

# The Vital Force

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Justin Stone: In His Words

## There Is Within You That Which Knows ...That Is Your Teacher

By Justin F. Stone, September 1992, *The Vital Force*

Con't....from the May issue of *The Vital Force*

**I remember** one teachers' training course in which a fine young man, who had many terrible habits, made a real breakthrough. At the end of the six-day course, he suddenly realized he had not indulged any of these habits during the week. I doubt that he subsequently indulged these habits, though it is not easy to break away from habitual thought patterns.

My advice is to trust your inherent, intuitive wisdom rather than the accumulated knowledge we all pile up. There is no end to adding facts and filling our heads with knowledge, which serves a very real purpose in its place. **Whether you call it God, *Prajna*, your own true nature, or whatever, my advice is to know it and listen to it.** This means to come to know "who" and "what" you are.

The Lotus Sutra says: "From state of emptiness." The key is the "emptiness," like an empty cup that can hold tea.

Da Hui is talking about *Prajna* as opposed to knowledge when he says: "The great teaching must flow out point by point from within your own breast to cover heaven and earth; only then will it be the action of a man of power." That which flows out from one's own breast, as he calls it, is one's own beginningless

present awareness, fundamentally complete of itself. **As soon as you arouse a second thought, you fall into comparative awareness.** "Comparative awareness" is something gained from external refinements (that is, acquired knowledge). "Present awareness" is something from before your parents were born. (Don't get hung up on "before" and be literal; just sense the meaning.) I call this "present awareness," the real power, *Prajna* or *Prajna Paramita*. The names we use are not important, yet wars are fought over them (Allah vs. Jehovah, Krishna, Jesus). How infantile.

Da Hui goes on to say: "With strong power one can enter both enlightenment and delusion. If one's power is weak, he can enter the realm of enlightenment, but not the realm of delusion." (I call this "merging sense with essence.")

I say to **have faith in this power**, this *Prajna* (which is certainly related to *Prana* or *Chi*) and to let it function for you. Don't let delusory thinking dull or obliterate it for you. In an interesting book I've been reading, "Do You See What I See?", the author says to have faith in Life and let it function freely. Thus he

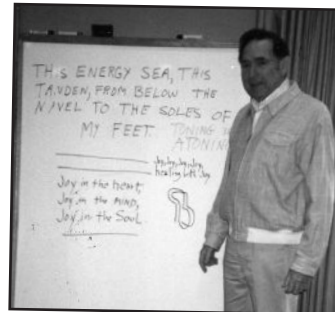
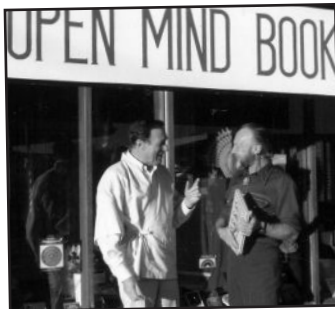
equates Life with God, Truth, etc. and rightly points out that it is all here now, not to screen it out.

It is easy to tell people that this very moment is the transcendental and equal to infinity. Here is Da Hui's answer to that: "In the conduct of their daily activities, sentient beings have no Illumination (that is, *Prajna*). If you go along with their ignorance, they're happy; if you oppose their ignorance, they're vexed."

So, I can make you happy by saying what you want to hear. But I'm unwilling to talk down to people. I won't use clichés such as "All is One." Do you live as though "All is One" or do you see others, some opposed to you? Do you live in the transcendental or do you have to pay the rent?

Zen Master Danxia said: "In the 'function which is identical to essence,' holding still and letting go rest completely in one's self. In the 'Essence which is identical to Function,' bringing forth and throwing away depend on no one else."

He is saying that it is all there with you, in your actions and your thoughts. You are complete. **T'ai Chi Chih is helping you uncover that completeness.** I say learn to live with and in that completeness and have absolute faith in it.



**GOOD KARMA PUBLISHING: THE END OF AN ERA**

Allow me to change hats for a moment, from editor of this quarterly journal to my former role as GKP publisher. It was my distinct honor to run GKP from January 2004 until mid-February 2015. Working with Justin, and preparing Justin’s materials to reach a wider audience, was a privilege. Even before becoming the CEO, I vividly remember photographing him at a rental studio for the photo textbook. It was 180 minutes of non-stop paying attention to lessons. There were many more to come. I have been grateful for all, and Justin’s teachings echo throughout the day.

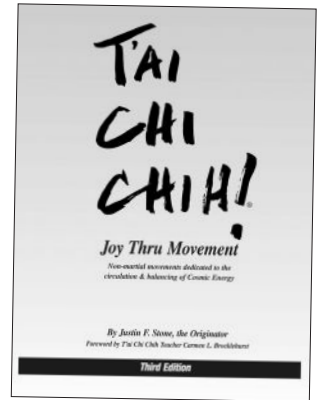
During my professional freelance career in publishing I acquired many skills that would come in handy at GKP: author, editor, photographer, designer, publisher, app developer, marketer, public relations writer, small business owner and more. I do not believe the earning of those skills was coincidental.

On July 16, 2018, the Good Karma shareholders and Board of Directors voted to dissolve the company, effective at the end of 2018. The vote

was 4 ‘yes’ and 1 ‘no.’ Please see Vic Berg’s message on page 18.

Were other alternatives considered? Yes. Please note this important fact: On October 9, 2016 the GKP Board voted 3 ‘yes’ and 2 ‘no’ to offer the Justin’s trademarks, copyrights, inventory and a sum of GKP cash as seed money to the T’ai Chi Chih International Foundation. The Foundation Board declined the offer.

On July 16, 2018, GKP voted to offer me the same, minus the inventory. I accepted the offer and am humbled and happy to resume my role as caretaker of Justin’s writings and teaching materials. Minus the profit requirement.



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*The Vital Force*

~ Web Site Updates ~

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

~ Submission Deadlines ~

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

~ Submission Guidelines ~

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

~ Giving ~

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

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# Gratitude + Humility = Cosmic Consciousness Pose

By Jeneth Rundle, Oxnard, California

**What is gratitude?** The Dalai Lama said, “The roots of all goodness lie in the soil of appreciation for goodness.” Like many ideas on our quest for spiritual development, **our journey from the finite to the infinite, our notion of gratitude transforms along the way** from simple thankfulness for the things we perceive as external to ourselves, such as loved ones, to appreciation that is non-dual – we are One with its cosmic origin.

Is T'ai Chi Chih a gratitude practice? Does it offer the transformative opportunity to see the good (or God) in everything? Here I visit the subject of the power of gratitude, the enormity of its potential to transform us and what takes place inwardly in its presence.

At the very first TCC class I attended I was instructed during Cosmic Consciousness Pose to think of absolutely nothing, and that if thoughts persisted, to think about what I was grateful for that day. I found incorporating **conscious gratitude** into the practice to be interesting and helpful and so I integrated this into my personal practice.

Justin offers the following advice in the TCC photo textbook Joy Thru Movement (within the General Instructions, Additional Tips section): “My T'ai Chi Chuan master used to say ‘Try to have no extraneous thoughts while practicing.’... Empty the mind before beginning; forget troubles and other preoccupations. The great Chinese philosopher, Chuang Tzu spoke of ‘fasting mind.’ We keep our heads too cluttered and accumulate too much tension; let the mind fast a bit for 15 minutes.”

But, how is this “fasting mind” accessed? This quiet fasting mind is detached from everyday interests, worries and concerns. How can I empty my mind?

After several years of using the tool of thinking about what I was grateful for when in Cosmic Consciousness Pose, I observed that there was a direct effect on my brain and the content of my consciousness. Other thoughts came to a full stop, and gradually “I” became quiet; the mind quiescent. **Over years of practice there have been intervals where the content of consciousness was empty – empty of all but Light – the “Uncarved Block” of consciousness.** Justin assigned the name to this pose – Cosmic Consciousness Pose. I do not make it happen. It is attained immediately when I understand intuitively what it is – the mind’s great action, acquiescence. The paradox is only verbal.

Upon reflection, it became clear that when thinking about what I am grateful for there comes the touch of essential humility; essential because nothing is to be transformed without it. **Humility is Teh;** sincere objectivity about one’s condition. The I, the ego, shrinks as humility approaches, absolved then dissolved; the everyday I quietened, the brain not doing. **In this peace the spiritual heart opens** and prepares to receive... blessings... joy, full of my Original Face, the face before I was born.

**Is true gratitude possible without humility?** No. Which comes first? Neither. Gratitude and humility arrive hand in hand, a combined catalyst. How can the mind involute to fasting mind? Start with the brain that is always busy. The brain loves to work, it loves to do so it must be given a job. The practice begins by assigning the brain the job of thinking specifically about what I am grateful for today, and then another job follows – observing the result. Less and less identified with thoughts, more and more the watcher, the I in identity subsides as the door to humility opens, the flood gates release, **joy and freedom flow as the Chi takes the lead in the spirit dance of love, joy and light in sync, in harmony with the Cosmic Rhythm.**

*Lotus Sutra*

*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.*

I bow in gratitude to God for the gift of this body, the vessel through which this practice is received, as offered by my teachers Justin, Carmen and Lisa and all of you with whom I share the *Chi*. All is love.



# Pyramid Poetry: Inside, Out

By Carmen L. Brocklehurst,  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

**There are times** when we sit to write that it seems we struggle for every word; the writing seems plain and lifeless. When that happened to Justin, he would do some T'ai Chi Chih movements or a full practice. He said that afterwards everything seemed to flow easily. The practice allows so many ideas to come and it also clears the mind, so we may go deeper, perhaps to find a new way to present a lesson to students. The focus seems always to be to feel more and think less, to connect with what we feel during practice and as we live our lives.

**This sense of wholeness stops being an idea and turns into a sense of true connection with everyone and everything.** One student said it this way: "Wrapped in a field of blue, gone were the fears and instead I felt comforted."

Justin was a gifted teacher; he knew the best way for us to go in the right direction.

He showed us but didn't force us. Most of us worked in our own way, only to come to the conclusion – because new words jumped out of our mouths – that those words seemed perfect. Some of us even thought that we had come up with them on our own. Later we realized we were saying it the way that Justin said it or doing the movement the way Justin had suggested. It felt like the most natural thing in the world. Often beautiful statements came from our hearts.

Many benefits came from spending time and practicing with Justin. Even today, we may do our practice with him using his DVD. We begin to feel and know deeply through our own experience while we do what he said; it is not just repeating what we heard or saw. One lesson that never seemed easy was Pyramid Poetry, explained in **Climb The Joyous Mountain**.

