

# The Vital Force

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for teachers & students

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*Justin Stone: In His Words*

## TCC & Non-Duality

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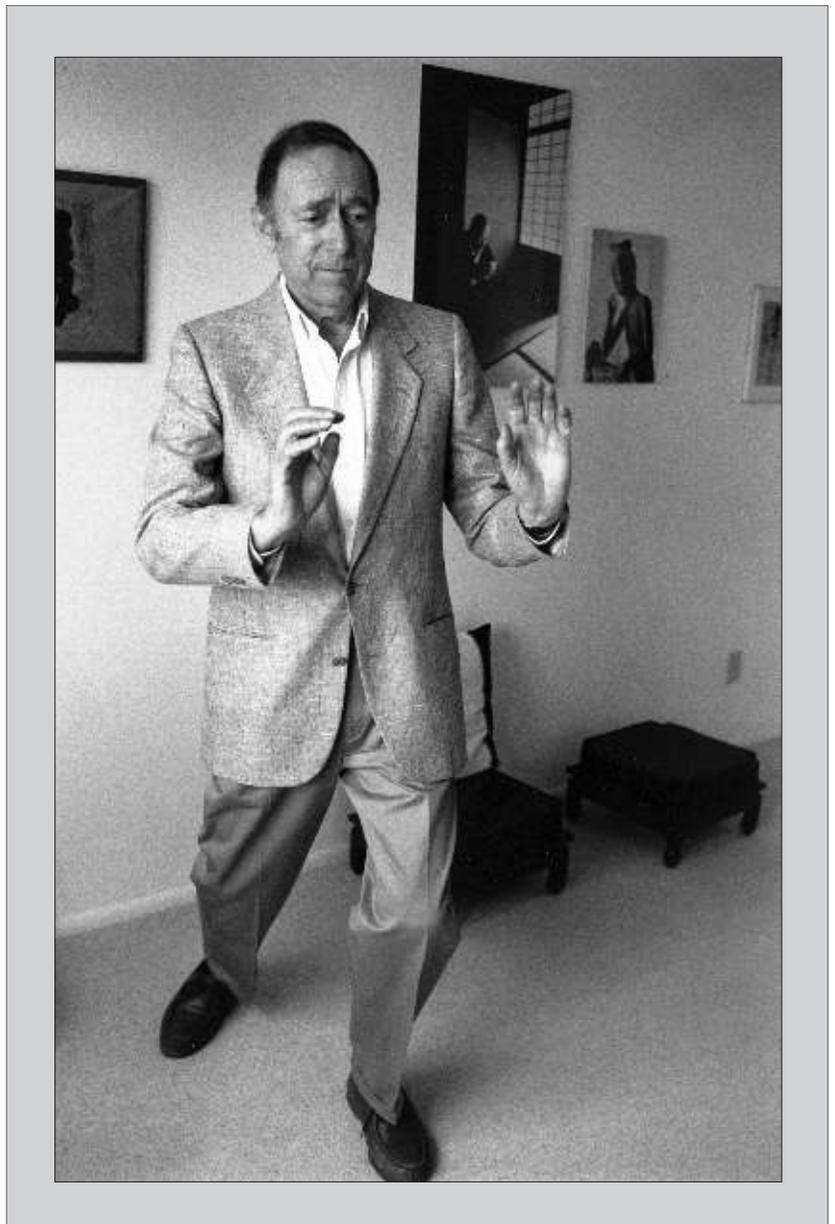
“**A**dvaita” in Sanskrit means “Non-Duality.” This is a difficult concept for most people as we look about us and see multiple objects. But what we see are only transformations not permanent forms, whether we are speaking of a chair, a tree or a human being. Each exists provisionally but is certainly not lasting. One day the tree may become the chair and the human body will be eaten by worms. The “I” that observes all this may disappear and become another “I”. To bank on permanence is to promote suffering.

*to bank on  
permanence  
is to promote  
suffering*

When we perform T'ai Chi Chih properly we feel the results. Since we are, essentially, a conflux of moving energies, stimulating and balancing the Intrinsic Energy (*Chi*) affects our whole being. The effects seem to be personal, but, in truth, they are widespread. Just as our Enlightenment is “saving all beings,” so does the balancing of the Universal Energy affect both the outer and the inner. So many students have written me about how their lives have changed with the practice of T'ai Chi Chih.

Those who truly practice note that their attitudes change – and others notice it, too. We do not heal symptoms; we become “whole.” So, to practice regularly and sincerely is to promote the positive in this world; we reap the benefits. This is “Advaita” in action.

*At right: Justin does Push-Pull in his meditation room, in his Albuquerque home, in the early 1980s.*



# May The Vital Force Be With You

## ~ In Justin's Words ~

In *Spiritual Odyssey*: "You cannot give the same teaching to two people. It must fit the Karma of each one and never be a teaching by rote. How do you know what teaching to give? You will be guided."

## ~ Community ~

Something seems to be happening out there. Communities are growing and strengthening through grassroots efforts. One teacher at a time. Each responsible for herself or himself. It's heartening.

## ~ T'ai Chi Chih Musings ~

"Many times during my TCC practice on my lanai I feel Justin Stone looking down from the heavens and feeling him seeing someone or somemany practicing TCC all in the same



moment, all over the world. It is quite astonishing to feel this and fills me with joy."

— TERRY JENNINGS,  
HONOLULU, HAWAII

## ~ Facebook ~

Have you dipped into the T'ai Chi Chih Facebook page recently? At press time facebook.com/taichichih had 2,036 followers. Share the page with your friends, students, families. It links a worldwide community of practitioners who might not otherwise have connected with like-minded

souls. And we know, Justin, it doesn't take the place of practice, practice, practice. That said, you can always count on a heartfelt discussion, shared TCC experiences, archival

videos of Justin, videos of new students and teachers practicing, quotations by Justin, open-ended questions and specific questions. Thanks to Lisa Otero and all who participate.

## ~ Wanted ~

- Anecdotes about your time with Justin, or, if you'd never met him in person, an anecdote about how you've come to know him through his writings.
- Interviewees like we present with Marie Dotts; see page 4-5.
- Articles about your experiences with *prajna*; you will make April Leffler pleased.
- A double-page spread of articles from your community. (Hello New Jersey, Northern California, Portland ... and more.)
- Articles about your experiences with various movements; you will make Stan Corwin very pleased; see page 3.
- Where in the World photos
- Artwork (5-10 thematic images)

~ WITH GRATITUDE. KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

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## Artwork & Photo Credits

Pg. 1: Carmen Brocklehurst; pg. 3: Anders Lowry (Laurie Jacobi's son); pg. 4-5, 11: Minnesota community; pg. 6, 10: Linda Jones; pg. 8: Hannah Hedrick; pg. 9: Lorraine Lepine; pg. 12: Justin Stone; pg. 13: The Vital Force; pg. 14-15: Linda Jones (except lower left on pg. 15: Roseann Heinrich); pg. 17-18: Jack Weaver; pg. 19 (top): Mary Wichmann; pg. 19 (movement): Linda Jones; pg. 19 (seated): Jack Weaver; pg. 21: Terry Gay Puckett; pg. 22 (from top to bottom): Sheila Leonard, Sheila Leonard, Jim Eagle, Dana Diller, Terry Gay Puckett.

## Web Site updates

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

## Giving

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

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

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

## Submission Guidelines

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

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# Teaching Tips & Stories

By STAN CORWIN, MADISON, WISCONSIN

*Editor's Note: Stan has requested that this be a regular column. Always happy to oblige. In fact, always happy to fill entire issues with tips and stories.*

First a tip: In teaching the forward and back movement, I start by calling for the left heel to be moved forward, shifting your weight onto that foot as you move forward. Feel your right knee straighten and then go forward a bit more and the right heel will be peeled a bit off the floor. Then shift your weight back to the back foot. Feel our left knee straighten, and then go backward a bit more and the left toes will be peeled off the floor. After coming back to rest, bring the right heel forward and repeat, all the while keeping the top half of the body upright and the head at the same level as you move.

Now, a story: My neighbor has multiple myeloma, a cancer that is usually fatal. When the doctors told her they could do no more, they told her she needed to build up her immune system. When I heard this, I offered to teach her T'ai Chi Chih. After a beginner class and an advanced class, she increased her practice to every day. Her blood and bones were recently tested and she is one of a small group with her cancer in remission. Did TCC help bring the healing? I don't know but sure hope so.

# Pulling In The Energy

By DONNA DEFFENBAUGH, PRESCOTT, ARIZONA

Tiny hands, far too small to grasp things, learning what life feels like.  
Playful hands, getting pretty muddy, tying yellow ribbons.  
Loving hands, finding secret treasures, picking yellow daisies.  
Mother's hands, folding freshened laundry, wiping childhood tears.  
Working hands, heavy on the keyboard, writing tiny numbers.  
Busy hands, struggling with a button, prying up the box lid, threading tiny needles.  
Empty hands, resting on the sidelines, seeking some lost rainbow.  
Timid hands, rising up to heart-height, following the leader:

Soft hands, reaching for the stars now – reaching for the universe...  
Hands filled.

# Just Because You Can Doesn't Mean You Should

By LAURIE JACOBI, MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

Where does energy come from? I find this a fascinating question, especially on those days when I don't have very much of it. It seems like a very powerful, mysterious and holy force.

While I don't know the answer to my question, I do know how to generate it – with my T'ai Chi Chih practice. The move that really focuses us on **bringing in more of this mysterious life force** is Pulling In the Energy. I must confess that it has been only recently that I have come to appreciate and actually enjoy this movement. When doing the movement I have always said the following words to my students just the way I was taught: "Visualize

energy streaming into your fingertips from the most distant star."

