and spread from where Justin was located, teachers could meet and reconnect with him and each other. Though Justin is no longer with us, the conference provides a priceless opportunity to hear first-hand accounts of **what it was like to practice with Justin**. His teaching lives through us.

#5: After the conference, you may learn or **become accredited to teach Seijaku**.

#6: **IT'S IN BEAUTIFUL BOULDER, COLORADO**. The location, near Rocky Mountain National Park, makes for a lovely summer vacation. Loads of trip-planning information is on taichichih.org.

#7: **If you are an experienced teacher**, there are rich and rewarding opportunities to mentor and support newer teachers.

#8: **If you are a new teacher**, your enthusiasm will be embraced by teachers with experienced in building local communities.

#9: **If you are accredited but not currently teaching**, conference can jumpstart your commitment to share TCC. It will also celebrate diverse ways we *Share the Chi* beyond teaching.

#10: Where else can you meet and practice with a large group that has committed their time and energy to sharing TCC? Justin Stone, the originator of TCC, looked forward to the conference every year. Find complete conference registration information at taichichih.org/conference-2017.

Register!

Find complete conference registration information, including the list of those who have registered, at taichichih.org/conference-2017.



Feel the Chi ~ Share the Chi

By Lisa M. Otero, Port Hueneme, California
On behalf of the Conference Program Committee

This year our annual teacher conference focuses on deepening our personal practice and exploring ways to share the Chi with others through teaching T'ai Chi Chih, spreading the word about the benefits of our practice, and in volunteering service to our community.

Our vision is clear and the program specifics are still evolving. **On the first full day** we will have opportunities for self-exploration as we *Feel the Chi*. Are we experiencing the full potential of our own practice? Have we fallen into habits that restrict the flow of the *Chi*? Are we ourselves experiencing the benefits and energy flow we encourage our students to feel? Experienced teachers will guide us in a number of sessions that explore our capacity to dive deeper into the essence of the form, to relax and let go, and to stay grounded so as to be guided by the *Chi* in all aspects of our lives.

Our capacity for self-study and exploration will continue to inform our activities **on the second full day** as we focus on ways to *Share the Chi*. We will look at current contributions to spreading TCC, whether through teaching classes or serving our community. Teaching is certainly important and we will have opportunities to exchange teaching techniques and ideas regarding innovative ways to structure our classes. We will also consider how we meet the needs of the variety of people drawn to TCC, whether they wish to improve their health and well-being or to find a catalyst for spiritual growth.

We'll have a **playful get-to-know-you session** on the first evening and opportunities on the second evening for **storytelling, sharing our talents and letting loose**. There will be ample time for casual discussions over meals and after-hours socializing in the lovely environment of the Millenium Harvest House Hotel. Participating in **our annual rededication ceremony** will rekindle your connection to your practice and to our community. You'll be able to spend time with Guide Sandy McAlister and our Teacher Trainers, Pam Towne and Dan Pienciak. You'll meet teachers who volunteer their time to run our community support services. And, of course, as always, there will be the joy of being surrounded by people with a uncommon passion and common wish to share the benefits so generously bestowed on us through TCC.

Wanna know who's coming? Check out the list of registrants at taichichih.org/conference-2017. If you don't see a friend on that list, please call them and share that you are attending. Your call may be just the invitation they were waiting for. See you in Boulder!

The Gift Of Yinning & Yanging

By Ava Wilensky, Atlanta, Georgia

After a wonderful, 10-day hiking trip at the end of August, I found myself in excruciating pain – unable to walk, sit, stand or lie down. Drugs were not helpful. Physical therapy only took the initial edge off. My yoga therapist (I have practiced restorative yoga for about eight years and meditation for about 30) made a difference, as did my chiropractor. But these were only incremental shifts. My talented team of health practitioners cautioned that the road to recovery was going to be slow.

During the first weeks of this, I did not sleep more than an hour or two at a time, constantly waking in pain. About ten days in, I saw a “T’ai Chi” teacher with Regis Philbin on television. I listened to stories about people who regained their strength and became pain free through this practice. As a student of T’ai Chi Chih for about six months, I realized that I already knew a similar practice. I slowly got out of bed and started just “*yinning* and *yanging*,” shifting the weight forward and back.

No hand movements, just back and forth three times on each side. **I could barely move but I persisted.** During the next few weeks I continued *yinning* and *yanging* multiple times per day. I went from three to six to nine on each side and eventually to four sets of nine. I was still unable to do hand movements, but began to feel hopeful that I might eventually be mobile. Then the oddest thing happened: while sleeping, I dreamt I was doing TCC. It was surreal, yet very reassuring: the universe was doing TCC for me.

In early October, during a private TCC lesson, I received two significant additions to my practice: a CD by Justin and a shortened version of the *Nei Kung* meditative prayer to recite when going to sleep. I continued *yinning* and *yanging* and adding bit by bit to my practice. Three weeks later I did my first full TCC practice.

I am truly grateful to study TCC with Sheryl Adair. I believe that my TCC practice helped me recover more quickly than would otherwise have been possible. TCC helped me move back into my body and to feel balanced and calm. Even more basic – just simply *yinning* and *yanging* – was transformative on every level and something that I continue to do daily.



Fast Track, The Cherry On Top

By Sheryl Adair, Atlanta, Georgia

Seijaku did not come easily, but I have always enjoyed and found it easy to do Fast Track with it. At the recent Albuquerque accreditation, Pam shed light on the subject when she gave us the opportunity to experience Seijaku practice in different ways:

- All Seijaku
- Seijaku and T’ai Chi Chih
- T’ai Chi Chih, Seijaku and T’ai Chi Chih
- T’ai Chi Chih, Seijaku and Fast Track

It became clear that Justin’s extra gift, the cherry on top of the cake, was Fast Track. **It ensures that I totally let go without thinking about letting go.** Fast Track puts me firmly in my feet (there’s no choice) and adds the joy to what has felt like a serious and somewhat intense practice. Three T’ai Chi Chih, three Seijaku, three Fast Track. Thank you, Justin, for gifting us so much. How fitting that I finally became accredited to teach Seijaku on your 100th birthday and was able to fully taste that cherry on top and understand how it all fits together.

Quick
Stepping
Light jumping
Letting all go
Try not to
Giggle
Ha!

Seijaku

By Caroline Guilott, Lake Charles, Louisiana

Fast Track freed my Seijaku practice more than anything else. It helped completely release the moving through resistance – while keeping me totally rooted in the soles of my feet as I hopped. The impossibility of thinking during Fast Track brings the movements to their essence. It allows the energy to go directly in the soles of the feet. The mental emphasis* that happens during Seijaku is released.

I do not mind going through resistance any longer. Fast Track really liberates the movements; it frees you mentally and physically. It allows the softness and solidity of the practice to merge. As it brings out lightness and joy, you also feel solid and grounded.

*P.S. I know there no emphasis in Seijaku but we cannot not think of going through the resistance. So that is what I call the mental emphasis, one that is very physical.

Start Fresh

By Sandy McAlister, Hayward, California

What is your first thought each day as you wake up? Do you wonder what day of the week it is? Are you thinking that the moment you move, your animals are going to pounce or demand your attention? Do you listen to hear what the weather is doing outside? Do you wonder what time is it, or consider what is the first thing you are going to do when you get out of bed?

Sometimes we have the luxury of lying in bed for a while organizing our thoughts and plans for the day. We may even have a ritual to set the tone for the day – some positive affirmation or prayer. On the days that we rush to get out the door for an appointment or job, it is easy to forget something or to feel unsettled. When we rise and meander aimlessly through our morning, we later tend to feel we have not accomplished what we could have that day. In both cases, we may not have taken the time to mentally prepare for the day ahead. We may have been acting out of habit or not really focusing on the moment at hand, not thinking ahead or not thinking at all.

Before we begin our T'ai Chi Chih practice what do we do to prepare? Usually we set the stage by setting aside a certain amount of uninterrupted time. We find a place that is as quiet as possible and we may use music.



T'ai Chi Chih
Boulder Colorado 2017

But what do we do to prepare our mind and body? I'm sure many practitioners have their own rituals. For me it's to stand still for a few minutes with eyes closed or lowered and become aware of my body in its immediate space. I feel a letting go of muscles and an awareness of my breath. I feel the weight of my body settling downward into my feet and the weight of my feet settling into the ground. If I am in a building I imagine the earth below and sense that I am rooted in the soil. I bring my attention to the present moment in time, aware of being, and moving my awareness outward with a radiating sense that we are all connected, that I am part of a web of humanity. Being inwardly focused, deeply rooted, and feeling an overall sense of spaciousness, I am ready to begin moving.

As I move through the practice it may be hard to maintain my focus. My mind skitters here and there. In awareness, I bring it back to feeling rather than thinking. I notice that if I have taken time preparing before starting I am better able to maintain my focus during.



Gratefully I have a chance to start fresh again with each set of repetitions and with each new movement, just like starting a new day. The stillness between movements is a lovely opportunity to start fresh again. I can refocus, take a deep breath, and with the exhalation my whole body sinks internally. Muscles let go and the mind settles and my attention is brought down.

I can let go of any self-criticisms over whether I am having a "good" practice (i.e., I could be softer, was that circle really round, I'm not moving smoothly, etc.) That is all past and I can let it go, continuing to the next movement with renewed focus. With each new movement I can start fresh. Even saying the word *fresh* has an uplifting feel to it – a feel of openness, lightness and joy.

Begin to cultivate that feeling of a fresh start with each new movement, with each new set of repetitions. Let the feeling of *fresh* bubble up even as it brings you down to earth. It is much like the practice of TCC: it is energizing and calming at the same time. Who doesn't want a fresh start.

