

The Vital Force

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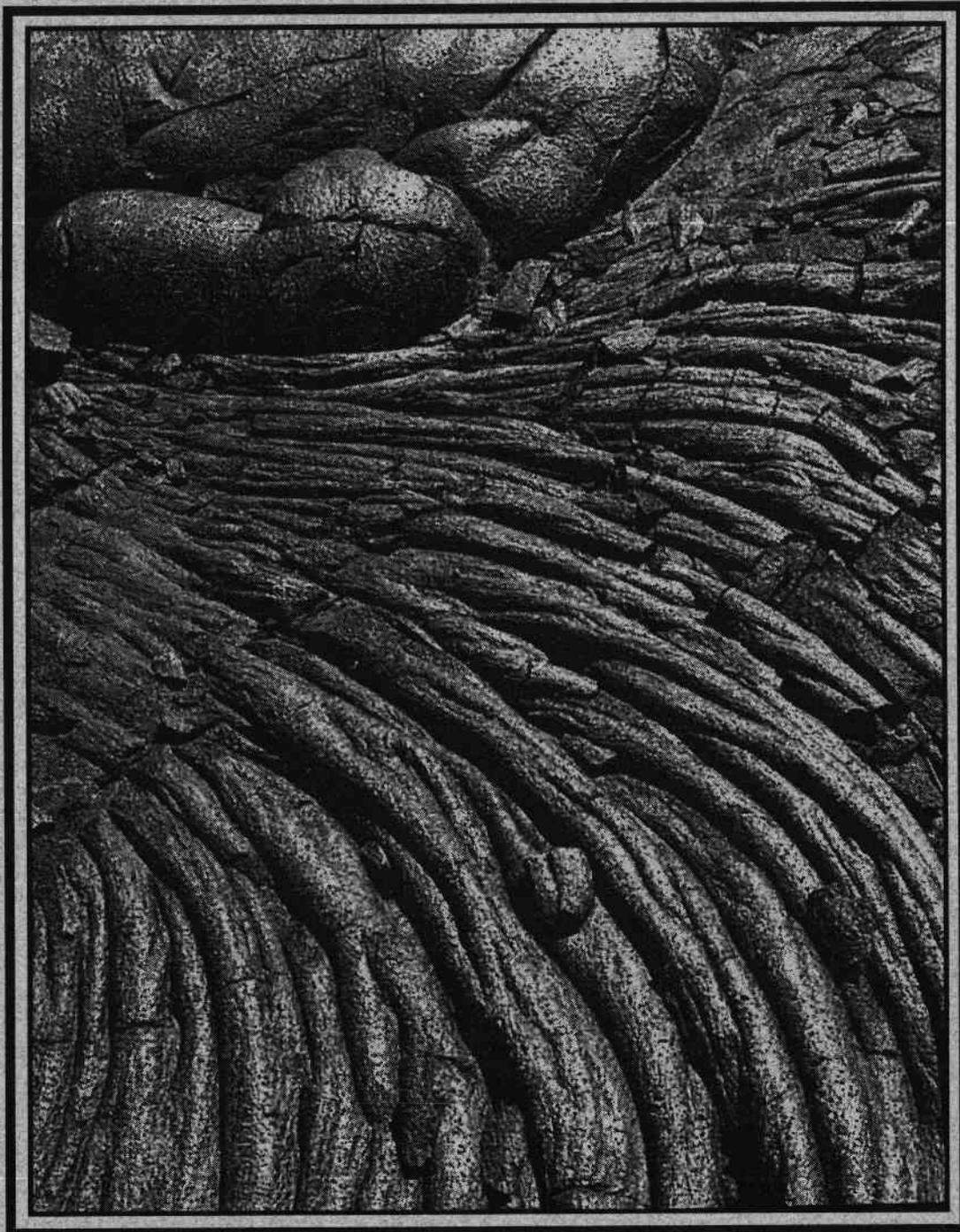




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**Justin Stone is the Originator of T'ai Chi Chih.
Ed Altman is the Head of T'ai Chi Chih.**



The Vital Force

Editor: Noel Altman
Technical Advisor: Ed Altman
Membership Svcs: Doug Harned

The Vital Force, *Journal of T'ai Chi Chih*, is an unincorporated, non-profit association, serving T'ai Chi Chih practitioners worldwide. Membership in the Association includes four quarterly issues of *The Vital Force*, listing in and receipt of the annual Teachers' Directory (to teachers only), and outreach activities, such as teacher referrals. The annual membership fee is \$30 for teachers, \$25 for interested persons / students. Addresses outside the U.S. require an additional \$10 per year. First Class delivery within the U.S. is an additional \$5 per year.

The purpose of *The Vital Force* is to provide a medium by which teachers and students of T'ai Chi Chih may share, educate, inform and inspire one another.

Cover:



The striking photograph on the cover was taken by TCC Teacher Kim Grant, a professional photographer and travel guide author.

Pictured is "Untitled," a photograph of lava flow taken at Volcano National Park on the Big Island of Hawaii where Kim is "working on a large-format series of lava flows."

"Untitled" © 2000, by Kim Grant, Boston

The three cranes on the cover and on every inside page are the artwork of Ou Mie Shu.

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Letter from the Editor

Anyone who has ever hosted a TCC event knows that the planning (and attendance fee) have to be based on the fewest number of possible participants so that the income collected will be enough to cover the expenses. Then, if the event is more successful than that, there will be extra funds generated.

Well, the good work continues from the 2000 Teachers' Conference Committee headed by Carolyn Perkins and Sr. Antonia Cooper! Although they charged a very nominal rate for the 2000 Conference, they still managed to have a pretty sizable surplus after all the bills were paid. They decided to make very generous donations with that income to The Vital Force, Good Karma Publishing and the New Mexico T'ai Chi Chih Center as well as pass along a sizable amount to the next conference committee (in the San Francisco Bay Area, CA). **THANK YOU, 2000 CONFERENCE COMMITTEE!**

Last year, Carolyn Perkins had to lay out \$5000 of her own money to put down the sizable deposit required by the retreat center where the event was to occur. (She was able to recoup this money when people began registering early). This "seed money" amount has been passed from one conference to the next, and has been about \$500 for years, but now that we have grown, this is nowhere near enough. After the 2000 Conference Committee's added donation, that amount now totals \$2000! In addition, another \$1000 has been earmarked for scholarships!

At this year-end, I would like to thank and acknowledge the other members of The Vital Force staff. **Doug Harned** of Membership Services is in charge of the VFJ database and performs the bulk of the data entry of your membership forms and information updates. He also sends out the "acknowledgment postcards" when you sign up or renew, and the "renewal reminders" when your membership is going to expire. That's about 1100-1200 pieces of mail each year that he personally prepares, stamps, seals and mails. In addition, he attends and helps facilitate the VFJ mailings each quarter. **THANK YOU FOR YOUR EFFORTS, DOUG!**

Ed Altman is our Technical Advisor, but he does much more than advise. He's more of a "jack-of-all-trades" — doing what is needed, as needed. He fills in with data entry when needed. He extracts records from the VFJ database file every 2-4 weeks to update the listing of teachers on the website. He does all the scans of photos, and "doctors" the photos as necessary with our software. He does all the scans of text submissions, usually doing the extra task of preparing them so they're ready for me to lay out. He sometimes does this for the e-mailed submissions, too. For the VFJ Mailings each quarter, he handles the bulk code grouping and prepares the ever-changing "master list" of those who are to receive that issue (a day-long task). Also, he extracts records in the database to create the labels for the VFJ Mailings, Doug's "renewal reminders" and other select occasions. He also re-created the entire look and usability of the Teachers' Directory last year (with my input). He will produce it again this year, too. **THANK YOU FOR YOUR EFFORTS, ED!**

Noel Altman, Editor

Ed and I (and The Vital Force) have moved from California to New Mexico! PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGED PHONE NUMBERS AND ADDRESSES on the Contacts page (pg. 35) for The Vital Force and the Head of T'ai Chi Chih, Ed Altman.



Readers Respond

. . . Last but not least, I want you to know how much I enjoyed the latest issue of *The Vital Force*, especially the wonderful articles and pictures of the Teachers' Conference! It is most special because I wasn't able to attend the conference [due to a back injury]. Best regards,

Rosemarie Hallenback
Wappingers Falls, NY

Noel,
I am currently developing a web site and I would like to know if I can copy articles from the *Vital Force*, onto the web page, if I reference the VF, date, author etc.? In particular, I am thinking of student's experiences.

Susan Evans
West Chester, OH

[Editor's note: I've considered this and spoken with Ed and Justin. I feel it is fine for you to put articles from *The Vital Force* into your web page as long as you reference the headline or title of the article, *The Vital Force*, the issue date and author. If you excerpt from an article, then please note that it is excerpted.]

You may want to consider having a link from your web page into the TCC Community Website (www.taichichih.org). We encourage teachers to link into the "official" website from their own websites.]

Hello Noel and Ed!

. . . About the website . . . I wondered if it were possible, fairly conveniently, for a geographical region to list various upcoming classes that are open to new students, in addi-

tion to locating teachers individually. . . . The NJ/NY teachers are meeting this Saturday evening, and again Sunday November 19th, so it's a good time to discuss it among ourselves, if we have more logistical information. . . . Thanks,

Carolyn Allenby
Annandale, NJ

[Editor's note: We have thought about including locations where T'ai Chi Chih is being taught by the teachers listed on the website, but have decided against it because of the logistics involved. First of all, it would be a tremendous amount of time and effort for our staff to keep the information updated, assuming teachers kept us updated in a timely fashion. Secondly, inevitably, some of the information would no longer be accurate over time (when teachers didn't update us), which would be frustrating for the student trying to find classes. So, we have concluded that the best approach is for interested students to call teachers directly to ascertain where and when they are currently teaching.]

If the teachers in your region would like to list this information, you all would need to start your own website and fully maintain it. You could then have a link to the TCC Community Website, as well, if you'd like. Our policy is that no links are permitted from the Community Website out to other websites because then there is no way to ensure that the user doesn't end up somewhere unrelated to T'ai Chi Chih.

If you do decide to set up a regional website, I'm sure there are other areas of the community who would be interested in hearing how and what you do — perhaps you'd write it up for readers of *The Vital Force*?

Hi Noel,
Want to know when my membership dues to *Vital Force* are due... have lost track of when I last paid. I don't want to miss any issues. Thanks.

Jerry Jonnson
West Linn, OR

[Editor's note: Thanks for the inquiry. Your membership is "good thru" (meaning it includes) the 3/01 issue. We do print the "good thru" dates on the top right of the address labels on the front of the large white envelopes that the issues come in.]

I have changed my email address on the website and my old one is no longer correct. I realize you may not be the place to go for this, but where do I go to get this done?

P.S., I am teaching probably my 6th beginner class, just started tonight, and it is wonderful, as usual. I plan to follow up with an intermediate class in the second eight weeks, if I can get enough students. . . .

Stephanie Bass
Raleigh, NC

[Editor's note: I'm glad to hear you're so actively teaching in North Carolina! We missed seeing you at the conference this year (which was on the East Coast for the first time ever). It was FANTASTIC!

Yes, you contacted the right place for any updates in name, address, phone or e-mail information. Go ahead and send me back your new e-mail address and we'll update *The Vital Force* database. The website will be updated subsequently as it is only updated once or twice a month.]



"Roadside Weeds", photo by Deanne Hodgson

Change is Necessary

By Justin Stone

In my book Metaphysics of Wall Street I mentioned that, in the Stock Market, one finds out that, no matter how many times you have made a certain mistake, you can always make it once more. "We learn from history that we do not learn from history."

The reason is simple: unless we change the ground from which the mistake arises, we will go on acting in the same impetuous, heedless, or overly-cautious manner. Swearing we will not listen to rumours any more, we once again — prompted by greed — do something that works out badly. We believe because we want to believe.

Those who have bad or addictive habits have found that TCC practice is a wonderful way to change habits, or have them change us. TCC practice changes the metabolism and that builds new

ground from which the old habitual actions do not arise. One prison is finding this out in a dramatic fashion. We can, literally, become a changed person no longer lured by the old Loreleis.

All the words in the world, from a psychologist or an analyst — or psychotherapist — won't make a difference. "Do you know what you're doing to your family — or to your health?" we ask. The truth is, he or she does know — and is powerless to change the habit or tendency. Meantime we spend a lot of money for meaningless chatter. It may flatter the ego to be talked about. And even there, how truthful will we be?