I've always tried to visualize that distant star, but not always with great success.

While researching a project unrelated to TCC, I came across this quotation from the poet, Robert Graves. In speaking about the ancient Celts he wrote, "Poets induced a poetic trance by treating their finger-tips as oracle agents. The very tips of the fingers, never the joints, were used for the purpose of getting in touch with magical inspiration." I found this quite interesting. Of course I immediately thought of Pulling in the Energy and how, perhaps, we are doing the same thing. **It began to broaden my understanding and feeling** of this movement.

Now, particularly when I am practicing outside, I feel like I am pulling in the



energy not just from "a distant star" but also from the chickadees, nuthatches, cardinals, squirrels, rabbits, chipmunks, cats, trees, breezes, sun, clouds, flowers, grass and everything alive that surrounds me. While staying soft I **open my fingers just a little bit more** and feel the energy surging and buzzing in the tips of my fingers. I have now come to love this movement. It feels mystical and practical at the same time. Here is the secret to bringing in more of that sacred life force.

How grateful I am for this practice of T'ai Chi Chih.

## An Interview

By MARIE DOTTIS, LOVELAND, COLORADO

### ~ Teaching TCC ~

#### 1. Why do you teach TCC?

I believe in many ways the *Chi* called me to T'ai Chi Chih and then called me to teach. I remember entering my first class with my teacher, Judy George, and having the feeling that I am *home* even though our family had just moved to Minnesota and we did not know anyone. During that first beginner session I felt an inner calling to become a teacher. There is a mystery, a oneness, that lives us and breathes us. **To me it feels like an inner magnet pulling and guiding me always to greater joy, expansion and fulfillment.** To not teach TCC would be going against this Loving Force.

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

Teaching TCC is a gift and great honor that fills me with the deepest gratitude. We are giving others a practice that helps them embody the Truth of Who and What they are. I give all the credit to Justin Stone. He set this intention over and over in his teaching and writings. In *Spiritual Odyssey*, Justin writes, "T'ai Chi Chih is not just a beneficial exercise ... If the one practising persists, ... the deeper levels - the Essence of T'ai Chi Chih, if you will - begin to dawn on the practiser and it is realized that T'ai Chi Chih is unique in design and that one begins to sense, and flow with the great Cosmic Rhythm." **This journey of aligning with the great Cosmic Rhythm is an unending, unfolding and limitless journey.** My students and the greater community of T'ai Chi Chih continually support and inspire my personal journey.

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

I truly feel the most effective way to spread the word is to deeply listen to the guidance of the *Chi*. To trust it completely. It has a plan and will use you if you are open. Justin Stone would call this "*Teh* - Power of Inner Sincerity." Justin shares in *Spiritual Odyssey*, "It is the power of Inner Sincerity that has been responsible for the rapid growth of T'ai Chi Chih. ... It is our jewel, and I fully expect this great power to bring T'ai Chi Chih to deserving people all over the planet."

As I look back over 17 years of teaching I can see how the *Chi* has always been guiding me in how and when to share TCC. **It has definitely ebbed and flowed like the great Cosmic Rhythm.** When I first started teaching most of my energy was still in raising children so I just had a few classes on the side. Classes were already established in community education and I just showed up and taught. There was not

much energy to spread the word beyond my classes.

After nine years of teaching in Minnesota we moved back to Colorado for family reasons. In Colorado my life became very busy, not only raising kids, but with working full-time and caregiving. The guidance was to not teach; it was six years before I felt the call to teach again. The call, when it came though, was not only to teach, but to dedicate myself full-time to building a community in Northern Colorado of teachers and students. It was hard to put myself out there to such a great degree but **I trusted the *Chi*.**

The first thing I had to do was find and establish places to teach. This called me to create a business card and brochure, create packets of information, do cold calls and then presentations. With continual push and support from the *Chi* I also created a website so perspective students could see when and where I was teaching. I contacted the newspaper and they wrote a large article. I began writing a newsletter. I felt called to host a retreat with Pam Towne. It was a little scary to commit without knowing if students would come. I had only been teaching in Colorado a year. Again, I trusted the *Chi* and the retreat birthed the Northern Colorado community.

The community wanted to stay connected so we created a Yahoo group, Facebook page and periodic free community practices. I am now mentoring about 10 students for Teacher Accreditation. A lot has happened in Northern Colorado in the past two years but because of the support and guidance of the *Chi* it has felt effortless. I feel like I am just riding a wave. What a joyful ride it is.

### ~ Training the next generation of TCC teachers ~

**1. Do you think moving more qualified students toward becoming TCC teachers is an important part of building the future of TCC? Why or why not? Is this a focus of your teaching? Why or why not? (There are no right or wrong answers here.)**

Teachers are the key to sharing TCC and I believe our job as teach-



ers is to support the teacher candidates as best we can. **In all my beginner classes I share my intention to not just teach TCC but to also create a community of students and teachers in Northern Colorado.** I believe this is why I now have a large group of teacher candidates and am hosting an accreditation course in June 2016. When I taught in Minnesota I was blessed to be part of an already established, beautiful community. My main focus was on teaching rather than community building. The *Chi* called my students to become teachers but it was usually only two people every two years.

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

I love this question because I am dedicating a large part of my time right now to preparing candidates. I am learning so much. I am so **grateful for articles** in *The Vital Force* about teacher preparation and the work of teachers who focus on this. We have evolved so much as a worldwide community in knowing how to prepare teachers. I know it will continue to grow and evolve. I have listed some things below that I am doing to help candidates prepare. This is in addition to helping them work on their practice in continuing classes and one-on-one sessions, and inviting them to attend beginner classes with the focus on how to teach.

I think it is important to have teacher **candidates be exposed to different teachers.** Since I was the only one in Northern Colorado this posed a problem. Hence the inspiration to host workshops with senior teachers from other areas. I hosted Judy George in February 2015 and Amy Tyskinski in October 2015. By Accreditation some students will also have had the opportunity to work with all three teacher trainers.

Once a month for an evening **we explore one principle of TCC.** Before class I scan all the articles that I have collected over the years that relate to the principle and email them to students. We start class with a group practice where they each take a turn leading a movement. We then sit and I lead a discussion of the



topic. We discuss the principle as it relates to our TCC practice as well as our life.

Students are organizing the **watching of Justin Stone's DVD together.** We pause as often as needed to allow all questions and clarifications.

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

I trust the *Chi* will guide the person. There are times that I feel an inner resistance or habit energy blocking someone pursuing teacher training. I find by allowing the resistance that a shift or letting go will occur. It is most important for candidates to realize that this journey is never about perfection. Acceptance and compassion for who and where they are is needed for their practice to evolve and open. With the deepening of their practice more strength arises to follow the guidance of the *Chi*.

### *~ Connecting with other TCC teachers ~*

#### **1. Is connecting with other TCC teachers important to you? Why or why not? (Again, there are no right or wrong answers here.)**

Absolutely! We open to more of Who and What we are because of our connection with each other. By sharing our journey, our gifts, our inspirations with each other we are serving the *Chi* and helping us all to grow and unfold. But most importantly we connect because of the joy that bubbles up when we do.

#### **2. If it is, what are the main ways you connect with them? Are these effective and enough? Do you wish there were other ways?**

I love *The Vital Force*. It is such a huge support for me and my students. I also appreciate the T'ai Chi Chih Facebook page. Through it I am feeling a connection to the greater community especially through the pictures and videos of events and other people practicing TCC. I also just returned from a Seijaku Retreat in Albuquerque, which was very powerful for deepening my practice and my connection with others in the TCC community.

I would love to have a yearly conference with a much greater attendance that includes students. I could just imagine the joy and healing that would arise if 200 to 500 people or more were practicing TCC together. I feel personally called to not just help build the Northern Colorado community but the worldwide community of teachers and students.

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

I am very excited when I think of the future of TCC and I am very grateful to be a part of it.

# To Remain Unchanging Is To Die

BY SANDY McALISTER, HAYWARD, CALIFORNIA

Discoveries and inventions occur when people try something new or put concepts together in a slightly different way. Usually they make our life more pleasant or more interesting. Sometimes they can turn our world upside down. Can you think of a personal discovery about yourself that may have changed your life or moved it in a new direction?

In the introduction in the *T'ai Chi Chih Photo Text* by Justin Stone, he writes about the evolution of the TCC form. In the beginning, as the movements he developed were taught, it became apparent that some changes would be beneficial. Some movements were dropped, others added and the order changed. He is referring to these changes when he writes, "These new developments had evolved from actual teaching experiences, and it is necessary that TCC, like all growing forms, evolve and not remain stagnant. To remain unchanging is to die."

One constant since 1985 has been an annual teacher's conference, with the exception of 1987. Justin felt it was important for TCC teachers to come together each year to refresh their form, to support each other and share teaching skills, and renew their commitment as teachers.

The conference this year was a wonderful experience. What was amazing was of the 76 attendees 51 had some role in supporting, assisting or presenting at conference. A couple of teachers who have been teachers less than a year had a part on the program. One fourth of the teachers attending were men. This conference percentage is slowly growing. But 76 teachers is a very small portion of our teaching community.

Some often used phrases include "going with the flow," "flowing from the center" and "flow as if moving through heavy air." Fixed and rigid is not flowing. So maybe it is time to take our concept of a conference and look at it in a different way. At this year's conference I proposed exploring the idea of having the annual teacher conference every other year and have a community conference the years in between.

## What is a Community Conference?

It is what you, the TCC community, shape it to be. My

initial thought is that community conferences would be for students as well as teachers. To explore this idea a short survey has been prepared (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/T6Q3VXT>).

