The Vital Force

Journal of T'ai Chi Chih

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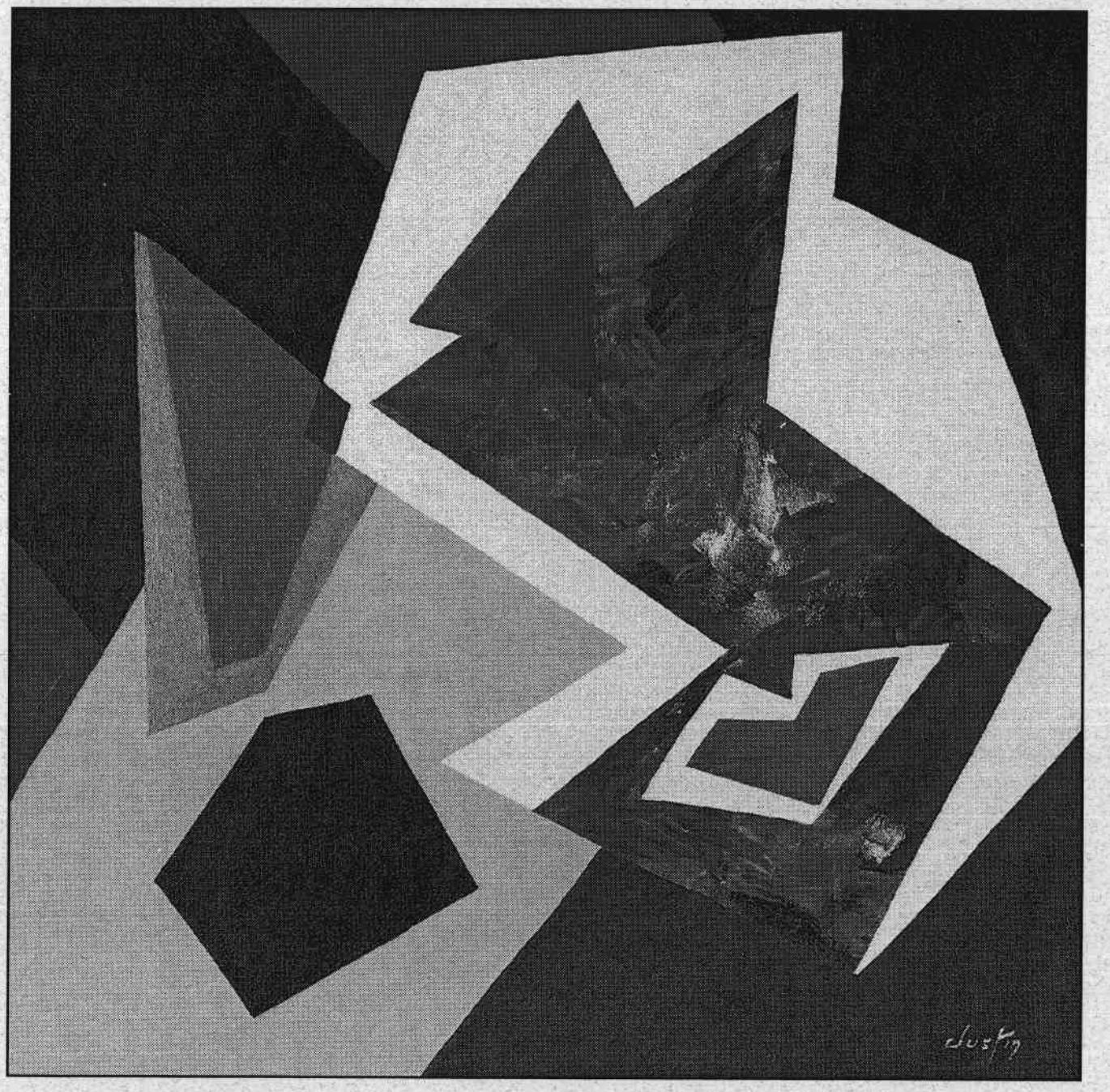

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Justin Stone is the Originator of T'ai Chi Chih.
Ed Altman is the Head of T'ai Chi Chih.

The Vital Force

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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.

Front & Back Covers:

The paintings on the front and back covers of this issue are the artwork of Justin Stone, the Originator of T'ai Chi Chih. "Beyond Symmetry II" (front) and "The Swiftness of Light" (back) show two very different styles of his artwork, with the latter showing his more recent technique. Both of these appear in full color, along with 38 others, in his new art book, *Tentatively Forever: Paintings by Justin F. Stone.* (See related articles on pages 35, 36, 37 and insert flyer).

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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

***Doug Harned,** our Membership Services coordinator, relocated to Albuquerque, NM in April. This should improve the speed at which membership forms are processed and acknowledgement postcards are mailed out, since we have eliminated the extra steps of me copying these forms and mailing them to Doug. We have ideas to discuss of possible changes to come, but will wait until he settles into his new home with wife Karin and baby Jenny, and gets oriented in his new construction engineering job. Welcome to Albuquerque, Doug!*

*I am pleased to announce a new VFJ Staff Member, St. Louis teacher **Kathy Vieth Albers**. Kathy has been in training since January to take over a new role for* The Vital Force. *She will coordinate "Information/Outreach." Kathy will be handling all incoming mail to the main VFJ e-mail address, thevitalforce@yahoo.com. Over time, a huge variety of questions have come into that address including: requests for teacher referrals or information on how to purchase TCC materials, questions about upcoming teacher training courses and other events, questions about subscribing to* The Vital Force, *questions from teachers who have been out of touch with the rest of the TCC community for some time and in coming across the TCC community website, notice that their name is not on the website listing of accredited teachers — they want to know how to get their name on that list. In addition, all sorts of other questions come in from various members of the public about what is happening in their TCC practice, are they practicing correctly, etc. Sometimes we even get specific questions for Justin Stone, from publications wanting to interview him, reviewers requesting free copies of his books, long-lost teachers trying to reconnect with him.*

The volume of these types of questions has increased over time and is no longer something I feel I have the time to handle well. I am grateful to Kathy for taking on this important work. In time, when Kathy has a good feel for this part of the job, her duties may expand to other outreach efforts.

Welcome to the staff, Kathy!

Because Kathy will be taking over the general e-mail address for The Vital Force, *I now have a new e-mail address just for submissions: VFJSubmissions@earthlink.net. I would prefer that only submissions be sent to this address, unless there is a question that only I can answer — then that would be okay, too.*

Doug also now has his own e-mail address for handling Membership Services questions. It is: VFJmembership@yahoo.com.

Please take a moment to note the restructuring of staff tasks and contact information delineated on page 39 under "Vital Force Journal Contacts."
Doug, Kathy, and myself each have different e-mail addresses and phone numbers listed as contact information based on the roles we have. By contacting the appropriate person directly, you will save us the unnecessary task of forwarding on information to each other. We appreciate your help in making our hours spent more efficient! Thank you!

***Noel Altman,** Editor*

Readers Respond

Readers: See page 32 for a full explanation of our new bulk mailing process and the overall results nationwide. Individual members' responses follow:

Noel, I received my copy of *The Vital Force* on Monday, March 12 . . . It reached us sooner than in the past. When I reach inside the mailbox and find *The Vital Force* resting inside I always experience a warm sense of gratitude and excitement. Thank you!

Bitsy LeBlanc
Lake Charles, LA

Hi Noel - I received my *Vital Force* yesterday -- March 26. . . . It is such a capricious system. Barbara Riley got hers on the 22nd, and mine didn't come for [four] days after that! Sounds like there is no figuring, except that it seems that Bay Area mail dispatchers feel more put upon than others, and so are grumpier . . . Anyway, the issue looks great. . . .

Pat Bourne
San Francisco, CA

[Editor's note: I'm sorry it took so long to get to you. For whatever reason, it is taking <u>weeks</u> longer to get to the WEST coast (which is closer to NM) than the EAST coast!

Overall, service has improved for most of our bulk mail subscribers. California, particularly the Bay Area, seems to be getting the slowest service (based on the responses I've gotten back). This may explain why our bulk mail service was so slow for all those years — because we were shipping <u>from</u> the Bay Area!]

Hi Noel! I just received the March 2001 *Vital Force* today, Saturday March 17th, in Annandale, NJ. . . . Great issue. I was riveted by Jean Katus' excellent article on working with troubled adolescents. Thanks,

Carolyn Allenby
Annandale, NJ

Vital Force, Just wanted to let you know that I did receive the *Vital Force* much earlier than I normally do. [Her e-mail was dated March 16]. Thanks for whatever you changed.

Marlene Brown
Cincinnati, OH

I'm enjoying the *VFJ* issue. . . . It is very strengthening to know that there is a COMMUNITY of people who are "on the path" all over the world. It strengthens my daily practice and influences my thoughts.

Linda Braga
Castro Valley, CA

Just a thought! It seems there is so much concern and stress about the mailing of the *VITAL FORCE* and when each member receives their copy.

It may be wiser to send out ALL copies at the same time. Forget the First Class level — "the HAVES and the HAVE-NOTS". I have not known of any organization that goes to all of that stress in all my years in the business. It didn't prove a thing when I had the First Class mailing. Either and/or both all came within a week of the mailing. . . . Then it could also cut down on the balancing of the money and less book keeping. And remember that the United States Postal Service has a mind of it's own, and a system of it's own in all of it's central terminals. There is one here in Eagan — and I got my *Journal* one day later than Nancy [Werner-Azarski] who lives in the City. Figure that!

Placing the *Journal* in an envelope is wise — there have been times in the past when it has been badly damaged without that protection. It is what is written and shared that is more important than that pesky time element. That's T'ai Chi Chih! Names'te!

Vivian Hoff
Eagan, MN

[Editor's Note: Thanks for the suggestion. As I am reading through the responses from other bulk mail recipients and this new system is proving to be WEEKS faster in some cases, we may just get rid of the domestic First Class in the future.

My understanding is that the reason First Class was added as an option for U.S. members was because for some living in small towns, it could take four to six weeks to get their issues! And they didn't want to wait.

The First Class handling does take more time on our parts, from the data entry to putting on the stamps.

As Editor, one thing I have wanted to see improve is the speed of delivery for our bulk mail subscribers.

<u>A final point of clarification</u>: ALL issues <u>are</u> shipped on the same day — March 5 in the last case.]

The Zen Way

The Zen Way! The Zen Way!
What is the meaning of
The Zen Way?
"Zen" means meditation, but Zen sitting is Zazen —
It is not like Indian meditation.
How define the practice of Zen?
There are no guidelines.
"Void" means "Emptiness,"
But Void is full of rivers, trees, and moonlight.
"Impermanent" — yes!
"Everlasting" — yes!
How reconcile such opposites?
Many are one but one equals many.
What meets the eye
is not what meets the heart.

A life of loneliness —
"aloneness," really —
Can be full and meaningful.
But, in the end
What is meaningful?
Do we look for satisfaction
Or do we seek to avoid suffering?
Can we have both?
Can we live with neither?
Bodhidharma came from the West
But, if he had continued,
He would have been in the West again.
Life contracts and expands
Everything appears circular and cyclical.
Who ordered it this way?

Can we be thankful
With no thing to be thankful for?

– Justin Stone

A conversation with Justin Stone on TCC

■ BY DELLA PACHECO

Justin Stone, originator of T'ai Chi Chih (TCC), had successful careers in music (he still records jazz piano and recently wrote and recorded the background music for the 13-part PBS series on TCC), finance (he was an allied member of the New York Stock Exchange) and writing. He is also an exhibiting painter and poet.

Stone left the financial world in 1953 to take the first of many trips to the Orient, where he practiced with Yogis in India and Zen Monks in Japan. He considers these trips the most important part of his life.

In 1974, after having practiced and taught T'ai Chi Ch'uan for many years, he originated TCC. In its short existence, mostly via word-of-mouth, TCC has spread throughout the world. There are now over 1,500 accredited teachers.

I asked Stone about his life and the development of TCC.

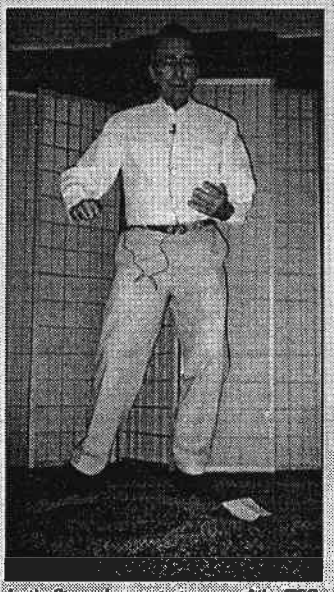
Indianapolis Prime Times: You left a successful career in the business world to go to the Orient to study and practice. Why?

Stone: I had always wanted to go to Japan and India. At the time it wasn't possible to visit mainland China, though I did visit Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and a few other Chinese cities. For years I had read about Indian traditions and Buddhist beliefs and had often been at Japanese "healing" churches and Zen Buddhist temples. Chinese thinking has always seemed closer to my views. Perhaps this is the reason I later originated T'ai Chi Chih, which has now spread throughout most of the world.

Buddhist thought–and that of the Yogis I lived with for a while in the Himalayas–demanded that you experience for yourself, not get your beliefs from church dogma and doctrine. The practice with the Yogis and also with Zen Buddhist monks seemed to offer the chance to experience God, Divinity, Heaven, Nirvana, etc. for me. In order to go to the Orient to practice, I knew it would mean giving up my means of making a living. I met Dr. Jon Covell, a female writer about Zen and Buddhist art, and she asked me to take a Japanese freighter with her and her son to Kobe, Japan, and then on to Kyoto where she said I could get a job teaching English. As it turned out, she and her son never boarded the freighter–I was the only passenger–but she was the catalyst that got me to go and fulfill my dream.

IPT: Why are Eastern philosophies so difficult for Westerners to grasp?

Stone: Anything foreign to our beliefs and educational background is hard to understand. Provincialism seems to be the most common characteristic in the world–"our way is the only right way." The idea of Karma is known



Justin Stone demonstrates one of the TCC movements.

to physics as "every action must have an equal reaction," but we don't know that this applies to every phase of life. It is the only possible explanation to the inequities we find in this life.

Chi is the most important thing in life. In Indian thought, this universal energy (known as "Shakti") arises simultaneously with Conscious-Energy. The cultivation of this Chi is all-important and is responsible for TCC. I believe that 50 years from now, medicine will come to understand the all-importance of Chi in every phase of life.

IPT: How did you develop T'ai Chi Chih?