Awareness Of The Back Leg To Help Your Practice

By Daniel Pienciak, Howell, New Jersey

Moving with a loose waist is important in our T'ai Chi practice. Flexibility in the pelvic girdle allows a strong flow of *Chi*. Justin Stone repeated that when we move, one leg bends while the other straightens. (He used the word stiffens but he did not mean tensing the leg.)

In ongoing classes and in helping student candidates to become teachers, I have found that this bending and straightening principle can often be taken for granted, not being executed correctly, causing difficulties in posture, complete weight shift or even physical discomfort. **I have two suggestions to possibly help with this**, and perhaps make a big difference in your practice.

First, feel how deeply you initially sink the weight into the supporting leg when preparing to place the other foot forward (or to the side). Just **how much** is your weighted leg bent at the knee? (Feel it.) As you move, does your back knee continue to bend that same amount, as it did initially, every time the weight comes back?

Second, feel the amount of bend in the front knee when your weight is forward, and then the amount of bend in the back knee when your weight is back. **Does the degree of bending feel equal?** Stubborn difficulties can arise when the back leg does not bend as much as the front leg, and this becomes a habit energy in the practice.

What can one do to correct the above situations, once discovered? Ask the knee to soften as the weight arrives fully on that leg. Allow the weight to sink down into the foot without tension in the leg or knee or ankle. Allowing the knee to soften/flex continuously, **from the very start of the backward weight shift**, will help a great deal.

If it feels like this means having to be too low every time the weight returns to the back leg, it could very well be that the front leg is too far forward (i.e., your stance is too large). Try gently dragging the front heel (with the weight off of it) back in a bit, and then try again.

Do I **know** how much I need to sink? Do I **know** how far out the front heel needs to be placed? Although a good teacher can help with this, we must discover it for ourselves.

Stop The Merry-Go-Round

By Pam Towne, Oceanside, California

Does it seem that life is speeding up? It certainly does to me. Does it really matter whether it's because the earth's electromagnetic field has risen from a frequency of 7.8 cycles per second (at which it has been vibrating for thousands of years) to 12 cycles per second currently, or because the rotation of the earth is slowing down so time appears to be speeding up, or because we are getting older, or...?

This apparent acceleration of time has an impact on humans on planet earth. Without an antidote it can lead to chronic stress, irritability, anxiety and a whole host of physical symptoms, especially chronic headaches, fatigue and a compromised immune system. Aren't you glad you know T'ai Chi Chih?

I'm reminded of playing on a steel merry-go-round as a kid. Running alongside it, I would push as hard and fast as I could, then jump on and hang on for dear life as the world swirled around me in a dizzying fashion.

I eventually learned that by crawling into the center of the merry-go-round, I could enjoy the 360-degree view from that still point without getting dizzy or my stomach turning somersaults.

In my everyday life today, TCC practice accomplishes the same thing. After moving like "slow motion as in a dream," everything slows down and I gain a new, more centered perspective on the daily happenings in life. The endless list of things to do loses its grip. I see what is most important to do and how to take care of myself while accomplishing it.

Those of us who practice TCC have been given a gift much needed in our world. Let's value it highly, practice it regularly and share it with others who can use an antidote to life's increasing pace.



Holding Fast & Letting Go: A Life In Contrast

By Sue Bitney, Richfield, Minnesota

On October 17, 2012, my husband was diagnosed with cancer. Our life shifted that moment and would never be the same. Five months later my husband of 40 years was dead, and I needed to find my way in an altered universe. In the beginning I held fast to what was. My gaze was backwards, to when I was one in a pair. Everything, even breathing, was hard. The first year was a struggle to survive. T'ai Chi Chih was a healing companion. My job and teaching TCC kept me from sliding into darkness.

“ what does
it mean to live
rather than
simply exist?

March 16 will be the fourth anniversary of my husband's death. I am not the person I was. I am still evolving. I no longer hold on to the past, when my husband and I were a pair. I have learned to let go and breathe into what will be. This past October I realized that I had survived the loss of my beloved but that I was not living a life. I existed, I made it through each day, but that was all I was doing. I needed to make a conscious effort to let go and begin to live.

What does it mean to live rather than simply exist? I am learning to make decisions to live a life. I still don't know what I want to be when I grow up but I am making deliberate choices about what I want (and do not want) in my life. I decided to retire after my birthday in March. It is terrifying to give up the assurances of a job for the uncertainties of retirement.

I read that **to be a trapeze artist you need to be willing to let go of the bar you are holding in order to advance to the next bar.** It is a leap of faith. But the trapeze artist does not do this blindly. The person has trained and practiced holding fast and letting go – what we do with each TCC practice. The same skill applies to each step of beginning a new life. Deciding what to hold fast and what to let go of ... all while shifting our weight to meet challenges we face as we move forward.

In this New Year may you find balance and healing that allows you to flow from the center and reach heights you only dreamt of reaching. *Namaste.*

Letting Go

By Mary Wichmann, Rochert, Minnesota

I attended a golf clinic recently, but was it a lesson about golf, T'ai Chi Chih or life? One pro said that everything about golf is circular. He suggested not striking the ball but simply lifting the club and letting it swing in a smooth rhythm, and playing the game with a soft right-hand grip and without any effort. Another pro, Jeff, said my stance looked like a question mark. He backed me up to the golf bag support and said to pretend that it's a wall and to lean back on my heels as though sitting down on a stool. We were reminded to keep the head steady, to breathe, relax and let go of any tension. Sound familiar? Jeff suggested each time we approach the ball that we unlearn or let go of something that's getting in our way. As we begin a new year I'd like to let go of a few things.

Dad, you did the best you could with limited finances, health issues, multiple children and at your young age. A lot of the drama was the fear of a young child. I didn't wish your death or cause it. Forgive me for not acknowledging all that you gave me: your chin, eyes, love for music, sense of fun, love of surprise, instilling my view of what's right, my moral standards and my love of God. And especially thank you for my brothers and sisters. I love you, Dad.

Mom, I made you a saint but you were just my mother. Thank you for providing so well for all of us especially after dad died. Thank you for giving me great hair, a warm smile, your large heart and even your varicose veins. And for encouraging my faith, appreciation for music, ability to cook, clean, organize and care for myself and others.

Great Uncle Dick, I apologize for holding you responsible for mom's death. I made you wrong for driving the car that night. You didn't kill her. That was just me trying to understand why you would get to live another fifty years after she died.

Glenn, I thought at one point in my life that I hated you, but I just hated the way you were being. I apologize for not trying harder to understand and help you. Thank you for giving birth to my best friends, including your oldest son whom I married.

And Mark, I love you but please know that if you changed everything about me, I'd be you.
“It ain't nothin' 'til I call it,” said 1953 Hall of Fame Umpire, Bill Klem. So I'm calling for 2017 to be extraordinary.

Palace Of Weariness: The Palms Of The Hands

By Tish Jaramillo, Port Hueneme, California

When we practice TCC we often feel tingling or heat in the palms of the hands. Have you ever wondered what the significance of that is?

The palms of the hands are considered to be, in *Qi Gong* practice, a mirror of the Bubbling Spring on the soles of the feet. The acupuncture points are located at the center of the palms. That means access to powerful *Qi* is optimal at these points. This is the Heart Protector or Pericardium meridian. In Chinese Medicine, these points serve as the transmitting points for all virtues of this channel: warmth, openness, safety and protection. These feelings of wellbeing are available to us directly through the stimulation of these points.

The Heart Protector channel begins between the breasts at heart-center, the same place where so many of our TCC movements begin for the hands. **(I don't believe it is a coincidence that Justin chose that spot for the hands to start.)** The meridian continues to descend, after connecting with the Pericardium, to the diaphragm and the abdomen, giving it considerable influence over the digestive tract as well as the heart and blood. Another branch runs horizontally to the lateral side of the nipple, arches over the armpit and down the center of the anterior arm, through the center of the palm and down the middle finger. Of the nine points on the Pericardium channel, the center of the palm has most access to the *Qi*.

Yes, it is the moving *Qi* and heat that you feel in the palms of your hands, but it is considerably more than that because *Qi* is intelligent and specific. In the Five Element tradition of Chinese medicine, Heart Protector 8 belongs to the Fire Element, and as such is able to summon a good deal of heat, or reduce heat in the body as needed. **Warmth for ourselves, as well as to share with others is available there.**

The name of this point is most often translated as "Palace of Weariness." That is in keeping with the hierarchy of the body's "Officials" or the organs and their respective energy channels. The Heart is considered the "Emperor" or the "Supreme Controller" and the other organs are the generals and ministers that serve to protect and aide the Heart Official. Therefore, the Heart Protector Official serves as the bodyguard, if you will, for the Heart. It is dedicated to taking all the insults and injuries it has to, to protect the Heart.

The stresses of modern life can place a heavy toll on the heart. It is the Heart Protector that selflessly takes on the burden for the Emperor. When we are traumatized or suffer a physical shock, when we over-indulge or eat harmful food or drugs, it is the Heart Protector that takes the hit. **But its true mission is to allow the Heart to stay open and receptive, full of eternal hope and joy.** It does what is needed with very little guidance. It can resurrect a heart



“ unearthing and restoring the memory of safety and joy buried in the depths of the self

that is unfulfilled and weary from loving, or calm and quiet an anxious heart. It can help to find the memory of our Heart's original desire or passion. It can unearth and restore the memory of safety and joy buried in the depths of the self.