This survey was initially offered in my October newsletter. Within four days, 44 teachers and 13 students responded. Even though there is always an evaluation opportunity at every conference, this survey has produced some helpful suggestions not voiced before.

Already questions are being asked: "Will students be fully integrated?" "Will it be more like a retreat?" "How will this change the usual content of conference?" Your answers and comments to the survey will provide the answers to these and other questions.

One question I would like to address now is: "Will students attending the conference be encouraged to become teachers?" No. This will not be a venue to recruit new teachers. It will offer students an opportunity to participate and explore TCC alongside long-time practitioners. It is possible that through that process an interest in becoming a teacher may arise but there will be no focus to encourage students to become teachers.

The question, *why do you attend conference*, had two comments that, to me, epitomize the value of conference:

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

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

"Soft, open, receptive" are words we use often in teaching. These words are conducive to flow and movement. To remain unchanging is stagnant and contractive. When to change, what to change, how to change? I feel this is the time to explore those questions regarding the annual teacher conference. I am asking for your help to shape this new direction should you choose it.



**Foremost this survey is to find out if teachers are interested in having the annual teacher conference every other year and are they willing to participate in a community conference the years in between.** I encourage you to help me in that endeavor by answering the survey. Be part of the community by helping shape it. The survey will run until the end of January. The results of your input will be addressed in the May 2016 VFJ.

# Teaching Daughter On The Mountaintop, Daughter In The Valley

By DANIEL PIENCIAK, HOWELL, NEW JERSEY

Justin Stone states (on the definitive DVD) that the movements of T'ai Chi Chih are simple and easy to learn. But some students do have challenges with the shapes and hand positions in certain movements like Daughter on the Mountaintop and Daughter in the Valley. With that in mind, here is a possible teaching tool that might help.

I ask students to imagine a large clock face in front of their torso, with the number six at the base (below the navel) and the number 12 out a few inches in front of the chin. For Daughter on the Mountaintop, I ask them to begin with the tips of the middle fingers at about 7:30 and 4:30 (on the clock face). As the weight shifts forward, the fingers circle the numbers upward until the fingers of both hands point upward at 12 o'clock (the left hand held closest to the body). Then I ask them (as the weight shifts backward) to lightly touch the wrists together (*for teaching only*)

as the hands descend down the center of the clock face. When the wrists are near the navel, I ask them to start pointing the fingers downward to six o'clock and let the wrists no longer touch together, as the backward weight shift completes. The fingers then begin circling outward again to 7:30 and 4:30 and the forward weight shift begins. (*Lightly touching the wrists together on the way down helps to feel the hand position*).

For Daughter in the Valley, I ask the students to begin with middle fingers pointing at about 10:30 and 1:30. As the weight shifts forward, the fingertips trace the numbers downward, palms closely facing each other as the fingers point down at six o'clock, then rise up the center of the clock face until the fingers point upward at 12 o'clock, as the forward weight shift completes (hands *softly* holding a large egg shape). As the weight shifts backward, the hands/wrists separate and fingertips trace the numbers downward, reaching about five and seven as the backward shift completes. The palms are closest at the beginning of the forward weight shift, and the polarity is strong.

I remind students throughout of Justin's words (in the Photo-text): "The shoulders are relaxed and drooping" so that softness and flow remain paramount. I hope these tips are helpful.

## Pyramid Poems from Fall Seijaku Retreat

**Sheryl Adair writes:** "It might be helpful to know the background of these Pyramid Poems from Carmen Brocklehurst's Fall Seijaku Retreat, held at the Norbertine Retreat Center, well out of Albuquerque proper. It felt like real desert to someone from the humid, green South (Georgia to be exact). What a contrast. There was a very large solar farm behind this beautiful, peaceful, serene setting. The energy from the very engaged Seijaku participants, coupled with that of the silent, praying monks and huge solar farm was amazing. Add a Super Moon in a clear desert sky that became a Blood Moon for a Total Eclipse. Truly quite exceptional."

find  
the Real  
it's inside  
resist not and  
Seijaku  
will find  
you  
- LO

strong  
push through  
resistance  
serenity  
being now  
linger  
soft  
- ROBERT M

love  
yourself  
share the Chi  
let it all go  
Seijaku  
fast track  
joy  
- CAROLINE G

be  
enjoy  
accepting  
who you are now  
releasing  
into  
peace  
- JG

starts  
anger  
opposite  
follows serene  
Seijaku  
still, clear  
joy  
- MR

love  
beauty  
Seijaku  
over flowing  
with the gifts  
of the  
ages  
- DORA W

to  
night we  
all are so  
connected through  
Seijaku  
and our  
hearts  
- BROCK

joy  
is here  
Seijaku  
listen to all  
the noise, and  
hear the  
love  
- JUDY H

the  
flow of  
energy  
is real to us  
Seijaku  
within  
me  
- SR

the  
way starts  
T'ai Chi Chih  
continues with  
Seijaku  
strong calm  
quiet  
- JOYCE V

love  
waiting  
Seijaku  
expressing now  
come to me  
and know  
joy  
- CR

strong  
and soft  
the essence  
grounded yet free  
releasing  
giving  
back  
- CARMELA

now  
I am  
filled with  
gratitude for  
Seijaku  
within  
me  
- LEYA

change  
gently  
get in touch  
with deeper place  
inside of  
myself  
now  
- SHERYL

arms  
embrace  
only love  
nothing to fear  
trust in Chi  
release  
"hai"  
- MD

# Renowned Cancer Prevention Physician Embraces TCC

BY HANNAH HEDRICK, MOUNTAIN VIEW, HAWAII

Sam Epstein was introduced to T'ai Chi Chih decades ago at yoga conferences he attended with his wife (and now TCC partner), Cathy. Through the years he did TCC intermittently – when he occasionally attended my classes at the American Medical Association, at classes Daryl Isenberg taught for the wellness program where she lives, and at other gatherings where TCC was part of the program. Around 2008, Sam and Cathy took five private classes with Daryl, and in 2013, they began attending Deb Sitron's very inclusive classes, offered through Gilda's Club (cancer survivors) at a hospital facility, twice weekly.

Finally, after 25 years of "exposure," Cathy reports that she and Sam now do TCC nightly on their terrace while spending time in Italy. Sam clearly experiences "Joy Through Movement" when doing TCC.

Sam's progression in moving from a scientist's skepticism to joyous "embracer" is important because it is a case study of how a world-renowned national treasure can, through practice, experience in the laboratory of his own body the physical benefits and sense of well-being achieved through practicing TCC.

We can all use Sam's case as support when promoting TCC to scientists, researchers, healthcare professionals and others. Recognized as the foremost international authority on the causes and prevention of cancer, Sam served as Chair of the Cancer Prevention Coalition. He has published some 260 peer-reviewed articles, and authored or co-authored 11 books. I share my copy of the *Safe Shoppers Bible* with family and friends, and because cancer "runs in my family," I value the prize-winning *The Politics of Cancer* (1978, 1998), *Breast Cancer Prevention Program* (1998), *Unreasonable Risk* (2001), *How to Avoid Cancer from Cosmetics and Personal Care Products* (2001), and books related to carcinogens in milk.

How well known is Sam? When TCC teacher Daryl Isenberg accompanied her daughter to a healthy moms group in Boston in 2013, the speaker spoke about environmental causes of breast cancer. When Daryl asked Suzanne if she had read anything by Sam Epstein, she replied, "Yes, of course. He's a god to my statewide organization."

And he is an inspiration to those of us who still aspire to a daily practice. Sam is almost 90 years old, so it is never too late.



## Pyramid Poems

it  
is all  
all in all  
in everything  
if I will  
let it  
be  
– BROCK

rest  
the eyes  
let light flow  
to your center  
ignite the  
glow through  
you  
– MAGGIE S.

the  
endless  
energy  
emanating  
from all things  
whispers  
life  
– DORA W.

sages  
evergreens  
blowing sands  
desert landscapes  
thriving in  
balance  
joy  
– JOYCE V.

look  
the bird  
is singing  
reminiscing  
of sweet love  
being  
here  
– ROBERT M.

still  
be still  
returning  
to the one source  
becoming  
one with  
life  
– DIANNE

one  
act of  
good springs forth  
seedlings that grow  
a touch of  
loving  
grace  
– P.Q.

drops  
water  
thru links of  
brown brass flowers  
flows softly  
grounded  
home  
– JOYCE V.

rain  
drops fall  
cool breeze feel  
beauty and joy  
time to have  
one true  
joy  
– P.Q.

some  
like it  
hot some not  
no matter what  
green or red  
gently  
fed  
– RHONDA S.M.

# Stone Circle Or The New Face Of TCC Community: Shifting Vision

BY LORRAINE LEPINE, OVERLAND PARK, KANSAS

While visiting Ireland this summer, I came across a Stone Circle site in the village of Kenmare where I spend some time. There was a big stone at the center and, around the circle laced in regular pattern, were ten smaller stones.

I stood grounded and centered near the center stone – when suddenly I felt and saw a beam of white light coming from above through the center stone and spreading around to the ten other stones.

The next day, as I started to do my T'ai Chi Chih practice, this scene came back to me as a vision: I saw Justin Stone above the middle stone and the TCC community with all students and teachers from the past, present and future moving in a circle, all in the cosmic rhythm. A beam of light started to move through Justin Stone, expanding throughout the whole TCC community. Justin became the light moving through the Stone and the light pervading everyone, bringing harmony, peace and healing.

