

# The Vital Force

JOURNAL OF THE T'AI CHI CHIH® COMMUNITY

Volume 36 No. 4

for teachers & students

November 2019

## Justin Stone: In His Words

**I have meditated in the Himalayas, in Zen temples, in the desert and on distant islands.** But best of all have been periods spent in absorption under the giant redwoods in northern California. These are the oldest creatures on earth, and their vibration is powerful for those who open themselves.

~ ~ ~

We create needs and then struggle to fulfill them, which is like voluntarily placing our ball in the sand trap.

~ ~ ~

Time has always seemed to me to be expansion and contraction. This would account for the cyclical nature of events.

~ ~ ~

Only the life based on Truth can bring Ultimate Joy. The life grounded in deception and delusion – no matter how attractive and successful – ultimately results in great and continuous suffering. And yet, there is not one in a thousand who wants Truth. Mostly, we want to reaffirm our status, like the overweight man who visits ten doctors before finding one who will recommend a diet containing all the foods he likes.

~ ~ ~

Memory cannot be real since it fades and dies. That which perishes is not Real. Memory is perishable; Reality is not.

~ ~ ~

What is the sinner who drinks, blasphemes and has no redeeming feature? He is the teacher of Buddhas.

~ ~ ~

The Japanese have their tea ceremonies (chanoyu) as a way to stop the outward flow of everyday life and to introspect for a while. Our way is the ice cream cone break. Have you ever seen anybody look unhappy while eating an ice cream cone? Everybody declares a moratorium on worries while he goes through the ritual of picking the correct flavor and then licking it with a conspiratorial air.

~ ~ ~

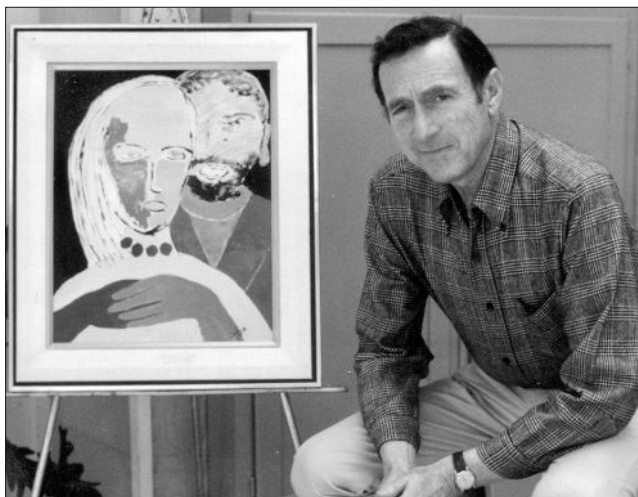


How wise and beautiful this saying by the great 13th century Japanese Zen Master Dogen Zenji: Spring draws in flowers and flowers draw in Spring.

~ ~ ~

Question: “Why must there be Chinese and Indian, French and English? Why must there be different peoples and wars?”

Answer: (by Zen Roshi Joshu Sasaki, holding aloft his fist and slowly unfolding his fingers): “I have five fingers. Why do I have five fingers?”



Find all of Justin Stone's writings and instructional teaching materials at [www.justinstonetccc.com](http://www.justinstonetccc.com).


**Intentional Communities**

I split my time between two locations and travel frequently for work. I recently experienced four different T'ai Chi Chih groups and feel better than ever about our teaching diversity and TCC's reach. The amazing **Northern Colorado** teachers host dozens of weekly events and during my week in Fort Collins, I attended an outdoor practice and potluck dinner, Spiritual Odyssey study group, silent teacher practice and many student classes. On Hawaii's Big Island **Hannah Hedrick** introduced

me to her faithful TCC student and his spiritual practice spot on a slab of smooth lava. We spoke outdoors for hours, long into velvety darkness as the sun disappeared from the sky. As Justin once said, the moon gives light too. Hannah and I met Sharon Cashman at the blocked entrance to Mauna Kea, where Sharon supports native Hawaiians against the desecration of sacred lands. TCC is right up their alley. I participated in **Amy Tyksinski's** TCC retreat in the Bay Area, and experienced a new day in bridging communities. Upon returning to **Albuquerque**,

I slipped back into the supportive Saturday night meditation group without missing a syllable while chanting the Heart Sutra, after which we gathered for Saturday Supper, just as we did when Justin was alive. Look around. Expand your intentional communities. As Justin said, "You meet the nicest people in T'ai Chi Chih."

~ With gratitude. Kim Grant, Albuquerque, NM



**You made a difference.**  
 Because you placed this order at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com), Amazon will make a donation to **Vital Force Journal Inc.**  
 Your purchases have supported charity **34 times** by starting at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com).

**Smile.amazon.com:** Every time you shop online (not on the mobile app or on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)) using Amazon, the company will make a donation to the Vital Force Journal, which goes directly to support [taichichih.org](http://taichichih.org). Simply type in **smile.amazon.com** and then type **Vital Force Journal** and then hit "select." Voila. Every little bit counts and adds up. It's painless and doesn't cost you a penny.

**Table of Contents**

Justin: In His Words	1
May The Vital Force Be With You	2
Features	3
Shifting & Moving	4
By Students, For All	5
Guiding Thoughts; Conference 2019	6
Trainer Tips	7
By Teachers, For All	8
Post-Conference Reflections	9
Teaching & Receiving	10
Teaching Our Elders	11
Justin Stone: Heightened Awareness	12-13
Experiences With Chi	14
Dispatch From Folsom Prison	15
"Free T'ai Chi For Veterans"	16-17
TCC Holiday Poem	17
By Teachers, For All	18
Events	19-23
Community Calendar	24

**Art Work & Photo Credits:** Pg. 1: Sheryl Adair (top) and Justin Stone (bottom); pg. 3-4: Connie Krumrai; pg. 5: Sheryl Adair; pg. 6-7: Connie Krumrai; pg. 8: Rachel Rilinger (top) and Sue Bitney (bottom); pg. 9: Mary Cerillo (top) and Caroline Guillot (bottom); pg. 10: Terry Jennings; pg. 11: Kent Jarratt; pg. 12-13: Courtesy of The Vital Force and [Justinstonetcc.com](http://Justinstonetcc.com); pg. 14: Linda Jones; 15: Lynne Roberts; pg. 16: Sheryl Adair; pg. 18: Lisa Vander Villet (top) and April Leffler (bottom); pg. 19: Marcella Box (top) and Mary White (bottom); pg. 20: Eliza Fulton; pg. 21: Diana Bahn; pg. 22: Marie Dotts (top) and Linda Robinson (bottom).

*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.

**What Does The Vital Force Do?**

- Produces a quarterly journal by and for its members
- Creates and maintains [taichichih.org](http://taichichih.org) for everyone
- Keeps up the extensive teacher database
- Extends its reach through a blog and e-newsletter
- Outreach for teachers and students about TCC through social media
- Provide free subscriptions when we have resources.

~ Giving ~

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

- Bequeath assets to The Vital Force in their estate planning
- Gift stocks to maximize their tax-efficient, year-end contributions
- Contribute monthly (aka our "sustaining members") via [taichichih.org/donate](http://taichichih.org/donate)
- Give through their employer's matching programs, thereby doubling their contributions
- Donate by credit card via [taichichih.org/donate](http://taichichih.org/donate)
- Donate by check to: The Vital Force, PO Box 92674, Albuquerque, NM 87199

Editor: Kim Grant • Membership: Mary Ruiz • Submissions: Send articles, poetry and photos to Kim Grant at [kim@kimgrant.com](mailto:kim@kimgrant.com) or to The Vital Force, P.O. Box 92674, Albuquerque, NM 87199-2674 • Memberships: Send membership subscription requests, renewals, remittances and changes of address to The Vital Force, P.O. Box 92674, Albuquerque, NM 87199-2674. Memberships are \$50/year for US and international. Members receive four issues of The Vital Force. Multi-year discounts are available. Teachers who subscribe receive a free listing on [taichichih.org](http://taichichih.org). The annual Teacher Directory is available for free at [www.taichichih.org](http://www.taichichih.org). If, for some reason, you do not receive an issue, send an e-mail to: [kim.grant@taichichih.org](mailto:kim.grant@taichichih.org). • Design: Amy K. Brown.

The Vital Force is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization serving T'ai Chi Chih practitioners worldwide. • Board of Directors: Dora Derzon, Guy Kent, Lisa M. Otero. • Copyright 2019 The Vital Force Journal Inc. Not for reprint, redistribution, or reuse in any format without written permission. All rights reserved. • T'ai Chi Chih® is a federally registered trademark.

## Be A Light

By Caroline Guilott, Lake Charles, Louisiana

**Recently, while attending Carmen’s T’ai Chi Chih retreat,** an image popped into my mind. This image was one of an old artisan making beautiful candlesticks.

He would take a long wick made of cotton and weighted down. The hot wax was ready so he could plunge each wick inside a vessel. He pulled each out and let it solidify in the open air. After drying, he would once again dip the forming candle in the hot wax so another thin layer would coat the first one. He would repeat this process until it formed a candle full of substance and strength able to stand on its own. It would also have to be beautiful. Each candle would resemble another while being slightly different. The candles would be useful, ready to give light to the purchaser – a soft, yellow, bright, glowing light.

This vision of a candle being formed reminded me of all the times I was **dipped into the hot wax of knowledge during TCC practice.** Every time we attend a workshop or retreat, we indicate a willingness to be dipped and start anew. A thin layer of understanding of how *Chi* works in our own body takes shape. We let it mold this awareness of how to move in our own practice. Little by little, it takes hold layer by layer, solidifying the essence that was present from the beginning. It is now brought forth in our own consciousness. And after such an immersion, we return home renewed, to **share our light with our students, so they can find theirs.**

I love this journey of being dipped over and over again, of going back to the source that reveals itself inside of ourselves. Justin would always ask, “Are you doing your practice? Are you teaching?” That was the most important thing to him. He entrusted us with this knowledge of the Supreme Ultimate, this knowledge of starting to recognize who we are.

In French it is, “*Ce voyage en vaut bien la chandelle,*” meaning “This journey is well worth the candle.” Did you know Justin spoke French? There are many things we don’t know about him, but if we want to discover who he was, and still is, we have to be willing to go there to discover our own truth through what he shared with the world. **These movements will give us freedom and knowledge** in our own journey through the discipline of TCC.



## Following The Chi

By Farrel Zeeman, Spanish Forks, Utah

**What do we mean when we say** we are whole, we are one? I began my T’ai Chi Chih journey in 2011 at the Big Sky Retreat, where Carmen led 30-minute movement sessions each morning. She patterned the movements for us, and we followed as best we could. Determined to get further training and having just completed an Albuquerque retreat, I know that the more I practice and refine my movements, the more there is to learn.

Many people think TCC is about physical movement, and certainly one cannot achieve mastery without perfecting the physical expression. **But TCC is more than physical movements.**

When one enters into prayer, words are important, but beyond words there must be intent and sincerity. Where do those words go when they are spoken? While practicing my prayer discipline, my state of consciousness is key when speaking the words. When I calm myself and become still, I am then ready to speak the prayer. In my experience, TCC requires the same state of mind as prayer, and in fact, I believe that TCC is a form of prayer. **The practice is the physical expression of the state of oneness and wholeness.** When you have experienced consciousness beyond the physical, you understand the essence and power of TCC. A quiet mind and the softness of TCC movements allow the *Chi* to make its presence felt in the hands, heart and entire body.