Stone: I had studied T'ai Chi Ch'uan with Professor Huang Wen-Shan and two other Chinese teachers. Later I taught it, but it takes a very long time for a Westerner to learn it. Very few are willing to make the effort, which includes regular practice. I do not believe that the great majority of students feel the circulation of the Chi until the 108 movements have been learned and performed by muscle memory. Teachers in Los Angeles tell me that during the eight lessons needed to learn TCC, students strongly feel the flow of Chi and fewer drop out.

The basic purpose of my discipline is to circulate and balance (Yin-Yang) the Chi. I have seen bad habits drop away from those who practice regularly. I will not comment on the vast spiritual benefits of TCC, which is not a martial art like T'ai Chi Ch'uan, but this is the most important part.

IPT: How can T'ai Chi Chih benefit older adults?

Stone: A teacher in Danville, Calif., has old students in wheelchairs–mostly 90 to 96 years old. They enjoy the practice and look forward to lessons. Very early in the history of TCC, I worked with wheelchair patients and with narcotic addiction victims, and the favorable results surprised me.

IPT: Can you distill one central thought surrounding T'ai Chi Chih?

Stone: Thousands of students have told me of the benefits they have received from TCC. Because of this, I have never taken money from my teachers, though 15 percent of earnings have often been offered. Many who have been benefited go on to teach and pass along the benefits to others.

If you want to know about chocolate, taste it. Similarly, I say to people, "Try TCC and see for yourself. But you must practice regularly." Once the joy is tasted, it isn't hard to get people to practice.

TCC is practiced at California's Folsom Prison. It's been statistically demonstrated that those inmates who practice TCC have almost a zero percent recidivism–return to prison for crimes after release. I was told by a prison official that those who don't practice TCC have an 80 percent return record!

Will this be the means of reducing or eliminating criminal tendencies? I believe so. ■

This article is reprinted with the permission of the *Indianapolis Prime Times.*

[Editor's note: Della Pacheco, the editor of the *Indianapolis Prime Times*, contacted *The Vital Force* in December about arranging an interview with Justin Stone. Over a series of phone calls and exchanged faxes, the interview was conducted in time to be the lead article for the March issue of the *Times*. Della's questions were very good and I felt that *VFJ* readers would be interested in hearing about more of Justin's background, in Justin's own words.

The photo used is one taken by TCC Teacher Paula Weiner at the last Teachers' Conference (and was previously published in the Sept. 2000 issue of *The Vital Force*). The picture was loaned to the *Times* to use with their article.]

The Best is Yet to Come

By Ed Altman

When we first begin to learn T'ai Chi Chih, we find that it is more difficult than it looks, and we are surprised to discover that our normal way of approaching things doesn't work very well. The brute force tactics that serve us in the "real world" make us feel clumsy and awkward in our T'ai Chi Chih practice—nothing like the vision of soft graceful motion we had in mind. We are taught that T'ai Chi Chih must be done with absolute softness, and often reminded of Justin Stone's words: "Softness means letting go." Clearly, we must use an entirely different way of thinking and acting if we are to be successful. The sight of our T'ai Chi Chih teacher flowing with such softness and grace continues to haunt us, and regardless of what we would like to believe, we *know* that our old ways are not working. We find this "letting go" is more difficult than it sounds, and that the old ways of living have more of a hold on us than we realized.

Soon enough it becomes apparent that the CHI has its own intentions, and that we can either fight it or learn to align ourselves with it through our T'ai Chi Chih practice. The CHI is *intelligent energy* and it is much more responsive to subtle suggestion than brute force. If we are dedicated in our practice, we discover that it is not only necessary, but also quite enjoyable to let go. We finally appreciate what it means to flow freely with "the effort of no effort", and find that T'ai Chi Chih is doing T'ai Chi Chih. This is a direct *experience* of Joy Thru Movement, and the resulting feeling opens up something within us. Our world is suddenly much more vast and mysterious than we previously realized.

As we continue in our T'ai Chi Chih practice, we begin to experiment with using the same principles that govern the flow of the CHI *outside* our practice as well. We learn to let go in our lives and find that things have a way of working out—often better than we had planned. More and more opportunities present themselves and as we let go, we are pleased to note that everything is going quite well. Until we struggle again. The problem is that we're only willing to let go while things continue to go "our way." As soon as life takes a different direction we find ourselves picking it all up again and getting troubled. Are we so certain that we suddenly know what is best?

This reminds me of a very moving presentation I heard from a T'ai Chi Chih teacher (in Folsom prison.) He said to his imaginary audience of fellow prisoners, "You think you know best, but your best judgement brought you here! You need to realize that you don't really know what's best for you."

Recently, Justin encouraged me to "let go" once again by saying "Life will lead you to where you are meant to be." There is great comfort in those words and I have no reason to doubt his experience. Slowly, consistently, it is becoming my own experience as well. In the T'ai Chi Chih Teacher's Training Manual it says: "To enter the door you must be shown the way...gradually, the steps extend to wisdom." The way of T'ai Chi Chih is letting go; regardless of whether you agree or disagree with the direction things appear to be heading. Let go of tension, clinging and even of any fixed sense of "self." When this happens, there is only the great *experience of life*, and all needs are well taken care of. Let the CHI take a larger role and allow "your" life to change. As this process of letting go continues, one day there will be no "you" left, and no one to worry about getting "your way." The best is yet to come.

Deeper than a Well

By Carmen Brocklehurst

The great Indian sage Ramanamaharshi asked a simple but profound question: "Who are you?" Volumes have been written on what it means to know the answer to this question. (Sometimes those who don't know write these volumes!) However, it is a worthwhile question, the answer to which resides in the deepest part of our being. It brings to light that which has the most meaning to us. It could be said that it solves the riddle of the universe. One sage, Justin Stone, put it this way "Climbing, Climbing, Climbing — finally we hit .... bottom!"

So many speak of it, but very few help us find out who we are. Why would we even want to know? As Justin says, "It doesn't pay the rent." Yet the question burns inside us.

We often come to T'ai Chi Chih not conscious about why we come. Something prompts us to come. It could be a backache, or stress, or any number of things that speak of being out of balance, but they are not the real reason. If we stay with the practice and go on to more advanced studies, we finally realize we must go through Teachers Training. One teacher put it very well, "Most students don't have any idea what T'ai Chi Chih is about until they get to Teachers Training." Luckily for us there is a T'ai Chi Chih and there is a Teachers Training. As Justin says, "It isn't by accident that you are here."

This casts a very different light on being a T'ai Chi Chih Teacher and on teaching. No longer is it a hobby or something that we do when we don't have anything else to do. But rather, it is a sacred trust, one not to be taken lightly. To know with each class we teach, and with each time we do our practice, that we are sharing pure gold is cause to drop to our knees with gratitude for the gift of T'ai Chi Chih.

Today is the day to begin. We first begin with ourselves, by not only simply doing our practice, but by being mindful of the nuances of each movement. Secondly it begins by going even deeper and offering a class, not just to make a dollar or two, but to "share our bread," and to offer to those that want to know, a way to know "Who are you?"

Analyzing Movements

The best way to analyze how a student moves is to make sure he or she has the right concept of *how to move*. If a student is not 'flowing from the center' or moving as if slow-motion in a dream then there is very little chance that the individual movements will be technically correct.

Working through the principles that govern a particular movement, great attention should also be placed on the shifting of the weight, softness of the knees and spinal alignment. It must be emphasized that T'ai Chi Chih practice is not just a matter of remembering to place the hands and feet in the 'proper' place. The movements must be supported by the flow of the CHI, and this can only be accomplished by moving properly according to the principles of T'ai Chi Chih.

Once it has been determined that the student is moving properly, then minor problems related to stance, alignment and so forth can be easily corrected. When making such corrections, it is recommended that teachers begin by reviewing the stance and then work their way up by examining the legs, spine, arms, and hands.

For example, if a student is having trouble reaching too far in 'Push Pull' the best way to approach the situation may be to start with the stance and make sure the student has placed the feet in the appropriate position. If the feet are too narrow or out of alignment, this will hinder the student's ability to shift the weight fully and may cause one to reach or lean forward to attempt to compensate for the situation.

T'ai Chi Chih is done mostly from the waist down, so unless the foundation (stance, legs, spinal alignment, etc) is solid, yet soft, there is no way to build anything of value on top. It is usually a mistake to attempt to correct the arms first as they are a reflection of the legs, and will convey a *symptom* of the real problem. Until the underlying cause is addressed nothing can come into balance. However, once these problem areas are addressed students should experience a greater ease to the movements and will often be more receptive to future corrections.

[Excerpted with permission from the newly-revised T'ai Chi Chih Teachers' Training Manual by Justin Stone and Ed Altman. See "News Shorts" for more information.]

On Giving & Receiving & Letting Go

By Sharon Sirkis

It was an extremely hot and sticky Monday morning on my way to teach TCC at the retirement community. The air conditioning in my car was on the fritz, and I realized I was low on gas. I drove to the nearest gas station and pulled up next to the pump. Since I was all dressed up and I always pump my own gas, I made a mental note to avoid getting dirty. As soon as I got out of the car, the garage attendant, Mr. L., hurried towards me. He lifted the nozzle out of the pump, and then I became momentarily confused. Had I pulled up to the full-serve lane by mistake? I quickly spun around and looked at the pump, no, it was self-serve. It finally dawned on me that he wanted to pump the gas for me. Unfortunately, I had to tell him I didn't have any money for a tip, which made me feel very uncomfortable. He didn't care, he just continued happily doing his work. Instead of getting back in the car, (which he wanted me to do), and waiting for him to finish, I just stood there watching him. It felt awkward to have someone do this for me since I was capable and always did it for myself. It didn't seem right, but I did get back in the car. Mr. L. then proceeded to wash my front windshield because it was covered with pollen. The more he did the more uncomfortable I became. He finally finished and I felt relieved. I thanked him and continued on my way.

I started ruminating over what just happened. It never entered my mind that someone would do that for me. Mr. L. was very giving of himself, and it was hard for me to receive it. I was dumbfounded at how a complete stranger was so eager to help me out. . . . I questioned myself as to why I was so surprised at his generosity.

I started ruminating over what just happened. It never entered my mind that someone would do that for me. Mr. L. was very giving of himself, and it was hard for me to receive it. I was dumbfounded at how a complete stranger was so eager to help me out. For him it was about the joy of giving without expecting anything in return. By not receiving his gift, I would be robbing him of the pleasure of giving it. I questioned myself as to why I was so surprised at his generosity. Hadn't I been generous like that before? Yes, many times in fact, but it was so much easier for me to give than to receive. I kept asking myself why this was true. I slowly started to connect the dots. Giving was easy; it made me feel good. Receiving was more difficult because I had to be receptive. Maybe it had to do with an element of staying in control. One of my teachers once said that I needed to give up control in order to be vulnerable and receive. Another teacher admonished me to "learn to accept." And you know that old line, ask and you shall receive? Well, I'm not real good at the asking.

Although I was starting to see things more clearly, my thinking and analyzing were getting in the way. Later, I finally got quiet and did my T'ai Chi Chih practice. I often get insights into dilemmas during my practice. The first insight that emerged had to do with my limiting beliefs. I realized that receiving gifts triggered one of those beliefs. Was I worthy and deserving of such gifts? Intellectually I knew I was, but on a gut level I wasn't so sure. I knew it was time to let go of those beliefs because

continued on page 32

New teacher relates her growth

By Debbie Cole

Since my teacher training in October of 2000, I have experienced sometimes mind-spinning changes in my attitudes. Some long held beliefs have gotten a serious workout (and so have my tear ducts). I feel I have an intensity of feeling that only existed rarely before. Now it seems possible to experience life and all its richness much more easily. I believe that I have experienced somewhat of a spiritual awakening — so much so, that, though I had not considered myself "religious" my entire adult life, after teacher training, I went seeking a spiritual community to share with and get support from on an ongoing basis.

I want to share with you a practice I experienced while considering this newly found community.

I did my TCC practice tucked into a corner of the Memorial garden at the church. My fingers had been pretty cold even before I started. However, I removed my coat to give more freedom of movement. I hesitated, but I felt strongly that I was being drawn to this place, this time, to do my practice.

I was originally focused well beyond the walls of the garden into the woods beyond. As time went on, I ended up looking at the wall in front of me. There was a little niche about eye level where the mortar had fallen out and it seemed to hold some interest for me. I realized as I continued my practice on this chilly January morning (snow was still on the ground around me) that I had found my niche (at least for the time being) in this church, this community, and this practice. I felt much gratitude. I felt that the wall was not there to box me in, but to give me a reference point for what lay beyond.

As I continued my practice I was getting to a point where I wasn't sure it was such a good idea to continue my full practice (my fingers were VERY cold). However, I didn't want to stop. I just thought to myself, "If I need to, I can stop at any time." I experienced an overall sense of well-being and didn't care whether my fingers were cold or not—I was observing, watching, my practice. Then, I remember the startling, but unmistakable feeling of warmth flowing down my arms and through to my fingertips.

As cold as my hands were to begin with, they shared the same incredible warmth as the rest of my body by the time I finished. It not only kept my whole body warm and comfortable, but I could feel the warmth all the way down to the tips of my fingers. For me, that symbolizes the feeling of warmth and support from the whole TCC community, as well as, the comfort I feel from the direction my life has taken. Not that it has been so easy, but that I have a strong sense that I'm headed in the right direction.

I have often nodded my head in agreement as others have written or said aloud how grateful they are for TCC, for Justin Stone, for Ed Altman and for the rest of the TCC community. Now, I guess it's my turn — Thank-you all for giving me the piece of the puzzle I didn't even know I was missing!

Invisible Girdle

In the tradition of my Grandmother's tied corset
And my Mother's stretch girdle,
I too wear something which flattens my tummy.

It is not made of cotton, or lycra, or polyester.
In fact it is invisible.
But is more powerful than a cast iron chastity belt.
My girdle is made up of beliefs.
That women should have a 24 inch waist.
A round middle on a woman is a "pot belly",
Which signals lack of self-control and discipline.
The only time it is appropriate for a woman
To have an extended midsection
Is when she is pregnant.
And then, her abdomen is considered community property,
Available for everyone to touch.

Teacher examines her own practice

I began teaching my first class about a month ago. The incredible responsibility is balanced only by the joy I feel in sharing T'ai Chi Chih with others.

My own daily practice is often done either in front of a mirror or our sliding glass door so I can observe my movements. I want to be sure I am moving correctly, the way I tell my students to move.

One morning I did my T'ai Chi Chih practice just before I left for work. I had on a suit jacket and was in front of our full-length closet mirrors. My attention was drawn to the front of the jacket. The right side moved as I moved, the left side didn't move at all. The movements appeared correct in the mirror but the odd way the jacket moved, only on one side, made me look lopsided and out of balance. Without thinking about it too much I allowed my awareness to go to my left side. The movements appeared the same in the mirror but the jacket began to move evenly on both sides. This subtle shift in awareness brought more balance to the intrinsic energies as they flowed through my body.

