The Vital Force

Journal of T'ai Chi Chih

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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
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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 brush painting on the cover is the work of TCC Teacher Virginia Shilson, a resident of St. Louis, MO. This is the third time that Viriginia's beautiful artwork has appeared on a cover of *The Vital Force*. At our request more than two years ago, she agreed to allow a large selection of her brushwork to appear in the pages of *The Vital Force*, over time. She was the first artist to contribute her work to the current *VFJ* staff and we are grateful that she did! She does offer her work for sale on a smaller scale (as notecards).

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

As of this writing, The Vital Force *has successfully moved from California (its birthplace) to New Mexico, the birthplace of T'ai Chi Chih. A new issue is nearing completion in a new office, a new printing house has been chosen, and new* VFJ *volunteers have signed up to continue the quarterly tradition of spending an afternoon inspecting issues, collating flyers, stuffing issues and stuffing and stamping envelopes for bulk and first class postage.*

The future looks bright for The Vital Force. *A little over two years ago, the membership base was at about 380 subscribers. Now we range from 500-575 per quarter (as the membership base fluctuates). The biggest increase, percentage-wise, has been in student memberships. It is now quite common for Ed (or myself) to talk about* The Vital Force *to candidates at the end of a Teacher Training week, and 50% or more of the candidates are already subscribers. This is wonderful to see because I believe these candidates have a definite "heads up" in their preparation and expectations for the course after reading so many fine articles from experienced teachers, new teachers who have just gone through <u>their</u> trainings, students at different levels and of course, the viewpoints and advice from Justin Stone, the Originator of T'ai Chi Chih, and Ed Altman, the Head of T'ai Chi Chih.*

Teacher candidates are obviously very serious students, but how many other students could benefit from reading these same articles? <u>Xerox them and use them in classes!</u> (Just attibute the source — The Vital Force *and issue month and year). If students are interested, give them xeroxed copies of the membership form (at the back of every issue) and encourage them to sign up for themselves so they can read issues in their entirety, every quarter.*

The Vital Force *is a different kind of publication — its content is reliant upon its subscribers! Those teachers and students who take the time to write up what is happening in their practices, their personal growth, their teaching are the ones who ensure that there is an issue to print each quarter! THANK YOU TO ALL OF YOU WHO HAVE DONE THIS, even if only once. <u>You</u> are why this publication is thriving! For those of you who have enjoyed reading what others have written, why not try your hand at it? Whether you are an absolute beginning student or a seasoned teacher, what you are experiencing in your practice (and teaching) is of interest to the rest of us.*

If you are teaching T'ai Chi Chih to a specialized population (like a group with a specific disability, or in a certain age bracket, or to prisoners or corporate executives or schoolteachers, or in a hospital or university setting), why not share with the rest of us how you got started teaching that group and how it's going now so others of us can get ideas of how to pursue that sort of group in our area?

The T'ai Chi Chih Community is a different sort of group. Sharing is encouraged, and even expected! And support is there from others when you need it. Why not jump in with your contribution to this focused effort? Write an article!

Noel Altman, Editor

Readers Respond

Haven't been receiving the news letter for years. I studied under Christeen McLain in Fargo, ND before I got married and moved to Chicago three years ago. I have been moving since 1989. Would like to re-subscribe...Can I send you my credit card number? Thanks so much. Blessings,

Pamela Magnuson
Des Plaines, IL

[Editor's note: I will send you out a membership form and you can send it back completed with a personal check or money order and we'll get your membership restarted. We don't have the capability to accept credit card numbers at this point. Thanks for the inquiry — look for my letter in the mail.]

Dear Ed and Noel, Greetings for this very special season of the year. . . .I hope to be able to arrange for a few more groups of adults. I must say that I have enjoyed teaching them, although I was a bit apprehensive in the beginning. I thought that my line was only with children. Thank you for this.....The [Teachers'] Directory.....It is amazing how many people have contacted me during the past year. So much so that one even lived in the same town as I did for many years and is now in California. . . . My December *Vital Force* has just arrived and now I can relax and spend many hours going through it. . . .

Sr. Marie-Ann Main
Brighton Beach Bluff
Durban, Kwa Zulu Natal
SOUTH AFRICA

Thanks for keeping the *Vital Force* moving forward in such a wonderful way!

Linda Meyer
Oakland, CA

I
tried to
write a note
to go with these
poems and
got four
more.

Please
use these
as you wish,
together or
apart. It's
up to
you.

I
cannot
seem to stop
writing this form.
Pyramids
in my
sleep.

The
Vital
Force always
manages to
inspire me
in some
way.

Eddie Roberts
Concord, CA

Dear Noel . . . I have a new website for TCC. Is it OK to have that listed instead of my e-mail address in the teacher web listings? . . . Thanks,

Sally McLaughlin
Barrington, IL

[Editor's note: No, we don't list website addresses, just e-mail addresses. We don't have any way of knowing what the content would be on other websites. This is the same reason we don't have links out to other websites, although we encourage teachers to have links from their websites into the community website, www.taichichih.org.

The point of having your e-mail address listed is so that potential students can contact you about your T'ai Chi Chih classes. Once they do, you can certainly tell them about your website, if you choose. Thanks for the inquiry.]

October 9-14 Teacher Training at Columbia, Pennsylvania was a beautiful week. Not only for the gorgeous fall weather but for the profound experience we shared together during our week of accreditation. Thank you to Ed and the many auditing teachers who took time out of their busy schedules to be there to help us. Before, I thought of T'ai Chi Chih as something I did, but now feel that it is more about WHO I AM.

Hope Spangler
York, PA

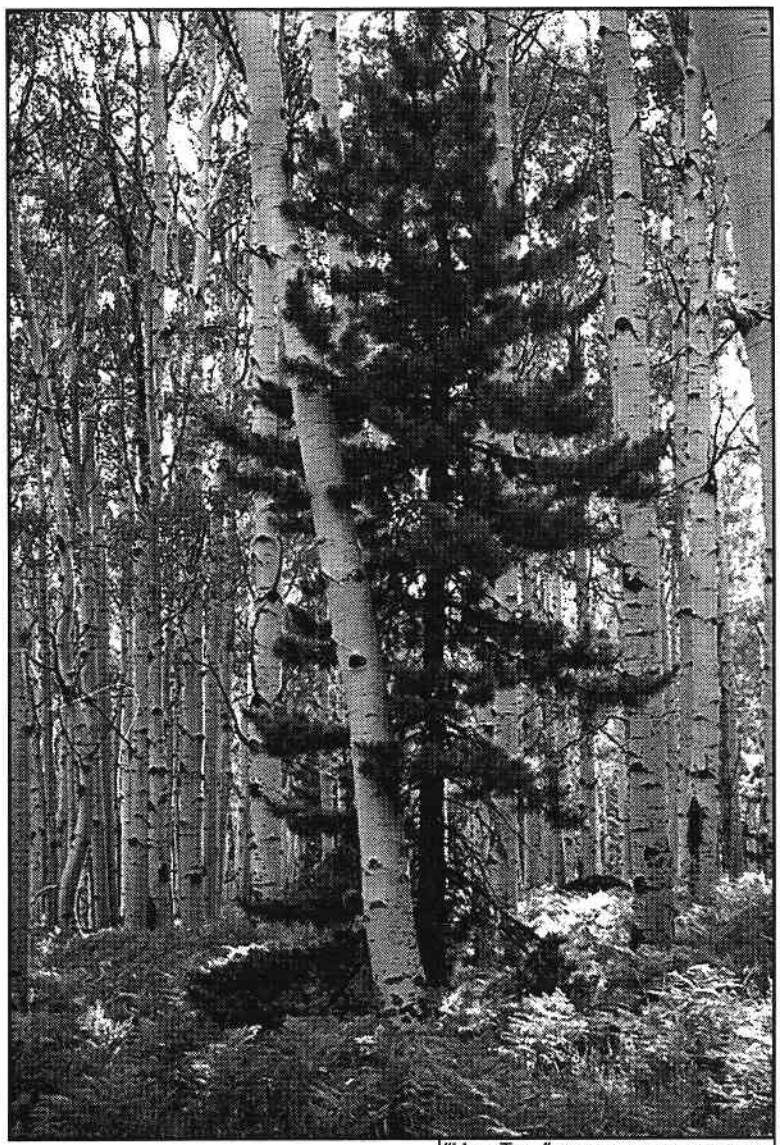
Dear Noel, Thanks for an outstanding job. Sincerely,

Denise Clark
Danville, CA

What You Read

By Justin Stone

On Saturday nights a small group of dedicated meditators gathers at my house. Afterward we go to dinner and come back to the house for philosophic discussion and reading from one of the books in my metaphysical library.



"Hug Tree", photo by Deanne Hodgson

The meditators are very interested, but I warn them not to try to apply what they hear to their own lives. The Indian work makes much mention of Vairagya (non-attachment) as a necessity for achievement of enlightenment, Moksha, salvation, etc. Can you expect a mother or father, living in this everyday world, to be non-attached to their children? If they live good, honest lives, useful to the world, that is enough, unless they are the few who want to 'know God', learn 'Truth', etc. In that case they are driven and will try to 'accord with Reality', the real purpose of Spirituality.

When we get into doctrine and dogma, this in no way leads us on the path to Truth, though it may forward the growth of the Religion we follow. There is a difference between trying to follow teachings as opposed to experiencing Truth for ourselves.

I point out that these books and teachings are for Yogis, Monks, and inherantly spiritual people. To try to work at a job, raise a family, and enjoy some entertainment (if that is necessary to you), means you have little time—or true desire—for spiritual practice, while knowing your whole future somewhat depends on it. I have known quite a few who are compassionate, ethical, and moral who are not in the least interested in future lives or salvation. They may be very helpful in this world.

One reason many people do T'ai Chi Chih is because it is not philosophical, has no hint of religion about it, and leaves one open to personal experience without any words. When a man is hungry, don't preach to him, give him something to eat.

Please remember this when you read deep, highly interesting metaphysical books. They do not, necessarily, speak to you. If you are spiritually inclined (perhaps the real purpose in life), you will know it.

The Next Step

By Ed Altman

There are few phrases as inspiring or misleading as "sudden enlightenment" and the promise of instant and effortless transformation. Unfortunately, there are no shortcuts to the hard work that precedes such a profound experience. Enlightenment cannot be bought or won like a prize, and it doesn't just fall from the sky for a chosen few. Each of us is capable of *awakening*, but this only happens when we take the necessary steps to create favorable conditions in our lives. I've heard it said that "there is nothing to be done", and I know at some level that is certainly true, but recently I laughed with a friend as we agreed that this life of "no effort" sure is a lot of work!

Each of us is capable of awakening, *but this only happens when we take the necessary steps to create favorable conditions in our lives.*

In order to create the appropriate conditions for personal growth, one must follow a spiritual practice and work diligently to employ the teaching to the best of one's understanding. Of course, with T'ai Chi Chih practice, one's understanding continuously evolves as the practitioner learns from, and eventually yields to, the intrinsic intelligence of the Chi. Each time we are mindful, make a correction during our practice, or allow T'ai Chi Chih to do T'ai Chi Chih, we find that another small step has been taken. Over time, each of these steps liberates a greater flow of Chi in our lives. Inevitably, we are struck with moments of great insight, and when this happens, we catch another glimpse of our true nature.

Recently, Noel and I took our next step together and relocated to Albuquerque, New Mexico. We both knew we were fortunate to have a very close relationship with Justin Stone, and we felt it was imperative to spend more time with him on a regular basis. We wanted to improve our personal T'ai Chi Chih practice, meditate with him, and work more closely together to help guide the future growth of the T'ai Chi Chih community. So what took so long?

For years, Justin has been encouraging me to take my next "leap of faith". Of course, he wouldn't tell me what I should do or how to act, but he kept asking me tough questions that drew my attention inward and worked ceaselessly to help me discover for myself how I really felt. Like a master chef, he knew that all the necessary ingredients were present, and he simply turned up the heat on the pot and kept the lid tight to allow the pressure to build up. He also made sure to give me many ways of backing out to save face if I felt that was needed. He was both comforting to me and my primary antagonist, and I cannot thank him enough. I know he played a similar role for Noel, and that his attention in our lives made all the difference.

Justin encouraged us to take an honest look at how we were living and to examine our innermost motivations. It was then that we decided to change some of our priorities and live more in tune with the principles we've studied through our T'ai Chi Chih practice. There is now a certainty we share because we have no doubt that we are where we need to be, and this knowledge makes it easier to endure any hardships we might encounter because we've brought them on by our own decisions and actions. Of course, this has always been true, but somehow, the move has brought that point home for me.