Resistance – physical, mental or emotional – blocks *Chi* from flowing. Old stress and fear energy must be released for *Chi* to flow freely. As *Chi* is the essence of the energy of life, we must be open and receptive to it. We must remove our small selves from the path.

This week, we practiced the movements intensely and practiced letting go of resistance. I experienced the flow of *Chi* in my hands, feet and entire body. The power of the retreat’s focused energy was sent out as a unifying force. Peace and oneness, focused within our synchronized movements, was sent out as a wave of love.

# The Here & Now Of Completing Your Weight Shift

By Rev. Rick Davis, Tulsa, Oklahoma

**Being present to the present** is an essential part of our T'ai Chi Chih practice and spiritual journeys. Yet, having the presence of mind to live your life with awareness takes practice. For some reason early in my TCC practice I adopted a bad habit of keeping much of my weight still in the *yang* leg and never quite flowing freely and completely into the *yin*. I was on to the next movement before I was fully into and out of the last.

**That is what it is like to never fully be present to the present.** We find ourselves tied to the past with our weight still settled into what was. And our focus can be pulled into the anticipation of “what might be,” finding much of our life’s weight thrown off balance as we lean into worrying about what may come. **To live either way is to live off balance.** Like always mentally being somewhere else when reading a good book, you reach the bottom of the page and find you are wondering what you just read. Rather than our core leading our movements, we find our unfocused extremities leading the way or holding us back.

“listening to  
and doing faithfully  
what this moment  
requires is the  
heart of awareness

We live in a culture that is continually off balance and out of breath. There is this dreadful busyness that drives us to feel a kind of worthlessness if we aren’t always doing something. Multi-tasking (doing more than two things at a time) is the new rage. This can nurture a frantic awareness-disconnect with our living moments. To live this way day-to-day is a kind of Homeric tragedy, allowing the sirens of distraction to blissfully lure us onto the rocks of inattentiveness.

Conversely, listening to and doing faithfully what this moment requires is the heart of awareness. Breathe. Step. Connect. Listen. Notice. Repeat.

“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.” (Ecclesiastes 3:1) Each step, every breath, each heartbeat has its “now” time. The present is the only commodity we can purchase with any certainty using the one true currency we all possess: life. The purchased past is already wrapped and delivered, painted and defined. The possible future is not up for sale yet. All that is truly ours to touch, hold and shape is happening in this very moment.

Listening to your body, staying attentive to your movements through the weight shifts, can keep you connected to where you are – to your living “address.” In our TCC practice we faithfully complete the weight shift in a gently soft rhythm, attentive to the flow of our energy from yang to yin. The joy of movement we speak of comes to us in the awareness of, and living into, the rhythm of our life’s present moments.

---

## TCC To The Rescue

By Diane “Di” Lund, Minnetonka, Minnesota

**A friend and I decided it would be fun** to get out of our comfortable exercise routine of walking or biking and try something more daring. Neither of us fears heights so the forty-foot-high ropes course sounded like a great idea to stretch our minds and bodies. We were tethered for safety; the system was comfortable and dependable. I only doubted my upper body strength should I fall and be caught by the safety line.

The first of the five elements required walking on a wire cable. The handholds were a series of ropes, each hanging down freely from the top and spaced unevenly. The distance between ropes varied from about three to five feet. Each rope was a different length and ended with a knot.

I put my foot on the cable and leaned over to grab the first rope while my second foot was still on the platform. I moved my other foot onto the cable and made for second rope. I became tense, and as my body tightened, the cable began to sway more and more. I began to grip my tether with white knuckles. Midway across the cable I became so nervous that I could not move. The cable was wobbling under my feet. I was stuck in fear.

**My T'ai Chi Chih practice came to my mind.** I let myself stand still and block out everything but my breathing. As my breathing became calmer, my body quieted and softened. I stood in alignment with my weight evenly over my feet. I relaxed my knees. When it was time to move, I moved from my *tan t'ien*, step-by-step, rope-by-rope to the next platform. The fear did not return during the rest of the course elements.



## Rest Your Feet In The Bubbling Springs

By Robert Delano, Atlanta, Georgia

**I was diagnosed with** Young Onset Parkinson's Disease in 2005. A decade later I remember watching my late mother, Toni, practicing T'ai Chi Chih at home while recovering from surgery and seeing how much she enjoyed "the Taffies."

In August of 2016, to help relieve some of my Parkinson's symptoms, I was implanted with a deep brain stimulator (DBS). Two years later, my slow shuffling walk continued to worsen, making it increasingly difficult to stay active. I started looking for an activity to keep myself moving that did not require a cane or wheelchair. And I remembered watching my mom practice TCC. I could not remember Toni's instructor's name, asked a few of her friends and searched on the Internet, but came up empty. So I waited patiently.

Most Fridays, my Dad and I have lunch together. Recently, I was surprised to see my stepdad Mike, who lives two hours north, walking through the parking lot. The three of us had lunch and to my good fortune, Mike had Toni's TCC instructor's contact information: Sheryl Adair. It is nice how things work themselves out with a little patience.

Fast-forward a month or two when I had been practicing TCC daily for a few weeks and experienced some unexpected benefits. In my second TCC class with Sheryl, **as we started Bass Drum, I remember a happy little smile bubbling up to my face.** Joy through movement, Sheryl said. That smile and calm keeps me practicing daily. After more daily TCC practice, I find myself completing tasks with more ease, less thinking more doing.

Many of us experience depression, anxiety or sour moods. The search for a healthy way to relieve those symptoms can be difficult. After regular TCC practice, I began to notice myself *winning* and *yanging* during regular activities like emptying the dishwasher and vacuuming. I'm keeping my attention on my feet and letting the *t'an tien* move me throughout my day.

TCC is an excellent tool to soothe an anxious mind and ease a tense body. I am grateful that my mother found Sheryl and TCC – and that I did too.

## In Sickness & In Health

By Merle Freidin Smith, Atlanta, Georgia

**T'ai Chi Chih has been a part of my life** for almost 20 years. It has guided me to experience joyful moments and navigate challenging times.

In 1998 I was diagnosed with Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA). At that time a family friend suggested that I might benefit from the practice of TCC. She had seen Carmen Brocklehurst on PBS and ordered a videotape for me. Coincidentally, soon after I received it, my husband's cousin, Sheryl Adair, told me that she was planning to become certified as a TCC teacher.

I have been practicing and learning TCC with Sheryl ever since. I also had the privilege of traveling with her to Albuquerque three times for retreats led by Carmen and had the honor to meet Justin.

This summer I had cervical spinal surgery because of complications related to Rheumatoid Arthritis. The surgery went well; however, two days after the cervical fusion I had breathing issues that required intubation and spent six days in the Intensive Care Unit and 18 days in the hospital.

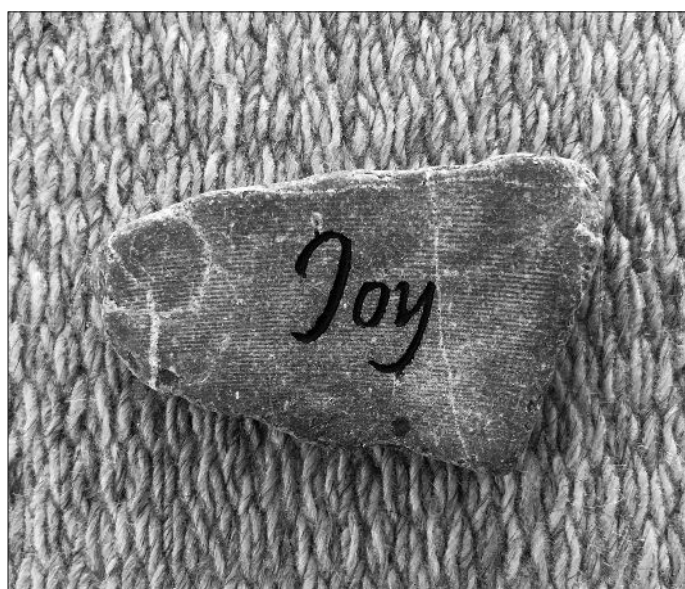
After the breathing tube was removed, tests indicated that I was aspirating into my lungs when I swallowed liquids and solids. I was fed intravenously until a feeding tube was inserted into my stomach. I was not allowed to drink liquids or eat solid foods for 25 days. This was one of the most difficult experiences I have ever endured.

**While in the hospital, I practiced TCC mentally as much as I could.** Each time I felt I couldn't take one more minute of this challenge, I kept my attention in the soles of my feet. Practicing TCC helped me be strong, to find a positive place to focus my energy.

TCC can be a valuable practice for creating a place of comfort in difficult times, be they physical or emotional challenges. It can also be there for us in good health, circulating and balancing positive energy. TCC can help support us in difficult circumstances and illuminate the joyfulness within and around each of us. I am thankful for the gift of TCC and for the many ways it has influenced my life.

fall  
crisp air  
coming fast  
feel it, see it  
deny it yet  
know it  
darn

- SHERYL ADAIR,  
ATLANTA, GEORGIA



# Practice All Or Some, In Order Or Not?

By Sandy McAlister, Hayward, California

**I am often asked,** “Do I have to practice all the movements in the prescribed order?”

I assume when Justin created the 19 movements of T'ai Chi Chih there were specific reasons for the order of the movements, and then again, some of them may have no particular reason for being where they are in the order of the form. In the early years of TCC he experimented with the form, adding and deleting movements, and moving the order around, finalizing the form as we practice it today.

Justin considered the first two movements as warm-ups, so we always begin with them. And it makes sense that the last movement is Six Healing Sounds: we have spent the whole practice letting go, softening and opening up the meridian channels, so the body is ready to receive the directed energy from the Taoist Sounds. The two “Daughter” movements complement each other in how they work the energy and should always be practiced with one following the other.

But what about the rest of the movements? Justin wrote, **“You only have to learn five or six of the movements and do them regularly... to gain the benefits.** It is application – constant daily practice – that gets results.”

I believe each movement was designed to move the energy in a specific way, so that when we practice all 19 movements we have thoroughly circulated and balanced the energy system of our bodies. **To receive the maximum benefit from the practice we do all the movements.** Justin wrote, “Each set of movements seems to have a slightly different effect, adding up to a complete and well-rounded whole...”

What about the order of the movements? We develop muscle memory when we perform a physical movement or action repeatedly. If we always do the movements in the same order our body gets used to a routine, of one particular movement following the next, so eventually we do not have to think about what comes next. The body knows.

I believe it is the same with “*Chi* memory.” Each TCC movement is circulating and shaping the energy. The energy gets used to being directed in a particular way in a movement, followed by the next energy pattern, followed by the next energy pattern. The energy flows smoothly into a habitual routine of one pattern flowing into the next. Softness and continuity are the results along with a deeper circulation.