Many of us have noticed that when we are not centered, our minds are muddled. We think that we are making sense as we talk, or making decisions, but truly we are not. Pyramid Poems work particularly well during this time because the scant number of words helps us simplify and focus. **It also opens us the order and peace within.** We don't have

to work at it; we simply see clarity in black and white.

A "successful" Pyramid Poem isn't a matter of being clever or intelligent. It has everything to do with having an open mind and heart. It is simple and uses syllables. The first line has one syllable, the second has two syllables, the third has three syllables, the fourth four syllables. Then next line has three syllables, next two syllables and last line one syllable. The subject matter can be anything.

write (1 syllable)  
a poem. (2 syllables)  
let it flow. (3 syllables)  
what comes to you, (4 syllables)  
as the words (3 syllables)  
flow out? (2 syllables)  
best (1 syllable)

After finishing, look at the first and last words. In this case, "write best." Isn't that what we would like to do when writing for *The Vital Force* or an email to a friend? **The first and last words speak to us.** I didn't plan on starting with "write" and ending with "best" – they just came. This seems simple, and it is, with deep implications. This is how we learn to love and share the *Chi*.

**Topic: Beauty**

the  
chi of  
my life brings  
beauty to me  
and love flows  
out in  
peace  
– MICHAEL DUNN

know  
beauty  
let essence  
be the key to  
opening  
your heart  
now  
– ROBERT

love  
beauty  
radiates  
from deep within  
changing our  
very  
souls  
– DORA WIEMANN

**Topic: Working the Pulley**

I  
commit  
to let go  
and then it feels  
so complete  
I must  
trust  
– MONICA CEJUDO

let  
the waist  
turn, feel the  
energy flow  
circles of  
light and  
love  
– M.W.

form  
spirit  
combine to  
synchronize as  
one moving  
feeling  
joy  
– MARY R.

not  
work, not  
pulling the  
pulley, just now  
easy flow  
with me  
now  
– LEYA

you  
smoothly  
flow and turn  
from the center  
push and pull  
gentle  
soft  
– SHARI HOLMES

turn  
the waist  
and feel the  
chi coming in  
tan t'ien  
and breathe  
ahh  
– CINDY DUNN

pull  
working  
movement ho  
back and forward  
here we go  
one more  
end  
– WINSTON A. DEANE

we  
working  
the pulley  
'till one merges  
with many  
being  
one  
– CONNIE LAPP

my  
pulley  
back and forth,  
over under  
catch the wave  
it's here  
now  
– ANNA MARES

**Topic: Gratitude**

give  
thanks feel  
gratitude  
sharing the love  
know the truth  
peaceful  
love  
– JUDY

work  
moves slow  
except for  
days when we hold  
gratitude  
for our  
time  
– SONDRÁ



## Flowing From Emptiness

By Deb Bertelsen, Cave Creek, Arizona

**Last Fall** April Leffler asked several of us for thoughts on “flowing from emptiness.” What that means to me is allowing me to be in that space of floating and drifting as an awakened being (*bodhisattva*). Thich Nhat Hanh wrote a great article titled, “The Fullness of Emptiness” (August 6, 2012), where emptiness meant being empty of a separate self and full of everything.

Circulating the *Chi* that is within and around me during my practice provides an opportunity for everything to reconnect. I **become empty of a separate self but full of everything**, becoming one with everything: earth, sky, water, soil, plants, animals, you and other beings. I exist outside of and beyond the confines of my physical form. This brings me renewed life.

Flowing from emptiness allows me to **be more open to receiving** – like the empty cup. It allows me to learn about myself and the impact that actions, non-action, words or silence may have. It’s like a butterfly flapping its wings: it ripples the air throughout the universe. This brings me a closer connection to my feelings and a greater consciousness.

Flowing from emptiness is a **truer sense of letting go**: of ego, angst, fear, perceptions. Flowing from emptiness gets me closer to working from a center of inner sincerity (*teh*) and as Justin wanted with T’ai Chi Chih, finding out who and what I truly am.

**It felt true and in the moment. But something felt like it was missing.** On a recent trip I was drawn to goldstone. Connected to the sacral chakra, it is a stone of ambition, gives you courage and reduces inflammation. It symbolizes the light found in the dark and is helpful for those lost in life. Goldstone promotes emotional balance and amplifies physical energy and vitality. So okay – why me? After further pondering, the layers of the onion begin to peel.

Our move to the Southwest is truly where my soul needs to be. I transitioned to a new job, created a home that feels more like us and focused on designing a calm and peaceful outdoor space. However, I still feel incomplete. I feel disconnected to people who were an integral part of my daily life: my family, friends, students, the MN TCC community and the greater TCC community. I am slightly lost and finding my way. And although I have been unable to attend conference the past few years, I have not forgotten any of you. I hold you close in my heart. I focus on flowing from emptiness to reconnect with everyone and everything. I search for ways to give back to the community, be a resource, be of service. The Goldstone will be a great complement to my TCC practice in helping me find my way.

## A Tool For Transitions

By Sheryl Adair Atlanta, Georgia

**T’ai Chi Chih is a unique and priceless tool** to have in one’s toolbox for life. I have come to appreciate this more and more over the last nineteen years. Utilizing this tool in times of transition such as birth, death, illness and divorce is particularly useful. TCC seems to help smooth the way through change.

I welcomed both grandchildren into the world while doing Rocking Motion in the waiting area. Somehow after waiting for hours, I instinctively knew when to begin. I am two for two. It’s wonderful to be born into TCC energy.

A student recently told me how helpful her practice was during the illness of her mother and while grieving her loss. Another was called to her fa-

“ TCC tells me it is okay, and it is okay not to know

ther’s bedside in the middle of the night. A text at first light expressed gratitude for the powerful experience of doing TCC there. Justin often spoke of those who credited TCC with a hasty release from the hospital. We all have examples.

Under normal life circumstances our daily TCC practice adds something special to our day and benefits us in countless ways. **When one does not know what to do, leaning on our TCC practice becomes a life raft.**

I count on my practice like a dear friend to help me quiet inside, calm down, listen for answers or surrender to not knowing. TCC tells me it is okay, and it is okay not to know. Next time you just don’t know what to do, start Rocking. The *Chi* will take it from there.

from  
the souls  
of my feet  
escorted to  
vast world of  
love and  
light

– SHERYL ADAIR



# Building Community In Class

By Sandy McAlister, Hayward, California

**As practitioners of T'ai Chi Chih** we know of the many ways the practice benefits us. We have read the studies touting the medical, emotional and practical effects of regular practice. We do not even have to do the movements well to get benefits. Of course, the closer we adhere to the form and principles of movement the more thoroughly the *Chi* will flow and balance.

Besides learning how to move well we also work with training the mind – paying attention to passing thoughts and the wandering mind. We practice recognizing and then letting thoughts go, continually bringing our awareness back to the present. Paying attention to the mind and its machinations helps us understand more about who we are.

Another component I bring into my classes is one of building community. I mostly teach continuing classes, with generally the same people attending each time and new ones periodically joining. One class is at a senior center, another is in a retirement facility of 300 and another a retirement community of 10,000. In each of the three classes there is already a common thread that connects the students.

Creating community in our classes can achieve three things: **it enriches the class experience, it broadens our TCC learning and it connects us with people and the larger picture beyond ourselves.**

Usually classes start with sitting in a circle. I ask if anyone has good news. It can range from the personal (such as a new grandchild or family wedding, planting the vegetable garden, a recommendation for a just-read-book about the local Indian tribe, a vacation coming up or just finished) to local upcoming events. As the participants get to know about each other, connections and friendships are made. There is a feeling of shared acceptance. I can usually count on at least two or three people speaking up each time. I've noticed students exchanging books, a couple of them going out to breakfast after class, others making dates to attend a class or event they both had an interest in.

As students become more comfortable with each other they are more likely to speak up and comment when I ask questions about TCC. After the “good news” I shift the class to TCC. I may ask the students a question such as, “why do we strive for softness in our TCC practice” or “how does the practice make you feel” or “what is your favorite movement and why”? I am often amazed at their depth of understanding, and I would never have known the degree of learning they had absorbed if I had not asked them questions. Their answers enrich the learning experience for all attending and often lead to wonderful discussions. Part of what is happening as we listen is learning to be more present with others. I feel each gift of opening up and sharing of thoughts is met with respect. We begin to see that we are not so different and feel a kinship in supporting each other.

One of my students had become quite a recluse. Going to church was about the only social thing she did. She saw the TCC class advertised at the local

senior center and came in hopes of improving her balance. She says the class has truly changed her life. She has joined an exercise class, a singing group and has a couple new friends that she often goes out to breakfast with after class. This week she is venturing out on her first cruise and vacation in many, many years. She says it is the TCC that has given her confidence to step out of her comfort zone, and also the people in her TCC class that support her.



While TCC is not a social club, the practice can be an avenue to connecting with something greater than ourselves. We get in touch with our inner voice. Barriers of resistance and self-protection fall away allowing us to see more clearly life around us, our roll in life – and how we fit into the bigger picture of all that is past, present and future. Building community in our TCC classes enriches the whole experience of learning and practicing TCC.

## Reflections On Conferences Past

By Pam Towne, Oceanside, California

**As I prepare** for our annual T'ai Chi Chih teacher conference in two weeks, I find myself thinking back on previous years' conferences. I'm very fortunate to have been accredited just nine months before the first conference in 1985, and to have been able to attend every one since then. Just for fun, I pulled out my saved conference folders and browsed through them. They brought back so many lovely memories.

Our first conference was in one of the old rustic lodges at Asilomar in Pacific Grove on the Central Coast of California. It was only two days, yet the 40 teachers who attended

agreed that "*Chi*, that was wonderful" and "it was too short." So the next year it expanded to three days and since 2000 it has been four days in length.

Back in the day, before the Internet, email, social media and cell phones, the two main ways teachers stayed in touch were the quarterly *Vital Force* journal and the annual conference. They both still provide important ways of connecting our TCC community.

At the 1992 Conference at Vallombrosa in Menlo Park, California, Justin told us that our purpose in coming together for conference was twofold. First, to renew ourselves in the essence of TCC and return home in that dedication. Second, to refine the movements of TCC so that we do it well and pass it on correctly.

That has certainly been my experience. Yet for me and many other teachers there

has also been a third purpose: to connect with our TCC family in person. It is delightful to re-connect with old friends year after year and to make new ones. An added bonus is the powerful *Chi* generated by over 100 teachers doing a silent TCC practice together. This is a deeply moving experience not to be missed.