On a physical level, this point clears heat (or stimulates it), reduces heat in the stomach or blood, treats insomnia or anxiety, stimulates the circulation, treats manic-depression, and reawakens the Heart's fire. As part of the Heart Protector meridian it is responsible for all the arterial and venous circulation, and it is also known as the Circulation/Sex Official because it regulates all the sexual secretions of the body. But since its protection extends to body, mind and spirit, it is easy to see that protection of the spirit of the Heart Official must be its most important task.

The Fire Element is all about connection, compassion and love. J.R. Worsley, the founder of Five Element Classical Acupuncture, has said, "The spirit of the love which comes from the Fire Element is our connection to the universal spirit in Nature, and no more important connection can exist in man and woman." The Heart Protector meridian is located in the center of the inner arm, from the Heart all the way to the tip of the finger. When we open our arms in a welcoming embrace, this channel opens as we receive another into our hearts and into our arms.

Seijaku - Wealth Beyond Measure

By Carmen L. Brocklehurst, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Many T'ai Chi Chih practitioners have been introduced to Seijaku, which Justin called Advanced TCC. The same movements we learned for TCC now take on a different emphasis and dimension in Seijaku. Instead of being on softness, as we learned in TCC, the emphasis is on strength first, then on softness. We also learn to use breath to lead us to the *tan t'ien*. This seems simple and it is, until we try to make it be so (which is not the best attitude). *Chi* does not respond well to being forced, yet that is what many new and older students try to do with Seijaku. As students begin to get the feel of the new form (this is an eternal form, so new Knowings are endless), a release in the body, mind and emotions begins to occur in a deeper, more expansive way. New ways of feeling and thinking begin to surface.

What follows are comments about the benefits and wealth received by Seijaku students in one of my beginner classes:

"I've been practicing at home and it's given me the inspiration to do it more." – SANDRA

"I feel more tingling all over the body; sometimes it feels itchy like healing, but scratching does not make it go away. It's a good feeling." – ROBERT

"I am able to stay more focused with this spiritual work. Really integrating it puts me in a more harmonized space of body, mind and spirit." – LINDA

"I can feel everyone else's *Chi*, and that helps me feel my own *Chi*." – SHARI

"I'm working on feeling the breath and letting go. Overall I feel a sense of balance." – RUDY

"I can feel the bubbling springs strongly. I have more awareness." – JUDY

"I can breathe into the *tan t'ien* without my lower back tightening up, as it did when I was misdirecting my breath into my back during the strong part of the movement." – BROCK

"I feel more focused after practice; it grounds me." – SUSAN

"There's a change of energy going on. When I do Seijaku, the floor appears wavy, but I feel grounded. I've been able to reduce my blood pressure medication by half and cut back on my diabetes medication also." – SIMON

"I learned to let go even if I'm not doing Seijaku." – MARY W.

"I feel more energy flow with much less effort." – DORA

"There is more awareness of the *Chi* filling and spilling over the *tan t'ien*." – JOYCE

"I feel encircled and embraced by the *Chi*." – JOHNNY

Teaching Seijaku has been more rewarding than I can say. If you have contemplated learning Seijaku or going deeper with your practice, this is the time to start. Perhaps there is a Seijaku teacher in your area who has been waiting for you to be ready. Perhaps now is the time to begin to get ready for the next Seijaku teacher training. It will teach you to love and share the *Chi*.



Dive Right In

By Donna Deffenbaugh, Prescott, Arizona

Try something new... Go for it... Dive right in. Turn the page on a brand new year to find 365 big, empty squares. Clean blank spaces. Some unruled. Some with faint gray lines to help keep things in order. Three hundred and sixty-five of them. Full use of all these days is not guaranteed, but imagine we have the privilege. Some employ a "one day at a time" process, allowing today's square to be filled by whatever moves the moment. Some take pen in hand very early on to note events, occasions, appointments, due dates and deadlines.

In the Caribbean Sea, a brown pelican has no calendar, iPhone or daily reminder app. It instinctively knows where to find what it needs and do what it must. **It needs a place to be at rest**, a colony to ensure the species will survive. It needs to plunge headlong into the azure sea to fish. It learns to adjust. Feeding grounds change. Storms knock out a favored roosting spot. Still, each day, the sturdy pelican dives right in. Some days we must carefully plot our next move, calculate the possible outcome and proceed ever so cautiously.

Sometimes to break an old habit, start a new practice, become healthier or more compassionate, sometimes we must not plot or plan or calculate. Sometimes, like that hungry pelican, we must simply dive right in.

Greetings From Northern California

By Julie Heryet, Placerville, California

At our 2016 teacher conference in Seattle, I shared about the class I teach at Folsom State Prison. I am still overwhelmed by the love and interest expressed by those in attendance. There was so much support, not only for the students at Folsom, but also for me, as I tried not to faint during my presentation. Thank you all for holding me up.

Being included in the conference last year through the presentation had an uplifting affect on my students at Folsom. As you can imagine, inmates (especially long-timers) often feel quite invisible. But the men at Folsom, through their membership in our large and loving community, have a sense of connection that reaches far beyond prison walls and the day-to-day challenges of confinement. Those who've been in the class awhile know that every time they practice, they are wrapped in a blanket of healing energy. It's often tangible – they can feel it – especially during the annual Circles of Light event.

During our first post-conference class at Folsom, I shared with my student, L.H., that one of the first questions I was asked after my presentation was, “Where can I get a copy of his poem?” I have often referred to L.H. as our class poet, because of the amazing things he says when we go around our circle and take turns welcoming new students to the class. But when he heard this, a surprised and wonderful smile lit up his eyes. His classroom nickname had been officially confirmed. **Here are his words, which I shared at conference:**

T'ai Chi Chih – it's like magic.
I don't know how coming together
with others of so many diverse backgrounds
and doing these simple movements
brings about so much positive change in our lives.
It just does. There is something about being in the moment.
Something about *now*. You are always okay, *now*.
You may be hungry, but right *now* you're okay.
There may have been a tragedy, but right now you're okay.
T'ai Chi Chih keeps you in the now.
First, you are fitting the moment of now into your life.
After a while, something very (there is no word) happens,
And you fit your life into the now,
And in this moment, everything is okay.

Observations expressed by other inmates included: “TCC is what keeps me sane in here” ... “Signing up for this class was the smartest decision I've made since my incarceration began 16 years ago” ... “TCC has helped me to be more open; I now talk about myself in class, when I never would have before” ... “During the course of the banquet we performed our TCC form at the same time as other free world TCC communities. Man was the *Chi* really flowing.”

There've been many changes in the class at Folsom since last summer. The prison has gone from a Level Two to Level Three facility (on a scale of 1-4) with an entire, five-tier building of Level Two inmates being transferred to make room for Level Three transferees. We have lost five classmates (sometimes without the chance to say goodbye) and miss them terribly. New students are pouring in, however, and we are currently filled to capacity.

Should you decide to teach TCC in a correctional facility, I am available for support, as are other instructors who have experience teaching in jail or prison. You need only ask.

In early April the Folsom class will celebrate its fifth annual banquet and retreat, and our third annual (co-occurring) Circles of Light event. Your participation and donations are always appreciated. I am so grateful to Justin for TCC, for you, and for the special group of men at Folsom Prison.



Justin Stone Speaks

By Justin F. Stone

... What is this *Chi* that seems to be the most important and best kept secret of life? Nobody has described it better than the Chinese sage Lao-Tzu, who 2500 years ago said, "There is a thing confusedly formed, worn before heaven and earth. Silent and void it stands alone and does not change. Goes round and round and does not weary. It is capable of being the Mother of the world. I know not its name so I call it 'the way'." **Could there be a better description of this cosmic force?** This however is not a definition.

Those who are theologically inclined might equate *Chi* with divinity. And scientists will see it in electricity and other forces. When this *Chi* circulates in us we live. And when through imbalance it totally ceases to circulate we are dead. So, isn't it wonderful to know we can accumulate, circulate and balance this great force, that literally makes us what we are.

My great friend Professor Wen-shan Huang used to refer to *Chi a Priori* and *Chi a Posteriori*. That is the Vital Force with which we are born and the *Chi* that we accumulate and develop as we live. Your face before you were born in Zen terms.

So closely is this *Chi* identified with breath, though it is not the same, that the Chinese use an identical term for the two of them. **And how basic is the power of this *Chi*, which T'ai Chi Chih teaches us how to use?** The great sage from India, Sri Aurobindo who lived in this century, made the amazing assertion that if this world were to be abolished, the *Chi* would be capable of building a new world in its place. We are the product of *Chi*.

Habit plays a great part in how we condition the *Chi*, and every thought and every emotion have their effects on it. This is what is meant by the reciprocal character of mind and *Chi*. The heart mind is influenced by the *Chi* and the *Chi* is influenced by what we think and feel, that is the workings of the mind. The reciprocal character of mind and *Chi* means that a certain type of mind or mental activity is invariably accompanied by a *Chi* of corresponding character.