My reason for sharing this personal experience is to encourage each of us to examine our own priorities and be honest about the lives we are living. As in our T'ai Chi Chih practice, are our lives based on the most important principles that allow the Chi to flow, or are we just living carelessly? T'ai Chi Chih practice is an essential tool in our self-discovery process, yet how many are willing to grow outside their comfort zone? Why bother to connect with Universal Intelligence only to continue to lead mediocre lives of mindless habit and fear? We are here to discover who and what we are and to honor the insights we experience from within. When we allow those insights to lead us to grow, is this not the ultimate purpose and the most effective use of the inner strength we cultivate during our T'ai Chi Chih practice?

I See You and I Hear You, Ego

By Noel Altman

There is more than one type of big ego. The type most people probably think of is the "big-headed" person who is basically conceited. But what about the big ego that is more hidden? The one that developed as a defense a long time ago, probably as the result of abuse of some sort or another? That big ego "protects" the person from further hurt. Or so it thinks.

All ego is a strong attachment to self, whether it's offensive or defensive in its outward expression.

Practicing T'ai Chi Chih over the last 14½ years has shown me my ego. Interacting with Justin Stone over the last 12½ years has definitely shown me my ego. T'ai Chi Chih is a gentle friend, usually, and shows you yourself little by little, one small step at a time, and then helps you repair afterwards. Justin Stone is this, too, but he can also be much more blunt, which, in my experience, leads to the most profound changes. Justin also helps you repair afterwards — if you allow him to help you. Having both of them (T'ai Chi Chih and Justin Stone) in my life, I find that the two work symbiotically.

When interacting with Justin, it's better to not EXPECT any particular outcome; doing so can end in disappointment. Sometimes he alludes to something when he speaks to you, but many times he speaks as directly as possible. It's NOT always pleasant to hear what he has to say. But what does "pleasant" have to do with TRUTH? If you are lucky enough to have an interaction with him that does NOT go pleasantly, (i.e. you got your feelings hurt, or you got angry or you got sad, or irritated or anything else not "pleasant"), CONGRATULATIONS; you've been shown something about yourself (your "self") — now you just have to decide what you're going to do with the information!

To get mad and give up is the easy way out, and gains you nothing, except one more grudge to bear!

When I struggle with whatever he has said to me, I (eventually) come to my senses and say internally, "What on earth do you possibly think Justin has to gain by saying such a thing to you? Is there ANYTHING you think HE will get out of it? The man did it for YOU, to help YOU! If he spent the effort to show you whatever it is he showed you, then he thought it was WORTH his effort — in other words, he thought you had the capacity to DO something useful with it! He is a teacher looking for good students."

If [Justin] spent the effort to show you whatever it is he showed you, then he thought it was WORTH his effort — in other words, he thought you had the capacity to DO something useful with it!

What I end up doing, essentially, is telling my ego to be quiet! Yes, I see you and I hear you, Ego, and you have served a purpose in the past, but I see something else, too.

In the movie "The Hurricane" which came out last year, this scenario is portrayed very well in the scene where the actor Denzel Washington is having it out with these two sides of himself after being sent to the "hole" of the prison he is in. On the one hand, he had his Ego shouting and on the other hand, he had this quieter, sadder side of himself really LOOKING at how he'd gotten in that "hole". This side was looking clearly at his Ego and seeing that it was being fueled by HATE and would continue to land him in the "hole" (or the equivalent) as long as it had control. Finally, he told the Ego to shut up. The hurt side of himself was then allowed expression, so it could (eventually) be healed.

Living in Albuquerque now affords me the opportunity to be worked up and down, inside and out by Justin on practically a daily basis. It's not easy. ("For who?" I can hear Justin say in my mind. "For this limited Self" is my answer.) But I'm grateful to be here, finally, after soooooooo many years of considering it (and of course creating our own excuses, reasons, etc. for NOT moving sooner). I'm grateful to be here with my teacher. I chose to come. That choosing makes it all a bit easier. I

know I frustrate Justin — I'm stubborn, willful and about a hundred other things. But underneath it all, there is great respect on both sides for this deep learning that is going on, and on my end, incredible gratitude that he puts up with me!

One of the things I am most grateful for is the chance to practice alongside Justin at the Tuesday morning practices at the New Mexico T'ai Chi Chih Center (open to all accredited instructors of T'ai Chi Chih), and WATCH him, try to let go of "me" and move as he moves. T'ai Chi Chih is the mainstay in my life and I want to move well. I have a long way to go to be soft through and through, and I know that THAT fact is tied to this holding on to self.

One more thing that is helpful to remember on this topic is Justin saying to a group of us, probably at a meditation retreat, and this is a paraphrase, "What's so great about your life anyway that you can't leave it behind for a time?" Yes, it was a meditation retreat because he was talking about how "No one enters meditation; there is meditation." In other words, if you can't let go of self, there will be no meditation. Not surprisingly, I also have trouble with meditating. Sometimes I can; other times, I cannot, or I do not, even though I still sit there and attempt it. One of the meditation techniques that Justin has taught over the years, and is the one I practice, is about letting go and letting the meditation take over. Even though it doesn't happen like that very often, the times that it does I know are helpful to my T'ai Chi Chih practice. Even when it doesn't happen, I still feel better having done it. Justin quotes his Indian teacher often, who said, "There's no such thing as a bad meditation."

Why do I hold on to self? Because I am afraid to let go, to be out of control. There are many reasons which led to me being this way. But now, I would like to let go of being this way. I would like to let go.

T'ai Chi Chih, Justin Stone, meditation. These are the reasons I came. I came prepared, (and wanting) to change, to take the next step. I know from past growth that the process can be painful, and then, afterwards, looking back, it's all a bit funny, or it's peaceful, instead of being a raging storm.

Welcome to Albuquerque. Welcome to the next stop on this journey. Thanks for the ride, lady.

T'ai Chi Chih is like an army of termites

T'ai Chi Chih is like an army of termites.

First they eat out the framing in the walls of your house/Self — you know changes are happening, but it's more like getting some light and fresh air into some dark rooms.

Then whole walls get eaten up, and crash down. Then, you just can't get warm (and cozy) anymore; there's a constant draft.

Until you acclimate. "Oh, I no longer live in 70 degrees — I live in 40 degrees." The skin thickens up to survive it.

The last part left is the weight-bearing beams, both vertical and horizontal (the roof). When the T'ai Chi Chih termites attack these beams, each bite is felt — this is your core (what you cling to) and every bite hurts.

Unless you acclimate. "Oh, I am no longer THIS house, or any house. Maybe now I am the air, which is inside and outside the house. If I am the air, then I can be any temperature, dry or damp, blowing or still.

(My foundation is crumbling and my instinct is to fight it — to try to exterminate the termites.

But I DO T'ai Chi Chih. I can't NOT do T'ai Chi Chih. Therefore, I am inviting this army of termites inside every single day.)

You don't realize they're termites until the house/Self comes crumbling down.

– Noel Altman

Review

Spiritual Stories of the East audiotape showcases Justin Stone's ability to tell a story (and maybe advance the listener)

By Kathy Grassel

Every time I listen to Justin Stone's audio tapes, a two-volume set called "Spiritual Stories of the East," I'm amazed how it's as if I'm hearing them for the first time. In fact, I've conceded that I am hearing for the first time, every time. I've even accepted my amazement. The words are the same; I can almost mouth the words like lyrics to songs that I've heard so often that one day I find that I know them. And, having the privilege of knowing Justin and hanging around him, I've heard these stories dozens more times. He tells them over and over. That quality of freshness, newness, activity, and dynamism comes not from the stories changing, but from the fact that "I" am changing!

These spiritual stories come in many layers, and where you are in your spiritual practice determines your ability to assimilate yet another layer grooved into the story.

These spiritual stories come in many layers, and where you are in your spiritual practice determines your ability to assimilate yet another layer grooved into the story. Let's assume we're all doing daily meditation. The sun comes up; the sun goes down. Every day, we sit. Months pass, years pass. Unlike getting taller or getting older or stepping on the scales to monitor our weight, spiritual progress is not measurable in familiar linear ways. We're told the ultimate goal is to accord with Reality. Okay, how are we supposed to recognize this ineffable Reality? Well, perhaps one day we stub our toe and become enlightened; or, better yet, we hear one of these stories we've heard so many times, only this time it breaks us open...Or it cracks us open, or rocks us open, or seduces us open like a shaft of moonlight under the door. Or maybe the story just makes us laugh! Now that's progress!

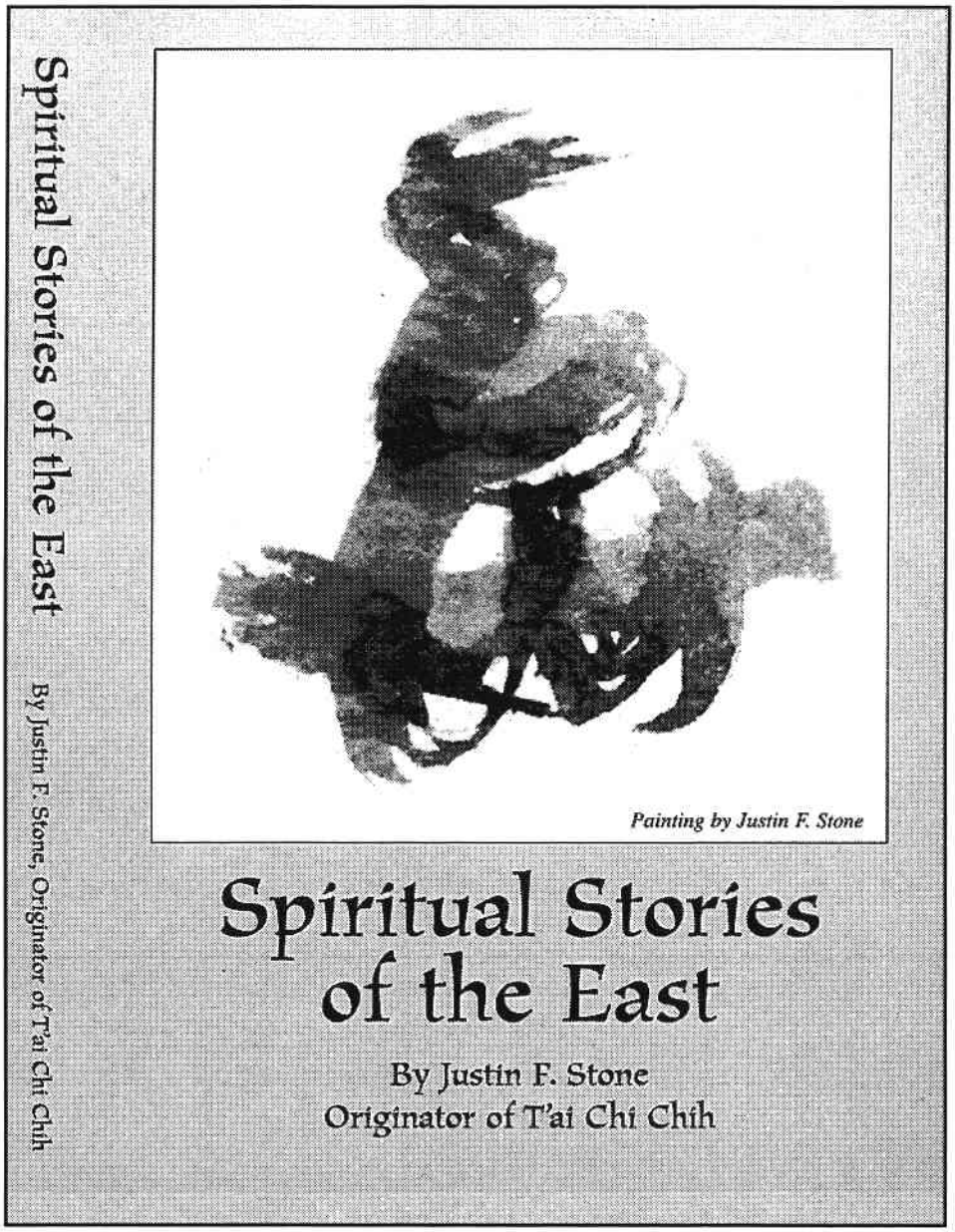
That quality of freshness newness, activity, and dynamism comes not from the stories changing, but from the fact that "I" am changing!