When we do all the movements and in the same

order, over time, the body develops a recognition of wholeness to the form and the energy within develops a recognition of certain energy patterns, one following the next, flowing into a smooth and fluid practice. **The energy becomes used to the routine and responds more quickly and deeply.** Many times I have seen Justin, at the beginning of a practice, placing his palms to face the floor as in our resting/beginning position and they would begin to flutter, even before he began the practice. He had not even started to do the movements and his hands were manifesting the flow of *Chi* that was being prompted to move by a familiarity of his body language and his intent. The *Chi* had been conditioned over many years to respond to particular patterns emanating from the body and the mind.

So, while it seems most beneficial to do all the movements in the prescribed order, there are times it is advantageous to change the order. Here is one example. In my beginner classes, at about the fifth or sixth class (during an 8-week class), I have been experimenting with the practice at the end of each class. The students face forward (I do not teach in a circle) and we begin with Rocking Motion and Bird Flaps its Wings and then jump to “the Taffies” and continue to Six Healing Sounds. We then move into a circle and continue the practice with Around the Platter on through to Pulling in the Energy and then Cosmic Consciousness Pose.

There is a purpose for this unusual order. The newer and more complicated movements are in the second half of the form and the students are still struggling to learn these movements. I want the students to end the practice with a feeling of accomplishment and peacefulness. They are more familiar, comfortable and confident with the first half of the form. By putting the first half of the form at the end they finish the class on a positive note. I also like to bring them into a circle for some of the practice, adding another dimension to their experience.

While we receive the greatest benefit from doing all the movements, there may be occasions to leave out movements. There was a time I was resisting doing a particular movement. I just didn't want to include it in

CONTINUED ON P. 7



# Grounding For Balance Of Yin & Yang

By Daniel Pienciak, Howell, New Jersey

**Recently a student commented** on the constant wandering of his thoughts while doing T'ai Chi Chih and asked what I might recommend as an antidote.

Justin Stone explained the importance of bringing the *yin* and *yang* energy back into balance after doing a TCC movement. He referred to this as “returning to the uncarved block.” His advice in TCC was to return the attention to the soles of the feet.

When I was training to do Thai-Yoga bodywork, my master teacher trainer often referred to “monkey mind.” By this he meant the constant tendency of the mind to wander (often a habit energy), instead of remaining aware of the present moment and the present activity in which one is engaged.

Here, it behooves me to repeat from my article in the August Vital Force, the words from Justin that “awareness is the root of T'ai Chi Chih” [from the article “The Essence of T'ai Chi Chih” in *Spiritual Odyssey*]. This is most certainly the antithesis of monkey mind. Often one is not even aware that the mind is wandering, so this is where the antidote process begins.

Set your intention to observe but not judge the mind. Simply make note of it when you observe it wandering, and then bring the awareness immediately to feeling the soles of the feet. Be persistent in this, and it will eventually become a new habit energy that will serve you well in remaining grounded throughout your practice.

At the end of each set of movements, when the foot comes in close to the other foot and the palms of the hands come down facing the earth, feel the body weight drop down into the soles of the feet. At the same time, bring the mind down into the *tan t'ien*. This is easier to do if the knees bend and as the pelvis sinks a bit, we feel the front of the lower abdominal area slightly contracting, or collapsing inward, without intentionally tensing the muscles there. Just feel it happening. Feeling the tailbone drop downward might also help.

I believe that when TCC is practiced faithfully with all of this awareness, the result is a profound integration of mind, body and spirit, which effectively grounds and centers us. TCC has changed my life.

## Buddha's Answer

By Justin F. Stone, from *Spiritual Odyssey*

The Buddha was asked: “Are you a God?”

“No,” was his answer.

“Are you a super man?”

“No.”

“Then what are you?”

“I am *awake!*” was the surprising answer.

Buddha meant this literally. Most of us dream our way through life, superficially responding to the karma brought on by our *vashanas* (habit energies). Compulsive behavior is a sign of these.

CONTINUED FROM P. 6

my practice. I didn't want to ask Justin “why or what I should do about it” because I was afraid he would say I needed to do it more in order to move through my resistance. And that was the last thing I wanted to do. When I finally talked to him about it, he said, “Just leave it out of your practice.”



Justin wrote, “...slow gentle movements will stir up and circulate the most *Chi*... However, one should experiment with different speeds and choose what-ever seems most effective personally.”

If teachers experiment in class by changing the order or speed, or leaving out movements, it is important to let the students know why. Teachers have a responsibility to teach TCC as given to us by Justin Stone. But it is also important to be creative and responsive in teaching, to teach out-of-the-box when necessary to bring about a certain result or understanding.

With practice of the complete form of 19 movements and one pose, with the prescribed, usually nine, repetitions, and in the suggested order, we derive the fullest benefit. But there are times to adapt and modify the practice for particular situations, to bring about particular results, which takes our practice to another level of awareness and enJOYment.

# Seijaku During High Tech (iPhone) Times

By Diana Bahn,  
New York, New York

**Life moves at a fast clip** and we can barely keep up with bills, news, families and health. Take my home renovation: we hired an architect and his wife to help us navigate the pathways we must travel, many unknown to us. A lot of people get stressed out when faced with the unknown. Yet is it the unknown or our reaction to it that ultimately shapes us? Is it possible to be the one who shapes rather than gets shaped? Can we have some locus of control in these complicated times? Justin says yes. The practice of Seijaku, serenity in the midst of activity, is an experiential way to ameliorate the stress of these times. One must humbly stand and practice, lonesomely-calm, with no outer pomp or acting cool.

It's an internal practice yet so useful because it grounds and helps your health. It keeps you aware so you are ready to face whatever life throws in your direction. With Seijaku it's possible to find inner peace.

# Ocean Waves & Chi Waves

By Rachel Rilinger, Kansas City, Missouri

**I stood on the edge watching** waves swell in and out, seeing gushes of water overflowing the rocks, seeing waves burst with joy over the rocks, then release and flow out, changing again.

It was the same feeling for a Daughter in the Valley correction during a recent workshop with Amy Tyksinski. When I made the shift, a flood of energy flowed through my body. While watching the waves at sunset and feeling the ocean's energy, I felt the same burst of energy. I saw a small part of the ocean but was aware of how much bigger it really was. It's the same for my experience with the Chi. The joy and strength of energy flowing in my body is a small glimpse into the much larger force of Chi present everywhere and within everything. At the root of everything I feel it's love. I was immensely moved at this reminder of the great gift that TCC has been in my life. I get a taste and experience of something far beyond me. When I come into my feet, I am there with it:

Looking out, I see in  
this swell of love  
pulsing  
overflowing  
expanding within and around  
a depth so pure  
a force so pervasive  
joy, energy, magnificence  
we are one



Moving energy  
through the universe smoothly  
Celebrating *Chi*

Stillness - letting go  
Allowing what's meant to be  
Experience *Chi*

Gliding energy  
as one with the universe  
Cumulating *Chi*

—EV HANSON-FLORIN, MN

*At left: TCC Practice at Lake Harriet Rose Garden in Minneapolis by Sue Bitney*



# Community Overflow

By Mary Wichmann, Rochert, Minnesota

**Once you experience T'ai Chi Chih** you become part of a community. How deeply you experience it is entirely up to you.

Each annual teacher conference must be special. This past one was especially so for me. I was returning to Minnesota where I was accredited and reconnecting with teachers and auditors from that accreditation. I was experiencing the conference with my student and now newly accredited teacher, Nancy. I reconnected with so many teachers from my past or on my path. I found myself missing those teachers who weren't attending, especially those few teachers near my rural home in Minnesota's lake country. At the conference's final practice Nancy and I agreed, "wouldn't it be great to have more teachers to move with, to share ideas with and to learn from." We shared that idea with attending Fargo teacher, Dale, who lives 60 miles east of me.

After the conference Nancy and I continued to meet regularly in Detroit Lakes to deepen our practice and to hold on to the community we'd experienced at conference. I sent an email to my teacher, Christeen, and the other two accredited Fargo teachers. Within a few weeks Nancy and I were carpooling to meet Dale at Christeen's home to practice together.

Yesterday, Rosemary, a serious student, joined us on our commute to Fargo. We attended Dale's ongoing TCC class before meeting at Christeen's for a second practice. It was dark when Nancy returned us to my vehicle parked in Lake Park, and we headed south. And it was a little darker as I returned Rosemary to her vehicle in Detroit Lakes, where she headed south. I went east as we three returned to our homes on three of Minnesota's 10,000 Lakes.

Our next gathering is October 9 and if you find yourself in or near Fargo, North Dakota, and want to experience a small part of your TCC community, please join us. We're hoping the other two Fargo teachers will join us, too. And, yes, I believe they will continue meeting after I leave for my winter residence.

Namaste, which I was reminded at the conference isn't TCC; it's just a way of showing respect.



**Justin Stone Quotation Cards:**  
Mary Cerillo has framed each of the 24 Justin Stone quotation cards available on [Justinstonetcc.com](https://justinstonetcc.com) and is in the process of gifting them to friends throughout the year. Find them on <https://justinstonetcc.com/daily-meditations/>

## Buddhist Teachings Continue

By Caroline Guillot, Lake Charles, Louisiana

**After the T'ai Chi Chih conference** I stayed in Minneapolis at the invitation of a fellow TCC Teacher, Silvia, for Buddhist teachings from the Sakya school led by His Holiness the 42nd Sakya Trizin.

One morning while waiting for His Holiness's arrival, a young Chinese woman asked me to help her boyfriend with Rocking Motion. (I had taught her four movements, including Rocking Motion.)

Since the new student was quite stiff, I told him to relax the knee and move from tan t'ien. At that same moment another student of Silvia's showed up in our circle and two monks joined. To my surprise, within seconds, nearby Tibetan people came running to join the group. We did Rocking Motion until they announced that His Holiness was arriving.

Since then, Silvia has started a beginning TCC class for the robust Tibetan community. She thanked me for giving them a taste of the practice. Isn't this great? Talk about diversity.... It was an incredible week.



## TCC In Des Moines, Iowa

By Terry Jennings, Honolulu, Hawaii

**My husband and I** have been going to Des Moines in the “bubbling” spring-time ever since we inherited a 50-acre farm from his parents who passed away 10 years ago. This year along the way I stopped in



New Mexico to attend Carmen’s Seijaku Retreat. My niece Rachel Rilinger [see page 8], accredited in 2018, joined me for the third day of the retreat, and we stayed longer to practice at the Albuquerque TCC Center with the wonderful teachers.

The retreat inspired me to teach TCC to some beloved friends in Iowa. After our four classes finished, we met at the Des Moines Botanical Garden for lunch and a walk. After teaching half the movements, one student asked and laughed, “Do we then only get half the benefits?” They loved the practice and their honest sharing, humor and deep questions inspired me. But sadly, there is no local TCC teacher.

look  
at the  
joy on our  
faces while we  
practiced T’ai  
Chi Chih  
close

T’ai  
Chi Chih  
under a  
waterfall what  
could be more  
delight  
full

when  
teaching  
T’ai Chi Chih  
I feel so full  
of *Chi* that  
my heart  
frees



## How Retirement Community Seniors View TCC Classes

By Jim Shorr, Beaverton, Oregon

**T’ai Chi Chih is a draw for their spirit**, energy and motivation at Creekside Village in Beaverton, Oregon, a thriving suburb of Portland. Here’s how and why Seniors become attached to Joy Thru Movement. If the future belongs to those who prepare for it, these Seniors have a head start.