Everyday I feel a deeper sense of self, and a connection to the energies of the universe. T'ai Chi Chih is truly Joy thru Movement.

- Patricia Strand

Weak Knees Vs. Soft Knees

What is the difference between weak knees and soft knees? Weak knees feel tender and vulnerable. Similar to how I am feeling — tender and vulnerable in life. Weak knees are weak because they are resisting life, resisting the flow of life. How and where am I resisting the flow of life? Where and how am I resisting myself? Weak knees have my concerned attention. Thankfully, I am comforting them, rubbing them, "reiki-ing" them and above all, listening to what they are trying to communicate to me.

They tell me to TRUST the Process. They tell me that resisting life and myself is based in fear and actually prevents me from finding joy. What my mind thinks is the "safe way" is actually a humorous illusion (although sometimes the "humor" eludes me).

Soft knees, by contrast, are loose and flexible. Soft knees are in fact very strong because they allow themselves to be moved and supported by the chi, by life itself. When I imagine myself moving through life in trust, in acceptance, in flexibility & ease and in joy, my body begins to tingle with excitement..... .....and I feel my knees smile.

- April Leffler

My invisible girdle
Is an unconscious holding in of my tummy.
I don't even realize I do it until I think about it.
All day long, I do not relax the center of body.
I hold it in, so no one knows
That, like my mother, I have a woman's belly.
It grows as I get older.
So the difficulty in holding it in becomes greater.
It is to the point where I don't think I can keep it flat any longer.
But what if I let it out?
Will others think I lack self-control or discipline?
Will they ask if I am pregnant?
Will I continue to be respected as a person?

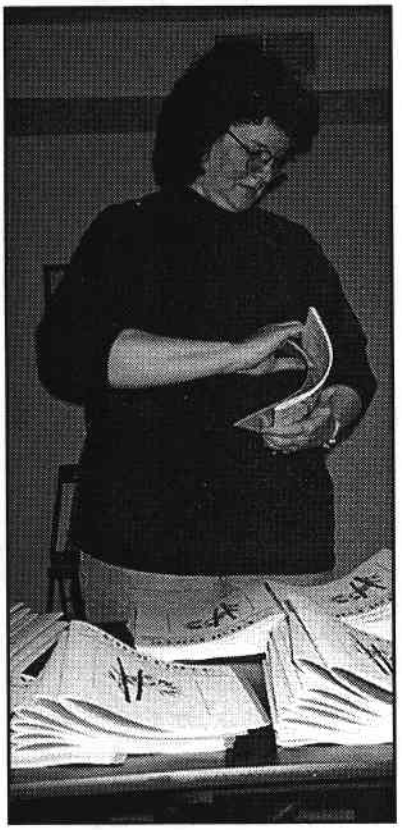
Recently, I started learning T'ai Chi Chih,
A meditative practice of body movements.
I learned that located in the belly
About two inches below the naval
Is something called the "T'an T'ien",
Which is considered the center of the body.
It is the core of body energy,
From which all movement originates.
In T'ai Chi Chih,
The T'an T'ien must be full and relaxed,
Not tight and empty.
In order for body energy to flow
To bring well-being and health and joy to life,
The T'an T'ien must not be constrained.
Perhaps, all of these years my invisible girdle,
By constraining my T'an T'ien,
Has been robbing me of well-being, health and joy.

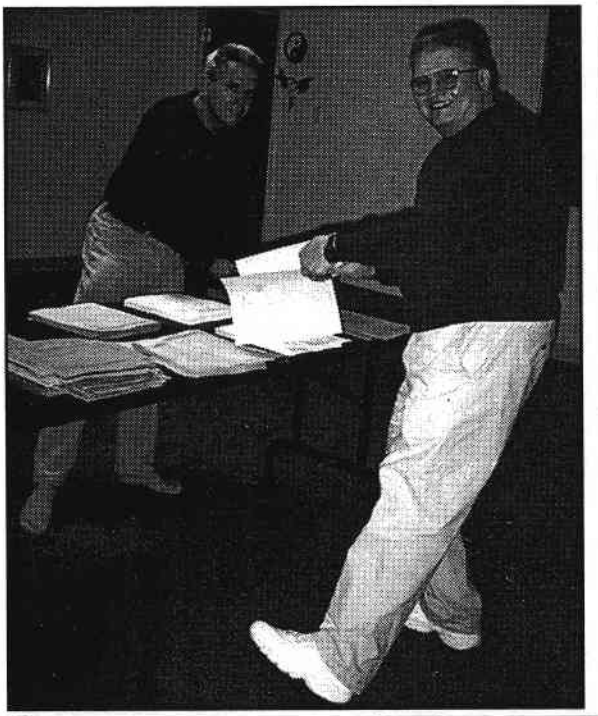
It is time to burn the girdle!!

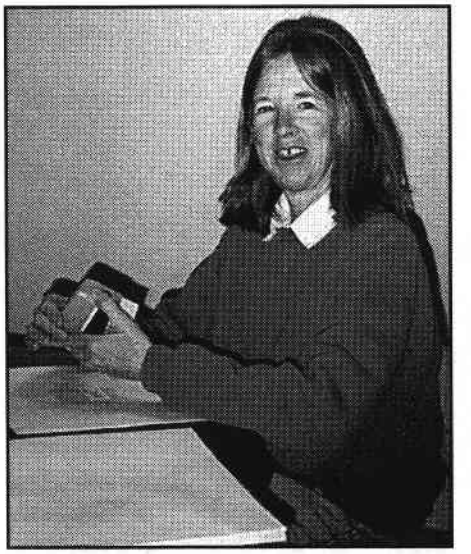
In the tradition of my Grandmother,
Who abandoned her corset,
And my mother,
Who threw away her girdles,
It is time to shed my invisible one.
It is time to say,
A woman's waist should not be 24 inches,
It should be whatever size it is.
A woman's big belly is not a "pot," but a well of energy.
A full middle is not a sign that a woman lacks self-control or discipline.
It is a sign of her honesty, her self-respect and her integrity.
And to my own belly, I say,
"Relax, be full, be beautiful, and be the center of my healing energy!

By Denise Moreland
Student of Marie Dotts

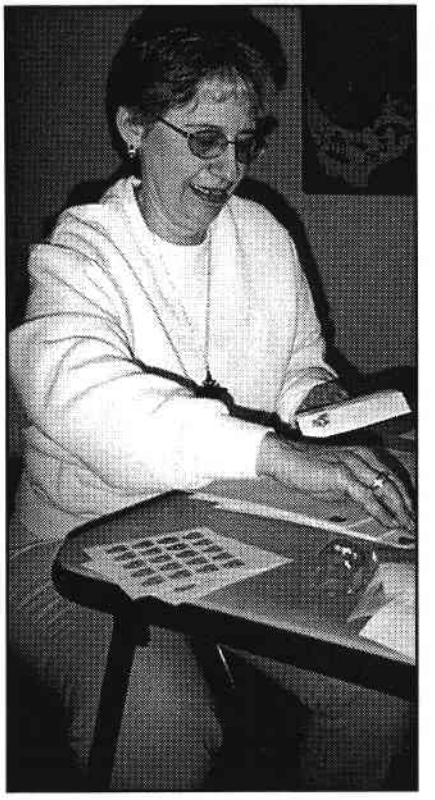
March 4, 2001



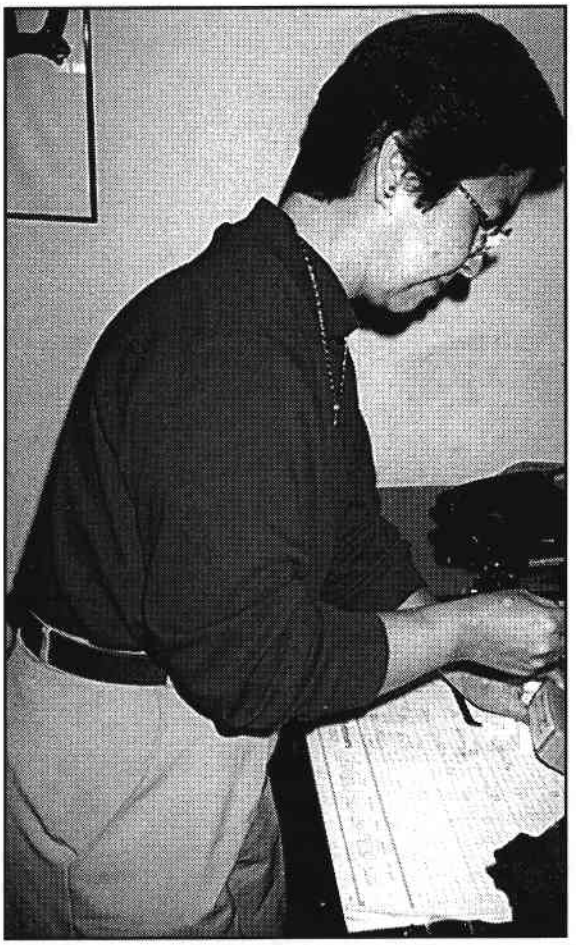


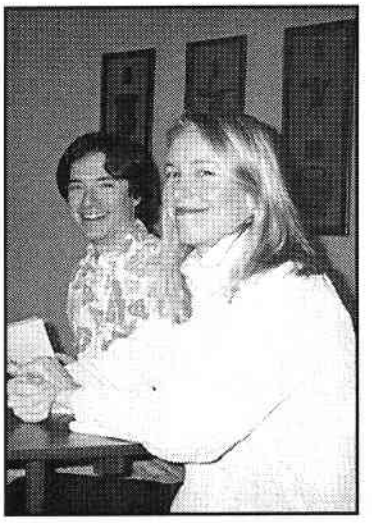


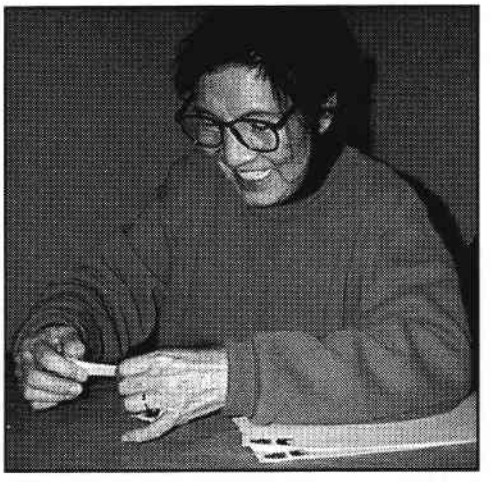
First Mailing of *The Vital Force* in New Mexico!



VFJ Volunteers, clockwise, from top left: Joyce Veercamp inspects and stuffs issues; Robert Montes de Oca and Uly Messier collate flyers the T'ai Chi Chih way — while shifting the weight; Marjie Bassler stamps international envelopes; Caroline Messier applies First Class postage as does Suni McHenry; Amy Tyksinski and *VFJ* Staff Member Ed Altman wait for stuffed issues to fill bulk mail envelopes, Carmen Brocklehurst saves the day by refilling a dry return address stamper (after going out to the store and buying a fresh bottle of ink). *Also attending, but not pictured:* VFJ *Volunteer Caroline Chavez*, VFJ *Editor Noel Altman*. Photos: Noel Altman

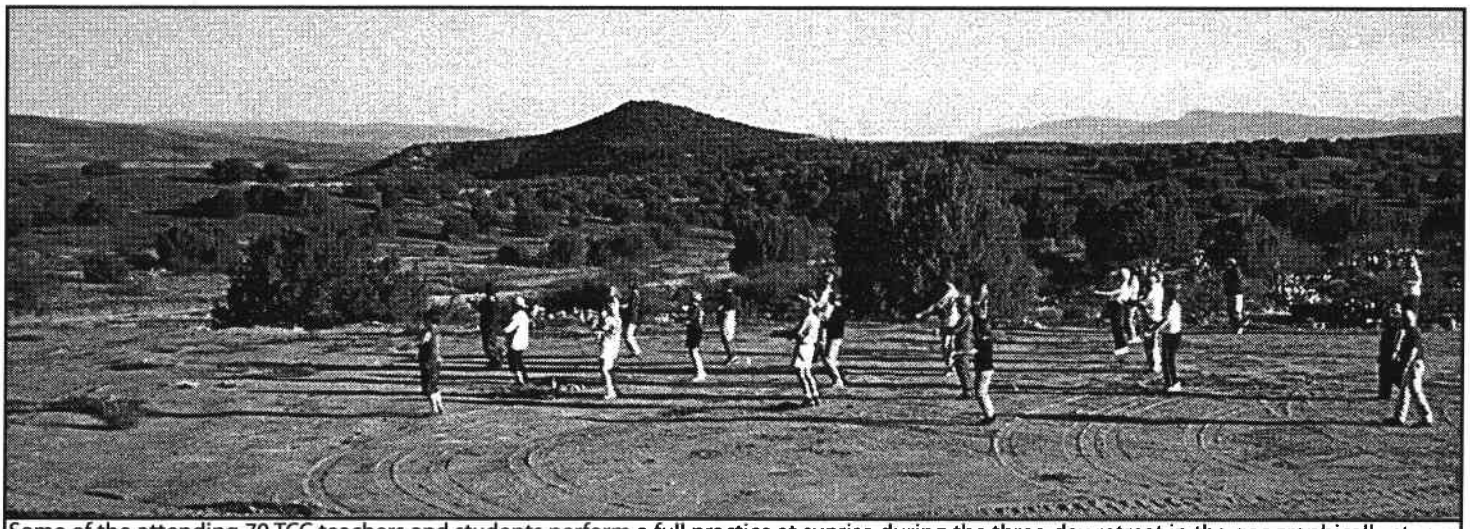






March 30 - April 1, 2001

Sedona TCC retreat attracts 70!



Some of the attending 70 TCC teachers and students perform a full practice at sunrise during the three-day retreat in the geographically stunning outskirts of Sedona, AZ. Attendees came from as far away as New Jersey, New York, Maryland, Louisiana, South Dakota and Washington, as well as closer by — from Arizona, California, Utah and New Mexico to this first-ever event which TCC Teacher Deanne Hodgson hosted.

Photo provided by Caroline Guilott and Bitsy LeBlanc

Participants respond...

. . . We were 70 persons, walking the path of mystery of our spiritual journey, who valued T'ai Chi Chih as essential. We came as beginners, as students, as teachers, as appointed head, from the place of no experience to having 25 years experience with the practice.