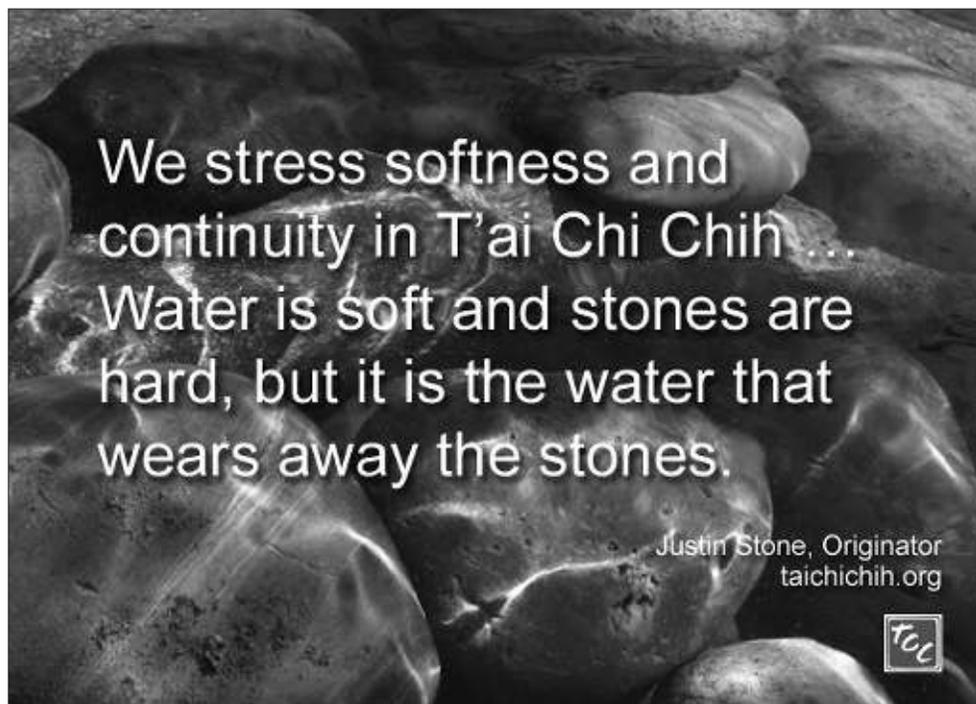
For instance, a particular mood, feeling or thought is always accompanied by a *Chi* of corresponding character and rhythm, which is reflected in the phenomenon of breathing. Anger produces not only inflamed thoughts and feelings but also a harsh and accentuated roughness of breathing. On the other hand, when there is calm concentration on an intellectual problem, the thought and breathing exhibit a like calmness. When the concentration is deep, unconsciously the breath is held.

When we meet someone for the first time, we sense the state of his or her *Chi*, and **we say the vibes are "good" or "bad."** Once we are within the aura of that particular stranger, the aura simply being the manifestation of the state of *Chi*, we are influenced by that *Chi*. And our first impressions are usually right. There is so much to be said on this idea of the reciprocal character of mind and *Chi* that we could go on and on, but I think you get the idea by now.

“ the Chinese say,
You cannot
appease the hunger
by reading a menu

In truth it is not necessary for you to know all this, [but] simply to practice T'ai Chi Chih and feel the results. [But] it is necessary to practice. The Chinese say, "You cannot appease the hunger by reading a menu." In other words, do the finger exercises and soon you will be playing Mozart on the piano or words to that effect.

T'ai Chi Chih has spread so rapidly that it is not always possible to say that something hasn't been done as yet. However I do believe athletes have yet to come to realize how cultivation of the *Chi* can help in bettering their performance. The young man who lost 75 lbs. in 4-1/2 months could not swim one lap in the Olympic-sized university pool before he took T'ai Chi Chih. After 4-1/2 months of regular practice he was doing 20 laps in the early morning before playing racquet ball or several sets of tennis.



When I eventually get the chance to work with athletes, whether it be weight lifters who want to take advantage of this new type of strength, or runners who cannot improve their time in a distance race, I will place them on what I call a maximum *Chi* program. T'ai Chi Chih will be the base and they will be taught how to mentally take the *Chi* through the meridian channels of the body. They will learn how to rub the backs of the thumbs together preliminary to certain forms of massage, and they will be asked to practice the *Nei Kung* taught in my book *Meditation for Healing* before they go to bed at night, while lying flat on their back with their eyes closed. It is my confident belief that the results will be amazing. Also older athletes who have not lost their skills, but continually get muscle pulls, *et cetera*, should be able to prolong their careers by staying in shape.

These athletes will learn how a group of martial art experts in Japan, with their knowledge of *Chi*, quickly demolished a building in Tokyo using only their bare hands rather than the old fashion swinging iron balls, *et cetera*. Many of you listening have seen Karate experts break through thick boards with one slash of the hands, uttering a shout, "Ahh," to bring the *Chi* from where it is stored below the navel. No ordinary strength could perform this feat. And the hands would crack up if it was possible.

Rather **it is the power of accumulated *Chi* that enables adapts to perform such feats.** Though great strength is involved it is paradoxical that T'ai Chi Chih must be done softly and without effort. Teachers continually harp on softness and continuity. If there's tension the *Chi* will not flow freely through the meridian channels, which will contract. So, there must be an effortless effort. If one imagines he is swimming through very heavy air, or that he is moving slow motion in a dream, he or she will get the idea. It is actually more important to know how to move than to know what moves to make.

In the 13th Century the great T'ai Chi Ch'uan Master Chang San-Feng described the way to move by saying, "In any action the body should be light and alert. Coordinated like strung pearls. The *Chi*, vital energy, should be actively excited but the *Shen* spirit must remain calm internally." **From this we learn that all T'ai Chi is essentially spiritual in nature.** Meaning it is in accord with reality. This should give you something challenging to think about.

If it seems to you that I am enthusiastic about this subject you are right. I know that this practice has done much for me. And I have heard countless times what it has done for others. I am grateful to have been the channel through which it came into the world. If you can understand that **everything physical is crystallization of the spiritual state**, then it will be easy to comprehend the beautiful passage from the Lotus Sutra that says;

*From the state of emptiness,
each man's body is a body pervading the universe.
His voice is a voice filling the universe.
His life is a life which is without limit.*

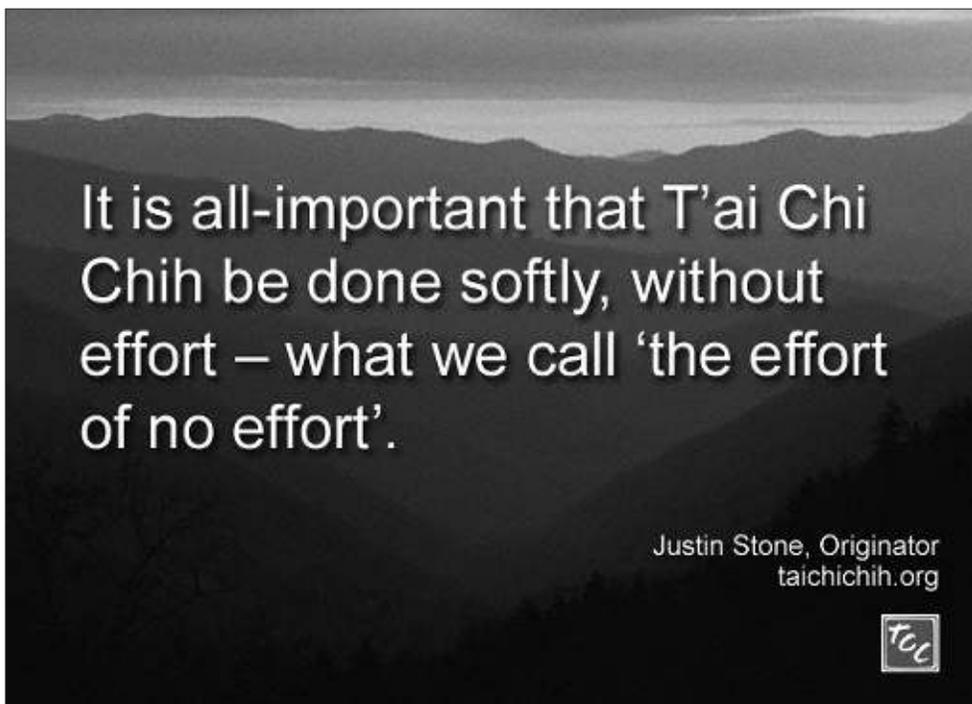
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[Justin takes a question from the audience:] "Do the emotions condition the Chi? ... Aren't they the normal emotions?" she asks.

Justin: The great Chinese Zen Master Yuan Man answers this question for us. He says, "The universe is so expansive, why does the sound of a bell range over only seven notes?" He was saying that basically **there are only seven emotions by which we are swayed; pleasure, anger, sorrow, joy, love, hate and desire.** We might want to add hope, which can sometimes be very devastating when it keeps us from living in the present. As Alice in Wonderland remarked, "Always jam tomorrow, never jam today." Doesn't this sound familiar? Hope is close to desire of course and this is a desire world. That most important characteristic, greed, the maker of war and tyranny, is also closely aligned to desire.

If I can add one personal observation, it is not the emotions that make us unhappy, but the resentment and clinging that they tend to breed.

From **Justin Stone Speaks on T'ai Chi Chih**, a transcription of a taped lecture, excerpted and reprinted with permission from Good Karma Publishing.



# Renewal & New Opportunities

By Jim Shorr, Wilsonville & Lake Oswego, Oregon

**Renewal and rejuvenation are in the air.** Moving my primary T'ai Chi Chih class to the New Thought Center for Spiritual Living in Lake Oswego, Oregon, has created new energy for the group to participate weekly, just before their Wednesday evening services. And it motivates me to improve. Part of my mission this year is to train one or two participants to become accredited instructors and encourage their development and motivation. The community's future needs to be alert for folks who move well, are dedicated and exhibit a flow, attention to details, proper weight shifting and motivation to upgrade their skills.

Says Sandy L: "We rarely miss Jim's sessions and daily practice with Justin Stone as he moves with intention on YouTube. Assisting Jim when he has professional obligations, we have become regulars in Joy with Movement. Dennis and I appreciate how in-home practice keeps us motivated."