“My calming moments come from TCC practices. I’m more open and enriched when I finish the practice with Six Healing Sounds and the Cosmic Consciousness Pose.”

– DARLENE K., GUEST FROM NEWBERG, OR

“I regard TCC as an opportunity to integrate body, brain and soul, letting go of physical discomfort and leaving intellectual thoughts behind. Starting with our warm-ups, I glide through Rocking Motion and Bird Flaps Its Wings. My body needs the gentle rhythmic movements that follow. Soft background music allows me to let go of things speaking to control. My initial fear in the class was stiffness but the “Taffies” loosen me up and help my body regain its energy. My friends in the group were concerned in the beginning about following the movements. But they have integrated all 19 movements into their lifestyle smoothly, so we all look forward to discovering the movement’s nuances each Saturday morning.”

– TOM O., ACTIVE GYMNAST AND RESIDENT

“A certain calmness comes from consistently practicing the early movements. At first I felt stiff and awkward when I saw other Seniors getting into the flow. But I learned that this is a safe way to bring us together. The muscle coordination we feel in Working the Pulley and Carry the Ball to the Side provide real stability.”

– ROBERTA S., RESIDENT

“Many fellow Seniors don’t realize how far off balance we are. Slow movements with a gentle weight shift feels invigorating and enhances my balance. When I shift forward and backward in the Daughter on the Mountaintop and Daughter in the Valley, I feel the stretch and it wakes up my body.” – BARBARA J., RESIDENT

“I’m now letting go, releasing tight muscles and unneeded emotions. During Push Pull, I inhale and let life in with mindfulness; I exhale and empty my mind of the tape that says “do, do, do.” And I benefit.”

– CHRIS, COMMUNITY MEMBER

“With Six Healing Sounds I concentrate on my breath and feel each movement with each breath. We’re more coordinated as a group when we call out the Six Healing Sounds, and I become more aware of my inner core.” – JUDY B., COMMUNITY MEMBER

# Discovering Joy In A Nursing Home

By Kent Jarratt,  
Asbury Park, New Jersey

**Two years ago my neighbor** Jerry, now 99 years old, had to move out of the senior residence apartment building where we both lived to a long-term care facility nearby. Since then I have been going once weekly to teach and practice with him at his new home.

Two other residents have recently joined us. Jackie, 86 and blind, can only see dark shadows. A few months ago she invited her new roommate, Marie, who is recovering from a stroke and is also blind. I'm 70 and the youngest in our group.

Here are some things I emphasize, usually through repetition, when teaching TCC to "my elders."

## Keep the form.

I'm talking mostly to myself here. Jerry does the entire practice standing, yet his shoulders hurt, and he can't lift his arms much higher than his stomach. Jackie focuses more on arms and wrists and likes bigger movements, which she can sense better. Marie does all the movements right now from only one side of her body. I can see micro-movements in her frozen left hand and foot.

Because I've learned by necessity to accept a lot of variation, I've learned to remind myself each week that my own form needs to be as consistent as possible. I see this mirrored back in Marie's weight shifts while sitting in her wheelchair; Jackie's wonderfully soft wrists and *yinning* and *yanging* when standing; and Jerry's adaptation when working with a painful shoulders.

## Always return to weight shifts.

I think of moving from the *tan t'ien*. I use many of the metaphors learned from my teachers such as: feeling the sand filling one leg like an hourglass while the other leg gets light. I say this during every movement. We

spend time feeling both legs rooted to the ground. All three students have experienced a vast improvement in their balance, and their physical therapists have noticed this.

## Delight in sudden and amazing sensations.

I wonder as we age if we are more likely to feel the *Chi* through warmth and tingling, or fluttering fingers? Is it because we're less distracted? Or are nerve endings more exposed? Each of my three students reported from their very first lesson that they could feel sensations in their fingertips and other pleasurable sensations. For some movements we work physically closer together, and everyone expresses a strong sensation of the flowing *Chi*. It's not uncommon for someone to let out a "Whoop!" during the practice.

## TCC really *can* be done anywhere.

I'm not an official volunteer, but over the last two years the staff know me as the "T'ai Chi guy," and simply allow me to find whatever space is available on the Sundays that I go into the nursing home. The four of us sometimes practice TCC with every television set in every room blaring into the hallways. We commandeer space in one of two lounges, in the reception area (where sometimes the receptionist joins in, sitting behind her desk); in a corner of a dining room; and in summer, in the small courtyard outside; even in someone's room when they are bedridden.

## Pay attention to back-up chairs and remind everyone to hydrate.

We do a 45-minute practice. Jerry and Jackie stand. Since the beginning I've always put a chair behind them, or put them in front of a couch in case they lose their balance, but no one ever has. (Marie practices from her wheelchair.)

One time Jerry got suddenly and unaccountably tired. I asked him if he'd had any water recently. He couldn't remember and when I brought him water, he came back to life within ten minutes.

## We do TCC no matter what.

Marie has clearly benefitted from the practice even with paralysis on one side. Jackie has had pneumonia,

and when she got out of the hospital, and it was safe for us to visit in her room, we all did TCC around her bed. I suggested that she could just listen as I talked through our movements.

## Debrief and let the sun shine in.

This is the only group I've been in where everyone wants to talk afterward about the wonderful sensations they feel: warm hands, tingling fingertips, a wave of pleasant heaviness across the shoulders, a paralyzed hand starting to lift and more.

Early on one of us was constipated from a new medication. I said, "TCC is reputedly great for regularity. You may be pleasantly surprised soon." Someone reported during the next class that within an hour of the previous class, the problem was solved, and there's been no problem since.

Jerry has become increasingly hard of hearing, and I arrived one day to discover him sitting in the courtyard with four family members who had traveled a great distance to visit. Because of his hearing everyone was mostly silent. I invited them to join our practice, and they eagerly did. This gave them a wonderful way to spend time with Jerry without having communication challenges. There were lots of smiles.

I'll never forget how inspiring it was when Jackie did the whole practice flat on her back in bed. At one point I'd looked over at her and she was doing the arm and wrist movements, while wearing an oxygen mask. Her legs kept releasing energy and we couldn't stop laughing as her feet continued to dance under the sheets, all on their own. What joy!



**Sound**

In India the people speak of “vibration before sound,” the catalyst for the beginning of creation. This probably has the same meaning as, “In the beginning was the Word.” Almost all beliefs agree that sound is the matrix of creation. The fanciful phrase “music of the spheres” has more truth to it than is generally known. Many mystics have reported hearing celestial music constantly.

Today medicine [uses] ultrasound for its healing properties, recognizing that this unheard sound can have great effect on the muscular and, probably, molecular makeup of the body. Those who live in big cities, with the constant noise [...] suffer a good deal without knowing it. [...] the continued harsh vibration has a detrimental effect on the character of the *Chi*. Such irritation causes blockage and makes it difficult for the *Chi* to flow freely through the meridian channels of the body. Since the flow of the blood follows that of the *Chi*, it can readily be seen how heart trouble and other ailments can develop from these tensions. ...

To those who walk or drive through deserted sections of the desert, the intense silence – certainly more than the mere absence of sound – can be very healing. [...] The vast silence and the broad, restful vistas of Nature (there are few displeasing sights in nature) can be healing to us all. ...

~ ~ ~

**Our first practice using sound is a simple one:** just sit or stand where you are, take a few deep breaths, then relax and notice all the near and distant sounds of which you were unaware a few minutes ago. Make a mental note of each. The humming of a plane overhead, an ambulance in the distance, house noises, the sound of tires on the pavements, the chirping of crickets and birds, a female voice calling out to someone, a trombone playing soulfully on a radio somewhere ... All these and more may be happening, and yet you have

not noticed them; your busy mind has not registered the sounds at all. “Listen to that trombone,” states a jazz lover in an admiring tone of voice. “What trombone?” you ask, mystified.

**Do not embroider the sounds.** Register only what you hear, using no imagination. If the sound is that of tires on wet pavement, then just note that; do not imagine the passing car.

This is not easy to do; it demands strict attention. It also means we have to drop our egoistic self-centered concerns, forget our worries and memories, and just turn ourselves over to the hearing organ, registering only what we actually hear.

**After a few minutes** it would be good to break off for a short interval, then take up the practice again. If this practice should carry over into your everyday life, you would have taken the first step toward real mindfulness.

**As we continue,** relaxed yet concentrated, in this choiceless awareness, more and more sounds will intrude upon our consciousness. And if we are really sensitive, we will also be aware of silence when it is there. Probably a ringing in the ear or some other bodily sound will intrude. A building is always making noise; groups of people include some who cough or sneeze. Heating and air conditioning devices make noise. It will become apparent that we are engulfed in an ocean of sound; so let's become aware of it.

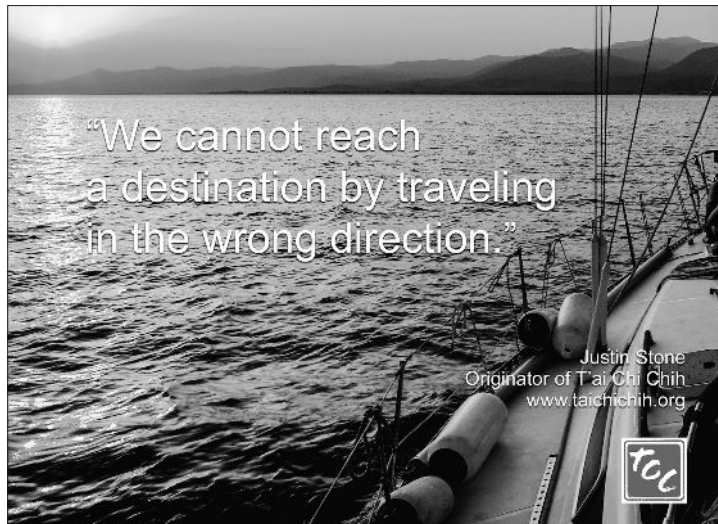
**When we have listened to random sounds for a while,** let's turn to something pleasant, where we control the object of hearing. Let's listen to music.

**Play some pleasing music, but not loudly.** Hear the music, the instrumentation of the orchestra, the singer's voice – all without mental comment. Just sink into the music and really hear it. Not many really listen to music; their thoughts begin to drift, and pretty soon they are daydreaming. While listening to the music, be aware if the mind starts to drift off and quickly bring it back to the focal point, the music. This may be more difficult than it seems, but be sure to persevere. ...

**When we have finished just being aware of the sounds of music,** we should extend the practice by now playing several different CDs and becoming aware of whether they are pleasing, displeasing or indifferent in their effect on us.

Discussion of these judgments would only cause argument and spoil the practice. Rather, each student should merely note, as he or she hears the music, whether he is enjoying it, is indifferent to it or dislikes it.