What made this T'ai Chi Chih gathering different from other gatherings? Many things. One was the mixture of persons and experience. Another was the setting. Located in Arizona's high desert, Sedona Retreat and Healing Park embraced us with quiet, acres of vast open landscape, simple delicious meals and gracious hospitality. Another was the easy rhythm of the time. In the residential setting, participants had the luxury of time to: experience three complete practices immersed in the energy of Nature; glean wisdom and refinement from Ed Altman and each other in three learning sesions; reflect, hike, soak in the grandeur of energy-filled red rocks; share with old friends and new acquaintances . . .

The impact of the weekend T'ai Chi Chih retreat was powerfully gentle, realized immediately and gradually revealing. . . .

– Sr. Kathy Salewski

. . . It has been a year since I completed Teacher Accreditation in Staten Island, NY. I am a new teacher who was trained mainly by the use of videos as there were no available teachers in my area. Since the accreditation I've used every opportunity I can to be with other teachers. These trainings and retreats have been so valuable to me, because I see how much I have to allow and let go for my own practice to deepen.

Recently I went to the retreat in Sedona. The help I received was immeasurable. First, moving without shoes, something I never do, put me in touch with the soles of my feet. Next, although I'd heard Ed and Justin talk about the back heel releasing, I'd never put my attention there. As the attention found it's way to the heel, I could more fully shift the weight and experience the movement of Chi. Thank you Ed for repeating one more time the emphasis and principles of TCC. I also found Pam [Towne]'s counting technique to be helpful ("1 and 2 and") in making contact with the heel. My new mantra is "1- release, 2- allow". Thank you Noel for your patience and attention in working with me on Perpetual Motion Taffy. . . . Many Thanks,

– Joanne Lovejoy

Originator and Head of TCC teach how to give effective presentations

By Noel Altman

"A presentation can be very powerful if you yourself are genuine and believe in what T'ai Chi Chih does..." began Justin Stone at an all-day workshop entitled "Giving Effective Presentations" held on April 22 at the Albuquerque T'ai Chi Chih Center. "I've never met someone that wasn't interested in hearing what T'ai Chi Chih has to offer. Since I'm sold on it, it's very easy to get them sold on it," he continued.

Nearly 20 mostly local T'ai Chi Chih teachers and teacher candidates attended the event, which was co-led by Ed Altman. One teacher, Margo Carpenter, flew all the way from Edmonton, AB, Canada to attend.

Justin stressed these three points in giving an effective presentation:

* "Move well."
* "Talk about what you know — your own experience, not what you've read."
* "Get them on their feet and trying some movements. *Around the Platter* is an easy one and they will begin to feel something right away."

Justin then proceeded to give a relaxed mock presentation of almost 30 minutes in which he addressed many of the questions that concern teachers by demonstrating how he would answer them. Addressing the mock crowd, he said, "When people come up and ask me 'Is it good for my arthritis, my this, my that — my answer is always, 'Why don't you try it and find out?'"

He continued, "This will surprise some of you, but (regular practice) will have an effect not just in your health and wellbeing, but in your life," thereby hinting at some of the deeper aspects of this practice. He then proceeded to talk about how T'ai Chi Chih affects your entire outlook.

He addressed the concept that the way you move is most important — "softly, without effort — the effort of no effort. If you make effort, then that is exercise and will close off the flow of the chi through the meridian channels." In making this point, he is dispelling the idea in the minds of the audience that this is just another form of exercise.

After getting his mock audience up on their feet to experience *Around the Platter* and *Daughter on the Mountaintop,* he mentioned that, in time, with practice, the practitioner may experience fluttering hands and later, the feeling of "Nobody is doing anything — you have gotten yourself out of the way. T'ai Chi Chih is doing T'ai Chi Chih."

He then mentioned that his upcoming class details were available for those interested, and added, "If those times are not convenient for you, then perhaps we can work out another time." He also mentioned that there are two ways to learn — by attending once a week or twice a week. He stressed that the attendees should "learn it from an accredited teacher — not someone who has just taken lessons, but someone who has been trained so that he/she can see that you develop properly in your practice."

Following Justin's presentation, Ed added that three points to convey in any presentation are that T'ai Chi Chih is "powerful, easy, and enjoyable." He then led a discussion from a handout he had prepared for participants of additional points to consider when presenting, which included:

* Indicate that one is an *accredited* T'ai Chi Chih instructor.
* Discuss the benefits without making promises.
* Target the benefits to the audience.
* Be enthusiastic, but not overzealous.
* Remember to smile.
* Do not try to teach the movements; just let them get the feeling.

Ed gave some tips on public speaking which he learned in workshops he attended while in the software industry in Seattle, WA. He said that standing with your

arms at your side, though it may feel awkward, gives the best impression to the audience. He said that research has shown that if you hold your hands clasped in front of you or behind you or put your hands in your pockets that you are sending subliminal messages that are unfavorable. He also mentioned that altering your volume and physically moving your voice around the room (by actually walking toward members of the audience) is a good way to keep people focused on you ("and awake").

In considering props, Ed suggested that teachers pick one (if any at all), use it and get rid of it. He mentioned that he has seen presentations where teachers had all number of props laid out on the floor and they became a distraction. He suggested that if teachers use music, that they have control over turning it off, or turning it down (or they have a helper who will). He added that it is a more graceful transition to ease the volume down, rather than just clicking the machine off.

Whenever possible, Ed suggested, presentations should be timed to occur a week or two before a class is scheduled to begin so the attendees will have your presentation fresh in mind when deciding to attend the class the next week. He said that before giving a presentation, teachers should know when and where their upcoming classes will be and how much they will cost. He said teachers could consider giving some sort of financial incentive to attendees to get them to sign up and pay for the upcoming class before leaving the presentation — for instance, including the text as part of the course fee, or offering a $10 reduction in the overall course fee. He also mentioned that a 50% discount could be considered for those on fixed incomes — full-time students or retired seniors.

Ed spoke of the "Two-minute presentation" which he said he has countless opportunities to give — when standing in line, when sitting next to somebody on a plane, when meeting someone for the first time. He said it is good for teachers to know what points they would want to make if these opportunities for a brief explanation of TCC occur in their lives. Attending teacher Carmen Brocklehurst explained that one time, when asked for an "in a nutshell" explanation of TCC in a parking lot on the way to her car, she distilled the purpose of T'ai Chi Chih down into an easy-to-remember phrase, "ABC — activate, balance and circulate the chi."

"We are ambassadors of T'ai Chi Chih — not just when we're teaching, but all the time," said attending teacher Uly Messier. He added that it is helpful to "be professional in the way you carry yourself, and in your dress." He had some "ice-breaker" suggestions and revealed that this is how he relaxes himself before giving presentations, "I greet people as they come in — I introduce myself and ask their name. If I have time, I might chit chat with them for a little while — this takes the intimidation away." He also mentioned that he then tries to use the information gleaned from these intial contacts when actually giving the presentation. If a man said he was a mechanic, for instance, Uly might then use an analogy to an engine in making a point about T'ai Chi Chih.

He mentioned that when he mans a booth for T'ai Chi Chih at a health fair or other event, when he has some "down time," he circulates around to the other booths. "Don't wait for people to come to you — you go to them," he emphasized. "I always have my business cards with me and sometimes some brochures in my back pocket as well." He said he was uncomfortable doing this at first, but he overcame it.

"His passion for T'ai Chi Chih is greater than his personal level of comfort," Ed noted.

Presentations can lead to other presentations," Ed explained, and teachers can encourage this by verbally mentioning that they are available to give presentations to other groups and if anyone is interested, they can talk to the teacher after the presentation.

A suggestion for the future

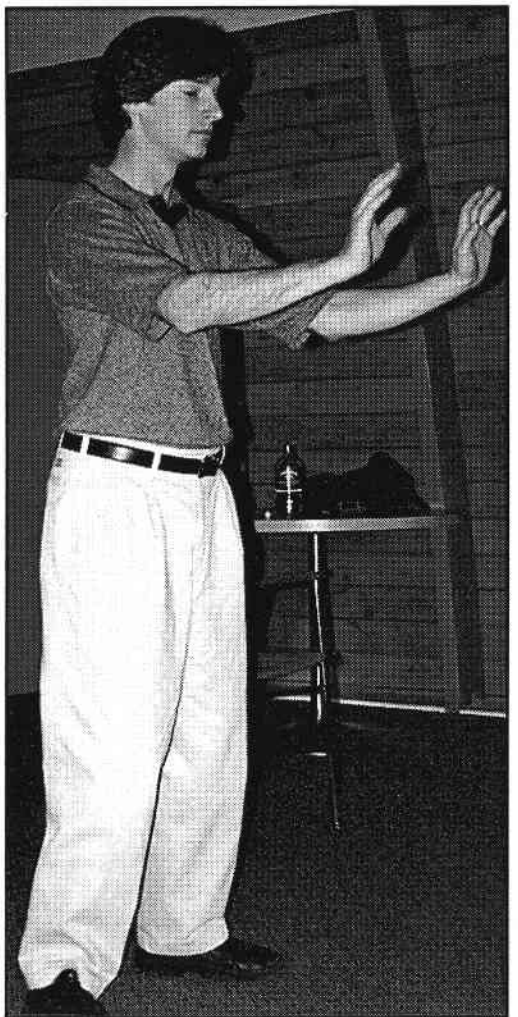
Teachers: *If you missed this workshop, but are interested in this topic, I have a suggestion to make: audit teacher training courses. In Ed's first year as the Head of T'ai Chi Chih, I attended every teacher training course held that year —nine total — and I cannot speak highly enough of that opportunity. As far as the presentations aspect of it went, after seeing over 100 heartfelt presentations that year, some from candidates who were already highly skilled public speakers before they learned T'ai Chi Chih, I certainly gained umpteen new ideas and perspectives on giving effective presentations. It was inspiring. I still remember some of those ideas to this day, and have put some of them into practice in my own presentations. But, aside from observing the various techniques employed, when you see someone speaking from the heart, it cannot help but stay with you and serve as a helpful reminder that that should always be the core of any presentation on T'ai Chi Chih.*

April 27 - 29, 2001

Canadian Seijaku training yields 13 newly-accredited Seijaku teachers

By Margo Carpenter
Course Host

On the weekend of April 27-29, 13 Seijaku candidates and four auditing teachers came together to join Ed Altman for a most valuable immersion into the world of Seijaku and the Maximum Chi Program. We even managed to have lovely weather to go with our superb three days of concentrated T'ai Chi Chih practice (we began with a half-day renewal) and Seijaku training!



Course Instructor Ed Altman leads the group through the preliminary toning exercises of Seijaku. Photo: Margo Carpenter

The Seijaku training gave us all the opportunity to look a little closer at what is going on in our own TCC practices. Are we shifting the weight properly? Are we maintaining our alignment? Do we allow the knees to soften before shifting the weight? Are we leading with the T'an T'ien and not the shoulders? Or have we fallen victim to carelessness and inattention to these basic principles? Seijaku brought the answers to these questions clearly into focus for each of us.

Someone asked the question "Are we pushing against an inner force or an outer force?" Ed's reply was a thoughtful — "Both". As we worked with this thought more questions arose for me. Was the barrier we pushed against actually constructed by ourselves? Were we pushing though our own self-imposed limitations, fears and doubts? Or was this wall erected by others — designed out of misunderstanding or prejudice and built to hold us back, or keep us safely out of the way? Which walls were higher? Which were stronger?

For some of us our biggest walls come from within — a lack of confidence, a feeling of powerlessness, perhaps even a sense of unworthiness. What a breakthrough indeed to burst through these barriers and catch hold of our true selves; strong, capable and entirely wondrous. Is this not where the true power of a personal Seijaku practice lies?

As the training continued, further questions began to surface regarding what kind of baggage we carry around with us. Baggage (or tensions) that we just can't seem to set down even when we have the opportunity to unload. An image came to my mind of the very small entrance to a walled fortress surrounding the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, Israel. As with the biblical gate referred to as the "Eye of the Needle", this tiny four foot high entrance demands the removal of all burdens from the backs of the camels before they can lower themselves to crawl through the entrance. How often do we find ourselves acting like the contrary camel that refuses to lower himself and let someone help remove the impossible burdens before entering through the gate?

It is this same stripping away of the added burdens we carry with us that makes it possible for Seijaku to carry us further into the heart of the "Holy City". Are you ready to step through that tiny entrance? Well, there are 13 newly accredited Seijaku instructors who have done just that. They now turn to you and beckon you to join them on the journey into the inner city.

(L-R): Maureen Purves, Lorraine Lepine and Lucia Veteran smile as they practice. Photo: Margo Carpenter

Attendees comment

. . . It was a fantastic weekend. I am now doing blended practices most mornings. I'm enjoying the Seijaku — but I'll say this. It's not for sissies! . . .

– Terri Manuck

. . . I really enjoyed the course, the place and the company. I have finally begun to embrace Seijaku after a week. At first everything seemed foreign, but now it is falling into place and is a great help and joy. . . .

– Lynn Shaw-Ringham

I've just returned to Planet Earth after having participated in the Seijaku Training held in Edmonton, Canada. . . . I will remember, and cannot say enough about, the warmth and generous spirit of each person in the group. I was a stranger in their country and yet felt so at home that I might have been with family or friends I'd known for a lifetime. The Teh [power of inner sincerity] was strong. But then such Inner Sincerrity is to be expected — but never taken for granted — in members of the TCC Community.

I learned so much that it will take a forever to absorb. I'm glad to have Justin's tape on Seijaku so that I can continue the learning process. During the Training I often thought of Dan Pienciak's comment that learning Seijaku helped him to understand the "softness" in TCC. That is the biggest and most helpful beginning lesson that I also learned. The rest will come in its' time. Ed was as usual very giving, very sensitive, and very patient. He seemed to know exactly where each person was in their progress, always encouraging the growth. I continue to be impressed with him and with the combination of his youth and his awareness. . . . Thank you Ed, and thank you Justin for the great gift of TCC and Seijaku.