For the next 10 days until conference, the visualization returned as I did my TCC practice. Justin asked us to move together during our TCC practice in intentionality to **allow the unifying yin-yang force to expand TCC to everyone who may benefit.**

To me the visualization of each of us through this universal *Chi*, encircled in *Chi* with Stone as a light form in the center, is a wake up call to ask ourselves:

- What are you prepared to do to benefit, grow and bring joy for the future of the TCC community?
- Are we able to find a balance of yin and yang? We know opposites are essential to help the community grow and extremes pull it apart and drain everyone of its energy.
- Is it our responsibility to let the *Chi* touch everyone who needs it? It is the *Chi* that leads us where it needs to go unaltered. The world needs the internal peace generated by the regular practice of TCC. The more the vibration of the TCC community is elevated the more we are asked to serve the *Chi* with integrity and clarity.
- We are a mirror to each other. What is reflected to me? To heal, forgive, let go and shift its face with something supporting wholeness, balance and joy?

- How are we going to create new vitality in the TCC Community?

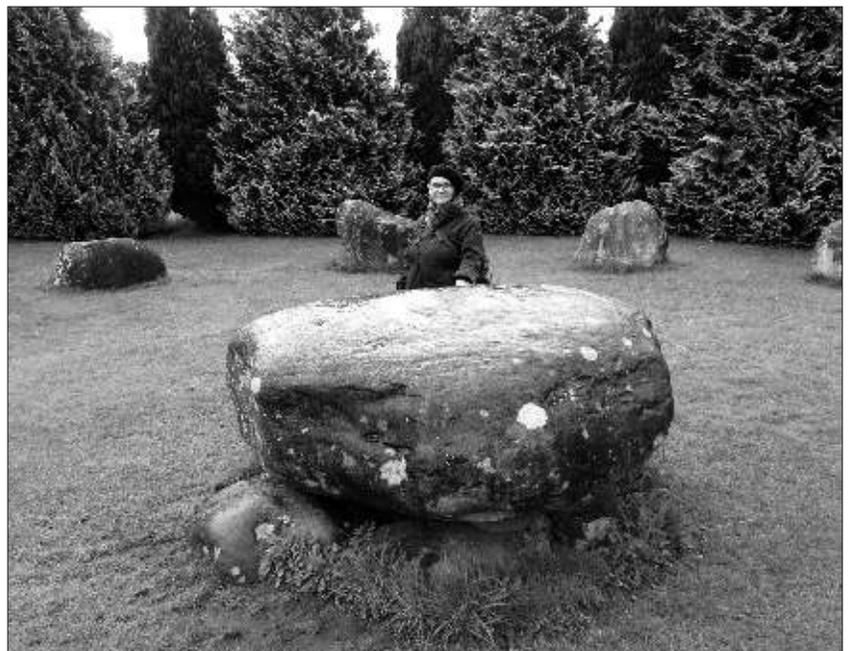
In the Circle of Stone image no one owned anything; we were all equal; the middle Stone as the channel of light nourished everyone at all times. All that was required was to think that we are connected to the originator by this Stone and then allow the *Chi* to guide us – to be of service to yourself, your students, the TCC community and the world.

During TCC practice, we are all flowing in synchronicity from every corner of the world. Let the light of Justin Stone shine over us TCC practitioners. **We do not need to do big things. We simply need to do our daily TCC practice** with intention to be guided in how to be of service.

With my talents and skills, what am I ready to do for the TCC Community? Is this the new face of the TCC Community? Ask yourself: Are you happy with what is? Does it feel good in your body? How can you transform it? How can you create a perfect moment in that situation that will transform what is toward a good feeling, a sense of wholeness, a sense of wellbeing?

Go within when frustration or other uncomfortable emotions come up. **The force generated by yin-yang is a necessary ingredient to stimulate the growth of the TCC community.** We need to welcome opposite ideas. Extreme reactions help us find the balance and help us question what we are about. We need to question our own integrity. And we need to go outward to spread our joy and gratitude into the world.

How can we set TCC free to evolve and reach everyone in need of its medicine, its power and its sacredness? Thank you! Justin Stone for this beautiful, easy and perfect form that is TCC.



## Feeling The Chi

By CARMEN L. BROCKLEHURST,  
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

**T**here have been questions regarding what it means to “stay grounded” or “stay in our feet.” When Justin taught, he was always grounded and he stayed in his feet.

Justin would say, “You can feel a lot of *Chi* as you loosen your waist” and “Did you feel that?” He spoke from his experience of feeling the *Chi* in that moment of teaching. Some students would nod in agreement, others wouldn’t. Even though we were all accredited teachers, we didn’t all feel the *Chi*. **Imagining it wasn’t enough.** In fact, imagining it often got in the way because it activated the thinking mind and removed us from our feeling nature.

First and foremost, Justin was interested in our experiences, not in what we were thinking. He once told the story of a very fine person, a professor at the university, who couldn’t learn the T’ai Chi Chih movements. He added, “It wasn’t that he wasn’t smart enough, but he was so much in his head that he couldn’t feel the movements.” **When we do the same, the result is the same.** When *trying to figure out* the movements, our minds are activated rather than our bodies. We end up moving in a jerky manner because every inch of movement is analyzed rather than felt. Justin wasn’t against mental intelligence, quite the contrary (he was quite intelligent); but it did not rule his body or his life experience. **His movements flowed – because he felt the *Chi*.**

Justin also said, “The movements are not start, stop, start, stop; where is the flow in that?” **Some interpreted that to mean the movements were supposed to be connected, without any stopping.** That was (and is) not the case. Continuity is about moving into a deeper understanding of life. The feeling is that life is as it has always been – and that we are timeless. The feeling is that even though we are standing perfectly still, life is gloriously flowing in and through us. “No one is doing anything. T’ai Chi (Supreme Ultimate) is doing T’ai Chi.” Many heard Justin describe his experience of doing TCC in a Japanese garden with those words. How many of us have felt it?

What’s the result of bringing our feeling nature into our practice? We bring forth beauty and health. Wholeness is always beautiful. As we allow our body to feel, we learn to love and share the *Chi*.

## Ten Years Later – Staying The Course

By SHERYL ADAIR, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

**A**fter I was accredited in 2004, a survey came out from my synagogue. The gist of one question got my attention: “Is there anything you can offer Temple Sinai?” Full of a new teacher’s enthusiasm, I swiftly volunteered to share T’ai Chi Chih. No response. After more attempts, I almost let go. Seven years later, I had an opportunity to share TCC at the Temple’s Women’s Mountain Retreat, a perfect setting where it was well received. A small class formed in my home from that, and it is still ongoing. Fast forward to today, ten years later, I completed a six-week series *in the chapel* at Temple Sinai. Moral of this story: do not give up.

The response was positive; the *Chi* never disappoints. One woman reported she had hurt her back and was in pain all week. Reluctantly she came to class. That afternoon she realized her pain was gone. “Could it be T’ai Chi Chih?” she asked perplexed. “What else could it be?” I gave her a Justin Stone answer. “What difference does it make as long as you got the results.”

Another, who had been confined to her home for a month with vertigo, came to the first class quite wobbly, so we put a chair nearby. She raised her hand at the third class to report the vertigo was gone; she credited T’ai Chi Chih. Who am I to disagree? Another delayed a trip by a day so she would not have to miss class. You know the drill, so I’ll not go on with more comments of newfound calm and balance.

I started most classes with words the Rabbi shared just prior to our TCC session at the first retreat. And I’ll share some excerpts appropriate to our practice:

“... May we stand still, for a brief moment,  
And watch the play of sunlight and shadow on the leaves.  
For a brief moment – listen to the world.

We need a quiet space to test the balance of our days.  
The weight of our own deeds  
Against the heaviness of the world’s demands.  
The balance is precarious – steady us with faith:

Quiet places and stillness-  
Where we will hear our own best impulses speak.  
Quiet places and stillness –  
From which we will reach out to each other...”  
– Adapted from Priscilla Stern



At the conclusion of today’s class, the Director of Programming (who attended the classes) indicated wanting to hold more classes. Stay tuned for what the *Chi* has in store when we stay the course with *teh* (inner sincerity).

# Shall We Gather At The River

By CAROL MOCKOVAK, MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

Minnesota and its neighboring states are rich with T'ai Chi Chih teachers. But because of great physical distances, regular events are rare. But we took a first step in the first chapter toward building a broader community on July 25. Teachers in Rochester, Minneapolis and St. Paul pulled it all together.

Anna Vaith looked for parks midway between the Twin Cities and Rochester area. Hannah's Bend Park in Cannon Falls, Minnesota, fit the bill; and Anna created a flyer with directions. Cannon River runs through the park.

Deb Bertelsen emailed the flyer to our extensive list of regional teachers. We planned a practice, potluck and time for conversation, connection and community building. Students and families were invited.

Saturday dawned with beautiful rain-free skies, and 28 people drove from around the state. By 3:30 p.m. we had formed a circle in a flat shady area to begin the practice. Deb welcomed everyone. Judy George shared some of Justin's words from *Spiritual Odyssey*, highlighting the reasons why TCC practice is so life-affirming and ending with a favored quotation, "Awareness is the key ... Love energy is the fruit."

New teacher Susan Sobelson talked about polarity and led the group in some movements to more strongly feel both the pulling away and the coming back together of the hands in Bird Flaps its Wings and Daughter in the Valley.

Ev Hanson-Floren led the complete practice with grace and softness. Moving in silence, everyone in the circle could hear Cannon River rushing and birds calling, and could feel support from the earth and blessings from the blue skies. Following practice, we moved to the picnic pavilion to enjoy a feast of delicious food, great conversation, connection and community building.

The day was so successful that plans are afoot to meet again and again.