One day many years ago, in the Himalayan foothills, the author was driving north in an old touring car with a companion who was at the wheel. There was a medium-heavy rain falling. Suddenly, directly ahead, an open and flat truck carrying a load of hay-like material appeared. Standing atop the hay in the pouring rain, waving his arms in the angular fashion of Indian dance, was a teenaged youth, naked except for a loincloth. The water was streaming down his face and his hair was disheveled. He was laughing ecstatically. As we were passing the truck, he brought a flute to his lips and began to play as he danced. Only for a moment could I hear the sound. Never had I heard a purer one. The tone of the flute coming through the rain was clear and angelic. As I looked



“ the tone of the flute  
coming through the rain  
was clear and angelic

back (we passed rapidly), I could see the dancing figure, moving in ecstasy, while my ears began to pick up the sounds of the road. I was sure I was looking at the god Krishna and his flute. Such purity of sound I have not been aware of again.

~ ~ ~

**Chanting can be enchanting.** The power has nothing to do with the semantic meaning of the sounds – we can chant in Latin, Chinese or Sanskrit and derive great benefit.

For practice in chanting we are going to use the *Gayatri Mantra*, which in India is supposed to be suited to all people anywhere. It has a good vibration and is fun to chant. In a class I gave at the University of New Mexico, students chanted the *Gayatri* at sunset as one of the members of the class kept time on his bongo drum (not my idea). It was fun.

The *Gayatri* is often sung, with notes rising one tone or descending one tone from the tonic. However, it is very effective just being chanted. The sounds (Sanskrit) are as follows:

OM BHUH BHUVAH SVAH-HA  
TAT SAVITUR VARENYAM  
BHARGO DEVASYA DHIMAHI  
DHIO YOO-NA PRACHO-  
DAYAT

This should be chanted firmly and evenly. Once the sounds are memorized, one can chant as he or she walks along the sidewalk (mentally if desired), keeping in time with the footsteps. In India chanting is often timed to be in rhythm with the breath.

A mantra is a sound or series of sounds apparently revealed to a

*rishi* (sage) during periods of austere practice. Two such sages in India's history – the ancient Yogi Vashishtha and the modern Ramana Maharshi – are known as Great Rishi, or *Maha Rishi* in pronunciation. Some present-day teachers have arbitrarily taken this title for themselves, but without general recognition in India.

The spiritual meaning is not of interest to us here, nor is the fact that *Gayatri*, in effect, is the Sun Goddess. **We are using the *Gayatri Mantra* as a vehicle to help us in our progress toward heightened awareness.** For the same reason we are not going to use prayer in our practice because it would involve us in religious matters, and greater awareness – not denominational faith – is our goal.

~ ~ ~

There have been many uses for **aphorisms, phrases repeated to the self so that they will sink into the subconscious.** Particularly where business success is the objective people have listened to motivational CDs, and they can be quite useful in strengthening the confidence and the drive for success.

We are going to approach the subconscious by singing a pleasing song (by the author, an A.S.C.A.P. composer) that makes use of the powerful vibrations of the word “joy.” Other inspirational words occur in the song. It is the writer's feeling that, **as we approach joy, we approach Divinity.** Many ashrams in India have the Sanskrit word *Ananda* in their names, and *Ananda* (or *Anand*) means

Bliss. This feeling is far from the satisfaction of having a desire gratified. Bliss is an inner thing, our real nature shining through. The words are as follows:

Joy, Joy, Healing thru Joy  
Joy, Joy, Healing thru Joy  
Joy in the Heart, Joy in the Mind, Joy in the Soul  
Joy, Joy, Healing thru Joy  
Joy, Joy, Healing thru Joy  
Joy, Joy, Healing thru Joy  
One with all Life, Happy am I  
One with all Life, Healthy am I  
One with all Life, Holy am I  
Joy, Joy, Healing with Joy

This winds up our practice with sound. Many have had an enlightenment experience (*Satori*) by hearing a sudden sound. This writer can refer to a time when, sitting in the house in meditation, he heard a bird chirping outside (which was felt to be inside the sitter), and suddenly for a moment, everything seemed clear in a complete unity. Striving to grasp the details so I could remember the experience, I found that it gradually faded and there were no details to recall, but the effect was powerful.

Similarly, a disillusioned monk, while mowing the grass one day, tossed aside a small piece of tile and was completely startled when it struck something with a large bang – startled to the point where thinking stopped momentarily and there was a complete *Satori* experience. Of course, this monk had spent many years in preparation for this sudden enlightenment by unexpected sound.

**Whether chanting, singing or hearing silent sound, there is no more effective way to culture the mind for heightened awareness.**



## I Wanted What He Had

By Carmela Beck,  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

**A long time ago**, I saw Justin Stone from across the room demonstrating a T'ai Chi Chih movement at a local bookstore. My toddler had wandered into the store and was running amok. A sizable crowd was seated and standing, watching him discuss and demonstrate something I had never seen. From 20 feet away, he made a strong impact on me.

I will never forget that moment. I was so amazed by his presence that I let my daughter wander through the bookstore unsupervised, for a long time. But I could not take my eyes off him. I have no apt language to describe what I saw and felt, even now. But I knew at that moment he had something that I didn't. And I wanted it too. I mentioned to my friend that one day I was going to learn about what he was teaching. I didn't know who he was, but I did know that he was very special and when I looked at him, I felt calm and peaceful and confident. I looked at the seated crowd and thought: these people look interesting. I liked the way they looked, probably because they were so grounded. (I only know that now.) I became busy in other areas of my life and never followed up.

A decade later I started having horrible back pain and my daily yoga practice was not helping. I thought, what is gentler than yoga? T'ai Chi. So, I googled T'ai Chi Albuquerque and after seeing many images, mostly of a martial arts nature, I came across Justin's face. I immediately recognized him and looked for more information. From the TCC website, I picked the first teacher name that appealed to me: Carmen Brocklehurst. I called and she answered, "How may I help, dear?" What a gift. Carmen has been my teacher ever since, for the last five years, and I became accredited at the Albuquerque center in November 2018. I feel so thankful to have seen Justin that day. Even though I never spoke with him, he taught me so much (just by his strong presence) and he continues to do so. Thanks for being, Justin.

## Try It, You Might Just Like It

By Linda Jones, Bennettsville, South Carolina

**I have always been so grateful** to have had the opportunity to attend multiple T'ai Chi Chih events annually. And I felt that having Antonia, Pam, Dan, Sandy, Janet, Bill and Dorene (all of whom I call the Dream Team) as teachers couldn't possibly get any better. But I was wrong. I attended Carmen's September TCC retreat in Albuquerque and was blown away from the very beginning when we spent over an hour on Rocking Motion. Who would have thought that 30 people could spend that long on a movement that already felt soft, flowing and full of *Chi*?



One tiny change – totally letting go of all the tension and effort when the fingertips are pointing downward – changed everything for the entire room. No one became the least bit bored as Carmen kept us going until every person felt it. Now my Rocking Motion really feels like the effort of no effort.

As the retreat proceeded, there was one small tweak in each and every movement that increased the flow of *Chi*

exponentially for me. Because of my Dream Team's superb teaching skills and techniques, I reached a point where I was able to accept and implement Carmen's modifications.

There has been a little controversy around the different styles between the Albuquerque and other TCC communities. Not too long ago some non-Albuquerque communities embraced standing up between movements and allowing the knees to relax because it felt good. (I felt a little like a traitor to my teachers when I started doing it.)

I think it's time for the entire community to note some of the subtle (and the not so subtle differences as in Push Pull) that Carmen teaches. I am not advocating changing the form or deviating from Justin's teachings. It seems as if the Photo Textbook has become TCC's bible, but even the actual Bible is subject to interpretation.

I never met Justin, but I know he certainly wasn't shy. I cannot imagine him allowing Carmen to produce television shows and instructional DVDs if he didn't think she was doing it correctly. Surely Justin would have told the Albuquerque teachers during their many weekly meetings if they were doing the form incorrectly.

At events I attend — even those where all attendees have been trained strictly in the ways of our teacher trainers — I marvel at how much we move as one. But we also move a little differently at the same time. And the Albuquerque contingent moves in slightly more different ways, but they follow all the principles of TCC.

Hopefully more of the community will be open to experimenting and will attend an event lead by an Albuquerque-trained teacher. You might experience the same increased energy that I did.

# TCC Promotes Emotional Healing

Compiled by Julie Heryet, El Dorado, California

**David H.** – In this T'ai Chi Chih class I feel an internal cleansing, like a shower. I feel grounded and refreshed. I do it every day in my cell. I grew up moving like this in a small village in Fiji with my Grandma and Mom, but I didn't know what it was. This class has given a face to it. My village was loving and hospitable but other villages were violent and would attack us. I've come to Folsom from Level 4 [*the highest level in the prison system*] and I have over 100 stab wounds on my body. I'm sensitive to people's energy, and **this class is healing the wounds I have on the inside that no MRI will show.** Like having a broken heart, like when my wife passed away, no one can see it but it can heal. This class centers and balances me and contributes to my 24 years of sobriety from heroin. **It heals the pain from my childhood and the pain from my addiction.** I haven't felt this peaceful in a long time. I wake up and choose to be peaceful. The flow of these gentle movements are the opposite of prison, of how my dad always said, "Get in there and fight." But now I have softness and continuity, and this is not weak, it is strong. I can't see myself *not* doing it every day. It's my medicine. It's how I get high now.

**Jonathon R.** – You ladies [*the TCC teachers*] are like a little string that connects us to the world out there. I believe things happen for a reason. Sure no one wants to be in prison, but being in this class, it's like things happening on time. When I saw this practice on the prison television, I knew it was a sign. I started coming, and I experience it as a chance to share a moment of life with others. When I'm doing the practice, I'm not like a sponge, but it creates a filter – filter for bad thoughts all around this place. We keep the practice simple and easy, and everything gets better. **This practice is like healing a broken bone. Once healed, it's stronger than it was before.** We develop an inner muscle that balances you: not too strong, not too weak. When I see these guys from class out on the yard, we share a connection. We nod and we know. I'm learning to listen beyond the prison chaos, to the universal energy that connects and completes us. We are the filter for this energy, we have healing power to share with others, we just need to stay connected. This is what I want to do on the streets: share this.

**Steven F.** – I've been in this class for four years and came after the law library closed. Now I have a center point in my life: it's TCC. On the Tier I mirror Lawrence doing the movements from across the cellblock. Other guys will yell, "Hey, what are you doing? You look funny." But I don't care. The pain in my body is gone and I feel good. I used to be filled with anger and hate, and I was very aggressive. Now I'm able to quiet down, pray, and do my movements. I come every week: it's my lifeline. After Julie started testing us and I got all three certificates, I felt like it said, "I AM T'ai Chi Chih." Not just in class but on the inside. When I'm here I feel connected with the universe and feel community with the guys. We see each other on the yard, and even though we move in different circles, we know who we are. No words are needed. When I get out I want to be a teacher and pass this along to others, to share this calm. **Once you have it, it stays with you.** Like your spirit senses you are a part of something.