– Lucia Veteran

Congratulations to the 13 new Seijaku teachers! ***Back row, (L-R):*** Jackie Williamson, Chery Ann Hoffmeyer, Tamara Zujewskyj, Course Instructor Ed Altman, Caroline Guilott, Lucia Veteran, Bitsy LeBlanc; ***Front row (L-R):*** Garret Tayler, Lynn Shaw-Ringham, Denise Cirino, Terri Manuck, Sr. Kay Morrell, Sr. Viola Bens, Ray Payne, Course Host Margo Carpenter. Photo provided by Margo Carpenter

May 5 - 12, 2001

Teacher renewal & training held in CA

By Pam Towne
Course Host

Candidate Sr. Corita Keane (far left) leads the group of fellow candidates and auditing teachers in *Working the Pulley* on Friday morning — ***(L-R):*** Keane, Lois Arrigotti, Pat Fisher, Sandy Smail and auditors Don Walker and Marilyn Wilson. Photo: Pam Towne

On Saturday before the Teacher Training, 12 Southern California teachers (plus one from Arizona) gathered for a day of **Renewal** on May 5th. Led by Ed Altman & hosted by Pam Towne, this special workshop offered an opportunity to deepen our practice of T'ai Chi Chih, to better understand the principles of circulating and balancing the Chi, and to connect with other teachers in the area.

Ed continually invited us to FEEL the weight shifting slowly & gradually in the soles of the feet...to FEEL what the Chi is doing (expanding, contracting)...to soften the knees...to let go of tension. We all agreed it was a very valuable day...and highly recommend it to teachers in other areas!

Sharing a laugh during discussion time --- ***(L-R):*** Course Instructor Ed Altman and candidates Linden Royce, Barbara Lippert, Pat Fisher. Photo: Pam Towne

****

With an empowering and introspective tone set for the week, eight teacher candidates embarked on the transformative process of **Teacher Training**, May 7-12. This was the first T'ai Chi Chih teacher accreditation course in 2001, and the first to use the newly revised Teachers' Training Manual. The new manual is available to already accredited teachers who audit a Teacher Training course.

Ed emphasized the principles of how to move: **flowing from the center**, which is the result of **alignment** of the spine, correct & stable **stance**, **shifting the weight** properly and **releasing tension** throughout the body.

The candidates' sincerity, commitment and willingness to examine every aspect of their practice led to

personal breakthroughs. Two of the candidates had farther to go with integrating changes in how they move, and they received deferred accreditations.

Auditing teachers commented on how much they learned which served to enhance their practice...inspire their teaching...and deepen their appreciation for the unlimited depths of T'ai Chi Chih! Many thanks to Ed for a successful training...and for embodying the principles of T'ai Chi Chih!

Attendees Comment

Ed's wholeheartedness was an inspiration to let go of the struggle and flow from the center. A grateful thank you to Pam, who hosted the Teacher Training with impeccability, allowing me to focus on being there.

– Lois Arrigotti

T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Training was a very stressful, yet profound experience for me. I return home with renewed energy, and determination to continue to discover the depths and effects of T'ai Chi Chih daily practice.

– Sr. Corita Keane, R.S.M.

What was the Fullerton Teachers Training like this May? Best to describe the aftermath. To me it seems like my life is now SO full...I feel rich beyond measure...I must get rid of some of this clutter...no hurry though, no one is hurried here...no one is driving me to hurry....I do notice a bit of greediness, a new enlarged appetite for laughter and joy...probably never to be satisfied....

Sincere thanks to Justin F. Stone and to the entire T'ai Chi Chih community, past and present, for enabling me to be in this state.

– Bev Geiger

The immersion process of the Teacher Accreditation is a continual surrendering to the flow of the Chi. I am deeply grateful for the privilege to participate in this joyful practice.

– Barbara Lippert

It was an unfolding. I have now begun to feel what Justin meant when he said that we all live one life.

– Linden Royce

Congratulations to the graduates! ***(Back row, L-R):*** Course Instructor Ed Altman, Pat Fisher, Sr. Corita Keane, Sandy Smail, Bev Geiger, Marillyn DeVine, Course Host Pam Towne; ***(Front row, L-R):*** Lois Arrigotti, Barbara Lippert, Linden Royce. Photo provided by Pam Towne

Second Time Around

It is said that, "Love is lovelier the second time around." Well, taking the TCC teachers' training certainly is too. Having been accredited two years ago in a church in nearby Fullerton, I was excited to be able to audit the recent training held in the same location. While I have very fond memories of the original training experience, the nervous tension and the fear of not "passing," played a heavy role in not allowing me to truly "let go" and enjoy it. During this training, I was able to relax and "connect with" much more of what was presented, and it was also very rewarding to be a part of helping and encouraging the teacher candidates. If you are an accredited teacher, don't miss this valuable experience next time it is offered in your area. It will deepen your practice, enhance your teaching skills and it's truly "joyful."

– Suzy Hazard

News Shorts

T'ai Chi Chih included in articles published in nationally distributed arthritis and cancer newsletters

Carolyn Hales Perkins, T'ai Chi Chih teacher and co-host of last year's annual teachers' conference, wrote an article for the March 2001 issue of *Arthritis Self-Management* entitled "T'ai Chi" in which she discusses the benefits of regular practice of T'ai Chi Chih and another specialized form of T'ai Chi for those with arthritis.

In it, she describes what practitioners may expect from attending classes, what to keep in mind when practicing and also that "T'ai Chi Chih can even be done sitting in a chair, and there are teachers who specialize in teaching seated groups."

To find an accredited teacher, Carolyn refers readers to the website listing of teachers on the TCC Community website at www.taichichih.org. She also mentions *The Vital Force* as a place to get teacher referrals. To purchase Justin Stone's text and videotape, she refers readers to Good Karma Publishing.

* * * * * *

T'ai Chi Chih was also mentioned in an article entitled "The Wonders of T'ai Chi" in the March 2001 issue of *MAMM/Women, Cancer and Community.* Although the article is primarily about T'ai Chi Ch'uan, T'ai Chi Chih teacher Donna McElhose and one of her students were both interviewed about the TCC classes she teaches at the Cancer Wellness Center in Northbrook, IL.

The article reads, "This is 'a great form for women with cancer,' McElhose says, 'because you don't have to stand while doing it. You can do it sitting down if your legs are wobbly.' In that situation, McElhose says, a woman would go through the arm and leg motions while sitting on the edge of a chair, shifting her body and moving her arms."

At the end of the article, in a shaded box titled "Resources," the author noted, "For information on T'ai Chi Chih or for a listing of instructors throughout the country, go to www.taichichih.org."

– Noel Altman

Attendance climbs for the Annual T'ai Chi Chih Teachers' Conference

ONE HUNDRED FORTY. That's how many teachers have signed up at this point for the August conference. Don't miss this opportunity. This very likely may be the last conference Justin Stone attends (according to Justin). You may not have another opportunity to spend four days with Justin, not to mention all the other great experiences waiting to be enjoyed. If you have not signed up, do so now using the registration form enclosed with this *VFJ* issue. Live in the now — Grab this opportunity!

– Sandy McAlister

Teacher Training Manual Updated

The T'ai Chi Chih Teachers' Training Manual has recently been revised. The entire manual has been reformatted, content has been updated and enhanced, and several new sections have been added to provide further information and inspiration for new teachers. Accredited T'ai Chi Chih Teachers who wish to can get a copy of the revised manual during this year's Annual T'ai Chi Chih Teachers' Conference in the Bay Area, or by auditing a Teacher Training course (after informing the course host in advance of such a request). In either case, the teacher will need to pay for the reproduction costs of the new manual.

– Ed Altman

"News Shorts" continued on page 32

Calendar of Events

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

Aug. 2-5, 2001

16TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL T'AI CHI CHIH TEACHERS' CONFERENCE
Location: Moraga, (SF Bay Area), CA
Contact: Sandy McAlister/Conference
24835 Second Street
Hayward, CA 94541
Phone: (510) 582-2238

Registration fee (6/1 - 8/1): $360
Non-U.S. Teachers' fee: $260

Aug. 27 thru Sept. 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

(Full — Waiting list only)

Nov. 20, 2001

DAY OF "JOY THRU MOVEMENT" CELEBRATING T'AI CHI CHIH
Location: Worldwide

March 28 thru 31, 2002

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: TBA

POSSIBLE FUTURE EVENTS:

If interested in an event described below, contact the host. These events will only happen if there are enough people interested.

Nov. 5 thru 10, 2001

TCC TEACHER TRAINING
Location: **Albuquerque, NM**
Contact: For the NM TCC Center:
Uly Messier
Uly's Phone: (505) 864-3946

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.

2001 Conference Committee prepares and distributes press release

The Conference Committee approved this release at our last meeting. I sent a copy to *Diablo* magazine, a local publication, and *People* magazine.

It was suggested that if all attendees sent a copy of this to their local media, stories of their participation would follow and this would help promote their local classes.

- Denise Clark,
Publicity Coordinator for 2001 Conference Committee

Contact: Denise M. Clark

120 Tuscany Way

Danville, CA 94506

E-mail
denise@deniseclark.com

Phone (925) 736-0513

T'ai Chi Chih

Press Release

Justin Stone, Originator of T'ai Chi Chih, to Visit St. Mary's College in Moraga, CA for Teachers' Conference

The 16th Annual T'ai Chi Chih Teachers' Conference is an International Event

- **Danville, CA, June 1, 2001:** Justin Stone, the Originator of T'ai Chi Chih, and 175 or more certified teachers will participate in a four-day conference to be held at St. Mary's College in Moraga, CA on August 2 through 5, 2001. T'ai Chi Chih, a moving meditation with far-reaching benefits, has been recognized by many prestigious organizations such as The Arthritis Foundation. "The slow, gentle movements build muscle strength without stressing the joints, improve balance and relieve depression. ... programs such as T'ai Chi Chih, that embrace these principals can be beneficial for people with arthritis," reads a statement released by The Arthritis Foundation. Additionally, the American Medical Association has included T'ai Chi Chih as a "complementary practice" for the health profession. The conference will provide teachers the opportunity to share success stories, and improve personal practice and teaching skills. People that are interested in learning more about T'ai Chi Chih may find additional information and locate a teacher in their area at www.taichichih.org.

Media Welcome at Event

Please contact Denise Clark for further information and to schedule on-site interviews during the conference.

Planting Seeds Results in Growth!

By Carolyn Allenby

Planting lettuce seed in the new warmth of an early spring day reminds me of a message from the TCC Teachers' Conference in Minnesota, nearly two years ago. "Plant seeds of T'ai Chi Chih." Well, TCC teaching has grown more than my garden. Here's a report on the continual planting and harvest!

In Minnesota, I confided that a local radio program host had invited me to talk about TCC when I called about a program on meditation that had not mentioned moving meditation. I'd been shy to follow-up on this, but of course new teacher friends at the conference urged me to "go for it!"

After a year of teaching the confidence was strong enough to let it happen. A mailing of class fliers to the station, with individual fliers to hosts of shows with related topics resulted in a 15-minute telephone interview with the host of "Healthy Lifestyles" and an hour's conversation in the studio on "The Many Faces of Addiction." Surprise at hearing from the alcoholism counselor moderated when researching substance abuse and finding the phrase: "Substances that alter mood and change perceptions and feelings...." Hmm, you can substitute TCC for "substances," without nasty side effects!

Thanks to Sr. Antonia Cooper, I met a woman who was planning a "Wellness Day." Participants had an hour of T'ai Chi Chih, and an hour of yoga, resting between with a presentation from a nurse about stress control techniques, followed by a healthy lunch. My handouts included a list of how to enroll in classes offered by other T'ai Chi Chih teachers as well as my own. These showcased a variety of learning opportunities: Sr. Antonia on Saturdays and in a retreat format, Janet Oussaty's classes for credit and as adult education at the community college, and Bobbie Ruocco's wellness programs at a hospital. The seed spreads over wider ground.

A workshop at a retreat center was also thanks to Sr. Antonia's referral. Plans for some alternative other activities, thinking all TCC might be too much movement in four hours, were quietly dropped because participants obviously wanted more TCC! So I even eliminated the Justin/Carmen interviews, just to give them as much practice time as possible. I'd been skeptical about TCC as a one day offering. But due to great feedback, I'm now more open minded about offering this version for people whose schedules or locations can't include weekly classes. Seeds can grow in different kinds of containers and gardens!

One afternoon I set up a table at a combination heatlh/craft fair at a nursing home. With an Avon lady on one side, and a knitter on the other, I serenely practiced TCC and answered questions from the residents and their caretakers and family who visited. This exposure helped build my confidence for the radio and retreats, and was fun!

Posted fliers from last fall are still yielding results in calls from potential students, and from people who want to set up classes. Students provide wonderful ideas on the line of my registration form that asks if they belong to a group that would appreciate a demonstration/class. Some of these I haven't had time yet to follow-up on, but they include: Rotary Club, Woman's Club, TOPs (Take Off Pounds Sensibly), a mother's group, temple, garden club, multiple sclerosis support group, employment places (two pharmaceuticals!)...

I am so grateful to Justin and all the TCC community for encouragement and support, and for the opportunity to share this healthy practice!

Heal Through Grief With T'ai Chi Chih

By Linda Robinson

When I first started teaching in the summer of 1999, I had a goal of teaching TCC classes to people in grief. I networked and wrote to various hospice organizations in Seattle offering T'ai Chi Chih to their clients, but no one responded. Meanwhile I started teaching "generic" classes in my home, at community centers, and at a worksite. Each class had its challenges as I had to pay for the space and make up fliers and "hit the pavement" to get people to come. But during all last year I had this running thread that in the right place and time I would find a way to meet my original desire to teach the bereaved.

PATIENCE AND FAITH (qualities I have learned through TCC practice) paid off. This past summer I made a marvelous connection with a bereavement program at a local hospital. I offered to volunteer a few hours a week to talk with people who had recently lost someone. The bereavement coordinator was describing the programs available and commented that she wished she could start some kind of physical or movement program for people who didn't feel like talking about their grief. Well....you can imagine how quickly I brought out my TCC business card! She was very excited and has been highly supportive of my teaching TCC classes for the bereaved. Since then I have been able to offer classes in the fall, winter, and the spring. The program pays me and offers the classes free to the individuals who go through their hospice program. My last class has a group of motivated learners who want to continue together with an ongoing/intermediate class, so the program is looking into whether they can offer it as well as a beginning class for new people.

Things I have learned about teaching the bereaved:

* People with recent losses have a hard time being consistent with anything in their lives. They also have a hard time with remembering the moves (because of preoccupation with their grief.) By offering a series of 8-10 classes twice a week (as opposed to weekly) there is a better chance they will be able to carry information over to the next time.

* People experience grief in many different ways. Some people come to class without having dealt with any of their emotional pain. Be prepared for strong emotions to come up with some students right away. Be empathetic and encourage them to see the benefits of the chi as a healing force that not only opens them up to their emotions but will also bring emotional balance to their daily life. If they need to talk with a professional counselor remind them of other hospice support services available to them.