# Circles Within Circles: Connecting To The Greater TCC Community

By ANNA VAITH, RACINE, MINNESOTA

On a beautiful, warm Minnesota Saturday after a group practice, potluck, fellowship and fun at Cannon Falls, I was asked to write about what it is like to participate in several communities within T'ai Chi Chih.

Our group meeting offered many wonderful surprises. First of all, the attendance was great. Also, never before had I attended a potluck with so many delicious, homemade and vegetarian options. I was in heaven. One teacher thoughtfully chose and read quotes from Justin; another led us through two movements. It always amazes me when I can experience TCC in a new way, often merely through a different presentation style, a teacher's carefully chosen words and the application of intention and awareness to the form while practicing. The group energy was strong and uplifting. The kindness, support and *teh* (inner sincerity) of the attendees was wonderful.

The afternoon left me smiling all the way home. The Twin Cities TCC teacher's group offers quarterly meetings in this same format, and I now realize what I have been missing. Getting to know more TCC teachers and students offers a wonderful opportunity to connect, practice and improve.

I have also had the pleasure and good fortune to participate in four national conferences, which have been energizing, increased my knowledge base and teaching skills, and helped me continue to improve my personal practice. My students always benefit from my having attended – because of experiencing new teaching styles and learning new visualizations. Attendance has also helped me meet teachers who contribute to *The Vital Force*, which helps make each story more personal.

I am grateful to be able to participate in the state, local and national TCC communities. Attendance at TCC events is such a blessing in so many ways. If you are looking for more TCC connections, I encourage you to create an event, ask the divine for help and see what happens. As they said in *Field of Dreams*, "If you build it, they will come." I think you will be surprised by the wonderful results.

## 20th Century Psalms: The Impersonal

BY JUSTIN F. STONE

“

Only the Sage understands the Impersonal.

~ My poem “Only the Human Heart Hears the Falling Snow” is meant to reveal that this Cosmos is nothing but the Human Heart.

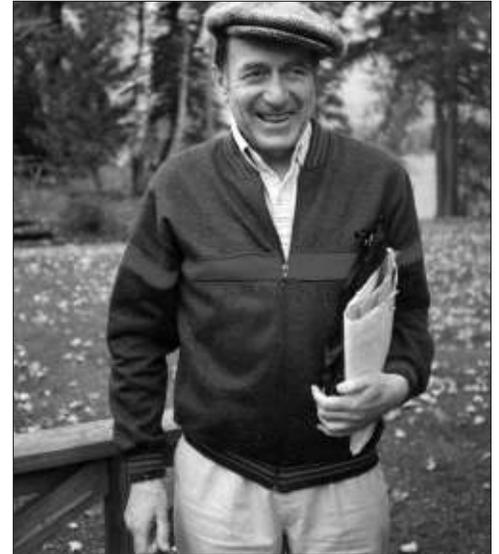
~ The experience of naked Reality is shattering. In an aware state of no-thought it comes on one, though it has always been there.

“

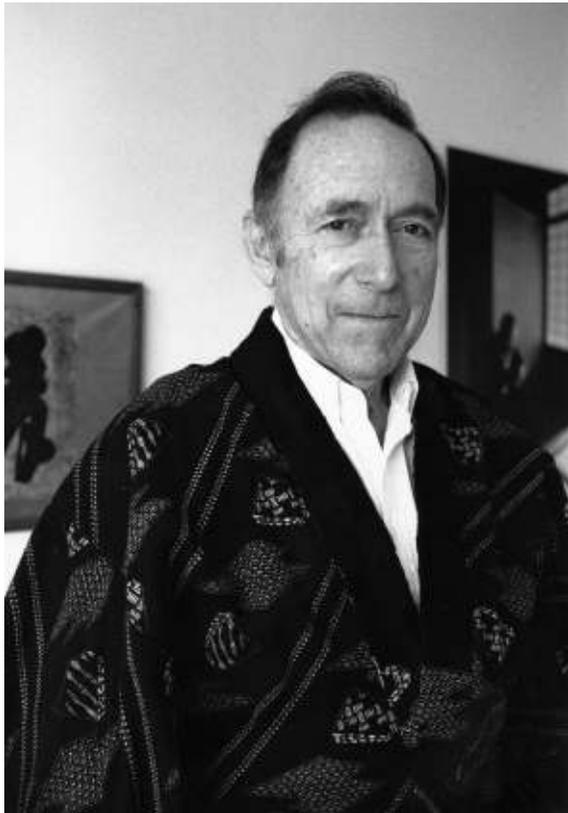
We cannot alter another's Karma. If we help that person, his Karma (and ours) must call for it.

~ It is my feeling that Karma can be worked out in dreams.

~ People sometimes mistake the emotional for the Spiritual. They are two different things.



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



“

Think of Time as a circle, not as a line from here to there. If we miss the brass ring the first swing around, we'll get other chances to capture it.

~ There must be a subject and an object or there is no consciousness.

~ Time, without which the duality of thought could not exist, is the screen blocking the apprehension of Reality.

“

To relieve the symptoms without searching out the causes is like rolling up the window so as not to hear the knocking of the motor.

~ When you're early, all the lights seem to be green.

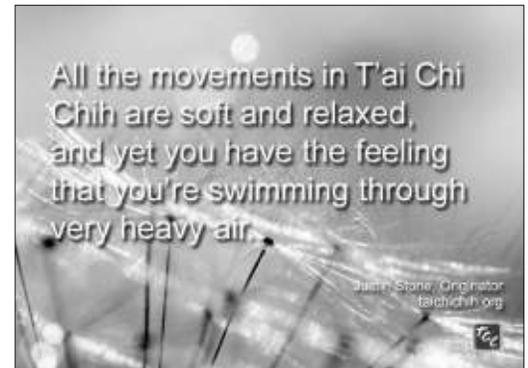
~ Any number of people will tell you that you should have checked your tires. How many will help you change a flat?

“

Paul Reps says we are creatures of light. I say we are the products of sound vibration. Both are right.

~ Want to know what is really happening? All are singing the Glory of Creation!

~ Paul Reps says he feels the equal of every blade of grass. Oh, to be a snowflake, each one completely unique.



“

To force morality and wisdom on those unready for them is disaster. Each according to his level of evolution.

~ Man's greed usually exceeds his kindness. He is willing to let others suffer so he may have his gain (and he can usually rationalize to justify it). However, the truth is that Compassion and Wisdom are one.

~ Except for egotism, why should you imagine that man is the most highly-developed of all possible creatures? Is there anything in his cruelty and greed that makes him seem to be an ultimate and not merely an immature development?

~ To hunt animals for “sport” is to shoot at God. To cage animals in a zoo and mistreat them in rodeos is to flagellate God.



“

How can there be “Zen or Yoga for the West”? Does Reality know of East or West?

~ Many say they are “into Zen or Yoga” – meaning they have read something. How many are sincere enough to really free themselves?

~ I stopped playing Chess when I realized I no longer felt competitive and didn't care whether I won or lost. Chess is cerebral and enjoyable, but the action is that of War.

“

Everyone knows he can't take it with him; yet he accumulates eagerly until his death. One man told me he retired 30 years ago with one million dollars and still has the million. “How much good have you done with that money?” I asked.

~ Tell people the “spiritual” message they want to hear and you'll make a fortune. Tell them “truth” and nobody will come to hear you.

~ Of what use is money if we do not spend it or give it away? To endlessly accumulate it is to see paper as the greatest value.



## Gliding Through The Flies To The Perfect Moment

BY ANITA VESTAL, SAN ISIDRO, COSTA RICA

**B**lack Mountain, North Carolina, was a serene setting to experience the **flies in our lives** that seem to create **disharmony** and distraction. Conference presenters gave us words and experience to recognize how we respond when a fly gets in our face, and how to make the intention to **glide** through it and **arrive** at the **perfect moment**.

The theme of conference, **Peace and Harmony**, was skillfully woven into every aspect of the four days. The conference host team, Steve, Vicki, Colleen and Adabelle, lovingly laid the foundation over the past twelve months so we could all experience the peace, support and love that our amazing community of practitioners offers to one another. The fabulous four (Vicki, Steve, Colleen and Adabelle) attended to every need and request that arose, and we know there were numerous, with respect and love and creativity.

Newly accredited teacher, Susan Quinn from Florida, gave us some insight on achieving **inner peace** by intentionally finding the **perfect moment** during T'ai Chi Chih practice. She helped us experience the perfect moment in a couple of ways: through our minds and through our senses with chocolate and hard candy. (I wish you all had been there for that.) We remembered that we can find that perfect moment of inner peace simply by asking, intending and putting our mind to rest. Thank you Susan.

The next day we followed April Leffler down the rabbit hole of her mind where she invited us to notice the **flies on our lives** who stir up feelings of bitterness, anger and resentment. Through her story of a fly landing on her nose, we experienced the metaphor of our own flies and noticed how we respond to those flies that unsettle us and elicit feelings of disharmony. We were reminded that we may choose our response to those people (flies); if we surrender and let go, there's a good chance the fly will eventually leave. Thank you April.

To bridge the two concepts of noticing flies and coming to the inner peace of the perfect moment, we acknowledge Sandy McAlister for showing us how we can glide through the weight shift and feel when we arrive at a full and complete weight shift. Encouraging us to focus on the soles of the feet during practice of Push Pull and Bass Drum, we were invited to experience how we feel the weight gliding forward until the weight arrives fully forward on the substantial leg. It was a powerful feeling, sort of a letting go. She used the words "**glide and arrive**" to help us feel the soles of the feet and experience a full and perfect weight shift.