*Lynne Roberts, photographer writes: I am honored to share these photos of our Circles of Light Event. It was a powerful, emotional connection we shared with the larger community and Folsom Prison in California. I invited all my classes to join, and someone from each of my classes was represented within this group.*

soft  
focus  
flow from *Chi*  
weight shift body  
of motion  
within  
soul  
  
poise  
posture  
within *Chi*  
stays with forever  
become part  
focus  
*Chi*

I  
just don't  
belong here  
but I'm so glad  
you guys are  
in my  
life

love  
is one  
power that  
heals all the wounds  
of a cruel  
turmoiled  
life

I  
know that  
everyone  
truly desires  
to live in  
peace and  
joy

don't  
be what  
you are not  
because along the way  
someone will  
prove you  
wrong

here  
with them  
I know peace  
inside we are  
together  
simply  
peace

– JUDY TRETHERWAY

# When You’re Ready To Teach Veterans, Get Them Ready For You

By Jessica Lewis, Claymont, Delaware

## Those who attended

the Minnesota teacher conference heard a dynamic presentation by David-Dorian Ross, CEO of Taijifit, about a brand new program called T’ai Chi for Veterans, offered through the Veterans Administration Community Care Network (VA CCN).

Taijifit is managing a network of instructors (including many TCC teachers) for Optum, the VA CCN’s healthcare service provider.

I became really excited about this program when DDR stepped up to the microphone at the conference, and I was “in” without knowing any details. Since conference time we’ve received additional information via the TCC Guide’s newsletter and the TCC Teacher’s Circle Facebook page about the program’s natal stages. David-Dorian Ross (aka DDR) is ironing out kinks on a daily basis so all information has yet to be revealed.

I’ve been working on getting classes going since the conference and I am pleased to say that my new vets-only classes commenced a few weeks ago. Regardless of the sometimes-confusing, administrative twists and turns before “opening day,” my students and I are now experiencing joy and ease.

The following roadmap describes how I’ve promoted my classes and made friends with my local “VA universe.” Many of us have stressed about the bureaucratic process of getting up and running with Taijifit; however, networking and promoting your classes to your local veterans community may be more important. (Think of it this way: what’s the

good of being onboard with Taijifit if you have no students?)

When pitching a class to a possible venue (VFWs, American Legion Halls, Mason Lodges, and Fire Stations are natural fits but don’t forget churches, libraries and such), you may want to provide a letter of introduction to lend credibility. Stephen Thompson will soon have a PDF example and editable version available on TCCCommunity.net.



Introduce yourself to as many VA employees and veterans as possible. Taijifit markets classes but they can’t be as effective in your neighborhood as you can. Get comfortable with marketing yourself. Join veterans’ support groups and keep your eyes peeled for veterans’ health fairs.

Consider creating a meetup.com group listing for your veterans classes. (Meetup charges a fee.) Meetup is a great way to advertise classes and through it, Taijifit can transfer the participants’ data into MindBody, the software program Taijifit uses to make billing and payments operate more smoothly and quickly.

If you have a website, create a dedicated page for this program so veterans can easily understand this class versus your others. Add a Call to Action button to your homepage and TCC page (if you have one) so veterans can quickly jump to the right page. When adding these classes to your website, indicate that they are “for veterans only.” It’s too complicated to blend vets and civilians in one class. If you need patriotic artwork for your flyers or website, Stephen will also make those available for downloading. Flags work well but overlaying a flag with words is not permitted.

Create flyers or banners to advertise classes. Stephen will soon post language and images that have worked for me; use whatever you like.

Two important contacts include David-Dorian Ross ([ddr@taijifit.net](mailto:ddr@taijifit.net)) and Rosy Perez, Executive Assistant: ([rp@taijifit.net](mailto:rp@taijifit.net)).

# Foundation Grant Helps All Teachers

By Jessica Lewis, Claymont, Delaware

## The T’ai Chi Chih Foundation

recently underwrote the cost of 1000 color flyers and a large banner which describe and promote the new “Free T’ai Chi for Veterans” program. Part of the Foundation’s requirement for a grant is to summarize the project and experience here.

Both products lent credibility and were effective during group presentations to veterans and support organizations. The banner has been a provocative conversation starter. I distributed 700 flyers to the Delaware Association of Realtors (many of whom are veterans) because they touch lives of veterans directly and indirectly. At “Stand Down,” a health fair for veterans, I distributed 250 – while speaking with 200 vets directly and with 50 state and federal politicians, VA caregivers and employees of organizations that exclusively serve veterans. The remaining 50 were went to my SSJ Associates group (dedicated to caring for the earth and uniting those with differences). I presented the program at our annual gathering in September and within days received emails from members describing how they’d begun disseminating information all along the East Coast. One member invited me to brainstorm ways to promote the program with the Interfaith Veterans Support Groups she facilitates.

Do I know that my advertising materials will benefit other TCC teachers? No. But this program is in its natal stages nationwide, and I’m actively engaged in educating the general public and caregivers within the VA medical system as I simultaneously promote my classes. I also believe that using and distributing these advertising materials will smooth the path for other TCC teachers who choose to participate in this program.



## Veterans: An Opportunity & Choice

By Kathleen McAllister, Broomall, Pennsylvania

**The presentation by David Dorian Ross** (he goes by DDR) at the Minnesota teacher conference was dynamic. And I have been working on the Free T'ai Chi for Veterans program since the day I returned home. At that time, there wasn't an application process or anything on the TaijiFit website. You had to e-mail DDR to get the ball rolling. And what a ball it's turning out to be.

You create accounts on numerous websites to complete tasks. I and others ask questions that go unanswered. Then I turn to other teachers to see if they have the answers. If they don't, I let it go. At some point answers will come. You will be called when DDR needs some information from you or when your state or county is ready to go live with T'ai Chi for Veterans.

During the last meeting when people expressed frustration to DDR, he said, “Yes, we have to have patience, and we practice patience in T'ai Chi.” He also mentioned a new instructional video to help the process. They are trying. The scope of this project is huge. If jumping through hoops isn't your thing, this might not be your opportunity.

When I googled DDR I found him to be an international competitive T'ai Chi champion – an 8-time U.S. gold medalist, World silver medalist and 2-time World bronze medalist in T'ai Chi competition. DDR is also the executive producer of “24 Hours of World Peace Livestream,” a live webcast of events during World T'ai Chi Qigong Day. Bill Douglas, the founder of World T'ai Chi Qigong Day, dedicated its 20th year to DDR for his contributions to the theme of world peace and harmony. I believe DDR has the best interests of everyone at heart.

When I was trying to get paper towels out of a holder at the Minnesota conference, they kept tearing in my hand. Carmen was nearby and said, “Do it softly, dear.”

Do you practice T'ai Chi Chih, or do you practice T'ai Chi Chih in life? We need patience and softness in approaching this opportunity. Think of all the great reasons you want to teach (everyone and veterans). Think of all the ways T'ai Chi Chih has changed your life. This is a long way from over, and a long way from being a smooth process. It is a tremendous opportunity and the choice is yours: softly go with the flow, or let it go, softly.

## Teaching TCC To Veterans

By Margery Erickson, Hanover, Pennsylvania

**If you have been wondering** what happens when you visit taijifit.net/vets [updated after this article was written], please remember that procedures are in a constant state of flux for this new program. This article offers the most recent answers and basics about how to get started. You'll still need to do some legwork and networking to get classes going and to attract veterans.

The application process begins with asking if you have 150 hours of training. If you have the credential (see our TCC Guide's requirements at [tccommunity.net/resources-1](http://tccommunity.net/resources-1)), select T'ai Chi Chih from the drop down menu. You do not need a sample video or certificate to begin the process. An email from TaijiFit should then arrive with more instructions and items to complete. Contact a representative to schedule a phone conversation if you have questions.

You have now entered a twilight zone of new acronyms, digital platforms and forms to complete (e.g. Vairkko, CANVAS, MeetUps, NPI#). While you are getting your credentials together, begin introducing yourself to veterans, veteran support groups and other individuals who work with veterans. Visit locations where veterans meet and identify locations where you may teach.

Remember that these classes for veterans are offered free to them. And as of this writing those leading classes are doing so on a voluntary basis. Teachers will be compensated once final details are completed. Once you get involve, feel free to contact me or ask questions on the TCC Teacher Circle Facebook page.



By Gerald Juzdan, Weekawken, New Jersey

# Sharing The Chi In The Colorado Rockies

By Rebecca Paulson, Loveland, Colorado

**My family has had a cabin** overlooking the Continental Divide since 1950. When I was accredited in 2016 several of us in Northern Colorado who could not attend our first teacher conference in Seattle decided we would meet during the same time here in the Rockies. This year marks our third annual T'ai Chi Chih at the cabin.

People pitch in to share meals, enjoy a glass of wine on the lookout during the sunset, meet later to stargaze, chat quietly while working on crafts or knitting, and practice together several times throughout the weekend. Especially memorable? Taking short walks down the hill from the cabin into a grove of pine trees for a full silent practice; the movement of the *Chi* is so powerful.

In July, local teachers and serious students joined together. We again so-journed down to the clearing for a full silent practice before a mid-day picnic lunch.

Why should I have been surprised? Sharing the *Chi* outside, fully grounded with the earth beneath our feet is incredible. The community that forms and strengthens among practitioners, some meeting for the first time, is beyond measure. There is shared wisdom, exploration of ideas and concepts, laughter and tears. So deep. So rich.

**You don't have to wait for a formal intensive or retreat to experience the treasure that is TCC in community.** Set a date, find a place, pitch in and taste the goodness.

You don't even have to head up into the mountains, but we did. And I'm already looking forward to the next time.



# Teacher Symposium Pennsylvania, August 2019

By April Leffler, Host, Prospect Park, Pennsylvania

**What exactly is a T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Symposium?** It's a little conference, a little intensive, a little retreat. I couldn't agree more with the summations below from several participants. Plus its lots of fun, enriching and unique to the group that gathers.

CAROLYN ANDREWS: "I attended as a newly accredited teacher to continue my TCC journey and better prepare to start my new classes. The nuances I learned in each movement continue to amaze me, benefit my practice and bring new insight and joy. Other teachers and Sandy McAlister shared their experiences and helpful hints without attitude, judgment or competitiveness. I especially enjoyed hearing stories from those trained by Justin Stone and appreciate the connectedness for those of us unable to meet Justin."

RON RICHARDSON: "Sandy often used the word wholeness. As a chaplain for many years I identify with this word. We are whole people; we are more than a body. Sandy's wholeness reference was to getting our whole body involved in the movements. She also talked about feelings as we practiced. We shared experiences with teaching particular movements. We were together with our good and bad, for healing and wholeness, and Sandy challenged us to return to our communities with a newness."

STEVE KOBLOCK: "To learn the movements and benefits of TCC, one must practice regularly. To be a successful TCC teacher we must communicate effectively and make students feel comfortable."

LYNNE JONES-DIETZE: "I didn't expect a mini-intensive but received one, pushing through issues I might have walked away from to reach the other side."

DEB WEIN: "As a recently accredited teacher, I learned about different class formats and what each term meant to different attendees: open practices, drop-ins, continuing, beyond beginners and more."

SKY YOUNG-WICK: "This is the only event which focuses on teaching TCC. It is enlightening to learn refinements for our own practice, and how to teach students."

SUANNE LEWIS: "I learned how to more simply breakdown movements into smaller segments for teaching and to better refine my own practice. The associations among other teachers, stories, sharing, humor and support was delightful. I heard different words to describe movements to students in a more meaningful way."

JACK WEAVER: "It was worth the effort just to learn another way to teach and present Rocking Motion."

KATHLEEN MCALLISTER: "It was amazingly helpful to submit discussion ideas ahead of time and have everyone's input."