I encourage everyone to listen to these charming and enlightening stories again and often. Good Karma now packages them together as a two-volume set. I refrain from repeating any of the stories here; after all, they are more than just stories; they are like prasad—food that becomes divine by consecration in a temple. I also refrain from repeating them because probably you've heard them already a few times yourself. They contain the deeds and feats of Hakuin, Chao Chou, Hui-neng, Nasrudin, Tenko-san, Dogen, Toku-san, and Justin Stone—great lessons contained in stories such as

Despite the high drama of the stories one and all, they are woven through with the ordinary stuff of daily life. Justin says Zen masters use everyday incidents as opportunities to teach.

when a simple ferryman trumps the pompous university professor who can't swim, a disciple complaining of the cold gets pummeled and chased by

his teacher, a great sadhu is chastised for chanting his mantra while urinating against a wall, an impatient lady breaks a broom over the head of the great Hakuin causing his breakthrough ("no Buddhas apart from beings"), a greedy merchant in India schemes to outwit the laws of karma, a great master invites a know-it-all seeker to take off his overcoat even though the seeker is dressed in a T-shirt, a monk insists on saving an ungrateful scorpion from drowning, a struggling and screaming student is picked up by the elbows for the "kill or be killed" sanzen session with the master (only a hopeless case is treated kindly by the teacher). The second tape is Justin's own spiritual encounters and exploits during his years of traveling in the Orient and California. Some very interesting things happen to him along the way that anyone would be hard put to explain in logical terms, like how the little red book, a mathematical commentary in Chinese on the I Ching, ended up in Justin's possession to find its way to the U.S. into the waiting hands of his friend Professor Huang a year later.



Despite the high drama of the stories one and all, they are woven through with the ordinary stuff of daily life. Justin says Zen masters use everyday incidents as opportunities to teach. He relates the story of his friend Dick who he takes to meet a Zen Roshi. Roshi invites them in and for a couple hours they talk, eat cookies, sip tea. They enjoy themselves and feel at home with their enlightened host, so much so that just before leaving, Dick says to Roshi, "I want you to teach me." Roshi responds, "What do you think I've been doing for the last hour and a half?" This is how our teacher Justin teaches, too.

In reviewing the tapes, I noticed that Justin concludes each side by saying, for example, "This is the end of Side One." This time I thought to myself, "For me, this is the beginning of Side One." For the abundance of lessons contained in this veritable romp around the world and through the idiosyncratic meadows of Zen mind, for these opportunities to turn within ourselves for glimpses into our self-nature, we can be ever grateful, entertained, and, with any luck, enlightened.

Spontaneity

By Carmen Brocklehurst

When an older man arrived at a temple gate asking to gain admittance, the head monk asked, "What took you so long?" (Most monks start their training at an early age.) The older man replied, "I am an only son and had to take care of my aging parents." The head monk only said, "I'm waiting for your answer." Although the older man's first answer seemed very reasonable, in spiritual pursuits, it is not usually the reasonable, well thought out answer that is of interest. It's the spontaneous answer, that which relates to the moment.

Justin often uses Paul Reps, the famous Zen writer and his good friend, as an example of someone who was spontaneous, ready to do or go where he needed at a moment's notice. When Paul came across a book about India one day, it made such an impact on him that, by evening, he had signed on as a member of a crew sailing to India. Before the term "carry-on luggage" was coined, Paul was doing it. All he took was a change of clothes and a one pound typewriter, made specially for him by Olivetti, in Italy. They traveled with him all over the world. You might ask, "But if he needed to visit some important people what would he wear?" These kinds of issues where not high on Paul's priority list. And yet, as Justin traveled the world and met people who influenced his life in a positive, spiritual manner, whenever he mentioned Paul's name, to well known teachers, like Ruth Sasaki, Alan Watts' former mother in-law, (with a big smile and a friendly remembrance) they would say, "Oh yes, I know Paul."

The great Swami Krishnanand of India, and special friend to Justin, was led to spontaneous acts, too. When he read that thousands of people were starving to death in Africa, he took it as a command from God that he was supposed to feed them and left for Africa the next day, ready to do his part. Swamiji, the son of a Maharaja who could have had an easy and idle life, instead chose to serve, setting up eye clinics that have saved the eyesight of thousands. He accomplished all of this without touching money. (Not touching money was part of a Swami's vows.)

When Justin was living in Taos, NM, in the early 1960s, he got up one morning and told his artist friend Chuck Stewart that he was going to Albuquerque. When Chuck asked him what he was going for, Justin didn't know; he just had to go. It was during this trip that Justin stopped at a bookstore where he met two students who had overheard him say that he taught T'ai Chi (Ch'uan). By that afternoon, they had introduced him to a woman who had a Yoga academy. She set up a T'ai Chi Ch'uan class and also a chance for him to go on radio. A student, Enid Howarth, came and took the class. After the first class she insisted that her husband come also. He was a professor at the University of New Mexico and helped to set up a T'ai Chi Ch'uan class for Justin at the University's Honors Program. This later led to the creation of T'ai Chi Chih. Justin could have been unwilling or unable to answer his inner guidance. However, he did listen, luckily, and today T'ai Chi Chih is serving thousands. In the future, who knows how many millions it will touch.

These stories are not meant as idle entertainment, but rather as examples of great beings who didn't put off, or make excuses about, their inner guidance. They were mature enough to listen and take action. One of the most important things that we do on the spiritual path is to stay open. Being open, we allow ourselves to be spontaneous. This spontaneity is the next necessary step on the path to unfolding.

Each day that we take time to do our T'ai Chi Chih practice, we are acting with maturity, not only about our own lives, but about the lives of many. It takes spontaneity to break out of old patterns and choose a new one, T'ai Chi Chih. This is an important choice, as our daily practice does makes a tremendous difference in this world.

College student heals from accident

By Jessica Skolnik
Student of Sharon Sirkis

I've always had trouble relaxing. My early childhood and teenage years were spent being alert, aware, looking out for violence, being afraid. I wasn't aware of how much tension had built up in my neck, in my back, in my spine. I began taking T'ai Chi Chih because I wanted to start paying attention to my body and what it was telling me, knowing that intuition (physical and mental) would help me make better decisions in my everyday life. A week or so into it, I became very aware of how I was holding myself and how my body language must have said 'Go away,' how tense and tight my arms and neck were, how I tend to cross my arms over my chest.

I became very aware of how I was holding myself and how my body language must have said 'Go away,' how tense and tight my arms and neck were, how I tend to cross my arms over my chest.

Then, I got into a near-fatal car accident. Although I miraculously walked away with only minute muscle strain, the intense concentration I'd put into being in my body in the present (due to T'ai Chi Chih) made me aware of it at every second. I began practicing more regularly, hoping that T'ai Chi Chih would help heal those wounds. I've also always had trouble with migraines and fatigue, possibly because I've never had a disciplined plan for physical exercise. Getting up every morning and going to T'ai Chi Chih, as well as going to the classes (which provided not only new impetus to practice because we learned new moves every week but which provided an atmosphere of collective energy which I have never felt before), was something that I felt that I could do to better myself. I decided I would let go of my preconceptions as to how it could help me and just let it help, and lo and behold, it did. I haven't had a migraine since I started practicing regularly, and my car accident injuries, though only two weeks old, are a thing of the past.

I had an opportunity to practice T'ai Chi Chih outside, the other day. I went on tour with my friends' band from Florida, and we had some downtime before a show in Connecticut, so we went exploring in a park behind the rec center where the show would be taking place. I told my friends where I was going and then slipped off by myself to go practice, which I hadn't gotten to do that morning as we'd had to get up and go in a hurry from the last house we'd been staying at. It was one of the most incredible experiences I'd ever had. The sun was dripping down through the thick canopy of leaves, casting warm shadows on my back. I have always had trouble being happy, being at peace in the moment, but this was no trouble at all. I kicked off my shoes, wriggled my toes in the dirt and did all of my favorite moves (my favorites are actually the side-to-side moves like Pulling Taffy, because they remind me of when I used to dance; the balance and the fluidity used are similar).

I am not sure how long I was gone. All I know is that when I came back, my friend Mike scooped me up into a hug just because I looked so happy. When we let go of each other, he said, "You're burning up." I didn't feel feverish. I felt full of energy and ready to face the night. We left the forest hand in hand. T'ai Chi Chih has not only gotten rid of my injuries and helped me focus on everyday activities, it's also helped me connect with people, something that social anxiety has been preventing me from doing for years. I am extremely glad I made the decision to take this class. It hasn't been just a phys. ed. credit.

Nov. 20, 2000

Day of "Joy Thru Movement"

Celebrating T'ai Chi Chih

Edmonton, Alberta CANADA

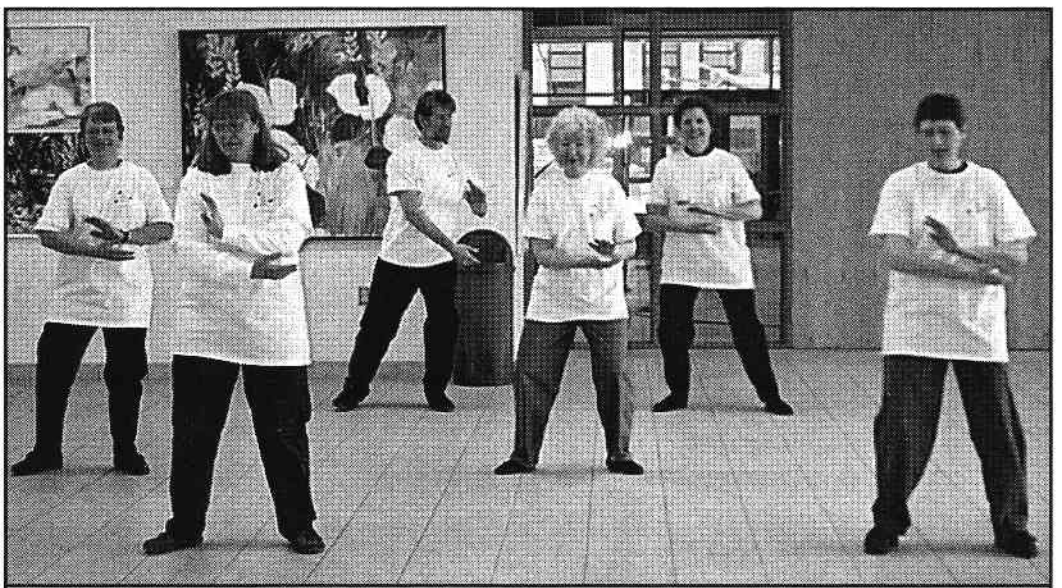
The Edmonton and area community of accredited TCC teachers marked November 20, 2000 with a lunchtime event in Edmonton, Alberta.

The Edmonton Public Library donated a space at their downtown branch — the art foyer just off of the main entrance. In preparation for the event, area TCC teachers split the costs of a banner and handbills.

Six of the accredited teachers in our area were able to participate in the event, which included demonstrations of T'ai Chi Chih, a display of literature, and an opportunity to see the latest video and to ask questions. After doing two full practices during the demonstration, I felt great! Now that we have some promotional materials and one event behind us, we will be even more ready for next year's Day of "Joy Thru Movement" Celebrating T'ai Chi Chih, or other events we participate in.

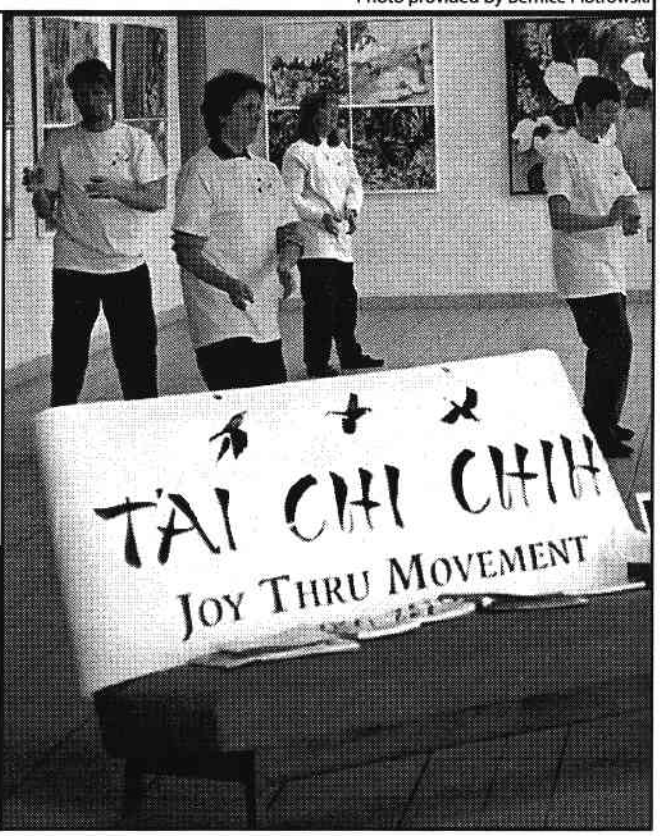
In my opinion, this International Day of "Joy Thru Movement" was an excellent time to celebrate T'ai Chi Chih, and to express our gratitude by increasing awareness of T'ai Chi Chih in our area and to remember Justin Stone on his birthday.