If the TCC practitioner is sincere and persevering — and many are not — we can be changed naturally. If we are not willing to be changed, nothing can be done. The ground from which the problems arise must be changed, and can be.



The Invitation

By Ed Altman

One evening as I flew into St. Louis I found myself looking out the window as the plane gradually descended from the clouds. At one point the view cleared, and my eye caught a glimpse of something partially hidden below. Was it land, water, or perhaps just my imagination? Moments trailed together as I strained to perceive what the eye could not see; something was definitely out there.

Suddenly, without warning, a flash of white light lit up the night as the shining moon was reflected on the still surface of a small lake. My mind was momentarily confused as I struggled to determine the source of illumination. Hovering above and out of view, the brilliant moon was present, yet I hadn't noticed it until that moment.

How often is this the case in our T'ai Chi Chih practice? It may begin with a general feeling of discomfort, the recognition of tension, or the discovery of a rough edge that wasn't there before. The certainty that was present a moment before quickly fades, and a small doubt begins to grow which may eventually overwhelm our enjoyment of the movement. Once again, the struggle is upon us.

T'ai Chi Chih is a wonderful spiritual practice because it requires each practitioner to discover his or her own way within the guidelines of the principles. As teachers, we must help our students learn how to move properly, and encourage them to continually examine the movements for new insights. I often tell students that it is impossible to think your way through the movements. You

must feel your way along, as if searching in the dark for some unknown thing. There is no way to describe what you're looking for, so any advice you receive from the outside is of little help. Just keep focused on alignment and flowing from the center, be willing to try different approaches, and feel your way along. Eventually, you'll discover it, and then you'll know.

When teaching, I note which students are struggling and which ones are complacent. The latter ones are the most concerning because they rarely break through to the deeper levels in their T'ai Chi Chih practice.

When teaching, I note which students are struggling and which ones are complacent. The latter ones are the most concerning because they rarely break through to the deeper levels in their T'ai Chi

Chih practice. The struggle is a necessary part of the growth process, and a good teacher will respect and assist the student in every way possible without getting in the way. I encourage students to use unwavering attention during their practice, and to focus on the feeling rather than trying to remember every important point. Just let T'ai Chi Chih do T'ai Chi Chih and get out of the way. This can only be accomplished by letting go.

When a problem area is discovered in the T'ai Chi Chih movements it is an invitation to deepen the practice, and this is something a serious student will not ignore. At times, the self-discovery process can be awkward, or even emotionally painful. This release is necessary to allow the Chi to flow more freely, and until that happens, it may feel like every way is blocked with no escape. If we stick to the principles we will make progress. Gradually, inevitably, a way through the barrier will be discovered, and a whole new world opens up in the practice, and in our lives.



Becoming...

By Marty Henry

[Editor's Note: Marty wrote this article when preparing for Teacher Training. She was accredited in May, 2000.]

The teacher does not normally take on a student unless the latter displays great resolution and energy in his inquiry... After some time the disciple's hidden doubts and reservations appear in the form of a crisis, generally centering around some point of the teaching or some action of the teacher. When the problem fills all of the waking hours without a moment's forgetfulness the stage is called the Great Doubt. The working of the mind ceases. Finally there is a flash which is called in Japanese satori or Realization.

- Leggett, 1988, p. 11-12

In the *Vital Force*, I have read several articles written from the perspective of teachers as they prepare their students to become accredited teachers of T'ai Chi Chih. They document some of the doubts and questions as to whether a student is ready to enter teacher training, as in Kathy Vieth Alber's [June '99] article [on the St. Louis Teacher Training in which students received deferred accreditations] and Carmen Brocklehurst's recent article on "Preparing for Teacher's Training" [September '99] about patience in the process of becoming ready.

My story has similar themes to these but comes from another perspective. I am a student of T'ai Chi Chih immersed in that process. This story is told from the inside. I hope it gives teachers a perspective of what their students are experiencing through their process of becoming.

I have been called "driven," "goal oriented," and "headstrong." All of these were correct until the last 14 months when I discovered the benefits of TCC. I began my training in January of 1999 under the teaching of a kind and patient mentor, Rich Race. From the first week of my practice, I could feel energy moving through a tingling sensation in my fingers. Looking back after over a year of increasing energy flow, I am amazed that anything at all happened that quickly. It took only a few months of practice for me to realize the power of TCC. The adjectives previously used to describe me were no longer applicable. Even my supervisor told me that I wasn't the woman he had hired three short years ago. I

knew that I had to become a teacher of TCC in order to share this wonder with others who could benefit from it.

I found that teacher training should not occur until after at least a year of practice. [Editor's Note: Ed Altman now recommends *two or more* years of practice unless the candidate is exceptional.] I understood the reasoning behind that thinking, but wanted to know what to do to begin preparation for it as soon as I could. It now seems that my old self was emerging.

Rich was teaching another class and I asked if I could observe it and watch him teach. I am an educational consultant and former teacher so I thought that I could at least begin to pick up some good teaching strategies. Because Rich has an open policy for any past student to attend an ongoing class to refresh themselves, he agreed that I could observe only if he could use me to assist as he gave corrections to the new students. I began my observation and modeled some of the movements as he instructed. This was a valuable experience for me as I first felt 26 eyes on my back during the first time I modeled for him. I had taught for many years, but this was completely different. Because I was still learning, I realized that I needed to focus on my form so that it would be correct for the students.

I signed up for an intermediate course with Kathy Vieth Albers. Learning from two talented and accomplished instructors opened my eyes to corrections I could make to further enhance and deepen my practice. I felt I was on my way and on target.

Then, as the universe has a way of doing, I was stopped in my tracks. I was reading Justin's work, some Qigong literature, and taking an Asian Philosophy course at the local university while practicing and attending Rich's classes. I encountered some conflicting information within the TCC literature and teachings, and with some of the other information I was processing and I became very uncertain if this was what I needed to be doing. My struggle was between pushing through my doubt or just backing off and keeping TCC to myself for my own benefit.

I was meeting with Rich for some individual instruction and his reaction to my distress confirmed for me that TCC is a powerful force in people's lives. As I



began to share my concerns, a peace came over his face and he exuded a calmness that assured me that I could share my doubts with no risk. He listened and asked me to think about whether I wanted to continue with the intensive work we were doing on the timeline we had set. He said he was confident that I would become a teacher some day but that the timing had to be right for me and he would work with me when I was ready.

During the next week things fell into place. During my practice one morning I realized that I *did* need to let go, but *not* to turn loose. I had set an arbitrary training date for myself for . . . summer and I didn't need to do that if it didn't feel right. I needed to just keep myself open to what benefits were occurring for me physically, mentally, and emotionally and realize that I would know when the time was right. Within a few weeks the disconnects in the theories and practice reconnected and I was back on target with renewed interest and insights. I am assisting in another TCC class with Rich and am becoming much more aware of the movement students are making. Because of this I am deepening my form as well.

Through this story run the themes of patience, letting go, and trust. TCC teaches us these three through the form itself. Have the patience of soft, flowing, and continuous form. Wait for the T'an Tien to move before anything else. Let TCC do TCC. You can't teach it, but students can learn it by doing it. Trust that the right way will be revealed. Chi will flow; the way will be made clear.

As the beginning quote shows us, the path to understanding requires mentors who allow the process to occur within the student on a timeline that is right for the student's development, and who provide the support and time for growth and acceptance to occur. It requires students who accept the form on two levels, one that continuously examines form as well as its understanding, and the other that accepts that it is not necessary to understand.

Leggett, T. (1988). The Tiger's Cave. Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Company

Forwarded Letter

Young mother healed by TCC practice

Dear Justin Stone,

I'm writing this letter to let you know how T'ai Chi Chih has made a great impact upon my life. But here's a little background first.

I am a full time mother of four young children (ages 7 ½ to 2 years). I run our household of six in a traditional fashion and have a wonderful husband who works a great deal outside of the home. For several years I've wanted to take Yoga or T'ai Chi for the purpose of relaxation, stress reduction, and time for me. Generally, every year I would become bedridden for a couple of weeks at a time, about six to seven different times throughout the year with some type of illness. It usually included loosing my voice and feeling absolutely miserable.

One can hardly imagine trying to handle small children who have thousands of questions and who love books with no voice to speak with!

About 1 ½ years ago, a T'ai Chi Chih class fit into my schedule and I took advantage of the opportunity. Since taking this class I have been completely compelled and drawn to T'ai Chi Chih. I have never been more healthy in my life! Instead of being sick for close to 100 days in a year and a half, I have only been vaguely sick for about three days. My new calmness and sense of peace has created a new me. I've learned to relax, take deep breaths, and practice a few movements during stressful times. It's a wonderful tool and a tremendous new way of life for me.

I enjoy spreading the word about T'ai Chi Chih and have introduced several people to the form through classes held at the fitness center where I practice. Each day I look forward to practice T'ai Chi Chih and am looking forward to the day where my skills will lead me to become an accredited instructor. . .

Thank you from the depths of my heart for bringing this beautiful form into my life and for touching other lives as well. The more people I speak with, the more amazing benefits and self-realization we are all finding through T'ai Chi Chih.

Sincerely yours,
Catherine Millman

[Editor's Note: Catherine was accredited in October, 2000.]



Thorough Preparation Essential for Successful Candidate

By Noel Altman

What does it take to send a qualified student to Teacher Training? How do we, as teachers, prepare students who are ready for this defining endeavor?

The first step, of course, is that the student be worthy. In her article, "Preparing for Teacher's Training," (*The Vital Force*, September 1999), Carmen Brocklehurst lays out very clearly the challenge of gauging *when* and *if* a student is ready to begin the process of "teacher preparation."

Ed and I co-taught all of our T'ai Chi Chih classes for the eight years preceding his appointment as Head of T'ai Chi Chih. During that time, he and I sent only two students to Teacher Training, one of whom is Amy Hackenberg, one of the finest teachers in our community (according to Justin).

So, assuming you have a worthy candidate, which in my mind is not a minor point in this whole process, but the whole crux of it — assuming that, what is to be done to best prepare that student?

Justin Stone says that having the proper attitude and the ability to move well are the two basic requirements for entry into a Teacher Training course. The first criteria, proper attitude, cannot be taught to someone, and some people will never be appropriate candidates because of bad attitudes. The candidate needs to be someone who has respect — for the form (more than anything), for the Originator, for his/her teacher, for the Teacher Training process. In addition to this, the candidate should be someone who earnestly wants to improve his/her practice, appreciates correction, and wants to help others.

The second criteria, moving well, is something that can be taught to a degree, but if a person has physical limitations which prohibit him/her from performing the movements well, not passably well, but *well*, then serious consideration should be given to deciding whether that person is capable of overcoming the limitation. Many physical limitations are self-imposed due to some old trauma, and can be released or healed. In this case I am speaking more about something like "I have bad knees - I can't bend them any deeper" or "I

can't turn my waist any more than this". If someone has a physical limitation that is more permanent and prevents him/her from moving well, then that person is not ready (and may never be) to become a teacher, although it may be possible in the rare case for such a person to receive a "limited accreditation" which would allow him/

her to teach *with* another accredited teacher (only).

With students, we take them where they're at and encourage them to move to the next level, but if they don't, so be it. With teacher candidates, we have a much higher expectation. Why? Because students will not be able to learn to move well, or even properly, if their teacher cannot demonstrate the movements well, and the form we all revere could disintegrate into a thousand lesser variations if teachers start showing the movements in a different way.

That said, what is it we actually do to prepare a candidate? Now that it has been some years since Ed and I have co-taught classes — (I now teach on my own) — and I have students expressing interest and/or showing promise, I have rethought the process of preparation. Ed "raised the bar" for accreditation last year and foresees that standards may rise again in the future. In keeping with Ed's higher requirements, (which are mine,

With students, we take them where they're at and encourage them to move to the next level, but if they don't, so be it. With teacher candidates, we have a much higher expectation.



as well), my level of preparation will be even more thorough in the future.

I would allow six months or more for the preparation process alone, and I would not begin to work with a student on the preparation *before one year* of steady practice. Of course, these are minimums. Every student is unique, and from my point of view, allowances should be made to accommodate this. But I wouldn't reduce my minimums listed above — I would more likely increase them. Ed now recommends "about two years" of consistent practice for any candidate entering the course (which I heartily agree with) so to send a student before the two years means the student is unusual, even exceptional.