* Even though they want to learn TCC they also want the connection of being around others who are grieving. So we spend the last half hour (classes are one and a half hours long) talking about how TCC is affecting their various symptoms of grief (physical and emotional). Students have also asked me to repeat the new moves again before leaving class. Sometimes it is helpful after having practiced in class to just sit and watch the teacher one more time.

* People are seeking a comforting place to learn TCC. Set up an environment that makes them feel safe and o.k. to be emotional, tired, irritable, thoughtful, etc. Even in the hospital (with its annoying PA system) we got permission to light votif candles in a sand tray to honor their loved ones when they first enter the class. It also helps them to get into a self-reflective mode and let down their outside armor. In these beginning classes I generally critique moves as a group rather than singling anyone out. Exceptions are made after a few times if someone is having a glaring problem. Then I move back into the group and do it by the person while everyone else is still moving.

With each TCC class I am learning new things both about my own practice and about this particular population. It has been extremely gratifying and personally healing for me. I would love to hear other people's experiences working with the bereaved and am happy to share more information for those interested.

In DEEP GRATITUDE to Justin and Ed and all the wonderful teachers who have helped me find my way with T'ai Chi Chih.

TCC Teacher (and former AMA executive) advises teachers on how to approach healthcare facilities to offer TCC classes

[Editor's Note: TCC Teacher Neena Mitchell wanted to know how best to approach the medical community to offer TCC to patients. She wrote to TCC Teacher Hannah Hedrick, a retired (as of last summer) executive at the American Medical Association. Hannah responded with such a thorough and helpful list of suggestions that Neena submitted them to *The Vital Force* to be shared with all teachers, (and teachers-to-be).]

...I hope to work with Ed to develop specific language and put together a packet when I have time. In the meantime you could put together a clean looking folder with the following:

1. Develop a letter or make a telephone call requesting an interview or the opportunity to provide a demonstration:

*introduce yourself, indicating when you were accredited

*provide brief information about the development of TCC.

*develop a paragraph identifying benefits OF MOST INTEREST to a healthcare institution. For example:

- Safe and effective for all patient populations and staff (no reported incident of anyone being hurt from doing TCC).

- Can be used to support almost any rehabilitation, recovery, or behavior modification program.

- Easy to learn, easy to share with others.

- For everybody

*For mobile patients, improves physical and emotional balance, reduces stress, enhances sense of well-being

*For people in wheelchairs, improves seated balance and same as above

*For people in bed, improves emotional balance and same as above

*For staff, creates the above benefits and provides a healthy alternative for breaks (replaces smoking, eating snacks, drinking caffeine, sugary, or carbonated drinks)

"Physical balance" includes metabolism, blood pressure, etc., but be cautious of making any claim not supported by a research report on your list. You can say that your students, other TCC teachers, etc., have experienced improvements in special areas, including reduced pain, but speak in terms of SYMPTOMS, NOT DISEASES. For example, less stiffness and less pain related to arthritis, not "It cured my student's arthritis."

2. Access the AMA Home page at ama-assn.org and do backslash "diversity," which takes you to the Cultural Competence Initiative Page. There is a prompt for the Cultural Competence Compendium table of contents. Select the section on Complementary and Spiritual Practices and print out the intro, which includes T'ai Chi Chih, and the entry on T'ai Chi Chih toward the end of that section. Include the inside cover of the book for publication information.

3. Copy the letter from [Dr. Michael Scotti, AMA Vice President of Medical Education] to Justin Stone, printed in the *VF*, ["News Shorts," Sept. 1999] about the contributions of TCC to cultural competence.

4. Include a list of publications on the safety and efficacy of TCC and of any form of t'ai chi, chi kung, or meditation.

- Hannah Hedrick

Teaching TCC: Center or No Center?

By Dale Buchanan

Almost four years ago I opened the T'ai Chi Chih Studio in Great Falls, VA. After only two years I had to close the doors due to financial difficulties. I basically could not make enough money teaching classes to pay the rent. I learned my lesson and now I am ready to share some of my experience.

It can be very stressful and frustrating sometimes to work in facility's where I have little or no control over the temperature, noise, room size, etc., but it forces me to let go and accept each class as it is.

After owning my own TCC center, it's my conclusion that a "center" is good to have for training's, practices, workshops, meetings, and some classes. It would be a good idea to allow other teachers in the local area to share the facility, which is something I did not do. I feel that the teacher should not get locked into teaching all classes at one location, that it is very beneficial to branch out and find different locations within a certain radius from their home. After teaching for a while, they can pull the students together (at any location) for regular practices, workshops, special classes, etc. to help expand the T'ai Chi Chih community.

I have been teaching a lot recently and have 10 classes per week at five local fitness centers. I have more students now than when I had my studio. I also have no overhead, pay for no marketing, and have the support of each club. It is really working our very well. My connection with fitness centers, from being a personal trainer, has finally paid off.

Each of the five locations I teach at are entirely different and offer new challenges. It can be very stressful and frustrating sometimes to work in facility's where I have little or no control over the temperature, noise, room size, etc., but it forces me to let go and accept each class as it is. When I had my studio, it was always the way I wanted it, which sometimes made me week and complacent...and that is a deadly combination. Now, I am forced to live more of the Seijaku way, being still in the midst of activity. I drive (and sit) through rush hour traffic, carry my bags of materials, products, and sometimes a TV/VCR into the club, and I am tired at the end of the night after each class is over. This actually brings me closer to my students and I can relate to them better because I can feel what they've been through all day.

When I had my studio, it was always the way I wanted it, which sometimes made me week and complacent...and that is a deadly combination. Now, I am forced to live more of the Seijaku way, being still in the midst of activity.

Many times, as I am teaching, I'll get distracted by something during the class and I think about how nice it would be to have my own place again. Those thoughts quickly disappear once I realize how grateful I am just to be teaching at all. I tell my students they have to learn to practice TCC even if there are slight distractions around them because it will force them to go deeper inside themselves and concentrate more on the soles of the feet. They usually agree and realize that they are lucky to be having TCC in there facility.

Creating a T'ai Chi Chih Center:

Albuquerque's Experience

By Ann Rutherford

A T'ai Chi Chih Center in your community provides an ideal environment for classes and for strengthening teachers' ties to each other and their practice. The Albuquerque Center is registered as a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization and is used for teaching classes, Association meetings, workshops and teacher trainings. Having a Center is a worthwhile goal, but one that cannot be taken on without a good deal of groundwork preparation.

The first consideration is cost. Can you generate enough income from classes and donations to afford the rent and utilities? In our case, the majority of the Center's expense is rent (41%). The annual rent for the Center was $14,156 in 2000.

Rental income from teachers' classes was a total of $3,861. How do we cover the shortfall? In two ways: 1. Monetary donations totaled $5,872. 2. Justin Stone has been extremely generous to our Center. He donates the proceeds of his Meditation Retreats to us and occasionally he has a gallery showing of his beautiful paintings, donating the profits to the Center. We realize that this is a risky way to finance our existence and have embarked on an ambitious plan to create a healthier financial picture.

Our goal is to stimulate more classes at the Center and at off site locations. To do this, we have created two Committees: 1. The Search and Find Committee approaches businesses and support groups such as those dealing with arthritis, lupus, cancer, writers, etc. We ask if they would be interested in a free T'ai Chi Chih presentation and demonstration. 2. The Presentation Committee educates itself on the issues and needs of each group to whom it will be speaking. When teachers pick up off site classes that were promoted by the Presentation Committee, they are asked to contribute 10% of their profits to the Center. Teachers who teach at the Center pay rent according to how many students they have and which room they rent. We have begun the Committee plan only within the last month, but already we are receiving an unusual number of calls requesting presentations, demonstrations and classes. The fruits of karma (action) are ripening!

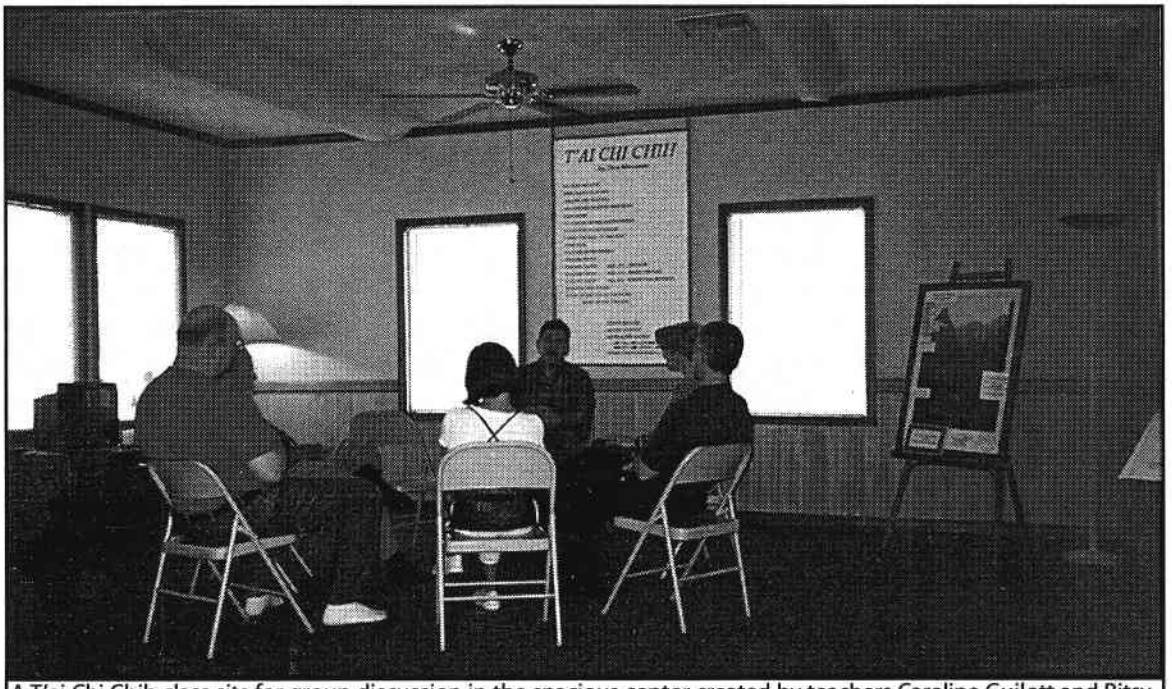
Besides income received from teachers and donators, a healthy Center should have a significant pool of enthusiastic volunteers. . . . Obviously the Center cannot afford to pay them, but it is in the nature of grateful T'ai Chi Chih practitioners to volunteer their time and not expect monetary compensation.

Besides income received from teachers and donators, a healthy Center should have a significant pool of enthusiastic volunteers. Both student and teacher volunteers run our Center. They man the telephone, mail out books and class schedules, serve on the Board, publish a monthly newsletter, help organize teacher training classes and workshops, sign up to sit at Health Fairs and wherever else they see an opportunity to advertise the benefits of T'ai Chi Chih. Obviously the Center cannot afford to pay them, but it is in the nature of grateful T'ai Chi Chih practitioners to volunteer their time and not expect monetary compensation. The Albuquerque T'ai Chi Chih Association looks forward to hearing about the formation of other T'ai Chi Chih Centers around the world!

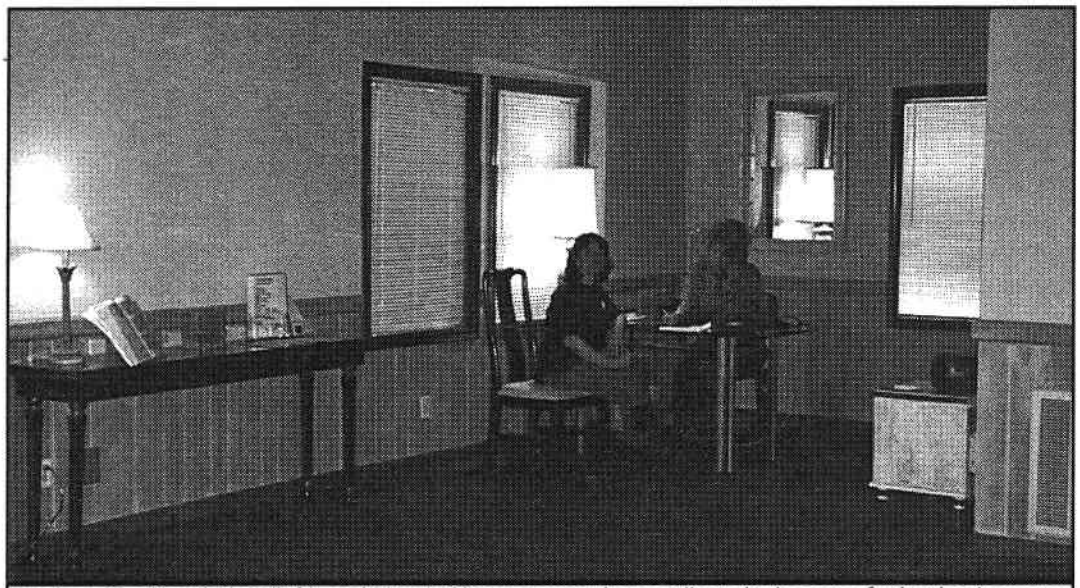
The Blooming of the "Green House"

By Caroline Guilott and Bitsy LeBlanc

After receiving their teacher accreditation in Albuquerque, NM in June of 1999, Caroline Guilott, Linda Kleinschmidt and Bitsy LeBlanc returned to Lake Charles, LA full of inspiration and eagerness. They took Ed Altman's advice and began teaching T'ai Chi Chih right away. Questions were asked and answered. Where, when and how? A decision to team teach was reached and finding a place to begin teaching was sought. The local restored Arts and Humanities building, one of the oldest existing school buildings in the downtown Lake Charles area, offered a very reasonable hourly fee. Supplies such as videos, books, music and other supplies were brought to and from each class. There was no place to leave these items on the premises. The key for entrance into the building had to be picked up and brought back to the main office before and after each class. When having night classes, this always involved going back the next day. After eight months, these, along with a few other hindrances, (even though minor), began to become just that.....a hindrance.



A T'ai Chi Chih class sits for group discussion in the spacious center created by teachers Caroline Guilott and Bitsy LeBlanc in Lake Charles, LA. Photo provided by Bitsy LeBlanc and Caroline Guilott



Teachers Caroline Guilott (left) and Bitsy LeBlanc answer phone calls and take care of other business at a desk in one corner of their center. Photo provided by Bitsy LeBlanc and Caroline Guilott

Around that time, Caroline had mentioned to her husband, Robert, the idea of using some of the space of their business rental house for teaching T'ai Chi Chih. (It

was being used for storing cleaning supplies). No immediate favorable reaction was noticed so Caroline dismissed this idea. A few months later, Robert asked Caroline if there was still an interest in using the "Green House" (a name that refers to the color and has nothing to do with being a nursery). Well, the seed had been planted and the "Green House" was about to begin budding.