To all TCC teachers, I invite you to join me at next year's conference in Minnesota, June 20-23, 2019. Put it on your calendar now to reserve those dates. I'd love to connect with you there in person.

all  
moving  
together  
flowing as one  
sharing peace  
love and  
joy

## Learning To Shift Gears

By Daniel Pienckiak, Howell, New Jersey

**Only a few times in my life** did I try my hand at driving a manual shift on an automobile – not very successfully. Scary for me and very funny to those trying to teach me. Maybe that's part of why the forward and back weight shifts were more difficult than they needed to be when I first learned T'ai Chi Chih.

Manual shifting aside, did you ever have the experience driving a car when you were a little too impatient in parking or turning around, and you put the car in reverse when it had not quite stopped completely in moving forward? Not a fun experience (and not very healthy for the transmission on the car either.)

So this little lesson makes moving smoother, and it's easier on the body's joint mechanics. Do not misunderstand the continuity principal of TCC to mean that we are always either shifting forward or back, or side to side, or up and down without any moment of being in "neutral." (Neutral is NOT when we are still between movements with the palms of the hands facing downward. We are *actively grounding* during that time of stillness.)

I recall a good reminder of letting our body be still – in neutral gear – when Sandy McAlister used the phrase, glide and arrive. This is different from a simple forward and reverse that, if done abruptly, will disturb the smoothness and grace of our TCC movements, and would likely disrupt the form or our hand movements.

I ask my students to remember that on their motor vehicles, neutral is always in between drive and reverse. I ask them, "Why do you think that is?" Even so, it is still possible to reverse direction too quickly and jerk the vehicle.

What is nice in the TCC practice is that we don't have to brake at the end of the forward or backward or side-to-side movement. (If we do, we are probably rushing the weight shift.) The body gracefully comes to rest in stillness for a moment with the weight fully on one foot and then gracefully begins the reverse movement. The hands just keep moving through that moment as if carried by the momentum. Patience.





## What Really Matters

By Lisa Stroyan, Fort Collins, Colorado

**I just found a note** written to myself months ago after practice. “It’s not about solving all the problems in my head, or whether or not I’m perfect. What’s real (the present moment) is what matters. Trust is a big part of letting go, and coming home to myself.”

Sometimes I get ahead of myself when moving; I’m not with myself. It might be getting into my head, anticipating the next movement and rushing the close, my hands getting ahead of the weight shift. **Do you know the feeling of being ready for action, queued up and ready to jump at a moment’s notice?** We let that go in T’ai Chi Chih, which is a subtle but very important shift. Getting ahead of ourselves or over-extending causes effort and tension. If your shoulders are ahead of your waist, for example, that will probably cause tension somewhere in the backside of the body, as it holds you up.

The phrase “be patient with yourself” came to mind. From a mental perspective that means letting go of critical thoughts, such as “I messed that up; on the next one, I have to change x or y.” Try noticing without judgment.

When I’m with myself, all of me moves and arrives at the same time. I can let go and trust my body and the *Chi* to hold me up. I sense the body moving all at once, in sync, “moving in slow motion, as if in a dream.”

TCC teacher Linda Braga’s booklet, *Seven Qualities of Movement*, talks about the quality of synchronicity, when all parts of the body are moving as one. “Synchronicity allows the body to move in the most efficient, effortless way.” She explains that synchronicity in TCC requires the coordination of movement in three dimensions: upper/lower, left/right and front/back of the body. “When these dimensions are coordinated and the body is moving as one, synchronicity is present. Synchronicity allows a person to move with the ‘effort of no effort,’ just being carried by the forces of gravity, the weight shift, and the flow of the *Chi*.”

By staying with the current moment, with our centers, with ourselves, we can connect to what is real, moment by moment, and expand it with our awareness. What matters is what is real right now.



## Have You Tried Doing TCC Mentally?

By Sandra Wells, Evanston Illinois

**I love to visualize** the movements of T’ai Chi Chih as a meditation. Some years ago, when I heard Justin talk about this I decided to experiment with it and have been practicing ever since.

This practice is not a substitute for standing TCC that I’ve done almost every day for over 20 years, but it’s been helpful in situations where the moving meditation is not possible. For instance, I do mental TCC in the dentist’s chair or in the doctor’s waiting room. The other day it helped relieve my impatience while waiting for a friend who is always late.

As well as being effective in stressful situations, mental TCC can make good experiences even better. Last spring my husband and I decided to do some hiking in a local state park that is an hour away by metro. Instead of reading during the trip, I settled into my seat, closed my eyes and began to visualize the TCC movements.

It didn’t take long before train noises and passenger sounds were blocked out. As I visualized myself doing each movement the mental practice became much deeper, and I began to feel the peaceful and enjoyable effect of the circulation of *Chi*.

The train ride seemed to go by quickly, but best of all, when we arrived I was both energized and in a very relaxed state of mind. The practice had also increased my sensory awareness so as we walked everything was more vivid. I felt that I was absorbing some of the energy of the prairies and woodlands.

Mental TCC is another gift from Justin Stone. He talks about the surprise when we *begin to do the movements in our minds. The Chi then begins to flow just as if we were standing and moving.*\* It would be interesting to hear of other people’s experience with mental TCC.

\* *10 Ways to Know TCC Practice is Working*, November 2016 issue of the *The Vital Force*.



# Intuition, Gut Feeling, Prajna?

By Sky Young-Wick, Lansing, New York

**Loved reading Justin's article** on *prajna* in the May issue of *The Vital Force*. Also am very grateful to April Leffler for her leadership in keeping *prajna* and Justin's definition present in our community through her conference presentations and the *prajna* workshops she has created. If anyone is in tune with *prajna*, it's April.

While the term *prajna* came later in my life, for many years I have trusted my intuition and gut feelings. The message or feeling received is occasionally important, but often it's something ordinary or quirky. For example, if I've packed for a trip and I'm ready to leave, I will sometimes get a feeling that I'm forgetting something. I'll be at the front door ready to walk out and there's that feeling... and I think, "oh heck" because I've learned through the years that feeling is never wrong.

Another more significant example of my intuition or *prajna* involved a health issue. Several years ago at my annual physical, I told my doctor, "Something's brewing and I don't know what it is." Eight months later pre-cancerous cells were found in my right breast, and the issue was resolved successfully. On some level, I knew something was wrong.

For several years my husband and I explored the U.S. searching for where we would retire. We wanted a strong university presence, and I have always wanted to be near water. As we approached Ithaca, New York, I knew immediately that this is where we would live. It felt like home right away; three years later it did become our home.

One day I was looking at Petfinder.com, a website dogs from rescue organizations all over the U.S. We wanted to adopt a young female dog who was non-shedding and weighed at least 20-25 lbs. But young female non-shedding dogs were generally either 15 lbs or 50 lbs. Then I found Roxy, a Shih Tzu/Cocker mix, and as soon as I saw her picture (and the size of her feet), the feeling hit me like a thunderbolt in my heart. I said out loud to the computer, "That's it. She's the one." I knew she belonged in our family, and crazy as it sounds, we traveled all the way from upstate New York to southern California to get her. [Editor's note: Roxy is the middle dog in the photo.]

## There are ways to help invoke *prajna*:

- Regular T'ai Chi Chih practice and meditation set the foundation.
- Do a mindless activity, like picking up sticks and limbs in your yard after a storm.
- Don't think and watch if an insight just pops into your mind.
- Ask yourself a question and then listen to what pops in your mind.
- Seek ways to get out of your comfort zone such as attending a silent retreat. A change to the everyday pattern often opens the door for insights and creativity.
- Be open and believe you already have the answers.

## Ways that block *Prajna*, which Justin stated in the article, are associated with habit energies. Here are a few of mine:

- Rushing causes me trouble. I don't even function that well, much less tap into higher wisdom. When I notice I'm rushing, I start singing the song Feelin' Groovy: "Slow down you move too fast. You got to make the morning last. Just kicking down the cobblestones. Looking for fun and feelin' groovy."
- Ego... taking myself too seriously, comparing myself with others, needing to be liked, etc. During my TCC practice, on the 9th repetition, I often think, "Smile and let go." Letting go is the key, and Justin provided the path. Aren't we blessed?

## Prajna

By Sky Young-Wick, Lansing, New York

### On A Clear Day (You Can See Forever)

Lyrics © Warner/Chappell Music, Inc  
Songwriters: Alan Jay Lerner / Burton Lane

On a clear day  
Rise and look around you  
And you see who you are  
On a clear day  
How it will astound you  
That the glow of your being  
Outshines every star  
You'll feel part of  
Every mountain, sea, and shore  
You can hear from far and near  
A world you've never, never heard before  
And on a clear day  
On that clear day  
You can see forever, and ever, and ever  
And ever more



# Love Is The Essence Of TCC

By S. Becky Shinas, Fremont, California

**My T'ai Chi Chih mind** has finally found delightful rest, in love, so my body can teach. I have been doing the TCC way a little over a year, and what I've come to know is that in the beginning, in the middle and in the beginning of the end, love is the essence of all TCC movement.

I believe love to be the essence of all life. To be loved, to be loving and to know that we are lovable is our essential and blessed learning on the planet. Yes indeed, *Chi* is the source and summit of all loving. Yet I find when I do my TCC movements, my mind jumps in immediately, telling me everything I'm doing mostly wrong, which does not leave me feeling the *Chi*, feeling the Love.

I begin to think, dang, I want my body to tell me what it needs to be and do to become my TCC movement of joy. At my core, my mind cannot (and does not want) to teach me, my body yearns to be my teacher. So I thought, okay, I need to give my mind something to do during this delightful TCC movement. I thought back. What is *Chi*? Love. What is the most important thing in the world? To be loved. Why are we here? To be loving. What is my essence? To be lovable. This sounded awesome since these are all the essence of TCC. My mind was on it.

I begin the TCC movements and my mind first feels the love of all those who love me. I hear my 96-year-old mom's voice on the phone saying hello and warming my heart, filling me with joy. On heaven's side, I feel my dad so close in my heart, laughing, guiding and still loving me. Thinking of my siblings allows me to feel their loving goodness, fun and caring. By this time I'm at Daughter on the Mountain and feeling more like a goddess of joy on the mountain, as I move *Chi* love back to them.

Hold this Hallmark moment while I make a little reality check. I know you have had struggles, disappointments and hurts in your life, just as I have, but **invite *Chi* to let your mind name the good. You may be surprised how it grows into new memories of comfort.** It only takes a little loving to know the truth that love is the core of each of us. No matter what anyone told or did to you, take back your power of love and live the lovelight you proudly are with dignity, grace, sincerity and integrity. That's the ultimate power of TCC.