This is what I will do with my candidates in the future:

- 1) Require that the candidate be practicing daily once entering the teacher preparation process.
- 2) Go over the candidate's practice with a fine-tooth comb — it may take many sessions one-on-one over a period of many months, but all serious principle violations **MUST** be corrected, and the finer details of where the arms and hands go should also be addressed, investigated if necessary (by perusing and discussing Justin's materials on T'ai Chi Chih, and related articles by Justin and Ed from *The Vital Force*), and incorporated into practice. (These details may not matter as much for the practicing student, but every teacher needs to know them.)
- 3) Require the candidate to repeat at least one, if not all levels of classes that I teach to observe *how* I teach — how I teach the movements, how I handle different types of students, when I give correction and when I don't, etc. Every person will develop his/her own style in teaching, suited to his/her personality, but this will serve as a foundation for that teaching, and something to fall back on in difficult situations. This was something that I did with my teacher when I prepared to go to Teacher Training, and it was possibly the most valuable (for me).

Along with this, I would give the candidate a chance to lead movements at the front of the class, with all eyes focusing on him/her. It takes practice to be able to keep one's focus (and remember the count!) when students' eyes are on you. In addition, it is even more challenging to add in talking while performing the movements. Knowing how to do both at the same time

(and do them well) is part of any movement teacher's repertoire.

If I were not teaching classes at the time, then I would encourage the candidate to do the above with another accredited teacher — again, to observe *how* to teach and possibly get practice with leading (although that would be the other teacher's decision).

4) Require that the candidate study Justin Stone's TCC text, the audiotope "Justin Stone Speaks on T'ai Chi Chih," and both of Justin's videotapes. Why both? Because, as I said in my column in the June 2000 issue of *The Vital Force*, there are different advantages to *each* of them. The teaching is perhaps more thorough on the new tape, but Justin mentions different things in each of the tapes, so together they present a very thorough explanation. And, in the practice session on the old tape, Justin demonstrates the movements from a full sideview — the only place this is done on either tape. That is critical to see to understand proper yinning and yanging — one leg bent and one leg straightened, upright posture (no leaning), bottom tucked under, etc. As I've said before, any serious student, and certainly every teacher, should have and use both.

In addition, I would highly encourage (and partially require) the candidate to read some of Justin's other books — Abandon Hope!, Heightened Awareness, 20th Century Psalms, and Meditation for Healing, for instance. (There are others). Why? Because Justin Stone is no ordinary man, and if you want to be able to talk coherently about what kind of man he is, and why he was qualified to *originate* such profound disciplines as T'ai Chi Chih and Seijaku (the advanced form), you'll need to know about his background to try and understand *who and what* he is. Every teacher gets questions at presentations and in classes about Justin Stone. Students are curious, and maybe disbelieving, too, about a Westerner who was able to boil down to their essence the profound disciplines of the East and create an entirely new and easy-to-learn discipline.

Also, I would copy and distribute particular articles written by Justin and Ed and other teachers from past issues of *The Vital Force* and *The New Mexico T'ai Chi Chih News* which relate to the depth or essence of T'ai Chi Chih, the responsibility of being a teacher, successful practice and teaching ideas. There are a whole slew of articles available on the TCC community website (www.taichichih.org) which were written by Justin and

continued on page 31



The Courage to Make the Right Decision

By Sharon Sirkis

When I first met this one student in September of '99, she expressed her love for TCC, and that she wanted to become an accredited teacher. Unfortunately, when I watched her move, she had picked up some very poor habits from a badly done video. I thought about my 16 years of teaching karate as a black belt, and how old habits are the hardest to change. Nonetheless, I was up for the challenge. I strongly recommended that she discontinue using her current video, and switch to Carmen &/or Justin's tapes. By the end of six weeks she did improve, but still wasn't ready for teacher candidacy. I suggested she repeat the next session, which she did.

During that time, this student tried to convince me to put her up for teacher's training in April 2000. She told me if she passed - great, if she didn't - well, then at least she'd know what to work on. I told her that's not how it worked, that she needed to be fully prepared and move correctly. I mentioned my own teacher's training; how I was on the waiting list and had to wait another year. But with extra time to practice, I felt confident in the way I moved, so I didn't have to worry about whether I'd pass or fail. Once again I was reminded of my karate training. I would never have dreamed of asking to be put up for a belt test. When my teacher thought I was ready, then I would know. I gave her a copy of Ed's article "Raising the Bar" (3/99 VFJ), and Carmen's article "Preparing for Teacher's Training" (9/99 VFJ). I had already given her the "TCC Teacher Candidate Preparation Guidelines". I told her there may be a training in the fall, and that I'd see where she was prior to that. She was disappointed, but understood.

By the end of the second time around, unfortunately she still didn't have a handle on the moves (mainly the side-to-side). I could sense she was frustrated with my corrections, but I explained that if she wanted to be a teacher she had to understand the principles, and she had to move well. I wasn't about to burden Ed with an unqualified candidate whom he would have to defer or fail. The student decided to work on her practice and repeat the class again after the first of the year.

She called and decided against taking the class, however, since one of the nights scheduled was on her anniversary. It was at this point that I began to question how serious she was. Although I believed her excuse, I also sensed something else was keeping her away. Self-doubt

started to creep in. Was it me? Was she getting irritated with my many corrections? On the outside she'd smile and accept the correction, but I always felt it was an act, that deep down inside she was really annoyed. She told me she'd be in touch soon. She was hoping to be put up for teacher's training in the fall.

I decided to be patient and allow the chi to guide me. I let this whole situation go, and four months rolled by. That seemed like a long time, and there was no way I'd consider putting her up for a training without even seeing where she was in her practice. I had an idea. I called and invited her to the final practice of my current class. That way I could see how far along she was. She thought it was a good idea, and agreed to be there.

At the final practice, the student was still not flowing from the center (way too much shoulder



movement). Other bad habits were appearing from that previous video, which I realized she had resumed watching. I also discovered that she had not been practicing every day. At the end of the practice she seemed in a hurry. She quickly told me she enjoys practicing, and that she'll see where she is; if she's ready, great - if not, she still loves doing TCC. She was all smiles and upbeat, but she raced out of class. She didn't stop to ask me if I had any other feedback for her, or ask me what I thought. She didn't want to hear it. I figured that more corrections would seem like undue criticism. This took me back to karate again. How I loved corrections. How I used to hang around after class and learn from other student's corrections and hope for more of my own. How I realized I was a worthy student because my teacher paid attention to me with his effort and time. How each correction to me was like a piece of the puzzle that I'm trying to complete, not some statement about my self-worth. I thought about how sometimes we can just be too sensitive, letting our egos get in the way.

Deep down inside I knew this student wasn't ready for teacher's training, and yet I was conflicted about telling her. My "good girl" started popping in. I wanted to be nice and I wanted to accommodate her. I knew she loved TCC and I didn't want to disappoint her. But the bottom line was that she wasn't ready for teacher's training now, nor would she be in the fall. I thought about what Ed said, "You can't do the student's homework for them." I tried my best, and now it was up to her. I wanted to call her and get this off my chest, but I felt guided to be patient and wait.

Two weeks later she called me and said she wouldn't be at any more practices or take my next class. She told me that it's been a tough decision but she's not going to go through with pursuing teacher's training. She went on to say how if she has to worry about getting everything just right, and it's not joyous to practice, then she'd rather just go out on the deck and watch the scenery. I thought to myself this is not the attitude of a sincere teacher. I told her if she wants to be a teacher, then she has to do the moves correctly to keep TCC

pure. I also mentioned that now it's recommended to practice two years instead of one. She told me she was disappointed in herself when she attended the final practice. I listened awhile, then I asked her if she wanted feedback, and she reluctantly agreed. First, I told her that I thought it was tough for her because of the role reversal. She is a teacher in another field, and she is used to being the teacher, not the student. She didn't comment on that remark. Second, I said, "I think you're hearing the corrections as criticism." She immediately became defensive, jumped in and said "No." She wondered if the problem might stem from her age &/or physical ability. I quickly dismissed that idea; she was perfectly capable physically. This led me to letting her know that I thought her ego was getting in the way. She was quiet on that one and started to quickly wrap up the conversation. She thanked me, and told me she'll just practice for pleasure. I thanked her for calling me, and I suggested that she might want to try another teacher, but she declined. I know what I said was not easy to hear, and it is my hope that one day she will work through this experience and become an accredited TCC teacher.

I learned a lot from this experience. I learned that wanting to be an accredited TCC teacher doesn't qualify you to become one. Students must be willing to do the work, on both the physical and mental levels. Hundreds of my karate students have told me they wanted their black belt, but only six did the work to actually achieve one. I learned to trust myself and pay attention to that knowing inside. I learned not to be pulled off center out of fear of someone's anger or disappointment. I learned that when you take a stand, people don't always like it, but that's what it takes to "raise the bar." I learned that we can't worry about "making nice." If we as teachers are true to ourselves and have to hold back a student from teacher's training, it may be uncomfortable. But just because something's uncomfortable doesn't mean it isn't right. If you ever find yourself in this situation, I would suggest that you tolerate the uncomfortableness, and do what's right for the student and for TCC. All it takes is a little integrity and courage.



Feedback from Teacher Trainings

Auditor sees unprepared candidates

By Donna McElhose

It was a privilege to audit the Teacher Training Course held in Berkeley, CA, July 10-15, 2000. I know that my understanding and refinement of T'ai Chi Chih was greatly enhanced by auditing.

Auditing is a wonderful gift for teachers wishing to deepen their T'ai Chi Chih practice. For the auditing teacher there is the opportunity to refine their own understanding of the practice, exchange information with other teachers, and connect with the new teachers.

One of the sad things about auditing, though, is seeing the work of some teachers. There are teachers sending candidates to the course unprepared! By sending unprepared students you are not doing anyone a favor. This makes for a very difficult week for the candidates. There seems to be

little regard for the unnecessary hardship you put your candidate through. The candidates should be enhancing their understanding of T'ai Chi Chih, not learning the basics! Maybe, prior to sending a candidate to the Teacher Training Course, one should audit the course themselves.

Congratulations to the 16 new T'ai Chi Chih Teachers from the Berkeley Teacher Training Course. You were inspiring and I loved working with you. You taught me so much. I am very grateful for that opportunity to grow.

In order for T'ai Chi Chih to grow we need to increase the level of instructors and the preparation of new instructors is vital for T'ai Chi Chih's growth.

Sandy, thank you for making it possible for this wonderful week.

A Teacher's Perspective

By Bitsy LeBlanc

Ed Altman is the means through which the form and most of all the content of T'ai Chi Chih is so eloquently expressed. It is with gratitude that this teacher wishes to thank him for the excellent way in which he conducted the San Antonio Teacher Training Accreditation [in June, 2000]. The benefits and rewards of attending this training as an auditing teacher are invaluable.

Lessons of humility, patience, awareness and a deeper understanding of T'ai Chi Chih were taught and learned by both teacher and student. In any given instant one may become the other. To teach is to learn. As a teacher of T'ai Chi Chih it is a personal responsibility to improve one's method of teaching. Correct and learn. Be open.

Chi follows thought. Realizing that if one intentionally releases tension, obstacles, and most of all, ego (the root cause of all problems within the body), time in its linear form could actually be saved in the evolution of one's T'ai Chi Chih practice. Follow the wish of the Mind. Attending T'ai Chi Chih workshops, conferences and meditations, performing daily practice, and auditing teacher accreditations are all means of saving this 'time'. Delay is of the ego. Use time attentively. T'ai Chi Chih will take one as far as allowed on one's journey to the discovery of Self. Inner sincerity can be a comforting guide along the way.

To Alice Holden, CCVI who so graciously hosted this training and to the newly accredited teachers —thank you for sharing your experience.