– Bernice Piotrowski



(L-R): Teachers Bernice Piotrowski, Tamara Zujewskyj, Garret Tayler, Louise Bureau, Chery Ann Hoffmeyer and Margo Carpenter perform *Pulling Taffy* in the art foyer of the Edmonton Public Library.

Photo provided by Bernice Piotrowski



Edmonton area teachers shared the cost of a T'ai Chi Chih banner and handbills (in foreground) to promote their demonstration and area classes on the Day of "Joy Thru Movement".

Photo provided by Bernice Piotrowski

North Plainfield, New Jersey USA

On Sunday afternoon, November 19th, about 20 NY/NJ area accredited TCC teachers gathered in North Plainfield, NJ to celebrate the first annual Day of "Joy Thru Movement." The event was hosted with love and care by Sister Antonia Cooper, OSF, at Villa Maria, her home and place of life ministry. The teachers were enthusiastic about the day and enjoyed being with one another greatly — particularly sharing the chi in a group practice that felt especially powerful for all — and agreed to gather again in November 2001, perhaps opening up the event to their students as well.

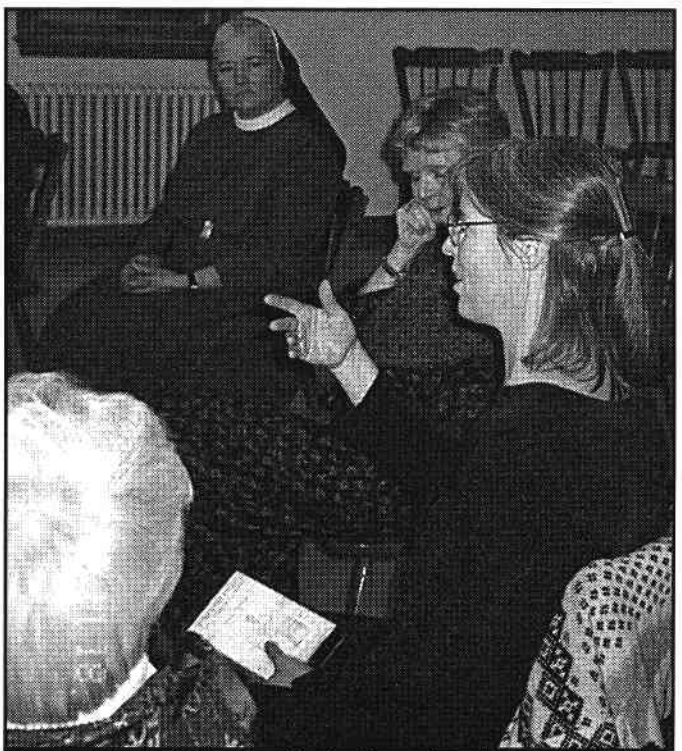
Discussions preceded group T'ai Chi Chih practice by approximately 20 NJ/NY teachers on the day before the Day of "Joy Thru Movement" at a gathering hosted by NJ teacher Sr. Antonia Cooper. Photo: Grady Anderson

Janet Oussaty led a lively discussion on marketing and promoting classes. Personal experiences through T'ai Chi Chih practice and teaching were thoughtfully shared with the help of Carolyn Allenby. Dan Pienciak undertook an informative talk on the preparation of students for teacher training in which he addressed the inquiries of many of the teachers there about Seijaku, and left with a list of names (not yet long enough) of those who would like to take a Seijaku accreditation course in NJ in the future.

After a deep and *moving* TCC practice, the group reluctantly dispersed with a lot of joy and energy, and good ideas for the future. All were very grateful to Sr. Antonia for hosting this event, and to Bobbie Ruocco for attending to many helpful details of the day.

– Dan Pienciak

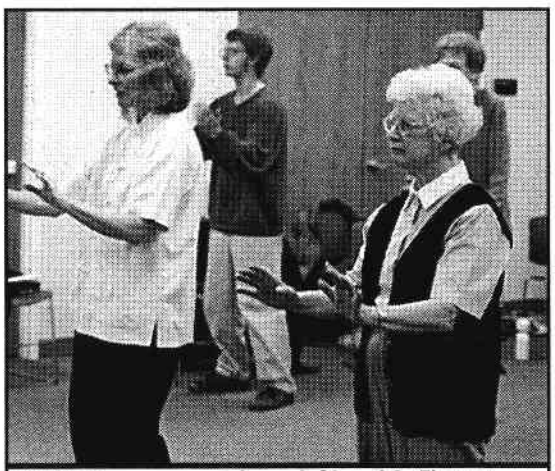
The teachers had a chance to chat and network at the event. Photo: Grady Anderson

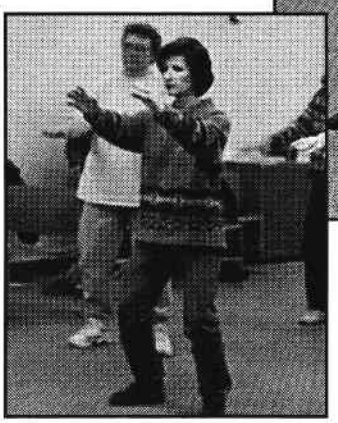


Carolyn Allenby (right, front) led a discussion of personal experiences with TCC practice and teaching. Photo: Grady Anderson

More Day of "Joy Thru Movement" Activities...

Bismarck, North Dakota USA





Teachers Jean Katus (above, left) and Sr. Eleanor Stockert (above, right front) lead students (in photos at right) through *Rocking Motion* during a gathering held on Day of "Joy Thru Movememt," Celebrating T'ai Chi Chih, November 20, 2000.

Photos provided by Jean Katus

Columbia, Maryland USA

(L - R): Students Florence Bradley and Dell Roethlisberger practice T'ai Chi Chih while seated. They participated in an event held at the Aspenwood Senior Living Community in Silver Spring, MD. Their teacher, Sharon Sirkis, led the group in practice on the Day of "Joy Thru Movement". Sharon notes that Dell is 96!

Photo provided by Sharon Sirkis

Vital Force on the Move

By Linda Braga

As the new millenium gets underway, we have witnessed many changes, both worldwide and local. Weather, fashion, technology, political fortunes .... nothing stays the same. We all know change is inevitable.

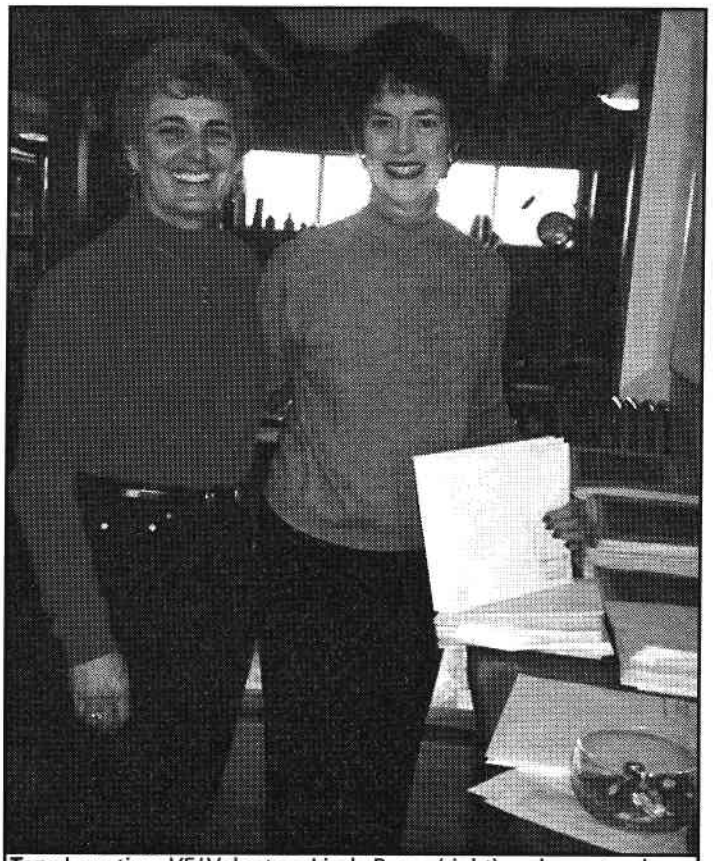
And so it is for the *Vital Force* — our own T'ai Chi Chih Journal. It was created and nurtured right here in the Bay Area. Many T'ai Chi Chih teachers took on the task of editing and publishing it over the years. Corinn Codye, Liz Salada, Lois Mahaney, Roberta Taggert, Carrie Kinsey with Barbara Riley and Linda Meyer, and then Noel Altman took on the huge responsibility to get it on paper, in print. Many others, too numerous to name, also gave countless hours for years to help mail out the *VFJ* four times a year. Lois, of course, created and maintained the database, updated subscriptions, directed referrals and published the directory for 15 years. Doug Harned has taken on this growing responsibility as our TCC Community expands. It has been a labor of love and hard work.

Last Sunday, Dec. 3, we met for the last time at David Schulberg's home to do what we do best .... stamp, stuff, stack, collate, affix labels, sort and carefully prepare the *Journal* for First Class and bulk mailing.

We each have our own special talent (and we know, we are the best!). We have fine-tuned the work so that no gesture, no movement is wasted effort. Like Santa's workshop, we are buzzing with activity — all to complete the mailing. Then we quiet down to do our group TCC practice outside, and then sit together to share snacks and tell what's happening in our classes and in our lives.

The feelings we all have shared over the years have grown stronger and deeper — commitment to T'ai Chi Chih and to each other. We are a close group that gave up personal time for a greater purpose, to promote T'ai Chi Chih worldwide. It was bittersweet to realize that we will not have Ed and Noel here with us and to know that the *Vital Force* will no longer be published in the Bay Area.

We all hold great hope that the Albuquerque TCC Community of teachers will give their full and unselfish support to keeping the *VFJ* alive and well. Best wishes to Noel, Ed, and the continuity of the *Vital Force Journal*.



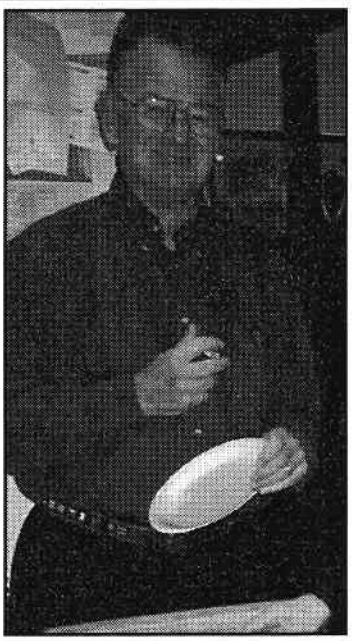
Top: Longtime *VFJ* Volunteer Linda Braga (right) and new teacher Athene Mantle prepare mailing envelopes for stuffing. ***Bottom:*** *VFJ* Mailing Host David Schulberg helps Veteran *VFJ* Staff Member Lois Mahaney affix the First Class postage. Photos: Pat Huseby

Dec. 3, 2000

Vital Force Mailing...

Photos, clockwise, beginning top left: **1)** ***(L-R)***: VFJ Staff Member Ed Altman, former *VFJ* Staff Member Linda Meyer, John Steinmetz, Eddie Roberts, Athene Mantle, Fifteen-Year *VFJ* Veteran Lois Mahaney, Joanna Woodrow practice TCC outside. **2)** Yuko Borland prepares her snack for the feast. **3)** John Steinmetz grabs a plate in the snack line. **4)** ***(L-R):*** Wendy Helms, Lois Mahaney and current *VFJ* Staff Member Doug Harned stamp envelopes. **5)** ***(L-R):*** Former *VFJ* Staff Member Barbara Riley, Pat Bourne and Pat Huseby share a hug and a snack. *Not pictured but attending: Student Al Borland.*

Photos: Pat Huseby, and one provided



The "Shocking (see Pat Bourne, at left) and Uplifting (see Eddie Roberts, right) Truth"?

Naaaaah — we don't even want to know, guys!

Photo: Pat Huseby
Caption: Ed Altman

Joanna Woodrow stamps envelopes in preparation for stuffing. Photo: Pat Huseby

2001 Teachers' Conference Coordinator Sandy McAlister (left) looks on as *VFJ* Editor Noel Altman and *VFJ* Staff Member Ed Altman read a going-away card from Bay Area teachers. Photo: Pat Huseby

A grateful thank-you to Bay Area Teachers

Were it not for the uninterrupted service of Bay Area teachers in leadership and support roles over the last 17 years, *The Vital Force*, Journal of T'ai Chi Chih (and connecting link for all TCC practitioners) may not have been published continuously or even survived. Our debt to them, as fellow members of the greater T'ai Chi Chih Community, is immense.