The "Green House" is literally a small house used by the husband of Caroline Guilott for storage of business supplies. With his "blessing", Caroline and fellow teacher Bitsy LeBlanc redecorated parts of the inside of the house and changed the exterior, as well, in order to transform it into a TCC Center. Photo provided by Bitsy LeBlanc and Caroline Guilott

Linda decided to venture on her own and teach yoga. Caroline and Bitsy assessed the possibilities of revitalizing and pruning the neglected "Green House." A local artist and student of T'ai Chi Chih, Melinda McFillen, volunteered her time and ideas to help with this project.

An interior wall was removed to create a larger space for teaching and also accommodate room for taking care of business (phone, desk, files, etc.). A separate room with its own entrance located in the back of the house would prove ample for the storage of Robert's business supplies. A soft sculptured wall was formed from using shelving units and covering them with castaway drapery fabric from the local Civic Center. This allowed for a foyer entrance. Attics were scavenged and local junkyards and residential curbs became a definite interest. Rejected paint was purchased from a local paint store for $4.00 a gallon. The walls were painted a soft buttery yellow and the existing paneling was washed with a coat of diluted cream paint. New commercial carpet was installed over the cement floors. A TV/VCR was also purchased for viewing T'ai Chi Chih videos. Part of an easel was transformed into a display table for books, tapes and other offerings. The ugly fluorescent ceiling fixtures were covered with bleached muslin, creating a soft ballooning effect. New door locks

continued on page 33

As I reflect on the establishment of the [Lake Charles] Center, a few T'ai Chi Chih principles come to mind. When it first opened, upon entering, I felt it gave TCC a certain rootedness in Lake Charles. It was no longer just something new and intriguing being taught in an available public facility. It was a place that was more than a building with an address. It was a *space* that effortlessly brought one in contact with the supreme ultimate. The environment is simple, with character, but not elaborate or exaggerated. The teachers, too, are a part of the identity of the Center and also a reflection of it. Students easily detect the "Teh" there, the power of inner sincerity and integrity that is both grounded and natural in and around them. And as we return to this same place, this same space, our practice is enhanced by the continuity of all of the above.

Miki White
Student of Bitsy LeBlanc and Caroline Guilott

Teacher's doubts assuaged by "sign"

By Roseann Heinrich

I am always looking for signs that I am on the right path. I usually miss the sign until I find time to reflect. But, today, I couldn't miss the sign. A couple of days ago while getting ready to do my practice, I began to doubt whether I should continue to teach.

Since Accreditation in October, I have had two classes complete the course. My first class was a completely free class I offered to any employee of our company. The second class still welcomed Company employees but also included other regular students. Out of the six people in the original class, four continue to practice and have asked to attend the next class. Out of the six people in the second class, two practice regularly and wanted to return to the next class. I began to wonder if it was worth my time. I do know, though, that teaching is always a further opportunity for me to practice the T'ai Chi [Chih] I love.

I certainly am glad I am not relying on teaching for my income at this time. But, probably because I do have a full time career, I don't have time to promote my classes either. You see, I was in a quandry.

So two days ago, I put a thought out to the Universe and asked if I should continue to offer classes or just let it go.

Today, I had a knock at my office door. Three people from the first class presented me with a lovely plaque, with engraved name plate saying:

T'ai Chi Chih!
Roseann Heinrich
Accredited Instructor
First Class
2000

There is a picture of the first six people that was taken with one of the students' cameras the first night of class. I believe this is my answer. I believe the Chi moves in ever so many different ways. I will continue to offer classes and be grateful that right now I have another income so that I can enjoy teaching T'ai Chi Chih!

Forwarded letter and response from Ed Altman

. . . Ed, Patsy at the Cancer Wellness Center let me know that CBS will be coming on the 21 of February to interview the director and co-founder etc. of the center and T'ai Chi Chih will be included in the filming! I believe about 12 students have agreed to be in the filming. Patsy thought CBS might interview me also.

– Donna McElhose

Hi Donna,
I'm glad to hear about your interview, and I hope you'll write something up for the *VFJ* when it airs. I'd say the key points to get across in any interview are:

1. The purpose of T'ai Chi Chih is to circulate and balance the Chi of the body.

2. When the Chi is brought into balance great benefits occur, but they only come from regular practice.

3. You must learn from an accredited instructor.

4. T'ai Chi Chih is not a form of exercise or religion.

5. Our web site has information about teachers, materials, and the spiritual aspects of T'ai Chi Chih practice (www.taichichih.org).

Please keep me informed!

– Ed Altman

Question to "thevitalforce@yahoo.com"

Student questions readiness for training

Hello Staff at the *Vital Force*,

My name is Carol Murphy. I would like to inquire about your teacher trainings. I have been practicing TCC for several years and am being encouraged by my teacher to attend the teachers training. I have been thinking about this for several months now, wondering if I am ready to go to the teachers training this year. I have read your articles about preparing for the teachers training and it continues to tug at my heart. So, at this point I am curious if you still have any openings in your May class in the LA area, or if you will be doing any teacher trainings closer to the Seattle area in the near future. If so, it would be wonderful if we could discuss further the possibility of my being accepted into a teachers training this year. I am very, very interested.

I began doing TCC when I was still suffering from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. When I began, I thought, this is low impact, certainly it won't hurt my already sore muscles. After the first training session, I woke up the next day barely able to move. The slow movements were deceptively vigorous on my body, plus my motions needed much improvement. But I persisted. After continuing the movements for several years, and getting more into the wonderful meditative flow of the movements I feel calmly invigorated doing TCC. I also noticed the coldness that I was plagued with going away as the Chi started flowing more freely in my body. As it continued to help the CFS, I was hooked. I love the way I feel when I do the movements regularly and would like to continue to learn the moves at such a level as to be able to teach them responsibly to other people.

I currently work at . . . a spiritual development center and learning community in Sequim, WA, that we opened this year. We offer T'ai Chi [Chih] classes there through our certified teacher, Karen Williamson, as well as meditation, and a variety of other classes to assist people to connect to the "vital forces" within them. Karen has taught this class very faithfully for several years but is feeling pulled in other areas right now. I am interested in becoming certified to be able to continue to offer these classes in our community. I am also somewhat involved in another national retreat network that I would love to offer T'ai Chi Chih to, as well as the local Senior Center and Boys & Girls club in our area. I look forward to hearing from you,

- Carol Murphy

The Vital Force answers

Hi Carol,

You will have to contact the teacher who is hosting the course in Fullerton, CA — Pam Towne — about the availability in that course. I believe there is space, but she will be able to tell you. Her phone number is: (805) 987-3607.

I am glad to hear you are reading the articles in *The Vital Force* about the thorough preparation necessary for Teacher Training. You might try to meet with another teacher in your state and get his/her opinion about your level of readiness. There are two teachers who I would recommend that you contact, or either one. Ray Payne in Pasco, WA just came back from his Teacher Training in October, 2000 in Albuquerque, NM. I saw him at that training and know that he moved well. Since he has just taken the course, he could give you valuable insight on what is required and possibly work with you in tandem with your teacher on your preparation. Ray's phone number is: (509) 545-8463. Patricia Strand of Redmond, WA took her Teacher Training course in July, 2000 in Berkeley, CA and did struggle at the time . . . [which she movingly wrote about in the Sept. 2000 issue of *The Vital Force*] . She made a great deal of effort and many breakthroughs during the week and has continued to work on her practice diligently since receiving her accreditation. She helped another teacher in Washington with her insights when that person attended the Teacher Training in Albuquerque last October. Patricia's phone number is: (425) 885-3802.

There are no events scheduled in the Washington or Oregon area at this time.

The main point I would make to you is that there is no reason to rush the process and go to the training unprepared (even to take over an existing program of T'ai Chi Chih classes). If you meet with Patricia and/or Ray and practice T'ai Chi Chih with them, I think you will get a better sense of where you stand. It would be up to them to as to what they might charge you for their time.

Good luck!

Noel Altman, Editor
The Vital Force, Journal of T'ai Chi Chih

[Editor's note: Answering these types of questions (received at our general information e-mail address) is the task that new *VFJ* staff member Kathy Albers is assuming. When the exchange is of interest to our readers, we may print it in an upcoming issue of *The Vital Force*.]

News Shorts

continued from page 20

Has TCC practice benefited you?

Becky Busching, a member of the T'ai Chi Chih Association in Albuquerque, needs your stories! She is collecting the personal accounts of TCC practitioners world wide. She will be clustering them together by category, (physical, mental, emotional benefits received from TCC practitioners) and publishing them in a simple fold-out format. They will be available to anyone who is planning to make TCC presentations in their communities. There will be a nominal cost to cover printing and shipping. Keep your accounts as brief and to the point as possible. Becky reserves the right to paraphrase, and she will use only your first name and city.

Her mailing address is: 34 Camino Real, Sandia Park, N.M. 87047. Her e-mail is: **rebeccabusching@hotmail.com**.

– Ann Rutherford

VFJ uses mailing house to send bulk mail issues; service improves

Toward the end of last quarter, when looking into registering *The Vital Force* with a new bulk mail permit and paying the yearly use fee, I compared the costs of continuing to do this versus having a professional mailing house ship our bulk mail envelopes under their permit. Surprisingly, the costs turned out to be less (especially since the permit fees went up in 2001)! On top of this, it turned out the mailing house could "bar code" the mailing addresses, which would speed up delivery, and reduce our actual mailing costs slightly. With their pre-printing of the bulk mail envelopes, the work required by *VFJ* Volunteers on the day of the actual mailing was reduced by at least 30 percent, maybe more!

Curious to see if this new method would actually improve our delivery time, I e-mailed about 50 bulk mail subscribers living in all parts of the U.S. on the day the issue shipped, March 5, asking them to please let me know the exact day they got their issue and whether or not this was any faster than usual. About 40 people noted the date of arrival. To my great surprise, second only to Albuquerque itself, the fastest service reported was to the East Coast! Nearly all of those contacted there received their issues within a week! Sr. Antonia of No. Plainfield, NJ reported getting hers in three days! Those in the Midwest and most of the western states — Washington, Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado — reported delivery in a week to a week-and-a-half. California was the one exception, with delivery ranging from two to three weeks in general, with longer times reported from the Bay Area (where the issues used to be shipped *from*, which may be one more reason why we're now seeing improvement). Considering that our bulk mail delivery times used to range from two to four weeks, we have seen dramatic improvement overall!

– Noel Altman

Giving & Receiving

continued from page 8

they kept me stuck in the past. I needed to move forward and stay out of reverse.

My second insight had to do with a nagging question I've had over the past few months. Should I get rid of those journals I've been keeping for 25 years, or should I continue to cling to the past? I didn't particularly care for this insight. I asked myself what the value was of holding on to the journals. I got that my journals were like my faithful friends, there for me when I needed them. They allowed me to review and relive my pain, joy, triumphs, longings, frustrations, anger, etc. But sometimes we have to let go of friendships that have become a burden and no longer serve us. I was very attached to these notebooks that told the

continued on nextpage

story of my life, but I realized the more attached I was, the more I needed to let them go.

After a week of weighing the decision back and forth, I decided to burn all 21 journals. As I ripped out the pages and threw them into the fire, I affirmed that I release my limiting beliefs and that I set myself free. It took about two hours, and I had mixed feelings the whole time. But even with these conflicting emotions, it felt wonderful to get rid of the old and make room for the new. How could I be open to receive anything in the present when I'm cluttered up hanging on to the past? Although it was difficult, I knew it was the right decision because of the many dreams and coincidences that followed afterwards.

So, thanks to one man's act of kindness at a gas station, I learned about giving and receiving, and letting go. Later that same night I taught another TCC class. Just before class, one of the students gave me a t-shirt, and expressed her thanks.

I accepted the gift, and laughed at the irony.

The "Green House"

continued from page 29

were installed, mirrors carefully hung and old lamps revitalized. Wallpaper in a Chinese red shade was donated by a friend and applied to the bathroom walls. The bathroom, having lots of cabinets, provided ample storage space for the students' shoes, bags, etc. A bulletin board was mounted on one of the walls hosting pictures of local students, one of Justin with the two teachers and various announcements. The house had its own ceiling fan and central air and heating system. This was a definite plus.

The exterior of the house was washed and the window and door frames given several coats of a creamy white paint. Philodendrons, ferns, aspidistra, climbing jasmines and liriope were planted along the exterior walls. A T'ai Chi Chih sign made from a rattan headboard and flanked with bamboo (made from plastic PVC pipe) stands proudly in the front yard. A honeysuckle vine finds its way onto the bamboo frame. A swing was hung from a pecan tree in the backyard. The front and back doors were painted a deep magenta color. Lots of energy and time was devoted to this transformation.

Caroline and Bitsy shared much more than hard work and determination. They shared ideas and emotions. Laughter, the making of a deeper friendship, and love, kept them company along the way. They had the generous help and support of their husbands, Robert and Daniel, who helped make this growth possible, not only financially, but emotionally as well. Just about anything that was asked of them, if possible, was granted. Neither Robert nor Daniel, at this time, are students of T'ai Chi Chih, but they are definitely part of the T'ai Chi Chih Family. They helped make a little ordinary green house bloom into a warm and welcoming T'ai Chi Chih Center. By the way, the Center is located on Center Street. It is still referred to sometimes as the "Green House."

Costs were kept as low as possible, but it did take initial money to get it started. Robert has been very generous in not asking for any expenses toward the rent or other monthly costs. Caroline and Bitsy don't want to take this for granted and look forward to being able to meet their share of expenses.

The T'ai Chi Chih Center gives Lake Charles students an opportunity to be able to learn and practice T'ai Chi Chih in a comfortable and peaceful environment.

For T'ai Chi Chih teachers, new and old, explore your possibilities! One never knows when the seed has been planted. A flower might bloom for you, too!

Forwarded letters

Student expresses gratitude for TCC; her teacher writes of publicity for TCC

Dear Justin,

Enclosed is a letter from one of my students. Since she addressed it to all of us, me, you, Carmen, I am sending you and Carmen a copy. Bobbie is a delight to each class she is in. Yes her illness tires her but she still does as much TCC as she can.

CBS did a filming of TCC at the Cancer Wellness Center where I teach twice a week. No idea when it will air. I will call Carmen if I hear anything.

The college where I teach four classes a week will video one of the classes and add TCC to the new orientation video for new students & may be used to show high schools.

Wishing you good days — see you at Conference this Aug.