September *Vital Force* Mailing



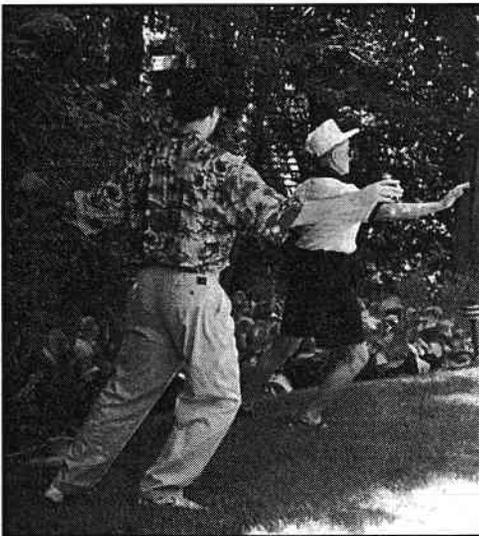
Left Photo: VFJ Staff Member Doug Harned (standing) directs VFJ Volunteers in stamping the return address and bulk mail codes — (clockwise, from Doug): Barbara Dinehart, Ursula Smith, Barbara Buckley, Marianne Merritt, VFJ Editor Noel Altman.

Middle Left Photo: VFJ Staff Member Ed Altman leads the outdoors TCC practice, alongside VFJ Volunteer Barbara Riley who hosted the Mailing at her lovely home.

Middle Right Photo (L-R): VFJ Volunteers Karen Silva, Wendy Helms, John Steinmetz and Linda Braga hold up the Sept. issue.

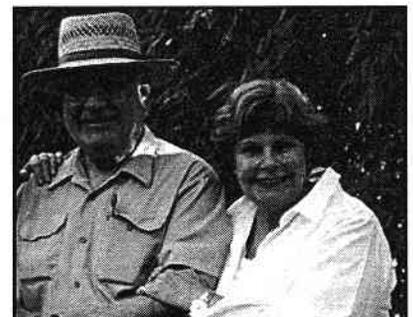
Photos:
Pat
Huseby

Not shown, but present (and helping) at the Mailing were: Lois Mahaney, David Schulberg, Pat Bourne, Paul Ciske and Sally Steffensen.



Left Photo: VFJ Volunteers Ursula Smith and Barbara Dinehart practice outside.

Right Photo: 2001 Conference Coordinator Sandy McAlister (left) leads planning meeting after the Mailing.

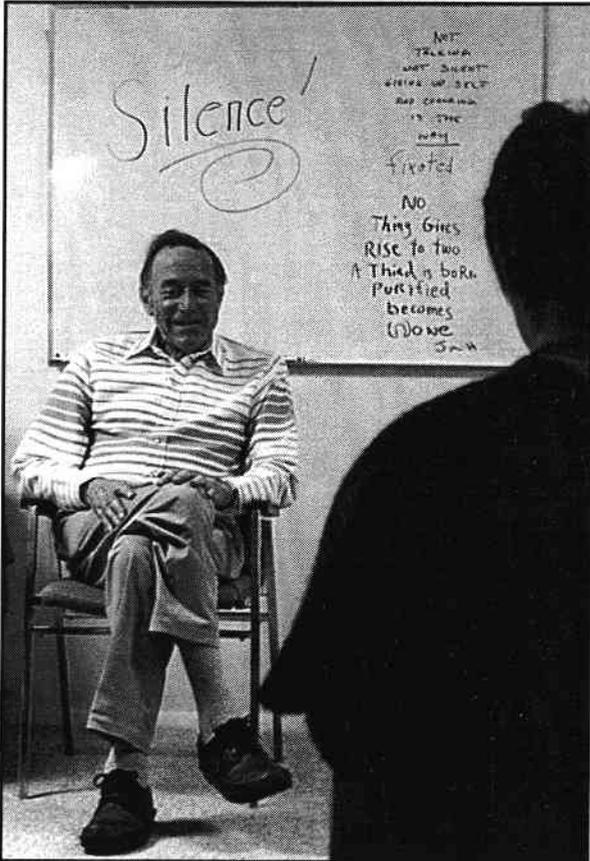


VFJ Volunteer Pat Huseby (right) hugs Cec Riley as she prepares to leave.



Sept. 21-24

Meditation Retreat with Justin Stone in Albuquerque, NM



Justin conducts the silent orchestra on Saturday, (typically the "Day of Silence" at these retreats). Pyramid poems by participants are on the board. Photo: Caroline Guillott



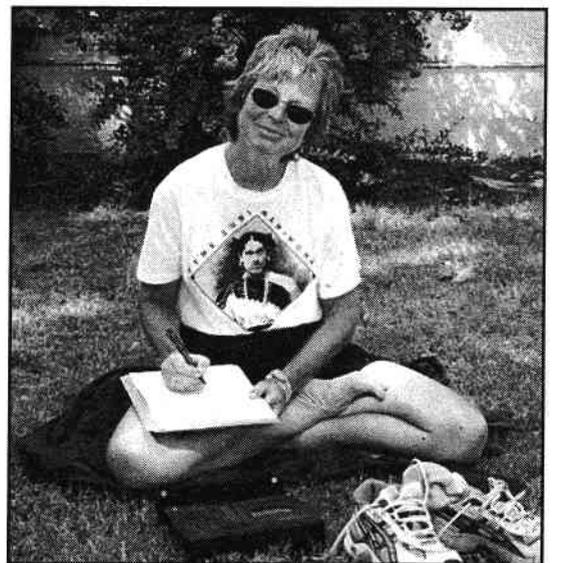
Participants enjoy dinner in the adobe-style dining room at the Dominican Retreat Center. Photo: Caroline Guillott



T'ai Chi Chih student and teacher participants join together on Friday afternoon for a full practice of TCC led by Teacher Carmen Brocklehurst. Photo: Dan Plenciak



Strolling along the country road just outside the Center grounds, participants chat or just enjoy the rustic countryside. Photo: Pat Huseby



Participant Kathy Grassel enjoys the warm weather outside during a break. Photo: Pat Huseby



A Gentle Day in St. Louis with Ed Altman

By Anne Perkins
Course Host

"Allow...discover...go deeper... pay attention to"— these were some of the phrases Ed used over and over as he led an intensive day-long workshop here on October 7, 2000. Although most of the participants were from the metropolitan St. Louis area (including a number of Bobbie and Andy Anderson's students from the East Side), we were delighted that 11 people joined us from Indianapolis, Chicago, Kansas City, and Cincinnati.

About two-thirds of the 53 participants were students with widely-varied experience of TCC; the rest of us were accredited teachers. We were fortunate to be able to use Mercy Center, both as lodging for many of the out-of-town people, and for the workshop itself. Mercy Center is the Catholic retreat house where Kathy Vieth Albers has hosted the two Teachers' Trainings held in St. Louis in the past three and a half years, and its exceptionally beautiful setting (including an outdoor labyrinth) is the perfect physical embodiment of the grace so many of us find in our TCC practice.

My fellow teacher Donna McElhose arrived on Thursday from the Chicago area to help me with the final preparations; we had such fun blowing up purple and blue balloons, and getting my contact sheet in order, and putting large signs all over Mercy Center. Just before Donna left on Sunday she described our group of participants as "sincere" and that's exactly what it felt like to me too. All during the day Ed helped us to deepen our practice,



Midwest teachers and students joined together for a day of T'ai Chi Chih enhancement with Head of T'ai Chi Chih Ed Altman. Here, they practice *Wrist Circles Taffy*. Photo: Donna McElhose

emphasizing the principles, talking to us about Justin and the preparation of students for Teachers' Training. But above all, he moved there in front of us, modeling the softness and continuity and moving-from-the-center that is the very heart of TCC. After the Intensive Workshop, about 20 of us gathered at my house for an informal potluck supper. We carried our eagerness and our questions for Ed over into the dinner hour, much to the enjoyment of all.

A gentle day indeed.

An Attending Teacher's Perspective

This (Saturday, October 7th in St. Louis) is the first time I have attended one of Ed Altman's intensive workshops. I have known the Altmans for many years and have always admired them, yet this day was a revelation for me. Ed was sharing the subtleties, the nuances of practicing T'ai Chi Chih; Ed was demonstrating how these principles

help each and every student (and I fit that category) to discover how TCC adapts, perfectly, to him/her individually. These principles were presented to us in a manner so easy to understand and grasp. I couldn't believe it! I have been teaching TCC since 1986 and today, in the year 2000, this young man was giving me fresh, new teaching gifts; gifts to have and to hold and to share with hungry students.

During our break I approached Ed with the purpose of letting him know what a wonderful TCC teacher he is and how proud I am of him for sharing his talents with us in such a simple yet beautiful way. I wanted to share the joy I was feeling in my heart because I was so happy for each one of us who was in attendance, to receive the gifts he offers. My heart was so full of thanksgiving I could only look into his eyes and share a moment of silent understanding.

Thank you, Ed.

Virginia Shilson



October 9 - 14

PA Teacher Training yields 11 new teachers

By Jean Markey
Course Host

WOW, what an incredible week. This was my first time to host a T'ai Chi Chih teachers' training course, my first time to audit for an entire week (which I highly recommend), and also my first time to have any of my students accredited.

Out of the 11 candidates, five of them had studied under me, four of which I have worked very closely with for the past two to two and a half years. It has been a wonderful experience, in that time, watching them grow and go deeper into their practice. After this week I think I know now what it feels like to give birth. It was a very powerful, emotional and rewarding experience for me. . . .

We were really fortunate to have four auditing teachers who were able to attend for the entire week and another who audited for one and a half days. (Thank you for being there).

Ed shared a lot of his knowledge and wisdom not only of T'ai Chi Chih, but, of life in general, that it was so hard to absorb it all. I found myself, as well as everyone else, taking a lot of notes. I also picked up some helpful hints on how to correct students who have problems with — leaning (forward or back), shifting the weight fully and moving from the Center. (Ed — thank you).



Congratulations to the 11 graduates of the course! **Back row (L-R):** Course Instructor Ed Altman, Cathy Lehman, Theresa Matthews, Sr. Carol DeAngelo, April Leffler, Gail Bjerklie, Sr. Meg Costello, Course Host Jean Markey; **Front row (L-R):** Nancy Adams, Hope Spangler, Pamela Grieg, Deborah Cole, Roseann Heinrich. Photo provided by Jean Markey

Ed talked about having integrity in our practice — when I arrived home on Saturday I read the thought for the day in my daytimer, "Live with honor and integrity and lend your talents and strengths to others," (by Paul J. Meyer). (How appropriate). . . .

An Insight

By April Leffler

T'ai Chi Chih, like life, is a process of letting go and of opening up. It makes no sense, in either situation to beat oneself up due to an increase in awareness. Honor the painful as well as the exciting insights for what they are — GIFTS.



Candidate Hope Spangler leads her fellow candidates and attending auditors through *Around the Platter Variation*. Photo provided by Jean Markey



October 23 - 28

Year's largest training held in NM

By Rhonda St. Martin
Course Co-Host

The sixth and largest T'ai Chi Chih teachers training course this year was held in October at the Albuquerque TCC Center. Seventeen teacher candidates from all over the country, including three from Albuquerque, came to spend the week with us. Throughout stormy weather (especially the first two days!) Ed gently and relentlessly led the candidates and several auditing teachers through movements. It deepened our experience and understanding of TCC. He focussed us on alignment of the body and alignment of integrity and reminded us on the final day to "allow the integrity of TCC to be foremost in your mind."

A real bonus for these teacher candidates was Justin's daily visits to class. Many candidates met him for the first time as he demonstrated movements and gave practical advice on presentations such as "Use your own words to express your own experience of TCC" and "NO mumbling!" Candidates enthusiastically welcomed his enrichment of this course. It was heartening to witness the working relationship between the Originator of TCC and his appointed Head. They provided a moving example of how all of us as teachers and forever-students can respectfully relate to one another.

Throughout the week candidates' movements (in body and mind) were broken down and reconstructed. The variety and quality of presentations were excellent. If one tear was shed by an individual it was certainly felt by the entire group. Such connecting and support of each other only enhanced those quiet moments of surrender when we moved together with softness and continuity.

Three candidates were given deferred accreditation status. It is painful to see a student ill prepared by their teacher for the high expectations of the teacher accreditation course. Deferral status is also a reflection of Ed's commitment to admit only teachers of the highest



The graduates of the course! **(Back row, L-R):** Co-Host Rhonda St. Martin, Co-Host Dora Derzon, Jane Dally, Jan Ramquist, Bob Steffen, Mary Ruiz, Joyce Kiefer Veerkamp, Linda Fellion; **(Middle row, L-R):** Mary Cameris, Karen Bolda, Trish Mosier, Catherine Millman, Janet Maissen, Maria da Gloria Alvarez, Rita Jacobsen; **(Front row, L-R):** Athene Mantel, John Taggart, Course Instructor Ed Altman, Lisa Otero, Ray Payne. Photo: Dennis Zallen

ability to the teaching community. Such practice will undoubtedly ensure the purity and longevity of T'ai Chi Chih. It was a humbling reminder to all of us to bring patience and self evaluation to our practice.