Their efforts, as Linda Braga said (pg. 15), toward "a greater purpose, to promote T'ai Chi Chih worldwide" have resulted in a cohesive local community, particularly in the East Bay, where *The Vital Force* was edited, published and/or assembled for mailing for the majority of the last 17 years.

Thank you to each of you who gave of your time and energy, particularly editors and staff members, and the *VFJ* volunteers who came to every mailing (or nearly so). May the cohesive community you have formed continue to strengthen!

– **Noel Altman,** Editor

News Shorts

Why T'ai Chi Chih Teachers Attend the Annual Teachers' Conference

"The teaching tips I learn make my classes more fun for the students and easier for me." "It's a chance to talk to Justin and learn from him." "There are many wonderful people in the T'ai Chi Chih community that I have met, and this is my chance to reconnect with them." "I know at the conference I'll have lots of opportunities to work on and improve my T'ai Chi Chih form." "I love hearing the way Ed talks about the movements. It has increased my understanding tremendously." There are so many reasons to attend the conference, and no reason not to.

The theme for this conference is **"Balance the Chi"** through T'ai Chi Chih, with the focus on the health and healing aspects derived therein. As teachers in the T'ai Chi Chih community we are the gatherers and keepers of the stories of what T'ai Chi Chih has done for those who practice it. This conference will give us a chance to share these stories through roundtable discussions, group forums, and informally as we mingle.

The conference will take place on the lovely and serene grounds of St. Mary's College. Nestled in the hills, you'll find lots of open space to go for walks or enjoy nature right from your doorstep. It's just perfect.

Please refer to the enclosed flyer for the particulars regarding registration. TO OUR CANADIAN AND OVERSEAS TEACHERS: We realize for you there is an extra burden of cost involved in coming to the conference, especially considering the exchange rate. So we would like to extend to you the offer that you disregard the deadline and rate increases and pay the original amount of $260 no matter the date of your registration. We hope this will enable more participation from those so far away who have not registered yet.

A reminder that a scholarship fund has been started through the generous donations of the teachers. If you would like to attend but are not quite able to come up with the full amount, the application is on the registration form. A big THANK YOU to all who have given, whatever the amount.

We, the Bay Area Teachers, are planning on this being the biggest conference yet, and we are having fun getting ready for y'all. Don't miss this opportunity to learn, share, and have fun with your fellow T'ai Chi Chih teachers and friends.

– Sandy McAlister

A Challenge: Just One

It's time to recall a challenge issued at the 2000 Teachers' Conference. Everyone who attended last year's conference has a simply defined task: Get one fellow teacher who didn't attend last year to attend this year. Just one. Call one person from your teacher training class. Or call one of your students who recently became accredited. Just one. Over 150 teachers attended the conference in 2000, so there is absolutely no reason to think that we can't expect over 300 teachers at the 2001 Conference. It is right to "expect" this growth. But it is not right to expect it without some active work on each of our parts. With a pool of over 1900 teachers worldwide, and with over 80 new teachers accredited last year, this goal of having over 300 teachers in attendance is quite realistic. Those who regularly attend conferences realize the benefits of renewed commitment to the discipline and the community. It is simple to communicate this enthusiasm; it comes as second nature. Give teh, the power of inner sincerity, the opportunity to spring forth in this manner. I doubt we'll be surprised by the extraordinary results.

– Kim Grant

"Presentations" Workshop Offered

Teachers: are you comfortable giving T'ai Chi Chih presentations to new audiences? If not, this workshop (see opposite page) will help you improve your skills and gain the confidence to give more effective presentations. Justin Stone, Ed Altman and other experienced teachers will share their advice and techniques, and attendees will be able to explore these ideas in a supportive, small group environment. All proceeds will be donated to the New Mexico T'ai Chi Chih Center, the only non-profit T'ai Chi Chih center in the world, run solely by the volunteer efforts of local teachers and students.

– Ed and Noel Altman

Calendar of Events

March 30 thru April 1, 2001

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

Attendance Fee: $195 - 255

April 22, 2001

"GIVING EFFECTIVE PRESENTATIONS" (10am-4pm)
Workshop w/ Ed Altman & Justin Stone
Location: **Albuquerque, NM**
Contact: For the NM TCC Center:
Ann Rutherford
1534 Wagon Train SE
Albuquerque, NM 87123
Ann's Phone: (505) 292-5114
e-mail: ruthergary@aol.com

Teacher Fee: Donation

April 27 April 27 thru 29, 2001

HALF DAY TCC TEACHER RENEWAL (8:30am-noon)
SEIJAKU TEACHER TRAINING (Begins 4:00pm)
Location: **Edmonton, AB CANADA**
Contact: Chery Ann Hoffmeyer
PO Box 57032
2020 Sherwood Drive
Sherwood Park, AB
CANADA, T8A 5L7
Phone: (780) 467-8701
e-mail: cheryann.hoffmeyer@home.com

TCC Teacher Renewal Fee: $20 CAD
Seijaku Teacher Training Fee: $300 U.S.
Auditing Seijaku Teachers: $20 U.S.

May 7 thru 12, 2001

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

TCC Teacher Training Fee: $450

June 18 thru 23, 2001

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

TCC Teacher Training Fee: $450

August 2-5, 2001

16TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL T'AI CHI CHIH TEACHERS' CONFERENCE
Location: San Francisco Bay Area, CA

(See insert flyer)

August 27 thru September 1, 2001

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

TCC Teacher Training Fee: $450

Sept. 20 thru 23, 2001

MEDITATION RETREAT W/ JUSTIN STONE
Location: **Albuquerque, NM**
Contact: For the NM TCC Center:
Marjie Bassler
P.O. Box 53034
Albuquerque, NM 87153
Marjie's Phone: (505) 823-1817

Commuter Fee: $145
Resident Fee: $202.50

(This event was first publicized in the January, 2000 issue of the NM TCC Center's newsletter, The T'ai Chi Chih News, *with registration noted to be on a first come, first serve basis. As of* VFJ *press time, it is full with a waiting list only.)*

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.

Teaching TCC on location...

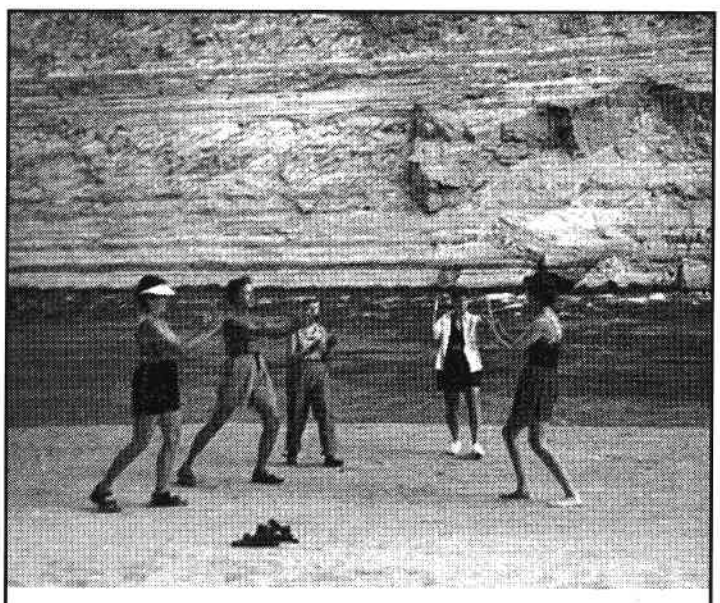
T'ai Chi Chih along the Colorado River

Jeanne Marlowe, (right, facing group) teaches a group *Carry the Ball to the Side* along the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon area. Photo provided by Jeanne Marlowe

Dear Friends,

Another busy year has passed and opportunities to teach continue to present themselves to me. I enjoy the teaching more and more, and with each class I improve my skills as a teacher.

I remember Justin telling us to make every movement count, keep the focus, and never do the movements halfheartedly or in a sloppy manner. Since my students are counting on me to show them everything and explain what the chi is doing, as well as motivate them to practice, I in turn, am motivated to keep a sharp eye on my own form and focus. That's great! I also continue to read the *Vital Force* and other books on chi, and that knowledge has proven to be a good resource when I'm asked questions, or when I take a few minutes at the end of each class to talk about what the practice is doing for us.



A group of students, led by Jeanne Marlowe, learn and practice *Daughter on the Mountaintop* along the Colorado River. Photo provided by Jeanne Marolowe

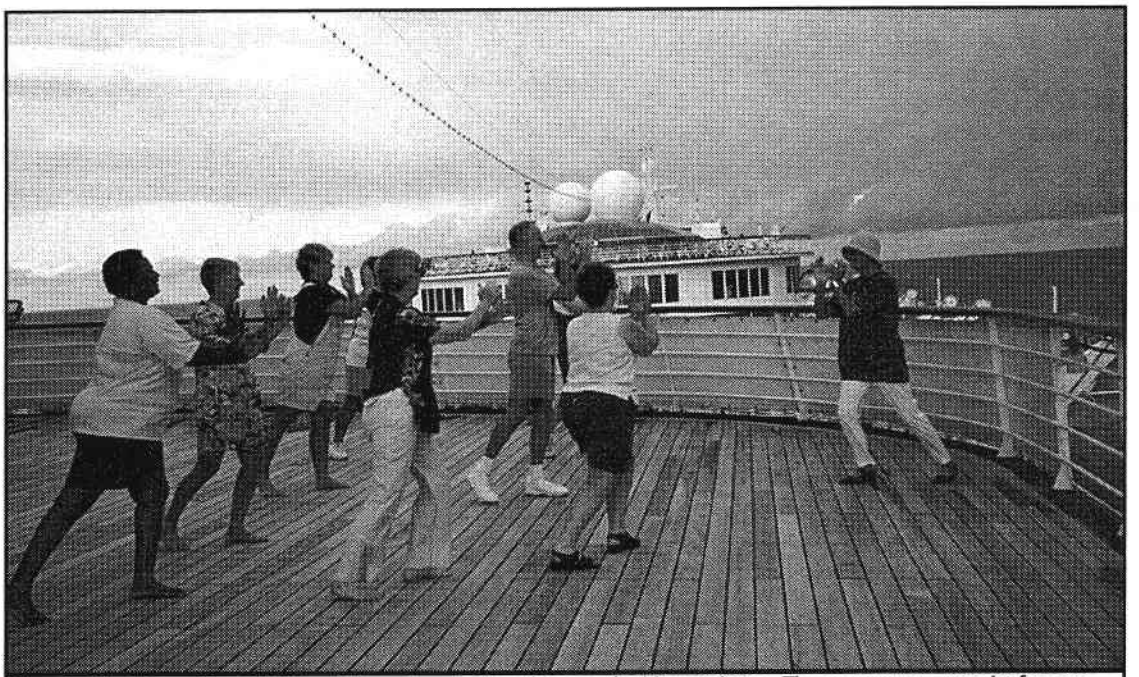
I've taken my T'ai Chi Chih practice to exciting locations this year. I travelled to the Greek Isles and Turkey with a group of friends, and I enjoyed doing T'ai Chi Chih on top of a beautiful mountain overlooking the Agean Sea. And this summer, in June, a group of friends took a six-day raft trip down the Colorado River at the Grand Canyon. What a thrilling experience! And I was asked to lead a group along the rushing river! A teacher can never guess when she or he will be called upon to explain the T'ai Chi Chih or to lead a practice! And I always welcome the opportunity!

Enclosed are some pictures of us practicing T'ai Chi Chih — and I will continue to update you on my travels and teaching.