I then move to all my wonderful friends and pets, letting ones come to mind that want to love and support me in this present moment, as I send my love to them with joy. And then my mind extends to my fantastic teachers, coaches, guides, spiritual mentors and companions. It then goes to all the amazing authors, activists, creators, painters, singers, dancers and wisdom circles that have touched me so deeply. And I feel

blessed by their loving.

Then I think of Mother Nature, our diverse and engaging global community and the many people I meet daily who I know in my heart. (Are you feeling the love, yet? I love you; it is called One Love.) They, too, know that we are each love-embodied Divine, and share the deepest common desire – to be kind and caring towards one another.

At this point I am on Light at the Top of the Head, receiving the sweet love of our intergalactic family, thanking them for balancing *Chi* so perfectly in our cosmic community by birthing love to us all day long. They wisely know that “felt love” is the most powerful grace bestowed on any human being, and that it is the beginning of all love shared.

As my mind is completely occupied contemplating our true nature – being loved, loving and lovable – **this leaves the body free to speak and teach. And I begin to quietly hear:** take a short step, soften the knees, no one will harsh your mellow, ease the thigh, let the *t'an tien* move you, bend the ankle, there you go, beautiful, tuck the chin, elbows in, you make me so happy, feel the feet, send roots down into the earth, ahhhh, how nice is that, no effort, lift lightly, slowly now, do you know just how awesome you are, drain the position before the transition, gosh, I adore you, let your shoulders relax, sit down in your swing with happy hips and we will fly, fluid hands, peaceful pose, you just make every cell in my body leap for joy.

All of these TCC teaching moments come spontaneously from my body. I am being sprinkled and glittered with loving tips and happy reminders of how to receive and learn the TCC way. My mind really loves TCC now because as I feel loved, my body allows me to receive all her *Chi* tidbits with lovable gratitude and loving joy. I have found no better reason “to be and do” TCC than that it enables me “to be love and do love” in the world with peace, praise, compassion and grace. *Chi* on. Love on. Live on. With joy.



# Connecting To Breath

By Judy Chancey, Canton, Georgia

**T'ai Chi Chih is truly the gift** that keeps on giving, often in surprising ways when least anticipated. It is the perfect, personal gift (with enormous lifelong benefits) for which my gratitude is both immeasurable and inexpressible. The newest gift that I'm discovering as a precious result of TCC practice is a solid connection to breath.

Are you a breath-holder, like me? Perhaps you, too, have spent most of your life unaware of being a breath-holder. It's so natural, for me, to wait to exhale that others have had to remind me on several occasions to let go and breathe. What's up with that? While I have clues about my own reluctance to exhale, I much prefer to rejoice in this new awareness of my relationship to breath and the internal peace it affords.

In these wildly divisive times, I'm discovering that the only place of peace is deep within the center of my being, which requires a connection to breath. It's one thing to know the physical location of my body's center: two inches inside and two inches below the navel. It's another thing to arrive in the center of my being via inhaling and exhaling ... and remain there in tandem with breath.

We know that TCC has no breathing instructions outside of Joyous Breath. But what is the first thing we do to ground ourselves as a prelude to practice? Exhale into the soles of the feet. Then we step left into Rocking Motion with its unspoken invitation to our inner essence to settle, peacefully, into center. No breathing instruction, yet the movements beckon us towards a quiet gentle evolution into stillness that elevates the quality of personal peace.

A student shared that on a turbulent flight she mentally engaged with Rocking Motion several times, delighting in how much calmer she felt for the duration of the bumpy flight. As I become older, fear of what might happen propels my unconscious breath-holding habit as fear's dark shadow barges into my brain with negative clattering chatter. Fear has no respect for time of day or night, although it seems to

become more emboldened when there is no light to shine on it.

The most effective calming balm, day or night, is Rocking Motion, my most treasured movement of TCC. Employed mentally or physically, somewhere during the first third or half of the Rocking Motion repetitions, I hear and feel my breath arrive in my physical center as if I am "at home again" in a conscious relationship with my breath. I hear and feel it working from the center of my being, connecting me with an essence and flow far greater than self or description. There is a comforting as well as humbling sense of "I am and I am safe. All is well." This has become my go-to tool as news increasingly stirs the flames of collective, intense, emotional fervors. I turn off all external vitriol and tune in to the internal peace that exceeds all understanding.

This connection with breath is new for me, in spite of the fact that I've practiced and taught exhaling into the soles of the feet for 10 years. What's changed? Perhaps my behavior ruts were so deep that it took this long to effect real change. It's also possible that the extreme tensions occupying the world stage are so far beyond my abilities of comprehension and/or control that the only place I can go for relief is within. TCC is the gift that has taught me how and where to go for calm centering and genuine peace. **I now own what I thought I previously understood well enough to teach.** One doesn't know what one doesn't know until one lives it. Isn't that the best kind of gift ever?

As I contemplate my breathing history, I'm realizing that TCC (without a strong emphasis on breathing) brought me into a vital relationship with a new companion – consciousness of and with my breath. I'm now experiencing breath as a constant companion, a faithful friend, the willing moderator of my emotions and my connection to **all there is**. Without it, I'd be dead, albeit grateful for its faithfulness.

As I become more aware of how to interact with breath, I listen to it, embrace it and welcome its power to enhance the quality of my life through conscious regularity of inhaling and exhaling. As I breathe into the soles of my feet, I rejoice in the immediate centering taking root in the *t'an tien*. Tuning into breath as I walk, I am grateful for the differences in breath's rhythm as I walk on flat surfaces or steep inclines. Letting go of the need/desire to control and allowing movement and breath to flow as it will during TCC practice enhances my awareness of the rhythm and connection with Divine Flow. Something similar happens when my body and breath relax into sleep. Even if I skip a breath now and then, connecting to breath is akin to discovering a new super-power, over and over again.

Retracing my awareness of my relationship with breath ignites memories of learning TCC. I feel blessed by everyone within the worldwide TCC community for each and all of your contributions towards the development of this treasured gift and practice for my personal benefit. Most especially, thank you, Justin Stone for creating TCC and for all that you shared with me, personally and collectively, while you were among us. Whether I received instruction gracefully or not, I am enormously grateful for each and every life that has touched mine.





## Heightened Awareness: Breath

By Justin F. Stone

**Let's consider the breath** for a bit. Nothing is as vital to life as breath, yet we take it for granted and breathe unconsciously. This is probably for the best, for when breath is regulated or made the object of concentration; it tends to become rough and uneven. A self-conscious breath is never natural.

Those in the Far East often confuse breath with *Chi* or *Prana*, but they are not the same, though they do interact. Later, we will examine *Chi* in detail, but right now we are concerned with the stuff of life, breath. Breath, blood and spirit are a mystic trio that the metaphysically minded might want to meditate on.

Breath and thought are connected. When, in deepest meditation, breath seems to cease, there is no thought. Conversely, worried thoughts will bring on a harshness of breathing. So we can affect our state of mind by working with the breath. *Pranayama* is one of the five preliminary steps of Raja Yoga, the kingly all-inclusive Yoga. It is the Science of Breath. Drastic alterations of the breath, including forced retention, will help bring about a quieting of the mind, along with the other four preliminaries – *Yama* (conduct, the don'ts), *Niyama* (attitude, the do's), *Asana* (postures and mudras), and *Pratyahara* (withdrawing the senses from the fields of the senses). When one is disturbed, counting breaths or clicking the teeth slowly will restore equanimity.

Observing the breath is a good way to note the thought process. Carried to an extreme, one will note that thoughts seem to have a life of their own and can be observed dispassionately without disturbing them. In deep concentration on a problem, or when the mind becomes one-pointed in meditation, we tend to hold the breath, making it easier to keep the concentration. Before entering into important work, or before creative endeavor, one might be wise to regulate the breath a bit.

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### **An Exercise:**

The first thing we are going to do is to sit quietly, in any position as long as the back is straight, and count our out-breaths to 50 – not the in-breaths, only the out-breaths. Be sure to keep the eyes open. Such breath counting with the eyes closed can lead to a state of meditative immersion, and such is not our goal at this time.

After finishing this counting of the breaths (do not alter the natural breath in any way), we will sit back and click our teeth together slowly and evenly ten times. Then we will repeat the clicking ten more times.

By now the breath is probably smooth and even. We will now just observe the breath for a period of time, noting whether each breath

is short or long, and whether it is rough or smooth. Remember, we try to keep the breathing process as natural as possible.

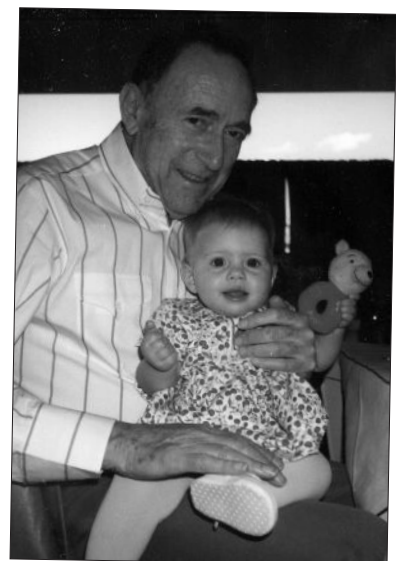
The above takes quite a bit of concentration, so it would be good at this point to quietly relax without talking. Talking will stir up the thought process. This is why I could never understand why those who take a vow of silence then proceed to communicate with pencil and paper. This is not silence; the thought processes are just as active as they would be from speech.

After a brief respite, we do the following: after every three or four breaths we will hold our breath at the bottom of the cycle (out-breath) and just rest there. Next time we will hold our breath after the in-breath and just rest there. We do not introspect, examine or think in any way; we just hold the breath as long as comfortable.

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Great secrets lie in the space between breaths. Perhaps we will intuit them from this exercise. It is too much to expect one to notice the spaces at the top and bottom, between in-breaths and out-breaths, on every inhalation and exhalation – though this would be a marvelous discipline. Only a seasoned Yogi could do that.

During the periods of breath retention we may become aware of the body currents. Remember, blood is flowing through the arteries and the veins, the heart is beating in and out, and the *Chi* (Vital Force) is either coursing through the meridian channels or is blocked in doing so. To highly aware individuals there is life coursing through every inch of the cosmos. Watching the breath is the gateway – the first step toward such realization. We also watch the breath to become conscious of the body. Strangely, it is the best means to





achieve body consciousness.