This course was blessed with many auditing teachers including Roberta Taggart, Pam Towne, Lovena Warren, Joanne Lovejoy, Jim Shorr, Amy Hackenberg and Noel Altman from out of state. Albuquerque teachers included the training planning committee members of Co-Hosts Dora Derzon and Rhonda St. Martin, Dennis Zallen, Amy Tyksinski, and Guy Kent. Local Good Karma Distributor Carmen Brocklehurst attended along with several other local teachers including Victor Berg, Ann Rutherford, Connie Hyde, Robert Montes De Oca, Suni McHenry, Caroline Chavez, Kathy Grassel, Toni Mora, Marjie Bassler, Ellen Tatge, and Beverly McFarland. . . .

The efforts of so many went into this training course. It is a true reflection of the simple and uncompromising goal of spreading the experience and joy of TCC. Thank you Ed for your forthright and skillful leadership. Thank you Dora for co-hosting this event with such maturity and grace. It was fun working with you again. On a personal note I was given the gift of renewed inspiration and commitment to daily practice for which I am grateful. . . .



News Shorts

March 30 - April 1, 2001

T'ai Chi Chih retreat, to be led by Ed Altman, offered for first time

A time for personal renewal and learning for teachers and students with Ed Altman, International Head of T'ai Chi Chih — this is the first gathering of T'ai Chi Chih teachers and students in Arizona and the first T'ai Chi Chih retreat with Ed. It will be a time for refreshment of body, mind and spirit, open to T'ai Chi Chih teachers and students from other states as well.

The site of the retreat weekend, The Sedona Retreat and Healing Park in Sedona, AZ, is located in a beautiful, serene, high desert setting, tucked into the majestic red rocks of Sedona. The buildings at the retreat center were designed by a student of Frank Lloyd Wright. They are adobe style and earth-integrated for a passive solar-controlled environment. The indigenous tribes who first lived in the area considered the land sacred. Sedona is known worldwide as a destination for healing, energy and spiritual growth. The marketing director said that "the chi here is just wonderful." Combine all this with Ed's wonderful leadership and we know this will be a very special experience for everyone who attends.

THIS RETREAT WILL OFFER:

- T'ai Chi Chih workshops with Ed Altman
- Frequent T'ai Chi Chih practice sessions
- Networking with teaching colleagues
- A healthy cuisine, primarily vegetarian, with an assortment of Korean, American, French, Italian and Mexican dishes served buffet style
- Relaxing atmosphere in a hospitality area with complementary snacks, fresh fruit, bottled water
- Ample time for personal reflection and meditation
- Hiking on 124 acres of trails and paths which meander through natural desert landscape

- *Swimming and hot tub - located on a ridge from which we can also view the sunset and beautiful night skies*

Prices range from \$195 - 255 and include lodging and all meals, beginning with dinner on Friday and going through lunch on Sunday.

- Deanne Hodgson

TCC Teacher Training Travel Fund to be used for international travel

Five dollars from every candidate's T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Training fee has been earmarked for the T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Training Travel Fund since the beginning of 1998. The amount in the fund, including interest and the contribution from the last Teacher Training of 2000, is now \$1096.37.

The purpose of this fund is to help defray expensive flight costs (over \$500) for teachers in the international teaching community who host Teacher Training courses and would have to pay for Ed Altman's overseas transportation costs.

The fund has not been used yet, but there is a growing presence of accredited teachers in Europe and it is expected that a Teacher Training course will be scheduled there within two to five years.

- Noel Altman

PAL format video to be produced

In response to the wish of European TCC students and teachers to purchase a PAL version of Justin Stone's videotape (since European VCRs cannot play VHS tapes), a list of names is now being taken by Good Karma Publishing (GKP). When the list is long enough, a limited number of the tape will be produced in PAL format. For details, contact GKP.

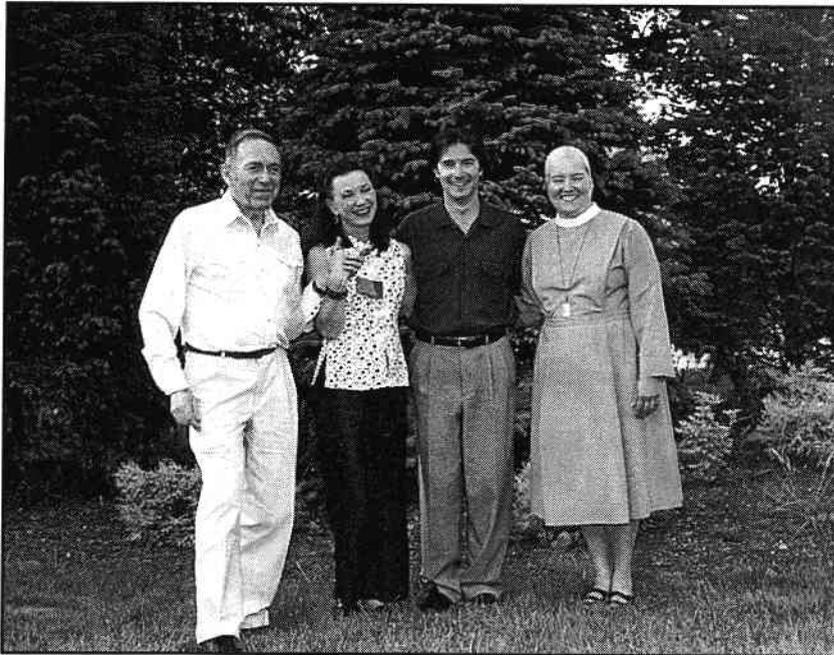
- Noel Altman



Calendar of Events

<p>March 30 thru April 1, 2001</p> <p>TCC RETREAT Location: Sedona, AZ Contact: Deanne Hodgson 233 E. Angela Drive Phoenix, AZ 85022-1812 Phone: (602) 789-7415 e-mail: deanne@blueribbon.com</p> <p>Attendance Fee: \$195 - 255</p> <p><i>(See "News Shorts" for description of event. Contact host for price details.)</i></p>	<p>June 18 thru 23, 2001</p> <p>TCC TEACHER TRAINING Location: Minneapolis, MN Contact: Sr. Rita Foster 2005 2nd Ave. S Minneapolis, MN 55404-2602 Phone: (612) 872-8624 e-mail: rfoster@csjstpaul.org</p> <p>TCC Teacher Training Fee: \$450</p>
<p>April 27</p> <p>HALF DAY TCC TEACHER RENEWAL (8:30am-noon)</p>	<p>August 2-5, 2001</p> <p>16TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL T'AI CHI CHIH TEACHERS' CONFERENCE Location: San Francisco Bay Area, CA</p> <p><i>(See insert flyer)</i></p>
<p>April 27 thru 29, 2001</p> <p>SEIJAKU TEACHER TRAINING (Begins 4:00pm) Location: Edmonton, AB CANADA Contact: Chery Ann Hoffmeyer PO Box 57032 Sherwood Park, AB T8A 5L7 CANADA Phone: (780) 467-8701 e-mail: cheryann.hoffmeyer@home.com</p> <p>TCC Teacher Renewal Fee: \$20 CAD Seijaku Teacher Training Fee: \$300 U.S. Auditing Seijaku Teachers: \$20 U.S.</p> <p><i>(Note: Due to space limitations, priority will be given to those taking the training for the first time. Auditors will be included as space allows.)</i></p>	<p>August 27 thru September 1, 2001</p> <p>TCC TEACHER TRAINING Location: Mahwah, NJ Contact: Dan Pienciak 72 Lake Ave. Ocean Grove, NJ 07756-1406 Phone: (732) 988-5865 e-mail: wakeupdaniel@aol.com</p> <p>TCC Teacher Training Fee: \$450</p>
<p>May 7 thru 12, 2001</p> <p>TCC TEACHER TRAINING Location: Fullerton, CA (Orange County) Contact: Pam Towne 107 Calle Vista Camarillo, CA 93010-1711 Phone: (805) 987-3607 e-mail: ptowne@inreach.com</p> <p>TCC Teacher Training Fee: \$450</p>	<p>November 20, 2001</p> <p>DAY OF "JOY THRU MOVEMENT" CELEBRATING T'AI CHI CHIH Location: Worldwide</p>

Justin Stone is the Originator of T'ai Chi Chih.
Ed Altman is the Head of T'ai Chi Chih.
All hosted events led by Ed Altman unless otherwise indicated.



(L-R): Originator of T'ai Chi Chih Justin Stone, Conference Co-Host Carolyn Perkins, Head of T'ai Chi Chih Ed Altman and Conference Co-Host Sr. Antonia Cooper pose outside during the 2000 T'ai Chi Chih Teachers' Conference in New Jersey. Photo: Jo-Anne Montanti

[Editor's Note: The number and quality of written submissions to *The Vital Force* following the 2000 Teachers' Conference was phenomenal — 70 responses! Although the bulk of those selected for publication appeared in the last issue, some of the longer responses and write-ups of "Roundtable" discussions follow on this and the next six pages.]

Conference 2000

Teacher was "aided" by attending in NJ

If you are meant to live a devotional life, Justin says, you will be drawn to those who will aid you. Justin and Ed gave me that aid at the Conference. We want to unite with the Source, to be in accord with reality. How do we accomplish this? Ed reminded us that any extraneous movement cuts off our relationship with the vital force. Are we leading with our shoulders rather than the T'an T'ien? Be alert to any weaknesses or tension in your movements. Explore them. They're

waiting to be discovered. What can they teach us? If you ignore them, you will stagnate at your present level of understanding. Is that what you want? You know there's much, much more waiting for you.

At the Conference, Justin reminded us that our spiritual life must be in accord with our daily life. We can not practice T'ai Chi Chih then go to work and practice deplorable behavior. This makes our T'ai Chi Chih a sham.

Chi follows thought; take an attitude and action that leaves no ripple. Ed gave us an excellent example of this by sharing his personal journey of aligning his software business with the integrity of his T'ai Chi Chih practice. If you weren't at the conference, you missed an inspiring story. (Maybe he'll write it up in the *Vital Force*!)

– Ann Rutherford



Conference 2000

The T'ai Chi Chih Teachers' Conference and The Bubbling Spring

By Lyn Welch

I just returned from my first teacher's conference and am still a bit bemused. It has taken me two weeks to sort out my impressions and it will take many more to integrate all the things I learned into my practice and teaching.

My original teacher's training had been a disaster. I thought I was well prepared, but was not. (My own fault, I might add). From the first practice, the first day, things slowly slid toward doom. By the end, I was deep in depression, loving T'ai Chi Chih, but convinced that I could never succeed in doing it correctly much less teaching it.

I would not have dared show my face last year, so I stayed at home, wondering what was going on and what I was missing. I studied the tapes over and over. I read about T'ai Chi Chih, I thought about T'ai Chi Chih, I taught (cautiously). Most important, I practiced. I focused, and I practiced again.

This year I gathered my courage, a year of teaching and hard practice under my belt and dared. Thursday night, once there, I again felt that sinking feeling. What was I doing there? I probably would have run, if I could.

The early morning practice was a total joy. Was I perfect? Of course not, and never will be. I have a long way to go and much to learn, but that morning was a revelation. The feeling of practicing with so many focused individuals was magic ... I felt

like a balloon floating free in the air, joy, and perhaps the breath of God, lifting me aloft. In many ways the conference became more spiritual than anything else. I am so grateful.

To the experienced teachers who took their time to talk to me about teaching and to help me with the form, I can only send a heart felt thanks. Whereas thanks are small things, I know that the kindness will be returned to you in some way, 1000 fold. That's the way life works. To those of you who welcomed me with smiles, a warm hug, and encouragement, thanks also. I will pass the hugs along to others who need them as badly as I did.

And now, about the Bubbling Spring. Yes, I know Justin talks about this, but the one to which I refer is a little different. I have found that the conference was much like a bubbling spring. It renewed and invigorated me at the time and has continued to do the same since. Its memories bubble, and chuckle, and tumble through my spirit ... a scene here, a word there, a kindness remembered. It renews and invigorates me every hour and infuses my practice with joy. What an overwhelming feeling, to know that all of you are out there practicing with me. Time, place, distance, do not matter. We are all doing this dance of energy together, with each other, the chi, and the Infinite All. What a blessing!