I felt peace and harmony throughout the four days. For this gift, I bow to the conference team gifting us long hours of tireless service. I admire the generosity of the conference participants, who contributed an average of \$35 each in ticket sales for a raffle of over 100 items. Gracias, Merci, Danke, Grazie, D kuji, Thank you.

# Memories

BY ROSEANN HEINRICH, CLEVELAND, OHIO

The conference was set in the Black Hills in North Carolina. The scenery seemed to invoke thoughtfulness, and for me, created a time to be mindful in every way. Life has been difficult in so many ways these last years. Thank goodness for my T'ai Chi Chih practice, which keeps me grounded.

I normally attend conference every other year. For some reason, this past April, I was spiritually encouraged to attend this year even though I had attended in 2014. I am so happy I followed my guidance. There was something so very different about this conference. The accommodation was not the caliber of Lied Lodge in Nebraska, nor was the food what we enjoyed at St Mary's College in northern California, but the camaraderie and support made the difference and seemed to envelope me each wonderful day.

Maybe it was because the conference was smaller and more intimate. Maybe it was because old friends I had not seen in years were there. Or maybe it was simply where I am at this time in my life, and I needed my T'ai Chi Chih community around me.

The program and speakers were excellent.

We never know what we mean to others or how we touch their lives. For me, this year, I was touched by so many of the participants. I met, and was able to speak with, more teachers than ever before. It felt like we had time to really connect. Did they change? Was I the one who changed? Or is it the Chi changing us all as we move through these very unusual times.

The next time you are moved to attend conference, follow your spiritual guidance and pay no attention to the discouraging reasons your mind provides to put off attendance. Being at conference might be exactly what you need to recharge your practice and your life. Namaste.



## Building A Community

**Editor's Note:** At the teachers' conference in Black Mountain, North Carolina, Lisa Otero organized and moderated a panel presentation featuring three pioneering teachers and community builders, who shared their experiences growing and nurturing their local T'ai Chi Chih communities. We are pleased to share their inspiring stories with the entire TCC community.

BY DEB BERTELSEN, MAPLEWOOD, MINNESOTA

**Growing a local T'ai Chi Chih community** requires a positive intent, focus, effort, commitment and lots of *teh* (inner sincerity). There isn't a template for how it should be done. It takes time and occurs in stages. One teacher works to grow the interest in TCC and get other teachers accredited. Next, these individuals expand the class offerings and exposure in different venues, creating a TCC extended family, which, through its own evolution, continues the outward circular growth. When you have a number of accredited teachers across a large geographic area you reach the next stage of development: **figuring out how to work together and support each other.**

With long-established relationships, the Dakotas, Iowa and Wisconsin are part of the Minnesota family. Our community is graced with longevity and a shared vision to strengthen who and what we are – locally, nationally and internationally. Over the course of 20-plus years we have grown from 1 to over 60 accredited teachers.

The **compassion and dedication** of our teachers make our community special. The “why” of what we do is often tied to a desire to give back and to honor those who have walked the path before us. Of course you run the risk of a few people doing most of the work – unless you invite more people to the table and truly believe your community has untapped skills and talents. **Invite people to participate** in unexpected ways ... students and teachers alike. For example, our website is handled by two teachers with varied backgrounds, located in different cities; updates are done by a teacher's grandson. Cool isn't it? The website communicates upcoming events, lists teachers and class locations, and provides a link to the greater community via [taichichih.org](http://taichichih.org).

Our quarterly gatherings, open to all, are for **connecting and sharing**. We share Justin's words, focus on a movement or two, enjoy a practice, and bring a potluck dish to share. Afterwards, for those who wish to stay, we talk about TCC business. To encourage people to attend, we alternate meeting days and times.

For efficient **communication**, one individual maintains a community email database of accredited teachers and forwards information out to the entire group. Another person handles updates and postings to our Facebook page.

In order to **rekindle the TCC connection** we initiated a “**We Want You Back**” campaign. We want to re-establish the bonds we felt so deeply through our accreditation journey. People who knew people

volunteered to connect with community members in person, by phone or email with an invitation to attend a future gathering.

~ **Support for one another.** A Teacher Development project currently underway will survey our members on two fronts. *First*, identify who is teaching, to what extent, and whether they want more teaching opportunities, are interested in serving as a substitute, or are looking to cut back. The focus is to match people with possibilities. *Second*, identify teaching opportunities (market niches) and share that information. Who is asking for classes that we are not aware of? Where are we missing out?

~ **Mentoring and Training.** We are passionate about mentoring students and teacher candidates in a consistent manner. We designed an “Accreditation Journey Framework” in 2011 and presented it at the 2013 teacher conference. We put together Movement Workshops for students, showcasing local talent through participation from teachers in the area. After accreditation, we continue the mentorship for six months, pairing newly accredited teachers with seasoned teachers.

~ **Working outside of Minnesota.** Interstate cross-pollination paired Judy George and Marie Dotts, who used to live in Minnesota, and now is growing a vibrant local TCC community in Northern Colorado. Judy visits Colorado quarterly and will likely be the second signature teacher for Marie's candidates for accreditation. Everyone loves the experience. Rumor has it these compassionate and deeply committed teachers are developing a “Teacher Candidate Referral Checklist” that delineates four important sections: Knowing the Movements; Knowing How to Move; Familiarity with the Principles; Inner Sincerity.

Positive intent and *teh* are essential guiding principles to educate and teach people about TCC, as well as to build a community. Don't re-invent the wheel – use what others have done as a resource. One size doesn't fit all, so try different strategies, capitalize on what works, massage what doesn't and abandon whatever stands in the way of progress. If something didn't work before, look at it from a new perspective. *The Vital Force* provides a perfect forum to share what works, what doesn't and challenges. Minnesota is still evolving. We want to know what is working elsewhere to add to our toolbox.

Remember, there is a tremendous amount of ability, knowledge, talent and skill around the TCC globe. Tap into that creative energy. You may be surprised what you find – the hidden gems, the gifts of TCC.

By DEANNA RASCH, RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

**Mostly because I really needed some folks to practice with** – a local community of more than one.

That's my best answer as to why I worked so hard in the past two and a half years to help grow a TCC community in the metro Richmond, Virginia area (known locally as RVA).

Not that it hasn't had its challenges. But, then, I've been known to be persistent. At the doors I've knocked on, I have heard everything from "[insert population] doesn't do T'ai Chi; that's why we don't have it," to "we're really all about yoga here," to "kids will be bored with that," to "that's (eye roll) really T'ai Chi 'light'." Some folks weren't always that polite.

I kept in mind some sound advice from Dan Pienciak, "Go where you know." Ultimately, that's what got the ball rolling. Slowly at first, but, then, with more momentum than one teacher can handle. I started a local Facebook group (T'ai Chi Chih RVA); found space (at the yoga studio where I took an occasional class) that agreed to a one-shot workshop; invited friends to invite friends; and introduced the first 25 people who signed up to our practice. Since I didn't have space to offer follow-up classes as yet, I followed up with interested participants by offering a weekly practice in a local park while I searched for a facility. This free practice continued to support students from the classes and serve those in financial need.

By "going where I knew," I found a partnership with the Gay Community Center of Richmond (now Diversity Richmond) and a home for the first ongoing class, open to the LGBTQ community and allies. While we still take the class outdoors to a park to enjoy the summer weather, the class has been a consistent presence ever since. This also resulted in an invitation to do an LGBTQ Healthy Aging class. A formerly-naysaying parks and recreation director visited this class and agreed that, perhaps [insert population] might, indeed, participate in TCC, if offered at their facility. This class turned into the largest ongoing group. Eventually another weekly class had to be added to accommodate the demand for more practice opportunities. Those were marketed as senior classes, because, of course, the practice was not active enough for children...

Until a friend and (now advanced) student arranged an invitation to teach TCC at her middle school for a day – where about 500 students were introduced to the practice during their PE classes that day. When word travelled to parks and recreation about this, I received an invitation to participate in their summer recreation programs, bringing an introduction to TCC to hundreds of children, pre-teens and teens at a dozen locations where they were "camping" (in Richmond, hiding in the air conditioning) during their summer break. If you haven't tried teaching the younger crowd yet, well, there is nothing cuter than a tiny person in a pink tutu wearing sparkly tennis shoes showing you how it's done. Be prepared for a lot of yawning, too, as they remember that relaxed feeling that comes without crashing on the couch.

More friends, co-workers, students... more invitations to a local library program, and a professional development series for faculty/staff... you get the idea. It's all about connection, community and sharing the practice wherever and whenever the opportunity presents itself. Whether it's locally, virtually (through social media and video calls) or by travelling to attend events and visit other TCC communities, it's all good. Put your hand out and chances are good that someone will take it and then extend theirs. And so on. It makes me smile (in that way that makes your eyes disappear) to know there are TCC students in RVA now preparing, in their own time, to become teachers themselves.



**Editor's Note:** As we go to press, Deanna is taking a job outside of Virginia. She writes: "I will continue to support these students (as I know the TCC community will) along their paths to becoming teachers as life takes me to a new home in Grand Junction, Colorado. I will miss the Richmond community and am grateful for the time spent -- and the technology that will keep in close touch."

# Building A Community

BY SHEILA LEONARD, NEWFOUNDLAND, CANADA

**My initial vision of pioneering T'ai Chi Chih in Newfoundland was simple:** to share the good news of TCC with anyone who would listen, whether interested or simply curious, and responding to opportunities and/or creating them.

In 2003 I became an accredited TCC teacher, always awed and grateful. Tucked away on an island in the North Atlantic far from other TCC teachers and events, I faced two key challenges: how would I get started in fostering a local TCC community, and how could we connect with the larger worldwide community?