Just as we will later become aware of our mental life, so do we first want to know we have a body that is alive and functioning. It is our vehicle for experiencing. Those beliefs that degrade the body would seem to be completely wrong, and this includes the myriads that mortify the body in India. To reach higher levels, we must use the body and keep it healthy and alert. There is nothing ignoble about body consciousness; any more than there is about spiritual consciousness.

Please do not think of awareness as merely sensory awareness. When one comes out of really deep meditation and consciously reconstructs the world (perhaps incredible to those who have not had the experience), there is no desire to move or talk, just to rest and feel the heightened livingness flowing through us.

One of the writer's strongest experiences came when he sat silent, cross-legged, in a farmhouse in Gujarat, India, about a foot from and opposite a Yogi who had just emerged from several days of Samadhi, the so-called super conscious state. There was no need for talk (we didn't speak a common language anyhow) as this tremendous flow of high vibrational life energy flowed from the Yogi to this writer. It was overpowering, the kind of thing that brings tears to the eyes.

An incident that happened to the writer some years ago gave him a chance to test his spiritual practice in a delicate situation, and it became an excellent vehicle for practicing the *Satipatthana* meditation, which will appear later in this book. I was visiting a former animal trainer who now kept an animal farm where circuses and other groups and individuals could leave large animals and have them treated with consideration.

A companion went with me to the animal farm. He was a rather gruff man and one, I was to find, whom the animals didn't trust or readily take to. Perhaps he had hidden violence in his makeup. As we entered the grounds, we passed a fence with chicken wire over it, making an enlarged cage within. There rested a pet puma (mountain lion) that the trainer had raised almost from birth. (The mother had eaten its twin, and the trainer had sneaked the day-old baby out of the cage before it had a similar fate.) He had seen the man I was with before and evidently had a

violent aversion to him. As we walked by, he sprang at the chicken wire, coming directly at us. The experience was exactly like that of a large wild animal pouncing on us in the wilderness, and it all seemed to happen in slow motion. I was amazed at the beauty and grace of the pouncing animal, and also noticed my own reaction in detail. My breath remained calm and natural, and there was no fear (obviously we were safe), only admiration for the magnificent spectacle, though I was totally unprepared for such a happening.

Later the trainer brought the mountain lion inside, without any restraint, and sat him down in the kitchen with his dinner, two dead chickens. I was sitting on a couch in the living room and, before eating, the animal looked squarely at me for about half a minute. Then, having determined that I was no threat to him, he looked down and began to eat. He never paid any attention to me again.

After the puma had finished eating, the trainer, whom the animal loved as a mother, directed him into the bedroom. As he walked through the living room, this 190-pound lion, which could kill a horse, brushed against my leg but never looked up. After many years of spiritual practice I watched my own reactions with interest, my breath and state of mind particularly. Physically and mentally, the animal did not inspire fear in me; it was obvious he was sensitive to vibration and mine gave him no trouble. This was a mini *Satipatthana* exercise.

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To return to our practice and sum up, we will do the following:

- 1.) Count our out-breaths to 50;
- 2.) Click our teeth, slowly and evenly, ten times and then ten times again;
- 3.) Just observe the breaths, to see whether they are short or long and rough or smooth;
- 4.) Take a brief respite;
- 5.) After several breaths, hold the bottom of the cycle (after out-breath) for a comfortable length of time; then, after several more breaths, hold the top of the cycle (after in-breath) for a short time.

During all this, we may sit in meditative pose, on a chair or in any way we like as long as the backbone is straight. This whole routine would not be a bad one to practice before any difficult or creative task.



From *Heightened Awareness*, excerpted and reprinted with permission from Good Karma Publishing

## Seated TCC: Just In Case; You Never Know

By Neena Mitchell,  
Syracuse New York

**I've been integrating** seated T'ai Chi Chih into a senior TCC class during the past year, after a course in seated TCC didn't measure up to expectations. I wanted the seniors at the Camillus Senior Center (in New York) to be aware of and comfortable using a few of the seated movements, just in case.

After the 2017 conference, I became so convinced that all teachers should know, practice and teach seated TCC that I suggested to the organizers that the 2018 conference should integrate seated TCC into the program.

Little did I know that I would be the one to make full use of seated TCC. In early May a ruptured kneecap muscle required surgery and was followed by a brace. I was confronted with how could I employ seated TCC in this crazy, restricted situation of the knee.

**First step was mental TCC in the MRI chamber.** The knee was so bruised and swollen that an MRI was needed to expose the extent of damage and any possible fracture. The nurse said the MRI would take about 20 minutes. I mentally used TCC to time the procedure (since I knew how many movements could be done in 20 minutes), to relax and to resist scratching my nose. I finished TCC just as a voice was telling me it was over. The timing was on the money. The next day I continued mental TCC while lying on a gurney and waiting my turn for surgery.

When your leg is encased in a brace and your swollen and bruised knee demands special treatment, standing TCC is not a good choice. Now was the time for seated TCC. While in the hospital for four-and-a-half days, I began doing a couple of movements seated or leaning against edge of the bed.

**I added more seated movements as my body grew stronger.** It's also is an important tool for eliminating and avoiding blood clots. I hoped to escape the hospital environment fast.

Now at home I do a full seated practice daily. A big plus? I'm learning improvements for standing TCC. Teacher Ann Pia chauffeured me to her May Memorial Unitarian Universalist class, where the standees and I do TCC. Contributing to people's knowledge in this fashion is a pleasure and blessing. Ann and I are planning to increase integration of the seated routine in the Fall classes.

Learn and practice seated TCC – for yourself and with your students. You never know when and where you'll need it. I never expected I would. Thank you, Sandy, for recording *Seated T'ai Chi Chih – Moving Meditation in a Chair*. It has taught me a lot of subtle improvements that I can incorporate in my standing practice.

## TCC Pulls Me Back

By Sue Bitney, Richfield Minnesota

**I have become aware recently** during my T'ai Chi Chih practice of lessons I have learned and gifts I have received these past five years since Jim's death. I have been on an incredible journey that has been difficult but rich with knowledge I could never have learned from a book.

I look back to those early painfully raw days and stand in gratitude for the people who entered my life at just the right moment, bringing gifts necessary to move forward on the journey, traveling to a new life without my partner. It is a life I must create but thankfully I am not alone.

**Each TCC movement surrounds me with energy and peace.** This allows me to open to experiences I did not sign up to receive, and yet I am grateful for their presence. I am stronger than I thought I could ever be. Having come through fire I am no longer afraid. I have been forged and tempered by pain into a person of resilience. I can and will survive this and move forward.

**TCC has drawn people to me who have eased my pain.** I began again to feel a sense of purpose. The rhythm and power of TCC keeps me centered and pulls me back when I wobble away from where I am grounded and stable.

I am eternally grateful to Justin for the gift of TCC, one that keeps on giving, and to the TCC community of students and teachers who have accompanied me on this path of rebuilding.





## “There Is Within You That Which Knows; That Is Your Teacher”

By Diana Bahn, New York, New York

**When I was a child** and didn't know what a word meant, I couldn't wait to go into my room and look up its definition. It made me feel independent, purposeful and helped me understand things. (I was a younger sibling and no one seemed to have time for me, and my father used a lot of big words.)

This penchant to find answers outside of myself made a lot of sense; I understood my part in it. I wanted to do it. Something inside me was expressing herself.

My family had a very harsh, crippling trauma more than three years ago when my sister-in-law, and friend, Sarah, committed suicide. Even writing these words, I feel myself going out of my heart and returning to my *t'an tien*, my safe place that keeps me comforted despite this sad, old, true news.

I have never lived in the West and have no familiarity with forest fires and their aftermath. Yet part of me perhaps feels the same sadness about Sarah's death as the people who walk the scorched earth after living through a hell-like conflagration and then come back to some purpose in life.

“There is within you that which knows”, Justin wrote regarding “Prajna, innate wisdom” and T'ai Chi Chih, Joy Thru Movement. Sarah's death and the subsequent effect it had on everyone she touched – especially my husband (her brother) and her parents – was such a barren, burned-out field. The wind was knocked out of all of us. The stillness was one that ran counter to the nurturing stillness in our practice of T'ai Chi Chih.

We know what we don't know. This happens all the time as we learn TCC especially when we get a suggestion from a teacher or trainer. For a moment that other person becomes our mirror and then we can go deeper, explore from inside ourselves and, in time, we shift.

Sometimes, though, we don't know what we know. If I had to go back (and believe me I have tried, although failed) and mentally retrace all my steps in missing Sarah's “hidden” messages that she was saying goodbye, I'd be reliving the trauma all over again. And that would open a box of wounds shared by everyone who knew and loved Sarah. I must let go and trust that it's okay to release my “accumulated knowledge” of who Sarah was and who I am.

My teacher, the *Prajna*, replaced my dictionary of long ago. The thing is, I always had this *Prajna*; I just needed to wake her up. Fortunately, I came across TCC in 2000 and have been coming to know her pretty well. I have introduced a lot of people to TCC and often it sticks. Sarah was on her own path and tra-

jectory, and to my mind had lost the Cosmic Rhythm.

Practicing TCC after Sarah's death wasn't easy. I had to dig deeply to inhibit the “helper” in me that often sacrifices my own happiness for the sake of others, only to find out later no one had my back. The *Prajna* led me – just like Justin said it would – to find new students seeking more than better balance and entertainment. I started teaching once weekly at a Mount Sinai Cancer Center and found some gem-like students. I also moved from a grieving field to doing self-care through regular massages, exploring Reiki and Jin Shin Juytsu, and doing Authentic Movement. The air has finally started to circulate.

There's a safety in numbers and something reassuring about moving well in a group practice. If there is any lesson to glean from Sarah's death, aside from the sanctity of every person's life, I believe it is trusting that inside us which knows. TCC helps us understand that.

## The Gift

By Jerry Jonnson,  
Bridstow Ross-on-Wye, UK

*Note: In 2006 I wrote a book entitled Living in Balance (obviously, my T'ai Chi Chih practice had an impact on the content of the book). A poem within it resonates every time I practice TCC and every class I conduct, and I give a copy to each of my students. I believe doing and sharing TCC with classmates is The Gift. Here's the poem:*

Take a hold of yourself.  
Care for yourself.  
Be gentle and good to yourself  
for you deserve it...not just now,  
but always, all the time.  
You are special...  
to me and to the world.  
So please, do not hold back.  
We are all less if you do.  
Know your uniqueness and  
care for your differences  
as there is no one else  
in the whole world like you.  
Give the gift of you to the world  
and the world and everyone it  
will be better for it.  
Because of you, we are more.