Says Jason M: "We move in harmony and trust that TCC will provide serenity in the midst of activity in our practice room. The emphasis is on weight shifting, allowing the *yinning* and *yanging* of the legs to move the *Chi* smoothly. Lately, these practices have allowed me to let go of stuck energy. My favorite movement is Passing Clouds because it heightens my awareness and bids me to be in the present moment."

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## Teaching Pulling Taffy, Variation #3, Perpetual Motion

By Susan Roady-Ross, Seal Beach, California

**Justin said that the best way to teach** T'ai Chi Chih's Pulling Taffy Perpetual Motion is to demonstrate it rather than discuss it. That works for some learners, but most of my students need more concrete information to help them to feel comfortable doing the movement. I've realized that Pulling Taffy Perpetual Motion is *smaller than they think it is*. The step to the side is smaller, and the crossing and opening of the arms is smaller too. This is because the hand swings under to catch the turn of the *tan tien* before the weight-shift is complete. I tell my students to think small and feel a few things:

- Focus attention on the soles of the feet (duh). When you begin to feel the weight shift into the foot that is stepping out, notice that the palms will be crossing for a moment of polarity.
- As the waist turns and the weight flows into the other foot, the hands reverse their positions. The arms pull apart in time to the turning of the *tan tien*. The top hand floats across and sweeps under the opposite elbow as the waist finishes its turn. At the same time the bottom hand sweeps to the side and over the top arm.
- Once the weight has filled the opposite foot and the hands have reversed their positions, pull up the toe of the empty foot and touch the ground with the heel. That heel touch starts the weight shift to the opposite side.
- The phrase "pull, reverse, heel touch" as we move helps students remember the order of the movements. But it's the heel touch beginning the new weight shift that I feel is the key to the perpetual motion. Some students have referred to that as "stepping on the gas" to begin the next part of the movement.

I remind students to use a smaller step and keep the hands' pull smaller too. I lead them to notice that the elbows stay close to the body, acting as pivots for the arms to pull apart and circle over or under. The bottom hand comes across and sweeps up and over, and the other comes across and sweeps under, each making a half circle. They eventually recognize that their hands and arms are tracing the *yin* and *yang* of the Great T'ai Chi, and that makes them smile.



# With Open Hands

By Lisa Stroyan, Fort Collins, Colorado

**In a recent workshop**, another teacher pointed out that my hands should be open. I had thought they were, but when I looked down my fingers were indeed slightly curled, and when I began paying attention, I found that often they were this way. I could open them, but it took a little bit of effort, which of course we don't want. I was trying to find a "happy medium" a couple of weeks later in a gathering with my teacher, Marie. I commented that it felt as if I were holding my hands open using muscles. As soon as I relaxed them, they wanted to curl closed.

She experimented with a couple of movements, and then replied something like, "No, it's not effort for me, but **it takes a lot of presence in my hands to allow them to be open.**"

"I thought we stayed in our feet," I replied.

"Of course. We are always in our feet," she answered. "But there is awareness in the hands."

I pondered this. There seemed to be something key I was missing. I thought back to an appointment I had had with my physical therapist. I've struggled with nervous system issues for a while, so while it wasn't the main point of the visit, she had given me an exercise to deactivate the sympathetic nervous system (fight or flight) and activate the parasympathetic system (which restores the body to a state of calm and allows it to repair).

The exercise involved lying face up and splaying the hands open to the side, palms completely flat, and pointing my toes, while holding a thought or feeling of gratitude. She explained that we want to have the body (and mind) do the opposite of what it would do in fight or flight, such as flexing the feet to be ready to run, and holding gratitude to combat worry. When I did the exercise, at the beginning it was always difficult to remember to flatten my palms. I wondered if this could be related, so I did little online research. A fascinating article confirmed that contraction of muscles in the hands (among other places) is one of the effects of sympathetic nervous system activation. Aha. **That certainly explained why "trying" to open my hands was counterproductive.**



“ Once again,  
the practice  
was my teacher

During the worst of my illness, I had practiced letting go of nervous system activation, by not just relaxing my body, but by relaxing my thoughts. It was tricky, like trying not to think of white elephants. When I get busy, I fall back into habits of wanting to be ready for whatever is coming next, whether the transition in a movement or the next family crisis. Despite knowing not to “anticipate” in T'ai Chi Chih, despite knowing that worry about the future hurts my health and is counterproductive toward my goals, the habit creeps in. Letting go of this “readiness to action” feeling (a type of stress) was the key.

**I began to practice *allowing* my hands to open**, asking them to open, while mentally reminding myself that I was safe, surrounded by nonjudgmental people who have my back, and that I didn't have to be in any moment except the present one. When I managed to combine this letting go with sinking into my feet, and at the same time maintaining awareness in my hands, something interesting happened. Polarity that had been sporadic and flighty, strengthened and took on a more magnetic feel, and, look, my hands were solid, soft and open – all without effort. Magic.

The value of this learning was not only the enhancement of my practice, but that **it gave me a tool for recognizing and self-correcting through the day**. Once again, the practice was my teacher. The *Chi* was teaching me another level of how to let go – not in some abstract sense, but very concretely. It would say: almost... keep going... there! ... It feels like that. See? You can do this. Relax; I've got you.” Over and over I have gotten lessons about life from my TCC practice that I may not have identified or understood otherwise. One of those gifts is a way to joyfully practice letting go of tendrils of nervous system activation, which I notice through my curled hands.

# TCC When You Can't Move

By Kent Jarratt, Asbury Park, New Jersey

**I'm sitting still right now** and not moving a muscle. As a passenger on the North Jersey Coast Line, I'm moving at 50 mph as the train travels through miles of small shoreline towns, until the scenery becomes more urban and the train slides through the tunnel under the Hudson River to deposit its commuters at Manhattan's Penn Station. I have been on the train for two hours, and while still not moving my person, I've been moving steadily along.

**It reminds me of two occasions that I've done T'ai Chi Chih when I couldn't move.** Once I was in a car; another time, I was in a hospital.

I was sitting anxiously in a parking lot as part of a police sting. The local police had asked me to participate in order to retrieve my Apple laptop computer stolen from an unattended grocery cart. The story has many twists and turns, so I'll fast forward: I was to meet the thief (a teenager with a drug problem) at his chosen location, where he was going to reap the "reward" he needed for returning the stolen computer. I was raised as a policeman's son and, at age 65, this meeting felt more of a lark than anything else. Yet as the time approached, I realized that a lot could go wrong no matter how benign the situation seemed. My anxiety rose. And rose. My face felt hot and I knew I was turning red. My hands trembled. My breathing was fast. I figured the minute the kid saw me he'd know something was wrong, and then who knew what could happen. One of us was bound to do something foolish.

Earlier, when I'd asked the police if he was likely to be carrying a knife or worse, they laughed and said, "No, he is a knucklehead." Suddenly, this cavalier attitude seemed ominous. I thought I was going to have to ask the lead detective – sitting in one of three unmarked cars scattered around the parking lot – to call the whole thing off.

As I sat waiting, anxious and red in the face, I started going over TCC's 19 movements as a distraction. I'd recently started studying with Daniel Pienciak, and had been conscientiously memorizing the names of the movements. When I got to Six Healing Sounds, I found myself vocalizing the sounds as I sat in the car. An instant wave of calmness came over me. I repeated the sounds, again and again. When my cell phone rang and it was the kid saying he was on his way, I was perfectly calm. As it turned out we never had to meet face-to-face as the police arrested him as he walked with the computer under his arm through the parking lot. Then, almost as an afterthought, they signaled for me to meet them back at the police station.



The following week, Daniel and I talked about the possibilities of utilizing TCC when one can't actually move. I remembered preparing for a tennis match by closing my eyes and going over my strategies, picturing a perfect backhand, a perfect serve. A few months later, I did something similar with TCC, though in a far different setting.

I'd just been wheeled into my hospital room after a five-and-a-half-hour heart procedure, which involved working on my heart through a catheterization process to cauterize heart cells causing intense atrial fibrillation. I was still feeling the effects of the anesthesia, but wanted to get up and around as soon as possible. I was kind of swaddled in blankets as I was put into the bed and couldn't move my feet or arms. I could, however, say the Six Healing Sounds softly.

**Within minutes I was imagining the whole practice, visualizing each movement,** and eventually also making micro movements with my toes and fingers. I also emphasized the "Ho" (for heart) sound as I lay there, repeating it many times. When an orderly came into the room, I asked him to "unswaddle me" and help me stand. With the friendly orderly spotting me, I took slow laps around the corridor, surprising some nurses at their central station. What a confidence builder that was. I have no doubt that visualizing the movements and vocalizing Six Healing Sounds contributed to my rapid recovery.

*Follow-up:* The teenager attended an alternative-to-sentencing program, which I advocated. A year later his probation officer said he'd done very well and was about to graduate. I needed a second heart catheter ablation three months after the first one, and I envisioned a full TCC practice in the same way. I recovered even faster. The next morning I hailed a cab from the hospital to the train station. Then home, again, on the Jersey Coast line.

# Auditor Musings From An Accreditation

Fran Alexander, Manahawkin, New Jersey

**I am an accredited T'ai Chi Chih teacher** and audited the Pennsylvania training in June 2016. While observing the candidates and corrections they received, I realized that there are several subtle aspects of my own posture and movements that need some adjustment.

I am sticking out and lifting my chest and pulling down my shoulders instead of letting them drape. I am using too much effort in my pelvis and leaning back a little because I am bringing my arms back a tad too much. My steps are wide and deep, a little too extreme. In *yinning* and *yanging*, I am dipping deeper more on one side than the other. My hands are curling. These are all self-observations (except for the curling hands that Pam pointed out).