I started in the small town where I lived. My community of one gradually expanded. Connections opened. Invitations appeared. Classes grew. The *Chi* was very busy. But I was still only one teacher. As time went on, I readily posed the question and sometimes students spontaneously and/or cautiously raised it: "Accreditation? Who? Me?"

Beginner and Beyond Beginner classes (and eventually Saturday Retreat Days) deepened students' practice with and without thoughts of accreditation. New doors opened by seizing opportunities and embracing invitations for "Come and See" demos and presentations.

Because student travel to the U.S. is so costly, we invited Dan Pienciak to Newfoundland. The preparation and promotion required time and energy that proved well worth the investment. I sought ideas and tips from seasoned hosts; students were eager and willing to engage. Occasional scholarships helped offset students' costs.

Our teacher trainers and the Guide were eager to come. Dan has been here nine times since 2007, most recently in July. Dan's initial workshops stirred student's interest in becoming teachers, and it led to our first intensive in 2008, followed by accreditation in 2009, which graduated six new Newfoundland teachers.

Dan's visits broadened student exposure to other teachers and fostered a sense of belonging to the worldwide TCC community. Every time another from outside Newfoundland joined us, it enriched our local island experience. It also united our province-wide community, a major challenge with our expansive coastal geography.

It is still about fanning the flame, dreaming as we grow. With six teachers, we now ask, "How small is big enough for an intensive or accreditation, especially given geographical considerations?" A very real challenge I pose to our Foundation. Another is whether our Foundation could subsidize travel cost for trainers' sessions beyond intensives and accreditations, especially in international and/or in more isolated contexts to help level the playing field financially (so that all have more equal access to trainers)? Intensives and accreditations would increase and be all the richer for it.

Being so far removed from so much because of distance and cost has added challenges. Our island culture means limited exposure to new modalities. For many people TCC is seen more as exercise rather than a life-long internal or spiritual discipline, so they stop coming to class when they feel, "I know it now." The challenge becomes how to keep students coming back long enough to really experience it and get hooked? Another challenge is the busyness of lives today. With so many opportunities, people are eager to check them all out, more like shopping therapy for perennial browsers.

As we dream our way into a future yet unknown, we continue more of what we have been doing, allowing the Chi, that Divine Intelligent Energy that Justin speaks of, to lead the way. Ours is but to nurture the dream. Bread needs time to rise. Jelly needs time to set. Trusting the Chi will do the rest when we allow. The key is to allow "More Chi. Less me."

Let us continue to encourage and inspire one another. Indeed my current TCC Prison Ministry was encouraged and inspired by other teachers who dared to dream and shared their story. It is very humbling to think our Newfoundland story might somehow encourage and inspire others among us. Thank you Justin, and all.



# Especially For Teachers Who Attended Conference

By MARY WICHMANN, ROCHERT, MINNESOTA

8 A.M., AUGUST 10, 2015

I often start my day with hot water or tea. If breakfast isn't cereal, it's tomato juice, dry whole-wheat or rye toast, egg whites or egg substitute with my hash browns. But this morning I'm on the outside terrace of the Inn on Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina, after completing the conference at the YMCA nearby.

After my morning practice I've come down from the sixth floor to dine with nature and soft piano music from the tall pianist I'd made eye contact with yesterday as I waited in the hotel lobby to check in. Was I the only one appreciating his talent?

We are never the same but I'm a different person this morning. I'm moved to compassionate tears for the familiar strangers sitting at tables nearby and for the world. Am I the only one seeing the beauty of this precious moment?

Carlos the waiter pours coffee and I don't speak. He delivers orange juice and I thank him. I find myself ordering heirloom tomato and basil eggs Benedict with roasted potato. The food is unfamiliar to my pallet but it's beautifully presented and delicious. Tomorrow I'll return to Minnesota and probably to my usual breakfast but my taste has matured.

Oh look, the fog here has moved in, but I woke up seeing clearly.



# Harmony

By APRIL LEFFLER, PROSPECT PARK, PENNSYLVANIA

**H**armony is an inside job. Peace is an inside job. Misery is an inside job.

Shortly after being invited to speak on Harmony at the 2015 T'ai Chi Chih teacher conference, **I received three black and white images** in my mind's eye during my morning TCC practice. I had a very strong feeling that these images were related to my presentation.

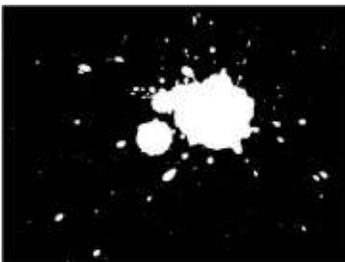
**The first image** was a big, black fly and I thought to myself, "Ewwwww. What is that?" Then I heard inside my head, "There's a fly in your soup. How do you respond?"



I began to ponder the implications. Would I respond (e.g., "Waiter, there's a fly in my soup, may I please have another bowl?") or react (e.g., How disgusting. What kind of place is this? My whole meal is ruined.) **Responding** to the situation cultivates a state of harmony. **Reacting** cultivates a state of disharmony.

The mind began to roll with other possibilities. Who and what are "the flies" in my life? Do I respond or react to them? Am I the fly in someone else's life? What if the fly simply represents my Shadow. How do I respond to that? Do I swat at it, hoping it goes away? Or do I take a look at it? Suppose, if we allow ourselves to get closer to and look at our shadow/fly, it actually becomes a peephole into the Universe at large revealing great Truths...

**The second image** I received was a white splat on a black background. The first thing that came to mind was white paint on black wool pants. Since this is hard to clean and it's summer, I switched the symbolism to white bird poop on black linen pants.



I continued with the same series of questions. Who or what is the bird poop in my life? Do I respond or react? ...

Then it occurred to me that the "white splat" could simply represent the Light within. I believe that Light spreads Light. It only takes one candle to lighten up a dark room; however, if one opens the door to a closet, the darkness from inside the closet doesn't spill out into the room. It doesn't work that way.

As a self-proclaimed Light-worker, I sometimes feel that this is lonely work. Pushing against the established status quo can feel draining. One day I was particularly feeling alone in the business of "spreading Light" and I received an image of a world wide web, similar to a huge fish net. Each of the knots in the four cornered squares in the fish net was a point of light. It reminded me that if I look around, I'll notice other Light-workers who are also spreading Light. Perhaps each of us is a Light-worker and essentially we are spreading more light to ourselves, to others and to the planet as we practice and teach TCC.

After sharing with the audience my perspectives on the fly and bird poop, and the shadow and light I asked everyone to stand and choose a partner. They were instructed to face their partner with eyes closed and connect palm to palm with fingertips pointed up. One person (i.e., the leader) was instructed to initiate random moves with their hands in any direction while the other person (i.e., the follower) was told to simply feel the movement of their partner's hands and stay connected palm to palm. After several minutes, each person was asked to switch roles so both had a chance to initiate and follow.

Were the leaders able to follow in the exercise? Were the followers able to lead? Were people resisting and creating disharmony or were they able to allow and cultivate a sense of harmony? People shared with their partners after the exercise was over as well as with the larger group. Some people realized the benefit of simply letting go and just being.

In summary, it's all good when accepted. Blend rather than resist. Which leads me to the **third image** I had received.



## TCC Intensive in San Antonio, Texas, September 2015

BY ALICE HOLDEN, HOST,  
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

What a great experience, to host an intensive with Pam Towne and have our first practice overlooking a pond followed by a light meal and sharing stories. Days were filled with practice, input from Justin's *Spiritual Odyssey*, and Pam's personal notes and reflections. Students wrote notes and reviewed "Ahha" experiences. Sunday brought shared reflections, including:

flow  
softly  
centering  
*Chi* follows thought  
think of soles  
of your  
feet  
– TGP

sink  
slowly  
into a  
new attitude  
I choose to  
self-heal  
*teh*  
– TGP

"I came for movement refinements for teacher accreditation, and I learned something from everyone." – JKR

"I learned how to practice TCC during time crunches." – PP



"I hoped to reconnect to my practice and ended up confronting my perfectionism as it relates to teacher certification and teaching." – MM

"I arrived anxious to be a student again. I was rewarded with deeper insights and understandings of the flow of *Chi*. I picked up helpful tips for teaching my students." – CP

"Making friends with the *Chi* helps me be friends with me." – CG

"My sought guidance in perfecting my physical movements. My experience carried me beyond the physical and entered into the spiritual realm of the *Chi*. And I learned they are one and the same." – JD

"The intensive surprised me in its multifaceted benefits: shifting, softness, stillness, grounding and allowing *Chi* to lead and flow." – SC

"I found circularity present on all planes of movement. Justin's writings spoke clearly to me, and the practice of TCC really grounded me during a very difficult, recent personal experience." – LE

"This intensive has convinced me of the need for this practice and my negligence, and it has confirmed my resolution to honor this spiritual practice by each day's faithful practice." – AH

## Seijaku Accreditation in North Carolina, August 2015

COMPILED BY JUDY HUBBEL, SAN FRANCISCO, CA

“If you make friends with the Chi, you can have a long happy life and an easy death.

~ JUSTIN STONE

Softness. Letting go. Summer is fading. Fall is coming. In *Spiritual Odyssey* ("The Vital Principle of How to Move" p. 59), Justin talks about the "difficulty of learning the simple T'ai Chi Chih movements." He mentions how important it is for students to get the feel of the practice. On the last day, our group was asked by Pam Towne how the training was. Charlotte, always enthusiastic and open, said she was rewriting her notes from last year's Seijaku training, and that she would like to see 75 percent of TCC teachers learning Seijaku. Pam commented, "not only learning but teaching it." Charlotte added that Pam had brought a smorgasbord to the table. Our group was insightful and full of fun. As half the class was male, Pam said we were "the most *yang* group ever."