## Help For PTSD

The article entitled 'Help for PTSD' that appeared here has been retracted as it detailed a process improvement project that was misrepresented by the author as valid scientific research. The project did not receive Institutional Review Board approval, required to conduct a study with human subjects. The measurement tool used in the project for data collection was neither reliable nor valid to measure subjects' responses, and so the data generated has no clinical significance. The project manager, who also authored the article, did not have permission from the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center or the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to present the process improvement project as valid scientific research, or to publish the article. *The Vital Force* Editor was informed of these facts after the article's publication.

## Carried To Safety

By Diane Crago, Bainbridge Island, Washington

Two years ago I began having episodes of terrible vertigo with migraines, lost my sense of balance and was unable to focus my eyes. I am an artist, and this was beyond upsetting. It was debilitating. Despite many medical tests, no one could identify the cause. Recently, after exploring both traditional and alternative medical paths I was diagnosed with a vestibular migraine disorder. This is a poem about my efforts to recover.

Two years ago as I lay sleepless  
Thinking of the me I used to be,  
Who danced and wrote and painted full of movement  
'Til my life was carried out to sea  
When washed ashore no longer could I move or paint or think the same  
Was lost except for love and hope and even then could see no gain  
I tried the sitting breathing, with mindfulness the hope my life restore  
But only felt the pain, and dreamed the dance of life that I adore.  
And then came T'ai Chi Chih movement, a conversation new  
The syrup air pushed back and forth, a lover's dance now grew  
With each new movement share we did, the universe and I  
Now listening more than talking, I realized with my cry  
That we were one and now I saw  
My fragment life reformed  
The flowing healing T'ai Chi Chih dance, by this new song informed.

*A note from Diane's teacher, Bill Nakao, with the poem's backstory: My student offered to write an article about her experience with TCC but later said she can't sit at a computer for any length of time because of the bright screen. Instead, she sent this poem.*





# TCC's Yin & Yang Of The Brain

By Carol Nelson-Selby, San Luis Obispo, California

I teach a weekly, ongoing T'ai Chi Chih class at a popular health club in Arroyo Grande, California, a semi-rural area in the Central Coast region with ocean views from its hillsides, fertile soil and excellent weather. It is no wonder that this region boasts a large retired population well-integrated into the rest of the community.



My 8am Friday class attracts this older population for many reasons, and for the past almost two decades, has continued to challenge me to open my mind about how to teach people with very diverse backgrounds and physical and mental abilities. Our classes have included cancer patients, stroke survivors, post-surgical patients with more conditions than I can list here, Parkinson's patients, people with early dementia, athletes, couch-potatoes, ex-military, machinists, scientists and former policemen. As a result, I have learned from my students more than I ever imagined I would know about how the body can help the mind to learn and to improve its functioning, and how TCC *uniquely* helps the left and right sides of the brain to come into balance. **This perspective may seem unorthodox, but I'd like to share it with you.**

Neuroscientist Jill Bolte Taylor describes in her book, **My Stroke of Insight: A brain scientist's personal journey**, her experience of suffering a hemorrhagic stroke. As the left side of her brain shut down over a period of a few hours from lack of oxygen, she experienced a kind of euphoria and sense of "oneness with the world." Luckily, her scientific background in brain anatomy alerted her what was happening: the sensory input going to her right brain was no longer being buffered by her left brain, allowing her right brain to wander unrestrained into what she now refers to as La La Land.

This struck a chord partly because my sister recently suffered a stroke, but also because there have been times during TCC when I have allowed myself to become distracted by something and I have lost the balanced state of knowing exactly what I was doing, while also enjoying the ride. I had failed to be mindful. I had *unwittingly* (unmindfully) unleashed my *imagining* right brain from my more *thoughtful* left brain. The result could be described as a brief euphoric trip or a sense of confused giddiness. My teacher Mary Pat George would have referred to this as not being grounded.

I now realize the experience was the loss of the **balance** that TCC creates in our minds through its fluid and emotionally evocative hand gestures and the inherent mood of humility and communion (stimulating the right brain) – while at the same time stimulating the left brain through constant mindfulness of the form of those movements, of taking care to move in unison with others, of making sure to perform each move on both sides of the body and by grounding between each set of movements.

I am convinced that **TCC finds the sweet spot between our two brains, building an enduring balance between them**, because when grace and mindfulness happen together in class (even if only *most* of the time), we all feel that we have grown stronger and better in mind and body. We feel balanced.

## The Ballad Of Justin Stone

By Pete Gregory, Oxnard, California

*Editor's Note: And now for some lightness, this was written to be read or better yet sung to the tune of The Beverly Hillbillies, and is from the sing-a-long at Lied Lodge during the 2009 teacher conference.*

Come and listen to my story 'bout Justin Stone  
Teachin' T'ai Chi Chuan, barely kept his classes goin'  
Then one day while he's doing no-thing  
Came a new T'ai Chi – up his bubbling spring  
Chih, that is, Joy thru Movement, Divine Love  
Well the first thing ya know, ol Justin taught a class  
Then a Teacher Training, the word was spreading fast  
In '93 New Mexico's the place he thought to be  
So he drove from California down to Albuquerque  
Bosques, that is, Hot Air Balloons, Southwest Cuisine  
(guitar instrumental)  
So now it's time to give our thanks to Justin and his form  
The benefits await us, and peace becomes our norm  
Please don't ever organize, or give into greed  
Cause T'ai Chi Chih is but a gift to serve humanity  
Y'all keep practicin', ya hear?

# Vital Good Karma Publishing Announcement

By Victor Berg, Albuquerque, New Mexico

**Good Karma Publishing, Inc. will be closing its doors but Justin Stone's materials will live on.** The remaining monies of GKP will go towards converting Justin's books, DVDs and CDs, including out of print materials, into electronic versions that will be made available for free on the Internet. This effort will be completed by Kim Grant no later than the end of this year, and she will be hosting the site that maintains Justin's materials.

As of right now, GKP will no longer sell materials via Progressive Commerce. Instead, the inventory of materials will be transferred back to Albuquerque and will be sold at greater discounts than normal. For the next month, GKP will offer a 50% discount, followed by a 60% discount the following month. After that, GKP has already been given an offer to purchase all remaining materials at 70%. So, purchase now, if you wish, while supplies last. After the current inventory is sold, printed materials will still be available for purchase in limited quantities from Kim. Details are still being worked out, but you will still be able to purchase printed materials after GKP closes its doors.

Kim came up with the idea years ago to put all of Justin's material on the Internet for free public access. It's taken me three years to realize that Kim was right. It is my belief that GKP will have a far greater impact by providing all of the Justin's materials, including out of print materials, for free on the Internet. The exposure of Justin's materials and T'ai Chi Chih might grow much further using this method rather than traditional retail/sales methods. Please thank Kim Grant for making this offer to convert and host his materials.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2, BY KIM GRANT

The night Justin died on March 28, 2012, while I was still the CEO of GKP, he said to me, "You have my words now." In the intervening three years, I've had to consider and reconsider what Justin's words must have meant. What I have concluded is this: In Justin's absence, *we all have his words*. He left us a lifetime of lessons, books and transcribed talks to absorb and re-absorb, videotape to watch and re-watch.

As the custodian and guardian of his words now, I have one mission, which was the same mandate I had while running GKP: to keep Justin's words and work alive, to keep them available and easily accessible to all. To that end I will create a new website where all his words and work are free and accessible to a worldwide audience. I will also keep in tangible form many of his books and audio/visual materials. Please be patient as

details develop.

I would like to thank *everyone* who supported GKP over the years: teachers who shared Justin's materials with their classes, students who availed themselves of every resource available to them, and my wonderful, dedicated assistant Mary Ruiz. The future of T'ai Chi Chih resides within every sincere practitioner. The path forward is clear. Sincerity and integrity light the way. Thank you.

~ WITH GRATITUDE. KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

## A Conversation

*Editor's Note: Thanks to Hannah Hedrick for suggesting and starting this thread. Please chime in with your response at [Facebook.com/taichichih](https://www.facebook.com/taichichih) or equally good, please write an article or few sentences for the next issue of *The Vital Force*. If you have an idea for another question, please send that along too.*

**How do you express the ineffable benefits you experience as a result of even a modest T'ai Chi Chih practice?**

TCC is my primary tool for accessing the universal life force from which I seek guidance in creating Solutions in which no one loses. Just a few minutes of TCC create space for me to feel that I am being Guided by something other than my own ego. And it is in that space that I feel I have connected with you from our very early encounters.

— HANNAH HEDRICK, MOUNTAIN VIEW, HAWAII

## Feel Your Way Through The Transitions

By Hannah Hedrick, Mountain View, Hawaii

**The comment** in Sandy's most recent newsletter (the title of this article) triggered my intention to introduce a subject that arose as a result of Sandy's response to the companion pieces by Julie Heryet and myself printed in *The Vital Force*. Both Julie and I expressed our gratitude and support for Sandy's gentle approaches to the basic fundamentals of practicing and teaching T'ai Chi Chih.

During a subsequent exchange, Sandy pondered the question whether TCC shares us with others or we share TCC with others. The answer, for me, is both. TCC is a two-way street – or a million way street – connecting me with every single individual I share it with, whether it is for 20 minutes or 20 years.

By the time you read this, I hope to have introduced this topic at the August conference: ***Does TCC share us with others or do we share others with TCC?***

## Power & Intention

By Judy Hendricks,  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

**T'ai Chi Chih movements are powerful.** Another TCC teacher recently asked what I meant by that. I believe the power from the movements is in the form. Justin originated this form. We receive benefits from practicing, but I believe the power is something different.

Just as I would not want to intentionally change Justin's words, I would not want to purposely change the TCC movements. The power is in the form. Justin has written that the practice of TCC can lead to enlightenment. Enlightenment is powerful. Monks devote lifetimes to practices that lead to enlightenment. Enlightenment is rare, but all can enjoy a shared journey.

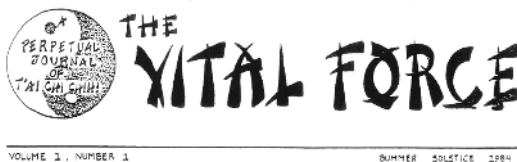
Some people feel they have no idea if they are doing the TCC movements the way Justin taught them. I believe all that is necessary is to have the intention, aim and focus to move the way Justin taught them.