So, it's back to work. Try harder, study more, practice more. Know that we are all working to be at one with the chi.

Thanks again to all of you who worked so hard to make this conference possible.



Conference 2000

Teacher investigates “Swivel” in her own practice

By Jan Arrott

“Swivel” was a word frequently used in discussions at this year’s conference, when describing the lateral movements of TCC.

The New World Dictionary defines swivel as a coupling device that allows free turning of the parts attached to it. In the case of a swivel desk chair the seat turns horizontally on the base.

When I open a wine bottle, I can either turn the bottle and hold the cork screw still or I can hold the wine bottle still and turn the cork screw. Either way a swivel is created.

So in my TCC movements, I use that image of holding the T’an T’ien still and letting the waist turn. Justin repeats over and over, “it’s the turning of the waist” which causes the chi to circulate.

No wonder Bass Drum, the Daughters and Push Pull seem to me like the easiest movements to teach. No turning of the waist is necessary. In Working the Pulley, when the T’an T’ien remains facing forward (as in not turning the wine bottle) the waist must swivel as the cork screw does. In the Platters and Pulling in the Energy that turning of the waist becomes very subtle and almost unnoticeable to the observer as the arms move to trace the circle of the movement.

In the lateral movements, as Ed often has described with his “bottom gliding across a piano bench” illustration, the T’an T’ien remains facing forward as the waist swivels on this still point.

When I previously concentrated on making my waist turn, my focus was not enhancing the flow of the chi. When I relaxed and shifted my focus to the forward stillness of the T’an T’ien the swiveling of the waist happened, not as an act of will but naturally without effort.

“Holding fast” with the linear yinning and yanging of the T’an T’ien and “letting go” to the circular turning of the waist lubricates my practice in a way I hadn’t experienced before.

Conference 2000

Does music enhance or diminish “continuity” during practice of T’ai Chi Chih movements?

By Jan Arrott

Each day, at this year’s conference, we had one full practice with lovely background music.

This brought to mind a conversation Justin and I had some time back about his music. Our discussion centered around how music can affect the continuity of our TCC movements and divert our attention away from this continuity as we move. Continuity means giving equal measure and mindfulness to each part of every movement. Continuity, along with softness, is the essence of how we move.

So often when I practice TCC to a rhythmical background of music, I become “hypnotized” by the cadence of that particular piece. I notice continuity gets lost into a rhythm. “That is not TCC,” Justin states bluntly. TCC is not a dance; it has no cadence.

The last practice of the conference, the background music was a piece written and played by Justin specifically for TCC practice [“Music for T’ai Chi Chih Practice & Restful Listening”]. It offered no invitation to fall into a hypnotic state; there was no repetitive rhythm. Justin’s music kept waking us up and we were free to watch the continuity in our movements.

Granted, some of us thought this rather jolting; falling into lazy reverie is so easy.

Or maybe you are one of the teachers who can stay present to the continuity of your movements no matter what is playing in the background.



Conference 2000

Teacher struck with insights at the annual Teachers' Conference

Wisdom, prajna, was one of the key terms mentioned by Justin & Ed this weekend. Ed explained it as the underlying current with which the spiritual practitioner can seek to align him or herself, and gave some compelling examples of how it had recently guided him in his life. From these, it became clear that wisdom shows up as a subtle force of right connection, a serendipitous linking of often unlikely causes & effects. As the weekend progressed, short as it was, I began to feel wisdom putting in a tentative appearance as a kind of heightened sense of analogy. The quieter & more at ease in TCC I became, the more the things & people around me began to link up & transmit a heightened sense of poignant meaning, often providing concrete examples of the principles embodied in TCC practice - first & foremost, emptiness. For me, a particularly striking instance of this occurred during the photo session late Saturday in the out-

door amphitheatre. I was sitting in one of the upper tiers. On either side of me & all around were all the other teachers, vibrant & here together in this exact configuration for one time only, in fact for a matter of minutes, with Justin, the source of the teaching that had called them together, seated in the first row. No sooner did the sense of that strong but fleeting whole register in me than my eyes lifted all by themselves and settled on the larger landscape of which we were a part, bordered to the west by row upon row of white crosses in the convent cemetery, some (I know from an afternoon walk) dating back a century, some as recent as this year. Each cross with its precise shadow in the setting sun. And I absorbed this powerful wisdom teaching not in my head but in my chest.

– **Bill Mishler**

Conference 2000

Catholic sister relates shared viewpoint of sisters who teach TCC movements

([Representing] Sisters at round table discussion):

The increasing number of Sisters becoming TCC teachers may be related to the centering aspects of the form. The movements often are a preparation for centering prayer and other Meditative practices. Many Sisters teach TCC in retreat and/or spiri-

tuality centers and attract persons who are interested in body prayer as a means of deepening their relationship with God, others and self.

Some prospective students are curious as to how the practice of TCC is compatible with our religious faith. This question presents the opportunity to clarify

that we are not promoting a religion but are tapping into the ancient wisdom of another culture which, as in our tradition, reverences the pairedness of all life and promotes a compassionate attitude toward all creation.

– **Sr. Mary Reynolds**



Conference 2000

Intermediate class formats vary

By Noel Altman

At this year's annual Teachers' Conference, I hosted a "roundtable" discussion on "Intermediate Classes." I had a full table of teachers, some experienced in teaching intermediate formats and others inexperienced and wondering what should be included.

First of all, I stated right up front: There is NO set way to teach intermediate classes—it's whatever each teacher decides.

Some teachers shared that they go over all of the TCC movements more carefully in their intermediate classes—that the students don't fully learn the movements in the beginning course and therefore need the extra help to become proficient at the practice.

I think it is important in discussing intermediate formats to also discuss the beginning formats that are feeding into those courses—in other words, "How and what have students been taught prior to entering an intermediate course?"

At the "roundtable," I shared that Ed and I used to teach our intermediate classes in the way described above (when we first began co-teaching in 1988). In those days, we were teaching all of the movements in 12 hours of instruction in our beginning class (as is most commonly done by the TCC Teaching Community), and found, as "roundtable" participants noted, that the students needed more work on putting together the details of the movements—and that work was accomplished in the intermediate classes.

Eventually, though, due to our own frustration at watching students go away from beginning classes with only a fragmentary understanding of the movements (since many students never go on to intermediate), we decided to change our beginning level instruction.

In 1992, when we began teaching courses in a new setting, in a new state, (due to a recent move), we decided to literally DOUBLE our instruction time to 24 hours—taught in two 12-hour courses. Over time, we found that this was too many hours, so we eventually streamlined down to 16 hours total—taught in two eight-hour courses, half the form in each course. This

way, we felt, even if they never went on to the second beginning course (and only knew half the form), at least they would be able to practice it fairly well.

At that time, we also offered an "Ongoing Practice" format, which was the successor to our beginning courses. In that one-hour format, Ed and I led a full practice of nine repetitions of all of the TCC movements, and then spent the remaining time working on a specific aspect of one of the more difficult movements or engaging the group in discussion, sometimes after reading a passage from the TCC text or another of Justin's books. With this format, we did allow students to enroll who had only learned the first half of the form, but we told them they would have to sit down and observe during the second half of the practice (since they had not been taught those movements). In this course, Ed and I focused completely on performing our practice to the best of our abilities, and students were encouraged to watch us closely as they moved with us to see what more they could begin to pick up on their own.

Other teachers at the "roundtable" mentioned that including a full practice in an intermediate format was very important in their minds because it gives the students a chance to put all of the individual pieces (movements) they've learned together into a whole.

In my current teaching at Kaiser Permanente Hospital in San Francisco, I have continued the two-part (16 hours total) beginning class format. However, when I designed my teaching curricula for the program in July, 1998, I rethought the intermediate class format.

Before I describe how I now teach the intermediate level, I should first say that I highly encourage my students to repeat the "Beginning Level B" course (second half of the form) since the movements are more difficult than in "A." Most do (which of course helps the students taking it for the first time—they seem to pick up the movements more easily when a class has many repeating students). I also tell students that it is highly preferred that they have taken "A" at least once and "B" at least twice before they enter the intermediate course, which is offered only once or twice a year.

I teach the intermediate course in four sessions, two hours each class, eight hours total. I break down the



movements into ones that have a vertical shift of weight, a forward-and-back shift of weight and a side-to-side shift of weight. I hand out worksheets with principles that should be followed in these three categories of movements. While the students are seated, I go over the list verbally by having each student read aloud one of the principles. They are phrases that they have heard over and over, but may not have incorporated as of yet—some examples: *Heel, (not toe) steps out with no weight on it; No leaning to either side with the upper body; SOFT; FLOWING, moving with continuity; Keeping the attention in the soles of the feet or the T'an T'ien.* Once the student reads the principle aloud, I demonstrate what I am talking about, and often what would be a violation of the principle, as well, so they are very clear on what I mean. We then choose about two or three movements that fit in that category and I write those on the board.

The students then break into pairs. One student begins by performing a movement listed on the board, and the other student watches carefully and notes any principles that need work. Once the movement is finished, the observing student gives verbal feedback to the other one and hands back the worksheet. Then they switch roles. After that, they begin again with another movement on the board.

I don't care which order they do the movements in, or even if they finish all of them. I am most con-

cerned with the careful watching each one is learning as well as the direct and individual feedback he/she receives regarding his/her practice. While the students are performing this task, I circulate around the room and facilitate the exercise, as well as give individual feedback on the practice of the form. I try to give feedback on at least one movement per person during the entire *course* (although per *class* would be preferred and ideal, but would take a team-teaching effort or a restructuring of the course). Of course, since the feedback is on principles, not particulars, it often applies to many, sometimes *all* of the movements, depending on the problem (for instance, "leaning" or "tucking the bottom under").

In the last class, after performing a full practice of all of the movements, we focus solely on the *Six Healing Sounds*. After reviewing the sounds (and making any necessary corrections) and answering any other particular questions, we practice the movement in a circle with one person taking a turn sitting in a chair (and resting, eyes closed, if desired) in the center of the circle. The group aims the sounds into the circle. I also take a turn. This is a wonderful exercise which my teacher (Pam Towne) taught when I took her Intermediate class 13 years ago. It gives everyone plenty of chances to practice the movement and also gives them a chance to (possibly) feel the effect of healing group chi.

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Conference 2000

Performing T'ai Chi Chih Movements in Water

By Nancy Vermond

Doing T'ai Chi Chih in very warm water, chest-high so that almost all the movements are done under water? Sounds great! I haven't tried it, but at our Friday "round-table" lunch discussion with Hannah Hedrick, we learned a few of the essentials of this kind of TCC. First of all, she told us the water should be 90-100 degrees. People need to be warm. Hannah is enthusiastic about the Water/T'ai Chi Chih combination, because hydrotherapy alone is very healing for the immune system and for any kind of pain. The movements of

TCC give an extra benefit, especially for people with arthritis. In Hannah's classes, a little more than half the hour is spent in the water, after 20-25 minutes of review and instruction.

Getting the feeling of "moving through very heavy air" comes easily with Water T'ai Chi Chih, but on the downside, people can feel they are floating away and need to focus on moving from the center and on being grounded. Students in Hannah's Water T'ai Chi Chih classes wear ankle or waist weights. "You can improvise," says Hannah, "Put weights in the pockets of your

shorts."

Where do you find a pool with 90 to 100 degree water? (Hot tubs are too hot.) Hannah suggests checking with a rehabilitation center, and if possible, partnering with a physical therapist (maybe someone who wants to do a research paper on it.) One successful experience opens many doors. Hannah has many more requests to teach than she can fulfill.

What does Justin think of Water T'ai Chi Chih? "Fine idea!"



Conference 2000

Singer finds TCC helpful for voice

By Grace O'Connor

Student of Sr. Margaret O'Connor

After having attended my cabaret show at "Don't Tell Mama" in New York City, Carolyn Perkins, with the approval of Sister Antonia, invited me to perform my show at the T'ai Chi Chih Teachers' Conference 2000 in New Jersey. The performance took place on Friday evening, July 21st, at the Xavier Center, St. Elizabeth College, Convent Station. My accompanist that evening was Dr. Don Fornuto of William F. Paterson University, Wayne, New Jersey.

Throughout my performance that evening, I was delighted by the warmth and graciousness emanating from the audience. There was such a strong connection between us and I knew my storytelling in the songs of our great American composers was touching each and every person in the room.