What had we learned from our Seijaku training? For Charlotte it was "letting go of anything that doesn't serve me." Ann added that could include "getting rid of the clutter in my house." Harry felt less connected to his negative self; that he "could be in the world, but not of it." Stephen felt "much more grounded and in the present moment." Bruce felt the "polarities of softness and hardness" and for the first time experienced the hardness not as a resistance but as an invitation to experience the intrinsic energy in a deeper way, as "it is always there for me." Judy became aware of all her practices (T'ai Chi Chih, Mindfulness, Meditation and Hatha Yoga) finally coming together in Seijaku. Jim felt a "deeper understanding of the softness" of T'ai Chi Chih. Jack said he "went down the rabbit hole and came out more alive." Linda was able to let go of her medical condition with a message of acceptance and tranquility: "It is okay if the treatment works or doesn't." For Pam, "Seijaku has opened my heart, and 'Love Energy is the fruit.'" And Alice was an example of that love, as she cared for a hospitalized conference attendee.

“The inherent wisdom of the Chi is that still small voice within all of us.

~ JUSTIN STONE

## T'ai Chi Chih & Seijaku Workshop in Newfoundland, Canada, July 2015

BY CAROLYN O'DONNELL AND SHEILA LEONARD, NEWFOUNDLAND, CANADA

July 2015 found us in the midst of another wonderful Newfoundland T'ai Chi Chih weekend with Dan Pienciak. Coming together from east to west and sharing our journeys towards and through TCC is a treasured gift of these weekends, especially given the vastness of our island.

Each person experienced the weekend as a special gift to deepen and refine his or her practice and sense of TCC's essence from Justin's teachings. Integrating Justin's teachings as part of his instruction, incorporating Justin's writings and his own experiences as a student are all valuable aspects of Dan's calm, patient and understanding style. The added exposure to Justin's philosophy and the principles of TCC stirred a wanting to further study Justin and his work.

A first-time participant (who had driven eight hours to get there and who was admittedly quite skeptical) said, "It had better be worth it." In the end it superseded her expectations to the degree that she didn't want the weekend to end. She was already looking forward to the next one. As were we all.

While enjoying the focus on trusting the *Chi* and the sacredness of TCC practice, the awareness and connections we thought we had actually became more prevalent, particularly regarding moving from the center and shifting of the weight. It also proved helpful to start more complicated movements one side at a time before continuing with both alternating.

We came to an increased clarity and understanding of specific moves, including Rocking Motion and Joyous Breath, movements that seem simple but have many layers. Re-grounding the energy from the upper part of the body (in Light at the Top of the Head and Light at the Temples) with Joyous Breath resonated well.

The energy of the group practice, encouragement from one another, the increase in energy, the lessening of chronic pain and wall exercises to help feel the pelvic tilt left us wanting more. Thank you, Dan, and thank you, Justin.



Retreat in Newfoundland (above and below).



Retreat in North Carolina (above).



Retreat in Prescott (above). Front row: John Baggenos, Lane Powell, Dana Diller; Second row: Ilyana Jacobson, Kassandra Lor, Kim Bradford, Stu Goldman, Sonya Van Wey; Third row: Nikol Price, Ali Baker, Pat Brie, Pam Towne, Holly Ueda



Retreat in San Antonio (above). Terry Gay Puckett, Judy K-Robinson, Patricia Pratchett, Michael Marx, Carol Payne, Carol Gilson, Jan Davis, Sharron Clark, Lorna Engleman, Alice Holden.

## TCC Retreat in Prescott, May 2015

BY DANA DILLER, PRESCOTT VALLEY, ARIZONA

People came from coast to coast, from the southern to the northern borders and locally. Many came to renew friendships; all enjoyed warm days and cool nights.

Chapel Rock is an exceptional facility with comfortable guestrooms and a spacious great room at the lodge for practicing. The chef did an amazing job catering to a wide variety of dietary requests. The magnificent setting, under towering ponderosa pines and close to the mountains, is tucked into a quiet corner of the city. A flagstone patio for watching wildlife was popular at break time. When we were not practicing, hiking on nearby trails was a popular diversion.

Pam Towne led us gently through the retreat to refine our TCC practice, learning as we relaxed. She worked with participants to help them improve and deepen their practice; many expressed interest in becoming accredited.

# Background Tapestry Of The Seijaku Publication

BY ANN RUTHERFORD AND KATHY GRASSEL, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

In 1986, Justin created Seijaku for his T'ai Chi Chih teachers and advanced students. For those TCC teachers who did not live close to a Seijaku accredited teacher, there was only one resource available to learn the movements: his Seijaku DVD, which he intentionally created as an incomplete work so that people would take classes from accredited Seijaku teachers. Furthermore, until recently, TCC teachers could take the Seijaku accreditation without ever having practiced the movements, which was in stark contrast to the long preparation we went through to become TCC teachers.

Since TCC teachers had such a brief exposure to Seijaku, they would return home from Seijaku accreditation feeling uncertain about teaching it to their students. At the Nebraska TCC Teacher Conference, a quick survey of practicing Seijaku teachers revealed that there were only five present who taught it. When asked why, most said they did not understand it or felt overwhelmed by it.

Fortunately TCC and Seijaku teacher Marilyn Irvin proposed that TCC teachers first take a Seijaku class as a requirement before attending a Seijaku accreditation. Sandy, Pam and Antonia agreed that this was a sensible idea. Now Seijaku is experiencing a renaissance, and we're sure Justin is delighted.

In 2013 at the Pecos, New Mexico, retreat, Antonia announced the creation of the T'ai Chi Chih International Foundation to support the TCC teacher conferences and provide scholarships for the conferences and accreditations. Wanting to support this new "child" within our community, we (Kathy and Ann) announced that we would be creating a community Seijaku booklet. We asked practitioners to share their personal experience with Seijaku. We are thrilled to announce that this Seijaku publication is now for sale, and that *all revenue goes to the Foundation*.

Readers of the new publication will notice that many TCC teachers wrote of the deeper changes that came into their lives after the addition of Seijaku to their practice. We are very grateful to these writers. If they had not been willing to share their stories, this publication never could have been created.

## Seijaku Publication Order Form

The purpose of this booklet is to deepen our understanding of Seijaku and its potential. Editors of this Seijaku publication wish to donate all profits from its sales to the T'ai Chi Chih International Foundation. The non-profit T'ai Chi Chih International Foundation sponsors the annual T'ai Chi Chih Teachers Conference, provides scholarship funds for T'ai Chi Chih and Seijaku teacher accreditations and continuing education workshops, and sponsors events and projects, which promote the knowledge and practice of T'ai Chi Chih and Seijaku worldwide.

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## The Lighter Side

I asked my college class to form a circle to practice the Six Healing Sounds. Right in the middle of the sixth sound, one of my student's sneezed. I kept going as if nothing happened and said, "That's the seventh healing sound." There were many giggles.

— BY SHARON SIRKIS, COLUMBIA, MARYLAND

I chatted with Linda, one of my T'ai Chi Chih students, outside of class. "How are you?" I asked. "My arthritis is kicking up," she replied. I then proceeded to tell her that my mother calls arthritis "Arthur...itis," and she often tells me that Arthur is coming to town. So I said, "I guess Arthur's coming to town, eh?" She laughed and said, "Oh, he's already here, and he brought his brother too."

— BY SHARON SIRKIS, COLUMBIA, MARYLAND

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## 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

**Nov 16-21 | TCC Accreditation w/Pam** | Albuquerque, NM | Mary White | 505-980-7329  
~ 2016 ~

**Feb 24-28, 2016 | TCC Intensive w/Sandy** | Littleton, CO | Marie Dotts | 970-412-9955

**Apr 10-13 | TCC Teacher Symposium w/Sandy** | Aston, PA | April Leffler | 610-532-6753

**May 29-Jun 3 | TCC Accreditation w/TBA** | Aston, PA | April Leffler | 610-532-6753

**June 19-25 | TCC Accreditation w/ Dan** | Littleton, CO | Marie Dotts | 970-412-9955

**Oct 9-13 | TCC Intensive w/TBA** | Aston, PA | Host: TBA

**Oct 16-19 | TCC Prajna Retreat w/Sandy** | Aston, PA | April Leffler | 610-532-6753

**Oct 21-24 | TCC Silent Retreat w/Pam** | Winter Park, FL | Susan Quinn | 863-393-8197

**Nov 17-19 | Seijaku Accreditation w/Pam** | Albuquerque, NM | Robert Montes de Oca | 505-999-1247

### - MORE WORKSHOPS & RETREATS -

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

**Nov 21 | TCC Workshop w/ Sharon Sirkis** | Marriottsville, MD | Sharon Sirkis | 410-730-1986

**Dec 19 | TCC Workshop w/ Sharon Sirkis** | Marriottsville, MD | Sharon Sirkis | 410-730-1986

~ 2016 ~

**Jan 16 | TCC Workshop w/ Sharon Sirkis** | Marriottsville, MD | Sharon Sirkis | 410-730-1986

**Feb 13 | TCC Workshop w/ Sharon Sirkis** | Marriottsville, MD | Sharon Sirkis | 410-730-1986

**Mar 12 | TCC Workshop w/ Sharon Sirkis** | Marriottsville, MD | Sharon Sirkis | 410-730-1986

**Apr 21-24 | Learn Seijaku Retreat w/ Carmen Brocklehurst** | Albuquerque, NM | Judy Hendricks  
| 505-573-0820

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