My wishes for peace and blessings for you all,

Jeanne Marlowe

T'ai Chi Chih in the Caribbean



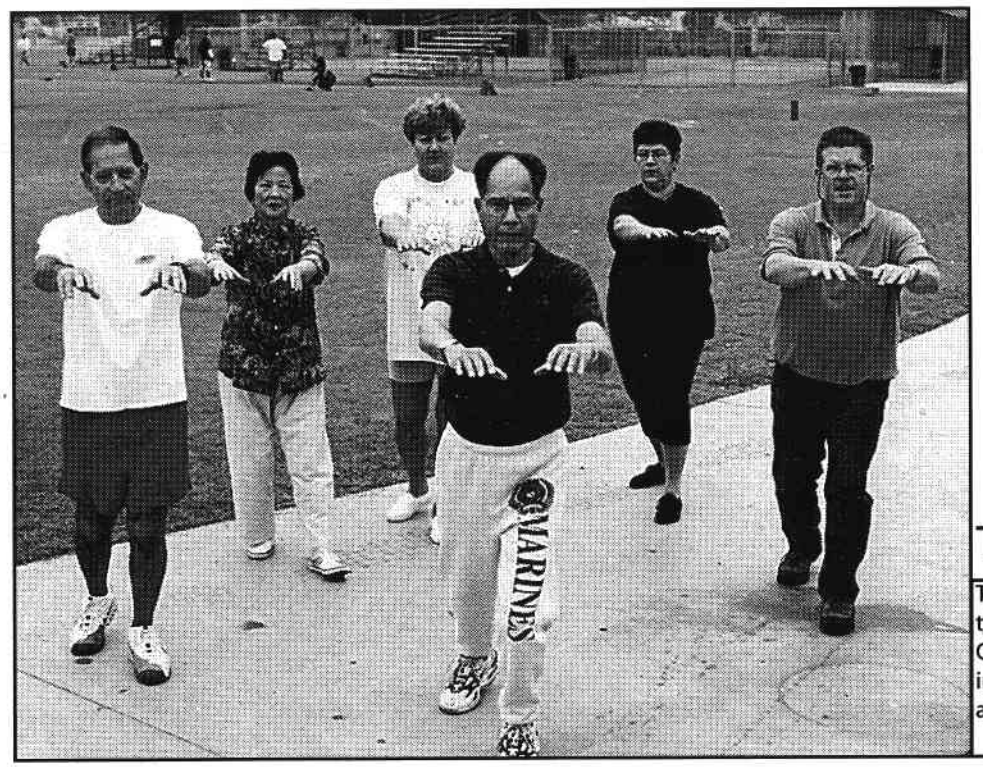
Glenda Blackburn (far right) leads her class in *Daughter on the Mountaintop*. The course was taught for continuing education units aboard a Carnival cruise ship in the Eastern Caribbean. Photo provided by Glenda Blackburn

Last November I had an opportunity to teach T'ai Chi Chih to a group of 20 nurses for continuing education units during a seven day cruise in the Eastern Caribbean. The cruise was arranged by Journeys of Wisdom, a holistic coaching institute in Columbus, OH that focuses on self-empowerment programs.

The ship, Carnival's "Paradise", was at sea four days and in port three days. T'ai Chi Chih was taught each morning during the days at sea, with an hour presentation during the first day of the seminars. The seminars, based on the concepts of intrinsic body energy and the power of the mind to affect the body, provided powerful personal and professional growth opportunities. T'ai Chi Chih was the perfect discipline to be experienced in combination with Journeys of Wisdom's "Inner Achievement Methods."

Each participant was given material that included TCC's web site for referral to accredited teachers. . . .

Glenda Blackburn



T'ai Chi Chih in the Park

Tom Tolentino (front, center) and his class practice *Around the Platter* in a park in Southern California. The class, held on Saturday mornings, is structured as a "walk-in / join-in" format, according to Tom.

Photo provided by Tom Tolentino

T'ai Chi Chih Practice with Adolescents

By Jean Katus

Why would anyone who's generally so intimidated by teenagers that she wants to flee the area if more than two of them are present choose to teach T'ai Chi Chih movements to a troubled population of that group? A former student in one of my adult classes is a counselor at a drug/alcohol residential treatment center for Native American adolescents. Having experienced the many benefits of the practice for herself, she asked if I'd be interested in teaching the residents at the center. I agreed but with a certain amount of trepidation about the decision. After a time, the clinical psychologist there invited me to begin teaching once a week, with the understanding that the students would use Justin's video several other times between my sessions in order to continue the practice. (Unfortunately, that never really happened in any consistent way.)

For some, it was the last chance before jail or prison. Besides having drug and alcohol problems, many had been in trouble with the law and came from very challenging home . . . circumstances.

Some of the residents were court-ordered to the center; some came at the request of their families or for their own needs; others were sent by social service agencies. For some, it was the last chance before jail or prison. Besides having drug and alcohol problems, many had been in trouble with the law and came from very challenging home community circumstances. As a result, they brought with them any number of difficult-to-deal-with life issues.

Because I've had little experience teaching anything to teenagers and because I have no background in the addiction field, I was more than a little nervous the first few times I went to the class. However, I felt confident about my teaching ability in general and knew I related well to Native people, having lived and worked on a reservation for close to 30 years.

Because my perception of people at this age and in these circumstances is that they seem to have a fairly short attention span, I found I needed to be creative in the ways I structured the classes.

The T'ai Chi Chih class was required of all residents, and a counselor almost always participated, a big help to me, though it seemed a bit strained in that the residents were not really able to "be themselves" because the counselor had the power to give points (something of a demerit system where points add up to incur privileges being withheld) to those who didn't participate, made negative comments, or engaged in other acting-out behavior. In general, though, even those who were obviously very uncomfortable, shy, and skeptical when beginning the class, were quite cooperative and at least tried to do the movements. Those who became sincerely interested (possibly as little as 15%) tended to keep their peers in line so the counselor hardly ever said or did anything overtly to control behavior.

Rarely did the same overall group attend the classes. Residents graduated from the program; new residents entered; sometimes participants were called out part-way through a session for counseling or a medical appointment. I soon realized I needed to accommodate students who had been taught perhaps half the movements alongside those who were there for the first time. I started going to the center early so I could work

with new students for about 15 minutes before the others arrived in order to at least introduce them to the basic principles, demonstrate movements, and have them briefly try some of them. I came to appreciate Justin's comment about the value of repetition being a mark of good teaching.

. . . When questions did come up, the one most often asked was how this silly set of movements had anything to do with treatment. The handout from Justin's tape gave real substance to T'ai Chi Chih being very directly related to the recovery process.

Because my perception of people at this age and in these circumstances is that they seem to have a fairly short attention span, I found I needed to be creative in the ways I structured the classes. The basic format I adopted during the hour-long sessions was, during the first part, to introduce and practice new movements or review movements previously introduced, sometimes focusing on significant points about the individual patterns; during the second part, participants sat while doing some activity related to T'ai Chi Chih practice; the third part was devoted to practicing, with music, some or all of the movements students knew. Activities during the middle part of the sessions included:

1) discussions based on questions that came up (most often not successful at all because the residents, in large part, did not care to discuss anything, partly, I feel, because the cultures they represent are quiet and possibly because of the presence of the counselor);

2) readings from the photo-textbook where I would explain, if necessary, some of what was presented;

3) hearing parts of "Justin Stone Speaks on T'ai Chi Chih," including going over a written handout I gave to every new student which was a transcription from the tape where Justin discusses how alcohol addictions can be overcome with T'ai Chi Chih practice; (A sidelight: when questions did come up, the one most often asked was how this silly set of movements had anything to do with treatment. The handout from Justin's tape gave real substance to T'ai Chi Chih being very directly related to the recovery process. Additionally, the psychologist who asked me to teach at the center is to be commended for his forward-seeing understanding and commitment about the place of these gentle movements in a treatment facility, the only Indian Health Service funded program, incidentally, that had ever used T'ai Chi Chih or any form of T'ai Chi or meditation as part of the program.)

4) watching sections of the PBS series video interviews between Justin and Carmen Brocklehurst where Justin discusses important principles about the T'ai Chi Chih form, again with my explanations if I felt they were needed;

5) learning the Great Circle Meditation, which most students seemed to enjoy;

6) drawing or writing responses to a question I posed, among the most successful activities I used.

To elaborate on activity #6, on one occasion I asked for ordinary questions, comments, or drawings about T'ai Chi Chih; another time, I asked what the residents experienced when they did the practice. The most fruitful device, though, became a kind of template for several activities. I used the instructions: "Choose one word or phrase. Draw or write what it means to you when you practice the T'ai Chi Chih movements." No one was to put his/her name on the paper. I gave two or three choice selections; for example, softness, balance, circularity, connectedness, attention in soles of feet, etc. In the succeeding class, I read and described the drawings of what everyone had done, whether positive or negative. The honesty and sometimes deep reflection that came forth from these little papers was very gratifying to me and nearly the only feedback I received from participants. It appears there was a kind of safety in expression by anonymously writing or drawing instead of being required to verbally articulate what came up. Following is a sampling of responses:

* Drawing of figure with arms outstretched and arrows showing that arms are moving in a circle; second

continued on page 32

T'ai Chi Chih offered at Canadian prison

By Guadalupe Buchwald

Lynn Shaw-Ringham and Guadalupe Buchwald from Victoria are currently involved in the second year of T'ai Chi Chih at William Head Medium Security Prison for Men [WHI] in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.

There are approximately 250 inmates in this very modern and progressive facility. The residents' ages range from the mid-20's to mid-60's and they come from across Canada. They live in homes with up to six people per house and have different programs as part of their activities. Sister Judy Morin, a Sister of Saint Ann, was the contact that finally opened the doors for us to teach T'ai Chi Chih, in WHI, under the Chaplain Services umbrella.

We initially felt we were giving a service to the William Head Community, but . . . we have learned a great deal. In TCC we see the transformation of the participants into gentle, fluid and harmonious beings when the Chi flows.

In 2000, from January to July, we held our first program. We had about 20 men participating in this course. William Head has a constantly changing population, so it was necessary to adapt our course to this reality. After the first nine-week beginners class we ran an ongoing program until the Summer. This allowed continuous intake of new students at all times, while keeping some of the advanced ones.

Currently we have 11 inmates and three staff members attending our program. We plan to run another nine-week beginners course, and perhaps continue on an ongoing basis until late Spring.

When we asked the participants what were their thoughts about the T'ai Chi Chih course, these were some of their responses:

"I am a big man and I want to learn how to be a gentle giant."

"I feel clean after the practice, and I particularly like to clean my liver."

"I am curious about a gentle approach."

"I feel relaxed and enlightened."

"I like something that promises both physical and spiritual dimensions."

Most of our students come from a course in Non-Violent Communication [NVC] that we also participate in as volunteers — as a spinoff from our first TCC class. We initially felt we were giving a service to the William Head Community, but through TCC and NVC, we have learned a great deal. In TCC we see the transformation of the participants into gentle, fluid and harmonious beings when the Chi flows. Through NVC we have reaped benefits, as well as learning new dimensions, firsthand, about parts of our society.

In conclusion, we are very grateful to Justin, to T'ai Chi Chih, and Sister Judy Morin on guiding our path to William Head Institution, having the advantage over our participants in the knowledge, that at the end of the day, we can leave and go home.

Happy Chi from the William Head participants, Lynn and Guadalupe. . . .

[Editor's Note: Guadalupe notes that an article on these T'ai Chi Chih classes was published in the Winter/December 2000 issue of *Out of Bonds* Prison Magazine under a feature titled "Around the PENinsula / William Head."]

Lone teacher in state of Idaho reports

Dear Friends at *The Vital Force* . . . Here's my local T'ai Chi Chih news:

Our real estate lady's husband is an Engineering Professor at Idaho State University here in Pocatello, ID and he also teaches T'ai Chi Ch'uan! They took us out to dinner in celebration of our return to Idaho and he asked me if I would like to give a T'ai Chi Chih presentation to his Intermediate class in January.

Next Saturday AM will be my fourth TCC class with a group of old and dear friends in Blackfoot, ID. We lived in Blackfoot for about 22 years before moving to Israel/Florida/Texas about 13 years ago. Their enthusiasm and feedback is very encouraging and inspiring to this novice instructor.

I have also been invited to give a TCC presentation on January 22 to a continuing education class at Idaho State University that invites people to speak on topics of group interest. This came about after my husband and I (as newcomers to the community) were invited to attend the class by a very nice lady waiting on us in a local furniture store — when my dear husband suggested that I be asked to speak — "Ann is an accredited T'ai Chi Chih teacher"!

In closing, I must express my deepest gratitude for your extraordinary work on the business end of T'ai Chi Chih. As the only TCC teacher in the State of Idaho, I feel the entire TCC community's support behind me when I'm telling someone about TCC and suggest that they visit www.taichichih.org and investigate TCC for themselves. . . .

Ann Sollars

News from Brighton Beach Bluff, Durban, South Africa...

. . . Here are a few comments from the women's group that I teach on a Wednesday evening:

T'ai Chi Chih has brought me to a sense of being centered and balanced. Going through the exercises makes me aware of reaching out beyond myself, touching into friends far away, the universe and deep within myself. Through all of these I feel more in touch with God, creator and centre of all.

– Sr. Annette St. Amour I.H.M.

I first experienced T.C.C. at a Healing Prayer Workshop given by Sr. Marie-Ann. I liked it straight away. I then helped to form a group and asked if Sister would teach us the whole thing as she only gave us a taste of what it was about. We started on coming together once a week and then after four months came and are still coming together every fortnight [every two weeks] due to other commitments. I found the exercises healing, renewing and calming. I am, I feel, energized after doing the movements after a draining day. Sometimes, as a workaholic, I waste a lot of energy and feel quite dead. T.C.C. revives my burnout state and heals me from deep within. I feel refreshed, peaceful and relaxed. T.C.C. gives me the balance and wholeness which I have been seeking in a prayerful physical moving form. I find it very powerful doing it in the group. It is so wonderful to have a T.C.C. teacher in our midst.