If that is your intention, you are likely to consult Justin's DVD or the photo textbook. I watch Justin's DVD before every class I teach. I feel ready to teach when I have seen Justin do and speak about the movements.

Justin had so much purpose behind all he did and said. I'm just beginning to scratch the surface concerning the depth and power of what he was teaching. I still remember things he said to me very vividly. I don't believe those were ordinary words. The connections are strong because the form is powerful.

These movements teach us all we need to know about living a purposeful life. After 22 years, I'm still learning the movements. Justin is still with me on this journey. Intentionally invite him your practice and feel what happens within. And keep feeling your feet.

## The First Issue of The Vital Force: Summer 1984



### LETTER TO TEACHERS

The emergence of this Tai Chi Chih Journal is an important event, for it will tend to bind the TCC teachers more closely together and encourage those who need further encouragement. It is nice to spread something as beneficial as TCC, and you who are the "early" teachers (remember, this Discipline is only ten years old) are to be congratulated. Those who come later will profit by your pioneer work.

There are many ways of appreciating TCC. One is to realize the harmonizing of the Outer and the Inner that takes place in practice—or, in Zen terms, the harmonizing of the Mind-Body continuum. If we realize the Kidneys are the Great Yin ("Rain Dragons" to the Chinese), while the Heart is the Great Yang (the "Sun"), we begin to see the relationship of Microcosm and Macrocosm—the small, individual lot and that of the Cosmos and beyond. To harmonize the individual Intrinsic Energy with the great Universal Flow, that is the task, and it is easily accomplished thru TCC movements. As it is accomplished, we begin to lead a TCC life. If enough people do so, we may know Peace and Joy in this world.

I have tried to keep TCC as pure as possible, even at the expense of my earning a living. It is important that we prevent deviations in the Teaching and the Practicing. You all know how Churches and Spiritual Organizations often degenerate into self-seeking political centers, with the benefits of the Practice moved almost completely forgotten. We must never forget that, as we receive rewards ourselves, it is our Way to serve. Each time one of you makes a Presentation, you are, in

effect, promoting TCC as well as yourself. When we are grateful for what we receive, we offer it to others. This is natural to those who feel the great CHI force flowing thru them. Not only is this CHI the PRANA (Energy), it is the PRAJNA (Wisdom) as well. I know that I frequently have had precognitive experiences that have benefited me greatly, and others feel the growth of intuition in other ways. Make no mistake: Tai Chi Chih practice will change you. It is a Sadhana (Spiritual Practice), but a pleasant and immediately rewarding one.

Do not do Tai Chi Chih carelessly. Have enough respect to remember that. Knowing the high caliber of those who have become teachers, I have no concern for your sincere endeavour.

Lastly, I hope this paper (and other steps contemplated) will contribute to the growth of Tai Chi Chih. My congratulations to Teen and Corinn (who will now publish the TCC book); they have taken the First Step.

*Justin*  
Justin Stone

To download free, older, sold-out issues of *The Vital Force*, visit <http://www.taichichih.org/free-archived-past-issues>

To purchase back issues, visit <http://www.taichichih.org/purchase-past-issues-of-the-vital-force>



# Preparing To Pull Taffy

By Suzanne Roady-Ross, Seal Beach California

**The “taffies” are the hardest T’ai Chi Chih movements** for students to learn. I’ve struggled with simplifying them for 13 years and have made some progress, but I still felt dissatisfied. The approach has finally come to me.

Students are most confused with which way the hands go, so I start by focusing their attention on the bottom hand, the one pulled across the body as if it is scooping the *Chi*. It is the “opposite hand” to the leg that is becoming “substantial.” I begin to point it out as they shift their weight in Carry the Ball to the Side because no one gets confused about which way the hands point in that movement. Sometimes we just relax in our feet and shift the weight side-to-side, releasing the arms to move how they want. I let them watch how their palms naturally swing back and forth across the body. They notice how the hands move with the weight shift, going toward the leg where their weight is settling.

I point out that the palm they can see (not the back of the other hand) is the moving toward the leg that is receiving the weight. I ask them to feel that hand, the one whose palm they can see as it is pulled across the body with the shifting weight. Feel the weight shift and see the palm scoop across to the leg where the weight arrives. It’s an organic feeling of the arm moving in opposition to the lower body. Point out that we walk that way: our arms swing in opposition to our footsteps. When the left foot steps forward, the right arm swings forward, and vice versa. Have them try it.

Next, they need to understand the idea of a “windup” to get the weight off the leg they will step out on. I begin by asking them to turn slightly to the right and sink their weight into the right leg, then touch out their left heel in a small step to the side. We do it several times and reverse it.

I explain that **the “taffies” are a combination of opposites**. We sink one direction to move the other way. The hands come in close, one palm down and one palm up, overlapping. Then when the empty leg steps out to the side, the hands pivot open, sort of like windshield wipers. We move from a closed position to an open one, keeping the elbows heavy, down and close to the body. Let the arms pivot open and closed without turning over either hand. Then ask them to reverse the hands (left on top, right on the bottom) and practice the opening and closing.

Add the notion that the top hand moves down on a diagonal and the bottom hand just moves straight across. Sometimes I use the image of petting a kitty with the top hand – across the kitty’s head, its back and down its tail until the hand is pointing to the side with the palm parallel to the floor.

Finally, I deal with **what moves** the upper hand. It moves in response to sinking the weight into a leg. Here’s a simple way to say that: **the leg we sink into raises the hand above it**. From the resting position where the hand is parallel to the ground, it rises up across the chest as we sink our weight into the leg. We practice that sink and rise part several times. Then I add the little twist away from the leg they will step out on, and we practice that little turn as we sink (the weight) and rise (the arm above it) into the starting position. This is the “windup” that precedes the taffy pull.

I don’t need to say right or left (which confuses students by adding another element to process). I point in the direction we will wind up and step out so they see the direction we will pull the taffy. Once they understand the biomechanics of the movement and **feel** how the weight shifts move the arms, teaching the rest of the movement should be pretty easy.

“ the leg  
we sink  
into raises  
the hand  
above it





# TCC Intensive Retreat July 2018, Santa Barbara, California

By Elizabeth Preston, Huntington Beach, California

**Our group of teacher candidates**, teachers and serious students attending the Intensive joined in circularity around Sandy McAlister for a warm welcome. With the lovely Santa Barbara Mountains behind us and the Pacific Ocean below us, we focused on our movements and shared our stories. We noted how fear, a great teacher, blocks us from having the confidence to change and grow and yet we all agreed T'ai Chi Chih allows us to examine these emotions in the midst of this fear. As we worked to diligently apply the principles to our personal practice, the flow and harmony of the group practice was inspiring.

We spoke about ego. I count as accomplishment learning to accept corrections. It gives me an opportunity to soften my moving and open myself up emotionally. – PATTY WADDINGTON

TCC is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle. You help students find where the pieces fit. And in the end, all the little edges are gone and you have the whole, bigger picture. – ANONYMOUS

This was a great experience and opportunity to become a teacher. I love how TCC helps people in their daily life – with mental health and clarity and physical health. TCC will always be a part of my life. – GEORGE MANNING

I learned so much about my own practice and areas I need to work on, as well as techniques for presenting TCC to others. – LISA OTERO

My ah-ha moment was amazement at the community that formed making discussion of deeply personal feelings and experiences feel safe and supported. – D. A.

I learned that TCC is not so much about the doing as it is about the feeling. We got great tips and reminders about the doing, but the consistent emphasis on softness and continuity were particularly useful to get to the feeling. – PAT BRIE

I arrived with my student George, a teacher candidate, and it has been a joy to watch him grow in his practice and build relationships with teachers and students. – SUE KENNEY

|                  |                         |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| odd              | knees                   |
| delight          | soften                  |
| devoted          | shift sideways          |
| students learned | weight shift, turn hips |
| t'ai chi chih    | keep turning            |
| in hot           | release                 |
| winds            | rest                    |
| – RUTH SMITH     | – BENJ BRISJAR          |

# TCC Teachers Retreat March 2018, Santa Barbara, California

By Ruth Slavin, Guelph, Ontario, Canada

**Our group photo** at the end of the retreat says it all: smiling relaxed women looking very comfortable together, like a family.

Pam (as host) and Sandy (as leader) did an amazing job of keeping us engaged. Our sessions were full of laughter, learning and sharing. A wealth of information was available. The teachers gathered had years of experience with every type of class – disabled, drop-in, very large classes, small classes – and they had excellent tips on how to give their students the most value from the time they spent with them.

Some T'ai Chi Chih teachers are isolated from other practitioners and so can get off track. I'm one of them, being the only teacher in my area. It had also been five years since my accreditation. I was doing some moves, such as Working the Pulley, with my arms too far from my body. It could have been embarrassing to be corrected, but it wasn't because everyone was gentle and kind. I easily fixed this error in my practice, and back at my classes in Guelph, my students were happy to make the adjustment.

Apart from learning a lot and gaining inspiration from Pam, Sandy and the other teachers, we were fed well, slept well and enjoyed the Santa Barbara foothills. The monks who live at the Mount Calvary Retreat House are kind, with good senses of humor, and they seem really happy to have us there. The cooks provided us with wholesome meals, simple but well-seasoned and delicious. Their jams and daily homemade bread

are a special treat. We are invited to keep to their regimen of silence from 10pm until after breakfast, and I for one, really enjoyed that quiet time. The calmness allowed for personal reflection and gave me clarity around an important decision I had been struggling with, leading to action when I returned home.



This is the second time I've attended and wish it were closer so I could go every year. It is a treat to be looked after for a few days amidst such beautiful, comfortable surroundings, and to gain inspiration while learning how to better my classes and deepen my own practice. See you there next year?

## TCC Workshop April 28, 2018, World T'ai Chi and Qigong Day

By Linda Robinson, Seattle, Washington

**The Western Washington T'ai Chi Chih teachers** gathered for the first time for a one-day workshop at the Bainbridge Island Senior Community Center with 25 students. Thanks to Bill Nakao (teacher and organizer extraordinaire), we spent the day in his classroom – TCC TEACHERS LAURIE THOMAS, DONNA JUNGBLUTH, NEIL ROY (FROM PORTLAND) AND I.