The subtle adjustments necessary for softness and continuity have been pointed out over time by Dan Pienciak, my teacher. They have gone from extreme to subtle, but they are still present, an opportunity for continuing adjustment. By simply being aware of these interferences, I noticed a smoother glide in my movement. **Adjustments are taking care of themselves.** The message? Relax, relax, relax. I'm beginning to transform from a more military stance, which is part of my conditioning, to moving more freely. My mind has also become quieter, as I let go of searching for reasons. My forward gaze has become softer, less extremely focused, as I settle into awareness. I'm reminded of a Chinese proverb, "*A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer. It sings because it has a song.*" I must learn to let my body sing.

# The Essence Of Chi & Friendships Are Timeless

BJ Amin, Truth or Consequences, New Mexico

**Ten years ago I attended an amazing T'ai Chi Chih retreat** in Albuquerque hosted by Antonia. Three beginners (plus our teacher Meara Joy) traveled from Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, to attend. To our great surprise and delight, Justin Stone paid us a visit during our retreat, and took time to meet and greet each of us. Pictures were taken.

It was a precious time to gain more in depth instruction. But even greater was an immediate essence of *Chi* that bonded a group of strangers into a lot of love, joy and laughter. One day at lunch, while getting to know a new friend, our conversation drifted to *The Wizard of Oz*, which I'd always seen in black and white until recently with my child. Suddenly the movie had a yellow brick road, and a horse of a different color. We both were laughing so boisterously that other retreatants turned to stare. Perhaps it was the joyful exuberance of *Chi* that comes from being among others devoted to TCC ... the magic that finds joy in the simplest, perhaps silliest, of times shared. *Chi* also helps open up our hearts to have compassion for one another.



Another woman and I walked between sessions. I had newly been diagnosed with diabetes so was very dutiful about walking. We became fast friends, me a beginner, she a teacher, sharing our hearts and laughter over marvelous walks under a brilliantly blue New Mexico sky. I was impressed she had come from Canada.

Life has a way of rapidly moving forward. It is suddenly 2016 and I am going through old pictures only to discover those I'd planned to mail to my new Canadian friend. They were photos of her with Justin Stone. I couldn't remember her name, but I needed to find her because she was photographed with Justin.

What are the chances of finding someone from somewhere in Canada when you live in the middle of nowhere in New Mexico and ten years have passed? I searched everywhere, including a lot of TCC Facebook groups and the TCC teacher's list for Canada. Who knew there were so many? I scoured dozens of pages and sites. One day for some unknown reason (perhaps *Chi* at work), I was drawn to one teacher's name and emailed her a photograph to see if she could help.

To my total amazement and joy, that very teacher was my long lost friend! And that is how I know the essence of *Chi* and friendships made along the way have no time limits. I am BJ from Truth or Consequences and she is Rita Beth from Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. How could any one forget the names of our towns?

## Student Sharing

By Adabelle Rychtarik,  
Simpsonville, South Carolina

**As I read from *The Vital Force* weekly**, my students listen to articles from people of all ages from all over the world who practice T'ai Chi Chih and describe the benefits they receive. This month I asked my students, some of whom have practiced for two years, to share the same.

"You class has proven to be a blessing. My original intent was to accompany my sister who suffers from Parkinson's. Her doctor recommended the class, and I tagged along. Now even if she misses a class, I still attend and look forward to it.

I was struggling at my new church because they stand and sing for about 15 minutes prior to the service. I would shift from one leg to the other and get achy from standing that long. One Sunday morning instead of shifting and rocking I thought about the TCC stance. Now on Sundays my heels are about an inch or two apart and my knees are slightly bent; I can stand easily for all the songs and not even think about being uncomfortable. I also recently painted a wall in my bedroom and getting up and down the ladder, which used to cause concern and concentration, became an easy climb."

– SANDRA JOHNSON, SIMPSONVILLE, SC

**"I began taking TCC because I have Parkinson's.** I would feel unstable with the back-and-forth and side-to-side movements, catching myself to regain equilibrium. Our instructor stressed the importance of doing what's right for you. That was welcomed advice since I couldn't always allow my heels or toes to lift. Little by little, that changed. My balance notably improved.

One characteristic of Parkinson's is muscle rigidity. Mine is not severe, but I have difficulty with movements that involve holding my arms at shoulder height (like Around the Platter and the pose). But I no longer have difficulty with those!

The benefits discovered far exceeded those related to Parkinson's, though. The soft fluidity provides a time of relaxation and beauty. While I focus on myself during practice, I sometimes glance around to see a beautiful, choreographed dance that exemplifies Joy through Movement."

– KATHY NEELY, SIMPSONVILLE, SC

## College Students' Experiences

By April Leffler, Prospect Park, Pennsylvania

*Editor's Note: These reflections about T'ai Chi Chih by April Leffler's college students are a continuation of others published in the November 2016 issue, where you will find the backstory.*

– **By NAV K.**

Week 8: Although I may not practice regularly, one of the greatest takeaways is that we become trapped within our heads and become more stressed than need be. In the end, it is about perspective and measures we take to get 'out of our heads' and control this stress.

Week 9: When working on my social media paper I considered the great irony that TCC emphasizes being in the present but in the long run has great implications for one's future. If one manages to ground himself properly and clear his head while practicing TCC, he is more ready to take on the responsibilities affecting his future.

Week 11: This week has been highly stressful and it has become increasingly difficult to ground myself. So I deliberately took time to step away from activities and work – taking a deep breath, grounding and practicing movements. Admittedly, I felt a bit silly and wasn't sure if TCC would help my stress levels. Amazingly, I felt less stressed after 10 minutes of practice.

Week 12: It is hard to believe our TCC class is almost done. I will use the valuable information learned to consistently complement my regular meditation routine. I am hoping to reap its benefits, including overall mental and physical balance.

– **By REBECCA R.**

March 24: Writing the social media paper really taught me a lot about TCC, which has a lot of health benefits, including helping you lose weight (which was the most shocking to me). Because TCC is so calming, it didn't cross my mind that it could also help you lose weight.

April 7: This has again been a very busy week. As the semester comes to an end, I have practiced more movements to fill up the tank, so that I am ready to fight to the end of the semester. I plan to continue practicing.

– **By SAMANTHA H.**

Week 1: I decided it would help my schoolwork to meditate more on my own time.

Week 2: When practicing the movements, I love that I can feel the energy in my hands very intensely.

Week 4: If I don't come to TCC one week, I can definitely tell the difference in my stress levels that week.

Week 5: I hope one day to find something I am as passionate about as you [April Leffler] are about TCC.



# Seijaku Accreditation November 2016, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Compiled by Dora Wiemann and Robert Montes de Oca

**Under the caring guidance** of trainer Pam Towne, twelve T'ai Chi Chih teachers were accredited to teach Seijaku. Although short in time (compared to a TCC teacher training), the course was intense and fulfilling. Justin always said to teach Seijaku only to your best students, and with good reason. If Justin were still here, we would all tell him how this Seijaku accreditation changed our lives. The depth of the practices was profound. We worked beautifully together as a group, knowing wholeness, compassion and serenity in the midst of activity.

– **BY JENETH RUNDLE**

“All my life, even though I did not know its name, I’ve always wanted a specific list to do that would get me there: Seijaku – Stillness or the

serenity in the midst of activity. I always thought, ‘Just tell me what to do and I will do it.’ This desire was pure in my heart, but clouded in its expression because I built a protective barrier of rules and black and white thinking. I so wanted to figure it out. In this desire has been the pursuit that led to my being here.

And what did I find out? What did I discover? The very first words Pam spoke were from Justin, ‘Seijaku will help you learn who and what you are in accordance with Reality (with a capital “R”). Allow it to unfold in you. Don’t try to figure it out. Let go of what you think you know.’ The two aspects of the Chi (Prana, the energy we can feel, and prajna, the expression of the energy as inner wisdom) will be my guide. It has become clear that Seijaku, the power and beauty of the practice, will be the vehicle for the Chi’s expression in me to be complete. And I will teach Seijaku.”

– **BY JOYCE VEERKAMP**

“I learned what I needed to learn and not what I thought I should learn.”

– **BY BRUCE CHILDS**

“First off, the draw was a celebration of Justin Stone’s 100th anniversary. The lure of the Chi in the high desert of New Mexico is powerful. Was I actually prepared for a deeper practice of T’ai Chi Chih and a review and practice of Seijaku? Yes. Also, I had a conversation with my primary TCC teacher and mentor, Ann Rutherford, with whom I’d taken a beginner workshop soon after being accredited as a TCC teacher. She said I was amply prepared.

Did I feel prepared? Not so much. I came to accreditation with a willingness to learn. I was open to whatever I had to do – even Fast Track, which was new to me. This was a valuable experience in two ways: I’m really feeling the effects of Seijaku principles (i.e. pushing through resistance) and my confidence level is high, in spite of the need for practice, practice, practice.”