Donna McElhose

To: Donna McElhose
Justin Stone
Carmen Brocklehurst

From: Bobbie Weichman

Subject: T'ai Chi Chih

. . . I am excited about learning T'ai Chi Chih and connecting with the energy of the universe. As a student of only three months, I have so much to learn and to look forward to. I am trying very hard to make T'ai Chi Chih a way of life for the rest of my life. I feel that T'ai Chi Chih is something that I have been searching for for a very long time. I wish that I were better at expressing my thoughts and emotions about this. I feel that this is a mind, body and soul experience.

My hope is that as I learn to experience the energy (Chi) of TCC that I will become a better and stronger person in mind, body and spirit. Since I have fibromyalgia, my physical condition tends to be tired & very achy a lot and there are days when I am mentally sluggish. This is all part of the disease. T'ai Chi Chih has helped some already. There have been days when after doing TCC I have noticed more energy and a little more mental clarity. This is truly my hope for the future. I realize that TCC is not a cure-all; but as a way of life, I feel it can help to keep things in perspective and enrich my life beyond my imagination.

I have both Justin's and Carmen's tape. Both tapes are excellent to use and offer a variety for practicing. I have not yet learned to work completely by myself. How I long to progress to the point of "The effort of no effort" and to exhibit the grace and softness of Donna, Carmen and Justin!

To Justin Stone a very big **THANK YOU** for developing T'ai Chi Chih so that the average person can develop their body, mind, and spirit.

To Carmen, I feel a friend coming through the tape as we do TCC practice. I really enjoy using your tape and the helpful encouragement you offer. It is helpful to have the mirror image, especially when first learning TCC. Thank you for such a fine tape.

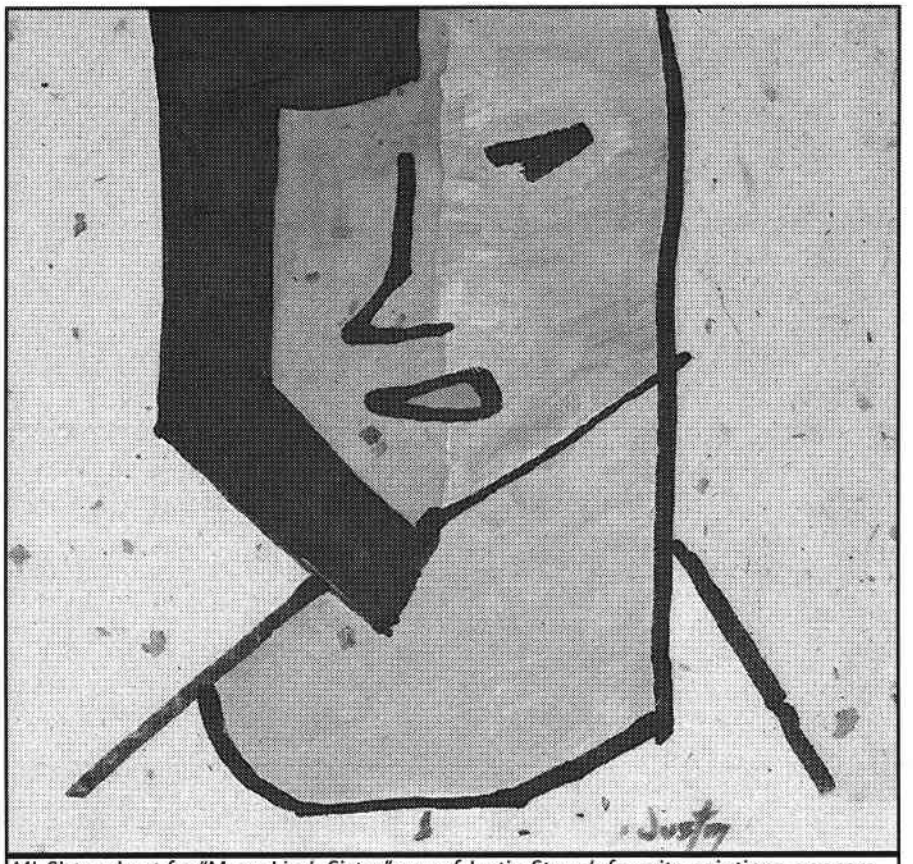
To Donna, I feel that I have been truly blessed to find such an excellent instructor as you. You are so patient with all my questions. There is so much to learn and I know that sometimes I feel like I want to learn it all at once. Of course, that is impossible and will take years of practice and inquiring. My one dream is to some day be able to tell a story in class. Perhaps the Chi will lead me that way.

An Invitation to Discover for Yourself: *Just What is it About Justin Stone's Art?*

By Noel Altman

"The bottom line is: Do you have a reaction?" This is something Justin Stone said to me years ago when showing me one of his paintings.

And that is what makes me decide to buy a painting — is there anything there to KEEP interesting me? Many paintings are beautiful and skillfully done, but what will make you look again and again at a painting? What makes you want a painting in your house (where you will see it day after day)?



ML Sister, short for "Mona Lisa's Sister", one of Justin Stone's favorite paintings, appears in his new art book, *Tentatively Forever: Paintings by Justin F. Stone.*

Reproduced with permission from Bindu Press. Artwork photographed byKim Grant.

When it has something there that you don't understand yet — like a koan (Zen puzzle with no "right" answer) — that is when.

Justin's paintings have this effect on me. I don't like all of them — some I don't like at all — but to no paintings other than his am I so drawn. I love his use of color — mismatching that works! I love his use of texture (secret techniques) that look like sand or small rocks mixed into the paint. I love his compositions — some so spare. But he is doing more than producing beautiful paintings — which many great artists have done (Picasso, Mogdiliani, Miro, Cezanne) — he is embedding koans. In studying his paintings, there is a puzzle there that my mind is working on. His paintings are fascinating to me — absorb my full attention when I stare at them. I see so many different aspects and new ones all the time in the same painting. There are layers and layers and levels and levels.

Over the years, I have watched my attraction to the same paintings change — when I have understood something on some level, it is time to take the painting down and put it into storage for awhile. Taking another one out that had been stored may cause me to see it in a totally new way. Others that I was not so crazy about (that I had seen years before in Justin's house) I have then been drawn to buying. As I evolve, my relationship with Justin's paintings evolves.

I invite you to browse through the paintings in his new artbook, *Tentatively Forever: Paintings by Justin F. Stone.* If one particularly appeals to you, leave the page open on the coffee table, so your mind can study it, mull it, when you happen to pass by during the day.

There is something in these paintings — far beyond color, technique, composition. What is there cannot be conveyed in words. I invite you to find out what it is.

The bottom line is: Do you have a reaction?

Karmic Komments

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

Spanish Translation of Text

The Spanish translation of the photo-textbook is in its final formatting phase and will definitely be ready by conference time. The saddle-stitched insert is provided with the book at no extra cost; the book and insert together sell for the same $15.95 price as the photo-textbook itself. Those who are more comfortable with Spanish than with English will be able to read the words in their own language but still refer to the photos in the photo-textbook. Like the regular book, no part of the insert may be photocopied without prior written permission from Good Karma Publishing.

We owe much gratitude to everyone who devoted many hours of loving work on this translation, and we acknowledge them. **Maria Elena Medina Mora de Brinkop** is the main translator. She first learned T'ai Chi Chih from **Caroline Chavez** and later studied further with other teachers so that her knowledge of T'ai Chi Chih, in addition to her fluency in both Spanish and English (having grown up and being educated in Mexico, then later moving to the U.S.), gave her not only the desire to do this work but also the credentials. **Carolyn Shaw**, long-time T'ai Chi Chih teacher and professor of Spanish, assisted Maria, along with **Carmen Brocklehurst**, who also directed the project. Teachers **Alejandro Rodriguez** and **Robert Montes de Oca** offered their editing and typing skills, respectively. The team made every effort to stay as close to Justin's words as possible and to use Spanish in as universal a way as they could, no small feat. Our sincere thanks for the team's combined efforts!

New Book Cover

The cover of the photo-textbook will soon match the video sleeve, the first time it is being printed in full color. The two pieces are complementary and can be considered a "set," especially since they each address different aspects of learning and practicing T'ai Chi Chih. This version of the text will be available when we have sold all the other books, perhaps by the time this issue of *The Vital Force* reaches you. Because the inside of the book is the same, we will not take any of the others as returns.

Art Book

Tentatively Forever: Paintings by Justin F. Stone is an elegantly designed and produced art book that was printed in Belgium. Good Karma Publishing, distributing for Bindu Press, is very pleased to make this special offer to the T'ai Chi Chih community for just $32 + $4.50 shipping. The volume features exceptional color reproductions of 40 of Justin's modern art paintings, an insightful and eloquent essay by **Carmen Brocklehurst**, individual and illuminating commentary for each painting, and a factual decade-by-decade biography of Justin Stone's life. The Belgian printer also produces publications for the Louvre Museum in Paris, an indication of the high quality of the printing.

Many people involved in T'ai Chi Chih have admired Justin's artistry, but few have had the financial means to buy his one-of-a-kind paintings. Here is a golden opportunity to own this lovely soft-cover "coffee table" book at a price far below art store prices.

The monograph was produced as a not-for-profit venture for two reasons, neither of which is commercial in nature: to send to art museum directors and gallery curators around the U.S. and to provide availablity to the T'ai Chi Chih community. **Kimberly Grant**, T'ai Chi Chih teacher, photographed the paintings, wrote the text, and coordinated the

entire project. Monetary contributors, teachers from various parts of the country committed to furthering Justin's exposure as a painter, made the enterprise financially feasible. The inexpensive selling price of the publication was set deliberately low to be affordable to teachers. After printing expenses, donation of copies to galleries, and remaining sales, the contributors will be only partially repaid for their investment.

Those of us associated with T'ai Chi Chih have long been grateful to Justin for originating this invaluable practice. He is living proof of its benefits, among them increased intuition and flowing creativity. Through his music, we are well aware of his complex arrangements, compositions, and keyboard performances. His numerous books and videos allow us to glean understanding and wisdom through his words. Now, with the publication of *Tentatively Forever*, we can enjoy and appreciate another of Justin's unique and extraordinary expressions. It is fascinating to note that he began painting in his early 60s, in 1978, a few years after he created T'ai Chi Chih. We can easily see how the circulating of the chi released yet another stream of creativity within this man whose talents in other areas were already evident.

This limited edition is our entry into another of Justin's truly visionary endeavors. It is available *only* through Good Karma Publishing. No discounts apply. Order your copy(ies) while the supply lasts! We're confident you will gain a deeper understanding with each return viewing and turn of the page. You can peruse the book and buy it at the Good Karma table at the conference, or you can purchase it now. (See flyer/order form inserted with this issue.) Many thanks to Kimberly Grant and Bindu Press for bringing forth *Tentatively Forever*.

Prepare for the Conference

Last year, one of the teachers came to the conference with an extra suitcase packed inside her main one so she could stock up on Good Karma materials to take home with her. A great idea! Any takers for this year's conference? Come see us! Remember, you save shipping charges when you purchase books and tapes during the conference. Further, we guarantee you free shipping on any items we run out of that need to be sent after the conference.

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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!

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T'AI CHI CHIH WEBSITE:

www.taichichih.org

VITAL FORCE JOURNAL CONTACTS:

Send submissions for publication by standard mail, e-mail, or fax to:

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87192-1068

(505) 296-1297 (Fax)

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

VFJSubmissions@earthlink.net

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Editor
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For all Membership Services questions, including: new memberships, renewals, updates or sign-ups for Website Teacher Referral List, updates for Teacher's Directory, back issues:

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VFJmembership@yahoo.com

For teacher referrals, general questions about TCC or events:

Kathy Albers
Information/Outreach
(314) 727-1983
thevitalforce@yahoo.com

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

Please print clearly. **MEMBERSHIP FORM**

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_____ Zip _____ - _____

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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 = $_____

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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 was so happy to get my first TCC class set up and knew that it would be announced in the weekly program of a local church. I excitedly opened the program and searched through to see:

9:00 am - 10:00 am T'ai Chi Chih, Moving "Medication"
(Hmmm . . . maybe they know more about this than I thought!!)

– Debbie Cole

2. As nature contracted during this winter season, so did my TCC classes. At first I started to worry, but then I decided to take advantage of the slow period and go within. I meditated on letting go of my limiting beliefs. I took a hard look at some of the choices I've made, and their consequences. Once again I found myself in that limbo of transition and change. I knew it was a good place to be, but I still didn't like it. As a friend of mine recently said, "One door closes and another one opens, but it's tough hanging out in the hallway!"

To ease this restless time, I turned to nature. I enjoyed looking at the trees and the animals outside my window. A few days ago I opened the blinds and saw a squirrel playing in the middle of the parking lot. I was in a silly mood and said, "Come on Mr. squirrel, come on over here and come see me...Come on...Come on." At that very moment he looked up at me, and took a hop forward towards the window. I started laughing and continued to say, "Come on...Come on over and see me." This happened about four more times, and each time he jumped forward in a straight line until he was about three feet from the window. Then he got busy with a nut, and I started thinking how I wanted him to stand up on his hind legs and look at me. In a few moments, that's exactly what he did! Then I asked for a message, and he abruptly darted away out of sight. I was disappointed at first, until it occurred to me to see where he'd gone. I went into the next room and looked out the window. I didn't see him at first. Then I realized he was sitting completely still on top of a bench. He was motionless for awhile, then he took a sudden leap off the bench onto a nearby tree and scurried towards the dumpster. I burst out laughing. I got the message. No, it wasn't that I was nuts for talking to the squirrel, it was: sit still, take the leap of faith, and get rid of the garbage!

P.S. Later on that very same day, I received the March 2001 issue of the *VFJ* where Ed Altman wrote about taking his own leap of faith.

– Sharon Sirkis

3. During one of my beginning classes, I finished teaching, then handed out the list of the moves to the students, reviewing the names of each move. One of the new students started giggling...

She said, "Oh, I thought the name of the move was 'Around the Bladder', not 'Around the Platter'! I kept trying to picture what my bladder looked like and thought how odd it was that a move would be named 'Around the Bladder'!"

Needless to say, that group of students really had a unique bonding experience that day!

– Mary Pat George

4. Three of my out-of-state grandchildren were spending a couple of weeks with me one summer. They were nine, seven and four years old at the time. Every morning the two oldest, Don and Dymond, joined me for T'ai Chi Chih. However, Lea, the youngest, did not care to participate, but played quietly off to one side while listening to the music. Finally, on the last morning, she joined our circle, but as we finished the Rocking Motion, Don, her seven-year-old cousin, said, "Grandma, Lea did not come to a graceful conclusion!"

– Sher Dano

[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..."]

Tentatively Forever: Paintings by Justin F. Stone