– Rosemary Sutton

We enjoy doing T.C.C. in places of Atmosphere — serene, quiet and relaxing. My life has become changed ever since I have been doing it. I am extremely grateful to the times that we can spend together.

– Maggie Nel

I have now come into contact with a Sr. Theresita Kriener O.P. who did a Sabbatical in St. Paul [MN] and did T.C.C. She was on a retreat here at the Bluff. We did T.C.C. together and it was great. . . . She said that she met [Ed] at the [Teachers'] Conference in St. Paul [1999]. So it just shows how small the world really is.

Sr. Marie-Ann Main

Training revealed struggle, feeling

By Sr. Margaret M. Costello

"Struggle" and "feeling" are two major words in my practice of T'ai Chi Chih. Being physically challenged since my fourteenth birthday with a stiff leg, I became a compulsive perfectionist hiding my disability. Feeling became frozen like cement from my waist to my toes. My head was the think tank. All my actions became think actions. The struggle to prevent anyone from seeing a weakness in my physical manner soon became an outer coat of strength from the waist up. Learning how to walk straight without shifting or swiveling the waist was the goal of my early years as a professional teacher.

Forty-some years later, T'ai Chi Chih enters my wholistic mind set for my senior years of life. This gentle practice opened me to new insights into the deep dark unknown within my own being. It was an invitation to discover my center from a different perspective. A perspective of FEELING. Again struggle returned with a vengeance in my body. Modern surgery and physical therapy enabled me to walk without dragging my leg. Feeling is not in my legs but I am able to move about more freely without dancing, jumping or skipping. T'ai Chi Chih gave me a graced movement that opened me to an energy that sought the deeper well that was clogged. T'ai Chi Chih became like tear drops upon a cement wall. After four years of this gentle movement the cement wall is becoming soft mush, not there yet!

Attending the Teacher Training Course in October of 2000 [in PA] put my struggle into the open arena of FEELING. If I heard once "Soft Knees," "let go of tension," "in your feet", I heard these and more even in my sleepless nights. The week was a moving meditation of stone being chiseled away softly from my center. It was a difficult time for me, a professional perfectionist learning to bend softly, swivel from the waist and feeling the chi move freely within my interior. The emotional breakdown from the deep core of my person was imperative for me to truly allow T'ai Chi Chih [to] do T'ai Chi Chih. This beautiful movement has opened a new vision for me. Dawn has always been a special time for me. With the spiritual practice of T'ai Chi Chih, I greet the "Kiss of Dawn" everyday moving with more feeling each day. I am grateful that Ed Altman saw my "struggle" and recognized my "feeling" even in the cement.

New teacher shares insights gained on TCC

By April Leffler

I have just completed a very powerful Teacher's Accreditation week and would like to share some of the insights that came to me during the process. . . .

* TCC, 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.

* Bubbles of responsibility rising to the surface of my shoulders...telling me, "April, we are not yours. Let us go back to the Light. You are not responsible for the world, but for the worlds within you. Dive deeply inside with divine light as your guide and the darkness fades away."

* Allow yourself to be comforted by the sun's warmth despite the winter chill. The sun shines everlasting while the winter comes and goes.

* The key to staying focused remains in staying present, period. A laser is direct, singly focused and in alignment. It burns through whatever is not needed—without judgement and without victory. It simply does what it does. As the laser of your attention refines, you will do just that—burn away what is not needed and move on. You are not your mistakes—therefore it becomes easy to let them go. It is only when you attach them to you as a part of yourself that you begin to hold on. When you realize that YOU LOSE NOTHING by letting mistakes go, you GAIN the universe! Enjoy that, it is your unequivocal, Divine right.

Grateful new teacher gives thanks

By Rita Jacobsen

I would like to acknowledge my teacher in Seattle, Linda Robinson, for holding fast to working with a diamond in the rough (big smiles and hugs to you Linda) and Patricia Strand [for] coming back in July fresh and invigorated from her accreditation week and passing on to me valuable tips. I wish to thank Carmen for recognizing my mystical larger self and helping me to ground and be more fully present. I wish to thank Robert for sharing his poetry (I have had some of my poetry published here and there and am so happy to find Justin and others with such strong interest and talent in the poetic form—this was one of many many wonderful surprises). I wish to thank Justin for teaching simply by "being." Two very valuable lessons come to mind that I learned from Justin. One was when he was talking in front of the class and I knew I had already experienced that moment (so I was being in the past and future simultaneously) and then later upon reading from the lil booklets we were all given as a much treasured gift, I read where these type of occurances will be normal as the evolved beings we are. I have had many many experiences of moving in and out of space and time and am happy to be with such a knowing and loving extended family. I have felt very lonely and alone with these things and am so grateful to have so much wisdom and experience from so many of you to assist in my journey. The other personal and poignant lesson from Justin was when I was acknowledging him as he was signing my textbook and he reached up to brush his hand upon my cheek. I moved too quickly and missed his precious gift. My timing is often still too quick (not waiting for the weight shift) and I am very conscious now of how many other gifts I might be missing by moving too quickly and not allowing the moment to unfold. . . .

Candidate praises Ed Altman's teaching

By Roseann Heinrich

I have been very fortunate in my life to work closely with many very good teachers. Last week, however, I was honored to work with a great teacher.

Ed Altman has already far surpassed any teacher of my experience in this lifetime. He not only knows and teaches T'ai Chi Chih well, but he lives the principles in his teaching methods by balancing learning with time for fun and relaxation. Ed gently and persistently prods each individual to practice for the sake of T'ai Chi Chih. He is inspired to notice the mistakes and the improvements at just the right moment.

He shares and invites your sharing genuinely and with utmost care. He doesn't push or pull the sharing, he simply allows his students to be who they are.

Yet, he is always of humble spirit attributing his gifts to a greater cosmic energy.

After my week at the Teachers Training in Columbia, PA, I understood why Justin Stone would entrust his great gift with one so young. Ed's spirit is far wiser than his years.

I hope I can emulate Justin's trust in another and the necessary "letting go". I will strive to teach T'ai Chi Chih and my daily work with the principles Ed displayed. I am so grateful for both of these men.

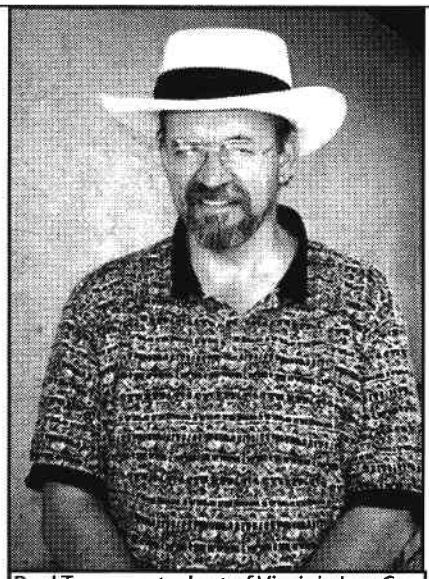
I am also grateful for the five auditing teachers who shared their time and talent to assist the process of molding new teachers of T'ai Chi Chih. Thank you to Mary, Sharon, Sandy, Thomas and Jean who nurtured us every step of the way.

Brain tumor patient calmed by class

By Paul Traver
Student of Virginia Lee Cepeda

About mid-August, 1999 I awoke to a grandmal seizure. A preliminary MRI located a very small speck at the top of my skull. Two months later I had a follow-up MRI which showed the tumor had grown and needed to be ressected. After surgery to remove the tumor, I was admitted to radiation for seven weeks.

After the radiation I was subjected to another surgery. Radioactive implants (70 surgical steel seeds) in my skull. There was another outpatient surgery and chemotherapy at home. I am currently on my second round of chemo with another MRI in August.



Paul Traver, a student of Virginia Lee Cepeda, has been helped by TCC practice.
Photo provided by Paul Traver

What does all this have to do with T'ai Chi Chih? Well, when I was going to an acupuncturist in Berkeley, I felt a strange "energy" concentration on the tumor site. I questioned the doctor about it and he said that in the hands of a skilled doctor that was the idea. He also recommended that I find an accredited T'ai Chi teacher in my area and felt that this might help me. Virginia Lee Cepeda has been that teacher.

My journey with T'ai Chi Chih has been fantastic! Virginia Lee and her wonderful class has supported me in every way ..... body, mind and spirit. The gentle movements, the relaxed feelings and the peace I have received from these classes have made my life so much easier.

I give my thanks to the originator of T'ai Chi Chih, Justin Stone, my teacher, Virginia Lee, and my wonderful class.

Student thanks her teacher

Dear Margery [Erickson],

Just a note to let you know that you've made a difference in another life. About a year and a half ago my husband and I took your T'ai Chi Chih class in Hanover [PA]. We really enjoyed the experience. We did it together regularly for about eight months, then life got hectic and we began to let things slide to the back burner. After throwing my back out twice this summer, I got out the video tape we got from you, dusted off the sheet listing the moves and have started once again to feel the benefits. For that I thank you.

Sincerely,
Marty McLaren
Student of Margery Erickson

Coughing spasm stopped by mental practice of TCC

This is an experience using mental imaging and T'ai Chi Chih. One night during an attack of bronchitis I was having difficulty getting relaxed for sleep because of repeated coughing spasms. The idea of using mental imaging of some of the movements of T'ai Chi Chih came to mind. I decided to try this and after a while of doing this I became relaxed enough to control the coughing spasms and get much needed rest.

Robert E. Rollin
Student of Judy George

Sleep problem healed with practice

By Mpho Mosinyi
Student of Sharon Sirkis

T'ai Chi Chih is a number of movements that are used to learn to balance the Chi and to keep it flowing. It is the life energy that flows within us.

The first day I heard my instructor describe the many ways that people have reported the benefits of T'ai Chi Chih, I just thought she was exaggerating the whole thing. She went on to explain how the Chi can be felt as it circulates in the body and I just thought in my mind that my instructor should be somehow "superstitious". I immediately denied in my heart it is not going to work for me and that I am probably going to complete the class before I actually experience the Chi as it circulates in the body. I never used to pay much attention to her as she stressed the importance of taking some time to practice the movements at home. I just hardly practiced any of the movements taught in class the first few weeks of class.

One Sunday morning at home I just woke up and began to think of T'ai Chi Chih, if it really can exist in my routine. I just decided to try a couple of the movements. I started with the Rocking Motion for about three minutes, grounded the Chi and proceeded on to the next movement which is Bird Flaps its Wings. Still I did not feel a thing. I stopped and I tried to relax my muscles and started all over from the Rocking Motion. This time I just took it so nice and slow and allowed my body to relax. I did a couple of the movements ranging from Around the Platter all the way to Pulling Taffy. Suddenly I began to feel like something strange was happening to my body. I felt my fingers go really warm and felt as if my mind had drifted somewhere way up. I could realize that I was no longer the person I was but instead something had replaced me and that thing is just controlling me. I also noticed that I seemed to enjoy the feeling so much that I took even longer before I proceeded onto the next movement.

I decided to stop at Pulling Taffy - 3rd Variation and immediately realized something that I have long wanted to maintain. I was so focused and really concentrating deeply. I sat down and asked myself a couple of questions about the movements. From there I told myself that I am going to practice the movements everyday and see what change they can bring to my life. I was so determined to do that. From there on, everyday [before] I went to bed I did a couple of the movements, slowly, for about 20 minutes. They really did help me catch sleep without having to turn and toss about in my bed trying to force myself to sleep like I always do. Ever since then I do not have any problems with enjoying my sleep. T'ai Chi Chih seemed to empty my mind and helped me realized that indeed I do not have to worry about getting myself to sleep.

I used to buy sleep tablets and used to go to the doctor every month complaining that I just can't sleep without having to struggle to really get myself to sleep. I can get on my bed, close my eyes and try to relax with the hope that in a few minutes I will be fast asleep. It has never worked. I take too long, probably two to three hours, before I can actually sleep. At first I thought it was because of drinking coffee or Coke. I stopped drinking those completely and it has been almost a year now, but the same problem persisted. Ever since I started to practice the T'ai Chi Chih moves, I do not have a problem at all with getting to sleep. Sometimes I am even forced to stop practicing the movements because I just start feeling drowsy and immediately as I sit on my bed I just fall asleep. The other day I went to see my doctor and told him about T'ai Chi Chih and he could not believe it. He was so happy to hear that I am healed with regard to my sleeping problems. I really feel so lucky to have known about T'ai Chi Chih because I believe so much that it is the one that has brought back my normal sleep.