In the course of my show, I revealed the fact that I was a devotee of T'ai Chi Chih, which pleased everyone in attendance. My introduction to T'ai Chi Chih came from my sister, Sister Margaret O'Connor, a T'ai Chi Chih teacher. Margaret had given me Justin Stone's video, and of course, some private lessons.

Since starting to do T'ai Chi Chih two years ago, I have found greater freedom and energy in my singing. This is evidenced in my performances where I feel just as

fresh after an hour's singing as when I began. This past February, I recorded my first CD, which meant eight hours at a time in the studio. My musical director, Christopher Marlowe, was astounded that I was able to

record twice the usual number of songs in one session than most singers are able to complete. Having recorded 14 songs in two days is directly related, not just to my vocal technique, but to the stamina I have achieved through T'ai Chi Chih.

I am very grateful to my sister, Sister Margaret, for introducing me to T'ai Chi Chih, and to Carolyn Perkins and Sister Antonia for inviting me to perform at Conference 2000. It afforded me the opportunity to meet Justin Stone, who is also a fine musician, with a wealth of knowledge of the music of our Great American Songbook. I saw and heard this firsthand at our impromptu musical rendezvous at the piano after my performance, which was a great

joy! Also, to have met so many beautiful people in the audience that evening, whose warmth and generosity of spirit certainly speaks highly of the type of person drawn to T'ai Chi Chih and of all that T'ai Chi Chih evokes from each individual. I do hope our paths cross again. In the meantime, we will think "continuity and gentleness."



Professional singer Grace O'Connor, sister and student of TCC Teacher Sr. Margaret O'Connor, sang her Broadway hits at Conference 2000.

Photo provided by Grace O'Connor



Letter to Ed

Inmate hopes to teach one day

By Craig Bowens

Student of James Hecker and Judy Tretheway

. . . Ed, at this point I would like to share with you what T'ai Chi Chih has done for me. Ed, for most of my life I was a very violent person and I did not really know why I just assumed I was that way because of the conditions surrounding my upbringing living in the ghettos of the San Francisco Bay Area during the decades of the 1960's and 70's, and then when I finally wound up in prison with a sentence of 25 years to life and the men that I was doing time [with] were just as violent or even more I really started to believe that it was cool to be that kind of person because you had to be violent to survive.

What T'ai Chi Chih did was show me that there is a core to my being and in that core dwelled a great deal of fear, and not knowing how to deal with that fear I would always react violently whenever that fear was triggered. Now after practicing T'ai Chi Chih for nearly three years now that fear no longer exists within me and has [been] replaced by a strength & balance so powerful that at this point in my life I can sense when a situation has the tendency to turn violent and tune into my T'an T'ien and draw from the energy stored there and peacefully & confidently defuse the conflict before it gets a chance to turn violent.

It has also helped me out a great deal in keeping me in good health especially as far as the common cold and flu are concerned. In any prison setting those two spread like wild fires because of the crowded conditions, and all of my life I have been told that there is no cure for the cold, but since I started practicing at one hour a day seven

days a week I can feel it in the early stages when I have been affected by the virus and all I do is practice three times a day for at least 45 minutes and 48 hours later I am back to my old self and the only ill effects I suffer is some nasal drainage, and the flu is usually gone in the same amount of time but I do tend to suffer the symptoms.

My memory and my ability to focus has got alot better. Ed, T'ai Chi Chih is the most wonderful gift that I have recieved — the power of having total control over my health and

well being is something that I will be forever grateful to Justin for, because of him creating this beautiful art form and allowing it to be taught here at Folsom.

Ed, the main reason that I want to become an instructor is because everyday I cross the paths of thousands of men and when I look into their eyes

. . . The main reason that I want to become an instructor is because everyday I cross the paths of thousands of men and when I look into their eyes I can see the same fear that once dwelled inside me, and I would love the opportunity to share the gift that I recieved . . .

I can see the same fear that once dwelled inside me, and I would love the opportunity to share the gift that I recieved with these men because I know from my personal experience and how much T'ai Chi Chih has changed me that these men can become empowered with having control over their lives so that they will stay out of prison and become productive members within their communities and society at large instead of continuing to be a detriment.

I would also love to go through the teacher training process so that I could recieve some serious coaching from you and get a deeper understanding of what T'ai Chi Chih is all about. . . .



Thorough, lengthy instruction offered for credit at IL college

By Donna McElhose

My two year anniversary as an instructor of T'ai Chi Chih was June 6, 2000. It does not seem possible that it has been two years only since I was accredited. In other ways it seems that there was no other time before being an instructor of T'ai Chi Chih. I am fortunate to have classes in a variety of locations. Each has its great and not-so-great points. I would like to share with you a bit about the college classes. The classes at the College of Lake County (CLC) have something special. **TIME.**

Having moved from state to state and county to county for over 35 years, I personally know it takes 90 to 120 days for one to adjust to their new life. So, as an instructor of T'ai Chi Chih, I know students need encouragement to add one more thing to their busy lives, and they need **time.**

It is fortunate for the students that take T'ai Chi Chih instruction at CLC, where it's been offered for four semesters now. It is offered as a credit class and combined in the past with the continuing education class. T'ai Chi Chih also has been offered for three years, once in the fall and once in the spring, through the Discovery Program, a seniors' program offered through CLC. The classes offered through CLC have a wonderful advantage over classes offered at other locations. This advantage is the time requirement for a credit class. The CLC credit classes are arranged in eight weeks, 16 hours of instruction for ½ credit. So if students register for Beginner (½ credit) and Intermediate (½ credit), they then have a full credit for PE and **16 weeks or 32 hours of T'ai Chi Chih!**

The first eight-week Beginner Course is for instruction in the complete set. If students stop taking class after this, they have had 16 hours to learn and practice T'ai Chi Chih. This is double the time of other locations. The students are able to practice T'ai Chi Chih on their own.

All the movements are introduced. There is a written test and an assignment. The assignment is to research two articles on the benefits of T'ai Chi [Chih or Ch'uan], chi gong, etc. Usually the students do more and are very excited about other things they learn and love to share their articles. The enthusiasm this generates for doing the practice is worth the work I have to do for the record keeping.

*... If students register for beginners (½ credit) and intermediate (½ credit), they then have a full credit for PE and **16 weeks or 32 hours of T'ai Chi Chih!***

The second eight weeks is an Intermediate-level class. With two hours for class, the first part is for questions, review, and refinement — refinement in the steps, shifting weight, beginnings and endings, the names and order of the

movements. We use a video camera (for four weeks) to tape some moves to check for leaning or refinement of a movement. The last half of most classes are spent doing the set. The Great Circle Meditation [taught by Justin at the back of the text] is introduced and practiced after the set. Some classes that seem ready also do T'ai Chi Chih mentally. Many of the students say they then continue that on airplanes or at the office. In this Intermediate class the students have a project to do about T'ai Chi Chih. It can be anything they want. I do not give any guidelines. One student's project was the artwork that was on the cover of the *Vital Force* in June. Others have started doing poetry again. Pyramid Poetry is popular. Some have been in the *Vital Force*. One student who could not remember the Six Healing Sounds drew the sounds in English and Chinese on a rock and says now she knows the sounds. There have been numerous wonderful projects by the students.

I find that the students who take the college classes have a greater depth to their practice sooner than students from the classes that are offered for short-

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Forwarded Letter

Justin Stone video proves to be useful tool in teaching and presenting

Ed, . . . Having [students] practice with the video while I stroll about is a great idea. They have a big screen TV in the room so that will work great. It will also give good visibility for the video and those who are serious may be more likely to purchase a copy. I guess I may have to call Jean [at Good Karma Publishing] and order more than the seven I ordered last week!

My presentation this week was to a group at a different Shepherd's Center and I used the practice session of the video for them to see as they were gathering and then showed Justin's intro during the presentation and I think it gave great credibility and comfort to them. While watching the practice session one man said, "They don't seem to have any tension!" I could have kissed him!

Donnis [Minx]

Teaching Special Needs Students: A Follow-up

By Margery Erickson

In a past issue of the *Vital Force* [March '00], I described the difficulty I had in convincing the public school where I teach what the benefits could be of teaching T'ai Chi Chih to the staff. I later requested permission to teach T'ai Chi Chih to my special needs students as part of the health curriculum.

Last school year I taught seven of my 15 students T'ai Chi Chih twice a week. By winter break we had learned all of the moves. We continued to practice the whole year.

One day, another teacher came in the room while we were practicing. She needed to talk to me. I asked one of the students if he would lead the class while I met with her. After I finished my brief meeting I continued to observe my class. It was a moment that makes the hair on your arms stand up and clap.

In front of me was my class of "disabled" students doing T'ai Chi Chih and being led by one of their peers. Instead of returning to the class as the teacher, I joined the class and let the student continue to lead until we were finished. Unfortunately, the only camera running at the time was the one in my mind. This is one tape that will be difficult to erase.

Perspectives on the Relationship Between Teaching and Work

By Stephanie Bass

I used to have a job with a big title and big salary, and taught T'ai Chi Chih once a week for very little money—just enough to rent the studio. I thought I was lucky because I had a job that would support my teaching.

Now I work for myself, making barely enough money to pay my bills, and teach T'ai Chi Chih for not a lot of money—a little more than enough to pay for the studio. I consider myself lucky because T'ai Chi Chih supports my work. Out of the quietness, the discipline and the joy comes whatever I need to help my

clients, meet my deadlines, face my future.

So I ask myself: what is my work? What does it mean to teach T'ai Chi Chih? Which thing supports the other?

The answer: it doesn't make any difference. Just do both.



Student's doubts about feeling chi are overcome during her first class

By Kimberly Hurst
Student of Sharon Sirkis

When I signed up to take a physical education class over the winter session, my main motivation was to get an easy gym credit and not have to take a full semester. I chose to take T'ai Chi Chih mainly because it fit my schedule and it was a class that did not seem to sound too difficult in the catalog. I mean how can 20 different moves be a hard class? This class was something that I was definitely not taking seriously. I tend to be a skeptical person and thought that T'ai Chi Chih was some new age class. That no one ever really felt their Chi, it was just something people say to fit in with the group, and if they did find their Chi, what good would it do them to know they have it? Then I came to the first class and from almost the very beginning my attitude was changed.

The moment that I felt that this was something that may be very beneficial to me was when we did [a] simple [exercise] of squeezing our hands together 20 times and then bringing them together slowly. I didn't think that I would feel anything, but I did. When I felt the warmth and tingling sensation between my hands, I thought to myself that this was something, that I was going to get something out of this class.

I have always been a very high tension, high-strung person. I always feel like I have to be on the ball and in control at all times. Especially when it comes to my job and school, I think you could say that I am somewhat of a control freak. Calm was never in my vocabulary. I always have five different things going at once and tend to like it that way.

So after that first class I went home and started doing the movements that we had learned

. . . After that first class I went home and started doing the movements that we had learned that day. I noticed myself becoming calm and more focused. My partner saw it also; he came home that evening and I actually sat and talked to him without doing something else, like cooking or folding clothes.

that day. I noticed myself becoming calm and more focused. My partner saw it also; he came home that evening and I actually sat and talked to him without doing something else, like cooking or folding clothes. He was impressed with how I was calmer and trying not to let things bother me

like they usually do. I also have found in my job that I am able to step back and assess a situation before going into it. I tend to be the one that jumps in with my opinion and the way to fix my clients' problems. I am trying now to sit back and really listen and observe before jumping in. I know that I have a long way to go before I am really a calm person. I still have three things going on at once and I still find myself getting agitated easily, but the more that I practice T'ai Chi Chih I feel myself becoming a more centered person who is more able to focus.