# TCC Retreat

## Albuquerque, NM, September 2019

By Cristina R. Fridenstine, El Paso, Texas

**Retreat attendees – who came with open hearts** and an eagerness to learn through intensive instruction – traveled from Florida, California, Colorado, Texas, Louisiana and the District of Columbia. Each morning practice set the day’s tone, and practices throughout the day were punctuated by gentle reminders to “stay in your feet.” Many attendees were challenged by the seemingly simple admonitions to “stay soft” and “let go,” and those who lapsed received gentle but firm coaching.

It didn’t take long for the group to bond, and even when conversation stopped during a morning of silence, fellowship was undeniable. Participants also relished Carmen’s accounts of her experiences with Justin. Reassurances to those who regretted not having met him in person came quickly: “When you do T’ai Chi Chih, Justin is with you.” Thoughts from participants include:

JENETH RUNDLE: “This retreat has been particularly warm and encouraging. Under Carmen’s guidance and Justin’s watchful eye, my sense of studentship was reborn through the experience of synchronizing all parts of my body. The movements washed me on the inside and outside. I came out clean and touched by grace. I am grateful. I give thanks.”

PAULA HAROLDSON: “I was touched by Carmen’s humble attitude and the experienced teachers who demonstrated that there is always something more to learn. As a newer student I felt at ease and appreciated the richness and depth of this simple yet complex practice.”

KRISTIN CLARK TAYLOR: “The joy of movement and fellowship with my TCC brothers and sisters has filled me. My desire to teach TCC is now overflowing, like a waterfall. I want and need to spread this joy to others. *Chi* is alive.”

JK VEERKAMP: “The smallest change in a movement opens new insights/feelings. During the retreat I adjusted my wrists just slightly upward, which allowed the fingers to tingle even more.”

MICHAEL DUNN: “This retreat has done four things: corrected 90% of my movements, helped me know Justin better, made me taller (part of my poor posture was from tense shoulders) and reminded me how special my wife is and how much I miss our little dog.”

MW: “Yawning, yawning, renewed freedom.”

JUDY HENDRICKS: “Doing TCC with substance means being grounded and feeling joy. When one is really grounded, life is easy and joyous. Grounding equals joy.”

CRF: “I knew immediately that TCC was my calling, but this retreat has humbled me in learning its true power, experiencing and harnessing *Chi*. I am even more inspired to spread the word to those seeking healing and balance in their lives.”



# TCC Retreat

## Santa Barbara, CA, September 2019

By Bella Box, Beaverton, Oregon

**Pam Towne invited participants** to step away from their usual routines and sink into the beauty of T’ai Chi Chih in an exquisite setting. Each brought varying levels of TCC experience. Pam gently guided us through each movement over four days. She provided a safe space to explore and release, and invited each to write about our experience. Those impressions follow:

PHOUC GERMINE: “My purpose in attending was to pursue a TCC teaching accreditation, hoping to introduce good health to people (mostly senior citizens) in my community. My experience has been positive, with Pam’s kindness and warmth welcoming me. I’ve also met spiritually like-minded people, which helped to open myself to receive love and wisdom. I have gained much to improve my movements. It’s been an awesome experience and I’m glad I made the trip to meet wonderful new friends.”

MICHELLE SARUBBI: “My intention was to deepen my spiritual practice, gain insight and confidence in the movements, and begin the journey to become a TCC instructor. All intentions were met and more. Thank you.”

KAREN GORAN: “This retreat allowed me to let go, take a break from daily routines and reclaim inner quietude. My breath is deeper, my being refreshed. It was a joy to be in the company of sincere practitioners. In the blessing of letting go, there’s an abundance of peace, at oneness and love.”

Gail Nieto’s niece’s wedding necessitated an early departure. Gail’s intention was to practice with TCC colleagues since she usually practices with her DVDs because there is nobody else in her area that does TCC yet. She was inspired to move forward towards accreditation.

BELLA BOX: “Taking time with a beautiful group of women to explore the fundamentals of each movement has been rejuvenating. Pam embodies love and it’s healing being in her presence. My intention was to renew my understanding of the practice, so that happened. As a direct result of spending time with Pam and the community, I discovered that the practice helped me let go of shame. I also experienced a profound reduction of headache pain intensity from a traumatic brain injury (TBI). This retreat has revitalized my devotion to a daily TCC practice and our TCC community in Portland, Oregon.”



# TCC Workshop

## September Weekend In The Mountains

By Eliza Fulton, Host, Glenwood Springs, Colorado

**Together under Caroline Guilott's wonderful facilitation** we explored the Essence of T'ai Chi Chih. What is essence? By definition it's the soul, ethos, core, heart of something. We also felt it included creativity, purity and love – as we became more and more grounded, this groundedness connected us as a group in a natural flow.

The workshop began Friday evening with a circle practice in the park by the Roaring Fork River. This set the tone for the weekend. Be patient, flow like the river, feel the hollow core within yourself, feel the earth, connect heaven and earth within yourself. Allow the *Chi* to flow from the *tan t'ien* to the feet, **like the river flows, not in a hurry but with patience and continuity.** Let the breath be natural.

We heard familiar ideas repeated again and again over the weekend: slow down, you don't need to be in a hurry; relax, sit into your little chair, have soft knees, be firm in your feet. Remember always that the *Chi* influences the mind and the mind influences the *Chi*. Be present.

Many of us had the pleasure of visiting the natural hot springs that bubble up in Glenwood Springs. Caroline suggested we feel the water softly passing over the tops of our hands and then the palms of our hands, letting the fingers be soft and feeling the sensation of water passing over them. **This concept was then brought back to the practice** and it brought a new

awareness to really feeling the heavy air passing across our hands, fingers and wrists – being open and practicing with the effort of no effort. Try it. Feel the air as if it were the warm water of natural hot springs. If you really move from the *tan t'ien* the hands know what to do.

We learned that we have to let go to become something else, something new. One quotation from Justin reminded us that, "We cannot reach a destination by traveling in the wrong direction." Where do you want to go? **Let the old fall away with the falling leaves.** Ahhh. Releasing fully gives us the power for the next move. In life as in our practice we must really let go, let go fully after we arrive. And we must allow the movements to be full. At the end of each set of movements we must simply let go completely, release fully and then ground solidly.

Through discussions we learned we are traveling in the same direction, just at different speeds. We must go beyond the form to the formless

while remaining present. We just need to slow down, soften and flow. It is that simple.

Caroline also reminded us that words are a trap. This is good; that is bad. We base our judgments, self-worth and self-image on such words. But what are they really? They are just words; as Eleanor Roosevelt said so eloquently, "No one can make you feel inferior without your permission." Know your essence and know your heart. Practice and TCC will teach you TCC. This is the Essence of TCC.



## Befriend TCC

By Rebecca Paulson, Loveland, Colorado

**I always look forward to T'ai Chi Chih** workshops and the opportunity to experience extended time with experienced teachers and fellow practitioners. We had another opportunity to deepen our practice this year at the Colorado workshop with Caroline Guilott in Glenwood Springs (September 13-15). I tend to jot down in my notebook new phrases I hear regarding the movements, personal instructions I want to incorporate into my practice and relevant bits of wisdom that arise. One of those tidbits applied to **grounding: "it's your foundation; be good to it; befriend it."**

That's it! I realized my "ah-ha" for the weekend. I found that I also wanted to befriend my weight shift. I mused about befriending in general, anyone or anything. When one befriends, he or she welcomes the Other. One listens and gives the Other their full attention. And it works best when we do it with intention. At that point my heart and mind opened out: I want to befriend my *tan t'ien*, my feet, every movement. Indeed, I want to befriend the entire practice. Allow me to invite you, as well, to befriend TCC.

# A Return To Seijaku

By April Leffler, Prospect Park, Pennsylvania

**I have been pleasantly surprised**, having just returned from a Seijaku retreat led by Dan Pienciak. The surprise was that my interest in Seijaku has been reignited and I am excited to add it, along with the preliminaries, to my daily practice.

Although I've been accredited to teach it since 2002 and have even taught a few classes, it never really grabbed me. I attended this retreat by default in that the Franciscan Spiritual Center Sisters asked me to host it so that they could get a break from having to stay over.

It was nice to seemingly start from scratch – in that I felt like my cup was empty. Talk about beginner's mind. The deep respect Dan has for Seijaku and the ease and gentle manner in which he repeatedly reminded us to feel the resistance, stay in the feet and *tan t'ien*, and leave no trace (i.e. let go), enabled me to sink deeper into the practice. I became aware of when I created resistance, which felt clunky and effort-filled, and when I simply allowed myself to shift through the resistance, which felt smooth and effortless. **(It's a good life lesson.)** Another benefit was seasoned Seijaku teacher and practitioner, Bill Moore, offering insightful and helpful nuances to consider and feel during practice.

I am looking forward to inviting a higher voltage of *Chi* into my practice (and life) as I embark on this new journey. Thank you Justin, Dan and Bill.



## Seijaku Reflections

**The first benefit I noticed** in adding Seijaku to my practice was a heightened awareness of the soles of my feet. Once Daniel Pienciak gave us the basics and we practiced a bit, Seijaku informed me of the adjustments needed for each movement. Gradually I became more aware of my whole body when applying T'ai Chi Chih's six principles. It was as if the volume had been turned up. After practicing alone at home, I am now more careful to be slow enough to be mindful. When teaching, I am more present with my own movements.

I also experienced a spiritual awakening, knowing that any belief I hold is resistance. And the corollary, when I let go of beliefs, truth is revealed. For example, I suddenly saw that my old belief of "nobody will support me; I have to do it on my own" was resistance to the truth that "we are all elevated when we share experiences and listen to others." One after another, false beliefs fell away and truth was revealed. And this is only the beginning. I will keep applying Seijaku and trust the experience.

– BY CHARLOTTE GARRETT, COPLEY, OHIO

### Why do you practice T'ai Chi Chih?

What does it mean, TCC?

Why do we practice Seijaku?

What is the real purpose in this life?

What is the deep purpose in this life but to be kind to each other? I heard this morning to "be nice to each other." I would add to be nice with honesty and sincerity because it is the only way to touch each others' hearts.

What is happiness? Is it lack of suffering? What is health? Is it lack of illness? I learned that we need to embrace suffering because it makes us stronger. Let's compare suffering to compost. Compost comes from rotten organic products and is used to help other organic products grow. Our sufferings do the same so we can appreciate happiness and health and not take them for granted. I learned to invite resistance (holding fast) and let go, to embrace my suffering and let go.

– BY IVONNE BEGUE DE BENZO, ROCHESTER, MINNESOTA

**Our Seijaku meditation retreat** with Daniel was a wonderful experience. I am very much a Seijaku beginner, but I was really able to feel the movements through the weight shift in my feet. The optional early morning practices with Bill Moore really helped me absorb the preliminaries and the movements. This was a really great retreat, with nice quiet time to go along with the Seijaku teaching and practice!