Student finds overall health improved

November 28, 2000
T'ai Chi Chih journal:

I began takingT'ai Chi Chih in October of 2000, and I have had fantastic results with it. I've had chronic upper back pain for years and had been told by many doctors that my only recourse would be to have breast reduction surgery. I debated this quite a bit, as I have known people who've had the surgery done and though they were pleased with the results, the pain of healing and resulting scars were a common complaint.

The back pain was finally becoming too much for me and I'd decided to do it and was actually saving for it. After only two classes and (somewhat) diligent practice, I had NO back pain! And I've now dismissed the idea of breast [reduction] altogether.

I've also suffered with very bad asthma for most of my life, but after a month of T'ai Chi Chih, I've had fewer attacks and those that I do have are very mild ... even the side effects from the asthma medications aren't as noticeable.

Other results have been just as fantastic; I sleep better, I'm more relaxed; I have more energy; ideas at work flow more clearly and faster; I'm less depressed; friends and co-workers continually compliment me on a "glow" that I have now; and I just feel better about life all around. I'm recommending T'ai Chi Chih to everyone in my life!

Catherine McNair
Student of Neena Mitchell

What T'ai Chi Chih Did for Me

My husband and I had been talking about taking T'ai Chi together for awhile. We decided that January 2000 was a great time to finally do it. So we went to the Community Center where they were offering classes for T'ai Chi Chih. We wanted to do something that was simple and not too physical.

T'ai Chi Chih is not only relaxing, giving me a better sense of physical balance, but it's also given me a better mental balance. People I see daily as well as those I only see occasionally keep commenting how relaxed and calm I seem to be and look. I work with Children who have challenging behaviors and learning difficulties such as ADHD. I noticed right away that just by visualizing the movements in my head, such as Pulling in the Energy or Push Pull, it had a calming affect. I found that I could do this even while driving and still be very alert but calm and relaxed too. When I'm helping the children do their schoolwork they can get frustrated, which sometimes can be frustrating for me. When this happens now we stop and do deep breathing followed by the Six Healing Sounds. The children have even come up with some of their own sounds. They're spending more time on the schoolwork and less on complaining about it.

Meditation is just as much a part of my morning routine now as showering and dressing are. I first started with a goal I knew I could hold to of just one to two minutes several times a week and I still thought, I'll never get through this. I now do 15-20 minutes daily and I can't believe how quickly the time goes by! On the few days I wasn't able to commit, I found myself not able to focus as well and spinning off in too many directions. I have a much better quality of work and accomplish more. I have learned how to sit and focus on one thought at a time, which has given me a sense of clarity I've never known before. I look forward to the many benefits from T'ai Chi Chih still ahead of me.

Judith Rivera

[Editor's Note: Judith's teacher, Ilse "Joy" Meyer, who submitted this article, notes: *"I did not and do not recommend doing anything other than drive while driving or creating extra 'Healing Sounds', but here it is: Life as it unfolds with T'ai Chi Chih. . . . The change in this practitioner is dramatic. . ."*

Justin Stone has stated that the ancient Taoists spent considerable effort in discovering the exact sounds which corresponded to the six most crucial inner organs (in order to stay healthy in the cold mountains). These are the sounds that Justin incorporated into his TCC movement, the *Six Healing Sounds*, and are the only sounds that should be used in practicing this movement.]

Poetry Page

Bend gracefully as before the wind
Always flow with softness and continuity
Move effortlessly led by the T'an T'ien
Be honest with/about yourself
Observe who and what you are
Oh, thank you Justin

– Donald Bohrer
Student of Kathy Vieth Albers

T'ai Chi Chih

as a metaphor for life...

When you are born, there is awkwardness.
You learn as you go, finding strength in knowledge.
As you learn you become softer and more thoughtful.
You remember to 'think in your feet',
and not go overboard.
Staying Centered, Keeping your Balance.
Flowing with the Chi that has flowed eternally.
In the end you hope for a graceful conclusion, and hopefully find happiness at the end of a golden thread.

Na Ma Ste

– Alex Rovang
Student of Donna McElhose

We are family
We are One in Chi
Our soles in silent harmony
To bond our Souls
For all eternity

– Donald Bohrer
Student of Kathy Vieth Albers

Stiff legs
Stiff arms
Stiff chest
Stiff breath
Mind SET

– Noel Altman

<u>To a white butterfly:</u>

Oh little butterfly, fluttering by—I've discovered your secret, you know
It's the softness of light that propels you in flight, as you flutter and dance to and fro
And the vibrating rhythm of your little wings, being danced by a song beyond time
Entrances my spirit and touches my heart, as together we dance the sublime.

– Beverly Weil

Teaching Adolescents

continued from page 23

set of footprints below each foot (seemingly indicating motion); words *"circular motion - to move with the flow; to guide your spirit."*

* *"Ain't feeling nothing but boredom and frustration because there's no point to this whatsoever so please don't teach us this any more 'cause no one likes it!"*

* continuous flow - drawing of moving water with fish jumping & words "water/waves."

* *"flowing energy; helps relax me"* + drawing of figure moving, one leg bent, other straight, arrows indicating circular flow of energy around figure.

* *"It don't have a feeling in me and I don't care for the T'ai Chi [Chih] stuff."*

* balance - *"T'ai Chi Chih seems to balance my inner self, to even out my feelings. It brings peace to my spirit."*

* *"Softness means being soft with my inner self and my goodness."* + drawing of pillow.

I learned a tremendous amount while at the center. As I got used to working with adolescents and they got used to me, I began to enjoy my time there, instead of being a bit on edge and apprehensive as I was when I started. Always, though, it was the T'ai Chi Chih practice itself that continuously came to my aid. For example, at the beginning of a session when some of the students were restless, nervously giggly, or not too willing to participate, the simple act of doing the movements calmed everyone so that by the end of the session, even the most skeptical and restless could certainly feel the flow and serenity that existed in the room. An extension of this sense is that staff members commented to me that on the days the residents had T'ai Chi Chih class, their behavior was much more positive.

I found that I needed to keep the class going at a steady pace, not hurried, but full. If I allowed even a moment's dead space, the attention was gone and I had difficulty getting it back. After I had been going to the center for several months, the entire staff often held meetings so that I sometimes had the students all by myself. At these times, there was a definite change from when a counselor was present. In a way, the atmosphere was more "real" in that the students knew because I had no authority over them, they could perhaps be more themselves. After the first time or two alone with them, I simply let the chi and the instruction control any negative behaviors, generally ignoring any rudeness or acting-out that occurred, a real test of my patience. That, along with peer pressure from those who sincerely wanted to learn, helped with the challenges of coming into a sometimes volatile situation once a week where I had no clue what incidents might have gone on just prior to my arrival or what would happen after my departure, to say nothing of the myriad events the residents experienced during the times between my classes, both positive and negative.

All in all, I feel very humble and honored to have been part of this program, to have learned that teenagers have as much to offer as anyone and that their protective shell in front of their peers can fall readily if handled gently, to feel, without any delusions, that a small seed was planted in all those who experienced the T'ai Chi Chih movements. That seed may grow and be nurtured into something wonderful for at least some of the residents who spent time at the center while the T'ai Chi Chih classes were going on.

The postscript is that, although my contract was to have been renewed, a new clinical psychologist is in charge, the center is applying for accreditation, and their focus is a bit different than it was while I taught there. It's possible that in the future, the administration will again offer the T'ai Chi Chih form to its residents.

Karmic Komments

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

Translations

Spanish and Italian translations of the photo-textbook are nearing completion. As more students internationally learn T'ai Chi Chih, as well as those in the U.S. who speak Spanish and Italian, we want to accommodate their needs. The translations will be inserted in the English version of the book and will be sold at the same price. Look for more details in the next issue of *The Vital Force*.

How do you use the photo-textbook?

We're interested in learning how teachers use GKP materials in class, most particularly the *T'ai Chi Chih/Joy Thru Movement* photo-textbook. We'd appreciate your sharing teaching strategies by jotting down the various ways you use the book (or other materials) and submitting that information to Good Karma. We'll compile it for a future issue of *The Vital Force* so everyone can benefit. As an added incentive, we're offering a small gift to the first person who responds with their ideas.

Ad Writer Wanted

As T'ai Chi Chih continues to expand, so does Good Karma Publishing. We are looking for a teacher to help write some of the ads we produce and to also assist in outreach marketing efforts. Nominal pay accompanies the job. Skills required are:

-Computer literacy, with some graphic experience
-Good writing ability
-Familiarity with all Good Karma materials

Any teacher interested in the job should fax her/his qualifications to Good Karma at 701/854-2004.

Regional Distributors of Good Karma Publishing Materials

Canada

BC, Victoria	Guadalupe Buchwald	(250) 385-6748

United States

CA, Hayward	Sandra McAlister	(510) 582-2238
CA, El Cahon	Susan Patterson	(858) 571-3705
CA, Camarillo	Pamela Towne	(805) 987-3607
CO, Denver	Margaret Manzanares	(303) 494-5800
MN, Minneapolis	Paula Arnold	(612) 721-9200
MN, Bemidji	Jeanne Engen-Duranske	(218) 751-3173
MO, St. Louis	Kathy Vieth Albers	(314) 727-1983
ND, Fargo	Christeen McLain	(701) 232-5579
NM, Albuquerque	Carmen Brocklehurst	(505) 299-0562

DIRECT ORDERS: To order books and tapes from Good Karma Publishing, please type or print your name and address *legibly* on an order form. Phone toll-free (1-888-540-7459), FAX (701-854-2004), or write if you need a catalog or order form. Please allow at least two weeks from order date for delivery.

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 may be possible to submit timely news for publication later than the deadline. and it is usually 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!

T'AI CHI CHIH CONTACTS:

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P.O. Box 23212
Albuquerque, NM 87192-1212

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Head of T'ai Chi Chih
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T'AI CHI CHIH WEBSITE:

www.taichichih.org

VITAL FORCE JOURNAL CONTACTS:

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

The Vital Force
P.O. Box 23068
Albuquerque, NM
87192-1068

Noel Altman
Editor
(505) 294-9065
(505) 296-1297 (Fax)

If fax line is busy, call (505) 294-9065 to inform us of your incoming fax.

thevitalforce@yahoo.com

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

Members from outside the U.S.: Please don't handprint the words "U.S. Dollars" or "U.S. Funds" on a personal check as our bank won't honor the requested conversion.

The Lighter Side...

1. I had an e-mail yesterday from someone interested in a beginner TCC class. They misspelled beginner as "biginner" — it made me smile, because the Big Inner is what we are going for. . . .

– Donnis Minx

2. During the first TCC class, one student introduced herself as Murray.

Surprised, I said, "Oh! I was looking for a guy."

She laughed and said, "So was the draft board."

– Sharon Sirkis

3. Two days after her teacher's accreditation, Debbie [Cole] tells me she's now hearing 'Ed tapes' in her head.

"Have they erased the 'Sharon tapes'?" I ask.

"No," she says, "I'm now hearing in stereo."

– Sharon Sirkis

4. One evening in class we were practicing the *Six Healing Sounds*. I had my back to the class. We stepped out with "Ho," then with both hands, "Hu." We then stepped to the side and just as we were ready for the third sound, the man behind me sneezed, "Achoo!"

"Ho, Hu, Achoo!" It broke up the class!

– Donnis Minx

5. One morning during TCC practice, I asked my students if they had any questions. One student looked at me, hesitated for a moment, and then said, "I think I'm doing variations on the variations."

– Sharon Sirkis

6. During class I said:

"Movement is from your whips."

– Mary Ann Johnson

7. While learning *Pulling Taffy* in one of my classes at the Shepherd's Center, one of the ladies in the class exclaimed, "I'm sure glad I'm not a centipede!"

– Donnis Minx

8. What did the buddhist monk say to the hot dog vendor?

Make me one with everything.

– Sharon Sirkis

[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.

Fire
Burns deep
Fury Storms
Venom spews forth
Injuring
Someone
Dear

– Terri Lease
(Student of Donna McElhose)

both
inside
and outside
the storm rages
till I sit
and peace
rains

– Doug Harned

I
sometimes
see dark stars
that light my way
through the most
blinding
nights

– Simon Reilly
(Student of Sharon Sirkis)

AS
THE CHI
COURSES THRU
I AM IN AWE
AT THE JOY
WITHIN
ME

– Lucky Sikora

When
your cup
is empty
it holds much more
than when your
cup is
full

– Eddie Roberts

When
The mind
Is serene
As a soft breeze
The master
Can teach
You.

– Angela Hackl
(Student of Richard Detert)