Successful Candidates

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Ed and previously published in *The Vital Force* and *The New Mexico T'ai Chi Chih News*. In addition, there are more recent articles that I think would be particularly useful, written by Justin, Ed, and other teachers (including myself):

THE DEEPER LEVELS, AS SEEN BY JUSTIN AND ED:

- "**In Accord with Teh**" by Justin Stone, *The Vital Force*, March 1999
- "**Softness and Continuity**" by Ed Altman, *The Vital Force*, June 1999
- "**Patience**" by Ed Altman, *The Vital Force*, September 1999
- "**Flow Softly**" by Justin Stone, *The Vital Force*, December 1999
- "**T'ai Chi Chih and the Future**" by Justin Stone, *The Vital Force*, March 2000
- "**Violence**" by Ed Altman, *The Vital Force*, September 2000

PREPARATION:

- "**Preparing for Teacher's Training**" by Carmen Brocklehurst, *The Vital Force*, September 1999
- "**Becoming an accredited T'ai Chi Chih teacher**" by Patricia Strand, *The Vital Force*, September 2000

ATTITUDE:

- "**Receiving Corrections**" by Jean Katus, *The Vital Force*, March 1999
- "**Motivational Tips for Practice**" by Sharon Sirkis, *The Vital Force*, June 1999
- "**Why Attend the Annual Conference?**" by Noel Altman, *The Vital Force*, June 1999
- "**When T'ai Chi Chih Feels Like New**" by Amy Hackenberg, *The Vital Force*, December 1999

TEACHING:

- "**Teaching TCC to a city population through largest U.S. non-profit HMO**" by Noel Altman, *The Vital Force*, December 1999
- "**New teacher has questions for Justin Stone...**" letter by Trish Winger, along with "**Justin responds candidly to new teacher's questions**", both: *The Vital Force*, March 2000
- "**Justin Stone's teaching on new video 'resonates' after viewing**" by Amy Hackenberg, *The Vital Force*, June 2000
- "**Teaching Where You're Given Space**" by Noel Altman, *The Vital Force*, June 2000
- "**Group practices unite students**" by Donna McElhose, *The Vital Force*, September 2000
- "**Teaching T'ai Chi Chih Without Classes**" by Jan Linthorst, *The Vital Force*, September 2000

5) Explain the core parts to a successful presentation and give the candidate a chance to practice in advance.

6) Quiz the candidate on the proper names of the movements and the order in which they are practiced (and taught).

Optionally:

If I were preparing more than one candidate at once, then I would offer a teacher preparation course for the group of them to accomplish most of the above and also give all of them the chance to lead each other — in a circle, in rows, mirroring and not. Maybe they'd even begin to practice teaching movements so they could begin to address this and related questions: What are the key points you want to make about this movement?

In Conclusion:

As teachers, we all know how much *can't* be taught in advance — the lessons that have to be learned by just getting out there and *doing*. How well a student *does* in that circumstance will have a lot to do with how confident he/she feels as a result of prior preparation.

Intermediate classes

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There does seem to be a great deal of interest in the topic of intermediate classes. If teachers who offer classes which go beyond the basic instruction in the TCC movements will write up what it is that they do and send the articles in for publication in *The Vital Force*, then we may all benefit from their experience

Thorough instruction

continued from page 28

er times, hours or weeks. There is a very big difference in the students' movements, comfort zone and skill quality when they have the time to incorporate T'ai Chi Chih into their lives in a gentle time-expanded class. When students have time to learn T'ai Chi Chih and make it a part of their lives, they have a greater opportunity for continuing their T'ai Chi Chih practice. They also find out that what they are doing is valuable. They have the opportunity to learn about the gift of T'ai Chi Chih without rushing it.

In order to help the students practice, I use a 100-day chart for students to track their days of practice. The students that use this method of tracking their practice time seem to enjoy it. One hundred days aids in giving the students the time they need to incorporate something new in their lives.



Karmic Komments

from Good Karma Publishing, Inc.
P.O. Box 511, Ft. Yates, ND 58538
Jean Katus, Publisher

Gift Ideas

During this season of gift giving or at any time, teachers might want to consider some of the Good Karma items for a special student, family member, or friend. While we always encourage teachers to have the “basic” materials available in their classes (the Justin Stone video, the photo-textbook and the audio cassette “Justin Stone Speaks on T’ai Chi Chih”—pieces particularly considered to be supportive tools for practice and study), we can also recommend certain others that make nice gift items.

For those who want to know more about Justin Stone, the man and his accomplishments, including samplings of his jazz keyboard performance, the “20th Anniversary Interview” cassette tape is a delight. (One teacher ordered several copies to have available at a local event where both teachers and students would be in attendance, most of whom were unfamiliar with the tape.) Then there’s the incomparable Paul Reps, one of Justin’s mentors, whose witty and succinct drawings and clever poetic expression fill the pages of *Let Good Fortune Jump on You*.

Readers drawn to meditation would find *Meditation for Healing* and *Zen Meditation* to be rich with history, potential results, pitfalls to avoid, along with very clear and concise instruction. Those who may not want to delve so deeply into meditation but who may nonetheless find the idea of simple meditative exercises inspiring will like *Heightened Awareness*.

Non-T’ai Chi Chih people with an inclination for the Far East would enjoy the sometimes humorous, sometimes serious, lesson-filled stories in “Spiritual Stories of the East” (either in individual packaging or as a two-volume set); the candid wisdom contained in the slim two-section volume of aphorisms and narratives of *20th Century Psalms*; the depth of Justin’s astute observations in *Abandon Hope* and *Climb the Joyous Mountain* (in addition to the fun of pyramid poetry and artist Ou Mie Shu’s drawings in the latter).

Music lovers who have not yet heard “Serene Nature” and “Music for T’ai Chi Chih Practice & Restful Listening” will find these soothing tapes to be a wonderful adjunct to activities where serenity and calmness are desired. “Elevation Music” and “Emblissening Music” are also popular tapes that go well with T’ai Chi Chih and/or reflective listening. In addition, we offer a few other items, mostly music tapes, not listed in the catalog any longer but still available as supplies last. You can request a list describing these materials.

Order Form

You’ll notice that the enclosed order form, one side for teachers and the other for students, has an extension after the effective date so it reads, “Effective through 2000+” so you know the prices and shipping chart will not change after the New Year until such time as we let you know via this column.



SUBMISSIONS:

The Vital Force invites letters, articles, news briefs, poetry, original artwork and photography. Written submissions should be typed. All submissions must indicate the full name and complete address of the person submitting them to be considered for publication.

The Vital Force now has a text scanner which allows us to process typed submissions much more efficiently. Unfortunately, hand-written submissions must still be typed in manually and are prone to human error. Mail, fax, or e-mail your submissions. (See "Contact Information" on opposite page.) **Students**, please indicate who your T'ai Chi Chih teacher is with your submission.

Issue Submission deadlines:			
Spring:	January 10th	Fall:	July 10th
Summer:	April 10th	Winter:	October 10th
Note: It <u>may</u> be possible to submit timely news for publication later than the deadline. and it is <u>usually</u> possible to submit items for listing in the "Calendar of Events" up until press time — contact The Vital Force.			

EDITING POLICY:

**"But if you turn your eyes within yourselves
And testify to the truth of Self-nature—
The Self-nature that is no-nature,
You will have gone beyond the ken of
sophistry."**

— "ZAZEN WASAN / The Song of Zazen" by Hakuin,
A Flower Does Not Talk by Abbot Zenkei Shibayama

The editing policy of **The Vital Force** is to leave written submissions as intact as possible in order to preserve the original voice of the writer. Therefore, **editing will be minimal, unless explicitly requested otherwise by the writer, or unless the meaning is unclear.** The editing term "sic" will NOT be used to point out errors. Due to space limitations, submissions may have to be shortened, although it is hoped this will be rare.

When an addition or substitution for a word or words in the original text has been made, these brackets: [] will be used to enclose the change, rather than parentheses, which some writers like using. If an omission is made of more than a word or two due to unrelated content (in a letter, for instance) or space limitations, it will be shown by the following version of ellipsis: . . . This is so as not to be confused when the following: is used by a writer to show a lapse in time, a long pause or change in topic.

MEMBERSHIPS:

The Vital Force is published quarterly and bulk-mailed to Association members in the U.S. during the second weeks of March, June, September and December. Generally, the mailing time is 2 - 4 weeks. U.S. First Class and international delivery can be ordered for an extra fee and post on the same schedule noted above. (See Page 2 for details).

TCC TEACHERS' DIRECTORY:

The T'ai Chi Chih Teachers' Directory is for referral and communication purposes among accredited T'ai Chi Chih teachers. **It is not to be used or sold as a mailing list.** Updates are published on insert pages in each issue of **The Vital Force**. Send your changes to the address on the opposite page.

WHEN MOVING:

Please allow 8 weeks notice and provide complete old and new addresses. Because **The Vital Force** has "return service requested" with the U.S. Post Office, an undeliverable issue or Teachers' Directory is returned to us with a charge for the First Class cost to return it (approximately \$1.25 - \$2.50, depending on the weight). Then, if we mail out a new one, it goes First Class (because a bulk mailing requires 200 pieces), resulting in further expense of \$1.25 - \$2.50. Please help us avoid this unnecessary and wasteful expense—send in your change of address information early!



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Vital Force Association Memberships, updates for Teacher's Directory, updates / sign-ups for Website Teacher Referral List, submissions for publication:

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THE VITAL FORCE *Journal of T'ai Chi Chih*

Please print clearly.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

1. () Renewal () New

2. Name _____ Phone () _____ - _____

Address _____

_____ E-mail _____

_____ Zip _____ - _____

3. () Accredited TCC Teacher - Are you: () Active () Inactive () Willing to travel

Membership includes Teachers' Directory _____ year(s) @ \$30.00 / yr = \$ _____

Do you want your name, phone number and e-mail address (if applicable) included on the T'ai Chi Chih community website (www.taichichih.org) _____ year(s) @ \$5 / yr = \$ _____

() Student / Interested person _____ year(s) @ \$25.00 / yr = \$ _____

4. () First Class Delivery in U.S. additional \$5.00 / yr = \$ _____

() Out of U.S. Delivery additional \$10.00 / yr = \$ _____

5. () Donation for funding VFJ projects: outreach and referral activities = \$ _____

Make check or money order in U.S. dollars payable to:

TOTAL = \$ _____

The Vital Force

P.O. Box 23068
Albuquerque, NM 87192-1068



The Lighter Side...

1. When teaching seated TCC, I was showing Bob, one of the seniors, how important it is to shift from the waist.

To illustrate further, I said, "Most guys like cars, so I'll use a car analogy. The waist is like the engine—it gets everything moving."

Somewhat concerned, he grabbed his waist and said, "But what if you have a big belly?"

I replied, "That just means you have more horsepower!"

— Sharon Sirkis

2. One evening at the UMBC college campus, I decided to hold practice outdoors. Thirty students and I enjoyed performing the moves to the soft sounds of the birds and the cicadas. As we were doing the Six Healing Sounds, we were startled by the sudden bang and clatter of a big hubcap as it flew off a car and bounced towards us. The students tried desperately to hold back their laughter, as the hubcap kept wobbling and rolling like it had a life of its own. So, going with the flow, I said, "That was the Seventh Healing Sound."

— Sharon Sirkis

3. Did you hear about the new Zen vacuum cleaner? It comes with no attachments.

— Sharon Sirkis

4. After mentioning how the chi is a healing current and how the body tries to balance itself, one very fit twenty-something college student who had not been getting enough sleep, embarrassedly admitted that after the previous TCC class he felt so sleepy that he had to go back to his dorm room in the mid-afternoon to take a nap!

— Sharon Sirkis

5. At the conclusion of the recent teacher training course in Columbia, PA the auditors and candidates went out to dinner on Friday night to celebrate. As we left the restaurant we noticed that a nearby park was in the midst of a fireworks show. "Isn't our course host wonderful?" I commented to the group. "She really thought of everything!"

— Ed Altman

[Editor's Note: If you have a funny story to tell regarding your T'ai Chi Chih practice or teaching, write it up and send it in for "The Lighter Side..."]

Pyramid Poetry

This form of poetry was originated by Justin Stone and is described in detail in his book, Climb the Joyous Mountain.

*CLOUDS
FLOATING
BILLOWING
BUILDING SKYWARD
OMINOUS
RAINFALL
LIFE*

– John Payette
(Student of Donna
McElhose)

*Light
Darkness
Circling with
Stars, cold and dry
To make a
Dance of
Light*

– Nancy Jo Bleier

*SILK
THREAD OF
GOSS-A-MER
SEDUCING LIFE
BEHOLD THE
SPIDER'S
WEB*

– Carolyn Powell
(Student of Donna
McElhose)

*Horns
Blasting
Lights twinkling
Music floating
As the boats
Float on
By*

– Nancy Jo Bleier

*TIME
WILL STEAL
THE MOMENTS
THAT HOLD YOUR DREAMS
RETURNING
NAUGHT BUT
TIME*

– Carolyn Powell
(Student of Donna
McElhose)