The seeds of my  
Out of step fast-track relationship  
Are slowly beginning to grow into a  
Fast-friendship

– **MARC KWASMAN**

## Arrowhead Rev.2

By Donovan Rundle, Oxnard, California

*Editor’s Note: During the recent Seijaku accreditation in Albuquerque, obsidian was mentioned during a late night discussion within a small group of teachers, including Jeneth Rundle. Although Donovan Rundle was not physically present or privy to the conversation, the poem he shared with us the next day included obsidian. Connection.*

They were not for me,  
the mute vast coils –  
obsidian smooth blackness  
of the singularity.  
They stretched until the round became flat.  
The target was everywhere.  
All-knowing, seeing all.  
The bow was drawn and the die of the fates  
forever cast.  
All motion was this motion – nothing other  
For beyond the eye of the bird there was no other  
No other substance. No form. Only Matter/Mind.  
And these, as inseparable as the mirror and her reflection.  
And as the arrow flew true, it pieced the essence of reality.  
My existence faltered, flickered, and disappeared.  
Into the union where all of nature is joined as One, but without any sense of  
form or number. What was I then?  
Only the singularity weaving its heart magic throughout All.  
I moved and listened to the silent call of the countless legions of Angels.  
They’ve come to save me from the end, to bring me to the beginning  
where I could see that they are one and the same.  
Archer! Hold Fast! Riding the breath-horse across that black seamless mirror,  
In which all truth is seen, all love is joined. And it was as merciful as it was full  
of blessedness – free as it was full of absolute Truth.



Front row: Sheryl Adair, Maggie Smith, Judy Hendricks, Jeneth Rundle, Robert Montes de Oca, Pam Towne. Second row: Bruce Childs, Dora Wiemann, Joyce Veerkamp, Mary White, Mary Ruiz, Leya Cragin, Marc Kwasmann. Back row: Kim Grant, Ery Kimmell.

## Silent TCC Retreat October 2016, Winter Park, Florida

**The theme was serenity and self-reflection.** The setting was 485 acres of protected wetlands and forest near Orlando. Led by Pam Towne and hosted by Susan Quinn and Anita Vestal, 10 teachers and students came together for four days of immersing ourselves in mostly silent TCC practice. As we worked on *yinning* and *yanging* properly, there was also a *yin-yang* balance of silence and instruction, rest and activity, time alone and time together.

### Retreatants shared their experience of silence and self-reflection:

As I walked the woodland paths and labyrinth, and sat by the lake, the beautiful natural surroundings had a calming and restorative effect on my mind and body. This allowed me to focus inward and find answers about finding better balance in all areas of my life. —*Adabelle Rychtarik*

Time spent in self-reflection led to deeper understanding of the Self (not ego), an abundance of peace, an appreciation of now, and a willingness to slow down, stop and drink in nature's beauty. Silence... Solitude... Serenity. —*Stephen Thompson*

I slowed down long enough to grieve the loss of my sister a month ago. —*Mary Wichmann*

In silence I thought I would be more in my head, but shockingly I was more in the now. My brain was quiet. I am very motivated to keep my practice going daily. —*Sharlene Tyler*

This was a weekend of peace and tranquility in a beautiful setting with like-minded people. —*Ken McHugh*

My most significant experience has been fasting, not so much from speech, but from electronic devices. —*Diana Daffner*

### Sharings from TCC practice and instruction:

I was pleased to find optional early morning Seijaku practices. These plus TCC instruction and full practices gave me the opportunity to be a student again and see everything through fresh eyes. Thank you for the many opportunities to go within, become more centered and improve the flow of *Chi* with each movement. —*Adabelle Rychtarik*

It has helped me clarify and fine-tune some of the movements, allowing a practice with more ease and certainty. —*Susan Quinn*

### Awareness gained included:

- 1.) To not only straighten my back leg, but to keep the heel down, releasing it at the last moment;
- 2.) In Bird Flaps its Wings, the heel lift isn't muscular. Let the heels lift naturally;
- 3.) The 60/40 mental emphasis increases the flow of *Chi*. I had wondered about it;
- 4.) Pulling Taffy Wrist Circles has a third wrist circle. —*Mary Wichmann*

Carry the Ball to the Side has become my new favorite movement. I have never felt so much *Chi*. Could it be the refinement of the hip swivel? —*Sharlene Tyler*

This retreat was about furthering my TCC practice while in the company of advanced students and instructors. I did not anticipate the serenity that would manifest from three practices a day, and the sense of wellbeing I would feel as a result. —*Lynn McHugh*

## What Is A Chi Market?

By Dorene Krause, Midland Park, New Jersey

Phyllis Segal, a T'ai Chi Chih teacher in northern New Jersey, was a great reader of philosophical, spiritual and energy related material. When Phyllis passed away in 2015, her daughter donated boxes of books, CDs and DVDs to the local T'ai Chi Chih community. These were eventually transported to a teacher symposium in Pennsylvania led by Sandy McAlister. Attendees browsed through the selection and chose what interested them. It was suggested that in exchange, a donation be given to the T'ai Chi Chih International Foundation to support the teacher training scholarship fund. This was a beautiful way to honor Phyllis for her dedication to TCC and her local TCC community.

Because of its success, several more Chi Markets have been held at different trainings in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Colorado, raising much needed scholarship funds. We all have things sitting on a shelf that we no longer want or need that may be of interest to another. The scholarship fund provides opportunities for students and teachers to continue their TCC education by offering some financial assistance. Many have been helped who might otherwise not have been able to attend an event. The fund is supported solely by the generosity of the TCC community.

**How you can help:** If you are hosting a TCC event, invite those attending to bring items to donate. (If you would like, I have a letter that you can attach to your registration information.) Set up a table and basket for donations. It is quite easy to do and does not require a lot of extra work for the host. The proceeds from the Chi Market go directly into the teacher training scholarship fund.



# Sharing Chi In Colorado, Fall 2016

By Lisa Stroyan, Fort Collins, Colorado

**As a follow-on to connections established** at the summer conference, thirteen students and teachers gathered for an inspirational weekend workshop with T'ai Chi Chih teacher Caroline Guilott from Louisiana. One member of our community, Lisa V, graciously hosted us in her home, and for two days we played and learned to deepen our feeling of the *Chi*. Caroline was a patient teacher with a great sense of humor and many stories to show us that she, too, had struggled with the same things we do in our TCC practices. Here are some tidbits of what we learned.

Caroline explained that the best way to feel something is to slow down and put attention in that area, and it was a point worth repeating. We learned to drop inside by feeling our feet, and to let the *Chi* flow by relaxing and putting awareness in our wrists, our palms, our fingertips. **"The fingers like to play together,"** she explained as we experienced new connections and increased polarity. We even practiced relaxing our butts, particularly to start the side-to-side weight shift and to feel the hip swivel. ("It's a body part, too. Why shouldn't we say it?" Caroline commented as a giggle spread across the room.) Despite the levity, this was an aha moment for some.

Another theme was letting go, one more example of bringing learning from the annual conference home to your local community. "After you apply the principles, then you just let go." ... Be patient. Let the movement unfold." ... "There is no rush. Be here, right now, all the way to the soles of the feet and to the fingertips."

Caroline talked a lot about the importance of being grounded. "I wasn't grounded when I began learning TCC. I would go, **'Boop, boop, boop,'**" she explained that as she drew an upward spiral with one hand, giving us a visceral understanding of that untethered feeling when we move the *Chi* without being grounded in our feet. I, at least, know that feeling all too well. She encouraged us to feel the energy going, "glug, glug, glug" down the body as the energy is grounded. Although I suspect her sound effects weren't intended to be one of the highlights of the workshop, we loved them and found them helpful as a reminder to experience the *Chi*. "Remember **'glug, glug, glug'** not 'boop, boop, boop'" became a weekend catchphrase.



We also worked on using our awareness and connection to the feet to make our movements strong, all while remaining soft. One teacher in our group commented that she learned to be "powerful within the softness," and that it has changed her practice. At first she thought, **"For two and a half years I've been 'trying' to be soft. And now I have to be powerful, too?"** "But I get it now, and I love it," she says. Another reported with excitement that she experienced the Bubbling Well for the first time ever.

By the end of the weekend, we were not only looking forward to seeing Caroline at the 2017 conference, but also scheming to bring her back for more workshops in the future. One participant explained, "Sometimes when someone new explains a move or principle using different words, all the wisdom of past teachers floods my mind with the confidence I have been looking for." Our community felt a strong bond with Caroline and we know our relationship with her will be on-

going. Even Lisa V's cats couldn't get enough of the *Chi* – the moment a circle formed, a cat would flop itself down into the middle. "Ahhh. This is the life," they seemed to say. We agree. Caroline, we are grateful to have had the opportunity for such a joyful and profound experience. If your community is looking to have a workshop for your teachers or students, you may want to contact Caroline.

*Seated: Rebecca Paulson, Bonnie Schowalter, Doriane Tippet. Standing: Julie Hygh, Caroline Guilott, Joanie Malone, Sandy Roerig, JoEtta Heck, Lisa V, Jan Cox, Leya Cragin, Marie Dotts, Lisa Stroyan, Nate Dotts.*



## TCC Intensive October 2016, Aston, Pennsylvania

By Parker Reynolds

**I set out for Aston somewhat confident** that I was doing the movements pretty well. After all, when I did the movements my hands would tingle and get very warm. I could feel the *Chi*. I was sure to get some pointers and refinements, and looked forward to them. During the first session it seemed that I had no idea how to do TCC properly. Very upsetting. At the lunch break I mentioned that I wasn't sure that I should be there. Others at the table related similar feelings. Knowing I was not alone and with words of encouragement from Daniel and April, it was time to send the ego out the window. With the heart and mind re-opened, the rest of the week was a joyous experience.

We went over every movement in detail and were invited to incorporate refinements and to notice how they felt and what was happening within us. The real learning had started. We were told to be aware of, and understand, the inner practice, not just the outer practice. Up to this point I had always concentrated on getting the form correct. Daniel told us that "TCC is a balance of movement and stillness" and that "awareness starts at the root" (feet). Although I'd heard "bring the concentration to the soles of the feet" many times, the grounding never registered until a couple of simple adjustments were accepted.