– BY SARAH RILEY, EXTON, PENNSYLVANIA

## TCC Intensive

Santa Barbara, CA, July 2019  
A Time Of Deepening  
& Discovery

By Marie Dotts, Host, Loveland, Colorado

**The longer I practice** T'ai Chi Chih the more I fall in love with it and the Chi it opens me up to. New students do not come to TCC realizing its potential to wake us up and open us to the Love energy within. This realization happens over time and through commitment. If the heart is open, a love affair will begin. One may start to realize TCC's potential during an Intensive. Ultimately this potential is about discovering Who and What we are. The Love affair is within us. Love was in the air in Santa Barbara as students were waking up to themselves in ways they had not before. They were finding their feet, tailbones and tan t'iens like infants delighting in their toes for the first time. It was powerful and transformative.

Students start by focusing on form. Principles are taught and played with, but it is hard to relax into principles until bodies have muscle memories for the form. Only then do students begin to understand that the real journey now begins. Their attention needs to be brought back to principles in a deeper way. This is the purpose and gift of an Intensive. Through principles we open to the never-ending Dance of Life, the expansion and contraction, emptying and filling, giving and receiving. There is nothing else. Our journey is unending in freeing this flow. We as students and teachers need to keep deepening into TCC's principles. As we deepen into them we are shown where we inhibit the flow. I am so grateful for this practice that keeps showing me how to open up more and more. The potential is endless. This poem by John O'Donohue found in Richard Rohr's Divine Dance speaks to this:

I would love to live  
Like a river flows,  
Carried by the surprise  
Of its own unfolding.

I also want to thank teacher trainer Daniel Pienciak for his embodiment of the principles and his skillful teaching and guidance in helping others embody them. I am deeply grateful.



*Top left: TCC Intensive in Santa Barbara, CA. Bottom: TCC Workshop in Washington & Oregon.*

## TCC Workshop

Washington & Oregon,  
April 2019

By Linda Robinson, Seattle, Washington

**Our 2nd annual** Western Washington/Oregon TCC Workshop with students and teachers drew about 30 participants for the morning and/or afternoon sessions. Mornings started by moving in a double circle: Experienced students and some teachers made an inner circle while others remained in an outer ring. It's amazing how quickly the chatty energy brought from outside quieted down to silence and connection.

We focused on the six principals of movement. Neal talked about how to initiate the side shift, turning the core where both the weight shift and the turn are used to bring the hands to the proper starting position. He also talked about continuity within a movement.

Bill read from a book he strongly recommends to TCC teachers: "The Spirit of T'ai Chi, Essential Principles," by John Lash. "It really clarifies the mentality of the TCC teacher, and the view can shape our teaching TCC and help our students."

Six of my students, who came from our Seattle class and really enjoyed it, concurred with most teachers: Next year we should break up into small groups to review movements and offer individual feedback.

There was something magical about moving together in community that enriched everyone.

# TCC Intensive

## Santa Barbara, CA, July 2019

Compiled by Marie Dotts, Host, Loveland, Colorado

### “Making Friends, by Cathe Powers

I recently attended my first T'ai Chi Chih Intensive. Many images come to mind of teaching time, practicing time, social time and even time to make new friends. We practiced and learned, and attendees were very kind souls, whom I would be proud to call my friends. A special short teaching session, during which we were breaking down Pulling Taffy, introduced me to my new BFF's. Ahh “the Taffies,” not exactly the easiest of the movements. The instructor demonstrated the arms pulling past, the waist turn and the setting of the hands, the placing of one above the other. She suggested we might connect with the *tan t'ien*, as we set up the hands, in the form of a hug. I had heard a lot about the *tan t'ien* in the few years I have been practicing TCC. Justin called it the “Seat of Heaven.” We are instructed to move from it, feel it, sink into it, pull it in – but never ever had I heard to hug it.

The mere suggestion of a gentle embrace was a surprise. As the concept sunk in, the tears flowed and I was filled with a knowing. I was meeting myself in the *tan t'ien*. I was being introduced to a part of me I'd never really known. My new friend, my treasure of gold. Although I was not prepared for this meeting we will assuredly be friends to the end, and we are so grateful to be on this journey together.

### Feel the Joy, by JJ Johnson

A relaxed Intensive? It sounds like an oxymoron but it isn't. It's more like a *yin-yang* thing. Daniel's movements are relaxed and precise and he guides you in the same manner (“JJ, I will see that leg straight before this is over.”) Precision, but not at the expense of joy. Precision, but not paid for with tension. Above all, feel the joy and the flow of the *Chi*. I think that that was one of the best learning moments of all. Daniel's instruction flows, relaxed, smooth. The days flowed. Like “...this energy sea, this flowing *Chi*...” Learning the *Chi* by living the *Chi*.

### Engaging and Enlightening, by Pat Brie

The program was an epiphany, placing an increased focus on the grounding of the feet, the position of the tailbone on forward and back movements, and an increased relaxation of the arms and hands. All of those points made me feel more grounded and allowed me to move more easily from the center. It almost feels like melting into the movement.

It was the most engaging and enlightening experience of any of TCC event I've attended. But maybe I was ready for the next step. It was wonderful to observe and listen to Marie and Dan. Their comments and insights were inspiring, and they have prompted me to go back into Justin's thoughts, observations and teachings. The contributions of other participants were also very supportive and thought-provoking.

### Chih = Direct Knowledge, by Linda Jaffe

The most important thing came at the beginning when someone asked Daniel about the meaning of “Chih” in TCC. I had always heard that

it meant Knowledge, but Daniel said it meant Direct knowledge. That was a real eye opener. Direct knowledge to me means direct perception, hence the importance of maintaining a clear mind to perceive *Chi* as it flows through the body and around it. Thank you everyone.

### The Newly-found Pleasure of Grounding, by Marija Hillis

My dancing self is light and airy. Whenever I am asked to choose which animal I would like to be, my answer is immediately and always: a bird! I want to soar over the landscape and let the wind carry me effortlessly upward. TCC is offering me another pleasure: the joy of connection to the earth. My feet are firmly planted, feeling gravity anchoring my whole being. My knees are softly bent with hands pressing downward. My mind and body relax in stillness. The moment of now can last forever.

### Small Tweaks Enrich the Practice, by Shirley Cross

This Intensive has given me multiple opportunities to work with and be observed by instructors with a wealth of knowledge and experience. It is amazing how a small tweak here and an adjustment there can enrich a practice. In Rocking Motion, simply widening my stance from hip-width to shoulder-width gave me better balance and ease of movement. Deepening my knee bend and moving my hands forward allowed me to stay in the rest position longer. Learning to tuck my pelvis so the tailbone points down – while sinking to begin a weight shift at the beginning of many of the movements – increased my stability and alleviated some back pain. I am grateful for all these corrections and wonderful teachers.

### For Me, At Least Twice Daily, by Melody Nielsen

I arrived tense and stressed, due to personal issues. Holding stress causes my joints to become inflamed and painful. By the third day of practicing TCC the inflammation and discomfort were gone. I need to continue at least twice daily instead of once daily to keep the inflammation away. I have learned so much to build upon my journey toward becoming a teacher. I am grateful for the teachers at the intensive who took time from their lives and teaching to be with those learning.

### Timing, It's All About Timing, by Terry Johnson

The Brothers needed us to arrive on time for meals. Tardiness created tension. The *tan t'ien* needs the weight shift to arrive on time for the *Chi* to flow. Too early and it's not ready. Too late and the window for nourishment has passed.

### Proud to be a TCC Nerd and Always Happy to Find Others, by Lisa Otero

As a long-time teacher and self-proclaimed TCC Nerd, it was a treat to be a student again and to hang out with other TCC Nerds, diving deep into the form. My practice improved over the course and it was fun and gratifying to see how much others improved, too.

### Discerning Eyes, by Dixie Adenerian

Intensives help teachers get feedback and refinements. The eyes of teacher trainer Daniel Pieniac, who made suggestions for improvements in moving, looked discerning to this fairly novice teacher. Marie Dotts and Lisa Otero also helped. It is now incumbent upon me to erase old habit patterns and establish better ones, practicing with awareness until it is effortless before me.

## 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  
234 Hoover St, Oceanside, CA 92054  
442-222-8332 / pamtowne@gmail.com

**Teacher Trainer:**  
Daniel Pieniac  
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

**Justin Stone Materials**  
www.JustinStoneTCC.com  
kim@justinstonetcc.com

**T'ai Chi Chih Foundation:**  
P.O. Box 11  
Norwood, PA 19074

**Web Site Changes:**  
kim.grant@taichichih.org



facebook.com/taichichih



instagram.com/taichichih



pinterest.com/taichichih



twitter.com/taichichih



flickr.com/photos/taichichih



youtube.com/tccabq

## Community Calendar

For the most up-to-date info and event PDFs, see [www.taichichih.org/events](http://www.taichichih.org/events)

### DATE / WHAT & WHERE / CONTACT

- Nov 7-10 | TCC Intensive w/ Sandy | Albuquerque, NM | Amy Tyksinski | 505-228-2104
- Nov 19-24 | TCC Teacher Accreditation w/ Pam | Santa Barbara, CA | Marie Dotts | 970-412-9955
- Mar 19-22 | TCC Teacher Retreat w/ Sandy | Santa Barbara, CA | Pam Towne | 442-222-8332
- Mar 24-27 | TCC Retreat w/ Sandy | Santa Barbara, CA | Pam Towne | 442-222-8332
- May 29 - June 4 | TCC Teacher Accreditation w/ Daniel | Aston, PA | April Leffler | 610-809-7523
- Aug 20-23 | TCC Teachers Symposium w/ Sandy | Aston, PA | April Leffler | 610-809-7523
- Sep 24-27 | TCC Retreat w/ Pam | Santa Barbara, CA | Pam Towne | 442-222-8332

### ~ MORE WORKSHOPS & RETREATS ~

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

Feb 1-2 | TCC Retreat w/ Bill Moore | Fort Collins, CO |  
Sandy Roerig | 970-581-7393

Mar 23-27 | TCC & Meditation Retreat w/ Amy Tyksinski |  
Aston, PA | Kathleen McAlister | 610-308-4846

May 1-3 | TCC Workshop w/ Carmen Brocklehurst | Aston, PA | Kathleen McAllister | 610-308-4846

### ~ GIVING UPDATE ~

*The Vital Force is a federally registered 501(c)3, and donations are deductible to the full extent of the law.*

### WOW. Sustaining donations.

A huge thanks of gratitude and appreciation to those who have set up a recurring monthly or annual gift. We guarantee your resources are used effectively.

### CONFERENCE 2020

Update: There will be no teacher conference in 2020.

## Subscribe to The Vital Force

We encourage you to renew or subscribe on-line with a credit card by visiting [www.taichichih.org](http://www.taichichih.org), where single back issues are also available.

Renew subscription \_\_\_\_ New subscription \_\_\_\_

### Contact Information

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone / Email \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_ Student \_\_\_\_

### Teacher Accreditation Information

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

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

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

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

### Vital Force Subscription Information

Teachers are automatically included in the Teacher Directory; please check below if you do not want this.

( ) I DO NOT want to be listed in the Teacher Directory or on the Web site.

Delivery within or outside the U.S..

I year at \$50 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Donation for The Vital Force outreach, to maintain [www.taichichih.org](http://www.taichichih.org) or to help others subscribe \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please call Kim Grant at 617-901-9628 or visit <https://taichichih.org/subscribe/> with your credit card.