Our Washington teachers live far apart, so I was particularly grateful that Bill organized and brought us together. Teachers collaborated with ease and joyfulness. Students were enthusiastic and attentive. The day was full of wisdom and connection, another opportunity to appreciate the magic and power of *Chi*. Below are some comments offered by participants:

I appreciated the exposure to different teachers and hearing their experiences and suggestions. One of the main points I took home was Laurie's description of sink, shift and step. And Bill's point about the step portion, being aware of how far to step out without losing balance/stability. This is something I continue to work with. The point about sinking from the start when moving to the side in Carry the Ball (and similar movements) was also helpful. It was great to receive some fine-tuning to work with at home. Thanks for lining that up for us.

– KAREN, STUDENT

Having the opportunity to do TCC with so many long-time practitioners gave me a wonderful sense of the deep peace that can come with a life of practice. It affirmed my commitment to continue.

– JANE SHERMAN, STUDENT

The one-day time frame was good and the setting, refreshments and environment seemed fine. My two students agreed. Mostly I enjoyed getting together with other teachers and students. Since we live quite a distance from each other, we are little islands of TCC, which made getting together a real treat.

– DONNA JUNGBLUTH, INSTRUCTOR

I totally enjoyed the workshop, as did my students. It's a treat to be together like this, and I honor this as my gift of service to humanity.

– LAURIE THOMAS, INSTRUCTOR

## TCC Retreat In The Pines May 2018, Sedona, Arizona

By Carol Taubman, Gold Canyon, Arizona

**Twelve people, mostly strangers** at the start, came together from many personal worlds to form lasting bonds of *Chi*. It was a rare and wonderful experience at Chapel Rock, located on the outskirts of Prescott, Arizona.

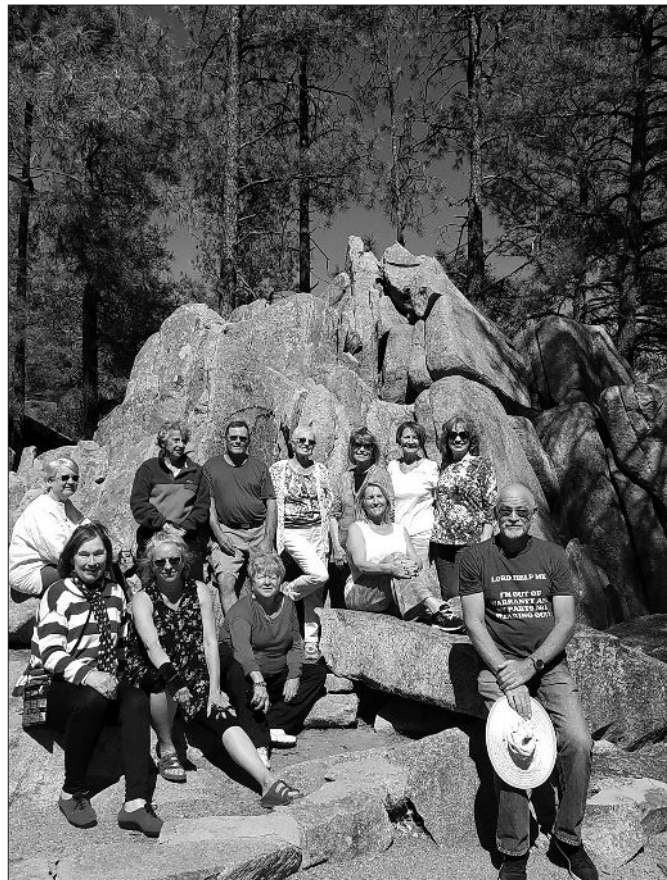
We enjoyed the usual accoutrements: comfortable rooms and good healthy food from the sociable cooks whose only aim was to please. Even the weather cooperated. Overall it was about the people – who met, loved each other and intended that the outer world might share a softer and happier existence. Gracious Pam Towne emphasized the magnificent power of TCC and we responded. We deepened our experience and understanding of the amazing practice of TCC.

Sherry Ziegler, a student from Tucson, had a magical experience of interconnectedness doing TCC in our circle. Beth Graves, a student from Colorado Springs, experienced a calmness and a power of the *Chi*. Victoria Mogilner, a teacher from Scottsdale, said the retreat was just what she needed: nurturing and replenishing. Dana Diller, our assistant host, offered seated TCC. This was a true benefit for many and especially those with a few aches and pains.

Another super bonus was Bonnie, who took a few breaks to chase bunnies (though never harming a hair on the hare). Bonnie is the service dog and best friend for David Hudson, a student from Prescott Valley.

The last night we were honored with an exceptional guest, Holly Ueda's boyfriend Michael Goodluck, a Native American who makes his own flutes, which he played for us at practice. It was positively magical. It was one of those ah-ha moments that happen when least expected. He played again on Sunday morning during our final TCC practice.

In closing, Shar Edwards, a teacher from Ft. Mojave, declared, "We connected with each other in the circle and we will remain connected all year long until we are together again."



# Learn Seijaku Weekend Retreat

## April 2018, Albuquerque, New Mexico

By Shari Holmes, Albuquerque, New Mexico

**Sunday morning** – with twenty-some people in a big room, doing *Seijaku* in almost perfect unison – was an extraordinary experience of sharing and harmony. Some of us know each other well and are always happy to be together. Some of us know each other only slightly because we have come from far away and are delighted to meet again from time to time at a retreat. Some know no one. Some have been doing Seijaku for years; some have never done Seijaku before.

At Carmen Brocklehurst's retreat we all felt the love and support that come from sharing *Chi*. It was a wonderful group – locals, a group from Lubbock, Texas for their second retreat with us, and others from Colorado, Texas, California, Utah and Kansas City.

On Saturday night, Carmen asked us what the retreat meant to us. The following comments are paraphrased, conveying the feeling if not the exact wording.

Anna, who had never done Seijaku before, said that everyone's so unique, so truthful. Aside from learning each movement, "you could hear the sound of toning in the wind." She was amazed by a fragile little flower growing out of a crack in the sidewalk. It was fragile, but still strong, even in the wind. That flower is strong, and I also am strong, said Anna.

Rachel also noticed the tenacious flower and added that there were so many connections, so much grounding. Another new Seijaku student, Steph, wondered if she would like this. She said yes to Seijaku. Alli agreed that T'ai Chi Chih/Seijaku/Fast Track is the path of beauty.

About Seijaku itself, Lisa said to trust it. Cindy thought that during Seijaku the *tan t'ien* is winking at you. Joyce added that insight helps. Pauline spoke of the sweetness of life, and of Seijaku she suggested that instead of judging, make it perfect.

A sense of community probably always develops at successful retreats. Because of the depth of the shared spiritual experience at this retreat, the sense of community and love were greatly enhanced. Many people spoke about that. Robert spoke of feeling us as a community, to which Leya responded that community is great. "You're supported," added Irma, while Mary W felt acceptance and lots of healing.

Sondra noted that everybody is practicing at their own level, in the best way they can. Maybe we're not perfect, but it still counts as good. Mary R said that there is this stillness that is always there. Life is without limit. I see how you, me invigorates I, one.

Corine thanked everyone for sharing the *Chi* and spoke of "faces I yearn to be with. Because of you I am stronger, because of the love that's here. I have to get involved, and participate. Love. Gentleness. Acceptance." Winston added that we are sharing, in love. Mike feels his life has changed because of his TCC practice and Seijaku, saying "I do things I enjoy, and I enjoy all things I *now* do."

Shari observed that we're open to each other here, and hopefully what we learned here we will share with the world. Carmen agreed and reminded us, "This is not just for us." We are healing, we are feeling love, and it is up to us to share the healing, the support, the love, with all with whom we come in contact.

We also feel gratitude. We are grateful to Carmen, Judy Hendricks and the other hard workers who made this retreat a wonderful experience. And we are grateful that we can share the *Chi*.

**Mark your Calendar!**  
TCC Teacher Conference 2019  
Minnesota, June 20-23

## Collective Pyramid Poems Through Seijaku

Mary Ruiz and Joyce Veerkamp offer gratitude and thanks to all for connecting with Seijaku and Pyramid Poetry during three days of serenity in the mist of activity at Carmen Brocklehurst's retreat in ABQ. Surrounded by friends, warm sunshine and high desert breezes, the atmosphere was open and enjoyable. Learning, feeling and deepening one's knowing of TCC, Seijaku and Fast Track was effortless. During breaks the following pyramid poems were created, with each participant contributing a line.

we  
open  
to love joy  
communicate  
connect with  
those we  
love

the  
rabbit  
sits softly  
twitching her nose  
the sunrise  
glows bright  
joy

light  
shine bright  
deep inside  
whence come the source  
of power  
to all  
chi

the  
essence  
keeps me here  
effervescence  
bubbles up  
from my  
feet



## Contacts

**Originator:** Justin Stone

**Guide & Teacher Trainer:**  
Sandy McAlister  
24835 Second St, Hayward, CA 94541  
510-582-2238 / mcalister19@comcast.net

**Teacher Trainer:**  
Pam Towne Duncan  
234 Hoover St, Oceanside, CA 92054  
442-222-8332 / pamtowne@gmail.com

**Teacher Trainer:**  
Daniel Pienciak  
PO Box 231, Bradley Beach, NJ 07720  
732-988-5573 / wakeupdaniel@aol.com

**The Vital Force:**  
P.O. Box 92674, Albuquerque, NM 87199  
kim@kimgrant.com / 617-901-9628

**Good Karma Publishing, Inc.:**  
sales@gkpub.com

**T'ai Chi Chih Foundation:**  
PO Box 517  
Midland, NJ 07432

**Web Site Changes:**  
changes@taichichih.org

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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

- Sep 25-28 | TCC Retreat w/ Pam | Santa Barbara, CA | Pam Towne | 442-222-8332
- Oct 4-8 | TCC Intensive w/ Dan | Aston, PA | April Leffler | 610-809-7523
- Oct 24-28 | TCC Intensive w/ Sandy | Colorado Springs, CO | Marie Dotts | 970-412-9955
- Nov 11-17 | TCC Teacher Accreditation w/ Pam | Albuquerque, NM | Molly Grady | 505-280-4701

~ 2019 ~

- Mar 30-Apr 5 | TCC Accreditation w/ TBD | Colorado Springs, CO | Marie Dotts | 970-412-9955
- May 31 - Jun 6 | TCC Teacher Accreditation w/ TBD | Aston, PA | April Leffler | 610-809-7523

### ~ MORE WORKSHOPS & RETREATS ~

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

- Sep 20-23 | TCC Retreat w/ Carmen Brocklehurst | Albuquerque, NM  
Judy Hendricks | 505-573-0820

**Mark your Calendar!**  
TCC Teacher Conference 2019  
Minnesota, June 20-23

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Date you were accredited as a Seijaku teacher

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