The first was coming to stillness after each movement. In the rest position, weight evenly supported across the soles of the feet, pause just long enough to notice and feel what was happening before setting up for the next movement. In just a few extra seconds, *Chi* was felt moving from the hands and arms into areas that it was never noticed before. As Daniel said, "just let it finish." Continuing to come to stillness between each movement, the *Chi* became more and more noticeable as *yin Chi* and *yang Chi* reunited. Joy was noticed in movements that had never been favorites. Now "coming to stillness" between movements is a permanent part of my practice instead of simply the "rest position."

The second adjustment came after practice. We were invited to sit, feet flat on the floor and just be, be aware of what was happening within. Notice and feel without judgment. This was profound. The door to the inner practice had opened. The path to awareness is now visible. 'Joy Thru Stillness' is now received during and after each practice. Feeling the warmth of the *Chi* spread thru my entire being is indescribable.




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## Daniel's Retreat

By Diana Bahn, New York, New York

**Remember the last time you had an aha moment?** I was teaching my T'ai Chi Chih class at Mount Sinai Cancer Center this morning and sure enough it happened – through introducing fellow teacher Mary Schapker's ingenious technique for helping students to do the full wrist circles in Pulling Taffy, Variation #2, Wrist Circles. (Mary has two circles each attached to a pencil and then has two students standing on either side of her holding the props as she illustrates the movement with her wrists.) I befuddled myself because I used it for Bird Flaps its Wings, and then I confused a student.

This led the entire class to take a time out. How was I going to teach my student the correct way to rotate her wrists? My explanation of a closed wrist (the wrist joint in flexion) wasn't getting the job done even as I explained that it blocked the *Chi*.

Fortunately, I had just returned from a restful weekend at Lonnie's New Jersey Shore beach house where Siobhan Hutchinson had hosted Daniel Pieniac's November retreat. Over the weekend Daniel reminded us that, "Awareness is the root of TCC." Justin also talked a lot about time: "The illusion we live in is due to Time." Today in class, during the aha moment, I could have sworn that Daniel, Siobhan and other retreat participants were present as I turned to my student and said, "Let's ask our waists to guide our wrists so we don't need to figure anything out." The student was a little befuddled, yet I knew she would get it. Another student shared her aha moment, speaking of the connection between the knees softening and expanding as the *tan tien* expanded.

There is probably no moving practice softer than TCC. Sometimes those of us with hard heads have to melt the head to absorb the teaching. Our habit energies resist the softness and flow. I invite each teacher and serious student to consider a pause in your busy life and take advantage of Daniel's *teh* and your ability to keep Justin Stone's form clear and accessible. Many teachers have said repeatedly that time is a concept. TCC goes way beyond the conceptual mind. You deserve a time out.

## A TCC Teacher Circle Group Facebook.com/groups/ taichichiteachercircle

By Janet L. Starr, Houston, Texas

### I'm a newly accredited teacher

with more than 12 years of practice, and I live in Houston, which only has one other teacher. Hearing stories of teachers with regular community meet-ups at the beach and over pizza is endearing, and I can imagine the day when Houston has a thriving community too.

Until that time (and beyond), Facebook groups are useful tools. After my teacher accreditation, I set up a closed group for our newly accredited teachers and the mentors who supported our transition that week.

Gradually my TCC Teacher Circle Group expanded; I began receiving requests from teachers I did not know personally. (Access is "approved" when I confirm their teaching credential.) If you are newly accredited, ask your accreditation course host or referral teacher to message me so I may add you without delay.

The group (whose membership list is public but whose posts are not public) is a welcome place to share ideas about teaching classes in various settings and locations. It's a safe place to discuss travel and room arrangements for retreats and conferences. Occasionally a post in our TCC Teacher Circle Group benefits the entire TCC community, and we ask to share it on the main Facebook.com/taichichih page.

I am honored that something small, which was started to help me personally, has grown into something larger to benefit our teacher community. Please Join us.

## Creating A Community Page Facebook.com/ taichichihlakecharlesla

By Caroline Guilott,  
Lake Charles, Louisiana

### Even if you are uncomfortable

creating a community page, that part is easy – model yours after another community page or ask Lisa Otero or someone savvy at the TCC conference.

Making the page similar to others is important. Start with its name, taichichicitystate as one word, because this will keep whole community coherent. (Do not use the apostrophe in Tai.) As for content, you do not have to reinvent the wheel. Simply copy and paste the description from another local community page.

Then post when and where your next classes are; post about events that you are attending and photos of people practicing together or alone. Share any TCC information from Facebook.com/taichichih, especially those beautiful cards with quotations from Justin Stone that *The Vital Force* created. It keeps your page alive.

I'm still working on letting go of my resistance to writing and using technology, to changing my mindset to allow technology to bring TCC to a larger world – so more people can hear about the benefits and discover them themselves, either with a teacher (you and I), a DVD from Good Karma Publishing or through the Internet on YouTube.

It is all there. We just need to share it. I realize that we need to connect and share what we know about the *Chi*. **We need to start where we are one step at the time.**

## The Next Frontier: A Page For Distance Learners Facebook.com/ TaiChiChihDistanceLearning

By Lisa M. Otero,  
Port Hueneme, California

**Numerous TCC students** have no accredited teacher nearby. It used to be that they purchased the Photo Textbook and one of Justin's DVDs and practiced on their own until they could attend a workshop, Intensive or accreditation. (That is how I learned TCC when I lived in Boston where there were no teachers. I practiced with Justin's and Carmen Brocklehurst's DVDs and flew to Albuquerque to practice with them whenever possible over many years.) Now there are digital and Internet resources for those without a teacher: an official TCC website with a calendar of TCC-related events; Youtube videos of Justin and many accredited TCC teachers demonstrating the movements; and numerous local community Facebook pages. A couple of years ago I realized that we could also use Facebook to connect isolated students with accredited teachers who could provide instruction via the Internet.

TCC Teacher Deanna Rasch shared my vision and together we organized this page and encouraged other teachers to sign on to provide instruction to far away students. All accredited teachers are invited to contact me to get listed. What differentiates this page from the others? It provides a place where long distance, student-teacher relationships can grow. It provides a refuge for beginners (who have gone as far as they can go watching videos on their own), long-time students (looking to hone their skills), and teacher candidates (in need of a second signature mentor to help them prepare for accreditation). The page remains a work in progress; we appreciate

feedback from students and teachers who use the page.

## Facebook.com/taichichih

By Kim Grant, Albuquerque, New Mexico

**The main TCC Facebook page is followed by more than 2,200 practitioners** and other interested people around the globe. The engaged community spans an arch from new students to longtime teachers – sharing experiences, movement tips, articles, events and questions and answers related to TCC. Consider jumping into the pool if you are not already there swimming (through heavy air).

## Contacts

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-  facebook.com/taichichih
-  twitter.com/taichichih
-  flickr.com/photos/taichichih
-  pinterest.com/taichichih
-  instagram.com/taichichih
-  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

- Mar 2-5 | TCC Retreat w/ Pam | Littleton, CO | Marie Dotts | 970-412-9955
- Mar 23-26 | TCC Teachers Retreat w/ Sandy | Santa Barbara, CA | Pam Towne | 760-421-7589
- Mar 28-31 | TCC Retreat w/ Sandy | Santa Barbara, CA | Pam Towne | 760-421-7589
- Apr 1-7 | TCC Accreditation w/ Sandy | Aston, PA | April Leffler | 610-809-7523
- Apr 20-23 | TCC Retreat w/ Pam | Rochester, MN | Judy Trousdel | 507-289-8534
- May 5-7 | TCC Teachers Retreat w/ Daniel | Lavelette, NJ | Daniel Pienciak | 732-988-5573
- May 11-14 | TCC Retreat w/ Pam | Prescott, AZ | Pam Towne | 760-421-7589
- May 17-21 | TCC Intensive w/ Sandy | Buffalo, MN | Nancy Werner-Azarski | 612-623-3086
- June 15-18 | TCC Teacher Conference | Boulder, CO | <http://www.taichichih.org/conference-2017/>
- Jun 18-20 | Conference Seijaku Basic w/ Daniel | Boulder, CO | Daniel Pienciak | 732-988-5573
- Jun 18-20 | Conference Seijaku Accreditation w/ Pam | Boulder, CO | Daniel Pienciak | 732-988-5573
- Aug 21-25 | Seijaku/Meditation Retreat w/ Daniel | Aston, PA | Daniel Pienciak | 732-988-5573
- Sep 14-18 | TCC Intensive w/ Daniel | Aston, PA | April Leffler | 610-809-7523
- Sep 24-27 | Teacher Symposium w/ Sandy | Aston, PA | April Leffler | 610-809-7523
- Oct 13-15 | Seijaku Accreditation w/ Pam | Rochester, MN | Anna Vaith | 507-378-4621
- Oct 15-21 | TCC Teacher Accreditation w/ Pam | Rochester, MN | Bonnie Sokolov | 507-529-9515

### ~ MORE WORKSHOPS & RETREATS ~

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

- Apr 20-23 | Learn Seijaku Retreat w/ Carmen Brocklehurst | Albuquerque, NM | Judy Hendricks | 505-573-0820
- Oct 18-20 | Prajna Workshop w/ April Leffler | Tupelo, MS | Ron Richardardson | 662-844-6473
- Oct 20-22 | TCC Workshop w/ April Leffler | Tupelo, MS | Ron Richardardson | 662-844-6473



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